

THE LOG THAT FITS

#2

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It's a slim APA this month. We're welcoming two new contributors, but several of the folk in issue #1 weren't able to get a zine together for this issue. I hope we'll see them back for **Interregnum** #3. A few people have suggested that an issue every month is too frequent a schedule for an APA, but I think that once every two months is too long. Any thoughts on this?



TOPIC #2: BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Like most other gamers, my first experience with roleplaying was AD&D™ (actually, I've noticed that most the newest generation of gamers seems to have begun with one of the robot or Vampire™ games rather than AD&D, but that's a separate topic). My experience with illusion, however, was perfunctory. If you thought it might be an illusion, you disbelieved it. Alternatively, you touched it with your bare hand to dispel it; some GMs ruled that this was effective. However, none of them used illusion

effectively or dramatically. It was never anything more than a different kind of trap or trick. The unique potential of illusion was wasted.

In the Dark

The one time I played an illusionist I did manage to come up with some interesting uses for the basic illusion spell, *Phantasmal Force*™. The only one that I can recall offhand was really quite simple: an illusion of darkness. A code word said aloud would let the other party members know that the illusion was being cast, giving them an improved chance to disbelieve. But for foes in the area who failed their saving throws, total darkness enveloped them. Needless to say, a party that can see has a huge advantage over blind enemies!

Eventually the GM became irritated with this tactic; it was simply too effective. Creatures began making their saving throws more and more often. Finally, I asked him why my spell had become totally ineffective. He informed me that the rules said that if the illusion produced was not believable, it had little chance of being believed—and according to him, sudden inexplicable darkness was something that monsters wouldn't buy.

The solution was simple, of course. I simply altered the spell to produce the appearance of a rising cloud of smoke, getting thicker and thicker until it obscured all sight. The apparent

source of the magical smoke varied depending upon the circumstances. However, the GM soon decided that this was ineffective, too; this time, however, he refused to explain why. As time progressed, he increasingly ruled against any innovative use of *Phantasmal Force*TM, until there was no point in even trying to cast it. Soon after, I left his campaign. 📄

That was many years ago. Since then, I have applied a variation of that spell in a **RuneQuest** campaign: as a sorcerer, I used the MultiSpell skill to cast several illusions of darkness simultaneously onto the heads of a number of enemies at once. The effect was only a -10% chance to their visual abilities, but at the time it was the most effective thing a relatively unskilled sorcerer could do. Under the new rules, of course, I'd have been even less effective.

The Trap

A while ago, I had a strange idea for a trap using disbelief that would be, well, totally fatal—or damn close to it. It's pretty silly, too. You Have Been Warned. 8^>}

A party fights its way through a typical dungeon, battling monster after monster in an insatiable quest for money, money, money. Down they go, deeper and deeper, hacking their way through level after level of ravenous fiends. Why is population so dense in this desolate locale? Maybe the schools are good. 8^>}

Down the party goes, down through this mysterious underground skyscraper. Strangely, the deeper they go the more powerful the opposition they meet;

fortunately, the more powerful the opposition, the greater the amount of treasure to be gained (the monsters must not have anything to spend it on down there. Hmm...a good boutique might do well in the dungeon...).

Finally, at the very bottom, they fight the most powerful and deadly monsters of all. Taking punishing losses, they manage to defeat the ghastly things—only to discover a small unlocked chest in an otherwise empty room. Inside the chest is a simple piece of paper. On the paper are the following words:

Hello. I hope you've enjoyed my dungeon. I wish it could have been a real one, but that would have been far beyond the means of a humble illusionist such as myself. Therefore, (over)

This is the last opportunity for the party to avoid death.

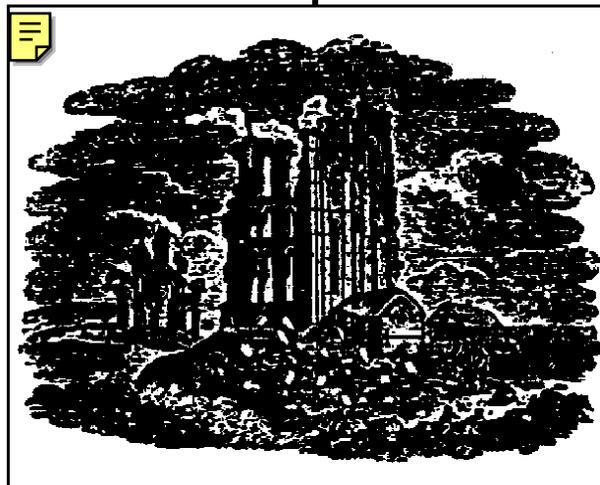
(continued from front) I've constructed this dungeon entirely as an illusion—right down to the hole. In other words, you're standing hundreds of feet below the surface of the earth in solid rock.

Sorry!

(signed) Bob the Illusionist

Now it's up to the party's disbelief. Can they maintain their belief in the illusion of a dungeon that's keeping them alive long enough to climb back out? Or will they find it

impossible to avoid realizing that they are actually buried alive in solid rock?



A kind GM might allow them to make saving throws of some sort. They could keep going as long as at least one member had failed—the disillusioned could be led by those still able to see the dungeon. Alternatively, the GM might simulate the difficulty of avoiding disbelief by ruling that they can live for as long as they are able to speak without, say, using the letters e, i, or o.

I doubt I'll ever use this illusion—it's too deadly, and I don't run dungeon games. And of course it uses illusion magic of a type that transcends most game mechanics. But it is amusing. Particularly since even if the party manages to get out, all the treasure they won is illusionary...though the damage isn't.

Cascading Disbelief

Another idea on disbelief and illusion—I can't recall if I used this one or not, though I think I did. The idea is layered illusions, setting up multiple illusions overlaying and hiding each other. Disbelieving one reveals the next, and so forth. It seems a good way to allow a clever player to use simple spells to far more effect than normally possible—which is what unimaginative gamemasters hate, of course. Come to think of it, I must have been a real pain in that game. 8^>}



Readers of **Interregnum** #1 may recognize the following as a developed version of plot #11 in the Bar Wars article. As I recall, the article and this scenario were created pretty much simultaneously. Truth to tell, I'm not sure which inspired which.

I've run The Grey Company several times, once as a play-by-email game. Low player participation ended that game fairly quickly, but even so the game was clearly developing along very different lines from previous runs—which was, paradoxically, typical. Every time I've run this it's been quite different from previous runs, and it has always been fun (for most of the players, anyway).

Editors of several RuneQuest magazines have suggested that I expand The Grey Company in various ways for publication. Perhaps someday I will, though by then they may not be interested.

A chaotic and disorganized version of The Grey Company appeared in a past issue of The Wild Hunt.



RuneQuest/Glorantha Scenario Outline: **THE GREY COMPANY**

The Grey Company is a group of closely connected scenarios designed to bring disparate starting characters together as a long-lasting adventuring group. It is set in the Pavis area, though it could be transplanted to another setting or system if necessary.

I. Start In A Pickle

1) The PCs start as young and relatively inexperienced characters. An unusually broad range of cultures and backgrounds are possible; the only unacceptable choices are obvious

Chaos worshipers and races/cults so mutually hostile as to cause immediate bloodshed on sight.

2) In a short private session (a half-hour or less should suffice), the GM runs each PC through a pre-game set of circumstances in which they are forced to leave their home culture—either for a few years, or permanently. Possible reasons: family feuds, accusations of crime (false or otherwise), famine in the homeland, avoidance of conscription, disease in homeland, family poverty, a search for aid for the tribe, or anything else the GM wishes to inflict upon the players. In one odd situation, a non-human PC was ordered to spy upon the “human frontier”. If desired, PCs may be of local origin; in that case, they obtain the letter/token as a gift or legacy.



3) Each PC acquires a letter or token from a kindly-inclined elder or friend of the family, recommending the character to the members of the Grey Company of Pavis, a mercenary group of bodyguards/salvors/adventurers for hire. The elder explains that he/she has worked with some or all of the members of the Grey Company in the past. Alternatively, in some cases these tokens could be stolen, bought, or gambled for by the PCs. The PCs are urged to go to Pavis and seek out the Grey Company, which will doubtless offer an excellent chance for advancement, prosperity, and glory.

4) The PCs travel to Pavis. Some may meet each other on the road; some may experience minor adventures during the trip, of the GM’s choosing. PCs native to Pavis will obviously not need to travel.

II. Pavis!

1) The PCs arrive in Pavis, and find the home of the Grey Company. The members of the Company are out of town; while the PCs wait for their return, they meet and get to know each other. Numerous minor adventures may transpire in the process (details omitted).

III. The Return

1) Members of the Grey Company return. They meet the PCs cordially, and invite them to spend the night (assuming the letters/tokens of recommendation are presented). A grand dinner marks the evening, with interesting conversation.

2) The next day, the PCs are given a tour of the house. Among other areas, they are shown the Armory and the Treasury—the latter is protect by a powerful spirit guardian, in addition to the usual precautions.

3) The PCs are invited to apply for apprenticeships with the Company. This is a highly prestigious opportunity, and a great honor. It must be stressed that cult obligations are understood to come first for all members.

NOTE: There are presently no apprentices in the Grey Company, though the PCs may not notice this. It is not called to their attention. If they ask about this mysterious lack, the elder members of the Company are clearly uncomfortable. If pressed, they say simply that it was necessary to dismiss the previous apprentices for malfeasance.

IV. The Tests

1) The GM may make up any number of tests he desires. Some options: tests of strength, mock

combat, diplomatic questions, magic. In one of the most revealing tests in playtest, characters were asked to make up their own test; to do something to show the Members their worthiness for apprenticeship in the Company. Player imaginations tend to run wild in this case.

2) Barring disasters, the PCs are accepted. They take the Oath of the Company.

V. Rote Duties

1) The PCs take up rote duties and training. One or more may notice that they are being followed by a shadowy figure in the streets of Pavis.

VI. An Unexpected Call

1) The senior members of the Grey Company (that is, all the NPCs) receive a midnight visitor on what appears to be a matter of urgency. They depart immediately for the Big Rubble, assuring the PCs that they will return within a few days.

VII. Where Are They?

1) Three days pass, a week...the senior members do not return. The PCs are in possession of a house, a Treasury that they cannot get into, and the reputation of the Grey Company—possibly the most valuable item of all.

VIII. The Tax Demon Cometh

1) Tax time has come, and taxes must be paid by the Grey Company. The tax is almost certainly more than the PCs have. They must raise money somehow, either from outside sources or by figuring a way into the Treasury, past the Spirit Guardian.

2) If they fail, the House and all of their own property will be confiscated by the Lunar Government. An auction will be announced, and a group of bidders will attempt to buy the entire House. (Alternatively) Though the action is announced, when the time comes the House and contents will have already been purchased by a mysterious buyer. (details omitted).



IX. Brick Through The Window

1) Late one night, a brick is hurled through a downstairs window. Attached to it is a crudely-scrawled note, saying “Leave the House or Meet your Doom!”

2) If feasible, magical warnings are given. One possibility: Ranged Voice Projection (depending on the Sorcery system used) moaning and warning all within to leave or die.

3) If desired, the Grey House is fired late one night. While the PCs are dealing with the blaze, an attack will be made upon the House from the opposite side. The attack is interrupted by the Lunar Guard. Costs will be charged to the PCs if the Guard must help to put out the fire. This encounter may take place at whatever point the GM feels would be most dramatic.

X. Duties

1) The Grey Company has certain regular contractual obligations. One of these obligations is now due; a caravan must be guarded for a short trip.

2) Other short adventures may be included in this manner.

XI. The Lurkers Without

1) The Grey House is definitely being watched. Both the Lunar Government and the mysterious hostiles are possible culprits, depending on the PCs previous actions—both at once is also possible.

2) A Spirit spy enters into the House, and departs.

3) It becomes clear to the PCs that the Lunars regard them with extreme suspicion, whether they managed to pay the taxes or not. With luck and effort, they may discover that they are under suspicion of being Orlanthi assassins, guilty of a recent murder.



XII. A Noble Summoning

1) The PCs are summoned by a local noble. When they arrive, they find that the “noble” is actually the noble’s young son, who wishes to hire them as guards for a trip he and his noble

friends wish to take into the Big Rubble while his father is away. If they refuse, the child will clearly attempt to enter the Rubble anyway; the already-suspicious Lunars will doubtless take an interest. The situation is best resolved through roleplaying rather than combat.

XIII. Into The Rubble

1) At this or some other time the PCs may decide to enter the Rubble, seeking the senior members. If they are intelligent, and have managed to get into the Company Treasury, they will hire as many Humakti to escort them as they possibly can.

2) The senior members may communicate with the PCs, but are inextricably trapped in the Big Rubble for a long and indefinite period.

a) They are dead, and are ghosts, or

b) They are embarked on a strange HeroQuest within an underground cavern of crystal, which will take a number of years to complete. (Crystal cavern scenario details omitted).

XIV. The Showdown

1) The mysterious hostiles eventually make their all-out attack. They are the old Apprentices of the Grey Company, who fell into evil ways and were dismissed. They desire possession of the Grey House and its contents, as well as the name and reputation of the Grey Company. In their campaign to achieve these goals, they killed an innocent man and anonymously tipped the Lunars that the PCs are Orlanthi assassins, responsible for the murder. At least one of the old Apprentices is an Initiate of the Black Fang Brotherhood, making detection magic unlikely to work.

2) If the final showdown is not decisive, the old Apprentices remain as a thorn in the side of the PCs. They may proceed in a number of ways

against them (details omitted), and will act as a continuing plot device.

XV. Miscellaneous

1) The contractual obligations listed in Section X are a continuing way to introduce new scenarios to the PCs.

2) Additional history of the Grey Company may also be relevant. The PCs may find that they have friends as well as enemies, based upon the reputation of the Company.

3) The main force which acts to bind the PCs together is greed. The Treasury of the Grey Company is extremely valuable; the Oath of the Company forbids them to loot it (assuming oaths matter to them). The Grey House itself is most desirable, and the reputation of the Grey Company more valuable yet. With the resources of the Grey Company almost any personal character goal would be more easily attained.

4) The GM should intersperse personal plot elements throughout the scenario, unique to each PC.

* * *

NOTES

Many additional elements have been omitted for brevity. These include:

- the nature of the Spirit Guardian of the Treasury,
- the strange and unfamiliar magic in the Company Treasury,
- the secrets of the history of Grey House,
- and more. These may eventually be written up and published. On the other hand, GMs are invited to create their own answers. 

Given the open nature of The Grey Company, it is best if the GM plays the role of the Lunar officials and the old apprentices flexibly, as best fits the situation. Adopt the point of view of each party in order to decide what actions to take. Events need not take place in the order listed above; if the PCs are clever, some may never happen at all. 



Time for me to make the plunge into fiction, I suppose. George Phillips excellent work makes me feel more than a little inadequate, but this is old work after all—and perhaps printing it will jar my fiction-writing daemon back into high gear (not that it ever was, actually). I wrote the following three or four years ago, and took it to a local writing group. Oops!

There are groups and there are groups, I've been told. This was one of the latter category. The criticism was savage, the prevailing attitude "If you can't stand the heat, get the HELL away from the keyboard!"

Though Gordon R. Dickson once told me that the most valuable thing a writer can have is good harsh criticism, I don't think he meant criticism so harsh that the victims gave up writing. Now that I think of it, he probably does have a problem getting those close to him to give him honest criticism—after all, he's one of the greats of the field. But the pummeling I received at the 

hands of these writers put me off of fiction for several years.

Unchill was written as a mood piece, with an aura of mystery and hidden depths; I was influenced by the works of Cordwainer Smith at the time. Rather than nail every detail down with surgical precision, I metaphorically “fished” my imagination for images and words. This was, apparently, the sin of sins: I recall as clearly as if it were yesterday the reaction of one of the participants.

“Can you describe the plot in one sentence for us?” she demanded.

“No,” I explained helplessly, “it’s a mood piece. I was going for a larger impression—I mean, there’s a plot but—”

“So YOU don’t know what the plot is, either!” she exclaimed disdainfully.

I discovered that I’d lost the will to write, and didn’t go back. A few weeks later I received a copy of my story back, dripping with red ink; the head of the group suggested throwing the story away.

Perhaps he was right. But the savagery of the criticism in that group was unnecessary, I believe; and from what I’ve heard I’m not the only one to have been driven out of that group. Later there apparently was a major shake-up over that very point, and the group underwent some major changes. It may be a kinder group now. But I, for one, will never look to a writer’s group for help with my art again. 



All of which serves to say: make nice comments about Unchill, or none at all. 8^>} Hee hee! No, I think I can take it. I’m divorced by time from the story now, and I have actually written a story since then—it needs a lot of work, but I did write it, and will probably rewrite it for **Interregnum** before long. A quick work of assurance: Unchill is not my usual writing style, insofar as I have one. I don’t expect to write another mood piece, though I make no promises.

Now that I’ve talked it to death for you, here it is.



UNCHILL

Dal Sirenesman was not happy. The long winter days had come, and once again Unchill lay heavy on his lands. The sunplants were glowing too brightly, he knew; soon the wildfire would rage in the fields. As he walked the Home fence, he heard the beasthands lowing in their pens. Their cries were a portent of things to come. *Twelve fields, nine beasthands*, he thought, *We’ll never get the crops in in time. What can I tell Sirene?* The thought of the season to come was a sickness inside him. Postponing the inevitable until the last possible moment, he stopped at the Gravehouse and crawled in.

Inside: Pappy, as always, was far ahead of him in thought. Tendrils of deceptively wispy mind-force came blasting out at him, powerful enough to make him wince:

NO MORE FISH!



Dal knew better than to try to answer Pappy immediately. Sitting before the redlit-anxious console, he placed the thinking hat on his head and hummed the ritual invocation of the Open Mind. The song brought the image of fading pink flowers floating in a dark purple sea to his mind’s eye. After a moment, the blistering smell of hot metal seared his nostrils, familiar and unpleasant as always.

".....@@@@@l@i@n@k@i@n@g@....." The mystic vibrations buzzed like steel flies in his ears. Pappy was angry.

"Fish? What difference does it make?" Dal inquired reasonably, with a slight touch of thinking-hat-induced arrogance in his voice. "It's all sanctioned protein-mash to you." He paused, then said suspiciously, "Are you getting bored again?"

"no." The grating voice sounded clearly yet softly in his head, startling him with its calm, sane tone, "i-or, if you wish to be specific, my sustenance I/O unit—can accept any protein equivalent in appropriate form. that fact, however, is irrelevant (*you little bastard*)" a voice whispered.



"The problem may be expressed in the following way: due to the continuing heat phenomenon you have described as 'unchill', we (the complex) have experienced six substandard crops. as a result, the only source of available protein for any of us for the last twelve periods has been fish. we are now within projected failure threshold for both beasthands and sunplants. you know what failure means, do you not? in any case, an exclusive diet of fish could render Sirene sterile and you catatonic, and **WHO WOULD I HAVE TO TALK TO THEN, YOU—**"

This time the ocean sound did not go away. The Talk was over. Dal stood up, and felt a wave of fondness for the crazed old unit. "I love you, Pappy." he said. Wincing as he removed the thinking hat (its tiny needles grating his skin as they stabbed in, out, in, out), Dal turned and crawled from the Grave. He

closed his ears to the tinny cries from behind. Outside, insects sang and danced in the long grass. Home loomed ahead. Dal went in.

(And there was nothing but Sirene's damp eyes. And there was no sound but the water dripping off her flippers, and her soft breathing.)

He knew what he had to do. Unchill had to stop. The Wizard had to be told. After all, it was probably his fault anyway. Dal couldn't help wishing that somebody else could do it, but there was nobody, nobody in the world. Slowly, Dal took up his leather bands and his great blade of metal and went North to see the Wizard.

The land was strange. Smoke rose from the ground. Hot mists made Dal choke and sob, but the thought of Sirene's eyes

drove him onward.

After a while, after he had suffered enough, Dal found the way into the Wizard's cave. Gnawing a braid of his long blond hair, he ducked quickly beneath the wings of the enormous MOTH that guarded the entryway.

There were clanging machines-halls with human voices, strange pools of sticky-looking multicolored liquid that sloshed madly with no visible cause, and incubators with small Elf-babies peering shyly from beneath cabbage plants. There were other things, too, but Dal didn't understand them and so didn't think about them. Eventually he found the Wizard behind a row of altars of many different shapes, colors, and sizes. He looked as strange as ever, with his tan *cyrdsn* vest, pointed astro-inscribed hat, and briar pipe clenched between his teeth. As Dal cautiously approached, the Wizard suddenly turned about, startling him.



“Ah, Dal,” the Wizard said briskly, deftly catching his pipe as it dropped from his mouth, “this is an unexpected visit!” He paused, and frowned. “In fact, why are you here?”

“Uh—the Unchill, Wizard.” Dal stammered. The Wizard had always unnerved him, even during the short time that they had been brothers. 

The Wizard looked blank. “What? What’s that?”

“My lands—are too hot. The sunplants burn.” Dal said carefully.

“Mmm. I see.” The Wizard frowned into the distance, then raised his eyebrows. “Excuse me.” He turned away from Dal and sang to a monkey-like familiar, which shyly warbled back at him. After a few moments, the duet ceased. The Wizard sat in thought.

“Well, Dal,” the Wizard said finally, “we seem to have a small problem. Tell me, for how many seasons have you noted this effect?”

“Four.” Dal answered. He could count well.

“Interesting. I must have a record,” the mystic mumbled to himself. Opening a drawer in the side of a black altar, he began rummaging through it. Straightening after a moment of hesitation, he held three small clear spheres out to Dal, who gingerly accepted them. “Place these in your fields for me, Dal. Remember where you bury them! Now. Let me see. I’ve been venting the Krasikoor  residua of that absorption/analysis spell, not that it makes any difference to you, (might as well talk to a grape)—ah, where was I? Umm, yes, the residue

was shunted into the plate beneath your fields. Apparently the power involved is greater than I had anticipated, so I’ll simply shunt the excess to a different end-point—it shouldn’t be difficult, and the effects should subside almost immediately.” The Wizard paused for a moment, then spoke carefully. “Unchill will end soon. All right? Good. Just show yourself out, will you?” The Wizard vaguely and sank through the floor. Bemused, Dal went Home.

During the next few days, things indeed seemed to be getting better. The air grew cooler, and the sunplants straightened and dimmed. Even the beasthands seemed happier as the hand of Unchill withdrew. Eager to keep the good luck, Dal carefully avoided the places where he had placed the Wizard’s spheres, and guided the beasthands away from those spots as well. With each good day, the hope in Dal’s heart grew stronger. After one attempt, he no longer spoke to Pappy, who remained more gloomy and pessimistic than usual. All too soon, however, Pappy’s fears proved true. Two weeks after Dal’s Homecoming, he smelled a terrible smell in the dark. Running outside, Dal saw the stream boiling, and a red glow to the east.



From the ocean. Unchill had come to a new place. The screams of the fish were deafening.

And so once again Dal found himself before the entrance to the Wizard's Cave. The wings of the MOTH fluttered slightly as he passed beneath. Lights flashed madly from the floor and ceiling, and strange energies tried to take things that Dal didn't know he had, and give him things that he had never imagined—all failing. It seemed to Dal that Time never meant much anywhere, but less here . . . Finally he found the Wizard, sitting cross-legged and motionless before a flower that wept pale tears.



“Yes, Dal?” the Wizard said, not turning around. “I—I—the ocean...” Dal said. “Yes?” “It’s boiling!” Dal choked. “*Arag, artegnag!*” The Wizard seemed upset. “Obviously—” he gave a short bark of laughter, “well, not obviously, there must be some sort of progression resonance factor involved.” He gnawed his lower lip. “Argh. Time for shunt number three, I guess. Make a note of that!” he exclaimed, apparently to the flower. “Now I’m afraid that I’m rather busy at the moment, Dal, so do forgive me...” He gestured, and green clicking clamps appeared from midair, seizing Dal’s arms and lifting him up and back. Dal stifled a cry of shock. As the claws bore him swiftly and painfully away, Dal saw the Wizard turn once again to regard the flower. Soon the

pressure on Dal’s arms became excruciating, and he fell asleep. When he awoke, he lay at the edge of his fields.

Once again, things went well for a time. The stream cooled, and the dead fish floated away, fins and tendrils gently waving in a parody of their dance of life. The stench of cooking streamweed faded, and the light in the east died away. Soon crops, lands, and beasthands seemed to glow with vitality. Even Pappy grudgingly announced that the failure threshold (whatever *that* was) was receding.

(And Sirene was happy...)

Disaster, when it came, came swiftly. Dal woke one morning to find the earth shaking beneath him. Scrambling outside, he looked frantically about—what was happening? The fields were fine. The stream was fine. What else was there? Then, spurred by a nameless instinct, Dal looked up.

The sky was melting. As Dal watched in horror, a piece of the Sun broke off and fell just beyond the south field. Wildfire blazed up in the south. The sunplants wailed as Dal re-entered the Home.

(On the floor, Sirene writhed in agony. Her eyes bled.)

* * *

Dal did what he could, then took up his great metal blade, bands, and birth-circlet. Shouldering the blade, he went North. His heart felt strangely heavy, as if it were not his own.

Outside, the land was screaming its outrage. Once-placid dogplants howled and flailed like demented things. Dal struck at them, teeth bared, till they stopped. Snakes leapt from the ground, snapping sharp orange teeth. Dal ran from them. Jets of hot blue rock spurted into the air. Dal dodged away, and ran till he was dizzy—and

still, panting, he went on. Finally he reached the Cave mouth, just in time to see the MOTH flutter madly and fly away. Heart and blade in hand, he entered.

* * *

Dal was used to madness at the Wizard's Cave. He had come to expect it. The silence and clean whiteness which greeted his senses within was more than surprising—it dazed him. He staggered forward into the stark and sterile hall. His heart beat three times . . . and then the world fell in on him.

There is a level of sensation so intense as to be no sensation at all. Few have experienced it. Dal kept walking, though at times he could sense neither the floor nor his own legs. It was not a matter of faith. There was simply nothing else he could do, and though the chaos around him made thought impossible, he had never needed to think very much anyway. Still, only the birth-circlet enabled Dal to find the man who had been his brother.

* * *

When next Dal could see, the Wizard was before him, gesturing frantically, facing away. Before him stood a titan-matrix of colored lights, radiating a power Dal could feel on his skin. Massive metal implements moved and chattered within the Wizard's hands, leaping from light to light. For a moment, Dal trembled. His lips began to form a word, then paused. The Wizard's back was still turned to him. Did the Wizard know he was there? Dal didn't know. The corner of his mouth twisted upward, and he felt something he had never felt before. *I could talk to him*, he thought, *but what would he do to us then?* The Wizard screamed at the matrix, his tools shrieking like doomed things. A soft thought touched Dal's mind. *Nothing ever changes*, it whispered. Dal took his blade in hand and paused for a

moment of memory. Then, in a single movement, he struck, closed his eyes, and ran.

The Wizard was dead.

On the way Home, Dal saw the rest of the sky fall to the earth, shaking all of existence. He laughed, not knowing why, and went into the maelstrom.



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COMMENTS #1



ALL: Thanks again for contributing. Perhaps

I'm not the one who should say it, but I think it was a great issue.



Virgil Greene: The reviews of the various gaming magazines were very useful and interesting. Personally, though, I find that the magazines I enjoy most are the ones that inevitably die first. It's a good thing that doesn't apply to amateur press! 8^>}

⊕ About the new *Fineous Fingers* in *Shadis*: two points. One, the author and artist is *not* the guy who created the strip and used to write it for *Dragon*; and two, well, frankly I think the new *Fineous* really sucks. That's from a man who loved the original, by the way. The art and humor are nowhere near the standards of the old strip, and if it weren't for the names being the same I wouldn't have recognized it as *Fineous*.

⊕ Was it I who was responsible for starting up this fad of light bulb RPG jokes? If so, I guess I'm paying the price now...8^>}

Dana Erlandsen: Wow, Dana. I never thought I'd be interested in a Vampire campaign writeup, but I really was. The background and characters are lovely, very intriguing—they really make me wish I could play in the campaign. I've been so put off by those lame Vampire wannabes running around in their black clothes that I'd forgotten the fun I had with the old Dracula comic book, and **Fred Saberhagen's** Dracula series.

⊕ While I'm on the subject, let me take a moment to say that in my book **Anne Rice's** vampire series are largely responsible for this idiotic Vampire fad, and are little more than poorly written sadomasochistic drivel. Down with Anne Rice! 8^>} 

⊕ Have you read much 17th century French correspondence?

⊕ My condolences on your Magic: The Gathering addiction. I trust that it will burn out soon. I'm sure others will mention it, but apparently some cards are going for as much as fifteen dollars! Seems to me that that rate of exchange makes counterfeiting a profitable option. 8^>} 

⊕ Thanks for the reviews. It's always hard to know what new writers to try, and with the price of paperback books these days edging towards \$6.00, mistakes can be doubly disappointing.

David Hoberman: Congratulations on your successful PBEM game. One point that I think would be valuable to make: such games absolutely depend on the amount of participation from the players.

⊕ I was extremely interested in your analysis of the effect of the PBEM medium on the game. I can't help but wonder how you would differentiate a game played over the InterNet from one played on, say, a local BBS. The interface is more difficult for the Net, of course; on the other hand, you have a far wider pool of gamers to draw players from. How did you recruit newcomers? And what do you mean when you say that the players come from "around the globe"?

⊕ Most of all, I'd like to hear more about your use of IRC. While I have access to IRC myself, I must confess that I still have no idea how to use it—perhaps you can give me a few tips.

⊕ I've just realized that I've been guilty of alphabet-soup syndrome. For those who don't know what all those letters mean (and I know there are some: IRC = InterNet Relay Chat (I think), and PBEM = Play By Email. I guess I should start creating a glossary for **Interregnum**, eh?

⊕ Regarding the Cyberpunk issue, I have a strong streak of sympathy for the player who disliked the genre. After all, I disliked the genre myself. But my attitude has been mellowing of late; I've come to realize that to speak of "cyberpunk" as a single-voiced genre is a fallacy. Insofar as it draws on the tradition of pulp detective novels, film noir, and such films as **The Terminator** and **Bladerunner** cyberpunk is fine by me. It's the poorly-done reader-torturing trash that I have no use for—but that applies in *any* genre.



⊕ The quotes are still very funny. You have some very funny players! Do you print all the good lines you get in a month, or are there more than you can use?

Curtis Taylor: It's great to have another **RuneQuest** player in **Interregnum**.

⊕ I can sympathize with your strange sleep schedule; I used to work the night shift at a bread factory, and it was very inconvenient. I hope that you avoid the aftereffects I've suffered—I've been a nightowl ever since. 

⊕ Thanks for the bio. Just out of curiosity, are you running or playing in any games these days?

⊕ Your method of character creation is much like my own. I assume the list of questions is actually much longer? If so, I wonder if you ever have a problem with new players, unused to deep-roleplaying campaigns, getting intimidated by the unprecedented (for them) investment of thought and time required for their characters.

⊕ The **GURPS™** spells are interesting, though I haven't played GURPS (or anything!) for quite some time. Some of the spell names sound quite familiar. Were they derived from some other source?

⊕ Glad to see the Gloranthan hooks. They remind me a little of one of the Traveller books—I can't recall the name of it at the moment, but it was filled with small useful hooks for GMs to develop into campaigns and encounters. I like that sort of thing. Frankly, too many scenarios, even very good ones, straitjacket the imagination; I prefer to get a few seed concepts and grow them in my own way. RuneQuest desperately needs this sort of thing. I hope we'll see more!

⊕ Another thought: One advantage to publishing hooks is that they can reach a wider audience. Scenarios generally sell to gamemasters; after all, if a player reads it s/he can't play it (okay, I know that's not really true for many gamers, but the principle is valid). But reading a book of hooks and bits can't spoil a game in the same way; after all, the bulk of the adventure is not in the book, but in the GM's mind.

George Phillis: It's hard to judge the end of Pickering, George—and it must be even more difficult for those readers of **Interregnum** who aren't familiar with The Wild Hunt. How many years have you been publishing sections of Pickering? And of course there are sections in the middle that we haven't seen yet.

Still, let me try to assess this final part. It seems satisfying somehow; the loose ends tied up, the group settled in their respective fates, and peace for Eclipse. The ponies at the end might have been just the slightest bit too much—a little too cute. On the other hand, such a life might be exactly what a young girl would choose for herself if she had the power. I remember how much my sister loved horses as a girl.

⊕ The description of the effect of controlling horses through the use of telepathy was excellent. I have only a little riding experience, but they reacted that way to me even with a saddle and bridle. 8^>} 

⊕ Excellent work on Who Slays Satan?! I'm extremely impressed, and enjoyed it very much. Perhaps that's in

part because I've been able to read the entire work in such a short span of time. I certainly hope we'll see more of your short pieces in the future.

Incidentally, WSS? reminded me a bit of some of the work of **Barbara Hambly**, a fantasy writer whose work I enjoy quite a bit. She features much the same conflict between a Church driven by fear and superstition and essentially neutral magicians. The purification of Lucifer was a very nice touch, and reminded me both of **Neil Gaiman's Sandman** and **Michael Moorcock's The War Hound and the World's Pain**. Not that the work is derivative; you've handled the themes in a unique way. But I enjoyed WSS? in much the same way that I enjoyed those other works.



Doug Jorenby: I'm so glad to see *Session Notes* again, Doug. Here's hoping that there will be many more.

⊕ I must admit that I hadn't realized that **Traveller still** existed. There seemed to be so many systems coming out from GDW that I assumed that Traveller had been dumped for some cyberpunk game or some such. Not that I've played Traveller for years.

⊕ When I did, though, it was pretty boring. All there was to do was trade, trade, trade, and that was pretty much a no-brainer after the best trade routes were discovered.  Traveller campaigns always seemed to have a built-in time limit; as soon as the party members got wealthy to be able



to afford their own ships, there was no reason for them to stay together. Old Traveller was an excellent demonstration of the futility of the mindless quest for ever-increasing material wealth.

The most excitement we ever had was the time we formed a band and went touring. But even that got boring after a while. Eventually, inter-party rivalries tore the group apart. As I recall, one player hired an assassin to kill two of the characters (including mine), because of his dislike for the players in the real world. On a purely irrelevant note, he was a sergeant in the US Army who was later dishonorably discharged when he was caught selling drugs.

That game fell apart.

⊕ Regarding the removal of the possibility of character death during pre-generation in Traveller: Was that really a problem? I don't recall it happening very often, and when it did, it wasn't a big problem. It's not as if it took much effort or time to create a Traveller character, after all.

On the other hand, I do recall one player who essentially operated a death camp for pregenerates. He'd create a character, and if he didn't like their stats or the result of some die roll, he'd steer them into a highly dangerous profession. He'd keep killing off his characters in pregeneration this way until he got what he wanted. His final characters were always amazingly powerful...

⊕ An in-game character experience increase system was an unbelievable lack in the old system. It's long past due. Good to see that GDW figured that out, finally.

Scott Ferrier: Rags?! **Interregnum?** Boy, is *that* a reach! I suppose I'm ineligible for the contest, eh? Just as well, as giving me a Magic card would be only slightly less obnoxious than giving me influenza. Or crack. 8^>}

⊕ Alexander was amusing. It's a pity we never got to really get into the campaign and see him in action! On the other hand, given his combat paralysis he might not have lasted long. It's possible that in Alexander you had a character concept that was highly amusing but not really playable in the long term.

⊕ Re the IFGS: You were a bit more savage than I was in my writeup in The Wild Hunt. And of course I didn't name names. Doesn't do me much good now, though, since anyone can cross-reference our two write-ups...8^>}

⊕ The "Fat Jerk"? Hee hee hee! Pretty funny. You're pretty mean. 

⊕ For the riddle contest in the first New England IFGS game not only did I suggest the possibility of a tie, but I also suggested the possibility of the good guys losing (as actually happened). Am I psychic? Nah. But there are times when I predict the worst that I *know* that it will happen, and it often does. Perhaps that's just experience with human nature. And coincidence is always a possibility. 

NEXTISH:

Who knows? I have at least six new RPG products to review, plus a CD-ROM or two. Beyond that, anything's possible...

→ Pete

COLOPHON:

The Log That Flies #2 was gestated in a *P. Maranci 30.2 brain*. Much of the text was then generated with *PC-Write 2.5*, an ancient but serviceable word processor.

The text was formatted for desktop publication using *Publish-It 4.0 for Windows*, a cranky but cheap DTP program.

The DTPed document was printed at a ruinous cost at a laser printing service, on a 300 dpi laser printer.

Most of the art in *TLTF* is taken from books of copyright-free clipart published by the **Dover Publishing Co.** of Mineola, NY. Reviews of various Dover books may be printed in future issues.

The art was copied on a **Kodak 2110** high-speed duplicator.

Inspirational quote for the month:

"The InterNet perceives censorship as damage and routes around it." (unknown)

Take care, all!

→ Pete