

HAWK & MOOR



II

KENT DAVID KELLY

JOURNEY INTO DUNGEONS DEEP ...

The HAWK & MOOR series chronicles the history of E. Gary Gygax, David Lance Arneson, and the creation of the first legendary game to arise in the Golden Age of role-playing: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. In Book Two, you will unearth the secrets of the Mad Archmage's dungeon. Discover the Old Guard Kobolds, the Jeweled Man, the Great Stone Face, the Black Dragon Labyrinth, the nine imprisoned demigods, and the journey through the netherworld into Cathay. Come along and experience an unprecedented journey into the Golden Age!

W O N D E R L A N D
I M P R I N T S

HAWK & MOOR

THE UNOFFICIAL HISTORY OF DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ®

BY
KENT DAVID KELLY
(DARKSERAPHIM)

® *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* IS A TRADEMARK OF WIZARDS OF THE COAST, LLC. THIS EDUCATIONAL WORK IS NEITHER AFFILIATED WITH NOR ENDORSED BY WIZARDS OF THE COAST OR BY HASBRO, INC. THIS INDEPENDENT WORK HAS NOT BEEN PREPARED, AUTHORIZED, OR LICENSED BY EITHER WIZARDS OF THE COAST OR BY HASBRO, INC. AND IS NOT AN OFFICIAL GAME GUIDE.

DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORIES OF
DAVID LANCE
ARNESON
&
ERNEST GARY
GYGAX

WONDERLAND IMPRINTS

2014 – 2016

O S R

ILLUSTRATED BY

EDWIN AUSTEN ABBEY, JOHN D. BATTEN, JOHN BAUER,
AMELIA BAUERLE, EMILE BAYARD, JACOB BINCK,
WILLIAM BLAKE, ARNOLD BOCKLIN, CARLO BRIOSCHI,
HARRY CLARKE, THOMAS COLE,
HENRIQUE ALVIM CORREA, WALTER CRANE,
THE BROTHERS DALZIEL, GUSTAVE DORÉ,
ALBRECHT DURER, MARY HALLOCK FOOTE,
HENRY J. FORD, J. M. GANDY, JOHN WILLIAM GOODWARD,
ARTHUR HACKER, ADOLF HIRÉMY-HIRSCHL,
WENCESLAUS HOLLAR, ALOIS KIRNIG,
LUIGI MAYER, PETER NEWELL, JOHN PETTIE,
FREDRICK PICKARD-CAMBRIDGE,
GIOVANNI BATISTA PIRANESI, HOWARD PYLE,
ARTHUR RACKHAM, ALFRED RETHEL, LOUIS RHEAD,
EDOUARD RIOU, ALBERT ROBIDA, CHARLES ROBINSON,
MARCEL ROUX, FRANZ XAVER SIMM, LANCELOT SPEED,
SIR JOHN TENNIEL, J. M. W. TURNER, N. C. WYETH,
ET ALII

Copyright © 2014-2016 by Kent David Kelly.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced without the written permission of the copyright holder, Kent David Kelly.

All products and names mentioned in this book are trademarks or service marks of their respective owners. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS is a trademark of Wizards of the Coast and Hasbro, Inc. The mention of trademarks in this work is for educational purposes only, and is not intended as a challenge.

HAWK & MOOR is an historical research project developed with the primary intent of broadening the popular awareness of, and appreciation for, Fantasy Role-Playing Games (FRPGs).

Quotes attributed to various individuals are derived from a wide array of filmed interviews, online forum posts, magazines, books, newsletters, and various game-oriented materials. Please refer to the Footnotes and Annotations section for detailed citations. Individuals who wish to have their own quoted words alluded to, rather than quoted directly, are welcome to contact the author with requests for modification, emendation or deletion of specific comments.

The cover of this volume features a detail from The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea, by William Blake, painted c. 1805-1810.

(Document Version 3.0)

For corrective and revision purposes, please note that this is document version 3.0 of this manuscript, completed in December of 2016. Versions prior to this, while useful are slightly outdated, and this most recent version of the book has

been amended as more interviews, documents, corrections and feedback have come to light.

In the age of the Internet, a printed book can never contain the final word. Therefore, the eBook version of this volume is intended as a living document, so that interested readers can enjoy a resource which is constantly revised, one which does not merely sit upon the shelf going slowly and forever out of date. The print version of this volume may well be slightly out of date, as in-depth research into the ever-shifting field of Role-Playing Game history continues to grow, diversify and change.

Please feel welcome to contact the author at shadowed_sky@hotmail.com with comments, questions, requests, recommendations and greetings. And thank you for reading!

DESCRIPTION

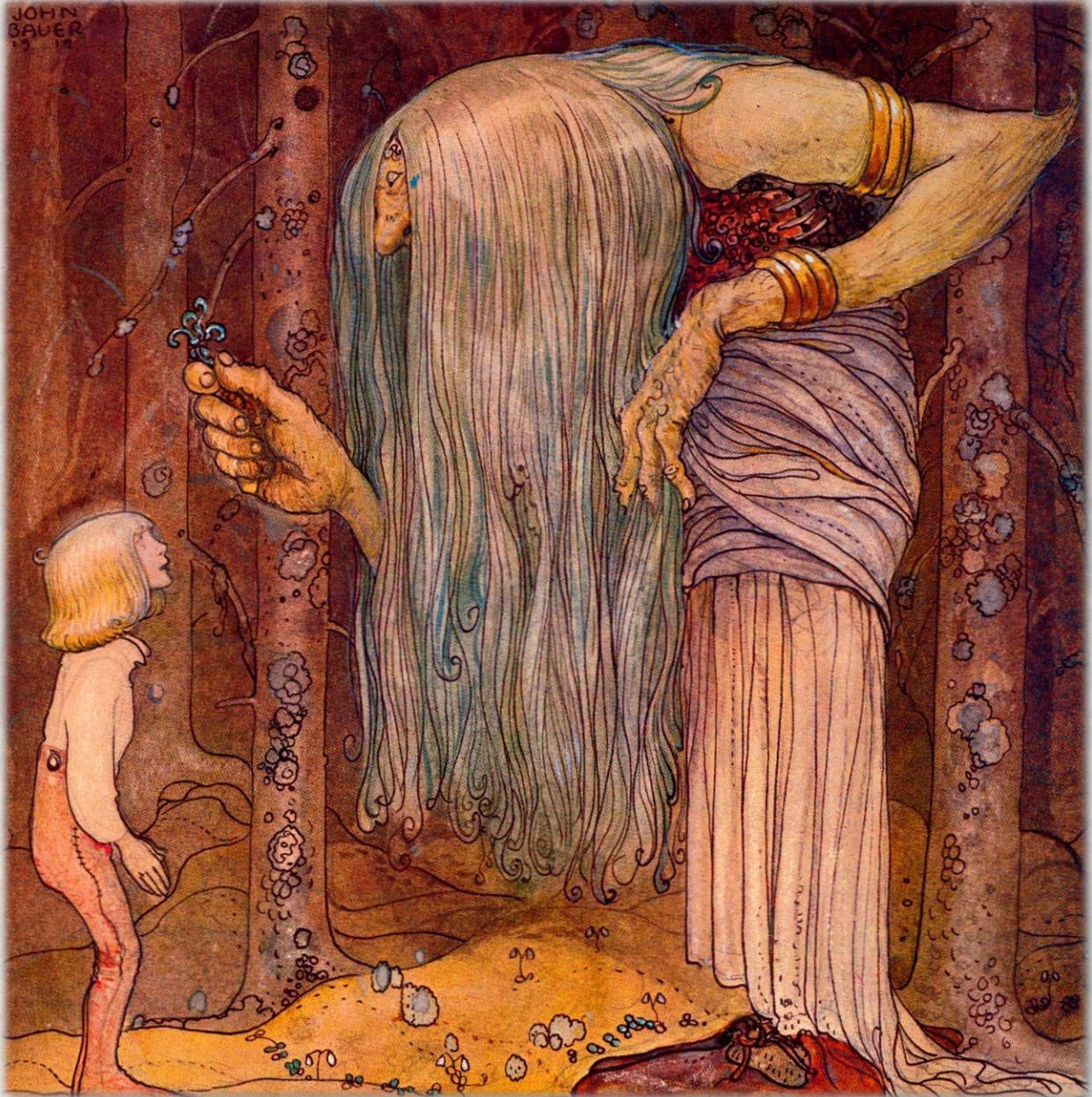
THE CREATION of the world's preeminent Fantasy Role-Playing Game (FRPG), *Dungeons & Dragons®*, is one of the most fascinating tales to be told in all the shared histories of entertainment, play and game design. Two very different men, David Lance Arneson and Ernest Gary Gygax, undertook an unprecedented collaboration which gifted us — as their shared legacy — with one of the most intriguing games the world has yet experienced. Their game did not just simulate one isolate corner of reality; it dared to encompass the entirety of all realms of adventure, the consensual playground of the human imagination.

HAWK & MOOR tells the story of Dave and Gary, and the many other people whose efforts gave first life to the game we know and love today. Arneson had spectacular ideas, but Gygax knew how to refine them. Collaboration soon turned to conflict as Arneson believed his game was being taken from him, and Gygax crystallized systems where incomprehensible riddles had stood before. Both men were creative geniuses, but the game they created from Gygax's *Chainmail* (1971) was the end result not only of their teamwork, but also of their clashes and disagreements.

HAWK & MOOR Book Two: *The Dungeons Deep* tells the tale of all that came after Blackmoor in the World of Greyhawk. Herein you will find the adventures of Robilar, Tenser, Terik, Murlynd, Lessnard, Quij, Otto, and Zagyg the Mad himself. Mysteries such as the Old Guard Kobolds, the orc hordes, the Thouls, the Black Dragon Labyrinth, the Great Stone Face, the demon lord Fraz-urb'luu, the Jeweled Man, the Nine Demigods, the Isle of the Ape, and the slide to Cathay are all explored as well.

HAWK & MOOR Book Two: *The Dungeons Deep* includes 86,500 words on over 370 pages, supported by over 470 footnotes and annotations. The adventure continues as we delve into the sinister and wondrous dungeons beneath

Castle Greyhawk. Prepare yourself, take up torch and sword. Come along and experience an unprecedented journey into the Golden Age!



*If I give you the secrets
of the underworld of the imagination,
what will you do?*

DEDICATION

*Quite simply, this book of wonders
Has been created to inspire
The future imaginings of my beloved son.
For Liam.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A BOOK like this is never written by a single person without significant contributions from many other kind, insightful and respect-worthy people. Some of these esteemed individuals contributed through their own diligent volunteerism, while others aided my efforts indirectly with their generous public engagement of the D&D and FRPG fan communities. This book is the culmination not only of hundreds of books, magazines, and interviews; it also comprises a living and ever-growing record of the thousands of scattered Internet blog entries, sub-pages and forum postings which have hidden away much of the true history of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Special thanks are due to my beta readers, including Andrew (“aeakett”), Axel (“aia”), Carl (“cdenham”), Carl (“gyg”), David (“faro”), David (“Thunderdave”), John (“Gnat the Beggar”), Mark (“Mars”), Matt (“nesbit37”), and Ron (“rredmond”), for their comments, support and recommendations. Constructive criticisms provided by Dan Boggs, Robert Conley, Jon Peterson, “Sauromatian,” “Stratochamp” (Bill Meinhardt) and others have also been very helpful as well.

I am grateful and happy to thank Jeff Berry, Mike Carr, Ernie Gygax Jr., Luke Gygax, Tim Kask, Rob Kuntz, Len Lakofka, Steve Marsh, Frank Mentzer, Mike Mornard, Greg Svenson and James M. Ward for their extremely helpful blog and forum posts which have helped to illuminate many of the darker corners of D&D’s early days. Their generously shared experiences, revealing much about the earliest games in those years which I now term the Golden Age, were the primary inspirations for this book.

The following individuals conducted interviews with Dave Arneson, Gary Gygax, Tim Kask, and/or Rob Kuntz, which were also very helpful in creating the foundation for this work: Barbara A. Blackburn, Martin Brown, Andrew S. Bub, Alex Handy, Anne F. Jaffe, Jeremy L. C. Jones, David Kushner, Robin D. Laws, Scott Lynch, Frank Mentzer, Allen Rausch, Ciro Alessandro Sacco, Sam Sloan, Harvey Smith, Ben Sones, Michael O. Varhola and Allen Varney. Please note that this is an incomplete list due to some partial attributions within the available materials, and I hope to add to it further in the future.

Further, many bloggers provided excellent resource materials through their ongoing sites which were extremely helpful to me, including Joseph Bloch (of the

Greyhawk Grogard blog), Dan Boggs (Aldarron) (of the Hidden in Shadows blog), Allan Grohe (Grodog of Greyhawk), Chris Kotalik (of the Hill Cantons blog), Jon Peterson (via his Playing at the World blog), Sham aka Dave (of Sham's Grog & Blog), Zach "Zenopus" H. (of the Zenopus Archives), and Jason Zavoda (of the Hall of the Mountain King Blog). Bill Owen's history of the Judge's Guild, and associated forum posts, were very helpful as well. A special shout out goes to Michael Popham of the *Horror Incorporated* Project as well for his outstanding summaries of Twin Cities "Creature Feature" movie showings in the early 1970s. The Tome of Treasures website, in addition, displays significant resources which allowed me to fill many of the proverbial "blank spaces in the map" concerning the early years of pre-*Dungeons & Dragons* history.

Scott "Foulfoot" of the Acaeum.com is also to be thanked for allowing my ongoing coordination of beta readers and commentators for this manuscript via his website forums. Please feel free to join our discussion in the Acaeum General Forum. Further, I am grateful to: the administrators of the Blackmoor Comeback Inn; Paul Stormberg's esteemed Collector's Trove; the endlessly-valuable Dragonsfoot and ENWorld forums, which archive much of the fan correspondence shared by Gary Gygax; the Knights & Knaves Alehouse; and the ODD74 Proboards. These valuable resources possess, via their forums, excellent archives of crucial anecdotes and historical posts pertaining to the early Greyhawk and Blackmoor campaigns.

Without all of you and the generous availability of your works and research, this book could not exist. I sincerely thank you all for your generous sharing, memories, and contributions to the cause!

BOOK II

THE DUNGEONS DEEP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Front Cover](#)

Page 3 ~ [Title Page](#)

Page 8 ~ [Description](#)

Page 10 ~ [Dedication](#)

Page 11 ~ [Acknowledgements](#)

Page 14 ~ [Table of Contents](#)

Page 19 ~ [Useful Notes Involving Greyhawk Experience Levels](#)

* * * * *

Page 43 ~ [Chapter 11: The Raiding of the Ruin](#)

Page 81 ~ [Chapter 12: A Clash of Arms](#)

Page 100 ~ [Chapter 13: The Dungeons Deep](#)

Page 123 ~ [Chapter 14: Riddles, Torture, Screams](#)

Page 162 ~ [Chapter 15: Gods and Madness](#)

Page 182 ~ [Chapter 16: Black Magic and Dragon Venom](#)

Page 217 ~ [Interlude: *Dungeons & Dragons*: A Glimmer of the Apocalypse?](#)

Page 235 ~ [Chapter 17: Shadows under Greyhawk](#)

Page 254 ~ [Chapter 18: The Lure of Jewels](#)

Page 303 ~ [Chapter 19: An Insufficient Trove](#)

Page 319 ~ [Chapter 20: And All That Is Yet to Come](#)

* * * * *

Page 332 ~ [Appendix III: The *Dungeons & Dragons* Chronicle:
A Timeline for the Years 1972 and 1973](#)

Page 345 ~ [Appendix IV: Secrets of Greyhawk:
Elements Notes in the Greyhawk Dungeons, 1972-1974](#)

* * * * *

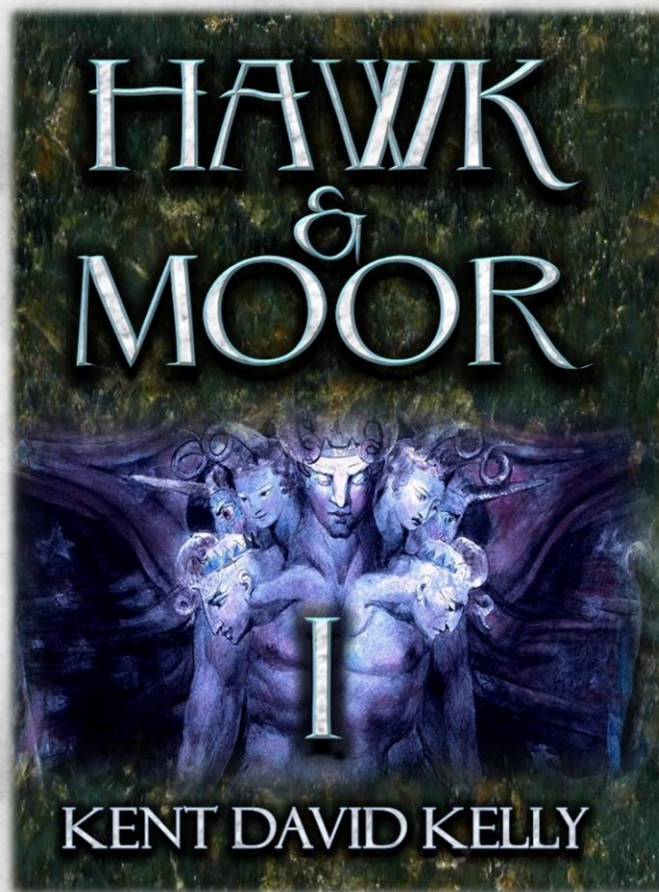
Page 372 ~ [About the Author](#)

Page 374 ~ [Other Books by Kent David Kelly](#)

THE SAGA CONTINUES

WELCOME! Please note that this is Book II in a continuing saga, exploring the early history of Fantasy Role-Playing Games in general, and *Dungeons & Dragons* in particular.

Chapters 1 through 10 of this series can be found in **HAWK & MOOR**, Book I: *The Dragon Rises*, also available from Wonderland Imprints. Therein, readers will also find an extensive introduction, biographies of E. Gary Gygax and David Lance Arneson, and a full and detailed narrative through which we explore the significant events which occurred between January 1970 and December 1972.



[Click here to view](#)

Hawk & Moor Book I, Deluxe Edition, online.

Herein with chapter 11, we continue our tale with Gary Gygax's first 1972 "Greyhawk" play test of his prototypical dungeon crawling game, based upon *Chainmail* and Dave Arneson's *Blackmoor* precedent.

Hereafter, I also provide a detailed guide to the approximate experience levels attained by key characters in the Greyhawk campaign. Due to the spotty historical record which we are forced to contend with, this information is useful in understanding the flow of cause and effect which links the many tenuous adventures together. We do not have enough information to firmly attach the entire Greyhawk dungeoneering chronicle to the fuller real world chronology, but this guide is nevertheless a significant step for research in that direction.



*These Greyhawk heroes, they're the very best
at keeping men-at-arms alive. Right?*

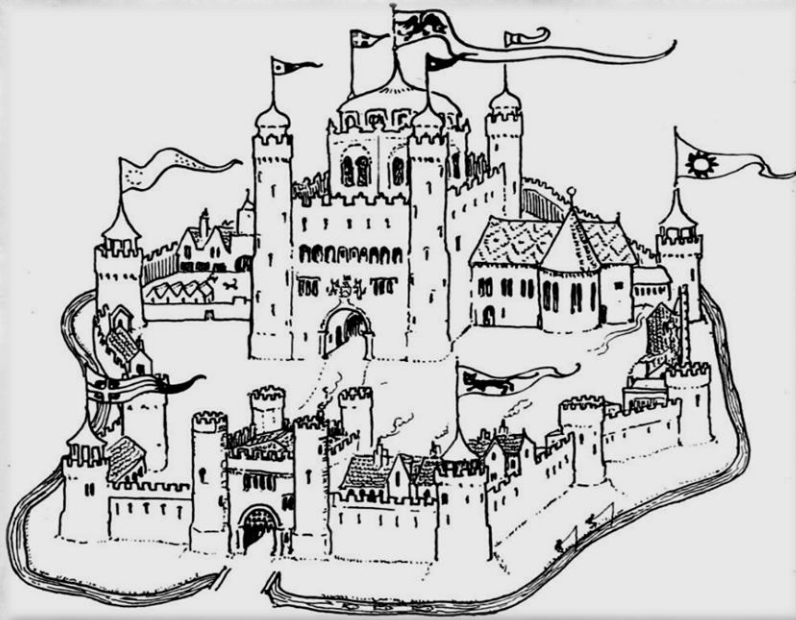
USEFUL NOTES

INVOLVING GREYHAWK CHARACTER EXPERIENCE LEVELS

GIVEN THE FACT that E. Gary Gyga could not always remember the precise times during which the various Greyhawk dungeon adventures took place in 1972 and 1973, I have adopted the rather unorthodox tactic of recording many of the player characters' *mentioned* (or more often and when necessary, *approximated*) experience levels as a rough form of timeframe estimation. We know logically that experience levels for each character began at level 1 and increased over time; and further, no adventure tales specific to the Greyhawk dungeons during this time period mention Energy Drain or other experience-reducing effects being suffered by the player characters. Therefore, quite simply, events which took place at "Robilar level 10" can be dated with a fair degree of confidence as occurring soon *after* those which took place at "Robilar level 9," which occurred after "Robilar level 8," and so forth. The characters' progression rates, in other words, help to date various important events.

Note that this is a very faulty and unreliable mechanism, but it is better than nothing! This approach, when coupled (tenuously) with the scanty real world chronology, has allowed me to offer a much more detailed and coherent stream of Greyhawk adventures than has ever been published previously. Please note that all chronological dates provided hereafter are solely my estimations made in consideration of the available anecdotes and evidence, and that this timeline may well be adjusted in the future as more information comes to light.

You will need to take all of these educated guesses with a grain of salt. But if you do happen to have further information which would cause me to carefully reconsider the determinations I have made here, please feel welcome to share it. The tentative sequence is difficult to further improve without additional information and further contributions are always welcome.



*Once upon a time,
there was a castle ...*

CAMPAIGN STAGE I: THE CONQUEST OF DUNGEON LEVEL 1

THE YEAR 1972

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
1st	1	Late November 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Castle Greyhawk is conceived and introduced.

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
2nd	1	Late November 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Upper Works and dungeon level 1 are in play. • In the first play test, Ahlissa the cleric (played by Elise Gygax) began play at experience level 1. • Ernie played a level 1 fighting man, but it seems that this character was quickly abandoned in favor of Tenser.
3rd	1	Late November 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the second play test, Robilar the fighting man (played by Rob Kuntz) and Murlynd the magic-user (Don Kaye) began at level 1. • It appears that Tenser the magic-user (Ernie Gygax) was created for the second play test as well.
4th	1	Late November or Early December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the third play test, Terik the fighting man (Terry Kuntz) began play at level 1.

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
5th	2	Early December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the characters cleared dungeon level one, it is likely that several of the player characters gained experience levels. Otherwise, they would not have felt that they had become stronger and ready to challenge the ogre guarding the entrance to dungeon level two.
6th	2	December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given Gary's frequent notes that Robilar was the fastest advancing character, with Tenser in second place, Terik third, and Murlynd likely fourth, I estimate that Robilar and likely Tenser gained experience level 2 before they killed the ogre.
7th	2	December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At about this time, Tenser acquired a wand of paralyzation.

CAMPAIGN STAGE II: THE CONQUEST OF DUNGEON LEVEL 2

THE YEAR 1972

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
8th	2	December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenser, on a solo adventure, is robbed by an evil magic-user and he loses his possessions (including his wand of paralyzation).
9th	2	December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenser later kills the mage and re-acquires the wand with the assistance of his allies, likely meaning Robilar and Terik.
10th	3	December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robilar, Tenser, and Terik separately attain experience level 3.

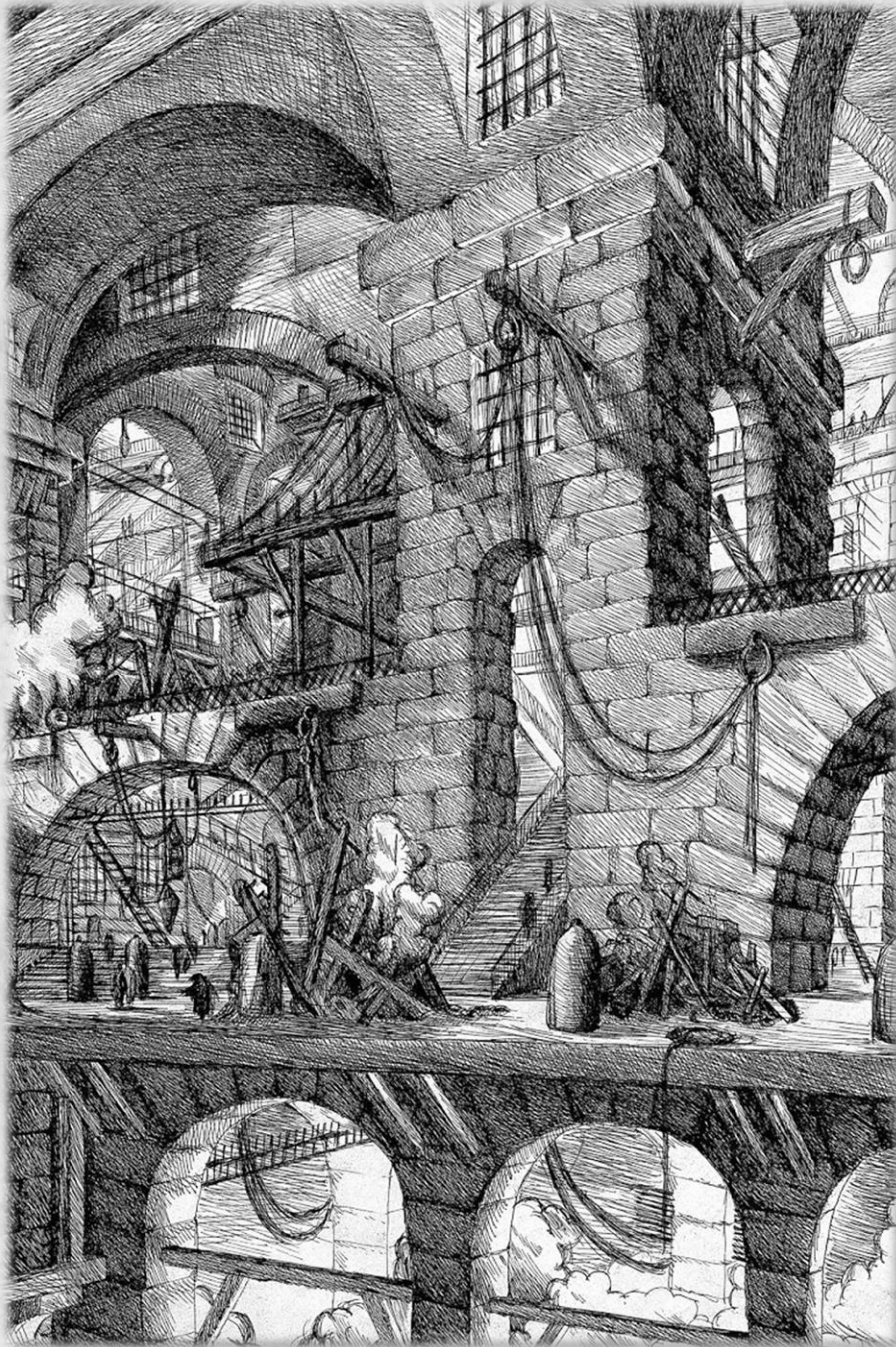


Hmm ... that Tenser lad, I wonder if I should have killed him ...

Nah.

<u>CAMPAIGN STAGE III:</u> <u>THE EXPLORATION OF DUNGEON LEVEL 3</u>			
<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
11th	3	December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rob Kuntz recalls that Robilar, Tenser and Terik were probably all experience level 3 when they encountered their first slime monster, which appears to have occurred on dungeon level two. • In 2007, Gary wrote concerning this encounter, “That’s about the best I can do recalling the incident after 35 years,” which, being stated in the year 2007, is another (admittedly frail) indicator that dungeon level two was explored in 1972, not in 1973.
12th	3	December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to one of Rob’s recollections, Robilar was level 3 when he descended to dungeon level three and encountered wights on a solo adventure.
13th	4	December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robilar, Tenser, and possibly Terik separately attain experience level 4.

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
14th	4 or 5	December 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering that Quij was made a level 4-equivalent orc hero at about this time, and that Quij was subservient to Robilar, it may be that Robilar was at least experience level 4 by this time, or even level 5. If this is true, then Tenser and Terik were probably about level 4 as well. Please note that this estimation may be lowered if more evidence comes to light, slightly affecting the timeframe for Quij's introduction.
15th	4 or 5	End of 1972 (Late? December)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around this time, Mike Mornard created his first character, Gronan the level 1 fighting man.
16th	4 or 5	December 31st, 1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In trusting the recollections of Rob Kuntz, we find that dungeon levels 1, 2, and 3 were designed and in play at this time; and that dungeon levels 4 and beyond would be featured in 1973.



*“Okay, I’m ready to map the dungeon on graph paper.
What does my character see?”*

<u>THE YEAR 1973</u>			
<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
17th	4 or 5	Early? January 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gary created his first character, Yrag the level 1 fighting man.
18th	4 or 5	Early? January 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The next day he created his second character, Mordenkainen the level 1 magic-user.
19th	5	January? 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If they have not already done so, then Robilar, Tenser, and Terik separately attain experience level 5 at about this time. The relative levels of characters can be discerned with Robilar at the highest level, Tenser in second place, Terik in third place, and Murlynd in fourth. The reasons for this is based on play frequency. Gary once wrote (in ENWorld Gary Gyax Q&A VI, posted February 9th, 2004): “As Ernie, Don, Rob and Terry [<i>were</i>] in my house or near to it, were family or friends, they came by often to play, Rob more so than the rest, followed by Ernie and Terry, for Don had a day job and a family.” This basis allows for continued estimations of experience levels based on Robilar’s detailed progression.

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
20th	5 or 6	January? 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gary noted that Obmi's repulsor ray machine on dungeon level three was probably taken out by Tenser's Lightning Bolt, which is a 3rd level spell requiring a caster of at least 5th level. Therefore, Tenser was probably level 5 while exploring Obmi's chambers. Since Robilar was the fastest advancer, Robilar was probably level 5 or 6. Terik may have been level 5.
21st		January 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated timeframe for the design of dungeon level 4.
22nd		January? 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At about the same time that dungeon level 4 is being designed, Gary works on the rough map for the City of Greyhawk.
23rd		January? 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated timeframe for the design of dungeon level 5.

CAMPAIGN STAGE IV: THE TALE OF THE DUNGEONS DEEP

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
24th	6	Early 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When Otto (a low-level NPC magic-user) became experience level 4, he distrusted his master Tenser and became a henchman serving under Robilar. Robilar was probably about level 6 at this time.
25th	6	Early 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At this time Mike Mornard created and played a new character, Lessnard the level 1 magic-user.
26th		Early 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated timeframe for the creation of dungeon level 6.
27th	7	Spring 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By extrapolation, I believe that Robilar was level 7 by this time.
28th	7	Late Spring or Early Summer 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the estimated time period for Tenser and Terik separately attaining experience level 7.
29th	8	Mid- or Late Summer, 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I believe that Robilar was level 8 by this time.

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
30th	8	Mid- or Late Summer, 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the estimated time period for Tenser and Terik separately attaining experience level 8.
31st	9	Late Summer 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robilar gains experience level 9.
32nd	9	Late Summer 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In <i>Oerth Journal</i> #7, it is estimated that Robilar was level 9 when he gave up dungeon adventures for a while and took up wilderness adventuring.
33rd	9	Late Summer 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the likely timeframe for the Tale of the Barrage Balloon, when Murlynd was perhaps level 6 or 7 (but probably still lower than Tenser and Terik).
34th	9	Early? September 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brian Blume entered the Greyhawk campaign, and created Rary the level 1 magic-user.
35th	9	September? 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robilar began his deep solitaire expeditions, according to Gary's recollection, as about level 9.

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
36th	9	September? 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robilar was also level 9 when he encountered the gnolls and their Evil High Priest leader in the dungeons of Greyhawk.
37th	9 or 10	September? 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It seems that Robilar was level 9 or 10 when he created his castle on the Wild Coast near the Gnarley Forest.
38th	9 or 10	Early Autumn, Likely September, 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When Mike Mornard left the Greyhawk campaign, his magic-user Lessnard was either 6th or 7th level. (Refer for example to a comment made by “Old Geezer” Mornard on the RPG.net forums on September 25th, 2009.) He was trying to catch up to the considerably more advanced regular players, which seems to imply that Robilar and Tenser were at <i>least</i> 8th level (and almost certainly higher); perhaps Tenser was 8th or 9th, while Robilar may have been 10th.
39th	11	Early Autumn, Likely September, 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robilar gains experience level 11.



The dragon is slain!
Time to go back to the Green Dragon Inn
and run a new ad for henchmen ...

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
40th	11	Early Autumn, Likely September, 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a tentative timeframe for the Tale of the Giant's Bag, when Tenser was level 9.
41st	11	Early Autumn, Likely September, 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robilar is said to have been level 11 when he encountered the green dragons of the Gnarley.
42nd	11	Early Autumn, Likely September, 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortly thereafter, Robilar may have tamed the white cold drake.
43rd	11	Early Autumn, Likely September, 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At about this time, Tenser attains experience level 10.
44th	11	Early Autumn, Likely September, 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By one of Rob Kuntz's estimations, Robilar was experience level 9, 10 or 11 when he, Tenser and Terik took over one of the Greyhawk dungeon levels as a base. To fit this with Gary's later approximations of levels and other accounts, I estimate that Robilar was level 11, Tenser was level 10, and Terik was level 9.

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
45th	11	Autumn 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In <i>Oerth Journal</i> #7, it is stated that Robilar was level 10 when he freed the nine imprisoned demigods. An estimate of level 12 has also been given, but level 11 seems more likely with the implied and over-arching sequence of events (in which the demigods were encountered prior to Robilar's descent to dungeon level thirteen).
46th	11 or 12	Autumn 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I currently estimate that the adventure on the Isle of the Ape, reached through the Greyhawk dungeons' teleporter nexus, occurred at approximately this time.

Please Note: There is a significant chronological accuracy gap here. There are conflicting interpretations of the time period for Robilar's full descent through the dungeons of Castle Greyhawk, with some estimations dating many of these events as beginning in mid-1974 as opposed to in the fall of 1973. This volume's narrative currently supports the autumn 1973 chronology, although this may be shifted in the future if further clarification of the mid-1974 timeline can be corroborated.

CAMPAIGN STAGE V: ZAGYG'S SANCTUM AND BEYOND

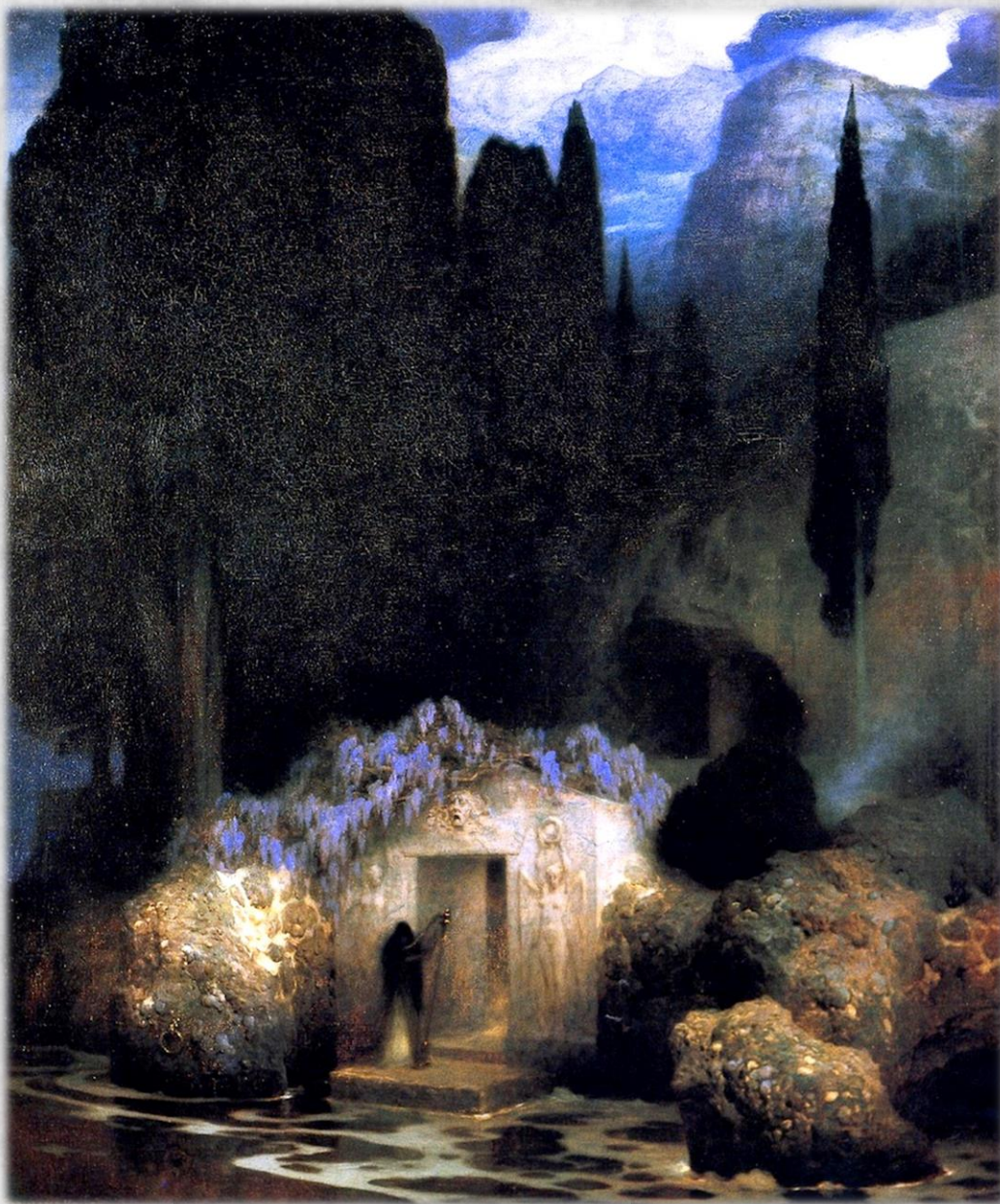
<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
47th	11	Autumn 1973?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It seems that Robilar may have discovered the bottom of the Greyhawk dungeon at experience level 11.
48th	12	Autumn 1973?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When Robilar exited on the slide to Cathay, Zagyg granted him an additional experience level, making him level 12.
49th	12	Autumn 1973?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When Tenser fell to Cathay, he was level 11 or 12.
50th	12	Autumn 1973?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the above considerations, Terik was probably level 10 when he sets out looking for Robilar and Tenser.
51st	12	Autumn 1973?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When Terik fell to Cathay, he was probably level 11.
52nd	11	October? 1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At around this time, Rary became experience level 3 and Brian Blume abandoned the character. He would later play in other D&D sessions, for example when helping to teach James M. Ward to play with Gary.

<u>THE YEAR 1974</u>			
53rd	12	January 1974?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By extrapolation, Robilar probably began the year at level 12. • Robilar's ascendancy slows significantly as Rob Kuntz focuses on running the Greyhawk campaign in the 1974-1975 time period. • The publication of <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> in 1974, and Gary's necessary focus on business over gaming, will slow matters as well.
54th	13	Late 1974 or Early 1975?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robilar attains experience level 13.
<u>THE YEAR 1975</u>			
55th	13	Spring or Summer 1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In one contemporary account (in <i>Alarums & Excursions</i>) Gary noted that Robilar was level 13 when he adventured in the prototype Tomb of Horrors. • This dungeon was play tested prior to the Origins conference in late July, 1975.
56th	14	Mid- or Late 1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robilar attains experience level 14.
57th	14	Late 1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hommlet campaign begins with new level 1 characters.

CAMPAIGN STAGE VI: HOMMLET AND ELEMENTAL EVIL

<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
58th	14	Late 1975 or Early 1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robilar was level 14 during his Temple of Elemental Evil adventure (as noted by Rob Kuntz on the paizo.com forums on September 12th, 2006), which occurred in either late 1975 or early 1976.
59th	14	January to April 1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A note on Robilar's slowed advancement: Gary once wrote (in <i>The Strategic Review</i> #7): "To my certain knowledge, no player in either Blackmoor or Greyhawk has risen above 14th level." This issue's publication date was April 1976.

<u>THE YEAR 1976</u>			
<u>Event Sequence</u>	<u>Highest Character Level</u>	<u>Estimated Timeframe</u>	<u>Events</u>
60th	15	Mid-1976?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to player Mike Mornard, Robilar was the highest level character who ever existed under Gary's purview as Dungeon Master, and he did not rise above level 14 or 15 during that time. • Therefore, we can say with a fair degree of confidence that Robilar would not gain the 15th experience level until the mid-spring of 1976 at the earliest. • Robilar gains experience level 15.



*“Ah! This is a truly excellent place
to build a netherworld labyrinth
to honor my lord Boccob the Uncaring.
What should I call it?”*

INTERVIEWER:

*A pale young sorcerer regards you warily
from atop the ivy-covered remains
of a shattered tower. What do you do?*

E. GARY GYGAX:

*I waste him with my crossbow,
quickly loot his body,
then complete the destruction of the tower, of course!*

CHAPTER 11

THE RAIDING OF THE RUIN

(NOVEMBER –
DECEMBER 1972)

“... Goblin, the Gobelinus of monkish Latinity, and the German Kobold, are only varied names for the Grecian Kobalus, whose sole delight consisted in perplexing the human race, and calling up those harmless terrors that constantly hover round the minds of the timid ...”

— *Traditions of Lancashire*, Volume 1, by John Roby

OUR DRACONIAN chronicle begins once again.¹ Let us return to Lake Geneva ...

Near to the edge of winter, approximately four to six weeks after the Blackmoor and *Pasha Cada* gaming weekend,² Gary finally had both his first draft of *The Fantasy Game* and a rudimentary dungeon map ready for actual play. This was probably in late November.³

According to one of Gary’s accounts, prior to the first play test he had only two grid maps completed: a map of the upper ruins of Castle Greyhawk (the fabled “Upper Works”), and the singular dungeon level underneath the surface.

¹ **General Citation:** Many of the following accounts are chiefly derived from these sources: [1] the Preface to *Castle Zagyg: The Upper Works*, [2] *Dragon Annual* #2, [3] *Dragon Magazine* #302, [4-9] ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A threads (particularly Parts I, IV, V, IX, X and XIII), [10] a Gary Gygax interview at theweem.com, [11] Rob Kuntz’s *Lord of the Green Dragons* blog (particularly the entry for 12-14-2009), [12] *Oerth Journal* #6, [13] *Oerth Journal* #7, and [14] various threads in the *Pied Piper Publishing* forums. These accounts are primarily by Gary Gygax and secondarily by Rob Kuntz. There are intransigent chronological problems within the specific incident timelines, and insurmountable difficulties which prevent the creation of a sole, authoritative version of these events. Conflicting accounts have been cross-analyzed and synthesized, creating a coherent narrative, to the best of my ability. Fair and informed criticism of various points is always welcome. ~KDK

² This timeframe was estimated by Rob Kuntz. Please refer to the *Lord of the Green Dragons* blog posting dated December 14th, 2009.

³ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 5th, 2002.



You're building a castle for your friends and family?

Dream big.

Further dungeon levels featured in this first incarnation of the Castle would not be completed until later in the winter of 1972, and on through the New Year and well into the spring, summer and fall of 1973. For example, Rob Kuntz once

recalled that “Gary sculpted the first three maps for the dungeon. That was probably [*in*] late ’72, and the rest of them [*the deeper dungeon maps*] would follow in ’73.”⁴

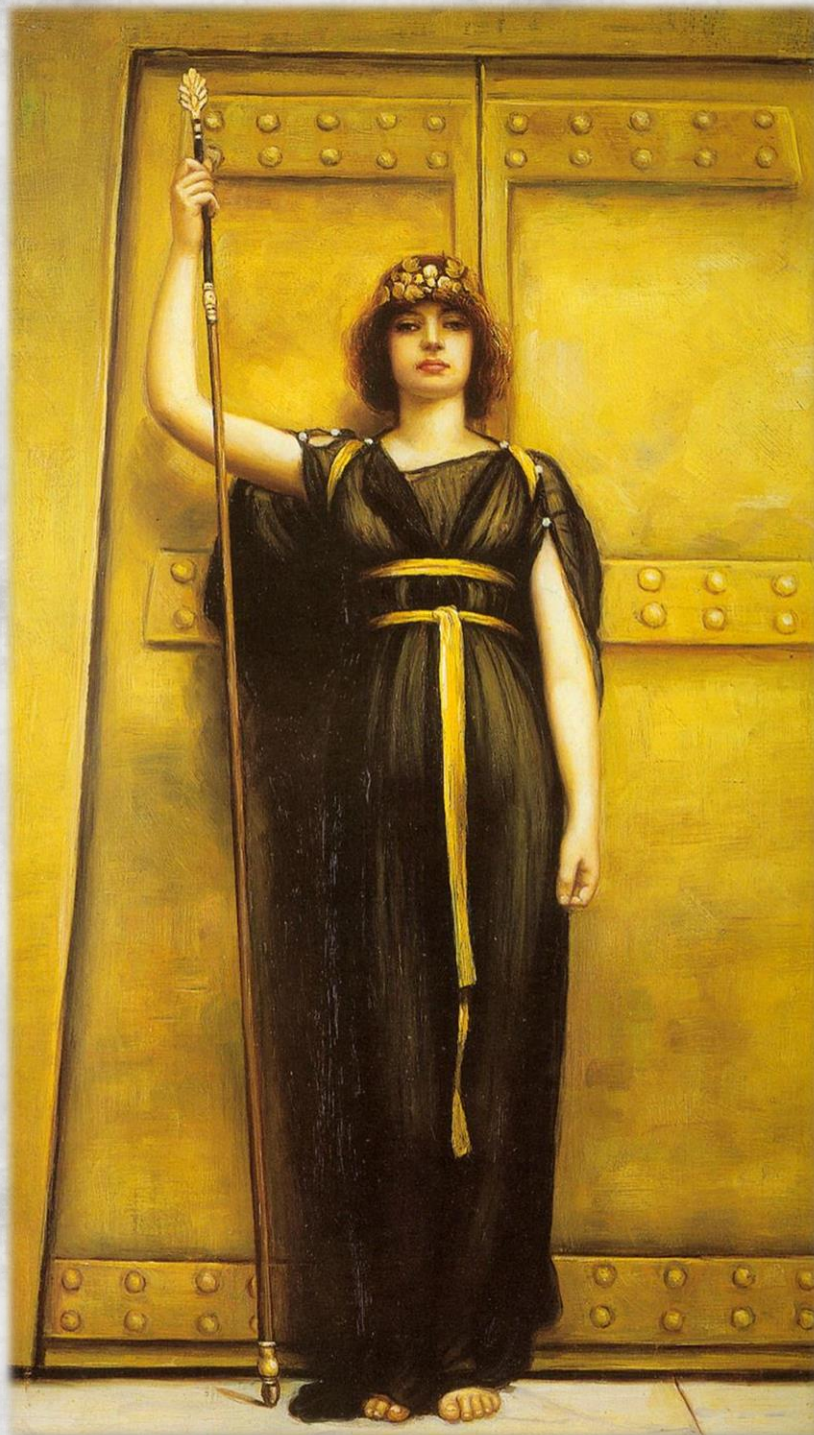
With these freshly-developed materials in hand, Gary invited his two eldest children, Ernie (whom I believe was then age 13) and Elise (age 11), to play his new game. It was the early evening. The three sat down at the dining room table and Gary explained the basic concept of the game. He then helped Ernie and Elise to use the dice to roll up their first characters. At that time, the now-classic *Dungeons & Dragons* attributes of Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity, Constitution and Charisma had not yet been fully conceived. Character attributes may not yet have been termed “ability scores” either, but were perhaps considered as Arneson-inspired “personality scores” instead. These personality scores may have been more along the lines of Strength, “Brains” or Intelligence, Cunning (later known as Wisdom), Health (later Constitution) and the interrelated triumvirate of Appearance / Credibility / Ego (later rolled into the effects of Charisma).⁵

These personality scores were rolled in a purely random method which is today known as the “hardcore” method, or Method Zero. By this technique, six-sided dice are rolled randomly for each aspect of the subject’s personality, and any poor scores simply indicate that the player is stuck with an inferior character for a while.

Nevertheless, it appears Ernie may have rolled a high “Strength” or similar score, because he chose to play a fighting man. Elise may have rolled a high “Cunning” (or Wisdom) because she chose to play a cleric. Elise might well have named her character “Elisa” or “Ahlissa” or something similar, but this is uncertain. Rob Kuntz indicates that the name Ahlissa was indeed used for one of Elise’s characters, while Gary said he did not remember exactly, and the evidentiary card which recorded her character’s details is now long lost.

⁴ Online interview: Refer to the Youtube clip ‘Rob Kuntz Conversations,’ with Martin Brown of Grogard Games. The comment appears at approximately 11:35.

⁵ An interesting analysis of Arnesonian pre-D&D attributes, based on Blackmoor player Pete Gaylord’s surviving character sheet, can be found online at the Boggswood blog.



Level 1 does not mean weak.

The scores would be generated by rolling three dice for each ability, and adding the sums together.⁶ These many dice sums for the two sets of generated personality scores were not recorded on character sheets (which did not exist yet) or even on plain paper, but rather on index cards, one for each player. The other additional character details which required notation may have included “division” (an ethical and philosophical leaning inherent in each character, later reconceived as “alignment”),⁷ Hits to Kill (HtK, or “hit points”), armor class, and possibly experience level (or “hit dice”).

Whatever their powers and quirks might have been, Ernie and Elise’s characters would certainly have been quite fragile and vulnerable to danger. Unlike the mighty Heroes of *Chainmail*, these novice adventurers began the game at experience level 1. These companions would thus need to rely on each other’s valor, wits and teamwork to survive. As preparations for play continued, the two index cards for these characters were quickly updated with gold amounts and possessions as various pieces of spelunking gear were purchased. Thus equipped, the two intrepid explorers were then ready to embark upon their first adventure.

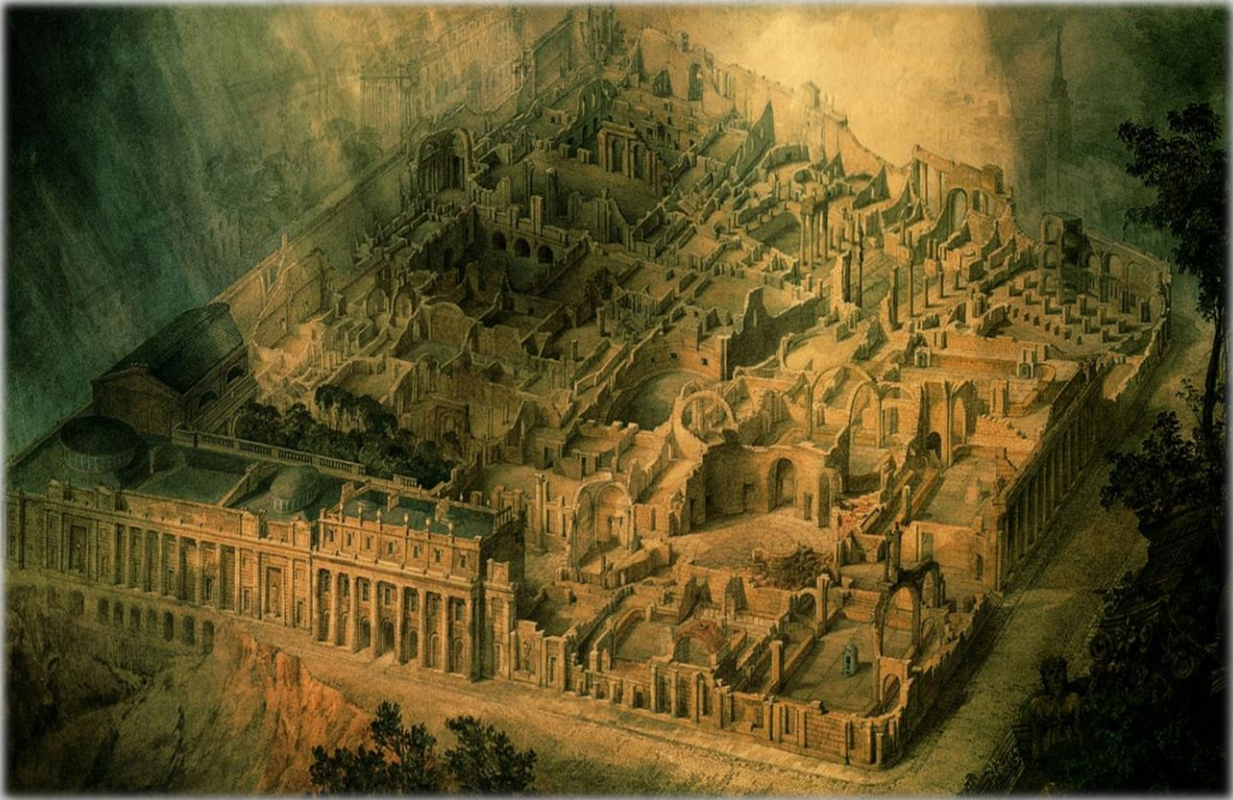
Gary narrated the tale, and so began refereeing the game that would become *Dungeons & Dragons* for the very first time. The game began not in the City of Greyhawk (which *also* did not yet exist), but rather in the ruins of one of the castle’s towers, with the two adventurers standing at the top of a crumbling staircase which led down into the murky depths. Gary once related his simple preamble as follows: “There is a ruined castle that you have heard is filled with strange monsters and treasures, and you want to get them. Your object is to slay the monsters and take their treasures and become more powerful. Go!”⁸

⁶ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted December 17th, 2003.

⁷ Gary once wrote that he used author Michael Moorcock’s conception of Law and Chaos to create the first D&D alignment system, but even early on he found it necessary to add descriptors to make the system work. “It soon became evident to me,” he wrote, “that those descriptors were not synonyms, that all that was lawful was not good, all that was chaotic was not evil, and animals were generally not concerned with any of those ethical mindsets.”

⁸ Dungeon Master: The Life and Legacy of Gary Gygax, Wired.com.

0



“Do we find any stairs leading down?”

These two bold companions simply checked their gear, lit their torches, and descended the musty stairs toward the first (and at that time only) level of the dungeon. Gary evocatively described one such descent into the Greyhawk underworld in a later story, *The Expedition into the Black Reservoir* (1975): “A huge oaken door at the bottom of the tower gave into a corridor running east and west. ... [*The adventurers traveled*] eastward, turned south at an intersection, followed a branching passage southeasterly [*they*] halted ... in a large natural cavern which was lighted by glowing clumps of foxfire upon floor, walls, and ceiling.”⁹

⁹ *The Expedition into the Black Reservoir* can be found online in several locations, for example at Grodog's Greyhawk site.

But these very first adventurers would not discover that yet-to-be-imagined cavern; instead they found themselves in a dank chamber filled with trash and debris. Their torchlight caught flashes of glitter in the shadows. Treasure! Gary had set a baited trap for the explorers: “The glint of coins was mentioned to lure the incautious hand into attack proximity.”¹⁰

Tempted into action, Elise’s cleric Ahlissa moved toward the rubble and poked around with a dagger to see what the sparkling thing might be. (Apparently, the classic prohibition against edged weapon use by clerics was not yet firmly in place in the first draft of *Dungeons & Dragons*.) There were slithery and scuttling noises in response to this prodding, and so the cleric leapt back in trepidation. But it was already too late.

A swarm of disturbed and angry vermin — maybe scorpions,¹¹ but more likely giant centipedes — crawled out from the trash, hungry for warm flesh.



Hss ...

One of the vile things made its way up Ahlissa’s forearm. The thing was killed, but not before it had managed to bite and sting the cleric, injecting a nasty dose of acidic venom into the wound. The cleric cried out for sanctuary, and the nebulous gods of Greyhawk were with her. (Elise made her character’s saving throw versus poison.) She was saved!

¹⁰ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted January 28th, 2004.

¹¹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted January 28th, 2004.

The two adventurers reacted quickly to the danger and ran out of the room, headlong into the mysteries of the deeper darkness. According to Gary, in doing so they missed a valuable piece of jewelry which was poised at the bottom of the nest — the true source of the glinting metal seen by firelight. Perhaps the young neophyte adventurers, knowing that death had been narrowly avoided and also not wishing to tempt the exact same fate a second time, had wisely decided that survival was more important than the lure of jewels or gold.

Gary would later pay brief tribute to this memorable scene in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*: “The centipedes living beneath a pile of rotting furniture ... [*killed*] an incautious adventurer some years ago, and his skeletal remains are visible still, one hand thrust beneath the debris of the nest. Hidden from view is a silver bracelet with an agate, the whole thing being valued at 20 gold pieces.”¹²

No one seems to know what Gary’s morbid fascination with giant centipedes was, by the way; although a more gargantuan variety does exist in folklore, specifically the “Oomukade” Great Centipede which is told of in the Japanese tale of Hidesato Tawaratota, the deathly arrow, and the magical bag of rice. The following passage in the 1913 novel *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*, by Sax Rohmer, is also of interest:

Prepared as I was for something horrible, I know that I paled at the sight of the thing that was running round the edge ... It was an insect, full six inches long, and of a vivid, venomous, red color! It had something of the appearance of a great ant, with its long, quivering antennae and its febrile, horrible vitality; but it was proportionately longer of body and smaller of head, and had numberless rapidly moving legs. In short, it was a giant centipede, apparently of the Scolopendra group, but of a form quite new to me.

And, I regret to report, in the real world the centipede species *Scolopendra gigantea* can reach lengths in excess of *twelve* inches, exactly as they are portrayed in the *Monster Manual*. And that is before we even consider the fossil record.

Even more intriguing is the recent discovery of the Hades centipede, *Geophilus hadesi* (whose existence was reported upon in the summer of 2015).¹³ Incredibly, this “new” species has been observed living without sunlight at depths

¹² *Dungeon Masters Guide*, TSR, 1979, pg. 92.

¹³ CBC News, Technology & Science: “Hades centipede, deepest cave-dwelling centipede, discovered by scientists.” Posted June 30th, 2015.

of up to 1,200 yards (1,100 meters) beneath the surface. The Hades, which lives in the caves beneath Croatia, is now considered to be one of the foremost predators of its netherworld environment. It has poison glands, long claws, and garishly extended antennae which is no doubt uses to find just about anything edible (fresh meat!) in the utter darkness. So it would seem that some parts of the Greyhawk dungeons are not very far away from the dark recesses of reality at all.

Nature, you're scary ...

* * * * *

Nursing the nasty wound, Ahlissa and her bodyguard pressed on. They crept through a seemingly endless labyrinth of winding corridors. The neophytes moved slowly once they knew the vermin were not in pursuit, careful not to attract any further monstrous attention. They managed to avoid an open pit trap, and as they rerouted and oriented themselves, they struggled to map the labyrinth onto a blank piece of graph paper. Gary teased his children with mysterious sound effects and tense descriptions of the dark.

As they explored and took seemingly random paths, avoiding encounters without even knowing what horrors or treasures they might be bypassing, Gary himself felt trepidation at this new form of game. We are left to wonder if he felt overwhelmed trying to fill Arneson's improvisatory shoes. He had already witnessed that veteran "dungeon" master in action during that earlier Blackmoor session, but actually *being* a referee for such an open-ended game was something else entirely. This was not merely a scenario in *Chainmail Fantasy*, restricted to clear military objectives and a single integral conflict played out upon the battleground. It was a completely unpredictable adventure, as exciting to Gary as it was to his children, because no one knew from moment to moment what might happen. It was much like experiencing a shared story, one where the main characters' decisions are entirely unscripted. "As they [*Ernie and Elise*] had few preconceptions," Gary once said, "they often amazed and confounded me."¹⁴

Venturing further through the tunnels, the fighting man and the wounded cleric eventually came to a huge oak door. They forced the door open, and soon

¹⁴ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 29th, 2002.

discovered that they had blundered into a lair of gremlin-like, impish kobolds. The kobolds snarled in defiance and drew their weapons, and the adventurers seized that moment of advantage to attack. The fighting man may well have wielded an axe or sword, while Ahlissa clutched her dagger with her unwounded hand. A few quick slashes, and two of the kobolds fell bleeding to the floor. The rest of the humanoids fled away to warn the rest of their tribe. The decades-long enmity between the foul surface-worlders and the kobold guardians of the Vaults and Barracks dungeon level had begun!

This encounter would first define one of the archetypal enemies in Gary's game. Kobolds are a sub-species of goblins, clearly, in early *Dungeons & Dragons*. In folklore, the name comes from the Latin *cobalus* and Greek *kobalos*, plural *kobaloi*. Originally they were regarded in tales as mischievous and irksome imps, companions to Dionysus. They would later be reimagined as guardians of house and hearth, and then as tempted and corrupted spirits who haunted mines in search of treasure. The mined, coveted, and potentially sickening element "cobalt" is named after them. Apparently, early miners believed the sneaky kobolds would salt and poison the ore while also creating eerie echoing knocking sounds to scare mortals out of the underground.

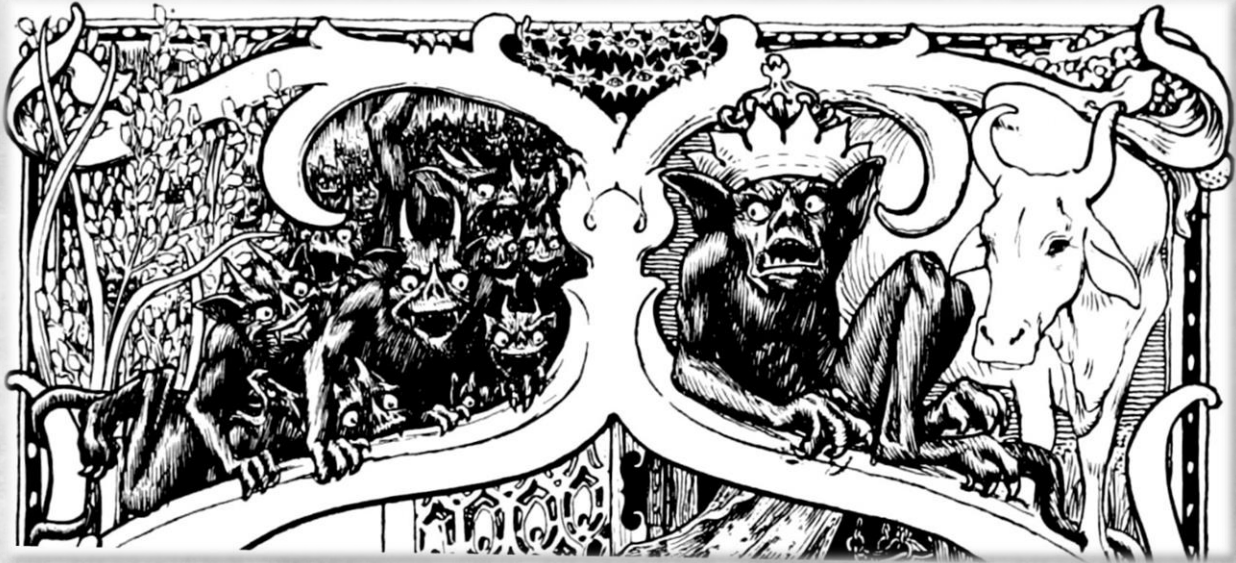
In Gary's Greyhawk campaign over the next twenty-five years, these vengeful little monsters would come to be known and feared as the Old Guard Kobolds (OGK). As Gary explained, "The OGK, long preyed upon by nasty adventurers, have grown into a wily and regimented force to be reckoned with. Their warriors wear chainmail, uniform tunics and shako caps [*crested military helmets*], and they are led by sergeants and captains. They defend their lairs in strict formation."¹⁵

From this description, the pugnacious kobolds Gary had in mind seem to be a winking nod to the fearsome Jägers, or soldier-hunters, of Imperial Germany (c. 1800s-1910).

Much like the adventurers themselves, these crafty kobolds would "level up" in Gary's game each time they wiped out a group of enemy forces and acquired more treasure. In his later years, Gary once provided a summary revealing precisely how his Old Guard Kobolds would grow in power with each Total Party Kill (TPK) inflicted upon the players' adventuring parties. "That's how my Old Guard Kobolds

¹⁵ Posts at the Gygax Games Group at Yahoo.com.

came into being, grew to be a force,” Gary wrote. They began “killing PC parties that stayed and fought when it was clear they couldn’t beat the little buggers.”¹⁶



“Humans, boss! Whee!”

“Secure the copper pieces!”

¹⁶ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted May 24th, 2005.

For the curious, with a few tweaks and clarifying expansions, the system Gary set out later in life looks like this:

<u>SECRETS</u> <u>OF THE OLD GUARD KOBOLDS</u>	
<u>Total</u> <u>Party Kill</u> <u>(TPK)</u> <u>Score</u>	<u>Progression Notes for Gary's Old Guard Kobolds</u>
TPK 0	<p>Description: We might name these poor mongrels “the Runts.” These are inexperienced and largely harmless kobold serfs, per the <i>Monster Manual</i> (1977), with a mediocre armor class (protection rating) of 7 and a measly 1 to 4 hit points.</p> <p>Base 1E Game Stats: OGK Whelp. AC 7 (light armor), HD 1/2, HP 1 to 4, Dmg. 1 to 4, Morale 50%.</p>
TPK 1	<p>Description: These might be accurately called “the Survivors.” These human-slaying kobold warriors earn the admiration of their dungeon-wandering kin, and so an additional twelve normal kobolds from outside the dungeon join the tribe.</p>
TPK 2	<p>Description: Perhaps “The Resilient.” Having dodged many a blade and arrow, the kobolds gain an additional armor class factor (improving their descending protection rating from 7 to 6).</p> <p>Base 1E Game Stats: OGK Skirmisher. AC 6 (light armor, +1 DEX), HD 1/2, HP 1 to 4, Dmg. 1 to 4, Morale 50%.</p>

<u>Total Party Kill (TPK) Score</u>	<u>Progression Notes for Gary's Old Guard Kobolds</u>
TPK 3	<p>Description: Perhaps “The Enduring.” Living to lick their wounds, the toughened kobold grognards all gain an additional hit point (resulting in hit dice 1/2 + 1).</p> <p>Base 1E game stats: OGK Warrior. AC 6 (leather armor, +1 DEX), HD 1/2+1, HP 2 to 5, Dmg. 1 to 4.</p>
TPK 4	<p>Description: Perhaps “The Vengeful.” By now, the kobolds are quite familiar with human (and dwarvish, and elvish, and halfling) anatomy. They inflict +1 damage, regardless of which weapons they choose to wield.</p> <p>Base 1E Game Stats: OGK Veteran. AC 6 (light armor, +1 DEX), HD 1/2+1, HP 2 to 5, Dmg. 2 to 5, Morale 50%.</p>
TPK 5	<p>Description: Perhaps “The Veterans.” The most veteran survivors among the kobold grognards truly “level up.” Four of them become lair guardians or sergeants (hit dice 2), and two more become champions (hit dice 3).</p> <p>Base 1E Game Stats, Sergeant: Based on Gnoll. AC 4 (chainmail, +1 DEX), HD 2, HP 2 to 16, Dmg. 2 to 7, Morale 55%. Increases all kobold morale to 55%.</p> <p>Base 1E Game Stats, Champion: Based on Bugbear. AC 4 (chainmail, +1 DEX), HD 3, HP 3 to 24, Dmg. 3 to 8, Morale 60%. Increases all kobold morale to 60%.</p>

<u>Total Party Kill (TPK) Score</u>	<u>Progression Notes for Gary's Old Guard Kobolds</u>
TPK 6	<p>Description: Perhaps “The Imperial Guard.” These veteran kobold warriors, now led by their toughened leader types, gain knowledge of advanced tactical maneuvering. From other player accounts in Gary’s campaign, this seems to imply that the kobolds gain abilities such as “double move and fire” with ranged attacks (much like elves), and the ability to immediately break off combat and to scurry down into inaccessible side tunnels. Javelins and flaming oil are mentioned specifically in one account. Further, the kobolds gain a fearsome battle captain (hit dice 4) to facilitate these nasty tactics.</p> <p>Base 1E Game Stats, Captain: Based on Ogre. AC 3 (heavy armor, +1 DEX), HD 4, HP 4 to 28, Dmg. 3 to 9, Morale 65%. Increases all kobold morale to 65%.</p>
TPK 7	<p>Description: Perhaps “The Imperial Guard Resurgent.” The kobolds gear up in shakos and chainmail, improving their armor class from 6 to 5. Plus they get snappy uniforms!</p> <p>Base 1E Game Stats: OGK Elite. AC 5 (chainmail, +1 DEX), HD 1/2+1, HP 2 to 5, Dmg. 2 to 5, Morale 55% or higher.</p>
TPK 8	<p>Description: Perhaps “The Imperial Guard Elite.” From this point forward, the kobolds are utterly fearless with “unshakable morale.” They will fight to the death and never flee, unless it is tactically advantageous for them to do so. In Gary’s Greyhawk dungeon games, the Old Guard Kobolds attained TPK Score 8 when they wiped out their eighth dungeoneering party in 2003.¹⁷</p> <p>Base 1E Game Stats: OGK Imperial Elite. AC 5 (chainmail, +1 DEX), HD 1/2+1, HP 2 to 5, Dmg. 2 to 5, Morale 100%.</p>

¹⁷ Derived and extrapolated from posts at the GygaX Games Group at Yahoo.com.

And now you know, and you can add the fearsome Old Guard Kobolds to your own old school FRPG campaign. If your players yell at you and insist that kobolds should only get a measly half a hit die (because hey, that's what it says in the *Monster Manual*), do be sure to tell them that the Old Guard Kobolds are okay ... after all, Gary sent them.



*Victory is always sweet,
until the Old Guard Kobolds
call in the reinforcements.*

* * * * *

But let us return to that first Castle Greyhawk adventure, when those scrawny kobold serfs fled and swore eternal vengeance upon all adventurers who dared to defile their underworld domain. As it turns out, the kobolds chased away by Ahlissa and the fighting man had been guarding a huge ironbound chest.¹⁸ The chest was admired in the torchlight, perhaps even checked for traps. The bolts were slid, the lid thrown open, and the victorious delvers discovered that they had won a veritable treasure trove, a spilling cascade of three thousand glittering coins.¹⁹

Riches, beyond all mortal imagining!

Unfortunately, this treasure was also a trick. The chest was far too heavy to be moved, despite the strength of Ernie's fighting man. Nevertheless, the two explorers were convinced that this was a great treasure indeed, and after some debate they scooped up as many of the coins as they could. Much like the dwarves wallowing in Smaug's treasure hoard — we can read of them in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, of course — Ernie and Elise's would-be heroes reluctantly left the rest of the coins behind, with open fingers and heavy sighs.

Fully loaded down by their bulging packs, the companions slogged their way out of the dungeon and marched back to the unnamed town, eager to trade their copper farthings for a tidy and smaller pile of precious gold. But alas, they had been fooled! To put it politely, the kobolds' treasure was actually a heap of crap. Like pennies converted to dollar bills, the copper coins were worth only a few gold pieces in all. The children were far from amused by the miserliness of their father's "reward," but they were also undaunted, and they immediately resolved to go back to the dungeon for more and better treasure.

(Very likely, a heartfelt resentment of stupid kobolds began that very night.)

Noticing the time, however, Gary decided to call it a night. It was nine o'clock, and bedtime. "They had to come back from such imaginary derring do,"

¹⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted August 19th, 2005.

¹⁹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted January 28th, 2004.

Gary once wrote, “put their index card character sheets aside, and get ready for bed.”²⁰ The children were sent off, chatting happily about their adventure and making plans for the next day’s game. The first play test of the game had been a near-perfect success.

Instead of merely reflecting upon that evening’s affirmation of *Dungeons & Dragons*’ potential for unpredictable fun, Gary was not satisfied. He was galvanized. He went up to his study and immediately began to rework his dungeon maps. More adventures were soon to come!

* * * * *

Ernie would become entranced by his father’s new game. Later he would play his characters Tenser and Serten²¹ (both anagrams for “Ernest”), enjoying the tactical challenges of casting high-level magic spells. But his love of a fighting man’s brutal directness in approach, as first experienced that night, would instill in him a fond affection for melee combat too. We can see hints of this entertaining behavior in his epithet “The Barbarian” and the mage-to-fighter magical metamorphosis spell (Gary’s testament of Ernie’s reckless behavior), known as Tenser’s Transformation.²² The spell description sets the scene: “Tenser’s Transformation is a sight guaranteed to astound any creature not aware of its power,” we read, “for when the magic-user casts the dweomer, he or she undergoes a startling transformation. The size and strength of the magic-user increase to heroic proportions, so he or she becomes a formidable fighting machine, for the spell causes the caster to become a berserk fighter!”²³

Elise for her part would eventually bow out of the “boys” game a few months later on. Although she did not play in the game for very long, her imaginary

²⁰ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IV. Posted July 22nd, 2003.

²¹ Serten began play as an NPC hireling working for Tenser; refer to the Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Burmania Episode Two.”

²² Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted March 1st, 2005.

²³ *Players Handbook*, pg. 86.

persona would be immortalized as Queen Ehliisa, the divinely inspired artificer who created the Marvelous Nightingale artifact along with Zagyg the mad and Joramy of the forge.²⁴

Joramy, by the way, is probably an anagram inspired by “Mary Jo,” Gary’s wife. She endured a lot with the constant comings and goings of D&D players through hard times, and due to her short temper Gary noted that Joramy was the goddess of “fires, volcanoes, anger and quarrels.”

²⁴ Refer to *Eldritch Wizardry* pg. 45, and the entry later elaborated upon in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, pg. 160.



*“Keeping in mind, of course,
I am not the Goddess of Infinite Patience.”*

Those were names for future tales, yet to come. But as Gary, Elise and Ernie played, he may have already sensed that each player would have a different and unpredictable reaction to the game. Some would find it an amusing diversion, while others might become obsessed with the game's endless possibilities. (This author shamelessly falls into the latter categorization.) Other players might completely lose interest in a short span of time. To ensure a long-term play test, and hoping to stretch the rules to their breaking point in the name of improving his game for future publication, Gary would need more players to explore his dungeon. *A lot* more.

He decided that night that he would bring in two of his favorite wargamers for the second day's test: Don Kaye and Rob Kuntz. Terry Kuntz would soon be invited to play as well. These were crafty veteran gamers with many campaigns and strategic victories under their belts, so the simplistic nature of Castle Greyhawk's single dungeon level would not hold them for very long.

Accounts are conflicting, but it seems that Gary fiddled a little with level one and then only partially plotted out dungeon level two before he fell asleep. He would later recall, "As play was so intense, I went to work immediately that night to create a second level."²⁵ The next day would bring him many more design demands, as well as another unpredictable adventure.

* * * * *

*Dungeons & Dragons, day two.*²⁶

Like anyone, Gary had hours of mundane work he had to endure the following morning, before he could refocus on his fascinating game. The accounts of these rapidly-progressing events are again somewhat confused, but it appears that on the afternoon following Ernie and Elise's Most Excellent Kobold Adventure, their father was still struggling with the redesign and repopulation of dungeon level one. This required "all my spare time during the following day. It was a level that

²⁵ *Castle Zagyg: The Upper Works*, Troll Lord Games, 2008. See also ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part IV, posted July 22nd, 2003; and Part X, posted July 2nd, 2006.

²⁶ As stated in ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part IV, posted July 22nd, 2003; and also in Part V, posted February 25th, 2004.

had lots of corridors and rooms, [*with*] few squares penciled in to indicate solid stone. There were, however, only about 20 encounters on it.”²⁷ This may imply that Gary reviewed some formerly corridor-heavy parts of the dungeon map, and then filled them in with more rooms to fit in additional monster lairs. Any blank space remaining was probably filled in with more of the labyrinth. Later versions of level one — glimpsed in fleeting photographs — point toward this possibility. Or, he may have expanded his encounter key by writing letters into more empty rooms in his map, and rolling up some new monster encounters to populate those rooms. Perhaps he utilized both techniques. But whatever he did, the dark and labyrinthine expanse of dungeon level one became much more crowded before the gaming sessions would continue.

This “reloaded” version of the dungeon would require some considerably tougher monster encounters, since Gary was going to challenge the incoming veterans from his *Chainmail Fantasy* campaign. While he performed this dungeon redesign up in his study, Don and Rob were down at the dining room table, waiting impatiently for Gary to finish. They were hearing all about the earlier game test from Ernie and Elise, and were excited to try out Castle Greyhawk for themselves. While this party of four players grew more restless, Gary fretted over his notes a little longer. It would be early evening before he was ready for play.

Finally satisfied, he went downstairs and welcomed his new players. Don and Rob were both excited, and for good reason. But they both knew better than to be overconfident. Whatever Gary had planned for them, it was sure to be a challenge.

They waited while Gary prepared his papers and cards. Apparently, Elise kept her same character from the night before, but Ernie may have rolled a new magician to replace his fighting man. According to Rob, this was the time when Tenser the Medium (a magic-user of experience level 1) came into the realm of Greyhawk.²⁸ Tenser would soon become a bold, daring, and reckless mage, a man of great intelligence but foolhardy disposition. In D&D terms, we could likely say that he possessed a high Intelligence along with middling Wisdom.

²⁷ *Dragon Annual* #2. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary Gygax.

²⁸ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Robilar Q&A.”

Both Ernie and Elise watched as Gary helped Don Kaye roll up his own first character. The dice gods revealed that Don would play a magic-user as well. Don simply named his character Merlin. Later, for publication, Gary would rename this promising apprentice as “Merlin-D[on],” an appellation which would — through the process of Gygaxian naturalization — simply become “Murlynd” in time.

That *mortal*/wizard Murlynd, before he was elevated to the folkloric rank of a Greyhawk “quasi-deity,” is something of a mystery. He may have later attempted to create his own magic items. Apparently, Don was fond of oatmeal or something similar, because Gary would later create the wondrous item Murlynd’s Spoon, dweomered to evoke an amazing magic gruel: “Although this substance has a flavor similar to warm, wet cardboard, it is highly nourishing and contains everything necessary to sustain any herbivorous, omnivorous, or carnivorous creature.”²⁹ The most heartfelt portrayal of Murlynd (and Don) that Gary made can be found in Dungeon Module EX2, *The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror*.

Rob then rolled up his own new fighting man, the soon-to-be-infamous Robilar (pronounced by the way as “ROE-buh-lar,” not “ROB-ih-lar”).³⁰ It was Gary who suggested the name, which had been used formerly in his partially-published and incomplete fantasy novel manuscript entitled *The Gnome Cache*. Lengthy excerpts from this quirky story would later appear in *The Dragon* magazine, under the pen name Garrison Ernst.³¹

The many rolled-out details were faithfully recorded, the new index cards were compared and finalized. The characters rolled at the table that evening would eventually become heroes of legend, known to millions of D&D players. But every hero in *Dungeons & Dragons*, as we well know, has a humble beginning. One of them at least seemed born for greatness. It seems that Robilar had a very high (perhaps even maximum) Strength score, because his Strength would be rated as 18/51 when the later exceptional strength rules came into play (in 1974-1975). This natural gift would make him more powerful than an ogre, being equivalent to the power of a nine-foot-tall “verbeeg” (“very big”) giant.

²⁹ *Unearthed Arcana*, TSR, 1985, pg. 101.

³⁰ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Robilar in my ToEE.”

³¹ For a reference to this moment of the naming of Robilar from Rob Kuntz’s perspective, see the Dragonsfoot forums, “Which Kingdom is Lord Robilar’s Manor Located In?”

This gift of might is not necessarily surprising, because it seems (again, accounts differ depending on who you ask) that for this second play session, one change in the rules had apparently already been made. Gary may have introduced the “roll and drop” method of personality score generation, in which an additional die is rolled and the lowest die is then discarded before the sum is calculated. This suggested system would later be recorded in the *Dungeon Masters Guide* as ability score rolling Method I.³² If this is true, then Murlynd would have definitely received this benefit as well, perhaps resulting in a high Intelligence.

We do not know if by now Gary was dropping parts of Arneson’s characteristics system and evolving his own, or if that came later. But we do know that the game’s rules would quickly change as a result of play testing, as Gary and the players realized which parts of the game were working and which were simply too clunky to withstand further modification. The combat rules, magic system, saving throws, and character progression systems would all fluctuate wildly in early play as Gary struggled to figure out which parts of the game were working poorly.

By the way, it is interesting to note that Rob once further explained that the *Chainmail* rules were not really a significant factor in the *Dungeons & Dragons* play test. The inclusion of *Chainmail* in D&D would come later, when Gary was getting ready to publish and market his game to the built-in audience of buyers who had already embraced his *Chainmail* Fantasy Supplement.³³ This is not surprising, but it does point out a danger in historical research: we cannot trust the earliest-published, 1974 edition of D&D to represent Gary’s game it was actually played. That set tells us *most* of the story, but the rules at Gary’s table are not all necessarily reflected in the published game.

* * * * *

However the game was played that night, it ran fairly well. Everyone was too excited to notice the jagged edges in Gary’s mad rules machine.

³² *Dungeon Masters Guide*, TSR, 1979, pg. 11.

³³ Online interview: Refer to the Youtube clip ‘Rob Kuntz Conversations,’ with Martin Brown of Grogard Games. The comment appears at approximately 14:25.

maybe he toughed it out. But whoever it was who stood there, he and his priestess ally soon went searching through the town for new companions, brave newcomers who might be interested in another daring treasure hunt beneath the ruin. After all, the fact that they came to the surface with virtually nothing meant that all of the good treasure was still down there!

When newcomers Murlynd and Robilar offered their services to these two kobold-loathing grumblers, the group promptly reequipped and then set out to the northeast through the city gate. There, a few miles away, the ruined castle loomed in silhouette upon its shrouded height.

It was time for another adventure.

Some of the provided details relating to this *second* play test (with these *four* players, Ernie, Elise, Don and Rob) and the *third* play test (apparently adding a *fifth* player, Terry Kuntz) are mutually conflicting. This story of the Golden Age, like all the others, flowed and changed over the years from telling to telling. Recollected details become hazy and confused. So we must tread carefully: we don't know the full story of what happened that night, and we never will.

But the second session, to the best of its participants' recollection, *probably* went something like this ...

* * * * *

"Now in these subterranean caverns lived a strange race of beings, called by some gnomes, by some kobolds, by some goblins. There was a legend current in the country that at one time they lived above ground, and were very like other people. But for some reason or other ... they had all disappeared from the face of the country. According to the legend, however, instead of going to some other country, they had all taken refuge in the subterranean caverns, whence they never came out but at night ...

"... Those who had caught sight of any of them said that they had greatly altered in the course of generations; and no wonder, seeing they lived away from the sun, in cold and wet and dark places. They were now, not ordinarily ugly, but either absolutely hideous, or ludicrously grotesque both in face and form.

"... The goblins themselves were not so far removed from the human as such a description would imply. And as they grew misshapen in body they had grown in

knowledge and cleverness, and now were able to do things no mortal could see the possibility of ...”

— *The Princess and the Goblin*, by George MacDonald

The lure of gold, and fool’s gold, beckoned once again. The four (?) adventurers descended the stairs, and quickly killed some giant centipedes. This is probably the same nest where Elise’s cleric had been poisoned. The deadly vermin were mercilessly wiped out. The jeweled bracelet beneath the rubble, perhaps, was acquired as well. Surely, Don and Rob would have a different adventuring style which would affect the earlier play chemistry between Ernie and Elise.

The party then wandered through the dungeon in a different direction, avoiding the area of the one known pit trap. Other lurking monsters such as goblins (allies of the kobolds)³⁴ and animated skeletons³⁵ were encountered, but there was little treasure to be had.

These two types of monsters are fairly interesting from an historical perspective. Gary’s ideas of goblins were derived from Victorian fairytales (such as *The Princess and the Goblin*) and Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*. In Poul Anderson’s *Three Hearts and Three Lions*, they appear as menial slaves who fearfully serve their masters (who happen in that story to be evil elves).

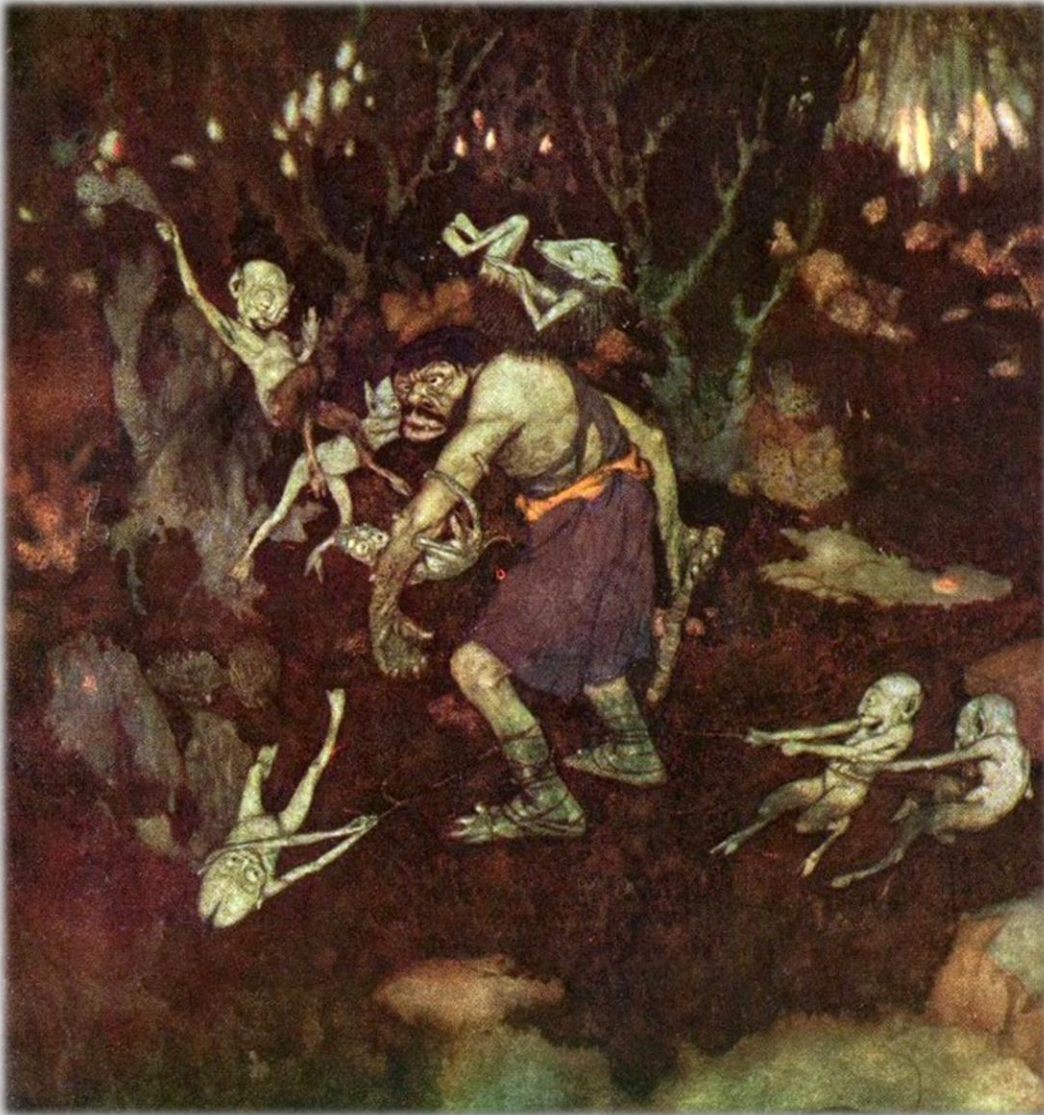
The skeletons, however, are whole-heartedly derived from the masterful animation by Ray Harryhausen which appears in the movie *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963). Harryhausen would be a frequent touchstone for Gygax throughout the creation of *Dungeons & Dragons*, as his stop-motion sequences still at that time represented the state of the art for monster special effects. These skeletons were likely the remains of former adventurers, or even the Castle’s early denizens, cursed and afflicted with reanimation due to some cruel sorcerer’s black magic.

* * * * *

³⁴ Refer to ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part IX, posted July 3rd, 2005.

³⁵ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Into the dungeons.”

These monsters were defeated, or avoided, in turn. The characters were growing clever, and a few more treasures were gleaned from the goblin-haunted dark.



*Kobolds, goblins, hobgoblins ...
If it attacks and it can kill you,
what's the difference?*

The players had a great time, but as night progressed once again toward the children's bedtime, Gary encouraged his players to end the game. Don had to work in the morning, and Gary needed to do some more dungeon design to be ready for the next testing session of play. Therefore the characters controlled by Ernie, Elise and Don promptly left the dungeon and headed back to town with their hard-won treasures packed away.

The singular Robilar, however, was not yet satisfied with that evening's meager haul. He stayed behind and explored the deadly dungeon on his own. "I was an oddball," Rob Kuntz would later explain, "from the beginning adventure, always wanting to go [*exploring*] alone."³⁶

Robilar (and Rob) would later become notorious for death-defying and stealth-based solo adventures, of which this was the very first. Gary would soon be forced to create a new style of play in response, much like the shadowy spectacle featured in Robert E. Howard's Conan stories, wherein a "lone wolf" warrior would sneak through dungeon tunnels, lighting and dousing his torch at will, fighting only those enemies he chose to.

"The tunnels were not silent. From the bowels of the earth in all directions came sounds that did not belong in a sane world. There were titterings, squeals of demoniac mirth, long shuddering howls, and once the unmistakable squalling laughter of a hyena ended awfully in human words of shrieking blasphemy. He heard the pad of stealthy feet, and in the mouths of the tunnels caught glimpses of shadowy forms, monstrous and abnormal in outline.

"It was as if he had wandered into hell — a hell of Tsotha-lanti's making. But the shadowy things did not come into the great corridor, though he distinctly heard the greedy sucking-in of slaver lips, and felt the burning glare of hungry eyes.

"And presently he knew why. A slithering sound behind him electrified him, and he leaped to the darkness of a near-by tunnel, shaking out his torch. Down the corridor he heard the great serpent crawling, sluggish from its recent grisly meal. From his very side something whimpered in fear and slunk away in the darkness.

³⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar's solo adventures."

Evidently the main corridor was the great snake's hunting-ground and the other monsters gave it room.

"... After it had passed on down the corridor he followed, at what he hoped was a safe distance, blowing his torch into flame again ..."

— *The Scarlet Citadel*, by Robert E. Howard

Robilar fighting only the enemies he chose to ... hmm.

That would be the *theory*, at least. The actual *tactic*, playing out in Gary's game, would require experience and refinement. His solitary exploration of the dungeons beneath Castle Greyhawk was proving fruitless. Creeping through the halls, memorizing the labyrinth, Robilar finally admitted temporary defeat when he discovered yet another empty room bereft of treasure. He rested there, waiting to see what would happen if he did nothing for a very long time.

And he waited. And waited ...

Rob was testing Gary, to see how the newly-minted referee might react to an unexpected tactic. It was time to see just how "open-ended" *Dungeons & Dragons* could be. In a game where anything is possible, what happens when a player deliberately takes action — or *inaction* — against the expected mode of play?

Gary, in response, gave Rob a strange look and then introduced him to the Arnesonian concept of "wandering monsters."³⁷ The maze was *not* just a static place where turns could be skipped at leisure. It was a living environ of death and darkness, home to dangerous creatures of every kind. So Gary decided to teach Rob an important lesson.

As Robilar waited, he eventually heard the sound of scales and claws scraping on musty stone. Something huge peeked its snout through an open archway.

³⁷ Gary once detailed (in ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part IX, posted June 21st, 2005) the main reasons for wandering monsters in the Greyhawk dungeons: besides adding some realism to the static environment, they were intended to keep the group (and play) moving, and to punish players who insisted on searching everything, or slowing the game down with "time-wasting and pointless" activities.

Whatever the creatures were, they were slithering, stinking, and enormous. A snout poked into the room from out of shadow, a tongue flicked out ...

And the room was soon invaded by giant lizards!³⁸ *This* should be fun, eh?

Gary's conception of giant lizards in *Dungeons & Dragons* is a bit hard to trace. He (or Dave) may have been inspired by the giant iguana fight which appeared in the early *Flash Gordon* serial, or even more likely by the ferocious caveman-assaulting "dinosaur" which appeared in the film *One Million Years B.C.* (1966). The later sub-species in the game were of various origin. The subterranean lizard might be based on the "Dimetrodons" which appear in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1959) and the fire lizard is simply the near-draconian fire wyrm of legendry, while the "minotaur" lizard may just be a pun based on the "monitor" lizard.

Whatever sub-species these beasts that Gary devised might have actually been, they were hungry! Not willing to become a screaming snack, Robilar quickly fled through another doorway and slammed the door shut behind him. He ran through the memorized tunnels, up the stairs and he fled the ruins, living to fight another day. The valuable lesson that Robilar brought back to the others was twofold, and quite simple. First, whatever you do, *Never split the party*. Second, regardless of what else you try, *Do not taunt or annoy Happy Dungeon Master*.

(These lessons would *not* always stick. There are fun times to be told of further on, I assure you.)

Despite Robilar's near demise, the second play test was deemed another success. Gary had learned a lot from the unexpected results and players' actions.

There was still some record keeping to be done, of course, before the night's game could end. Experience points were awarded, and the few treasures were shared out. When Gary said goodnight to all, the players immediately countered: "So when is the next adventure?" Gary said that it would be best to wait for a few days. Further adventures might reveal the stairs down to level two, and that level was still just a skeletal framework unready for exploration. Yet Gary was soon pressured into another session, scheduled for the next day's afternoon. Don pouted, because he had greatly enjoyed the game and had to work the entire day. (This might be a hint that the very first D&D game was played on a Saturday evening, and the second game on a Sunday. Although likely, we cannot say for

³⁸ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Into the dungeons."

certain.) The other players — all minors, coincidentally — kindly ignored the adults' laments, then began making their own plans for the next day's game.

Gary sent Don and Rob out on their way, put Ernie and Elise to bed, and then "went back to the study and went to work on adding a few more encounters to level one, and roughed out level two."³⁹ From other accounts, we can assume this implies turning a feeble sketch of level two into an actual labyrinth which filled a sheet of graph paper. Creating these detailed dungeon maps from the outlined frameworks, however, was already proving to be a laborious and time-consuming process. Gary did indeed finish the map for level two while the hours rolled by, but he still had not yet keyed in the encounters and treasures.

Soon, it was midnight. Then it was two in the morning. The new level map he had scrawled out would barely suffice for the next day's game, but he had to sleep and do some more actual work (you know, for money) before he could lead the group in play again. Exhausted, he finally crashed on the couch in his studio.

* * * * *

The next day's labor, presumably, was a boring and tired affair. So we will ignore those mundane hours here, and get on with Gary's third upcoming game.

That afternoon, probably after school, Rob brought his brother Theron (Terry) over to try out the new system. Terry sat down and rolled out some of his own personality scores, which resulted in him deciding to play a fighting man. This new character was instantly branded (much like Merlin-D) "Terry-K[untz]," a name which would soon be naturalized to "Terrik." (Later, the second "r" would be dropped.) Terik would later be noted by Gary as Robilar's brother, reflecting their relationship in real life.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Dragon Annual* #2. "Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75," by Gary Gygax.

⁴⁰ *Dungeon Module WG6, Isle of the Ape*, by Gary Gygax, pg. 6. TSR, 1985.



“Hey, little brother.

Wanna go up to the castle and kill stuff?”

And now there were five companions.

The adventuring party was bolstered by Terik’s presence, and made capable of surviving even tougher monsters within the dungeon. After all, the party had

two warrior brothers now, the beginning of a shield wall. Yet despite this overall increase in staying power, the group would soon have difficulties staying alive in some of the deadlier corners of Gary's dungeon. Rob had surely warned the others about the giant slaving lizards, and there were good reasons to believe that even deadlier horrors would soon be discovered lurking in deeper mazes.

We know only a little about Terry's first session, but *around* this time, Gary had a lot of fun taunting Ernie and Elise with the appearance of the "wandering treasure chest." This was an ongoing in-joke which would demonstrate Gary taking the players' actions to their logical conclusions, thereby illustrating once again that the dungeon kept on living and changing while the adventurers were away. The kobold treasure from the first game, Gary decided, had become something of a local legend underground. Those horrible humans had murdered two innocent kobolds, and then they'd had the audacity to scoop up and steal some of the precious copper coins. But the bulk of the pennies were still there in the abandoned iron chest. How could such talismans — which had withstood the filthy sneaking plundering humanses, *Gollum, Gollum* — not become good luck charms for the monsters' own protection?

While the adventurers were away, the kobolds played. The survivors returned to their lair, dragged out the chest, and hid it somewhere else within the dungeon. The adventurers eventually found this "treasure" once again, and since the players were now wise to Gary's crappy scam (copper is heavy and basically worthless in D&D), they absolutely refused to take the coins when they rediscovered them. In future sessions, Gary would relocate the chest in random rooms as the dungeon's monsters moved around, lugging their good luck pennies — a testament to their obstinate defiance — from lair to lair.

Beyond such antics the third session was largely uneventful. It did however serve to intrigue Terry, who would become a regular player in the game. The developing story was halted for a few hours while Gary took care of work and other chores. Don Kaye came over that evening after his own work was done for the day, and the tale of the dungeon delvers — from Murlynd's perspective — resumed a "moment" later, with his erstwhile and greedy companions waiting for him in town.

The group was now fairly well established: Tenser the reckless mage, Ahlissa the priestess, Murlynd the cautious wizard, and the warrior brothers Robilar, and Terik. These five explorers confidently marched back up to the ruined castle, ready to do battle, hungrier than ever for more treasures to glean. The group was not

yet ready for dungeon level two, but with some further tactical planning, the players believed that they could conquer and plunder most of level one. Perhaps then, with more knowledge and experience points, they would be ready to brave the deeper labyrinth.

And so, with weapons in hand they marched through the rubble-strewn courtyard, got misguided by Gary's new description of several towers, and accidentally discovered a nest of hungry rats. They quickly dispatched some of the vermin, and then found another rubble-hidden staircase leading down. Torches were lit and the group descended, likely with Robilar and Terik at the front, the magic-users Tenser and Murlynd behind them, and Ahlissa the armored healer protecting the rear. Gary notes that the group learned very quickly to move and act in tactical formations, and they now had sufficient numbers for flanks, formation, and a marching order.

They inevitably discovered the same vile humanoids which Elise and Ernie had grown to hate — those accursed kobolds! A quick melee ensued, and the humanoids were again defeated. It is entirely possible that the irksome “wandering treasure chest” made another appearance here.

Binding their wounds, the adventurers wove their way through many more corridors, and finally they managed to stumble upon the stairs leading down to level two. This was good, because it meant that the players were growing bolder, more skilled, and capable of navigating the entire maze. It was also disastrous, because Gary had not had any time to key the lairs of the deeper dungeon.

So Gary did what any good Dungeon Master would do in similar circumstances: he cheated a little. When the players announced that their characters were marching down the stairs, Gary replied that the first chamber beyond the landing was the unavoidable lair of a massive ogre. This would begin something of a tradition in Gary's starter dungeons, as deadly solitary ogres are also featured in the texts of both Dungeon Module T1, *The Village of Hommlet* (1979) and B2, *The Keep on the Borderlands* (1980). As T1 would note in an apparent homage to Greyhawk's ogre progenitor, “This creature has been lured into service by the promise of gauds and fresh meat — plenty of it being human flesh, of course. He has been instructed to guard the room against any creatures who do not wear the symbol of the new master ... he will pursue a fleeing party, but only as far as the

stairs up.”⁴¹ And on cue, this first primordial ogre roared and chased the terrified dungeon delvers back up the stairs, and that was that.

* * * * *

“By thefts and exactions, by heavy ransoms from merchants too old and tough to be eaten, in one way and another, the Ogre had become very rich; and although those who knew could tell of huge cellars full of gold and jewels ... the richer he grew the more anxious and covetous he became. Moreover, day by day, he added to his stores; for though (like most ogres) he was as stupid as he was strong, no one had ever been found, by force or fraud, to get the better of him ...”

— *Old-Fashioned Fairy Tales*, by Juliana Horatia Ewing

⁴¹ Dungeon Module T1, *The Village of Hommlet*, by Gary Gygax. TSR, 1979.



GRO SMASH!

Ogres are derived purely from folklore. The term has been used for centuries to refer to bestial men of large size, of either demonic or mortal origin. The French word comes from the Latin *Orcus* (god of the underworld) from the Greek *Horkos*

(the personification of grim demon-sworn oaths). Female “ogresses” are also mentioned in *Phantastes* by George MacDonald (1858), and also in *The Old-Fashioned Fairy Book* by Mrs. Burton Harrison. They are typically cannibalistic, which makes them perfect for instilling fear in tasty neophyte adventurers.

But regardless of the ogre, Gary’s players were only temporarily thwarted. Play on level one continued long after that night, and although the Greyhawk campaign would later settle into a pattern of play on Wednesdays and Sundays, those first fateful months would see the game being played and tested virtually every day.

* * * * *

We will now leave the intrepid Greyhawk delvers alone, so that they might sulk and plot for a little while against that nasty ogre. Meanwhile, dark and summoned things — Invaders and Unknowns — were stirring upon the frosty border reaches of Blackmoor. An entirely new adventure was about to begin, just as soon as a magical gateway called “the mailbox” could be opened.

An adventurer approaches. Dave Arneson, home from work, has just received Gary’s play test packet for *Dungeons & Dragons*.

CHAPTER 12

A CLASH OF ARMS

(DECEMBER 1972 –
JANUARY 1973)

AH, YES. The worthy Dave Arneson once again enters our picture.⁴² The manuscript for their collaborative project *Dungeons & Dragons*, there it was at last! Going inside the house with his newfound treasure, eager to behold a cleaner text of his own imagined creation, David Lance Arneson finally sat down and read Gary Gygax's version of the rules for dungeon games, and ...

He didn't much like it.

This was not his game at all, it was *Gary's* game of Greyhawk, *inspired* by David's Blackmoor. This revelation is unsurprising, considering that the Castle & Crusade Society's members frequently adopted, borrowed, wrecked, rebuilt and sideswiped one another's game creations. After all, Jeff Perren had taken Bodensiedt's *The Siege of Bodenburg* to create his own medieval rules; Gary had taken Perren's game to create *Chainmail*; and then Dave Arneson himself had taken *Chainmail* to create Blackmoor. David Megarry took Blackmoor and made *Pasha Cada*, too. This turnabout was to be expected. The problem however was that the *essence* of Blackmoor was there, but Gary had changed and improved upon just about everything else. In many places where Dave would have made an exemplary *ruling* on the fly, Gary had created a restrictive *rule* for new game referees to follow. The entire paradigm of refereeing was being changed. And how (from Dave's viewpoint) could you have rules in a game of the imagination, a great new game with the wildly ambitious goal of simulating every possibility the players could conceive?

From Gary's perspective, everything had been cleaned up. From Dave's perspective only some of the manuscript adhered to the lofty original ideal, with wise words about "the essentials only" and the rules being merely "*guidelines* to follow"; but these *rules*, by their very nature, told people what to do when they played the game. Fundamentally, I must agree with Gary that the game would have been nigh incomprehensible without at least a *few* rules for all of the major aspects. Gary was by no means blind to Dave's philosophy; he simply decided that

⁴² **General Citation:** The details in this chapter are chiefly from [1] Alarums & Excursions (July 1975), [2] Dragon Annual #2, [3] the ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A threads (particularly Part XI), [4] comments by Dave Arneson on the ODD74.proboards forum, [5] the Dave Arneson interview in Pegasus #1, [6] comments by Rob Kuntz, and [7] Gary Gygax's essay To Forge a Fantasy World: Greyhawk's Creation. See also additional footnotes.

D&D's first release would need to share some similarities with board games, so that new players could understand how to play.

Later interviews with Arneson make it clear that he regarded the creation of *Dungeons & Dragons* as a deeply trusting and collaborative effort, the culmination of two play groups' collective experiences in both the Twin Cities and Lake Geneva. He admired the Lake Genevans' enthusiasm, and knew that the newer players' collective youth (and also, perhaps, Gary's immense investments of personal time) would mean that "they" got to develop the game far more than Dave ever could. "They had a lot more spare time than I did," Dave once said, "and they had a lot of ideas, so they came up with their own version of the rules."⁴³

As I alluded to in **HAWK & MOOR Book I: *The Dragon Rises***, we can understand that Dave had a markedly different game design philosophy when we compare him to his older friend Gary. Gary loved introductory rules for new players, codification, clarification, collaboration and refinement. Dave loved crazy ideas, genre mash-ups, mad science experiments and off-the-cuff rulings hashed out over arguments in play. This difference was not just one of *approach*, it was in deciding precisely what should be written down for the benefit of others. What is a rule? What is a guideline? How much of being a "judge" involves interpretation of law, and how much involves providing insightful guidance to the errant? Rules do not just crystallize the imagination, they fence it in. Rules are both good and evil. Indeed, one of my own favorite quotes from Dave Arneson is this: "The more rules you add (AD&D) the more likely it is you will constrain the players and the game. Rules are good, too many rules are bad."⁴⁴

Gary loved to write guidelines as well as rules, and the rules he came up with while writing the first draft in 1972 could probably only be seen as "too restrictive" by Dave Arneson and his players in the Twin Cities. But as the years would advance (c. 1976-1985), Gary would gradually come to write rules over guidelines more and more. The 1974 *Dungeons & Dragons* set is, to my mind, a near-perfect balance between the two approaches (although its format is a mess). It must be said that Gary was far better than the Napoleonic campaign master, Dave, at understanding what neophyte game masters would need to play this bizarre new game. After all,

⁴³ "An Interview with Dave Arneson" in *Pegasus Magazine*, issue #1, April / May 1981.

⁴⁴ Online web forum post: ODD74.proboards.com, "4E and OD&D." Posted December 19th, 2008.

he had handled all of the fan letters for *Chainmail*, and all of the play test calls and mail, and had personally taught *Dungeons & Dragons* to dozens of new players. There was no assurance that the audience for this new game would share the same gaming background as Gary and Dave did. Would it therefore have been better for Blackmoor to be memorialized in print, or better for Gary to produce an introductory game that would draw any interested players into the new hobby of fantasy wargaming? Could there be a middle ground, a set for gamers who might appreciate both philosophies?



“Preposterous knave! They’re called hit points, I tell you!”

“Hits to Kill!”

These arguments of approach to rules of the imagination, by the way, have continued for over forty years. The “Edition Wars” we engage in today began *long before* there was even a single edition of the game! Gary — who probably knew both sides of the argument better than any of us — had a great but unfortunate saying he revealed later in life: “The secret we should never let the game masters know is that they don’t need any rules.” This was a bit facetious of course, because one of the corollaries it points out is that *rules* are good for learning players and business profits, while *guidelines* are good for world builders and game designers. It is hard to sell a rulebook to Dungeon Masters who don’t need any rules at all.

But this sagely quip also acknowledges that rules are good for beginners and amateurs, and guidelines are good for amateurs and veterans. There is some overlap between the categorizations, but of course everyone is a newbie in the very beginning. Ergo, the first *Dungeons & Dragons* products would require a few more rules than Arneson might be comfortable with. A new game in a new subgenre needed such laws and codes as its foundation, *especially* if it was going to appeal to both established wargamers and readers of *Swords & Sorcery*.

Although Gary’s published philosophy (in private, he was much more sympathetic to Dave’s own view) would steer back toward Arneson’s perspective over the years to come, this would only be after his own *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* system (1977-1985) would deluge players with more rules than Dave could ever care for. There are still lots of great guidelines in Gygax’s later works, particularly in the advice sections of the 1979 *Dungeon Masters Guide*, but throughout official AD&D — a system designed primarily to *regulate tournament play* — the laws and codes would rule the day.

We can derive a sad yet crystal clear illustration of these creative differences, which were inherent between Dave and Gary, when we consider the innocuous matter of pole arms.

A pole arm, by its basest definition, is a weapon featuring a sharp metal head bolted upon a wooden haft. The simplest example is the spear. Specialized pole arms from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, however, include the awl pike, bardiche, bill hook, corseque, fauchard, glaive, guisarme, glaive-guisarme, halberd, partisan, poleaxe, ranseur, spetum, voulge, and the wildly evocative Bohemian Ear-Spoon. Every weapon was used in a different way against differently-armored

opponents. Over the years, Gary would feel the need to define and differentiate these various weapons with merciless precision.

Dungeons & Dragons, as first released by “Gygax and Arneson,” (1974) features the “pole arm,” “halberd,” “spear” and a few other suggested weapon types. But soon — after Arneson was out of the picture — many exacting Gygaxian studies of pole arm differentiators would appear within *The Strategic Review* (1975), *The Dragon* (1976), the *Players Handbook* (1978), the *Dungeon Masters Adventure Log* (1980), *Unearthed Arcana* (1985) and elsewhere. Meanwhile, Dave was once quoted as saying, “He [Gygax] literally had a small book on different kinds of pole arms, which I regard as the ultimate in silliness. It’s a pointy thing on the end of a stick!”⁴⁵

And so it would go for years, beginning with that first manuscript in Arneson’s hands. These disagreements were not yet nearly so dramatic or evolved during the years of 1972 and 1973, but it does help the reader to know which direction things would be going very soon. A little understanding of this “future history,” I believe, makes some of the arguments Gary and Dave may have been having at this time more sympathetic ... on *both* sides.

* * * * *

By early 1973, once Dave realized what Gary was actually doing, the first major differences in opinion would already be in the making.

In public, both Dave and Gary were rather diplomatic about these matters. Dave once noted, even while he was in the midst of a lawsuit against Gary and TSR over royalties, “We fooled around with them [Gary’s rules for *Dungeons & Dragons*] for a while. We exchanged letters for a while and just kind of slipped into it [collaboration over the design of the game]. It just felt natural that Gary and I worked together on the D&D rules, because the two [play] groups were associated, and Gary and I had worked together on projects before.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Dungeon Master: The Life and Legacy of Gary Gygax, Wired.com.

⁴⁶ “An Interview with Dave Arneson” in *Pegasus Magazine*, issue #1, April / May 1981.

While this account is certainly mild, the off-hand wording “fooled around” is rather telling. Earlier in April of 1971, Arneson had taken Gary’s newly-published *Chainmail* rules at face value. He soon realized however that the lethality of binary combat results, forcing the determination of a Hero’s life or death to be decided by a single die roll, was far too severe for a role-playing scenario in which players were encouraged to become invested in a single character’s personality. Therefore, taking the rules in a direction Gary had never intended, Dave eventually came up with the revolutionary improvements of experience levels, progression, ever-increasing survivability, wounds, healing and hit points. In this particular case, Dave’s out-of-the-box thinking led directly to a major improvement in Gary’s game. A counter-example, however, can be acknowledged when we consider that Dave would later send Gary a disastrous mess of rulings when Gary asked for “the rules” of the Blackmoor game in 1972. Dave didn’t *have* any definitive rules back then. He had a messy binder filled with on-the-fly ruling options for the referee’s consideration. And — Gary would soon be forced to wonder — how can you create a teachable, learnable, saleable piece of merchandise from such a thing?

This chemistry between the two men’s philosophies, while volatile, was crucial to their developing game. Without Dave to come up with the strange ideas and intuitive suggestions, *Dungeons & Dragons* would never have been born. However, without Gary to provide both a reasonable springboard for those leaps of intuition *and* a revision process to “catch” those ideas on their way back down, few novice gamers would *ever* have figured out the crazy rules of the game at all.

These problems would be exacerbated by the utterly new game style exemplified by D&D, and the rush to print in late 1973 and early 1974. Despite many revisions and improvements, Gary’s published rules are (to put it kindly) still a mess, and — even with the releases of D&D Supplements I through V and many periodicals (1975-1976) to clarify the rules — a truly definitive version of *Dungeons & Dragons* would not be finalized until 1979. In the opinions of many players, a definitive version was never created at all.

Considering all of this, it is obvious that Dave would have no reason — during that December and into January of 1973 — to regard Gary’s new rules for D&D as some authoritative treatise. And why should he? There was still much more collaboration to be done. By sending this first draft packet, Gary was asking for Dave’s counterpoints and criticism. The manuscript only represented Gary’s preliminary attempt at a dungeon game, while Arneson in comparison had already been running the Blackmoor dungeons for an entire year. Both men had unique

play experiences, whose treasures would necessarily be mined and smelted together to create the game. Unfortunately for Dave however Gary had the hammer, and he was the only one running the forge.

Regardless, Dave could see the huge potential in Gary's game. He was certainly encouraged by much of the clarity inherent in Gary's cleaner rules, even if he didn't care as much for the spirit behind them. He may well have been suppressing his natural urge to tweak or even eliminate those rules, but nevertheless, he soon gathered up his Minneapolis gamers and tested the "Geneva" dungeon rules for the first time.

According to the recollection of player Greg Svenson, Dave's rules for Blackmoor incorporated only minor changes as a result of play-testing Gary's version of the game. The attribute scores for player characters, formerly rated from 2 to 12 (2d6 with an average score of 7), were changed to 3 to 18 (3d6 with an average score of 10.5). Polyhedral dice (the four-, eight-, twelve- and twenty-sided varieties) were added to Dave's game as well.⁴⁷

But other than these mechanical shifts, the larger paradigm of Blackmoor — a campaign in which free-wheeling superheroes explored the wilderness and dungeons while simultaneously trying to run their fiefdoms' finances and standing armies — were largely unchanged. Blackmoor, in the end, very much remained Dave's personal game.

⁴⁷ Online web forum post: [Dragonsfoot.org](https://www.dragonsfoot.org). Dragonsfoot forums, "Q&A with Tim Kask."



Alas.

* * * * *

Back in Wisconsin — in this same timeframe, when Dave's group had just begun experimenting with the Lake Geneva draft — Gary was still busy play testing the initial levels of his Greyhawk dungeon. He soon realized that his own necessarily narrow interpretation of the dungeon game was in immediate need of an expansion. The rules for characters to purchase equipment for example were entertaining, but by their very nature they implied the existence of a town or city with a bustling economy and varied merchants, each selling their assorted wares.

In Gary's early games, this town could be glossed over. Soon however, adventurers would need to be magically healed to be returned to the party quickly. Others would want to hire men-at-arms and porters, while still others would like to change coins into convenient portable gems, or even to sell subdued monsters and valuable eggs and young. But where *were* these places? What else did the urban environment have to offer? And if the players were capable of having their

characters attempt just about any action in the dungeon, why couldn't they exercise that same philosophy in town?

Between invention and necessity, the game began to grow.

These cursory urban explorations could be hand waved away for a while, but not forever. Therefore, no more than a month after the first dungeon level had been designed,⁴⁸ Gary created a rudimentary single-sheet map of the "City of Greyhawk." This conceptual city — later to be a medieval metropolis, home to over 100,000 souls⁴⁹ — was first situated directly to the southwest of the ruined castle, just a few miles away. In the later campaign, a more considerable distance was made to divide the two locales, so that there would be brief wilderness adventures as characters journeyed to, from, and around that pinnacle dominated by the ruins of Castle Greyhawk. Gary would encourage the players to explore these surrounding wilds by placing secret entrances to the deeper dungeon levels in caves, pits, hollows and so forth.

That innovation of the wilderness, however, was in the near future. Gary was first concerned with the imminent potential of the City of Greyhawk itself. Dave had conceived of the dungeons, inspired by Howard and Tolkien; and so Gary envisioned the cities, inspired by Howard and Leiber. It was the next natural innovation for the game.

First, he decided on the matter of scale. Just as Castle Greyhawk represented a bigger and better version of Arneson's own citadel, the City of Greyhawk would represent a much vaster modeling beyond that of Blackmoor Village. The original City design may have actually been created within twenty-four hours of the first play test. According to one account from Gary,⁵⁰ "*Immediately [emphasis mine]* after the initial adventure, I realized I had overlooked detailing the place where equipment was purchased, lodgings kept, and so forth. To manage for the time, I

⁴⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XI.

⁴⁹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted October 25th, 2005.

⁵⁰ *Dragon Annual #2*. "Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75," by Gary Gygax.

‘fudged’ a city, making notes and a line map as I went along. From this came a single sheet of graph paper with a walled city.”⁵¹



“I’ll write up the detailed building key later. Maybe next year.”

In other words, it appears that the rudimentary city map was created on *blank or lined paper* during the first or second play test.⁵² The last sentence appears to indicate that the *graph paper* version came into being later. A likely timeframe for the transition to graph paper is noted in Gary’s essay, *To Forge a Fantasy World*: “... The City of Greyhawk sprung up as a single piece of graph paper around the same time that level four of the castle dungeon complex was being developed.” This may have been around January of 1973.

⁵¹ *Dragon Annual #2*. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary Gygax.

⁵² *Dragon magazine*, issue #302.

This “second” urban map was still a crude one, filled with meandering streets which had no names. Much like a dungeon’s corridors, the intersections of these streets were plotted to create blocks of blank space where encounter clusters (blocks of buildings, instead of rooms) could be placed in the midst of the unknown. These “blocks” were shaded gray, and then colored pencils were used to mark out individual sites along the edges where the blocks adjoined the streets. Arms dealers, armor shops and smithies were signified in red (perhaps symbolizing blood and fire); jewelers, money changers and lenders in yellow (gold); taverns, and alehouses in blue; inns and flophouses in green; and merchants of goods, provisions and horses in brown. Throughout this process, the urban environment quickly graduated from haphazard town to district-layered city. The walls were drawn to mark the size of the place in relation to the castle ruin, and nameless crooked streets wound away from the gate and into the city’s heart. Between the intersections, gray penciled blocks marked featureless clusters of buildings for later development.

The city would be regarded as the jewel in the crown, the heart of adventure for Gary’s imaginary world, with a “pseudo-medieval European” theme.⁵³

As he once stressed to his later readers by way of explanation, “Much of the original activity in the Greyhawk campaign came in the huge City of Greyhawk.”⁵⁴ About 10% of the adventures in the Greyhawk campaign, by Gary’s later estimation, would be urban in nature.⁵⁵

The background which Gary would later devise for his new creation was as follows: “This walled town was the area trade center and seat of feudal power, then began to decline when the overlordship transferred from a suzerain to the city itself,” meaning that Greyhawk became a Free City after having formerly been ruled by a more distant noble (perhaps a King, or even a titular Overlord).⁵⁶ At this time, that noble might have still even been the ruler of the Great Kingdom itself.

⁵³ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III. Posted April 14th, 2003. Refer also to the *Slayer’s Guide to Dragons*, where Gary notes that “the base game ... assumed a quasi-medieval environment, similar to that of the European fairy-tale paradigm.”

⁵⁴ *The Dragon*, issue #37, pg. 10.

⁵⁵ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VI. Posted February 12th, 2004.

⁵⁶ *The Dragon*, issue #9, pp. 5-6.

As a result of play, the Free City would then undergo “a boom due to the activities of adventurers and the particular world system events (a new struggle between lawful good and chaotic evil, with the latter on the upswing).”⁵⁷ This by the way was a foreshadowing of an overarching theme demoniac influence in the World of Greyhawk, where vile outsider powers such as Zuggtmoy, Iuz, Eclavdra and Lolth were rising against the young free cities of the realm.

Gary further explained, “The oligarchs of the city are neutral in outlook, if not in alignment, viewing anything which benefits their city as desirable. Therefore, all sorts of creatures inhabit the city, commerce is free, persons of lawful alignment rub elbows with chaotics, evil and good coexist on equitable terms.”⁵⁸

It also seems that the rulers of Greyhawk would deliberately intervene if any temple, faction or guild assumed too much power or dared to impose a religion on the people: “Any preeminence of alignment is carefully thwarted by the rulers of the place, for it would tend to be detrimental to the city trade.”⁵⁹ This created an ever-shifting environment of political intrigue, in which PCs might be hired to assist in causes against rival urban powers.

* * * * *

In many ways, this city would soon be treated like a surface dungeon by the eager players. As a direct result of characters discovering that not every establishment catered to every whim, they naturally wandered from place to place, seeking new examples of similar places of business. As they moved about, the streets acquired names, and favored places became local haunts and hangouts. Throughout this process Gary might well have been inspired by the Fafhrd and Gray Mouser tales of Fritz Leiber, where the byways of Lankhmar carry such apt appellations as the Cheap Street, Death Alley, Murder Alley, Plague Court, and the Street of the Thinkers.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *The Dragon*, issue #9, pg. 6.

⁵⁸ *The Dragon*, issue #9, pg. 6.

⁵⁹ *The Dragon*, issue #9, pg. 6.

⁶⁰ *Swords and Deviltry*, Chapter IV: Ill Met in Lankhmar, by Fritz Leiber.

Throughout early 1973 the single sheet of graph paper was filled with notes, labels, corrections, elaborations, and random scribbles made during play. A few years later, Gary would know enough about fantasy cities and urban adventures to provide his own advice to *Dungeon Masters*: “Here your players will find lodgings, buy equipment, hire mercenaries, seek magical and clerical aid, drink, gamble and wench. The town would do well to resemble some of those in Howard’s ‘Conan’ stories or Leiber’s city of ‘Lankhmar.’ Strange towers, a thieves’ quarter, and temples of horrible deities add greater flavor to play.”⁶¹

There are far too many Lankhmar parallels to Greyhawk for me to enumerate here. I will simply say that Gary’s City of Greyhawk, up through and including the *Gord the Rogue* novels of the 1980s, is essentially a creative reinterpretation of Lankhmar.

In regard to the Conan tales of Robert E. Howard, Gary was probably thinking specifically of the tales *The Tower of the Elephant* (1933) and *Rogues in the House* (1933-1934). In *Rogues*, there is a wealthy noble district “in the part of the city occupied by the purple-towered marble and ivory palaces of the aristocracy.” In *Tower*, we learn of the well-guarded temple and tower district, replete with hallowed sanctuaries that are filled with riches (and ripe for plunder). A district called “the Maul” also offers us a glimpse from the seedy underside of the later City of Greyhawk:

“Torches flared murkily on the revels in the Maul, where the thieves of the east held carnival by night. In the Maul they could carouse and roar as they liked, for honest people shunned the quarters, and watchmen, well paid with stained coins, did not interfere with their sport. Along the crooked, unpaved streets with their heaps of refuse and sloppy puddles, drunken roisterers staggered, roaring. Steel glinted in the shadows where wolf preyed on wolf, and from the darkness rose the shrill laughter of women, and the sounds of scufflings and strugglings. Torchlight licked luridly from broken windows and wide-thrown doors, and out of those doors, stale smells of wine and rank sweaty bodies, clamor of drinking-jacks and fists hammered on rough tables, snatches of obscene songs, rushed like a blow in the face.”

⁶¹ Europa 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of Europa Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

Gary was probably also inspired by evocative descriptions of Lankhmar, which Fritz Leiber described as featuring colossal walls, maze-like alleys, cultic temples, exotic emporiums, and sinister brooding shadows where fog would glide like wraiths beneath the moonlight.⁶²

Early unique sites in the City of Greyhawk would include: temples of good and evil; a wizard's tower (perhaps inspired by Robert E. Howard's *Tower of the Elephant*); a Sages' Guild for player inquiries into legends and lore; and the Mercenaries' Brotherhood, where those stalwart and doughty men-at-arms would soon be hired to strengthen the beleaguered party.

These core locales would collectively become the "Old City," as featured in later novels such as *Saga of Old City* (1986) and *City of Hawks* (1987). Given the proximity and direction of Castle Greyhawk, it seems likely that there would also be an Old City gate in the northern or eastern wall, with the first sketched-in streets radiating out deeper into the city's core.

An eventual city-and-surround map, showing the immediate environment around the City of Greyhawk, likely also showed a flowing river and the shore of a great lake. This formative region was chosen because Gary wanted a port city on a major body of freshwater, so that he could expand the campaign into naval and river adventures if the players decided they wanted to engage in sailing or pirating. Looking at his earlier Great Kingdom map, Gary situated Greyhawk upon the southern shore of the Nyr Dyv (the "Near Dive"),⁶³ in a locale similar to that of Chicago on Lake Michigan and the out-flowing Chicago River.

Again, the region's terrain may have been inspired by the Lankhmar-Land of Nehwon, as there are some interesting parallels between the two settings. Lankhmar's reach includes the shores of the Inner Sea, the Great Salt Marsh, the River Hlal, and southern grain lands; while the Greyhawk region features the shores of the Nyr Dyv, the marshes near the Cairn Hills (often called the Mistmarsh), the River Selintan, and the rich southern Plain of Greyhawk.⁶⁴

By the autumn of 1976, the work on the urban campaign components would be so well-developed that Gary could proudly report the following: "The territory

⁶² See for example *Swords and Deviltry*, Part I: Induction, by Fritz Leiber.

⁶³ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III. Posted July 10th, 2003.

⁶⁴ See for example *Swords and Deviltry*, Part IV: Ill Met in Lankhmar, by Fritz Leiber.

within 500 or so miles of our main dungeon [*i.e.*, *Castle Greyhawk*] is mapped out at 5 miles to the hex. Territory within 50 miles of Greyhawk city is mapped more closely, and monster locations are indicated. The entire world is mapped out in rough form, with notes regarding typical encounters in given areas as well as particular special places, for hardy souls who wish to go forth to seek their fortunes.”⁶⁵



What's beyond the castle, anyway?

⁶⁵ *Alarums & Excursions*, issue #15, October 1976.

Also, the old Great Kingdom itself was situated in the same approximate location as the state of New York (in comparison to Greyhawk near to the Nyr Dyv).⁶⁶ The growing world of “Oerth” would soon be based on a fantasy version of America, because it was “easier to use existing outline maps than creating a world setting from scratch.”⁶⁷

Greyhawk would soon be joined by the hazy silhouette of a farther city upon the horizon. A rivalry would soon exist with that mysterious gang-infested city state of Dyvers (the city, that is, inhabited by the “Divers”), representing a fantasy version of Milwaukee.⁶⁸ (Perhaps coincidentally, one of the kinder and more polite definitions for “Diver” which can be found in *Cassell’s Dictionary of Slang* is “A beggar who forages in garbage cans for food.”)

The later inclusion of the thief class, representing fantasy charlatans and “gangsters,” would soon darken the nature of both of these cities’ underworlds. In creating the wilderness between these two cities, Gary learned quite a lot which he would later share with fledgling Dungeon Masters. He recommended a scale of one mile to the hex, and preferred to “often use rods, chains, furlongs and leagues,

⁶⁶ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III. Posted July 8th, 2005.

⁶⁷ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted May 22nd, 2006. Gary also wrote that “Oerth” was pronounced as “‘Oith,’ as if you were from Brooklyn ... that annoys all who take a fantasy world far too seriously.”

⁶⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III. Posted April 14th, 2003. See also Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A Part III, posted July 8th, 2005. Gary also noted that the populace of Dyvers had a “general antipathy for folks from Greyhawk,” indicating a winking fantasy allusion to the classic Milwaukee-Chicago rivalry. And for those who are interested in cryptic references to unremembered adventures, I also note that Gary once commented (in the ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part XII, posted March 20th, 2007) that the Greyhawk PCs adventured in Dyvers, and in the Amazonian city of Hardby too. However, despite a brief report that “the players avoided the place, [i.e., *Hardby*] as they found the Amazonian-types running it [too] hot to their adventuring taste,” there is little that I can report about those activities at this time.

too!” He gruffly noted that a scale of two kilometers to the hex could alternately be used by “those of you who go in for recent faddish modes of measure.”⁶⁹

Soon after the burst of urban and regional development in early 1973, Gary would be running wilderness adventures in the Greyhawk city state region using the *Outdoor Survival* game map and improvised encounters.⁷⁰

With the addition of such details, *Dungeons & Dragons* was no longer merely a simulation of a subterranean treasure hunt. The game was now simulating an entire fantasy world.

* * * * *

While this improvisatory setup provided sufficient details for many “winged” urban and wilderness adventures, the *dungeons* of Castle Greyhawk remained the heart and soul of Gary’s game. Due to the success of the early play tests, and to accommodate more players (now with characters of differing experience levels and varying degrees of skill), Gary decided that he next needed to develop further levels of the dungeon. Reading further into Gary’s quote above, it seems that dungeons levels one through three were completed before the second (graph paper version) map of the City came into being, with level four only partially designed. In the near future Gary would mix urban, dungeon and wilderness adventures to keep all of his players occupied, and so the City of Greyhawk would then become the center of the game.

And now that we have a clearer understanding of just *where* Gary’s conception of the urban environment was leading him from December and into

⁶⁹ Europa 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of Europa Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

⁷⁰ Rob Kuntz, Lord of the Green Dragons blog, entry for March 16th, 2009. Gary also once wrote a clarification on the Greyhawk campaign use of the *Outdoor Survival* game board. It seems that the hand-drawn 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper showing the City State of Greyhawk, Castle Greyhawk and the surrounding region was used for adventures near Greyhawk, while the Outdoor Survival board was used for adventures further afield. “The O[utdoor] S[urvival] board was for outdoor adventures away from the city,” he wrote. “The ponds were castles, and there one’s PC or PC party could often engage in some chivalrous combat ... or slap an evil knight or mage.”

January, it is time to turn back the clock a couple of weeks, so that we can chronicle the full conquest of dungeon levels one and two.

CHAPTER 13

THE DUNGEONS DEEP

(DECEMBER 1972)

AND SO, we come back to our telling of the Greyhawk saga.⁷¹ When last we left the celeritous — but not yet mighty — dungeoneers of Greyhawk, they were being inelegantly chased up shadowy stairs by a monstrous ogre who guarded the single discovered descent into dungeon level two.

Following that inglorious setback, the players decided that they would instead dare to clear as much of level one as they possibly could. And so, Ahlissa, Tenser, Murlynd, Robilar and Terik explored the more obscure corners of the Barracks. These tireless explorations led to the discovery of more of the ever-nefarious open pit traps, each of them blocking access into several of the level's farther rooms. With ingenuity and persistence, however, the adventurers managed to overcome. As Gary noted, "Open pits were mainly an inconvenience — they slowed progress for a little while. However, they could be dangerous if the adventuring party was fleeing pursuit by a monster. ... The players soon devised ways of dealing with all of these difficulties."⁷²

Many more monsters were slain, treasures were hauled out, and the mysterious level one gradually became a known and quantifiable threat, constantly diminishing in both its danger and allure. Eventually, Gary would realize that the dungeon would need to "restocked" in full, not just once but after almost every session, to keep the overconfident delvers on their toes. In later sessions however (likely from 1974-1976, when Rob Kuntz was helping to design the Greyhawk dungeon levels), it seems that the dungeons were never restocked at all. "When the setting was in constant use," Gary once explained, "we never restocked, just drafted new side and deeper levels, as it was assumed that the depredations of the cruel P[layer] C[haracter] parties kept the monsters away in fear and loathing."⁷³

⁷¹ **General Citation:** Particulars noted in this chapter have been distilled from mentions in [1] Castle Zagyg: The Upper Works, [2] Dragon #287, [3] Dragon #294, [4] Dragon #302, [5] Dragon Annual #2, [6] the Dragonsfoot Q&A with Rob Kuntz, [7] Dungeons & Dragons, Volume 2: Monsters & Treasure, [8-12] ENWorld's Gary Gygax Q&A threads (II, IV, V, IX and XIII), [13] Europa 6-8, [14] J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, and [15-17] posts on the Pied Piper Publishing forum.

⁷² Dragon magazine, issue #294. "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax.

⁷³ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted July 3rd, 2005.

As each monster lair was wiped out, it was simply deleted from the dungeon key. Gary “drew a line through it, and the place was empty for the foreseeable future.”⁷⁴ The adventurers were becoming very successful, but the awaiting Unknown — symbolized by the ogre on level two — still taunted them. It was probably that encounter, along with some of the more intransigent evil humanoids on dungeon level one, which encouraged the frustrated explorers to seek out some additional firepower.

As the players considered the Swords & Sorcery pulps which had inspired Gary’s version of the game, an answer to their predicament became clear. Those violent stories do not just feature bloodied protagonists. The sundry mundane tasks, portage of treasure, and suspense-building losses in many of these tales are exemplified by “spear carriers” (or their *Star Trek* equivalent, the ever-maligned and luckless “red shirts”). In medieval chronicles, these are the ill-fated “men-at-arms.”

⁷⁴ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted September 15th, 2005.



“If I don’t return, there is always the Wergild ...”

A notable instance of adventurers hiring men-at-arms to protect them on a dangerous journey can be found in Michael Moorcock's Elric tale *Kings in Darkness*, when the maiden Zarozinia explains that her kinfolk hired men-at-arms to defend a caravan traveling from Vilmir to Ilmiora.⁷⁵

Alexei Panshin, in his 1968 novel *Rite of Passage*, put it this way: "A spear carrier is somebody who stands in the hall when Caesar passes, comes to attention and thumps his spear. A spear carrier is the anonymous character cut down by the hero as he advances to save the menaced heroine." These brave and dull unfortunates are the "non-knights," the expendable nameless mercenaries who get chomped by dinosaurs, swarmed by tarantulas, slain by the ghouls or thrown into bottomless pits. In *Dungeons & Dragons* terms, they are the poor sods who soak up damage, so the heroes don't have to. These are Blackmoor's long-suffering NPC Flunkies, suffering longer under another name.

The hiring of men-at-arms was actually a natural progression for the game, due to *Chainmail's* earlier genesis. In *Chainmail*, masses of troops are led into battle by Heroes, Wizards and Superheroes. Troops are cut down in such numbers that individual losses only count for the Hero-types and bigger monsters, while all other deaths are abstracted as mere unit-wide casualties.

In the December 1972 Greyhawk campaign, as the players' characters progressed doggedly toward Hero statuses of their own, it only made sense that they would soon begin to command these weaker and faceless soldiers to win the day. "It was a natural thing for a PC group to hire men-at-arms," Gary wrote, and for the players to "form a mercenary company and adventure thus."⁷⁶

And so, mercenary men-at-arms were quickly mustered in the City of Greyhawk, and deadlier weapons were purchased too. The players themselves were growing wiser as well. Gary summarized these innovations as follows: "In [*Dungeons & Dragons*], the first-level P[layer] C[haracter]s did do several things to help extend their chances — hire men-at-arms, use missile weapons (including

⁷⁵ *Kings in Darkness*, Chapter I, by Michael Moorcock.

⁷⁶ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part II. Posted March 27th, 2003.

flaming lamp oil, that is kerosene), and run away when things appeared to be too dangerous to stay and fight.”⁷⁷

Gary also commented, “All the early play groups I knew of, those in 1972 and on through 1974, surely did that [*the hiring of mercenaries*] so as to give their low-level P[ayer] C[haracter]s a better survival chance.”⁷⁸ The tactical precedent would soon make its way into classic (and now “old school”) dungeon play, when D&D was released to the masses. Sadly, this pulpy and cinematic trope is a practice which has now fallen into disfavor. Fantasy role-playing gamers today forever remember the hero, but the hero’s servile troops are all but forgotten.

* * * * *

While the players and their mercenary legions conquered the last monster-infested bastions on level one, Gary completed his key for dungeon level two, frequently known as “the Storerooms.” This level filled with old musty stockpiles would also include dozens of lairs filled with ever-more-dangerous monsters, as well as two special features: “a nixie pool and a fountain of snakes.”⁷⁹ Nixies in Scandinavian folklore are mischievous water spirits, and Gary borrowed his own interpretation of them directly from a scene in Poul Anderson’s well-loved fantasy novel, *Three Hearts and Three Lions* (1953, 1961). As Gary would later define them, the devilsome nixies “always seek to lure humans beneath the waters to enslave them for one year.”⁸⁰ Such slaves as the nixies manage to ensnare are gifted (cursed?) with magical water breathing, and so are dragged down into the deeper waters of the nixies’ lair.

⁷⁷ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted August 6th, 2007.

⁷⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part II. Posted March 15th, 2003.

⁷⁹ *Europa* 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of *Europa* Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

⁸⁰ *Dungeons & Dragons*, Volume 3: *The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures*, TSR, 1974.

The fountain of snakes, in turn, involved a never-ending flood of magical vipers and asps, pouring out in slithery heaps and filling the room with poisonous beasties. (“Why does it always have to be snakes?”) Clearly, Gary was feeling the need to challenge his clever players not only with *deadlier* monsters and tricks, but with *nastier* ones as well.



FOUNTAIN OF SERPENTS.

*My apologies for this poorly-contrasted image (preserving text)
from an explorer's old engraving of a Syrian ruin ...
but this is a rather interesting name for a locale, don't you think?*

I believe the fountain is purely from Gary's imagination, although I do find an interesting passage — akin to far earlier tales of the Lernaean Hydra — in an obscure 1880 book entitled *Tuscan Fairy Tales*, by V. Paget, which might be of glancing interest due to this passage in the story *The Three Golden Apples*:

“Be of good cheer; I will go and kill this serpent.”

“So he goes to the fountain, and presently the serpent shows one of his [seven] heads above the water. The Prince draws his sword, and swish! Cuts off the head. Then another head appears, and the Prince cuts that off, until he has cut off all the seven heads. Then he cuts out the tongues, wraps them up and puts them in his pocket ...”

When we consider that the nixies and the fountain of snakes are both magical and water-based trick encounters, it becomes apparent that Gary was beginning to toy with the idea of creating *themes* for his dungeon levels beyond the mere use of repeating monster types. Indeed, Gary would soon (1975) be encouraging other *Dungeon Masters* with this sage advice: “Each level should have a central theme and some distinguishing feature, i.e. a level with large open areas swarming with goblins, [or] one where the basic pattern of corridors seems to repeat endlessly, [or] one inhabited by nothing but fire-dwelling or fire-using monsters.”⁸¹

Expanding on this theme of deadly magical “liquid encounters,” Gary also created another nefarious monster for level two, the “gelatinous cube.” (Rob Kuntz remembers this as a black pudding; either or both seem plausible.) This now-infamous slice of the dungeon biosphere is a wizard-engineered macro-microbe, spawned for the sole purpose of cleaning the bones and corpses out of dungeon corridors. Gary once wrote that “My concept was that [*slimes and gelatinous cubes*] were accidental creations of careless wizard alchemists that dumped various failed magical and alchemical experiments down the drain or into some cesspit. These admixtures affected single-celled life forms, thus eventually engendering the various

⁸¹ *Europa* 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of *Europa* Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

jellies (and a gelatinous cube is one of those), oozes, puddings. The slimes were generated in similar fashion, the waste affecting normal slime.”⁸²

This idea was almost certainly inspired by “the Blob” or black pudding encounter in Arneson’s *Castle Blackmoor*. The slime monster as reconceived by Gary may have also been inspired by an old Mad and EC Comics story, in which the planet Mars was covered with “dormant Gookum,” a hibernating slime which had devoured everything else that dwelled on the planet.⁸³ We will look at the Greyhawk adventurers’ first encounter with this horrible thing in just a moment.

Simpler but still deceptive monsters were included in the key to level two as well. We know that on several of the “shallow” dungeon levels, likely beginning with this one, Gary was beginning to place two competing orc tribes in separate dungeon lairs. One tribe would be known as the “Grinning Skull,” while the other worshipped the sign of the “Bloody Axe.”⁸⁴ These two tribes hated one another, and each would fight the other to the death. If the players would take the time to scout and spy on these legions of orcs, they might discover that they could exploit this mutual hatred and thus compel the orcs to fight amongst themselves. Gary’s idea here was probably borrowed from J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Return of the King*, in which the orcs of Cirith Ungol — notably, two from different tribes, named Snaga and Shagrat — are literally at one another’s throats until the hero cuts them down. This theme of orcish legions would later reach a fuller form in the deeper side-dungeons of *Castle Greyhawk*, as we shall see.

As these monster hordes increased in number, the worthwhile treasures gradually piled up as well. While copper coins had been common (and commonly despised) on level one, level two’s treasure chests would often be topped off by piles of silver pieces. What treasure, nickels and dimes! But the players’ characters, duped too often by the chest full of “lucky” kobold pennies, would scarcely be impressed by such paltry lucre: “Even in those days when the amount of wealth

⁸² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XII. Posted October 1st, 2006.

⁸³ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted May 18th, 2007.

⁸⁴ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted January 31st, 2004.

carried out meant earned experience,” Gary recalled, “such heaps of currency were actually pretty valueless.”⁸⁵

As the key and map for level two were being completed with these finishing touches, Gary also placed some trickier pits within the labyrinth. One of his new schemes was especially devious: “Placing a pit just behind a door worked well. Characters forcing the door from the non-pit side had a chance of stumbling through the portal when it came free, falling into the hole. Coming at the door from the pit side made it very difficult to get to the door and open it by force.”⁸⁶ And even worse, “It was obvious that the time had come for a more elaborate form of the pit: the concealed hole with a trap door that opened suddenly, dropping the victims into it. The covered pit appeared on the second level.” This ploy⁸⁷ was faithfully recreated in published form via Gary’s Dungeon Module B2, *The Keep on the Borderlands* (on page 14 in encounter area A of the Kobold Lair, in fact, for those keeping score at home). Many of the scenes with humanoids in B2, in fact, probably had their precedents in Greyhawk on dungeon levels one and two.

With these sinister ploys fully in place, all of the baits were set. It was time for the overconfident adventurers to overwhelm the ogre. After that, Gary would only need to smile, keep his silence, and wait.

* * * * *

The adventurers and their pay-emboldened men-at-arms had a merry time plundering level two. Almost certainly, some of the player characters had already reached their second experience level. (To partially borrow part of a phrase from Leiber, in doing so they “advanced another grade in their apprenticeships.”)⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *Dragon* magazine, issue #302. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

⁸⁶ *Dragon* magazine, issue #294. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

⁸⁷ One instance of a one-way lid-covered pit trap (which may have inspired Gary) can be found in the Robert E. Howard tale *Xuthal of the Dusk*, when Conan falls into the depths and must battle the horrific god-thing Thog and save the maiden Natala.

⁸⁸ *Swords and Deviltry*, Part III: The Unholy Grail, by Fritz Leiber.

In gaining such power — literally doubling their characters' relative potency — the players realized that it was finally time to put an end to a formerly-fearsome foe!

“And in this circuitous way you see I have reached my present subject, which is, Ogres. You fancy they are dead or only fictitious characters — mythical representatives of strength, cruelty, stupidity, and lust for blood? Though they had seven-leagued boots, you remember all sorts of little whipping-snapping Tom Thumbs used to elude and outrun them.

“They were so stupid that they gave into the most shallow ambushes and artifices: witness that well-known ogre, who, because Jack cut open the hasty-pudding, instantly ripped open his own stupid waistcoat and interior. They were cruel, brutal, disgusting, with their sharpened teeth, immense knives, and roaring voices! But they always ended by being overcome ...”

— *Roundabout Papers*, by William Makepeace Thackeray

Yep. That brutish ogre lurking at the bottom of the dungeon stairs was long overdue for a Robilarian reckoning.

On the next expedition, the adventurers charged down the stairs with a vengeance. The ogre was quickly killed, and the exploration of dungeon level two began with expectant intensity. The heroes forged on, traps were sprung and monsters slain. The nixies' fell ensorcelments were foiled. The fountain of snakes proved to be a far more devilish obstacle, however. As Rob Kuntz remembered, “The fountain of snakes? Nothing could be done about that, as it poured forth an endless stream of snakes. Sure, many players combated them ... [*but*] there was no decrease that they were aware of, except as measured by their own flagging energies.”⁸⁹

After a while, the adventurers ran away.

⁸⁹ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums.



*From Tuscan Fairy Tales,
The Three Golden Apples.*

There were many such confounding encounters in the dismal dungeons beneath Castle Greyhawk.

Sometimes the would-be heroes were cautious, and other times they were bold. The players were still figuring out the game, and Gary was probably still

struggling to deal with the “one player, one playing piece” mode of play which Arneson and his group had pioneered with Blackmoor.

At about this same time, there were also sessions where one of the players would dare a solo adventure with their low-level player character. Gary would improvise around this situation, rewarding the player with scaled-down encounters and the opportunity to trick or evade opponents due to the potential lethality of direct confrontations. But these sessions were still not easy, and very often things would still not go the player’s way.

The most detailed example we have of this phenomenon involves Ernie’s mage Tenser, when Tenser was only experience level two.⁹⁰ Tenser at the time was neutral in alignment, and Ernie was tempted to have his character shift to evil to see if that would make some of the game’s conundrums easier to handle. In a seemingly random occurrence that must have taken his father Gary by surprise, Ernie decided to have Tenser march up to the ruins of Castle Greyhawk alone in search of some evil companionship.

Tenser made his way down to dungeon level two, and there he encountered an evil magic-user and his minions. Foolishly, Ernie had Tenser attempt to parley and to request an alliance with the evil NPC. Gary gave his son a quick lesson in the nature of evil: Tenser was apprehended, robbed (he had a cherished wand of paralyzation at this time), stripped, bound, controlled by a spell (probably Sleep or Charm Person), and left in the upper ruins where some hungry monster or group of bandits could decide what to do with him. (This was actually somewhat merciful; Gary must have decided that the evil mage did not care to get his hands dirty with murder.)

When Tenser regained control of himself, he managed to get free and fled naked back toward the city. He had no equipment, no money, and no weapons. The perfect time for a stranger to wander by, which is precisely what happened! In a panic, Tenser dashed off the road and hid in some trees. He snapped off a branch to serve as an improvised club just in case. Watching from his camouflaged position, Tenser saw that the oncomer was a fighter NPC who must have been traveling to the ruins. Tenser leapt down (and gained surprise, of course ... for what would

⁹⁰ For a summary of this tale, and Gary’s response (although he incorrectly says “late 1973” when this must have occurred in late 1972, see the Dragonsfoot forums, “Lake Geneva Campaign,” posted February 11th, 2003.

your reaction be if a naked wild man brandishing a tree branch plopped down in your path?) and smacked the fighting man over the head.

Having learned well the meaning of “survival of the fittest,” Tenser passed down the lesson of his fate: he stripped the fighter, took all of his equipment, put on some clothes, and went back to the city where he sold everything for a few meager gold pieces. Tenser then memorized some new spells, went to bed, and plotted his revenge.

For the next play session, Ernie and Tenser had some allies to work with (probably Robilar and Terik). There was a very simple mission: find the evil mage and wreak an ironic vengeance upon him! Tenser led the party down to the mage’s lair, and in a quick battle the evil spell caster’s henchmen were laid low. The mage begged for his life. Tenser accepted, tied up the prisoner, and in a very unchivalrous move he slit the man’s throat.

(And now we have a very clear picture of why Gary would feel the need to write explicit penalties for sudden alignment shifts into the later game!)

Tenser took back his wand, and the rest of loot went to his loyal compatriots. And Ernie must have known that he had escaped his father’s judgment of this act by a narrow margin, because Tenser would never court the cause of evil ever again.

This, in turn, would cause a rift when Robilar decided to walk the path of evil, but that is a tale which we will come to a bit further down the road ...

* * * * *

Following Tenser’s miserable mishap, the conquest of dungeon level two continued. The rooms were filled with other dangerous men and monsters, and even the connecting corridors of level two were dangerous. There were certainly more wandering monsters. Some of the pits were avoided, while others were sprung. Wounds were suffered in profusion. At one point (when Robilar, Tenser and Terik were all approximately at experience level 3),⁹¹ a fighting man (probably either Terik or Robilar, perhaps an NPC) was sent ahead of the party as a scout.

⁹¹ Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboards.

The fighter discerned a strange magic or gaseous substance which caused his vision of the torch-lit flagstones ahead to become blurry and indistinct.⁹²

As Rob related the tale, it seems that the first slime encountered in the Greyhawk dungeons (although there is some confusion) was seen as “blob-like, dark and undulating ... which propelled us into a concerned silence as we drew weapons or readied spells. Upon nearing us the melee commenced, with it being now described as a black amorphous mass which had no apparent appendages, like a black half-sphere.”⁹³

The thing oozed its way up Terik’s armored leg, and the fighter out let out a frantic cry. Terik and Robilar jabbed their blades into the thing’s pulsing central mass, and both swords struck true! Unfortunately, that meant that the slime was split in half. The writhing pseudopods were then flailing in from two sides. Having had quite enough, the adventurers wisely fled.⁹⁴

This was the Lake Geneva group’s first encounter with a “slime” monster, and it was certainly one they would never forget. The poor fighter Terik barely survived (“He slimed me!”), and undoubtedly had little stomach for more such unspeakable horrors writhing in the deep.

Things were getting nasty. These pits and slimy terrors required another shift in player tactics. According to Gary, “This led to the rise in popularity of the 10-foot pole. Non-human characters able to spot such traps were also more in demand. Nonetheless, this new type of pit [*with the closing cover*] had surprise working for it, and there was no doubt that from the DM’s standpoint, it was much better than a plain hole in the floor of the dungeon corridor.”⁹⁵

At some point — perhaps during either the dungeon level two or level three adventures, or on a nearby “side level” — Robilar, Terik and Tenser encountered the vile orcs. They killed many (greatly aided by Tenser’s spells, which probably included Sleep), but Robilar also turned some of them into vassals. And why did the players covet orcish mercenaries? The answer is simple. Human men-at-arms

⁹² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted May 18th, 2007.

⁹³ Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboards, “Puddings, Oozes and Jellies, Oh My.” Posted February 24th, 2013.

⁹⁴ Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboards.

⁹⁵ *Dragon* magazine, issue #294. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

will only suffer through so much abuse, and there were a *lot* of silver coins to lug around. As Gary explained, “The initial reaction by the players to heaps of low-value coinage was to hire mercenaries. They recruited orcs as mercenaries (even posting ads in orcish throughout the dungeon!), paying them off with part of what these servants carted out of the dungeon. Of course, this changed the manner of play, incited greed and covetousness, and generally made my life as DM more interesting.”⁹⁶ Gary also once noted that “It didn’t take long for the regulars in my Greyhawk campaign to discover that it was cheaper and easier for them to subdue and conscript orcs into their attack forces than it was to find and hire mercenaries.”⁹⁷ In other words, it is likely that the men-at-arms in the City of Greyhawk were talking amongst themselves about the grimly dismal survival rate experienced by their hired peers! And interestingly, Rob Kuntz once noted that Robilar “went out of [*his*] way to find ‘neutral’ orcs, not evil ones,”⁹⁸ which would have some interesting ramifications very soon. Gary balanced out this new strength advantage enjoyed by the players by insisting upon monthly upkeeps paid for the orcish troops in gold, and he watched the numbers very closely.⁹⁹

With so many orcs in play as porters and skirmishers, Gary was free to ramp up the difficulty of many of the deeper trap and monster encounters. Orcs were used to spring traps and to test dangerous locked chests and doors. Gary noted that “Some of the less caring PCs [*certainly meaning Robilar, and probably Tenser as well*] had orcs who were sent forth to take care of such things.”¹⁰⁰

Sometimes, however, these intended sacrifices of orcish cannon fodder could yield surprising results. In one adventure Robilar (along with Terik)¹⁰¹ was leading “about a half-dozen” orcs on a dungeon expedition when they encountered a nest of trolls. These were probably “ogre-ish” trolls as opposed to regenerating “true”

⁹⁶ *Dragon* magazine, issue #302. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

⁹⁷ *Dragon* magazine, issue #312. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

⁹⁸ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Robilar and evil races.”

⁹⁹ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “What kind of orc was Quij?”

¹⁰⁰ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 23rd, 2002.

¹⁰¹ Although Gary seems to have had later forgotten this, Terik’s presence was confirmed by Rob at the Pied Piper Publishing forums, “What kind of orc was Quij?”

trolls (a confusing distinction dating back to the *Chainmail* rules), because in Gary's recollection they were ogres.¹⁰² Whomever the opponents might have been, the orc bodyguards themselves were neutral, and when Robilar commanded them into battle, they obeyed. A deadly battle ensued, in which the last orc standing — against all odds — managed to kill the last troll, despite only being equipped with chainmail armor, a shield, and a trusty sword.¹⁰³ If the orc had not made the killing blow, the badly wounded Robilar would almost certainly have died. Statistically, if Gary wasn't pulling any punches, the odds of this happening were less than 1%. And so Gary decided on the spur of the moment that this incredible feat had made the orc into a mighty and unprecedented Orc Hero, a 4th level fighter with an incredible 12 hit points.¹⁰⁴

This orc's name was Quij. The name was a joke by Gary; apparently, Rob had once tried to use "QUIJ" as a valid word in a Scrabble game (which it most decidedly is not). Gary liked to remind Rob of this little detail whenever he tried to bend the rules while playing *Dungeons & Dragons*.¹⁰⁵

After the killing, Robilar honored the orc and in turn Quij became a faithful (but rather dense) henchman and bodyguard. It is also interesting to note that Robilar's association with an orc as a near-equal would cause rumors to stir in the City of Greyhawk, perhaps beginning an alienation which would eventually end in Robilar willfully changing his philosophy (alignment) to lawful evil. But that was Rob's strategic choice, made for very specific reasons, in 1974. Until then, Robilar would greatly respect his orcish bodyguard and they would share many adventures together.

All hail the mighty Quij!

¹⁰² *Dragon* magazine, issue #312. "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax.

¹⁰³ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "What kind of orc was Quij?"

¹⁰⁴ More specifically, in one account (Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A Part V, posted May 12th, 2006) Gary notes that Quij gained a single hit die. Gary rolled maximum hit points on that die, and so he decided that Quij was fourth level.

¹⁰⁵ *Dragon* magazine, issue #312. "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax. See also Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A Part IX, posted March 5th, 2007.

* * * * *

In another early encounter which would prove to be fateful — probably at the end of 1972 when Robilar and Tenser were around experience level 4, and Terik not far behind — the adventurers clashed with an NPC controlled by Gary, a portly magic-user known as Otto. There was a quick and brutal melee, and Otto was subdued by Tenser with a Charm Person spell, but not slain.¹⁰⁶ Otto then became a servant to Tenser, although his compelled “loyalty” would not last for long. Otto would soon become a popular character for his jocularly. He would later be described as “a burly chap resembling Friar Tuck, someone always joking and singing and prone to imbibing vast quantities of ale.”¹⁰⁷ He clearly liked to party, and in later years the entertaining spell Otto’s Irresistible Dance would become his most enduring legacy.

¹⁰⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Otto.”

¹⁰⁷ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted June 30th, 2007.



*Otto is my name;
Magic is my game.*

These adventures on dungeon levels two and three did not only force the players to become more team-focused and creative in their problem solving, however. In being forced to create new types of challenges, Gary was already

broadening the horizons of the game. The rapid culmination of good ideas was the result of Arneson's suggestions, Gary's improvisations, and the ever-more-brilliant play by the cunning players themselves. This team process meant that the game would grow at an astounding rate, but it also meant that Gary could not possibly keep up with the ever-increasing spiral of ploy and counter-ploy. He once wrote that after dungeon level two, he would find it necessary to design "a new deeper level every few days."¹⁰⁸

More devious schemes like those of the nixies, the fountain and the covered pits showed great promise, however, and Gary needed every cruel trick he could think of to slow the players down. And so, the dungeon encounters soon became even more complex. Rob would recall that Gary "always made maze-like maps, with down slants, transporters, shifting walls and rooms and other such contraptions and devices to befuddle mappers."¹⁰⁹ The "transporters" Rob refers to were sneaky "teleportation nexuses" which served to baffle the adventures as they endeavored to create a single definitive map of the labyrinth.¹¹⁰

These magical spots were similar to the transporter pads on *Star Trek's* U.S.S. Enterprise, but instead of beaming willing travelers from ship to planet, they zapped unsuspecting adventurers from room to room. Beyond *Star Trek*, Gary probably got this idea of a dungeon teleporter from a scene in Margaret St. Clair's *Sign of the Labrys*, in which the protagonist and his companions use a matter transmission room to escape from pursuers who have chased them throughout a post-apocalyptic underground labyrinth of mold-culture laboratories and fallout chambers. After successfully but quickly transmitting themselves, they end up deeper underground, inside "a tiny, stone-walled room, with an opening in one side."¹¹¹ Even that ploy, however, barely slowed the players down. And more and smarter players were now joining Gary's game all the time!

¹⁰⁸ *Castle Zagyg: The Upper Works*, Troll Lord Games, 2008.

¹⁰⁹ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Q&A with Rob Kuntz. Posted March 27th, 2006.

¹¹⁰ "The transporter also has the benefit of making any dungeon level more difficult to explore and map," Gary wrote, "thus adding to the challenge involved. They are also handy devices to move the player characters to such new and different places as the GM wishes." See ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part VIII, posted March 26th, 2005.

¹¹¹ *Sign of the Labrys*, by Margaret St. Clair. In my 1963 Bantam Book copy, this scene culminates on pp. 103-106.

As Gary once said, “It was a race for me to get more levels done as the player group grew and got more able in their delving.”¹¹² While Gary strove “for the next couple of weeks ... [and] hastened to create the fullness of Castle Greyhawk,”¹¹³ he was confounded by the players’ obsession with the unreachable bottom of the dungeons deep. The City of Greyhawk was fascinating, yes, and wilderness adventures were already being experimented with, but it was always the dungeon which beguiled the players with its spellbinding temptations. He remembered, “The many P[layer] C[haracter]s involved in the campaign wanted to dungeon crawl above all else. As a result, I populated levels hastily, generally without regard for ‘ecology,’ with an aim toward challenge, surprise, and diversity.”¹¹⁴

Gary also began putting in secret passageways which led from the upper dungeon levels down to much deeper labyrinths, so that the dungeon could be enjoyed both by incoming novice players and the near-Hero veterans of the game. These deceptive secret tunnels were seemingly endless, with slopes so gradual that even dwarven miners would have difficulty detecting the descent: “It was [eventually] quite possible,” Gary wrote, “[for characters] to journey downward to the bottom level by an insidious series of slanting passages which began on the second level, but the likelihood of following such a route unknowingly didn’t become too great until the seventh or eighth [dungeon] level.”¹¹⁵ This was by no accident either: “With malice aforethought, I had put in a series of long, slanting passages that took the unwary characters to lower levels unbeknownst to the player.”¹¹⁶ If the players wanted to reach the bottom of the dungeon, eventually Gary would let them. Of course, what they later found there would be entirely unexpected!

Such were life and death, deep in the mazes of Castle Greyhawk.

¹¹² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IV. Posted July 22nd, 2003.

¹¹³ *Dragon Annual* #2. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary Gygax.

¹¹⁴ *Dragon* magazine, issue #287. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

¹¹⁵ *Europa* 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of *Europa* Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

¹¹⁶ *Dragon Annual* #2. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary Gygax.

As this tripartite arms race between [1] man-at-arms and ignominious death; [2] player and referee; and [3] character and monster continued to escalate, Gary found himself always looking farther for more Machiavellian innovations. Fortunately, he would soon have *many* more good ideas than he knew what to do with.

And why? The feedback from all of the remote play test groups was starting to trickle in. Soon, the trickle would become a deluge.



“Run away! Run away!”

CHAPTER 14

RIDDLES, TORTURE, SCREAMS

(DECEMBER 1972 –
SPRING 1973)

OUR CHRONICLE of the real world adventure, outside of the dungeons in Gary's imagination, continues apace as well.¹¹⁷

While letters and calls filled with clever suggestions from Dave Arneson were still being well-received, Gary was also beginning to hear from the other play testers who lived in the “realms afar.” These groups, lacking any crucial foundational wisdom from either Dave's Blackmoor or Gary's Greyhawk, were struggling with (and fascinated by) the cryptic “rule”-filled *grimoires* they had received. The baffled yet patient testers wrote long letters; while the *impatient* ones called Gary's house directly. This was no casual matter in late 1972 and early 1973, when long distance phone calls were expensive, *Time* magazine was running a cover story which stated “Is the U.S. Going Broke?” and a stock market crash was waiting in the wings. Nevertheless, the inquiries came in droves.

As Gary would explain, “At the same time [*as the early Greyhawk play tests*], I received many letters and phone calls each day, all having to do with the draft manuscript of the D&D game I had mailed to fellows across the country.”¹¹⁸ “And boy, did I get a huge reception from that [*mailing*]!”¹¹⁹ In another account, Gary elaborated: “From the end of 1972 on I received much mail and many phone calls. ... Many a telephone call was received after midnight. ... Of course most of the calls were in regards to rules questions or inquiries about how best to handle some aspect of game mastering. As the number of enthusiasts grew, I finally had to have my telephone number ‘unlisted,’ or else I would have had to spend most of each day talking to DMs and players.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ **General Citation:** Significant information in this chapter was derived from: [1] The Crusader Journal #13, [2] Dragon #287, [3] Dragon #294, [4] Dragon #302, [5] Dragon Annual #4, [6] the ENWorld Q&A threads (particularly XIII), [7] Europa 6-8, [8] a Gary Gygax interview at theweem.com, [9] the Ultimate Gary Gygax interview at www.dungeons.it and thekyngdoms.com, [10] Oerth Journal #7, and [11] the Pied Piper Publishing Forums. See also the additional footnotes and annotations cited hereafter.

¹¹⁸ An interview at theweem.com.

¹¹⁹ *40 Years of Gen Con*, by Robin D. Laws, Trident, Inc. (d/b/a Atlas Games), 2007.

¹²⁰ Online interview: *The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax*, conducted by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

For now, however, Gary welcomed all such interruptions as vindications that he and Dave were indeed onto something. They were crafting an amazing, marketable game. The “letters and phone calls that poured in following that [*first*] distribution,” Dave and Gary realized, “confirmed our assumption that the game was destined to be a hit.”¹²¹ These question and answer sessions would soon lead to redesigns in many unexpected directions: “Answering procedural questions encouraged the second draft of triple the size of my initial one.”¹²²

As word of mouth spread, some of the other play testers from Lake Geneva and the surrounding regions simply began showing up on Gary’s doorstep to play the game. Several were strangers, were quite familiar. Specifically, Gary noted, “Soon [*after adding Don, Rob and Terry to the play test*] the weekend sessions included many of the members of our miniatures group, the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association, and nearby wargamers that belonged to the old IFW such as Bill Hoyer.”¹²³ Additional players and characters — these players are named in *The Dragon #7* — were listed as Don Arndt (aka “the High Priest Arnd of Tdon”¹²⁴), Brian Blume (“Rary”), Tom Champeny (playing a nameless neutral priest who would turn to evil¹²⁵), Bill Corey (who favored playing fighting men, one after the other¹²⁶), Bob Dale (who played an evil PC in cahoots with Champeny’s villain¹²⁷), Mary Dale (playing an elven fighter/mage¹²⁸), Chip Mornard (character unknown, but mentioned in dungeon module EX1), Mike Mornard (Gronan the fighter and

¹²¹ *Dragon Annual #4*. “50 Years of Gaming: A 25-Year Retrospective, Plus 25 Years of Fearless Predictions,” by Gary Gygax.

¹²² *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gygax.

¹²³ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII.

¹²⁴ *Dungeon Masters Guide*, pg. 158.

¹²⁵ Refer to the Pied Piper Publishing forums, Otto’s Observatory, “City of Greyhawk.” See also the thread “Greyhawk’s Clerics.”

¹²⁶ Refer to The Collector’s Trove page, The Robert J. Kuntz Collection eBay auction of Sunday, May 15th, 2005.

¹²⁷ Refer to the Dragonsfoot thread “Evil PCs in Greyhawk?”, reply posted September 25th, 2003.

¹²⁸ See Mike Mornard’s comment at the Playing at the World blog, “The First Female Gamers,” reply posted October 6th, 2014.

Lessnard the magic-user, with lots of tales to be told), and Tim Wilson (character unknown).

All of these gamers — as well as the other play-testers — contributed to the final form of the game.”¹²⁹ Not *all* of these players can date their first sessions to early 1973, but certainly many of them can. According to Mike Mornard, “Gary had a pool of approximately 15 to 20 players. Typically, 3 to 4 of us played at a time. And no, the composition was *not* constant. That was part of the fun.”¹³⁰

By the time the new players had experienced their first games, it was clear to Gygas that the play test was a raging success. “Most of the recipients were as enthused about the game as I was,” he noted.¹³¹ The numbers would soon get out of control. By the middle of the year, Gary explained, “At around that time we ran D&D sessions four or five times a week, and sometimes 20 players would show up! That’s when I talked Rob Kuntz into co-DMing the Greyhawk Campaign with me. Just too many PCs for one guy to manage.”¹³²

Regardless, Gary always did his best whenever unexpected players dropped by: “As I was working at home,” he explained, “I did not schedule play sessions, but when a gamer or two dropped in of a day, I made haste to finish immediate work and put on my DM’s hat. Evening games with the regulars were generally schedules a few hours or a day or two ahead.”¹³³ Gary noted that the regulars who lived outside of his own home — Rob Kuntz, Terry Kuntz, and Don Kaye — “were over to play about three or four times a week, minimum.”¹³⁴

¹²⁹ *The Dragon* #7, June 1977. “Gary Gygas on *Dungeons & Dragons*: Origins of the Game,” pg. 7.

¹³⁰ Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboards.

¹³¹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygas Q&A, Part X.

¹³² An interview at theweem.com. See also ENWorld Gary Gygas Q&A Part IX, posted December 5th, 2005. By the way, Gary once noted that he frequently ended his play sessions not “on time,” but rather when the party exited the dungeon. “Parties left the dungeon at the end of a session,” he wrote, “so PCs could get their experience point awards, resupply, and heal.” This guideline became an insisted-upon rule when he was running large play groups through the Greyhawk dungeons.

¹³³ An interview cited at mmorpg.com.

¹³⁴ Online interview: An interview at rpgconsortium.com. See also for example posts at ENWorld Gary Gygas Q&A Part IX, posted on December 5th and 6th, 2005.

The “regulars” of course were Rob, Ernie, Terry and Don. Gary tried to balance the play sessions so that the regulars could play as frequently as possible, while also giving the other players’ characters a simultaneous fighting chance. He once wrote “Whenever possible, I ran the less-experienced players alone or with lower-level ‘flunkie’ PCs of the veterans of the group, giving them a chance to get full XPs. ... The newbies actually often preferred to be along as assistants to the high-level PCs.”¹³⁵

In between adventures escorting the newer players around the upper levels of the dungeon, these experienced players also began to dabble in wilderness adventures. This is probably because the “shallow” dungeon delves did not provide sufficient treasures or experience points, and so the wilderness was turned to as a potentially rich environment with new and unexpected dangers. One article Gary wrote¹³⁶ implies that these adventures began prior to the regulars’ exploration of dungeon level three. Gary gave an example of such play in an early tale entitled *The Giant’s Bag*:

“Four great war horses forced their way through the brush bordering the stream. The party was making its way through the trackless wilderness southeast of the walled city of Greyhawk, seeking monsters to slay and treasure to loot. At the head of the horsemen rode the sorcerer Nestre [*Tenser*], with his elven apprentice close at hand. Behind were two armor-clad fighters, his henchmen and bodyguards. The four followed the tiny watercourse southwards, and eventually came to the place where it fed a broad river; here they dismounted to camp for the night. Trouble came almost immediately thereafter.”¹³⁷

These wilderness journeys kept the experienced regulars entertained, but not for long. They knew that these were just experimental side dishes while next main course was being prepared. Gary now needed not only to create new side encounters to employ in teaching these newcomers, he also needed to create the expanse of dungeon level three.

¹³⁵ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted December 6th, 2005.

¹³⁶ *Dragon* magazine, issue #287. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

¹³⁷ *The Giant’s Bag* can be found in various places online, for example at Grodog’s Greyhawk site.

* * * * *

“It is out of the lore and experience of the ancients ... the powers of the Un-Dead. When they become such, there comes with the change the curse of immortality; they cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world; for all that die from the preying of the Un-Dead becomes themselves Un-Dead, and prey on their kind. And so the circle goes on ever widening, like as the ripples from a stone thrown in the water ...”

— Dracula, by Bram Stoker

Level three would be a true nightmare for even the best players to map, and it may have simply been called “the Cells” as a reflection of its door density. This may have been a mess made up of hundreds of tiny 10’x10’ rooms. These cell blocks, in turn, were like the spokes of a wheel, surrounding the “hub” of a central torture chamber.¹³⁸ And many of the cells were not empty, either. Considerable numbers of them were filled with the corpses and skeletons of forgotten victims from the unknown former Lord of Castle Greyhawk’s reign. And in a magical world, such restless spirits would surely return to life as the hateful undead. Monster types featured here included skeletons, zombies, ghouls and wights. Gary got the idea of the latter monster from the Barrow Wights, featured in Tolkien’s *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

“... They set this idol [of Jagannath Temple] upon a car with great reverence, well arrayed with cloths of gold, of rich cloths of Tartary, of Camaka, and other precious cloths. ... And before the car go first in procession all the maidens of the country, two and two together ...

¹³⁸ Europa 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of Europa Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

“And after those maidens go the pilgrims. And some of them fall down under the wheels of the car, and let the car go over them, so that they be dead anon. And some have their arms or their limbs all to-broken, and some the sides ...”

— *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, Anonymous

Although the details are perpetually hazy, this may have also been the level which featured a nigh-indestructible automaton known only as the Juggernaut. As Rob Kuntz once hinted, “The Juggernaut was on an early level too. Player reaction when nearing its known area? Avoid!”¹³⁹ We can well imagine that one or more unfortunate mercenaries were steam-rolled by this unstoppable monstrosity. Curiously however, this classic monster would not be featured in a published Gygaxian dungeon until 1985’s *Super Dungeon Module T1-4, The Temple of Elemental Evil*. As such, it is an old school monster which few players have ever seen in play.

Running from the Juggernaut or undead swarms, however, could be just as perilous as standing to fight. The pit traps, already dangerous on levels one and two, began to become diabolical. Gary remembered, “By the time the characters had progressed to 3rd level or beyond, the threat of taking [*one to six points of*] damage wasn’t dismaying. Ah-hah! I came up with a solution for this. Put spikes in the bottom of the pit, and the damage is increased by a considerable amount.”¹⁴⁰

As if all of these deathtraps were not enough, the center of level three beyond the torture chamber featured Gary’s most hated creation of all. At the time, he was merely looking for a way to spice up the monotony of the level. He had mapped in a complex of interconnected rooms in the level’s center, and one huge room in particular had nothing interesting inside of it. Thinking about the cruel experiments implied by the prison cells and the torture chamber, Gary decided that this would be an alchemical laboratory where the mad denizens of the dungeon had conducted nefarious experiments on flesh as well as machine. We are reminded again of the mad wizard’s experiments in the dungeons featured in Robert E. Howard’s Conan tale, *The Scarlet Citadel*.

¹³⁹ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums.

¹⁴⁰ *Dragon* magazine, issue #294. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

But also, this scene might have been partly inspired by St. Clair's *Sign of the Labrys*, in which one underground zone "had been designed as the laboratory level, but there had been a foul-up during its construction." This level had a deadly trap set up by one of the underworld denizens:

*"Somebody in the lab up ahead has hauled a big X-ray machine up close to the wall. ... The beam is going across the corridor at about the height of a man's heart. It might not kill you for a while. But there are an awful lot of roentgens there."*¹⁴¹

Further, Dragonsfoot forum poster "Xabloyan" also once noticed¹⁴² that there are some strange similarities between Castle Greyhawk's laboratory scene and a Doc Savage novel, initially published as *Repel!* (1937) and later as *The Deadly Dwarf* (1968). In that story, a stunted criminal mastermind — basically Dr. Evil and Mini Me bundled up all in one — discovers a rare and treasured force-generating netherworld metal of volcanic origin, known as "the Repel." This substance — when carefully adapted and housed in a calibrated shell of metallic stone — can be used to create a reverse gravity engine: "A theory was once advanced that gravity," we read, "is the pulling force of a deposit of some substance in the approximate center of the earth."¹⁴³ This metal is used to create a "cannon" and other devices which cause the victims to be "knocked down, *carried backward*, thrown high into the air."¹⁴⁴

Emphasis mine on that "carried backward" bit, by the way.

Whatever the chief inspiration among these disparate ideas was, it allowed the genesis of one of the finest villains in the Greyhawk campaign. Gary, likely considering these influences, situated a very similar wheeled apparatus (which we might now interpret as an infernal, mad science contraption of "Steampunk" origin,

¹⁴¹ *Sign of the Labrys*, by Margaret St. Clair. In my 1963 Bantam Books copy, the salient details for this example appear on pg. 20 and pg. 24.

¹⁴² Refer to Dragonsfoot.org, "Inventory of levels / sublevels in EGG / RJK's Castle Greyhawk."

¹⁴³ *The Deadly Dwarf*, by Kenneth Robeson. In my 1968 edition of the novel, this quote is on pg. 101.

¹⁴⁴ *The Deadly Dwarf*, pg. 103.

or even a post-apocalyptic mechanism) in the center of Castle Greyhawk's enormous subterranean laboratory, and then created an evil insane dwarf to run its engine. This villain would share some resonance with Cadwiller Olden, the dwarven mastermind featured in the Doc Savage story.¹⁴⁵

The name of *this* dwarf, an invective soon to be spoken only in disgust, was Obmi.

You can find descriptions of foul-mouthed Obmi in Gary's *Gord the Rogue* novels, as well as Dungeon Module G3, *Hall of the Fire Giant King*. Obmi is "a grossly fat but very strong, and quite fast renegade" who became known for his "Snidely Whiplash"-caliber escapades and escapes. For this first encounter, Obmi was given a troop of bootlicking gnolls — hyena-like humanoids — who would cackle at his exploits and defend him to the death. He was also given a Mjolnir-like magic hammer, as well as a pair of boots of speed which made him almost impossible to catch.

* * * * *

Level three would challenge and frustrate just about every player, but it seems that one of the first excursions there was actually a solo adventure by Robilar. Robilar by that time was at least a 3rd level fighter and close to leveling up,¹⁴⁶ being arguably the most powerful player character in the game. Emboldened, Rob Kuntz decided that he would enjoy his unique station (as being too old to be sent to bed like Ernie and Elise, and too young to be expected to work full-time) by running some daring solo adventures refereed by Gary up in the study. Provided with such a golden opportunity, how could he refuse?

As Rob tells the story of that adventure:

¹⁴⁵ Amusingly, the Doc Savage tale hints that Cadwiller Olden turns to a career of evil supremacy simply because he is compensating for his dwarfism in the macho world of 1930s America: "He was so small he got sensitive as heck about it, so he got himself all fired up with the idea of becoming a very big shot over ordinary-sized people. He took the quickest way of getting power ..."

¹⁴⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar defeat" as well as "Goddess of Luck."

The wily Robilar snuck down through oft-memorized corridors, torch in hand, making his way deep into the Cells. He came to a long corridor lined with prison doors and oubliettes to either side. As he was passing one set of doors, an undead wight shambled out to feast on his tasty life force. Suppressing a scream, Robilar fled up the passage and rounded a corner. But instead of finding an escape route, he found another cell block, and a second wight crawling out to take his life! He turned around in desperation, only to behold the horrific sight of the first wight clawing its way around the corner. He was trapped. Grimly vowing to fight to the very end, he gripped the haft of his sword, slid its blade out from the scabbard, and suddenly —



*Death is not the end.
Go down fighting regardless.*

Boom!

The door banged open in Gary's study. In came Gary's frazzled wife, Mary. She had had quite enough with the midnight calls, the strangers, the dining room table dominated by laughing children, Gary sleeping on the couch and no end (or "serious" job prospect for Gary, for that matter) yet in sight. She slammed the door open and screamed, "You're always playing this game!" More screams and curses, another slam, and stomping down the hall. Gary, massaging his temples, muttered that Rob should roll a single die. If he rolled well, the entire late night session was just a dream. Rob rolled, and poof! Robilar survived the wight, Gary survived his wife, and for a while all was well.

At around this time (and this is purely a coincidence, I'm sure), Gary "decided" that it was time to move the entire play test out of the house and down into the basement. As he wryly noted in a later interview, "When the first dungeon forays were staged upstairs, the winter of 1972, the dining room became a popular gaming spot most days of the week. To avoid spousal wrath, we soon moved RPG activity to the basement, playing on a flat table that replaced the one covered with sand."¹⁴⁷ As one player described the new location, "We didn't enter the house proper, but entered directly into the basement, which had an outside entrance. The basement held Gary's shoe repair shop. Gary was set up behind the shop's counter, with his dice, rules and maps. The rest of us were crowded into a small open area in front of the counter, next to his machines."¹⁴⁸

Later play tests in the dungeon went rather better, from what I understand. Electrum coins (half dollars!) were common here, a heavy treasure finally worth carrying ... provided enough men-at-arms were left alive to lug the packs, of course. Level three saw many skirmishes and close calls, and Elise bowed out of the game around this time (with her cleric only at level 3),¹⁴⁹ while the other experienced characters — Murlynd, Otto (played indirectly by Gary), Robilar, Tenser and Terik — likely reached experience levels 4 and 5. Robilar became the game's first Hero,

¹⁴⁷ An interview at theweem.com.

¹⁴⁸ Willlegal.net, "The Iron Brigade."

¹⁴⁹ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III. Posted July 5th, 2005.

huzzah! Things were going well, until the group finally discovered the central magic laboratory ... and Obmi.



*“And I would have gotten away with it,
If it wasn’t for you meddling kids!”*

The great door into the laboratory was opened. The room beyond was huge, bigger than any the adventurers had yet seen. They had only a few moments to size up the place, with a bulky silhouette in the center of the room. Around this

looming thing were the sniveling, hulking gnolls, all creeping out from the shadows to either side of the door. The gnoll guards were mercilessly dispatched, and the heroes quickly charged into the room. More gnolls marched out to meet them, pushing at the silhouette which proved to be a machine, while a fat dwarf bumped out to leer and enjoy the proceedings.

Gary told the tale like this: “Even as they dropped the last of the ugly humanoids, there appeared Obmi and his assistants ‘with some odd device on wheels.’ The party’s rush to assail the new foes suddenly landed them all well outside the complex [*zapped by the machine’s repulsor ray*], wondering what had happened. They immediately made a second attempt, and this time some of the characters made their saves [*against the magic ray*]. These retreated hastily nonetheless, when [*gnoll-shot*] arrows and blows from the dwarven [*hammer*] wrought their own special ‘magic.’”¹⁵⁰

Every time the party tried to push their way back into the laboratory, they met only with the repulsor beam and Obmi’s grating laughter. The bizarre machine also created a confounding illusion which convinced the adventurers that were still charging forward, even as they were being pushed back.¹⁵¹ Eventually the heroes were forced to leave the dungeon in defeat. It was time to go back to the taverns in the City of Greyhawk, to bitch and moan, and to get drunk.

Scheming over too many goblets of wine and mead, the characters decided that they would heal, wipe out level three, and find *some* way into the secret laboratory. (Invisibility, supplemented by sleep spells, seems a likely prospect.) This was not just a matter of treasure hunting, it was a matter of pride. Robilar and Tenser probably both reached experience levels 6 and 5 in all of the ensuing battles. More monsters were dispatched, many more were avoided. Somehow, with the aid of much magic, the group finally managed to sneak back into the laboratory undetected. They had many reinforcements this time. The machine was zapped by Tenser’s Lightning Bolt, and Obmi gave a startled cry. The shaky gnolls formed up in their battle lines, but the heroes had the advantage. One by one the cackling gnolls fell, fighting to the death for their beloved Master Obmi. At last, the gnolls were utterly annihilated and the sniveling Obmi, with a giant-felling hammer

¹⁵⁰ *Dragon* magazine, issue #287. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

¹⁵¹ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Up on a Soapbox.”

clutched in his hand, prepared for battle. He raised the hammer at the bloodied intruders, and —

He ran away like Hell.

This time, the screams of outrage were not from Gary's wife, but rather the cheated players. They had planned to take Obmi down for days, and the plan to that point had worked perfectly. So of course Gary had the outnumbered dwarf scurrying out of the room like the Road Runner, spinning his enchanted feet and hurling curses out behind him.

He was fat, slow, and stunty. The party ran after him, certain that they would catch him.

Obmi had magical boots of speed. He got away.¹⁵² More cries of indignation! As Gary told the tale, "That vocal hostility made it certain that Obmi would live on for a long time, naturally. The first real villain of Greyhawk Castle was thus born."¹⁵³

Gary by the way would later recall Obmi as his all-time favorite villain in all of *Dungeons & Dragons*. "All of the players who encountered him rapidly came to despise Obmi and want[ed] to see him extirpated," Gary wrote. "Of course, that was why he kept coming back."¹⁵⁴

While Obmi did get away, one of the side effects of this whole misadventure is that the party felt the need to add even more minions to ensure their martial superiority. Otto hit experience level 4, and grew resentful of "Master" Tenser. Not only had he been magically compelled into servitude, he was made to take orders and chase nasty dwarves! Otto therefore left Tenser's service, but the opportunistic Robilar made him an offer he could not refuse. From that day

¹⁵² While not escalating the matter quite to the point of cheating, Gary wrote that Obmi possessed "whatever defensive items ... he needed" to escape, and he "made sure he [Obmi] had logical means of evading pursuit."

¹⁵³ *Dragon* magazine, issue #287. "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax. Gary also wrote of Obmi that his players "hated him thoroughly, [and] always did their utmost to finish him off."

¹⁵⁴ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part II. Posted February 22nd, 2003. See also Part IV, posted November 12th, 2003.

forward, Otto would be Robilar's willing sidekick.¹⁵⁵ Later Otto would get an apprentice of his own, a wizened and beleaguered chap with magic-user and sage abilities named Herb.¹⁵⁶

Robilar acquired some elves as henchmen, too.¹⁵⁷ We do not exactly when this occurred, but this dungeon level three timeframe seems the most likely moment, considering that (a) there were ghouls on level three, and only elves were immune to their paralyzing attacks; (b) Robilar had suffered a near-death experience with the undead; and (c) the overall party sought many reinforcements to deal with Obmi. Tenser, meanwhile, acquired a dwarf henchman of his own to make up for Otto's shift in allegiance.¹⁵⁸

Although Obmi had defied the heroes, the party was now strong enough to be ready for dungeon level four. That, of course, meant that Gary suddenly had a lot more designing to do.

* * * * *

Following from level three's ominous concepts of the torture chamber, the evil experiments, the bone-crushing machines and the prison cells, Gary's sinister theme for dungeon level four would be "The Crypts." Slides and chutes between the mid-levels of Castle Greyhawk are mentioned, and so perhaps there were "dumping chutes" which had been used by the torturers to send dead bodies and pulverized bones down to horrific mass graves on dungeon level four. The level also featured sealed treasure vaults and tombs, which may have belonged to the more esteemed personages from Castle Greyhawk's fabled past. No one knows for sure. What is certain, however, is that level four was filled with the undead and

¹⁵⁵ *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7. Produced by the Council of Greyhawk, June 15th, 1998.

¹⁵⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums.

¹⁵⁷ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Hey Rob!"

¹⁵⁸ Note that this might have been on dungeon level two, because Gary mentioned NPCs used to detect hidden traps; but those NPCs were probably low-level dwarves.

other nasty monsters.¹⁵⁹ There would be more skeletons, zombies, ghouls and wights than on level three. Even worse, a new monster appeared at about this time: the mighty and oft-forgotten “thoul.”



Regenerating undead troll-kith.

Not cool.

¹⁵⁹ *Europa* 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of *Europa* Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

Gary enjoyed these Lovecraftian beasties, because they were horrifying and hard to kill. But due to a strange series of later omissions (1974-1980), thouls were frequently hinted at, yet rarely detailed in any published versions of *Dungeons & Dragons* prior to 1981.

Therefore, few players of the later game *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (1979-1985) ever knew what the fabled thouls actually *were*. Gary once inquired of his curious fans who were asking questions about these creatures, “What’s so bizarre about a ghoul-troll? They just are not in the general undead pantheon, if you will, but they make great monsters that paralyze and regenerate and are much tougher to turn than are ghouls or even ghosts.”¹⁶⁰

For those who enjoy lost snippets of Greyhawk lore, from the many hints provided I recommend the following OSR game statistics for these creatures:

* * * * *

THOUL

FREQUENCY: *Very Rare*

NO. APPEARING: 1-6 (1d6)

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVE: 12"

HIT DICE: 4+2 (4d8+2)

% IN LAIR: 15%

TREASURE TYPE: B, Q, R, S, T

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 (Claw / Claw) (THAC0 15)

DAMAGE / ATTACK: 2-8 / 2-8 (2d4 / 2d4)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Paralyzation (per successful attack; successful victim saving*

¹⁶⁰ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VIII. Posted March 12th, 2005.

throw indicates immunity for 1d20+20 rounds)

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Immune to Holy Water; Immune to Sleep and Charm;*

Regeneration (1 hit point per round, unless in sunlight); Turned as Spectres

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Average (with exceptional cunning)*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic Evil*

SIZE: *M*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack / Defense Modes: *Nil*

LEVEL / X. P. VALUE: *V / 320 + 5 / hit point*

The loathsome *thoul* has no mythological precedent. Rather, it is a metagame-inspired hybrid of a troll and a ghoul, with both paralytic and regenerative powers. Thouls appear as ghouls, although they are instilled with an horrific undead vitality which causes their pallid flesh to take on a deathly crimson hue. Thouls are occasionally found alone. More frequently, they are discovered leading ghoul packs, or in troll lairs where death-worshipping troll shamans are present. Once a thoul attacks, it will fight until destroyed.¹⁶¹

Thouls suffer terrible damage if they are exposed to sunlight, at the rate of 1 hit point per round of exposure. This damage cannot be regenerated and must be slowly healed in total darkness at the rate of 1 hit point per day.

* * * * *

And there you have it. If you're designing a mega-dungeon nasty enough to include some Old Guard Kobolds, make certain that you place some thoul crypts in the deeps as well!¹⁶²

These nasty things would have been perfectly suited for catacombs in the darker dungeons beneath Castle Greyhawk. And they were probably not even the

¹⁶¹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld forums, "Gygaxian Monsters."

¹⁶² Refer to the Dragonsfoot forums, "Monster & Treasure Assortment."

deadliest monsters on the level! Following Gary's emerging theme of deadly "specials" in the hidden areas secreted in each level (the nixies on level two for example, and Obmi on level three), the deepest crypts might have even featured one or more powerful undead "lords" to command such fiends, such as wraiths, mummies, spectres, ghosts or even a vampire.

There were surely non-undead monsters as well. Later stories printed by Gary imply that this level may have even had a giant scorpion, or a pit full of hungry crocodiles; these creatures probably appeared in the campaign in the spring of 1973.

The worst and surprising monster of all, however, was not even placed on the map in Gary's design. It was a randomly encountered demon of the pits! That is a tale which we will consider shortly hereafter.

As the diabolical map and key for dungeon level four both took on their final shape, Gary sketched in some more of the ever-hated pits. The pit traps were nastier than even before: Gary took time to "deepen the pits to 20, 30, or more feet, [*so that*] yet more harm is inflicted on the unfortunate victim. [*I would also*] add trapdoors [*to*] close after the subject falls into the pit, so that the character scouting ahead seems to disappear without a trace ..." ¹⁶³

Such deathtraps surely justified greater rewards for the survivors. Beginning with level four, Gary amply rewarded the tireless explorers with the mythical lure of gold. Scatterings of gold coins had been found on the earlier levels, but it was only in the Crypts that significant stashes of gold pieces began to crop up regularly in treasure hordes. ¹⁶⁴ Treasures in the tombs may have also included small caches of gems, funereal pieces of jewelry. There were even magical baubles, such as scrolls, potions, magical weapons, and (later) a cleverly-concealed ring of invisibility.

We do not know precisely how long Gary took to create level four, but with all of the other things going on, it was taking him longer and longer to create each level. Fiendish monsters and more devious traps slowed down the party's explorations, but he needed to keep making the dangers worse to keep the game at a reasonable pace. The design gap between dungeon levels one and two was only a day or two, while levels three and four were added "every few days" as the

¹⁶³ *Dragon* magazine, issue #294. "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax.

¹⁶⁴ *Dragon* magazine, issue #302. "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax.

game progressed.¹⁶⁵ But soon thereafter, it appears that Gary started to slow down as he needed to focus on rules rewrites, introductory sessions for new players, correspondence with play testers, the design of the City of Greyhawk, and mundane work and chores. He also had a family to attend to! Once in a while, he may have even slept.

* * * * *

The adventurers had a difficult time on level four, and due to the influx of new players to the Greyhawk campaign the “veterans” (Ernie, Don, Rob and Terry) would sometimes find themselves leading newcomers into the dungeon. While Gary trusted the veterans to show the new people how to play, greed would occasionally get the best of the vets and interesting situations could occur.

One of the most memorable involved Terik, probably as a Hero (perhaps a 5th or 6th level fighting man by this time), leading what Rob once kindly termed “a party of newbies (out-of-town fans who had never played in Castle Greyhawk).”¹⁶⁶

Seeking his own share of Robilar’s glory, Terik led this group and they snuck all the way down to the Crypts and began poking around for treasure. Terik was at that time the only character who had discovered a magic weapon, a +2 sword. Unfortunately, as his group wandered the halls, the referee (Gary) rolled a wandering monster encounter. The subsequent roll of twelve on two dice indicated something extremely dangerous had found the unlucky adventurers: a Balrog! Gary probably chuckled inwardly at this; it seems that he loved to annoy Terry with wandering monsters, because Terry always responded to the annoyance with anger. And this encounter was going to be a bad one!¹⁶⁷

The level 1 “newbies” cowered, and the trapped Terik drew his sword and prayed for the best. A desperate melee ensued. The Balrog burst into flames, brandishing its burning sword and thorny whip. Terik managed to dodge these

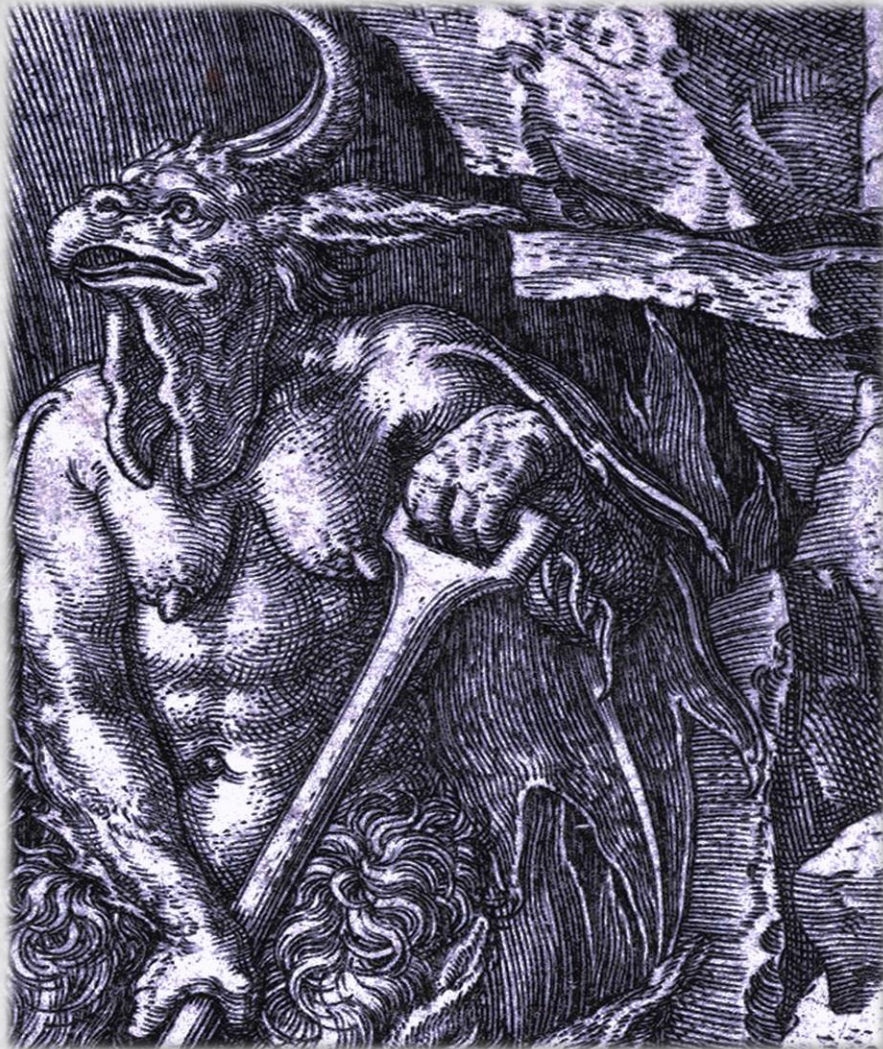
¹⁶⁵ *Castle Zagyg: The Upper Works*, Troll Lord Games, 2008.

¹⁶⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums.

¹⁶⁷ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Terik.”

attacks, twice each, and struck two telling blows for a total of 18 hit points of damage.

Impressed by Terik's boldness and these significant blows, Gary finally relented and rolled the Balrog's hit points. Terry's brother Rob was watching over Gary's shoulder, and saw that Gary had rolled poorly. The Balrog was a scrawny specimen of its kind, with only 18 hit points to its name. Terik the Mighty had single-handedly slain the puniest Balrog of the deeps!



“Ndulu sad.

Ndulu exiled up to dungeon level four.”

* * * * *

Terik had another amusing and very unlikely pair of encounters at about this time, although it is impossible to place the incidents concretely in the chronology. Nevertheless, the quick-and-cryptic tale is too good to pass up, so here it is:

Not to be outdone by his brother Rob and Robilar (who had secured the services of Quij), Terik made certain to subdue a heroic mercenary of his own. In Terik's case, he managed to net an even stronger hench-monster than the mighty Quij: He "subdued and had in service an ogre," Gary once wrote. But as is often the case in the perilous mazes of chaos beneath the Castle, something unpredictable occurred: "In an encounter, that character [*i.e.*, *Terik's new hench-ogre*] was bitten by a werebear, and in time became an ogre-werebear."

This created quite a problem, because the creature now had a schizophrenic good/evil and lawful / chaotic temperament to contend with. But instead of declaring that the poor were-ogre had simply gone mad, Gary was merciful: "A series of [*dice*] checks discovered that the ogre became True Neutral in alignment, because of the different natures involved."¹⁶⁸

So as soon as Oerth's next full moon rolled around, Terik was gifted with the best henchman of all: a loyal 9'-tall ogre who turned into a colossal war-bear-slash-were-bear whenever got angry.

Beorn, eat your heart out!

(Just don't forget to feed him.)

* * * * *

Other adventures during this time involved the explorers wiping out infestations of undead, clearing out monster lairs, and finding impressive piles of the prized golden coins. Gary once observed in admiration: "When piles of gold coins were concerned, the lengths the players would go to make sure their PCs got the

¹⁶⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII.

lot were usually astonishing, often amusing, and sometimes the cause of great consternation to the characters as monsters reacted to what was going on.”¹⁶⁹

Despite the value of the gold, the time it took each party to find the coin piles, then to sort out the “worthless” copper and silver, and finally to haul the load slowly up out of the dungeon meant that even more wandering monsters were encountered. Eventually, the more savvy players would wise up and ignore virtually *all* coins as treasure, but that was in the distant future.¹⁷⁰

While all of this was going on, other developments were beginning to change the nature of the Greyhawk campaign. Questions from play testers which pointed out severely imbalanced rules needed to be addressed, with further implications for Gary’s game. New players kept coming in, while the veterans hit experience levels 6 and 7, and formerly new players gained characters of 2nd or even 3rd level. Gary could no longer predict who would show up to game, what the power level of the party would be, or even where the adventurers would choose to go. He needed more levels, restocking of early levels, and he had to be ready for anything!

As Gary remembered, “The group, increasing by a couple of players every week or so, roamed and romped joyfully through the levels. Although I increased the strength and numbers of the monsters, the frequency and deadliness of tricks and traps, as the levels descended, the skill of play and arsenal of weapons more than kept pace with my Dungeon Masterly impediments to progress.”¹⁷¹

Also, it seems that Rob Kuntz may have been allowed more than a few glimpses at Gary’s techniques. Not only had he observed solo sessions held for other players, he also had his intuition and memory to draw on. Gary could not hide his techniques from Rob for very long. As Rob began to gather these peeks behind the curtain into a wider tapestry of understanding, his knowledge of the game — along with the excellent dungeon maps the group was continuing to acquire — would inspire him to create some sample dungeons of his own.

Robert J. Kuntz would call his own ruined castle El Raja Key (“the RJK”), and he created his own first few labyrinthine dungeon levels within four weeks of his very first game in Gary’s Castle Greyhawk. In the beginning, El Raja Key was purely

¹⁶⁹ *Dragon* magazine, issue #302. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

¹⁷⁰ *Dragon* magazine, issue #302. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

¹⁷¹ *Dragon Annual* #2. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary Gygax.

a dungeon environment. As Rob once noted, by that time he had “designed no supporting town or city as [*Gary*] had.”¹⁷² But the overall dungeon was clearly inspired by Castle Greyhawk: “El Raja Key is the Castle created by the wizard of the same name,” Rob once explained. “It has peculiar magical qualities, that is all I will say on it for now.”¹⁷³

Soon, in January 1973, Gary would feel the need to create his own characters and to experience the play test from “the other side,” as a dungeoneering player. Gary’s first characters, including Yrag the fighting man and spell-slinger Mordenkainen, would enjoy (and suffer through) some of their best adventures in Rob’s convoluted dungeon.

Yrag was created first. Gary, like any other player, was at the mercy of the dice. He must have rolled a character with high Strength, because he decided to play a Fighting Man. He named this first unlikely hero, a mirror reflection of himself in that imaginary world, as Yrag. We catch a fleeting glimpse of Yrag in Dungeon Module *WG5, Mordenkainen’s Fantastic Adventure*. There, he is described by Gygax as being “a stout and hardy man, flaxen haired, and normally dressed in grey and green robes.”

Yrag would live through many adventures to become a founding member of Gygax’s famous and misunderstood gathering of his favored player characters, the Circle of Eight, alongside the wizards Mordenkainen and Bigby, Rigby the cleric, Zigby the dwarf lord, Felnorith the elven lord (initially created as Yrag’s bodyguard), and the venturesome twin elven fighter/magic-users Vram and Vin.¹⁷⁴ These characters would later reside in the Obsidian Citadel, where a not-yet-familiar archmage would lead them.

¹⁷² Lord of the Green Dragons blog by Rob Kuntz.

¹⁷³ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Q&A with Rob Kuntz.

¹⁷⁴ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gyax Q&A, Part IV. See also *Dragon* #318.



*Jovial and reckless,
constantly getting himself into serious scrapes ...*

Spake the warlike Lemminkäinen:

*“Wizards often have bewitched me,
And the fascinating serpents;
Lapland wizards, three in number ...
Once bewitched me with their magic.*

...

*“Horribly the wizards threatened,
Tried to sink me with their magic,
In the water of the marshes,
In the mud and treacherous quicksand,
To my chin in mire and water;
But I too was born a hero,
Born a hero and magician,
Was not troubled by their magic.”*

— *The Kalevala: The Epic Poem of Finland*, as translated by John Martin Crawford

Although he enjoyed his fighter, Gary soon relegated Yrag to secondary status so that he could play his new and soon-to-be-favorite persona, a magic-user named Mordenkainen (pronounced More-den-KAY-nen).¹⁷⁵ Gary once noted (in *Dragon* #318) that this mage character was created so that he could overcome magical problems in Rob’s dungeon that might prove too tricky for Yrag to triumph over. In naming this new character, Gary was inspired by the appearance of the Finnish

¹⁷⁵ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XII.

wizards Väinämöinen and Lemminkäinen¹⁷⁶ in the tale *The Green Magician* by L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt.¹⁷⁷

“The background I created for Mordenkainen,” Gary said, “was Finnish-like in nature, and his master was a chap called Old Waino [*Anglicized Väinämöinen*].” We learn from Jim Ward’s and Rob Kuntz’s *Deities & Demigods* that in their D&D conceptions, Väinämöinen is the “greatest hero and minstrel ... called ‘Son of Wind’ by his friends and enemies alike,” while Lemminkäinen is “jovial and reckless, constantly getting himself into serious scrapes.”¹⁷⁸ Mordenkainen, through play in Rob Kuntz’s dungeons, would certainly live up to both of these ancestral legacies!

Gary described his most famous character this way: “Mordenkainen I pictured as tall, lean, with a pale complexion tanned by sun and weather. His features are sharp, eyes gray. His hair is rather bushy, with a long moustache but no beard. He favors garments of gray with black or bright blue accents — girdle and blouse for example. His age appears to be somewhere around 50.”¹⁷⁹ Mordenkainen’s exact stats remain elusive (the version published in the *Rogues Gallery* was according to GygaX not correct), but we know that he was Oeridian, possessed an 18 Intelligence and was True Neutral in alignment, trending toward Chaos and Good.¹⁸⁰

In later life — as he sought to attain the same power and majesty as Väinämöinen — his favorite spells would include Conjure Elemental, Wall of Force, Energy Drain, and of course many dweomers of his own creation. Through extended play over several decades, Mordenkainen would eventually rise into the mid-twenty experience levels. Through such experiences, Gary would come to prefer the magic-user class above all other modes of play. “The options for [*magic-*

¹⁷⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Original Circle / Citadel of Eight.”

¹⁷⁷ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part XIII.

¹⁷⁸ *Deities & Demigods*, TSR, 1980.

¹⁷⁹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part XIII. Posted June 30th, 2007.

¹⁸⁰ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part VII. Posted February 5th, 2005.

users] are more interesting to me than are those for most other classes,” he wrote.¹⁸¹ This certainly sheds some light on why magic-users have the widest array of choices and powers in the entire game!

Rob would referee Gary through solo adventures when Gary had completed his work for the day, and Gary would play a main character and several others as henchmen (so that Rob would not be forced to modify his setting to facilitate truly solitaire play).¹⁸²

Gary would not have much time to play in the beginning, however. He once explained: “I was very much engrossed in game creation then, devising mechanics and writing rules and in between time making dungeon levels and populating them for the ever-growing group of players I had continually knocking on the door for adventure sessions.”¹⁸³

I should note here that Rob is in the process of writing his memoirs, and his El Raja Key CD archive has been released, and I feel that the most significant events pertaining to the exploration of El Raja Key should be left for Rob to tell. Dave and Gary are sadly no longer with us, but Rob is still writing, designing and playing as the most experienced living master of the game. Therefore, in this book and at this time I will share only those adventures which Gary himself widely shared with the reading public. These tales include escapades which I refer to as **The Feast of Yrag**, **The Unfound Horn of Blasting**, **The Training of the Black Pudding**, and **The Diamond Onslaught Caper**.¹⁸⁴ All of these tales are tentatively dated to 1973, perhaps beginning with the Feast of Yrag early in the year.

* * * * *

¹⁸¹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VI. Posted February 9th, 2004.

¹⁸² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VI. Posted March 1st, 2004.

¹⁸³ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VIII. Posted March 1st, 2005.

¹⁸⁴ These highly amusing adventure tales can be found in *Dragon* issues #289, #292, #304, and #306, and are alluded to in issue #318.

The Feast of Yrag

Once, when adventuring in the shallower levels of the dungeons beneath El Raja Key, Yrag struggled through pits, spear traps and dens filled with venomous serpents and centipedes. This never-ending gauntlet of obvious perils was broken when the dauntless fighter crept into a vast and well-lit chamber, where he discovered a merrymaking man sitting at table. A sumptuous feast was laid out before him. The man cheerily welcomed Yrag in, and invited him to share in the feast and to rest from his laborious struggles through the labyrinth.

Gary, not quite knowing what to expect from this surprising turn of events, decided to play the scene diplomatically. Yrag walked into the room, ready to share a meal with the goodly fellow, and suddenly the floor crumbled away beneath him. He suffered minor wounds as he tumbled into the pit. Gary reveals another classic use of iron spikes in his telling of the tale: Yrag huffed, pounded some iron spikes into the wall, and carefully climbed up this makeshift ladder until he finally managed to escape.

He saw to his bafflement that the good man was acting as if nothing surprising had transpired. Instead of expressing shock or dismay at Yrag's tumble, he was sipping wine and savoring the roasted fowl. Yrag stumbled forward. "Yes, come," the jolly man said (or something quite like it). "Sit, rest! Enjoy, for there is still plenty to be had!" Still off-balance, Gary decided that Yrag should sit down at the table and pretend that nothing had happened. He tasted the ale, and then the potatoes. Poison!

Yrag made his saving throw. This outright death threat proved to be too much — even for the slow-witted fighter — and so he leapt up with blade drawn and hacked the old man in two. But alas, behold! The man was merely an illusion, and he wisped away into only a few glittery whorls of shadow-stuff. The illusion shattered, melting away more of the deceptive scene. Yrag was horrified to see that the table was ancient and filthy, piled with rotten food and cups of poison. He decided to make the best of a grave situation, and searched the entire room for treasure. What else had the illusionary veils been hiding?

He walked into an alcove, and another trap was sprung. Yrag escaped, cursing and badly wounded. Furious, he hacked the table and chairs to bits so that no other unsuspecting adventurers might fall prey to the chamber's accursed magics.

In doing so, he shattered the table and heard something crystalline tumble chiming to the floor. A gem! And not only valuable, but magical: the secret and malicious thing had been the source of the illusion all the while. He carefully pocketed his hard-won find, and later sold it for thousands of gold pieces.

* * * * *



“This horn is getting boring. Where should I hide it?”

The Unfound Horn of Blasting

On another adventure — presumably, when he was wiser and more powerful — Yrag managed to procure a ring of wishes. Gary wanted his fighter to have a horn of blasting, a mighty treasure capable of deafening foes, stunning them, and even causing castle walls to tumble to the ground. Yrag was about level 8 or 9 at this time, and was hoping to build his own stronghold or to conquer that of a foe. The horn would surely help Yrag to defeat his high-level opponents during a siege. However, Gary was fully aware (having designed the rules himself) that the Wish spell is a carefully-laid trap of opportunity. The more greedy and lazy the Wish is, the more likely it is to backfire and to cause some kind of ironic calamity. Therefore, instead of wishing for a horn of blasting directly he wished to learn the location of a horn that he might find after an arduous adventure.

Rob decided that this was a reasonable use of a powerful spell, and so Yrag would learn the remote location of an undiscovered horn. He was above ground when he uttered the Wish, and a gusty wind arose. He heard the sound of fluttering paper, and turning he saw that a map had gotten tangled in a nearby bush. Rushing to claim it, he reached out. But the wind gusted again, and the map skittered away from him across the ground. He ran after it and managed to snatch it before it blew away entirely.

The map revealed a nearby stretch of wilderness, with a ruined stronghold indicated prominently. Yrag recognized a few landmarks and knew where the ruins would be. He embarked on a quest to recover the treasure, traveling alone. He was attacked by monsters, wounded, and while triumphant his journey was slowed by the demands of rest and healing. The fighter eventually discovered the ruin and explored its many chambers. Traps were sprung, more monsters were vanquished. Finally he discovered a vast chamber filled with bones. Investigating, he recognized the limb-bones and vertebrae of a monstrous hydra slain long ago. He looked about warily. Would the bones animate and attack? Where was the horn of blasting?

Searching carefully, he discovered a pair of runes reading “HB” inscribed over one farther door. Gary wittily deduced that this stood for “Hydra Barracks.” Deciding that the chamber was empty, he explored a little while longer but nothing

else worthwhile. At the end of the day Yrag left the ruined stronghold in defeat. His Dungeon Master Rob Kuntz tried not to smile.

Once Gary thought about the non-encounter more carefully, he realized his error: “HB” had meant “Horn of Blasting”! By the time he realized his error, it was too late. He never did find the ruins again ... but he *did* harbor a lifelong hatred of hydras!¹⁸⁵



Sometimes it's more fun to imagine the magic item than it is to get it.

¹⁸⁵ For a slightly different version of this tale (in which Yrag was forced to battle hydras in a cavern), please refer to Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A Part V, posted April 19th, 2006.

The Training of the Black Pudding

While playing Mordenkainen early on (perhaps at experience level 7 or so), Gary encountered a chaotic evil level 3 NPC magic-user of Flan-Suloise descent who was probably nameless, but would soon be named Bigby.¹⁸⁶

Mordenkainen used Charm Person to draw Bigby into service as a bodyguard and apprentice.¹⁸⁷ Bigby (named by Rob) would be soon become a boon companion (due to fair treatment and Mordenkainen's charisma),¹⁸⁸ but Gary (from extensive DMing experience) knew that the low-level apprentice was very likely to meet an untimely end. Therefore, Mordenkainen "kept" Bigby away and protected while he adventured through Rob's dungeons accompanied by his two experienced henchmen, the elven brothers Vram and Vin (both fighter/magic-users, then of levels F4/MU3).¹⁸⁹

On one adventure soon after the beguiling of Bigby, Mordenkainen, Vram and Vin went deep into the dungeons beneath El Raja Key. Gary's goal was to find a way past the "choke" chamber on dungeon level five. He had only discovered a

¹⁸⁶ Bigby is noted as evil in ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part XI, posted August 8th, 2006. He is variously noted as neutral evil and chaotic evil, although such particulars don't matter much considering the crude state of the 1973 D&D alignment system. And for those who enjoy such details, Gary wrote that Bigby was "of medium height, bald, with prominent nose and large, dark eyes. He is also around age 50, but as he is rather plump, Bigby has few wrinkles. His hands are large and long-fingered. His clothing is generally of deep green."

¹⁸⁷ *Dragon* magazine, issue #289, pg. 28; *Dragon* magazine, issue #318, pg. 12. See also ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part XI, posted August 8th, 2006.

¹⁸⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted January 26th, 2004. Gary would also note that the magical and charismatic influences wrought a spiritual change of heart in Bigby: "By dint of fellowship, lecturing, mentoring, and sharing with Bigby," Gary wrote, "he was not only turned from C[haotic] E[vil] to Neutral, but from there to a leaning towards C[haotic] G[ood] as he considered his past actions." Once Bigby became a loyal henchman, Rob allowed Gary to roll up his ability scores so that he could go adventuring as a uniquely-detailed individual.

¹⁸⁹ *Dragon* magazine, issue #289, pg. 28.

single stairway leading down to level six, and the chamber above that stairway was protected by a gigantic black pudding. If Mordenkainen was ever going to gain the best treasures in the dungeon, the black pudding would need to be defeated.

Gary had already tried to vanquish the pudding several times. His first encounter ended quickly, with Mordenkainen beating a hasty retreat. Later attempts at stealth proved fruitless, and the slime was so huge that it even shrugged off several blasts from a wand of fireballs. When Vram and Vin later discovered wands of their own (one of paralysis, and one of fear), Gary decided that he finally had enough firepower to get past the pudding and down the well-protected stairs.

Therefore, the three adventurers journeyed down to level five to do battle. The slime was found, and once it again it advanced to slay and feed. Mordenkainen blasted it with the wand of fireballs, Vram shot a paralyzing bolt, and Vin sent a wave of psychic fear. This time, the dice were with Gary and not with Rob. The pudding failed all three saving throws! It was crisped and badly wounded, and tried to flee in terror. But the paralysis prevented it from moving away. Gary's mage was running low on fireball charges, presumably, because he did not finish the thing off. A few whacks were taken at it with sword and staff, but then Gary decided to make the most of a dangerous situation. The three companions rushed down the stairs, and finally managed to explore dungeon level six.

Their adventures there were successful, and more stairs were discovered which led them down to level seven. Significant treasures were recovered, and Gary realized that he needed to curtail his greed or he would be tempted to delve even further. If his characters were depleted of all powerful spells and wand charges, the lurking pudding would probably put an end to Mordenkainen once and for all.

The three explorers crept back up the stairs to level five, ready to finish off the wounded slime. But the chamber was empty! Gary assumed that the thing had fled once the paralysis had worn off, and it was probably hiding somewhere and healing its wounds. There was nothing more to be done that day, however, and Gary wisely had his party leave the dungeons with their loot.

A little while later, Gary was confident enough in his explorations that he decided to take Bigby along on a "training run." If Mordenkainen could kill some monsters and acquire treasures while Bigby was present (and with Vram and Vin not there), the young apprentice would gain a hefty amount of experience points ... probably enough to achieve level 4. The mages ventured down to level five

with full repertoires of combat spells, and Gary happily anticipated the pudding's fateful end.¹⁹⁰

Sure enough, the healed pudding was there and eager to devour the irksome human that had caused it so much pain. It squelched its way forward while the two mages prepared their best attacks. Gary, being clever, decided to cast a fireball near the slime but not at it. Whether or not the slime made its saving throw, it would sense the wave of flame and flee. His quick thinking paid off, and the pudding fled. Mordenkainen then led his apprentice down to level six, where more treasures were gained. Another successful venture!

Thinking about this situation carefully, Gary realized that leaving the slime alive provided him with a distinct competitive advantage. He had a way to make the slime flee, and while it was alive he had sole access to the deeper levels. The other players, fearing the giant slime and not knowing its secret terror of magical flame, could not explore the depths while it was still alive. Rob approved of this intelligent ploy, and in time Gary was rewarded by the spectacle of a “trained” black pudding. Whenever Mordenkainen entered the chamber, the thing would flee without even a single fireball being hurled! Gary never did kill the slime after all, it seems ... it was too valuable to him and suited its purpose perfectly. With sole access to the deeper dungeons, Mordenkainen and Bigby raised their experience levels very quickly.

* * * * *

The Diamond Onslaught Caper

In another adventure, when Bigby had gained a significant amount of power, he, Mordenkainen, and some henchmen (probably Vram and Vin) found a hexagonal room encircled by six closed gates. In the center stood a pedestal, and

¹⁹⁰ By the way, Gary's favorite spells for Mordenkainen included Cloudkill, Cone of Cold, Death Spell, Evard's Black Tentacles, Fireball, Ice Storm, Lightning Bolt, Magic Missile and Power Word Stun. If you'd like to berate munchkin players who load up their magic-users chiefly with artillery spells, you begin by admonishing the winsome spirit of Gary!

upon the pedestal there gleamed a beautiful diamond of unparalleled radiance and beauty.

Sensing an obvious trap and deducing Rob's tactical ploy, Gary stated that his adventures were slowly advancing with spells at the ready and weapons drawn. They moved only a few steps, and one of the gates clattered open. Mordenkainen saw a legion of guardsmen tramping out of the newly-opened passageway.



*“Vram, hold them off but don’t get too close,” he says.
‘I’ll cast the deadly spell right in front of you,’ he says.”*

The guardsmen surged forth, and Vram and Vin moved to intervene. But before they could engage the wily Mordenkainen wove his magic and manifested a lethal Cloudkill spell, and wiped them all out before they could leave the corridor.

The party advanced a little more, and a second gate opened. Monsters surged out, only to be pelted with arrows and assailed by a scintillating fusillade of spells. All of them perished with no wounds being suffered by the party. The traps proceeded “like clockwork,” and although spells were running low and many wounds were eventually taken, Gary had counted the gates and discovered that he could probably — just barely — vanquish the entire area’s monsters without meeting with defeat. As the last spells ran out and the sixth set of guardians was laid low, Mordenkainen triumphantly seized the diamond and left the dungeon.

Rob Kuntz (as DM) was despondent, and realized that he should have unleashed all of the monsters simultaneously. Gary consoled him, and also tallied up his scores. Every character under his control had gained a level!

Further tales will be revealed when I have enough information to provide the entertaining details. But for now and with these four tales told, we shall this spectacle of Rob’s Dungeon Mastered Oerth and castle with a final and teasing glimpse of Yrag and Mordenkainen where they stand, wreathed in silver mist, approaching the mighty arch of yet another dungeon door.

May they journey well.



*“Hermes summoned the fallens’ ghosts;
he held in his hand the golden rod of eternal slumber;
with this he roused them and led them on,
and they followed him, thinly gibbering.”*

— from The Odyssey, by Homer

CHAPTER 15

GODS AND MADNESS

(C. DECEMBER 1972 —
SPRING 1973)

BY THE Christmas season of 1972, Gary had created and tested several dungeon levels with perhaps a dozen players. The other remote play testers in other cities and states were encouraged to keep expanding their own diverse play groups, and many of these unsupervised (by Gygas or Arneson, that is) gatherings became so large that they split into two or three, with the most intrepid players and testers become referees themselves.

Naturally, these groups all required copies of the rules to play on their own. An unknown but certainly considerable number of photocopies spread through high schools, libraries and college campuses in Minnesota, Michigan, California, Illinois, Pennsylvania and elsewhere. According to Gary's estimate, "When 1973 was welcomed in, it is likely that some 200 people had heard of the new game."¹⁹¹

The feedback was still extremely favorable, but filled with questions. Gary said that "The reaction to the manuscript was instant enthusiasm," and this reaction was surely shared by the majority of testers.¹⁹² People were dazzled and confounded. Dave Arneson was already in the minority with his significant and dissenting opinion, but even he could see that Gary's rules were causing a sensation. "Based on the reception given to the game by the others testing it," Gary once said, "he [*Arneson*] had to agree that it was acceptable."¹⁹³

Of course, "acceptable" does not mean any degree of "pleasing." As we have seen, Dave's reservations did not concern the reception of the game itself, because he was hoping to get this collaborative work published by dint of Gary's influence (just as they had done with their first collaborative effort, the naval wargame *Don't Give Up the Ship!*). But the game that was becoming loved was still not Dave's own, and it seems that Arneson was not receiving any of the feedback from the other remote play testers outside of the Twin Cities. Gary was the other testers' sole point of contact. Perhaps then Dave felt that the testers were getting only a pale imitation of his real Blackmoor game. Gary's game had no baronial

¹⁹¹ *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

¹⁹² *The Dragon* #7, June 1977. "Gary Gygas on Dungeons & Dragons: Origins of the Game," pg. 7.

¹⁹³ *The Dragon* #7, June 1977. "Gary Gygas on Dungeons & Dragons: Origins of the Game," pg. 7.

management, no realms, no economy, no war scenarios in the Great Kingdom, no detente between rival player factions, no armies led by Heroes astride their Super War Horses. To this point in time, Gary's version of the dungeon game might even have been bereft of complete rules for dragons! The test game was all about dungeons, wilderness exploration, and newly-created realms of the imagination ... all experienced on the small and intimate scale of fellowships and parties led in play by a Dungeon Master. (DMs were still all called referees and judges, however. That was the common parlance carried over from wargaming.)

Gary's retellings of this crucial time also relate that Dave "complained bitterly that the game wasn't right, but the other readers/players loved it. In fact, the fellows playing the *manuscript* version [*emphasis mine*] were so enthusiastic that they demanded publication of the rules as soon as possible."¹⁹⁴ That must have been a bitter pill for Dave, who could see some of his ideas in play, but precious little of his greater vision of a grand campaign.

These hard feelings over the direction of the play tests and Gary's game design may have had a lasting effect on Dave's overall enthusiasm for the testing process. Indeed, Gary once estimated that he had conducted over 90% of the play testing for D&D (perhaps in regards to either the number of sessions conducted, or the total number of player hours).¹⁹⁵ Through purely mathematical measures of contribution, *Dungeons & Dragons* throughout 1973 was becoming more and more Gary's game. And tellingly, Dave once noted in an interview: "I was not consulted on many aspects of the final work, and in *Blackmoor* and *The First Fantasy Campaign* [I] have tried to show where I would have liked *Dungeons & Dragons* to have gone."¹⁹⁶

In other words, even before publication, Dave was feeling shut out of the growing enthusiasm in many ways.

* * * * *

¹⁹⁴ *The Dragon* #7, June 1977. "Gary Gygax on *Dungeons & Dragons*: Origins of the Game," pg. 7.

¹⁹⁵ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. "How It All Happened," by Gary Gygax.

¹⁹⁶ *The Space Gamer*, issue #21. "An Interview with Dave Arneson."

“What of your own gods? I have never heard you call on them.”

“Their chief is Crom. He dwells on a great mountain. What use to call on him? Little he cares if men live or die. Better to be silent than to call his attention to you; he will send you dooms, not fortune! He is grim and loveless, but at birth he breathes power to strive and slay into a man’s soul. What else shall men ask of the gods?”

— *Queen of the Black Coast*, by Robert E. Howard

Gary was not fully in control of the game’s development, however. Far from it. From the beginning the play testers were taking the game in unexpected directions.

As the Lake Geneva dungeon play sessions created an indirect need for odd additional materials and conceptual expansions, Gary was also compelled to shift his expected design focus away from dungeons and toward the urban environment (and as I have noted, he developed the first crude City of Greyhawk in response). The ramifications of city-focused play, as well as the still-developing cleric class and unanticipated player questions — especially those relating to character death, magical healing, divine intervention, and resurrection — all necessitated the design of a rudimentary pantheon of divine and infernal powers for the growing *World of Greyhawk*.

Gary explained, “When one ‘creates’ a fantasy world setting that is totally divorced from our world, it is logical that special, unique deities are needed to fill it, for clerics subsume deities that are served. Thus I began adding deities to my campaign early in 1973, and those became the first deities of the World of Greyhawk.”¹⁹⁷

Perhaps because of Gary’s own religious beliefs, these first game-specific religions were at first very facetious and light-hearted. There would be no Christianity in Oerth, nor Judaism, Islam, or aspects of Earthly monotheism in general. Gary once noted that in his own campaign, there would always be a number of deities, but there would never be a single, all-powerful “God” for

¹⁹⁷ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VIII.

characters to contend with.¹⁹⁸ In deciding this, Gary was adopting a fantasy philosophy similar to that exhibited by author Michael Moorcock, who once wrote in the Elric tale *While the Gods Laugh* that the forces of Law and Chaos “exist only to fight — not to win, but to preserve the eternal struggle.”¹⁹⁹ In Moorcock’s cosmology, the One God was known as the Cosmic Hand (i.e., holding the scales of balance which kept good, evil, law and chaos in perpetual fluidity and equality). In a way, the oblique Moorcock-esque God was never pure and “good,” but was rather the incarnation of something that Gary would later call the True Neutral alignment.²⁰⁰

The universe’s equilibrium demanded eternal conflict, with no one force able to proclaim a lasting victory. “While the Gods Laugh” was Moorcock’s fitting title for this existential predicament.

¹⁹⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VII. Posted February 5th, 2005. Refer also to ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part II, posted April 16th 2003, where Gary alludes that he also did not want to use Christianity in the fantasy game because then magic used by villains would be Satanic in nature. This was a question not of game design, but rather of the man’s faith.

¹⁹⁹ *While the Gods Laugh*, Chapter IV, by Michael Moorcock.

²⁰⁰ Refer for example to *The Secret Life of Elric of Melniboné*, 1964.



*"Goddess I will hide you in eternal slumber, in the nether labyrinths of Zagyg.
None shall ever find you ..."*

The *Dungeons & Dragons* gods, meanwhile, would come into being as aids to play, not as divine beings worthy of worship. After all, this was all just a game! Philosophy and ethics only have a place in the game for as far as they can positively influence play. Something fun, workable, and non-threatening would be required to answer players' needs for gods, demon lords, and other higher powers. And so it was that between the City and the Castle of Greyhawk there was placed (with a wink and a nod toward H. P. Lovecraft's legacy) a Temple to the Latter Day Old Ones. The Norse gods were occasionally worshipped in the '72-73 campaign as well, and Robilar sometimes revered Odin ... although rarely.²⁰¹

Elsewhere, Gary mentioned that early Greyhawk religions included the Brethren of St. Cuthbert of the Cudgel (likely inspired by both the Celtic Cuthbert of Northumbria, and jokes about life's "School of Hard Knocks"), and the rival god²⁰² Pholtus of the Blinding Light,²⁰³ as well as the most excellently named Church of Crom, Scientist.²⁰⁴ After these major deities were instituted, Gary further created a gathering of diverse good and evil (demi)gods who were mystically termed "the Nine."²⁰⁵

The most important of these imaginary deities (from our perspective) and the very first one invented²⁰⁶ was named Zagy, or Zagy (a reverse reflection of game referee "Gygax" in both name and meaning). This "Mad Archmage" has been regarded as a trickster deity, a demigod, a jester and a patently unfair projection of Gary's persona into the dungeons of Castle Greyhawk. Zagy is not only the spirit of madness, he is the incarnation of fun over serious business. Additional details would be provided much later:²⁰⁷ Zagy is also the demigod of humor, occult studies, unpredictability and eccentricity. He serves Boccob the Uncaring, the

²⁰¹ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Goddess of Luck."

²⁰² "Clerics of St. Cuthbert and Pholtus were always debating in my campaign world, bonking and blinding each other." — Gary in the Pied Piper Publishing forums.

²⁰³ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Generation of Oerth's Deities."

²⁰⁴ *Alarums & Excursions*, issue #2, 1975.

²⁰⁵ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums.

²⁰⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Generation of Oerth's Deities."

²⁰⁷ *Dragon* #70. "The Deities & Demigods of the Greyhawk," by E. Gary Gygax.

absolutely neutral god of magic; but Zagyg himself is chaotic neutral with good tendencies. And always, “somehow, despite his seeming madness, Zagyg survives, carries out his assignments, and moves on.”

The presence of Zagyg as the “supreme trickster” of the Greyhawk dungeons allowed Gary to justify several of the game’s less realistic features. “I believe that the first quality a dungeon needs is game logic and verisimilitude based thereon,” he later wrote. “That’s why I subsumed the maze beneath Greyhawk Castle had been created by a mad demigod.”²⁰⁸ Zagyg, then, was simply a manifestation of the urgent need for the game’s chaotic fun and randomness to reign over all.

We are told that Zagyg loves to test adventuring heroes, and he is fascinated by their struggles against the monsters of the underworld. He is also obsessed with puzzles, in-jokes, mazes and leaps of intuition over the confines of logical mundanity. Gary noted once that “The advent of Zagyg corresponded to the development of the castle-dungeons complex in early 1973,”²⁰⁹ representing “me as the mad designer of Greyhawk Castle and its dungeons. After all, how else could such a place exist?”²¹⁰ And further, “Castle Greyhawk had to have such a figure behind it. Otherwise, how could one explain all the strange and near-impossible (even in a magic-active universe)?”²¹¹ In other words, every single question the players might have concerning dungeon ecology, lapses in physics, vanishing chambers, reappearing monsters, wandering (summoned) beasties, or bizarre inferences of “reality” in Greyhawk’s dungeons could all be firmly pointed in Zagyg’s direction, there to receive only a wink and a smile, and no answer. (Let us never forget Gary’s tripartite maxim, It’s a game. Have fun. Get over it!)

In the future, whenever a restocking of the Greyhawk dungeons became necessary, that too could be interpreted as Zagyg simply summoning more monsters to keep the fascinating conflicts going. He could even conjure more treasure to give the adventurers a reason to keep coming back.

²⁰⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III. Posted May 13th, 2003.

²⁰⁹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III.

²¹⁰ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 20th, 2002.

²¹¹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III.

The clever inclusion of Zagyg gave Gary a humorous way to explain away divine fiat in a magical game, an “out” against any demands for logic and reason. In this dire age of Wizards, fanboy factions, and edition wars, we all would do well to bow once again to this infuriating wisdom. All hail Zagyg, supreme lord of fun, slayer of the foul and endless legions of the Rules Lawyers!

* * * * *

Once many of the wearying questions about reasons, whys, wherefores, and persnickety higher meanings were quashed in this manner, the game could grow fruitfully wherever it wanted.

These early 1973 improvements to the Greyhawk campaign would also encourage the intrepid adventurers to wander some more outside of the dungeon itself. Why not push the design and see where the borderlands were? An entire world was being created for the players to wonder of, and to wander through. With the Temple to the Latter Day Old Ones firmly placed,²¹² and entrances to both the city sewers and the Greyhawk dungeons being found between the Castle and the city walls, what other intriguing discoveries might be made by those who dared to explore outside? The road led straight up to the castle ruins, certainly, but what would happen if anyone decided to journey left or right? The occasional wilderness adventures which resulted from whimsical exploration became more frequent as Gary further defined the countryside to the southwest and southeast of the Nyr Dyv, and the shore-lands near to Greyhawk.

In 1973 and through 1975, this surrounding region was only vaguely defined. But for the curious, I can provide some details about how the area of the rarely-considered *City State* of Greyhawk — and its immediate environs — was developed over time.

Until this point, Gary’s world was simply presumed to be a younger and more improbable version of version of Earth, reflecting the earlier map of the Great Kingdom. “When I initiated the Greyhawk campaign,” Gary wrote, “I envisaged a world of parallel Earth sort. Thus the geography then assumed was pretty close to

²¹² Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “City of Greyhawk.”

that of Earth.”²¹³ That would soon change, however, as the City State of Greyhawk would be mapped and explored. Gary once wrote that this region was first sketched out on a single 8.5” x 11” sheet of paper, now presumed lost.²¹⁴

The very first glimpse of that City State would involve the City’s relation and proximity to the Castle. The location of Castle Greyhawk in relation to the city itself — although it is sometimes said to lie to the northeast²¹⁵ — was stated in 1975 as being “on the hill not a league to the east of the city.”²¹⁶ From a published *World of Greyhawk* setting perspective (1980), this means that the eastern road out of the City of Greyhawk leads to the ruin, and that the ruin itself is poised atop one of the isolated and westernmost slopes just preceding the rise of the greater Cairn Hills. As I hinted earlier, these lands around the ruin are filled with strange wells, cisterns and tunnel entrances. At least some of these ways lead into *deeper* levels of the dungeons.

Around the castle’s great hill, and before the ruin can be reached by the Greyhawk road, there is a dreadful swamp filled with slimy pools and bloated trees.²¹⁷ The depths of this swamp lie especially to the north.²¹⁸

This varied terrain between swamp, ruin and hills is home to many monsters. Hill giants dwell in the Cairn Hill summits and descend from there, while giant crabs live in the swamps and along the streams.

²¹³ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 6th, 2002. See also Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A Part VIII, posted August 18th, 2006 and ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part III, posted April 6th, 2003.

²¹⁴ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted October 15th, 2007. Gary “never did a large-scale map for the world” until the publication of the commercial *World of Greyhawk Folio*.

²¹⁵ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “City of Greyhawk.”

²¹⁶ “The Magician’s Ring,” by Gary Gygax. Found in *Wargamer’s Digest*, Volume 2, Number 8. McCoy Publishing Enterprises, June 1975.

²¹⁷ *The Expedition into the Black Reservoir*, by Gary Gygax. Found in *El Conquistador*. Viking Systems, September 1975.

²¹⁸ Refer to the *Gord of Greyhawk* novels.



*Hill giants of the Cairn Hills are renowned
for their boisterous escapades
and differences of opinion.*

The ground here is soft and filled with decaying vegetable matter, an ideal home for burrowing creatures. Bulettes are certainly found here,²¹⁹ and there might be anhkhegs, umber hulks, xorn, and worse underfoot as well.

A particularly evocative description of this area is found in Gary's play report / story entitled *The Magician's Ring*:

"Those who have explored the countryside between the bustling city of Greyhawk and the castle ruins of the same name which lie on the hill not a league to the east of the city will testify to the fact that there are a number of strange tunnels and wells about. Wise folks avoid them, for they know that these are but entrances to the fiendish maze of dungeons, pits, labyrinths, crypts, catacombs, and caverns which honeycomb the hill and the rock far beneath it. There are those, however, who eagerly seek these ways, for it is likewise well-known that incalculable treasure also rests within these twisting mazes. Dauntless adventurers sally through these entrances to a hideous underworld, determined to gain great fortunes or die."

The Expedition into the Black Reservoir tale provides a glimpse as well:

"To the east of the busy walled city of Greyhawk the land is forsaken, overgrown with thorns and thistles. Oozing marsh creeps slowly down. The copses are huddles of weird, bloated trees. The wiry grass seems to grasp at the feet of any who dare to tread upon it. In the center of this unwholesome place, on a rock-boned prominence, hulks the ruin of the grim Greyhawk Castle."

These details, collectively, give us an enticing picture of a narrow strip of wilderness capable of providing forest, swamp, hill, wasteland and even river adventures for enterprising travelers to enjoy.

²¹⁹ *The AD&D Coloring Album*, Troubadour Press, 1979.



The treacherous swamps of Greyhawk.

Canceri Magni are about, tread and wade in carefully ...

Unfortunately, we have very few notes about the first Rob Kuntz-refereed (as opposed to Gary-refereed) wilderness adventures around the City of Greyhawk. So we are mostly reliant on Gary's own play reports for fleeting details.

We can assume from vague hints that the Greyhawk outdoor adventures were roughly modeled off of Arneson's known Blackmoor examples, with Rob (as co-DM) later following Gary's earlier demonstrations. Rob recalls running his outdoor adventures for the other veteran players when he was beginning to serve as Dungeon Master, "just prior to completing my journey as Robilar to China,"

which likely means that these adventures were in August or September of 1973.²²⁰ Regardless of such initiatives, it appears that the majority of Greyhawk campaign play — at least from Gary’s perspective — was still in the dungeons and ruins: “About 80% of the game action in my old Greyhawk campaign centered on the castle and dungeons and in city adventures,” he explained once.²²¹ “Wilderness adventures covered the balance.”

This is an open research item, and I hope to provide some further details in the future. For now, however, many of these early adventures are a mystery.

²²⁰ Lord of the Green Dragons blog, by Rob Kuntz.

²²¹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWord Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VI. Posted February 29th, 2004. Gary once noted (Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A Part IX, posted March 8th, 2007) that he frequently discouraged long wilderness adventures, because the act of splitting the party and having a few adventurers on one time scale and everyone else on another created huge and confusing gaps in the Greyhawk timekeeping records.



*“Okay, the Gnarley Wood. it’s just a forest.
How fast can we march in a day?”*

* * * * *

At some point in 1973 — likely during the same timeframe as the expansion of the City of Greyhawk's surround, at the beginning of the year — Gary also took the time to further detail the surface ruins of Castle Greyhawk. These buildings became known more properly as the “Upper Works,” referring not only to the ground-level castle but also to the remains of towers, bastions, barbicans, and the castle keep. According to Gary's tale *The Expedition into the Black Reservoir*, the main gate into the ruin faces west, and the “great central keep” contains the primary descending stair into the dungeons. (This deep, 30'-wide circular conduit would appear in the center of Gary's dungeon level maps, providing a rare point of reference for venturesome heroes lost in the labyrinths.)

Much of the once-mighty castle is still intact, and so there are chambers, towers, donjons and parapets filled with monsters and guarded treasure. Some of these areas have been taken over by brigands, humanoids and intelligent monsters. There are additional stairways leading down to various regions, and not all of them have landings solely ending on dungeon level one. The great stair, probably inspired by the Endless Stair of Moria in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, descends through the many deeper dungeon levels to provide a “spine” for the colossal whole.

The depths were always just a little bit beyond the players' knowledge; at no point in time could anyone rightly say that they had conquered the entire dungeonscape. Gary's underworld, forever challenged and forever unconquerable, was growing with the game and defining its unknown fringe of mysteries.

* * * * *

Once all of these newly-detailed aspects of the game — the gods, the roughed-in wilderness, the ruins, and the implied placement of Greyhawk central to the vastness of a larger world — were all in place, Gary was able to return to his designs at the campaign's core: the dungeon levels themselves. At approximately the time that dungeon level four was being explored (the early months of 1973), Gary began creating extensive side levels and special areas which radiated out from

the main vertical array of dungeon tiers. The reasons behind this design decision are not entirely clear, but it seems that Gary wanted to maximize the variety of the places which could be reached without demanding that the adventurers make long, monotonous treks into the deepest parts of the dungeon. By having “bonus” areas relatively close to the surface, he was able to ensure that the veteran players would always have a significant number of regions to explore without necessarily forcing them to leave the weaker characters played by newer players behind.

Over time, these special side areas beyond the core levels included “a barracks with orcs, hobgoblins, and gnolls continually warring with each other, a museum, a huge arena, an underground lake, a giant’s home, and a garden of fungi.”²²²

²²² *Europa* 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of *Europa* Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.



*Just because you're underground
Doesn't mean there's not a wilderness.*

These areas were mostly explored in the fall of 1973 and early 1974. Later incarnations of the Castle Greyhawk dungeon complex (dating to the co-DM era, when Gary and Rob jointly shared in the creation and refereeing of levels) would feature dozens more of these special regions ... a subject which is sadly beyond the scope of this current book.

We can glimpse a bit deeper before we move. One of the most interesting stories we know of involving a side level is also one of the earliest. It seems that late in 1973, Gary created an extension for dungeon level four which included a “large band of gnolls in an out-of-the-way corner.”²²³ Dissatisfied with this area’s sameness and lack of novelty, he decided to create a new magic item called a portable hole. Rob Kuntz once explained that the name “portable hole” was taken “directly from the Looney Toons cartoon, ‘The Hole Idea.’”²²⁴

Fans of the Road Runner cartoons are certainly familiar with the concept: a movable, circular rift which allows for the existence of a portable extra-dimensional space. Gary’s idea was more of a “super bag of holding,” or rather a hole leader into a magical cave where huge amounts of treasure could be stored. Rob Kuntz further explained that the idea for this magical effect was taken by Gary “from Jack Vance’s story of ‘Chun the Unavoidable.’”²²⁵

This was a very powerful magic item, but by hiding it in a still-unknown region of the dungeon, Gary had little reason to be concerned that this treasure’s inclusion would soon unbalance his game. It could linger there for a later adventure to entertain whichever one of the veterans managed to find it.

As fate would have it of course, one of the player characters managed to discover the portable hole almost immediately, and the lucky recipient who gained it happened to be Ernie’s magic-user Tenser. Ernie managed to find the area simply because his father had placed the tunnel leading to the level 4 dungeon extension in a tempting blank area which had not been explored. Tenser found the portable hole because he kept prodding and poking about in mysterious shadows there.

²²³ *Dragon* #296. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

²²⁴ Lord of the Green Dragons blog, by Rob Kuntz.

²²⁵ Lord of the Green Dragons blog, by Rob Kuntz.

Much like the climbing of Mount Everest, Tenser — lord of filled-in sheets of graph paper — had chosen to explore that unknown area simply because it was there.

In the future, Gary would be certain to hide his bonus areas beyond magical gates, through multiple secret doors, and past the ends of “endless” corridors. But any treasure fairly won is fairly earned, and Tenser thus became the envy of the others as he was able to carry huge amounts of treasure without ever slowing himself down.

* * * * *

Regardless of rivalries, everyone was having fun with Gary’s expanding game. Well ... *almost* everyone.

Throughout this time, one major development in the play test was becoming very clear: the game’s rules would need to be expanded not only because of Dave’s and Gary’s ingenuity, but also because of the too-clever contributions of the players. Notes involving the ever-growing number of rules exceptions, new monsters, new spells, and new treasures were making the core untidy and difficult to play. And so, early in 1973, Gary set forth to write a second draft of the rules for *Dungeons & Dragons*. This draft would be aimed not only at the further delineation of the amazing potential for creative play in fantasy gaming, but also toward the goal of future publication. Coincidentally, this would also be when Dave Arneson lost control of the game.

CHAPTER 16

BLACK MAGIC
AND
DRAGON VENOM

(C. MARCH — MAY 1973)

OUR WAY forward and downward, I must warn you, is both an intrepid and a confusing one. Darker mysteries await.

According to one of Gary's many accounts, intensive revision work which would formulate the second draft of *Dungeons & Dragons* began in the "early spring of 1973," which may mean late in the month of March, or early April.²²⁶ The pressure to release an expanded and corrected play test packet was coming directly from the play testers themselves. Many of the people were using haphazardly scrawled-upon and amended photocopies to play the game, and there were referees and players whom Gary had never even heard of who needed to know the basic intentions behind the more cryptic rules.

"Letters and even telephone calls requesting that I 'please, please, mail me the new stuff,' and so on," Gary explained, "were coming in daily by then."²²⁷ Secondary pressure may have arisen from the fact that a general awareness of the game — and thus, a rise of potential competing versions which might (hypothetically) be disseminated by people whom Gary had not even invited to the play test — was rising beyond his ability to control. "By then, of course," he noted, "copies of the copies of the first manuscript were proliferating."²²⁸ It was clearly time to produce a new, definitive version of the game for Gary's preferred testers, so that Gary's authoritative version of the game could be more firmly re-established and hopefully commercially published before year's end.

An exact timeframe indicating Gary's commencement in writing the second draft is of course uncertain. There are too many gaps in the chronology; much of the vital correspondence is hidden from the public eye; and there is no full copy of the "lost" master manuscript for us to research. (Gary once noted that the original

²²⁶ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 5th, 2002.

²²⁷ *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

²²⁸ *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004. We do not know the names of most of the Dungeon Masters who were testing the game at this time, but it has been noted (refer to the ODD74 Proboards, "Manual of Aurania") that one of the otherwise-obscure players who possessed a copy of pre-publication D&D was Thomas R. Coveny III.

second draft manuscript was never returned to him from Graphic Printing,²²⁹ and no absolutely proven examples of the second draft have yet surfaced as of 2016, the “Dalluhn Manuscript” and “Mornard Fragments” only partially withstanding.)

As always, the tales we hear of this process are internally inconsistent, simultaneously revelatory and confusing. Gary once explained to fans that “these individuals [*college students who were play testing the first manuscript*] gave me a lot of feedback, so that in about two months of time after sending out the initial draft I rewrote the game so that the manuscript was 150 pages in length.”²³⁰

However, he earlier stated that the first manuscript was sent out in late 1972, and this fact — if we are also to take the above quote literally (“about two months”) — would mean that the second draft was sent out no later than early March, 1973. But another interview with Gary indicates that “by the *late* spring [*emphasis mine*] ... I revised and expanded the rules to 150 pages, sent copies to the original recipients and a dozen other persons, and began to seek a publisher.”²³¹

Taken collectively, these accounts may indicate that feedback from the remote play tests was received beginning in late December of 1972, and then continually thereafter. The writing of the second draft may have begun in the early spring (March?) of 1973, and ended in the late spring (May?), with packets of the revised version probably sent to play testers in the late spring and early summer (early to mid-June?), so that any last refinements could be made throughout the summer (July and August?), with the final touches being put on the game’s typescript of rules later in the fall. While some of these deduced timeframes are quite reckless and rampant guesses on my part, we do know that the Foreword to *Dungeons & Dragons* — likely the capstone which indicated a formal end to Gary’s editing of the manuscript — was dated November 1st, 1973. Regrettably, these many estimates are necessarily dependent upon a synthetic interpretation of the disparate sources on my part, and so many of the implied specifics surrounding these timeframes must remain — perhaps forever — indistinct.

²²⁹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted October 14th, 2002.

²³⁰ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part II. See also the Gary Gygax chat preserved in the user comments at Slashdot.org for February 22nd, 2003 entry entitled “A 1974 Review of D&D.”

²³¹ *The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax*, conducted by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

Please note further that at the time of this writing, I am unable to clarify exactly what this design process between the first and second manuscripts specifically entailed. One of the key documents from this time period, as I mentioned in Book I, appears to be the unique piece which is now referred to by collectors as “Beyond This Point Be Dragons,” or alternately by some as the “Dalluhn Manuscript.” This nonesuch illustrated document appears to promise answers to many of the secrets involving the actual transition between the first and second drafts of Dave and Gary’s rules. Regrettably, due to potential copyright issues and many delicate questions (surrounding the document’s provenance, unspecified authorship and concerns over intellectual property), this manuscript — while worthily offered on limited public display in a museum — is unfortunately not readily available for full public consumption.

The mystery, I regret to say, shall continue.

What is certain, however, is that by this time (c. early summer) Gary had positioned himself as the primary author of the game. The covers of each published booklet would soon bear the names “Gygax & Arneson,” and that specific and precedential placement of Gary’s name as the foremost is far from being an accident. Gary once noted testily (posting on the Dragonsfoot forums on July 14th, 2007) that “I wrote all of that game myself without anything from [Arneson’s] so-called notes.” At the end of 1973, however, for example in correspondence with the *Great Plains Game Players Newsletter*, Gary noted that he was working on a new and “really superb game, built from *Chainmail* and Arneson’s *Blackmoor*.” Clearly, the litigious falling out between Arneson and Gygax in the intervening years permanently soured his disposition on this point of contention.

It would be fairer to say that Gary wrote his own version of the fantasy role-playing game in the spring and summer of 1973, but also that “his” game would have never existed without the established precedent of Arneson’s *Blackmoor* campaign and the efforts of hundreds of play testers.

* * * * *

Despite these frustrations, I will do my best to provide a glimpse of the redesign process for the *Dungeons & Dragons* game throughout early 1973.

Part of the mess was caused by the urge to play the game, and to test modes of play, instead of documenting the entire process thoroughly. As Gary once explained, “I was as much taken with the prototype of the D&D game as anyone, so the design approach was strictly hands-on, seat-of-the-pants play and revise.”²³² This tells us that even a printed version of the revised game manuscript would almost certainly be out of date the very moment it was completed, and scrawled amendments would be added which might or might not carry through in full to the next revision.

The first steps taken toward revision appear to have involved “divid[ing] [*the rules*] into three portions,”²³³ or thematic groupings of material, as featured later in the first published version of D&D: [1] a book of characters and spells (a player’s guide), [2] a book of monsters and treasure (a compilation of adventure challenges and rewards), and [3] a book of dungeons and the wilderness (a guide to prospective locales). Following this division of the material, Gary began expanding his existing lists and rules sections from the initial draft. “The actions [of the player characters] that they could follow were outlined,” he said. “Spells were expanded. The list of monsters was broadened again, and a complete listing of magical items and treasures was given.”²³⁴ By April or May, Gyax’s own group had played “100 or more sessions” of Greyhawk-themed *Dungeons & Dragons*,²³⁵ amounting to hundreds of hours of play, and these extensive experiences were being used to inform and expand on every aspect of the second draft.

The rules were not only being *expanded*, however. Some were also being corrected, limited, or even removed. Gary was the final arbiter in determining what would be left out of the second draft, and what would be included. As he once explained, “There were indeed a lot of gamers giving me useful input in regards to

²³² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gyax Q&A, Part VI. Posted February 11th, 2004.

²³³ *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

²³⁴ *The Dragon* #7, June 1977. “Gary Gyax on Dungeons & Dragons: Origins of the Game,” pg. 7.

²³⁵ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gyax Q&A, Part X. Post July 2nd, 2006.

my design, but I was the only one doing the work, deciding what was ‘right’ and ‘wrong.’”²³⁶

Dave provided his own sage advice, and Gary interpreted Dave’s suggestions within the context of his own developing Greyhawk campaign and play. As the process would be rather coldly explained in legal records pertaining to the Arneson-Gygax lawsuit, “During 1973 and 1974 plaintiff [*Arneson*] and defendant Gygax in his individual capacity collaborated on the authorship of ‘Dungeons & Dragons.’ There was extensive correspondence between them by phone and mail during this time.”²³⁷

Although Gary was in later life rather reticent to detail the level of Arneson’s exact contributions to the game following his initial offering of the Blackmoor material, Dave himself once stated that “The *final* draft [*emphasis mine*] was done by phone and mail,” indicating that he was still deeply involved in the game design process in the middle and toward the end of 1973.²³⁸ And to date, there is no good reason not to take him at his word.

As the two game designers continued to collaborate, Gary and Dave were busily considering not only their own insights and rulings for the game; they also considered the letters and calls received from the ever-increasing play test referees. Gary explained that he was receiving “feedback from about 20 diverse gamers of hardcore stamp who loved the game” at this time, while he was as earlier noted “expanding the draft rules to some 150 pages.”²³⁹

There is some evidence that the major monster types — specifically dragons, giants and lycanthropes — were undergoing a redesign in early 1973. Rob Kuntz has also indicated²⁴⁰ that several monster types (such as the “chromatic” and “metallic” sub-species of dragons, and the sub-species of giants) were written up during the play test phase, which likely means that these pieces of the monster sub-

²³⁶ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X.

²³⁷ Arneson v. Gygax, Civ. No. 4-79-109.

²³⁸ *The Space Gamer*, issue #21. “An Interview with Dave Arneson.”

²³⁹ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V; *Dragon* #50.

²⁴⁰ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums.

manuscript were being redeveloped during the spring, then to be codified later in the year.



*When you're setting up challenges for heroes,
you can never have too many kinds of giants.*

Gary specified that at least one other now-classic monster, the rust monster, was introduced to the game in early 1973 as well.²⁴¹ That one is interesting because it is a very meta-monster, one specifically created to instill game balance and to force experienced and treasure-laden players to change their mode of play. So it is clear that by early 1973, the players in Gary's group were savvy enough to need some nasty curve balls thrown their way.

Other innovations at this time appear to have included new spells and spell clarifications, expanded equipment lists, a detailed glossary of terms, and further refinements to the game's abstract combat system. Gary once explained the rationale behind the combat system adjustments in this way: "As the object of the game was to provide a continuing campaign where players created and developed game personae, the chance for death (of either character or monster) was reduced from that in *Chainmail*, so that players could withdraw their characters from unfavorable combat situations. ... Remember that D&D was developed as a game, and allowances for balance between character roles and character versus monster confrontations were made."²⁴²

The other design modifications, too, began to change the game from a quasi-historical wargame based on large troop units, to a fantasy wargame based on heroic individuals and their unique travails. The scope was narrowing away from the player as general of an army, and toward the adoption of a "one player, one character" mode of atmospheric adventure.

These were not just quality-of-life improvements, they were the documentation of tactics, strategies, problems, and brilliant ideas which had all affected the ongoing play of the game. Successful tactics by one player were emulated by the others, and this would cause various tropes to become institutionalized (as dungeoneer "best practices," basically.) Player Mike Mornard for example would later stress the importance of one type of dungeoneering equipment in particular: "[In Gary's *Greyhawk dungeons*], we spiked doors [*shuf*] all the time. For more info, go re-read *The Lord of the Rings* when they're in the

²⁴¹ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XI.

²⁴² *The Dragon*, issue #15, pg. 13.

Chamber of Mazarbul and they're trying to keep the orcs and the troll out.”²⁴³ We can imagine that this addition of “iron spikes” may well have been one of scores if not *hundreds* of additions being made to the typed-up and revised game rules at this time.

The rules also by this time allowed for somewhat anachronistic “iron rations,” which Mornard explained were packets of “things like double baked bread, dry sausage, and hard cheese. Note that some medieval hard cheeses were so hard they had to be broken up with a hammer and soaked in water before you could eat them, and the dry sausage was like jerky except tough and dry.”²⁴⁴ Players must have gotten tired of having their characters’ food rot during long expeditions, so they focused on long-term fare. The more you know!

As players emulated one another’s successful ploys and tactics, there were serious balance issues as well. Play had also proven that magic-users were a favored class, and very powerful. But Gary tried to balance their power with vulnerability, especially at the lowest experience levels. Spells such as Sleep and Charm Person would give magic-users a fighting chance at experience level 1, and thus the magic-users were clearly delineated as light artillery pieces in the D&D rules draft. “The low-level magic-user is mainly a one- or two-shot weapon,” Gary wrote, “but the ‘artillery’ is potent. This fits well with a balanced party of low-level PCs, none of whom are really very strong singly.”²⁴⁵ This created a nice synergy where low-level fighters and clerics would protect the mages, while the mages would grow to become far more versatile as they faced deadly magical monsters in the deeper reaches of the world.

* * * * *

All of this clearly took a great deal of time. And he was a family man! Sleep in 1973 must have been hard to come by. Gary wrote the second draft of the rules “during the wee hours of many a morning and on weekends,” somehow still finding

²⁴³ Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboard forums.

²⁴⁴ Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboard forums.

²⁴⁵ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 4th, 2002.

the time to work, sleep, eat and play the game.²⁴⁶ As Gary explained this hectic time in life, “I probably averaged at least 30 hours a week with D&D. I’d work a half day to keep the wolf from the door, then play the game or DM a group. Late at night I’d make notes and/or write.”²⁴⁷

These battle-tested rules, codified by summertime, would change very little over the following year. As Gary once explained, this second draft was “essentially what was published” in January of 1974.²⁴⁸ The rules by this time probably also included all of the references to *Chainmail* which Gary had decided to incorporate to draw *Chainmail Fantasy* players to his soon-to-be-published game. As Rob Kuntz explained, Gary would soon be “trying to sell it [D&D] upstream to the miniatures market that was already used to *Chainmail* and [*he was*] trying to bridge it. Which is what I believe he was doing, because at the beginning, the titles [*on the booklets*] said ‘for use with miniatures’ ... but we never used miniatures.”²⁴⁹ This gives us fair warning that even though Gary in retrospect regarded 1974 published D&D as being equivalent to the unpublished second draft, it would be hazardous in the extreme for his to assume that the published set embodied his game’s systems as they stood in mid-1973. Surely, there were a fair number of differences between the two.

We can pry away at the edges of the mystery, however, and try to “see” the second draft, by considering Gary’s other hobbies and activities at the time. Beyond the dry work of codifying rules, Gary’s love of *Swords & Sorcery* and science fiction probably influenced much of the writing of the second *Dungeons & Dragons* draft as well. For the curious, here is a summary of some of the books and pulps (by Gary’s favorite authors) which were made available between December 1972 and June 1973, while he was creating, testing and polishing the *Dungeons & Dragons* rules. Some of these books *might* have been in his reading stacks while he was revising everything and considering further elements to include

²⁴⁶ *The Dragon* #7, June 1977. “Gary Gygax on *Dungeons & Dragons*: Origins of the Game,” pg. 7.

²⁴⁷ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I.

²⁴⁸ An interview at theweem.com.

²⁴⁹ Online interview: Refer to the Youtube clip ‘Rob Kuntz Conversations,’ with Martin Brown of Grogard Games. The comment appears at approximately 14:35.

#	Novel	Notes
[1]	<i>Fantastic: Science Fiction & Fantasy Stories</i> , Volume 22, Number 2.	Included Part 1 of <i>The Fallible Fiend</i> by Lyon Sprague de Camp, as well as his essay <i>Literary Swordsmen & Sorcerers: [Fletcher] Pratt and His Parallel Worlds</i> . The second part of <i>The Fallible Fiend</i> would soon follow in February of 1973.
[2]	<i>Garan the Eternal</i>	A hardcover compilation of short stories by Andre Norton. Included the Witch World tale <i>Legacy from Sorn-Fen</i> , as well as the story <i>One Spell Wizard</i> .
[3]	<i>Changeling Earth</i>	By Fred Saberhagen. Book 3 of the post-apocalyptic <i>Empire of the East</i> series, and featuring the interesting extra-dimensional demon lord nemesis, Orcus.
[4]	<i>Flashing Swords!</i>	An anthology compiled and edited by Lin Carter. This classic volume includes tales by Fritz Leiber (<i>Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser</i>), Jack Vance (<i>The Dying Earth</i>), and Poul Anderson in addition to Mr. Carter.
[5]	<i>Hiero's Journey</i>	By Sterling E. Lanier. A unique post-apocalyptic novel which would later inspire elements of <i>Gamma World</i> , and perhaps <i>Metamorphosis Alpha</i> before then as well.
[6]	<i>Paradox Lost and Twelve Other Great Science Fiction Stories</i>	By Fredric Brown. A collection of ironic and too-clever tales which probably appealed to Gary's sense of humor, as well as the idea that special powers should have unpredictable yet logical consequences.

#	Novel	Notes
[7+]	Various Swords & Sorcery reprints	Gary was probably already familiar with all of these tales, but he may have been seeing some of them on the shelves of his favorite bookstores: <i>The Broken Sword</i> (by Poul Anderson), <i>The Charwoman's Shadow</i> (by Lord Dunsany), <i>Conan the Adventurer</i> (by Howard and de Camp), <i>Conan the Freebooter</i> (by Howard and de Camp), <i>Conan the Wanderer</i> (by Howard, Carter and de Camp), and <i>Thuvia, Maid of Mars</i> backed with <i>The Chessmen of Mars</i> (by Edgar Rice Burroughs).

Gary would likely have had access to some of these works in paperback — he was always picking up new books from week to week — and of course through the local library as well. (We know that Gary frequented the Lake Geneva library for hardcovers which he could not procure otherwise, because he mentioned poring over such books when he was working on the *Monster Manual*.) There were many other earlier inspirations, of course, but those *contemporary* releases I mentioned above may have influenced Gary's writing to some degree during those frenetic years of creative activity, 1973 and 1974.

Whether these particular books were yet available to Gary during the writing of D&D is unknown, but he certainly had twenty years of speculative fiction reading to draw upon (including his preferred genres of fantasy, post-apocalyptic and science fiction).

* * * * *

And there is one more thing to consider in this literary vein, in regards to the (re)writing of *Dungeons & Dragons*: the most interesting book from this particular period (published June 1973), to my mind, is *Imaginary Worlds: The Art of Fantasy*, authored by Lin Carter. This work was published under the Ballantine Books label,

which Gary was known to follow due to the affordable and esteemed Ballantine Adult Fantasy line, the series selected and curated by Carter personally. *Imaginary Worlds* is interesting not only because of its publication time, but also because it is an early, foundational, serious and sincere critical celebration of fantasy fiction in general, and Sword & Sorcery fiction in particular. If Gary somehow missed this important new book directly in his current field of interest, it must have been because he was deliberately trying to do so.

In Carter's Introduction entitled "The Empire of Imagination," he cites magic as the single most important uniting element in fantasy fiction, and goes on to say: "A fantasy is a book or story, then, in which magic really works — not a fairytale, not a story written for children, like *Peter Pan* or *The Wizard of Oz*, but a work of fiction written for adults — a story which challenges the mind, which sets it *working*."²⁵⁰ This is interesting to read as an echo perhaps reflected in Gary's introductory "Forward" to original *Dungeons & Dragons*, written in November 1973, where he welcomes readers to "read on and enjoy a 'world' where the fantastic is fact and magic really works!"

²⁵⁰ *Imaginary Worlds*, by Lin Carter, pg. 6.



*An imaginary milieu,
For purposes of fantasy.*

Selected works and authors discussed by Carter in the 280-odd pages of *Imaginary Worlds* include, but are by no means limited to: the *Arabian Nights*, the *Kalevala*, Poul Anderson (*The Broken Sword*), William Beckford (*Vathek*), Edgar Rice Burroughs (*A Princess of Mars*), Lewis Carroll (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), de Camp and Pratt (the Harold Shea tales), Lord Dunsany (*The Gods of Pegana*), William Hope Hodgson (*The House on the Borderland*), Robert E. Howard (the Kull and Conan tales), Fritz Leiber (the Fafhrd and Gray Mouser tales), C. S. Lewis (*The Chronicles of Narnia*), H. P. Lovecraft (the Cthulhu Mythos and Dreamlands tales), Abraham Merritt (*The Moon Pool*), Michael Moorcock (the Elric

tales), Andre Norton (the Witch World series), J. R. R. Tolkien (*The Lord of the Rings*), Jack Vance (*The Dying Earth*), Roger Zelazny (*Jack of Shadows*) and *Weird Tales*. These are names you will find repeated throughout **HAWK & MOOR** as we detail many of the significant inspirations which took root in *Dungeons & Dragons* under Gary's guiding hand.

Interestingly, we find Carter also discussing topics such as the ethos of Law and Chaos: "This theme of Order (or Law, or Creation) against Chaos," we read, "is a favorite one with modern authors of Sword & Sorcery. Poul Anderson used it in *Three Hearts and Three Lions*, Michael Moorcock uses it in his Elric stories, Brunner employs it in *The Traveler in Black*, and I have used it myself in my Lemurian books ... the theme has become by now part of the tradition of the whole Sword & Sorcery school."²⁵¹

Perhaps the most prophetic chapter of *Imaginary Worlds* from a D&D perspective would be Chapter 9, "Of World-Making: Some Problems of the Invented Milieu." Therein, Carter discusses reader investment in the story role of dragon-slaying heroes (pp. 175-176), evoking belief in dragons and the willing suspension of disbelief (pg. 176), fantasy adventures which take place in the post-apocalyptic far future (pp. 178-179), the value in creating maps to explore the emerging fantasy world (pp. 180-181), and "constructing an imaginary milieu for purposes of fantasy" (pg. 188).

Later in Chapter 11, "The Tricks of the Trade: Some Advanced Techniques of World-Making," Carter explains the importance of fantasy magic working as an inherently codified system (pg. 214); Jack Vance's own magic system, involving the capacity of a mage's memory to hold spells, and the deletion / forgetting of spells when they are cast (pp. 214-215); Vancian magic items with depleting charges (pg. 216); and a summary of the Edgar Rice Burroughs approach to creating new monsters, in regards to his own Barsoom / Mars methodology.

Now are we *really* to believe that Gary did not read any of this in 1973, and did not take it to heart while he was expanding the manuscript for his game? I suppose it is possible ...

* * * * *

²⁵¹ *Imaginary Worlds*, by Lin Carter, pg. 157.

Reading and writing and playing turned the second draft into a far more concrete gatherum of ideas than the first draft had ever been. These essences were distilled, the unstable text began to crystallize. When all of the guidelines were composed and the new rules finally completed, Gary made somewhere between twenty-four and fifty copies of them. There is reason to believe that each new play test packet may have consisted of three stapled manuscripts, containing the separate rules for characters, monsters and campaigning. He would have made more if he could, but the complexity of the effort made that infeasible: “I sent out only some 50 copies of the expanded new version of the Dungeons & Dragons manuscript because of time and costs.”²⁵²

The copies were sent out to “eager ‘referees’ from coast to coast.”²⁵³ Gary hoped not only to provide clearer rules to aid the remote play testers, but he also wanted the incessant calls to stop: “copies were handed out ... in order to stop the late night and early morning phone calls, asking weird questions about clerics or monsters or whatever.”²⁵⁴

By this time (if not earlier), Gary was confident enough in the game that he put out a general notice to the wargaming community that a new game was going to published. Whether this was surprising news to Mr. Don Lowry of Guidon Games, however, remains an interesting question.

* * * * *

Despite such growing and serious business endeavors, there was still time enough for fun. Gary’s Greyhawk gaming continued apace.

One of the more interesting games conducted in the spring of 1973 was a solo session with one of the more talented and experienced players, Mike Mornard.

²⁵² *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

²⁵³ *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

²⁵⁴ *The Dragon*, issue #26. “D&D, AD&D and Gaming,” by Gary Gygax, pg. 28.

Mike had begun playing toward the end of 1972 with his fighting man, wryly named “Gronan of Simmerya,” a worshipper of Crom.²⁵⁵



All barbarian, all the time.

²⁵⁵ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Goddess of Luck.”

Later, in early 1973, he would play a magic-user named Lessnard.²⁵⁶ The character was named as a joke by Gary, not by Mike himself.²⁵⁷

Lessnard was not quite as accomplished as Robilar and Tenser, due to a lack of play time.

Nevertheless, Lessnard would prove to be a bold adventurer worthy of recognition. He began with a measly 3 hit points to his name, and a solitary Charm Person spell. He went on his down a stairway to dungeon level three, and managed to perform so well that he gained experience level 2, and almost level 3 (Gary checked him at 1 experience point shy of that mark), in a single night of play. And how? Quite simply, “I ran,” Mornard recalled. “I snuck, I threw lanterns (fire, oil, and a handle in one convenient package!), I ran, and I ran some more. It was still one of the best single evenings of gaming I've ever had.”²⁵⁸

Gary was probably pulling a few punches, knowing that he had a new player who was daring a solo expedition. In such cases he preferred to improvise and to encourage player creativity, rather than being shackled by the rules.

At one point Lessnard was trapped in a dead end, and was nearly attacked by an evil fifth-level fighter (who could probably skewer Lessnard and end his career at a single stroke). But Lessnard burned his Charm Person spell, and ended up with a powerful bodyguard who unwittingly helped him to battle back up to the surface.²⁵⁹

Due to Mornard's clever and aggressive style of play, Lessnard managed to make it all the way up to experience level 6 (“Magician”) by the late spring. Lessnard may have made it to experience level 7 before Mornard stopped playing him in favor of Gronan once again (who reached level 8, due to skillful play,

²⁵⁶ Some of these details are derived from The Collector's Trove Presents: The Michael Mornard Collection.

²⁵⁷ The Collector's Trove Presents: Michael Mornard Collection.

²⁵⁸ Online web forum post: RPG.Net, “Low-Level Magic-Users — How Valuable?” Posted September 25th, 2009.

²⁵⁹ The Collector's Trove Presents: Michael Mornard Collection.

survival in the face of endless wandering monster swarms, a 15 score in Strength, and a 15 Intelligence).²⁶⁰

Gary preserved one of Lessnard's more amusing sessions in a tale called *The Magician's Ring*, and as this is a perfect example of an early Greyhawk misadventure, I will relate the details here. I've added a little spice for atmosphere, of course!

The tale, sung with grace notes and all, runs something like this ...

* * * * *

One day, lounging about the City of Greyhawk, Lessnard the Magician grew frustrated. He was ambitious, brilliant, and dashing, but those wily inexhaustible do-gooders — Robilar, Tenser, and Terik by name — were too experienced and exclusive to care much for his welfare. Those worthies were already busying themselves with the deeper dungeons, and Lessnard could not seem to receive sufficient divine guidance (i.e., play sessions between Gyfax and Mike Mornard) to keep up such an exhausting pace. Emboldened by the others' victories, Lessnard promptly decided to hire some henchmen and to lead his own expedition into the deeper catacombs beneath the ruins of Castle Greyhawk.

Three boon companions, short on cash, answered Lessnard's call to arms: Crum the Veteran (a level 1 fighting man), Floppspel the Medium (level 1 magic-user) and an eponymous acolyte of Saint Cuthbert (level 1 cleric). Lessnard marched these good lads out of the City to one of the many secret entryways which led to the deeper levels of the dungeon. (Hints seem to point at a direct descent to dungeon level four.) Despite their explorations, every chamber they discovered had already been looted. There were dried bloodstains, crushed skulls, shattered doors, and no treasure whatsoever. Growing all the more restless, Lessnard led his men up a hidden flight of stairs and searched some more.

The adventurers opened a sealed door and discovered three animated corpses lurching toward them. Wights! Lessnard hurled a Fireball at the foul things,

²⁶⁰ Online web forum post: RPG.Net, "Low-Level Magic-Users — How Valuable?" Posted September 25th, 2009. See also The Collector's Trove Presents: Michael Mornard Collection.

and they were blasted into loathsome and greasy heaps of ash. Coughing away the smoke, he led his trembling apprentices into the vacated tomb and searched the sarcophagi. At last! Twelve pieces of valuable funereal jewelry were discovered, undamaged by the magical flames. Wisdom dictated that the lucky treasure hunters should immediately leave the premises and secure their fortunes (and experience points); and so naturally, the adventurers abandoned caution and went exploring into the deeper catacombs.



“Do you hear something?”

To the north of the wight tomb they discovered a vast chamber in which slept a giant scorpion.

Their advantage was slight, and any movement or flicker of torchlight might waken the horrid monstrosity. Thinking quickly, Lessnard ordered his minions to attack. Crum shot an arrow at the thing, while the acolyte charged forward. Floppspel cowered behind Lessnard, who cast a Slow spell on the scorpion to give his minions a chance to fight the thing with at least a fair hope for survival. The valiant acolyte engaged the giant arachnid, smacking it with his mace.

The scorpion rushed forward, and Lessnard was forced to fend it off with only his dagger. Floppspel had a dagger of his own, and Crum dropped his bow

and struck the thing with his sword. Pieces of chitin flew off under the onslaught, but the scorpion would not be so easily slain. As the acolyte raised his mace for another attack, he was seized by two mighty claws and transfixes by the dripping stinger. He died most horribly.

The distraction, however, was enough. Screaming and slashing, the three surviving adventurers managed to impale and finally kill the loathsome creature. It collapsed in a twitching pile, dying legs skittering in wild circles upon the floor. Crum and Lessnard quickly searched the room for treasure, but nothing was found. Lessnard turned to Floppspel, expecting to see him standing aghast over the remains of the poor acolyte; but instead, the wily Medium had caught something twinkling on the scorpion's stinger in the torchlight. A ring! Even as Lessnard demanded the treasure from his minion, Floppspel slipped the golden ring onto his quivering finger and ... vanished into thin air.

Crum gasped, Lessnard cried out in indignation. The Magician rushed to the sole exit of the place, thrashed around, and managed to knock the invisible Floppspel on his ass. Crum helped to wrestle the greedy Medium to the ground, and Lessnard slipped the ring from his twisting fingers. (No, he did not cast Floppspel hurtling down into the fires of Mount Doom, for lack of a volcano; but he probably thought about it.) Floppspel relented, simply because he had no choice. But Lessnard was in no mood for more fun and games. He ordered Crum to haul up the acolyte's body, and then pushed Floppspel up to the front to keep an eye on him. Treasure acquired, mission accomplished. It was time to go home.

Unless, of course, the three got hopelessly lost after wandering through an unnoticed one-way door. Which they did.

An hour's worth of flustered exploration finally led the adventurers into and through a narrow fissure, which led into a humid hexagonal room.²⁶¹ This room was entirely taken up by a deep pool of black water, with only a slippery and crumbling ledge to serve as fringe. As Lessnard gazed down into the depths, there was a thrashing of foam, a crashing of tails, a gnashing of many teeth. Crocodiles!

The only way onward and upward, Lessnard discerned, was through. Beyond the black pool rose a sloping passageway, hopefully leading out of the dungeon and back to the blessed light. Lessnard had magical boots of levitation,

²⁶¹ The actual play map which Mike Mornard created during this misadventure, is illustrated on page 305 of Jon Peterson's *Playing at the World*.

and so he offhandedly ordered Crum and Floppspel to edge their way around the ledges while he floated over the pit. They would meet at the farther shore, as it were, and continue back to the surface.

There were a few problems with this slapdash plan, however. The none-too-bright Crum affably agreed to give it a try, but he had not been told to drop the awkwardly-weighted body of the acolyte. So he shambled onto the ledge, tottered, screamed, and plunged headlong into the waters. One croc got the thrashing fighting man, while the other got the pre-toasted acolyte. Two meals for the price of one!

Fortunately for himself, Floppspel the Intrepid had not yet dared to set foot to the other ledge. The exasperated Lessnard — floating a few feet above the slimy floor — ordered the Medium to unwind his rope, and to tie it around Lessnard's waist. Floppspel decided that this was a truly excellent time to ask if he could keep the ring of invisibility. He gave the rope a friendly yank to make his point, and the ballooning Lessnard bounced around toward the ceiling. Lessnard demanded that Floppspel walk along the ledge, holding onto the rope. Floppspel refused. The Magician had had enough with his rebellious apprentice, and so he yanked on the rope until Floppspel slipped off the edge. Now he would dangle his apprentice over the chomping jaws of the blood-spattered crocodiles, to really teach him a lesson in chivalrous gratitude!

But the boots of levitation were only meant to bear the burden of a single person. Lessnard, with the shrieking Floppspel clutching his legs and kicking his slippered feet, realized with horror that they were both sinking down through the air toward those gnashing teeth. Floppspel flailed and panicked, while Lessnard threatened to cut the rope. The apprentice replied by clawing his way up his master's robes until he stood upon Lessnard's shoulders ... with one foot jammed into Lessnard's mouth for balance, of course.

Floppspel leapt off of Lessnard's shoulders, and barely managed to land on the farther ledge. Lessnard bobbed upward and smacked his head against the ceiling.

Finally, Lessnard managed to make his way across by clawing his way across the ceiling. It is likely that Floppspel only waited for his master because he feared that he could not find his way back out of the dungeon all alone. The two finally managed to make their way back up through the ruins of Castle Greyhawk, and back into the City. Lessnard had the ring, and of course the disgruntled Floppspel

was all too eager to share the tale of his master's bumbling greed with anyone who cared to hear. The magnificent Magician would have a rather difficult time procuring the services of more henchmen in the future!

Ah well, at least he had managed to win a ring of invisibility. Only two people who trusted him had died, and only one was spreading malicious rumors around the city. And of course Robilar, Tenser and Terik were really quite fascinated to hear the tale of Lessnard the Ballooning Bombast in every tavern they cared to frequent. But such are small prices to pay in the name of magical treasure.

Right?

* * * * *

During this time — beyond reading, studying, and revising the rules for the D&D game — Gary was also wrestling with the design of the notoriously deadly “mid” levels of the dungeons beneath Castle Greyhawk. His players insisted that the dungeon needed to grow and grow, ever more dangerous, ever deeper. With the trickster-demigod Zagyg now firmly ensconced as the mad lord of the underworld, Gary was ready to create the deadliest and most treasure-laden labyrinths that his players had yet experienced.

From inferences and oblique mentions by Gary and others, it appears that dungeon levels one through eight were created in late 1972 through the beginning of 1973, in two phases of design: [1] a complete rendition of levels one through three and a partial conception of level four, followed by the creation of the City of Greyhawk; and [2] the completion of level four, followed by levels five through eight, perhaps around the new year or thereabouts. A relatively late account,²⁶² however, says that Gary had been refereeing the game for “a few months,” and that dungeon level six was created in early 1973. So what is the real timeline, eh?

Sigh. No one knows. Specification is impossible. Shakily, however, I date the creation of dungeon levels four and five to January of 1973. Some of the levels were actually played a little later than that. These calculated guesses on my part, however, might change in the future. Levels six and beyond are more difficult to place.

²⁶² *Dragon* magazine, issue #291. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

Frustrating and inspiring hardcore D&D players for nearly 40 years, Castle Greyhawk is something of a mirage hovering over the wasteland. It has come tauntingly close to being published innumerable times over the years, beginning with the *Dungeon Geomorphs* in 1976, continuing through to the 1980s with promises of future publication, in *Gord of Greyhawk* stories, in play-glimpses at various cons where Gary Dungeon Mastered, and much later in the Castle Zagyg project for Troll Lord Games. Sadly, the “true” Greyhawk Dungeons have never been fully revealed. Pale imitations have been published in the horrendous Dungeon Module WG7 *Castle Greyhawk*, more admirably in WGR1 *Greyhawk Ruins*, and most recently in *Expeditions to the Ruins of Greyhawk*. But in this author’s opinion, the best version so far would be a mixture of *Castle Zagyg: The Upper Works* (Troll Lord Games, 2008), supplemented by the worthy *Castle of the Mad Archmage* (by Joseph Bloch, 2009-2010), and a hefty contribution from the reader’s imagination. It is very likely that the original notes still exist, held by Gary’s family; but out of respect for the family and Gary’s memory, it is best not to push too hard for the release of such material. After all, the spirit of D&D entails a sense of mystery and the exploration of unknown halls deep beneath the earth. Isn’t it better if the dungeons are left to the imagination, and filled in with one’s own netherworld creations?

No? I share your pain.

* * * * *

We continue our explorations, then, with full understanding that much of what we would love to learn and verify remains within the clutches of the Unknown.

We know very little dungeon about level five, for example, except that it was a maze “centered around a strange font of black fire and gargoyles.”²⁶³ The secret magical nature of this “font” was once revealed by James M. Ward.²⁶⁴ James indicated that the gargoyles were animated monsters, and that they were able to

²⁶³ *Europa* 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of *Europa* Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

²⁶⁴ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot forums, Q&A with James M. Ward. Posted May 23rd, 2010.

heal themselves in combat by leaping into the flames. The gargoyles were extremely difficult to slay, because they would quickly regenerate themselves whenever they were near to death.

The origin of these eerie creations is uncertain. Gary was surely familiar with the grotesques which grace Notre-Dame Cathedral and are featured in *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. TSR's artist David C. Sutherland III would later use the iconic imagery of these French *chimeres* in his portrayals of gargoyles in the *Monster Manual*.

But there was also a 1972 made-for-TV horror movie entitled *Gargoyles*, which (due to the timing and Gary's appreciation of televised horror and fantasy) may have been Gary's primary inspiration. Ad the similarity between the film's chief gargoyle and David C. Sutherland's gargoyle art — and David Trampier's art for the mouth of the Tomb of Horrors — is unmistakable. The film's voiceover introduction nicely hints at the possibilities: "And so it came to pass that while man ruled on Earth, the gargoyles waited, lurking, hidden from the light. Reborn every 600 years in man's reckoning of time, the gargoyles joined battle against man to gain dominion over the Earth. In each coming, the gargoyles were nearly destroyed by men ..." The plot of the movie involves trying to wound the gargoyles, and disrupting their generation rituals, before they can heal and thrive.

Seeking to uncover more such secrets of Greyhawk, we can also find a further glimpse into Gary's conception of magical pools and fountains in the 1979 *Dungeon Masters Guide*. In particular, he described a gargoyle fountain which would ask the delvers a riddle (perhaps akin to the Game of Riddles in the Dark between Gollum and Bilbo Baggins, as featured in *The Hobbit*). If the explorers answered correctly, a nymph sculpture rewarded them with a cryptic poem pointing the way to a secret treasure. Should they fail, the gargoyle would spray them with a jet of poison.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ *Dungeon Masters Guide*, TSR, 1979.



*“It’s just an animated stone demon guarding the waters, right?
How scary can it be?”*

Indirectly, by the way, there is reason to believe that during the exploration of dungeon level five, Robilar the fighting man managed to charm and capture one of these gargoyles and to turn it into a loyal servant for a while.²⁶⁶ This is a lost tale which I cannot yet relate here, because there is not enough information. But we do know that Robilar had a subdued gargoyle as a personal servant for a time, and that it saved his life. We will get to that a little later on in this volume.

The treasures of dungeon level five, guarded by these horrors and other fiends, included treasure troves of platinum pieces, the most valuable coins in the game.²⁶⁷ Platinum is typically a fantasy metal, because it is far too valuable to use as real-world coinage over long periods of time. Curiously however, it was actually minted as such in 18th-century Spain and later in Russia, but such uses were rare anomalies. The metal is hard to process, which means it is also hard to counterfeit. In D&D it therefore became the coinage of choice for noblemen.

Getting to such troves of coinage would not be easy, however. The fifth level could have also featured slime monsters and monster pits: "... To make things really tough," Gary once wrote (referring to a middle dungeon level), he would "add poison to the spikes, have a black pudding make its home in the pit, cover its bottom and sides with yellow mold or any number of like-minded dirty tricks, and voila! Now the pit has become a very real threat again."²⁶⁸

Tests of this lethal caliber may well have strengthened the divide between the "amateur" players in Gary's game and the "pros." By the spring of 1973, there would be a firm division between these groups which would be exacerbated by the fact that those players who played the most would be earning their characters the most experience points. We do not know what level the highest characters may have been by this time, but we do know who they were: "Because they were seemingly always present and ready for another go at it, and very able players too," Gary wrote, "Rob [*Robilar*], Ernie [*Tenser*], and to a slightly lesser extent Terry [*Terik*], soon had the highest level PCs." Which is not, however, to say that they were ready for anything. These three and their henchmen would soon face the most perilous adventure of their entire careers.

²⁶⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar and evil races."

²⁶⁷ *Dragon* magazine, issue #302. "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax.

²⁶⁸ *Dragon* magazine, issue #294. "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax.

* * * * *

“I slept, and I saw myself changing into a boar in dream, and I felt in dream the beating of a new heart within me, and in dream I stretched my powerful neck and braced my eager limbs. I awoke from my dream, and I was that which I had dreamed.

“The night wore away, the darkness lifted, the day came; and from without the cave the wolves called to me: ‘Come out, O Skinny Stag. Come out and die.’

“And I, with joyful heart, thrust a black bristle through the hole of the cave, and when they saw that wriggling snout, those curving tusks, that red fierce eye, the wolves fled yelping, tumbling over each other, frantic with terror; and I behind them, a wild cat for leaping, a giant for strength, a devil for ferocity; a madness and gladness of lusty, unsparing life; a killer, a champion, a boar who could not be defied.

“I took the lordship of the boars of Ireland ...”

— *Irish Fairy Tales*, as told by James Stephens

In what may have been the early months of 1973, the available sources indicate that Gary created dungeon level six, the Labyrinth. This level would be “a repeating maze with dozens of wild hogs ... in inconvenient spots, naturally backed up by appropriate numbers of wereboars.”²⁶⁹ The level also included “other shape-shifting creatures lurking about,”²⁷⁰ black puddings, and minotaurs.²⁷¹ It is likely that these “Swine & Spirals” mazes featured numerous Minoan-inspired labyrinth swirls, dead-ends and also parallel passages, all intended to make mapping a nightmare. Readers who would like to study some other Gygaxian mazes, perhaps

²⁶⁹ Europa 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of Europa Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

²⁷⁰ Dragon Annual #2. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary Gyax.

²⁷¹ Dragon magazine, issue #291. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gyax.

offering a glimpse of the method to this level's madness, are invited to consider the minotaur maze in Dungeon Module S4, *The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth* (1982), as well as the maze clusters in *Dungeon Geomorphs, Set Three: Lower Dungeons* (1977).

There was also a deadly lair of the undead on level six, which consisted of a "whole throng" of thouls leading a pack of thirty bloodthirsty ghouls (!). This horrific pack would wipe out one of the parties of adventurers which ran across it (but fortunately, it seems that Robilar, Tenser and Terik managed to avoid this terrible fate).²⁷²

But by far, the most insidious aspect of the level's design was the shadowy axis of the treasure vaults. This was the first dungeon level to include significant troves of Zagyg's "real" treasure: gems, jewelry, and magic items. Therefore, one side of this level's map (either the east side or the north side, depending on which account you prefer) featured six identical open areas, each with "four exits in the cardinal directions." There were also six secret doors, which would lead the most diligent and foolish of dungeoneers into six separate treasure vaults.²⁷³ Four of these vaults held vast amounts of treasure, thematically divided into hoards: a repository of potions; another filled with scrolls; a vault for magic armor, magic shields and enchanted weapons; and a vault filled with gold and other coins. Two of the vaults held Zagyg's favorite pets — a mated pair of ancient black dragons, held in magical stasis — that would awaken in a fury as soon as their secret doors were opened. These are the first dragon encounters attested to in the Greyhawk dungeons, and they were about to become the most memorable as well.

²⁷² Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org, "Monster & Treasure Assortment." Posted May 30th, 2005.

²⁷³ *Dragon* magazine, issue #291. "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax. See also *Dragon Annual* #2, "Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75," by Gary Gygax.



*It's a funny thing about Zagyg's treasure.
Discovering it always means finding out who's currently protecting it.*

Interestingly, Gary had written creatively about several different sub-species of chromatic dragons even before the creation of *Dungeons & Dragons* itself. He wrote a series of articles and letters for multiple issues of the fanzine *Thangorodrim*, and the black dragon appeared in the November 27th, 1969 issue.²⁷⁴

There, Gary wrote: “Another rare Dragon is the tropical *Draco Nigrus* (Black or Spitting Dragon). It is the smallest of all Dragons, usually averaging no more than 40’-50’ long and weighing in about four tons. Like its northern cousin, the black species has no internal fire; rather they distill a potent caustic enzyme which they spit forth in long streams when angry. ... The Black Dragon preys upon all jungle animals, and its only enemies are its own kind, the Roc, and man. They seem to favor treasures of ivory.”

When it was time for level six to be explored, the three trusty veterans — Robilar, Tenser and Terik, along with a few other weaker characters²⁷⁵ — assembled their respective retinues of henchmen and braved the labyrinth. A black pudding lairing in its recessed hollow beneath one of the corridors was narrowly avoided. Wereboars, hogs and minotaurs were slain, but each expedition into the spiral mazes brought the group into one of those featureless “cardinal direction” rooms in front of the hidden treasure vaults. The delvers also found a dark and intriguing wind shaft, which seemed to go up through the dungeon as far as their eyes could see, but from a treasure seeker’s standpoint there was nothing really there.

Finally growing annoyed with the lack of treasure (and cannily sizing up his mental image of a roughly square map in a rectangular play area, no doubt), Ernie had Tenser search for secret doors along the empty sections of the farther wall. Sure enough, in doing so he discovered the treasure vault which was overflowing with coins. The group hauled up as many gold (and probably platinum) coins as they could, and returned to the surface. Tenser likely used one of his famous personal

²⁷⁴ Refer to the helpful online post at the ODD74 Proboard forums, “Gygax Dragons Pre-Chainmail.”

²⁷⁵ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted June 25th, 2007.

spells — Tenser’s Floating Disc — to assist with the arduous task of carrying all of these weighty riches back to the city.²⁷⁶

But they were not done. After some celebrating in the City of Greyhawk, the adventurers “brought back lower level PCs a second time” to the opened vault, “to clean it out to the last copper.” Once this was done, Ernie considered the non-rectangular layout of the level again and recommended some other locations where the veterans should search for more secret doors. This symmetry-driven flaw in Gary’s level design was soon exploited to maximum effect. Gary must have been gnashing his teeth, because somehow the group managed to open all four of the treasure vaults without waking either of the dragons.

Greed was the delvers’ undoing, however. Cashing in all of the treasure and keeping the best of the magic items, the three companions assembled all of their henchmen and made another expedition down into the level six Labyrinth. Rob even brought his enslaved gargoyle companion, just in case. There were still two unknown regions which might hide rooms, and good reason to believe that even more treasures awaited the bold.

The group went to one of the last “blank spot” chambers, searched for secret doors, and found no treasure at all. They did, however, behold the immense and stasis-held body of the female black dragon. Horrified, the party fled the room, but it was much too late. The opening of the secret door had triggered a mechanism which lowered the entire wall between the empty chamber and the dragon vault, allowing the awakened and furious she-dragon full access to the labyrinth.

There were probably screams as the adventurers took advantage of their meager head start and fled into the maze. The dragon surged forward and chased them down the spiral tunnels, but with all of the angled surfaces throughout the never-ending catacombs, she never had a clear shot where she could unleash her acid breath against her lair’s defilers. Trusting to Ernie’s and Rob’s memories, the entire party managed to escape.

Being covetous and cocky, the three players instantly agreed that they needed to go back and check the final blank spot of the unknown. The she-dragon was lost in the maze, and the group had a momentary advantage which they pressed at

²⁷⁶ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted March 1st, 2005.

once. They marched back at full speed to the last mysterious area of the level, and there they unleashed the she-dragon's mate!

The heroes screamed, the wakening male dragon roared. Off in the distance, the she-dragon gave an echoing roar of affirmation. The panicked gold-mongers were now stuck between two dragons, and the only directions in which they could safely flee (into the adjacent open chambers) would each give the male dragon a good clean shot to spit his acid and kill them all.

They had all faced similar circumstances in the past. Robilar had barely escaped the wights on his solo adventure, while Terik had managed to slay a Balrog on his own. Tenser, in his own solitaire escapade, had slain an entire band of gnolls and discovered a portable hole. Now all of these worthy explorers were together, fully armed, with their trusty (yet panicked) henchmen at their backs. They drew their weapons, faced the male dragon, and charged.

There was distance between the adversaries, and the dragon let loose with its venomous acid spittle. All three heroes survived the corrupting onslaught, badly wounded. Some of their weaker henchmen turned into screaming piles of bloody slush, and perished horribly. Robilar's gargoyle barely managed to survive. The fighting men struck to subdue, and not to kill ... if the dragon possessed no treasure, then the dragon would become the treasure itself! They would force it into subjugation, drag it up to the surface, and sell it for a fortune to some pompous lord in the City of Greyhawk.

The dragon was bludgeoned ferociously, but still it fought on. Its mate clawed her way through the labyrinth, following the sounds of battle as she drew near. Another gout of acidic spittle blasted the party, killing more of the henchmen and bringing the three veterans near to death. According to Gary's later estimation, there was about an 80% chance that the male dragon would succumb to his wounds and beg for mercy, but the morale dice of Zagyg dictated the adventurers' fate: nope. The dragon, relentless, would fight on to the death.

Perhaps with bitter memories of their encounter with the Castle's original arch-villain, Obmi the evil dwarf, the three survivors raised their wand and weapons, gave a battle cry, pointed them at the bloodied dragon, and —

They ran like bloody Hell.

Tenser, being a magic-user and unable to wear any armor, was probably the fastest. Terik followed up behind. Poor Robilar, in lightweight but still cumbersome magic armor, brought up the rear with the vengeful dragon in hot pursuit. Robilar's

immense strength (and quick thinking) paid off in that moment, as he grabbed his gargoyle and tossed it “on his back in a sort of fireman’s carry.”

The dragon unleashed its third acid spray, and Robilar’s gargoyle melted off his back in a gory torrent of liquid stone. The exceedingly lucky Robilar managed to survive, suffering “only” one-quarter damage!²⁷⁷

At that moment, the she-dragon appeared at her mate’s side, and the two malevolent dragons took a few seconds to greet one another before surging along together for the final pursuit and kill.

Tenser and Terik and the few other survivors, being able to run faster than the nearly-dead Robilar, cut their way into the labyrinth and tried to hide. Robilar knew he couldn’t make it in time, so instead he ran straight for the earlier-discovered vertical wind shaft which had seemed to ascend through several hidden dungeon levels. He had earlier acquired a magical pair of boots of levitation, and if he could make it into the shaft, he just might be able to survive this ongoing catastrophe.

Robilar made it into the shaft, although the dragons had seen him and roared in indignation. He began levitating through the darkness as quickly as he could, and Gary made a customary roll to check for a wandering monster.

Robilar was thrice cursed that day, apparently. A wandering monster was indicated. So Gary rolled again. It was the worst possible result for dungeon level six, a purple worm. Justifying the result, Gary had to think about the structure of the vertical shaft, and he came to the logical conclusion that the only place the worm could be was directly above poor Robilar.

Purple worms, known to D&D players as humongous tributes to the sandworms in Frank Herbert’s *Dune* novels (as well as Lovecraft’s dholes), were something of an interesting beast undergoing transition at this point in the game’s history. In *Chainmail*, Gary had indicated that they were “wyrms,” or wingless dragons. In this play session, the evolving worm might have been legless as well. Perhaps this is the very moment when the description of the purple worm shifted from dragon to the annelid we know today. Whatever the case, the monstrous behemoth was squelching its way down the shaft when it spied a tasty acid-flavored snack levitating up toward its open maw. Robilar, in disbelief, used his boots to

²⁷⁷ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted June 25th, 2007.

descend quickly back to the bottom of the shaft. There he found the two black dragons, elated to have re-caught the day's elusive prey.

Both dragons inhaled, ready to spit their acid, and Robilar took those scant few seconds to make a run for the labyrinth. Thus, Robilar was forced to sprint down the same corridor where the black pudding was waiting. He ran straight across it, and his magical boots saved him once again, even as they were devoured off his feet.²⁷⁸ The dragons were slowed by the cheated and hungry deadly pudding, which they surely destroyed in hateful wrath.

Running for dear life deeper into the maze, probably screaming at the top of his lungs, Sir Robilar the Nearly Slain managed to collide with Tenser and Terik, who had been searching for him. (Just follow the screams, guys.) With the dragons coming in behind, the three fled and managed to make it back to the surface at last.²⁷⁹

The dragons, by the way, would live on for years, reigning as the rarely-disputed tyrants of what came to be known as the Black Dragon Labyrinth.

²⁷⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted June 25th, 2007.

²⁷⁹ We know from a few brief asides (for example the Dragonsfoot forums, "How far did Gygax go with Greyhawk?") that at some point, Terik the mighty managed to subdue a black dragon; but whether this was one of THE black dragons of the Castle Greyhawk labyrinth is not known.

INTERLUDE

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: A GLIMMER OF THE APOCALYPSE?

(GLIMPSES OF THE
“GAMMA WORLD”
IN EARLY D&D)

DESPITE THE omnipresent temptation which might lead some to unfairly label Dave's and Gary's signature masterpiece — *Dungeons & Dragons* — as a mere mutant derivative of Professor Tolkien's hallowed and now-legendary fantasy setting of Middle Earth, there is a far more unusual background to the game which I feel it is crucial for the historical reader to consider. The game is not just fantasy.

It is an open secret²⁸⁰ that D&D, as published in January of 1974, can very easily be interpreted as a fantasy simulation of a *post-apocalyptic* environment. In other words, Greyhawk and/or Blackmoor — and all the ruin-filled fantasy realms traversed in between — might actually represent the healed and forgotten remnants of a far more ancient world, one ravaged by a nuclear war or other technological cataclysm.

²⁸⁰ This idea has been explored many times over the decades, and I was reminded of the theme by Tavis Allison's 2010 article for *The Escapist Magazine*, "The Day After: D&D Is the Apocalypse." I owe a debt to Tavis's insightful precedent as I tackle the subject herein, from my own perspective.



Some say the world will end in fire.

This suggestion might seem laughable at first — after all, what could possibly embody purely *medieval* fantasy more than *Dungeons & Dragons*? — but when we peel back the layers of preconception and consider both Dave’s and Gary’s love of

science fiction, it really is not unlikely at all. Gary's favorite author Jack Vance wrote *The Dying Earth*, in which a far-flung and post-apocalyptic world is filled with eccentric wizards who battle and vie against strange monstrosities. The *Hawkmoon* stories (of Michael Moorcock),²⁸¹ along with *Hiero's Journey* (by Sterling Lanier), *Sign of the Labrys* (by Margaret St. Clair), and *Changeling Earth* (by Fred Saberhagen, who was one of the authors whom Gary named as being "very key to his thinking" while he was writing D&D materials)²⁸² are all exceedingly post-apocalyptic works, and all were held dear among Gary's favorite tales. All of these stories inspired pieces of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, and all of them were featured in Gary's recommended reading list for AD&D, Appendix N. Several of these tales were also included in Gary's earlier "Fantasy / Swords & Sorcery: Recommended Reading" list as well, featured in *The Dragon* #4 (December 1976).

But there are also hints beyond the mere recollection and lists of Gary's preferred reading material. The Greyhawk dungeons of 1973 for example would feature beaming teleporters and dimensional gates to other worlds, inspired in part by the technology of *Star Trek*. It is also remarkable that in 1974, when James M. Ward expressed an interest in seeing a pure science fiction version of *Dungeons & Dragons*, Gary's answer was not "No." Rather, Gary loved the concept, but he simply did not have enough time to write the new game by himself. Therefore, he let James run with the idea. The result would be *Metamorphosis Alpha*, published in late 1976 ... some six months before *Star Wars* told the tale of ravaged technological worlds "A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away." *Star Wars*, in turn, would convince everyone that high technology and Jedi mysticism could co-exist in the fabled past, and not just in the future. Crazy old wizards fighting black knights with laser swords? Why not?

In the world of *Star Wars* as in Greyhawk, the Golden Age of peace has already come and gone, and who is to say that Golden Age was not celebrated

²⁸¹ I believe it is worth noting that in Moorcock's work, post-apocalyptic settings are indicative of an interim cycle between a world's death and its rebirth. The Lords of Law and Chaos in the Eternal Champion saga exist to battle with one another for the privilege of reshaping ravaged worlds in their own image. Intriguingly, Gary would also (in the late 1980s) choose to destroy his own world of Oerth at the end of the Gord heroic cycle, just as Moorcock did in the Elric novel *Stormbringer*. Refer for example to Chapter 6 of *Dead God's Homecoming*.

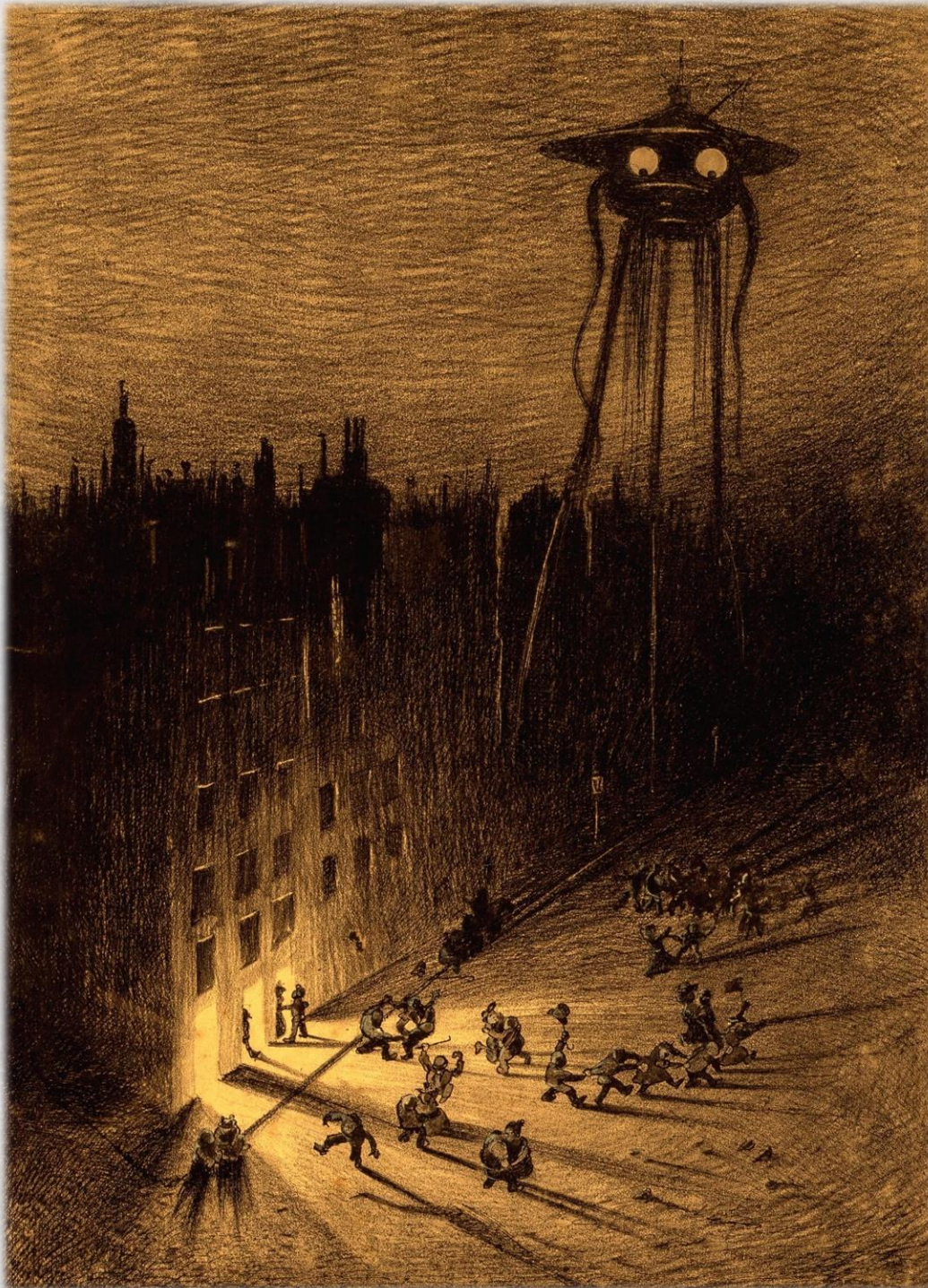
²⁸² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part II. Posted February 17th, 2003.

through the omnipresence of magic-like technology? After all, Gary — very much like George Lucas — was a fan of the “Sword & Planet” genre exemplified by Edgar Rice Burroughs’s *Barsoom* stories, the first tale of which — as *Under the Moons of Mars* — had been written more than twenty-five years before Gary was even alive. And Barsoom in turn was based on the premise of a declining civilization, where the past culture’s technology had fallen into ruin and become “magic.” There, apocalypse took hold in the form of a worldwide climate disruption, and the survivors grew to favor swords and other melee weapons as a result of their gradual degeneration into barbarism.

TSR’s game *Warriors of Mars*, celebrating Barsoom and linking it explicitly to D&D, would be released in 1974. And certainly by 1975, Gary was also a devout admirer of M. A. R. Barker’s post-apocalyptic Tékumel setting, which would then premiere to the public in TSR’s own *Empire of the Petal Throne*. While James Ward continued his work on own special version of “sci fi D&D,” Gary too would mix sci fi and fantasy in his own *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*, conceived in early 1976 as a tournament-driven introduction to *Metamorphosis Alpha* as an adjunct to *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Some sci fi concepts and powers, reconsidered and refined, would be deliberately carried forth from the early D&D game (1974-1977) into Gyga’s next incarnation, AD&D (1977-1979). The 1978 *Players Handbook* — inspired by the precepts set in *Eldritch Wizardry*, 1976 — would feature rules for “psionics,” a word which means “psychic electronics” ... in other words, technologically-enhanced psychic powers. In 1979, Gary’s *Dungeon Masters Guide* would also feature conversion rules syncing AD&D to TSR’s most forthright post-apocalyptic game, *Gamma World*. So there really are official rules for mutations and powered armor in AD&D; just check out DMG pg. 114 (along with module S3, of course). After all, as Gary noted in that section of the rules, there are “many possibilities for the DM if he or she includes a gateway to a post-atomic war earth a la *Gamma World*. The two game systems are not alien, and interfacing them is not difficult.”²⁸³

²⁸³ *Dungeon Masters Guide*, pg. 113.



This is the end ...

A few interesting synergies clearly emerge as we consider this, don't you think? But there is more. There are deeper clues to D&D's apocalyptic background buried within the rules which deal with artifacts and relics.²⁸⁴ Several of these powerful nonesuch gadgets are obviously hints that the world of fantasy possessed *much* more technology in its ancient past. These anachronistic and ancient contraptions include Heward's Mystical Organ, the Mighty Servant of Leuk-O, and the micro-automaton "device" known as Queen Ahlissa's Marvelous Nightingale. Most especially telling is the Machine of Lum the Mad: "Perhaps this strange device was built by gods long forgotten and survived the eons since their passing," we read, "for it is incredibly ancient and of workmanship unlike anything known today. The Machine was used by Baron Lum to build an empire ..." ²⁸⁵

So it is clear, then: Gary acknowledged many links of inspiration and development between post-apocalyptic fiction and D&D, to the point that they in many ways became irrevocably intertwined. But how early, exactly, did he link the apocalypse and lost technology to the simpler precepts of historical and medieval fantasy? It may have been very early indeed, before D&D or even *Chainmail* had been conceived of. He once wrote that he read Jack Vance's *The Eyes of the Overworld* in 1966,²⁸⁶ and then read *The Dying Earth* thereafter. But despite all of these later links within his game, was Gary thinking of post-apocalyptic fantasy while he was writing the first early rules for *Dungeons & Dragons*? He almost certainly was. In the original set's volumes (written in 1973, published in January of 1974), we find direct references not only to Barsoom, but also to cyborgs, robots, and androids. Early on in Volume 1, Gary noted that D&D's scope could easily "stretch from the prehistoric to the imagined future," although he urged an exploration of *medieval* fantasy prior to any engagement with such further flights

²⁸⁴ In Saberhagen's *Changeling Earth*, by way of an analogous example, the phrase "Old World artifact" is used in Chapter 1 to refer to an ancient technological device of supreme power. Gary certainly must have noted this concept, appearing where it does; but when he applied it to his own game design is uncertain. (Some clues point to a tentative timeframe of c. late 1975- early 1976.) The dangerous effects of ignorant experimentation with such devices would be explored later in TSR's *Metamorphosis Alpha* (1976) and *Gamma World* (1978).

²⁸⁵ *Dungeon Masters Guide*, pg. 159.

²⁸⁶ "Jack Vance and the D&D Game," an article by Gary Gygax.

of fancy. From the beginning, it seems, D&D's ties to the post-apocalyptic were both hinted and hidden in equal measure.

Despite Gary's reticence on the subject, there are very much clearer ties between D&D and a technology-imbued former age, which can all be found in the realm of Greyhawk's ancestor: Dave Arneson's science fantasy campaign of Blackmoor. Blackmoor's earliest arch-villain is the Egg of Coot, who would later be described in this manner: "All communications with this beast are through direct mental contact or via his throne room, which is dominated by a huge old world artifact said to be an ancient war machine."²⁸⁷

And the blatant references to a more technologically-focused world of Blackmoor do not end there. In 1973, John Snider — a player in Dave's campaign who contributed significant additional rules — introduced guidelines for *Star Trek*-style exploration missions to be enjoyed by the Blackmoor players. These rules would later be published in part by TSR, as *Star Probe* and *Star Empire*. In that stars-and-fantasy campaign, the world which Blackmoor resides upon was designated as a unique planet which could be visited by spaceships. One ship's crew in particular visited this world and became stranded, with one ambitious member — Security Officer Stephen Rocklin, known as "The Rock" — becoming a villain of special note. Stephen would control the Temple of the Frog, as later featured in *D&D Supplement II: Blackmoor* (1975). Dave's genre-spanning campaign would also come to feature phasers, nanotech healing kits, and *Starship Troopers*-style powered armor (as worn by William of the Heath, the "Blue Rider"). Perhaps most significant of all, the region of Blackmoor was home to the City of the Gods: a half-buried spaceship, apparently hailing from the times of old.

These many hints of the apocalypse in Blackmoor's history were certainly no accident. In fact, D&D writer and commentator Tavis Allison has noted that he once asked Mr. Arneson flat out if Blackmoor was a post-apocalyptic setting, with ruins standing over lost remnants of technology. Reportedly, Dave stated, "Yes. My players haven't figured that out yet."²⁸⁸ And *that*, if it is true, is a revelation. The world's foremost fantasy game has a hidden layer of science fiction, and these

²⁸⁷ *The First Fantasy Campaign*, pg. 14.

²⁸⁸ *The Day After: D&D Is the Apocalypse*, by Tavis Allison. Posted for escapistmagazine.com, June 15th, 2010.

two genres are deeply merged via significant post-apocalyptic elements and imagery. D&D is arguably, from this perspective, a science fiction game.

It may be surprising, but the revelation is also welcome. If we *do* consider the worlds of *Dungeons & Dragons* as being post-apocalyptic, many of the game's stranger “magical” trappings begin to make much more sense. Magic exists because the high-tech devastation caused the laws of science to become permeable, with the dream logic of chaos magic taking hold wherever the physical laws might falter. (This is the premise behind Fred Saberhagen's *Changeling Earth*.) “Monsters” are the long-lost descendants of mutants, biologically corrupted lifeforms, sentient flora and fungi, and degenerated species.



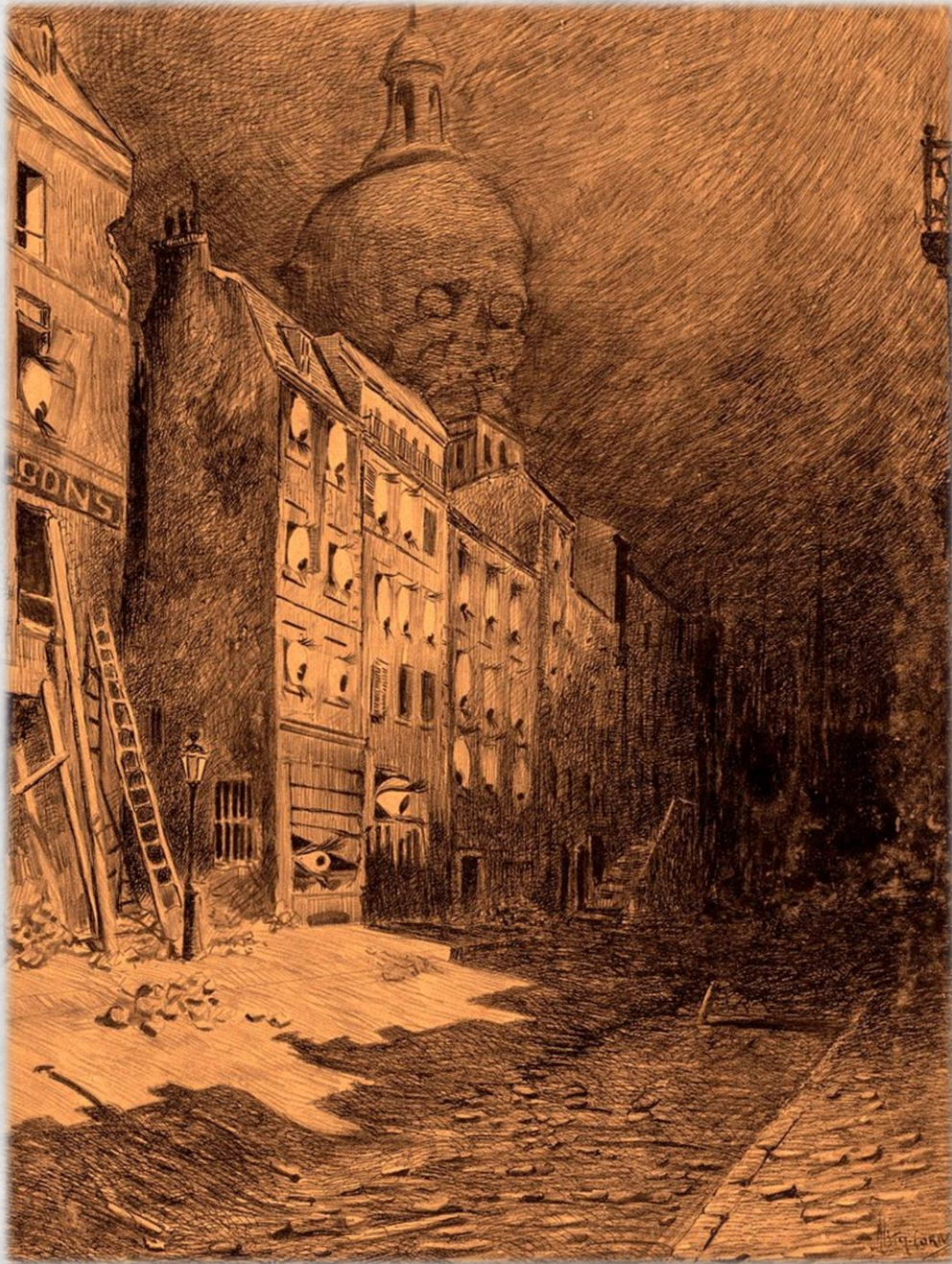
*Mutation means “Survival of the fittest,”
with a twist.*

Such a background also provides a logical explanation for the absence of crude black powder weapons, or gunpowder of any kind, in the World of Greyhawk: with the laws of physics disrupted and replaced in part by the twisted science known as “magic,” humans would be forever coming to grasp with an ever-changing world chaotically governed by shifting physical laws.²⁸⁹

A world facing a grim decline from civilization would require new solutions for humanity to survive. The elder technologies, despite all attempts at replication, would not always reliably function. And why would humans continue to attempt recreating a form of technology that would never work again? Instead, they could simply innovate anew, using “magic” and ingenuity to work out similar effects (such as Magic Missiles and Fireballs) in sync with the new ways of the world, to explore technological ruins, and to combat mutating beasts.

This hypothetical background, in many ways, makes D&D more sensical. And best of all, a post-apocalyptic background could also offer a firm rationale for the existence of hundreds of dungeons!

²⁸⁹ There was also a gamist reason why there was no gunpowder in Greyhawk: Gary simply felt that it did not fit in with the fantasy setting. “I do not believe that magic and gunpowder technology mix well,” he wrote. “... Having gunpowder weapons really moves the game from the fantasy genre to some other, weird or science fantasy.” Separately, he also wrote: “As for it ever working, no. As Oerth was a different world, gunpowder and like acting (gas expansion) explosives were never meant to function in the future time there.”



*Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

After all, if the world had been filled with fallout shelters, subterranean fortresses and vast underground sanctuaries (as seems to be the case in one of Gary's favorite tales, Margaret St. Clair's *Sign of the Labrys*), those places in the underworld would certainly be filled with mutated survivors. If the cataclysm-wracked surface of the planet remained poisoned for thousands of years, would the denizens in the shelters not dig deeper in every direction, because they could never return to the surface? Wouldn't such places be filled with storerooms and vaults filled with the ancient ones' technological and wondrous "treasure," protected by traps and guardians? There would be ruins everywhere after the apocalypse, many being cities and military bases with these sheltering "dungeons" hidden far below. And after thousands of years, the new surface dwellers would only know that these secret and hidden netherworld environs were filled with strange creatures, magical wonders, mysterious rooms, mechanical traps and secret tunnels of every description.

* * * * *

The apocalypse, then, is pretty much a perfect background for a D&D campaign.

And what might end the world? The cataclysm could be technological, or it might instead be dimensional and reality-altering ("magical"). Or perhaps both at once, to varying degrees? In Gary's own *World of Greyhawk*, we have long known, the great advanced civilizations of the past were destroyed by the *Invoked Devastation* and the *Rain of Colorless Fire*. The *Sea of Dust* bordering the *Flanaess* is itself quite reminiscent of the nuclear-impact-created "*Desert of the Death*," as featured in another of Gary's favorite tales, *Hiero's Journey*.

Gary once wrote that the *Invoked Devastation* and the *Rain of Colorless Fire* were not thermonuclear effects, but rather the result of massive waves of uncontrollable magic.²⁹⁰ Here, however, we are reminded not only of Gary's love of post-apocalyptic fiction, but also of Clarke's Third Law: "Any sufficiently

²⁹⁰ Please refer to the *Greyhawk-L* materials retained in the May 13th, 2000 conversation (preserved at oracle.wizards.com) posted by Patrice Forno and Paul Stormberg, with replies by Gary Gygax.

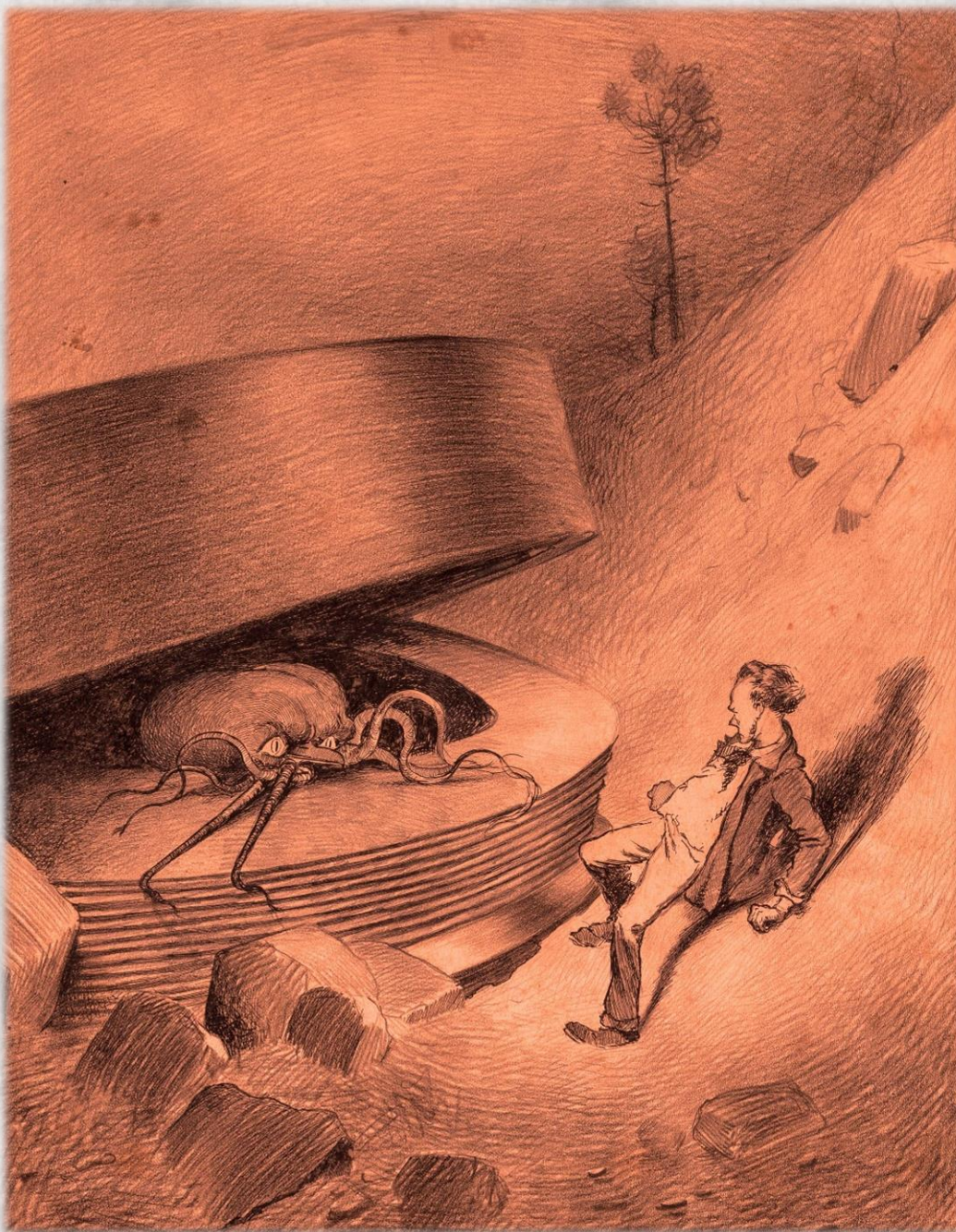
advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” The Golden Age World of Greyhawk, despite being spared the devastation of nuclear holocaust, might have fallen prey to post-industrial “progress” and annihilation after all.

In Blackmoor — in contrast to Greyhawk — the elder devastation’s cause is a total mystery. Was the Blackmoor-world perhaps a failed colony, descended back into savagery? Or was it a paradise planet that rose in glory and then fell to war? What if the technological ancient ones who dwelled there were inhuman, and then the later humans built the Blackmoor-world’s civilizations on an existing alien paradigm? The true history Arneson intended here is unknown. But the world assuredly has a technological past.

There are many different forms that the apocalypse could take. In *Sign of the Labrys*, humanity fell victim to the plague. And in the world of *Changeling Earth*, the cataclysm which caused the death of the technological societies is simply called “The Change.” It seems that in that near future, a nuclear war occurred and a desperate experiment was conducted in an attempt to save some of North America: some of the laws of physics were deliberately altered at the sub-molecular level, resulting in fewer fissionable reactions, making nuclear weapons much less likely to detonate. But these very changes caused the laws of physics to become more mutable, and gave birth to both chaos magic and the Demon Lord born of an interrupted nuclear explosion, the Lord Orcus himself. “Magic” and “technology” in such a world are simply different words for the same enigmatic concept, spoken from two vantage points which are diametrically opposed.

Not everyone, however, is comfortable with such a definition of “magic-tech” as a unifying theory to explain the unknown in an apocalyptic world. In our own age of the 21st century, where genre fiction is highly striated and fandoms forever divided, many readers have returned to the comfortable tropes of “Tolkien worship.” Some fans today embrace fantasy as solely representing the medieval period, merged with the lost dream world of fairy tales. Under such a strict definition, *any* whispers of technology at all appear to be out-of-genre, upsetting, and perhaps even faintly ridiculous. But from the perspective of the open-minded, or from the viewpoint of the early 1970s, such genre-merging mischief is precisely the spice which serves to create the very exciting grounds where many new and unpredictable ideas take root and flourish into the future.

And speaking of revered early writers in speculative fiction, what again of the Barsoom tales of Edgar Rice Burroughs? Is that not a post-apocalyptic setting, the very same one which Gary praised in his introduction to the 1974 D&D set?



*“Okay, we leave Mars
and land on the planet of the naked primates.
What do we see?”*

Fantasy and technology have gone hand in hand for a very long time. They do so naturally, both fed by our boundary-leaping and genre-defying collective sense of wonder.

* * * * *

Despite all of the compelling evidence hinting at an apocalyptic background for D&D, it seems clear that Gary set out to write a *medieval* fantasy game — and only that — in early 1971. *Chainmail* (March 1971) was sub-titled “Rules for Medieval Miniatures,” and offered to the public with the Fantasy Supplement’s introductory justification, stating that “Most of the fantastic battles related in novels more closely resemble medieval warfare than they do earlier or later forms of combat.” And D&D itself (January 1974) would subsequently be sub-titled in part, “Rules for Fantastic Medieval Wargames.” In other words, *Chainmail* and D&D were at first games which reflected a Tolkien-inspired background: a world of the fairy tale past, where technology never rose out of the Dark Ages to alter the fate of humanity.

Nevertheless, it seems that Gary’s orthodox (and Leonard Patt-influenced) premise came to an end as soon as Dave Arneson began tampering with *Chainmail Fantasy* to create the Barony of Blackmoor and the Egg of Coot in April of 1971. The strictly “medieval” trappings of the game swiftly went out the door, and Gary was happy to borrow many of Arneson’s innovations when he was writing up the rules and implicit background for D&D.

The interesting question then becomes: When exactly was Gary inspired by post-apocalyptic fiction to lend sci fi aspects to the background of his own game of dungeon exploration? Was it perhaps in November 1972, when he played as an adventurer in Dave’s Blackmoor dungeons? Or in early 1973, when he was busy writing the second draft of *Dungeons & Dragons*? Or (despite mentioning robots and cyborgs in D&D!) did he not become obsessed with the concept until after D&D’s publication, when writing *Warriors of Mars* (early 1974), or while publishing *Empire of the Petal Throne* (1975), or perhaps only while writing *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* (early 1976)? When did D&D become post-apocalyptic, and to what degree? And why is it that *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (1977-1979) is so much more heavily vested with these science fiction ideas, while (at the very same time)

the game's many new fans were pining for a more Tolkien-modeled conception of traditional fantasy?

There are no easy answers to these questions, and there probably never will be a definitive resolution which would assuage our collective confusion. But the next time someone derides the science fiction elements in *Dungeons & Dragons*, you might want to point out to them that those elements have a very solid and justifiable place in the earliest foundations of the game. Rob Kuntz for example has noted that the fantasy aspect of D&D was just one play facet of many. He wrote that the game's "relation to other genres such as S[cience] F[iction], Steam Punk, Sword & Planet, Planetary Romance, Post-Apocalyptic and other such related matter has never been far and away from the game as originally conceived and played-tested." And further, "This easily-included core matter was instead separated into distinct RPG types for commercial reasons only."²⁹¹

In other words, he believed that these facets of D&D's published version were held back to create the opportunities for future products — products which could exhibit other narrow genres beyond fantasy. He noted too that although D&D was marketed as a medieval fantasy game, "this initial segmentation was a weighed choice made for D&D's immediate commercial introduction only. We [*i.e.*, Rob and Gary] had previously felt that the game had more range and infinitely more possibilities than what the lone S[words] & S[orcery] element produced."²⁹²

It could thus be argued that D&D, *even before its publication*, was a multi-genre game which included many aspects of the post-apocalyptic. Gary may have deliberately written a "fantasy" game, but Arneson quickly introduced many sci-themed aspects to the work, and Rob felt that the game was richer when it embraced the entire realm of speculative fiction ... including, in honor of Jack Vance and Burroughs and many others, unforgettable aspects of an apocalyptic planet whose future fantasy was presaged by a more sophisticated Golden Age lost in the technological past.

Is D&D post-apocalyptic? Yes and no. It is *mostly* fantasy, but there are many hints that can be interpreted as technological remnants of a mysterious past, a lost

²⁹¹ Lord of the Green Dragons blog: "Taking D&D 'Back' to Its Future Level: Part I," by Rob Kuntz. Posted October 24th, 2010.

²⁹² Lord of the Green Dragons blog: "The Machine Level: Special Web Introduction," by Rob Kuntz. Posted October 21st, 2010.

and fabled age of the ruins underlying the surface worlds of Greyhawk and of Blackmoor. It would, in fact, be harder to argue that a post-apocalyptic background is *not* implied by the game, its disparate elements, its design, its synergy with *Warriors of Mars*, and its original sci fi sources of inspiration.

CHAPTER 17

SHADOWS UNDER GREYHAWK

(C. JANUARY —
AUGUST 1973)

FOLLOWING THE nightmarish (yet rewarding!) descent into the Black Dragon Labyrinth, the adventurers exploring the realms beneath Castle Greyhawk continued to defy the odds. With such exciting play sessions, and the rules which were known to some remote play testers only as “the dungeon game” becoming something of a grass-roots phenomenon, it is only natural that Gary’s play group would begin to grow beyond the confines of his basement. Within a few months, Gary’s “tribe” had expanded from a dozen souls at the beginning of 1973 to over twenty players later in the year.²⁹³ “Thus I got into the habit of not memorizing names and faces,” Gary wrote. “The group was so transient that it didn’t pay, save in regards to the campaign’s regulars.”²⁹⁴

Sometimes, there were even sessions where up to 20 Player Characters were played at once!²⁹⁵ That would prove to be the limit for any harried DM’s sanity. “Adventures with 10 to 20 PCs were fun, if hectic,” Gary wrote, “and few if any of such mass forays were of memorable sort, other than perhaps for the number of low-level characters being done for and new ones hastily rolled up. Because of that, and the fact that the more skilled veterans with higher-level PCS wanted adventures of less chaotic sort, the sessions with smaller groups were much in demand.”²⁹⁶

Interestingly, Gary once also said that most new players were attracted to the fighting man class. “Most parties were mainly fighters,” he explained, “and ... got in trouble when facing spell-casters without [*their*] own artillery for fire counter-battery.”²⁹⁷ And the newer players were almost always male. “There were never

²⁹³ *The Dragon*, issue #30. “From the Sorcerer’s Scroll,” by Gary Gygax.

²⁹⁴ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted September 21st, 2007.

²⁹⁵ According to Rob Kuntz’s recollection (Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Size of adventuring groups?”) the 20-character party was a one-time deal that ended in disaster: “The group of twenty cited above all but died, butchered but for three who escaped Greyhawk Castle via a transporter which left them nude on the castle green.”

²⁹⁶ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VI. Posted February 9th, 2004.

²⁹⁷ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V.

many female gamers in our group,” Gary commented. “My daughter Elise ... and both of her younger sisters played ... and lost interest in a few months, as she did.”²⁹⁸ Despite significant future contributions from female players, designers, artists and authors (notably Jean Wells, Darlene Pekul, Laura Hickman and Margaret Weis), this state of affairs would remain the sub-cultural norm until the introduction of *Vampire: the Masquerade* and other storytelling RPGs in the early 1990s.

These new players — with no understanding of *Chainmail*, the Castle & Crusade Society, or effective wargame preparation and battle strategies — may have struggled quite a bit in Gary’s dungeons, and sessions alongside the veteran players were much preferred. Low-level characters had a much higher chance of survival when they had a Tenser, a Terik, or a Robilar to watch their backs.

However, due to timing (and the gold-hungry ambitions of the veterans!), there were frequently times when Gary would run the game for relative newcomers with nothing but their intelligence and creativity to guide them. Mike Mornard once indicated that the very first dungeon level featured a trolls’ nest.²⁹⁹ These monsters, with their vicious attacks and powers of regeneration, would shred their way through low-level characters in a heartbeat. The only warnings that these monsters were deadly were the casually discarded heaps of splintered bones and shattered skulls. Any adventurer who ignored this and went further would learn a fatal lesson: under Castle Greyhawk, survival was often a matter of knowing when to avoid combat entirely. Ignorance, however, could easily prove fatal to any stubborn player’s character. Hubris, over-daring recklessness, or simple greed could result in terminal conditions for many a would-be hero.

* * * * *

Speaking of which, of course, there was still the matter of poor Robilar who had been badly wounded during his horrific run in with the black dragons, the black pudding and the purple worm. Robilar needed a significant amount of rest to heal his wounds, and he was also — due to the plundered treasure vaults situated on dungeon level six — wealthier than he had ever been before. These two factors

²⁹⁸ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III.

²⁹⁹ Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboards.

combined may well have caused Rob to consider his fighting man's eventual retirement. What would have happened if Robilar hadn't become suddenly wealthy, or had no safely place to heal? He needed rest, and so he sought to purchase a place along the City of Greyhawk's waterfront where he and his allies could recuperate and plot their next caper in the dungeons deep.

Gary once described the inn which Robilar chose to purchase as a bustling place overlooking the Lake of Unknown Depths, with outside tables where adventurers sat "quaffing amber ale and charting their course to wealth beyond belief."³⁰⁰ This place in the Old City³⁰¹ would later be named the Green Dragon Inn, inspired by Tolkien's inn of the same name situated in the busy Hobbit village of Bywater. Rob once noted however that Robilar was "a silent owner, preferring to hang out there to gather information and odd facts about Castle Greyhawk from wandering adventurers."³⁰²

³⁰⁰ *The AD&D Coloring Album*, Troubadour Press, 1979.

³⁰¹ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "The Green Dragon Inn."

³⁰² Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "The Green Dragon Inn."



*“Treasure beyond all imagining, buried somewhere
on the sixth level? You don’t say ...”*

As Rob (the most active player in the Greyhawk games) finally slowed down for a little while, it appears that the overall advancement of the Greyhawk campaign may have slowed down as well in accordance, in early 1973. Dates and time estimates relating to this time period are much harder to come by, the stories are fewer in number, and our detailed knowledge of the individual characters becomes spotty in nearly every source. Facts concerning the construction of deeper dungeon levels, most of all, become sparse indeed. Part of this relative scarcity in the tales that I can tell you can be attributed to the influx of new players (demanding frequent reiterations of the upper levels), while the rest may be the result of Gary’s focus on rewriting the second draft of the game for future publication. Whatever

the dominant reason, from this point forward our tale begins to shift farther away from play test reports and nearer to the actualities of business, design and publishing. I wish this were not the case, but I cannot share adventure stories that do not exist. (Hopefully in the future, I will be able to share a bit from Rob's DMing of the El Raja Key campaign.)

Concerning the design of the deep Greyhawk dungeons: It must be noted that this was one of the tangents of game design that Gary was most frequently asked about by fans over the years, and so his recollection of the exact dungeon layout tended to change slightly over the decades. And this is understandable, because the dungeon layout shifted radically depending on which time period you were asking him about (roughly 1972-1973, 1973-1976, 1977-1981, 1981-2002, 2003-2008). For this chronicle, I have decided to treat his earliest recollections as being the nearest to "authoritative," supplemented by his later remembrances as need be. But there are times when I cannot adhere to this methodology, because we have too much other circumstantial evidence which points toward the early vagaries as being wrong. Solid, unconflicting information is hard to come by.

We do still have *some* tantalizing details, however, of the deeper dungeons. There are a (very) few details which we can certainly ascribe to particular areas and room clusters. Level seven for example featured a huge circular labyrinth at its heart, as well as a "street [*filled with*] masses of ogres."³⁰³ More interestingly, however, there was also the matter of the Great Stone Face.

This feature may have been present on dungeon level seven, but this is by no means certain. Rob Kuntz was of the opinion that the Face "was at least partially influenced by the Easter Island Moai."³⁰⁴

³⁰³ *Europa* 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of *Europa* Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

³⁰⁴ Lord of the Green Dragons blog, by Rob Kuntz.



The watchers of the mystery, ever silent.

However, the Moai seem only to have influenced the appearance of the Face, not its secret nature. Long-time students of Greyhawk history may be interested to learn that a *related* mystery (that of the *bas-relief* face encountered by the characters Ayelerach and Erac's Cousin, later in the Greyhawk campaign) has been resolved and mostly answered, but of course we can never be certain that this face's mystery was related to that of the *Great Stone Face* ... Gary was very proud that no one

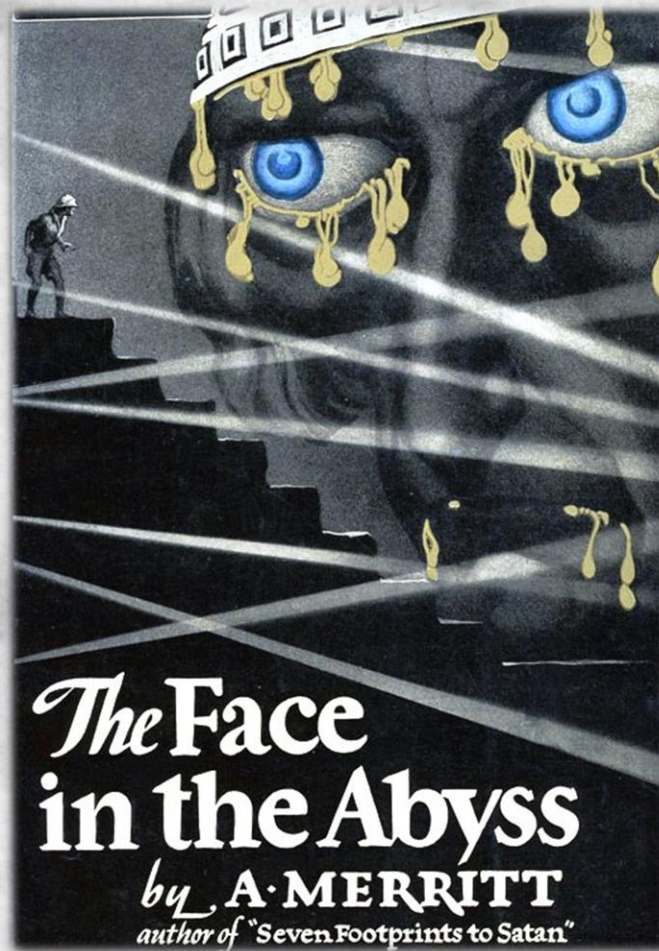
had ever solved the full riddle of its existence.³⁰⁵ The “Great Stone Enigma” is therefore a somewhat known quantity, while the earlier-established “Great Stone Face” remains a mystery.

The closest we get to an official explanation of this strange feature in the published D&D materials is this: “A great bas-relief face which, if looked upon, will either bestow some worthwhile knowledge or increase to the beholder; or else, cause him to save versus magic, or else be turned into a wart on its face or something similar.”³⁰⁶ (Note that any or none of these powers might be ascribed to Gary’s creation as it stood in 1973.)

The bas-relief face was probably inspired by Abraham Merritt’s tale *The Face in the Abyss* (1923), in which a very similar graven colossus is described as “that visage of ultimate evil,” with “eyes of pale blue crystals” which radiated “power which could have been godlike in beneficence, had it so willed, but which had chosen instead the lot of Satan.” One person in Merritt’s story notes that the Face “and the Lord of Evil are one.”

³⁰⁵ Please refer also to the thread “Great Stone Face vs. Great Stone Enigma,” posted on the Doomsday Games Message Board on January 17th, 2009.

³⁰⁶ *Dungeons & Dragons*, Supplement I: *Greyhawk*, pg. 62.



Merritt's own enigma.

Image from the dust jacket of the first edition.

Meritt's Face as described in the story is quite evocative. When wakened, it would send a beguiling telepathic command to those who dared to behold it: "Look into my eyes!" And it would promise golden riches, while offering only corruption. But its ultimate secret brooded through infinity, unknown: "There were in Yu-Atlanchi secrets hidden even from its dwellers."

Eventually, the Face possesses a character named Cadok, and so gives rise to an evil Shadow in the flesh. This Shadow is called "a disembodied intelligence, able to manipulate the particles that formed the body of Cadok." It is the Shadow (soul) of a primordial thing called Nimir, Lord of Evil. Nimir once told the protagonist in

Merritt's tale, "I never intended this shape of mine [*perhaps alluding to the Face*] to be ... permanent." The Face to Nimir became a prison of the ages, and the liberated entity sought a willing sacrifice to serve as a more permanent vessel of its eternal spirit. Before this pact can be sealed, however, Nimir is annihilated (or merely banished into the earth once again?) and his earthly vessel is destroyed.

As Greyhawk aficionado Allan Grohe has pointed out,³⁰⁷ there are very strong hints (particularly in *Dragon Magazine* #320) that at least one of the stone faces in the Greyhawk dungeon — the Face and/or the Enigma — is tied to the demon lord Fraz'urb-luu. Fraz'urb-luu, therefore, was probably Gary's version of Nimir in the 1973 campaign.

In the game the imprisoned demon lord was eventually unleashed due to excessive player curiosity. As Gary had expected, the lord Fraz'urb-luu was recklessly freed (by the two Greyhawk heroes named Erac's Cousin and Ayelerach) and promptly carried those two unfortunates "Back to my abode in the Abyss to serve as valued henchmen."

During the earliest years of the dungeon, however, the connection of Fraz'urb-luu to the nether stones of Greyhawk was unknown to Rob and the other players. The Great Stone Face was, from its first discovery, enigmatic and became an almost gravitational force which attracted the veteran heroes to puzzle over its cryptic runes and dire mien. Gary noted that when the Face was first encountered, "the strange artifact caused many emotions. At first fear, then hesitancy were displayed."³⁰⁸ But the Face refused to give up its secrets to mere mortal displays of magic and curiosity, and so its mystery grew until it was driving the players absolutely nuts.

Many characters kept returning to the chamber of the Face, but it would be quite some time before any of the intrepid dungeon delvers managed to learn even a shred of truth about the inscrutable thing.

(This is a mystery that shall be continued ...)

* * * * *

³⁰⁷ Grodog's Greyhawk site.

³⁰⁸ *Dragon* magazine, issue #288. "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax.

Meanwhile, outside of the game — as Gary’s confidence in both the rules and in the players’ fascination grew by the day — it was time to begin thinking far more seriously about how D&D could ever come to exist as a commercial product.

It could happen, eventually, with a little business acumen and daring. Couldn’t it?

During the spring of 1973, Gary found the time to visit Jeff Perren down in Rockford, Illinois. This had little to do directly with *Dungeons & Dragons*, but Gary also talked to Jeff about the success of *Chainmail* (which Perren had basically co-authored), and Gary asked him whether he had any other rules systems which he might like to publish in the future. Jeff happily offered another of his personal rules sets, one which simulated battles in the English Civil War, and Gary promised that he would revise these promising rules for future publication. This new game would not be published by Don Lowry’s Guidon Games, but would instead become the very first product ever released by Gary’s own company, an entity which would be gravely and obscurely named “Tactical Studies Rules.” The title of Perren’s and Gygax’s new co-authored game would be *Cavaliers & Roundheads* (a “Roundhead” being a supporter of the English Parliament during the war), and proceeds from its release would aid Gary and Don Kaye in their efforts to publish *Dungeons & Dragons* at the beginning of 1974.³⁰⁹

When Gary returned from this promising trip to Rockford, he certainly had future publication of both *Cavaliers* and D&D on his mind. Therefore — while the deeper dungeons continued to intrigue the players — he needed to turn his attentions toward securing a publisher. The problem was that all of the fun the players were having would be extremely difficult to convey in a set of rules for a fantasy wargame. *Cavaliers* was an orthodox wargame, and was thereby virtually assured to find a small audience amongst the gaming grognards. But D&D was its own thing, outlandish, almost impossible to describe without being seen in actual play. How could the magic of the game be marketed, and what could it compare to? What could be done?

It is unsurprising that Gary first turned to Don Lowry and Guidon Games. Gary and Don trusted one another, and although their business relationship had

³⁰⁹ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gyax.

likely been damaged by Gary's refusal to move to Maine and also by the company's declining fortunes, it nevertheless seemed likely that Don would at least give Gary's D&D game some serious consideration. It certainly didn't hurt that *Chainmail* had been Guidon's bestselling game, and that Gary was offering his newfangled *Dungeons & Dragons* as something of an elaborate expansion upon that game's popular Fantasy Supplement.

The sobering publication problem, however, was that D&D would be an expensive game to produce. The design would require three booklets, reference sheets and a labeled box, and this was more than Lowry was willing to stomach. The game would also be more expensive and fragile in regards to shipments to out-of-state buyers and retailers. But Gary liked long shots: also at this time, he checked to see if Don was interesting in publishing David Megarry's board game, *The Dungeons of Pasha Cada*.

The concepts were too strange, however. These were not wargames, they were eccentric hobby interests. Don, waffling for a while, eventually and unfortunately turned down both games.³¹⁰

(Whether Gary also offered Don *Cavaliers*, or kept it close to his chest, is an interesting question.)

One of the historical advantages of this disappointing moment, however, is that it was memorable to someone other than Gary. So we know a bit more about it than we would otherwise. As *Pasha Cada* designer David Megarry would later recall, "Guidon Games said they would [*publish*] it — that is, Don Lowry — and he was in Maine at the time. But it became quite apparent by the summer of 1973 that Guidon Games was not going to publish this game. The board is very difficult to publish, it's very expensive. And ... Guidon Games did not have the resources to be able to publish this game."³¹¹

And as for *Dungeons & Dragons*, it is said that Lowry felt the role of the referee in D&D was too arduous, and that normal players would not bother to assume that role, which would in turn cause the game to fail. This of course is only part of the story, as Gary had hundreds of eager play testers he could point to as

³¹⁰ *The Dragon* #11. "View from the Telescope Wondering Which End Is Which," by Gary Gygax, pg. 5.

³¹¹ Online interview: Refer to the Youtube video *40 Years of Dungeon!*, produced by Fellowship of the Thing. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 18:45.

early indicators of D&D's success. But Lowry had become very risk adverse, likely as a result of Guidon's grim financial downslide. So Gary did not press the matter.

David Megarry was traveling the nation by Greyhound that summer, and remembered when he got the *Pasha Cada* game set prototype back from Lowry and Guidon Games in person: "I was going around the United States," he recalled. "... I was going to go up to Maine and get the prototype. So I got the prototype back from Guidon Games. And then I carried it around ... and finally decided ... 'Gary wants to try to do something with this' ... I'll just take it down to him. So ... I went down to Lake Geneva again and left the prototype with him."³¹²

Gary, in turn, promised that there was still hope to get Megarry's game published in the future. And in the end — after many travails — *Pasha Cada* in its renamed and more commercial format, *Dungeon!*, would finally see print.

But what of D&D?

Rebuffed, Gary became very nervous about the future of *Dungeons & Dragons*. His worries would not be calmed by the news that a new gaming company called Game Designer's Workshop was formed (on June 22nd, 1973) in Normal, Illinois ... only a hop, skip and a jump away from Gen Con and Lake Geneva. It seemed likely that there might be competition in the brand new market of fantasy wargaming very soon.³¹³ This company would soon prove to be one of the most influential small players in the industry, founded as it was by Frank Chadwick (later the designer of *Space: 1889*), Rich Banner (winner of the Charles S. Roberts and H.G. Wells Awards), Marc Miller (creator of *Traveller*) and Loren Wiseman (a *Traveller* adventure designer). We will see how these gentlemen indirectly influenced the creation of Tactical Studies Rules — Gygas's first game company — in the immediate future.

Following the disappointment with Guidon, Gary sent both *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Pasha Cada* to Tom Shaw at Avalon Hill (AH). Gary later noted AH as "a company I had long admired for whom I had written articles and done game design work. They laughed hysterically, I was later informed; then when I

³¹² Online interview: Refer to the Youtube video *40 Years of Dungeon!*, produced by Fellowship of the Thing. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 19:20.

³¹³ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. "How It All Happened," by Gary Gygas.

telephoned to see if there was interest, they declined.”³¹⁴ It seems that Gary may have misheard reports concerning Tom’s initial reaction, but it was very clear that neither game would ever be published by Avalon Hill either. Not for the lack of trying, though. According to Dave Arneson, Gary insisted to Tom: “I think we can sell 50,000 copies of it.”³¹⁵

Mr. Shaw did not agree. Arneson also gave his own opinion of why the D&D game was so hard to market to wargaming companies: “They couldn’t understand a game with no winners and losers that just went on and on.”³¹⁶ How could people be expected to play a game that could never be won?

This uncomfortable matter, by the way, seems to have been one of the root causes in a rivalry that would erupt between Gen Con and the Origins Game Fair (a competing conference, indirectly facilitated by Avalon Hill) in years to come. In the beginning of this sad cascade of events Gary was quite diplomatic about the rise of Origins, but later things turned sour for various reasons. I will tell of that rivalry in a future volume of **HAWK & MOOR**.)

So that was that: Avalon Hill had turned the fantasy games down, decisively.

Faced with these nigh insurmountable barriers to market entry, Gary began seriously planning to publish *Dungeons & Dragons* on his own. He probably was not yet thinking about the legal and organizational details surrounding a future partnership, or finances, but those concerns would soon come to the forefront. He simply started saving what little money he had, and then started hiring artists and illustrators “on the cheap.”³¹⁷

The credited artists in the published *Dungeons & Dragons* (1974) are listed as David Arneson, Greg Bell, Tom Keogh, Keenan Powell (a relative of Gary’s),³¹⁸ and

³¹⁴ *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

³¹⁵ According to one account (Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A Part V, posted May 12th, 2006), Gary had repeated this figure to Don Kaye, friends, family and fellow gamers. Sadly no one (except for perhaps Don) would believe him until it actually came to pass!

³¹⁶ *Dungeon Master: The Life and Legacy of Gary Gygax*, Wired.com.

³¹⁷ *Dragon Annual #4*. “50 Years of Gaming: A 25-Year Retrospective, Plus 25 Years of Fearless Predictions,” by Gary Gygax.

³¹⁸ Blog of Holding conversations with Mike Mornard.

(later, after being “recruited” by Mike Mornard) David C. Sutherland III. Once, Mornard asked Gary why he was using so many illustrations by Greg Bell (an eager amateur and a teenager at the time), and Gary reportedly replied “Because Greg works for \$2 a picture.”³¹⁹ Mornard replied to this by seeking out the talented Mr. Sutherland, would eventually become one of the most prolific artists at TSR.

Dates on some of the drawings in the set seem to indicate that the drawings were submitted to Gary in June, July and August of 1973. Arneson probably worked for free, and maybe Keenan did too, and Tom Keogh was a good friend of Gary’s who may have owed a favor or two. The artwork in the set would not be spectacular but it served to set the tone for the game: serious or whimsical, seemingly at random; adult; fun; a little wild; decidedly unschooled; and filled with the spirit of high adventure.

The art provided that summer may have given Gary confidence that eventually the game would reach a form that would appeal to browsing strangers. And all the while, the pressure to publish kept pouring in from the play testers: “They [*the play testing referees*] wanted more,” Gary once wrote, “and the volume of mail and telephone calls I received at home each day grew ever greater. Calls at midnight or later were common, and it was a case of ‘publish or perish’ from want of sleep!”³²⁰ By midyear Gary felt that the game was, although hastily written in parts, largely complete and ready to go; he once wrote that “only a few alterations were made between then [*i.e., the summer of 1973*] and when the work was published in January of 1974.”³²¹

Around late June or July, Gary made the decisive proclamation: he told his friend and confidante Don Kaye that he was going to found his own gaming company and that he wanted to do it with a partner he could trust. Gary was convinced — perhaps more out of frustration and intuition than out of rational

³¹⁹ Blog of Holding conversations with Mike Mornard. This situation would come back to bite Gary in later years. As Tim Kask tells it (Gary Con 2016), “Before I got there, they had a guy named [Greg] Bell ... did a lot of illustrations in the first three books. It was years later that we found out that the little [*gentleman*] had been copying them out of comics, and just changing the weapons and the helmets.” Such is irony, I suppose.

³²⁰ *Dragon Annual* #4. “50 Years of Gaming: A 25-Year Retrospective, Plus 25 Years of Fearless Predictions,” by Gary Gygax.

³²¹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VI. Posted February 11th, 2004.

assurance — that the endeavor was going to work, even though he “had not a spare penny, what with a wife and five kinder to support.”³²²

Through sheer force of will perhaps, the venture would work simply because it had to. Yet Don, Gary related, “liked the idea, [*but*] he was dubious about the potential.”³²³ Gary was not concerned by Don’s caution, however; in fact, in looking for a savvy and careful partner he probably welcomed a second mind that needed to be convinced. And Gary would soon have the perfect venue to prove to his good friend that it was time to create a company to publish D&D, and that venue would be Gen Con VI.

* * * * *

Gen Con VI was held on Saturday and Sunday, August 18th and 19th, 1973. By this time the International Federation of Wargaming (IFW) was no longer a functional entity in the serious gaming scene, so Gary and his local LGTSA play group would need to step forward to ensure that Gen Con could carry on that year with effective sponsorship and staff. It was a risk worth taking. And he had allies, too. As Gary once proudly remembered:

“When the IFW folded, our local group took over. The Gen Con VI convention was run by the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association, with the support of many gamers and other small clubs. As usual, the convention was a success, with gamers coming from all over the nation. A fair number of firms exhibited, and more than 700 gamers were there to buy their wares.”³²⁴

The new Game Designer’s Workshop crew were present too, and they introduced their launch products to the enthusiastic gamers there. Don Kaye was

³²² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted July 2nd, 2006. Gary also once wrote “None of my family was interested in backing the project,” which may imply that he sought the assistance of uncles or cousins to participate in the risky business endeavor. We are left to wonder what TSR might have looked like if anyone else he trusted had taken him up on the offer.

³²³ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gygax.

³²⁴ *Dragon* magazine, issue #65, pg. 4.

present for the first time (and was very impressed), as were several hundred others.³²⁵ Due to the size of the crowd, Gen Con VI was held not only in the Horticultural Hall, but in the nearby Episcopal Church Guild Hall and the American Legion Hall as well.³²⁶

Arguably, the most popular game at that con was *Chainmail*.³²⁷ Miniatures were becoming easier to find, and more manufacturers were putting out ancient and medieval figures for wargamers interested in pre-industrial combat simulations, so the game was finally taking off with moneyed players who had not been willing to work for many hours in converting their own play pieces.

It was good to see *Chainmail* thriving once again. Gary however was dead-set determined to show Don (and hundreds of others) the potential of *Dungeons & Dragons*, and so he game mastered a dungeon for friends and curious strangers there.³²⁸ “The new participants,” Gary wrote, “were eager to get their hands on a set of rules so they could run their own adventures.”³²⁹ Future TSR employee Jon Pickens — as one of the Gen Con VI attendees — would note that people were enjoying *Chainmail* quite a bit, but there was also a buzz about Gary’s new dungeon game as well. The word was that Gary’s new game would be published next year.³³⁰

One of the new players was a young local man named Brian Blume. Brian was a gamer, cheerful and forthright, and the new game intrigued him. He introduced himself to Gary and other members of the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies

³²⁵ *40 Years of Gen Con*, by Robin D. Laws, Trident, Inc. (d/b/a Atlas Games), 2007.

³²⁶ *40 Years of Gen Con*, by Robin D. Laws, Trident, Inc. (d/b/a Atlas Games), 2007.

³²⁷ *Dragon* magazine, issue #106. “TSR Profiles: Jon Pickens,” pg. 60.

³²⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII; *40 Years of Gen Con*.

³²⁹ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gygax.

³³⁰ While not a direct quote from Mr. Pickens, this information can be found in the Jon Pickens TSR profile, as featured on pg. 60 of *Dragon* magazine #106.

Association who were running the convention.³³¹ He promptly asked to join the LGTSA, and with his outgoing and confident demeanor he was happily accepted.³³²

Overall, the convention was a considerable success. Hundreds of gamers traveled from around the country to play together, make new friends, learn about new games, and to buy the latest miniatures from the exhibitors.³³³ Gary's doubts about his game's potential audience were largely assuaged. "I then determined," he wrote, "to do my best to start my own publishing company ... None of my family was interested in backing the project, but my old pal Don Kaye was."³³⁴

Not everything was rosy, however. Gary still had reason to be nervous. As yet, he still had no ready game company to his name, and other designers were banding together and making inroads into the wargaming hobby. With competition increasing and interest in fantasy wargaming spreading, Gary had good reason to fear that his creation might well not be the first major fantasy wargame to come to market. What if GDW, or some enterprising California play test referee, or someone else completely unexpected beat him to market? He needed to move quickly to publish the game, and soon that would mean risking a significant financial investment. If it was to be done, it had to be done soon. *Dungeons & Dragons* — with some serious cash laid on the line — was about to become a business.

After Gen Con VI had ended, Don came to see Gary at his house.³³⁵ Don had had a change of heart: he really wanted to form a partnership after witnessing the enthusiasm at Gen Con. He had already expressed his growing interest there, but to take a real financial risk he required confidence and commitment on Gary's part. He asked his childhood friend with all seriousness: "Do you really think you

³³¹ *Dragon* magazine, issue #65. "Guest Editorial," by Gary Gygax.

³³² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted July 2nd, 2006.

³³³ *Dragon* magazine, issue #65. "Guest Editorial," by Gary Gygax.

³³⁴ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X.

³³⁵ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted July 2nd, 2006.

can make a success of a game publishing company?”³³⁶ Gary’s answer was a confident, “Of course!”³³⁷

Conviction. And that was all it took. Their partnership was born that day in late August, and would soon become formal and legal in weeks to come. Grimly, however, they were both about to learn just how challenging that bold endeavor would turn out to be.

³³⁶ *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

³³⁷ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gygax.

CHAPTER 18

THE LURE OF JEWELS

(SUMMER —
OCTOBER 1, 1973)

THE ELUSIVE tales of the “dungeons deeper” — specifically, stories and facts concerning Greyhawk Castle’s dungeon levels eight through thirteen — are ones that are difficult to place with confidence into any specific timeframe. From the available evidence, it appears that these levels were created in the first half of 1973, and mostly explored in the summer and September. But despite some interesting details concerning the levels’ contents, the tales told of the deepest explorations are few and far between. In this chapter I have consolidated what little is known about the mysterious deeps, and it is hoped that I can expand on this material in the future. But for now, we must content ourselves with those few of the Gygaxian mysteries which are known to us.

The veil of Zagyg is strong, but still, we can see some shapes through the holes frayed through the shroud ...

* * * * *

Gary created dungeon level eight, and those deeper, for the sole and exclusive purpose of challenging the veterans of his Greyhawk campaign. The dozens of newer players continued to romp through the upper levels, while the three “elites” of dungeoneering — Rob’s Robilar, Ernie’s Tenser and Terry’s Terik — created a tripartite alliance which was dedicated to reaching the very bottom of the labyrinth.³³⁸ After all, if treasure seeking and puzzle solving were the name of the game, then three strong young minds acting in unison would stand the greatest chance of making it all the way down to Zagyg’s the Mad One’s treasure vaults. What could the demigod of insanity and trickster fate hold in store for such intrepid heroes?

Together and separately, they sought the deepest descents that they could find. It was all very fun and frustrating, of course. But first, for such game sessions to reach fruition Gary would need to design the great levels which would serve as his young players’ deadly playground.

It was time to dig deeper.

³³⁸ *Dragon Annual #2*. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary Gyax.

Level eight would be drafted first. Beginning here, the stonework dungeon gives way to a seemingly endless series of caves. It is likely that there are very few doors and chambers, with roughed-in walls and less worked stone. The monsters here are considerably more dangerous, including swarms of giant insects (probably ants, beetles, centipedes and wasps) and tribes of loathsome trolls.³³⁹ The ogre-trolls were dangerous. But the “true” trolls were the most sinister power of all, shambling out of their filthy dens to suffer sword blows and then magically regenerating their spongy flesh. Severed limbs and even heads continued to fight on, roaring their terrible roars, showing their terrible claws and gnashing their terrible teeth.

A fun trivia note: Even more horrifyingly, Gary once entertained the idea of “Old Guard Trolls” in the tradition of the Old Guard Kobolds, but apparently sanity prevailed and such armored and organized fiends were never introduced into early Greyhawk play. It is hard to imagine any adventurers who could survive against a military force of organized trolls for very long. I leave such terrors only mentioned, lest I invoke their foul wrath; more intrepid Dungeon Masters than I are welcome to stat them out.³⁴⁰

The layout of level eight may have been similar to the troll warrens we can find in two of Gary’s finest Dungeon Modules, D1 *Descent into the Depths of the Earth* and G3 *Hall of the Fire Giant King*. Levels eight, nine and ten were apparently quite similar to one another, with the degree of danger increasing with depth. By far the most famous highlight of dungeon level eight, however, was an enigmatic golem which Gary simply called “The Jeweled Man.”³⁴¹

When Robilar, Tenser and Terik first explored the reaches of dungeon level eight, they chanced upon a vast chamber in which there stood a magnificent living statue “made entirely of gold.” The statue turned and regarded them. As it tilted its head, the diamonds, rubies, emeralds and sapphires embedded in its skin glittered

³³⁹ *Europa* 6-8, 1975. This online file preserves the text of *Europa* Newsletter issues #6, #7 and #8.

³⁴⁰ Refer to ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part VIII, posted February 27th, 2005.

³⁴¹ There are hints that the Jeweled Man was later found on many other dungeon levels, but in *Dragon* #290 where the most detailed treatment is featured, Gary says matter-of-factly that the Jeweled Man was first encountered on dungeon level eight.

beneath the torchlight. It was, quite simply, a treasure beyond all imagining. Perhaps it was the living hoard of Zagyg the Mad himself.

Seizing the initiative, the adventurers rushed into action. Tenser cast a spell to imprison it, while Robilar and Terik charged in with outspread hands. The figure ran away with blinding speed. Not even magical boots could keep pace with that blurring figure made of priceless gold and jewels!

Stunned at their failure, the adventurers chased after. But soon the Jeweled Man was lost, seemingly swallowed by the labyrinth. Many plans were made, and many other players' characters found the incredible thing. But no one could capture it. Missiles always missed, spells had no effect, and even pre-set traps were effortlessly avoided by the "statue." Dozens of heroes saw this majestic creature, yet no one ever so much as touched it.

What an enigma! There may be a solution, however, which (to my knowledge) no one else has yet proposed as the final answer.

In my opinion, it may be that the Jeweled Man was inspired by the anonymously-written fairytale of the Gingerbread Man (c. 1875). In the earliest versions of that story the only one who could catch the Gingerbread Man was the Sly Fox, using charm and cunning. In one version, before running into Mr. Fox the Gingerbread Man sings to taunt his pursuers: "Ah, ha! Ah, ha! Catch me, if you can! You can't catch me, I'm a gingerbread man!" And in Gary's co-authored late publication, *Castle Zagyg: The Upper Works*, there is a taunting magical statue which alludes to the Jeweled Man as follows: "That one sparkles oh so bright / Chase him and he's out of sight. / Treat him right, he will not bite / But his feet stick out of bed all night."

The last line is a quote from *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*, by Dr. Seuss! Despite this (a probable allusion to nursery rhymes or childlike thinking), the underlying indication in both the statue's rhyme *and* in Seuss' book is this: the key to solving the mystery is in treating the Jeweled Man *kindly*. Those who give chase will never catch him, while those who are polite and sly (like the Gingerbread fox) may finally get a bite.

The "feet sticking out of bed" may also be a Procrustean reference. In Greek mythology, there was a vile murderer named Damastes, or Procrustes the Stretcher. This villain would invite wayfarers in to sleep in his iron bed. If the guest was too short, he would hammer on them, "spreading them out" until they died. But if the guest was too tall, he would cut their legs off to fit the bed. The trick to "defeating"

him, for most travelers, was simply to refuse to play his game at all. He was eventually killed by the hero Theseus. This tale led to the literary allusion “a Procrustean bed,” which means that people tend to violently force the evidence to fit into a container of their own devising, rather than considering oblique and far-too-obvious peaceful answers to some potentially unsolvable riddle.

This allusion was famously used by Edgar Allan Poe in his story *The Purloined Letter* (1844). In that tale, Inspector Dupin notes that there are mysteries which “escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious.” He also notes that one particularly intelligent man “perpetually errs by being too deep or too shallow, for the matter in hand; and many a schoolboy is a better reasoner than he.” More deeply, Dupin notes that this man “and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and, secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their *own* ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which *they* would have hidden it.” Crucially, Gary also once noted³⁴² that for the pursuers of the Jeweled Man, “Their reason for failing to capture the prize might well have been the close-lipped nature of the would-be plunderers.”

Perhaps that was as close as we can get to the answer.

From these hints, it is my own guess that the secret to capturing the Jeweled Man involved simple friendly communication. Perhaps greeting him, while swearing that no harm was intended, would be enough to make him halt, sit, and parley with adventurers. With enough friendly interactions, he might even be willing to gift a polite questioner with one of the diamonds or rubies inset in his golden flesh. The trick would be not to force the issue, and to allow the Jeweled Man to choose to give of his himself, upon his own terms and no one else’s. Gary’s tale seems to indicate that he was both saddened and amused by the players’ disregard for coins, and their emphasis on portable gems and jewelry. The Jeweled Man was created because Gary was mocking this short-sighted mentality, and the only way the Jeweled Man could *ever* be captured was if the players totally changed their predictable way of thinking.

Too obvious? Exactly!

But is my solution the correct one? No one will ever know. For the nostalgic and the curious, however, let it be known that the original Jeweled Man featured

³⁴² *Dragon* magazine, issue #290. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

in Greyhawk's dungeons was never captured by anyone. And now, with Gary gone, he never will be. Even in 2002 — when Gary was planning out the *Castle Zagyg* series of game supplements which would offer a public version of Castle Greyhawk — he warned his fans, “Just don’t expect the secrets of the Disappearing Jeweled Man and the Great Stone Face to ever be revealed in actuality. I plan to provide a set of options for the DM that may or may not include the way those were dealt with originally.”³⁴³

And then due to Gary's untimely passing, those secret options were never written down for us. Some mysteries, in the end, are meant to last forever.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, as a result of conversations between friend, the successful *Chainmail*, and D&D events held at Gen Con VI, Gary's gaming group was increasing in numbers once again. Gary explained, “The interest was essentially word of mouth. A single gamer, or a group would come for two or three adventure sessions, then go off on their own.”³⁴⁴ As a result, Gary would need to keep making dungeon levels all the time. As he remembered it, “I recall churning out dungeon level after dungeon level in 1973 and 1974, sacrificing sleep, let alone other pursuits, in order to have fresh territory for my burgeoning body of players to adventure in.”³⁴⁵

One of the most enthusiastic new players was Brian Blume, who came into Greyhawk playing a magic-user known as Rary. Brian, it seems, had a rather peculiar sense of humor which Gary could not quite figure out what to do with: “[Rary] was one that Brian Blume created early in the D&D cycle, a magic-user that Brian wanted to work up to 3rd level so as to introduce him as ‘Medium Rary.’ When he gained that level Brian quit playing that PC ... pretty much dropped out

³⁴³ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted November 16th, 2002. See also Part III, posted April 7th, 2003.

³⁴⁴ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII.

³⁴⁵ Gygax preface to Mayfair Games 1987 edition of *City State of the Invincible Overlord*.

of regularly playing D&D, in fact.”³⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Gary noted that Brian remained “friendly and amiable” with the other players,³⁴⁷ and his devotion to the potential inherent in *Dungeons & Dragons* would soon have a major lasting effect on Gary’s dreams of publication.

* * * * *

While striving to acclimate these new players into the Greyhawk campaign, Gary was also hard at work making more devious dungeon levels to frustrate (and slow down!) his veteran players. Dungeon levels nine, ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen were designed primarily with Robilar, Tenser and Terik’s relentless questing to seek the deepest reaches in mind. We do not know when these levels were created, precisely; but the most reliable tellings of various tales hint that these levels were not conquered until the second half of 1973. For that reason, I assume that the first explorations of what I term “Zagyg’s Domain” — dungeon levels nine and down — took place after Gen Con VI, and particularly in the early autumn.

Dungeon level nine for example was similar to level eight, but with more trolls and giant insects and even worse horrors to be found. We get an indirect glimpse of these deep levels in one of Gary’s Dungeon Modules (WG6), where Tenser explains that beneath the central Endless Stair there lies “a vast, multi-leveled array of natural caverns and passages infested by every sort of hideous monster one could imagine.”³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted June 4th, 2006.

³⁴⁷ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gygax.

³⁴⁸ Dungeon Module WG6, *Isle of the Ape*, by Gary Gygax, pg. 6. TSR, 1985.



*Sometimes, discovering a new abomination
in the dungeons deep,
you don't want to know what it is.*

Level ten was built from a series of huge caverns, and it apparently featured a “transporter nexus” that was guarded by an evil magic-user, of at least the 11th experience level and maybe even higher. This villain had a number of “tough associates” under his control. Surrounding his underground stronghold was a maze filled with “Martian White Apes” (from Edgar Rice Burroughs’s Barsoom, as featured in *A Princess of Mars* and other works).

Gary would later write in TSR’s unauthorized *Warriors of Mars* booklet (1974) that “these are terrible monsters with a cunning almost equal to [a] human. Many seem to have a rough tribal organization, and those that do always use stone (or some other form of) clubs. Because of this glimmering of true intelligence, apes will not always behave as a typical animal. They infest the abandoned cities of Barsoom, and they are also found in many other places ...”³⁴⁹

The presence of the apes indicates that there was either a secret portal to Barsoom hidden within the dungeon, or that the evil magic-user had found a way to summon horrific monsters from other worlds. Later in the campaign, Gary would allow Ernie’s character Erac’s Cousin to journey to Barsoom itself, a tale which will be told in Book III of **HAWK & MOOR**.

The “transporter nexus” these monsters guarded was probably a series of interconnected teleportation chambers, leading to other levels of the dungeon. Given the nature of the nexus and its guardian, this is the most likely locale to feature stonework chambers instead of caverns; and considering that the endless stair still descends through this level, the nexus might well be in the center of the level.

The deeper dungeons did not just feature interconnecting portals to higher levels of the dungeon, however. They were also filled with gateways to other dimensions, even to other worlds.

³⁴⁹ *Warriors of Mars*, pg. 44.



"I go through the planar gate, no worries. What do I see?"

Most of these worlds were explored in 1974 and 1975, so I will not be detailing them here; but the curious reader may be interested to know that they included the world of Greek mythology,³⁵⁰ Barsoom, Jack Vance's *Planet of Adventure*, Skull Island (of *King Kong* fame), the *Starship Warden* (later of

³⁵⁰ The Greek mythology section of the dungeon, reached through the dungeons (in part) and then through a magical portal (in full), was jokingly known as "Horsing Around." According to Gary's later recollection, this was "a Sylvan area where centaurs were indeed one of the encounters." For DMs interested in recreating such a zone, I recommend the garden maps in *Dungeon Modules EX1* and *EX2*, along with the sylvan encounter table featured in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*.

Metamorphosis Alpha), the Unseelie Court (a dark faerie version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), an underwater realm ruled by a dragon turtle,³⁵¹ a joke-filled area known as “Fooling Around” (replete with “Jack” Puddings and a powerful jester),³⁵² and Alice’s Wonderland. These alternate dimensions were both intriguing and dangerous, for teleportation magics and similar dimensional “phasing” effects would not function there.³⁵³ It is vaguely hinted that the “transporter nexus” on dungeon level ten held the magical gates which led to these various special dimensions.³⁵⁴

Level eleven was the “home of the most powerful wizard in the castle” and his Balrog minions. Beneath this level, there is an extensive series of sub-passages. Most likely, this is again a tribute to the *John Carter of Mars* novels in which Martian ruins are filled with catacombs and secret corridors. Such alternate means of travel would probably be reached via hidden trapdoors and pit traps. The sub-corridors are filled with “poisonous creatures with no treasure.” Given the details of higher dungeon levels and the earliest rosters of D&D monsters, this probably means snakes, centipedes, scorpion swarms, and perhaps giant scorpions and spiders.

Level twelve was probably comprised of either massive treasure vaults or great caverns, because Gary related that it was “filled with dragons.” This almost assuredly means the evil varieties of dragon in particular — the white, black, green, blue and red.

³⁵¹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted September 15th, 2005.

³⁵² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted May 2nd, 2005.

³⁵³ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Teleport-free zone.”

³⁵⁴ Dungeon Module WG6, *Isle of the Ape*, by Gary Gygax, pg. 6. TSR, 1985.



“Mmm, crunchy shell-things.

Don’t see many of those down here these days.”

Gary was rather notorious for the way that he played dragons while Dungeon Mastering, stressing their intelligence, aggression, cruelty and deception. As one example of this play approach, a young Gyaxian dragon with spell-casting capability would render itself invisible and hide on a cavern’s ceiling, beginning the attack with a surprise breath weapon which was likely to destroy some of the adventurers’ prized magic items.

At the very bottom was the last jest, the domain of Zagyg the Mad himself. The level was filled with tricks, humorous traps, invisible stalkers, bizarre puzzles and highly magical “specials.” The centerpiece of the level was an immense and

inescapable slide, which would plunge adventurers all the way through the level and into Cathay ... the mythic equivalent of China.

We do not know exactly when Gary finally completed his thirteen-level version of the Greyhawk dungeons, but there is a useful hint: he once wrote that “when summer came, the whole complex consisted of 13 levels of dungeons.”³⁵⁵ From that (admittedly feeble) lonely mile marker, we can estimate that the dungeon designs for the deep levels were completed by late June of 1973. Also, Rob Kuntz once helpfully noted that he was eighteen years old when Robilar reached the bottom level.³⁵⁶ Rob’s birthday that year was on September 23rd, 1973, so we can assume that the first adventure on level thirteen took place after that date. Mike Mornard also remembers that Rob had become co-DM (his reward for beating Gary’s dungeon) before Mike moved away to Minneapolis to go to college, which hints that a late September date for this adventure is likely.³⁵⁷

It is said that Rob became Gary’s co-DM, “officially,” on the day after Robilar fell down the slide to Cathay.³⁵⁸ This is useful to know, because this was also when Gary and Rob began updating the single-sheet map of Greyhawk, which would soon be expanded to fill four 8 ½” x 11” sheets. The in-game rationale for this wildly vaster city was hand-waved away with a convenient justification: so much gold had been poured into the City State of Greyhawk by the recent dungeon expeditions that the entire area experienced a rapid expansion.³⁵⁹ From that time forward, the original stomping grounds of the Greyhawk regulars became the “Old City,” surrounding by many other districts and quarters behind the ever-expanding walls.

The dungeons would be updated too. There is also one mention where Gary states that this first completed version of Castle Greyhawk was thirteen levels deep

³⁵⁵ *Castle Zagyg: The Upper Works*, Troll Lord Games, 2008.

³⁵⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Robilar’s career.”

³⁵⁷ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums.

³⁵⁸ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Robilar and evil races.” Posted August 7th, 2002.

³⁵⁹ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “The Green Dragon Inn.”

and “about 20 levels total,” which tells us that there were approximately seven “side” levels as of the early autumn of 1974.³⁶⁰

* * * * *

While Gary was busy designing these deeper levels, his regular players entertained themselves with other dungeon and wilderness adventures. In one such jaunt, Sir Robilar delved into the deadly Troll Dens, although we do not know exactly what transpired there. (Lots of bloodshed, screams, regenerating fungal flesh and gouts of acid and fire would be a good guess though.)

In another solitaire dungeon excursion, Robilar encountered a band of vile gnolls who were led by a powerful Evil High Priest. The dice were with Gary that day, and Robilar — despite a very respectable armor class of -4 — suffered grievous wounds which nearly laid him low. Robilar focused his attacks on the deadly evil patriarch to the point that the gnolls had reduced him to about 10 hit points before he was able to turn and slaughter them.³⁶¹ “Robilar was about one solid hit from death when he wiped out the last of his adversaries,” Gary recalled.³⁶²

Nevertheless, the fighting man did prevail. But Rob was then probably quite interested in a change of venue for a while! For Robilar, along with his companions Tenser and Terik, it was time to embark on some wilderness adventures.

The three companions roamed farther and farther afield in search of treasure, magic and glory. At the beginning of this time Robilar was still level 9,³⁶³ which indicates that these sessions were likely conducted in the late summer.

Robilar and his companions roamed along the Wild Coast and into the fringe of the Gnarley Forest, through the wilderlands which lie southwest of the City of

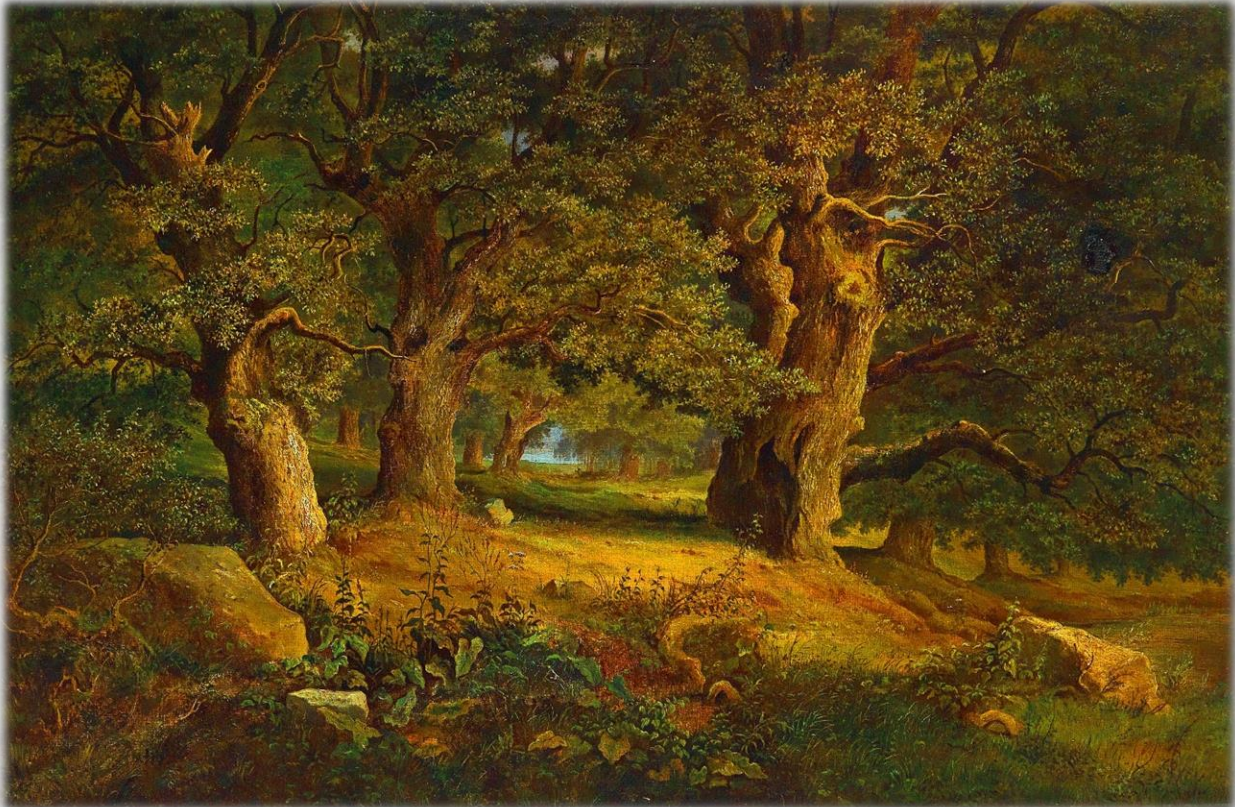
³⁶⁰ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III.

³⁶¹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted January 29th, 2004.

³⁶² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III. Posted July 6th, 2003.

³⁶³ *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7. Produced by the Council of Greyhawk, June 15th, 1998.

Greyhawk. “The lot [*i.e., the regular players*] were prone to wander far and wide,” Gary wrote.³⁶⁴



The endless Oerth.

There are several entertaining outdoor adventure stories worthy of our interest, three of which I will share in detail. These are: The Tale of the Giant’s Bag, The Tale of the Barrage Balloon, The Tale of the Firedrake, and The Tale of the White Dragon. Details for these interludes are chiefly derived from the *Great Plains Game Players Newsletter* #7, *Dragon* #317, Gary’s online forum recollections, and *Dragon* #316 respectively. These accounts were supplemented over the years by various forum posts made by Gary and Rob.

³⁶⁴ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted August 4th, 2007.

* * * * *

The Tale of the Giant's Bag

One day at the height of Rob's outdoor adventure sessions, Ernie and Gary decided to run their heroes through an adventure. Rob Kuntz was the Dungeon Master, Ernie was playing Tenser, and Gary was playing another one of the characters present (perhaps playing Yrag or Felnorith). Tenser was a sorcerer at this time, which probably means that he was level 9. (Gary called the mage "Nestre" in the published tale, but in later recollection he obliquely confirmed that it was indeed Tenser, disguised by an anagram to protect the not-so-innocent.)³⁶⁵

He had a treasure map which indicated the greenwood and river far to the south of Greyhawk, and was interested in braving the distance to acquire whatever treasures might lay concealed at the end of the journey's course.

The four companions cleaned their weapons, memorized their spells, mounted their destriers, and set out for the wilds southeast of the City of Greyhawk. They followed the course of a stream, following it to a great river. There at the confluence, they set up camp for the night with most of the approaches limited by the waters. The fire was set to blazing and the travelers were just getting situated when something encountered them.

Branches popped, birds went flying. An enormous and smelly hill giant stomped out of the wilderness. The giant was surprised and outnumbered, but Tenser made no move to attack. A halting and awkward parley took place while the slow-witted giant struggled with the eloquent nuances of the common tongue. The giant seemed peaceful, and so he was cautiously admitted into the camp. Tenser managed to get the big guy to agree to find the hidden treasure, for a small share of the proceedings. Giants like treasure, and the forest was cozy on the giants chilled feet, and so he consented to this agreement.

Despite being one of the most obvious and common of folkloric monsters, giants were actually fairly rare in the early Greyhawk campaign. There was a

³⁶⁵ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted July 31st, 2004. See also Part XIII, posted September 18th, 2006.

“giants’ bowling alley” hidden in the dungeon, and of course the later D&D game would feature sub-races of giants as common encounters. Early on, however, outside of a few *Chainmail Fantasy* play test scenarios the giants received short shrift. They were practically forgotten in *Chainmail*, and the sub-races were not elaborated until later on. Gary’s conception of hill giants was derived from *The Roaring Trumpet* by L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt (1940).

* * * * *

The strange adventure continued, with the giant still with the group. Dawn broke, and the unlikely companions set out along the river. Where X marked the spot, there was a flood-land caused by the river’s winding course. There scuttled swarms of giant crabs, surely guarding whatever treasures might be hidden beneath the waters. The adventurers braved the water, but they were out of their element — literally — and the crabs had a significant advantage. Tenser asked the giant if he would help. The eager giant stomped into the river, smashing crabs with his mighty club. Several of the horror managed to scurry away, but the vast majority were pounded into the mud. Whatever the treasure was, it was now unguarded ... and the adventurers had avoided the bulk of the fighting in securing it!

The giant threw his club to the shore, took an enormous breath, and dove down into the river. Sure enough, he rose back to the surface lugging a great iron chest up from the depths. The adventurers approached, eager to gain their fair shares of the treasure.

But the giant had done almost all of the work. He ripped the chest open, lifted his bag, and started stuffing the goods into his satchel before the flustered humans could even count all that he had acquired. Tenser, still hoping to avoid a battle, asked the giant if anything else had been hidden down there in the river mud. The giant replied that there were “three round things,” but nothing of value. The humans stripped their armor and dove in turn. Three mossy spheres were lifted back to the surface. What were they? Crystal balls? Enormous gems? Perhaps arcane orbs of majestic power?

The moss was scraped off, and the adventurers found that they were the proud owners of three well-rounded river stones. The giant had a great laugh at their expense. He was a fairly honorable fellow, however, and when the group camped in a cave that night he reluctantly agreed to let the mortals see what had

been acquired. A deal was a deal. The humans outsmarted the poor confused giant, and took the lion's share as their own while they offered the giant only a few hundred coins.

Rob might have let the players get away with this shameless ruse, but then Tenser got greedy. He wanted to know what else was in the giant's bag. He asked for a peek, and was refused. Tenser brought out a sparkly bribe in the shape of a little gemstone. The giant loved sparkly things, almost as much as a toasty fire to warm his toes. But the big galoot was learning quickly, watching the shifty humans in their play. He demanded a big gem instead of a little one. Tenser had a few great jewels in his possession, but they were very valuable. He instead offered the giant a very shiny crystal ball, with pretty shapes swimming inside it. Was this not pretty great? The giant agreed it was.

Tenser tried to apply some more conditions to the deal, and managed to get a peek in the bag. The giant got annoyed when he couldn't get the pricy crystal ball to work, and so he took up his club and smashed it into a million pieces. Tenser only managed to keep the giant from getting hostile by offering him two huge beautiful jewels, and in return he finally got a glimpse in the giant's stinky bag.

There he found a few well-gnawed bones, a nice pile of spare underwear, some candy, trash and a comic book. The giant shrugged, took back his bag and secured his nice new jewels therein. Tenser finally gave up in exasperation and went to bed.

The giant realized during the night that he should get out while the getting was good. He scooped up most of the loot, and in return he left his dirty underwear. He was also nice enough to leave a handwritten note (scrawled in common, no less), asking Tenser to please clean his drawers and to wait for the giant's prompt return.

The adventurers waited for weeks, but the dumb giant — not so dumb after all, it seems — never did come back to pick up his skivvies.

* * * * *

The Tale of the Barrage Balloon

Some of the early wilderness adventures were quite amusing. When Don Kaye's mage Murlynd was a "low-level adventurer," he managed — through dint of daring and skillful play — to procure some surprisingly powerful items for his level, including boots of levitation³⁶⁶ and a wand of fireballs. The long-range artillery effect of the wand was appreciated, although there was always the danger of back-blasts in small rooms and dead-end corridors. The boots, however, were only useful for navigating pits and various traps. Thinking cleverly, Don realized that the combined potential of these items would be greatly heightened if Murlynd were to enter the wilderness.

Considering the wounds which Murlynd would soon suffer, he was probably a level 6 magic-user at this time. Once however, Gary noted that Murlynd was only "a couple of levels behind those three" (meaning Robilar, Terik, and Tenser, so he may have been as high as level 7).

The first time Murlynd took his armaments into the great outdoors surrounding the City of Greyhawk, he got the jump on Gary. Gary described an encountered orcish encampment, and Murlynd managed to sneak up on the place, levitate, hurl down fireballs, and finally descend unscathed. He not only fried all the bacon, he wiped out the human NPCs who were leading them. Don was thrilled, and Gary decided a lesson would loom in the future. If the tactic was never used again, fair enough; but if Don tried it once more without modifying his approach, he would be in for a most unpleasant surprise.

The next time Murlynd went out on a jaunt, it was in the company of Robilar, Tenser and Terik. This makes it likely that this occurred during the first round of serious outdoor adventures, when Robilar was level 9 and the others not far behind. Murlynd may have only been level 6 or so, but he was eager to show his powerful friends his worthy trick.

More orcs were encountered, the larger tribe directly associated with the former wiped out encampment. The few surviving orcs from the earlier engagement had spread the word about the mean little prestidigitator with the nuclear arsenal. Sure enough, battle was engaged and Murlynd rose above his

³⁶⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Murlynd."

surprised companions. But this time, the orcs cried out, “Barrage balloon!” Before Murlynd could react, dozens of arrows and crossbow bolts were whipping past him to either side. Robilar, Tenser and Terik erupted in laughter as Murlynd scrambled down toward the ground for his life. He managed to unleash a single fireball, but in turn he had suffered several nasty wounds.

The other heroes managed to slay most of the orcs, and Don decided that Murlynd should help finish them off. He levitated again, and the dying orcs shouted “Barrage balloon!” one last time and expended themselves in sending hateful missiles and invectives at their favored nemesis. Murlynd suffered another bolt hit and was forced out of battle. Victory was won, but from that day forward a mere whisper of “Barrage balloon” was enough to send poor Don (and Murlynd) cringing.

* * * * *

The Tale of the Firedrake

During one of Robilar’s several dragon-subduing jaunts, Gary was in particularly ornery mood. His star player was growing overconfident, and perhaps a touch of greed was overtaking Rob’s willingness to engage in group play. Therefore, Gary had Robilar run into an NPC who promised that a mighty Firedrake — a great red dragon — was lairing nearby. The dragon was currently asleep, and the NPC was willing to disclose the location of the lair in return for a fair share of the treasure. The NPC only wanted a jeweled necklace. Robilar was wary, but who was he to deny the tempting lure of jewels and gold?

The two adventures made their way to a hidden cave, and Robilar soon realized that a Firedrake did indeed lair within. But before he could formulate a plan, the crafty NPC (a wily thief) hid in shadows, crept into the cave, and with a shout the nefarious fellow warned the sleepy Firedrake that a powerful dragon slayer was fast approaching. Robilar, knowing that he had been duped but also that he could not outrun a soaring dragon, charged into battle. A terrible battle ensued between man and dragon, while the thief remained hidden (while hoping to dominate the weakened victor and to steal all of the treasure).

Robilar was unable to vanquish such a deathly foe. However, he did manage to wound the Firedrake so badly that it was fearful of pursuing the powerful fighting man, and so a truce of sorts was reached. Robilar fled, the Firedrake did not pursue, and the furious warrior managed to catch the thief at the cave's exit and even killed him for his treachery. Robilar never did acquire the Firedrake's hoard, but he did earn himself a grim respect for red dragons which stayed with him until the end of his days.³⁶⁷

* * * * *

³⁶⁷ This partial tale is most fully told, to my knowledge, at ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part XIII, posted June 19th, 2007.



Save for half damage.

The Tale of the White Dragon

At some point after the subdual of the green dragons and before the conquest of the Greyhawk dungeons (probably when Robilar was about level 10 or 11), our erstwhile fighting man decided that he was going to seek out another dragon lair. The treasure was always good, and despite the danger the experience points were usually worthwhile. Robilar tended to avoid red, black and blue dragons, because their destructive breath weapons tended to destroy much of the treasure that they were guarding. Instead, he favored green and white dragons when possible.

In an autumn 1969 issue of the *Thangorodrim* fanzine, Gary shared his first imaginative conception of the white dragon which would later populate Greyhawk: “Perhaps the rarest of the Great Worms is the Arctic Dragon, or ‘Frost Breath.’ Unlike others of his kind, this large white worm inhabits only the coldest regions of the far north and has no internal fire. *Draco Arcticus* seeks glaciers in which to dwell and if the temperature remains cold enough they will sleep therein for very long period of time, only awakening to feed when stimulated by warmth. The Arctic Dragon will attack any living creature on sight, often including others of his own species. Their main weapon is a chilling breath (which will immediately freeze boiling water) ...”³⁶⁸ Clearly, ice dragons were not to be trifled with!

One day, Robilar was exploring the regions of the Gnarlley and the Wild Coast, and somewhere he came across the lair of a huge female white dragon. This he regarded as worthy and potentially lucrative foe, and so he stealthily snuck into her lair and attacked. We know little of the battle, except that Robilar ultimately prevailed and even managed to subdue the dragon. She submitted reluctantly, the price for refusal being her life.

Robilar’s castle at this time was well guarded (and filled!) by the family of subdued green dragons, and so he decided that he would sell the cold drake for a tidy sum in the City of Greyhawk. But no one could afford or hope to control the mighty she-drake. Robilar sat and thought, and with a flare of remembrance he realized precisely the place to go: the domain of “Klinchak,” the reviled and

³⁶⁸ Refer to the helpful online post at the ODD74 Proboard forums, “Gygax Dragons Pre-Chainmail.”

grudgingly respected “Striped” Wizard of the Tower, who had bought and identified so many magic items and sold so many expensive spells.³⁶⁹



*“Ah, the grimoire begins to reveal its secrets!
Hopefully none of those fool ‘adventurers’
will interrupt my arcane studies on this day ...”*

³⁶⁹ For one allusion to Klinchak and his role in identifying magic items for the Greyhawk adventurers, refer to Dragonsfoot Thread I, March 7th, 2005.

(Whether the character of gruff and witty “Klinchak” shares certain qualities with the supernatural detective “Kolchak, the Night Stalker” — who was watched and appreciated by Gary on television during these years, beginning in 1972 — I will leave as an open question to the reader.)

Perhaps Klinchak would be interested in having a new and prestigious guardian to show off to his guests and rivals.

Klinchak, however, was busy and not to be disturbed. And Robilar was not to be denied. He shouted up at the tower for several minutes, while Klinchak tried to concentrate on whatever alchemical brew or enchantment he was toiling over. Finally, the exasperated mage sent out his vile little apprenticed warlock to shoo the shouter off for some peace and quiet. The apprentice popped out on the tower balcony, and Robilar immediately dismissed him like a servant and told him to fetch his master. The apprentice became irate at this offense, and cast a Charm Person spell on Robilar.

This was something of a conundrum, because Robilar was protected by a ring of spell turning.³⁷⁰ The spell rebounded, striking not only Robilar but also the apprentice. Adding to the amusement, both of these worthies failed their saving throws. They became beguiled with one another, each trying to flatter the other with compliments and generous favors. Robilar tried to sell the dragon as cheaply as possible, while the warlock struggled to buy the beast for an exorbitant sum. Eventually, Robilar recovered his wits while the warlock was still beguiled. He thereby managed to secure the astronomical bid of sixty thousand gold coins for the confounded she-drake.

The thrilled warlock went back into the tower, reporting the incredible “bargain” he had secured on behalf of the wealthy Klinchak. Klinchak responded with a fastidious bop on the enchanted apprentice’s noggin. The enchantment was broken (painfully), and the chagrined yet admiring wizard came out to parley with brave, brave Sir Robilar. In the end, Klinchak proved to be a savvier and less disadvantaged bargainer than the fighting man. Robilar was forced into a deal he

³⁷⁰ We know that Robilar acquired his ring of spell turning in a Leiber-esque urban adventure featuring Strange Way and Odd Alley, but we do not know what transpired. There may be hints in a story that Gary later wrote, entitled “A Weird Occurrence in Odd Alley,” but the similarities that can be drawn at this time are speculation at best.

could not refuse, with a price considerably less than the minimum he had hoped to accept. But it was better than nothing, and the cold drake was taken off of Robilar's hands.

* * * * *

During this time (and a bit before the taming of the white dragon), Robilar managed to subdue some other great drakes. Several dragon lairs were located and plundered over a short period of time, and so Rob became certain that this area was ripe for plunder. He knew that if he was going to seriously control and exploit this region's treasures, he would need a fortress where his secrecy and security would be ensured. Seeing as no such place was available to him, he used his still-remaining wealth to build a castle. The castle would be built to store all of Sir Robilar's treasures, and he would focus his efforts on subduing dragons so that his treasures could be guarded from thieves and other nasty interlopers.³⁷¹

The castle was probably built by a combination of orc labor and paid humans dwelling in villages along the Wild Coast. Rob once explained that the villages there were "not under protection of any local baron when [*Robilar*] settled and they were glad for the company."³⁷² The trees were cleared away to create the clearing where Castle Robilar would reside.

When completed, the castle was protected by an enormous gate which required giant strength to lift (provided to Robilar by a magic girdle). There were also towers, a moat, and magical traps. Subdued green dragons would later be kept to guard Robilar's treasures while he was away, and a laboratory was built for his mage companion Otto as well.

Gary was very happy to keep sending monsters out of the Gnarley Forest to test the defenses of this stronghold, and Robilar was forced to use tamed griffons and orc patrols for prolonged reconnaissance. He also swore to protect the nearby

³⁷¹ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted February 26th, 2005.

³⁷² Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot forums, "Which Kingdom is Lord Robilar's Manor Located In?" Posted April 22nd, 2006.

villages, for these places supplied the castle with a constant influx of silver tithes. Through such vigilance, the Freehold of Sir Robilar came into being.

Things went very well for quite some time, but there were still random dangers in the wilds. One fateful random encounter along the Gnarley verge, in fact, changed everything.

Robilar was about level 11 at this time. He took his companion Otto (a level 7 or 8 magic-user by then) and a magical efreet bottle which held a bound and sullen genie servant in its crystalline depths. This small party came across a lair with three green dragons: a huge adult male (later named Schwartzmorgen), a large adult female (later Grunehok), and a baby drake as well.

Rob, being very clever, had observed an earlier session in which Tenser had fought red dragons,³⁷³ but had lost out on the magical treasures because dragon fire had destroyed the choicest items. Rob knew that green dragons employed a breath weapon of poisonous gas, which could not destroy any treasures during battle. Therefore, this was too good an opportunity to pass up despite the enormous risk. Robilar unleashed his efreet and ordered it to attack the mighty dragons.

The efreet died horribly, and one of the dragons exhaled a gout of foul chlorine gas, and both Otto and Robilar were nearly killed. Otto desperately used his Charm Monster spell and managed to beguile one of the dragons to obey his commands. The other was reluctant to attack its mate and to risk the baby in all the chaos, and so all of the dragons were conquered subdued. A great victory!³⁷⁴

The dragons were brought back to the castle, where they were allowed to guard “their” treasure on the provision that they also defended the stronghold from invaders.

Other players would soon be emboldened by Rob’s successes and would leave the Greyhawk dungeon to create their own strongholds and defensive towers. For Rob and friends, this would be a perfect time to try another new tactic designed to net them the dearest treasures of all.

³⁷³ It seems that at some point, Tenser managed to subdue two red dragons and used them as guards for his treasure hoard; reading in between the few cryptic lines that exist, it seems reasonable to assume that the red dragons he tamed were the ones who melted their treasure during a fierce combat with the wizard.

³⁷⁴ These tales are largely derived from the Pied Piper Publishing forums.

* * * * *

Before that final assault was made on Greyhawk's depths, however, another notable adventure took place on "King Kong Island." The record of that journey is very incomplete, and some of the details come only in a fictionalized form from Gary's introductory write-up in *Dungeon Module WG6*. Unfortunately, these second-hand bits are somewhat unreliable and may have been altered for public consumption. Nevertheless, as they are all that we have to go on, I will relate them the best I can:

There were six specific players noted as having played in the sessions concerning the Isle of the Ape: Don Arndt (character unknown, but likely his cautious cleric), Ernie Gyax (playing Tenser), Don Kaye (Murlynd), Rob Kuntz (Robilar), Terry Kuntz (Terik), and Mike Mornard (character unknown, but likely Gronan at level 8 or Lessnard at level 7).³⁷⁵

Considering that Mike Mornard left to attend university in Minnesota during the autumn of 1973, I would estimate (shakily) that this island adventure took place in September or thereabouts. However it began, the adventurers formed an alliance and set out for the ruins. They knew that they were looking for an artifact of great power, and so the players were well aware that the savage frontier they were about to enter was the borderland of someplace exceedingly dangerous.³⁷⁶

They descended the Endless Stair, fought their way through the horrific cavern-dwelling monsters on dungeon level nine, and then quickly made their way down to the transporter nexus on dungeon level ten. There, they discovered "in a great tunnel, oddly convoluted and filled with unknown glyphs" a runic message, warning them not to proceed.³⁷⁷

This was duly ignored — they were after glory and treasure, of course, and not necessarily in that order — and the brash companions were promptly teleported

³⁷⁵ *Dungeon Module WG6, Isle of the Ape*, by Gary Gyax, pp. 2, 6. TSR, 1985. See also RPG.Net, "Low-Level Magic-Users — How Valuable?" Posted September 25th, 2009.

³⁷⁶ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gyax Q&A, Part IX. Posted June 21st, 2005.

³⁷⁷ *Dungeon Module WG6, Isle of the Ape*, by Gary Gyax, pg. 6. TSR, 1985.

to the rocky shores of the Isle of the Ape. They first encountered the savage natives who sheltered behind the Great Wall on the island's protected peninsula. Gary said that Terik was the primary instigator of what transpired next: "He took great exception to the chief's and witch doctor's initial treatment of him."³⁷⁸

The adventurers therefore got themselves in a series of hit and run fights, where they eventually triumphed over the savages (with some difficulty). The adventurers defeated the natives' "main leaders quickly," Gary wrote, "and so the mass fled from them."³⁷⁹

The party then made their foray into the island's wild interior. They slogged their way through the jungles and swamps, fighting dinosaurs and finding very little treasure. Eventually they managed to discover the lair of Gary's tribute to *King Kong*, the great ape Oonga. Oonga was, to put it lightly, designed as a killer monster. Gary once wrote "Perhaps I was a bit carried away when I started out Oonga, but I loved (and still do) the 1933 *King Kong* film ... and I was fed up with the top players' PCs in my campaign kicking around almost every monster sent against them."³⁸⁰ Gary once also noted that Oonga was his all-time favorite monster.³⁸¹

In the final confrontation, one of the PCs — Gary refused to say just whom — was unfortunate enough to be swept up into Oonga's terrible clutches. As Gary explained, that doomed hero was summarily "grabbed, wrenched, bitten, thrown down, and then drop-kicked off the ledge of the cave."³⁸² Needless to say, that amounted to a couple hundred points of damage and a very grisly death. The remaining adventurers fled, recovered the mutilated body, and saved their hapless

³⁷⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 29th, 2002.

³⁷⁹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted June 21st, 2005.

³⁸⁰ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted July 19th, 2007.

³⁸¹ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted February 13th, 2006.

³⁸² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 29th, 2002.

companion from oblivion with a Wish spell. “That ended all interest in further adventuring there,” Gary quipped.

In the end, Gary reported that the Isle of the Ape was never a complete success: “Most of my guys hated it,” he complained.³⁸³ In the future, the veteran players “avoided the place ... assiduously.”³⁸⁴ Therefore, Gary was probably quite happy later on when a goodly newfound friend named James M. Ward journeyed there — in the summer of 1974, as we shall see in Book III of **HAWK & MOOR** — and loved the place, reveling in its sheer sense of spectacle and high adventure.

* * * * *

The veterans unfortunately regarded the Isle of the Ape expedition as a disaster. There were, however, more lucrative adventures to be had beyond the transporter nexus on dungeon level ten. When the players began to suspect that Gary had completed his conception of Castle Greyhawk and had designed the deepest dungeon levels, Rob, Ernie and Terry scented a huge opportunity for adventure (and treasure, of course!). If they could manage to get to the bottom of the dungeon before everyone else, locating Zagyg’s hoard along the way, they would become filthy rich. The magic items they would find might even make them nigh invincible! They decided that it was time to strike, before any of the other player characters could come within striking distance of that same elusive goal.

In one of the accounts that Gary once shared, he noted that Robilar, Tenser, and Terik were “aggressive and ambitious,” a reality which resulted in their conquest of an entire dungeon level.³⁸⁵ They selected the uppermost dungeon level, the Barracks. The goal was to control the Barracks as a close base of operations which would allow for more concerted assaults and explorations of the deepest dungeon levels. Gary’s game mastering required that characters return to a safe base for the awarding of experience points, and if the distant City of Greyhawk could be

³⁸³ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XI. Posted July 11th, 2006.

³⁸⁴ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted February 13th, 2006.

³⁸⁵ *Dragon* magazine, issue #312. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

circumvented, then these three crafty players could widen their experience level leads over all of the other players. Brilliant!

All of the level's monsters were mercilessly put to the sword (or the Fireball), and then the level was repopulated with neutral orc conscripts. These troops were barracked in the level's many rooms, securing especially the chambers with stairs up (into the ruins) or down (to level two). Tense used Walls of Force and similar spells to block particularly vulnerable locations, and a steel portcullis was constructed to restrict access to the deeps. The other player characters could still use secret entryways (out in the wilderness) to gain access to the lower dungeons, but anyone wanting to use the main stairways would need to use the portcullis way.

Gary must have laughed when he heard that Rob, Ernie and Terry were demanding (and getting!) a ten percent cut ... er, luxury tax ... applied to every other player's treasure hauls. Those who refused to pay were simply not let back out of the dungeon, however badly wounded they might be. Succinctly, Rob noted the other players' reaction to this intriguing and acquisitive arrangement: "They hated us."³⁸⁶

Rob also took advantage of his exclusive play time, conducting solo adventures in the deeps. According to Gary's later recollection he was about level 9 when these more serious solitaire adventures began.³⁸⁷

He used a ring of invisibility and later, a pair of elven boots (the latter discovered on the bottom level of the Castle Greyhawk dungeons, along with an enchanted sword and suit of armor, as accoutrements upon a statue of a fighting man³⁸⁸) to maximize his potential for stealth.³⁸⁹ As Rob explained, "I pushed the solo aspect of it, which became very interesting, because I wanted to test the boundaries of the concept. We were all based on group play at that point — parties — so Gary was sculpting the dungeons and the encounters and so forth for group play. So when I went solo, I started beating all of this stuff. Why? Because it was set up for a bunch of people making noise who are coming into the dungeons as a group and can't really avoid anything. Your presence is pretty much known. Well,

³⁸⁶ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums.

³⁸⁷ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III. Posted July 6th, 2003.

³⁸⁸ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar and evil races."

³⁸⁹ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Q&A with Rob Kuntz.

I did a couple of hours, I ... silently took to the dungeons and selected my targets, like Conan creeping through the crypts. I would say that was more interesting ... It challenged Gary ... because he started putting more teleport traps and misdirection, but I never mapped anyway. I just went down there and he couldn't understand it. He once told me I had one of the best memories he'd ever run across. But I had methods to my madness, it wasn't just chaotic. I was wandering around ... taking my chances. I would attack from surprise when invisible. I stacked the odds, and if I couldn't, I wouldn't engage ... I isolated a target and went after it."³⁹⁰

Robilar also carried a hooded lantern,³⁹¹ using it only occasionally to survey his surroundings. This allowed him to avoid many wandering monsters, and to scout monster lairs. Vulnerable monsters which appeared to have treasure were attacked, while dangerous or impoverished ones were avoided. This of course had the side effect of making future expeditions by the other players' characters both more deadly and less rewarding!

Some of solo these adventures were lucrative, but some of them were fruitless ... and one in particular was nearly disastrous in its implications.

* * * * *

It was late in 1973, it seems, when Robilar ventured alone through Gary's "side levels" beyond the core thirteen dungeon levels. Robilar was probably about level 11 or 12 at this time. He wandered away from the central region of dungeon level four, and found himself in a mysterious series of chambers far to the northwest.³⁹²

In one particularly ominous chamber amongst the side levels, Robilar discovered a circle comprised of nine ornate pedestals. Upon these pedestals were

³⁹⁰ Refer to the Youtube clip 'Rob Kuntz Conversations,' with Martin Brown of Grogard Games. The conversation begins at approximately 18:10.

³⁹¹ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar's solo adventures."

³⁹² Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar and luz."

poised nine enchanted figures, who were apparently imprisoned in a state of suspended animation.

Little did Robilar know that he was in extreme peril here.³⁹³ For this was the chamber of stasis, where nine powerful deities and demigods loomed, held against their will. Each of these powers crossed or challenged Zagyg in the past, and were each rebuked with temporary confinement in their magical prisons.³⁹⁴ It pleased Zagyg to let them stand there dreaming for many years in the hall of pedestals, never to be wakened until a random mortal would come by and accidentally release them. And so, in a twisted form of humility and repentance, the great powers of the planes were left at the mercy of man. It is a fairly good joke, really.

According to the most authoritative account (by Rob and later confirmed by Gary), the identities of the Nine were as follows:

#	Deity	Alignment	Notes
[1]	Celestian, the Far Wanderer	Neutral Good	The god of the night sky, wandering and the void, who is “drawn to the endless reaches of the stars and the Astral Plane.” ³⁹⁵
[2]	Erythnul, the Many	Chaotic Evil	The deity of ugliness, hatred, envy, malice, panic and slaughter. “Erythnul is said to greatly reward his faithful servants for their fickleness and wickedness.” ³⁹⁶

³⁹³ This tale, a rather convoluted and disjointed one with some internally conflicting points, comes from the *Oerth Journal*, numerous forum mentions, and particularly from threads found in the Pied Piper Publishing forums.

³⁹⁴ *The Oerth Journal*, issue #12. Produced by the Council of Greyhawk, 2001.

³⁹⁵ *Dragon* magazine, issue #68. “The Deities & Demigods of the World of Greyhawk,” by E. Gary Gygax.

³⁹⁶ *Dragon* magazine, issue #71. “The Deities & Demigods of the World of Greyhawk,” by E. Gary Gygax. Gary once noted that Erythnul was partly inspired by the “Demon of Blood and Seed” from Hindu mythology.

#	Deity	Alignment	Notes
[3]	Heironeous the Invincible	Lawful Good	The champion of chivalry, honor, justice, valor and daring. He “has the power to create an illusion which makes him appear as a young boy, a mercenary soldier, or an old man.” ³⁹⁷
[4]	Hextor, the Scourge of Battle	Lawful Evil	The six-armed martial god of war, discord, conflict and endurance. “Places of worship of Hextor are grim, dark, and bloody. Major shrines and temples are usually built on some field of slaughter.” ³⁹⁸
[5]	Iuz the Old	Chaotic Evil	The demon-spawn of oppression, deceit, cruelty and pain. “His wickedness and treachery are infamous throughout the Flanaess.” ³⁹⁹ Pronounced by Gary as “aye-UHZ” according to Rob.
[6]	Obad-hai, the Shalm	True Neutral	The spirit of the natural world, hunting, and wild beasts. He “is an archaic deity of nature and wildlands, one of the most ancient known.” ⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ *Dragon* magazine, issue #67. “The Deities & Demigods of the World of Greyhawk,” by E. Gary Gygax.

³⁹⁸ *Dragon* magazine, issue #67. “The Deities & Demigods of the World of Greyhawk,” by E. Gary Gygax.

³⁹⁹ *Dragon* magazine, issue #67. “The Deities & Demigods of the World of Greyhawk,” by E. Gary Gygax.

⁴⁰⁰ *Dragon* magazine, issue #69. “The Deities & Demigods of the World of Greyhawk,” by E. Gary Gygax.

#	Deity	Alignment	Notes
[7]	Olidammara, the Laughing Rogue	Chaotic Neutral	The patriarch of music, revelry, rogues, trickery and wine. “He wanders the Prime Material Plane in many guises, stealing from the rich, the haughty, or the evil. Olidammara gives wealth to those without means — often distributing his pilfered gains through high revels.” ⁴⁰¹
[8]	Ralishaz the Unlooked-For	Chaotic Evil	The trickster god of randomness, misfortune and madness. “In his (or her) true form, Ralishaz is quite awful to behold, for at one moment the face and body of the deity are handsome, the next wrinkled and ugly — first that of a scabby beggar, then that of a beautiful maid.” ⁴⁰²
[9]	Trithereon the Summoner	Chaotic Good	The deity of individuality, self-protection, liberty and retribution. “His symbol, the rune of pursuit, indicates many things, including the need to strive for liberty and to seek and bring an end to those who are bent on abridging life or freedom.” ^{403 404}

⁴⁰¹ *Dragon* magazine, issue #70. “The Deities & Demigods of the World of Greyhawk,” by E. Gary Gygax.

⁴⁰² *Dragon* magazine, issue #71. “The Deities & Demigods of the World of Greyhawk,” by E. Gary Gygax.

⁴⁰³ *Dragon* magazine, issue #68. “The Deities & Demigods of the World of Greyhawk,” by E. Gary Gygax.

⁴⁰⁴ These true identities of the Nine, always a matter for some debate, were confirmed by Gary in a Q&A article featured in *Oerth Journal* #12. There is still reason to doubt the historical accuracy of this list, but it is certainly as close as we’re ever going to get.

This core idea — showcasing nine starkly different personalities, all poised to vie for supremacy in order to realize their own immortal vision of regal dominance — reminds me a bit of the background for Roger Zelazny's *Nine Princes in Amber*. Whether this similarity in design was intentional, however, Gary never seemed to make a mention of it.

These luminous figures, adrift in enchanted slumber, were fully aware yet unable to move or act without outside interference. According to Rob Kuntz, they were very likely aware and had remained so for many years. Each of these powers of Greyhawk were capable of listening to and answering prayers made by their clergy, but their incarnate forms were frozen in their luminous prisons beneath the castle.

Staring at each of these awe-inspiring beings in turn, Robilar decided to risk it all and to tempt the worst of fate. He noticed the six-armed and terrible Hextor appeared to be the most martial and powerful, and he reasoned that if he conquered the strongest power he might then stand a chance against the rest. Such is the hubris of mortals in their ultimate curiosity!

Robilar touched Hextor, and in doing so he released the Scourge of Battle. The darkly handsome Hextor immediately rose up, leapt off his pedestal, and attacked! This foul power wielded two shields, a trident, a scimitar, a morning star and a bone-crushing flail. Robilar was forced to fall back, terribly wounded. He was only saved by another instance of Zagyg's mischief: in touching one of the Nine, Robilar had set off a chain reaction which dispelled the enchantments of all of the great powers in the chamber. One of the powers of good — almost certainly Heironeous, Hextor's half-brother and eternal rival — intervened in Hextor's near-slaughter of Robilar, and so the dismayed fighting man was able to flee for his life ... leaving a trail of blood behind him.⁴⁰⁵

The Nine, every one of them made wrathful and embittered by their centuries of imprisonment, vied with one another for ultimate supremacy. The other powers of good — Celestian and Trithereon — faced off with the evil ones, Erythnul, Iuz, and Ralishaz. Obad-Hai and Olidammara had their own quarrels as well, with Obad-Hai likely protecting himself from the evil powers and Olidammara eager to

⁴⁰⁵ For a slightly different take on this encounter from Gary's perspective, refer to the Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A Part V, posted April 30th, 2006.

escape so that he could loot Zagyg's ultimate treasury.⁴⁰⁶ Spells flew, magic weapons arced and drew sparks from enchanted armor. Divine and infernal battle cries echoed throughout the hall.



*Sacred powers don't grow powerful
without knowing how to slay.*

⁴⁰⁶ *Dragon* magazine, issue #70. "The Deities & Demigods of the Greyhawk," by E. Gary Gygax.

Robilar, still badly wounded, heard all of this from a nearby hiding place. He waited until the sounds of clashing turned to curses, vows for divine retribution, and then finally ... echoes falling into a dead silence.

Robilar crept back into the hall of pedestals to investigate, but there were only sundered walls and flagstones, and perhaps a few bits of tattered finery. The Nine had fled the dungeon by gating to their home planes, where they would plot their revenges upon Zagyg the Mad.⁴⁰⁷

The hall was abandoned.

It seems there were no treasures here, but the release of the Nine elder powers back upon the World of Greyhawk would deeply affect the meta-plot which Gary was brewing in his head. Soon, this key event in the epic of the Flanaess would stir the next major phase of the campaign into being: the resurgence of a destroyed demonic stronghold known to luz. As Rob would later relate, “Gary seemed very pleased when Robilar loosed these creatures, and I was to find out why much later in the Temple of Elemental Evil!”⁴⁰⁸

* * * * *

That vast underworld setting’s debut would follow soon after the end of the first phase of the Greyhawk campaign, which was about to end in a spectacular fashion: Robilar, Tenser and Terik were racing to seek the utmost nadir of Zagyg’s dungeon. It was time for this great triumvirate of adventurers to play the endgame.

Gary confirmed that the first adventure to the bottom level took place in late 1973.⁴⁰⁹ Robilar went on another solo adventure, and managed to find an “endless corridor” which gradually sloped all the way down to deeper levels. Using stealth, trickery and his wits, Robilar managed to get all the way down to level thirteen. There was a problem, however: much like the maw of a carnivorous pitcher plant,

⁴⁰⁷ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted April 30th, 2006.

⁴⁰⁸ Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums.

⁴⁰⁹ *Dragon* magazine, issue #295. “Up on a Soapbox,” by Gary Gygax.

the antechamber leading into level thirteen prevented any explorer's return. As Gary explained, "When a character got down to his [*Zagy*'] level, there was no going back."⁴¹⁰

While he was exploring this deepest dungeon level, Robilar discovered a chamber with several statues in it. There were (at least) stone representations of a fighting man, a wizard, and a high priest. The fighting man statue had boots of elvenkind, a magical sword, and magical armor; whether they were adorning the statue and somehow removed, or placed at its feet, is unknown. Whatever the case, Robilar earned these treasures and added them to his panoply.

Robilar was pursued however by invisible stalkers and other mysterious minions of *Zagy*, and so he was pushed toward the level's central chamber.⁴¹¹ There he soon found himself hurtling down the magical spiral slide which plunged down into the unknown abyss. A gleeful old trickster — *Zagy* himself, of course — appeared in a sphere of force with a wink and a wave, wishing Robilar a safe and rapid transit into the terrifying unknown.

⁴¹⁰ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gyax Q&A, Part III.

⁴¹¹ *Dragon Annual* #2. "Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75," by Gary Gyax.



*“Fare ye well, Lord Robilar!
Say ‘Hail’ to the Ifrits for me!”*

Robilar gained a full experience level for his daring, and ended up falling through the entire Oerth until he fell “up” into a bizarre and ornate temple, situated in the fabled upside-down land of Cathay.

The next game day (and the same day in real time), Ernie wanted to play in Gary’s dungeon as well.⁴¹² He (as Tenser) asked Gary where Robilar was, and received no clear answer. Plying the citizens of Greyhawk’s taverns with drink, he learned that Robilar had ventured alone into the ruins. Brave Tenser followed (according to one account, he was accompanied by his NPC companion Serten), and he too — by dint of tracking and blind luck — managed to find the same way down into Zagyg’s domain. He too slid all the way to Cathay, becoming hopelessly lost because Robilar had already moved on.

On the third game day (and again, during that same evening in the real world), Terry wanted to play as Terik. Gary was astonished when Terik (perhaps accompanied by a magic-user NPC) managed to follow the same path, getting dumped to other side of the world in search of his companions. “I know,” Gary once wrote, “that none of the players had access to the dungeon maps, for I kept them carefully guarded.” Both Rob and Ernie were present at the table as Terry was playing however, because Gary later wrote “I kept my eyes glued to the pair [*of players*] who had already ‘graduated’ to see that they made no sign nor signal.”⁴¹³

Somehow, the three players managed to communicate to one another between these quickly-played sessions, resulting in a flabbergasted Gary wondering just how he was going to continue the Greyhawk campaign with its three most stalwart heroes stuck on the other side of the world. Gary’s recollections indicate that at this time, Robilar was likely a level 12 fighting man then, having been raised from level 11 by Zagyg’s magical wave. Tenser was either 11th or 12th level, and

⁴¹² *Dragon Annual #2*. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary Gygax.

⁴¹³ *Dragon Annual #2*. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary Gygax.

Terik was level 11.⁴¹⁴ Murlynd by this time was about level 9 or so.⁴¹⁵ Please note that these milestones are helpful indicators for the harried author, especially when he is adding hundreds of details to future editions of this book!

Gary once stated⁴¹⁶ that after Terik's descent, no other characters in all the years of play ever found the bottom level of Zagyg's dungeon. Rob, as the first player to beat the dungeon, was awarded the title of co-game referee at Gary's side. Robilar's adventures would continue, but from that point on Rob would run many of the Greyhawk games for the other players, including Gary. About a month after Robilar's descent — perhaps beginning the work in late October — Gary and Rob combined their many dungeon level designs into a magnificent second version of Castle Greyhawk. This colossal restructured mega-dungeon would be approximately 28 levels deep, with over a dozen side levels, totaling over 40 dungeon levels in all.⁴¹⁷

It appears that the dungeons went through multiple and successive phases of expansion: "At its largest," Gary once explained, "the complex had about 25 levels

⁴¹⁴ According to recollections in the Pied Piper Publishing forums, Tenser earned a staff of power in the room of statues. Presumably, Terik gained a similar reward. There are conflicting accounts as to whether they had henchmen present with them at this time; for example, one telling notes that Serten was with Tenser and that he earned a snake staff as his own reward. I will clarify this later if I can ... the many tellings over the years inevitably differ in the details.

⁴¹⁵ *Dragon Annual* #2. "Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75," by Gary Gygax.

⁴¹⁶ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III.

⁴¹⁷ See for example ENWorld Q&A Part III, posted May 13, 2003. Gary also wrote in 2005 (in ENWorld Q&A Part VIII, posted March 17th, 2005) that he was in still possession of these 40+ levels, and in fact had selected seven of them to serve in a dungeon campaign which he was running. Fortunately, therefore, these maps are very likely to still exist within the Gygax archive. At various times he provided details on the map types used, for example: "Being of insidious nature, I varied the maps for levels of the castle dungeons. Sometimes I used 8.5" x 11" paper, 4 squares to the inch, sometimes 5, 6, or 8. Then I'd throw in two or more levels on the same map, or use 17" x 22" paper with 4 or 5 squares to the inch. At least one level was done with small hexagons. Also, many of the levels were connected so that it was difficult to know when one was leaving one and entering another. Accurate maps were highly prized by regular players."

down and 50 total levels.”⁴¹⁸ Other estimates provided at various times are even larger. It seems that the *completion* of the *first* experimental phase of the merged mega-dungeon may date to the end of 1973, or even the beginning of 1974. I estimate the timeframe based upon the “month later” comment⁴¹⁹ and the following further account by Gyga: “About the time *Dungeons & Dragons* was published, the dungeons under the ruined castle consisted of only 13 levels down and a couple of extra on the sides.”⁴²⁰

This playground was necessarily huge, because there were so many players participating in the Greyhawk campaign by this time. As Gary elaborated in the book *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*, “We merged our dungeons and worked both as a team to manage huge groups of player characters adventuring simultaneously and also ran several separate sessions each week with ‘only’ a dozen or so players in each.” Rob Kuntz would later further clarify the number of players in the game at this time: “The most [*players*] he [*Gary*] and I co-DMed at once was twenty (that was due to out-of-town players all appearing as a large group),” Rob remembered. “The high mean was closer to 7 to 9, with 5 to 7 being common.”⁴²¹

Gary once said that some of the expanded super-dungeon’s levels were never fully explored, and some of the more secret side and transporter-accessed levels were never explored at all.⁴²²

But the majority were indeed searched, conquered and plundered in part. As you might well imagine, there were many more stories to come in 1974, with hundreds of underground adventures still waiting to happen!

⁴¹⁸ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part III. See also Gary’s post in the Yahoo Gyga Games Group, posted December 4th, 2004.

⁴¹⁹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part III.

⁴²⁰ *The Dragon*, issue #37. “From the Sorcerer’s Scroll: Greyhawk: The Shape of the World,” by Gary Gyga, pg. 10.

⁴²¹ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org, “To Forge a Fantasy World: Essay by Gyga.” Posted June 13th, 2015.

⁴²² Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part III. Posted May 1st, 2003.



*"Well done, little brother!
That's enough slaying for one day."*

And here, we must say farewell for a time to Sir Robilar, Tenser and Terik, the victorious triumvirate of Zagyg's jest. The three companions eventually did return (separately) to the City of Greyhawk, after many diverse adventures through the jungles and the wastelands; but all of that apparently occurred in early 1974,⁴²³ and that — as I am wont to say — is a tale for another day.

* * * * *

This was by no means the end of the early tales of *Dungeons & Dragons*, however. In Minnesota, a new saga was just beginning. These tales were begun by Mike Mornard, who had played the characters of Gronan and Lessnard in the Greyhawk campaign.

When Mike began attending classes at the University of Minnesota, he met a lot of great people. From a D&D history perspective, the most profound and influential meeting would involve Professor Muhammad Abd-al-Rahman (M. A. R.) Barker, a renowned linguist and scholar who has been remembered as “the forgotten Tolkien.” This rather unfair (yet perceptive) appellation derives from the fact that Barker loved to study linguistic structures and mythic history. And, like Tolkien, he developed an intricate fantasy world through which he told stories and shared his creation with the world. Professor Barker's “Middle Earth” was known as Tékumel. Tékumel was a lifelong passion for Professor Barker, just as Middle Earth had been for Professor Tolkien. Incredibly, he began creating material for his fantasy world in the 1940s, and would continue to do so for some 70 years.

Professor Barker was the faculty sponsor of the Tuesday night wargaming group at the University of Minnesota. Soon, Mornard's D&D sessions had taken over the Tuesday night wargaming play sessions which Professor Barker had presided over. It seems that Mike introduced the Professor to *Dungeons & Dragons* in late 1973. We know very little about these games, but this development is interesting to note because we will hear from Professor Barker in **HAWK & MOOR**

⁴²³ *Dragon Annual* #2. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary Gygax.

Book III (1974-1975), where his elaborate synthesis of *Tékumel* and *Dungeons & Dragons* would give birth to a remarkable game entitled *Empire of the Petal Throne*.

* * * * *

With all of these fascinating tales in play, it is very easy to lose sight of business matters and Gary's ongoing financial concerns. To catch up on the "real" side of the story, we must turn back the clock ever so slightly to early September, 1973. In an interesting synchronicity, I choose to note a tragedy: on September 2nd, J. R. R. Tolkien passed away. His legacy would pass on to other men and their ambitions.

At around that same time, Gary persuaded Don Kaye to borrow \$1,000 against his life insurance policy.⁴²⁴ Don's wife Donna would certainly not approve of this risk-taking, as we shall see.⁴²⁵

And her chilly opinion of Gary's business endeavors would grow frostier in the months to come.

Don took an enormous leap of faith, and it was crucial for the early secure development of our hobby. In the later opinion of David Wesely, original conductor of the Braunstein role-playing scenario sessions (as posted on theminiaturespage.com): "If Gary and Don Kaye had not put up the money to turn Blackmoor and Greyhawk into D&D and publish it, there might still only be a few dozen people playing RPGs."

He took Gary at his word that the new company would be successful, and so he resolved to help his friend in making his dream come true. Gary approached his uncle, Hugh L. Burdick with a sensitive request.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ Inc. magazine, February 1982. "TSR Hobbies Mixes Fact and Fantasy," by Stewart Alsop II. See also ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part X, posted July 2nd, 2006.

⁴²⁵ See *Empire of Imagination: Gary Gygax and the Birth of Dungeons & Dragons*, pg. 113.

⁴²⁶ An interesting life history of Hugh Lewis Burdick's father, Hugh Abram Burdick, can be found in *History of Walworth County, Wisconsin*, Volume 1, by Albert Clayton Beckwith (1912). There, we hear high praise for Hugh L. Burdick's father: "Only those who come into personal contact with Hugh Abram BURDICK, of Lake Geneva, scion of one of

Hugh, like his father before him, was an attorney of high repute. Court records indicate that he was city attorney of Lake Geneva in the early 1960s. He agreed to draft up a partnership agreement for his nephew and Don Kaye, *pro bono*.⁴²⁷

After the partnership agreement had been drafted and signed, Don gave Gary the money to deposit in a new fund for their fledgling company, Tactical Studies Rules.⁴²⁸ The company was named in honor of the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association, where both men had enjoyed so many game sessions with their friends.

Gary added \$1,000 from his own meager savings to the fund, exemplifying the equal partnership. It would be a huge financial risk for both of them. Neither of them had enough money to do it, and both were risk averse in a bad economy. Don was married, and Gary had the welfare of his own wife and children to consider.

As Gary once noted, “We founded our company with a bit of money, a lot of ideas, and no outside help.”⁴²⁹ TSR was born on October 1st.⁴³⁰

Missing from the equation, of course, was David Lance Arneson. It is said that he could simply not afford to commit to Don and Gary’s venture at that time. Also, however, Dave had serious doubts about any future success. He once said in

the worthy old families of Walworth county, and one of the popular and successful attorneys of this section of the Badger state, can understand how thoroughly nature and training, habits of thought and action have enabled him to accomplish his life work and made him a fit representative of the enterprising class of professional people to which he belongs. He is a fine type of the sturdy, conscientious, progressive American of today — a man who unites a high order of ability with courage, patriotism, clean morality and sound common sense, doing thoroughly and well the work that he finds to do and asking praise of no man for the performance of what he conceives to be his simple duty.”

⁴²⁷ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gygax.

⁴²⁸ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gygax.

⁴²⁹ *The Dragon*, issue #11. “View from the Telescope Wondering Which End Is Which,” by Gary Gygax.

⁴³⁰ For this date, refer for example to United States District Court (Fourth Division, Minnesota) Civil Action 4-79-109, Arneson v. Gygax.

an interview: “We [*the Twin Cities gamers*] didn’t think that there was a business there. It was really Gary’s friend, Don Kaye, who came up with the money to do the first printing of *Dungeons & Dragons*. We couldn’t find anybody that would give us money. At that time I was a security guard who couldn’t afford shoes, so neither one of us was willing to cashier. Don bankrolled it.”⁴³¹ And even more to the point: “Don was the major money man at the time.”⁴³²

At about this time, realizing Arneson’s difficulties, Gary may have assured Dave that he would provide him a royalty as a gentlemen’s agreement (which would later, as we see in court documents, be put in writing), but this is speculation on my part. Some of the facts pertaining to this agreement are sensitive from a legal perspective, and despite some professional access I do not feel that I should elucidate this matter to the fullest extent.

Gary and Don chose a powerful symbol to emblazon on their works: a dark and ornate capital letter G, interwoven with a light-hued capital K. The foremost goal of their new company was very simple: the immediate publication of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

⁴³¹ Gamespy interview with Dave Arneson.

⁴³² *The Space Gamer*, issue #21. “An Interview with Dave Arneson.”



"We still have enough gold though, right?"

CHAPTER 19

AN INSUFFICIENT TROVE

(OCTOBER 1973 —
JANUARY 1974)

AS IN all other great adventure tales, there were considerable obstacles to be overcome before Gary's and Don's quest to unleash *Dungeons & Dragons* upon the world could be fulfilled. The first problem they faced was also one of the most confounding: money. More specifically, income over time.

Dungeons & Dragons was going to be an expensive game. Instead of being confined to a single booklet (as *Chainmail* had been), it would be featured in a boxed set with adhesive labels attached. Inside would be three separate booklets, and a set of reference sheets. The rules also required the polyhedral dice, which TSR needed to (eventually) be able to supply — at additional cost, and as a separate purchase! — once the orders came pouring in.

Gary knew that he needed to acquire three solid estimates on materials before he could calculate the production cost of a D&D boxed set: [1] the printing costs for the three covered booklets and reference sheets; [2] the storage boxes themselves; and [3] the front and spine labels which would display the art and title to sell the game. Printing would of course be the most expensive, and a small local establishment called the Graphic Printing Company (near to Gary's house, over on Broad Street)⁴³³ offered Gary a "firm estimate" of \$2,100.⁴³⁴ Another local supplier gave Gary a quote of \$0.20 per box, provided 1,000 boxes were ordered (thus totaling \$200). These would be the now-coveted "wood-grain" boxes, named for the wood-like pattern printed on their adhesive covering papers. The labels (also to be provided by Graphic Printing)⁴³⁵ would be the cheapest component, costing less than \$100 in total for 1,000 frontal adhesives and 1,000 spines. With all of these figures considered, Gary brought the estimated production cost to Don's attention: \$2,400, give or take. Assuming, of course, that all of the assembly labor was free (which it had to be).⁴³⁶

⁴³³ *Dragon Annual* #4. "50 Years of Gaming: A 25-Year Retrospective, Plus 25 Years of Fearless Predictions," by Gary Gygax.

⁴³⁴ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. "How It All Happened," by Gary Gygax.

⁴³⁵ *Dragon Annual* #4. "50 Years of Gaming: A 25-Year Retrospective, Plus 25 Years of Fearless Predictions," by Gary Gygax.

⁴³⁶ Tim Kask would later (Gen Con 2016) relate his own memory of sets being assembled in the Gygax household, c. 1974: "If you ask any of Gary's children, [he] had this big, long, lovely dining room table. He needed it, to seat his family around it. And

This was an exorbitant sum, even considering the \$2,400 TSR had raised for the founding. Don and Gary could not risk their entire meager trove on an initial venture with no guarantee of quick returns. Simply put, TSR's base fund was insufficient to create 1,000 sets of *Dungeons & Dragons* while also covering additional expenses. This conundrum required a solution, and quickly. Hoping to keep their dream of a 50-50 partnership alive, Gary and Don decided to take a chance and to publish a wargame prior to *Dungeons & Dragons*. Once the wargame sold a few hundred copies, TSR would have enough money to publish D&D in early 1974.

But which game would they choose?

There were several candidates, but Gary and Don eventually decided upon *Cavaliers & Roundheads* (C&R), which was the Gygax-Perren wargame which simulated the battles waged during the English Civil War (1642-1651 AD). This is an interesting choice, because the age of "pike and shot" featured desperate battles fought with cannons, firearms, swords and spears. As such, *Cavaliers & Roundheads* had a chance to appeal to "pure" wargamers and to "medievalists" alike. Gary also hoped that the same audience which had been receptive toward *Chainmail* — an already proven Gygax and Perren collaboration — might be interested in C&R as well.

they'd lay out brown boxes all around the table ... 'Come here, Heidi,' and give her a bunch of [Book] 3s. Come here Cindy ..." What fun!



For King, or for country?

Unfortunately, Gary also knew from earlier fan letters and correspondence that perhaps “9 out of 10” of *Chainmail’s* buyers had been interested primarily in the Fantasy Supplement. Nevertheless, this was the closest that Gary could come to providing a similar product on short notice. As Gary once noted, “we produced a military miniatures rules set as the first product, as that was all we could afford.”⁴³⁷ And, “we knew that wasn’t really our hottest prospect, but it was all we could

⁴³⁷ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 5th, 2002.

afford to put out.”⁴³⁸ He and Don would simply have to take the gamble, set their pikes and prepare to fire, and hope for the best.

Perhaps cringing inwardly, Gary took his prepared manuscript of C&R to the printers and spent hundreds of dollars on the order, thereby rendering the publication of *Dungeons & Dragons* temporarily impossible. This was probably in early October. The single-booklet game would be printed and published later that month. The hope of course was that “sales of the booklet would generate sufficient income to afford to publish the D&D game soon thereafter, as we both knew it would be the horse to pull the company.”⁴³⁹

Regardless of the enthusiasm of *Dungeons & Dragons*’ play testers, the larger wargaming community contained substantial elements which were not impressed by the founding of TSR. The strongest of these opinions were apparently held by the employees of rival companies, likely Avalon Hill and Simulations Publications, Incorporated (SPI). These wargame-publishing behemoths had little to fear from TSR. As Gary once wrote, “When we began business in 1973, we were laughed off as a miniatures-oriented company.”⁴⁴⁰ It is well to remember that at that time, miniatures gamers were a minority among wargamers, and that play with “toy soldiers” was often frowned upon by the mighty “chit pushers” who *simulated* instead of *played* their gravely serious abstractions of famous battles.

Unfortunately, Don and Gary seem to have been cursed by the ghost of Oliver Cromwell ... sales of *Cavaliers & Roundheads* were very slow. The field of wargaming was already filled with quality games, and TSR was a new company offering a single product which simulated an unpopular time period. By November, Gary began to realize that if he and Don were to wait for *Cavaliers & Roundheads* to generate the fund that would allow *Dungeons & Dragons* to be published, the game would be delayed until 1975!⁴⁴¹ To that date, the game had only brought in about \$700 in sales at \$3 a copy — perhaps 230-240 copies sold in all.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁸ Online web forum post: Quarterofthree/CGM interview with Gary Gygax.

⁴³⁹ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted July 2nd, 2006.

⁴⁴⁰ *Dragon* magazine, issue #65. “Guest Editorial,” by Gary Gygax.

⁴⁴¹ *The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax*, conducted by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

⁴⁴² Inc. magazine, February 1982; Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. As Tim Kask noted, this money came from his father, see 1973: “Upon Don’s demise, Brian came into

Considering the nascent nature of fantasy role-playing at this time and the value inherent in being the first FRPG on the market, this was clearly an unacceptable state of affairs. Someone else, perhaps Game Designer's Workshop, would surely get to that untapped market first. There was a way out, of course; Gary was just reluctant to accept it. Gary's acquaintance Brian Blume had attended Gen Con that year, and began playing in the Greyhawk campaign in September. Brian had by that time worked in his father's company as a tool-and-die maker for five years, and had a fair amount of money to his name.

He was very interested in the publication potential exhibited by D&D and regarded himself as a very savvy businessman. According to Gary, "When Don and I formed the Tactical Studies Rules partnership, Brian was interested in our enterprise, [and] made suggestions as to how to get more copies of our single product, *Cavaliers & Roundheads*, into hobby shops, [and to] promote sales."⁴⁴³

Brian wanted in, and might well be a significant asset to TSR. But Gary and Don had known and trusted one another since the 1940s, and Brian was in many ways an unquantifiable wild card. How would the nature of that partnership between lifelong friends change if a third partner was brought in solely as a short-term tactical business decision? But much worse, what would happen to Don's and Gary's families if TSR went belly-up within its first few months of operation?

* * * * *

With such questions hanging over his head, Gary spared a little time for hope and dark reflection. One of the few *firm* historical dates we can pin down at this time is Thursday, November 1st, 1973. On this day, Gary wrote the "Forward" [*sic*] to his still-published labor of love, *Dungeons & Dragons*. Gary's heartfelt Foreword is interesting, because it hints at the epic saga of the Castle & Crusade Society, the MMSA, the Great Kingdom and *Chainmail* as well. Gary also took time to pay

the picture with some money (from his father) and he and Gary then converted *Tactical Studies Rules* into *TSR Hobbies, Inc.* by incorporating." See also ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X, posted July 2nd, 2006 for Gary's posting of the \$700 amount.

⁴⁴³ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. "How It All Happened," by Gary Gygax.

tribute to some of his favorite inspirational authors, including Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert E. Howard, L. Sprague de Camp, Fletcher Pratt, and Fritz Leiber.

As the sales of *Cavaliers & Roundheads* belatedly slogged over the \$400 mark in late November, Brian approached Gary and “asked if he might become a partner in Tactical Studies Rules.”⁴⁴⁴ If Gary was willing to accept Blume as a 1/3 equal partner, Blume would pitch in an additional \$2,000 of his own money as a good faith gesture toward getting *Dungeons & Dragons* published.⁴⁴⁵

Resigned to the inevitable, Gary took this offer to Don. Don simply asked Gary if Brian was trustworthy, and Gary replied that he “seemed like a good chap.” Don asked for a week to think it over. Gary let him have it.

When the week was over, Don called a private meeting with Gary and Brian in his dining room over at 842 Sage Street. Gary sat quietly as Don proceeded to question Brian about his intentions. Brian was forthright and honest in his ambitions, and had no worries about working hard to make the new company a success. Don asked Gary about TSR’s financial prospects if Brian’s contributed funds were to be considered toward the immediate publication of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Gary went over the previous estimates’ figures again for Brian’s benefits, and then explained that D&D would be sold to the public for \$10 a set. This is a rather grim figure; in 2014 dollars, it would equate to over \$53!

Don may have balked, but Gary showed the math that Brian would be likely to agree to: immediate future sales were projected (guesstimated, really) at 50% direct to public (at full price), 25% to hobby shop retailers (at a 40% discount), and 25% to wholesalers and national distributors (at a 55% discount). Packaging and shipping costs were figured in, and the sum was made plain: if all 1,000 sets of D&D were made for \$2,400 and sold, and if all funds were poured back into production of a second printing, then TSR “would make sufficient profit to reprint twice the quantity, leaving a bit to spare for an inexpensive ad or two.”

With all of that said, Don finally acquiesced. Hands were shaken all around, and Brian was brought in as an equal one-third partner. As Brian once wrote, he

⁴⁴⁴ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gygax. See also ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part X, posted July 2nd, 2006.

⁴⁴⁵ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted July 2nd, 2006.

had successfully and “finally badgered Gary into letting me in at the ‘ground floor’ of TSR.”⁴⁴⁶ Gary was confident at the time that this was a wise decision. “Don and I made the decision to admit him as an equal partner,” Gary wrote, “as both of us wanted to get the D&D game into print, and we knew that between us we controlled the company.”⁴⁴⁷

By this time, it was early December.⁴⁴⁸ On the following weekend (perhaps December 8th-9th), Brian brought his \$2,000 check to Gary. Brian was declared to be the Vice President of TSR (Don Kaye was President), and Gary (TSR’s Editor) deposited the check in the company account. Gary thus had one last weekend to look over his final versions of the game manuscripts. The writing had been rushed, and the game was still very much a work in progress. As Gary would later confess, “D&D came out in the form it did [*i.e., rushed and incomplete*] because it was still a baby when it was done. It was done in a hurry to answer the demands of many hardcore gamers.”⁴⁴⁹

It was far from being a perfect arrangement, and the rules were oblique, cryptic, and in many places confusing to ridiculous extreme. But the clock was ticking ... and so were all of the men’s financial obligations.

Gary went down to Graphic Printing on the following Monday (maybe but not certainly in “early December,”⁴⁵⁰ perhaps on December 10th) “and got the ball rolling on the production of the three booklets, reference sheets, and box labels.”

⁴⁴⁶ *The Strategic Review*, issue #5, TSR, December 1975.

⁴⁴⁷ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IV. Posted July 22nd, 2003.

⁴⁴⁸ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gygax.

⁴⁴⁹ *The Dragon*, issue #28, pg. 4.

⁴⁵⁰ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Thread I, February 23rd, 2005. However this is not conclusive, as Gary also remembered this event as taking place in “early January” (ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part X, posted July 2nd, 2006).



"Gary sent me.

You don't mind if I watch you typeset this, right?"

The order was paid in full. *Cavaliers & Roundheads* sales were by then up to a more respectable \$700, and in combination these funds would be sufficient to publish *Dungeons & Dragons*. At last!

The staff person at Graphic Printing (likely one Mrs. Jiardini)⁴⁵¹ began printing up the text for the rulebooks, using Gary's manuscript as a guide and retyping the verbiage on an IBM typewriter.⁴⁵² Plates would be burned from these IBM-printed booklet scripts as soon as all of the retyping was complete.

⁴⁵¹ The Collector's Trove: The Tim Jiardini Collection.

⁴⁵² *Dragon Annual* #4. "50 Years of Gaming: A 25-Year Retrospective, Plus 25 Years of Fearless Predictions," by Gary Gygax.

Gary received an assurance from the printer that “the work be corrected as it was typeset.”⁴⁵³ Then, the booklets would be covered, folded, stapled and prepared for shipment to Tactical Studies Rules’ majestic world headquarters ... also known as Don Kaye’s house.

Play time was over, and the gears of business kicked in. It was time to risk it all.

* * * * *

Sometime early in January, a little after Christmastime,⁴⁵⁴ a loaded delivery truck pulled up to Don Kaye’s house on Sage Street. Don received the huge orders for the booklets from Graphic Printing, as well as the orders for the boxes and adhesive labels. Gary would state later that this occurred just after the New Year’s holiday.⁴⁵⁵ New Year’s Day in 1974 was on a Tuesday, leaving the work weeks as January 2nd-4th (to my mind the most likely timeframe for the shipments to be received, although late December has been mentioned), 7th-11th, 14th-18th, 21st-25th, and 28th-February 1st. Gary once stated that the received materials were collated “every night for a week,”⁴⁵⁶ which may indicate that the first 1,000 boxed copies of D&D were created from approximately January 2nd to January 9th. Unfortunately, a more accurate dating is not possible given the evidence currently at hand.

Whenever the order was received, Don likely called Gary up right away, and (since it was probably a work day) an evening review of the product may have occurred at Don’s house. Gary discovered to his chagrin that his manuscript had

⁴⁵³ *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

⁴⁵⁴ A timeframe inferred by Mike Mornard in the comments at the Playing at the World blog, “When Dungeons & Dragons Turns 40.” Please note that a December timeframe cannot be easily supported, because it conflicts with virtually every recollection made by Gyga in print.

⁴⁵⁵ *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gyga.

⁴⁵⁶ *Dragon Annual #4*. “50 Years of Gaming: A 25-Year Retrospective, Plus 25 Years of Fearless Predictions,” by Gary Gyga.

been typeset into the three little brown books, but not edited in the slightest. The typesetters at Graphic Printing had taken Gary's text verbatim and plopped it down on the page.

But it was too late, the boxes represented thousands of dollars of investment and a reprinting "do over" was entirely out of the question. And after all, Gary knew that he had rushed the order: "D&D was released," he once wrote, "long before I was satisfied that it was actually ready."⁴⁵⁷ He can be forgiven, of course, considering what a grave financial stake he and Kaye had put into the fledgling company. In a very real sense, the survival of Tactical Studies Rules was at stake.

Therefore, Don, Gary and Brian (and, I believe, Rob Kuntz as well) spent the next couple of weeks' worth of evenings and weekends constructing the sets. The dining room table was cleared, the pantry was emptied.⁴⁵⁸ (Don's wife Donna may not have been amused to find herself suddenly living inside a gaming warehouse.) The reference sheet pamphlets were folded, the booklets sorted into piles. The three booklets — Men & Magic, Monsters & Treasure, and The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures — were stacked in each box along with the reference sheets. The large cover label, featuring a Thor-like Viking swordsman atop a rearing warhorse, was affixed to the front, and a smaller title label on the spine.⁴⁵⁹ These labels by the way were not self-adhesive; each needed to be wetted before it could be applied.⁴⁶⁰

Each set was carefully placed into the TSR storeroom, once Donna Kaye's kitchen pantry. If it took two minutes to assemble each set, the men were looking at a little over 33 hours' worth of work. "We ... spent hundreds of hours readying [D&D]," Gary once explained, "... hours we could not spend gaming, or with our families, or in pursuit of some other form of relaxation and enjoyment. It was long,

⁴⁵⁷ *The Dragon* #7, June 1977. "Gary Gygax on *Dungeons & Dragons*: Origins of the Game," pg. 7.

⁴⁵⁸ Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org. Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted June 22nd, 2007.

⁴⁵⁹ *The Crusader* #13, *Dragon Annual* #4; also *The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax*, conducted by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

⁴⁶⁰ *The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax*, conducted by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

hard work done late into the night and on weekends. It was nobody else but the three of us who stood this hazard.”⁴⁶¹

Once the sets were completed, the momentous new game entitled *Dungeons & Dragons: Rules for Fantastic Medieval Wargames Playable with Paper and Pencil and Miniature Figures* (for simplicity, shall we call it D&D: RfFMWPwPaPaMF?) was fully produced and ready for sale. As soon as possible, Gary typed up letters to friends and fellow gamers, letting them know that the game was finally available.⁴⁶² His colleagues in Lake Geneva would be the first to know, with the groups in Illinois and Minnesota receiving their notices perhaps a day later.

The first order was received just before the end of January. Happily, Gary packaged and shipped the order himself. We will never know who that lucky mystery gamer was, but he (or she) was the first of millions to purchase a boxed copy of Dave and Gary’s little game.⁴⁶³ The most likely date for the shipment of this order is somewhere between Monday and Thursday, January 28th to January 31st. For those who are interested in the particulars, my research of copyright records indicates that the claimed publication date for the original *Dungeons & Dragons* game (registration number A760448) was January 30th.⁴⁶⁴

Therefore, the 40th Anniversary of *Dungeons & Dragons* can arguably be dated to Thursday, January 30th, 2014.

⁴⁶¹ *The Dragon*, issue #11. “View from the Telescope Wondering Which End Is Which,” by Gary Gygax.

⁴⁶² *The Crusader: The Journal of the Intrepid Adventurer*, issue #13, October 2008. “How It All Happened,” by Gary Gygax.

⁴⁶³ *Dragon Annual* #4. “50 Years of Gaming: A 25-Year Retrospective, Plus 25 Years of Fearless Predictions,” by Gary Gygax. See also *The Crusader* #13.

⁴⁶⁴ The copyright date for *Dungeons & Dragons* (the original boxed set), in the names of E. Gary Gygax and David L. Arneson, appears under registration number A760448. This entry is found in the July-December 1976 *Catalog of Copyright Entries* in the Library of Congress. Please note that the dates for a publication’s (a) copyright registration, (b) press printing, and (c) publication (distribution for sale) are frequently different. As a result, even official copyright dates are not always accurate ... although they are frequently the best data they we possess until other evidence (mailing envelopes with USPS dates, letters, etc.) causes a copyright date to become suspect.



*The King of RPGs.
Long may he reign ...*

This is backed up by Gary's mention that "Our first sale was one mail-order shipped off at the end of January when the game was hot off the press."⁴⁶⁵ Gary also once stated that "a handful" of such orders was completed before February 1st, so perhaps five or so copies in all were ordered and shipped in January.⁴⁶⁶ That would mean a whopping return of about \$50 on the investment of \$2,300-2,400 in just a week's time!⁴⁶⁷

But it was enough. It would have to be. As Gary wrote in *Liaisons Dangereuses* #70 in 1976, "About all D&D had going for it was the fact that the publisher consisted of a group of wargamers quite familiar with the game and convinced that the mania would infect just about any gamer who was exposed to it."⁴⁶⁸

And that it did. Many of us are still happily suffering under that mania, forty years after the game was first unleashed.

* * * * *

With the publication of *Dungeons & Dragons*, Dave Arneson would begin receiving royalties for his co-authorship at the rate of \$1 per box sold.⁴⁶⁹ This was a fairly good deal, as Dave had zero financial risk associated with TSR or the sale of D&D. Dave knew this was a good deal, and that Gary was taking on a huge gamble. Dave would later say that "We [*Gygax and Dave himself*] thought we were crazy

⁴⁶⁵ Online web forum post: ENWorld.org. ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted July 2nd, 2006.

⁴⁶⁶ *Dragon Annual* #4. "50 Years of Gaming: A 25-Year Retrospective, Plus 25 Years of Fearless Predictions," by Gary Gygax.

⁴⁶⁷ Gary remembered and wrote once that "The whole run of 1,000 booklets, reference sheets sets, box front and spine labels, and boxes came to around \$2,300."

⁴⁶⁸ For the curious, *Liaisons Dangereuses* issue #70 (among others) is preserved online at the whiningkentpigs.com archive.

⁴⁶⁹ Arneson v. Gygax, Civ. No. 4-79-109.

when we published it.”⁴⁷⁰ The company could excel or crumble, and Dave would keep earning \$1 a copy for as long as the sales continued. However, Dave was still unhappy ... not only with the game’s rules, but also the entire process. “It is, however,” he once noted in an interview, “an almost universal truth that game designers are rarely satisfied with the way their work comes out.”⁴⁷¹

As *Dungeons & Dragons* exited the safe harbor of gaming for fun and became a published for-profit product, there were stormy waters up ahead.

Gary would soon push Arneson to promote the game with an aggressive tail wind, and several of those letters would later become part of the record during Arneson’s lawsuit over royalties. But that, occurring in later 1974 and 1975, is a tale for another day. On the public front, things were far more amenable while both men still acknowledged their frustrations and creative differences. As Gary would diplomatically note in a more public forum during those hectic times, “Dave and I disagree on how to handle any number of things.”⁴⁷²

The mania did infect many, this author included. Sometimes, authors, actors and game designers would be inspired by the game; while other times, the results would be tragic and difficult to comprehend. (See for example my book **HAWK & MOOR: *The Steam Tunnel Incident***, for the sad tale of James Dallas Egbert III.) But for all of us, *Dungeons & Dragons* would be revolutionary. It shifted the landscape of the imagination in so many ways that it has become almost impossible to discern from a 21st century perspective, because so many things we now take for granted — sprawling gaming cons; MMORPGs like *Everquest* and *World of Warcraft*, for example; interactive fiction; trading card games; MUDs and *Rogue*-like games; *Dwarf Fortress* and the *Minecraft* phenomenon; Kickstarters and the OSR movement; and the Harry Potter movies, to name but a few — had their seeds planted in those fateful, chaotic golden years of 1971 through 1974.

But I wanted to be certain to honor the men who created the game where it all began, Dave, Gary, Rob and all the rest. There are many crucially important individuals (such as David Wesely) whose tales I have not told here, but there will be time in the future for such things. I hope you have enjoyed my selection of these tales from the Golden Age; this book represents is my heartfelt thank you to the

⁴⁷⁰ Gamespy interview with Dave Arneson.

⁴⁷¹ *The Space Gamer*, issue #21. “An Interview with Dave Arneson.”

⁴⁷² *Alarums & Excursions*, issue #2, 1975.

men who empowered me to turn my idle imagination into a willful force of creation. Gary and Dave encouraged me to create worlds. I hope you have found similar inspiration in hearing of their adventures and tribulations through the years which led to the creation of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

CHAPTER 20

AND ALL
THAT IS YET
TO COME

(1974 — 1985)

THERE IS NEVER ENOUGH time — nor enough space, it seems — in which I can include all of the treasured stories, surprising facts, and amusing asides which I would love to share with fellow gamers if I only had infinite resource! **HAWK & MOOR** Book III covers the years 1974 and 1975 in detail, while Book IV continues the journey into 1976 and beyond. I invite you to share those deeper journeys with me, for there is much more for us to talk about in the near future.

But for those who want to know much more *right now*, hereafter I provide a summary of the major highlights year by year through what I now term the Silver Age of TSR, from January 31st, 1974 to December 31st, 1985. It is useful, after all, to consider the lay of the land before we continue our very long journey forward.

* * * * *

In the Year 1974 ...

Throughout the year, Dungeons & Dragons slowly sold out of its first 1,000 copies. Relations between Gygas and Arneson began to sour, with Arneson showing a marked lack of interest in the published game, despite a royalty agreement in which Arneson would receive \$1 per copy sold. It is probable that this is due to the published game being markedly different from the Blackmoor campaign that he originally wanted to publish. From that viewpoint, *Dungeons & Dragons* is Gary's interpretation of Dave's game (which was in turn based on Gary's game!). Gary's new friend Tim Kask begins playing D&D; Kask will soon become a crucial contributor to TSR's media and awareness efforts (particularly in *The Dragon* and other magazines).

In play, the adventures of Robilar, Tenser, Terik and other major characters continued. Gary played Mordenkainen extensively in El Raja Key. With all of the new ideas that were being developed in play, Gygas and Kuntz collaborated on their ever-piling notes to publish a future addition to the game, which will later appear in print as *Supplement I: Greyhawk* (1975).

* * * * *

In the Year 1975 ...

Don Kaye died tragically in January, forcing Gyga and Blume to make an emergency reconfiguration of their partnership. D&D sold thousands of copies in this year, becoming a certified hit which expanded the entire hobby. In the new company structure following Don Kaye's death and the selling of his widow's shares, Brian and his brother Kevin achieved a controlling majority in TSR.

The *Greyhawk* Supplement was published. Gary became a full-time employee of TSR so that he could ensure the company would endure through these tumultuous times. Dave Arneson prepared to move to Lake Geneva to work for TSR. The Gen Con and Origins conventions begin an ugly rivalry, each vying for a dominant share of the wildly-growing fantasy gamer market. Tim Kask joined TSR in September, and was tasked with cleaning up Arneson's campaign notes (a job Gary surely passed on with both *Schadenfreude* and sympathy!) to create a future and second supplement for the game, *Blackmoor*.

* * * * *

In the Year 1976 ...

With the number of supplements growing, Gary decided that a major cleanup of the system was necessary. He began this monumental task by collecting the monster descriptions throughout all of the products, and wrote a draft to what will later become the *Monster Manual*. This will be the first product in an entirely new line of gaming supplements authored by Gary alone, under the brand name *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*.

Dave Arneson left TSR, presumably over professional and creative differences. Popularity of the game surged and D&D became dominant at Gen Con, pushing out many of the long-time wargamers who did not have an interest in fantasy gaming of any kind. Soon, D&D would face competition from a host of

imitators. TSR released issue #1 of *The Dragon*, their major fantasy magazine, with Tim Kask serving as Editor. Supplements III, IV and V were published. As a result of these rapid expansions and unanticipated clashes between various rules, D&D became a mess. Dungeon Masters and players were virtually required to scour dozens of different sources for hidden rules, monster descriptions, character classes, and so forth.

* * * * *

In the Year 1977 ...

While Gary continued the years-long effort to codify *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, he saw the need for an immediate product to bring new players into this very confusing game in an easier manner. Following earlier correspondence and writing, Dr. John Eric Holmes presented a final manuscript to Gary early in the year which would become the foundation for the *D&D Basic Set*.

The comprehensible and appealing *Basic Set* became a best seller, and the fandom of D&D began to shift strongly toward a youth and teen market. TSR's first major hardcover release, the *Monster Manual*, was completed and issued at the end of December, but was not widely distributed through hobby stores until early in the following year.

* * * * *

In the Year 1978 ...

D&D Basic Set sales surged over the Christmas holiday from 1977 to 1978, and another set of introductory rules was released in the UK. With this vast new audience, “do it yourself” D&D products (such as the *Dungeon Geomorphs* and *Monster & Treasure Assortments*) quickly fell out of vogue, and “prepackaged, ready to go” supplements were wanted. Some players simply did not understand how to create a playable adventure, and required some kind of guide to show the way.

This need was answered mid-year by TSR's new line of Dungeon Modules, with the first title being G1, *Steading of the Hill Giant Chief*. Because Gary and the other TSR staffers did not yet understand that there was a need by *beginning* players for these types of products, the G modules were actually high-level and aimed toward *expert and veteran* players. Expert play was further catered to in 1978 with module S1, *Tomb of Horrors*. The phenomenal sales of these modules, however, would soon encourage TSR to create further modules for *all* levels of play.

The *Players Handbook* was released for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, bridging the divided veteran and beginner groups with a single product. Gary also worked on the manuscript for the upcoming *Dungeon Masters Guide*, and the D series of modules which introduced the dark elves of the netherworld.

* * * * *

In the Year 1979 ...

Arneson brought a lawsuit against Gyax and TSR. Legal complaints focused on the matter of royalties, and the lack of attribution for Arneson on *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* products.

Meanwhile, the *Dungeon Masters Guide* was released to wide acclaim. A troubled young player named James Dallas Egbert III disappeared and the event was unfairly blamed on D&D, causing a scandal and explosive sales. (I detail these insane and rather amazing events in my book **HAWK & MOOR: *The Steam Tunnel Incident***.)

Gary burned out on his endless game designs, and the delays troubling his planned Lolth, *Temple of Elemental Evil* and Greyhawk products would force him to delegate many projects in the months and years to come. The aggressive Blumes effectively took over control of TSR as Gyax suffers overload from too many projects, pressures and responsibilities.

* * * * *

In the Year 1980 ...

Frank Mentzer joined TSR. Non-Gygax modules proliferated as TSR staffers completed their assigned projects. Tournament adventures were popular as well. The *Deities & Demigods* hardcover was released, and there was confusion over the rights for characters from Melniboné (Michael Moorcock's Elric properties) and the Cthulhu Mythos (of H. P. Lovecraft). Already wary from Arneson's litigation, TSR pulled the first edition of *Deities* and republished it without the questionable content.

Tom Moldvay and Dave Cook work on a revision of the popular "Holmes" Basic Set, further streamlining and clarifying the rules for beginning players. The Role-Playing Game Association (RPGA) was founded, which would soon generate strong word of mouth and also attract new players for years to come. Sales of D&D reached \$8.5 million. Gygax began working out a distribution deal with Random House, which would greatly increase the reach of TSR products in 1981.

* * * * *

In the Year 1981 ...

A highly eccentric product entitled Dungeon Module B3, *Palace of the Silver Princess* was published and quickly contested by the Blumes, an example of one of their many power struggles with Gygax. Gary began to see himself as being "boxed out," and sometimes even rendered powerless in company decisions. Arneson and Gygax settled out of court. In December, TSR was listed as one of the fastest growing companies in the nation. The internal turmoil and power struggles were largely hidden from the public; for many players, the mess would not become evident until early 1986. Soon, however, many would question Gary's strange and "inexplicable" distance from his own game.

* * * * *

In the Year 1982 ...

Gary was largely sidelined in all of TSR's internal politics. He was sent to Hollywood to seek major media deals for D&D movies and television properties. TSR began to over-diversify its products, but strong sales and word of mouth continued. A grieving mother, lamenting her son's suicide, formed a hate group named Bothered About Dungeons & Dragons (BADD). This miserable sideshow managed to achieve some faint notoriety. More sales followed.

Tracy Hickman, already known and highly regarded for independently-created D&D adventures such as *Pharaoh* and *Rahasia*, was hired by TSR as a designer. He would begin work on "Project Overlord," a new direction for D&D which would eventually be known as *Dragonlance*.

* * * * *

In the Year 1983 ...

TSR hired Margaret Weis, who would work with Tracy Hickman on the fiction components of Project Overlord. TSR faced financial instability due to over-hiring and highly questionable business practices.

A massive correctional reorganization occurred in the summer. New Basic and Expert sets, designed by Frank Mentzer, bolstered sales and attracted more new players. This helped to hide some, but not all, of the fiscal bloodshed. Gary began planning a revised and second edition of AD&D, an effort which would continue into 1984.

* * * * *

In the Year 1984 ...

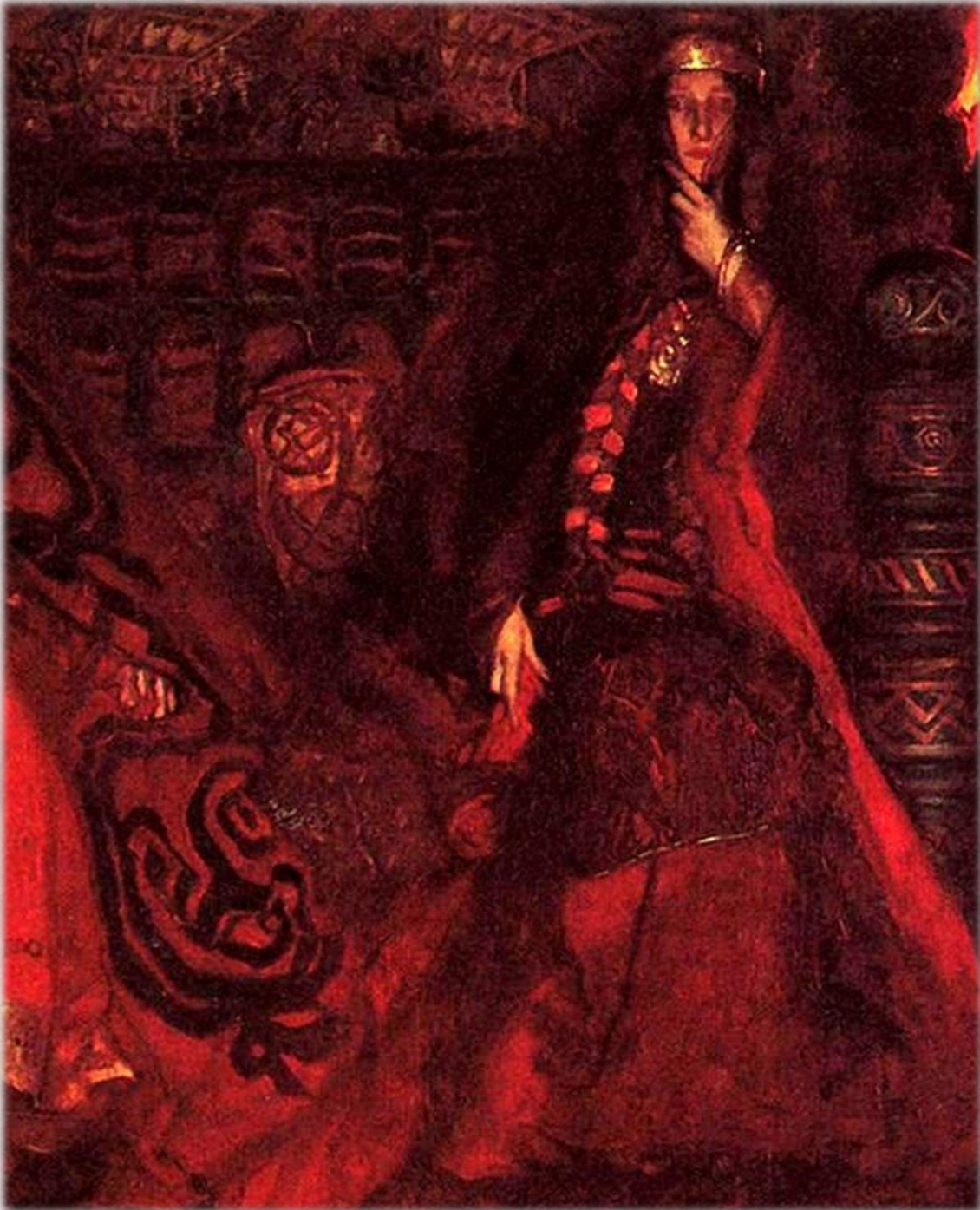
Dragons of Autumn Twilight, the first Dragonlance novel, was published and became hugely successful. Its bestseller status caused a stir, generating considerable interest among the traditional publishing companies. As a result of this success, TSR began more strongly diversifying into separate game and fiction camps, in addition to the development of other non-game products. Gary returned to Lake Geneva to help resolve TSR's ongoing financial crisis. Hoping to provide a more neutral business management liaison to mediate his ongoing battles against the Blumes, Gary hired Lorraine Williams to assist with the reorganization of TSR.

* * * * *

In the Year 1985 ...

Gary and Flint Dille had been busy shopping a D&D movie script to Orson Welles, who apparently saw significant promise in a script entitled *The Scepter of Seven Souls*. TSR, however, was on the verge of collapse due to internal mismanagement and never-ending squabbles.

Major products, including *Unearthed Arcana* and *Oriental Adventures*, were rushed into print to help stave off TSR's crippling financial losses. Even fiercer power struggles erupted between the Blumes, Gyax and Williams. On December 31st, Gyax severed all ties and left TSR behind forever, the end of an era. Here, I personally mark the end of an era which I term the Silver Age.



*... Yet every kingdom falls,
to rise again.*

AN END

TO THE SAGA
OF BOOK II

GARY PASSED away in 2008. Dave Arneson passed away in 2009. Many of the other luminaries told of in this book are still alive, and many are publishing their own outstanding role-playing games and supplements to this day.

Beyond 1985 a great many things happened, but the game of Dungeons & Dragons lost its essential identity in many ways when Gary — as its last remaining co-creator — was forced out of the business. From 1986 forward, D&D was no longer a personal vision of fantasy adventure in the worlds of the imagination. It was a business product, cultivated by committees and authored by hundreds of different people. Some of these people shared Dave's and Gary's passions, but many of them had never watched the same movies as Dave, nor read the same books as Gary. None of them had devised the same diabolical dungeons as had one Robert J. Kuntz; nor had they made the same bold and heartfelt sacrifices as Gary's friend from childhood, Don Kaye.

To this day there are still many things that are wonderful about D&D, in all of its published iterations. However, to my mind the primal magic that tied the game's inspirations to its creators is forever lost. Much like a partial masterpiece begun by Michelangelo but later completed by a Granacci or Montorsoli, something of that true essence was lost because the successors could not share all of the dreams and influences held by the former masters. This is not to disparage all of Gary's and Dave's successors. Some of those new masters — such as Jim Bambra, Len Lakofka, Frank Mentzer, Tom Moldvay, Dave Trampier and James M. Ward — created outstanding D&D supplements, art and derivative works which I love and use to this day. But without the unity entailed by a single guiding vision, D&D irrevocably became an endless scattering of treasures.

This book is dedicated not only to the game, but also to those original dreamers, risk-takers and creative designers who poured their hearts into their work to give us the incomparable Golden Age. That time is gone, but the works remain. We look back on those years with fondness and nostalgia through the mists not because we are deluded, but because it was a truly great and unique thing that will never be again. It lives on in those of us who choose to perpetuate its ways, to honor those who have come before. It is my hope that this book will be seen not as an epitaph, but as a milestone marking the way for our return toward the Cairnlands and the Mires, the ever-waiting realms of Hawk and Moor.

If I have inspired you to explore the older games on your own; if I have given you the curiosity to approach a veteran game designer, whom you might otherwise have been too shy to ask a question of; if I have encouraged you to go to a gaming convention, to play with friends and family, to see the fans and creators sharing tables and having fun; or, if I have simply strengthened a longing you might feel to go through your old collection, to turn dusty heirlooms back into a living game ... then I have finally succeeded in sharing the dream which caused me to begin writing this book over eight years ago, on the day that Gary Gygax died.

Please do these things, with or without my encouragement. Enjoy the games. And above all, please have fun as you reclaim the lost ways of the Golden Age and make them your own. I thank you for reading.

Until next time, this is ...

THE END.

FOR
APPENDICES I & II:

REFER TO
HAWK & MOOR
BOOK I

APPENDIX III:

THE
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
CHRONICLE:

A TIMELINE
FOR THE YEARS
1972 AND 1973

(Please note that due to ongoing research which is causing many of the estimated dates which pertain to the Greyhawk and Blackmoor campaigns to fluctuate, this timeline is focused chiefly on real-world events. Campaign events are detailed in the primary narrative of **HAWK & MOOR**, featured chiefly in Books II and III. Real-world events which occurred between 1937 and 1971 are detailed in the chronological appendix to Book I.)

<u>THE YEAR 1972</u>	
January 1st, 1972	This is the likely date for the beginning of the Blackmoor dungeon adventures.
January 11th, 1972	The television movie <i>The Night Stalker</i> — introducing the character Carl Kolchak from an unpublished novel by Jeff Rice — is aired.
January 1972	Minor refinements to <i>Chainmail</i> are published in <i>International Wargamer</i> .
January-Spring 1972	The dungeon adventures become the primary focus of the Blackmoor campaign.
February 1972	<i>The Sleeping Sorceress</i> , by Michael Moorcock, is published in <i>Fantastic</i> magazine (having originally been published in the <i>Warlocks and Warriors</i> collection in 1971).
March 1st, 1972	The <i>Night Gallery</i> episode <i>The Caterpillar</i> , the inspiration for the ear seeker monster, is aired.
March 1972	Gary moves away from wargaming activities and begins to distance himself from the IFW.

<u>THE YEAR 1972</u>	
March 1972	The tale <i>A Sword Called Stormbringer</i> , featuring Elric and Conan, is depicted in <i>Conan the Barbarian</i> issue #14.
March 10th, 1972	The movie <i>Frogs</i> is released in theaters.
Spring 1972	A notice in the <i>Courier</i> wargaming fanzine indicates the availability of polyhedral dice from a company called Creative Publications, Inc., of Palo Alto, California.
April 1972	<i>Spell of the Witch World</i> , by Andre Norton, is published.
April 1972	<i>Dragon Magic</i> , by Andre Norton, is published.
Late Spring 1972	Dave's <i>Blackmoor Gazette and Rumormonger</i> offers news on dungeon adventuring activities in the ongoing Blackmoor campaign. This is likely Gary's first exposure to the intricacies of the Blackmoor campaign, and will stir his curiosity.
May 1972	The Ballantine Adult Fantasy anthology <i>Beyond the Fields We Know</i> , by Lord Dunsany, is published.
c. Late Spring to Early Summer 1972	David Megarry designs his <i>Dungeons of Pasha Cada</i> game, inspired by the Blackmoor dungeon adventures.
June 1972	<i>Domesday Book</i> #12 is published.
June 21st, 1972	The movie <i>Beware! The Blob</i> is released in theaters.
July 1972	Cover date of the <i>Domesday Book</i> #13.
July 1972	A revised second edition of <i>Chainmail</i> is published by Guidon Games.

<u>THE YEAR 1972</u>	
July 1972	<i>The Castle Keeps</i> , by Andrew J. Offutt, is published.
July 1972	Don Lowry announces that he will be moving his game publishing business to Belfast, Maine.
c. Summer 1972	Gary decides not to relocate from Lake Geneva to Maine, and indirectly distances himself from Guidon.
(Unknown Date) (Before September) 1972	<i>The Dreaming City</i> , by Michael Moorcock, is published.
August 1972	<i>The Witch of the Mists</i> , by L. Sprague de Camp, is published in <i>Fantastic</i> magazine.
August 1972	<i>The Crystal Gryphon</i> , by Andre Norton, is published.
August 19th-20th, 1972	Gen Con V is held in Lake Geneva.
c. Late August 1972	<i>Domesday Book</i> #13 is published, and features Blackmoor campaign information provided by Dave Arneson.
c. Late August or September 1972	Gary invites Dave Arneson and David Megarry to Lake Geneva, so that they can demonstrate the <i>Blackmoor</i> and <i>Pasha Cada</i> games for his play group.
September 1st, 1972	The game <i>Outdoor Survival</i> , which will later be used in part for <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> wilderness adventures, is published by Avalon Hill.
September 1972	The Ballantine Adult Fantasy anthology <i>Great Short Novels of Adult Fantasy I</i> , edited by Lin Carter, is published.

<u>THE YEAR 1972</u>	
September 1972	The Ballantine Adult Fantasy volumes <i>Orlando Furioso: The Rings of Angelica, Volume 1 & 2</i> , by Ludovico Ariosto, are published.
September 1972	<i>Elric of Melniboné</i> , a version of <i>The Dreaming City</i> re-edited without author Michael Moorcock's permission, is published.
c. Summer or Fall 1972	David Megarry submits <i>Dungeons of Pasha Cada</i> to Parker Brothers, hoping to have the game published.
c. Fall 197	2The Castle & Crusade Society falls apart.
c. Fall 1972	Dave Arneson allows Greg Svenson to referee the Blackmoor campaign, perhaps while he prepares to visit Lake Geneva and to demonstrate the dungeon game.
October 1972	<i>The Guns of Avalon</i> , by Roger Zelazny, is published.
October 1972	<i>The Holding of Kolymar</i> , by Gardner Fox, is published in <i>Fantastic</i> magazine.
Late 1972	Mike Mornard joins the Greyhawk campaign.
November 1972	Don Lowry and his wife complete their move to Belfast.
c. November 1972	Dave Arneson and David Megarry demonstrate the dungeon games for Gary and his friends in Lake Geneva. Gary is inspired to develop the games for future publication.
c. November 1972	Gary requests the rules for the <i>Blackmoor</i> dungeon exploration game from Dave Arneson.

<u>THE YEAR 1972</u>	
c. November 1972	Arneson sends his notes to Gary, who struggles to interpret them. Rob Kuntz reviews the notes as well but is also unable to decipher Arneson's full intent. Gary will decide to write his own game, featuring ideas contributed by Arneson.
November 21st, 1972	The movie <i>Gargoyles</i> — very likely one of Gary's inspirations — is played on TV.
c. Late November 1972	Gary begins writing the first draft of the rules manuscript for <i>The Fantasy Game</i> (possible working title), <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> (publication title).
c. Late November 1972	Gary and Dave correspond by phone, and then by letter, as they collaborate on game design.
c. Late November 1972	Gary works on refining David Megarry's dungeon game.
c. Late November or December 1972	Gary completes the first draft of rules for <i>The Fantasy Game</i> .
c. December 1972	Gary conducts the first play test of his dungeon game with his son Ernie and daughter Elise. Further play test sessions include Rob Kuntz, Terry Kuntz and Don Kaye.
c. December 1972	Gary mails play test copies to trusted gamers for comment and review.
c. December 1972	Dave Arneson receives his play test copy of <i>The Fantasy Game</i> , and is disappointed with some of Gary's design decisions.

THE YEAR 1972

December 1972	<i>Garan the Eternal</i> , by Andre Norton, is published.
December 1972	Part one of <i>The Fallible Fiend</i> , by L. Sprague de Camp, is published in <i>Fantastic</i> magazine.
c. Late December 1972	Dave begins play testing Gary's version of <i>The Fantasy Game</i> with his own Twin Cities play group.
c. December 1972	Gary begins receiving letters and calls from his play testers, asking for rules clarifications and game mastering advice.
c. Christmas Season 1972	By this time, illicit photocopied versions of Gygas's <i>Fantasy Game</i> test packets are proliferating in other play groups as interest in the game spreads.
December 28th, 1972	Parker Brothers prints a rejection letter for <i>Dungeons of Pasha Cada</i> , which will be sent to designer David Megarry.

THE YEAR 1973

January 1st, 1973	By Gary's estimation, by this date approximately 200 people had heard of (and had contact with) <i>The Fantasy Game</i> .
c. January 1973	Gary and Dave have disagreements regarding the design of the game.
February 1973	The Ballantine Adult Fantasy edition of <i>The Charwoman's Shadow</i> , by Lord Dunsany, is published.
February 1973	<i>Changeling Earth</i> , aka <i>Ardneh's World</i> , by Fred Saberhagen, is published.

<u>THE YEAR 1973</u>	
March 1973	<i>Count Brass</i> , by Michael Moorcock, is published.
Early Spring (March?) 1973	Informed by the significant amount of play tester feedback (and all of the play testing by the Greyhawk group), Gary begins writing the second draft of <i>The Fantasy Game (Dungeons & Dragons)</i> . He is still in design correspondence with Dave Arneson at this time.
Spring 1973	Gary visits Jeff Perren in Rockford, Illinois.
c. Spring 1973	By this time, Dave Arneson is unsure how his contributions and ideas are being used in the development of <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> .
April 1973	<i>Flashing Swords! #1</i> , a collection of various authors edited by Lin Carter, is published.
April 1973	<i>The Champion of Garathorm</i> , by Michael Moorcock, is published.
April or May 1973	By one estimate, Gary by this time has conducted over 100 game sessions with various members of the Greyhawk group.
May 1973	<i>The Jade Man's Eyes</i> , by Michael Moorcock, is published.
May 1973	<i>Paradox Lost and Twelve Other Great Science Fiction Stories</i> , a collection of tales by Fredric Brown, is published.
c. May 1973	Gary mails out play test packets of the completed second draft manuscript to his play testers.
c. Late Spring (May or June?) 1973	Gary completes the second draft of the rules manuscript for <i>The Fantasy Game (Dungeons & Dragons)</i> .

<u>THE YEAR 1973</u>	
c. Late Spring (May or June?) 1973	David Megarry and Gary send <i>The Dungeons of Pasha Cada</i> to Don Lowry for publication consideration, but Don turns the game down.
c. May or June 1973	Gary encourages Don Lowry to publish <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> , but Lowry turns that game down as well.
c. May or June 1973	With an eye toward future publication, Gary begins soliciting artwork for the <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> manuscript.
c. May or June 1973	Lowry's company begins selling sets of polyhedral dice to gamers.
June 1st, 1973	A notice in <i>Gamesletter</i> indicates that Gary and Dave are still working together on developing their new fantasy game.
June 1973	The Ballantine Adult Fantasy volume <i>Imaginary Worlds: The Art of Fantasy</i> , by Lin Carter, is published.
June 1973	<i>Hiero's Journey</i> , by Sterling Lanier, is published.
June 22nd, 1973	Game Designer's Workshop is founded.
c. Early Summer 1973	Gary mentions <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> to Avalon Hill in regards to potential future publication, but the lack of response is not promising.
July 1973	<i>Black Sphinx of Nebthu</i> , a Conan tale by L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter, is published in <i>Fantastic</i> magazine.
c. Summer 1973	Gary decides to form his own game company to publish <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> , and informs his trusted friend Don Kaye of his intent.

<u>THE YEAR 1973</u>	
c. Summer 1973	Throughout the summer, Gary makes refinements to the <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> rules (likely amending the second draft), creating what will become the eventual published version of the game (to be released in January of 1974).
Summer 1973	Joining the speculative fiction resurgence, <i>Weird Tales</i> magazine resumes publication with Volume 47, Number 1.
Summer 1973	Various artists contribute artwork for the <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> manuscript.
August 1973	MiniFigs runs an advertisement in <i>Wargamer's Newsletter</i> , announcing the imminent release of a line of Mythical Earth fantasy figures, strongly alluding to Tolkien's Middle Earth.
c. August 1973	Mike Mornard leaves Lake Geneva to attend university in the Twin Cities.
August 18th-19th, 1973	The Gen Con VI conference is held. Brian Blume introduces himself to Gary.
c. Late August 1973	Don Kaye expresses cautious interest in partnering with Gary to found a game company that will be able to get <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> published.
September 2nd, 1973	J. R. R. Tolkien passes away.
September 1973	The collection <i>Flashing Swords! #2</i> , edited by Lin Carter, is published.
September 1973	Gary and Don Kaye make arrangements to found their gaming company partnership.

<u>THE YEAR 1973</u>	
September 1973	The collection <i>The Halfling and Other Stories</i> , by Leigh Brackett, is published.
September 1973	<i>Here Abide Monsters</i> , by Andre Norton, is published.
September 1973	Gary's article entitled "Fantasy Wargaming a la Tolkien" appears in <i>Panzerfaust</i> magazine #60. The article includes Gary's Battle of the Five Armies scenario for <i>Chainmail</i> Fantasy.
Fall 1973	<i>Weird Tales</i> Volume 47, Number 2 is released.
Fall 1973	In the Twin Cities, Mike Mornard plays in the Blackmoor campaign.
October 1st, 1973	Tactical Studies Rules (TSR) is founded by Gary and Don.
October 1973	The Ballantine Adult Fantasy edition of <i>Hrolf Kraki's Saga</i> , by Poul Anderson, is published.
Early October 1973	Gary performs calculations which indicate that he and Don do not have enough money as of yet to publish <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> . They decide to publish another wargame first to raise additional funds.
c. Early October 1973	<i>Cavaliers & Roundheads</i> is released as TSR's first published game.
October-November 1973	Slow sales of <i>Cavaliers & Roundheads</i> incentivize Gary to seek a third partner to join TSR (and to provide additional funding).
November 1973	<i>The Emperor's Fan</i> , by L. Sprague de Camp, is published.

<u>THE YEAR 1973</u>	
Late 1973	Professor M. A. R. Barker, observing a game run by Mike Mornard, is introduced to the <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> game.
Late 1973	<i>Weird Tales</i> Volume 47, Number 2 is published.
November 1st, 1973	Gary writes the Forward to the soon-to-be-published <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> manuscript. This date may mark the final edit of the rule draft which would soon be sent to Graphics Printing.
November 1973	<i>Trapped in the Shadowland</i> , by Fritz Leiber, is published in <i>Fantastic</i> magazine.
Late November 1973	Brian Blume approaches Gary and expresses interest in joining the partnership.
End of November 1973	Don Kaye decides to hold a meeting between himself, Gary and Brian to discuss the potential publication parameters for <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> .
Early December 1973	Brian Blume is admitted into TSR as an equal partner.
December 1973	The print order for <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> is paid for, and the game is printed at Graphic Printing of Lake Geneva.
December 1973	The collection <i>The Worlds of Jack Vance</i> is published.
December 1973	<i>The Bait</i> , by Fritz Leiber, is published in <i>Whispers</i> magazine.
End of Year 1973	In correspondence to the <i>Great Plains Game Players Newsletter</i> , Gary indicates that he is working on a fantasy game derived from <i>Chainmail Fantasy</i> and <i>Blackmoor</i> .

THE YEAR 1973

(Unknown
Date) 1973

Worse Things Waiting, a collection by Manly Wade Wellman, is published.

THE YEAR 1974

*(Please refer to **HAWK & MOOR** Book III for further details on the chronology of Dungeons & Dragons and its inspirations.)*

APPENDIX IV:

SECRETS
OF GREYHAWK:

ELEMENTS NOTED
IN THE
GREYHAWK DUNGEONS,
1972 — 1974

THE FOLLOWING is a necessarily partial summary of details known and suspected concerning the first, and original Gygaxian, incarnation of Castle Greyhawk.

The stories relating to these elements are told throughout this book, but the notes are provided succinctly here once again for those enterprising Dungeon Masters who might wish to emulate the mode of Gary's original dungeons.

<u>RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK:</u> <u>DUNGEON LEVEL 1</u>	
Purported Room Types:	Barracks, branching passages, gradually descending passageways, staircases up to the Upper Works (castle ruins), storerooms, vaults.
Purported Monster Types:	Giant centipedes, giant lizards, goblin slavers, kobold skirmishers, scorpions, skeletons, vermin.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	Bandits, giant rats, orcs, (large) spiders. In 1974 — considering D&D Supplement I, <i>Greyhawk</i> — Gary's dungeon roster would be expanded to include berserkers, dwarven adventurers, elven adventurers, footpads (level 1 thieves), gelatinous cubes, and stirges.
Purported Traps:	Pits, teleporters, and general confusion due to the layout of the labyrinth.



DUNGEON LEVEL 1 (CONTINUED)

Purported Treasures:

Copper pieces, ironbound chests, minor pieces of jewelry (silver bracelets etc.).

Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level — using Gary's own rules and applying them to his signature dungeon — would include 100-600 silver pieces, 10-60 gold pieces, perhaps gems or jewelry (5% chance of each) and perhaps magic items (5% chance).

<u>RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK:</u> <u>DUNGEON LEVEL 2</u>	
Purported Room Types:	Dungeon chambers, room of the fountain, room of the pool, storerooms.
Purported Monster Types:	Evil magic-user; perhaps men-at-arms (guards of the evil magic-user); nixies of the enchanted pool; ogre (guardian of a flight of stairs down from level 1); perhaps orc warriors (of the Bloody Axe and/or Grinning Skull tribes); perhaps Otto the magic-user; serpents of the magical fountain; slime monster (either a black pudding or gelatinous cube).
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	<p>Berserkers, evil fighting men, hobgoblins.</p> <p>Beginning in 1974, the monster selections would begin to blend more uniformly between dungeon levels; for example, monster types from dungeon level 1 would be found on dungeon level 2 in greater numbers, and monsters ascending from dungeon level 3 would rarely appear as well.</p> <p>Monsters from the <i>Greyhawk</i> supplement would commonly include ghouls, giant lizards, gnolls, magic-users, thouls, warriors, and zombies.</p>
Purported Traps:	The fountain of serpents; pits blocking access to various rooms.



DUNGEON LEVEL 2 (CONTINUED)

Purported Treasures:

Copper pieces, silver pieces.

Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 100-600 silver pieces, 100-600 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (10% chance), jewelry (10% chance) and/or magic (5% chance).

RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK: DUNGEON LEVEL 3

Purported Room Types:	Alchemical laboratory, cells, cell blocks, dungeon chambers, oubliettes, torture chamber.
Purported Monster Types:	Evil fighting men; ghouls; gnoll guardians of Obmi; perhaps the Juggernaut; perhaps orc warriors (of the Bloody Axe and/or Grinning Skull tribes); Obmi the evil dwarf; perhaps ogres; skeletons; wights; zombies.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	Evil clerics, gargoyles, giant beetles, giant scorpions, lycanthropes, wraiths. By 1974, this list would be expanded to include giant ants, giant hogs, giant snakes, giant weasels, heroes (level 4 fighting men), ochre jellies, and various NPCs of experience level 4 or thereabouts.
Purported Traps:	Spiked pits.
Purported Treasures:	Electrum pieces, perhaps a +2 long sword, silver pieces. Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 100-600 silver pieces, 100-600 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (10% chance), jewelry (10% chance) and/or magic (5% chance).



RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK: DUNGEON LEVEL 4

Purported Room Types:	Crypts, tombs, torture chambers, treasure vaults.
Purported Monster Types:	Crocodiles, ghouls, giant scorpion, gnoll warriors, wandering minor Balrog, skeletons, perhaps thouls, wights, zombies, perhaps stronger undead.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	Cockatrices, evil clerics, evil fighting men, gargoyles, giant beetles, hydras, lycanthropes, manticores, medusa, minotaurs, mummies, ogres, spectres, trolls, wraiths, wyverns. By 1974, additions would commonly include giant scorpions, White Apes, and various NPCs.
Purported Traps:	Deep pits.
Purported Treasures:	Electrum pieces, funerary jewelry, perhaps gems, gold pieces, minor miscellaneous magical treasures, portable hole, potions, ring of invisibility, scrolls, silver pieces. Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 1,000-6,000 silver pieces, 200-1,200 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (20% chance), jewelry (20% chance) and/or magic (10% chance).



RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK: DUNGEON LEVEL 5

Purported Room Types:	Chamber of the font of black fire, maze tunnels.
Purported Monster Types:	Gargoyles, perhaps thouls.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	Similar to dungeon level 4.
Purported Traps:	Monster pits, slime pits.
Purported Treasures:	<p>Gold pieces, platinum pieces, silver pieces.</p> <p>Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 1,000-6,000 silver pieces, 200-1,200 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (20% chance), jewelry (20% chance) and/or magic (10% chance).</p>



<u>RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK:</u> <u>DUNGEON LEVEL 6</u>	
Purported Room Types:	Dragon lair, labyrinth tunnels, treasure vaults.
Purported Monster Types:	Black dragons, black puddings, ghouls, giant hogs, minotaurs, purple worm, shape-shifters (werewolves?), thouls, wereboars.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	<p>Cockatrices, evil clerics, evil fighting men, evil magic-users, hydras, manticores, medusae, mummies, spectres, trolls, wyverns.</p> <p>These lists for mid-level monsters would be little changed by the 1974 <i>Greyhawk</i> rules expansion.</p>
Purported Traps:	Unknown, but very labyrinthine and including slime monsters which appear to be floor surfaces.
Purported Treasures:	<p>Gold pieces, magic armor, magic shields, magic weapons, platinum pieces, potions, scrolls, silver pieces.</p> <p>Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 2,000-12,000 silver pieces, 500-3,000 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (30% chance), jewelry (30% chance) and/or magic (15% chance).</p>



RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK: DUNGEON LEVEL 7

Purported Room Types:	Catacombs, perhaps the chamber of the Great Stone Face, wide hallways (“streets”).
Purported Monster Types:	Ogres.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	Similar to dungeon level 6.

<u>DUNGEON LEVEL 7</u> (CONTINUED)	
Purported Traps:	Unknown, but this level and lower probably featured more tricks (anomalies, illusions, magical effects, animated statues, etc.) than mechanical traps.
Purported Treasures:	<p>Gems, gold pieces, jewelry, magic items, platinum pieces, silver pieces.</p> <p>Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 2,000-12,000 silver pieces, 500-3,000 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (30% chance), jewelry (30% chance) and/or magic (15% chance).</p>



RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK: DUNGEON LEVEL 8

Purported Room Types:	Caves, crypts.
Purported Monster Types:	Giant insects, perhaps the Jeweled Man, trolls.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	<p>Similar to dungeon level 6.</p> <p>By 1974, the most common monsters on this and deeper dungeon levels would include Balrogs, basilisks, chimeras, dragons (of various types), giants (of various subspecies), gorgons, hydras, purple worms, vampires, and high-level NPCs.</p>
Purported Traps:	Unknown, but see note for dungeon level 7.
Purported Treasures:	<p>Gems, gold pieces, jewelry, magic items, platinum pieces, silver pieces.</p> <p>Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 5,000-30,000 silver pieces, 1,000-6,000 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (40% chance), jewelry (40% chance) and/or magic (20% chance).</p>



RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK: DUNGEON LEVEL 9

Purported Room Types:	An arena (?), caverns, natural cave passages.
Purported Monster Types:	Giant insects, perhaps purple worms, trolls.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	Similar to dungeon level 6.
Purported Traps:	Unknown, but see note for dungeon level 7.
Purported Treasures:	<p>Gems, gold pieces, jewelry, magic items, platinum pieces, silver pieces.</p> <p>Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 5,000-30,000 silver pieces, 1,000-6,000 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (40% chance), jewelry (40% chance) and/or magic (20% chance).</p>



RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK: DUNGEON LEVEL 10

Purported Room Types:	Huge caverns, maze, the transporter nexus.
Purported Monster Types:	Evil wizard, Martian White Apes, poisonous monsters (perhaps giant scorpions, giant snakes, giant spiders, etc.).
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	Balrogs, basilisks, chimeras, evil lords, Evil High Priests (EHPs), giants, gorgons, hydras, purple worms, vampires. (See note for dungeon level 8's random monsters as well.)
Purported Traps:	Unknown, but see note for dungeon level 7.
Purported Treasures:	<p>Gems, gold pieces, jewelry, magic items, platinum pieces, silver pieces.</p> <p>Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 5,000-30,000 silver pieces, 2,000-12,000 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (50% chance), jewelry (50% chance) and/or magic (25% chance).</p>



RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK: DUNGEON LEVEL 11

Purported Room Types:	Sub-passages, winding corridors. Perhaps a mix of dressed stone chambers and large natural caverns.
Purported Monster Types:	Balrogs, evil wizard.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures):	Similar to dungeon level 10.
Purported Traps:	Trapdoors to the sub-passages.
Purported Treasures:	<p>Gems, gold pieces, jewelry, magic items, platinum pieces, silver pieces.</p> <p>Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 5,000-30,000 silver pieces, 2,000-12,000 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (50% chance), jewelry (50% chance) and/or magic (25% chance).</p>



RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK: DUNGEON LEVEL 12

Purported Room Types:	Dragon lairs, great caverns, treasure vaults.
Purported Monster Types:	Dragons.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	Similar to dungeon level 10.
Purported Traps:	Unknown, but see note for dungeon level 7.
Purported Treasures:	<p>Gems, gold pieces, jewelry, magic items, platinum pieces, silver pieces.</p> <p>Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 5,000-30,000 silver pieces, 2,000-12,000 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (50% chance), jewelry (50% chance) and/or magic (25% chance).</p>



RUMORS CONCERNING CASTLE GREYHAWK: DUNGEON LEVEL 13

Purported Room Types:	Chambers of Zagyg, the great slide.
Purported Monster Types:	Invisible stalkers, Zagyg the Mad Archmage.
Likely Additional Wandering Monster Types (from <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> Book III, <i>The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures</i>):	Similar to dungeon level 10. It seems likely that this level did not include “normal” monster lairs, however.
Purported Traps:	The great slide itself, and perhaps random visits from Zagyg as well.
Purported Treasures:	Boots of elvenkind and similar items of considerable magic power. Per D&D Book III, random treasures on this level would include 10,000-60,000 silver pieces, 5,000-30,000 gold pieces, and possibly also gems (50% chance), jewelry (50% chance) and/or magic (30% chance).

~

FIN.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BEGINNING PLAY as a chaotic neutral normal human with one measly hit point to his name, KENT DAVID KELLY eventually became apprenticed to a magic-user of ill repute ... a foul man who dwelt in the steamy deeps of the Ivory Cloud Mountain. After this mentor carelessly misplaced an intelligent soul-sucking sword and then died under suspicious circumstances, his former henchman Mr. Kelly escaped to the deeper underground and there began playing Satanic role-playing games. This, the legends tell us, occurred in the year 1981.

Hoary wizard-priests who inspired Mr. Kelly in his netherworldly machinations included the peerless Gyax, Carr, Arneson, Cook, Hammack, Jaquays, Bledsaw, Moldvay, Kuntz, Schick and Ward. Sadly, a misguided made-for-the-basements movie entitled *Mazes and Monsters* gave Mr. Kelly's parents conniptions in 1982. As a result of that blasphemous Tom Hanks debacle (and other more personal lapses in judgment), Mr. Kelly was eventually forbidden from playing his favorite game for a considerable length of time.

Nonplussed but not defeated, he used this enforced exile to escape to a friend's alehouse, and there indulged himself in now-classic computer RPGs such as *Zork*, *Telengard*, *Temple of Apshai*, *Ultima*, *Tunnels of Doom*, *The Bard's Tale*, *Phantasie*, *Pool of Radiance*, *Wizard's Crown* and *Wasteland*. He then went on to write computer versions of his own FRPGs, which led to his obsession with coupling creative design elements with random dungeons and unpredictable adventure generation.

Mr. Kelly wrote and submitted his first adventure for *Dungeon* magazine #1 in 1986. Unfortunately, one Mr. Moore decided that his submission was far too "Lovecraftian, horrific and unfair" to ever serve that worthy periodical as a publishable adventure. Mr. Kelly, it must be said, took this rejection as a very good sign of things to come.

In the late 80s and 90s, Mr. Kelly wrote short stories, poems and essays ...

some of which have been published under the Wonderland Imprints banner. He wrote several dark fantasy and horror novels as well. Concurrently, he ran Dark Angel Collectibles, selling classic FRPG materials as Darkseraphim, and assisted the Acaeum with the creation of the Valuation Board and other minor research projects.

At this time, Mr. Kelly and his entourage of evil gnomes are rumored to dwell in the dread and deathly under-halls of the Acaeum, Dragonsfoot, ENWorld, Grogardia, Knights & Knaves, ODD, and even more nefarious levels deep in the mega-dungeon of the Web.

There he remains in vigil, his vampiric sword yet shivering in his hand. When not being sought outright for answers to halfling riddles or other more sundry sage advice, he is to be avoided by sane individuals at all costs.

OTHER BOOKS BY KENT DAVID KELLY

CHRONICALLY AFFLICTED with the “Partial Completion Curse” of the Magus Arneson, Kent is the author of hundreds of partial manuscripts, ranging from role-playing games, to novels, to poems, to songs, to short stories and gaming articles. A few dozen of these pieces have even been published and read by others! If you enjoyed this book, the following additional works are available for your consideration:

Perhaps the most relevant to **HAWK & MOOR** is **THE STEAM TUNNEL INCIDENT**, the real-life account of the legendary “satanic hysteria” and the tragic death of James Dallas Egbert III.

Mr. Kelly also publishes the well-received **CASTLE OLDSKULL** line of system-neutral gaming supplements, intended to inject classic “old school” flavor into any Fantasy Role-Playing Game. To date, there are eight books in the Castle Oldskull series, detailing world design, dungeon design, character creation, urban encounters, monsters, treasures, and more. A similar extensive line of 5E (Fifth Edition D&D) gaming supplements is available through DMsGuild.com, and Wizards of the Coast. The 5E DMsGuild line exemplifies gaming systems which are used to bring old school (OD&D & 1E) themes, atmosphere, and methodologies into the current 5E system.

Kent has also published three novels to date. The first is **ARACHNE**, a dark fantasy epic which is available in two volumes: (I) *Death, the Beginning* and (II) *The Weave of Fate*. The second full novel is **NECRONOMICON: THE CTHULHU**

REVELATIONS, a grimoire which depicts the nightmarish life of H. P. Lovecraft's anti-hero, Abd Al-Azrad. Third and most acclaimed is FROM THE FIRE, a gripping post-apocalyptic tale which is available both in a special omnibus edition and as a series of novellas, beginning with *Episode One: End of Days*.

To date, Kent's published poetry has also been made available in two volumes, comprising THE LYRIC BOOKS OF SHADOW. These volumes include *For the Dark Is the Light* and *The Summoning of Dark Angels*.

* * * * *

All of these works are available as affordable eBooks via Amazon.com, DMsGuild.com, CreateSpace (limited selections to date) and other sites as well. I do try to balance my family's financial needs with the interests and convenience of my readership, and run free promotions and sales on my eBooks whenever I can. Paperbacks may be released in the future if there is sufficient interest; please let me know of your preference!

Many additional works are being prepared as well. I ask that you always feel welcome to contact me via Facebook, my Amazon Author page, or at. You can also reach me through the Dragonsfoot.org or Acaeum.com websites (although replies may be delayed) via account name darkseraphim.

If you have enjoyed this book, please do consider leaving me a review online, as that "tip jar" has a direct and lasting positive effect on my future success. And if you would be kind us to tell at least one friend about this book, I would grateful. Who knows? Someday, I may even convince my family that my hobby is almost as important as my day job. I thank you in advance!