



# HAWK & MOOR

III

KENT DAVID KELLY

# HAWK & MOOR

THE UNOFFICIAL HISTORY  
OF  
*DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*®

BOOK THREE  
LANDS AND WORLDS AFAR

BY  
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(DARKSERAPHIM)

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

WONDERLAND IMPRINTS  
2014 – 2015

OSR

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***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.*

*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 2.2)*

*For corrective and revision purposes, please note that this is document version 2.2 of this manuscript, completed in October of 2015. Versions prior to this are slightly outdated, and have been corrected as more interviews, documents, corrections and feedback have come to light.*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can enjoy a resource which is constantly revised, one which does not merely sit upon the shelf going slowly and forever out of date. The print version of this volume may well be slightly out of date, as in-depth research into the ever-shifting field of Role-Playing Game history continues to grow, diversify and change.*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](mailto: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 III: *Lands and Worlds Afar* spans the years 1973 through 1975, when TSR surged forth to conquer the wargaming industry and to spread the hobby of fantasy role-playing far and wide. A tragedy in January 1975 forced the reformation of TSR, planting the seeds which would cause E. Gary Gygax to lose control of the company in the even wilder years to come. This devastating loss was worsened by aggressive legal challenges brought forth by the estate of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Nevertheless and through it all, TSR soldiered on.

This book is not just a compendium of business maneuvers, however; it is a chronicle of adventure. The dread domains of the Tomb of Horrors, Castle Greyhawk, the Temple of Elemental Evil, Dungeonland and the Temple of the Frog are all unveiled herein through the eyes of Ayelerach, Bigby, Burne, Erac, Erac's Cousin, Jaroo, Mordenkainen, Robilar, Rufus, Tenser, Terik, Yrag and many other heroes of the Greyhawk campaign.

**HAWK & MOOR** Book Three: *Lands and Worlds Afar* includes 79,500 words on over 240 pages, supported by 617 footnotes and annotations. Prepare yourself, take up torch and sword. Come along and experience an unprecedented journey into the Golden Age!

# DEDICATION

*For Michelle,*

*My companion in all worlds.*



# 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, and others have also been very helpful as well.

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The following individuals conducted interviews with Dave Arneson, Gary Gyga, 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 Kutalik (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 III

LANDS  
AND WORLDS  
AFAR

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THE SAGA  
CONTINUES ...



WELCOME! Please note that this is Book III in a continuing saga, exploring the early history of Fantasy Role-Playing Games in general, and *Dungeons & Dragons* in particular. This book can be read and enjoyed on its own. However, you will find it a much richer and more rewarding experience if you read the other books in addition to this one.

Chapters 1 through 10 of this series can be found in **HAWK & MOOR**, Book I: *The Dragon Rises* (1968-1972), and Chapters 11 through 20 (1972-1974) are found in Book II: *The Dungeons Deep*. Both of these books are available from Wonderland Imprints.

Herein with chapter 21, we continue our tale with an overview of the state of Gary's fantasy game as it likely stood in the autumn of 1973. Rob Kuntz's character Sir Robilar had just withstood the final challenge of Zagyg and defeated the Greyhawk dungeons, and was thereby awarded the esteemed mantle of co-referee (an assistant Dungeon Master). This meant that Rob would soon "switch sides of the screen," and that he would finally get to see how Gary Gygax kept all of the game's mad gears running in synchronicity.

And what did Rob and Robilar discover on their separate journeys, their destinies intertwined? Step inside, my dear apprentice, mind the Abyss and step inside ...

## CHAPTER 21

### TWO MASTERS OF THE WORLD

(AUTUMN 1973 –  
AUTUMN 1975)

BEGINNING IN the autumn of 1973 and throughout 1974, E. Gary Gygax and Robert J. Kuntz worked together to expand the horizons of the Greyhawk campaign. In their shared world of the imagination, where anything was possible, a vast and forever-unfolding canvas was required to keep the many Greyhawk players busy and engaged. As I have detailed in the book preceding this work (**HAWK & MOOR** Book II: *The Dungeons Deep*), there were two epic tales unfolding at once throughout the fall and winter of 1973-74. The first involved the imaginary journey of Robilar, Tenser and Terik into the deepest delve of Zagyg's forbidden dungeon. A second chronicle, interwoven within the first, revealed the real-world drama of the arduous race to publish and ship out orders of *Dungeons & Dragons* before any rival offerings could make it into print. That final goal for pre-publication D&D, of course, was really just the beginning of a much greater story still waiting to be told.

Both of these tales continue in this current volume. But throughout the unpredictable borderlands where these worlds of fantasy and reality overlap with one another, there are many more revelations for us to behold. As we mark the time beginning soon after the conquest of Zagyg's dungeon, we can discern two sequel threads emerging which complicate our telling of these tales: (1) the journey of Robilar and co. through the mythical lands of the Mysterious East, and (2) the promotion of Rob Kuntz as co-Dungeon Master of the Greyhawk campaign.

While Gary Gygax and Don Kaye were toiling to get D&D published and Tactical Studies Rules fully off the ground, Lord Robilar was struggling to return home to the City of Greyhawk and his abandoned castle. The pressing business concerns forced Gary to rely upon Rob, as Dungeon Master, to help solidify the future direction of the campaign. The Lake Geneva play group was quite large by that point and getting bigger all the time. As Gary once explained, "I enlisted Rob as co-DM for my campaign ... as it took two of us to manage the large player groups, and also to run all the game sessions demanded by smaller parties. Often times there were two long [*play*] sessions a day in 1974 and 1975. I had to write material, so Rob ran many of them." [21-1]

Gary once affectionately termed this new and unruly group of regulars the "wild bunch," and they played every weekend ... and then some. This bustling play group was sizeable enough that both Gary and Rob would sometimes referee their "mass expedition" sessions simultaneously, supporting each other's game mastering. [21-2] Several of the more esoteric guidelines in the rules for D&D — such as the need for a pre-designated marching order, the role of the "Caller," dice-rolling systems for treasure sharing, and the common knowledge that players should never split up the party — date to this era when the huge groups of players were difficult to handle. "Of course

most activity was dungeon crawling,” Gary wrote, “so actions were just done in order around the table. Be ready or lose your chance!” [21-3]

These sessions would require the manifestation of an artfully and carefully determined common ground, so that Gary and Rob would not conflict while they were conducting various parties’ adventures through the shared-world setting. Fortunately, they both knew each other well and were able to synergize their creations due to their familiarity. As Rob recollected, “we were just feeding off each other as far as ideas went. If I didn’t have a clue about where to go with an idea I’d just generated, he’d come up with an idea and vice versa. ... I was used to the way Gary thought. He was sculpting me as his student, and taking me everywhere. So I was pretty used to his humor and ... sometimes his ambivalence.” [21-4]

Gary noted too that he and Rob “thought very much alike,” and the vague nature of the shared Greyhawk Castle notes helped to ease the transition into a dual-Dungeon Master setup whenever only one of the DMs could attend a dungeon session. [21-5] “We knew each other’s style,” Gary remembered, “and what the castle should ‘feel’ like.” [21-6] Of course, the brevity of the encounter entries and other scrawled notes that they were using also necessitated a lot of improvisation.

But the co-DM era required much more than just a transference of role. The entire game milieu needed to be re-rendered on a far grander scale. The too-confining walls of Greyhawk were beginning to become apparent to many veteran players, and cracks were forming in the foundation of the dungeon’s original limitations. Before Greyhawk could hold *all* of the actions of dozens of players and the creations of two Dungeon Masters, it needed to grow considerably. Therefore Gary strove to widen each of the four interlocked settings which the over-eager players had been straining to the limits: the city, the ruins, the dungeons, and the world.

In various accounts, Gary mentioned that the expansion of the City of Greyhawk was completed in the middle of 1974. [21-7] More specifically, however, it appears that he began the work alone in the autumn of 1973, while Rob was still busy playing Robilar in the deeper dungeons. The revision of the *City* of Greyhawk, therefore, was primarily a Gygaxian endeavor.

The vague city of early 1973 had proven itself useful, but the meager map was filled with notes, nebulous barriers and erasures. That “Old City” could no longer be contained by a single sheet of paper. Realizing this, Gary quadrupled the size of the map, using four pieces of graph paper to create a rectangular poster-sized renovation. It seems that the east-west axis of the map was the shorter one and the north-south axis was the longer, and so the “new” city was further elongated to follow the course of the winding Selintan River. The Citadel of Greyhawk where the ruling mayor dwelled still formed the heart of the Old City, and around this were situated new quarters

for the Slums, Thieves and Merchants. There was also a High Quarter, where the wealthier citizens lived and indulged themselves in a world of gambling, decadence, and sophisticated courtesans. Lord Robilar's fabled Green Dragon Inn, by the way, was featured on both this new "quad" paper map and the earlier "single" map, which implies that he procured the place at some point during the first half of 1973. [21-8]

Rob added a lot of fresh and on-demand improvisatory material to the City of Greyhawk over the early years, to the point that Gary needed "to consult with him about what he had brought into the mix after he had run a city adventure." [21-9]

Many of these elements reflected Gary's recollection of the Swords & Sorcery stories involving Conan, Fafhrd, the Gray Mouser and many other mercenary heroes. New positions for temples and wizards' towers were prominently featured along the new map's many byways. But most of this "quad" city map still consisted primarily of blocks of anonymous buildings, divided from one another by meandering streets. As Gary explained, "Crooked alleys, lanes, and angling streets were mostly nameless, save by their identity." [21-10]

Gary also stated that he had just finished this map when he asked Rob to become co-Dungeon Master of the Greyhawk campaign, which appears to date this event to late 1973 (although mid-1974 has also been mentioned). The incongruity in timelines is impossible to rectify at this time, but the mid-1974 date has been favored for this chronicle for the *completion* of the City's second major incarnation. It seems that at least two separate major phases of Greyhawk renovations occurred in the early to mid-1970s, and it is plausible that these phases may have become one in Gary's later memory.

When the City had been successfully re-envisioned, Gary shifted his focus to the ruins of Castle Greyhawk and the dungeons which lie beneath them. In the minds of several players, the dungeon had been "beaten" and the competitive resolve which had caused much of the risky (and fun!) behavior amongst the many rival characters had quickly dissipated. More worryingly, the dungeon would still need to serve as the main area of play for any number of characters with experience levels ranging between 1 and 13. Mixed parties of any size would need to be accommodated, and *everyone* would need to be surprised by the monsters, traps and tricks they might discover. The ambitious redesign would be required "to entertain a group numbering 20 to 30 regular adventurers, the composition of the group changing every month or two." [21-11]

A considerable task! This massive overhaul would require a dungeon far beyond the original version's limited constraints. First, Gary worked on redesigning the Upper Works of Castle Greyhawk (the ruins proper). He used two sheets of 17" x 22" graph paper to re-envision the castle

as a huge, mostly intact ruin with a full citadel and various outbuildings. This revision would allow the upper levels of towers and other fortifications to be explored on lengthier expeditions. Many more encounters were added for the ruins, increasing in difficulty in a vertical progression throughout each edifice. Very roughly, this would mean that the ground level of the ruins would be a fitting adventure setting for level 1 and 2 characters; the upper tower ruins would challenge characters of levels 3 and 4, and the highest areas might only be conquered by heroes of levels 5 and up. [21-12]

And even though the Castle was now immense, the *dungeons* beneath them would become positively colossal. Five separate “descent zones” were sketched into the ground level of the ruins: one being central, and four more situated to the north, south, east and west respectively. Each descent area had one or more pits or stairways leading down. Most of the descents led directly to dungeon level one, but some went further down to level two, three, four, or even deeper. This multi-chambered vertical design would allow low-level adventurers to reach the “easy” levels for a variety of adventures, while the veterans could bypass these non-challenging regions to quickly go deeper into the most dangerous depths of all.

The “shallow” descents were guarded by various powers: an enclave of profiteering elves, another enclave of dwarves, and a massive ogre with a very nasty disposition. These creatures, when encountered and asked to allow the adventurers’ passage, would typically demand a cut of any recovered treasure. There was an additional descent area which was completely unprotected, but this one was harder for novice players to find. The one descent which was the most difficult to detect, hidden behind secret doors, ran all the way down to dungeon level nine. This may have been the central “Endless Stair,” carried over from the earlier 13-level Castle Greyhawk design of 1972-73. [21-13]

To this “descent skeleton” framework were grafted all of the newly-amended dungeon levels themselves. Gary and Rob began developing their new mega-dungeon by merging all of their existing dungeon keys into this single vast design. Elements from both Zagyg’s labyrinth and Kuntz’s own El Raja Key were modified, mashed, stretched, and forced to fit. To this hodgepodge of “known” levels, Gary added some new special side levels which no one had ever seen before. Gary once said that this new version of the dungeon was about 28 levels deep, with 40 total levels in all; [21-14] in another account, he said about 25 levels deep and 50 total levels. [21-15] Either way, the dungeon now consisted of 70-75 or so unique environments, with even more new areas to be explored above ground! No character, however daring or intrepid, would ever follow in Lord



Robilar's pioneering footsteps to find the slide of Zagyg the Mad Archmage ever again. Through sheer immensity, further conquest of Castle Greyhawk was rendered impossible.

To make this mega-labyrinth even more fun to play in, new dungeon levels were being added by Rob and Gary all the time. The exact timeframe for these efforts is uncertain but it appears that the major design work on the dungeon began in late 1974, and continued through 1975-76. Throughout this time period the dungeon gradually became Rob Kuntz's domain, as Gary shifted his attentions toward both TSR's business dealings and his own new campaign region, featuring Hommlet and the Temple of Elemental Evil.

The overhaul project also touched upon various aspects of Greyhawk's larger outdoor environment. According to one player's account (Skip Williams, later co-creator of *Dungeons & Dragons* 3rd Edition), Gary also spent time in perhaps 1974 or 1975 — "After TSR published D&D" — expanding the wilderness regions and borderlands of his campaign setting. In doing so he developed a rudimentary form of the wider World of Greyhawk we know today. [21-16]

Given the nature of the early wilderness adventures, and the symbolic and literal direction (west) that Gary's new and more rural campaign would soon be moving, it is likely that he worked on the outdoor regions in the City of Greyhawk vicinity, and perhaps too the shores of the Nyr Dyv, the Wild Coast, the Pomarj, the Gnarlley Forest, Verbobonc, and the southern verge of Furyondy. The most detail would be lavished upon the Village of Hommlet region, where Gary had already decided to situate a new Greyhawk campaign specifically intended for new players and lower-level characters. In much the same manner that the real-world Roman Empire became too vast and unwieldy and split into a Western Imperium (centered upon Rome) and an Eastern Imperium (centered upon Constantinopolis / Byzantium), the Lake Geneva campaign would split into a western Hommlet game mostly run by Gary, and an eastern Greyhawk game mostly run by Rob. We will look at developments in both of these regions in more detail soon hereafter.

But before I get too far ahead of myself, I still need to share the captivating tale of Robilar's return. When last we left Lord Robilar, Tenser and Terik, they were falling down a slide out of Zagyg's dungeon, spiraling ever downward to the core of the Oerth itself ...

\* \* \* \* \*

When Robilar plummeted through the entire planet of Oerth via Zagyg's magical slide (c. the early autumn of 1973), he blacked out and later found himself lying in a strange and ornate temple. The opulent architecture of this place was like nothing he had ever seen before. He had fallen all the way to the Mysterious East, into the fabled land of Cathay, or Khitai.

Whatever wondrous place was this?

The very name of Cathay is evocative, because it tells us that Sir Robilar was in a mythical version of northern China and Mongolia, as envisioned by Marco Polo and other Occidental explorers of the Far East. In D&D terms, this would likely be the land of the foo dogs, foo lions, cynanthropes (gnolls?), Oriental gold dragons, Longma dragon horses, Huli Jing fox spirits and the Fenghuang phoenix, as well as many other fabulous beasts.

The names Cathay and Khitai were also used by Robert E. Howard in his own fantastic fiction. In first conceptualizing the adventures which he would soon throw at Lord Robilar, Gary may have been recalling this passage from Howard's *A Witch Shall be Born*, a Conan story first published in *Weird Tales* (1934):



*"He was a magician from far Khitai, returning to his native kingdom after a journey to Stygia. He took me with him to purple-towering Paikang, its minarets rising amid the vine-festooned jungles of bamboo ... age had steeped him deep in black wisdom, not weakened his powers of evil. Many things he taught me ..."*



Lord Robilar, a stranger in a strange land if there ever was one, was baffled to find himself out of the dungeon and back in the wilderness. He quickly left the temple precinct, guided by the sun, and tried to calculate the quickest route home. If he only he knew how far away he really was! He probably had a rude surprise that first evening, when the sun went down and the stars were spread in a mad and unrecognizable array.

Tenser the wizard emerged in the magical temple a day later, but he had no idea that Robilar was near. The wizard waited for a while, deciding what to do, and an astonished Terik appeared before him. Tenser and Terik quickly reached an accord, and so with resolve they set out together in search of their lost friend.

There may have been a road or obvious path out of the temple region, for it seems that Tenser and Terik managed to journey in the exact same direction. (Scrying and divinations assisted them as well.) They soon caught up with Robilar, relieved to find that he was still alive. [21-17] Together these companions went on a short adventure in western Cathay, but it seems that no details of this mysterious venture have survived. [21-18]

These wilderness adventures far away from the City of Greyhawk — considering their improvised nature — were likely handled with the hex-grid game board from Avalon Hill's *Outdoor Survival* game. Gary once said that the map was used as a representational portrayal of whatever terrain the adventurers happened to be moving through. "We used the map," he wrote, "moved counters on it, and rolled for getting lost, so that one was never certain which direction one would head on a turn. Random encounters were used, and the ponds were castles, so there was some jousting rather than regular mortal combat." [21-19]

At some point, the adventurers came across a nesting group of rukhs (rocs, or giant eagles). From this, and other hints, we can assume that Gary was drawing inspiration from the movie *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* to improvise these unexpected adventures for his friends. In that movie, Sinbad and his companions discover a mysterious island where they save a sorcerer from a marauding Cyclops. The sorcerer uses a djinni from his magical lamp to create a protective shield, and the adventurers flee the island. Other interesting touches in the film include a serpent woman (the clear inspiration — along with the statue of Kali in this movie's sequel — for D&D's type V demon), screaming demons which cause insanity, sea monsters, a skeleton lord, and a wrathful dragon. But it is the roc itself which definitively ties Robilar's adventures to those of Sinbad.

In Robilar's own adventure, rocs were seen in the distance. The characters crept up and spied upon the rocs' nest-crowned pillars, and saw that far below there lay an inaccessible canyon studded with raw gemstones. Robilar's group slaughtered some mules and threw their bodies over the cliff. The rocs saw the fresh meat, and pulled the carcasses up to the nest-pillars. Many raw gems were stuck within the meat. The rocs ate the meat, carefully picking out the gems that might cause them indigestion. That night when the rocs were asleep, the adventurers climbed up and stole the gems for themselves. [21-20]

A clear parallel to this clever scheme can be found in Andrew Lang's version of *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, in one of Gary's favorite books from childhood:



“‘We must sew you into this sheep-skin,’ said they, ‘and then leave you. A fowl of monstrous size, called a roc, will appear in the air, taking you to be a sheep. He will snatch you up and carry you into the sky, but be not alarmed, for he will bring you safely down and lay you on the top of a mountain. When you are on the ground cut the skin with the knife and throw it off. As soon as the roc sees you he will fly away from fear, but you must walk on till you come to a castle covered with plates of gold, studded with jewels.’” [21-21]



The tale of the thrown meat, by the way, is told with perfect clarity in *The Second Voyage of Sinbad the Sailor*. This too reveals that Gary was borrowing heavily from the *Arabian Nights* to run these new Oriental adventures.

Having made a small and cleverly-won fortune, Robilar and his companions then took Tenser’s flying carpet — a scene probably inspired by the 1924 swashbuckling classic, *The Thief of Baghdad*, as well as similar scenes in the Harold Shea novella *The Castle of Iron* — and flew to a nearby city. This mysterious place might well have been inspired by early medieval Baghdad, as also featured in the tales of the *Arabian Nights*. Rob Kuntz, more succinctly, has said it was the City of Brass itself.

The saga of the City of Brass is one of the most fascinating in all of the tales of the *Arabian Nights*, because it features strong fantastical elements which almost border on early medieval science fiction. This theme would be fully explored by Dave Arneson in his own City of the Gods locale, as well as by James M. Ward (in *Metamorphosis Alpha*) and Gary Gygax too (in *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*). In the original folktale, which was clearly a favorite of Gary’s (because it is rife with D&D-isms, from our modern perspective), the City is home to a magical brass djinn bottle which had originally been a treasure coveted by King Solomon himself. The adventurers in the story learn of the lost City of Brass and parley with Dahish, a powerful efreet. Dahish’s guidance almost reads like an adventure introduction spoken by a Dungeon Master:



*“Be rejoiced, O Emeer; for this is the City of Brass, and this is the appearance of it that I find described in the Book of Hidden Treasures; that its wall is of black stones, and it hath two towers of brass, which the beholder seeth resembling two corresponding fires; and thence it is named the City of Brass.” [21-22]*



Exploring further, the companions of Dahish find it thus:



*“When they had ascended that mountain, they saw a city than which eyes had not beheld any greater. Its pavilions were lofty, and its domes were shining; its rivers were running, its trees were fruitful, and its gardens bore ripe produce. It was a city with impenetrable gates, empty, still, without a voice but the owl hooting in its quarters, and the raven croaking in its thoroughfare-streets, and bewailing those who had been in it.” [21-23]*



In the fable, the adventurers pick the magic lock on one of the city’s golden gates, and they discover the fallen ruler and the crumbling skeletons of his legions. They creep through bazaars filled with accursed treasures, but they ignore these dread temptations as they seek the brazen djinn vessel of Solomon. They explore the deeper treasure vaults and pick the lock of an ivory door. Inside they find a treasure tomb, where a mummified and jeweled damsel presides in death over the holy treasures of eld. On either side of the damsel are two warrior automatons, one of ivory mien and one of ebony, both bearing ancient scimitars of steel.

Faced with these irresistible temptations, the party quarrels over treasure: The Emir Moosa commanded, “Bring the sacks, and fill them with part of these riches and these vessels and rarities and jewels.” And that was all that was to be taken, for the fallen damsel herself — in all her precious

finery — was not to be defiled. Yet the Vizier Talib disagreed with this decree: “Wilt thou leave these riches and these jewels, when she is dead? What then should she do with these things, which are the ornaments of the world, and the decoration of the living?” Talib moved to steal the dead maiden’s funereal trappings, and the two mechanical guardians animated and decapitated him. Moosa wisely took only those treasures which were allowed by the maiden’s sanctity, and the surviving adventurers departed the city with much wealth and splendor to their names.

There are a few more hints which tell us a little of Gary’s own conception of the City of Brass for *Dungeons & Dragons*. (We do not know, however, if this depiction was used in that adventure with Lord Robilar.) Some of these hints are hiding in plain sight: for example, in the cover painting for the 1979 *Dungeon Masters Guide*. There we can see that the City of Brass floats over a sea of burning oil, and is inhabited by great efreeti and fire lizards. Gary also once explained that the City of Brass as he envisioned it was “floating on fiery stuff of airy sort, a sort of island in a sea of flames,” [21-24] which hints that the City could *only* be reached by flying carpet or the aid of a flying efreet.

The most interesting allusion to be found relating to the City, to my mind, is this evocative Gygaxian passage relating the cryptic history of the *Codex of the Infinite Planes*:



*“The two strong slaves lifted it from the back of the Beast. Thereupon I commanded the Brazen Portals to be brought low, and they were wrenched from their hinges and rang upon the stone. The Efreet howled in fear and fled when I caused the page to be read, and the Beast passed into the City of Brass. Now was I, Tzunk, Master of the Plane of Molten Skies ...”* [21-25]



Dahish seems to peer forth from Gary’s words! The tribute to Rob Kuntz (Tzunk) is obvious, and we can see hints once again that the City is filled with accursed treasures from lost worlds and ages, treasures which are all too ripe for some fool’s transitory taking.

Two more flying carpets were acquired in the City of Brass by Robilar and Terik. It is doubtful that any of the adventurers were weighted down with significant amounts of treasure, so they may



have bartered away precious magic items to procure these extra carpets. The three then left the mysterious city, and may have experienced some more Arabian-themed adventures. If so, monsters such as djinni, dragon turtles, efreeti, ghouls, golems, ogres, giant snakes, or giant scorpions may have been encountered. Unfortunately there are very few details about this era of the Greyhawk campaign; but nevertheless, the vague hints and knowledge of the inspirational source material give us a fair idea of what transpired.

As if Gary's job in improvising entire new realms of adventure was not difficult enough, the players now had a serious disagreement about how to proceed. Ernie (Tenser) wanted to return home to the City of Greyhawk as quickly as possible, because Quij's orcs guarding the first level of the dungeon were unpaid and only partially controlled. Anything could happen while the three masters were away. And too, the three companions each had a separate stronghold in the Greyhawk region that they wanted to get back to before anything bad could happen to their estates. Worse, Tenser's stronghold was not as well-protected as Lord Robilar's was. [21-26]

Rob (and Robilar) wanted to explore more of these strange lands on his way home, and was hungry for more treasure and power. And Terry (Terik) somehow got the idea that his character could become more powerful if he acquired voodoo dolls and powerful juju magic. Perhaps, in seeing that Gary was gleefully plundering the *Arabian Nights* for Greyhawk's Oriental mythology, Terry had deduced that juju would be prominent throughout Oerth's version of the Dark Continent.

Unable to come to an agreement, the three adventurers went their separate ways with vague promises to meet back in the ruins of Greyhawk, where together they would deign to take care of the orc garrison situation. With that accord, they all whisked off separately on their flying carpets and went on their own adventures. Poor Gary was left with a situation where he needed to run unique solo adventures for each player in the sessions to come, with an Asian kingdom theme for Tenser, an African wilderness theme for Terik, and an Aztec jungle theme for Robilar.

"I winged it," Gary confessed. "[I] must have done a fair to middling job, as Rob so enjoyed Robilar's adventures in the City of Brass while returning from the Mysterious East that he went on and developed a detailed city of that name of his own design." [21-27]

We know almost nothing about Tenser's journey, except that Tenser encountered a dangerous Oriental wizard. He may have briefly visited Gary's Nippon (mythical Japan), where ogre magi, ki-rin, werefoxes, giant spiders and other fabulous creatures dwell.

Of Terik's journey too, I sadly know very little at all. Rob once related that Terik wandered through the Dark Continent and "southern isles," [21-28] still hoping to acquire the ability to make

magical voodoo dolls. Consider Gary's sources for Aethiopian and Egyptian mythology, Terik may have encountered zombies, voodoo priestesses, snake spirits, mummies, ghosts, gorgons, basilisks, demons, crocodiles or poisonous serpents, but no one seems to remember. Those tales, barring a great discovery of original campaign material, may well be forever lost. Terik finally returned to the early version of the Flanaess through the isles of the Sea Barons, perhaps implying that he was forced to trek through the Great Kingdom on his way back to the City of Greyhawk. [21-29]

Robilar went south and found himself in an Aztec realm. This later became known as the Amedio Jungle. There, he was captured by the natives. He tried to negotiate, yet failed to impress them and was nearly sacrificed. [21-30] The natives of the Amedio are distrustful of white men from the north, you see, for slavers from the Hold of the Sea Princes are renowned for the "rare woods, spices, ivory, and gold ... they wrest from the jungle savages." [21-31] Robilar eventually escaped, but in doing so he lost his enchanted +1 composite bow and accidentally taught the natives the riddle of steel. Gary noted that the natives would certainly make use of these amazing new inventions in their future warfare. [21-32] Robilar would finally wend his way north through the entire Amedio Jungle, perhaps making his way back via what is now known as Fairwind Isle, near to the Hold of the Sea Princes. [21-33]

There is much more to tell of Robilar's and Tenser's fantastical adventures. (Terik, for the most part, fades from our view hereafter.) But for now, we shall return to firmer ground to consider a whirlwind of the real: the chaos caused by the too-rapid publication of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 21

[21-1] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part I. Posted September 6th, 2002.

[21-2] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part VI. Posted February 10th, 2004.

[21-3] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part VII. Posted February 18th, 2005. Interestingly, Gary also once noted (in Dragonsfoot Gary GygaX Q&A Part III, posted July 13th, 2005) that the 1974-1975 Greyhawk campaign included over 100 players in all, and “there were perhaps three females.”

[21-4] Refer to the Youtube clip ‘Rob Kuntz Conversations,’ with Martin Brown of Grogard Games. The comment appears at approximately 22:25.

[21-5] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part IX. Posted August 31st, 2005.

[21-6] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part XI. Posted August 7th, 2006.

[21-7] Refer for example to *Dragon Annual* #2, “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary GygaX.

[21-8] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “The Green Dragon Inn.”

[21-9] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part VI. Posted February 13th, 2004.

[21-10] *Dragon Annual* #2. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary GygaX.

[21-11] Yahoo GygaX Games mailing list, posted December 4th, 2004.

[21-12] Many of these details come from *Dragon Annual* #2, which has in this narrative been treated as authoritative to smooth over the difficulties caused by several dozen differing recollections which Gary provided in various forum postings over the decades. As always, I will correct this account is more accurate information is revealed in the future.

[21-13] *Dragon Annual* #2. “Founding Greyhawk: The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk Campaign, 1972-75,” by Gary GygaX.

[21-14] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part III.

[21-15] Yahoo Gygas Games mailing list, posted December 4th, 2004.

[21-16] The Grognardia interview with Skip Williams.

[21-17] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Terik." Posted February 5th-6th, 2004.

[21-18] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar in China."

[21-19] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygas Q&A, Part XIII. Posted December 20th, 2007.

[21-20] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Terik."

See also the thread "The Codex of the Infinite Planes."

[21-21] *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, edited by Andrew Lang.

[21-22] *The Arabian Nights: Their Best-Known Tales*, edited by Kate Douglas Wiggin and Nora A. Smith.

[21-23] *The Arabian Nights: Their Best-Known Tales*, edited by Kate Douglas Wiggin and Nora A. Smith.

[21-24] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygas Q&A, Part I. Posted November 8th, 2002.

[21-25] *Dungeon Masters Guide*, TSR, 1979, pg. 156.

[21-26] On June 25th, 2014, Ernie Gygas shared a few rare details about Tenser's stronghold in a Facebook post. Apparently, he first constructed a tower to secure his treasures and then later built a castle around the tower. The castle had about ten vertical levels, and was constructed to allow Tenser to use flying and levitation effects to reach all of the chambers. Most likely, this means that the tower was built to be completely inaccessible to non-wizards, so that his treasures could not be easily stolen.

[21-27] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygas Q&A, Part III. Posted May 16th, 2003.

[21-28] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "How far did Gygas go with Greyhawk?"

[21-29] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7. Produced by the Council of Greyhawk, June 15th, 1998.

See also the Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar in China."

[21-30] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar defeat."

[21-31] *The World of Greyhawk* boxed set, TSR, 1983.

**[21-32]** *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7. Produced by the Council of Greyhawk, June 15th, 1998.

See also the Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Robilar defeat.”

**[21-33]** *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7. Produced by the Council of Greyhawk, June 15th, 1998.

## CHAPTER 22

### MASS CONFUSION

(JANUARY –  
MARCH 1974)



DESPITE ALL of the onerous flak I shall receive as a blasphemer, it must be said: in January of 1974, *Dungeons & Dragons* was a mess. A glorious one to be sure, but still a mess regardless. The game had been published quickly for competitive and financial reasons, but it was such a radical new concept in gaming that it was very difficult for many prospective players to understand. But that barely mattered: imaginative people who came into contact with the game, its sheer *potential*, would be forever changed.

As Bill Owens of the Judge's Guild would later put it, "I still wonder if D&D's success was because it was such an unpolished gem. It brought forth gardens of blooming ideas from every group that made the game 'theirs' as compared to these competition-style games that have rules locked down tight." [22-1]

Indeed, the first iteration of *Dungeons & Dragons* was an amazing, terribly confusing game, filled with terribly amazing ideas.

And as has been said many times (and only half in jest), the problem with the 1974 D&D boxed set is that when you opened the box, you found booklets but no Lake Geneva. You would read the rules and soon realize there was something vital missing, *someone* that would have made the game comprehensible: E. Gary Gygax.

But despite that, every intelligent and careful reader of the rules enjoys *The Moment*. The Moment is when the light bulb goes off, when the awareness dawns and ignorance falls away: the game suddenly makes sense. It is a collaborative game which defies all board game conventions, it barely makes sense without any limitations, it never ends, there are no victory conditions, and *that is the entire point*. It is a fantasy life simulator. The game is an improvisatorial storytelling vehicle for the imagination.

The side effect of The Moment, however, is that each reader of the rules is forced to become an interpreter. Gary in D&D's Afterword states it flat out: "We urge you to refrain from writing for rule interpretations or the like unless you are absolutely at a loss, for everything herein is fantastic ... why have us do any more of your imagining for you?" [22-2]

That is the beauty of *Dungeons & Dragons*, but it is also the game's curse. The game requires an immense investment from its players, and especially from its referees. That investment results in unique, equally valid, and very passionate opinions concerning every minute facet of the game.

From the beginning, meetings between D&D players have tended to be disruptive and baffling affairs. If you ever tried to preach "the rules" at someone who was not a regular member of your

own play group, you would receive an hour-long retort beginning, “Well, the way we do it in my campaign ...”

*Dungeons & Dragons* had no standardization in the beginning, and that too was by design. The rules could never be complete, and no two players would ever 100% agree on each other’s interpretation of the particulars. This is a wonderful thing when you think about it from a creative standpoint, but from a standpoint of business and demonstration it is something of a nightmare.

Players and Dungeon Masters began clamoring for new rules as early as December of 1972 — *better* rules and *more* rules — as soon as they began to play. This call was eventually answered, but not for quite some time. By early February of 1974 there was already an untapped market waiting for D&D supplements. Gary, consummate businessman and game designer that he was, had been prepared for this eventuality by the hundreds of calls and letters he received during the play tests of 1973. While refereeing the game he kept a goodly pile of notes and alternate systems throughout 1974, and these notes were used almost daily as “more and better rules” in the Greyhawk campaign. [22-3]

But these piles were the conglomerated rules which had not been fully clarified by December of 1973 (when the set was finalized for print), and so they were left out of the first published edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* proper. Play testers across the nation were demanding refined and republished versions of their now-tattered and dog-eared rule packets, and to their ranks were being added the new Dungeon Masters who were exposed to the game through purchasing new mail order sets from TSR. Gary’s own notes, along with recommendations from Dave Arneson, Ernie Gygax, Rob Kuntz and Mike Mornard, would grow throughout 1974 until there was a sufficient thematic core to build a publishable manuscript around. That manuscript would eventually become the first draft of *Supplement I: Greyhawk*, to eventually be published in March of 1975.

There were many such supplementary endeavors which began to coalesce in 1974 and 1975, each prepared through the personal vision of its own primary author. As TSR employee Steve Marsh once pointed out [22-4], the D&D Supplements would represent localized and personalized interpretations of *Dungeons & Dragons* as envisioned by several of the original players. *Supplement I: Greyhawk* would be comprised of Gary’s and Rob’s campaign notes; *Supplement II: Blackmoor* would be Arneson’s campaign, infused with Steve Marsh’s creations and heavily edited by Tim Kask; *Supplement III: Eldritch Wizardry* would be Blume’s and Kask’s rules with many of Gary’s re-interpretations; and *Supplement IV: Gods, Demi-Gods and Heroes* would be James M. Ward’s and Rob Kuntz’s “super-powered” supplement for high-level play.

Each of these separately-themed contributions would significantly add to Gygas's and Arneson's core and disputed vision for D&D, making the game a truly collaborative endeavor, forever precariously balanced upon the contributors' clashing opinions and disagreements. In 1974 however, D&D was a strongly Gygas-themed game, and *Supplement I* would be more of the same. The difference with *Supplement I* however would be that Rob Kuntz, as co-DM, would add an unpredictable spice to the new rules' brewing mix. As Gary would later elucidate, *Greyhawk* featured "a lot of creative input from Rob, so I included him as co-author." [22-5]

All of this wild creativity, interspersed with bouts of orderly clarification, would take quite a while to sort itself out. Throughout 1974, Gary would write ideas from play which would then be drafted and added to "the pile." Gary was aware that players from afar would be deeply interested in new rules and options, but he could never quite conceive why anyone might be interested in adopting *his* imaginary world of Greyhawk and Oerth. To his mind, all of the fun of being a DM was inherent in creating a world of one's own.

This "it's *more* fun to make your *own* fun" mentality would really not depart Gary's approach to D&D marketing until the summer of 1978, when it became inescapably clear that pre-scripted "Dungeon Modules" were going to be a huge hit with the masses. His stubborn faith in the creative drives of other Dungeon Masters, by the way, is the primary reason why the *Greyhawk Supplement* has lots of rules for new classes and monsters and treasures and such, but very little information on the Flanaess or the City of Greyhawk itself. (His secondary reason was that he was private about his home campaign.) The philosophy of players has changed so much over the intervening decades that I have witnessed many curiosity seekers who pick up the *Greyhawk Supplement*, seeking the earliest secrets of the Oerth, only to frown and mutter something akin to, "Hey, where's Greyhawk? This booklet is just a rough draft for AD&D."

Times and player expectations have changed over many years ... irretrievably so.

\* \* \* \* \*

But that was all in the future. Immediately after the publication of D&D, dreams of supplementary material had to be set aside. If the game and TSR were going to survive, the work of getting the boxes in the hands of games needed to be performed, and quickly.

A considerable part of Gary's job in February of 1974 was not just filling out and shipping these orders. He worked to convince the world that a new paradigm in gaming was worthy of not only

national but also worldwide consideration. That was a tall order, and he began the work one letter, one conversation, one handshake at a time. But he could not reach out to everyone, and he could only rarely leave Lake Geneva. Most people in early 1974 simply had to figure the game out for themselves.

The RPG concepts were too revolutionary for many, however. Some people got it, many did not. And many people who *would* have gotten it did not know that D&D even existed, and would never come into contact with the game unless they were sought out by someone already in the know. As TSR employee Harold Johnson one explained, “In the early years, the only way you learned about [D&D] was if a friend introduced it to you.” [22-6]

Marketing was the key, but effective marketing is exorbitantly expensive. This problem would persist for years, ameliorated by Gen Con where gamers could finally meet face to face. (In a strange kind of way, through Gen Con Gary had already created the perfect environment for D&D’s viral spread in 1968, six years before the game itself existed.) And as the game diversified, eventually many people — especially college students — would come into contact with *someone* who already knew how to play.

That process, however, was years in the making. The first edition of D&D was confusing, and 1971-72’s *Chainmail Fantasy* before it had been more confusing still (simply because *Chainmail* was even more of a pioneering effort than D&D would be).

Fortunately, the medieval wargaming community was very small and Gary was fairly easy to find. People wrote Gary letters, or simply showed up on his doorstep. One Friday or Saturday night in early 1974 (when the long distance phone rates went down), a player who was struggling with *Chainmail*’s intricate details used the Long Distance Directory Assistance service so that he could then make a cold-call to game author Gary Gygax. [22-7]

Tim wanted some help in understanding the intricacies of the rules. [22-8] This intrepid young wargamer was named Timothy James Kask, and he was a student attending classes at the Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. [22-9] As Tim later related, “My call was answered by a most genial and gentlemanly fellow that was the soul of kindness and courtesy, who took no offense at being called at home one evening by a stranger. In fact, I got the idea that he admired my initiative in tracking him down.” [22-10]

Gary clarified the problematic rules, and he and Tim got along famously from the very beginning. They chatted for over an hour. Tim soon regarded Gary as “an older brother, very bright, eccentric and eclectic.” [22-11] Tim would continue to call from time to time to chat about

Gary's game, and so the friendship grew. That friendship would become momentarily important later on, in the autumn of 1975. During early February of 1974, however, Gary was still preoccupied with the orders for *Dungeons & Dragons*. A few individual orders to gamers were shipped, and then the larger orders to hobby shops and distributors were filled. According to Gary's recollection, as many as five or six of these companies were requesting half-dozens of *Dungeons & Dragons* at this time. Three larger distributors received the largest orders of all, with 12 copies to each. As Gary noted, "Interestingly, those three were all manufacturers of miniature figurines." [22-12] Gary's group did not play with miniature figures for dungeoneering, but it seems that many of the other early players did.

A skeletal distribution network revealed itself in this pattern of miniatures manufacturers that stocked the game. In the near future, those same distributors would reorder D&D in batches of approximately 25 to 50 copies. [22-13] These companies would help to spread the game far beyond Lake Geneva, and into places where Gary's more personal methods could not reach. *Dungeons & Dragons* was catching on. By the middle of February, perhaps 100 or more boxes had been sold. [22-14]

A spectacular success! And then? Nothing. No more major orders came.

Throughout the second half of February, TSR suffered along with only a tiny trickle of incoming single-copy orders. In Don and Donna Kaye's pantry, a stock of about 900 bought-and-paid-for boxes was still waiting to be sold. Gary and Don, beginning to panic, made immediate plans to advertise their game.

Meager and inexpensive efforts came first. The first notice for *Dungeons & Dragons* appeared in the periodical *El Conquistador*, in February. That notice is particularly interesting because it invites people to actually come right over to Gary's house to play and learn the game! "One may find a game in progress on a Sunday afternoon at about 1:30," it read. "Visitors are welcome." [22-15] Beyond that notice Gary also sent the first true D&D advertisement, slated to appear in a future issue of the Great Plains Game Players Newsletter. [22-16] Additional copies of this advertisement (in flyer form) were included with Gary's letters as well, as he continued to keep in touch with Dungeon Masters and former play testers throughout the country.

These efforts were tiny, but they perfectly targeted the game's potential audience. As Gary noted in *Liaisons Dangereuses* #70, "Tactical Studies Rules was about as small as a firm can be and still be considered a real company ... so publicity for *Dungeons & Dragons* was pretty much left to word of mouth." [22-17]

From the safely planted acorn is born the mighty oak, and all that. But Gary and Don did not have 100 years in which to serenely observe that acorn growing to its fruition. By the end of the month, the 150th copy was sold, bringing D&D's average sales up to a few copies a day. [22-18]

Whether this was a result of advertising or word of mouth, or both, is open to conjecture. But it is known that D&D was widely regarded as being very expensive, and Gary believed that many potentially interested buyers were either relying on their friends to already own the game, or were making personal photocopies of a friend's set for use in their separate games. Pirates were everywhere, and they couldn't be ratted out without disenfranchising other potential customers. And D&D could not be sold at a loss, because Gary and Don were sitting on a \$2,000+ investment which they could not yet break even on. Bad news all around. [22-19]

By the way, have you ever wondered why early Dungeon Module maps were printed in light blue ink? That was to foil primitive photocopiers, but the technology eventually caught up and made these efforts futile. Blue-tinted maps are still printed to this day in many "Old School Renaissance" (OSR) Dungeon Modules, as a nostalgic nod to the TSR maps of 1978-1980.

Considering the dark gift of piracy (the pleased mouth spreadeth the word, while the covetous hand taketh away) and D&D's lackluster and slumping sales, Gary called a meeting. He talked to Don and Brian about the future of D&D purchases and fandom. He estimated that D&D would sell between 10,000 and 15,000 copies to the wargaming community, with another 50,000-odd sales waiting if the word ever got out to all of the nation's Tolkien fans. [22-20]

This idealistic assessment would prove to be premature, but would eventually be vindicated. More immediately, though, slower and more dire times were just around the corner.

At about this same time, the business owned by Gary's old employer Don Lowry began to collapse. [22-21] Gary likely felt bad for Don, and was probably quite empathetic considering that TSR had just lurched off the ground and toward Lowry's same uncertain horizon. But he indirectly benefitted from Lowry's downfall as well. Gary acquired the rights to his *Chainmail* game [22-22] — which was still generating a fair amount of interest due to D&D being dependent upon its rules, by the way — and this booklet would be republished by TSR in the near future.

Gary also expressed an interest in *Tricolor*, a traditional Napoleonic wargame designed by Rick Crane. *Tricolor* would be released by TSR toward the middle of 1974, most likely in June. The registered copyright date for the game is June 1st. [22-23] According to an interview with Gary, this simulation had originally been prepared for Guidon Games. [22-24] Therefore it is likely that Gary waited patiently until Guidon was out of the picture, and then offered to publish *Tricolor*



under the banner of TSR. Through such efficient tactics, TSR plowed its way through the mediocre sales of *Dungeons & Dragons* and diversified its offerings.

Gary wrote the forward to *Tricolor* on April 1st, which gives us an idea of the timing of Lowry's business downfall. Don's endeavor would continue on in some form for a while longer, but it would no longer have any major relation to Gary or TSR or D&D, and so it exits the tale of **HAWK & MOOR**. Mr. Lowry himself, by the way, moved to California. He and his wife Julie continued to publish wargames sporadically through 1982.

TSR, while primed and eager to publish these new releases, was entering ominous waters. The company had very little money. At the beginning of March, sales continued to lag and Gary was filled with doubt. "We began to worry," he said. "Me especially. Had I overestimated the new game?" [22-25]

I estimate that D&D was down at this time to perhaps only 1 or 2 copies sold every day, since 5 copies daily had earlier been worthy of Gary's celebration. Gary decided that it was time to promote D&D more aggressively. He had a specific target in mind, too. That target might not appreciate Gary's tone, but the time for gentle handling was done.

On March 5th, Gygax wrote a letter to Dave Arneson, who was back home in Minnesota. He encouraged Dave to hand out flyers promoting *Dungeons & Dragons* to gamers. Gygax's letter was straight out and to the point: "Every flyer you pass out could mean more royalty dollars. Remember, every retail sale we make is \$1.00 to you. Put a flyer in all letters, right?" [22-26] Historically, this is interesting because it implies that Arneson was receiving a 10% royalty on each copy of D&D sold; that is, \$1.00 of the \$10.00 purchase price.

But as I have detailed in Book II, the financial aspect of D&D was not enough to motivate Dave to actively promote what he may have seen as *Gary's* game which paid a middling royalty. In my own opinion, Dave might even have been waiting for an apology from Mr. Gygax, perhaps for turning Arneson's Blackmoor into something it was never meant to be. There would be none coming. To Dave, the publication of D&D was merely a curiosity which generated a few dollars' income. To Gary, this was a pressing business concern and the success of his foundering company was at stake.

Sales must have remained sluggish, because Gary wrote another strongly-worded letter to Arneson on the 13th. The court record reveals the tone once again: "Seeing as how you and I each make a buck on a retail sale by TSR, we have to be dreaming up ways to promote same! Get to work!" [22-27] Ironically, these letters would later be entered as evidence in court as proof that

Gygax was actively seeking sales of *Dungeons & Dragons* in Minnesota. This, in turn, would become one of the technical points in the future litigation concerning *Dungeons & Dragons* royalties which TSR refused to fully pay to Dave in years to come.

All of these promotional efforts were not enough, however. Awareness was growing, but the slow pace of D&D sales would not be sufficient to keep the company moving on its intended course. Something else had to be done, and soon. Gary realized with both reluctance and enthusiasm that even more games would need to be designed.

This dawning realization was also a moment of opportunity. Don Kaye for example was very interested in creating a Wild West game, either a role-playing game or a gunslinger combat simulator of some kind. [22-28] The problem of course was that Don was not a game designer, and neither was Brian Blume (yet). Most of the heavy lifting would need to come Gary himself. [22-29]

This did not prevent development of TSR's Wild West game, but it did slow the process considerably. Don and Gary continued to "noodle" about with potential rules and scenarios for publication in early 1974, but no serious work was done. Eventually the Western game would be published as *Boot Hill*, but not until a tragedy intervened to compel development along an unpredictable course. We will get to that sad tale a little later.

Despite these ongoing struggles, the game of *Dungeons & Dragons* was gradually taking hold. The problem was still that the process was slow enough that TSR's finances remained in danger. Gary said of D&D, "Its initial acceptance was small, but those who played were highly enthusiastic and dedicated to the game." [22-30] The core fandom was loyal, but it was tiny. So how else could that audience be expanded?

From Gary's, Don's and Brian's perspectives, one clue to the game's eventual grass-roots success could be discerned from some of the shipping addresses of the gamers who were purchasing individual copies. "The original D&D rules set," Harold Johnson once explained, "was written for college students and quickly became popular with them." [22-31]

Beyond that core audience, however, the game was simply too weird for many gamers to ever embrace. "Imagine, if you will," Gary wrote, "attempting to find new 'converts' — then, as now, the true enthusiast is always seeking to add fellows to the 'ranks' — and having to explain role-playing from the most basic concepts on up. Even with ... dedicated players actively out doing just that ... it was daunting." [22-32]

And that is the price of innovation. It is ironic to consider that in 2014, computer games which borrow too closely from D&D are regarded as generic and cliché. But let us not forget the definition



of a cliché: it is something that became so popular, and so widespread, that people eventually got sick of it and started making fun of the great idea's omnipresence. We are left to wonder how many potential clichés in the world of gaming simply died before they ever gained traction, never to rise, forever forgotten.

That was nearly the fate of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Fortunately for us, however, bit by bit the game found its audience and eventual immortality.

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 22

[22-1] *Judge's Guild's Bob & Bill: A Cautionary Tale*, by Bill Owen. 2014 Kindle Edition. Refer to book location 64%/100%.

[22-2] *Dungeons & Dragons, Volume 3: The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures*, TSR, 1974.

[22-3] *The Dragon*, issue #26, pg. 31.

[22-4] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Steve Marsh. Posted November 17th, 2005.

[22-5] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Refer also to *Dragon Annual* #2, pg. 99.

[22-6] *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

[22-7] Online web form post: Dragonsfoot.org Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 8th, 2012.

[22-8] Refer to the Youtube clip "Gygax Magazine Interview with Tim Kask," posted by Grogard Games. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 5:50.

See also the clip "Interview: Tim Kask," posted by Mythwits, beginning at approximately 21:35.

[22-9] Grogard interview with Tim Kask, Part I.

[22-10] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted March 5th, 2008.

[22-11] Refer to the Youtube clip "Interview: Tim Kask," posted by Mythwits, beginning at approximately 23:30.

[22-12] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

[22-13] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

[22-14] *Dragon Annual* #4, pages 9-10.

[22-15] *El Conquistador* Volume 1 Number 6, as reported in *Playing at the World* by Jon Peterson, pg. 464.

[22-16] Playing at the World blog, “The Earliest *Dungeons & Dragons* Advertisements.”

[22-17] Issues of the *Liaisons Dangereuses* zine are preserved at the whiningkentpigs.com website.

[22-18] *40 Years of Gen Con*, by Robin D. Laws, Trident, Inc. (d/b/a Atlas Games), 2007, pg. 22.

See also *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[22-19] *40 Years of Gen Con*, by Robin D. Laws, Trident, Inc. (d/b/a Atlas Games), 2007, pg. 22.

[22-20] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[22-21] RPG.net interview with Gary Gygax, part 1 of 3.

[22-22] The TSR copyright registration for *Chainmail*, 3rd Edition, is dated February 10th, 1975.

[22-23] *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, Library of Congress, Copyright Office.

[22-24] D-Infinity interview with Gary Gygax.

[22-25] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[22-26] United States District Court (Fourth Division, Minnesota) Civil Action 4-79-109, Arneson v. Gygax.

[22-27] United States District Court (Fourth Division, Minnesota) Civil Action 4-79-109, Arneson v. Gygax.

[22-28] Online web forum post: The Quarterofthree/CGM interview with Gary Gygax.

[22-29] RPG.net interview with Gary Gygax, part 1 of 3.

[22-30] *Little Wars*, issue #1.

[22-31] *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

[22-32] *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

## CHAPTER 23

### LORDS OF GREYHAWK

(JANUARY –  
APRIL 1974)

SOMEHOW, AMIDST all of these promotional efforts Gary still had time to play many games of *Dungeons & Dragons* from the perspective of a player. His first characters were Yrag the fighting man and Mordenkainen the magic-user, created in January 1973. These two characters adventured in the castle ruins of El Raja Key, and Rob Kuntz served as Gary's Dungeon Master. As I noted in **HAWK & MOOR** Book II, Rob is busy writing his memoirs and will reveal much more about the El Raja castle's secrets in the future, and so it is not my place to reveal too much herein. But I know people tend to clamor for revelations concerning these original adventures, so I will here provide some of the details which have already been widely disseminated to date. I will also provide a detailed account of the most famous session: the Quest of the Terrible Iron Golem, as chronicled in *Wargamer's Digest* issue #7, *Dragon* #307, and in the 1980s Dungeon Module WG5, *Mordenkainen's Fantastic Adventure*.

\* \* \* \* \*

By the end of 1973 or thereabouts, Gary's favorite character Mordenkainen was approaching experience level 10. This allowed him access to powerful spells, and his lordship over Rob Kuntz's dungeons increased ... as did his treasure trove. [23-1] He was a worshipper of Boccob, and so he honored the Mad Demigod Zagyg. [23-2] But he did not tempt fate, and was not "eager to have Zagyg intervene" in his destiny. [23-3] Therefore he did not journey into the ruins of Castle Greyhawk (Zagyg's sacrosanct domain), but rather explored the dungeons of El Raja Key.

When he finally attained the lofty 12th level (likely around the beginning of 1974), Gary decided that his wizard should "have some greater purpose" outside of dungeon crawling, and so Mordenkainen became involved in intrigue and "political concerns." [23-4]

Therefore, he became a champion of neutrality and "the Balance" (in Michael Moorcock terms), battling the more severe powers of the Flanaess. Because the World of Greyhawk at that time was virtually overrun by the forces of evil, Mordenkainen ended up championing the cause of good in his own way. This would require a base of operations and a cadre of troops and henchmen. Gary did not intend for him "to rule more than a minor domain where he and his associates and followers would be secure and properly housed and fed," [23-5] but due to the already-growing size of his forces a fairly large stronghold would be required. The Obsidian Citadel — at least in concept and wild ambition — was born.

By early 1974 (and over a year of play), Gary had five significant PCs and a host of lesser henchmen. His five major personas were Mordenkainen (a level 13 magic-user), Bigby (a level 11 magic-user), Yrag (a fighting man of perhaps level 10), Felnorith (another fighting man, perhaps level 9), and the Bishop Raunalf (a level 6 cleric, later revealed in *Dragon* #307 as a byname for the character Rigby). At this time they were all collectively seeking treasure and forbidden knowledge beneath Maure Castle, an incarnation of El Raja Key.

On one expedition, Mordenkainen and Bigby went all the way down through twelve deep dungeon levels in search of information. They discovered a seemingly magical key, and a cryptic couplet written in a runic language they could not comprehend. These seemed to be very minor treasures to reward such a dangerous exploration, but the latent “incompleteness” of these finds aroused Gary’s suspicions. The mages made their way back out of the dungeon, went to their Citadel, cracked open their “tomes bound in dragon hide” and got to work. The key’s symbols and the riddle proved elusive, however, and very old. So they researched older scrolls, and even older tablets, and finally conducted some expensive divinations over a cauldron and alembics. Eventually, they received a few clues to the key’s and the couplet’s origins. They had a vague idea of where the key’s gate might be, and so they planned a return to Maure Castle to find the secret way to that forbidden gate.

They returned in stealth, and their companions back in the Citadel observed them through a crystal ball. They were acting once again without companions and were garbed in dark cloaks, using their spells and subterfuge to penetrate the castle’s defenses while suffering only a minimum of violent opposition. Soon, they found themselves in a room with four closed chests, a room which had been visited and shunned earlier on. This room was important, because it seemed to hold the solution to the hidden gate.

As they entered, an iron portcullis slammed shut and trapped them inside. This was to be expected. Also predictable was the deathly voice which whispered out from the nothingness: “Choose from the four chests before you!”

The first chest was opened. Enormous serpentine heads lashed out, writhing in a hissing mass. A fell creature impossibly crawled out of the chest, enlarging as it came, and attacked. A hydra of five heads! But the wizards had been prepared for the arrival of this guardian. Mordenkainen waved his staff, casting a Polymorph Other spell. The hydra shrunk again, but this time it became a snail. Bigby promptly plucked up the snail and secured it in his pouch. This would be a valuable ally later on: the snail could be thrown at monsters in combat, and then a Dispel Magic spell would break the Polymorph enchantment, causing the monstrous hydra to grow once more in the midst

of dismayed attackers. [23-6] Rob liked this trick (and may have enhanced it after learning of it), and would use it later to defend his own castle while playing Robilar and Otto.

The other chests were opened, and the disembodied voice seemed pleased. “You are granted one wish of limited power.” Mordenkainen seized the moment, and asked to learn where the gate stood which might accept the ancient key. The ghost knew that gate well, it seems, for it urged the mages to proceed into the Great Hall hidden just beyond.

The wizards quickly navigated a nearby labyrinth, and found themselves at the edge of the Great Hall. Waters splashed and danced in an alabaster fountain, a threat made clear by its veil of serenity. Someone wanted the wizards to be at peace here, and so they were on guard. A tapestry-covered corridor led into another vast hall, its lofty ceiling held high by ivory pillars.

But no, already something hidden was revealed! The pillars did not reach all the way to the ceiling, they were raised pedestals with open space above them. Mordenkainen and Bigby casted their Levitation spells and rose to investigate. Each pillar was hewn from a single piece of ivory, carved from the tusks of some gargantuan behemoths which strode the Oerth long ago. Rob here may have been alluding to the tale *Idle Days on the Yann* by Lord Dunsany, in which we read:



*“I came to a silver temple and then to a palace of onyx ... I suddenly saw in it [the city wall] a huge ivory gate. For a while I paused and admired it, then I came nearer and perceived the dreadful truth. The gate was carved out of one solid piece! I fled at once through the gateway ... and even as I ran I thought that I heard far off on the hills behind me the tramp of the fearful beast by whom that mass of ivory was shed ...”* [23-7]



Alarmed by this ominous revelation, the wizards descended. They found and approached a dais, and there — formerly hidden from view by the ivory pillars and the dark — stood three mighty granite thrones, and three regal forms in iron were sat upon them. These kings of old must have been the high lords of Maure Castle. One statue (portraying a mage-king of the lost world?) held a

dagger, another a broad sword, and the mightiest central colossus bore a great sword clutched in one hand and some kind of eldritch plume in the other.

As Mordenkainen and Bigby thought it best to leave this place, they shrank away. But the gaze of the ageless one fell upon them! The center colossus woke, becoming animate, and rose from its throne with a grinding of iron upon stone. The great golem thundered down the dais and surged to the attack! The fearless wizards shared a glance, steeled themselves for battle, lifted their staves of arcane power ...

And they both ran like Hell.

But the strides of the golem were long, and both mages were forced to cast their second spells of Levitation. They clambered together to the top of one of the ivory pillars. The golem slammed into the pillar with its massive shoulder, and ancient ivory fragments splintered down in a cascade over its iron form. As the golem stepped away and prepared for another charge which would bring the pillar crashing down, Mordenkainen dared to step to the pillar-summit's edge. But iron golems are immune to practically all magic. What could Mordenkainen hope to do against such a fearsome foe?

He targeted a Transmute Rock to Mud spell on the floor between the golem's feet. The plan was to allow the golem to sink, and then Bigby would cast Transmute Mud to Rock to seal the golem in an inescapable tomb. But the golem had arcane powers of its own! It levitated over the mud pool, then flew into pillar. Another crash. But the golem had lost momentum, having no foothold, and the pillar only cracked instead of shattering outright.

This was a desperate time. Mordenkainen brought forth the brazen urn he loathed to use, and released an enslaved efreet which he kept trapped therein. The efreet was commanded to destroy the golem. It swept down, and the iron golem breathed out an enormous incendiary cloud. Another unique power of the golem, both unforeseen and deadly!

Efreets are immune to normal fires, and highly resistant to magical ones. But the Terrible Iron Golem's attack was so fierce that the efreet was charred and horribly wounded. Mordenkainen, looking down in dismay and disbelief, told Bigby that it was time to battle the golem in melee. Their only other recourse was to wait for the golem to slam into the pillar again, at which point both mages would likely plummet to their deaths.

They floated down together, ready to die. The golem moved to block their escape as expected, and "inhaled" as it recharged its incendiary cloud. Another exhalation brought forth a huge sheet



of flame, but the mages' protective items reduced this fatal onslaught to merely a wounding one. Bigby recaptured the efreet, while Mordenkainen struck the iron golem with his staff.

There was a clang, but nothing happened. The golem swung its venom-dripping great sword, and Mordenkainen ducked to the floor to save his life. Bigby capped the brazen urn and shouted a warning as Mordenkainen recovered himself. The golem lifted the item in its other hand. It was not a plume at all, it was a magical whip tipped by the preserved feather of a cockatrice! The whip snaked out, and touched upon Mordenkainen's back as he struggled to rise. The wizard did not even have time to cry out before a terrible transformation began deep in his flesh. He tensed, he paled, and his skin crackled and calcified. The great mage, never before defeated, was turned to stone!

Bigby, looking on in horror, did the only thing he could to save his master. He ran. The Terrible Iron Golem, guardian of the castle's greatest treasures, did not pursue. Bigby used a Teleport spell and returned to the Citadel, where he told his shocked companions (who had been watching through the crystal ball) the few unseen details concerning their master's defeat.

Mordenkainen's strongest allies thus prepared for battle. These were Lord Yrag, Lord Felnorith, Bishop Raunalf, and of course Bigby himself. This rescue party advanced into Maure Castle, and rushed headlong through the Great Hall. They stood outside the threshold tapestry and formulated a daring plan. Bigby, ever the clever one, had realized that there were weapons which might be capable of destroying the Terrible Iron Golem after all. Yrag and Felnorith were tasked with procuring them. Shields were lifted, swords were drawn, spells and magic items of power were made ready, and the curtain was pulled away.

There was lain the pathetic statue of Mordenkainen, his life force trapped in stasis beneath the stone. The transmuted and muddy floor had re-congealed, and only the splintered pillar gave evidence of the terrible battle waged before. The Terrible Iron Golem — with the imminent threat to the Castle's treasure, Mordenkainen himself, eliminated — had returned to sit upon its granite throne. The ageless sentinel waited as four more victims drew near.

The adventurers crept in, and Bigby used a Transmute Stone to Flesh spell to free Mordenkainen from the terrible enchantment. The great mage, barely alive, collapsed with a gasp upon the flagstones. He would not be able to fight in this battle. Bigby led his companions toward the dais and the fighter-lords drew their swords.

When the golem began to animate once more, Yrag and Felnorith charged toward the two lesser iron statues to either side. One Lord seized the iron dagger, the other the iron blade. The golem

turned to smite them, and Bigby was forced to do battle with this implacable juggernaut once again. The whip flashed out before Bigby could dodge or complete his spell. Another mage turned to stone! But the fighter-Lords had wrenched away the magical weapons of old, and sword and dagger hacked into the golem's limbs.

These eldritch blades struck true. The sword smote off the arm that held the whip, and limb and weapon both came crashing down. But golems feel no pain and the venom-dripping sword was quickly turned against Yrag as he struggled to recover from his telling blow. Again, the golem was too quick to be withstood. The poisoned blade-tip impaled Yrag, and he died horribly, his armor and body bubbling with corruption. [23-8]

Felnorith attacked again, and his dagger blade ran deep. Raunalf was forced to leap aside as the sundered golem tottered and crashed to the floor. Its enchantments were finally broken, and enormous pieces of armor collapsed in a thundering jumble.

Mordenkainen was unconscious, Bigby petrified, and poor Yrag slain. Raunalf and Felnorith searched the chamber, hoping only that some great succor could be found now that the Terrible Iron Golem lay asunder.

The two smaller iron statues were hollow, and filled with gems. An ornate collection of coral miniatures, heretofore unseen, proved to be a miniature map of Maure Castle that would greatly aid future expeditions. But there were no healing magics of resurrection, no wishes to be had, and Bishop Raunalf was not yet wise nor powerful enough to raise the dead on his own. Mordenkainen and Yrag's body were taken back to the Citadel, while the valorous Bigby was necessarily left where he had been frozen into stone.

The three surviving companions took the body of Yrag to the goodly Patriarch of Greyhawk, and the valiant fighter was restored at a very dear cost. Most of the gemstones were spent bringing him back to life. But it was worth it, yes? Grimly, the cabal of Mordenkainen swore an oath: they would return to Maure Castle to recover the form of Bigby for de-petrification, or die trying.

And after a days' rest, off they went. Bigby's body was recovered and taken back to the Citadel, where Rigby used a Transmute Stone to Flesh spell to remove the accursed affliction wrought by the golem. But too much time had elapsed, and Bigby had perished while petrified! His companion Nigby then expended a rare and powerful Wish spell, and so the loyal and intrepid Bigby was finally brought back to life. [23-9]

\* \* \* \* \*

And so it would go, the adventure never really ending. Was Bigby ever rescued? Of course! Did Mordenkainen ever again suffer such a defeat? No, but there were times in battle against liches or entire armies when Gary was cutting it very close. Gary once related (in *Dragon* magazine, issue #299) that soon after the ordeal with the Terrible Iron Golem, Mordenkainen decided he needed to surround himself with bodyguards, henchmen, associates and other protective individuals. After all, his faithful NPCs had saved his life. He could expect even deadlier encounters in the future, and who was to say that he would survive the next time he dared to vie with Rob Kuntz's ominous monsters and other deadly encounters?

It was time for more manpower, in spades. Hiring mercenaries and paying them well, Gary soon had "a score or two" (meaning 20 or 40!) of soldiering followers to Mordenkainen's name, in addition to his other PCs and NPCs. By deduction we can estimate that Mordenkainen was around level 12 or 13 at this time. As he ascended into the teen levels, both his army and his ambitions expanded. He outgrew the plundered dungeons of El Raja Key, and decided to make an impact on the wider world he lived in. The upkeep costs for his Citadel, NPCs and soldiers quickly became exorbitant and he was forced to consider the seizure of ever-greater treasures to fund his growing legion. Many of Gary's later exploits with Mordenkainen in 1974 and 1975, therefore, involved wilderness — and specifically, road and shoreline excursions — with his legion and companions. And why? Because Gary had designed the game's treasure tables, and he knew that the most common and easiest "rich" monsters to conquer were bandits, brigands and pirates. [23-10] Bandits typically found in camps, while pirates of course ply the Oerth's rivers and seas. It was time to leave the dungeons and to go reaver hunting.

The more Gary considered this ploy of thieves hunting thieves, the more he liked it. The wealthy societies of the Flanaess despised robbers, brigands, highwaymen, corsairs and the like, and no one would miss them if a few hundred of them went missing overnight. Why not let the wizard and his little army clear the countryside, making the Flanaess a safer place? Gary might even be able to replace the losses in his legions by offering mercy and conscripting the defeated. With a little care, this could become a self-propagating scheme.

And on and on it would go — if he planned correctly — with Gary carefully calculating his odds of maximizing monster-carried wealth through opportune encounters based on terrain (and the random tables he had originally developed, of course!) Perhaps Gary even remembered that in one of his favorite fantasy tales, *The Mathematics of Magic*, there is a point in a journey through the monster-harried wilderness where protagonist Harold Shea complains, "Traveling through Faerie [Land] is just one damned encounter after another." To which his companion Chalmers replies, "It

is logical that it should be so. *The Faerie Queene* indicates that this is a world wherein an endless and largely planless concatenation of encounters are a part of the normal pattern of events.” [23-11]

Of course, despite all foreknowledge Gary could never fully control the nature of random encounters in the wilderness. But he could study the tables that Rob would use for random rolls, and decide on the terrain which might yield the likeliest opportunities. He could also frequently avoid dragons, giants, and other deadly mega-monsters that might wipe out his legion in a brutal confrontation. Gary therefore proceeded to “cherry pick” the region around the Nyr Dyv, scouring its shores. Perhaps he also went down the Selintan and prowled the Wild Coast. He certainly followed roads between cities, knowing that bandits prey on merchants, and caravans follow the quickest routes for travel.

His very first ploy, however, was even more calculated. Gary decided to have Mordenkainen’s minions simulate a wagon train so that his army could pose as a vulnerable caravan ripe for plundering. Covered wagons were selected instead of carts because Gary wanted to hide his well-armed soldiers away from the view of any prospective thieves. A particularly large wagon was even built to hide a subdued red dragon for extra firepower.

When the ruse was fully developed, Mordenkainen the Merchant’s Merry Traveling Show set out for a tour of Oerth’s dangerous roads. A little time passed, and bandits eventually attacked. Imagine their surprise and horror when the robed merchant proved to a wizard, the porters were archers, the “goods-laden” wagons were troop carriers, and a vicious dragon was set loose into the skies!

The hunters became the hunted, and the bandits were wiped out. Mordenkainen and his band gained a lot of treasure. Rob, seeing Gary’s tactics in play, was faced with a serious quandary. He could modify the encounter tables to “cheat” Gary, but Gary was playing fair and the fudge factor implied by a complete overhaul of the tables seemed too severe a reaction for such skillful play. Instead, Rob decided on a more realistic solution to the problem: so many bandits, brigands, thieves and pirates were wiped out that the countryside became safe, and the word got out that a vengeful masquerading mage was on the prowl. Mordenkainen and his crew gained several experience levels before the gold rush petered out, but eventually the gravy train faded away. Mordenkainen and Bigby thus became both wealthy and renowned, which attracted even more troops to the mages’ banner. Soon they would field an army capable of besieging strongholds and even walled towns ... but these are later details which appear to more properly date to Books IV and V of **HAWK & MOOR** (1976-1977).

\* \* \* \* \*

Many of those further adventures are only whispers without detail, and so now it is time for us to stop reminiscing about Gary's characters for a while. There were other adventures to be experienced by Greyhawk's other champions, Robilar and Tenser.

\* \* \* \* \*

Such inglorious defeats and losses were not foreign to Greyhawk's other players. In early 1974, while Tenser was still aloft on his flying carpet and trying to return from his journey through the Oerth, there was treachery afoot in the Old City. The good and evil gods of Greyhawk each had their own minions, the sacred and the infernal. One of the powerful priests of light was Serten, a cleric of the "Powerhouse Church of the Presumptuous Assumption of the Blinding Light" played by Ernie Gyax. [23-12]

One of the greatest priests of darkness was a mysterious lord of the unholy, played by Tom Champeny. Apparently, Champeny's character was never named (or at least the name was not shared by Tom), but Rob Kuntz has referred to him as TC or "Tecee." [23-13] Serten was about 7th or 8th level, and the evil one was more powerful than he. [23-14] The good Patriarch of Greyhawk may have been busied with the resurrection of Yrag or another fallen champion of light at this time, and unable to protect Serten or his ilk.

Some of the more circumspect lords in the City of Greyhawk believed that the three lost adventurers were undertaking a slow return (presumably from the depths of Greyhawk's dungeons), but most of the city's denizens believed that all three of these champions had been slain. With Tenser presumed dead, his wealthy accomplice Serten was therefore at wide risk (and not just by Champeny's EHP). Serten possessed many powerful items from his adventures shared with Tenser in the Greyhawk dungeons. However, it seems that he was not well-known for his venturesome spirit. Serten was Ernie Gyax's secondary character, which he played when Tenser would be too overpowering. [23-15]

While Tenser was being played, Serten was “dormant” in the City of Greyhawk and he rarely did anything on his own. As such, he was vulnerable to others’ evil acts. Two players — identified as Tom Champeny and Bob Dale [23-16] — conspired to take Serten’s treasures for themselves. It seems that Champeny’s character, the Evil High Priest, coveted Serten’s regalia. [23-17] These two villains murdered the poor cleric in cold blood, and stole his +3 plate mail, a magic shield, and a staff of the serpent.

The other players were dismayed by this atrocious act. Some of the other player characters pooled their gold together and had Serten raised from the dead. These good Samaritans swore that they would exact vengeance and hunt down the murderers. The two murderers fled the City of Greyhawk, and took sanctuary with another Evil High Priest far to the south of the city. Murlynd (played by Don Kaye) tried to hunt them down, but when he realized that they were being sheltered in a stronghold of evil he was forced to give up his quest. Serten never did recover his treasures, either! [23-18]

A nasty precedent had been set in the game: it was possible for the players to snipe at one another’s henchmen, and to murder and steal. Things were about to get very ugly as the play group’s ethical ground rules began to crumble.

Ernie was not the only player having these kinds of problems, however. While Sir Robilar was still away in Cathay, he was also presumed dead. An advantage-seeking distant cousin — an NPC played by Gary Gygax — took an avaricious interest Robilar’s castle. [23-19]

This nameless NPC had managed to find an immense gem in a magical “gem tree” region of the Greyhawk dungeons, and so had progressed from the 1st to 7th level (of experience) in a relatively short period of time. This was before Gary created the rule that a character could gain no more than a single experience level during a single adventure, and may well have been the impetus for that ruling in the name of game balance. Through such fortune (and Dungeon Master fiat, of course), this anonymous cousin quickly rose to power and managed to lay an undisputed claim to Robilar’s castle.

When Robilar finally returned, he and his upstart cousin were very unhappy to see one another. An aggressive spat took place, and Robilar kicked his cousin out of the castle. [23-20]

Robilar took over his stronghold once more, and made certain his imperious claim would not again be disputed by anyone. We can roughly estimate that Robilar took back his castle in early 1974. Tenser and Terik enjoyed their own homecomings at about this time as well. These three would soon turn their collective attentions back toward the dungeons beneath Greyhawk Castle.



And what happened there? No one seems to remember. To my mind, it seems that Robilar, Tenser and Terik would have quickly returned to the “orc level” (dungeon level one) to reestablish their control. There is a note relating to this time which tells us that Quij was commanding some orcs for Robilar, and it seems logical that he was there; but beyond that there is very little that I can say about this mystery. It seems likeliest that the first level of the Greyhawk dungeon was revisited soon after Robilar’s return, but there is no evidence. There may have also been more adventures in the deeper dungeon levels at this time, but if so they are lost to history.

Besides these misadventures, the players may have been busy with some of the special new side levels hidden within Castle Greyhawk’s dungeons as well. Gary would later publish an inspired and twisted D&D version of Lewis Carroll’s *Wonderland*, entitled *Dungeonland* (published as Dungeon Module EX1 in 1983). In the Afterword to this module, Gary said that *Dungeonland* was reached through the Castle Greyhawk dungeons, and that “the adventurers came upon [*the magical gateway into Dungeonland*] quite by accident after about a year of play.” Since we know that the Greyhawk campaign began in approximately December of 1972 and January of 1973, this would place the first *Dungeonland* adventures in perhaps January of 1974.

These Carrollian realms were probably first explored by Robilar, Tenser, Terik and several others. Gary once cryptically hinted, “Terik had some hilarious run-ins in the Land Beyond the Magic Mirror with the Walrus and Carpenter, but they were more of the ‘you had to be there’ sort.” [23-21]

There are many excellent set pieces in the published versions of these inspired “Alice” settings, which collectively exude the same quirky and fearful charm as did the rest of Zagy’s dungeon. Particularly fine examples of Gygaxian wit therein include: a grotto of random and wild potion waters; Charldos, or rather “CHARLes DOdgSon,” the senile archmage (who bears a striking resemblance, in powers and behavior, to a certain Mad Archmage of the Greyhawk dungeons); a menagerie of dangerous fungi, perfect for Drowic underworld settings; a fantastical Mad Hatter; the monster-puzzle of the Chessboard Fields; the nonesuch Jabberwock, with eyes of flame; Jub-Jub birds and Bandersnatches; and an iron golem riding atop an iron steed. Perhaps the most touching piece found in the published version is an extended exploration of Murlynd’s (Don Kaye’s) home, where the man’s playful personality is made abundantly clear but the man is not to be found. Due to this heartfelt tribute it seems likely that the Murlynd sub-environment featured in Dungeon Module EX2, *The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror*, was designed soon after Don Kaye’s passing in early 1975.

The Alice dungeon-realms are quite underrated in my opinion. We hardcore fans tend through jaded eyes to think of the legendary Greyhawk campaign as something almost sacrosanct, untouchably serious and important. However, it is all too easy to become lost in such grim thoughts and to lose sight of the whimsy: *it's a game*. Gary and the players were having a blast. Epic tales of heroic sacrifice had their place, but so did silly puns, pranks and obvious nods to pulp fiction tropes, timeless stories, and trashy movies. I strongly recommend these pure Gygaxian adventures to anyone *truly* interested in the early spirit of the game. You never know how deep the rabbit hole really goes, until you dare to explore it for yourself.

\* \* \* \* \*

In a similarly winsome spirit, Gary also developed new monstrous challenges for his players by using completely unpredictable sources of inspiration. Beyond movies, fairytales and classic fiction, he also derived ideas for *Dungeons & Dragons* from plastic toys.

These introductions of “Japanese” monsters to the game are impossible to date effectively (besides the rust monster dating to early 1973), [23-22] but it is known that some of them premiered in Gary’s game in 1974 and 1975, and so I will speak of them collectively here. Many of these iconic beasts seem to have come from the same source: bags of cheap plastic monster toys from the local five and dime store. [23-23]

These “Prehistoric Animals” were received from various manufacturers in Hong Kong, and many were actually rip-offs of copyrighted Japanese movie monsters. Their evocative and sometimes humorous appearances tempted a great deal of speculation about their strengths, weaknesses and special abilities. Gary noted that “various persons involved [*in the Chainmail Fantasy play tests and later game sessions*] suggested what they might be. Eventually, we created names and stats for all, and so the resemblance [*to classic monsters featured in the Monster Manual*] is no coincidence at all.” [23-24]

For those who find such trivia interesting, I will provide some details on the various new monsters here:

\* \* \* \* \*



**The Bulette:** In Greyhawk, the bulette was originally called “the Bullet,” due to its rounded back shell and pointed snout. The toy concept was originally inspired by the creature Gabora, as featured in episode 9 (“Operation: Uranium”) of the 1966-1967 Japanese Tokusatsu series, *Ultraman*. [23-25] The Gabora creature apparently travels by burrowing underground. [23-26] In its first appearances in the Greyhawk campaign c. late 1975, Tim Kask noted that the creature had been encountered a couple of times but had only “run down a crowded hall and made people fall down. That’s all it had done, so there really wasn’t anything [*to its game stats*] yet.” [23-27] Its abilities were powerful in Gary’s game, but rather vague. The toy was later called “the Landshark” by the Lake Geneva gamers, based on a *Saturday Night Live* skit which aired on November 8th, 1975.

One day Gary asked Tim Kask to give it a more detailed write-up, and this would appear in *The Dragon* #1 in June of 1976. This would be the first monster Tim ever invented. [23-28] Amusingly, at the time Tim was very annoyed by *The Lord of the Rings*, and also by Tolkien-adoring players who demanded to play hobbits at every turn. He found the people who cited Bill the Pony as an exemplar of epic hobbit-pony abilities to be particularly irksome. Therefore, he would specifically note that the bulette preferred to eat halflings and ponies whenever it could. [23-29]

\* \* \* \* \*

**The Owlbear:** The owlbear was based on a strange-looking toy which is believed to (badly!) represent the bowl-headed kappa of Japanese mythology. This figure by the way is now rare, and worth a small fortune. Snap it up if you ever find one!

\* \* \* \* \*

**The Rust Monster:** This is perhaps the most famous of the toy figures, with its appearance borrowed with complete faithfulness for the illustration found in the 1977 *Monster Manual*. It is believed that Gary himself came up with the monster’s fearsome powers, perhaps after noticing that the creature had a propeller tail and long antennae, but no really vicious appendages to speak of. The lack of any obvious attack form — and, probably, the toy’s badly-speckled paint job — forced him to get creative.

\* \* \* \* \*

**The Troglodyte:** The troglodyte is based on a reptilian / amphibian figure with a saurian snout, but unfortunately I have not yet identified the original inspiration which caused the toy to be made. *Ultraman* is a possible source, and perhaps specifically the monster Telesudon. [23-30]

The troglodyte monster beyond the toy is actually from Greek lore and a novel by Abraham Merritt, which I detail in **HAWK & MOOR** Book IV.

\* \* \* \* \*

**The Umber Hulk:** Unlike the “green Hulk” of Marvel fame, this creature’s figure was based on the Japanese Toho Kaiju named “Antlar” (or sometimes “Antler”). Gary came up with the stats and powers after marveling at its girth, mandibles and confusing eyes. [23-31]

\* \* \* \* \*

Various other figures found in these “Prehistoric Animal” packs look suspiciously like cockatrices, dragons, rocs and wyverns. It seems likely that Gary picked up the packs for these recognizable figures, and then got tired of looking at the unused ones, and decided that *they* needed to become monsters too. And why not? *Dungeons & Dragons*, as any experienced Dungeon Master knows, is the great cosmic vacuum cleaner: *anything* that looks like a suspiciously good idea gets sucked up and assimilated with the rest of the jumble, whatever it might be. The only limits to such integration are an individual gamer’s self-imposed limits upon the imagination.

And why have limits at all, when you can have more fun?

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 23

[23-1] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Gary Gyga Q&A, Part IV. Posted August 19th, 2005.

[23-2] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part V. Posted January 29th, 2004.

[23-3] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part V. Posted January 29th, 2004.

[23-4] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part X. Posted June 13th, 2006.

[23-5] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part X. Posted June 13th, 2006.

[23-6] Gary talked about this tactic several times, for example at ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A Part X, posted June 27th, 2006. “Hydra snails are the specialty of Mordenkainen,” he wrote, “many attacks in one, as it were.”

See also Dragonsfoot.org, “Lake Geneva Campaign,” posted February 12th, 2003.

[23-7] Gary would also later note that these tusked behemoths were to be found through a magical portal within the castle ruins, which led to “a world where everything was super-sized.” Wisely, the mages explored this world only briefly, and in haste. Refer to ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A Part II, posted March 27th, 2003.

[23-8] According to Gary’s recollection, Yrag perished “several times,” and so we have a very clear example of the deadliness of old school *Dungeons & Dragons*. Even the master’s cherished characters got slaughtered at an alarming rate!

[23-9] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part III. Posted May 4th, 2003. Magic items which contained Wish spells were “highly prized,” said Gary, “and generally reserved for bringing back a beloved character.” He also noted that “after a few hilarious times where the incautious PCs misused them, all such were saved for desperate situations.” In other words, Wishes became Resurrection spells by default simply because they were too dangerous to use for more frivolous or greedy concerns ... perhaps because Gary was a stickler about the wording of self-serving Wishes in the name of game balance.

[23-10] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted December 22nd, 2002.

[23-11] *The Mathematics of Magic*, by L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt. In my Baen edition of *The Complete Compleat Enchanter*, this quote occurs on pg. 173.

[23-12] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "What original Greyhawk material is available?" Posted December 29th, 2010.

[23-13] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "City of Greyhawk."

[23-14] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "How come Serten was a cleric, but has a MU spell?"

See also the thread "Serten."

[23-15] Online web forum post: Doomsday Games forums, "Serten."

[23-16] Online web forum post: Doomsday Games forums, "Serten."

[23-17] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Evil PCs in Greyhawk?"

See also "Greyhawk? Don't really care about it" at the Paizo.com forums.

[23-18] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Murlynd."

See also the Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar and evil races."

[23-19] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar's tower."

[23-20] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar's tower."

[23-21] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 29th, 2002.

[23-22] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Gary Gygax, Part XI.

[23-23] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A threads. Posted February 14th, 2007.

[23-24] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 19th, 2002.

[23-25, 23-26] Refer to the blog *The Mule Abides*, post "Origins of the Displacer Beast and Rust Monster," posted January 10th, 2011, and including the comments section. The Youtube clip "Ultraman Scene Gabora" is also of interest.

[23-27] Refer to the Youtube clip “Gygax Magazine Interview with Tim Kask,” posted by Grogard Games. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 41:30.

[23-28] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, “New game company forming?”

[23-29] Refer to the Youtube clip “Gygax Magazine Interview with Tim Kask,” posted by Grogard Games. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 41:30.

[23-30] See for example the helpful toy listings with detailed pictures at ClubTokyo.org.

[23-31] For more on these creatures and the collectors who covet them, please refer to the Acaeum thread “Bulette & rust monster plastic toys.”

## CHAPTER 24

# WARLORDS OF OTHER WORLDS

(APRIL –  
AUGUST 1974)

BACK IN reality, *Dungeons & Dragons* sales finally began to rise again throughout the spring and early summer of 1974. Promotional efforts continued unabated. Notices and advertisements appeared in various publications (such as *El Conquistador* and the *Great Plains Game Players Newsletter*), and the college campuses began to buzz as more new fantasy gamers were welcomed into the fold.

The Greyhawk game sessions continued unabated, typically twice a week with games on Wednesday and Sunday afternoon. Gary reported, “The semi-weekly meetings for the campaign in Lake Geneva have seen an increase from an original half-dozen to as many as 16 eager players, crowded close to hear the moderation by the referees, and loving (almost) every second of it! Those who can be only occasional visitors have all expressed a desire to begin their own local campaigns.” [24-1]

Various pulp novels and the recommendations of the players would continue to inspire new monsters, spells and treasures in the game. Sometimes television and cinema played their inspirational parts as well.

On April 5th for example, a movie which had already been seen in the United Kingdom premiered for the first time in the United States. This was *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, a remarkable sequel to *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*. This movie like its predecessor featured the amazing stop-motion effects work of Ray Harryhausen, and would go on to win the first Saturn Award for Best Fantasy Film. We cannot be sure when Gary first saw this movie, but we know that he loved it because its effects would inspire his conception of the Energy Drain effect, and would inform his interpretations of the centaurs and griffons found in Greek mythology. This movie was also the primary source of inspiration for the homunculus, the stone golem, and indirectly the Type V demon.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Greyhawk and Blackmoor campaigns were not the only incubators of these many new ideas. Soon, fantasy role-playing would embrace another creative luminary, a man whom Gary and Dave only first became aware of indirectly.

As mentioned in Book II of **HAWK & MOOR**, Professor M. A. R. Barker had been introduced to *Dungeons & Dragons* by Mike Mornard (the former Lake Geneva player whose characters Gronan and Lessnard had been played in the Greyhawk campaign). It seems that Professor Barker’s

introduction to the game of D&D occurred in late 1973, when Mike was game mastering for a play group at the University of Minnesota. Later, perhaps in January of 1974, Mike showed the Professor his new D&D boxed set, and the Professor was very interested to see the entirety of Gary and Dave's open-ended rules system.

Apparently, Professor Barker (while observing the D&D game being DMed by Mike) objected to something which transpired during play: the adventurers had encountered an angel, and defeated it in battle. The Professor said that the angel was semi-divine, and should have been unconquerable by mere presumptuous mortals (or something similar). After all, Mike explained, the angel had specific game stats and the PCs had won in accordance with the rules. The Professor then asked, with calculated perception: "Then how many hit points does Jesus Christ have?" [24-2] Mike, being a charming soul from time to time, replied that if Professor Barker didn't like the rules, perhaps he should go design his own. Little did he know that the Professor would soon do precisely that! [24-3]

With his curiosity sparked, the good Professor sent a purchase request to TSR. We know from the booklet inscriptions in Barker's personal copy that he acquired his personal D&D boxed set on February 19th, 1974. [24-4] According to Mike, Barker then "disappeared for about six weeks" with D&D's concepts well in mind, [24-5] and then returned to the game table in the spring with unique rules for adventures in his own fantasy world of Tékumel. Incredibly, it seems that in addition to the D&D-derived rules for play in Tékumel, the tireless Professor Barker had also devised his initial *Petal Throne* play test setting — the underworld city of Jakalla — during those six weeks, complete with over 1,000 pre-generated NPCs. [24-6] Later, Barker's rule set would be play tested and self-published (in August of 1974), [24-7] and then elaborated upon and republished by TSR as *Empire of the Petal Throne* in the summer of 1975. [24-8] (The publication date for *Petal Throne* is listed as August 1st.) [24-9]

Also during that fateful time (around the month of April), the Professor wrote some commentary which would later appear in an issue of *Wargamer's Newsletter* (dated August 1974). Besides providing a few details about the Mornard games (Mike apparently liked to kill adventurers with orcs and Balrogs), this notice was important because it provided an unsolicited appreciation of *Dungeons & Dragons* from a respected source outside of Gary's own play circle. [24-10]

This correspondence was probably one of the ways in which the creation of Tékumel and its associated role-playing rules came to Gary's attention. Gary was concerned about protecting his Intellectual Property inherent in *Dungeons & Dragons*, and he talked to Phil to urge that the game



not be published with so much D&D material under its banner. Gary was “rather upset about how much of the [*Tékumel RPG*] system came from D&D.” [24-11] He once wrote, “[*Professor Barker*] lifted large sections of the D&D game and was planning on publishing, but I heard about it and put the brakes onto that. I informed him that if TSR was the publisher, fine; otherwise, he had better devise new rules.” [24-12] The Professor agreed to these terms, and the future publication of *Empire of the Petal Throne* was thus assured under the auspices of TSR.

Tékumel would add an exotic flavor to *Dungeons & Dragons*, offering a world of unparalleled richness and cultural ambiguity which Barker had derived from inspirations quite beyond Gygas’s and Arneson’s pulp fantasy. The game was quickly growing beyond its original confines, with lands and worlds afar unfolding along the borderlands of the imagination. As more imaginations came into contact with the game, D&D proved itself to be virtually limitless in creative potential. And with the purchase of D&D sets throughout the world and new Dungeon Masters creating their own campaigns outside of Gary’s purview, many more surprising worlds of wonder would soon come into being.

The enchanting background Professor Barker’s unique imaginary world would later be adeptly described by Dr. John Eric Holmes, thusly: “Tékumel has been colonized, in the distant past, by humans and other races from far parts of the galaxy, suppressing the original inhabitants. The world then suffered some cosmic catastrophe, was dislocated in space and time, and is now isolated completely from the rest of the universe, alone with its sun and two moons in a continuum where the ordinary rules of physics no longer hold. Here magic is possible and demons from other dimensions can enter Tékumel and influence the course of human events. The catastrophe destroyed the human civilization and most of its technology and now, after 25,000 years or more, mankind has risen again to something one step ahead of barbarism.” [24-13]

\* \* \* \* \*

At about this same time (perhaps early in the spring of 1974), Gary and Brian Blume were devising and play testing *Warriors of Mars*, a game designed to emulate the exotic Barsoom setting as portrayed in the John Carter novels written by renowned pulp author Edgar Rice Burroughs. A reader may well wonder: was Gary inspired to develop his own “alien world exploration game” as a result of reading hints of Barker’s work? No, it does not seem that this is possible. The Foreword to *Warriors of Mars* hints at a more mundane trigger, one which is still quite interesting.

A game company which had been creating Martian-themed miniatures requested that Gary design such rules; this likely means that any general similarity to *Tékumel* is entirely coincidental. This company by the way was Hinchliffe, whose stateside manufacturing partner was Heritage Models. Heritage would later release a game entitled *John Carter, Warlord of Mars* in 1978.

These two parallel “alien world” games by Barker and Gygas/Blume would end up being completely different from one another, but Gary would later come to appreciate *Empire of the Petal Throne* as a true and worthy successor to *Dungeons & Dragons*. The Professor’s game was also admired by Dr. Holmes. He hailed *Petal Throne* as a “minor masterpiece” which details “one of the most exotic planets in all of imaginary literature.” [24-14]

Professor Barker’s game was the one to most decisively prove that the concept of fantasy role-playing could be lifted out of one genre (pulp *Swords & Sorcery*) and moved into another (alien science fantasy), creating a new world-game governed by similar rules shared with its ancestor ... a revolutionary idea at the time.

Gary and Brian moved quickly ahead with their own game design, both eager to add Barsoom to the realms of playable fantasy. As the dimly-envisioned TSR Wild West game (likely first conceived in early 1974) was still understood to be Don Kaye’s pet project, Gary did not force a timeline upon that separate system. Instead, he and Brian decided on a narrower scope for *Warriors of Mars* which would allow them to publish a new game fairly quickly. It would be a multi-situational combat scenario system, primarily, with a few exploration systems but only token nods to role-playing or character motivation. This is somewhat surprising, considering that the introduction to D&D noted that those rules were written to be enjoyed by sci fi readers who loved “Burroughs’s Martian adventures where John Carter is groping through black pits.” [24-15]

Indeed, John Carter is signified in the rules as a 13th-level fighting man ... the same as Sir Robilar in the Greyhawk campaign. But *Warriors of Mars*, perhaps in the interests of development time and cost, would actually be quite restricted in its potential. There would be no new TSR RPG at this time. “Campaigns requiring a referee and several participants,” Gary explained in the booklet’s Foreword, “are generally left to the imaginations of those concerned.” And in another section of the rules, more tellingly: “These aspects [of a wider game design] would affect only the ‘personal adventure’ area of the rules, and in the interest of space they were omitted.” Any poor players who were interested in a Barsoom RPG were summarily directed to “pick up a copy of *Dungeons & Dragons*” to fill the gaping holes left in the framework for *Warriors of Mars*. [24-16]

Ah well! And now, it seems — due to labyrinthine legalities, limited profit potential caused by the failed Disney film, and a fading fan base — that a more modern and definitive E. R. Burroughs RPG will never be made.

The rules to *Warriors of Mars* were completed in the late spring of 1974, perhaps in late June. Gary's Foreword, typically the last section to be written, is dated July 1st. Gary noted that the game was an equal and collaborative effort between Brian and himself. Brian created the combat system (which Gary later admired for its ability to "facilitate unarmored protagonists fighting and surviving hordes of opponents"), [24-17] Gary devised the monsters, and the rest of the work was shared. [24-18]

The game would be finalized and printed in time for Gen Con, and there it would sell fairly well. The problem it would face, however, was a legal one: although the earliest Barsoom novels were already in the public domain, the E. R. Burroughs estate would raise a legal challenge on the grounds that TSR was selling a game based on a trademarked property without permission. Therefore *Warriors of Mars* would only stay in print for about a year. Gary once estimated (to his hazy recollection) that perhaps between (less likely) 3,000 and (more likely) 5,000 copies had been printed, and no more would ever be printed again. [24-19]

The game was still being advertised in *The Strategic Review* early in 1975, but mysteriously vanished by the time the autumn issue was released. Barsoom would still appear in Gary's private Greyhawk campaign, however. We will consider those "secret" adventures, as played out by Ernie's new character Erac's Cousin, a bit further on.

Meanwhile, Gary and Don and Brian continued to fret over D&D sales. By April 30th, only 300 boxed sets had been sold (leaving about 700 still in inventory).

Fortunately, TSR's promotional efforts began to pay off in May when several publications released D&D articles and notices in rapid succession. The initial orders which had been received and disseminated by several of the shops and distributors were running out, and they placed new orders with TSR. Word of mouth continued to generate further sales as well. [24-20] A review of the game appeared in *El Conquistador*; Gary's interpretation of the proposed thief class appeared in the *Great Plains Game Players Newsletter*; [24-21] and *Wargamer's Digest* published the tale of Mordenkainen and the Terrible Iron Golem.

And yes, it is true that Gary Gygax did not originate the thief class. He listened to some details provided by Mr. Switzer over the phone, and then "made" the class based on the systems which Mr. Switzer's group had already used in D&D play.

More specifically, the development of the thief class originally went like this:

The Aero Hobbies shop gaming group in Santa Monica, California, had a regular Dungeons & Dragons campaign. While DM D. Daniel Wagner was refereeing, a player tried to have his dwarf PC pick a lock with a dagger. From this, Daniel developed a Burglar character class (likely inspired by Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*, among other things). The class was designed mostly for henchmen (NPCs), so that adventuring groups could have a designated risk-taker to perform the dangerous safecracker-type tasks that folkloric thieves were famous for. [24-22]

The group liked the idea, but they decided to rename the class as “the Thief.” Hugh Singh and Gary Switzer contributed additional ideas and helped to refine the class. [24-23] The thief as originally designed had a 100% chance to perform class-based activities (such as picking locks, disarming traps, and so forth). Additional abilities were gained at each new experience level. [24-24]

Mr. Switzer, the owner of the Aero Hobbies shop where the play group convened, [24-25] called Gary Gygax and told him about the new class idea. We know that Gary loved it, because he snagged the idea and published a version of this concept by himself!

Gary was the one who added the percentages for thief skill success, which added an element of danger to the class. [24-26]

Gary’s refinement of the class was based on the character Cugel the Clever, as featured in Jack Vance’s Dying Earth novel *The Eyes of the Overworld*. To this he added a few elements from the character Shadowjack from Roger Zelazny’s *Jack of Shadows*. [24-27] Gary also once noted the influence of *Thief of Llarn* by Gardner F. Fox and Conan’s tales of thievery too. [24-28]

Tim Kask once noted that the Gray Mouser (from Fritz Leiber’s Lankhmar tales) was a major influence on Gary’s conception of the class as well. [24-29] Gary, however, said that the Gray Mouser “was too good a swordsman to serve as the pure model” for the archetypal thief. [24-30] And of course, the influence of Bilbo Baggins from *The Hobbit* (which Gygax characteristically downplayed) cannot be ignored either! But these were simply examples of the thief in pre-existing fantasy fiction; the D&D class’s particulars were created and play tested outside of Greyhawk itself.

This was not an uncommon situation. Many readers who play AD&D, or who are not familiar with D&D’s 1974-1975 incarnations, are surprised to learn that Gary did not create most of the game’s character classes by himself. For anyone who would like to consider all of the particulars in one place, I offer here a summary of the major D&D classes (published from 1974 to 1978) and their actual originators:

\* \* \* \* \*

**[1st] The Fighter:** This class exemplifies the “warrior” of Swords & Sorcery fiction. Created as the fighting man by Gary Gygax in 1972, following after his earlier work in *Chainmail* (1970-1971). Ernie Gygax was the first player to roll a fighter.

**[2nd] The Magic-User:** The “wizard” of Swords & Sorcery fiction. Created by Gary Gygax in 1972, following after *Chainmail*. Either Ernie or Don Kaye played the first magic-user in D&D.

**[3rd] The Cleric:** Developed from the Village Priest concept precedent set forth by Dave Arneson in 1972, and then refined by Gary Gygax in 1973. Mike Carr played the first Village Priest.

**[4th] The Paladin:** Most likely created by Gary Gygax, circa mid-1974, and published in the *Greyhawk Supplement* in March of 1975. The first paladin was played by Terry Kuntz.

**[5th?] The Assassin:** Created by Dave Arneson (according to the recollections of James Ward and Tim Kask), [24-31] circa 1974-1975; refined by Tim Kask for publication in the *Blackmoor Supplement* in late 1975. The first player of an assassin is unknown, but it may have been Dave Arneson (using an NPC). Gary once noted that he created the class, but without any significant details this is open to debate and seems very unlikely. [24-32]

**[6th?] The Ranger:** Created by Joe Fischer in 1975, closely modeled after the portrayal of Strider / Aragorn in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. The player of the first ranger, if not Mr. Fischer himself, is unknown to me.

**[7th?] The Thief:** Apparently developed by Daniel Wagner and his area’s play group, then refined for play testing by Gary Gygax in 1975; play tested at Gen Con.

**[8th?] The Druid:** Developed by Dennis Sustare and his play group in 1975, following their review of the Druid NPC template released in the *Greyhawk Supplement* (March 1975), which was developed by Gary Gygax and Rob Kuntz.

**[9th?] The Monk:** Created by Dave Arneson’s play group, and possibly Brian Blume, circa 1974-1975. Edited heavily by Tim Kask and Gary Gygax for the *Blackmoor Supplement* released in late 1975. The first Blackmoor player of a monk is not known, but Terry Kuntz appears to have been the first Greyhawk player to embrace the class for long-term play.

**[10th] The Illusionist:** Created by Peter Aronson and published in *The Strategic Review* in late 1975.

**[11th] The Bard:** Created by Doug Schwegman and publicized in *The Strategic Review* in early 1976.

\* \* \* \* \*

As this list of detailed attributions demonstrates, Gary was always in his natural element not as the “great originator,” but rather as the “great refiner.” He did not always come up with the original ideas, but he — greatly assisted by the editorial efforts of Tim Kask, beginning in the fall of 1975 — *did* come up with the published and workable versions of each class. Of these 11 most famous character classes, only 3 were conceived by Gary. When we crack open the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Players Handbook* (1978) where all of these classes were gathered together for the first time, we find that all of these people were credited (non-specifically) for their work, except that poor Mr. Switzer and Mr. Wagner were not credited at all. This oddity in turn was a result of Gary’s intense re-codification of (A)D&D from 1976 to 1979, where he would take the lion’s share of the credit (to his later legal detriment). The reason for this, simply, is because he did most of the work from 1976 on. In the early 1970s Mr. Gyax was much more collaborative, and much more willing to honor the contributions of others to his game designs.

\* \* \* \* \*

While Gary was working on *Warriors of Mars* and the thief class draft, he continued to promote D&D and *Chainmail*, and fielded calls and letters. *Chainmail* player Tim Kask (who had earlier in the year impressed Gary by tracking down his phone number) called Gary once a month or so to talk about the game. [24-33] Discussion of *Chainmail Fantasy* led to Gary talking about his new game, *Dungeons & Dragons* (which sounded pretty strange to Tim). Tim got hung up on the idea that there was no board or sand table, no miniatures, and that the game referee described everything. How was it possible to play?

“When Gary first tried to explain the game methodology in one of our phone chats,” Tim explained, “I had to stretch a bit to imagine [it] ... I told him that I was having a bit of difficulty



grasping the concept. He laughed ... I think this may have been the first time I had heard or used the term ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ as applied to gaming.” [24-34] When Tim continued to have trouble grasping the concept, Tim said that Gary “invited me to come to Lake Geneva and Gen Con in the summer of ‘74 and see for myself.” [24-35] This was likely in late May or early June. [24-36]

Fortunately for TSR (and for D&D fans worldwide!), Tim would soon take Gary up on his offer. It was, as they say, the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Sales of D&D continued to pick up throughout this period. On June 2nd, Gary wrote a letter to David Megarry — yes, the designer of *The Dungeons of Pasha Cada*, who was still waiting patiently for his own game to be published — and reported, “Sales are really quite good ... the company is worth about \$6,000 or so.” [24-37]

This gives us a fair idea of the number of games sold by the middle of the year. As Gary once related, “By the summer of 1974 we had sold some 500 copies. Amazing! Counting all of the illicit photocopies that were floating around, and the players who didn’t own their own set, it is a safe bet that no fewer than 10,000 persons then knew of and were enthralled by the D&D game.” [24-38] Sales were just over 100 copies a month, and from this point forward would only continue to grow by leaps and bounds for the next ten years. [24-39]

Gary once noted of this time that the competition was moving away from mockery, and beginning to get envious of this surprise success. As he explained, “We [TSR, producing *Chainmail* and ‘74 D&D] became the strange fellows who thought fantasy was more fun than wargames. And then, we became the ‘lucky’ nobodies, riding a fluke which would soon burn out.” [24-40]

Ah, but the popularity surge of *Dungeons & Dragons* was only just beginning. TSR’s wild star would burn gloriously for quite some time yet to come. Life was busy, life was good.

In play, Gary added the untested new thief class to the Greyhawk campaign. He introduced the class by playing thief NPCs, and then later allowed his players to experiment with it. [24-41] However, he was still uncertain about the class because it was so different from the two major play style paradigms of “warrior” and “wizard.” After all, a cleric in its simplest form is simply a mythic Knight Hospitaller, a warrior-wizard hybrid with religious overtones. The thief however was something totally new. It changed problem solving and the very way the game was played. The thief would be play tested further at Gen Con, and was probably not made available to Greyhawk players until the fall.

New experimental worlds were being added to Greyhawk as well. At some point during the year 1974, Gary added some unusual twists to the Greyhawk dungeons by creating special gates to other worlds. As he once explained, “To spice up my own D&D campaign back in 1974 I added a number of special ‘dimensional portals’ so that players might enjoy adventures in strange places that were different from the ‘everyday’ realms of fantasy.” [24-42] Gary once noted that there were “a half-dozen or so” such regions “accessed by transporter.” [24-43]

Unfortunately, there is limited information available detailing when these areas were created. This phenomenon is very difficult to date more specifically, because there were numerous such portals and the adventures therein have never been very well explained. The five events which offer us the best clues as to when Gary might have placed these portals are as follows: (1) his mention of Dungeonland being explored after about a year of play; (2) James M. Ward learning D&D and playing in the King Kong island adventure; (3) the writing of *Warriors of Mars*, and the creation of systems for exploration and combat on Barsoom; (4) the adventures of Erac’s Cousin on Barsoom; and (5) the overall group’s earliest explorations in Alice’s Dungeonland. The approximate dates for these events are (1) January 1974; (2) summer 1974, before Gen Con; (3) before July 1, 1974; (4) perhaps the end of 1975; and (5) c. January and February 1974.

From these hints, I shakily estimate that the Barsoom and Skull Island portals were created in the early summer, and the Dungeonland portals early in the year. This is an open research item, and I will try to be more specific in the future.

\* \* \* \* \*

Throughout all of these expansions to the Greyhawk game, there were also opportunities for Gary to expand his play circle as well. In the early summer of 1974, a young substitute teacher from Elkhorn named James M. Ward had the good fortune to be shopping for books at the Lake Geneva News Agency. [24-44] It was weekly “new book” day (when the new shipments are received, and the savvy customers were well aware that this was the best time to pick up batches of new material. James bumped into an older man, causing both men to realize that they picked up the exact same seven titles. Clearly, this was a fateful encounter between men with similar interests! [24-45]

It seems that James had come to appreciate Swords & Sorcery by way of earlier exposure to science fiction. He once related in an interview [24-46] that his family (along with the Wisconsin National Guard) was transferred to Washington State during the Cuban Missile Crisis. James, as a



lonely 5th-grader far away from his friends, purchased some *Tom Swift* books for entertainment and fell in love in with the ideas of starships and ray guns and all the rest.

During their bookstore encounter, James and Gary got to talking about history and fantasy, and Gary described his new game. “He told me he had a game where I could play Conan the barbarian and fight the forces of Set,” James wrote, “and I was hooked.” [24-47]

That weekend Gary invited James over to his home, and so one day “a couple of weekends later” [24-48] in June Mr. Ward showed up to learn how to play. Gary and Brian sat James down on the porch and taught him how to play *Dungeons & Dragons*. [24-49] “As a complete stranger, I was warmly welcomed,” James remembered. “I sat on his side porch and Brian Blume ... taught me how to roll up a character. I rolled a good Intelligence and Dexterity and made my first, magical character [*a magic-user*]. We sat and played ... I simply can’t describe how much fun I had, and continued to have, as the weeks and months went by.” [24-50]

James noted that they played an adventure where the party “went to King Kong island,” [24-51] which indicates that Gary’s “Monkeying Around” special Greyhawk portal — later to form the basis of Dungeon Module WG6, *Isle of the Ape* — was already in play in the campaign. I believe, as I related in **HAWK & MOOR** Book II, that the original adventure on the Isle took place in approximately September of 1973.

In James’s case, his teensy weensy new magic-user foolishly cast a Light spell into a hut full of hostile natives ... with less than stellar yet truly illuminating results. (Ernie, playing Tenser, wasted a Wish spell saving this reckless apprentice’s life.) [24-52]

After the game was done, James said that Gary should write a new and more technically inspired version of D&D. “I made the suggestion that he should do a science fiction version of the game,” James remembered, “and he was nice enough to say, ‘Jim I’m too busy right now, why don’t you give it a try?’” [24-53] James indeed took the offer seriously and started writing. [24-54]

James’s goal was simple: he wanted to make “a game that was basically D&D in a spaceship in outer space.” [24-55] He realized that the easiest way to convert the idea of endless dungeons to science fiction would be to envision a vast colonization ship which filled with mutants, and he ran with that concept until he had roughed out a starship-enviored dungeon crawl. [24-56]

*Dungeons & Dragons* had obsessed him, and he possessed considerable talents and imagination of his own. Over that summer he would quickly develop a few pages of outline material, summarizing character types, technology, gadgets, and sci fi “monsters,” along with many other ideas. [24-57]

Considering how important James M. Ward's science fiction creations (particularly *Metamorphosis Alpha* and *Gamma World*) would become to TSR's legacy and the history of D&D, it is worthwhile for us to take a little time to explore some of James's favorite science fiction. As mentioned earlier, James explained that he first dug into the genre with *Tom Swift*. [24-58] His favorite author was Roger Zelazny, and he also appreciates Bill Baldwin, Bernard Cornwell, Philip José Farmer, Simon R. Green, Robert Heinlein (his second favorite), [24-59] Elizabeth Moon, Andre Norton (but not the D&D novel, *Quag Keep*) and Jack Vance. He also liked the movie *Forbidden Planet*, as well as the classic TV series *The Outer Limits* and *The Twilight Zone*.

When the outline for "science fiction D&D" was done, Gary was impressed and liked it enough that he wanted to see a rules draft. [24-60]

And yes, Mr. Ward kept writing. James's ambitious game design would later prove to have significant potential. There would never be a sci fi version of D&D, however. Well ... not *exactly*. But eventually, James's draft would lead to the science fiction role-playing game *Metamorphosis Alpha*, and then on to the associated milieu of *Gamma World*.

\* \* \* \* \*

And by this time another summer was flying by, and it was conference season once again! This would be the first RPG con since the publication of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Gary was dedicated toward making his game as successful as possible, and ensuring that D&D would be the #1 game in its field. Gen Con was the arena where that dominance would be displayed.

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 24

[24-1] *Wargamer's Digest*, issue #7, page 24.

[24-2] Online web forum post: the Comeback Inn forums, "Q&A with Jeff Berry."

[24-3] Online web forum post: the Comeback Inn forums, "Q&A with Jeff Berry."

[24-4] TékumelFoundation.org blog. Thanks go to Tim Kask for pointing this out on the Acaeum forums as well.

[24-5] Online web forum post: RPG.net forums, "Why I hate modules."

[24-6] The Comeback Inn forums, "Q&A with Jeff Berry."

See also the Hill Cantons blog, "Exploring the Jakallan Underworld, Playing with Arneson, and More: Jeff Berry Interview."

[24-7] The Comeback Inn forums, "Q&A with Jeff Berry."

See also the Hill Cantons blog, "Exploring the Jakallan Underworld, Playing with Arneson, and More: Jeff Berry Interview" and "Empire of the Petal Throne, the 'Gamist' Early Years."

[24-8] TékumelFoundation.org blog, "Another 40th anniversary."

[24-9] *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, Library of Congress, Copyright Office.

[24-10] *Playing at the World* by Jon Peterson, pg. 473.

[24-11] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted March 16th, 2005.

[24-12] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted January 25th, 2004.

[24-13] *Fantasy Role-Playing Games*, by John Eric Holmes, 1981.

[24-14] *Fantasy Role-Playing Games*, by John Eric Holmes, 1981.

[24-15] *Dungeons & Dragons, Volume 1: Men & Magic*, TSR, 1974.

[24-16] *Warriors of Mars*.

See also the Grogardian retrospective for same.

[24-17] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted July 4th, 2005.

[24-18] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted October 22nd, 2007.

[24-19] Online web forum post: Refer to the thread “True ‘Jumped the Shark’ Bidding.”

[24-20] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[24-21] Playing at the World blog, “Gygax’s Thief Addition.”

[24-22] Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboards, “Manual of Aurania.”

[24-23] Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboards, “Manual of Aurania.”

[24-24] Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboards, “Manual of Aurania.”

[24-25] See the Zenopus Archives blog, “*The Manual of Aurania* (1977),” posted September 26th, 2013.

[24-26] Online web forum post: ODD74 Proboards, “Manual of Aurania.”

In regards to the use of rudimentary PC skills before the advent of the thief skill percentage system, Tim Kask once noted, “Before thieves, most DMs used a roll against Dex[terity] to open doors, locks, and chests.”

[24-27] “Jack Vance & the D&D Game,” an article by Gary Gygax which originally appeared in *The Excellent Prismatic Spray* #2, 2001.

[24-28] Online web forum post: Refer to the thread “Thieves’ World, Lankhmar, Why Do You Like Them?”

[24-29] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted April 3rd, 2011.

[24-30] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted January 25th, 2004.

[24-31] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted October 16th, 2009.

[24-32] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted September 15th, 2007.

[24-33] Grogardia interview with Tim Kask, Part I.

[24-34] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted January 20th, 2009.

[24-35] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted October 18th, 2011.

[24-36] Grogardia interview with Tim Kask, Part I.

[24-37] Letter to David Megarry, as quoted in *Of Dice and Men: The Story of D&D and the People Who Play It*, by David M. Ewalt, pg. 92.

[24-38] *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*. Published by Wizards of the Coast, 2004.

[24-39] RPG.net interview with Gary Gygax, part 1 of 3.

[24-40] *Dragon* magazine, issue #65, pg. 6.

[24-41] For background and comments see the ENWorld.org forums, Q&A with Gary Gygax, Part I, posted September 18th, 2002.

[24-42] “Jack Vance and the D&D Game,” by Gary Gygax.

[24-43] Yahoo Gygax Games mailing list, posted October 22nd, 2004.

[24-44] *Polyhedron*, issue #3, pg. 6.

See also MetamorphosisAlpha.net, “Ask Jim Ward / 900 Words,” originally written for September 20th, 2002.

[24-45] Boardgamegeek.com, “Game Designer James M. Ward.”

Refer also to the Dragonsfoot James M. Ward interview.

[24-46] *Polyhedron*, issue #3, pg. 6.

[24-47] Sword and Sanity blog, interview with James M. Ward.

Refer also to the Dragonsfoot James M. Ward interview.

[24-48] *Polyhedron*, issue #3, pg. 6.

[24-49] Sword and Sanity blog, interview with James M. Ward.

Refer also to the Jim Ward bio at EldritchEnt.com, and the Dragonsfoot interview.

[24-50] DnD Shall Never Die blog, “Looking back at D&D miniatures.”

See also *The Crusader Journal*, issue #8.

[24-51] The Dragonsfoot James M. Ward interview.

[24-52] MetamorphosisAlpha.net, “Ask Jim Ward / 900 Words,” originally written for September 20th, 2002.

[24-53] The Jim Ward bio at EldritchEnt.com. Refer also to the Wizards of the Coast James M. Ward interview, and the Dragonsfoot thread “Metamorphosis Alpha --> AD&D.”

[24-54] Boardgamegeek.com, “Game Designer James M. Ward.”

[24-55] MetamorphosisAlpha.net, “Ask Jim Ward / 900 Words,” originally written for October 4th, 2002.

[24-56] *Polyhedron*, issue #3, pg. 6.

[24-57] Online web forum post: Metamorphosis Alpha forums, “Rough notes, proto-MA.” James Ward later clarified (in a Facebook post) that this first game took place in the month of June.

[24-58] *Polyhedron*, issue #3, pg. 6.

[24-59] MetamorphosisAlpha.net, “Ask Jim Ward / 900 Words,” originally written for December 30th, 2002.

[24-60] Online web forum post: Metamorphosis Alpha forums, “Rough notes, proto-MA.”

## CHAPTER 25

# DEATH BY LUCITE AND LEGERDEMAIN

(SUMMER 1974)

THE ARENA was prepared. Tactical Studies Rules was now poised to become the first and dominant power in the nascent community of fantasy wargaming. The very newness of the concept, however, was causing difficulties for TSR as it attempted to build an audience. Fantasy devotees and wargaming simulationists did not always see eye to eye. With the popular sharing of D&D at Gen Con and the game's later proliferation, the uneasy amalgamation of younger fantasy gamers and experienced wargamers was about to become a divide within the fan base.

Gen Con VII was held from Friday through Sunday, August 23rd-25th, 1974. The ever-growing con was held not only in the Horticultural Hall, but also in the nearby Guild Hall and the Legion Hall as well. This would be the first time that the con spanned over three days, and Lake Geneva's already-busy restaurants and accommodations were filled with enthusiastic gamers from across the nation. [25-1] There was a good turnout of several hundred people. One of the people who purchased a set of *Dungeons & Dragons* at the con that year was Bill Owen, future founder of Judge's Guild. [25-2]

As D&D sold like crazy, Gary realized that the new audience included many people who had no experience with (nor interest in!) historical wargaming. [25-3]

Miniature figures were displayed by several companies, and sold very well. The enthusiasm shared by the vendors of these new startups was infectious: "Many of the early companies fit right into [*the gamers*'] camaraderie," Tim Kask once explained. "They were gamers too, indulging their passions in small companies that as often as not broke even or even made a very few dollars." [25-4]

TSR showcased their new release, *Warriors of Mars*. Mimeographed packets featuring the new thief class were also made available at the TSR booth. *Dungeons & Dragons* was played non-stop everywhere on Saturday, and ended up being the hit game of the con. [25-5] Dave Arneson ran Blackmoor-inspired dungeon crawls, Rob Kuntz did the same for Greyhawk, and anyone who couldn't get in a formal game simply sat down and started playing with strangers. Fighter characters were beefed up by the new exceptional strength rules, and an informal play test of the thief class took place as many players rolled them up at the con to try out the new mode of play.

Several future TSR employees were at Gen Con for the first time as well. Ralph "Skip" Williams was there, and played in some interesting games (but apparently not yet *Dungeons & Dragons*). [25-6] He would go back to school in the fall, interested in the gamer phenomenon. One of his classmates was Ernie Gygax, so Skip would soon learn about the various games played in the Gygax household, including *Warriors of Mars* and D&D. [25-7]



James M. Ward was a first-time attendee as well. He had loved learning to play the D&D game at Gary's house over the summer, and was happy to see just how many other devotees were already present in the burgeoning *Dungeons & Dragons* community. [25-8]

Tim Kask was also in attendance, having been invited by Gary over the phone earlier that spring. Tim has to date provided the most detailed descriptions of Gen Con VII, and so we will see much of the con through his eyes. I am indebted to his generous open contributions to the Dragonsfoot forums over the years for much of the following information.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Horticultural Hall was where the action was at. It was hot, cramped, loud, glorious ... and stinky. Yes, gamer stink has a long tradition too, but I will leave it to another intrepid soul to write a full book about the phenomenon! [25-9]

But despite that, Tim felt like he was coming home. He had never guessed that so many gamers could gather in a single place, let alone play games with one another and welcome strangers into their midst. As he once recalled, "This was the Elysian Fields. So many games! (Probably 12.) So many fellow gamers! (Probably 60.) So many [*miniature*] figures in one place! (Hundreds, perhaps some few thousands, more than I had ever thought of at one time). Being in the same place with dozens or even hundreds of people that share your, what was then, very peculiar fascination is to be immersed in an energy field of light and force and shared power. Amazing, astonishing, awe-inspiring; these are but a few words to describe the first con experience. Back then, we were so few." [25-10] And "We were members of a fellowship," he explained, "a brotherhood." [25-11]

Tim got to meet and speak with Gary for a while, and Gary encouraged Tim to check out some wargaming. Games were being played everywhere, on boards, behind screens, on makeshift battlefields and crowded tables. Tim played a few wargames in the afternoon, and then later in the evening he decided that he would try out *Dungeons & Dragons*. After all, he was on a one-day trip (Lake Geneva had "no vacancies for miles and miles around"), and this was his one chance to try Gary's weird game with someone there to teach him the basics. Poor Tim had never played D&D before, but he later noted "I had the rudiments in my head" as a result of the earlier phone calls with Gary. [25-12]

A big eighteen-year-old guy, by the name of Rob Kuntz, was walking down the aisles and asking for more players. Rob walked up to Tim, and asked if he would like to try an adventure game. Tim

readily agreed. He had no idea that he was about to be subjected to an early version of “The Machine Level” ... one of Rob’s unique and more diabolical designs from the dungeons of Greyhawk. [25-13]

Beginning our long and honorable tradition of welcoming newbies to learn D&D at game cons and then slaughtering their characters outright in the most amusing ways conceivable, Rob had Tim sit down in the back of three noisy rows of chairs.

Tim had volunteered to play along with half a dozen other players, and as a novice he was given the role of a fighter. Tim didn’t really know what he was doing, so when the other players told him to “guard the rear” while they trooped along he followed and did exactly that. One time, while Tim was looking away to the back, a trap was sprung by someone in the front rank. [25-14]

There were many battles against terrible monsters, which ultimately ended in Tim’s dwarf (and all the other adventurers) being captured. The prisoners were brought before their captors’ god: a massive machine from another world (which looked suspiciously like UNIVAC). This thing, covered in dials and blinking lights, bore the ominous name of Deus Ex Machina. Unable to escape, the hapless adventurers were encased in transparent Lucite. This futuristic substance was gas-permeable; the prisoners could breathe, but they were frozen in place. [25-15]

The immobilized prisoners were then mercilessly “cubed” apart by a laser beam. Some of the players might have been outraged, but this was a one-shot learning scenario just for fun. Hey, death is one of the best ways to enforce a time limit on a con scenario!

Naturally, Tim was utterly befuddled. Even more naturally, he wanted to play some more. For his next D&D session, Tim was given a dwarf fighter equipped with chain mail, a shield and a battle axe. He also made sure his character was up in the front rank, so that he would have a clue as to what was going on! There was much hacking and slashing over the next two hours. At some point toward the end, Tim’s promising character performed a rescue and was “adopted by a dwarf-king and made his heir.” [25-16] Tim was playing the only dwarf, so he somberly received the dwarf lord’s reward: a medallion of office which bestowed upon him the authority to take over a castle occupied by a hundred loyal dwarven warriors. Tim was thrilled, feeling he had basically won the game. [25-17]

Impressed, Tim then went to the TSR booth and bought a boxed set, along with a bag of polyhedral dice. He then went and said farewell to Gary (while holding the box of trophies he had won wargaming that day), [25-18] and promised to keep in touch while he tried out the game. Gary respected Tim for going so far out of his way to attend Gen Con. He shared some of his future plans

for TSR, and mentioned that once Tim finished college there might well be a future editorial position waiting for him in Lake Geneva. [25-19]

Gary by then was thinking about the possibility of a big-time periodical which would spread the influence of *Dungeons & Dragons* specifically, and *Swords & Sorcery* in general. As Gary later explained of his plans for Tim's potential future: "When I decided that *The Strategic Review* was not the right vehicle [for broader marketing and awareness], [I] hired Tim Kask as a magazine editor for Tactical Studies Rules, and named the new publication he was to produce *The Dragon*." [25-20]

But we are getting a bit ahead of ourselves ...

Tim left later that night, concocting schemes to get his college gaming club — the Strategic Game Society at the Southern Illinois University of Carbondale — to try out *Dungeons & Dragons*. [25-21] During that autumn after Gen Con, he would teach his friends how to play ... and because he possessed the only set of rules, he became the Dungeon Master by default. [25-22]

\* \* \* \* \*

When Gen Con ended, the fervent players who wished it would never end carried their enthusiasm (and their purchased games) back to their friends and families in many different places. And 1974, of course, was the first year that anyone brought home *Dungeons & Dragons*. Tim Kask once noted [25-23] that the spread of the game was viral. It passed into susceptible populations at universities and in various game clubs, brought in by a "carrier" who was dead-set on infecting everyone in sight. In this manner — like a zombie plague, *One of us, One of us* — D&D spread to Boulder, Detroit, and many other previously "uninfected" cities. TSR had a very poor distribution network in those early days, but word of mouth carried from Gen Con and worked brilliantly where distribution or paid advertising might well have failed. And even more important, word of mouth was free!

One of the most enthusiastic carriers, as one might guess, was Tim Kask himself. But he had a heck of a time educating his fellow wargamers about this bizarre new game that didn't have any board, play pieces, or victory conditions. [25-24] It was tough going, but Tim had the distinct advantage of having been introduced to the game by Gary and refereed by Rob. He played the game before he ever had to attempt reading the rules, which gave him a uniquely powerful perspective on the more unusual aspects of the game. *Dungeons & Dragons* haltingly took over Tim's gaming group, and soon he would have an entire campaign going. Then, of course, he would

have lots of new questions for Gary on the subject of refereeing. This in turn caused him to keep in touch until he graduated from college, and the rest is history.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the summer of Gen Con VII, the Greyhawk games became more divided than ever before. The campaign was healthy, but Robilar, Tenser and Terik were so far beyond the other players that there were really two different modes of play: high-level epic quest, and low-level basic dungeon crawl. The only “mid-” level participants which are fairly well documented for this time are Don Kaye’s Murlynd and Tom Champeny’s EHP. After the returns of the “three champions” from China and the resurrection of Serten, Gary was facing quite a conundrum in entertaining his veteran players further. They had conquered the entire Greyhawk dungeon, and had even returned from three different trips around the world. What else could challenge such mighty heroes?

Harkening back to the Swords & Sorcery stories which had originally inspired the game, Gary considered the powerful unique items which were prevalent in many tales and myths. Nonesuch treasures such as Mjolnir (the Hammer of Thor), the Golden Fleece, the One Ring, Excalibur and Stormbringer established a useful precedent for a high-level adventure campaign. In tales these singular items glorified kings and laid demigods low, but they also tended to be cursed. Some of them even twisted fate and led to the bearer’s downfall. In *Dungeons & Dragons*, these magic items of ultimate danger and power would come to be known as “artifacts.” Artifacts would soon be used as major adventure hooks, goals, and even obstacles in epic-level play.

We do not know exactly when these items began entering the game, but it seems that the first ones were discovered in the summer of 1974. And because they were not featured in the *Greyhawk Supplement* (which was finalized at the beginning of February), it is doubtful that the first artifacts could have been fully developed until the spring. The concept was therefore likely still in development when summer rolled around, but we do know a little bit about what was on Gary’s mind at the time. The artifacts the veteran adventurers first learned about would later be known as the Crowns, Orbs and Sceptres of Might. [25-25]

Together, *Dungeons & Dragons Supplement III: Eldritch Wizardry* and the *Dungeon Masters Guide* explain how these items are to be introduced into play for high-level characters. First, the items would be chosen and carefully hidden in the game world. Rumors would be heard that magnificent

one-of-a-kind treasures crafted by the ancients were still in existence. Then, interested characters would need to use Legend Lore spells, sages, and obscure texts to learn more about the last known resting place of any specific item. Gary would later stress that “those artifacts and relics which you bring into play should be so carefully guarded by location and warding devices and monsters that recovery of any one is an undertaking of such magnitude that only very powerful characters, in concert, and after lengthy attempts have any chance whatsoever of attaining one.” [25-26]

These checks and balances, however, were not in place in 1974 when he was experimenting with the concept, and the sheer greed manifested in the characters (and players!) desperate to possess these items would soon disrupt the entire campaign.

It seems that Gary first placed at least two such items in his game world, the Crown of Good and the Orb of Evil. In all, there were nine such items: a Crown, an Orb and a Sceptre comprising a set, and different sets for Evil, Good and Neutrality. The Crowns were for magic-users, the Orbs were for clerics, and the Sceptres were probably for fighting men.

The Rod of Lordly Might item appears to be a scaled-down version of what these Sceptres were capable of. (Or perhaps, instead, the Rod served as a template for later artifacts of greater power.) The Rod is capable of changing form, becoming a mace, axe, spear or flaming sword as the wielder desires. It is also capable of causing terror, inducing paralysis, or even draining a victim’s life force. [25-27]

Given the classes of the three veteran adventurers, it seems that the Crown of Good was intended for Tenser, and the Orb of Evil for either Robilar or Terik. However, since all three characters were neutral, it appears that Gary was carefully testing the waters by making these items both attainable and impossible to use. Would Tenser turn to good? Would Robilar or Terik turn to evil, or offer the Orb to an allied cleric? With the precedent of “no limits” being set by the murder of Serten, the players were wondering: Would Gary set any restrictions on future developments in the campaign? Would raw and merciless force rule the day? Just how far would the characters allow their greed to go in the name of power?

Pretty damn far, it seems.

The hints of these three artifact trinities may have begun percolating in the City of Greyhawk in the spring or early summer of 1974, and Tenser and Robilar both became obsessed with these taunting dreams of ultimate treasures. Before any of the artifacts were ever discovered, it appears that Tenser was pursuing the three Crowns, and Robilar was probably seeking the three Sceptres. [25-28]

The game was changing, and the players' mindsets were changing as well. Gary was innovating and shaking things up, but it was still very possible for his players to surprise him. One of the most surprising developments occurred early in the summer, when Rob Kuntz decided that Robilar was no longer of neutral alignment. Instead, he became lawful evil. [25-29]

This may have been because he had received hints that one of the evil artifacts was hidden nearby, but it seems more likely that he was just satisfying his own curiosity and making an in-game decision that would offer more interesting play opportunities. In Rob's own words, "I wanted to test the way of darkness within the game; and boredom. I had tested the limits of neutrality. It was a player's choice, nothing more or less." [25-30] Gary once had Tenser, portrayed as an NPC in Dungeon Module WG6, state that his former companion Lord Robilar had turned and walked away with his "feet ... on a path unspeakable." [25-31] In my opinion, this decision bears a quite remarkable resemblance to the fall of grace exhibited by Elric (in Michael Moorcock's fiction), and his being branded as an eternal outsider with his own curious and unassailable personal code of corrupted honor.

It is notable that Robilar rarely committed thoroughly evil acts after this sudden turn of alignment, and was always considered honorable by his former companions. Gary had no idea why this occurred, and seems to have been disappointed in Rob's arbitrary choice. But Gary would later stress that in *Dungeons & Dragons*, the player should always be able to make such a choice as a matter of free will.

The *in-game* change, however, was abrupt in its effect. Robilar stealthily killed some of his own elven hirelings. But one of the elves escaped, using a potion of polymorph to turn into a bird. The elf flew away to alert Robilar's companions (and the authorities in the City of Greyhawk, no doubt) that Robilar had inexplicably turned to evil. [25-32]

The forces of good were thus aware of Sir Robilar's evil nature. What had happened? Was Lord Robilar possessed? Was Rob still in control? It seems that Tenser was most especially alarmed, and alerted the City's powers. The Green Dragon Inn property was immediately confiscated. [25-33]

Tenser meanwhile was growing fearful because of Robilar's turn to evil. The good mage was urgently pursuing his own research and divinations, which he believed would soon lead to the discovery of one of the nine artifacts of power. On a long outdoor solo adventure, Tenser finally managed to discover the first artifact ever revealed in Gary's game: the legendary Crown of Good. [25-34]



Because Tenser was neutral in alignment, he could not use the fabled Crown. Therefore, he underwent a long “repentance” process which resulted in him having a metagame-inspired change of heart. He got rid of money (perhaps giving it away to charities or temples of good), freed his subdued evil dragons, did penance, and thus was by painful degrees was converted to good alignment. This all took place in a single game session, with Gary grudgingly allowing the change because the player really wanted to perform it. Rob was thoroughly annoyed by all of this, because Ernie was not making the change for reasons of sincerity; he was transparently making an in-game shift so that he could use the Crown of Good to make his character stronger. Rob said dismissively that this ploy by Ernie was “the ultimate favorite fudge with swirl on top, and it outraged all of the other participants in Greyhawk.” [25-35]

The desire of Tenser to equip the Crown was obviously the result of a shameless lusting after power. The crown increased his experience level by one, and bestowed 10% magic resistance. Even better, it allowed him to cast Teleport Without Error spells at a whim, and he could cast Geas on any good magic-users and force them to go onto world-spanning quests! Clearly, these powers would become game-breaking if a single character was allowed to possess an artifact while everyone else had to make do with mere magical armor and vorpal weapons. [25-36]

This imbalance of power could not be allowed to stand!

Throughout the months to come — and now in absolute rivalry with *all* of Ernie’s characters — Lord Robilar would engage in a daring spree of one-upmanship. He would beat Tenser through the Tomb of Horrors. He would compete with Erac’s cousin in attempting to reach Barsoom, and would even plunder the Temple of Elemental Evil before Berne could reach the dungeon’s bottom level. In 1976, Robilar would find the second artifact in the campaign (the Orb of Evil), and he would take this fell relic of power to the Temple of Zuggtmoy — the Demon Queen of Fungi [25-37] — in a quest for greater allegiance to evil. Many of these adventures (in 1974-1975) are featured later in this work, while the Orb and the journey to mythical Lyhnn is chronicled in Book IV of **HAWK & MOOR**.

Echoing such behavior, the other players also stepped up their own efforts and engaged in personal rivalries. As greed and power and divided loyalties spread throughout the Greyhawk campaign, the other players decided that Tenser was now fair game. Some players felt that Ernie had “cheated,” making Tenser change alignment simply so that he could use the Crown of Good. Such opinions were not without merit. And yes, the campaign’s original Dungeon Master just happened to be Ernie’s dad. Was this a blatant case of favoritism, or simply a manifestation of envy in the less daring and accomplished players? Perhaps it was a matter of both.

We may recall the Evil High Priest played by Tom Champeny, who had already slain Ernie's character Serten and stolen his magical treasures. Thus emboldened and made more powerful, Champeny's cleric decided to strike again while Tenser was still learning to use his powerful new Crown. The play details are very hazy, but it seems that the EHP asked Tenser to sell him a powerful magic item. (Was it the Crown? The staff of the magi? Something else? No one can quite remember.) Tenser refused, and so the EHP later snuck up on Tenser in the wilderness, uttered a Finger of Death spell, killed the mage from ambush, and took the item for his own. After all, Champeny's EHP was the epitome of evil and Ernie had made himself a champion of good, no? Ernie reportedly joked: "Oh well, I guess I should have given it to you." [25-38]

Tenser's loyal cleric-companion Serten, having died to this same EHP a little earlier in the campaign, grimly managed to get poor Tenser resurrected. But another negative precedent had been set: now, it was not only "acceptable" for players to kill each other's lesser characters; it was okay for them to kill each other's main characters too. Anyone who wanted something another character possessed could simply attempt murder, and if the dice allowed a lucky ambush then Gary would run the battles according to the players' wishes. Everyone was suddenly fair game.

\* \* \* \* \*

The tales of Robilar and Tenser here begin to fade. In my interpretation, this was when Rob became too busy DMing to play Robilar very much. And due to the actions of the players becoming more spiteful and aggressive by the day, it seems that Gary too was losing interest in the original campaign. This was perhaps in the late summer of 1974. There were now a champion of good (Tenser), a champion of evil (Robilar), Tenser's understandable wariness toward all evil PCs, an unrepentant murderer (Champeny's EHP), one artifact of great power discovered and more on the way and a City ready to wage war against one of its former champions. Greyhawk was getting ugly. How could the teamwork and camaraderie exhibited by the players through all the early games of 1973 ever be reclaimed?

Worse, Gary had a situation where his own son and one of his best young friends were playing the two major antagonists. Whatever happened next in the game, it could only end in tears. This situation may have been one of the things that inspired Gary to begin his new Greyhawk campaign in the Hommlet region for the lower-level players, while encouraging Rob to run the City of Greyhawk campaign for the veterans on his own. This would have been a clever way to defuse the



rising tensions, taking Robilar out of the picture (except for the occasional special adventure, of course). In this way the original Greyhawk campaign quietly ended, even while it continued in a new and divided form.

Fun, it seems, was no longer the only reason to play *Dungeons & Dragons*. Some, having their fun at others' expense, coveted power over all. Perhaps it is for the best that Gary began to swing the pendulum the other way.

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 25

[25-1] *40 Years of Gen Con*, by Robin D. Laws, Trident, Inc. (d/b/a Atlas Games), 2007, pg. 23. Refer also to *Dragon* magazine #65.

[25-2] *Judge's Guild's Bob & Bill: A Cautionary Tale*, by Bill Owen. 2014 Kindle Edition. Refer to book location 12%/100%.

[25-3] *Polyhedron* #1. Also known as RPGA News, Volume I, Number 1, Summer 1981. "Special: Interview with E. Gary Gygax," perhaps conducted by Frank Mentzer.

[25-4] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted July 2nd, 2008.

[25-5] *40 Years of Gen Con*, by Robin D. Laws, Trident, Inc. (d/b/a Atlas Games), 2007, pg. 22.

[25-6] *40 Years of Gen Con*, by Robin D. Laws, Trident, Inc. (d/b/a Atlas Games), 2007, pg. 20.

See also the Grognardia interview with Skip Williams.

[25-7] Grognardia interview with Skip Williams.

[25-8] *40 Years of Gen Con*, by Robin D. Laws, Trident, Inc. (d/b/a Atlas Games), 2007, pg. 20.

[25-9] You can begin your research, should you dare, at the Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask, posted May 16th, 2007!

[25-10] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 4th, 2008.

[25-11] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted July 2nd, 2008.

[25-12] Refer to the Youtube clip "Gygax Magazine Interview with Tim Kask," posted by Grognard Games. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 18:00.

[25-13] Gary once wrote that the Machine Level appeared in Rob Kuntz's dungeon, which likely means that it premiered in El Raja Key instead of in the Castle Greyhawk dungeons. Refer to ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part IX, posted September 8th, 2005.

[25-14] Refer to the Youtube clip "Gygax Magazine Interview with Tim Kask," posted by Grognard Games. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 18:00.

See also the clip “Interview: Tim Kask,” posted by Mythwits, beginning at approximately 24:20.

[25-15] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Refer also to the Youtube clip “Gygax Magazine Interview with Tim Kask,” posted by Grogard Games. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 18:00.

The story is also told briefly in the Youtube clip “Tim Kask part 1 interview 1,” posted for rpgbomb.com, at approximately 5:45.

[25-16] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[25-17] Refer to the Youtube clip “Gygax Magazine Interview with Tim Kask,” posted by Grogard Games. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 18:00.

This story is also told in the Youtube clip “Tim Kask part 1 interview 1,” posted for rpgbomb.com, at approximately 7:00.

See also the clip “Interview: Tim Kask,” posted by Mythwits, beginning at approximately 25:00.

[25-18] Refer to the Youtube clip “Interview: Tim Kask,” posted by Mythwits, beginning at approximately 26:45.

[25-19] Grogard interview with Tim Kask, Part I.

[25-20] *Dragon* magazine, issue #248.

[25-21] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

See also *40 Years of Gen Con*, pg. 22.

[25-22] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[25-23] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 19th, 2010.

[25-24] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[25-25] Refer to *Eldritch Wizardry* and the *Dungeon Masters Guide*.

[25-26] *Dungeon Masters Guide*, TSR, 1979.

[25-27] *Dungeon Masters Guide*, TSR, 1979, pg. 133.

[25-28] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #14.

[25-29] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted May 23rd, 2007.

[25-30] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “What turned Robilar evil?”

[25-31] Dungeon Module WG6, *Isle of the Ape*, pg. 6.

[25-32] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "What turned Robilar evil?"

[25-33] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "The Green Dragon Inn."

[25-34] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar and the cleric orb."

See also the Dragonsfoot forums, "How far did Gygax go with Greyhawk?"

[25-35] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Straining Robilar's memory."

[25-36] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org, "Huge Favor Request for *Rogues Gallery* Owners." Posted October 27th, 2003.

[25-37] Zugtmoy was very likely inspired by "the House," a super-intelligent radioactive fungal creature featured in the novel *Hiero's Journey*. The House controlled a brood of slimes and lesser fungi, was psionic and sentient, and hated human life.

[25-38] A comment made on ENWorld. Regrettably I have lost the exact citation.

## CHAPTER 26

### THE CURSE OF SUCCESS

(SEPTEMBER –  
DECEMBER 1974)

IN MANY ways, the summer of 1974 had been the season of the antihero. The thief was in experimental play, Robilar turned evil, Tenser was slain from ambush, and the assassin class was being developed by Dave Arneson and his Twin Cities play group. Considering all of these thematically similar events, it should come as no surprise that Gary also decided to try out an evil player character at this time. Around the late summer or early fall, he rolled a neutral evil half-orc cleric/assassin. We can shakily attribute Gary's half-orc creation to the autumn of 1974 or thereabouts.

It is frustrating that we have so few clues about this nameless character, because the play test must have been fascinating. The character was developed a campaign being refereed by Brian Blume. [26-1] The half-orc only made it to about 3rd/3rd level before dying. [26-2] As Gary noted, this character was created as "a member of an evil adventuring party. He was soon killed, and of course none of the others in the group cared to do more than loot his body." [26-3]

The (calculated?) effect of the experiment was simple: many of the players (but by no means all) realized that evil characters would be poor choices for a long-term party-based campaign, and so they would become unpopular in future play. The option would certainly exist, but in a game where teamwork and companionship are crucial to survival — Robilar sometimes being the glaring and notable exception, of course! — the very nature of evil was detrimental to team play, to party success, and ultimately to character progression.

At some point in 1974, the "knight in shining armor" paladin class was tested as well. It is tempting to date this event to the autumn as well, as a reaction to the other "evil events" which were darkening the Greyhawk campaign. The paladin class was not only lawful and good, it demanded adherence to a strict code of honor. The class is enormously powerful, but that power is difficult to hold onto. The first player to seriously play test the paladin would be Terry Kuntz. [26-4] Gary would occasionally play a paladin as well.

The class was partly inspired by *Three Hearts and Three Lions* by Poul Anderson, [26-5] *Durandal* by Harold Lamb, perhaps the movie *Ivanhoe*, and of course the tales of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Most specifically, however, Gary said that the class was developed in consideration of Roland and the historical Paladins of Charlemagne. [26-6]

No one quite recalls who created the paladin class with absolute certainty, but Gary said that he did and Tim Kask is strongly convinced that it was indeed Gary himself, because it is "so rigid a PC class; that smacks of Gary's fiendish wit. Make a character truly extraordinary and make it really tough to play in terms of always having to do the 'right' thing, *always*." [26-7]

Also in the autumn, new players would soon be coming into Gary's games (a predictable after-effect of Gen Con.) After school came back into session, Ernie invited Skip Williams to come over and try out *Warriors of Mars*. [26-8] This was Skip's introduction to the Gyga household; the playing of D&D would come soon after. Gary liked Skip, and they spoke a lot about game design while Gary watched football. Gary would later invite him to play in the new low-level Greyhawk campaign as well.

\* \* \* \* \*

While all of this was going on, new D&D play groups were sprouting up everywhere. Two of these groups would be especially significant to the early development of post-publication *Dungeons & Dragons*: the Erebor campaign group of Bill Owen and Robert Bledsaw (soon to be partners running the Judge's Guild), and the Kwalishar campaign group of Tim Kask.

Bill's group probably began play in late August or early September. His friend Marc Summerlott designed an experimental dungeon; [26-9] and then Bill, Bob, and their friend David were the players, and everyone struggled as they tried to figure out the rules. [26-10]

Despite this laborious and rather rudimentary success, Bob Bledsaw was impressed enough that he asked to borrow the rules. Just like that, Bledsaw's imagination was up and running and he would develop an incredible campaign which would culminate in the publication of one of the great early D&D supplements, the City-State of the Invincible Overlord (as we shall see in Book IV).

Bledsaw first designed a setting based on Tolkien's Erebor, as featured in *The Hobbit*. Bill played the wizard Llangewellen the Blue, and heroically created a barony to surround the Lonely Mountain. [26-11]

Even the werebear Beorn made an appearance. And of course, the deepest level of the Lonely Mountain dungeon featured the tomb of Thorin Oakenshield, lain to rest with the magical elven blade Orcrist, the Goblin Cleaver. The dungeon also featured barrow wights, the "Home of the Cloud Giant," and a nest of pegasi. From these early inspirations, a flying pegasus would soon become the suitable and meritorious symbol of the Judge's Guild. [26-12]

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, down in Carbondale Tim Kask was devising his own dungeon and rereading the rules to D&D. Despite his Gen Con experience Tim was struggling with the nearly-incoherent rules, having “a miserable time” trying to figure out the game enough to play. It took him several weeks to figure everything out. [26-13]

He told his play group that on one particular Saturday, he would teach them the weird new game he learned how to play in Lake Geneva. Tim created what he later termed a “funhouse / Monty Haul dungeon,” [26-14] meaning that there was no quasi-realistic dungeon ecology. Every room was occupied and featured a different monster, and the action when the entered the dungeon would be fast and furious. That first game lasted for nine hours, and everyone loved it. [26-15]

However, Tim had spent a huge amount of time preparing the dungeon, and it had been plowed through very quickly. He therefore quickly changed his mode of game mastering: “I went that day from puzzle-creator and roadblock builder,” he explained, “to master writer letting the story write itself within the outline(s) I had scripted.” [26-16] In modern gamer parlance, Tim was already moving away from a “railroad,” DM-driven mentality and toward a more “sandbox,” player-driven mode of play.

Despite these advances, Tim was still confused by many of the rules. He noted in an interview [26-17] that he was calling Gary frequently for translations of difficult passages in the text. His constructive criticism of the messier sentences printed in D&D (beginning with “God, who wrote those rules?” asked of Gary!) [26-18] would plant the seeds in Gary’s mind that would eventually lead to Tim being hired as TSR’s copy editor.

Within a few weeks, Tim was turning his group’s *Dungeons & Dragons* games into a full-fledged dungeon crawl campaign during September and October of 1974. [26-19] This campaign, which was later restarted at the beginning of 1975 (as Tim came to understand more of the game’s rules and subtleties through play and his own editing of *D&D Supplement II: Blackmoor*), [26-20] has been referred to as Ruins of Kwalishar. [26-21] Longtime players of AD&D may recognize that name due to either the Apparatus of Kwalish (a magical contraption of great power), or perhaps by Tim’s occasional pen name in *The Dragon*, Omar Kwalish.

Tim began the dungeon games with about a dozen players, and soon a “hardcore” group of about eight people emerged, and these gamers wanted to play twice a week. One of the more infrequent players was Tom Wham, future designer of such charming and idiosyncratic games as *Snit’s Revenge* and *The Awful Green Things from Outer Space*. (Tom Wham by the way had also originally mentioned to Tim that he had met Gary Gygax once, which then resulted in Tim’s first call to Gary.) [26-22]



Tim would call Gary from time to time to let him know how the campaign was going. [26-23] During one call, Tim defined his interpretation of Dungeon Mastering with a metaphor: “I had become a storyteller with characters that wrote their own parts within the framework of the outlines of my story ideas.” Gary felt that this was an excellent description of D&D’s methodology, and would later define the game for new players in much the same way. [26-24]

The efforts of Tim and other Dungeon Masters served to create much of D&D’s grass roots popularity at various university campuses. Gen Con too had done very good things for TSR’s reputation, and a milestone was celebrated toward the end of the year: the first printing of *Dungeons & Dragons* finally sold out. [26-25]

This was both good news and bad news. Gary, Don and Brian had taken a “wait and see” approach despite the increase in sales, so there was a gap in late 1974 where there were no saleable copies of D&D ... and still a fair number of orders waiting to be filled. [26-26] Soon it would be time to make another D&D print order, and it would be a big one. Gary ordered a second print run from Graphic Printing Company which would total either 1,000 (more likely) or 2,000 (less likely) copies, depending on which recollection you choose to believe. [26-27]

Considering the rising costs of paper and ink, this order may have required an expenditure of either \$2,500 or \$5,000. It would take approximately 5 months for those new copies to sell out, implying that by the end of 1974 TSR was selling about 200 or 400 copies a month — even at the lower estimated rate, that figure was double the pre-Gen Con sale rate! [26-28] “There was no doubt anywhere now,” Gary would later fondly remember. “The game was a success. Little did we know how great a success it was to be.” [26-29]

The gap in availability, however, encouraged more piracy. Gary would pointedly speak against this practice from time to time in the early years, but in a much later interview stated that the practice was actually quite helpful for its indirect marketing effects: “In all, though, the ‘pirate’ material was more helpful than not. Many new fans were made by DMs who were using such copies to run their games.” [26-30]

Piracy was not the only problem at this time, as Avalon Hill was busy fighting back (via their magazine the *General*, and other routes) as the popularity of *Dungeons & Dragons* in wargaming circles was becoming ever more apparent. Avalon Hill decided to sponsor its first-ever gaming convention, an event which would be known as “Origins.” Throughout the 1970s, a rivalry would develop between Origins and Gen Con. But it must be noted that Gary took these early competitive developments in stride. When first discussing the AH con, Gary would helpfully encourage gamers to focus not on one faction or the other, but on gaming as a whole: “You should make a point,” he

urged his readers, “of attending either or both of these events, for they are an experience unique to wargaming.” [26-31]

Relations were not diplomatic everywhere, however. A veteran wargamer and game designer named Arnold Hendrick reviewed *Dungeons & Dragons* in *The Courier* magazine in an issue (Vol. 6, No. 6) which appeared in late 1974. [26-32]

Mr. Hendrick was very impressed with the game’s revolutionary ideas, saying that “the concept and imagination involved [are] stunning.” However, like many others he was confused when he tried to conceptualize how the game could actually work. His play test was awkward and faulty. The newness of the genre and the widespread lack of knowledgeable players concerned him as well. He even went so far as to suggest that play in person was “usually impossible,” and that “play by phone” (!) might be a workable solution. In addition to this he had valid criticisms concerning the game’s high price, the vague rules, and what he saw as the game’s too-ambitious scope. Most problematically, from Gary’s perspective, he ended his review by stating “I do not suggest these [rules] to the average wargamer.” And since Hendrick was quite respected and influential in his field, this could pose a serious problem to TSR’s future sales.

Despite the temptation for Gary to reply to such complaints, his rebuttal would not appear until the publication of TSR’s *The Strategic Review* #3, released in the autumn of 1975. Gary fairly regarded Arnold Hendrick as a potential rival, because Mr. Hendrick was busy creating his own medieval gaming rules, and Hendrick had also earlier spoken of *Chainmail* in a fairly critical manner. Therefore Gary felt quite justified in declaring Hendrick a biased reviewer with a decided conflict of interest brewing in his background. “The axe that Mr. Hendrick has been grinding so loudly and long,” Gary stated, “has been exposed.” And so, Gary inquired of his readers: “Could one expect honest and fair reviews from a source directly connected with a competitor of the product being reviewed?” [26-33]

This would not be the last negative review that *Dungeons & Dragons* would receive by any means. But it was one of the most potentially damaging ones, considering that it may have swayed the opinion of those wargamers “still on the fence” who were already leaning toward a negative opinion. Fortunately, this tempest in a teapot boiled off rather quickly without further conflict being sought by either party.

Although Gary had no way of knowing it, another influential person began hearing rumors about *Dungeons & Dragons* around December of 1974. [26-34] This would be a game devotee named Ken St. Andre, who read someone’s copy of the D&D rules for a few hours and decided that he liked the concepts but didn’t understand precisely how to play. Instead of just giving up, however,

remarkably he designed his own game that was more comprehensible. He didn't even own the game he was emulating! As he once explained in an interview, "When I created T&T [*Tunnels & Trolls*], I just wanted this kind of game that I could play with my friends. None of us owned D&D or had any idea of where to get it. None of us had the miniatures, the multi-sided dice — heck, we had never even seen dice that didn't have 6 sides." [26-35]

(The author must here confess that he did something quite similar, in elementary school, creating my own "D&D" game while I busily saved up allowance money to buy the expensive books and modules. The wait was agonizing. ~K)

St. Andre was not a foreigner to the realm of D&D-related properties, however: he was familiar with Avalon Hill, loved Burroughs, Howard, Leiber, Moorcock, and Tolkien, and he created ambitious *Diplomacy* variants which included Hyboria, the Young Kingdoms, and Barsoom. [26-36]

But the key inspiration for *Tunnels & Trolls* was confusion. As St. Andre explained, "If first edition D&D rules had made any sense to me, there probably never would have been a *Tunnels & Trolls*." [26-37]

St. Andre had a knack for quick and immersive game design, and he would "get" the core concepts of role-playing much more than wargamer Arnold Hendrick did. St. Andre best described his own game, calling it "*The Lord of The Rings* as it would have been done by Marvel Comics in 1974 with Conan, Elric, the Gray Mouser and a host of bad guys thrown in." [26-38]

He happily created his competing FRPG (T&T) which from the very beginning featured cleaner rules, easier mechanics and — perhaps most importantly of all — an affordable format.

St. Andre lived in Phoenix at the time (a city still largely untouched by the viral post-Gen Con spread of D&D, it seems), and would not be able to acquire his own set of this rumored "dungeon game" until the spring of 1975. It seems that he took D&D apart and rebuilt it to his own specs in April of 1975, resulting in an exceedingly humble first edition of T&T. [26-39] His play group fortunately convinced him that his preferred title, *Tunnels & Troglodytes*, was a poor one and so he ended up instead with a catchy and marketable name for his soon-to-be-viral RPG. [26-40]

*Tunnels & Trolls* would never pose a serious threat to TSR, but it did set a significant precedent: it was possible to make games very much like D&D, with a personal custom twist, and get away with it ... sometimes.

A displeased Gary would later sniff that T&T "apes a well-known, earlier work," and would let St. Andre casually damn himself in Gary's eyes by admitting in an interview that the first edition of T&T was basically "a pale shadow of *Dungeons & Dragons*." [26-41]

As a curious aside, I note that Gary never bothered to play *Tunnels & Trolls*. In fact, he never played any competitors' other fantasy RPGs at all! As he once stated in an interview conducted in 1984 and published in 1985, "I've never played another fantasy role-playing game. ... I have enough ideas, and don't want to be influenced." [26-42]

T&T certainly evolved into something much more, but Gary never seemed to note any appreciation for such niceties in the future!

TSR further exhibited a bit of nastiness after direct comparisons to *Dungeons & Dragons* were used in advertisements for *Tunnels & Trolls*, sending cease and desist letters to Metagaming Concepts and Flying Buffalo (two companies responsible for magazine and game publication respectively). Mr. Rick Loomis of Flying Buffalo was acquiescent to TSR's demands, but a chilly rivalry in gaming was about to begin ... and TSR was not particularly bent on making a lot of friends during the clashes to come.

As can be seen, TSR — as the forerunner in the new field of role-playing games — was very successful in the arena which it created. But that was both a blessing and a curse. The curse of success of course is that the more successful you become, the longer your coattails become as well, and there is never a shortage of potential riders waiting in the wings.

\* \* \* \* \*

In his "spare" time in late 1974, Gary was busy writing the copy for a new publication which would be entitled (for obvious reasons) *The Strategic Review*. Perhaps noting how effective magazines like the Avalon Hill *General* were proving to be during the winter when the summer-positioned Gen Con was but a memory (and with its next annual incarnation far away in the future), Gary decided that he should have at least a winter newsletter in the works to support TSR's games. He may have fully decided on this endeavor after talking to Tim Kask about publications and potential editorship, but this is speculation on my part.

*The Strategic Review* started off very small, but it would prove to be quite effective and influential. More significantly its modest success would lead directly to the future publication of *The Dragon* magazine. I believe Gary may have written the text of the first issue of TSR in December 1974 (as he mentioned in his "longbio" file that he considered himself the creator of that publication in 1974, not in 1975), but the first issue would be published later with a vague cover "date" of Spring 1975. Therefore, the exact timing of Gary's writing issue #1 is still unknown.

Meanwhile the D&D game continued to expand, drawing in ideas from hundreds of diverse sources. One of the noteworthy minor events in D&D history that we *can* definitively date is quite entertaining. Gary enjoyed a television series called *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, a short-lived but influential show which featured a Chicago reporter who investigated unlikely happenings. The causes of various crimes were frequently of supernatural origin. The show has been credited as a direct inspiration for *The X-Files*, and may soon be rebooted in a major production starring Johnny Depp.

The original Episode #11, “Horror in the Heights,” aired on December 20th, 1974. In that show, a demonic Hindu creature called a rakshasa plagues a Jewish neighborhood and Kolchak is forced to kill the thing — while it looks like a dear little old lady no less! — by shooting a blessed and sacred crossbow bolt into its belly. Gary quite enjoyed the show, and this particular episode’s antagonist struck him as being worthy for inclusion in the game. Thus, this episode would later inspire a line in the *Monster Manual* (1977): “Rakshasas cannot be harmed by non-magical weapons, magical weapons below +3 do one-half damage, but hits by crossbow bolts blessed by a cleric kill them.” [26-43]

\* \* \* \* \*

By the end of 1974, D&D had spread to many major cities. TSR at that time had generated about \$12,000 in sales. *Dungeons & Dragons* was the #1 bestseller, and *Warriors of Mars* was quite successful as well. [26-44]

Gary was thrilled, Don and Brian were very happy. Just as the company was finally gaining traction, however, everything came crashing down in a disastrous manner that no one could have ever expected.

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 26

[26-1] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted February 5th, 2004.

[26-2] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VII. Posted February 13th, 2005.

[26-3] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part II. Posted March 26th, 2003.

See also Part VI, posted March 7th, 2004; and Part XII, posted September 8th, 2006.

[26-4] Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Terik.”

[26-5] Gary sometimes liked to say that Ogier the Dane was *not* an inspiration for the paladin class at all; but there are so many similarities in form and function (for example, the paladin’s warhorse, the circle of holy protection, the wavering of vows causing loss of power, etc., etc.) that I am inclined to disagree.

[26-6] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted October 17th, 2007.

See also Part I, posted September 25th, 2002.

[26-7] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted October 16th, 2009.

[26-8] Grogardian interview with Skip Williams.

[26-9] *Judge’s Guild’s Bob & Bill: A Cautionary Tale*, by Bill Owen. 2014 Kindle Edition. Refer to book location 56%/100%.

[26-10] *Judge’s Guild’s Bob & Bill: A Cautionary Tale*, by Bill Owen. 2014 Kindle Edition. Refer to book location 14%/100%.

[26-11] *Judge’s Guild’s Bob & Bill: A Cautionary Tale*, by Bill Owen. 2014 Kindle Edition. Refer to book location 14%/100%.

[26-12] You can catch a tantalizing glimpse of the early side-view dungeon map in *Judge’s Guild Bob & Bill: A Cautionary Tale*, at book location 16%.

[26-13] Refer to the Youtube clip “Gygax Magazine Interview with Tim Kask,” posted by Grogard Games. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 23:00.

See also the clip “Interview: Tim Kask,” posted by Mythwits, beginning at approximately 25:45.

[26-14] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted April 26th, 2008.

[26-15] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[26-16] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted April 26th, 2008.

[26-17] Refer to the Youtube clip “Gygax Magazine Interview with Tim Kask,” posted by Grogard Games. The relevant conversation begins at approximately 24:00.

[26-18] Refer to the Youtube clip “Interview: Tim Kask,” posted by Mythwits, beginning at approximately 26:00.

[26-19] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted March 16th, 2008.

[26-20] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 17th, 2007.

[26-21] Grogardia interview with Tim Kask, Part I.

[26-22] Refer to the Youtube clip “Tim Kask Part 1 Interview 1,” produced by rpgbomb.com. The comment appears at approximately 1:05.

[26-23] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[26-24] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted April 27th, 2008.

[26-25] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

See also the Quarterofthree/CGM interview and *The Dragon*, issue #11.

[26-26] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[26-27] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[26-28] *Little Wars* #1. Refer to the Acaeum thread “Interesting articles” and *Dragon* #103.

[26-29] *30 Years of Adventure: A Celebration of Dungeons & Dragons*.

[26-30] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

[26-31] *The Strategic Review*, issue #2.

[26-32] Tome of Treasures forums, “First mention of D&D actually being in print?”

[26-33] *The Strategic Review*, issue #3.



[26-34] Tunnels & Trolls.com, "The origins of Tunnels and Trolls."

[26-35] Online interview: "Days of High Adventure: A Visit to Trollhalla: An Interview with Ken St. Andre," at [escapistmagazine.com](http://escapistmagazine.com), by James Maliszewski. Posted September 17th, 2009.

[26-36] Online interview: Grogardia, "An Interview with Ken St. Andre." Posted May 14th, 2012.

[26-37] Online interview: Grogardia, "An Interview with Ken St. Andre." Posted May 14th, 2012.

[26-38] Online interview: Grogardia, "An Interview with Ken St. Andre." Posted May 14th, 2012.

[26-39] *Take That You Fiend* fanzine, the John Harrington interview with Ken St. Andre.

[26-40] Online interview: Grogardia, "An Interview with Ken St. Andre." Posted May 14th, 2012.

[26-41] *The Dragon*, issue #22, pg. 17.

[26-42] From "Maximize the Fun: An Interview with E. Gary Gygax," published in the April 1985 issue of *Game News*.

[26-43] Online web forum post: the ENWorld forums, as well as [JohnKennethMuir.wordpress.com](http://JohnKennethMuir.wordpress.com), "Cult TV Flashback #78."

[26-44] *Of Dice and Men: The Story of D&D and the People Who Play It*, by David M. Ewalt, pg. 93.



## CHAPTER 27

### AT WHAT PRICE GLORY?

(JANUARY 1 –  
JUNE 1975)

THE FATEFUL year 1975 began as a very busy one for Gary Gygax. He crafted a random dungeon generation system, based on another Dungeon Master's correspondence, which appears to have become the basis for his first rough conception of what would later be known as the Temple of Elemental Evil.

When alluding to his original design of the Temple (as opposed to the published version), he once wrote, "I used some random dungeon generation methods as a test of the systems when I put the design together." [27-1] This appears to be a reference to a system submitted to Gary by a man named George A. Lord. Gary liked Mr. Lord's innovative system, and so he play tested it with Rob and Ernie, refined it, and then published a variation of it in *The Strategic Review* #1 in February of 1975. The system would be updated further later on and would enjoy a permanent place in the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* system as Appendix A of the *Dungeon Masters Guide* (1979).

The system is worth looking at in more-than-cursory detail, because it gives us some hints toward the secret contents of Gary's unpublished version of the Temple which was actually used in his campaign. The system generates many diagonal passages and oddly-shaped rooms: triangular, trapezoidal, hexagonal and octagonal. For those who have a copy of Super Module T1-4 (the published version of the Temple), you will note diagonal passages are prominent on every level. There are also the following rooms of note: triangular chambers 140, 217, 328, 421, 422 and 430; trapezoidal chambers 119, 314, 402 and 409; hexagonal chambers 132, 301, 315 and 316; and octagonal chambers 210, 236 and 309. Although it is known that Gary crafted part of each level carefully and then filled out the design with random generation, many of these geometric features are almost certainly the result of the random dungeon generation system.

The monsters in the 1985 version of the Temple (T1-4) are primarily based on Volume III of original *Dungeons & Dragons* (1974), with a few added beasties thrown in from the soon-to-be-published *Greyhawk Supplement* notes as well. A few unpublished campaign classics (such as the brutal juggernaut) appear, as do a few later special monsters (such as the su-monster and the umber hulk). The vast majority of monsters however are found in the 1974-1975 D&D sources, which leads me to believe that Frank Mentzer — when he was tasked with refining Gary's Temple dungeons for publication, circa 1984-1985 — was actually working from Gary's terse line-description keys of the original dungeon that was played in 1975. The additional "Elemental Node" dungeon levels featured in T1-4 were designed by Mentzer, and used to supplement Gary's earlier work. The essence of the published dungeon in T1-4 therefore appears to be quite "Gygaxian" at its core (from c. 1975), with a Mentzer chaser and fuller elaboration which lent the dungeon its own evocative charm.

It appears that the randomly-generated dungeons were not played too extensively in early 1975, however. The business of finalizing the imminent *Greyhawk Supplement* necessarily superseded play of the game as that project's release date (March 1975) came closer. Gary was busy typing up the pieces of campaign material that were going to be included in this new booklet, and setting the more questionable bits aside. There was not a uniform consensus on what should go in and what should be left out, however. Rob Kuntz was still providing input on which features should be included in the manuscript, and which should be cut. Dungeon Masters Rob and Mike Mornard both advocated for the inclusion of rules delineating variable damage by weapon type, and so Gary included this DM-favored system in the manuscript. [27-2]

Another one of Mike Mornard's favorite bits that went into the *Greyhawk* manuscript was the giant slug. This monster was inspired by Robert E. Howard's story fragment *The Hall of the Dead*, which had been later expanded for publication by L. Sprague de Camp. [27-3] Rob Kuntz noted that many of the new magic offerings (for example, the spell Maze, created by Rob) had scarcely been play tested before *Greyhawk's* publication. These spells included the Bigby's Hand spells and Otto's Irresistible Dance. [27-4] Rob by the way may have also been responsible for a rare and early D&D mention of Cthulhu, in the description provided for the Gate spell.

And while Gary was still writing, the RPG audience was growing ever more quickly. Gary once estimated the gamer population of January 1975 as follows: "A year after its initial release there were perhaps 5,000 or so players, seemingly insignificant when one considers that at the same time there were perhaps 150,000 wargame hobbyists playing board games and about 25,000 or so devoted to miniatures." [27-5] But nevertheless, 5,000 was a huge number to be proud of.

Soon, the second printing of *Dungeons & Dragons* (with a listed print date of January 1975) [27-6] had been received from Graphic Printing. [27-7] The work involved in getting these D&D boxed sets ready for sale was the same as before: wetting the labels, adhering them to the boxes, collating the sheets and booklets, sorting the booklets and sheets into proper order, closing the box, and setting each on the shelf. Quite a trivial affair, unless of course you need to repeat your actions 1,000 or 2,000 times. [27-8]

This was probably when Rob and Terry Kuntz started working informally for TSR (but not yet as employees), helping to make the boxes and fulfilling the shipping of the ever-mounting orders. [27-9] "The basement was very cramped," Rob would recall. "We worked in a round-robin style assembling the OD&D games ... and [Gary] had not quite gotten rid of the shoe repair equipment by then." [27-10]

Terry by the way would not officially become an employee until October 1, 1975. [27-11]

Once the boxes for the second printing were prepared, the shipping began. The larger orders were filled after the late single copy requests were taken care of. [27-12] The pace of those big orders was increasing, too. Distributors were ordering more as demand grew more intense, and many game shops were beginning to order multiple copies directly. Gary estimated that TSR by this time was shipping out 10 orders a day. [27-13]

Gary had a conversation with Don Kaye at this time, in which Don expressed happiness about TSR's success. Don still wanted to create his Wild West game, devoting time to his own beloved genre as Gary had managed to do with *Swords & Sorcery*. Don was also looking forward to leaving his uncle's metal spinning business, and in becoming the first full-time employee of TSR. [27-14]

The time was not quite right for such a move, but it is likely that Gary was both proud and happy to see that his once-doubtful business partner had grown so fully invested in TSR's future success.

There was much activity elsewhere as well. Other companies had taken note of TSR, and new players were moving into the field. In the UK, Games Workshop ("GW," not to be confused with Game Designer's Workshop, "GDW") was founded in early 1975, and began publishing a newsletter entitled *The Owl & Weasel* in February. [27-15]

A complimentary copy would reach Brian Blume at TSR, who would praise the effort warmly. (This by the way would later result in Games Workshop becoming the UK distributor for *Dungeons & Dragons*.) Issue #6 (July 1975) was dedicated to D&D, and the December issue would celebrate the UK's own Games Day convention (featuring a well-received full-day exhibition of D&D) as well. [27-16]

*Owl & Weasel* in turn would later be replaced by *White Dwarf* magazine, which greatly enhanced the visibility of *Dungeons & Dragons* "across the pond." Games Workshop would acquire the UK distribution rights for TSR products in the autumn of 1975. This allied endeavor would greatly widen TSR's reputation, and *Dungeons & Dragons* would soon begin to spread throughout Europe and then beyond. TSR, soon to enjoy a truly international presence, was on the verge of a great success.

Tragedy struck however on Friday, January 31st when Don Kaye suffered a massive heart attack. [27-17]

He died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. He was only 36. [27-18] Don had known about his grave medical condition and had been scheduled for heart surgery, but he had not shared that secret with Gary or Brian. [27-19] Therefore the sudden loss of Don was a heartbreaking shock

from out of nowhere. The partnership drawn up between Gyga and Kaye had no clear provision for the transfer of ownership if one of the partners should pass away. "Let this be an object lesson to the young," Gary wrote in lament in later years, "that they are indeed mortal, that life might end at any moment, and therefore to proceed with prudent steps to protect themselves and their heirs." [27-20]

This terrible situation created an immediate legal void, which Gary and Brian Blume would be forced to fill. [27-21] As such, Kaye's equal share of the partnership would pass on to his wife and heir, Donna. Donna of course had no interest in running a game company while her life was collapsing around her shoulders. As Gary put the situation (with great reservation), "Don's widow was not interested in continuing in the company." [27-22]

She apparently cleared out TSR's "stockroom" (her pantry) soon after Don had passed away. Stolidly, she would assist Gary and Brian with various internal TSR affairs (such as accounting) throughout the early months of 1975 and into the summer, but she wanted to get out of the partnership as quickly as possible.

In many ways, this was a living nightmare for Brian and Gary. Both men moved in a daze to keep the company moving, and the orders kept pouring in. They worked to clear a small room in the Gyga household basement, creating a new TSR storeroom and (by default) moving TSR's operations (but not its official headquarters) to Gary's house. Gary's leather-working table was converted to a shipping and packing area. He and Brian hauled all of the unsold games down to the new storeroom. Donna Kaye dropped off the TSR accounting ledger and petty cash without saying a word. It was clear to Gary that a partnership with her was out of the question, and so he and Brian had an emergency meeting to figure out how to proceed. [27-23]

The heartbroken Gary was left to fend for himself in determining the future direction of TSR. "There is no question in my mind," he once said, "that had Don Kaye lived, the whole course of later events at TSR would have been altered radically. Don was not only a very intelligent guy, a gamer, but he was also one who was not given to allowing the prospect of greater profits to cloud his judgment in regards the long-term viability of the enterprise he co-founded, was so proud of." [27-24]

Later in life, he would lament this moment as changing the entire course of not only *Dungeons & Dragons*, but also the TSR corporation and his entire life. To quote at length, as this was such a profound time for Gary:

“Very frankly, what I feel caused the downfall of the corporate approach I had hoped to see in TSR was the untimely demise of my original partner, Don Kaye. ... Because at that point, he owned a third of the corporation, I owned a third and our other partner, Brian Blume, owned the remaining third. With Don’s death, things were throw in the air ...”

And if Don had not died? “Many of my actions and decisions,” Gary lamented, “would have been different. I would have been less of a team player and less starry eyed. I’d have been a lot harder about defending my own rights as an author and creator.” [27-25]

\* \* \* \* \*

In the meantime, a temporary and amended partnership agreement was drafted up on February 1st, with Gary, Brian and Donna as equal partners. [27-26] Realizing that the situation was untenable, Gary and Brian were forced to consider buying out Donna’s unwanted share of the partnership. They conferred with Brian’s father, the successful and respected businessman Melvin Blume. Melvin (President of Wisconsin Tool and Stamping Company) advised that a corporate structure, as opposed to a mere informal partnership, would be crucial in moving forward. [27-27]

Amazingly, something else took place on February 1: Gary wrote the Foreword to *Dungeons & Dragons Supplement I: Greyhawk*. Perhaps he had written it that evening sitting up in his study at his Royal typewriter, after an exhausting and bewildering day of trying to come to terms with the death of his childhood friend. The text of the Foreword is positive, enthusiastic and inspiring, noting that *Greyhawk* offers a wealth of options to D&D players. Gary also promised that more material would soon be forthcoming in the form of *Supplement II: Blackmoor*: “Dave Arneson, co-author of the original work, is currently in the catacombs beneath his tower preparing the second supplement.”

There was no mention of Don’s passing; the tragedy was too vast to be framed in simple words. But the fact that Gary wrote this capstone to the supplement on the 1st, finalizing the *Greyhawk* manuscript for printing and publication, makes it very clear: he knew that the show must always go on, even when life’s great players fade away into the waiting shadows beyond the stage.

The harsh realities of business continued to demand Gary’s immediate attention. He and Brian, assessing their resources, realized that neither one of them had sufficient money to safely buy out Donna’s share on their own. Brian urged Gary to allow his father Melvin to loan Brian the money

to buy out Donna Kaye's share of Tactical Studies Rules. Seeing no other way to keep the company going, Gary would reluctantly agree. [27-28]

This innocuous emergency arrangement, made under duress and with the immediate survival of TSR at stake, would plant the seeds of future conflict which would eventually cause E. Gary Gygax to leave TSR on December 31st, 1985, rendered nearly powerless in the corporation that he had created. But that grim end to his involvement with TSR was still far in the distant future on that chilly day in 1975. It has been said that late in his life, Gary would reflect on this agreement as the worst decision he ever made.

\* \* \* \* \*

Brian and Gary discussed other projects that might be completed and sold to keep the company going through this disastrous time. To Gary, the answer was obvious: he could not forget that last haunting conversation with Don, when Don had been talking about his happiness and his hopes for the future. Gary would write the Wild West game in his friend's honor, remembering the Cowboys and Indians games they had played as children in the 1940s. Brian earnestly agreed to assist with this endeavor. The game would be released by TSR in the near future, supplemented by numerous articles and expansions throughout the years to come. The game dedicated to Kaye would be called *Boot Hill*.

Such arrangements were not enough, however. TSR needed immediate promotion of its already-existing games, and Gary knew how to perform it. He had likely been working on the text of *The Strategic Review* #1 before Don's passing, and it appears that the first issue was quickly printed (either before or after Don's passing, it is difficult to say with certainty) and released before the end of February. The issue was dated simply as "Spring 1975," perhaps because Gary had had no idea when it was going to be released.

The print run was perhaps 500 copies, or even less. A notice of Don Kaye's death would head issue #2, but there was no mention in #1, and Don's Sage Street address was still listed for TSR headquarters. All of these facts taken together make a January printing and a February release of the issue the likeliest scenario. Per Gygax, "The first issue of TSR was a giveaway, with orders for a copy at \$.50 each." [27-29] From a D&D history perspective, there are two major elements featured therein for the very first time: the first being the mind flayer, a new monster which was inspired



by the cover of a Brian Lumley book entitled *The Burrowers Beneath*, which had been published on February 19th, 1974. [27-30]

The cover of Lumley's book features writhing tentacles and an ominous proclamation (which Gary likely saw): "The earth's original rulers are waking!" Gary apparently did not read this book, but the cover and its text were enough to inspire him to create an insidious, brilliant and ancient race which was clearly modeled on Gary's own conception of H. P. Lovecraft's Star Spawn of Cthulhu. In thinking about these Cthulhu-esque fiends in a *Dungeons & Dragons* context, Gary later decided that mind flayers were "never native to any human planet." They were from another plane of existence, and found their way to Oerth ... likely as a result of a crashed and marooned starship. [27-31]

The preliminary version of the mind flayer was published before the existence of the convoluted "psionics" rules for D&D, and as such is in many ways more playable than the version which would later appear in the *Monster Manual* (1977). Gary wrote that these monsters appeared in the early Greyhawk campaign, so they were probably first encountered in 1974. [27-32] And the players, he noted, hated them! Always the sign of a good monster. [27-33]

The second major piece in TSR #1 was the remarkable solitaire dungeon exploration system, which set the fundamentals of D&D into a program-like state that offered practically infinite potential for self-directed play. It is also my personal belief that this concrete demonstration of an if/then-based D&D system encouraged later programmers who would go on to create games such as *Colossal Cave Adventure*, *Temple of Apshai*, *Zork*, *Telengard* and the like. Gary was careful to credit inspiration for this system to George A. Lord for his lasting contribution to the game.

TSR also published *Chainmail* once again, now with the TSR logo and the now-famous silver cover. This edition was apparently produced in February or March of 1975. [27-34] Understandably, Gary was at this time viewing *all* of his new releases with considerable scrutiny. He probably realized that with the audience for D&D shifting away from wargamers and toward SCA-minded college students, *Chainmail* was not a good gateway product into *Dungeons & Dragons*. Further and increasing sales of D&D would be crucial in keeping TSR afloat following Don's absence. Some kind of introductory set would be needed to promote *Dungeons & Dragons* to novice players. "We knew initially," Gary once explained, "probably in early 1975, that we had to do a more clearly done introductory piece." [27-35]

Gary may have developed the solitaire dungeon system with this idea of an introductory approach already lingering in his mind, but he would soon want to create an elaborate Basic Set featuring a full array of introductory materials. He would end up being sidetracked frequently,



however, and the first D&D Basic Set would not emerge until the summer of 1977. It eventually came to be through the efforts of one Dr. John Eric Holmes. That is an intriguing tale all its own, and is told in detail in Books IV and V of **HAWK & MOOR** (covering 1976 and 1977). [27-36]

Also in March, some 1,000 copies of the *Greyhawk Supplement* came off the printing press and immediately began moving off the storeroom shelves. [27-37] The supplement's price was very high at \$5, the equivalent of about \$22 in 2014 funds. But that was apparently not a deterrent to D&D's rabid fan base. Gary once noted that the *Greyhawk Supplement* was designed to "fill the gaps in the initial booklets," [27-38] and as such it featured more of everything. As Tim explained, "Gary told me [*Supplement I*] was all the rest of the stuff he would have liked to put in the first three books. That is essentially what it is; not a bunch of new concepts but more on the order of 'extra stuff' and just a couple of corrections. More spells, more artifacts, more monsters." [27-39]

One of the problems with this approach, however, is that the rules began to exhibit power creep. Rules were provided for 22nd level wizards and 20th level patriarchs, with clear notes indicating that the coolest spells did not even become available until levels 18 and 17 respectively. Gary and Rob probably felt that they were defining the uppermost limit of player character potential, but Dungeon Masters far and wide would interpret the rules in another way: the game's full features did not even become available until your characters hit level 18. There would be major problems ahead, as conflicting interpretations of D&D's heroic scope would soon come to the forefront in early 1976.

It also seems that Dave Arneson may have taken the promise that more Blackmoor material would soon be in print (from the *Greyhawk Supplement's* Foreword) to heart, because he informed Gary (at some point during or before early March) that he was "*finalizing*" the draft for D&D *Supplement II*. [27-40] Readers of this series, however, may be cringing at my italicization of that word "*finalizing*"! As we have seen, Dave's idea of "final" and Gary's idea of "final" were not just entirely different concepts, they were entirely different universes. Gary would feel confident in promising *Blackmoor* to D&D's fans frequently throughout 1975, only to be confounded at every turn. The supplement would finally, through the heroic efforts of Tim Kask and others, be published at the very end of the year.

Meanwhile, the *Greyhawk Supplement* was already selling very well. The rules for variable weapon and monster damage were being enthusiastically adopted by many play groups, and the new character classes, monsters and treasures were seeing extensive play. Several of the new contributions featured in *Greyhawk* — in particular, beholders, good dragons, owlbears, umber hulks, slimes, and many of the high-level spells and magic items — would later be regarded as

essential and classic elements of the game. Gary would note in his own campaign that the thief class remained relatively rare despite being available to all: “Relatively few thieves were played because of their guaranteed short life span if caught stealing from a party with a major PC in it.” [27-41]

However, thieves became popular in the *Greyhawk* campaign as the encounters became more complex, and the traps deadlier, and the treasures more enticing. “Just being able to have a member go ahead, see what was awaiting,” Gary wrote, “and return to warn the other PCs was often the difference between success and failure.” [27-42] It is inferred, but not stated, that most of the thieves in Gary’s and Rob’s campaign were actually henchmen as opposed to famous PCs. Consider also that famous thieves of *Greyhawk*, despite the existence of the novel-based and fictional Gord, are few and far between!

In later years and with the advent of the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* system (1977-1979), the thief would become a popular multi-classing option for demi-human characters because it allowed demi-humans to progress in unlimited fashion alongside their human companions. Today, the thief class is looked upon by many as a mistake, because many of its abilities — opening locks, finding traps, and moving silently, for instance — are given explicit percentage scores based on a character’s level and dexterity. Many *Dungeon Masters* (excluding this author, by the way) interpret this system as indicating that non-thieves are incapable of performing *any* of these vital actions at all!

This seems rather silly when we consider the existing body of *Swords & Sorcery* tales, in which heroes of all stripes, shapes and sizes tend to pick locks, find traps, and sneak around at leisure (in accordance, of course, with the immediate needs of the plot). But in *Dungeons & Dragons*, can only thieves open locks? Can only thieves move silently? It depends on who you ask. There is a potential solution, in allowing all characters to act at least as 1st level thieves, but this is by no means a perfect answer because it weakens the already-weak thief class by making many of the class’s privileges non-exclusive. The game design approach exemplified by the thief, stressing abstract (percentage-based) solutions over descriptive (player skill-based) solutions, is at the heart of a debate that continues to this day. As noted prior, it is clear that the thief is only partially a Gygaxian creation, having been lifted from others’ work; and therefore it is never quite fully at ease within the over-arching game system. This debate of “arbitrary percentages vs. specified character actions” would begin for many play groups as soon as the *Greyhawk Supplement* was adopted.

Despite such flaws and significant changes to the game, the overall supplement was highly regarded and widely used. In many ways the *Greyhawk Supplement* was the progenitor for the

thousands of game-modifying additions which would appear in the years to come, produced by TSR and hundreds of other companies.

One person named Dennis Sustare particularly liked the thief class, because it represented a significant addition to the game which promised an entirely new mode of play. Using that model as inspiration, Dennis applied the same design methodology to one of his own historical interests, and came up with the druid class. He applied this design method to an entry in the *Greyhawk Supplement*, where druids were listed briefly as NPCs. “I was familiar with druids from literature about early England,” Dennis explained, “especially during Roman times.”

The most immediate inspiration, of course, was their mention as a monster in *Greyhawk* (but not as a character class). Initially, I was trying to make them related totally to plants and animals, but felt they needed a little more firepower (literally).” [27-43] Dennis therefore added spells involving lightning and fire to the druid class as well.

Later in 1975 (at Gen Con, in August), a mimeographed version of the class would be passed on to Tim Kask. Tim liked Dennis’s work, and passed it on to Gary. The fully-redeveloped class would soon make its way into Gygax’s, Blume’s and Kask’s *Dungeons & Dragons Supplement III: Eldritch Wizardry*.

By the spring however, *Greyhawk* was still the only D&D Supplement in existence. TSR’s next major release was a science fiction game entitled *Star Probe: The Game of Adventure, Conflict and Exploration in Space*. This *Star Trek*-inspired board game (the “five-year mission” becomes the time limit in *Star Probe*) was designed by John M. Snider, one of the veteran players in Arneson’s Blackmoor campaign.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Star Probe* is worthy of some consideration in the history of *Dungeons & Dragons*, primarily because it tells us about the science fiction direction of the 1973-1975 Blackmoor campaign. John began the “Star Empires” campaign in 1973 [27-44] as a parallel to Blackmoor, but Dave Arneson would later bridge the two worlds more closely together via the City of the Gods and the Temple of the Frog. The world of Blackmoor actually existed in the Star Empires galaxy, and was “quarantined by the local galactic government.” [27-45]

In this sci fi campaign, each player controlled an alien race's empire. Fred Funk for example played an amoeboid race, while Greg Svenson played the bear-humanoids of the Ursoid Republic. [27-46] "Magic" items such as phasers, shields and tricorders appeared in Blackmoor from time to time, indicating that the fantasy world had been explored by aliens at various times in the past. The "clockwork" horse and powered armor used by William of the Heath, the Blue Rider, were Star Empire technologies as well. [27-47] Perhaps inspired by such artifacts, the long-lived elves in Arneson's game world had actually discovered the secret of gunpowder on their own. Keeping with the campaign's Swords & Sorcery tradition, however, these primitive muskets and blunderbusses were colloquially termed "magic bang sticks." [27-48]

Advanced concepts in the published *Star Probe* rules included a portrayal of three-dimensional space, a Federation-inspired "Board of Review" which scored captains on the quality of planets explored and colonized, and random planet and alien delineations. Gary wrote the Foreword to *Star Probe* on September 1st, 1974, which hints that its design was probably finalized over the summer. The game was probably printed and released very late in 1974 or at the beginning of 1975, likely being shipped and received by early adopters in January. [27-49]

*Star Probe* was the first volume in a promised trilogy, and was followed by the innovative *Star Empires* supplement in 1977. However, the success later enjoyed by *Traveller* — a competing Game Designer's Workshop release — would render *Star Empires* a relative failure despite its quality, and the release of a new movie called *Star Wars* would solidify the popular vision of science fiction for many years thereafter. TSR would abandon Snider's franchise before the third volume could be published, and would instead focus on the innovative post-apocalyptic game by James M. Ward, *Metamorphosis Alpha* (which eventually led to *Gamma World*).

\* \* \* \* \*

While all of this was going on, Gary was probably also creating a rough "over-world" framework where he could situate his Temple of Elemental Evil dungeons for future play. He wanted to do something simpler than the vast City of Greyhawk, designing an urban setting that would give new player characters all of the basic essentials — an inn, an equipment dealer, a healer, a mentor, hidden villains, and mercenaries for hire — in a much more quaint and rural setting.

The very smallness of this "Village of Hommlet" would encourage new players to prepare quickly and to set out for the nearby dungeon. For those who are interested in the exact location of

Hommlet (which was moved for the 1985 super module T1-4), Gary once wrote that if Greyhawk was equivalent to Chicago and Dyvers was equivalent to Milwaukee, then Hommlet was in the approximate position of New Glarus village, Wisconsin. In other words, it was northwest of Greyhawk and southwest of Dyvers. The Temple of Elemental Evil was in roughly the same location as Madison. [27-50]

The Moathouse Ruin to be featured in this setting was designed as a tribute to “Castle Bodenstedt” (of *The Siege of Bodenburg* fame), and a farther village known as Nulb was designed to serve as a more dangerous base for parties ready to explore the Temple dungeons proper.

I have very little information about the design phases which led to the creation of this over-world setting, but due to the creation of the random dungeon frameworks in early 1975 and the play of Hommlet later in the year, it seems likely that the first developmental sketches of these now-classic areas began in the spring of 1975.

Another now-classic D&D adventure was created in early 1975 as well. Apparently, a Dungeon Master named Alan Lucien had provided Gary with some interesting design notes involving a “killer” dungeon which would serve to test even the strongest and most capable of adventurers. Lucien’s original dungeon featured the crypt of a powerful lich. Since liches were introduced in the *Greyhawk Supplement* (released in March), it seems that Lucien must have created this dungeon in April or so, and then submitted it to Gary for consideration in May or early June. Otherwise, it is difficult to justify a later timeframe without bumping into the adventure’s official public debut at *Origins I* in late July.

This trap-filled dungeon, designed to kill “immortal” high-level characters, comprised about 12 pages of maps and keys. A then-current 2004 notice indicates that Mr. Lucien was still in the possession of this original version of the tomb. [27-51] However, to my own partial knowledge, the Lucien version has never been published.

Gary designed his own Lucien-inspired tomb before late July (when it would debut in play at the *Origins* game conference). The name he chose for the dungeon was one for the ages: the *Tomb of Horrors*. [27-52] The goal of this dungeon was simple: “The place was designed to test the mettle of the best players, stretch their ability to the maximum.” [27-53] It was to be the ultimate killer dungeon. As Gary would later confess of its preparation, “I admit to chuckling evilly as I did so.” [27-54]

Mr. Lucien’s preliminary design may have perhaps featured a pyramid or ziggurat, but Gary’s version would occupy a single elaborate dungeon level within a barrow mound. The Tomb of

Horrors has a strong Egyptian theme to it, with some Sumerian and Babylonian overtones. Perhaps Gary (or Alan?) was inspired by the history of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaten, or even the curse of the tomb of Tutankhamun, or Boris Karloff's 1932 portrayal of Imhotep in the classic film *The Mummy*. I personally believe that in conceiving Acererak for his own Tomb of Horrors, Gary was inspired by the Boris Karloff film. Lucien's dungeon featured a corporeal lich, while Gary's dungeon featured a skull and a blasted pile of ash; and *The Mummy* (1932) ends with Ankh-es-en-amon praying to Isis, Isis becoming animate, and Imhotep getting blasted. I also note with curiosity that later mummy movies would feature Lon Chaney, Jr. or Christopher Lee as the mummy "Kharis," which — when spelled backwards (becoming a "Sirahk") — is somewhat close to Acererak.

The secret of Acererak seems to have been that he simply that he wished to restore himself to fully corporeal lichdom, so that he could continue his evil ways in the greater World of Greyhawk. And to do that, he needed to devour a lot of souls! "As far as I am concerned," Gary wrote, "Acererak needed some great source of magical negative energy to return to regular lich state, be able to manage such a return to his former 'glory.'" [27-55] And what better way to lure mortals into your tomb than to have the place filled with treasures beyond compare?

Once Gary had designed what he believed was the nastiest problem-solving and trap-filled dungeon he had ever concocted, he invited his three best veteran players to test it.

There were good times looming up ahead, to be sure!

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 27

[27-1] *The Dragon*, issue #37.

[27-2] The Collector's Trove Presents: The Michael Mornard Collection.

[27-3] The Collector's Trove Presents: The Michael Mornard Collection.

[27-4] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Rob Kuntz. Posted June 11th, 2009.

[27-5] *Little Wars*, issue #1.

[27-6] Acaeum.com, Original D&D Set.

[27-7] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[27-8] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

[27-9] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[27-10] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted January 10th, 2010.

[27-11] *The Strategic Review*, issue #5.

[27-12] *Dragon Annual*, issue #4.

[27-13] *Playing at the World* by Jon Peterson, pg. 494.

[27-14] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[27-15] Playing at the World blog, "Fortieth Anniversary of Games Workshop," posted February 28th, 2015.

[27-16] For details on *Owl & Weasel* #5 and #6, see 2WarpsToNeptune, "*Dungeons & Dragons* in Games Workshop's *Owl and Weasel* (1975)," posted November 17th, 2014.

[27-17] See *The Strategic Review*, issue #2, pg. 1

[27-18] *The Crusader Journal*, issue #13.

See also *The Strategic Review*, issue #2 and *Dragon Annual* #4, as well as The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.



[27-19] Inc.com magazine, "TSR Hobbies Mixes Fact And Fantasy."

[27-20] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IV. Posted July 22nd, 2003.

[27-21] *Dragon Annual* #4, *The Crusader Journal* #13.

[27-22] *Dragon Annual* #4.

[27-23] *The Crusader Journal*, issue #13.

[27-24] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

[27-25] Shadis Interviews: E. Gary Gygax, by Barbara A. Blackburn. Shadis Magazine, c. 1990.

[27-26] United States District Court (Fourth Division, Minnesota) Civil Action 4-79-109, Arneson v. Gygax.

[27-27] *The Crusader Journal*, issue #13.

[27-28] *The Crusader Journal*, issue #13.

[27-29] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 21st, 2007.

[27-30] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VII.

See also *The Burrowers Beneath* at Goodreads.com.

[27-31] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted September 15th, 2007.

[27-32] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted December 6th, 2007.

[27-33] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted September 15th, 2007.

[27-34] Acaeum.com, *Chainmail*.

[27-35] Grogardia, "More from Gygax interview," and the Gryphon fanzine interview with Gary Gygax.

[27-36] Grogardia, "More from Gygax interview."

[27-37] Acaeum.com, D&D Supplements. The registered copyright date for the Greyhawk Supplement is January 15th, 1975.

[27-38] *The Dragon*, issue #11.



[27-39] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 20th, 2008.

[27-40] *Playing at the World* by Jon Peterson, pg. 536.

[27-41] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted February 5th, 2004.

[27-42] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VI. Posted February 16th, 2004.

[27-43] Grogardian interview featuring Dennis Sustare.

[27-44] Havard's Blackmoor Blog, "There's a Spaceship in My Fantasy?" Posted February 15th, 2010.

[27-45] Online web forum post: the Comeback Inn forums, "Blackmoor dungeon history."

[27-46] Online web forum post: the Comeback Inn forums, "Memories of Fred Funk."

There is also an interesting article in *Different Worlds* magazine #5.

[27-47] Havard's Blackmoor Blog, "There's a Spaceship in My Fantasy?" Posted February 15th, 2010.

[27-48] Online web forum post: the Comeback Inn forums, "Q&A with Jeff Berry."

[27-49] Online web forum post: Acaeum forums, "Warriors of Mars development?"

[27-50] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III. Posted August 7th, 2005.

[27-51] Avalanche Press, "Back to the Table."

[27-52] *Alarums & Excursions* #15; ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X.

[27-53] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted June 4th, 2006.

[27-54] *Dragon* magazine, issue #248.

[27-55] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted June 28th, 2007.

## CHAPTER 28

# COUNTING THE DRAGON'S TROVE

(APRIL 1 –  
JULY 1975)

PLAY, HOWEVER, consistently gave way to pressing financial realities. April was a busy month for business at TSR. From April 1st to the 14th, Gary and Dave made legal entries for a revised royalty agreement concerning D&D. Per the court materials, “The contract assigned TSR Hobbies, Inc., the right to publish, sell, and distribute ‘*Dungeons and Dragons*’ in exchange for a royalty of 10% of the cover price of each set sold, payable to the authors, Gygax and plaintiff [Arneson].” In other words, they accepted a 5% royalty each, as opposed to the 10% royalty each indicated by Gary’s letters from March of 1974. [28-1]

In the later opinion of a U.S. District Court judge, this was a fairly straightforward rights transference agreement: “It seems that [Arneson] authored and designed a game ... and sold the rights to [TSR] in exchange for a ... royalty on each game sold.” [28-2]

But the terse agreement would prove to be *too* simple, and with too few legal explications. The foremost danger of a quick-and-dirty legal agreement is that there is no room for strategic contingency planning, which makes a mess if (when) any other circumstance should unexpectedly change. And that wrinkle would mean very bad news for Gary and TSR in the years to come, as we shall see ...

\* \* \* \* \*

In the midst of these negotiations, issue #2 of *The Strategic Review* was reaching subscribers (having been newly published, either on or before April 1st). Only a few hundred copies made it into to print, each headed by a stark and formal announcement of Don Kaye’s passing.

TSR #2 is also important because it is the first time that Gary specified that “a magic-user can use a given spell but once during any given day, even if he is carrying his [spell] books with him.” [28-3] This rule may have seemed obvious to Gary, but until this point in time, many play groups were allowing magic-users to serve as arcane artillery pieces with unlimited ammunition! Even in a Gen Con report from August 1976, players from California in particular would still be surprised to hear of this peculiar little rule hidden away in a low-print newsletter (with some 300-odd subscribers).

The entire article however (entitled “Questions Most Frequently Asked About *Dungeons & Dragons* Rules”) makes it clear that combat was the thing that confused people the most. In addition to explaining melee and weapon damage, Gary also provided some quick rules for unarmed combat. (It seems that orcs, when they know they are hopelessly outclassed, love to grapple their

targets and try to drag them to the floor in a boisterous team tackle.) He later confessed — in 1982, three years after the *Dungeon Masters Guide* had been put into print — that the DMG unarmed combat system was far too complex, and he was still using the handy grappling system he developed for TSR #2 in '75! [28-4]

Clearly, sometimes the simple way is best.

This memorial issue is also interesting because it features two now-classic additions to the game of *Dungeons & Dragons*. The first is the ranger class, a clever “borrowing” of Aragorn as featured in *The Lord of the Rings*, developed for use in D&D by Joe Fischer. Joe was a regular player in Gary’s group, [28-5] although I regrettably have very few details about his characters or contributions.

Mr. Fischer would even draw a blatantly literal allusion to Aragorn’s use of the Palantir, noting that “Ranger Lords are able to employ all devices which deal with clairvoyance, clairaudience, ESP [and] telepathy.” The exactitude displayed in translating Tolkien’s character to D&D is impressive, and also rather shameless. These old school Striders even have a fair chance of attracting “two Hobbits” to their service at the moment they attain the level of Ranger Knight! (Feel free to look it up ... page 5. I’ll wait here.)

The second and even more entertaining addition to the game is the roper monster, inspired by Gary’s (or Dave’s) interpretation of an alien space creature featured in a nearly forgotten 1959 movie, *Battle Beyond the Sun*. [28-6] Humorously, this Soviet sci fi epic was Westernized in the early 1960s by a young film school student named Francis Ford Coppola (!). The mischievous Coppola wanted to add in a scene where a penis-like and a vagina-like monster were duking it out in a violent confrontation, while an innocent astronaut backed away from the fleshy melee in horror and disbelief. (Sometimes, you just can’t make this stuff up). [28-7]

Coppola’s fanged vagina monster would be innocently reconceived by Gary as the roper, “a mass of foul, festering corruption,” capable of ensnaring and causing weakness in its prey. And now you will never look at its fanged orifice, gracing the cover of the *Monster Manual*, in a normal way ever again. The penis monster would in turn inspire the otyugh, with its ... shall we say ... protuberant and thrusting eye-stalk. Another young film maker, by the name of George Lucas, would later take Coppola’s monster as inspiration for his own “Dianoga” trash compactor beastie, to be featured in a little movie entitled *Star Wars*. Accidentally adding to this humorous sub-context, Gary would sagely comment on the phallic otyugh in the *Monster Manual*: “These weird monsters are omnivorous scavengers, not at all hesitant about adding a bit of fresh meat to their diet.”

See? It’s just like in college.

And now that I have scarred the reader and salaciously ruined the reputations of two beloved monsters for all eternity, we shall continue.

\* \* \* \* \*

*The Strategic Review* #2 also gave the public its first vague hint of a new release by Professor M. A. R. Barker in the form of a pre-publication offer of the new mage duel game, *War of Wizards* (publication date July 1st, 1975). [28-8] This obscure TSR offering, initially self-produced by Barker, provides intricate rules for battles between magic-users.

We find that in *War of Wizards*, there is a world — ostensibly set in the world of Tékumel, but easily abstracted to just about anywhere — where mages duke it out in honor duels to the death. The arena is a nicely-illustrated push-and-shove grid, with profuse illustrations of sorcerers, cultists, warrior priests, and various Bosch-inspired beasts. Players must choose the appropriate offensive and defensive spells from a repertoire of 71 visible and invisible effects, hoping to blast the enemy into the disgrace of arcane oblivion. (Yes, this was decades before *Harry Potter*, to say nothing of *Magic: The Gathering*.)

The advertisement in TSR #2 cryptically states that “This game is enjoyable as a separate contest, and it can be adapted for integration with such similar games as *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Chainmail*, and the upcoming fantasy game *Petal Throne*.” [28-9] Gary referred to it as “a somewhat complex but entertaining two-player game of spell combat on a board similar to a football field,” and noted that TSR eventually sold several thousand copies. [28-10]

As mentioned earlier, Gary had made contact with the Professor and reached an agreement to publish Tékumel material through the auspices of TSR. Gary once noted in an interview that “M. A. R. Barker sent us the manuscript for his *Empire of the Petal Throne* RPG, the rules inspired by those for D&D, of course. It was a most compelling environment.” [28-11] *Petal Throne*, due to some delays caused by the set’s innovative poster maps and very high print quality, would not be published until later in the summer. The manuscript Professor Barker sent in, however, was according to Gary “near perfect” and virtually ready for printing. [28-12] Gary never refereed the Tékumel setting internally, but he did play the game as refereed by then-future D&D artist David C. Sutherland III. [28-13] Later (1976?), he and other TSR employees would travel to the Twin Cities to play in Barker’s own campaign, and that was even more enjoyable. [28-14]

Tékumel truly is a setting that either thrives or dies based on the game master's familiarity with the imagined environment and all of its baroque idiosyncrasies. "With a knowledgeable GM the game was an exotic blast," Gary wrote. "When GMed by someone less than expert, it was a tongue-twisting bore." [28-15] Gary enjoyed the game but sometimes felt that it was too difficult and frustrating for a novice referee to learn without significant help. (This may partly explain why *The Dragon* magazine would be obsessed with publishing Tékumel articles during the earliest years of its run.)

\* \* \* \* \*

The gap in the widespread availability of *Dungeons & Dragons* had been addressed by the time of TSR #2 as well. The reported time periods for the following events are confused by many and various tellings, but I will here prefer the Acaeum's print run histories which state that the third printing of D&D dates to April 1975. [28-16]

While *veteran* players and Dungeon Masters were buying *Greyhawk*, many *new* gamers were buying the original *Dungeons & Dragons* set. Gary and Brian were watching the escalating sales trend, and soon decided that it was time to arrange for a third printing of the game.

With Don no longer there, however, there were serious logistical barriers to overcome. Gary's basement storeroom was small and by no means ideal, and a single flood or mishap could potentially wipe out the company's assets. This threat could not be solved at the time, and Gary and Brian had to think about the labor involved in collating the next print run's booklets and boxes. With the increasing orders, the need to design new games, a staff reduction forced by Don's passing, and a projected need for 2,000 new copies of the game, this was a very grim problem indeed. Gary simply threw up his hands and said, "Whoa, this is just way too much work." [28-17]

Apparently, Heritage Models of Dallas, Texas had made an offer to print the third run of D&D for TSR. [28-18] Gary and Brian jumped at this proposed deal, because it allowed TSR's cash flow to remain uninterrupted. [28-19] As Gary explained it: "Heritage Models said that they had a new printing operation, and they said they'd print up 3,000 [*more likely 2,000*] copies, and keep 300 of them to cover their printing expenses. Hey! What a deal, right? So we did that." [28-20]

It was a win-win situation for all involved. 2,000 of the printed copies were for TSR to sell, and the several hundred overrun copies were Heritage's payment for offering the printing service. Heritage would sell these copies directly to hobby stores for their own profit. Considering the costs

and delays involved in dealing with Graphic Printing (who were now gouging TSR with the spiraling costs for paper and ink), this was a tremendous deal.

Several thousand copies of the game would sell out in just a few months' time, [28-21] equating to D&D selling as much as 1,000 copies a month in the middle of the year. [28-22]

During this time, Gary began to realize just how popular D&D was going to be outside of the insular wargaming community. "I had envisioned the D&D game as quite popular," he noted, "likely to appeal to many wargamers and also to the science fiction and fantasy book audience. I was not aware of just how vastly popular it would be, though, until we were selling the third print run of the product. At that time I realized it had appeal far beyond the bounds I had foreseen." [28-23]

The money saved by the Heritage Models printing allowed TSR to move forward in many ways. In May, Tactical Studies Rules (the *original* partnership entity) was bought out by the newly-formed TSR Hobbies, Incorporated (the *new* corporation). This corporation then bought out Donna Kaye so that she could leave the business. [28-24]

Gary and Brian then calculated their quarterly sales figures, and reconsidered D&D's newly emerging demographics. [28-25] By any measure the predictions were very favorable. Therefore in June, Gary became the first full-time employee of TSR. [28-26] As a result of these added hours and responsibilities, Gary would report that "My gaming time ... dropped to an average of about 12 hours a week." [28-27] And when he got to game, he usually had to be the Dungeon Master too! That pattern would hold for many decades.

As he later recalled, "Around 1975 I increasingly served as G[ame] M[aster]. That holds true today, when I seldom get to participate in another role. Thus I now prefer having a player's role to that of a GM ... but to be a good GM one must sometimes be on the other side of the proverbial screen." [28-28]

His salary during this laborious time has been stated as a mere \$100 a week, plus royalties. [28-29] "It was not until the middle of 1975," he once said, "that income from game-related work was sufficient to provide my entire income, that money needed to support myself and my family." [28-30]

This was probably a sobering and even haunting milestone, considering that Don Kaye had been fondly hoping to become TSR's first employee just a few months earlier.

Gary was not the only one influenced by D&D's widening success, either. James M. Ward, who as mentioned had learned the game from Gary in the summer of 1974, was then working as a teacher



at a rural high school nearby. Every time there was a holiday, and especially over the summer vacation, he would drive his family to Elkhorn (his home town) for some hard-won time at play. James himself would then drive over to Lake Geneva to play D&D with Gary. This would eventually lead to Mr. Ward writing *Dungeons & Dragons Supplement IV: Gods, Demi-Gods and Heroes* (co-authored with Rob Kuntz), and his later hiring by TSR in June of 1980. [28-31]

James also shared a new draft manuscript (40 pages in length) [28-32] with Gary in the summer of 1975: his finished version of the long-planned science fiction variant to *Dungeons & Dragons*. This draft was largely inspired by the Brian Aldiss novel *Starship*, and featured James's personal invention of the colony starship *Warden*. [28-33]

James noted that Gary, in reading and welcoming the manuscript, had "lots of suggestions" for its improvement. [28-34] Apparently Gary said, "Well, this is good, but I need twice as much copy."

Thus encouraged, and with much more work to be done, James would begin rewriting the materials which would soon become the *Metamorphosis Alpha* game.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gary was busily designing games as well. *Boot Hill* was published in the summer, in Don Kaye's honor. (The publication date is listed as July 1st.) [28-35] Gary realized that the Wild West game was rather limited, and acutely aware of its limitations. "The premise was good, I believe," he later reflected, "and some of the mechanics as well. What the game lacked was sufficient RPG elements — various other skills and PC development for certain." [28-36]

*Boot Hill* would receive significant (and yet sporadic) support in the years to come, greatly embellishing its original conception. Today it is remembered as a trailblazing model which would inspire later Wild West RPGs such as *Aces & Eights* and *Deadlands*.

Ken St. Andre, meanwhile, had quickly written the *Tunnels & Trolls* game to compete with *Dungeons & Dragons*. Sales of this inexpensive game would begin in early July, and then continue via Origins I beginning on July 25th. [28-37] June 1975 also marks the debut of Lee Gold's long-running and esteemed fanzine, *Alarums & Excursions*. [28-38]

To those who are unfamiliar, Lee Gold was certainly one of the most influential women in the burgeoning mid-70s role-playing scene. She first learned about *Dungeons & Dragons* from her



friends Owen and Hilda Hannifen, and she and her husband were able to garner a photocopied set of the rules. [28-39]

Lee promptly wrote a check and sent it off to TSR (to get a D&D brown box as quickly as possible), and the Golds set about playing and tinkering with their curious new contraption right away. *Alarums & Excursions* would be the imagination engine through which the Golds, and many other West Coast D&D players, learned about shared this baffling new game and its limitless potential.

Some of the promise of this new fanzine was realized right away. A&E issue #1 included thoughtful articles such as “Thoughts on Keeping Magic-Users Within Bounds,” balanced by more light-hearted fare like “Music to Loot Dungeons By.” Fandom was erupting everywhere. D&D was growing beyond all of its earlier imagined boundaries, but it was also growing *far* beyond Gary’s own ability to control.

There were legal problems brewing as well. The estate of Edgar Rice Burroughs objected to the sale of *Warriors of Mars*, and TSR was forced to quietly let the game die. Gary once wrote that the game was not pulled from publication; rather, it was simply allowed to lapse out of print. [28-40] This unannounced and permanent sell-out probably occurred in the middle or late summer of 1974, with the estate complaint perhaps being received in June or thereabouts. [28-41]

But even while losing *Warriors of Mars*, TSR was surging forward with sales of D&D material and miniatures. As noted later by Tim Kask, the *Greyhawk Supplement* “was a big success.” [28-42]

The exact number of print copies for *Greyhawk* is unknown, but it certainly sold very well throughout March-December 1975. In fact, Rob Kuntz has mentioned that the long-term sell-through of *Greyhawk* was approximately 90% of the number of D&D boxed sales! Since there were thousands of boxed D&D copies printed by this time, it is likely that the first printing was over 1,000 copies. Strong demand continued, and forced the second printing soon after. The second printing would be released in July. [28-43]

The huge sales surge caused by the third printing catapulted TSR into an entirely new realm of financial success. As Gary once reported, “When we finished our first fiscal year back in 1975, we ... [had] gross sales of ... about \$50,000.” [28-44] Gary once defined TSR’s fiscal year as running “through June,” [28-45] which we can hopefully interpret as meaning from July 1st of one year and on through June 30th of the year following. \$50,000 (if accurate) is indeed a truly remarkable figure, especially considering that on June 2nd, 1974 Gary had estimated the worth of TSR at a mere \$6,000. There was still a dark cloud at the core of this silver lining, since TSR as of mid-July still owed the

printers about \$6,000. [28-46] But nevertheless, the company was now growing by leaps and bounds.

The game would become even more popular when Gary and crew promoted their wares at the first Origins Game Fair later that summer. Gary planned for a D&D tournament dungeon to be run by his son Ernie, and was creating his scenario for that express purpose. To prepare the dungeon for external play, however, he would need to test it. He used his Tomb of Horrors dungeon, the one originally inspired by Alan Lucien, and asked his son Ernie and Rob's brother Terry to test the dungeon with their most powerful characters. These initial play tests were brief affairs, however. "Tenser retreated from the perilous place," Gary reported, "as did Terik." [28-47]

Apparently Tenser braved the tomb for a short while looking for treasure, but when "Tenser saw the nature of the tomb he simply retired from it, not caring to risk life and limb for whatever treasure it might hold." [28-48]

Gary next turned to his most audacious player. He needed to get the new dungeon perfected before Origins, and there was of course only one character left who might prove his mettle in the deadly Tomb: Lord Robilar. When Gary told Rob that he wanted to test out a lethal new dungeon level, Rob was understandably wary. [28-49]

Rob agreed to test the dungeon, but in so doing he decided that Lord Robilar would take a small group of companions with him. Rob remembered that he had taken a mere five orcish flunkies along, but in a contemporary letter Gary stated that it was more along the lines of 14 orcs and an additional couple of low-level henchmen. [28-50]

For the purposes of **HAWK & MOOR's** ongoing efforts at establishing a firmer chronology for events in the Greyhawk campaign, it is also worth noting that at this time, Lord Robilar was an evil 13th level fighter. [28-51] Therefore, and considering Rob's recollections that Robilar turned evil in the middle of 1974, I estimate that the Tomb of Horrors play test occurred in either late June or early July. At this time, Robilar was very well equipped with a bag of holding, a flying carpet, a girdle of storm giant strength, +3 plate mail, a ring of invisibility, elven boots, a ring of spell turning, a +3 shield, and his trusty +3 sword. [28-52]

At the beginning of the play test for the Tomb, Robilar mustered his orcs. Per Gary: "Those orcs were Robilar's servitors, his guards in a manner of speaking. Although he forced them into service, they were paid and so generally were wiling troops. Of course in the Tomb of Horrors they were less than willing, and Robilar prodded them at sword point along the entry corridor." [28-53]

Robilar was particularly suspicious at one point, and ordered an orc to advance further along the corridor. The orc refused. Robilar immediately killed him, and the other orcs then realized that they could not defy their Lord's orders without facing a similarly thankless end. [28-54] One by one, Robilar's distraught companions were ordered to walk ahead of the group, and each fell to a grisly death. [28-55] None of these poor souls survived the entry passage into the demi-lich's tomb. [28-56]

Their lives ran out just as Robilar reached the end of the beginning, it seems: "I knew Rob's thinking so well ... Robilar bodily tossed the last of his orcish force through the demon mouth at the end of the corridor, drew the correct conclusion about that little device, and went on alone from there to find the tomb chamber." [28-57] From that point forward, the evil Lord Robilar was on his own.

After many trials, Robilar managed to find the true tomb of the demi-lich. But the demi-lich encounter was designed in such a way that it demanded provocation. Any adventurer with a death wish could confront the ancient fiend, but any brilliant (and greedy) dungeon delver could simply dash in and steal the undead thing's treasure before the spirit had a chance to coalesce. Even the published version of the Tomb of Horrors carries a hint of this in its text: "If the treasure in the crypt is touched, the dust swirls into the air and forms a man-like shape. If this shape is ignored, it will dissipate in 3 rounds, for it can only advance and threaten, not harm." [28-58]

Robilar, however, had already learned his lesson about touching ultra-powerful dormant godlings when he had encountered the Nine in the dungeons below Castle Greyhawk. (Refer to Book II of **HAWK & MOOR** for that tale.) So this time, he had an entirely different tactic in mind. As soon as he got there, Robilar grabbed all of the magical treasure that he could, stuffed it into his bag of holding, and fled. A confrontation with the demi-lich was strictly avoided and he left with all haste using magical boots of speed. [28-59]

Gary was confounded and foiled. He noted later with admiration, "Rob Kuntz, in his game persona as a 13th level (evil) lord went through the entire tomb in four hours actual time." [28-60] It may have been a cheesy victory, but a player who fairly outsmarts the Dungeon Master deserves a great reward!

\* \* \* \* \*

At about this same time, in early July of 1975, *The Strategic Review* #3 was published with a cover date of “Autumn 1975.” This issue has become known in some collector circles as the “Monster Issue,” because it includes the first appearances of many now-classic monsters: the yeti, ghost, shambling mound, leprechaun, naga, wind walker, shrieker, piercer, and lurker above.

Some of these monsters are D&D-specific interpretations of folkloric precedents, while others are unique to Gary’s dungeons. The ghost is a surprisingly late edition to the game, considering that more obscure creatures such as the ghoul were already in play. Leprechauns were chosen to go along with pixies, sprites and other faerie folk, probably as a tribute to Gary’s fond recollection of the *Teenie Weenies* from childhood. The yeti may have been on Gary’s mind because of the bigfoot sighting tales which were in the media that summer; for example, on July 5th and 6th, articles were printed noting that the US Army Engineer Corps had acknowledged the potential existence of Sasquatch in Washington State. [28-61]

The other monsters in TSR #3 are more esoteric. The naga may have been designed for the Cathay adventures. Perhaps Tenser encountered them, or Terik, but this is speculation. Gary’s conception of the naga may have been drawn from *Fabulous Beasts and Demons* by Heinz Mode, a bestiary within the collection of the Lake Geneva library. The wind walker was perhaps inspired by Boreas and the lesser wind spirits in Greek mythology (Zephyrus, Notus, Eurus, and so forth). To this day it is one of the most obscure monsters in the classic game; even Gary once admitted that later in life he encountered a wind walker in a dungeon, and despite being the monster’s creator he could not remember the creature’s weaknesses, and so his character was forced to flee. [28-62]

The lurker above is a meta-game monster designed to annoy players like Terry Kuntz, who hated to be ambushed. Terry started using the words “I look up, down, and all around” whenever Terik would enter a new room, and Gary would surely have loved to torture him with a camouflaged ceiling monster. “The thought of placing a trapper on the floor with a lurker above overhead made me laugh a good deal,” Gary once recalled, “and of course I did just that in my own dungeon levels.” [28-63]

The piercer was probably developed along the same lines as the lurker above, but it was perfectly designed for cave environments. The shrieker monster is difficult to place, but perhaps Gary created it to force wandering monster rolls in rooms even when players were moving their characters quickly and efficiently. Perhaps they were present in Alice’s Dungeonland, and may have been partly inspired by the giant mushroom forest scenes in *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, by Jules Verne. But the real source of inspiration for the shrieker was the Lanier novel, *Hiero’s Journey*.

The shambling mound is one of the more mysterious monsters found in the early game. Gary noted that the monster was derived “Strictly from ‘The Heap’ in Airboy Comics, of which I was a great fan.” [28-64] Confusion would arise in 1977 over the monster’s origin, as the illustration in the Monster Manual is clearly influenced by the *Man-Thing* from an entirely different line of comics. Rob Kuntz later noted that the “shambler” was first encountered by Robilar during the Journey to the City of the Gods adventure, as Dungeon Mastered by Dave Arneson.

In addition to *The Strategic Review* and the Tomb, TSR was also busy developing M. A. R. Barker’s *Empire of the Petal Throne* RPG for its Origins debut. Gary noted in TSR #3, “By the time you are reading this Professor M. A. R. Barker’s incomparable fantasy campaign game EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE will be nearing completion. It should be released around mid-July or perhaps a bit later, and it will be the ultimate in fantasy gaming.” The print run of this ambitious release would total 2,000 copies. [28-65]

This issue also noted that character sheets were now available, with a TSR version of such play aids soon to follow: “John Van de Graaf has developed an efficient system which allows referees and players to keep track of their character data. TSR is at work along somewhat similar lines with an aim towards making such forms available for purchase.” Other outsider products offered include in TSR #3 include *The Siege of Minas Tirith* (by Fact and Fantasy Games of Maryland Heights, Missouri), *The Battle of Five Armies* and *The Battle of Helm’s Deep*. Promotions for these minor Tolkien-inspired wargames would prove to be short-lived, however, due to another legal challenge TSR would face in late 1977.

The preparations for Origins continued throughout June and July. “We are getting ready to run some D&D tournament games at Origins I,” Gary noted, “and from what A[*valon*] H[*ill*] says [concerning preregistrations] the games will be filled to capacity.” [28-66]

Immediately before Origins (on July 19th), TSR officially incorporated in the state of Wisconsin. [28-67]

This new company would be known as TSR Hobbies, Inc. The corporation assumed the Gyga-Kaye-Blume partnership’s former business rights, responsibilities and liabilities, which would fatefully include the Gyga-Arneson royalty agreement for sales of *Dungeons & Dragons*. [28-68]

A new division under the direction of Brian Blume, TSR Hobbies proper, was formed as well. Gary announced that the division “will soon have a catalog with no less than 150 different miniatures for fantasy gaming — as well as other goodies.” [28-69]

During this time, Gary needed to decide upon a new logo for the company. Sadly the G-K logo, following Don Kaye's passing, no longer bore relevance to the passing eyes of most outside observers. Therefore, an evocative piece of artwork would be chosen as TSR's logo for new releases. The piece eventually selected was a lizard man illustrated by Greg Bell, which had appeared in the *Greyhawk Supplement*. Tim Kask once speculated that David C. Sutherland III may have been responsible for redoing the artwork in cleaner fashion, so that it could be cleanly reproduced in a smaller scale. [28-70] The Acaeum indicates that the lizard man logo was created in July of 1975. However, the logo would not see widespread use until September. [28-71]

In the interim, Gary and Ernie and others traveled to Avalon Hill's enormous con. The Origins I gaming convention was held at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. "Now, for the first time ever," the advertisements boasted (pointedly ignoring the precedent of Gen Con), "this hobby gets it all together in one BIG package by way of the largest, most lavish, most exciting convention ever seen." Even more pointedly, Origins would be "professionally planned and executed." [28-72]

And as Tim Kask would later note — if the reader has not already noted the obvious — "Origins was formed by the board gamers as a counter to Gen Con." [28-73] The location for Origins was not appreciated by everyone who traveled there. As one attendee noted, "Baltimore, outside Johns Hopkins, is a slum." The available sleeping rooms apparently consisted of "un-air-conditioned 'coffin singles.'" [28-74] Many gamers suffered in the summer heat.

TSR offered two significant new products at Origins I: the *Dungeon!* game (yes, David Megarry's *Pasha Cada* finally made it into print, with David receiving a 5% royalty), and M. A. R. Barker's *Empire of the Petal Throne*. The initial print run for *Dungeon!* was 3,000 copies. [28-75]

*Petal Throne*'s advertising would proudly proclaim, "J. R. R. Tolkien would be envious!" [28-76] *Petal Throne* sold particularly well, despite being offered for the exorbitant sum of \$25 (the equivalent of about \$110 in 2014). Gygax and Barker would later have a falling out, because the Professor realized that TSR would never promote *Petal Throne* as extensively as it did *Dungeons & Dragons*. But for a time (particularly from 1975 to 1977), Barker's beautiful game was considered to be the state of the art in fantasy role-playing game design. [28-77]

Gary's *Tomb of Horrors* was, as noted, used for the official *Dungeons & Dragons* tournament. [28-78] The original player introduction to the tournament version of the manuscript reads as follows:

"Somewhere under a lost and lonely hill of grim aspect lies a labyrinthine crypt. It is filled with terrible traps and not a few strange and awful monsters. It is filled with treasures both precious



and magical. Besides the aforementioned guards there is a lich himself who guards his final haunt, and it is said that his powers make him nearly undefeatable. It is doubtful that any party will succeed in penetrating to his chamber, however, for the way is fraught with terrible traps, poison gases of various bad effects, traps *[sic]* and magical protections. Only large and very well-prepared parties should even consider attempting the location of this horrid place, and they must be powerful, varied in nature of class, have many magical protections, and equip themselves with every safety device imaginable.” [28-79]

The tournament version is also interesting because while the published 1978 version of the Tomb suggests that the crypt is hidden in the lands of the Flanaess, the tournament version hints that the crypt might be in Blackmoor, either on “an island lying 100 miles east of Blackmoor” or deep within “the highest hill in the Egg of Coot.” [28-80] Clearly, in 1975 Gary was still infatuated with Dave Arneson’s campaign!

Both Gary and his son Ernie Dungeon Mastered the parties for the fifteen-person tournament sessions. Most of the Origins attendees did not fit into the official tournament, due to its flawed and restricted access, but it was reported that many other impromptu sessions of D&D were played at various tables throughout the University’s Levering Hall.

Gary would later praise Avalon Hill for the success of Origins: “For a first-time event,” he wrote, “it seemed nearly perfect.” However, due to AH’s competitive nature in promoting the event he also wrote, “We will allow no other event to steal Gen Con’s glory.” [28-81]

He was also annoyed to find that “Gen Con, with a history of eight solid years of service to hobbyists from all over the North American continent, was passed off as a ‘miniatures’ gathering of a ‘regional’ nature. Origins, the gaming public was told, was a national convention featuring board games.” [28-82]

A little while after the con, Gary would broadcast (and not without reason) his belief that “Fantasy gaming is being ignored and concealed by the folks at AH and SPI (and that isn’t too surprising, for who wishes to plug a competitive game which is sweeping through the hobby?).” [28-83]

The rivalry would grow much worse in the future, but for that moment in late July of 1975, Avalon Hill and TSR stood warily eye to eye with the field of wargaming conventions shared between them.



## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 28

[28-1] United States District Court (Fourth Division, Minnesota) Civil Action 4-79-109, Arneson v. Gygax.

[28-2] United States District Court (Fourth Division, Minnesota) Civil Action 4-79-109, Arneson v. Gygax.

[28-3] *The Strategic Review*, issue #2, pg. 4.

[28-4] *Dragon* magazine, issue #67, pg. 66.

See also Blog of Holding, “The First Grapple Rules,” posted March 28th, 2013.

[28-5] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III. Posted May 2nd, 2003.

See also Part V, Posted January 25th, 2004.

[28-6] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, “The origins of the roper, xorn and otyugh.”

[28-7] For all of the sordid details, please refer to “Battle Beyond the Sun” at Wikipedia.org, “Francis Ford Coppola early works” at directorsseries.tumblr.com, and the *Battle Beyond the Sun* video at trailersfromhell.com.

[28-8] *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, Library of Congress, Copyright Office.

[28-9] *The Strategic Review*, issue #2, pg. 8.

See also *War of Wizards* at boardgamegeek.com.

[28-10] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted May 20th, 2007.

[28-11] RPG.net interview with Gary Gygax, part 1 of 3.

[28-12] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted January 25th, 2004.

[28-13] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted May 18th, 2007.

[28-14] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted May 18th, 2007.

[28-15] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted May 20th, 2007.

[28-16] Acaeum.com, Original D&D Set.

[28-17] Online web forum post: the Quarterofthree/CGM interview with Gary Gygax.

[28-18] The publisher is sometimes mentioned as Hinchliffe, but the confusion can be cleared up by referring to an advertisement featured in *The Dragon* #4: Hinchliffe was the English company that manufactured miniatures. Meanwhile, Heritage Models, Inc. of Dallas, Texas was the American manufacturer of their products. Perhaps the costs of metals and/or figurine production were such that it was cheaper for Hinchliffe to license their business to Heritage for sales in the United States, instead of exporting figures from the UK.

[28-19] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[28-20] Online web forum post: the Quarterofthree/CGM interview with Gary Gygax, *Dragon Annual* #4 pg. 10, *The Dragon* #22 pg. 29, and *Illinois Entertainer*, August 1983.

[28-21] RPGConsortium.com.

[28-22] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[28-23] RPGConsortium.com.

[28-24] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[28-25] *Dragon Annual* #4, pp. 10-11.

[28-26] *Dragon Annual* #4, pg. 10.

[28-27] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part I. Posted September 20th, 2002.

[28-28] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, posted May 25th, 2006.

[28-29] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted April 27th, 2007.

[28-30] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

[28-31] The Dragonsfoot interview with James M. Ward.

See also *Polyhedron*, issue #3, pg. 7.

[28-32] *Polyhedron*, issue #3, pg. 7.

[28-33] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with James M. Ward.

[28-34] Metamorphosisalpha.net, "Rough notes, proto-MA."

See also *Polyhedron*, issue #3, pg. 7.

- [28-35] *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, Library of Congress, Copyright Office.
- [28-36] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted June 13th, 2007.
- [28-37] Tunnels & Trolls.com, "The origins of Tunnels and Trolls."
- [28-38] Grognardia interview with Lee Gold.
- [28-39] Online interview: Grognardia, "An Interview with Lee Gold." Posted April 18th, 2009.
- [28-40] Online web forum post: Refer to the thread "True 'Jumped the Shark' Bidding."
- [28-41] *Playing at the World* by Jon Peterson, pg. 478.
- [28-42] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted October 7th, 2010.
- [28-43] Acaeum.com, D&D Supplements.
- [28-44] *The Dragon*, issue #35, pg. 12.
- [28-45] *The Dragon*, issue #69, pg. 23.
- [28-46] Online web forum post: The Acaeum.com, "Was *Greyhawk* Printed in Feb. '75?"
- [28-47] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted June 4th, 2006.
- [28-48] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted June 28th, 2007.
- [28-49] RPG.stackexchange.com, "How did Robilar plunder the Tomb of Horrors?"
- [28-50] *Alarums & Excursions*, issue #15, and the Dragonsfoot forum thread "Prisoners."
- [28-51] *Alarums & Excursions*, issue #15.
- [28-52] *Rogues Gallery*, and the Dragonsfoot forum thread "Prisoners."
- [28-53] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Lake Geneva campaign."
- [28-54] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Lake Geneva campaign."
- [28-55] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X.
- See also the Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Tomb of Horrors."
- [28-56] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X.
- [28-57] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Lake Geneva campaign."
- [28-58] Dungeon Module S1, *Tomb of Horrors*.

[28-59] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, “Famous survivors of the Tomb of Horrors” and “Lake Geneva campaign.”

See also ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part IX, posted August 31st, 2005; and Part XIII, posted June 28th, 2007.

[28-60] *Alarums & Excursions*, issue #15.

[28-61] Bigfootbuzz.net, “Army Corp of Engineers officially recognized Bigfoot.”

[28-62] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part V. Posted February 8th, 2004.

[28-63] Online web forum post: ENWorld forums, “Gygaxian monsters.”

[28-64] Online web forum post: ENWorld forums, “Gygaxian monsters.”

[28-65] Online web forum post: The Acaeum.com, “Was *Greyhawk* Printed Feb. ’75?”

[28-66] *The Strategic Review* #3.

[28-67] United States District Court (Fourth Division, Minnesota) Civil Action 4-79-109, Arneson v. Gygax.

[28-68] United States District Court (Fourth Division, Minnesota) Civil Action 4-79-109, Arneson v. Gygax.

[28-69] *The Strategic Review*, issue #3 and *White Dwarf*, issue #14.

[28-70] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[28-71] Acaeum.com, D&D Supplements.

[28-72] *The Strategic Review*, issue #2.

[28-73] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 23rd, 2007.

[28-74] *Alarums & Excursions*, issue #4.

[28-75] Online web forum post: The Acaeum.com, “Was *Greyhawk* Printed Feb. ’75?”

[28-76] *The Strategic Review*, issue #4.

[28-77] Readers who are interested in Barker’s setting beyond its influence on D&D are encouraged to visit the excellent Tékumel Foundation website.

[28-78] *The Dragon* #21, and the cover of Dungeon Module S1, *Tomb of Horrors*.

[28-79] Havard's Blackmoor Blog, "Blackmoor References in the Tomb of Horror Prime." Posted November 3rd, 2010.

[28-80] Havard's Blackmoor Blog, "Blackmoor References in the Tomb of Horror Prime." Posted November 3rd, 2010.

[28-81] *The Strategic Review*, issue #5.

[28-82] *Dragon*, issue #65.

[28-83] *The Strategic Review*, issue #7.

## CHAPTER 29

# BLOODLINES AND LEGACIES

(AUGUST 1975)

OTHER GRISLY battles, however, were waged at the con itself. After participating in Gary's *Tomb of Horrors* tournament, one of the players there (Mark Swanson) wrote an entertaining article for *Alarums & Excursions* which would be published in issue #4. For the reader's entertainment, I will provide a full summary here:

There were fifteen players at the table, but only four of the ones in Swanson's group had past D&D experience. The dungeon was designed by Gary as an ultra-difficult death trap. Swanson's session was run by Ernie as referee. Ernie handed out the characters to the assembled players, alphabetically by player name (so that players could not aggressively cherry pick the strongest characters for themselves). These included: two clerics (levels 6 and 10, a Patriarch); six fighters (levels 4, 5, 6, 7, 7 and 7 (dwarf), with the level 4 fighter having a strength of 18/80); two magic-users (levels 6 and 12); one paladin (level 8); and two thieves (level 5 Hobbit, and level 9 human). There were also two multi-classed elves, a fighter 4 / magic-user 6, and a cleric 4 / fighter 4 / magic-user 4 which was apparently very surprising to Mr. Swanson (as elves were not supposed to be clerics, to his mind). Each character had one or two magic items; Mark's magic-user had boots of levitation.

Mark, as one of the most experienced players, took the caller's spot. For such a large group, a caller would be necessary to declare the other players' actions to the referee. This would speed play, and time is always at a critical shortage in a gaming con situation. Another experienced player named Paul Bean selected spells for all of the magic-users in the group (including the one to be played by Mark), while Mark explained that basic concepts of D&D to the novice players. I have difficulty imagining what those 11 nubile souls went through, playing through the Tomb of Horrors as their very first game ... the term "lambs to the slaughter" comes immediately to mind, but with a grin of more of bemusement than of empathy!

The adventurers found themselves in front of a creepy barrow set into a misty hill in the middle of a swamp, and so they lit their torches and went inside. A few false entrances were plodded through before the group found the real way into the depths of the tomb. Observing the murals and bas reliefs, Mark assumed that the tomb was of Egyptian origin and theme (which might be a clue to the monsters encountered therein). The elves searched for secret doors and traps, but found none. Declaring the way safe, the party marched forward and the two fighters in the front plunged into a pit filled with poisonous spikes and died most horribly.

Welcome, new friends, to the wonderful world of *Dungeons & Dragons*!

The bodies were dragged out and the party argued about whether the sacred Patriarch should raise the dead with twelve other companions still alive. Wizard Swanson, being a pragmatic and goodly fellow, declared that the bodies should be shoved back into the pit (Double impale! Fatality!



Fatality!) for later recovery. “Neither the Paladin nor the Patriarch protested,” he duly wrote in his report. Being more than mostly dead, it is likely that neither of the fighting men protested either. A Locate Traps spell was finally used, and more pits were revealed under the resulting arcane haloes of ghostly light. The group avoided these most carefully, and soon discovered the ominous devil mouth at the corridor’s end.

The mouth was quite a quandary. “Things shoved in it,” Mark sagely noted, “did not return.” There was also a strange archway to one side, filled with coils of sapphire mist. Paul’s level 7 human fighter volunteered to journey through the mist, and Dungeon Master Ernie politely escorted Paul outside. Mark had by now decided that Paul was the only other player at the table worth a ... copper piece, and so seizing an advantage over the gullible he ordered the entire party to march through the misty arch.

The Patriarch and the level 7 dwarf fighter refused this order, and so Ernie escorted those players out of the game room and brought Paul back in. The remaining adventurers found themselves in a small room with three levers set into the wall. Wizard Swanson did not like this, not at all. Suspecting another pit trap, he had the adventurers hammer iron spikes into the walls and stand upon them (so that if the floor fell out, no one would fall ... at least, not right away). Various levers were then pulled, in many confounding combinations. Sure enough, when all three levers were yanked into the down position, the floor collapsed and a 100’-deep pit was revealed. The group promptly pushed all three levers into the up position, which opened a crawlspace in the ceiling. The adventurers carefully clambered up the spikes and walls, and safely escaped the chamber of the pit. Presumably, loincloths were then changed.

Ernie then went to confer with the players of the Patriarch and the dwarf. These two were sat back down. They immediately decided that they should follow after their fellows, and so they traipsed through the sapphire mist and into open air, where — perhaps with shared and momentary look of “Oh sh##” and matching a pair of Wylie E. Coyote frowns — plummeted a hundred feet into the abyss.

There were, as we state in polite accounts, sadly no survivors of this inexplicable tragedy. On with the body count!

Meanwhile, the survivors had crawled up into a higher passageway. They discovered a new room in which there were three promising-looking treasure chests: one of wood, one of silver, and one of gold. All were opened. One contained a monstrous animated skeleton, which was quickly overwhelmed and slain. Another contained pit vipers, which were stomped and hacked to bits. The third contained a magic ring “with white dust inside” its inner rim. The Hobbit thief, being a

Hobbit thief, took the ring and refused to blow out the powder. And so the Hobbit put on the ominous ring (Bad literary precedent? Why, dear reader, whatever do you mean?), gasped, and died.

Contact poison is a bitch. Body count? Five and counting.

The ten survivors, perhaps lamenting never asking the Hobbit companion for second breakfast, left the room. The elves searched for secret doors again, but still found nothing, and so the group found themselves back in a spiked pit in which the doubly-impaled bodies of two poor fighters were displayed. The Wizard Swanson gave a mighty sigh and declared that the party should leave this accursed place, forever. He was ignored.

The rest of the fellowship searched some more, and found a new pit. Paul's fighter, taking control of the situation, plummeted and measured the density of the pit's floor with his helmeted head. Fortunately, the helm's contents were thicker than the stone floor, and so he survived "with only bruises."

One of the wittier players decided that the group should chisel some of the plaster reliefs off of the walls, and so a hidden door was found. Preparing for glory, the delvers marched down a new corridor and encountered two giant gargoyles. These nasty fiends were dispatched with violence and "difficulty," because in all of the excitement none of the players could remember what magic items and spells their characters had. Charm Person proved ineffective against one gargoyle (not the Personable sort, apparently), but another fell in a flash of brilliance (and stroke of genius) when a javelin of lightning was hurled into its stony flesh. The mighty victors thus acquired two precious collars, each worth a whopping 500 gold pieces.

The triumphant treasure seekers galumphed further into the tomb, and discovered a maze of "10' square rooms with walls that pivoted vertically, horizontally, slip up, down, and sideways." This was entirely too much for the players to comprehend, and the fighter with 18/80 strength was finally called upon to smash a hole in the wall. The hole led into another corridor, another crawlspace, and finally an eerie chapel. The chapel featured an altar which the Paladin declared a vile and unholy thing. Wisely, none of the other adventurers dared to touch it.

Nearby was another sinister archway, this one filled with a whirling ochre mist. The level 6 cleric (now the *only* cleric, his companion having become a Patriarchal pancake some time ago) walked straight through the mists, and out came his Antimatter Universe opposite: a level 6 female Anti-Cleric, perhaps sporting Spock's beard and a Satanic unholy symbol. The Anti-Cleric saw her arch-nemesis — the Paladin — and hurled a curse at him. The Paladin was not amused, and so he

chivalrously upended the Anti-Cleric and hurled her back through the mist. Out popped the good cleric once again, dazed, bruised, and thoroughly confused.

Meanwhile, back in Origins and the real world, the players were given a five-minute warning. The game was about to end! The group tried to run through the unexplored regions of the labyrinth, but Gary called out that the game was over. Many of the great Wizard Swanson's companions, it seems, were not considered worthy of ascension into the final round.

Oh, well.

Finishing up his report, Mark offered his own opinion on Gygaxian play: "Play a Gygax game if you like pits, secret doors and dungeon roulette. Play a game such as in *Alarums & Excursions* if you prefer monsters, talking ... and a more exciting game. ... Gary can defend himself. I felt no real desire for a second, similar game." [29-1]

Which is truly unfortunate, because I find Mr. Swanson's play report to be hilarious.

\* \* \* \* \*

Amusing play continued in Gary's own Greyhawk campaign as well. It seems likely that Gary and Ernie resumed serious play after Origins, with Ernie's Tenser character being mostly retired. To replace Tenser and to continue his wily legacy, Ernie rolled up Erac, a lawful good human magic-user born of another bloodline. Erac first adventured in the ruins of Greyhawk Castle, and eventually made his way down into the gigantic "new" dungeons which had been developed by Gary and Rob. [29-2]

Erac is believed to have attained at least the 8th experience level, because he is mentioned as an Enchanter in the tale of the Expedition to the Black Reservoir. His favorite treasures were a silver horn of Valhalla, and a wand of fear.

The tale of Erac's trials upon the shadowed waters is told here ...

\* \* \* \* \*

One ominous morning, Erac set out to the ruins of Castle Greyhawk with three companions: Londlar (a cleric, specifically a level 7 lama), his henchman Nulfyke (dwarf fighting man, level 3

swordsman) and Ugubb of the Lake of Crystals (Londlar's acolyte, a level 1 cleric with questionable survival instincts). They passed through the west gate and into the ruins, found the eastern stairs down, descended, and came to a cave filled with phosphorescent lichen. Here, more than twenty elves were on guard. The redesigned Castle Greyhawk had descents that were protected by small bodies of troops, which prevented most of the subterranean monsters from crawling out to the surface. For this service, they frequently charged adventurers going down an arm and a leg.

Erac struck a deal for his group: He would pay nothing to get by, but if he returned, he would pay the elves in coin and give them a magic item. The deal was struck, and the adventurers descended further. They found a secret way down to an unexplored side level off of dungeon level four, [29-3] where moisture was dripping from the walls. The humidity and darkness grew as together they descended another staircase and then looked out in wonder through a black expanse, a void of swirling mists.

Exploring carefully, they realized that they were standing upon a precarious ledge overlooking a vast underground lake. Gary had designed this area with Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* in mind. The adventurers discovered a moored raft. Erac wanted to use it, but Londlar wisely said that they should explore further to make certain that there were no monsters or other perilous foes nearby.

They went west and further down the shore, through the vast cavern, traversing over 200 feet. They discovered a spiral staircase which led slickly upward through the murk. A strange clattering sound echoed through the cavern. They raised their lanterns, and to their horror espied a giant crab scuttling down. They fled, but the thing did not follow. It was the guardian of the stairs. But suddenly, considering the beast incredible size and claws, the raft seemed like a much safer means of travel.

So they boarded the raft carefully, and poled out onto the eerie black water of unknown depths. The umbral vapors swirled about their faces. The poles did not reach the bottom, and a slow current took up the raft and pulled it deeper into the lake. The adventurers saw a blocky silhouette rising out of the mists, and found that it was the top of a granite pillar sticking high out of the waters' surface. The pillar's top, presumably holding up the great cavern's ceiling, could not be seen through the vapors overhead. They used the pillar and their poles to push off in a new direction, and came thence to another pillar, and then another. They kept pushing away from these, plotting a haphazard course as they tried to determine just how big this enormous Black Reservoir might be.

Eventually they came to a stranger place: there was an oval-shaped barrier, made up of many adjacent pillars, which prevented passage into a central elliptical expanse of water. They could not see anything inside this barrier zone, but the pillars were too close for them to move the raft into the middle. They moved around the perimeter of the place, poling carefully, and studied the pillars' granite sides. Nulfyke's skill in stone-craft paid off: he saw a rusty lever hidden on one of the pillar's flanks. The lever was pulled, but it was so immense and so soundly stuck that it took the combined strength of Nulfyke, Erac and Ugubb to finally move it.

There was a bubbling and hissing sound, as the lever-pillar descended rapidly. Its summit, once touching the cavern's roof, descended past the explorers' eye level and sunk beneath the water's surface. The pillar sank so quickly that a little whirlpool formed on the water's surface, and for a few alarming moments the raft bobbed and swirled along in a bubbling pool. Then there was the sound of bubbles rising, and something slimy rising up out of the depths. An enormous netherworld serpent lifted its head, freed from its underwater prison! Nulfyke, Ugubb and Londlar frantically pushed away on the other pillars, but it was slow going. Erac began to chant a spell. The raft slowly drifted away, and the giant serpent surged in to snap at these four tasty morsels adrift in its domain.

But Erac had been clever. He had not cast a mere attack spell on the humongous beast, he had granted arcane Haste to his companions! Their rowing speed intensified, and they gradually pulled away from the hungry monster. A few precious seconds had been gained, and Erac prepared another spell. He launched a Fireball straight toward the beast's open mouth. The Fireball hit the thing at the base of its neck, and blossomed there in a blinding explosion. It gave a roar of agony, then plunged its long neck toward Erac. Vicious fangs closed on the enchanter's robes, bloodying him badly before he could twist away.

The raft had reached the western wall of the great cavern, and the hastened adventurers were able to pole a little faster as they pushed off the slick surface. Erac pulled out his last hope: a rod which had been taken "from a quasi-human in another dimension." To be more precise, Gary revealed that this was a Dirdir laser pistol, which Erac had recovered while exploring a magical gate in the dungeons which led to the Planet of Adventure. [29-4]

Erac triggered the pommel button on this technological wonder of Carabas, and a blue heat ray arced out and boiled the water around the lake monster's body. The thing roared more savagely, but it slowed, instinctively moving out of the boiling water. Erac fired again as his companions desperately poled their way back to shore. The thing finally retreated underwater. The relieved adventurers leapt off the raft and back to the shore-ledge. They were saved!

Not quite. The commotion had stirred awake five pteranodons, which dove down from their hidden aerie to attack. At the same moment the enraged lake monster lifted its head. Escape was cut off, and the adventurers arrayed themselves in a battle line along the narrow and slippery ledge.

A pteranodon dove at Ugubb, another lunged for Nulfyke. Londlar fended them off with wild swings of his enchanted mace. Erac fired the heat ray at the same moment that the lake monster lunged at him with open maw, and the thing's head boiled and exploded in a sickening spool of unwinding gore.

But there were still too many pteranodons to fend off! Londlar was pummeling one, but two others dragged Ugubb and Nulfyke up off the ledge. Erac carefully fired the heat ray twice, and blasted the struggling pteranodons off of his companions. Their fried and twisted wings coiled and hissed, and they plopped messily down into the water.

Londlar smashed one of the vile things to pieces, and the crunch of its fragile bones convinced its brethren that this prey was too difficult to tarry with. The remaining pteranodons swooped away, circling high up into the shrouding vapors once again.

Londlar fastened his mace onto his belt. He laid his palms on each of his wounded comrades in turn, magically healing their wounds with sacred prayers. The adventurers looked for the raft but it was nowhere to be found. Perhaps the death throes of the lake monster had dragged it beneath the surface. Fully mindful of the giant crab, the adventurers changed direction and explored the last expanse of the shoreline ledge. At its other terminus they found a punt moored in the darkest waters. They climbed in, and carefully made their way across the unknown deeps once again.

In the utmost distance, they discerned the Gothic silhouette of a stony island with a spindly tower set precariously upon its height. The adventurers made their way to the slimy shore there, carefully moored the punt, and crept out toward the tower's single entrance. The door was immense, and Wizard Locked. Erac cast a Knock spell to open it. He knew then that the caster of the Wizard Lock was a mage of great power, because his counter-spell barely opened the vast portal. A few mere inches of space were opened by Erac's spell. One by one, the adventurers held their breath and squeezed their way through the opening and into the tower's ultimate darkness.

The single room at the tower's base held only a few musty and meager furnishings, but the wall revealed a narrow and rising stair. The group marched up the stairs with weapons drawn. A trapdoor loomed overhead, and this too was Wizard Locked. Erac used his last Knock spell to slam this open.



Inside was a flabbergasted wizard garbed all in black, shaking his head as he strove to release himself from some infernal meditation. A censer emitting hot whorls of smoky incense stood before him. Before he could ready a spell to meet these brash intruders, he was overcome. Nulfyke and Londlar tied the wizard's wrists and ankles, and he was gagged so that he could not cast a single spell. Erac then dragged him back down the stairs and into the punt. The adventurers searched his person, as well as his chambers, and found a treasure chest overflowing with jewels and ancient gold.

The chest was loaded onto the punt, but it soon became clear that the load was far too heavy to safely move across the vaporous waters of the Black Reservoir. Nulfyke searched the rest of the tiny island, and discovered the wizard's private boat. This boat was lashed to the punt with rope, and the seething wizard was tossed bodily into his own appropriated craft. The group then set out once again. They should have made their way toward the surface-heading corridor once again, but they were filled with gold-lust and easy victory had made them brash. Instead, then, they made their way back to the central prison of the lake monster.

The punt and the boat were carefully maneuvered into the center of the pillar-surrounded water. Ugubb, the strongest swimmer (with the highest constitution) was told to strip off his armor and to dive in search of treasure. The acolyte reluctantly agreed. Another long rope was lashed to the punt and thrown overboard, so that the acolyte could quickly descend and ascend once again on a single breath. Ugubb strapped a sack of iron spikes to his back for weight, took in a humongous breath, clutched the rope and jumped over the side.

Londlar played out the rope, feeling Ugubb's rapid exertions through the shifts in pressure and tension. Then there was a tug. He waited in suspense, and almost cried out when Ugubb rose back out of the water with a gasp. When he could breathe again, Ugubb reported that he had reached the end of the rope without seeing anything or reaching the bottom. The adventurers realized that they had already asked much of their most vulnerable companion, and there was nothing more to be done. It was time to return to the surface with their treasure and their captive. Perhaps the evil wizard would be forced to teach Erac his spells before he would be released?

Ugubb replaced his armor and regained his strength, while Nulfyke and Londlar poled the heavy punt toward the shore. Erac moved to check on his captive, but was shocked to find that while Ugubb had been diving, the evil wizard had craftily loosened the hasty knots around his wrists. The wizard threw off his bonds and dove into the depths!



The adventurers were too startled to prevent this daring escape. Minutes later, a Magic Mouth boomed out an imperious warning to the brazen treasure-hunters: "I am the Sorcerer of the Black Reservoir, and I shall be avenged for the theft of my treasure!"

The four dungeon delvers did not tempt fate any further. They made their way back to the surface world, probably paying a tithe to the elves (who must have been rather surprised to see these short-lived fools returning alive). All of the adventurers greatly benefitted from the adventure, and Erac grew even stronger than he had been before. Surely such was reward enough for daring so much? Perhaps it was time to retire in comfort, to only dream of glory ...

But the call of the dungeons deep is a compelling one, and late one night Erac heard the siren song of adventure once again. He left the City of Greyhawk alone, and returned to the dungeons beneath the ruin, and went thus to his doom ...

\* \* \* \* \*

All in all, it is quite a remarkable tale (and likely my own favorite out of all of Gary's related chronicles of the Greyhawk campaign). I must note that the overall conception of the Black Reservoir bears some broad yet significant similarities with the underworld portrayed in Michael Moorcock's Elric tale, *While the Gods Laugh*. There, Elric and his companions discover a long sloping tunnel which deposits them on the crystalline shores of an underground lake beneath a monster-haunted wilderness. Seeking to cross the water, they find a boat and are then attacked by flying monsters. The adventurers eventually make their way across to a forbidden citadel enclosing an ancient sanctuary, where they find that a powerful arcane treasure is guarded by a mighty and magic-wielding guardian.

How much of this is coincidence, and how much Gary's borrowing of a tale he is known to have admired?

\* \* \* \* \*

It seems that a little after the incredible adventure in the Black Reservoir, Erac suffered a terrible setback. During this later excursion he was exploring dungeon level six, and discovered a secret tunnel which led into a well-hidden side area. Here, he found a chamber filled with small pools.

The pools glowed with images of stars, reflected from painted stars upon the ceiling. Curious, Erac entered the chamber alone. The wall slid shut behind him, and he became trapped. Gary had created a puzzle room, hoping that Ernie would manage to solve the mystery. But unfortunately, Ernie could not fathom what the solution was, and Erac slowly died of starvation. What an ignominious fate! [29-5]

(Circumstantially, it appears that Erac's demise occurred in the summer of 1975. This notation will help us in dating many of the later adventures experienced by a more fortunate adventurer, soon to be known as Erac's Cousin.)

Amusingly, however, Gary wrote in 2005 that Erac's earthly remains were discovered by one of the newer adventuring groups which was exploring the classic Greyhawk Dungeons. Gary even invited his son back to play the resurrected Erac once again, although I do not know if Ernie ever took his father up on the kindly offering. [29-6]

\* \* \* \* \*

In addition to these entertaining games, it was still conference season as well. Between Origins and Gen Con, Gary and others attended the more historically obscure CITEX-75 / DIPCON convention at the Midland Hotel in Chicago. [29-7] This was the foremost con for fans of the proto-RPG *Diplomacy* (a longtime favorite of Gary's and of many other people). The con took place from August 15th-17th. Gary reported that it was "Lots of fun too — especially to see how D&D is making inroads among Dippy buffs." [29-8]

Just a few days later, it was time once again for Gen Con (August 22nd-24<sup>th</sup>, 1975). [29-9] This would be a huge event, as D&D had grown enormously in the twelve months since its dominance enjoyed at Gen Con VII in 1974. This year, TSR was not only in a position to dominate the miniature wargaming industry; it was also authoritative enough to presume (rightly) the ability to bestow awards upon fellow game designers as well. The First Annual Strategists Club Awards Banquet was held at the fittingly-chosen Gargoyle Restaurant in Lake Geneva on the evening of Friday, August 22nd. [29-10]

Gary would report that the banquet "was great fun, and we managed to squeeze in 58 people!" To no one's surprise, *Dungeons & Dragons* had been voted the best game of 1974, and Gary and Dave Arneson shared an award for outstanding designer. Several other wargaming-specific awards were also given for entities not associated with TSR. [29-11]

Tim Kask, for one, greatly enjoyed this con (especially in retrospect) because it was the last time that he got to sit at Gen Con as a participant, kicking back and gaming instead of working the event. [29-12]

Attendance was extremely high, with Gary giving a figure of “nearly 1,600 gamers,” and later even “a whopping 1,800.” [29-13]

However by this time the rivalry with Origins was in full swing, and both sides were taking creative liberties with their con attendance reporting! In the midst of what Tim Kask once frankly referred to as “a big pissing contest,” [29-14] these oft-refuted figures were eventually reined in, as Gary noted that “only about 900 of those we reported as attending were actually paid.” [29-15]

Regardless, the event was a smash hit which dwarfed all previous Gen Cons. Avalon Hill’s contention, basically, was that (correctly) Origins had a lot more people present at Johns Hopkins. But when the fans’ blood is fired up, why should the truth get in the way of a sensational story? The battle for the title of “number one wargaming convention” was already raging on many fronts.

Such political theatrics made little difference to most of the casual gamers themselves, however. One of the first-time attendees this year was a Canadian gentleman named Ed Greenwood.

Ed would become a devoted D&D player and game master, [29-16] and is today of course known as the father of the Forgotten Realms campaign setting. The Forgotten Realms would soon come to the attention of other D&D players through evocative articles Mr. Greenwood published in *The Dragon*. [29-17]

Another first-time attendee was future TSR employee Jeff Grubb, who had just recently been introduced to the game in classic fashion: “I first saw D&D being played in the corner of a wargaming club. These people were sitting in the corner rolling dice and screaming, but there wasn’t any board. I went over to ask someone what was going on, but one of the guys yelled, ‘We need a cleric!’, handed me 3d6, and it was all downhill from there.” [29-18]

Tim Kask was also present, this time to talk with Gary, to meet with Brian Blume and to arrange for his imminent employment by Tactical Studies Rules. [29-19] As Tim later recalled, “It was decided that at the end of the summer they were going to hire me.” [29-20]

A *Dungeon!* tournament was conducted, and many other games were played. [29-21] The now-legendary miniatures company Ral Partha (founded in 1975) brought forth their new offerings, and due to their extremely fine quality they immediately (per Tim) “set the gaming industry on its ear.” [29-22] And of course, in the realm of imaginary games (alongside *Dungeon!*) *Dungeons & Dragons* reigned supreme.

Gary (and Ernie?) ran the Tomb of Horrors again, although sadly I possess no play reports for these Gen Con games. [29-23] We can hope that the sessions were intense, comedic and blood-filled, rivaling the entertaining Origins occurrence. The most impressive play group (DMed by Russ Stambaugh, but I do not know precisely where or when) apparently came up with the ingenious solution which Gary had not expected: “The best group managing the adventure that I know of,” he wrote, “was the tournament team that used the crown atop the demi-lich’s skull, [and] a touch of the wrong end of the scepter to utterly destroy it.” [29-24] This arcane trick of legerdemain immediately vaporized the mighty Acererak’s skull and spirit into dust. When Russ told Gary what the group had done, Gary “awarded them first place hands down.” [29-25]

\* \* \* \* \*

In addition to the Tomb games, Rob Kuntz also ran a two-day D&D tournament entitled “The Sunken City.” [29-26] From a glimpse at his surviving game materials, [29-27] we can see that this scenario involved a partially-flooded ruin with the tops of many buildings rising above the waves. Likely, these buildings were filled with air-breathing monsters in their accessible summits, and then aquatic monsters and difficult-to-garner treasures below. This scenario may have been inspired by Fritz Leiber’s tale *The Sunken Land*.

The enthusiasm of many of the new D&D players was remarkable, if in some cases misguided. Dave Arneson once reported that people were bringing Xeroxed (i.e., pirated) copies of D&D to him, asking for his signature. [29-28]

This was also the con where Gary began to realize just how devoted the more experienced players were as well. Creative endeavors were shared, and in great proliferation. Following the vague yet inspiring nature of the 1974 *Dungeons & Dragons* rules, many Dungeon Masters and players created their own variants while they were experimenting with the game. Limitations in the rules were explored and quickly surpassed. New treasures, monsters, variant systems and character classes proliferated, although many were regional in nature and only rarely disseminated beyond a select circle. Many of the best designs however reached Gary’s attention, either through the mail or via Gen Con.

One of the early examples of this process is the druid PC class, as proposed by numerous gamers. Environmental awareness was proliferating in the early 1970s with the popularization of Earth Day and similar movements. Also, interest in un-Roman and pagan cultures was increased

not only by D&D, but by *The Lord of the Rings* and the SCA as well. The druid was regarded as a cleric-like class that could excel in a wilderness environment, much like the ranger class had complimented the more dungeon-oriented fighter. Several druid variants were in existence by the summer of 1975, but the one which Gary was most impressed with was one created by Dennis Sustare.

Dennis's play group had mimeographed their homebrew druid rules, and these were shared with Tim and Gary (most likely at Gen Con 1975). The Sustare rules elaborated on the mention of druids in the *Greyhawk Supplement*, where they were featured as NPCs but not as a playable class. The PC class would later be further developed by Tim and Gary, and would appear in D&D *Supplement III: Eldritch Wizardry* in early 1976. The spell honoring Dennis and alluding to him as the "Great Druid," Chariot of Sustar[r]e, was designed by Tim. [29-29]

The druid however was only a minor takeaway in light of TSR's wider accomplishments at Gen Con VIII. In all, this convention (to my mind) set TSR and D&D on an unshakeable path toward hobby gaming dominance ... a reign which would last for many years.

When Gen Con VIII was over, the promotional conference season largely came to an end. At some point, Gary received Dave Arneson's draft for the upcoming *Supplement II: Blackmoor*. Perhaps Dave even passed the papers to Gary by hand during or after the con, or provided these papers to Gary even earlier. (It is interesting to note that the copyright registration date for *Blackmoor* is August 15th, which implies that Gary and Dave were already seriously considering the supplement's publication by the time of Gen Con.) [29-30]

When Gary had a chance to look over these papers, he must have experienced a wave of déjà vu: Dave's new material was brilliant, eccentric, disparately influenced ... and messy. *Very* messy. There would be a lot of editing to do in the near future.

At first, it seems, Gary passed these notes to Brian Blume to see if Brian could make enough sense of the material to generate a new accessory. [29-31]

But due to the disorder and complexity of the material, Brian would quickly realize that such interpretive editing was above his head.

Who might be able to make sense of it all? Funny that you should ask ...

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 29

[29-1] *Alarums & Excursions*, issue #4.

[29-2] Online web forum post: Garycon.com forums, “Erac and Erac’s Cousin.”

[29-3] Online web forum post: Doomsday Games forums, “Black Reservoir.”

[29-4] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted May 2nd, 2005.

See also Part IV, posted November 5th, 2003.

[29-5] Rob Kuntz post on the paizo.com forums, dated September 7th, 2006.

See also Garycon.com forums, “Erac and Erac’s Cousin.”

[29-6] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX. Posted August 23rd, 2005.

[29-7] *The Strategic Review*, issue #3.

[29-8] *The Strategic Review*, issue #4.

[29-9] *The Strategic Review*, issue #2.

[29-10] *The Strategic Review*, issue #2.

[29-11] *The Strategic Review*, issue #4.

[29-12] *The Dragon*, issue #15, pg. 2.

[29-13] *The Strategic Review*, issues #4, #5.

[29-14] *40 Years of Gen Con*, pg. 53.

[29-15] *The Strategic Review*, issue #7.

[29-16] Mr. Greenwood would date the beginning of his D&D obsession to 1975; see for example *Dragon* magazine, issue #244.

[29-17] *Dragon* #244 and the Grogardia interview with Ed Greenwood.

[29-18] *Dragon* magazine, issue #111, pg. 64.

[29-19] Grogardia interview with Tim Kask, Part I.

See also *40 Years of Gen Con*, pg. 27.

[29-20] *40 Years of Gen Con*, pg. 27.

[29-21] *The Strategic Review*, issue #4.

[29-22] *40 Years of Gen Con*, pg. 31.

[29-23] *Alarums & Excursions*, issue #4.

[29-24] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted May 15th, 2007.

[29-25] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VI. Posted February 29th, 2004.

See also ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part IX, posted August 31st, 2005.

[29-26] *40 Years of Gen Con*, pg. 29.

[29-27] The Collector's Trove Presents: The Robert J. Kuntz Collection.

[29-28] *40 Years of Gen Con*, pg. 22.

[29-29] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Dennis Sustare on the origins of the D&D druid class"; the Groggardia interview with Dennis Sustare.

[29-30] *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, Library of Congress, Copyright Office.

[29-31] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted October 17th, 2009.



CHAPTER 30

TASKS  
FOR THE WIZARD  
KASK

(SEPTEMBER –  
OCTOBER 1975)

A NEW era for TSR began on Monday, September 1st, when Tim Kask began working for the company as a full-time employee. [30-1] Tim's wife had encouraged him to take the job. He was hired "at the princely stipend of \$100 a week."

His first few paychecks would be paid out by "Tactical Studies Rules" as opposed to merely "TSR." Gary was happy to have an editor, because he wanted to focus more on game design and play. "I was brought in because he liked to do other stuff in *The Strategic Reviews*," Tim recalled.

When Tim was handling the logistics, Gary could get back to writing articles featuring monsters and elaboration of the game's featured weapons and systems.

However, unlike Gary and Brian, Tim had a commute from nearby Delavan to contend with, and he did not earn royalties because he had no prior game design credits to his name. [30-2] Tim's "day office" was, of course, a cramped section of Gary's basement. His "evening office" was the spare bedroom in his Delavan home. [30-3] The basement was lit by two 100-watt bulbs in the ceiling, and the work "table" Tim shared to fill the orders consisted of a raised and sawhorse-balanced piece of plywood. As Tim recollected, "We worked around the furnace and oil tank in near Stygian darkness. ... It was always a bit of a shock on the pupils when we came up." [30-4]

On the day that Tim began work, Gary was busy writing the Foreword for *Blackmoor*. This was an extremely optimistic gesture, and a huge vote of confidence in Tim Kask's capabilities. Gary knew full well that Tim still needed to edit Dave Arneson's notes into a workable supplement, and by writing the Foreword he was indicating that he expected this work to be finished rather quickly.

However, due to Mr. Kask's lack of super-humanity, Gary's confidence in *Blackmoor*'s imminent publication would soon prove to be premature.

There is some chronological confusion involving the start dates of TSR's early employees. Rob Kuntz at the time of Tim's arrival was a part-timer, and had probably gained that status early in 1975 when he helped with the collation and shipping of D&D's third printing. A few weeks after Tim's hiring (probably in late September), Rob was made a full-time employee of TSR. [30-5] His older brother Terry had been part-time too, filling orders and preparing shipments. [30-6]

According to Rob's recollections, Terry was employed full-time prior to Tim's arrival. [30-7] TSR had recently (perhaps in the summer) acquired "the grey house," a run-down former residence — rezoned for business, and with an excellent potential storefront location — at Williams and Marshall Street.

Terry was hard at work re-wiring, carpeting, and generally refurbishing the building so that it could serve as a store and the TSR headquarters building in the future. (“And at less than a professional rate, I may add,” Rob would later note.) [30-8]

The storefront would be on the ground floor, and the offices — with Gary’s desk planned to be at the very top of the stairs — would occupy the upper floor. These commendable efforts would save Gary and co. thousands of dollars, and those selfsame dollars would allow Gary to pay everyone’s salaries for a while. [30-9]

Terry would later become the manager of the ground-level store, which would incarnate as the now-legendary Dungeon Hobby Shop. [30-10] Terry’s official full-time start date has been stated in print as October 1st, 1975. [30-11]

Early on during Mr. Kask’s employment, Gary and Tim discussed the future of *The Strategic Review*. At that time, as Tim recalled, “It was understood that at the first feasible opportunity, *S[trategic] R[evue]* was to morph into two, slick-papered, with color, actual magazines.” [30-12]

Tim would soon take the reins and turn the TSR zine into a much more professional publication. The *Review*’s descendant periodicals *The Dragon* and *Little Wars* however, had only been vaguely conceived of. [30-13] Tim hoped however that his editing skills would soon be put to the test.

He went in to work one morning, a couple of weeks after beginning work, [30-14] and he knew that something was up. Gary and Brian were sitting there waiting for him, “looking like siblings from the same litter of Cheshire cats.” [30-15] As Tim went to the plywood table and began preparing orders, Gary and Brian brought him an apple bushel basket full of notes. [30-16]

Tim glanced at the mismatched pieces of paper, and thought the slips might be more orders that needed filling. Tim wanted to know what was going on, and Brian started laughing. Gary explained that Tim’s first true test as an editor was immediately at hand. The basket was filled with Dave Arneson’s “final draft,” and Tim would be responsible for editing *Dungeons & Dragons Supplement II: Blackmoor*.

Tim was told that Gary and Brian wanted the *Supplement II* manuscript to be completed and ready to send to the printer in approximately six weeks. Tim had not yet taken a detailed look at the papers, and so he agreed that he would do this on a quick turnaround. He needed to empty the bushel basket that same day (as Gary’s wife Mary needed it to do the laundry), so he took all of the papers and stuffed them into an accordion file. [30-17]

Nonplussed, Tim took the file of papers home.

He did not look at the papers for about a week, because he was busy getting the next issue of *The Strategic Review* (#4) prepared and completed at the printer's. [30-18]

I believe that *The Strategic Review* #4 was written by Gary (having been created a little earlier, perhaps right before Tim was hired), and that Tim's editorship came with issue #5. [30-19]

The next week after "the basket incident," Tim sat in his home office and looked over Dave's draft in detail. As he sorted through Arneson's materials, he found that there was not really a "manuscript" which required an edit. There was a nice adventure scenario involving the Temple of the Frog, and about forty pages of other notes. These notes included tables, matrices, charts and explanatory summaries, [30-20] which were "full of repetitions, contradictions, duplications and complications." [30-21] He tried to make sense of the papers that night and the next. At some point early in the process, it seems that he may have contacted Dave Arneson personally for clarification of various points. Unfortunately the answers received were less than promising, intimating that Tim needed to think a little harder (I am putting this politely) if he could not yet understand what had been clearly written. [30-22]

Tim soon went back to Gary in defeat. When Tim said that he couldn't figure out Dave's systems, Gary simply replied that Tim was the editor and professional editing was all that Dave's materials required. [30-23] Gary had already been through his own trial by fire in writing D&D on his own while incorporating Arneson's obscure ideas, and now it was Tim's turn.

Unwilling to give up on such a promising job (and his friend and employer Gary), Tim rolled up his sleeves and went to work. He may have tackled the easy part first, the Temple of the Frog. Tim once noted that the scenario was solely Dave's creation, and besides spelling and such it just needed an edit and inconsistency check from the perspective of another Dungeon Master.

That was the easy part.

There were also materials detailing the new assassin and monk classes, and these systems must have been in good enough order that an appraisal of their relative power (compared to the already-existing character classes in D&D) could be rendered. It seems that Brian liked the monk, and Dave's notes on that class passed through his hands before they reached Tim. (Whether Brian tinkered with Dave's version of the class is unknown.) [30-24] As Tim once explained, Brian "was a huge fan of David Carradine's *Kung Fu* on TV." [30-25] Brian's affection for the monk class would ensure that many of Arneson's details concerning the class's powers would make it into print.

Tim and Gary agreed that the idea of the assassin was somewhat depraved and "twisted," [30-26] but Tim also felt that the monk was unrealistic and difficult to justify within the larger context

of the game. Tim did not like either class, and he felt they were overpowered. Tim wondered if the classes could be excluded, or at least heavily modified. Apparently Tim had detailed some specific and lengthy concerns about the monk, and talked to Gary about them, but Brian (in overhearing this) convinced Gary to keep the monk systems intact by arguing that many of the extreme powers were received only at high level, and therefore it was doubtful that many players would ever manage to get a monk that experienced through honest play. [30-27]

Tim tried suggesting that the assassin would make a quality NPC villain, unusable by players as a PC class, but again was overruled. [30-28] Gary later told Tim that D&D *Supplement II* would be Dave Arneson's tome and reflective of his unique milieu of Blackmoor, and therefore Dave's ideas were going to be included in the final work. [30-29] Tim was thus reduced to editing the classes for clarity, and they would both make it into print. According to Tim's recollection, because the monk was allowed the assassin was allowed too: "The assassin rode in on the monk's coattails, so to speak." [30-30] But he never did like monks after that first appraisal. "I despise the Monk PC," he once wrote. "I will never, ever put one in any adventure I ever write. They're a game breaker." [30-31]

A few overgrown monsters provided by Dave from the Blackmoor campaign made it into Tim's draft of *Supplement II*, including the giant beetle, giant frog, giant lizard, giant toad, and giant wasp. [30-32] "I'm pretty sure the giant animals were Dave's idea," Tim recalled. "[Arneson] made a point that remains valid today; you don't need supernatural foes to kill a party." [30-33]

It seems that the giant beetles, in particular, were vaguely outlined by Dave and then elaborated into sub-species by Tim and Gary. [30-34]

Despite a few other pieces of material, however — for example, Arneson had written the treatise on diseases which appears in the public work — [30-35] Tim did not have enough intact goodies to make *Supplement II* into a manuscript which would be comparable in size with *Supplement I: Greyhawk*. Gary responded to this need by offering a set of underwater adventure rules written by an outside contributor.

The story goes something like this:

At some point, perhaps in the middle of 1975, a young Dungeon Master named Stephen R. Marsh had begun sending Gary several pieces of interesting conceptual material for potential inclusion in *Dungeons & Dragons*. Earlier, he had ambitiously struggled to create a new board game based on the mystical precepts of James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, but the scope of this unusual undertaking caused his crude system to fail before it could really begin. D&D came into

his life soon after: “One day,” Steve later recalled, “I sat down next to Sandy Petersen in a class at BYU, saw his D&D rule books, and started asking questions.” [30-36]

(Yes, the same Sandy Petersen who would later design *Call of Cthulhu*.)

Steve studies the bizarre little booklets, and soon had a firm enough grasp on Arneson’s and Gygax’s ideas that he could develop his own D&D systems, monsters, and character classes. This was the core of the material that he would soon send to Gary and crew at TSR.

The most significant piece (from a *Blackmoor Supplement* perspective) consisted of a detailed envisioning of a magical water world (the Elemental Plane of Water), [30-37] complete with new monsters and encounter tables. From this would come many of the now-classic underwater beasties featured in *Supplement II* and the later *Monster Manual*. There has always been some confusion about this, because *Supplement II* is entitled “Blackmoor” under Dave Arneson’s byline, creating the false impression that all of these monsters were used in Arneson’s campaign and then submitted to Gary for publication. But that is not the case. Steve’s earliest contributions to the game are indeed very interesting, and over the years he has provided some excellent details sourcing the origins of many of these aquatic monsters which are worthy of further consideration here.

The *catoblepas* is lifted directly from mythology, but with a convoluted pedigree. Specifically, the creature was first described in print by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* of the 1st century A.D. The real creature which Pliny’s fantastical description derived from was probably the African wildebeest. Claudius Aelianus later elaborated that the *catoblepas* killed enemies not with its gaze, but rather with its poisonous breath. The “deadly gaze” version of the monster was actually derived from later interpretations, and popularized via the Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci.

Similarly, in its *Dungeons & Dragons* incarnation, the monster known as the *gorgon* (the iron-plated bull, as opposed to the bipedal female *medusa* creature whose viper tresses turn victims to stone) was also inspired by medieval reinterpretations of Pliny’s older account of the *catoblepas*.

The *floating eye*, described as a mere fish in the later *Monster Manual*, had a far more intriguing conception in Steve’s original material. Apparently, these (more properly in the plural, “floating eyes”) were possessed by extra-dimensional monsters which were capable of viewing and exploring the under-seas of the Oerth-world from a distance, and their bodies remained in their home plane. Only their physical eyes came through to D&D’s world of the Prime Material Plane. [30-38]

The *ixitxachitl* was derived from a Fafhrd and Gray Mouser tale by Fritz Leiber, in which the protagonists follow a treasure map and are attacked by sea monsters. [30-39] (I believe the tale in

question may be *The Bleak Shore*.) Steve later explained that this exotic race of vampiric manta rays was inspired by the Aztec culture. [30-40]

The *morkoth* was inspired by a *Witch World* story by Andre Norton. In Norton's tale, the maze-dwelling monster dwells upon land, and Steve thought this would be an interesting concept to develop for underwater play. [30-41] By this comment Steve may be referring to the 1974 tale *Lavender-Green Magic*, but I am not certain.

The *sahuagin* monsters, quite similar to H. P. Lovecraft's Deep Ones, were named after a real-life person. Steve had seen a religious pamphlet entitled "Christ in the Americas," and one of the sources listed therein was a person named (Mr.?) Sahuagin. Steve liked the evocative name and borrowed it. The monster's appearance was inspired not by Lovecraft, but instead by "a Justice League episode." [30-42] By this Steve may have meant the 1973-1974 *Super Friends* cartoon series, but I believe he is actually referring to the 1967-1968 cartoon *The Superman / Aquaman Hour of Adventure*, episode one: "Menace of the Black Manta." (Strangle kelp is glimpsed in this episode as well.) At one point the armored villain Black Manta commands, "Attack, my Manta Men, destroy them!" And the fanged evil minions swim out to pursue the heroes. [30-43] A quick review of the cartoon reveals that the Manta Men are much more like ixitxachitl than sahuagin, however!

In the end, Tim's version of Steve's contributions would include about 30% of Steve's original monsters, and the underwater encounter tables had been stripped of their terrain specificity. [30-44]

Later in life, Steve would graciously note that "One could say Gary 'pinched' [*borrowed*] the underwater encounters, but he had permission, in order to fill out the book which was a bit thin without them." [30-45]

More Steve Marsh contributions, as edited by Tim, would appear for D&D in the near future. Steve also offered a mystic character class to Gary, based on the use of extrasensory powers and planar travel. [30-46]

Steve once offered some details about this prospective class as well, which was based on the idea of "Vedic yogis." "The real mystic had all the psionic powers," Steve explained, "but no psionic attacks (the attacks and defenses were to go with another class). They gained powers or abilities as they went up [*in*] levels (much like magic users gain spells) and they started out with a bare-handed attack that emulated different weapons for 'to hit' modifiers and damage and then was like a sword, with plusses." [30-47] This class would eventually be considered carefully,



dismantled and reconstructed by Tim Kask, becoming the psionics system which debuted in *Dungeons & Dragons Supplement III: Eldritch Wizardry* in 1976. [30-48]

Tim provided some details on a new NPC class as well, the sage. Tim estimated that the work on the sage was about 35% Arneson, 60% Kask and 5% Gygax; [30-49] in other words, Dave came up with the idea (perhaps from his Blackmoor-game “gypsy prophecies”), Tim refined the detailed system, and Gary gave a final review and approval. The sage may have been partially inspired by Epimetreus, the fabled and prophetic sage of the elder years, featured in Howard’s exemplary Conan tale *The Phoenix on the Sword*.

Tim decided against creating this specialist as a player-available class, because sages seek after knowledge rather than craving adventure. Tim once explained that “Adventuring for a sage would be cruising the caravansary looking for obscure works; a quest would be a pilgrimage to a great library.” [30-50] Despite their limited adventure potential, sages would prove to be an ideal addition to *Dungeons & Dragons* because they could provide adventure hooks, clues, and a handy way for the Dungeon Master to get rid of excess PC gold.

As can now be clearly seen, in devising the *Blackmoor Supplement*, Tim was not just the booklet’s editor. He was basically the co-creator, as Gary had been forced to become the co-creator of *Dungeons & Dragons* while he struggled to interpret Dave Arneson’s campaign notes. Tim was forced to identify near-duplicate materials, to discard inferior versions and to beef up the superior ones, and to create entirely new material to fill in the gaps in Arneson’s conceptual whole. In the end, Tim would use “less than half” of Dave’s material, regarding the remainder as unusable. [30-51]

Tim would end up writing most of the rest of the *Blackmoor Supplement*, with helpful suggestions and contributions from Gary, Brian, Rob and Terry. It seems that Rob was particularly helpful, because Tim did not want to bother Gary too much or to appear incompetent. As Greyhawk’s co-DM, Rob was a perfect choice for Tim to share new ideas with. [30-52]

Other business of course continued while poor Tim was still wrestling with his *Blackmoor* demons. On September 26th, 1975, Gary and Brian finally managed to buy out Donna Kaye’s interest in the original TSR partnership which had been modified after the passing of her husband. [30-53] The partnership was dissolved, and TSR Hobbies, Inc. would move forward as Gary’s and Brian’s new public forefront for game sales, promotion and other business correspondence. The lizard man logo developed over the summer would soon be seen everywhere.

The first product to bear that logo would be the second printing of the *Greyhawk Supplement*. Note that there is some interesting contention on the print date of this version, because the text declares that the second printing dates to July 1975; but there are two booklet versions, one with the GK logo and another with the lizard man logo. [30-54] It may be that the GK version was released in July, and the lizard man version released in September, but this is still unclear at this time (and remains an open research item).

And as mentioned prior, on Wednesday October 1st, Terry Kuntz officially became Service Manager at TSR. [30-55] While still very busy with the “grey house” refurbishment, he would soon be tasked with a bit of game design, setting up TSR’s retail presence, and determining various rules clarifications as well.

Terry’s appointment came around at about the same time that Tim was finishing up his labors over *Blackmoor*. After all was said and done, it had taken Tim about two long and very stressful weeks to organize Arneson’s papers and to prepare the *Supplement II* manuscript for review. [30-56] Finally, he was able to hand a finished manuscript over to Gary. Gary, still amused and admiring Tim’s ordeal decades later, once wrote that “After completing his assignment, [Tim] informed Brian and me that if he was handed another ‘basket’ like that he turned into a D&D game supplement, we could find a new magazine editor.” [30-57]

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 30

[30-1] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

As Tim would explain about that standard salary: “Gary, Brian and I paid ourselves the princely sum of \$100 per week for a very long time. Gary made a hell of a lot more than I did because he had royalties; I never did as what I did was done on company (salary) time. Having said that, Gary was not rolling in high clover, either.”

[30-2, 30-3] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. See for example the post made on January 10th, 2010.

[30-4] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 24th, 2007.

[30-5] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted January 10th, 2010.

[30-6] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[30-7, 30-8, 30-9] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted January 10th, 2010.

[30-10] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[30-11] *The Strategic Review*, issue #5.

[30-12] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 22nd, 2014.

[30-13, 30-14] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. See post made July 6th, 2011.

[30-15] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 24th, 2007.

[30-16, 30-17, 30-18] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[30-19] One clue that this might be the case is that fact that TSR #5 is the first issue to feature cover art, and Tim once noted that *The Strategic Review* “started changing as soon as I took over; the art on the front was the first indicator that there was a new sheriff in town.”

[30-20, 30-21, 30-22, 30-23, 30-24] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[30-25, 30-26] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted October 16th, 2009.

[30-27, 30-28, 30-29] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[30-30, 30-31] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted October 16th, 2009.

[30-32] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Steve Marsh.

[30-33] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted August 2nd, 2010.

[30-34] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted June 3rd, 2008.

[30-35] Havard's Blackmoor Blog, "Was Supplement II Arneson's Work?" Posted December 19th, 2009.

See also Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask, posted December 12th, 2009.

[30-36] Online interview: Grogard, "Interview: Steve Marsh." Posted August 23rd, 2009.

[30-37] I found this information in various eBay auctions held for the collection of Stephen R. Marsh, as sold by The Collector's Trove.

[30-38, 30-39] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Steve Marsh. Posted April 12th, 2010.

[30-40] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Steve Marsh.

[30-41] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Steve Marsh. Posted April 12th, 2010.

[30-42, 30-43] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Steve Marsh.

[30-44] *Playing at the World* by Jon Peterson, pg. 537.

[30-45] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Steve Marsh.

[30-46] I found this information in various eBay auctions held for the collection of Stephen R. Marsh, as sold by The Collector's Trove.

[30-47] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "RC Mystic v. Blackmoor Monk."

[30-48] Wikipedia.org, Stephen R. Marsh.

[30-49] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted August 10th, 2010.

[30-50, 30-51, 30-52] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[30-53] Arneson v. Gygax, as well as the Grogardia interview with Tim Kask, Part I.

[30-54] Acaeum.com, D&D Supplements.

[30-55] *The Strategic Review*, issues #4, #5.

[30-56] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted July 6th, 2011.

[30-57] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

## CHAPTER 31

# DEMONIC DISENCHANTMENT

(LATE 1975)

DESPITE THE painful experience of laboring over the labyrinthine notes which would eventually become the *Blackmoor Supplement*, Tim did find some time to game with his new co-workers and companions. The other and more established players were still enjoying the Greyhawk campaign as well. Ernie had lost Erac, but would soon create a stronger character to replace the one he had lost. Terry, perhaps bored with the high-level adventures of his original character Terik, play tested the new paladin and monk classes. Gary continued to play Mordenkainen and his Circle from time to time. And, with Lord Robilar in and out of semi-retirement, Rob Kuntz frequently took over for Gary as Dungeon Master.

Unfortunately, there are literally *no* reliable dates to speak of for this material, other than my best guess that the majority of these adventures occurred in the second half of 1975. Play continued whenever and wherever it was possible, but TSR was so busy that the sessions were apparently scattered and unpredictable; no one seems to remember exactly what happened when. The following stories and notes are derived from dozens of different second-hand stories, half-remembered recollections and asides (many of them with the details of course conflicting), and despite my best efforts to determine cause and effect some of these events may still be out of order. Despite all hardship, the stories are too much fun to exclude, and many of them are fascinating, so I will relate all of them here in the best order which I can achieve at the current time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Undaunted by the loss of Erac a few months earlier, Ernie rolled a new character. The time period for the creation of Erac's Cousin is especially elusive, although there is a vague hint (in *Dragon* #305) that when Terry Kuntz started playing the first monk in the Greyhawk campaign, Ernie was already playing Erac's Cousin. Gary stated in that *Dragon* article that Erac's Cousin was Ernie's "new" character, which hints that Ernie may have created him in the autumn of 1975.

This new adventurer would be another magic-user, and he let no one know his name. Instead, he simply became known as Erac's Cousin (EC hereafter). Whether Ernie was inspired by the mysterious namelessness of Tom Champeny's villainous EHP character, or whether he decided to add this amusing façade of intrigue on his own, is unknown.

According to The Collector's Trove website, EC began play in 1975 and was played extensively through 1976. [31-1] EC was a devout worshipper of Zeus, and he adventured at length in



Greyhawk's dungeons. Ernie by this time was very skilled at playing a magic-user, and EC therefore rose through the low experience levels quite quickly. [31-2]

As I mentioned early in this chapter, Ernie however was not the only one creating other characters at this time. One of the other players involved in the 1975 campaign was a young man named Mark Ratner. (This is probably the same A. Mark Ratner who designed the games *Space Marines* and *Space Opera* later in life.) [31-3] Mark was active in the SCA and may have found his way into Gary's game through the Twin Cities gaming group and/or a friendship David Sutherland. [31-4]

Mark's first character in the Greyhawk campaign was a failed magic-user by the name of Rolf. Rolf managed a few successful adventures, but one day in the dungeons he discovered a chamber which featured a strange and monstrous statue as its primary decoration. (Any veteran player would likely tell you that you never, ever, NEVER touch statues or inanimate life forms in Gary's dungeons, but hey ... what's the fun in that?)

Yes, Rolf touched the accursed statue. The statue touched him back. Rolf failed his saving throw and so he was petrified, and the statue was given its freedom to explore the dungeon on its own. The statue ran deeper into the maze, probably overjoyed by the sheer experiences of running and causing mayhem. Fortunately, Rolf had a few low-level henchmen with him and these doughty souls dragged their very heavy inanimate master all the way back to the surface. They took the statue to the Tower of Klinchak, the infamous "Wizard of the Tower" who dwelled in the City of Greyhawk.

For a hefty price, Klinchak tried to turn Rolf's stony form back to flesh. But sadly, the magic fizzled. The confounded (and greedy) wizard informed the henchmen that the disenchantment had failed because the statue which had caused the malady was not present to revert the magical transformation. So the good-hearted henchmen went back to the dungeon to bring back a certain runaway piece of masonry, and in doing so they got themselves slaughtered to a man.

Time passed, and Klinchak realized with some sadness that Rolf would never become a fleshly man again. But why not make the best of a tragic situation? He would sure make a nifty garden ornament! Rolf was set up in the wizard's garden fountain, where the petrified warlock was reduced to spitting water at his captors at every opportunity. [31-5] And that, as they say, was a truly Rolf-ful way to go.

(Gary, I promised myself that I would put one miserable, groan-worthy pun in this book as a tribute to your sense of humor. And there you are. ~K)

\* \* \* \* \*

Working with Arneson's play notes, Tim Kask and Gary worked out a new design for the monk class in about October of 1975. It seems that the major play tester of the class, who loved it, was Terry Kuntz. This third character of Terry's (following after Terik and the unknown paladin) was probably inspired by Erac's Cousin, and was simply known as "The Monk with No Name." [31-6]

Terry would play his own nameless character well, and would quickly progress through the experience levels. The few existing anecdotes pertaining to this character relate to his *higher* experience levels, which were probably achieved in 1976. We will therefore look at this monk a little further in **HAWK & MOOR** Book IV, which chronicles the history of that year.

Mark Ratner, without lamentation, had rolled his new character too. After his calcifying experience playing Rolf, International Garden Ornament of Mystery, Mark decided to roll a fighting man instead. This flunky would live to become the sword master Ayelerach, who ended up being a very successful hero and companion to Ernie Gyga's new character, Erac's Cousin. Perhaps because of Mark's style of play, Gary always remembered this champion as a paladin. Mark himself, however, has insisted since that Ayelerach began play as, and forever remained, a fighter of good alignment.

Ayelerach became very powerful, and managed to acquire an intelligent magic sword with numerous special abilities. He eventually (at experience level 9) built a stronghold to the south of Greyhawk, and one day soon thereafter he ventured with his fellow sword master Erac's Cousin deep into the dungeons, embarking on what sadly would become his final fateful journey. We will tell that sad tale a little farther down the path. [31-7]

James M. Ward had a character named Lidabmob (a reversal of Bombadil, derived from the beloved nature spirit in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*). I do not know if this was the same magic-user character that Mr. Ward played in his summertime "King Kong Island" introduction to *Dungeons & Dragons*, but it does seem likely. Later, perhaps because of Gary being worried about getting a no-no censure again from the Tolkien estate (Lidabmob is Bombadil in reverse), the character's name was changed to Jimward ... that is, *Drawmij*. Through dint of cleverness and needful inspiration, on one particular dungeon adventure Lidabmob created the Instant Summons spell which now bears Drawmij's name. [31-8]

A helpful article in *Polyhedron* #18 (published in May 1984) provides us with a fleeting glimpse of James's character. Lidabmob was initially neutral, and later forced to become lawful evil. He gained power early on while exploring the dungeons of Greyhawk Castle. In the deeper levels, he adventured with other powerful heroes and managed to triumph over demons, devils, liches and vampires. Through sheer determination he acquired great wealth, and then managed to establish a castle on the Selintan River near to the City of Greyhawk. [31-9]

At some later time, Lidabmob was forced into a diabolic pact to save his own life. We do not know what actually happened to force such a cruel fate upon him ... details concerning Lidabmob's early dungeoneering career are hard to come by. [31-10]

Erac's Cousin, however, rose quickly beyond these new characters and managed to attain considerable prowess on his own. Ernie's new goal was for EC to acquire the magic items which he presumed were still lying sealed in a secret vault with the body of his former character Erac, who had perished on dungeon level six in the room of the reflected stars. As EC gained power, he finally became strong enough to dare the attempt. Acting alone, he made his way all the way down to dungeon level six. There, he discovered the sealed secret chamber with poor Erac's emaciated skeleton lying near to the sliding wall. EC took his family heirlooms from Erac, the magic wand of fear and the silver horn. He then looked up at the ceiling, and realized that the magic words needed to escape the room were literally written in the stars. What a way for Erac to die! Perhaps, when he was weak from starvation to move any longer, poor Erac had realized the puzzle's answer when that knowledge was too overdue to save him. The mystery was answered by EC, but Erac would never be resurrected. His legacy would live on in his cousin's spirit.

Erac's Cousin and Lidabmob had a very amusing run-in of sorts, which seems to have occurred soon after EC recovered Erac's heirlooms from the dungeon vault. Lidabmob discovered the Great Stone Face and was fascinated by its runes, as well as the impossible-to-solve riddling nature of the expressionless stone. Instead of struggling to find the solution, however, James M. Ward cleverly decided to use the Face's mystery to his own advantage. Lidabmob placed a Magic Mouth on the Face, which would trigger whenever another adventurer came into the room. The Face would then intone something like this: "In the name of the cosmic balance, if you would be rewarded you must bestow your most prized of all treasures as a gift. Give this gift not to me, but rather to one who walks the path of neutrality. Should you do so, great wealth shall be given to you."

James did this on a solo adventure, and then played with Ernie (and Erac's Cousin) shortly thereafter. When the Great Stone Face was nearby, Lidabmob offered to do some scouting at the other end of the chamber and was out of earshot. EC approached the Great Stone Face and heard

the ominous portent of promised wealth. Ernie, knowing that Lidabmob was neutral, proudly (and with feigned innocence of heart) gave Lidabmob a powerful magic item as a gift. James was touched, while Ernie was probably silently flustered that no divine reward seemed to be forthcoming for his actions. Gary was probably struggling not to laugh at these antics as they played out! Never underestimate a 1st-level spell, or the creative potential of a clever player. [31-11]

James was a little *too* tricky, however. EC returned to the chamber a bit later on, and the Magic Mouth spell triggered again. But he had not yet received a reward! He somehow (probably through the use of Detect Magic, Dispel Magic or the like) realized that he had been deceived, and how. And by whom! But EC was of lawful good alignment, and there was no real way for him to get his powerful item back from Lidabmob without performing an evil act. Ernie — probably remembering all too well the trouble caused by Tenser's shift of alignment when he sought to use the Crown of Good — was forced to swallow his pride in angst-ridden silence, and Lidabmob got to keep his prized possession after all. [31-12]

This was just one instance of the ill fortune which seemingly plagued poor Erac's Cousin. On one adventure in the dungeons beneath Greyhawk Castle, EC managed to slay some monsters and discovered a magical scroll. He covetously read the runes upon the scroll, eager to learn a new magical spell, only to realize to his horror that the scroll was cursed! He was bathed in a crimson light. Erac looked up from the baneful manuscript, only to discover that he had been teleported to another world of fantastical adventure: the fantastical Martian landscape of Barsoom. [31-13]

On Barsoom, EC quickly learned that he was trapped in a place called the Land of Ugor, a wilderness filled with cannibals. [31-14] A horde of these cannibals chased EC down but he survived, due to the planet's low gravity which bestowed upon him both phenomenal strength and leaping ability. He learned to his utter dismay however that in this world, magical powers were useless. He could no longer cast spells! He raced away and leapt up a tree, and the cannibals climbed up to devour him.

Using his phenomenal newfound strength and a razor-sharp dagger, EC dispatched the cannibals one by one. One of the fiends had a sword strapped to his back, so EC grabbed this and used its more deadly blade to fend off the relentless foes. Hours passed and the desperate sword-mage stood in the branches swathed in blood, with the tree's roots far below hidden by ever-rising piles of mangled corpses. The remaining cannibals were forced to withdraw and to feast upon their own dead.

This event, among other escapades experienced through the play of Tenser, would cause Gary to admiringly nickname his son “Ernie the Barbarian.” As Gary would later explain, “Ernie got the nickname of ‘Barbarian’ because of his play style. Even as a mage his character would go full bore to defeat the foe without regard to danger. That was indeed the inspiration for the spell ‘Tenser’s Transformation,’ as Ernie would risk all thus.” [31-15]

When the slaughter was complete EC glided down in the light gravity, strapped on some armor from his fallen foes, and ran away through the wastes as far as he could go.

Gary, then, was left with something of a rules conundrum which demanded his immediate attention. EC had been forbidden to act as a magic-user, and forced to act as a fighter to save his life. He had in fact slain so many cannibals that the first-level “fighting man” was already worthy of level two. Gary would rule that EC could keep his prior hit point total from being a magic-user, but would also be a 2nd-level fighter, and only able to progress in the fighter class until he returned to Oerth. Then, Ernie would need to decide which calling — wizard or warrior — EC would heed on each following adventure. In this way, the crude rules for “the character with two classes,” or dual-classed humans, came into being. [31-16]

In his further adventures on Barsoom, EC became a worthy sword master capable of dexterously wielding two blades simultaneously. [31-17] It seems that he fought with the Green Martians, and organized a mine escape involving the human “Yellow” Martians. Perhaps he led a revolt. By the end of his swashbuckling adventures, he was a 6th-level fighting man. [31-18]

He eventually made it back to Oerth, where he likely reveled in the ability to cast his beloved spells once again.

EC eventually acquired two powerfully magical vorpal swords in different adventures. The first was discovered in Looking-Glass Land (bestowed by Tweedledum and Tweedledee), and the second was discovered during a wilderness adventure. The first one had been specifically placed as a special hidden treasure by Gary, but the second was the result of a random roll. [31-19] Combined with his spell-casting abilities and fighting prowess, this combination of magic and vorpal blade mastery made EC extremely deadly. *Too* deadly, in fact. Gary and Rob, as co-Dungeon Masters, decided that EC’s power needed to be scaled back for the good of the campaign. [31-20] Gary and Rob needed to wait for a fair opportunity, however, so that they did not simply steal the vorpal blades outright as a blatant example of poor and heavy-handed Dungeon Mastering. Some delicacy would be required. Things however did not turn out quite as Gary hoped, as we shall see. [31-21]

While Erac's Cousin continued to grow in power, Rob was admiring Ernie's ascent to glory from afar. It seems that Rob even pulled Lord Robilar out of semi-retirement for a while in hopes of emulating some of EC's victories. One day, Robilar decided that he too would journey to Barsoom. Outside of metagaming, we must imagine that Robilar only heard of such a wondrous place after the return of Erac's Cousin back to Oerth; otherwise, he would have had no way to know that Barsoom even existed. Therefore, Robilar's "missed Martian misadventure" likely occurred in the fall of 1975.

The in-game problem to be solved first, however, was that Robilar had no way to replicate the cursed scroll which had caused EC to journey across the aether to the red planet. What Robilar *did* have, however, was wealth. He consulted with his two powerful mage-friends, Otto and Herb (a 12th-level magic-user and researcher NPC, apprenticed to Otto). He also consulted with the great sage Isador of Greyhawk, hoping to find some magical way to emulate EC's journey. [31-22]

Choosing what he believed to be the best course of action, Robilar spent a huge amount of gold, and then left Herb to his own devices. Herb bought a huge amount of tomes and began researching the potential for interplanetary travel. Gary made a sage research roll which proved to be disastrously bad (a critical miss, if you will). This was unbeknownst to Rob, of course. Robilar went adventuring to win more gold and to restore his depleted treasury, while Herb continued diligently on with his own overenthusiastic research.

A few game months passed, and Robilar was encouraged to learn that Herb was building a great clockwork machine of some kind. Lord Robilar was very pleased at this, with Rob perhaps surmising that Herb had figured out a way to build a dimensional transporter or something similar. So imagine Rob's dismay when the machine was completed, and Robilar came to Herb to behold the great machine. Herb promptly displayed the most gargantuan catapult ever built on Oerth, and proclaimed that the contraption would hurl Robilar into orbit and land him on Barsoom ... or the moon, at least! Or something. Well, it sounded good when all the gold was flowing in, quite? [31-23]

Needless to say, Robilar never gave the catapult a "shot." But we sadly never learn what happened to the chastened Herb, nor to the magnificent siege-behemoth he created. Perhaps the improbable war machine was scrapped for the lumber, or sold to a wealthy madman for some nefarious purpose. Who knows? At least Gary had a great laugh, and Robilar was back in action and hungry for more treasure. This misadventure (and likely others) made Rob dead set on getting Robilar more gold, and on foiling Gary's plans. These unpredictable events would soon set Robilar loose in the Hommlet campaign, which is a story we will explore a little further on.



Gary was disappointed that Rob never showed interest in Greyhawk's moon ever again, because he did indeed want to run some portal-originated adventures there. Gary wrote that the moon was a "viable sphere," likely meaning that it had a breathable atmosphere. It was going to be filled with mutant plants, Lunar denizens and "little sprite-like races" in a savage jungle setting. [31-24]

Greyhawk's version of planet Venus was also inhabited, and would have followed the Amtor series of novels by Edgar Rice Burroughs. But sadly, neither of these areas were ever fully developed. This is yet another instance where we have only an enticing glimpse of what might have been, an adventure hook which encourages us to devise worlds of our own design by following in the footsteps of the former master. [31-25]

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile down below, EC was exploring the Greyhawk dungeons, and Mark Ratner's chivalrous fighter Ayelerach had the unknowing misfortune to be alongside him. Rob and Gary both DM'd the misadventure which soon transpired. EC and Ayelerach — a 9th level fighter at the time — had managed to find their way down to a dungeon level where a beautiful bas-relief visage was carved in a chamber's floor. [31-26]

The magical face there — crying golden tears — spoke to EC and Ayelerach, and the treasure-hungry adventurers were intrigued by its promises of fortune. Little did they know that a demon lord had been imprisoned by Zagyg within the magical face, and desperate for release! This idea by the way was probably informed not only by the works of A. Merritt, but also by Gary's reading of Saberhagen's *Changeling Earth*, where the demon lord Orcus is imprisoned in a dungeon by a powerful archmage named John Ominor.

It seems that Mark Ratner was completely duped by the demon lord, and although Ernie was highly suspicious, he had the gentlemanly grace to avoid meta-gaming or warning Ayelerach away from malicious intent. EC simply followed Ayelerach's lead, and so Ayelerach agreed to perform the magical face's bidding. The adventurers therefore descended to the eighth dungeon level, and went to a side level nearby where a clan of werebears was protecting a magic Urn of Moon Dust. The Urn which the clan's leader defended was the key to freeing the poor magical spirit from its confinement, and perhaps also the key to a valuable reward.

Unfortunately Mark Ratner did not stop to think about the nature of the werebear chieftain (and its good alignment). He attacked the shape-shifter, killed it, took the Urn and went to release the



magically-held prisoner behind the bas-relief face. Back up in the prisoner's chamber, Ayelerach promptly sprinkled Moon Dust into the face's eyes, and immediately was greeted by a gale of malicious laughter.

Through such actions (and Ernie's noble but misguided inaction), [31-27] EC and Ayelerach had accidentally released the great demon lord Fraz-urb'luu, Prince of Deception. A furious combat began, but the mortals quickly realized that they were outmatched. Frantically, EC used a magical Gate scroll to summon his patron deity, Zeus, to protect him from this horrific Abyssal power. But the fates of ill omen (Gary's percentile dice) decreed that for some reason Zeus would deign to intrude on this affair. The god refused to save his faithful servant! [31-28]

In some ways, this moment bears some curious similarities with the fate of Elric in Michael Moorcock's fiction, where Elric would call upon his devil liege Arioch for aid. Sometimes, he would find himself instilled with unholy might. At other times, however (as in the tale *While the Gods Laugh*), the gods heroes choose to worship — for unguessable reasons — refuse to hear the frantic prayers of the needy.

In the case of Erac's Cousin, the freed demon lord clutched the two terrified adventurers in his hairy paws, and then whisked them through a dimensional portal of his own. Together fell these three unlikely companions into the chaotic maelstrom of the Abyss.

The Kingdom of Fraz-urb'luu is a harsh domain of unbridled Chaos. There, the wild emanations caused EC's vorpal blades and Ayelerach's intelligent two-handed sword to be destroyed, turned into useless chunks of disenchanting metal. [31-29] After many hard travails and outright torture, Erac's Cousin finally managed to escape the Abyss and the clutches of Fraz-urb'luu. (Gary, although not certain, recalled that Ayelerach may have died in the escape attempt.) [31-30] The powerful blades were forever lost. Mark Ratner was despondent, but Ernie was flat-out angry. In forum threads and articles written decades later, Gary *still* doubted whether his own son had truly forgiven him for the unfair and heavy-handed way in which the vorpal blades were stolen from Erac's Cousin! [31-31]

Following this calamitous event, Gary would describe EC as bitter, "hard and merciless in his actions." [31-32] "This very malign individual," he said further of Ernie's indignant sword-mage, "was once a servant of Good, but in being captured by a demon and subsequently escaping, he bitterly turned from his former deity for failing him in need, and he now serves Hell with will and enthusiasm. 'Erac's Cousin' is seldom seen without a red-eyed rat [*a shape-shifted imp*] upon his shoulder." [31-33] Another source (the *Rogues Gallery*, pg. 42) provides a few more details: "Erac's Cousin is thoroughly evil, having made a pact with Baalzebul [*more likely Asmodeus, according to a*

*better-researched source*]. In exchange for the souls of those he slays, [Asmodeus] has agreed to make a major devil of Erac's Cousin when he dies. He is, however, afraid of death and if there is any means to prevent or delay it (i.e. wishes, potion of longevity, etc.), he will try to obtain it."

Proving his zealous and new-sworn fealty to the powers of diabolic evil (and Ernie's anger with Gary), Erac's Cousin murdered his loyal henchmen. He burned his fortress to the ground. He was consumed by abject hatred. And such forever remains the legacy of Erac's Cousin, the fortunate and luckless, the blessed and the damned.

\* \* \* \* \*

Of course, there was work for Gary and Rob to do as well. Tim was a great help with moving TSR forward on the periodical front. After finishing the *Blackmoor* manuscript, Tim started working on something much more akin to what he probably *intended* to do when he accepted employment with TSR: *The Strategic Review* #5. This would be the first issue under his editorship, and his work on it would lead directly to *The Dragon* magazine in 1976. A few hints of the coming magazine ("Beware of *The Dragon* ..." and "*The Dragon* approaches!") would also appear in #5, which was released in November. [31-34] Gary and Tim were probably both heartened to note that with this issue, *The Strategic Review* exceeded 800 subscribers. Tim began writing an introductory feature titled "In the Cauldron," and was happily able to state that *Supplement II* was finally at the printer. He wrote in TSR #5, "Suffice it to say that I've been blooded, as an editor, by *Blackmoor*." [31-35]

Tim would also report that Rob was busy working on a new project entitled *Lankhmar*, in collaboration with author Fritz Leiber himself. Rob's brother Terry, it seems, was also busy restructuring some Robin Hood rules which had been introduced at Gen Con earlier in the summer. Simultaneously, James M. Ward was conceptualizing a future D&D Supplement with the nominative title *Gods, Demi-Gods & Heroes* (GDG&H). GDG&H would later be released as *Supplement IV*, after *Supplement III: Eldritch Wizardry*, which appears to have not even been conceived as of November 1975. Rob Kuntz would assist with Mr. Ward's research project as it progressed. [31-36]

While all of these new projects were being cooked up, purchased copies of D&D were still rushing out the door. The third printing had sold out quickly, and "late that summer" [31-37] the fourth printing had been prepared. Despite Gary's recollection which would indicate a September time frame, however, game historian Jon Peterson notes that the fourth print run was actually

completed in November. [31-38] This run was necessarily the biggest one yet, and therefore Gary and Brian had decided not to use Heritage Models again for the printing process. Instead, they used Patch Press of Beloit, Wisconsin. [31-39]

The boxes would be different from those which had come before, replacing the wood grain pattern with a “pre-printed white paper-wrapped box.” [31-40] Patch Press agreed “to do all assembly,” [31-41] greatly reducing the amount of labor which needed to be conducted by TSR staff. But there would still be much work to do with all the receiving, packing and shipping of various orders. Rob was made a full-time employee just in time to deal with preparing the huge fourth printing of D&D for various shipments. Gary noted that the completed fourth print run was delivered not to his home, but rather to the “grey house” where Terry Kuntz was *still* working hard to get the building in shape to serve as TSR’s new headquarters. [31-42]

The amount of work each person had to perform was quickly getting out of control. Gary was not only optimistic about future sales, he believed that they would continue to grow at an astronomical rate. “The demographics of the D&D audience [*in October 1975*] were not quite what I had thought would be the core market,” he once said in a later interview. “So then I revised [*sales*] projections upwards.” [31-43]

Meanwhile in all of the overlapping confusion, *The Strategic Review* #4 had been published “a bit late,” [31-44] likely in late October. The most substantial addition to the D&D game in this issue was the illusionist class, presented by Peter Aronson. The version presented there is quite similar to that which would eventually appear in the *Players Handbook* (1978), with a few abilities that would be dropped from later incarnations: for example the spell Create Spectres, and access to 2nd-level magic-user spells.

Ioun stones, lifted from a tale by Jack Vance, are also featured in TSR #4 as new magic items; and the issue featured a now-classic monster too.

To the list of flesh, stone and iron golems, Tim and Gary added the clay golem as well. Tim relates that the clay golem was inspired by the monster movie *It!* (1966) starring Roddy McDowall.

In the movie, McDowall plays a museum curator (and madman) who brings the newly-acquisitioned Golem back to life. Naturally, he loses control of the monster and things don’t go very well. One of the golem’s warning inscriptions is actually quite chilling: “He who in the 21st century evokes me must be of God’s hand himself, because on this Earth the person of man existeth no more.”

Both being impressed by the movie, Gary and Tim discussed the inclusion of a more powerful golem. Perhaps Gary mentioned Mordenkainen's experience with Rob Kuntz's Terrible Iron Golem, but mercifully that fire-breathing, levitating, and petrifying monstrosity did not make it into the published game! [31-45]

The clay golem is a metaphysical force of nature, an "inexorable nemesis" [31-46] with overtones of divine retribution. This is the reason why the creature requires a lawful good and ultra-powerful cleric for its creation. [31-47] The McDowall movie is also the likely source of inspiration for rules involving a chance for the clay golem to be possessed by a chaotic evil spirit. [31-48]

In all, *The Strategic Review* #4 is an excellent example of the iterative creativity which led to many of the subtle reiterations appearing in *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (1977-1979) which we now take for granted.

\* \* \* \* \*

Also by this time, TSR was not the only company advertising and advocating the viral spread of D&D. In the late spring of 1975 (c. June), a new magazine called *The Space Gamer* had published its premiere issue through an upstart company called Metagaming Concepts. The second issue, perhaps published in October, included enthusiastic mentions of *Dungeons & Dragons*. This in turn would help to introduce the game to a new audience of sci fi fans which TSR had not yet fully reached. "The most stimulating part of the game," reads one review of D&D, "is that anything can happen. Nothing is impossible. Even when you are standing between a cliff and a troll, there is still hope, perhaps levitation boots!" [31-49] Another review notes, "In this game there is no victor as such, but the object is to gain experience (by finding treasures and beating up on monsters) and become more powerful and gain more possessions. Staying alive is a big part of the game, as there are always monsters that hate you, lurking in the gloom. But, if you should happen to die, don't worry; you can always start again." [31-50]

Meanwhile, the *Blackmoor Supplement* was offered for purchase in *The Strategic Review*, although it would end up being late once again. Even more intriguing however is Gary's mention that a fan-based supplement might be in the works: "We are also seriously considering the production of a D&D supplement authored by 'DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENTHUSIASTS EVERYWHERE,'" he wrote, "edited by Gygax, Arneson and possibly Kuntz also, for that will be a big job." This may

have been decided upon after a closer review of Steve Marsh's excellent contributions which were making their way into Blackmoor, and perhaps the development of Steve's mystic class as well. Sadly, this dream of open fan authorship would be long deferred until the eventual Open Game License (OGL) created by Wizards of the Coast, but the pent-up creativity of amateur designers would soon be found in every issue of *The Dragon*, beginning in the summer of 1976.

It was also noted that Dave Arneson would soon be moving from St. Paul to live in Lake Geneva and to work with TSR. Gary noted that "His function will be to help us coordinate our efforts with free-lance designers, [to] handle various research projects, and produce material like a grist mill." Due to logistics and various hang-ups, Dave would not make it down until the middle of January, 1976. [31-51] But when he finally arrived and got situated in Lake Geneva, nothing went the way that anyone was expecting. Things were very good for a while, and then they were outright terrible. That is a tale told in Book IV of **HAWK & MOOR**.

And yet, while everyone was waiting for Dave to join the company, the Greyhawk campaign continued in an exciting new way. That will be the subject for our next chapter.

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 31

[31-1] The Collector's Trove: Ernie Gygax "Erac's Cousin" D&D Notes.

[31-2] *Dragon*, issue #319.

[31-3] Boardgamegeek.com, "Board Game Designer: A. Mark Ratner."

[31-4] An interview at space-opera.net.

[31-5] Online web forum post: Doomsday Games forums, "Rolf."

[31-6] *Dragon*, issue #305.

[31-7] Online web forum post: Doomsday Games forums, "Erac & Erac's Cousin" and "Ayelerach."

See also *The Oerth Journal*, issue #5.

[31-8] Online web forum post: Doomsday Games forums, "Bombadil."

[31-9] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with James M. Ward. Posted December 2nd, 2009.

[31-10] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with James M. Ward.

[31-11] Garycon.com forums, "Erac & Erac's Cousin."

See also *Dragon*, issue #288, and Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A Part V, posted March 31st, 2006.

[31-12] *Dragon*, issue #288.

[31-13] *Dragon*, issue #319.

[31-14] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XII. Posted September 20th, 2006.

See also Dragonsfoot Gary Gygax Q&A Part IV, Posted December 6th, 2005.

[31-15] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part III.

[31-16] *Dragon*, issue #319.

See also ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A Part V, posted January 28th, 2004.

[31-17] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #5.

[31-18] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part XII. Posted September 20th, 2006.

[31-19] Online web forum post: Garycon.com forums, "Erac & Erac's Cousin."

[31-20] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Swords with alignment."

[31-21] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #5.

See also *Dragon*, issue #320.

[31-22] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Straining Robilar's memory."

[31-23] *Dragon* #301. As Gary noted, Herb was following in the tradition of "some science fiction writers on our world [who] thought that firing a space vessel from a giant cannon to reach the moon would be workable." By this he was probably referring to the *Columbiad* space-gun, as featured in Jules Verne's 1865 novel *From the Earth to the Moon*.

[31-24] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part V. Posted January 28th, 2004.

[31-25] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part XIII. Posted April 26th, 2007.

[31-26] *The Oerth Journal* #5, *Dragon* #320.

See also "Erac & Erac's Cousin" in the Garycon forums.

[31-27] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A, Part XIII. Posted July 23rd, 2007.

[31-28] This memory is a bit confused; in another conflicting account, Gary said that Zeus "made a brief appearance" but then "left with a shrug, none there honoring him." In other words, Erac's Cousin may have been left to his fate by the petulant god because Zeus did not receive a pandering bribe! The exact events remain uncertain.

[31-29] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #5, *Dragon* #320.

See also ENWorld Gary Gyga Q&A Part IX, posted November 10th, 2005.

[31-30] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Lake Geneva campaign." Posted February 28th, 2003.

[31-31] *Dragon*, issue #320.

[31-32] *Dragon*, issue #319.



See also ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part XIII, posted July 25th, 2007.

[31-33] *The Dragon*, issue #37.

[31-34] *The Strategic Review*, issue #5.

[31-35] *The Strategic Review*, issue #5.

[31-36] *The Strategic Review*, issue #5.

[31-37] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

[31-38] *Playing at the World* by Jon Peterson, pg. 535.

[31-39] Acaeum.com, Original D&D Set.

[31-40] Please refer to RPGConsortium.net etc. Also, there is some confusion in Gary's recollections, particularly in the publication and shipping dates provided in *Dragon Annual* #4 while recounting the year 1975. I may have copied several additional unintended errors from this account in regards to the publication of reprinted D&D sets, as several other details pertaining to the Third vs. the Fourth Printing are potentially incorrect. Thanks are due to Scott "Foulfoot" of the Acaeum for clarification of the box differences between the Third "brown box" and the Fourth "white box" Printings of the Original *Dungeons & Dragons* boxed set.

[31-41] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

[31-42] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

[31-43] TheWeem.com interview with Gary Gygax.

[31-44] *The Strategic Review*, issue #4.

[31-45] The Terrible Iron Golem would finally appear in 1984, in Dungeon Module WG5, *Mordenkainen's Fantastic Adventure*.

[31-46] Online web forum post: Q&A with Tim Kask, posted May 26th, 2010.

[31-47] *Monster Manual*, pg. 47.

[31-48] *Monster Manual*, pg. 47.

[31-49] *The Space Gamer*, issue #2, pg. 9.

[31-50] *The Space Gamer*, issue #2, pg. 9.

[31-51] *Playing at the World* by Jon Peterson, pg. 536.

## CHAPTER 32

# ELEMENTAL EVIL

(LATE 1975)

THE TEMPLE of Elemental Evil (TOEE) is one of the most famous dungeons in all of classic *Dungeons & Dragons*. In fact, due to the non-publication of Gary's personal version of Castle Greyhawk, it is arguably the most legendary "mega-dungeon" released throughout the entire history of the game. The creation and play of the TOEE dungeon, and the campaign region surrounding it, are topics of great historical interest to hardcore D&D fans. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most spottily annotated events that I have yet covered in the annals of **HAWK & MOOR**. For this reason I must issue a general apology, and a warning: this chapter details the Hommlet / TOEE campaign to the best of my ability, but regrettably none of the details I provide here can be taken as gospel. There are (as of yet) no firm dates attesting these events, and simultaneously there exist a plethora of confused accounts which make establishing a firm chronology for this campaign an exercise in frustration and futility. If you liked the mess of tangled webs I sifted through trying to figure out Castle Greyhawk, you're going to love watching me thrash through this! Revel in my suffering, eh?

There are a few hints, however, which appear to date the first steps which Gary took toward the Temple design to early 1975. The first, as I have chronicled, is the random dungeon generation system which premiered in *The Strategic Review* #1, which appears to date the earlier conception of the Temple dungeon levels to the beginning of the year. Another significant clue is the following mention Gary made on the ENWorld forums: "When the World of Greyhawk was completed, I decided to start a new campaign based on Oerth rather than continue using my generally undetailed parallel earth setting. Thus I created the Village of Hommlet, Temple of Elemental Evil, Nulb and Stoink for nearby town adventures." [32-1]

This comment might indicate that the Temple's overland region was *created* in the spring and/or summer of 1975. The closest allusion to the Temple *adventure* time period can then be derived from a Dragonsfoot forum post written by Rob Kuntz, in which he provided a near-chronological account of Robilar's many adventures in the Greyhawk campaign. [32-2]

Rob's sequence there lists Robilar's Temple adventure after the Tomb of Horrors, and before the journey with Mordenkainen to the City of the Gods. Rob once recalled (in 2006) that Robilar was about 14th level when he explored the Temple, which also fits well within this somewhat flawed 2006 chronology. [32-3]

Since the Tomb of Horrors play test and tournaments date to the spring and summer of 1975 respectively, and further considering that the City of the Gods adventure dates tentatively to early 1976, we can infer that the Hommlet / TOEE campaign was conducted in the autumn of 1975, through the winter and to perhaps the beginning of 1976. This likely range is reinforced by a few

other details, such as: [1] the recollections of player Skip Williams (playing Rufus) during football season; [2] the introduction of the ranger class (represented by the NPC Otis); [3] the Gen Con dating of TSR's internal adoption of Dennis Sustare's druid PC class for play testing; and [4] the September hiring date of Tim Kask (playing Jaroo in Hommlet, although that name came into being later than the character who possessed it). The only other tangible clue we have of the time period is that Lake Geneva was "snowed in" while the low-level party was exploring the dungeons, which resulted in Rob's boredom and Gary agreeing to run Lord Robilar through one last great dungeon adventure. [32-4]

Tim also once provided an indirect hint that the weather may have sometimes prevented him from staying to play his druid during these sessions: "If I was not there," he explained, "neither was Jaroo unless it was in a role as an NPC / adviser / savant, etc. This was a courtesy extended to me by Gary following a series of exchanges we had before I got there [*in September?*], and a couple of talks after I got there, dealing with this issue." [32-5]

None of these estimates are certain, however. And adding to the confusion, we must also consider that there are at least *eight* major versions of the Temple in existence. When people talk about the Temple and the adventures held therein, it is crucial that we discern which incarnation(s) they are referencing. I personally divide the eight known incarnations as follows, for the sake of clarity and authorial sanity:

\* \* \* \* \*

**Incarnation I:** The first in-campaign Temple which Gary created and later Dungeon Mastered for his players. The dungeon levels were likely conceived in early 1975, then played in late 1975, potentially through to the beginning of 1976. Unpublished.

**Incarnation II:** The later and more refined pre-publication play test version of a manuscript which would then become Dungeon Module T1, *The Village of Hommlet*. This draft probably included the Moathouse Ruin, but not the Temple. However, play testers sometimes refer to these games as the "Temple sessions" or some such when they are discussing play. Unpublished, created c. 1978-1979.

**Incarnation III:** The published Dungeon Module T1, *The Village of Hommlet*, which includes hints concerning the Temple and its contents. Published in the autumn of 1979.

**Incarnation IV:** The draft materials prepared by Frank Mentzer, at the direction of Gary Gygax, in preparation for the publication of Super Module T1-4, *The Temple of Elemental Evil*. Unpublished, and having been reviewed by Mr. Mentzer c. 1984-1985.

**Incarnation V:** The published TSR Super Module T1-4, *The Temple of Elemental Evil*. Published in August or September 1985.

**Incarnation VI:** *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil*, a sequel produced by Wizards of the Coast in 2001. This version strongly references Incarnation V (above), but was not written by Mr. Gygax or Mr. Mentzer.

**Incarnation VII:** *The Temple of Elemental Evil* computer game, designed by Troika Games and released in 2003.

**Incarnation VIII:** (Dating from approximately 2004-present.) Revisions and corrections made to the most definitive published version (Incarnation V) to make it align more with Gary's original vision, made and collated by many DMs and fans; particularly in activities at the Dragonsfoot forums. These efforts are very helpful because they are frequently informed by comments made by Gygax, Mentzer, and players in Temple versions I and II.

\* \* \* \* \*

In this book, we are most interested in Incarnation I (1975), while pulling some helpful information from V and VIII. Incarnations II and III will be discussed in a future volume of **HAWK & MOOR** (covering 1978-1979), and IV will be discussed in a potential future book discussing 1985 and Gary's exit from TSR. I do not at this plan to write histories extending so far as to cover VI, VII or VIII; those I leave to some future historian more devoted to the later history of *Dungeons & Dragons* than I.

Keep in mind in my following account that if I have gotten something "wrong," it is entirely possible that you are comparing data derived from III, V, VI or VII to my own historical information. But if you are in a position to know more about I, II or IV than I do, by all means feel free to contact me at [shadowed\\_sky@hotmail.com](mailto:shadowed_sky@hotmail.com).

Clear as mud? Excellent! It is time for us to delve into the mysteries of Gary's original Temple of Elemental Evil.

\* \* \* \* \*

As noted, Gary used the random dungeon generation system to create some of the Temple dungeons. He once noted in an interview that: “As I got busier and busier, and the demands of work kept me from playing Greyhawk, I began to merge my profession with my avocation, and cheated a lot by creating the village of Hommlet and the Temple of Elemental Evil to test some ideas I had about random dungeons.” [32-6]

More specifically however, it seems that he actually created some of the most important rooms in the dungeon by hand, and *then* filled in the many side areas using the random system. As he once explained, “The village and main temple areas were carefully mapped before I began adventure sessions in the area. The random generation was used mainly in developing the land around the village and some of the side areas surrounding the main rooms I had done for the temple dungeons.” [32-7]

The adventure scenarios pertaining to the Temple and the Moathouse Ruin were apparently supposed to feature Lolth, Demon Queen of Spiders, as the primary antagonist. [32-8] Whether this was true for the 1975 adventure is uncertain, and if so this would be the earliest known appearance of Lolth in Gary’s campaign. The non-random design of the core of dungeon level four is interesting as we consider this possibility however, because it clearly features a chamber shaped like a demon’s skull with eight symmetrical and spidery tunnels radiating off at precise angles. But the inclusion of Lolth as the Demon Queen antagonist would change before the 1979 publication date of module T1, [32-9] and the published module would feature a cryptic reference (in the form of an amulet inscribed “TZGY” for “Temple of Zuggtmoy”) to the demoness Zuggtmoy instead.

The Temple of Elemental Evil, in Gary’s original conception, was supposed to have been constructed upon an unholy site of power where an *earlier* Temple of the Elder Elemental God (EEG) had been created in ages past. The EEG’s netherworld sanctuaries were still in existence beneath the ground, deeper than the deepest levels of Elemental Evil; but the builders did not know of the powerful and primal lure of the EEG which had caused them to “select” the site for construction. [32-10]

Interested readers may draw some intriguing hints from this information as it relates to the eerie “violet temple” beneath the Steading of the Hill Giant Chief (as featured in 1978’s Dungeon Module G1), which we will delve into further in the later books of **HAWK & MOOR**. Perhaps the hill

giants' ancestors were compelled to build on the site of an ancient shrine to this same Elder Elemental God? The mystery has many layers.

The village of Hommlet was carefully populated to serve the adventuring PCs, and to serve as a base for more established personages as well. Gary was quite taken with Dennis Sustare's druid class, and decided to allow a druid PC in his new campaign. It seems that Tim Kask may have been the first to actually play test the class in Gary's game. Gary would later play his own druid named Curley Greenleaf, whom he later immortalized in the *Gord the Rogue* novels as a champion of balance. Tim's druid was named — get ready for it — Tim the Druid. This was not sufficiently entertaining for the other players, so the group collectively decided at random that he was actually "Tim the *Lusty* Druid." [32-11]

Whenever Mr. Kask was not available to play, the other players would take turns devising ribald verses to the bawdy ditty of "Lusty Tim." Tim once let his readership in *The Dragon* know that the full song is "definitely NOT suitable for reprinting. We don't need any more [songs] of that nature, nor will we publish them, unfortunately. There are simply too many readers of [*The Dragon*] that are too young for a 'dirty D&D songbook,' and we certainly don't need any nasty letters from any mommy-monsters." [32-12]

Tim recalled that his very merry alter-ego was a level 9 druid during the time of the play test. [32-13] It is likely that a higher level was chosen by Gary, so that the majority of druid spells could be play tested at the same time. Tim's character was later named Jaroo. In the later play tests of Dungeon Module T1 (c. 1978-1979), Jaroo would receive the honorific "Ashstaff," referencing an actual staff that Tim Kask found had been left behind by someone at Gen Con in the summer of 1975. [32-14] Tim kept the staff safe in his office, vowing to return it to its original owner if possible. When Gen Con '76 rolled around, he posted a notice for anyone who might be looking for that missing piece of treasure; but no one responded, and so the staff became Tim's forevermore.

The staff was thus safely situated in Tim's office at TSR when the T1 module was being play tested, and the name "Ashstaff" stuck where "Lusty" could not stand due to imminent public scrutiny. [32-15] Yes, "Ashstaff" now takes on a revelatory meaning. Readers are strongly encouraged to draw whatever solid and mighty inferences they will.

Young new player Skip Williams played Rufus the fighting man. This character was originally known as "Rufus of Hommlet," but Gary would change that to "Rufus of Skipperton" for the published version as a nod to Skip's portrayal. His erudite companion, Burne the magic-user, was played by Ernie. The character's name was originally spelled Berne (as in the capital of Switzerland), perhaps derived from "B-Ernie." (The name by the way is pronounced as "Bern-



NEY,” not as “Burn.”) [32-16] Berne is recorded as one of the first characters to enter Hommlet, [32-17] which implies that he began play at level 1. He and Rufus were both noob PCs, with nary an experience point between them. As Ernie would later explain, “The characters Burne and Rufus were only created and used for the T1 [*Hommlet*] adventure. Both of us had at least one if not multiple characters already involved in the Greyhawk Castle campaign.” [32-18]

Another character, Otis (at first a fighting man, and later re-imagined as a ranger) was originally an NPC, but would subsequently be played by Luke Gyga. The compound name “Otis-Luke” would then be shortened to “Otiluke” by Gary, a name used for a few interesting magical spells in the later design of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. [32-19] Otis’s brother Elmo did not yet exist, [32-20] but would apparently be added for the play test of the soon-to-be-published module in 1978 or 1979.

A few other characters in Hommlet are very interesting from a naming perspective, but we do not know for certain whether these characters were played by the real people which they reflected. Nira Melubb is an anagram for Brian Blume, a “truly neutral” individual who dislikes the rise of the Temple’s evil horde because it would “hurt business.” It is believed (due to an aside in an interview in *Polyhedron* #2) that Brian was an occasional player in the Hommlet campaign. The veteran thief Rannos Davl (the name is a near-anagram) may be a caricature of Dave L. Arneson, who was still in the Twin Cities when the new campaign began. In the published module, Rannos is jokingly described (despite his 18 Dexterity!) as “slow, fat, clumsy, and placid.” [32-21]

Gary noted that “many of the NPCs in the module [T1] are the characters and henchmen developed through play,” [32-22] but unfortunately the specific attributions have been lost to time. I do not yet know if the names of NPCs such as Black Jay, Calmert, Furnok of Ferd (someone named Fred?), Gremag, Gundigoot, Kobort, Lareth, Lubash, Spugnoir (pronounced “Spug-NWAR”), [32-23] Terjon (Terry Kuntz?), Turuko, Y’dey, or Zert correspond to any real-life influences, but am always willing to speculate and to hear of readers’ theories!

What the new characters did first is not known, but it seems very likely that the Moathouse Ruin featured prominently in their adventures. Interesting bits in the published version of the Moathouse include: [1] a pool of giant carnivorous frogs, perhaps as a tribute to Arneson’s Temple of the Frog; [2] the symbol of Mordor’s eye, shamelessly lifted from Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* to serve as the blazon for evil troops; [3] some Lovecraftian ghouls and rats; and of course [4] Lareth the Beautiful, a decadent and duplicitous cult master filled with twisted dreams of glory.

Just how much the published Moathouse dungeon reflects the original design is unknown, but (as mentioned earlier in this series) the upper ruins are a clear tribute to the castle featured in *The*

*Siege of Bodenburg*. It seems likely that the adventurers entered Hommlet, hired men-at-arms, made alliances, and then proceeded to wipe out the Moathouse monsters and to explore the surrounding countryside. The Temple's agents were — with some difficulty, and probably the help of the druid — cleared out of the Village. [32-24]

The new characters did well and gained a few experience levels, but they were still reluctant to go near to the Temple ruin itself. [32-25] After their enjoyment of Hommlet, the survivors progressed to the vile hovels of Nulb [32-26] and thence to the sinister ruins of the Temple. The players were wary of the Temple, and were afraid of losing their characters during a long underworld expedition. Therefore, they conducted repeated hit and run raids on the monsters there. After each successful foray the adventurers would retreat, recuperate, and then return for more. [32-27]

Eventually, the group did get powerful enough to explore the deeper levels. However, the group was being extremely cautious so that they would not be trapped in a dead end by the Temple's overwhelming forces. It seems that during most sessions they were busy exploring, mapping and avoiding monsters as much as possible. [32-28] This by the way is classic "Tenser" behavior, which may imply that Ernie's Berne (with a 17 Intelligence) was the de facto leader of the party.

After many battles and hardships the party found Prince Thrommel, ninth in line for succession to the crown, an abducted hero held in enchanted stasis. However, the adventurers did not yet know what to do with the discovery. [32-29] There was a good reason for their confusion: the champion Paladin Lord Thrommel had been captured by the Temple's rulers, and his appearance as a "staked" vampire was merely an illusion. He had been hidden away while the evil rulers bickered about what to do with him. If found as a "vampire," there is a very good chance that a misguided adventuring party might mistake his appearance for the real thing and finish him off by cutting off his head! [32-30] There was a short break in the campaign while the players mulled over the discovery of the "vampire," and were deciding what to do. By this time it was winter in Lake Geneva and the snows were falling hard. [32-31]

Rob Kuntz was over at Gary's house and was bored and wanted to play Lord Robilar once again. Gary thought about this and tried to conceive precisely what adventures he could come up with to entertain his friend and his powerful character. Considering the location of Castle Robilar along the Wild Coast, and the fact that it was in the same Gnarley Forest as the Temple itself, Gary decided that there might be a chance for Robilar to hear rumors about evil activity (and treasure!) nearby.

These rumors eventually did reach Lord Robilar's ears, and so the tempted veteran promptly emerged from semi-retirement and prepared to set out for a major expedition. [32-32]

To get there, he needed to cross to the far side of the Gnarley Forest, so he used his flying carpet. His two most faithful companions, Quij and Otto, followed on tamed griffons. [32-33] The three adventurers spotted the Temple's vast ruin from the air, and Robilar ordered the group to land in a hidden meadow close to the outer walls. Otto prepared his spells, Robilar readied his weapons and magic arsenal, and Quij was ordered to remain behind to guard the carpet of flying along with the hungry griffons. [32-34]

With these cautionary measures taken, Robilar and Otto crept through the ruins and down into the vermin-infested dungeons which lie beneath the ancient Temple itself. Knowing Gary's game mastering style very well, Rob decided that he could not risk the safe "raid and retreat" tactics which were being slowly and successfully used by the other low-level adventurers. He had something more like a Tomb of Horrors-style "smash and grab" in mind. Robilar's mission therefore was to smash his way into the bottom of the dungeon, where all of the best treasures would be, and to get back out before the Temple's minions could regroup or post reinforcements. Even more cannily, Rob decided to get everything done in a single session so that the other players would have no chance to intervene or beat him to the treasure! [32-35]

All of the monsters Robilar encountered were either avoided or slain, with no prisoners being taken. Rob once noted that there may have been a slim chance for parley, with Robilar and the monsters being collectively evil (but not serving the same powers); and yet the monsters mercilessly attacked in defense of the Temple, and so Robilar and Otto wiped all of them out whenever combat ensued. [32-36]

This is not to say that the adventure was a frontal assault, however. Far from it. Robilar and Otto moved in stealth and secrecy, and sometimes (perhaps when invisibility or resistance to spells was required?) Robilar acted alone. Using the same tactics which Rob had perfected under Castle Greyhawk, the most dangerous monsters were avoided while the rich ones were attacked from ambush. Closed doors were dealt with by having Robilar make noise, and then waiting to see if any evil priests or monsters came out to investigate. [32-37]

Anyone who peeked out, of course, was summarily slain with total surprise. As each lair's monsters were cleared, the adventurers would dig through the mess and filth in search of treasure. There was not much to be had, however. Rob once noted fondly that as Robilar searched every room, there would be "little bits and pieces of temple trash flying everywhere. Now those were the days!" [32-38] Then again, he may have been referring to slaughtered monsters!

The meager finds, however, only proved to Rob that Gary had hidden the vast majority of the wealth at the very bottom. A final assault would be needed to remove the most dangerous monsters lurking in Robilar's way. The carnage lasted for two full game days, which probably means that Robilar and Otto depleted their spells and hit points to the utmost limit that Rob would dare to undertake. Perhaps the adventurers then hid themselves in a secret room, or in a cleared area of the upper dungeon levels, while Robilar nursed his wounds and Otto strove to re-memorize his spells.

Along the way, Robilar encountered a curious assortment of magical columns. These huge arcane devices were planar seals of a kind, ensorcelled by great powers of Good and positioned to chain Zuggtmoy to the Prime Material Plane (and more specifically, to her prison amongst the slimes and fungi who served her as eerie "consorts"). [32-39]

Rob may well have suspected that these columns were the puzzle-key to the riddles surrounding the Temple's hidden treasure. In reality, however, these were barriers placed by the forces of Good years ago, their purpose being to keep the terrible Demon Queen Zuggtmoy imprisoned within the dungeons. (Gary noted that Zuggtmoy was basically immortal, as far as the irksome adventuring heroes were concerned: "As for the Temple of Elemental Evil," he wrote, "Zuggtmoy is unkillable. She can be set free or sent back to the Abyss, but the PCs cannot destroy her.") [32-40]

Robilar used his girdle of storm giant strength to shatter the columns and barriers in his relentless search for the treasure. And with each shattering, Rob's satisfaction and Gary's anxiety grew. [32-41] When the brash Lord Robilar came to the final gate which held Zuggtmoy at bay, he shattered the doors down with the last pillar and strode inside. [32-42] Surely, great treasures must be hidden behind such well-protected portals! Instead, Robilar came face to face with the newly-liberated Demon Queen.

Otto must have either been hidden nearby, or perhaps Gary ruled that (as an NPC) he had fled in mortal terror. Whatever occurred, the solitary and hapless Lord Robilar was quickly overwhelmed by the jubilant tyrant Queen. The Demon Queen knew that she was in great danger as she stood free beneath the Temple, because the forces of Good had greatly curtailed her power with the imprisonment. And so, she decided to flee homeward to her demoniacal palace within the Abyss. But surely she would need a great champion to protect her while she rebuilt her power base on the Prime Material Plane, and who better to "reward" with such an honor than her liberator himself?

Yes, the “handsome” Lord Robilar — much like poor Ayelerach and Erac’s Cousin — was whisked up in the clutches of a monstrous Evil and swept away to serve chaos in the ultimate realm of darkness. [32-43]

While Lord Robilar and his newly-won beauty queen were away and enjoying their Abyssal vacation (to varying degrees), the forces of Good learned about what had been done. [32-44] The liberation of Zuggtmoy was probably discovered as a result of the lower-level adventurers (led by Ernie’s Berne) re-entering the dungeons and finding that many of the monsters had been slaughtered, with treasures missing, and of course the un-breachable gates had been sundered too! Berne, Rufus and company probably went straight to Tim, the Druid of the Grove, to share their deepest fears: the Demon Queen had been loosed once again upon the world. How could such horrific things be? Who would dare to free such a terrible foe?

During their time together, Zuggtmoy and Robilar became “friends,” or at least tentative allies with Zuggtmoy in control. [32-45]

Eventually, Lord Robilar managed to convince the Demon Queen of two things: first, he should be allowed to live; and secondly, he really wasn’t very good at that whole “fawning servant” thing. Being lawful evil and asked to serve chaos intimately, Robilar was not entirely trustworthy. Perhaps Robilar managed to convince the Demon Queen that he had a wrathful protector of his own; or, more likely, he simply asked to serve the Queen on the Prime Material Plane where he could acquire treasures and face down the powers of Good on her behalf. Whatever the reason, Robilar managed to escape the Abyss and so he was returned to the Temple environs. [32-46]

Freedom was just the beginning of his ultimate problem, however. Lord Robilar had angered the great powers of Good by unleashing the Demon Queen of Fungi, and he was now worth stomping out. Even the neutral druids were in allegiance with Good, because the balance of power in the region had been completely disrupted. A great force was raised to hunt Lord Robilar down and to bring him to justice. [32-47]

Robilar (not yet knowing all of this, but probably sensing instinctively that he was stuck hip-deep in demonic doo-doo) managed to escape the dungeons, to meet up with Otto (who had probably feared the worst), and to find Quij who was still faithfully guarding the griffons beneath the secret boughs of the Gnarley Wood. However, loyal Quij had gotten very cold waiting for master to return. Unable to leave the griffons unguarded or to make his presence known in Nulb, Quij instead cut a hole in master’s carpet of flying. He then stuck his head through it and waited more contentedly in his “poncho” while master was away. [32-48]

Good boy, Quij! But Lord Robilar was less than thrilled. He needed to make an escape, and quickly! When Robilar finally managed to flee, he left in such haste that neither he nor his companions noticed that they were being followed. The damage to the carpet of flying probably slowed it down considerably, and Otto's and Quij's griffons would have been forced to slow themselves to avoid leaving Robilar behind to a nasty fate. Behind them, the druid Tim had watched them depart while hidden in the nearby forest. Tim then shape-shifted into a falcon, and followed the fleeing adventurers for hundreds of miles until they returned "safely" to Castle Robilar. [32-49]

Finally, the identity of the culprit who had so audaciously freed Queen Zuggtmoy was known! Tim returned to Hommlet and shared the ghastly news: the champion of Evil was hidden away in his nearly impregnable castle. A siege would be needed to be brought against Castle Robilar at once, which would require the mustering and marching of an army.

Very soon thereafter, "Robilar's ravages were followed by the army of enraged Good folk, led by Tenser and associates, including Otis, Berne, [and] Rufus." [32-50] In other words, Ernie decided to create a righteous conclave that would hunt down the impious Lord Robilar once and for all. Ernie probably allied his mid-level PC Berne with his main high-level PC Tenser, and then convinced Skip Williams and Tim Kask to assist. The inclusion of Otis's name in this list also implies that by this time Gary's young son Luke [32-51] was controlling Otis as a new NPC-turned-PC for this special mission of vengeance. There were seriously bad times ahead in Lord Robilar's future!

The army of Good which assembled also included elves (probably from the Kingdom of Celene), unicorns (ridden no doubt by elven knights and maidens), and paladins (undoubtedly Prince Thrommel's companions, who hailed from Verbobonc). [32-52] Tenser led the force to Robilar's castle. Quij, perhaps learning of their approach from his patrolling orc scouts, fled in panic. [32-53]

It seems that due to all of his earlier precautions, Robilar narrowly managed to escape. He may have left as soon as he realized the size of the force being brought against him. This, combined with Gary's genuine displeasure that Rob had ruined the Temple dungeon for future use by the lower-level PCs, probably forced him to come to terms with a grim and incontrovertible fact: everyone was pissed off at him. Sure, it was all in good fun, but that would not be enough to save Lord Robilar's life! At the very least he would be imprisoned for life. And so, thinking fast he fled the Greyhawk region and went into exile. [32-54]

The army came and the siege on Robilar's castle then began. [32-55] The details are confused, but it seems that Otto may have led the last effort to defend the place, even while Robilar was safely away. Castle Robilar was laid out on a relatively simple plan, with a square outer perimeter



cornered by four towers and a fortified keep in the center. Near the courtyard was a beautiful fountain. [32-56]

The invaders suffered some deaths due to the castle's guards and warding spells. As the main gate came crashing down, Otto used a Dispel Magic spell on the fountain in the castle courtyard, which caused a swarm of "snails" to become furious hydras. [32-57] The hydras killed many of the invaders but were eventually slain. Under the cover of this confusion, Otto fled away as well. [32-58]

Lord Robilar's abandoned castle was sacked and ruined, perhaps even razed to the ground. [32-59] All of the treasures which he had not managed to carry into exile were lost. At this time he also lost the Green Dragon Inn. It seems that Tenser instigated an investigation, and the forces of law in the City of Greyhawk confiscated the property. [32-60] As has been gravely noted, "A valuable lesson was learned and [*from this point forward*] Robilar's history starts being controlled by outside forces." [32-61]

Despite a very chagrined Rob learning his lesson well, however, Gary was genuinely depressed by the misadventure's aftermath. With the "big bad" in the Temple no longer present, and most of the guardian monsters slain, there was little reason for the rest of the PCs to go back into that netherworld setting again. Gary's son Ernie would lament many years later that the mysteries of Elemental Evil would never be fully realized in the Greyhawk campaign: "Father kept so many details hidden," he remembered, "and if we did not explore the background deep enough, we never learned all that the module contained." [32-62]

"When Robilar freed Zugtmoy," Gary remembered, "I pretty well scrapped the idea of using [*the Temple of Elemental Evil*] for ongoing adventures for my group, vowing to get back to finishing it eventually. As I was not able to do much DMing thereafter, that never happened ..." [32-63]

And now you know. Robilar's demon-freeing days came to an end. He would later ally with the neutral archmage Mordenkainen, and journey to the City of the Gods. Thereafter, he would find a powerful artifact and take it across the sea to the land of Lyhnn. We will consider these other great adventures — the last to be told in the legendary chronicle of Lord Robilar — in Book IV of **HAWK & MOOR**.



## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 32

[32-1] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part XII.

[32-2] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "How far did GygaX go with Greyhawk?"

[32-3] A post by Rob Kuntz on the paizo.com forums, dated September 12th, 2006.

[32-4] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Temple of Elemental Evil question."

[32-5] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted February 16th, 2009.

[32-6] *Polyhedron*, issue #2.

[32-7] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part V. Posted January 24th, 2004.

[32-8] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Lareth the beautiful."

[32-9] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Lareth the beautiful."

[32-10] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Elder Elemental God?"

[32-11] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. See for example entries from March 8th and August 14th, 2011

[32-12] *The Dragon*, issue #13.

[32-13] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. According to Gary's recollection, Tim the Druid "got up to around 10th level" in the end.

[32-14] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask. Posted May 2nd, 2012.

[32-15] Acaeum.com, "Gen Con 2007 pictures."

[32-16] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Zagy's Castle."

[32-17] The Collector's Trove: Ernie GygaX.

[32-18] This information comes from a Facebook post made on July 14th, 2015.

[32-19] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Primeval players of D&D."

[32-20] Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Rufus, Burne and the green dragon."

See also the Dragonsfoot forums, "Otis and the Battle of Emridy Meadows."

[32-21] Dungeon Module T1, *The Village of Hommlet*, pg. 4.

[32-22] Dungeon Module T1, *The Village of Hommlet*, pg. 3.

[32-23] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org, "Zagy's Castle," posted March 8th, 2004.

[32-24] Super Module T1-4, *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, pg. 28.

[32-25] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7.

[32-26] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VIII. Posted February 25th, 2005.

[32-27] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part VIII. Posted February 25th, 2005.

[32-28] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Temple of Elemental Evil question."

[32-29] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Temple of Elemental Evil question."

[32-30] Super Module T1-4, *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, pg. 86.

[32-31] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Giants / Drow – was it played in the Geneva campaigns?"

[32-32] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot forums, "Temple of Elemental Evil question."

See also a Rob Kuntz post on the paizo.com forums, dated September 8th, 2006.

[32-33] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7.

See also Super Module T1-4, *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, pg. 28.

[32-34] Online web forum post: a post by Rob Kuntz on the paizo.com forums, dated September 8th, 2006.

[32-35] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7.

[32-36] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar and the ToEE."

[32-37] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar's solo adventures."

[32-38] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar in ToEE?"

[32-39] Super Module T1-4, *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, pg. 94.

[32-40] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part X. Posted June 23rd, 2006.

[32-41] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7.

[32-42] Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Robilar and the ToEE,” in addition to the Greytalk Archives.

[32-43] The Greytalk Archives.

See also ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A Part X, posted June 2nd, 2006.

[32-44] Super Module T1-4, *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, pg. 28.

[32-45] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7.

[32-46] The Greytalk Archives.

See also ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A Part X, posted June 2nd, 2006.

[32-47] Super Module T1-4, *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, pg. 28.

[32-48] Super Module T1-4, *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, pg. 28.

See also ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part X.

[32-49] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[32-50] Super Module T1-4, *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, pg. 28.

[32-51] Gary once noted (in the Dragonsfoot forums, Q&A with Gary GygaX Part X, posted June 23rd, 2007) that in regards to Luke’s game play, “Hommlet was the first campaign in which he actually played in a reasonably mature manner. The older fellows in the group used to razz him a good deal and also assist him in developing [his] RPG skill.”

Luke’s first attempts at Dungeon Mastering would be made for his sisters Heidi and Cindy, with father Gary noting that the girls “told him what opponents they should face, what treasure they should gain from their defeated adversaries ... until he complained to me, and I set matters aright.”

[32-52] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7.

[32-53] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7.

[32-54] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, “Robilar’s tower.”

[32-55] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary GygaX Q&A, Part X.

[32-56] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org, “Which Kingdom is Lord Robilar’s Manor Located In?” Posted April 21st, 2005.

[32-57] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot.org, "Which Kingdom is Lord Robilar's Manor Located In?" Posted April 21st, 2005.

See also Dragonsfoot.org, "Lake Geneva Campaign," posted February 11th and 12th, 2003.

[32-58] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar's tower."

[32-59] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "Robilar's tower."

[32-60] Online web forum post: Pied Piper Publishing forums, "The Green Dragon Inn."

[32-61] *The Oerth Journal*, issue #7.

[32-62] This information comes from a Facebook post made on July 14th, 2015.

[32-63] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XII.

## CHAPTER 33

### BLACKMOOR DAWNING

(NOVEMBER –  
DECEMBER 1975)

ON THE business side of affairs, November and December of 1975 encapsulated a very busy time for TSR. Early in November, Gary traveled to Minnesota to make various business arrangements. [33-1]

It is very likely that he visited with Dave Arneson (as a game designer and associate, of course), M. A. R Barker (game designer), Mike Mornard (experienced D&D campaign referee) and David C. Sutherland III (artist), among others. We know a meager scrap of this via the court record, but that brief mention provides us with only a glimpse of the possible goings-on at this time.

This may, by the way, have been the Minnesota trip which Rob Kuntz accompanied Gary on. As Rob would later fondly recall, “I first met David Sutherland when in 1975 a select crew from TSR drove to Minnesota to visit with the esteemed Professor M. A. R. Barker. Dave personally showed me around Minneapolis / St. Paul, took me to Uncle Hugo’s bookstore, pointed me to the Clark Ashton Smith and H. P. Lovecraft books there, and we later joked and talked and ate some food downtown. A great first start to a friendship, which was to build for years after he finally arrived in Lake Geneva to work for TSR.” [33-2]

\* \* \* \* \*

By this time Tim Kask had his stewardship of *The Strategic Review* well in hand, and issue #5 was published in November. [33-3] Gary once estimated that circulation may have been over 1,000 copies ... a noteworthy milestone considering the amateur makeup and casual distribution of earlier issues. [33-4] Soon and with the waiting audience proven, Tim and Gary would be able to shift their focus toward a more professional publication, *The Dragon*, with a similar print run. *The Dragon* would also feature fiction, a full-color cover, more illustrations, better-quality paper and a higher page count as well. Even better, the *Blackmoor Supplement* was being bound, stapled and churned out at the printers (and thus it was out of Tim’s hair, which may have been in danger of falling out by this time). Good things were brewing in the publication side of the business!

Issue #5 of *The Strategic Review* features many highlights, including an illustration of stirges by David Sutherland, and several new monsters: the rakshasa, the slithering tracker and the trapper.

The *rakshasa* appeared as a result of Gary’s earlier-mentioned enjoyment of *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*. As Tim once fondly recalled, “Gary came in one morning and threw the rough stats and such on my desk and asked what I thought about the critter. It was love at first sight.”

The *trapper* monster, meanwhile, is simply an inverted lurker above, again likely inspired by Terry Kuntz's paranoia concerning the various surfaces in Gary's Greyhawk dungeons. The *slithering tracker*, however, is something of an enigma. It appears to be an intelligent and invisible slime monster, and may have been created by Gary with the help of Rob Kuntz.

This issue also gives us the first hint of "geomorphic dungeon maps," meaning that Gary was already testing the waters for general DM interest in the generic and configurable maps which would later be published as the *Dungeon Geomorphs* series of supplements. [33-5]

Copies of *The Strategic Review* #5 that were mailed to subscribers were accompanied by a flyer, which invited readers to embrace "an offer that only comes once in a lifetime." [33-6] This was an invitation to subscribe to a lifetime subscription to TSR game products. People could shell out a sizeable chunk of cash, and in return they would get every game produced by TSR in perpetuity. (!) A similar offer would be made in 1976, with lifetime subscriptions available for *The Dragon* magazine. It was a chance for Gary to raise a significant amount of cash in a short period of time, but the long-term advantages of the program were very much on the side of the subscribers. As Gary later explained, "a lifetime sub to *The Dragon* was \$300 and a like sub to game products was \$700." [33-7]

He recalled that approximately 30 individuals signed up for both, and several others signed up only for the game products. Subscribers were required to sign an annual form which confirmed their interest in continuing with the program. (TSR was obviously less interested in honoring this agreement as time went by, but honor it they did.) Every once in a while, TSR would get behind on shipments and send materials by the pallet-full! [33-8] By the time Gary left TSR in December of 1985, about a dozen of these people were still involved in the program and reaping a huge amount of gaming loot as a reward for their much earlier foresight.

Also in this issue, Tim was proud to note that work was being performed to finally open the Dungeon Hobby Shop. Ideally, the Shop would have opened before the busy holiday shopping season; but alas, this was not to be. The "grey house" simply needed too much work before it could be safely opened and fully stocked for business. And in Terry Kuntz's defense, it is said that he was working extremely hard and his efforts were saving TSR a considerable amount of money. The ground-level retail side of house was put on hold, but it seems that the office spaces were ready to go: Tim reported, "We are in the midst of a move out of our beloved crypts," by which he meant the cramped work spaces in Gary's basement.

Tim also told the following story about the last of the basement days: "The last Friday that we were in Gary's basement — Monday we were moving into the new building, it was a landmark red-



letter day for us — we were sitting in Gary's study. Invariably and inevitably, we were smoking cigars and drinking scotch. We didn't do this very often, only once in a while would we take the time to do this. And we would have what we called our 'blue sky sessions.' We would just start throwing out preposterous stuff that we saw in the future." The funniest tale was that TSR would sell 10,000 copies of D&D, which was met with gales of laughter. Little did anyone know that one day soon, this impossible pipe dream would come true ... and then some! [33-9]

Indeed, *Dungeons & Dragons* continued to sell very well. The fifth printing appears to have been produced at some point between December 1975 (less likely) and April 1976 (more likely). [33-10] Tim once estimated that TSR sold "a little over \$100,000" in product in 1975. [33-11] This was largely a result of the TSR Hobbies Division, which was selling miniatures (with the Minifigs offerings being especially popular). TSR Hobbies was also stocking other designers' games, and of course selling *Dungeons & Dragons* and its various supplements as well. We do not know what the profit margins were for all of these many proceedings, but nevertheless \$100,000 is a phenomenal number for a gaming startup which had just recently celebrated its second birthday on October 1st, 1975.

Despite all of these developments, however, the most eagerly awaited new publication was saved for last: *Blackmoor* finally made it into print and was arriving in customers' mailboxes in late December. [33-12] All of the back orders were filled and this supplement was eagerly purchased by many other gamers, but it was not as well-reviewed as *Greyhawk* had been. Initial feedback for *Blackmoor* was mixed, and not everyone knew what to do with the sheer variety of the material. The aquatic theme was considered confusing by some, and not everyone enjoyed the assassin and the monk. "Some people were turned off by all the emphasis on water," Tim once explained. [33-13]

Also — through no fault of Tim's own — *Blackmoor* is the first D&D product in which there is a significant change of tone. *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Greyhawk* and *The Strategic Review* issues had all been authored by Gary Gygax, with input from Dave Arneson, Rob Kuntz, Mike Mornard and others. *Blackmoor*, however, was not only not created by Gary; it was comprised entirely of materials which had never appeared in Gary's game. For those "old school" purists who are interested in marking a line of demarcation between Gygaxian *Dungeons & Dragons* and the more collaborative game which followed through all of the decades to come, the publication of *Blackmoor* represents a milestone for the borderland between those two very different play styles. Material from Gary's game would still appear in print, in altered form of course; but never again would D&D be "Gary's game." *Dungeons & Dragons*, as a direct result of its commercial prosperity and success, had become the shared creative property belonging to the growing community of D&D's players and Dungeon Masters.

\* \* \* \* \*

Blackmoor is a major D&D release, however, from both a play perspective and an historical one as well. The section which was most widely embraced by Dungeon Masters, it seems, was The Temple of the Frog.

The Temple of the Frog offers us an evocative glimpse into Dave Arneson's Blackmoor campaign. As such, I will reveal some of the more interesting details here. The Temple is not precisely a "dungeon" in the sense that any small adventuring party might stand a chance to attain glory and riches there. It is more of a battle scenario setting, a military outpost which might be attacked by a small army. The surface stronghold appears to have been designed to integrate with Arneson's interpretation of *Chainmail Fantasy* (c. 1971-1972), while the dungeon proper (suitable for large parties, provided they can make it past the army) appears to date to the spring of 1973. [33-14]

In Dave's world, the Temple of the Frog was situated just a little further to the south from the swamp-town of Loch Gloomen. [33-15] A few anachronistic game system notes in the text lead us to believe that Arneson only lightly updated this material prior to handing it off to Gary in "final draft form" in 1975.

The Temple as portrayed in *Blackmoor* is a great stronghold of evil, hidden within the wreathing and corrosive mists which veil the frigid swamps near to the frontier town of Loch Gloomen. Considering Dave's cinematic and pulpy predilections, I believe that this setting may have been inspired by the cheesy 1972 horror movie *Frogs*, which boasts some of the most terrible taglines of all time: "If you are squeamish stay home!!!" shrieks the poster, featuring a giant frog with a dead man's hand sticking out of its mouth. "Cold green skin against soft, warm flesh! ... a croak ... a scream! FROGS!" And even better, "TODAY — the pond! TOMORROW — the world!"

Some of the more obscure details concerning the Temple's convoluted history are made clearer in Arneson's later (and heavily revised) Dungeon Module DA2, *Temple of the Frog* (1986). The Temple was founded by priests who worshipped the deadly frogs and swamp beasts lairing throughout the region of Loch Gloomen. The mad priests of the swamp, it seems, may have sought unholy unification with the spirit of the Great Frog. Human sacrifices were made, and a subterranean breeding program was begun in which frog DNA was spliced with human DNA to create a race of fanatical amphibious warriors. (*Jurassic Park* fans take careful note.) The

Brotherhood's goal was to raise an army to purge all of Loch Gloomen's unbelievers — the sane and innocent humans throughout the world, rather — in the unholy name of the Frog. The description of the forbidden chapel makes the goal of the Brotherhood very clear: "Behind the pit is a huge tapestry that portrays the eventual doom of man at the hands of the priests of the Temple, with the emphasis on the worthlessness of human life." [33-16]

The Temple's reclusive Brotherhood was split into two orders, the pious Brothers and the sinful Keepers. The Brothers remain above while the Keepers are forced to contend with the horrors of the underworld and the frog-infested breeding pools, and so the Keepers became more depraved and feared as the years went by.

Everything changed, however, with the arrival of an entity named Stephen. Stephen is "quite literally not of this world," an alien and member of "a scientific expedition that crash landed on this planet some years ago." [33-17] In Arneson's original background, the world of Blackmoor is alluded to be a staging ground for invaders which threaten some remote star empire. Stephen is assigned to beam up to an orbiting satellite station once a year to provide evidence of enemy artifacts, troop movements, and so forth to his commanders. Meanwhile, however, he becomes greedy and duplicitous. He controls the Temple priests for his own personal gain, while hiding the extent of his planet-side activities from his commanding officers. These ideas were all probably related to a specific character in John Snider's space adventure campaign — very popular in Arneson's play circle c. 1974 — which would later be featured in a published and more general form as TSR's *Star Probe* (early 1975).

Stephen Rocheford, the player who played the Stephen character, described the creation of this arch-villain as follows:

"Dave approached me to invent an 'evil' character that would be 'different from the norm' in this world. Ergo, I thought and settled on a character that was 'not of this world' of Blackmoor. My inspiration eventually was from an old episode of the original *Star Trek* television series. In it, Captain Kirk found a planet of Nazis and found the earthling, an historian, who founded it in the hope of eliminating its excesses and organizing this society for the betterment of all in the name of efficiency. I told Dave Arneson and he was delighted. He asked that I 'flesh out' the character." [33-18]

In the later version of the story (in DA2), a starship much like *Star Trek's* U.S.S. Enterprise crashed on a fantastical planet, and the Captain and most of the crew believed that the Prime Directive would forbid them from making contact with Blackmoor's primitive inhabitants. The crew planned to enter suspended animation and to await rescue by the Arnesonian equivalent of

the United Federation of Planets. However, Security Officer Stephen “the Rock” Rocklin led a minority faction in mutiny. The mutiny failed and Stephen escaped in a lifeboat, which was hit by a missile as it raced through the swamp near Loch Gloomen. The Brothers of the Swamp set out to investigate the ill-omened explosion, and when they arrived they promptly marveled over the technology exhibited by Stephen and his companions. Stephen just happened to belong to a green-skinned anthropomorphic race, and so he told the Brothers that he was a comet-borne swamp god worthy of their worship. And who, in the face of Stephen’s miraculous armor and weapons, were the Brothers to disagree? Stephen basically took over the Temple and became a power-hungry villain. [33-19]

In Arneson’s campaign, Svenny and his companions hear rumors of the Order of the Frog, and decided to mount an expedition to reach the Temple. Stephen Rocheford was still playing “the Rock” at this time and was in control of the Temple priesthood. The adventurers invaded, and one of them was slain in the ensuing battles. The fallen man’s companions vowed revenge. It is likely that much more transpired, but many of the details have faded from memory. Perhaps Svenny’s crew were victorious, plundering the dungeons below the Temple. Who can know? [33-20]

But there is much more of interest which we can find in the published version of Arneson’s batrachian-spawning netherworld. There are many remarkable features in the dungeons below, such as three “weird sister” medusas, each over a century old, who dwell in a secret chamber which they have clawed out of the slimy stone. There is also a warren filled with 200 giant rats, accessible through a secret door which the Keepers of the Frog might be able to flee through while employing their magical rings of domination. A room reached by three bridges is occupied by clambering trolls who will swarm up to attack intruders, while the horrific Breeding Pool is home to “an estimated 1,100-1,200 killer frogs.” Beyond the Breeding Pool lies the Island of the Frog People, where over 250 frogmen guard a clutch of powerful magic items.

Dear Reader: If any of the players in your game ever complain about unfairness in your dungeons or approach to play, you may want to consider introducing their favored and coddled characters to the Temple of the Frog!

\* \* \* \* \*

Tim was excited to see his quality work in print, although he may have privately resented the fact that Arneson was listed as the author and would be receiving royalties on the project. [33-21]

This was not the end of the world, however; it was an incentive for Mr. Kask to do more. Soon, Tim would begin working on his own preferred system expansions to the *Dungeons & Dragons* game, and many of his ideas would see print in the spring of 1976 by way of *D&D Supplement III: Eldritch Wizardry*.

Tim had also earned Gary's respect as an editor and creator of published professional content. With Brian Blume focused on the business and financial side of TSR, and Rob Kuntz busy running the Greyhawk campaign, Tim and Gary began discussing the future of *Dungeons & Dragons* and its various releases. These conversations of course encompassed the upcoming *Dragon* magazine, but it seems that Gary also had something far more ambitious in his mind. Gary had decided that it was time to clean up D&D *in toto*, before the rules, additions and corrections could get any more convoluted than they already were. [33-22] Who better to assist Mr. Gygas in this task than the mighty Wizard Kask?

This effort originally entailed a full editorial consideration of D&D as a whole. The monsters would all be alphabetized, the magic items would all be consolidated in a single source, and the character classes and races would be gathered together to form a unified guide to play. However, in beginning the work it soon became apparent that even an edited D&D game would be too difficult for new players to learn (and perhaps also too expensive for them to procure). If a single monolithic edition *was* created, would new players be frightened away by the sheer bulk of the offering? It seems that Gary decided to create a Basic Set of the rules in either late 1975 or early 1976. Soon, this endeavor would take on a life of its own under the auspices of a neurosurgeon, author and Dungeon Master, a fascinating gentleman named John Eric Holmes. [33-23]

With so much time (in 1976) to be saved by the development of the introductory set by Dr. Holmes, Gary would then be able to shift his attentions to a far more comprehensive edit and update of the overarching D&D system of "advanced" adjuncts to the Basic Set. Gary's efforts would take several years and would eventually result in a new game which he titled *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. That, however, is the main tale to be featured in Books IV and V of **HAWK & MOOR**, covering 1976 and 1977.

TSR was literally moving out from the underground, leaving Gary's basement while providing his family with a reliable income and hope for the future. As the move into the new "grey house" headquarters continued and 1975 came to a close, Gary must have reflected on the wild ride which TSR had taken throughout the year. What had begun with disaster, and the death of Don Kaye, had ended in bittersweet triumph. Avalon Hill, the great wargame publisher which had rejected adventure games as uninteresting pieces of folly, had been forced to change its business plan and

to run a gaming convention to compete with Gary's risky startup. The entire industry was changing. There were much stormier waters looming ahead, but there were also many glorious islands of wonder to be discovered.

Books IV and V of **HAWK & MOOR** explores Dave Arneson's arrival at TSR, his mysterious departure, the rise of *The Dragon* magazine, the Dungeon Hobby Shop, the conception of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, the Basic Set, and the development of the *Monster Manual*. We will also journey into some fateful and exotic locales which have become legendary in gaming fandom, such as the City of the Gods, the Barrier Peaks, the Starship Warden, the Palace of the Vampire Queen, and the Lost Caverns of Tsojconth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Before I take my leave, however, there are a few lingering mysteries to address. Here, I will discuss several developments which occurred in either 1974 or 1975, but where there is not a sufficient level of detail to confidently place the events into the overall chronology. It is hoped that as my research and the revelations of history continue to unfold, I will be able to shorten this section further. But I did not want these crucial events to be utterly lost, and so they are gathered here. Tread warily, there are interesting mysteries ahead ...

\* \* \* \* \*

**[Mystery #1] The creation of the beholder.** In 1974, Terry Kuntz created a short story about a melancholy and solitary sphere of eyes ... long-time D&D players will recognize this as the accidental conception of one of the game's most iconic monsters, the beholder.

Gary noted that the saying "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" had no bearing on this monster's origin. [33-24] Rob remembered that his brother Terry "had a wild imagination. He came over to my house one day on his way to Gary's and showed me a short story ... I read through it, it was 8 or 10 pages where he described a family of these things living on a mountain, and how they're discovered. So there was an ecology to them already built into his mind, and his conception of it and his story fully conceptualized this. He went over to Gary's and told him about it. The next



thing he knew, it was appearing on the cover of *Greyhawk* and then Gary made apologies [*in the later Monster Manual*] for not giving him credit.” [33-25]

Obviously Gary loved the idea, and (with Terry’s permission) he created a few additional game stats for it (Terry had done most of the work) and added it to the D&D monster roster as a powerful new tyrant of the underworld. [33-26] As Gary noted, “All I needed to do was a bit of editing to make it a great addition to the terrible monsters to be found in the D&D game.” [33-27]

Gary once said that Terry “came up with the beholder after he had been playing in my campaign for about two months,” but if this is true then the beholder actually dates to around February 1973. This seems unlikely, however, as the monster was not featured in the original D&D set but rather in *Supplement I: Greyhawk*. [33-28] Unfortunately the short story documenting the origination of the beholder was later lost in a fire, which makes dating these events difficult. [33-29]

More details surrounding the beholder’s creation are eagerly anticipated, should Rob Kuntz ever publish his memoirs!

\* \* \* \* \*

**[Mystery #2] New masters in the mists.** It is known that Ed Greenwood, renowned as the creator of the Forgotten Realms, began playing *Dungeons & Dragons* with friends in early 1975. [33-30] He also played *Chainmail* before that. [32-31] It has also been noted that two other RPG luminaries, Tom Moldvay and Lawrence Schick, began playing around 1975 as well. [33-32] However, I know very little about their early games or the circumstances surrounding their introduction to the hobby of role-playing. I hope to provide more details surrounding both of these talented men in the future.

\* \* \* \* \*

**[Mystery #3] Mike Mornard meets Dave Sutherland, and Sutherland meets Professor Barker.** Unfortunately Mr. Sutherland — one of the iconic artists who would define the visual identity of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* — passed away some years ago, and never seems to have conducted interviews with the “Old School Renaissance” movement that has heightened so much of the popular interest in RPG history. We know that he was involved in the Society for Creative



Anachronism (SCA) in the early 1970s, and that he would eventually come to the attention of Gary Gygax and TSR through a friendship with Mike Mornard. [33-33]

It seems that Mike disliked the artwork in the originally published D&D set, and so he went off in search of an artist who could manage a better job of bringing Gygax's and Arneson's imagined world to life. Mike met Dave Sutherland at an SCA meeting. He loved Dave's art, and encouraged him to get in touch with Gary. [33-34] I believe that Mike met Dave in 1974, and that Dave was introduced to Professor Barker by Mike in 1975. [33-35]

As Gary admired Dave's illustrations, Dave would also be asked to provide illustrations for *The Strategic Review* and *The Dragon* in 1975 and 1976. We will learn much more about Mr. Sutherland in the future. His greatest works would include the *Monster Manual* and *Dungeon Masters Guide* covers, the piece "A Paladin in Hell" featured in the *Players Handbook*, and the cover of the "Holmes" Basic Set. It is Sutherland's art — along with that of David A. Trampier and Tom Wham — which attractively presented and sold these compelling products to hundreds of thousands of gamers in the mid- to late 1970s. [33-36]

In the interests of honoring Mr. Sutherland's legacy, I would like to include a more detailed history of his early days in these future pages.

\* \* \* \* \*

**[Mystery #4] Gary Gygax creates the Lost Caverns of Tsojconth.** Although the tournament dungeon *Lost Caverns of Tsojconth* was not played at a convention until 1976, Gary once mentioned that he had created the first version of the dungeon in "c. 1974." [33-37] The Lost Caverns were partially based on a dungeon level originally created by Rob Kuntz. [33-38] This is an open research item.

\* \* \* \* \*

**[Mystery #5] An eyebrow-raising offer.** At some point in 1975, probably before Origins I, Tom Shaw of Avalon Hill asked Gary if he would be interested in letting AH publish *Dungeons & Dragons*. Of course, Gary was in a much stronger negotiating position than he had been in the summer of 1973 (when AH rejected his inquiries), and so he was quite amused: "It was my turn to

laugh,” he once noted in an interview. [33-39] This would be an interesting turn of events to integrate into the larger chronology, because it implies that AH was willing to negotiate with TSR even while the rivalry between Gen Con and Origins was still in its earliest stages.

\* \* \* \* \*

**[Mystery #6] More adventures in the dungeons of Castle Greyhawk, Blackmoor, and beyond.**

In my research I am always coming across more vague hints of dungeon adventures, and I will try to add some more entertaining stories in the future. Most of the adventures undertaken in Gary’s and Dave’s campaigns are still unknown to us, and so I hope to unravel more of the early mysteries in a future edition of this book, as ever more arcane details are unearthed from the musty tomes of FRPG history.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are many more curiosities to consider, but these six events are the ones which I am most avidly endeavoring to solve for a future edition of this work. I hope to shed light on such discoveries soon! I hope further that you have enjoyed sharing this third journey into the mists with me.

And so, with hundreds of mysteries thus uncovered and many more thousands yet awaiting our exploration, be it known that future volumes of **HAWK & MOOR** are on the horizon — I promise — while Book III, *Lands and Worlds Afar*, is here brought to an

**END.**

## FOOTNOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

### FOR CHAPTER 33

[33-1] United States District Court (Fourth Division, Minnesota) Civil Action 4-79-109, Arneson v. Gygax.

[33-2] “Memories of David C. Sutherland III,” by Rob Kuntz. This essay appears in the *In Search of the Unknown Campaign Sourcebook*, edited by Demos Sachlas, 2009.

[33-3] Grognardia interview with Tim Kask, Part I.

[33-4] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[33-5] *The Strategic Review*, issue #5.

[33-6] *The Strategic Review*, issue #6, pg. 13.

[33-7] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A Part VII, posted February 2nd, 2005.

[33-8] Online web forum post: Acaeum.com, “TSR Products for Life.”

[33-9] Refer to the Youtube clip “Interview: Tim Kask,” posted by Mythwits. The relevant conversation appears at approximately 17:50.

[33-10] Acaeum.com, Original D&D Set.

See also the Acaeum.com forums, “Was Greyhawk Printed Feb. ’75?”

[33-11] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[33-12] *Playing at the World* by Jon Peterson, pp. 538-540.

[33-13] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[33-14] Havard’s Blackmoor Blog, “Stephen the Rock — First D&D Arch-Villain” Posted August 15th, 2010.

See also “The Frog God,” posted September 29th, 2010. By the way, Sterling Lanier’s novel *Hiero’s Journey* featured vicious and weapon-wielding frogmen in a ruined swamp-city, which were the result of radioactivity-induced mutation. However, the novel was published in June of 1973

and so it was likely a case of parallel creativity, and not an inspiration for Arneson's own conception of vile frogmen of the marshes.

[33-15] Havard's Blackmoor Blog, "The Frog God." Posted September 29th, 2010.

[33-16] *Dungeons & Dragons Supplement II: Blackmoor*.

[33-17] Dungeon Module DA2, *The Temple of the Frog*.

[33-18] Online web forum post: the Comeback Inn forums, "Stephen the Rock."

[33-19] Online web forum post: the Comeback Inn forums, "Stephen the Rock."

[33-20] Online web forum post: the Comeback Inn forums, "Stephen the Rock."

[33-21] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with Tim Kask.

[33-22] *The Dragon*, issue #11.

[33-23] *The Dragon*, issue #14.

[33-24] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part XIII. Posted July 30th, 2007.

[33-25] Refer to the Youtube clip 'Rob Kuntz Conversations,' with Martin Brown of Grogard Games. The story begins at approximately 20:40.

[33-26] Lord of the Green Dragons blog, "Sphere of Many Eyes."

See also the ODD74 Proboards thread, "Terry Kuntz's beholder."

[33-27] *Dragon*, issue #305.

[33-28] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IV.

See also Dragonsfoot Q&A with Gary Gygax, Part IX.

[33-29] Refer to the Youtube clip 'Rob Kuntz Conversations,' with Martin Brown of Grogard Games. The story begins at approximately 20:40.

[33-30] The Grogardia interview with Ed Greenwood.

[33-31] *Dragon*, issue #218.

[33-32] The Grogardia interview with Lawrence Schick.

[33-33] A link reached through the Wayback Machine, linking to Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, Inc., David C. Sutherland III.

[33-34] Online web forum post: the ENWorld forums; complete citation not available. Also, The Collector's Trove: David C. Sutherland III.

[33-35] Online web forum post: Dragonsfoot Q&A with James M. Ward.

[33-36] See *The Crusader Journal* #2 for tributes to Sutherland in memoriam.

[33-37] Online web forum post: ENWorld Gary Gygax Q&A, Part IX.

[33-38] *The Dragon*, issue #35.

[33-39] The Ultimate Interview with Gary Gygax, by Ciro Alessandro Sacco.

APPENDIX

THE  
*DUNGEONS*  
& *DRAGONS*  
CHRONICLE:

A TIMELINE  
FOR THE YEARS  
1974 AND 1975

# I

## THE YEAR 1974

**Early January 1974:** By this time, the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association (LGTSA) has 12 members.

**Early January 1974:** The full print order for *Dungeons & Dragons* is delivered to Don Kaye's house, and assembly begins.

**January 1974:** The collection *The Book of Fritz Leiber* is published.

**c. Mid-January 1974:** Gary writes letters to his friends and fellow gamers, letting them know that D&D is finally ready for sale.

**Late January 1974:** The first copy of *Dungeons & Dragons* for which someone had a mailed in an order is shipped to its new owner.

**January 30th, 1974:** This is the date retroactively applied to the original *Dungeons & Dragons* boxed set (registration A760448) which appears in the Library of Congress July-December 1976 Catalog of Copyright Entries.

**January 31st, 1974:** By this date, perhaps 5 copies of D&D have been shipped.



**Early February 1974:** Gary, Don and Brian fulfill D&D shipping orders for various suppliers and hobby stores.

**c. Early February 1974:** Gary and Don work sporadically on rules for a Wild West gun-fighting game, which will later become *Boot Hill*.

**February 1974:** The first printed notice of *Dungeons & Dragons* appears in *El Conquistador* fanzine.

**Mid-February 1974:** By this time, perhaps 100 copies of *Dungeons & Dragons* have been sold. Professor M. A. R. Barker purchases a set at about this time.

**February 19th, 1974:** Professor M. A. R. Barker receives and inscribes his personal copy of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**February 19th, 1974:** The paperback of *The Burrowers Beneath*, by Brian Lumley, is published.

**Late February 1974:** By this time, 150 copies of *Dungeons & Dragons* have been sold.

**Late February 1974:** By this time (and perhaps earlier), TSR has sufficient revenue to begin considering paid advertising.

**February 27th, 1974:** Gary writes a letter to the *Great Plains Game Players Newsletter* to inquire about advertising rates.

**c. Early 1974:** Tim Kask calls Gary Gygax, and introduces himself. The two men discuss rules interpretations for *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**c. February-April 1974:** Professor Barker uses *Dungeons & Dragons* to create his own fantasy role-playing game, which will later become *Empire of the Petal Throne*.

**March 5th, 1974:** Gary writes a letter to Dave Arneson, encouraging him to promote and sell *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**March 13th, 1974:** Gary writes another letter to Dave stressing the importance of marketing *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**c. Early Spring 1974:** Gary and Brian Blume work on a new game based on the Barsoom setting created by Edgar Rice Burroughs, entitled *Warriors of Mars*.

**c. Spring 1974:** The experimental thief character class is devised by Daniel Wagner and his play group.

**April 1st, 1974:** Gary writes the Foreword to the *Tricolor* wargame.

**April 5th, 1974:** *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, previously released in the UK, is released in American theaters.

**April 1974:** James Lurvey, editor of the *Great Plains Game Players Newsletter*, inserts a D&D flyer in the later issue at no cost to TSR.

**April 1974:** The Ballantine Adult Fantasy volume *Over the Hills and Far Away*, by Lord Dunsany, is published.

**c. April 1974:** Professor Barker writes an update on the Mornard fantasy campaign, which will later appear in *Wargamer's Newsletter*.

**April 30th, 1974:** By this time, 300 copies of *Dungeons & Dragons* have been sold.

**May 1974:** A list of preferred Swords and Sorcery authors written by Gary appears in *Wargamer's Digest*. The D&D play report featuring Mordenkainen and Bigby also appears in this issue.

**May 1974:** A partial review of D&D appears in *El Conquistador*.

**c. May or June 1974:** Gary invites Tim Kask to visit Lake Geneva and to attend Gen Con.

**c. Late Spring or Early Summer 1974:** Gary develops the thief class, utilizing a description from rules originating in another play group.

**June 2nd, 1974:** Gary writes a letter to David Megarry, updating him on the sales and marketing of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**June 1974:** The wargame *Tricolor* is released by TSR.

**June 1974:** An ad for *Dungeons & Dragons* appears in *Wargamer's Digest*.

**c. Late June 1974:** The design of *Warriors of Mars* is completed.

**Early Summer 1974:** Gary meets James M. Ward at a bookstore. Mr. Ward will become the future author of *Metamorphosis Alpha*, a sci fi game derived from *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**July 1st, 1974:** The Foreword to *Warriors of Mars* is written.

**c. July 1974:** The thief class appears in the *Great Plains Game Players Newsletter*.

**July 1974:** An ad runs in *Lowry's Guidon* for Jack Scruby's fantasy figures, which are some of the earliest to be offered to *Dungeons & Dragons* / role-playing hobbyists.

**Summer 1974:** By this time, 500 copies of *Dungeons & Dragons* have been sold.

**Summer 1974:** James Ward begins developing the material that will become *Metamorphosis Alpha*.

**c. Summer 1974:** Gary develops the paladin character class.

**August 1974:** Issue #1 of *The Savage Sword of Conan* is published.

**August 1974:** Professor Barker self-publishes his role-playing game.

**August 23rd-25th, 1974:** Gen Con VII is held in Lake Geneva. Tim Kask introduces himself to Gary, and plays in Rob Kuntz's D&D demonstration game.

**Late August 1974:** The popularity of D&D begins a viral expansion, as attendees of Gen Con return home to their gaming groups.

**September 1st, 1974:** Gary writes the Foreword to the upcoming sci fi game *Star Probe*.

**Late Summer 1974:** Craig VanGrasstek releases *Rules to the Game of Dungeon*, a game heavily (yet in many ways unintentionally) derived from *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**c. Late Summer or Early Fall 1974:** Gary Gygax becomes aware of Professor Barker's role-playing game. Gary will encourage Barker to develop his game, but will note that due to its heavy reliance on the rules for *Dungeons & Dragons* the future edition (*Empire of the Petal Throne*) will need to be released by TSR.

**September 7th, 1974:** *Land of the Lost* premieres on television.

**September 20th, 1974:** Episode 2 of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*, entitled *The Zombie*, is aired.

**September 27th, 1974:** Episode 3 of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*, entitled *They Have Been, They Are, They Will Be ...* is aired. This episode may have influenced the depiction of invisible stalkers in D&D.

**October 4th, 1974:** Episode 4 of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*, entitled *The Vampire*, is aired.

**October 1974:** The tale *Black Colossus* is adapted in *The Savage Sword of Conan*, issue #2.

**Late 1974:** Arnold Hendrick gives D&D a mixed review in the *Courier* magazine.

**c. Late 1974:** A D&D player named George A. Lord submits a random dungeon generation system to Gary for consideration.

**November 1st, 1974:** Episode 5 of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*, entitled *The Werewolf*, is aired.

**November 8th, 1974:** Episode 6 of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*, entitled *Firefall*, is aired. This episode may have influenced the depiction of doppelgangers and/or ghosts in D&D.

**c. November 1974:** The first printing of D&D sells out, and Gary orders a second printing.

**November 1974:** *The Warrior of World's End*, by Lin Carter, is published.

**November 16th, 1974:** Tactical Studies Rules, the former and amended partnership (Gary-Donna-Brian), is formally dissolved.

**December 6th, 1974:** Episode 9 of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*, entitled *The Spanish Moss Murders*, is aired. This episode may have (tenuously) influenced the conception of shambling mounds in D&D.

**December 1974:** Ken St. Andre, future designer of *Tunnels & Trolls*, hears rumors of the existence of D&D and begins searching for a copy.

**c. December 1974:** By this time, hobby stores are out of D&D stock, and it becomes difficult to find a copy of the game.

**c. December 1974:** Gary refines George Lord's random dungeon generation system for publication.

**December 1974:** TSR continues to take back orders for *Dungeons & Dragons* while awaiting the second printing.

**December 20th, 1974:** Gary watches *Horror on the Heights*, the 11th episode of *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, on TV. This episode will inspire the creation of the rakshasa monster.

**December 31st, 1974:** By this time, TSR has generated approximately \$12,000 in sales. Gary (in *The Dragon* #26) would later write that "only slightly more than 1,000 copies" of D&D had been sold by the end of the year.

**c. End of Year 1974:** Gary writes text for *The Strategic Review* #1 for future publication.

**End of Year 1974:** At this time, it is likely that 200 or more copies of D&D are being sold per month. Gary will later indicate that TSR is handling 50-75 orders (of games, including D&D) per week.

**c. End of Year:** *Star Probe* is published by TSR.



**(Unknown Date) 1974:** *The Jargoon Pard*, by Andre Norton, is published.



## II

# THE YEAR 1975

**January 1975:** Rules for damage by individual monster type appear in the *Great Plains Game Players Newsletter*.

**January 1975:** Gary's article "What Dungeons & Dragons Is All About" is published in *Europa* magazine.

**January 1975:** For this time period, Gary estimates that D&D has approximately 5,000 players.

**January 1975:** The second printing of the D&D boxed set is released, and back orders are filled.

**c. January 1975:** Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone discover *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**January 17th, 1975:** Episode 13 of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*, entitled *Primal Scream*, is aired. This episode may have influenced the conception of yeti in D&D.

**January 31st, 1975:** TSR co-founder Don Kaye suffers a heart attack and dies.

**Early 1975:** Games Workshop is founded in the UK.

**Early 1975:** By this time, the majority of the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association (LGTSA) as it remains is directly associated with TSR. In Gary's words (in *Dragon* #65), "By 1975, most of the old club members were either part of TSR Hobbies, Inc., gone from the area, or out of gaming for a time."

**February 1st, 1975:** Gary makes a new temporary business arrangement with Don's widow, Donna.

**February 1st, 1975:** Gary writes the Foreword of the upcoming *Greyhawk* supplement.

**February 7th, 1975:** Episode 16 of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*, entitled *Demon in Lace*, is aired. This episode may have influenced the conception of succubi in D&D.

**February 14th, 1975:** Episode 17 of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*, entitled *Legacy of Terror*, is aired. This episode may have (tenuously) affected the depiction of mummies in the *Greyhawk* campaign.

**February 1975:** *The Strategic Review* #1 is published.

**c. February 1975:** *Owl & Weasel* #1 is published in the UK.

**February 1975:** *The Quest for Tanelorn*, by Michael Moorcock, is published.

**February 1975:** *Sign of the Unicorn*, by Roger Zelazny, is published.

**February 1975:** The tale *Iron Shadows in the Moon* is adapted in *The Savage Sword of Conan* #4.

**February 13th, 1975:** Gary Gygax writes a letter to Bill Hoyer, indicating that the first major Supplement to *Dungeons & Dragons — Greyhawk* — would be available “in about 3 weeks.” This would end up being a bit optimistic, however.

**c. Early 1975:** Gary and Brian realize that in time, they will need to create an introductory set for *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**c. February or March 1975:** The third edition of *Chainmail* is published by TSR.

**Early March 1975:** By this time, Dave Arneson is preparing his Blackmoor “supplement” (gathering of notes) for future publication via TSR.

**March 6th, 1975:** Gary writes a letter to David Megarry which discusses the business future of TSR. Gary also notes that the *Greyhawk* accessory will be “finished next week.”

**March 7th, 1975:** Gary notes in a letter that *The Strategic Review* #2 is at the printers, which means that it will be ready on schedule and ready to be published no later than April 1.

**March 7th, 1975:** This is the earliest date for the availability of *D&D Supplement I: Greyhawk* (although almost no one would have it yet).

**The Week of March 10th to 14th (most likely) 1975:** *D&D Supplement I: Greyhawk* is becoming more widely available beyond TSR.

**March 20th, 1975:** Likely by this time, *D&D Supplement I: Greyhawk* is available to most gamers in the Midwestern United States.

**March 20th, 1975:** Bill Owen, a member of the future Judge's Guild partnership, writes a letter to TSR seeking clarification of a D&D rules question. Gary will answer the letter personally.

**March 20th, 1975:** Episode 20 of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*, entitled *The Sentry*, is aired. This episode may have (tenuously) affected the depiction of lizard men in the Greyhawk campaign.

**March 1975:** George Phillies publishes an article on the meaning of D&D in *American Wargamer* magazine.

**End of March, Or No Later Than April 1st, 1975:** *The Strategic Review* #2 is published.

**c. Spring 1975:** Dennis Sustare designs the druid class, which he will later share with TSR for consideration.

**April 1st, 1975:** The new royalty agreement is enacted between Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

**April 1975:** The tale *A Witch Shall Be Born* is adapted in *The Savage Sword of Conan* #5.

**April 1975:** *Under the Thumbs of the Gods*, by Fritz Leiber, is published in *Fantastic* magazine.

**April 1975:** *Kyrik: Warlock Warrior*, by Gardner Fox, is published.

**April 1975:** TSR orders a third printing of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**April 1975:** Ken St. Andre is able to read a copy of *Dungeons & Dragons*, and begins considering improvements and modifications to the system (which will lead to the design of a new game, *Tunnels & Trolls*).

**c. May 1975:** Ken St. Andre and his play group play test *Tunnels & Trolls*.

**May 1975:** *The Enchantress of World's End*, by Lin Carter, is published.

**May 1975:** TSR is restructured so that Donna Kaye can formally leave the business.

**c. Late Spring 1975:** The second printing of D&D sells out.

**c. May or June 1975:** Alan Lucien sends a dungeon design to Gary, which will become the inspiration for the Tomb of Horrors adventure.

**c. Early or Mid-June 1975:** *The Space Gamer* #1 is published.

**June 1975:** *The Magician's Ring*, a Greyhawk campaign tale, appears in *Wargamer's Digest*.

**June 1975:** *Alarums & Excursions* #1 is published.

**June 1975:** Steve Jackson mentions *Dungeons & Dragons* in *Owl & Weasel* #5.

**June 1975:** Gary formally becomes the first full-time employee of TSR.

**June 1975:** Ken St. Andre prints the first edition of *Tunnels & Trolls*.

**c. June 1975:** The Burroughs estate objects to the unauthorized existence of *Warriors of Mars*.

**c. June or July 1975:** Gary designs the Tomb of Horrors for the upcoming D&D tournament.

**Summer 1975:** James Ward shares his first draft of the sci fi D&D-related game with Gary, and Gary provides advice for expansion and improvement.

**c. Summer 1975:** Steve Marsh sends some character class designs and aquatic campaign notes to Gary for consideration. Much of this material will later appear, in altered form, in the *Blackmoor* supplement.

**July 1st, 1975:** TSR publishes Professor Barker's *War of Wizards* game.

**July 1st, 1975:** TSR publishes the *Boot Hill* game.

**Early July 1975:** *The Strategic Review* #3, misleadingly termed the "Autumn" issue, is published.

**July 3rd-6th, 1975:** Ken St. Andre begins selling his *Tunnels & Trolls* game at WesterCon (the West Coast Science Fantasy Conference).

**July 1975:** *Owl & Weasel* #6, devoted to the topic of D&D, is published.

**July 1975:** The second printing of the *Greyhawk* supplement is released.

**July 1975:** The *En Garde!* role-playing game designed by Frank Chadwick is released. Gary would admire this game especially for its social status system and other good ideas. (Refer for example to *The Dragon* #16, pg. 21.)

**July 1975:** Gary discusses the history of *Dungeons & Dragons* in *Alarums & Excursions* #2.

**July 19th, 1975:** TSR is formally incorporated in the state of Wisconsin as TSR Hobbies, Inc.

**c. July 1975:** The lizard man logo is designed for future use on TSR products.

**July 25th-27th, 1975:** The Origins I conference is held in Baltimore, Maryland. *Empire of the Petal Throne* and *Dungeon!* are released.

**August 1975:** The D&D derivative game *Warlock* — a later influence of Dr. John Eric Holmes — appears in *Spartan Simulation Gaming Journal* #9.



**August 5th, 1975:** Dave Arneson notes that it is likely that he will soon be moving to Lake Geneva to work for TSR.

**August 15th-17th, 1975:** Gary attends the CITEX-75 / DipCon conference, noting how D&D is being embraced by the *Diplomacy* gamers there.

**August 22nd-24th, 1975:** Gen Con VIII is held in Lake Geneva.

**c. Late August 1975 (Or Earlier?):** Gary looks over Arneson's Blackmoor notes and plans the future publication of the next D&D supplement.

**September 1st, 1975:** Gary writes the Foreword to the *Blackmoor* supplement. However, due to difficulties the accessory will not be published for quite some time.

**September 1st, 1975:** Tim Kask, Editor, becomes an employee of TSR.

**c. Early to Mid-September 1975:** Gary and Brian hand the *Blackmoor* development and editing project off to Tim.

**September 1975:** *The Character Archaic* is developed, and will later be offered for sale via TSR.

**September 1975:** The collection *The Second Book of Fritz Leiber* is published.

**c. September 1975:** A play report of the Tomb of Horrors tournament dungeon appears in *Alarums & Excursions* #4.

**September 26th, 1975:** TSR Hobbies fully originates: Gary and Brian buy out Donna's share of TSR to dissolve the original partnership arrangement. This business transaction involves the transfer of purchased assets from the Tactical Studies Rules partnership to TSR Hobbies, Inc.

**c. Late September 1975:** Rob Kuntz becomes a full-time employee of TSR.

**c. Fall 1975:** Games Workshop secures the rights to distribute *Dungeons & Dragons* and related materials in the UK.

**c. September-October 1975:** TSR purchases a house, which will become the company's future headquarters building.

**October 1st, 1975:** Terry Kuntz, Service Manager, becomes an employee of TSR.

**c. Early October 1975:** Tim completes his work on the *Blackmoor* draft.

**October 1975:** *Owl & Weasel* #9 is published.

**October 1975:** *Alarums & Excursions* #5 is published.

**October 1975:** SPI enters the fantasy game market with their new wargame, *Sorcerer*.

**c. October 1975:** The monk character class is refined for the *Blackmoor* supplement.

**c. October 1975:** *The Strategic Review* #4 is published.

**c. October 1975:** *The Space Gamer* #2 is published, and includes notes on Dungeons & Dragons.

**October 1975:** The *Blackmoor* supplement is late, but still in production at this time.

**October 21, 1975:** TSR sends the first royalty check to Dave Arneson for the sales of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

**October 31st-November 2nd, 1975:** The First World Fantasy Convention takes place in Providence, Rhode Island. Honored guests and attendees include Robert Bloch, Ramsey Campbell, Lin Carter, L. Sprague de Camp, Lester del Rey, Fritz Leiber, Andrew J. Offutt, and Manly Wade Wellman.

**October-December 1975:** Terry Kuntz works to repair and renovate the TSR house, so that it can be made into a headquarters building and storefront.

**Early November 1975:** Gary travels to Minnesota to make various TSR-related business arrangements.

**November 8th, 1975:** A skit appears on *Saturday Night Live* which will become one of the inspirations for the “landshark” monster, aka the bulette.

**November 1975:** *The Strategic Review* #5 is published.

**c. November 1975:** The fourth printing of the D&D boxed set is released.

**November-December 1975:** The last outstanding legal debts of the Tactical Studies Rules partnership are satisfied, and everything business-wise is tied up and completed by this time.

**c. December 1975:** TSR begins moving out of Gary's basement and into the "grey house."

**December 1975:** Bob Bledsaw loses his job, and will soon develop a major D&D campaign. Bledsaw will later become the driving force behind the Judge's Guild.

**December 1975:** *The Strategic Review* #5 is published.

**December 1975:** The collection *The Compleat Enchanter: The Magical Misadventures of Harold Shea*, by L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt, is published.

**December 1975:** *Owl & Weasel* #11 is published.

**December 1975:** The second edition of *Tunnels & Trolls* is published by Flying Buffalo.

**December 20th, 1975:** The first Games Day con is celebrated in the UK.

**End of December 1975:** *D&D Supplement II: Blackmoor* is published, after many delays. It will not be available to most gamers until January.

**(Unknown Date) 1975:** *Kyrik Fights the Demon World*, by Gardner Fox, is published.

**(Unknown Date) 1975:** *Fabulous Beasts and Demons*, by Heinz Mode, is published.



## THE YEAR 1976

*(Please refer to HAWK & MOOR Book IV for further details on the chronology of Dungeons & Dragons and its inspirations.)*



## 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 Gygax, 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, Grogardnia, 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.

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 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 [shadowed\\_sky@hotmail.com](mailto:shadowed_sky@hotmail.com). You can also reach me through the Acaeum.com website (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. Someday, I may even convince my family that my hobby is almost as important as my day job. I thank you in advance!

# THE HAWK & MOOR SERIES

**BOOK I: THE DRAGON RISES (1938-1972)**

**BOOK II: THE DUNGEONS DEEP (1972-1974)**

**BOOK III: LANDS AND WORLDS AFAR (1973-1975)**

*(Books I, II and III are also collected in TRILOGY ONE as a single volume.)*

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**BOOK IV: OF DEMONS AND FALLEN IDOLS (1976)**

**BOOK V: AGE OF GLORY (1977)**

**BOOK VI: DARK ELF UNDERWORLD (1978)**

*(in preparation)*

*(Books IV, V and VI shall be collected in TRILOGY TWO in the future.)*

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**SPECIAL EDITION: THE STEAM TUNNEL INCIDENT**

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**BOOK VII: THE MASTER'S GAME (1979)**

**BOOK VIII: SLAVE PITS AND DEMONWEBS (1980)**

**BOOK IX: GATEWAY TO ADVENTURE (1981)**

**BOOKS X-XIII: 1982-1985**

*(all in preparation)*

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(The series — including Special Editions and interrelated side projects — is likely to include between 15 and 18 volumes upon completion, and all volumes shall be continually updated into the foreseeable future as new discoveries come to light.)

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