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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

2nd Edition

Dungeon Master's Guide

Rules Supplement

Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide

TSR, Inc.

Dungeon Master's Guide

Rules Supplement

Campaign Sourcebook

Catacomb

Guide

TSR, Inc.

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The dungeon master's task is not an easy one. On his shoulders rests the' responsibility for the whole game. It is the DM's job to make sure that everyone, himself included, has a good time when they play the AD&D® game. If you are an experienced DM then you are sure to know that there are times when this task is so daunting that you wonder why you didn't stick with a safe hobby like stamp collecting.

The AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide* give the referee everything he needs to set up and run a role-playing game—they are the tools. In this book, we will share with you a wide array of tips and techniques **for** weaving the tales of adventure, which fill your active imagination, into games which will grab the attention of your players.

If you are new to the fine art of dungeon mastering, you will find that the information in this book can make you seem like a pro who's been doing it for years. If you are a pro who's been doing this for years, you'll find hints to help you get the most out of your existing campaign.

The first section of the *Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide* provides information on setting up a gaming group. We'll touch on a number of points ranging from good gaming manners (I brought the soda last week! It's somebody else's turn!) to dealing with disruptive players. After all, part of being a good dungeon master is managing relations with your players!

In the second section we'll offer advice on how to pace the events of your games, set up campaign worlds, make better game maps, and reduce the amount of time you must spend to make ready for a game. In addition, we've included a section on making NPCs more realistic and important in your campaign.

Thirdly, we've included chapters about what it is that sets a dungeon based campaign apart from a wilderness campaign. Here, you'll find tips on making the most out of those gloomy passages that run beneath the surface of even the most pacific nation.

To close out the book, we present a number of maps for use by referee's when time is tight. Unlike the tradition "hole in the ground" dungeon, however, each of these is somewhat—unusual.

Designing a game world and plotting out the dynamic stories and spine-tingling excitement that takes place in it requires a great deal of imagination and more than a few creative skills. Yet the job of the DM doesn't end there. A good DM not only has to make a good adventure, he has to run a good adventure session and make decisions about his world that even the best rules can never adequately cover. The latter tasks go beyond mere creativity and enter into the realm of social etiquette and administration.

Gaming Etiquette

While one does not necessarily need to know which side of the plate a salad fork goes on to successfully entertain gamers, good gaming sessions, like other types of social gatherings, depend on having both the players and the DM observe a number of basic, but greatly appreciated courtesies. The DM should follow these "rules of etiquette" and encourage his players to heed them too.

Be Prepared

Probably the greatest mistake that a DM can make prior to a game session is to fail to prepare. Proper preparation can be summed up in two words, study and organization. Nothing spoils a game more quickly than a DM who hasn't studied his material beforehand and doesn't know the gist of his adventure, if not all the details.

Take the time to organize material in a logical manner. If players ask questions or go off in an unexpected direction, the DM should know where to find that information without spending an hour looking for it.

Hosting a Game

It is not the DM's responsibility to provide a place to play. Nor should he be held responsible for bringing the food and drinks or even scheduling the time for the game and calling the players. That responsibility should be shared among the players, the DM included. Often, it should be enough that the DM provides the adventure.

However, the DM is responsible for setting up before a game, even though the game may take place in someone else's home or in a public place such as a lounge in a college dormitory. If possible, he should be the first to arrive and should have his game materials in order before the players arrive. If the game will take place in a public area, the DM

(or another player) should take it upon himself to secure a play area in advance, one that will accommodate the players and, just as importantly, not disturb others who may wish to use the facility.

The game session host should ensure that a clean play area and enough seating is available for all anticipated players. If at all possible, arrange for the DM to be seated at a separate table in the gaming area. It's very important that the DM keep his game notes and maps out of the players' sight.

Courtesy to the Host

At the end of each game session, clean up the play area, regardless of whether the game is played in a student lounge or at a player's home. Toss out food and drink containers (don't make the host responsible for returning empty beverage containers). Sweep up any mess. Offer to help put away excess chairs, books, tables, miniatures, etc. Failure to do so may result in your having to find another place to play next time.

Courtesy to Others

Every time a roleplaying game occurs in a public or semi-public place (such as in a school cafeteria, a dormitory lounge, or a student union), the players and DM involved become ambassadors for roleplaying games at large. People will judge the players, the AD&D® game, and all roleplaying games in general based on what they see. If an adventure is exciting or disappointing, players often get loud, possibly even downright rowdy. To say that loud noise or uncouth language can disturb others is an understatement.

A wise DM will encourage his players to keep verbal expression of excitement or dismay ("What do you mean he's dead! He's 16th level! He can't be dead!") to conversational decibel levels.

Prerolling Characters

Whenever possible, create **new** player characters ahead of time. Prerolling new player characters before the day or scheduled time of a game session is a small but greatly appreciated courtesy. Character creation, especially when any type of background development is involved, takes time. If the DM waits until the game session to roll up new player characters, valuable game time is wasted. Instead of playing the game, the other players must find ways to entertain themselves until the DM is ready to play. In this regard, the DM runs the risk of losing his players to whatever has distracted them.

Opening Ceremonies

Allow the players to get comfortable. This is a social time, friendly conversation relaxes players and gets them ready to play Don't rush the start of the game. Give the players a chance to discuss the previous game session, go over mistakes, plan strategies, and decide on spells. If possible, have this activity take place at someplace other than the gaming table. Announce when the game is to start and request that non-essential conversation end.

Refreshments

Refreshments are something that everyone should provide for themselves, or better yet, bring to share. As stated before, this is not the DM's responsibility. Commonly, refreshments are acknowledged "junk foods:" soda pop, peanuts, pretzels, cookies, and chips of all kinds, including the four basic gamer food groups: caffeine, sugar, salt, and carbohydrates. In deference to good eating habits and in an attempt to avoid pear-shaped bodies, try to balance the type of snacks provided. For long game sessions, suggest ahead of time that the players come prepared to participate in some form of deliverable food (like pizza).

Allow breaks for eating and, if possible, keep food and drink away from the gaming table. Don't let food disrupt the game or become a distraction.

Distractions

Anything that doesn't add to the playing of the game will detract from it. Where possible, eliminate all outside distractions. It is difficult to concentrate on roleplaying while a ball game or loud music is going on in the background. If a player can't concentrate on the game because he is more interested in a distraction, suggest that he leave and let other players enjoy the game.

For some gamers, young children (particularly their own) can be a distraction. If young children must be present during the game session, the players may wish to contribute towards the hiring of a baby sitter. The resulting peace may be well worth the price!

Be Kind to the DM

Accept that the DM is the final authority in the game. Don't cheat, even if it means a character

buys the farm (dies). Don't play favoritism games. Accept a character's death' calmly, don't belabor it. The DM is human (really, it's true!) and will make mistakes. If a mistake is fatal, ask the DM to change his decision in good grace, without recriminations. Be sure to compliment the DM on a good game!

Be Kind to the Players

Be Fair. Assume they are not cheating if they haven't been caught at it. Let the players make their own decisions. Don't manipulate their characters as if they were part of a novel or railroad them into choosing predetermined paths. Don't punish them for being clever. If they avoid or foil the best trap in the dungeon, then reward them for it. Don't try to kill off the characters of unpleasant players or punish them if they miss a play session or have to leave early. Compliment players on clever actions. Ask their opinions on obscure rule interpretations. Treat players with respect, regardless of whether they know the rules or not.

The Administrative DM

Part of the job of being a DM has nothing to do with actually running adventures. What follows is a look at situations a DM may encounter between game sessions, or that may complicate the way he runs his world.

One World, Many DMs

What happens when several people in a group want to DM and everybody wants to keep the same player characters in each world? One solution is to share the world. Most worlds are going to be big places. It should be a simple matter for each DM to take a part of the world, say a major country or wilderness area and continue to flesh it out and run adventures there. The player characters then physically travel from place to place, adventuring in the area controlled by whoever is DMing that session.

It can work and it can be fun. Still, drawbacks exist. Any secret information about a character, such as special abilities or independent actions that are usually shared only between a player and the DM soon become common knowledge as each player in turn takes over the duties of DMing. Second, the characters will end up doing a lot more traveling than might be realistic or reasonable.

A better solution might be to share the world, but have different player characters in each DM's campaign. This allows for the eventuality of teaming up player characters from different campaigns for particularly difficult missions, but keeps characters private.

One Player, Many Characters

Nowhere is it carved in granite that each player shall play but one character. If it suits the needs of the game, allow as many characters per player as the DM sees fit. Many players and DMs find it convenient to have multiple characters. If one hero is off on an unfinished quest, his backup character can go on another adventure in the same world.

If a player is competent enough to play each character as an individual (rather than elements of a group mind), he may even play more than one character within a single adventuring party. This is tricky, but extremely useful when the number of players is far less than the number of characters needed for good adventuring.

In such situations, both the players and the DM must keep in mind that even characters controlled by the same player will not freely share or give up personal belongings. The player is encouraged to roleplay the persona of each individual character. If a player insists on playing his characters "out-of-character," remove one (or more) secondary characters from his control and make them into DM-controlled NPCs for the remainder of the adventure.

Visitors from Other Worlds

It happens to every DM and every campaign at least once. A new player joins the group and wants to bring Sigimund, his 14th level chaotic good barbarian fighter/thief with him. How should the DM decide the matter? There are no hard rules and it can be a tough call. Several "rules of thumb" can be applied to help the DM make his decision.

First, ask to see the incoming character's record sheet and any applicable notes. Everything the character possesses should be detailed here.

If the incoming character's experience level is much higher than the rest of the characters, do not allow the transfer. Stripping a player's favorite character of hard-earned (or otherwise) experience can only cause grief. Tell him the character must "wait in the wings" until the other PCs reach his power level, and have the new player create a new character.

Either disallows characters with

nonstandard character classes (those not covered by official AD&D® game rules) or requires that the incoming character adopt a standard character class.

Disallow nonstandard magical items, the logic being that the physical laws of the two prime material planes are not similar enough to allow the new magic items to function. This allows the DM to avoid any possibility of "padding" a magic item with extra powers that the player's original DM would be surprised to find or to have the player purposefully overlook any attendant curses.

Disallow any magical (or technological) item which would unbalance game play. If the DM has not allowed players in his own world to acquire such items, then they should disappear between transference (to be held safely in limbo).

Finally, tell the player what will and will not be allowed in the DM's world. Be honest and firm. If the player's favorite character must be stripped down to fit his new home, the player may elect to create a new character instead.

New Players

Over the course of time the DM should expect his game campaign to lose old players through attrition (they move, they graduate, they get married, they get new jobs, they get bored). Similarly, new players will be joining the campaign, in the form of experienced players, inexperienced novices, and brand new neophytes (they are easily recognizable as the players who think dice only have six sides). At some time or another, the DM will find the need to integrate each one of these three types of players into the existing campaign framework.

Experienced players usually have experienced characters and will greatly appreciate the chance to continue playing a character that they have been working hard to develop. Just remember to check them at the door for nonstandard magic items and create a logical (or just plain mysterious) explanation for their cross-planar journey.

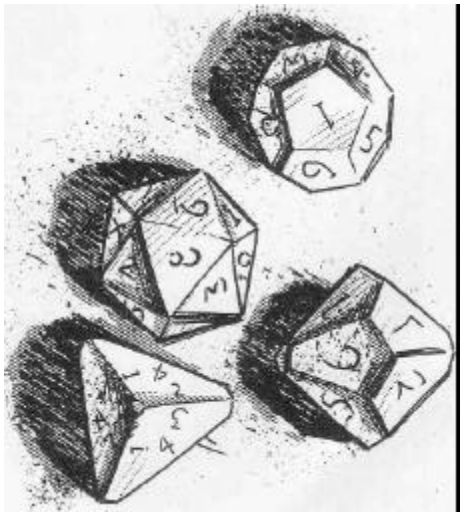
Novice players (those who have played before, but not much) and neophytes present a special problem for DMs. Every player remembers his first encounters with fantasy role-playing. when nobody really knew what was going on, or which monster was which—but gosh, wasn't it great? Throwing greenhorns in with veteran players ruins that journey-of-wonder feeling. The vets will be spouting gamespeak jargon and rolling dice without explaining themselves and the new guys will feel lost and worthless.

The good DM owes it to these new players to let them get their feet wet first. Have them explore a few low-power areas as 1st level adventurers (possibly with a few henchmen controlled by veteran PCs along for the ride). Let the new players make the decisions with no help from the experienced players and after a few supportive game sessions like that, they will feel comfortable as companions to their more experienced comrades.

Hosting One Shots

What does a DM do when cousin Bob shows up and wants to play in his campaign world, but the DM's regular group is in the middle of a quest to save the world from the icy clutches of Kreplock, magefiend of the frozen north? The answer is what is known as a *one-shot adventure*. Invite cousin Bob to bring his favorite character from his group in Muncie, and ask those among the DM's "regulars" who can make it on an off gaming night to show up with either their favorite dead characters (allowing them to resurrect dear-departed adventurers for one special playing session) or with characters not currently involved in the ongoing campaign quest.

The DM should design a short adventure that can be played to completion in one game session. A "game tournament" style approach, with a definite goal, is probably the best way to go. The player characters mysteriously appear together and must find out what they have to do. Contrary to the recommendation that the players' actions have a real and measurable effect on the world, this adventure should take place on the DM's world, but not be a part of any major story or plot line.



Dungeon Mastering is an art which takes a few minutes to learn and years to perfect. It goes beyond world or adventure creation, beyond social grace, even beyond advanced crowd control. It combines vast amounts of creativity with the ability to make quick, accurate judgment calls. It requires a mind that can visualize situations as they happen and determine the probable (and often highly improbable) results of the actions taken by the players and their characters.

The ultimate goal is to provide the players with gripping adventure within the fantastic realms of a shared imagination. Although all players (including the DM) contribute to the quality of the game, ultimate success depends on the DM himself. He is responsible for both its challenging content and riveting delivery.

Prior to the game session, the DM will have prepared the content: his world and the situations and environs the characters will encounter. The need for dynamic delivery challenges the DM to be at his best as he presents the world to the players through the eyes of their characters.

General Delivery

Developing the art of a masterful delivery requires both patience and experience. As a DM's playing skills mature, he learns what fails and what works as he slowly acquires new tricks from other DMs and from his own players. One of the most difficult challenges facing the DM will be that of maintaining neutrality, walking that fine line between being either the enemy or a benevolent guide. Each DM's ultimate style, approach, and technique will be highly personal. More often than not a DM's style will be somewhere to the left or right of perfect neutrality. It's a hard path to follow, yet there exist general rules that most successful DMs follow, whether they realize it or not.

Don't Manipulate!

One of the reasons the players have gathered to play an AD&D[5] game is to experience the thrill of being a hero in another time and place. They want to be the masters' of their own fates, not the pawns of higher powers (which definitely includes the DM). In simple terms, let the players decide how their characters will act and where they will go. A good DM will not force his players to make decisions that match his goals and desires. Even if the sequencing of scenarios *is* primarily preplanned, arrange events so that the players believe that they are choosing their character's actions and directions.

DM manipulation most commonly occurs when the players adamantly avoid involvement in a scenario that the DM has spent much time preparing or when the players are bound and determined to do something stupid—something that will either kill their characters outright or cause a major, world-changing catastrophe (the particularly annoying kind where a continent sinks or the entire political structure of a major land must be recreated).

In such situations it is better to improvise (also called "winging it") than manipulate. Heavy-handedness is usually resented and even the "mysterious voice from on high" type warning to keep players out of mischief gets old after a while. When a DM wants the players to act in a desired way, he should do what he can to either make his preferred choices more attractive, or manipulate events (not player characters) to give the **players** another opportunity to choose "correctly."

Never Favor Characters

Often, in extended campaigns, favorite personalities will emerge among the characters. It's a great temptation for the DM to favor such characters. Such a character may never die (or at least is always resurrected) and always gets the choice treasure. The job of the DM is to fairly administer the results of characters' actions. Playing favorites is not appropriate and can only lead to unhappiness. If a character dies in battle or chooses the cursed sword instead of the magical armor, then the DM should not alter the situation. He should only give the results of actions, not change the scenario to favor one character.

Character favoritism also applies to the creation of adventures. Try not to build a quest around a single character. If that character dies, then the quest is over for the entire party and all the time invested is wasted.

Never Punish Characters

This is the other side of favoritism. A DM may dislike a player or a character in his campaign. It happens. Avoid the temptation to single out disliked characters for special unpleasantness unless the character (not the player!) has done something to warrant punishment and the outcome would

advance the story line in a campaign.

Never Choose Sides

This cannot be stressed enough. "Killer" DMs who take the side of the monsters against the PCs are as bad as those who purposefully make the monsters ineffective by taking the side of the players against the monsters. A good DM will play monsters and NPCs to their fullest without actively trying to annihilate the party, or giving them smarts or insight that they couldn't reasonably possess.

On the other hand, a 1st level character should never be allowed to single-handedly destroy an entire family of red dragons.

Always Maintain Game Balance

Present the characters with challenges that are neither too easy nor overly difficult. This is best illustrated in combat situations. If a party enters a room of ores, adjust the number of ores present to match the fighting ability of the party. If it is a strong party, increase the number and upgrade their weapons. For a weak party, reduce the number and arm them with inferior weapons. Challenges which are too easy to overcome can be boring while those which are too difficult will cause the players to become discouraged. Remember, even low level monsters can be dangerous foes if played cleverly.

Styles of Play

Once the DM has established his neutrality (or is at least aware of his shortcomings), he should work on his awareness of his own playing style and possibly determine what style of delivery he will use. Style encompasses a variety of features: the pace of game play (fast or slow), the way a DM interacts with his players, the ratio of combat to puzzle-solving or role-play, how problems are solved, the humor level in the game, the ratio of dangers to rewards, and so on. *

Play styles are as varied as the people who play the game, though most will fall into one of the styles listed below. Much as an author must choose the way he will present his story (be it a mystery, historical fiction, horror, or epic tale), a DM must choose a method he is comfortable with when presenting information to the group. While no style is inherently bad or good, right or wrong, it's important to match play style with the overall personality and desires of the group, otherwise one may not be able to say "... and a good time was had by all."

Hack-and-slash.

An important element of style selection is maintaining a balance between puzzle solving, role-playing, and combat. The hack-and-slash game ignores balance in favor of continuous violent heroics (fighting). At first most players love the thrill of battle. But all fighting eventually degenerates into boredom. An all hack-and-slash game has the effect of putting the players in a room with a revolving door which admits an endless line of monsters. This provides excitement—for a while—but gives little chance for non-muscle-bound characters to operate at their full potential. After the characters have killed the kobolds, trashed the trolls, bashed the bugbears, decimated the doppelgangers, wailed on the were-rats, wasted the wraiths, trounced the troglodytes, obliterated the ogres, and creamed the carrion

crawlers, even the most combat-crazed players may desire a change of pace.

Thinker

Sherlock Holmes, the Great Detective himself, would be comfortable with this style of play. It encourages the players to think their way out of situations (often to the exclusion of other play options). It is more a test of the players' puzzle and problem solving skills than of their character's abilities. Taken to the extreme, this style of play presents a constant stream of enigmatic riddles, convoluted logic puzzles, murky mysteries, and a countless collection of tricky, troublesome traps.

Remember, when designing problems and riddles, make them possible to solve. Fun quickly evaporates in an impossible situation. In every case, the clues needed to solve the problem must be accessible to the characters.

Righteous Roleplayer

The focus here is on successful role-play. Both the players and the DM submerge themselves into the personas of their characters. This is a unique style that presents all information to the characters as they see it or as nonplayer characters see it. To rabid role-players, the process of reserving a room for the night can be as involved as an encounter with the characters' arch foe. Character development is stressed over level advancement. Players will seek to overcome problems through the personas of their characters, not smashing, zapping, or using brains that they do not have. This should be a preferred playing style, and is usually incorporated with other styles since it is essential that a fair amount of role-play take place in order to create a believable game.

Historical Simulation

These are usually serious games. Many are based on a particular historical period and stressing "real world" rules variations with very little supernatural involvement. However, more often than not, simulation play focuses on simulating adventuring activity with a goal to make them seem "real." Most variants focus on combat, producing multistep systems which can be time-consuming, tedious and often morbidly gruesome. Speed and elegance of play are often the first victims.

Successful simulation play focuses on making the players believe that their characters exist within the confines of the simulated period.

The Silly Game

This style of play is purposefully laughable and unbelievable. Often the entire game is a single joke or an extended series of puns. NPCs act like denizens of situation comedies, monsters look and behave like cartoon characters, and the player characters find themselves faced with outrageously ludicrous scenarios. Most adventures are satirical parodies of contemporary culture, pompous personalities, and popular game systems. The player characters are the "straight men" for endless gags and punch lines. Though such games are undeniably popular (just take a look at the offerings of many game conventions as examples), when presented to players as a steady diet, the humor quickly loses its appeal.

Monty Haul

The relationship between risk and reward can influence the style of play more powerfully than almost any other factor. In the "Monty Haul" giveaway campaign, the players gain treasures and experience points in a disproportionate ratio to the dangers overcome.

With little personal risk, the characters greedily accumulate magic items, gems, and gold. They quickly attain uncontrollably high experience levels, rapidly advancing beyond the DM's ability to handle them. To accommodate such characters, the DM may find himself hopelessly sacrificing armies of ores and dragons by the dozens, only to realize that this just gives these ridiculous characters even more ill-earned experience points! Treasure, even wondrous magical treasure, becomes meaningless and valueless. How can finding a magic wand have any meaning when the character already has more than he can carry?

Warning!: Once this style of play takes hold in a campaign, it is **next** to impossible to dislodge it without stripping the player characters of their experience levels and magical items.

Novel Style Play

The DM has a great idea for an adventure . . . and unfortunately . . . he often already knows the outcome. He uses the player characters to write the scenes for his **great** American fantasy novel. To **its** credit, this style of play often has great plot lines and a gripping theme for its adventures. The characters' actions feel as if they are part of a book. The danger with this style is that the DM may be tempted to manipulate the players in favor of a better story (or the DM's predetermined outcome). This style is usually most successful when the players are on the fringes of the story instead of the main focus. The DM can make the story line move as he desires, while the players are able to make their own choices, free of the DM's manipulation.

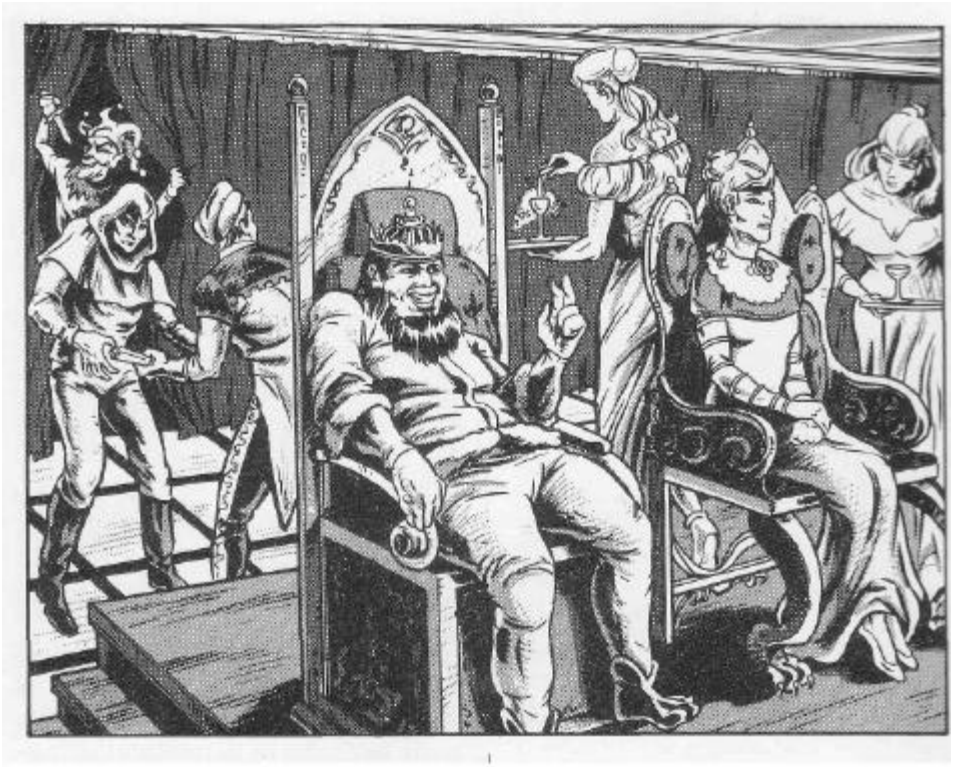
Wargamer

This style is named for the mass of military board game players and miniatures enthusiasts who have tried their hand at the AD&D® game. Because of their experience with games that require a great deal of strategy and tactics within a very tight framework of rules, they tend to need rules for everything. Nothing is free-form. If the rules don't say it, it can't be done. However, if the rules are vague, they are fair game for the type of player (or DM) known as the Rules Lawyer. The Rules Lawyer is an expert at bending the letter of the rules to his favor (though the spirit of the rules may be violated in so doing).

Like the hack-and-slash style, wargaming stresses combat. Yet this is not battle for the sake of mere mayhem, but conflict that offers strategic challenge and opportunities for military problem-solving. While this style of play has a limited appeal, wargamer style players have contributed a heightened sense of competitiveness to the game.

Political Play

This style of play involves the characters in a web of intrigue as the players side with one or more rival factions in a political struggle. These factions can be rival guilds, political candidates, barons, towns, even countries. The



goals of these factions (whether good, evil, or neutral) are to increase their own spheres of power to the exclusion of all others. Political factions within a town, dungeon or country can be a reservoir of potential problems for a group to solve.

Everything the player characters do affects the politics of the area, maybe only locally or perhaps, worldwide. For example, the characters kill a sheep-eating dragon (or just convince it to change its diet), it might unbalance the tenuous relations of the sheepherders and the cattlemen. The townspeople may in return, elect one of the characters mayor, order the return of all the treasures found in the dragon's lair to the proper owners, or the dragon might have been the pet of a prominent wizard.. .

Commonly, political adventures focus on covert power struggles, spy missions, and one-upmanship. This group wants that done, which in turn angers another group which retaliates. Perhaps the local citizenry want to overthrow the ruling power, or possibly an evil wizard has the king under his influence and his rival craves that privilege.

Wars are an aspect of political gaming, along with the diplomatic missions to avoid them. Politics give the DM a lot of latitude in the direction of an adventure.

To use this style successfully, great care must be taken to make the players influential in the political situations and not just pawns. There are often a mirage of subplots, and treachery is the ever present danger. Players and DMs are attracted to the mystery and intrigue created when characters enter the murky world of the quest for power. Players seldom know who they can trust or which side is the right side. When faced with an army, the choices are easy. When faced with diplomats and politicians grappling for more power, the choices are more difficult.

Eclectic

Eclectic games borrow elements from a number of diverse sources. In a sense, this is the best style of play since at various times it partakes of all the styles mentioned. Since any particular style can become tedious, the wise DM will constantly adapt and change his style to fit the needs of his adventuring group.

Regardless of which style a DM initially chooses, he may eventually find that his tastes and the tastes of his players will change. While change is normally good, the DM should occasionally check his style of play for the negative elements that have been mentioned. Chances are that any real problems in play style will become apparent to either the DM or the players before too much damage is done.

How to Prepare

Scenario **One:**

It couldn't be helped. Until an hour before the guys are supposed to show, you were involved in a kill-or-be-killed table tennis game with your room mate. Now you're gonna have to throw something together fast. But hey, you know the stuff, didn't you just look at it, like, just last week? Maybe you can just use that module you bought at the hobby store last week. Great stuff! No need to reread that, its all ready to go. Anyway, you've gotta run out and grab a bunch of munchies and soda pop before everyone shows up. I mean, priorities first, right?

Scenario Two:

You can't remember when you've operated on this little sleep (but hey, you're so tired that remembering anything right now is beyond your capability). But it's worth it—your campaign is ready for the big game today. You've spent over 1OO hours devising the penultimate encounter between good and evil (the ultimate battle takes place next week). There '11 be mayhem and carnage galore tonight! You've prepared for every possible alternative . . . except one. Your players decide that they really aren't ready for the penultimate encounter with evil and just want to bash a few more orcs or harass a *dragon or two. You hadn't prepared for that option and your befogged brain has difficulty even deciphering a monster manual let alone coming up with an adventure on the fly. Sometime during the game you fall asleep face down in the chip dip, burbling out your world's darkest secrets between onion-scented snores. Out of respect for you, the players keep the volume on the TV turned down.*

Successful gaming is more than an impromptu performance in a fabricated world for a group of individuals who just happen to be available and interested in the AD&D® game. Good gaming experiences require creative preparation (and it is possible to over prepare!). While most of this burden falls on the DM's shoulders, advance preparation by the players will help the adventure run smoother. In short, the more details that can be resolved ahead of time, the less often the game will have to be interrupted.

For those DMs whose preparation time is limited, a highly organized and efficient use of that time is essential. Divide the game preparation into six segments:

Scenario Planning

Take the time to lay out the adventure you want to run. Be careful to provide for as many logical deviations from the main plot as you can. But don't worry, the players will think of something you didn't.

Background Information

Determine what information the characters will have available to them at the start of the game. If more data will become available later on, document it and have it on hand when they need it. Player hand-outs are a very effective way of dispensing information when it becomes available.

NPC Statistics

Generate the non-player characters which you will need for a given scenario. Be sure to give them all the detail they need, but don't go overboard. Make notes of an PCS's personality traits and motivations so that you can quickly determine his or her reaction to anything the characters might do or say.

World Update

Determine the effects of your last gaming session on the world in general. Are there maps that need updating? Were important NPCs killed? Anything which might be important to the campaign world in general should be noted here. Also, it may be that the events of the next game will be certain to have an effect on the world which can be noted ahead of time. This will save you time when you set up for next week's game.

Character Update

If any of the player character's have been changed in some way by the actions which they took at the last game, be sure to update your records on the matter. For example, did Thrang the Indefatigable contract lycanthropy from the werewolf he battled? Did anyone go up a level? All of this information must be carefully maintained so that the referee can always have accurate data at arm's reach.

Alternate Scenarios

Finally, give thought to what will happen when the players decide to go or do something for which the DM has not yet prepared. This is, perhaps, the toughest area of the six to develop as it requires you to determine what unexpected things your characters might do. If expecting the unexpected sounds like something of a paradox to you, then you've got an understanding of the problem.

Be Prepared!

Clearly, the more preparation time spent on planning the scenario, the more detailed it will become (up to a point). Each DM will have his own style of preparation. Some will prepare adventures far in advance while others frantically get ready just before game time. Some DMs write out their adventures in minute detail, much like commercial

adventure modules, while others make simple listings of room contents and still others scrawl out crude maps and write cryptic notes to themselves to jog their memories about what they intended. Each method is correct so long as the DM has enough material to smoothly and enjoyably run his adventure session.

Allow Time to Design

The DM must give himself adequate time to prepare for an adventure. Too little time and he cheats his players out of potential enjoyment. Too much time and not only has he created more material that he will use, but he has also cheated himself out of personal time that may have been better spent.

There is no way to say exactly "this is the correct amount of time to spend preparing for a game" since so much depends on the DM's design and play style. A good rule of thumb is for preparation time to equal playing time. If a game is going to last three hours, the DM should spend about three hours preparing. However, a DM who likes everything spelled out, with encounter descriptions he can read verbatim to his players will need more time, while the DM who can make things up on the fly may need considerably less.

Even if the DM is using adventure material prepared by someone else (as is the case with purchased or borrowed scenarios), he must allow preparation time. The material must be read and possibly even customized in advance to fit the DM's campaign. Slight plot changes and name changes, map modifications and so forth will disguise most adventures (players buy scenario packs too) and fit them seamlessly in the DM's campaign.

Get Organized

All too often a gaming session is ruined, or at least severely damaged, by a DM who can't find his material. He knows that he wrote it. He's fairly certain he put it into a notebook. He just can't put his finger on it.

Of course, it may not be that the information has been lost. If the party is engaged in a running battle with the monster they met earlier in the adventure and the DM recorded its statistics only in the section of the adventure which details the monster's lair, a similar problem arises. In this case, the DM must constantly flip between the changing encounter area descriptions and the page with the monster's stats.

Regardless of how the DM puts his material together, he needs to put it in a ready-to-use form. DMs can save endless flipping through notes by following these organizational tips:

- Make "at-a-glance" reference sheets for the non-player characters and monsters to be encountered. Record their vital statistics in a manner that is easy to use. Include armor class, hit dice, hit points for each creature, the number of attacks and the damage caused, movement rate, alignment, THACO, the source material from which the monster was taken (for more complete details), and whether it has any special attacks or defenses. For NPCs, also give a brief listing of personality, appearance, important possessions, and *speech* patterns.
- Do the same thing for the player characters. It's very hard to secretly make a check against a character's Intelligence attribute if you have to ask for it.
- Make maps so they can be used separately from their content descriptions. Use very simple map keys and symbols whenever you can.
- Keep descriptions of unique treasure items or new monsters separate from adventure write-ups, possibly in a separate notebook.
- Use dividers with index tabs to separate sections of game information. It's so much easier to find a section clearly marked "Dungeon of Megadeath, level 8" than to hunt for a plain dog-eared Page halfway into the notebook.
- Make a quick list of important adventure features (like monster lairs, key treasures, magical items, NPCs, towns, etc.) and note their locations within your notes, much like an index or a table of contents.
- Keep copies of your players' characters in your records. Be sure to include information the DM knows about the character, but that a player may not, such as cursed weaponry and armor or secrets from the character's past.

"Know thy Stuff!"

In spite of the DM's skills at adventure creation or how efficiently he organizes his notes, he must KNOW the adventure scenario before the game session, otherwise his players will quickly tire of "Wait a minute while I see what's supposed to be here." Read and review all relevant campaign materi-

als ahead of time. Know where the players are and what they were doing last game, be familiar with their foes and up-to-date on the status of the world.

As stated previously, advance review is especially important with purchased or borrowed scenarios. When running a game that is not of his own creation, the DM must spend enough time to become thoroughly familiar with its details. When a DM creates his own world and adventures, he usually has more background information in mind than he actually writes down. With a purchased or borrowed adventure, this is not the case. The information is present, but may be in such abundance that important details can be overlooked. Make notes in the margins (or on those little adhesive backed note papers) to highlight details or scenario alterations.

Establish a Background

Creating background information can easily become as involved as planning the scenario itself (if not more so). Background information encompasses the cast of significant NPCs (with individual descriptions, personal histories, and motivations for major NPCs—see Making NPCs Live), player handouts, stories and legends that may be heard from the local folk, surrounding natural and unnatural environment, political and social situations, and any other special features that are not intrinsic to the DM's chosen adventure scenario. Most of this information should center around the town or setting in which the adventure begins (beyond that which the DM set forth in his creation of his world).

Detailing the personalities that the characters are likely to interact with, will prevent the necessity of impromptu creations during the game. The motivations and histories of NPCs can become the basis for future adventures.

Your Changing World

For every action there is a reaction. This law of physics also has truth in a fantasy game world as well. The characters' actions may cause a reaction in their world, even changing the nature of reality. For example: the player characters destroy a dragon that has been devouring sheep and cattle in an area. This alters both the area's economy and its political climate. The afflicted village may have been isolated from the outside world due to the danger of the dragon. Thus they enjoyed a measure of autonomous freedom. Removing the fear and danger of the dragon alters this.

The Passage of Time

Organized DMs usually keep a calendar of events for their world. They plot the times of recurring major events such as seasonal changes, full moons, eclipses, holy days, festivals, gatherings, and so forth. From here the DM can go on to plot the future of the campaign, primarily those things outside the control of the characters, like wars, invasions, troop movements, earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, and so on. Characters always run the danger of blundering into one or more of these events. Furthermore, some of the occurrences in a DM's adventure plots may be time dependent. These too should be recorded as they occur, including any movements by major NPCs.

Thus, it is critical that the DM update the world situation from time to time to determine if the characters might be in a position to be affected by or encounter a time dependent event. Note that troop movements are often wider in scope than the location of the actual army. Recruiting may be taking place in the PCs town, foraging for supplies may bring troops into their area, or scouts may be spying in the area and assume that all armed personnel are the enemy and report the characters' position to their commander. Thus characters may innocently become involved in a war they want no part in, but where treasonable desertion may be punishable by death.

The world calendar must also be updated to include any changes caused by the characters (such as the previous example of the dragon). It is possible that a small group of adventurers could alter world events significantly. Most generals must depend on their couriers to coordinate attack and movements. Capture of a courier could have dire effects on the ensuing battle and alter the entire world situation. If the characters were to capture or prevent the capture of such a courier, they have significantly altered their world, not necessarily for the better.

A Note On Alternative Scenarios

It's bound to happen. The DM can prepare for every imaginable alternative and outcome to his adventures and more often than not, his players will choose an option he either overlooked or, more likely, didn't imagine.

Even so, it is possible to accom-

modate those adventurers who choose paths other than the one the DM would prefer (and squashing them like insects is not a particularly mature solution). If time permits, go through the scenario. Imagine what would happen if the characters do the wrong thing in a key encounter and survive. What if they drink the wizard's store of potions? What if they decide to pilfer the town instead of heroically defending it against unbeatable odds? What if they kill the NPC that they should have aided? What if they make friends with the bad guys? What if they don't complete their mission, but slink off into the wilderness? What if . . .?

Don't write out full blown solutions to these "what ifs;" just make notes of what might occur and where things could possibly go from there. Give some thought to how events (not characters) might be manipulated to put the plot line or world back on the intended track. In the likely event that whatever the players do is still beyond the DM's imagining, pay close attention to the section on "Winging It," or what to do when the players decide to go where no design work has gone before.

Winging It

In spite of engaging adventure hooks, regardless of the rumors spread by NPCs, in the face of less-than-subtle hints by the DM, game players will often choose to go places or do things for which the DM has done little, if any preparatory work. A common cause for this is DM manipulation. Players like to feel that they are in control of their fates. Continually biting at the DM's scenario bait slowly erodes the players feelings of self determination as it dawns on them that the DM not themselves controls what they do and where they go. Consider it a subtle (or overt) form of rebellion.

Before the DM blurts out "You can't do that," (or reveals his total lack of preparation in that area. which only encourages the players further) he should consider letting the player characters go where they will while he makes things up on the fly. This is a true test of his design and storytelling skills and often leads to the best adventures for both players and DMs alike.

Improvisation is not as difficult as it sounds. Essentially, the DM is preparing material as he plays it out. Keep things simple and don't make major changes in the environment. If the PC party has been exploring a forest, keep them in forest. Rely on encounter tables for what creatures they might discover. Introduce random encounters with NPCs who will become important later in the adventure.

This may even be a chance to use previously prepared material that the characters have avoided before. An unused dungeon level could become part of an abandoned temple. Although it violates what has been said about using pre-prepared scenarios, consider leading the player characters into a mini-scenario taken from a magazine or adventure anthology.

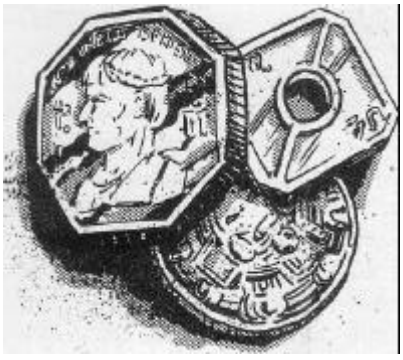
Foreshadow future campaign events by giving the characters a close, but inconclusive brush with the major evil in the world. Try scaring them with something obviously out of their league (although the players can easily surprise the DM in this regard by outwitting, rather than outgunning his menacing horror).

Keep notes on what is found and done as it now becomes a part of the DM's world.

Go with it, wing it and have fun with it. Improvise! Some of the best adventures are the unplanned, and besides, sooner or later, they'll head back to the DM's original plot line (with luck.)

Player Preparation

Make the players responsible for some of the game preparations. If one or more new players will be joining the group, ask one of the "vets" to walk the new folk through basic character creation and a brief explanation of the rules. Let someone other than the DM be in charge of arranging a time and place for each game and contacting all the players. Encourage the players to bring their own snacks. Have the players keep a journal of their adventures and reestablish the mood and setting for each adventure by prefacing each play session with readings from the journal.



A DM's goal as storyteller and game moderator should be to consistently give his players wondrous, dazzling, and above all, thrilling adventures. Toward this end, he must be able to set a mood, create an atmosphere of suspense, break that suspense with humor, and effectively role-play all the "bit" parts. He must get the action moving when the game slows down, then slow it down when things happen too fast, know when to stick in a much needed break, and just as important, know when to call it quits for the night.

Mastering the art of DMing will **take** imagination, perseverance, and time. Like most art forms, there are really no hard and set rules as to how things must be done, only the recommendations of those who have traveled the DM's path before. Read and heed, but ultimately, it is one's own imagination and personality which must take control.

Pacing the Play

The ideal adventure game session plays like a good book reads. There are times when it moves slowly while the players soak up the rich atmosphere of the DM's world of wonder. Suddenly the action builds to a furious climax as swords swing and spells zing in pulse-pounding excitement with little time for complicated planning. Then the rate of play relaxes and once again, the players can take their time to plot and plan and prepare. As a storyteller, the DM must actively control the pace at which events and actions take place in his game. Pace of play is an intangible sort of thing that partakes of the speed, variety, intensity, and continuity of game play in an adventure. Speed refers to how fast the action in a game takes place. Variety suggests a selection of play styles and encounters, including combat, puzzle solving, and role-play. Intensity has to do with the level of suspense the DM has created in the game—from a peaceful or even silly "none at all" level to the "nail biting fear and frenzy" often associated with movies where undefeatable alien monsters eat everyone but the heroine and the kid. Continuity then, is the way that events logically and believably fall together in an acceptable or at least reasonable manner.

Controlling the pace of play may well be one of the most important steps toward becoming a master DM. In the same way that he designs his world and scenarios for maximum enjoyment, he must learn to orchestrate the components of game pacing. He must know when to speed up or slow down the play, throw out the rules for more enjoyment, or call a break for his fatigued players. Just as importantly, he must know when NOT to interrupt play. The DM must learn to be aware of nonverbal feedback from his players and be able to understand what they are telling him. Such feedback might come in the form of yawns, interplayer chatter, or shortened tempers.

While the goal of a game may be to have the players on the edge of their seats, when the tension seems too high, or the sighs of frustration become too great, it might be time for a break.

When examining his own style of play, the DM may wish to consider the following scenarios:

Scenario One

Imagine listening to a speaker who drones on and on in a monotone voice, never varying the pitch of his voice or the rate at which he speaks. Though the content of his speech may be of great importance, one by one, his audience drops off into slumber.

Scenario Two

Picture a fast-action horror movie. Bodies gruesomely splatter left and right faster than the watcher can keep track. The level of terror builds relentlessly with no relief, until finally, the movie ends. Yet somewhere, back in the middle, the audience lapsed into a stunned overload mode where they could no longer be shocked by what they saw and could feel no relief when it ended.

Scenario Three

Visualize an artsy foreign film with constant and visually confusing changes of scenery, point of view, pace of the action and such. Things change so rapidly, that its hard to get a handle on what's going on. The action speeds up and slows down in what seems an almost random manner, leaving the viewer lost and confused.

Although these scenarios initially appear to have nothing to do with game playing, each can be directly related to the way a DM manages his game sessions. In each one, the audience, or in the case of a game, the players, are lost because the pace of the presentation falls apart.

The DM who consistently maintains a single style of play or type of activity in his game is like the boring speaker. He becomes predictable and regardless of his world or adventure design skills, his games extend on in boring sameness. If the DM catches his few remaining players reading the labels on the potato chip bags for excitement, he is probably suffering from monotony malady. The cure in this case is simple: add variety.

The DM who diligently (and with good intentions) works to maintain the level and rate of game play at a fever pitch, demanding that his players not only think on their feet, but that those feet be running at top speed, is just as guilty. His players can't stop to think or plan during a game. They either respond by blasting everything they see before it has a chance to hit them first or between game sessions, they concoct devious schemes to buy themselves a little breathing room. The cure is the same as for monotony malady: try variety.

At the other end of the spectrum is the DM who throws nothing but change-up pitches at his players. Every game it's the same old thing, variety! Just as the players become comfortable with one style of play, the DM interrupts it and radically changes what's going on in the game. The players are not certain whether they are even involved in campaign play. Like the disjointed film, the game suffers from a lack of continuity. The players become jumpy, even unwilling to try new things. This DM needs to slow things down until his players tell him to change the pace.

In general, learning to read a group and altering the pace of play to accommodate both the interests of the players and the needs of the adventure story line comes with experience. These few rules can be helpful until the DM knows his own play style better:

Get the players moving

If the players discussion about their next move has deteriorated to a petty quarrel, or has gotten off the subject onto idle chatter, *make something happen.* Sometimes, it may be enough to cast a couple dice and make a quick (meaningless) note on paper. This is especially useful if, at least once in a while, a wandering monster or other event actually occurs. Another way is to ask for immediate action. Turn to one of your players and ask "What is your character doing right now?"

Create Unusual Puzzles

Counterbalance a hack-and-slash tendency, by setting up situations devoid of monsters that require innovative solutions.

Dead or Alive?

Another option for foiling the combat-crazed is to have some creatures, even evil monsters, be more valuable (or important to gameplay) alive than dead. Consider the problems caused when a specific monster is the only source for important information, and the group just killed it.

Comic Relief

It's only a game, right? Try telling that to the player who is just about to lose his favorite character. Break his tension and get the game back on track by playing up the foibles of one of the NPCs (or the opponents). Go for broke (try unabashed slapstick or out-and-out silliness). Have that halfling hireling drop his lunch sack and scramble around reclaiming his prizes, all the while tripping up combatants, who in turn slip on squishy fruit (hey, it works).

Keep things lively

Try to keep talking to the players even while searching through manuals or notes.

Encourage Rapid Play

Create a rich game environment with colorful descriptions and vivid NPCs. Give the players room to role-play. Don't force them to act without thinking, but on the other hand don't let them dawdle over game decisions. Try the following rapid play techniques:

- Keep the player group small, no more than six players and only six to eight characters.
- For each turn or round of combat, give the players a short time period to mutually discuss options. For combat rounds, the time should be very brief.
- Discourage unnecessary chatter during a game. Establish a what you say is what you do atmosphere. If a player says it, his character says it.
- Have a predetermined order in which players take their turns. During this time, keep discussion to a minimum.
- Make sure all needed dice are on the table. If possible, encourage players to bring their own dice.
- Be willing to make rules up. No DM can know every rule. Rather than look up obscure rules, make an on the spot judgement call. Use common sense and take situational factors into account. Make sure penalties for failure are fairly balanced by the potential reward for success (and vice versa).
- Be willing to fudge a die roll or overlook an obscure rule if it would damage the pace of play.

Avoid Splitting Up

Unless the DM can split himself in two, he should discourage actions where one half the party goes one way and the other half another. While it can provide some interesting dramatic possibilities, such as the rescue that arrives just in the nick of time, or situations where shapechangers can impersonate one or more party members, the most common result is that one group is bored while the other plays. To keep the game moving when the party splits, separate the groups and move back and forth between them. Allow only a few rounds/turns to pass before switching. Enforce rapid play techniques. Encourage the groups to rejoin as quickly as possible.

Plan Breaks

After a particularly intense period of gaming, a short break helps the players recuperate. Usually a 10 or 15 minute break every two hours of play is enough. Plan breaks at natural stopping points, such as an interlude between encounters, or at a cliff-hanger, just when something exciting is about to happen (which usually involves personal peril to the player characters).

Encourage the players to get up, walk around and take care of necessities. This is also a good time for refreshments if the group is so inclined. Otherwise, let the players use the time for open chatter about recent events or to plan their next action. The DM can use this time to catch up on any bookkeeping that might be necessary or to simply catch his breath! Rolling up new characters to replace those who have passed away can also be done at this time.

Know When To Quit

It's generally a good idea to have an agreed-on stopping time. Like a runner, a DM needs to conserve enough energy (both emotional and physical) to make the last half-hour of game play as enjoyable as the first. Games without end are

rarely enjoyable by all parties involved. As the ending time draws near, the DM needs to watch for an obvious stopping point (again, interludes and cliff-hangers are best). As a warning though, the DM who sets up a cliff-hanger ending for his game session will find himself under immediate pressure to resolve the situation. Everyone wants to know what happens next. It is better to quit while the players are still interested and excited, than to continue gaming past reasonable endurance.

Scripting an Adventure

It is possible to prepare (or at least attempt to prepare) the pace of the adventure in advance. If the DM can imagine his adventure as a story, then he should continue the analogy to make each play session into a chapter of that story. Before each game session, set up goals which the players could possibly accomplish during the course of the session. If the DM is running one of his predesigned adventures (see Creating the Adventure) the events of the play session should be a subset of those needed to work out the events of the DM's plot.

Even if the players are just exploring part of their world, decide what events and situations the player characters might logically encounter. Guesstimate the amount of time that those encounters might reasonably take and adjust the events which might happen based on the amount of time allowed for the game session. Arrange the events, if possible, to alternate fast-paced action with slower periods of play. Remember, complicated multi-character, multiple-opponent combats can be lengthy affairs even if the DM decides to streamline the rules to resolve combat more quickly.

Strive to arrange events such that each play session accomplishes some significant part of the story. Use the same guidelines for arranging events during a play session as were used when designing the adventure.

Try to open each game session with action (remember the 'hook' that grabs the players' attention) and then close with action at the end, even leaving the characters hanging with something just about to happen.

Building a Dramatic Environment

Total involvement in the game requires the inclusion of more than just the players' visual senses. Adding sounds or smells to the adventure enhances the total experience and further stimulates the players imaginations.

Develop a proper mood at the beginning of an adventure by decorating the play area, providing player hand-outs, including props and sound effects, or even encouraging the players to arrive and play in costume. These preparations don't need to be elaborate, just whatever is at hand that will add to the flavor.

Fantasy theme posters (including calendars) depicting magical beasts and forests or showing arcane battles can be purchased in most bookstores and help get the players thinking about fantasy adventure. Although they may be a bit on the hokey side, leftover Halloween props (in the form of folding skeletons, bats, cotton-candy spider webs, fiendish jack-o'-lanterns or ghoulish ghosts) can make excellent decorations if the players aren't too "grown up" to appreciate them (older players may appreciate these more than the younger ones).

Sound effects records and tapes can provide creaking doors, clanking chains, moans, groans and screams. Again, Halloween tapes can provide weird soundtracks, but the DM may want to check on the availability of specific sound effects records at a school or public library.

A costume is whatever makes someone feel more a part of the new world. It can be as simple as a hat, or as complex as a suit of armor if someone happens to have one lying around. Parts of costumes can also be used as props to actually aid in the game play process.

Encourage players to bring any of their own items that might make them feel more at ease in the new world (so long as the game session doesn't turn into a regular show and tell event).

Playing Pieces

Miniature figures arranged on a battle board can help both the players and the DM visualize the spatial relationships between their characters and any foes. Miniatures help some players eliminate problems found in developing a mental picture of their surroundings from the DMs descriptions.

Numerous manufacturers provide a broad array of excellently-sculpted metal and plastic figurines. Many adventure game players enjoy collecting and painting miniature figures and if asked, are often more than willing to let other players in their games use them. For players on a restricted budget, colorful stand-up card-

board figures are a less-expensive alternative to the 3-D miniatures.

If miniatures are not available in any form, try making cardboard playing pieces. Write character and monster names on 3/4-inch square pieces of light cardboard or index cards and indicate which side of the playing piece is the character's front (or his 'facing'). For groups of monsters, just make a couple sets of boldly-numbered playing pieces (remember to differentiate between the '6' and the '9' by underlining the number). That way the DM can call out the foes by number during encounter. If possible, use a different color paper for each set of these monster pieces.

Yet another alternative is to use playing pieces from dismembered or defunct board games that may still be lying around the house, including old chess and checker games (although ambushing the top hat, the iron and the race car with a ravening band of white pawns led by a huge red checker may strain some player's suspen-, sion of disbelief).

Using miniature figures assumes a playing surface. The term "battle board" includes a variety of playing surfaces. Hard-core miniature wargaming enthusiasts may have tables filled with sand at home (although these are less-than-portable playing surfaces). Other players often use large sheets of graph paper marked off in inch or half-inch grids. Vinyl gameplay mats are gaining in popularity. These flexible playing surfaces are marked off in either hexes or square grids. The one-inch size are the most popular for fantasy gaming. Washable overhead projector pens are used to draw the encounter areas in a scale appropriate to the miniatures (where an inch usually equals five feet). Some mats are even transparent so that the DM's predrawn maps can be placed under them allowing the map grid to provide the necessary scale. Of course, gamers on a budget can always use the nearest flat surface and provide a map scale with a cheap plastic ruler.

Props

Props are not necessary to the adventure, but their inclusion adds to the flavor of the game. A prop is essentially any physical object or visual aid that can be used during a game to evoke a mood, enhance play, or aid the players in solving problems. The following are suggestions for props, many of which are readily available to players:

- A cardboard box or jewelry chest that can be used to represent a trapped treasure chest. The players can show, instead of tell, the DM how they will go about opening it.
- Chess boards always seem to find their way into game adventures. Having a board and pieces available allows the adventurers to either play out a chess problem or puzzle out a room based on a chess board (without having to draw the board).
- A stuffed animal or plush fantasy monster can provide a lot of laughs as it mugs for a wizard's familiar. Hand puppets are even better. Try having the puppet carry on a conversation entirely in pantomime (no speech—movements only).
- Use glass beads, play money coins, begemmed costume jewelry (from flea markets and garage sales), and other trinkets to represent important pieces of treasure.
- Make homemade flash cards for monsters, NPCs, or magic items. Photocopy an illustration of the being or object and mount the picture on a 3"x5" index card (this is for the DM's personal, noncommercial use). Place important information about the pictured thing on the reverse side of the card. Show the cards to the players when needed.
- Use books with photos of real castles to depict castles in the DM's game world.
- Use models of castles, buildings and even dungeons to depict and lay out encounter areas. This can be fun even if miniatures are not used during play.
- Use wood blocks or locking plastic bricks to build walls, rooms and even entire castles.
- Use playing pieces from board games to represent treasure, monsters or odd artifacts.
- Make player handouts, including maps, scrolls, wanted posters and deeds.
- Provide sample items from a typical adventurer's inventory; like mirrors, flasks, hammers, magic wands, spikes, and so on. While sitting at the table, the players can show how they might use them.

Mood Music

One of the easiest, yet most effective, ways to set the mood is through music. Soundtracks of science fiction and fantasy movies are available at nominal cost and provide an excellent background for the session. These soundtracks have been programmed to express

through music the adventuresome spirit we all feel within us. Some make us feel daringly heroic, while other pieces raise the hair on our necks and chill our souls. The DM should choose soundtracks that will evoke the desired moods.

Classical music is another great source for adventurous mood music, particularly selections from classic symphony composers such as Hoist, Tchaikovsky, or Rimsky-Korsakov. Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries,* for example, is exciting battle music. If the DM lacks a broad selection of classical music, check with the public library. Many libraries lend records and tapes. The following is a tiny sampling of recommended composers and appropriate pieces.

Beethoven	Symphonies 2, 5, 7, and 9
Berlioz	Symphony Fantastique
Bruckner	Symphony #6
Haydn	London Symphonies (12)
Hoist	The Planets
Mendelssohn	Symphony #4
Mussorgsky	Night on Bald Mountain
Rimsky-Korsakov	Scheherazade
Rossini	William Tell Overture
	1812 Overture
Tchaikovsky	Symphony #6 Pathetique
Wagner	Ring Cycle operas
	Lohengrin

The DM should note that most symphonies are composed of four movements or segments. Not all of them will be appropriate background music. Rather than fumble with cuing up the appropriate movement at the right time, make an audio tape of each piece (one piece of music per tape—so the DM may wish to use inexpensive tapes).

Smells

Smells are more difficult to achieve in setting the mood, since "Eau de Dragon," and "Essence of Dungeon" are not popular perfumes. To be honest, most players may wish to avoid smelling a dungeon or a dragon (and just as many may object to simulating a forest clearing by spritzing the room with air freshener).

In some ways, this is truly unfortunate. Studies have shown that smell, of all the senses, evokes the strongest emotional responses. This is especially true of *remembered* smells. People establish strong links between odors and experiences. The aroma of baking bread can conjure up pleasant memories, while someone who has escaped from a burning building may tremble in fear when he catches even a faint whiff of smoke.

With this in mind, the DM should try to evoke vivid game imagery by drawing upon the experiences of his players. Consider situations in our world that relate to the ones in the game world.

Saying that a cramped dungeon cell smells "bad" has no emotional meaning. Since beings have probably been trapped in here without the benefits of indoor plumbing, evoke memories of school locker rooms, rustic road side restrooms or even the stairwell of a public parking garage.

A damp tunnel might smell like an old musty, mildewy basement. For a monster lair, suggest a cat's litter box or an animal barn with just a hint of ripely rotten garbage. The odor of spent fireworks is similar to that of brimstone. A well-preserved mummy might share odors in common with both a spice rack and a paint storage cabinet. Obviously, not all players will relate to these smell descriptions, but those who do may suddenly experience the adventure in new ways.

Player Handouts

Players really enjoy it when the game master gives them something tangible, something that they can hold in their hands to read and reread at their leisure. If the thing looks like something other than a computer printout, then its even better!

Suggestions for handouts that simulate things that are part of the game include maps found as a part of treasure hoards, letters to the characters, official pronouncements from the ruler of the land, pages apparently removed from old books, deeds to property, birth certificates, and other official documents (such as inventory lists or intercepted messages).

An artistically adept DM might use pen and ink to calligraphically letter a scroll on yellowed vellum, while a DM with a computer could print out the same thing in a fancy type font and then "age" the paper.

Along with other props, player handouts can help the DM establish what is going on in a game. A simple but fun way for a DM to set up a game would be to have things in the playing or gathering area be clues to the coming adventure. It may be a reward poster hanging

on the wall advertising a 1,000 gold piece reward for the return of the mayor's daughter, or a wanted poster for their own characters who were seen last week tearing up the tavern. It could be a broadside (newspaper) highlighting the events that have happened in the region since the characters' last visit. This is often a newsletter-style handout given to the players as they arrive.

Handouts might also summarize information that the characters would be aware of if they had grown up in that world, such as the basic tenets of the popular religions, peculiar customs of the area they grew up in, or brief histories of the politics in the area.

Whatever the process used to create and present a handout, the end result is a playing aid that both communicates information to the players and enhances their feelings of participation in the DM's fantasy world by making them personally a part of it.

Suspenseful Disinformation.

Acting can also be used to create suspense. There is nothing more frightening to a player than a DM's secret chuckle. This knowing laugh implies that the DM knows what is going to happen next and that it won't be pleasant. The chuckle's effect is enhanced when the DM combines it with rolling several dice and flipping through manuals or notes. It's amazing how quickly inattentive players are suddenly searching the room or guarding the door to prepare for whatever nasty creation the DM has summoned. Of course, he may not have summoned anything, but the players don't need to know that.

When the players ask what they see during a situation, simply answer, "The hallway seems to be empty at this time."

Always leave a shred of doubt. The players never really know if the hallway is actually empty or if they simply cannot see what is coming. Maybe they should have searched more or even not searched at all. Doubt and uncertainty are the building blocks of suspense. Use them to create an adventure in which anything is possible.

Misperceptions

Try to phrase responses to player questions about what they see, hear, taste, smell, or feel in terms of what their characters could actually perceive. Omit information or details that the DM feels a character would not detect through his senses or have the presence of mind to be aware of. Adapt information to fit the characters' (or players) preconceived notions about their world, including any rationalizations about why things might happen or exist.

Consistently use suspense-creating words or phrases when giving answers to your players questions. These include: it appears, it seems, presumably, apparently, possibly, supposedly, most likely, in all likelihood, or (my personal favorite) as far as you can tell.

These phrases emphasize that the character cannot know if anything is in the room, only that they don't see anything. After all, it would be impossible for a character to know anything with absolute certainty.

Vague phrases will drive the players crazy if used properly. For example, when characters are walking down a deserted hallway. tell them that they "perceive nothing out of the ordinary." This does not mean that there actually is nothing out of the ordinary, only that they see nothing unusual. If a DM gives answers like, "nothing is in the hallway," or "the room is empty," he is giving too much information. The player should not know if the room is really empty. They only know that, with their five senses and any magical aids they are using at the time, the room "appears empty."

Players eventually learn to "read" their DM (especially true for players married to their DM). They will learn to pick up clues about dangerous places or situations without the DM consciously giving any. If a DM states that a room is "empty" one time and that they "see nothing" another, sharp players will know that something hidden is there. Keep the level of doubt constant.

Another good tactic for fooling your players in this situation is to say outright "the room is empty". With a sigh of relief and an inner feeling of great self-confidence, they walk in and are ambushed by a handful of invisible monsters. If you think that you are being read by your players, simply take note of your own keys and then use them to your own advantage. In the end, the players may well decide that you aren't so easy to read after all.

Loose Lips Sink Ships

The old "dice rolling and evil chuckle" trick is particularly useful if the game has slowed down due to idle chatter among the play-

ers. Of course, excessive talking is likely to bring wandering monsters to the area to investigate, so make some of the rolls bring actual monsters. This will keep the players on their toes in the future, especially if the DM wiped out half the party the last time they were not paying attention.

Messy Maps

Exact room dimensions are another type of information that DMs should not give out freely. How many characters adventure with a yard stick in hand? Take a good look at the players maps. If they are as precise as the DMs, then he must presume that the players are either professional surveyors or, more likely, that he is giving out way to much dimensional information. The best that a character would know under most adventure game conditions (i.e., bad lighting, imprecise measuring tools, and the constant threat of swift, violent death) is that they are in a "small" "medium" or "large" room. The DM may wish to relate an area's dimensions to something with which the characters (not the players) would be familiar, such as a hut, a temple, a tavern common room, and so on.

If someone wishes to take the trouble to pace out the room for more accurate measurements, then he must state that he is doing so and taking the time to do it. Unless the character has brought a measuring stick, a knotted cord or similar device, divide the room dimensions by 2V2 feet for paces. Remember that dwarves, halflings and other small folk will have shorter strides, but probably make notations in the same scale as a human would (imagine a mighty warrior trying to pace off a treasure map prepared by a halfling). If the DM is not careful in the dimensional information he gives out, the location of secret rooms or passages can be unintentionally given out through overly accurate measurements.

Magical Misinformation

While this might sound like the sort of thing you receive at a White House press conference, it is actually a wonderful tool for spicing up your games which involves the distribution and description of magical items. The rules provide a rich selection of useful magical objects. Without a *detect magic* spell, characters will not be able to distinguish between a *sword +1* and a normal one (or worse yet, a cursed one). In fact, even if the character knows that the item is magical, he will not be aware of its precise abilities until they are used. Yet, once the players think that they have a magical item, they begin to dig into their rule books to rapidly narrow down the possibilities of what they have found. For example, a character will know that he has a *sword +1* the first time he uses it in combat, but any other abilities, like detection of secret doors, will remain unknown unless activated.

The DM may wish to limit some abilities further (even if the rules do not specify any other constraints), so that detection of secret doors might be restricted in some way. This can be done through limiting the number of times a power will work in a given day, or forcing the owner to point the object at the secret door location before it will alert him to it, or even making it functional only during certain phases of the moon. Whatever method is used, limit it in some way so that it will not be too difficult to handle in the future.

Encourage the players to keep their noses out the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* especially during actual play. Be sure to inform them that magical treasures may not appear or function as described in the DMG. Even if the DM has made no changes to the appearance or function of his magical items, this always keeps the players guessing.

Magical items are made by individual wizards or priests either for their own use or for sale to clients. Remember that these people are craftsmen who have both researched the creation of the item and shaped its final form. Each item is made by hand. While a wizard/alchemist may be able to produce large batches of simple potions, no factories exist to grind out clone copies of *figurines of wondrous power* or *medallions of ESP*. Each magic item will be as unique as the man or woman (or thing) who made it.

To reflect this, many DMs will take care to make sure that no two magical objects are very similar. While the dreaded *Bloodblade of Aahg* might only be a *+2 sword,* the clever DM will go to some length describing the "pulsating runes of power" which decorate its length. Thus, this weapon is a well known object now which will instantly be recognized by others as magical in nature. Such descriptions are a good way to add to the feel of a game.

The magical items listed in the DMG, for example, should not be discarded, but may appear in different forms. A *wand of polymorph,* may not always take the

shape of a traditional wand. Perhaps it has been built to resemble a jewelled scepter. Maybe a *helm of telepathy* will appear as a knitted stocking cap. The old maxim, "Things are never as they appear," should remain true.

Another way to alter magical items would be to devise a random chart of possible results of using the item if the user is not fully versed in its secrets. For example, if the characters manage to find, borrow or steal the personalized wand of a high-level sorceress, any attempt to use the wand might produce random results.

For proper identification of treasure in hand, a high-level bard might be the most likely source. Unfortunately, high-level bards do not grow on trees and those few of sufficient power are probably also too important to deal directly with adventuring nobodies. Therefore, the players will usually be left to discover the properties of a magical item by trial and error or through the use of spells like *identify*. Sometimes, the players attempts to discover just how an item works leads to a whole new campaign.

You Talk Too Much

A DM can also inadvertently reveal too much information while playing the part of an NPC. Just because an NPC is a resident of the DM's fantasy world does not mean that he will necessarily have access to every secret of the land. Rare will be the townsman who knows the happenings in the next village, let alone the activities of the prince in the neighboring land. People usually remember things that are personally important to them, and discard the rest. On the other hand, unusual events will be talked about for years, even generations, to come.

Keep in mind what the NPC could actually know, and don't be tempted to act or speak based on information the character would not have. Furthermore, most NPCs will tell the truth (if it suits their purposes) as they *believe* it to be. A particular bane of law enforcement officials is that each person who witnesses an event will tell a unique version of what they have seen. The events are colored by the person's general level of perception, his preconceived notions, his personal prejudices (likes and dislikes) and interests.

For example, an alchemist may have overheard two strangers discussing the hazards they suffered obtaining a particularly rare potion. Like fishermen, adventurers will often embellish the tale of their latest catch. What starts out as the ambush of a small party of goblins that yielded them the unusual find of a magic potion, may end up being told as an epic where evil wizards and deadly dragons were demolished to discover a hoard of lost formulae. In order to make a sale, the alchemist would naturally exaggerate the story even further to whet the characters' appetites and lure them into spending more in his shop.

Thus, much of the information gained from such sources should be treated as unreliable and grossly exaggerated from actual fact. The important thing is to be careful not to allow the DM's "inside information" to color the alchemist's words or actions. The DM knows the truth about the phony formulas, but the alchemist doesn't. The alchemist might exaggerate to the characters the importance of the find, or go off to search for it himself.

Fear and Loathing

It can be said that players (and humanity in general) are not afraid of what they know, but of what they don't know. When the DM places a familiar name on a monster, the players instantly pigeonhole the beast. Unless the monster has been specially created by the DM. the players will either immediately know all there is to know about it or will know it out to nine decimal places as soon as they grab a monster manual. The solution that usually occurs to DMs is to constantly make new monsters. Designing monsters is great fun, but also a time-consuming process.

As an alternative to developing vast hordes of new monsters, consider describing creatures (and NPCs) in ways that disguise or at least cast doubt on their true nature. Remember that the characters will usually only catch brief, often dark and shadowy glimpses of their foes. The word 'humanoid' covers a broad range of creatures, from kobolds to storm giants.

Again, rely on the perceptions of the characters. Describe what seems to be seen, what may have been heard, or a faint odor in the air. Let the players draw their own conclusions. When the players don't know what their characters are up against, they begin to feel the creeping chill of fear. Under such circumstances the players suddenly become keenly aware of what it must be like for real people to be in the situations that their characters are experiencing. The DM may find that his players have become more concerned with dis-

covering the nature of their unknown foe than they are with learning how much treasure it *is* hiding.

Keep the players guessing, keep them on edge, even make them afraid—they'll love you for it.

Funny-Ha-Ha

Humor, in all its various forms can break the tension, relieve the fear, and provide a balance for all the intensity associated with combat and life-or-death puzzle-solving. A joke (even outside the context of the game), a funny incident, or a silly NPC portrayal can slow the pace of the game down and give the players enough time to regain their perspective on a situation. Humor can also provide a deadly trap. Picture an inept NPC, someone who could be dangerous if he had his wits about him, but who is obviously more concerned with his own trivial, even humorous problems. His light-hearted demeanor catches the player characters off-guard, even involves them in solving his problems. Then, when the players least expect it, the NPC springs his trap, either attacking the characters or relieving them of valuables (it may even be possible for the characters to be unaware of their loss until long after the fact). Unless the DM varies the situation, this little trap should only work once for each group of players.

Use humor to change the pace or lighten a tense situation, but avoid giving NPCs silly sounding names unless the character is intended to be the constant butt of jokes. Keep the names consistent with the world. Fearless Phred, may seem cute initially, and generate a few chuckles, but eventually, the joke wears thin and the DM is stuck with an NPC who has a stupid name. Regardless of Fearless Phred's prowess or power, the PCs will never take him seriously.

DMing in Full Color

OK, by now the DM should know how to speed things up, slow things down, and what NOT to tell his players. Unfortunately, he also may have decided to quit telling his players *anything* about what they see, hear, or experience in an adventure (some DMs do this as second nature, but more on that later).

This is where we reverse the trend. The DM is certainly encouraged to misinform the players if it suits the needs of the game, but misinformation is no excuse for running a game in black and white. Since the players cannot actually see the areas that their adventurers explore (unless the DM is running a lavish audiovisual presentation), most, if not all of their perceptions of their world come from the DM's descriptions.

So don't be stingy with descriptive material. Tell the players the important things that their characters see, hear, smell, and taste in their world, and then add in enough extra detail so that the players have to decide for themselves what's important and what's not.

Set the Scene

Establishing the setting for encounters, whether they take place in a wind-whipped mountain pass or a dimly-lit underground chamber, is an important part of the DM's responsibilities. When all a DM does is to draw room dimensions on a battle map and says "This is what you see," chances are, that is all the players (and their characters) will see: outlines on paper. The effective DM will take his descriptions of an area beyond mere room dimensions and make it live for the players. The following are examples of ineffective and effective descriptions of encounter areas:

Ineffective Setting

The room is 20 by 20 feet and has a couple cots and a table in it.

Effective Setting

The door sticks and opens only with effort, scraping the mold and moss that carpets the floor beyond. Even the beds and table are encrusted with the stuff. The walls remind you of leprous sores, with gangrenous wounds where scabs of plaster have fallen away. Even as you stand here, a mottled chunk falls silently to the padded HOOT.

Ineffective Setting

You come to a clearing in the woods with some ruins near the center. It's getting dark.

Effective Setting

The path through the forest abruptly opens onto a grassy clearing. Tumbledown remnants of an ancient building hulk in the center of the glade. Rows of fallen columns, like broken teeth, mark a path to the gaping entrance of the ruin. Even from here, you can see numerous statues filling wall niches and unpleasant sculptures looming gargoyle-like near the collapsed roof. Several leaning towers thrust up out of the ruins as if to catch the last light of the day. Even now, long shadows from the surrounding trees darken the glade, almost visibly creeping forward to make the darkness complete.

In each of these situations, the DM's effective description (even though a bit heavy on the prose) both describes what the characters see and establishes a mood. A once-generic part of the DM's world has taken on specific and even menacing form. Will the characters enter the area as it is described, now knowing, or at least feeling, that potential danger lies therein? Without motivation, probably not.

Presenting NPCs.

It never hurts to re-emphasize the importance of NPCs to an adventure game setting. If the DM does a good job making his NPCs colorful, his players eventually may forget the 30-level dungeon they explored, or the corrupt political system they exposed, or even the nifty magical toys they were constantly uncovering, but they will never forget the time that Hilgo Bandylegs bowed low and offered his battle axe in the service of the player characters, only to trip on his flame-orange beard and go tumbling into the wine vat.

Make Encounters Dramatic

The statue you were fiddling around with animates and swings its fist at you.

Described like this, the eerie magics that breathe life into an eight-foot-tall being of cold stone seem somehow mundane, as if it happened every day. Think how much more exciting it would be for the players if they were told:

As you attempt to remove the gems from the statue, the blood red ruby sinks inward as if it were a button being pressed. With a sharp snapping sound the statue's eyelids slide up to reveal jewels that glow like lanterns through green glass. Its cold stone flesh suddenly becomes almost hot, like a sunbaked rock and a hiss of vapor escapes its mouth. Its limbs move with unnatural speed as it swings a mallet-like fist at your character.

Notice how the second description focuses on what the characters see and feel. If the DM emphasizes the sudden movement of the eyes and punctuates it with a sharp sound, he may catch the players off guard. Like their characters, they too have been caught off guard and now share the character's apprehensions.

The key to making encounters dramatic is to focus on what makes them fantastic:

- Stress the fantastic or the unusual in every encounter. Try to make each encounter unique in some way, even if the characters are encountering something they already know about.
- Make the foes seem unbeatable. Their numbers or apparent abilities make the chance of failure and death an all-too-possible reality.
- Monsters should be horribly monstrous or wondrous and fantastical. Don't treat them as natural parts of the environment. Evil is vile and awful, frightening to behold. Marvelous things bring out the child in us. When magical beasts make an appearance, scare the characters or make them marvel in wonder.
- Have the monsters or NPCs make startling or mysterious entrances and exits. A wizard or monster appearing in a puff of smoke may be a trite and overworked cliche, but that's the general idea. Try having thieves who sneak up to politely tap a character on the shoulder, or monsters who drop from the ceiling or leap from hidden cavities in the floor. Have the lights go out and when they are rekindled, the monster/NPC has appeared or disappeared (hey, it works in detective movies). Use the old "chill wind shivering the spine" effect to make an encounter seem weird. Leave the players wondering "How'd he do that?".
- Use foreshadowing to warn or hint of an encounter's eventual occurrence. Foreshadowing is a storytelling technique where mysterious minor events seem to tell of the occurrence of another major event. For example, a dream might hint at black shadows creeping across the countryside, implying something evil this way comes. A found note might reveal the name and intentions of an evil wizard 'who's actions have recently involved the PCs. The idea is to give the players just enough information to make them wary or nervous, then slowly play up the fears through other hints and rumors until they crave/dread the foreshadowed encounter. Then its up to the DM to make sure that the encounter is worth all the anxiety it has generated.

The Threat of Failure

If life, death, or the fate of the universe hangs on the outcome of the player's actions, the threat of failure adds significant drama to any situation. When it's impossible for the characters to fail or if the PCs are immortal (or nearly so), the drama is gone.

In real life, risk taking is an addictive, but deadly form of entertainment enjoyed by a few, but appreciated by many. Every day, men and women jump out of airplanes and drop earthward, drive automobiles at breakneck speeds around the hairpin curves of racetracks, dangle precariously from wind whipped icy rocks at altitudes where oxygen is a rare commodity, and challenge lightning-quick martial artists in combat—all in the name of fun, sport and enjoyment. Part of the excitement in these activities is the risk factor—thrilling and chilling realization that a single misstep means injury or death.

Since most of us do not risk our lives for the sheer thrill of it, a significant attraction to role-play gaming is the ability to vicariously partake in risky activity—without any personal danger (other than the threat of writers cramp or danger of overeating).

Therefore, increase the drama of an encounter by putting the characters at risk of personal injury, death, or loss. Possibly have their failure inflict injury or death on someone else (remember the legend of William Tell and the apple he had to shoot off his son's head?). Make the players aware of the consequences of failure (at least the immediate ones). Of course, the rewards should be equal to the risk.

Ban Gamespeak

There exists a tendency in adventure gaming for both the DM and the players to sacrifice the color and richness of role-playing for the expedience of advancing the game. The DM forgets that he is a storyteller and becomes a rules judge. The players forget that they are characters in a drama and behave like board gamers calling out combat results. Instead of talking descriptively about actions and their outcomes, the participants refer to dice rolls and game statistics. An exchange might go:

DM: "The orcs see you and advance 20 feet to attack. Somebody give me an initiative roll."

Player one: (rolls dice) "Drat, only a three."

DM: "Still beats my one. What's going on now?"

Player one: "My fighter Bruno attacks with his + 1 sword."

DM: "OK, he needs a 13 or better to hit, and the magic user needs a 16 if she uses her weapons."

Player two: "No way! Wanda zaps with her magic missiles. *Aw, only six points of damage from both missiles."*

Player one: "Bruno rolls a 16 and does seven points of damage, plus one for the sword and another one for Strength, for a total of nine. Since ores only take eight points of damage max, one of them is aced!"

DM: "OK one ore is down from Wanda's missiles, but the one Bruno hit takes his points and keeps on coming and does 11 points to Bruno."

Player One: "Let's get outta here! Bruno's only got one hit point left."

Player Two: "Tough break, Bruno. Wanda whips out her wand of fear *while Bruno makes for the door."*

The action comes across, but without any particular emphasis on the setting, the characters, or their foes. Wanda and Bruno are played as generic characters who encounter a band of equally generic monsters. One set of numerical statistics has met another and exchanged a round of randomly generated numbers. Now try the same encounter with a little color and role-play.

DM: "A pair of heavily armored, low-browed humanoids round the corner. They see Wanda and Bruno and they don't look happy to see them here. The big one growls out something that sounds like orcish to Wanda."

Player two: "What did it say? Wanda knows the ore language enough to make out basic words."

Player one: "Yeah, what?"

DM: '"Surrender or there'll be trouble' is all you can make out."

Player two: "Wanda drops to her knees and starts to plead for mercy, wringing her hands together. She tries to get Bruno to do the same."

Player one: "Bruno will never surrender to ore scum! He charges the largest ore, swinging the mighty Calabash over his headin a deadly arc!"

Player two: (sighing) "Wanda was also trying to disguise the somatic part of her Sleep *spell like she did with the gnolls."*

DM: "The big fellow charges Bruno while the little one warily approaches Wanda. He seems to be indicating that any attempt to aid her companion will end badly. Bruno's attack roll must beat least 13 to affect his foe. If Wanda wan ts to attack her opponent, she must roll a 16 or better."

Player one: "The glowing blade of Calabash slices through the air and connects solidly with the ore for a mighty blow. Bruno's opponent loses nine hit points!"

Player two: "Wanda stays on her knees and continues to wring her hands and cry, but she has changed over to her magic missile *spell. When she releases it, the missiles inflict six points of damage on her foe."*

DM: "Wanda's missiles strike the smaller humanoid, flinging him backwards like a rag doll until he strikes the passage wall and collapses. Meanwhile the larger creature seems to shrug off the damage done by Bruno. Its own hideous weapon crushes the fighter, reducing Bruno's hit points by 11 and forcing him to his knees."

Player One: "Even though Bruno is nearly done in, he drags himself towards the exit. He knows that Brother Albert can heal his wounds."

Player Two: "While the monster's attention is still focused on Bruno, Wanda readies her wand of fear *and prepares to speak the words that will unleash its powers."*

Again, the second passage emphasizes the descriptive, or storytelling, nature of the game. Die results, statements of intent and turn instructions are woven into the story that the DM and his two players are mutually creating, but the story takes preeminence.

Although both the DM and the players share the responsibility of telling the story and avoiding the crutch of gamespeak, the DM must shoulder an unequal portion of the burden. As the DM he must encourage his players to speak in character and take part in the tale's telling. The more the DM makes use of descriptive phrases the more the players will also. The words he chooses sets the tone for the game. If the DM speaks in technical jargon, the players will also.

When Rules Get in the Way

The AD&D® game rules are purposefully complex and detailed. They are designed to accommodate a vast array of game situations, and give both the DM and his players satisfactory answers to the question "what happens if I do this?" in nearly any scenario. Yet game rules are designed to solve the statistical aspects of game play, not to tell stories.

In case one hasn't realized it by now, adventure role-playing is a form of orchestrated storytelling, almost improvisational theatre, where the actors make up their lines just before they speak them. Game rules provide statistical suggestions for what happens as a result of a characters actions. Unfortunately, constantly having to determine the statistical outcome of player actions gets in the way of good storytelling.

For example, if the party find themselves as participants in major military battle, the DM does not need to fight every combat encounter. For the purposes of the story, assume that the PCs successfully deal with any foes they meet or set up a single conflict to give the players the feeling of frenzied conflict and the senseless slaughter occurring around them.

If the events of travel between two places are unimportant, inform the players that they arrive safe, sound, and only slightly weary from their journey. Don't drag them across the intervening terrain day by day and inch by inch.

Assume that, as heroes, the characters can overcome simple challenges without needing to roll dice. If a task is reasonably within a characters abilities, let the character do it (unless the DM's story requires a dice roll). The same holds true if there is no personal danger involved in a task or if multiple tries are possible.

When the rules get in the way of telling the story, the DM should consider eliminating or at least streamlining them.

Character Mortality

For characters' lives to have real meaning within the game world, their deaths must have meaning also. No player is ever happy to see his favorite character die and if that character's death seems meaningless, then his life may also seem pointless. The DM can take this as a recommendation against traps that function on an "oops yer dead" basis.

Since an effective DM's adventures contain dramatic scenarios which have a real chance of a

player character dying, the DM should try to make those characters' deaths play an important part in his story.

If it becomes obvious to both the DM and the players that one or more PCs are about to be killed, give the characters a chance to make their deaths meaningful. Improvise a scenario that gives the characters a glorious and memorable death scene. For inspiration, consider those war movies and action films where a mortally wounded character remains behind to take out the pursuing bad guys, or where one character leads the villains astray, knowing it means his own death.

The DM might wish to let the characters ignore their fatal wounds for *a* few rounds while they hack berserkly at the fiends who outnumber and surround them, giving better than they get and giving their friends a chance to survive. Remember, the characters die in the end, but the clever DM has managed to let them die with dignity and heroism!

Alternatives to Dying

Death is essentially a punishment for a character's failure to overcome a fatal obstacle. However, even when the rules indicate that such a failure would kill a character, the DM need not necessarily make death the only possible punishment.

Some characters pointedly deserve to die. Their players have insisted on making the characters act and behave in a manner contrary to either good role-playing or even common sense. Their stupidity finally places them in a situation from which their is no escape and they die an ignominious and pointless death.

Other characters are victims of either bad dice-rolling (their's or another's) or the logical outcome of the way they role-play their characters. Given such situations, the DM can decide either to make the death grand and glorious, one that has real meaning in terms of the adventure's story, or arrange events such that the character survives but is still punished in a significant manner—this latter punishment can often be a fate worse than death.

The DM might help a character cheat death in one of the following ways:

- The character collapses into unconsciousness only to awaken later, his wounds mysteriously healed. Usually, there is a price to pay for this later. This is one of those situations where the DM is allowed to meddle with a character, taking away something, giving him something, or changing him in some way. Often, whoever does the healing will demand a payment of service.
- Instead of killing the character, his foe's last blow stuns him and he is taken captive.
- An NPC or favored animal companion sacrifices his life for the character. Care must be taken to make this scene believable.
- The character dies, but a higher power guides his spirit back into his body—his task on earth is not yet done.
- The dead character's companions find a one-shot device or NPC who can bring the character back to life. Again, this usually involves a loss or sacrifice on the part of the dead character.

If the DM has to intervene to save a character, he may wish to balance his act of mercy by penalizing the character who should have died. Consider the following possibilities:

- Reduce the amount of experience points gained from the adventure.
- Have the character survive, but be captured until he is rescued or escapes on his own, usually without any of the goodies he has been collecting during his adventures.
- Have the character acquire a liability due to his mistake. Possibly his wounds leave him with a limp that reduces his speed, or internal injuries cause a drop in his constitution score. Maybe his depth perception is gone due to the loss of an eye, or he becomes one handed when his sword hand is lopped off.
- Change the character in some way. Maybe the only way his friends could bring his spirit back was to reincarnate him in the body of another creature. Or maybe his spirit was transferred into a body that could be repaired. That new body could be just about anything. The magics involved in saving the character could have required replacing severely damaged parts of his body with functioning parts from other creatures.
- Relieve the character of treasured possessions. Whoever saves the character (or captures him) may think that taking his *+3 sword* and *helm of telepathy* are a fair trade for bringing him back to life. Maybe the thing just got lost, say in that deep (bottomless?)

chasm back there, the one with the hot vapors and eerie noises wafting up from below. Subject the characters to the mockery of others. This usually works best when the DM has had to save the hide of the entire party. Let them know that their failure in a situation (where they should have rightfully died) makes them the laughingstock of the fortress. Have a once-loyal hireling or two silently disappear, unable to bear the shame of it all.

Fudging or Constructive Cheating

Imagine that during the course of the game, the player characters have just barely survived the climactic encounter with the Baron Skorditch, Wizard-lord of the Kroolons, escaped with the cumbersome princess Natasia and discovered the lost secret of double-entry bookkeeping. All that stands between them and glory is 100 feet of corridor. Unfortunately, the DM had decided long ago (more likely at 3 A.M. the night before) that this corridor would be filled with deadly Snargon gas. Since none of the players thinks to check for traps, the DM secretly makes the die rolls for them.

All-too-suddenly, the hot dice-rolling that allowed the PCs to so handily overcome their earlier obstacles goes sour. No one detects the gas. If the party continues, they will all die! And, of course, they continue . . .

While the DM should not feel that he must protect his precious plot lines or make sure that the desired outcome of a story takes place, he does have a responsibility to his players. He owes them a good time.

Having the entire party wiped out as the denouement of an adventure is rarely considered a good time. In situations like these, it's OK for the DM to cheat.

Throughout these chapters on DMing, it will be stressed time and time again that the DM must remain impartial. He should not take the side of the monsters against the PCs or side with the player characters in their battle against their fiendish foes.

So now we tell the DM to cheat! What should the fair DM do in such a situation? Well, a hard-hearted DM would let the PCs walk into his trap, blow their saving rolls, and die. He may also see his players suggest, that they have better things to do with their time from now on.

At the other extreme, the DM could just say to himself "there's no trap here" and let the PCs proceed on their way, not realizing that the DM just compromised his design to let them live. This too is a mistake, because by doing so, the DM has assumed that the players are unable to deal with challenges.

A wiser solution would be to suggest to the players that something does not seem right in the corridor ahead or to let an NPC reveal the trap, even though it costs his life. The DM might even improvise an ambush attack that diverts the characters to another exit.

In a sense, whenever a situation arises in which the outcome of the entire adventure seems to hang on a single die roll, and that die roll fails, the DM is encouraged to fudge—to cheat in a constructive manner. Rather than see an entire gaming session, even an entire campaign wasted because of one stupid incident, the DM may wish to create alternative outcomes on the fly, ones that require role-playing instead of "roll-playing."

Many of you have had the chance to play computer games or play-by-mail games which are much like role-playing games. While many of these games are wonderful and provide a great deal of enjoyment for the players, there are some important things which set them apart from true role-playing games like the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game.

Computer games have built-in limitations when it comes to the kinds of activity they will allow. The players must make their choices for actions and reactions from those allowed by the game's rules. Nothing else is allowed. If it hasn't been put into the game by the programmer, it can't be done. Furthermore, the features in a computer software game all have to work together absolutely perfectly, otherwise the game crashes when the computer is unable to resolve a software problem.

Like computer games, the rules for role-playing games are designed to deal only with those situations that the game's designers have previously anticipated. It would be nice to say that this game or any role-playing game has rules that work perfectly for any situation or encounter. However, the vast variety of options in role-playing games generally means that some obscure combination of rules has been overlooked. When rule conflicts arise the game would also crash and burn (figuratively speaking, of course) if it weren't for a DM who can act as a free thinking "computer" and make rules interpretations in order to get his adventure through a rough spot.

To Interpret the Law

One of the purposes of a court of law is to interpret the laws the land, to decide whether or not they apply in a given situation. Like a judge, the DM must determine whether or not the rules of a game apply to situations within his game. He may even decide that certain rules are "unconstitutional" and do not apply to his game world. Working within the rules, he determines the outcomes of the actions of the players and of those NPCs and monsters that he controls.

Leaving the Rules Behind

There are also times in an adventure when the DM may decide to wander away from the official rules of the game and focus on the action of the game, making judgement decisions as to whether characters successfully use skills or monsters detect the presence of intruders rather than rolling dice for an answer.

Too often in a game, the DM gets in the habit of consulting dice to make his decisions. The player's want to perform an action. The DM considers the options and rolls the dice. Even though he may have weighted the success chances one way or another based on his estimation of the chance of success, he's still relying on random chance to determine the outcome. True, random elements can affect player actions, but just as easily randomness can ruin a chance for drama within an encounter, spoil the excitement in an adventure or ruin the players' plans.

Chances are, the rules say to roll dice to resolve a given situation, such as "roll a d20 to determine success" or "there is a one in six chance that the character detects the hidden door." Yet in some situations, its better to ignore the rules and rely solely on the DM's judgement skills.

Go watch some young children playing with cars, trucks, action figures, or dolls, the kind of toy doesn't matter. Without a game master or a complex set of rules, they play out complex fantasy encounters. In their childlike way, they role-play more effectively than most older players. Minor disagreements aside, they work together to forge their shared imagination into a single story line, a fantasy lived out through their toys. As we have grown older, we've found a need to impose structure on our lives, to replace toys with tools, imagination with rationalization, and free-form play with rules.

The effective DM will draw upon both the imaginative child within him and his abilities as a story teller to stir the imagination of his players. He will find whatever opportunities he can to free himself from the constraints of rules and concentrate on giving the players an extraordinary role-playing experience, where the shared fantasy of the adventure, the telling of the tale takes precedence over the mechanics of how it is done.

Leaving the rules behind does not mean that the scenario is no longer an AD&D® game adventure. Far from it. The DM should still keep actions and results within the scope of possibility offered by the rules (or at least close enough to be believable). Consider the following:

Fleeing from bandits, the party takes refuge in the oddly intact ruins of a long-dead wizard's tower. The bandits do not immediately follow, for they are afraid of the fiend rumored to dwell in the tower. The cowardly bandits slowly work up their courage to follow—maybe the PCs and the fiend will wipe each other out and they can clean up whatever's left.

Meanwhile, during the course of exploring the tower (looking for something that they can use against the cowardly bandits who grossly outnumber them and tend to shoot lots and lots of arrows from the safety of the surrounding trees), the PCs kill a minotaur, and even dispatch the fiend (who actually did live in the tower, but left behind no earthly remains upon his demise).

Unfortunately, the fiend left the PCs in poor shape for dispatching hordes of cowardly bandits (remember, lots of arrows from the trees?), so they concoct a plan!

They will scare the bandits when they come through the front door.

Using paint found in the wizard's lab, they paint the minotaur carcass fire-engine red, haul it to the top of the stairs (which conveniently end at the front door) and sit it atop a shield. At the top of the stair a burly fighter holds the brightly painted minotaur carcass upright while a wizard stands ready with a few simple spells to provide special effects. The rest of the PCs smear themselves with blood and soot and lay around the entryway doing their best corpse imitations and hoping that the bandits don't have time for a body count when the door opens.

As expected, the bandits soon manage to break down the front door and begin to charge into the tower, pausing for a second to look at the unusual scene around theme. Tension hangs in the air as the player's hope for the success of this highly improbable trick. The DM, on the other hand, is doing his best to remember which section of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* deals with fire-engine-red minotaur corpses and their ability to terrify charging bandits. Hmmmm. It doesn't seem to be covered. . .

As you can see, the success of the players' depends on about a zillion complicated factors coming together to create a single desired effect—making the bandits believe that the PCs are dead, that the fiend (who looks like a bright red

minotaur) still lives and has his heart set on bandit pot roast for dinner. When the wizard casts his *phantasmal force* spell and the fighter gives the body a shove and sends it sliding down the steps, will the bandits turn and flee? Or will they burst out laughing and proceed to slaughter the characters?

Now the DM running this situation could yank out his d20s, dlOOs, d6s and so on, decide on a chance for each piece of the plan separately, i.e., do the bandits believe the PCs are dead, do they believe that the minotaur corpse is truly the fiend they have heard so much about, does it slide down the steps smoothly when pushed, and of course, are the bandits scared? After rolling for each item, he discovers that one part of the plan fails and the characters are all killed.

The DM who works things out that way is not being very much fun. Sure, the *rules* say to make skill checks and random dice rolls to resolve encounters, but rules are really only needed as an alternative to imagination. The players have put a lot of imagination into solving the problem of their immediate survival. They set up an opportunity for a dramatic, exciting, and even humorous encounter, which has a slight chance of saving their lives. The DM in turn has given responsibility for its outcome over to a few chunks of geometric plastic. By slavishly following the rules, he has condemned the characters to a pointlessly brutal doom. Look now at the players' plan as it occurs when the DM decides to rely on his judgement instead of his dice.

The aging door to the outside suddenly bursts open and the bandits peer cautiously in. In the gloom they see the carnage wrought upon the dead PCs (the DM decides that it's dark enough for the ruse to work, at least until the bandits inspect the bodies). As the horror of the PCs' doom begins to settle in, they are startled by a booming voice from above.

"What! More intruders? You shall die even more horribly than those who came before." The bandits look up to see a horrible, horned, scarlet fiend barreling down the stairs toward them before they are blinded by the brilliant bursting flares of light which shower down around them (the DM decides that the *phantasmal force* spell covers a multitude of discrepancies between the appearances of the fiend they have heard so much about and a red minotaur).

The bandits scream in terror and flee the tower. Their fellows in the woods presume the worst and they, too, run. Meanwhile, back in the tower a muffled voice grunts "will somebody get this lousy minotaur off me, I can hardly breathe!"

Similarly, the DM may find himself in situations where the player's must make a skill test to discover something in his game. If they fail the test, the characters miss out on what the DM has in store for them. Rather than rely on the dice, the DM simply allows the characters to find the door. Yet, if he does it right, the situation adds more to the game than the rolling of dice.

DM: "The blood trail ends near the south wall."

Player: "We check the wall for secret doors."

DM: "You don't find anything that looks like a door, secret or otherwise. But the elf hears someone fumbling with the lock on the north door."

Player: "Quick, what's the south wall look like?"

DM: ' 'Lots of detailed pain tings, mostly landscapes. Most of 'em are pretty big."

Player: "I move the one closest to the trail."

DM: "Doesn't move. Hey, that sounded like a key in the lock."

Player: "Uh, um. Uh, what's that painting look like?"

DM: ' 'It's a win ter scene. It looks like footprints in the snow, trailing off into the distance. Every so often, you can see a splotch of bright crimson amongst the footprints. In the distance you see what looks like a warrior. The door's starting to open."

Player: "I, we, um, guys, everybody follow Thuenor. He's climbing into the winter wonderland picture."

DM: "The door opens and the wizard enters. He doesn't seem to notice that one of his paintings now contains portraits of a bunch of adventurers."

A third area where leaving the rules behind can help the DM create a world of wonder is that of magic. The AD8d3® game magic system allows for a great variety of magical powers. Nevertheless, the DM may find that his imagination can create magical devices, artifacts, and environments that defy description within the bounds of the magic rules.

Suppose that the DM creates a scenario that involves living beings encased within stasis cocoons

of transparent crystal. Based on the magic rules for creating magical items, no spell or spells exist for making this work. The DM is then faced with a choice: use this creation of his imagination and present it as an object of wonder, or throw it out because it doesn't fit the rules. The DM probably knows our recommendation already.

Danger! Danger!

We've been promoting the concept of slipping free from the rules for a better game. Yet game freedom has a darker side, there is risk involved in breaking the rules.

Realize that there are times during a game when dice rolling and rules adherence must be followed. While the DM may have wandered away from the rules with the best of intentions during his adventure, the players will feel more comfortable in certain situations when they know that the DM is playing it by the rules. Then they know that they and the DM are operating at the same level. They have a feeling of control over the situation.

Combat is probably foremost among these situations. During combat, follow the rules and make dice rolls for hits and damage. Reserve any stretching of the rules for those activities that do not directly affect the health and well being of the characters (or their foes!). It's one thing to let a character make heroic jumps and perform acrobatics during a melee. It's quite another to let him make attacks without requiring a combat or damage die roll.

Magic use is another sensitive area. Stick to the rules for both sides of an encounter. As shown below, the players may not appreciate the DM's creativity:

DM: "Waldemar glares at you from his perch atop the statue. He waves *his hands in a dizzying pattern over his head and casts his spell. You are all encircled in sparkling lights and suddenly realize that Waldemar is your friend."*

Player: "Hey, just what kind of spell was that? If it's charm person *then my elf gets a saving throw. And what's with the sparklies. None of our spells do that."*

DM: "Uh, its a special form of charm person. *Nobody gets a saving throw."*

Player: "Well the elf wants either a saving throw or a chance to break free."

DM: "Well, he tries to break free, but he can "t."

Player: "C'mon! You didn't even roll the dice."

Proficiency and attribute check rolls are another area of ambiguity. If the DM has gotten in the habit of overlooking them during play in favor of his storytelling, he may have a hard time asking the players to make them in life-or-death situations.

DM: "Thuenor, if you 're going to cross the rope bridge, make a Dexterity check for me."

Player: "Huh? He didn't have to make one going the other way. Why should he now?"

DM: "Because he has to, OK?"

Player: "Let's just say he made it"

DM: "MAKE THE DIE ROLL!"

Be sure that whenever a player action could lead to harm, the player makes dice roll. They need to realize that their misfortune is the result of either their own bad judgements or the chance failure to perform a task, and not the arbitrary whims of the DM. If the DM doesn't follow a procedure like this, the players will become suspicious every time something goes against them. They may even accuse the DM of cheating.

And cheating is something that the DM should worry about when he's running loosely. Fudging the rules a bit to either preserve a good game or enhance the players' enjoyment is not only approved behavior, but comes highly recommended However, there comes with it the opportunity to ignore rules or results that conflict with the DM's desires for his adventure.

The final point in this area of danger is minor, but needs consideration. The unmodified AD&D game rules are used extensively at game conventions for official tournaments and individual games. Players who have become used to a DM's free-form DMing style may find themselves unpleasantly surprised when playing under the constraints of the unmodified rules system.

Presuming They are Heroes

Finally, keep in mind that the PCs are supposed to be heroes. They are unusual persons whose skills and abilities stand head and shoulders above the normal man (figuratively speaking in the case of dwarves and halflings).

They should be able to perform heroic actions without worrying about the fussy details of their activities. They should be concerned with finding lost artifacts, slaying horrible fiends and saving the

world; not cleaning their swords after each battle, counting the arrows in their quivers or telling the DM exactly how they prepare for sleep each night.

Just as the DM works to make his world and nonplayer characters richly real and exciting, he should encourage his players to think of their characters not as the pieces in a game, but as fictional heroes, who live, breathe, and have lives of their own. The best role-playing happens when the DM and players alike quit worrying about the game.

When Reason Fails

If a set of rules could be written to cover every situation possibly it would resemble a law library with stack after stack of volumes documenting important scenarios and the "correct" interpretation for each occurrence. The DM would become, in fact, what some games refer to him as—a judge. Unfortunately, DMs might also need to charge professional fees for their time.

Instead, much is left to the judgment skills of the DM. If the rules don't exactly cover a situation, he and his players must resolve the dispute via a mutual agreement (or a definitive declaration by the DM). The hints and tips that have been presented so far have been provided to help the DM deal with any ambiguities or difficulties that develop between his campaign and the "official" game rules. So long as everyone is satisfied with the decision (or at least not intensely grumpy about it), the game can continue without incident. Given the vast creativity of the players and DMs in this world, 99.9% of the problems that arise can be solved in this mutually agreeable manner.

Still, that little 0.1% remains—and, of course, these are the ones that cause DMs to go prematurely gray or question why they ever gave up their hobby of collecting old shoe boxes for all this. For some situations, no interpretation of the rules seems to apply. In fact some of them are directly related to interpreting the rules.

Worse yet, problems are going to arise that have nothing to do with the game, but involve the people playing the game. The DM will rapidly find that people who enjoy playing the AD&D® game often have "interesting" personalities. Strong personalities seem to inevitably clash. So, along with running the game, the DM may find himself moderating "discussions" between players.

With this in mind, a number of potential problems, sticky situations, unpleasant scenarios and dire dilemmas have been provided, along with possible ways for the DM to handle the situation and the people involved. Whenever possible, the solution "kick the player out of the game" has been avoided.

Basic Presumptions

For the DM to enforce his judgements during difficult game play sessions, he must set a few ground rules for later disputes with the players. Call these the rules for arguments:

First, the DM must declare that his word is the final authority in things pertaining to the game. He will listen to arguments to the contrary, but the players must accept that his word is law and if he declares a thing to be so in his world, then *it is so!*

Second, let the players know that if the DM makes a decision which everyone agrees is bad, he is more than willing to discuss it and possibly even call back the decision. The guideline for calling back such a decision is not whether or not the result is bad for a character, or even the entire group, but whether or not it was fair. The same holds true for interpretations of rules. Everyone, including the DM, must agree on an interpretation that differs from the one held by the DM.

Third, make sure the players are aware of any major rules variants being used. The best way to do this is in writing, so that everyone has a copy of the rules on hand.

Fourth, any major deviations from the group's accepted rules (including any variants currently in use) must be approved by the group and must take effect after the situation that brought about their creation.

Escaping from Monty Haul

"After Daniella slays all 12 of the kobolds with her multi-barrel wand of megadeath *the rest of the party finds about 100,000 gold pieces, 33 potions, about 243 gems, 900 pieces of jewelry, a sword that glows almost as brightly as Daring Dirk's* frost-brand, *a suit of well-maintained power armor with markings of the old Imperium and two mounted projectile throwers on it, about four cases full of short range rockets, a* rod of lordly might, *and a shadow box hanging on the wall that contains about 20 different* figurines of wondrous power."

"Oh boy, we grab all the magical loot and stick it in our portable holes. *The wizards begin setting up the transmat box that teleports all the gold back to Castle Pardo."*

"Well, as you do that, the south wall glows and a humongous bat-winged creature steps through, oozing pink goo from huge warts and dragging a huge bag of treasure."

The television game show has become an integral part of our culture. With little or no personal risk (other than that of public humiliation on nation-wide television), regular folks can try for hoards of valuable prizes. The winners walk out with all those things our materialistic souls crave and even the losers get consolation prizes.

Some gamers play adventure games in the same way. In just about every case, The DM is responsible for this. Too quickly, the game goes from the "Awe and Wonder" stage in which the game itself seems magical to the "Glory and Thunder" level where the players aren't happy unless their actions are punctuated by wrath-of-heaven style special effects.

Monty Haul can begin innocently enough. Sometimes the DM wants to try out some new magical items and so he makes them available at the first opportunity. Maybe he feels guilty about not providing enough magical items for everybody. Possibly he wants to accelerate the player characters through experience levels. Whatever the reason, the end result is that the player characters, like game show contestants, get used to obtaining vast amounts of treasure without risk while their experience levels ratchet upward like miles on an odometer.

From that point on, the PCs' problem changes from "do we have the magical resources to tackle this problem?" to "how are we going to carry all this stuff?" Instead of simulating a fantasy novel, the game begins to resemble a mail order catalog. The DM may notice that he has an increasingly difficult time setting up scenarios that the players cannot easily blast their way out of or bypass by using magical devices.

The best way out of a Monty Haul situation is not to get in it. When placing magical items, consider whether or not the risk encountered to obtain it is balanced by the benefit the character who finds it will gain. Then consider what the possession of a particular magical item will do to the campaign itself. Foiling the effects of a magical device which is too powerful for the campaign can consume much time.

Unfortunately, most players don't realize that they are victims of Monty Haul until it's too late. For the DM who finds he has worked himself and his players into a Monty Haul campaign, there are several possible ways out. Unfortunately, most of them require the DM to act in a manipulative, heavy-handed manner.

The DM can terminate the campaign and start over. This has the most immediate effect, but neither the DM nor the players may desire this heavy-handed solution.

Taking away the characters' magical toys still involves a heavy handed approach, but it can be done. Have the characters captured by incredibly powerful monsters and relieved of their magical goodies.

While still in the manipulative mode, the DM could save his game by afflicting all magical items with power loss. Reversing the effect requires an adventure, but only partial power is returned (maybe the players are given a limited amount of power to reinvest in magical items).

Although it's a silly solution, have all the magical items possessed by the party suddenly fly together and form an ultra-monster, a golemlike creature who must be defeated without magical firepower. Of course, destroying the thing ruins most of the magical items.

Once the cure is implemented, put the party on a magic-free diet (also trimming out heavy things, like gold and gems) for an adventure or two and then slowly work neat treasure back into the game. The DM might find that the players have a new appreciation for what treasure he does give them.

Super Characters

"Both ancient dragons rear back and spew fire at Clarissa the Mighty. That's 192 points of fiery megadeath."

"Well, with her cloak of displacement *and* ring of fire resistance, *Clarissa automatically makes her saving roll. Between thering* of fire resistance, *the* potion of fire resistance *and her special ability to make her body immune to heat, that reduces the damage down to 18 points, only a slight singeing. Clarissa slurps down a* potion of extra healing *and then blasts both dragons into Hinders with the* photon cannon wand *she found in the metallic ruins."*

A common by-product of Monty Haul gaming is the super character. The DM may know the type by now, faster than a speeding arrow, more powerful than a loco hill giant, able to leap tall dungeons in a single bound. Most of their attributes appear to have been rolled on dlOO's. They have more magical gizmos than a college of wizardry and their hit point totals resemble a modest lotto jackpot. In most senses of the word, they are unbeatable—and they are the DM's fault. He made them what they are and he now must deal with them.

Getting rid of super characters requires more than a visit from an exterminator, but that is generally the best solution. Toning them down (i.e., taking away some of their power) is a bit more difficult.

If a character has no chance of failure, adventuring becomes a simple exercise in treasure gathering—sort of like an all-expense-paid visit to the local shopping mall. Considering this, even the player may actually want to find a convenient reason to get rid of his super liability.

Offer the character a chance to retire. Maybe he is promoted to demigod and has to worry about balancing yin and yang in the universe, not just whacking monsters for profit. On a lower key, give him a barony or kingdom to run, whatever seems reasonable. Have the character put his arsenal to good use, defending peasants from marauders.

If that fails, feel free to set up situations that either take the super characters down a few pegs, even to kill them outright. Need examples? • An immortal hunter seeks prey, ignoring small-fry in favor of real challenges.

- Create situations where a character's super weapons are turned into super slag.
- Convince the other players that a super character threatens their own well being.
- Use life-draining undead liberally.
- Set deadly traps in the form of puzzles or devices that can only be triggered by those with high enough power or skills to operate them.
- Arrange for the character's quality of life to decline. Maybe an injury, illness or curse lowers or prevents full use of his attributes and abilities. Maybe he's imprisoned forever by the powers that be.
- Have the character's final treasure acquisition be an artifact that messes him up physically and mentally. Make sure the player is aware of his fate at some point and once again make the offer of retirement.

Changing Reality

"OK, before we get going, I want to let you know that I've given some thought to how Jenny's fighter used her ring of invisibility *last week and I've decided to modify the way we play invisibility from now on. When a character is invisible, anybody near him gets a chance to sense his presence, regardless of monster level."*

"What? Oh just great! My character bought an invisibility *scroll last game and now it's basically worthless."*

Game worlds, like living creatures, are constantly changing. Most of these changes are minor, but every so often, the DM decides to make a major change, either to his world itself or to the rules used to run the game. Sometimes these changes will affect the way that the players make decisions about their characters and their actions.

If the DM decides to add a new continent to his world, the after effects are usually minor. However, if the DM chooses to reduce the purchasing power of gold, change the way a particularly irritating spell works, or require wizards to wear pointy hats, his players may object.

Unless all the players disagree with the change, go ahead with it. However, give the players a chance to alter recent decisions or actions that they would have made differently had they known the change was coming.

Rules Lawyers

'7 *don't care if you think it should work that way, that's not the way the rules say it works. Look right there on page 112 of the* Player's Manual."

Rulius Magistarius, the rules lawyer, can be the bane of both DMs and players alike and can be either a DM or a player. He's the fellow who demands that anything that occurs or could possibly occur in the game be covered by rules and be followed exactly to the letter of those rules. He is also willing to argue endlessly about some minor point of rules until the DM or the other players are ready to concede the point, if only to shut him up. Chances are he may only be comfortable in a situation where he knows exactly how things will be. Ambiguity scares him. The Wargamer style of play (see Styles of Play) suits this fellow just fine.

Dealing with the rules lawyer as

a DM requires both creativity and patience. He is the reason why the DM must both establish his own word as the final authority in games played in his world and record any major variations to those rules. Make it clear to the rules lawyer and the other players that the rules of the game are used as guidelines for play and are not designed to cover every situation. The DM must be willing to hear the rules lawyer's opening arguments, and to explain the logic of his own decision. Stand firm on a decision, but offer to discuss the situation after the game.

If the rules lawyer continues to interrupt play, come down hard. Restrict further arguments to unified appeals (all players must agree without requiring arguments to convince them). Ban all but the most necessary use of the *Player's Handbook* during play. Make the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and all monster manuals entirely off limits.

Player "Personalities"

"Hey, can I have a little of your attention people? Kevin, finish painting the miniatures for the next game, OK? That was real good Mark, but I'm not certain I want to see how close you can put your roundhouse kick to my nose again tonight. Ron, Randy, if you need the stuff in those mere'magazines, you can get them out later. Uh, Lawrence, my wife was saving that gelatin dessert for a dinner party tomorrow. I'd prefer we used a miniature for the green slime instead."

Adventure gaming attracts—how shall we say it?—a unique type of person as a player. Anyone who prefers to spend a Friday night pretending to slay dragons and sling mighty magics is not the type who fits the so-called "normal" mold. More often than not, these people, often the DM's friends, have other unusual interests, hobbies and personalities. Strong, unusual personalities tend to exert themselves in gaming and readily find ways to come into conflict with other strong, unusual personalities.

Try to keep the emphasis of the game on gaming. Privately encourage players to avoid discussing outside topics that will bring them into conflict. Be tolerant, even when pelted with dice (just don't let it get out of hand). Be a

peacemaker. Remember, these are friends.

Off Nights

"Look, I'm running this game! If I say your stupid dwarf is dead, then he's dead."

"But Thuenor should have been able to detect that trap. He made his detect trap roll just before you opened that pit up beneath him. Anyway, 6d6 is way too much damage for a 10-foot-deep pit."

"Then it was 40 feet deep and had spikes in the bottom. Same difference—he's dead!"

"But. . . forget it, I'll see what's on the tube. Let me know when everyone else dies."

What does it take to make a DM go sour? A rotten day at the office or school? Missed sleep? Family problems? A messed-up romance? The onset of pneumonia? Maybe even too much MSG in his Chinese takeout? Everyone has an off day sometime. Unfortunately, when the DM's turn takes place before a game session, everybody suffers.

When a DM feels that he is not in good enough shape to run a game, it may be a good idea to postpone it. Give players adequate warning though. No one likes to drive for an hour to find no game.

If the DM finds himself consistently doing those things which these rules say not to during a game, then by all means stop! Let someone else run the game this time.

Intra-party Treachery and Backstabbing

"You round the corner, following Lychor. Suddenly, you are surrounded by gnoll warriors. Your 'friend,' Lychor is nowhere to be seen."

"Grrrrr, that rat! We attack!"

"Before your group can do anything, Thuenor is struck by a dart, one of Lychor's black ones. As he feels its poison course through his veins, the dwarf hears 'that's for selling my spell book to the gnomes, you little wart'."

Playing adventurers "in character" often leads to situations where the motivations and personality of one character lead him into direct conflict with another. If so, the DM may find himself moderating a tit for tat encounter which readily escalates to an all-out war between the characters (and quite possibly their players, too).

Although team play is best for successful adventuring, don't entirely discourage small squabbles between characters. They are a part of role-playing and really do add to the game's richness and complexity by offering an occasional interesting twist. However, when these little pranks escalate to situations where bodily harm may occur to a character, step in and stop them. Take the involved parties aside and suggest that this behavior stop. If that doesn't work, use some element of the game to end the treachery.

Player Feuds

"Cindy, will you tell that piece of shit over there that if his retarded dwarf ever tries that stunt again, he's fuckin' toast."

"Oh yeah? Cindy, you tell hoser there that he can just forget his ride home tonight."

Always remember that this is a game and that characters in the DM's worlds exist free and clear of any personal problems that the players have with each other. If the DM suspects that intra-party treachery is occurring because player A dislikes player B, stop the activity immediately. Suggest that the players either behave themselves or find something else to do for the rest of the game session.

Pettiness

"The orcs attack the party while the fire giant goes after Sherimar."

"Hey, what is this, bash the halfling thief night? How come all the nasties head straight for my character? And what's a fire giant doing here? You said the ceiling was only nine feet high."

"He's standing in a low area that leads right to your character."

"Yeah, sure. You're still upset that your dumb trap won't work 'cause I found out that a magic missile *didn 't work that way, aren 't you? Guys, I need some help here. . ."*

Ever notice that sometimes the DM singles out a player's character for special punishment? Often that player did something to irritate the DM, like constantly arguing or disagreeing with the DM's judgment calls (rules lawyers beware!). So in turn, the DM goes out of the way to make life miserable (or succinctly short) for that character.

Regardless, it's wrong. Such petty behavior violates the tenets of DM neutrality and can cost the DM the trust of his players. If he treats one player unfairly, can they expect similar treatment?

If the DM finds that he is avenging himself on a single player, stop the game. Apologize and replace any losses before continuing on.

Me-Against-Them Mentality

"OK, so you trash the high priest and his pals.<Well, just as the old guy is dying from Thuenor's sword thrust, he pulls on a hidden cord. The loud gong summons every priest in the castle, and they all appear in were-beast form. Meanwhile, an 18 inch thick steel plate blocks the exit."

"I think she's mad at us, Frank, what do think?"

This is an extension *en masse* of DM pettiness. Maybe the players ganged up on the DM, foiling his best plans or backing up a fellow player's disagreement with a judgement call. So the DM retaliates. Neutrality is cast aside and the game becomes a shooting match, one that the DM can always win.

When someone realizes what's going on, either DM or player, they should speak up and stop the madness! lake a break, NOW! During the break, re-establish a policy of fair and informed decision making and mutually discussed disagreements. Consider replaying events that occurred after things got out of hand, allowing the DM some leeway to account for player knowledge of the situation.

Experts

"The martial artist leaps up at the three fighters, does a spinning side kick and knocks two of you down. B'rolfs hit points are reduced by twelve and Eyegor's by nine. He then . . ."

"No way, that's just not possible. A real martial artist would have to use two kicks and the fighters could have avoided them easily. I'm a brown belt in Tae Kwan Do and 1 know this stuff. Be real, and replay his attack the way it should be."

Assuming the player is a karate student (and the DM is not) he probably does know more about the martial arts than the DM. He could just as easily be an archery enthusiast challenging the DM on the realism of a barrage of arrows or an architect correcting the DM on his design of a castle. The point is that the player is better informed on the subject than the DM and as an "expert," he expects his special knowledge to both countermand one or more of the DM's game actions and allow his character to act as if he too possessed the same knowledge.

From the DM's point of view, his game has just been interrupted, his authority has been challenged, and more importantly, he has been made to look foolish because he apparently does not know his material. A less-principled DM may follow up on the urge to make a pay-back on the player's character later in the game. Yet there are other ways to more effectively deal with experts.

First of all, reinforce the authority of the DM. Regardless of what the expert says, the DM's judgement regarding a situation stands. This is a game, the rules were designed to be fun and playable, not perfect simulations of reality.

Second, and only if necessary, gently inform the player that his character probably would not have that type of information, and that you would appreciate it if he would accept the challenge of role-playing him in that manner.

Third, the DM has to accept that he himself is not the last word in every subject. Other people will probably know more about aspects of his world than he will ever have the inclination to even research. Look upon those players as resources, not just as thorns in the side. If a player brings up a point of realism that might be, useful part of the game, the DM should offer to work with him to design a rules variant that incorporates his knowledge.

The DM's campaign will be improved by an additional richness of detail and, more importantly, the player feels needed. In the end, he will feel more a part of the game (though he may regret it if his special rules eventually work to his detriment some day).

Know-it-alls

Four times during the game session, Rudy has informed the DM that the rules either don't reflect reality or that if the DM knew what he knew on the subject, the DM would obviously make a different decision. Each time, the subject was different and the player felt obliged to clarify the subject matter for all involved.

The expert (which we discussed above) and the know-it-all are two very closely related species of gamer. Chances are that the latter type of player does know his material, but the difference between them is that this fellow, the know-it-all, is very interested in letting people know that he knows more than they do and delights in the attention he gets when all eyes are focused on him.

The know-it-all is more a problem than the expert, since he has

an opinion on everything. While he may not directly challenge the DM's authority, he often wants to play his character in light of his own knowledge.

Again, as with the expert, the DM should inform the player that he should role-play the character as if he did not possess the knowledge. If this does not do it, enforce the decision. Don't allow the player's character to use knowledge he would not normally know.

Furthermore, the DM should admit that although he may not have as much information on the subject as the player, his decisions are based on the rules of the game and will stand unless their is unilateral player support for any rule variants.

When Players Cheat

"Allright, Grimbor hits again and does 12 points of damage. You want to see my roll? Um, I think I knocked the dice over just after I rolled them . . . uh, yeah that's the ticket."

Somehow, for some reason, some players think that it's OK to make up their own dice results. Yes, it improves the game outcome for their character, but is a character who always wins, who always does what he needs to do as well as it could be done, as fun to play as one who occasionally messes up? What about the drama involved in missing a die roll and then knowing that the next one has to be made or it's all over, and the glorious relief and excitement when that next roll succeeds. Character creation is often where the cheating begins. Instead of rolling dice for character stats (or using some other method generally approved of by the group), the player makes sure that his favorite character attributes and money or background rolls are loaded with the best possible results.

A player who fudges dice rolls in order to make things go better for his character only ruins the game for himself. From that point on, he never knows whether or not he really could have won through on his own merits. Lacking such confidence, he may feel that cheating is the only way he can succeed, both in the game and in life. And if that player is caught cheating, can his friends ever trust him again?

Player cheating hurts the quality of the game, it's hurts the other players, and it hurts the person cheating. How the DM deals with the cheat depends on his feelings toward wrongdoers in general, but the following course of action may be appropriate: Ask the player to redo the suspect die roll and suggest that all future rolls be made where all can see. The DM may wish to have other players develop a punishment for a cheater, something that deprives him of ill-gotten gain. If the cheating continues, ask the player to find another game group.

When DMs Cheat

The dice fall—sixteen, eighteen, and twenty-one, uh oh. The DM looks at his notes and back to the dice again. If he uses those results, half the party is dead. Still, they are the results of a fair dice roll. So close, yet so far. Still, instead of killing the characters outright, he could throw something else at them, something equally deadly, but which will give them a chance to survive—if they're clever.

In our earlier section on Pacing & Theatrics we talked about constructive cheating, or fudging. There, we suggested it as a way to improve the quality of the game. So now we have established a double standard: it's OK for DMs to cheat, but not players.

DM cheating, or 'fudging' should always be a last resort. Often, it serves as a way to get the party around a flaw in the design of an adventure—either something too deadly or an overemphasis placed on the outcome of a single die roll. DM fudging should never favor the monsters, a single character (or even all the players for that matter), or his desired plot outcome. Instead, the DM should only cheat when the outcome of a DM-controlled action would totally and pointlessly destroy the adventure. Unlike a computer adventure game, it's not always possible to restart a failed game from a saved game.

Cheating should be both constructive and give the players some control over their destiny. Don't let the players off too easy. Chances are the DM will feel just as cheated by that action as the players would feel if he wiped out the PCs. Instead of ignoring a deadly trap, let it go off, but give the characters time to react or escape.

Instead of killing a character with a deadly blow, have it destroy something of personal value to the character.

If the characters are overlooking something obvious that would save their lives, make the hints broader or find another way to draw their attention to it.

Lastly, if something would logically and reasonably destroy the entire PC group, modify the outcome just enough for a character

or two to make a conscious decision to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their fellows. They get the benefit of heroic death (from which there might be a return) and the adventure can continue from there.

One final note—don't let the players realize that the DM has cheated. Many players feel manipulated when they realize that the DM's intervention, not their own skills saved their bacon in a tight situation.

Rudeness

Randy: "Herb, wait until it's your turn."

Herb: "Oh, stuff it, dickbreath, my character's doing something more important than yours right now anyway."

Rita: "Guys, where's the last beer I left in the fridge? I can't find it."

Herb: "Hey, URRRRP!!, I'm sorry, OK? How was I to know that was your last bottle."

Grumpiness, grouchiness, bad manners, interrupting players during their turns, eating food that wasn't intended to be shared—whatever—the end result is that one player (or more) is acting in a way that insults or annoys his fellow players and the DM. This type of behavior encompasses a lot, from the guy who openly insults someone else (even a joke can hurt) to the fellow who presumes that the food in the host's fridge was provided for his benefit. Most people have enough tact to keep unpleasantries to themselves or to behave within the boundaries of common courtesy. When they don't, tension and bad feelings rapidly increase.

When it does happen, the DM needs to respond quickly and gently, but firmly. Ask the players to be civil to each other. Stress the need for team play. If necessary, set down some common courtesy rules.

Enforce a standard order of play, who goes first, regardless of where people are sitting or what their characters are doing.

When Nature Calls

"Yikes, it's eight o'clock! I was supposed to be home at 7:30! I'm in for it now. See you next week, guys."

"What happens to Frank's dwarf? Thuenor was the only fighter we had left."

It would be nice if the outside world could be kept from intruding on the DM's carefully ordered game world. However, players are people (it's really true!) and people often have commitments that take them away from the gaming table. The fact that Thuenor is the party's only fighter means little to a player's wife if he was supposed to be home an hour before. Likewise, a player's urgent need to "pay rent" on the two liters of soda pop he's ingested since the game began may not wait for a convenient rest break. Either way, a player character disappears from the game, often at an inopportune moment.

So what's a DM to do? Consider the following options:

He's dead Jim!

Without the player at the table to control him, the character dies, struck down by a bolt from heaven (or a sudden coronary). This heavy-handed style of play is not recommended if it seems likely that the DM would like to keep this player in his game (or even keep him as a friend).

Sleeping Beauty.

The character collapses in a limp heap. Nothing can wake him and nothing can hurt him. For the convenience of the other characters, the afflicted one could move around like a sleepwalker, a somnambulating zombie. Like Snow White, the sleeping character waits to be reawakened. How he gets out of the dungeon, whether he must be carried or walks zombie-like on his own, is up to the DM.

There's No Place Like Home

When the player leaves, his character is instantly teleported to wherever it is that the adventurers hang out between quests. All hit points, experience points and accumulated treasure are intact. Of course, if the PC group doesn't return here at the end of the play session, the DM must come up with an equally implausible way to return the character to be with his comrades. Warning: some bright player is going to figure out that this is a quick way out of a bad spot. When the PCs find themselves surrounded by bugbears, he says "Gosh, lookit the time, well I gotta be going now!"

Into the Bermuda Triangle

Some fluke of the universe swallows the character and he disappears to who knows where, possibly another plane where time

passes not. When the player conies back, his character reappears from limbo and time starts again.

Polymorph to NPC

When the player leaves, his character becomes a nonplayer character under the control of the DM. His character still fights and even takes risks, but cannot lead or propose innovative solutions. Whether or not the character gains experience is up to the DM. When the player returns once more his character is returned to him, along with any wounds or treasure he may have accumulated.

Changing Hands

Control of the character shifts to another player until his original player's return. The new player treats the character just like one of his own. Unfortunately, any secret information recorded on the character sheet is revealed to the new player. Furthermore, any special knowledge known only to the original player and the DM is usually not shared.

The solution really depends on the playing style of the group and how long the player expects to be gone and possibly even his reason for leaving. Zapping the character of a player who has to make a mad dash for the bathroom is grossly unfair, but the same cannot be said for the player who becomes engrossed in a movie showing on television.

All in all, we have found that the last two solutions, polymorphing into an NPC and changing hands, work well in almost every situation. Most of the other, more dramatic solutions, should be used sparingly (if at all) for they tend to disturb the "suspension of disbelief which is integral to any role-playing game.

Whatever the choice, remember this: chances are that the DM may find himself a player in campaign run by that very same player. Revenge is often fatal, final and unpleasantly sweet.

Shut Up, You're Dead

"Sandy, have Clarissa the mighty open the left side of the box first."

"Sandy, I'm afraid you can't act on that. Dave's character is dead and he's not fuckin' here right now, are you Dave?"

"Uh, no, I guess not, but I think she should also eckchay for apstray before opening the box."

"Yeah, Clarissa checks for traps before opening the left side of the box."

"Arrrrghh. Dave, get out of here and roll your next character— and put him about a million experience points in the hole, too!"

Is the DM going to allow communication between players whose characters are either dead or separated by a sound-stifling distance? The situation is bound to arise. The character who takes independent actions may try to pass on what he has learned to his compatriots to help them catch up (or, more likely, rescue him from some predicament) or the sole survivor of a party gets lots of help from his deceased buddies when he tries to solve the puzzle that stands between himself and freedom (and, coincidentally, the opportunity to resurrect their characters).

While some DMs may not care, after all the point is to have fun, others may find having their best trap foiled by a character acting on 'spirit voice' tips from a the corpse of a recent companion.

Each DM must decide this point for himself and if voices from beyond seem unfair to him, then he needs to say so and make a suitable punishment for the crime (one that affects all parties concerned).

Never **Say Impossible**

"My Dwarf fighter, Thuenor, throws his mattock so it lands on top of the wall, steps back, and, with a short run, leaps up to grab the top of the wall. He gets his weapon, dives into the water, and swims to the far shore."

"Six impossible things before breakfast, eh, Frank? (Sigh.) You sure that he doesn't want to walk on the water instead? OK, I'm gonna need some die rolls."

Players want their characters to do the darndest things. They're heroes, right? Heroes do heroic things. Yet, reality (often in the form of immutable physical or magical laws) has to be considered.

Don't tell a player that he can't do something. If the task is at all possible (even if hideously difficult) allow the character a chance at it, say a 1 in 100 chance for something that's darn near impossible. If the task is impossible, let the player know it by the dice roll he is asked to make. For example, "Go ahead, Frank, Thuenor needs an unmodified roll of 21 on a d20 to swim with his armor on."

Instead of telling a player his

good character can't do something evil (y'know, taking candy from a baby or something equally wrong), let the local authorities teach him the error of his ways. After his character is stockaded, loses most of his possessions, and finds that his Constitution attribute has dropped a point due to that unpleasant disease he contracted in prison, he may think twice before doing evil again.

On the other hand, don't go overboard on the punishment. Make it fair and reasonable (unless, of course, the infracting player already knows that the local authori-"j ties are NOT fair and reasonable *f* themselves). Don't kill a character for spitting on the sidewalk (unless, of course, the locals worship sidewalks and he has defiled their god).

The plus side of giving the characters a chance to dice their way out of nigh-impossible situations is that it gives them a chance to get out of situations that would otherwise automatically kill them.

Overdone Independent Action

"OK, Gary, the three fighters Hank around to the left, Sherimar the thief works her way across the wall above the door, and the wizard, Lychor, walks up the middle as if he suspected nothing."

"Fine. Except that Lychor doesn 't seem to be here anymore."

"What?"

"Where'd he go?"

"Grrrrr!"

"I'm going to get that sneak."

"Quit snickering Dave, where's that mage of yours gotten off to?"

"Waitaminit guys. Change of plans, Gary. We're gonna leave the ogres for later. Let's go nuke us a wizard!"

Successful adventuring parties survive and thrive because of teamwork. Yet not every player feels that his character's best interests are served by continually going along with the group's actions. More often than not, these are the players whose characters are not the leader types. Their characters hang near the back while the party's movers and shakers plot the team's next action. Notes passed to the DM from these players describe activities to be performed (secretly if possible) by the player's character. When the group goes one way, the independent PC goes the other.

Such independent ventures are risky, since the DM has often designed his world to accommodate a group, and can easily result in a swift doom for the character. However, because the character often relies on guile and stealth, he may succeed at something where the full party might otherwise fail. Should he succeed, he has his pick of rewards, ones that he may wish to keep to himself and not share with his fellows.

Needless to say, other players become upset when one of their own disappears, probably to get the choice pick of a treasure that should rightfully be shared among all. Yet, unfair treasure division should be the least of their worries.

A character prone to selfish activities may decide to change sides, to go to work for the foe (particularly if he has been captured and offered his life in return for betrayal). Worse yet, a lone character is an easy mark for creatures who can shapechange or use illusions to assume new identities. That wizard who disappears and then returns may not be the person who left the group, but may instead be a doppleganger.

Independent action can be fun for both the DM and the player willing to risk his character, but when it happens too frequently, it leads to the problem of the split group. In such cases, the DM is forced to run two (or more) separate groups at the same time. Still worse, it can lead to both intra-party treachery and player feuds.

"No, wait, I change my mind."

"Bruno says 'Go eat sjelkunga berries, scroggly face' to the old man."

"OK, Bruno, you've just insulted N'gojorogo, the high chief of all the J'garta barbarian tribes. He is unimpressed by your manners and orders the young chieftain, the one you thought was in charge here, to have you pierced through with poisoned spears."

"No, wait, that's not what Bruno says. . . what he really said was. . ."

Bruno's player seems to have neglected to think about the consequences of his player's actions. He has committed a wrong, and now that he has to pay the price, he wants to recall his action, to make it as if it had never happened. One can bet that if the DM had said, "the old man quivers in fear and offers you 100 gold coins in tribute" that player wouldn't want to change his mind.

Bruno's player is not alone. The DM will have to deal with the same problem more often than he might like. If the players have been pre-

sented with adequate information to make necessary game decisions, they should not be given the opportunity to change their mind once they learn the consequences.

On the other hand, if it is reasonably obvious that a player didn't have all the facts, even though he was paying attention, be lenient and allow the change.

To avoid the situation, try enforcing a policy of "if you say it, you do it." This can be taken so far as to say that anything the player says at the game table that is not a direct conversation with the DM is something that is also said by his character.

Gaming Too Often

Dear John: Think back. When did we last spend a Saturday together? Can't remember? Well, all your Saturdays are free from now on. My lawyer will call next week. With regrets, your soon-to-be-ex-wife, Sharon.

It is often a mistake to attempt the scheduling of a game session each and every week. Other friends and especially family would probably like to see you on a regular basis. Try for a three weeks on, one week off schedule. In addition to an improved social life, the DM may find that these regularly scheduled breaks may prevent absenteeism in a campaign and can provide extra time to work on his ideas and adventures.

Insufficient Players

"Shouldn't they have all been here by now? . . . If we don't start soon, there won't be enough time to do anything. . . . I doubt if Clarissa the mighty and Whandar can take on this quest by themselves tonight. . . I've tried calling, but nobody's home. . . I'm certain they knew there was a game tonight."

It happens—at the last minute nearly everybody cancels out, leaving the DM and one or two other players sitting alone in a room trying to decide how to proceed. Unfortunately, the campaign often depends on having all the PCs and the creativity of those who didn't show up. If the DM lets the players who did show run a herd of NPCs, much of the plot value of the game is gone. If he lets them run the other players' characters, he either has to enforce the 'reality'

and 'permanence' of any damage or death that occurs or treat the whole play session as a dream sequence that never really happened. Although this cheats the actual players out of experiencing this part of the adventure, they are the ones who chose not to show up.

The other alternative is not to run the regular campaign that night. The DM might consider the following instead:

Teleport or *gate* the player characters who showed up into another adventure. Let them gain additional experience points here, but don't let them be permanently killed (make it a dream experience).

Run a separate adventure, say something from a magazine, or even an extemporaneous story adventure.

The last may be the best. Put away the AD&D® game material and get out a fun board game, a deck of cards, or even a video game. Relax, have a good time, and continue the campaign next session.

The Too-big Party

"Table *number three, I'll take the statements of intent from your characters now. Please be quick, I'd like to get in at least three rounds of combat tonight. And now for the RPGA scoring…"*

For every group that can't get enough players, there's always one that has too many. Often, the reason is a popular DM. He runs a good game and players want to play in his campaign. He only has time for one group, so everyone plays together.

Regardless of the DM's skills at crowd control, a group with more than eight players is a cumbersome entity. Three to six players is best. Actual numbers aside, if the size of the group is too large to manage, split it up. Ask another player to run one of the splinter groups. If the players are willing, and space allows, run the two groups at the same time (big basement rec-rooms are great for this). Consider having both DMs run the same material and occasionally switching back and forth between groups.

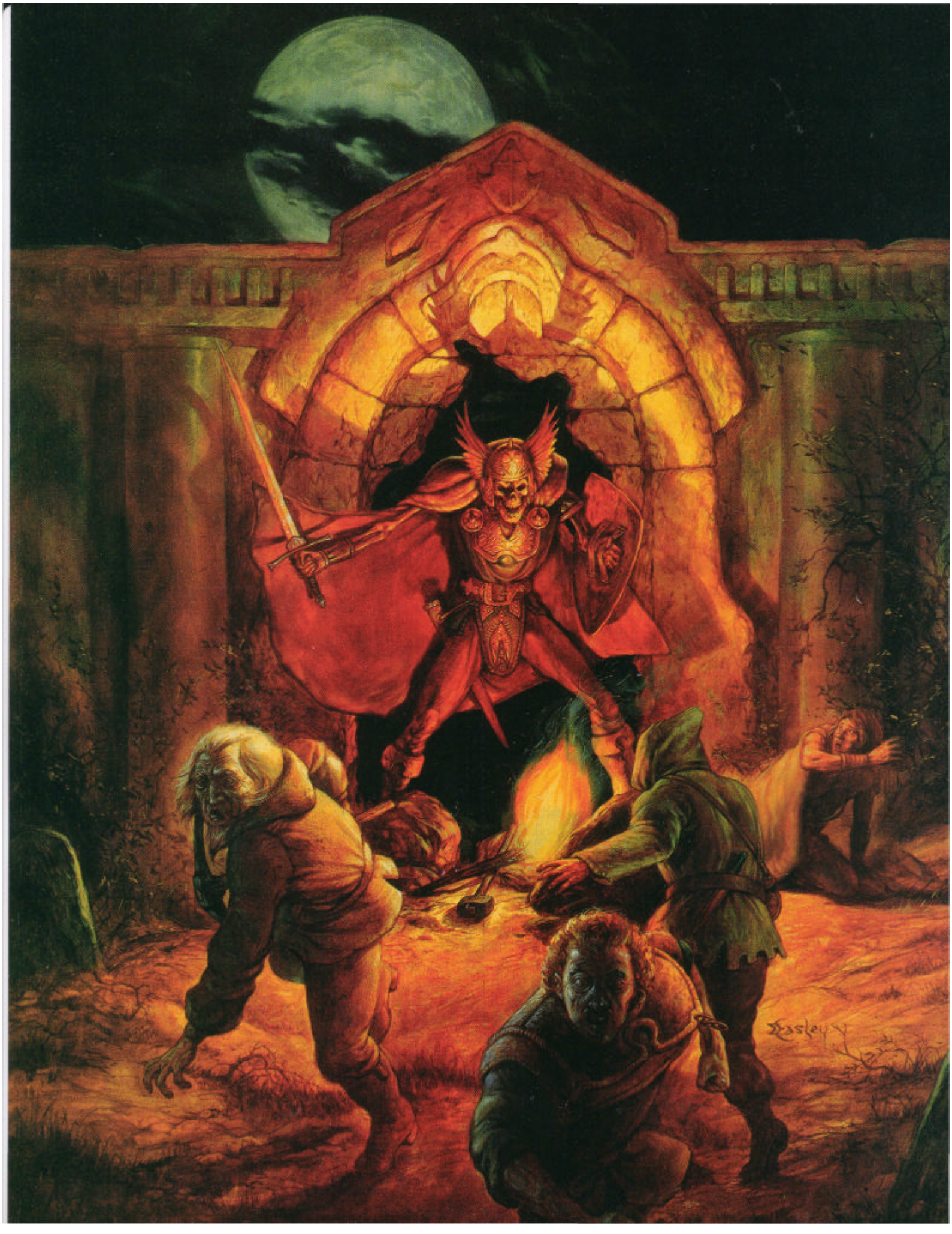
DM Burnout

The DM sat staring at his game notes. Before him lay a sheet of note paper, blank except for an aimless doodle. For nearly an hour, no inspiration had come for Saturday's game, making tonight a dismal repeat of last night. In fact even running the game seemed like a terminal chore.

Authors call it "writer's block." Business executives call it "burn out". Whatever the name, it can affect DMs, too. The general symptoms include a lack of inspiration for new game material, a loss of enthusiasm about running games, and the dismal feeling after a game that you didn't do a good job.

Chances are that it's not something that the DM has really ever considered. Most game players play games because they love them. The thought that they could become tired of it never crosses their mind. Yet, it happens.

The solution is to quit— take a vacation. Get away from gaming or at least from DMing for a while. Recharge the old creative juices by reading good books, seeing good movies (and not just genre stuff), and becoming a regular player for a while. If the DM has been running games long enough to burn out, then one or more of the players in his campaign should be competent enough to run their own games. Ask one of them to run their own campaigns until the burned out DM has had a chance to recuperate and become excited about the possibility of running his own game again. Don't push it, though. Relax and just enjoy not having the responsibility of DMing for a while. Hey, maybe this is a good time to get familiar with the *Player's Handbook* again.



It's possible to pick up a novel and read the chapters out of sequence and still say you've read the book. The pulse-pounding action, convoluted intrigue, and character growth are all there, but the reader has wasted the book's true entertainment potential. Everything's taken out of context and there's no continuity.

In a like vein, players and DMs can have enormous fun playing individual, unrelated AD&D® game adventures without ever creating a game world or developing a continuing campaign. Campaign style play may not be for everyone. Still, like the out-of-sequence book, something is missing. The characters live their "lives" out of context. They have mighty adventures, yet no eternal mysteries are solved by their actions, no peoples are rescued by their deeds, and no world celebrates their glories. The players know the outcome of each episode, but are uninvolved in the book that could be.

A game campaign exists to provide a framework for a number of connected game adventures. The campaign is more than a game world or a clever plot line. It must be a place for the player characters to live, grow, and develop. For their character development to have any meaning beyond inflicting megadeath, acquiring zillions of experience points, and collecting vast, tax-free inventories of gold coins and arcane devices, the characters need a world upon which their actions, the outcomes of their adventures, can have a real effect; a world whose events, in turn, affect the player characters themselves.

When properly created, the campaign is a living, breathing, growing, and most importantly, changing game environment. It is a place that the DM builds, but which gains its life from the continued involvement of both the DM and his players.

Dividing the Work

From this point onward, the goal will be to get the DM up and running, creating his game world, moderating game play, and dealing with one of the more challenging aspects of gaming—the players themselves.

The first task then, is that of world creation. It is possible to avoid this step completely. Commercially developed campaign worlds like the WORLD OF GREYHAWK®, FORGOTTEN REALMS™ or DRAGONLANCE® campaign settings, can set things moving quickly for the DM. Much (though not all) of the background work involved in creating a fantasy game setting has already been done. These fantastical game worlds have been mapped, populated and imbued with life by the designers, writers, artists, and editors involved in their creation. They are rich in details and good examples of what campaigns can develop into. Still, most DMs get the urge to create worlds of their own, making fantastic realms based on their own fertile imaginations.

For the determined DM, a challenging task lies ahead. Campaign creation is fun, often even more challenging and exciting than actually playing, but it's also work-time-consuming work. For both the novice and experienced DM alike, the time required to create a new, original game world can be daunting. The thought of spending endless hours building a world from scratch may seem overwhelming. There is a lot of work involved, but it need not all be done at once. Start small and work upward and outward from the core of ideas upon which the campaign is based. Don't do more work than is initially required to give the players a taste of the world in which they live. The wise DM will never put more work into a campaign than he can reasonably get back in play value and neither must he do all the work himself.

The DM's first step is to get organized. Have a folder ready for notes about the campaign world. Three-ring, loose-leaf binders are a good way to keep your notes in one handy place. Don't mix unrelated information. Use index dividers to keep related notes together. Even if the sewers beneath the city are the place where the PCs will adventure, keep those "dungeon" notes separate from the city descriptions.

Next, think about the general nature of the world and focus on the locale in which the characters will adventure. Will it be a land of warring medieval baronies, a remote and rugged wilderness, an arid desert realm, or a sophisticated oriental empire? The DM may wish to base the world around a favorite fantasy novel or even historical Earth. Whatever the desired feel, the DM should keep his plan in mind when developing pieces of the world.

Third, divide the work of creating the world into easy-to-handle stages. Don't try to do it all at once. Start small. Write ideas down as they come and leave room for them to grow. Not everything need be in place before the first game session, just enough to give a bit of local flavor, or a sense of position

within the world. At first, only a limited area, called a core area, need be described. Beginning player characters need not know much more.

Consider starting in a remote part of the world, close enough to civilization to be settled by humans, but far enough away to be of little immediate concern to the lords of the land. A village or even a friendly wayside inn provides a base of operations for the characters, a place for them to rest, recover from adventures and spend treasure gained during encounters. A road or two should go somewhere, though the locals may only know that it goes to the next village. If the village has a temple or a shrine attended by a cleric (who is willing to heal wounds), determine which deity the cleric serves.

Build outward from the core area. Before the second play session the DM should map out major terrain features for several days' journey around the characters' base of operations and have a large-scale map of the land in which the adventures take place, including the positions and names of major cities and landmarks.

Involving the Players

Asking the DM to even attempt to handle every aspect of game world creation is similar to asking the architect of a major construction project to do the plumbing and wiring himself. Chances are he can do it sooner or later, but meanwhile, the building goes unfinished. In a like manner, the DM can take forever and try to cover every detail of his world himself, but why do it? Why not involve the players? Let them do some of the work of creating cultures, religions, and area maps for parts of the world. Great idea, but how?

Let the players come from parts of the world other than where the campaign will initially take place. If a player wants to play a seafaring barbarian, give him a coastal or island area from which his people originate. Give him a peek at what has been roughed out for that area. Encourage the player to make notes about what goes on in his corner of the world. Much of this can come from his character background. Who are his people's gods? Do they have any peculiar customs? What are the major cities? Encourage the player to draw the regional maps for his homeland. The more the player details his character's culture and homeland, the more he designs that portion of the DM's world.

In a similar manner, the players of priests and paladins can expand upon the nature of gods and religions in the DM's world. Thief characters may be both the basis for a thieves' guild and an overview of the laws of the land (particularly as they relate to larceny).

Now this doesn't mean that everything that the player says has to be law. In fact, the creative DM will take what the player gives him, and modify it ever so slightly to reflect what the DM knows to be true of his world (things the player's character wouldn't or couldn't know). Does it matter that the player knows what part of the world map looks like? Not particularly. It is his character's homeland.

Listen to the players. Although much of the core design and development falls on the DM's shoulders, don't design the world without listening to the players. What do they want to do? What kind of adventures do they seek? What interests them? Design the core area and the first adventure to meet these desires. It would be folly to design a campaign around political intrigue or a grand mystery when what the players really want are monster hunts and dungeon crawls. As the players become involved in the DM's world, the DM can rely upon them for inspiration.

To choose to be a Dungeon Master is to accept the responsibility of creating fun, challenging adventures for eager players and their characters, and developing a larger setting in which their adventures are to take place. This setting must be one that takes on life, developing and growing on its own. This eventually takes the form of a unique fantasy world, which takes shape with lands, legends, and peoples drawn from the DM's fertile imagination. While it's possible to run a campaign entirely within the confines of someone else's pre-made world, such as the DRAGONLANCE® campaign lands of Krynn or in the vast reaches of the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ campaign setting, there is no greater glory for a DM than to run adventure campaigns set in his own world.

A Big Job Made Easy

Even for an experienced DM, starting a new world is *a.* daunting, even personally threatening prospect. So much work lies ahead that one wonders if the eventual fun will be worth the effort.

While it may merely daunt an experienced DM, the project can overwhelm the novice—so much to do, so much to know. Yet the tasks can be scaled down and made to fit a DM's available time, energy, and ambition.

The good news is that all the work of world creation need not be done before playing out the first adventure. The guidelines that describe how to create an entire world can be scaled down to apply to something much smaller, to a small kingdom off the beaten path, a little barony that needs the attention of a motley band of heroes, or an isolated island with access to places of mystery. If the players' characters begin as local folk, they do not need to know more of their world. In fact they probably will not know much more than the fields around their own village or keep. Thus, at first, the DM can limit his world design to a mere microcosm of that world.

The very important aspect of history need not include much more than the last few generations of local lore and at least some idea (if only for the DM's benefit) of why those old ruins are slowly crumbling out there in the woods.

A great campaign can begin as simply as just described. As the DM's time permits, his world can

grow outward from a core of these first little kernels. The backwater barony turns out to be a small fief in a larger kingdom, the local temple is revealed as a heretical branch of the primary religion in the area (causing some hot water for any cleric characters when they leave the shelter of their home town), the cherished and respected local lord is found to be a pretender, a local bandit chieftain turns out to be a large scale international criminal, and so forth.

By beginning small, the DM can also test his pet ideas and keep or discard them as he finds they work or fail miserably. A general guide for deciding if something works or not is to ask yourself: Was the concept easy to understand and were the players excited or intrigued by the idea when it was presented to them? If the answer is no to either part of the question, then it may be a good idea to discard it and try something else.

Getting Started

The decision to make "the plunge" has been made. The experienced or novice DM has decided to make a new world. He accepts the challenges that lie before him and understands that it is no small project he undertakes. Since a large task is always easier when partitioned into smaller, easier-to-handle chunks, it is best to divide the work into stages. For world creation, those stages are outlined below:

- World Building: Its geology & ecology
- Filling with Fauna: Its beasts
- Populations: Its sentient inhabitants
- Social Structure: Government & cultural structure
- Ancient History: What forms the basis for the world's current state of affairs?
- Mythology: Gods, legends, & lore
- Fantasy: A final evaluation of the world in light of a fantastic imagination.

Just as they are in our own world, these aspects are tightly intertwined with one another. As one phase of the world develops it affects subsequent phases and may require that the DM change material he has already created. Don't let ideas get away, even the ones that are thrown out. Keep notes of ideas that appear spontaneously, you never know when you will be able to use them in another project!

Campaign Overview

The first step toward creating a personalized campaign world would seem to be drawing a map of that world and placing the important geographic features. Yet to do that immediately would be a mistake. The first, and possibly most important step is to think about the world to be created. A DM who has come this far will usually have preconceived ideas about what he wishes his world to be. Ideas have been collecting and gestating in his mind while he was a player in someone else's campaign or when he ran his old game. Even though the design process will generate new possibilities, these first ideas are important. Commit them to paper! Ultimately, they will shape the new world.

What kind of things should be included? The DM should ask himself questions or make notes about key features he wishes to incorporate in his campaign. Will the new world have a pair of twin volcanoes whose molten innards touch upon the plane of fire? Write it down! Is there a canyon complex that dwarfs the Grand Canyon of the American southwest? Make a note of that! How about nomadic samurai elves who are the last remnants of a dying race from another plane of existence? Great idea, record it!

Assume that the laws of nature in the world have some bearing on our own. Note any differences that might affect play or add color to the game world, then let it be in effect for the rest of the game.

The more ideas that are put to paper, the more the DM will know about his preferences for his world before he begins making choices about its final design.

Along with any ideas that spring to mind, the DM should know (and have written down) at least some information on the following topics regarding his world-to-be:

- What is the dominant sentient race?
- What other races dwell in the world?
- What is the general culture or technological level of the area where adventuring will begin? Are the characters barbarians, members of a feudal society with towering castles, or perhaps even dwellers in a crumbling, decadent civilization?
- Have previous civilizations existed here before the ones that currently thrive? Did they leave lots of ruins?
- What types of climate areas will be readily available to adventure in? Examples include arctic regions, deserts, and

temperate or tropical zones.

- What type of major geographic features (like mountains, oceans, deserts) might be fun to use in running adventures?
- How prevalent is magic use?
- What kind of really exotic terrain features exist in the world?

As the world develops, these initial thoughts will guide its creation, though some may be discarded as unworkable. Keep any ideas that are discarded for this world. Chances are that someday, there will be a need to create another world—one in which that discarded idea will fit perfectly.

Realism versus Fantasy

A great deal can be said for creating a "real" world—one that is entirely familiar to the players. The logic here is that if the players are able to accept the physics of the world as normal, similar to what they know to be true in our own world, they will be able to suspend their disbelief of the DM's world. In theory, they are able to concentrate upon role-playing their characters. On the other hand, if the DM's world is to be just like our own, there is really no need to create a new world. The DM might just as well use maps of medieval Europe or pre-Columbian North America for his campaign world.

A creative DM should not feel constrained to make a world that could fit on our own planet. His goal, his end product, should be a fantasy world, the product of his imagination. If a DM wants water to flow uphill, have clouds that can be walked upon, design a swamp that is bordered by desert, or locate a tropical valley between ranges of arctic mountains, he should feel free to do it. However, he should also remember that even in a world where magic works and the fantastic is the norm, there must be a reason for things to happen. ;

The same rationale that allows a player to readily accept a world patterned on our own can be made to work for even the most fantastic of worlds, so long as the DM can convince the players that the fantastical nature of his world is normal. If the player characters know that the world has a red sun, or that water flows out of the oceans due to an attraction to waterspouts found atop hills and mountains, they recognize that these are natural features of the world in which they live, and though different from what they know, should be able to believe in it.

Remember, though, that a fantastic world feature that is found everywhere will soon be treated as commonplace and will rapidly lose its distinctiveness. Truly fantastic things, places or events should be localized to one region or be just plain rare. They then remain oddities, worthy of investigation by foolhardy adventurers.

World Building

Every DM approaches world-building in a unique way, governed more by personal interests and preferences than any other definable factor. The temptation is to focus on an aspect of world creation that specifically interests oneself and let the rest kind of, well sort of, you know, just happen like it should. When this sort of haphazard technique is used, true-to-life details prevail in one part of the world design while apparently obvious facets of another are totally ignored. Thus it is possible to visit worlds with exotic, yet realistic geography that are populated by a homogenous population of medieval baronies, all growing wheat and making vast quantities of plate armor, or worlds with incredibly detailed ecosystems built upon terrain not too distantly removed from dungeon floor plans.

It readily becomes apparent that not everyone is a master world designer, regardless of his knowledge of our own world. Still, as in so many things, practice does make perfect. Even if one is an experienced DM and knows how to create a world, it still is a good idea to read through these step-by-step suggestions—there's a good chance that even the most experienced DM may come across something that just hadn't occurred to him before.

Although the goal is to create a fantastic adventuring environment, the steps used to create a good world, fantastic or mundane, remain the same. Follow the steps below, but more importantly, feel free to follow your own instincts when it comes to designing a world for your adventures.

After the initial concepts are in place, world design often depends on a DM's skill at map making. If the DM is unfamiliar with the techniques needed for good map design, he should feel free to flip ahead and read the section on map making before continuing here.

Choose a Scale

The first step in world creation is to decide how much area the world map will include. As mentioned

earlier, it isn't necessary to create an entire planet, a continent, or even a kingdom at one time. This discussion will deal with an area the size of a continent, but the DM should stick to something that he is comfortable with, regardless of size.

At this stage, it is a good idea to start mapping out ideas. If hex paper (special mapping paper marked off with a hexagonal grid) is used, assign a scale to each hex. Otherwise, use a convenient unit of measurement, such as an inch, to mark distances on the map. The chapter on map making gives more detail on maps and map scale. For our sample continent map, we will assume that the DM is using a blank sheet of paper with a scale of 50 miles to the half inch. Thus, on a standard *8 1/2* by 11 inch sheet of paper we can map an area 850 miles by 1,100 miles—just under one million square miles!

If more space is desired, simply fasten two or more sheets of map paper together side by side; or use an even larger scale, such as 75, 100, or even 150 miles to the half inch. Don't worry about losing detail, at this stage all that is important is describing the size and shape of the world and locating its most prominent features. Later on, portions of the map can be scaled down into regional maps for greater detail.

When using a hex grid, remember that the world's outline and any other features need not follow the boundaries between the hexagons—in fact, it's much better if they are not restricted by the hexagons at all. The hexes are there only to regulate the size and distances on the map. The hexes should be assumed to be non-existent when the map is being drawn. Perhaps the best thing to do is draw the map out in rough form on blank paper and transfer it to the hex paper later.

Start at the Bottom

Decide whether the world is going to be the size of a continent or just part of one. Pencil in an outline that describes the coastline. Remember that not all coastlines are the same. An area that has been subjected to glacial activity will be substantially different from areas that have always been swamps or deserts.

Now is the time to plan for major islands, long peninsulas, massive bay areas, and isthmuses connecting large land masses and other ultra-large-scale geographic features. Decide now whether the continent is an isolated island itself (like Australia) or connects with other land masses (like Africa, Europe, and Asia or North and South America). Unless there is a reason to create a continent surrounded by water, extend the land mass off one or more edges of the map. This keeps options open for later expansion that can be done without having to redraw existing maps. If the DM eventually decides that the continent is only an island, the map can be extended to incorporate the previously uncharted coastal areas.

At this point, the map shows all the places where the land meets the sea, at least as far as the major land masses are concerned. By definition, these coastal contour lines also show the location of zero elevation, or sea level.

Work up to the top

Decide where to place the major mountain ranges, and determine how high the tallest peaks will rise. Don't make them too frequent or too high; characters shouldn't have to scale something the size of Mount Everest once every few days during a cross-country trek. On the other hand, don't make them consistently low, otherwise they won't provide a good challenge or change of pace.

When placing mountains, consider the following: If the fantasy world being created is similar to our own world, then the theory of plate tectonics or continental drift can be used to place mountain ranges. According to this theory, mountains are created when one tectonic plate—a moving section of the earth's surface—presses against another plate. The incredible pressure crumples the earth and raises up towering peaks all along the contact area. Where such activity is ongoing, the peaks will be high, bleak, jagged, and rocky. Where activity happened during ancient history, the mountains will be gentler, heavily overgrown, and forested—more like huge hills, as is the case of the Appalachians near the eastern shore of North America.

Also bear in mind the large effect that mountains have on a real world's climate and social structure. They can shield areas from rainfall, creating deserts; act as natural barriers, separating adjacent cultures; and, importantly for a fantasy world, they are rarely fully explored or exploited.

Locate the highest peaks individually and decide how high they stand. If any peaks are higher than 10,000 feet, draw shapes around

those points indicting the 10,000-foot elevation. Then do the same for a line of 5,000-foot elevations (remember, for scale comparison, that a mile is 5,280 feet long).

The map is now a rough topographical map, showing the highest points of elevation on the continent and the area's lines of elevation at 5,000 foot increments. The rough shape of the world, in all three dimensions, has now been determined.

The above assumes a realistic approach to mountain placement. For reasons known only to him, the DM may wish to entirely ring his continent with mountains leaving a small strip of land along the coast, or cluster his major mountain range Alp-like in the center of his continent. Likewise, mountains can be placed at this time to isolate special or forbidden lands. This is also the time to place some of those fantastic terrain features that the DM has in his notes. If the DM is considering a large, high, inaccessible plateau, or an area pocked by gigantic meteorite craters, place them now. Like mountains, they will have a significant effect on later design.

Place It On the Planet

Decide where the world is located with respect to the poles and equator of the planet of which it is a part (again, this makes a broad assumption that the world is part of a planet and not some exotic plane). Then note some rough boundaries where climatic zones change. The world need not run the gamut /from arctic to tropical climate, but on the other hand, it doesn't need to be the size of Earth's northern or southern hemisphere in order to contain all five climatic regions. At this time, determine the direction of the prevailing winds in each climatic area of the world. The five brief climate descriptions that follow should aid in this.

Most worlds will contain five distinct climatic regions: arctic, subarctic, temperate, subtropical, and tropical. Briefly described, these regions are as follows:

Arctic

These climates are most often associated with polar regions, where it is usually frigidly cold. In fact, it is so cold year round that agriculture is generally impossible. Sentient beings live here only if they are equipped to survive in a deep freeze. Gentle to moderate (but very cold!) winds blow from east to west.

Sub arctic climate

Winters here are long, harsh, and cold— but daytime temperatures in the summer can reach or exceed 80 degrees. A short agricultural season is possible. Winds are more active here than in the arctic and are generally westerly. As a rule, they blow from the direction of the arctic in the winter and from the opposite direction in the summer months.

Temperate

In our own world this essentially encompasses the continental United States of America. It is the area of greatest temperature extremes, from bitterly frigid winters to steamy hot summers. Winds are usually westerly (although eastern coastal breezes are common).

Subtropical

This is an area of climatic extremes that are closely tied to terrain features. It can include vast rainless deserts or dense jungles where it rains constantly. Days during the warm months can be uncomfortably hot, while nights during the cooler months can be quite brisk. Winds of variable velocity blow from the east, often coming from the equator.

Tropical

These regions are as consistently hot as the arctic is cold. The temperature rarely drops below 70 degrees Fahrenheit, except in high areas or during the cold months when a "cold snap" of 60 to 65 degrees may occur. Summers are unbearably hot—especially in low, flat lands or desert areas. Winds are generally mild and easterly.

Now is also the time to note any glaciations present in the mountain ranges. Most mountain ranges in arctic and sub arctic climates and to a lesser extent, some high mountain ranges in other climatic zones will have glaciers. These great, slowly-moving rivers of ice that flow downward, relentlessly scouring the world in their path. Where possible, they extend until they reach the ocean. At the ocean, pieces of the glacier fragment off to become icebergs, the bane of ships in frigid seas.

Just Add Water!

With the low and high regions of the planet determined and the general climatic regions laid out, the DM's next step is to add some rivers and lakes.

Rivers begin at some high elevation and run away from the source, toward an ocean, large lake, or some other place nearer zero elevation. A large river usually has

several tributaries (feeder rivers) that flow into it, and extremely large river systems (such as the Mississippi in North America or the Amazon in South America, and all the tributaries that feed them) are rarely found more than once in a continent-sized area. The presence of mountain chains affects this. Precipitation falling on one side of the range feeds one river basin, while precipitation on the other side feeds into another.

Large inland bodies of water (including wide-ranging river systems and huge lakes) are less frequent in sub arctic climates than in warmer areas, but a sub arctic region may be laced with a dense and intricate network of smaller rivers and lakes. Be generous when laying in rivers and lakes, yet don't run streams through every hex unless the world is intended to have no deserts.

Swamps, fens, large marshes, and other wetlands fall into the category of water. Wetlands exist where the movement of water through an area has either been hampered or where low-lying ground has been filled by water from a nearby source, such as a river, lake, or ocean. Place wetlands in lower elevation areas, such as along the seacoast and in areas with many rivers and lakes.

What's for Desert?

With water courses and bodies placed, it's time to plan out desert areas. Have an eraser handy for this stage (if one hasn't been used already), because several rivers and lakes may have to "dry up" to make way for desertification.

In our own world, deserts are primarily found in or near the subtropics. The cause is the global wind pattern. Prevailing winds blow east to west around the equator and in the opposite direction in temperate regions. When the opposing winds meet over the subtropics, cool, moisture-bearing air is forced downward where it is warmed by the earth. The warm air retains moisture better and rarely releases it as precipitation.

Farther away from the tropics, deserts are often located on the downwind sides of high mountain ranges. When moist winds strike the slope of a mountain, they are forced upward. The air cools as it rises and since the cool air cannot retain moisture as well, rain falls

on the mountain's upwind slopes. By the time the air crosses the mountains, much of its moisture is depleted.

With these conditions in mind, place deserts in the world accordingly. Obliterate rivers (or at least change their course) if the map shows water flowing through an area that in all likelihood would be desert.

Planting Forests

By placing high mountains (10,000 feet plus), deserts, arctic regions, and lakes, the DM has created a number of places that forests cannot grow. Now decide where they do appear. Mark in the forest areas of the world, remembering that they are more likely to be located near large bodies of water or where rainfall is plentiful (such as the upwind slopes of high mountains). Assume that the world has not been heavily lumbered. Don't go above the tree line on mountains (10,000 feet, where arctic conditions begin) and don't place a forest next to a desert unless there is a specific reason for creating "unearthly" terrain in that area.

Other Common Features

Any terrain that has not been designated as seacoast, mountain, swamp, desert, or forest must either be hills or plains (although hills can include ridges, razorbacks, or badlands and plains may mean rolling prairie, arid steppe, or frozen tundra, each of which is a unique type of geographical feature). If it has no distinguishing characteristics, the area adjacent to a mountainous region should be considered as hills (even if it is also desert or forest). Hilly regions can also be spotted into the middle of flat, featureless areas, just for variety. After this, anything left over is, for now, plains.

Large-scale Details

Up to now, the continent has been dealt with on a macro scale—depicting only those major features that would be visible from a vantage point several dozens of miles above the surface. Now is the time to focus in on a few areas and add more specific details. Does that huge desert have an oasis at its heart? Is there a pass that runs through that awe-inspiring mountain range? Do any of the major rivers have waterfalls? Mark these features now and they will be there when the player characters come looking for them.

This is also the time to make any large-scale additions or changes to the terrain features. How about lining that river that runs through the vast plains with a strip of forest? What if that large river splits into a complex delta as it nears the sea? Are there islands in that massive inland lake? Possibly a river should run through the middle of this big desert—but if so, it should be bordered by strips of something else, like prairie. The DM should make as many large scale finishing touches as he likes, stopping only when he is wholly satisfied with the lay of the land.

Points of Interest

This refers to natural points of interest. The truly exotic locales are reserved for later. While the design of the world is still at an ultra-large-scale viewpoint, begin to pin down some special isolated features. If the world has features resembling the Grand Canyon, Death Valley, or the Yellowstone area (all in North America), now is the time to place them. It is also time to determine if this world has volcanoes or earthquakes. If so, the DM should place the fault lines and subterranean hot spots.

As with mountains, the theory of plate tectonics also affects the placement of earthquake sensitive areas and volcanoes. The shifting caused by the movement of the Earth's continental plates causes the leading edge of a plate (often where the continent's highest mountains are located and most often near a seacoast) to be earthquake prone as the land relieves pressure by shifting along fault lines. If the world has features that may indicate potential earthquakes or fault lines, mark them in now.

In a like manner, as the slowly moving planetary crust inches over a hot spot deep beneath it, the hot magma thrusts upward through faults and crevices to form a volcano or to superheat subterranean water. In this manner chains of new, dormant, and dead volcanoes are formed (the Hawaiian Islands are an example of this effect).

Individual volcanoes do not need to be included on a map of this very large scale—this would be as difficult a task as locating every individual mountain peak. However, hot spots should be located, usually by marking off one hex (or 30 mile diameter area) in the lower regions of a mountain range or along a major fault line that cuts through those mountains, representing a place where magma lies close to the surface.

Not every fault line produces

earthquakes. Nor will every hot spot contain active volcanoes within its boundaries. Be generous with these special features. They don't all have to be active right now, but no one else (in other words, the characters) will have any way of knowing that they exist.

Things Fantastic

At this point our view of the design narrows a bit further as we once again consider the DM's precreation notes and take a look at locating even more exotic features on the world. As previously discussed, a world filled with mundane features may have its awe-inspiring moments, but otherwise, it remains mundane. It is strongly recommended that the DM place a few large scale, noteworthy pieces of geographic fantasy into his world. The DM will, in all likelihood, have his own imaginative features, but samples might include twin volcanoes that constantly belch forth ash and lava, a badlands that dwarfs even the Grand Canyon, fragments of a titanic wall (possibly a construct of the gods?), giant craters, dead areas of salt, ash, and glass, an incredibly deep lake ringed by swamps, or a natural stone bridge of unusual proportions.

Be sparing with them, but don't be afraid to put in such features. As the world develops, they can spur imagination and form key aspects of its mythology and history.

Zooming in for Detail

Now that he has his world's major geography designed, where does the DM go from here? Since the world map shows the whole world at a glance, it lacks the details necessary for day-to-day adventuring. The next step is to scale down the world map to make maps that are useful for other purposes. These smaller scale maps, called regional maps, depict in greater detail the lands that the player characters will explore. The chapter on mapping explains the mechanical details of creating a regional map.

Initially the DM should create only a few regional maps, which will cover the places where the first adventures will take place and one or two adjacent regions. Transfer the major terrain features from the world map to the regional map and begin to add more details. Keep in mind that in most cases, terrain does not remain the same mile after mile. Break up large terrain features with smaller terrain details. A vast plain may be dotted with small forests. A vast forest may contain numerous small swampy areas, deep-cut ravines and lakes. Include special features on a smaller scale. Add in the streams that feed the rivers, border lakes with marshes. Put low, rolling hills into the plains.

Try to give each regional map its own bits of unique geography, things that are visible only when viewed more closely, like sink holes, small islands, or jagged cliffs.

If the DM desires it, he can zoom in further on parts of the regional map and create areas in even greater detail. This is particularly useful when detailing population centers like cities, villages, and gathering grounds for nomadic peoples.

Filling up on Flora & Fauna

The next stage in step-by-step world creation is to populate the newly-made world with plants, animals, and fantastic creatures. Rather than place things at random, the DM may wish to consider how these living beings would be found in the ecological structure of a real world. If the area being developed is coastal, or contains large lakes or rivers, remember to place appropriate animals, fish, and birds in and around the water.

Ecology Overview

As is the case with our own world, the ecology of the DM's world exists in delicate balance. The plants and animals are dependent upon one another for life and sustenance. A food chain exists with links that connect the smallest protozoan with the largest predators. Yet the DM doesn't need to concern himself with the operation of the world at this level. It's only when he brings sentient beings and huge carnivorous monsters into the picture that he needs to consider how his ecology works and how to keep it working in a realistic manner.

Assume that each climatic and geographic region of the world is populated with animals similar to those that fill the usual ecological niches in our own world. A variety of small scavengers, predators, omnivores, and herbivores will eat, live, reproduce, and die in much the same manner as their counterparts do in our own world.

The next steps then, are to place some of these plants and animals. Review your notes and take a look

through your copy of the *Monstrous Compendium* for new ideas. Jot down your notes for later when you can go back and fill out a monster form and define the specific attributes for each of your new creatures. Continue to work at a regional scale and keep notes of any vegetation or creatures that might be useful in the areas of the world that are not currently being developed.

Common Creatures

The AD&D® game rules presume that these creatures may be animals from our own world, like rabbits, squirrels, groundhogs, frogs, weasels, badgers, serpents, field mice, lizards, monkeys, and so forth. This assumption allows for the drama of imagining a rabbit the size of a horse or wasps as large as condors. The players know the animal and can imagine the humorous or terrifying consequences of its enlargement.

Furthermore, recognizable animals make places more real to the players. A craggy mountain environment takes on more substance when creatures recognizable as mountain goats skip along its slopes. Forests with startled deer in sun-dappled clearings bring forth imagery of the early American pioneers.

Yet, this is a fantasy world, and not all creatures will have developed along mundane lines. In selected regions of the world, make up a few exotic animals to fill the same slots as rabbits, squirrels, groundhogs, frogs, and so on. At this point, a name and a one sentence description such as "Slikkern: weasel-sized, furry, snakelike rodent" is sufficient. Though this is not a big deal, having a ranger trap a trio of snakelike slikkerns for dinner instantly creates a different atmosphere than snaring three bunnies.

Remember that a creature must be suited to its environment, otherwise it will not survive long. Moist, slimy creatures would be unreasonable in the parched air of a desert in the same way that cold-blooded reptilian animals would have difficulty surviving in an arctic clime.

One way to work out the creation of fantastic animals is to decide what kind of monsters may dwell in the region (the *Monstrous Compendiums* list the type of creatures that can be found in the selected terrain), then make up a few animals which have developed similar environmental adaptations and defenses (but are not themselves monstrous). An example might be the chameleon-like rock lizard. In the area in which it lives, several other smaller lizards or insects may also have developed a rocky appearance to avoid predators or fool their own prey.

Big Animals

Next, assign one or more large, non-predator creatures to several major terrain areas of the world (don't try to do it all right now). In our world they would be moose, deer, bears, buffalo, elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotami, kangaroo, and so forth. Avoid placing major predators and intelligent beings now, but feel free to add in fantastic or highly unusual creatures like unicorns, behemoths, and dinosaurs. Keep such unusual creatures restricted to limited areas of the world.

Major Predators

Next, decide what major predators keep the numbers of these large animals in check. At this point, feel free to pull fantastic predators out of the *Monstrous Compendiums*. Do dragons from the mountains feed on the bison in the plains, stealing them from beneath the claws of the sabre tooth tigers? Do roving packs of hideous yeti prey upon slow-witted mountain goat herds? Do cheetahs and lions run down unicorn-horned herbivores on the sun-washed savannah? Keep in mind that the successful predator type must be able to overcome its prey's defenses.

Finally, a common failing in a fantasy campaign is to make the predators too numerous. In our own world, the large predators (the great cats, wolves and wild dogs, birds of prey, sharks and toothed whales) are few in number—the ecosystem's food chain cannot support such large numbers, even if they prey upon each other.

Placing Plants

Plants are possibly the most overlooked aspect of world design. DMs and players alike often assume that plants just exist and that the only ones they need concern themselves are the sentient or monstrous variety described in the monster manuals. Yet by assigning a few common types of plants to a region of the world, creating a few unique or even magical plants, and restricting the distribution of monstrous flora, the DM can enhance the realistic aspects of his world and make it more believable

to the players.

Including oaks, elms, maples, and pines in the description of an area says to the player: "This is a temperate forest." A little research into plants native to other climates can do the same for those regions. The flora is now established as "realistic." From here, the DM places his own unusual plants, which like DM-created animals, need just a name and a description. At least a few of these should have a magical or inherently valuable nature. A forest of sinister dire oaks, or a densely columned grove of bamboo-like tabintha trees adds a unique flavor to a mostly mundane environment, while a stand of hover elms with the tips of their dangling and dangerous roots floating a few feet above the forest floor creates a weirdly magical touch.

Locate any plants with magical, healing, or poisonous properties. Like oases and mountain passes, it's nice to know where they are (at least in general terms) when players want to go looking for them.

Lastly, place the monster plants, the deadly denizens who lurk in dark glades, waiting to prey on the unsuspecting. Limit the monster plants to the wildest regions. Like the major predators, there should only be one or two monstrous plants in any specific place. Again, remember climate considerations when placing monster vegetation. Tropical plants will not be found in arctic, subarctic or even temperate climates (unless the DM first modifies them). By restricting these horrors to particular places in the world, the monstrous plants remain unusual, mysterious, and even mythical as they form a part of the legends and folklore of those regions.

Populations

Who are the people who dwell in the land? What do they do to survive? Who are their leaders? How do they feel about adventurers looting the ruins of their ancestors? These are important questions, and the good DM will have an answer for each and every one of them.

The next stage of world creation is to place sentient and social life upon it—people of all shapes, sizes, natures, and goals. These are the races of men, demi-humans, and monsters who are the basis for the character races and their foes. Since we are still dealing with the world on a large scale, let us first place its peoples and races in general locales on the map. The steps that follow are ideas for creating people to live in the world.

Select the Races

The DM should decide what races dwell in his world. If he wishes to have all the character races available, those races must have one or more homelands around the world. Place these peoples in parts of the world that fit their nature, keeping in mind that many of them may dislike being close to each other. Elves tend to prefer forested areas, especially deep and ancient forests. Dwarves and gnomes have an affinity for mountains and the minerals they hide. Halflings love well-drained, rolling hills. Ores and other rapacious monster races take any lands ripe for plunder, but are commonly driven away by elves and dwarves. Humans, in their diversity, dwell wherever a living can be made, regardless of climate or geography.

Culture Levels

Assign a culture level to each group of people. Culture level is a catch-all classification that describes the life-style, technical accomplishments, and trappings of civilization possessed by a people. These levels can be loosely defined as barbarian, nomadic, feudal, civilized, and decadent. Although endless variations and crossovers exist within these five classes, they sum up the essence of that type of culture.

Peoples who are not separated by a major geographic obstacle (such as oceans, mountains, deserts or vast forests or grasslands) tend to share the same culture level. Essentially, if a wilderness area is home to one tribe of barbarian humans, it's a good bet that all peoples in the immediate area are also barbaric. There are exceptions to this rule, though. Nonhuman races are often closed societies. They rarely intermix with other cultures and often purposefully isolate themselves. Colonization and migration bring incursions of outside culture levels into previously homogenous regions, although eventually one culture level will again dominate the region.

Barbarians

These primitive people often dwell at the edge of the known world and manage to survive in a most primitive state. Occasionally, they may develop an extensive culture. Barbarians rarely have a written language more complex than pictographs and do not build anything larger than their roughly fortified villages. They hunt, fish, and gather their food. More advanced barbarians

may farm or raise livestock. Barbarians have limited metal technology, but readily work stone, wood, and bone for their tools and weapons.

They are ruled by the best warriors in the tribe or clan and their religious leaders are witch doctors and shamans. Otherwise, they hate and even fear the trappings of magic use. Ancestor worship and beast totem cults are the religion of the superstitious barbarians. Religious structures are often mounds or rough stone temples (like Stonehenge). The artifacts of "higher" culture levels are often feared. Sample barbarian cultures may include cavemen, tribesmen, lizard men, goblins, ores, ogres, and hill giants.

Nomads

A nomadic culture depends on its ability to move from place to place, as seasons and resources dictate. They depend heavily on mobile livestock, hunting, and gathering. They build no permanent structures (although portable ones are common) and agriculture is just not practical. They are often mounted or use beasts to transport their belongings.

Metal working nomads are rare, but warrior bands are plentiful. Nomads are often ruled by charismatic chieftains, who are both mighty warriors and clever leaders. Nomads are often strongly, even fanatically religious, and dote upon the teachings of their shamans. Sample nomad cultures include dervishes, gypsies, gnolls, and locathah.

Feudal culture

This is a transitional society that occurs as a dynamic barbarian or nomadic culture takes the first steps toward civilization. Feudal people have a keen sense of right and wrong and develop a central government that relies on the principles, powers, and rights of royalty and nobility (see the Feudality government description that follows later in this section). Each ruler owes allegiance to a higher ruler and in turn receives allegiance from his own vassals. Common folk are little more than slaves. Devotion to religion is important, so long as it does not interfere with the desires of the ruling class. Magic use is tolerated but not well liked. Feudal folk live in small to medium-sized towns, build strong fortresses, and have a

stable economy. Sample feudal cultures include medieval Europe and Japan.

Civilized culture

These people are city builders and their cultures are typified by both extensive kingdoms and individual city states. They typically have central governments, but true power is held by those who wield wealth.

Civilized cultures are constantly growing, learning, and expanding. Technologically, they are the most advanced people in the campaign. Civilized cultures have diverse economies that rely just as heavily on the process of trade as they do on growing or creating trade goods. Most religions are tolerated in civilized lands, though all may not be popular. The same can be said for magic use.

Decadent

Civilized cultures that slip past their peak without totally collapsing in on themselves become decadent. Social and moral decay sets in and the people become jaded, constantly seeking new forms of pleasure. They are slowly losing what they have learned and gained. Government, while centralized, has lost much of its authority and small autocracies dependent on personal power and wealth develop to fill the void. The poor are poorer and the rich richer than ever before. Tragically, they believe their culture to be at its dynamic prime, vastly superior to everything else. The drow (dark elves) and the late Roman empire are classic examples of decadent culture.

Building Cultural Character

It's time to start thinking about the more colorful nature of the region's major peoples. Whereas culture level describes the technical accomplishments and attitudes of a people, Cultural Character describes their personality—the things that make them unique. While it's easy to say "make cultures memorable," the means may not appear quite so simple—and yet, they are!

The key is to use resources outside oneself, stealing, or synthesizing cultures from the history of our own world, or from favorite fantasy novels. Another, more difficult but extremely satisfying, method is to make a culture's character grow from one or two of its more colorful details.

Taking directly from history is quick and easy. The DM can easily adapt the time of King Charlemagne (eighth century France) for his feudal culture. They have a rough and ready code of honor, are defended by numerous cavaliers (see *The Complete Fighter's Handbook)*, worship a central, powerful religion, and are constantly fighting against the expansion of a similar desert-based nomadic/feudal culture located beyond a orange of mountains. By changing the names and adding fantasy elements, most cultures from our own world can be picked up and moved to a fantasy campaign.

Use imagination when including fantasy. Do more than say that the king has a magic sword, rides a hippogriff, and is served by a 14th level wizard. Imagine that a good dragon has been complicating battles with the nomads in the mountain passes by driving off both sides, or that the king is resisting demands coming from the dominant religion's clerics that he outlaw magic use. Both concepts add color to the culture and provide a basis for adventures.

Synthesis involves combining two or more cultures to make a wholly unique society. It involves asking the question "What if ...?" regarding the cultures involved. The best way to start a cultural synthesis is to research cultures from our own history. Find several that are intriguing and that would apply to the world being created. The cultures involved need not even be historical contemporaries. The typical stereotype of hard working, staid, metal-mining dwarves might be combined with the fanatical Mujadheen rebels of Afghanistan to create fiercely driven, semi-nomadic dwarven rebels, fighting against an occupying force, and wielding weapons of superior construction and design. Merge Oriental martial artists with medieval Europe for a people whose knights fight only with unarmed combat. Make sure that the most important aspects of the synthesized cultures are logical. An Egyptianized barbarian culture may mummify their dead, but they would not have the skills to make enduring pyramids.

Creating a culture out of a few details of information is the hardest and most time consuming. If this method is chosen, the culture may take time to evolve and development will probably occur during game play as the people of the culture interact with the player characters. Begin with a simple concept for the people, such as "They never bathe in water" or "All of their architecture, artwork and clothing are decorated with dragon motifs." Answering why

they do this is the next stage. To make a people truly memorable, search for an answer along fantasy lines. The non-bathers may fear evil water spirits or believe that dirt upon their bodies helps them draw magical power from the world. The draconian artists might focus on actually becoming dragons as their faith increases.

Continue to add details as they come to mind. The dirty-bodied folk may be ingenious chemists or perfumers who have learned to profitably combat body odor. The dragon-worshippers are on eternal pilgrimages to acquire the remains and artifacts of dragon-kind (often appearing as manic souvenir hunters in exotic bazaars).

Consider any peculiar customs that may have developed, like the practice of showing an open palm or shaking hands to indicate that they are free of weapons. Behavioral oddities can make a culture appear more exotic than a few oddities of appearance.

As a finishing touch, ask whether the culture has any specific likes or dislikes? Do they have any taboos or unusual laws? How do they feel about interaction with outsiders? How do they react to outsiders (its a good bet that any culture that isolates itself from the world has a healthy dislike or distrust of strangers). Remember that folk are usually friendlier towards others who resemble them and less trusting or even horrified of beings who are substantially different.

Regardless of how cultures are developed, the DM who invests time in their development will be richly rewarded. For soon his players will begin to tell tales, not of their adventures, but of their encounters with the world's strange and unusual peoples.

Population Centers

Regardless of culture, people tend to congregate and build camps, villages, towns, and cities. The DM must decide where to place major human and demi-human population centers. These need not all be cities and may include customary gathering sites for barbarian and nomadic peoples. Use the same considerations that guided people throughout the history of our own world. The largest population centers are usually located on large bodies of water, especially along the seacoast or on the shores of bodies of water with an outlet to the sea (like lakes and rivers).

The health of a population center depends on commerce, and the most efficient way to move trade goods from one place to another is by boat or ship. Other major population centers will develop where an abundant natural resource exists, such as mineral ores, or exotic animals. Feel free to develop a large number of population centers. In the next step, many of them will become part of the dust and mystery of history.

A Walk through History

The ruins that adventurers are so fond of looting were once the homes, temples, castles, and strongholds of folk from long ago. While we will go into more detail about such places later in the book, and even provide you with a few samples to base your own dungeons on, take a few minutes now to consider the subject. Answering how, when, and why the worlds ruins came to be in this state tells the history of the world.

This is a relatively advanced step and can be saved until the DM is more familiar with his world. History is a wonderful tool for justifying the existence of lost cities, mysterious ruins, abandoned temples, and haunted battlefields. It can be used to explain the relationship between character races, the creation or reappearance of monsters, the disappearance of civilizations, and the establishment of new ones.

The basic rule for creating a history is to recognize that entire civilizations do not appear overnight, but grow slowly, ascending through the culture levels. As they develop and sometimes fail, they leave behind the debris of their growth in the form of tombs, temples and abandoned dwellings. Unless utterly eradicated, the folk of failed civilizations migrate or merge with their successors to form new peoples. New cities rise up from the ruins and living cities build over the foundations of their past, leaving bits of history to be discovered.

Work up a time-line for the world (or region), essentially a general sequence of events. Exact dates are not important. Ask the questions "Where did it all come from?" and "What has happened to and be cause of man in the past?"

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Focus on local history. Don't worry about neighboring realms yet, or leaving out major events, or describing something that may have to be changed later. History is flexible. The 'truth' grows and changes as more evidence of the past is uncovered. What is accepted as fact by one generation is proven folly by the next.

First, examine the world's distant past. Decide if the world had a prehistory of any kind. Were there

any races long ago that predate the appearance of humanity and demi-humanity? What artifacts did they leave behind? Have any beasts from ancient times survived into the current age? Where can they be found? Is there a divine or magical reason for the evolution, appearance, or creation of the major character races? Was there any interference from elementals or other interplanar beings that significantly affected the nature of the world? Also consider the role of dragons in the world, since they are among the most powerful of all the AD&D® game system monsters.

With the appearance of the major character races, recent history begins. Here, we look at the movement of peoples, major conflicts between them, and the rise and fall of civilizations, including those of humans, demi-humans, and monsters.

Decide where each major culture came from and where they may be going. Select a number of the population centers to be victims of history, naught but empty ruins. Give thought to how they became empty. Were pestilence, war, earthquakes, or volcanoes the cause of their demise? Or was something far more sinister to blame? Make some notes about what might live in the abandoned areas.

Behold the Works of Man

Until now, we've discussed developing the personality of cultures and placing them on the map. Now we let them build. Begin by deciding which population centers will become major cities and which will be minor. On the regional maps, designate the farmlands around each population center. Remember that much of the area around cities towns and villages must be open for cultivation. Food must be grown, otherwise the people starve.

Draw roads and trails to connect population centers. Indicate the location of bridges or fords across rivers. Remember that roads will rarely cross mountains, except through passes. Locate fortresses that are separate from population centers. Forts and castles often guard passes, oases, and bridges. It was common practice to make castles more defensible by placing them on rocky outcroppings over rivers.

Place a few isolated temples and monasteries. Don't worry about which gods they will be dedicated to, but do remember that they need farmlands too. Also include the abandoned guard posts and isolated temples of any lost civilizations.

Does the world have any features like Hadrian's wall or the great wall of China? What about necropolises (cities of the dead}? These were often placed near major cities, but could easily be separate cities, far from civilization. Finally, place a few inns and roadhouses along the highways, especially where traffic between major population areas might be heavy.

Social Structure

When sentient, social beings congregate in any number, they inevitably find ways to stratify themselves into social classes and then arrange some sort of arcane system where members of the upper social classes—the wise, the powerful, or the wealthy—can either wisely guide, subtly manipulate, or cruelly suppress their supposed inferiors. It happens in our world and, speaking realistically, it should happen in the DM's new world.

Social Class

A person's social class is his standing in society, a measure of both his personal wealth and the accident of his birth. If we ignore religious classifications or the belief that some people are born to lead others and focus on economic classes, we find three broadly defined social classes.

The poor, which includes peasants, farmers, laborers, soldiers and those who are even less fortunate form the bulk, the "unwashed masses" of nearly every society. They have little money, no influence (unless they riot or revolt), and can rarely think of anything but survival.

The *middle class* consists of merchants, craftsmen, lesser priests and government officials. They handle most of a society's money, yet keep only a fraction of it. They live comfortably, yet are rarely well off. Most adventurers will come from this social class.

The *rich* include the nobility, elite landowners, merchant princes, and powerful priests of the land. Even in countries that espouse democratic representation, the rich will often have control. The DM should note that even if the PCs become wealthier than kings, they will rarely (and then only grudgingly) be accepted into the ranks of the elite.

DMs may wish to have the PCs arise from one of these social classes, letting them further identify with their world. While it is

possible for peasants to become adventurers, it may be more likely that middle class and the lower ranks of the rich would be potential heritages for wizards and priests, since these folk customarily have money available to apprentice their children. Thief and druid characters would more likely have a poor social background, the former as city dwellers, the latter coming from the countryside. Warriors may hail from any background, but paladins would only come from the upper crust of society. The offspring of nobility will rarely be adventurers, and when they are, it should be expected that only younger children follow the adventurer's path, not heir apparent.

Countries

Just as there are numerous peoples in the DM's world, there will be numerous political organizations called countries. Most of these will be small, sometimes nothing more than relatively large walled cities, and usually represent the reach of a single ruler's influence. Some will be larger, either as the territory of a large cultural group, or the unified efforts of one or more of those smaller countries.

Where Do Countries Come From?

Countries form when leaders within a people declare their control over a geographic region to be supreme and exclusive of all other influence. Establishing the boundaries of that region is another matter altogether.

Any area that is physically isolated will tend to be politically independent (at least initially). Its boundaries will extend as far as the geographic features that cut it off from the rest of the world. High mountain valleys, islands, and peninsulas are potential examples of this. In a similar manner, the lands on opposite sides of a vast desert will usually not belong to the same country, since it is difficult for a central government to exert its authority across so large an expanse of desolate terrain.

Rivers, more than any other geographical feature, often serve as political boundaries. With rivers, there is no doubt where one country ends and another begins. Islands in the middle of rivers are a problem though. High mountain ranges can serve as boundaries also, but deciding on actual borders can be somewhat ambiguous and easily disputed.

Begin drawing in country borders on the world and regional maps. Leave a few borders indefinite and disputed, keeping in mind that the countries on either side of those borders will probably be at odds about it.

As a side note, the higher the culture level of a people, the greater the chance that they will extend their reach to place surrounding peoples and lands under their control. Also, remember that in more primitive cultures (including most fantasy worlds like the FORGOTTEN REALMS® world), there are few hard political boundaries. Most states will have only a vague border which can be easily disputed.

Name-calling

Now it's time to give the countries names. Use any naming system that works, but avoid silly or punny names. The joke quickly becomes old and the DM is stuck with a stupid name and his players have a much harder time suspending their disbelief. Adapting the names of countries with similar names from our own world works quite well. The DM may call his barbarian lands the Confederacy of Czevakia, invoking a central European flavor, while nomads might take their names from totem animals, like Tribe of the Wolf.

Wars *and Rumors of War*

A world without strife seems a glorious goal, but it makes for lousy adventure gaming. Conflict between nations can provide a tense, exciting backdrop for the activities of the PCs. It sets up the opportunities for them to join in spy missions, BATTLESYSTEM™ rules conflicts, border patrols, raids, political intrigue, assassinations, diplomatic missions, and rescue attempts, all at the behest of one feuding government or another.

Deciding who doesn't like whom requires a little imagination and a bit of common sense. Using a hypothetical situation, we find that country A doesn't like country B because B insists on sending all of its refined iron ore eastward into country C. It doesn't seem to matter that A and B are separated by a nearly impassable mountain range.

Meanwhile, country B sells the ore in return for weapons that it sends to troops stationed near the border with country A.

Country D watches the interplay between its neighbors and secretly builds its own military strength. It sees the possibility of either A or B moving around the mountain range to attack.

In three short paragraphs the political situation in one region is summarized. Details can be added as the nature of these disputes coalesces in the DM's mind.

Governments

Each country will have rulers of some sort. As mentioned earlier, government is an inevitability. Fantasy adventures invariably evoke imagery of kings and queens, princes and princesses, evil barons, proud emperors, wise caliphs and all the other trappings of governments based on the divine right of kings to rule over lesser men. Yet even in a fantasy world, countries need not all be run by nobles. Within the space of less than a century, pre-imperial Rome was first a republic, then a dictatorship, an oligarchy, and finally an autocracy, while the Vatican City in Rome has been a theocracy for more than a millennium. Even so, a substantial difference in type of government is usually a catalyst (or excuse) for neighboring countries to be at odds with each other.

The following is a list of government types which may be found in a typical AD&D® game.

- ***Autocracy:*** Government which rests in self-derived, absolute power, typified by a hereditary king or emperor.
- ***Bureaucracy:*** Government by department, ruled by the heads of those departments and conducted through layers and layers of lesser administrators.
- ***Confederacy:*** Government by an alliance or league of lesser governmental bodies or social organizations.
- ***Democracy:*** Government by the people, that is an established body of citizens, either directly or through elected representatives.
- ***Dictatorship:*** A nonhereditary government whose final authority rests in the hands of a supreme ruler, who is often of a tyrannical nature.
- ***Feudality:*** Government of a feudal nature, in which each successive layer of authority derives its power from the layer above and pledges allegiance in return.
- ***Hierarchy:*** A typically religious government similar in nature to Feudality.
- ***Magiocracy:*** A government of wizards.
- ***Matriarchy:*** Government by the eldest or wisest females.
- ***Militocracy:*** Government by the leaders of the military and enforced by military might.
- ***Monarchy:*** Rule by a single sovereign, usually hereditary. May be an absolute ruler (see Autocracy) or with power limited and delegated in some form, such as through a council of lords.
- ***Oligarchy:*** Government by a few (and usually absolute) rulers who each have equal authority.
- ***Patriarchy:*** Government by the eldest and wisest males.
- ***Pedocracy:*** Government by the learned, the sages, and scholars.
- ***Plutocracy:*** Government by the wealthy.
- ***Theocracy:*** Government based exclusively on religious teachings, usually headed by the most powerful clerics of a specific deity.
- **Syndicracy**: Government by a body of syndics, that is, representatives of various business interests. Such a state may, in fact, be a confederacy of criminal cartels working together to provide for their own interests.

It is important to keep in mind that these governments are not mutually exclusive. If one considers the current state of affairs in the United States of America, we find that it contains many of the features typical to a democracy and a bureaucracy. Further, there are those who might claim that is also something of a plutocracy. As you can see, there is room for debate and an endless variety of potential combinations.

Economics and Taxation

The Cost of Living

Admittedly, the price lists for items given in the AD&D® game rule books do not reflect historical, real world prices. The prices listed for goods and services to be had reflect an inflationary economy, one which has seen the influx of vast amounts of gold and silver, the booty of countless forays by worthy adventurers. In this cash-rich economy, the prices charged for items has cycled upwards to its current rate. Those with coin buy what they need. Yet for those without ready access to gold, barter has become a way of life, exchanging goods and services for other goods and services.

For the most part, the DM should assume that these prices will remain stable. Yet, should a war or drought ravage a land or its neighbors, prices will rise steeply as demand increases and supply decreases.

In a similar manner, some items will be radically less expensive or more costly away from large population centers. The cost of food and untrained livestock should be cheaper, only a tenth of the big city prices; while good quality swords and metal armor, much rarer far

from the weapon shops of the city, might cost 10 times as much—if they can be found at all.

While it may be easier to use the price lists in the rule books, DMs should modify prices to represent the costs in their own worlds.

Taxation

Governments exist and thrive through taxation. The larger (or more incompetent or unscrupulous) the government, the more it taxes the population. If it seems reasonable that something could be taxed without causing a population revolt, it will be taxed. The most common rate for any particular tax is 5% of the basic value of the taxed item. As an example, an adventurer would pay the government 5% of the value of his castle, lands and livestock each year. Furthermore, he may also have to pay a tax on the goods produced by his lands.

Taxes are generally paid upon property that a character owns, not what he earns. Thus things like castles, inns, farmland and livestock are assessed while gold taken from dungeons is not.

How the DM wishes to tax his players is a personal matter, but in all fairness, try to downplay this all-too-real facet of life. Limit taxation to easily calculated taxes. Figuring and paying taxes is not fun, whether or not it takes place in a real or fantasy world. On the plus side, heavy taxation could be the impetus for a *revolt against the evil ruler* scenario and unscrupulous tax collectors always make wonderful villains.

Good & Evil Societies

This final consideration has a great deal to do with the level of fantasy in the world. In complex, realistic societies, both good and evil exist and battle within the bounds of the same society. Do any of the countries have a specific alignment with the forces of good and evil? While such societies are admittedly unrealistic, they allow the players to identify friend and foe with relative ease.

It is, of course, possible to draw a historical basis for a nation which is utterly evil. Consider the actions of Germany in the second world war. Genocide, unchecked aggression, and tyrannical rule are, without a doubt, evil. But was the average foot soldier a violent fiend? Probably not. Although it was greatly overshadowed by the actions of the government as a whole, there were good people caught up in that evil society.

Mythology and the World

Upon first consideration, mythology seems nothing more than a dry listing of gods, goddesses, the alignments they represent, and who worships them. After all, what more could be needed for a game? Such a pigeonholing of mythology completely ignores what it represents. Deities may play key roles in legends and folklore, but mythology is much more, being the sum experience of life and history as a people believes it to be true.

In mythology, one finds tales of the universe's creation and the origins of most sentient races. It justifies the war between good and evil, organizes the sides and prophesies of the battle's final outcome. It explains the origins and sources of magic and the needs and fears of the people. Mythology describes the great monsters who inhabit the unknown and the bogeymen who frighten little children. It presents moral lessons to those who will listen and acts as the holy scripture of contemporary religions. In a nutshell, mythology is the history and workings of the world as the player characters in a campaign will learn to know it.

Building a Mythos

A world's mythology is a colorful, often slanted retelling of its history. Yet, like world construction, the DM can restrict his initial work load by limiting his design to the folklore of a small locale. Not all deities need to be detailed at first. Thus the player characters' knowledge of the world will be both restricted and biased.

Regardless of whether the DM decides to create the world's mythology all at once, or develop small sections as needed, the process is the same. Read the sections that follow, making notes to answer these questions:

- What is the role of good and evil in the world? Which moral alignment is currently more powerful (has the largest or most influential following)?
- Who are the gods and what influence do they have?
- What is the role of mankind (or elf kind, dwarf kind and so on) in the world?
- How do monsters fit in?
- What are the primary religions in the world and how do they interact?

Now, take the point of view of a common person (preferably one who follows a mainstream religion) and begin writing simple tales. Describe the creation of the world and detail the battle between good and evil. Describe how

important monsters and character races participated in the war. Whose side were they on? Who were important heroes? Use the world's unique geographical features as settings for battles and tales. Explain history in legendary terms. Describe ancient civilizations in terms of awe or hatred. Explain magic in simple terms that a peasant would understand (and probably fear).

Do all this and the DM will have his mythology, the world and history as the people know it—full of great stories, biased viewpoints, and wonderful misinformation.

Good versus Evil

The primal conflict in any world is the eternal battle between the forces of good and the powers of evil. All deities in the world and their followers are involved in this battle to some degree, whether directly or indirectly.

The basic tenets of what is good can be defined as the rights of beings to retain life, have relative freedom, and have the prospect of happiness. Cruelty and suffering are wrong and undesirable. Goodness embodies a selfless desire to do right for others, to improve their quality of life and redeem them through compassion and justice.

Evil then is the glorification of selfish desire with no concern for the rights or happiness of others. Evil holds to the premise that quality of life comes only to those who can take it and keep it.

Moral neutrality, if it can truly be said to exist, is the balance of good and evil within oneself or within the bounds of the universe. Neutrality seeks to satisfy the needs of self, but not at the expense of denying others their own satisfaction.

When combined with the organized thinking of law and the individualized goals of chaos, these three moral paths form the basis of character alignments.

Determine how this struggle between the forces of good and evil will be fought in the world and the importance it may have to the player characters. Do the gods openly battle for control or do they keep a hands-off policy and let mortals act on their behalf? Can followers of all alignments live and act openly or must evil (or good) beings skulk about for fear of being exposed?

Archetypal Gods

Since priests in an AD&D® game world must worship a deity to gain spells, the DM must select or create those deities.

In most fantasy worlds, gods (or Greater and Lesser Powers as they are also known) appear to have influence over parts of the universe and often manipulate what comes under their power. What a deity can control is called his sphere of influence. Powerful gods have more influence and often grant greater powers to their followers.

There are several ways to incorporate the presence and worship of gods into a game. A common trend in world design is to create polytheistic societies.

Polytheism literally means "many gods." The sphere of influence for each god is relatively large and may actually cross the boundaries of another god's sphere. Their worshippers generally pay homage to one or more gods within the pantheon, but refuse to acknowledge foreign gods. The deities of the Norse religion are examples of polytheism.

Another view is that of pantheism. Pantheists see all aspects of life and existence as being manifestations of gods. For each major or minor aspect of dally life, there is a specialized deity. Each god has clerics, temples, and devoted followers (although it is often common for people in a pantheistic culture to worship all gods and even to acknowledge the existence of gods outside their own pantheon).

Monotheistic religions also exist in fantasy worlds. The god of such a religion is usually the supreme creator and controller of the universe. Followers of this god recognize no other true gods. Despite his or her supreme nature, the god is often aided or opposed by lesser semi divine beings.

Books on mythology and the *Legends & Lore Cyclopedia* describe a host of gods which the DM can use to design his own mythos. Specific pantheons may be incorporated as presented (a tribe of Viking-like barbarians may worship the gods of Norse mythology) or the referee may wish to "pick -and choose" gods from various religions to create a unique pantheon. Even if the DM opts to generate a wholly unique mythology, ideas can be taken from these works and used as, if you will pardon the phrase, divine inspiration.

To aid in the design of a unique pantheon, a listing of archetypal powers and spheres of influence is presented below. While these fields are neither good nor evil, guidelines for decadent and evil gods follow. More powerful deities will combine several of these archetypes into their makeup. Minor deities have less influence than described here.

Each people, each race, each country in the world will generally worship different gods (though they may actually be the same god with different names). Choose several to make up the pantheon of gods who are worshipped in the world.

Consider that the culture of a given people will affect their gods. Barbarian and nomad gods often symbolize the forces of nature which must be appeased and worshipped to ensure day-to-day survival. They may be glorious heroes who crackle with vibrant energy which they use in titanic physical strife against the forces of evil (and civilization, which is often the same thing to a barbarian). Civilized gods embody noble or exotic philosophies and patronize skills and professions, rather than symbolizing the forces of nature. Gods who represent ideals like Love, Compassion, Knowledge, Kindness, Industry, and Immortality are found among civilized folk. Decadent gods represent unspoken passions, pleasures, and cravings. They rarely seek to enoble the spirit, only to satisfy the body.

Consider whether the gods in the campaign will be openly worshipped and adored, or be mysterious secretive powers whose exploits and true powers are known only to an inner circle of followers. Will they be paragons of their moral alignments, solely dedicated to championing their moral code or beings who serve their own interests first and their alignment last?

Archetypal Spheres of Influence

Agriculture
Ancestors
Beasts
The Earth (as a nurturing mother)
The Elements—air, earth, fire, and water Healing
Hunting
Love (also fertility and reproduction) Luck
Metalworking
The Moon
The Night (and possibly darkness) The Sea
Storms (and rain) The Sun (and possibly light) Thieves
Trickery & Cleverness
Mercantile Trade The Underworld (or afterlife) War
Wine Wisdom & knowledge

Two other general types of gods exist, though they are used to represent the forces in the world that the player characters will eventually oppose.

The Decadent Deity

This is any deity who represents a culture's jaded or amoral attitudes. Rather than fulfilling real needs, the deity plays to baser desires. These gods may be nothing more than sanitized gods of evil.

Evil Deities

Evil deities are a corruption or reverse an archetypal god's expected function or the application of a godly archetype for immoral or destructive purposes. Evil gods are known to champion pain, suffering, disease, greed, and abuse of power. They are often the deities of particularly vile monster races and the foes of the "good" gods. Their works should be opposed, never supported.

The Role of Mankind

The attitudes of people towards their gods and their involvement in their religion can add a great deal of personal color to a DM's world. Every culture has an idea of where they fit into the cosmology of the universe and usually believe all other beliefs to be either false or misguided.

The history of our own world reveals that most peoples believe themselves to be the chosen of the gods and that their particular pantheon of deities are the one and only true gods. Anyone who believes differently is not only wrong, but a heretic. How a people deal with heretics is something the DM will have to decide for himself.

Do the people have a holy mission to act out (such as spreading their beliefs or building a sacred tower to the stars) or is living a goodly life their best means of devotion to their deities?

Are the people consistently acting on the behalf of their gods (upholding religious codes of ethics, evangelizing unbelievers, punishing transgressors) or is religion a social institution, something that they leave at the temple after each holy day?

Monsters & Mythology

Many of the original AD&D® game monsters were adapted from the mythology and folk lore of our

own world. Would It not be entirely reasonable to find them as a key part of the folk lore of the DM's world?

Writing monsters into mythology is simple folk tale telling. Give standard monster's local or folk names and write a few fantastical or terrifying folk tales about their exploits and they take on an entirely new aspect. By including monsters in a world's mythology, the DM can accomplish several valuable goals.

First, the monsters become part of the world. They are tied to its creation and development. The DM knows why they exist and what their ultimate purpose might be.

Second, they become more mysterious. A difficulty inherent in adventure gaming is that it is just as easy for a player to buy a *Monstrous Compendium* as it is for the DM. When the DM says "you see three ores with a bound and gagged prisoner," the player instantly knows what he is dealing with—three low-level monsters.

On the other hand, if the DM says "three bandy-legged creatures squat in the shadows around a bound body. They resemble bogeymen from the dark tales your mother used to frighten you into being good when you were a child", the player is no longer so sure of himself. In fact, what he knows of bogeymen is next to nothing, except that they are really scary. Instead of being simply evil humanoids, ores become the hideous bogeyman, symbols of abject terror to those who heard of them as children. In fact, just about any evil humanoid would be a bogeyman.

Even in a world of fantasy, the rarer the monster, the more mythical it will become. Tales of it become even more fantastical. In folk lore, a red dragon becomes a "great bat-winged demon, red like a tomato, with teeth like swords, claws like spears, and belching brimstone and fire!"

Finally, the DM may find less need for an endless stream of "different" monsters. Unknown monsters with mysterious descriptions suddenly become frightening challenges. It can be said that players are not afraid of what they know, but of what they don't know.

Creating Religions

Religions are not created by gods, but by men to formalize the worship of their gods. The steps that follow, actually groups of questions to ponder, will walk the DM through creating a religion. Don't feel that all the questions need be answered immediately. Initially, it may be enough to know a god's name and that he champions the cause of good.

Give the religion a name. Calling it the Order of Zeus is fine for a straightforward, mainstream religion, but a mysterious cult may have an equally mysterious name, like the Fellowship of Three Secrets.

Next, examine the god and his archetypal sphere of influence. Decide which aspects are most important to his followers. Determine his moral alignment and its relationship to his worshippers. Decide the god's goals, as far as the world and his followers are concerned. Does he have a secret nature known only to an inner circle of believers?

Now look at the folk who worship the god. What is their culture level. How might that affect the religion? What do they want from the god—survival against the elements, protection from the supernatural, eternal life, gain of material possessions, or something else?

Decide what characterizes the religion. Does it constantly seek to convert new believers? Can anyone join, regardless of race, nationality, or social class? What kind of restrictions are placed on believers? What kind of obligations, either in the form of service or money, do believers owe their god? What benefits do believers derive from the religion, if any?

How popular is the religion? Is the religion a political power in the land or are its believers persecuted? Do they persecute others? Are its temples rich, or is all its income spent on good causes?

What magic can the god's clerics wield? Assume that the god grants clerical spells to his priesthood, but only those spells that do not conflict in some manner with his moral alignment or purpose. Some gods may not be able to grant higher level spells to their clerics (as is often the case with tribal spellcasters like shaman and witch doctors). Furthermore, a god may give his clerics special powers not available to clerics of other deities.

For example, a god of healing might not grant his followers damaging spells, but might give them more powerful curative spells at lower character experience levels.

Lastly, how do its clerics dress? What icons, animals, symbols, colors, metals, or weapons are associated with the god?

Answer these questions and the DM will have a good, solid picture of the religion.

Fantasy

Throughout this primer on world creation, we have been stressing the use of our own world as a guide for grounding the design of the DM's own world in "reality." Even so, the world that the DM creates is not intended to be a real world. It is instead, a fantasy world. No, more than that, it is a fantasy game world.

Re-examine the work done on the world and think about it, not in terms of "is it real," but in terms of its fantasy. Decide whether it could be more exotic if magic could play a bigger role. Is at least one culture unusual and memorable?

The ultimate measure of its value, the deciding factor in determining whether or not the DM has done a good job, is whether or not his players can imagine that their characters live and breathe in a fantastic universe filled with magic, awe, and wonder.

Afterthoughts: Using Other Sources

Some DMs seek to re-create a world that has been described by another. Krynn from the DRAGONLANCE® novels is an example of using an author's imagination as the basis for a campaign world. In such cases, the DM should do his research and strive to be faithful to the original creation as possible in both physical detail and spirit of play. The same can be said for attempting to duplicate a particular period or culture from history. A game set in the North American southwest around 1,200 A.D. should have as much attention to detail as one that duplicates the fantasy worlds of Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, or Stephen R. Donaldson.


Oscar Morrissey
10-10-1983

Maps are the bones of a fantasy universe. They define the physical situations in which the adventures will take place. They are a concrete, visual representation of the DM's imagined world. Everything else is eventually built upon them. For this reason, the DM, whether novice or experienced, must give them the attention and care in creation that they are due.

A beginning DM typically prepares a large map of his world showing the major geographical and political features (see the previous chapter on world design), maps out a small village or town for adventurers to dwell in, then creates one or more detailed adventures and the maps that go with them. These maps are "secret," never to be seen by players, since they contain information that the PCs could not know. Unfortunately, many of these maps should remain secret forever, hidden away and never used.

Too often, during the process of world and adventure creation, a DM will hurriedly slap together a wilderness that bears no relationship to real geography, a cavern complex that more closely resembles a rabbit warren, or a castle that totally ignores plausible (or even magical!) construction methods, and then cannot understand why his players are unable to suspend their "disbelief" when he runs his adventure. Even more tragic is the DM who spends countless hours on his maps, yet still accomplishes the same, unbelievable end.

Map making is important and the time invested in researching and making clear, realistic, even visually exciting maps is time well spent. Making maps that look good and play well does take time. Yet making good maps need not dominate the DM's design time. It is possible to make good maps, even great maps, without having to become a professional cartographer or needing to invest half one's lifetime in their creation.

What follows is an accelerated course in adventure game map making with a particular focus on making maps for AD&D® games. The goals of this course are to teach beginning DMs how to make fun, visually interesting, but most of all believable maps and to give experienced DMs some pointers to bring new life into their campaign worlds through clever, realistic mapping techniques.

Basic Mapping Considerations

An effective map is one that communicates exactly the right amount of information needed by the DM to run the game—no more, no less. Map making can be as simple as drawing a rough diagram of a few rooms in a dungeon or as complex as multicolor, three-dimensional perspective maps of a vast underground realm.

At the most basic level, mapping can be done with a piece of scrap paper, a pencil and few quick doodles. From an adventuring character's standpoint, this is really all that he will be able to do during his explorations.

However, by necessity, a DM needs to produce something a little less basic, something not quite so unpolished. The DM's map will need to contain more information than "here is how we get out of this mess."

The complexity of the DM's maps depends on the DM and his playing style. One DM may precisely draw intricate floor plans on finely gridded graph paper that locate every item in each encounter area, name each area, list ceiling heights and wall thicknesses, give the hit points of all doors, indicate the local temperature, and describe the type of construction to be found there (even to the point of defining the type of stone). At the other extreme, is the DM who roughly sketches out the relationship between encounter areas, shows corridors as lines and makes up other details as he goes along. Both styles of map making are valid. The precision detail style is particularly suited to maps where puzzle solving or three-dimensional play are key parts of game play. The second style has its uses for warren-like lairs, where tunnels weave in arid out, but have no important features. Nevertheless, a style somewhere in-between will best suit most DM's gaming needs.

Tools of the Trade

As described previously, it is indeed possible to make maps with nothing more than a pencil and a piece of paper. However, the DM's task is made easier if he invests in (or borrows) a few supplies and tools. A basic shopping list for the adventure game cartographer follows:

- A pad of graph paper (4, 6, 8, or 10 squares to the inch).
- A pad of tracing paper
- Hex grids (paper divided into six-sided hexagons—a variety of sizes exist)
- Several sharp pencils
- A small set of colored pencils or watercolor markers

- A felt tip or razor point drawing pen
- A straight edge or ruler
- Drafting templates (for circles, ellipses and other geometric shapes)
- A compass (for making large circles)
- A protractor (for measuring angles)
- A drafting triangle
- A T-square
- Access to a good photocopier—most libraries and quick printing shops have suitable machines available

Of course, many of these items are optional. Many DMs (myself included) have gotten along perfectly well without a compass or templates. As you might expect, however, many of my maps did not have large circular chambers on them (unless they were the same size as the nearest coffee cup of plate).

What Makes a Good Map?

As stated before, a good map is an effective map; one that conveys exactly the right amount of information needed by the DM to run his adventure.

What is the right amount of information? That depends on the map. There is no hard, fast rule that says "each map must have the following features or it is not an official map." However, there are many features that good, usable maps have in common.

Map Scale

This defines the relationship of a unit of measurement on the map, such as a graph square, a hexagon, an inch or a centimeter to its corresponding "full scale" measurement. It is usually expressed as "one square equals five feet" or "one centimeter equals 20 feet" depending on the map scale that the DM chooses.

It is important to note that the use of a square grid can distort movement somewhat. Mainly, this is due to the fact that the distance covered in a diagonal movement from one square to the next is roughly half again that traversed in a lateral movement. Dungeon Masters should keep this in mind when using normal graph paper.

When using graph paper, the expression "one square = five feet" means that the measurement along the side of the square corresponds to a full-scale measurement of five feet. Such a map square would cover an area of 25 square feet.

On the other hand, the expression, "one hex = five feet" has a slightly different meaning. It means that the distance from one flat side of the hexagon to the opposing flat side, is five feet.

Map Grid

A common adventure game practice is to draw maps on gridded paper. Gridded paper is divided into two general types: graph paper and hex paper.

Graph paper is generally found in office supply or stationery stores and departments. This paper is gridded in uniform squares. In the United States, the size of the squares is measured in fractions of an inch, quarters, eighths and tenths being the most common. Elsewhere, metric measurements may be used.

Hex paper has little use outside of gaming and is therefore found only where gaming supplies are sold.

It is not absolutely necessary to draw a map on graph or hexagon paper, but it does make the task easier for the beginning mapper. While it is possible to run games by making measurements with a ruler on a map (more on this later) it is far easier to plot movement, missile, and spell ranges on a gridded map. Adventurers with a desire to map their progress will find it easier to map an encounter area that has itself been drawn on hex or graph paper.

Though extremely useful, map grids can have a negative side. Grid mapping can restrict the DM's creativity. He can easily fall into the trap of designing a world to fit within .convenient grid boundaries (see the Maps without Grids and the Tips & Tricks sections of this chapter for details).

Encounter Area Numbers

The use of letters, numbers, or symbols is very important as it allows the DM to uniquely mark important encounter areas. These numbers refer the DM to corresponding text in his adventure notes. A good rule of thumb here is to use numbers for major encounter areas and then letters for minor encounters or areas of note within the numbered encounter area.

Map Keys

A map key explains any special symbols used to indicate features on the map that may not require extensive text descriptions. This need only cover those symbols which the DM does not commonly use.

Compass Rose

At its simplest, this is an arrow pointing north. It helps the DM orient (or confuse) the adventurers when they are exploring the mapped region.

Map Types

The maps that a DM will normally use as he designs and runs adventures in his world can be easily divided into several types:

World Maps

This large scale map does not necessarily show the entirety of the DM's world, but does reveal most of the land mass where the game adventures take place. This map should show an area of several thousand or even several hundred thousand square miles.

Regional Maps

This map is an enlarged subset of the world map. The scale on such a map is smaller (see Mapping Scales). It gives a more detailed depiction of one part of the DM's world—usually the area where the campaign will take place.

Encounter Maps

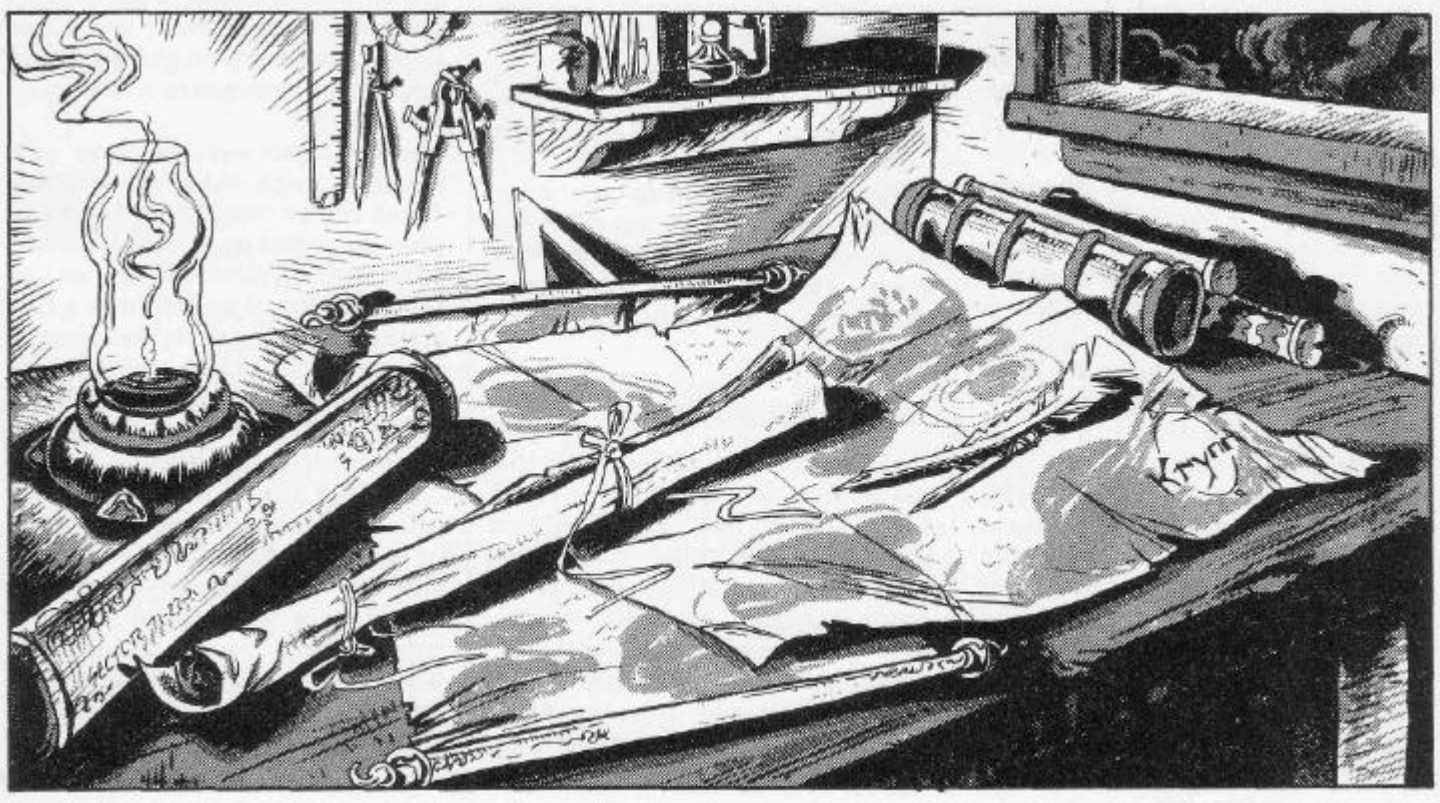
These maps depict individual encounter areas. The scale is very small, usually not more than five to ten feet per square or hex (or about 40 feet to the linear inch). Examples of encounter maps include dungeons, monster lairs, ruins, towns, taverns, towers, castles, and caverns. Most adventures that the DM creates will require one or more encounter maps.

Diagrams

Technically, this is not a map but is instead, a drawing or plan of a detail shown in one of the encounter maps. Diagrams fall into two general classes:

Alternate Views

These diagrams show things that cannot be easily or clearly shown from a top view, such as a pit with several side exits at varying levels or windows near the ceiling area of a room. These are best depicted by a cross-section or perspective diagram. Elevations, or



front and side views of the exterior of a building also fall into this category. Particularly effective diagrams can be created using the guidelines for drawing perspective maps later in this chapter.

Working Diagrams

These diagrams are used to detail items or room features that need a close-up view to best explain their workings, such as a counterweighted trapdoor that works another mechanism.

Diagrams should be used as needed, but keep in mind that if something needs a diagram to make it clear to the DM, it may also be difficult for his players to understand. The DM may need an additional visual aid to explain it to his players.

Mapping Scales

The first step in map creation is to decide how much of the world is going to be shown on a single map page. At the DM's choice, a single map (regardless of paper size) can show an entire world, a continent, a kingdom, a barony, a castle, or just a few rooms in an underground dungeon. The deciding factor is map scale—the relationship between a measurement on the map and its corresponding measurement in the real world (which is also called full scale).

To show a great deal of the world, the scale relationship of the map to the actual world must be quite large. Each unit of measurement on the map must represent many miles. While such a map gives an overview of the world and its major features, it is noticeably lacking in fine detail. The DM must also create smaller scale regional maps as they are needed. Regional maps reveal the locations of villages, streams, castles, ruins and so forth.

Even smaller scale maps are used for encounter areas. They are often floor plans for castles, towers, ruins, dungeons, and buildings. Such small scale maps are blowups of specific areas. The scale is measured in feet, not miles.

Choose a scale for the map that best suits the needs of the map. A regional map drawn at a scale of one inch or one hex equaling 1,000 feet gives too much detail and not enough overview of the region (and also makes much more work for the DM, who must draw an incredible number of such maps to depict even a single barony). Likewise, a dungeon map drawn with each 1/8th inch square equaling 100 feet is great for plotting large cavern complexes that stretch on for thousands of feet, but does not show enough detail to depict doors, traps, and stairs in a castle or dungeon.

Remember to mark the map scale on each map—it saves trying to remember what was intended when one looks at a map three months or three years after it was drawn.

Maps without Grids

Most of the maps that we use in the "real world" do not have graphs or hex grids. Likewise, grids are not absolutely necessary for adventure maps. Maps without grids, whether they are world, regional, or encounter maps allow the DM to design his world in a free-form manner, giving attention to realistic landforms and believable buildings (believe it or not, the world was not made to fit on a five foot by five foot map grid).

To make a gridless map, the DM must first assign it a scale. The map is then drawn with this scale in mind.

The primary drawback to a gridless map is that all movement and missile ranges on the map must be measured with a ruler or a scale, rather than the simpler method of just counting spaces on a grid.

Mapping Symbols

A DM who has the talent and the time might wish to realistically render every feature in his world. The end result will no doubt be gorgeous and probably worth framing.

Luckily, for the rest of us who may not be quite so artistically gifted, there is an alternative—map symbols. Map symbols are icons: simple, easily drawn graphics that inform the viewer as to what can be found there.

As you can see, we have provided a quick table of symbols which can be quickly used to detail your maps (see page 126). The first chart lists symbols which might represent the items found on a typical encounter map for the average adventure. Symbols for uncommon items like fonts of boiling water or magic sigils are left to the DM's fertile imagination.

Outdoor maps have their own set of mapping symbols, as shown in our other diagram. These symbols represent features commonly found in a wilderness environment. Here are symbols for trees, lakes, rivers, oceans, hills, castles and of course, mountains. Color can also be used to good effect in

outdoor maps.

For smaller scale maps, mountains, hills, and valleys can be shown by topographical mapping. On a topographical map, contour lines indicate changes in elevation (height or depth). Each line represents a specific change in elevation since the last contour line. For small scale maps this should usually be 10, 20 or 50 feet. Lines that are close together indicate a steep slope or even a cliff. Lines that are very far apart depict a gentle slope. A line with little hash marks coming off of it represents a depression, usually in the form of a body of water. The direction of the depression's downward slope is indicated by the side of the line upon which the hash marks appear. More information on topographical maps appears under the heading Tips & Tricks.

Using Color

Drawing maps in color is not absolutely necessary, but it can add to a map's clarity. In a wilderness map, color can be used in addition to or in place of map symbols. Green might mean forest, but varying shades of green could be used to show the density of the forest. While water can be shown by using blue, the shade of blue used could indicate the depth of that water.

On a small scale encounter map, the uses of color to indicate foliage or water are obvious, but color should not be limited to depicting parts of the physical environment. Color can show the territory controlled by a political faction or monster group. It can indicate the presence of magic, fire, poison gas, teleportals, or changes in an area's "danger level" (where the monsters and traps suddenly become more deadly).

Simple Maps— Orthographic Mapping

The simplest form of adventure gaming map is the orthographic or top-view format map, drawn on graph or hex paper and using the map symbols described earlier to depict map features. This style of mapping can be used to depict world, regional, and encounter maps.

The features of the map are drawn as if seen from directly overhead, often in the form of a floor plan. Height and depth are indicated by topography lines or notes written on the map (such as "The floor slopes down here towards the north at a 30 degree angle.") Mapping symbols are used to show map features. Special notes for the different types of maps are given below.

World Maps

World mapping is closely tied to the process of world creation described in an earlier chapter. Much of it will actually be done as the DM makes notes about his world and its contents. This is often best done on something other than hexagon paper. If necessary, a hex grid can be superimposed later (see Tips & Tricks section later in the chapter).

Sketch in the coastal outlines (if any), the major terrain features, such as mountain ranges, vast plains, mighty forests, and rivers that drain into the ocean. Think of areas in our own world that are similar to the lands being created. Keep an atlas handy for ideas on how these features might look in this new world. Next, mark areas of habitation and draw in major political boundaries. Select the area or areas that will initially be detailed by regional maps.

Regional Maps

Generally speaking, regional maps show wilderness. They are used to show greater detail about those parts of the DM's world in which adventuring will take place.

If hex grids are used to draw the map, the most common method of mapping is to assign one primary terrain type to each hex and draw in the corresponding map symbol. This does not mean that every square foot of that terrain area contains that type of terrain, but that the selected terrain dominates the area. Lakes, oceans, streams, and rivers are treated differently. They ignore hex boundaries and go where the DM wants them to be. It is possible to draw a region to conveniently fit within hex borders, but such a map looks artificial to the DM and will eventually feel artificial to the players as they explore it.

If graph paper or if no grid at all is used, a slightly different style of map drawing is required. Terrain features are drawn in as needed to suit the DM's world (rather than trying to place features inside artificial boundaries). Distance determinations are based on measurements like inches or centimeters (see Mapping Scales and Maps without Grids for more details).

Encounter Maps

More often than not, this map will be an interior space—the floorplan of a building, cavern, or

dungeon. It also may represent the layout of a village, ruin, or a monster encampment. It can also be used for ships, forest clearings, or ambush sites. As the DM draws the plan he needs, special consideration must be given to how it might look and function if it were real. If the encounter takes place in a "made" area then it was economically feasible for someone to have built it.

The DM needs to ask himself if a building based upon his floor plan could stand by itself. What supports the r.oof? Are the walls thick enough to actually be made out of stone? How are any secret passageways or doors hidden in the construction? Is there any provision for heat, light, or sanitation?

Next he needs to consider the game aspects of the map and the ways it can enhance play. Does it guide or restrict movement in a desirable manner? Does it provide opportunities for strategic maneuvering by the PCs and their foes? Is it an interesting backdrop for the action? If the answer is "no" to any of the above, the DM should get out his eraser and make modifications as needed.

Perspective Mapping

Imagine craning back to stare at a tall building, then realizing that it's in the way and must be scaled, or staring down into the depths of a crevasse, looking for the handholds that will make it climbable. Views like these are hard to depict in a typical orthographic map. If the DM feels equal to the task, a style of mapping called perspective mapping can provide more drama and clarity to the DM's maps. Perspective mapping has advantages and disadvantages compared to standard orthographic (top view) mapping. On the positive side, a perspective map conveys the three-dimensional nature of a setting much more realistically than an orthographic map. The position of each dungeon, castle or cavern level relative to all other levels is much clearer, and the connections between the levels are easier to see.

On the other hand, perspective mapping requires more knowledge and technique than standard mapping. Raised features such as staircases, spiral stairways, platforms, ramps, and any other three-dimensional details will obscure the view of areas immediately behind them. Also, the smaller squares to the rear of a perspective grid tend to cramp design if used for areas that need careful attention to detail. Finally, a perspective map takes more time to draw than an orthographic map.

However, if one has the time and doesn't mind learning a few relatively simple techniques, it is possible to create maps that communicate much more information than the size of a room or whether the door is in the north or the east wall.

It is possible to use a "forced perspective" on maps of this type. If you flip to the back of the book and examine the generic dungeons which we have provided, you will note that they do not suffer the "cramping" of squares in the background. In many ways, a forced perspective map like this combines the advantages of an orthographic map and a perspective map.

The first mapping technique requires the DM to make a few photocopies of the forced perspective grid printed at the back of this book. TSR hereby grants permission to photocopy the perspective grids for personal use only. Make one copy for each floor or level needed. Make a few extras too. A photocopier with enlarging or reducing capabilities is a real help here.

The second technique requires tracing paper (see Tools of the Trade earlier in this chapter). Place the tracing paper over the selected grid and trace only those portions needed for the perspective map, then draw in necessary map details. While it is possible to hold the tracing paper in place by hand as the grid is drawn, taping the tracing paper in place is a better technique.

Take precautions before taping or the tape will eventually ruin the pages of the book. To avoid this, place clear tape on the corners of the page and secure your tracing paper to the taped portions only.

Selecting a Starting Point

Start the design as close to the front of the grid as possible. This does not mean that the entrance to the area depicted must be at the front of the grid. The DM may wish to have the adventurers enter at the rear of the map and work their way to the important areas detailed in near the front.

If an area has multiple levels that will be drawn on several different maps, assign one square on the map as a control square. This is a single square on the grid, located roughly in the center of the area being designed. It is a good idea to center the control square under the highest tower or at the midpoint of the top level of the design. When a new level is created,

align the control square vertically with the control square directly above or below it.

If each level of the designed area is approximately the same shape, the control square should be the same square on each grid. If photocopies are used, line up the grids while looking through them at a light. If using tracing paper, mark one square on the grid with a small dot and line the maps up using the marked square.

Drawing the Map

Once the grid is established, drawing a perspective map is very much like drawing a top-view map. The main difference is that the squares making up the map grid are not true squares. It may require a little practice, but soon, drawing perspective maps should be as easy as drawing the top view variety.

It is a good idea to draw the outer limit of the design first. This aids in seeing the overall structure and makes it easier to line up the maps of the various levels. As an alternative, try starting with a huge staircase or centrally located atrium that includes access to areas on several levels.

Mapping Symbols

The symbols described earlier for use with orthographic maps can usually be translated directly onto a perspective map. Doors, trapdoors, curtains, furniture, and many other symbols can be used in the same manner. However, the symbols for certain three-dimensional objects, primarily stairways, must be changed slightly, since the map must display both their horizontal and vertical aspects.

The map grid provided later in the book contains a number of different stair graphics, both simple and complex, to be traced, copied or hand-drawn into the DM's maps. Use the ones that work best with the selected map.

Splitting the Grid

When a multiple level area is designed, the DM may wish to mimic minor changes in altitude by cutting the grid (we recommend using a tracing or a photocopy) into the appropriate pieces and shifting the individual pieces up or down slightly to show the level changes.

Two techniques, one using tracing paper and the other photocopies, are described in step-by-step sequence below:

Technique 1: Tracing Method

1. Draw the main floor grid on tracing paper, except for the areas to be raised or lowered.
2. Look at the grid through the tracing paper and find the grid area to be elevated. Pull the tracing paper down until the grid area appears to be at the correct (scaled) height above the main floor.
3. Draw this grid area in its correct location on the tracing paper.
4. For areas below the main floor of the level, move the tracing paper up until the correct grid area is below the main floor. Trace this grid onto your paper in its proper location.

Technique 2: Photocopy Method

1. From a photocopy of the grid being used, cut out all of the grid areas that need not be raised or lowered.
2. Glue or tape the rest of the grid to another piece of paper. This protects the holes cut in the grid, and allows one to draw or paste symbols over them.
3. Put the small cut-out grids on the sheet created in step 2. Judge how high or low they need to be to indicate the proper elevation. The horizontal lines of the grid should help to make this calculation. For example, if each square equals 10 feet, and a platform is supposed to be 20 feet tall, simply measure the front of a square along the cut line and place the platform grid twice that distance above the cut line.

Horizon Lines

The sample grid in this book includes a horizon line, a dotted line above the grid. The purpose of the horizon line is to help the DM view the grid correctly. In order to correctly orient the grid, turn it so that the horizon line is horizontal, or level.

The horizon line can also help the DM draw vertical lines on the grid. Pillars, staircases, ladders, and other primarily vertical objects should not look as if they are about to topple. With a T-square, or a triangle that includes a 90 degree

angle, the DM can use the horizon line as a guideline to accurately draw vertical lines. To draw a vertical line, simply make sure that it is perpendicular to the horizon line.

Tips & Tricks

Consistency

Whenever possible, keep the scale of related maps, such as multiple levels of a dungeon, at the same scale. It can be quite confusing to have the map of one dungeon level drawn at eight feet per inch and the map of the next level at eleven feet per inch.

Making Handouts

Map handouts are useful and fun game play aids. They can be used for maps found by players or as a graphic depiction of information that the characters should already know. Handouts can be made by several methods. The first method is to trace the necessary parts of the map on a sheet of tracing paper. The second method is to just hand draw a separate map, based (somewhat loosely) on the DM's map. The third method is to use a photocopy of the DM's map that was made before he put any of his notes on it or to edit a photocopy of his map, removing secret information, and then recopying the cut-up map to clean it up.

A nice touch is to "age" the map. If the map is on bond paper and made by photocopier or with indelible ink, tear the edges of the paper slightly to give it a rough edge, then soak the paper in a tray filled with tea or coffee for several minutes. Carefully take the damp (and easily shredded) paper from the tray and let it dry overnight. The result will have the look of parchment.

Superimposing grids on Maps

If access to a plain paper photocopier is available, try the following tricks. Draw the desired map freehand, sketching in boundaries and placing map features as desired. Use a dark pencil or pen. Keep map proportions in mind, but don't worry about scale. Position the map properly on the photocopier, then insert a piece of graph or hex paper into the single sheet feed slot. The map will then be copied onto a grid for ease of play. Assign a scale to the map grid and finish it by drawing and coloring in additional details. If the photocopier has enlarging or reducing features, the final size of the map need not be the size that it was drawn at.

Real Maps

Real architectural floor plans can add a new dimension of reality to a map, including details that DMs (since most DMs are not architects) tend to overlook. If floor plans for historical temples, castles, or catacomb complexes are available, place a piece of tracing paper over the map and trace those parts to be used with a dark pencil or pen.

Position the tracing on the photocopier. It is most likely that the tracing will need to be enlarged or reduced, to make it better accommodate game play (this often requires some experimental copies to get the size right). When the size is right, place a piece of graph or hex paper in the single sheet slot and make the final copy. As before, add in notes, scale, color, area numbers and so on. This photocopier trick works best when the color of the copier toner and the color of the map grid are different.

Mapping with Authority

A coastline is rarely a flat line where featureless land meets a mirrored sea, nor are all mountains jagged crags clawing bleakly against a leaden sky. Yet it is quite common for even an experienced world designer to treat all land features equally.

In a similar vein, DMs tend to build all of their castles, temples, public buildings and towns along similar lines. Regardless of culture or the time period in which it was built, all buildings of a given type are generally the same. Why? Because the DM often doesn't know any better. He draws only on his own experience.

If, on the other hand, the DM chooses to research our own world, he finds a variety of maps that can reveal the detail of different coastlines for different parts of the world, including rocky cliffs, sandy beaches and dark cypress swamps. He finds a variety of mountain types, from the green rolling ranges of the Appalachians to the rugged rocks of the high Himalayas. By using real maps as guides he draws his own maps with an authority lacking in his previous creations.

In a like manner, the DM can use floor plans and elevations of historical buildings, temples and castles to populate the cities and wilderness of his world. With a little understanding gained from architectural history, he creates buildings that can actually stand with realistic interior spaces. Although experienced players may miss the

convenient 20-foot-wide corridors they were once accustomed to, the excitement of exploring a place that could really exist will rapidly replace their loss.

Where does the ability to map with authority come from? From geography books, from art history texts, from topographical maps, and from magazines—all of which are usually available at any local library.

What follows is just a sampling of places to find reference material for mapping:

Topographical Maps

An entire gaming campaign could be built up from a few of these maps. The clever DM may even want to use them in place of hand-drawn regional maps. If so, treat them as gridless maps. A dramatic trick is to change the vertical distance between topography lines.

Ask for topographical maps at any sporting goods specialty store that sells a full line of hiking and camping supplies. If they don't have them in stock, they can probably order them. If these maps cannot be found locally, contact the National Cartographic Information Center listed below under Other Resources. Try to find maps for forests, canyons, deserts, coastlines and mountainous areas, anything that might be useful as a regional map in a campaign setting.

Books on Caves

Check the local library for a book covering this subject. Look for books with maps or floor plans of real caves. If possible try to find one with three-dimensional cutaway views in it. Don't be afraid to use the children's' section of the library. Books aimed at younger readers will more often have the pictures and diagrams that a DM needs.

Books on Castles

These may be found in a local library. Books with pretty photographs or illustrations are nice and may be useable as inspiration or visual aids, but look for one that has floor plans drawn to scale. *Castle* by David McCauley (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977) is a fine look at the construction of a medieval castle.

Geography Books

Look for books that focus on natural wonders, rather than geopolitics. Again, try to find maps for forests, canyons, deserts and mountainous areas.

Art History Text Books

Good examples of these can be found in most public and college libraries. Art history texts are an excellent source for building floor plans. Look for a book that shows floor plans of ancient buildings, temples, cathedrals, castles, and cities. Gardner's *Art Through the Ages* is an excellent example.

Architectural History Books

These are a wonderful source for ancient building floor plans, cross-sections, and cutaway illustrations. *Introduction to Architecture* by Stephen Gardiner is an excellent example of this type of book. It is chock-full of pictures and maps showing architecture from ancient Egypt to the 20th century. *Cathedral*, *Pyramid*, and *City*, three books by David Macauley, are excellent sourcebooks for the construction and layout of ancient architectural structures. They give insight into the amount of time and manpower that must be invested into a project for it to succeed.

Books on Ancient Civilizations

The best books of this type have lots of pictures, diagrams, maps, and illustrations. Look up ancient civilizations in the library's card file. Again, use the childrens' section of the library.

Other Sources

For a good reference on how to locate real maps of the United States, particularly topographical maps, get the free U.S. Department of the Interior pamphlet: *National Mapping Program, Mini Catalog of Map Data* from the National Cartographic Information Center, U. S. Geologic Survey, 507 National Center, Reston, VA 22092. The pamphlet also lists addresses where you can go to browse and buy maps.

For another general source book on locating maps of all kinds, look for *The Map Catalog* by Joe Makower from Vintage Books, a division of Random House, copyright 1986.

Finally, look through an index of *National Geographic* magazine, particularly one which covers the last 30 years or so. This magazine is available in libraries and contains excellent articles and maps on many periods of ancient history, including lost civilizations, ruined cities, castles, and sunken wrecks.

Regardless of how clever he may be at world creation and in spite of his technical accomplishments at drawing beautiful maps, a DM who doesn't put his best effort into the design of spine-tingling, heart-pounding adventures, has missed the entire point of role-playing games. Adventure design is an art form, like writing novels or painting pictures, one that requires creativity, ingenuity, a measure of technical skill, and a dedication to the task at hand.

There is no One True Way to design a good adventure. Every DM has his own style, methods, and procedures to accomplish the same end. Even the elements that make for an exciting adventure vary and often are nothing more than a matter of personal opinion. Yet for those who play regularly, the difference between good adventures and even mediocre ones is clear. The former grabs the players' attention and draw them into a world of mystery, action and intrigue, the latter merely provides a few hours of mild diversion. Opinion aside, truly gripping adventures shares many common features:

- They play like good fiction reads, but avoid following a predetermined path.
- They draw the PCs into a well-woven web of activities, often personally involving the characters in the outcome of the adventure.
- They tell more than a single story.
- They begin and end with excitement.
- They test the skills of both the players and their characters, teach them a bit about themselves, then reward them with glory.
- Though the outcome may not be earthshaking, even the smallest adventure has a discernible effect on the world.

It may not be possible for the novice DM to make his first, or even second adventure match this list 100 percent, but even giving conscious thought to these elements as he designs means that he is moving in the right direction.

What follows is a path to guide the DM in his quest. It represents the experience of many DMs and gives not only the theories behind good adventure design, but also acts as a basic nuts-and-bolts ap-

proach to adventure writing, including the development of adventures into ongoing campaigns.

Evaluating the Players

Start the adventure design process by evaluating the players in the campaign and deciding what kind of adventures will satisfy their playing styles (novice DMs can skip this step until they know their regular players better).

Most players fit into one of three general types: Adventurers, Problem Solvers or Role-players. Each type brings a different attitude to a role-play game. A mismatch of ad-; venture to playing style often results in reduced enjoyment for all concerned. Since most groups will contain one or more of each type, a good adventure is balanced between the various styles of play.

Adventurers

These are the bright-eyed, enthusiastic players that most of us were when we first played the game. Many players retain an interest in this style of play for as long as they game.

To Adventurers, a good game is full of physical challenges that their character abilities allow them to overcome. Combat is their top choice for action and they rate their characters' quality by the amount of sheer mayhem and carnage they can cause.

The needs of the Adventurer are easily met. Monsters to fight and booty to haul can satisfy them for weeks on end. The lure of treasure and potential mayhem are all the DM needs as hooks to draw them into his adventures. To keep the game fresh for these hack-and-slash heroes, make the monsters use smarter combat tactics or try variations on existing monsters like adding poison or magic to those creatures the PCs are used to using as sword fodder.

Problem-Solvers

These players see the campaign as a great puzzle and their purpose, indeed their joy, is to put all the pieces together. The more twisted and convoluted the plot, the better. They love unique and mentally challenging gaming sessions and rapidly become bored with anything that does not seem new. They go to great lengths to concoct imaginative and occasionally workable plans to deal with every eventuality.

Problem solvers can be tough to referee. They tend to be creative with the rules of the game and thus require the DM to be creative and consistent.

Don't hesitate to borrow tricks, traps, and encounter ideas from any source available to meet the problem solvers' insatiable craving for mental challenge. They also need more than just the lure of treasure to seek out an adventure. They need a mystery! Give these players motivating backgrounds and let them decide where they will go, then work hard to keep one step ahead of them.

Role-players

At some point, every player fits into this category. Role-players love to develop the details of their character's lives, right down to minor possessions, ancestry, and personality quirks. To them, even the routine parts of a game session, such as equipping a character, are an opportunity for a role-playing experience. Given the chance, they'll haggle in the market over every item in their inventory.

Role-players approach the game in the person of their characters. Character development may take precedence over other minor aspects, like survival or mission success. They may choose to talk instead of fight their way out of delicate situations. Since role-players view their characters as the sole reason for playing, the motivation for an adventure must come from within the characters, something that is important to their motivations and goals (which are rarely listed as "kill all monsters, grab lots of treasure," or even "solve tricky mysteries"). With the amount of detail these players know about their characters, devising a motivation should not be a difficult task for the DM. Pick something out of the character's past and use it as a subplot to get that character involved (more on this later).

As stated earlier, chances are good that the DM will need to provide a mix of styles to please his players. He will also need to keep in mind that during the adventure, the different types of players will want to play the game differently. The chapters that follow on DMing the Adventure will provide help in that regard.

The Importance of Story

First, it must be stressed that it is entirely possible to play adventures that have been designed without an underlying theme or unifying scenario, and that have no plot, subplots, or their complications. Players (par-

ticularly Adventurer types) can be satisfied without them. . . for a while. Yet it is not so difficult to create adventures that do contain these elements.

If the DM can bring himself to think of his campaign as a story with an unwritten ending, he has made the first logical step in successful campaign design. Players, regardless of type, want to do more than just slay endless streams of monsters or loot bottomless treasure hoards. They want to be heroes who perform legendary deeds like the characters in fantasy fiction or film. To do this, they need a vehicle where their characters can grow strong and become famous. The vehicle for this is the game campaign.

Theme

The first step in campaign design is to give thought to the underlying theme of the campaign. A theme is a unifying concept that goes beyond the limits of a simple adventure. It is the framework upon which the adventures are built and provides the links between seemingly unrelated events in the world. Think of theme as the overall story line in a trilogy of books where each individual book both tells a complete tale in itself and advances the overall story of the series.

Several themes of varying depth and complexity should be created initially, allowing the players to pursue those which interest them most. As the game progresses, the DM will undoubtedly find ways to link and interweave the themes and the potential plots and adventures they contain.

Themes are expressed in terms of action, since they represent a macro view of the action going on in the world. A land with dragons is not a theme, whereas dragons who like to prey on villagers is. Other examples include: Ores mass for invasion in the mountains, a migration of barbarians threatens the kingdom, or rats threaten the villagers.

The theme must provide a need for character involvement and then be sufficiently broad to support several adventures. Taking the example of the barbarian migration, the players first hear of burnt villages on the frontiers from refugees which leads to a series of adventures, all based on different scenarios, but linked together by the theme of the migration.

A baron needs aid to infiltrate a camp and learn of the barbarians' plans. This leads to the discovery of *a* captured princess in another encampment. Meanwhile a fortress in a pass must be re-supplied and regular troops cannot be spared. The Duke needs an escort to negotiate with the barbarian high chieftain, during which the party finds shelter in a ruined castle. Finally the PCs discover the reason for the barbarian migration: the sudden reappearance of an eldritch evil in the north. A new theme, that of suppressing the evil, is now linked to the old and a new series of adventures logically begins.

The *Tale is* Told

The structure of each adventure should develop like a story. It begins with a hook, something that piques the characters' curiosity, focuses their attention on a problem and then grabs and runs with their imaginations. The story develops as the PCs hunt for details that reveal the plot and important subplots to them. Tension increases as plot complications occur until the PCs arrive at a predetermined climax and the players realize that success or failure depends solely upon their actions in this encounter. The climax resolves one or more of the major conflicts presented by the plot, often a showdown between the characters and their major opponent. This is where successful characters get to be heroes and the players have to keep wiping the sweat off their palms. After the climactic encounter, the story closes with a denouement, a short period of retrospection in which the victors can count their spoils and review their deeds, while the vanquished shake their heads and count their losses. It should be a pleasant, relaxing period of relative safety (for both the PCs and their players) before conflict arises anew and tension builds once again.

Plots & Subplots

The plot is the arrangement of adventure elements in which the characters must work to overcome a major obstacle and achieve a goal. While the major obstacle (or antagonist) is any force that opposes the PCs' completion of their goal, it might be the forces of nature or even the characters' personal problems, but more often than not, it is a monster or evil NPC, often the villain or the characters' chief adversary.

Although the plot outlines the major conflicts, it's not an order of play in which the PCs follow the DM's imagined script. A good plot line allows for a variety of paths and outcomes and may not come

to the same conclusion that the DM had originally intended. Remember, this is *a* game. Unlike a fiction author, the DM has less direct control over the heroes in his stories.

Plot deals with conflict, but conflict is not necessarily fighting. Conflict occurs whenever a person must overcome or resist someone or something that threatens his safety, his possessions, his personal goals or ambitions, or his values. Thus, most plots develop around one or more of these basic situations.

The plot should always initially appear uncomplicated and straightforward. An example might be that a baron wants the PCs to destroy the monsters in a remote part of his barony. The plot here is initially one of the players against the monsters.

The DM now must create a rough outline for the plot, listing the major encounters or scenes that will occur (though they need not all occur in the order listed). A outline for this simple plot above might read:

Episode one: The PCs scout the area. They encounter several hideous monsters in the area.

Episode two: The monsters organize a return ambush in an empty village.

Episode three: The lone surviving resident of the village is dying and frightened. If healed and befriended, he tells of the temple where the monsters dwell.

Climax: The adventurers try to ambush the monsters in their lair.

This is a simple, straightforward plot, with much physical conflict and a bit of role-playing to make it successful. It's also a dull plot. Missing are the complications that add depth to the story, the subplots that weave in and out of the main tale and often personally involve the PCs.

Subplots are stories within stories that complicate matters for the characters. They deal with side issues and focus on the goals of minor players, especially as they get in the way of the major action.

In the story above, the baron hires the characters to solve a problem. By adding a simple complication, the baron becomes a part of the problem. Instead of hiring the PCs to get rid of monsters, he has them take care of a mess that his own meddling has begun. The story picks up with episode two. . .

Episode two: At night, the PCs are challenged by angry villagers who do riot want them here. Many villagers are strange-looking, even ugly, but in the firelight its difficult to say why. The encounter may end in a fight.

Episode three: A frightened villager seeks shelter in the PCs camp, but disappears during the night.

Episode four: If the PCs track the villager, they discover an abandoned temple with odd riddles and fierce magical guardians. Trails indicate that the monsters live here. The villager from episode two warns them to leave. He looks different now.

Episode five: The PCs solve the puzzles of the temple and defeat the guardians. They press on into the monster lairs and discover the sleeping bodies of villagers with monster-like attributes.

Climax: The PCs attempt to destroy the thing that changes villagers into monsters, despite the villagers' actions to stop them. If they spend too long here, the PCs undergo minor, monstrous changes.

The story can be further complicated by having one of the empty villages be the home of one of the PCs or by having the baron and his guards show up to deal with the weakened PCs, thus tying up his own loose ends. The climactic end may not be the battle with monsters, but the running battle with the corrupt nobleman's henchmen.

Subplots can also be sidelights to the main story line, brief little adventures that take the PC party off the main track, but in reality provide another component needed to develop the main story.

Avoid giving the players all the information they want, or need, all at once. Make them look for it, make them adventure for it, parceling it out in pieces gained from this NPC or that bit of library research or from tavern rumors.

Don't give out solutions, present clues. Remember to provide the occasional red herring (false clue or trail) to keep the PCs on their toes and not accept everything they hear as truth. On the other hand, remember that an NPC will probably not lie unless he has a motive for doing so (to protect his or someone else's interest, or out of sheer malice—although the latter should be perceivable in some way).

Personal Involvement

Try to base one or more subplots within an adventure on the personal goals of the player characters. Personal goals are great hooks for justifying the start of an

adventure, yet they can also become liabilities to the DM. Avoid having a character's personal goal become the primary focus of the campaign. Should that character irrevocably die, the campaign will rapidly grind to an embarrassingly and boring halt. Furthermore, the DM may be tempted to cheat (more than is necessary) to protect his plot line, keeping that key character alive in order to keep his story alive.

It's better to make the character's personal goals into subplots, sideline stories to the main adventure plot. Conflicting personal goals may not contribute to group harmony, but boy will they increase the intrigue level in a game.

To determine these personal goals, the players will have to create character backgrounds, working together with the DM to make their characters come alive. Go deeper than social status, parentage, and occupation to give a satisfactory answer to the question "Why has the character become an adventurer?"

If time permits, have each player write a short history for his character, including social status and any significant events of his past. The DM can then take the history, reshape it slightly and fit it into the events of the world, possibly even intertwining the histories of several characters. The end goal is to give the player characters a motivation for adventuring (rather than just looting for gold and glory) and in so doing create more character-oriented subplots.

Plot Complications and Twists

Complicated plots are more exciting than simple ones—ask anyone who reads for enjoyment. The same holds true for gaming. Most plot twists involve incorrect or insufficient information supplied to the PCs or someone working at cross purposes to them. These are the little (or big) surprises for which even the best of problem solvers cannot plan ahead. The following are suggestions, but with a little imagination the creative DM can go beyond them. Fiction and film are wonderful sources for these little gems.

- All is not What it Seems: What the PCs are told about something or someone is apparently not true. Who is lying and who is telling the truth?
- The Set Up: The PCs are set up to do something that no one else wants to and then find out why.
- Bait-and-Switch: In the middle of a mission, the objective changes.
- Betrayal: Whoever hired the PCs lied to them and has played them into the hands of their foes.
- The Problem Goes Deeper: What the PCs were assigned to do is not the real problem, only a symptom. Example: the PCs are sent to clear out bandits and discover that the bandits are acting on secret orders from a mysterious power in dark castle.
- Ah, Romance!: An NPC has a romantic attraction to a player character or to another NPC, one that only serves to make matters more difficult.

Hooks

It's possible for the DM to start an adventure with "You find the entrance to a dungeon." Yet in campaign style play, that opening totally voids any feeling of story continuity or player choice. The belief that the characters exist in an ongoing story is destroyed or at least severely damaged. Instead, the DM needs to plan out a Hook, an imaginative opening scenario that presents adventure options to the players (never force them to choose one path) and then grabs onto their imaginations in such a way that they feel they must delve deeper into the adventure!

Open with action. Nothing starts a game off more predictably or pedestrian than "You are in your favorite tavern and a stranger comes up and tells you about..." Such detail at this stage is unimportant. Although the stranger may have a great adventure in mind, his speech inspires the same amount of excitement as, say, a trip to the dentist.

Action need not be combat or even something that directly involves the PCs. Have a murder occur in front of the party, a dragon strafe the village, an army march through, or have that stranger entrust the PCs with a locked box, just before he dies from that knife stuck in his back.

Whatever the DM does, it should latch onto the motivations of the PCs and appeal to one or more of the player types in his player group (Adventurer, Problem-Solver, or Roleplayer).

Story Development

Once the PCs bite the hook, lead them into the adventure with other clues. Most major encounters or side adventures should advance the story line. If the DM feels a need to use random encounters (random dice-rolling can be used to spur the imagination but should never be taken as a substitute for

it), it's an excellent practice for the DM to predetermine a number of encounters before beginning play. This gives him a chance to set up the statistics and motivations for monsters or NPCs encountered. It also allows the DM to answer questions like, "What kind of goods is that caravan carrying and where is it headed?" or "What's the ores' tribe?"

Encounters and events develop the story line as long as they bear some relationship to the story's primary villain or adversary. Battles with the foe's evil minions often bring insight into the complexity of the plot. Provide a balanced mix combat and encounters.

Remember to add in plot twists as necessary to deepen (or confuse) the plot, and throw in a few traps and puzzles, regardless of the setting.

Eventually, the encounters should serve to point the adventurers towards what the DM has determined to be the climactic encounter of the adventure. The climax need not be reachable in a single gaming session, although each gaming session should have some kind of mini-climax. This lets the players feel they are making progress toward their final objective.

Climax

Plan for a big finale which allows the characters to accomplish their goals and should involve some of the character's personal motivations. This is the encounter toward which the entire adventure has been leading. A wizard who is avenging his brother's death should be able to confront the murderer while a thief who seeks a lost magical item should find it.

Have an idea of what the climactic encounter will be when designing the campaign, but do not design it too far ahead. To do so may be to waste design time that could be used better elsewhere. The story is bound to change (remember players act independent of the DM's goals) and as it does the nature of the final encounter will change with it. Rough it out in advance, but add final details only when it looks like the PCs will be there on the next play session.

Like the Hook, which opens the adventure with action, the climax should close it with more action. A rousing good fight is one way, but the DM may wish to combine it with a daring, fast-paced escape or a challenging puzzle that has to be solved while the battle rages. A pulse-pounding climax will make the players feel good about the adventure, even if their characters fail.

While the purpose of the climax is to resolve major goals and mysteries, leave some unsettled, or have the resolution of the first mystery unveil even deeper ones. Let the main adversary survive to plot and come back even stronger next time. Plant hooks for the next campaign or adventure!

Suspense, Drama, & Humor

Like fantasy literature itself, the elements of the story need not be limited strictly to blood and thunder action, obscure puzzle solving, or subtle role-playing. Fantasy stories often borrow elements from murder mysteries, tales of horror, and humorous stories. The DM may wish to add variety to his adventures by changing the tone of the game.

Suspense is created when the players know that something is happening or going to happen, but do not know what or when. It involves playing up the fear of the unknown. Whatever is going to happen will directly affect the PCs. The setting can enhance the feeling of suspense, playing upon the uncertainty. Darkness or deep shadows, unfamiliarity with the surroundings, and separation from friends all build suspense.

Suspense moves into fear and horror when the unknown becomes a threat to life and limb. Unknown quantities develop a feeling of paranoia in the players. Don't describe monsters right out of the *Monstrous Compendiums* or even give out their names. Describe only what the players see, hear, or smell. Let them first experience monsters by their hideous deeds. Keep the foe a secret as long as possible and build the tension by dealing horrible death to henchmen and other NPCs.

Humor in an adventure can balance horror and suspense by breaking the grip of tension on the players. Humor is not silliness, such as using puns for NPC names or making horrifying monsters into pink and purple polka dot absurdities that blow bubbles (although silliness does have its place in gaming). Humor is essentially a way to make light of tragedy. It depends heavily on the DM's playing style and really can't be anticipated.

Humor should arise from the situation. A character is shrunken until he becomes trapped underneath his helmet. A terrible thing to happen, unless one happens to find him pounding angrily on the inside the helmet and running from the head lice that didn't shrink with him.

Often it derives from the slapstick outcome of the solution to *a* problem, such as placing glass marbles on a stair to foil pursuit and listening to the enemies shouts as they tumble backwards into a pile of noisome goo.

NPCs are a wonderful source of comic relief as their single-mindedness, slowness of wit, or peculiar habits take their toll on the characters' patience. A tubby halfling hireling whose goal in life is to sample the world's cuisine may never provide much help in combat but he's worth his weight in gold the first time he staunchly defends his larder with a sturdy sausage.

Success or Failure

The temptation, when designing a campaign so closely tied to a story, is to think of it as a novel in which the DM must guide the players to the make right choices in order for the end of the story to come out as he has planned. Resist the temptation. Strongly resist the temptation! A DM who manipulates his players to reach his desired conclusion is telling those players that their actions and motivations are worthless and have no bearing on the game world. Instead of determining the outcome, they are impotent puppets. The DM might as well read them the novel he has brewing in his mind.

The solution is to look ahead to the possible outcomes, success or failure of a scenario. What will be the effect on the story line for each outcome? What effects will those outcomes have on later adventures?

Allow the story to flex and change as the adventurers move through it. If the DM feels that a particular scenario must be dealt with successfully for the adventurers to accomplish their mission, he may wish to give the PCs a second (or third!) chance to make a go of it. Remember, a key element to the fun of campaign play is the PCs' ability to influence the world for good or ill.

Multiple Story Lines

A good role-playing campaign usually relies on more than one story at a time. Although these may just be subplots of the same adventure, they can also be separate stories occurring simultaneously. The working out of characters' personal goals is good examples. A character could be looking for a way to remove a cursed glove from his hand and hoping an ancient temple may give him the insight to do it.

The whole story line of an adventure could easily be a stage in a greater epic. An epic is a single story with many linked episodes (usually more than simple encounters). The end goal of the epic is some fine and noble purpose, the ultimate defeat of evil, saving a continent from sinking below the waves, or founding a new nation in the wilderness. The final outcome of the epic often demands some sacrifice on the part of the heroes involved.

Campaign Style

There are three easily definable styles of campaign play. Each one incorporates the story elements that have been discussed thus far, and offers both benefits and headaches for the DM who chooses to run his campaign along those lines.

The Linear Campaign

This type of game advances the story through a predetermined sequence of encounters. The PCs must handle the encounters as they arise and are given no choice where to go between encounters.

For these highly-structured adventures to work the DM must be able to logically channel the PCs through his world. While this is easy to do for low-level PCs in dungeon-style adventures, it can be difficult in the wilderness where there is little to restrict movement.

The Open Campaign

This style of game plays down the story aspect and relies on the players to choose where play will go. Obviously this creates an incredible burden on the DM, since he must prepare an enormous amount of material, "just in case." If the players like random encounters with monsters, the Open Campaign can work quite well, but if the DM must constantly prepare more than he needs, then DM burnout is a likely result.

The Matrix Campaign

This is best suited to the story aspect of play. It allows the DM to create a detailed plot, set out a limited number of encounters, and yet still offers the players freedom of choice as to where they will go and how to deal with encounters.

With the matrix campaign, the DM places his major encounters then feeds clues to his players as to how they might find them. By using character motivations or NPCs, the DM can gently steer his players back towards the goals of the adventure, without the attendant feelings of DM manipulation.

No game would be complete (or even playable, really) without non-player characters (NPCs). Simply put, NPCs are any characters not directly controlled by the players. They are encountered during the course of an adventure and may range from shedu to shop keepers, trolls to trollops, and korred to kings.

NPCs are fun; fun to watch, fun to play. More than any other facet of design or play, they affect the game's sheer entertainment value. If played enthusiastically, NPCs can bring vibrant life to a game.

Where to Start

In a sense, NPC creation is a part of both world and adventure design. NPCs exist in the DM's world in much the same manner as a city, a castle, or a dungeon. Theoretically speaking, the DM has placed them in his world to fulfill a specific purpose, such as running the dry goods store, owning the tavern, ruling the land, and so on. Chances are that the DM has even given these folks names and decided whether they are young or old, rnale or female. But beyond that, there is either nothing or a generic stereotypical personality.

Unless the DM has unlimited time available, he will want to restrict the amount of detail he creates for each of the NPCs in his world. It would be nice to know each stable boy, shop keeper, or monster as individuals; to know their fears, desires and personality quirks, and, when necessary, role-play them as exciting characters. The truth of the matter is that defining characters as personalities takes time. Therefore personalities are developed only as much as will be needed to make good game play.

What determines the right amount of development? The answer lies in the NPC's importance to the DM's world and to the plot lines of his adventures. Greater importance means greater development. Just as in the movies, not every part is a speaking part. Some characters just stand around to fill out the crowd scenes—they remain both nameless and faceless. Others exist only to fight the player characters. Time spent developing such characters will be time wasted.

However, if the PCs will spend any time in conversation with an

NPC, such as the local tavern keeper, a bandit chieftain, or a favorite informant, the DM will want to personalize that character, give him an interesting appearance, unusual speech patterns and a personality quirk or two. Unless the NPC is to be a key part of an adventure, his background and motivations are irrelevant to the game. Once the DM has rounded out the character as described before, he has enough ammo for role-playing without worrying about fulfilling the character's inner needs.

Yet when an adventure revolves around an NPC or if an NPC must play an important part in the lives of the player characters, such as becoming a patron or a henchman, then that NPC deserves the full treatment. The DM should take the time to fill out every aspect of the character's background, appearance, possessions and personality.

Creating Character

We know people in many different ways. We know them by their names, by what they look like, by their experiences (or our experiences with them), and by their personalities. For an NPC to appear as a real person to the players, the DM needs to know the character in many ways.

The DM begins by deciding why the character exists in his world. Based on his reasons, the character gains skills and abilities and, if necessary, gains a set of character attributes like those of the player characters. To go beyond this stage of development, the DM must delve deeper into the character and into his campaign world.

A Bit of Background

The first thing to recognize is that NPCs do not live in a vacuum. They are as much a product of their environment as anyone. They have backgrounds, personal histories, personality quirks, and their own motivations for their actions. The better grasp a DM has on these factors, the more "real" the NPCs will become in his own mind.

For example, if the PCs encounter a stable boy who is important to the DM's adventure, he could be just another nondescript person who tends horses for a living, or be a boy, 15 years of age, orphaned when was young, taken in by a farmer and raised in an environment where food was scarce and beatings plentiful. In fact, one of the beatings could have damaged his hearing so that he yells out "'ey?" whenever someone speaks to him. He has a particular fondness for horses and will immediately befriend anyone with a similar interest, or viciously turn on anyone he sees mistreating a horse. His lifetime dream may be to have his own stable some day, and marry Eliza, the cobbler's daughter (which is a near impossibility, as she has been secretly betrothed since birth to an ogress's son in order to lift a curse on the cobbler's wife).

Given this quick personality and background sketch (and the fantasy sidelight to the love of his life), the DM can much more accurately respond to questions put to the boy by the PCs. He has a rough idea of the type of information the boy might know and how much he would be willing to share with strangers.

Producing a Past

Many DMs believe that there is nothing more to creating an NPCs background than putting together a few notes and slapping the character into place as an encounter or aside for his players. The rest of the documentation and development, they feel, will all just take place as the game progresses.

Unfortunately, if writing character histories that are both believable and interesting from a role-playing standpoint was that easy, most DMs could readily change occupations to become professional novelists. The truth of the matter is that creating character histories with any amount of variety (or that haven't been clipped unmodified from a fantasy novel) is a task in itself. Dice tables could be used to generate a character's background, but to do it right requires many pages of tables.

The best alternate solution is look at the character with the perspective of his environment. Ask what *could* have happened to this character during his life. Focus on events that shaped his personality or that have some bearing on the adventure in which the character participates. As far as a character's parents or family are concerned, assume that the character works at the same occupation as his father or mother.

Personality Traits

To effectively role-play a character, a DM needs to know the character's personality, his likes or dislikes, and the things he places value upon. For each major NPC consider the following facets of his personality and decide which among them will be most promi-

nent. Complex characters will have complex personalities. One personality attribute will usually dominate the character's personality, such as a devotion to money or being kindly, greedy, or brave, but the other personality attributes will also affect how the DM role-plays his characters.

Determine what the character holds to be most important to him. When making value decisions, the character may weigh his decisions in favor of what he values most. Example: When given a choice between obtaining gold and saving the life of an ally, an NPC who values money may choose gain at the cost of another's life.

Select several key personality features for each major NPC (such as greedy, kind, helpful, dull, etc.). Decide which of the personality attributes will be the most prominent and how it affects the way he is role-played. If dice tables are used for random generation of specific character personality attributes, the DM should use the dice only as an aid to his imagination, not as a substitute for it.

Motivations

Something makes people do what they do. Even insane beings rarely act without a reason. When the PCs encounter an NPC decide (if it has not already been determined) why the character is here, and what his goals are.

Motivations are often the character's reason for continued existence, the focus of their lives. The most common motivation in adventure games seems to be greed, the sheer accumulation of wealth and power. However, characters with other motivations might make the game more interesting. Consider characters who are motivated by faith and live only to serve their gods or a character dedicated to serving others, who wants to make the world a better place. Other motivation categories include: revenge (always a favorite), solving mysteries, discovering the truth about oneself, love of another (either romantic or familial), devotion to research or a profession, personal pleasure, gaining knowledge, power or insight, striving to be the best at something, obtaining a goal or sheer survival.

Motivation directly affects the way a character behaves. In general, one can assume that a character who is seeking great riches (greed) will behave differently than one who wishes only to serve his god faithfully.

Physical Appearance

Make a few notes about the appearance of each NPC created, regardless of whether or not they are immediately important to the adventure. These notes can always be embellished later as more details are needed. Make all the characters colorful. Avoid making characters nondescript, unless it is important that they blend in with background.

Exaggerate appearances—use colorful adjectives when describing the character. Make the characters the ugliest, the prettiest, the most handsome or smelliest being the PCs have ever encountered. Don't be stingy with detail. Are their clothes ragged and dirty, well-mended, or even stylish and new? What color is the character's hair? Does he have any unusual possessions or pets? Does the character have any unusual types of behavior (like rubbing his hands together, twisting hair or beard, wiping sweat from the forehead, sneezing, coughing, rapid blinking and so on)? If he does, try *showing* these behavioral oddities rather than *telling* about them.

Draw upon observations of other people to create realistic characters. The DM may wish to pattern the appearance of a character on someone he has seen, including public figures, translating those appearances to fit a fantasy setting. Even so, the DM should avoid using people known personally to himself or the players. Even a gentle caricature or a friend can be taken in a manner other than intended.

Rely on popular movies (new and old) to supply additional NPC characterization. If the DM says that a bounty hunter sneers like Clint Eastwood, most players instantly superimpose the actor's face over anything they have previously imagined. As the game develops, the DM may even find the players supplying the NPC's lines for him, (usually quotes from the actor's films). When this happens, the DM knows that his character has truly become alive for the players.

Portraying the Character

Find a peg of reality to weave the fantasy around and then hams it up! The DM doesn't need to be a practiced thespian or stand-up comedian to get good drama or rib-tickling humor out of his NPCs.

The first rule is to relax. If the DM is self-conscious about portraying characters with unusual accents or odd speech patterns, all his characters will sound the same (and will usually be more than a lit-

tie boring). Loosen up, don't worry about what your players will think. Even if the performance wouldn't get a standing ovation at a comedy club, the players will enjoy it.

It may help the DM to arrange for games to be held in relatively private settings where the players are his only audience.

Second, be spontaneous. Don't rely on scripts for character dialog. Very few things detract from a game like a DM who reads what his characters say.

Finally, get inside the characters to be portrayed. The DM should get outside himself and imagine how his characters would react to the player characters. Strive for realistic response and actions that serve to advance the play of the game.

Believability

People, even strange and fantastic people, placed in unusual situations should behave in a realistic manner. Before the DM allows one of his NPCs to make a questionable decision, he needs to think, if given the same situation, whether or not he would perform an action. While the character might reasonably make a different decision than he would, the DM needs to realize that any decision that the character makes will be reasonable, not irrational (unless the character is irrational by nature).

Particularly, the DM must realize that unless strongly motivated, beings will not throw away their lives nor give away their life savings to intruders. Even in a fantasy world, the actions and reactions of intelligent creatures will not be too far removed from their counterparts in our own world. When characters begin acting in an unrealistic manner, the believability of their world begins to suffer.

In the "real" world, not everyone is entirely honest. Would all NPCs necessarily tell the truth at all times? It seems unlikely, but most beings do tell the truth, as long as it is in their interest to do so. A captive dragon may lead the PCs on a merry chase through the land, looking for a treasure that doesn't exist, instead of revealing that part of its treasure lies hidden in the next cave. Townspeople may send the PCs on a false quest in order to rid themselves of potential public nuisances.

Avoid overuse of popular stereotypes for NPCs. Stereotypes are often overused and unoriginal depictions of characters. Rather than develop fresh ideas, DMs often rely on the images they remember from their own early days as players. The DM needs to think about the types of characters he presents. Are they original? Are they unusual? Are all bartenders big and burly ex-adventurers? Is every evil wizard bent on conquest of the world? Are all merchants greedy and scheming? Is every princess rich and beautiful or every prince handsome and daring? If so, then the DM should rethink his cast of characters.

Stereotypes are easily forgotten. Make the characters memorable. Look for interesting alternatives to the stereotypes. Maybe that bartender is a grouchy little woman with a grudge against big burly ex-adventurers. The evil wizard could simply be selfishly self-centered, totally uninterested in the world outside. The rich merchant might be a bumbling idiot whose success depends on his aides and assistants.

Acting at the Table

Any DM can read a description of an NPC and then *tell* the players what they see and how an encountered being reacts. However, the DM who wants to make his NPCs come to life will not *tell* the players about a character—he *becomes* that character. Years of acting classes are not required to make a character come to life. Be ready to improvise any motivations, voices, or dialogue necessary to role-play the encounter with the player characters.

Mug it Up

Make faces as the character speaks. The DM can show the character's emotions by his own facial features. Scowl, smile, grin, snarl, curl the lips, flutter the eyelashes, pout, cross the eyes—do what it takes to make the character memorable to the players. When facial effects are combined with an unusual voice, the character can really come to life.

Move Those Hands

Don't get up. Remain seated. Use your hands to portray the character. Think about it. Does a scheming character rub his hands together? Does a politician chop the air with one hand while he delivers his deadpan monotone? Does that master thief flutter his fingers when he thinks of thieving? Does the sergeant of the guard punctuate his points with a pointing finger?

Speak In Character

Use different speech patterns. Not everyone talks the same, even within the same culture or geo-

graphical region. Age and occupation can also affect speech patterns. A youngster will phrase his speech differently than his grandfather. Borrow distinctive speech patterns from real life, the movies or television. Practice a few different ways of speaking. Not every character should use the same words as the DM himself.

Vary the volume

Most of the DM's delivery will be at a fairly consistent audio level. Yet when necessary for dramatic effect, the DM should be ready to shout (say for an effective battle cry) or speak in a conspiratorial whisper.

Hearing Voices

Practice funny voices and bad (or not so bad) impersonations of famous people. Try to develop a few good character voices. Then go ahead and have those eccentric characters use those funny voices: pirates say things like "Aye, harr-r-r-r maties" in the DM's best Long John Silver voice while beings unfamiliar with a language stumble along with stereotypical "immigrant" grammar. Have peasants speak in broad twangy dialects, and rich folk talk in haughty drawls. Let drunkards and monsters mutter with slurred speech, while lizard men hiss out menacing threats in near unintelligible sibilance. Ancient sorceresses cackle merrily as crazed berserkers scream out challenges with booming bass bravado.

Meanwhile, make sure that plenty of water is on hand to ease the DM's poor throat after a lengthy presentation.

Presenting Special Character Types

Elves will act and react differently than dwarves, who will react differently than monsters, who will react differently than humans and so on. A rich man might react differently than a poor one. Not all beings will have the same perspective as a human adventurer (or DM for that matter). When acting out his character portrayals, the DM may wish to factor in the distinct backgrounds of some special character types.

Mundane Folk

There may be a tendency for the DM to role-play his "everyday" folk as if they were all adventurers, or at least ex-adventurers. They seem oblivious to the fact that they live in a world of monsters and magic and take the exotic in stride:

"Dang dragon's in the backyard again Maw, go call us an adventurer ta get 'im outa the cabbages. Do it m 'self? Lissen woman, I'm sortin' out spell components for market, I cain't be bothered! Git yor ass back in tha outhouse and clean me scrubbages"

Mundane folk are the way they are because the fantastic is not a part of their everyday life (if it was, it wouldn't be fantastic). It's hard to make monsters frightening or have great magics seem awe-inspiring if farm folk and townspeople treat such things as commonplace.

As a rule, make everyday folk in the world either suspicious, fearful, or unbelieving of the fantastic. Magic and monsters are the province of far away lands, ancient legends, or princes and wizards. Such things should be outside their normal experience and therefore something that they cannot deal with (otherwise there would be little need for heroes).

Children

Few towns in any world will be devoid of children, whether they be the runny nosed Miller's kids in a character's home town or the bugbear brats in the monster camp. Children are quick to point out the obvious, even when adults are pretending to overlook something (remember the tale of the emperor's new clothes?). If one must resort to shame to motivate a group of PCs into action, state their shortcomings through the perspective of a child. Local lads can provide innocent hero-worshiping companions to would-be heroes while jaded, sharp tongued street urchins might be foils to adventurers lost in the big city (imagine the Artful Dodger from Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* showing the PCs around while he subtly relieves them of their valuables).

Persons in Power

When players encounter powerful NPCs, such as wizards, patriarchs, or nobility, the DM should keep in mind that personality quirks and eccentricity add a great deal of character to beings who have attained any degree of personal power. These characters provide a treasure house of fun for the DM to develop. While a stable boy might not differ much in personality from a hundred other stable boys, each of the rich and powerful are apt to have a definite and distinct set of personality traits. Even if the characters will have little direct contact with the movers and shakers of their world, the DM may want to develop these personalities in more detail. Considering that players often want to rub shoulders more with the rich and powerful than with ordinary folk. Even if the characters do not directly encounter these powerful NPCs, they will experience the imprint of their personalities. An eccentric or insane ruler will run his land much differently than a sane one (whether for the better or the worse).

Although its perfectly acceptable for rich and powerful folk to be benign, loving, and caring, the truly altruistic personality should be as rare in a fantasy world as it is in our own. Money and power are notable corruptors of men and great compromisers of even the highest ideals. They like their power. Even once-good beings who have become corrupt feel that they can do more good for the world than "lesser men." In any case, this leaves the door open for any variety of merciless or deviant personalities. Deception and evil go hand in hand. Very seldom will an evil personality try to appear as evil to the general public (very few willing subjects or potential victims are attracted to obvious evil).

Demihumans

Nearly every DM has elves, dwarves, and halflings in his campaign, or similar races that fulfill the same function—elder, exotic peoples who are both more and less than human. Unfortunately, these same DMs (and their players) tend to role-play demihuman races as humans with odd physical characteristics. They overlook the fact that these beings are cultural aliens—they are not human. They do not think or react to situations like humans.

Elves, with their incredibly long life spans, will have an unusual sense of time perception, possibly with an inability to feel any sort of urgency. Dwarves place unusual emphasis on things of value, particularly things made of metal and stone. Regardless of the wonderful dexterity that makes Halflings good thieves, they have a racial tendency to be stay-at-homes. Bringing spicy mustard on a picnic lunch may be more than enough adventure for the average halfling.

As a part of his world design process, the DM may wish to consider

the attitudes of his demi-human races. Ask questions about each race. Does the race like or dislike other races? Do they have a particular enemy? What cultural quirks do they have? What do they wear? What do they eat? What do they do with their dead? What or whom do they worship (if anything)? What is their technological level (sticks and rocks? bronze smithing? iron forging? steel working? perhaps something more exotic?) Do the people interact with other cultures or are they isolated? Do they respect others' views or is there just "one true way?"

By establishing the cultural personality of demihuman race, the DM has established the basic personality for most characters from that culture. Later, when creating a demihuman NPC, he can decide whether this being follows the attitudes of his race or is a maverick, going against accepted tradition. From there, the DM can continue to round out the character.

Monsters

All too often, a DM will place monsters in his adventures in order to give the characters something to dice into hamburger (or vice versa). Horrible monsters reveal their inner personalities and motivations by instantly attacking the PCs. If the DM does give a personality to a monster, that being will obviously be a friend or ally to the PCs. The players quickly learn that if something doesn't talk, kill it.

Yet monsters are a wonderful source for intriguing NPCs. With a little thought, the DM can make his monsters more than ravening murder machines. Sentient monsters have personalities and a reason for existence, just like the player characters. Maybe that ogre would rather be left alone and is so frustrated that she breaks down in tears when the PCs invade her lair. That evil, but lonely dragon might prefer the pleasure of talking to someone who doesn't immediately run away or try to stick a sword in his eye.

Like demihumans, monsters are usually the product of an alien culture. More often than not, monster cultures consider humans and demihumans as little more than animals. Thus, they do not see a problem in eating humans or using them like beasts. Monsters may have a hefty selection of personality quirks, particularly ones that make them even more unacceptable to society.

Remember that intelligent monsters will act in an intelligent manner before, during, and after encounters. They will use their environment to their advantage, including known traps, hiding places, and other monsters.

Magical Items

Not all NPCs need to be living beings. Try giving intelligence and personality to some magical items. Talking swords are a familiar example, but how about swords whose unusual personality affects their performance? A sensitive sword could refuse to be drawn from its scabbard if spoken to harshly. A timid sword would be afraid to fight (regardless of its magical capabilities) and an aggressive sword might exert its will on the mind of its wielder to press for constant combat while a rude or tactless sword will blurt out impolite comments at inopportune moments.

Inanimate, but intelligent objects can be a source of hilarity as they interact with the PCs in their single-minded fashion. Imagine a weapon that detects danger, then warns the party by sneezing (loudly of course). Another magic item might gossip, revealing a character's innermost secrets to anyone who will listen. A hack-and-slash player might find his character's style cramped by a weapon that demands formal decorum in combat. An ESP *Medallion* could transfer thoughts garbled by a thick Scottish brogue and interject its own opinions as well.

Obviously such magic items must have a value that more than compensates for their quirks, otherwise they will end up in the nearest pawn shop faster than one can say *"Melfs Miniature Meteors."* On the other hand, such items may have a wee bit of a curse that keeps their owners from disposing of them.

Improvisation on the Fly

Actually, improvisation is acting or speaking extemporaneously (on the fly), making up things as one goes along, something that most DMs are always doing, using a few prepared notes. But what happens when the DM needs to create and role-play a character without any preparation time?

First of all, don't interrupt the game to make up a character. The DM doesn't need to have the character's full pedigree to give him a fair role-playing treatment. Quickly make a few notes about the character, those things that are immediately apparent to the characters—physical appearance and

manner of speaking, and maybe his name (or what he says to be his name).

If the DM is not comfortable making up these items on the fly, he can rely on dice tables, ones that he personally creates in advance. The DM should make three tables, with eight entries on each table. The first table contains names for potential NPCs (like Derek the Bold, Rhonda Windslayer, Old Drayfus, and so on). The second table contains roughed out personalities, including personality traits and behavior. The third table is a list of appearances, including clothing, physical features and possessions.

When the DM needs an NPC description in an instant, he can select or roll dice to obtain an individualized NPC description. Skills and other features are added as needed for the NPC to fulfill his purpose. When time permits, the DM can replace any names or unique descriptions taken from the table.

Going for the Funny Bone

Mix humor into the presentation of NPCs whenever possible. Even if the game style is serious, a bit of levity provides a welcome change of pace (on the other hand, don't make all the ores stand-up comedians—now, take my overlord. . . please). Be spontaneous with humor, but don't try to be a stand-up comic. Unless a DM is a natural entertainer, his contrived jokes may be inappropriate. Instead, he should rely on the spontaneity of the situations he presents to supply the laughs. Although some types of humor really need to be planned out during the design of the adventure, others can be improvised as the spirit moves the DM.

Broad Characterization

This means that one aspect of the character dominates all of the others. He is more like a cartoon character than a "real" person. One or more facets of his personality, his appearance, or his mannerisms are grossly exaggerated and inherently funny (or at least embarrassing).

Slapstick

This is another of type of humor that can develop out of the NPC's actions. Slapstick relies heavily on sight gags (these have to be described). This category includes pies-in-the-face, pratfalls, ducked punches (which hit someone else), practical jokes, and zany chase scenes.

Situational Comedy

This is the stuff of your basic television comedy. The player characters are placed in complicated, usually embarrassing dilemmas involving the NPC and must somehow extricate themselves. This humor relies heavily on the interpersonal relationships between NPCs and the player characters' ignorance of those relationships.

Parody

Here, the NPC is designed to both imitate and ridicule a fictional (or real) character. In gaming, this is commonly used to poke fun at other forms of popular entertainment, such as movies, television programs, books, and comics.

Satire

Like parody, a satirical character is used for the purpose of ridicule, but with the ulterior motive of revealing the folly or evil nature of that person's behavior.

Puns

Called the lowest form of humor (at least by those who don't find them funny), puns rely on a play on words often implying a different meaning for the word used or suggesting a word that sounds the same (a homonym or homophone).

A common question in the minds of many Dungeon Masters and players is "why do dungeons exist?" In this section, we'll consider this question and then discuss some of the most common settings for dungeon based games as well as giving you a few hints on ways to make some very unusual dungeons that your players are sure to remember for a long time to come.

The Disadvantages of Dungeons

There are a number of problems associated with the construction of the vast underground complexes required in a dungeon based campaign. At first glance, each of them seems to be more than adequate justification for the abandonment of the dungeon setting as wholly impractical. Consider the following:

Construction Time

As you might imagine, building a dungeon of any significant size is a very time consuming process. If two structures of equal size are commissioned, one built on the surface and one underground, the surface construction will almost certainly be completed first. The reasons for this are manifold, but center primarily on the difficulty of working beneath the surface of the earth.

Expenses

Just as underground construction is a time consuming process, so too is it an expensive one. In addition to the normal costs for an above ground structure, complexes built below the surface must have large quantities of earth removed and carted away. Further, money must be allocated for the special equipment which is used to pump out flooded areas or keep air circulating so that workers can survive. Further, sections of tunnels which might collapse must be shored up and steps must be taken to counter the myriad other hazards unique to dungeon excavation.

Worker Safety

Working underground is very hazardous. As such, accidents are common enough and workers are frequently injured, disabled, or even killed. Persuading people to work in such an unsafe environment is not easy and often requires a considerable outlay of cash. The time lost to worker injuries and the cost of securing laborers for above ground construction projects is far less than it is for underground ones.

Advantages of Dungeon Construction

On the other hand, the unique environment of an AD&D® game world, a place populated with powerful monsters and spell casting wizards, makes these disadvantages not only tolerable, but utterly insignificant. Again, consider the following factors:

Aerial Attacks

In our own history, the concept of aerial attacks has only recently become a problem for military engineers. In the middle ages, it was unheard of. In the AD&D game world, however, flying creatures or warriors pose an ongoing threat to security. The walls of even the most powerful concentric castle will be of little or no use in stopping the fiery breath of a red dragon as it races overhead. Brave warriors who stand ready on the battlements will suddenly find themselves exposed to attack with only their own armor for protection

An underground fortification, however, is shielded from such aerial bombardments. If built under a traditional castle, it provides the defenders of the structure with a place to withdraw to in the event of a catastrophic failure of their surface defenses. In short, the added expense and time required to equip a castle with an underground section may be well worth it if it means holding out against an airborne foe who might otherwise overwhelm your defenses.

Magic Spells

Another aspect of the AD&D game world which was, sadly, lacking from our own medieval period is magic. A powerful stone wall which might otherwise hold off armies for months can instantly be eliminated by a volley of *transmute rock to mud* spells. Other spells, those affecting the weather or unleashing similar wide scale devastation can easily shatter the sternest of stone fortifications.

An underground fortification, while not wholly immune to such attacks, is much better able to defend itself against them. While spells like *earthquake* and *transmute rock to mud* are still able to wreck havoc on dungeons and catacombs, it is much harder to direct and target your attacks when the structure you are firing on is hidden beneath the surface.

Defensibility

Castles, and other above ground structures, can, as a rule, be attacked from a number of sides. Even structures which are built on lakes, beside mountains, or in other secluded or protected areas are not wholly inaccessible. As such, the defenders are forced to split their forces along every possible exposed surface lest the attackers overwhelm their defenses in some area.

Underground structures, even those with more than one entrance, can still expect attacks to come from only one direction: above. The net result is that fewer defenders are required to keep an area secure. On the other hand, if you choose to maintain the same number of defenders, you can greatly increase their effectiveness. Underground fortifications require a would-be attacker to expend far more troops in any attempt to overrun a defending force.

Some may point out that there are a number of burrowing creatures, like xorns or purple worms, which pose threats to all sides of a catacomb complex. While this is true, it is important to remember that these creatures are, fortunately, few and far between. Further, they are seldom, if ever, marshaled into a coherent fighting force. In fact, even if this was not the case and someone managed to assemble an army of xorn warriors, they would be just as dangerous (if not more so) to an above ground fortification.

Traditional Siege Tactics

Years of experience in the field has provided military commanders with a number of potential weapons and strategies for use in assailing castles and similar structures. These weapons, or siege engines, include the ram (for battering down doors, gates, and walls), the catapult (for hurling projectiles over the walls of a-castle), and the siege tower (a mobile structure which allows attackers to scale the walls of a castle). The tactics employed ranged from undermining (a slow, but effective process of removing the earth that supports a wall and using explosives to bring it down) to storming (an all out assault on the defenders).

In attempting to tackle an underground complex, nearly all of the traditional tactics and weapons fail utterly or are, at least, reduced to minimal effectiveness. Rams, while they might allow you to break through a gate on the surface, leave you faced with the problem of charging headlong into a well defended, and possibly trapped, corridor to reach the fortress beyond. Catapults and siege towers, while excellent at overcoming high stone walls, are utterly useless against underground complexes.- Storming an underground structure requires that you attempt to fight your way into it through the few, heavily defended, entrances; an action certain to cost you dearly in troops. And mining, which is still effective as a means of gaining entry into a dungeon, simply creates another entrance which, after the initial surprise has worn off, can be as well defended as any of the others.

Refuge

Even if the above thinking is discounted, there is yet another reason for the construction of underground complexes beneath the traditional European castle. If your castle defenses fail you, either due to traditional tactics and weapons or to spells and monsters, an underground complex gives you a place to retreat to. Here, in the safety of your dungeons, you can sally forth to harass the attackers or simply hold your own and wait for the cavalry to arrive.

Other Underground Structures

Of course, not all dungeons are designed and built as military complexes. In fact, many of them are not designed and built at all. There are numerous examples of natural caves and cavern formations which can serve as dungeon settings.

Mines

Nearly every intelligent race conducts some form of mining operation to obtain metals, gems, or important minerals. Some of the more sophisticated races and cultures have even been known to drill for oil using a variety of techniques which are amazingly advanced.

Mines can easily be converted into settings for dungeon adventures. In many cases the mines will have been abandoned by their creators, while in others they are still operated and the characters must assume the role of trespassers or hired trouble-shooters who have been called in to deal with a problem in the shafts.

Mines might be abandoned for a number of reasons. The ore they were built to exploit may have run out or been depleted to the point where the mine is no longer profit-

able. Of course, the mine may still have exploitable ores in it or untapped veins which are just begging to be found by adventurers. If this is the case, the original owner of a mine is more than likely to pop up again and demand his fair (or unfair) share of the take.

Some mines may have been abandoned while still profitable. A complex which constantly floods despite all efforts to prevent or cope with it may well be considered too dangerous or too much trouble to work. A mine which accidentally breaks into the lair of an underground creature (a nest of carrion crawlers, for example) might well be shut down temporarily until a group of heroes or members of the local military can be sent in to deal with the problem.

While it is important to remember that mines in the feudal period which most AD&D® games take place in are far more sophisticated than the average person would expect, they can quickly degrade and become dangerous when unmaintained. If systems which once kept air circulating no longer function, the depths of the mine may quickly become low on oxygen or even fill with toxic or explosive gases. Without continual pumping, many mine complexes quickly fill with ground water to the point where they are impassable to those unable to breathe underwater.

Animal Burrows

Another artificial type of cavern is the animal lair or burrow. Many creatures in the AD&D game universe, like the xorn, purple worm, or umber hulk, spend most of their lives burrowing through earth and rock in search of food and prey. When these creatures pass through an area, they leave behind them a network of tunnels and, on occasion, chambers.

While many races, dwarves in particular, are too proud to make use of caverns which they did not manufacture themselves, others (like goblins and kobolds) will eagerly seek out these "ready made" dungeons and move right in. Of course, from time to time they find themselves claiming sections which have not been wholly abandoned by the creatures who fashioned them. In these instances, they are forced to either abandon the complex (possibly returning to claim it at a later time) or attempt to drive off or slay the monster. As a rule, they will opt for the former tactic unless special circumstances dictate otherwise.

Natural Caverns

There are numerous types of caverns and cave complexes created by nature without the aid of living things. These are found around the world, in a variety of environments, and provide easily available housing to any number of intelligent and unintelligent races. Many creatures, like the piercer, have evolved in this type of an environment and are utterly helpless outside of it.

Limestone Caverns are one of the more common types of natural dungeon complexes which adventurers will encounter. Limestone caverns are found in areas where the bedrock is composed of limestone, dolomite, or marble, and where there is abundant groundwater or rainfall.

The formation of a limestone cavern is easy enough to understand. Limestone is a very soft type of rock which is easily eroded and altered by running water. In addition, rain water (which is more acidic than ground water) can rapidly break down areas of limestone which it comes into contact with. Over the course of centuries, the ongoing action of the local water supply simply carves its way into the heart of the bedrock.

Limestone caverns are often difficult to explore, having narrow passages, steep inclines, and areas which have been blocked by cave ins. Entrance to such complexes can often be gained through the inlets which have been carved by running water (often a tight fit) or by descending into a large chamber whose ceiling has collapsed to create a sinkhole in the surface above it.

Over a period of time, the water which formed a limestone cavern may dry up as the climate changes. In such cases it is not uncommon to find small streams, springs, and pools within caves which are in otherwise dry regions of the world. In addition to underground pools, streams, and rivers, limestone caverns are noted for numerous other distinctive features, most of which are formed, in one way or another, by the action of natural water.

Stalactites and stalagmites, the most well known type of formation, are conical pillars of mineral deposits formed by dripping water. As the water evaporates, it leaves behind foreign matter which has dissolved in it. As the centuries pass, these traces add up to form large projections. The color of these features is dependent wholly on the type of minerals which compose them, but can range from

gray to brown or even to red or white in unusual cases.

Other features common to a limestone caverns include draperies, flowstone, and the rare, but fabulous, gypsum flowers. Draperies are formed when a sheet of running water evaporates, leaving behind a rock formation that resembles a ruffled curtain. Flow-stone is a formation which has the appearance of a terraced stream of oozing sludge. The last, and most beautiful of these formations, is the gypsum flower. Delicate and crystaline, these rare structures give every cave explorer pause to wonder at the elegance of nature's handiwork.

Sea Caves are another common form of natural cavern complex. Sea caves are found in coastal regions where the action of the pounding surf has broken away sections of a cliff face. As a rule, sea caves are much smaller than limestone caverns since the energy of the surf which forms them dissipates rapidly as the cavern grows.

It is not uncommon for sea caves to be partially filled with salt water as the ocean actually reaches right into them. In fact, more than one adventurer has been caught and drowned in a sea cave when the coming of high tide brought water surging into the cave, flooding it completely. As a rule, however, tidal surges come on gradually enough for the typical explorer to anticipate them and leave the sea cave before being placed in any great danger.

Unlike limestone caverns, sea caves are not marked with any great natural formations. In fact, they are very smooth and often seem almost artificial in their construction. The reason for this is simple enough, the repeated crashing of the surf and tidal action of the sea has worn down the rough surface of the rocks in the cave and prevents any unusual rock formations from evolving.

Lava Caves are, perhaps, the most unusual type of cavern found by the average explorer. Located only in regions of current or past volcanic activity, lava caves are created by the flowing and cooling of magma which rises up from deep within the earth. Because of the unusual way in which they are formed, many lava caves are completely cut off from the surface world. They will be discovered only by a deliberate excavation to search for such chambers or by an accident which breaks into them.

As a rule, lava caves will not have the unusual features associated with limestone caverns, but will more closely resemble the smooth interiors of sea caves. This is due to the fact that the lava which forms the cave in the first place is molten and tends to settle and cool without forming sharp edges or large outcroppings. In fact, one of the more common features in a lava cave is the "tube", which is formed when the outside of a stream of magma cools into a shell and forms a pipeline for the lava within it. In many cases, long sections of the tube will end up empty, creating a smooth passage which is very circular in shape.

Persons exploring lava caves must be very careful to take precautions against potential exposure to magma or freshly cooled rocks. In many cases, pools of lava are hidden beneath thin shells of cool rock. Those trusting the rocky crust with their weight will soon find themselves bathing in a pool of molten rock, a circumstance which is certain to be instantly fatal. In fact, even sections of rock which have cooled enough to support an adventurer's weight may still be hot enough to cause severe burns. Rocks formed by volcanic action may require several days to cool completely.

Faulting is a process which, while it does not create whole cave complexes, can open up some very large chambers in the earth's crust. Faulting is caused when one section of rock breaks away from another. Caverns formed in this manner can be quite large, but seldom have any other chambers or tunnels associated with them (unless they have been expanded by artificial means).

Cavities of this nature make good camp sites for a band of travelers, but also serve as comfortable homes for many varieties of monsters and animals.

Unusual Dungeons

The examples presented above are intended to provide a dungeon master who is planning to run an underground campaign with a variety of settings which will be more or less familiar to the players. One drawback to such dungeons, however, is that they can become trite. After all, characters who spend most of their time in sea caves and limestone caverns will probably long for a change of scenery from time to time. The following section is meant to provide a referee with some ideas for a change of pace.

The basic premise which we have followed so far assumes that a dungeon complex is formed either by man, nature, or animals as an

underground structure. But what happens if we take a building which was intended to stand on the surface, and then turn it into a dungeon? Here are a number of ways in which otherwise normal buildings can be converted into subterranean complexes just begging to be explored by adventurers.

Sand Storms: In the myths and legends of many cultures dwelling near or amid the sands of a great desert, there are tales of mighty sandstorms. In regions of the world where the desert is particularly prone to such tempests whole cities have been known to vanish from the face of the earth.

The cultures in and around the Sahara Desert in North Africa are filled with stories of cities "swallowed up" by the blowing sands.

Silting: On the opposite end of the spectrum, we have silting. In order to have a dungeon created by silting, a region must be flooded by rising waters and left submerged for an extended period of time. As the years pass, sediment carried in the water begins to collect around the structures and, eventually, they will be completely covered by mud and debris. Then, as the climate changes or is altered, the water recedes or is drawn away. If enough time has passed, the silt covered buildings will look like nothing more than mounds of earth. Anyone who takes the time to dig a little deeper, however, will learn the truth.

Volcanism: Volcanism is a wonderful tool for transforming above ground structures into underground dungeons. Perhaps the mightiest natural force known to man, a volcanic eruption can send sheets of lava boiling across a region, instantly covering it in rock as it cools. In addition to lava, of course, volcanoes are known to unleash rivers of mud which, when it dries, can also encase cities or villages in stone or hard earth. Even volcanic ash, powdered stone created by the mighty living mountain, can entomb whole cities. Over the years, it too will harden into stone.

Perhaps the most well known example of volcanic entombment is the buried city of Pompeii.

Overgrowing: Far less dramatic than volcanism, overgrowing is a natural process found in many parts of the world. It takes place when a building or village. in a heavy forest or jungle region is abandoned by its owners for some reason. Over the years, the jungle vines and plants, which were kept at bay only by the actions of the inhabitants, return to the area. In a fairly short period of time, the jungle may become so thick that it is almost impossible to pass through it. Dungeons formed in this manner are still above the surface of the earth, but are so cloaked in vegetation as to be unreachable by all but a few means. Once inside a structure which has been overgrown, adventurers will find themselves able to exit only by those few openings which remain in the foliage around the building.

Examples of overgrown structures in our own history which might make superb dungeons are the Aztec and Mayan cities found in South and Central America.

Magic: Of course, the thing which makes the AD&D® game world more than just a history lesson is the introduction of magic into an otherwise fairly common medieval setting. Just as magic can make many common things wondrous, so too can it make ordinary settings into exciting dungeons to test the metal of your bravest knights and most pious priests.

Powerful magicks can be used to create dungeons of unusual nature or serve to guard them with unnatural defenders. Of course, the magical powers of priests and druids should not be discounted here. Consider, for example, the section on overgrown jungles above and then imagine a druid's hand in the background. What was once a simple patch of brambles might grow into a deadly labyrinth guarding some ancient druidic secret.

Above Ground Dungeons: While this may seem to be a contradiction in terms to the novice referee or player, it is not. In our own history there are numerous structures which make excellent dungeon settings just as they are. For example, we don't need magic or volcanic eruptions to turn the Great Pyramids of Egypt into dungeons. The myriad tunnels and chambers built within these ancient structures are as challenging to explore as any underground complex.

There are other examples from our own history which might be classed as dungeons. The pueblo cities of many American Indian tribes might make good dungeons, as would any number of monasteries or similar structures built for isolation.

The environment, both physical and psychological, which characters are confronted with beneath the surface of the earth is as much a hazard to their lives as the monsters who dwell there. There are numerous examples of adventuring parties who could overcome almost any monster which the forces of darkness might hurl against them being killed by a massive tunnel collapse or suffocating as a raging dungeon fire stole the oxygen from their lungs. In this section, we will examine life underground and give you, the dungeon master, a few interesting insights on the evils lurking there.

The Psychological Environment

Dungeons and other underground complexes touch a note deep within all of us. There is a certain fear or uneasiness associated with subterranean realms which even the bravest explorers must admit to at some point.

Think back to when you were a child. At one point or another, each of us found our own "dungeon". Maybe it was a narrow fissure in the side of a cliff near your home or the basement of an old, abandoned house on the outskirts of town. Whatever it was, there were only two things about it that you were sure of: first, that it was full of ghost or monsters and second, that you weren't about to go in there alone.

Now, of course, you can look back on the incident and smile. There probably weren't any monsters in there after all and maybe you even got the courage up to explore it one day. But, when you think back to it today, I'll bet you still feel a sense of wonder and a little tingle of fear. It's that little tingle that a good dungeon setting can rekindle in all of us.

Isolation

Perhaps the most dramatic psychological aspect of a dungeon quest is that it places the characters in a situation where they are cut off from the rest of the world. In some cases, this sense of isolation is founded simply on the knowledge that they have traveled several hundred yards beneath the surface of the earth and are not likely to encounter anyone else here. At least, not anyone who doesn't want to use them as target practice or the main course at a monster buffet.'

In other cases, the sense of isolation may be reinforced by a physical barrier which impedes not only any chance of rescue, but any chance of a quick escape. Examples of physical isolation techniques might include a cave-in which seals off the route which lead the party to this point or a series of iron gates which have slammed shut behind them.

When we are dealing with physical isolation and the means by which the dungeon master inflicts it upon his players, it is important to avoid obvious plot devices and wild coincidences. For example, having a cavern collapse behind the party without reason simply to trap them in the dungeon is generally a bad move. In addition to being an obviously engineered plot device, it detracts from the suspension of disbelief which is vital to any game.

Of course, this doesn't mean that you can never use such a device in your plots, simply keep in mind that you are planning to use one and then justify it ahead of time. If the party is constantly reminded of the creaking timbers holding up the dungeon ceiling and are pelted with minor rockfalls from time to time, then a big cave-in behind them will seem more like a stroke of good fortune ("At least it didn't fall on us!") than a plot device.

Another means of inducing physical isolation, that of an intentional barrier which is obviously sprung on the players like a trap, has its own unique advantages. By the same token, it has its drawbacks in the dungeon and must be used with care.

If an iron portcullis comes crashing down behind the party, it must be there for a reason. In all probability, such a trap is set up ahead of time by a band of raiders (goblins, kobolds, or whatever) who plan to ambush passers by as soon as it falls. While the characters have their attention turned to the gate which has just slammed loudly into place, they are attacked by the raiders. Simple enough.

In other cases, the gate (or whatever isolation mechanism is being employed) will be unleashed by someone with more in mind than simply robbing the party. As soon as the party enters the sewers underneath the Tower of the Mad Wizard he might drop iron gates and *wizard lock* all the exits to keep them from leaving so that he can play cat and mouse with them. In cases like this, the characters should be made aware that not only are they now isolated from the outside world, but also that the bad guys know exactly where they are. Try this the next time to you want to watch a party of powerful characters overcome with fear and apprehension.

Alienation

Another aspect of the dungeon style adventure is the fact that it forces the characters to confront an environment which is quite alien to them. There are numerous hazards which exist underground and not on the surface world. Although any of these hazards might be easily dealt with and discounted in a more familiar setting, the fact that they all exist simultaneously in the vast reaches of the underground can be quite overwhelming to a character.

Examples of the ways in which an unfamiliar environment can disorient or confuse a character are unending, but here are a few of the most common ones:

Keeping Track of Time is very difficult in a dungeon. On the surface, in their homes, characters could depend on a faithful grandfather clock or hourglass to mark the passing of the day. While miniaturized watches might be available from the finest dwarven craftsmen, they are not common by any means. Waterclocks or hourglasses, while they will keep excellent track of time if left undisturbed, do not function if carried in a backpack or subjected to numerous shocks. Even the ages old skill of knowing the time based on the elevation of the sun fails you when the sun is hidden from view by half a mile of bedrock.

The inability of the players to keep track of time with any degree of accuracy can be a very useful plot device; especially if they are on a mission where time is of the essence.

Sense of Direction is another easily disrupted thing which most of us take for granted every day. In an environment which is new to you, like the twisting tunnels of a dungeon, it is all but impossible for the average person to keep track of their compass points. Of course, there are means by which this can be overcome (a magnetic compass, for example) but these can be fooled or destroyed.

Other traditional means for determining position and heading, such as taking a bearing on the sun, moon, or stars, fail when far beneath the surface.

Obviously, being forced to resort to "seat of the pants" mapping can force the party to make "best guess" maps which may or may not be accurate enough to save their lives when everything hits the fan. It's this kind of uncertainty that has resulted in more than one party of dungeon delvers developing an acute case of paranoia.

The Home Field Advantage

This is a term which we can use to describe the culmination of a party's sense of isolation and alienation. In short, it boils down to this: the monsters and inhabitants of the dungeon know every passage and crawlway in their subterranean mazes, but you don't. Even races of otherwise insignificant creatures, like goblins or kobolds, can employ this knowledge to misdirect explorers, set up deadly ambushes, or lure their enemies into lethal traps.

Perhaps the best way to use this in a game is to arrange for a party of explorers to stumble into ambush after ambush as they travel through a dungeon. At each turn, a volley of darts or arrows flies at them to inflict minor damage. When they rush to the counter attack, however, they find nothing left to fight. The fiends have used their skills and knowledge of the

tunnels to evade their attackers.

Another possibility is the suicide squad. Here, a small group draws the party's attention and then flees, hoping to lure the characters into a hot pursuit. After numerous twists and turns, during which the dungeon delvers almost overtake their foes on several occasions, the players find that they have been tricked. They have followed the bait and are now in a very dangerous situation. Perhaps they now face an army of creatures who surround them on all sides or they have been lured right into the lair of a very powerful monster. Whatever the end result, they have been tricked because they did not know the area nearly as well as the creatures who inhabit it.

Controllability

This is another factor which deserves to be mentioned at this time as it is one of the best "selling points" for a dungeon based campaign. In short, the point we need to make is that the dungeon master has a great deal of control over the actions of his players in an underground campaign. In a campaign set above ground, in a city for example, the players can opt to move in any direction and pursue courses of action wholly unplanned for by the referee. While this is not totally eliminated in a dungeon setting, it is greatly reduced.

Of course, this feature of a dungeon campaign not only makes the referee's job a little easier, it also makes things easier for a new player to understand. A novice gamer can often be left confused and overwhelmed by the multitude of choices available to him or her in a city or wilderness campaign. In a dungeon, where the choice of actions is usually far more limited, they may feel more in control of the situation and better understand what is going on in the game.

The Physical Environment

Now that we have examined a number of factors which can contribute to making a dungeon exploration game mysterious and memorable, lets look at the physical hazards which a party of adventurers is likely to encounter beneath the surface of the earth. Although each of these could be incorporated into every single dungeon adventure which you referee, it's probably better to hold off on them and use each one only when it's appropriate for the plot or setting. For example, if you have decided that portions of your Haunted Mine are going to be filled with explosive gas, then there's no need to also have it subject to violent geological tremors and earthquakes. Save the other unusual features for a game in which they are better suited to the environment.

Cave-Ins

Perhaps the most familiar of all the hazards which characters are likely to encounter as they explore the depths of the earth, cave-ins can be very dangerous. In most regions of the average dungeon, cave-ins will be rare. This is due primarily to the fact that older subterranean structures of a natural origin tend be fairly stable. Those that are not collapse early on in their development and are, thus, not usually around long enough to turn into dungeons.

Man made structures, on the other hand, are more dependent on regular safety checks and upkeep. Without such close attention, they can quickly become unsafe to travel in.

If the referee decides that an area is generally safe to travel in, consideration must be given to the possible actions of the party. For example, a length of an abandoned dwarvish mine might normally be fairly rugged, but how will it stand up to a wizard's *chain lightning* spell?

Of course, cave-ins can also be engineered by adventurers or dungeon denizens as a means of attack. This can be direct (dropping the roof on the victims) or indirect (dropping it behind them to cut off escape routes), depending upon the goals of the ambushing party. Such traps must be rigged with great care, however, as there is always the chance that an artificial cave-in may get out of hand and bring down whole sections of the complex, possibly even killing those who set up the trap.

Darkness

By the far the most common and easily countered hazard in the typical dungeon is simply that fact that it's pretty dark down there. Most referees don't go out of their way to remind players of this fact, and it's generally ignored in the average game. But let's take a moment to consider how we can use this dreadful darkness to our advantage in brightening up our adventures.

The first thing to consider is simply this; we know it's dark in a dungeon, and that's why characters will have torches or lanterns

with them. A very wise thing to do, of course, but there are inherent problems with torches, lanterns, and other forms of light. The most obvious of these is the fact that light in a dungeon draws attention the way it draws moths in the wilderness. There is no better way to advertise your presence to the inhabitants of a subterranean realm than by casting bright light about for all to see. And make no mistake, while the light may only provide you with good vision for a few yards, it can be seen at much greater distances. To a great many monsters, a light in the distance is like a beacon that says "free food - all you can eat - come and get it". A good way to remind characters of just how dark it really is in a dungeon is to extinguish their lights every so often. This can be done with a cloud of steam from a geothermal hot spring or a gust of wind racing along the corridor from some mysterious region up ahead. As often as not, in fact, it can be accomplished with a simple *darkness* spell cast by some magic using monster.

Flooding

Many underground chambers, especially those created by water, like sea caves or limestone caverns, often have standing water in them. In some cases, it may be only a trickle or a stream while in others it may be a raging river. In addition, the level of water in a cave can change with the passing of time. Sea caves, for example, may be regularly flooded by the rising tide while the river running through a limestone cavern may overflow its banks every spring with the thawing of a near by glacier. Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of dungeon flooding is simply the fact that there is no way to escape the water. In such a confined space, every alcove and hiding place will be filled by the rising tides. Characters unfortunate enough to be caught in such a hazardous situation may find themselves fighting for their lives against the merciless elements.

Oxygen

As everyone knows, the vast majority of living creatures require oxygen to survive. Sadly, the dungeon environment is often lacking in this very element. As such, travel into regions in which there is little or no oxygen available can be quickly fatal to the average team of adventurers.

Of course, not all regions of an underground complex will be in this condition. In fact, the vast majority of underground realms are ventilated enough to allow air for respiration as long as unusual circumstances (such as a fire) do not deplete it in a rapid manner.

Dungeon Masters should use oxygen starvation carefully, as it requires that the party be in a region with no access to fresh air. Since they have almost certainly gotten into the area by walking, there is obviously an open passage to the surface which will allow some air flow.

In order for the lack of oxygen in an area to become life threatening, this connection with the surface world must be severed. This can be done with a cave-in or similar physical barrier which actually blocks off the air supply. If this does not fit in well with the plot of the game, the referee may wish to introduce a raging fire or magical spell to deplete the oxygen in an area. In fact, it may not even be necessary to use such drastic means to place the characters in a low oxygen environment. If an area is poorly ventilated, the rapid exertion of a combat with some monster may force their bodies to attempt to metabolize more oxygen than is available.

Fires

In most natural dungeon complexes there are few, if any, sources of combustible materials and, thus, fire is not very probable. In the majority of man made dungeons, however, there are often wooden supports and similar items which can ignite. In fact, the danger of combustion in a coal mine is one hazard that must be carefully considered before entering into such a region.

The greatest danger presented by fires in a dungeon is not the flame itself, but the fact that it rapidly consumes oxygen. The larger the fire, the faster it burns off the oxygen, and the more dangerous it is to adventurers. Of course, when the oxygen is gone, the fire will be extinguished.

Another dangerous by-product of an underground fire is the smoke that it can create. In areas of poor ventilation it can quickly fill entire chambers. Because of its heavy carbon dioxide content, smoke can be just as deadly as any poison gas unleashed by an enemy.

Noxious Gases

Many subterranean regions, especially man made complexes like sewers, are filled with noxious gases. While these are not actually deadly, they

can be quite overpowering and make breathing difficult and distasteful to adventurers.

Dungeon masters can introduce noxious vapors from a wide variety of sources. Rotting garbage, for example, can produce a stench which is so overpowering to the average human as to induce gagging or even vomiting. The *stinking cloud* spell is another classic example of this type of gas, this can be introduced by the characters to battle their foes or even released by a party of monsters lead by a spell caster. A third fine example of a source of noxious vapors is the troglodyte lair. As these vile creatures often secrete a very offensive smelling oil, the caverns which they dwell in is apt to be thick with its scent. A modern example of noxious vapors would be tear gas.

Toxic Gases

Far more dangerous than their noxious cousins, toxic gases are able to cause injury and harm to those who breathe them. In many cases, toxic gases will carry a distinct odor which may allow characters to detect them before they reach dangerous concentrations. In other instances, however, they may be utterly odorless and colorless. In the latter case, the party may be overcome by the fumes before they are able to react to them.

Of course, the most common means of detecting odorless toxic gases is with the aid of a small songbird in a cage. As these fragile creatures are far more sensitive to toxic gases than humans or demi-humans, they can act as early warning devices. In short, if the bird dies, get out of the area quickly!

Explosive Gases

Even more dangerous, perhaps, than toxic gases, explosive ones can lurk undetected until a party of adventurers wanders in with an open flame. Once ignited, they release vast amounts of heat, light, and energy in a sudden violent chemical reaction—that is, they explode.

Tb make matters worse, many explosive gases are toxic or noxious, compounding the danger of encountering them. In regions where coal or oil is common, explorers are prone to encounter pockets of methane (natural gas) which is toxic, explosive, odorless, and colorless. A more lethal combination would be hard to image!

Referees should use all forms of gases (toxic, noxious, and explosive) sparingly. If they are too frequently encountered, players will no longer be shocked by their effects. Remember, the most important thing in any game is excitement and entertainment, both of which are diminished if gimmicks are overused or predictable.

Low Temperature

Many dungeons are prone to being both cold, because they are shielded from the sun's rays, and damp, because they have vast quantities of water in them. Although this condition may not immediately become an obvious threat to the lives of the characters, it can make them quite uncomfortable and, if left uncountered, can prove fatal.

The rivers and streams found underground are notoriously cold, often just warm enough to avoid freezing, and can quickly disable anyone forced to spend time in them due to hypothermia (a dangerous reduction in body temperature).

The dungeon master can use the exceptionally cold waters of the typical dungeon setting to great advantage by forcing characters to pass through deep streams or punt their way across a wide lake, all the while struggling to avoid the ill effects of immersion in cold water. In many cases, numerous water crossings may be required to reach a party's objective, each of which presents fresh hazards to the already chilly explorers.

Attempts to counter the cold, by warming oneself before a camp fire or the like are all well and good, but have the disadvantages of aerating a light (thus announcing your firkin presence to everything in the area) and using oxygen to feed the fire (thus making your own breathing supply more limited). The players will have to weigh the risks and benefits of this course on their own.

High Temperature

On the other end of the spectrum, there are subterranean realms in which cold air and water are not likely to become problems. One seldom catches a chill, for example, from attempting to wade through a pool of water which has been heated to near boiling temperatures by geothermal activity. On the other hand, anyone in such a situation is certain to be badly burned.

Geothermal heat is found in many forms. Most commonly it manifests itself in hot springs and geysers of steam. In more exotic locales, it may be found in the form of a stream of molten lava or a boiling lake of magma. In the latter

case, the air is apt to be thick with brimstone, a noxious (or even toxic) vapor.

Dungeon masters can use geothermal heat sources in much the same way that they use pools of bone-chilling water. A party may have to find some way around a stream of bubbling lava or through a plume of superheated steam in order to reach the climax of the adventure.

Line of Sight

Because of the twisting nature of the passages which make up many dungeon complexes, it is often easy to lose sight of other party members. In fact, it is easy to lose sight of almost everything. Remember that there is usually no light beyond that which you have brought with you and the area just around the next corner is shrouded in absolute darkness.

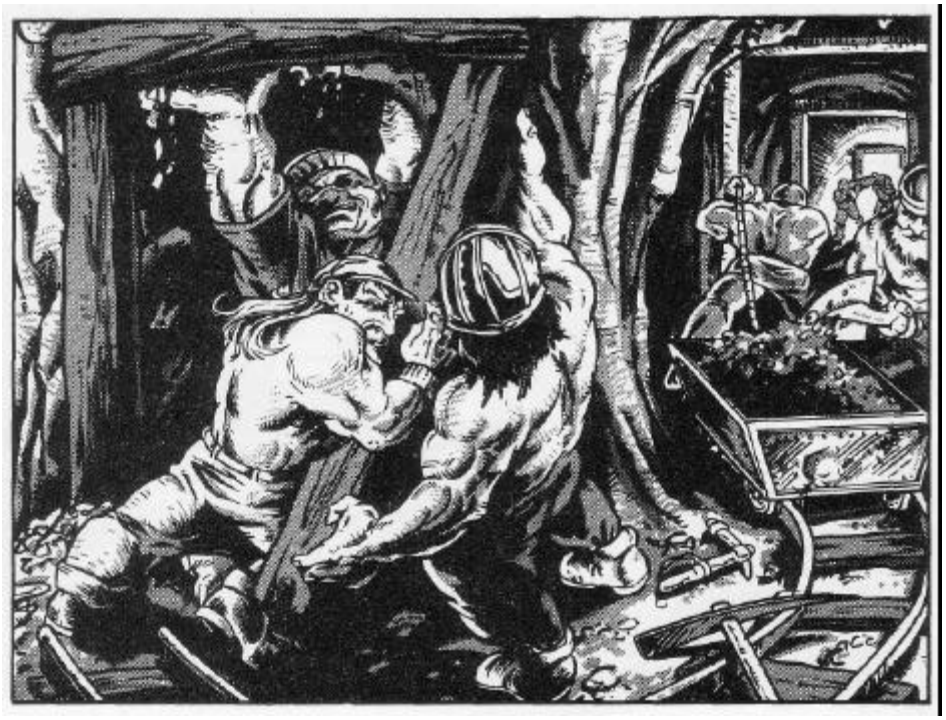
The inability to keep sight of party members who leave the main group makes the job of scouting very dangerous. As soon as you are out of sight, you're on your own. With luck, you'll be able to call for help if something attacks you, but you can never be sure.

A skillful dungeon master can use this factor the same way many television shows use actors without speaking parts. For example, Johndar the Thief is sent ahead of the part to watch for traps and act as a scout. Because he is elvish, the players decide that his infravision will be useful once he is far enough ahead of the party to avoid the glare of their torches and lanterns. Sadly, Johndar is cut down by a volley of arrows from a hidden grotto full of kobolds. A few seconds later, the party catches up with the dead scout. Just as the kobolds release a second volley, one of the players looks around and says "something's happened to our scout!"—Famous last words.

Loadstone

Some areas of the underground may hold deposits of magnetic ore known as loadstone. Although such areas are normally safe to travel through, large outcroppings of such ore can be dangerous. The mining of loadstone, however, can be very profitable and will often cause numerous mines to spring up in areas where it is discovered. The most common use of magnetic ores in a dungeon setting is as a hindrance to mappers. In games which allow characters to purchase or acquire magnetic compasses, even a small deposit of loadstone will be enough to cause dungeon delvers to produce very confused and often wholly incorrect maps. As a rule, such occurances are more of an annoyance than a physical hazard.

In extreme cases, dungeon masters may decide to place a large quantity of very powerful loadstone in a dungeon. The most obvious effect of this is that its magnetic field is so strong that it can immobilize characters in metal armor or with metal weapons. Any alloy which is subject to magnetic attraction may be yanked from the adventurer's grasp and pinned to the surface of the deposit. Encounters with loadstone veins of such intensity should be very rare indeed.




G. Barr

In the section that follows, we have provided you, the dungeon master, with an assortment of unusual dungeons. Each of these is presented in a standard format and is intended to make your job easier. After all, if there's one thing a DM never seems to have enough of, it's preparation time.

Dungeon Descriptions

Each generic dungeon is presented in a forced perspective view which allows the dungeon master to get a better feel for the area than he would with a standard top view map. In this format, you can better judge the relationships of objects in three dimensions and provide your players with more vivid descriptions of the areas they are exploring.

The first section of each generic dungeon's description is its origin. Here, we give you a little bit of background about the dungeon and tell you why or how it was built or formed in the first place. Obviously, this information is fairly open so that you should have no trouble finding a way to fit the dungeons into your own campaign.

After that comes the section entitled transformation. In here, we present you with a possible means for converting a structure which might not seem like a dungeon (such as the primitive temple) into an underground complex. Once again, these descriptions are not specific so that you should have no trouble finding a place in your campaign world into which you can fit them.

The final section of the dungeon description is the map key. Here, we go into some detail about the dungeon's original construction and uses. None of the chambers are described in great detail, so you can add or delete anything you like without worrying about upsetting the balance of play.

In addition, we have not "aged" the dungeons. We have left out any mention of the monsters which have now moved into them or the spirits which roam their halls in search of living spirits to feed on. Each dungeon master will be able to set up his own unique encounters when he uses the generic complexes we have provided here. Thus, even if two dungeon master's make use of, say, the great pyramid map, you can bet that their dungeons will be greatly different.

It's up to you now...

What do you need to do to get a dungeon ready for use? Well, first you'll have to decide how it fits into your campaign and think about its history for a little bit.

Let's assume that you have decided to use the limestone cavern for a game.The secret of its evolution may seem to be quite obvious: it was carved by a river. Okay, we could add more details about the history of the river or its origins, but let's also assume that these will have little if any bearing on your game. Thus, we have decided that the text provided in the generic dungeon description is enough background for the physical cavern itself.

What about the monsters, traps, and treasures? Once again, think about the past. Suppose that a fairy good sized community of goblins lived upriver from the twisting mazes of the limestone cavern. Some 25 years ago, however, a family of ogres moved into the area which they had called home for generations and they were forced to leave. Boarding crude rafts, they set out on the river.

Eventually, they came to the caverns. Imagine their delight at finding so perfect home with so little effort. As one might expect, they moved right in. As they explored the caves, they also took care to clean out anything dangerous which might have been living there, like giant rats or spiders. In the end, the caves belonged to the goblins.

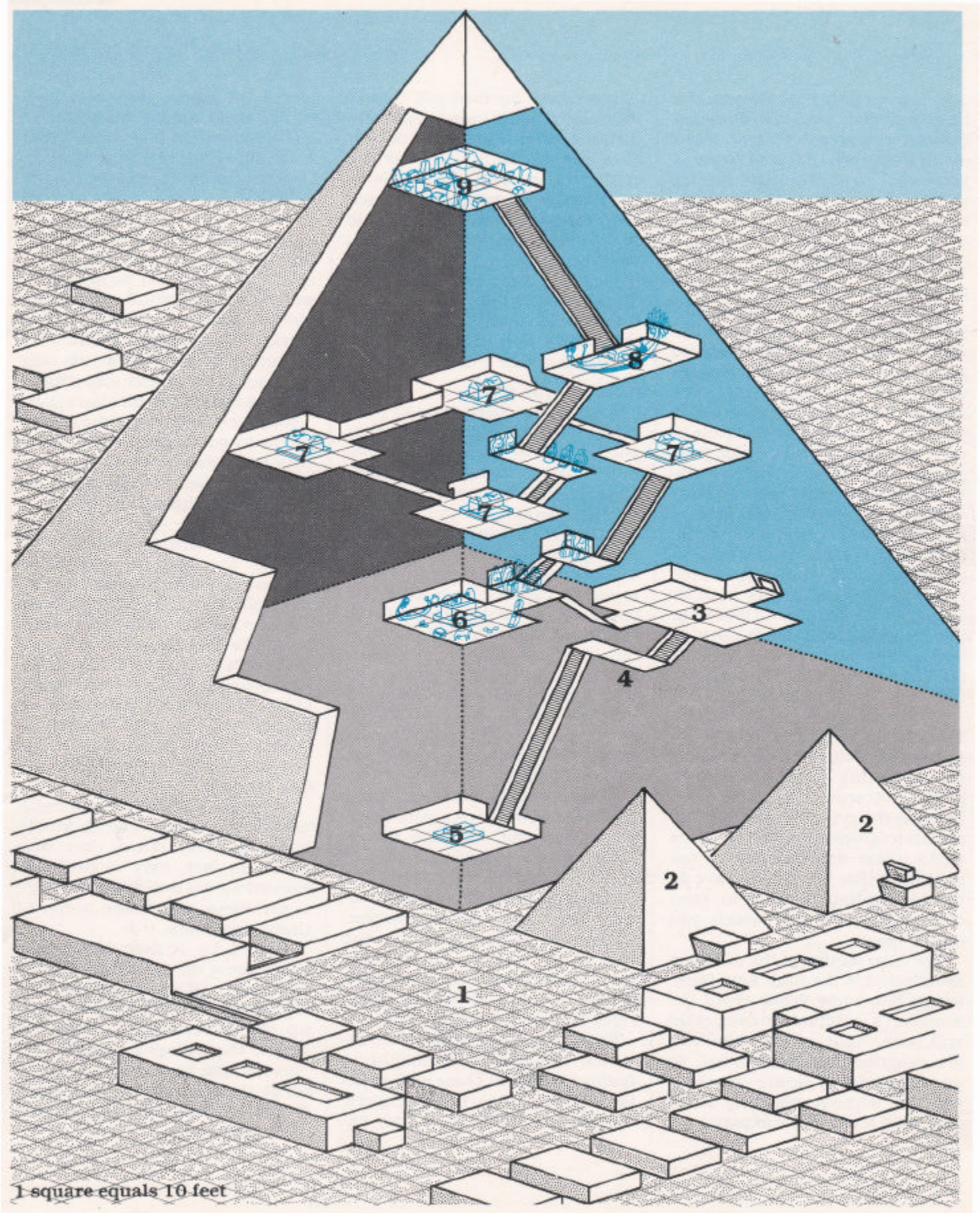
Over the years, the goblins came to love their new homes. It seems that they have everything they need to survive and prosper. The water is fresh and full of fish, fungus grows easily in the dark, damp corridors, and there are a number of human towns in the woods near by to act as targets for raids. All in all, it sounds like goblin paradise.

Now, how will we get the adventurers to go there? That's pretty easy to figure out if you just take the information you already have and follow it through to its logical conclusions.

The local farmers, fed up with having the goblins raid their homes every two or three months, have offered a reward to anyone who can rid them of this evil curse. It may be that friends or relatives of the PCs live in one of the neighboring towns and have been hurt, killed, or captured by the fiendish humanoids. One way or another, there is plenty of motivation for the player's to move against the tiny tyrants.

As for the goblins, one can imagine that they won't take too kindly to being driven out of their new home. In fact, they've probably learned a great deal from their past experiences and taken steps to thwart intruders.

Well I'll be, it looks like things are shaping up real nicely for this adventure. All we have to do now is to insert a few sub-plots and play up the supernatural fear with which the villagers regard the "horrid little beast-men" who terrorize them and before you know it, we'll have *a* challenging, memorable adventure.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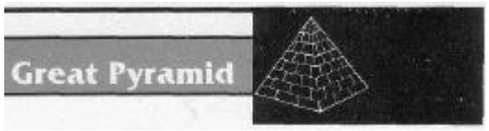


Origin

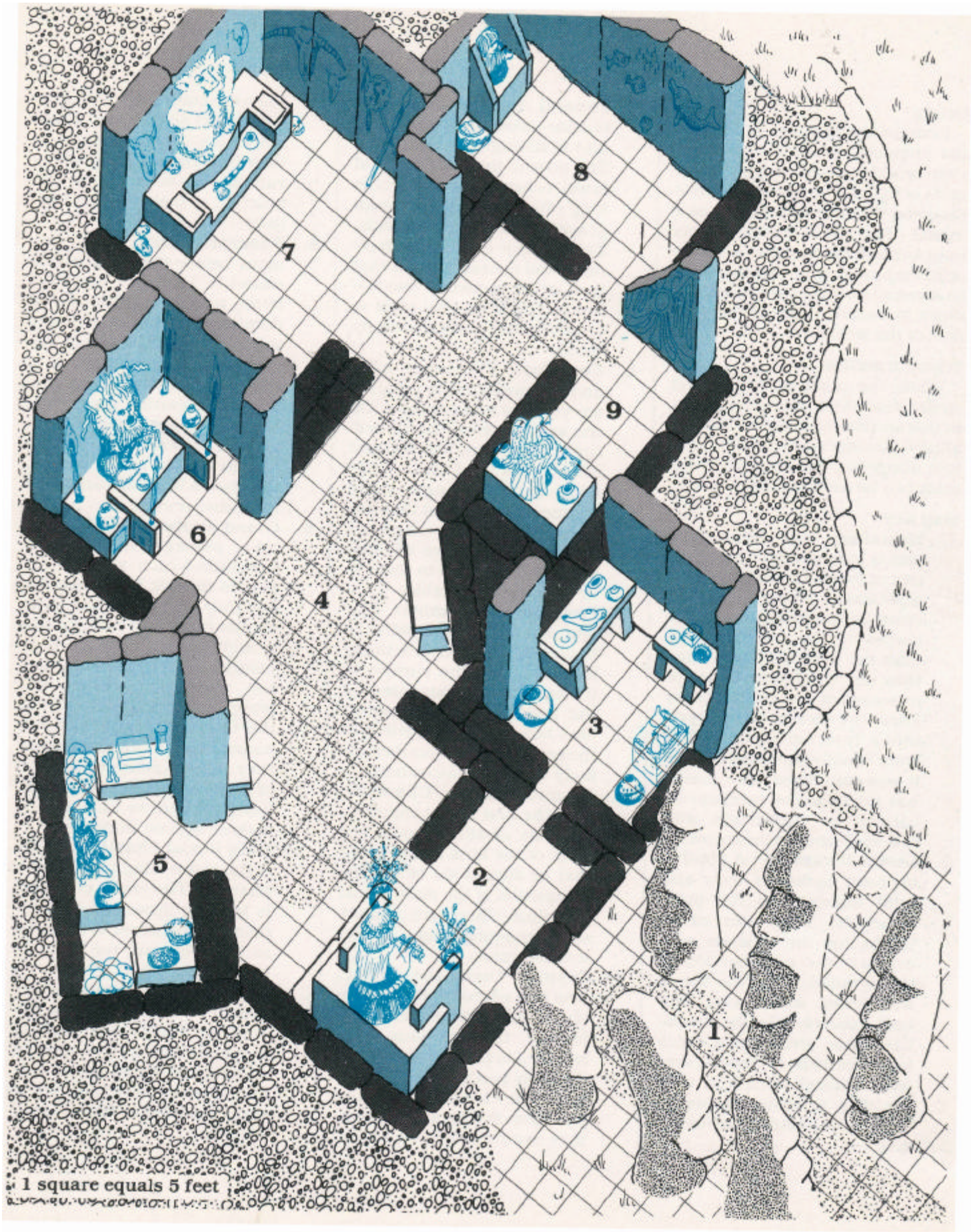
Perhaps the greatest tributes to the engineering skills of the ancient world were the mighty pyramids of Egypt. For our first generic dungeon we have taken them as a model. The Great Pyramid was built as tomb for the ruler of a powerful empire. It is no surprise that so awesome a structure should go down in history as one of the wonders of the world.

Transformation

While the other above ground structures which we will present in this section must be modified or altered in some way to make them into dungeons, the majestic pyramids can be used just as they are.

Map Key

1. **Mastabas:** The Great Pyramid is surrounded by a small city of lesser tombs known as Mastabas. These low, flat structures served to house the bodies of the workers who built the pyramid. More often than not, these were slaves or prisoners of war. Because they knew the secrets of the pyramid's internal layout, they were ritually slaughtered after it was completed. The Mastabas might make excellent locations for encounters with low level undead creatures.
2. **Lesser Pyramids**: A number of lesser pyramids were also built adjacent to the main structure. These served as tombs for the officials who oversaw the construction of the pyramid. Once the slaves were killed, so too were their task masters. Like the Mastabas, these areas make excellent locations for encounters with undead, although they are likely to be more powerful than those found in the former area,
3. **Funeral Temple:** The only outside entrance to the pyramid is through this chamber. The door to the outside world is well concealed to protect the king's final resting place from grave robbers and vandals. This temple is lavishly decorated and contains much that is of great monetary value—everything from gold idols to ornate figures and valuable incense.
4. **Corridor**: The inner halls and stairwells in the pyramid are very low and cramped. On the average, they have a ceiling height of only four feet and are about a yard wide. While dwarves, Halflings, and gnomes may not find that this presents them with too great a problem, other races will find moving from room to room to be very uncomfortable.
5. **First Burial Chamber**: The first part of the pyramid to be built, this chamber is actually located below the surface of the earth in the foundation of the building. If the pharaoh died before the completion of the second burial chamber, his body would be placed here.
6. **Second Burial** Chamber: Like the first burial chamber, this was meant to house the body of the king in the event that he should die before the completion of the main burial chamber. There are usually some trappings here of reasonable value.
7. **Crypts**: Once the priests who had overseen the assembly of the pyramid and performed the religious rites required to make it pleasing to the gods had completed their tasks, they too were slain. Unlike the workers, however, they committed ritual suicide and were entombed in the pyramid with their king. These rooms are ornate temples in their own right, having many valuable items used in the practice of their religious beliefs.
8. **Funeral Barge**: The last room before the main burial chamber, this area houses *a.* most unusual thing for *a* dungeon—a boat. Intended to act as the king's vessel on his voyage to the next life, it is rich with the trappings of nobility and carries everything that the king will need to survive in the next world. In addition to money and weapons, the boat is likely to carry food and other provisions.
9. **Grand Hallway**: Unlike the other passages in the Great Pyramid which require explorers to walk bent over (unless they are Halflings or some similar race), this corridor has a high arched ceiling. It is painted in bright colors and has numerous images engraved on its walls. As this is the final entry way into the main burial chamber, referee's may want to consider the use of a wide array of deadly traps being set here as a last line of defense against intruders.
10. **Main Burial Chamber**: This is the last resting place of the pharaoh. The entire chamber is lavishly decorated and appointed with items so valuable as to be beyond the belief of even the greediest of thieves. The sarcophagus which holds the body of the departed king is often made of a valuable metal like gold or silver. The trappings of this chamber are worth more than the treasuries of many small countries.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Origin

The primitive temple was built by a race which had not yet developed advanced architecture or metal working. It may be that early men built it in their quests to satisfy their need to worship their simple deities. If this is the case, then the structure is incredibly ancient and few of its interior furnishings have survived. Another option for the referee is to use the temple for some contemporary, but primitive, race like the lizard men.

Transformation

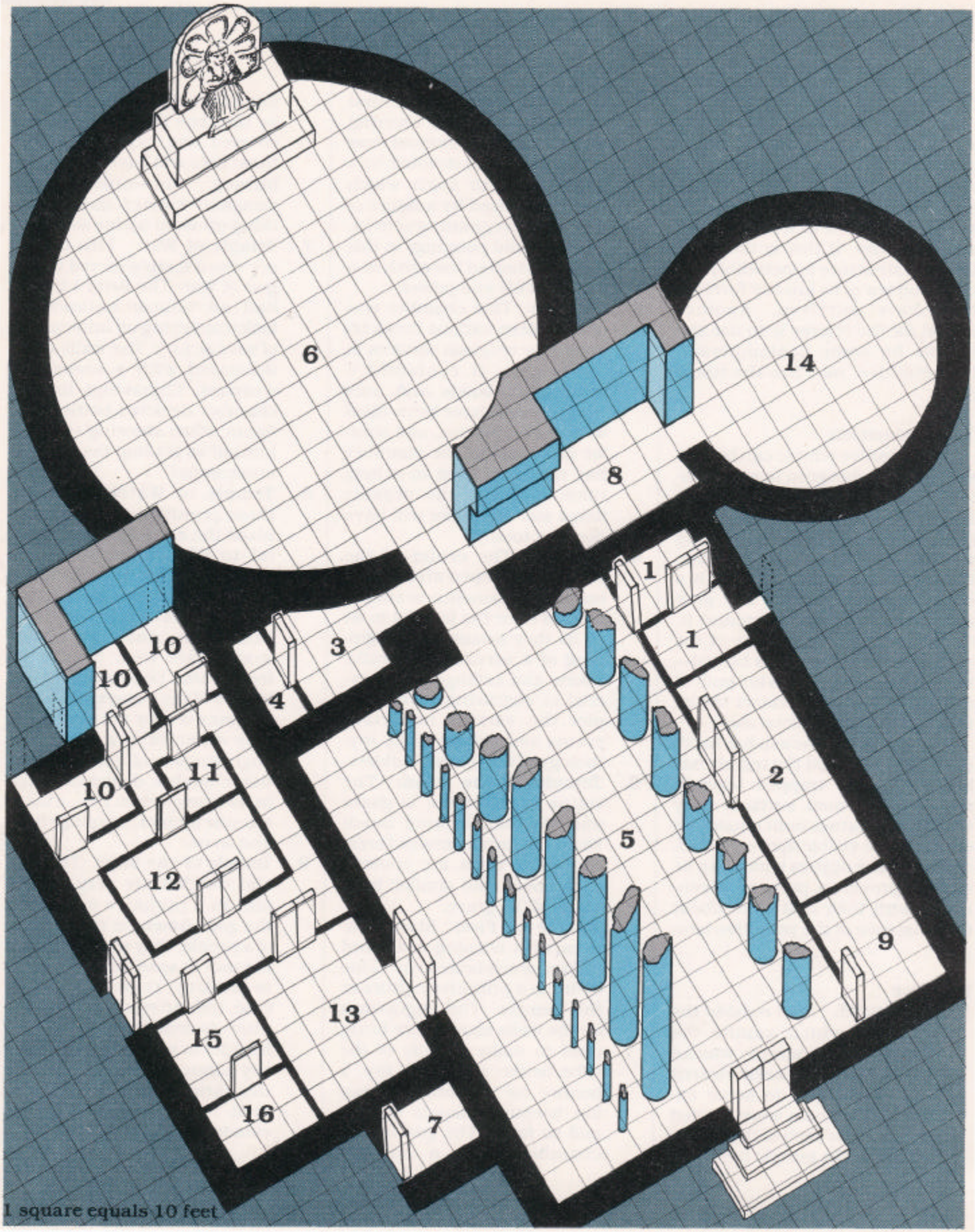
The primitive temple can be converted into a dungeon in any number of ways. For our purposes, however, let us assume that it was built on the slopes of a towering volcano. During a major eruption, the mountain of fire sent forth a cloud of ash which fell like gray snow upon everything around it. Caught beneath the plume of the eruption, the temple was buried—but not before those who built it could seal it up and protect the interior from the insidious ash.

Over the years, the ash has hardened into stone and the temple has become solidly trapped beneath the newly formed surface. Only the mighty statues built outside its entrance are visible above ground, and it is these objects which can be used to provide a party of adventurers with their first clues about the existence of the primitive temple.

Map Key

1. **Courtyard**: Just outside the archway which admits the faithful to the temple was an area which had been cleared and landscaped to some extent. Six statues were erected here, one for each of the deities sacred to the temple builders.
2. **Temple of Earth**: The first shrine which those entering the temple encountered was this one. It was devoted to a primitive earth spirit which was symbolized by a figure of a large, pregnant goddess. Carvings and paintings in this room celebrated the earth as a source of life and power.
3. **Storage**: This chamber was used to keep various items required for religious services in the temple. It contained a number of bowls and pots which would have been filled with herbs, berries, and similar materials. If the chamber has not been used in a long time, many of the organic items stored in here will have decayed totally.
4. **Gallery**: The center of the temple is an open area with a number of benches scattered around it for the faithful to sit on as they awaited the beginning of a service. The walls, floors, and ceilings were covered in engravings which depict the various important events and beliefs of the mythology of the temple builders.
5. **Temple of the Dead**: The statue in this room is gaunt and skeletal, looking much like some form of undead creature. The walls are covered with bones and similar trappings of the grave.
6. **Temple of Fire**: Stone braziers with burning coals and oil lamps celebrated the value of fire to a primitive culture in this temple. The engravings on the walls showed fire being used to make the life of the tribe better: a cooking fire, a bonfire for warmth, a camp fire keeping animals at bay, and so forth. The god in this chamber holds a burning torch in each hand. Of course, by the time the temple is uncovered and explored, all of these fires will have long since burned out—unless the dungeon master has something unusual up his sleeve.
7. **Temple of War**: This chamber was a temple sacred to the god of war. The deity himself had an almost animalistic look, conveying an impression of savage fury. The walls were decorated with a variety of weapons. Engravings in this chamber depicted battles and fights, often showing the god himself as leading the faithful into combat.
8. **Temple of Water**: Just as these primitive people recognized the earth and soil as vital to life, so too did they understand the importance of water. A number of ornate barrels or cisterns once adorned this room, each of which would have been filled with fresh water. Depending on the wishes of the dungeon master, this may or may not have been holy water. In any event, the engravings and paintings in this chamber depicted water in its many forms: rain, a lake, a gentle stream, a raging river, and so on.
9. **Temple of the Sky**: The sky and weather are very important to a primitive culture. If the gods frown on the actions of a people, they may withhold the rain or send deadly storms to destroy them. In either case, the end result is often the utter destruction of a people. In order to keep the gods of the sky happy, the primitives built this shrine. Its walls were covered with engravings of clouds, storms, and so on.

The Modern Temple



The Modern Temple

Origin

The modern temple is a descendant of the primitive temple presented earlier in this section. This temple, lavishly decorated and very ornate, is the product of such a faith.

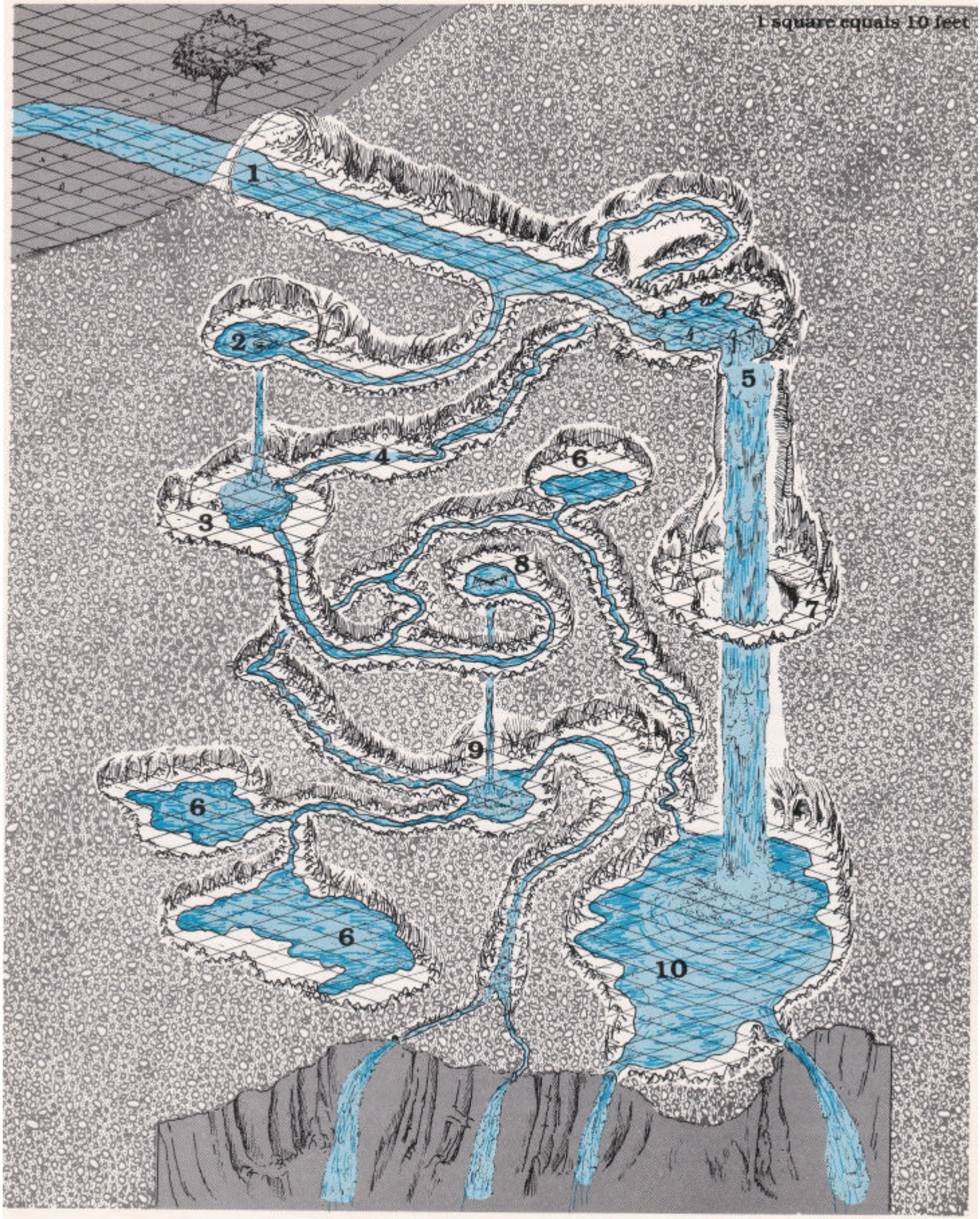
Transformation

It is not difficult to imagine a clash between two powerful religious factions of opposite alignments. In this case, we are looking at the temple of the losing side. Powerful magicks have been used to cause it to sink beneath the surface of the earth, entombing it in solid rock.

Map Key

1. **Temple Offices:** These chambers were the business offices of the temple. A number of desks, scroll racks, book cases, and similar office equipment were found here. Of course, depending on the amount of time which has passed since the shrine was entombed, these may be noting more than piles of dust and rotting wood. A secret door allows easy entrance to or escape from the office area in the event of an emergency.
2. **Library:** This served as both a filing area and a book depository. The numerous shelves and racks here were filled with books, scrolls, maps, and similar documents. Depending on the condition of this room, it could be a sage's dreams come true.
3. **Wardrobe:** As with many religions, the priests of this temple wore special garb when they performed their services. In this chamber, which resembles a modern walk-in closet, were hung the many ritual garments they employed.
4. **Dressing Room:** This room was used by the temple priests to dress and ready themselves for a religious service. Depending on the nature of the religion, any number of things might be found here including various pigments or makeup's, incense burners, or unusual foods which must be eaten to purify the spirit.
5. **Main Hall:** This huge chamber was ornate and magnificent. Rows of pillars served to support it high ceiling and also served as works of art, being covered with bas-reliefs of the religion's major tenets. Banners, tapestries, or other decorative fabrics were draped from the rafters and supported by long shafts of polished wood. Its main function was to impress those walking into the temple from the main entrance.
6. **The Main Temple:** Like the main hall, this chamber was built to inspire awe among the faithful. It's high domed ceiling is covered with a beautiful mosaic which was crafted by the most skilled artisans of the religion.
7. **Grounds Keeper's Storage:** This small room and closet were nothing more than a tool shed kept for the purposes of landscaping the area around the temple.
8. **Gallery:** This wide hallway had a very high, arched ceiling and was used to display paintings, sculptures, and other works of art made by or donated to, the temple and its deity. Some of the relics in here might be quite valuable.
9. **Storage:** This storage area was used by the temple priests for everything from janitorial supplies to extra candles or lamp oil.
10. **Priest's Chambers:** These living quarters may have been quite spartan or lavishly decorated, depending on the beliefs and practices of the faithful. A secret door in the outer wall provided a means of covert access to the outside world from these rooms.
11. **Vault:** Some items, like silver holy symbols or perhaps even blessed and magical objects, were too important to be stored in the main area off the main hall. For them, this room was built. It has a door with a very advanced lock, thick walls, and may even have been sealed with some form of magic.
12. **Lounge:** This room was decorated with style and taste. It is here that the priests ate their meals and entertained guests. Informal business was often conducted here, as was light entertainment.
13. **Meeting Room:** More formal than the lounge, this chamber was used for business meetings and official transactions.
14. **Lesser Temple:** This temple, while much less impressive than the main dome, is still a wonder to behold.
15. **Kitchen:** A large stove and an assortment of cooking supplies dominated this room.
16. **Pantry:** A variety of pots, jars, and kegs held the temple's foodstuffs here until needed. A trapdoor in the floor leads down to a small, but well stocked wine cellar. It may well be that the passing of the years has turned some of the bottles in this area into priceless collector's vintages.

The Limestone Caverns



The Limestone Caverns

Origin

High in the mountains there rests a gentle valley. All in all, it is a peaceful place. At its heart is a broad river, formed by a number of lesser streams which trickle down from the snow covered caps above the valley. As with all rivers, this one naturally began to flow toward the equator and sea level.

It was thwarted in its journey, however, by the towering walls of the mountains which ringed the valley. As the years passed, however, the river slowly carved its way through the mountain. After centuries of effort, it broke through the other side and plunged over a grand precipice into the foothills beyond the mountain range. In its wake, however, it left a network of twisting and treacherous tunnels for adventurers to contend with.

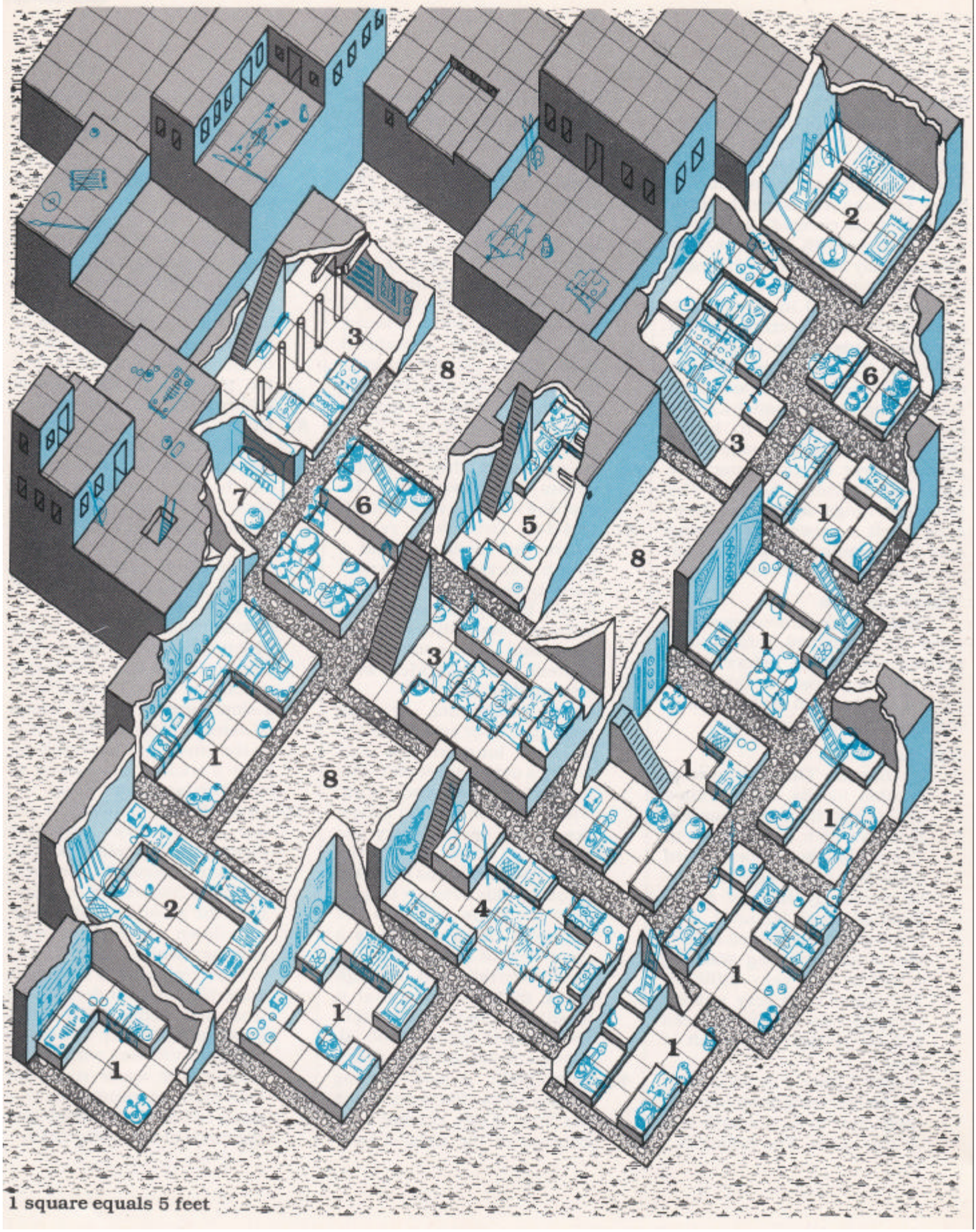
Transformation

Unlike surface structures which need to be turned into underground complexes before being used as dungeons, the limestone cavern can be used 'as is'' for any dungeon based campaign.

Map Key

1. **Entrance:** This chamber is notable for its high, arched ceiling and the numerous stalactites which dangle from it. The walls have all been worn smooth through ages of natural erosion by the river. A thin band of shore (about 1 yard wide) runs along each side of the water, making walking possible, but very difficult. The water runs very quickly through this region, but can still be navigated by a raft or boat.
2. **Upper Lake:** A secondary stream curves around from the main river to form a large lake in this room. The ceiling is a high, domed affair with a number of stalactites visible on it. A wide shore surrounds the lake which has a slight whirlpool visible in its currents. The whirlpool is not so swift as to be hazardous to boats, but swimmers may be at risk.
3. **Lower Lake:** A slender cascade of water pours from a series of fissures in the ceiling of this cavern to form a broad lake. A number of natural stone pillars provide support for this chamber and the walls glisten with mineral deposits. A fast moving stream flows into the lake through a fairly wide passage while a second stream flows away from the pool down a fairly wide tunnel.
4. **Grotto:** This is a region where the cavern around a length of stream has been widened by natural erosion to form a large chamber. Stalagmites and stalactites are common and the entire area glistens and sparkles with mineral deposits.
5. **Upper Cascade:** At this point, the river enters the top level of long atrium and plunges over a sheer cliff. The roaring of the cascade is intense, and the natural acoustics of the cavern carry the vibrations throughout the area. The river turns into dangerous rapids before it topples over the cliffs and into the darkness below. There is a great deal of shore area atop the waterfall and enough space in the cavern that it might be possible to climb down beside the waterfall, although this is certainly risky.
6. **Dead Pool:** A slow moving stream feeds this pond which has little, if any, current in it. Because of the natural environment of the cave, however, the water has not become stagnant as it would in a swamp. Thus, although it is unmoving, it has remained fairly fresh.
7. **Balcony:** The atrium around the cascade widens at this point, producing a natural balcony around the waterfall. Explorers might reach this region by climbing to it from below or above. It is possible to climb down or up from this area, but the presence of the cascade makes it dangerous to do so.
8. **Upper Pool:** This region is much like the upper lake, but the waterway which feeds it is much less intense. A small pool has formed here which empties through a split in the rock underneath it. A minor whirlpool swirls these waters, but it is dangerous only to swimmers.
9. **Lower Pool:** The water which falls from the upper pool pours into this room through a split in the ceiling. In addition, a slow moving stream enters on one side of the pool and exits on the other. A minor creek, almost a trickle, flows away to form two large dead pools.
10. **Great Pool:** Although a minor stream flows into this chamber, carrying a fair amount of water to the great pool, the majority of it comes from the grand cascade. Pouring down through a wide chimney which stretches out of sight overhead is a gigantic waterfall. It thunders down from high above to form this great body of water. The entire chamber vibrates with its intensity. The water roars out two exits to plunge over a sheer cliff face and vanish into the mists of the valley below.

The Beehive Fort



1 square equals 5 feet

The Beehive Fort

Origin

Long ago, the inhabitants of a rich area of fertile plains discovered the secrets of agriculture. Their land furnished them with everything they needed to survive and be comfortable. Others, jealous of their high standard of living, began to raid the peaceful farmers. Unlike other regions, where stone for building was common, these people did not even have tall trees to fashion into walls. Instead, they set about building a new type of city.

For walls, they used dried mud or adobe. While not as hard as stone, it would hold up well enough against the light weapons of their enemies. As their city grew, they built each house right up against the building beside it. No doors or windows faced outward to offer easy access to intruders. The doors to the buildings were placed above, on the roofs, with ladders and stairs providing access to them. In the end, they had a small community which was not only solid and hard to attack, but also very comfortable to live in.

Transformation

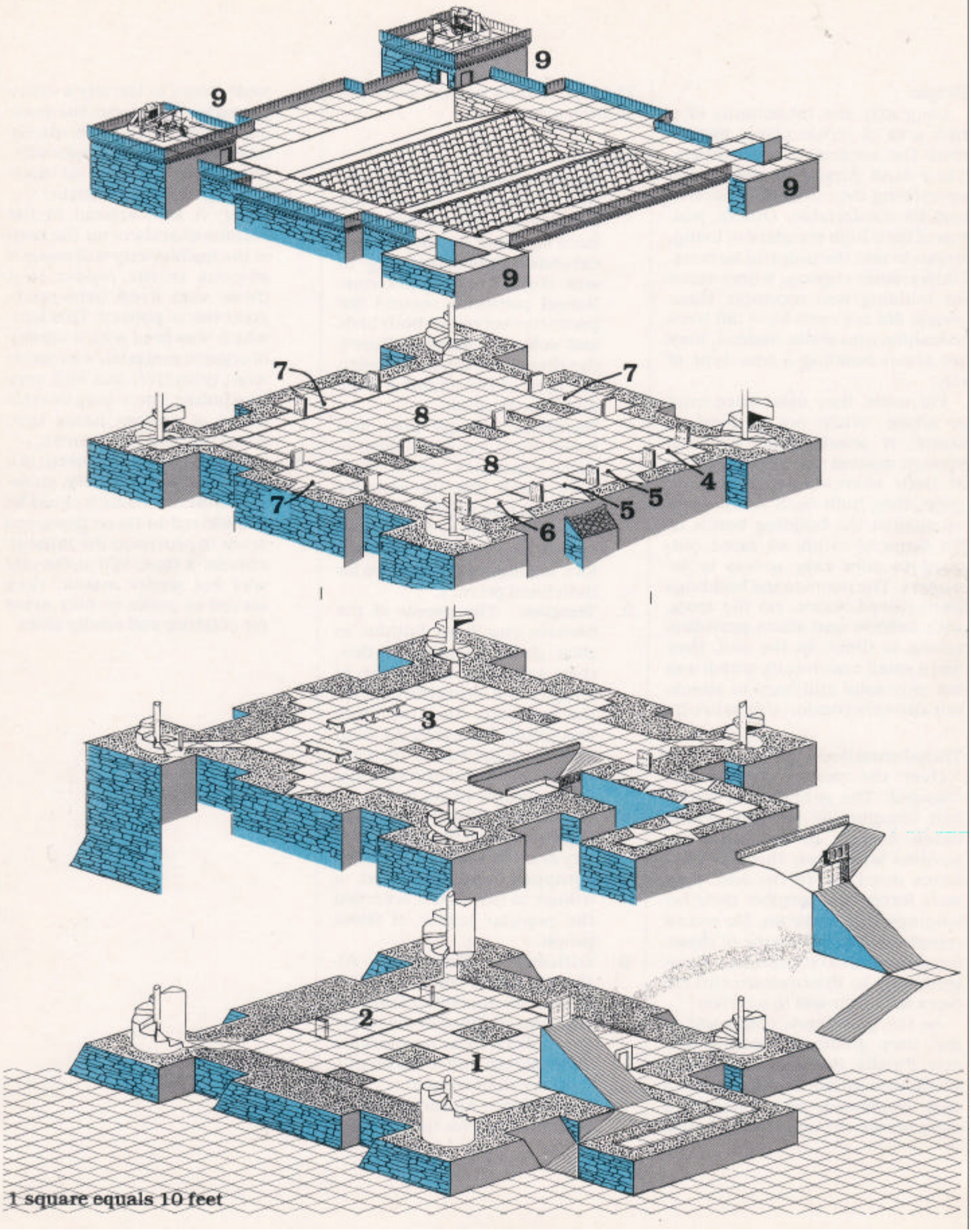
Over the years, the climate changed. The gentle rains which had brought life to their prairie fields ceased to fall and the streams which ran through their farms dried up. In the end, they were forced to assemble their belongings and move on. No record remains of what became of them, but the beehive city speaks a silent testimony to their resourceful natures and their will to survive.

As the grasslands continued to dry, they gradually became deserts. Finally, this vast sea of sand swallowed up the beehive city in a dark sandstorm which raged for days across the once fertile lands. The city, like its people, vanished without a trace.

Map Key

1. **Family Chambers**: This portion of the city housed the farmers and their loved ones. Each chamber was home to an extended family, ranging in size from 7 to 12 persons. Raised platforms around the perimeter served as both beds and sofas. In many cultures, the dead were buried beneath the floor of the chamber they had once lived in.
2. **Barracks:** Single men and members of the guard lived in these chambers which were very much like the military barracks one might expect to find in a modern fort. There was little provision for comfort, and almost no chance for individual privacy.
3. **Temples**: The people of the beehive city were faithful to their gods. As proof of this, they scattered a number of temples and altars throughout the complex. Each of these was richly decorated (in comparison to the rest of the city) and served as a cultural nexus for the people living here.
4. **Governor's Home**: This living area served the ruler of the city and his family. It was well equipped and decorated, a tribute to the status accorded the popular leader of these people.
5. **Officers' Barracks**: Although much more spacious and better appointed than the barracks assigned to the rest of the soldiers, these quarters are very spartan and focus on utility more than comfort.
6. **Granaries**: As various crops became ready for harvest they were stored in the city's many granaries. Of course, the passing of time may have utterly destroyed these foodstuffs, but some evidence of their passing may well remain.
7. **Kiln**: A look around at the various chambers on the map of the beehive city will make it obvious to the reader that those who lived here made great use of pottery. This kiln, which was fired with a variety of organic material, was somewhat primitive, but still very functional. There may be remnants of pottery items here when the area is explored.
8. **Courtyards**: In the event of a siege or raid on the city, an assortment of livestock could be transferred to these protected areas to provision the inhabitants for a time. When the city was not under attack, they served as parks or play areas for children and adults alike.

The Castle on the Moors



The Castle on the Moors

Origin

Several years ago, a proud young knight fought bravely against those who would have brought down his king. In return for his services, a thankful ruler repaid this dedication with a grant of land and the pledge of a powerful castle.

True to his word, the king sent a company of workers out to construct a fortress for the bold knight. Overlooking a gloomy and desolate stretch of swamps and bogs, the Castle on the Moors was to be the kingdom's first line of defense against the evil creatures who thrived in that forsaken region.

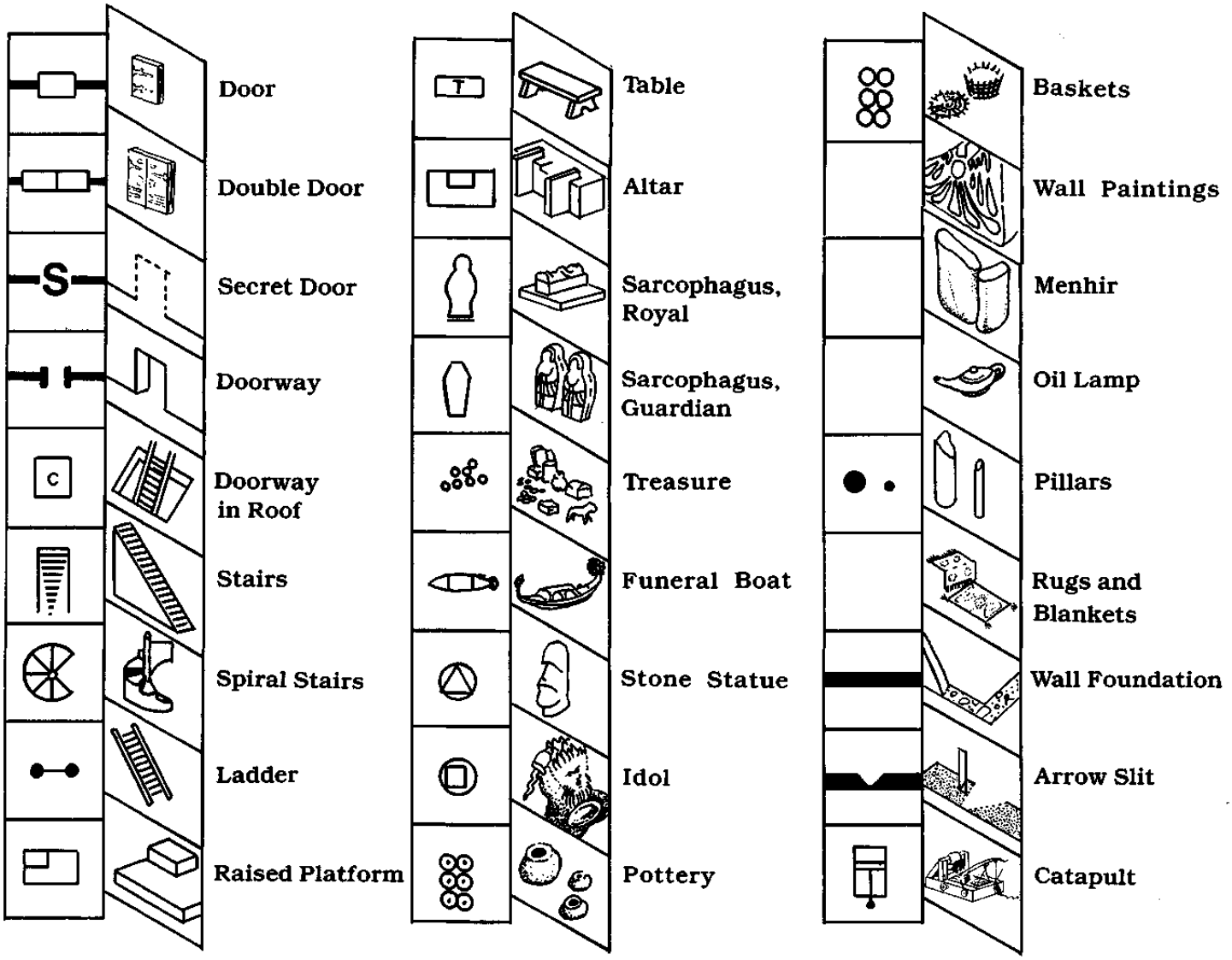
Transformation

The high hopes of the king and his faithful knight were short lived, however. A season of torrential rains fell across the land, causing the water level in the swamps to rise. Eventually, the fierce stone fortress was swallowed up by the water and mud. When the region dried up years later, the castle was nothing more than a large mound of dried mud. Underneath this shell, however, is the catacomb that had once been the Castle on the Moors.

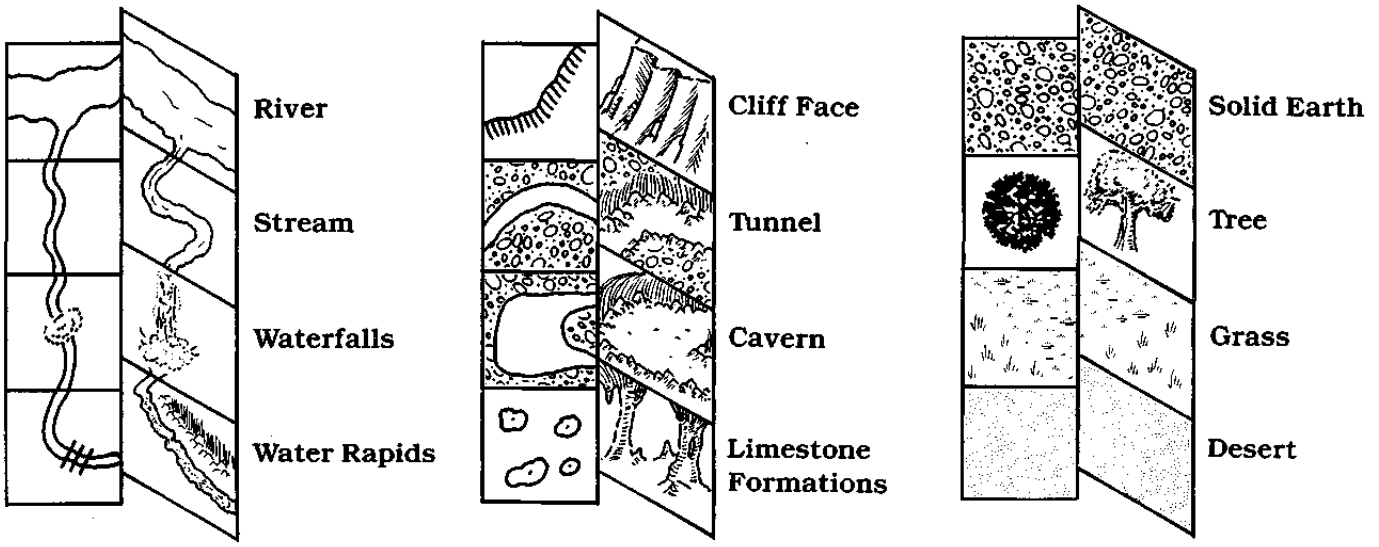
Map Key

1. **Storage:** Located on the lowest level of the castle, this large chamber was used to house great quantities of goods and materials for use by the structure's inhabitants. Kegs of ale, bottles of wine, wheels of cheese, and many other supplies were kept here, although the passing of the years has almost certainly ruined them.
2. **Kitchen:** This cooking room was home to any number of cooking utensils and devices. A large oven and stove occupied a large portion of the area and there was more than enough space to prepare a feast for dozens of guests in the great hall.
3. **Great Hall:** This huge chamber was the focus of social life at the Castle on the Moors. Its walls were hung with elaborate tapestries and banners. It was here that the lord of the manor held his parties and entertained his guests. Great feasts could be sent up from the kitchen below and performers could entertain the guests while they relaxed and ate.
4. **Office:** This room was used by the lord's seneschal in the course of his administrative duties. Every aspect of the castle's economic and political affairs was controlled from this area. As one might expect, it was once filled with files, records, and a work desk.
5. **Bedrooms:** These comfortable living quarters were used by the lord and his family. They were richly appointed and their decorations reflect the owner's religious and political affiliations.
6. **Day Room:** This room was well appointed and provided the lord and his family with a pleasant place for light entertaining and socializing. It's furnishings were both comfortable and functional.
7. **Knights' Chambers:** Each of these rooms served as the living quarters for one of the lord's most faithful warriors. If they were married, then their wives shared their rooms with them. If not, they had a live-in squire who tended to their needs and hoped to learn something of the warrior's trade from his master.
8. **Workrooms:** Although these rooms were used by the castle staff for spinning, weaving, and other light work, they were more than just areas for light industry. At the close of each day, the looms and such were put away and bedrolls covered the floor. While these seeping accommodations for the castle staff were far from luxurious, they were better than those available to most of the local peasants.
9. **Towers:** Each corner of the Castle on the Moors was anchored to a strong stone tower. From the tops of these battlements, archers could fire volley after volley of lethal arrows onto attacking armies. In addition, each of the towers had its own catapult for hurling large projectiles at invaders.

Dungeon and Building Mapping Symbols



Geographic Mapping Symbols



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