

The  
VOYAGE  
of the



PRINCESS  
ARK

# The Voyage of the Princess Ark

Up, up, and away – across the Known World!

by Bruce A. Heard

For several years now, I have planned and monitored the development of the D&D® game's Known World at TSR, Inc. A relatively small area of the world, stretching from the Empire of Thyatis to the Atruaghin Clans, was described in great detail in the *Gazetteer* accessories. Only recently did we venture farther away, starting with the *Dawn of the Emperors* campaign set covering the illustrious empires of Thyatis and Alphatia.

Now, by popular demand—meaning horrible threats from gamers and designers—I have started a quest to resolve certain troubling questions. (Nope, it's not what you think!) These questions concern the intriguing continental map published in the *D&D Master DM's Book* (e.g., "Just who is Dorfin IV?"—an annoying question that came up more than once). But fear no more! Here are some logical answers for that and other strange geographical peculiarities of the Known World!

While browsing through some obscure tomes in my office, I discovered a dusty pile of scrolls written by the hand of an intrepid Alphatian explorer. Let's now embark on a fabulous journey across the D&D Known World and see what we discover.

**FROM THE JOURNALS OF  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN  
LORD ADMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.**

**Nyxmir, 11, 1964 AY:** I am astounded by the complete lack of interest in geographical matters on the part of Alphatia's younger mages. Worse, it has been found that the geographical teachings offered at Eriadna High are based on the fallacies of a Thyatian lowlife! This general—without a doubt a failure in the Thyatian legions—retired after a shabby campaign in Thothia. There he stole an ancient map of this world from a pillaged temple. The map was but a simple continental outline with a few words here and there. Upon his return, this lowlife invented kingdoms and empires, then placed them on the map and wrote tome upon tome about them. His knowledge of ancient Nithian and his

interest in the truth being what they were, nothing good came out of this ignorant barbarian's overactive imagination. He made a fortune selling his books, and many took them as the final authority on the world.

His errors were legion. Ridiculous assumptions were made about the size of the Thyatian Empire. The map shows the limits of that empire stretching beyond the Wendarian Reaches, north of the Principalities of Glantri. Poppycock! There are at least a half-dozen countries between Thyatis and Glantri having nothing to do with Thyatis.

You can forget about these absurd borders, too. These were in fact various creases in the original crumpled map which that Thyatian dimwit mistook for actual borders. The "Empire of the Great Khan," east of our province of Esterhold, is another fantasy. There are indeed large steppes there, but no Great Khan—we'd know about it by now!

And, yes, about this Dorfin Empire: It was the joke of a certain gnomish king, the inventor of wondrous but totally useless contraptions, who went by the name of King Dorfin IV. His kingdom is, in truth, merely the workshop of a few hundred gnomes in the hills of Karameikos. One of Dorf's favorite pastimes was to send loyal followers beyond the Sind Desert. There, they would pose as plenipotentiaries of the imaginary "Empire of Dorfin IV," then hire local people to carry a sealed message back to the real King Dorfin. These strange messengers, obviously from a distant place, seemed to make quite an impression on local Karameikan barons when they brought the gnomish king those phony and pompous greetings from his "imperial cousin to the west." These messages hinted at the outrageous size of this bogus empire, alleged to be twice the size of Alphatia! What nonsense! And the barons believed it, the fools.

I shall skip the details on other equally false kingdoms such as "Vulcania" (that was the Thyatian general's wife's name), "Cestia" (his mistress), "Brasol" (his dog), "Tangor" (a brand of cheap beer found in the streets of Newkirk), or "Zyxl" (a deceased gladiatorial hero whom the general claimed was also a fallen queen of that same nation). For all this, I find that I

grudgingly admire such a bold and irreverent joker. After all, everyone fell for his fake encyclopedias.

I propose that in the name of grand buffoonery, we keep these place names, since they are now the ones with which laymen are most familiar, but we should use them in a purely geographic sense. For example, let's do away with the nation of Nentsun (an Ethengarian word for a Heldanner's arm pit) and simply call that land the Nentsun Peninsula. Similarly, we'll forget about the state of Izonda (Hin for "fruitcake" —it figures), renaming that area the Desert of Izonda, since this is what is really there.

So be it! It is time to see for myself if this old Nithian map has any truth to it. I today obtained permission from Her Imperial Majesty for the *Princess Ark* be recommissioned for a last but glorious mission of exploration in the name of Our Illustrious Empire. . . .

**Alphamir 15, 1965:** Finally, she is airworthy again! It took no less than 35 master crafters and 300 slaves to refit the beautiful skyship. Her five masts stand majestically over her black hull, bearing the sails that will trap the magical wind. One can almost feel a strange life emanating from her as she gently pulls on her mooring lines in her desire to cast off and head into the sky.

**Sulamir 10, 1965:** Days have come and gone since our departure from Sundsvall. After leaving the capital, I ordered a southerly course. Our *Princess Ark* sailed well into the clouds above Edairo, Caerdwicca, and Beitung.

Soon we reached the barbaric coast that lies east of the Thyatian Hinterlands. Some people refer to the region as The Coast, or the Four Kingdoms. The Four Kingdoms no more exist here than water exists in our bilge. As far as The Coast goes, we in Alphatia prefer calling it the Jungle Coast, because that's what it is: a forsaken, endless jumble of tropical growth. It is always hot and humid here, and torrential rains from the Bellissarian Sea drench the place every day. If the boredom doesn't kill you, then the savages, diseases, and monsters will.

It is no wonder the stiff-necked Thyatians did not waste their time in conquering this foul region. The white sandy

**WRONG**

**WRONG**

**WRONG!**

### The Known World

- 1 Adakia
- 2 Arm of God
- 3 Agypt
- 4 Barbarians (not listed)
- 5 Boera
- 6 Brasil
- 7 Cestia
- 8 Empire of Alphatia
- 9 Empire of Decia IV
- 10 Empire of the Great Khan
- 11 Empire of Tangor
- 12 Empire of Thyatis
- 13 The Coast (a.k.a. The Four Kingdoms)
- 14 Hyboeria
- 15 Isle of Dawn
- 16 Izunda
- 17 Jen
- 18 Lower Agypt
- 19 Matriarchy of Priban
- 20 Minaea
- 21 Neutsun
- 22 Newworld
- 23 Oceania
- 24 The Sea Kingdoms
- 25 The Sea Kingdoms
- 26 The Serpent Peninsula
- 27 Southold
- 28 Thonia
- 29 Valcama
- 30 Vulture Peninsula
- 31 Zyl



beaches are idyllic, but no pleasures can be found here. Immediately beyond the beaches stretch hundreds of miles of rolling hills. Dark jungles blanket the highest terrain, and repugnant swamps corrupt the lowlands.

**Sulamir 25, 1965:** The savages who live on the eastern Jungle Coast are quite different from those in the neighboring Thyatian Hinterlands. The latter are believed to be descendants of slaves brought from the Nithian colonies nowadays known as Ostland and Vestland. The Nithians carved out a southern domain from the jungle for their priests. Then three tribes of slaves rebelled and escaped north, seeking their fatherland. Instead, these ruffians found (and founded) what would later become Thyatis. A century later, Nithia foundered. The unruly slaves who stayed south obliterated whatever remained of their Nithian origins; in a few centuries, all was lost to the jungle. These hardy, blond Hinterlanders survived and became savage jungle warriors who were capable of fighting the original natives on equal footing.

**Sudmir 3, 1965:** Terrible, those natives. We came close to a large town deep in the rain forest. Smoke from their fires could be seen from miles away. Thousands of huts sprawled across a clearing in the forest, with several stone buildings placed near the clearing's center. We spotted

what seemed to be a temple of some sort. Upon our descent, it was observed that the natives were of a much smaller build than the Hinterlanders. Tattoos covered their copper skin, and most of them had long, black hair tied in the back. The natives immediately attacked our vessel, using poison needles and blowguns against our exposed crewmen when we came within range. The gray substance on the needles was deadly, and we lost two men. Magic from their barbaric sorcerers cracked and thundered, but the *Princess Ark* withstood the crude spell-strikes. As we sailed away, we spotted some of their shamans—or so we assumed those monstrosities to be, as they all had various snakelike features. Alas, we did not remain to study this culture any further. We will return at a later time to deal with these natives in a more fitting way. I sent an invisible messenger back to Her Imperial Majesty with our last position, then ordered the *Princess Ark* farther east along the Jungle Coast.

**Sudmir 25, 1965:** This morning I watched one of the nicest sunrises just as we steered eastward toward the Pass of Cestia. There we reached an unknown cape on the continental coast. I named it Cape Eriadna, in honor of Her Imperial Majesty. The place seems deserted. Despite the hot and rainy weather of this area, no rain forest grows here; instead, Savannah spreads out as far as we can see, with occasional clusters of trees dotting the land. Unlike the dominant northeasterly winds of the Jungle Coast, the winds here usually blow to the southeast.

**Sudmir 26, 1965:** Talasar, my second in command, is in charge of replenishing the *Princess Ark's* food and water supplies. The magic from his Immortal patron is powerful, but some of the supplies are now reported to be spoiled. This is quite unlike Talasar; he is a dedicated priest. This will be investigated at a later time. I am sending an away team to gather food and samples of the local vegetation.

**Vertmir 1, 1965:** The away team—or what's left of it—has finally returned. Xerdon, the captain of the guard, took matters in his own hands and mounted a rescue mission to find the team. I quote from his report:

"We had marched 30 miles south when we found the antelopes that the team was tracking. With their hunting wands, the men should have easily caught their prey, skinned it, and cut it up. But there was no trace of the team nor of any fight.

"Then Ramissur, my forward boltman, saw a glint on a nearby hill. I ordered the men into skirmish order and approached it. The grass was nearly 3' tall, and the ground was a bit marshy. Suddenly, one after the other, guards screamed in horror. I ordered the men into a tighter group but found that those who had screamed were missing. We made it to the hill and found two survivors from the away team. None appeared wounded, but they bore

strange purple marks on their bodies, like bruises. Both were insane, and in their mad babbling they screamed of an attack by tentacles that shot from under mosses and peat. The other poor devils on their team must have been pulled underneath and devoured by foul beasts.

"Once warned, it wasn't difficult to spot the concealed creatures on the way back. My two elite boltmen on point took pleasure in blasting the things once they found them. Ramissur managed to stun one creature that had rags hanging from its tentacles, rags that probably belonged to Azoth, the Dispel Warden of the lost team. By Razud, I'll now have to train Ramissur in the art of magic dispelling. Azoth was a fine guard. I cast a binding on the creature's mind, then brought it back. And so we returned."

**Vertmir 4, 1965:** These beasts are quite a discovery—they are vegetable beings. I have named them "Cestian gobblers." Each appears to have a short, fat trunk with a slimy, sphincterlike mouth on top. Three to six gooey tentacles grow on the sides of each trunk, which are used to capture prey. The tentacles exude a substance capable of stunning an ox. When I brought fresh meat near the opening of one gobbler, small translucent tendrils stuck out of it like little tongues, each of them ending in a noisy, smacking suction cup. It took the gobbler very little time to suck the juices from the meat. Afterward, the opening widened and the gobbler gobbled its food.

I was able to retrieve Azoth's partially digested remains from one plant, and after some cleaning of his remains, I animated the late warden's body and set it on permanent duty in the hold. There, away from the common crew, Azoth will cater to the Cestian gobbler, now properly restrained and potted in a large jar. I was surprised to see that the gobbler wouldn't attack Azoth in his present state. In fact, it seems the gobbler now looks forward to Azoth's arrival with fresh food. This unusual vegetable specimen deserves to be brought to the Imperial Greenhouse.

It appears these gobblers commonly grow throughout the coast in the Pass of Cestia. This explains why we've found no human population there. Beware of lowlands with high grasses in this region! This is where gobblers are most likely to be found. After this discovery, I ordered the *Princess Ark* back to her original easterly course.

*To be continued. . . .*

Please send your questions and comments on this series to Bruce Heard, D&D Column, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get an answer, but they will be given all the attention they deserve. Your input in the development of the D&D Known World is welcome. Thank you!

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Illustration by Jim Holloway

# The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*



## Part 2: Into the mountains, to meet with . . . doom

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alpathian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
Prince Haldemar of Haaken  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
Princess Ark  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

**Vertmir 7, 1965:** After Cape Eriadna, the coast runs directly to the south. Another land lies to the east; the pattern in the clouds is quite clear about it. So far, it seems the old Nithian map is quite accurate. After pondering our course, I decided to head due east. Heavy clouds persisting in the south warned of violent weather; I feared the *Princess Ark* would hardly be able to climb above them. The eastern coast is no more than a few hundred miles away.

**Vertmir 17, 1965:** After reaching the western coastline at dawn, I decided to follow the coast to the north rather than penetrate this unknown land. The terrain is similar to the Jungle Coast, and so far no sign of population has been seen. By evening, we reached the northern end of the Isle of Cestia, which I named Cape Andor. Our choice is either to veer toward the isle to the northeast, or to follow the other side of Cestia, due south. Tonight I will consult the Auguries and make a decision. Which is the most interesting course?

**Vertmir 18, 1965:** At midnight, Talasar traced the circle around the mizzenmast, then inscribed the eight runes. The crew was silent, perfect in observing the ritual. The drummers, in trances, slowly beat the pace as the ship pivoted on its center, from starboard to port. The moon appeared late and low on the horizon. At the point where the shadow of the mast intersected with a rune, Talasar lifted his hand. The drummers and the ship stopped. It was the rune of Ice and Sun. So be it: Today we rested, but tomorrow we shall sail away from the coast to the northeast. So spoke the Immortal Razud.

**Tslamir 8, 1965:** Wise is the Immortal

Razud! His path has led us to a strange island, which we discovered after following the coast for a few days. This island is a large one by our standards (and probably bigger than what the Thyatians call their "Known World"). To the west lies the Bellissarian Sea; to the east is an ocean unknown to us. We named this place the Isle of Oceania.

To the south of Oceania is a smaller island, 200 miles long. This rocky formation is the realm of sea birds and large lizards; its rocks are almost completely covered with their droppings. The birds feed on the fish, the lizards consume the birds' eggs and remains, and fish feast on the sludge washed from the rocks into the sea by the storms. I shall name this place Everfeed.

A few forests grow along the rare beaches of Oceania, but for the most part its mountains form jagged cliffs that drop straight into the sea. The reefs and shoals around Oceania would be deadly to seafaring vessels. The mountains rise over 20,000' in height. We discovered the abandoned ruins of two towns built on ledges above the sea. Their architecture is unknown, and time has washed away any inscriptions or paintings. Judging from several imposing buildings, this must once have been an advanced culture. No clue was found to tell us what may have happened to the "Oceanians."

In the morning, we'll explore a narrow mountain pass that opens over a small bay on the south side of the island. Through the pass flows a river that forms a high cataract plunging straight into the bay.

**Tslamir 11, 1965:** After days of trial and error, we are closer now to the center of the mountains. Many passes branched off the one from which we started, some forming a maze of jagged rocks and dizzying gorges, others ending in treacherous, impassable walls. Maneuvering out of these dead ends proved considerably more difficult than I had expected. The *Princess Ark* is a large ship and cannot climb above 10,000'. Several passes nearly reached that limit, one of them causing the ship to scrape her keel. The weather is much cooler here than near the coast. At sundown, we found another ruined town, this one quite huge and with a once-mighty

citadel. Still no clue was at hand as to the fate of the Oceanians. We anchored off several promontories to prevent the *Princess Ark* from swaying into the cliffs on the wind. Clouds formed around us, muffling every sound. Now for our sleep.

**Tslamir 16, 1965:** By the blessings of the Immortals, we yet live! The crew is exhausted from a difficult day. Visibility today was reduced to less than 30'—a mere fraction of the *Princess Ark's* length. Late during the night of the 15th, Second Class Petty Officer Nadonosor reported that the watch was missing, along with a launch. The deck watch was young Tarias, the midshipman sent along with us by the House of Arrogansa for his education in the science of sky navigation. I immediately ordered Xerdon and his men to follow me to the ruins. If Tarias died, then so might I.

We found the launch on one of the old bastions, where Tarias's footprints led toward the citadel. The place was ghastly at night. Murmurs and whispers could be heard everywhere, but never could we find their source. Tracking the boy took time and skill on the part of Xerdon. At last, when it seemed we would never find the boy in this maze of collapsed houses, we reached an open-air temple. There, chained to an altar in the center, lay Tarias, staring blankly into the sky. Our midshipman was someone's sacrifice!

Yet we could see that he still lived—and we could see his unhuman captors, who sent the chill of fear through me. A ring of translucent beings knelt around the altar!

Instantly, Xerdon ordered his boltmen to blast the ghosts away. Screams of unearthly terror and pain shook the temple as the undead wisps were scattered like paper ash. Forward boltman Ramissur was the first to reach the midshipman, and he had nearly removed the rusty shackles when a swarm of shadowy apparitions swirled around him. The boltman was clearly dying! Fortunately, I could cast a magical *light* to relieve him. As expected, the shadows reeled back in terror from the illumination. We moved in and thought our battle over.

But as we rushed forward in the moment of our triumph, we discovered a terrifying presence that had remained

unseen. A huge, pitch-black dragon emerged from the dark, looming over the altar. Xerdon's men froze as it advanced, and I am afraid that I did the same.

But the dragon stayed its attack. To our astonishment, it said in perfect Alphatian, "You are trespassing on lands which ought to remain the domain of my kin and of the dead. You who are called Haldemar—you have a choice: take back the boy, or save your warrior. Make your derision now, and you may return to your ship unharmed. I shall keep the soul of he who remains."

I had no certainty that the wyrm would be true to its word, nor that it would not come after us again. Yet I could see a multitude of ghostly shapes and unspeakable abominations coming up the streets of the ruined city. We had run out of time. I made my choice. I *had* to save Tarias of Arrogansa; his family is a terrible enemy. With deep regrets, I pointed to the boy. As I did, Xerdon turned to me with flames of anger in his eyes. I fear I have lost a friend as well as a superior boltman. As we hurried away with the limp form of Tarias in our arms, the wyrm's thundering laughter echoed in the ruins.

We reached the ship with no further incident. Suspecting more trouble from the monster, I ordered watches with torches to the prow, then cast off. Very slowly, guided by the words of the

watches, the *Princess Ark* veered away from the ruins and moved down into the darkness of the gorge.

That wily wyrm! It did not lie, for it let us reach out ship in safety—but it promised nothing more! The expected attack came swiftly. Three lesser dragons were seen on the approach, and they swooped upon us three times. Each time, their teeth, claws, and wings ripped a whole sail to shreds. Each time, Xerdon's boltmen braved the danger in defense of our ship, while the bosun exhorted his sailors to man the riggings at all costs. We could not afford to lose our sails here!

It was Talasar who saved the night. He later revealed that he sensed the nature of these dragons, which were clearly not of this world. Our priest of Razud had closed his eyes to better sense the presence of the wyrms. Then he cast his magic, and one of them, somewhere in the darkness, roared in pain and agony. It fell like a rock, and the sound of its hones crashing into the jagged ridges below echoed through the gorge. An insane, monstrous shriek rose from the citadel—and the *Princess Ark* lurched forward as if struck by a storm.

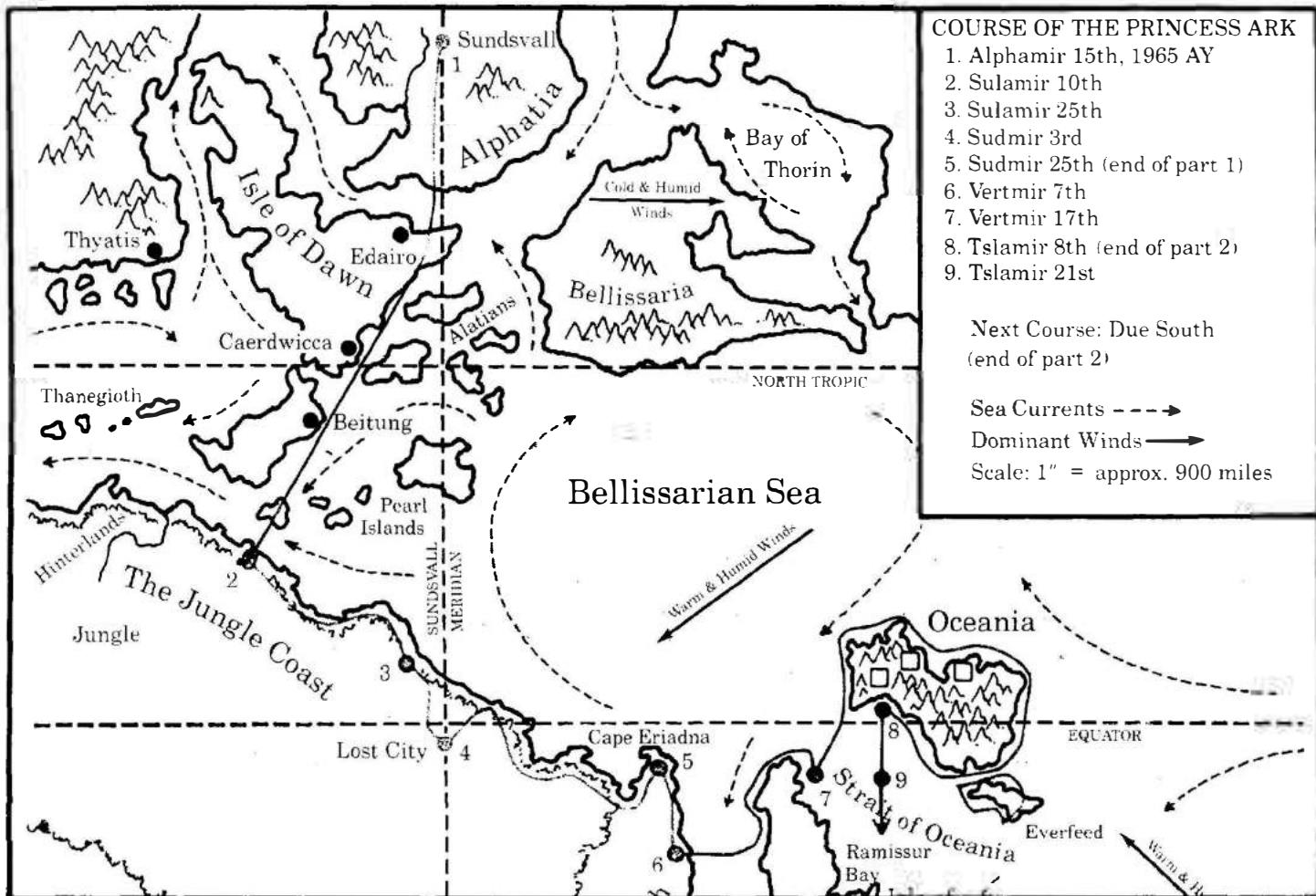
We do not know if the ship moved on her own or if she was lifted and thrust away by some enormous force. In any event, the sudden movement was enough to outdistance the wyrms, though only by

great luck did we avoid smashing into the rocks. We flew all night, and by this morning's dawn we had reached the cataract at the bay. The deck was a scene of utter carnage. The crew had suffered many wounds, though no deaths. However, the mountain passes are marked in our chart room. Someday I shall return, for if there are such powerful dragons, great treasures and magic must lie beyond. Alas, the fate of the Oceanians is now clear.

**To be continued. . .**

If you have already designed the areas covered by the flight of the *Princess Ark*, simply ignore the information given here (the skyship simply went by, assuming that these areas were already well known to the Alphatians). If you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the Gazetteers, please send your inquiries to Bruce Heard, D&D (Column, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they, will certainly have our attention. Your input into the development of the D&D Known World is welcome.

See *Ship Flight* in boxed area on next page!



# The VOYAGE of the PRI

## Part 3: To seek out new life and new civilizations

by Bruce A. Heard

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**Tslamir 21, 1965:** Makeshift repairs have been finished since our unfortunate encounter at the citadel. The *Princess* needs a complete hull overhaul, and the sails' enchantments threaten to fade. Fortunately, we escaped the Isle of Oceania without further difficulties and have now reached the eastern coast on the Isle of Cestia. Heavy forest and hills, however, have prevented us from landing the *Princess* where she could be properly cared for. We are veering to the west in search of a quiet bay.

**Tslamir 24, 1965:** We have reached a large bay with lower hills. No sign of active, intelligent life can be seen in this region. In honor of Xerdon's fallen boltman, I've named this place Ramissur Bay. I plan to land the *Princess* tonight in a clearing that was sighted this morning. The moon hasn't reached first quarter yet, but the night should be clear enough.

**Tslamir 25, 1965:** The landing was a success, considering the difficulties. Night landing with a damaged vessel has rarely been practiced. I sent the forward scouts ahead with the landing raft, and they revealed no impending danger. Three squads of boltmen and dispel wardens under Xerdon then secured the landing site. Raman, the chief carpenter, followed with his men and tools. They installed the wooden beams to hold the *Princess's* hull off the ground, then placed *the magical globes* at the edges of the dry dock. Finally, I maneuvered the ship down into the landing joists. By then it was almost dawn, but the ship was properly secured and nearly hidden by the surrounding trees.

Our cleric Talasar took half the crew and a squad of boltmen into the forest in search of trees that could be used to replace the foremast, which had been damaged during the final battle against the night dragons. Raman's crew began their work on the hull. I remained on board the *Princess* with the remaining boltmen and the rest of the crew to oversee the repair of the sails and the enchantment operations. The enchantment took until sundown, at which time I reached a break in the incanta-

tion sequence. I ordered the crew back on board to get some rest, while Xerdon and his boltmen set up camp around the *Princess*. Talasar and the away team have not yet returned.

This is the most dangerous part of the operation. While the incantations are in a hiatus, all sails are off the masts. They must not be disturbed, for the magic would then be completely spoiled. The *Princess* will have to remain stranded for the night.

**Tslamir 26, 1965:** I should have known better. Near midnight, Xerdon quietly warned his men and sent a message aboard that movement had been sighted in the forest around the ship. It lasted a few hours but nothing else happened. This is when I noticed the real danger. Were it not for the stars that disappeared for an instant in the sky, I would not have realized the threat. The creature of darkness from the Isle of Oceania must have been tracking us ever since we left the citadel, seeking revenge for the death of its kin. With hardly a thought, I cast a *ball of fire* at the dragon. It roared with rage, which alerted Xerdon's guards and awoke the crew. Unfortunately, the beast was very hard to see. It swooped twice on the boltmen, and both times it seemed that several men disappeared into the dark wings.

Then the unexpected happened. A signal of light went off in the forest nearby. Whizzing balls were hurled from the surrounding trees and hit the dark dragon several times. The balls produced blinding flashes upon impact with the dragon, causing it to lurch in its flight and wail in pain. A faint glow remained on its hide, apparently from a sticky substance within the balls. Almost immediately, a cluster of *bolts* shot up at the dragon from every point of the landing site. Xerdon and his guards would not miss such an opportunity for revenge.

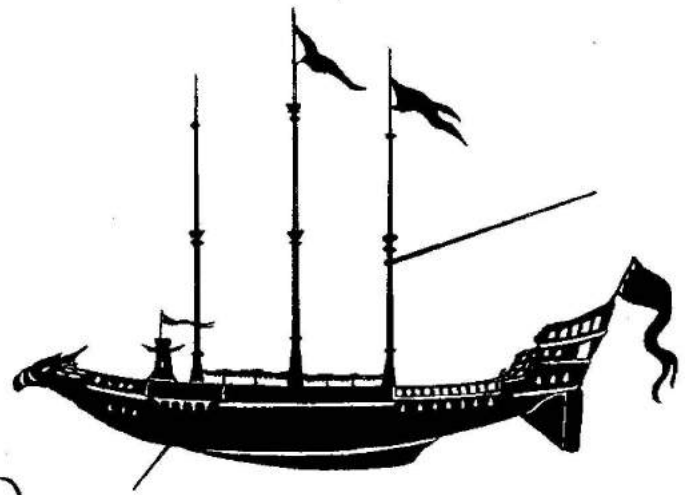
But such was not the end of the dragon. It escaped, and it will most certainly return. At the end of the battle, Xerdon and his men searched the edge of the woods, but nothing was found there except dozens of broken jars attached to ropes. All of these were smeared with the strange glowing substance we had seen cast upon the dragon.

**Tslamir 28, 1965:** The crew was back at work when, soon after dawn, a scout brought news of Talasar's return. The priest, who has a knack for the grandiose, certainly made a triumphant arrival. He had left with a few dozen men but returned with hundreds? There came drummers, trumpeteers, soldiers riding elephants, and a horde of totally mysterious people. Talasar and his men were carried on palanquins, obviously enjoying their ride. Several perfectly shaped trees followed, carried by an army of bearers.

It so happens that Talasar was captured by natives, whom we totally failed to notice in our preliminary observation. The na-



# PRINCESS ARK



tives are none other than the descendants of the ancient Oceanians! They fled centuries ago and constructed a new civilization here on the Isle of Cestia. Talasar was able to communicate with these people and describe our battle against the dragons. Tales of the death of one of these beasts caused great joy among the natives—I'll call them Cestians—who then honored Talasar and his men.

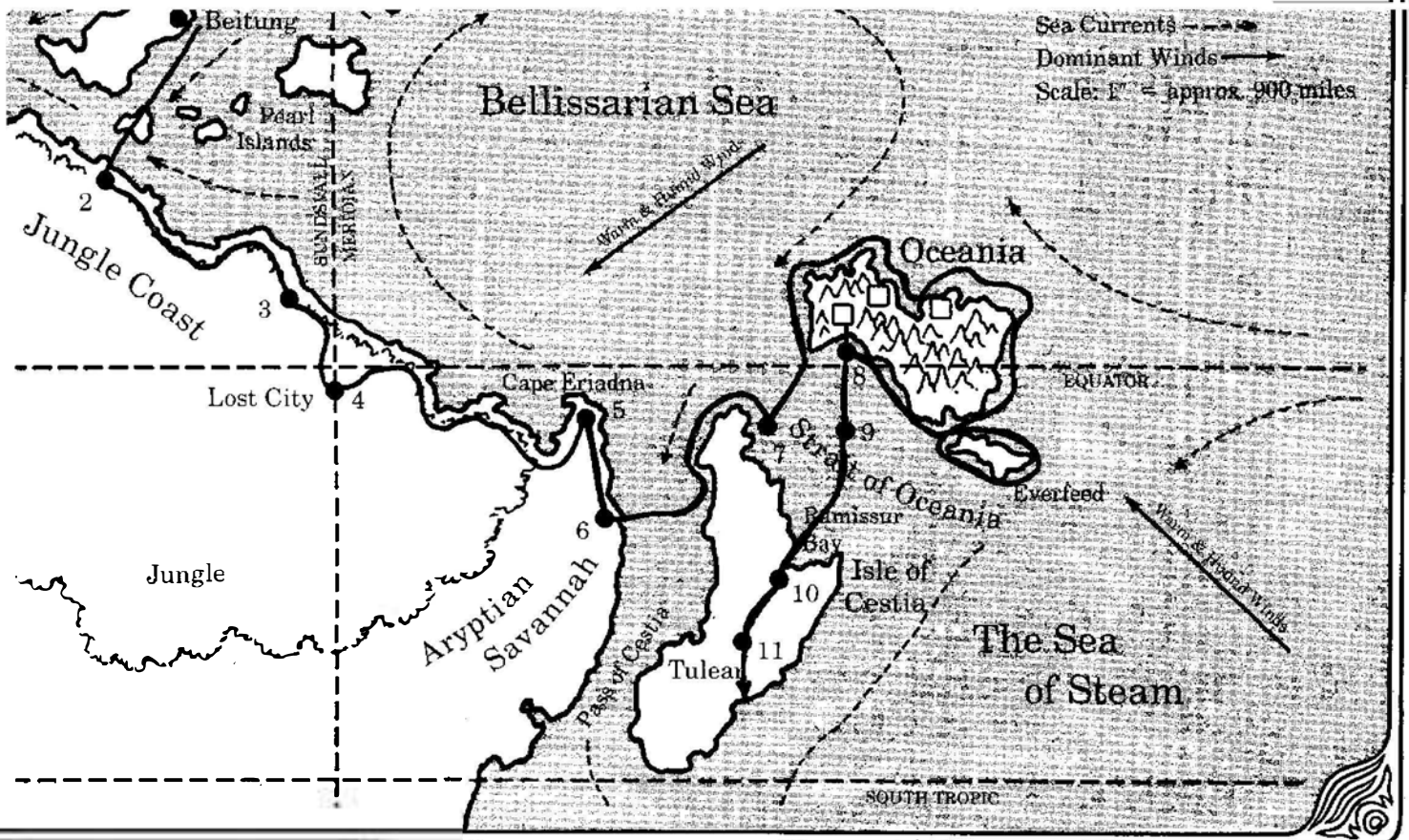
It was a group of Cestian scouts that routed the dragon two nights ago. The Cestians have developed a nonmagical substance that produces a blinding flash, which they hurl at their targets using jars attached to rope slings. They must still fear the dragons of darkness to carry these heavy jars around so routinely.

**Andrumir 4, 1965:** The Cestians are a fine bunch. They helped repair the *Princess*, then invited us to meet their king. Some of their warriors joined the ship's crew and began their training as sailors and boltmen. Learning our language and the work aboard the *Princess* will take time, but we need reinforce-

## COURSE OF THE PRINCESS ARK

1. Alphamir 15th, 1965 AY
2. Sulamir 10th
3. Sulamir 25th
4. Sudmir 3rd
5. Sudmir 25th (end of part 1)
6. Vertmir 7th
7. Vertmir 17th
8. Tslamir 8th (end of part 2)
9. Tslamir 21st
10. Tslamir 24th
11. Andrumir 7th (end of part 3)

Next Course: Due South-West (end of part 3)



ments. Their abilities with the antidragon balls are welcome, and it is a honor for them to serve on the ship that defeated a night dragon. While the other Cestians return home on foot through the forest, I set sail to the south with their guide, Abovombe, who provided directions to their capital. She is a rather sophisticated lady, which is a shock as we did not expect to find a civilized, educated people in such an isolated region.

**Andrumir 7, 1965:** We finally arrived at the capital city of Cestia. After the rugged, hilly terrain and heavy forest of Ramissur Bay came a series of plateaus on which the Cestians grow their crops. The plateaus are well irrigated, with many small canals and dams. Farming communities cluster at the crossroads.

The city, which the Cestians call Tulear, is a large urban center with high walls. Unusually high towers rise at many points of Tulear, each of them pointing huge, jagged stone spikes in every direction—not unlike the mountains of Oceania. Barbed chains stretch from tower to tower over the houses below. Abovombe explained the chains were a simple defense against the wings of low-flying dragons. The spikes are designed to wound dragons that

come too close. (I could also see problems for skyships that attack such a bastion of ingenious traps.)

We landed at the gates of Tulear. There, Talasar and I reached the palace by way of a palanquin and met King Mananjary. Like many Cestians, King Mananjary is a tall person with dull brick-red skin and black hair. We used magic to communicate, and we learned that the Isle of Cestia has four kingdoms, the largest being King Mananjary's Manakara. The kingdom on the south of the isle, Androkia, is very hostile to foreigners. Here live the descendants of the island's original natives, who were pushed back when the ancient Oceanians fled their home isle. Two other Oceanian kingdoms lie to the north: Morovoay on the western shore, and Ambiroa on the eastern shore. (The ancient Oceanians apparently split up after their arrival and formed separate, sovereign nations.) Most of the population of all kingdoms remains hidden in the mountains or in the forests, for fear of the dragons' return. Nonetheless, wars here seem to be as common as rainstorms. The people of Manakara, Morovoay, and Ambiroa seem to hate each other; it wasn't clear why. On behalf of Her Imperial Majesty, I formally estab-

lished diplomatic ties with King Mananjary and bid him farewell.

Shortly after casting off, I summoned an invisible messenger and sent it to Sundsvall with our last position and royal greetings from King Mananjary. Our course is now due south.

**To be continued....**

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*See Imperial Navy Boltmen and Bolas of Sunlight on next page.*

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Art by Roger Raupp



# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 4: Capture, surrender, and - death?

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphantian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

**From the Journals of  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN  
LORD ADMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.**

**Andrumir 12, 1965:** Our flight over the kingdom of Manakara was uneventful. The high plateaus of Tulear eventually passed, and we reached the northern border of Androkia, near the coast. We then continued southwest over the sea to avoid direct confrontation with the Androkians, xenophobes about whom we were warned by King Mananjary himself. The decision was made more to please Lady Abovombe than to avoid difficulties with the natives. (I neglected to mention that the lady has stayed aboard the *Princess Ark* to join our voyage of discovery. Upon our return to Sundsvall, she will be King Mananjary's ambassador. Lady Abovombe has a refreshing personality, and the crew is becoming fond of her.)

As night fell, I heard a noise against my

window, at the *Princess's* stern. A small bat was there, apparently terrified by my presence but too exhausted by its flight above the sea to flutter away. I pitied the poor thing and put it in a cage in my room. It will be yet another witness to my long journey.

**Andrumir 24, 1966:** The journey across the southern edge of the Cestian Pass was quite an endeavor. The quasi-permanent storms that prevail in this region dropped so much rain on the *Princess's* deck that she almost alighted on the roaring sea—a fate that would have destroyed her since she was built to fly, not to float. The princess's hulk is much too light to withstand even normal sea navigation, much less a violent storm. Fortunately, the crew performed splendidly in bailing out the water. Any navigation of these waters by a seagoing vessel would be excessively dangerous and thus should be avoided.

**Andrumir 26, 1965:** We reached the continental coast after sundown. I would have ordered a southerly course if one of the crewmen had not discovered some lights in the distance, perhaps a native village. I've decided to investigate, using the clouds for cover. We shall see what we shall see.

**Andrumir 28, 1966:** Our approach toward what we thought be a native vil-

lage became a very serious situation. We are fortunate to have survived. Indeed, there were lights, but not from a village—they came from a large, gloomy castle perched atop an incredible cliff overlooking the Gulf of Mar. All seemed to be fine as we observed the fortress from our position in the clouds, until I noticed that the princess was getting dangerously close to the cliff, despite my orders to stand off. Our strenuous attempts to pull away inexplicably failed. It was then I detected a powerful magical force that had locked onto the *Princess's* bow. Nothing could break that grip—neither my powers, nor those of Talasar, nor those of the dispel wardens.

As we slowly drifted down to the black fortress, knights in armor could be seen standing motionless in the rain and the wind. All of them bore the coat of arms of the Heldannic Order. How such an insignificant clerical order built a mighty fortress so far from the Heldann Freeholds was at first inconceivable; later events would explain all, as we learned.

As soon as the range permitted it, the battle started. The boltmen and their Cestian squires did their best. But when the *Princess* reached the main Heldannic bastion, the heavily armored knights boarded the ship en masse and overwhelmed the crew. There was no alterna-

tive but to surrender in hopes of saving the ship.

Of course, for a wizard of my status, being "captured" is a relative term. I had copiously prepared myself, then allowed these knights to believe I was their prisoner. I followed their commander, planning to learn the Order's reasons for this act of war against a ship of Her Imperial Majesty.

As the commander of the *Princess Ark*, I was predictably and forcibly taken to the fortress's high priestess. Her welcome was very cold. These knights knew about wizardry and had made all the right moves to ensure I would not cast spells. I had a short conversation with the high priestess, which did not amount to much since she had protected her thoughts against any sort of magical *empathy*. Soon enough I tired of her charades, and I played my trump card.

Years ago, when I dabbled in spell research, I stumbled upon an interesting spell of *delaying* — a rather difficult spell, but if used successfully it confers the ability to delay a number of spells until a certain condition occurs. It will not work for more than an hour for me, but that was sufficient. A few blinks of my right eye and a casual sniff were all it took to *time stop* this fine company.

My, what an interesting discovery I then made. A little *invisibility* here and a bit of *teleport* there, and before long I had

found a temple at the center of fortress. A stairway spiraled down into the rock, leading to a crypt—a regular sort of crypt, mind you, like the ones that invariably contain someone's grave. After blasting away a few creatures that did not expect my impromptu appearance, I read the inscriptions carved just about everywhere. Crafty sculptors, these knights.

The Heldannic Knights have been on a quest for decades to find the mortal remains of their Spiritual Patron. One of their heroes had made it this far and had actually found the grave. The knights managed to create a permanent gate to this place, then built their fortress above the ancient crypt. So far, they had succeeded in keeping it secret, which leads me to believe they murdered the wizard hired to create the *gate*, as well as all those who built the castle. This explains why they might desire the destruction of the *Princess*.

It took some sophisticated magical doing on my part to remove the corpse and take it away into the planes, to a place of my knowledge alone. Just as I returned from my journey, knights poured into the crypt and captured me again—this time for sure. Their anger was as palpable as the many sharp blades they laid at my throat. It would have been over for me, but the high priestess arrived in time.

And she *knew* what I had done. It took some very careful discussing to sort things

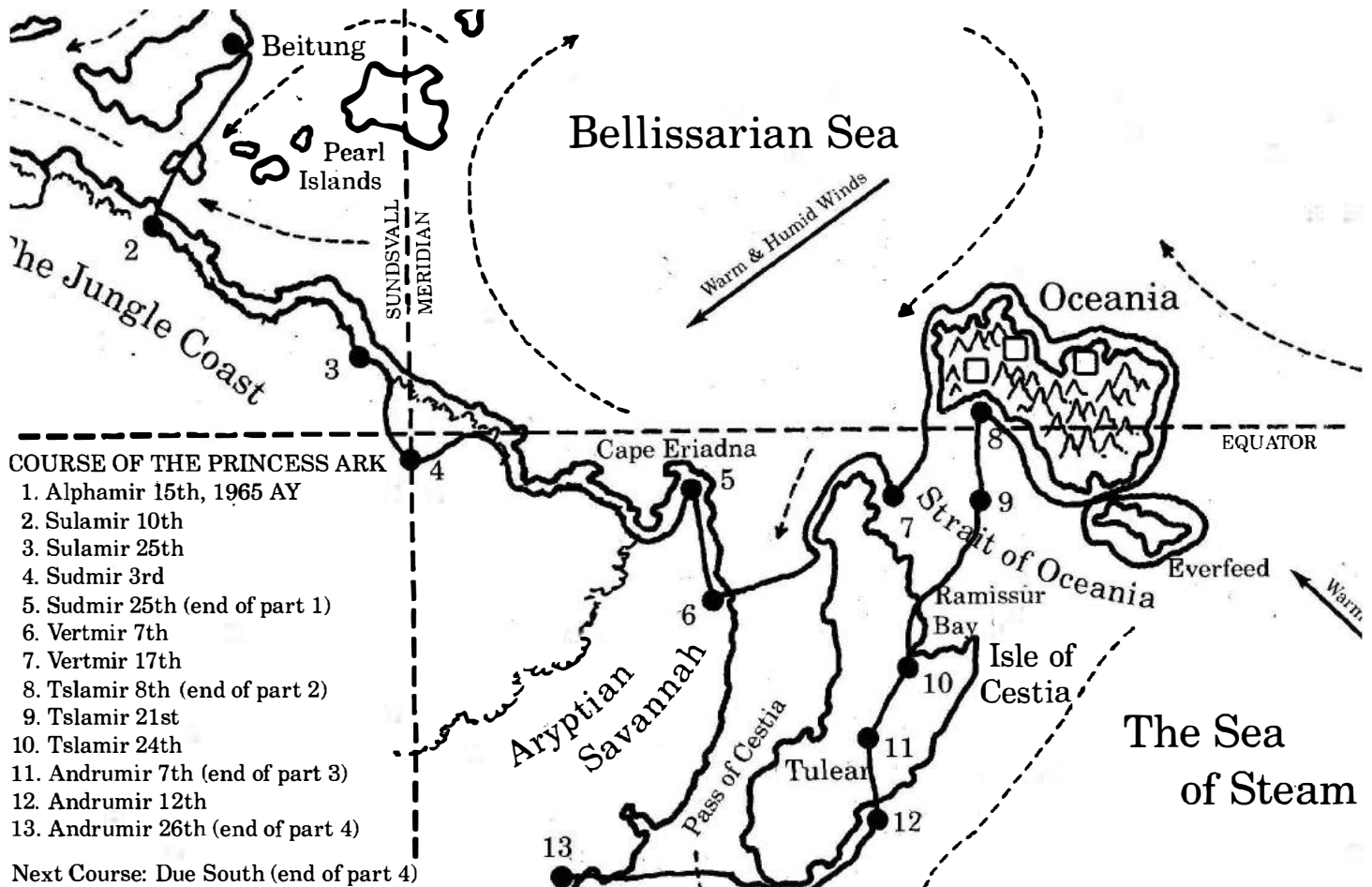
out. A shrewd negotiator, that lady; I grant her that. Eventually, she ordered the release of both ship and crew, in exchange for which she and I went into the planes the next day and recovered the body of the order's Spiritual Patron.

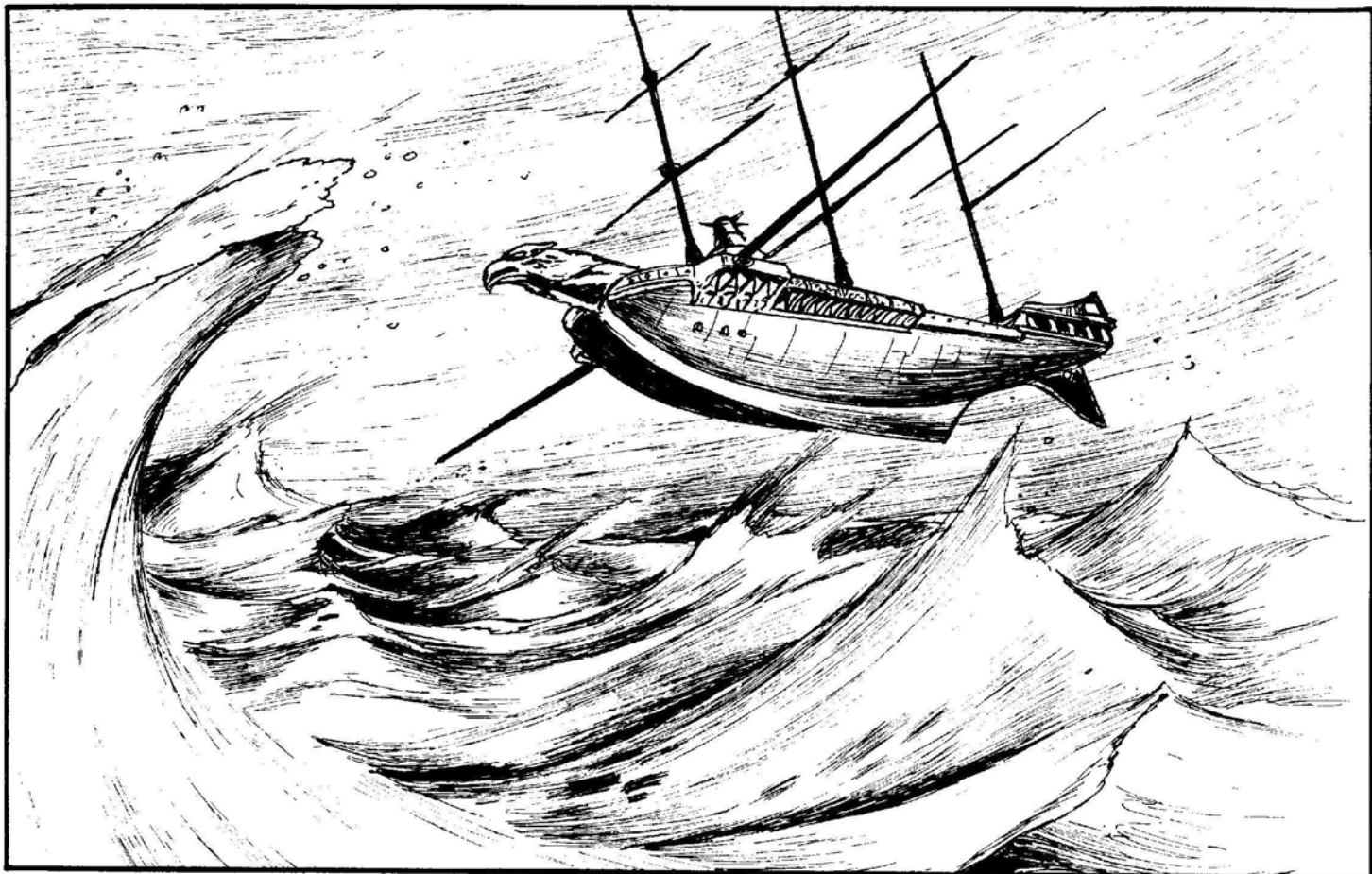
I must admit that I had a very tough time breaking away from the priestess. Her intention, of course, was to never let me go—I was too dangerous, now—but neither was my intention to stay. The priestess had what she wanted—the "holy relic"—and my ship was free and far enough from the fortress to avoid being pulled back. We left immediately; the empire has no interest in the clerical matters of petty knighthoods. My personal interest in this whole episode lies now in discovering the nature of the force that pulled the *Princess* down—and this I am intent upon unveiling one day. It will have to wait for now.

**Cyprimir 1, 1965:** After returning to the *Princess*, I ordered a new course, away from the fortress. These knights will probably be looking for us, but I care no more about them. We are now sailing south over the coast. The land has become an extremely rocky, uninviting region. Despite some rainfall, it seems the vegetation is getting sparser.

*To be continued...*

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## Heldannic Knights

The Heldannic Order is a grim brotherhood of warlike knights whose quest and devotion is the unification of the barbarian freeholds north of the Kingdom of Vestland. The Heldannic Knights, most of them powerful in the magic of clerics, are brutal and bloodthirsty. They exterminated countless barbarian clans during the centuries of Heldannic terror. The knights are extremely loyal to their order and are the embodiment of the concept "rule by the strong." They have no mercy for the weak. These enigmatic knights have no known allies and have systematically rejected all diplomatic ties with either Thyatis or Alphatia.

A Heldannic Knight is recognizable for his dark, dull-gray plate armor; for his long white tabard with its black,

upright lion; and for his full-face great helm topped with the ominous upright lion to make him appear much taller than he really is. These are heavy cavalry knights with fully barded warhorses. They normally travel and march to battle brandishing dozens of very large banners, standards, and pennants bearing the order's coat of arms. When a great cavalry charge is possible, Heldannic Knights are likely to use heavy cavalry lances. Otherwise, half of them use large shields and bastard swords, and the remainder use two-handed swords.

A Banner of Heldannic Knights (2-12 men) typically casts *protection from evil* before combat. Their officer, the Knight Banneret, is likely to also cast a *blight* spell and remain at the center of his troops. The officer's two remaining

spells are often *cure light wounds* and *hold person*.

Lower-level clerics of the order are students who reside at the various strongholds of the order, or else act as squires or men-at-arms during conflicts. The Heldannic Order as a whole is said to have up to 2,000 knights and officers (Knights Banneret, Lieutenants, and Captains), and 5,000 students. Twelve High Priests (C12) under the authority of the Great Knight of the Order (C25) rule the knighthood from the Fortress of Freiburg in the Heldann Freeholds.

Countless other troops and armies exist in the Heldann Freeholds. These include barbarian hordes, town militias, and mercenaries opposed to the Heldannic Order.

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### Heldannic Knights Table

	<b>Knight</b>	<b>Officer</b>
Armor Class	3 (plate armor)	2 (field armor)
Class and Level	C2	C5
Move	90'(30')	90'(30')
Mounted	120'(40')	120'(40')
Attacks	1 sword or lance	1 weapon or spell
Damage	By weapon type	By weapon or spell type
No. Appearing	1 Banner (2d6 + 6)	1 per Banner
Save as	C2	C5
Morale	11	11
Alignment	chaotic	Chaotic
XP Value	30	425

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 5: As they fed on a nation,  
so were they cursed

by Bruce A. Heard

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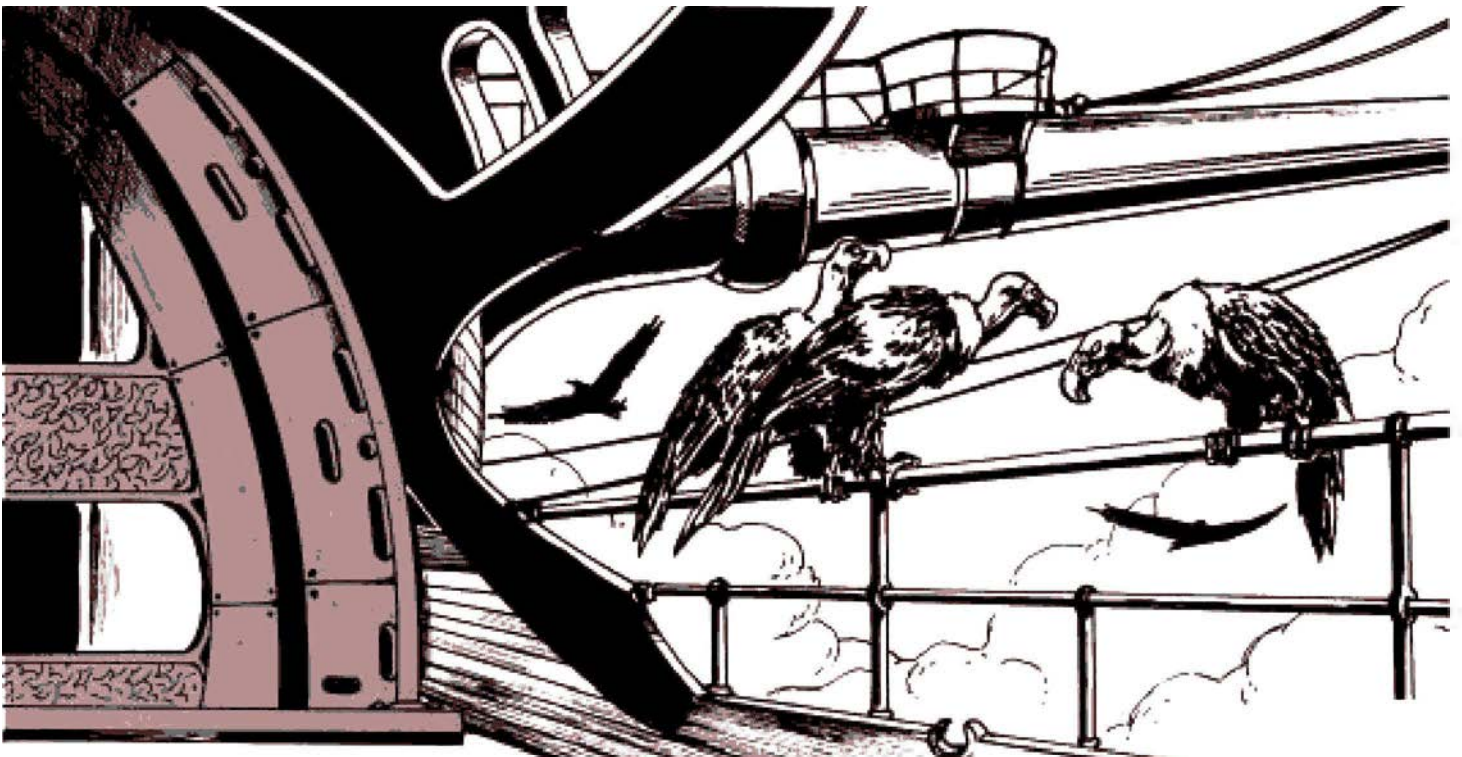
from the journals of  
**prince haldemar of haaken**  
lord admiral of the mightiest empire  
captain of the ever-victorious  
princess ark  
imperial explorer, etc., etc.

**Cyprimir 10, 1965:** We have now reached the region called the Vulture Peninsula. It is a complete desert, where occasional sand dunes alternate with desolate rocky wasteland. According to the stars, we have sailed well south of the Meridional Tropics, and the winds regularly blow from the west. Despite the presence of the sea, very little vegetation grows here at all. Temperatures are similar to that of southern Alphatia in summertime. The very poor quality of the soil and extremely dry winds coming from the land contribute to this infertile wilderness.

**Cyprimir 16, 1965:** A large plateau can be seen on the peninsula, no more than a few miles from the coast, forming sandstone cliffs falling into the sea. The plateau reaches 600' in average height. So far, no sign of civilization has been encountered in this region. This place deserves its name, for the whole peninsula has the shape of a vulture's head, and vultures slowly circle underneath the ship. The refuse dumped overboard has attracted these clumsy birds. A lucky bird sometimes succeeds in catching some falling garbage, but most of them manage only to get splattered with smelly waste. If nothing else, the vultures offer the crew some amusement, making easy targets for the antiquated crossbows on board. At dawn I shall order a southern course to cross the peninsula's widest section.

**Cyprimir 18, 1965:** The vultures are getting bolder. They seem to have figured out our dining hours and know when to expect waste to come falling down. I caught one indolently perched on the railing next to my door. Another ruffled its filthy feathers while observing the ship boy scrubbing the deck—hungrily observing, I imagined. That's when a blood-curdling shriek from starboard literally froze everybody in place. It was Lady Abovombe.

The scene that greeted our hasty arrival was certainly a striking one. Lady Abovombe had been taking her daybreak stroll when one of the vultures perched in the riggings managed to soil her favorite décolleté dress. Furious, the ambassadress seized a boat hook and swung it at the bird, impaling the "criminal"—but further splattering her with its blood. Then she sought out the watch on duty, screaming at the top her lungs as to why such a slovenly creature could be permitted to







remain on board, and she gave the watch a solid punch in the mouth. It is the first time I've noticed that Lady Abovombe has a hot temper, but she is extraordinarily pretty when her cheeks turn rosy.

**Cyprimir 19, 1965:** In the morning, the lookout called out a discovery on the ground below. At first we saw nothing, but after a few minutes we made out what must have been a road, centuries old—now merely a narrow band of a color different from the soil. Then I saw several other ancient roads. They converged to the east, and we followed them—and there it was. A ruined city! From the ground it would have been nearly impossible to see, but we were high enough to distinguish its shape. Streets, walls, buildings—we could see the outlines of them all, but barely even the walls remained now. The city must have been raised in the depths of times past. It had been built on a group of several small hills, with one larger hill, tapered on top, in the center. I decided to investigate this myself, and I ordered Xerdon and a squad of boltmen with me.

**Cyprimir 20, 1965:** There was very little to see on the surface—mostly dust and rocks. We climbed the peaked central hill and discovered the ruins of an old temple. The men started digging and sifting through rubble, in search of archaeological clues. We found plenty. There was indeed an advanced civilization here. It appears that at the time of its' splendor, the city was surrounded by fertile plains, lush forests, and several rivers and lakes.

Then, following the death of a great king, the king's two sons fought for the throne, dividing the nation in a bloody civil war. No other clues were unveiled as to the outcome of the struggle. It was getting late, and I ordered the team back to the ship for the night. We'll remain in this area and explore a bit more tomorrow at our leisure.

**Cyprimir 21, 1965:** Soon after sunset last night, a sentry interrupted my rest with news of movement down below. I had him order total silence aboard the ship while I took out my *crystal ball* for a little investigative work.

A strange creature was slowly walking by, hunched under the weight of a bag. It looked like an old man with the head of a vulture. Another hint at vultures! This could no longer be a coincidence. I decided to let the creature go its way, so I could quietly observe it.

The creature never showed any awareness of the ship above the temple. It marched away and kept going for hours along one of the nearly invisible roads to the east. Before sunrise, it crawled into a niche under a large rock and closed the entrance with a dusty blanket. It then went to sleep—and shortly thereafter, so did I, canceling our planned foray into the ruins.

Since this creature was the only apparent inhabitant we have met in this desert so far, I've decided to follow its slow jour-

ney from a safe distance, observing it through the magical sphere again this evening. More later.

**Cyprimir 24, 1965:** It has been days now since I first saw the vulture-man. I discovered a fitting description of it in the ship's library. It is a nagpa, a creature found in other parts of the world and said to dabble in necromancy (how fitting). As usual, our specimen crawled out of its shelter after sundown and kept moving to the east.

Its journey's end was at hand, however. Much later in the night, it reached the edge of a depression in the desert. Hundreds of other nagpas were walking down the slopes to the bottom, toward a large volcanic-like mound. They circled it, then one after the other they climbed to the top of the mound to drop some jewelry into the dark opening thereon. Meanwhile, the other nagpas chanted a sad but powerful psalmody. The wind picked up, and the nagpas knelt down facing the mound, waiting.

Many long minutes, perhaps an hour, passed. Then faint lights appeared above the nagpas—at first only a few flickering auras, then hundreds and soon thousands of them, filling the sky above the depression. The scene was frightening. These illuminated shapes were undoubtedly the ghostly images of the people who once populated this region. These ghosts slowly reenacted scenes of battle and carnage involving a level of violence that I have never before witnessed.

Then a huge, ugly shadow rose from the opening of the mound when the horrifying war scenes reached their paroxysm. This shadow was, for me, the embodiment of fear and destruction. Even from this ship, stationed miles from the site, I could sense the evil of that grotesque being. Inexplicably, the apparition and the ghosts suddenly faded in the dark. The nagpas began searching the site, picking up round, black cocoons from the sand that had not been there before. Within the hour, most had left, headed in various directions. Our little nagpa is coming back toward the ship. It is time to know the truth.

**Cyprimir 26, 1965:** I decided to meet our specimen personally late last night, so I prepared myself and waited along the road for it. It was not surprised when it saw me. "You saw," it said somberly (its words translated by my spells). It obviously knew I had been observing it all along.

"Our" nagpa goes by the name of Abatu of Varellya. It told me of its tormented existence. There was indeed a vast nation here once, and a brutal war. One of the two princes conjured a powerful monster from the Sphere of Entropy to destroy his rival. He clearly was unable to control the Immortal avatar, and when it had accomplished its crime, it turned on its summoner and obliterated his entire land. He and all his people would be cursed to live,

die, and forever return as nagpas—feeders on carrion as they had once fed on each other in war.

Every year for centuries, the accursed people of Varellya return to the site of the ancient conjuration and sacrifice jewels, precious metals, magical items, books, knowledge, food, anything that may have any value to them, seeking atonement and an end to their wretchedness. Death itself will not break the curse. When death befalls, the souls of the Varellyans return to the mound. Every year at the same time, the ghosts fight their wars all over again, then materialize as embryos inside the black cocoons. Over time—I don't know how long—they grow to adult size and breach the cocoons.

Many nagpas wander the far reaches of the world, but they always return to Varellya in soul or in body. Abatu pulled one of those black spheres from his robes and said, "You see, wizard, this is my father. He was the King of Varellya, and I was one of his sons. Such is the—sentence for my crime. Perhaps one day the Immortals will forgive us, but until then we must go on. Feel free to plunder the mound, wizard, but beware of the risks."

I bade him farewell. As the ship continued its course to the south, I burned the map of the site and all notes on its whereabouts, then scattered them in the nocturnal wind.

*To be continued. . . .*

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### Abatu of Varellya, Nagpa

Armor Class	3
Hit Dice	9**
Hit Points	64
Move	120'(40')
Attacks	1 bite or spell
Damage	1d8 or special
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	MU9
Morale	9
Treasure Type	I
Alignment	Chaotic
XP Value	2,300

Abatu was a human being back in 565 A.C. (1565 A.Y.) and was the Crown Prince of Varellya. The king wasn't dead when Abatu claimed the throne;

Abatu had merely had the old man abducted and declared dead. Abatu had a twin brother, Lothir, who was Abatu's accomplice in the king's abduction but who challenged Abatu's right to the crown. Their morbid rivalry caused the total destruction of Varellyya and the curse that turned all Varellyans into nagpas (see AC9 *Creature Catalogue*, page 73). Since then, Abatu has already died and been reincarnated three times.

Abatu's goal is to break the four-century-old curse that afflicts him and his people. Since the catastrophe, Abatu has discovered that he must find his brother and come to terms with him in order to break the curse. He knows—but ignores—where Lothir is. Abatu has visited many places in the world, including Alphatia, Thyatis, and the far reaches of Sind. He commonly travels with the Flying City of Serraine (see PC2 *Top Ballista*), a fabulous gnomish creation that roams the world. Abatu has a *ring of teleportation*, the only item of value he has never dropped into the mound. He uses it to get aboard the Flying City.

Abatu has avoided dealing with the fact that his brother is kept prisoner deep beneath the volcanic-like mound, where he nourishes an eternal hate toward Abatu. The keeper is a night-

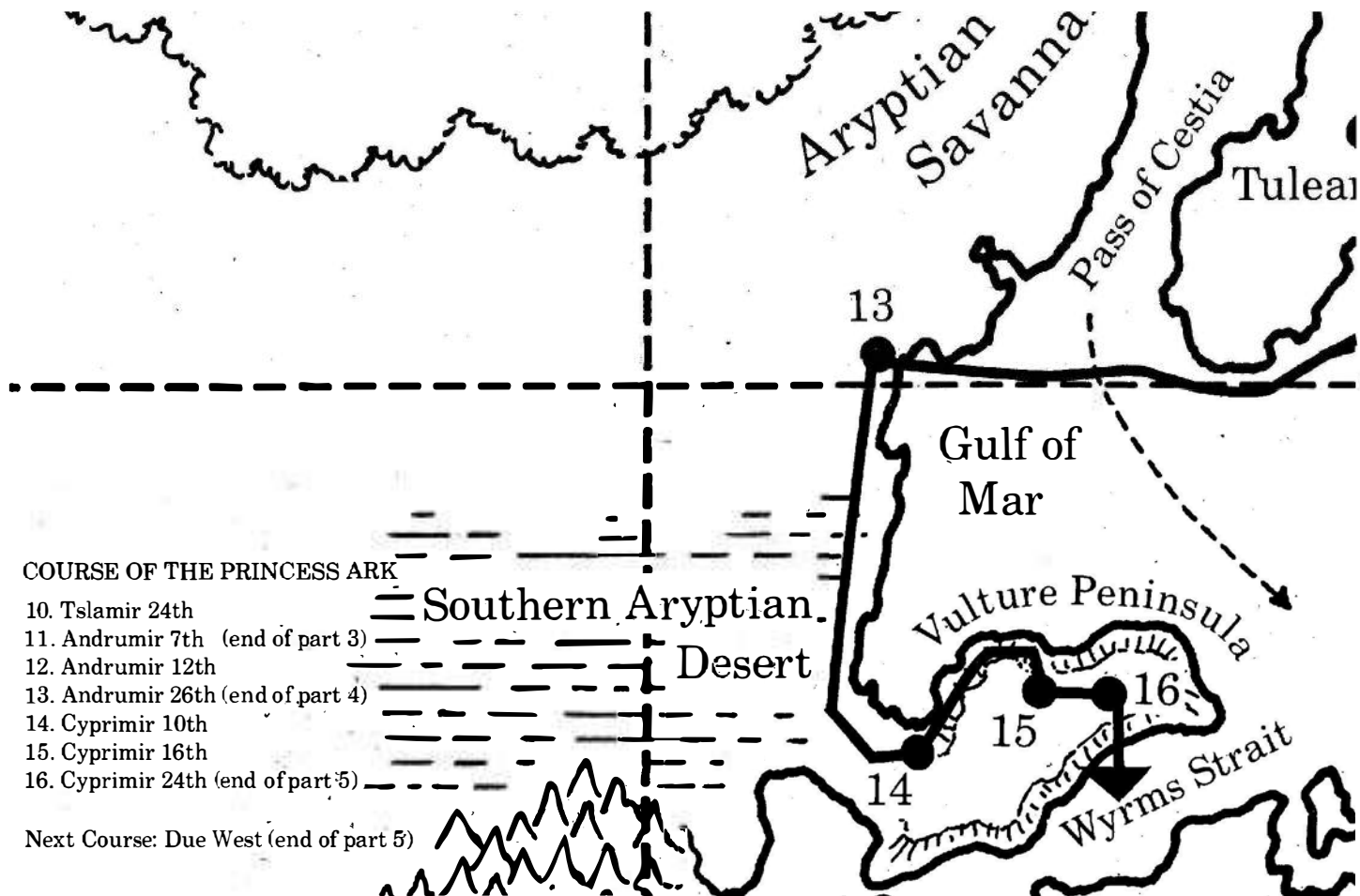
walker (HD 25, hp 171, D&D *Master DM's Book*, pages 36-37) that can only be dismissed back to the Sphere of Entropy by a voluntary and simultaneous wish (not as a spell) on the part of the twins. If an outside party ever managed to defeat the nightwalker, it would reform within a day and return from the Sphere of Entropy. If Lothir (himself a nagpa, identical to his brother in statistics) was taken away from the mound, the nightwalker would stalk him forever, seeking to bring him back. Once the nightwalker is properly dismissed, the twins disintegrate and the curse is broken; the Varellyan nagpas continue their normal lives as nagpas, but their deaths afterward are final and forever. The land remains a desert. The Immortal who caused the Varellyan calamity has long forgotten about the whole affair and is neither reachable nor interested.

Abatu keeps his true identity a secret, fearing that his people might interfere with his goals or torture him. Death is no concern, since he would reincarnate within a year—but he fears the loss of his magical ring. Abatu loathes the thought of entering the mound in search of his brother, and he generally would prefer staying out of Varellyya. Abatu is a conniving, treacherous being who stops at nothing to reach his goals.

Abatu senses when a kin dies, and he returns to Varellyya for the cocoon to place it in a local cavern or dungeon later on.

Nagpas can do each of the following, three times a day: *create flames*, *paralysis*, *corruption*, *darkness*, and *phantasmal force*. *Create flames* causes flammable objects within 60' to burst into flames for 1-3 rounds, inflicting 2-12 hp damage (a Saving Throw vs. Spells grants half damage). *Paralysis* causes all Lawful characters within 10' to make a Saving Throw vs. Spells or be paralyzed for 1-4 rounds. *Corruption* causes nonliving objects within 60' to decay into uselessness (magical items make Saving Throws vs. Spells at the level of the character using them). In combat, a nagpa will try to avoid melee and use its spells instead.

Nagpas prefer staying in deserted ruins or wastes, avoiding humans if possible. They speak their own tongue, Varellyan, and often another language or two (Glantrian, Sindish, etc.) depending on where they live. A reincarnated nagpa takes 5-8 months to breach a cocoon, then emerges as an adult with all its memories of its previous lives intact. Ω



# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 6: A culture with a different sense of taste

by Bruce A. Heard

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FROM THE JOURNALS OF  
PRINCE HALDORAR OF HAAREN  
1st ADAMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.

**Hastmir 4, 1965:** Last night, Lady Abovombe and I had a fine dinner in my quarters. We spoke at length of the potential for enhanced cultural exchanges between our nations. I am convinced she is perceiving a certain charm in my Alpathian manners—or perhaps it is my gray hair. I got very close to a more personal approach to the subject but was interrupted by my little bat companion's sudden tantrum in its cage. Lady Abovombe took pity on the furry thing, pampered and petted it, then returned to her cabin.

The bat stared at me all along. I could have sworn I have seen that look before.

The air is much cooler now that we have reached the Wyrms Strait, on the southern coast of the Vulture Peninsula. The crew has switched to winter uniforms. Many of the Cestian squires are in sick bay with chills; they are not used to colder weather. We are proceeding due west.

**Hastmir 6, 1965:** The water here is dark green, thus the name of the bay—Green Bay. I ordered the ship to wait until sundown before reaching the coast. High mountains rise to the west, and I would like to examine them. There has to be some civilization in this region. Most of the coast is covered with forests of oaks, and game seems plentiful.

**Hastmir 7, 1965:** Aha! We have flown over several villages already. I was expecting human population, perhaps luckier people than the Varelyans of the Vulture Peninsula. Instead, we found very tall people, closer to the size of ogres but not quite as muscular. Detail were difficult to determine in the dark, so I ordered Xerdon and few boltmen to join me in an ground expedition to observe the natives. The ship is to go offshore to avoid frightening the local population and is return tomorrow night at the same place and time to pick us up.

**Hastmir 8, 1965:** This was a rather surprising expedition. As planned, we left the *Princess Ark* and approached a native settlement. There must have been no more than 500 people there, with children and cattle. These people are indeed as tall as ogres, strong but not as massive. Their skins are red, and most favor a style in which their black hair is tied back in long, single tassels. They wore elegant and very colorful garments made of felt and wool, including hats and boots. The most sur-





their obvious elven physical features—delicate facial lines and pointed ears. Wood was a material commonly used in the construction of their houses. The logs were ornately carved and painted. At the center of the village stood a stone totem, with many sculptures of various animal heads.

I ordered Xerdon to remain at his post, then turned *invisible* to continue my observations. I visited a few houses, which looked very clean and quite comfortable. It was late and many of the natives were sound asleep, although two woke up as I entered their houses. They must have the keen hearing of the elves.

I saw a house curiously built on top of a high menhir stone. Despite the precarious look of the house, it was very solidly built—as it should for people of that size. I levitated up to the door since I could not find a stairway. Fortunately the massive door was ajar, so I peeked in. An old female was sitting on a rocking chair, reading a leatherbound book and smoking a pipe. A large cauldron was puffing steam in the fireplace, releasing the pleasant smell of stew.

This is when I noticed the female had lowered her book and was quietly watching me. She cleared her throat and pointed at another chair, near the table—a rather large chair, of course. It was all rather embarrassing.

After a final puff on her pipe, she pulled out what looked like dried lizard tongues from a nearby jar, then tossed them into the fire, muttering some incantation. I decided not to intervene. She turned back, and said, in perfect Alphatian, “Well, visitor, why were you sneaking around our village?”

After a number of probing questions, she was apparently satisfied of my intentions. She called herself Ngezitwa in her dialect, and said her people were the N’djatwa (pronounced: un DJA twa). They seemed to be a crossbreed of elves and either ogres or giants—and a very successful mixture at that, offering the strength of giant humanoids with reasonable spell-casting abilities. It seems that they kept the best of both worlds.

The N’djatwa have lived on the shores of the Green Bay for centuries, even before the Varelyans reached their golden age. In fact, the N’djatwa had regular trade with the latter until the culture of the Vulture Peninsula was obliterated. This did not hurt the N’djatwa, since they could no longer rely on the shipment of goods from Varelyya nor on any wealth created by commerce.

The N’djatwa did travel north in search of other people and met the bellicose Androkians on the Isle of Cestia. That proved disastrous to the expedition, of which only a handful returned. The N’djatwa shun the uninhabited desert, the Savannah, and the jungle. To the west lies a very large mountain range, and to the east a land of horrible monsters. The

latter is mostly surrounded with mountains, but occasionally monsters wander into their lands, near the Green River. The N’djatwa built fortified walls in several mountain passes to prevent these destructive incursions.

Most surprising was the old female’s mention of the lands that lie farther to the east. Ngezitwa said that it was the realm of the titans, huge creatures that seem to spend their time fighting and destroying each other. Most intriguing, she pointed out that she had seen another flying ship—like the Princess—in that region!

Ngezitwa casually explained with a smile that village hunters had seen the *Princess* and had followed her moves until my arrival at the village. She added, “It really is a nice ship you have, but personally I prefer riding our giant pelicans. They are quite friendly, they do not rely on powerful magic, and they have no equal when it comes to bringing a load of fresh fish to the village.” Well, I certainly felt I had been put in my place!

We spent a few hours talking about N’djatwaland and Alphatia. Ngezitwa didn’t think the N’djatwa would mind establishing ties with Alphatia. She seemed very interested in the prospect of acquiring books and anything related to magic—definitely an elven attitude. As druidess of the village, she could speak for the villagers, but a more official approach for the whole nation would be to meet the head of the clan in the city of M’banyika. The druidess would not reveal where the city was, however, and she wanted it to remain hidden. I accepted her invitation to ride with her to M’banyika.

The next morning I discovered Xerdon and his boltmen standing toe to toe with a group of N’djatwa hunters, defiantly gauging each other. Xerdon had come to the village looking for me. Fortunately, my intervention and Ngezitwa’s prevented the worst. Xerdon will dispatch a messenger to the ship and remain at the village until my return.

**Hastmir 16, 1965:** The flight to M’banyika was pleasant, albeit too slow for my taste. The giant pelicans are comfortable birds, but they require constant care and time to rest. Halfway to the city, Ngezitwa requested that I wear a blindfold—which I did. This however did not prevent me from seeing the path to the city, at least partially; *wizard eye* spells are still fairly useful in this condition.

The forest of oaks gave way to the pines that grow on the mountain foothills. M’banyika lies 300-400 miles southwest of Ngezitwa’s village, at about 3,000’ altitude. It is a very nice city, with white fortified walls, slender towers, small water canals, and elegant bridges. It lies halfway up a tall mountain peak, facing south. A waterfall drops several hundred feet to the city, where the water forms a lake. The city seems to have underground sewers (which alone proves to me that the N’djatwa are good architects). The streets are rather

narrow, and most residences have two to three stories. I would estimate the population at 35,000 souls. Evidently, it would be difficult to see the city from the mountain pass down below. Finding the city through the jumble of mountain peaks and ridges is an impossible feat without a guide.

I was adequately greeted at the palace and given a comfortable room to recover from the journey. Unfortunately, I had the distinct feeling the palace guard would not allow me to wander the city unescorted. I did, however, encounter little trouble in leaving my room at night without being seen. All is not as nice as it would seem. The N’djatwa are slavers. Several markets were still open, where N’djatwa bought and sold their captives—mostly gnomes and humanoids. I saw one human slave, too—a Heldanner, judging from his fair complexion and a black lion tattooed on his chest. One group of slaves was taken to what I would say was a slaughterhouse, while warriors entered the city gates, pulling several hundred captives in chains behind their lizard mounts. Apparently these N’djatwa haven’t completely shed their ogish attributes, either. It seems a great part of the food required for a large city such as M’banyika comes from these slaves; I saw almost no fields, cattle, or pastures near the city. I did not have time to investigate further.

**Hastmir 17, 1965:** I met His Highness Kitakanga, the Clanmaster of the N’djatwa, early in the morning. He was just as eager to learn from the empire as was Ngezitwa. There was genuine interest on his part in the establishment of some commercial and diplomatic link with the empire. However, some tension grew when I brought up the slavery issue. If the N’djatwa wish to maintain any kind of relationship with the empire, I said, it is imperative that all Alphatian subjects must be absolutely immune to any law or situation in which N’djatwa could enslave or eat them.

N’djatwa laws are quite clear about their own attitudes: Non-N’djatwa are fair game, unless noted by proclamation from His Highness Kitakanga. Even then, any law-breaker could be enslaved (and devoured). After much discussion, His Highness agreed to concede such a proclamation toward Alphatian citizens, provided Imperial Authorities would acknowledge (if not approve of) N’djatwa civil laws. Kitakanga would not negotiate that point. I had no choice but to agree to his terms and sign a provisional treaty. The Heldann slave I observed earlier was offered to me as a sign of goodwill. Fine—I did wish to question the fellow, after all.

It was time to return. The Heldanner was tied up quite literally in the manner of a sausage—no allusion intended—and given over to my custody. Ngezitwa was happy that we had come to an agreement. The return to the village was uneventful.

**Hastmir 25, 1965:** Ngezitwa and I traded gifts. I received a pair of exquisite felt quilts bearing pelican emblems, sev-

## N'djatwa Experience Advancement

Level	Hit dice	Experience needed	Spells per level			
			1	2	3	4
Young	1	-4,800	-	-	-	-
Teen	2	-2,400	-	-	-	-
Adult	3	0	1	-	-	-
2	4	4,800	2	-	-	-
3	5	14,400	2	1	-	-
4	6	33,600	2	2	-	-
5	7	72,000	2	2	1	-
6	8	144,000	3	2	2	-
7	9	300,000	3	3	2	-
8	10	600,000	3	3	2	1
9	11	900,000	3	3	3	1
10*	11+2	1,200,000	4	3	3	2

\* +2 hit point per level thereafter; Constitution adjustments no longer apply. No other spells are gained beyond level 10.

eral scrolls of N'djatwa poems, and a stuffed bread—no doubt a N'djatwa delicacy. I can only conjecture about the nature of the stuffing in that bread. It does smell good, though. Perhaps a small taste of it wouldn't hurt.

**To be continued. . .**

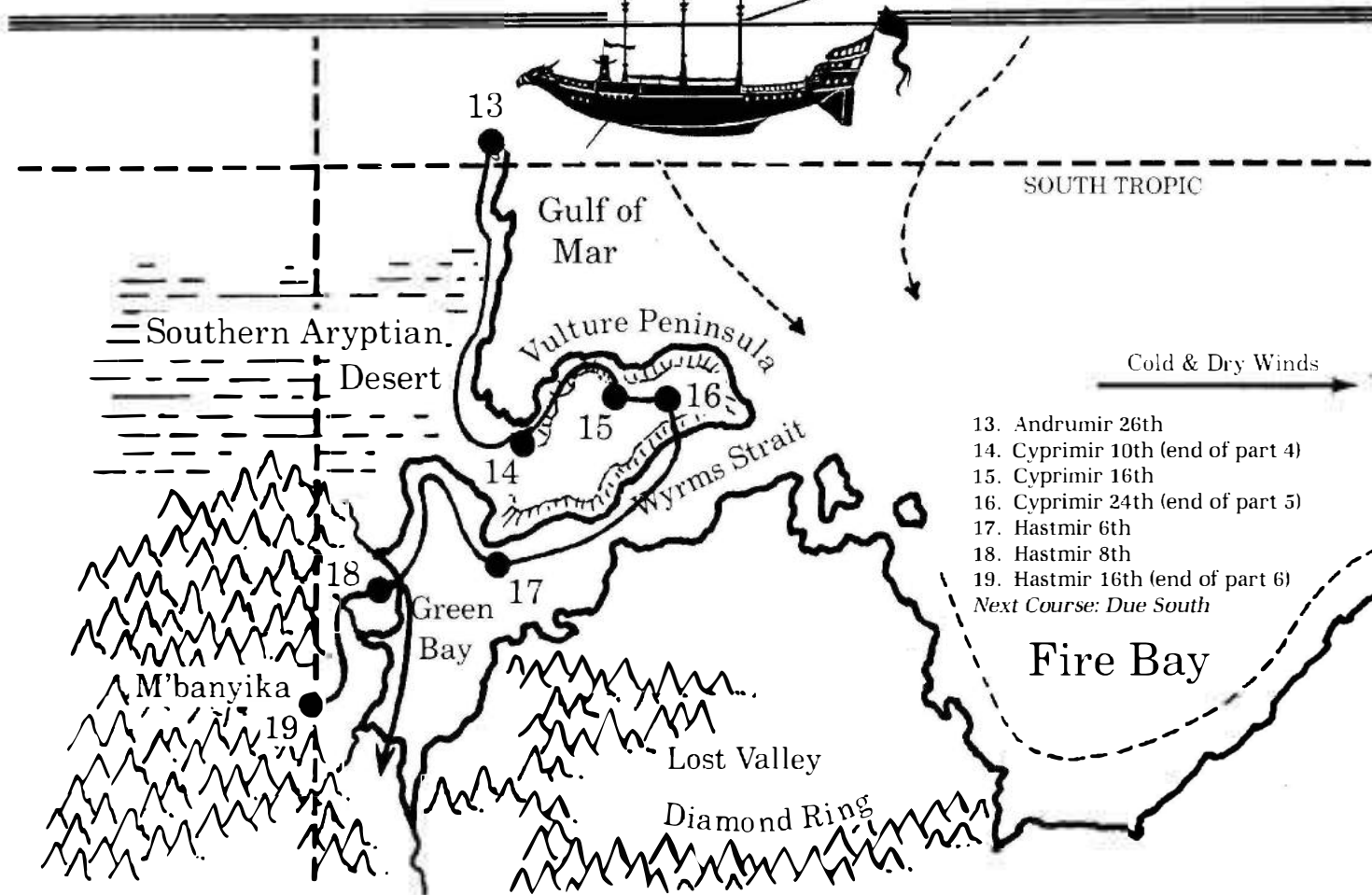
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## The N'djatwa

Many centuries ago lived two large rival clans. One was the Nunjar, a horde of ogres; the other was the Hatwa, a tribe of mountain elves. Survival was very difficult in this land of frigid glaciers and eternal snows. Wood was scarce, and wildlife was equally rare. Relations between the Nunjar and the Hatwa teetered between all out-wars and precarious truces. None would leave the mountains, the land of their ancestors and their sacred ground. After

*Continued on page 15*



## The Voyage

Continued from page 44

centuries of fruitless wars, a great shaman rose from the ogrish ranks. Utaba the Shaman claimed Immortals had spoken to him and had given him the *Altar of the Stars*—a powerful relic that was to be the salvation of the holy land. According to the Immortals' directives, he made the prophecy that Nunjarese and Hatwa must one day all become blood kindred on the *Altar of the Stars*. Though his philosophy was quite unpopular, Utaba went on preaching for peace. A shower of Hatwa arrows and Nunjarese boulders eventually ended Utaba's bright but ever-so-brief vocation.

Soon thereafter, pestilence and, death swept the hallowed land. Losses became so horrendous that it was painfully obvious both races were doomed. Finally, an elven hero reminded his people of the shaman's fateful prediction, and in total desperation all attempted to follow Utaba's precepts. Each elf and each ogre made a cut on his or her hand, mixing their blood together on the holy altar. So was the blood alliance of Nunjar and Hatwa forever sealed. Racial intermarriage was enforced, and generations later, Nunjarese and Hatwa were no more. Their children, the N'djatwa, flourished and eventually reached the Green Bay. The *Altar of the Stars* remained at the site at which the races merged, sheltered by an impressive temple at the center of the N'djatwa capital of M'banyika.

The N'djatwa race is similar to others used in the D&D game. To be a N'djatwa, one needs a Strength and Intelligence of 12 minimum. Hit points are rolled on eight-sided hit dice, according to the N'djatwa Experience Advancement table,

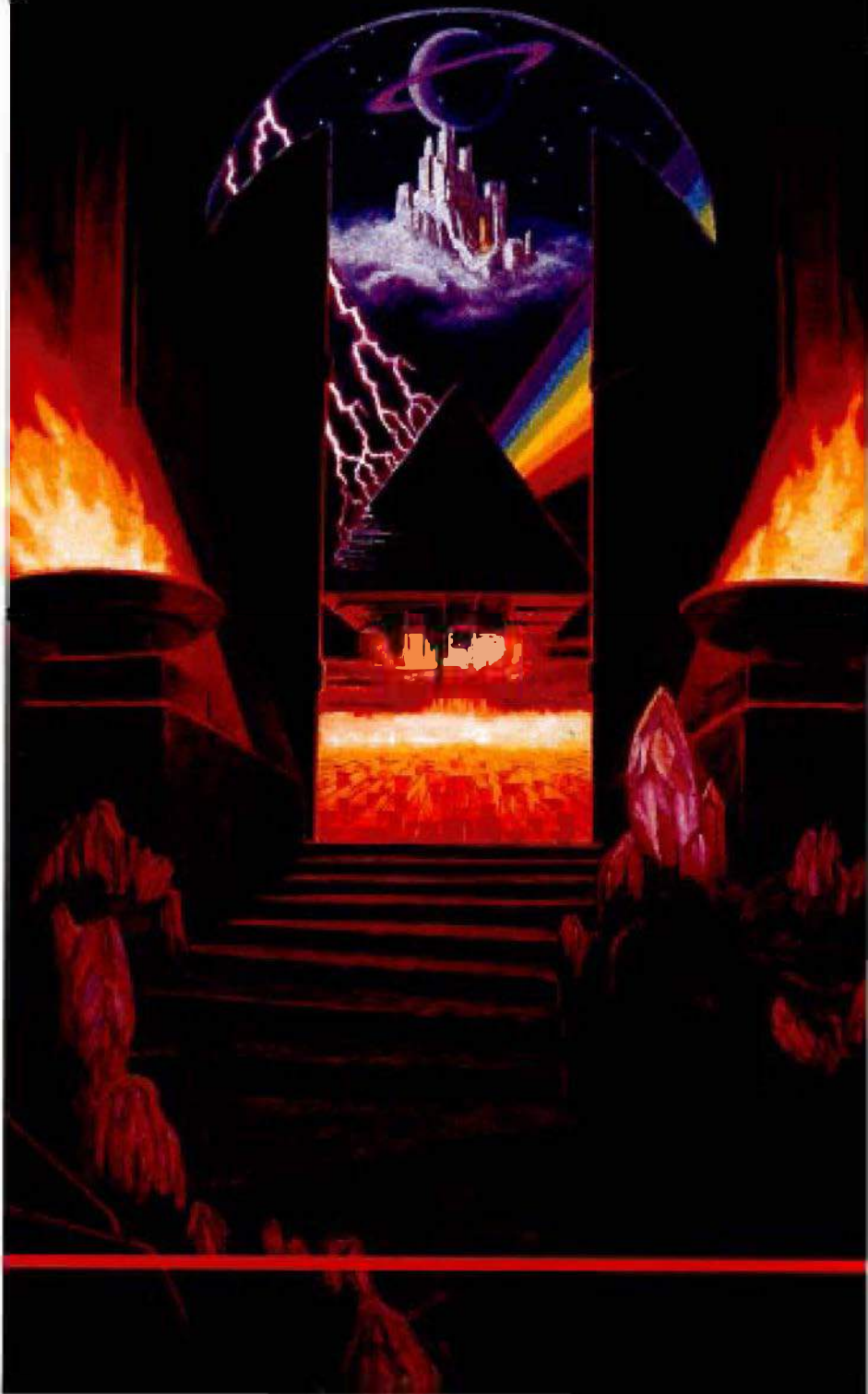
N'djatwa save as elves of the same level (young and teens save as El). They have infravision and the ability to detect secret passages. They are not, however, immune to ghoul paralysis, nor can they climb trees. N'djatwa are Neutral or Chaotic, and they can cast magic-user spells. Neutral individuals with a Wisdom of 13 or more can cast druidic spells in lieu of magic-user spells (no clerical spells beyond the first level are allowed for these druids); this decision is irreversible and must be taken when the character is created. Typical adult statistics are as follows: AC 5; HD 3\*; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 fist or weapon; Dmg 1d6 per fist or by weapon; #AP 1d12 (any); Save E3: ML 10; AL N or C; XP 115.



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# ENTER THE WORLD OF DRACONIAN AND DISCOVER...



# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 7: The Princess Ark aims for the stars

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphan explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D Known World in their skyslip. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
PRINCE HALDMAR of HAAGEN  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire,  
CAPTAIN OF THE OVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

**Eimir 3, 1965:** It has been six days since we left N'djatwaland. We are now at the southern edge of the Green Bay, and the weather is getting much cooler—it is well into winter in Aasla, but it is midsummer in this hemisphere. Cold winds blow down a large valley to the south of us, between high, snow-capped peaks. On the west lies N'djatwaland's southernmost borders; to the east is the unknown.

I invited the Heldanner I extracted from the voracious N'djatwas' appetites to dinner (not "as" dinner) at my table. He apparently does not know of my little adventure

at his order's citadel some time ago. He is neither a very talkative fellow nor a very thankful one. The man, who introduced himself as Rolf Schwartz, is an arrogant Heldanner indeed.

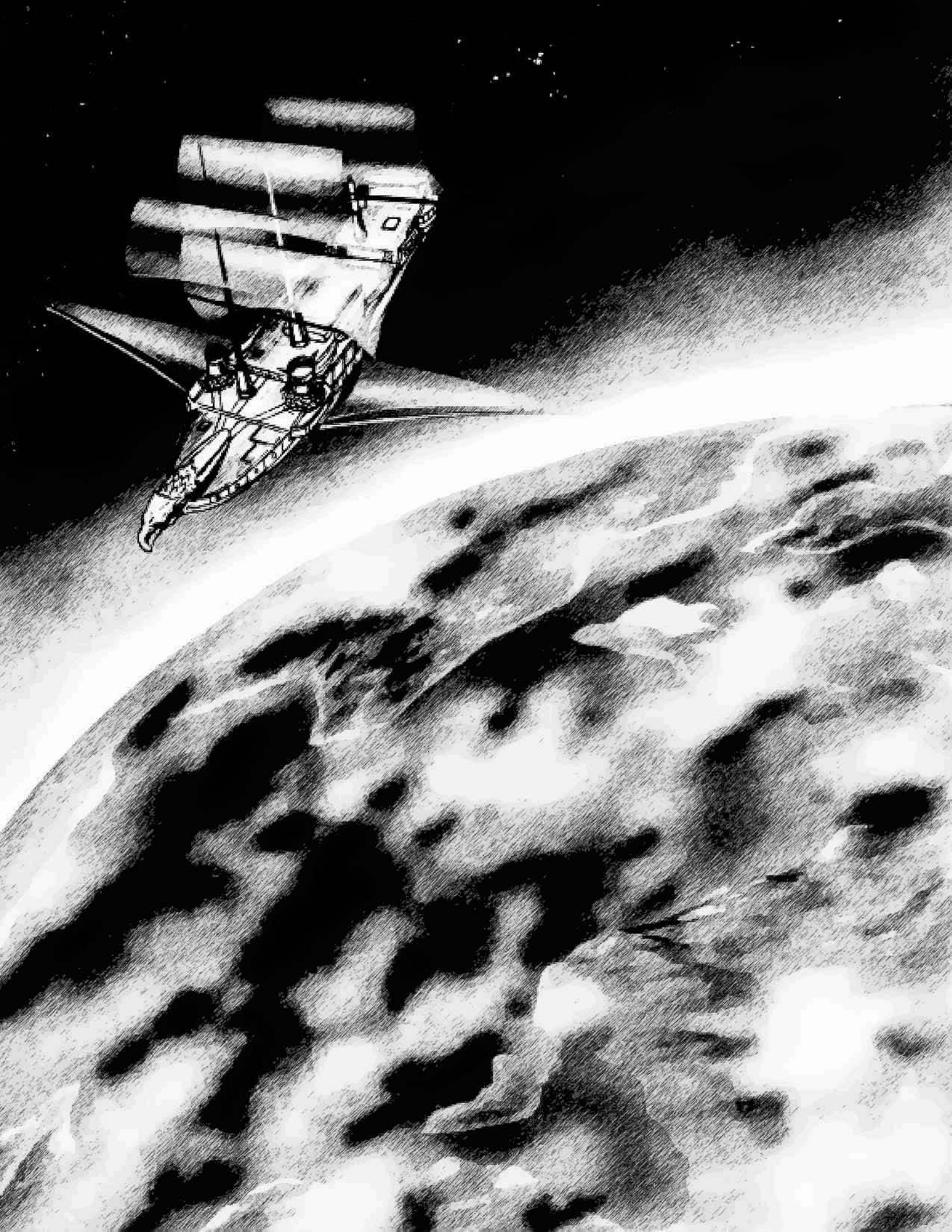
Herr Rolf has been suspicious of my intentions since we took him aboard the *Princess*, tied up like a sausage. How petty. After all, he could have ended up as a package of steaks. He has been treated as befits common gentry, which is more than reasonable for someone who has failed to offer his rank, title, name (other than one that I suspect is false), and a plausible reason for his presence so far from his native land. He claims that slavers captured him near Ostland many years ago; since then he has been bought and sold, every time being moved farther away from Ostland. He admitted studying at the Temple of Freiburg at a younger age, after Lady Abovombe made mention of the conspicuous black-lion tattoo on his chest.

**Eimir 4, 1965:** This morning we veered eastward. At noon, a dangerous storm rolled down the mountains to starboard, and I ordered maximum altitude to avoid the worst. *Airmasks* have been distributed to all personnel aboard, according to standard procedures. We will maintain this position until the tempest comes to an end.

After several unsuccessful attempts at conversation with Herr Rolf, I simply made use of certain powers at my disposal to pry into his thoughts during his sleep. That proved to be a difficult endeavor. The man is strong willed! Nevertheless, I learned that he is an officer of the Heldanner Order, as I suspected—but he left his citadel on a flying ship! So they *do* have such ships here, after all! His original mission had something to do with the stars. Then his ship was attacked by the







N'djatwas, and he was captured. There is a recurring vision of his ship spiraling away from him into the sky. That annoys me greatly, as I cannot not find a clear explanation for it.

Herr Rolf is free to go about the deck, but he is being watched for his (and our) safety. Just to be certain, I cast a *geas* on him without his knowledge. He will not be able to do harm to the ship nor to any of the crew or officers aboard:

**Eimir 5, 1965:** The storm is still raging below. Late in the morning, the quartermaster sounded the alarm when several large cloud funnels soared up into the sky, surprisingly close to the *Princess*.

I would have ignored this harmless event—harmless to a seasoned Alpathian skyskipper like myself—had it not been for the Heldanner's reaction. Few people know about this rare atmospheric turbulence, and very rare indeed are those who have actually encountered it. I would not have expected this knowledge of Herr Rolf. However, he calmly secured himself, studying the largest and closest funnel. He seemed surprised, then a bit amused, when I ordered the *Princess* away from the turbulence. Most intriguing this was.

**Eimir 6, 1965:** I gave great thought to what happened yesterday, and I concluded there is something more about these funnels than is taught at Eriadna High—something that the Heldanners already know. And I was right.

Later in the day, a very large funnel rose near the ship. After ordering everyone and everything secured aboard, I commanded full speed forward—into the *funnel*. That obviously startled Herr Rolf, who got increasingly nervous as we approached the roaring funnel. Shortly before reaching the turbulence, he turned around, staring at me in panic, and shouted, "Fool, you will kill us all! Roll her over!"

Everything became clear to me at that instant. We were on Deaths doorstep. I maneuvered *the Princess* to the limit of her endurance. I heard a low groan rise in her hull, then a shattering shriek as the *Princess* flipped over—out of my control—and hit the funnel like a diving falcon, her wings bent back and almost touching the hull. The wood *should* have splintered, yet didn't. After a dizzying moment of whirling around, the sky became very dark, and the thunderous roar of the funnel came to an abrupt end. And there we were. . . .

What a discovery—the *Princess* has vanquished the skyshield! No Alpathian skyship in recent memory has ever sailed into the dark, unbreathable sky above the clouds. Yet the *Princess* has now done so!

There are legends of ancient Alpathian vessels capable of traveling beyond the skyshield, to moons, stars, and distant mysteries of the universe. That science was long lost—until I rediscovered it for the greatest glory of the Empire!

**Eimir 10, 1965:** The world below us has rotated already four times since we

passed the skyshield. Fortunately, our crew was wearing *airmasks* at the time we entered the funnel—a good thing, or by now we'd all be dead. What lies on this side of the skyshield is a vast, cold, and airless void. Our speed seems to be much greater than could possibly be reached in the atmosphere of our world. The studies we have now made reveal much about this environment and its laws. Only now do I begin to realize the incalculable consequences of my gamble! I must gather as much information as possible before I return to the Imperial Palace. And there is so much to do, so many questions to answer. . . .

Much to my astonishment, I also suspect there is more to the *Princess* than I once imagined. It isn't the first time that she has maneuvered in some unexpected fashion almost as if she were a living being. I recall the encounter with the night dragons back in Oceania, when the *Princess* seemed to act on her own to avoid a fatal blow from one monster.

And this enigmatic Heldanner! How could he have possibly known about the effects of such a reckless maneuver as I attempted into the funnel? This leads me to believe that we are not alone beyond the skyshield! Now the vision he had while sleeping *does* make sense. I can only conclude that the Heldannic Order is in possession of at least one skyship, and it has acquired the knowledge of reaching past the skyshield. But how? And from whom?

Our *guest*, Herr Rolf, has been totally mute about this whole affair. I had no choice but to clap him in irons and cast him into the brig. For him to know so much, he must be a high cleric of his order and, therefore, a dangerous man. What else does he know?

**Eimir 12, 1965:** This day we made our first encounter in the Void—and a most unexpected encounter at that. It began while I was conducting research in my laboratory. Without warning, a flock of creatures dropped onto the deck out of nowhere, causing great surprise among the crew.

The fight was brief but fierce. Our assailants had not counted on our boltmen's firepower. Most of the attackers were quickly slain, and the survivors retreated. The attackers were catmen, much like the rakasta of our world—but they were mounted on sabre-tooth tigers! Shortly after they took off, the attackers vanished again into the void. But it was not my intention to give up pursuit so quickly.

I ordered the *Princess* full speed ahead after the fugitives. It seemed we had almost caught up with those flying felines when, to our astonishment, an entire world appeared before our eyes—and between it and our vessel were many hundreds of rakasta mounted on their great cats, obviously waiting for us! By the time *the Princess* could come to a halt, we were surrounded.

It would have been stupid to resist their

many bowmen. An emissary flew close to us and gestured for the *Princess* to follow him, as we are doing now. I must close and prepare for the worst.

**Eimir 14, 1965:** It appears now that we have found a previously unknown moon of our world, called by its natives Myoshima. Myoshima is not a very large globe, but it has its own atmosphere. From what we could see, it is mostly covered with jungle and mountains, a warm world by our standards.

We landed near a mountain city not unlike those of Ochalea. The buildings are elaborately carved with curved pagoda roofs, many dragon sculptures, and mansions made of wood and paper. First Officer Talasar and I followed the emissary to a palace, while rakasta warriors set up camp around the ship.

We were brought before a rather haughty rakasta noble who introduced himself—in very barbaric Alpathian—as Lord Katayama, Imperial Governor of Ichiyoda Province. In our discussion, Lord Katayama did not seem surprised by our arrival; it is clear that many other space-going ships have come and gone in this area! It was also clear to Lord Katayama and his generals that we were unaware at first of their existence, since we, as he said, "were drifting about, bobbing aimlessly in the solar winds like an empty gourd."

We had come very close to their world and were spotted by one of their scouts. He apparently saw a certain person with a black lion tattoo on our ship's deck. That person was wanted there, and Lord Katayama had ordered *the Princess* to be lured closer. Lord Katayama seemed very satisfied with the results of his plan.

In effect, Lord Katayama offered us a trade. He would release the *Princess* and her crew in exchange for the man with the tattoo—our man Rolf. In addition to this, Lord Katayama wished to establish ties with our Empire, and to that end offered to provide a gift from the Emperor of Myoshima to our illustrious Empress. All of this was acceptable to me, although rather abrupt in general approach.

The deal was done, and we stayed at the palace overnight. Clearly, we were "guests" so long as we did not try to leave. We had no freedom to move about the palace, and the governor's guard was very assertive. There were no friendly whiskeys among the rakasta nobles. Why, some were at the limits of the most basic courtesy, while others even showed their claws at us!

Much was learned from our host. It appears that this moon, Myoshima, has a very strange nucleus, a core highly magical in nature. It bends rays of light around its atmosphere, causing the moon to be invisible to onlookers outside its atmosphere! This explains how the scouts observed us without being seen, and how we missed seeing such a huge object while being so close. I do suspect the moon of

being visible to those using infravision, though, because of the heat it would radiate. Lord Katayama would not disclose the exact course of the moon around our world, so we are still uncertain of its position at any one time.

These rakasta have good spell-casters among them, since they have developed items very similar to our own *airmasks*. Their tigers wear magical *flying collars*, which makes me believe that rakasta are capable of reaching our world. It is also possible that rakasta settlements in the more remote regions of our world are descended from these Myoshima felines. This would explain how Lord Katayama knew about Alphatia.

The most saddening aspect of our agreement with Lord Katayama is that we do have to let go of the Heldanner at once. He is one prisoner on whom I would have liked to have spent more time and effort. The Heldannic Order apparently committed some act of sacrilege and was outlawed on Myoshima by the Emperor. Lord Katayama would not expound on the subject, and palace etiquette required our tact and discretion.

**Eimir 15, 1965:** Talasar and I returned to the Princess with the imperial gift carried on a huge palanquin. The thing is a 10'-tall hunk of rock with a few sculptured figures on it. It is far heavier and harder than I had believed it would be. It radiates a pulsating, pale-blue aura. Its magic is so powerful it made the hair on my skin rise when I approached. There is much to study upon my return to Alphatia.

Reluctantly we parted with Herr Rolf, who showed a somber, expressionless face. He still refused to say a thing. The crew secured the imperial gift and prepared for the journey home.

**Eimir 16, 1965:** Lord Katayama's cats-at-arms boarded the Princess very late this night without warning. Their leader—a minor noble who called himself Kenju, complete with shining katana, do-maru armor, great kabuto helm, and a sabre-tooth tiger on a leash—approached and addressed first officer Talasar in mediocre Alphatian. "Haaken-San, Lord Katayama sends me. Man with lion tattoo has escaped. My master lose great honor if prisoner not brought back to Imperial Palace. Lord Katayama says maybe lion knights' ships set ambush for you if lion man not recaptured soon. Lion man seen flying on stolen tiger toward south of your world. I go with you. Both our empires lose much if lion man succeeds."

At these words, a squad of pole-toting catmen seized Lady Abovombe and moved to take her off the ship. Talasar shouted a word, and every wand on deck came free. Katana-wielding catmen froze, as did we, poised for combat to the death. But Lady Abovombe, I knew, would die first.

There would be better times for battle. At my sign, Talasar accepted the generous "offer." The cat warrior then bowed briefly and stood back as Lady Abovombe was

taken away. He was a bit smug and arrogant, and his tiger hissed in our direction.

Not that I cared about his tale of ambush against ships of Her Imperial Majesty—we can deal with Heldanners—but I want Lady Abovombe back, unharmed. She is important to my mission. And I might yet pry some information from that pretentious Heldanner. Alphatians have more than one way to skin a cat.

Lord Kenju and two of his followers were shown to their cabins while I ordered immediate takeoff. We headed for the south of Vulcania. Soon thereafter, the rakasta army escorted us to the edge of Myoshima's atmosphere. The *Princess* had no difficulty breaking through Myoshima's skyshield, a much weaker one than that of our world. Soon, Myoshima vanished into the dark, starry sky.

**To be continued. . . .**

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### **The Second Moon: Myoshima**

Myoshima is a moon orbiting the D&D game's Known World. It is small, with a circumference roughly equal to 3,000 miles. The central core of Myoshima is extremely dense and magical, allowing a gravity comparable to that of the Known World.

This moon completes a full revolution around the Known World in three days and twelve hours (or two revolutions per week). Myoshima follows an exact polar orbit above the Known World, so that the moon passes above almost every point on the globe. Myoshima does not have a rotation of its own. One hemisphere (nearside) always faces the Known World, and viewers on the opposite side of Myoshima (farside) never see the world they orbit. The pattern of day and night cycles on Myoshima is thus very complex because of the Known World's axial tilt, which provides its seasons. The sun appears to wobble back and forth across the sky over a 3½-day period as it also appears to travel around the Myoshiman globe along a great cycle every 336 days, the Known Worlds year. (Myoshiman calendars take a year of study to be understood, and its inhabitants have no fixed cycle of wakefulness or sleep.) Nearside usually receives a small amount of light reflected from the Known World.

Full daylight on Myoshima is not as bright as on the Known World, being more like twilight. The sky changes color during a "day," ranging from fiery tones at noon to tamer red and purple hues at dusk or dawn. This happens because Myoshima has a light-reflecting shield at the immediate edges of its atmosphere. This shield bends light rays except at the extreme ranges of visible spectrum. In effect, this causes the planet to be nearly invisible from the outside and allows little light to filter in (only the Known World, the major moon, and the sun can be seen from Myoshima's surface). Myoshima's core generates the light shields effects.

Myoshima is mostly covered by steaming jungles and earthquake-prone volcanic mountains that surround three freshwater seas. Rain clouds cover a third of Myoshima at all times, and precipitation is abundant. The two polar areas of the moon offer at worst a temperate climate.

The vast majority of the sentient population is made of various breeds of rakasta (see *AC9 Creature Catalogue*, page 44). Unlike the earthly species, these all have infravision good to 60'.

Myoshima is divided into three major political blocks. The largest and potentially most aggressive is the Empire of Myoshima itself, a nation of feudal provinces controlled by daimyos, with a single emperor who rules them all.

Next is the nation of Rajahstan, made up of twelve allied realms. Each realm is a sovereign state ruled by holy gurus (who handle law, education, religion, and internal politics) and maharajahs (who handle the economy, military, and foreign politics). Together these form the Spiritual Council to run Rajahstani affairs as a whole.

The third block consists of many loosely allied petty kingdoms and principalities. Among the more prominent territories are Kompore-Thap (a valley of a thousand hidden temples), Selimpore (a mercantile matriarchy), Malacayog (a nation of head-hunters), and Surabayang (fierce island pirates). These territories are politically aligned with placid Rajahstan against imperial Myoshima—when they are not fighting each other. Ω

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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 8: Voyaging down under and inside!

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
Prince Halderman of Baaken  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever Victorious  
Princess Ark  
Imperial Explorer, etc. etc.

**Eimir 16, 1965:** It was merely a day after we left the moon Myoshima when the alarm was sounded. Five large ships were sailing through space on an intercept course with our *Princess*. They were very close, coming around a small field of asteroids that had shielded them from our view. There was no time for evasive maneuvers.

The ships were of a strange build, most of them bearing bird features. The largest of the five, a very large war galley, had an eagle figurehead, and its hull was engraved with golden feathers. Two large eagle claws jutted out on either side of the

galley's prow. The vessel bore the banner of a capital ship. Many pennants and main sails revealed a black lion against a white background. Clearly, we had run into the clutches of a Heldannic war fleet.

The boltmen raced to their battle stations and braced for combat, while the sailors feverishly prepared the riggings for an imminent boarding. Yet the rakasta Kenju and his two henchmen remained near the center of the deck, calmly observing the proceedings with haughty and arrogant postures. They showed no signs of fear or nervousness.

Oddly enough, I soon discovered there was little activity aboard the Heldannic "warbirds"; certainly no Heldannic sailors were preparing for battle. The ships came almost within ramming distance of us—and inexplicably continued full ahead, totally ignoring our potentially doomed *Princess Ark*. I could clearly observe Heldanners moving about their ships, mending sails and scrubbing decks; one of their leaders casually paced the upper deck, mumbling some obscure prayer while picking his nose. They were totally oblivious to our presence!

The ships came so close that I could hear an eerie military march emanating from the war galley. I dismissed that as an auditory illusion, and all was fine. The ships sailed on and soon disappeared behind us into the celestial void. Kenju and his henchmen simply returned to their cabins, apparently satisfied and no more surprised at the results than they would have been had they seen another group of asteroids pass by us. Somehow, they had been confident of this event's outcome.

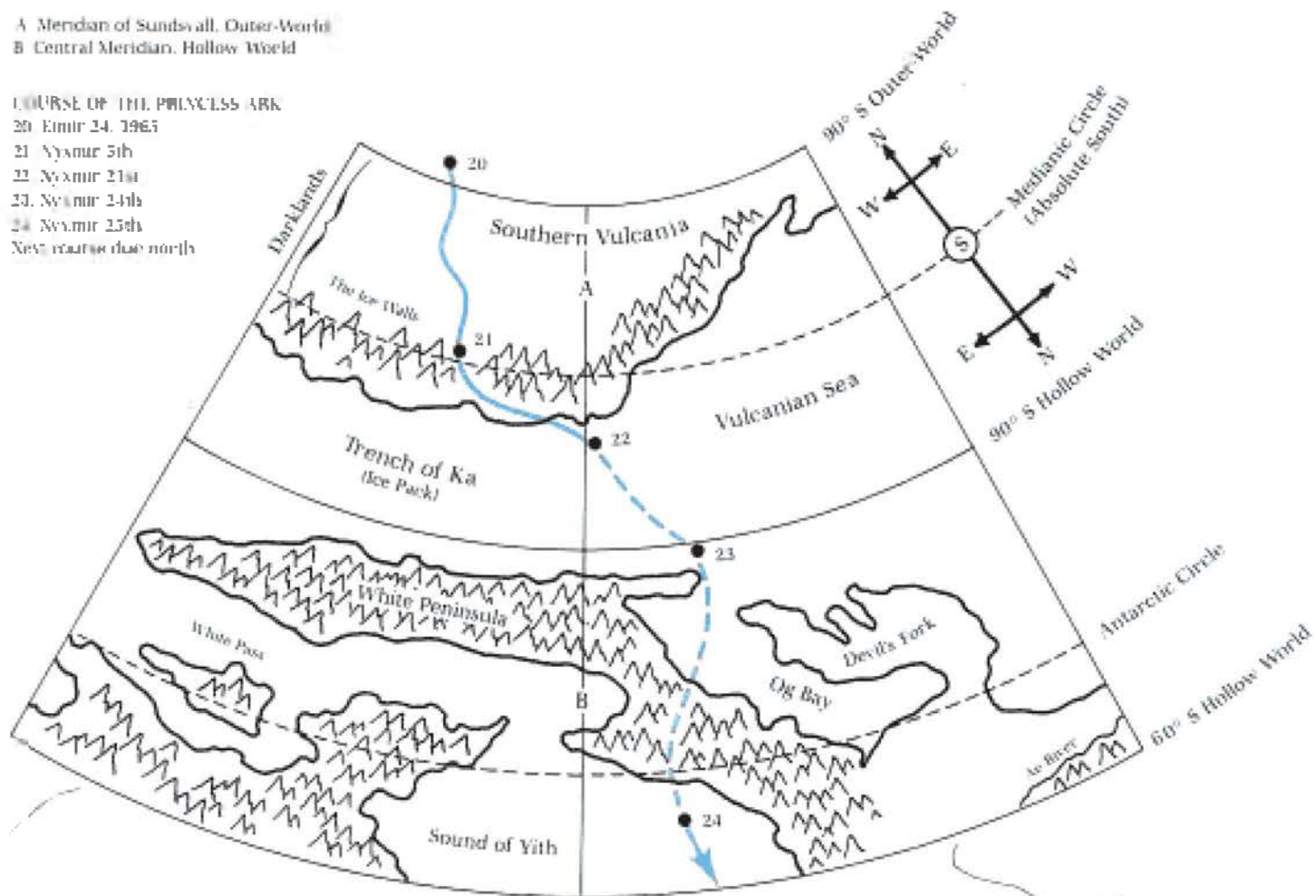
I had the chance to observe the Heldannic ships at my leisure as they unwittingly sailed by. The war galley was very heavily armed with catapults and ballistas. I could see metal bolts all along its hull, holding



A Meridian of Sundsvall, Outer-World  
 B Central Meridian, Hollow World

COURSE OF THE PRINCESS ARK

- 20 Emir 24, 1965
  - 21 Nyxmir 5th
  - 22 Nyxmir 21st
  - 23 Nyxmir 24th
  - 24 Nyxmir 25th
- Nyxmir routes due north



Artwork by Jim Holloway



together an ominous coating of metal plates. This ship was not built to fly in the air, like the *Princess*; it would require far too much magic to be worthwhile. I suspect it was built in this airless void with the help of several smaller vessels. Large feathery oars slowly rowed the galley through space, occupying four decks of the ship. The strangest sight, however, were a half-dozen small black boats—for lack of a better term—tethered to poles at the sides and stern of the galley. These were each large enough for one man and had man-made wings and tails like those of ravens. Two rods, probably weapons packed with Heldannic clerical magic, jutted from beneath the wings.

Escorting the war galley were four smaller ships, each bearing some resemblance to a vulture. More lightly armed, these lesser ships seemed built more for speed and maneuverability than for heavy assault. From astern, all four ships displayed appropriate birdlike tails. It was a sight I'll not soon forget.

**Eimir 17, 1965:** Our three rakasta guests haven't come out of their cabins yet. So much the better. At least they haven't interfered with ship's duties.

I have begun studying Lord Katayama's monolith. After several hours of experimenting, I determined that the monolith has the ability to bend light around a sphere with a set radius—a sphere large enough to encompass the *Princess Ark*. These are the same properties of Myoshima's core. Smaller fragments of the monolith retain this light-bending power, with areas of effect appropriate to each fragment's size. This explains why the Heldannic fleet ignored the *Ark*, and also why the rakasta felt so obviously secure. The Heldanners simply could not see us! The *Princess Ark* is practically invisible! This Imperial gift has proven to be a very useful contraption indeed.

**Eimir 18, 1965:** I observed the stars and their alignment with our world as a means of measuring the speed of the *Princess*. Although it is hardly noticeable to the crew, our speed in the void has varied greatly. It seems that our speed has to do with the proximity of other physical bodies, such as ships on intercept courses, asteroids, moons, or planets. The farther we are from physical obstacles, the greater our speed potential becomes. This is vital for future voyages, since it would enable journeys into the void far from our world and at little risk of smashing into obstacles.

In effect, what seems to be "full speed ahead" on our *Princess* remains a stable constant when we are close to a moon, within our world's skyshield, or within sighting distance of an oncoming ship. Away from celestial bodies, our speed could increase a hundredfold—indeed, perhaps even more. I do not have the means to fathom any conceivable limits.

It appears that the constant use of a means of propulsion such as magical

power or very fine silk sails increases our speed, especially more so when traveling away from a world. Removing the means of propulsion would not be sufficient to halt the ship, which would instead continue on its course at a constant speed. Inertia remains a definite force in the void.

**Eimir 22, 1965:** I have finally located Herr Rolf, our fugitive Heldannic knight, several hundred miles ahead of our ship and riding a winged sabre-tooth tiger common to Myoshima. He has put his few hours of lead time to good use. I am now tracking the knight with my *crystal ball*. Straps have kept him on the saddle during the times he has fallen asleep. Herr Rolf is getting very close to our world's great blue skyshield, heading toward the south pole. The *Princess* is pursuing, following a southerly course slightly above the skyshield. It would be preferable to capture him while the *Princess* is still in the void, as that would save us the trouble of returning later to complete further studies of this outer space. I would intercept the man myself in normal conditions, but my inexperience in this environment demands that I remain aboard. We will maintain our course and pursue the fugitive.

**Eimir 23, 1965:** We are finally closing in on Herr Rolf. He is now in visual range of the common crew. It should only be a matter of a few hours before we catch up completely. Unfortunately, I fear that we must soon reenter our world's skyshield, several hundred miles south of the N'djatwaland. We are much too close, and we can feel the effects of the skyshield's pull on the *Princess*. There is no alternative but to carry on.

**Eimir 24, 1965:** Trickery! I should have known better. As soon as we entered the skyshield, the *Princess* began a dangerous dive. Every beam and mast of the *Princess* screamed in the dizzying fall, but the ship managed to progressively alter her course, heading away from the pole. This beautiful ship sensed the danger and acted on her own to save herself and her crew! She barely avoided the worst and landed heavily on a thick snow bank. The truth of our fate became as brutal as a frigid, antarctic wind howling around us in the night. We were stranded without magical power.

Herr Rolf is a devil of man. He must have been aware this region was *anti-magical*. Fortunately, the effects were progressive. Herr Rolf perceived he could not escape the *Princess*, as she was much too fast for his winged cat. He had to find a way to escape us. He's probably flapping away on his winged cat even now. His assessment of the *Princess's* speed was amazingly accurate—a fine mathematician, that knight. He obviously did not waste his time during his journey aboard our ship.

I will find Herr Rolf even if I must devote the rest of my life to the endeavor. But the task of saving the crew and the *Princess* remains a more pressing matter.

**Eimir 25, 1965:** Something very strange is happening. Night has now lasted far longer than it should, and the sun still has not risen anew. According to tome three of the *Arcanean Worlds*, by the respected sage Nesfutar, complete night never falls upon the frozen lands, and neither does the sun ever rise high above the horizon there. But here, neither the light of the moon nor that of the sun could be sensed at all.

The crew was given heavy winter gear and completed repairs of the *Princess*. Fortunately she suffered little damage. We are still stranded in this bleak land of ice and howling winds. Magic of any sort has been totally ineffective. The threatening cover of dark clouds hasn't shown any sign of thinning so far. Snow storms occur with discouraging regularity. I estimate our position is due south of the Vulcanian Coast.

The rakasta finally emerged from their cabins, warmly dressed. They had also managed to totally cover their great cats with fur boots and several layers of coats sewn together. Kenju mentioned their cats were used to warm climates and wouldn't last long without protection in these temperatures.

I plan to head a scouting party to seek out native villages for help, probably to the north—or what I surmise is north. In this kind of weather, I hope the remainder of the crew can survive several days without too many difficulties. After that, I fear the *Princess* will have to be abandoned.

**Eimir 26, 1965:** The sun still hasn't returned. After a long discussion with the crew and our feline guests, it seems the best course would be for me to leave with Kenju and Myojo, his first henchman. The cats would be able to smell their own tracks and return to the *Princess* if we became lost. Traveling in the dark in these conditions—without magic—seems nearly hopeless.

I will be riding the third great cat, while Kenju's other henchman Jiro remains aboard the *Princess*. We would move much faster this way. Talasar argued vehemently against the decision, for I was quite vulnerable without magic and nothing so far could be said about the rakasta's loyalty. If I did not return within five days, my orders to Talasar were to execute Jiro, abandon ship, and proceed due north to the Vulcanian Line.

**Burymir 1, 1965:** Jiro's great cat has proven to be a difficult mount to control, but I've managed well so far. At least we've been blessed by the speed of these animals. We found no villages, and we lost some time hunting seals and polar bears to feed the cats. It was virtually impossible to keep an accurate orientation. The sky remained overcast, masking the stars, and the uselessness of magic still prevailed.

In the course of our latest hunting expedition, our mounts followed a scent and stumbled upon the frozen remains of a dead winged cat. This must have been

Herr Rolf's mount. So *Herr Rolf* is stranded as well! His cat did not survive the cold, and without his own clerical magic, he could not heal or revive the animal. Fine; then we know he is close.

Fresh prints of Herr Rolf's heavy boots were visible in the snow. According to Myojo, Herr Rolf camped there until recently. Many other footprints and signs of a fight were apparent in the snow, and Myojo concluded the aggressors pursued Herr Rolf back toward the general direction of the Princess—or so I judged, compared to our own footprints.

Ever since this discovery, Kenju and Myojo have acted even more insolent than usual. Kenju's subordinate was so bold as to even lay a hand on his sword's hilt at my order to set camp. Apparently, the two wanted to go after Herr Rolf immediately and scorned the task of seeking help for the Princess and the crew. Eventually, Kenju disdainfully nodded his approval. I must use caution while I rest.

**Burymir 2, 1965:** My caution paid off. The two rakasta made an attempt on my life during my sleep, but I was expecting a move on their part. Kenju was observing from the other side of the campfire when Myojo suddenly reached for his large bow, on the back of his cat. But I was quicker. There are certain things that wizards do instinctively in the face of danger, things done without thinking. That saved my life.

As I uttered the last syllable of the incantation, I suddenly realized the futility of my reaction. I had been powerless for days. But no! Against all hopes, the spell did work! In a split second before the ball of flames flared up, Myojo ducked behind a snow drift, barely escaping a fiery death. His cat wasn't so lucky, however, and it died on the spot. Kenju jumped to his feet, already whirling his katana with blurring speed. But strengthened by my initial success, I drew two wands and roared "Go ahead, kitty! Come find out if they work!"

Instantly circumspect, Kenju hissed at me and lowered his blade. There was no telling if magic would work again. But I won.

Myojo crawled out from behind the pile of melting snow, smoking but alive. The two must have thought they could go after Herr Rolf on their own and return back to Myoshima with the Heldanner. That would have gained them great honor and put us in a position of weakness, subjecting citizens of Her Imperial Majesty to ridicule. Fortunately, we must have unknowingly passed the limits of *anti-magic*. Herr Rolf failed to notice it. How ironic. He could have saved his cat after all! That will be his undoing. If only I could get the Princess this far!

I have maintained a safe distance from the two rakasta since the incident. They seem to fear my magic and have obeyed my orders—quite reluctantly of course. We followed the natives' footprints toward the ship, with Kenju riding the lead cat. The now charcoal-hued Myojo trotted at

his best pace between Kenju and I. I, of course, retained the other great cat—humiliating Myojo even more. I will make the stops as few. and as brief as I can.

**Burymir 3, 1965:** Today we caught up with the natives. They were elves—but more like savages? I would say. Perhaps these people are the remnants of some forgotten tribe lost in the ice centuries ago, afflicted by this bleak lands *anti-magic* curse. Over the centuries, these elves must have then sunk into the abyss of barbarity and historical oblivion. But they still remembered how to fight.

They came by the dozens, screaming down an icy hill at us. I must say that Kenju and Myojo did wonders, chopping away at the howling mass. I, of course, remained mounted, displaying the most contemptuous and unconcerned attitude possible. I suspected my magic was gone again, as we probably had reentered the *anti-magic* zone. I would have died in the matter of a cat's eye blink if either rakasta had suspected my renewed weakness. I caught a few increasingly worried glances from a frantic Myojo as a wailing elven savage almost reached me.

All of sudden, a huge white monster rose from behind a hill. The thing was a hideous sloth, half the size of the Princess herself and equipped with flesh-rending teeth. It lunged for the savages, ripped two of them apart, and swallowed them in no time. The rest of tribe fled as swiftly as they came.

The growling sloth then slowly turned on our party. Kenju and Myojo rapidly executed

a strategic retreat, standing behind me. Obviously they expected me to handle the situation. Not knowing what else to do, I remained calm and waited, too. The sloth was poised for attack, staring at me. It hesitated. It sniffed. It snorted.

And it relaxed. I noticed that the monster's eyes had the unmistakable flicker of intelligence. As I was thinking this, I was overtaken by a powerful feeling of warmth. It occurred to me the sloth was empathic; it could sense my feelings and bare its own to me! Apparently it felt only anger for the elven savages. Elves must have been ancestral hunters of its kind.

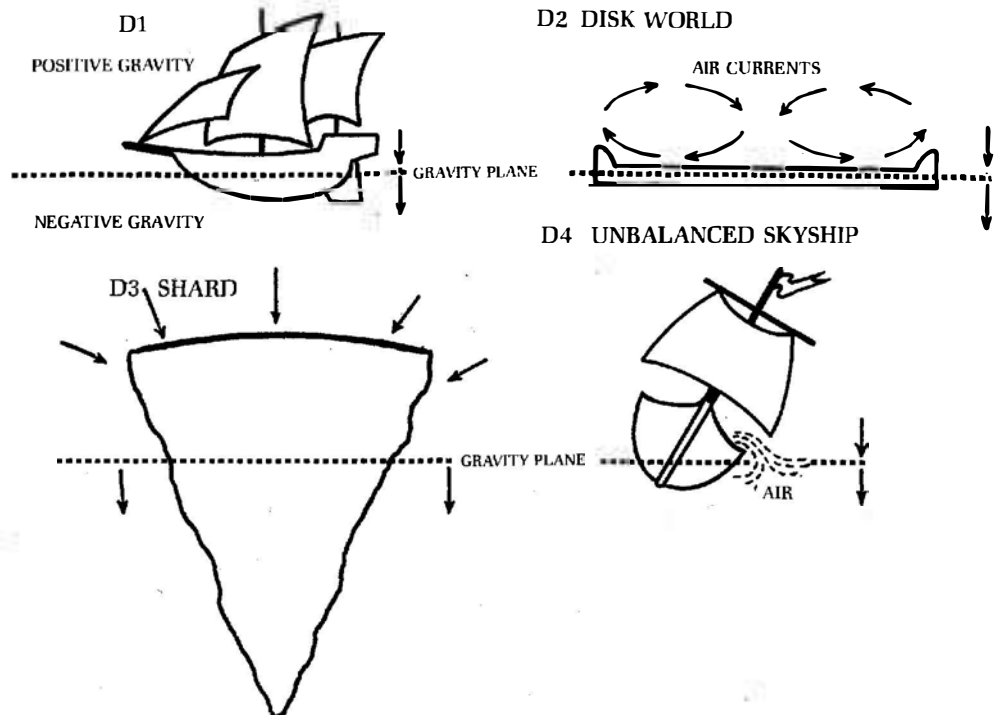
It did not take long for the beast and I to become attuned to one another. Somehow I managed to make it understand I needed its help, and it shuffled over to me like a huge puppy. Minutes later, I sat on the sloth's furry shoulders. Apparently the two rakasta were oblivious to the sloth's empathic powers. Myojo stood there, open-mouthed, until Kenju slapped him in the face and ordered him to mount my winged cat.

We were running short of time. Soon we resumed our journey back toward the Princess, along with our fearsome new companion. Herr Rolf would have to wait.

**Burymir 4, 1965:** We finally made it back on time to the Princess. There was no further hindrance from Kenju. Before leaving our last campsite, however, Myojo bowed deeply and presented me with his katana. He had offered me his loyalty! Aha! I could use this. Of course, Kenju was greatly angered, and the two haven't spo-

### "Up, Away, and Beyond" Errata

Because of an editorial error, four small diagrams were left out of the layout for "Up, Away, and Beyond" in DRAGON® issue #160. The diagrams are presented here, each showing the effects of gravity (according to Bruce Heard) in the universe of the D&D® game.



ken to each other since then, except for occasional hisses and caterwauls.

Our arrival at the *Princess* created great confusion. My sloth wasn't sighted until the very last moment. Its white fur blended very well with the frozen surroundings. A few dozen crossbow quarrels were about to shoot forth when Talasar recognized me. I ordered Kenju to be sent to the brig. Jiro was to remain in his quarters, under guard. I sent Myojo to separate quarters with his gear, free to roam the ship.

**Burymir 5, 1965:** Talasar and I decided to spend more time with the sloth. It had curled up against the *Princess's* flank like a cub against a she-wolf. We sat next to its chest in the warmth of its fur, while a raging blizzard blanketed the rest of the world.

It was clear that the sloth was eager to help. It could not understand the concept of north or south, but I managed to make it feel that we were seeking warmth for the *Princess*. It took some work to set up the next step.

The *Princess* was eventually fitted with outrigger skis to prevent her from rolling on her sides, and the sloth was harnessed to pull the ship. As the *Princess* slid across the snow, the crew's morale began to improve. Myojo and Xerdon volunteered to mount to the two remaining great cats and scout the surrounding for signs of the elven barbarians. The sloth is moving very fast for its size; I had to stop several times to allow Myojo and Xerdon to catch up and get some rest. We are making great progress over the flat, wind-beaten ice pack, but still no sign of the sun. Why?

**Burymir 12, 1965:** Despite our great speed, we have not reached the limit of the *anti-magic* region. I suspect the sloth has perhaps taken us in a direction other than what we had expected. Despite this, it still communicated to me that it went "toward warmth." I was concerned. For all I know, it may be heading for a volcano, but we are too far into this journey to turn around now.

There is no sign of Herr Rolf. Without his magic, he must have starved and frozen to death—or perhaps he was captured by the elven barbarians. We may never know.

**Burymir 19, 1965:** The sun still has not returned. I know not what to think. If we were reaching the edge of the frozen lands, periods of day and night would become evident, but this . . . Darkness has prevailed for days with no sign of change. Yet the sloth does not seem concerned.

Polar bears and occasional monstrosities from this dark world of ice have been sighted and hunted down. Unfortunately, none of these creatures has been kept for study. The need for restocking food supplies has remained a constant concern. Heating is an even worse problem. There are few places aboard where fires may be lit, and even fewer things that can be burned. During our occasional halts, the sloth digs through the ice pack to hunt

and feed itself. Sometimes it returns with a hunk of whale or a mouthful of walrus. Their fat becomes vital for heating.

Xerdon caught two sailors attempting to cut away some of the rigging, hoping to burn that and get some warmth. I loathe the idea of turning the *Princess* into a mere source of firewood. The two were flogged and thrown in the brig.

**Burymir 26, 1965:** The crew is getting very weak, and desperation has affected even the toughest veterans. Food supplies are minimal. Many men are sick with fever, especially among Lady Abovombe's Cestian contingent, who among all the crew have suffered the most from the cold. Discontent among the crew is getting more apparent each passing day. Weapons have been locked in the armory. Only officers, the most trustworthy boltmen, Myojo, and myself are armed. Magic still does not operate. The sloth still does not seem to be affected by the darkness.

A late note: A large amount of food has been stolen. The guard was ill and fell unconscious during his watch. No trace was found of the stolen supplies. No doubt the culprits have already devoured it.

**Nyxmir 05, 1965:** Light has begun to return, and just in time. Talasar had major difficulties keeping discipline among the men. Even the Word of Razud brought little strength to his worshipers. A fight broke out, and Talasar barely escaped. The return of the light, as tenuous as it was, calmed the growing psychoses dividing even the oldest of friends.

**Nyxmir 12, 1965:** Indeed the light is increasing, although it has an unusual reddish tint. The ice, the snow, and the skies all range from deep purple to a fiery amber hue, unlike anything we have seen before. The temperature has risen substantially, and wildlife can be found more readily. Morale is improving among the crew, but uncertainty remains. The sloth persisted in its course, probably led by some Immortal will. It had been a month since we left Herr Rolf's tracks. I have no idea where we are.

**Nyxmir 15, 1965:** Two men have been found dead. Both the guard on duty at the supply hold and the watchman at the stern had their heads crushed, each by a single blow. More food supplies were stolen, as well as one of the great cats. It wasn't long before Myojo spotted the cat's footprints. Judging from their depth in the snow, one man with some heavy gear has left the *Princess*, probably with enough food for several days.

**Nyxmir 16, 1965:** No one is missing among the crew, and both Jiro and Kenju are still being detained. How could this be? How could we have had a stowaway for so long without noticing it? Who that could have been is a mystery.

Myojo volunteered to go after the fugitive's track with the last remaining cat, but I refused. There is a better way. I have instructed the sloth to follow the track. The scent was faint, which has slowed

down the huge beast's pace, but I think it is important we find out what happened.

**Nyxmir 19, 1965:** Myojo spotted the fugitive's last campsite. We knew then who he was. Heavy footprints were found near those of the missing cat—marks left by heavy boots, those of an armored knight.

So it was he whom I thought was dead! Herr Rolf must have discovered the *Princess* and climbed aboard during a snowstorm. Lord Katayama's monolith cannot magically conceal the ship in the *anti-magic* area as it had in the void. No one could have seen Herr Rolf, and of course none of the ship's magical wards would function. To think that he remained concealed within the *Princess's* hull for over a month is unbelievable.

After some investigation, it is now clear that Rolf hid in the plant hold, where I had stored our Cestian gobbler specimen. The carnivorous plant had gone dormant from the extreme cold and thus ignored the knight. Rolf managed to take control of the animated remains of the late Azoth, which reinforced my conviction that Rolf is a powerful cleric. Talasar probably turned our undead Azoth with ease, then sent him back to his task.

Rolf was indeed the one who stole food from the unconscious guard and murdered the others, but those will be the last of his tricks. My magic has returned, and so has Talasar's. Soon we will get to the end of this knight's charade.

**Nyxmir 21, 1965:** It still isn't right. Light has returned indeed, but now it is night that is amiss! The clouds cleared for a moment, revealing for the first time in over a month the warmth of sunrays—but strangely, the sun is red! It seems much smaller than usual, and most oddly it now stands motionless at the sky's zenith! It is a mystery as to whatever has happened to the Immortal clockwork of the heavens.

Unfortunately, the sloth stopped immediately upon witnessing the sun's appearance. I sensed this was the end of its journey with us. Already we could feel the *Princess* shivering with regained power, as if she were reborn. It was time to soar again into the sky and freedom.

**Nyxmir 22, 1965:** Finally, the *Princess* was ready to take off. The outrigger skis were discarded, the wings unfolded, and the sails repaired.

As we took off, the sloth roared. A brief moment of sadness overcame my thoughts. Then a roar of equal strength startled us all, as the *Princess* responded in kind to her gargantuan savior. Most peculiar that was. . . .

**Nyxmir 23, 1965:** This is a time of fantastic discoveries for the Sons of Alpha-tia. Upon soaring above the clouds, we discovered a totally different landscape than our own maps depict. This is not our world!

Oddly enough, the new sun really is red. The air remains very hazy to the point



## Voyage

Continued from page 45

that it is difficult to make out the shapes of nearby coasts and mountains. What we observed of the lands below was completely alien to us. Visibility was limited to less than a hundred miles at most.

Most inexplicably, the clouds at the horizon always seem to rise up toward the zenith of the sky, anywhere one looks. No matter how far the *Princess* travels, she always seems to remain at the bottom of a circular bowl of clouds.

But the oddest part remains over our heads. The red sun stands still at the zenith. Dark shapes slowly cross the red sun's face and block sunlight at various intervals, just as the moon sometimes eclipses the light of the sun on our world. These celestial bodies seem to be of various sizes and move at different speeds. We need, once again, to defeat the skyshield and see for ourselves where we are.

**Nyxmir 24, 1965:** Again, the trusty *Princess Ark* vanquished the skyshield. In truth, it was much easier than the last time. This skyshield is much weaker than that of our world. With a decent breeze, full sails pushed the *Princess* through the skyshield. That was a relief for the everyone on board, given our last experience with this maneuver.

What we discovered beyond was just as incredible as our first journey into the void. It appears that we are *within* a gigantic globe, perhaps the size of our homeworld. A small sun shines in the hollow globe's center, while clouds swirl and stretch across the lands below. From this high up in the airless void, we could finally observe new continents and vast oceans. A continuous chain of mountains girdles the globe, separating the sphere almost perfectly into two hemispheres; we are at the top (or bottom) of one. A huge continent occupies almost all of one side of this inside-out world, nearly reaching to what I assume are the world's poles.

The poles are the great clues to the identity of this new world. At the "poles," two large openings, each over a thousand miles across, lead out of this globe. Through them I can see the starry constellations so common to our homeworld.

This world is none other than the bowels of our own Known World! It seems our world is not a gigantic sphere filled with stone and fire. Our celestial orb is hollow! And probably inhabited! The inner surface has its own sun, although not hot enough to scorch all life from the lands underneath.

The world inside also has floating continents, much like our flying cities of Ar. They orbit the central sun, some within the airless void, others as low as the cloud cover within the globe's skyshield. The shadows of these flying continents provide regular nocturnal periods to those lands underneath their paths, though the rest of

the lands remain in permanent daylight. The lands below, as well as some of the flying continents, have air, clouds, storms, and endless new mysteries to be unveiled to the Greatest of the Empires.

**Nyxmir 25, 1965:** It is now clear to me how we got here. The openings of—what shall we call it—the Hollow World produce a mirage that shield them from the view of those vessels flying outside, in the void above the outer-world. When we pursued Herr Rolf, we simply could not see the southern pole opening. That ignorance almost caused our doom.

The polar region where outside gravity curves into the Hollow World remains totally dark because neither the Hollow Worlds sun, nor the sun of the outer-world can bring light. Moreover, it remains conveniently covered with clouds and is the scene of constant blizzards. This region is the one producing the *anti-magic* effect that forced the *Princess* to land.

This also means that Herr Rolf knew where he was flying, and I suspect he also knew of the Hollow World. This is a most annoying thought. More than ever, the Heldanner must be found and returned to Myoshima.

**To be continued. . . .**

As always, if you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the Gazetteers, please send your inquiries to: Bruce A. Heard, D&D Game Column, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. A number of your letters have been coming in and are finally answered at the end of this adventure. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they always get our attention.

One question needs to be addressed by the readers of this series. The outcome of this saga will be affected accordingly. The question is: Would you rather . . .

A. Continue exploring the Known World? (If so, what regions would you prefer?)

B. Begin a series of adventures in space (a la the AD&D® SPELLJAMMER™ set), such as the one presented in the last episode?

C. Dive back as soon as possible into the new Hollow World setting?

Please understand that these episodes are written four to five months before publication, so be patient. In the meantime, the *Hollow World* boxed set should have reached your favorite hobby shop by the time this episode sees print, should you need to learn more about this strange new world.

### Vulcanian Sloth

Armor Class	6
Hit Dice	45
Move	120' (40')
Attacks	2 claws, 1 bite
Damage	2-12/2-12/3-36

No. Appearing	1 (1-2)
Save As	Fighter 25
Morale	7
Treasure Type	Nil
Intelligence	4
Alignment	Lawful
XP Value	18,500

The Vulcanian sloth is a gargantuan monster living in the region that stretches from the southernmost coastline of Vulcania in the Outer-World to the area south of the White Peninsula in the Hollow World. Although rare, it is more likely to be found in the Dark Lands at the southern entrance of the Hollow World. Unlike other sloths, this one is carnivorous.

The sloth grows to be 60' long. Its front paws have very sharp claws useful in combat or to grip the ice, and their width allows it to walk on thick snow. The sloth's thick white fur provides excellent protection against antarctic temperatures.

Though semi-intelligent, the sloth is capable of limited reasoning. It has the ability to communicate its feelings and to read other beings' minds by empathy, a nonmagical and natural ability the sloth uses when it meets another creature acting in a friendly or unexpected fashion. Particular individuals and events affecting the sloth's life are usually remembered.

The Vulcanian sloth can live to be 150 years old. Once every 10 years, it digs a large burrow in the ice and finds a mate. No more than two adult sloths will be found in the lair, in addition to 1-2 pups (10% chance).

Sloths normally hunt alone, digging through ice to dive for whales, seals, walrus, and large fish. They occasionally surprise surface dwellers by swimming under ice, then suddenly smashing through the ice to attack.

### Letters

I am very pleased to see the inclusion of a regular D&D game column within the pages of DRAGON® Magazine. With this feature, I am now a regular purchaser. . . . Unfortunately, I think I have spotted an error in the first installment of Prince Haldemar's journal. In DRAGON issue #153, under the entry for Nyxmir 11, 1964 AY, it reads: "These strange messengers . . . seemed to make quite an impression on local Karameikan barons." However, the Grand Duchy of Karameikos did not come into being until 1970 AY, as described in GAZI!

*Oh, you had to check, didn't you! Yes, that wizard was mistaken; the Grand Duchy wasn't in existence at that time. Haldemar was referring to the land owners in the area that would become Karameikos four years later. These would be ethnic Traldar owing fealty to the Empire of Thyatis. The Empire moved in around 1900 AY. Several readers caught that one (I hate historical sticklers). Thanks.*

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 9: Land, ho . . . 12 o'clock!

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alpathian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
PRINCE HALDUMAR OF HAACKEN  
FOURTH ADMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPEDITION, ETC., ETC.

**Nyxmir 26, 1965:** Further repairs were completed aboard the *Princess* since the return of magical power. Our long journey being dragged across the rough ice of the Hollow Worlds Antarctic Gate had caused much damage to the ship. Talasar has spent hours restoring order and healing the sick among the crew.

I studied in great detail the topography of the lands below, seeking the whereabouts of Herr Rolf, our Heldannic fugitive. He successfully evaded our vigilance and rode away on a stolen Myoshiman cat to some unknown destination. I am disappointed to notice that several spells no longer function in this new world. More

importantly, some magical items are powerless as well, although they still radiate magic. Alas, I can no longer rely on my *crystal ball* to seek Herr Rolf, that fiend.

I could only conclude that we traveled mostly north through the icy mountain range past Southern Vulcania and the ice pack. Within recent days we navigated over a long, narrow stretch of steep mountains that I named the White Peninsula. Herr Rolf could be in any of this range's narrow, frozen canyons. I hope to catch him later on a vast frozen bay that offers little shelter. At least we have the advantage of speed and absolute mobility over his land-striding cat.

**Nyxmir 28, 1965:** Myojo spent long hours observing the ground with my spyglass, hoping to see the Heldannic knight. Earlier on this day, he spotted what could be a small campsite. After a short visit, Xerdon and Myojo determined Herr Rolf had been there recently. They found the dead remains of Kenju's cat, reduced to a mere carcass. Footprints revealed that a fight took place, possibly between Herr Rolf and a giant lizard.

Myojo pointed out he did not smell the odor of human blood. Xerdon ended the report by adding that no footprints left the scene, which leads me to suspect the beast flew away with Herr Rolf. The question is: Was he prey or master?

**Amphimir 3, 1965:** An unforeseen event has led me to believe that we are being observed. I was awakened this night by a strange crying. It was reminiscent of 1st Class Boltman Ramissur's cry of agony when he was abandoned to the shadow dragon on Oceania, months ago. At first I thought I had been dreaming, but the noise persisted.

I arose and found the small bat I had recovered over Cestia, lying over my *crystal ball* and staring at the swirling mists inside the crystal. Although nothing else





could be seen inside the sphere, the luminescent stone had dominated the little animal's mind and was draining it of its life force. Somehow, the bat had unlocked its cage and pulled the velvet shroud off the crystal. The stone's powerful hypnotic effect had seized the bat's gaze and prevented it from pulling free. I lifted the poor thing off the glowing ball and put it back in its cage.

I suspected foul play. The lock on the cage was not one that a mere bat could undo. It was also quite improbable that an animal would accidentally pull the thick veil from the crystal ball; it could have fluttered across the cabin to seek a way out, or landed on my dinner's leftovers.

**Amphimir 5, 1965:** We pursued our course toward the northeast above a ridge of high mountains. I have decided to arise above the skyshield; it is much quicker to travel through the void. I am gambling on the chance that Herr Rolf needs to cover a long distance and therefore has done the same. Somehow, I simply cannot believe that someone like Herr Rolf could be taken away by a mere monster. By now he must have found a way to gain the upper hand. I would not be surprised if he had staged the whole event, both to cover up his tracks and to travel faster.

On an unrelated note, it occurs to me that the east and west directions are inverted in this world, compared to the Surface World. If travelers—such as ourselves—followed the Meridian of Sundsvall toward the north on the Surface World, West would be on the left, and East on the right. When continuing along this longitude we would enter the Hollow World through the Arctic Gate, then proceed *southward* along the Central Meridian. Assuming that West remains on the left and East on the right, the two directions then appear to be "reversed." In effect, 10° East on the Surface World would be exactly above 10° East in the Hollow World. Although confusing at first, this is a convenience when reporting relative positions on a map.

**Amphimir 06, 1965:** By luck and with my spyglass, I have spotted our fugitive riding a white dragon. The Heldannic Knight must have been nearing his destination, for he reentered the skyshield and dove into the clouds beneath, remaining within the thick cloud cover. The cloud bank had been slowly moving to the Hollow Worlds west and stretched several hundred miles across. I ordered the *Princess* to fly under the clouds in the event Herr Rolf would reappear.

**Amphimir 7, 1965:** An interesting day, indeed. I had been avidly observing the land below the skyshield with my spyglass, spending long hours mapping out these new lands. We were far from the surface, but some detail was visible still. Near the eastern edge of the clouds lies a very large valley. A ridge of mountains forms its eastern boundary, with a large

desert on its western reaches. A long river flows along the entire valley, ending at a large lake in the north. The valley seems to be fertile and probably harbors life—perhaps a great civilization.

While I was deeply involved in my thoughts about the world below, someone coughed softly behind my back. For an instant I believed Talasar had entered my cabin, but I turned to find instead a lady casually sitting on my bunk. A panther was lying at her feet, and a small goblin slowly waving a large feather fan. She had bronze skin and long, black hair. But what impressed me most was her eyes—immense and black as the night, yet intense like the sun. A long, white robe, Thothian in style, draped her body down to her feet. A beautiful lady indeed.

"The land you gaze upon is called Nithia," she said. "And, yes, as you thought, it indeed is the center of a great civilization. Perhaps the greatest ever."

"I suppose Nithians have no doors," I answered. "Else they should know it is customary to knock at one's portal before entering, dear . . . who, may I inquire?"

"Khufiri is my name." She smiled and added, "Of course, you do realize it is you who are prying into our ancestral lands. I don't believe you have been invited to enter the Sky of Nithia. Our priests have a habit of observing the sky, for it is sacred. New objects such as your wondrous vessel are a source of great interest."

"Then perhaps we might find a way to satisfy each other's curiosity. You may remain aboard, in exchange for which I request your guidance in these lands."

Khufiri accepted. She was friendly, but distant and a bit disdainful, definitely a sophisticated lady. She entered my cabin by secret magical means, I would guess, and was reading my thoughts. Although cordial, she could be quite dangerous.

We spoke at length about her lands and its people's common life and customs. Her temple had sent her through spiritual ways up to the *Princess*, essentially as an observer and escort through Nithia. Until such time our intentions are made clear to the temple, the *Princess* was not to land in Nithia—a directive that I intended to follow. Obviously, her temple had the means to observe their skies very well, for I had believed the Myoshiman monolith was still cloaking the *Princess* from normal sight.

The trio was sent to a separate cabin, with a special escort of boltmen to keep an eye on them. All this has been very disturbing and demands further observation. I then ordered the *Princess* to descend below the level of the cloud cover.

**Amphimir 8, 1965:** Khufiri has proven very useful in identifying and naming regions we flew over. We reached an expanse of water called Lake Thufu and followed a large river to the north—the River Hapta. The region is quite fertile and villages dot the river banks. After flying over the large City of Hapta, the

lowering clouds were forcing the *Princess* closer to the city. Concerned, Khufiri asked that we regain altitude until the clouds cleared up again. Satisfied when I gave the order to climb, Khufiri retreated to her cabin, along with her purring panther and feather-fanning goblin.

At that point I decided to put that time to good use. I could not take the chance of missing Herr Rolf, should he unexpectedly decide to come down. I ordered the crew to prepare for a blind sail. First Class Navigator Ashari took her post at the prow and sounded the horn at regular intervals. A returning sound would indicate the presence of a very large obstacle—if any were possible at that altitude. Ashari was well trained in this technique and navigation went smoothly for several hours.

We got close to Herr Rolf. He appeared no more than 100 yards ahead, and I caught him glancing back over his shoulder several times when Ashari's horn echoed through the clouds. He pressed his dragon forward and dove back into dark, stormy clouds.

The cracking sound of bolts and the growing rumble of the storm greatly altered the effectiveness of Ashari's horn. Threatening flashes illuminated the clouds so often that I commanded the *Princess* to return to safety above the clouds.

And a good thing the *Princess* began her ascension! Just as her prow rose, the clouds cleared up ahead, suddenly revealing a huge cliff. Instantly I thought this could not possibly be, at such an altitude! But yet a cliff was approaching, and so at a frightening speed. I commenced an evasive maneuver, but alas, too late. The stern of the *Princess* was still low and hit the edge of the plateau. Within seconds, the entire hull had scraped the rough, jagged rock, and the ship dragged to a halt. Painfully evident were those planks that flew off the wounded flanks of the *Princess*. We were stranded. Rain then began to fall, and a raging tempest ensued. More later.

**Amphimir 9, 1965:** The gale has passed on. The clouds cleared up so that we could see for a few hundred yards. It appears we are perched precariously on a high, narrow mesa. The hull is so damaged that the *Princess* can no longer lift herself. Everyone aboard shares her silent pain.

Worse, we aren't alone. Several hundred feet below is a town, a large, populous town. All around our promontory are towers, mansions, and other buildings stretched as far as we can see under the gloomy clouds. No one in the streets seems to have noticed our unfortunate posture.

Much worse yet, an ominous white banner with the black lion emblem flutters in the breeze over a large fortification. On the ramparts pace the unmistakable armored guards of the Heldannic Order. Again we might meet Herr Rolf, but this time in the Black Lion's den.

**Amphimir 10, 1965:** Still no one

seems to have noticed our presence. I suspect the storm muffled the sound of our crash, and since the Myoshiman monolith is intact, it cloaks the *Princess* from prying eyes. But we are dangerously close to a potentially hostile people, with the prow unnervingly jutting out over the edge of a cliff. Slowly, quietly, the crew has begun to repair damage.

It appears we are on a flying island or continent. The clouds do not allow better observation. Unlike the tall men-at-arms on nearby battlements, the people in the street seem much smaller. I will have to get a closer look later on. The clouds seem to get thicker and darker at regular intervals, pouring rain over the flying land. Amazingly, the storm acts to create "night," a period of sleep for the town people, while heavily armed squads of men-at-arms patrol the street.

I notice Myojo is spending much of his time with Khufiri. He enjoys the presence of her panther, which has adopted him. Khufiri shows much admiration and affection toward the Myoshiman warrior. This is useful for the moment, for Myojo is a loyal follower and I can thus obtain information on Khufiri. I must, however, remain cautious, for this relationship must not get out of hand. All this reminds me of my dear Lady Abovombe. Now that she is far away, I do realize how much I became accustomed to her presence. I long for this wretched mission to come to an end. I must return Herr Rolf to Myoshima and recover Lady Abovombe unharmed, and the sooner the better.

**Amphimir 11, 1965:** I was quietly but firmly awakened this morning by Talasar. The watch had spotted movement near my cabin. Indeed, observing through the stern's window, I could see a townsman. He was casually walking about, holding a small umbrella in one hand and a pointy cane in the other. Humming and whistling, he was picking snails with his cane and dropping them into a pouch at his waist. I hoped he'd walk past the *Princess*.

We had no such luck. The townsman came closer and attempted to hop onto a rock—under the invisible *Princess's* hull. He bumped flat into the hull, dropping his belongings and sliding down several feet, then landing heavily on his posterior.

In pain, the townsman whined loudly, holding his rather protuberant and now bloody nose. The whine stopped abruptly when two muscular boltmen hastily grabbed him, dropped a bag over his head, tied him up from toe to nose, and unceremoniously lifted him aboard. Nobody else seemed to have witnessed these events.

**Amphimir 12, 1965:** Talasar and I remained alone with our captive. He turned out to be a gnome, judging from his size, more-than-generous nasal appendage, and somewhat pointy ears.

"I say, once!" he spoke in his curious accent. "What's come into you heer? Theer I go, once, hunting snails, and Boum! I hit something, I thought, but no, theer's noth-

ing heer, you know, but yet I say my nose bleeds and I sit on my reer, once, and I say but theer's really nothing heer, nothing I can see, so, I think I must be dreaming once, and then, Boum! The sky falls on my head, and it's all dark, you know. Is this the end of the world, I say. . . ." The gnome did go on for some time in this way.

Eventually I was able to slip in a word or two. It appears we landed on the floating Island of Oostdok. Our captive, now apparently a willing guest, goes by the name of Leopold of Le Nerviens Corporation (as Leopold said: a Duly Accredited And Consolidated Enterprise, Wholly Owned And Guildmarked By Le Nerviens Family Trust Incorporated—in other words, a respectable family of professional inventors).

Oostdok is an island, roughly 50 miles long by 30 miles wide, with a series of small mountains and plateaus such as the one on which we have crash-landed. It has a capital city, the one sprawling from our vantage point, called Schaerbeek. Oostdokers are essentially gnomes.

It seems the Oostdokers are divided into two main ethnic blocks, the Flamaekers and the Valoins. The problem is very old. It seems Oostdok was originally two separate islands, Oostmaeker and Waldok. The two islands collided and remained stuck together. Since then, both peoples have accused each other of causing the catastrophe. They've never really got along.

Both peoples excel in the art of creating machinery, a science purely gnomish in nature that I will not attempt to explore further. Apparently, when a ship full of Heldannic Knights became stranded (like the *Princess Ark*), the knights offered great rewards to those able to repair their vessel. A large number of Flamaek and Valoin family corporations competed for the contract. One of them apparently built a device that would return the Heldannic ship back to its intended course.

This event was soon followed a massive invasion by Heldannic Knights. They occupied all of Oostdok and forced both the Flamaekers and the Valoins to build wondrous contraptions for the benefit of the Heldannic Order. The Oostdokers' submission to the Heldannic Order is reluctant, and both Valoins and Flamaekers are waiting for an opportunity to throw them out.

Leopold was very interested in the fact we weren't Heldanners. He was all the more interested to learn that we in fact were opposed to the Heldannic tyranny and that we would be able to cause some trouble to the knights provided our ship could be repaired and returned beyond the polar gate.

Leopold's eyes had a sudden flicker of conniving joy. We could already see ideas and schemes crossing his mind. Leopold became very agitated and began pouring an endless stream of nonsensical sentences punctuated by sporadic giggles, while pointing in every direction at once. The gnome went literally all over the *Princess*, observing her structure, mechanism, and

damage. He jabbered something like "Be right back!" and unexpectedly jumped off the railing, hopping away so fast that no one had time to intervene.

I was willing to take the chance. Repairing the *Princess* could take months. Perhaps this gnome will indeed find a way to help without alerting the knights. I only hope these gnomes would not damage the *Princess* further. This might be the ship's death.

**Amphimir 16, 1965:** Nothing has happened since Leopold's hasty departure. I am confident that he has remained on our side, since no Heldannic Knight has been seen anywhere close. Repairs are proceeding but slowly.

I had several conversations with Khufiri about Nithia and our current fate. She was of course quite worried. Khufiri said she knew about these gnomes and warned that they could bring only woe and chaos with their inventions. The rare times Nithians encountered Oostdokers have lead to untold disasters.

**Amphimir 17, 1965:** Repairs were temporarily halted as a violent thunderstorm struck Schaerbeek. Soon afterward, our friend Leopold returned. He approached the *Princess*, casually hopping about, hunting for snails after the rain.

Twenty yards from the ship, he stopped, looked over his shoulder, then leaped forward, thinking the *Princess* was near. He was wrong; he flailed his arms, then fell heavily into a mud puddle. After a number of similar attempts, he eventually bumped into the *Princess's* hull and was yanked aboard.

Leopold brought great news. The Vandermerch Corporation was sponsoring the annual Schaerbeek Regatta, when the most powerful family trusts would race in the skies above Schaerbeek with their flying contraptions. It so happens that the regatta's trajectory includes a tight turn right over the Tanneken-Pes, the steep mesa on which the *Princess* is stranded.

Leopold's commercial kin at Le Nerviens' Corporation had a plan. Their ship, *L'Epaulard*, would come very low over the plateau's edge and attempt to lift the *Princess* off the rock. Despite my absolute inability to grasp the technical details of Leopold's plan, I found the scheme nonetheless frightening. I am afraid my arguments didn't deter Leopold a bit, either. The plan was already in motion.

**Amphimir 18, 1965:** The regatta started shortly after another heavy rainfall. Over the edge of Schaerbeek, already dozens of gigantic, multicolored dirigibles were gathering for departure. They looked like incredibly huge, bloated whales, with plump fins at their rears. Each of these grotesque airships had a cabin underneath its chubby belly, with pipes, fans, and tubes sticking out in all directions. A crowd gathered in the streets, at balconies, and at windows everywhere. Great horns echoed through the city, and the crowd cheered, waving the flags and banners of their family trusts.

A deafening roar began as the airships began the race. Billowing clouds of smoke and steam poured out of the airships' cabins, as strange devices caused blades and other parts to propel the ungainly blimps. The *Demeulemeister III* lurched ahead, while the *VandenKoop* spun off course, bumping into *Le Gros Belouga*. The latter landed flat on a large cohort of Heldannic Knights underneath—causing great panic in their ranks—then promptly rebounded back into the race. The crowd went wild! Meanwhile, rattling and shuddering, *L'Epaulard* roared after *Demeulemeister III* along with a horde of other outrageous blimps.

*Demeulemeister III* came first above the mesa. It launched a grapple that caught on a ridge, using it to spin around the edge of the plateau. The pilot promptly severed the cable and raced back toward the center of Schaerbeek. *L'Epaulard* followed, very low on the ridge. I could see the pilot's head sticking out of a porthole; he was squinting and looking for something. With horror I realized that Leopold had probably failed to tell his kin that the *Princess* was not visible.

That's when I noticed Leopold was missing. He was spotted a moment later, perched on the highest point of the ship, cheering and waving Le Nerviens' colors. He had attached a flag to a pole and had propped it up in the air in order to exceed the area of effect of the Myoshiman monolith.

The pilot waved back and veered toward the *Princess*, cutting across the path of the wild, tubby pack racing after him. The *Montjoie Rouge* made a loop to avoid *L'Epaulard*, while the *Hembeek*, *Johanneke*, and *Broqueville* bumped into each other. *L'Epaulard* got through, scraping the edge of the plateau. It made a pass over our ship and decided to go after *Demeulemeister III*. The *Hembeek* and *Broqueville* followed, some of their riggings fouled together. Both pilots exchanged colorful vociferations on their way. Meanwhile, the *Montjoie Rouge* ended its loop and bumped into the rear of the *Johanneke*, pushing the blimp ahead of the pack. Not far behind, *Le Gros Belouga* and the *VandenKoop* were rushing back into the race.

Soon *L'Epaulard* caught up with *Demeulemeister III* and began the second lap. The crowd was hooting and cheering. The two airships prepared their approach of our mesa. *Demeulemeister III* launched its second grapnel but missed, spinning wildly out of control. *L'Epaulard* reversed its propellers to slow down, causing its whalelike balloon to bulge forward. At this very moment, a dozen cables shot down at us, out of the cabin. Some had hooks, others suction cups; I even saw a few with bola-type endings. Everyone on the deck of the *Princess* ran for cover. Amazingly, no one was hurt, but *L'Epaulard's* machinery started roaring madly as the blimp made its turn and attempted to lift the *Princess*.

Lift her it did—but sideways. The cables

did not hook up to the *Princess's* masts and hull in an even manner, causing the ship to hang starboard down. Everyone aboard grabbed at anything within reach to avoid falling off. Most of the scene was obscured by the billowing smoke and steam pouring out of the blimp.

*L'Epaulard's* speed was greatly reduced, but its pilot decided to continue the race. *Demeulemeister III* was regaining control, while the rest of the pack was catching up. By then, the pilots on the *Hembeek* and *Broqueville*—still tangled up—had resorted to fist fighting, while the *Johanneke* took the lead, harried by *Le Gros Belouga*.

The end of the second lap came very fast. *L'Epaulard* was desperately trying to gain altitude while the *Princess* swung wildly underneath, threatening to hit some of the Heldannic Knight's upper towers. Sparks shot out of the blimp's portholes. Several cables were being cranked back, slowly bringing the *Princess* to a more convenient posture, just in time for *L'Epaulard* to veer back into the third and final lap.

By then, *L'Epaulard* was in the middle of the main pack of airships. The *VandenKoop* was coming fast behind, and low, thinking it could pass *L'Epaulard* underneath! Its pilot, of course, could not see the invisible *Princess* dangling in its way! At the last moment, *L'Epaulard* swerved aside, but the *VandenKoop's* balloon caught the *Princess's* wing, which scraped along the length of the balloon and finally pierced its thick fabric. The *VandenKoop* suddenly lurched forward as gas violently blew out of the gap at the rear—and it took the lead in front of the *Johanneke*, flying forth to victory!

Meanwhile, *L'Epaulard* dipped behind the mesa, abandoning the race. It flew at a very low altitude over a small river and left Schaerbeek. Everyone aboard was exhausted, panting, and sweating—except for one. Leopold was on the mast, still waving his flag and crying for an encore! But that was enough for the day.

**Amphimir 22, 1965:** The trip took a few days. We flew over a series of small farming communities and rolling hills. Storms and rainfalls continued at regular intervals on this gloomy land. At last, the pilot waved at Leopold; we were nearing our destination. Leopold pointed at a small rocky hill ahead of us. A large tower stood on the top, bearing Le Nerviens' colors. At last, the *Princess* stood a chance of rest and repair.

**To be continued. . . .**

If you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the Gazetteers, please send your inquiries to: Bruce A. Heard, D&D Column, TSR, Inc. P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they always have our attention.

## Oostdok trade houses

Oostdok is a small floating continent made of two celestial islands, each inhabited by gnomes, that collided several centuries past. The two gnomish peoples so joined, the Valoins and the Flamaekers, have different cultures and get along with some difficulty. Both the Valoins and Flamaekers originally had the power to control the flight of their islands through the use of gigantic machinery buried in the rock of each continent. That ability was lost when the two islands collided.

The two gnomish cultures have since then evolved into a society based on powerful trade houses. These are essentially very large families dedicated to commerce or manufacturing as a means of achieving political supremacy on Oostdok. So far, seven trade houses dominate the political and economic environment. Scores of minor trade houses struggle for survival, all of them aiming to one day become one of the major powers. However, all trade houses are in league against a common oppressor, the Heldannic Knights who invaded them a decade earlier.

All members of a trade house are fanatically devoted to their kin, hard-working, and very rarely, if ever, betray their cause. Trade-house members bear the natural birthmark of the family, so both of the member's parents must be natural kin of the trade house. Each trade house comes with its own police force.

Failing to live up to the expectations of one's trade-house supervisor may cause the culprit to be shunned by the entire Oostdok establishment. None of the trade houses will ever "hire" or deal with an individual who wasn't born in the family. One who has been rejected by his kin has his birthmark burned off or branded in a way sufficient to deface it. Those born of illegitimate parents (parents of different trade houses) are treated in similar fashion and abandoned. All those rejected by their kin form a caste of "untouchables": poor, hopeless wretches shunned by all other gnomes.

**Broqueville, Sa. (Inc.):** This Valoin trade house specializes in the manufacture of military hardware. They are one of the most powerful and disliked trade houses on Oostdok since they do business with the Heldannic Knights—though not by choice. The Knights outlawed all arms ownership by and all arms sales to Oostdokers, but Broqueville is secretly stockpiling common weaponry and has built a doomsday machine, speculating on the day when Oostdokers will revolt and overthrow their oppressors. They are actively manipulating other trade houses to commit themselves to the revolt.

Broqueville's dirigibles use magical camouflage patterns that change color to match their background, much like a chameleon. The natural colors are often

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 10: The Return of Darkness

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand the D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
PRINCE HALDORAR OF HAARNEY  
Lord Admiral of the Mischief Empire  
Captain of the Ever Victorious  
PRINCESS ARK  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

**Amphimir 23, 1965:** I woke up at the sound of my bat screeching under the veil of its cage. It must have been late, and the poor thing was getting hungry. Ever since the wild Schaerbeek Regatta, the bat had shown signs of agitation.

A soft knock at the door came next. It was Khufiri and her retinue; she had come to talk business. It was her opinion that the *Princess* had been so badly damaged that no magic remained in her hull. The ship's magic was not salvageable, certainly not within a reasonable period of time. She offered in the name of the king of Nithia a great amount of gold if the remains of the vessels could be left to her

temple. As for the crew, the temple knew of underground passages linking the Surface and Hollow Worlds. She was certain the king would provide a suitable escort.

I found that offer outrageous. I would rather entrust the *Princess* to the care of the gnomes rather than abandon her for a mere pecuniary reward. Khufiri acted as if she was offended.

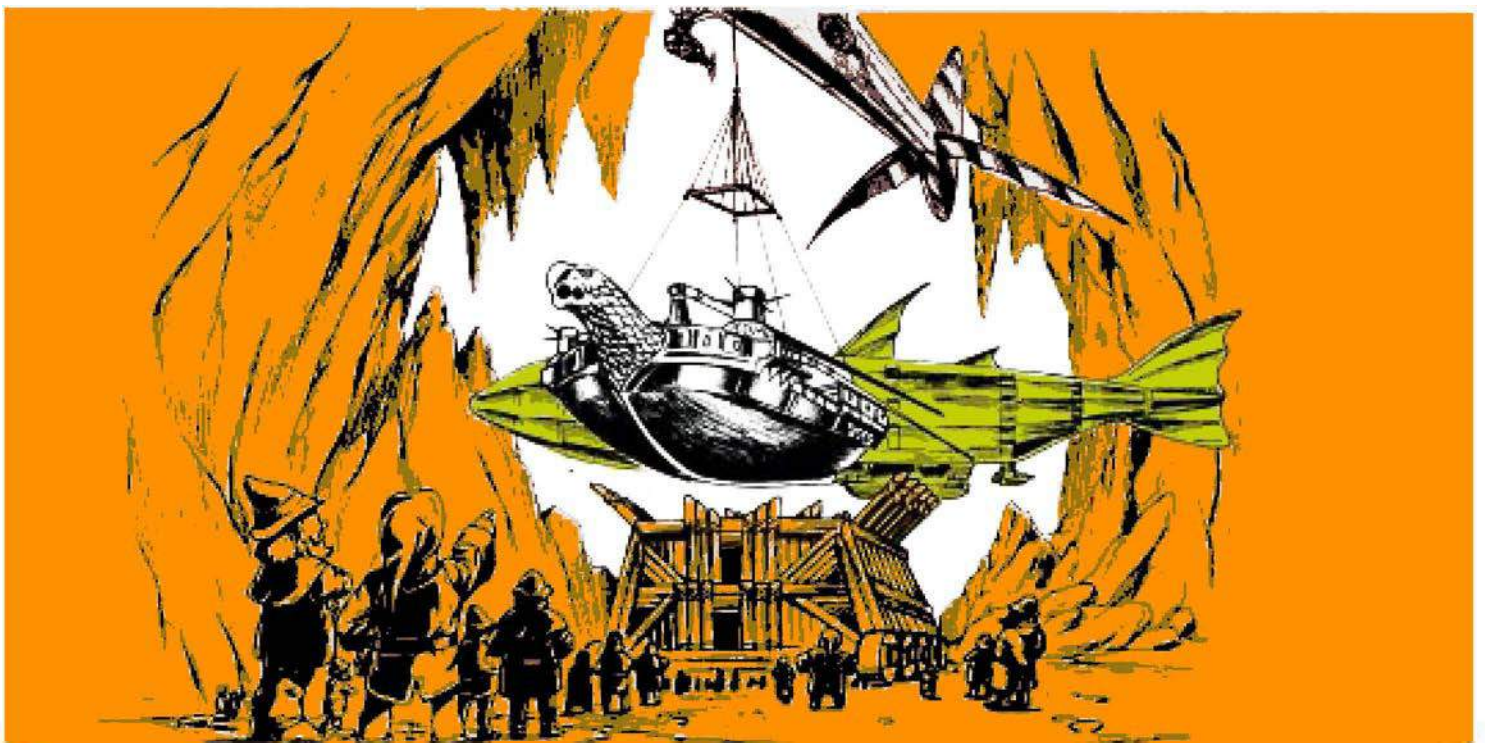
I also noticed that my bat was staring at Khufiri. She noticed, too, and gazed back at the animal. The poor thing seemed to be paralyzed by terror. Khufiri then turned to me and added "You really should listen to me. This ship will do you no good—and neither will these demented gnomes."

She left, and I pondered on what she was up to. Who was she truly? Blasted be this Hollow World, for I could not use many of my magical talents to pry the truth from Khufiri's mind. I requested Myojo to come to my quarters. The Myoshiman warrior did not notice anything worth of suspicion so far, but he would keep a closer look. He seemed annoyed by the affair, but carried on.

**Amphimir 24, 1965:** After the gates of Le Nerviens' fortress swung closed behind the *Princess*, the gnomes led the ship down a series of colossal galleries. Two pilots *levitated* on metal disks ahead of the bow, leading the airship that carried the wounded *Princess*.

At first the stone galleries were tastefully carved into the rock, with bas-reliefs decorating much of their surfaces. Many openings could be seen among the sculptures, either windows or doors to gnomish dwellings. Exquisite stairways had been hewn in the walls, crisscrossing from bas-relief to door in an unending and mazelike pattern.

The galleries progressively turned to natural stone. Soon their surfaces became even smoother, totally unlike rugged caverns. After hours of meandering through







the dark galleries, our two gnomish pilots finally reached a giant cavern.

*Le Gros Belouga*, their first airship, was already there, tethered to a stone post at the far end of the cavern. *L'Épaulard* slowly descended and positioned the *Princess* softly on a large wooden scaffold. The rickety structure creaked, gave a bit, and settled. I heard a sigh of relief from the crew when the *Princess* finally stabilized. *L'Épaulard* then severed the cables and cast three anchors nearby.

**Amphimir 25, 1965:** The gnomes of Le Nerviens have so far acted professionally, as befitting their prestigious Trade House. Leopold—Leo, as his friends call him—led us to his Conceptual Leader, who in turn introduced us to the Theoretician Supervisor, who took us to the Hypothesician Comptroller, who escorted us over to the Principilar Master, and so on. I stopped counting after 23 levels of hierarchy.

Eventually we reached the Canonic Convictor, apparently one of the highest ranking gnomes in Le Nerviens' trade counsel. The lady was quite charming and much was said about each other's cultures. Of course, the issue of the Heldannic occupation was covered in great length, and it was agreed that if our Glorious Empire of Alpathia could cause grief to the Heldannic Temple, then Le Nerviens would be honored and delighted to participate in our flight back to the Surface World. Several divisions of the most talented and skillful Le Nerviens engineers would be dispatched to the *Princess Ark* to begin complete repairs. The lady then took off to handle other immediate business as a tremendous explosion rocked the chamber (apparently a common occurrence here).

**Amphimir 26, 1965:** Hundreds of gnomes boarded the *Princess* with their tools and their plans. Trouble started at once. From that instant on, gnomes popped up just about everywhere on the ship, including the most unexpected places. Some of the crew resorted to fisticuffs when the gnomes invaded their privacy.

There was nothing one could have done to stop the horde. Hoping the *Princess* would not suffer at the gnomes' hands, I ordered the crew to disembark.

**Amphimir 28, 1965:** The crew and the officers celebrated the last day of the Alpathian year. I chose that time to climb the ledges of the cavern and meditate. From there I could observe the gnomes' work below and ponder their activities.

**Alphamir 15, 1966:** Myojo showed up later on with alarming news about Khufiri. He saw her discreetly speaking to one of the gnomes working on the *Princess*. She had often made a point before to show her distrust of the gnomes, and yet she did seem to maintain a connection with one of them. It also appeared like she did not want to be seen. That gnome hasn't showed up since his conversation with her, either. Worse, Myojo did not find a single worker on the *Princess* to be famil-

iar with that gnome's description. This report is not a good omen. I've ordered Myojo to keep a close watch on her.

**Alphamir 19, 1966:** It has now been over a year since we left Sundsvall. Some of the crew are homesick. Others show signs of despair when dealing with the gnomes. Soon it will be time to cast off, when the gnomes are done.

A late note: I've received a message from the Canonic Convictor mentioning some activity outside the fortress. A Heldannic brigade has arrived at the gate and has demanded to enter. Parley is in process. I've ordered the crew to gather its belongings and be ready to board.

**Alphamir 20, 1966:** Leo returned today from the *Princess*, happy and proud. The Canonic Convictor joined the engineers in a blessing ceremony. Although I could not see anything different about the *Princess*, the gnomes showed great pride and excitement.

It was not to last. As the beer flowed and the gnomes celebrated their accomplishment, a horn echoed in the far galleries. The knights had broken in. A message arrived that a traitor had alerted the knights to the *Princess's* presence, and later had allowed the knights to enter. Khufiri must have had something to do with this treachery.

The crew immediately began boarding and preparing the riggings. Meanwhile, the gnomes carefully began dismantling the huge scaffolding. The preparations took hours. I suspected that Le Nerviens would not risk a battle against the tyrants. Heldannic troops were probably marching down the cavernous hallways, straight for the *Princess*. There was no time to waste; we had to leave unseen. Rolf had probably revealed to his minions our ability to bend light with the Myoshiman artifact. I suspected his officers would use clerical magic to see the *Princess Ark* in any guise.

The Heldannic Knights came almost in sight of the cavern, but the gnomes cleverly filled the cavern with smoke as two *levitating* pilots beckoned the *Princess* to another exit. The flight was frightening. Steering a large vessel like the *Princess* down narrow and poorly lit galleries was a strenuous task. The ship responded well to my commands, however.

Suddenly, the two gnome pilots ducked to the sides while the *Princess* screamed down a gallery, shooting out from the side of Oostdok. At last, the sky was ours again!

I have commanded the *Princess* to gain altitude and leave at once. Returning to the empire is now vital.

**Alphamir 21, 1966:** It took little time to reach the skyshield and gain enough speed to breach into the void. The stern watch has spotted five smaller vessels pursuing us. They seem to be quicker than the *Princess* and are slowly gaining on us. Our only hope is to fly out the arctic gate to the Surface World. The flight path has to be calculated with great accuracy; if we

err so much as a few degrees off course, the *Princess* will crash just as it did on its way in.

**Alphamir 22, 1966:** Our deciphering of the celestial forces is now complete. Talasar cast a *find the path* spell that greatly increased our chance of escape. We had to fly through a field of floating rocks that delayed our pursuers. By chance, none of the rocks hit the *Princess*. As before, she seemed to be able to avoid the threatening boulders on her own. Soon thereafter, we reached the anti-magic region that blocked the polar gate. All magic progressively died out aboard, and the *Princess* followed her course based on a purely ballistic trajectory. Our pursuers halted near the anti-magic area.

**Alphamir 23, 1966:** Fate was on our side, for we have crossed back out into open space. The *Princess* came terribly close to falling back through the skyshield, as the attraction of the planet below was frighteningly strong near the gate. But as the *Princess's* bow pointed dangerously low, large panels opened from the sides of the hull and revealed two large oblong tubes. Without warning, flames shot out to the rear of each tube. The tubes exerted a force that kept the *Princess* level just long enough to exit the anti-magic area. Sufficient magic was restored just in time to resume normal flight.

There is no doubt that the gnomes installed this device. What else have they done to this ship? After examination, I conclude that the contraption was devised by an amazingly skillful alchemist, for no magic was used here. A very clever system of pendulums caused the panels to open and the tubes to be aimed and fired at the proper angle. Unfortunately, the tubes are now empty. Thank Razud nothing was in the *Princess's* path. A collision in the airless void would have been disastrous.

I hope to recover samples of the substance remaining in the tubes. Perhaps my skills in alchemy will allow me to identify it. The tubes have meanwhile pulled back into their recesses, and the panels have snapped shut.

Our new course is set to Sundsvall.

**Alphamir 24, 1966:** "Ahoy, the *princess!*" The guttural shout came loud and clear "In the name of the Heldannic Temple, heave to and surrender your weapons!"

The warning came soon after we exited the gate. The voice seemed to come from every point of the *Princess*. A large war galley was then sighted, coming straight at us from the dark. We were too low above the skyshield, and there was no time to maneuver. It was an ambush. The knights knew their business.

The shouted voice seemed familiar. Yes, it was him again! Herr Rolf could soon be seen standing near the helm with a grin on his face. The boltmen prepared for a last stand; they knew I would not surrender to these fiends. The crew braced for a boarding.

Suddenly, a trapdoor popped open near

the bow of the Princess. At first nothing came out except a faint squeaky noise. The sound of a ratchet followed, and a small platform appeared. It was surmounted by a fat, black tube with cranks and levers. And behind it sat Leo!

"Oh, greetings!" he said. "You wouldn't have a spare mallet, would you? I still have a problem with—" Noticing the crew, he turned around and gawked at the approaching warship. Scrambling with the cranks and levers, he pointed the tube at the galley and yanked a handle. A pulsating hum grew from the quivering contraption, with ominous hisses. Everyone ducked for cover.

A deafening explosion rocked the *Princess* as a black, billowing cloud obscured the deck. The smoke cleared slowly, revealing a scene of horror and confusion. Leo, now all sooty and smoking, still sat on his platform, holding the handle (which had broken free) and scratching his head. The tube was gone.

Ahead of the *Princess*, the Heldannic galley was reduced to little more than a wreck. Its crew stunned, it drifted on its course and merely bumped into the *Princess*. Xerdon seized the initiative and boarded the galley.

A raging battle took place between the heavily armored knights and the swift boltmen. I, for my part, had a personal account to settle. It took little magic to enter the galley and locate Herr Rolf in a small chapel at the galley's stern. Part of the altar had been ripped off its base. I felt a waning power fizzle from the unholy debris.

"You!" he said. "You shall pay for this!" In a fit of blind rage, Rolf seized a two-handed sword and took a wild swing. His blade crushed through a heavy chest, barely missing me. He lifted his weapon, preparing for another mighty blow—but I was ready for him. My word would be far quicker. How great the anticipation of arcane strands of webbing shooting forth from my fingers! Oh, what rapture! Revenge at last!

But alas! Fate again decided otherwise. Khufiri unexpectedly appeared at the door and struck a wicked blow at Rolf's back. The knight stared blankly, opened his mouth, and fell forward. The back of his armor was lacerated as if giant claws had struck him.

Khufiri displayed an evil grin, and she had death in her eyes as she laughed. "You are so easily fooled, wizard!" she hissed. "One does not rid himself so easily of my kind. I searched a long time for you. Neither the barriers of the stars nor those of the Hollow World can stop me. Now, gaze upon me, and see who I truly am!"

Khufiri's body began to warp and shake. Slowly it grew and expanded to the ceiling. The planks burst outward as the creature developed fully. In horror I realized what had happened. Khufiri was none other than the Oceanian dragon of darkness that had tormented us so long ago.

"You shall not be granted revenge, Halde-mar." The dragon now towered above the war galley. All combat ceased immediately on the deck. "Synn is my name. You will learn to hate it for the rest of your miserable life." She picked up Rolf's unconscious body and added "You will never have this. His soul is now mine." Synn gazed a moment at the princess and snarled, "You can keep your abomination, wizard. It will not help for what is yet to happen!"

The night dragon breathed a cloud of utter darkness and disappeared. There was no sign of Myojo. Where was he?

**Alphamir 25, 1966:** I write this down from a hazy memory of the day's events. Moments after Synn's strange departure, the sun rose from the east of our world, illuminating the battle scene in a grand display of celestial majesty. At the sight of Rolf's kidnapping, the few remaining knights had yielded. It took hours to transfer all worthy spoils of war off the Heldannic galley. These knights must have been plundering some hapless civilization somewhere in the void. We seized strange coins and items I've never seen before.

Supplies and captives were brought aboard the *Princess*. The Heldannic wreck was then set ablaze and left behind. The flames were rapidly consuming the ship's remaining envelope of air. As the *Princess* resumed her course toward Sundsvall, we watched the fiery hulk plummet toward the skyshield and disappear into the clouds below.

Within hours of our departure, however, chaos seemed to have overtaken the starry vault. Whirling clouds of luminous gases surrounded the *Princess*. Flashes and bolts of magical energy raged everywhere. Somewhere in the distance I heard the voice of Khufiri—Synn. At first it was a mere giggle, but soon it turned into a nagging laughter. The storm built up to a demented maelstrom of energy. In the back of my mind, I could hear Synn's mocking voice: "For you, death is too sweet. So then, wizard, learn to deal with my reality!" There was a roar, and then oblivion.

It was hard to tell how long our unconsciousness lasted. The entire crew and myself had passed out. We apparently did not move from our previous position, which at first led me to believe that little time had gone by.

Then the frightening truth came forth. There, standing at the bow of the *Princess*, was an old lady. Her face was familiar. She rose upon my awakening and said, "Halde-mar, why did you abandon me? Why didn't you return? I trusted you. I gazed at the red skies of Myoshima, praying for your return. Day after day, I hoped and cried. But never did the *Princess* reappear to take me back. I endured thirty-four years of misery in Myoshiman dungeons. And it is only now that I am old and tired that a creature of darkness finally returns me to you. Why, Halde-mar?"

**To be continued...**

If you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the Gazetteers, please send your inquiries to: Bruce A. Heard, D&D Column, TSR, Inc. P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they always get our attention,

## The Night Dragon

Night Dragons are particularly chaotic dragons that have become the undead servants of Immortals in the Sphere of Entropy. Night Dragons are sometimes sent to the prime material plane to accomplish a mission for their masters. For example, after the destruction of Oceania, Synn (a greater dragon) was allowed to remain and guard an ancient secret in her lair. She looks like the shadow of a dragon, totally black, except for her eyes that glow slightly. Very faint shimmering of dark blue or purple reveal some of Synn's physical features, such as scales and muscles. Night dragons are solid on the prime material plane.

Night dragons are masters of guile and treachery. They feed off the sorrow they inflict upon their victims. They torment and curse a foe rather than destroy it. Physical combat is not viewed as a means of achieving their goals; lies are far more acceptable.

The breath of a night dragon causes a billowing cloud of absolute darkness. Any living being in the area of effect must Save vs. Breath Weapon or fall unconscious. The darkness dissipates in 1d6 turns. The breath cannot be used in windy areas.

Night dragons have the ability to enter the plane of entropy through any area of absolute darkness. In most cases, the dragon uses its breath to cause *darkness*, then disappear into the other plane. Likewise, it may reappear only from a dark spot.

A greater dragon may wrap its wings around an unconscious foe, which causes the victim's soul to be trapped in the plane of entropy. The body is either destroyed or, more likely, possessed by the dragon. It retains its intellect and memories, and becomes a fanatic follower of the dragon. Minor foes often are transformed into bats, which are then used as spies. A night dragon maintains a telepathic link with its followers that allows it to see and hear through them (except in the Hollow World).

Greater dragons like Synn are granted one *wish* per century they spend on the prime material plane, in addition to their spells. Night dragons use wizard spells.

**Lesser dragon spells:** four 1st level, four 2nd level,

**Greater dragon spells:** five 1st level, five 2nd level, four 3rd level, three 4th level, two 5th level.

Synn, as an example of this species, often has the following spells: *charm per-*

son (× 2), read languages, shield, ventriloquism, continual darkness, detect invisible, ESP, invisibility, phantasmal force, clairvoyance, dispel magic, haste, protection from good 10' radius, curse, polymorph self wizard eye, magic jar, teleport.

A lesser dragon inflicts 3d10 hp damage with a bite, and 1d6 + 1 hp damage with its claws. A greater dragon inflicts 4d8 + 8 hp damage with its bite, and 1d12 + 2 hp with its claws. A successful blow from any night dragon is similar to the touch of a ghoul, producing a Save vs. Paralysis.

Night dragons are particularly vulnerable to light and spells affecting undead. A light spell causes 1d10 hp damage to the monster. A *raise dead* will destroy a lesser dragon, or inflict 3d10 hp damage on a greater dragon. Direct sunlight from the Outer World sun will destroy any of these dragons. Both dragons require at least + 1 magical weapons to be hit.

A cleric can turn a lesser dragon as a vampire, and a greater dragon as a nightshade (see the D&D Companion Set, *Player's Companion*, page 11). These dragons cannot be turned within 10 miles of their lairs or on the plane of entropy.

## Letters

I think your magazine is fantastic! I would be delighted if you included an article in your magazine about the kingdoms of Ostland and Vestland.

*Have you had a look at GAZ7 The Northern Reaches? That gazetteer does include a great deal of information on these two regions and Soderfjord.*

DRAGON® Magazine should have more information regarding the D&D game. There seems to be more about the AD&D game than the D&D game.

Also, in the D&D Known World, there are several countries with no information about them. Will there ever be in-depth descriptions in Gazetteer-style books about these places?

One last thing, Thyatis is for fighters, Glantri for magic-users, etc. What about a place for thieves or clerics?

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*I agree wholeheartedly with your first suggestion! The D&D line has been doing quite well these past years and is regaining its popularity among gamers. Now it is up to you to get the magazine's writer's guidelines; send an SASE to: Writer's Guidelines, DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Then you can submit more articles on the D&D game and the Known World.*

*GAZ13 The Shadow Elves was published recently GAZ14 The Atruaghin Clans will be out in 1991.*

*There are no nations in the Known World devoted in particular to thieves or*

*clerics—so far. Thieves would do quite well in the Emirates of Ylaruam. Unfortunately for clerics, there are just too many different philosophies to realistically round them up within one single nation.*

In one of the latest voyages of the *Princess Ark*, the ship flew into space and traveled to the second moon. Will this moon ever be mapped? I would also like to have the abilities of the rakasta.

*Thanks. There are no plans at the moment to map out Myoshima (any volunteers out there?). You will find the complete description of the rakasta in the D&D Creature Catalog, page 44. I am repeating their game statistics here in short format for your convenience: AC 6; HD 2 + 1; MV 90' (30'); #AT 2 claws, 1 bite; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4; #APP 0 (3d10 + 1d8 sabre-tooth tigers); Save F2; ML 9; TT M; AL N; XP 25 (Intelligence 12).*



## Night Dragon

	Lesser *	Greater *
Armor Class	0	- 5
Hit Dice	9****	20 *****
Move	90' (30')	150' (50')
Flying	240' (80')	360' (120')
Attacks	Up to 7	Up to 7
Breath Cloud	50' x 40' x 30'	50' x 50' x 30'
Breath Effect	Darkness	Darkness
# Appearing	1-4 (1-4)	1 (1)
Save As	Fighter 9	Fighter 36
Morale	9	11
Treasure Type	H	H x 2, I
Alignment	Chaotic	Chaotic
XP Value	4,400	18,500

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 11: The return home . . . almost

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphadan explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand the D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

[From the Journals of  
**PRINCE HALDCMAR OF HAAREN**  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
**PRINCESS ARK**  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.]

**Alphamir 26, 2000 AY:** The sound of creaking wood slowly woke me, as the solar winds softly rocked the *Princess Ark*. I have slept little despite the long hours of reflection and anguish that have followed the last incredible events. I shivered in the cold air and thought of what seemed to have happened only a day ago.

Somehow, Synn had anticipated the presence of a nebular storm near the Hollow World's gate. It ripped the very fabric of time, and the *Princess* fell through. According to my estimations

based on the relative position of the stars, we have jumped 34 years into our future. I fear what may await us below, in our new world.

I conjecture that the wretched dragon waited all those years, meditating on her revenge. Synn must have returned to Myoshima exactly 34 years after abandoning the Heldarnic wreck, recovered Lady Abovombe from the Myoshiman gaol, and returned her to the *Princess Ark* as the ship emerged into this new era. The hapless woman spent years in misery and hardship, obviously thinking that I had abandoned her to her captors.

I have a magical cure for Lady Abovombe's current age, but I am afraid that a much deeper wound may linger in her heart—and mine. It pains me to think that Lady Abovombe would doubt my feelings toward her. I suppose this is what that wretched Synn had in her twisted mind all along. Such a hateful and gratuitous act of cruelty speaks eloquently of the night dragon's utter evil.

Not only this, but Myojo suffered greatly during the last battle. The brave warrior had followed Synn closely prior to her treachery. He must have sensed her wicked intentions and attempted to stop the night dragon. But she turned against him and easily defeated him. It took many hours of praying and great skill from Talasar to pull Myojo back from the very threshold of death.

So be it. Rolf may be dead, but Synn has replaced him as a foe that I must destroy. But first, patience and time will be needed to regain Lady Abovombe's heart. I must find this elixir at once.

**Alphamir 27:** Again, Myojo's life came close to an end. As I left my quarters on my way to see Lady Abovombe, I noticed a





furtive shadow quickly entering Myojo's cabin. I knew it couldn't be my feline companion, since he was quite feeble and still recovering. I crept up to the door as quietly as I could—quietly for a wizard, that is.

Three intruders were in Myojo's cabin, dressed in black from head to toe. One was poised to strike at Myojo's chest with a short sword. The two others spotted me and threw curious little metal stars at me. One got stuck in the wooden door, while the other grazed my throat. Almost instantly I spoke a command word, and my wand disintegrated one of the two, who shrivelled into a lifeless form. Unfortunately, the deadly discharge also damaged the wooden bulkhead beyond.

Immediately, a roar rocked the *Princess*, almost as if the ship had felt the blow from my wand. Myojo woke up and instinctively stabbed at the closest of his foes with a hidden dagger, while both myself and the other intruder lost our footing. A short scuffle followed, and my opponent ran down the passageway. He didn't go far however, as Talasar stepped out of his quarters and magically *held* the intruder. About the same time I heard some fighting on the main deck, followed by the familiar "zap-crack" sounds of boltmen at work.

The intruders were Myoshiman rakastas. Another two intruders had freed Kenju and Jiro from the brig, but they were all intercepted on the deck. All died except the one Talasar paralysed and the one Myojo wounded. According to Myojo, these are trained and highly skillful assassins, probably sent by Lord Katayama. Alerted by the recent disappearance of Lady Abovombe from their gaol, the Myoshimans must have dispatched their scouts to seek us out.

The two survivors would not utter a word, but there are ways to pry information out with a little talent and magic. The tall, wounded survivor was Uisuka-San, chief of his clan of assassins. The other was his daughter, Kitikata. It was a stroke of luck that I left my quarters just as the rakastas had entered Myojo's cabin, or else my companion would certainly have been quite dead by now.

I, however, released the two with a message to Lord Katayama. I informed the lord that Herr Rolf of the Heldannic Knights had been killed 34 years ago, and that his own envoys Kenju and Jiro had acted treacherously. One should not hope to acquire Imperial friendship with a gift in one hand and a dagger in the other. The two bowed abruptly and flew away on a black-moth ship that blended swiftly into the night.

**Alphamir 28:** I met Lady Abovombe again. I found her lying near the crystal bay, sadly gazing at the stars. She turned and watched me silently, with an expression of resignation in her eyes. Conversation was difficult, interrupted by many uncomfortably quiet pauses. I am not sure she truly understands what has happened.

After all, only our appearance could testify to the time lapse.

I offered her my elixir, one of those potions that rejuvenates one's body by 10 years—but she refused to drink it. She firmly believed what had happened was the will of the Immortals. I advanced the argument that Immortals care little, and their will is more often than not that of the mortals. But the thought failed to comfort her, and she still showed reluctance to drink the elixir. There was little else I could do and so retired to my quarters. Time had betrayed her, yet time perhaps would heal her sorrow.

**Sulamir 1:** At last, the familiar coastline of Alpathia could be observed through the clouds. Everyone was very tense on board. The news of our time shift had reached the crew. Talasar was skillful in explaining the situation to all—their relatives in the Empire would now be dead, much older, or have mostly forgotten about them. Worse, they ran the risk of being arrested for impersonating people thought dead for decades. It will be difficult for the crew to understand and adapt. For my part, I am worried as to what may have happened during the last third century.

The answer came swiftly as we approached the aerodrome over Sundsvall. Three imperial skyships raced toward us. This, at least, had not changed. As expected of the aerodrome's Crimson Guard, they spotted our invisible ship and reacted swiftly. I ordered the Haaken colors to be hoisted, along with a parliamentary banner. Two of the crimson airships flanked the *Princess* while a squad of guards requested to come aboard. Much to everyone's surprise, the guards arrested both Talasar and me. We were immediately taken to the imperial dungeon under the palace. A chill ran down my spine at the thought of going to this ghastly place, but we had to cooperate in order to see this through.

**Sulamir 14:** I was finally granted a meeting with the Empress, as befitted my rank. Curiously, the palace had changed very little during all that time. The guards, the customs, and the court were all nearly identical to what I was accustomed to, except that many of my friends were now long dead. One that was still alive did not recognize me.

I was quickly ushered into the immense Throne Room. The Empress sat a mere 60' from me. Of course, the guards had been exceedingly thorough in stripping me of my personal belongings. I had also been duly "processed" by the court's magists to ensure that none of my magic could harm the Empress in any way. From where I kneeled, I could see a glimmer of magic encasing the Empress. *That* was new.

The Empress observed me, and I hated it. She wasn't merely studying me. She was steadily and progressively exposing my inner self, almost as casually as one would peel a fruit. She was browsing

through my mind and memories with all the delicacy of a gardener's rake.

"Release him," she ordered abruptly. "He is not guilty. Leave us alone." The guards left swiftly and closed the doors behind them.

"That was quite a journey, Admiral," she began. "Too bad you lost all that time. Your presence and knowledge would have been useful many years ago."

I was relieved to see that the initial enmity was gone. "May I know what I was accused of, Your Imperial Majesty?"

She smiled briefly, but her eyes remained ice cold. "Simply of attempting an assassination on the person of the Heldannic Order's High Priest! I believe you knew him as Herr Rolf. When you seek trouble, you certainly are thorough in your quest, Admiral." Seeing the expression on my face, she immediately added "Yes, yes, I know you did not do it. Amazingly, however, I see from your memories that the man did indeed die!"

Something was amiss. How could they have known? There were no survivors other than the prisoners still in our brig. The Empress sighed, motioning me to come closer and sit near her. "But how?" I asked.

"My dear Admiral, all isn't so simple. The ruler of the Heldannic Order died twenty-one years ago—while you were absent from the normal flow of history. Wulf von Klagendorf, the one you know as Herr Rolf, succeeded him and became the High Priest. Clearly, someone brought Rolf back to life after his death, which you witnessed thirty-four years ago. Since that creature of Entropy, Synn, killed him, Herr Rolf must have had some ties with Entropic Immortals. Or else something very strange must be happening 'up there.' The Heldannic Knights are followers of Vanya, who is not a lord of Entropy. It's a bad omen, in any case.

"You see, no one here at the palace could find any trace of you, even through the most powerful magic available. The only news about your expedition came shortly after Herr Rolf became the High Priest in Freiburg. An envoy came and declared you had attempted to kill their High Priest and that you were in hiding. Of course, I know the true story now—as amazing as it is. You do understand, however, that you and your men must avoid any prolonged stay anywhere and with anyone. Your knowledge of the sky shield and most especially of that strange Hollow World must remain absolutely secret. Few would believe you, but this knowledge is far too dangerous to fall in the wrong ears.

"Now you have a choice, Admiral: Either leave and carry on your initial endeavor in the name of the Empire, or all of your crew, officers, and civilians on board must perish at once. Then I will deal with you and your first officer in my own ways."

I had no wish to ask what that may be, and I quickly nodded agreement with the first option.

"Very well, then. Carry on, Admiral. Your ship, or whatever you call that thing, has been restocked. And please, do show any Heldannic ships you encounter what a true Alphatian wizard can do. Those knights annoy me. Farewell."

**Sulamir 15:** Bitterness, bitterness:

That was all I could see in their eyes. The crew had been under order to remain aboard above Sundsvall during the days of my confinement. None were allowed to disembark at any time, and now I bore the news of our imminent departure. For a moment I thought we would have a mutiny on our hands, but my harangue seemed to have some effect. The older crew members returned to their duties, some muttering, others showing outright anger in their movements and words. The younger sailors followed.

Suddenly, a sailor broke into tears. He screamed and ran for a small floating launch. Before anyone could react, the young man was already floating down toward Sundsvall. A single crimson frigate swooped by; much to everyone's horror, a blast of lightning shot forth. The man fell off the launch's remains and tumbled like a rag doll toward the distant earth. A deathly silence descended upon the crew. Slowly, one after the other, they returned to their quarters. That was all.

**Sulamir 19:** I had no immediate plans to leave for anywhere, not with the crew's miserable morale. I opted for a quick stop incognito at Starpoint. We stopped due north of the city above a small forest. Unseen, the crew left in shifts, all wearing civilian outfits and carrying copious gold to spend, courtesy of the *Princess's* treasury. This took five days. I must admit I never saw a crew as drunk as this one! But that was worth every pop of a cork. None of them deserted. They knew they would not last long in metropolitan Alphatia. Perhaps they feared me even more, for they all knew I could easily find any of them. The crew was mostly Amburesse, and that stop in Starpoint went a long way toward improving morale.

**Sulamir 25:** I paid a short visit to my kin in nearby Ar. They were overjoyed to see me again, but were appalled at what had happened. All was fine at the family domain. They quietly hoped that I would someday, somehow, come back and settle there for good. That would not be for a long time yet. I gathered a few of my favorite objects, then returned to the *Princess*.

In the evening, while unpacking, I accidentally triggered an item of my making. The thing had never been fully completed nor properly enchanted. It popped. It hissed. It rattled. And by the beard of Pligzy Gladz, it smoked like the nostrils of a sleeping dragon! Soon the room was filled with a luminescent, swirling fog. That's when I heard something heavy rip loose from the overhead beam and crash to the floor.

The smoke cleared—and there was

Ramissur! Wide-eyed, the man was on all fours—naked as a worm, mind you—holding a piece of a fruit in one hand and with a foot tangled up in what was left of my bat's cage. He sniffed, squeaked, and scurried over to the other end of the room. All that time my bat had been none other than Ramissur himself! Why am I not surprised?

Talasar did wonders in bringing back the human side of Ramissur. The boltman had been under Synn's control, acting as her eyes and ears all along. The crew welcomed him back. By now, nothing could surprise them either.

Indeed, that would end a chapter of our saga. After the latest events, it was time for the *Princess* to head for other horizons, and the sooner the better. The sun was setting, and once again we headed out under the stars.

*To be continued. . . .*

If you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the Gazetteers, please send your inquiries to: Bruce A. Heard, D&D Column, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they always get our attention.

### **Haldemar of Haaken** (Admiral, Captain of the *Princess Ark*)

**History:** Haldemar was born in 1911 AY, of pure Alphatian blood, in the Kingdom of Ar. He was raised in the tradition of aristocratic spell-casters and spent many years of his childhood with his uncle, a famous skyship owner in Ar. For his tenth birthday, Haldemar was offered a small flying sailboat, with which he got himself into trouble at every occasion.

As a teenager, Haldemar became the family's accountant. He was brilliant but tremendously bored, and over the years he developed a propensity for investments of a highly speculative nature to spice up his life. One financial venture brought great anger from his elders when he nearly squandered his entire family's fortune on a bad investment. Although not disinherited, he was promptly cast out of his home.

His taste for adventure and gambling brought him aboard a flying casino in 1933 AY. His nerve allowed him to acquire the ship from its previous owner on a successful wager. The games were rigged, but Haldemar—a hustler at heart—used his magical skills (which he had concealed when he came aboard) to turn the situation to his advantage at the pool table. His skill and experience of things aerial enabled him to embark on a career of excellence on his flying casino, where he met a number of very influential nobles. He quickly learned to deal with the Alphatian society's upper crust.

A pack of greedy young dragons once attacked his ship, seeking wealth, but he successfully repelled the air raid when he organized the defense of the gambling palace. Although the flying casino was seriously damaged, he managed to bring it to a place where his aristocratic passengers were out of danger.

Soon after this episode, he was introduced to Emperor Tylion IV, who granted him the command of a small flying frigate. Haldemar sold the damaged casino at a profit and began his duty right after that. Haldemar proved to be an outstanding commander during the 1959 war against Thyatis, and he collected an impressive list of treasures. His long career in the Imperial Navy eventually led him to the rank of Admiral in 1961 AY. He retired shortly afterward to avoid life at the palace—which he found too dull for his taste—and returned to the family tower with his treasure (and his family's renewed blessings).

He spent a number of years at the family tower, improving his magical skills. After studying a mysterious and ancient scroll he had acquired during the war, he used a one-of-a-kind enchantment to bind the soul of a sky wyrm (see later) to the hull of the family ship, the aging *Princess Ark*. Although he did not fully grasp the nature and implications of the enchantment, Haldemar thus imbued the entire ship with the ability to fly, rather than using an inordinate amount of separate *fly* enchantments on all surfaces of the ship. This allowed the *Princess Ark* to fly despite heavy damage to its hull, unlike conventional warships.

Haldemar came out of retirement in 1964 AY after presenting his new flying enchantment to Empress Eriadna. She rewarded Haldemar with a commission in the Imperial Fleet and bestowed upon him the mission to explore distant new lands for the benefit of the empire. Empress Eriadna provided him with an official Writ of Endorsement, allowing him to act as a plenipotentiary with newly discovered nations and to subsequently draw a personal excise of 1% on all future trade with each of these nations for 10 years.

**Personality:** Although a good-hearted person, Haldemar betrays a naturally chaotic attitude due to his family background and national culture. Clever and quick thinking, Haldemar is a good judge of character and an effective leader. He has proved many times to be a shrewd and tenacious negotiator.

Haldemar seems conceited when it comes to his physical appearance and dressing habits. Some at the palace called him a dandy, although Haldemar refrained from any of his dressing excesses at court. This is a facade he often uses to deceive others. Cosmopolitan and refined, Haldemar is also capable of numerous escapades. His talents as an actor allow him to spontaneously mingle with common folk without betraying his origins, and he can move silently as a thief of equal level.

Occasionally whimsical with his peers or his foes, Haldemar is fanciful in his way of dealing with unexpected problems. He is an imaginative and unpredictable aristocrat who likes to do things with style. A learned man and an adventurer, he seeks to discover the marvels of the world and bring them to his peers.

**Disposition:** Goodwill toward Talasar, Lady Abovombe, and Xerdon; Neutral toward Myojo, Leo, Ashari, Ramissur, and Ramar; Antipathy toward Tarias. Haldemar is in love with Lady Abovombe—as much as an elder Alphatian wizard and a hardened bachelor can be.

**Appearance:** Haldemar is a typical Alphatian, slim, proud, with long black hair, pale skin, and deep blue eyes. He keeps his hair neatly tied on the back of his neck. A few gray hair on his temples and wrinkles on his face betray his age of 51. When on duty on the *Princess Ark*, Haldemar often wears knee-high boots, dark blue pants and cloak, and a white, laced shirt.

**Equipment Carried:** Haldemar's cloak contains a number of secret pockets in which he conceals magical items and miscellaneous objects. In addition to the cloak and a few normal pouches, Haldemar commonly carries a dagger +2 of *watching* in his left sleeve, a small *pouch of security* at his waist (capacity 200 cn—containing an *egg of wonder* and a *wand of disintegration*), a *wand of fire balls* (8d6 hp damage) in his right sleeve, a *wand of lightning bolts* (8d6 hp damage) in his right boot, a *potion of healing* (one dose) at his belt, a *ring of protection* +3 on his left hand, a *scarab of protection* on his cloak, a sealed *scroll of creation* in the cloaks lining, a *talisman of air elemental conjuring* around his neck, a few odd gems, gambling tokens from the Lady Luck Flying Casino (for good luck), and some loose change. Other objects may be found in his cabin on the *Princess Ark*, and even more in his family estate in the Kingdom of Ar.

**Spells Commonly Memorized:**

Haldemar has several spells of his own invention that will be disclosed during a later episode.

Level 1 – *Detect magic, floating disk, light (x2), shield, ventriloquism*

Level 2 – *Invisibility, knock (x2), phantasmal force, web*

Level 3 – *Create air, dispel magic, haste, fly, protection from normal missiles*

Level 4 – *Dimension door (x2), polymorph self, remove curse, wizard eye*

Level 5 – *Animate dead, hold monster, passwall, telekinesis*

Level 6 – *Geas, invisible stalker, projected image, weather control*

Level 7 – *Magic door, reverse gravity, summon object*

Level 8 – *Force field, travel*

Level 9 – *Contingency* (20% chance) or *immunity*

**D&D Game Statistics:** S 10, I 16, W 12, D 17, Co 11, Ch 15; 21st-level Wizard,

AC 4 (with Dex); hp 35; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 (dagger +2 or spell); Dmg by weapon type or spell; Save MU21; ML 10; AL C. Languages: Common Alphatian, Ancient Alphatian (for poetry and arcane lore), and the Ambur dialect. Skills: Astronomy (In), Finance and Accounting (In +1), Alchemy (In), Gambling (Wi+3), Acting (Wi), Palace Etiquette (Wi), Prestidigitation (Dx), Helmsman/Captain (In).

**Sky Wyrms**

The sky wyrm is a very large elemental from the plane of Air. The front half of the lesser sky wyrm is that of a wildcat with two powerful paws. Two large feathery wings protrude from its back, while the other half of the creature turns into a long, coiling serpent's tail. The greater sky wyrm has the paws and head of a lion with a thick mane, being otherwise like its smaller relative. All sky wyrms are made of shimmering clouds and living air, with an overall pearl color with light green shadings.

Sky wyrms are highly intelligent and magical, having the ability to create the *whirlwind* common to conjured air elementals. At their option, sky wyrms may use the claw-claw-bite combat routine instead of the *whirlwind*. Lesser sky wyrms can *predict, summon, and control weather and control winds* at will. They can cast the following spells once per day: *cloudkill, dimension door explosive cloud, ice storm, and invisibility*. They are immune to electrical attacks.

In addition, greater sky wyrms have the normal spell-casting abilities of a 12th-level wizard. They can also spit a *lightning bolt* three times a day that is immediately followed with a thunderous roar (save vs. paralysis within a 300' X 100' cone). The damage inflicted by the *lightning bolt* equals the sky wyrm's current hit points. This breath weapon cannot be used simultaneously with any of the sky wyrm's other attacks.

Sky wyrms are rare, even in the plane of

Air. They sometimes serve as mounts and companions of greater djinn, but always of their own free will. Sky wyrms do not get along well with aerial servants and earth-type creatures. Lesser sky wyrms absolutely hate spectral hounds and hell hounds, and at best dislike all other dog-like creatures. Greater sky wyrms are marginally more tolerant of canine-kind. Sky wyrms are otherwise good willed although neutrally aligned.

**Talasar, Ecbashur**

**(Commander, 1st Officer of the Princess Ark)**

**History:** Talasar was born and raised as a Minaean pirate. At 13, Yodar Jernog (Talasar's true name) scored his first success when he swam up to an Alphatian merchantman and entangled its anchor in nearby reefs. Minaean bandits on foot did the rest at low tide. Talasar's early life consisted of ruthless piracy, spreading woe and destruction in his wake. His Minaean name became feared on the entire eastern Alphatian coast. He was finally captured and condemned to be a slave for life.

Eleven years later, he was sold back to the Temple of Razud in Starpoint, Ambur. The high priest was looking for strong minds, and so put Talasar to the test. Talasar endured unspeakable rituals to atone for his deeds. But he saw the light and honestly embraced the Ways of Razud. Talasar finally returned to the seas and the skies, making his skills and wisdom available to the Imperial Navy. He keeps his

*Continued on page 92*

**Errata**

On the map on page 42, in DRAGON® issue #161, the directions of east and west were reversed on the Hollow World side; thus, Devil's Fork is east of the White Peninsula.

**Sky Wyrms**

	<b>Lesser</b>	<b>Greater</b>
ARMOR CLASS	- 2	- 10
HIT DICE	16****	32*****
MOVE	60' (20')	60' (20')
Flying	360' (120')	360' (120')
ATTACKS	3 or special	3 or special
Breath Area	nil	300" x 100' cone
Breath Effect	nil	Stun + lightning bolt
COMBAT DAMAGE	1-8/1-8/1-12	2-16/2-16/2-24
Whirlwind	3-24	10-80
NO. APPEARING	1-4 (1-2)	1-2 (1)
SAVE AS	Fighter 16	Fighter 32
MORALE	9	11
TREASURE TYPE	Px20, I	Rx100, I, M, N
ALIGNMENT	Neutral	Neutral
XP VALUE	8,450	48,000



# Princess Ark

*Continued from page 45*

Minaean identity secret, for many people would still demand vengeance for the rampages of Yodar's Sea Wolves.

**Personality:** The Ways of Razud changed Talasar, making him a charitable, forgiving, and compassionate person. His tact and diplomacy have served him well aboard the Princess. Quiet and keenly observant, Talasar is a great judge of character who proven many times to be an invaluable help in Haldemar's endeavors.

**Disposition:** Goodwill toward all aboard. New feelings about Lady Abovombe are deeply disturbing to this now-pious man, however.

**Appearance:** Although in his mid-fifties, Talasar is a tall, powerful man. He keeps his head shaved and bare, according to the precepts of his order. Talasar has a dark complexion, with slightly slanted green eyes. His thin, long mustache common to that of Ochalean nobles in Beitung has long since turned white.

**Equipment Carried:** Potion of black dragon control (including lesser night dragon, two doses left), earring of seamanship, balm of ethereality, scroll of communication (whose other half is at the temple of Razud in Starpoint), ring of holiness, amulet vs. crystal balls and ESP hammer +3 of extinguishing.

- Spells Commonly Memorized:**  
 Level 1— Detect evil, light (x2), purify food & water (x2), remove fear, resist cold  
 Level 2— Bless, hold person (x2), know alignment, resist fire, silence 15' radius, speak with animals  
 Level 3— Cure blindness, cure disease, remove curse, striking (x3)  
 Level 4— Create water, dispel magic (x2), neutralize poison  
 Level 5— Commune, create food, cure critical wounds, dispel evil  
 Level 6— Animate object, cure all, find the path  
 Level 7— Ship flight (10% chance) or raise dead fully

**D&D Game Statistics:** S 15, I 13, W 17, D 10, Co 14, Ch 16; 17th level cleric; AC 9; hp 49; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 (by weapon type or spell); Dmg by weapon type or spell; Save C17; ML 11, AL L. Languages: Common Alpathian and Minaean. Skills: Intimidation (St), Swimming (St), Helmsman/Captain (In), Guidance/Counseling (Wi), Theology (Wi), Persuasion (Wi), Storytelling (Ch).

these creatures in one place for easy reference.

And why is there never more information on the ability scores for humanoid than what is printed in DRAGON® issue #141? I would like to be able to let my players play a hobgoblin or a groll but I don't have the statistics on either of them.

GAZ10 The Orcs of Thar is what you need for humanoid ability scores. As for monsters, we are making plans for a major supplement in 1991 that should include most of the D&D monsters published to date in our various boxed sets. Unfortunately, the descriptions may remain just as short as they have been so far because of a lack of space in that product.

I'm all in favor of the Princess Ark diving back as soon as possible into the new HOLLOW WORLD setting. This is the most fascinating game world I've ever seen, and I want to know more!

Where are Amazons in the D&D game world? Because they are a basic element in fantasy, they must be somewhere in the game world. Could the Princess drop in on them?

Thanks for your vote. Amazons would be likely to be in the region originally called the Matriarchy of Pelatan, on the Southern continent. Perhaps that old Nithian map had some truth to it!

## Letters

I would like to know if you were going to do a *Monstrous Compendium* for the D&D game realms? I would like to have all

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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 12: An ancient revelation

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphantian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand the D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

from the Journals of  
**PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAUKEN**  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
**PRINCESS ARK**  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

**Sulamir 26, 2000 AY:** The departure from Starpoint was a grim one. I couldn't take the chance of being discovered. Empress Eriadna might have been watching, and she might not have tolerated a longer stay, no matter how helpful it was to my crew's morale. There would be other stops elsewhere, away from the Empire.

We are now sailing to the southwest, toward East Portage. I decided to remain within the skyshield. I have no doubt in my mind that the Heldannic Knights are aware of our emergence into this era. They would certainly intercept us if we breached the skyshield. Fortunately, their best ships are built in the void and cannot

reach the *Princess Ark* within the atmosphere of this world.

**Sudmir 17:** I have conducted further research on the Myoshiman monolith during the days of our journey between Starpoint and East Portage. By luck, the Empress did not request this "gift" from Lord Katayama. I have devised a contraption for controlling the effects of the magical monolith. With a simple command word, Talasar or myself can now allow or disallow the *invisibility* to take effect.

**Sudmir 19:** We entered the sky above East Portage this dawn. As usual, a multitude of busy merchantmen crowded the port, some unloading their cargo and others picking up valuable merchandise from the west. I observed nearly any kind of flag at the docks, and several new ones, too. With pleasure, I noticed the Imperial Banner was still the most common.

Several medium-sized ships were being pulled out of the water and loaded onto large wooden cradles. Scores of logs placed ahead and under the ships allowed the massive hulls to move forward, pulled by hundreds of draft horses. The ships were to be slowly dragged 140 miles overland in this manner until they reached West Portage, on the opposite coast of the narrow Isle of Dawn. This was quicker for surface vessels than circumventing the Isle of Dawn. This is proof that skyships such as the *Princess Ark* are a blessing for all navigators.

The port authorities did not seem to mind our presence; after vague formalities, some of the crew went down, alternating shifts again. I thought it would be a comfort for Lady Abovombe to leave her quarters and visit the city with me. Talasar had spent many hours with her, providing counsel and spiritual help. I was greatly relieved to see that Abovombe had finally partaken of my potions. She is clearly at her best now. Her looks could melt the





heart of the coldest man.

We landed near a huge, paved avenue that divided the entire town of East Portage, from the port to the west gate. The avenue was wide enough for two seagoing ships and their horse carriages to pass through at once. Elephants and a number of other large creatures were also used as draft animals, depending on the ships. Heavily armed caravans lead the ships, often followed by impressive baggage trains and other travelers.

We took a stroll to the commoners' market. It was quaint. I offered Abovombe a selection from a "bird of fortune" at one of those stuffy Ochalean shops that one can only find in a small, isolated street. It is a local custom to pay the shop owner to have his bird pick one of several thousand scrolls in the shop. The scroll often turns out to be a poem, a luck sign, or some obscure saying. Lady Abovombe read her scroll, smiled, and placed it in her pouch. Tradition demands that he poem be kept for oneself, but I wondered what it said.

I then took her out for dinner at The Silver Snake, a native place of my knowledge. Amazingly, it was still there after all these years. Dinner was pleasant, but Abovombe still showed a bit of coldness in her eyes. I was about to reveal how painful that was to my heart when I felt my dagger quiver in my sleeve. Danger was close.

Suddenly, Abovombe screamed, grabbed my arm, and pulled me to the ground. A swarthy man hiding behind a pillar had stepped forward and tossed a dagger at my back. Abovombe was quicker and saved my life. The man shouted, "Death to the Profaner!" and escaped into the crowded street. The dagger stuck into a wooden pillar that had been behind me, the blade oozing a black, oily substance.

After an interminable string of abject apologies from the owner, we left and returned to the Princess. I wondered what I had gotten myself into this time. I could also not stop thinking that Abovombe saved my life, and that perhaps she still had some feelings for me!

**Sudmir 20:** It was quite inconvenient that I was unable to see my aggressor, for this denies me the option of tracking him with my *crystal ball*. According to Lady Abovombe's description of the man and his accent, he must have been a Thothian. So far, I cannot see in what way I would deserve such treatment.

Raman, our chief engineer, erudite in the matters of ancient history, confirmed the dagger to be Thothian—that is, *ancient Thothian*. Raman had years ago been part of an archaeological expedition in Upper Thothia and had unearthed items of this nature. Sages in the expedition then began dying mysteriously during the excavation of King Haptuthep's tomb. Eventually, a native was caught while attempting to slit the throat of a sage who had fallen ill the evening before. The native had a weapon identical to the one hurled at me.

Unfortunately, the man never revealed

whom he worked for. He died mysteriously within the hour of his capture. Magic was ineffective in retrieving the man's soul for further questioning. Rumors flew among the native workers that frightening, ancient curses were at work. The tomb was dug up at last, however, and its treasures were shipped back to Alphatia. All of the sages in the expedition died of mysterious causes in the following three years. Raman himself nearly lost his life in a fire that ravaged his personal library. Many ancient Thothian scrolls were destroyed in the blaze.

Lacking any other clue as to the nature of this problem, I have ordered an immediate departure toward Upper Thothia, into the neutral region.

**Sudmir 25:** We located the old excavation site that Raman described. It lay in a deserted, rocky valley; the tomb was abandoned, and no sign of life was visible. Sand filled most of the entrance left by the archaeological expedition.

Raman, Myojo, Ramissur, and a squad of boltmen came with me to study the tomb. Removing the sand from the entrance was no major problem, and soon we started searching the dark monument for clues.

The expedition team had been quite thorough in stripping the tomb of treasures or anything else worth studying. We visited a number of chambers and galleries. Extra attention was brought to the chamber where the assassin had been caught, deep inside the tomb. The chamber had only one entrance, so the assassin must have used a secret passage or magic. It was Myojo who found—or, rather, smelled—the answer.

Raman studied some hieroglyphs on the wall and unveiled an interesting parable which gave away the mechanism of a secret passage. We entered the passage and followed a long stairway down to a larger chamber. It seems the expedition picked up a false treasure, a lure left by the builder of the tomb to fool the grave robbers. This new chamber contained a large sarcophagus, treasures, and statues of ancient Thothian mythology. Especially worrisome was a series of alcoves in which stood the mummified remains of priests and acolytes who remained in the tomb at the time it was sealed. In dark places such as ancient tombs where necromantic magic may be powerful, one must be naturally suspicious of any corpses.

My dagger quivered again. Ramissur and the boltmen took position against the corpses. However, unleashing *lightning bolts* in such closed quarters could be disastrous, and I ordered the boltmen out immediately. About then, a large slab of stone slammed shut with a thunderous rumble. Low voices rose from the corpses, chanting a strange hymn. The corpses did not move—but the walls did. They seemed to fade away into darkness, revealing an even larger chamber, a throne room lit by glowing braziers.

The mummified priests came alive,

progressively regaining their former living appearances. On the throne was a black figure, King Haptuthep presumably. An unsettling, evil glow flickered in his eyes, almost overwhelming my senses.

As the king spoke, Raman translated his whispered words with some difficulty. "You, sage, are a thief in my abode. And you, sorcerer, are a profaner. Your magical powers are useless here, and your feline lackey is an insult to the Immortals."

I inquired of the being as to what I had that belonged to him, and he went on. "That magic you used to empower your ship with the ability to fly is mine. It was stolen centuries ago when your people invaded my land. You have been the last to keep it, and you committed a sacrilege when you invoked its power."

I was properly nettled. "Why have you waited so long to manifest your anger, may I ask?"

"My servants searched your empire for you for decades until an old friend of yours came to me. She revealed many things about you and your servants, Synn is her name. Now you shall become my servants."

Naturally, I didn't wait any longer and tried to *web* this sinister character. I felt the magic go off, but *nothing happened*, or at least nothing that I was aware of. If we had been standing within an *anti-magic* zone, I would have felt nothing at all. And that's what tipped me off. I've seen this kind of trick before. He was merely trying to make me believe that magic didn't work. This was one pharaoh who had lost touch with reality. Alphatian wizards are fully aware of the powers of *hypnosis*. It is the oldest trick in the grimoire!

Myojo swung wildly at the approaching priests, and Raman tried to fend off a few others with his torch. I feigned being a wizard incapable of casting a spell, dropped to my knees, and implored his royal highness for mercy.

The king stood up, already rejoicing at his victory. Then I added, "Oh, what the heck!" and fired my *wand of disintegration* with quite a bit of conviction. It worked perfectly well.

With a cry of rage, the king reeled back. He survived, so to speak, since he was undead as I had suspected. The marching of the dead priests was illusory, and so was most of the room. The old king appeared for what he truly was—a horribly desiccated body with glowing eyes, no doubt a lich. His left arm and shoulder had been obliterated by the wand, unveiling bones darkened by centuries past. He uttered a quick word and disappeared.

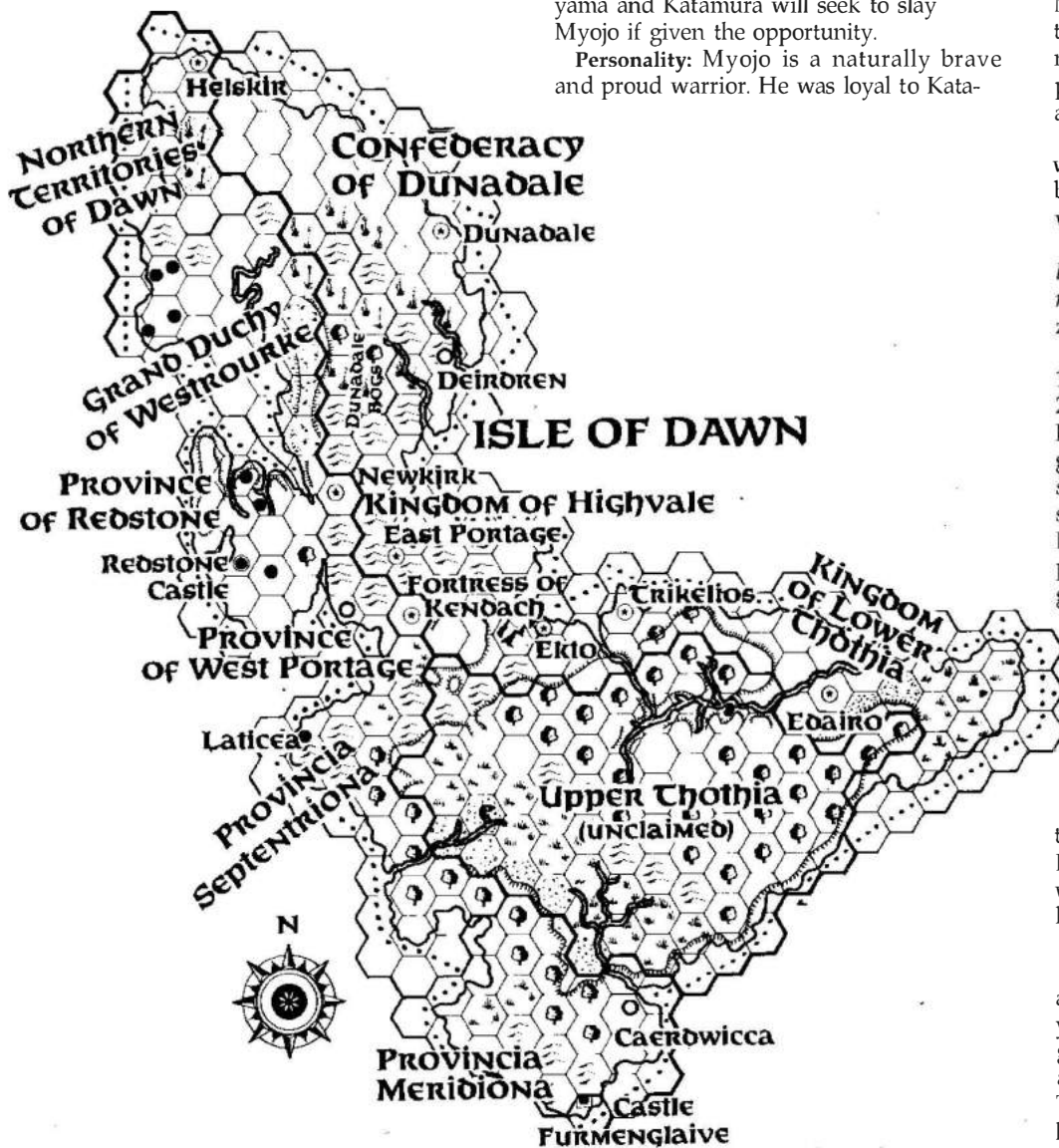
**Sudmir 26:** We had no trouble emptying the chamber of its treasures and scrolls. As I expected after yesterday's encounter, King Haptuthep's royal sarcophagus was empty. The king's lich probably has another lair somewhere in Thothia. We removed the other corpses and gave them a more permanent burial.

It was evident that his chamber had

been regularly visited. There were many gifts, some quite recent, that could not have withstood the passing centuries. The lich probably maintained a group of living followers, fanatics devoted to their ancient king. I must have encountered one of them in East Portage. Well, I am not in the lich-hunting business. This will have to be left to the proper authorities in Edairo.

The most interesting discovery, however, concerns this ancient scroll of which the king spoke, which I obtained decades ago during the war. I am worried that, as a result of my use of the scroll to enchant my ship, the *Princess Ark* may be more than I first thought. But what could the scroll have been? I fear that I was not in possession of the entire spell when I conducted the original enchantment of the ship. According to my findings in the tomb, it seems I must perform a further ceremony to complete the full enchantment. I will have to study these new scrolls further. As an echo to my thoughts, a low groan seemed to arise from the *Princess Ark's* hull.

*To be continued . . .*



Scale: one hex equals 72 miles

If you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the Gazetteers, please send your inquiries to: Bruce A. Heard, D&D Column, TSR, Inc. P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they always get our attention.

### Myojo Katamura (Attaché to the Admiral)

**History:** Myojo comes from a family traditionally devoted to the life of warriors. The Katamuras are vassals to the Katayama clan on Myoshima, and Myojo was sent to serve in Lord Katayama's personal guard. While still a teenager, Myojo gained great honor when he deflected an arrow meant for his shogun. Unfortunately, his awe and admiration for a nonrakasta (Haldemar) has made him a pariah to his kin. His two former companions, Kenju Fuurifesu (the shogun's cousin) and Jiro Tomokato (Myojo's brother-in-law) are now dead, and consequently all Katayama and Katamura will seek to slay Myojo if given the opportunity.

**Personality:** Myojo is a naturally brave and proud warrior. He was loyal to Kata-

yama until Haldemar demonstrated his daring and power when he bent to his will a ferocious monster (see DRAGON® issue #161). In absolute awe, Myojo wanted nothing else but to serve his new master. Myojo is otherwise hot tempered, arrogant with foes or underlings, and generally haughty with nonrakasta other than Haldemar. He does not trust Xerdon, whom he senses could be a rival to Haldemar, and considers Leo the gnome an inferior being.

**Disposition:** Goodwill toward Haldemar; Neutral toward Talasar; Antipathy toward Ramissur, Raman, Tarias, Ashari, Lady Abovombe, Xerdon, and Leo (given in order of preference).

**Appearance:** Myojo is a rakasta, a cat-headed humanoid. Short gray fur covers his body and face. A rather good looking male by rakasta standards, Myojo is slim but well muscled, with keen yellow eyes and large pointy ears. Myojo usually wears traditional Myoshiman armor complete with kabuto war helm, modified to bear Haldemar's family colors (gold crescent over a crimson and sable background). Myojo bears multiple scars on his chest, a testimony of his fight against Synn, the night dragon. The wound becomes very painful in the presence of wights, wraiths, and other powerful undead.

**Equipment carried:** Myojo's armor was given to him by his father; it is light but effective *armor* +2. His favored weapon, a katana, is a very fine *sword* +1. He also owns a small *gong of dispelling* (12 charges, casts *dispel magic*, 12' radius at level 10), and a ceremonial *wakizashi* (short sword).

**D&D game statistics:** S 16, I 13, W 11, D 17, Co 15, Ch 10 (14 to rakasta); HD 2 + 1; AC 0 (with Dex and magic); hp 16; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1 or 2 (katana or daikyu great bow); Dmg 2d6 +4 (Myojo reached *skilled-proficiency* in his mastery of swords) or d6, Save F2 +2, ML9, AL N. Languages: Myoshiman (common and poetry) and Alphatian (treat as an Intelligence skill). Skills: Tracking (Wi), Myoshiman Etiquette (In), Blind Shooting (Dx), and Bravery (Wi).

### Raman, Nabonidus (Chief Engineer)

**History:** Born to a family of horse traders, Raman became a jack-of-all-trades. He raised horses with his elders when he was a teenager, but soon grew bored and left to learn about the marvels of the world. He was a soldier for a short time, studied Basic Magic at Eriadna High, created a mobile theater and sold it a few years later, returned to Eriadna High and graduated in Ship Building, joined an archaeological expedition in Upper Thothia, ran a plantation in Aegos where he made a small fortune, returned and dabbled for some time in politics, gave up the risky and expensive life of politician to

become a poet, then opened his own library, which eventually burned down in a fire. Nearly penniless, he joined the Imperial Navy as a last recourse.

**Personality:** A snob and a bit pedantic, Raman is the blase type. He is 50 years old and has an opinion on everything and everyone. Thanks to his education and extensive experience in life, Raman does reasonably well as a sage. He is quiet, rational, and despises disorder and non-conformist thinking (such as Leo's). He loves poetry, literature, and famous quotations, although (much to his consternation) he does very poorly as a writer himself. He tells endless stories about his tribulations that often put listeners to sleep.

**Disposition:** Goodwill toward Haldemar, Talasar, and Xerdon; Neutral toward Lady Abovombe and Myojo; Antipathy toward Tarias, Ashari, Ramissur, and Leo.

**Appearance:** Like many people of the ethnic Ambur background, Raman has a copper skin, dark brown eyes, and short black hair. He is small and bit overweight. Raman grows a neatly trimmed goatee that he pulls at when lost in thought.

**Equipment carried:** *Wand of lightning bolts* (8d6) and *Zigomar's instant library* (Raman's pride and joy). This large ivory tube contains a scroll listing a collection of books. A *read magic* is required to decipher the scroll. Uttering a title on the scroll makes the corresponding book appear next to the tube. "Keep" is the command word that either returns the book or enters a new one into the scrolls arcane memory. Any summoned book must remain within 30' of the tube or crumble into dust. The scroll memorizes up to 1,000 books. Raman protects the tube with a *wizard lock*.

**Spells memorized:**

Level 1— *Read languages*, *read magic*

Level 2— *Knock*, *wizard lock*

Level 3— *Dispel magic*

**D&D game statistics:** S 11, I 16, W 14, D 11, Co 12, Ch 10; 6th-level Magic-User; AC 9; hp 15; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (dagger); Dmg by weapon type; Save MU6; ML 9; AL N. Languages: Common Alphatian, Thothian, and the Ambur dialect. Skills: Horse Husbandry (In), Ship Building (In), Literature (In), Archeology (In), Linguistics (In), Ethnology (In), and Zoology (In).

**Abovombe, Daughter of Mananjary**

(Ambassador from Cestia)

**History:** Lady Abovombe is the third daughter of Mananjary, the king of Manaraka on Cestia. Raised to become a diplomat, she always preferred the traditional life of dragon hunter. Whenever she had an occasion, she would leave the palace and join dragon-hunting raids incognito. While still a teenager, she mastered the fighting techniques used against Night Dragons.

She joined the *Princess Ark* expedition in

1965 AY in Cestia. Lord Katayama of Myoshima abducted her when she was 27, and she spent 34 years in a Myoshiman dungeon while the *Princess Ark* voyaged into the Hollow World, then was hurled into the future to the year 2,000 AY. Synn the night dragon then brought her back to the ship to torment Haldemar. Haldemar gave her two *potions of longevity*, rejuvenating her to the biological age of 41.

**Personality:** Despite the years of hardship in Myoshima, Lady Abovombe still is a sophisticated and proud person. She can, however, switch quickly to her more rugged side, as dictated by the situation. She is equally at ease within a palace as among a party of crude, ruthless warriors. Her passion and hot temper prevent her from succeeding as a diplomat, and she has gotten her in trouble when dealing with adversity, such as when she was thrown into the Myoshiman jail. Her willpower and tenacity allowed her to endure and survive despite her condition. She now despises all Myoshimans.

**Disposition:** Goodwill toward Haldemar, Talasar, Xerdon, and Ashari; Neutral toward Leo and Raman; Antipathy toward Ramissur and Tarias; Hatred toward Myojo. Lady Abovombe is in love with Haldemar but doubts his true feelings for her, and her growing friendship with

Talasar is confusing the issue for her.

**Appearance:** Now in her forties, Lady Abovombe is still sensual and elegant despite three decades of captivity. She often keeps her jet-black hair tied in a bun. Her dark skin makes quite a contrast with her steel-gray eyes. Although she doesn't look strong, Abovombe's strength and endurance surprise many. To the crew's delight, she speaks with a charming native Cestian accent.

**Equipment carried:** Lady Abovombe does not normally carry any item of importance when on the ship. She will take along the following objects when expecting danger: *short sword +1*, *bolas +2*, *bolas of sunlight*, *ointment of soothing*, and a *ring of safety*.

**D&D game statistics:** S 14, I 13, W 10, D 15, Co 16, Ch 16; 4th-level Fighter; AC 8 (with Dex); hp 28; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (*short sword +1* or *bolas +2*); Dmg by weapon type (1d6 + 2 or d4 + 3/entangle; Abovombe reached *master-proficiency* in her mastery of *bolas*); Save F4; ML 11; AL L. Languages: Cestian, Night Dragon (reading only), and Common Alphatian (treat as an Intelligence Skill). Skills: Detect Deception (Wi), Tracking (Wi), Horsemanship (Dx), Leadership (Wi).

*Continued on page 102*

**ORCS NEST**

TIDDLEY, WIDDLEY, DIDDLEY, PLOP!  
THE ORCS HAVE GOT ANOTHER SHOPPE!  
IT'S AT... IN-SHOPS, THE MALTINGS CENTRE,  
**St. ALBANS!**  
AND THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE FANTASY  
GAMES SHOPPE IS STILL AT  
6 EARLHAM STREET  
**LONDON WC2**

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# Princess Ark

Continued from page 45

## Letters

I am concerned about the future of the Princess Ark. I loathe the idea of seeing the end of the D&D column in DRAGON® Magazine, and I think it should go on as long as possible. So I have two questions: How does "The Voyage of the Princess Ark" end, and what happens to the log?

*I certainly agree the column should go on as long as possible, provided that it brings something new to the reader. If the series were to meet its end, I suppose the Princess Ark could head into space—that is, with its log book. Don't forget that it is really up to you to decide whether or not the log book should ever become available to PCs. If yes, the party could hear legends about it and go on a quest to find it. But of course, that is another story!*

I've been a long-time fan of the D&D game. However I'd like to point out that the rules are difficult to use. The game rules are generally simple, but finding them is a problem. The rules are spread among five different boxed sets, and they are very poorly indexed. Although the D&D Known World is probably one of the best game worlds I ever played in, I must admit that the game's organization is appalling. I would love a simpler, more flexible alternative to the AD&D game; so far, the D&D game has fallen short of this goal. Is there anything planned in future to address that problem?

*Yes! Our writers have had the same complaint for years, including yours truly. Fall 1991 should finally see the release of the D&D Rules Cyclopedica, a 304-page, hardback compilation of all D&D rules from Basic to Masters. If everything works out, it should also include beefed-up monster descriptions, a complete listing of skills, a small atlas of the Known World, optional rules, and a complete guide on how to convert D&D game material to the AD&D 2nd Edition game. How's that?*

I found a strange sentence in the D&D HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set. Page 119 of the Dungeon Master's Sourcebook reveals that Yagrai's chief ally is Halav, enemy of all humanoids. Am I missing something?

*Errare humanoidum est! The author meant "Yagrai's chief foe is Halav, enemy of all humanoids."*

How do you explain that Haldemar referred directly to Nithians in his log book when describing the "Old Nithian" scroll? I thought all memory of Nithians had been magically wiped out.

*Direct memory about ancient Nithia was wiped out when that empire was destroyed. However the spell affected only current memory not future knowledge. In the following centuries, Nithian ruins were dug up in Ylaruam and Thothia. A small number of sages (Raman is the last*

*of them) deciphered the hieroglyphs and thus discovered that culture's existence. There is, after all, an Emirate of Nithia in northern Ylaruam. Ancient Nithia now belongs in the exceedingly obscure realm of Known World archaeology*

Could you come up with a plausible reason why a desert setting lies next to a Norse region in the Known World?

Although I understand this is part of the D&D Known Worlds fantasy, how could you explain it otherwise?

*A segment of the Elemental Plane of Fire seems to coincide with the general location of the Ylaruam desert, so the hot weather there is magical in nature. As far as the Northern Reaches are concerned, assume that the intersection of cool winds coming down from the Makkres Mountains and the icy sea currents flowing from the north create a cold microclimate. The Hardanger Range shields the northern weather pattern from Ylaruam's.*

Exactly which colonies or nations lie on the Isle of Dawn, and where do their boundaries lie? Do these states have capitals? Also, on the Isle of Dawn, what is the "Provincia Septentriona" depicted on the TM2 Trail Map, and how does it relate to the other colonies?

*See the map of the Isle of Dawn for specific boundaries. As for a list of colonies and nations, starting from the North on Thyatis' side: City State of Helskir (only covers approximately a 72-mile area); Northern Territories of Dawn (wilderness claimed by Thyatis); Grand Duchy of Westrouke (archduke's capital: Newkirk); Province of Redstone (colony, administrative center: Redstone Castle); Province of West Portage (Colony, admin. center: West Portage); County of Kendach (similar to Helskir); Provincia Septentriona (colony, admin. center: Laticea); County of Fumenglaive (similar to Helskir); Provincia Meridiona (colony, admin. center: Caerduwicca).*

*Continuing from the North, on the Alphatian side: Confederation of Dunadale (capital: Dunadale); Dunadale Bogs (wilderness claimed by Alphatia, under the Dunadale Confederation's administration); Kingdom of Hillvale (capital: East Portage); City States of Ekto and Trikelios (both similar to Helskir); Kingdom of Lower Thothia (capital: Eclair); Upper Thothian Territories (unclaimed wilderness, neutral territory).*

*The Northern Territories of Dawn, the Dunadale Bogs, and the Provinciae Septentriona and Meridiona are largely unpopulated regions. These dependencies were essentially created for administrative purposes. They may be subdivided into dominions as their populations develop.*

I would like to know how many Gazetteers there are beyond GAZ13 The Shadow Elves. I'm a bit confused about the

Drow and Shadow Elf. Could you clear up some of this confusion?

I would also like to know if you have any product for a jungle setting. In DRAGON issue #160, the HOLLOW WORLD supplement is pictured as a boxed set, and I take it that *Nightwail* and *Nightrage* are extra games within the Hollow World. If so, how many more are involved?

As I live in New Zealand a lot of the games are not available here. Do you have a mail order system? If possible can I get a TSR mail order catalog sent to me?

*GAZ13 The Shadow Elves is "it" for the moment. The shadow elves are the D&D setting's equivalent of the AD&D game's drow, sort of. Shadow elves are pale skinned; drow have black skin. Shadow elves also have abilities and magical powers different from drow.*

*The HOLLOW WORLD boxed set offers several jungle settings. The Dawn of the Emperors boxed set (look for the Hinterlands) and GAZ4 Ierendi (with Aloysius Island) are the only two Known World jungle settings. There is little information on these two regions, however.*

*Nightwail, Nightrage, and Nightstorm are part of the HOLLOW WORLD Blood Brethren Trilogy. More modules will be published for the HOLLOW WORLD set in the future.*

*For everyone overseas who is experiencing difficulties acquiring copies of current or older products, TSR has a mail order department where you can also get a free catalog. Just send your address to: The Mail Order Hobby Shop, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.*

Like many other D&D enthusiasts, I was a bit distraught at the absence of commentary on the D&D Known World until the present column, "The Voyage of the Princess Ark." It was a much-needed overview of the world not yet touched on by the Gazetteers. This information can give DMs like myself a chance to see what lies beyond the realms specified in the Gazetteers.

Personally, I would like the Princess Ark column to continue exploring the outer Known World. The SPELLJAMMER™ and HOLLOW WORLD sets cover their respective territories adequately. An overview of the Known World presented in the Masters Set would be more beneficial, since it would touch on areas not yet explored, helping to "explain" little questions that arise as the world is being explored/developed, like why "The Arm of God" (Masters Set) is now referred to as "The Arm of The Immortals" (HOLLOW WORLD set).

*The Arm of God became the Arm of the Immortals simply because D&D has Immortals but no gods. By the way, the SPELLJAMMER set does not deal with the D&D universe. Although this excellent system works perfectly well in a D&D setting, it is first and foremost an AD&D product.*

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 13: Where dreams of chaos reign

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

from the Journals of  
prince haldemar of haaken  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
PRINCESS ARK  
Imperial Explorer, etc. etc.

**Vertmir 11,2000 AY:** Many days and nights have passed since I began studying the ancient Thothian papyruses from King Haptuthep's tomb. One of them appears to be the missing fragment of my original scroll. As I grow closer to unveiling the key to the Thothian enchantment, my curiosity grows even greater, keeping my weariness at bay. The warm summer breeze plays with the flickering flames on the candelabrum, causing the tiny hieroglyphs to dance on the papyrus.

It is as though an uncanny life animates the symbols, telling strange stories of dark secrets, obscure magicks, and bizarre creatures invoked during the encryption.

Increasingly fascinated, I cannot truly discern where the reality of the pictograms ends and where the dancing illusions begin. Oddly, the symbols seem far away one instant, then inexplicably grow huge and very close the next—back and forth. Today as I was reading, my vision slowly blurred and my mind began to tip into an abyss of uncontrollable thoughts.

"Haaken-San?" The sudden voice rippled through my mind like the crack of a whip. I promptly jumped up, sending a flurry of notes flying off my desk and startling Myojo just as much. Dear Myojo—he hadn't seen me for days. He came to check on my well-being and in so doing saved me from complete insanity. It was clear that dire magicks protect this archaic Thothian papyrus—and I had almost been their victim. It had been far too long since I had some rest. It was time to put the papyrus away.

But a long sleep fraught with odious dreams and nightmares followed.

**Vertmir 13:** The deep sound of a distant gong awoke me. From the light filtering in, I could tell it was close to noon. I'd slept far later than I had wanted. I could hear the brief orders Xerdon barked to the crew while they clewed the sails up.

Despite a throbbing headache, I came up to the railing but left Xerdon in charge of the approach. We had reached our next stop at the far western tip of Ochalea. The small port of Tang-Hwa had an old custom of ringing huge gongs and blowing enormous horns both to greet incoming vessels—and as a means of calling the guards to their positions, just in case. This noise served only to worsen my headache.

Down below, a crowd of cackling onlookers gathered at the docks, pointing fingers up at the *Princess* with wide eyes. Skyships were not a common sight in these parts. Very soon came a dignitary, a Lady Ping, mounted on an elaborate palan-







quin. Talasar went down to greet her and bring her aboard the *Princess* for a visit of courtesy.

I invited Lady Ping to the officer's mess for a refreshment. The conversation was quite pleasant, except for some oddities. As we were talking, an ant came out of Lady Ping's nose, scurried over her face, then disappeared into her mouth. Xerdon and Talasar were also present but did not react, and neither did Lady Ping. Shortly afterward, the serpent tattoos on her face coiled and uncoiled. Nobody reacted to this, either. Talasar took Lady Ping for a tour of the *Princess*, and I took the opportunity to question Xerdon about the dignitary's facial tattoos. His answer of, "Tattoos, sir?" confused me even further. I retired to my quarters with an aggravating migraine.

**Vertmir 15:** The *Princess* remained two days above Tang-Hwa. Some of the crew went on leave while fresh supplies were carried in. I was ill during that time and delegated command of the *Princess* to Talasar. I've had several more nightmares that have perturbed my psyche, and I therefore prefer to stay away from the busy decks. Finally, our westward journey resumed with no further incident.

**Vertmir 16:** Today I felt much better and came up to the deck. My crew was relieved to see me there. My headache was gone, and I was no longer experiencing these upsetting nightmares. Everything was fine. The morning sun rose from the west, and purple clouds stretched along the horizon as fine gossamer, reaching toward the endless scarlet waves of the sea. I resumed command and ordered the *Imperial Ark* on a southward course across the emerald sky. Our heavy, bronze-clad man-of-war veered gracefully as its six wings fluttered in the late summer breeze. A flock of sapphire gulls glided in our wake, indolently waving their scaly tails. A lovely dawn indeed.

**Vertmir 28:** Days have past—very ordinary, fine days, I might add. We finally reached our next stop, on the northern coast of Davania, west of the Thyatian Jungle Coast. There had been rumors that a kingdom existed in this region. We expected to find coastal towns and ports, but instead the coast was almost entirely savage, overgrown with slender coconut trees and gnarled mangroves.

It was only because I used my spyglass that I spotted buildings in the upland hills. Vegetation partially concealed them. Most of the buildings had a dark green color, helping in their concealment, I could observe common activity taking place in the streets. I commanded the mighty *Imperial Ark* to be cloaked and sail forth.

**Tslamir 1:** We spent a day above these new-found people. Indeed, these are of a strange kind. These very tall, skinny people have pale green skin and long silver hair. Aside from this, it seems like a normal city and they did not seem a violent people. It was time to send down an away team.

Talasar will stay on board, while Xerdon, Myojo, and myself will go down to explore the place in more detail. We will descend into the forest and approach the town as travelers.

**Tslamir 2:** My adventures this day have been difficult to recount, for reasons that shall grow clear, and this entry and those following it have been written some days after they occurred. I shall start at the beginning:

The green people reacted with great curiosity when we entered the front gate. There was no sign of animosity. Soon enough, an official came forward with a small guard. The guards wore very elaborate armor, with graceful curves and sharp thorns perhaps designed to both decorate and defend. I could not tell what the armor was made of; it wasn't metal, however. The blades of their weapons were similarly shaped.

The official came closer and inquired about our origins. It appeared they had already met Thyatian explorers a decade ago. The odd thing is that I could understand the official quite clearly, but Xerdon and Myojo could not. The official, Lord Verdlin, invited us to his residence, and we followed.

It was indeed quite a residence. The mansion was almost entirely built of wood, intricately carved and dyed in various tones of green, the dominant color here. It had an incredible garden with beautiful topiary, shrubs, and trees. The inside of the building had a more natural wood color, except for the very fine carpet of grass growing inside—comfortable, but uncommon. We sat next to a small fountain with Lord Verdlin and his wife, Lady Gruneel. She had her servants bring *unrah*, the local brew—a sweet, fermented tree sap of which we all partook.

We had a long conversation. The name of the city is Glauqnor; it belongs to the small kingdom of Emerond. The capital lies further inland. The Emerondians' skin color comes from vegetable dyes. They developed a civilization and culture based on the respect and love of nature, especially flora, and grew to understand all aspects of plant life and the magic devoted to that sphere. They live mostly on vegetables that they grow in small fields or pick from the forest. The Emerondians seemed like a very peaceful people.

As a sign of courtesy, Lord Verdlin invited our party to be his guests at the residence for the night. I accepted, and shortly afterward was led to my quarters. We spent the evening with a group of young nobles eager to show off the best parts of their city. Gardens and ornamental plants were ever present in the streets and on the houses. When I grew tired of the tour, one of the nobles proposed a stop at an "elation abode." Having no idea what that was, I decided to go along.

The place was an indoor pool and sauna. A few nobles of both genders were already there, naked, waving at me while

enjoying the hot, bubbling water. Myojo came out of the dressing room in the briefest of attires but still holding his sword. He looked down at the water, gazed at me in despair, then resigned himself to stepping down into the bath. He sat there, quite unhappy, as two cute courtesans delighted in scrubbing his head and scratching his chin. Xerdon came out next, clutching at a small towel, visibly embarrassed. I could have sworn one of the young nobles winked at him, but I could be mistaken. I couldn't tell if it was the hot water that caused Xerdon to blush.

Things got a bit less uptight as I discovered the water was laced with *unrah*. It was indeed a very pleasant interlude, until I noticed something strange. The cheeks of my closest neighbor, Lady Gruneel, began to stretch unnaturally until green thorns ripped through her skin. She opened her mouth to say something, but her tongue was turning into a slimy liana. It coiled out and lunged at me. In horror I jumped back and slapped at the obscene thing.

The entire scene suddenly changed. To my astonishment, I found myself standing next to the small fountain at Lord Verdlin's residence. At my feet lay a dazed Lady Gruneel, rubbing her cheek. I could see the mark of a hand slap on her face. Myojo sat nearby, staring at me with wide eyes, while Xerdon slowly shook his head, looking at me with surprise and shock. It was as if nothing had actually happened since we had sat down for our fountain-side conversation!

Lord Verdlin leaped to his feet. "This is an outrage!" he roared. Guards raced into the room. I wasn't granted time to explain my deed—I couldn't anyway. The offended lord had me taken to his prison.

**Tslamir 3** (I think): Had I been dreaming? Was I losing my mind? I started to suspect the ancient Thothian papyrus had affected me far more than I thought. I could no longer rely on my senses. With horror, I also realized I could not recall any spells; my thoughts and memories blurred every time I tried. I was wholly powerless.

The cell was dark, humid, and absolutely silent, yet at times I could hear voices. One sounded like King Haptuthep, another like Herr Rolf or Synn, and Lord Verdlin's cry of outrage echoed continually in my mind. The walls began to warp, turning into black, glossy sludge. With great difficulty, I shrugged the vision off, and calm returned for a while. I knew enough then to realize I was hallucinating. But I could not remain clear headed much longer.

Soon enough, my delusions returned along with a throbbing headache. Creatures of chaos marched all through my cell, roaring and screeching horribly. The infernal procession went on for what seemed an eternity, mimicking the uncanny ballet of hieroglyphs on the archaic papyrus. In the profound psychosis that overtook my mind, I discovered what I had been after. It was there, the key to the

Thothian enchantment.

Oh, I wasn't truly mad. What I had failed to understand is that one must become a Gate to Chaos in order to use the powers of the Thothian enchantment. I had merely become a gate standing at the threshold of my world and of the Plane of Nightmares. I could see both at once; my world and the nightmare plane had seemed to be the same all along. The oddities that had occurred were chaotic emanations from the Plane of Nightmares of which only I was aware. Alas, this discovery did not grant me control over the visions. I still could not trust my senses.

The long, insane night went on.

**Tslamir 4:** The guard pulled me out of the jail this day and brought me to Lord Verdlin. Xerdon and Myojo were present under a solid guard, along with magistrates and scribes. I was informed that the penalty for my deed was death. But in view of the fact I was an important personality, I would be granted the right to something called "Trial by Fear."

I was dragged to a large wooden structure that looked like an indoor arena. The magistrates took places at a bench, while a number of nobles sat around a wide pit. The guards then lowered me into the pit, and a large iron grate squeaked open. A horrid miasma befouled the air in the pit, while creatures from chaos spewed out of the dark.

I couldn't be sure this was truly happening. Was I dreaming all this? If not, there was little I could do. Frustrated, I made a terrible effort to shut the gate myself. With a thundering crash, the iron grate slammed shut, and the visions blurred into oblivion—except for one. It stood tall and slimy, and it was snapping its mandibles at me. I could see the many marks on its shell left by fallen warriors. And I was unarmed. Powerless.

Against a fragment of a dream.

In anger, I faced the nightmarish phantasm and addressed it formally. "Creature of the Dark, thou canst not harm me, for I know whence thou hast come! I fear thee not. Begone!" Strengthened by my words, I turned away from the thing, looked up at Lord Verdlin, and added, "Let this charade come to its end. This has lasted far too long!" Lord Verdlin blinked at me, then gazed at the chief magistrate, who responded with a short nod. The guards lifted me out. The request was made that I leave with my two companions and never return. I supposed that was fair enough and proceeded back to the forest at once.

**Tslamir 5:** I briefed Xerdon, Myojo, and Talasar of what had happened and why. It was imperative that I return to my quarters at once and complete the Thothian enchantment. This would be the only way of defeating the spells madness. I ordered I was not to be interrupted for any reason. Talasar will therefore assume command of the ship until my return.

On the way down to my quarters, Myojo mentioned how impressed he was

by my inconceivable bravery and gall in the face of the terrible Emerondian monster in the pit. Confused, I stopped in my tracks and considered the implications of his comments. "What monster, Myojo? You saw it?"

Perplexed, he said, "Well, yes, Haaken-san. You ignored the beast and turned away as if you could not care less. The monster was so surprised that it backed off. Clearly, it sensed you to be a powerful wizard." At the expression on my face, Myojo queried further, "Is something wrong, Haaken-San?"

"Never mind, Myojo. Thanks, anyway." *To be continued...*

If you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the Gazetteers, please send your inquiries to: Bruce A. Heard, D&D Column, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they always get our attention.

### The Emerondians

The Kingdom of Emerond is a loosely organized nation of city-states under one monarch. Over the centuries, a nobility has developed from the more influential families of the city-states' governments. The city-states are mostly autonomous, but, in case of war or a grave crisis, they will accept the rulership of the ancestral ruling dynasty. In other times, the city-states see the royal authority mostly as a honorific position.

The Emerondians are essentially farmers and gatherers. Their knowledge of agriculture and flora in general is extensive, but they remain almost totally ignorant about the ways of the sea and navigation. The local economy is weak compared to other nations of the Known World, as their concept of private property is rather vague. Emerondians share with each other much more than money-driven societies. They live a humble, albeit generally comfortable, life.

A peaceful people, the Emerondians are very respectful of their ancestors and laws. They benefit from an ancient culture that provides them with a rich artistic and literary background. Their philosophy is mostly druidical, but several insectlike figures are known to be part of the Emerondian pantheon of Immortal patrons.

They suffered several invasions in the past, including a number of limited incursions from Thyatis. Emerondians maintain a small but reasonably well-trained army. They are masters at concealment in woods and have acquired a great experience in engineering. As a result, their cities are always fortified and well defended.

Emerondians grow a special steel-like vegetable fiber from which they produce armor or blades. Amply curved lines and deadly thorns are typical of these pieces of equipment. The color of the fibers varies

from tan to dark brown. A common sort of Emerondian armor provides AC 5 (AC 4 with a shield), while blades are equivalent to the Known World's normal swords. Both types of equipment generate half the encumbrance of comparable metal weapons for the same strength. If ever sold, they would cost five times the price of metal gear because of the time needed to grow the fibers and the amount of work needed to fashion them.

Emerondians have mastered a special fighting technique that makes ample use of the thorns on their armor and on their blades. Once during each round of melee, one of the following may happen, depending on the Emerondian warrior's initial attack roll that round:

—On an attack score of 1-5, an opponent chosen at random is stabbed by a thorn inflicting 1-4 hp damage.

—On an attack score of 16-20, an opponent of the Emerondian warrior's choice must make a Strength check or be disarmed.

The Emerondians are not natives of the Known World. They came many centuries ago from asteroids far beyond the Sky shield, called the Pyrithean Archipelago. The Pyritheans were a race of savage space pirates. A stray war band became stranded on the Known World and eventually founded the more peaceful Emerond Kingdom. They brought their unique vegetable fiber with them.

The common Emerondians have forgotten about this old tie with their warlike Pyrithean ancestors. A handful of the high priests and greater druids remain as the keepers of this archaic lore. They have a secret knowledge of special magic that creates Pyrithean war mounts: flying insects grown to huge proportions and transformed into mystical armored beasts with wicked thorns and talons. The war mounts are tamed to respond to their riders' thoughts. For combat purposes, the mounts have the same game statistics as the hook horror (AC9 *Creature Catalog*, page 70), but have a flying movement of 180' (60').

### Letters

Hooray! The HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set added essential information on the Immortals' interaction with the mortals and their goals in the Known World. They are much more active than I first thought.

Unfortunately, you left a number Immortals out—some with good reason, but others would have been useful. My second complaint is that the chapter on Immortals explains only briefly how they interact with their clerics and worshippers. The most important question is: How closely do Immortals monitor their clerics? After all, it appears Immortals are not omniscient. Since an Immortal patron provides a cleric with spells, dreams, and omens, it would be logical to assume the Immortal is aware of the cleric's identity and personality.

However, candidates to immortality have to go to a lot of trouble to get the attention of an Immortal sponsor. It would seem that a cleric who has served his Immortal patron faithfully should not have this problem. How do you handle it?

HOLLOW WORLD set author Aaron Allston faced the daunting task of compiling these Immortal characters from the mass of previously published D&D modules and accessories within a relatively short time. That and the limited space in the HOLLOW WORLD Sourcebook are what governed which Immortals made it to print.

If current plans hold together, there should be an update of the Immortals Set coming in 1992. The material that Aaron put together (including what was left out) will be expanded even further, and many of the finer points on game mechanics and role-playing will be fine-tuned at that time. As a matter of fact, now would be a good time to send in your suggestions on what you would like to see removed or improved in that game set.

Part of the problem with Immortals comes from the fact that the original creators of the D&D game wanted to downplay the importance of gods and religions in role-playing in order to avoid offending anyone. Unfortunately, it did take out quite a bit of color from role-playing clerics. Originally, clerics furthered a general philosophy of Law, Neutrality, or Chaos without being connected to any specific Immortal.

Over years of product development, that concept was slowly replaced with the more popular idea of Immortal patrons interacting with clerics. Unfortunately, the current game system is not built to handle this situation to its best effect. Until an update of the Immortal Set comes out, we'll have to tinker with the system a bit.

In the case of clerical candidates to immortality, assume Immortals will treat them no better than any other character class. When it comes to who is best suited to become an Immortal, there can be no distinction of classes. What is relevant is what the candidate accomplishes in the Known World, not how much faith he has in his Immortal patron. Also bear in mind that there is a certain question of game balance and fairness here.

How do the Churches of Karameikos, Traladara, the Eternal Truth, and the People's Temple relate to the Immortals? What Immortals have the Ylari adopted as their philosophical guides besides Protius?

The Church of Karameikos is of a polytheist cult. Its major patron is Asterius, with some representation of Vanya, Valetrias, Tarastia, Kagyar, and Isundal. A single church of Karameikos often has several chapels consecrated to some or all of the above Immortal patrons. Each Immortal requires a separate cleric for services, however. Only the larger churches of Karameikos have multiple clerics on a

permanent basis. The Church of Traladara is similar, although it follows exclusively the precepts of Halav, Petra, and Zirchev.

Note that the Church of Thyatis is a defunct organization that splintered in to smaller groups. Otherwise, it should be nearly identical to the Church of Karameikos.

The Eternal Truth goes by the Way of Al Kalim. It is more of a way of life than an actual religion. Al Kalim (an ex-follower of Protius) should be considered an Immortal. The Magian Fire Worshipers are followers of Rathanos. But the People's Temple? What's that?

The HOLLOW WORLD set seems to contradict some of the Gazetteers. For example, the HOLLOW WORLD set states that Rafiel belongs to the Sphere of Time; GAZ13 says he belongs in the Sphere of Energy). The HOLLOW WORLD set says Atzanteotl attained greater Immortal power, while both GAZ10 and GAZ13 say he's only a screaming demon.

Rafiel really ought to be part of the Sphere of Energy; hopefully a future correction will take care of that problem in the HOLLOW WORLD set. Atzanteotl had indeed attained Empyrean level by the time the HOLLOW WORLD set made it to print.

1. Do pegataurs have infravision, immunity to ghoul paralysis, and the ability to detect secret doors?
2. At which level(s) do pegataurs gain a new weapon proficiency?
3. Do centaurs begin with skilled mastery with the longbow?
4. Is the gestation period of the elves the same as shadow elves' 12 months?
5. Is the level advancement of Tree Keepers the same as for shadow elves?
6. Where did the Myoshiman rakastas get their spell-casting abilities?
7. What would a rakasta's level-advancement table be like?
8. The Immortals Set states that a Hierarchy is nearly omnipotent on its own plane when dealing with a lesser Immortal. What about mortals?

There are gamers out there who relish this kind of rules detail. The D&D game provides general ideas and guidelines for gaming. For the sake of flexibility and simplicity, game rules often avoid going into massive lists of what monsters can and cannot do. If you run into a problem of this nature, the choice is yours – and your DMs – to make, depending on how you want your game to be played. If you feel the need to have a rule dictated to you for everything, perhaps you are better off playing the AD&D® game. But if we must:

1. Infravision only.
2. AC9 Creature Catalog mentions a 20% chance per level; this guarantees one new mastery per five levels.
3. If you so desire.
4. Yes.
5. Yes.

6. That was an optional twist to the rules that I brought in for the purpose of the story, Assume some rakasta tribes to be more skillful than others at wizard or clerical magic.
7. GAZ9 The Orcs of Thar suggested a generic system for developing new character classes based on monsters.
8. Mortals, to a Hierarchy on his home plane, are the same as food for Fido.

What happened to Blackmoor? Who caused its doom?

Humans experimenting with magic and forbidden technologies caused a nuclear explosion that destroyed Blackmoor.

How do I volunteer in designing a map or game background for the Moon of Myoshima?

A short article with a few maps submitted to DRAGON® Magazine might be the way to start. There are Writers Guidelines available from DRAGON Magazine that you'll need to get first, however. Send a SASE to: Writers Guidelines, DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. [You should also query the editors to make sure they want to see your article before you write it. –The Editors]

What happened to AC4 The Book of Marvelous Magic?

It has been out of print for a number of years and is now a collector's item. You might be able to get a copy at the annual GEN CON® games fair auction.

The Legion of Thar described in GAZ10 is way too small to live up to its reputation. With 30,000 humanoids, it could not take Corunglain, let alone fight a major war against humans and demihumans. Is this number correct?

It is by AC 1000 standards. Remember two things: First, humanoids breed a lot faster than humans or demihumans do; second, humanoids view the Broken Lands as their sacred territory, and any rumor of war is likely to attract masses of humanoids from the Dwarfgate Mountains to the Kurish Massif. A 300,000-strong horde of starving (there's not enough food in the Broken Lands for that big an army) and angry humanoids may very well do the trick.

Ω

## Errata

Two glitches sneaked into Haldemar's personality description (second paragraph) in DRAGON issue #164, page 44. In truth, Haldemar refrains from any of his dressing excesses away from the court. And while Haldemar enjoys sneaking about as a thief, he does not have the ability to move silently as a thief.

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 14: The sky dragon unleashed

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
Prince Haldemar of Haaken  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
Princess Ark  
Imperial Explorer, ETC. ETC.

**Tslamir 8, 2000 AY—Talaras:** Three days already. I, Talaras Ecbashur, have taken over this vessel's command until the admiral's return from his cabin, but his absence has lasted far too long. I thought several times of reaching him but have decided not to, for fear of disturbing his work. I could also sense magical wards near his quarters and so ordered everyone to stay away. I am hoping for some sign from the admiral. I could not order the Princess to head back to the Empire, for not much help would be found there. We have to continue on our primary mission, so I have decided to keep sailing west. Patience will be my guide.

**Tslamir 8—Haldemar:** Three days already. A sinister magic has overcome my quarters; the entire room seems to have shifted out of reality. Bulkheads feel much farther away than they should, and beyond the crystal windows reigns a perpetual realm of threatening shadows. I sense that I can no longer leave my quarters. From the corners of my eyes, I can perceive unnerving movements in the room, but as I turn to watch, the movements always dance away to the sides. Flames on the candelabrum are frozen as if time has stopped. In this unreal light, I proceed with the infernal Thothian enchantment, again struggling against the nightmarish delirium of the hieroglyphs. Patience will be my guide.

**Tslamir 9—Talaras:** At last, a sign! I was brutally awakened by the sound of thunder; we were nearing a large storm. Both Xerdon and I reached the upper deck at the same time. By then, the wind had picked up great strength. At this moment, a large blue whirlpool of light appeared directly in the path of the Princess. I ordered the helmsman to veer hard to the north, but in response a cavernous roar rose from the ship. The helmsman suddenly lost his grip on the wheel as it spun wildly out of control. The entire hull shook, and the Princess resumed her course straight toward the pool of light. This could only be the doing of the admiral. The blue whirlpool must be a magical gate. But to where?

**Tslamir 9—Haldemar:** At last, a sign! I unveiled a major axiom in the principles of ancient Thothian wizardry summoned in this papyrus. This dweomer craft was far more elaborate than the initial enchantment invoked on the ship. As I conjured the power encrypted in these runes, the papyrus consumed itself slowly. There was no stopping then, for the rest of the text would have disappeared and I would





have remained stranded forever in this nightmarish netherworld. When the papyrus disappeared completely, new pictograms began to glow in the air, continuing their maddening ballet. The eerie markings transformed their shapes and forms as I read them, endlessly adding more depth to the sorcery's mechanism. After I had deciphered the meanings of the mystic sequences, the hieroglyphs blended to form a whirlpool of blue light. I had opened another portal. But to where?

**Tslamir 10—Talaras:** Blue light everywhere . . . The place past the gate was amazing. The storm stopped as abruptly as it had begun. Its billowing clouds revealed a vast new world, much like the heavens beyond our skyshield. At first I reached for the airmask at my waist, but found there was no need for that. There was air—cold and pure like steel.

Above and below the *Princess* I could observe several worlds, some spherical and others more rugged, slowly following their celestial courses. In the distance, dark blue clouds seemed alive, with an eerie light pulsing inside them. The watch then sounded the alarm. There, coming from the clouds, a horde of draconic creatures flew toward us.

The boltmen quickly reached their battle stations, and the crew braced for combat. The creatures weren't dragons, as I first thought, but were more like wild cats with huge eagle wings and the tails of great wyrms. One among them was truly immense. Myojo was close to panic. At the sight of the great celestial felines, he clutched his sword and muttered his ancestral prayers.

The beasts began a gracious but sinister dance around the *Princess*. Suddenly, a younger cat broke from the ranks and lashed at the ship. Its claws seemed formidable enough to rip through the hull. A fury of lightning bolts converged on the cat, as testimony of the boltmen's power. Alas, despite the fiery conflagration they created, the bolts proved miserably ineffective. The cat didn't even twitch. Myojo prayed harder.

The cat roared and reached the *Princess* as the others dove in to join the attack when, suddenly, a frightening shriek rose from our ship itself! The cat's roar was a mere caterwaul in comparison. The younger cat froze in its path and hissed in fear; the others bristled up and hunched their backs at the *Princess's* thunderous warning. At last, the largest beast with the lion face came closer, dwarfing its lesser kin. It spat a bolt of lightning in the air; a clap of thunder then shook the skies.

The younger cats finally flew away. Their leader approached 'the aft deck where I stood, stretched a paw toward the starboard railing and disappeared. In its place stood a woman of blue and silver light. Myojo steadfastly stepped forward, but she raised a hand. "There will be no need for this, my friend," she said. "The time for battle has passed. I must talk in

peace with your Commander. I bear news of your master." To my question as to who she was, she merely added, "I am she who rules over this part of the universe. In this realm, a *Princess* I am."

**Tslamir 10—Haldemar:** Blue light everywhere . . . In some places, I could see beams of cobalt brilliance; in some others, wisps of dimness. Once past the portal, I could no longer sense up, down, or even keep a notion of time. I drifted in this azure void for what seemed an eternity. Somewhere in the distance, I could hear crystalline sounds. I came close to sinking again into insanity when I heard Abovombe's voice calling me. Memories filtered back.

Then I saw the *Princess*, and I was there on the deck, as if my thoughts had gotten me there in some obscure way. The ship was deserted, merely a ghostlike image of its former reality. I returned to my quarters and there, sitting on my chair, was a woman of shining sapphire and opalescent light. I didn't notice at first, but it soon became evident that she actually blended with the seat and the rest of the floor. She looked up to me and said, "I waited so long. I remained trapped here in this half-world, with the other part of my soul in your hands, Haldemar. It is time to finish what you started and set my mind free." To my inquiry about her identity, she replied, "In this realm, a *Princess* I am."

**Tslamir 11—Talaras:** A great blue sun arose in the distance. The mysterious wyrm requested that I come with her to her palace. I rode on her back to a great tower on a cloud, lost somewhere in a shifting, mazelike aurora. At the top was a hole into which the wyrm dove. The flight ended in a vast hall made of solid, purple clouds.

There, the wyrm—Meryath, as she later introduced herself—offered me rest and sustenance. For the sake of my comfort, Meryath reverted to a human form. She explained she sensed the soul of her mother inside the *Princess Ark*. Meryath's mother died several centuries ago in a great battle against creatures known as spectral hounds, leaving Meryath to succeed her. The mother, Berylith, briefly contacted Meryath just seconds before the sky wyrms' attack. But that was enough to convince her daughter of her mother's existence. She later mentioned her imminent binding with a human, the master of the ship—the Admiral, no doubt.

Suddenly, Meryath stopped talking and listened. Her eyes widened. Then she uttered strange words and ran for the opening in the hall, transforming herself into a great wyrm while the younger beasts coiled up in the hallways in alarm. Perhaps some intrusion? A sinister baying echoed my thoughts.

**Tslamir 11—Haldemar:** A great blue sun arose in the distance. Its light filtered through the crystal windows, toying with the shadows in my room. I had lost consciousness for some time. The princess

was still there, watching over me. I realized she was none other than the soul of the creature I had bound to my ship.

She called herself Berylith. She related how I had pulled her away from the realm of the Immortals when I used the Thothian enchantment on the *Princess Ark*. Berylith did not show anger however. She had come very close to becoming an Immortal being herself, but when she died in this world she remained a mere servant of the Immortals in the Draconic Plane. Her master permitted her to depart in answer to my conjuration, but only if she would accomplish a certain goal that would grant Berylith higher status among the Immortals upon her final return. What the quest was he did not tell her.

One thing is certain—I have to complete the Thothian enchantment. Without it, Berylith's soul will eventually decay into oblivion, and the *Princess Ark* will fly no more. Either way, a terrible waste . . .

It seems that what I had magically siphoned into the hull of the *Princess Ark* was only Berylith's life force. Her psyche had been lost in this plane of torment and solitude. Only the completion of the Thothian wizardry could bring the two back together. More than ever, it was imperative I unveiled the final chapter of this enchantment. But what could it be? A sinister baying echoed my thoughts.

**Tslamir 12—Talaras:** Horror again. The spectral hounds had apparently returned, and I feared the worst for the *Princess Ark*. Meryath left me very little time to join her. It was a great sensation to ride on her back amidst her horde of ferocious sky wyrms. I uttered a short prayer and unstrapped my hammer. I was ready for battle.

Indeed, many hundreds of these evil creatures surrounded the ship. At the sight of our arrival, Xerdon opened fire on the hounds while the younger sky wyrms dove into fray. The battle was frightening. To the sky wyrms' ferocity and agility, the hounds responded with sheer numbers. Many came close to me, only to taste my war hammer's fatal might or Meryath's thunderous roar. Many sky wyrms died or faded away, weakened by their numerous wounds. Many more hounds perished at the boltmen's aim or at the wyrms' dizzying whirlwinds.

Suddenly, a horrible howl rose from the ship. It sounded like one of those hounds, but more powerful and much more frightening. The hounds instantly halted their attack. After a moment of anxiety, they mysteriously turned from the battle and fled. A clamor of joy rose from the sky wyrms and the men on the *Princess Ark*. We had won.

The sky wyrms commenced a war dance around the *Princess* to celebrate their unexpected victory. I could see Xerdon waving up at me. Soon he ordered the crew to attend the wounded. Meryath chose that moment to make a few loops in the air, which did not make me feel so

glorious after all. I hoped that Razud had some cure for that.

As the celebration went on, I noticed from the corner of my eye that something was wrong with the princess. A plank fell off the bottom of the hull. A second later, a maelstrom of chaos overtook the ship. Whole sections of the ship cracked and splintered. Masts and their rigging collapsed on the decks. In shock, I witnessed the princess breaking up utterly before my own eyes.

**Tslamir 12—Haldemar:** Horror again. My presence in the Plane of Nightmares had finally attracted someone's attention: Hundreds of ghostly hounds surrounded the phantasmal image of the *Princess Ark*. Berylith said in a somber voice they were the spectral hounds that had killed her in centuries past—and now they were back to destroy her soul.

Suddenly, the hounds began racing around the ship, rushing forward and back, growling and biting at some invisible enemy. Some of them bled ectoplasmic ichor, while others were literally torn into spectral pieces. Slowly their foes began to appear, bizarrely fading into existence, but these twisted apparitions were all dead and gruesomely mutilated. Horrified, I suddenly realized what was happening. Both men from the *Princess Ark* and sky wyrms were fighting these beasts from another plane. Those who fell before the spectral hounds then reappeared in this plane of madness.

I had to intervene at once. Just then, phasing through the bulkhead, appeared the nightmarish muzzle of a spectral hound. It was much larger than the others and much more terrifying. Berylith looked frightened. The hound snarled at me and entered the room completely. Berylith implored my help, stretching out for me, incapable of defending herself.

To flee was my first thought. But where? The blue whirlpool was still there. It must be the way. Without realizing, I grabbed Berylith's translucent hand and ran for the magical portal. We both jumped through just as the giant hounds jaws snapped empty behind us. The gate led back to my room, the real one in the Prime Material Plane. At last, I was back.

The hound attempted to follow immediately but got caught halfway through the closing gate. It howled horribly as it was cut in two; its fore half fell at our feet, still writhing in agony. Then the monster faded away forever.

Berylith stood there a moment, almost completely human. She smiled, then cried out, "At last, I am whole again! I will remain within this ship for as long as you live, Haldemar, for you are now. a part of it almost as much as I am. This is but a small price for my Immortality. I will then be free to complete my own quest. Be wise in your command, Haldemar, for my fate is in your hands until then. But beware—the Princess must change. . . ." Berylith's shape blurred in a flash of blue light, then

blended away into the wooden bulkhead. The enchantment was finally complete.

I hurried up to the deck to resume command. The crew was quite surprised, and I must admit it was the first time ever I noticed a smile on Xerdon's face. I was about to reach the upper deck when a sudden, low, unnerving rumble shook the *Princess*. Railing, planks, and masts started to crack and splinter. In moments, wooden and metal debris was hurled about within an abominable shower of broken masts and rigging. In shock, I witnessed the *Princess* breaking up utterly before my own eyes.

**To be continued. . .**

### **The Thothian Enchantment**

This very rare spell was invented by a skillful Thothian priest, King Haptuthep. His dream was to create a vessel powerful enough to carry him to the realms beyond the Skyshield and back. He spent a great part of his life putting the spell together, but the Alphatian empire accidentally thwarted the pharaohs plans with a surprise invasion.

King Haptuthep fled his coastal domain while his capital and palace were shamelessly sacked, and the unused magical papyrus were lost. King Haptuthep later became a lich in order to continue his struggle against the invaders. His followers were able to retrieve some of papyrus, but they could not locate the first sheets.

Haldemar of Haaken acquired these lost sheets in 1959 AY, during the war between Thyatis and Alphatia, and the remainder were taken by him from King Haptuthep's secret lair in 2000 AY. It is not known whether other copies exist elsewhere. The first few sheets could conceivably have been reproduced in Thyatis or Alphatia, while copies of the last might be found in some forgotten lair of King Haptuthep.

The spell conjures the soul of a powerful, mortal being in order to confer a large object with intelligence and some magical abilities akin to that of the conjured creature. The object becomes attuned to the thoughts of the caster. The spell was originally written with a greater sky wyrm in mind, but it could be, modified to affect other types of creatures. The spell can be cast either by a wizard (9th-level spell), or by a cleric of Haptuthep's ideology (7th-level spell).

The first part of the spell invokes the life force of the creature in order to seal the magical abilities within the object. The last part compels the creature's psyche to become one with the object in order to give it sentient thought. This second part is by far the more difficult to master, because the sigils used by Haptuthep are both sophisticated and cursed.

In order to understand and use the second part, the caster temporarily becomes a gate between the Prime Material Plane and the Plane of Nightmares. By holding someone by the hands and gazing in his eyes, the caster can send that per-

son to the other plane and eventually bring him back.

The spell bestows upon the caster a limited prescience that enhances his psychic perception. This grants a better understanding of the hieroglyphs, the sensing of emanations from the Plane of Nightmares in the Prime Material Plane, and the comprehension of other languages. The caster, however, cannot use any spells, magical items, or magical abilities during the time of the enchantment.

Since the spell deals with the very fiber of Chaos, Intelligence checks (or Wisdom checks for clerics) are needed at random times to avoid temporary insanity. Check once every 2d12 hours. Temporary insanity lasts 1d4 hours. Assume a failed check wastes half a day of work. Each time the caster fails an Intelligence check, his Intelligence score drops one point. Three consecutive failures to avoid temporary insanity will cause the caster to spoil the enchantment. He then phases into the Plane of Nightmare and remains permanently insane. Only a *wish* or a *cureall* spell can cure the insanity if the caster is later retrieved from the Plane of Nightmares. The caster may recover Intelligence at the rate of one point for every five successful Intelligence checks. The caster also gets a +3 bonus on Intelligence checks if he is sleeping or deliberately not working on the enchantment at the time of the check.

Completion of the spell requires 30 days of work (assume the caster can work for 12 hours each day) minus a number of days equal to the caster's initial intelligence score. The caster may interrupt his work for any length of time, but he must keep checking against temporary insanity until the enchantment is completed. The spell automatically succeeds if the caster hasn't become permanently insane by the end of the enchantment time.

Upon completion, the spell binds the caster's and creature's souls to the object of interest. The creature may alter the shape of the object in the process, and the caster gains the ability to mentally control the final object through the bound creature's mind. The creature can physically move any original part of the object that is mobile (e.g., doors, levers, windows, traps, and other mechanical parts). If the object was capable of movement, the creature can then control the object's path. Conflicts of personality may occur between the creature and the caster, just as with intelligent weapons.

Should the caster die, the object will lose its powers and the creature's soul will be freed. If the object is destroyed, the caster dies instantly and the creature's soul is consumed. The enchantment is permanent and cannot be broken by a mortal *wish*.

**Ashari Sunlil**  
(1st Class Navigator & Yeoman)

**History:** Ashari never knew her par-



ents. Her father died before she was born, and her mother—a Heldanner slave—died while giving birth to Ashari. She lived the hard existence of an orphan and homeless beggar in Sundsvall's Pit Quarter, often panhandling in the aerodrome. There, she dreamed of flying on one of those fantastic ships while in reality she lived a meager existence, scavenging and pick-pocketing. She joined the thieves' guild in Sundsvall and developed her thieving skills.

The House of Arogansa hired Ashari's services several times, and Tarias of Arogansa noticed her good looks. As a reward for her services, she was granted her wish to enter the Imperial Navy School for basic training. She performed well and served several months on a small Imperial galley as an air navigator. She was then unexpectedly transferred to the illustrious *Princess Ark*. This was all the doing of Tarias, who had been ordered to join the navy as a desperate effort by his elders to teach the brat some good sense. Tarias made sure some good company would be available during his tour of duty, and he used family influence to quietly effect Ashari's transfer.

**Personality:** Ashari is extremely proud of her achievements and is devoted to her duty. Her training taught her discipline and conscientiousness. She is a clever and perceptive person, except when it comes to Tarias, whom she finds attractive and entertaining. She has also become Lady Abovombe's confidante and companion, and they often quip about Haldemar's attitude toward Abovombe.

**Disposition:** Goodwill toward Tarias, Haldemar, Lady Abovombe, and Talasar; Neutral toward Xerdon, Leo, and Myojo; Antipathy toward Ramissur and Raman.

**Appearance:** Ashari just recently turned 20. She is a captivating blonde with emerald eyes and pouting red lips—the dream of any young serviceman. She always wears an impeccable uniform, even in the worst situations, an uncanny talent that befuddles even the most experienced officers.

**Equipment carried:** Ashari normally carries a (stolen) *earring of protection +1* in addition to her standard navigational equipment: a few navigational tools and manuals that normally remain in her cabin. If leaving the ship, she takes along a *dagger +1* that Tarias of Arogansa gave her. She keeps a complete thieves' kit in her personal effects.

**Game statistics:** S 10, I 13, W 10, D 16, C 12, Ch 17; 3rd-level Thief; AC 6 (with Dex); hp 10; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (magical dagger); Save T3; ML 10; AL N, Languages: Common Alphantian and Thieves' Cant. Skills: Navigation (In), Sailing Weather (In), Evade (Dx), Gain Trust (Wi + 2).

### Ramissur Zumrulim (1st-Class Boltman)

**History:** Ramissur comes from a family

of poor Amburesse farmers. Severe drought and disease decimated his family when he was a boy. He was too young to work in the fields and had to be fed, so his folk "donated" him (for a fee) to a local wizard who needed a stable boy.

Although at first illiterate, he got some education as the wizard befriended him. In a few years, Ramissur became his apprentice and learned a few magical tricks but showed little magical skill beyond that. He was out of place as a student; he was meant to be a logger or a professional wrestler.

The wizard died of old age, and Ramissur went to Sundsvall, seeking fame and wealth. He fell madly in love and got married to a tavern wench, but she left him for a better, more refined wizard. Heartbroken, he joined the Imperial Navy to forget his pain.

**Personality:** Ramissur is a brave boltman who cannot deny his origins, being crude and rude by wizardly standards. Though a tough and impetuous soldier who thinks nothing of taking on dangerous tasks, he has a pathological fear of darkness since his misadventure with the Night Dragon, and he hates Haldemar, whom he holds responsible. Ramissur has a lot of respect and loyalty for Xerdon. He finds Leo amusing and feels he should protect his little friend. Ramissur's greatest weakness is that he is a heavy drinker and will pick drunken fights with anyone (the reason why he's still a 1st-class boltman after 20 years in the service).

**Disposition:** Goodwill toward Xerdon and Leo; Neutral toward Myojo and Ashari; Antipathy toward Talasar, Raman, Lady Abovombe, and Tarias; Hates Haldemar (secretly).

**Appearance:** Ramissur is a tall, muscular man. The fact that he is now in his early forties hasn't affected his strength. He has the tanned skin of those who spent many years on the seas and in the skies. Most of his head is cleanly shaven, except for a long black tassel in the back. His thick, bushy eyebrows almost cover his eyes, giving him a somber and gruff expression.

**Equipment carried:** *Wand of lightning bolts* (6d6) and standard boltman equipment.

**Spells memorized:** *Light* (x2).

**Game statistics:** S 17, I 13, W 8, D 12, C 16, Ch 10; 2nd-level Magic-User; AC 8; hp 10; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 (dagger or wand); Dmg 2d4 +2 (Ramissur reached *expert proficiency* in his mastery of daggers) or 6d6; Save MU2; ML 10; AL C. Languages: Common Alphantian and the Ambur dialect. Skills: Brawling (St + 1), Drinking (Co + 1) and Singing (Co).

### Tarias of Arogansa (Midshipman)

**History:** Tarias is the youngest son of the cousin of the Grand Duke of Arogansa. His four brothers have all gotten some illustrious

position either at the Grand Duke's palace or at the Imperial Court in Sundsvall, but Tarias has failed his father so far.

Tarias has always been very bored with life at his family mansion in Shavadze, and he has been the source of many scandals, from Shavadze to Bluenose City. Tarias once threw a grand party where zsonga fruit was so common that some of his guests tossed handfuls out the windows to commoners in the street below. Local authorities quickly covered up the affair. Tarias so far has conducted himself as an aristocratic brat and never proved to be anything but a troublemaker and a complete embarrassment.

Tired of Tarias's excesses, his father, Nargol of Arogansa, finally ordered him to join the Imperial Navy. The political power of the Arogansa House is such that, sooner or later, Tarias will become an officer with his own ship command.

**Personality:** Tarias has the outrageous attitude of those young, rich, and pretentious aristocrats who believe everything is for them to use, abuse, and carelessly discard. Tarias is handsome and dashing but brash and ungrateful to the extreme. His impertinence with authority and his irreverence with the clergy has commonly earned him enmity in many areas of the empire. Tarias's apparent attraction for Ashari is merely casual and probably short lived. Tarias is a lazy, selfish, greedy scoundrel and coward.

**Disposition:** Goodwill toward Xerdon, Ashari, and Lady Abovombe; Neutral toward Haldemar and Talasar; Antipathy toward Myojo, Leo, Raman, and Ramissur.

**Appearance:** Tarias is a 30-year-old, pure-blooded Alphantian. His black curly hair, light suntan, and dark brown eyes go a long way with young, adventurous ladies. Tarias is a tall, well built, and self-assured noble.

**Equipment carried:** A *headband of human control* that he used on Ashari, a flask of zsonga liquor (three doses, illegal on the princess), a *short sword +2 of deceiving* that he "borrowed" from his father's seneschal, a *medallion of protection +2* that he extorted from a magistrate in Shavadze, and a *scroll of equipment* containing, in addition to three random objects, a 1,000-gp gem, a phony treasure map, and an air mask (common to those used on the *Princess Ark*).

**Game statistics:** S 13, I 12, W 8, D 14, C 11, Ch 15; 4th-level Fighter; AC 6 (with Dex and magic); hp 20; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 (magical sword); Dmg by weapon type; Save F4; ML 6; AL C. Languages: Common Alphantian. Skills: Dancing (Dx), Music (Harpsichord, Ch), Hip Conversation (Ch+3).

### Leo of Le Nerviens (Civilian Advisor)

**History:** Leo was born of legitimate Le Nerviens kin. He was a straight "A" student at the corporate school, often seeking the

most unexpected solutions to problems. As a reward for graduating with honors, he was sent on a commercial prospective mission aboard one of the corporate airships. There, he learned a bit about blimp technology and Hollow World geography.

In the following years, he joined the Research & Development division of Le Nerviens and bettered his creative and engineering skills—in the usual gnomish way. He joined the *Princess Ark* expedition by accident and felt this was so much the better; there was much to be discovered on the outer world, and the *Princess Ark* would definitely need someone of his talent to maintain all the gnomish inventions added to the ship.

**Personality:** Leo is of the *eccentric inventive disorderly nosy obtrusive alignment*—in short, a perfect Le Nerviens gnome. Leo never seems tired; he's a hyperactive perfectionist who is never pleased with his work. His incredible naivete and constant pranks often test Xerdon's and Raman's patience. Leo is a peaceful character whose biggest weaknesses are his love of gems and beer.

**Disposition:** Goodwill toward Ramisur, Haldemar, Talasar, Lady Abovombe, Ashari and Raman; Neutral toward Xerdon; Antipathy toward Tarias and Myojo.

**Appearance:** Leo is a middle-aged gnome with short blond hair, a large handlebar mustache, and a reddish face. His spectacles sit squarely on his protuberant nose.

**Equipment carried:** There is no telling what Leo carries in his pockets; what he has one day can be lost the next somewhere on the ship. Leo constantly tinkers and comes up with various trinkets and gadgets that may or may not function.

**Game statistics:** S 13, I 15, W 8, D 14, C 17, Ch 10; 8th-level Sky Gnome with Special Abilities I-VI (see note following); AC 8 (with Dex); hp 56; MV 60'(20'); #AT 1-4 (unpredictable widgets; randomly pick one die of damage for each new encounter); Save D8; ML 9; AL L. Languages: Oostdokian, Milenian, and Common Alphatian (treat as an Intelligence Skill). Skills: Gemcrafting (In), Ship Building (In), Helmsman (In), Memorizing (In), Drinking (Co), Singing (Ch).

**Note:** Sky gnomes, their experience levels, and their abilities were originally described in PC2 *Top Ballista*. If that material is not available, use a common gnome from the Basic Set.

## Letters

While reading "The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*," part 9, I discovered a minor error. The HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set indicates that the *invisibility* spell does not function in that setting. However, the *Princess Ark* seems to be able to do so anyway. See issue #162, page 45: "... Leopold had probably failed to tell his kin that the *Princess* was not visible."

*It is true that the invisibility spell does not work in the Hollow World, but the Princess*

*Ark does not use that spell. If you remember the ship gained "invisibility" when the Myoshiman monolith was placed on board. The monolith bends rays of light to a certain degree (a careful observer could still see a blur; like in the movie Predator), but it does not confer true invisibility like the spell. This is an example of how a DM can deal with a potentially annoying limitation in a game setting (it's a cheap way of cheating but it works, eh?).*

*Can PCs imitate that feat by carrying around chunks of the monolith? The monolith itself is barely sufficient to conceal the ship, and we'll assume the mineral's magical properties grow in a geometric progression compared to its mass. If so, that pesky PC might end up needing a 500-lb. hunk of rock to make him invisible. Well, I guess he still could hide behind it!*

I'm a DM from Denmark who wants to tell you how much I enjoy the Gazetteer series, particularly *The Orcs of Thar*, but I think an injustice was done to the trolls. I love trolls, I really do! In GAZ10, trolls are portrayed as unintelligent scum, and that's not fair! Why haven't you matched the Expert version of the troll, or your descriptions of the goblins that seem far smarter? GAZ10 trolls have no faith, either. You also mentioned war dogs in GAZ10 but did not give their stats. Are they described elsewhere?

*Hmmm . . . As for trolls, I kind of like them, too. I wrote the darn gazetteer, so I'd better like those dumb, smelly ugly dudes! What happened is that they were presented that way in GAZ7 Northern Reaches, and I decided to stick with that description. Nothing says that you cannot change trolls to fit your preferences! This is especially so if you're going to make a PC out of a troll. However, you are incorrect in assuming that I presented them as totally faithless. They do have a certain Bagni Gullymaw to worship. (They could also believe in peanut butter.)*

*Ah, yes, the war puppies. We should have noted that their statistics can be found in AC9 Creature Catalog, page 13. Here are the abbreviated stats, if you cannot find that accessory: AC 7; HD 2 +2; MV 120'(40'); AT 1 bite; Dmg2d4; Save F1; ML 11; TT Nil; IN 3; AL N; XP 25, The illustration on page 13 shows a cutesy war dog with gleaming canine barding. Add to that some smudges, dents, rust, spikes, and plenty of disgusting drool, and that war dog will be ready for service in Thar's Legion.*

Are undead PCs allowed? (I have a nosferatu cleric.) If yes, can they reach Immortality?

*Why not have a PC undead? There aren't any guidelines that I know of on how to create and role-play undead creatures in the D&D game. You'll have to come up with a system that balances the undead PC reasonably well with the other character classes in the party I can't help*

*wondering, though, what kind of party would associate with such macabre companionship—other undead, perhaps? The rest of the population might also stage a major hunt to rid their beloved land of these ghastly fellows. Considering that undead are already immortal (sort of), your point is moot. If it were at all possible, undead could attain "true" Immortality in the Sphere of Entropy, but I would limit that to the really powerful undead (vampires or better).*

About dominions: How many hexes can a single person rule, and how many troops are needed to maintain each hex?

*There is no real limit to how much a single ruler can control, especially in setting where magic can be used. In D&D game terms, Genghis Khan would have ruled over more than 125,000 eight-mile hexes, with no magic at all. The number of troops needed to maintain your borders depends upon a multitude of factors (like troop quality, economy, population, and the presence of peace or war). For example, the Roman Republic in the second century B.C. maintained over 12% of its citizens in its legions (and that wreaked havoc on its economy). On the other hand, Imperial Rome in the fourth century A.D. had only 0.7% of its citizens in arms, and did quite well-well for the Visigoths, that is. Medieval kingdoms were incapable of coming anywhere near these numbers (it wasn't called the Dark Ages for nothing).*

I am anxious to see GAZ14 *The Atrughin Clans*. Wendar, Sind, and the Heldann Freeholds would be good next choices. Gazetteers on Norwold and Hule wouldn't require much work, since they are based upon previously published material. Some of these modules are hard to get, so it wouldn't be just reprinting old material. Also, please make some new countries more like "typical" medieval settings. Few countries in the Known World have kings, knights, and serfs (Kara-meikos and Thyatis seem to come close, though). Too many of these types of countries would be boring, but what's the point of having the Companion Set if no country really matches that rules set directly?

*Good point. The closest thing that we could develop into a medieval setting would be the Heldann Freeholds, which are close to a Dark Ages Germanic setting with clerical magic. The freeholds are barbaric tribes that are being "pacified" by the Heldannic Knights. The regions now under the Knights' control are definitely getting feudal in style. (By the way, the creation of a 96-page accessory can hardly be referred to as requiring not much work; a typical Gazetteer manuscript comes close to 200 pages!)*

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 15: The last (and first) hour of the *Princess Ark*

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
**PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN**  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
**PRINCESS ARK**  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

**Tslamir 13,2000 AY:** I've entered this day's report from the back of a young sky wyrm. Immediately after the ship started to crumble into pieces, the sky wyrms swooped down and picked up those crewmembers who did not have time to reach the escape rafts. We all watched the *Princess Ark* tumble down, breaking apart totally. Meryath ordered her sky wyrms to return to their fortress, while she and Talasar followed the wreck in its fall toward the small, nearby world that the sky wyrms call Hakh. She was paying a last homage to her mother's soul. I could not bear the sight of the destroyed ship.

**Tslamir 16:** Talasar and Meryath have not returned; they should have been back by now. The sky wyrms are showing signs of irritability. I had to suspect foul play. I had a long talk with Meryath's elder senechal, Fenroth, and we decided to return to the world where Meryath and Talasar were last seen.

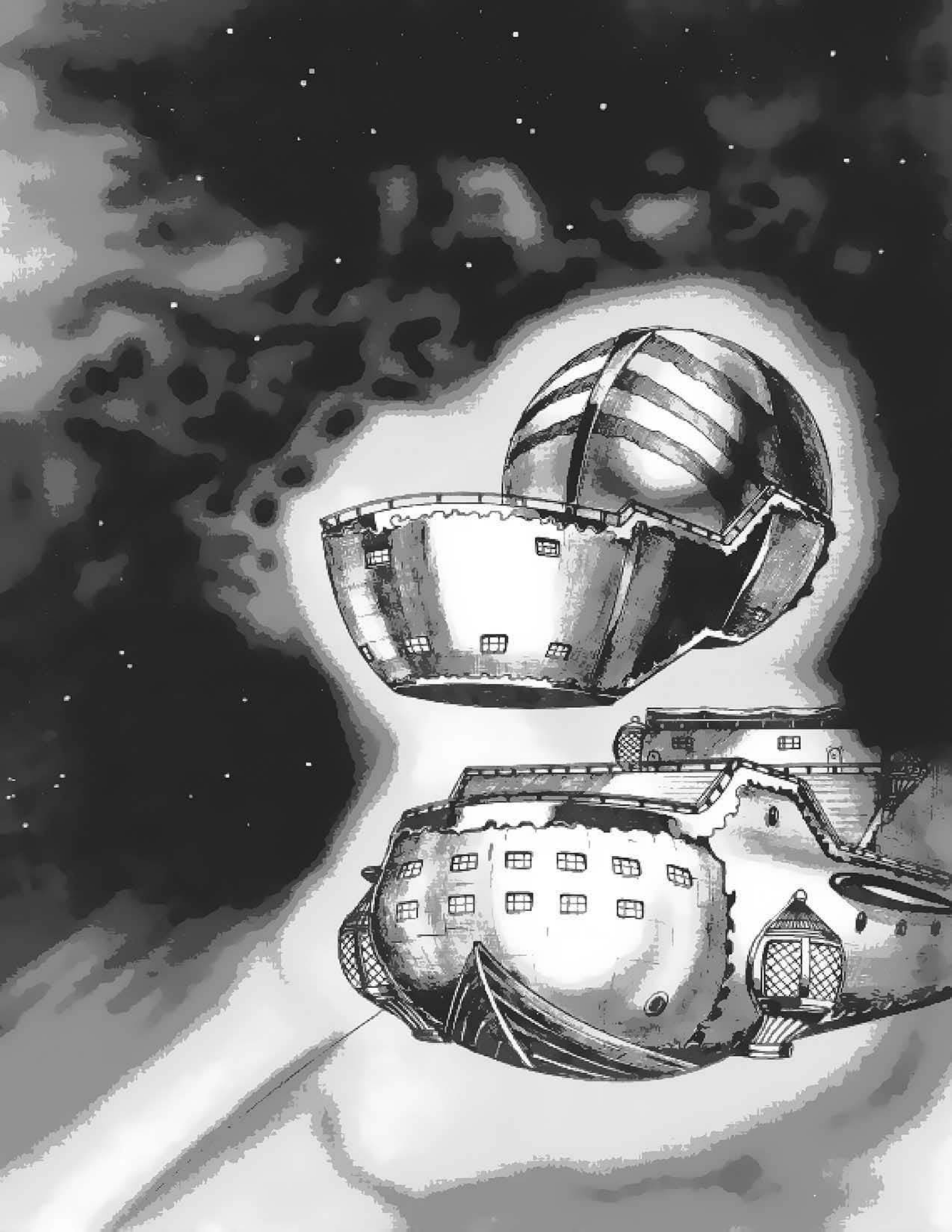
**Tslamir 17:** Dense layers of blue clouds covered Hakh; spotting any sign of either Meryath or the wreck was clearly hopeless. We dove toward that perpetually dark world and landed in a dense jungle. Strange, gnarled trees with dark blue leaves and purplish vines seemed to creep away from the magical, golden light that I invoked to show our way. Fenroth growled and hissed impatiently when his huge wings got entangled in the labyrinthine foliage. He soon decided to revert to a rakasta's shape, that of an old one with silver hair and two small fangs protruding slightly under his upper lip. A chilling, oily rain began to come down, turning the ground into a muddy, smelly mire. Fenroth hissed and spat his disgust for this repugnant place.

Fenroth said he had heard of hunting tribes in these woods who might help us. He did not know whether they were peaceful or not. We would have to find out. We began our slow trek through the sticky mud and the tangled vines.

**Tslamir 20:** It had been raining on and off every hour since our arrival. Both of us were soon unrecognizable, covered almost entirely with mud, leeches, and clouds of tiny flies. Chilled to the bones and exhausted, we were debating on whether or not to leave when my dagger betrayed some danger nearby. I looked but could not see much ahead.

All of a sudden, a heavy net fell from the branches above, and I felt ropes tightening around us. A trap! Fenroth snarled and





was ready to revert back to his natural form, but I bade him not to, for we would then never find the hunters' village. He hissed to me how foolish that was-and perhaps he was right, for a terrible blow to my head left me unconscious for the remainder of the day.

**Tslamir 21:** It was clear these hunters were no friendly folk. Both Fenroth and I were tightly tied up, gagged, and hanging by our feet from a branch. Ignoring a fuming look from Fenroth, I could see that the village consisted of a number of spherical huts hanging from branches, each large enough for a small family. The hunters were tall humanoids, very similar to our hobgoblins but with jet black skin, long blue hair, and white eyes. They wore little more than leather breeches or skin cloaks that still seemed to protect them well from the cold rain. Amazingly, their skins were covered with tattoos that glowed in the dark, producing a strange ballet of monstrous images in the dark distance.

At the far end of the village, on the ground, was a huge mound where trees had been cut down and piled up. Closer to us was an altar, carved out of a large rock, on which I could see our personal effects. A very tall hunter was standing there, playing with my dagger. He turned to us with a sadistic grin on his face. He jabbered some apparent insult, then asked questions that neither of us understood. As he became angrier, he moved closer and started poking at me. Then an old wokan, a spell-caster, walked up and silenced him. She pulled out slime, scum, wriggling slugs, and other disgusting mush from her side pouch, stuffed them into her mouth, and began dancing.

After a while, she approached and grabbed my hair, lifting my face close to hers as she spoke. Between her repugnant breath and the spit-out fragments of the black, gooey spell components she had been masticating, her words grew clear. "Morre strangerrrrs?" she said. "Good. The sky spirrit will be pleased. But firrrr, you sufferrr."

More hunters came down rope ladders from their hanging huts. A cold hand clutched at my heart when I saw one of them wearing tattered parts of Talasar's uniform. They began dancing and feasting, a few of them tossing stones or daggers at us. Some missed; some didn't. The wokan brought a board covered with slimy creatures and applied it to my bare chest. The hunters greeted my muffled cries of pain with delight. A hunter stared at Fenroth with an insane look in his white eyes, slowly licking a long, serrated blade. He brandished the knife as the rain began to fall again.

The wokan suddenly barked an order. As if bitten by a snake, the hunter with the knife jumped back. The wokan snapped orders at two other hunters, and they ran off. The fun seemed to be over for the moment. The two came back,

dragging behind them the unconscious bodies of Talasar and Meryath. What they had done to them I cannot describe in this log, but the sight sent horror and pity through my mind-then anger.

The humanoids brought all four of us to the mound. The wokan began chanting. A throbbing glow filtered from under the mound, between the wooden logs. The wokan's incantations grew louder and more insistent. When a growl rose from the mound, the wokan stopped. She came closer, holding a garrotte that she slid slowly around my neck. Drummers began to pound on their drums, imitating heart beats. At first they grew quicker, then slowed as I lost consciousness. My last thought went to the *Princess Ark* and her soul. Dear Berylith, I wondered, where are you?

A log rolled off the mound, then three others. The garrotte loosened as the wokan turned to watch. Suddenly, the whole top of the mound blew off in a frightening explosion of blinding light and crackling bolts. The wokan screamed and fell to her knees. The other tribesmen dropped to the ground, prostrated before the sacred mound.

What seemed like the ghost of a great sky wyrm rose out of the mound. Meryath's strangled voice cried, "Mother?" The great beast turned toward the hunters and roared in the way the *Princess Ark* used to. So it *was* Berylith! But how? The hunters screamed, dropped their spears, shields, headdresses, and gris-gris, and fled as fast as their legs would allow. Trembling, the old wokan crawled over to us and cut us loose, revealing her black teeth in a pathetic parody of a smile. Fenroth immediately returned to his normal shape and ripped the wokan apart.

*So, I turn my back for a moment, and the world falls apart!* echoed a voice in my mind. *Look at you! Daughter, I thought you knew better than to meddle with the Forest People of Hakh. And Haldemar! Couldn't you wait just a little longer? I have been working very hard these past few days, and I needed some rest. You'll see. You'll be proud. Anyway, it's fortunate you called me, else I wouldn't be able to show you anything at all. That was a close one, wasn't it, my dear?*

Berylith was using *telepathy*. More of the logs rolled off, revealing an incredible blue structure with windows and silver sculptures. By the beard of Pligzy Gladz! *That was my skyship?* In absolute horror, I recognized parts of my *Princess Ark* lost amid the massive creation. She wouldn't have dared! Or had she? I heard myself scream, "My ship! What have you done to my ship?"

**Tslamir 22-Xerdon:** Admiral Haaken left me in command of our new "ship" shortly after our departure from the sky wyrms' fortress. Commander Talasar is in sick bay, suffering greatly from wounds he received on Hakh, and the Admiral has retired to his quarters.

The *Princess Ark* has been altered in some radical fashion. The result is an incredible vessel of a kind I have never seen before.

The large wooden hull is totally different from-and bigger than-the Haaken family's *Princess Ark*. It is also surrounded by a ghostlike aura shaped like a living sky wyrm. As a combat vessel, I must admit it seems impressive. I think the crew and the rest of the officers will enjoy this new ship. Unfortunately, the Admiral's opinion became clear when I helped him to his new quarters. Admiral Haaken seemed to cringe at everything he saw on his way down. I thought for a second he was being attacked when I shut the door behind him and I heard him scream, "My cabin! What have you done to my cabin?" He said many other things that I will not copy here. Perhaps all is not perfect, after all.

We bid our sky wyrm allies farewell and took off toward the magical gate in the sky. I was proud to command this fantastic ship and can only marvel at the way it flies. It is truly amazing.

**To be continued . . .**

### **The new *Princess Ark***

The present-day *Princess Ark* is a much-evolved version of Haldemar's family ship. Ever since the Thothian enchantment was completed, the ship's structure became fully inhabited by the life force and psyche of the sky wyrm, Berylith. This spirit has totally reshaped the *Princess Ark* to suit her own preferences.

**General description:** The ship is now in three parts. One is an immaterial shape surrounding most of the ship, a magical aura resembling Berylith's sky-wyrm body. This translucent envelope has the consistency of pipe smoke, very much like the puffs of smoke some hins of the Shires use to create images in the air when telling their old tales. Berylith may turn this aura *invisible* on Haldemar's commands. The aura matches the maneuvers of the *Princess Ark* with appropriate body motions, like flapping its huge wings, moving its head, coiling its serpentine tail, and so on.

The second part is the ship's main wooden hull, which contains most of the crew and equipment. The outside of the hull is heavily decorated with sculptures representing cloud patterns, wavy snakes, lions, and eagles. The main colors of the ship range from azure to night blue, while the sculptures show a brilliant silver hue. The decks and the inside of the ship retain a more natural wood color.

The third part is a mobile deck *levitating* above the fore end of the main hull, within the head of the sky wyrm's ghostly aura. This is the commander's deck, from which Haldemar normally controls the flight of the ship. This deck moves with the aura's head, pitching to the left or right when Berylith looks aside, rolling up when she looks up, and so forth. All floors on the mobile deck are enchanted with their own *gravity* effect, preventing occupants from losing their footing when the

deck moves too rapidly. A smooth crystal dome covers the commander's deck. The nacreous crystal acts like a mirror, preventing anyone from looking into the dome. Berylith can see only through her aura's eyes.

The structure of the ship became a material extension of Berylith's immaterial body. Berylith feels whatever happens on the ship. If the ship is physically damaged, Berylith is in pain as well. Berylith may voluntarily move mobile parts of the ship, such as doors, windows, or other items that are part of the ship's structure. Passengers walking about the decks can be sensed as well, just as someone can notice ants on his skin.

It should be noted, however, that Berylith is no omnipotent genius. Although she is aware of many things, she has to concentrate to pay attention to any one thing. There is a limited number of things she can think about or do at any particular time. In general, Berylith is busy flying, watching what happens ahead, or dreaming. If Berylith wants to slam a door or lock a hatchway by herself, she must succeed at an intelligence check. Each additional simultaneous action she attempts incurs a +2 penalty to the check. Add another +5 penalty if Berylith is busier than usual that round (if combat or a difficult maneuver is in progress, for example):

Berylith communicates telepathically with Haldemar, to whom she is attuned. She may also accept simple commands from Talasar or other duly appointed officers on the commander's deck. The ship has a total crew of 100 people, including 60 boltmen and 12 officers, and a cargo capacity of 80,000 cn. The ship has AC 7 and 200 Hull Points.

**Ship's weaponry:** The ship is armed with three types of weapons. Despite their common names (ballistas and catapult), these are, in fact, magical devices. These are manned by common crew, while boltmen assume individual combat posts on the decks and gangways.

Light ballistas consist of triple-mounted, rotating rods capable of firing bursts of magic missiles at the rate of three per round with a range of 200', interspersed with a huge number of *light* spells. The firing of a light ballista produces spectacular, though harmless, roaring flames at the rods' firing tips, a feature designed essentially to scare the enemy.

Heavy ballistas come with larger twin-mounted rods, each capable of casting a web spell up to 300' every other round. Heavy ballista rods look like two oversized, hissing black snakes that recoil after each shot.

The catapult looks like a large, heavily sculpted wooden tube, similar to a fat, medieval bombard with three red muzzles resembling dragon heads. The catapult can fire a *disintegrate* spell to 400' once per turn.

In order to function, each of these de-

vices requires a magical key made of jade and gold. These keys have been entrusted to Xerdon and to several petty officers in charge of gunnery.

Berylith retained the use of her breath weapon, which originates at the mouth of her ghostly aura (effects as per the greater sky wyrm's description in DRAGON® issue #164, page 45). Berylith does not have the other abilities of sky wyrms. The ship's hull points are used as the basis of damage the breath weapon inflicts. The ship can fly at a speed of 360' per round (120 miles per day). Berylith's aura must remain visible around the ship while any of the magical weapon devices or the breath weapon are used, or during one full turn following their last use.

**Deck plans and key:** The rooms shown in the deck plans for the new *Princess Ark* are numbered according to their deck location. The first digit corresponds to the deck number on which the room is located.

Unless otherwise noted, the following is true for all of the ship. The lower edge of each stairs' railing ends with a small *continual light*. All windows and portholes are covered with the mirrorlike nacre, preventing observation by outsiders looking in. Portholes cannot be opened and are too small for anyone to get through. The doors are unlocked. The ship is heated or cooled depending on the seasons, and can maintain breathable atmosphere beyond the skyshield. Throughout the ship are leather straps used to avoid falling during emergency maneuvers; these are placed on railings, in alleyways and personal quarters, on rafts and lifeboats, etc.

Magical wards protect the ship from outside intrusions. They include the following enchantments:

-All *wizard lock* spells on doorways aboardship are cast at 32nd level (the number of hit dice that a greater sky wyrm has).

-All outside decks and all gangways directly accessible from the outside provide the ship's first line of security. Anyone or anything moving on these surfaces and not registered at the yeoman's office on the crew's roster will trip this first ward. It causes the culprit to leave brightly glowing footprints on these surfaces or anywhere else aboard, until the footprints are *dispelled*, the culprit is caught, or one turn has passed.

-Turning the door knobs or rings on any of the alleyways' port and starboard doors (including the ones leading to the brig) or on any of the hatchways, without first uttering the password, causes an electrical shock for 1-8 hp and activates all the *magic mouths* described later.

-Anyone or anything invisible or using magic to conceal its identity or appearance may not use any of the stairways or the *levitation* shaft without causing a *magic mouth* to appear and scream "Intruder!" continuously for one turn or until the spell is *dispelled*.

-Causing damage to the structure of the ship (starting a fire, breaking through doors, puncturing the hull, etc.) automatically attracts Berylith's attention. This may not be obvious to the culprit. Berylith will inform Haldemar or will take action on her own, such as attempting to slam a door in the culprit's face for 1-4 hp damage or attempting to lock the exits.

## Deck plans key

**E. Elevator (*levitation* shaft):** A magical shaft stretches from deck 8 to deck 4, allowing quick access to a number of areas in the ship. The shaft itself is empty but is enchanted with a *levitation* spell. Anyone stepping in simply states which deck he wishes to reach, and the spell does the rest. Asking for a deck that does not exist or cannot be reached through the shaft automatically attracts Berylith's attention. Depending on the situation, Berylith may attempt to freeze or cancel the *levitation* effect, or even jettison the intruder from the shaft with great strength up through deck 4 or out through the bottom of the ship.

**G. Guard turret:** These small turrets are located in various areas of the ship. They are always occupied by a boltman. Each turret has a wide view and a horn to sound the alarm. Guards are changed every four hours.

**L. Latrine:** These rooms contain a magical chamber pot that remains always empty, a magical tub filled with warm *ever-cleaning* water, a small table, and wash cloths. Although insufficient for the whole crew by modern standards, ship personnel get by simply by taking water in pans and washing up in their quarters. According to Alphatian Imperial Navy Regulations, each crewmember must bathe at least once a week.

## Decks 1-3—Commander's decks

**101. Command bridge:** Two wooden seats with red cushions face toward the bridge's front railing. The wood is carved to show strange, intertwining veins. A stand with a small crystalline ball sits between the two seats. Talasar or another officer simply lays a hand on the crystal to convey simple orders to Berylith.

**201. Lower bridge:** Two boltmen often stand guard in this area. The door to area 202 is *wizard locked*. Port-side stairs lead up to the bridge (area 101), while the starboard stairs lead down to area 204.

**202. Commanders' lounge:** All superior officers have a free access to this room. Six armchairs are spread around a circular, glowing metal plate on the floor. The plate shows a magical image of either the lands underneath the *Princess Ark* or the constellations above. A small cache exists under the stairs on the port side, containing the ship's more valuable treasures (usually gems and jewelry). The

value varies with the ship's fortunes but often comes close to 5,000 gp.

### **203. Commander's ballista deck:**

This open-air deck is normally unoccupied except for one sentry, usually a forward watch. The deck has a light ballista (see "Ship's weaponry").

### **301. Library and cartographic services:**

Crowded shelves of musty old books and map cases cover a large portion of the bulkheads here. The center of the room is occupied by a large varnished table with six leather chairs. The table is often strewn with scrolls, notes, and books. A secret compartment lies under the starboard staircase. It contains a rope ladder that can be used to exit through the secret door on the opposite side of the room. The ladder is long enough to reach area 503. The hatchway leads to area 401 underneath.

**302. Promenade deck:** This rectangular gangway overlooks the atrium underneath. The entire surface of the gangway and the atrium's skylight is covered with a sky-blue silk tent.

## **Deck 4—Ceremonial deck**

**401. Upper teleporter:** Although at the level of deck 4, this room is really part of the mobile commander's deck. It contains a magical circle capable of *teleporting* people to area 402. *Teleportation* requires the proper password. Haldemar and Talasar know several other command words that will lead them directly to other areas of the ship.

**402. Lower teleporter:** This open-air area contains a magical circle linked with room 401. A sentry keeps guard here.

**403. Atrium:** This room contains the Myoshiman monolith that allows the *Princess Ark* to bend rays of light and become invisible. The bulkheads and beams supporting the gangway above (area 301) are ornately carved and decorated. Small wooden busts of previous Alphatian rulers are located at the corners. The top of the monolith sticks out through a rectangular skylight overhead. The port and starboard doors lead to the guard turrets. The forward doors open on the stairs to deck area 503. The stairs next to the monolith lead up the gangway area 302.

**404. Midship ballista:** This open deck is the location of a heavy ballista (see "Ship's weaponry"). A hatchway can slide to reveal the top end of the *levitation* shaft (see area E). The forward stairs lead up to the gangway area 302. The aft stairs lead down to deck area 511.

## **Deck 5—Crew deck**

**501. Forward ballista deck:** This open deck holds a light ballista manned only during combat. The two doors leading to area 502 are locked, except during combat.

**502. Armory:** Nonmagical combat equipment is stored in this room. All the

doors leading to this room are locked, except during combat. The hatchway is always locked. Only superior officers have a key to the hatch. The hatchway leads to room 601 underneath.

**503. Briefing deck:** This open-air area is often used when officers address the crew. Ceremonial duties are performed on this deck, with a honor guard standing on the stairways and the gangway above (area 402).

**504. Boltmen's quarters, men:** Ship's personnel live in these quarters. Narrow bunks are stacked three high, allowing rest for up to 33 people. Small chests are located under the lower bunk, while heavy cloth bags hang from the bulkheads. These contain the crew's personal belongings.

**505. Boltmen's quarters, women:** This room is similar to area 504. The Alphatian Imperial Navy is an equal opportunity employer. Fraternalization, however, is not tolerated aboard ship.

**506. Crew's mess room:** Inactive personnel have their meals or spend their free time here. Consumption of alcoholic beverages is generally tightly controlled. Crew otherwise use their time here to mend uniforms or equipment, to read, or to play cards, dominos, dice, or darts.

**507. Chapel:** The chapel is nominally devoted to Razud; however, Talasar often conducts more generic services to accommodate the remainder of the crew. An unusual enchantment actually causes the room to be larger than it could possibly be. Its scale becomes 20' per square for people inside the room. The chapel contains rows of benches, a small wooden altar, and small statues of Razud and his followers carved into the bulkheads.

**508. Crew quarters, men:** This room is similar to area 504, except that some of the space is taken up with barrels and common deck equipment. In the tradition of the Alphatian Navy, sailors often sleep in hammocks. These are hooked to wooden beams and bulkheads almost haphazardly in these quarters. Up to 21 people can fit in the room, in rather cramped conditions. Passengers of the lowest status may share these quarters with the crew.

**509. Crew quarters, women:** This room is similar to area 508.

**510. Alleyway:** A sentry normally guards this passageway. The door to the stairway is *wizard locked*. Only officers and the galley personnel have free passage. The stairs lead down to area 613 underneath.

**511. Aft catapult deck:** This large deck is the largest open area on the ship. A magical catapult occupies the center of the deck (see "Ship's weaponry"). Riggings run up to the top of the observation mast, behind the catapult. A watch remains on top of the mast, observing the *Princess's* aft arc for incoming vessels. Two doors lead to the guard turrets near the stern of the ship. Three stern lanterns give off a reddish light during the night.

**512. Upper gangways:** These open-air bridges allow the crew to quickly reach their battle stations. A light ballista (see "Ship's weaponry") occupies the aft edge of each gangway. A sky-blue tent covers the narrow portion of the gangway; the tent can be rolled back for combat. Rolls of rope ladders are tied up to the inside of the railing, allowing quick escape to the life boats below on deck 7. A hatchway near the gangway's midsection leads down to gangway 614.

## **Deck 6—Officers' deck**

**601. Officers' mess room:** Superior officers and occasionally petty officers dine in this chamber or conduct meetings here. It is a well-decorated room, with large window openings on the prow of the *Princess Ark*. A wooden ladder in the starboard corner leads to a locked hatchway overhead, opening into area 502. Another locked hatchway, hidden under the carpet, leads down to area 701. Both hatchways are locked (see area 502). A large wooden table and a dozen leather chairs occupy the center of the room. China and silverware are located in a chest in the port-side corner.

**602. Guest lounge:** Dignitaries often meet in this lounge. A large sofa faces a crystal canopy on the port side bulkhead. Several potted plants and small wooden sculptures of famous Alphatian seamen stand on pedestals in the corners of the lounge. The stairs lead down to area 702 underneath.

**603-604. Guest rooms:** These opulently decorated, very comfortable quarters are reserved for important passengers. They are currently unoccupied.

**605. Trophy room:** This area displays a variety of strange and valuable items collected over the years of travel of the *Princess Ark*. Some are magical; others are simply bizarre. Their true uses and actual properties are not always clearly known to the ship's officers. Raman is in charge of studying these items, researching their lore, and cataloging them in his library. The stairs lead down to area 703 below.

**606. Raman's quarters:** This room would be a disgrace to normal navy officers. It is filled with chests, wooden boxes, bulky scroll cases, and books spread about the room in a most disorganized fashion. A few of the items from area 605 can be found on Raman's work table, with piles of notes and sketches. Occasionally, a small cage with a strange creature inside may hang near the window (see area 703).

**607. Xerdon's quarters:** Unlike Raman's quarters (area 606), this rather spartan room is absolutely spotless. The only note of uniqueness consists in a collection of weapons and shields adorning the bulkheads.

**608-611. Petty officers' quarters:**

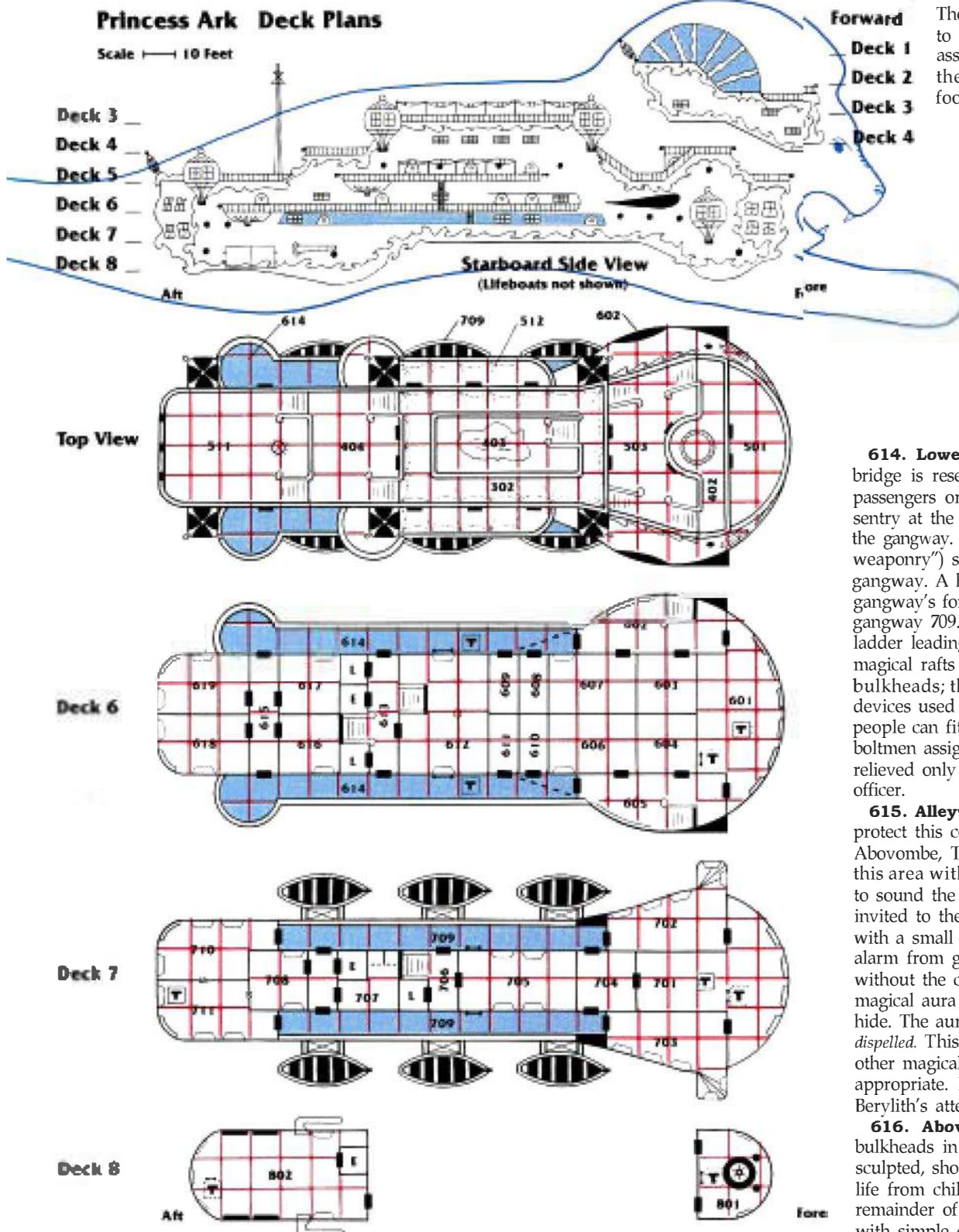
# Princess Ark

Continued from page 45

These narrow quarters are shared by two to four lower-ranking officers. The quarters include wooden bunks stacked two high, here, catering to all needs aboardship. Food is cooked in a magical oven that requires no flame or combustibles. The galley includes a kitchen and a scullery.

**612. Galley:** All meals for the crew and officers are prepared in this room. The cook and his two scullions work, sleep, and live here, catering to all needs aboardship. Food is cooked in a magical oven that requires no flame or combustibles. The galley includes a kitchen and a scullery.

**613. Alleyway:** The aft stairs lead up to alleyway 510. The forward stairs lead down to alleyway 706. The cooks two assistants use either stairs or the *levitation* shaft to bring food from area 612.



**614. Lower gangway:** This open-air bridge is reserved for upper-class passengers or officers. There often is a sentry at the door on the forward edge of the gangway. A light ballista (see "Ship's weaponry") sits on the aft edge of the gangway. A hatchway located near the gangway's forward end leads down to gangway 709. Near this hatchway is a ladder leading up to gangway 512. Three magical rafts are fastened to the bulkheads; these rafts are *levitating* devices used for emergencies only. Four people can fit on each raft. Any crew or boltmen assigned duty on this deck can be relieved only in the presence of a petty officer.

**615. Alleyway:** Further magical wards protect this corridor. Only Myojo, Lady Abovombe, Talasar, or Haldemar can enter this area without causing a *magic mouth* to sound the alarm. When someone is invited to these quarters, he is provided with a small magical coin that prevents the alarm from going off. Anyone entering without the coin is also surrounded by a magical aura that betrays him if he tries to hide. The aura lasts an hour or until *dispelled*. This aura will trigger every other magical ward on the ship, where appropriate. It does not, however, attract Berylith's attention by itself.

**616. Abovombe's quarters:** The bulkheads in this room are intricately sculpted, showing episodes of Abovombe's life from childhood to present. The remainder of the room is more humble, with simple curtains over the window, a round carpet in the middle of the room, and flowers in a vase on the chest of drawers near the door. A small table and



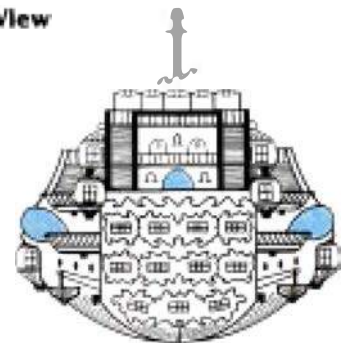
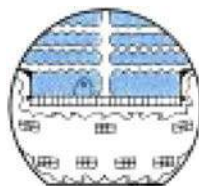
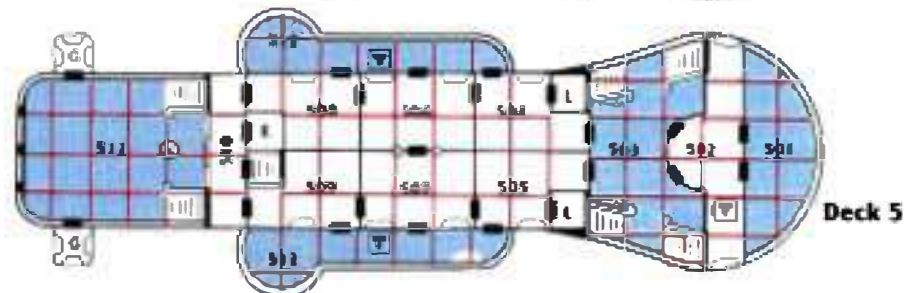
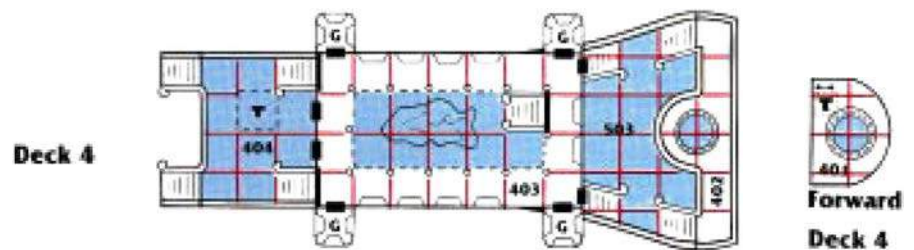
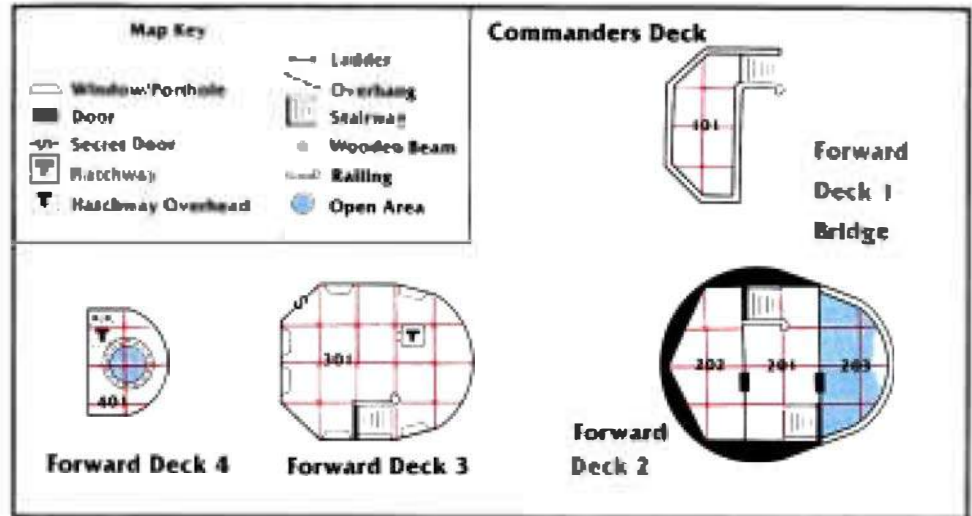
two chairs stand next to the bed, which is covered with a mosquito net. A *levitating* crystal globe hovers over the table, providing a soft, opalescent light; it can be dimmed with a black velvet veil that lies on the table.

**617. Myojo's quarters:** These quarters are furnished very much like a Myoshiman room. A tatami (woven mat) covers the floor, while a futon (low mattress) lies in the far corner of the room. Myojo's swords normally rest on a small wooden stand near the futon. A number of fine tapestries cover the bulkheads. Myojo's other personal belongings remain in a wooden chest.

Near the door is a perch. Myojo talked Raman out of dissecting the little creature, and he has kept it ever since as his mascot and watchful pet. The donshu has the size and body of a tamarin monkey, with small claws and the head of cat. It has blue-gray hair and green eyes having neither pupil nor iris. The donshu shows the intelligence of a clever chimp. Once per day, it can turn *invisible* and cast a *telekinesis* spell (at the 1st level of ability). The donshu can pick pockets, move silently, climb, hide in shadows, and hear noise as a 10th-level thief. (Donshu: AC 6 (Dx 18); HD 1/2; hp 3; MV 90'(30'); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1 hp; Save F1; ML 7; TT None; AL N; XP 20.

**618. Talasar's quarters:** The floor, bulkheads, and ceiling in this room are covered with skillfully polished metal plates. All of them are oriented at slightly different angles and act like mirrors. The room is normally dark, except for a large number of *perpetual candles* (enchanted with tiny *continual lights*) glowing everywhere in the room. In effect, the room resembles the meditation hall in the Great Temple of Razud in Starpoint. Talasar's bed is concealed behind one of the reflecting panels. The window is covered with a thick velvet curtain. Anyone using bright light in this area must save vs. spell or be blinded for 1d6 rounds.

**619. Haldemar's quarters:** Berylith took particular care to rearrange Haldemar's quarters in the way *she* liked them. Most of the dark-brown, varnished floor is covered with unique carpets made from the fluffy, silver hair of sky-wyrm manes. The bulkheads have the consistency of soft leather rather than wood and show a variety of blue tints, ranging from deep purple dotted with tiny glowing stars, when Haldemar sleeps, to bright azure with shifting cloud patterns, when he's fully awake. A translucent globe of *continual light* mimics the passage of the sun or the moon across the cabin's overhead, with all appropriate tints for sunrises and sunsets. Occasionally, a light breeze may create havoc among Haldemar's disorganized stacks of scrolls. The choice of shades and the strength of the breeze depend on Berylith's mood.



Berylith also added to the room quite a bit of what could be perceived by Haldemar as the dreaded feminine touch—including exquisite curtains and charming vases of ever-resplendent blooms. The centerpiece and pride of Berylith lies in Haldemar's age-old bunk, which she has mercilessly turned into a pink-shaded, *levitating* cloud in the middle of the room. Berylith is very sensitive about comments on her taste. There is a 90% chance in any situation that she will hear any derogatory comments anywhere on the ship and act upon them in some rash manner.

### Deck 7—Utility deck

**701. Upper cargo deck:** Common crew equipment and items of small bulk that can be pulled up through the hatchway are stored in this area. The hatchway in the floor leads down to area 801. A wooden ladder in the middle of the cargo bay leads to another hatchway overhead to area 601. Both hatchways are locked (see area 502).

**702. Greenhouse:** A *continual light* spell permanently illuminates this large room. A number of small and large plants picked up during the voyages of the *Princess Ark* have been placed here. One unappreciated vegetable is a specimen of Cestian gobbler (see DRAGON issue #153),

which stopped growing and went dormant due to unfavorable conditions in the room. The carnivorous plant wakes up only when touched or presented with raw meat. The greenhouse's caretaker, Azoth, is a zombie that remains inside a large empty jar when done with its chores. Azoth will attack anyone harming the plants. A heavy curtain conceals the stairway on the port-side bulkhead; the stairs lead up to area 702.

**703. Zoo:** A strong, alkaline smell fills this room. Most of the space is occupied by metal cages, some empty and others containing various animals and small monsters. Some have recently become objects of further study, especially by Raman (see area 606). A heavy curtain conceals the stairway on the starboard side; the stairs lead up to area 703.

**704. Yeoman's office:** This office contains a large desk, wooden chests, and shelves covered with a number of ledgers and other scroll cases. Most of the ship's accounting takes place in this room. The crew often stops in this office to receive their pay before leaving the ship. It is also here that passengers and new crew members must register.

**705. Sick bay:** These quarters are mostly filled with bunks, night stands, chairs, chests, and a small altar consecrated to Razud. Wisps of myrrh slowly curl out from small copper censers. The beds are covered with fine mosquito nets. Opposite the door to alleyway 706 is an area that can be separated with curtains from the rest of the room. In the center of that area is a flat wooden table used for surgery, should it ever become necessary, as well as a rack of wicked-looking tools. Occasionally, Raman will use the table to dissect some of the creatures from area 605. Talasar more often handles common medicine through clerical spell-casting. The room fills rapidly after a battle.

**706. Alleyway:** The stairs leading up from this area connect with alleyway 613.

**707. Brig:** Only two cells can be used in this area. Manacles hang from the wooden bulkhead to which they are solidly bolted. One sentry, who normally remains with potential prisoners, sits at a small table near the exit. The door is *wizard locked* at all times, limiting access to officers only.

**708. Leo's quarters:** This room is filled with an incredible mess of raw materials, tools, and strange pieces of machinery (Leo's partially completed inventions). There is no telling what these devices may do if tampered with. Leo's bed is a small hammock hanging from the ceiling. Mugs, bags, and other items hang nearby; Leo can reach them with a mechanical arm.

**709. Evacuation gangway:** Lifeboats hang from the side of the gangway here. Pulleys and cranks allow the boats to be pushed away from the deck or pulled back in 1d4+3 rounds. The lifeboats are enchanted with *fly* spells and may carry

up to 12 people without ill effect. Up to 18 people could huddle on a lifeboat, but it would lose its ability to maneuver (it would descend slowly within a gravitational field). With more than 18 people aboard, a lifeboat has a 10% chance per turn of capsizing or beginning a free fall within a gravitational field. *Airmasks* may be needed during an evacuation, since lifeboats and rafts lack *create air* enchantments. The lifeboats are covered with tarpaulins. A ladder located halfway down this gangway leads up to an overhead hatchway connecting with gangway 614.

**710. Laboratory:** Haldemar and Talasar often use these quarters to study magic or alchemy. Shelves cover the bulkheads, displaying huge numbers of crystal vials, copper urns, glass beakers and tubes of various colors, porcelain jars, stone crucibles, ivory and wooden scroll cases, skulls of various shapes, bizarrely twisted candles, grimoires, and other arcane objects. Haldemar often calls in Leo to help make a sophisticated contraption. The door is *wizard locked*.

**711. Workshop:** Leo works in this area, using the facilities and its heavy tools to build his inventions. Leo is aware of the secret passage leading to his quarters in area 708. The room is filled with work benches, rows of tools, and pieces of broken equipment belonging to the ship or the crew. Chief engineer Raman has long given up this area, reluctantly leaving it to the hyperactive gnome. A hatchway in the floor leads to area 802 underneath.

### Deck S—Cargo deck

**801. Anchor room:** A few boxes and barrels are stored in this area. In the middle sits a large winch used to lower a ground anchor. At least four people are needed to crank the anchor back up, a process taking 1d6+4 rounds. A wooden ladder leads to a hatchway in the ceiling that connects with area 701. The two doors are *wizard locked*.

**802. Lower cargo deck:** This area is filled with large barrels, crates, chests, and other bulky items. This cargo deck contains mostly food supplies for the crew, with very little in the way of actual merchandise, as the *Princess Ark* is not a merchantman but an exploration vessel. Two very large double doors open on the port and starboard sides of the hull. Two cranes on the outside can be used to bring cargo up when the ship is airborne. The cranes are operated from the inside of the cargo deck with pulleys and levers. All doors are normally *wizard locked*, except for the one leading to the *levitation shaft*. Scullions commonly visit this area, searching for food. A wooden ladder near the end of the room leads up to a hatchway overhead, connecting with area 711. Ω

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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 16: Conspiracies within conspiracies

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphantian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAALLEN  
LOOD ADMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.

**Tslamir 23, 2000 AY:** It took a day to reach the magical gate that had brought us to the sky wyrms' universe. It was a bumpy flight, and it took all the skill and prowess of a sky wyrm like Berylith to hold the course through the gate's storm. At last, we could see daylight piercing the billowing clouds at the peak of the storm. Everyone was longing for a moment of calm and rest under our golden sun. With a bang, the ship emerged through the gate into our own universe—and we nearly crashed into a desert sand dune!

The gate's exit had moved since we had

entered the other universe, apparently by hundreds of miles north-northwest of our previous position. Worse yet, we showed up unexpectedly in the middle of a battle in the desert. Apparently, a smaller force had been surrounded and would have been butchered had it not been for our impromptu arrival.

I ordered Berylith to make her ghostly sky-wyrm aura turn *invisible*, wishing to stay out of what was clearly not our business—but no! Instead, Berylith felt this was not becoming of a true princess. She even roared to make her arrival more grandiose. Myojo held his head in embarrassment. Xerdon shrugged. And I was too numb to react.

The larger army panicked immediately. Dropping scimitars, shields, and turbans, the soldiers rode off on their camels toward the southwest. As for the smaller force, its men dropped to their knees, bowing as low as they could. There was nothing else to do but make contact.

It took some convincing on my part to have Berylith go *invisible*. She obviously enjoyed the awe she caused and wanted to remain the heroine of the day. Finally, with the wooden ship alone being visible, I invited the leader of the defending forces to come aboard.

The man was Prince Dharjee, a polite and soft-spoken person. His father, the maharajah of Putnabad, ruler of the southern province of Sind, had sent him on a mission to King Chandra's palace in Sayr Ulan. He was to return with special orders for the king's future visit in the capital of Putnabad. A small army, sent by the rajah of Jaibul, had come close to capturing the prince. Jaibul, I learned, is a small, independent realm on the coast west of Sind, and it has been a rival of Putnabad for centuries.

Prince Dharjee was obviously very impressed with the *Princess Ark*, her magic,





her workmanship, and, most of all, her decoration and style. His caravan being in such poor shape, he asked if we could transport him and his servants back to Jahore, the capital city of Putnabad. After our undue intrusion into the Kingdom of Sind, the only civilized thing to do was to accept. We picked up his camels, troops, servants, and even the caravan's royal elephant, and we headed south to Jahore, the pearl of Putnabad.

**Tslamir 24:** Berylith's mood was truly dreadful all morning. She complained without end about the elephant pacing from port to starboard all night, and about the camel dung all over the stern deck. She nearly ejected one of the crew for referring to that area as the "poop deck." And we were flying at a snails pace. I couldn't tell if it was because of the extra weight or Berylith's bad mood.

Talasar was still in sick bay, recovering from his misadventure on Hakh. I left Xerdon in control of the bridge and spent the remainder of the day with Prince Dharjee. He was amazed at the ship's construction, and he had no doubt that a great architect must have designed the plans of this marvel. He assured me his father "would certainly pay a thousand treasures of emeralds and rubies for the services of the divine genius who conceived such a masterpiece as the *Princess Ark*." I cringed. Berylith heard that—I knew it. Suddenly, the ship flew faster.

**Tslamir 25:** We reached Jahore this morning. The city is a sprawling megalopolis on the westernmost branch of the Asanda delta. High, fortified walls enclose the inner city, protecting middle and upper class quarters, merchant areas, and the maharajah's palace. Beyond the walls spread thousands of poor, overcrowded dwellings, a squalid collection of shacks and muddy passageways, occasionally divided by the main roads leading to the inner city gates and the numerous temple compounds. A shabby port occupies the southern edge of the city, allowing light ships to sail the grimy delta up to Jahore. Larger ships remain anchored in a small bay, at the mouth of the delta. A few stone bridges span the wide Asanda river within the inner city, while most of the population uses small barges to cross over.

Oddly enough, it seemed none of the main buildings were erected in a regular fashion. As we came closer, it became clear many of the onion-shaped domes were imperfectly built, the towers being crooked nearly to the point of collapse. Certainly none of the windows or doors showed any symmetry at all. This was totally unlike the usual Sind architecture.

As usual, the arrival of the *Princess Ark* caused quite a bit of agitation among the people and the guard. Prince Dharjee's appearance on one of the *levitating* life boats came as a relief to them. We were immediately whisked away to the maharajah's apartments.

Ashupta Khan, the maharajah, was very

thankful to us for saving his son from the rajah of Jaibul. A great banquet was offered at the palace. Later, during the celebration, the maharajah leaned over to me and asked about the *Princess Ark*. Indeed, his son had described the vessel at length, and I could see a gleam of envy in the maharajah's eyes. I am afraid I disappointed His Highness when I mentioned the ship had been created by the magic of a creature from beyond this world, and that I was only its keeper.

The maharajah then explained what was happening in Jahore. It was believed that a great curse afflicted the city. Many people were unable to attain the greatness of skill of their fathers. Most of the upper castes were going through an inexplicable decadence and laziness, explaining the imperfect looks of the buildings in Jahore.

Last month, the Black Rajah of Jaibul visited King Chandra in Sayr Ulan, and he joked about the poor state of affairs of the "Pearl of Putnabad." This greatly irritated the king. He ordered a great palace be built there before the end of the year, or the Ashupta family would be stripped of its nobility and possessions. The maharajah's son was on his way to Sayr Ulan to obtain financial aid from the king when the Black Rajah's troops managed to intercept Prince Dharjee's caravan. Ashupta Khan was quite broke; he was totally unable to find a competent architect anywhere in Jahore as well. He was in a sticky position.

Of course, being a foreigner and the "keeper" of an incredible piece of architecture, I could not evade his interest. For my assistance he offered many things, including his prized stable, half of his harem, and even the diadem on his turban, none of which I could honestly accept. In time, though, Ashupta Khan was more than willing to offer "preferred client" status to Alphatian merchants in Jahore, with a 1% impost on port trade payable to the Haaken family. At that point, I thought that lending a hand would be a challenging enterprise. Based on this lucrative arrangement, I set forth to build a palace.

**Tslamir 26:** The crew was granted shore leave in Jahore after the elephant, the camels, and their owners disembarked. The scene drew a huge crowd of onlookers in the street below, as the large animals dangled from ropes underneath the *Princess*. Widespread betting took place in the streets on whether each animal would make it to the ground safely. The elephant drew record bets when one of the ropes began to give. A little *levitation* spell came in handy, and I won that bet (with 79:1 odds).

The officers discussed the palace project with me. Raman and Leo both showed great interest. Berylith was able to attend the meeting after a fashion, reading my mind as the discussion took place. She, of course, said she was skillful in matters of architecture and would gladly provide her knowledge. She also quietly requested that

half of that trade impost be used to embellish the *Princess Ark* through the purchase of objects of art and other ornamental items. Once the details were worked out, Raman, Leo, and myself would disembark and conduct the construction, as per Berylith's blueprints.

**Tslamir 28:** It took some time to find the proper site for the construction. It was finally decided to destroy the abandoned city library, which was threatening to collapse into the river. Unfortunately, the Sindian workers proved to be incredibly slow, so slow that I had to use the ship's crew to accelerate the process. There was no telling how long it would take to level the older construction.

Late this night, after the moon had set behind the horizon, I felt the ship move. Berylith had decided to intervene in the construction. She moved close to the library and blasted it with her breath weapon. It created great confusion in the sleeping city, as people thought the monsoons had arrived. Berylith quickly gained altitude and remained hidden inside a solitary cloud until calm returned.

**Andrumir 4:** Despite the magic I used to help in the palace's construction, I must admit that the people of Jahore are terribly slow workers. It has been very difficult making them follow a construction plan without erring. Raman and Leo were near nervous exhaustion in their endeavors to explain the work to the Sindians and to avoid catastrophic mistakes.

**Andrumir 8:** I have noticed an increase in construction oversights. Raman and Leo seemed much more indolent and careless today. Worse, the crew has been acting quite sloppily on board, forgetting to clean the decks or to show up for duty. Some crewmembers did not seem to care at all. This was too much of a coincidence.

This lazy attitude struck me with its similarity to *zzonga* addiction, which ravaged our empire some time ago. However, I could observe none of the other symptoms normally accompanying *zzonga* addiction. It would take quite a bit of magic to affect an entire city—and so far I have not detected any sign of large-scale magic anywhere.

**Andrumir 12:** I found the source of the "curse." The waters of the Asanda River have been poisoned with a rare alchemical substance. It is unlikely it could happen naturally, so I must admit someone has been seeking the doom of Jahore. But who? There was only one way to figure this out. Ashari and myself would leave the ship under disguise and blend in with the population. With some luck, we could unveil who was behind all this.

**Andrumir 14:** It made sense that someone would be working upstream to contaminate the city waters. We explored the river banks just north of the Jahore and found several areas well concealed from sight. There I dropped hardened compounds of my creation that would take several days to dissolve. The solution,

when mixed with the water, would immediately reveal any evidence of poison by coloring the water. We could then trace the colored solution back to the spot where the poison had been thrown into the water.

Indeed, we were soon able to trace the solution back to one of the hidden sources. Someone had dropped a sheepskin full of slow-dissolving poison into the river. It came in sufficient quantity to affect most of the population in the city for several days. We even spotted our culprit, a man on a horse. It was time to uncover the conspiracy.

We quietly followed the man back to Jahore. A bit of invisibility allowed us to enter his house just moments after him. There we saw him use a magical item that opened a small gate. He entered, and we followed closely.

On the other side was a palace—but not quite like the one in Jahore. It was darker and more sinister. The man walked past a corner and entered a room. Ashari tiptoed up to the door and listened. She heard a discussion between what must have been a spy and his employer, and the sound of money changing hands. The man came back out carrying a goatskin full of poison and returned to the gate. Ashari barely had enough time to get through before the gate disappeared.

**Andrumir 15—Xerdon:** I fear that something has happened to the Admiral and his escort. Neither he nor First Class Navigator Ashari have returned from their foray into Jahore. I alerted His Highness, Ashupta Khan, who immediately dispatched his guards to search the city.

**Andrumir 15—Haldemar** (Text added later): The sun rose soon after Ashari's return to Jahore. I was able to explore the sinister palace and locate the ruler in his throne room; my spell of invisibility still protected me. From the visitors he met in the morning, I could deduce that he was no other than the Black Rajah of Jaibul. He was an old man, with a skin parched from age and the unforgiving sun of the Great Waste. Judging from his stance, I could not fail to recognize an experienced wizard.

The Black Rajah retired shortly after the meetings to his personal quarters, at the top of a high, narrow tower overlooking the town. There, he spent hours going through the bureaucratic paperwork that plagues so many rulers. While perusing about, I noticed antique clay tablets held together with a golden silk ribbon. The tablets bore the royal seal of Sind. While the rajah was busy elsewhere, I quietly took a few pieces of vellum and rubbed them with a bit of charcoal over the tablets in order to obtain an imprint of the ancient text. With luck, Raman could decipher the Sindian scriptures later on.

The sound of chains and men-at-arms echoed up the hallway. Soldiers were pulling a prisoner—a Pearl Islander perhaps, judging from the dark color of his skin. He was a bit small, though, with

slightly narrow-lidded eyes and gracious facial features. He had a thin, neatly trimmed beard and wore a long red robe made of soft leather scales. The guards knocked at a door and while they waited, the prisoner glanced in my direction. I could have sworn he saw me, but the guards pulled him quickly into the other chamber.

Intrigued, I followed them. The rajah was there, sitting in a comfortable chair and toying with a small piece of jewelry. It looked like a replica of a small flame carved out of a topaz. He had the prisoner stripped and waved the guards out. Soon thereafter the rajah uttered a long invocation and brandished the jewel. Translucent flames began to glow on the prisoner's body. I could see the pain in his eyes, but he endured stoically. He remained quiet and immobile while the magical flames grew and consumed his flesh. The rajah was watching intently, enjoying with a sadistic pleasure his victim's pain and agony. I realized then that the prisoner was staring into my eyes, despite my *invisibility*. It felt like he was looking through me. For a brief instant, I saw images of great battles, flying ships, death and pestilence, then a great continent sinking into stormy seas. My senses returned just as the man died.

I noticed a certain perplexity on the rajahs face. He squinted for a moment in my general direction. That would not do, so I ducked behind a curtain. The rajah quickly spoke another spell and looked around him, observing the room and listening carefully. I did not think he saw me, but he certainly suspected something. He quickly scooped up the bone cinders and the few ashes remaining where the prisoner once stood, poured them into a golden crucible, and walked out, swiftly shutting the door behind him. By the time I could safely open the door, the rajah had disappeared behind a corner or, more probably, through a secret door.

This was very strange. I had no clues as to how the prisoner could have seen me or what those visions were. Worse, I knew the rajah would use those ashes—and I suspected his intentions to be thoroughly evil. It wasn't until very late that night that I located the rajah and the ashes as well. He was in the palace dungeon, in a chamber that took all my skill to reach. I observed the rajah working at a small brazier. After a litany of incantations, he sprinkled the ashes that had been mixed with another substance. This produced swirls of acrid-smelling smoke with sparks of light. Inside, I was surprised to see the same visions that affected me in the rajah's apartments. The rajah was quickly taking notes with a quill and a piece of parchment. The same battles and cataclysms appeared as in my previous vision, up to a point when the rajahs apartments also materialized in the vision—with me standing near the curtains!

The rajah jumped to his feet and cursed.

He dispersed the smoke and had the guard sound the alarm. If he had a doubt, it was now gone. He knew I was in the palace and what I looked like. I would have to be very careful in the future. The old man had many ways of finding me. It was time to skip out of the chamber. It was late, and I was getting very tired and hungry.

**Andrumir 16—Xerdon:** The ship has grown restless, somewhat skittish like a horse. I suspect she senses the disappearance of the Admiral. I attempted to communicate with the ship's entity but failed to obtain an answer. So far, the search by the maharajah's men yielded no sign of the admiral or Ashari. I recovered Chief Raman and Mr. Le Nerviens, both of whom I found in an unclean condition and resting with the other construction personnel during work hours. This inexcusably lax attitude before foreign civilians is not permitted for an officer of Her Imperial Majesty's Navy and shall be stopped at once.

**Andrumir 16—Haldemar** (Text added later): I spent the night in a little stable. At dawn, I took a stroll down the streets. The town of Jaibul was as sinister and oppressive as its palace. This was a haven for thugs and cutthroats rivaled only by the rajahs guard, a brutal and arrogant bunch. The rajahs palace and his army's quarters were located inside an imposing citadel. A port opened directly on a small bay. There I noticed the rajahs guards were unloading another prisoner; he looked a bit like the one the rajah murdered earlier. He displayed the same, unmistakable dignity as the other. These people could be powerful seers, perhaps. I was getting horribly curious about their origins.

Aside from the unspeakable tortures and murders that had been probably taking place for some time, it was clear the rajah was up to something big. I had to return and find out, so I cast a new spell and *flew* up to the rajahs tower. There, from the window I could see the rajah sitting in front of a mirror. Instead of his reflection, the mirror revealed a man in black, wearing a hood. The rajah picked up the scroll containing his notes on the vision and stuck it through the mirror, causing strange ripples through its glassy surface. The man in black nodded, then quietly produced a pen and wrote something on the scroll before returning it. The rajah read the response—then said, in proper Alphatian, "Their destruction will be a blessing for us all. How soon, though, is the question, isn't it, my obtrusive friend?" The man in black faded away as the rajah turned toward me. "You didn't think you could fool me much longer, did you?"

**Andrumir 17—Xerdon:** The ship has inexplicably broken her lines and set flight toward the southwest. I suspect she senses where the Admiral is. For lack of results from the maharajah's incompetent search of Jahore, I am allowing the *Princess Ark* to freely take us to wherever she wishes. I

am cloaking the ship to avoid further problems with the local population.

**Andrumir 17—Haldemar:** I should have been more alert. No recollection of what had happened after my last encounter with the rajah came to my mind—that is to say, nothing else than a searing pain in my head. I woke up in the citadels dungeon, stripped, gagged, and shackled to the wall in a very uncomfortable position. I could not have done a better job of it myself.

The rajah showed up hours past my awakening. He came with a nasty grin and his dreaded topaz. "I didn't think you would cooperate, and as a fellow wizard I wished to spare you the commoner's fate," said he, while pointing at various instruments of torture across the cell. "The Fire Jewel is far more efficient in revealing someone's inner thoughts. And I am sure you will fully savor the refined magicks of Jaibul." The rajahs sinister laughter echoed in the dark dungeon. He began the Fire Jewel's incantation. I cringed.

Then a heavy cudgel landed on the back of the rajahs turban. He collapsed in a soundless heap. Someone stepped out of the dark. It was Ashari! The dear young woman had followed the rajah's lackey back to Jahore. Seeing that the gate had closed before me, she quickly "terminated" the river's poisoner and recovered the item he used to open the gate. By the time

she had discerned its method of operation, I was already elsewhere in the rajahs palace. She had been looking for me ever since. Finally, Ashari had followed the rajah down here, and, as Glantrians would say, "Voila!" A master stroke! And she smirked, "I also, um, accidentally dropped the rajah's poison in the citadels well." How thoughtful of her. This yeoman was due for a promotion.

After hooking the rajah to his own shackles, I was tempted to try the fiery topaz on him. After all, he, too, had many things to tell us about. Alas, a squad of guard entered the cell unexpectedly. A prompt *reverse gravity* took care of them, except for a runty fellow in the back who ran for help. We ducked from pillar to corner for some time while men-at-arms rushed down the narrow stairwells looking for us. This was an exhilarating moment, although I had some trouble keeping pace with the nimble Ashari as this delightful game went on.

It was during this "dungeonesque escapade" that I located the prisoner I had seen in the port of Jaibul. Ashari defeated the crude lock that imprisoned him with barely two twists of her wrist. Our man bowed slightly and swiftly followed us. We could hear the rajahs hysterical holler echoing up the hallways.

It took Ashari some doing to find an exit—a filthy sewer grate in a deserted

street. Something was amiss, though. It was high noon and no one was around. As we slipped down the street under the shadows of colonnades, guards suddenly poured out from every corner. We were trapped!

The rajah had recovered his senses more quickly than I anticipated. Within moments, there he was, sitting on a *flying carpet* and hovering above us. "You will suffer for a thousand days and thousand nights, each of you!" said he, pale and trembling with anger.

I grimly turned to my compatriots and noticed, oddly enough, a wry smile appearing on the face of the prisoner we had rescued. Enraged, the rajah raved on, "You will see your skin slowly ripped from your flesh and thrown to the dogs!" he cried.

Now the former prisoner displayed a very wide grin that infuriated the rajah even more. Perhaps he knew something I didn't. "You'll have each of your limbs ripped from your body!" spat the rajah. "You—" Suddenly the rajah jerked, his eyes growing very wide, and stopped in the middle of his speech.

"I doubt that very much, your highness!" came a voice behind him in the air. Slowly, the *Princess Ark* became visible just behind the rajah. And at her prow stood Xerdon, with his sword conspicuously jabbed into the rajahs back. The rajahs men fled at once in complete chaos. What

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wonderful timing.

**Andrumir 18—Haldemar:** With the rajah of Jaibul in our hands, I had no difficulty in retrieving my personal belongings—and the antique Sindian tablets and the strange mirror. According to Raman, the clay tablets were an old treaty between previous rulers of Sind and Jaibul. It attributed the ruler of Jaibul legal rights to the Province of Putnabad, should the Ashupta family become extinct or be stripped of its nobility due to royal discontent. The rajah of Jaibul had found a way to discredit the Ashuptas by poisoning the people, thus causing their decadence. Jahore definitely looked like a mess. It was time to return to Jahore and finish a certain construction enterprise—and quickly so, before the king's visit.

As we veered over the port of Jaibul toward Jahore, Ramissur came up to me, holding the rajah by his collar. "Sir, what do I do with him?" Ramissur asked.

This was an unexpected problem. The rajah was too dangerous to keep aboard, and I had a hunch that our new guest, the ex-prisoner Yarani, could shed more light on what had been going on than could the rajah. I told Ramissur to do as he pleased.

Ramissur gazed at me for a moment, looked at the rajah, then shrugged and unceremoniously tossed his prisoner overboard. I suppose that sank our diplomatic ties with Jaibul for many years to come.

Such is life.

**Andrumir 19—Haldemar:** Back to Jahore. The poison in the river has started to thin out. Already, positive results can be seen among the population. The building of the palace has resumed, and with a little magical help on my part, construction is literally progressing by leaps and bounds. The "Raj Tahal" might be done well within the royal deadline.

I spent some time with our guest, Yarani. He claimed to be a citizen of the Yavdlom Hagiarchy, far beyond Jaibul. This was one place I'd never heard of. Yarani was a holy man, a noble of sorts. He wouldn't answer my questions regarding his uncanny ability to see *invisible* things, nor would he comment on the visions I'd had when I witnessed his compatriot's murder at the hands of the rajah. He seemed very concerned, however, and invited the *Princess Ark* to visit the Great Prophet, spiritual ruler of Yavdlom. There, he said, would be many revelations—some good, some bad. *To be continued. . . .*

### The Kingdom of Sind

In the eastern region of the Great Waste lies a large nation under the rulership of King Chandra. His kingdom stretches from Lake Hast, west of Glantri, to the Asanda River delta on the Sea of Dread. The eastern border separates Sind from the Atruaghin Clans and Darokin. At its south-

west border lies the smaller but fiercely independent Rajahstan of Jaibul. The western limits lie somewhere in the Plain of Fire, a vast territory still unclaimed.

Sind's notoriety comes from the extreme poverty of its people, some of the poorest in the Known World. The hardship of these destitute folk clashes with the fabulous wealth of Sind's nobility, the many rajahs and maharajahs. Common Sindians get by, however, thanks to their great faith in a vast pantheon of Immortals and to the help given them by a powerful clergy. Foreigners often have difficulties traveling in Sind because of the incredible number of customs and beliefs that affect every aspect of the daily life. Ignoring a custom, deliberately or accidentally, can provoke anger among the population.

The nobility is clearly under the authority of the king. The rajahs control commerce, politics, and warfare. The history of Sind was fraught with wars among the various rajahstans until the great royal dynasties of Sayr Ulan pacified the Asanda plain. A series of bloody wars ensued during the conquest of the states of Peshmir, Gunjab, and Kadesh—fierce warriors by tradition. Those states still enjoy a relative autonomy from the king compared to the southern states. Today, the king's army is often busy fighting off humanoid incursions from the Plain of Fire and banditry along its caravan trails.



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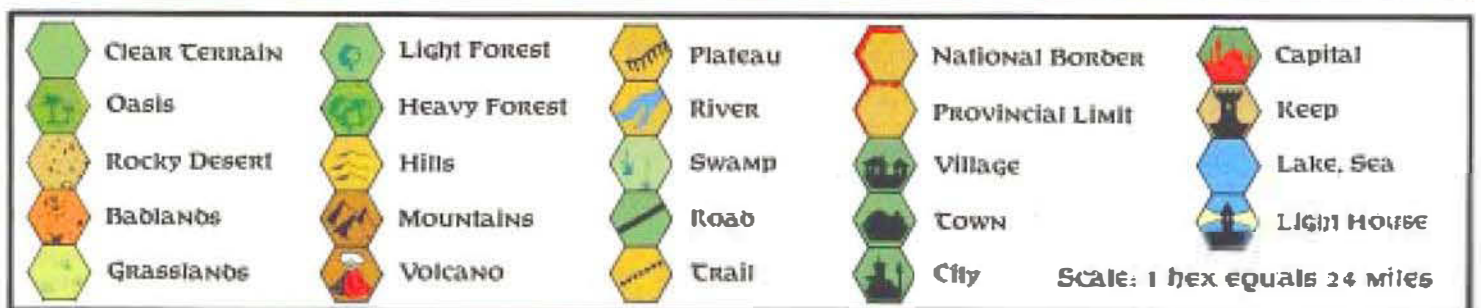
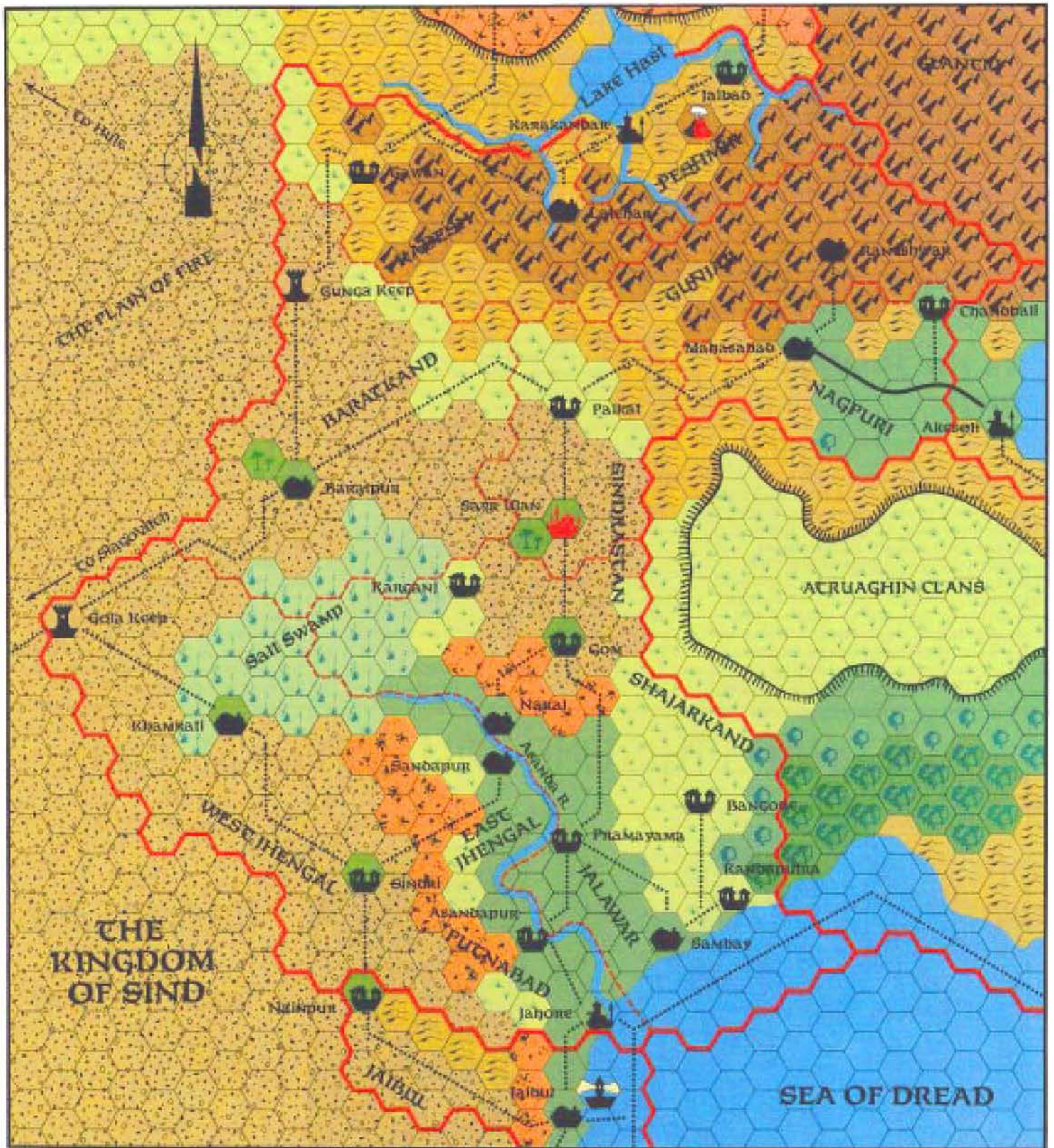
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Sayr Ulan is the nation's capital and the historical domain of the royal dynasties. It began as a small oasis village; centuries later, it became a convenient stop for Darokinian caravans and a trading point. A new caravan trail was built around the northern states, toward Fort Sablestone in Glantri. Nowadays, Sayr Ulan is a major center of commerce between Darokin and

the western city of Slogovitch. Sind is a major trader in silk, cotton, rice, salt, and tea. Merchant ships from Minrothad often anchor at Jahore.

The Rajahstan of Jaibul is an independent and chaotic magocracy that allows itself to be ruled only by a single, powerful wizard. Successive monarchs of Sind never could conquer it. Whenever Jaibul's

rajah dies, the most powerful wizards of Jaibul compete for the throne. It is a cruel and unforgiving challenge, usually fatal for the weaker candidates. Jaibul's biggest trade is in slavery, gold, and rare oils. Constant clashes take place between Jaibul and the Serene Hagiarchy of Yavdlom to the southwest.

Ω

## Letters

Continued from page 5

We are open to suggestions from gamers who have first-hand knowledge on this subject. Please send us your thoughts; the best advice will be printed in "Forum."

## As the Realms turn

Dear Dragon,

In his article, "The Game Wizards" ("Understanding Undermountain—the king of all dungeons"), Ed Greenwood mentions one Laeral. It is stated in the article that she is both the consort of Khelben "Blackstaff" of Waterdeep and the sister of The Simbul, Alustriel, Dove, and Storm (as well as the deceased Sylune). Looking through the FORGOTTEN REALMS® boxed set and all the FR supplements, I found no mention of her. Am I just missing it, or has she not been introduced before? This group of sisters is very important to one of my characters who adventures in the Forgotten Realms. Are there any other sisters not yet revealed? If so, where can I get information on

them as well as on Laeral?

Michael Kellam  
Mesquite TX

Dear Dragon,

I have some questions regarding inconsistencies appearing in an article, "The Game Wizards, in issue #167. In this preview of *The Ruins of Undermountain*, Elminster is unavailable for commentary thanks to a previous engagement with The Simbul. In his place, Laeral meets with Ed Greenwood. During the course of their conversation, Laeral claims kinship with The Simbul, Alustriel, Dove, Storm, and (though unmentioned) the late Sylune. As far as I can tell, isn't Laeral supposed to be a member of "The Nine" and of no relation to these sisters? And if she is now involved with Khelben, I wonder if anyone has warned him of her "Crown of Thorns," or has he something kinky in mind? Lastly, if Laeral had a hand in the notes describing Undermountain while she was under the spell of the crown, then she may be scheming to trap unwary adventurers in dangers beyond the reach of even the most powerful of DMs.

John A. Payawal  
Toronto, Ontario

Your editors were completely lost when these letters came in, so, we turned this material over to Steven Schend, the editor of the massive *dungeon boxed set*, *The Ruins of Undermountain*. His reply on Laeral, confirmed by phone calls with Ed (and with editorial inserts in parentheses) follows:

Laeral (who first appeared in *DRAGON* issue #39, page 42, as the creator of Laeral's storm armor) was the former leader of "The Nine," an adventuring group now in retirement (see *FR5 The Savage Frontier*, page 52, for details). She is indeed related to the aforementioned women, being one of seven sisters, one as yet unrevealed. (The relationship between these women is first mentioned in the DM's *Sourcebook of the Realms*, from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS boxed set*, in the entries on Dove, The Simbul, Storm, and Sylune. Laeral and the unnamed sister were not discussed there, leading most people to believe that there were only five sisters.) As for the Crown of Horns (its correct name, first mentioned in *FR5*, page 53, it has been destroyed; its hold on Laeral was broken by Khelben (her archmage consort; described in the DM's *Sourcebook*, page 24, and in *FR1 Waterdeep and the North*, among other places).

And worry not about Laeral's oft-innocent scheming; worry about your DM's plans!

Ω

# PERHAPS THIS ONE WILL INTEREST YOU...

The advertisement features a central illustration of a catalog with a skull and a dragon. The catalog is titled "The Dark Prince" and lists various vampire-themed miniatures. The dragon is a large, detailed model with wings spread, standing on a base. The skull is a human skull with a crown-like structure on top. The catalog is open, showing the title and a list of items. The background is dark and textured.

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## Part 17: The Serpent Peninsula revisited

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

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PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.

**Cyprimir 12, 2000 AY:** At long last, the Raj Tahal's construction in Jahore approached completion. There was nothing left to do that the gentle people of Putnabad could not do for themselves. Talasar had finally recovered from his wounds and was back on duty at my side. With great fanfare and fireworks, we bid the maharajah farewell. At sundown, we set a southwesterly course heading for the Most Serene Divinarchy of Yavdlom. Yarani was kind enough to teach some of us the basics of the Yavdlom language.

**Cyprimir 18:** The Coast of Jaibul and the parched beaches of the Sind Desert proved so far to be of little interest, being

an endless succession of sand dunes and rocky outcroppings crisscrossed by tribal caravans and desert thieves. At night, small raiding parties of orcs and goblins often became active, scouting caravan campsites and oases. No combat took place, however.

Surprisingly, we observed numerous merchantmen that bore Minrothad or Jaibul colors, sailing off the sun-baked coast. Their waterlines ran deep under the surface, betraying some heavy cargo, perhaps from the city state of Slagovich.

Yarani spoke of his fabled nation. It was a realm governed by prophets, and its clergy were soothsayers and seers that he described as the Great Watchers, Historians of Humanity. Their power over the people was so great that once their entire nation migrated to the Arm of the Immortals, far to the west, as a tribute to their Immortal patrons. Centuries later, a new generation returned and retook their ancient lands from the jungle and the swamp. This was a fascinating place that I wouldn't miss for the world!

**Cyprimir 24:** It has been a few days now since we flew past the Western Thanegioth Archipelago. We had reached Thanegia Island, at the southern edge of the Serpent Peninsula. Despite omnipresent jungle and swamp on Thanegia, Yarani revealed villages and small towns hiding under a thick tropical haze. They clung precariously to the sides of steep hills or were surrounded by small patches of pasture land. These were the first settlements of the Yavdlom Divinarchy that we could see.

We reached our final destination just before sunset. There, sprawling before us, lay the Most Limpid City of Thanopolis. Yarani pointed out this was a name Minrothad explorers had given to the city. Native Yavdlom called their capital Tanakumba. It stood on a few dozen small islands among

ARTWORK BY JIM HOLLIMONEY





a very complicated network of rivers, canals, and lakes that led to a chaotic delta on the city's south side. Imposing stone buildings dominated the center of each island, while wooden structures stretched out toward the river banks. On the banks, a jumble of light dwellings on bamboo stilts, tiny houseboats, and floating shacks invaded the murky city waters. Every where, crowds of people ran along pontoons and streets, rushing to fulfill their daily chores before nightfall.

The most fascinating features of Tanakumba were the clusters of huge shells sitting in the city's many lakes. These graceful edifices rose from no less than 30' to 100' up. Yarani, his chest swollen with pride, identified these as the Abodes of the Seers. Indeed, we could see hundreds of small windows on each shell, balconies cascading with colorful tropical flowers, and elegant bridges that arched between the giant shells. A ballet of sailboats took place at the water level, ferrying people and goods between the isles.

This is not to say Tanakumba had no streets, for many paved streets and a few large avenues ran through the small islands. Pahn trees swayed in the evening breeze, alternating with neat rows of large potted plants along the malls where pebble mosaics in the pavement displayed colorful patterns. The important thoroughfares had massive, river-spanning bridges. The roads all converged toward the spiritual center of the Most Serene Divinarchy of Yavdom: the Great Prophet's palace in the highest city-shell of Tanakumba. Yarani bowed deeply before this national monument.

By nightfall, the *Princess Ark* finally anchored at a large terrace of the palace. Although we noticed crowds of spectators watching from nearby islands, few of the palace's residents seemed to care about the massive *Princess Ark*. No guards were to be seen anywhere. Seeing my surprise, Yarani explained, "They do not fear you. They know you." He then suggested we stay aboard until invited into the palace, which would probably happen in the morning. Yarani then left the ship, saying he had to meet relatives he knew in the palace.

*The events that follow were entered into The ship's log after the officers' return to the Princess Ark*

**Cyprimir 25—Haldemar:** At dawn and without notice, a herald of short stature entered the ceremonial deck and elbowed his way past the boltmen and crew, up to my position.

"Make way, make way, subjects of little consequence," he trumpeted. Looking around him, the fat little man then negligently waved at me and added, "Yes, yes, we knew you were coming. You, the one who seems to matter—please come along swiftly! The Great Prophet is a busy person." By that, he apparently meant me. I was pleased to learn that I amounted to something!

I quietly followed the prickly squab to the upper levels of the palace. At last, I met the Great Prophet—Yarani! With a kind smile, he waved his disciples out and gestured me to sit on a large pouf. Small cups full of a black, steaming beverage sat on a golden tray next to some ring-shaped pastries. Heavily sweetened, the hither drink became a delectable treat.

"Of course, you are surprised," said Yarani, between two sips. I had not spoken a word. "I did not mean to deceive you. I simply desired to enjoy a fine journey on a very fine ship without the annoying pomp and etiquette."

I couldn't believe a man of his importance would waste time in such a frivolous endeavor. But again, he smiled as I thought those very words and added, "Well, it had always been clear to me that Sésékumbo, my brother, would fall before the rajah of Jaibul. We both knew this would be the end of his path in this world. His ultimate fate was to warn you of a time yet to come — a destiny that he has fulfilled well. I came to Jaibul as his final witness."

"But, Your Grace," I began, "How could you have not used your prophetic visions to save your own brother? How could you have risked being captured yourself?"

Yarani poured himself a second cup. "Fate, you see, is the result of Immortal will. And who would I be to meddle with the wishes of Immortals? I was indeed blessed with the power of true sight, but it is wise not to use it inconsiderately. Would you want to incur the wrath of the Immortals? My own destiny is already written in the Annals of Yav, and so is yours, admiral. Our fate was to meet—here or in Jaibul, what difference does this make? You came, and you returned me here, didn't you?"

Although I admired the Great Prophet's style, I could share neither his incredible fatalism nor his blind respect for the Immortals. I am a gambler. If I can't win, I make it so that I can't lose, either, I make my own destiny—and to heck with what Immortals think! With a power like Yarani's, I could do amazing things.

The prophet chuckled softly, "Tsk, ts. Such amusing thoughts! You'll learn however, at your own time and place. But, until then, please listen to my advice and heed Sésékumbo's vision. Great powers are growing in the dark, and you, my friend, have a place in their future. As you so succinctly put it, you will weave your own destiny. But you've yet to discover it."

Yarani would not elaborate on the subject of Sésékumbo's vision. Judging from what I saw of the vision in Jaibu., there was nothing charming about the future. I gazed at length into the prophet's eyes, but all I felt was the burden of a mysterious and terrible fate now on my shoulders. Nations and perhaps whole empires were at stake. This much I could sense. His Grace Yarani bade me farewell, and I retired to a guest room in the palace.

**Cyprimir 25—Tkilasar:** Soon after the admiral disembarked, I ordered part of

the crew off the ship on a 12-hour leave. Unexpectedly, this created quite a clamor among the native boatmen, who furiously competed for their share of the business, all to the amusement of the remaining crew aboard the *Princess*. Small barges flocked beneath the skyship, peddling fresh fruit, shells, flowers, ivory, up to the singular services of ephebes and maidens. But many hopeful faces among the crew turned sober at the sight of Lady Ahovombe, hands on her hips, frowning severely and saying, "Not on this ship you won't, thank you!"

I allowed Xerdon to leave with the crew, to keep an eye on their behavior among the locals as well as to observe and enjoy this wondrous city. As for myself, I left Raman in charge of administering common duties aboard while I retired to my quarters. Thanegia's weather was far too humid for me, which the wounds I received on Hakh reminded me. I needed to meditate on all that had happened these past weeks. Wounds taken on outer planes are always difficult to heal.

**Cyprimir 25—Xerdon:** The streets of Tanakumba were amazingly busy. After fending off tenacious peddlers and hordes of children, some of us managed to get past the populous mercantile street. Others of the crew remained there, spending fistfuls of Alphatian gold crowns to the joy of the native merchants. Souvenirs, trinkets, and other shiny bric-a-brac changed hands by the bagful, without even a whisper of haggling. Already some of my boltmen, wearing ridiculous feather head-dresses—no doubt purchased at exorbitant prices—rode through the cheering crowd on bamboo palanquins. Fools.

Soon, I found myself walking down a narrow street between a row of large stone buildings. People there didn't seem to mind the presence of a foreigner. I could not avoid noticing their strange similarity to elvenkind. These ebony-skinned people, although tall even by human standards, displayed graceful facial features—and, most notably, slightly pointy ears. Among the decorative patterns and colorful paintings adorning their clothes and houses, I discerned a few stylized elven patterns. Even their writing, although clearly unique to the Yavdom culture, showed traces of elven calligraphy. There must have been a friendly elven presence among the Yavdom many generations ago.

The hot noon sun hung high in the sky. I stopped at a tavern. Everyone became suddenly silent as I stepped in, staring at me through clouds of pipe smoke. Slowly, they turned back to their own business as I ordered.

I had merely sipped from a buffalo horn of ale when a towering man walked up to me. The white mohawk on his head made him look even taller. "Eh, mohn," he said with easy menace. "Is no markie place for strangers. We make de tasty stew of elves hee'."

So much for the friendly elven connection. I chose to ignore the insult and was turning away when he slowly pulled out a knife. "How much for ye pointy ears, mohn?" he asked.

Everyone was watching. He made a move toward me, and I jumped to my feet. My sword swiftly came out of its sheath—and just as quickly, knives and staves appeared among the crowd.

The sound of shattering glass broke the silence. I saw Ramissur near the counter, holding a broken bottle in one hand and a wand unsheathed in his other, and Leo, nervously fidgeting with a bizarre contraption. Luckily, they'd chosen the same tavern as I. It was not yet an even match.

but better now.

The man before me smiled. "Just ye and me, thun!" A bastard sword was tossed to him from the crowd, but I could deal with that. The onlookers formed a circle, and the duel began.

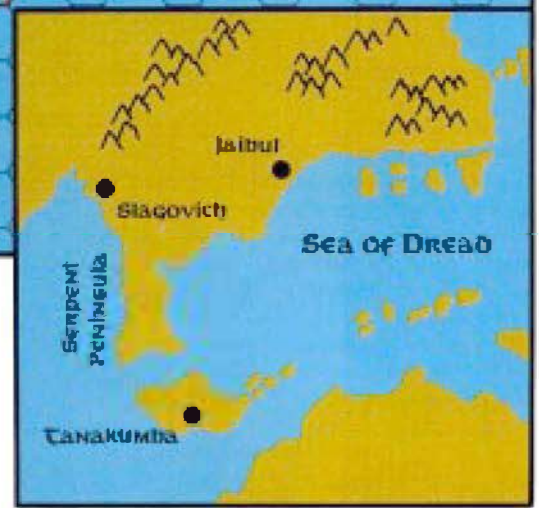
Despite his large size, he was quick and accurate. His crushing strength and humming blade spelled death at every blow. It took all of my skill to fend him off. On the bright side, the man had an equally hard time trying to keep me from reaching him.

Our fight went on. Tables, pots, windows, and most everything on the shelves paid the price of our duel. In a single strike, the man smashed a support for a wooden stairway, which then collapsed

under the weight of the spectators on it. This caused my opponent to laugh with a roar. He was clearly enjoying himself. The fight seemed to go on for hours.

Then, without warning, he stuck his sword into the floor and wiped his hands. "Is cool, mohn! I be done if ye be, too." Something in his manner said he was sincere, so I carefully let down my guard. There was no point in further battle. This man was my equal in combat. He then produced two huge tobacco rolls. "Have a smoke, friend! De name be Swetanga Nyanga."

Nyanga lit the rolls in a candle flame as the satisfied crowd settled down again, and he handed one to me. I took one puff



- Map Key**
- Village
  - Town
  - City
  - Capital
  - Ruins
  - Lighthouse
  - Trail
  - National border
  - State line
  - River, coast
  - Clear terrain
  - Forested hills
  - Swamp
  - Jungle



Scale: One hex equals 6 miles

of the thing and knew I was in trouble. How anyone could smoke this was beyond my understanding. The smell was frightening, and the aftertaste was even worse. And soon it was making me sick.

Heedless, Nyanga roared with laughter again. "If all ye boys be half as good, ye gots me blade, mohn. Be hackin' desert raiders on de northern borders ain' no fun life. So be Tanakumba's, too."

Nyanga had potential. We could use a warrior such as he—and we could trade fighting skills, too. We discussed the pay as I grew even sicker over the nauseating smoke. The last I remembered that day was Ramissur and Leo gravely watching over me, and Nyanga laughing thunderously. I hate smoke.

**Cyprimir 26—Haldemar:** It wasn't long after I had left His Grace Yarani and settled down for the evening that I had a dream. I saw an ugly red mark circling the prophet's throat. He pointed at something behind me, and I woke up abruptly, just in time to catch some movement in the room. Someone was in the dark with me, holding a wire. I could barely see him in the moonlight filtering through the curtains. His intentions were plain. Without delay, I gave him a taste—a rather unpleasant one—of my closest wand. He raised his hands to protect his face at the last second, which cost him dearly. Alas, the thug's sizzling remains left little to be learned from them.

The dream bothered me. I feared for Yarani. I left quietly, suspecting the presence of other killers, and I was correct. I saw many dead people—all strangled—on my way to the prophet's quarters. There were no guards in the palace; everyone here relied on the prescience of their seers. They should have known ahead of time of any wrongdoing, yet no alarm had been sounded.

My dagger throbbed as I entered Yarani's antechamber, which confirmed my worst fears. Two masked men rushed at me from behind a large porcelain vase, brandishing daggers. Forthwith, more sizzling flesh befouled the palace's marble floor, and I pressed onward.

But I had been too slow. I noticed a shadow slipping out of Yarani's room, into a secret passage. Yarani lay next to his bed, a wire still locked around his neck. I relieved him of the deadly device. Perhaps Zdasar would be able to gain Razud's goodwill and restore Yarani to life.

Suddenly, a woman entered the room and screamed. She was one of Yarani's aides. Before I could do anything, she ran away, screaming "Murder! Assassins!"

I had more pressing things to do than to clear myself of the accusations that would inevitably follow. I entered the secret passage and pulled the door shut. I had to find out who was behind the slaying. A narrow flight of stairs spiraled down as far as I could see.

Much later, I reached an abandoned network of catacombs. Judging from the

mildew-covered bones and stonework, this was an elven sanctuary. There was no time to ponder that piece of information. The gallery was partially filled with water, probably from the swamp or the city's rivers. I could hear someone moving ahead, splashing through the water. There was no point in soiling my boots. *Flying invisible* would be a suitable way to quietly catch up with the fugitive—or, as I discovered, fugitives.

Shortly, I caught up with several masked men. They reached an exit and stepped into a canoe, pulling their masks off. I was surprised to see one of them was a native Yavdlom—a traitor, obviously someone who knew his way in the palace. The traitor snickered. "You should have seen it. The man didn't even fight. I pulled the wire and he died without a prophetic word. Peh, what a wimp!"

I was tempted to fry this happy bunch, but I needed to know more. They paddled down the river to one of the city islands, then got off at a pier that led to an elegant mansion. Soon, the thugs met in a room before a large mirror, just like the one I saw in Jaibul. I landed silently and hid near them.

Danger was close; my dagger throbbed again. A familiar dark figure appeared in the mirror. He exchanged messages with the traitor, then nodded. I was ready for the dark figure to attempt something, but the danger did not come from him. Suddenly, a dozen men burst into the room and hurled darts at the traitor and his accomplices. I found myself accidentally caught in the volley and felt a burning sting spread through my back. They were using darts with poison, the sort that paralyzes.

Helpless, I could only behold what happened next. While paralyzed, the traitor and his accomplices were coldly executed. The aggressors' leader exchanged messages with the dark figure in the mirror, bowed, and walked away. This would have been all—but, by some rotten luck, one of the men stumbled over my *invisible* body. These people knew their business, and they promptly tied me to one of the pillars. I spent the night there, unable to sleep or move.

**Cyprimir 26—Talaras:** Common duties aboard were carried out as usual until dawn, when I observed a wave of boats approaching the ship. The boats were crowded with furious citizens toting pitchforks, sticks, and torches. The *Princess* herself grew nervous at the many sources of flame, and she began to pull on her lines. Something terrible must have happened during the night.

There was no sign of the admiral, Xerdon, or the crew on leave. I suspected treachery. I could not allow the mob to seize the ship; they might burn her to ashes. I ordered the *Princess* to take a position above a patch of low clouds while I went below and sought an audience with the prophet.

As I entered the palace, I met a group of armed soldiers. The palace had not been guarded earlier, and I remember thinking that these must have been called in for a crisis. I was apprehended at once and was taken to the herald who came aboard the day before. He was shaking with anger as he sputtered that several High Seers and the Great Prophet had been assassinated during the night. Worst of all, he said that the admiral had been seen strangling the prophet! Haldemar was said to have fled. I could believe none of this.

I was denied an audience with the Regent Seer, since all surviving High Seers were conferring—in a sealed room—until such time they could decide who the next Great Prophet would be. This could take days. I was detained and kept under heavy guard. I decided to wait. Razud would guide my path.

**Cyprimir 26—Xerdon:** Coming out of my temporary weakness during the night, I felt myself roughly carried by two rather loud drunkards. I was hanging between Ramissur and Nyanga, with Leo carrying my gear. Obviously, the two brutes got along well, with kegs of ale helping. I prepared to castigate Ramissur for so contemptuously ignoring Imperial Navy Regulations that specifically prohibited crew members from fraternizing with the natives. Unfortunately, rather than words a shameful gurgle came out, followed by some quantity of undigested substance.

"Eh, mohn," shouted Nyanga happily, "I be thinkin' ye chief woke up!"

I had no wish to expand on the subject, which was just as well as a vociferous mob came down the street at us at that moment, screaming insults and raising their fists. All four of us ended up in a prison cell, along with the remainder of the crew on leave. Soldiers came several hours later and took Nyanga away. He was subsequently returned (rather, was thrown into the cell), having obviously been beaten up. He said he had been accused of treachery and duplicity with strangers who had killed the Great Prophet. This seemed like a frame-up. We had no idea what was happening.

Soon, the soldiers came back and attempted to drag me out. I supposed it was my turn to be questioned. I feigned sickness—an easy thing, considering my condition—and the crew did the rest. The soldiers were swiftly neutralized, and the other guards surrendered quickly. After recovering our impounded equipment, Nyanga led us out. We escaped through a metal grate opening over the river, entering a forest of petrified tree trunks, supporting this part of the city. There, our group discovered the city's poor, pariahs, and criminals living on urban trash and unhealthy fish. They fled as we seized some of their canoes.

We had hoped to reach the Princess, but as we entered the open lake, we observed with horror the ship taking off without us! On our right, a flotilla of angry natives

paddling toward the *Princess* now spotted our canoes. We turned around and headed back for the slovenly undercity. We lost our pursuers, but we ran astray as well. We ended up in a maze of tunnels the water had dug into the rock. We soon discarded the canoes and continued on foot. Mud and slime were everywhere. Perhaps we would find a way out of this stench by nightfall and leave the city. We could then signal the *Princess* from some vantage point in the jungle.

**Cyprimir 27—Haldemar:** “We’ve got the man, sir! We tied him to the pillar after he killed Swetanga Jio.” Soldiers spewed into the room. I was rudely lifted from the pillar to which I had been tied since the previous day. Every bone in my body ached. The effects of the poison were wearing off, but I could move only the tips of my fingers. Spells were out of the question.

I was taken to the palace. The Great Prophet had been propped up on a dais, in a meditating position. Makeup covered the wounds on his neck. Members of his family and people close to him were quietly mourning his death. One of them was Yarani’s aide, the woman who saw me in Yarani’s bedchamber. “Is he the one you saw, Yaounda?” asked a soldier. She nodded. The man turned back and hit me in the temple with the hilt of his scimitar. I lost consciousness.

**Cyprimir 27—Vhlasar:** At long last, an elderly seer came in. She ordered the guard out and sat next to me. “Greetings. It seems an explanation is overdue! Please accept my apology and that of my peers. We should have anticipated your mishap. None of this is your fault. You see, my predecessor knew of his imminent death. There is no bad feeling among the seers about his departure. Unfortunately, it will take our common people some time to get over the error of their ways and their pain. My predecessor was much loved by his people.”

The old lady, it developed, was the Great Prophet’s successor. The decision for his replacement had been made swiftly, by Yavdloom standards. “It seems an old foe of ours has found a way to harm our order,” she said. “We are dangerous to him, for we know of his future. Because of this, he desires our end. He knows of you also and will seek your demise. Beware of a man in black.”

She covered her mouth and said, “Oh, but I forget—we must go now. Please come quickly!”

**Cyprimir 27—Xerdon:** “At last! The end of the tunnel!” Thanks to Leo, we had found a slope upward to freedom through the back side of a sliding stone panel, perhaps a secret door. I peeked, but no one was around. It seemed like a rich abode, perhaps someone’s mansion. The sun had not yet dawned, so we risked a quick sortie.

Our little troop sneaked past several guards, ducking from room to room, seeking a way out. This proved a difficult task.

Soon, the sun came out—and all became worse. An old servant saw us and sounded an alarm. “The assassins! The assassins are back!”

Assassins? There was no time for questions. We ran down a hallway as soldiers poured out behind us. We rushed into a room—and stumbled into a large group of mourners kneeling before the Great Prophet himself! Worse yet, a soldier was about to behead our admiral, who was prostrated at the soldier’s feet. I quickly disarmed the man as guards stormed into the room. The fight was a brutal one. Native soldiers kept pouring in.

Then, suddenly, the soldiers pulled back, and the battle stopped. I ordered likewise. At the door stood Talasar and a lady seer, the soldiers kneeling before her. She somberly gauged the damage and bloodshed in the room, then sighed deeply. After much talk and explanation, the guards picked up their wounded and left the palace.

“Good,” said the lady seer. “I see Swetanga Nyanga has decided to join you. Your path will be filled with excitement. This fine warrior is also known as the Bane of Jaibul.” Nyanga saluted her praise. “You must leave now,” she finished, and waved us away.

Xdasar got the admiral to his feet, and soon the *Princess Ark* returned from her position above the clouds.

**Cyprimir 28—Haldemar:** Just before leaving Tanakumba, I paid a last visit to the ruffians who had executed Swetanga Jio—Jio the traitor, that is. But they had already vacated the house. There was no trace of the mirror nor of the thugs’ bodies. It was imperative that we find out who the man in black was. Fortunately, I had a good look at the aggressors, especially their leader. My crystal ball would be helpful in this quest.

Our new recruit, Nyanga, the Bane of Jaibul, is a swetanga, formerly a noble with power who now remains as a knight errant of sorts. Nyanga explained that this situation was unique to the Yavdloom culture and politics. Some nobles did not always relish the idea of relinquishing their titles and possessions in the name of destiny. Jio may have betrayed the Yavdloom in response to his recent demotion to swetanga status. Jio indeed had power in the north, said Nyanga, where he commanded a fleet in charge of hunting Jaibul’s slavers. Somehow, he fell into the clutches of the man in black. Perhaps he was promised power elsewhere but was ultimately paid back in kind for his evil deed. What more wicked justice than that of another murderer?

But Tanakumba was behind us. My *crystal ball* would not yield secrets about the man in black; magic protected him well from prying eyes. We would have to settle for his ruffians, and all indications pointed to Slagovich, a town to the northwest. So be it.

**To be continued...**

## The Yavdloom people

The Yavdloom Divinarchy is a society ruled by soothsayers and prophets. The talent for prediction separates the laymen from the clergy and provides the basis for an entire clerical hierarchy. The different ranks among the seers range from those who have latent abilities to those who are nearly all-seeing diviners.

The caste of laymen is also divided among “those who matter” and those who don’t. The former are people who will affect their environment in some noticeable fashion during their lives. There are different degrees of effectiveness; someone who will lead an army into a historically meaningful battle “matters less” than a future emperor who will conquer and rule nations for decades. This serves as the basis for the Yavdloom nobility.

Nobility is a relatively temporal thing. One loses nobility once his destiny no longer affects the world around him (hence he “no longer matters”). These destitute nobles, the swetangas, retain a status equivalent to knights in a common medieval society.

To be a noble, one must be able to affect at least 1,000 people sometime in his life, bringing about drastic and lasting changes in their lives. This makes a man a *jobar* (baron). At 5,000 people, it makes him a *kwa’a* (count); at 25,000, an *uvundi* (viscount); at 100,000, a *m’doli* (marquis); at 600,000, a *djangasa* (duke); at 3,000,000, a *mokubu* (monarch); and, beyond 15,000,000 people, a *somba* (the supreme incarnation of one of the many Immortal spirits in the Yavdloom pantheon—a king of kings among mortals). Those titles are usually added before the recipient’s name.

The clergy chooses the nobles and provides them with a ruling charge commensurate with their rank, such as the rulership of an army, a dominion, a town, a city, or a whole state. The Yavdloom Divinarchy otherwise is a federation of medieval states under the administration of an overlord. Although tribal homelands correspond more or less to the states’ geographic areas, partition of the land by tribes has not been in effect for two centuries. Tribal environment affects only cultural background and regional accents. As with all noble offices, the charge of overlord is mandated by the clergy (obviously “one-who-matters-most” in the eyes of the clergy). Nobility is accountable for the enforcement of the laws created by the clergy, the economy, and the defense of the land. The clergy unequivocally controls the legislative and judicial branches of Yavdloom government.

As a cultural and philosophical trait, the clergy never willingly reveals what it foresees. According to the Precepts of Yav, the greatest prophet in their history, holy ones must not interfere with the course of history set by the Immortals. Yav is now the Immortal heading the Yavdloom pantheon. His remains are thought to be buried

**Continued on page 11**



# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 18: The Slagovich affair

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

FROM THE JOURNALS OF  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAREN  
LEAD ADMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE OVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.

**Hastmir 1, 2000 AY:** I had a visit from Leo this morning. He wanted to show me some plans he was working on—an elaborate series of masts, sails, and rigging that, according to him, would enable the *Princess Ark* to sail more swiftly when the wind was strong. It was an unconventional setup, however. He envisioned three pairs of masts in a V-shaped configuration. The masts would jut out at a 45° upward angle on both sides of the hull, each bearing three sails with complicated rigging to operate them. The concept, although unorthodox, was fascinating. And any speed gain always remained an attractive

prospect. Velocity was definitely what I needed now.

I had been observing the swetanga's killers through my *crystal ball*. Once, their leader opened a scroll, the one given to him by the hooded figure in the mirror. It read, "Go to Slagovich immediately and meet Zgozod at the Black Samovar for your reward." That confirmed my suspicions. How kind of them to be so informative!

I had hoped to intercept the killers at sea, but they had a two-day head start on us, and a large water elemental propelled their boat very quickly toward the northwest—probably compliments of our dark friend in the mirror. It would take them at least two weeks to reach Slagovich, but we should be able to intercept them within four days.

There was no time for Leo's plan. The *Princess* would have been halted for days for construction material to be brought aboard. And there was no telling what Berylith's reaction would be. I had to unveil the mystery of this man in black first.

**Hastmir 3:** I had a strange dream last night. I saw the Imperial Palace in Sundsvall sinking into raging seas. I could not think of anything capable of causing this in Alphatia. Then the palace seemed to fly in a red sky, and my sister did not recognize me. I would have normally dismissed this nonsense, but I am afraid to admit that my visit to Tanakumba last month put some doubt in my mind about the nature of dreams. Perhaps Talasar could help.

Raman came up later that day with a scroll of spells. It held a series of enchantments that enabled recipients to speak, read, and understand foreign tongues. This wonderful discovery was obviously a must for those in our position. I ordered Raman to prepare more of these scrolls in the future. These would be a standard element of all landing parties.





**Hastmir 4:** I was unfortunate enough to run into Leo on my way to the commander's deck. In an attempt to explain to me all the refinements he brought to his blueprints, the gnome had planted a small mast on the side of the ceremonial deck. He was perched dangerously at the other end, holding the loose edge of a mockup sail. Unexpectedly, a sentinel sounded the alarm in the middle of Leo's precarious lecture.

Swarms of large insects were headed toward us. The power of the boltmen came into action almost immediately; *lightning bolts* crackled and sizzled through the blue sky, while Berylith's frightening breath charred a huge gap in a swarm. Hundreds of giant red dragonflies assaulted the *Princess Ark*. The fight became even fiercer as the ship's heavy weaponry finally opened fire. The light ballistas turned dozens of the giant insects into instant chaff, while magically *webbed* creatures fell helplessly into the dark blue sea below.

Many dragonflies got through the ship's defenses, however. I caught a glimpse of crew members bravely jumping off upper decks to take a swing at low-flying dragonflies. Even the halfling cook and his stewards were out, chasing the giant insects with frying pans or butcher knives. Despite the slaughter, the insects came back for more, delivering their fiery breath whenever they could. Soon, crew, boltmen, and officers were all struggling to put out the many small fires on board.

The *Princess* suddenly began a vertiginous dive, leveling out just in time to avoid hitting the surface of the sea. There, Berylith used her last breath to cause a huge wall of water spray ahead of us, through which she flew. That put out most of the fires. By then, all the dragonflies were dead, littering the decks. It was clear these creatures had been summoned to slow us down. We were up against a very powerful person who knew how close to the killers we were. It was time to double the guard and halt the *Princess*. There was damage to repair in many places, and crew to heal.

"Ho, hum. Sir?" Leo was still hanging from his makeshift mast. "While repairs go on, could we take the opportunity to install the new masts? It can be done."

"No. Don't you dare."

"Please. It won't take more than a week, sir."

**Hastmir 5:** After conferring with the other officers, it was agreed we could not afford losing track of our fugitives. Xerdon and I would go ahead, while Talasar remained behind on the *Princess Ark* to oversee repairs. Talasar was then to set sail to Slagovich and wait for us to make contact. Meanwhile, Xerdon and I would attempt to learn who was behind the slayings in Tanakumba. Raman dug up a number of references on Slagovich that helped me visualize the town through my

*crystal ball*. As a guide for *teleportation* it was a bit vague, so I chose a spot above the city. We would have to *fly* down upon our arrival.

We were gone before the end of the day. The arrival over Slagovich was a decent one, though Xerdon almost caused a pelican to die of a heart attack. It would be days before our fugitives would show up. We would have to come up with a plan to intercept them upon their arrival and quietly follow them.

**Hastmir 10:** Xerdon and I posed as fortune-seeking adventurers. These seemed a common sight in Slagovich. We took a room at the Black Samovar but noticed nothing uncommon there, other than a truly dreadful cuisine. With a few days of waiting ahead of us, we went for a reconnaissance tour of Slagovich.

Slagovich was a large town built on a plateau, next to a cliff overlooking the opalescent Gulf of Hule. At the bottom of the cliff opened a large cavern mouth into which ships could sail. At the center of the town was a huge natural shaft connecting with the cavern underneath. For a very high fee, the shaft could be sealed and filled with water to bring ships up to the level of the city. A water lock then allowed the ship to enter an artificial harbor around which the town was built. There was no apparent mechanism for the water to be pumped into the shaft and maintained in the artificial port, which led me to believe the people of Slagovich controlled a gate to the plane of water.

Indeed, hydraulic mechanisms were present everywhere in Slagovich. Sleds, pulled by a network of cables, carted scores of people up and down the town's steeper hills. Drawbridges, water locks, and portcullises allowed ships to reach deep into the town to unload their goods. At least, Slagovich had wonderful engineers.

Despite a bustling merchant business and some rich nobility, it seemed the common population was rather poor. Many of the houses, especially those farthest from the port, were badly maintained. High, well-defended walls protected Slagovich, though not the slums outside the town. Town dwellings eventually gave way to farms and hilly acreage beyond. On a darker note, armed troops constantly patrolled the streets, and there was a harshly enforced curfew after sunset.

Much of the mortar and stonework there had a common reddish-brown color, much like the people. We could certainly not pretend to be natives, our skins being much too pale for this. Judging from the language and the customs of the people, it seemed this area was populated by emigrants from the ancient Traladara era, back in the years of Halav, perhaps. Their culture evolved separately from there. Much of the region remained unclaimed, except for a few city states, like Slagovich, controlling territory in their immediate vicinities.

**Hastmir 16:** Day after day, Xerdon and I had spied on the central water lock, hoping to see our fugitives' boat. Today, it arrived. The men went straight to the Black Samovar. Standard procedure was followed immediately: Xerdon and I turned *invisible*, then went to observe the incoming party.

All twelve of them entered and sat in the tavern. A man in dull red armor entered sometime before sundown; as if on signal, the tavern's patrons quietly stood up and walked out. The innkeeper and his wench migrated to the kitchen. The red-armored man coldly gazed at the twelve men and tossed a pouch on their table. "Leech away, maggots!" he said with a sneer.

Four lunged to grab the pouch, pushing and shoving until their leader slammed the tabletop with the flat of his sword. "Sit back, you filth!" He poured the reward on the table, revealing a pile of bright, pink coins. With a small cloth, he picked up and gave a single coin to each of his retainers. Some received the coins with their own cloths and stored them in pouches. The others quickly placed their coins inside arm bracelets or into the recess of medallions. All this trouble for a single coin each. Odd.

The leader then returned the remaining eight coins to the pouch and dropped it into his shirt. Ominous glances went between the men and their leader. One by one, hands on hilts, the men left the tavern, never turning their backs until they were out. Only their leader and the man in the red armor remained.

"Was that you, Master Zgozod, bringing the red swarm the other day?" asked the thugs' leader. Without warning, the man in the red armor—Zgozod, I assumed—stepped forward and brutally slapped the leader across the face. The leader pulled out a dagger—but not quickly enough. Zgozod already held a sword at his throat.

"Never speak my name, ever," Zgozod said. He reached into the leader's shirt and pulled out the scroll I had seen in the *crystal ball*, then held the scroll over the flame of a candle, never taking his eyes from the leader. "Perhaps this will help you get wiser," he added when the scroll was only ashes, and he touched the leader with his sword. The leader fell to the floor, screaming. His hair turned white and wrinkles appeared on his face. Zgozod then walked out.

I looked out the window just in time to see Zgozod silently touch his forehead. He turned into a reddish *gaseous form* and disappeared into the dark. This was no clerical magic, and the man wore armor no wizard would bear. I had no clue as to what kind of sorcery this was.

**Hastmir 17:** Nothing else happened during that night. We recovered Zgozod's retainer and brought him back to our room. He had lost consciousness after being touched by the sword and woke up only the next morning, solidly tied up. Xerdon remained *invisible* while I ques-

tioned him.

Other than his name, Pustek, he revealed nothing of interest at first. He obviously lied and made up answers during our conversation, but he turned very pale when I mentioned Zgozod's name. He came close to revealing more, but suddenly became quiet. Finally, I took his pouch of bright pink coins and threatened to keep them—and that finished him off. Whatever these coins were, they seemed quite valuable to him.

Pustek admitted his tie with Zgozod. Apparently, the latter was the commander of the Slagovich army, a ruthless and dangerous personality, second only to the prime hierarch of Slagovich. Zgozod used this thug leader's services occasionally, particularly in "spying" missions in the neighboring city states of Hojah and Zvornik. Pustek was otherwise mere riff-raff from the streets of Slagovich, not really worthy of my time.

I could not yet let him go, however. I kept one of his coins and gagged him. Both Xerdon and I left for the hierarch's palace. Heavily armed troops still patrolled the streets and the walls around the city. It seemed like a city at war, or soon to be. We witnessed a number of troops rounding up younger civilians and forcing them into the city's army. Their methods were rather brutal.

An old beggar approached me at one point and discreetly opened his jacket, revealing a series of small chains, jewelry, and other trinkets. "Eh, care for the true stuff? Yeh, pure and untouched. It'll last years, good man." I figured it was all contraband—or fakes, more likely. The baubles were shining with the same hue as the bright pink coins I took from Pustek. There was definitely something odd about that pink metal. I ignored the man, and he spat in my direction.

I found a deserted street and turned *invisible*. The palace was near: a large, sinister fortress, with metal barbs, stone gargoyles, and other gloomy sculptures guarding the battlements. We decided to wait until nightfall before moving in.

**The following events were entered in to the logbook in chronological order, after the return of the officers to the Princess Ark.**

**Hastmir 18—Haldemar:** Last night was all but the quiet night we had hoped for. A fleet of ships sailed to the coast, blockading the cave's entrance and bombarding the city with flaming projectiles. Simultaneously, a land force assaulted the northern walls. Several buildings were soon in flames, and people ran through the streets in panic.

This is when Zgozod came back into the picture. He led a force of heavy knights wearing the same red armor as he, with golden tabards. The city's defenses threatened to collapse under the onslaught when Zgozod led a sortie against the aggressors. The results were simply amazing. Twenty knights charged the light

infantry outside the city, trampling and slaughtering at will scores of their foes. They seemed almost invincible, literally plowing through the lightly armored men-at-arms. Nothing seemed to reach the knights. The mass of infantry retreated in disorder under a shower of arrows shot from the city walls. By the end of the battle, only three of the red knights had fallen.

We could hear the people cheering on the walls. The city of Slagovich had been attacked by a joint Zvornikian-Hojahite force, apparently a common occurrence there. So much for the friendly neighborhood!

We chose that time to sneak into the prime hierarch's fortress and find out a bit more about the ruler of Slagovich. We found him before long. The hierarch was a pale and frail-looking boy, no more than fourteen. He was watching the fight from a barred window. "How long will this go on?" he sighed. "Why can't they stay away?"

Zgozod rudely broke into the chamber, fuming. "I lost three knights in that battle. Every day you refuse to sign the charter, more of your people's blood soils the walls of Slagovich. This is hopeless. You must sign now!"

"But I don't trust him," said the young hierarch. "That priest scares me!"

Zgozod slammed the table with his fist. "You will sign, or there will be no one left to sign for!"

The argument went on a little longer, with Zgozod getting increasingly angry and arrogant. Trembling, the young hierarch huddled in a corner of his room and became totally mute. Zgozod grabbed him by the shirt and yanked him to the window. "Look! They suffer because of your foolishness!" he roared. The hierarch squirmed and dropped to the floor. Zgozod then threw him a scroll and a quill. "Sign or be damned!"

With tears in his eyes, the young hierarch scribbled his name on the scroll and fell to the floor. "At last!" barked Zgozod, and he left the room. I whispered for Xerdon to remain with the hierarch while I followed the sinister red knight.

**Xerdon:** The child-ruler wept until late that night. I noticed the door was locked, probably to keep the hierarch prisoner in his own quarters. Much later, I heard voices behind the door. The two guards and one of the red knights burst in, swords unsheathed. I caught the gleam of murder in their eyes.

I decided to intervene. The two guards died before they realized what happened. The knight was another affair. His eyes turned totally red, as if flames consumed him inside. Each time I struck a blow, it seemed the knight blurred out of harm's way, and a red haze flared up around him. Only once did I manage to corner him and get a solid hit. This would have split wide open any other armor. But this red metal proved more resilient than I thought. My

blade demar his flesh and consumed with delectation the knight's vital energy. Both horribly surprised and in pain, the knight finally retreated and called for the guard.

The hierarch had awakened and had seen me fight the knight. He was petrified by fear. I had to act fast, since I could already hear guards rushing up the stairs. I knocked the child-ruler out and discharged my *wand of lightning bolts* into the narrow hallway. While the bolt caused horrible damage to the crowd of men-at-arms, I retreated through another stairway with the child-ruler on my shoulder. With luck and the help of darkness, I reached the palace walls. I was forced to dispatch another guard at a postern before I could exit into the city. The trip back to the Black Samovar was a treacherous one. It seemed the entire city garrison was on the march. But I fooled them easily in the dark and safely reached the Black Samovar. No one saw me.

There, I found Pustek dead. His skin was the color of chalk, and his face displayed utter horror. Nothing was missing. He bore no wound, and I had no clue as to his death. I decided to dispose of the cadaver and await the admirals' return.

**Haldemar:** Just past midnight, Zgozod reached his knights. He said to one that the hierarch had signed. The henchman picked up his sword and walked out. "Are they still at Grabana?" Zgozod asked another, who responded with a nod. Zgozod then declared, "Fine. Let us march! I want his uncle's head in a bag of salt."

And, indeed, they marched. In the middle of the night, Zgozod and his knights mustered the city's troops and moved toward the north. Just before sunrise, they reached a ridge overlooking the camp of the Zvornik forces. The brutal onslaught that followed was worthy of the most bloodthirsty barbarians. The massive Zvornik infantry was caught unprepared and was inexorably, systematically butchered. Without mercy, fleeing troops and yielding knights alike were slaughtered. Only tattered and burning remains of their banners stood in the morning breeze. Clearly, Zgozod had many more troops than he had led the hierarch to believe.

A knight dragged an older warrior behind his destrier, and tossed him at Zgozod's feet. With a wicked smile, Zgozod said, "Good. The pleasure of beheading you, Stavro, will be all mine! Calling upon Zvornik to save your royal nephew was a pathetic move, old fool. And now you die."

But I grew tired of this knight's arrogance. He reminded me too much of the Heldannic Herr Rolf. Still *invisible*, I approached and cast a *dimension door* at the old warrior. He reappeared in the safety of thick brush, a little over 300' away. Despite his astonishment, the old warrior kept quiet and went his way, probably thanking the Immortals for their merciful intervention. Zgozod was not pleased. He cursed and rode back to Slagovich. I spent

the rest of the day searching for Stavro.

**Xerdon:** With difficulty, I reassured the child-ruler and explained who I was and what had happened. The child-ruler called himself Miosz II of Slagovich. Zgozod was his "servitor," said he. He had Miosz confined to his quarters for his own security ever since his uncle disappeared, fearing someone would make an attempt on his life, too. Miosz said the charter was intended to provide the Hagiarchy of Hule with some political concessions over Slagovich, in exchange for protection. Soon after Miosz's uncle disappeared, the rival city states of Zvornik and Hojah allied and marched against Slagovich. Zgozod accused them of killing the uncle, and strongly suggested that Miosz sign the charter to defeat them. Miosz felt uneasy signing any such document without his uncle's advice. But Zgozod had apparently found a way to "influence" Miosz at last. It took some time to explain to Miosz that he was being manipulated and that his life still was in great danger.

The noise of heavy boots and metal interrupted our conversation. Slagovich men-at-arms were after us. As we left through the window, I saw the innkeeper down in the street, pulling Pustek's body out of the barrel where I had concealed him. A sergeant-at-arms was watching, hands on his hips. The innkeeper must have seen me and alerted the city watch.

We lost our pursuers after a long chase across the rooftops of Slagovich. Miosz then said he knew someone who would help. It was the old general of the army, whom Zgozod replaced a few years ago. He had been accused of treachery and made to work in the mines.

There was no apparent way to enter the heavily guarded mine. Miosz then thought of setting fire to the smelting works to create a diversion. I am afraid I left a trail of dead guards behind us, despite the diversion, but finally we made it into the mine's gloomy galleries.

An eerie red glow illuminated the galleries. I had thought these were gold mines, but Miosz they produced *cinuabryl*, some metal even more precious than gold. He said it was the source of Slagovich's wealth. He did not reveal more however. I quietly pocketed a small chunk of the ore for later study. It looked a bit like Pustek's bright pink coins.

Hours later, we located a man by the name of Enver, the one whom Miosz sought. Once out of his cell, Enver promptly freed another 12 men and women from their chains. They called themselves the Knights of Halav—a brotherhood obviously persecuted by Zgozod. Their order was almost extinct in Slagovich. Our arrival offered them a chance to restore justice at last. Enver directed us to a passage that ultimately led to the palace. His plan was to return Miosz to his throne and accuse Zgozod of treachery. By law, he could still challenge the red knight to a duel.

Guards poured in the instant we entered the throne room. A number of petty nobles followed in, with rather perplexed and annoyed expressions on their faces. The unarmored Knights of Halav bravely formed a wall before their child-ruler, while Miosz ordered the troops out.

Zgozod stepped forward, followed by a man in a long white robe—perhaps a priest. The latter said, with a smile, "I dare say, young man, you seem to be mistaken. You are in no position to give orders, for this land is now part of the Great Hule. You should know. You did sign the Charter of Protection!"

"It was signed under threat," Miosz answered, "and for this, I repudiate the agreement!"

"Now, now. Surely you don't think anyone would believe this, young man?" said the priest. "No one among Slagovich's rightful nobility would attest to this! And as you can see, they are all here to witnesses that justice and order be upheld. Now, please, step down. And Lord Zgozod, would you kindly remove these ridiculous wretches from my presence."

**Haldemar:** I caught up with Stavro eventually and introduced myself. Stavro was the young hierarch's uncle. Zgozod had managed to separate him from his nephew in a conspiracy that could ultimately force Slagovich to become a protectorate of the Hagiarchy of Hule. Stavro opposed Zgozod's growing influence at the court and was nearly killed by Zgozod's men. He was forced to flee. Since then, he had attempted to retake Slagovich with the help of the city states of Hojah and Zvornik, who detested any Hulean hegemony in the region even more than they hated Slagovich's odious merchant wealth.

From what I knew of Zgozod, I strongly suspected him to have shady ties with Hule—so it was very likely that Hule stood behind the murders in Jaibul and Tanakumba. And now this was happening here. I knew I was getting close to something very big. The only thing left to do was to find Xerdon and the hierarch. Avoiding the many Slagovich search parties that were after Stavro proved a dangerous exercise. All the trails were heavily patrolled.

As we approached the city later that night, we discovered an entire city quarter in flames. Stavro identified it as the mines' smelting works. The fire had spread to many houses nearby. This offered us a perfect opportunity to enter the city, as the night watch was too busy containing the blaze. Soon we crept into the palace through a secret passage Stavro knew about.

It led to a small balcony in the throne room. It seemed we stepped right into another hot situation. Xerdon was standing next to the young hierarch, along with a dozen half-naked and hirsute people. They were surrounded by Slagovich men-at-arms under Zgozod's command. A man

in white robes accompanied him. After hearing what the white-robed man said, Stavro addressed him from our vantage point. "I believe him, Your Grace, as a rightful noble of Slagovich. I also have knowledge of Zgozod's attempt to kill me and his false accusations against Lord Enver! I, Count of Bistr, Hetman of the Knights of Halav, speak against Zgozod's treachery!" For several long seconds, his words hung in the air. We waited for their result.

"Kill him!" roared Zgozod. The troops hesitated. The nobles pulled out their swords, but they looked away from Stavro and instead eyed Zgozod—albeit with considerable nervousness. It was obvious that the tide had turned. Zgozod must have made himself very unpopular with his own troops.

Suddenly, the white-robed priest raised a hand. He looked like a man who has seen his most cherished plans go up in smoke. "There will be no need for violence," he said. Giving Zgozod a burning gaze of blame, he added, "Clearly, I can now see treachery at work." The man then uttered a *word of recall* and vanished.

"You haven't won yet!" snarled Zgozod. A red blur surrounded him, and he disappeared as well. His henchmen, abandoned and surrounded, dropped their swords and kneeled. The Knights of Halav cheered and placed the young hierarch back on the throne. Perhaps peace and justice would prevail, but nothing was sure with Zgozod at large.

**Hastmir 24—Haldemar:** At last, the familiar shape of the *Princess Ark* materialized in the sky. Familiar? Not quite. It dawned on me that something unexpected had happened. Huge sails had grown on the sides and bottom of the skyship—the handiwork of Leo. I should have known.

*To be continued. . . .*

## Red steel

Slagovich and most of the Savage Coast is a brutal land, often plagued by wars. Centuries ago, the riff-raff of the Known World—pariahs, criminals, and unscrupulous adventurers—colonized its shores on a quest for wealth and power. Sometimes, refugees fleeing humanoid invasions and other scourges migrated to the Savage Coast and remained stranded in this unforgiving land.

Very little law exists there, except as enforced by the nobles or the personally powerful. Often, the law is that of the jungle. Indeed, the forces of good are an exception more than a rule. The Slagovich affair is a typical example of what happens in many kingdoms of the region.

What makes this region stand apart from the other places is the fact its land bears a poisoned soil. It affects everything and everybody, from the color of the people's skin to their society, right down to their money. It is the source of wealth and power, but also of rivalry and, ultimately,

grief and destruction. This poison is called "seed of cinnabar."

**Seed of cinnabar:** This poisonous mineral compound exists in everything at varying concentrations, including in food and water. It impairs the mental performances of contaminated people, limiting them to Intelligence and Wisdom scores of 3d4. A spell-caster is limited to spell levels equal to his appropriate ability score (Intelligence for wizards, Wisdom for clerics) minus 9. The poison also reduces the life expectancy of all life forms by 20%.

Seed of cinnabar is a very slow poison, needing a week of cumulative exposure per point of Constitution to affect game attributes, and a month of exposure per point of Constitution to affect longevity. Native life is automatically affected at birth. Animal and vegetable ecology maintained its balance with quicker proliferation. Effects on mental performance subside within 20 weeks (minus one week per point of the character's Constitution score) of avoidance of contact with the poison, but the shortened life expectancy is permanent. Seed of cinnabar can be made into a powder and stored in a pouch.

**Cinnabryl:** The Savage Coast harbors a rare fossil ore deriving from millions of years of awesome telluric pressures and volcanic temperatures applied to seed of cinnabar beds, deep underground. When properly extracted, the ore produces a shiny, red metal, called cinnabryl. Pure cinnabryl has the consistency and weight of lead.

When touched to fully contaminated people, cinnabryl negates the harmful effects of seed of cinnabar. Cinnabryl must be worn directly against the skin, as a bracelet or medal, for example. When wearing cinnabryl, the mind-altering effects of seed of cinnabar recede in 20 weeks, minus one week per point of Constitution. Full life expectancy is restored as long as the metal is worn at least 20 months, minus one week per point of the character's Constitution score. Going more than one week without contact with cinnabryl cancels all accumulated gains and benefits against the poison.

Contact with the skin, however, causes cinnabryl to slowly lose its properties. Depleted cinnabryl appears as a dull red metal. Some sages say that contact with life energy provokes the oxidation of cinnabryl. Depleted cinnabryl can be forged into steel with half the weight and three times the value of normal steel. This red steel makes fine weapons permitted only to the local royalty, nobility, heroes, and (sometimes) elite troops.

Undepleted cinnabryl cannot be forged into steel without a clerical or wizard *wish*. It also is poisonous to people uncontaminated by seed of cinnabar, causing them to lose one point of Constitution per week of exposure. Death occurs when Constitution reaches zero. Constitution is otherwise recovered at the same rate if

the metal is discarded or depleted. Its depleted form is harmless.

**Currency & depletion rate:** In the past centuries, people have recognized the value of cinnabryl. It became a coveted possession, a source of desire and bitter rivalry, as well as the standard currency on the Savage Coast. Oxidation in the hands of its owners tends to cause it to devalue regularly. This causes chronic economic downturns in the region and a quasi-permanent poverty among the common people.

Currency values are as follows:

- 1 Bright (Br):** This coin is a mixture of 90% silver and 10% undepleted cinnabryl. It takes five weeks of continuous contact with skin to deplete 1 Br (see "1 Dim"). This glowing, pink coin is reserved for royalty or nobility, and is forbidden to commoners and foreigners.
- 1 Fair (Fr):** This coin is a mixture of 98% copper and 2% undepleted cinnabryl. It takes a week of continuous contact with skin to deplete 1 Fr (see "1 Dark"); **5 Fr = 1 Br = 2½ gold pieces** in the Known World (see "Exchange rates"). This slightly glowing, reddish-gold coin is the standard currency of the rich.
- 1 Dim (Dm):** This is a depleted Bright; **10 Dm = 1 Fr = 10 silver pieces** in the Known World (see "Exchange rates"). This is the coin people use most on the Savage Coast. It is light gray with a reddish tone.
- 1 Dark (Dk):** This is a depleted Fair; **10 Dk equal 1 Dm = 10 copper pieces** in the Known World (see "Exchange rates"). This brown coin is the smallest currency denomination.

Pure cinnabryl is not minted. If it were, a coin-sized quantity of this metal would take over a Known World year (50 weeks) to deplete. In equal quantities, pure and undepleted cinnabryl costs 10 times the value of a Bright coin. Pure cinnabryl metal is abbreviated as Ci, and numerical values of Ci refer to coin-sized amounts.

**Exchange rates:** Precious metals other than silver and copper (e.g., gold and platinum) and precious stones are useless as currencies on the Savage Coast. Merchants will trade them for their ornamental values or 'to conduct business with foreign powers, but at half the Known World's prices. Conversely, Savage Coast Fair and Bright coins or objects made of pure cinnabryl are traded at half their values in the Known World. Depleted cinnabryl trades at the value of pure silver in the Known World. Silver ingots are used in most merchant trade. Note that the true value of a Dark coin really is 1.18 cp, but this difference is widely ignored in trade since that coin is used as petty street cash.

In the Savage Coast setting, note that jewelry is always listed with its cinnabryl alloy type and value first, followed by other ornamental elements lacking cinna-

bryl. For example: A crown listed as "10 Ci/500 gp" means that it contains 10 Ci of pure and undepleted cinnabryl, and 500 gp worth of normal metals and ornamental gems.

There is no way to tell how long undepleted currency has been used before it turns dim. For that reason, powerful people use personal talismans or bracelets of cinnabryl. It is customary to handle undepleted coins with a cloth or glove for fear of seeing them turn dim in your very hands! To keep things simple in a game setting, ignore the depletion factor of money unless characters actually use the money to counteract the poison.

## **Xerdon, Naduk-Sim** (Chief of the Guard)

**History:** Xerdon is a Shiye, an elf from the Kingdom of Shiye Lawr. His true origins are unknown. As an infant, he was found hidden in a secret recess, in a house bordering the Territory of Blackheart. The house had just been raided, and all adults had been taken, never to be seen again.

Adopted by a family of commoners, Xerdon grew to be an outstanding hunter and warrior. He became a general in the Guard of the Lawr and took an assignment on the northern border. He successfully destroyed a great many monsters, then began a series of illegal forays into Blackheart, putting a temporary end to the bloody monster incursions by burning down several towers (with their wizards). This caused an uproar at the Imperial Palace. Under Imperial pressure, the ruler of Shiye Lawr publicly "court martialled" Xerdon to appease the powerful Blackheart lobby, then quietly had him transferred to the Imperial Navy.

**Personality:** Xerdon is an effective, professional soldier. This cold and calculating commander shows little forgiveness and flexibility to those who fail him. Xerdon confronts adversity with great calm and resolve. Although courageous and disciplined, he is ambitious, seeing in Haldemar a possible obstacle to his career. He disliked Haldemar's decision to leave Ramissur to the night dragon, and feels contempt for Myojo whom he perceives as Haldemar's lackey and a potentially hostile outsider.

**Disposition:** Goodwill toward Talasar and Ramissur; Neutral toward Lady Abovombe, Ashari, Raman, and Haldemar; Antipathy toward Leo, Tarias and Myojo.

**Appearance:** Xerdon is a rather tall and athletic elf, bearing a golden tan from his many years of active duty in the Imperial Navy. Xerdon has long, silver hair held back with a leather headband. A scar runs down his left cheek, testifying to his numerous battles with Blackheart monsters.

**Equipment carried:** *Armband of protection +2, buckle of armor (AC 3), wand of lightning bolts (8d6), lunar brooch, sword +3 plus draining*, normal

long bow and arrows, six **arrows of penetration**, and one **arrow of wounding**.

**Spells memorized:**

- Level 1 — **Light, magic missile, shield, sleep (x2)**
- Level 2 — **Detect invisible, knock, levitate, web**
- Level 3 — **Haste, hold person, protection from evil 10' radius**
- Level 4 — **Dimension door, wall of fire**
- Level 5 — **Feeblemind**

**D&D game statistics:** S 16, I 15, W 11, D 14, Co 13, Ch 12; 10th-level Elf; AC 0 (with Dex and magic); hp 46; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (sword +3 or wand); AT Rank C (smash, parry, disarm); Dmg 2d8+9/drain (Xerdon reached **master-proficiency** in his mastery of swords) or 8d6; Save E10+2; ML 11; AL N. Languages: Common Alphatian, Shiye Lawr elven dialect. Skills: Military Tactics (In), Military Logistics (In), Hunting/Tracking (In), Monster Lore (In), Leadership (Wi+1), Horsemanship (Dx), Endurance (Co).

**Letters**

I was pleasantly surprised to see my previous letter in your D&D Column, in DRAGON® issue #166. In the letter, I asked how the People's Temple related to the Immortals. In return, you asked "What's that?" The People's Temple is the religion introduced in GAZ4 *The Kingdom of Ierendi*. It is the religion created by the Minrothad traveler, Tomia (see GAZ4, pages 16-17).

*Thanks, I had lost track of these fellows. At the time GAZ4 was written, not much thought went into the links between the various churches, their clerics, and the Immortals.*

*If you care to backtrack a bit, I would suggest that the Makai, the original inhabitants of Ierendi whose clerics are usually druids, were once followers of the Immortal Diulanna (see the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set for complete information). The Makai philosophy would technically be in Diulanna's sphere of influence, perhaps under a different name. The People's Temple uses a modified form of the Makai philosophy. However the People's Temple still honors Diulanna by name and by the acts of her followers. Tomia, long dead by the AC 1000 era, is now a hero and a herald of Diulanna.*

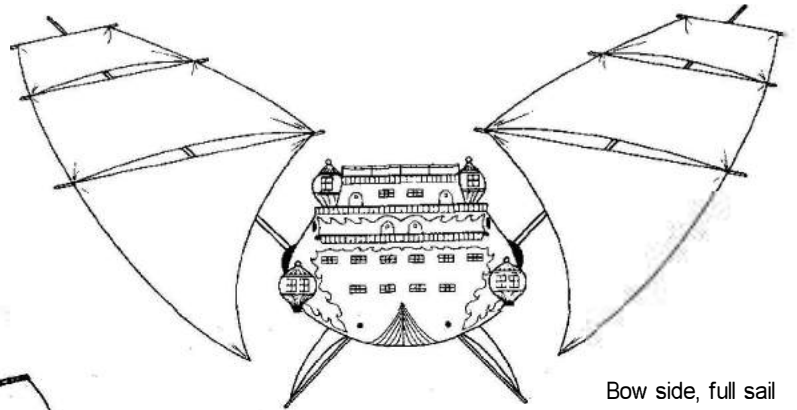
*Note: I observed that GAZ4 and many D&D game players commonly use the terms "religion" and "worship." In order to avoid difficulties with certain people, it was recently decided these terms would no longer be used in D&D game products. Instead, we prefer such terms as "philosophy," "precepts," "patrons," "guides," "disciples," "and "followers." Of course, "gods" and "deities" are right out. You will notice this especially in upcoming products for the D&D game. As you may also recall, we changed the term "wicca" to "wokan/wokani" in the HOLLOW WORLD setting.*

I am not a regular DRAGON Magazine buyer, but I recently picked up a stray

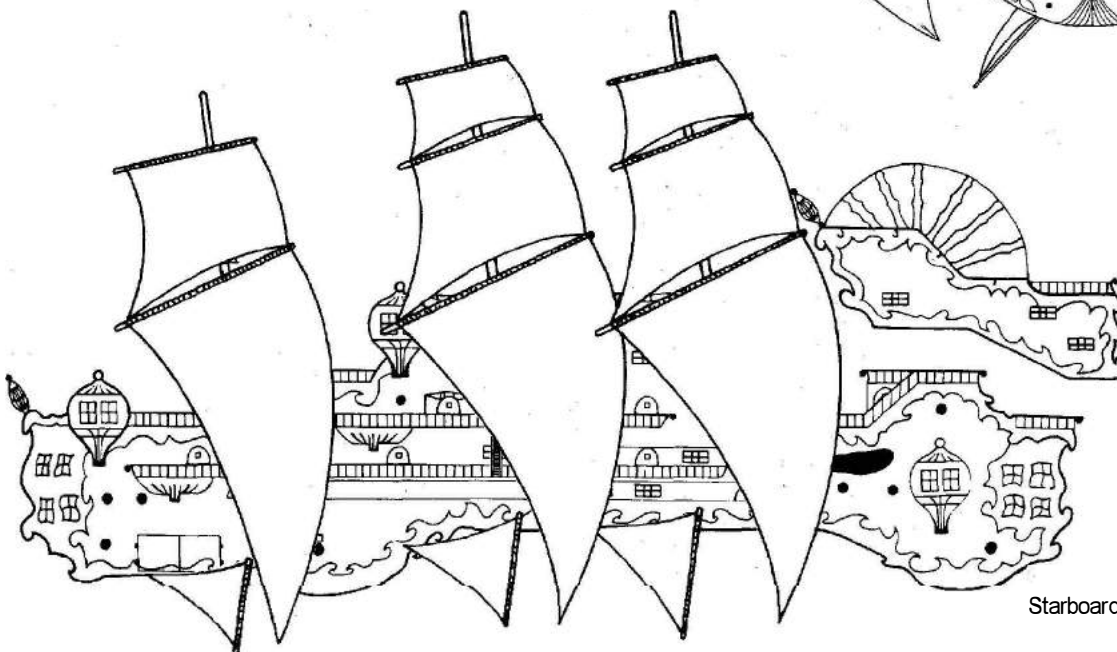
copy of the June 1990 issue (#158). Being a "standard D&D game" player, I naturally went directly for the "Princess Ark." Needless to say, I was wrapped! Unfortunately, the only bit of "Princess Ark" log I have is Part 6. I am dying to find out more, but have trouble finding regular issues of DRAGON Magazine in this part of the country (Queensland, Australia), let alone finding back issues. And the only bit I am really interested in is this ship's log. Is there any plan to publish information on its own, and how should I get a hold of the missing parts?

*This is becoming a familiar theme! For the missing parts, you should be able to get back issues of DRAGON Magazine through our Mail Order Hobby Shop. For a catalog, write to: Mail Order Hobby Shop, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. For upcoming episodes, there is no substitute for a subscription. FYI—Part 1 of Princess Ark was published in DRAGON #152, and we skipped issue #159. And yes, we are thinking about "Princess Ark" material in a game format' but it may not necessarily contain a compilation of the ship's log. All log entries put together would come close to 128 pages of material in our current game format! Instead, such a product could provide role-playing material and deck plans. PCs would either be part of the crew or would replace the officers. The point of this accessory would be to further adventuring and exploration.*

**The Princess Ark**  
(with Leo's handiwork)



Bow side, full sail



Starboard side, full sail



SCALE: ONE HEX EQUALS 8 MILES

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	CITY		REEFS		LIGHT FOREST		RIVER
	TOWN		HILLS		HEAVY FOREST		TRAIL OR SHIPPING LANE
	VILLAGE		FORESTED HILLS		STEPPE		BORDER
	LIGHT HOUSE		CLEAR TERRAIN		SWAMP		
	NAVAL BATTLE		MOUNTAINS		VOLCANO		





# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 19: Hule!

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphantian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

FROM THE JOURNALS OF  
PRINCE HALDENAR OF HAAREN  
LOED ADMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.

**Hastmir 25, 2000 AY:** This evening, I could hear the hull and the new masts creak faintly with the ship's slow pitch. The wide sails occasionally fluttered in the wind, the sound sharing the darkness with only the night bell. The crew was still learning to work the rigging, but Berylith nevertheless showed satisfaction with her new sails, like a bird with new wings. She enjoyed the sweet feeling of wind filling her sails, and she had maintained a good pace since our departure from Slagovich.

I could not get to sleep. The picture of the man in black behind the mirror haunted me. I got up, dressed, and walked down to the laboratory, where I examined the

strange mirror I had taken from the Rajah of Jaibul. I could push small objects through its glassy surface to the other side—wherever that was. I could not see what lay beyond. Only parchment or papyrus could pass, but I was careful not to let any paper fall completely through. Wooden, metallic, and mineral objects, as well as living flesh, would not go through, for the mirror felt cold and solid to my hand. Neither could air, water, or the flame of a candle get through.

Magic did get through, but not all magic. Some spells related to vision or detection could sometimes get through the mirror. By chance, a *wizard* eye paired with a spell of *infravision* made it through. It revealed an unlit crypt, a scriptorium with many books, scrolls, and maps. One map displayed the familiar contour of the Great Waste desert. On it, little flags were pinned west of Sind, others very close to Slagovich. Their symbols looked orcish or goblinoid in style. These could have been Hulean-controlled forces.

Then I saw a dark veil on the scriptorium's floor next to the mirror. I realized in a moment that it was a covering for the mirror. Perhaps it had slipped off when one of the pieces of paper I had poked through disturbed it. I was lucky, for otherwise the *wizard* eye would not have functioned at all. I could not explore further since the scriptorium's door was closed, but at least I could now spy on that room. If another *wizard* eye could not succeed, my *crystal ball* would. At last, I had found a weakness in the dark figure's defenses and had even learned one useful thing: **Keep my mirror covered.** As the sun began to filter through the curtains, I dropped a black velvet cloth of my own over my mirror (fixing it carefully in place) and left.

**Hastmir 26:** At sunrise, we had an unexpected encounter. Just past the city of





Raska, a small man-o-war descended from the clouds and veered toward the northwest. A flying warship was already reason enough to pay attention, but her banner was even more disturbing: a black lion over a white field. She was a Heldannic Prowler. And I wanted to know why she was here.

I had general quarters sounded immediately. We were at her stern, hiding in the rising sun; her watch was either sleeping or blinded. We got close enough for a warning shot. The light ballistas at the bow quickly shredded the Heldanners' main sail. Despite the surprise, her crew reacted swiftly and competently, returning a volley of arrows in little time. A blinding ray followed, punching a hole into the side of the *Princess Ark*. The wood crumpled and withered away where the ray had hit, causing Berylith to roar in pain. Berylith then responded with a devastating bolt of her own that blew off a large part of the Prowler's hull. The Prowler careened violently, causing topside crew to fall off screaming in space. Oil spilled over the deck and caught fire, spreading chaos aboard. Almost instantly, the Prowler struck her colors as she began to list severely and lose altitude. Alas, I failed to calm Berylith, and she roared again. With horror, I saw the surrendering vessel break up and crash into the sea.

Infamy! Shame! Even against Heldanners, there were certain rules of engagement by which all respectful commanders abided. Berylith felt my anger and ceased further attacks. We came as close as we could and rescued what little was left of the Prowler's crew. The captain had drowned, along with many of his officers. The few I could question knew only of their next stop, a port called Boyâzka in southern Hule. They could not unveil the reason of their journey this far away from home. Rats.

**Hastmir 27:** Boyâzka was in sight early in the morning. Talasar activated the ship's invisibility while I convinced Berylith to fade away. For once, she did not argue. Talasar and I landed, while the *Princess* took position above the town. Xerdon remained on board. He looked pale, and Talasar ordered him to stay.

Boyâzka was a mean-looking little town. Decrepit and filthy, it harbored no more than two dozen ships. A handful of merchantmen flew Zvornikian or Hojahite banners. Many others displayed unknown flags that Nyanga said belonged to a series of shady coastal realms southwest of Hule. Among them were a number of heavily armed warships. Perhaps half of the ships mooring at the docks were Hulean, but these were old, rotting merchant or fishing vessels, barely fit for navigation. Hule could hardly qualify as a naval power in these waters; any of the regional city states fared better in that respect.

The people bore the same reddish skin as those in Slagovich, and they seemed just as poor. We learned that this territory was

part of the Dervishy of Uzimir. The High Dervish of Uzimir himself sometimes resided at a small temple in downtown Boyâzka, a meridional retreat of sorts. Talasar and I found the temple and posed as Heldannic officers who had survived an unfortunate shipwreck.

Soon enough, a cloistress came trotting to us. "For Hosadu's sake, be quiet! No one is to know of your arrival. Follow me." The elderly lady brought us to our quarters and explained that her superior, the High Dervish, had not yet returned. He was up north, meeting with the Most Holy One.

Both of us scouted the temple during the night. We found the dervish's personal quarters and browsed about, looking for clues on the Heldannic presence. Among his papers was a message from the "Master," addressed to the High Dervish of Uzimir. It ordered him to escort the Heldannic envoys to Darkwood; their ship was to remain in Boyâzka until their return. Obviously, the Heldannic Order was conspiring with that "Master." By the same token, this made the "Master" the Most Holy One, Ruler of Hule.

**Hastmir 28:** The cloistress came back in the morning. She said her superior, His Eminence Ismet Atadervis, the High Dervish, could see us. She brought us to a mirror in an alcove of the temple's crypt. It was nearly identical to the mirror I took from the Rajah of Jaibul, but perhaps larger. This one, however, allowed passage. It was a magical gate that led to a chamber in a much larger temple—somewhere north, judging from the cooler weather. Outside the windows spread a dark forest everywhere we looked. The

temple itself looked more like a fortified city, with large avenues, smaller temples, huge statues, schools, and sprawling monastic quarters.

A man walked in with a broad smile on his face. "Welcome to Hule! I wished to see my Brother Knights before your meeting with . . ." He froze in the middle of his sentence, and we stared at him in shock as well. It was Zgozod, the "charming" warrior from Slagovich.

"You!" he cried. "What the—" Talasar's hammer landed on his head before he uttered another word. We promptly tied him, gagged him, and hooked him up to the highest point of the chamber's ceiling—and, for good measure, cast an *invisibility* spell on the scoundrel. We could always use him at some other time, perhaps.

A eunuch finally came in and led us to the cluttered office of the High Dervish of Uzimir. Another reunion—he was the man in white robes who had appeared at the court of Slagovich with Zgozod. My heart froze in my chest when I recognized him; unlike Zgozod, he could cast spells. Ismet did not seem to react, however. Perhaps I had stood in the dark behind Stavro when I first saw Ismet, so he could not recognize me. The thought of facing him was still unnerving.

Addressing Talasar with a smile, Ismet said, "Please enter. General Strohm, I presume?" Talasar clicked his heels in a perfect imitation of the Heldannic salute. With a slight bow of the head to me, Ismet added, "Your Grace Urqvart, my respects. We are so sorry of the delay on the Slagovich affair. We assure you that it is only

**Table 1**  
**Essence of Cinnabar Contamination**

Contamination	# of Abilities	Subject
Degree 0	no special abilities	Foreigner
Degree 1	no special abilities	Normal native
Degree 2	1 ability	Enhanced contamination
Degree 3	2 abilities	Enhanced contamination
Degree 4*	3 abilities*	Enhanced contamination

\* Each subsequent degree adds one additional ability.

**Table 2**  
**Abilities Granted by Essence of Cinnabar**

1d12	Contamination degree			
	1-4	5-7	8-9	10+
1-3	#3	#3	#3	#3*
4-5	#3	#3	#3*	#4
6-7	#3	#3*	#4	#4
8-9	#3	#4	#4	#5
10-11	#3	#4	#5	#5
12+	#3*	#4	#5	#6

\* The player may freely chose any one ability from Table 3, except for the last ability (Power Fluke).

a temporary setback, and soon the fortress shall be yours. Meanwhile, you are more than welcome to use our ports of Boyázka and Yenigaz."

Talasar cleared his throat. "Ach ja. But your ports need major work, Your Eminenz! Silt threatens to block the main stream, and the state of repair of the docks is a disgrace. And we expected to control Slagovich by now!" I thought for a moment he was overdoing it, but I understood what he was trying to do.

"Yes, yes, of course, general." Ismet was clearly embarrassed at Talasar's rebuke. "I shall obtain new funds to begin improvements right away. Our forces are standing by in the desert east of Slagovich. If need be, we could overrun their puny army."

I intervened. "Well, there will be no need for this. I am sure that you have the situation well in hand. Now, if we could discuss what we came for. It is a long way back to Freiburg."

Reassured, Ismet agreed. He led us to a large map on the wall. With a wink, he said, "We bought this wonderful trail map from the library of Rufus Omnibus in Thyatis. Amazing what these Thyatians can do with a piece of parchment, isn't it?" With a wide gesture across the eastern portion of the map, he added, "Soon, we shall share all of this! As agreed, all coastal areas on the Western Sea of Dawn will belong to the Heldannic Order, and we shall keep the coastal kingdoms from Sind to the Five Shires! Together, we shall smash the Thyatian Empire!"

I nearly choked on that one. "Have you made plans for a possible Alphatian intervention? For this to succeed, we will need major support against their powerful magic."

"Fear nothing. The Glantrian Council is unwittingly working for us. It is in their power to foment major unrest in metropolitan Alphatia, possibly destroying their main skyfleet and perhaps even assassinating Eriadna the Wise, the hag herself. This should delay the Alphatians long enough for us to reach our goals. Your Knights will have to do the rest."

"Naturally." Our recently departed friend Yarani did not jest when he had talked about dark plans. And I was right in the middle of them. I just hoped our masquerade would last long enough for us to ruin these plans.

I thought for a moment. "But we will need Slagovich now."

"We have already stockpiled enough depleted red steel to outfit several of your armies. We could ship these right now at our own cost, provided . . . that you relinquish your claim on Slagovich's port and its mines." Hurriedly, he added, "This would save time in both our plans."

I seized the opportunity at once. I had no doubt we could sink whatever Hule put to sea, thereby denying the Heldannic Order access to the red steel (some superior alloy, probably). At least, it could ruin their plans for some time. "Of course. I

came to negotiate this alternative. We want the metal now. Do you have a sample here?"

The dervish sighed in relief and gave me a red, glistening short sword from a shelf. "Very well, then," he said. "Let's sign the treaty now." After scribbling several more lines on a stack of scrolls, Ismet rang a

small gong. The eunuch came back. Ismet murmured a few words to the man, and the eunuch ran off with the scrolls. Free to relax, our host offered us baklava and some of that black beverage I once had with Yarani. This version was much worse, though, almost syrupy with black mud at the bottom of the cup. The eunuch

**Table 3**

**Special Abilities From Essence of Cinnabar: Degrees 1-4**

**1d20 Ability and description**

- 1 Altered Dexterity:** This permanently adds +2 to the character's Dexterity score, up to a maximum of 18 (reroll if 18 has been reached). Use: constant once activated.
- 2 Altered Strength:** This permanently adds +2 to the character's Strength score, up to a maximum of 18 (reroll if 18 has been reached). Use: constant once activated.
- 3 Amber Paralysis:** The character paralyzes one nonmagical creature on contact for 1d6 rounds. A successful save vs. paralysis negates this ability.
- 4 Anti-Magic I:** The character becomes immune to the effects of one first-level spell, either clerical or magical. The first eligible spell affecting the character automatically triggers this ability and alerts him of the activation. The character may cast all spells normally.
- 5 Cinnabar Skin:** The character develops a tough skin, improving his natural armor class by +2. This benefit may be combined with normal or magical armor protection.
- 6 Cinnamorphism:** The character gains a form of anti-magic due to the essence of cinnabar. It reduces damage from magical weapons bonuses at the rate of 1 hp per degree of contamination.
- 7 Crimson Fire:** The character causes any creature he hits with a red steel weapon to glow with *faerie fire*.
- 8 Detect Cinnabryl:** The character can detect and locate cinnabryl or essence of cinnabar within a 30' radius. This ability is similar to a locate object spell.
- 9 Enhanced Corrosion:** The character gains the ability to steal iron molecules from a ferrous object he is touching, in order to heal any single wound on a nonmagical creature, causing a permanent oxidation of the ferrous metal. The process rusts 50 cn worth of nonmagical iron or steel per point of damage healed.
- 10 Enhanced Life Force:** The character's life force is permanently enhanced, providing an extra 1d4 hp per degree of contamination. The ability remains active for each new degree of contamination reached subsequently. Use: constant once activated.
- 11 Fiery Mesmer:** This power causes a victim who looks the character in the eyes to stare blankly until slapped or attacked in some way. The attempt takes one round. A saving throw vs. spell negates the attempt.
- 12 Immunity to Fire:** The character becomes immune to up to 10 hp damage from all magical or nonmagical fires.
- 13 Immunity to Electricity:** The character becomes immune to up to 10 hp damage caused by magical or nonmagical electricity.
- 14 Immunity to Paralysis:** The character gains immunity to ghouls' paralysis or other paralyzing poisons.
- 15 Infravision:** The character permanently gains infravision if human, or *detect invisible* if demihuman or humanoid, or if infravision was acquired earlier. Use: infravision is constant once activated; detect invisible lasts for one turn and can be used only once per day.
- 16 Repel Metal:** The character develops an antimagnetic energy that repels any metal projectile of 60 cn or less. An attacker wielding a metallic weapon attacks with a -2 penalty to hit.
- 17 Ultravision:** The character's vision is altered, allowing him to see up to 60' into the Ethereal and Astral Planes.
- 18 War Cry:** The character gains a powerful metallic voice. His war cry causes an immediate Morale check to all NPC or monstrous opponents within hearing distance (at least a 20' radius under battlefield conditions).
- 19 X-Vision:** The character's vision is altered to receive X-rays, allowing him to see the silhouettes of objects up to 6' through rock, iron, or wood.
- 20 Power Fluke:** Roll twice more on this table, ignoring scores of 20, or roll once more on this table ignoring a score of 20 and gain a +1 bonus to all future die rolls on Table #2 (player's choice of option).

returned and whispered in Ismet's ear. "The Master waits," our host declared, rising.

We left the room and entered another chamber. There sat—the man in black from the mirror! Damn!

"Imposstorsss!" he hissed—and disappeared before our eyes. If Ismet did not recognize me, the Master made no such mistake. The eunuch shrieked and fled. Ismet followed, but I intercepted him with a *web*. Talasar knocked him out promptly and recovered his scrolls.

We had to leave at once. Already we could hear ominous gongs echoing in the cavernous hallways. I had barely enough time to cast a travel spell before hordes of fierce janissaries poured into the chamber.

I took both Talasar and the unconscious dervish with me as I returned to the *Princess Ark*.

**Eimir 1:** I ordered a course to the southwest after dropping the Heldanners off in the wilderness. Hule was a wee bit risky for us now. Talasar used his magical scroll to send a long message to his temple in Starpoint. He requested the message be delivered at once to Her Imperial Majesty. Starpoint acknowledged a few hours later and said we could trust the Temple of Razud. As for myself, I *teleported* a message to the Maharajah of Putnabad, warning him of a possible invasion from the Great Waste.

Once done with this, I returned to my quarters and observed the crypt through

my crystal ball. By chance, I saw the man in black, the Master, angrily pulling flags off his maps. I guessed that he would pull back his forces for some time, thus removing any proof of the conspiracy. I hoped Her Imperial Majesty would soon unveil what Glantrian treachery menaced our beloved Alphatia. The stakes were dreadfully high.

Then there was this red steel, which I examined. It had to have come from the mines in Slagovich. It was a mighty metal, hard like true steel yet light like wood. I had a hunch the nations to the southwest held more clues to that fancy metal.

Talasar soon came back with news of Ismet. He was found dead in the brig, apparently from the same causes that did for the ruffian Pustek at the Black Samovar. Talasar tried reaching the man's soul, but failed. Either something held on to it very tightly, or it no longer was in existence. Both of these alternatives sent a chill through my spine. A nasty business this Master was in. . . .

**To be continued...**

### Cinnabryl's darker uses

*This section continues the section on the shiny red metal cinnabryl and its uses, from this column in DRAGON® issue #171, pages 43-44.*

As noted in the last issue, individuals of the Savage Coast are affected by a natural poison in the soil called *seed of cinnabar*. However, contact with a shiny red metallic ore called *cinnabryl*, produced by geological activity on beds of seed of cinnabar, will undo the effects of the poison. Contact with living beings also causes the cinnabryl to become depleted, so that it loses its healing properties. Fully depleted cinnabryl becomes *red steel*, a dull red metal as strong as steel but with half the weight.

Certain powerful individuals of the Savage Coast discovered that they could cause a sudden, massive depletion of cinnabryl by ingesting *essence of cinnabar*, a precious and rare alchemical distillate, while in contact with a sufficient quantity of cinnabryl. The reaction of this distillate in the body allows a character to gain special abilities derived from the magical and alchemical properties of cinnabar. Essence of cinnabar is, however, a virulent poison, causing an immediate and permanent loss of one point of Constitution per dose (no save allowed). Despite this cost, essence of cinnabar has become the object of epic adventures, sinister quests, unspeakable treacheries, and bloody wars. It is the Savage Coast's Unholy Grail!

Essence of cinnabar comes in small vials of a single dose. Each dose increases the drinker's contamination by a single degree (a "degree" being a measurement of contamination). One hundred coin-sized units of cinnabryl (100 Ci) are also required per degree of contamination wanted. For example, to reach the second degree of contamination after having reached the first, two doses of essence of cinnabar

**Table 4**

#### **Special Abilities From Essence of Cinnabar: Degrees 5-7**

##### **1d12 Ability and description**

- 1 Anti-Magic II:** The character becomes immune to the effects of one first- or second-level spell, either clerical or magical. The first eligible spell affecting the character automatically triggers this ability and alerts him of the activation. The character may cast spells normally.
- 2 Amber Sharpness:** The character gains the ability to cause slashing or piercing weapons made of red steel to vibrate in such a way as to negate any opponent's nonmagical protection due exclusively to metallic armor. Thus, red steel cuts right through the metallic armor.
- 3 Cinnabryl Implant:** The character can instantly deplete up to 1 Ci, implanting the cinnabryl molecules in his body for later use in supporting any abilities derived from essence of cinnabar. This allows the character to maintain the required contact with cinnabryl without carrying the precious metal itself. The absorbed molecules function like depletable cinnabryl in all respects. The implanted cinnabryl depletes before material cinnabryl does, if the character is carrying both an object of cinnabryl and holding implanted molecules simultaneously. Use: at will, though implanted molecules must dissipate before this power can be used again.
- 4 Crimson Skin:** The character's skin turns silvery red, providing partial immunity to damage from any natural or manmade weapon. In this condition, the character ignores 1d6 hp of nonmagical damage from each successful physical attack, to a minimum of 1 hp damage per attack.
- 5 Gaseous Form:** The character and his equipment turn gaseous, allowing him to fly 90' per turn and pass through very small openings (key holes, cracks, porous rocks, etc.).
- 6 Heroism:** This ability produces effects identical to those of a *potion of heroism*. If the character is a spell-caster or a thief, ignore this ability and roll for another one on this chart.
- 7 Immunity to Energy, 10' Radius:** Negates up to 10 hp of natural or magical damage based on fire or electricity within a 10' radius centered on the character.
- 8 Invulnerability** This ability's effects are identical to those of a *potion of invulnerability*
- 9 Neutralize Cinnabryl:** The character instantly causes all cinnabryl within 10' around him to become totally inert and stop depleting. This negates all special abilities drawn from cinnabryl until those affected move out of the area of effect. The ability-neutralizing effects apply to the character using this power as well, excluding this ability itself, which lasts a turn. This power does not affect someone using a *cinnabryl implant* (#3 above).
- 10 Pyric Brand:** This ability creates a burst of red light equivalent to a *light* spell, blinding for 2-12 rounds all creatures facing the character within a 10' radius (or a 30' radius in the dark). A saving throw vs. spells is required to prevent this blindness. Use: once per day, instantaneous duration.
- 11 Quick Silver:** The character gains the ability to accelerate his reactions, allowing movement at twice the normal speed and twice as many melee or missile attacks (but not spell attacks) as normally permitted.
- 12 Regeneration:** The character regenerates lost hit points at the rate of 1 hp per turn. At 0 hp, the character passes out normally but could withstand up to 10 hp of additional damage before actually dying. Use: constant once activated.

and 200 Ci would be required; two points of Constitution would be lost as a result. See Table 1 for further details on contamination levels.

In addition to an innate ability, each dose of essence of cinnabar augments the character's longevity at the rate of one year per hit die or experience level. For example: Gombar the minotaur (6 HD) imbibes two doses, which give him another 12 years to live. Note that seed of cinnabar, cinnabryl, and essence of cinnabar do not affect undead or magical creatures like dragons.

High-level characters of the Savage Coast are often tempted to sacrifice their stamina in order to gain what is referred to among them as "cinnabar's immortality." The more notorious figures gained several centuries of life in this way.

In most cases, an ability generated by the essence of cinnabar is innate and can be called upon at any time, as long as the user wears pure, undepleted cinnabryl. The character must physically touch cinnabryl to use these abilities or maintain their effects (hence the use of cinnabryl bracers, rings, and so forth). All of the abilities described in Tables 3-6, unless noted otherwise, can be used at will only once per day, for a duration of one turn.

A player usually cannot choose a specific ability nor a specific ability table to roll from if his character increases his degree of contamination. Each time a character imbibes a dose of essence of cinnabar, roll 1d12 on Table 2 to find out on which table (Tables 3-6) special abilities are found.

### The "catch"

If a Savage Coast native left his home, the seed of cinnabar poison in his blood would eventually pass out of his body, breaking his body's delicate balance with the metal cinnabryl. Remember: ***Cinnabryl is poisonous to uncontaminated people*** (see DRAGON issue #171). The absence of cinnabryl also prevents the use of all special abilities drawn from cinnabar and negates all permanent changes that such abilities may have had on the character. It may ultimately bring death to one who has already exceeded his normal biological life expectancy, by causing a permanent loss of 1 hp per day spent without cinnabryl.

This explains why no cinnabryl-augmented explorer or conqueror ever succeeded in reaching far beyond the Savage Coast. They all eventually died from contact with their cinnabryl talismans, which most of the affected persons jealously kept to themselves, or from the lack of cinnabryl, for those who grew far too old for the Immortals' taste. Very few are those who are aware of the risks involved in using this dangerous metal in all its forms.

A *wish* spell could conceivably remove any contamination, but that would ruin the character, just as this spell would ruin any other standard character class if someone *wished* his class to be something

else (provided such a use of the *wish* spell were allowed at all). Constitution points lost during the absorption of essence of cinnabar can never be restored, even if the character is "cured," except by use of a *wish* (one *wish* per point). This spell and all magical items with *wishes* are almost unknown on the Savage Coast because of their over-use.

Note that an "instant cure" of cinnabar contamination is instantly lethal to someone who has lived past his normal life expectancy. Seed of cinnabar also makes common people more irritable than normal, which accounts for the history of violence among the nations of the Savage Coast.

On the subject of life expectancy, it is a good idea not to reveal to a player what the exact longevity of his character is

(see the *Dungeon Master's Companion*, page 21). It would be appropriate to have a player make several die rolls for life prolongation, then have the DM secretly pick one at random every time his character increases his longevity in this manner. Keep them guessing.

Very low Constitution can become a real problem. DMs should be nasty with power-crazed characters! When a Constitution score reaches 2, adjust the PC's hit points further downward (-4 hp per HD/Level) and drop Strength and Dexterity 2 points. At a Constitution score of 1, apply a -5 hp per HD/Level penalty; if the character is still alive by then, reduce his Strength and Dexterity by half, rounding down. At a score of 0, the character turns into depleted bologna—R.I.P

**Table 5**  
**Special Abilities From Essence of Cinnabar: Degrees 8-9**

#### 1d8 Ability and description

- 1 Anti-Magic III:** The character becomes immune to the effects of one first-, second-, or third-level spell, either clerical or magical in nature. The first eligible spell affecting the character automatically triggers this ability and alerts him of the activation. The character may cast spells normally.
- 2 Contaminate:** The character surreptitiously contaminates one living creature with cinnabar (no save). The contamination takes one day per level or hit die of the victim, as long as the character can remain within 10' of the victim for at least one full turn each day of the contamination process, or in physical contact for at least one full round each day, or partake of the same food or beverage each day. The attempt fails if any of the above is interrupted. The character knows when the contamination takes effect only when the victim's skin takes a reddish color; the victim reaches Degree 1 of contamination. Use: at will, one victim at a time until the attempt fails or succeeds.
- 3 Counter Drain:** The character causes a level-draining creature to drain its own hit dice each time it would affect the character (no save). If the PC counter drains the creature to 0 HD, the character gains a 5% chance per drained hit die of recovering one lost point of Constitution.
- 4 Life Sublimation:** A human character using this power ages 50 years in order to regain one lost point of Constitution. The character can use this ability at will; however, the character will not necessarily know what his exact lifespan is (see the *Dungeon Masters Companion*, page 21). ***The first time demihumans use this ability***, halflings age 75 years, dwarves 150, elves 550. Effects are permanent.
- 5 Planar Phase:** The character can enter the Astral Plane and remain there for up to six hours. While there, the character can see into the Prime Plane up to 60' from his position.
- 6 Power Storing:** At the character's discretion, before damage is rolled, he can instantly absorb magical energy such as magic missiles, *fire* balls or lightning bolts cast at him. The character can later release the absorbed energy through a red steel weapon, when successfully hitting an opponent or an object. The energy causes a bonus of 1 hp damage for each hit die absorbed. The energy otherwise remains stored in the character up to one hour, after which it dissipates. Energy can be absorbed only once a day at the rate of 2 HD per degree of contamination. Unabsorbed hit dice that remain cause damage to the character normally.
- 7 Red Blur:** The character can move up to 10' each round at a blinding speed, either to automatically dodge all physical attacks that round or to pass through solid obstacles (e.g., walls and doors) without damage to either the obstacles or himself. The character may not dodge and attack during the same round. He may move through obstacles and attack normally.
- 8 Scarlet Storm:** The character creates a red shimmering force field to repulse opponents. The field instantly pushes away inanimate objects of less than 2,000 cn and all man-sized or smaller creatures, shoving them up to 60' away on a 30' wide front (no save). Any immobile obstacle in the victims' way inflicts 1d6 point of damage on the victims. Larger creatures must save vs. spells to move toward the character, and do so at half speed.

## And monsters, too

Over thousands of years, mines and caves polluted with cinnabar have allowed for the existence of monsters that can assimilate cinnabryl ore. This contamination gives the monsters innate abilities that come with the higher contamination degrees normally caused by essence of cinnabar. These creatures were never able to spread beyond the Savage Coast since they carry within themselves the toxic essence of cinnabryl, which would kill them if the

seed of cinnabar poison faded from their blood. There are many tales about these horrid creatures. Rumor has it among common folk that those who abuse cinnabar die loathsome deaths, and return later to haunt their foes as cinnabar liches.

*Special thanks to the D&D Product Group, the DRAGON Magazine staff, and my wife for their invaluable help and patience in the design of Red Steel*

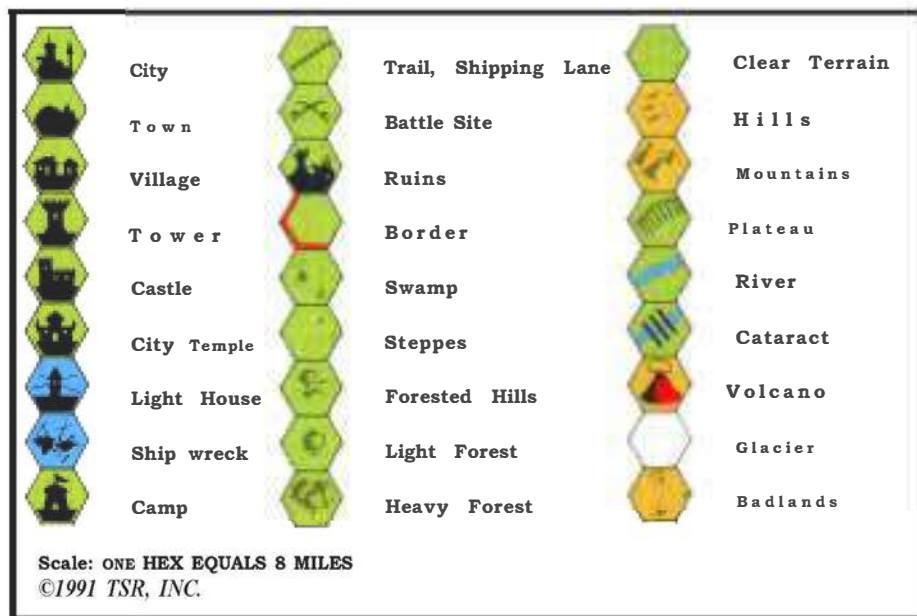
## Letters

In *GAZ10 The Orcs of Thar*, I noticed King Doth had a 12th-level lizard man sidekick. I realize the lizard men were probably cut from the Gazetteer in editing, but I was wondering if they were the same as those in the *HOLLOW WORLD* set? If not, could you please state the differences?

The "normal" lizard men found in the *HOLLOW WORLD* set are assumed to be identical to the ones described in the new D&D game set (or the Basic Set for those of you who do not yet own a copy of the new set). Haarsr the Ambusher (a critter from the *HOLLOW WORLD* set) is described as a 4-HD creature since he is a "unique" NPC. Nothing there would prevent you from using the *GAZ10* guidelines for the creation of humanoid PCs to make Haarsr a level 4 lizard man. That's what these optional rules were designed for. The same goes for King Doth's paramour, Gaakie-Green-Snout. Her adjustments are: St +1, In -1, Wi -1, Dx +1. Her XP advancement table would start this way:

Teenager: -1,200 XP, 1d8 hp, Lvl -1  
 Tribesman: 0 XP 2d8+1 hp, Lvl 0  
 Scout: 1,200 XP 3d8+2 hp, Lvl 1  
 Marauder: 3,600 XP 4d8+3 hp, Lvl 2

And so on. Gaakie has 8d8+13 hp at her level. You can figure the rest!



What about Myojo Katamura? He's a rakasta, as found in D&D module X2, but did you use GAZ10 to flesh him out in issue 165? What sort of racial bonuses did you apply, if any? What would the racial bonuses be for a minotaur?

*More humanoid stuff! Rakastas have the same basic hit dice as lizard men, so we'll use the same XP advancement table. That makes Myojo a simple "Tribesman" (a standard rakasta). Rakasta racial bonuses are: St -1, In +1, Dx +3, Co -1. For a minotaur, I'd suggest: St +2, Dx -1, Cha -1. By the way, a box of D&D miniatures is now available from Ral Partha; among other neat figures, it includes a wonderful rakasta! This set also contains a description of a PC rakasta. It is simplified compared to what is suggested here, so it*

*could be used with the new D&D game set (without the GAZ10 guidelines, that is).*

Has the *Creature Crucible*, series been discontinued?

*No. We are planning a Creature Crucible on Glantrian lycanthropes for next year (PC4 Night Howlers). Be a party animal!*

In DRAGON issue #161, you invited fans of the D&D game to send in their preferences for future installments of the Gazetteer series. I've responded with a list of my choices, but I have an interesting idea and I figured I'd run it by you.

One of the potential Gazetteer settings you mentioned was the Sind Desert. My personal D&D campaign has grown a bit stale, and in an attempt to liven it up, I

considered running module X10 *Red Arrow, Black Shield*, even though the Gazetteers say that Nomad Wars occur around 1,200 AC. To make a long story short, I thought it would be a good idea for TSR to revise the Desert Nomads modules (1983's X4 and X5, and 1985's X10) to set them in current Known World era. Why not bring in the maniacal Master and his desert minions? The FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting has the Horde, so why not threaten the D&D world with the nomad armies?

*Funny you should bring this up just now! Our staff has been working on a major project for next year that will include not only a total revision of the Immortals set but also a major conflict rippling through the entire known world. And that, of course, should include the Desert Nomads faction. If your campaign has run stale, Wrath of the Immortals will definitely be an eye opener. This great saga will provide many events, both innocuous and ground-breaking, over decades of game time! Expect some earth-shattering changes to affect areas of the Known World. (As Prince Dharjee would say, "Elephant dung happens, Sahib!") As far as a detailed setting for Sind and Hule go, these two are definitely on our list for the future.*

How does the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game relate to the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game?

*The D&D game is a simpler, more flexible version of the AD&D game. If you are a prospective gamer who is unfamiliar with role-playing in general, you should purchase the new D&D Basic boxed set.*

Are the Varellyans just a species of nagpas, or do all the nagpas (including those on the Flying City) have to return to their cocoons? What if they are in space? Do they have any other means of reproduction? At the time of the Gazetteers, is the Varellyan Curse broken?

*Frankly, this is all up to you! If the nagpas are all related to the Varellyans, they would be bound to remain on the Known World forever. Should you change the setting, assume someone defeated the Varellyan curse, so the nagpas become biologically normal creatures.*

I noticed a glitch on the Known World planetary map given in the HOLLOW WORLD boxed set. The area between the Arm of the Immortals and the Orc's Head Peninsula seems like land territory instead of water. What happened?

*You can see the coastal line in blue that delineates the Yalu Bay and the small spot for the Trident Isle. An unfortunate error in production caused the blue color to end too far south. And, while we're at it, the Izondian Deep is also known as the Western Sea (see X9 The Savage Coast for a good map of the Orc's Head Peninsula and the coastal region north of the Izondian Deep). The Midland forest (also known as the Darkwood) also stretches too far south; it covers Hule completely*

**Table 6**  
**Special Abilities From Essence of Cinnabar: Degree 10+**

**1d6 Ability and description**

- 1 Alchemical Ego:** The character instantly creates a double of himself. The new character is in all ways identical to the original at the time of its materialization, including age, contamination degree, abilities, memorized spells, personality, etc. The double acts as the character's twin (role-play as if *charmed*). The twin remains in play up to one hour. The twin vanishes when its time is up unless the original character died, in which case the twin permanently becomes the player's character; the original body vanishes. This ability does not duplicate magical equipment. If the original character dies, magical equipment remains on the floor. Note that a temporary twin cannot create an *alchemical ego* of himself while the original character still lives. Use: once per week.
- 2 Anti-Magic IV:** The character becomes immune to the effects of one first-through fourth-level spell, either clerical or magical in nature. The first eligible spell affecting the character automatically triggers this ability and alerts him of the activation. The character may cast spells normally.
- 3 Cinnabar Vampirism:** The character may partially "cure" a victim of cinnabar contamination. The victim must save vs. poison or permanently lose one degree of contamination. This process restores the use of one special ability (except *cinnabar vampirism*) that the "vampiric" character has already used that day. The victim must be physically touched for this power to work.
- 4 Enhanced Longevity:** The character instantly gains 3d10+6 years of life expectancy. Further, the character may use this ability each time his degree of contamination increases. The gain is permanent as long as the character remains contaminated with cinnabar. Use: constant, while contaminated, once activated.
- 5 Scarlet Gaze:** The character causes any nonmagical, living creature within his field of vision (a 30' long, 45° cone) to age 2d6 years per round of exposure (or 6d12 years for demihumans). The DM secretly rolls Intelligence checks for each victim each round, until one succeeds and warns the others. Victims otherwise do not realize what is happening unless someone specifically notices this tiny scarlet flicker in the character's eyes (a player must ask the DM if there is "anything unusual" about the gazer's appearance). A saving throw vs. death ray halves the effect of *the scarlet gaze* (round down effect).
- 6 Symptomatic Switch:** At one point of his life, the character gains the ability to cause all further doses of essence of cinnabar to reduce Charisma instead of Constitution. Two points of Charisma are lost for each new dose absorbed, causing odious deformities or disfigurement, repulsive body odor, detestable voice and behavioral alterations, etc. At a Charisma of 2 or less, the character becomes an evil, psychotic, chaotic creature of horror, a dangerous wretch hated by all, and falls under the control of the Dungeon Master. Use: once in a lifetime, at the character's discretion; once made, the decision to switch is irreversible (reroll on this chart if this ability has already been acquired).

**Rolling the same ability twice:** The character has the option of either selecting a twice-rolled ability a second time or rerolling for a new one on the same chart. Most abilities are usable once during a period of time; if selected twice, the character would then be able to use the ability twice during that same period of time. No other changes should be allowed.



# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 20: Raman's holiday homework

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

FROM THE JOURNALS OF  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN  
LORD ADMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVERVICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.

### **Eimir 5, AY 2000—Raman:**

after the admiral's visit to Hule, it was decided to halt our voyage for a few days. Xerdon has been feeling weak recently. Haldemar and Talasar took him down to a small deserted island for some rest and recreation.

From my vantage point far above them, I could see the officers and several boltmen enjoying their time in an idyllic cove. Xerdon was resting under a silk tent, sipping through a straw one of Talasar's secret concoctions that he had carried with him from the ship. It must have been a new formula, for I don't recall any previous drink that required the presence of

a pineapple slice, nor tiny Ochalean umbrellas stuck into cherries. Talasar spent his time demonstrating roast pig recipes from his homeland to the crew. I couldn't see Haldemar anywhere, however. I had thought he was swimming, but it must have been someone else. I did spy a boltman courageously standing on a flat piece of wood, riding on top of a large wave. Or was that indeed the admiral? My eyesight is not what it once was.

I sighed and returned to my duties. I had been asked to gather information on Hule and get it ready before the crew's return from R&R. I suppose everyone is entitled to a vacation once in a while. Children . . .

### *Hule*

*A Report for the Admiral and Staff  
by Raman Nabonidus, Chief Engineer  
of the "Princess Ark"*

It wasn't difficult to find material about the Great Hule. Between what I could dig up in my own library, some help from Yarani, and an impromptu visit to a library in Yenigaz, my writing table quickly became very crowded with books, scrolls, parchments, wax tablets, printed silks, ivory engraved with minuscule runes, skullcap etchings, painted papyrus, sculpted marbles, and other literary bric-a-brac. Here is what I gathered from all this.

The Great Hule is a strange nation, ruled by people who call themselves Holy Men. However, most of their "holy" philosophy seems to be based on lies and trickery. Using the people's fervor for their Immortals, these Holy Men have placed themselves in a ruling position.

Several Immortals are honored in Hule. The greatest one is called Bozdogan. According to certain scriptures I acquired from an Ochalean dealing in obscure





antiques and lost tomes, the true goal of the Holy Men is to acquire for Bozdogan (or his Immortal companions) the greatest number of followers. That is done through skillful deceit, which is a holy act in itself.

Also according to the same sources, Bozdogan, also known as the Prince of Deceit (Sphere of Thought), found a way to nourish himself from his followers' trickery. Every time someone deludes someone else, Bozdogan gains some sort of arcane power. The greater the number of people involved and the subtler the duplicity, the more "food" for Bozdogan. Petty lies or blatant frauds are worthless in this respect and could cause unrest among the people; such are frowned upon by the Holy Men.

I found rudiments of Hulean philosophy written on a goblin's skullcap dating back to BC 1,500. Hule has occasionally shrunk as a result of invasions or wars, but its slow expansion has mostly remained unchecked. Hule is a mosaic of various microcultures that have fallen, one after the other, to the Hulean deceit-machine.

The Holy Men do not necessarily belong to the clergy, although many do. There are an inordinate number of thieves among the Holy Men, too. Holy Men are especially favored of Bozdogan, and they occupy official positions in Hule's ruling class. Unmistakable signs help determine who is favored, such as being incapable of ever uttering the words "yes" and "no," "black" and "white;" or "is" and "have," or the inability to use the letter "e" or numbers of any kind, etc.

These Holy Men maintain civil order and the "orthodoxy of thoughts," providing enlightened rulership of the land through deceit. In Hule, lies are a holy thing, and certain types of untruths constitute ritual acts in the Bozdogan philosophy. To qualify for holiness, lies must ultimately perform at least one of the following functions:

- Bring new followers to adopt the ways of Bozdogan;
- Uphold and further the expansion of the Great Hule;
- Uphold and further the goals of the Holy Men;
- Bring the downfall of foreigners, infidels, or "wrong thinkers"; or,
- Acquire wealth in the name of the Temple of Hule, usually by trickery, theft, extortion, and so forth.

According to a Hulean lawyers' manual, if someone can prove that certain lies were perpetrated for one of the reasons given above, any kind of misrepresentation, libel, or deceit becomes perfectly legal and even praised. Those who think differently are "wrong thinkers" and are sent to the temple to learn the error of their ways.

Of course, it is wise not to lie inconsiderately; a lie is a double-edge weapon. It is ill advised to lie to Holy Men, and among Holy Men it is heretical to lie to a superior—which explains why the Hulean ruling class is so rigidly classified in a

complex, extremely detailed hierarchy.

Grand deceit of the more subtle and daring kind, especially involving a great number of unsuspecting people, is what truly makes the stuff of the legendary Hulean heroes, such as Hosadus, mentioned hereafter. The best deception remains the one where the victim is ultimately content and largely oblivious.

Inside a set of translucent marbles borrowed from the library at Yenigaz, in which magical letters appeared when held up to the eye, I researched details on the history of Hule. There, among the colored swirls, I discovered the mention of Hosadus. A great goblin horde, the Wolf-Riders led by the bloody Wogar, ravaged the lands of Central Hule, circa BC 1271. Wogar's horde captured Hosadus and others as slaves after slaughtering a great many people. Late one evening, Hosadus accidentally overheard an old goblin shaman mention the Blue Knife, an ancient relic the goblins had been after for centuries. The quest for this object had brought them to Hule.

Hosadus walked up to Wogar himself and declared the Immortals had sent them to him, for he, he said, knew of the Blue Knife's location. He *animated* a simple sword enchanted with *continual light*, then had it hover in the dark over his own hand as a "omen" of the Immortals. That feat impressed the goblins beyond all hope of their realizing his trickery.

Hosadus said the Blue Knife lay beyond the Black Mountains to the east, then beyond the Great Waste. There, they should seek the holy relic. Two thirds of the horde moved on, spurred by the unexpected revelation, while the remainder stayed in Hule as followers of Hosadus. Since then, descendants of Wogar became the mainstay of Hosadus' Honor Guard. Their symbol is a blue dagger pointing down over a sable background.

Legends say that Hosadus died, but Bozdogan returned him to the living a few centuries ago, when Hule threatened to crumble before the aggression of northern barbarians. Newly reincarnated, he perpetrated many other hoaxes that saved the hagiarchy and caused dissent and chaos among the barbarians.

There are clues in the tomes and scrolls I studied that corroborate the legend of Hosadus's return among the mortals. What is certain is that fervor for Bozdogan increased drastically during that period. Hosadus, or perhaps someone claiming to be him, became the architect of the greatest expansion in Hulean history. He founded his holy capital at the heart of a huge forest called Darkwood. This fortified city-temple was far away from urban centers. It seems The Master now rules the vast Hule from there.

Other scriptures I gathered from Yavdlom scribes tell of a favor granted by Bozdogan. The Immortal gave Hosadus a magical avatar as a substitute for his old and failing body. Perhaps the true body

still lies somewhere today. The scribe who wrote this tale conjectured Bozdogan's wish was to give his trusted disciple more time in a quest to attain true Immortality at his side.

Nowhere in the ship's archives could I find mention of the avatar's death or Hosadus's success. It is hard to decide whether Hosadus is The Master. I could find nothing that says he couldn't be, but most of our references are many years old.

The Master is currently very much in control of Hule. Much of his armies rely on humanoid tribes, particularly goblins, though a vast corps of dervishes defend the many city-temples. Among these dervishes are a number of elite troops armed with red steel scimitars, which are lighter and more resilient than common steel weapons. These dervishes have regularly repulsed barbarian incursions from the north, thanks mostly to their red steel equipment. *[See the notes on red steel in this column in DRAGON® issues #171 and #172.]*

The people of Hule view the brutal and bloodthirsty northern hordes as a great peril and have justifiably feared them throughout their history. Hulean literature depicts barbarians as faithless, ignorant brutes incapable of understanding and adopting the subtle ways of Hule. It would be safe to presume these barbarians nourish a particular hatred for the bizarre practice of Holy Deceit that clashes with their simple, straightforward customs. For them, Hulean-bashing is a both a useful and praised activity.

Given certain footnotes in a Zvornikian Gazetteer, I conjecture that Hulean red ore is mined and processed in Darkwood, but this is a minor source of red steel compared to that available in Slagovich. Hule recently spent huge sums of money to buy Slagovich's stockpiles. Many other states compete for that precious metal, especially these nations on the opposite side of the Bay of Hule. There are rumors of other mines existing on the Savage Coast, southwest of Hule, but if these mines exist their owners have hidden them very well. In a merchant diary dated AC 987, I also found mention of a Minrothad ship that bought red steel, then sailed back toward the East.

This concludes my study of the Great Hule. For me to unveil more on this vast nation and its dealings with neighboring states, it would be useful to visit the Savage Coast and gather as much literature as possible. This would reveal more about what other people think of Hule as well. I would finally suggest visiting another library during our next voyage.

**To be continued . . .**

## Letters

The article "Up, Away, and Beyond" in issue #160 dealt with the basic principles of space flight in the D&D game, but did not give any details of speeds attainable. The nautical ship speeds given in the Expert Set seem far too slow for space travel. The "Voyage" series implied that

flight is much faster above the skyshield. If so, how much faster? Does speed increase beyond the moon's orbit and outside the solar system, allowing for interplanetary or interstellar space travel in a reasonable time scale? Do other means of travel (teleport or gate for example) have to be used?

*I think you are trying to peg a number where one is not needed. The explanation about speed in space given by Haldemar is conveniently vague for a reason. Exactly what speed a ship may reach may not be relevant in the game since what really matters is when you get there—and that is the domain of playability, within the boundaries of a role-playing game and the schemes of your DM.*

*Yes, speed in space varies with the proximity of celestial bodies that exert gravity. The farther away such bodies are, the faster the speed of a ship. Speed would continue to increase past the moon and the Known Worlds planetary system. There is no actual limit to speed or acceleration (call that "warp speed," if you like). If your DM wants your raft from outer space to go faster than light, fine; the consequences are your DM's problem.*

*As far as combat goes, if a ship gets in your way, you will most definitely slow down (call that "impulse speed," if you want). This should give at least some chance for interception and space combat. In this case, simply use the speeds given in the Expert Set. It should not matter whether the speeds of fighting ships are actual speeds, since the relation between the respective speeds still remains proportional.*

*Remember that the D&D game is not a science-fiction game, nor does it rely on true science.*

The ads for the new D&D game (the 1991 black-box version) have gotten our gaming group a bit concerned. Will the old D&D rules go out of production, and if so, when? None of us are thrilled at the idea of buying a whole new series of boxes. Here in the U.K., things can get expensive.

On the subject of cash flow, we found DRAGON Magazine to be a good bargain for game ideas. Unfortunately, most of it deals with the AD&D® game, and converting the material to the D&D game sometimes gets difficult. Will you print an article on converting AD&D game information to D&D rules?

*The new D&D game does not affect the rules. These are the same rules that you have grown accustomed to. The new game offers radically different components, however, which should appeal more to true novices. Although in your case the game is not absolutely necessary, you may want to acquire a copy so you could use it to bring new gamers in to your group.*

*The old boxed sets will eventually disappear from the market. They will be replaced with the D&D game Cyclopedia. This 304-page hardback book offers all of the material contained in these sets, reor-*

*ganized to be more easily used. Here again, very few changes will be implemented to ensure all of your older accessories do not become obsolete. The Cyclopedia will also include the skills presented in the Gazetteers, an atlas of the Known World and the Hollow World, and a complete guide to convert AD&D rules to D&D rules (and vice-versa)!*

*The bottom line is that you just need to purchase that one book. It should hit the shelves in the U.S. in November.*

What's the name of the Known Worlds planet? Or is that the name of the world itself?

*Mystara. The Known World is the geographical area located at the southeastern corner of the continent of Brun. Mystara contains both the Known World and the Hollow World. Mystara also has two moons: Matera (which is similar to our Earth's moon) and Patera (also known as Myoshima, the invisible moon described in the "Princess Ark" series).*

Does the D&D Cyclopedia cover the entire range of D&D rules, or is it a follow-up to the new D&D game set?

*The Cyclopedia covers all the rules needed for characters of levels 1 to 36.*

Why won't the Immortals Set rules be included in the D&D game Cyclopedia? Are there plans for a new DM's screen? Why aren't there any novels that feature the people and the places of the D&D world? Surely with all the material that has been published for the Known World and the Hollow World, the writers who brought us the DRAGONLANCE®, GREYHAWK®, and FORGOTTEN REALMS® novels have plenty of background material.

*The Immortals rules will be handled separately in 1992 in Wrath of the Immortals. The topic deserves more than a simple chapter in the D&D Cyclopedia. The Cyclopedia is already quite full with the first four sets. And yes, we have plans for an updated DM's screen, but it will be a while before it sees print.*

*Unfortunately, we live in a world suffering from AD&D game myopia. A lot that goes on in fantasy gaming seems to revolve around that commercial behemoth. This is why most of our novels are written for AD&D game worlds. However, with the new D&D game, things are now changing for the better. Our chances for having D&D novels are improving. Some of us have been pushing hard for those novels, but don't expect anything in the immediate future. In the meantime, feel free to send your comments on the subject to our marketing folks, here at TSR, Inc. (P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.)*

I play with the AD&D 2nd Edition rules, using the Known World as a main setting, and really enjoy it. My players already know everything about dark elves, Tiamat,

and other AD&D game stuff, but in this setting, everything suddenly looks different. It works great.

*You bet it does.*

I looked at the largest map in the *Dawn of the Emperors* boxed set and could not locate Wendar or Denagoth. Was there an error in the design of that map? Will there be any corrections in a future article?

*Well, yes to the first question. That portion of the map is not totally correct. Mea culpa; that one slipped by despite our frantic efforts to cover both the empires of Alphatia and Thyatis before deadline. For those unfamiliar with that region, Wendar and Denagoth are both located north of Glantri. They were presented in D&D module X11 Saga of the Shadowlord. Eventually, Wendar will be the subject of a Gazetteer-type accessory. Of course, Haldemar might just find a reason to fly there first.*

What are the next Known World Gazetteers that you plan to release?

*Tentatively, we should have Gazetteer-type accessories covering the following areas in this order: the Heldann Freeholds; Sind; and Wendar. These were the ones on which I received the most positive responses in the mail.*

I am very pleased with the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set, though I do feel that magic-users have been severely limited in that setting. How about an article with new spells or powers only achievable by HOLLOW WORLD spell-casters?

*The Spell of Preservation that shields the Hollow World has its merits, but I can understand your feelings. You can simply ignore the whole thing, but you would miss some of the Hollow World's particular flavor. Making new spells is also a viable way of dealing with the limitation.*

*In the meantime, you can buy off some of your players by allowing their Known World cleric or wizard characters to cast extra spells in addition to those they can normally cast. An extra 1st-level spell for spell-casters of levels 1-5, a extra 2nd-level spell for those of levels 6-10, etc. (up to an extra 7th-level spell for levels 31+), would be a reasonable way of balancing out Known World and native Hollow World spellcasters; they aren't as good, but they now have more spells to play with.*

Will there be any Gazetteer-like products for the HOLLOW WORLD setting?

*By the time this article reaches print, the first HOLLOW WORLD guide book should be out on the shelves. Look for HWR1 Sons of Azca (it has something to do with GAZ14 Atruaghin Clans). The next one, HWR2 The Kingdom of Nithia, is due out this fall, followed next year by HWR3 The Milenian Empire and its sister module, HWR4 The Milenian Scepter. Happy? Ω*

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 21: The Savage Baronies

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the journals of  
PRINCE HALDUMAR OF HAAKON  
LOVE ADMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.

**Eimir 7, AY 2000—Raman, from a later account:** After many hours of study, I came to the end of a large, black, leather-bound tome on the origins of Hule. It had unveiled many ties between the incredible age of the Hulean hero of leg end, Hosadus, and the discovery of cinnabar. Perhaps his inhuman age was no holy gift, but rather the result of cinnabar usage. The so-called Immortal's favor could have been a lie as well. But then, there was still no clue as to Hosadus's ultimate fate, nor any apparent link with today's Master of Hule. It could be, too, that Hosadus had become undead.

A loud, cavernous snore pulled me from

Porto Preto, a nest of sea-going riff-raff. His Highness the admiral had judged the place somewhat risqué for the likes of me, and he had ordered me to rub red makeup over my face and hands before landing. The admiral also gave me several coins of the shiny pink metal from Slagovich, just in case. Fortunately, the majority of the population was of distant Yavdlom descent—not that they were as well educated and well behaved as their mighty southern cousins, mind you. Anyhow, Nyanga fit in very well.

Porto Preto's library qualified more as a grossly mismanaged bric-a-brac of literature, probably booty plundered from hapless merchantmen. Indeed, there were volumes of material foreign from this rugged barony. Of course, this was obviously of no interest to Nyanga.

I was turning back to my studies when I noticed a small, slimy, and nasty looking creature crawling up Nyanga's leg. It looked like a tiny red man, gnarled and warty, perhaps some evil mandragora. Then I noticed one on Nyanga's shoulder, sucking at his jugular vein, and yet another two examining the contents of his pouch. I could not help gasping at the sight.

Nyanga woke up. The man-things trotted away with his pouch, chittering and giggling. The tall black man jumped to his feet and ran after them. With horror, I saw him swing his giant sword at the little creatures, wildly slashing through stacks of moldy scrolls and carelessly crushing tables, shelves, and other furniture. Soon, Nyanga ran down the stairs, cursing and roaring at his tiny tormentors.

Damp, stuffy, and dark, this remote crypt of the library was no reassuring place. A chill ran down my spine at the thought of staying here alone. I lit another three candles to chase away any suspicious shadow and evil spirits. That's when





I saw her: a frail maiden with a pale white face, long black hair with pearls, and a sad look in her eyes. Her beauty almost made me forget she was not of this world, for I could still see rows of books through her translucent body. I dropped my candelabrum in surprise, but she raised her hands in a gesture of friendship,

"Fear not, noble sage. I wish you no harm. Please listen to my plight, for I have sought eternal rest so long,"

I could not take my eyes off the ghostly maiden. I was too shocked to answer. "You bear the key to my freedom," she went on. "I beg you to help me end my torment."

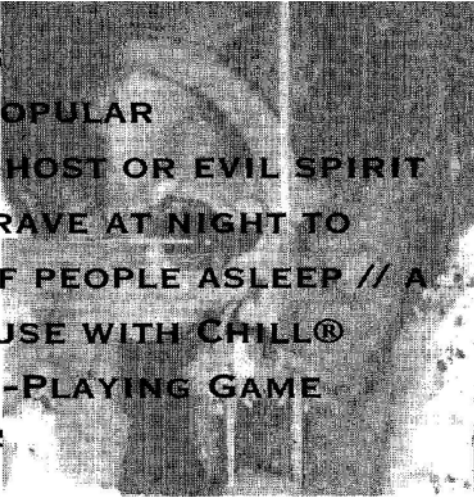
After further conversation, I learned that she was referring to the pink coins with which the admiral had entrusted me. That seemed like very little wealth to offer in exchange for such a deed as freeing her, but she was adamant. "I am fading away into limbo," she whispered at last, "but only you can save me. Come at the Tower of Mercy and seek my grave at the chapel. Please come. On my knees, I implore you." She then vanished into the dark.

My heart was pounding in my chest. Her words echoed endlessly in my mind. I had to free my own self from an overbearing sense of grief and guilt. I had no choice but leave at once on a quest to save the maiden in distress. How quaint.

**Eimir 8—Haldemar:** Nyanga and Raman had been missing most of the night until the warrior appeared, alone, just before sunrise. His report to me: "De sage be readin' all day when de little mohn steal me pouch. Eh mohn, I say, give back me pouch. He run away! I be catchin' de little mohn, and then—poof—he go away! Tis' evil magic, mohn. Someone play de trick illusion to keep me away. When I be back, ye sage be gone. I be searchin' de crypt, I be searchin' de street. He be nowhere, mohn."

It could be that Raman had been kidnapped. But why? Perhaps this wasn't such a good idea giving him these coins. I was tempted to use the crystal ball to locate Raman, but he was wearing common garb, not his uniform robes. I could not recall any familiar object that the crystal ball could focus on. In addition to this, Xerdon was showing no sign of improvement from his strange illness, I left Talasar in charge of the *Princess Ark* and left with Nyanga to investigate Raman's disappearance.

**Eimir 8—Raman, from a later account:** It took most of this day to locate the Tower of Mercy. I learned from three drunken miners at a tavern that it stood on the northern border, on the trail north of Porto Preto. It was a fortified guard post, the last civilized spot before the Red Lands. Beyond it lay a desert filled with monsters, but also a haven for miners. In the evening, the three drunkards were to leave toward their promised land. Posing as a poet in search of inspiration, I decided to ride with them up to the tower on one of their shabby mules.



**VAMPIRES N. (IN POPULAR  
SUPERSTITION) A GHOST OR EVIL SPIRIT  
WHICH LEAVES A GRAVE AT NIGHT TO  
SUCK THE BLOOD OF PEOPLE ASLEEP // A  
SOURCEBOOK FOR USE WITH CHILL®  
THE HORROR ROLE-PLAYING GAME**

**Eimir 9—Talaras, from a later account:** A band of thieves triggered the ship's magical wards last night, several hours after the admiral's departure. They left promptly as the crew investigated, but not before causing great harm to Xerdon. Somehow, they managed to enter sick bay and stab Xerdon several times in his sleep, nearly killing him. By chance, they did not slit his throat altogether. With Razud's will, I healed the Chief of the Guard.

Although still weak from his unknown illness, Xerdon mentioned a pendant he had that the thieves ripped away. It did not seem to have much value at all, though. It was a small net in which he used to keep small objects. It held a piece of red metal he found in the mine under Slagovich. I examined his chest, and I noticed a small red patch on his skin where the rock had rubbed. The thieves took nothing else, except a few items of little value and some petty cash.

The rest of the day was uneventful until later in the evening. I caught Ramissur preparing to leave on one of the lifeboats without permission. He was drunk. He seemed somewhat embarrassed and admitted he had decided to seek out the chief's assailants and settle accounts with them. Although I would not condone his inebriated state or his intended use of violence as a way of gaining retribution, I authorized him to go on. I needed to find out why thieves wanted that piece of ore and how they managed to learn about its existence and the location of the *Princess Ark*. As tempted as I was to join him, I was the last able officer on board and thus had to remain. One condition for Ramissur's nocturnal escapade was that he was entirely on his own, and that he had to return before the end of the next day. Otherwise, I would be obligated to condemn him for his lack of discipline.

**Eimir 9—Haldemar:** In the evening, after a day of scouring the city without success, we returned to the library. At the sight of Nyanga, the old shrew who kept the library went into a frenzy. A crowd of shady-looking fellows came out to observe the scene. The screeching librarian demanded payment for the damage Nyanga

had inflicted. There was no point in further discussion, as we had other business to attend. I stared at Nyanga.

Reluctantly, he pulled out his pouch and tossed a coin at the howling hag. She stopped. She pondered. And shook her head.

There went another coin. Nope.

There went more, followed soon by the whole pouch. To no avail.

This should have covered whatever damage had been done to the shabby establishment. The crowd grew a bit restless. So there went my pouch too. But the truculent termagant then pointed at my cloak and my boots. Now *that* was enough! I nodded at an already fuming Nyanga, who dove head first into the vociferous crowd. The cantankerous crone jumped savagely on his back while I shot a few warning *lightning bolts*. The mob vanished, leaving the annoying nag before Nyanga's humming blade.

It's amazing how fast she spoke—and for free, too. It seemed our lad Raman had been seen with miners heading north toward the desert. Why? She couldn't tell. But perhaps we could catch up. We soon bought two fast steeds and galloped up the miners' trail.

**Eimir 10—Ramissur from a later account:** Upon my arrival in Porto Preto, I went to one of the shadier taverns in the older part of the town. After some preparation, I found the identity of a notorious band of thieves in the town and their habitual hangout. There, feigning to be drunk, I spread noises about some shiny metal I planned on stealing. It wasn't long before someone whispered me to come in the back street.

Five hooded people were waiting there. I posed as a deserter seeking revenge and wealth. I told them I had been in charge of security in a ship that had just been raided. In response to my failure to prevent an officer from being severely wounded, the ship's commander stripped me of my rank. I said I knew how to get past the ship's magical wards and how to reach the chest holding the precious metal. But I needed help in exchange for a fair share of the booty. Of course, for my own life's sake I

wouldn't reveal anything more.

They said they would consider the idea and contact me later. I stayed at a tavern called O Valhacoito [The Cutthroat]. One of the men came back later and said his leader was interested. I was led to a crypt inside an abandoned family tomb in the cemetery, where six people were waiting. In colorful language, the leader asked, "Eh, meu bom [my good man], what tells me this is not a trap?" As I considered clobbering the happy bunch myself, soldiers burst in, to my astonishment—and to everyone else's, as well. In the brief melee that followed, the soldiers slaughtered every one in the gang, except one—a stoolie. The troops held me at sword point.

With an excited grin, the stoolie pointed to me and said, "He's the one, *Senhor Capitão*. He said they still have the ore on board." The captain nodded and turned to his men, pointing at the stoolie. "Get him, too," he said. The soldiers brutally knocked out the screaming stoolie. We were both put in chains and promptly taken to the baron's keep by wagon. An hour later, my fiendish companion woke up beside me in the baron's dungeon. The place was poorly maintained, and I discovered that the mortar was crumbling where our chains were secured to the walls. We made a deal: If I could break the shackles, he would pick the locks to the dungeon doors. Although I could not trust him, there was little else to do.

After considerable exertion on my part, the shackles gave and soon I pulled the stoolie free. It was only after a copious thrashing from me that he recovered his nerve and endeavored to defeat the heavy grate's lock. After sneaking about the dungeon, we came to an exit. Two people stood on the stairs there, unaware we had escaped. The baron was there, speaking with a man with a slight Hulean accent. There I learned that an old acquaintance was still interested in our ship and crew. The man said The Master desired that I be put to the sword, and the *Princess Ark* captured at once. The Master's spies had failed to seize any cinnabryl during the raid they had conducted on the ship. The Master wanted only the crew, especially the officers, and would pay a generous ransom for them. The ship could remain in Porto Preto. The man added he could help the baron's soldiers reach the ship.

That's when the stoolie started acting up again. He leaped forward and dropped to his knees before the astounded men. "*Vossa Alteza* [Your Highness], I beg your mercy! The foreigner forced me to come with him. Let me serve you better, *Senhor Barão* [Sir Baron]." Fearing an attack, the two men ran away, calling for the guard. I took great pleasure at the sound of the stoolie's bones cracking when I got hold of his neck. I ran down a hallway and jumped through a massive stained glass window, the only exit. By chance, I landed in the keep's front court, under a pouring rain. I knocked a guard down and stole his

horse, just barely making it past the portcullis. At last I retrieved the lifeboat and returned to the *Princess Ark*—without the stolen ore, alas, but with vital information.

**Eimir 10—Haldemar:** A thunderstorm had been plaguing us all day. It worsened when we reached the tower, on top of a high plateau. It was close to midnight then. The muddy trail was very steep in many places, and darkness made our task of following it rather perilous.

The guards at the tower were rather apathetic. When questioned, they vaguely pointed toward an abandoned monastery at the edge of a forest. We found Raman there, sitting inside a dusty crypt. Disappointed and confused, he was bidding his time tossing small rocks into a broken urn. He was startled and ashamed when he saw us, but perhaps relieved as well.

"Forgive me, Your Highness," he said, red faced. "I don't know what's become of me. I felt compelled to come here at once after an encounter with a ghost in that library in Porto Preto. So eager was I to go that I omitted to leave proper notice. But perhaps the ghost was just part of a vivid dream I had, for I have waited here a whole day to no use."

As we prepared to leave, a form suddenly materialized above a tomb. It was the maiden of Raman's description. She stared at us, then motioned Raman to come. She was indeed fascinating, but something inside me cried foul play. Suddenly I snapped out of the trace. "Raman!" I shouted. "Back off, man!"

I was too late. An ark of crimson light fused the air between Raman's pouch and the grave. It sizzled and crackled . . . and it fizzled out.

The ghost wailed. Obviously in pain, she transformed herself into a ghastly, translucent red skeleton. This monstrosity then leaped at Raman and tore at him. A *lightning bolt* from my wand seemed to burn through her ectoplasmic matter, causing her to shrivel somewhat. Nyanga charged forward and, with a mighty swing of his deadly magical blade, hacked the fearsome apparition into spectral smithereens.

Raman felt weak. The pink metal in his pouch was gone. "Why, why?" he babbled in tears. Nyanga pried the stone grave open. "Tis an evil spirit, mohn," he said curtly. "Only de powers of darkness know why it be wantin' ye soul. Open fire be de way of killin' de evil spirit!" He tossed a flask of oil into the foul sepulcher and set it ablaze.

I then cast a *travel* spell back to the ship. We arrived hours after Ramissur's return and found the crew at their battle stations. Talasar warned us of a potential attack from the Vilaverdan army. Indeed, a small flying skiff approached, its lantern flickering in the nocturnal sky. It made directly for the *Princess Ark*, despite the fact that our ship was invisible at that moment.

The baron's captain of the guard soon stood at the prow and hailed us. "*Senhor Capitão da Princesa!* This is an official

visitation! You are transporting illegal metals. We request you turn your ship visible and allow immediate permission to come aboard!" He could obviously see us. I restored visibility to the ship's hull and acceded to the captain's demand.

He carried a small animal with him, like a fat ferret. He dropped it on the deck and it scurried away, sniffing and snorting, while he asked probing questions about our mission and itinerary. The creature came back later, whining and hissing. It had found nothing. The baron must have been after the pink metal from Slagovich. There was none left now. Perhaps that ghost had been of some use after all!

"It seems everything is in order. My apologies, *Senhor Capitão*. But you are requested to keep you ship visible at all times when visiting Vilaverde. *Muito Obrigado, Senhor* [Much obliged, sir]." The captain of the guard picked up his little beast and left. Whatever were the plans the baron of Vilaverde had concocted, they had just failed. He had probably hoped to delay our departure. Worse, perhaps he had expected to demand the ship be impounded and moored at a common dock. At least I presumed so, since I could not see any threatening force nearby. But there was no point in remaining in such a dangerous place any longer. The baron must have had a secret up his sleeve.

I ordered an immediate departure, full speed ahead. Already the morning wind filled the sails, and the *Princess Ark* veered on a southwesterly course. In the rising sun, I looked down and saw that dozens of powerful ballistae dotted the farmland below. They had been rigged with ropes and large grappling hooks, some still aimed at the *Princess's* previous position. They must have been pulled into position during the stormy night. Fortunately, the mud had delayed them long enough to allow for our departure. I could see crowds of soldiers and their baggage train slowly heading back toward Porto Preto. Indeed, we had just escaped another treachery.

**To be continued...**

### Errant soul \*

Armor Class:	2
Hit Dice:	6*** (see text)
Move:	150' (50')
Flying:	300' (100')
Attacks:	1 touch or spell
Damage:	Weakness, or by spell
No. Appearing:	1 (1)
Save As:	F6 or better (see text)
Morale:	11
measure Type:	E
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	950; 1,650; 2,300; etc

The errant soul appears as a faint skeletal silhouette inside a translucent red specter, its eyes no more than gaping pools



of darkness. It can appear as a less fearsome ghostlike person if it wishes. It is an undead that rose from the remains of a being who was once powerful through the use of cinnabryl. The original being aged beyond its natural life span, then died when it ran out of cinnabryl or when the cinnabar poison subsided from its body. The chances of an errant soul forming are equal to 1% per century of the being's final age at the time of his death. For example, a 350-year-old creature dying of one of these two causes has a 3% chance of becoming an errant soul. This presumes the original body is intact and left in a crypt or another secure area where it becomes a dry, mummified husk. The errant soul rises on the 10th day after the being's death.

An errant soul typically has 5 HD, plus one per century of the original being's age at the time of its death. In the example given above, the errant soul would have 8 HD and save as an 8th-level fighter. It retains the memory and personality of the original being, but it has an uncontrollable desire to find cinnabryl. It does not have any of its previous life's spell-casting abilities, other than those described herein.

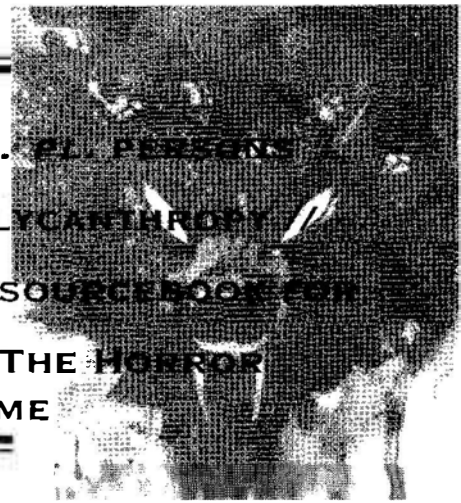
The errant soul's only attack form consists of a *grasp of weakening*. On a successful to-hit roll, it causes its victim to temporarily lose a point of Strength (no save). At Strength zero, the victim passes out and dies. Lost Strength is recovered after a full night's sleep. The errant soul can be hit only by magical weapons. If the mummified body is ever destroyed, the vengeful errant soul will forever stalk the culprits until they are dead or until it itself is destroyed. A successful *raise dead* spell cast on the monster will destroy it forever, as well as a "D" result on the Cleric Turning Undead Table. If it does gain revenge, it returns to the old grave and haunts it forever (or until destroyed). An errant soul can be turned as a specter. Like all undead, it is immune to sleep, charm, and hold spells.

The errant soul lurks in the dark, avoiding contact with crowds or bright lights. It must save vs. spells each round it is in presence of two or more living creatures, or if caught in sunlight or within a *light* spell's area of effect. It vanishes if it fails its saving throw, is turned by a cleric, is defeated in combat by means that failed to destroy it permanently, or so wishes. It rematerializes 1-4 days later at midnight, near the old grave.

Characters killed by an errant soul rise from their bodies 1-4 days later as common wraiths. They travel back to the errant soul's old grave during night hours and seek to guard it in the errant soul's absence. They attack anyone approaching without cinnabryl. There is a 50% chance of finding 1-4 wraiths guarding an errant soul's old grave.

The errant soul is attracted to cinnabryl and can accurately sense its location within 24 miles. It seeks to have cinnabryl

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SUFFERING FROM LYCANTHROPY  
WEREWOLVES // A SOURCEBOOK FOR  
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brought to its parent body, since the errant soul is immaterial and thus could not carry it. The errant soul has the ability to cast a *phantasmal force* once a day, which it uses to isolate a victim. It also can *charm* a victim once a day and persuade him to carry the metal back to the dead body. If brought within 10' of the dead body, the metal is instantly depleted at the rate of 100 Ci per hit die of the errant soul. If there was enough cinnabryl to account for all of the undead's hit dice, the errant soul and the mummified body are exorcised and permanently destroyed. If not, the errant soul becomes enraged and seeks to kill the bearer of the cinnabryl. The errant soul is an intelligent being that uses its *charm* ability to gain information on people or treasures, or in order to meet any goal it has given itself. If the *charm* fails, it may attempt to parley, depending on the situation.

### The Savage Baronies

Southwest of the Great Hule lie a number of loosely organized realms. These are known as the Savage Baronies because none of their monarchs qualify as a true king. The rulers are essentially the descendants of families of explorers who established their colonial domains centuries ago. Most of these rulers call themselves barons, and they wield almost supreme power over their lands.

The four nations closest to Hule in the Gulf region are the Dominion of Vilaverde, the State of Texeiras, and the Baronies of Narvaez and Torreón. The Red Lands—flatlands of cracked, sun-baked mud—separate these baronies from the Great Hule. Although the Red Lands are culturally claimed by Texeirans and Vilaverdians (hence the Red Lands' original name of *Terra Vermelha* [Red Lands]), they are a region of fierce political rivalry. The lands harbor small, scattered deposits of cinnabar. Although no deposit lasts long enough to provide its owners with any significant advantage, the cinnabar is nevertheless the object of ferocious competition among Torreón, Texeiras, Vilaverde, and Hule.

These four nations signed the historic

Treaty of Tampicos, in which it was agreed that the first nation to raise its flag above a desired mining site gains the right to operate a mine there. This requires that a messenger bring the news to his ruler, then return with an official delegate and a mining writ. This is the most dangerous part, since rivals might slaughter the envoys so their own flags can be raised first. Many spies travel this parched land for that sole purpose. More than once have armies clashed over a treacherous ambush or a falsified writ. There are presently two mines in "official" operation, both under Vilaverdan control.

The Red Lands also are the homeland of brigands, humanoids, and foul monsters. For an outrageous fee, some of these inhabitants may work for one of the four nations. Their loyalty, however, is very short lived, since it is often based on who pays the best. Most of the Red Lands natives are dangerous raiders who prey on border villages, miners, and caravans.

Capsule descriptions of each of these nations follow. (Clever DMs will note that Vilaverde and Texeiras were inspired by Portugal during the 1500s and 1600s. Torreón is based on conquistador-era Spain, and Narvaez is based on Spain during the Inquisition period.)

**Vilaverde—capital:** Porto Preto (pop. 14,000, distantly related to the Yavdlom); ruler: Barão Jorge "O Temerário" de Vilaverde; typical NPC: boisterous, swash-buckling fighter.

Porto Preto, a notorious pirate haven, is the home port of a large fleet of armed merchant ships. As with all other towns in this region, it is heavily defended. Tiny hamlets with fortified keeps dot the domain of Vilaverde. Vilaverdians, like Texeirans, are famous for their adventurers, explorers, thieves, pirates, and whalers. Feared on all seas, they are a light-hearted, high-spirited people who often show a legendary audacity.

Baron Jorge "The Intrepid" actually owns many colonial holdings. These are no more than small forts or fortified villages used for commerce and navigation, spread out on the coast of Davania and further west on the Savage Coast. Vi-

laverde and Texeiras are rivals who virtually control the Gulf of Hule's western half. They often clash with the aggressive eastern city states.

Vilaverde's biggest challenge remains the defense of his eastern border with the Great Hule. Aside from the Red Lands, his barony offers the only barrier to Hulean expansion into the Savage Coast. The Vilaverdan fleet could easily ruin all of the Hulean naval and coastal assets, which is why Hule is reluctant to muscle into this territory.

Texeiras—capital: Boa Mansão (pop.: 9,500); ruler: Barão Bartolomeu "O Calvo" de Texeiras; typical NPC: chic, adventuring thief.

The capital of Boa Mansão is a merchant center. Much of the merchandise brought in the region, including very secret loads of cinnabar, pass through this city. Business is generally good with the Barony of Narvaez, which often relies on Texeiras for its supplies of cinnabar.

Baron Bart "The Bald" is, however, in a difficult position because he must maintain his borders with four powerful neighbors. All of them covet his rich capital, his fleets, and his colonial holdings. The barony's overall population and land forces remain rather light in comparison with its neighbors. So far, diplomacy, bribery, and skillful political manipulation and assassinations have kept the status quo.


Torreón—capital: Ciudad de Leon (pop.: 12,200, elven majority); ruler: Baronesa Isabel "La Terrible" de Torreón y Morales; typical NPC: proud, witty swordmaster.

This land-locked barony is notorious for its poverty. Doña Isabel's great plan is to build up an army of conquistadors and eventually take over Texeiras and the Red Lands. This policy has wrecked the local economy through excessive taxes. To date, most of Doña Isabel's troops have been needed to garrison the outer limits of her territory against brigands or humanoid raids. The remainder of the troops is used to enforce that taking of unpopular taxes among the population. Torreón presently is in the best position to overrun the Red Lands' native inhabitants and seize its wealth of cinnabar.

The people of Torreón and Narvaez are renown for their ability as fine warriors. They are the brave and passionate type: hot tempered, proud, and quick to cross rapiers at the least offense. Generations of tough and ruthless soldiers, raised from the hardship of the borderlands, have hailed from these lands. Torreóners often seek employment elsewhere as professional mercenaries, including as marines aboard Texeiran ships. Ciudad de Leon harbors a famous Guild of Swordmakers whose red steel is the best, a prized item for any swordsman throughout the Savage Coast.

Narvaez—capital: Puerto Morillos (pop.: 23,000); ruler: Baron Hugo "El Despiadado" de Narvaez y Montoya; typical NPC: devout and inflexible cleric.

**(CHILL) COMPANION N. 1**  
**TO MATCH OR HARMONIZE**  
**ANOTHER // A MANUAL (IN THE**  
**HANDBOOKS) // A REFERENCE WORK**  
**FOR USE WITH CHILL® THE HORROR**  
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This large barony is the only state that hasn't ratified the Treaty of Tampicos. It has no common border with the Red Lands and thus cannot directly compete with its neighbors. Fertile Narvaez is reduced to trading food for cinnabar with any of its neighbors, usually Texeiras. Excess trading has occasionally provoked famine and peasant revolts.

Baron Hugo "The Merciless" spends much of whatever wealth remains to build a better war fleet. His goal is to break the Texeiran and Vilaverdan hegemony over the seas. Although this is a large barony with a higher population than its three neighbors, its people suffer from excessive taxation and a brutal rulership.

The powerful here, like the poor, remain profoundly pious followers of their Immortal Patrons. Knights commonly go on quixotic quests to retrieve holy artifacts or bring the good word to faraway natives (with the help of their mighty swords). One such "recovered" artifact lies at the Grande Catedral de Ciudad Quimeras, a heavily fortified spot of constant pilgrimage in the region. Immortal philosophy is taken excessively seriously in Narvaez, to the point that anyone suspected of the least heresy risks prompt imprisonment, ruthless "questioning," and merciless execution at the burning stake. Magic-users, elves, and druids should beware.

## Letters

I must inquire regarding the context of issue #170's visit to the Serpent Peninsula. The population and state of "Thanopolis" appears at odds with that described in module X6 *Quagmire*. Presumably the events depicted in that module pre-date or post-date the contemporary period of AC 1,000 of the Gazetteers and the *Voyage of the Princess Ark*.

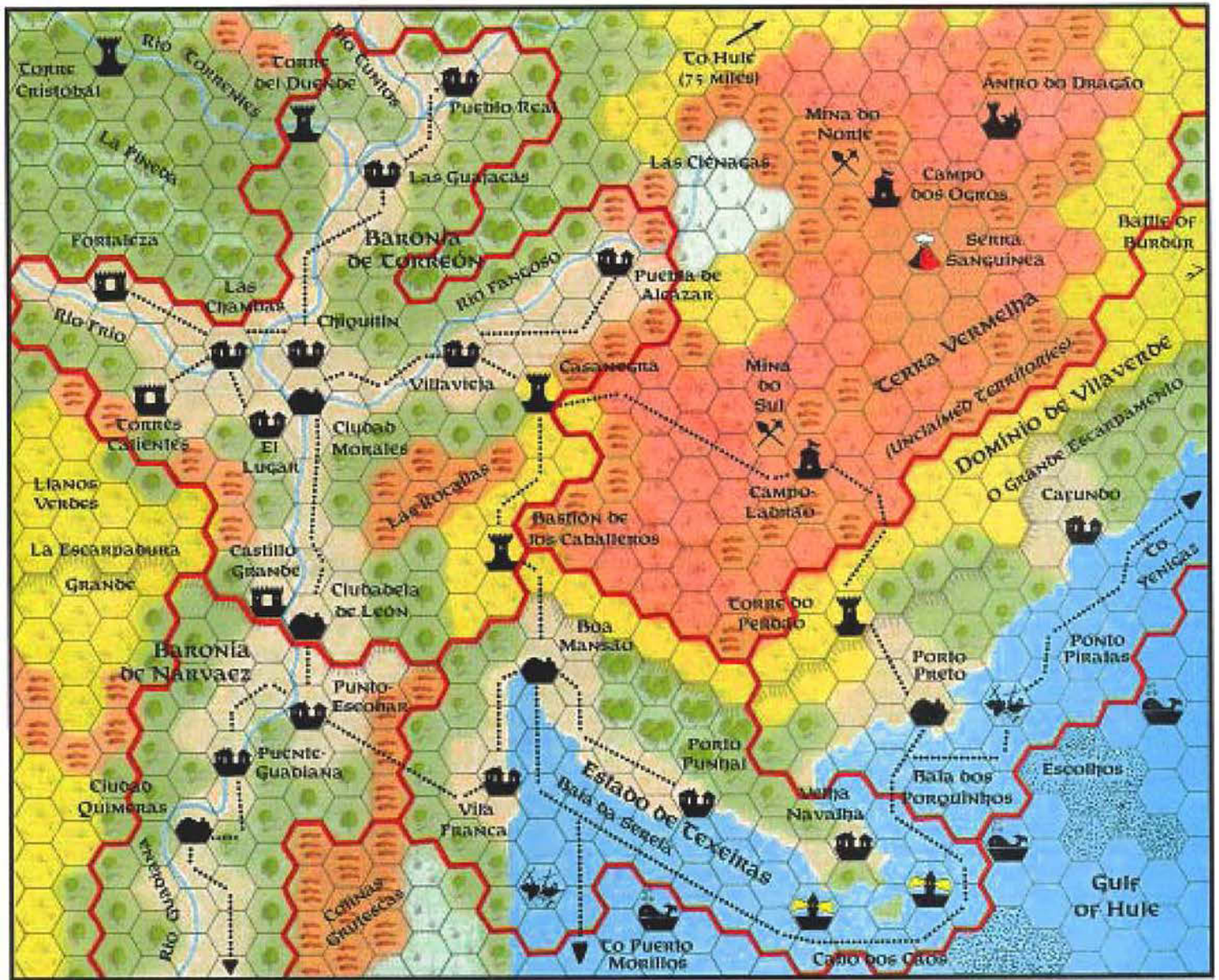
*You are right: I deliberately took liberties with the original settings. In researching that region and what obviously lay to the west (Hule and the Savage Coast), it quickly became clear that there was very little of interest there. I didn't think anyone would be particularly fascinated by thousands of miles of swamp, desert, and fea-*

*tureless plains with nobody around! I made these changes in order to liven the place up, and so mercilessly grafted on geographical features and local cultures. At this point, it would be safe to assume all these older modules took place at an earlier period in time. I hope that by now you are no longer playing the characters from these modules (which are now out of print). If you do use those PCs and desire to use the information presented here, perhaps it is time to perform (gasp!) a reality shift. Again, don't forget that the material presented here is only suggested. Please tell me if you want more of this stuff.*

I was slightly disappointed by the latest D&D module DDa3 *Eye of Traitor*. I had hoped that a greater description of the Black Eagle Barony and Fort Doom would have been given. However, I suspect that this would have overloaded what was intended as a Basic-level module. Is such detail being reserved for at least an Expert-level module? I am sure, however, that the forthcoming HWR series and GAZ14 will satisfy my thirst for more background on parts of the D&D game world.

*Bingo! Aiming the module at novice gamers was indeed what affected DDa3. Please note that, for simplicity's sake, the new D&D boxed game deals exclusively with dungeons and does not mention anything of the Known World. This is why we could not expand on the subject of the Black Eagle Barony DDa4 The Dynrak Dread (available in December 1991) will be affected likewise. DDa4 will work better as a novice module than DDa3, but it is not the kind of product that experienced gamers should look in to for background information on the world.*

*This brings up a more important issue. (I can already hear some grumbling out there.) Please understand that the more new gamers these types of products are able to bring in, the more likely we will later be able to increase the number of products that are so dear to you. There is going to be a lot of support for the new D&D boxed game within the next year. We*



Scale: one hex equals a mile

- Village
- Large Town
- Keep
- Fort
- Camp
- Light House
- Ship Wreck
- Whaling
- Reefs
- Rocky Desert
- Battlefield
- Trail on Shipping Lane
- Ruins

- Salt Mines
- Volcano
- Border
- Light Forest
- Heavy Forest
- Forested Hills
- Rocky Hills
- Badlands
- Bog
- Plateau
- Grasslands
- River
- Farmland



Regional Map



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think that this is in both the D&D game's and its loyal fans' best interests in the long run.

If you're not sure which products support the new D&D boxed game, simply look on the front cover for a special icon. Those that come with an icon deal with the D&D boxed game and are referred to as "Entry Level" products. If they do not show an icon, they are for use with the Rules Cyclopedia, the Known World, and the HOLLOW WORLD™ set, as you now know them. These are referred to as "Champion Level" products. Starting with DDa4, a dragon icon indicates an adventure module; a sword-and-shield icon denotes a common supplement; a scroll (like on the side of the D&D boxed set) designates rules; and, finally, a castle indicates a special accessory containing 3-D material or special components.

The main problem that I have with a number of Gazetteers is that they do not always provide clear numbers for what the local armed forces are. For example, a good job was done with *The Golden Khan of Eihengar*, *The Republic of Darokin*, and *The Principalities of Glantri*; however, the same cannot be said about *The Emirates of Ylaruam*, *The Northern Reaches*, *Dawn of the Emperors*, and a number of others. Especially for the latter, whose empires always seem on the verge of a clash, this type of omission is surprising. Other Gazetteers provide vague or conflicting information on military statistics. It would be good if you could provide this type of information, as well as notes on how the numbers break down among land, naval, aerial, or other types of military forces.

Good point. The different styles of the many authors who contributed to the Gazetteers conflicted at times with the "Gazetteer mold." Some of these accessories indeed missed military-related information but may have fared better in other respects. Sometimes, choices must be made as to what best fits a product and the talent of its author. What may be lacking in unerring consistency can often be gained in the variety of approaches and styles. Some of the information you seek can be found in a chart at the bottom of TM2 The Eastern Trail Map, but it will not solve your problem entirely. It is not out of the question, however, for a complete and detailed list of military forces to see print in 1992. More later on this.

Speaking of air fleets and treacherous Thyatians, why do pegasi, rocs, and gold dragons still stick around Thyatis? The dragons would have to be paid, even those bred from eggs. No human could possibly tame the older dragons, either, not with their centuries of life spans. The desire for treasures in dragons is indomitable.

The treacherous side of the Thyatians, I would think, remains limited to their nation's higher spheres, such as the government, merchants, and so forth. The

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relationship between a Knight of the Air and a flying mount would be totally different. Imagine the moral and emotional ties that existed between a Roman general and his legions, compared to that between a Caesar or his senators and a common foot soldier. Not the same, I would think.

But you are right in pointing out the need for reasons that would keep these creatures in the service of the knights. These reasons might be ones personal to the creatures, or some other powerful binding force. It could be interesting to see how one could use dragons as war mounts, based on what was said in the article, "From Hatchling to Immortal Guardian," in DRAGON® issue #170.

I found a point of confusion in the piece on "Cinnabryl's darker uses" ("The Voyage of the Princess Ark," DRAGON issue #172) about the number of points of Constitution that can be lost with one single dose of essence of cinnabar. You say first that anytime someone imbibes a dose of essence, one point of Constitution is lost. A few paragraphs later, in the example, you then say that reaching the second degree of contamination causes two points to be lost. Which is true?

Yes, one dose of essence causes the loss of one Constitution point. To reach the second degree, you would lose another point, for a final total of two points since you started dabbling in cinnabryl use. It is

only the amount of depleted cinnabryl that gets multiplied (you would deplete 200 Ci for the second degree, 300 Ci for the third degree, and so forth). Ω



## LOOKING FOR MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 22: Arsenic and old mantillas

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
prince haldemar of haaken  
Lord admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
princess ark  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

**Eimir 12, AY 2000:** We had just flown past the coast of Narvaez when a strange incident occurred. A small whirlwind materialized in the atrium where Lady Abovombe and I were taking our morning stroll. Seconds later, a handful of boltmen arrived, having seen the whirlwind from their posts nearby, and they made ready to open fire.

The whirlwind came to a halt, revealing a curious character: a halfling in buffoon's garb. Lifting his hat, he cried, "*¡Hola! Buenos días, Señores!*" Bowing deeply before Lady Abovombe, he added, "*Y Señora.*" He pulled a sealed scroll from his jacket. "I bear a cordial invitation from His

Excellence el Baron de Saragón to you, in hopes that you will attend the annual banquet. His Excellence Don Balthazar will be honored by your visit." Kissing Lady Abovombe's hand, he murmured, "*¡Ay! ¡Que guapa!*" ["What a babe!"]

The buffoon disappeared in a puff of smoke as fast as he'd come, making the boltmen all the more twitchy. Several sentries looked anxiously above and behind them, and to their sides. Hands still on their wands, they left only after I dismissed them.

The scroll was indeed an invitation. It seemed someone had taken notice of our little performance in Villaverde. We had no particular objective in the immediate future, and indeed, a friendly stop would be good for the crew. But first, I had to verify this Don Balthazar's intentions.

**Eimir 13:** A quick invisible visit to the Baron's mansion revealed it was a heavily fortified abode. The place was one that only an experienced wizard could build, judging from its many magical wards and arcane sentries. The arabesques on the walls, the fine colonnades, and the elegant tile works in the atrium reminded me of the style and color used by the Alasyian people. Curiously, more classical paintings, furniture, and wrought iron bars on the windows demonstrated a strong Guardiano influence.

The servants were feverishly preparing a great banquet. The broad fire in the kitchen roared under roasting piglets. Pheasants, stuffed boars, racks of lamb, and other delicacies littered the vast tables. Up in the main hall, I noticed the chamberlain debating with the lady of the manor about where to place the guests at the baron's table. I saw my name and Lady Abovombe's among the chamberlain's small plaques. Our plaque moved many times before the lady of the manor, Doña Teresa de Montejo y Sotto, the baron's wife, made her decision. So far, all seemed normal, so I returned to the ship.





**Eimir 14:** The *Princess Ark* made her formal appearance above Ciudad Matacan's Plaza Grande. The crowd was impressive. Although astounded by our arrival, the people showed no signs of fear.

Soon enough, a column of guards plowed through the spectators. An officer stood among them, signaling to the Princess. A fast lifeboat promptly fetched him. He introduced himself as our escort to the baronial manor house. As a dignitary of Imperial Alphatia with a beautiful lady on an official reception, we took along a proper escort in the person of Myojo Katamura.

Courteous and thoughtful, our guide took us on a tour of the town with a short stop at the flower market. The trip proved enjoyable, despite an all-too-evident escort of Torreón lancers riding before and behind our carriage. We reached the manor by sundown, where all three of us were provided with quarters for our stay.

Soon afterward, the major-domo announced our arrival in the main hall. A sumptuous crowd of petty nobles and ladies-in-waiting bowed respectfully before us. I was an Alphatian prince, after all. We looked just right. Lady Abovombe stood resplendent in a white robe covered with pearls. Myojo had simply outdone himself with a gleaming ceremonial armor that made the Torreón guards pale with envy. So far, so good.

"Welcome to Saragón, Prince of Haaken!" called Baron Balthazar as he walked up to us. "Your visit honors our modest barony. I hope your tour of the city was to your liking?" We were promptly and formally introduced, and the baron added, "Tales of your famous exploits have preceded you, Señor!"

Almost immediately, the minstrels began to play a fine minuet. Before I could react, a diligent and hopeful troop of hidalgos besieged Lady Abovombe for a dance. The baron won the first. For my part, I enjoyed a few steps with Doña Teresa. The dances went on between the usual court conversations and gossip. Many partners later, I finally gave up keeping track of who was whom.

I grew tired of the reception and so retired to my quarters with Myojo. Lady Abovombe remained, enjoying her time tremendously. It is true that balls are not all that common on the ship. We'll have to work on this.

**Eimir 14—Abovombe, from a later account:** The emotion and passion in the people I met and danced with surprised me. I had grown accustomed to the polite and restrained ways aboard the *Princess Ark* and at my father's court. It was only because of Doña Socorro's help, the dueña [chaperon, an elderly lady in waiting] of the baron's daughter that I safely returned to my quarters. It nevertheless remained a delightful night.

No sooner had I snuffed out my candle, than there arose a sweet melody from the garden. A young hidalgo stood beneath my

balcony, singing a love song under the full moon. Although old fashioned, it was very charming. Thinking himself in luck, he quickly climbed the vines and reached my room. Indeed, he was of the romantic, enterprising, passionate, and ultimately tenacious kind—in short, totally lovely. Also very, very difficult to get rid of.

**Eimir 14—Haldemar, later that night:** Foolish was I to believe the evening was over so quickly. I barely had time to pour myself a glass of that sweet Gargonan sherry when a soft knock came from the door.

A colossal man with handlebar mustaches immediately pushed his way into the room. "Have a cigar, amigo! Sherry is best enjoyed this way." He opened a box full of odorous tobacco rolls and added: "I will meet any offer they made, plus a full cargo load. Well, amigo, have you decided?"

At a loss, I frowned and said, "I'm afraid you are mistaken, sir. Business was not the motive of my visit here."

He seemed disconcerted. "Ay! This is very unfortunate, amigo." I was about to further question this rather insolent character about his identity and the object of his visit when he suddenly pulled out a large knife. But Myojo's sword-drawing talent proved swifter, and the surprised—and quite dead—assailant fell heavily to the floor.

As the baron's guest, I couldn't possibly get caught with who-knows-who's dead body in my quarters. I thought of returning to the ship with the body, but soon discovered that none of my travel spells worked. The mansion was magically locked, it seemed. Drat! Finally, Myojo bound up the big man's wound, picked up the body, and hooked it up inside the closet. It would do for the time being.

Someone else then came to the door, a small, fat fellow. "My apologies, Señor. I hope I am not interrupting. But little time is left, and I must insist. When the third hour strikes—" He stopped speaking and opened his eyes wide. "Caramba!" he whispered—and fell to the floor. A small dart was stuck in his neck. Alas, too late I noticed a shape jump off the balcony and run away into the garden. Double drat! Myojo dutifully picked up the new victim and propped him up behind the curtains.

One more visitor knocked at my door. It was an elderly lady this time. "Young man," she said, "you should know that great deeds make great men. For what you are to do tonight, you shall be rewarded in honor and status."

"Milady," I ventured, "might I inquire as to whom you might be?"

"Oh, puh-lease!" she said with indignation. She then motioned to Myojo, as if he should be doing something. He gathered she wanted a glass of sherry. She went on when he brought her the drink. "Listen carefully, for it must not be broken. Twist the skull to the—urk!" She choked on her beverage, then went into convulsions as her mouth began to foam. "¡Que Barbari-

dad!" she spat, then fell to the floor. Another one!

Myojo sighed and shrugged. He picked her up and pushed her under the bed. I tossed the dangerous beverage and my glass out of the window lest someone else be harmed. I heard a scream from below and saw a dark shape run back into the garden, holding his (or her) head.

Despite their sudden deaths, these strange people singularly amazed me. My curiosity was now greatly aroused. Would I have more visitors this evening? I wondered. And, sure enough, another visitor knocked at the door just then.

A Torreón officer fell forward into the room, a dagger stuck in his back. He whispered: "I am dying, Señor. Listen, for many other people have died this night. I can smell it."

Myojo sniffed around him and looked puzzled.

"You are the victim of an odious set-up," continued the officer. "You must leave at once. A secret passage exists behind the third barrel in the cellar . . ." He nearly passed out. "Adiós, Señor. My time has come." Now beyond our help, he slipped to the floor.

I rendered "number four" invisible and sat him at my chair when the door suddenly opened. A servant came in. That was enough! Myojo grabbed the steward and prepared to cut his throat. "Have mercy, Señor!" the man cried, frightened out of his wits. "I am only a poor peón working for the baron. I came to prepare your bed. Please spare my life. I will not disturb again, I swear!" He seemed rather honest. After some fruitless questioning and many repetitions from him of "¡Muchas gracias!" I let him go—only to hear a scream of agony an instant later in the hallway. I refused to go look.

Minutes later, yet one more visitor came up. "Are you all right?" It was Lady Abovombe. She carried a black-eyed hidalgo on her back, dragging the recently departed servant behind her. "This one got a bit too daring," she said. "I knocked him out when I heard the scream in the garden. I couldn't possibly leave him behind! As for the servant, I don't know what happened to him. I found him lying in the hallway as I came to check the noise. He's dead."

At last, someone who didn't drop dead on us! After unceremoniously stuffing Lady Abovombe's two into a large chest, we left the room for fear of inheriting another macabre gift. It was time to pay a visit to our baronial host.

**Eimir 15—Haldemar, early morning:** I did not have much of a clue about where to go in this vast manor. I decided to follow the late Torreón officer's words. Indeed, a secret passage existed in the cellar, and it lead to a wizard's workroom.

Alchemical implements stood on a large bench, bubbling, puffing, and whistling, as glowing, multicolored liquids traveled through the glassware and the crystal

tubes. On a desk sat a crystal skull with some other bric-a-brac that reminded me of my own office. Rays of faint, blue light from the skull's empty eye sockets illuminated a clock in the corner. It reached the third hour in the morning and struck its bell. I tried to reach the skull, but an invisible force kept me at bay. By the second stroke, I dispelled the force, hoping my magic to be strong enough. Indeed, by the third stroke, I turned the skull to the right and hoped for the best.

And the best happened. The two beams hit a golden Oltec sun sculpted on the wall. It shifted away, revealing a new chamber. There, sitting among an impressive library, was Don Balthazar, quietly observing us.

With a smile, he began "¡Buenos días, Señor! I am glad to see that you prevailed over my guests. I do apologize for the inconvenience, but a number of spies and traitors had penetrated my court, and I needed someone powerful from the outside to help me uncover them. I quietly had the rumor of your arrival spread among my subjects at the court. I made them believe you planned on stealing a great artifact from me, selling it to the highest bidder. Many rulers in the region would give their right arms to acquire such power. It was the only way I could seek them out, and for this I am in your debt, Señor."

I wasn't amused. "Dear Baron, there are better ways of dealing with a prince of the Alphantian Empire. For your information, I do have other business to which I must attend, and I am not the least bit interested in your petty dealings."

He stood up and pulled out a pipe. "Ah, Señor! You surprise me! On the contrary, a great adventurer as yourself should appreciate an evening such as this! Come now, my friend. Your time wasn't lost. I am prepared to make amends and offer Your Majesty's skyships unlimited access to my Plaza Grande—and for you, the usual commercial fee from all merchant deals. The wizards' empire is most welcome in Saragón!"

Indeed, this was one very-well-informed wizard. I pulled out my own pipe. "With one condition, then! I dare say, I would love to sample this fragrant tobacco of yours."

Don Balthazar agreed with a broad smile, "... and a glass of sherry. The good sherry, of course!"

After a long and constructive conversation, we finally took a stroll back outside, in the garden. The sun was rising. As we stood in the alley before the manor, Don Balthazar wondered about the identities of those who had showed up in my room. He was concerned about an assassin who had stalked him in the dark and was probably still at large.

Just then, a scream came from my apartment. Lady Abovombé's black-eyed lover appeared at the balcony, rather frightened. He probably had just awakened in

the chest with a dead man resting in his arms. As he stood there on the balcony crying murder, another body slipped from behind the curtains and bumped against the young hidalgo's back. He screamed again and jumped off the balcony, landing on a thick bush. Almost immediately, he stood up and screamed once more. A tall creature in black was hiding there—a gnoll dressed in the garb of assassins. It, too, screamed, and they both ran off in opposite directions. Without a moment of hesitation, both Don Balthazar and myself pulled out our wands, and in a single motion fried the ugly beast.

"¡Muy bien, Señor! Excellent shooting!"  
"Not bad yourself, dear Baron!"

I guess that took care of the wizard's night stalker.

**Eimir 22:** We enjoyed a few more days at the manor while the crew was granted a much-appreciated furlough. I introduced Talasar and Xerdon to the Baron, who was then given a tour of the Princess. He later revealed that he had traveled once to the Court of Eriadna the Wise and learned a lot about Alphantian ways. He had heard secondhand about my financial arrangement with Her Imperial Majesty, and when news of my visit to Vilaverde had reached him, he naturally thought of inviting me to Ciudad Matacán. The rest then fell into place.

We finally left the Barony of Saragón. With auspicious winds, the *Princess Ark* took a southwestern heading, toward more discoveries and adventures in the Savage Coast.

**To be continued. . .**

## The Savage Coast

The population on the western shores of the Gulf of Hule is often referred to as Los Guardianos. They are primarily the descendants of an ancient Oltec dominion, which explains their dark complexion. Elves appeared in several outlying areas by the 23rd century B.C. but were decimated circa B.C. 1290 by Wogar's Horde of humanoid, except for a few clans north of the Great Escarpment. The elves did not influence the local culture in any meaningful manner. Around B.C. 700, Nithians colonized this lost civilization without, however, removing its ancient cultural heritage. By B.C. 500, the Nithians had disappeared, leaving behind a strong artistic and philosophical legacy.

The modern Guardianos culture reflects more recent Traldar influences. Expatriate Traldars fleeing epidemics of lycanthropy in what would later become the Grand Duchy of Karameikos resettled this area circa A.C. 450. A first wave of colonists populated the eastern shores of the Gulf of Hule, founding such states as Slagovich and Zvornik. They spread farther west within the following centuries, slowly settling along the main rivers. Rather than imposing their own culture, these expatriate Traldars were assimilated by the local culture.

The exception to this are Texeirans and Vilaverdians (see DRAGON issue 174, "The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*"). They developed a local dialect different from the language of other Guardianos realms. This resulted from centuries of Hulean influence and older Yavdlom ties.

**Almarrón—Capital:** Ciudad Tejillas (Pop.: 7,000); **Ruler:** Señor Esteban "El Salvador" Díaz y Delgado; **typical NPC:** a poor peón conspiring against the tyrant.

This small, reclusive nation has fallen under the control of the capital city's lord mayor—Don Esteban, Señor Alcalde of Ciudad Tejillas. The population had overthrown the old baron decades ago and instituted a Traldar-inspired democracy. Poverty and hot tempers threatened the young nation, and Don Esteban intervened to prevent its downfall. Using his authority over the capital's garrison, he ousted opposing factions, imposed his dictatorship, and named himself "El Salvador" (The Savior).

Don Esteban quickly seized the nation's most important asset, as he saw it: the silver mines in the Sierra del Plata. Many of the surrounding nations depend on this source of silver to mint their coins. Remaining resources come especially from coffee plantations whose crops are commonly exported to Hule and the Yavdlom Divinarchy, and the production of cigars or pipe tobacco. Much of the nation's wealth remains in Don Esteban's hands.

The people of Almarrón resent the usurper and his odious tyranny. Many of the poorest peons ran from the dictator's Torreón mercenaries and tax collectors. The guerrilleros formed bands of insurgents preying on silver caravans and competing for their own goals. Several guerrilleros dream of restoring democracy, while others are still loyal to the old baron's son, Barón Maximiliano de Almarrón y Escudor. So far, Don Esteban has been unsuccessful in dislodging the guerrilleros from the hills. Most of his troops are tied up with the control of urban areas, the trails, the silver mines, and the Castle of Tordegena that wards the nation's western border against gnoll raids.

**Gargaña—Capital:** Ciudad Real (Pop.: 13,000); **Ruler:** Baronesa Esperanza "La Ilustre" de Sotto y Rivera; **typical NPC:** the adventurous poet on a quest for inspiration.

This is the mildest of the region's nations. Doña Esperanza's enlightened reign has given her people a secure and almost prosperous life for the past 15 years. It has been free of revolts and wars, thanks to the policy of neutrality the "Illustrious Baroness" maintains with her neighbors. Doña Esperanza's two daughters married into the baronial families of the Narvaez and Montejo (Saragón), which has helped to prevent unnecessary wars.

Ciudad Real is perhaps more famous for its generous patrons. The capital is a haven for the arts and literature. Many fine



artists, poets, and philosophers came to Ciudad Real to flourish under the philanthropic boon. Intellectually, it is the center of the Guardiano culture. Thanks to their skills, many scholars native of Gargaña work abroad as preceptors or political advisers for other baronies.

As a military force, Gargaña is rather weak in comparison with its neighbors. The baroness relies mostly on a large, loyal, but mediocre militia backed up with Torreón mercenaries. Active troops garrison the capital and the Castle of Pardalupe. The latter force is more concerned with occasional gnoll raids through the southern border than with their Saragón neighbor.

**Guadalante—Capital:** Ciudad Huelca (Pop.: 9,000); Ruler: Señor Cristóbal "El Barbuda" Bigotillos y Copetez; typical NPC: the proud gaucho, rover of the pampas.

Guadalante is the home of the gauchos, free-spirited wanderers of the savage west's great plains. They can easily be recognized by their calf-high boots, puffy pants, ample shirts, and broad hats. Their weapons of choice remain the bolas, spear, and light crossbow. Few ever wear armor, considered too bulky for their trade in the pampas. As a military force, the gauchos form an effective light cavalry corps of lancers, mobile crossbowmen who are well suited to combat in the vast grasslands.

In peacetime, most are vaqueros, cattle raisers who live in large (usually fortified) haciendas. The gauchos' main concern remains the protection of their cattle against gnoll raiders from the south. During periods of famine, goblin incursions from the Yazak Steppes are to be expected as well. The gauchos are a major source of horses and bovines for most of the western Gulf of Hule. After a few clashes with the arcane Saragón over border disputes and watering rights for cattle, the two nations eventually settled their conflict with the Treaty of Cortesillas. Guadalante resumed normal trade thereafter.

Guadalante is an oligarchy, a state ruled by the more prominent families of cattle traders. Don Cristóbal "The Bearded" is a rather peaceful if boisterous ex-adventurer. Despite his apparent roughness from his years in the pampas, his style, extravagance, sense of humor, and appreciation of all that is refined in life have charmed more than one señorita during his visits to the eastern baronies. He is currently married to Doña Catalina de Bigotillos y Narvaez, daughter of Barón Hugo "The Merciless" (see last issue's column). The marriage was performed in secret, without her father's approval. The baron has yet to send the dowry to this much despised *pechero* [commoner].

**Saragón—Capital:** Ciudad Matacán (Pop.: 11,000); Ruler: Barón Balthazar "El Moro"

de Montejo-y-Aranjuez; Typical NPC: the shadowy wizard on a secret quest.

The people of Saragón are unique in style and thinking. This small region shows a stronger Nithian influence than anywhere else. Ancient Nithian culture prevailed a bit more here than elsewhere and still shows some resistance to Traldar influence. Nowadays, it seems more like a Guardianos-style blend of Alasyian and Traldar backgrounds.

Within the past century, the population seems to have remained evenly split between the traditional precepts of the Guardianos and Al Kalim. There is no animosity between the two philosophies, but rather a friendly understanding among the various advocates—which enrages the Narvaezan Inquisitors (see last issue's column). The proponents of Narvaez clerical orthodoxy view the dark-skinned citizens of Saragón as the spawn of chaos, and their fair-skinned compatriots as dangerous heretics.

On the other hand, the people of Saragón like to view themselves as sages and scientists, the learned ones in the western Gulf of Hule. Their Nithian legacy facilitated the rise of wizards, alchemists, astronomers, and outstanding mathematicians. Don Balthazar "The Moor" himself is an experienced wizard—yet one more cause for the ancestral enmity between Saragón and Narvaez.

The oddest thing about Saragón is that

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its baron owns an ancient Oltec artifact that protects the barony's borders. Any armed force of 100 or more troops that crosses the border with intent to harm the barony is immediately stricken with fear and the urge to leave at once. This has prevented Narvaezan armies from invading Saragón. This is a blessing since the elite Narvaez troops, *Los Matamoros*, would certainly create great havoc in Saragón if they ever came. Commonly encountered patrols of Torreón lancers usually take care of smaller groups of intruders, especially groll raiders along the Río Copos. The Oltec artifact can also generate a force field around the baronial manor that negates all transportation spells such as *dimension door*, *passwall*, *teleportation*, *travel*, *gate*, etc.

## Letters

What is the correct progression for demi-humans to acquire new skills?

*You will find the answer in the new D&D game Rules Cyclopeda, which should be available just about the time you read this. The skill system and a list of the more important skills have been included there.*

What are the statistics for weapon-mastery skills with the Belcadiz rapier? Is there a connection between the Belcadiz and Darokin rapiers?

*Those rapiers are pretty much the same. Many of the Guardians, especially Torreón mercenaries, use them as well, sometimes with red steel. See the Rapier Update Table in this article.*

The rules on elf magic in GAZ5 *The Elves of Alfheim* are a bit vague. Can humans learn that magic? Can elven scrolls and spell books be found? If elf magic is

taught by Tree Keepers, why don't the Vyalia and the Calarii elves of Karameikos know any? What about the elves of the Shiye Lawr?

*It would be natural to assume elven scrolls and spell books exist, and that any elven tribe with a Tree Keeper would be able to acquire elven magic skills. Humans should not be allowed to use elven magic; they might be able to decipher elven runes and understand their general intent, though. Humans should not be able to use them to gain any advantage in the research of comparable human spells, either. If you use this idea, elves should then suffer the same limitation regarding human magic. Universities of magic would have to develop different teaching branches!*

I'd like to know about paladins and avengers in the Known World. Where do they fit in? I don't remember seeing them anywhere in the Gazetteer line. Despite the rules in the Companion Set, couldn't a paladin or an avenger become a knight in Karameikos or in the Empires? Will the world be more feudal in the future?

*These types of characters could be used in Karameikos without too much trouble, especially the paladin and the knight. Avengers will fit perfectly in the Princess Ark's version of the Heldann Freeholds (remember the Heldannic Knights). It is especially easy to use the paladin, since the requirement is to swear fealty to a "lawful church." That could be done in the two empires, Darokin, Ierendi, Vestland, Vilaverde, Teixeiras, Torreón, Narvaez, the baronies of Gargaña and Saragón, or the various city states across the Gulf of Hule. We are planning on developing the Heldann Freeholds/Heldannic Knights in a Gazetteer format sometime in the future.*

*With some tinkering, coming up with home-rules for demi-human versions of the knights should not be an impossible endeavor. Elven knights in Wendar, or their dwarven equivalents in Rockhome, are not necessarily out of the question so long as one preserves game balance and fairness to those players running human fighters.*

I feel the Known World has too much magic; it's my only complaint about the Gazetteers. For example, where did the boltmen get their wands? Is there a "magic factory" in Alphatia somewhere?

*The Known World was made "magic-happy" to make it stand apart from its many competitors; this is its hallmark. Of course, Alphatia does not have the privilege (or curse) of having developed arcane wand factories. However, 2,000 years of wizards' experiments (and they had a lot of those fellows running around) will produce many wands and other goodies.*

*The boltmen are a special caste in the Alphatian armed forces. They don't come in unlimited supplies. Being a boltman is a family trade, the wand often becoming a youth's prized inheritance when his veteran parent retires. For that reason, battlefield scavengers are frowned upon in Alphatia.*

**Final note:** When asking questions about specific rules or background information, please include the name of the product and the page number of the material in question. This would be of great help. Some of your questions deal with rather obscure topics that can take quite a while to locate (when I *do* locate them)! This little effort on your part will increase your chances of seeing a response in this column.

## Rapier Update Table

	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
[P = H]	Basic	-	2d4-1	-	-
	Skilled	-	1d8+1	H: +2 AC/2	Deflect (1* *) Disarm (Save)
	Expert	-	1d8+2	H: +2 AC/3	Deflect (2**) Disarm (Save +2)
	Master	-/10/20	1d8+1*	H: +3 AC/3	Deflect (3**) Disarm (Save +4)
	Grand Master	-/10/20	P:1d12	H: +4 AC/4	Deflect (3**) Disarm (Save +6)
		10/20/30	S:1d10*		
			P:1d12 + 1		
			S:1d10 + 1*		

[P = H] Primary target fights back with either a hand-held or a hand-thrown weapon

\* Rapier can be hand-thrown.

P: Primary target

S: Secondary target (when the rapier is hand-thrown)

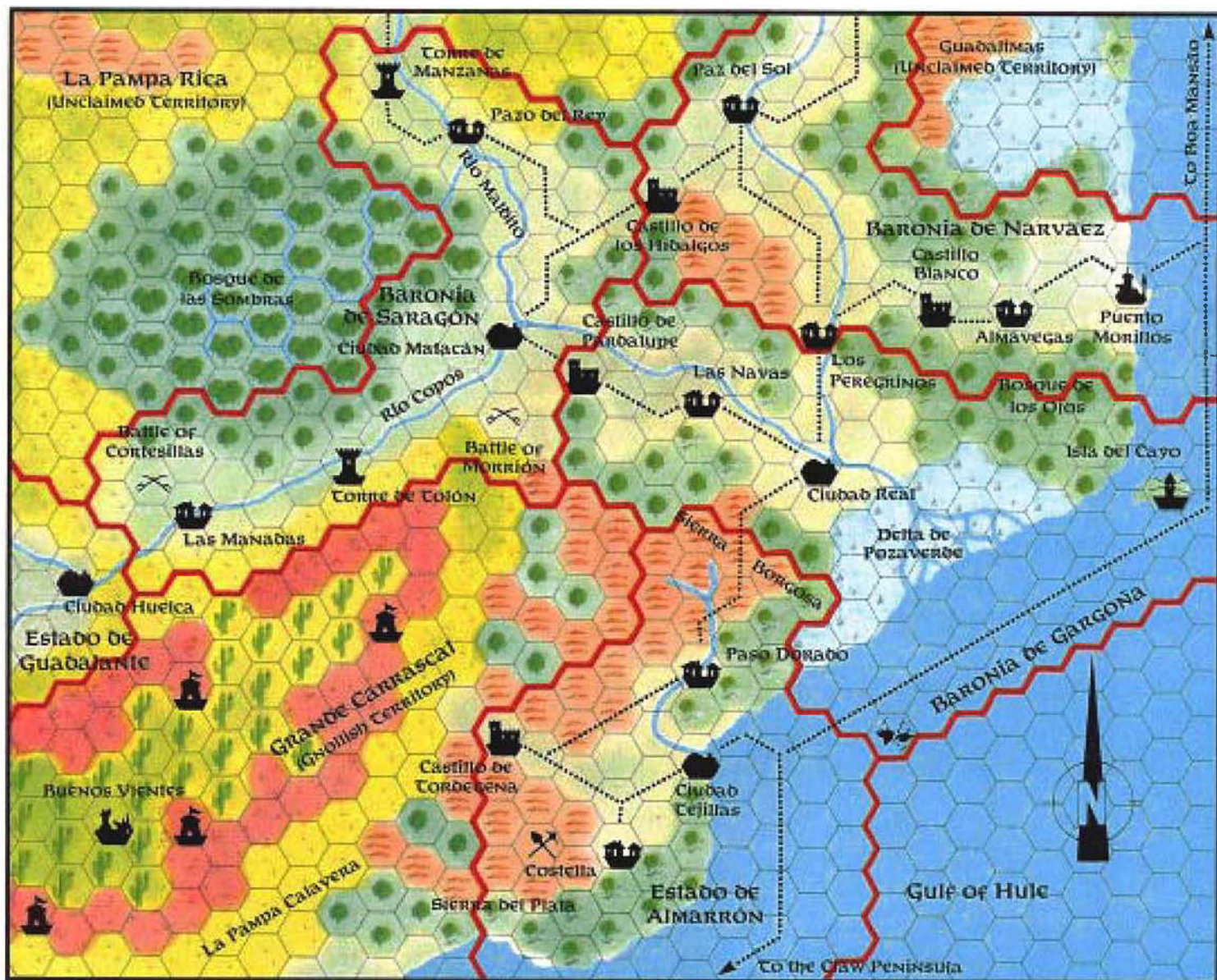
H: Armor-class bonus to the rapier's user, against attacks from opponents using hand-held or hand-thrown weapons

AC/# Number of attacks affected by the armor-class bonus each round

\*\* Number of successful attacks the rapier's user can attempt to deflect each game round (save vs. Death Ray for success)

**Note:** Don't forget to apply the Hit Roll bonuses from the table on page 17 of the *Masters Players Book*. Deflect and Disarm abilities are both explained on page 22 of the same book.

The rapier costs 10 gp and has an encumbrance of 60 cn. It is a single-handed medium weapon. The shield conflicts with the "art of fencing" required for the rapier, negating all Defense and Special effects. The rapier is a melee weapon rarely or never thrown. It suffers a -2 to-hit penalty against plate armor.



- |  |                         |  |                    |
|--|-------------------------|--|--------------------|
|  | City                    |  | Farmland           |
|  | Town                    |  | Light Forest       |
|  | Village                 |  | Heavy Forest       |
|  | Tower                   |  | Forested Hills     |
|  | Castle                  |  | Rocky Hills        |
|  | Light House             |  | Marshes            |
|  | Shipwreck               |  | Grasslands         |
|  | Camp                    |  | Light Cactus Scrub |
|  | Ruins                   |  | Heavy Cactus Scrub |
|  | Battle                  |  | Badlands           |
|  | Trail or Shipping Lanes |  | River or Coastline |
|  | Border                  |  | Mine               |





# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 23: Shootout at South Gulch

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

**From the Journals of  
prince haldemar of haaken  
Lord admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
princess ark  
Imperial Explorer, etc, etc.**

**Eimir 24, AY 2000:** Two days after leaving Ciudad Matacán, I changed heading and veered toward a curious place called Smokestone City. According to ga-

zetteers I had gotten in Saragón, Smokestone City was the capital of a country—or “county,” as the locals called it—that seemed very different from the baronies we had seen in the past weeks. One of the gazetteers also alluded to a source of cinnabryl somewhere south of the capital. I was hoping to acquire a small quantity for study and magical experiments.

Raman returned from a quick visit to the place. He described the capital as a place somewhat more rugged than the Guardianio baronies but otherwise industrious and peaceful to foreigners. So confident was he that he even made reservations for four rooms at a hostel on the main street. The price seemed right, and it included hot bath for each room. Why not?

With relief, Raman received my thanks and authorization to return to his books. I left Talasar in command of the *Princess* as the landing party and I quietly went down to Smokestone City.

We found the place Raman had described, the Red Steel Saloon. However, this place was totally unlike anything I had seen before. A dozen tables occupied the main hall opposite a long bar, hosting people playing cards, drinking, and smoking. A charming lady was standing in a corner before a curious spinning wheel, enjoining people to try their luck and bet their money on a random number; judging from the vast possibilities offered, this seemed like a losing proposition. Nonetheless, half a dozen men were tossing small ivory chips on the numbered carpet, wishing for instant wealth. Some things never change.

I faced an utterly shocking vision as I turned away from the glitzy, spirining wheel. Five ladies were dancing and singing in a scandalous manner before dozens of hooting ruffians. To the rhythm of a tortured harpsichord, the wenches suddenly lifted their dresses to reveal their legs, petticoats, and other frou-frou. Lady Abovombe fumed; “I’d better have a talk with Raman!” she muttered. Utterly embarrassed, our party quickly retreated to the front desk.

The party broke up into four rooms: Ramissur and Leo, Xerdon and Nyanga, Myojo and myself, and finally Lady Abovombe. As we prepared to climb the stairs to our rooms, a thunderstorm rocked the night. Talasar would have to leave the area and head for calmer skies. I had total confidence in the man and knew I needed not worry further about the *Princess’s* safety.

Escaping from the heavy rain, a dozen cattle drovers stepped into the main hall. They looked like trouble. By the time we reached the mezzanine overlooking the main hall, a brawl had started. One of the





ALCOHOL

visitors had impulsively bet and lost his salary at the spinning wheel, which quickly ended up around the saloon owner's head. We paused, taken in by the spectacle and thinking ourselves safe above the fight.

While the fight raged on, the wenches and the insane harpsichord minstrel continued their outrageous show as if nothing was happening. The barman dove behind the counter as a bottle crashed into a large mirror behind him. Things were getting bad until one man entered.

Cool and quiet, with eyes of steel, he stared down one of the rowdier fellows. The leader of the cattle drovers walked up and stood rather arrogantly before him; he pulled back the side of his jacket to reveal a tiny crossbow. "Well, what have we here? Another yellow-bellied lawman." Silence overtook the place as everyone carefully stepped out of the way. The steely-eyed man calmly answered, "You have ten minutes to leave Smokestone City, Baraboo Jack."

Suddenly the ruffian pulled out his crossbow, but the other man was even faster. Seemingly quicker than his own shadow, he had drawn his weapon and shot the ruffian dead, hitting him between the eyes. Several troublemakers drew their crossbows out and started shooting. Amazingly, the lawman rolled behind a large potted plant, while shooting another five times with incredible accuracy! By the time he stood up again, five more men were on the floor, wounded or dead. This was no ordinary fellow. Theirs was no ordinary weapon. This was no ordinary place at all.

**Eimir 24, Talasar—from a later account:** The watch spotted large black clouds rising on the horizon a few hours after the admiral left with the landing party. I ordered a routine maneuver to climb above the storm. Unfortunately, we would have to remain out of touch with the admiral for some time, but the risk was too great to remain.

**Eimir 25, Haldemar:** After some investigating at the LB Trading Co., I managed to deduce the whereabouts of Cimarron County's cinnabryl. It was a place called South Gulch. I got only blank stares from the LB Trading Co.'s clerks when I asked about acquiring some of that red metal. Someone must have called their lawman—Sheriff "Wild Tex" Mokum, as I recall. "Pardner," said he with a slow drawl, "some questions are best not asked. The next coach out of town leaves at high noon." The point of this visit wasn't to stir up trouble, so I agreed to follow his advice: "Much obliged, pardner," he said.

Unfortunately, there was no coach departing for South Gulch. The heavy rain had turned the Wrangler's Trail in the south into a muddy mire. The coach official from Zachariah & Peabody Co. pointed out that the rainy season just had started in that region. Judging from the rumblings in the sky, more rain was obvi-

ously on the way. The coach would have to take the longer route off the trails, west of Cougar's Bluff, through Little Big Rock, Bushwack Prairie, Buffalo Run, and then to South Gulch. That was a four- or five-day ride. Unexcited at this prospect, the seven of us climbed into the coach and off we went on a long, uncomfortable ride. Rain began to fall again even as the driver whipped the six-horse team.

**Eimir 25, Talasar—from a later account:** An alarm was sounded in the morning. Five skyships had been spotted in a break in the seemingly endless clouds beneath the *Princess*. Judging from the reports, these ships were not of Alphatian designs, but more likely fast Heldannic Warbirds. It would seem the Hulean Master and his lackeys had not given up on us yet—and these people knew how to defeat the *Princess's* invisibility.

I needed to learn more about their forces before engaging them. Damn this weather! The admiral and Xerdon were sorely needed. Routine maneuvering of the *Princess* was one thing, but engaging in combat was another. I had no way of knowing how the ship would respond to my orders in the admiral's absence. Perhaps this ordeal was put on my path by Razud to test my faith. So be it. I had the skyship dive into the cover of the thick, billowing clouds. Navigator Ashari was at her post as usual, listening for approaching vessels. This dangerous game of hide and seek could prove deadly for all with a mid-air collision; lightning and fire were yet another concern. I could sense the *Princess's* reluctance to enter the storm clouds. All was quiet aboard as the hunt began in the eerie twilight of the clouds.

**Eimir 28, Haldemar:** We had been riding in the wilderness since yesterday when the coach turned off Bugle Trail. We were following a bumpy path toward the south when I heard the driver exhorting his horses frantically, whipping them on.

"Them desperados are a-ridin' for us agin!" he shouted. "Better get yore shooters out quick an' start a-firin'!" Brigands were riding down the hills, trying to get ahead of us. Judging from their size, our attackers were goblins on ponies.

Nyanga winked at me and said, "Yo, goblins!" Ramissur responded with a sinister grin, whispering, "No sweat." In a single move, all seven of us pulled out blades, wands, and other implements of war, ready to jump out of the coach.

Already, one of the goblins had jumped on the lead horse, and the coach came to a halt in a cloud of dust. The rest of the badlanders formed two groups, one on each side of the coach. One of them pointed a large crossbow at the driver, a weapon so large that the goblin could barely handle it. "Put 'em up! Hey, you in there! Y'all get out with yer hands up!"

Armed to the teeth, our party leaped out of the coach on both sides, howling in our savage attack. I must say, it did surprise the badlanders. Half of their ponies either

fell to lightning bolts or galloped away, dumping their riders in the process. Those goblins who fought us died. The surviving badlanders were rounded up with their hands high above their heads and rather contrite and fearful expressions on their faces.

"We better get a-goin' now!" said the driver. "Them badlanders normally ride by the hundreds." We could already hear the distant rumbling of hooves on the prairie, so we grabbed our prisoners' weapons and climbed back into the coach. As the driver whipped the horses, over 80 badlanders came charging around a hill. A wild chase began, the coach skidding and bouncing down the dirt path. Xerdon and Myjo hung out on the coach's footboards, having a grand time shooting the tiny crossbows we had taken from the badlanders—but not with much effect, I would say. Occasionally, when a couple of badlanders got too close to the coach, I would let go with a *fireball*, prompting a round of "Ooh!" and "Aah!" from Lady Abovombe and Leo.

There were far too many of these goblins to handle. Nyanga soon climbed out and sat next to the driver, who was wounded. Ramissur got on top of the coach, firing his newly acquired dart-shooter.

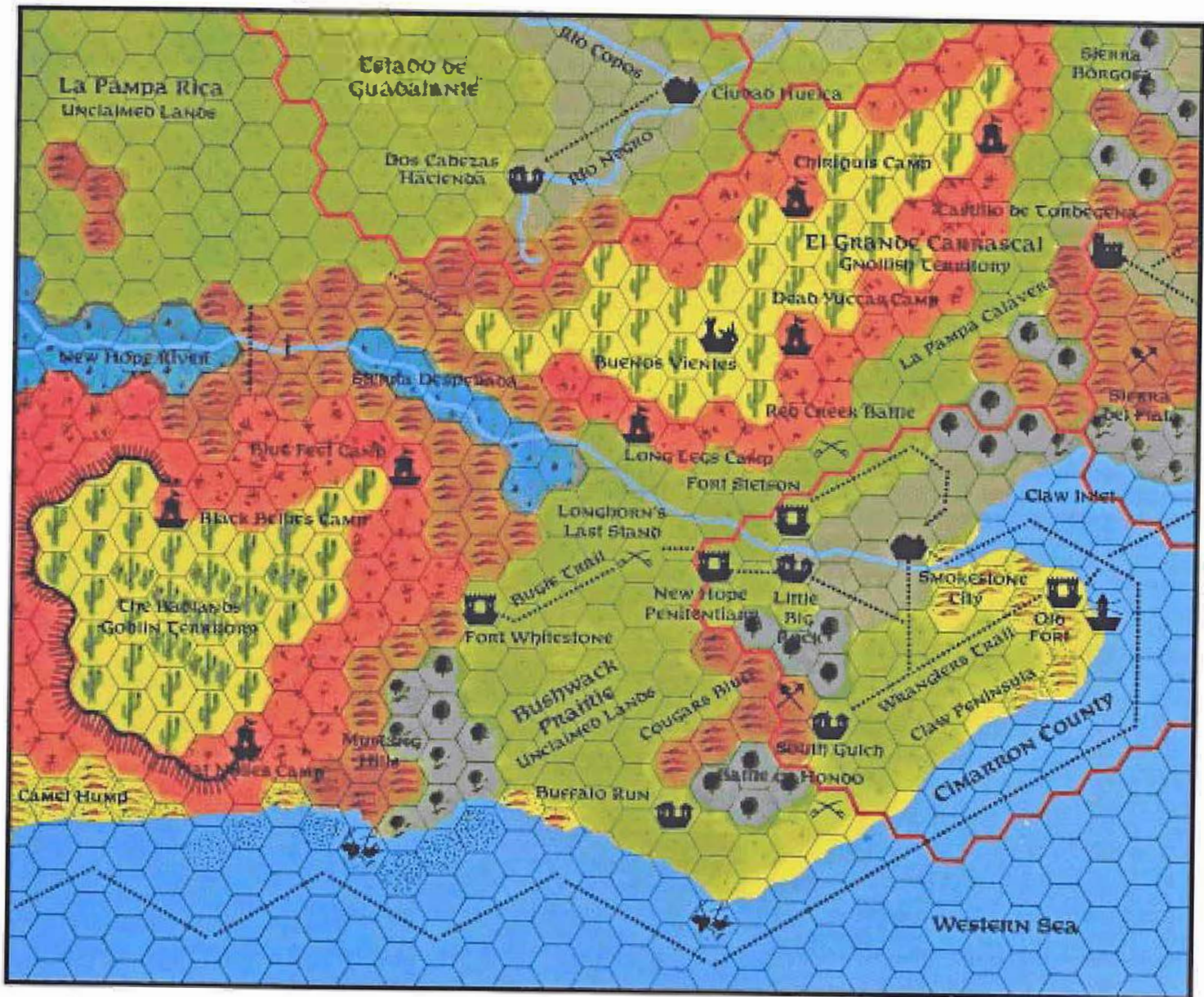
Another wave of badlanders appeared ahead of us, clearly blocking the way. We thought our last battle had come, but the sound of a bugle tore through the clamor of the chase. It was the cavalry! A column of regular horsemen appeared behind the goblins and bravely charged ahead, lances and sabres forward. Soon the decimated badlanders rode back into the hills.

"Well done, captain!" said Lady Abovombe. The handsome officer in charge saluted briefly and responded, "Seventh Cavalry at your service, ma'am!"

**Burymir 1, Talasar—from a later account:** The thick clouds made it impossible to chart our position. For all I knew, we were hundreds of miles away from the admiral. I dared not climb above the clouds to sight on the stars, exposing the *Princess* to our pursuers.

We had been playing hide and seek with the five Heldannic Warbirds over four days and nights. These ships seemed to have guessed my moves, at least quickly enough to catch up with the *Princess* before she could effectively break away. I suspected they were using some magical device. Our encounters had been at closer ranges each time; I could sense their grip getting tighter every day.

I decided to somehow get aboard one of the Warbirds. Perhaps I could discover what their secret was and destroy it. I knew I might not survive the attempt, but the *Princess* would then stand a better chance to break loose. I would have to put Chief Engineer Raman in command, however. The man had never had the charge of a ship, and certainly not in an uneven combat situation. I had to meditate. Per-

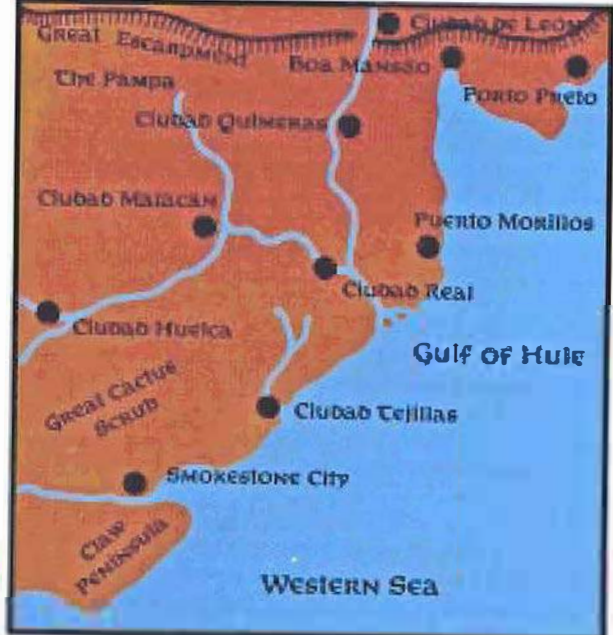


Scale: one hex equals 8 miles

- |  |                         |  |                    |  |            |
|--|-------------------------|--|--------------------|--|------------|
|  | City                    |  | Reefs              |  | Sand Dunes |
|  | Town                    |  | Farmland           |  |            |
|  | Village                 |  | Light Forest       |  |            |
|  | Fort                    |  | Forested Hills     |  |            |
|  | Castle                  |  | Rocky Hills        |  |            |
|  | Light House             |  | Swamp              |  |            |
|  | Shipwreck               |  | Grasslands         |  |            |
|  | Camp                    |  | Light Cactus Scrub |  |            |
|  | Ruins                   |  | Heavy Cactus Scrub |  |            |
|  | Battle                  |  | Badlands           |  |            |
|  | Trails on Shipping Lane |  | River or Coastline |  |            |
|  | Border                  |  | Mine               |  |            |



Regional Map





haps Razud would brighten my path through this darkness.

**Burymir 3, Haldemar:** At last, South Gulch. This mean little village had all the callousness of those greedy places built during a gold rush, except no gold was to be found here—just the deadly red ore, cinnabryl.

From what I could gather, South Gulch was a native turtle's village, overrun by red-ore miners a decade earlier. Turtles are strange turtle-like people, rather Guardian in style as an ethnic group. Peaceful and quiet, the turtles offered little resistance to the rowdy miners. Fortunately, most of the miners moved on years ago to the mine itself, eight miles northwest. Food shortages are a constant problem here, as bands of miners regularly come down from the hills and pillage whatever supplies might be in the village.

When the word got around that we weren't miners, an old turtle came up to seek our help against the miners. He must have been a sage or a shaman, for he knew what had brought us here. (Of course, perhaps only those seeking the red ore would ever come here.) He said we would never get what we sought, as the mine was too well defended for this. The miners were notorious for not trading their ore to anyone but an LB Trading Co. representative. This was the law in this county. Red-ore trade was heavily regu-

lated, and the marshals were prompt to send out bounty hunters after those who had acquired red ore illegally.

The old turtle candidly offered us his blessing, his house, and his food if we decided to help him. How could I refuse? I sensed there was more to this old chelonian than his knobby shell, though I had never dealt with his kind before. I could always find red ore some other time. I accepted his kind offer, which provoked a raised eyebrow from Xerdon.

**Burymir 3, Talasar—from a later account:** The dampness of the heavy darkness chilled me to my bones. Ashari quietly stood at the prow of the lifeboat while the Princess disappeared into the night behind us.

Upon deciding to put my plan into action, I ordered the small skiff painted black and covered with a black canvas. When Ashari heard a ship approaching astern of the *Princess*, she courageously volunteered to come with me. I would indeed need her help to maneuver in the dark around our pursuer and board it.

Indeed, the massive hull of a Warbird passed just above our lifeboat. As Ashari silently fastened our skiff to the ship's claws, I climbed aboard. The deck was busy. The knights had removed their clunky armor and put out all lanterns to avoid attracting the Princess's attention. This darkness would be their undoing,

though, for it allowed me to get below-decks without being seen.

All hands were on the main deck for what seemed an imminent assault. There was no time to waste. I reached the stern of the ship unhindered, where I found a small chapel with an altar. From the icons, I could tell the chapel was devoted to Vanya, a warlike being.

Fastened to the deck was a large censer. Among the silver wisps of smoke I could see five golden sparks surrounding a red flicker. Each spark seemed linked to the other with a thin golden thread of light. It must have been their scrying device. Perhaps if I broke the link, all the enemy ships would lose their guidance. Pouring the contents of my flask on the burning incense seemed to do quite well in that respect.

I would have left then had it not been for a slight glow under the drapes covering the altar. There, I discovered a crystal urn; inside it was a hovering gem that pulsed and hummed as if a power radiated from it. I could feel my skin crawl and a slight tingle run through my hair, an ominous sensation that great magic was at hand. It was a great magic that only high clerics understood, and it tapped directly into the power of the Immortals. With a quick prayer to Razud, I slipped a glove on and moved toward the gem.

"Stop, you fool!" The warning came from



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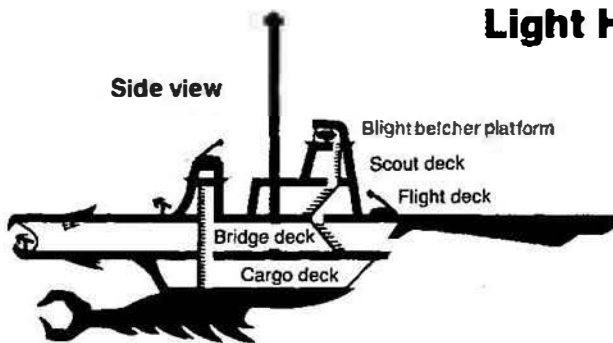
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# Light Heldannic Warbird

One square = 5'

Artwork by Andrew Allen

Side view

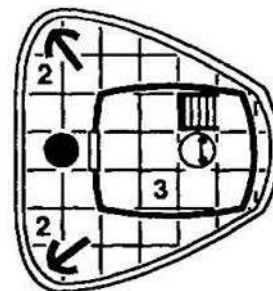


Blight belcher platform

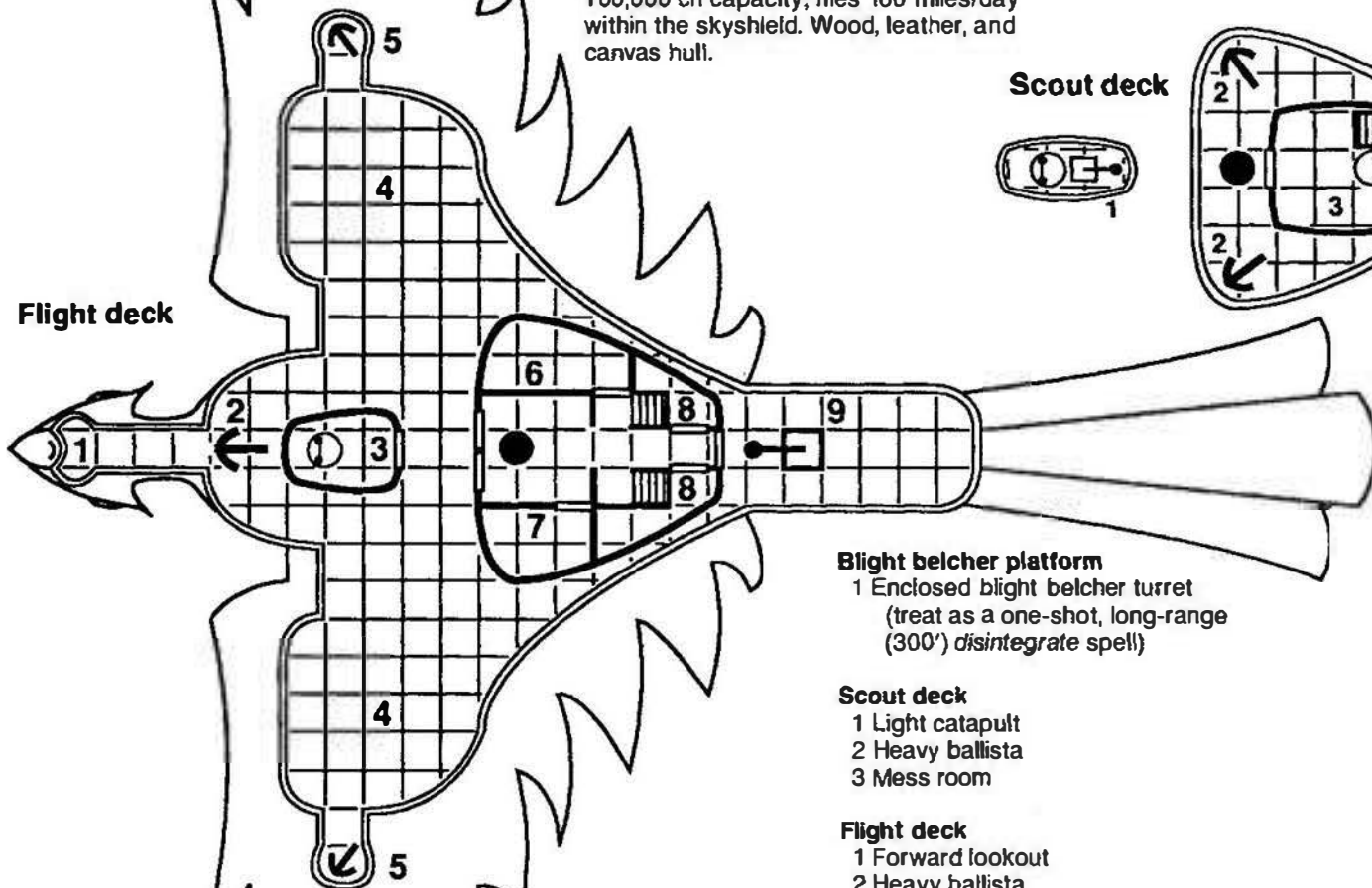


**Statistics:** 90 hull points, AC 8, 9 sailors, 23 templars (including 6 knight overseers, a 1st officer, and a captain), 100,000 cn capacity; flies 160 miles/day within the skyshield. Wood, leather, and canvas hull.

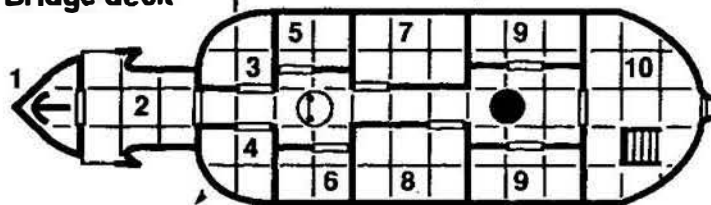
Scout deck



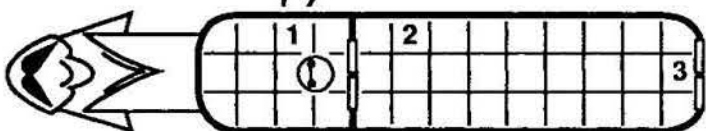
Flight deck



Bridge deck



Cargo deck



**Blight belcher platform**

- 1 Enclosed blight belcher turret (treat as a one-shot, long-range (300') *disintegrate* spell)

**Scout deck**

- 1 Light catapult
- 2 Heavy ballista
- 3 Mess room

**Flight deck**

- 1 Forward lookout
- 2 Heavy ballista
- 3 Armory
- 4 Main deck
- 5 Light ballista
- 6 Sailors quarters
- 7 Repair bay
- 8 Storage and latrines
- 9 Heavy catapult

**Bridge deck**

- 1 Light ballista
- 2 Bridge & helm
- 3 Brig
- 4 Chart room
- 5 1st officer's quarters
- 6 Captain's quarters
- 7 Sick bay
- 8 Galleys
- 9 Overseers quarters
- 10 Chapel & altar

**Cargo deck**

- 1 Lower crew quarters
- 2 Cargo hold
- 3 Cargo bay doors

another door; a knight had walked in, sword unsheathed. "You will destroy us all, and you with it!"

There was only one way to ensure this ship would not repair its scrying device. I grabbed the stone as the knight lunged at me. Suddenly, we were weightless; the Warbird rolled on its side and began a frightening dive. The knight and I fell tumbling across the room, each shouting in fear. In seconds, the vessel broke apart. The room itself split open, and I was hurled into the black, endless sky.

**Burymir 4, Haldemar:** It wasn't long before a new mob of miners came down from the hills. There were 50 of them, screaming and galloping through the village on horseback. One of them managed to catch a slow-moving turtle with his lasso, dragging the poor thing behind his horse. That was enough!

One by one, the miners fell prey to Xerdon's well-choreographed defense, in which we all had parts. Nyanga skillfully unhorsed a number of miners, casually striking them aside with the flat of his giant sword. Meanwhile, several young turtles knocked Nyanga's victims out and tied them up in neat piles. Leo had devised several traps to immobilize the miners. His best consisted of a series of four spears mounted on a ballista; when shot, the spears spread apart, deploying a large net. Lady Abovombe's bolas worked beautifully against the miners' horses.

Myojo then led a fine charge against a massive group of miners; behind him came a mob of turtles armed with pots, pans, pitchforks, and other bric-a-brac. As for Ramissur, he became an ace at shooting the tiny crossbows. I thought he overdid it when he walked across the main street, spinning the crossbows on his fingers each time he hit a target. How he learned to do that is beyond me.

Eventually, the whole fight came down to the miners' leader and myself. "Come out of yer rat hole and face me if yer a real man, wizard!" he roared. He stood in the middle of the street, waiting for me. I couldn't disappoint him. He had his dart-shooter, and I had my *wand of lightning bolts*. Fair enough.

It was high noon. I could barely see his eyes under the brim of his hat. No one moved. A tumbleweed blew across the street. A puff of dust twisted up in the air. His mouth twitched. Suddenly, the man reached for his weapon.

I was faster.

His charred remains were buried on Boot Hill by sundown. The turtles paid their respects to his grave, then quietly returned to their chores. The surviving miners left. They knew the turtles would fight them from then on, and they had no stomach for the battle.

**Burymir 4, Talasar—from a later account:** I fell through the blasting wind and thought that Razud had finally severed the thread of my life. But such was not my fate.

The gem I had captured from the Heldarnic Warbird was what had kept it flying across the sky. The crystal urn enabled the gem's power to shoot forth in all directions. I had surmised that a number of receptacles to receive this magic had been spread out in the ship, solidly anchored in its hull. Once removed from the urn, the gem kept its magic to itself—and the ship fell.

Of course, this did keep me hanging in the air, desperately holding onto the gem as the Warbird's remains vanished into the cloudy depths below. Under my weight, the gem slowly dug into my leather glove. I was in agony and called out for Ashari. At last, she showed up, amazed at seeing me hanging there in the sunlit morning clouds. Exhausted from the pain in my hand and arm, I finally let go and fell into the lifeboat. Free, the gem shot up into the sky like a rising star. There was no telling where it went. Perhaps it returned to the celestial vault, to twinkle forever among the stars and the Immortals.

**Burymir 5, Raman—from a later account:** I was afraid to think the worst. Commander Talasar had not returned from his mission against the Heldarnic Knights. I was the last officer left on board. I could maneuver the *Princess Ark*, but my attempts at communicating with her spirit yielded only sluggish responses. Nonetheless, I was fortunate enough to have pulled a few useful tomes from my library. I located a few pages in the *Imperial Airman's Manual* that provided me with tactical hints that came in handy later on.

At this point, either Commander Talasar had succeeded in his mission or he was dead. Judging from Ashari's absence, I believed the latter to be true. If the Warbirds could still find us here—and they would, sooner or later—we would probably be better off fighting in the open,

where the boltmen could see their targets. I managed to get the *Princess* to climb above the clouds. According to the manual, I would at least have the advantage of altitude.

There were no Warbirds there. Suddenly, the spirit of Berylith spotted something. Her spectral head turned down to starboard, allowing me to see what she was looking at. Far below, barely visible in the swirling clouds, was the tip of a mast emerging ever so slightly from the clouds. That could only be one of them.

I must have thought very "loudly" then, for Berylith reacted swiftly. She roared at the target, causing a hail of blue bolts and fiery death to pour over the Warbird's deck. We could hear the horrified screams of her crew. Their ship quickly performed an evasive maneuver and ducked deeper into the clouds. We had become the hunters, and they the hunted. Long live the Empire!

Soon after our attack came another surprise. Somehow, the Warbirds did not seem as coordinated as they had previously. Had Talasar indeed succeeded? Had the Warbirds been deprived of their cunning? The answer to this came from the thick clouds, as the diving Warbird collided with another vessel with an explosive bang. Both went down in flames. The *Princess* followed their flight down and emerged beneath the clouds, into a pouring rain. There, we watched the two Warbirds tumble down and crash into the dark, stormy sea below. In the distance, two other Warbirds dove out of the clouds and retreated, full speed astern. I knew we had won.

Hours later, we recovered Commander Talasar and First Class Navigator Ashari, drifting in the wind and frantically scooping water out of their lifeboat. At long last, it was time to retrieve the admiral.

#### Cimarron Six-Shooter Table

P = H	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
	Basic	50/100/150	1d4	-	-
	Skilled	60/100/150	1d6	M: + 1AC/1	Stun (s)
	Expert	<b>70/110/150</b>	2d4	M: + 1AC/2	Stun (s)
	Master	<b>80/110/150</b>	P:2d6	M: + 2AC/3	Stun (s)
			S:1d6 + 2	M: + 2AC/3	Stun (s)
	Grand Master	90/120/150	P:3d6	M: + 3AC/4	Stun (s)
			S:2d6 + 2	M: + 3AC/4	Stun (s)

P=H — Primary target uses either a hand-held or a hand-thrown weapon.

P: — Primary target.

S: — Secondary target (with missile weapons or natural weaponry).

M: — Armor-class bonus to the six-shooter's user against attacks from opponents using missile weapons or natural weaponry.

AC/# — Number of attacks affected by the armor-class bonus each round.

**Note:** Don't forget to apply the Hit Roll bonuses from the table on page 76 of the D&D® game *Rules Cyclopedia*. Stunning is explained on page 81 of the same book; (s) indicates that only beings smaller than the attacker are affected. Two six-shooters can be fired at the same time, one in each hand, provided they are both armed at the end of the previous round. Apply a - 2 penalty to hit on both shots.

**Burymir 8, Haldemar:** It would have been another week before the coach returned to South Gulch. The turtles kindly led us back to Smokestone City by taking a shortcut through the forest. Before we finally parted, the old chelonian came to me again. He thanked me for our help—and our martial training to his people—and handed me a small gift, a token of his friendship.

Later that day, Talasar greeted us back on the *Princess*. Raman was standing by with a broad smile on his face and a small ribbon on his chest: a red stripe with a golden bolt, the ribbon normally awarded after a commanding officer's first combat mission. Raman? Commanding officer? Combat? I then noticed a small bandage around Talasar's right hand. I would have to ask him about that, but first I wanted to check that gift.

It was a skillfully painted turtle egg. Judging from the weight, it felt almost empty. The bottom easily came off, with a simple twist of the hand. Inside, wrapped in velvet, was a small rock. A small red rock. Cinnabryl.

**To be continued . . .**

**The Claw Peninsula**

**Cimarron—Capital:** Smokestone City (Pop.: 14,500—humans, halflings, and dwarves); **Ruler:** Sir John of the Wain, Earl of Cimarron; **typical NPC:** cool, unwaver-

ing, six-shooter-toting duelist.

The first traders to set up on the Claw Peninsula were the Lawful Brotherhood (see D&D module X9 *The Savage Coast*, and DUNGEON® Adventures issues #6 and #7, *Turtles of the Purple Sage*, parts 1 and 2). They were soon followed by shiploads of adventurers from many different areas of the Known World. The first Lawful Brotherhood outpost was located at the present site of the Old Fort, at the tip of the peninsula. It is still used as a military port and local garrison. As a clerical body, the Lawful Brotherhood is now defunct. It did survive as the LB Trading Co., however, now a powerful commercial enterprise behind many endeavors in Cimarron County. Based in Smokestone City, its traditional concerns include exploration, mining, hand-crossbow manufacturing, ale production, and general trading of merchandise in the Gulf of Hule.

During the time of the Lawful Brotherhood, many of the early colonists were Guardianos. Facing the undesirable arrival of the many *gringos* from the eastern states, the old Barony of Almarron sent troops to formally claim the land. Several decades later, however, the increasingly alien population rebelled. Many insurgents lost their lives during a disastrous battle at the Old Fort, after refusing to yield before the baron's vastly superior forces. Rallying his last troops with the famous call "Re-

member the Old Fort!", the self-appointed General Cimarron finally defeated the baronial troops at the Battle of Hondo. His supporters promptly "dubbed" him Earl of Cimarron, and his lands became today's free-styled county.

Earl John rules the county today. This larger-than-life character hardly fits his role as a head of state. He is extremely active, prompt to lead a posse against gnomish desperados to the north or goblin badlanders to the west. Ever since his father's death at Longhorn's Last Stand, he's shown a particular hatred of goblins. To avert further incursions, he had Bushwack Prairie garrisoned at a strategic point. Fort Whitestone is a desolate cavalry outpost at the end of Bugle Trail, constantly on the lookout for goblin drifters and humanoid horse thieves.

**Cimarron six-shooter**

The six-shooter is a weapon unique to the Cimarron folk. This little wonder was originally created by Smithy, a clever watchmaker from Rockhome, and Westron, a crossbow expert from the Five Shires. They came up with the idea of a very light crossbow that could shoot darts. The true innovation lay, however, in the use of a spring mechanism that reamed the weapon after each shot. A S&W hand crossbow could hold up to six small darts. Recocking the crossbow required only a

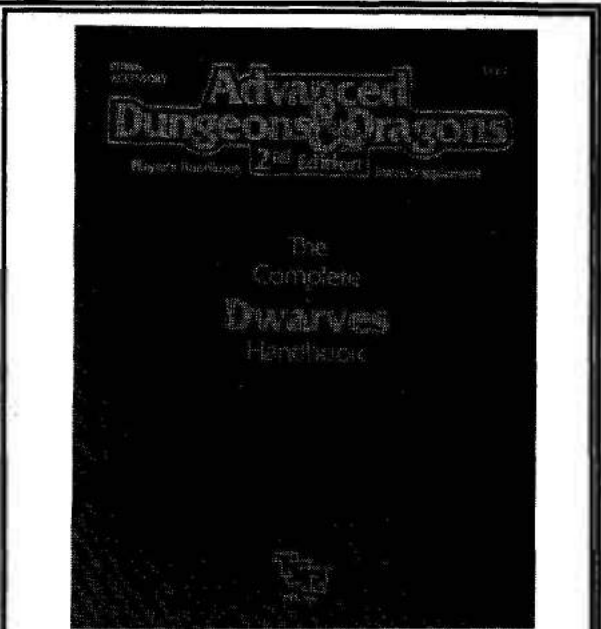


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quick motion of the hand, which could be done in the same round the weapon was fired. It takes a full turn to load another six darts into the weapon's handle.

Unfortunately, the six-shooter has always been a fragile weapon that easily jams. A to-hit roll of 1 or lower, after modifiers are applied, causes the dart to jam inside the weapon, requiring one round to clear and rearm the device.

Nowadays, a Cimarron six-shooter costs 80 gp (including a leather holster, the hand-crossbow itself, and 18 darts). The hand crossbow has an encumbrance of 25 cn. An extra supply of 18 darts costs 5 gp. Some notorious sharpshooters use depleted cinnabryl darts, which add a flat 10' to all ranges and cause an extra hit point of damage. These special darts cost 20 gp each.

At Skilled level or better, the user may acquire special skills related to the six-shooter's use. General skills in the D&D game are explained in the new *Rules Cyclopedia*, pages 81-86. These special skills are as follows:

**Cool (Cha):** This allows the user to stare down an opponent in a duel and gain a psychological advantage. On a successful Charisma check by the user, the opponent suffers a -2 penalty to his next to-hit roll (and to his next Dexterity check if using the Fast Draw skill below). This skill requires two rounds of concentration to take

effect. Cool can also be used to negate someone else's attempt to use Cool or to spin one or two six-shooters on one's fingers without dropping them.

**Fan Shooting (Dex):** The user attempts to shoot as many darts as possible within one round. The extent of success on the user's Dexterity check indicates the number of darts that can be fired a given combat round. A successful Dexterity check allows at least two shots during the same round; if the Dexterity score was beaten by 3-5 points, at least three shots in a round; 6-8, up to four shots; 9-11; five shots; and 12 or more, all six shots. Each successive shot suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to hit (-1 for the first shot, -2 for the second, etc.).

The first shot occurs when the user should normally be allowed to fire a missile weapon during the combat round. Each successive shot then alternates with other missile-weapon users in the user's group. If there are none of the latter, all remaining shots take place at the end of the user's Missile Weapon phase. Fast Draw and Fan Shooting skills can be used simultaneously.

**Fast Draw (Dex):** Upon making a successful Dexterity check, a user can shoot before anyone else during a combat round, regardless of the original Initiative result. If two opponents fight a duel and both use the Fast Draw skill, the one who

beats his Dexterity score by the highest amount gains the initiative.

**Hip Shooting (Dex):** The user has the ability to shoot from the hip. This skill allows the user to shoot faster, adding a +2 bonus to Dexterity Checks made for Fast Draw or Fan Shooting attempts. Unfortunately, it is less accurate and causes a -2 penalty to hit in both cases.

**Repair Hand Crossbow (Int):** On a successful Intelligence check, the user can repair a jammed weapon. Each attempt takes a full hour. He may try as many times as needed to repair the weapon. An unmodified score of 20 causes the weapon to break permanently.

**Sharpshooting (Dex):** On any to-hit roll of 20 or better after modifications, the user may make an extra Dexterity check. If successful, the user designates a particular spot on a target to be hit by the dart. This can be used to automatically disarm an opponent, stun a man-sized opponent, or inflict maximum damage. Sharpshooting cannot be used with the Hip Shooting or Fan-Shooting skills. Ω

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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 24: The lords of the forest

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

**From the Journals of  
prince haldemar of haaken  
Lord admiral of the mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
princess ark  
Imperial Explorer, etc. etc.**

**Burymir 14, AY 2000:** We had been flying over a previously unknown kingdom the day before, west of a small Vilverdan colony. In the evening, we observed a large city near a forest, probably the capital of this region. Great beauty graced this city's all-wooden architecture, so I decided to have a closer look. Talasar, Myojo, Nyanga, and I landed just before dawn this morning, a few miles north in the forest. The rumblings of a storm echoed in the dark. The *Princess* remained up in the sky, watching for Heldannic Warbirds among the clouds; since Raman's battle last week, there had been no further sign of them. I put Xerdon in charge, with Raman at his side for in-depth combat training.

No sooner had we had set foot in this misty forest than the sound of a battle

arose. The clang of metal and the mighty roar of a monster echoed through the woods. We hurried to investigate. In a small clearing stood a red dragon, poised to release its fiery breath at a gallant knight clothed in green. The raging storm of fire fell upon the man as he plunged his blade into the beast's crimson-scaled hide. The knight fell to his knees—alive, but just barely. Horrified by the spectacle, we reached for our weapons, hoping to aid the knight. Suddenly, I felt the cold edge of a blade under my throat. "Move not, strangers," spoke a cool voice, "for this is not your battle." I glanced over and saw the warning came from another knight.

Six other knights appeared around us. They all wore the same green garb and armor as the noble warrior in the clearing. We were evidently not to be killed, so our attention went back to the fight. The dragon pawed at the sword stuck in its chest, trying to rip it out. It prepared to breathe again. Raising both hands toward the sky, the knight chanted a vigorous psalm. Lightning suddenly flashed and struck the sword's pommel, driving the searing electricity straight into the wyrm's heart. The dragon coiled and uncoiled in agony. Finally, roaring its pain at the thunder, the beast fell heavily to the ground.

This knight was not an elf, nor had he uttered a paladin's spell. What magic was this that allowed a knight to strike this dragon so deadly a blow from the skies?

At that moment, a curious character walked up to the knight. Bare-chested, wearing only striped breeches and a red cloak, the newcomer threw a golden braid back over his shoulder and began to play a lyre while reciting a poem, an ode of a sort:

"King Edwix had but one dread,  
"That fell the sky on his head.  
"But fall it'll not by 'morrow,  
"So fear naught, O Night Harrow."

Rain suddenly began to fall.

"Will you shut up, you blasted idiot?" roared the wounded knight, whom we took to be the king. "By Cernuinn, what is





it with you? Have you signed a pact with Taranos to drown us all in his rain?" Vexed, the bard stuck up his nose and walked away.

Clearing his throat, the knight before me put his sword away and added, "King Edwix does get rather punchy in the morning!" Indeed.

The king finally stood up and returned, wounded and burned, to his knights. He was either a powerful man or very lucky. "Who are you, strangers?" he asked.

"Prince Haldemar of Alphatia, and my escort," I replied.

"Eh? Never heard of it," grumbled the king. "I am tired. Follow me to my camp."

I could not help admiring the workmanship of the king's armor. Tiny leaves and branches were delicately carved into the plates. Then I realized this was no metal armor; it looked more like wood, perhaps petrified or somehow turned into metal. In fact, all these knights wore the same style of armor, and their weapons, too, were made of that odd iron. Dark green cloaks concealed the men well, except for the cloaks' delicate golden trim or the occasional glint of armor. Their helms all bore large deer antlers, and in the eerie morning mist they looked like surreal creatures of the forest. Without waiting, the knights and their king all rode away.

The bard alone remained. "They always do that," he said, "but don't let that intimidate you, my lord. They enjoy playing hard to get. Comes with the antlers. I guess we'll have to walk, then." With an inspired sigh, he added, "Might I compose a sonnet for our journey back to the royal camp?"

"Er, thank you, but no. We've already had our morning ballad, truly."

"Oh," he sniffed, disappointed.

On our way to the camp, our new friend and guide, the bard Voxpopulix, told us more about our bizarre encounter. The king was on a quest. Druidic tradition demanded that he return to the hallowed forest to meet his end should he fail his duty. He had until next summer's druids' gathering to complete his quest. He had to do so alone, without help from anyone, to prove his valor. This was very serious business for the druids. In this case, he was to slay a mother dragon, Greudnax. The one he had destroyed this morning was her daughter. The king was still seeking Greudnax's secret lair.

It soon became clear we were well inside the druids' hallowed forest. This caused great discomfort to both Talasar and Nyanga. My first officer detested treading uninvited upon others' sacred grounds; Nyanga had a great respect for things of nature, especially forest spirits.

A billowing fog rose from the ground. It was so thick it could only be someone's uncanny magic. Suddenly, a net fell from above. We were captured with ease; within minutes, we and our bard friend stood before the druids.

The druids were angered. Bound and

gagged, we were brought to the sanctum sanctorum, the heart of the Great Druidess' hallowed grove. As we quickly learned, no one but a druid was allowed to enter the sacred woods. Until late that day, a crowd of druids debated on whether to sacrifice us to the Immortal Breig or the Immortal Cernuinn—by the sickle or by the cauldron. At last, the Great Druidess questioned Voxpopulix. Our situation greatly improved when they learned that the king had invited us to his camp after defeating Greudnax's daughter. Since we had a legitimate reason for being in this forest, they chose to set us free—up to a point, that is.

Talasar and Nyanga—why did it have to be them?—were kept as hostages. Myojo, Voxpopulix, and I were free to leave. We had until the next moon to accomplish our business; only then would the hostages be released. I had no quarrel with the Great Druidess of this kingdom, nor did I desire one. Since druids show only limited respect for foreign nobility, negotiation was of little help, and violence was out of the question. At Voxpopulix's insistence, we left without further argument. He feared for our safety, for the druids could be cruel when offended. Clearly, our presence was offensive.

**Burymir 15:** At last, we made it to the camp—but it was empty. Someone had ransacked it. Voxpopulix pulled a black arrow from one of the tents. "Cassivellonis—a northern orc tribe," he said. "What are they doing here?" It was hard to tell whether the king had been caught.

Their tracks in the wet soil were easy to follow. We had been trailing the orcs for hours when, inexplicably, the tracks ended. There, a small path seemed to wind through the thicket. I suspected an ambush when I heard leaves rustle. I could have sworn someone whispered my name, but it could not have been one of my companions. Myojo readied his great bow, expecting the worst, when a majestic stag stepped out of the bushes. It calmly gazed at us, then sprang back into the brush.

This couldn't be the orcs' doing. We followed. The stag appeared a few more times, always at a fair distance ahead. Oddly, every time I glanced back, I could no longer see the path we had followed. Obviously, we were being led somewhere. Fog rose again, muffling sounds and masking our sight.

Suddenly, in a swirl of the mist, a shape walked by, ignoring us completely. Grotesque and hunched, the figure snorted and cursed in a guttural voice. Myojo was ready, knee to the ground and arrow cocked. Voxpopulix was nowhere to be seen. Naturally, my wand found its way into my hand.

The fog dissipated somewhat, revealing about 30 orcs and a chieftain crouching behind bushes in a narrow gully, watching the tracks they had left earlier. Their scouts had probably spotted us earlier, and their chieftain had set up an ambush. The

mysterious path, however, had lead us to the orcs' left flank, at one end of the gully. We were perfectly set to attack.

Pandemonium and panic ensued as my lightning bolt struck their packed ranks. Many of the orcs died instantly. The survivors quickly scattered, running for cover. A deadly game of hide-and-seek followed, with enraged orcs sporadically charging out from hiding places. They quickly fell to Myojo's arrows or to his swirling silver blade.

I smelled the foul breath of an orc behind me, but it fell dead into my arms when I turned around. With a wink, Voxpopulix wiped his elegant ivory blade on the orc's garb. He had been hiding behind me, in the shade of the undergrowth. A curious character, indeed!

Soon enough, the few remaining orcs retreated and vanished into the forest. They left a prisoner behind them—one of the king's knights. His companions had all died while delaying the orcs, he said. The orcs had learned about the king's quest and had come to capture him. The king barely had enough time to escape and continue his quest—truly alone this time.

There was no time to waste. I had to find the king. Surely, there must have been more orcs around. It would serve no good purpose if the king died now. Voxpopulix and the knight argued against intervening; Almighty Breig would watch over him, they said. In a pig's eye! No Immortal is worth three feet of cold steel and good magic to boot when it comes to orcs. This was war!

**Burymir 15—Talasar, from a later**

**account:** "And what sort of a cleric are you, stranger?" the young druid asked. The apprentice had been observing me for some time, clearly impressed with my hammer. "Do you honor Tuatis?"

I gathered that Tuatis was the local name for Thor, a powerful Immortal in the north, patron of wars. The young druid, Cucurbita (Pepo to his friends), proudly showed me his own wooden war mallet, a rather large one that he had used to crush several orcish heads in the past.

As we spoke, another druid came running down a path. He brought news of a nearby fire in the woods, obviously the work of Greudnax the dragon. The hour was grave; everyone marched toward the blaze. Neither Nyanga or I wanted to stay behind, and so we joined in the effort. The druids displayed great skill and magic in fighting the fire. Fortunately, my hammer could extinguish flames, too. I had used it to this effect a number of times on wooden ships. Its magic is potent.

This impressed the druids tremendously. Later in the night when the fire was contained, the Great Druidess declared, "Priest of Razud, the iron in your hammer we dislike, but its power to smother fire is a good portent. Your help was precious to us. You and your friend warrior are free to come and go as you please until the return of your companions."



Pepo stood by me, his hand on my shoulder. "He's my friend!" he said proudly. I guess we won't end up being nailed to an oak after all.

**Burymir 16—Haldemar:** The knight, Ariovix, woke me up when he jumped from a branch in a tree. "There was fire in the south last night," he said. "It was Greudnax's work, but the druids smothered it. I heard the dragon fly by just after sunset. Her lair could be close. Breig must have guided us here."

Indeed, we found a cavern by sunrise. The ground had collapsed recently, opening an entrance to a deep cave. The dragon must have moved there no more than a few months ago.

Voxpopulix and Ariovix refused to go any farther. If the dragon was there, so was the king, and this dragon was the object of the king's quest before Almighty Breig. I could not convince them otherwise. Myojo and I moved on.

We reached a ledge overlooking a deep cavern. The king was at the bottom. When he saw us, he yanked down the grappling hook he had used to climb down, denying us a way to reach him. Brandishing his sword, he shouted, "Return whence you came, wizard! She's mine!"

As I pondered on a way to help, we heard a beastly breathing from the sky. The dragon was flying back from a night of devastation. I hoped she had expended her fire.

Greudnax landed nearby, then crawled and slithered past without noticing us. The king ducked behind a rock. Within moments, Greudnax coiled up in a corner of the cave and fell asleep.

The king left his hiding place and began to move toward the dragon, his sword out. Movement caught my eye then. Above the king, on a ledge, an orc was watching. I saw the humanoid open his mouth to warn Greudnax—but his breath was cut short when one of Myojo's arrows struck him in the head. He slumped silently.

Greudnax snorted, then sniffed. She opened an eye, just enough to see what was happening. From where he stood, the king could not have noticed the dragon's awakening. With a spell of *ventriloquism*, I whispered a word of warning to the king. He responded with an angry look in my direction.

Suddenly, the dragon's head whipped toward the king. The king was ready for her. With his heavy broadsword, he hacked off a piece of the dragon's lip, infuriating the wyrm. Her cavernous roar was a deafening, blood-curdling sound.

Scores of orcs appeared on the ledge, alerted by the dragon. They encountered Myojo and me instead. We barely succeeded in stopping their assault, using spells and arrows. The orcs came in waves, indifferent to their casualties. Meanwhile, the king was engaged in a heroic fight against Greudnax. Several times Greudnax nearly caught and swallowed him whole, but always he managed to avoid her lethal

bite. He was a true warrior.

In desperation, Greudnax reared back and breathed a vast cone of red flame upon the king. The monster had fire left inside her! The dragon's thunderous laughter shook the cavern as the king cried out in agony, wreathed in flames. The dragon turned toward us and thundered, "You are next, wizard!" I lifted my wand at Greudnax, meaning to *disintegrate* her ugly head.

"No! Leave her to me!" cried the king. Limping and bearing horrible burns, he dragged his sword behind him as he staggered into battle. "'Twas I who slew thy daughter, evil beast! And I shall slay thee, as well!"

The dragon glanced at the wounded king and brushed him away with her tail. Greudnax turned calmly back toward me. "Go ahead, wizard. Use your wand, if you dare! Slay me, and you'll sentence your king to death as well."

What could I do? Either I slaughtered this wyrm and the king would have to die before the Great Druidess, or I didn't—and the dragon would certainly kill the king then. Either way, the king was a dead man. I supposed that I could talk some sense into these superstitious druids later on. So be it.

"Well, old wizard, I want your answer," taunted the dragon. "Hesitating, are we?"

I drew myself up. "It seems my choices are limited indeed, dear Greudnax, but you know—I really don't care!" I raised my wand and aimed right at Greudnax's head.

At my answer, the dragon opened her eyes wide in astonishment. Ah, but this was one lucky beast. With horror, I saw my magic strike the monster—then fizzle and gurgle as it liquefied on the dragon's scales, dripping to the ground as nauseating, putrid ectoplasm. My wand should have *disintegrated* the beast—but she had resisted it. She laughed again and cried, "Now you are mine!"

She took a deep breath, ready to fry Myojo and me, when suddenly the king stood up before her and stabbed his sword into the dragon's neck. Valiantly, the king twisted the blade in the wound and, ripping a gash through her scales, jammed it up to the hilt into the dragon's throat. Deep in shock, Greudnax had to release the fiery storm she had built up inside her chest. She turned and breathed heavily at the king, but no infernal blaze shot forth. Instead, a few flames hissed and sizzled through her throat wound. Then, unexpectedly, Greudnax's entire chest blew up, sending flesh, ribs, scales, and bits of incandescent ichor flying through the cavern at us all.

So died the red dragon Greudnax at the hands of King Edwix I, the Night Harrow.

**Burymir 17—Talaras, from a later account:** I witnessed a strange activity among the druids. Immediately after a messenger arrived, the druids sacrificed a lamb. They spilled its blood into a large cauldron, which the Great Druidess then

used as a *crystal ball*. There, in the troubled fluid, she saw the mangled carcass of a red dragon. Beside it stood an orc chief. He dipped his sword into the beast's ichor, raised it, and with ugly cries exhorted his followers to revenge. I assumed that the king's quest had been successful.

For the next several hours, the druids worked around the cauldron, bringing various ingredients from the forest. When the brew was ready, the Great Druidess blessed it, and all present partook of the beverage. Nyanga and I were invited to join. It gave us strength, so much that I could wield my hammer with unusual ease. The druids planned to battle the orcs, and there would be no survivors among the defeated. We set out at once.

By nightfall, we had reached the savage horde. The battle was brief but deadly. Against us were many hundreds of orcs, ogres, and trolls. The orcs, infuriated by the death of their living idol, showed no fear of the druids and displayed great cunning in their tactics. Despite their knowledge of the forest and their powers over the forces of nature, many druids died. Pepo did well with his wooden mallet, and I saw him bash to death an ogre who hadn't seen him coming.

At the height of the battle, something odd happened. The sound of a hunting horn echoed through the forest. Fog rose from the ground, allowing our force to retreat up a small hill. Suddenly, bears, eagles, stags, boars, wild cats, black wolves, and even clouds of buzzing insects charged the orcs. Leading them was a ghostly knight with antlers.

Buckling before the wild charge, the orcish horde finally escaped down a small trail. I learned later that spirits of the forest had changed the path and led the orcs to a deadly cliff. No one could see far in the mist, and the entire horde met its doom over the ravine's jagged rocks.

**Burymir 18—Haldemar:** Ariovix and Voxpopulix somberly carried their wounded king. He hadn't uttered a single word since his battle against Greudnax. The other two said little more. By luck, we saw no sign of the orcs. We reached the druids' camp this inglorious afternoon.

The Great Druidess was waiting, standing among her entourage. Ariovix helped the king to his feet. "Great Druidess," he said, "the time has come to return to thee my father's sword and shield, for I have sinned in my quest. The beast has died, but fate allowed the hand of strangers to disgrace my endeavor. And for this, I long to embrace the spirit of Breig."

Whispers rose among the druids. "The honor is yours, Edwix, son of Othual. You have done well. The land flourished under your rule, and so will it bloom again. Your wish will be granted, O King of Robrenn."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. How could they part with such a great man? All this clerical mumbo-jumbo irritated me to no end. A horrible feeling of guilt and doubt clutched my heart. Des-

perate, I stepped forward and cried, "Great Druidess! I must respectfully object!"

Angry muttering rippled through the gathering, but I plunged on. "I ask you, who else but Almighty Breig could have led us to defeat your foes? Was it not She who cleared the way to King Edwix? Was it not She who guided my hand at the heart of the battle? This was Her will. I see no disgrace here!"

The Great Druidess silenced the crowd. "Your intentions are noble, O Wizard, but this is not our way. There are other matters than the death of a beast. In time, all that lives shall die, and all that died shall be reborn. Indeed, it was Breig who guided your hand—but She desires he who embodies Her land to stand by Her side. You shall take the sword, the shield, and the story of Edwix to his palace at Eyf, and present them to the son of the Night Harrow, for it is time for him to be king."

**Burymir 20:** It was with no pleasure that I greeted the rising sun this day. Ariovix led us to the great hall at Eyf, where we met the king's son. Our host knew what to expect when he saw his father's sword and shield.

My actions caused this young man's sorrow, and I was powerless to ease his pain. He took the sword and shield and placed them before the throne. He then gazed into my eyes, looking for a sign, but it was he who bore the sign, for I could see in his eyes the dark, intense look of his father. Truly, the father was reborn.

The young monarch finally left to mourn. I was lost in sad thoughts when I felt a hand on my shoulder. Ariovix stood by me. "Grieve not, my lord. You listened to your heart. You who scorn the Immortals should understand that they weave your fate and wove that of others before you." He handed me a braid of black hair, bound in a golden cap. "He wanted you to have this, and remember. Leave in peace, O Prince."

"At the song of a mage  
"She roared all her rage,  
"But the daughter of Nyf  
"By a king met her blight.

"As her blood soaked the earth  
"A new lord saw his birth,  
"For the King of Robrenn  
"In Breig's arms shall remain."

*To be continued...*

## The Confederated Kingdom of Robrenn

**Robrenn—Capital:** Eyf (Pop: 25,200—humans, demihumans, some woodland beings); **Ruler:** King Edwix II, son of "The Night Harrow"; royal lands include all of the Hallowed Carnuilh Forest.

Robrenn is a confederation of sovereign dominions. The people of the present kingdom are descended from ancient barbarian tribes that moved to this region

after fleeing the marching armies of Hule, far to the north. The fair climate and generous forests were a boon to this druidic society. The braided warriors thrived, though over the centuries their barbaric culture ebbed before a new age. The tribal chiefs formed a nobility that allowed a feudal system to progressively replace the tribal structure. With the druids' guidance, the nobles then formed a confederacy under the rulership of a new king, Robrenn I, chosen by the druids.

Since then, Robrenn's descendants inherited his title. Should his lineage become extinct, the druids would then choose one of the current nobles as the new ruler. In all other respects, this is a feudal society, with the druids replacing the more traditional clerics. Nobility and knights must swear allegiance to the ruler and follow the ways of the druids.

Men and women are of equal importance in this society. It is the belief of the Robrenn that their chief patron Immortal, Breig, is the mother of nature. As a result, the highest functions among the druids are often limited to women. However, in order to maintain universal balance, right of birth usually (but not exclusively) favors males. For example, the first-born male has priority over a female in the succession for a nobility title or the ownership of a family heirloom. In general, all that is mystical or linked to nature and creation is the realm of women; all that is material or linked to warfare and destruction is the realm of men.

The Confederacy maintains a small standing army, the Guard, to enforce its laws and guard its borders. A vast reserve of trained and armed citizens also exists. The druids provide a set of weapons and armor to each family's first child, when he or she comes of age at puberty. If a female, the child bears the right to refuse the weapons only if young male exists in the family.

This "chosen one" must leave the family and remain with the Confederacy's Guard to learn the art of war. Three years later, the young adult earns the title of "armed citizen" and may return home. Once a year, an armed citizen must provide a month of military service to the Confederacy, to support its defense and to be ready for war. In times of war, all armed citizens must join the Guard until the threat is gone. When an armed citizen dies, the deceased warrior's weapons and armor go to the family's next in line (if old enough), who is placed under the guidance of the druids. If no heir exist, the druids keep the equipment until another chosen one comes of age.

The druids systematically enforce this system, sometimes quite ruthlessly. Any perceived lack of enthusiasm or poor physical fitness can lead a citizen to be banished or sacrificed to the Immortal Taranos. The Robrenn are a fierce and brave people. It was their personality more than any need for warriors that led

to the creation of these laws; thus, few actually resent them. Becoming a chosen one is a sign of honor. In this society, knights can rise only among the ranks of armed citizens.

Druids are eminently powerful among the nobility; they make the laws and decide on the penalties. Nobles are responsible for enforcing these laws. The Great Druidess also may name which noble is to succeed a king when his dynasty is extinct. Only a legitimate wife, son, or daughter may succeed a king. If none are alive, the druids intervene.

The druids also permit, disallow, or even demand that armed conflicts be started or specific battles occur. Druids affect the Confederacy's ability to attack another realm, or the ability of two dominions to fight each other. The latter is permissible in the case of a dispute between two nobles of the Confederacy that the druids cannot resolve. Considering the deeply rooted respect this society has for druids, disobeying them is almost unheard of and could lead to a civil war.

A thick forest covers a vast area of the Confederacy; this is the druids' Hallowed Forest of Carnuilh. It is a sanctified area that no one but the druids may enter. At its center is a holy grove where the druids meet once a year, on midsummer's eve. There, they discuss mystic topics, consult auguries, and resolve problems.

Every 12 years of continuous rulership, the king of Robrenn must go on a quest. If he succeeds, he remains king for another 12 years. If he fails, he must seek the Great Druidess's grove in the Hallowed Forest of Carnuilh. Legends say that he returns to the earth that he embodies, thereby allowing the land to flourish again. He is magically "absorbed" by the forest, thus ending his life in this world. No succession may take place until the king dies or returns to meet his fate. If he flees in shame and dies elsewhere without fulfilling his duty at the grove, years of hardship may threaten the kingdom.

The Robrenn honor a wide variety of Immortals. Their belief is that all life came from Breig, also known as the Mother of Nature, the Great Oak, and the Spirit of Eyf. She heads the Robrenn pantheon. Although a druid may choose one Immortal over another as his or her primary patron, they all meet at Carnuilh. Regardless of their individual philosophies, all druids follow the same basic principles that maintain their coherence as a mystical order. They all revere the Great Druidess Maud, daughter of Trestana. Maud is a follower of Breig. There may be other Great Druids elsewhere in the world, but, as far as the Robrenn are concerned, Maud's the only one. There have been few male Great Druids in Robrenn's past; women have commonly held this position.

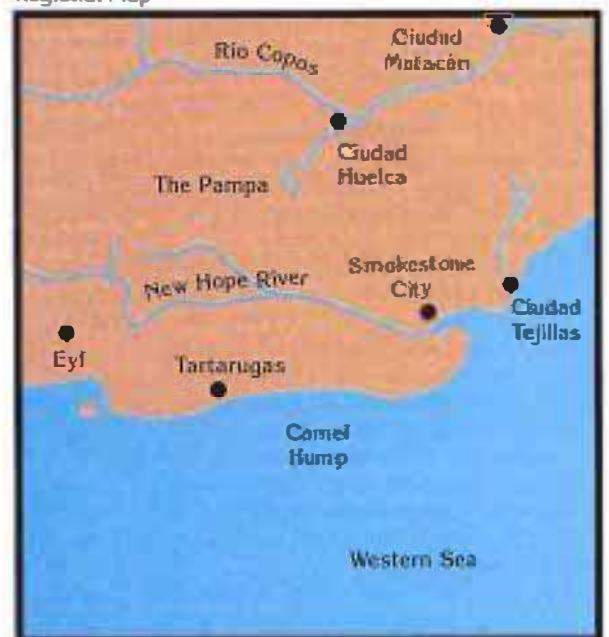
Much of Robrenn lore is spoken. Little has been written down (although the people are literate), because the druids believe that the memorizing of legends



Scale: one hex equals 8 miles

- |  |             |  |                |  |                         |
|--|-------------|--|----------------|--|-------------------------|
|  | Capital     |  | Farmland       |  | Road                    |
|  | Town        |  | Glasslands     |  | Trail or Shipping Lanes |
|  | Village     |  | Light Forest   |  | National Border         |
|  | Castle      |  | Heavy Forest   |  | Dominion Limit          |
|  | Fort        |  | Forested Hills |  | Rivers                  |
|  | Ruins       |  | Rocky Hills    |  |                         |
|  | Light House |  | Cactus Scrub   |  |                         |
|  | Battle Site |  | Badlands       |  |                         |
|  | Camp        |  | Swamp          |  |                         |
|  | Mines       |  | Sand Dunes     |  |                         |
|  | Ship Wreck  |  | Reefs          |  |                         |

Regional Map



and prayers sharpens the mind and prevents their holy knowledge from being vulgarized by ink and vellum, and thus possibly misused. Bardic tradition enables history to be told, establishing the bard as a key element of the Robrenn culture.

Much of this culture is affected by the druids' dislike of all that "never lived." This distaste includes man-made objects of metal or stone; the druids prefer wood, leather, cloth, etc. This practice has prevented the Robrenn from building much with stone. Their forts and towns are usually made of wood, with very little stone except for fireplaces or roads. This has been the source of many disasters, especially in times of war.

The plateaus to the north of the Robrenn teem with orcs and ogres. Armed horsemen constantly patrol the northern edge of the Confederacy, watching for invasions in the making. A number of murderous wars with the humanoids have nearly ruined the Confederacy, and great attention is paid to this threat.

As the centuries passed, the Robrenn developed trade with other nations, especially with Texeiran and Vilaverdan merchants. Robrenn exports wine, mead, sausage, corn, wheat, medicinal herbs and potions, spices, and amber. Red steel is of no interest to them. They would rather obtain payment in serfs, to be used as a labor force for the nobles; Guardian tradesmen will indeed trade common criminals for goods. Silver is otherwise acceptable, which Robrenn need for their coinage.

## The Robrenn pantheon

**Breig:** (alias Ordana)—She is the Mother of Forests, Patron of Robrenn, and head of the pantheon. Her philosophy allows only female druids, though men and particularly elves follow her precepts.

**Arduinna:** (alias Diulanna)—Her sphere of interest includes willpower, archery, and hunting. Her philosophy is restricted to female druids.

**Belnos:** (alias Asterius)—The patron of healers, trade, and journeys abroad, Belnos is popular among halflings.

**Belsamas:** (alias Kagyar)—He governs the art of forging, metalworking, and construction. He is a common patron of the dwarves.

**Cernuinn:** (alias Faunus)—An important figure among the Robrenn pantheon, Cernuinn is often represented as a tall man with either the head or antlers of a deer. He governs the sphere of forests, songs, poetry, and bards, and is also the patron of woodland beings. Some say that all male Robrenn are related to him.

**Leug:** (alias Zirchev)—A fairly recent figure among the Robrenn pantheon, Leug's interests include demihumans, wisdom, and the arts.

**Nyt:** (alias Hell)—Although no druids follow her precepts, Nyt is acknowledged as part of the beginning and the end of all. Naturally, Nyt's interests are death and

reincarnation.

**Taranos:** (alias Odin/Wotan)—Master of the skies, storms, and mighty lightning, this Immortal is not as influential among the Robrenn as he would be in the Known World's Northern Reaches.

**Tuatis:** (alias Thor)—An old-time favorite of the Robrenn, Tuatis remains the warriors' patron, the unchallenged lord of wars and bravery.

## The Confederated Dominions

**Duchy of Avernos—Symbol:** Boar; Capital: Arax (Pop.: 8,500—humans and dwarves); Ruler: Duke Blergix the Tall, son of Medonix; Typical NPC: blacksmith; Patrons: Belsamas or Tuatis.

**County of Morguen—Symbol:** Deer; Capital: Cernumna (Pop.: 13,700—humans, halflings, and elves); Ruler: Countess Onnena the Sylvan, daughter of Subellos; Typical NPC: druid sage; Patrons: Breig or Cernuinn.

**County of Suerba—Symbol:** Rooster; Capital: Ogmna (Pop.: 4,800—humans and elves); Ruler: Count Brevoel the Swift, son of Maloel; Typical NPC: champion archer; Patrons: Arduinna or Leug.

**Barony of Avarica—Symbol:** Raven; Capital: Dubrax (Pop.: 9,800—mostly humans); Ruler: Baron Eusgetorix the Stormy, son of Aduatucas; Typical NPC: adventurous bard; Patrons: Cernuinn or Leug.

**Barony of Nemausa—Symbol:** Auroch; Capital: Moriganna (Pop.: 11,200—mostly humans); Ruler: Baron Calturix the Bloodthirsty, son of Demiatix; Typical NPC: fearless horseman; Patrons: Breig or Tuatis.

**Barony of Sedhuen—Symbol:** Ram; Capital: Venatis (Pop.: 14,900—mostly humans); Ruler: Baron Teuthoel the Merciful, son of Trestana; Typical NPC: peaceful farmer; Patrons: Breig or Belnos.

**Barony of Uthuinn—Symbol:** Ship; Capital: Senerobriwa (Pop.: 3,700—humans and halflings); Ruler: Baroness Brivaela the Sagacious, daughter of Clothual; Typical NPC: quiet fisherman; Patrons: Belnos or Taranos.

## Robrenn druids

Robrenn druids start as druids at level 1 (use the Cleric Experience Table in the D&D rules). Druidic spells are available immediately from level 2 on. All usual druidic limitations apply. Druids must have the Nature Lore and Ceremony skills. Their next available skill choices must be used to acquire the following skills: Healing, Snare, Survival, and Tracking. At level 3 and higher, Robrenn druids must meet at the Hallowed Forest of Carnuilh during the midsummer's eve celebration.

At 10th level, a druid becomes immune to poison and gains the use of the charm plant spell (see the 7th-level wizard spell). At 20th level, a druid can use his cauldron as a crystal balls. When reaching the Circle of Nine at 30th level, a druid can create a magical torc used by that druid alone. It allows the druid to *shapechange* into any

nonmagical woodland animal. The druid can do this at will, back and forth, any reasonable amount of equipment appearing with the druid when regaining his or her normal shape.

Unless there is a vacant spot among the Circle of Nine (at 30th level or above), the druids eligible to fill that position must compete with each other to advance in levels. The druids do so by inventing new druidic spells or potions, or furthering the druidic cause during quests, by returning a long-lost relic to the grove, etc. All the druids from the Circle of Nine and above (except the petitioners) vote for the best achievement during a special gathering at the Hallowed Forest of Carnuilh.

Upon reaching 3,500,000 XP (or death), the Great Druid of Robrenn becomes one with the hallowed forest, effectively ending life in this world. Depending on the campaign, the dying Great Druid either attains Immortality (if eligible) or becomes a forest spirit (at the DM's discretion). A forest spirit has a cumulative 10% chance per day of spotting visitors in its assigned forest. Some of the physical manifestations of these spirits include unicorns and spell-casting dryads (for female druids) or spell-casting treants and actaeons (for male druids). Forest spirits can cast any spell from the druidic spell list once per hour; they can also cause paths to change, leaves to whisper messages, fog to rise, or animals to act in certain ways (such as helping a lost party find its way or attacking unwanted visitors with up to 12 HD of animals per hour, etc.). Forest spirits can only be destroyed if their entire forests are razed to the ground.

## New druidic spells

### Ironwood (5th-level druidic spell)

Range: Touch  
Duration: Permanent  
Effect: Wooden objects

This spell bestows the strength and flexibility of metal to wood, without altering its appearance. It can affect objects up to 1,000 cu ft of encumbrance. It is traditionally used to create one set of armor or one weapon for a druidic knight, often with the help of a warp wood spell. This spell cannot affect magically enchanted items made of wood.

### Seasons (6th-level druidic spell)

Range: Touch  
Duration: 1 turn  
Effect: Undead within a 60' radius indoors, or undead within a 180' radius outdoors

The spell is used to destroy or neutralize undead monsters. The season of the year determines its effect, which is not under the druid's control.

**Spring—This** causes 1d8 points of damage per round of exposure to all undead in the area of effect (no save). Humanoid

undead reaching 0 hp are “revived”—that is, *raised* from the dead at their lowest-possible experience levels or Hit Dice, and with no relevant memories of their past. Revived creatures become servants of the druid, as if magically charmed.

**Summer—This** creates an area of blinding magical sunlight, burning undead creatures exposed to the area of effect at the rate of 1d8 points of damage per round of exposure (no save). A vampire caught in this light will flee immediately (no save) and not return until fully rested.

**Autumn—Each** undead caught in the area of effect must make a saving throw each round of exposure. A failed saving throw causes an undead to wither, dropping various parts of its body (if material) or fading away (if immaterial). Each failed saving throw reduces any undead’s hit points by one-quarter (rounded down).

**Winter—Each** undead caught in the area of effect must make a saving throw each round of exposure. A failed saving throw causes an undead to go dormant until the next full moon.

## Druidic knights

Only neutral traveling fighters may become druidic knights. They must have adopted the philosophy of the druids prior to reaching knighthood and must swear fealty to a prince, king, or emperor faithful to the ways of the druids. A druidic knight may not wield metallic weapons nor wear metallic armor and shields. The knight must use wooden armor and weapons magically shaped and hardened by the druids. These items are usually lacquered or varnished, and include curvilinear decorations, delicate leaf carvings, and fine scrollwork tooled into the wood. The knight must repay the druids for these precious items, usually in terms of several years of routine service when not called upon by a liege.

In addition to all obligations and advantages common to knights, a druidic knight also has the following abilities:

—A knight can detect *danger* (as per the druidic spell) once per hour, simply by concentrating (range of 5’ per spell-casting level). The knight cannot use that ability and attack on the same round.

—If the knight’s Wisdom score is 13 or more, the character can cast spells (from the druidic spell list only) as if he were a druid of one-third his actual experience level (rounded down). If a fighter becomes a druidic knight right at 9th level, he’ll immediately gain the druidic spells of a 3rd-level druid. With a lesser Wisdom score, the fighter can still be a druidic knight but will have no spell-casting ability.

—The druidic knight learns how to meditate and cast spells as druids would. He can do so at someone’s behest, but at a price—set at the DM’s discretion—that must involve a service to nature or to woodland beings.

—Druidic knights cannot turn undead.

—Druidic hirelings may include demi-

humans (especially halflings or elves) and woodland beings. A druidic knight cannot have more Hit-Dice worth of hirelings than his druidic spell-casting level. In other words, if a druidic knight can cast spells as a 3rd-level druid, he may not have more than 3 HD worth of hirelings accompany him.

—The druidic knight must assist any woodland being asking for help with two exceptions: He does not have to help creatures opposed to the druidic philosophy and goals; and if the knight is on a mission for a higher authority (such as on a quest, serving a duke, etc.), he may offer only a small amount of help. Assistance never involves the donation of money or items, only the offering of personal services for a short time.

—A druid of the Ninth Circle or higher may summon a knight to escort him to gatherings at the Hallowed Forest of Carnuilh. The knight must remain with the druid until the end of the celebration. This call supersedes that of a liege.

## The bard

Bards are an essential part of the Robrenn culture. They are played using the thief character class as a starting point. The bard must choose music, singing, and storytelling skills, but he does not have the backstabbing and pickpocket abilities (druids frown upon theft).

At 3rd level, the bard gains the *charm* person ability once per day, as per the magic-user spell. He affects a number of Hit Dice or levels equal to one-third his own level (rounded down). The attempt requires the bard to recite poems, sing, or play an instrument for three rounds. He must make a skill check on the weakest of his three mandatory skills. If he fails the skill check, his victims get a +3 to their saving throws. The bard fails completely if interrupted or wounded. Likewise, the bard may use this ability to negate another bard’s *charm* attempt.

At 9th level, the bard may extend his *charm* ability to intelligent monsters (except undead, as per the fourth-level wizard spell, *charm monster*). At 15th level, his ability extends to plants as well (as the seventh-level wizard spell, *charm plants*). A successful saving throw vs. spells always negates the *charm*.

The bard may use his *charm* ability to affect Morale (either a +2 bonus to his companions, or a -2 to his opponents), or their eagerness to fight (+1 to hit for his companions, or -1 to hit for his opponents). These effects are automatic after three rounds (no save).

The bard can make a living from his trade. He can earn up to 5 cp per person every time he sings, plays his music, or tells stories in public (boost the reward to gold pieces if performing for a noble). He must make the appropriate skill check. If he fails, he gains nothing. If he succeeds, he makes 1 cp per person (+1 cp per point scored under his skill). For example,

a bard succeeding his skill check by a margin of two points would make 3 cp per person. If he uses his *charm* ability, assume he automatically succeeds, though if his skill check failed this bard will not be viewed very positively by his victims when the *charm* wears off.

*(Special thanks to K. Boomgarden and N. Ewell for their very Celtic help.)*

## Letters

In GAZ14 *The Atruaghin Clans*, you have the Children of the Viper on the map, but not in the text. Instead, the Players’ Guide mentions the Children of the Tiger. Are they the same? The Players’ Guide mentions three rivers in the vicinity of the Children of the Horse, but the map shows only two. Which is correct?

*Yes to question #1. The Children of the Viper should be called the Children of the Tiger (the map is wrong). The late Children of the Beaver, now dormant, took care of the pesky third river (i.e., the text was wrong; only two rivers are present).*

How did the reactor of the F.S.S. *Beagle* (the source of the Radiance in Glantri) end up under the Great School of Magic? As far as I can tell, Blackmoor is way off to the northeast. Did the Immortals move it?

*Yes to question #2. When the Immortals bestowed their magic upon it, they moved it and buried it deep under the region that would later become Glantri. After the planet changed its angle of rotation, the ancient land of Blackmoor became a frozen, uninhabitable wilderness. The Immortals sensed Glantri would become a more auspicious region and would serve their plans better.*

Where did the magic in the F.S.S. *Beagle* come from, and where are the effects of the Radiance located in the Known World?

*The F.S.S. Beagle was a starship. The Immortal’s magic was added to its reactor after it crashed on Blackmoor. The effects of the artifact do not reach the Hollow World. Should you (as the DM) decide to affect the surface of the Hollow World, the area would be located exactly six hexes north of Fort Xichu in the Azcan Empire. The effects cover a 5-hex radius. Care to populate this desolate wilderness with Hollow World wizards?*

Where is the basic module *Journey to the Rock* based?

*Nowhere. It was a ‘suitable with any campaign’ design. Journey to the Rock was not set in any particular area of the Known World. Should you need to place it, perhaps the best place would be in the vast unexplored region northwest of the Known World.*

I love the CREATURE CRUCIBLE™ series. I would like to see additional supplements for role-playing monstrous creatures.

## Princess Ark

Continued from page 50

*There is a new CREATURE CRUCIBLE supplement coming in 1992 (Night Howlers), covering the werewolves of Glantri. They are forming a "legitimate" principality with the support of some members of the Glantrian Council. There are no plans at present for more in this series. Now would be the best time to voice your opinions and preferences as to the format, goal, or topics of future offerings. Your letters are always appreciated, and they do affect our decisions.*

I'd like to see additional CREATURE CRUCIBLE supplements. Why not publish a few more on topics such as intelligent undead or dragons? Since these monsters are a lot more powerful than traditional adventurers, you could always provide adventures made exclusively for these types of player creatures.

*Indeed, these characters are difficult to mix with standard adventurers. Adventures exclusively for such odd beings seem too restrictive. Part of the solution consists in providing a very specific campaign setting for use with these critters, along with plausible reasons for the setting to exist and solid ways for the DM to keep it under control. This works with lycanthropes. With more powerful individuals, such as greater undead or especially dragons, there are still a number of problems to iron out (their Experience Progression Tables reach daunting heights very quickly, for example). Those two ideas will require lots of development time.*

I heard you were going to publish "Almanacs" in 1992. What are they going to be like?

*The Poor Wizard's Almanacs are a series of pocket books that provide lots of information on the Known World and the Hollow World in a simple, easily accessible format. Each book consists of two major sections. One section deals with past campaign information (a "Who's Who" of the D&D game world, with geographical and political information and too much other material to enumerate here). The other section provides about a year's worth of "future" world events to puzzle your players and occasionally rock the D&D game worlds. If our plans hold together, one Almanac should appear each year, with the newest one including the most important information published in the previous ones.*

When will the D&D boxed set and the *Rules Cyclopeda* be printed in French, German, and Swedish?

*The boxed set is currently being printed in German and French; it is going to be a while longer before we see the Swedish version. Translations of the Cyclopeda will also have to wait.*

Where is Hule?

*Looking at the Outer World planetary map provided in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set or in the Rules Cyclopeda, Hule would be located at the southwestern edge of the Black Mountains, north of the Serpent Peninsula, just east of the Yacak Steppes. If you have the older Master's DM Book, check the map inside the cover; Hule is located between areas #26 and #27.*

I was hoping you would be able to answer a few more questions on Immortals, especially since the update on the Immortals will come out until 1992. Why weren't the Lawful Order of Forsetta and the Temple of Spuming Nooga mentioned in GAZ7 *The Northern Reaches*? What are the alignments, spheres, and powers of the following immortals: Thendara, Arik, Gorm, Usamigaras, Madarua, Chardastes, and Lepta (B1-9 *In Search of Adventure*); Cretia, Tubak, and Yamuga (GAZ12 *The Golden Khan of Ethengar*), Orcus and Demogorgon (*Dungeon Masters Companion*); Tallirai, Sharpcrest, Slizzard, Malafor, Kallal, Gorrzlok, Crakkak, Polunius, and Saasskas (PC3 *The Sea People*); and, finally, Bozdogan (this column in DRAGON issue #173). Are Wildeye Auger, Minroth (GAZ9 *Minrothad Guilds*), and Chiron (PC1 *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*) now Immortals?

*Eeep! I passed this question along to Aaron Allston, who is currently working on the upcoming Wrath of the Immortals boxed set (due out in August 1992). His answer: "Argh! Please, no more Immortals!" When Aaron did the preliminary research on Immortals, he ended up with over 100. At the time we received this letter, it was hard to tell whether or not we would be able to include all these fellows (we'll try, trust us).*

*Several other things may happen. Some of these Immortals might have gone away to other dimensions, some might have been destroyed in some fantastic battle, and some might be separate identities of other Immortals. For example, Bozdogan is none other than Loki. The Immortals favored by the people of Robrenn are yet another example of this. This approach helps keep the number of Immortals under control. For the moment, we can assume Chiron, Auger, and Minroth still haven't made it to Immortality. Until the final design is complete, I'd rather not reveal too much, since this may conflict with the final material. Thanks for the list, by the way; you named a few that we had overlooked. More later.*

Who or what is Orcus? In what way is Orcus of the D&D game connected to the Orcus of the Bloodstone module series, set in the AD&D® FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting?

*In the D&D game, Orcus was a demon. For various reasons, we are now calling these creatures fiends. They are a type of Immortal creature originally described in the older Immortals Set. They will be*

*detailed in the upcoming Wrath of the Immortals boxed set. Beings also known as fiends exist in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. As far as the D&D universe is concerned, the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting is part of a separate reality, and the AD&D game's Orcus and Demogorgon are different entities. They are similar in that they are the embodiment of all that is evil in both game worlds.*

When *Wrath of the Immortals* is released, will there be three interlocking worlds (Known World/Hollow World/Wrath)? When is it due out?

*Wrath of the Immortals is not a game setting. It provides hefty background and rules for the D&D game's Immortals and a campaign saga. As a setting, it provides information on outer planes and a magical city, sort of a neutral safe ground where Immortals can meet without danger.*

As an avid D&D game player and reader of your column, I would like to take this opportunity to make a few points to my fellow gamers.

1. Are you fed up with there being few specific articles for the D&D game in DRAGON® Magazine? The solution is simple: adapt other things! In my campaign, I am using five of the seven characters from last year's AD&D trading cards. My main PC is Caramon Majere, now a 17th-level paladin of Halav. I created his background for the D&D game, and he turned out to be an interesting character to play.

2. Do you want more monsters? Either buy the D&D game's *Creature Catalogue* or the AD&D 2nd Edition game's *Monstrous Compendium* volumes. Bear in mind that although you may need to make superficial changes to the monsters, the experience-point values in the AD&D game are often quite high; for example, a D&D-game beholder is worth 5,100 XP, against the AD&D game's 14,000. I use the *Monstrous Compendium* as a source of D&D-game species variants.

3. The SPELLJAMMER™ setting: Should I use it? Yes and no. Use it if you think your campaign is ready for it. In my campaign (AC 1003), skyships are becoming popular in magically comfortable regions (Alphatia, Thyatis, Darokin, Karamaikos, and Glantri). Spelljamming helms are rare, though, and should be limited to Alphatia or Seraine, as they have an abundance of skyships and experience in the matter.

### Announcement!

We are pleased to announce that the D&D game will finally be blessed with a brand-new series of novels. Coming in the fall of 1992, the first novel in the Penhaligon Trilogy, *The Tainted Sword*, will reveal the story of a great knight, his companions, and a long-time enemy who has sworn his doom. Don't miss it! ♪

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 25: Of blood and steel

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
Prince Halbernar of Haaken  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
Princess Ark  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

**Burymir 23, AY 2000:** No more than a day after the events in Robrenn were concluded, we reached a fortified city southwest of Eyf. According to the Saragón Gazetteers, this was the capital of Eusdria, a pious realm of knights and paladins whose main enemies were the humanoid tribes of Yazak. I sent Raman as an envoy to announce my visit, and he came back before nightfall with a message of welcome from the king.

**Burymir 24:** I ordered the *Princess Ark* to be made visible again and approached the city's main place. Lady Abovombe, Talasar, Myojo, and I were to meet His Majesty, King Sigismund. A solid guard of knights awaited us, keeping the crowd away from our lifeboat. They all

wore dull red armor with black and gold tabards. We were greeted by the castellan in the castle's main hall, but as we prepared to enter the king's hall, the knights in red armor suddenly turned against us.

There was little we could have done; the knights were too many and too close, and resisting would have certainly cost the lives of my companions. I decided to go along with things for now. Perhaps we would soon discover the reason for this treachery. We were placed in shackles in the castle's dungeons.

Shortly thereafter, our cell was visited by a knight—a Heldannic knight! I should have known. "It seems that what five Warbirds could not accomplish, a provincial ally did all on its own," he said to us. "It is only a matter of time now before you will pay for your villainies against the Order." He turned to Talasar and concluded, "You, among them, will live the longest. You will wish you had died with that Warbird you destroyed. I shall take care of you personally." He slapped Talasar in the face and walked away. Myojo hissed with rage.

There was no point in remaining here any longer. The knights had failed to remove all of my belongings; under my cloak, I still had a pouch that contained my *wand of disintegration*. Abovombe was kind enough to kick off her shoes and reach for the pouch with her bare feet. Eventually, she managed to get the wand and lift it to my hand. It pays to have dexterous toes!

The rest was easy. The knights expected us to be in this cell, so I had the chance to find the king and teach him a lesson. Myojo would remain with me, while Talasar and Abovombe were to return to the ship.

Unfortunately, the plan was only half successful. Shortly after Talasar and Abovombe escaped through a balcony of the main hall, a squad of guards surprised and captured Myojo and myself. These were well-trained guards, although differ-







ent from our earlier captors. They wore normal steel armor with blue tabards, and they knew nothing about us. Immediately afterward, the knights whom we had first met came in, and an argument developed; there was clearly tension between their two leaders. The captain of the guard arrived and inquired about the commotion. Eventually, it was decided that we were to be kept under guard of the "blue tabards" until a council could be held. The "black tabards" seemed rather angry at the decision, but bore it.

**Burymir 24—Talaras, later that day:** The *Princess Ark* was gone when we escaped from the palace. Three Warbirds swooped over, not seeing us, sailing full speed toward the southwest where we caught a glimpse of the *Princess* turning invisible on the horizon. She was ready for battle, but we could not intervene.

We turned back to rejoin our companions, but it became evident that the admiral and his aide had been captured again. We saw the guards take them upstairs in the keep. Lady Abovombe and I agreed to investigate the situation further and free the admiral from his captors.

**Burymir 25—Haldemar:** We spent the night in rather spartan quarters in the castle's keep. It was a far cry from our earlier dungeon cell, though. At least we had some hope of discovering what was going on.

The captain of the guard came in the morning and led us to the king: a kind and impressive man. I could tell he had elven blood in his ancestry. Fortunately, he had heard of our visit in Robrenn.

Among the people in the king's hall were knights of different orders, including the "blues" and the "blacks." I gathered that the "blues" were the king's personal guard. Several nobles attended the hearing, including a few magistrates and, of course, the Heldannic envoy who visited us in the dungeon.

"Your Majesty," I began, "how is it that a visiting prince from the Empire of Alphatia is treated in such dishonorable fashion? We came in peace and with a message of welcome from Your Majesty."

"Silence, Alphatian dog!" the Heldannic knight interrupted. "You stand accused of piracy and murder!"

The king raised a hand. "Steady, Herr Ulrich. There is the question of a certain message given to Prince Haldemar—a message given in our royal name. We, King of Eusdria, would want this issue clarified first."

The captain of the guard stood up and said "Your Majesty, someone indeed spoke in your name. The royal mayor of the palace received the prince's messenger and arranged for the Knights of Harstal to capture the prince and his retinue. The royal bailiff and the lord of the squires will testify to this."

The king signaled his guards. "Very well. Have the royal mayor arrested at once and brought here for questioning. We shan't

tolerate undue use of our Royal Seal: Several nobles muttered in anger as the king postponed the hearings. The king's guard escorted us back to our quarters in the keep. Our sergeant-keeper turned out to be a fine fellow. He explained that the presence of his men were both to protect the king against foreigners, but also to protect us against foes. It seemed there were long-lasting feuds among many of the factions in the palace. He requested that we swear on our honor to remain in our assigned quarters, and this we did.

**Burymir 25—Talaras, later that day:** Lady Abovombe and I had hidden ourselves on the balcony that led to the Heldannic knight's chamber. In the darkness of the evening, we began climbing the north side of the keep to find the admiral, hoping that no harm had befallen him. Soon we heard the Heldannic knight's ranting. We listened.

"What an outrage!" fumed the knight. "How dare they even speak against the mayor! I'll have the captain's head for this." We peeked in and saw the knight was addressing the men who had captured us on our first day here. "Once this Alphatian wizard is dispatched," he continued, "be prepared to act. No matter what happens, keep Morgund near the throne. The king must be removed from power for your order to rise. You shall receive more red steel, as agreed."

This talk of treachery went on for some time. We had to reach the admiral at once. Alphatia had no business in this affair, but anything benefitting the Heldannic Order could only mean trouble for Alphatia.

**Burymir 26—Haldemar:** The hearing started anew. Both the royal bailiff and the lord of the squires testified against the mayor of the palace, who was promptly sentenced to the dungeons. He was dragged away, claiming he had been framed by the captain of the guard.

The Heldannic Knight then stood and said, "Your Majesty, these people are notorious pirates. Clearly, they have come here to seize Your Majesty's treasure. It wouldn't be above this wizard's ability to forge your Royal Seal or to have the mayor of the palace framed as a way to escape. It is a disgrace to see that the captain of the guard and his cronies are using this opportunity to damage their rival's long-standing reputation of loyalty to Your Majesty and to the Kingdom of Eusdria!"

"We are not pirates!" I objected vehemently. "We are a legitimate vessel of Her Imperial Majesty's fleet. We are here only to establish a diplomatic link between Your Royal Majesty and the Empire. We are the ones being stalked and attacked by the Heldannic Knights!"

The knight laughed. "Ha! Listen to this fiend talk! He has become an outcast in his own nation. He has been rejected by the very Empress Eriadna herself and forever exiled from his own empire. He treacherously attacked a Heldannic Prowler on a mission of peace over the coast of Hule,

the Heldannic skyship being mercilessly obliterated after it had stricken its penants, thus murdering all aboard! How could anyone trust such a criminal? Your Majesty, I beseech you in the name of the Heldannic Order to have these brigands executed at once!"

The king's face became grave, "Is it true, Prince Haldemar, that you are guilty of such an act?"

I nodded. "Heldannic vessels had been stalking us for a long time. The Heldannic Prowler refused to heave to after our warning shots, and then used a magical power that almost destroyed our vessel. We had no choice but to prevent this magic from being used again. This was indeed a tragic episode, Your Majesty, but in times of war, incidents such as this one are bound to happen."

The king sighed. "We see no evidence of treachery so far. However, since you cannot prove your absolute innocence, you will have to leave this kingdom at once. True justice cannot be rendered today."

The knight stood up and said loudly, "Ah, but it can, Your Majesty! There is a way! The Eusdrian Code of Chivalry allows trial by combat. The Immortals will see that the culprit is punished. I demand a duel by the sword with this pirate!"

The captain of the guard raised a hand. "Your Majesty, His Highness, the Prince of Haaken, cannot possibly defeat a knight by the sword. There would be no honor in this duel!"

The king was solemn. "Indeed. Well, then, the Code of Chivalry allows one who cannot fight to chose a champion! What say you, Prince?"

Of course, I immediately chose Myojo. He would be more than capable in this situation. The king accepted this and postponed the fight until the next dawn.

**Burymir 26—Talaras, from a later account:** It soon became evident that we could not enter what we suspected to be the admiral's quarters. We spent most of the day trying to find a way to get around the guards in the hallways, but the place was too well guarded. Both the king and the admiral seemed out of reach. At last, we decided to return to the Heldannic knight's chambers. If all else failed, we could capture him and trade him later on for the admiral. The knight left the castle in the evening, and we followed him.

He went to a tavern where he spoke to a wench wearing a hood. He gave her a vial and left. We attempted to capture him in a quiet street, but we discovered that he was a good warrior; he resisted my magic and fought well. We wounded the man but did not capture him. The noise of the fight attracted far too many bystanders, and we had to retreat.

I could only think of one more thing we could do. Razud had no following in these lands, but a land of knights must certainly follow some friendly Immortals. There were many temples in the city. Perhaps Razud would show us a path there.

**Burymir 27–Haldemar:** All parties were at the site of the duel. Skittish horses with jousting lances and barding were ready for both parties, but the Heldannic knight was nowhere to be seen when the time came.

He arrived a bit later, with some help from a squire. The man bore a bandage around his chest and looked pale. “Your Majesty, I was treacherously attacked last night by followers of the pirate. I am powerless against their poison, and thus unable to fight this day.”

“You must then choose a knight champion,” announced the king calmly. “The fight must take place, for today the Immortals watch!”

With a grin, the Heldannic knight responded, “Your Majesty, I see only one knight here whom I can trust. It is your sword that will bring the truth. I choose you as my champion!”

There was an uproar. The captain of the guard begged the king not to fight, as it would be to the death, but the king accepted. It was a matter of honor. The king requested and received a moment of peace in his tent so he could prepare for the battle.

Indeed, the fight took place. Myojo was tremendously worried and embarrassed. He could not possibly bow out, yet he was requested to strike a king. The battle began. The king soon forced Myojo off his horse and continued the combat on foot, where both displayed great swordsmanship. This was a very short fight, though. No more than a few strokes into the battle, the king suddenly dropped his guard and Myojo’s blade hit him an inch above the heart. The king fell without a murmur as the crowd roared. The captain rushed to his help, promptly carrying him back to his tent. We quickly learned that the king was dying—the second king whose death would be on my hands.

The Heldannic knight smiled tightly at me. “You seem to have won, wizard. What a shame.”

A stuttering noble seized this tragic moment to claim his right to the throne of Eusdria. Behind him stood the Knights of Harstal, who wore the red armor. “The K-k-king is dead! I, C-count of Harstal, thereby c-c-claim my right to be the K-k-k- . . . my right to the throne!”

“Not so, dear count!” A knight who had been standing on the sidelines since the beginning of the duel now walked over and stood before the count. He opened his helm. He was the king! What magic was this? How could he have died by Myojo’s sword, then stand here in a suit of armor?

Clearly the king understood everyone’s confusion. “Indeed I died, count, but there are many things in my power. You will have to wait your turn to rule this land. As far as these ‘pirates’ are concerned, Herr Ulrich, my death warrants their innocence, since it proved you to be wrong. I order you out of my kingdom at once.”

**Burymir 28–Haldemar:** When at

last I was allowed to see the king at the palace, I discovered both Talasar and Lady Abovombe sitting near him. “Prince Haldemar,” he said jovially, “you have two very loyal friends. By chance, it seems, they reached the Temple of Tiuz and revealed what they had overheard in Herr Ulrich’s chambers. The temple reached me with a message of warning against Morgund, my servant, who meant to slay me if all else failed. She was found in her chambers last night with a dagger and vial of blade poison.”

He then offered Lady Abovombe and Talasar quarters in the palace where they could rest. I was left alone with the king, and we relaxed as he explained at length what a predicament he was in. King Sigismund was very powerful from his use of cinnabryl, whose potencies he detailed for me. The red metal gave him unusual abilities, such as the power to create an *alchemical ego* that allowed him to dodge death. [For *details*, see *cynnabryl’s alchemical ego power in DRAGON issue #172, page 48, Table 6.*]

Through the Heldannic knights, the king found a steady supply of cinnabryl—but he also suffered an unfortunate dependence upon the knights’ services. Worse, the Heldannic envoys were gaining influence among his knights by offering them red steel. If the Empire of Alphatia could provide the king with a cure for cinnabryl addiction, he would gleefully outlaw the Heldannic knights from the Kingdom of Eusdria. Otherwise, he could only struggle behind the scenes to oppose Heldannic influence. His nobles were growing restless, and he could count on only a dwindling number of loyal knights for his defense.

Until such time as I could help him, I was to leave his lands, for he could not guarantee our safety within Eusdria. He was a wise and noble man, this King Sigismund, for he could see how his own thirst for power was leading him to his doom and to the ultimate corruption of his gallant kingdom.

**To be continued...**

## The Kingdom of Eusdria

**Eusdria—Capital:** Gundegard (Pop.: 25,200—humans, demihumans); **Ruler:** King Sigismund III the Great, son of Godegesil. Royal Domain includes the communities of Othmar, Ingelhad, and Withimer. **Patrons:** Viuden and Tiuz.

The history of Eusdria is very similar to that of its neighboring kingdom, Robrenn (see this column in DRAGON issue #177). The Eusdrians are descended from northern barbarians dislodged by Hule’s armies. They relocated in this southern region, hoping one day to reconquer the fatherland. That day never came. Eusdrians came to love this new land anyway and eventually established a medieval society.

In its past, Eusdria has had a number of clashes with the Robrenn. The druids and clerics on either side always spoke against

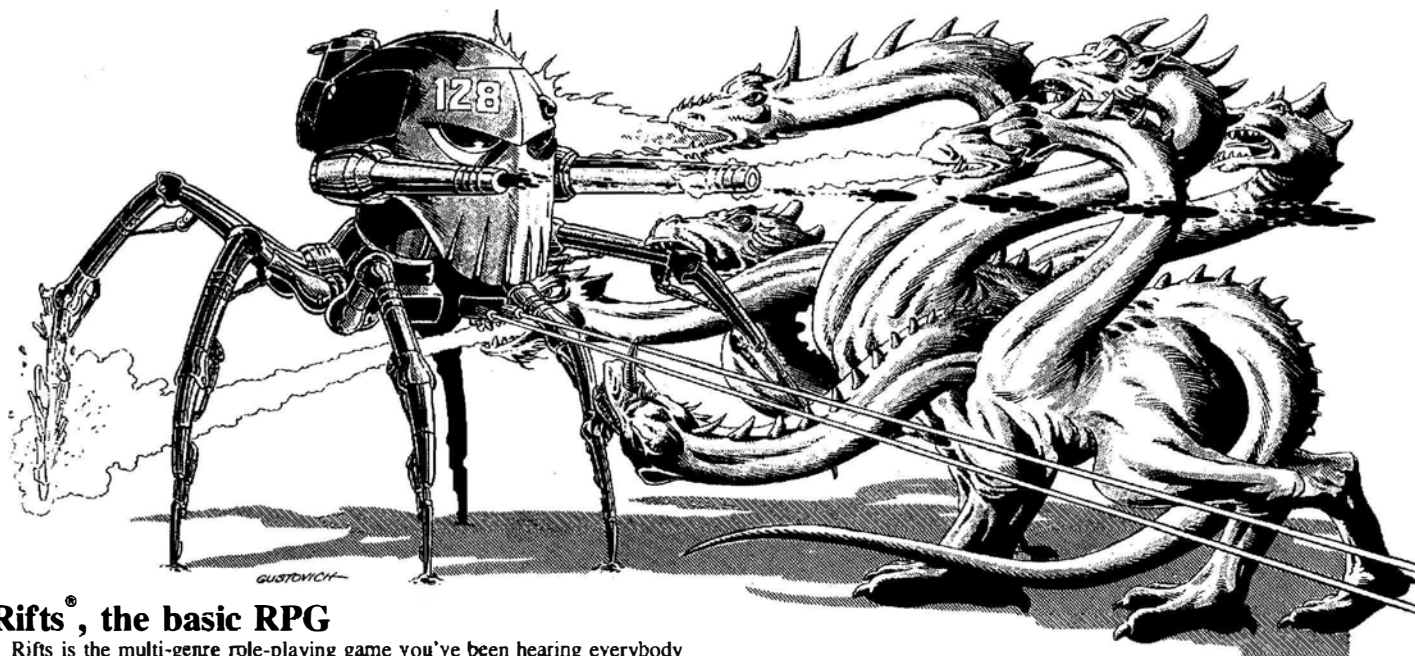
all-out war, since both nations largely honor the same Immortals, although they call them by different names. Eusdrian clerics are uncomfortable with the mysterious and barbaric ways of Robrenn druids, just as druids distrust Eusdrian clerics’ unnatural and self-serving ways. The two kingdoms have maintained a precarious status quo, keeping up a balancing act between cordiality and rampant accusations of heresy.

The biggest difference between Robrenn and Eusdria lies in the greater presence and influence of elves in Eusdria, particularly in the Duchy of Frissonnia and the Barony of Savaria. A great deal of the finer Eusdrian culture has come from the elves, including the alphabet, literature, architecture, and fine arts.

Eusdrians are fond of battle. They believe that death on the battlefield is by far the best way to die, for it opens the path to the land of the Immortals. This ancient belief dates back to their barbarian days in the north. Before a battle, warriors often celebrate and drink beer mixed with honey, thought to give them strength and courage. Fortunately, the elven love for peace and tranquility has toned down this ancestral predisposition to mere aggressiveness. At the very least, it brought order and law to the impetuous Eusdrians.

The elven influence led the Eusdrians to create several orders of knights, including paladins. Instead of fighting for the sake of battle and destruction, the Eusdrians learned to channel their battle fervor through military organizations with a purpose. The easiest ones to impress among early Eusdrians were orders that served their rulers, particularly the king of Eusdria and, later, orders that served the Immortals. This created a caste of knights and paladins capable of defending the nation against any foe.

The present king, Sigismund III, is a half-elf paladin and a highly charismatic follower of Tiuz. Sigismund is well known for his even-handedness with his dominions, both elven (Frissonnia and Savaria) and human (Harstal and Mohesia). He dreams of ridding the Yazak Steppes of goblins and other monsters, and of expanding his kingdom into a holy empire in the name of Tiuz. For the past 20 years of his reign, he has promoted a tradition of chivalry among his people, aspiring to have fewer but more competent warriors rather than the massive barbaric hordes of the past. In knighthood, he also sees the establishment of a highly mobile, elite, heavy cavalry whose loyalty would bring the end of the marauding tribes of the steppes. Dwarven crossbowmen from the County of Harstal also go to battle riding trains of heavy war wagons that provide cavalry with mobile forts. All this allows the king to wage long-lasting wars without pulling common peasants off their fields to be slaughtered in massive battles; such a loss would weaken the kingdom, as it had many times in Eusdria’s past, and bring



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**Rifts World Books Two: Atlantis:** Atlantis is the domain of the multi-dimensional slavers known as the Splugorth and the Minions of Splugorth. It is a domain where all manner of supernatural and other-dimensional life forms come to visit, live, or to purchase slaves and magic. It is a dangerous and mystical place. Will include dimensional travel and many surprises. Written by Kevin Siembieda, illustrated by Kevin Long. Available March 1992.

famine and pestilence to all.

King Sigismund hasn't unleashed his knights upon the goblins because of a curious phenomenon affecting the Plain of Dreams at the northern limit of the kingdom. The tradition says that the Immortal Lokar lost a bet with Donar and was forced to plant flowers throughout the entire plain. Lokar then cursed the flowers, giving them the power to put people and animals to sleep. These large beds of amber lotuses release clouds of sleeping pollen. The goblins seem to have found a way to protect themselves and their mounts from the pollen, allowing them to flee to safety after their raids into Mohesia and Frissonnia. As a result of these onslaughts, villages and towns in these two dominions are heavily fortified. King Sigismund is still hoping to find a reliable defense against the pollen and to learn how the goblins overcame it.

King Sigismund is also famous for developing a true school system for the young, supported by royal taxes. With this, he hopes to lead Eusdria to a golden age and a might comparable to that of faraway Thyatis. This system, however, is largely unpopular among the peasantry, since their children are sent off to school instead of to work in the fields. The nobility abhors this unique policy, since educated subjects are far more difficult to rule and control, and higher taxes have to be sent to the king to support the construction of the schools, the purchase of books, and the payment of preceptors (usually clergymen). The clergy, however, strongly supports the king and these measures, for the influence they provide over commoners and nobles.

The Heldannic knights established contact with King Sigismund not long ago. There are similarities and thus sympathy between the two nations, but King Sigismund is more concerned about the Heldannic knights' conquest-minded views. He suspects their dark and treacherous ways, and under a friendly composure he keeps a watchful eye on their activities. So far, Heldannic knights have arranged for several Eusdrian orders to acquire depleted cinnabryl, through the Texeiran Protectorate south of Eusdria. The Heldannic knights gained the gratitude of these chivalric orders, which worries King Sigismund to no end. The precious red metal is used especially to forge excellent plate armor and bastard swords, bestowing these knights with a clear edge in combat (see "Red Steel" in this column in DRAGON issue #171, page 43).

Most Eusdrian trade is with the Kingdom of Robrenn and the Texeiran merchant fleet. Eusdria has a small fleet in Reslar and Withimer, but it is no match for experienced Texeiran sea wolves. From the Niedegard Mountains, dwarven miners extract iron and copper, which are largely exported along with beer, honey, furs, timber, and herring.

## The Eusdrian pantheon

**Viuden:** (alias Odin). The chief Immortal of the Eusdrians pantheon, Viuden represents the sky, the storms, and authority in general.

**Donar:** (alias Thor). A patron of warfare, Donar is as popular here as he is among the more warlike folk in neighboring Robrenn.

**Eiry:** (alias Eiryndul). Eiry is a patron of Eusdrian woodland beings and elves, but especially of elven wizards.

**Lokar:** (alias Loki) The patron of flames, mischief, and lies, Lokar is not honored except by evil beings. His goals are the destruction of Viuden, Donar, and Eiry.

**Nyt:** (alias Hel). As with neighboring Robrenn, Nyt is acknowledged as a part of the beginning and the end of all. Her interests are death and reincarnation.

**Tiuz:** (alias Ilsundal). Patron of the elves, wisdom, law, and trust, Tiuz is often represented among Eusdrian clerics as a warrior whose right hand is missing.

Other Immortals are known in Eusdria, such as Kagyar, Fredar, and Fredara (the latter two being Frey and Freyja).

## Eusdrian royal dominions

**Duchy of Frissonnia—Symbol:** Tower; Capital: Breimald (Pop.: 12,300—mostly elves, some humans); Ruler: Duchess Beovilda the Blunt, daughter of Onulf; Typical NPC: urban elf warrior; Patrons: Donar or Tiuz.

**County of Harstal—Symbol:** Bear; Capital: Harstal (Pop.: 10,400—humans and dwarves, some halflings); Ruler: Count Theodamir the Stutterer, son of Althuin; Typical NPC: boisterous beer drinker; Patrons: Viuden, Kagyar, Fredar, and Fredara.

**Barony of Mohesia—Symbol:** Horse; Capital: Verdegild (Pop.: 6,600—mostly humans, some elves); Ruler: Baron Arthaulf the Forthright, son of Euric; Typical NPC: righteous knights; Patrons: Donar, Tiuz, Fredar, and Fredara.

**Barony of Savaria—Symbol:** Fish; Capital: Reslar (Pop.: 8,500—mostly elves, some humans and halflings); Ruler: Baroness Utha the Fair, daughter of Aldaric; Typical NPC: elven hunter or fisher; Patrons: Eiry or Tiuz.

**Common men's names:** Adaric, Althuin, Avigern, Atharic, Arthaulf, Childaric, Euric, Fredegern, Galamir, Godegesil, Guntheric, Gothamund, Hildebert, Leobald, Onulf, Rethismund, Rodulf, Sigebert, Theodamir, Theodoric, Theudebald, Thorisbert, Thratemund, Tregibald, Widemir.

**Common women's names:** Auda, Avigerna, Bathilda, Beovilda, Brunehilda, Clothilda, Cunegund, Eleonora, Ethrelgund, Flora, Fredegund, Gudule, Guenevilda, Hilda, Hildegard, Ida, Isolt, Lotha, Mathilda, Morgund, Radekund, Theodora, Utha.

## Elven class variants

**Elven clerics:** Elven characters may be created as clerics or druids who are able to retain some of their racial abilities (infravision, languages, detection, and immunity to ghoulish paralysis). All other racial abilities are lost (fighter combat options, special defenses, and wizardly spell-casting). Elven clerics use the Elven Experience Table, but cast clerical spells, fight, and save as clerics or druids of the same level. In all other respects, they have all the normal abilities, restrictions, and obligations common to clerics. Druids can be created using the same guidelines (see this column's details on the druids in the Kingdom of Robrenn, in issue #177, for background; Eusdrian druids would honor the Great Druidess Maud and have to go to the Forest of Carnuill as required). These elves must start as 1st-level clerics or druids when first created.

**Elven paladins/avengers:** Between 9th and 12th levels inclusive (or at Attack Rank E), an elf may become either a paladin, if Lawful, or an avenger, if Chaotic. As with paladins or avengers, the elf must swear fealty to a church. When this is done, the elf gains abilities, restrictions, and obligations specific to paladins and avengers; this includes clerical spell-casting if the elf has a Wisdom score of 13 or better.

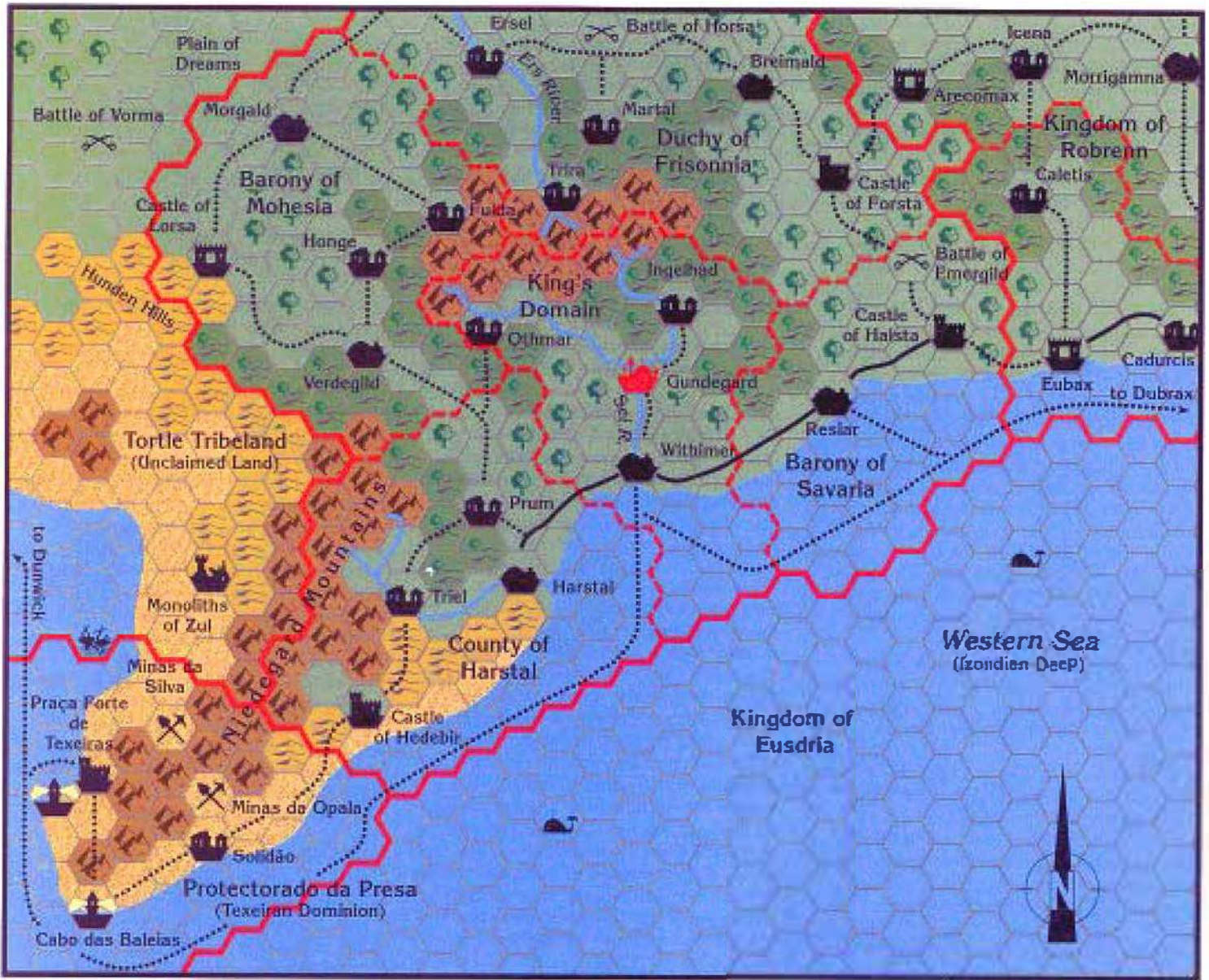
The elf retains all normal elven abilities, including attack ranks, special defenses, and wizardly spell-casting. He uses the Elven Experience Table, with each new attack rank becoming the equivalent of one new experience level for purposes of clerical spell-casting. For example, an elven paladin with attack rank K would be able to cast spells like a 6th-level cleric, in addition to his wizardly spell-casting.

The optional rules on page 266 of the *Rules Cyclopeda* on unlimited demi-humans' experience could be used otherwise. They are simpler and fit the case of the elven paladin or avenger better, but should be used from 1st level on.

**Important:** The elf permanently ceases to gain new levels in wizardly spells upon swearing fealty to a church. The elf also loses one level of wizardly spells each time he gains a new level of clerical spells, other than the ones gained upon swearing fealty.

For example: A 9th-level elf can normally cast fifth-level wizardly spells. Upon swearing fealty to the Order of Tiuz, that elf becomes a paladin with the addition of 1st-level clerical spells. When reaching 12th level (or Attack Rank E), the elf would gain the ability to cast second-level clerical spells, but would lose all fifth-level wizardly spells.

This represents the effects of the time spent studying clerical scriptures, meditating, praying, and acting as a paladin or an avenger, which inevitably alters the elf's skills and experience in magic-use. Remember that the elf can no longer swear



Scale: one hex equals 8 miles

- |  |             |  |                |  |                         |
|--|-------------|--|----------------|--|-------------------------|
|  | Capital     |  | Farmstead      |  | Road                    |
|  | Town        |  | Light Forest   |  | Trail or Shipping Lanes |
|  | Village     |  | Forested Hills |  | National Border         |
|  | Castle      |  | Rocky Hills    |  | Dominion Limit          |
|  | Fort        |  | Mountains      |  | Rivers                  |
|  | Ruins       |  | Sand Desert    |  |                         |
|  | Light House |  | Reefs          |  |                         |
|  | Battle Site |  |                |  |                         |
|  | Whaling     |  |                |  |                         |
|  | Mines       |  |                |  |                         |
|  | Ship Wreck  |  |                |  |                         |

Regional Map



fealty at level 13 (Attack Rank F) or better. It is assumed the elf has lingered too long in the ways of magic and profane warfare, and thus can no longer faithfully embrace the ways of the church.

Using the optional rules, the best an elven paladin or avenger could ever achieve is 12th-level clerical spell-casting, with four first-level spells and four second-level spells (or three first-level spells if using the standard elven attack ranks). This assumes the elf swore fealty to a church at level 12.

An elf who swears fealty at 9th level must eventually lose all wizardly spell-casting ability and related skills. An elf who makes this ultimate sacrifice, either willingly or because of the rules mechanics, permanently gains enough Wisdom to reach a score of 13, or gains one single extra point of Wisdom (up to a maximum of 18). Once lost, magic-use cannot be regained without permanently losing the status and abilities of the paladin or avenger (including any Wisdom gains), and spending a whole game year in studies for each of the spell levels originally lost. During that time, the "fallen champion" may not gain any experience nor learn any new spells.

Elves may also become druidic knights, using these guidelines. See last month's column for information about druidic knights' restrictions and background.

**Knights:** An elf can also become a knight in the service of a monarch. The elf can do so upon swearing fealty, with no alteration to the basic elven character class. Elven knights prefer elven monarchs, but otherwise may swear fealty to a human monarch, although the latter is rare.

**Half-Elves:** Contrary to common belief, there is a race of "half-elves" unknown to Alfheim elves. These rare people live among elven and human communities in the Savage Coast. Fredar and Fredara made the characteristics of this mixture permanent and hereditary in an attempt to create a more homogeneous kingdom in Eusdria. The half-elven gene is dominant (thus, if only one of the parents is a half-elf, the progeny has a 65% chance of being a half-elf). Although still rare in Eusdria, this race is slowly gaining in numbers. Fredar and Fredara are their usual Immortal patrons.

Half-elves have *infravision* but no other elven abilities. They usually speak both the local elven and human tongues, and other languages can be acquired through the normal use of skill points. Half-elves have the life-span of halflings; otherwise treat half-elves as humans with slightly pointy ears. All classes normally open to humans are available to half-elves. Half-elves should suffer a 5% penalty to their experience because of their *infravision* and extended longevity.

## Letters

What happened to Bargle the Infamous in DDA3 *The Eye of Traldar*?

*Author Carl Sargent suggested we send him off on vacation for a while, and use his cousin Sveraloff in his place in the meantime. The Eye of Traldar was designed to help entry-level gamers get started with the basics of adventuring in the D&D game. There would come a point when the PCs might have run into Bargle, and either he would overpower them or the PCs would fry his worthless hide. Either way, that was a problem. So Bargle has gone to Hule to have a serious little talk with The Master. He'll be back soon. You can count on it.*

I think it would be greatly appreciated by D&D-game players if TSR would bring out a "Best of" X-series of modules. Are there plans in that direction?

*No. Would anyone be interested in a "Best of" series? How about Gazetteer reprints? We are considering republishing the collection in a series of big, fat, soft-bound books (in lumps of three Gazetteers each). Anyone interested?*

Are there plans to publish Expert, Companion, and Masters modules for the D&D Rules Cyclopeda?

*There will be modules for use with the Cyclopeda, but they no longer follow the Expert/Companion/Masters structure. They will fall under the more-general "Champion" D&D-game category and will differ only by their game levels or the setting used (HOLLOW WORLD™ setting, Known World, or other). The old "Basic" modules now connect exclusively with the new D&D game's boxed set, and they are a rather different breed of modules. Simpler and shorter than the old Basic stuff, they each provide 3-D character stand-ups and full-color 25 mm-scale dungeon maps.*

Does a dragon roll against its opponent's armor class when using its breath weapon, or does it hit automatically?

*It hits automatically. Remember that a breath weapon affects only those opponents who are within its area of effect. Victims do get a saving throw. If they succeed, they take half damage from the breath weapons effects (rounded down).*

Is it possible to publish a "wanted" notice in this column? I have been looking without success for a number of modules, and I would like to get in touch with possible sellers.

*No. Unfortunately there isn't sufficient room in this column or in the magazine itself for such a "Wanted" feature. You can post notices in local hobby shops with the owners' permission, however.*

How do Combat Ratios work in GAZ10's "Orc Wars" game?

*You need to compare the value of the Attacker against that of the Defender. Add up the values of the counters on both sides. Then, divide the Attacker's total by the Defender's total. The "Odds" depend on the result you get:*

A/D ratio	Odds
0.49 or less	1-3*
0.50 to 0.65	1-2*
0.66 to 0.99	2-3*
1.00 to 1.49	1-1
1.50 to 1.99	3-2**
2.00 to 2.99	2-1**
3.00 to 3.99	3-1**
4.00+	4-1**

\* Defender's advantage.

\*\* Attacker's advantage.

*In other words, if you are the Attacker you want your Combat Ratio to be as high as possible.*

Why do paladins have to be lawful? After all, their main requirement is that they swear fealty to a church. What if it is a neutral church?

*Good point. In the last issue, we presented the rather unusual druidic knight, but we're still missing an equivalent for a nondruidic neutral order. All you have to do is call it something different, like a Stalwart or a Defender, then give it the paladins spell-casting skills and replace the detect evil ability with remove fear\* (reversible). That's pretty potent, but you should disallow the ability to turn undead. Even better, you can exchange the defenders remove fear\* ability for something else that is more appropriate to the defenders order. The same would be true for specialty paladins and avengers. Keep it balanced though—nothing is free.*

I'd like to know more about souls. In keeping with the idea of the five spheres, a creature's soul could be made of Energy and Thought elements. When the creature dies, these elements are dispersed into the Prime Plane. As the creature ages, entropic elements contained in its soul weaken, then vanish when the creature dies of natural causes. This would explain why Entropy would be so preoccupied with destroying rather than letting life run its natural course, since a violent death would then release a greater amount of entropic elements in the Prime Plane.

*This is a very interesting concept. Remember that the five spheres aren't like outer planes or some sort of elemental fabric. These are similar to "spheres of interest" that explain the powers and goals of the Immortals. It wouldn't take much, however to stretch things a bit to make this idea work. It is a very elegant one. In the same vein, the Spheres of Matter and Time would govern the physical body I suggest that Entropy affect material bodies rather than souls, since souls cannot "normally" be corrupted!* Ω

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 26: A glass of wine and a shaggy dog story

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
PRINCESS ARK  
Imperial Explorer, etc. etc.

**Burymir 28, AY 2000:** After our misadventure in Eusdria, I almost forgot about the arrival of the end of this year. The crew was a bit gloomy, being so far from home. I suggested to Talasar and Lady Abovombe that they organize a night of revelry. Everyone then got very busy, hanging garlands and paper lanterns and setting up tables. A marvelous smell soon rose from the galleys, and smiles began to show on some somber faces.

The celebration of the new year's eve was indeed memorable. The ship's band played marvelously well, adding a touch of magic to their own talent. Lady Abovombe

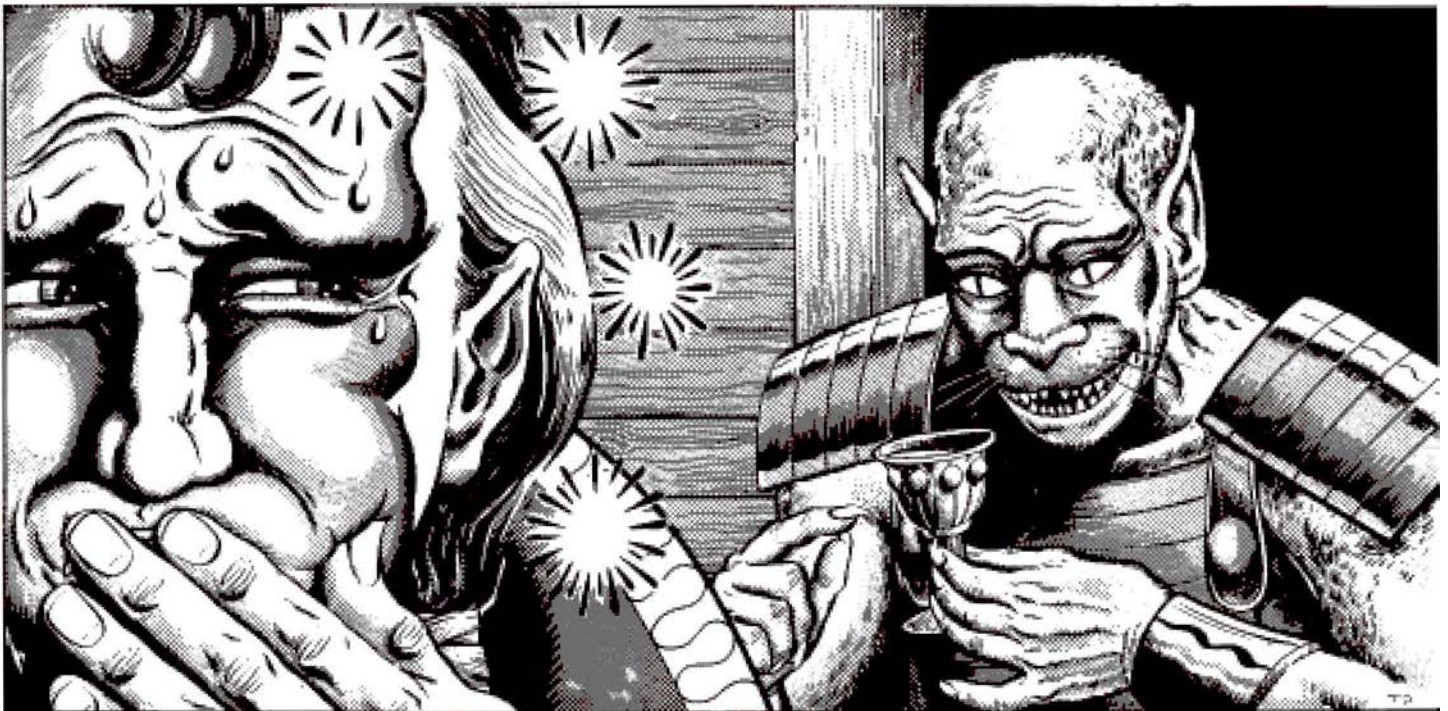
and I opened the ball, quickly followed by officers and their partners and finally by the crew. By midnight, several barrels of punch accomplished what several days of furlough couldn't. The polite festivities of the evening turned into a cheerful carnival, especially after Leo unveiled a chest full of confetti bags, rolls of streamers, toy flutes, and ridiculous gnomish hats with feathers, pom poms, and other garish things.

They were an instant hit, but they left a horrendous mess on the deck. I myself concentrated on more upscale pleasures, enjoying some wonderful sparkling beverage from Glantri. I discovered that I knew the steps of a square dance I had seen in Cimarron County. Things got a bit fuzzy after that. It was Myojo who kindly helped me back to my quarters, I think.

**Nyxmir 1, AY 2001:** The sound of gigantic waves crashing on the deck, as if from a storm, woke me up that day. The roar was unbearable. At the thought of water on the decks of the *Princess Ark*, I jumped up, bumping my head on a joist. It felt like Talasar's mighty hammer falling upon an eggshell.

Forever cursed be thou, Immortal patron of hangovers! I should have never looked at anything Glantrian. That was no storm outside—only the ship's boy sweeping heaps of confetti off the deck, as I discovered with a few shouts from my room.

A thunderous knock at the door then rippled through the cabin, shaking the windows and echoing forever in my head. I staggered over to see who dared disturb my agony. "Haaken-san, the city of Louvines is in sight," Myojo said briskly, neatly attired and brushed. After a moment, he added, "You look pale, Haaken-san. Glantrian sparkling wine is no good? Please try ancient Myoshiman hangover medicine." My good friend left, then re-





Dykstra©92



turned to hand me a tiny glass of his native medicine: saké. Soon, nausea was added to my throbbing migraine.

Slightly green-faced, I went topside to observe the city Myojo had named. Perhaps fresh air would do me good. I saw two crewmen still snoring away, one perched on a mast and the other's lower half hanging out of an empty barrel. I also found Talasar, who looked rather shabby as he rubbed the back of his neck. I couldn't tell anything about Xerdon's condition, as he was bending too far over the railing.

Raman returned from a quick visit to the capital of royal Renardy. "Your Highness," he said, sweating heavily, "King Louis IV is expecting you to visit today at the palace. He was very excited by our arrival." He looked very queasy and added hurriedly, "May I return to my quarters now? I feel a bit fatigued." Without waiting for my answer, he ran toward the head, holding his belly.

No one volunteered for this diplomatic visit, of course, so it had to be Talasar, Myojo, and myself. I heard several sighs of relief behind my back as we boarded the lifeboat.

A crowd of Renardois—why is there always a crowd?—awaited our arrival. They cheered. They applauded. We cringed. Some of the Renardois even howled, as hound-men apparently made up the majority of this crowd. I feared for a moment we had run into a werewolf lair, but these dog-people looked friendly. Ah, yes, lupins they were. Good fellows, if only they could yowl more quietly.

Myojo hissed when he saw and smelled the lupins. "Shut up, you!" muttered Talasar under his breath.

At last, we arrived at the palace. Great brass horns announced our arrival, the horrendous sound echoing interminably through the courtyard and the hallways. We reached the throne room and the king, feeling barely alive.

"Ah, *cher Prince!*" cried the monarch, arms wide and a broad smile on his lupin muzzle. "*Bienvenue*<sup>1</sup> to Louvines! *Sacre-bleu*, you look so tired! Ah, but of course, eet must be zee navy food. Please honor my table. Our chef, he has prepared zee best banquet for you. *C'est magnifique!*"<sup>2</sup>

There was food. There was wine. Then there was more food and more wine. A bottle of Glantrian sparkling stuff came around again. Much to my surprise, even the king sounded Glantrian—how could that be? The *pièce-de-résistance* finally showed up: a glazed boar with an apple in its mouth, stuffed with marinated pheasant *du chef* and potato-soufflé *à la Barbassonne*. We gorged ourselves as best we could.

The king then stood and proudly announced this year's Boisjolis-Nouveau vintage would be offered to all, an amazing first that overjoyed everyone but myself and Talasar. Queen Fifrelyne whispered to me this great vintage was normal-

ly served only after the Brotherhood of Vintages had determined which wine was the best of Renardy. This Boisjolis-Nouveau was the king's family pride, his true *joie de vivre* (and, no doubt, soon to be my *coup de grâce*). The king was breaking with tradition to honor our visit. I knew I should be grateful, but . . .

The king clapped his hands and called out, "Bring le Boisjolis-Nouveau at once!"

There was a crashing silence.

The king's steward bent down and muttered at the king's ear, too loudly to keep his secret a secret. "*Votre Majesté*<sup>3</sup>, le Boisjolis-Nouveau—eet is gone!"

Flabbergasted, the king replied, "*Comment? Plus de Boisjolis-Nouveau! Vite, vite! Retournez à Clairvault!*"<sup>4</sup>

With astonishment, the other nobles added, "*Morbleu! Quelle horreur! Trahison! Aux armes! A la guillotine!*" The royal lupin guards trotted off in all directions. Gongs rang. Horns bellowed. In dismay, the chef threw his cap on the floor. The king walked away, furious, loudly voicing an endless stream of colorful imprecations. The banquet ended in total chaos. We promptly retired to our chambers so that Talasar and myself could hide our tortured heads under the pillows.

**Nyxmir 2:** A soft knock at the door woke me, early in the morning while it was still dark out. Queen Fifrelyne entered quietly. "Please forgive this intrusion, monsieur," she said. "I had to speak to you about what happened yesterday. You see, this wine is much more than it may seem. It is a symbol of prestige and power in Renardy. My husband is too proud to see you again after yesterday's humiliation. Worse yet, he fears that he'd become the kingdom's laughing stock if he sent his knights to seek the wine. I can hear the words of the town criers now: 'Royal knights on a quest for the holy vintage!' Only you could find the wine without compromising my husband's honor. Please, I implore you, find what happened to this wine and who was behind this treachery. I fear this might lead to a dark conspiracy."

How could I refuse? This lupin lady had a way of batting her eyes that went straight to my heart. I agreed to look into the theft, and she left quickly. She didn't want to be seen alone with me.

Later that morning, I took a stroll by the king's cellar. There, Mordicus, the royal steward, explained that he had left the cellar locked. The lock had been forced open during the banquet and the barrels stolen. Someone had them loaded on a wagon under cover of darkness, after a load of 13 barrels of Château Médor had just been delivered next door.

Mordicus knocked at a large barrel that sounded hollow. "*Parbleu!*"<sup>6</sup> There eet is! They took all twelve barrels of the king's precious wine instead of zee empty barrels. Eet's terrible! In a few days, the Brotherhood of the Vintages, they will meet again and the king, he will not have his wine. The king, he made a bet with

Monsieur le Duc d'Ysembagne that his Boisjolis-Nouveau was better than Monsieur le Duc's Château LaFifi-Trotteschild! If he loses the wager, oh la la . . . Madame Fifrelyne, she will be very, very angry with him."

Looking around, I found footprints in the cellar's soft ground. They looked like goblin-style hobnailed boots. In shock, Mordicus gasped, "*Mais Monsieur, comment. . . Des gobelins, ici? Saperlipopette!*"<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, this was very fishy business. So far, I had three suspects: the Duke of Ysembagne, who had something to gain from all this; goblins; and the owner of the Château Médor vineyard, who delivered the wine and stole the barrels. Mordicus identified this wine as coming from a vineyard in Ysembagne, past the village of St. Vézy. We had at least one link!

I needed Mordicus' help as a guide to reach St. Vézy. Mordicus suggested that his younger nephew, Croche-Patte, come with us, as the latter knew many people in the shadier circles of Louvines. For my own safety, I brought Myojo as well. Myojo hissed upon meeting Mordicus and Croche-Patte, and Croche-Patte growled, but politely so, and he apologized immediately after Mordicus jabbed his nephew in the ribs. Myojo then sniffed, and Croche-Patte snorted. As for Talasar, he had gone off with a group of nobles for a visit to the Great Wall of Louvines. I envied him for a moment. He was getting off easy this time.

**Nyxmir 3:** We quietly went through St. Vézy and found the path to Château Médor. The lord of the mansion, Monsieur Ducroc, received us. He explained his two retainers came back from their trip to Louvines, having been beaten up by dwarves a few miles before the bridge there. The dwarves then stole their wagon, horse, and wine barrels. Monsieur Ducroc was very surprised when he received payment from the royal reeve for receiving the wine shipment.

We questioned the two other fellows about the dwarves who attacked them. "Well, *M'sieur le Prince*," said the first, "the dwarves, they were ragged, a bit skinny with a sickly green skin." The second added, "*Oui, oui, M'sieur le Prince*, their beards, too, they looked full of moths!"

We saw none of the king's barrels in the cellar. Without any other evidence to the theft, we had to follow the goblin lead. We reached the site of the fight before evening, near the bridge of Louvines.

There, Croche-Patte recognized the odor of the two beaten retainers from Château Médor. He also identified the odor of goblins—not dwarves. The goblins had obviously been wearing shabby disguises. But there was not one set of wagon tracks—there were two, both coming from the general direction of St. Vézy. The first set went no further than the bridge and then doubled back, while the other went on, presumably to Louvines and back, then headed north. There was no way to

tell if the tracks had been created at the same time. On the other hand, the tracks were the same depth, which lead me to believe both wagons had been loaded at all times. Also annoying was the stench of wine spilled on the river bank, near the spot where the second set of tracks doubled back.

What had happened? The extra set of wagon tracks was very suspicious. Presumably, the tracks that went to Louvines would have been the goblins'. But whose was the second set, and why did it come as far as the bridge and then double back? It had to be our two fellows from Château Médor. So they lied, since they obviously returned with their horse *and* a loaded wagon to St. Vézy. I was beginning to think the goblins and the two fellows were in cahoots from the beginning. But what did goblins have to do with this? In any case, we still had to recover the wine, which I assumed was in the goblins' hands. And I had a hunch it was not the Boisjolis-Nouveau that had been spilled on the bank.

**Nyxmir 6:** Mordicus returned to the palace to help prepare for the gathering of the Brotherhood of Vintages. Croche-Patte, Myojo, and I went on. Croche-Patte had no difficulty dogging those tracks, which were as clear as if the goblins did not care if they were followed. The wagon tracks crossed the army trail north of Château-Roan and went east to the River of Dreams. Fortunately Croche-Patte had brought a set of herbal masks to protect us from the effects of the Plain of Dreams' amber lotuses. We reached a small camp of goblins just as evening fell.

The few goblins there hadn't a dog's chance of defeating us. They gave only token resistance and surrendered rather quickly, except a couple who managed to escape on their dire wolves. We had to move on, fast, for these two would be back with reinforcements. Those goblins we interrogated knew nothing.

We discovered 13 barrels nearby. Twelve bore the mark of the King's Boisjolis-Nouveau, which brought a sigh of relief from Croche-Patte, and one had the mark of Château Médor. The latter was empty, however. It had contained wine several days ago, since the barrel wood was still wet with the beverage. Instead, this barrel now held four shabby dwarven disguises, goblins' weapons, and a large sack of Renardois silver coins. The king's wine was untouched.

Perhaps the thirteenth barrels contents had hidden the goblin's silver. I did not recall of any silver being stolen from the palace. So, whose silver was that? Someone must have paid the goblins; was it to steal the king's wine and let them keep it? "*Scrongneugneu!*" said Croche-Patte, lost in his thoughts. "*Comme c'est bizarre.*"<sup>8</sup> We had to leave at once. The 12 barrels were hastily loaded on a nearby oxcart, and off we went.

**Nyxmir 6—Talaras, from a later**

**account:** The admiral had been gone for three days with no news from him. Later this day, I met the duke of Ysembagne, who was visiting the king. He inquired about the admiral and was surprised of my lack of information. He said his troops had reported seeing the admiral cross the border into goblin land. The duke thought the admiral had gone on a private goblin hunt, which was not an uncommon thing among nobility. Seeing this was not the case, he said he would arrange for reliable warriors to help me determine the admiral's whereabouts.

Indeed, by evening, a group of the duke's knights offered me a horse. We rode north toward the spot the admiral was last seen. The knights seemed confident that the admiral and his companions would be found.

**Nyxmir 7—Haldemar:** What I had feared the most was beginning to happen: Croche-Patte's herbal masks were drying up. The substance in the herbs protected us less and less from the *sleeping* effects of the amber lotuses, and Château-Roan was still some distance away. The heavy wagon was slowing us down. Without warning, my horse collapsed, as its mask no longer protected it. Our plan was going to the dogs.

As we debated what to do next, a howl rose in the distance. The goblins were following the wagon's tracks. It wouldn't be long before they would catch up with us, awake or asleep.

Radical problems demanded radical solutions. We tied the barrels together and threw them into the river. The barrels had only slightly more buoyancy than rocks. We whipped the ox and horses away, hoping to mislead the goblins, and grabbed the barrels. Slowly, we floated downstream. At least the goblins would have a tougher time getting to us.

The plan worked for a few hours. Alas, the masks were truly failing us. Myojo was already deep asleep; Croche-Patte and I were having a tough time keeping awake and holding on to him. Then a large raft came into view downstream. Unfortunately, it looked like some goblin-fortified river barge. We tried to maneuver around it, but I fell asleep just as our barrels bumped into the raft. I felt dog-tired.

**Nyxmir 8—Haldemar:** No goblins here! I woke up this morning among a group of large turtles. One of them bowed slightly, holding his wrist up to his forehead much in the fashion of mystics. These were missionaries sent by the grand abbot of Dunwick on a quest to convert the impious goblins. They belonged to a lawful order of turtle mystics. The raft was theirs. By chance, they had recovered all three of us and the precious barrels. They expected an attack from the goblins, however, as goblin scouts had seen the turtles retrieve us from the water.

The raft was an interesting device. Within the fortified part of the raft were four oxen. Two were harnessed to a horizontal

wheel that drove a paddle-wheel through a series of pinions and shafts, while the two other oxen rested and fed. The bunker protected the oxen from projectiles and the cursed river's plants. Clever, as long as the paddle-wheel worked.

That point made, a burning projectile suddenly hit the back of the raft, setting the straw on fire. Two turtles ran out of the raft's wooden bunker to put out the fire, and several more arrows came down. Amazingly, one turtle demonstrated an incredible ability to deflect arrows with a stick. The rest bounced off the shell on the other turtle's back. As if the goblins were angered with the turtles' performance, a furious shower of flaming arrows followed. Both turtles then retreated into their shells, and the arrows bounced off them harmlessly.

The fire was getting worse, though. Soon we lost our steering and ran aground. A pack of goblins mounted on dire wolves quickly charged onto the boat. The turtles fought like none I'd seen before. They didn't run very fast, but they didn't need to: Anything within reach of their legs, arms, or sticks was destined to be bashed, chopped, or thrown into the air. One of the turtles hid within its shell, and each time a goblin or a wolf peered at an opening, a deadly blow would shoot out, followed with a heart-felt scream of "Hay-yah!" "Copycat!" murmured Myojo when he saw this.

A heated battle was on. More goblins rode onto our stranded raft. Suddenly, cheers rose from behind the goblins. There, Talaras and a company of heavily armored lupin knights charged into the goblins' rear, brandishing the banner of Ysembagne high above their crested helms. Losing heart, the goblins retreated.

The paddle-wheel and steering devices were hastily fixed, and off we went, slowly sailing down the River of Dreams alongside "*les chevaliers du duc*"<sup>9</sup> and my loyal friend, Talaras. We reached the walls of Louvines in the night. Mordicus greeted us at the dock, overjoyed by the recovery of the royal vintage. "*C'est formidable, non?*"<sup>10</sup> he cheered, "We'll make a wine-stomper of you yet!" One of the turtle mystics asked if we would make a donation to the order, obviously eyeballing one of the barrels. Mordicus sighed, "*Oh et puis zut!*"<sup>11</sup> Just don't tell anyone." Thus we parted with our turtle saviors.

**Nyxmir 9:** The precious barrels had been returned to the king's cellar just in time, for the Brotherhood of the Vintages was meeting this morning. I, however, still hadn't gotten a clue as to what exactly had happened.

Someone knocked at my door. It was one of the turtle mystics. "Your Highness," he said, "I believe you have been fooled. Why, no later than this morning, we stopped at a tavern in Louvines and sampled its wine before returning to Dunwick. Lo and behold, its wine was no better than the Boisjolis-Nouveau we had yesterday. Come

to think of it, it tasted very much like it. With all due respect to King Louis, this Boisjolis-Nouveau you gave us was not what it used to be. And how could a tavern already have some anyway?"

Mordicus and I rushed back to that very tavern, where we discovered the owners were selling Château Médor wine that they had legally acquired "weeks ago." That's it! It was the missing clue. This Château Médor was the same wine that now filled the king's barrels. Of course, the two "roughed-up" retainers were in cahoots with the goblins, to whom they must have paid that silver. Both parties came together, each with a load of thirteen barrels of Château Médor. The goblins indeed stole the 12 barrels of the king's vintage, then switched barrels. They poured the king's vintage into Château Médor barrels, and vice versa. For this they needed an empty barrel—thus some wine poured into the river. The goblins then went north with their payment and their *phony* barrels of Boisjolis-Nouveau, while our two fine fellows returned home with the king's wine, marked as Château Médor.

Why? Mordicus knew. Monsieur le Duc d'Ysembragne had probably engineered all of this to win his bet. The trail to the goblins was after all not all that difficult to follow—a bit risky, yes, but not impossible, as we had demonstrated. Monsieur le Duc *wanted* us to find the phony wine and bring it back to Louvines. Château Médor had never won an award from the Brotherhood of Vintages, and it seemed clear it wasn't going to win one anytime soon, as it was rather average. If the jury of the Brotherhood sampled that wine instead of the true Boisjolis-Nouveau, they would surely not give it any award, thus allowing Monsieur le Duc to win his bet with his comparatively excellent Château LaFifi-Trotteschild. In addition to this, the sample marked as Château Médor, which belonged to the Duke of Ysembragne, might even win the award this year, adding insult to injury. *Vailà!*

Of course, it would be best not to involve Monsieur le Duc, since nothing could be proven. We had to rush back to the palace. The Brotherhood of Vintages was in the process of sampling all those wines—including the ones with the wrong labels! We had to act at once!

With horror, I discovered how the competition was set up. Hundreds of anonymously numbered samples sat on a huge table in the throne room. There was no way to tell which sample was whose. More samples came into the room, on trays carried by the king's servants. I had an idea.

I had Croche-Patte don servant's garb and carry a tray to the table. There, he would sneeze violently, at which point he would tuck a corner of the table cloth into his belt and walk away. Those samples would be ruined, and the competition would have to start over.

While Croche-Patte went to do his worst, Mordicus and I went to the cellar where samples were secretly numbered by the Brotherhood. We had to get the wines switched back to their rightful barrels—a tough task, since no one but the Brotherhood could now enter the cellar.

*Invisibility* helped us both. Once inside the rather dark cellar, we rolled two of the mislabeled barrels around the cellar, playing hide and seek with the members of the Brotherhood working there. One confused brother saw my barrel at several different spots in the cellar. He looked at that barrel every now and then, walking away muttering and scratching his head. Eventually, we found a quiet spot with an extra empty barrel where we could switch wines. For the moment, one single barrel of each vintage would do. Soon after we returned the barrels to their proper spots in the cellar, word came that all the samples had to be redone and renumbered, as some fool upstairs had utterly ruined the current session. Grumbling and growling, the members of the Brotherhood went back to work.

**Nyxmir 10:** "And zee winner is . . . an exquisite although discreet, delicate yet rustic, flowery if mellow, fruity albeit dry, light but not too much so, historical vintage that we unanimously enjoyed and which therefore earned our unequivocal preference without zee shadow of a doubt. And so, eet is our honor, and doggedly so, to award in zis Year of AC 1001, by zee grace of St. Mâtin and Malinois, zee Golden Leaf Award to . . . Madame la Comtesse de Marmandie's excellent Côtes du Grognes! Other nominees for the Golden Leaf Award will be posted at once."

Monsieur le Duc and King Louis stared at each other in total amazement, then both stood up at once and marched over to the list. Both the Boisjolis-Nouveau and the Château LaFifi-Trotteschild were listed among the other nominees. The king called the archbishop of the Brotherhood of Vintages and demanded to know which of the two wines was best.

"*Votre Majesté*, eet is not customary to rank nominees, as eet is honor enough for a vintage to be listed. In our eyes, we feel all nominees to be of equal quality and enjoyment. You should be pleased to know that your entry, this *je-ne-sais-quoi* of amber lotus and ever-so-slight aftertaste of St. Vézy vine stock, was absolutely, hmmm, *délicieux!* This unique and original blend might win you another golden leaf, *Votre Majesté!*"

So ended this day in Louvines. King Louis was satisfied that no bet was lost and that his vintage had come so close to winning. The bet with Monsieur le Duc had not been revealed, and no harm to either party had come from it. Queen Fifrelyne was greatly relieved that the honor of her royal husband was safe, and she quietly rewarded my help by permitting unlimited furlough for the crew and a free load of that excellent vintage, Le

Boisjolis-Nouveau. At last, all was quiet in the Kingdom of Renardy—at least until next year.

*To be continued . . .*

#### Footnoted translations

1. Welcome
2. It's wonderful!
3. Your Majesty
4. What? No more Boisjolis-Nouveau? Quick, quick, return to Clairvault!
5. *Sacrebleu!* Shocking! To arms! To the guillotine!
6. *Sacrebleu!*
7. But sire, how . . . Goblins, here? *Sacrebleu!*
8. *Sacrebleu!* How bizarre!
9. The duke's knights
10. Isn't it wonderful?
11. Oh, blast it!

#### The "Royaume de Renardie" Kingdom of Renardy—

Coat of arms: golden fox rampant (1st and 4th quarters) and fleurs-de-lis (2nd and 3rd quarters) in azure field, with royal crown and golden crest overhead; capital: Louvines (pop.: 65,700—mostly lupins, humans, some demihumans and turtles); ruler: King Louis IV "Le Cabotin," son of Gaston de Clairvault (royal domain includes the communities of St. Vézy and Daens); patron: Saint Renard.

The Renardois belong to an uncommon race of humanoids, the lupins. No one knows exactly how they came to Mystara, but it is largely believed among sages that lupins descend from a cross between humans and gnolls. Fortunately, humane attitudes prevailed in the offspring, and an ancestral hate of gnolls and other evil canine manifestations is part of the lupin character.

Early lupins were nomads, tribes of hunters and adventurers who roamed the plains west of the Guardian lands. They observed the way the Guardians grew in power, and the lupins began to imitate them, mimicking their arts, nobility, hereditary laws, and philosophies.

The goblins of the Yazak Steppes captured a large portion of the lupins' hunting grounds, scattering many of the tribes. Five tribes, however, regrouped to the south and formed an alliance to defend their lands against the goblins. They were the founding fathers of Renardy, the present lupin kingdom, west of Eusdria. With time, they became typical medieval dominions under the authority of a sole king, now King Louis IV "The Theatrical." Louis set his capital in the City of Louvines, on the River of Dreams. It was the site of an old lupin camp (see D&D module X9 *The Savage Coast*, page 8, Lawful Alliance Camp).

To prevent the sleep-producing amber lotuses from the Plain of Dreams from plaguing their lands, lupins installed a water lock whose sole function was to strip out all debris that floated on the river



- |  |                         |  |                |
|--|-------------------------|--|----------------|
|  | Capital                 |  | Farmland       |
|  | City                    |  | Grasslands     |
|  | Town                    |  | Light Forest   |
|  | Village                 |  | Heavy Forest   |
|  | Castle                  |  | Forested Hills |
|  | Tower                   |  | Rocky Hills    |
|  | Light House             |  | Mountains      |
|  | Road                    |  | Volcano        |
|  | Trail or Shipping Lanes |  | Rivers         |
|  | National Border         |  | Desert         |
|  | Domínion Limit          |  | Great Wall     |
|  | Mines                   |  |                |

Scale: one hex equals 8 miles

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# Princess Ark

Continued from page 45

(particularly plants) before the water flowed further south. Construction was achieved thanks to the help of lupin shamans who protected the workers against the effects of the plants. Later on, the water lock grew into a mighty fortress, Château-Roan.

Other sleep-producing plants infested the land nearby, and soon the shamans directed a general cleanup, slowly gaining territory to the east and north. Patches of noxious plants were systematically destroyed, and the earth beneath them scorched thoroughly. This infuriated the goblins, who saw their conquered territories threatened, and they savagely attacked all lupins in hopes of wiping them out. The war was a brutal one, but the courageous lupins held their ground. It also forced the lupins to build great fortresses on their borders; most towns and villages erected walls. The late King Gaston de Clairvault finally ordered the construction of the Great Wall to protect his subjects from the goblin hordes and halt the spread of the cursed plants. Today, Le Grand Mur is complete, and the Plain of Louvines is a lush, fertile valley dotted with countless hamlets and farms.

Although the Renardois remain at peace with their neighbors, the Eusdrians, the former suspect the latter of harboring aggressive thoughts toward lupinkind. Kings Louis and Sigismund of Eusdria have begun formal talks, however. Sigismund is likely to offer a pact of nonaggression or treaty of mutual support against the goblins. King Sigismund would also be willing to trade an undisclosed amount of red steel for the shamans' secret protection against the cursed plants in the Plain of Dreams. Red steel (see this column, DRAGON® issues #171-172) is currently unknown in Renardy. Both Sigismund and Louis dream of conquering wide swaths of the northern plains—Sigismund in hopes of imperial power, and Louis for the recovery of the ancestral lupin hunting grounds. If the red-steel trade for shamanic secrets takes place, "the Holy Crusade" against the Yazak Goblins may very well succeed.

Lupins are great producers of wine, grain, dairy products, cloth, wool, and works of art, and they also extract amber and sapphires from their mines. A great deal of their exports channel through the Free City of Dunwick, a city of merchants located at the heart of the turtles' sacred lands. The majority of Dunwickers are turtles, but the remainder contains representatives of just about any intelligent race, including goblinoids. Dunwick was built around the site of an old monastery of the Lawful Brotherhood that is now the mayor's residence (see D&D module X9, page 7, Second Chance Outpost). Dunwick later became a trading post owned by the LB Trading Co., based in Cimarron. Today,

many of the businesses in Dunwick are either owned or financed by the LB Trading Co., with the hired protection of the Texeiran Navy and a corps of Torreón swordsmen.

The wine trade is of particular importance to Renardy. Wine affects many things in the Renardois' daily life, from business to political power. The existence of the small *châteaux* (country houses and estates) and vineyards so typical of the Renardy landscape have a greater meaning than most outsiders think. Nobles or bourgeois (members of the self-employed middle class) commonly own the *châteaux*, seeking prestige from the quality and uniqueness of their wines. *Châteaux* range from small fortified manors to well-defended towers strong enough to resist goblin depredations or banditry long enough for help to come. Bourgeois are wealthy enough to arm guards to defend their estates.

Bourgeois commonly settle north or west, outside the limits of the kingdom, on lands that are not part of the established nobility's domains. For a fee, a bourgeois' claims to the land is registered at the Palace of Louvines by the royal bailiff (*Bailli du Roi*). This practice angered the goblins, who have watched the fringes of their immense tribal land being nibbled away. Renardois nobility defends the bourgeois, for the latter are regaining the tribal territories of their ancestors.

A jury of wine-tasters, the Brotherhood of Vintages, determines which wine in Renardy is the best every winter. Bourgeois, nobles, and the king are allowed to present samples from the vineyards they own. Numbered samples are otherwise unmarked to avoid cheating. The winner receives a golden vine leaf from the Brotherhood.

Seven leaves awarded to the same vineyard over time allow a bourgeois to gain nobility. The King of Renardy recognizes a bourgeois as a baron when the latter receives the seventh leaf. In exchange for his title, the baron swears fealty to the king, and his estate becomes a dominion of the kingdom.

Likewise, seven leaves awarded to a vineyard allow the owning noble to gain a rank, such as from baron to count. "Grand duke" is the highest title that can be attained. A rank cannot be lost except by royal decree (a punishment for treachery). If the noble's family is dispossessed or extinct, the king divides the land into *châteaux*. The lords of the manors who administered those vineyards for their noble master get to purchase the land if they meet a price set by the king, therefore becoming bourgeois. Otherwise, the land is auctioned off. Until nobility rises from the *nouvelle bourgeoisie* (new bourgeois), the land remains under the king's law and protection.

Monasteries often own vineyards, too. Should they win seven leaves, their territory would become a royal dominion under

the authority of the Renardois clergy. Depending on the number of awards, the landlord could become an abbot, a bishop, or an archbishop. Although not shown on the map, many such monasteries within larger dominions eventually escape a noble's authority, including taxation rights and other service privileges. Clergymen cannot attain royalty.

The very first king of Renardy was originally put on the throne by the allied lupin tribal chiefs. From then on, the crown remained a hereditary title. Should the royal family become extinct, the noble of the highest rank and with the highest number of leaves becomes the new king.

Besides prestige, wine growing encourages territorial and economic growth for the kingdom. The more "leaves" a wine is awarded, the more popular it is among the connoisseurs and therefore the more expensive. Clues also reveal that some of the best vintages (seven gold leaves or more) have mystical powers, such as the abilities to heal, instill joy or sadness, enhance strength or bravery, or even compel truth (thus the saying *In Vino Veritas*—although simple inebriety often achieves the same results). Of course, wine-growing and fermentation techniques are utterly secret, invaluable family heirlooms never discussed with outsiders.

Many bourgeois have been bankrupted in Renardois history, either because of a long-lasting lack of awards, vine diseases, bad weather, poor growing technique, or goblin raids. But the worst threat to a bourgeois, or a noble for that matter, still lies in his very neighbor. Competition among them is fierce, if not outright sordid. No guile or villainy is too low for a rival. Although lupins are lawful beings, anything goes when it comes to wine. Local bourgeoisie usually rush to bid for a fallen competitor's land (they may even coerce the latter to sell out) or establish a new claim at the *Bailli du Roi* should all legal owners of the land be gone or deceased. This is often how nobles and bourgeois increase their domains.

Many Texeiran sages still wonder how the lupins developed their present language and culture, which is somewhat different from that of the Guardian. Many "tribeless" lupins came from the faraway land of Glantri. There, they had lived with the people of New Averöigne, from whom they learned the local tongue. Following problems with lycanthropy in that region, the lupins migrated to the lupin nation they had heard rumors about. From the original Renardois, they gained friendship and protection. In return, the Glantrian lupins offered their magic skills and their colorful culture, which has become widely popular there.

## Dominions of "Sa Majesté le Roi"

**Duchy of Ysembragne**— Coat of arms: sable wolf head in crimson field (upper left half) and ermine (lower right)

half); capital: Deauvais (pop. 14,300); ruler: Duc Henri "Le Grogard," son of Thibaud de Châtelguyon; typical NPC: lupin knight riding a dire wolf; patron: Saint Loup.

**Marquisate of Noijou**— Coat of arms: red and argent chequy; capital: Pertignac (pop. 9,800); ruler: Marquis Francois "Le Hautain," son of Fouques de Valefroi; typical NPC: Glantrian lupin wizards, sages, palace or cathedral architects, and wine merchants; patron: Saint Ralston.

**Barony of Brégoigne**— Coat of arms: flaming hell hound over argent and azure vair; capital: Ytres (pop. 5,600); ruler: Baron Philippe "Le Chevalier Sans Puce et Sans Reproche," son of Grégoire de Rochefort; typical NPC: Old lupin mystic shaman; patron: Sts. Mâtin and Malinois.

**County of Marmandy**— Coat of arms: three golden mastiffs standing in verdant field; capital: Mons-en-Plécy (pop. 12,300); ruler: Comtesse Marguerite "La Soyeuse," daughter of Gilles de St. Gens-de-Bout; typical NPC: sea wolves, lupin adventurers and explorers; patron: Saint Clébard.

## The lupin pantheon

Much like other civilizations, the lupins of Renardy adopted spiritual patrons among the Immortals. The novelty here is that they refer to them as *saints*, holy lupins who achieved ultimate greatness in this universe. Over the centuries, many

saints were authenticated, either genuine Immortals or heroes of the lupins' history now long gone. It would take too long to enumerate all these here, other than some more-common ones:

**St. Renard**: (alias Korotiku). He represents freedom of thought, wit, wisdom, smell, cunning, but also trickery. He is the chief Immortal of the Renardois pantheon and so far has guided the royal dynasty of the Clairvaults well. Korotiku is the only Immortal of this group who wasn't a lupin (although everyone in Renardy would object to this statement). He sponsored lupins to become Immortals as a prank played on pompous Immortals of human origins.

**St. Clébard**: This is the patron of loyalty, fidelity, and family. He represents the law and also love among those well-thinking beings of acceptable canine pedigree.

**St. Loup**: As the patron of mercy but also of hunger, destruction, night, and winter, St. Loup portrays both good and evil among lupins. Originally, St. Loup was the one who kept the tribes strong by weeding out the sick and the weak.

**St. Mâtin**: He is the Great Watchdog, patron of fortresses, guards, and those who died on the battlefield defending their kin. He is the master of safety and happiness at home.

**St. Malinois**: Patron of hunters, the Were-Slayer also masters the spheres of revenge, courage, warriors, blacksmiths, and those who go to war. He is the lord of glory and conquests against evil.

**St. Ralston**: The patron of good food, fun, health, and later the patron of wealth, farmers, merchants, and those who produce goods for all. St. Ralston is the immortal patron of life.

**Common lupin**: Bipedal, human-sized, doglike creatures with canine heads. AC 9 unarmored, or AC 5 with armor; HD 2; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; D by weapon type; Save F2; ML 8; INT 2d8 + 1; AL L; XP 20. For more information, see D&D modules X2 or X9, or accessory AC9 *Creature Catalogue*, page 39.

**Common tortle**: Turtlelike, 6'-tall, 500-lb. humanoid land-dwellers. AC 4; HD 4; MV 30' (10'); AT 2 claws/1 beak, or 1 weapon; D 1-4/1-4/1-6 or by weapon type; Save F4; ML 11; INT 4d4; AL L; XP 75. For more information, see D&D module X9 or accessory AC9 *Creature Catalogue*, page 47. Ω

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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 27: To death and back

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphantian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

FROM THE JOURNALS OF  
PRINCE HALDUNAR OF HALDEN  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire:  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.

**Nyxmir 18, AY 2001:** Soon after loading several barrels of genuine Boisjolis Nouveau from Renardy into the *Princess Ark*, our mighty ship steered to the southwest. Several days passed as we continued our exploration of the Savage Coast. The term "savage" has little bearing on the people who dwell on these shores, yet their societies have remained very fragile, nevertheless. Massive Hule looms to the northeast. Far to the north reign the barbarian hordes. Great tribes of humanoids hold the Yazak Steppes. There is cinnabar,

too, the vile substance that gives power but corrupts its user. All this could sweep the coast, brutally returning these budding kingdoms to lawlessness and the darkest barbarism.

As I reflected on these possibilities, Myojo informed me that we had reached the southernmost cape of a kingdom called Bellayne. He was excited, for he had heard this was a nation of rakastas. Surely their queen would have heard of our performance in Louvines. This presented a problem, since the Renardois and the Bellaynish were bitter rivals. We might be perceived in Bellayne as lupin sympathizers, and therefore suspicious visitors.

So be it. The *Princess* was made *invisible*, and I decided to disembark with Myojo and Raman, going incognito as travelers from Dunwick. We would visit the countryside and observe the people of Bellayne, which would be helpful later should I decide to meet their queen. It wouldn't do to commit an unfortunate faux-pas on our first visit there.

I chose an old ruined castle as our landing point. The gloomy fortress stood over a cliff, overlooking the Western Sea in the sunset. The Saragón Gazetteer indicated this to be Castle Malburn. It would be an easy spot for Talasar to find. As we left the ship, I ordered Talasar to keep exploring the coast—and especially to keep moving. There could still be Haldarnic prowlers in the sky, looking for an opportunity to lash out at the *Princess*. Talasar was to return in two days. We would spend the night there and begin our visit in the morning.

**Nyxmir 19:** Something terrible happened during the night. We awoke to find our old friend Raman dead, with neither any sign of a fight nor any wound on his body. Had he been killed during his watch? Who could have done this, and why? He had an expression of horror on







his face, his eyes wide with fear. He reminded me of the man we found dead in Slagovich—the one called Pustek, if I remember it. We never knew what had happened to him. Was his fate linked to that of our Raman? The Master might have been behind this, but why Raman and not me?

There was little we could have done for our friend. With pain in our hearts, we wrapped Raman's body and his beloved books in his blanket, then placed them inside a large barrel. Once the barrel was covered with stones, we somberly left. We would recover the body when Talar returned. A few hours after our departure, a farmer on his way to Theeds picked us up on his cart.

**Time unknown—Raman, from a later account:** "Hey, what happened? Where am I?" My words echoed in the dark. I thought I must have fallen asleep during my watch. I'd had a horrible nightmare in which the ghost I met at the Tower of Mercy in Vilaverde had found me. She attacked me again and again, moaning "Revenge . . . revenge . . ." I woke up just as she struck the final blow, and a chill ran down my back.

The sun hadn't come up yet. Good, I thought, I had not been asleep too long. I must have somehow wandered away from the ruins. I started to return and check the safety of my two companions, but it was dark and I had difficulties finding my way back.

**Nyxmir 20—Haldemar:** Theeds-upon-Blythe was a city like many others we had seen on our journey. The majority of its people were indeed rakastas. Humans were not uncommon, including polite locals, quiet merchants from Dunwick, brash bankers from Smokestone City, and refined exporters from Boa Mansao. There were even a few elves and dwarves, probably Eusdrians, and a handful of native halflings. The latter seemed perfectly suited to Bellayne's orderly ways.

We entered a small tavern called Ye Olde Shoppe to rest from our journey from Castle Malburn. "'Tis not opened yet, milords!" said the rakasta innkeeper. "The meat pies aren't ready."

"I beg your pardon," I responded, "but we are tired from our journey. We hoped to find rest and refreshment here."

"I'll say!" intervened the serving wench. "You can't possibly send our guests out this way! 'Tis almost tea time, my dear!"

"Great Cats, you're right! Steam the kettle, love. I'll fetch the crumpets at once!" said the innkeeper.

"A cloud of milk, milord?" asked the wench of Myojo. "And where might you be from? I don't know your accent. Dear me, of course, you must be from the Forest Marches, true?"

Wide eyed with confusion, Myojo muttered, "Yes . . . yes . . . Forest Marches."

"Truly amazing," she went on. "One lump or two? I never met the forest folks. I always pictured them with green overalls

and feathered hats, you know. Any kippers? Or a slice of pudding, perhaps?"

"You are annoying our guests, love," intervened the innkeeper. "Let them rest, and stoke the fire, please."

The folks of Bellayne seemed a friendly people. The day went on in this way as we visited the city and learned about its people. But nothing could truly ease our hearts after the death of Raman. I could still not understand it. It was so sudden and meaningless. I wished I could still see his face and hear his voice.

**Time unknown—Raman, from a later account:** Something was terribly wrong. The sun had not risen for what seemed an eternity. There was no castle to be found. The cliff was gone, and so was the sea. Could have I wandered so far to be this lost? I kept running into crisscrossing dirt paths and bare rocks. The trees here had nothing in common with what I had seen before. This was too confusing.

"A penny for your thoughts, Raman," said a voice behind me. I turned and saw her, the ghost I first met at the library in Porto Preto. However, she now wore the leather cuirass of an adventurer and held a serrated sword. Her skin bore the red mark of cinnabryl. "Welcome to my world, old sage," she said with a wicked smile.

"Your world? What world?" I asked.

"Have you not found out yet? You disappoint me. Come now, old sage. This is your last discovery. This is Limbo, my dear, and you are the merest reflection of what you once were. You are mine now."

"You lie, fiend! This is all trickery!" I responded, feeling a terrible sense of coldness in my spine.

"Spare me. You failed me once and now I've come to make you my servant—and serve you will, old sage, for I need your soul to guard my grave." She brandished her sword. An evil glint came from its blade as she turned into a vile, crimson spectre.

I screamed in horror and ran. The nightmare would not end. Many times she found me cowering behind a rock or trembling in the shadow of an ethereal tree, but I was lucky and escaped her for some time. So it was true—I was dead, dead and lost in Limbo.

**Nyxmir 21—Haldemar:** Despite our depression, Myojo and I saw that Bellayne was a very likable place, except for the food. It seemed no real enmity existed between the Renardois and their feline neighbors, other than a natural dislike of each other. A question of taste, I guess. At least they had common foes in the north, and that alone kept them from the worst. Their queen, Her Gracious Majesty Catherine "The Lioness," is both honored and beloved of her people. She was seen as a strong and wise ruler, which was what I wanted to hear. This place seemed pleasant enough, but it was time to return to the *Princess Ark* and give Raman a decent burial, then to mourn our loss.

**In Limbo—Raman, from a later**

**account:** In my flight from the red spectre, I discovered a strange place that looked like a city. All was dark and crooked, as if the very forces of Chaos had built its streets and houses. There were people there, many people, the souls of lost creatures like me, all seemingly stranded there. Since I was dead anyway, there wasn't much I could lose, so I entered and explored this bizarre place.

Nobody seemed to mind my presence. There were shops selling various baubles, tools, and weapons—but no food. Indeed, I felt no hunger. Like any other city, it came with rather obnoxious folks, pick-pockets, haughty lords, and beggars who looked shrivelled, as if the light in their souls was fading. One faintly begged me, "Have pity, master. Have pity for one who withers. Please, bestow me with the gift of life, and I'll serve you, my master. A mere shred of your life . . ." I kept moving.

I found what looked like a twisted hostelry, where I rented a room where I could rest. The keeper, probably another lost soul like me or perhaps a deceased innkeeper himself, asked for his dues. I dropped a few coins on the desk; I seemed to have all my old clothing and items, even in death. The innkeeper looked up, surprised. "A newcomer, eh?" He blew on the coins and they dissipated into thin air. "Your wealth is no more in the world beyond. I request your true wealth."

"And what might this be?" I asked nervously.

"A mere shred of your life, stranger," he said, pointing to a vial. "Touch here." I did, and a cold sensation crept up my arm. I felt a bit more tired. So this is what a "shred" was! In this world, only one's life force had any value. I'd better learn quickly how to use it. I went to my quarters.

I was happy to discover I still had my trusted library scroll, and it worked. Perhaps this was a mere reflection of my true books, but I could still browse. How long would it last? I had no way to tell.

I spent a very long time there, alone and quiet, studying what little information I could dig up on Limbo and its laws. The city was a safe haven, but also a backwater, for it led nowhere. Many souls ended up there, afraid of Limbo's wilderness.

Those who were strong of heart and faithful to their Immortals could find a way to eternal rest, somewhere beyond this Limbo. Others cowered in the City of the Dead, safe perhaps but stranded until they decided to meet their fates.

Someone knocked at my door. A tall figure stood there, wrapped in a long black robe with a hood. It whispered, "You seek escape, human. I can sense it."

"What do you want?" I inquired.

"I know what you seek, and I know where it lies," it hissed.

"What do you know of what I want? And what does it matter to you? Begone!" This character was truly disturbing.

"Your companions are grieving," it whispered again. "They await your return

from beyond."

"No one can leave here. What happened has happened. Now go away."

It slowly shook its head. "Not so, human. There is a way. You can return to your friends, and I know how."

It dawned on me that perhaps this could lead somewhere. "And you'll reveal to me your dark secret if I pay you—don't tell me—a shred of my life!"

"Five, human. Five shreds of your life, or darkness forever," it whispered.

"Prove to me first that you don't lie! I will not let go of my life so easily!"

The gaunt soul breathed deeply, then whispered, "In the City of the Dead, no one can cheat on a pact. The law of the Immortals binds me to my word."

"So be it. Tell me your secret, and I will pay you."

"Seek the rock on which an obelisk stands. Beyond, at the bottom of the fallen bridge, lies a gate. It leads back to your world. Go quickly, for your time now runs faster."

The gaunt creature grasped my wrist with a skeletal hand. I could see spectral flesh materializing slowly on its bones as it drained my life force. Then it left, quietly and mysteriously. I felt very weak, and I could see in a mirror I had faded a bit. This was troublesome. I had to move on. It seemed to me I had been here for over 10 days already.

**Nyxmir 22—Haldemar:** At last we recovered Raman's body and returned to the ship. Consternation overtook the crew at the sad news. Talasar began to prepare the mourning ceremony and the last prayers for Raman.

His remains were brought to the chapel, and incense was lit around them. A few candles were all that brought light to the chapel. The crew entered one by one to pay their last respects to Raman. Later that night, the officers, Lady Abovombe, Myojo, Nyanga, Leo, and myself remained for an eve of mourning. Talasar then began the prayer for the dead.

**In Limbo—Raman, from a later account:** At last, here it was—I had found the obelisk! From where I stood, I could see a fallen bridge below. I started scrambling toward it when I heard a familiar voice.

"And where do you think you are going, old sage?" The red ghost was there, standing in front of me. "It took you some time to get here. I thought you would never leave that city. Your five shreds of life felt so sweet, old sage! How kind of you to bestow me with something so dear."

This evil soul had lured me out of the city's protection. I had no hope of defeating her now; I was too weak. I knew the pact was still good, but I would have to reach the gate first.

Again, she turned into her dreadful spectral incarnation and approached. Other voices then rose in the distance. Faint at first, they grew in strength. I could have sworn I recognized Talasar's

voice among them. It was compelling me to move toward the bridge.

The crimson spectre screeched and charged, her sword raised to strike me. Suddenly she stopped, dropped the sword, and fell to her knees, screaming in pain. She had hit a magical barrier around me, like some sort of protection from *evil* spell.

"Cursed be thee, cleric of Razud! Cursed be all your crew!" croaked the crimson spectre. I had no wish to hear more. I ran to the gate, and all became black again.

**Nyxmir 23—Haldemar:** The night of mourning was over. It was time to return Raman's mortal remains to the care of the sea by the light of dawn, as demanded by naval tradition. The crew stood at attention as Raman's shrouded body was placed on the plank. Talasar uttered his last prayer and farewell when Ramissur blew his whistle to signal Raman's final departure, with two long, saddening notes.

Suddenly, Raman's body lurched, moaned, and sat up on the plank. Frightened out of their wits, the sailors holding the plank screamed and accidentally dropped the plank overboard—along with Raman's body!

Ramissur immediately dove overboard to recover our friend. By some miracle, Raman had come back to life, barely avoiding another death by drowning this time. Pale, exhausted, and visibly shaken, he was brought back to his quarters a mere shadow of himself. After a long rest, perhaps he could tell us whatever it was that happened to him. Until then, Talasar would remain with him at all times. There was no telling what might come from beyond to reclaim his soul.

**To be continued...**

## The world beyond

A study completed by Raman Nabonidus, Sage and 1st Engineer of the *Princess Ark*:

"As many people correctly believe, a living being is made of two basic elements, material and immaterial—body and soul. The body results from the interaction of forces pertaining to the Spheres of Matter and Time. Matter makes up the body, while Time regulates its natural life.

"The soul requires elements pertaining to the Sphere of Thought and Energy. Thought allows the soul to be sentient, while Energy allows it to exist. It is the soul that animates and governs the body when both are joined. Without it, the body soon perishes.

"A fifth element exists, one that initially binds soul to body. This element pertains to the Sphere of Entropy. It is strong at birth, then weakens as years pass. If natural death occurs, that bond withers, allowing the soul to leave the body. Otherwise, the remaining entropic force is released in the Prime plane or wherever the body was at the time of death. This force is one that creatures of Entropy feed upon. . . ."

## Limbo

At the time of death, a soul is immediately transported to Limbo, a very remote outer plane. It is a dark and mysterious place that no living being but Immortals may enter. There, the soul may seek eternal rest or struggle to return to its body, thinking it still has unfinished business.

Chaos is the dominant element in Limbo. It affects many things, from the physical laws to the passing of time. Time in Limbo runs differently than in the Prime plane. The first day a soul "lives" in Limbo lasts only an hour in the Prime plane. The second consecutive day in Limbo lasts two hours in the Prime plane, the third consecutive day three, and so forth. At this rate, an uninterrupted year in Limbo would be a little over seven years in the Prime plane, and a decade there would last seven centuries on the Prime plane!

When a soul manages to leave and then return to Limbo, the passage of time resets itself, so a day there is equal to an hour in the Prime plane. Time in Limbo can always be measured with a sundial despite the lack of any sun. Natural sundials exist in Limbo's wilderness. The mark of the sun on the dial actually glows no matter how the sundial is held. Sigils on sundials mark the passing of weeks, months, and years. Magical hourglasses may also mark the corresponding time in the native plane of the entity consulting it.

The passing of time in Limbo explains why two creatures who entered that plane at different times will not be able to exit it and reappear in the Prime plane at the same time. For example, two warriors die during a battle. The first warrior dies at dawn, the other at noon (six hours later). Both meet in Limbo. This means the first warrior has already spent three full days there (three days in Limbo equal six hours in the Prime plane). Together they manage to find a gate back to the Prime plane after another four days in Limbo. By then, the first warrior has spent seven days in Limbo, and the other only four. If both enter the gate simultaneously, the first warrior appears 28 hours after his death (at 10 A.M. the day *after* his death), and the second warrior appears 10 hours after his death (at 10 P.M. on the day of his death). If they met again in the Prime plane and both reentered the gate to Limbo at the same time, time in Limbo would affect both in the same way from this point on.

As long as a soul remains in Limbo, it appears, feels, and thinks like its living counterpart, though it neither ages nor requires food or water. It possesses all items the character carried or wore at the time of his death, complete with magical abilities. The soul and its equipment are only "reflections" of what they once were. Magical-item reflections function only in Limbo, being powerless in the Prime and other planes. Should the next living owner of the deceased character's magical items die in the Prime plane, the old reflections of these items would dissipate and reap-

pear in the possession of the last owner's soul when it reaches Limbo. Exception: Artifacts have no reflection in Limbo.

A soul in Limbo senses when its former possessions, such as weapons, tools, clothes, and so on, are being used on the Prime plane. It also knows if they are being used in a way the soul would approve of. The physical objects and their reflections in Limbo are closely linked. The older the object or the stronger its magic, the greater the bond. An intelligent sword could even communicate with its owner on the Prime plane and its previous owner's soul in Limbo. Think again before stealing a sword from an ancient tomb; one never knows to whom it once belonged, and the owner's soul might come back from Limbo and haunt the grave robber until the sword is finally returned to the tomb.

Most spells may be cast normally, except for traveling spells used in an attempt to leave Limbo. A *teleport* spell used to move from one region of Limbo to another will function. *Teleport*, *travel*, *word of recall*, or *wish* spells used in an attempt to exit Limbo will fail. The only way to leave Limbo is through adventuring. Likewise, all healing spells and all spells related to life, death, or souls (e.g., *raise dead*, *speak to the dead*, *animate dead*, *magic jar*, or a *wish* used in any way affecting death) cannot be cast from inside Limbo. Entering or leaving Limbo heals any damage done to the soul.

To a soul, the environment in Limbo looks and feels as if it were a tangible reality. For D&D game purposes, the soul is played exactly like the live character was, with armor class, hit points, movement, and so forth. Of course, a soul that just arrived in Limbo doesn't immediately believe it is "dead." The soul needs time to come to that conclusion.

Limbo may take different aspects, depending on the character and his cultural background. For example, a character from Ochalea may see Limbo as a shadowy Oriental garden with pagodas, while a character from the Northern Reaches could see it as giant glaciers battered by dark, thunderous storms. For those without such beliefs, Limbo is likely to look like dirt paths winding through jagged rocks. The sky ranges from a dim, gray twilight to total darkness. Eerie algae and veils of Spanish mosses seem to stretch forever from the ground up into the starless sky. Even though the ethereal plants sway slowly as if in some imaginary breeze, a sound like a howling wind can be faintly heard far away in the darkness. Occasionally, a screech or the rumble of falling rocks echoes in the distance. Limbo is a cold, dismal place, with grays and blacks dominating throughout.

If one flew "upward" alongside the algae, he would discover that their other end is rooted in a land that is the mirror image of the one he just left, as if Limbo were a giant sphere. If one could dig into the

ground, he would reappear on another surface in all ways identical to the one he just left. These places are all infinite extensions of the same world, like interlocking Möbius strips. Like the Prime plane, Limbo is not a finite universe; this is due to the predominance of Chaos in Limbo.

Many creatures populate Limbo, ranging from the lost souls of otherworldly beings to creatures of Entropy and predators unique to Limbo. These latter seek to destroy lost souls, for they feed on elements related to the Spheres of Thought. These entropic entities represent ultimate oblivion for those who fall before them. They usually remain in Limbo, since other planes are deadly to them. Only the more powerful ones dare linger in the Prime plane, often in an attempt to stalk prey that escaped them. The more powerful the prey, the more it will attract these denizens' hunger. Other beings haunt Limbo as well, including Immortals on a quest or fiends with some dark scheme in mind.

### Seeking eternal rest

The souls of nonplayer characters entering Limbo will seek eternal rest in most cases, at the DM's discretion. If not, skip to the next section, "Returning home."

If the character chose an Immortal Patron to guide him during his previous life and he has been faithful to his philosophy, his soul will find a gate leading to the plane of his Immortal Patron. The time spent in Limbo, ranging from a few minutes to several decades, depends on how faithful that character was. The stay in Limbo is meant as a period of atonement. On the Immortal Patron's plane, the soul becomes a servant of the Immortal and cannot be called back to the Prime plane (by a cleric casting a *raise dead* spell, for example) without the Immortal Patron's will. All memory of the Immortals plane is wiped out permanently if this is achieved. No mortal magic can restore memory lost that way.

If the character had adopted an Immortal Patron's philosophy but betrayed it later, that character's soul will not ever be allowed into the Immortal's plane, and it is condemned to remain forever in Limbo. Sooner or later, the lost soul will fall prey to entities of darkness that wander the paths of Limbo. Truly evil souls could fall before the forces of Entropy there and join their side, but they are more likely to become Entropy's prey or the hapless pawn of some grand, evil plot.

A chaotic soul trapped in Limbo may become a Minion of Chaos. It must first become familiar with the peculiarities of Limbo (subtract the character's or monster's level from 40; the result indicates the number of local days a soul needs to "survive" in Limbo to gain this knowledge). If it defeats a Minion of Chaos of the same number of hit dice or better (minimum 10 HD), a Chaotic soul then becomes a Minion itself, the very predator it learned to fear in Limbo.

If the character never adopted any philosophy at all, his soul must go on a quest to find the gate that leads to eternal rest on planes where free souls may reside. These are the entities that mend the fabric of the universe in the Prime or Outer Planes, allow the celestial clock to work, enable the eternal cycle of creation to go on, and maintain the balance between the powers of the spheres.

Simple prayers from those still alive can help a soul lost in Limbo. To someone in Limbo, prayers sound like faint calls from friends. If the prayers are uttered with enough faith, they can lead a soul in the right direction, toward a gate it seeks or away from danger. Many clerics know prayers for the dead, which are particularly effective when said by mourning friends gathered at the side of the deceased or at his grave. Depending on the mourners' background, candles, incense, chimes, songs, Ochalean firecrackers, the toll of a bell, or the sacrifice of gifts, are used to ward off evil spirits (equivalent to a *protection from evil* spell in Limbo) and help the prayers reach the soul beyond. The most effective prayers for the dead were written many centuries ago by the ancient Nithians; these are still in use in the HOLLOW WORLD™ setting.

Other spells cast in the Prime plane can affect lost souls, like *speak with the dead*. To a soul in Limbo, the spell induces a trance that allows the soul to respond to questions (no save). The soul is totally vulnerable during that time and cannot break the trance until it has responded to the cleric's three questions.

### Returning home

For a soul to desire its return to the Prime plane, there should be some unbearable need or feeling of distress such that the soul would be ready to risk losing eternal rest in order to accomplish a great deed. An epic struggle against evil, a loved one in dire need of help, and revenge for some terrible crime are examples of legitimate reasons to go to the Prime plane.

When confronted with a character's death and entry into Limbo, players will almost always attempt to bring their characters back to life, regardless of the legitimacy of their reasons. Let them. If a player is being frivolous, make his character's path to the Prime plane dangerous and unforgiving. The path to the Prime plane can be a long and difficult one. In the case of a character with a noble quest, some help could be made available in the persons of benevolent entities guiding the lost soul toward a gate.

The wandering soul must face many dangers that could destroy it forever. Creatures of darkness dwelling in Limbo prey upon these lost souls. Gates are well hidden. Malevolent beings also know that lost souls seek these gates to return to their world, and therefore will haunt these places. The more powerful ones, fiends or their Minions in particular, will

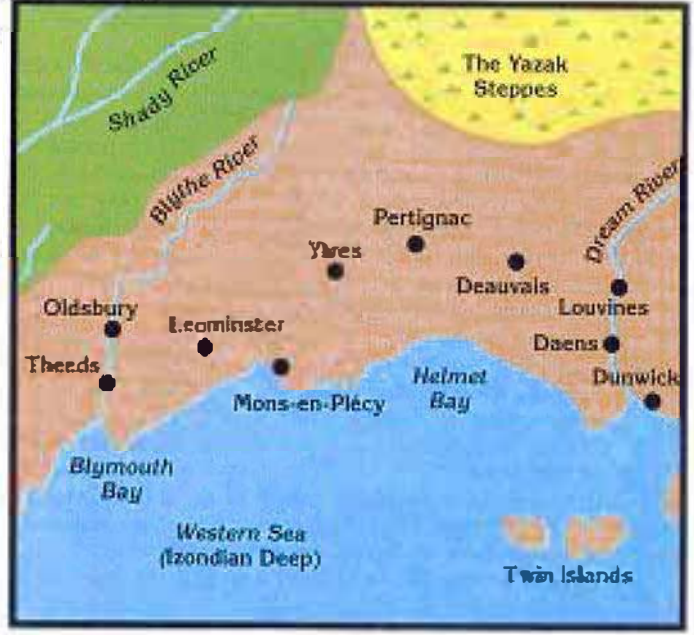


Scale: one hex equals 6 miles

- |  |                         |  |                |
|--|-------------------------|--|----------------|
|  | Capital                 |  | Farmland       |
|  | City                    |  | Grasslands     |
|  | Town                    |  | Light Forest   |
|  | Village                 |  | Heavy Forest   |
|  | Palace                  |  | Forested Hills |
|  | Castle                  |  | Rocky Hills    |
|  | Tower                   |  | Desert         |
|  | Ruins                   |  | Bog            |
|  | Light House             |  | River          |
|  | Paved Road              |  | Waterfall      |
|  | Trail or Shipping Lanes |  | Reefs          |
|  | National Border         |  | Mines          |
|  | Dominion Limit          |  | Battle Site    |

Cartography by John Knecht

Regional Map



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attempt to fool a lost soul into believing they are trying to help. Instead, they will guide the soul to the wrong gate, one that leads to their plane. There the soul will be devoured or imprisoned by creatures of Entropy.

If the soul succeeds in reaching the Prime plane, it will enter at the spot where its body was killed. The soul is *invisible* totally immaterial, and incapable of affecting anything physically or magically in the Prime plane. No one can see it or hear it. The soul must find its body by wandering the region and listening to people. If it finds its body, the soul may immediately enter it and attempt to reanimate it, provided the body is in reasonably good condition. Make a Constitution Check based on the character's original score. If it succeeds, the body is revived. For example, a warrior dies from a stab in the heart, and his soul leaves the body and later returns. Everyone thought the fighter was quite dead (he was), only to discover that the deadly blade just grazed the fighter's heart. He "miraculously" awakes, very weak and in pain but alive.

If the body decayed beyond any possible recovery, was damaged to a point it couldn't conceivably live, or was already disposed of (cremated, buried deep in the ground, etc.), then the soul is in danger of becoming a ghost. Make a Wisdom Check based on the original character's score. If it succeeds, the soul immediately returns to Limbo. If not, it becomes a ghost trapped in the Prime plane (see the description of the ghost in the *Rules Cyclopedic*, page 182).

Souls may be recalled to the Prime plane by powerful clerics. To a soul in Limbo, a *raise dead* spell would produce a great ball of blinding light. The spell in effect creates a magical gate for the soul. It leads it directly to its body, at the time the cleric casts the spell. If it does not desire to return to the Prime plane, the soul must pass a Wisdom Check to resist the call. Sometimes entropic entities will imprison a newly arrived soul, hoping for an unsuspecting cleric to cast such a spell. The entity will enter the gate and take possession of the resurrected body. At other times, a Minion of Chaos might sneak into the gate after the soul. Creatures of Limbo can be jealous of and spiteful toward those who escape Limbo. Clerics should always take heed when summoning a soul back from beyond, for there very well might also be a furtive shadow lurking somewhere near, waiting for its time.

### Cities of the dead

Invariably, there are places in Limbo that can be called cities. They offer a neutral ground where souls, followers of Entropy, and creatures of Chaos may meet and dwell without fear of each other. It is rumored that these places are under the protection and law of Immortal Patrons.

As long as one remains in such havens, no harm may befall him *without his own*

*consent*. To say the place is absolutely safe would be far from the truth, however; the only acceptable "currency" there is one's precious lifeforce. Many reasons exist for why a being might want to part with some of its lifeforce; this is usually done for services or information. A Minion of Chaos may bestow upon a weak soul some of its lifeforce in order to obtain its services for a time. A lost soul may accept the loss of some lifeforce in order to gain valuable information on the location of a magical gate. Another might want to pay a rent to "open shop" and sell goods (remember, there is no way to tell how long the reflection of an object will last in Limbo). A fiend may "loan" lifeforce to another entity, at an interest, but the fiend might let the contract run past its deadline and claim its dues back when one is not in any shape to repay. Many souls became the victims of an unscrupulous fiend, either meeting their final doom or becoming followers of Entropy just to survive. Cities crawl with such unsavory creatures.

The trading of lifeforce is vital in Limbo because it often is the only way to cure damage to souls. A soul on a quest to find a gate might sustain great damage in a battle against a creature of Chaos, and thus would want to seek employment in order to cure its wounds. The reflection of money and precious items has little value in Limbo. These are viewed as mere trinkets and baubles.

Lifeforce can be transferred upon contact. For simplicity, lifeforce is measured in hit points. The recipient cannot receive more lifeforce than its normal hit-point total. Lifeforce can be stored in vials and used at a later time like a magical potion. One may refuse to return borrowed lifeforce, but then the protection of the city no longer applies to the delinquent, and his creditor is entitled to take any action it sees fit.

### Denizens of Limbo

As mentioned earlier, myriad entities populate Limbo besides the souls of the dead. Because of the preponderance of Chaos there, the "law" of the strongest is the only one that applies. Among the more powerful entities are fiends and their rivals, the Masters of Chaos. Fiends, or Lords of Entropy, are not native to Limbo but consider that plane their hunting grounds. Masters of Chaos are souls that remained in Limbo and rose to power there. Every Minion of Chaos remembers vividly its very first encounter with a fiend or its servants when it first entered Limbo as a lost soul. For this, Minions of Chaos abhor fiends and all other entities of Entropy, especially undead in the service of Entropy.

Undead are abominations that should not normally exist, except that sometimes intense emotions or evil magic interfere with order in the Prime plane. Some undead maintain links with Limbo.

Sentient undead with physical forms

(ghouls, wights, mummies, liches) often require souls to be called back to the Prime plane from Limbo and be bound to their corpses. Souls that make it past a gate to eternal rest cannot be called back for the purpose of creating undead. Sentient undead whose souls are capable of traveling Limbo retain their ability to control other undead souls in Limbo, just like on the Prime plane.

Undead without physical forms (wraiths, spectres, haunts, spirits, etc) are perversions of their original souls. This happens in the cases of great sorrow or ultimate evil. Some souls trapped in Limbo for a very long time may turn into these beings and return to the Prime plane many years after their actual deaths.

Most undead have a goal that will allow them to earn eternal rest, sometimes good (ghosts), sometimes evil (spectres). Others hope to break the curse that created them (mummies). Most evil undead are content with spreading evil and sorrow around them (wraiths, nightshades) in revenge for their fate. Others have become insane in their quest for power and knowledge (liches), or in their painful, unbearable hunger for live flesh (ghouls, wights, vampires).

Note that in order for an evil soul to become any of the undead in the following section, the late character must have had at least the same number of HD as the chosen undead form.

**Skeletons, zombies:** These are the lowest manifestations of evil magic. Some one in the Prime plane simply animated the remains of dead bodies, which does not affect their souls. The souls of the victims of this magic may go on quests for eternal rest.

**Ghouls, wights:** These creatures exist in the Prime plane due to entropic magic. Ghouls must feed only to ease the pain of hunger; they do not otherwise require food to survive. A wight, however, is far more than a hungry undead. After being killed by a wight, a victim's soul first goes to Limbo. There, it is stalked by the wight's mind, as the wight enters a cataleptic trance that allows it to send its own soul after its victim. A wight's soul looks like a dark, frightening shadow straight from the deceased's worst nightmare.

The wight's soul is more powerful in Limbo than in the Prime plane, and it knows many tricks. It can cast the following spells once per visit in Limbo: *hold person*, *phantasmal force*, *web*, *continual darkness*, and *hallucinatory terrain*. It can also enter Limbo within 1d4 miles of its victim. The wight can sense the general direction of its victim. The energy drain ability functions in Limbo. A soul totally drained of its energy is forever destroyed. The wight's soul uses this ability to heal damage on its Prime plane body at the rate of 1d4 hp per hit die drained.

If it catches the hunted soul, the wight can instead bind it to the victim's corpse, thus creating another wight. If the victim's

soul can stay clear of the wight for four Prime plane days (almost seven months in Limbo), the undead will give up the hunt. If the soul defeats the wight, the undead awakens from its trance. It may attempt a trance every night for four nights. The trance lasts 1d4 hours in the Prime plane, at which point the wight's intolerable hunger for flesh awakens it. Destroying the body of a ghoul or wight in the Prime plane also destroys its soul.

**Wraiths, spectres:** These are the corrupted souls of evil beings whose hatreds drove them to return to the Prime plane. Wraiths usually prefer to haunt an evil place. Spectres, however, often are followers of Entropy sent back to the Prime plane by a fiend to complete a quest.

Wraiths and spectres hate all that lives. Destroying these entities also eradicates their souls. These entities can follow the souls of their victims into Limbo to drain their energy. They possess the same spell abilities in Limbo as the wights. As with wight, energy drain heals any damage inflicted to the entities at the rate of 1d4 hp per drained hit die.

**Mummies:** A mummy is the result of a curse cast by someone who is already dead and desires revenge on the mummy-to-be. The caster of the curse refused eternal rest and remained in Limbo in order to take its revenge. Nithians were notorious for this sinister practice.

The curse has the power to send a soul eater (see AC9 *Creature Catalogue*) after its victim's soul soon after the latter's arrival in Limbo. The soul eater will stalk the victim until the latter can locate and destroy the caster of the curse. If the soul eater effectively defeats the soul, it will drag it back to the victim's mummified corpse, to which it will be bound.

The curse prevents the soul from ever leaving the body, except for a very specific task that the mummy must accomplish. The mummy might not initially know what the task is. If it is to guard a tomb, it may do so for 1d6 millennia. The hapless being remains in the darkness of its tomb until such time as it can meet the terms of the curse. If the mummy meets its goal, the corpse falls apart and its soul returns to Limbo to seek eternal rest.

If the mummy is destroyed before it achieves its goal, the curse prevents the soul from then earning eternal rest. It must then attempt to return to the Prime plane, again, and seek revenge on those who destroyed its corpse. It returns as a ghost that can cast curses of insanity. Only a *wish* or a *remove curse* spell cast by a 20th-level spell-caster can cure a mummy's curse.

**Vampires:** The "gift" of vampirism is a magical disease created by an Immortal of Entropy and brought to the Prime plane in an attempt to spread sorrow and destruction. Mortal magic or medicine cannot cure this disease. It prevents the soul of a victim from entering Limbo at the time of

death; the soul remains in the corpse to rise again later. When a vampire is destroyed, its soul returns to Limbo to seek eternal rest. Vampires do not always begin as evil creatures, but the agonizing need for fresh blood eventually turns each of them evil or insane at the rate of one day per hit die it has.

**Phantoms:** Although treated as an undead, the apparition is the reflection in the Prime plane of a Master of Chaos. This is a powerful tool given to Chaos, since it can be used anywhere at any time, without the entity leaving Limbo.

The shade is the undead servant of a fiend. It is the corrupted soul of someone who was captured in Limbo and taken away to the fiend's plane. When destroyed, the shade returns to its evil master's plane.

The vision is an amalgam of the souls of warriors who died on a battlefield and found a way to return to the site. Their emotions were so intense at the time of their death that they couldn't leave the place. Their misdirected angst causes them to attack anyone entering the site, thinking them to be their old enemies. They cannot communicate and go dormant if no one approaches. If the vision is destroyed, these souls return to Limbo to seek eternal rest.

**Haunts:** The most common manifestation of Limbo on Mystara is the ghost (or banshee, for evil female elves), which was brought up earlier in this article.

Although treated as an undead form, the poltergeist is in truth the extension of a Minion of Chaos. The latter uses it to interact with the Prime plane without traveling there itself, like using a remote-controlled device. By using a poltergeist, a Minion of Chaos may pull objects into Limbo for its own uses. This is a way physical objects from the Prime plane may end up in Limbo. An object's reflection in Limbo, if one already exists there, vanishes from the hands of whatever soul possessed it at the moment the physical object is brought into Limbo. The soul of someone killed by a poltergeist's aging ability is drawn into Limbo where it falls prey to the Minion of Chaos. Poltergeists may be created only on the site of a dramatic death where the link between the Prime plane and Limbo is strong.

**Spirits:** The druj and the revenant are similar to the ghost in that the soul returned to the body sometime after death. The difference is that the original, evil character was 18th level or higher and his soul may reanimate the corpse even though it has reached an advanced state of decay. The odic is the soul of an evil monster whose body was totally destroyed before the soul's return to the Prime plane. All three spirits travel the Prime plane in search of those (and their descendants) who caused their deaths. Spirit hauntings cease when all legitimate descendants of the original culprit, up to the seventh generation, are dead or insane.

These spirits are destroyed when they reach their goal or exceed the time of their quests in the Prime plane.

**Nightshades:** Very rare on Mystara, these undead are constructs built by fiends to further some grand, evil scheme. Fiends use the souls of shades as the basic element to build nightshades, which are often sent into Limbo to harass the more powerful Masters of Chaos. Because of the distorted time flow in Limbo, however, it is difficult to retrieve nightshades. Finding the right nightshade and determining with accuracy when it would arrive on the other side of a gate is an arcane art that few among Masters of Chaos or Lords of Entropy can master. Nightshades do not control the time distortion that occurs when they leave Limbo to go to another plane.

**Liches:** Magic is required to create a lich, allowing the soul of the lich-to-be to travel to Limbo where it must accomplish a quest. The object of the quest is usually to gain some form of evil magic or a spell that will bind the soul back to its body and suspend its decay. Depending on the time the lich's soul takes to meet its goals, the body may reach an advanced stage of decay. There have been cases of liches that accomplished their quests quickly enough to prevent major deterioration of their bodies, but as long as a few bones are left, a lich may yet succeed in its scheme. If nothing is left of the body, the lich cannot further its quest and is trapped in Limbo. The lich's quest often requires the destruction of a powerful denizen of Limbo.

Like wights, liches dream and can thus travel Limbo in search of victims to torment and secrets to gain (such as new spells or the location of artifacts). A lich can enter Limbo once per new moon, and it tracks down victims much as a wight does. The souls of liches have the same abilities and game statistics in Limbo as the original monsters, complete with magical weapons (which again are only reflections of the true items). Liches prey on the souls of dead wizards, preferably ancient rivals.

Liches, though able to summon and control undead creatures, are not necessarily followers of Entropy. For this reason and because they are very powerful entities on Limbo, liches sometimes manage to become Minions of Chaos when trapped on that plane. Lichdom often leads to insanity—a symptom of Chaos—although wanting to become a lich in the first place is a clear sign of a sick, evil mind. Lichdom precludes any hope for eternal rest. Destroying a lich in the Prime plane traps its soul in Limbo; destroying its soul in Limbo kills the creature forever.

**Minions of Chaos:** These chaotic denizens of Limbo were lost souls once and still have the statistics and abilities of the characters or monsters they once were. Each benefits from the ability to *shapechange* (with the ability to cast spells, if any are possessed, in whatever

shape they choose), *dimension door* at will, and use *alter reality*. The latter power can't be used to affect a victim directly, affecting only its perceptions, and it is limited to a sphere with a diameter equal to 1' per hit die of the Minion. The alteration can be centered as far away as 10' per hit die of the Minion. A Minion can use *alter reality* only in Limbo, once per round, independent of anything else it does during that time.

The difference between *phantasmal force* and *alter reality* is that if the victim fails an Intelligence check, the alteration (so long as it is of a nonliving thing) becomes real. For example, if the victim struck a Minion of Chaos a damaging blow, the Minion could respond by showing his wounds healing instantaneously (using *alter reality*). On the other hand, the Minion could not cause a bridge to melt away under the victim's feet, sinking him into bubbling lava, but it could create this illusion *near* the victim to prevent the victim from fleeing. This power is negated for the remainder of an encounter the first time the victim succeeds in his Intelligence check. If several foes are present, use the highest Intelligence score in the party for the roll, with a + 1 bonus.

The Minion can use this ability to shape its surroundings, create nonmagical, nonliving objects, and build itself a lair in Limbo's wilderness or cities. The durability of such dwellings is largely based upon its builder's notoriety among Minions of Chaos, who will attack at any chance. A lone Minion always succeeds in using *alter reality*.

A Minion of Chaos can survive no more than an hour per hit die in the Prime plane. It has the ability to follow someone through a gate and appear at the same time in the Prime plane, despite the time distortion in Limbo. The Minion can freely return to Limbo anytime it wishes.

A Minion of Chaos can also create poltergeists. Each poltergeist it creates temporarily reduces the Minion's hit points by 10%, rounded up (or by 5 hp, whichever is greater). If the poltergeist is destroyed in the Prime plane, those hit points are recovered.

Creatures capable of earning levels of experience (the lost souls of player characters, for example) may resume their quest for higher levels in Limbo if they become Minions of Chaos, using their original experience tables. A Minion of Chaos may become a Master of Chaos if it destroys a Master in combat.

Note that a creature of Chaos can "heal" damage caused to it by feeding on lost souls. The more hit dice or levels a soul had, the more damage is healed, at a rate of 1 hp per hit die or level devoured. Creatures of Chaos are fiercely competitive and aren't known to form alliances. Coercion and fear are the only motivations for any such creature to obey another.

**Masters of Chaos:** These powerful rulers of Limbo have all of the abilities

available to their Minions, with several differences. Each has an anti-magic resistance equal to its hit dice, the power to cast *telekinesis* and *ESP* at will, and the power to cast *confusion*, *reverse gravity*, and *maze* once per encounter. It exudes a 30'-radius aura of Chaos that temporarily reduces the Intelligence scores of all creatures caught in the aura by one-half, rounded down (save vs. spell). This aura affects only creatures of fewer hit dice than the Master itself. Its ability to *alter reality* affects a sphere 10 times bigger and at 10 times the range of the normal spell. A natural 1 on an Intelligence Check is needed to knock out a Master's *alter reality* power in an encounter.

A Master of Chaos can open a gate to the Prime plane, but only once each time it senses a soul escaping Limbo (a one-mile radius per hit die). The gate leads to an area in the Prime plane located 1d4 miles away from the location of the soul. As with the souls of wights in Limbo, a Master of Chaos can sense the general direction of a runaway soul. It can survive in the Prime plane up to one day per hit die. Its *alter reality* power works on the Prime plane, too.

Masters of Chaos can create 1/2-HD creatures of Chaos called *discords* (AC 7; MV 30'(10'), 180'(60') flying; AT *alter reality* as a 3 HD Minion; Dmg none; Save MU1; ML 6; TT none; Int 8; AL Chaotic; XP 7). Each of these small winged eyes cost their creator 1 hp, recoverable only when the discord is destroyed. Discords act as the eyes and ears of their creators, with whom they remain in telepathic contact.

For the same cost as a making poltergeist, a Master of Chaos can also create an apparition in the Prime plane, using it to seek information or revenge. The apparition has a mind of its own, which frees the Master of Chaos from having to concentrate in order to control it. The Master does have the option to see, listen, and control the apparition at will from Limbo. The apparition dissipates upon returning to its master.

**Visitors:** Other creatures may wander through Limbo, such as spectral hounds, undead beholders, and other undead variants. Fortunately, not all that dwells in Limbo is evil. Some friendly entities exist and may bring help, such as lawful souls on their way to eternal rest, or guardian angels (see next entry). The archon is perhaps one of the most powerful creature at the service of good that could roam Limbo. It enters Limbo to monitor the schemes of the Masters of Chaos there, or to keep the Masters under control (see the *Rules Cyclopedia*, page 158).

### Beyond Limbo

Characters reaching "eternal rest" past Limbo are still playable. They could become servants of their chosen Immortals, or free entities in a separate plane. In either case, their goals could be very similar to those they had when alive in the

Prime plane, in that they continue their struggle against the enemy (presumably Entropy), either defending their home plane against their foes or returning regularly to the Prime plane as "guardian angels" to protect their philosophy.

A guardian angel permanently loses 1d6 HD when destroyed or defeated in the Prime plane, and it immediately returns to its home plane for 1d8 days thereafter. If "killed" on its home plane, a guardian angel is permanently removed from the game. The guardian angel gains experience levels as appropriate to its mission and original character class, and it may continue its quest for immortality if it wishes.

The guardian angel has the original character's game statistics and abilities. The guardian angel's incorporeal form is *invisible* in the Prime plane (infravision cannot reveal an incorporeal guardian angel). It can freely materialize, thus becoming visible. In either form, only spells or magical weapons of +2 or greater power can affect it. The guardian angel may cast up to three *travel* spells a day as an innate ability. The guardian angel cannot take away any material objects from the Prime plane. Guardian angels should not deliberately interact with other creatures in the Prime plane; stiff experience penalties threaten those who do.

So, if everyone in a party dies during a game, there's no need to crumple up those precious character sheets. Favorite characters might yet remain companions of fortune in Limbo, on a quest for mysterious adventures in the worlds beyond. Good haunting! Ω



### Colorful Connection: the solution

(puzzle on page 34)



# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 28: In the eyes of the cat

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

from the journals of  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAREN  
LOD ADMIRAL OF THE HIGHEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
MISCAL EXPEDITION, ETC. ETC.

**Nyxmir 24, AY 2001:** After Raman's return from beyond, I decided to quietly drop Xerdon at the gates of Leominster during the night. I then ordered the Princess Ark back to Malburn Castle, where she was made visible again, 300' above a lighthouse. Xerdon would announce my visit at the palace. I hoped that everything would work out well.

**Nyxmir 25:** A Vilaverdan warship sailed by and attempted to attack our vessel. Its ballistae could not reach us, and soon our foe made for the open sea. This

short episode surprised me. Here was a foreign warship openly hostile to a visiting ship from a neutral power within waters under Bellayne's control. Even so, the vessel came and went with total impunity, like a privateer.

**Nyxmir 26:** Xerdon returned from Leominster alone, riding a curious creature that was part horse and part cat. He bore news from the queen. He could not meet her directly, but her advisor told Xerdon I was invited to a hunting party tomorrow, at the palace of Uxington.

Xerdon felt a certain suspicion of us on the part of the rakasta establishment, but the hunting party seemed legitimate, since many at the court were chatting about it when he arrived. It was an event, planned weeks ago, that no self-respecting noblecat at the court would miss. I accepted the invitation and steered northwest, inland, toward the royal palace.

**Nyxmir 27:** We arrived late in the morning. Many noblecats, the queen, and her retinue had arrived the day before. Rakasta ladies played with wool balls on the front yard, and noblecats took lazy strolls in the palace's many gardens, watching the birds in the trees. Others quietly catnapped near the fountains, purring in the warm sun or casually playing with the fishes. An occasional guard patrolled the area. The atmosphere was very relaxed.

I came with Myojo in hopes that his presence would ease the suspicions I expected from the queen. Soon after our arrival, we were shown to our quarters. Hunting horns echoed through the hallways early in the afternoon, and everyone gathered in front of the palace. Servants held the mounts while noblecats climbed onto their saddles. At last, the queen appeared with her guards. Hunters brought the dogs, then played a hunting song on







great brass horns. Everyone was ready.

The queen rode up to me. "We are pleased to see you among us, Prince," she said, then glanced at Myojo for a moment and frowned. She then looked back at me and added with a smile, "We hope you will enjoy the hunt. The fox has been found."

She then rode toward the other noblecats, and everyone lined up with her. That's when I heard a low hiss nearby. Myojo and I turned around and faced an unexpected problem. There, riding a large sabre-tooth tiger, was a visibly angry rakasta dressed in every way like Myojo. This was no Bellaynish noblecat. It seemed we had just encountered an envoy, perhaps an ambassador from Myojo's homeland, the moon Myoshima. And he obviously recognized Myojo, who was now regarded as a traitor by his people.

The hunting horns bellowed again, and the dogs were released. Everyone rushed after the pack. An old rakasta noblecat, whom I was later told was Duke Purceval of Pawcester, rode at my side for some time. "Her Majesty is in a joyful mood again!" he said, laughing. "Today she decided to hunt the fox. This is meant as a joking insult to the King of Renardy."

"How so?" I asked.

"King Louis's symbol is the fox!" he answered. "This is a bit unexpected, though. Her Majesty usually does this when a Renardois ambassador comes on a visit, but I don't see any lupin among us."

Avoiding this latest topic, I asked, "What do you normally hunt?"

The duke turned and gave me a blank stare. "Well, what else? The giant rat! They infest Uxington Woods. That's why the palace was built here."

Of course. Why did I even bother to ask? The hunt went on until I discovered Myojo no longer rode behind me. The Myoshiman envoy was also missing. After riding around the woods with the duke, I finally found them, facing each other with swords poised for a duel. Neither of them paid any heed to my words. The last thing I wanted was to lose Myojo or create a diplomatic incident at the queen's palace. As I considered what magic would stop them both, the queen rode up to the scene.

"It seems we arrived just in time. Now, now, gentlecats. We do not wish to see violence on such a nice day. And we do not permit duels in Bellayne," said she.

"Your Majesty," answered the Myoshiman envoy, "This wretched individual is a traitor in Myoshima. This is a question of family honor. Allowing him to go freely in your kingdom would be an insult to our emperor."

The queen looked at me with inquisitive eyes. I intervened, "My guard Myojo has acted wisely and bravely in a difficult situation. He has remained an obedient and faithful servant of Imperial Alphatia. I see no need for retribution, Your Majesty."

The queen was clearly embarrassed and couldn't make a decision either way. "Well,

then," she declared, "You must resolve your quarrel in a civilized manner. It is our wish that you compete in the upcoming Tatterham-Glenswych Derby. He who arrives before the other will decide who must leave."

The brass horns sounded in the distance. "Your Majesty," said the old duke, "we mustn't miss the quarry."

"Very well. Carry on, Milords!"

**Nyxmir 28:** Tatterham lay just a stone's throw from Uxington Palace. A great crowd occupied the center of Tatterham before the race, and many chariots with those strange cat-horse creatures cluttered the streets. Admirers asked questions of their favorite drivers and placed wagers. Every charioteer bore a banner representing his master, including representatives from every dominion of Bellayne as well as Vilaverdains, Texeirans, elves from the Barony of Savaria, turtles from Dunwick, Avarican bards, and participants from Slagovich, Gargona, and faraway Yavdlom. The queen's team arrived, resplendent with its six-mount turn-out and a red-and-gold chariot.

Our rival, the Myoshiman envoy, arrived just as we applied to enter the race. The whole thing had been organized by the Leominster Tymes, a guild of minstrels interested in creating a new sensation in the kingdom, some sort of traditional event that would take place every year. The grand prize was 500 pounds of gold and a seat at the queen's banquet.

Our first difficulty was to find a chariot and suitable mounts—or so I thought, until a minstrel walked up to us and proposed an arrangement. He represented the Theeds Royal Heralds, a rival of the Tymes. He could make a chariot available provided that we would take him with us on the race. He would act as a storyteller extraordinaire, observing all that happened during our journey in order to later entertain those people who couldn't come themselves (the guilds were not permitted to join the race on their own).

We later received an invitation from the duke of Pawcester to stay at his palace for the night, where we briefly ran into the Myoshiman envoy. Myojo later explained the envoy belonged to the Kitahara clan, which was related to the Myoshiman emperor. The envoy certainly knew all about the history behind Myojo and his defection to a human's service, and our meeting was cold beyond what little formalities were exchanged.

**Amphimir 1:** We found Puttsworth, our minstrel from the Theeds Heralds, and our chariot. The latter had been freshly painted with the Haaken colors, to which Puttsworth had added those of his guild. I wasn't enthused about the clashing and somewhat disrespectful result, but it was a bit late to do anything about it. All participants had gathered at the starting line by early in the afternoon.

We saw Kitahara, his Myoshiman bodyguard, and another rakasta whom Putts-

worth described as a lowlife working for the Oldsbury Sun, a rival guild. The bodyguard was arguing vehemently with the "lowlife" about the sun symbol painted over Kitahara's clan colors on their chariot. The envoy was not amused, and I sympathized with him.

Horns echoed in the streets; the race was about to begin. The crowd massed along the route, forming dangerously narrow passages for the chariots. At last, the Tymes official waved the starting flag. The crowd cheered. With wild cries, the charioteers urged their chariots lurched forward and raced en masse down Tatterham's main avenue before separating into smaller groups to take the side streets. Fortunately, Puttsworth proved an excellent guide.

Soon, we reached the fields outside the town. Puttsworth opted for a northern route through Uxington Woods. It was a dangerous passage because of the giant rats, but it was otherwise shorter than the trip through Wallingford and Theeds. I noticed Kitahara's chariot several hundred yards ahead of us. He, too, had chosen the forest route. This would be a tight race.

Before long, we heard shouts ahead. The Myoshiman team had run into a large pack of giant rats. All three rakastas were tearing through the rodents with their swords, but it was certain the rats would soon get the upper hand if we did not intervene. Surprised, both Puttsworth and Myojo gazed at me when I decided to help our rivals out. But they followed my lead and drew their weapons, and soon the squeaking, crawling mass was reduced to cat food.

With the battle done, Kitahara grunted and bowed briefly. With a haughty expression on his face, he motioned us to pull ahead, his way of being thankful. As we drove away, Puttsworth murmured (practicing for later recital; I thought), "And so, in the name of fair play, the noble prince of Alphatia came to the help of his rival, perhaps at the cost of his own victory. In response to this gesture, Lord Kitahara stepped aside to show his gratitude. The race went on."

Rather than doing all that in the name of fair play, I was hoping to gain an edge on Kitahara. He owed us one now. Perhaps this could help defuse our dispute. I had no quarrel with Myoshima, and neither did Myojo. He had not meant to betray his masters by becoming my bodyguard and friend.

We reached the village of Rockburn later that night, where we rested.

**Amphimir 2:** We left Rockburn early. Late in the day, we finally reached Oldsbury. All would have been fine except that a band of ruffians grabbed our mounts and attempted to push us off the chariot.

As we fought, Puttsworth shouted these were supporters of the Oldsbury Sun who were going a bit too far to ensure their team's victory. Kitahara arrived about then and brought his chariot to a halt. The

lowlife riding with him vehemently exhorted the Myoshiman envoy to move along, but he just stood there, coldly looking at the supporters. They quickly got the message and let go of our chariot.

I guess Kitahara was simply returning our previous day's favor, a debt of honor. Well, then, I could only show the same attitude and motioned him to go on ahead of us. He lifted an eyebrow, grunted haughtily, and rode away with his team without a word or a smile. Nevertheless, I began to understand how to deal with this Myoshiman. He was all honor.

"I say! I can't believe this! How could you?" argued Puttsworth.

"My dear sir, courtesy goes both ways. Bellayne is, after all, the land of sportsmanship—isn't it?" I said.

"Oh . . . well, never mind," he answered.

**Amphimir 3:** We were still riding our chariot after nightfall when rain began to pour. Soaked and exhausted from our journey, we finally stopped at an old tavern just past Bromstow. Several chariots were stopped at the front, left there by other competitors who had decided to rest, too.

The old tavern was a large, abandoned structure at the edge of a dark wood. It had a dozen rooms on the upper floor and a single large room on the ground floor. Water leaked through the rotten thatch. Between cobwebs, dust, and darkness, the place bore a sinister look. Rumors had warned of the existence of many haunted mansions in Bellayne, indicating something odd about this kingdom.

An Avarican bard roasted a hunk of wild boar in the fireplace, while a Gargonan chariot driver played his lute. Several people later moved upstairs while their teammates remained in the main room. Our small group began to wind down, quietly keeping a close watch on each other as the fire dimmed to crackling embers. Lightning soon flashed outside, and the wind howled as a thunderstorm rocked the night. A window shutter began to rattle. The wooden ceiling creaked. I had difficulty falling asleep, my gaze wandering the room.

Then I noticed Myojo's sudden attentiveness. He opened his eyes wide, his ears pointed up. Other rakastas copied him, staring at something in the air near the chandelier. The Avarican, the Gargonan, and I looked at each other. Our daggers slowly came out.

Kitahara's lowlife then leaped onto the table, evidently trying to reach some invisible creature. Whatever it was came near Myojo, who tried to paw it. Kitahara's bodyguard then sprinted across the room, almost running into the front door when he slipped on the wet tiles. Puttsworth, poised to leap with an expression of utter excitement on his feline face, suddenly trapped something on the floor with his paws.

I threw aside my blanket and moved in close to see . . . a fly. A fly?

Puttsworth then noticed all three of us humans watching him. "Oh. Sorry," he said. He released the fly, which pitifully crawled away for its life, and returned to his spot near the fireplace. Myojo looked away, innocently licking at his paw. The other rakastas looked as if nothing at all had happened.

Cats. I should have known.

**Amphimir 4:** Thanks to Puttsworth's guidance, we avoided Norchester altogether and cut overland toward the Felfolk trail. This allowed us to catch up with the derby's leaders. We reached Felfolk just after nightfall; this was a small village, with a few hundred people at most. All of us ended up at Felfolk's sole tavern. No leaky roofs this time, and at least we had some decent, warm food. The innkeeper served beer, cider, port, and tea, with milk for the younger rakastas. We enjoyed a far more relaxed atmosphere for dinner than at the "haunted" cottage.

The Earl of Penwick had thoughtfully sent men-at-arms from Norchester to ensure the safety of the derby participants and their mounts. This relieved us of the need to watch the chariot and allowed a good night's rest. The final stretch of the race would take place the next day, so we would have to get up early. Everyone wandered back to their rooms or to a spot near the fire in the main room.

Half-asleep in the middle of the night, I blinked and saw Myojo sit up and watch something intently. "Leave that fly alone, Myojo," I muttered.

He slowly unsheathed his sword, which lay by his bedside. "No, Haaken-San. No fly. Someone creeping in hallway," he breathed. We both got up at once.

He tip-toed to the door, with me close behind, and opened slowly it a crack. Right across the hallway, three rakastas wearing dark outfits and red steel claws were furtively entering Kitahara's room. Myojo gazed at me for a moment, and I motioned him to go in. He quickly nodded and went after the nocturnal visitors—who turned and saw him, their blades drawn.

Almost instantly, the sound of the fight awoke the inn's patrons. It was brutally fast, with the three intruders against the two Myoshimans and Myojo. Kitahara's bodyguard was badly wounded, but Myojo's intervention undoubtedly prevented Kitahara's death. Before I could get off a spell, the three intruders were dead, and Myojo and Kitahara were tending to the bodyguard.

The constabulary arrived almost immediately afterward. The sergeant examined the aggressors and declared these were outcast rakastas, probably spies, from Leãoça, a Vilaverdan colony to the south. These three were wanted in Bellayne from a previous assassination. Why they attempted to eliminate Kitahara? I suspected Vilaverde's ties to the Heldannic Knights had something to do with this. After all, Heldann and Myoshima were not exactly

friends.

Myojo had earned some respect from the envoy. Kitahara would not show it—he couldn't—but I knew Myojo had scored points. The envoy bowed slightly and returned to his quarters. No other event interrupted the night.

**Amphimir 5:** By sunrise, our chariots had already begun the last part of the race, thundering down the trail toward Glenswych. It was a wild dash to get the lead. Chickens, geese, and other small and unwary farm animals were mercilessly trampled on the road. Peaceful peasants turned into a furious mob when a hay wagon was run off the road into a muddy pond by the wild chariot horde racing down the road. Whips cracked with growing rage as the town drew nearer.

On the last mile, the turtle team cut ahead of my chariot, sending it off on a side path. Before we could get back on the track, our mounts bolted toward a small farm. Thinking we had found a short cut toward Glenswych, Kitahara steered after us.

Our wagon flew over a bump in the path, knocking us all off balance. Out of our control, our mounts then headed into a series of large coops, flinging into the air thousands of mice! We were crashing through a large mouse farm, ruining months-worth of the breeding and rearing of fat market mice. A few yards from us, Kitahara's chariot created its own wave of destruction, ruining hundreds more of the fragile cages. In the wake of the horrendous pandemonium, Puttsworth grabbed a terrified mouse that clutched his sleeve. "I say—a Glenswych mouse. What a treat! I'll save it for later." He stuffed the hapless farm rodent into his pouch.

The good news was that we did indeed open a short cut to Glenswych. The bad news was that Kitahara's chariot took the lead. A few hundred yards away was the finish line. Puttsworth, in sudden fury, whipped his mounts in hopes of catching up with Kitahara. I could hear Kitahara's lowlife exhorting his mounts just as rudely. The rest of the pack appeared around a corner just behind us, skidding on the street's cobblestones and madly jockeying for third place.

Suddenly, a bump on the street crushed a wheel on Kitahara's chariot. It skidded wildly, sending the lowlife hurling into the packed crowd. Kitahara hung on desperately to his uncontrolled chariot. As our chariot rushed past, Myojo grabbed the envoy and pulled him free just before the latter's vehicle slammed sideways into a building and was smashed to kindling. The crowd went wild as we flew past the finish line.

The queen's trumpet sounded the end of the race. Supporters of both the Theeds Heralds and the Oldsbury Sun carried all four of us on their shoulders. It seemed both our teams had won! Kitahara briefly gazed at me, rather embarrassed. The crowd transported us all the way to the

queen's stand, in front of the Abbey of Kittings.

"Well, then," she declared solemnly, "we do hereby pronounce both the honorable teams of Alpathia and Myoshima the winners of the derby! Both parties are therefore summoned to the royal banquet this night."

Nice—but this did not resolve our problem. None of us had lost, and so no one could expel the other from Bellayne. I wondered how the queen would solve our little dilemma.

The Leominster Tymes provided Kitahara and I with 250 pounds of gold each. We donated our prizes to the "mouse farmer" on Kittings Road whose livelihood had been so totally ruined as a result of our crazed passage. The crowd applauded, and we were carried to the lord bishop's residence.

The banquet was served later. I cared little for the boiled slice of "stuffed giant rat stomach Uxington," a delicacy in Bellayne. The typical social conversations that could be expected at a royal banquet seemed to go on forever. I caught Puttsworth casually toying with his farm mouse between two courses. The local conversation on our side of the table came to a halt when all the noble rakastas began staring at the appetizing rodent, hoping it would perhaps run away—toward them. Puttsworth noticed my disapproving look. "Oh—so sorry," he said, pocketing the animal.

Shortly afterward, the queen raised her hand. "The time has now come to solve a quarrel." The banquet's hurly-burly died out in the background, everyone now staring at both Kitahara and I. "Fate has decided to make both of you the winners of this race. Gentleman and gentlecat, the choice is now yours. You may both leave at once and never return to Bellayne, or both remain at peace in our kingdom. We shall not tolerate any foreign quarrel within our land. You both have proven your courage and your honor in this memorable race. In our eyes, you are both worthy of our royal respect and welcome."

Rakasta noblecats sitting at the table muttered for a moment, nodding their approval of the queen's approach. It was the only possible decision. Lord Kitahara then stood up and curtly announced, "The presence in Bellayne of the Lord of Haaken is acceptable to us." He bowed ever so slightly in my direction—and in Myojo's, which was most amazing. This meant personal respect from a lord toward a member of lower social standing. By Myoshiman standards, this was almost unheard of.

It was my turn to repay the courtesy. "It was an honor and a pleasure to race by the side of Lord Kitahara's courageous team, and we, the representatives of Her Imperial Majesty of Alpathia, hope that our journey remains a sign of friendly sportsmanship for all. We are satisfied with Lord Kitahara's decision and wish

him a pleasant stay in beautiful Bellayne."

Old Duke Purceval raised his cup, "Here! Here! To the victors!"

Despite Kitahara's continued relative coldness, this turned out to be a memorable banquet. At last, I had managed to speak with the queen about warranties for future Alpathian tradesmen when a certain farm mouse—newly escaped—interrupted our conversation, scampering across the long banquet table. I dare say Her Majesty got somewhat distracted and even took a few royal stabs at the runaway rodent. A hail of forks followed immediately, all the way down the table, until the poor thing leaped from the table and disappeared into a hole in the wall. After giving Puttsworth a very stern look, I managed to regain the queen's attention.

Our mission was soon over. We had discovered first hand the beauty and character of Bellayne. A message was sent to the *Princess Ark*, summoning her to Kittings. We were on our way a few days later. Without a doubt, that Puttsworth fellow would have a few interesting stories to tell his compatriots after our departure. Perhaps I should have asked for a fee.

*To be continued...*

## **The Kingdom of Bellayne**

**Bellayne**— Capital: Leominster (pop.: 71,300—mostly rakastas, humans, some demi-humans and turtles); ruler: Queen Catherine I "The Lioness," daughter of the late King Lionel I of Dorsythe (queen's domain includes the communities of Chanssea, Chatsworth, and Bromstow); patron: Pax Bellanica.

The original people of Bellayne were rakastas. Like their eastern neighbor and rival Renardy, Bellayne folk were pushed back toward the coast by the invading goblins of the steppes. A great tribe of savage rakastas eventually settled that region and established what is now modern Bellayne. In time, a feudal system was created with a king who was served by a strong clergy and many proud noblecats and knights.

Many rakasta tribes still roam the vast Yazak steppes. The people of Bellayne view these warriors as brave and skillful, but nevertheless savage. When a nomadic tribe faces great hardship, Bellayne always offers solace and protection as long as the tribe settles inside the kingdom and adopts its "civilized" ways. Very often, this means relocation to the forest of Wyndham that Queen Catherine I, the present monarch, plans to deforest some day in favor of farming. Unfortunately, the fierce people of Wyndham, hunters and foresters at heart, oppose the plan and have revolted many times against the monarchs autocratic rule. Wyndham is often thought of as a dangerous bandit haven by the common Bellaynish folk.

So far, the Bellaynish have succeeded in keeping the goblins at bay. An organized defense of its land and a disciplined, loyal

citizenry have allowed Bellayne to prosper.

Lupins and rakastas competed in the past for territorial control of the Yazak steppes, their common ancestral lands. Although presently at peace with the Kingdom of Renardy, the two nations have remained somewhat suspicious of each other. It is because of the mutual goblin threat in the north that both nations have remained at peace. Over the years, the Bellaynish have developed at taste for Renardois wines, which the latter trade for Bellayne's excellent wools, tea, liquors, and coal. A community of dwarves has successfully established itself in Bellayne after an explorer discovered "black rock" deposits in Penwick. They found the rocks could burn for a very long time, and thus begun to mine the deposits for a profit. The coal became particularly useful in metal working.

Perhaps the greatest innovation of the Bellaynish came from their traditional entertainment. Bellayne harbors a series of illustrious companies of heralds. These are guilds of minstrels whose goal is each to witness amazing and spectacular events in Bellayne and in the world, then travel the countryside to relate these stories to the common folk. For this, the minstrels developed a special magic inspired by the wizards' *phantasmal force* spell. Depending on their skill and experience, the minstrels can create images and sounds to depict what they have witnessed. The better the minstrel, the better the pictures and sound, and the more pictures that can be remembered. A true master can even animate the images to a degree.

The common folk rely on the guilds to entertain them and keep tabs on the world. Depending on the whim of a minstrel and the importance of a story, guilds can charge quite a bit of gold to give the news. Several guilds now compete for the best stories to tell; among the greater guilds are the Leominster Tymes, the Oldsbury Sun, and the Theeds Royal Herald. The guilds seek new talent among the younger Bellaynish folk, educate them in the arts, and finance expeditions and other exciting endeavors. In return, the professional minstrels pay a large portion of their income to the guilds.

These guilds are so eager to make the news they will often organize spectacular events or send some of their best minstrels on amazing adventures across the world. One of the most exciting events these days has been to send minstrels to explore the "savage" lands in the southern continent. Another activity of the guilds is to handwrite illuminated manuscripts and sell them to the nobility in Bellayne and other kingdoms.

Bellayne developed land trade with Renardy and other kingdoms with the "help" of Vilaverdan sea traders. Vilaverde established a colony south of Bellayne, its goal to control naval access to Theeds more than anything else. Queen Catherine views Vilaverde's colony of Terra Leãoça

# Coat of Arms of the Savage Coast



(pronounced: lea-ON-Sa) as a mixed blessing. The Vilaverdan quasi-monopoly of sea trade in the region is costly at best for Bellayne.

Vilaverde maintains a strong military presence at the Rock of the Cats, a very large fortress and port of Leãoça that includes Torreón swordsmen and rakasta outcasts. Bellaynish rakastas show outstanding seamanship, but sarcastic Vilaverdians contend that this is due entirely to the rakastas' strong dislike of water and the amazing ingenuity they show to avoid sinking into it! Indeed, very few rakastas master swimming skills, but rakastas still remain without peer when it comes to fishing.

### Dominions of Her Majesty

**Duchy of Pawcester**— Capital: Tatterham (pop.: 13,700, rakastas, humans, elves); ruler: Lord Purceval "The Iron Clawed," son of Sir Hume-Archibald Whitwell; typical NPC: rakasta knight; patron: Belbion.

**Earldom of Penwick**— Capital: Norchester (pop.: 12,800, rakastas, dwarves, halflings); ruler: Lord Mortimer "The Defiant," son of Sir Edward Hillsborough; typical NPC: rakasta coal miner; patron: Kagyar.

**Earldom of Theeds**— Capital: Theeds-upon-Blythe (pop.: 52,400, rakastas, humans, elves, halflings); ruler: Lord Rodney "The Intrepid," son of Sir Winston Gladsworthy; typical NPC: rakasta merchant or fisherman; patron: Felidae.

**Viscounty of Furfield**— Capital: Oldsbury-upon-Blythe (pop.: 32,600, rakasta, humans, elves, halflings); ruler: Lady Meghan "The Gaunt," daughter of Sir Melville Purringstoke; typical NPC: rich rakasta farmers; patron: Pax Bellanica.

**Bishopric of Kittings**— Capital: Glenswych (pop.: 8,500, mostly rakastas); ruler: Sir Humphrey "The Exalted," son of Sir Jasper Cockerfield; typical NPC: rakasta war clerics; patron: Belbion.

**Forest Marches of Wyndham**— Capital: none (population is mostly rakastas, some elves); ruler: none; typical NPC: free-spirited forester, hunter, or elite longbow archer; patron: Tawnia.

### Patrons of Bellayne

**Pax Bellanica:** Also known as Tarastia, Pax Bellanica is the patron of rakasta justice and peace. It is often in her name and in Belbion's that the rakasta people mount holy crusades against the goblins.

**Tawnia:** Tawnia's sphere governs the people of the forests in general, rakasta and elves most commonly. Also known as Ordana, she defends hunters, archers, and druids.

**Felidae:** Felidae (a.k.a. Calitha) has a sphere that covers oceans, travelers, adventurers, good fortune, and merchants. She's an Immortal common to both rakastas and elves.

**Belbion:** Belbion represents pride, honor, war, conquests, and the superiority

of one's way. She's a favorite of warriors and those who believe the rakasta culture to be naturally better than any other. Some call her Vanya.

**Kagyar:** This "foreign" dwarven Immortal was primarily followed by dwarves in Penwick and northern Furfield; its following then grew among rakasta coal miners working with the dwarves. Being the only male in the rakasta pantheon, he became a favorite among "macho" rakasta males with an axe to grind against the stuffy Bellayne philosophic establishment.

### Lupin & rakasta PCs

**Lupins** can be played using normal human character classes (including druids, paladins, mystics, etc.). Each starts with 2 HD at first level, using the type of dice corresponding to the chosen character class, and a one-time penalty of -2,000 XP that must be overcome before any of the class abilities can be used. The lupin suffers a permanent 30% experience penalty (rounded up to the nearest 100) on all experience points gained thereafter during adventures. For example, a 1st-level magic-using lupin gains an extra 1d4 hp in addition to his initial 2 HD when reaching 2nd level; he must have first gained 2,000 XP to qualify as an apprentice, then 3,600 XP (-30% penalty = 2,500 XP) for 2nd level.

Lupins are limited to an Intelligence and Wisdom of 17 and must respect all limitations that are normally part of the chosen human class. They have no level limitation; Constitution adjustments apply only once per class level up to ninth level. Lupins fight and save as their chosen character classes or as 2 HD monsters, whichever offers the best score.

Lupins have the ability to use their superior perception sense (a combination of smell, hearing, and lupins' instinct) that allows them to *detect invisible* within a 10' radius. Their sense of smell enables them to track down prey. An Intelligence check is required each hour of active tracking (penalize the check three points if the scent is a day old, and one extra point for each day thereafter). On a successful Intelligence check, a lupin can recognize the smell of a creature or individual met once before (werewolves are automatically recognized). Although the sense of smell is treated as an innate skill for lupins, it can be improved as if it were a learned skill (see *Rules Cyclopedia*, page 86). Lupins also have infravision, with hearing comparable to that of a thief of the same level. Lupins can be surprised only on a roll of 1 on 1d6. If allowed in a campaign, all the special abilities described in this paragraph should be extended to normal lupin monsters.

**Rakastas** can be played exactly like lupins, except the experience-point penalty should be raised to 2,200. The rakastas have perceptive senses nearly as good as the lupins, and so can *detect invisible* objects within a 10' radius. They also have *infravision* and the ability to hear (listen-

ing at doors, etc.) as a thief of the same level. Their sense of smell isn't very sharp, so rakastas do not have the lupins' tracking ability. Rakastas have increased Dexterity (+2 when the character is created, up to a maximum Dexterity of 18). Rakasta PCs retain the use of their natural claw/claw/bite routine in combat (1-2/1-2/1-4) or can use one weapon other than war claws (a single attack).

### War claws

Rakasta warriors, especially nomads from the Yazak Steppes, use war claws. These are steel claws that increase the damage of natural claws to 1d4 hp each; they cost 12 gp each (or 120 gp if silvered), with an encumbrance of 20 cn each. Increase the base damage of *red steel* claws by +2 points each; these cost 36 gp each but have half the encumbrance. For details, see the War Claws Weapon Mastery Table.

### Rakasta land strider

This is a breed of mount created by Bellaynish wizards, because normal horses usually become skittish in the presence of rakastas. Land striders are half-lion (front), half-horse (rear), and stand about the size of a normal horse. They are in every respect similar to hippogriffs, except they have no wings and cannot fly. Land striders are natural enemies of hippogriffs. Rakasta knights generally prefer striders because they are fast. Unlike traditional sabre-tooth tigers, striders can be fitted with common cavalry barding and they allow the use of heavy cavalry lances as well.

### Letters

Will there be an Isle of Dread adventure in the Thanegioth Archipelago for the *Rules Cyclopedia*? If so, will it detail the rakastas as player characters?

*Nothing prevents you from playing the current Isle of Dread module (X1) with the Rules Cyclopedia, as we haven't changed the rules. Otherwise, we have no immediate plans to create a Thanegioth adventure. Notes on rakasta PCs are given in this issue's column.*

I've been able to read a few tantalizing hints about dirigibles in the D&D and AD&D® games. Can you tell me in which issue, if ever, you gave game statistics for airships? By "airships," I mean the mostly nonmagical kind like those used by the gnomes of the floating island of Oostdok in DRAGON® issue #162.

*Well, since you're asking:*

**Small airship:** cost: 20,000 gp; crew: 1 gnome engineer; marines: 5 gnomes and their gear (no space for cargo); capacity: 5,000 cn; MV 120 miles/day or 180'/round; hull points: 20-40; AC 9.

**Great airship:** cost: 200,000 gp; crew: 5 gnome engineers; marines: 50 gnomes and their gear (no space for cargo); capaci-

## War Claws Weapon Mastery Table

[P=M]	Mastery	Damage	Defense	Special
	Basic	1d4	—	No off-hand penalty
	Skilled	1d6	M: + 1AC/2	Double damage* (20)
	Expert	1d8	M: + 2AC/3	No off-hand penalty
	Master	P: 1d10 + 1 S: 1d8+1	M: + 3AC13	Double damage* (19-20)
	Gd Master	P: 1d12+2 S: 1d10+	M: + 4AC14	No off-hand penalty
				Double damage* (18-20)
				No off-hand penalty
				Double damage* (17-20)
				No off-hand penalty

[P = M]: Primary target is either a monster using natural attacks (claws, bites for example) or an opponent caught with a missile weapon in his hands

P: Primary target

S: Secondary target (opponents with hand-held weapons like swords and daggers)

M: AC bonus to the war claws' user against attacks from monsters or from opponents using missile weapons

AC/#: Number of times the AC bonus can be used each round

\*: Double damage (with unmodified required hit scores given in parenthesis) only applies to unarmored opponents

**Note:** Don't forget to apply the Hit Roll bonuses from the table on page 76 of the *D&D Rules Cyclopedia*. Double damage and off-hand penalties are both explained on page 80 of the same book. The war claws can neither be used with a shield nor thrown. They usually come in a set of two. Both war claws should be used in order to benefit from all the advantages listed in the weapon mastery table.

ty: 50,000 cn; MV 80 miles/day or 120'/round; hull points: 70-90; AC 9.

Fly safely

It seems to me that the practice of giving an experience bonus to characters with higher ability scores is rather unfair. If my character has been plagued with a series of low scores, why should he also suffer from this nagging rule?

I agree that this seems like an all-or-nothing rule. It would be more logical if it worked the other way around, since characters with low ability scores must work harder than those with high scores to achieve the same results. The harder they labor, the more experience they gain. Here is a change you could bring to the fighter's balance of experience bonus/penalties:

Strength	Bonus/Penalty
3-5	+10%
6-8	+5%
9-12	nil
13-15	-5%
16-18	-10%

A 20% bonus or penalty seemed rather excessive either way and was altered in this example. Other than strictly for role-playing fun, having a real wimp as a character now gets a bit more attractive in the long term. (Think of the movie, *Revenge of the Nerds*.) You can easily follow the same idea for other character classes.

Are there plans to create psionics for the D&D game?

No. This goes beyond the scope of a game that is supposed to remain simpler than the AD&D game. Just adapt the AD&D rules if you want psionics in your D&D game.

We have been playing the new D&D

boxed set for a few months, and our characters have reached 5th level. What do we do next?

The next step is to get a copy of the *D&D Rules Cyclopedia*. It has all the rules you need to keep playing up to 36th level. If you can't find it where you are, you can purchase a copy from TSR's Mail Order Hobby Shop. To get a free catalog, write to: The Mail Order Hobby Shop, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

I really like DRAGON Magazine. I would subscribe if there were more D&D material. Even an article on how to convert AD&D game material to the D&D game would help.

It is a bit late for the magazine to publish an article like that one. The *D&D Rules Cyclopedia* has already covered the topic of game conversion in great detail, and it would be redundant to present the information again in the magazine. Please remember the magazine can only publish material it receives from its contributors — and that's you. If you don't send it, they can't publish it. If you have some article ideas, send an SASE to: Writer's Guidelines, DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

In the June-December 1987 issue of the TSR *Worlds* newsletter, a basic/expert set adventure called BX1 *The Islandia Campaign* was mentioned as an upcoming new product. I also heard of a DA5 *City of Blackmoor*. What happened to these products, and will there be any other material on the Blackmoor Campaign?

Unfortunately, for various reasons we could not publish these two products. There are no immediate plans to revive or revise the old Blackmoor campaign series. We have been receiving mail inquiries about this series from our readers in the

past. If you are interested in seeing new material published on the Blackmoor campaign, please send us your letters. This is one of the ways we can tell what your preferences are. Write to: Bruce A. Heard, c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

I noticed that several Alphatian kingdoms were missing their descriptions in the *Dawn of the Emperors* boxed set. They appear on the poster maps, but they aren't described in the books. Was this an error?

Because of space considerations, we couldn't publish the actual descriptions of all the minor kingdoms that make up Alphatia. The two empires of Thyatis and Alphatia do represent a great surface to cover. More later on this.

In GAZ3 *The Principalities of Glantri*, there is a wealth of arcane secrets to be had. Until now, the bulk of my players were Glantrian mages, and one of the pressing reasons for visiting far off Alphatia is the knowledge that empire supposedly possesses.

I say "supposedly" because, despite fascinating rules on dealing with the enchantment of large objects, there is scant else. It would seem that, after 2,000 years of magecraft, Alphatian wizards would have come up with some surprising innovations in magic-use. My players are due for a surprise when they travel thousands of miles only to discover that Alphatia has only barely accomplished more than Glantri, that has been in existence for less than 200 years.

Indeed. GAZ3 had the advantage of having a small surface to cover and a whole 96 pages (and tiny type size) to do so. *Dawn of the Emperors* had to deal with two large empires (and standard type

size). There simply wasn't room enough for all the goodies. The empire of Thyatis seems to have been covered in reasonable detail, but Alphatia would have required more on the subject on magic, which would have had to come in addition to everything else. This doesn't mean Alphatian wizards are magical nitwits.

Obviously, there is a craving among our readers for neat, new magic in any case, especially Alphatian. We are looking at the idea of a new accessory on Alphatia, specifically, but it'll be some time before it happens. In the meantime, a good article on D&D game magic in general (or one specific to Alphatia) would surely catch our editors attention. Your submissions are welcome and needed. By the way, true Glantrians descend from the Followers of Fire, a group in existence a bout 2,000 years ago.

Who are the ancestors of the Sindians, the Yannifey, and the Alatians?

Sindians, like Ethengarians and the people of Atruaghin, all are related to some degree to the ancient Oltecs. The Alatians were Neathar. Of course, the original Alatians were deported when the Alphatians took over their lands. The Alatians were probably sent to populate and develop the Yannivey Islands and Qeodhar. True Alatians are probably extinct by now. As for the Yannifey, they form a mixed race of all the people who ended up in these cold islands, including Alphatians, Antaliens, Neathar, and who knows what else.

It would be appreciated if you didn't grab names from an atlas, as shown on TM2. Many of the names in the Province of Redstone are Irish places names, and their real meanings are totally different. They are the English versions of Irish names, and you obviously don't know their real meaning.

Mea culpa (pardon my Latin). We wanted to have an area that "sounded" Irish — which it did — but it seems those names weren't such a good choice after all. Let's assume these names were perverted by the Thyatians. We'll try to do a better job next time. Until then, anyone out there fluent in Kurdish?

What languages are spoken in the Northern Reaches?

Later dialects of the ancestral Antaliens are spoken there. Two very similar dialects exist in the Northern Reaches: Vestlander (which retained about 30% of its old Antalian roots) and Ostlander (about 45%). A host of more-or-less distant derivatives have spread into various regions like Eusdrian and the northern barbarian tongues (35% old Antalian and 25% ancient Neathar). True Antalian is spoken in the Hollow World. Use these percentages as guidelines for linguistic checks. Roll once for each language to establish the

status of unknown dialects. If both checks succeed, routine communication is possible. Modern Vestlander and Ostlander are compatible (no check needed). Modern Vestlander, although a rather curt version with an ever-so-slight dwarven twang, is spoken in Soderfiord. Heldannic Knights speak a more guttural Vestlander with many idioms and expressions that are literal translations from Hattian.

Where can I find the calendar and dating system you use in this column?

The Alphatian calendar is in the Dawn of the Emperors set (the Thyatis and Alphatia boxed set). Other than the different month names, it is identical to the calendar used in all Gazetteers. The year 2001 AY is the same as 1001 AC used by all other Known World nations. Nyxmair 18, 2001 AY is the same as Nuwmot 18, 1001.

Will all the old modules work with the Rules Cyclopeda, especially Companion and Master adventures?

Yes. The Rules Cyclopeda has all of these rules.

What is happening to Alphatia these days?

Nothing at present, but be prepared for a major upheaval with the Wrath of the Immortals set (due out this summer). Did you know that the Immortals began quarreling over certain magical secrets several years ago already? Tension is mounting, and both Immortals and their clerics are getting restless. Wrath of the Immortals will unveil the whole story

You mentioned that the Entry Level D&D products will bear different icons to indicate if they are adventure modules, common supplements, or rules and special accessories. What can be expected in these categories?

Modules with the icons have begun to hit the shelves; they each bear a dragon icon inside a shield at the bottom right of the front cover. Similar products should come in the future with either castle icons for 3-D accessories or crossed swords for more conventional accessories (new monsters, background settings, etc.).

The new map segments appearing in your column lead many people to hope for the publication of at least one new D&D Trail Map of the area west of Glantri and Atruaghin. The Heldann Freeholds Gazetteer is eagerly awaited, as are the appearances of Wendar and Norwold. I hope there won't be any major "clangers" like the mix-up over the Viper and Tiger Clans in GAZ14.

Sorry, no new Trail Maps will be produced anytime soon. We plan for the Heldannic Knights to make their appearance in 1993 in a new Gazetteer that will be part of a new (bigger? better?) series. More later on this.

The two best bits of news relate to the "Poor Wizards Almanac" and the D&D novels—they both sound great and I look forward to a new TSR catalog with release dates. Would it be possible to collect the "Princess Ark" columns from DRAGON Magazine into one publication?

Our trade catalog is already out. You might find a copy to browse through at your hobby store. If our plans hold together we should indeed see a boxed release on the Princess Ark in 1993. It's a bit early to expand upon its contents, however

The spell levels listed on page 26 of the Rules Cyclopeda are slightly different from the ones in the boxed set and in the Gazetteers. Which ones are correct?

Technically, the latest release take precedence over older products. In the case of the Gazetteers, it remains a question of personal preference or game balance for the setting. Looks like a DM call.

The 1st paragraph of chapter 8 in the Rules Cyclopeda (page 102) says that a character cannot move and attack in the same round. This is the same rule from the new D&D boxed set (and the other boxes published previously). But the statement at the top of page 103 under Movement contradicts page 102 by saying that a character may move his full encounter speed and still make his attack during the same round! I think the latter rule is better (it makes more sense, is less clumsy, and is easier to use in situations like retreat, pursuit and evasion). Which one is correct?

Page 102 has the correct rule. Thanks for catching the glitch. I would tend to agree with you, however The second rule works better. Again, this is your choice.

The fighter class description in the Rules Cyclopeda and the Companion set both say that only traveling fighters (those who don't rule dominions) can become knights. However, GAZ1 and Dawn of the Emperors tell of "landed knights" or "kord knights." Not only that, but knighthood can be given to almost every class! Which rules do we go by: Gazetteers or core rules?

When all else fails, always go by core rules. Gazetteers present alternative settings; because of that, they often break core rules. Gazetteers are entirely optional. GAZ1 and Dawn of the Emperors use knighthood more like a historical title rather than the narrowly defined game term (medieval Europe did have landed knights.) Beware of the nasty term "rules." What you call rules should only be regarded as guidelines to help you manage your campaign and have fun. No one will come after you if you decide to play the game one way or the other.



# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 29: Letters! We get letters!

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew, but you know all that. This month, however, Bruce Heard takes a vacation, the*

*Princess Ark rests in port, and you get to read your own mail on the D&D® game!*

### Letters

How about a CREATURE CRUCIBLE™ product featuring creatures like chameleon men, gator men, hutaakan, lupins, pachydermions, rakasta, snappers, turtles (all from AC9 Creature Catalogue), and good old lizard men?

*We could handle these guys (especially lupins, rakastas, turtles, and snappers) in either a new CREATURE CRUCIBLE product or an occasional chapter in future Gazetteers covering this region of the Savage Coast. Any preferences?*

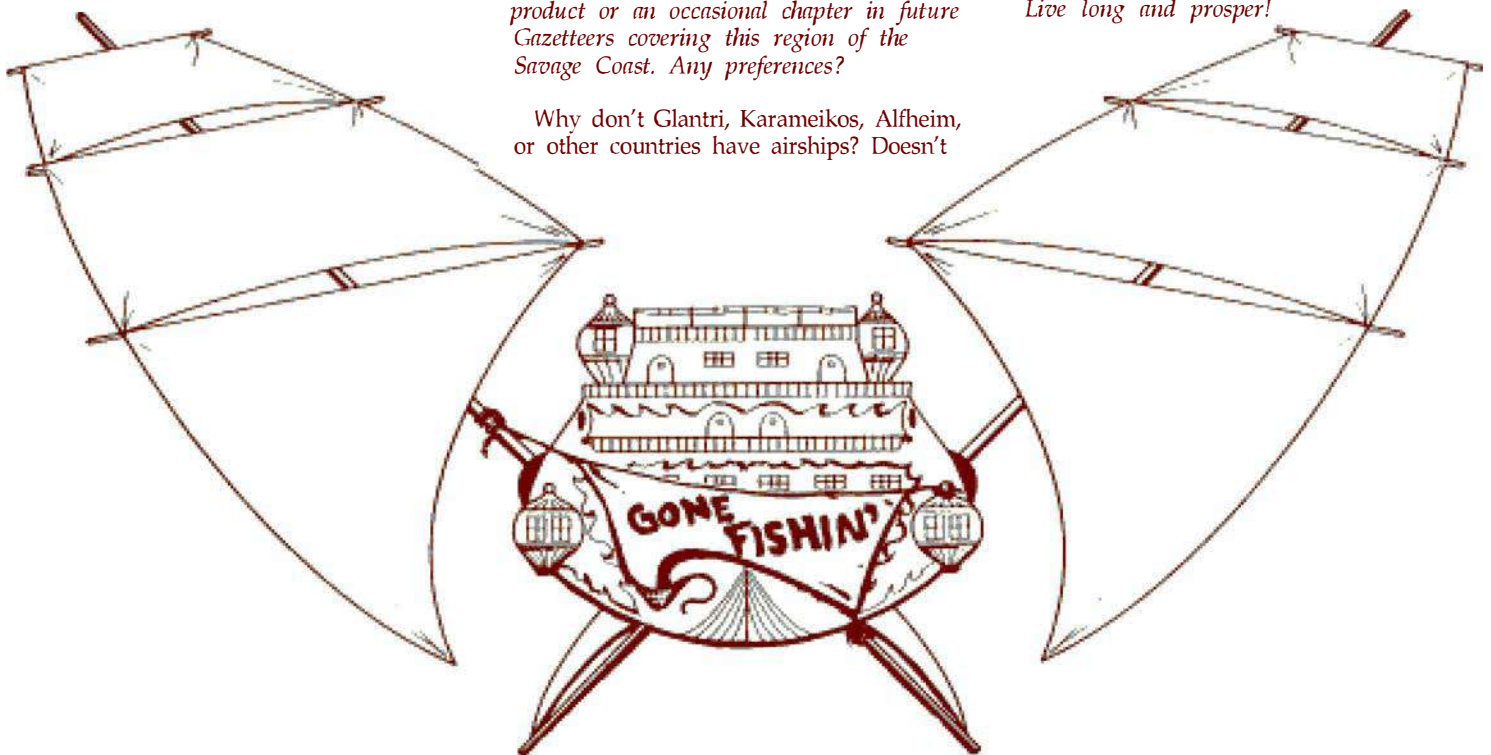
Why don't Glantri, Karameikos, Alfheim, or other countries have airships? Doesn't

this Alphatian monopoly upset the campaign balance? What's stopping Alphatia from using its deadly, modern fleet against other realms?

*Airships are extraordinarily expensive to produce, and wizards are extraordinarily uninterested in wars. Alphatia indeed possesses many of these wonders, but they required centuries of magic-use to build. Wizard-princes such as Haldemar own these vessels, and they would rather save them to keep rival wizards at bay than risk them alongside the imperial fleet in a foreign war that may not return much other than mundane gold. Sure, Alphatia could easily overrun many nations, but is that wise? If a powerful state with the latest war technology decided to go on a rampage just for the sake of using its weapons, what would happen to the global economy? Perhaps Alphatian wizards figured that their empire is big and rich enough as it is. On the other hand, any kingdom would think twice before raiding Alphatian coasts.*

I've noticed that your article series includes a developed cast of characters of different creatures and races. These well-rounded personalities serve as the crew of an almost fully automated flying ship that can shoot magical energy weapons. The ship's mission is to explore and seek out new civilizations, while occasionally getting into air-to-air battles with the evil Klingo—er, Heldanners. You've even thrown in little details like chief engineers, away teams, and cloaking devices. Is it reasonable to assume that the inspiration for this series come from a certain famous TV show?

*Although that was not the original intent, the magic-heavy background in Mystara certainly contributed to that set-up. Live long and prosper!*



**Table 1**  
**Nithian Armor**

Armor	Cost (gp)	Enc. (cn)	AC	Notes
Armlet, pair	5	5	*	Partial Armor (as per Skill)
Anklet, pair	5	5	*	Partial Armor (as per Skill)
Bracelet, pair	5	5	*	Partial Armor (as per Skill)
Textile armor	15	50	+1	Partial Armor
Leather harness	15	20	+1	Partial Armor
Breast plate	15	100	+1	Partial Armor, without harness
Breast plate	30	110	+2	Partial Armor, with harness
Leather helm	10	50	+1	Partial Armor
Battle helm	20	100	+2	Partial Armor
Nithian shield	10	50	+1	See below
Nithian scale armor	20	200	7	Can use with helm and shield
Nithian plate mall	40	400	5	Can use with helm and shield

**Table 2**  
**Nithian Weapons Equivalents**

Weapon	Price	Enc.	Combat equivalent
Short khopesh	15 gp	80 cn	Bastard sword, one-handed
Normal Khopesh, used one-handed	25 gp	100 cn	Bastard sword, two-handed
Normal Khopesh, used two-handed	25 gp	100 cn	Great two-handed sword
Heavy eye axe	4gp	30 cn	Hand axe
Mace-axe		40 cn	Mace or hand axe
Staff-bow	15 gp	60 cn	Short bow or staff
Short spear	2 gp	20 cn	Use normal spear statistics but with a throwing dagger's base damage
Sword-staff		100 cn	Use pole axe statistics but with a normal sword's base damage
Throwing stick	1gP	10 cn	Special (see below)

**Table 3**  
**Nithian Weapon Mastery**

	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
[P=M]	Basic	10/20/30	d2	-	-
	Skilled	15/30/45	d4	H:+1AC/1	Stun (s)
	Expert	20/40/60	d6	H: +2AC/2	Stun (s)
	Master	25/50/75	P: 2d4 + 1 S: d8	H:+3AC/3	Stun (s)
	Gd Master	30/60/90	P: 2d6 + 1 S: d10	H: +4AC/4	Stun (s)

[P = M]: Primary target is either a monster using natural attacks (claws, bites for example) or an opponents caught with a missile weapon in his hands

P: Primary target

S: Secondary target (opponents with hand-held weapons like swords and daggers)

H: Armor-class bonus to the throwing sticks user against attacks from or opponents using hand-held or thrown weapons

AC/#: Number of times the AC bonus can be used each round

**Note:** Don't forget to apply the Hit Roll bonuses from the table on page 76 of the *Rules Cyclopedia*. Stun effects are explained on page 81 of the same book. The throwing stick cannot be used in melee; it is a missile weapon. Druids, wizards, and clerics may also use the throwing stick.

You described an ironwood spell in an earlier episode of this column, but you don't specify what armor class the spell is capable of producing.

*Right. The spell transforms wood to metal. This means you have to carve a suit of armor out of wood, then have it transformed. Of course, chain mail would be impossible to carve out of wood, but plate armor might work. You get the armor class corresponding to the type of armor produced.*

I am happy to hear that Gazetteers on Wendar, Sind, and the Heldann Freeholds are in the works. Your stories about the Heldannic Knights makes the Freeholds more interesting. Is there a possibility for a separate Gazetteer on Norwold? Even though it is included in *Dawn of the Emperors*, many modules take place there and Norwold deserves better treatment.

*Norwold has always been an "800-lb. gorilla." Many people would like to see it covered, but it is so big that it hardly fits the Gazetteer format. Norwold is obviously interesting, and it has lots of wilderness for characters in search of dominions to establish, but we'll have to use a 24-mile-or-more hex scale in order to fit that territory on a map.*

Are there rules for determining hull points for ships? I would like to create airships of my own and need an accurate estimate of such a ship's strength.

*Unfortunately there are no such rules. I guess you need to compare ship sizes and prices with the ones described in the Rules Cyclopedia. Also check GAZ9 The Minrothad Guilds, if you have it (Book 1, page 25).*

Are there any plans to bring firearms into the D&D game?

*No. It's up to you to decide whether to have them or not.*

Exactly what is Haldemar prince of?

*Haldemar is related to the King of Floating Ar. Because of this, he is allowed to bear the title of prince. His estate consists of the lower of Haaken on a floating rock and, down on the surface, a vast farming community, a few villages, and the family mansion. These are private lands, not an actual principality like Glantri.*

While studying the continental-drift theory in my science class, I came upon an exact copy of the D&D world's planetary map. It was a map of the Earth 135 million years ago. I would like to know whether whoever created the D&D planetary map used the Earth map as a guide?

*He did. The original designer of the D&D Masters' Set started with a map of our Earth millions of years ago. The likeness stops there, however. Over the years, the development of Mystara took that world further away from the original idea (a hollow planet, two moons, magic, etc.).*

After reading the otherwise excellent HWR2 *Kingdom of Nithia*, I noticed two irritating omissions. The promised armor and shield statistics do not appear on the cover, as stated. Secondly, contrary to the statement on page 39 of the *DM's Tome*, no details about statues are provided in the "Mystical Structures" section. As I mentioned above, other than these two snafus, the supplement is an interesting read and certainly valuable for the money.

You're right. This complaint has become quite common these last few months. Here a solution I hope will be satisfactory:

Kingdom of Nithia mentioned several types of armor, including the great Nithian shield, partial armor, and full armor. Among these were the armet, ankle, bracelet, breast plate, leather harness, leather helm, battle helm, textile armor, scale/textile armor, and plate mail.

The use of the armlets, anklets, and bracelets is explained in the section on page 26 of the *Player's Tome* that deals with Bracers' Skills. They can be used in conjunction with a leather harness or breast plate. They do not affect armor class for armor or combinations of partial armor providing AC 6 or better. The use of a shield precludes the use of the Bracers' Skill, and the skills total bonus on armor class should be limited to +4 in any case. See the Nithian Armor table for details.

Nithian shields, because of their light build, can easily be destroyed, which happens in any combat round during which the character sustains five points of damage from a single attack, or 10 points or more from a combination of attacks.

Thieves can use any of the partial armor except the battle helm and the breast plate. Textile armor comes with a textile helm. In game terms, the latter provides protection against the sun only (no armor-class bonus).

As far as the statement on page 39 is concerned, regarding the statues, check page 42, on the power that pyramids have over statues. That was the intended use of statues in *Kingdom of Nithia*. The mention of the "three" mystical structures is misleading in that respect—sorry.

On page 19 in the Heavyman section of HWR2 *Kingdom of Nithia*, there is mention of Shield Back and Nithian Armor skills that aren't described in the skills section. Is there a weapon mastery chart for Nithian weapons? GAZ12 has two other weapons, the lasso and the Ethengar lance.

The Shield Back skill is pretty straightforward. If your character acquires this Dexterity skill, your character benefits from a +1 armor-class bonus against missile weapons shot from behind. This means the character wears his shield (medium size or larger) on his back. The shield has no effect against handheld weapon attacks (like a thief's backstab, for example). The Nithian Armor skill should

have been removed from the final text; please ignore that mention.

The author did not originally design Nithian weapons to be used with the full Weapon Mastery rules. The weapon chart inside the product's cover should be treated as a simpler alternative to the Weapon Mastery rules. If you intend to use the Weapon Mastery rules, ignore the chart given in *Kingdom of Nithia*.

Several weapons listed inside the product's cover can be taken straight from the Weapon Mastery chart with little or no modification (e.g., battle axes, pole axes, clubs, maces, normal and short swords, halberds, pikes, staves, and all missile weapons other than the heavy eye axe, the throwing stick, the short spear, and the staff-bow). For the former, use the price and encumbrance of their Weapon Mastery chart equivalent. For the latter and other yet unmentioned weapons, I would recommend the equivalents in Table 2.

The mace-axe is a weapon mounted with both mace and axe heads. Your character must expend two skill slots for each level of weapon mastery with this special weapon. Both the mace and hand axe skills have to be acquired at the same time because this is a single weapon. Then freely use one set of weapon statistics or the other for the desired effect. The same logic applies to the staff-bow: it is a staff when used in melee, or a short bow when used

for missile fire. For the perfectionists among you, limit the staff-bow's range to that of a sling.

This leaves us with the throwing stick. We'll have to make up its own Weapon Mastery chart, as per Table 3.

There were several glitches in the Nithian Weapons section, especially along the lines of textual descriptions not matching the game data in the cover charts. The above should solve most of these problems. And finally, there are the Ethengar lasso and lance: for the sake of simplicity, use the net skills for the lasso, and the spear for the lance.

Will there be any kind of *Monstrous Compendium* for the D&D game?

Yes. We are considering a complete revamping of the old AC9 *Creature Catalogue*. The new version will be bigger and better reflect approaches begun in the *Rules Cyclopedia*. Some of the more questionable monsters may get dropped and others added from previous D&D products, while expanding and clarifying the monster descriptions. Ω

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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 30: Web of the Wizard-King

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

FROM THE JOURNALS OF  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAREN  
LOAD ADMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORER, ETC., ETC.

**Amphimir 11, AY 2001:** Our Saragón Gazetteer mentioned something about a wizard's nation, the Kingdom of Herath, southwest of Bellayne. Unfortunately, no capital was shown. I decided to stop at the largest city and send Ashari ahead as my envoy.

She returned a few days later with good news. Although she couldn't reach officials of the royal court, she had come into contact with a noble related to the wizard-king, Duke Yaluughu of Ensheya. Ashari had also managed to arrange an audience with the duke, at his palace in Sorodh.

Indeed, I did meet the duke, a very

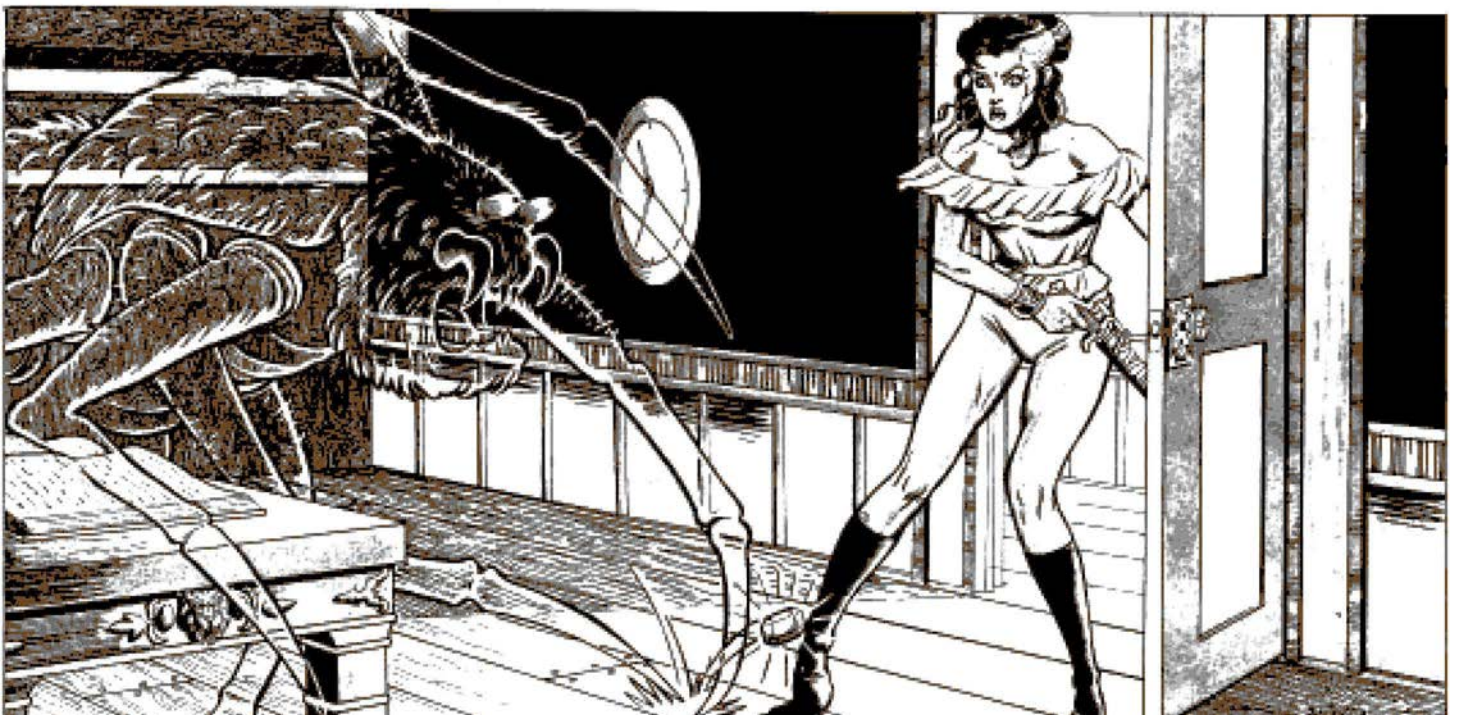
austere and somewhat sinister character with whom conversation was often terse. I finally reminded him I was an official representative of Her Imperial Majesty of Alphatia and that I sought an audience with the wizard-king of Herath. That seemed to embarrass him. He eventually revealed the wizard-king should already be aware of our presence, and if he had wished to see us, we would already know. He later added that the Royal Citadel was located at the center of the king's domain, a thick forest ("a forbidden land infested with horrible monsters").

For a fellow wizard, this was no friendly welcome. Empty-handed and rather disappointed, I took my leave from the duke and returned to the *Princess Ark*. Judging from the "forbidden forest" hint, I was clearly not to go there. I soon got a confirmation of this from Ashari. She had found that the woods in question, the Forest of the Magus, were indeed strictly prohibited by law to the common population. It was a place only nobility was permitted to enter, and only with a royal invitation at that.

I found all this rather rude. I was not the representative of some third rate, petty kingdom—like Herath! I was upset and felt insulted. Well, then, if I could not enter the forest, fine—I would then fly over it!

I ordered a northerly route at once. I may not be granted any favors as a result of all this but, by the Eye of the Newt, I would not be ignored!

**Amphimir 11—Baalhoth, from a later account:** His Lordship, Duke Yaluughu, summoned me this evening. I was to board the outsiders' flying ship and find out who they were, unveil their intentions, and retrieve any magical secrets. His Lordship provided me with a magical *brooch of spying* into which I could store all that I saw and heard. I was to report back to the Watcher with the brooch,



Artwork by Terry Dykstra



after my mission.

I began my duty after a quick prayer at the Temple of Enebaan. I cast a spell of invisibility and approached the outsiders' flying skiff. The sailor noticed nothing. Soon after my arrival, the outsiders' commander returned with his rakasta guard and they boarded the skiff. I followed. We reached the outsiders' flying ship just before nightfall, when I began exploring the large vessel.

**Amphimir 13—Haldemar:** At last, we found the citadel. I didn't want to antagonize the wizard-king further and decided for the moment it would be best to keep the *Princess Ark* visible.

I signaled the citadel's guards I was coming down, and they formed a double line and stood at attention. Their trumpets announced my arrival. The guards all wore high pointed hoods and sinister black robes that covered their entire bodies. Of all visitors, of course, I would be the least prone to be impressed by such a display. I went on by them.

I met the Viscountess of Berevrom, a lady of great beauty and mind. She was far friendlier than the duke. She apologized for His Majesty, saying he was busy at the time and could not receive me. She showed me to my quarters and verified that I was comfortably installed until such time as I could meet the wizard-king. I saw very few people in the palace other than the hooded guards. A magically animated table knocked at my door, bringing a cup of steaming tea and a few pastries. The viscountess returned with an invitation to the wizard-king's dinner that evening.

The evening came soon enough, and guards escorted me to the banquet hall. There, three dozen nobles and their spouses sat at a large table, along with the viscountess. They were mostly humans, with a few lupins and rakastas. Strangely, none of the last two seemed the least annoyed of each other's presence at the same table. In fact, a deadly silence filled the room.

The wizard-king and queen arrived shortly thereafter, and everyone rose. He quietly motioned everyone to sit down. Still, no word had been uttered in the entire hall. The queen clapped her hands twice, and a wooden statue came alive, playing a lute. A group of magical trotting tables then entered with food and beverages. The high point of the dinner involved the serving of large, plump houseflies the size of fat chickens. Everyone picked up sharp silver tubes, inserted them into the flies, and, with great delight, began noisily slurping out the juices. Courtesy demanded that I go along with the other guests. Could it be worse than stuffed mice à la Uxington? (It was.)

After no word had ever been spoken, the wizard-king and queen left and everyone returned to their quarters. The magical trotting tables began cleaning the remains of the feast, occasionally grunting and fighting for leftovers.

**Amphimir 13—Baalboth—from a later account:** This ship is truly wondrous, although it presents a difficult endeavor for spies. I soon learned to stay away from the floors, since they create glowing marks around footsteps. Fortunately, the wooden bulkheads were no match for my eight claws, and I could easily cling to them and to the ceilings and move unhindered. The stairways, also magically protected, forced me to waste precious *dispel magic* spells to get through. I heard the outsiders' officers utter magical words before entering certain areas, and I concluded some doors were also enchanted. I quickly followed them into those rooms I wanted to visit.

After long hours of poring over an immensely revealing log book in the quarters of the outsiders' commander, I examined a big gem, a fiery topaz of great value. Surely, it must be the magical stone mentioned in the entry dated Andrumir 15 in Jaibul. The Watcher will be pleased with it.

An outsider female then unexpectedly entered the room. Surprised, I dropped the precious stone. The female did not see me but noticed the gem fall to the floor. She looked perplexed, then began moving back toward the door. I picked up the gem as she turned back, and tried slipping past her, but she caught one of my legs in the door. I screamed.

The female immediately started slashing wildly with a short sword she had quickly drawn, wounding me badly. Some of my ichor stained the floor, and the female sounded the alarm. I had to flee, triggering almost every magical ward in my way. I then ran into a row of heavily armed outsiders standing on the deck. Next to them was a tall, hairless outsider with a big hammer. I hate big hammers. Seeing my ichor spilling on the deck, the bald outsider cast a spell that negated my *invisibility*. Almost instantly, the other outsiders started firing *lightning bolts* at me.

Fools! Their aim could not match my superior agility. I leaped out of harm's way and clung to the underside of the ship. I immediately secreted a long strand of silk and began descending toward the forest. I had to warn The Watcher I had been seen.

**Amphimir 13—Xerdon, from a later account:** A monstrous creature was aboard the *Princess Ark* late this night. Lady Abovombe reported she had heard some noise in the admiral's quarters and went to investigate. There she saw an object fall to the floor for no apparent reason, which it seems had been held by an *invisible* creature that Lady Abovombe wounded shortly thereafter while it was caught in the doorway. The alarm was sounded, but the creature escaped. It appears the creature stole a precious object from the captain's quarters. Nyanga and I are going down into the forest to pursue the creature.

**Amphimir 14—Haldemar:** At last, I had a chance to meet the wizard-king. He pointed out that he was a busy man, but

he would do what he could to accommodate me. We discussed that which wizards often enjoy to chatting about. He said he was an astrologer by profession and could see in the stars some of the great events of this world. He gazed at me for an instant and added he had seen in the stars the end of a great empress. Treachery from an ancient mountain wizard threatened her rule. He said perhaps I had something to do with this, and I should return to Alpha-tia to seek out the danger. Then he burst into diabolical laughter. Surely, this was a joke. There were no mountain wizards threatening Her Imperial Majesty. There couldn't be.

The meeting came to an end, and I was asked to leave. The wizard-king needed to work on a complicated problem of astrology, and he required absolute silence and tranquility. The viscountess escorted me back to the tower on which I had originally alighted, and she bid me farewell as I climbed aboard the life boat. The leaving seemed too easy. There was something very odd about the wizard-king's jest. This monarch seemed decidedly too suspicious to me, and I wanted to know more. As the skiff flew back toward the *Princess Ark*, I instructed the sailor to keep going and to ask Commander Talasar to feign a departure and turn the ship *invisible*. I cast a spell of *invisibility* of my own, and flew back to the wizard-king's keep. I was intent on figuring this wizard out once and for all.

**Amphimir 14—Baalboth, from a later account:** By Yehm, what arrogance! The outsiders have followed me down into the Forbidden Forest. Blasted be this wound that slows me. This will be the outsiders' undoing. I know cousins of the Astafirs have a village nearby. They'll help, I'm sure of it.

**Amphimir 14—Xerdon, from a later account:** The creature left footprints in the forest's soft soil. A *light* spell prolonged our search into the night hours. We were getting closer to our fugitive when we ran into trouble. A magical illusion concealed the terrain before us, which caused both of us to fall into a ravine—or, rather, into a very large spider web in the ravine. Our legs were caught. Three huge spiders approached, while a fourth, wounded, remained aloof. One of them hissed and clicked, "Now you die, outsiders! "

Nyanga glanced at me and asked with a grin, "You be ready; mohn?" His giant blade hummed as he tore a wide gap through the web. We fell heavily into the bushes underneath, as the three spiders reached the gap. Just then I cast a *wall of fire* around the spiders, setting the entire web ablaze. The spiders had no choice but to jump off as well. The rest was standard procedure; the three giant arachnids were soon chopped to bits. The wounded one fled.

Both of us had seen creatures such as these, in the rain forest of Yavdlom and

the dark woods of Shye Lawr and Blackheart. Araneas—vile intelligent spiders, deadly creatures. What they wanted with us, I had no idea. But we had to capture the fugitive, alive.

**Amphimir 14—Haldemar, later that night:** I finally managed to get past the hooded guards and the magical wards that defended the wizard-king. Carefully, I snuck into his quarters. There, I discovered a semicircular door, about 3' high. It was a secret door that someone had considerably left open.

It led to a spiral staircase to the top of the keep. There, hidden under a one-way mirror dome, was a huge spider web. At its center stood a giant spider, gazing at the stars through a looking glass, or "longview." I cast a wizard eye and sent it closer to the spider. There it was, watching through its longview, and making notes with little insectlike fingers.

The creature wrote in a language I couldn't read, but I did recognize an old rune. It came from an alphabet once taught to young Alphatian students of wizardry. The rune alluded to Followers of the Fire, ancient foes from Alphatian mythology. More followed, among which I recognized the symbol of Alphatia, the Immortal. I had to unveil this mystery, at any cost.

Suddenly, the web vibrated, like the cord on a lute, but much deeper. The spider hissed and clicked as it put away its longview. Images appeared in the web, near the center. It was Xerdon and Nyanga. What were they doing in the forest? I saw them fall into a giant web, escape, and defeat three large spiders.

The creature I was watching dissipated the image and moved to the edge of the web where I was. I hid in a corner, hoping it wouldn't see me. Indeed, it went out through the open secret door. This was the chance I was hoping for. I crossed the large chamber and reached spiraling stairs at the center, which led up to the web's nexus. There, I stretched up to reach the notes, carefully avoiding the mess of sticky strands. Unfortunately, my sleeve caught some of the web and caused vibrations to ripple all the way out. The spider reappeared at the door—and then fled!

Drat! It will alert the guards. I shoved the notes into my shirt and ran after the creature. I heard a door slam and a lock bolt shut just as I crawled back into the other room. The spider was gone, but the wizard-king stood there, holding a key. He cast a spell that ended my *invisibility*. Beside him, 30 guards aimed cocked crossbows at me.

"I seriously advise you not to make a move nor to utter a word, admiral. These guards are very twitchy. You have come here without an invitation and disturbed my research. Despite all, I have received and entertained you at my court. And you have the gall to return here, like a thief, to spy on my research and annoy my familiar. Worse yet, your men have entered the

forbidden forest and harmed my pets. This angers me greatly. I have no concern for what nation you belong to, nor do I care about who you might think you are, admiral. Since you are so interested in Herath, I invite you to extend your stay among us for some time—a very long stay, admiral. Guards, throw this fiend to the dungeons!" I was trapped and defenseless. The wizard-king cast a *web* spell at me, and the guards carried me to the dungeons.

**Amphimir 15—Baalboth, from a later account:** Enebaan the Wise has abandoned me. I've had no rest since my flight from the outsiders' ship. My pursuers haven't halted their hunt, and they are but a few instants behind me. I am exhausted. The death of the Astafir cousins causes me great sadness. They must be avenged. There is still hope for this. I must reach the citadel. I must keep going. The tunnel is close.

**Amphimir 15—Talaras, from a later account:** Late last night, the wizard-king's guards treacherously attacked the ship despite our *invisibility*. The wizards in the citadel must have discovered our presence and directed their troops' fire. I fear the admiral was either discovered or captured in his covert visit to the citadel.

The attack began just past midnight when the guards began firing globs of webbing from the highest towers of the citadel, probably in an attempt to pull the Princess down. Failing this, giant spiders attempted to climb aboard, running up the silk strands, but we successfully repelled their assault. Unfortunately, the citadel used a magical shield that absorbed the Princess's breath weapon. It proved only marginally effective against the assaulting spiders. The boltmen now show signs of fatigue after this long night of fighting. The sight of so many giant spiders severely tested their nerves.

The aft sight spotted packs of spiders gathering in the citadel. They seemed to be coming from the forest en masse. They must be preparing for a massive assault. Vats of boiling slime from which the webbing shots came have been replenished. With the sun rising above the forest the crew finally managed to cut off the majority of the web strands that held us fast despite volleys of arrows. We lost several sailors overboard due to the arrows and stray web strands; those who survived their fall were mercilessly slaughtered by the giant spiders. This is perhaps our last chance to leave, for another assault would certainly crush our defenses.

Alas, I've yet received no message from either the admiral or our hunting team. In the face of the grave danger threatening the *Princess Ark*, I am obliged to order her withdrawal to a safer altitude. I pray to Razud that our companions are safe. I will advise a new course of action as soon as the *Princess Ark* is out of danger.

**Amphimir 15—Xerdon, from a**

**later account:** It was fortunate that the sky had remained heavily overcast this night, for we would have otherwise lost track of the fugitive. When my magical *light* had run out, *infravision* revealed faint spots of warmth on the leaves and on the soil, no doubt ichor from the monster's injury. My experience in tracking the woods of Blackheart had again paid off. By sunrise, the spots of ichor and the footprints had led us to a small cottage. We knew the fugitive hid there.

Nyanga kicked the door open, and a woman screamed. There stood a wench whom I took to be the wife of a forester. She had almost convinced us she had seen no monster, but said she had heard some noise in the rafters. As I considered her words, Nyanga noticed blood dripping from her hand. Before I could intervene, his blade swung wide, beheading the wench.

"Eh mohn," he said to my horrified protests, "I be sure de monster spirit be inside her. I be taking no chances with de magical spiders." He had a point. The wench's wounds did look like several deep sword slashes, yet there really was no way to tell. She looked very human to me, even in death. This could mean trouble later.

A search revealed a black brooch, a fiery topaz, thieves' tools packed in a weblike net, the remains of a pickled house fly the size of a chicken, and a secret passage leading down to a tunnel. It ran for hours. We finally reached the bottom of a dungeon well, just above the surface of muddy, fetid water. Unidentifiable, putrid flesh bobbed at the surface as we forced the tunnel's rusty grate open. I cast a *dimension door* to reach the top of the well and tossed a rope to Nyanga. Just then, we heard shouting and the sound of people running toward us. Perhaps we had triggered some unseen alarm.

Madly racing down the hallway came the admiral, shouting "Jump back, you fools! Jump!" A few paces behind him followed a crawling mass of huge, repulsive spiders, hissing and clicking furiously. All three of us reached the bottom of the foul pit in no time. Nyanga slammed the tunnels metal grate behind us.

Choking and gagging, the admiral sputtered a spell with such volubility I thought for a moment the spell would fail. But just as the spiders ripped the grate right off its hinges, the *travel* spell took effect. At last, we were back on our way to the *Princess Ark*.

**Amphimir 15—Haldemar, epilogue:** I congratulated Talaras and Xerdon for a job well done, as well as Lady Abovombe, without whose alertness many questions would have remained unanswered today. The ship was safely headed north. Xerdon had retrieved from the intruder—the creature called Baalboth—the stolen Jaibuli topaz and a magical black brooch. The latter turned out to contain Baalboth's comments, magically etched inside—comments that I have en-

tered into my log book at the appropriate spots. I can only hope it really was Baalboth that Nyanga eliminated. It knew far too much about the *Princess Ark* for my own comfort.

From this and what I had seen in the citadel, I must conclude the wizard-king has allied himself with a tribe of araneas, either by common accord or by coercion. Was the Great Magus an aranea himself? I strongly suspect it but don't have irrefutable proof. Wizards do have strange ways at times.

More interesting were the notes taken from the spider in the wizard-king's keep. The dungeon's muddy sludge had ruined part of the parchment, but Raman still helped me decipher the runes that survived. There were hints to waves of magical power being sucked into Glantri, a nation northwest of Thyatis. The wizard-king of Herath had scribbled some concerned comment that perhaps this had to do with the overall impoverishment of mortal magic on Mystara, our "Known World." I had no idea what he was alluding to, but the thought was nevertheless worrisome. The wizard-king of Herath seemed neither a prankster nor an incompetent fool. I would have to investigate this myself soon. Perhaps his warning should be brought back to Her Imperial Majesty after all.

*To be continued...*

## **The Lands of the Great Magus Magocracy of Herath** —Capital:

Belpheon (pop.: 186,000 araneas—absolutely no outsiders); ruler: Wizard-king Yahav IV "The Watcher," son of Queen-Sorceress Amsharai II (hereditary domain includes the Forest of the Magus); patron: Yehm.

The araneas of the Savage Coast are a secret race; no one knows that they really exist, because these araneas have learned to take the shape of humanoid creatures when dealing with outsiders. (Note: "Humanoid" throughout the following text includes humans, demihumans, goblinoids, rakastas, turtles, lupins, etc.). Araneas are spiderfolk, highly intelligent beings that look like human-sized spiders in their natural shape.

Over the centuries, araneas learned to use magic to subdue their environment. They also developed a unique culture that, if cold and amoral, remains nevertheless quite pragmatic. Araneas are predators to whom humanoid flesh remains a delicacy. Because of this and their clearly arachnid morphology, other races loathe the very mention of araneas. Unruly children from rakasta cottages to goblin yurts are often told stories about how scary araneas come and take away disrespectful youngsters. Had the araneas not learned to conceal their identities, the neighboring realms would have annihilated the aranean nation long ago. Today, araneas of the Savage Coast are thought to be the stuff of legends, mere mythology of the past.

Thus, as the aranean nation grew, laws and customs that reflected their behavior and mentality were created. The young araneas of Herath are taught from birth that they are *two* different people. One is the true aranea, the other is a humanoid alter-ego. The aranea's two personalities are very distinct, with two separate sets of histories and personal experiences that the aranea learns to accept as legitimate identities. This is done to ensure that the aranea will play its alter-ego's role to perfection in order to better fool outsiders. Indeed, the practice has largely succeeded thanks in a great part to the araneas' superior intellect.

However, the practice does present a risk. Some araneas develop split personalities. When this happens to an aranea, it no longer knows it has a second personality and forgets what it did under its other personality. A psychotic aranea will almost always revert to its natural mind and shape when in presence of araneas in arachnid shape (95% chance). If it fails, it becomes permanently insane in that it forever forgets about its true nature and everything pertaining to araneas, save perhaps some common humanoid legends and folklore about araneas. So deeply ingrained is the aranea's double-personality teaching that a psychotic aranea will always shut down its aranean self and switch to its humanoid alter-ego when in presence of outsiders. (One of the secret aranean laws demands that araneas switch to their humanoid form whenever they prepare to leave the Forest of the Magus.)

A further limitation exists on an aranea's shape-changing ability. It can switch only between its two specific alter egos; it cannot use humanoid or aranean identities other than the two given it at birth by aranean sages. These two original identities are chosen in accordance with the aranea's family lineage. An aranea of noble birth will be given a noble humanoid identity (e.g., the family of a "human" baron is most likely to be a single aranean family).

Aranean imitation and acting are so good that an aranea can hardly tell whether or not a character met for the first time is an aranea. Furthermore, if wounded or killed in humanoid form, an aranea does not revert back to its arachnid body. Dispel magic cast at 20th level or higher is necessary to force an aranea to adopt its true form. This fosters a certain element of confusion very useful to intruding adventurers.

No one knows for sure exactly where araneas came from. Some say they were a creation of the Immortals, an experiment with a race that was left unchecked. Others surmise they came from other worlds and adapted to Mystara. In any case, there are several aranea realms on Mystara, all of which are exceedingly well concealed.

Savage Coast araneas spread out from the area that is presently their capital, at the center of the Forest of the Magus.

Beneath the citadel lies a huge network of caverns that saw aranean prehistory. There, primitive paintings and carvings remain a silent testimony on how long they've existed below the earth. Armed with their incredible abilities, the aranean advance remained unchecked within the confines of their dark forest, a thick wilderness only rarely visited by primitive hunters.

When they reached the outer limits of their forest, the araneas had already developed their shape-changing skills. They also knew of the humanoids' hatred and fear of things arachnid. Under their impenetrable disguises, araneas began mingling with their primitive neighbors and soon came to think humanoids were their inferiors. They believed that the aranean Immortals put the "savages" there for the araneas' benefit—as succulent edibles at first, as convenient armies next, and finally as a precious source of labor, revenue, and sometimes even magical innovation. However, in the Immortals' infinite wisdom, "savages" were made dangerous and wonderfully varied so that their gift could not be abused and so araneas would learn and inspire themselves.

In the past centuries, Savage Coast araneas posed as wizards and slowly established their magocracy. Seizing power in the region without drawing suspicion from the local folks proved to be an easy task for the crafty araneas. Over the years, four "wizards" established large domains and imposed their authority on the people there. Finally, the "wizards" declared allegiance to the "Great Magus in the Forest," and "united" their domains into a single, large realm. Nonaranean wizards are unwelcome and promptly and quietly removed from any position of power there. Today, the aranean realm stretches from Bellayne to the northern edge of the Dark Jungle in the Orc's Head Peninsula, and goes about 140 miles inland from its shore on the Western Sea.

The common folk of Herath have grown accustomed to the thought of their ruler being a quiet and reclusive wizard, "over there in his tower at the heart of the dark forest." They have had no reason to complain of their treatment or suspect the truth about the ruling nobility. Their fate is comparable to any other nation's subjects' save for people who occasionally "disappear" without explanation.

Once in a while, the Great Magus (in humanoid shape) visits one town or another or the court of his vassals. Most of the time, envoys or vassal nobles will conduct business with visiting dignitaries on behalf of the Great Magus. So far, no monarch abroad has had reasons to suspect anything, other than the natural distrust of magocracies—wizards can be strange, indeed. The Forest of the Magus is off-limits to all uninvited people. In any case, none of the local folk would enter that forest, since it is rumored to be haunted and infested with monsters—a



perfect place for wizards.

The Great Magus lives in what could be called the capital of the araneas. It is a great citadel where araneas enjoy going about in their true shapes. There, the most brilliant aranean minds help the Great Magus determine his nation's fate and rule his subjects, humanoid and aranean. The citadel reaches 100' into the air but delves 10 times deeper below ground, connecting with ancient caverns where many more araneas dwell. The deepest and oldest caverns hold sacred grounds for temples, as well as dark secrets and clues to the true origins of araneas.

Six fortresses delineate the Great Magus' domain. Each is the home base for aranea patrols (in humanoid shape) that guard the edge of the woods. The fortresses connect with each other and with the Great Magus' citadel through tunnels and caverns. Each fortress is a magical building that marks the edge of the Magus' magical power.

An invisible web of magic emanates from the citadel and affects the forest. The web is an immaterial extension of the Great Magus' mind, allowing him to sense everything inside the forest, including the predominant feelings and physical sensations of visitors. If an animal is killed, the Magus may sense it, but the Magus cannot actually read someone's thoughts, only the surface impressions.

The greater the extent of the sensations (e.g., many warriors fighting in a small area of the forest), the more the attention of the Magus is likely to be attracted; this chance is 1% per 10 HD or levels of creatures involved in a single event (round up fractions, with a 1% minimum chance per roll). If the Great Magus expects trouble somewhere and actively searches the web, the chances he'll notice some activity go up to 5% per 10 HD.

Once the Magus' attention has been caught, the Magus can "lock" his attention on a specific individual in a party, usually the one with the highest experience level or the greatest number of Hit Dice. The Magus will not know who that individual is, but he will sense where the victim is (within 1d8 miles) as long as the individual keeps moving through the magical web. If the individual stops for more than 1d4 hours, the link is lost.

The Magus can tell if someone he's been tracking with the web enters the citadel, but no more. Short of personally encountering the visitor, the Magus will not be able to locate or identify that visitor. Once he has personally met a visitor, the Magus may keep tracking the visitor through the web after the latter's departure from the citadel (no die roll needed for this). If the visitor returns to the web at a later time, the Magus will then be able to recognize him, provided he does something to attract the Magus' attention.

Herath maintains peace with Bellayne, as a war with the rakastas would be far too costly; there's also the risk of unveiling the araneas' little secret if things go wrong.

The Great Magus is far more interested in political intrigue and magical influence than in open warfare. He stays busy maintaining a delicate balancing act between Bellayne to the east and the bellicose orcish hordes of the Dark Jungles at the opposite end of the magocracy. The presence of Terra Leaoa, a small Vilaverdan colony, is useful to the Great Magus, since the colony is a pain in Bellayne's flank. The Magus quietly supports the Vilaverdan colony, in exchange for which Herathite merchant ships may sail through the colony's territorial waters without any interference.

### **Eastern Dominions of Herath**

**Viscounty of Berevrom**—Capital: Amion (pop.: 4,300, araneas, humans, elves, rakastas); ruler: Lady Beryam "The Deft," daughter of Lord Balmoroth of Berevrom; typical NPCs: soldiers, thieves, and aranean spies; patron: Enebaan.

**Duchy of Ensheya** —Capital: Sorodh (pop.: 14,900, araneas, humans, elves, halflings); ruler: Duke Yaluughu "The Dark Weaver," son of Lord Ezer of Ensheya; typical NPCs: farmers and woodcutters; patron: Yehm.

**County of Enom** —Capital: Nezhev (pop.: 5,700, araneas, humans, dwarves, some turtles); ruler: Count Disbaal "Eight-Eyes," son of LordENZUTH of Enom; typical NPCs: miners and gem cutters; patron: Negyavim.

**Viscounty of Hethzya** —Capital: Shahav (pop.: 18,500, araneas, humans, halflings, some rakastas); ruler: Lord Mazioth "The Hook," son of Lord Gerphemon of Hethzya; typical NPCs: merchants and soldiers; patron: Shaya.

**The Wildwoods** —Administrative center: Tower of Yedom; regional population is mostly araneas, with some humans and elves; ruler: Lord Yezarath of Pazphezu, appointed overseer; typical NPCs: forest hunters and lonely wizards; patron: Shaibuth.

The Wildwoods are mostly wilderness, barely touched by civilization. The Great Magus is still debating whether it should be left to the hand of the woodcutters and farmers to expand the nation, or saved for future aranean generations. Aranean nobility is widely divided on the fate of this unclaimed territory. More pressing is the need to curb the incessant encroachment of rakasta hunters from Bellayne's Wyndham Marches.

### **Immortal Patrons of Herath**

**Yehm** (alias Korotiku the Spider): Araneas are an old-time favorite of Yehm, one of those Immortals who no longer remembers ever being mortal. It is tempting to say he once was a mortal aranea, which would attest to this race's ancient existence in the universe, but no proof exists of this. Nevertheless, Yehm is the grand patron of araneas, even more so than he is of the lupins.

**Enebaan** (better known as Masauwu):

Enebaan represents the arts of diplomacy, intrigue, influence, and masquerade—things of vital importance to the existence of araneas in a world dominated by humanity and its cousins. By definition, this makes him the patron of rulers, spies, and thieves.

**Negyavim** (known as Iliric elsewhere): This Immortal is a brilliant teacher of magic whose attention was attracted early on by the araneas' talent in things arcane. His followers use the local mining of gems and the dwarves' skillful crafting of these precious stones as a source of sacrificial gifts to this greedy Immortal. Negyavim is the patron of aranean wizardry—but also of their insensitivity.

**Shaibuth** (also named Eyrindul): This elven Immortal took on the cause of araneas as an afterthought, merely a means to compete against Korotiku, his old rival. Eyrindul, however, prefers those araneas who decided to remain creatures of the forest. He still tries to create a druidic aranean philosophy but with little luck so far. His devout eight-legged followers have decidedly proven much too pragmatic and cynical for Eyrindul's hopes.

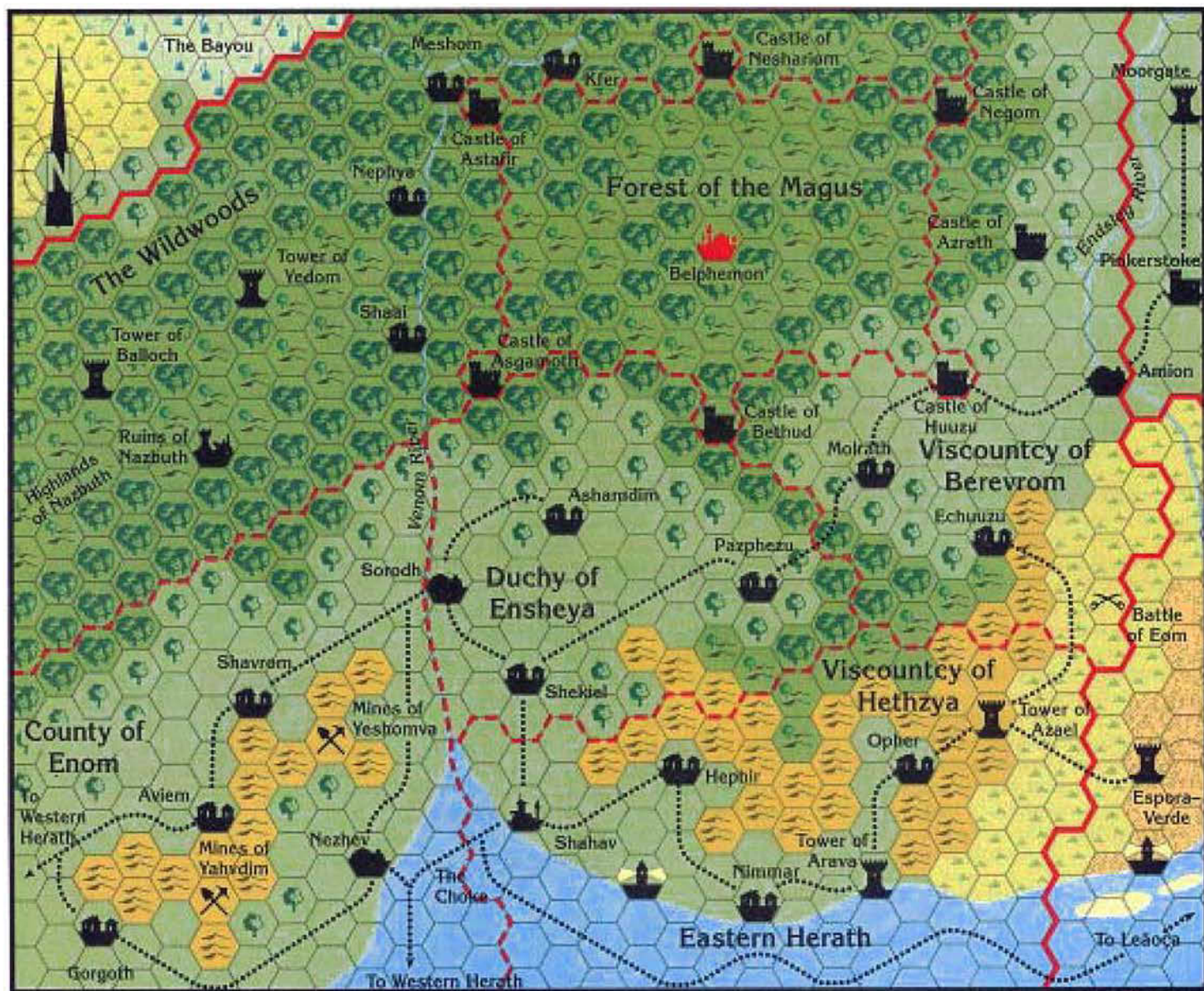
**Shaya** (alias Valerias): One might be shocked to find such a symbol of beauty and love here; however, the unusual story of two Herathite lovers touched her so much she wished to know more about araneas. A human paladin once met an aranea's beautiful human alter-ego. They fell in love—he being unaware of his lover's true self, and she being so immersed in her masquerade she could neither discern nor control her emotions. Alas, the nature of the aranea's shape-changing ability allowed the lady to bear a child, no doubt some poor creature neither fully human nor arachnid. This tragic birth would foil her secret and forever destroy her love. In desperation, she kissed her knight and bit him to death, then ended her own life and that of her progeny. Shaya witnessed the sad tale and saw that even within a truly loathsome creature true love could still be found—and it is this quality that she sponsors.

### **Araneas as PCs**

Although these creatures are better suited as NPCs to annoy and torment your favorite player characters with, they could be a challenge to role-play among a group of unsuspecting adventurers. Use the magic-user's experience progression table, with a 50% penalty (rounded down) to all experience gained for the sake of game balance.

Araneas were described in the AC9 *Creature Catalogue* as 3-HD monsters. Let's assume these are a separate species of NPCs. PC araneas would start with the same game statistics and abilities as human magic-users, with the racial abilities listed as follow. These differences apply only to araneas in their natural form. An aranea can cast spells in both forms.

In humanoid form, treat an aranea as a



Scale: one hex equals 8 miles



normal human magic-user. If mimicking elves, rakastas, or lupins, be aware that the PC's number of Hit Dice and the combat tables will remain those of a human magic-user. Otherwise, the shape-changed araneas do benefit from the race's special abilities (e.g., increased dexterity and claw/claw/bite routine for rakastas, secret door detection and infravision for elves, improved senses of hearing and smelling for lupins, etc.).

#### Aranean racial abilities

**Level 1:** Araneas can shape-change at will between their two alter-egos. The change requires a full game turn. Araneas have multiple sets of eyes that provide infravision, secret-door detection, and wide-angle vision (araneas can be surprised only on a roll of 1 on 1d10). They can climb walls without the help of tools like thieves of the same level, and can cling to ceilings with a -40% penalty to the climbing roll.

**Level 2:** An aranea can build a sticky web (or a cocoon) or secrete a silk strand. It does so at the rate of one square foot per round for the web, or 20' per round for the single strand. The aranea can hang at one end of the strand and descend as it secretes the strand. The strand is as strong as a normal rope, with half the encumbrance. The aranea can climb up its strand at its normal web movement rate.

The web functions like a *web* spell for creatures running or falling into it. The web must be large enough to cover the

entire creature or else it rips apart. Without constant care, an aranean web lasts a week, after which it dries up and falls apart. Araneas can move at their web movement rate on any giant arachnid web. They can also toss a small sticky web (no more than 3' x 3'); treat as a basic skill with nets (*Rules Cyclopedica*, page 79).

**Level 3:** Aranean venom becomes potent enough to affect creatures of 1/2 HD or more. The venom causes paralysis (saving throw vs. poison to negate) that lasts one game turn per level of the aranea.

**Level 5:** Araneas can freely sense the presence of and control normal spiders (up to 4 HD worth). This is done at will, as long as normal spiders exist within 30' of the aranea (no save). This does not include giant types or other monstrous arachnids.

**Level 7:** Once a day, araneas can summon normal spiders regardless of the situation. They arrive magically within 1d4 rounds as a single, crawling mass. Treat as an insect swarm for game purposes (*Rules Cyclopedica*, page 187).

**Level 9:** The aranea's poison becomes lethal. If the victim fails to save against paralysis, the victim must then roll a second saving vs. poison. If the second saving throw fails, the victim dies within 1d4 turns. The lethal effects of the poison affect only creatures with the same number or fewer Hit Dice as the aranea.

**Level 12:** The summoning and controlling of spiders also applies to nonmagical giant spiders. The aranea magically attracts a number of Hit Dice of giant spi-

ders equal to or less than one third its experience level, once per day.

Araneas must be neutral or chaotic, use skill slots to acquire the ability to speak to normal and giant spiders (one skill slot covers both), and reach a score of 18 in Acting as soon as possible. The Acting skill is based upon the araneas' natural Charisma scores.

Araneas gain a +2 bonus to Dexterity and Intelligence (up to 18), but suffer a -2 penalty to Strength and Constitution. These game statistics apply to both alter-egos. Roll up the aranea's natural Charisma as usual. The Charisma of the humanoid alter-ego is initially equal to 8 (use the aranea's natural Charisma if 7 or less). Each time the aranea gains a new level of experience' it may make an Acting skill check. If successful, the aranea permanently increases its humanoid alter-ego's Charisma by one point, up to 18. Note that the alter ego's Charisma can be higher than the aranea's natural Charisma. In their natural form, araneas have a Charisma of 3 to outsiders.

**Natural Aranean statistics:** AC 9 (minus dexterity bonus); HD as MU; MV 180'(60') or 120'(40') on web; #AT 1 bite or weapon or spell; Dmg by weapon or spell (bite 1d6 +paralysis); Save as MU; AL C or N. Ω



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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 31: Letters, letters! More letters!

by Bruce A. Heard

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alpathian explorer and his crew as they journey across mountains of letters! So, here we go again, trying to keep up with all these little notes of encouragement and criticism. Readers will find answers they were looking for to their D&D® game questions.

### Letters

The dwarven calendar on page 27 of GAZ6 *Dwarves of Rockhome* only shows the Thyatian names of the months. Are there any dwarven equivalents?

Yes, they are *Wharlin, Morlin, Hralin, Hwoyrlin, Styrlin, Bahrlin, Buhrlin, Klintlin, Birrlin\**, *Biflin, Jhyrlin, Kuldlin* (\*instead of *Barrlin*, which sounded too much like *Bahrlin*). To add insult to injury, the dwarven calendar shows cryptic symbols that aren't explained in the main calendar key (our pet gremlin penciled in *Glantrian* holiday symbols to better confuse everyone). This all should be fixed in the upcoming AC1010 *Poor Wizards Almanac*.

Page 36 of GAZ2 *Emirates of Ylaruam* shows only 11 months in the calendar. Are they using a different calendar or is there an omission?

Surely, our favorite editorial gremlin must have taken the twelfth month away, and stashed it with the lost dwarven months! The missing month is the month before Ramadan, *Shaban*.

The Verdier Calendar in GAZ9 *Minrothad Guilds* consists of 336 days (12 complete lunar cycles). Therefore the calendar dates for the lunar phases should not change from year to year, which contradicts page 13 of the *Adventurer's Guide*.

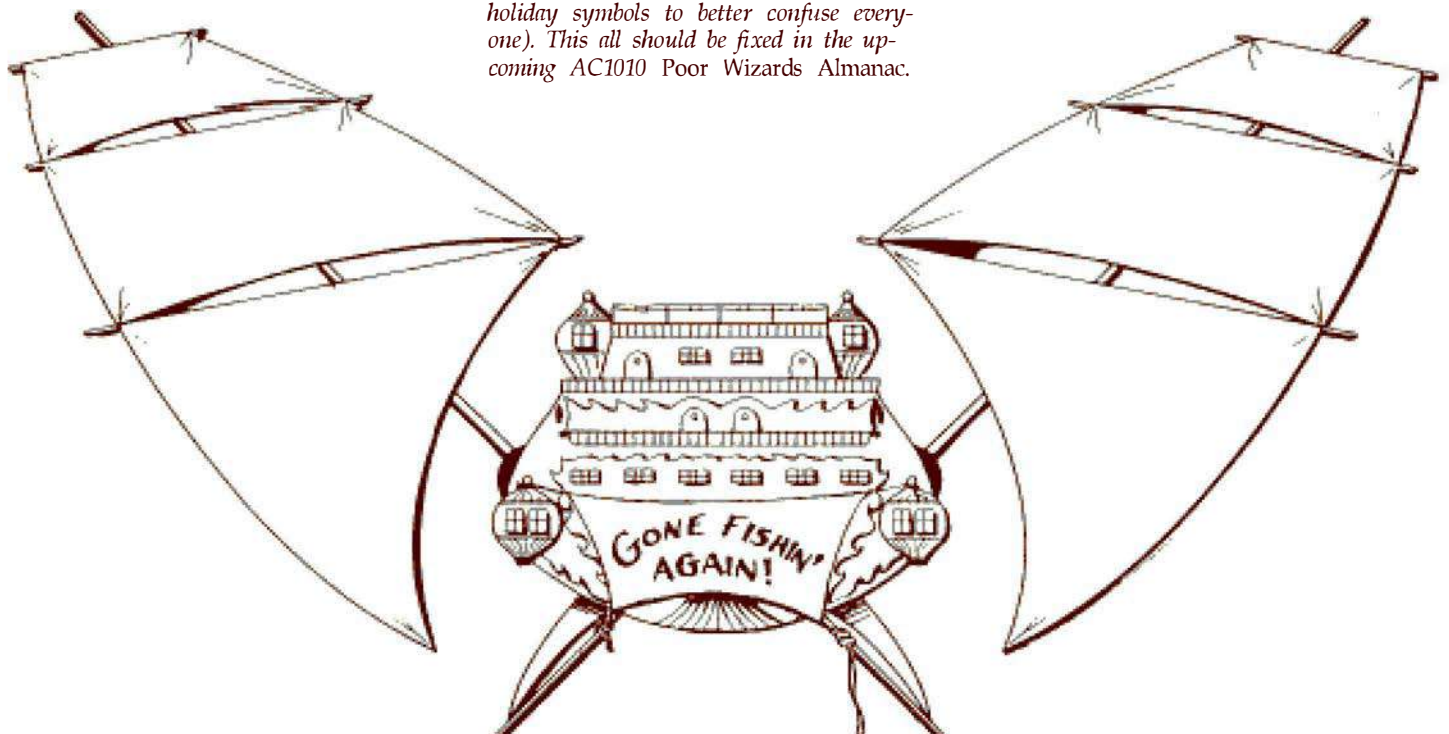
This issue has always been rather confusing. First note that there is a small glitch in the month of *Onmun* – the first-quarter moon waning should be on the 26th (not on the 29th), and the second new moon should be on the 28th (instead of the 30th). With this being corrected, and since both calendars have the same total numbers of days and lunar phases, the yearly two-day adjustment then seems indeed superfluous.

Page 52 of GAZ3 *Principalities of Glantri* claims *Nuwmont* is in early spring. Since most supplements contradict this, should we assume that it is an error and that all events should be pushed forward two months to the corresponding time of the year?

Sigh. Only those events that are tied to seasons should be moved up.

Are the villages of *Mar* and *Hinmeet* on the color maps of *Darokin* transposed? According to the descriptions on page 42 of GAZ11 *Republic of Darokin*, *Hinmeet* would be close to the *Malpheggi Swamps*.

Correct. *Mar* and *Hinmeet* were acciden-



tally transposed on the very first color map (the error has been perpetrated on all later maps of the region).

It's about time we got D&D™ novels! I would like to find out how ideas are selected for novels that fall under the TSR banner.

The book editors are thrilled to hear that the new line of D&D novels is receiving so much support from DRAGON® Magazine readers. It's an even bigger compliment that the books and the games have inspired fans to do some writing of their own.

All the D&D novels will be written on a work-for-hire basis, just like other shared-world lines, such as the DRAGONLANCE® Saga, the FORGOTTEN REALMS® books, etc. D.J. Heinrich is now busy writing the Penhaligon Trilogy, the first book of which, *The Tainted Sword*, will be in stores this October. The two other novels in the trilogy will be released in 1993.

We know readers have some very creative plot and character ideas for this new line. Unfortunately, we cannot accept any unsolicited manuscripts or book proposals. The D&D novels, like other shared-world settings, are plotted out well in advance to ensure consistency within the series. It would be nearly impossible to keep the plots and the characters in line if we did not maintain this control.

However we are always interested in learning what our readers would like to see published. If you want to let us know what you think, send a letter to the Books Department at TSRS address (P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.). We read every letter and we pass the ideas along.

Where would Blizzard Pass (of module M1 of the same name— the old D&D game invisible-ink module) be on the map? It's supposed to run between the Five Shires and Darokin. Does it lead to Mar or Hinmeet?

The location was never established, but it would be logical to place the pass between the villages of Ringrise and Hinmeet (looking at the color mapsheet of the region). The pass between Sateeka and Mar is too well travelled and at too low an altitude for this type of adventure.

Are there critical fumbles in the basic D&D game?

No. However it is customary to automatically miss a target on a natural roll of 1, or to automatically hit it with a natural roll of 20. Some DMs like to have their players make a Dexterity Check on an attack roll of 1 to see if a fumble occurs, or on a roll of 20 to see if the attack causes double damage.

I have a small problem with my cleric player. She doesn't like to say she's praying to her god because she feels it is not right in reality.

The D&D game does not have "gods,"

but rather Immortal heroes who act as superpowerful patrons on behalf of one cause or another. Up to a point, they have the ability to answer prayers, and for a DM, they are convenient tools to put back on track a game that is going out of control. Immortals aren't gods; they are more like super heroes straight out of comic books! Your player should understand that everything in the game is make-believe, which includes the "praying," for clerical spells. This is a very common theme in fantasy role-playing games. It was never intended to offend anyone or conflict with anyone's faith. There are two things you can do: either replace the "praying" terminology with "meditation" terminology (likewise replace "religion" with "philosophy"), or ask your player if she wants to switch characters. The latter might be the simplest. If you need to go one step further, you can remove the concept of Immortals from the game altogether. Clerics will then become simple representatives of the abstract philosophies of Law, Neutrality or Chaos. They draw their mystical powers from those forces. This, however, does take away a lot of the game's flavor and uniqueness.

I always thought the city scales for Thyatis and Sundsvall were inaccurate and far too small. A little calculation using the Coliseum from DDA2 *Legions of Thyatis* as a measure proves this. A thousand yards per inch might be a better scale (also measure the cities versus real-world Constantinople and Cordoba).

You are probably right. However the task of making a more realistically sized city such as Thyatis fit inside a single mapsheet is often limited by the designer's ability or our staff's workload. The other problem is that a correctly scaled street map for a medieval city of 500,000 to 1,000,000 inhabitants means that the streets would become mere lines with street names and few dots for points of interest (check your Rand McNally city maps). Alternatively, the city map could be limited to the very center of the city. Finally, most TSR products offer the country map first and then— maybe— the capital city, if enough space is left.

I think the "Rich Resource" rule (*Rules Cyclopedia*, page 140) is a bad one. It encourages subinfeudation to an extent that is inconsistent not only with the real world but also with the world described in the Gazetteers. Rich hexes don't seem to have a ruler for that hex alone. Obviously, nonfeudal, efficient administrations can do the job at least as well as subinfeudation, without the hassle of a vassal.

This all depends upon the type of era the campaign setting is emulating. In history, the use of vassals to manage territory was established by the Carolingian dynasty (6th-9th centuries in France) that later led to the feudal system that is more familiar to D&D players (9th-13th centuries).

Back around the time of Charlemagne, barons and counts were no more than administrators (chosen among the Frankish tribal aristocracy) in the service of the emperor. It is only afterward that these various administrative functions became nonrevokable, hereditary titles at the source of the more familiar medieval nobility. Monarchs and powerful nobles developed the bad habit of "donating" a piece of their domain to weaker nobles in exchange for their loyalty (thus creating vassals). Many nobles in history accepted such land gifts from different suzerains, and the fealty that came with them.

The medieval system eventually fell apart when powerful nobles went to war against each other trying to call upon vassals who effectively owed fealty to both sides! It then boiled down to basic greed, politics, or fear of which side might win and exact revenge upon the "treacherous" vassal. Short of going to war, it also proved very difficult for a suzerain to recover whatever land was given a way to unruly vassals.

The D&D game tries to simplify this and maintain the myth of feudalism. The system of economics prescribed by the D&D game is imprecise, incomplete, and unrealistic because of this— but it is a solution. Others exist that are far more complicated. Otherwise, you are right in pointing out many Gazetteers are not really compatible with the true medieval tradition (after Wrath of the Immortals, the new "kingdom" of Karameikos will work better with standard D&D rules on chivalry and dominions). Of course, there were far more efficient administrations in history (like the ancient Romans who, for centuries, successfully managed millions of people and their various lands).

How did the Heldann Freeholds become more potent than Thyatis and Darokin, and possess more magical power than Glantri? If Thyatis has 250 + L36 mages, and fosters strong clerical and fighting arms, why is it so feeble? While 250 L36 mages may pale before the might of Alpha-tia, it towers above that of other countries, including Glantri. Thyatis, being more efficient and less chaotic than Alpha-tia, should be able to make better use of its mages. If it's because the mages are not loyal and don't trust the Imperials, why don't they abandon them entirely, muscle in on Glantri, and get hold of the Radiance instead of hanging out on a puny island? Do the Heldannic Knights have 250 L36 mages and clerics? Everyone seems to portray the Thyatians as evil and sinister. Why is that? If it's so bad, why didn't the populace (ahem, citizens) welcome the Alphas as liberators in 959?

The Heldann Freeholds were the nordic tribes occupying the land north of Vestland. Over the years, they have been effectively taken over by a growing group of expatriate Hattians who established an aggressive order of knights— the Heldannic

Knights, under Vanya's guidance. Native Heldanners are not "free" anymore, nor do they "hold" much since the knights' arrival. No, the knights are nowhere near as tough as the Thyatians. But they do have several advantages. They know the Thyatians very, very well, since they originally were Thyatians themselves. Their order is one of fanatics. They also possess something Thyatis doesn't — an artifact upon which they draw power to lift their skyships (comparable to long range telekinesis). That's how they got flying ships.

The problem with this is that their artifact has a limited power and that the flying ships need an onboard consecrated temple to receive the artifact's power. This means the number of ships they can send up in the air (or through the Skyshield) is definitely limited. Finally, the Heldannic Knights have been draining some of the ebullient Hattian youth, keeping their ranks full while ever so slightly depleting some of Thyatis' Heldannic Knights, of course, rely heavily on hundreds of knights and clerics (preferably heavy cavalry and infantry), and the direct support of Vanya, their chief Immortal. So, for now, the Heldannic Knights are still a minor power compared to Thyatis, but a fast-growing one. As far as possessing more magical power than Glantri, this remains to be seen. Glantri is awfully tough in that field, and certainly not a pushover.

You qualify Thyatis as "feeble?" A nation as geographically small as mainland Thyatis possessing such a disproportionate colonial empire doesn't look "feeble" to me (consider England at the height of its colonial period). Compared to the size of mainland Alphatia, Thyatis has done incredibly well as a foreign landgrabber! There is nothing in Thyatis (or Alphatia for that matter) that can possibly be qualified as "puny."

You have to realize that Thyatis' permanent rivalry with Alphatia drains much of both empires' attention and national energy. Why would the Thyatian mages not muscle in on Glantri? Because Thyatian mages are perfectly happy where they are. An army of 250 L36 mages — something totally out of character for high-level wizards in the first place — is not going to take over Glantri in any case. Glantri has enough wizards to give any Thyatian visitors a run for their money.

You should realize that those Glantrians involved with the Radiance are utterly secretive about it. It is just not common knowledge among either Thyatians or Alphatians. So no, they wouldn't "muscle in" and seize the mysterious Radiance (there is a certain Immortal guarding it anyway). Everyone outside Thyatis could indeed portray the empire as evil and sinister (if that were true in the first place) because they fear its power. If a few years ago you stood at the border with the old U.S.S.R., you might have thought it to be threatening and sinister. But Soviet citizens

certainly didn't think of themselves that way! My guess is that the same would be true with Thyatis. Life in Thyatis is still far better than many other chaotic or economically depressed places. And Thyatians are notorious for their national pride. Alphatian liberators? Heck, no!

In DRAGON issue #164, we learned that the Princess Ark cannot return to Alphatia because the crew knows too much about the HOLLOW WORLD™ setting and the Skyshield. Why not? Wouldn't this information be of great service to Alphatia? Wouldn't this knowledge give the Known World an edge against the Heldanners, who are apparently flying regular expeditions in space and to the HOLLOW WORLD lands?

The information has already been provided to Empress Eriadna. Eriadna's problem lay in the presence at the Imperial Palace of powerful and unscrupulous wizard aristocrats (an opposing faction — got to have palace politics!) who would inevitably come to the conclusion that Haldemar and his companions are indeed who they claimed to be. They would suspect Haldemar of holding some mysterious secret explaining his bizarre return from the past. (Aha! Perhaps a clue on eternal youth!) These wizards would stop at nothing to "extract" from Haldemar or any of his companions whatever information they might have.

The best way to protect Haldemar and his companions is simply to send them away as far as possible into the unknown, to make it hard for those wizards to track them down. Alphatian jails would offer little protection against these kinds of people — or else Eriadna would've had to execute the whole crew and throw their ashes away, and this she simply refused to do. So they sailed away. Haldemar could always be recalled at a later time.

The Heldannic Knights do have some colonies in the HOLLOW WORLD setting, but their problem lies in the fact it is almost impossible to fly in and out of Mystara's polar gates without crashing. What travellers have to do is fly to the edge of the anti-magical region, disembark, cross the dangerous polar region on foot, and then re-embark on a ship presumably waiting on the other side — either this or mount the skyship on skis like Haldemar did once. This means that Vanya's artifact (see the previous letter) can sustain a skyship's flight inside the Hollow World, but as soon as the ship's onboard temple enters the anti-magic area, it becomes incapable of receiving the artifact's power and the ship crashes.

The Heldannic Knights managed to get one skyship through the polar opening. They failed in all other attempts. Those knights inside the HOLLOW WORLD setting managed to build several more skyships there, but they are stranded there. As far as space colonies are concerned, Heldannic Knights are experiencing in-

creasing difficulties with the Myoshimans. The knights' arrogant, bellicose attitude is not endearing them to the other civilizations there either. That typical Hattian temperament tends to get in the way when it comes to exploration. In any event, space and HOLLOW WORLD expeditions are a risky proposition at best.

Why weren't the Sea Machine rules included in the Rules Cyclopedica?

Unfortunately, there was no room left. Trust us, we tried!

Why are the Thyatian armies so feeble in X10 Red Arrow, Black Shield?

The module represented only those forces Thyatis deigned to send against the Master of Hule. What the module should say is that Hule should never attack mainland Thyatis, since it has a much larger army. Provided that the Master made it that far across the Known World (an unlikely feat), it would be outright suicidal to invade Thyatis.

Isn't the Thothian enchantment used to create the Princess Ark just a tad too powerful, even for a 9th-level spell? Just casting the first portion of the spell can save a mage hundreds of thousands of gold pieces in enchanting costs in the creation of the flying toy. The second, while dangerous, is even more potent, not only in giving the vessel more powers, but in creating more magical items and enchantments. And don't try to sneak around it: If an NPC with no connection to the ideology of the spell's creator can cast this spell, so can any other PC.

The first part of the spell is almost useless without the second part, as you should have noticed in the earlier adventures of the Princess Ark, since without the creature's intelligence, most of the special abilities cannot be used at all. The spell, partially completed, did indeed provide the Princess Ark its ability to fly, but all of the other abilities of the skywyrms were not available then. Some weird, minor phenomena were observed occasionally — purely for dramatic purposes — and that's about it.

If you find this too much of a giveaway, don't allow the spell to be interrupted at all, or give the caster a 10% chance of obtaining the desired result (failure meaning no results at all). If the caster fails, then he must begin the whole enchantment again — with all the risks involved. Have you tried to actually complete the whole sequence of the enchantment (without cheating)? It's really tough for the character not to go insane. This wonderful character — who took so long to reach the experience level necessary to cast such a dangerous spell — has a greater chance of being doomed than anything else. Then, there is the problem of the caster's soul being forever bound to his creation.

Indeed, it's a monstrously powerful spell, but awfully risky, too. And don't forget it's

ultimately rare; it's just not going to fall into anyone's hands unless a DM wishes it to. If your character survives an epic quest to piece this spell together, then why not allow amazing results? The spell could be "made available" to a party of adventurers as a DMS device to allow them to create a wondrous vessel and go on fantastic adventures on their own. That's part of the game too. Otherwise, I would agree that the description was rather vague. A few more lines would have helped dispel this confusion.

It was a joy to watch the Princess Ark fly over medieval Spain, France, and Celtic England complete with medieval jousts. Of course, the exception was DRAGON issue #176, which featured the American Old West. I personally thought it was a bit silly, but it was very entertaining. By the way, shouldn't Sir John of the Wayne be a Duke, instead of an Earl?

*Ouch— Yes, he definitely should have been a duke! The bit on the Old West was meant to be silly; there was no way it couldn't have been. That one was for laughs. By the way, the Robreim were inspired from ancient Gaul, not Celtic England.*

DRAGON issue #165 has the description of Lady Abovombe, who is a Master of the bola at 4th level! How? DRAGON issue #167 describes Ramissur the Boltman. He's only second level, but has Expert mastery of the dagger! I don't mind fudging the rules and making new ones, but what we have in above examples are some no-nos that knock over the game balance enough to reduce the credibility of the Princess Ark campaign.

*This was a mistake on my part. That was the bad news; the good news is that we definitely have a Princess Ark accessory in the works where— hopefully— these shameful glitches will be fixed. Any other comments about rules "no-nos" found in the Princess Ark campaign will be greatly appreciated. Thanks.*

DRAGON issue #156 introduces Heldannic Knights, an order of clerics who wield edged weapons. Is this right?

*Yes, this is correct. However, it deserves an explanation. According to standard rules, clerics don't use edged weapons, period. There has been a number of comments about the logic of such a rule, particularly when specific Immortal patrons come into play. Vanya is an Immortal of war, and his followers form an order of sword- or lance-wielding knights. That's why their clerics are allowed to use swords. This new material will be reflected in the upcoming Wrath of the Immortals boxed set (due out this August). Many of Wrath's clerics end up acquiring some new advantages over the "standard" cleric as a result of rules development presented there. This was done for color and background, but*

*should not unbalance the game.*

In DRAGON issue #155, we are introduced to the boltmen, who use rechargeable wands of lightning bolts. Since when are wands rechargeable?

*This approach was necessary for the Princess Ark, not to make the boltmen better than anyone else but simply because the skyship leaves for extended periods of time. The boltmen would soon run out of power. And I've yet to find a note in the Rules Cyclopedia about wands not being rechargeable. Why not make this an option?*

Please keep the Princess Ark campaign down to earth (Mystara), both figuratively and literally. The series is most enjoyable without the Ark hurtling through space and other dimensions. The enemy Heldannic ships with squadrons of magic missile-shooting fighter jets (DRAGON issue #161) are a bit hard to swallow and best left to the AD&D® SPELLJAMMER® supplement. Mystara already has so much going on inside it and on its surface. To fly through space and time on galactic, cross-dimensional adventures in a ship that can already do some outrageous things would be pretentious.

*The flight plan for the Princess Ark has been down to earth for about a year (and will remain so). Now that the Savage Coast has been almost completely mapped out, suggestions are welcome for where in Mystara our readers would like the Ark to go. The subject of space and the HOLLOW WORLD setting were briefly touched on (had to try them at least once!). Where could we go next? If the knights' space fighters get in the way of your campaign, the Myoshimans could chop them into sushi during some epic battle. There are otherwise no current plans to develop this unusual aspect of the Heldannic Knights.*

I am a fan of the BATTLESYSTEM™ rules. I like what was done with the Ethengar Gazetteer. The special maneuvers were great. Players might be interested in a war almanac that gives statistics on armies and strategic points throughout the Known World. This war almanac would require the use of some form of the BATTLESYSTEM rules.

*There is an Almanac due out at the end of this year. It does contain War Machine statistics of many armies (Known World and HOLLOW WORLD settings) after Wrath of the Immortals' great war. It would be hard to adapt them for AD&D BATTLESYSTEM rules since the armies shown in the AC1010 Almanac sometimes reach well over 100,000 troops. A D&D War Machine to AD&D BATTLESYSTEM rules- or troops-conversion article might make a great topic in this magazine.*

Just how much space do 100 troops need to live in? I know it sounds pretty picky, but can they all live in a single

square keep? At the cost of 75,000 gp per keep, this does make a great difference for an impoverished noble.

*Your best bet is to turn to history books. Otherwise, the following guesswork might do. If you assume a three-tiered bunk, a chest, and some surrounding space require approximately 8'x8', you would need a 2,135 square feet room to house all 100 troops. That's approximately a 50'x 50' room. Throw in some extra space for several tables, stools, a large barrel of water, coal braziers for heat, some elbow room near the crossbow slits in the walls, a stairway, and a weapons rack, and you get, say a 60'x60' room. It's packed, but it should work considering troops will not be in the barracks all at the same time— some will be on night patrol, others pacing the battlements on guard duty, etc.*

*Your typical 75,000 gp stone keep is 80'x 60'x 60'. This means it probably has six 60'x 60' floors, not counting the thickness of the walls, but including a tall main hall on the lower level. Voilá! Your 100 troops could probably occupy a single floor in the keep. The rest of the keep could easily be taken up by a well room, stable, latrines, kitchen, mess hall, storage for food and other goods, sergeants' or captains' quarters, a chapel, etc.*

*Remember, this is a game. Absolute reality is not required. Think about this: A single large galley as described in the rules has a total crew of 250 people, including rowers, sailors, and marines, sharing a total deck surface close to 8,000 square feet (presumably with a top deck, a rowers' decks, and a cargo deck). If they can live that way, so can a band of 100 warriors in a rather spacious 21,600 square-foot keep! Right?*

Ω



### Looking for some fun?

Are you hunting for a gaming convention in your area? Turn to this issue's "Convention Calendar" for the latest information on where the fun is.

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 32: Silence of the lizards

by Bruce A. Heard

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphantian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
PRINCE HALDGMAR OF HAAGEN  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
PRINCESS ARK  
Imperial Explorer, etc. etc.

**Amphimir 23, AY 2001:** There was a reference in the Saragòn Gazetteer about some savage kingdoms hidden in the dark forests of the Shady River. We had been meandering above those thick woods for a week and had almost given up hope of finding anything when we discovered some structures below.

There was a small clearing in the woods in which several very large mounds of dried mud had been erected. At first we thought they were giant termite colonies, but the painting on the mounds and the size of the entrances and windows alluded to humanoid origins. By our standards this was a large town, considering the number of mounds there.

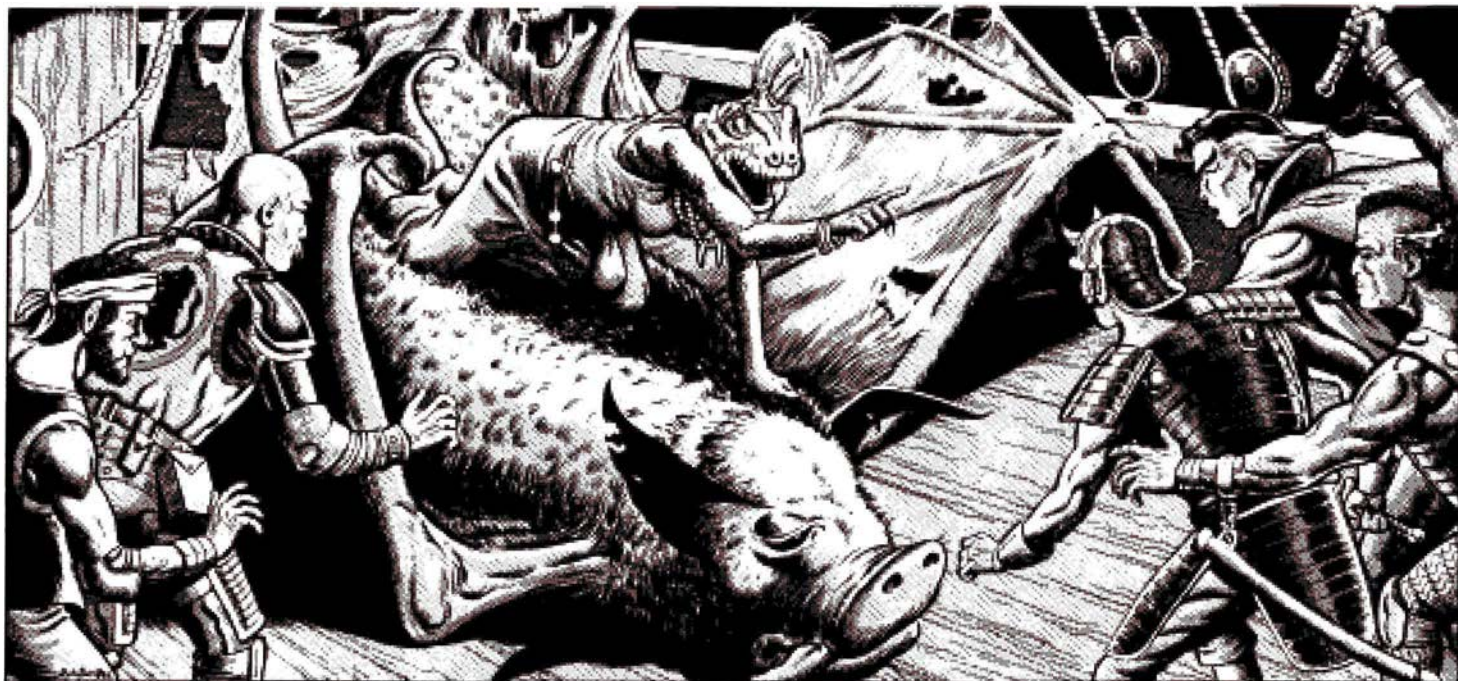
Moving the invisible *Princess Ark* closer, we observed great activity among the lizard men in the woods. Several lizard men carried the body of a dead warrior on a small bier. From our vantage point we clearly saw the eyes were missing from the dead warrior's head. Perhaps this was some ghastly local custom.

Some lizard men blew auroch horns and others beat drums, while the bulk of the crowd followed, weeping or looking somberly at the ground as they marched toward the burial grounds we'd earlier spotted from our vantage point. There, they dropped the body into an funerary urn made of terra cotta. They then added weapons, colorful feathers, ornamental trinkets, and other personal effects. The urn was then sealed and was lowered with ropes into a hole in the ground, over which a large flat stone was laid down. Finally, a shaman—an old hag of a lizard woman—painted a regular pattern of symbols on the stone while making bizarre incantations with her raspy voice. From this we gathered these lizard men had some sort of written language—quite unusual for lizardkin.

Raman was ecstatic to be able to observe such a ceremony. The behavior of such a primitive race of nonhumans was of great interest to our sage. He said he would really love to obtain one or two of the urns for study. I found that rather ghoulish, but I could see usefulness in any findings he might make.

Later that night, I sent Raman and several of the crew down into the graveyard. We could observe them from above, aboard the *Ark*, and warn them if anyone approached. Fortunately, the lizard men were diurnal creatures—most were asleep except for several warriors walking the streets around the mounds.

As Raman was loading a second urn onto the lifeboat, a horrible shriek echoed from the lizard-man town. Raman and his







crew quickly repositioned the tombstones and hurried back to the ship.

Soon, we found out that one of the warriors guarding the streets had been killed. A number of warriors standing around his body formed a protective circle with their spears, staring into the darkness. They looked terrified. The shaman, kneeling next to the corpse, lowered her torch to reveal a horrible wound on the warrior's face. His eye sockets were now two gaping holes. Perhaps some wild beast preyed on the lizard men. I had never seen such a wound before.

**Amphimir 24:** I ordered the skyship to a higher altitude while Raman began his study of the two urns. His library came in handy in the deciphering of the symbols. The urns had prayers written on them, and such words as "Be you blessed, O Warrior Ss'akh, for your defense of our ancient city Ah'roog. May the Mighty Ka'ar keep you safe forever."

Both corpses found in the urns were rather recent—no more than three or four days. There was nothing of great value inside the urns. Medicinal herbs had preserved the bodies somewhat. Both bore the same facial wounds as the guard. Further observation revealed their brains were also gone, as if they had been sucked out. What manner of monster could have done this?

We returned the two urns to their graves. After Raman had completed all of his observations, it seemed no one had noticed our visit. I then ordered a course to the northwest, toward a large bay marked on our Gazetteer. I had no wish to find out what kind of monstrosity lay behind the gruesome lizard-men deaths.

**Amphimir 25:** The sound of flapping wings drew my attention. Just after nightfall, something came straight at us out of the night. I ordered an evasive maneuver, but that "something" screeched and kept turning back in our direction. It was clearly chasing us.

We heard a thud. Something had hit one of our masts and had fallen to the deck. There, rubbing its head, sat a lizard man—actually a lizard woman. It was the old hag, the shaman from Ah'roog. Next to her lay a giant bat with a broken wing. It was an old thing, with holes and rips in its leather wings. Totally exhausted and suffering from its shattered limb, the poor creature passed away.

A ring of befuddled boltmen encircled the shaman, wondering whether to roast her with their wands or toss her overboard. She began talking in a succession of quick rattles, clicks, snaps, and raspy lizard words. After some I performed some spell-casting, I could understand what she said. Then, pointing a gnarled finger at me, she added "You, I know you. I saw you in my dreams. Ka'ar sent you to help us!"

These lizards were truly strange. She went on, "I am Haz'ar, the wise one of Ah'roog. Ka'ar has spoken to me in my

dreams. He told me of you and your wondrous ship. He spoke of the great beasts you once defeated, O Great Hero of the humans."

Immortals speaking of me? To lizard men? Hmm, this did not seem right at all. I invited the wretched creature below and further questioned her. She told me some monstrous fiend had begun stalking the city of Ah'roog about a week ago. The lizard men could not catch it. They lost warriors during the nights to the fiend, sometimes just one, other times up to five or six. All of them bore the same horrible wounds.

Days ago, Haz'ar began having her dreams. She believed they came from her Immortal patron, Ka'ar, and in this she seemed truthful. Her dreams showed the four eyes of the monster stalking her warriors, and from them came visions of war. These visions, however, she didn't understand. They showed humans fighting humans, the symbol of an eagle in the sunset, and that of a winged bull against a sunrise. Then followed the image of an hourglass tumbling in the night, and always the gaze of the fiend would appear at the end of her visions, as if they had been sent by him.

I was utterly astonished! A chill ran down my back as I realized the eagle and the winged bull could be the symbols of Thyatis and Alphatia! A war? Again? No, this couldn't be. But what was this hourglass? A symbol of times to come, perhaps. Somehow, this fiend was at the center of the puzzle. Surely, it must have been playing tricks on the mind of this old hag. This fiend knew enough about Thyatis, Alphatia, and me to fabricate fantasies and get an obscure lizard shaman to find me. Why? What did it want with me? This was all too strange. I had to find out who or what was behind all this.

I agreed to help Haz'ar find the fiend. With a wide smile revealing the rotten and broken teeth on her reptilian face, Haz'ar fell to her scaly knees. "Praise Ka'ar! Ka'ar preserve us all!"

**Amphimir 4:** In the days following Haz'ar's visit to the *Ark*, we disembarked and went to Ah'roog. We heard of a few more slayings occurring near a village called T'lak, and we began our journey north after the fiend. The pattern then continued in the direction of Ryt'takk. The fiend was on the move. Perhaps it sensed we were tracking it. Several times we came close to encountering it, but it always seemed to outguess us and escape safely into the dark forest. At best, we saw a vague shape vanish into the shadows.

Soon we reached the border of the Kingdom of Cay. Haz'ar described it as a nation of cay-men—small, pretentious people, half-human, half-caiman, and about half as tall as lizard men. Haz'ar's nation, the Kingdom of Shazak, was presently at peace with Cay. Perhaps the fiend thought of entering the other nation to throw off his pursuers. Haz'ar insisted she

wanted to continue the hunt, for the fiend might return. It had to be destroyed once and for all. So we marched. Unbeknownst to Haz'ar, the *Ark* was flying just above, observing each of our moves. This was very reassuring.

**Amphimir 8:** Our trail lead us to Tu'eth, the capital of the cay-man. It seemed that slayings of cay-man hunters had preceded us by a day or so, and they were happening twice as often now. Already, word had come of more hideous murders within the city of Tu'eth. At least we hadn't lost track of the fiend.

A band of armored warriors riding chariots met us at the entrance of Tu'eth. The diminutive warriors stood arrogantly behind their lizard striders, proudly wearing peacock feathers on top of their scaly heads. One of them, waving his puny little javelin at us, said with a strange squealing and wheezing voice, "Strangers, state your business or succumb to the wrath of Cay!"

Seeing my hand slip to my wand, Haz'ar put her hand on my arm and answered "We come in peace, O noble cay-lords! We seek to slay the fiend that killed the mighty hunters of Cay!" She bowed deeply.

The leader of the cay-men rode up to me, and, with his fists on his hips, stared up at me inquisitively. "I don't trust them. Let's take them to the queen! March ahead, strangers!" We complied.

Cay-man guards on the palisade surrounding the Queen's compound sounded their trumpets when we arrived. We were "loaded" into a large net and hoisted to the other side by a crane. There, the Royal Guards of Cay escorted us to the queen's throne, where she sat brooding. Before her lay the body of someone important, judging from the jewelry and feathers. His eyes were missing.

"So," she squealed, "you have come to slay the fiend. You are late. He who lies at my feet is my younger brother. He too has fallen before the fiend. He tried to battle the beast and lost. It seems that both Shazak and Cay are suffering from the same plague."

"Your Majesty," I dared, "it is indeed our quest to slay the beast. With your permission, we must be allowed to continue. Many more lives are at stake."

The queen, observing me with suspicion, said, "Why do you wish to help, human?"

"I too seek revenge, your Majesty. The fiend had tasted human blood before he harmed your noble subjects. No one is safe. Where was your brother found?"

The cay-men whispered and whistled among each other, glancing often in my direction with distrusting looks. The queen then shook her rattle-scepter and said, "He was found in the Mines of Hwezah. Go there, human, and take your lizard shaman with you. If you slay the monster, you shall go free. If not, I shall condemn you to work for the rest of your lives in the mines. Leave now."

**Amphimir 9:** Not until the evening did we reach the mines, a terrible place with a

single narrow shaft going straight down. We descended and entered a network of tunnels with little cubby-holes dug into the walls that were the resting places of the slaves working there. Most had gone nearly blind from the darkness and screamed in pain at the light of our torches.

A cay-man guard cracked his whip to send the slaves back to work, but most were too terrified to leave their holes. The fiend had indeed been here, judging from the number of slaves' bodies. All work at the mine had come to a halt because of the fiend's presence.

The guards weren't in much better shape. They walked in little groups, cautiously staring around them. Beyond one point in the cave, they would not advance further. One of the guards pointed forward, "He was found there." The guards then retreated in good order.

Haz'ar and I walked down a tunnel, bent low to avoid hitting the ceilings with our heads. I heard a clicking sound. "What's that?" I asked.

"My old knees," answered Haz'ar. It was obvious she was almost petrified with fear, yet she continued down the tunnel.

"This is silly. There is no need for us to do this alone," I said. I cast a *travel* spell and returned us both to the *Princess Ark*. Talasar was relieved to see us both safely back aboard. I had to rest and meditate for more appropriate spells. Our next day would be a difficult one.

**Alphamir 10:** I returned to the tunnel the next day with Xerdon, Nyanga, Haz'ar, and Talasar, all ready for battle. Nyanga stood in the front, his huge sword strapped to his back—only a smaller blade could be used in these tight quarters.

The tunnel led to a larger chamber. The light from our torches glinted off the red ore on the vault. The cay-men had found a small vein of cinnabar. Perhaps this is what attracted the creature in this mine.

Suddenly, a large blob of hideous orange flesh appeared from the shadows. It moved fast, as much on its six crab legs as on its dozens of tentacles. Without a moment of hesitation, Talasar, Xerdon, and I let our spells fly at once. Almost instantly, the creature grabbed a pillar and caused the chamber to cave in.

Everyone ducked and scrambled. Talasar, Xerdon, and Haz'ar dove to one side, Nyanga and I to the other. The torches went out as billowing clouds of dust filled the chamber. Soon, I discovered tons of rubble separated us from our companions. We were trapped in darkness.

The sound of something fleeing echoed ahead. I cast a spell of *light*, just to see the shadow of the fiend writhing away down a tunnel.

"Come," I said to Nyanga, "We must chase it, the others will catch on and follow if they can." We ran down the tunnel, which grew narrower with an underground river running down the middle. We could see the creature ahead, swimming away. Several dugout canoes of cay-

man workmanship lay by the side of the river. We jumped into one and paddled frantically after the fiend.

Much later, when the river had gained dangerously in speed, we could no longer see anywhere to put ashore. Centuries of roaring waters had smoothed out the sides of the tunnel. The water rushed down the passage at a frightening speed, and the canoe shook so much I could not cast a spell to save my life. We both grabbed the canoe's sides and held on. Before we realized what was happening, the canoe was sucked into a vicious whirlpool. Everything went dark as my head hit a rock, somewhere in the roaring waters.

**Alphamir 10, Talasar:** It was a trap. The fiend must have known that the pillar supported the chamber's vaulted ceiling, and deliberately caused the cave-in to split our party. It must have guessed that we were too much for it to fight as a group. We had to find the admiral at once.

We went down another tunnel, trying to find a way around the rubble. At first, all we achieved was to run into small groups of cay-man guards. To them, we were dangerous intruders. They all ran away, but we could hear their leaders trying to rally the troops. They were organizing a man-hunt.

It became clear we could not fight their well-organized search parties. Mobs of cay-men guards ran down the tunnels with javelins and nets, hoping to find us. We played hide-and-peek for hours before Xerdon spotted the admirals' footprints. At least, he and Nyanga were still alive. They had gone after the fiend.

Soon afterward, we reached a series of dugout canoes. We could hear cay-men chiefs shouting orders and the sound of war trumpets echoing in the tunnel. We fled in one of the canoes after setting fire to the others.

Paddling downstream, we could see the cay-man guards jumping up and down, waving their short arms at us. Haz'ar smiled smugly, and as the water gained speed, she said, "They want us to come back! Su-ure . . . well, that's one man-hunt going down the drain!"

**Alphamir 11, Haldemar:** Lucky that Nyanga was there, else I would have drowned. We had reached a siphon bubbling up into an aboveground river. Nyanga managed to swim back to the canoe, drag me aboard, then collapse inside, totally exhausted. We drifted downstream most of the night, without strength or paddles.

The sun rose above the fog. The river had entered a swampy region. It was hard to tell where we were. The canoe then hit something and stopped.

"Eh mohn, there be a tree trunk in the way," said Nyanga. Suddenly, he pulled out his giant sword. "That be no tree trunk, mohn. It moved."

"Yo, who you callin' a tree trunk, punk?" A seven-foot-tall creature stood right behind the canoe. It looked like a giant cay-

man, but with huge jaws and jagged teeth. Nyanga took a swing at it, but another swamp creature rose behind him and grabbed his wrist. Two others rose out of the muck and caught me before I could cast a spell.

"Hey, dey're no lizers. Whaddya think, Gnarfi?" said one.

"Yeh, dat's weird. Dey ain't got no scales. Let's eat 'em!" said Gnarff.

"Nyeh, I dunno. Let's take 'em to Gur-r'ash. Maybe the chief'll rewar' us" intervened a third with an eye patch. They tied us up, sank the canoe, and swam away, carrying us on their scaly backs.

**Alphamir 11, Talasar:** This was indeed a rough ride. The whirlpool that spewed us out of the bowels of cay-men tunnels had split our canoe down the middle. We ended up swimming back to the river bank. Beyond lay a realm of swamps. Wild-eyed, Haz'ar said, "We can't go any further. This is the Bayou, the land of the gator men. They're big, they're fierce, and they're always hungry. And they hate lizardkin."

Well, we couldn't abandon the admiral. Our best chance was to get back to the *Princess Ark*. Of course, she was *invisible*, but perhaps we could attract her attention. Xerdon cast a *wall of fire*. If the fire didn't catch, at least the smoke would be visible from miles away.

**Alphamir 13, Haldemar:** I landed heavily in a mud puddle when my reptilian captor shook me off his back.

We had been swimming down the Swamplight River, according to Gnarff. We reached a spot in a huge lagoon where these giant alligator men crowded the water. Without warning, Gnarff dove underwater and swam down to some cave. Beyond lay a vast complex partially filled with water. Of the three races encountered in this region, this one was the most primitive. No paintings, sculptures, or feathers here. Just filthy, smelly muck. And lots of tall gator men. "You wait 'ere," said Gnarff.

Hours later, an even bigger and meaner-looking gator man approached. He wore a strange armor made of lizard skin and bones, and on his head was a spiked helmet made of crocodile skin. He yanked both Nyanga and I off our feet and carried us down to a large chamber. From the looks of it, it had to be some temple. There were pits of bubbling mud, cracks in the ground from which rose blue flames and an 18'-tall statue of a reptilian humanoid with two apelike heads, tentacles instead of arms, and a forked tail. That couldn't be good. Nyanga and I were tied with bamboo strips to a large altar. That wasn't good either. The big gator man then said, "Tomorrow you will be sacrificed to the Avatar of Gorn." That was bad.

**Alphamir 13, Talasar:** Blasted be the swamp fog! We were lucky enough to get the *Princess Ark's* attention, but we haven't been able to find the admiral so far. I fear the worst.

We've reached an island at the center of a large lagoon. Haz'ar says it is the heart of the Kingdom of Ator, a huge swamp ruled by brutish, cruel gator men. We circled the island several times, but could not see any towns, mounds, or burrows of any kind. Haz'ar suspects the gator men live under the water in subterranean dwellings. Had the admiral been a lizardkin, they would have killed him instantly. But humans-they wouldn't know what to make of them, according to Haz'ar. Thus, there still is a small chance that he and Nyanga are inside the gator-men's lair, somewhere beneath us, under miles of swamps stretching below the *Princess Ark*. But where?

Well, it seemed a gator hunt was due. I ordered the crew to drop lines with hooks and bait. Perhaps we could force a few gator men to speak.

Indeed, a gator man swam by and stopped near a hook. After observing the bait, he grabbed the line out of the water and saw the hook. He then gazed at the line, following it up to the point where it became *invisible*.

"Hey, how dat get up dere?" he mumbled while tugging on the line. He then started to climb the line. Ramissur was at the other end, waiting with a big mallet. That gator man never knew what hit him. When he wakes up, he'll have a long conversation with us.

**Alphamir 14, Haldemar:** The time had come. Neither Nyanga nor I had managed to loosen the bamboo strips that held us on the altar. The gator men now filled the chamber, chanting crude incantations. The queen of the gator men appeared and took her place on a throne to the side of the chamber. Then two gator men cranked up a large bamboo gate, revealing the entrance to a dark cavern.

From behind the gate came gurgling, hissing, and growling sounds. Soon a horrible creature crawled out. The gator men cheered. Suddenly, I recognized the monster—it was the fiend that we had pursued down into the mines of the caymen. It stopped its bizarre noises, then sighed. "Oh, so sorry. I didn't know it was you! You didn't believe I was going to eat you, now did you? All I really want is your brain. Hold on a minute."

It turned toward the gator men, roared, and writhed its tentacles menacingly at them. The gator men bowed deeply and quickly left the chamber.

"Now, that's better. The fools believe I am the avatar of Gorn, the Immortal patron of the gator men. What a crock!" the fiend added.

I couldn't believe my ears. Perhaps the evil creature was just toying with me before killing me. There was nothing I could do, so I decided to find out what he was up to. "Now, what is a fiend like you doing in a swamp like this?"

It looked truly surprised. "A fiend! Me? Oh come now, you don't see any batlike wings on my back, do you? Do I wear any

horns or a forked tail, hmmm? Can't you tell? I'm a Neh-Thalggu, from the University of Jawwag-Uf. I'm a student in interplanar cosmogonic magic."

Totally baffled, I asked, "Well, in what manner may my brain help you? I know nothing of interplanar cosmogonic magic, whatever it is."

The creature writhed its tentacles. "I didn't think you would. You see, I am studying the cause and effect of the magical drain on the world of Mystara. In order to complete my thesis I needed to acquire the brains of typical wizards of this world. I've already got a Nithian from the Hollow World, a Glantrian, and a Herathian. I couldn't possibly leave without a Alphatian specimen, now could I?"

That was totally bizarre. I still had to know about Haz'ar's dreams and those symbols. "At the risk of boring you out of your brain my friend, do tell me of the shaman's dreams, and what the eagle and winged-bull symbols have to do with all this?"

Several blobs of orange flesh began pulsing on the Neh-Thalggu. "I haven't a clue of what you are talking about. By Qywattz, don't get weird on me! What dreams would these be?"

I answered, "Well, the ones you sent Haz'ar, the lizard shaman of Shazak, of course!"

The Neh-Thalggu's four eyes squinted. "What hazard, what shaman? Say, wait a minute now. I think I know. You see, I was until recently a prisoner of the Wizard King of Herath. I was captured just after acquiring the brain of one of their noblemen. I became the object of his studies, and later he had me thrown into his dungeon. Many years later, I saw you running down a hallway of the very same dungeon, just past the door to my cell, with hordes of giant hunting spiders after you.

"The next thing I knew, the Wizard King came and visited me, told me of your brilliant mind, cast a series of spells compelling me to feed gruesomely on the saurians' eyes and brains for some time—yuk!—and had me released at the edge of the Bayou. Now I understand why.

"He must have done all this to set you up to find me, so I could acquire your brain. That lizard shaman of yours became a convenient tool to get you to hunt me. I do know for a fact the Wizard King knew how to send dreams. He tested that on me several times. The Wizard King also knew the kin of Shazak fairly well, since his people trade with them on a regular basis. That lizard shaman must have been someone he knew to be resourceful enough to get in your way—so he must have been the one sending those dreams. What can I say, the man is brilliant! Of course, I don't mind this arrangement at all. Now, about that brain of yours . . ."

I had to think fast. "Hold on for a minute, young man. You said you collected a Herathian brain. Now, wasn't there some-

thing odd about that Herathian? I truly must know."

"Odd? Like what?" it asked, crossing its crab legs.

"I'm not sure." I ventured. "Something about spiders. Big, ugly, hairy spiders."

The bloated hump that I presumed contained the Herathian brain pulsed and jiggled for a minute. The Neh-Thalggu then said, "Hmm, Wait . . . Hard to tell with those aliens. Oh yes, that's really odd, never noticed that. What the . . ." The Neh-Thalggu opened its eyes wide as drool dripped from its gaping mouth. Suddenly, it straightened up, haughtily looking down at me with its four yellow eyes. With an imperious voice it then inquired, "What are you doing in my presence, human? I am Lord Achym of Ensheya, spider-lord of Shahav!" Then, confused, the Neh-Thalggu hesitated. "No, wait."

I could have sworn this was someone else speaking. Judging from its looks, this Neh-Thalggu was going insane. It looked like it was suffering from an acute split-personality syndrome. What could have caused this? Perhaps all those alien brains-must be unhealthy after a while.

The Neh-Thalggu drooled more. "Aha! I know now. I am Lady Aliana Nyraviel of Glantri, Countess of Seth-Kabree, Dragonmaster of the second circle! And what's with you, Alphatian?"

I risked a last question. "I seek an hourglass tumbling in the night."

"An hourglass? The one I honor is the symbol of the d'Ambrevilles! And why would you care? Why would I care? Just who am I?" The befuddled Neh-Thalggu drooled even more. Then suddenly, it began chanting what seemed delirious Thothian incantations, and added "It's breached! It's breached! The Old One comes!" Finally, the Neh-Thalggu screeched horribly and ran away screaming into the dark.

Fortunately, he forgot his scalpel! Nyanga managed to grab it and free us in no time. We had to get out of there quickly; there was no telling how long the Neh-Thalggu's insanity would last. I didn't know what went wrong with that Herathian brain, but it certainly confused the Neh-Thalggu's wits.

We could not escape with a *travel* spell—I had already used it to enter the cayman mine, days ago, and I hadn't meditated for new spells since. But Nyanga had a brilliant idea. While I cast a *light* spell, he threw the chamber's torches into a puddle. Then, Nyanga pulled a bamboo mat off the throne, covered it with a thick layer of wet mud, and tossed it on one of the two flaming cracks in the rock. The hissing gases soon blew the mat off, but the flames were already extinguished. He repeated the operation on the other crack. Flammable gases rapidly began filling the chamber. We had to act fast.

Nyanga then rang a gong at the chamber's entrance. He hit it strongly enough that it echoed down many galleries wind-

ing away from us. I then cast a spherical force field around us and hoped our plan would work.

**Alphamir 14, Talasar:** That gator man would not speak. Even Haz'ar's tickling act with a feather failed miserably, despite the gator-man's thunderous laughter. I considered with great reluctance the possibility of certain, more extreme interrogation techniques when Xerdon had an idea. We tied the gator man to a rope and dangled him in front of Berylith's mouth. We then asked her to become visible. That did it. The gator man sang like a scaly bird.

The problem was that the gator-man's "capital" was nowhere to be seen. The whole thing lay below ground, under tons of the lagoon's muck. We considered using some *water breathing* potions, but we would still have to contend with hundreds of rather large gator men.

Just then, a low rumbling came from the water. At first, there were just a few large bubbles, but then the entire surface of the water seem to turn into a volcano, with rocks, flames, and bits of gator men flying in all directions, just barely missing the *Princess Ark*. The brutal eruption ended as quickly as it began, with tons of greenish water rushing back to fill some underground vacuum. Surely, if the admiral had been down there, he would be dead by now.

A sphere covered with mud came bobbing up at the surface of the water. The sludge dripped off, revealing the Admiral and Nyanga, sitting inside a translucent sphere, laughing hysterically. We immediately sent a life boat down to recover them.

**Epilogue, Haldemar:** A mystery unveiled only other mysteries. What the Wizard King of Herath had told me during my visit at his palace seemed pure fantasy. Perhaps some warped truth lay behind his words, perhaps not. He knew the dreams of eagles and winged bulls sent to Haz'ar would be of interest to me. Was that only a trick to get me involved?

Yet, the creature told of his studies concerning the loss of magic in Mystara. This corroborates the scroll I took from the Wizard King<sup>1</sup>. How could this be mere coincidence? And then, I cannot ignore the Neh-Thalggu's comment about the hourglass of Glantri—information that presumably came from the Neh-Thalggu's Glantrian brain. Who are those d'Ambrévilles? Who is that Old One? These could all have been the delirious words of an insane alien. But what if they weren't?

This uncertainty is eating at me. As soon as I can, I must unveil that which lies in the dark, be it truth or trickery.

<sup>1</sup> See the epilogue in issue #183, "Web of the Wizard King."

To be continued \*\*\*

## The Squamous Kingdoms

**Kingdom of Shazak** —Capital: Ah'roog (pop.: 7,500 lizard men); ruler: Shazak XII "The Slick," son of Shazak XI "No Tail"; tribal domain includes the forested area between the Bayou's eastern edge and the rakastas' Forest Marches of Wyndham; patron: Ka'ar.

Lizard men, like the cay-men and the gator men of Ator, were the result of magical experimentation performed many centuries ago. Ancient araneas of Herath originally constructed them from humans magically crossed with dragons. The result was less than satisfactory, since lizard men never developed any of the desirable elements of either race. They became rather crude, bipedal carnivores with a smattering of civilization. They failed as a race of servants and were eventually tossed into the Bayou.

Rather prolific, they quickly overpopulated the area and many of the original tribes spread into other regions of Mystara. These were the more primitive, degenerate breeds incapable of competing with the wiser race. Thanks to subsequent genetic breeding on the part of Herathian sages (and some faith in their Immortal, Ka the Preserver), the few tribes remaining in Shazak became somewhat more advanced and a bit less chaotic, but still not enough to provide any great service to Herathians.

Over the centuries, the lizard men were thrown out of the Bayou by newcomers—the gator men, another ill-fated Herathian experiment (see "Kingdom of Ator," below). The kin of Shazak adapted to the dark forests north of Herath, which was a positive factor in their evolution as a species. No longer confined to the wetlands of the Bayou, they developed a primitive artform, a written language composed of ideological symbols conveying simple concepts, and a very rudimentary phonetic alphabet. Some Herathian influence can still be found there.

Some nobles of Herath hire lizard men as mercenaries, as basically expendable front-line assault troops in times of war against the humanoids of the Orc's Head peninsula, but more particularly against the rakdstas of Bellayne. Lizard men of Shazak have become ancestral enemies of Bellayne because of their mutual struggle to occupy the forested area between the lizard men's capital, Ah'roog, and Bellayne's Marches of Wyndham. Rakasta war parties have been known to raid the kin of Shazak as far into Shazak as the battle site called Rakasta Grave. Several battles took place in that vicinity, within as little as mile of each other, during the past 50 years. The lizard men never were able to really threaten Bellayne's border because of the ominous presence of the hated gator men to the west. Gator men incursions, especially near the villages of Snaat and Ryt'tak, are as common as they are savage.

It is because of the gator men that the kin of Shazak united their many tribes

behind a single war leader, the Shazak, which is the closest equivalent to a human king in the lizard men's language. This happened around 760 AC. By now, the role of Shazak has become hereditary. Shazaks usually have at least one wokan and one shaman to assist them and act as advisors. There are no social differences between male and female lizard men.

In the past century, the kin of Shazak have learned to domesticate giant bats found in the caverns under the hills of T'lak, between the Shady and Gatorbone Rivers. These mounts have been useful in spotting rakasta incursions. One or two bats usually can be found in each village, with more in Ah'roog. They often become the mounts of greater shamans, wokani, and Shazaks.

Herathians are the quiet allies of Shazak simply because they form a buffer state on their northern border. The kin of Shazak aren't bright enough to figure out the true nature of Herathian nobility. The lizardkin also help keep the rakastas of Bellayne at bay. A small caravan of traders often sails up the Venom River from the town of Sorodh to the village of Kfer, then continues on foot with mules, up to Snaat. There, traders sell their goods at a monthly market, and purchase pelts, pottery, feathers, rare woods, giant bat guano, live monsters, etc.

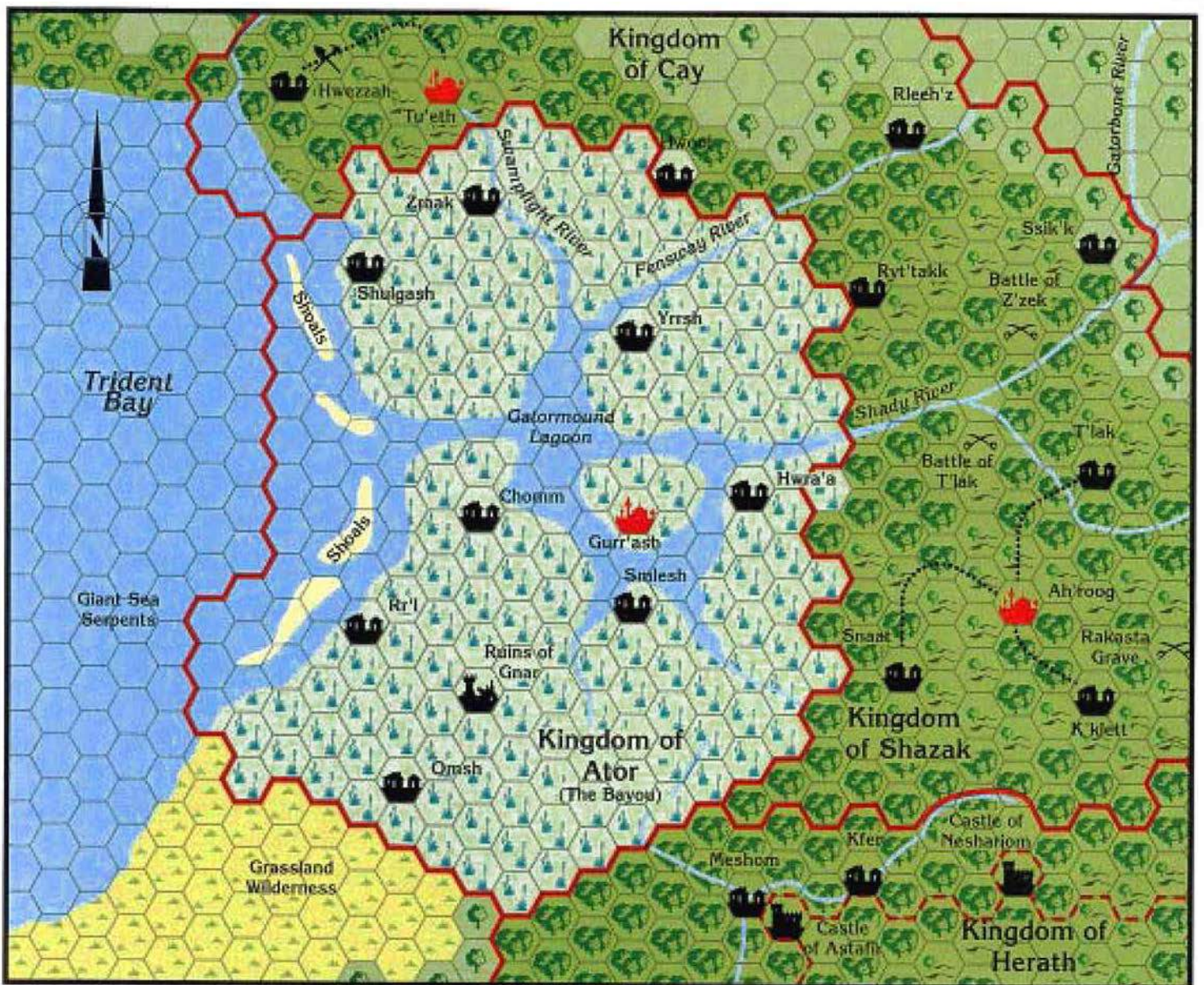
**The City of Ah'roog** —excerpt from the scrolls of Raman Nabonidus:

"Two dozen mounds stood so tall they peaked above the highest trees. Smaller ones dotted the forest and formed winding streets under the trees' canopy. Lizard men were building one of those larger mounds, giving us the opportunity to observe that the mounds were erected on top of subterranean dwellings, using the earth dug out from below the surface as construction material. Considering the number of lizard men in the area, the underground network must have been extensive.

"The lizard men were building the larger mound over smaller ones, while using the taller trees as an armature. The mound encased several trees entirely. The live branches of some of the trees still stuck out from the sides of the mound, almost giving it the aspect of a natural hill with saplings, wild ivy, and moss on its slopes. The paint pattern on the exposed mud made all the difference for the untrained eye.

"Although primitive, there was a certain artful taste in the way the lizard men arranged the pattern of live branches, windows, paint, occasional sculpture, and almost chaotic structural protuberances on the sides of the mound. This was obviously the work of a somewhat advanced lizard-man species.

"Entrances were located halfway up the sides of the mound, with stairs snaking



Scale: one hex equals 8 miles

- Capital
- Village
- Castle
- Ruins
- Battle Site
- Mines
- Trail
- National Border
- Dominion Limit
- Swamp
- River
- Shoals
- Farmland
- Grasslands
- Light Forest
- Heavy Forest
- Forested Hills



Regional Map



back down. A funeral procession came down the stairs of a nearby mound."

**Kingdom of Ator (The Bayou)—**

Capital: Gurr'ash (pop.: 3,200 gator men—outsiders welcome for lunch only); ruler: Queen Ator I "Ole Gray Fangs," slayer of King Osh III; tribal domain includes all of the Bayou; patron: Gorn.

The gator men were a dismal failure on the part of Herathian wizards, at least as far as the wizards were concerned. They hoped that a cross between lizard men and alligators would produce a tougher warrior race to fill the ranks of their armies. Indeed, the gator men turned out to be tough-very tough, very tall, and quite bloodthirsty. Unfortunately, the breed remained very crude and totally unruly. The first specimens used in the army often turned against Herath's human troops. They also turned out to be absolutely incompatible with lizard-man troops, whom they viewed as food.

A few attempts at developing a more controllable breed took place, until a large batch of the creatures escaped from the laboratories, fomented an uprising, and wreaked havoc among sages, nobles, and their guards. After this bloody episode, the surviving gator-man specimens fled into the Bayou despite frantic efforts on the part of the Herathians to eradicate the whole species. Herathian rulers hired

bounty hunters to rid their northern neighborhood of the frightening gator-men threat. It became a booming business for a few decades, but the gator men outbred the bounty hunters, causing the hunt to become excessively perilous—for the bounty hunters.

Once the losses due to the bounty hunters had been greatly reduced, the gator men quickly turned against the lizard men who populated the Bayou at that time. After a century, lizard men had all but left the ancestral Bayou. Fortunately, the gator men prefer the murky waters of the wetlands and have stopped their territorial expansion at the edges of the Bayou. Since then, the gator men population has stabilized. Diseases and parasites (mostly introduced by the Herathians) and a lack of an adequate nutritional base cause weaker hatchlings to perish.

Occasionally, when the number of gator men increases beyond what the Bayou's ecology can sustain, gator men go on a massive rampage into one of their neighbors' territories, hunting for food and whatever might spark some interest in their thick saurian minds. Gator-man shamans usually spark these raids, on behalf of their patron Immortal, Gorn. These forays are now a sacred ritual in which a warrior presumably gains Gorn's favor by spilling the blood of his foes in

the most savage ways. These raids have become the most frightening and unpredictable calamity the neighboring nations have experienced. Bringing back food is of course useful to the community, but all the shamans instinctively understand that the true goal of these raids is to limit the gator-man population lest the gator men feed upon each other.

Some trading does occur between the gator men and their mysterious neighbors in the Grassland Wilderness, however. A gator-man shaman once noticed that if he forgot or abandoned something at the southwestern edge of the swamp, the next day something else might be there, usually something of use. After a century, gator men have come to believe that the spirit of Gorn takes these goods and repays the gator men with something else.

Of course, there is no such arrangement. In fact, several nomadic tribes of chameleon men inhabit these grasslands. Chameleon men are difficult to spot among the tall grasses prevailing there. The first "trade" was an accidental one, when a chameleon man found a gator man's huge stone ax. He was so surprised he left his backpack on the site and walked back to his camp with his discovery. Over the years, chameleon men found out that if they left something of value after picking up a gator-man item, soon more gator-man objects would be found

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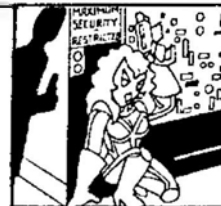
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there. So it became a regular trade with the unwitting gator men. Spots have become known for the kinds of items expected to be found there. In some areas, food is traded; in others it could be weapons, shells, or ornamental stones.

The positive side of all this is that gator men *never* raid or even dare venture into the grasslands, for they are thought to be Gorn's home, a land taboo to all upon pain of death. The chameleon men understand this quite well. Using their camouflage ability, chameleon men do their best to preserve these gator-man beliefs. This provides them with some wealth and a much-appreciated immunity against the gator men's fearsome endemic raids.

The gator-man monarchs have established themselves by sheer savagery and cruelty. Their rule is based on fear, brutality, and the support of the shamans. The gator man who acts in the most heroic and gruesome fashion during the latest foray into neighboring lands may challenge the current ruler. For this he must have equalled or bested the present ruler's savagery during such raids—at least three shamans must testify to such "heroism." If the challenger then defeats the ruler, the challenger establishes a new, hereditary dynasty (until another challenger comes up). This is what happened when Ator defeated acting monarch King Osh III. She killed the aging king, crowned herself Queen Ator I, thus supplanting the Oshite dynasty with her own Atorite dynasty, and renamed the nation the Kingdom of Ator. She has ruled for fifteen years since. Should she die unchallenged or undefeated (she barely avoided death during Halde-mar's escape from Gurr'ash's eastern quarter), one of her heirs would become King or Queen Ator II. For the moment, the queen has ordered 100 cay-men to be captured and brought back as slaves for the reconstruction of the destroyed quarter of Gurr'ash. A war is in the making between the kingdoms of Cay and Ator.

**Kingdom of Cay** — Capital: Tu'eth (pop.: 8,900 cay-men); ruler: Queen Ssa'a IV "Silver Tail," daughter of Queen Roha'a II; Tribal domain includes forested land north of the Bayou; patrons: Kutul, Cay.

The last creation of the Herathians was almost a success. Backing away from the gigantic and deadly gator men, Herathians produced the small cay-men. They were bred to become slaves and builders, smart enough to understand construction plans, agile and quick enough to do the job well and without delay, and small enough to make them weaker than their guards and easy to control.

That plan almost worked, except that the cay-men weren't as bright as expected and were terribly pretentious in addition. Their pride would get in the way when a construction flaw needed correction, or when the cay-men simply disagreed with the architects! Endless bickering separated the Herathian architects from their cay-

men servants. In the long run, cay-men deliberately allowed flaws to remain in the Herathian monuments, without alerting the architects. Exasperated by a rash of catastrophes, Herathians gave up on the lizardkin experiments, and dumped the cay-men north of the Bayou.

The building skills of the present-day cay-men are rather outrè. They were never bred to become architects, yet cay-men still attempt to build things to prove they are better than the kin of Shazak and Ator. Their lack of understanding of sound architecture and engineering has led the cay-men to erect such dubious structures as the Great Citadel of Cay (see "The City of Tu'eth"). These constructions do get in the way of raiding gator men who don't know any better, but they wouldn't last long against the experienced military of Bellayne or Herath. But that's beside the point. Cay-men are still very proud of their accomplishments.

The people of Cay copied the social structure of the other demihuman kingdoms and established their own monarchy. Queen Ssa'a presently rules the nation. She has been behind the cay-men expansion into the open lands north of the forests around Rleeh'z and Hwool. There, the cay-men have learned a very primitive way of raising herds of wild aurochs. For this, they domesticated small lizardlike striders that they harness to small war chariots. Cay-men trade some of their auroch meat with the kin of Shazak. Unbeknownst to Herathians, cay-men also trade a little of their red steel, from a mine that is located next to Hwezzah. They are still in the process of learning how to forge metal. Cay-man metal-working is quite primitive, but their wokani are learning.

**The City of Tu'eth** — excerpt from the scrolls of Raman Nabonidus:

"Seen from above, Tu'eth reminded me of halfling burrows. The city was a succession of small hills with wooden doors and round windows. It was an average-sized town, with most of the paths winding inward, more or less toward a small mesa, about 50' high, in the middle.

"At the center around the mesa stood the Great Citadel of Cay. It was an amazingly rickety assemblage of planks, tree trunks, bamboo, stones, ropes, leather, nets, and random portions of adobe walls with arrow slits, all of which contrived to form a 20' palisade. Several towers of respectable height (but debatable stability) overlooked the palisade at rather unpredictable intervals. Rope bridges, catwalks, and flimsy-looking drawbridges hung just about everywhere, running from one level to another like some sort of mad, three-dimensional maze. Surely, if an enemy ever climbed up the palisade, it would not be able to get back down the other side, for it would be hopelessly lost.

"This 'monument' of cay-men military architecture stretched for miles around the mesa, up and down the hills and crags,

using large trees and boulders as anchor points. A 15' wide moat full of muck surrounded the extraordinary creation. At the center of citadel, within the mesa, lay the queen's burrows."

## Patron Immortals

**Cay**— (alias Terra), cay-men's patroness: Cay represents earth, but also life, fertility, and good luck. Cay is one of the Immortals whom the Herathian experiments on humans and other beings angered. She felt that creating a new race was truly admirable, but debilitating already existing ones in the process was odious. She caused the cay-men to become useless to the Herathians by making them too proud and limiting their building skills (see the *Codex of the Immortals*, in the *Wrath of the Immortals* boxed set).

**Gorn**— (alias Demogorgon), gator men's patron: Gorn is the gator men's embodiment of evil and destruction. It was Demogorgon who interfered in the Herathian experiments on gator men. He's the one responsible for instilling in the gator men's minds the racial instincts that make them brutal and bloodthirsty. He's also the one at the source of the gator-man revolt against Herath. For the warlike gator men, Gorn is the patron of victory, bravery, and ultimately death (see the *Codex of the Immortals*, in the *Wrath of the Immortals* boxed set).

**Ka'ar**— (alias Ka the Preserver), lizard-men's patron: Ka was the first Immortal to observe the Herathian experiments on humans and dragons. He felt that the creation of new races by mere mortals was blasphemous; this privilege was reserved for Immortals only. Ka also feared what a cross between dragons and humans might produce, so he caused several of the species' undesirable traits to become those of the lizard men. Korotiku, the Immortal patron of Herath, remained neutral on this issue and did not intervene. Ka then became the lizard men's protector, hoping to make them better creatures once they gained their freedom. However, his views caused the more warlike breeds to leave the Bayou, leaving behind those more inclined to improve. Ka became the patron of trade, wealth, and a better life (see the *Codex of the Immortals*, in the *Wrath of the Immortals* boxed set).

**Kutul**— (alias Kurtulmak), cay-men's patron: The Shining One was a late comer to the scene. He saw in the cay-men an opportunity for increasing the number of his followers. At that time, the cay-men were poor warriors at best. Kutul contrived to have them create a caste of warriors headed by shamans devoted to him. Kutul now shares the leadership of the cay-men with Cay, she taking care of the growth of their population, and he acting as the patron of war, fire, and territorial gains. He also balances Cay's annoying lawfulness with his own brand of chaos (see the *Codex of the Immortals*, in the *Wrath of the Immortals* boxed set).



## Squamous ones as PCs

The best way to use any of the three races presented in this article would be to borrow the character-advancement system given in *GAZ10 Orcs of Thar*. The experience points are given in the Squamous Ones Table.

Note that Constitution bonuses should be added only when a PC is created and every time it gains a new level, up to 9th level. None of these creatures have any special abilities (see "Miscellaneous"). Young lizardkin (i.e., player characters when they are first rolled up) each start with a relatively low intelligence score, as shown on the Intelligence table below. Don't forget to reward good role-playing of truly "primitive" characters!

Race	Intelligence	
	Starting	Max.
Common lizard men	1d4+2	8
Shazak's kin	1d4+2	12
All cay-men	1d4+2	14
All gator men	1d4+2	10

Each time one of these PCs gains a level, an Intelligence check should be rolled on 1d20. If the check is *failed*, the PC gains a point of Intelligence, up to the racial limits given in the Intelligence table. In other words, PCs gain in Intelligence as they gain levels, but the gain becomes increasingly harder to achieve.

**Shamans & wokani:** Should the character decide to become a spell-caster, the experience table of the lizardkin will have to be recalculated, incorporating the experience points requirements listed below. The indicated XP have to be gained *before* actually acquiring the corresponding spell-casting level. This means that one cannot start with a spell-casting character when the PC is created.

Spell-casting level	Extra XP required
1	1,000 XP
2	2,000 XP
3	4,000 XP
4	8,000 XP
5	16,000 XP
6	32,000 XP

For example, if a 3rd-level cay-man wanted to become a 1st-level spell-caster upon reaching his next level, he would need to reach a total of 16,000 XP instead of 15,000.

In order to cast spells, a shaman must have a wisdom of 9 or better. A wokan needs an Intelligence of 9 or better. All spell-casters must be at least 1st level in their race to be able to cast spells. For all lizardkin, levels in spell-casting are limited to S6 and W4, as per standard rules on monster spell-casters, page 215-216 in the *Rules Cyclopedia*.

**Languages:** Many of the sounds used

in lizardkin expression are difficult to reproduce with a human's vocal cords. In general, names are very short, one or two syllables at most. Gator men use anything that sounds like chewing, ripping, rumbling, and other throat noises along with deep voices. Lizard men prefer clicks, rattles, snaps, and generally raspy near-human voices. Cay-men hiss, wheeze, sneeze, whistle, hum, purr, or use a weak, lispy voice when communicating with humans.

Body language is used in conjunction with spoken words. For example, all of the squamous ones use slight movements of their tails as punctuation or signs of courtesy and respect. Greater movements of their tails express deeper emotions. Lizard men also use quick motions of their forked tongues when thinking or when suspicious of something.

**Miscellaneous:** All lizardkin instinctively know how to swim. Lizard men can hold their breath as long as normal humans. Cay-men can stay underwater without discomfort up to three minutes, gator men up to five minutes. All lizardkin can hide in swamp vegetation (30% chance, at least 10' away from observer).

Lizardkin all have *infraction* and, for simplicity's sake, a natural armor class of 7. Addition of any armor of AC7 or worse only improves the lizardkin's natural AC by a +1 bonus. Shields work as usual. For armor of AC6 or better, use the AC rating of the armor worn, with a +1 bonus.

For those nit-pickers who demand to have gator men with the standard natural AC of 3, it may be better to allow AC7 at level -3, AC5 at level -2, AC4 at level -1, and finally AC3 at level 0 (adult tribesman). Likewise, when first created, a gator man's bite causes only 1d4 points of damage. At higher levels, the bite inflicts 1d6 points of damage for every 2 HD, rounded down. Thus, the most damage any gator man's bite could inflict would be 6d6 points.

Cay-men and gator men can be found in AC9 *Creature Catalogue*, pages 33 and 37. The Neh-Thalggu is a creature from the outer planes, also known as the fearsome Brain Collector (see page 62 of the *Creature Catalogue*). Standard game statistics are abbreviated here for your convenience.

**Cay-man:** AC 7, HD 2, MV 90' (30'), 120' (40') swimming, AT 1 bite or weapon, D 1-4 or by weapon, Save F1, ML 8 (9), TT K, AL N, XPV 20. Size: 1' tall.

**Gator man:** AC 3, HD 7, MV 120' (40'), 180' (60') swimming, AT 1 bite or weapon, D 3-18 or by weapon +3, Save F7, ML 10, TT M, AL C, XPV 450 (weapon damage assumes a strength of 18). Size: 7-8' tall.

**Neh-Thalggu:** AC 2, HD 10\*, MV 180' (60'), 120' (40') swimming, AT 1 bite or spells, D 1-20 or by spell, Save F10, ML 10, TT C, AL C, XPV 1,750. Can cast up to 12 wizard spells, levels one to three, chosen at random.

## Squamous Ones Table

Level	Cay-man		Lizard man		Gator man	
	XP	HD	XP	HD	XP	HD
-3	—	—	—	—	-63,000	1
-2	—	—	—	—	-47,250	3
-1	-1,000	1d8	-1,200	d8+1	-31,500	5
0	0	2d8	0	2d8+1	0	7d8
1	1,000	3d8	1,200	3d8 +2	63,000	8d8
2	3,000	4d8	3,600	4d8 +3	189,000	9d8
3	7,000	—	8,400	—	441,000	—
4	15,000	5d8	18,000	5d8+3	741,000	10d8
5	31,000	6d8	37,200	6d8 +4	1,041,000	11d8
6	63,000	7d8	75,600	7d8 +4	1,341,000	12d8
7	129,000	—	152,400	—	1,641,000	—
8	259,000	8d8	306,000	8d8+5	1,941,000	13d8
9	519,000*	+2 hp**	606,000*	+2 hp**	2,241,000*	+2 hp**

\* + 300,000 XP per extra level.

\*\* +2 hit point per level, constitution bonus no longer applies.

Abilities	Str	Wis	Dex	Con	Cha
Race Max.	18	16	18	18	18*
Lizard man	+1	-1	—	—	—
Cay-man	-1	-1	+2	—	—
Gator man	+2	-2	—	+1	-1

\* Charisma applies only between creatures of the same race; penalize Charisma -2 when dealing with humanoids, and -5 when dealing with demihumans or humans. The natural -1 penalty to gator men's Charisma reflects the difficulty gator men have in getting along with each other.

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 33: Lords of shade and hue

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphantian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D<sup>®</sup> Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

FROM THE JOURNALS OF  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAALKEN  
LODGE ADMIRAL OF THE MIGHTIEST EMPIRE  
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS  
PRINCESS ARK  
IMPERIAL EXPLORED, ETC., ETC.

**Amphimir 17, AY 2001:** Three days have passed since we left the gator men's Bayou. All that talk of Alphantia and Thyatis was a troubling matter. I found the Wizard King of Herath's ability to send dreams to people extremely disquieting, and I asked my old friend Talasar for a special prayer that would protect us. I could not run the risk of having any of my officers' minds affected in such a treacherous fashion. I was deep in my thoughts when the snap of thunder shook the *Princess Ark*. What now? I heard Talasar sounding the alarm on the upper deck, and squads of boltmen running up to their battle stations. This was no ordinary storm. I rushed topside.

The *Princess* was climbing to get above some big thunderheads when three silvery

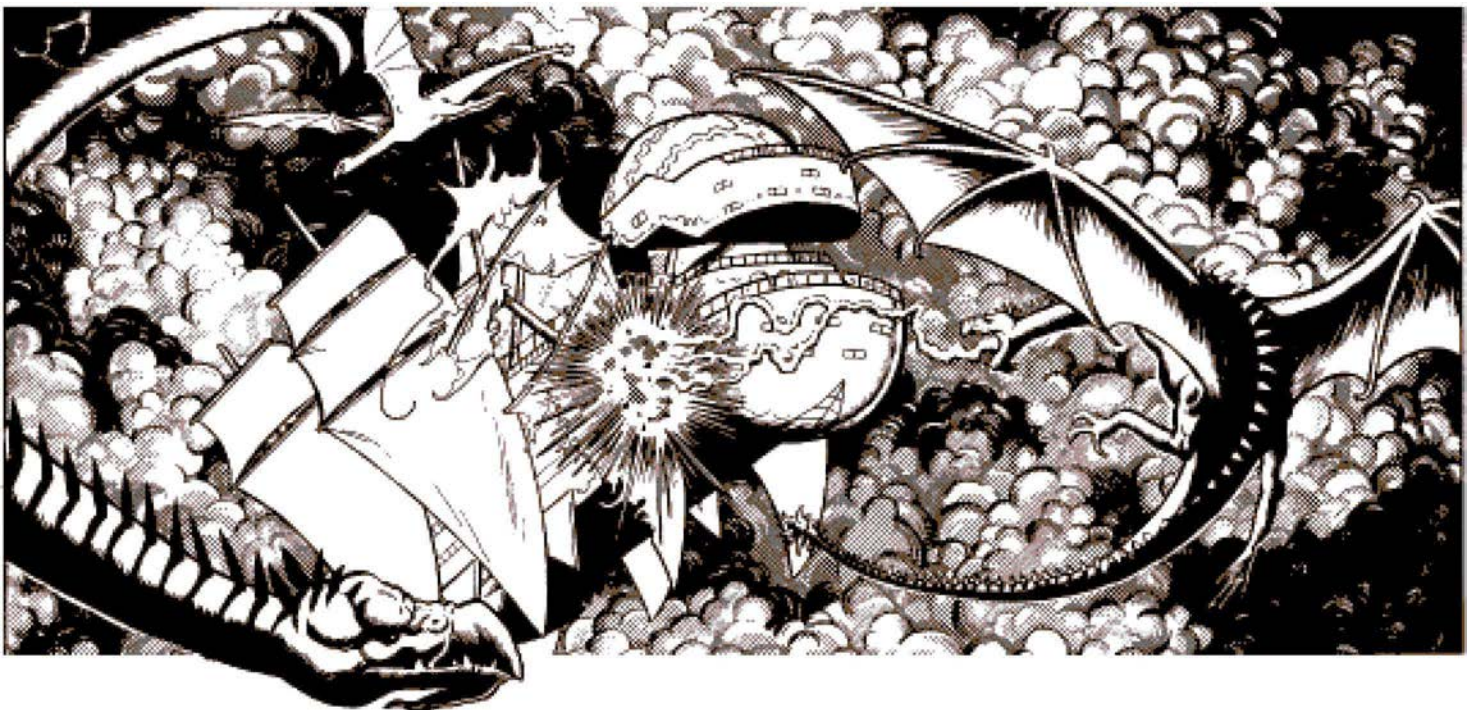
creatures swooped by. I thought at first these were dragons, but the unusual silver color made this improbable. They looked more like wyverns. One of them suddenly released a *lightning bolt* at us. No, they weren't wyverns either.

Another flew past us and spat a second bolt just before disappearing into the storm clouds. Its bolt shattered a mast and scorched much of the rigging. Luckily, no one was hurt. The boltmen released their anger and their wands at the "wyverns," but their bolts did not seem to hurt the creatures much. Perhaps they had some immunity to lightning—it would make sense.

More of the creatures attacked. The crew was better prepared now and met the assault with determination. The magical fire of the light ballistas traced graceful arches through the dark, forcing the creatures to jink and roll before diving on the *Princess*. One got its wing caught in a heavy ballista's magical *web*, screeched, and tumbled down into the clouds. Another vanished instantly as it ran afoul of the catapult's devastating magic. Berylith defeated several others in her path, but the attacks continued, unrelenting.

It became clear that the attacks were not meant to destroy the *Princess Ark*. The creatures were directing their assaults at masts, sails, and other unoccupied areas. Despite damage and utter chaos on deck, no one aboard had been hurt thus far.

I took a gamble and ordered a cease fire. The creatures swooped a few more times, observing, then disappeared into the dark clouds. I still had no clue as to why the attack took place, other than something or someone wanting to disable the ship. The *Princess* showed damage serious enough that repair was required at once. When the storm ended, we would descend to the land below, and mend the masts and rigging.





**Amphimir 18, Haldemar from a later account:** We found a secluded clearing in the forest. The *Princess* slowly descended to the treetops, and the crew fastened lines to hold her steady. The plan was to acquire several good quality logs for the masts, but this would expose the crew as they would no longer benefit from the *Princess's invisibility*. Xerdon and Nyanga returned after a few hours from their scouting mission. They had seen no one in the woods. All seemed peaceful. Work began immediately.

When I was convinced all safety measures had been taken, I left the ship to oversee repairs. I had to pick the trees needed for the masts. I was best qualified for this, because of the enchantments that would be needed eventually. The raucous laughter of a bird echoed strangely somewhere in the forest. Moments later, the crew began cutting down a majestic tree. I sat on a mossy rock next to a pond, as the tree trunk creaked and groaned in its fall.

Some time went by as Raman and the crew examined the log for any splinters or irregularities. Satisfied, he turned toward me and began, "This one's perfect, Your High . . . Admiral?" He turned around several times, apparently not seeing me. Hands on his hips, he added "Well, by Yiggureth, where is he now?"

How could he not see me? I just sat there, amazed. I walked up to him. Strange—he seemed twice as tall as he used to be. Indeed, I could barely reach his belt. Perhaps this place was magical. I tugged on his belt.

"Eh, what's this? Shoo! Out of my way, you, I'm busy," said Raman. He shoved me off to the side, into a bush. "Boltmen," ordered Raman, "sound the alarm, the admiral is missing."

I tried to call, but only a faint squeak came out. A squeak? I realized with horror that I had somehow transformed into some lizard with a big, scaly frill around my neck. A lizard? Me!? Who could have dared try such insolent trickery?

The crew stepped aboard the lifeboat. I rushed to get on board, but a boltman grabbed me by the tail and tossed me off the lifeboat. "Hey! Get off, you. Go away, shoo!"

Now what do I do?

**Amphimir 18, Talasar:** I fear the worst may have happened to the Admiral. None of our search parties have revealed his whereabouts. So far, I've discounted the possibility of wild animals or monsters. No traces of combat were found, nor any remains. I suspect he was abducted. Why, I do not know yet.

Native tribesmen have been sighted leaving the forest, south of our position. They could have had something to do with the admiral. I sent Xerdon and Nyanga to observe them. Lady Abovombe decided to join their party. I will remain to oversee repairs. I've doubled boltmen patrols in the vicinity. No one is to be alone at any time until this mystery is unveiled.

**Amphimir 18, Haldemar from a later account:** Alas, I had to leave the forest after running into several unsavory critters with cravings for lizard flesh. I discovered I could frighten smaller animals by stretching out my frill and standing up menacingly. This was useful since I couldn't cast any magic in my current shape. I also discovered I could run quite fast as well. I've done a lot of that lately.

I was north of the forest, in open grassland. I must admit I'd lost my way in the tall grass, with no possibility of reaching the ship. This could be trouble.

Some sudden noise in the grass got my attention. A tribesman squatting nearby, observed me silently. He must have had some lizardkin blood, judging from the very fine scales covering his skin. He otherwise seemed almost human. I looked him in the eyes, hoping perhaps to communicate.

"Friend . . . Help . . ." I thought very hard.

He began aiming his spear at me. Well, that didn't work. Time to run!

I ran until I ended up in a dead-end, at the base of a large rocky monolith. Drat! I tried to use the frill thing to intimidate my pursuer. The tribesman, raised an eyebrow, pulled a curved piece of wood and hurled it at me. It spun in the air and flew right past my head. "Ha!" I thought.

"Missed me!" That's when the wooden missile suddenly came back and hit me in the back of the head. That was it. I thought I was to end up as some tribesman's dinner after all. What a pity. All went dark.

**Amphimir 18, Xerdon:** We followed the small native hunting party. They had no prisoners, nor any way in which to conceal them. We were about to give up the observation when all 12 tribesmen suddenly vanished from the path. They were nowhere to be seen.

Later in the night, the tribesmen returned. They quietly entered our campsite, without any warning. Nyanga, who was on watch at the time, saw no telling sign of their arrival—they just appeared next to us.

Fortunately, these tribesmen were peaceful and simply curious about who we were. They tossed a strange creature's carcass, which they called a *roo*, onto the campfire and roasted it. One of the so-far silent tribesmen spoke after the roo feast.

They knew nothing of the admiral's fate. We were the first people of our kind that they had met. The leader of the tribesmen said he knew some magical place farther south where we could find out about many things. Perhaps the medicine men there would help us. We agreed and decided to leave the next day at dawn.

**Amphimir 19, Haldemar from a later account:** I woke up with a throbbing headache. I thought it all had been a bad dream, but I had no such luck. I hung from a branch, with my tail tied to a string—how discouraging.

The tribesman sat nearby, fixing embers in his campfire, probably to roast me. Lizard or not, it was time to act. I swung a few times at the end of my tail, leaped, and ended up perched on the branch. That caught the tribesman's attention.

I stood up, pointed a little reptilian finger at my captor, and then down at the offending string still at my tail. The tribesman took a few steps back in amazement. He scratched his head, then regained his composure. He approached and removed the string, watching me carefully.

He considered me for an instant, then stirred up his campfire again. Embers crackled and sparks rose above him as he began chanting. This was a shaman perhaps, who knew magic to talk to lizards. He said he was Gagidju, a walkabout medicine man.

"Ooh," he said. "You are gondaman. Barramundje cursed you."

"Who's that, and why was I cursed?" I asked.

"She Spirit Mother of Wallara. She protects land, water in the billabongs, trees in the outback. Should listen to kookaburra's call when you hear it. You angered Barramundje. Unwise . . ." said Gagidju. "Now, you gondaman."

"Well, can you break the curse?" I asked.

"Ooh no. Very unwise. Only great spirit breaks Barramundje's curse. We can go to dreamstone. There, the Eagle Spirit will help," answered Gagidju. He then added "Maybe."

**Amphimir 20, Xerdon:** We reached a small town in the rocky hills. It looked like an ancient archeological site. Judging from their architecture, the buildings must have been erected centuries ago by some advanced civilization. They had fallen in ruins at some point, and the tribesmen had taken over the site. They tried to rebuild some of the structures, using mud and straw, but clearly none of the original work was theirs. They religiously cleaned up the older structures and revealed long forgotten runes that their medicine men studied at length.

They called the place Risilvar, the lost city. Our arrival caused some agitation. Medicine men looked at us and said, "Balandas—evil spirits" From then on, no one would speak to us. Even the tribesmen who had led us here shunned us. We were free to go about Risilvar as we pleased, but everyone kept their distance.

Lady Abovombe had seen this kind of behavior among the tribes in her nation. She believed we had stepped right into these medicine-men's beliefs. They associated us with some ancestral enemy in their mythology. We had to prove our peaceful intentions.

She later found a wounded tribesman in one of the ruins. Fortunately, she had brought an *ointment of soothing* that she put to good use. A medicine man called Kapurugi was watching and appreciated the act. He later agreed to help to us.

Lady Abovombe explained, "We are

strangers in this land, Kapurugi. We never meant harm to anyone here. We are seeking a lost friend. Those who had led us here thought that the mystery of our friends disappearance could be solved here in Risilvar."

"Many secrets can be unveiled in the lost city," said the medicine man, "but first we need a corrobororee."

He called upon a few of his friends, and they built a fire in one of the alleyways and began dancing and chanting around it. Strange colors appeared on their skins, and kept changing as the corrobororee went on. Sparks and smoke rose from the fire. In the flames there appeared a fish, then a strange lizard with a frill. Finally a great eagle appeared and took the lizard away into a mountain.

"Your friend is alive. But he's a gondaman, a cursed one. He roams the outback now," said Kapurugi.

"What do you mean, he's cursed?" asked Lady Abovombe.

"He is a lizard. You must leave him alone. He caused a quarrel between the Spirit Mother and the Eagle Spirit. This is bad. You must leave the lost city now."

This wasn't much help at all. There must have been some mountain somewhere in the grasslands north from here. Perhaps we would find the admiral—or a lizard—there. This was rather bizarre. We had to return to the *Princess Ark* and report all this to Talasar. Kapurugi met us at the gate of Risilvar. He held three very large, flightless birds. He handed us their reins and mimicked the position of a horseman. "Take emus. You will need them to travel the outback. Good luck."

**Amphimir 20, Haldemar from a later account:** After a day's march across the outback, Gagidju and I arrived at the Wallabong dreamstone. The great stone monolith rose straight up from the grass. On our way to the top, I noticed several ancient paintings, and finally the entrance to a large cavern with a small billabong.

Gagidju set up camp in a sandy corner. I had ample opportunity to observe this medicine man during our journey. The very fine reptilian scales covering his body had a tendency to change colors slightly, depending on the surrounding or the light, very much like a chameleon. The skin had a shimmering quality that unnerved me several times.

Gagidju lit a small fire, and he carefully livened the embers. This time he pulled out small chips of opal and played with them for some time. He then tossed hand-sized pieces of painted bark into the fire and began chanting. The ceremony lasted hours, until well after sunset. The flames were casting odd moving shadows against the cavern's vault. At times I could see the shadows of birds among the rocks. Mesmerized, I began seeing images in the shadows, as if I were dreaming. Soon my mind was lost in the pattern of moving dark shapes.

**Amphimir 21, Talasar:** Xerdon finally returned from his mission. At the idea of the admiral being turned into a lizard, I prayed all night for all manners of removing curses. A long day lay ahead of us. The task of hunting down every frilled lizard in the region was both ludicrous and daunting, but nevertheless seemed crucial. Where could the admiral be?

I sent out the crew in small hunting parties with nets and bags, and the hunt began. Xerdon, Abovombe, and Nyanga would ride their emus, scouting the grasslands for signs of the admiral. Meanwhile, I would examine each and every one of those lizards. Perhaps I could discern which was the admiral.

Hours later, some of the teams began returning with bags full of lizards. Soon the deck was rampant with runaway frilled lizards, goannas, and other unrelated animals. Later in the night, natives began following the crew to the *Princess Ark*, gleefully selling anything they could lay their hands on, including amazing creatures that delighted Raman. The deck became a racing track for platypuses, spiny anteaters, flying squirrels, dingoes, koala bears, wombats, and kangaroos. This happy crowd was soon returned to the ground below so I could concentrate on the remaining frilled lizards at last.

**Amphimir 21, Haldemar from a later account:** Gagidju had already left when I awoke from the magical dreams. Gagidju's dreams were truly amazing. I saw the eagle that Gagidju had spoken of.

It had risen from the furtive shadows of the cavern and turned into a man with small flames coming out of his eyes. At his feet sat the silvery "thunderheads," the creatures that had attacked the *Princess Ark* during the storm. They seemed very small next to him. An hourglass appeared in his hand, and he hurled it against the ground, shattering it. He finally said "Beware of the mountain wizards. They bring the doom of your world." Finally, a fish approached the edge of the cavern's pond. It transformed into an elven maiden with a gem in her forehead. She waved her hand at me and I regained my former human shape. Mist then rose in the cavern and I lost consciousness again.

Upon my awakening, Lady Abovombe appeared at the cavern's entrance, riding a strange bird. I thought for a moment I was still dreaming. After my companions' arrival in the cavern had finally dispelled my confusion, we gathered near the pond and spoke at length about what had occurred. I could have talked at length about all I had experienced lately, but it was clear that we had to return to Alphatia without delay.

Far too many clues about an ominous future had kept surfacing in our path. They could no longer be ignored or dismissed as mere coincidences. Neither was there any evidence that my dream of the hourglass symbol and the new mention of mountain wizards—presumably

Glantrians—came from the sinister creatures I had met several days ago, namely the Neh-Thalggu or the Wizard-King of Herath<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps I had indeed met with the Immortals. With a chill I recalled the vision of Sésékumbo, the Prophet of Yavdlom's brother<sup>2</sup>, when he died in Jaibul six months ago. The empire was in danger, and we had to warn Her Majesty at once.

1. See *Princess Ark* episodes 30 & 32, DRAGON® Magazine #183 & 185.

2. See *Princess Ark* episodes 16 & 17, DRAGON® Magazine #169 & 170.

*To be continued. . .*

## The Land of Wallara

**Land of Wallara—Capital:** Risilvar (pop.: 9,500 chameleon men); ruler: Baka-loo "Sunskin," son of Woy "The Dreamer"; patron: The Rainbow Serpent.

Chameleon men descended from the Wallaras, a native race of hunter-gatherers, possibly one of the oldest races on Mystara. There was a time in the past when the Wallaras walked side by side with the spirits that created them. They were in tune with the land, so much so that Wallaras equated their life and well-being to that of the earth and its wealth. The Wallaras viewed themselves as the protectors of nature with which their creators had entrusted them. They built a small city, Risilvar, in the hills where the link between them and their Immortal patrons was the greatest. From there, they flourished and learned much about the universe.

These were very wise people, a race that could pierce mysteries that other races did not even suspect existed. Although a small, peaceful people, Wallaras soon attracted the enmity of the Herathians who had many dark secrets to hide. The Wallaras knew of the aranean nature of the Herathian wizards, but saw it not as a threat but as just another incarnation of nature. Alas, Herathians did not follow this thinking. As years passed, the discomfort of believing their concealment was at risk grew unbearable to native araneas. This situation caused a frightening psychosis with which araneas did not know how to deal. At greatest risk were the older creatures, often the most powerful ones. Thus, the greatest wizards created a spell that would remove all knowledge of the araneas' true identity from the mind of the Wallaras. Alas, the mental uneasiness prevailing among Herathian wizards at the time caused them to miscalculate the severity of their spells effect.

The result was catastrophic. In removing knowledge of the araneas from the minds of the Wallaras, the spell backfired and kept altering the memory of Wallaras. Herathians were at a loss to halt the spell, and the hapless Wallaras' civilization fell back to the stone age. Only obscure memories and legends of their past survived in their minds.

This tragedy caused the Great One—the immortal patron of Wallara—to seek revenge. A plague of dragons attacked Herath. Araneas were experienced and organized enough to survive the wrath of the Great One, though at a dreadful cost to their nation. Herath faced such horrendous devastation that Korotiku met with the Great One and explained the error of his aranean followers. It cost The Trickster dearly to convince the Great One to cease the attacks, in addition to a promise of Herath never to interfere with the Wallaras again. The message got through to the aranean clerics, and soon Herathians began rebuilding their nation. The Herathian clergy also destroyed all traces of the despicable *spell of forgetting*, and forever banned further research on its effects for fear that someday it might be used against Herathians.

Meanwhile, the Wallaras remained primitive nomads, seeking the secrets of their past. They believed that, indeed, spirits once walked this land, but it was a Time of Dreams, the time when the Immortals created them. They thought for a long time that the spirits lived in the rocky hills, and no one was allowed to go there. Centuries later, walkabout medicine men seeking knowledge of their past entered the Forbidden Highlands and discovered the Lost City of Risilvar. There they found old runes and symbols that told ancient stories of spirits, sky heroes, and Immortals. This became a hallowed place that all tribes could visit freely, and many did.

Many returned to their nomadic ways, while others decided to settle in small villages in the grassland outback.

Today, chameleon men are slowly re-learning their past, and shreds of their ancient civilization are starting to reappear. The remainder of the hills, mostly south of the Forbidden River, are still taboo. No one is to enter them for fear of evil spirits living there. Wallara medicine men have gotten messages from the sky that beyond the river lay the land of the *balandias*, evil spirits that steal people's souls. In truth, this refers to Herathians.

The Wallaras haven't gotten as close to the Immortals as they used to be. Immortals are convinced that this was not necessarily a good thing for mortals. After all, this closeness turned out to be the Wallaras' undoing. Chameleon men are still a wise people, but they no longer have the curiosity to see through mysteries. Their special wisdom applies mostly to their land and their people.

The Land of Wallara is at peace nowadays. Other than Herath, chameleon men have two other neighbors, the gator men of Gurr'ash at the northeastern end of the outback, and the Phanaton people at the western edge of Wallara. The latter are friendly, and some trade exists among the two races, mostly opals, quartz stones, and animal pelts being traded for phanaton goods. A large battle took place once, just after the Herathian spell wiped the chameleon men's memory, but since then, the Wallaras have returned to their senses

and back to peace.

The gator men are another story (see episode #32, issue #185). In order to preserve peace, chameleon men managed to make the dangerous gator men believe that the grasslands belong to their Immortal patron. On the other hand, they maintained a curious trading system with the unwitting gator men. Only the wiser tribesmen may enter the Wallaroo Grasslands bordering the Bayou, and always under the guidance of medicine men. Gator men occupy a very special place in the chameleon men's mythology. For Wallaras, gator men are an embodiment of Genjoo, the Crocodile Spirit. Because of this, they must be respected.

**Flora and fauna:** The land is mostly a long, temperate plain covered with tall grasses and small clumps of forests. Occasionally, a lonely boab (baobab) offers some shade in the middle of the grassland outback. The light forest bordering the Forbidden Highlands is mostly eucalyptus trees, with acacias, mosses, and ferns where the woods grow thicker. Some vegetation struggles to grow in the rocky hills of the highlands, including patches of porcupine grass, saltbushes, and rare, stunted trees. The Forbidden River takes its source in salted grounds. Its muddy, brackish water remains inadequate for consumption. The Forbidden Highlands are mostly sandstone, with many forgotten caverns of the ancient Wallara. To keep with the overall feel of the Wallara wilderness, here are some creatures common to the region, and their game statistics:

**Saltwater crocodile:** Common in the Forbidden River and on the Great Billabong shores (Trident Bay), these large saurians are the true bane of the Wallaras. AC 3, HD 6 (L), MV 90' (30') on land or water, AT 1 bite, D 2d8, NA 0 (1d4), Save F3, ML 7, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 275.

**Dingo:** These wild dogs are commonly found in the hills or in the grassy outback. They normally hunt in packs. Lonely

**Table 1: Chameleon Man Levels**

Level	XP	HD	Special abilities
-1	-2000	1d8	—
0	0	2d8	Vanish
1	2,000	3d8	—
2	8,000	4d8	—
3	17,000	—	Mimic
4	34,000	5d8	—
5	72,000	6d8	—
6	144,000	7d8	—
7	300,000	—	Dream
8	600,000	8d8	—
9	900,000 *	+2 hp**	—

**Table 2: Medicine Man Levels**

Level	XP	HD	Spell levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
1	-3,000	1d8	—	—	—	—	—
0	0	2d8	1	—	—	—	—
1	3,000	3d8	2	—	—	—	—
2	12,000	4d8	2	1	—	—	—
3	24,000	—	2	2	—	—	—
4	48,000	5d8	2	2	1	—	—
5	96,000	6d8	2	2	2	—	—
6	192,000	7d8	3	2	2	1	—
7	380,000	—	3	3	2	2	—
8	680,000	8d8	3	3	3	2	1
9	980,000 *	+2 hp**	3	3	3	3	2

\* +300,000 XP per extra level

\*\* + 2 hp per level, constitution bonus no longer applies

Note that constitution bonuses should be added only when the PC is created and every time it gains a new level, up to level 8.

Wallara medicine men often keep tame dingoes as companions. AC 7, HD 2 (M), MV 180' (60'), AT 1 bite, D 1d6, NA 0 (3-18), Save F1, ML 6-8, TT Nil, Int 3, AL N, XP 20 (AC9, page 14).

**Spiny anteater (Echidna):** An egg-laying mammal that burrows under the ground, this nocturnal anteater uses its long, sticky tongue to catch insects. Beware of its giant cousin: AC 5, HD 9\* (L), MV 90' (30') or 60' (30') when burrowing, AT 1 tongue, D 3d6/rd, NA 1-2 (0), Save F5, ML 8, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 1,600. The giant echidna lashes at its prey with its sticky tongue, sweeping a cone-shaped area equivalent to a standard dragon's breath. All small- or medium-sized creatures within this area must save vs. dragon breath or be stuck on the tongue. The giant echidna then pulls its victims into its mouth, causing 3d6 points of damage per round to each of them. At the end of each round, victims can pull free if they succeed a Strength check.

**Emu:** This is a 6-7' tall, flightless bird similar to the ostrich. Chameleon men of the grassy outback use large emus as mounts. AC 8, HD 2 (M), MV 240' (80'), AT 1 beak, D 1d6, NA 0 (2-12), Save F1, ML 6, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 20. *Load:* 750 cn at full speed; 1,500 cn at half-speed. *Barding Multiplier:* x 1.

**Goanna:** This iguana-like lizard often ends up as prime ingredient of Wallara dinners. The skins can be sold to the

phanatons for 2-12 cp each (or equivalent barter value). AC 5, HD ½ (S), MV 120' (40'), AT 1 bite, D 1d4, NA 0 (1-20), Save F1, ML 7, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 5.

**Kangaroo:** A common herbivore of the grassy outback and lower hills outcroppings, this marsupial forms an important component of chameleon men diet. Skins can be sold to phanatons for 2d6 silver pieces (or equivalent barter value). AC 8, HD 2 (M), MV 240' (80'), AT 1 hind leg, D 1d8, NA 0 (3-60), Save F1, ML 7, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 20. The kangaroo can leap up to 60'.

**Koala:** This marsupial herbivore inhabits the eucalyptus forests of Wallara. Legends say it is the incarnation of a forest spirit, and thus is taboo for hunters. Medicine men sometimes use koalas as familiars. AC 8, HD ½ (S), MV 30' (10'), AT 1 claw, D 1d4, NA 0 (1-2), Save F1, ML 7, TT Nil, Int 3, AL N, XP 5.

**Kookaburra:** This kingfisher-like bird is well-known for its raucous, laugh-like call. As with the koalas, kookaburras are rumored to be incarnations of spirits who use their call to warn the travellers of impending dangers, or to mock their ignorance of the land. AC 7, HD ½ (S), MV 360' (120') flying or 30' (10') swimming, AT Nil, D Nil, NA 0 (1-2), Save F1, ML 6-8, TT Nil, Int 3, AL N, XP 20.

**Termite:** Termite mounds can be found throughout the grassy outback. Occasionally, giant termites will emerge from ca-

verns in the Forbidden Highlands after heavy rains. These dangerous creatures are cause for alarm and local chameleon men tribes will hunt them down; AC 4, HD 4 (M), MV 180' (60'), AT 1 bite, D 2d8, NA 2-8 (4-24), Save F2, ML 7, TT Nil, Int 1, AL N, XP 75.

**Wild turkey:** Another common element of the chameleon-men's diet; AC 9, HD ½ (S), MV 120' (40'), AT 1 beak, D 1-2, NA 0 (2-12), Save F1, ML 6, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 5.

**Wakaleo:** These marsupial lions are rare creatures dwelling in the heavier forested areas. They climb trees and wait, hiding in the leaves, for unsuspecting preys. AC 5, HD 2 +2 (M), MV 150' (50'), AT 2 claws/1 bite, D 1d2/1d2/1d4, NA 1-2 (1-4), Save F1, ML 9, TT Nil, Int 2, AL N, XP 25. Can surprise victims on a roll of 1-4 on a 1d6.

### Immortal patrons of Wallara

**Agundji, The Rainbow Serpent**—(alias the Great One). Agundji is the chief Immortal of the Wallara pantheon. Chameleon men are an ancient subspecies of dragons, which explains their magical abilities (vanishing and mimicry at higher levels). Most Wallaras honor Agundji as the lord of all creatures and the patron of sky heroes. Agundji's sphere of interest includes the sky, the element of air, colors, and mimicry. Separate individuals occasionally honor other dragons' rulers, de-

**Table 3: Boomerang Statistics**

P=H	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
	<i>Basic</i>	40/80/160	1d4	—	—
	Skilled	50/90/160	1d6+1	H:+1AC/2	Stun (s/m)
	Expert	60/100/170	1d6+3	H:+2AC/3	Stun (s/m)
	Master	70/110/170	P:1d6 +5 S:1d4+5	H:+3AC/3	Stun (s/m)
	Gd Master	80/120/180	P:1d6+6 S:1d4+6	H:+4AC/4	Stun (s/m)

**P=H:** Primary target uses either a hand-held or a hand-thrown weapon.

**P:** Primary target.

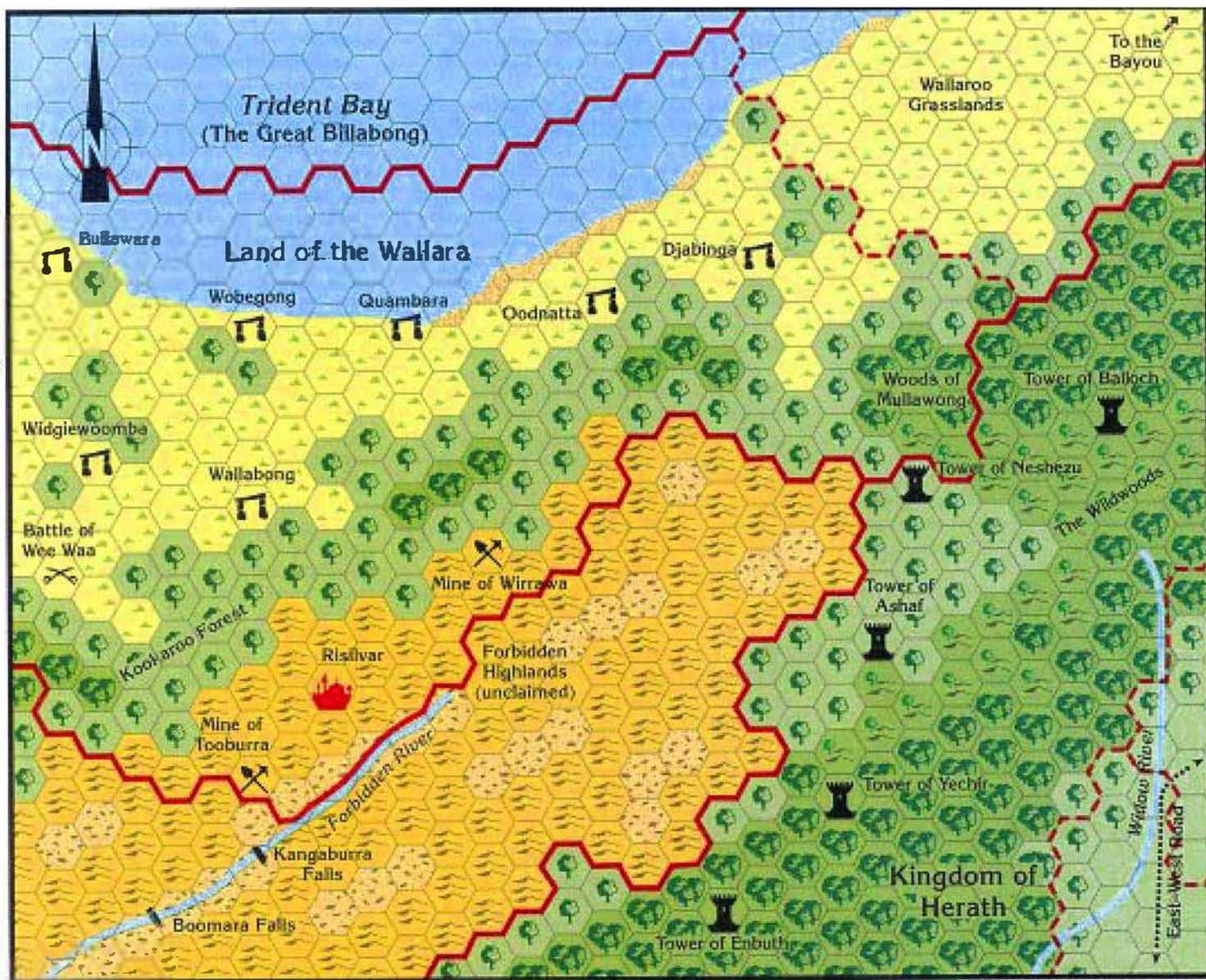
**S:** Secondary target (with missile weapons or natural weaponry).

**H:AC/#** AC bonus to the boomerang's user against attacks from opponents using hand-held or hand-thrown weapons, and the number of time it can be used in a single round.

**Table 4: Chameleon Men's Statistics**

Abilities	St	In	Wi	DX	Co	Ch
<b>Race Max.</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18*</b>
Chameleon Men	- 1	—	—	+1	—	—
Medicine Men	- 1	—	+1	—	—	—

\* Charisma applies only between chameleon men; otherwise, penalize Charisma by -1 when dealing with other humanoids, -2 when dealing with demihumans or humans.



Wallara Painted Barks

Regional Map

Scale: one hex equals 8 miles

- |  |                 |   |                |
|--|-----------------|---|----------------|
|  | Capital         |  | Farmland       |
|  | Tower           |  | Grasslands     |
|  | Rock Shelter    |  | Swamp          |
|  | Battle Site     |  | Light Forest   |
|  | Mines           |  | Heavy Forest   |
|  | Trail           |  | Forested Hills |
|  | National Border |  | Rocky Hills    |
|  | Dominion Limit  |  | Rocky Dessert  |
|  | River           |  | Sand           |
|  | Waterfall       |   |                |



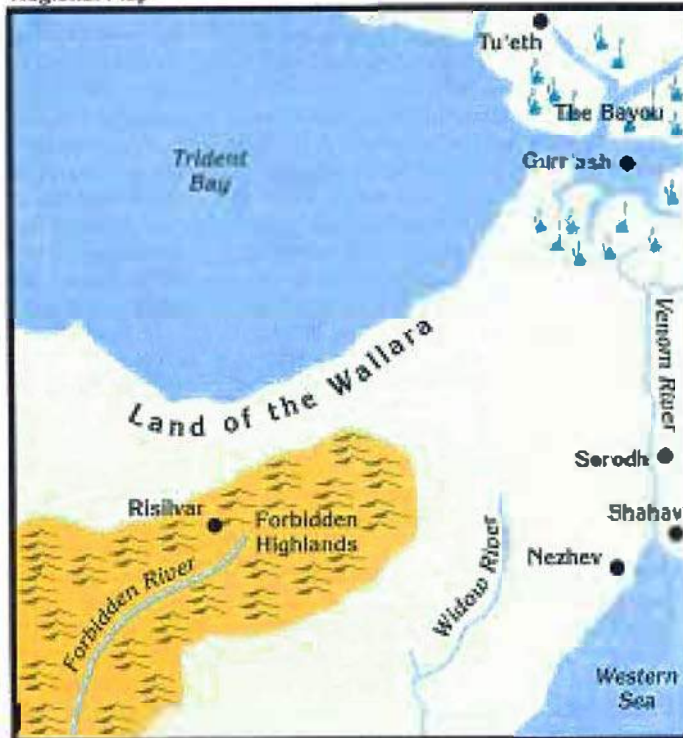
Wallara Outback



Forbidden Highlands



Wallaroo Grasslands





pending on their alignments, local customs, and circumstances. For example, those working in the Forbidden Highlands' mines of opal often are followers of the Sun Dragon. Wallaras know the lesser dragons' rulers as the Sun Spirit, the Moon Spirit, and the Star Spirit. Most chameleon men believe their souls join their Immortal patrons after dying on Mystara.

**Sky Heroes:** The goal of these servitors of Agundji is to teach the chameleon men stories of their forgotten past. They also act as Agundji's eyes and ears on Mystara in times of trouble. These beings often appear as lonely, walkabout medicine men. They do not reveal who they are and only stay for a limited time with a tribe, from a few weeks to a couple of years at most. They are mortal creatures whose life forces return to the Rainbow Serpent's home plane upon their death. In addition to typical Wallara medicine-man aptitudes, sky heroes have the innate ability to travel between Mystara and Agundji's home plane, once per full moon.

**Barramundje, The Mother—(alias Calitha Starbrow).** Barramundje's main concern in Wallara remains that of rivers and billabongs in general, and fertility in particular. Her sphere of interest includes the element of water and all that grows, such as trees and grass. Her symbol among Wallara medicine men is a fish. One who harms her forests, abuses the wealth of her rivers and billabongs, and befouls the land runs the risk of being cursed and of becoming a *gondaman*, a frilled lizard condemned to wander the outback and perish under the hunter's boomerang.

**Guwarris:** These are Barramundje's spirit servitors. Guwarris sometimes take the shape of a fish, a platypus, or a kookaburra to watch over rivers and billabongs. Guwarris have the game statistics and abilities of nixies. Medicine men say it is bad luck to disturb waters known to be inhabited by guwarris.

**Genjoo, The Crocodile Spirit—(alias Ka).** Genjoo's sphere of interest for Wallara lies in the earth, the land, and magical places. Chameleon men say that the rocky outcroppings of the Forbidden Highlands and the *oglas*, great monoliths dotting the outback, are the scaly warts on Genjoo's back. Great rocks are thought of as places of great magic, and entrances to Genjoo's world. Paintings left by the ancient Wallaras can often be found there. Medicine men who honor Genjoo often come to these places to meditate. Legends also say that when one dies in the jaws of a great saltwater crocodile, it is that Genjoo has claimed one's soul and requested it to become his servitor.

**Neemes:** The neemes are rock spirits, servitors of Genjoo. Their task is to teach chameleon men how to become more attuned to the land and how to protect nature. They are incorporeal and invisible, speaking to the medicine men only through dreams and meditation. Some-

times, they will bring a distressed medicine man's prayers to Genjoo and return with a message.

**Warruntam, The Eagle Spirit—(alias Ixion).** Warruntam is the patron of hunters, speed, and bravery. His area of interest in Wallara is the element of fire. Chameleon men have rarely invoked Warruntam as a patron of war, since they are a peaceful people, but the Eagle Spirit among all Immortal patrons would come closest to this role, should an actual conflict ever occur. Legends say that those who die from the sky's lightning have been claimed by Warruntam and become his servitors.

**Namarkons:** These servitors of Warruntam are also known as lightning men. They ride the storm clouds, bringing rain and wind. Their fire destroys that which is ill and weak. Namarkons are incorporeal, invisible spirits that sometimes materialize on Mystara as silver-colored, lawful-aligned *thunderheads* (AC9, page 79). Namarkons can otherwise take the shape of medicine men with the same number of hit dice.

### Chameleon men as PCs

Chameleon men are distantly related to dragons. From them, they inherited several innate magical powers. An adult tribesman has the ability to *vanish*, which is roughly equivalent to the *dimension door* spell. The difference lies in its shorter range (120' instead of 360'). Also, because it is a racial ability, chameleon men never accidentally materialize into solid objects. However, for game balance, this ability counts as a full action and should require an Intelligence check every time it is used.

At 3rd level, a chameleon man can truly *mimic* its surroundings. The chameleon man effectively turns invisible as per the *mage* spell. Although the chameleon man can use this ability at will, any number of times in a day, he must remain absolutely quiet and motionless when doing so (he cannot cast spells, talk, attack, dodge, move, *vanish*, etc). Chameleon men have perfected the ability to remain motionless for extended periods of time (up to an hour per experience level). *Mimicry* only fools other races—chameleon men can always see one another.

At 7th level, a chameleon man can *dream*. Once this ability has been used, it cannot be used again for seven days. The *dream* allows the chameleon man to tap into mystical knowledge of Wallara spirits. At the chameleon man's option, the *dream* can imitate the effects of one of the following clerical spells: *speaking with animal*, *speaking with the dead*, *speaking with plants*, *commune*, or *speaking with monsters*.

*Dreaming* requires the chameleon man to meditate for 1d6 rounds, plus the time spent communicating. The meditation requires live embers (from a small campfire for example). *Dreams* cannot be used against hostile creatures unless such crea-

tures are restrained in some manner.

**Medicine Men:** Chameleon men of Wallara have their own types of spellcasters, called medicine men. These gifted people are identified at birth by other medicine men. They learn their first spell when they become adults (level 0), Medicine men can cast clerical and druidic spells, but cannot turn undead. In order to cast a spell, medicine men need a small piece of quartz or opal that is consumed when the spell is cast. Supplies of these minerals can usually be acquired in caverns, near great rocks, or in the Forbidden Highlands. They must perform a corroboree (fire ceremony) to recover their spells.

Medicine men also can use their *dream* ability to imitate the effects of the druidic *control weather* or *creeping doom* spells. Medicine men can always sense if a place is often visited by spirit servitors of their chosen Immortal patron (60' radius). As an option, adult medicine men also acquire special clerical powers specific to their chosen Immortal patron, as described on page 13 of the "Codex of the Immortals" in *The Wrath of the Immortals* boxed set. If the Star Dragon is the chosen patron, give the medicine men a permanent *protection from evil* rather than a +2 bonus to turn undead.

**Miscellaneous:** Chameleon men were originally described in AC9 *Creature Catalog*, pages 33-34. Chameleon men are poor swimmers (requiring a skill slot to learn how to swim). Chameleon men do not have *infravision* and their natural armor class is 9 like humans. They strongly dislike armor as it cancels both their ability to *vanish* and to *mimic*. They use stone or bone daggers, spears with stone edges, clubs, and—for the typical Wallara—the boomerang. Chameleon men have racial modifiers to their game statistics, as shown in Table 4.

**Language:** If you haven't caught on by now, the best way to imitate Wallara lingo would be to pick a good map of the land down-under, and check for native names. Grab a bunch, shake well, and there you have it—but beware! You might very well end up creating true words with ludicrous meanings!

Chameleon men also can use the changing colors of their skin to show feelings. Proper usage of shades and hues is a sign of wisdom and social status among chameleon men.

**Chameleon men:** AC 9, HD 2\*, MV 120' (40'), AT 1 weapon, D by weapon, Save as F2, ML 7, TT (Q + S) E, AL Neutral (any for PCs), XPV 25. Size: 7' tall.

**Thunderheads:** AC 0, HD 16\*\* (or 8 outside storms), MV 30' (10'), 180' (60') flying, AT 2 claws or *lightning bolt*, D 2d6/2d6 or 5d6, NA 0 (1-3), Save as F16 (or F8 outside storms), ML 9, TT Nil, Int 5, AL L, XP 4,050 (or 1,750 with 8 HD). *Load:* 3,500 cn at full speed; 7,000 cn at half-speed. *Barding Multiplier:* x 3.

**Boomerang:** This is the fabled weapon of the Wallara. It is a curved wooden missile that returns to its owner if it hits neither target nor obstacles. With an enc. of 50 cn, a good boomerang can be worth many wallaroo pelts (say 10 gp worth in the game).

Wallara medicine men can enchant boomerangs as +1 weapons. A magical boomerang flies in a figure-eight when it is thrown. If it misses the target and does not hit anything else, the magical boomerang will take a second pass at the target at the end of the round. If the target is unaware of the boomerang's return, the boomerang then gets a +2 attack bonus for a back attack.

If a boomerang does not hit anything during the round, it then returns to the owner. If not distracted (by attacks from foes for example), the owner can catch his returning boomerang automatically. With a successful Dexterity check a distracted owner can catch a returning boomerang. Opponents cannot catch an incoming boomerang unless they have a higher mastery level than the boomerang's owner, and they roll a successful Dexterity check. This all assumes that either or both the owner of the boomerang and the target remain within the boomerang's flight path during the entire round.

Boomerang users of Expert Skill or better can aim at a target hiding behind an

obstacle (like a tree). The boomerang may hit that target on the returning segment of its flight only, with a -2 attack penalty (no back attack advantage here).

Boomerangs are made specifically for a user of a given strength and height. If a boomerang is picked up by someone with a different Strength score or a different size, attack rolls should be penalized by -2. Finally, a boomerang can be used to light a fire by rubbing its hard edge on a dry log.

**Note:** Don't forget to apply the Hit Roll bonuses from the table on page 76 of the D&D Rules Cyclopedia. Stun is explained on page 81 of the same book.

**Shields:** Chameleon men do not normally carry shields. However, quarrels do occur at times and medicine men allow two forces with an equal number of chameleon men and comparable armament to do battle to settle their dispute. Shields are used at that time. They are medium-sized shields, made of wood and bark, offering the usual AC protection. *Shields +1* exist that match the owner's *mimicry* ability. Tribal leaders are likely to own one. Note: Nonmagical shields do hamper a chameleon man's *vanishing* and *mimicry* abilities. Chameleon men are otherwise free to use any magical protection other than armor to improve their AC. Ω

### Wrath of the Immortals boxed set errata

On page 69 of Book Two (*The Immortals' Fury*) in this set, the title "Immortals Showdown" should appear just before the last paragraph at the bottom of column one.



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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 34: The postal deluge continues

by Bruce A. Heard

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D<sup>®</sup> Known World collecting questions and queries on the D&D game and delivering them to our offices. Presented here are answers to some of your latest letters. Unless stated otherwise, page and chapter numbers refer to the D&D game's *Rules Cyclopedia*.

The monster description lists 0-level "Normal Humans." Where are the "Normal Demihumans?" Would a normal elf know any spells?

*That goes back to the prehistory of the D&D game! The term "normal" was used from the point of view of the human majority, those wimpy, short-lived guys who constitute most of the population on Mystara. "Level-enhanced" adventurers are an exception among humans (or at least they should be). Demihumans are, after all, fantastic creatures. They simply don't qualify as "normal" in that context. So, there are no 0-level demihumans.*

Is the *create food* table on page 125 of the *Rules Cyclopedia* wrong?

*Yes—it is wrong. It seems the original material from the older Master Set rules was incorrect and the error was reproduced in the Rules Cyclopedia. The description for the create food spell indicates that a 10th-level cleric creates food for 36 people. For every extra level, add another 12 people (not 36 more). For everyone's convenience, see the revised table here*

What is the base damage for Striking? The checklist on page 111 says it is 0 while the mastery chart on page 112 says 1 point.

*Base damage for Striking should be 0 points.*

For a game that is supposed to be simpler than the AD&D<sup>®</sup> game, the D&D game sure is getting complicated. The Gazetteers and the *Dawn of the Emperors* boxed set have a lot of great optional rules, yet they are divided among 17 different booklets. Are there any plans to take all these tidbits and put them into one sourcebook?

*No. These are optional rules that often should be limited to the settings described in their campaign accessories. If we came*

*up with a rules supplement with all these neat "optional" rules, many of our customers would begin to incorporate them into their games as a matter of principle—without always knowing the circumstances of their creation. We meant these optional rules to remain optional.*

Who are the two guys illustrated on page 148?

*They are two fellows from the artist's campaign.*

The cultures that you have introduced these past few months, detailing the Sind Desert and lands to the west, have opened new opportunities for expansion, both in unexplored regions and new character classes. However, I wish there was just one map of these regions instead of many different maps located throughout the various issues of DRAGON<sup>®</sup> Magazine.

At one point, TSR introduced Trail Maps of the Eastern and Western Countries of the "Known World," and it would be extremely convenient if you were to continue with this idea for the northern lands of Essuria, Denagoth, and Wendar (as introduced in *X11 Saga of the Shadow Lord*) and the Heldann Freeholds. A map of the far west, including Sind, Hule, and the others you've introduced also would be valuable.

However, I believe you wrote at one point that TSR had no future plans to make any more Trail Maps, but was contemplating putting out a boxed edition of the *Princess Ark*. If this should ever see print, will it include a large-scale map of these regions? Or might it simply have reproductions of the smaller maps printed in DRAGON Magazine?

*We're still hoping to get the Princess Ark boxed set out by the summer of 1993. If our plans hold together, there should be two neat deck plans of the Princess Ark for use with 25 mm figures, and two geographic hex maps. The poster maps should cover Sind and the Serpent Peninsula, at the rate of 24 miles per hex. These are large regions, and two maps are barely enough to cover them.*

**Clerics and the Create Food Spell Table**

Cleric level	Men/spell	Max. men	Cleric level	Men/spell	Max. men
10	36	36	23	192	960
11	48	96	24	204	1020
12	60	120	25	216	1080
13	72	144	26	228	1368
14	84	152	27	240	1440
15	96	288	28	252	1764
16	108	432	29	264	1848
17	120	480	30	276	1932
18	132	528	31	288	2304
19	144	576	32	300	2400
20	156	624	33	312	2496
21	168	840	34	324	2596
22	180	900	35	336	3024
			36	348	3132

*The Savage Coast, from Slagovich to the tip of the Orc's Head Peninsula, would have to be covered in another product. There is too much information there to fit in the Princess Ark set. We also would need at least three poster-sized mapsheets to cover that region, including a big chunk of Hule, at the rate of 8 miles per hex.*

*Also remember that the Princess Ark material was written for the AC 1000 era. New material will have to stretch up to AC 1010 after Wrath of the Immortal's great war. Many things can happen between now and then, none of which was ever detailed in Wrath or in the Poor Wizard's Ahnanac (which should hit the shelves sometime this month). Rules or background material originally presented in DRAGON Magazine also could benefit from further development or redesign. Conveniently, that extra 10-year span gives us a lot of freedom to "fix problems." All that depends upon your suggestions and criticism about the material that I wrote originally. Don't be shy—if you feel strongly about something, now's the time to let us know! Critical letters don't end up in a dungeon. They do get our attention. Likewise, if you liked something in particular, please tell us so we don't drop it from the boxed set!*

I do have a small complaint—the amount of text contained in the supplements seems to be decreasing dramatically. In GAZ14, HWR1, and HWR2, the margins, headers, and footers have been huge, effectively cutting about 15 lines off each page. Also, I find it hard to understand how a tiny 32-page module costs \$5.95 while DRAGON Magazine, which has 120 pages, only costs \$3.50. I realize DRAGON Magazine has a significantly larger circulation, but I would be willing to sacrifice the flimsy cardboard cover and better quality paper of the supplements for more information. I hope the forthcoming D&D™ novel will provide a solution to this problem, as it could present an entire module as an appendix to the overall story.

*The decision to reduce the amount of text in our game products originally came from our upper management as a measure to help keep production costs at a reasonable level. Sorry—if you feel this is unacceptable, perhaps the best thing to do is to send a note to our VP of Marketing. Also, please bear in mind that products occasionally undergo unfortunate development problems affecting their final contents.*

*DRAGON Magazine is a different story. Besides wonderful distribution, it also benefits from lucrative advertising and convenient subscriptions ensuring a full year of sales. There's also one large print run for a magazine with few returns. That makes a big difference! Game products do not benefit from any of this. You also should realize the minimum cost to produce a supplement can be stiff (compare \$5.95 for a 32-page module to \$10.95 for a 96-page accessory, and \$20.00 for 224+*

*pages in the Wrath of the Immortals boxed set). Fortunately, the larger the game supplement, the better bang for the buck. Sales and cost demographics vary for different product types.*

Where do the mystics fit in? I was intrigued to find their inclusion in the Rules Cyclopedia. As far as I can tell, there has been no mention of them in any of the Gazetteers. Perhaps you could include some more information about them in a future column or product.

*These are rather arcane fellows who never did fit quite right in a medieval setting. This probably explains why most authors "omitted" them in their settings. It would not be too difficult to create a secret order of mystics spreading through the Known World. There could be several spots where they would originate—Ochalea would be my first guess. I remember a certain Tibetan-style setting in Glantri's Colossus Mounts, in the village of Lhamsa. Also, don't forget the infamous mystic turtles in the Free City of Dunwick. See "The Voyage of the Princess Ark" episode #26 in DRAGON issue #179.*

What happened to the gnomes? There is a pocketful of them in Karameikos and few more on floating islands. Many have disappeared in the depths of the Soderfjord Jarldoms. They must be somewhere. Do they have a kingdom like the dwarves?

*The reason gnomes aren't as important in the D&D game as they are in the AD&D game is that they never were offered as player characters in the standard rules. Otherwise, there is no reason they could not have a kingdom of their own (after all, we've seen kingdoms of lupins, rakastas, araneas, lizard-gator-chameleon-cay-men, and finally phanatons—so far). Rad knows what else will follow! I do remember, however, a certain Kingdom of Dorfin IV Episode #1 of this column, in issue #153, had something to do with this topic. Here's a reminder, straight from Haldemar's mouth:*

*"About this Dorfin Empire: It was a joke from a certain gnomish king, the inventor of wondrous but totally useless contraptions who went by the name of King Dorfin IV! His kingdom is nothing but the workshop of a few hundred gnomes in the hills of Karameikos. One of his favorite pastimes was to send loyal followers past the Sind Desert. There, they would pose as plenipotentiaries of the imaginary "Empire of Dorfin IV." They would then hire local people to return some sealed message back to the real King Dorfin. These strange messengers, obviously from a distant place, seemed to make quite an impression on local Karameikan Barons when bringing the gnomish king the phony but nevertheless pompous greetings from his "imperial cousin in the west." The messages hinted at the outrageous size of the bogus empire. Imagine something twice the size of Alphatia. What nonsense!*

*And they believed it, the fools."*

*I'm sorry, there are no Imperial gnomes yet, but someday somewhere, we'll have a true gnomish kingdom.*

Can shadow-elf shamans wear armor, or are they restricted to wearing white robes?

*Acolytes can wear only white clothes and nothing else. Beyond that, we could assume armor to be acceptable as long as it does not prevent the shaman from wearing robes over it. That would imply leather, scale, or chain mail armor to be acceptable. Other types of armor are just too bulky to qualify.*

The D&D Rules Cyclopedia states that continual light spells may be cast at a creature's eyes to blind them. What if the creature has several eyes, some with special abilities like the beholder's?

*Ooh—sneaky! In general, a light spell will blind a victim upon failing its saving throw vs. spells. Follow that rule to keep the game fast and simple—in theory.*

*The trick is to cast the spell at the eyes to be blinded. If the caster cannot see some of the eyes, then those eyes aren't blinded by the spell (roll at random to see how many of the beholders eyes were turned toward the caster at the time the spell is cast). Fortunately, one saving throw is sufficient for all the eyestalks facing the caster. Blinded eyes talks are inoperative.*

*Unfortunately, the beholder has that annoying, antimagical central eye. It usually faces the first opponent to begin spell-casting. Tough luck there, since the caster has to see the eye to blind it. This implies he must be standing before the beholder and thus, is within its antimagical ray!*

*It's possible to blind a number of eyestalks pointed in a different direction than the beholder's antimagical eye. That eye simply cannot be blinded. Frankly, if the best you have to throw at a beholder is a mere light spell, perhaps your wisest course of action would be to run!*

What if an invisible creature were to eat or drink? Is the spell broken, does the meal remain visible, or does it turn invisible?

*Assume that any ingested or carried matter also becomes invisible. Eating or picking up objects does not break the spell. The moment a held object is let go (tossed, dropped, or laid down) it becomes visible again.*

How are dominion holders supposed to stay out of debt? The cost of advisors, officials, tithes, and taxes far outweigh the income of dominions, as presented in Chapter 12.

*You're absolutely correct. When dominion rules were originally written some seven years ago, the intent was that rulers—PC rulers, that is—must continue to go adventuring in order to stay solvent. It's not historical, it's not realistic, but it's*

meant to keep the campaign going and encourage PCs to seek a high-stakes life of dangers and mysteries. There are some ways to modify the system to match the cost of necessary retainers.

Have a seat, this will take a while.

First, realize this: No peasant could possibly generate income for his ruler in monthly fistfuls of gold (not counting his own food and upkeep). At that rate, he wouldn't remain a peasant for very long! If you wanted to put together a system allowing your dominion to become financially independent, you'd have to examine what is a realistic monetary base for commoners: the population could generate monthly taxes at the rate of a few silver coins per "statistical" inhabitant. Here's a chart that could help you estimate how much taxes inhabitants can generate:

Territory type	Average tax income
Cities	5 sp a month per inhabitant
Large towns	4 sp a month per inhabitant
Towns/Suburban	3 sp a month per inhabitant
Villages/Rural	1 sp a month per inhabitant
Borderlands	5 cp a month per inhabitant
Wilderness	0 cp a month per inhabitant

These are abstract statistics, implying that a typical borderland family of five generates as an average 25 cp in taxes each month. That's okay since, essentially, we're dealing only with demographics.

Based upon that, let's assume it takes about 10 people to support one average, 1st-level light foot soldier. Further, assume that equivalent mercenaries are paid twice that amount. So, should you decide your typical peasant can get you 1 sp a month in taxes, then a native, human light footman would be paid 1 gp a month, and an equivalent mercenary would earn 2 gp per month.

Note that you have to provide native soldiers with all their equipment and train them. Mercenaries are already equipped and most are seasoned warriors. With the above, you should now realize two important facts:

1. Dominions in rich, settled areas are infinitely more attractive than those in inhospitable borderlands or in the wilderness. With the latter don't bother with taxes—go after the local dragon instead. It's quick, lucrative, and more entertaining!

2. As population increases, so does your overhead! Now that you have all those nice people to rule, you need many more retainers to help you run the nation and maintain a lifestyle that is appropriate to your status. Both are expensive. This has the effect of diverting a growing amount of tax income that you used to spend on troops, to be spent instead on a sheriff and

magistrates, a reeve and his provosts, wardens and spies, and a stronghold that befits your rank. This is realistic and historical. As the land grows more civilized, law and order become easier to enforce, so there will be a lesser need for military force.

Obviously, the salaries of other specialists would have to remain in line with that monetary system. A 500-gp-per-month animal trainer is impractical. In a minor dominion, he'd earn no more than 5 gp a month. All these figures should be adapted to local realities. Remember these numbers were used in the rules to handle PC rulers coming back from their epic adventures with gold and jewels by the cartful.

Here's a sample chart of "lesser salaries" (see the original chart in the Rules Cyclopedic, page 133). It assumes your native footman is paid 1 gp a month:

"Cheaper" retainer costs	
Alchemist	50 gp per month (+ cost of potion work)
Armorer*	5 gp + 1 gp per skill level above 9
Engineer**	25 gp + 5 gp per skill level above 9 (INT x 5) per level (INT + WIS + CHA) x 10 gp
Mage & magist	
Sage & seneschal	
Seaman:	
Rower	1 sp (or nil if convict)
Sailor	1 gp (if native; 2 gp if mercenary)
Navigator	25 gp + 5 gp per skill level above 9 (INT + WIS + CHA) x 10 gp
Captain	INT per level & per mission
SPY	

\* Includes animal trainer, artist, bailiff, chamberlain, equerry, herald, lesser magistrate, marshal, provost, sheriff, and warden.

\*\* Includes castellan, chaplain, guard captain, magistrate, reeve, and chief steward.

The salaries listed above are for Level-0 stronghold retainers. The military are a different story (refer to the Mercenary Table on page 133). Mercenaries are 1st-level troops. At 2nd level and higher, a mercenary's pay becomes: Base Pay x level x 5. For example, a 2nd-level elven mercenary archer would cost 10 x 2 x 5 = 100 gp (half that for a non-mercenary native). Level-0 military should get one-quarter the mercenary rates, and peasant levies no more than 2-3 sp a month (cheap maybe, but, look at the bright side—troops do not pay taxes!) Should stronghold retainers also have a character class with specific levels, use instead the following rates, whichever is more expensive:

Humanoid*:	INT per level (or HD)
Thief	(INT x 2) per level
Fighter**	(INT x 3) per level
Cleric	(INT x 4) per level

Wizard (INT x 5) per level  
Elf\*\*\* (INT x 6) per level

\* Includes goblin types and lizardkin.

\*\* Includes dwarves, halflings, lupins, rakastars, tortles.

\*\*\* Includes araneas.

The salaries listed for stronghold retainers are those of a petty baron. To be thorough, remember that civilian salaries and the pay of high-ranking army officers might have to go up as the dominion ruler gains in rank, land, and wealth. Use the following formula: Viscount +10%, Count +20%, Marquis +40%, Duke +60%, Archduke x 2, minor King (or up to 500,000 subjects) x 4, greater King (or up to 3 million subjects) x 6, Emperor (or over 3 million subjects) x 10, etc.

Now the trick is to have enough population per hex in order to pay those hateful taxes. So your next job is to find out a realistic level of population based upon the terrain, vegetation, climate, and whether the land is suburban (near a town), rural, borderland, or wilderness. Check your local atlas for comparable population densities per square mile. For simplicity's sake, assume medieval population to be a tenth of modern-day populations (and I am being optimistic there!) Knowing that your standard 8-mile hex covers approximately 56 sq. miles, and a basic family includes about five people, you can now figure how many families there are to a hex.

Another important factor should be kept in mind when planning for urban development: Always try to keep a balance between urban and rural population. You need a minimum 80% rural population to support urban centers and other populations that do not produce food (like armies). Should you end up with more than 20% nonrural population, food prices will catapult sky-high, people will starve in your towns, riots and revolts might occur, and finally those people who are still around will eventually leave for better lands. So, if urban populations mushroom in your kingdom, you may need more fertile land very soon. That's probably a good sign that the time for conquests has come!

Finally, find out what other resources not linked to peasants and feudal service might produce cash (like bridge and gate tolls, merchant taxes on imports, port duties, salt taxes, taxes on money-lenders, fines charged by dutiful magistrates, returns on mineral and precious stone mines, war booty, taxes on adventurers' booty, etc.). To keep that simple, assume this adds another 30% to your total dominion income.

This is, of course, not a comprehensive system, but it should put you on the track to establishing mechanics that you find more suitable to your style of gaming. Ω

# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 35: The return home

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEM  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Imperial  
CAPTAIN of the Ever-Victorious  
PRINCESS ARK  
Imperial Explorer, LLC, LLC.

### Amphimir 25, AY 2001—Haldemar:

After the strange discoveries of the past weeks, I decided to return to Alphatia and warn Her Imperial Majesty. I couldn't take the time to fly the *Princess Ark* all the way back, nor did I want to take the risk of breaching the skyshield for a faster journey. The ship still needed repair anyway. So, despite Her Majesty's orders to stay away from the empire, I took along Lady Abovombe and faithful Myojo when I cast a *travel* spell, Talasar would take the *Princess* out of the land of Wallara and seek another repair site.

I had to find a short cut through the

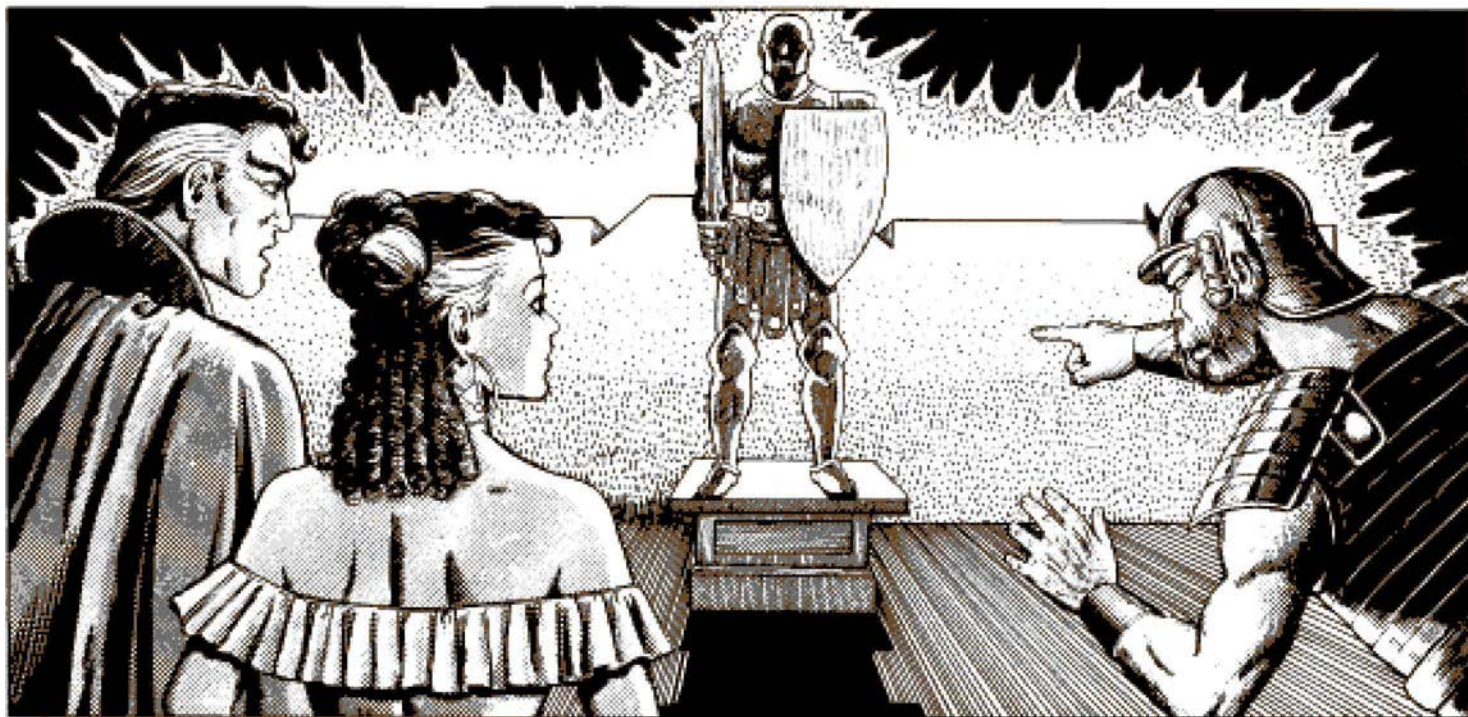
outer planes. Soon after leaving the Astral plane, we reached the plane of Draesten, a cluster-universe of raw energy in the outer planes. There, we appeared to be standing on a high mountain peak Rainbows of magical might shimmered across the sky all around us. We flew for some time among Draesten's dizzying flashes and bursts of hue and energy when I noticed a flickering silhouette following us. It was so faint I had missed it earlier, but it was there, and it was alive. The silhouette, possibly 20' long, seemed to follow our flight, occasionally coming up to our side.

I spoke to it, but it did not respond. I tried sign language, with the same ineffectual result. At last, I gambled a *read magic*. Success! The flickering light was sentient and friendly She stated she'd be willing to carry us to the site we sought, in exchange for a burst of magical energy—mere food for this creature. I suspected curiosity to be her motivation, for this place was filled with all sorts of energy.

As the deal was struck, the three of us found ourselves within the multicolored entity and shot across the sky, hurtling through Draesten like comets in Mystara's firmament. It took little time to reach the end of our journey in this strange world. The creature—I called her a *flicker*—stopped among a cluster of floating rocks. Floating above one, it created a gate of blue, crackling light.

I cast a minor spell as payment, then we bid the flicker farewell and entered the gate. Alas, I soon discovered it led not to the place we had sought. I had expected to see the Hardball arena in Sundsvall. Instead, we stood in the Ethereal plane, observing through the wisps of ether a very large and unknown cavern somewhere on the Prime plane.

The gate faded away behind us. Trapped! The flicker had tricked us. But





why? I had no *travel* spells left. So, while I could rest and meditate for new spells, Myojo and Abovombe would watch for any activity in the cavern and around us in the Ethereal plane.

**Amphimir 26—Talaras, from a later account:** Not far from the lands of Wallara, we found a patch of very tall trees towering over the forest. We could see no activity below, save for some unusually large raccoon-faced monkeys casually jumping from branch to branch—nothing to worry about. They'll make a good stew for the crew.

I had the *Princess Ark* hover above a clearing, and sent the crew down to prepare for the ship's landing. Once they were down, I ordered the ship to become visible to ease repair. Work was proceeding at a good pace. Several trees with perfectly straight trunks were soon cut down. Raman and Leo were doing wonders directing operations.

Suddenly, a volley of stings, stones, sticks, spears, and arrows came pouring down on the crew. Sentries were the first to fall, most of them without a word. I saw Ramissur pull a sting out of his arm, take a few steps, and fall flat on his face. Poison! Our attackers were hiding in the bushes and the trees. I could not see them. Feeling a burning sensation on the back of my neck, I turned around and barely had the time to notice a strange, raccoon-faced monkey staring back at me from under the shadow of a large fern. It held a long blowgun. The scene blurred and all went dark.

**Amphimir 26—Haldemar:** It appeared the cavern was made of black stone fused by great heat. Approximately 500' in diameter, it had the shape of a sphere except for the flattened floor. A dull-gray structure, almost 200' long, occupied the center. Nearby stood a large statue with an inscription at the bottom: "Alexander Glantri—Still He Protects."

Glantri? Perhaps we had entered a secret crypt somewhere in Glantri. The Draesten flicker clearly had something in mind when it led us here. There must have been someone else behind its actions—someone powerful. Who?

I studied the gray structure and found no way to enter it. The whole object was magical and impervious to my influence, even from the Ethereal plane. I tried *dispelling* its fields of magic and casting a *magical door*; but these attempts and several others proved futile. The mysterious structure either exuded powerful *anti-magic* or it was an artifact. Considering the size of the structure, either possibility seemed mind-boggling. Even Alphatia could not produce something like this! To think Glantrians concealed such a device sent a chill down my spine.

I had guessed I'd have to deal with some sort of mystery here and had studied my spell of lore last evening. The spell revealed the structure was called the "Nucleus of the Spheres." It also unveiled its

function: to enhance one's magical prowess while forever draining magic from the world of Mystara.

I felt a ghastly hand clutch my heart. How could they? The Glantrians were using some sort of evil magical device to destroy the most precious element of our world. Life without magic? Inconceivable!

All I had learned in the past weeks now made sense. The clues about Glantri, Alphatia, and magic being drained were pulling together. Somehow, I was linked to all this. Perhaps my destiny had already been woven, and it led me to this obscure place. Else, someone wanted me to come here, despite my journeys away from the Known World.

I had to do something about this Glantrian scheme, whatever it was. If there was something like *forbidden magic*, this was it. If I warned Her Majesty, it would mean war. Surely, the empire would not ignore this fiendish magical device and would have to march against Glantri sooner or later. Thyatis would, of course, inevitably rise against Alphatia, given my country's actions. Knowing Thyatians, they just would never allow an Alphatian presence in what they've always considered as their backyard.

What was I to do? I had fought before and knew all too well the savagery and sorrow of war. Many would suffer and die. Should men die for magic to exist? How right was this cause?

My dilemma was eating at me. If I did nothing, magic and all that is wondrous would disappear forever from our world. If I exposed the Glantrian scheme, empires would clash in perhaps the greatest of all wars, bringing misery and darkness to many. What if Alphatia lost the war?

No. I wasn't brought here merely to do nothing. If so, they should have chosen someone else instead. I just was not that kind. Perhaps without magic there would be neither man nor world—indeed, it was time to leave this forsaken place. I had seen enough.

**Amphimir 27—Talaras, from a later account:** I awoke to find myself tied to a tree trunk. Next to me was Raman. The remainder of the crew was slowly waking up as well. The entire crew was similarly tied, dangling from branches or tied to masts on the *Princess Ark*. With horror, I realized our assailants had taken over the ship.

They were halfling-sized creatures, more or less like monkeys. They were intelligent. Two of their war-party leaders were arguing, perhaps about what to do next. I asked Raman, "Are you hurt, man?"

"I don't think so. I've been listening to them for some time. I can understand some of their words. If only I could move, I might be able to communicate with them." Raman tried to twist out of his ropes.

I could move one hand. I managed to loosen some of Raman's ropes and they began to give way. The natives began

playing drums and a distant echo responded. Good, that kept their attention away from us. Raman eventually freed himself and untied me. Before anything else, I prayed for Razud to bestow upon my companion a blessing to neutralize poison. He would need it to approach the natives—soon—as my voice attracted the natives' attention.

Raman stepped forward, cleared his throat, said, "Gentlemen, would you please—" and went on chirping at the natives in their strange speech, making gestures. After a moment of silence, a wave of rage overtook the natives. Raman had perhaps insulted one of the leaders. A cloud of poisoned stings came flying in his direction. A moment later, Raman was still standing there, trying to protect himself while removing the prickly stings. The natives became suddenly quiet.

In apparent awe, they all dropped to their knees and bowed before Raman. "Oh, by the Brow of Smaarad!" said Raman. "They think I'm some sort of forest spirit!" His ability to resist their sleeping poison had truly impressed the natives. They were ready to obey him, up to a point. Raman convinced his followers to untie me, but they refused to free anyone else. Soon afterward, the natives carried us toward their village.

**Amphimir 27—Haldemar:** With the help of a *travel* spell, we returned to the location in Draesten where we had last seen the flicker. She was gone, and so was the magical gate. As I suspected, further attempts to return to the Glantrian device through the outer planes failed completely. Without the gate, I was unable to retrace our path to the cavern.

Our journey led us to the Hardball arena in the Imperial capital. It was a game day. The place was crowded and no one noticed our arrival. We entered the palace grounds thanks to my family seal. Seals are magical items that Alphatian nobility often use to enter or exit the Imperial palace. It gives the Lord of the Guard a convenient way of locking out unwanted families and checking on who visits the palace. I was relieved to see that the Haaken seal was still acceptable. The magical door opened after I removed my seal from the recess. We entered.

Palace halberdiers came to attention as we walked down the cavernous main hallway. Noblemen and palace officials politely nodded as we went by, largely minding their business. So far, things were going fine.

At regular intervals stood pedestals with the busts of past rulers and legendary state figures. Unfortunately, they were fitted with *magic mouths* that emphatically announced our arrival, according to the seal I had presented at the entrance. Much to our discomfort, their calls echoed down the long hallway. We would've preferred inconspicuousness to pomp and circumstance just then. After some time, nobles began giving us furtive looks, while people



whispered behind our backs.

The Imperial Herald walked up to us and discreetly slipped a note into my hand. It said that Her Majesty wished to see us at once. At least she had found out quickly enough about my return. Unusually, we met in her quarters in a rather informal way. It appeared that she was more concerned about avoiding public attention than displaying any outgoing friendliness. Fortunately, Empress Eriadna did not bring up the topic of my obligation to stay out of Alphatia.

Empress Eriadna nevertheless enjoyed the presence of Lady Abovombe and even showed some curiosity toward Myojo. She had never seen a rakasta before. Then came the more serious business. I informed her of all that had happened lately, and of the Glantrian device. She considered the information at length.

"I do trust you, Admiral, but I doubt that the Council of Wizards will. You have no tangible proof of these incredible things you just told me. It will take time before I am in a position to back your discovery. Even then, there is dissention among the council. A faction secretly works to split the council, perhaps conspiring to seize the throne. I haven't yet identified who is behind the treachery. I am convinced that this faction would push the council to discredit you and your discoveries in order to get to me.

"Unbeknownst to the council, I have pursued a quest to unveil that hollow world of yours. I have now received proof of its existence beneath our world, and started establishing a way to reach it more quickly. Some day, that new world will be Alphatian. Should anything happen to the empire as a result of the Glantrian scheme, look toward the hollow world. You might very well find me there.

"You find my words rather gloomy, but I have been suspecting some great evil at work. I have known for some time now that magic is slowly waning from Mystara. The temple priests have spoken of friction among the Immortals, and it seems to have something to do with magic. If this is true, Admiral, someone far greater than even kings and emperors of Mystara has guided your path ever since you left the empire. If so, even the whole of mighty Alphatia may not make a difference at the end.

"I will speak to the Glantrian wizard-princes. I will pray that they listen to the voice of reason. Should I fail, a great war will follow. I am not certain we'll win, but this empire will fight like never before. The world will not be the same again.

"Admiral, it is time for you to return home. I want you to stay at your ancestral domain in Floating Ar. You will be safe there. Be patient. I may need your help and the service of your loyal crew in the difficult times to come. You have done well and shall not be forgotten."

**Amphimir 28—Talasar, from a later account:** Some time before arriving at their village, the war party halted the

march. Everyone rested from the long, difficult journey through the woods.

Sometime after our meal, both Raman and I began suffering from severe cramps. A shaman had made us drink a magical potion of his making. As a result, we both shrunk to the natives' size. The shaman watched us and laughed, "You not spirit! Not spirit!" That was bad luck.

We eventually reached the village—a place named Cafua—if Raman got the name right. The village sat up in the branches of the tallest trees. Precarious, hanging bridges linked a multitude of platforms on top of which sat the natives' huts. They had to haul us up with ropes, since we couldn't climb the tall trees at all. We were allowed some rest in the shaman's hut—a detestable place with all sorts of dried insects pinned to the walls, all manner of snakes and arachnids hanging from the roof, and, worst of all, an impressive collection of mummified skulls, most of which looked like shrunken human heads,

The shaman showed up with a sly grin. After a rudimentary conversation with Raman, we learned that these were the phanaton people of Jibaru, forest hunters and tree dwellers. It took some doing to convince the shaman that we weren't from Herath—apparently people they didn't like. He still seemed suspicious. A phanaton warrior entered the hut and motioned us to follow him. The village chief wanted to see us.

He, too, was very suspicious. Then, the shaman told Raman to enter a large cage that sat on one of the tree platforms. It was filled with large spiders. I quickly bestowed upon him the same magical protection against poison, but that did not reassure him one bit. He hated spiders. At the sight of what lay in the cage, so did I. There was little choice there. Dozens of warriors aimed their bows at Raman and I. The chief then said "You enter cage, or Ixu make trophy of your head."

Raman entered. The spiders all leaped on top of him. I could barely see his hands and feet sticking out from under the crawling mass, as he screamed in abject terror. The village chief raised his hand and a volley of blowgun stings neutralized the spiders.

Moments later, the phanatons pulled Raman from under the dozing arachnids. It seemed the spiders did not react as expected. The shaman then said, "He not man from Herath; spiders attack him." The phanatons quickly applied herbal concoctions to Raman's wounds.

The rest of the day went more peacefully, thank Razud. We learned that the phanatons of Jibaru were spider-hunters, and not surprisingly, had gotten in trouble with the neighboring Herathians over the years. Not having seen many humans, they thought we too were from Herath. Had the spiders not attacked Raman, by now our heads would be adorning the chief's hut, soon to be followed by those of the

entire crew,

Finally, the Jibaru released us and the crew. They brought food (baked spider legs), fruits, nuts, and other forest goods, while the crew worked on the ship. After a night of feasting, drum-beating, and dancing around a large campfire, we took our leave and returned to the *Princess Ark*. It turned out these phanatons were good fellows after all.

**Amphimir 29—Haldemar:** After another travel spell, we were back aboard the *Princess*. I was pleased to see repairs were on schedule and that everything had gone well. At least they had an easy time!

I announced the news of what had happened to the crew. Everyone was stunned and overjoyed. At last, we were going home for good. I couldn't help thinking about what was to come, though. What did the future hold for the *Princess* and her loyal crew? It seemed that the adventure was over for now. But does adventure ever really end on Mystara?

## The End

### Phanatons

**Land of Jibaru—Capital:** Itucua (pop.: 1,250 phanatons); ruler: Queen Barana-Ui "Orchid-Soul," daughter of Queen Ujiri-Xuu "Forest-Whisper"; Immortal patron: Ui.

Phanatons are halfling-size mammals that look like a cross between raccoons and monkeys. A membrane stretches between their limbs that allows them to glide from branch to branch (and to fly at higher levels). They have long, prehensile tails that can easily support their weight. These tree-dwellers were originally described in *AC9 Creature Catalog*, page 43.

Relative to the ancient araneas of Herath, phanatons are newcomers among the civilized races. In their early years, phanatons were forest predators that fed on large insects, lizards, and small mammals. Immortals gave them a natural agility that made the phanatons well suited to hunting dangerous creatures like poisonous snakes, scorpions, and spiders. Among these, the latter were by far the most common prey in the region.

At first, phanatons were viewed as a nuisance by other races. In their early years, phanatons hunted common spiders and occasionally giant ones—araneas used the latter as servants, thus the spider-folks annoyance (see episode #30, *DRAGON*® issue #183). It was fashionable then for affluent araneas to capture and tame young phanatons as pets. No araneas in their right minds would otherwise ever venture deep into the northwestern end of the Orc's Head Peninsula since the region was notorious for being infested with these pesky creatures.

Over the centuries, phanatons grew smarter. They had been a race on the brink of becoming fully sentient. Perhaps the habit of those captured phanatons to mimic their aranean masters precipitated the natural process of their evolution. At

the heart of Jibaru, there rose a new breed of phanatons who organized a society and eventually took over the region.

They got better at hunting spiders, thanks to their natural agility, but also due to new hunting methods involving bait, nets, and missile weapons. They also learned to make blowguns to shoot needles dipped in a paralyzing poison made from giant-spider venom. Although many spiders still dwell in the region, there are far fewer of them today. Phanatons then began raising giant spiders in captivity, as cattle, but in order to renew their stock, phanatons performed occasional forays into Herath, whose forests were reputed for their plump, juicy giant spiders.

Some unwitting araneas were caught in their natural form and taken back to Jibaru. Amazed phanatons later discovered "humans" among their catch, and not knowing what to do with them—certainly, they would not eat them!—the phanatons released them. Phanatons came to believe these spiders to be the souls of very evil beings. They were a bad omen. Since then, a prevailing suspicion among the phanatons is that the people of Herath harbored evil spirits among them.

Survivors of the phanaton hunts returned to Herath, bringing tales of "ferocious and intelligent phanaton hordes bent on devouring the nation!" Herath dispatched a heavily armed force to probe the region beyond the Forbidden Highlands. Soon they ran into a large phanaton war band. Surrounded by what they primarily viewed as dangerous predators, Herathian officers (araneas) panicked and ordered an immediate attack. The Herathians were slaughtered almost to the last, mostly because of the phanatons' blowguns. Several more Herathian "crusades" took place over the following decades with the same horrifying results.

After what had happened with the chameleon men of Wallara (see episode #33, DRAGON issue #186), Herathian wizards were reluctant to use overwhelming magic to destroy the phanaton clans. Their expeditionary armies being systematically eradicated, they finally decided to reinforce their defenses along the Forbidden Highlands. Meanwhile, occasional raids by phanatons into Herath still took place, mostly to acquire venom for their blowguns. Some hunting parties were wiped out. Others got through, but now with the new habit of beheading captured humans—especially officers or nobles, and thus araneas—and shrinking their heads as war trophies. Despite the fact phanatons developed a taste for fruit, vegetable, nuts, and even fish since their primitive origins, the two races have maintained a virulent hatred of each other.

The phanatons have gotten along fairly well with the chameleon men of Wallara, especially since they discovered their common fear of the Herathians. Today, phanatons trade with the Wallarans, bartering whatever goods they can manufac-

ture. Garish piranha-bird feathers, woven spider silk, and phanaton pottery are in particular demand by the chameleon men. Emu eggs, giant termite larvae, and crocodile skins are a favorite among phanatons. Also traded are occasional human-made objects, either stolen from Herath or traded from a Texeiran outpost lying at the edge of The Horn, a sandy peninsula north of Jibaru, near the Trident Isles. It is a penal colony, with a fortified prison at the tip of The Horn.

Phanatons have sensed the difference between Herathians and the colonists of The Horn, but a relative distrust still prevails. Trade with Texeiran colonists takes place occasionally when the latter sail up the Jururu and Xinga rivers. Sometimes a handful of escaped convicts will seek refuge among the Jibaru. If anything goes wrong during such encounters, these human visitors are likely to end up with shrunken heads as well. Rare tree resins, cocoa beans, vanilla, healing mosses, and silver are what attracts the colonists to sail up the dangerous, piranha-infested rivers.

Soon after they had organized their first society, Jibaru phanatons multiplied rapidly. They established many more "clans," usually centered around single villages of no more than 300 individuals. Rivalries and frictions grew among the clans until their first clan war took place. The death toll was heavy. Fearing an attack from Herath, shamans arranged a truce during which the clan chiefs chose the greatest war-chief as their king. The monarch has usually little to do on a day-to-day basis, but when the nation is endangered, the king can summon the Council of Clans at his capital, the City of Itucua. The clan chiefs usually votes on major issues—the king counting for a full third of the total votes at the council. If the king has more than half the votes, his wishes will be respected, or else the clan chiefs will go on deliberating until a solution is found. If a war takes place, the king commands to all war hordes of the Jibaru. Monarchy among the Jibaru is hereditary. Within the past decades, a small group of "nobility," as medieval humans would conceive it, has

grown from the ranks of shamans, clan chiefs, and minor war chiefs. There is no social difference between males and females among the Jibaru, age alone being the way of sorting out who in a family inherits a king's or clan leader's position.

## Immortal patrons of the Phanatons

**Ui**—(alias Ordana) Head of the pantheon. She commands the forces of nature. Patroness of the forest and protector of its people, Ui is the one who gave the phanatons the spark of intelligence so they could avoid total subjugation by Herath. Although an ally of Korotiku in the maintenance of the Hollow World, Ui despises his spider folk, and loathes what they did to neighboring chameleon men followers of her friend, Calitha Starbrow.

**Mother-Earth (Marau-Ixui)**—(alias Terra) Patroness of birth, life, and death; the cycle of years and seasons; earth and fertility. She is the one who created the primitive phanatons as natural predators to balance the aranean threat on the Savage Coast. Mother Earth is a friend of the Star Dragon and sympathizes with neighboring chameleon men. Shamans of Ui or Mother Earth usually support good relations with the Wallara tribes.

**The Huntsman (Uatuma)**—(alias Zirchev) Patron of the hunt, but also of bravery, charm, and success among the clan. The Huntsman is a friend of Ui. He is the one who guides the hunting parties and the war bands during times of crisis.

## Phanatons as PCs

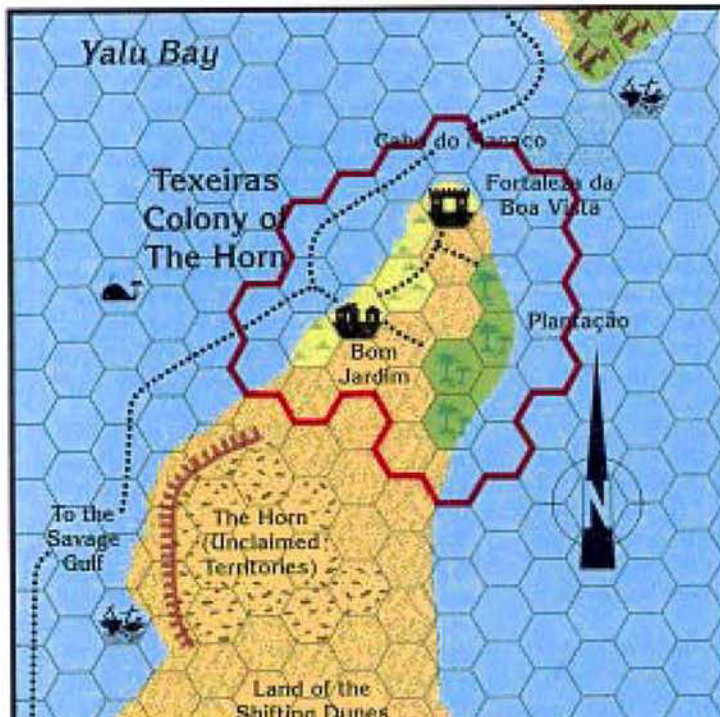
As an option, phanatons could be run as player characters (or NPCs with levels). Here is a way they could be added to your game. It is suggested that PCs' game statistics be rolled with the standard 3d6 dice method.

**Gliding:** Phanatons can glide, usually from branch to branch, due to loose skin between its limbs. The distance a phanaton can glide is equal to three times the starting height. So, for example, if a phanaton jumped from a height of 30', it could glide over a horizontal distance of

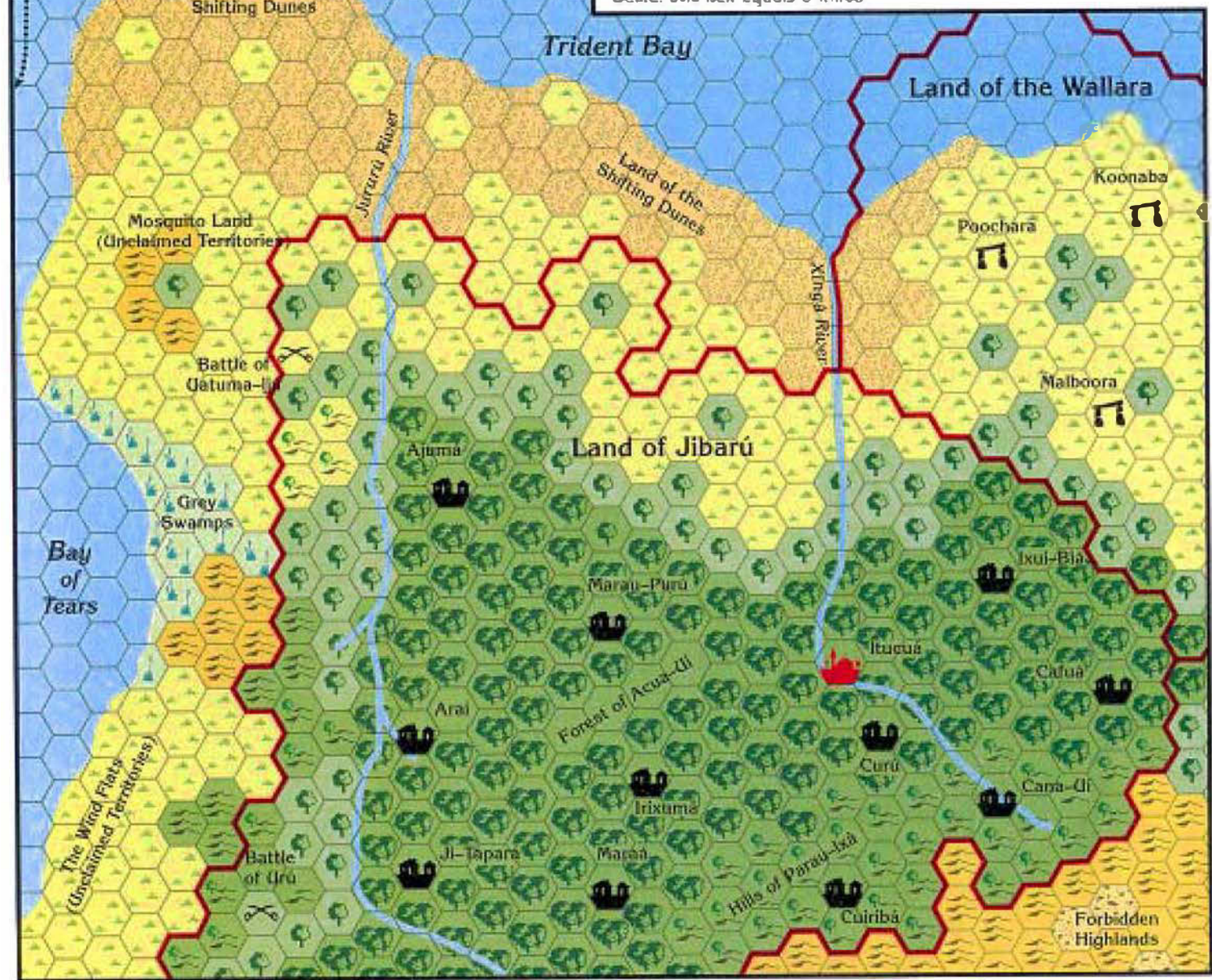
Phanatons			Special abilities	Shaman's		Spell levels			
Level	XP	HD		XP	HD	1	2	3	4
1	0	1d8-1	Glide	0	1d8-1	—	—	—	—
2	1,800	2d8-2	—	3,000	2d8-2	1	—	—	—
3	3,600	3d8-3	—	6,000	3d8-3	2	—	—	—
4	7,200	—	Fly	12,000	—	2	1	—	—
5	14,400	4d8-4	—	24,000	4d8-4	2	2	—	—
6	28,800	5d8-5	—	48,000	5d8-5	2	2	1	—
7	56,600	—	Pass plant	96,000	—	2	2	2	—
8	112,200	6d8-5	—	200,000	6d8-5	3	2	2	1
9	225,000	+2hp**	—	400,000	+2hp*	3	3	2	2

\* + 300,000 XP per level thereafter.  
 \*\* +2 hit point per level, Constitution bonus no longer applies.

Constitution bonuses should be added only when the PC is created and every time it gains a new level, up to 8th level.



- |  |                        |  |                |
|--|------------------------|--|----------------|
|  | Capital                |  | Grasslands     |
|  | Fort                   |  | Light Forest   |
|  | Village                |  | Heavy Forest   |
|  | Rock Shelter           |  | Forested Hills |
|  | Plantation             |  | Rocky Hills    |
|  | Battle Site            |  | Cliff          |
|  | Ship Wreck             |  | Mountains      |
|  | Whaling                |  | Swamp          |
|  | National Border        |  | Sand Dunes     |
|  | Traff or Shipping Lane |  | Rocky Desert   |
|  | River                  |  | Reefs          |



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90' maximum at the rate of 50'/round). When gliding, a phanaton must spread its arms and legs to catch the air, and therefore cannot fight, cast spells, or do anything requiring two hands. For every 100 lb of weight they carry, phanatons reduce their horizontal gliding range by 20' for the same loss of altitude as an unencumbered phanaton.

**Flying:** At 4th level, phanatons can fly—that is, maintain level flight or gain altitude, but only if updrafts or normal winds are present. The phanaton can gain 10' of altitude for every 60' of horizontal distance covered with normal winds (see the Rules Cyclopeda, page 90). A strong breeze will reduce the horizontal distance to 30'. Phanatons do not fly in high or extreme winds.

**Pass plant:** Phanatons gain the magical ability to *pass plant*, as per the druids fifth-level spell. They can use this ability once per day.

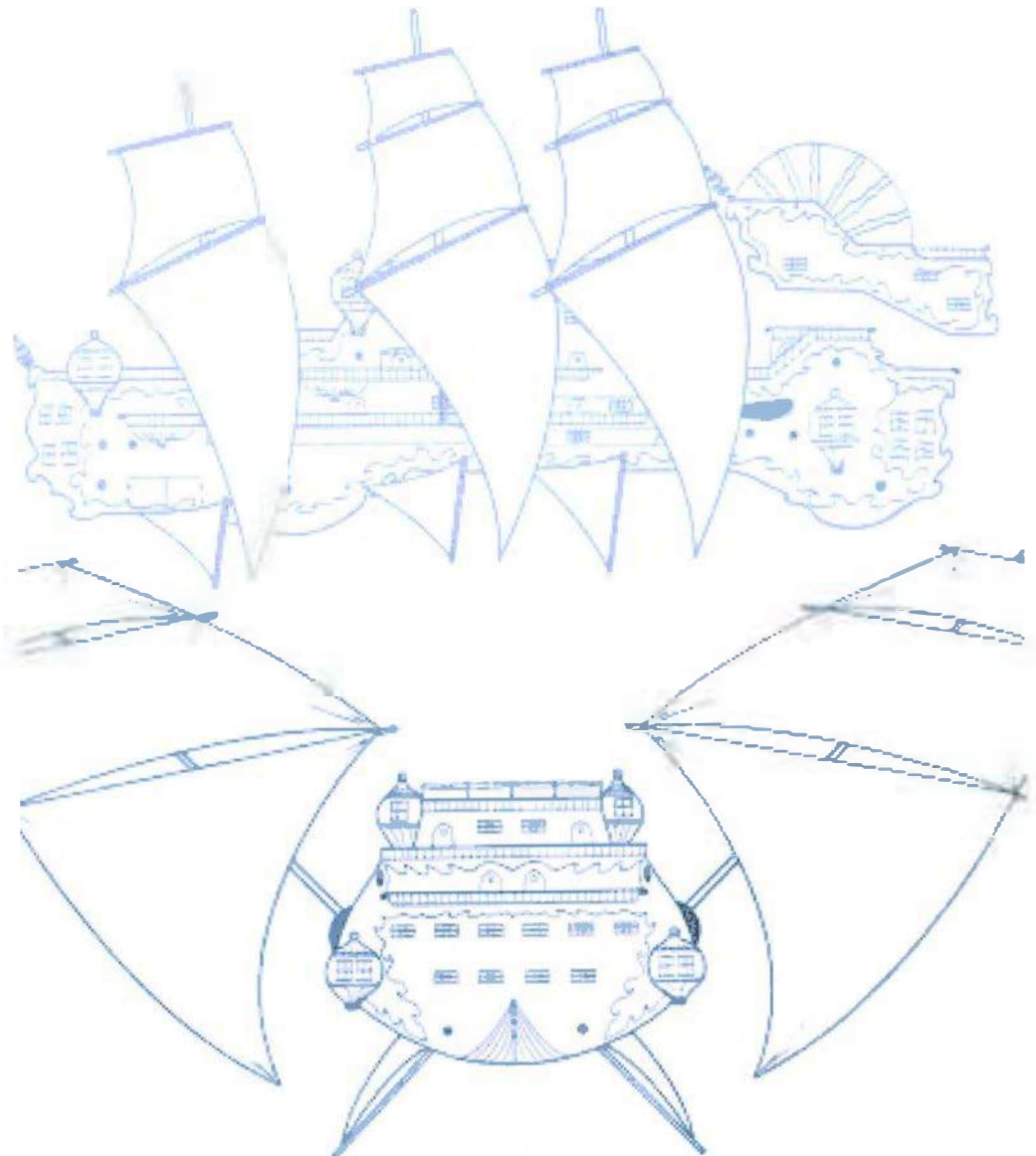
**Shamans:** Also called the "wise-ones," they are chosen at birth and begin learning the way of the shaman from a very young age. They are entrusted with the

knowledge of reading and writing.

They can only cast spells from the druidic spell list (see the *Rules Cyclopeda*, page 33). Shamans should have both a Wisdom and Charisma of 12 or better. If the *Wrath of the Immortals* accessory is used, shamans of Ui gain the ability to *move silently* and *hide in shadows* as thieves of the same experience level so long as they remain in trees. Mother Earths shamans gain the mystic's ability to *speak with animals*. Shamans of the Huntsman receive the general skills of "Tracking" and "Alertness" plus any other general skills they might have.

Jibaru shamans must use up one skill slot in order to read and write their own language. Common Jibaru don't have that knowledge. Shamans must then choose language skills to speak treant, dryad, and elven (if any such creatures exist in the phanatons home), before any other skills. Non-shamans may acquire Jibaru writing skills, but with an initial penalty of -3 to their Intelligence scores. Monarchs and other Jibaru leaders usually have that skill.

**Miscellaneous:** Phanatons are poor



swimmers, preferring their arboreal habitat. Phanatons do not have *infravision*. The more common, primitive (nonsentient) breeds of phanatons are normally clumsy with their hands. When fighting, they are likely to drop objects (coconuts, branches) on their attackers, or bite them (1d6 points of damage), or use simple weapons (branches, stone maces, or other blunt objects). Phanatons of Jibaru have learned to use small spears, short bows, and blowguns with needles dipped in a paralyzing poison (save vs. poison or remain paralyzed for 1d6 turns). Shields and armor are rarely used since they negate the phanaton's ability to glide. All phanatons are otherwise naturally agile (PC phanatons must have a Dexterity of 16 or better to qualify). Their natural AC is 9, with a +2 bonus to their AC and to all saving throws due to their small size and agility. They have the following racial modifiers to their game statistics:

Abilities	St	In	Wi	Dx	Co	Ch	
Race	Max.	16	15	15	18	18	18*
Phanatons	-2	-1	0	+2	0	0	
Shamans	-2	-1	+1	+1	0	0	

\* Natural Charisma applies only between phanatons, elves, treants, and dryads; otherwise, penalize Charisma - 1 when dealing with other humanoids, - 2 when

dealing with humans and demihumans other than elves. Phanatons and araneas have a relative Charisma of 3 when dealing with each other.

**Names & language:** Tapuru, Urua, Maragu, Araca, Ixaituba, Tuaca, Uapagu, Cacui, Jarapua, Gujari, Ixugu, Garanui, Axaua, Purucui, Palama, Tapaju, Uruxu, Itupaxingu, Macapui, Irigi. The Jibaru language does not have "e" and "o" sounds. The "x" is pronounced "sh," and the last vowel in the name is accented. Double names are usually a sign of nobility, as shown for the two queens mentioned earlier in this article.

The spoken language is still primitive as far as grammar and syntax go, requiring many gestures. The written language otherwise requires an extensive library of symbols representing animals whose sounds come close to the desired syllables. Ideograms conveying ideas complement other written symbols available to Jibaru shamans. The rest is left to the readers' interpretations.

**Phanatons:** AC 7, HD 1-1, MV 90' (30' or 150' (50') gliding, AT 1 bite or weapon, D 1d6 or by weapon, Save as F1 (+2), ML 7, AL Lawful (any for PCs), XPV 5. Size: 4' tall. Ω

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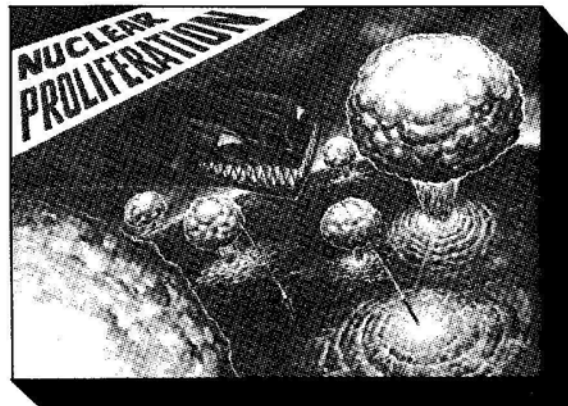
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