

# RACK & RUNE



## RACK & RUNE #8: The New Look

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Greetings again to the Hunt! With any luck, R&R will be presenting a new face to the world in this issue, as I recently purchased an upgrade for my desk top publisher program. If this looks like a crude and unproofed modified ASCII printout, don't buy Publish-It 2.0! However, as of this writing (5/18/92) it hasn't crashed yet...



Telecommunicationally advantaged readers should note that my InterNet address has changed slightly, as a result of my host moving one notch closer to the pure stuff. As a result, I'm receiving Email at an exceptionally quick rate. I've also gotten connected to the Grass Server, about which more later. On with the show!



### FEAR AND FREEZING AT NERO

As a follow-up to my report on the recent NERO adventure weekend I attended, there is one small addendum. As may be remembered, My roommate and I had found that since the weekend had been overbooked we would have to sleep in a large unheated log building, rather than the cabin we had paid for. Faced with freezing temperatures that never rose above 20° (and Bog only knows what sort of wind chill factor), we drove home Friday night to sleep. Of course the next day we were met with such unbelievable and unprofessional rudeness that we left for good.



Later information shows that this was an excellent idea. NERO maintains a large presence on the local Argus computer bulletin board system; this presence includes an active message board, which I occasionally scan. After the ill-fated weekend, it was posted that several attendees had been frostbitten, and at least one person had hypothermia. I've little doubt that I would have been one of the stricken.

### THE NEW LOOK

The Runes at the base of each page are standard RuneQuest Runes taken from the RQ2 book. One standard Rune is missing; one non-standard Rune has been added. Can anyone name the various Runes without looking them up? What is notable about their order?



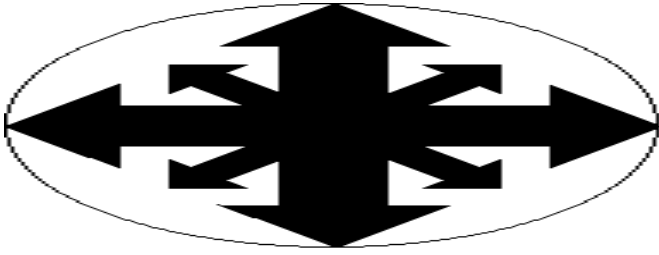
The setup of the runes was suggested (OK, slightly ripped-off) from the layout of the excellent RQ magazine "Tales of the Reaching Moon."

I drew the Runes and some (though not all) of the art in this issue using a popular painting program. They are stored as .PCX files, though they can be converted between many different formats. These are simple shapes, of course, requiring no artistry (which is good, since I can't draw); however if anyone would like a copy of them, let me know.



I suspect that I'm the only member of the Pack who still uses a dot-matrix printer. On the off chance that I'm wrong, let me pass on one thing I've discovered that greatly improves dot-matrix performance: printing on high-quality bond paper. The difference in print quality astonished me. Or was I the only one who didn't know that? 8^>}





## “BELLE, BOOK & CANDLE”

It’s difficult to know how far to go when writing up an International Fantasy Gaming Society event. Since it’s a national live roleplaying organization, it’s possible that some readers of TWH might someday want to play an IFGS game; I’d hate to play the role of a spoiler. Still, it’s hard to report on an event without discussing it!

“Belle, Book & Candle” (by Tracey O’Connor) is a one-day live roleplaying scenario for the IFGS. It was first run several weeks ago at the Quincy Quarry, an historic abandoned quarry site. The geography is perfect for live gaming; high craggy rock peaks, deep dark pools beneath, long forested trails, and even an area of shallow water which is crossed with stepping-stones. It has anything a game designer could want, except for interiors (there are none). The only other drawback is the vast amount of graffiti, which covers nearly every exposed rock surface. Still, by looking on them as “mystic runes”, and with a good dose of imagination, these problems are easily overcome.

It had been planned that the PCs would be divided into two parties, of approximately five players each; these would be run separately through the adventure, in sequence. When the time came, however, too many PCs wanted to stick together, and so the game was run with one big team. This made things both easier and harder for the NPCs (of which I was one); fighting NPCs were greatly outnumbered (and were beefed up accordingly), but we didn’t have to run back and forth between Team A and B, doing each encounter twice.

Of the plot, little can be said. Like many IFGS games, the form was not unlike that of a table-top RPG tournament module, with se-

quential encounters and quick action. The PCs traveled through perils and dangers, gaining information and treasure along the way, and finally came to a showdown with the villain of the piece—though you can never be sure about these things...

Roleplaying was rather notable (yours truly chewed more than his share of scenery himself), and a good time was had by all. It took me days to get over the terrible sunburn I got on the top of my head, though. My hair is getting a little thin up there. 8^>}

Now that summer is here, the IFGS will be running games on a frequent schedule. I’ll include a listing of upcoming events in the next issue.

## RANDOM RUNEQUEST

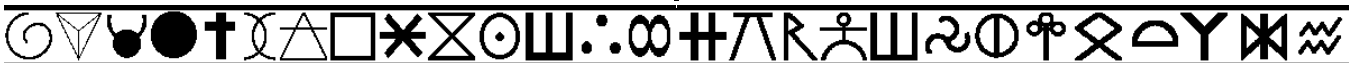
### RQ4

Lately I’ve been hearing quite a few rumors about a supposed RuneQuest 4 from Avalon Hill. A modified Encumbrance system and completely rewritten Sorcery magic system are said to be the two most outstanding features. This is not necessarily a Bad Thing. I don’t know anyone who uses the Encumbrance system as it is—too much bookkeeping. The Sorcery system, too, has its shortcomings. However, I’m concerned that amidst all this activity one of RQ’s greatest weaknesses may be overlooked: the lack of a character build system. That the system which has always been on the cutting edge should lack so fundamental an element is incongruous, to say the least. RuneQuest’s delay in implementing such an option makes it all the more necessary that it be the best character design system possible, going beyond mere mechanics to personality and history design.

Directly following this issue, I’m pleased to present another guest columnist: Virgil S. Greene III, who presents an interesting new RuneQuest character design system, purely by coincidence.

### Sorcerous Intensity

Regarding the RuneQuest Sorcery system, I’ve noticed a mistake that almost every player



makes. Spells are manipulated using the Sorcery skills of Intensity, Duration, Range, and Multispell. The spells may be altered by any combination of these skills, up to the Free Intelligence of the Sorcerer; a Sorcerer with a Free Intelligence of 16, for example, can beef up his spell with up to 16 points of alterations. He could, for example, cast a spell of Duration 12 (one month), and Range 4 (160 meters); this adds up to the total of his Free INT of 16. When Intensity comes into the equation, however, things get muddied. Most players would cast a spell of Intensity 4, Duration 10 (one week), and Range 2 (40 meters). This seems to add up to sixteen, same as the previous spell. What is usually forgotten, however, is that the first point of Intensity is free; it's built into the spell itself. Therefore the spell could actually be cast with Intensity 5 (1 point free with the spell, plus 4 points of additional Intensity), Duration 10 (one week), and Range 2 (40 meters). The cost for this would be 17 magic points.

I suspect that this error occurs because the tables for the various Sorcery skills are subtly different. Range 1, which doubles the base range of 10 meters to twenty meters, costs one additional point. Intensity 1, however, adds nothing to the cost of the spell; Intensity 2 doubles the base effect. A minor difference, but one that has its effect.



### Calling All GMs

Lately more than ever there's been a crying need for RuneQuest gamemasters. I recently joined a new RuneQuest Glorantha game; the GM had put notices in a few game stores, something I had done myself a few years ago without response. Things certainly seem to have changed since then! Not only are there seven players in this new game, but the GM has been contacted by three more people wanting to play (though there's just no space for them). In addition, I know several people who'd like to try RQ, but can't find a game or GM. I'm actually considering starting an alternating Saturday night RQ game just to get people into the system, though I really don't have the time.



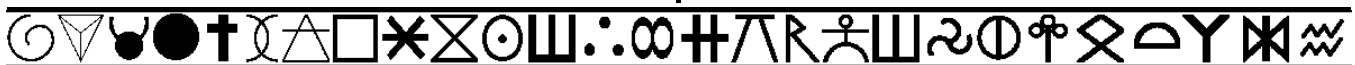
### CRUEL BOOK

A couple of weeks ago I had a rather frustrating experience: while on the subway I noticed that the young woman next to me was reading "Cruel Doubt" the "expose" which tells of a popular murder and puts part of the blame on Dungeons & Dragons. It was quite frustrating to watch her read that rank propaganda and not say anything!

What's more annoying is that this book has now been made into two sensationalistic made-for-TV movies. Apparently these movies show the young murderer doing acid and playing D&D. The number of gamers I've met who've played while under any influence is virtually nil, but you'd never think so from this stuff.

All of this leads me to a recent book by Larry Niven and some other writer(s)—I can't remember the name. However, it was notable in that it featured a bleak near-future in which the US government had been taken over by that well-known threat of radical feminists, eco-freaks, and New Agers. Said idiots proceed to try to stop the Greenhouse Effect, and thereby plunge the Earth into a new Ice Age. It's nonsense, of course; Mr. Niven's (insane political) slip is indeed showing! What makes this book interesting, however, are the scapegoats of the new tyrannical EcoFemAge dictators: science fiction fans. Their anti-Mother Earth, pro-racist-sexist-white-male-technology inclinations make them the natural victims of oppression, torture, and brainwashing.

OK, it's silly. But there is something



compelling in the portrayal of science-fiction fans as an Underground. I had to wonder what the roleplayers were doing, as they weren't mentioned. We probably were the first to go... 8^>}

I can't really recommend buying this book, unless you have lots of extra money, like the theme/politics, or really like Niven. But it would certainly be worth checking out of your local library—if they stock such juvenile nonsense as science fiction.

## STAR TREK: THE FRUGAL GENERATION

Given the amount of bashing that I've done to ST:TNG, I must be fair and admit that the most recent episode as of Saturday, May 16 (with the Borg) was outstanding—a fine piece of writing. Too bad they won't keep it up.

Did anybody notice that the show had no subplot this time? It's been customary for the show to have a main plot and at least one internal-dissension subplot. I wonder if the lack of a subplot had anything to do with the quality of this episode?

The actor who played the Borg should be especially praised. He did a good job with lines that should have made me gag—but didn't. An excellent job.

*SLIGHT SPOILER (read no further if you're picky about such things):*

Why is it that every alien race in the ST:NG universe is really nice at heart? There's a sickening New Age smarminess to the notion that all anyone really needs is a hug. I kind of wish Dr. Crusher would encounter an Alien (from the movie) and try doctoring *that* to health with warmth and friendship. Or that Troi would try to share emotions with it. As it is, the only alien race that is at heart inimical to the human race is the Parasites (who left their little tails sticking out at the back of the victim's neck). But I'd bet that if they come back, even they will be Smurfified. 8^>}

Finally, did anybody notice that one of the pieces of equipment attached to the Borg's head was actually a welding device from Radio

Shack? I guess they assimilate the past as well as the future. I must credit my roommate for noticing this.

## THE VERY FIRST TIME

I've often been interested in hearing how gamers first got involved in the hobby. How did you start playing? How did you start gamemastering? Such questions are both interesting and potentially useful; they may indicate how others may be introduced to gaming as a positive experience.

In an early issue I described my first roleplaying experience. That was a Gaming Horror Story, a game of obnoxious aggravation. My first experience as a gamemaster, however, was quite different.

I'd been playing RuneQuest Glorantha for about eight months, and was quite enamored of this fascinating new system and world. The two brilliant gamemasters who had "inducted" me into good gaming had each been GMing a little too much; they began to pressure me to try running a game (there were other players, but they simply lacked the caliber to GM to the standards we held). I protested that I couldn't, didn't know what to do, but they beat down my objections one by one and persuaded me to GM for just the two of them in a totally forgiving, casual atmosphere. Of course, I had no idea what I was doing.

The details are a little fuzzy; after all, this was several years ago. As I recall, however, a PC was in a bar in a town near Pavis when he paid a few lunars for a strange bottle of peculiar shape. The label was in Auld Wyrnish: "Old Dragonewt Sweat", it said, "bottled in the Dragon's Eye by Dragonewts". Before bedding down for the night with a serving girl, the PC philosophically gave the strange liquor a try. It proved very strange—dusty, almost—but not unpalatable. The maid decided not to try the strange brew. After an enjoyable night, both fell asleep.

When he awoke, the PC had a bit of a woozy feeling. Half-sitting up, he looked toward the table at the foot of the bed. There, sitting nonchalantly watching him, was a trans-





parent pink Crested Dragonewt. Other people got elephants; he got Dragonewts. This was strange, but he could deal with it.

Until the maid woke up, took a look at the foot of the bed, and screamed. It turned out that everyone could see his Dragonewts—oh yes. Didn't I mention it? There were more than just one. In fact, the pink apparitions in questioned numbered in the dozens, from Crested to Priest status. They were apparently all different incarnations of the same Dragonewt, and they all had *very* weird senses of humor...

Before long, our hero was standing in dishabile in the Town Square. Dozens of crossbowmen were aiming at him, while ghostly pink Dragonewts sank beneath the ground, occasionally reaching up to tickle the soles of the bowmen's feet right through their shoes. The Town sheriff was demanding that he control his Dragonewts—or face the consequences...

Somehow he managed to talk his way out of it. Figuring out that all this was somehow related to the mysterious bottle, he determined to rid himself of it. But how? He couldn't break it—it was made of seemingly unbreakable crystal. He tried to walk away from it, but the dragonewts kept bringing it after him. It seemed that they were attached to him. Finally he decided (based on a few cryptic comments from one of the dragonewts) to take the bottle back to the city of Dragon's Eye, in the hope that he could free himself of it there. He guessed that the dragonewt(s) were/was somehow cursed, and that the Inhuman King could help somehow. Getting to the Dragon's Eye would be difficult under normal circumstances, of course. But with a swarm of ghostly pink dragonewts, it was... insanely difficult?

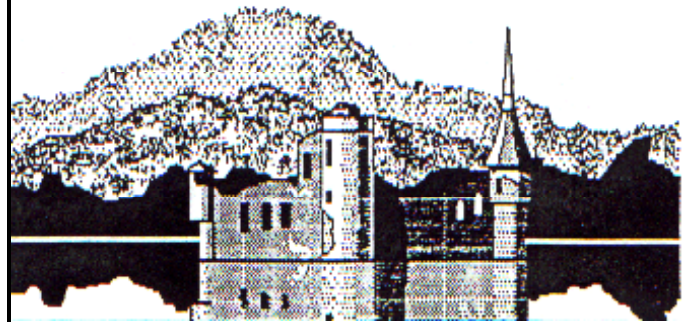
We dropped the game about then—the player couldn't handle it anymore, he said. His mind was blown. We talked about restarting that scenario, but never got around to it. Nonetheless, it was a lot of fun for both of us, and I've been GMing ever since.

The strange thing was that almost all of this was *ex tempore*—off the cuff. The bottle

had been a throwaway bit, of no importance. When the time came, however, my mouth started living its own life. It was quite frightening in a way, kind of like deliberately taking off the training wheels for your first try at riding a bike.

My next game was a serious one. I worked for months on a comprehensive background and plot structure. Strangely enough, the first several sessions were excruciatingly boring—I'd overplanned, and was practically requiring the PCs to roleplay every breath and heartbeat. Fortunately I was able to modify my GMing style in time to save the game. It took me years to realize a crucial point—my first game had gone extremely well *without* any detailed planning. Is winging it better for everyone, or just for me? I wonder.

There's probably something Zen about that, but I slept through Zen class.

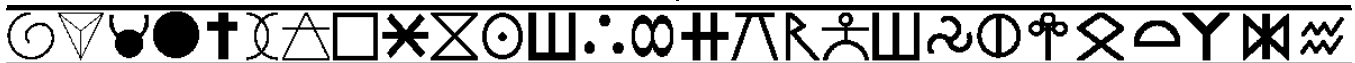


## DIGESTING RUNEQUEST (WIRED FOR BYTES)

Once again I run the risk of passing on information that most readers of TWH probably already know. Still, if even one person who plays RuneQuest didn't know this, I suppose it's worth it.


Sources for new RQ material are all too few these days. There are hopes that Mr. Ralston may be able to do something about this; until that time, though, RQ players will have to do with the following:

1) Tales of the Reaching Moon. This outstanding magazine has been plugged to death. If there's a RuneQuest player who hasn't



subscribed, only extreme poverty or apathy can be an excuse.

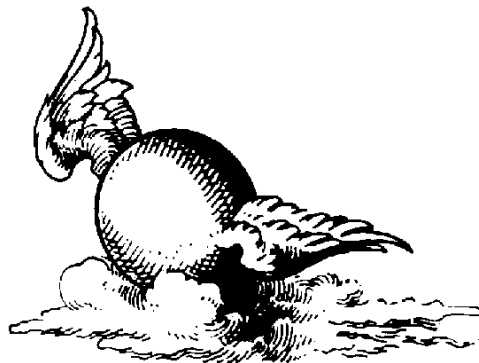
2) The RuneQuest Digest. This electronic RQ 'zine is distributed to a subscriber list via the InterNet. There is no charge for this service, though InterNet access is necessary. Much of the material is duplicated from "Tales", but since the RuneQuest Digest has had 75 issues, there is much more material available there—some of it of impressive quality ("Tales" has had only seven, albeit individually larger issues). Discussion articles are also available, consisting of material sent to subscribers for comment; these are often incorporated into later issues.

 To receive the RuneQuest Digest, send email to the editor, Andrew Bell, at bell@cs.unc.edu . If you cannot get InterNet access (which I heartily recommend), write to him via postmail at the following address: Andrew Bell, 135 Mallard Court, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 27514. If you can't work anything out with him, and need hardcopy rather than an ascii file, drop me a line; perhaps I can help.


3) The Grass Server. This is also available only via InterNet. I suppose that any RQ devotee with InterNet access would already be acquainted with it. On the other hand, I spent years searching for InterNet access (and a computer) after I heard about the Digest; perhaps I can spark someone else's quest.

The Grass Server is the repository for all 75 back issues of the RuneQuest Digest. It also includes all 35 or so discussion articles, and numerous supplements—not only for RuneQuest, but for Call of Cthulhu and other game systems as well. It's an automated mail server, and so responds very quickly to requests for files—my turnaround time is less than 24 hours (pretty much between log-ons). It's slightly tricky to join, or at least proved so for me; some peculiarity of my InterNet address made it impossible for the server to reach me. This was repaired by simply manually altering my "Reply-to:" line. To get information about the Grass Server, send email from a valid InterNet address to: GRASS-SERVER@wharton.upenn.edu . Put the word HELP as the subject line,


or as the first line of the message; you should get all the information you need fairly quickly.

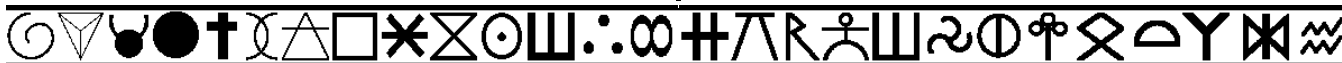


## COMMENTS #172

**Swanson:** Again, congrats on the new job. You violated the odds, you know; I believe it's supposed to take at least six months to find a new job. This would qualify as a "happy" coincidence. 

As far as coincidence goes, well...what exactly are we talking about? There are, after all, many kinds of coincidence. For example, I recall one game where the GM had an NPC use Tarot cards to predict the future. They were eerily accurate, and he wasn't stacking the deck (let me say here that I do **not** believe in such mystical nonsense—not without serious evidence, anyway). I assume you mean "How much may a GM use 'coincidence' as an excuse for manipulation?", however. I could be coy and say "as much as s/he can get away with", but in truth...well, I have yet to resort to that excuse. I suppose the ideal mix would be one in which the characters would be uncertain if a coincidental-seeming event was truly coincidence, or caused by unknown factors. What can I say? I like to keep them on their toes. Does that sound reasonable?

**Butler:** The characters you describe in Glenn's Africa campaign sound quite interesting. How were they created? Did the players consult with each other before designing their characters, or was each designed separately? To what extent was Glenn involved? How many more questions can I ask in a single paragraph? 



Why is the sky blue?

You award eeps based on how much fun the player had? How do you judge this? It seems a little unfair—to punish those who didn't have fun by giving them less eeps. Wouldn't it make more sense to base experience awards on how much fun the player was for the others in the game?

Regarding the SIL Foundation & Destiny game—yes, I was aware of the Pisces Arm government. A friend of mine was the head of the Army for Equality (or was it Liberty?) on Bari. I believe you mentioned her in a previous issue—called her “strident and intense, really into her role”. I haven't let her forget that! 8^>} Actually, she was rather pleased by the description...Anyway, I heard about you through her.

It's not surprising that you never heard about Barni Seldon; in a way, he didn't exist. I made him up out of frustration with the game as written. Let me explain.

Asimov's Foundation books were among the first SF I ever read. I loved those books, a reread them every year or so. The Foundation & Destiny game was a dream come true for me. I sent in my info, requested a serious major character with lots of roleplaying and characterization, pledge most of my time at the Con to the game, and generally went nuts. All this was months before the registration deadline. Other friends of mine also registered, most of them requesting casual, freewheeling, chaotic characters.

When I got to the Con, I received my character and eagerly scanned it. I was Noram Rasio, an agent of the PPP, and secret member of the Second Foundation. My task was to wander around and prevent people from discovering the existence of the Second Foundation. I was also to be brutal and oppressive, making trouble for all.

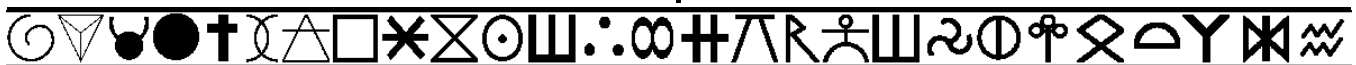
This was not exactly what I'd requested, but I decided to play it for what it was worth. As I was reading my information in a corner of the room, however, someone came and sat down next to me. It was an acquaintance of mine, one of the inner circle of the then-SIL.

He quickly revealed that he knew every secret I had, and was my superior in the Second Foundation. This was rather crushing; the game had already begun, and already I was clearly a menial. “What should I do, sir?”, I asked, trying to get something out of all this. The reply: “Oh, it doesn't matter. Walk around. Support our candidate for Emperor at the end.” Are you surprised to hear that I wasn't thrilled?

That pretty much set the tone of the entire game. Throughout, the SIL elite (who were generally the most powerful characters) treated me as less-than-dirt—not because of my character, but because I *wasn't part of the SIL inner circle*. Not all such authority figures were rude, but several were incredibly, unbelievably nasty—again, not just in character, but outside as well. Believe me, I'm not so offensive in person as to deserve that!

It was soon clear that the basic plot structure of Foundation & Destiny was what I call the “Circle of Power”, a common form for SIL plots. Details vary, but in general the focus of the game is a struggle for power—the goal is to become the supreme ruler (i.e. Emperor, King, or whatever). This is accomplished at an end ceremony in which the final decision is made, after which all must acclaim their new ruler. Actual candidates for the Supremacy are usually limited to under ten characters, all of whom begin the game as major PCs—the “inner circle”. Each member of the central cadre commands numerous “minor” players; for the most part, these are meant to spend their time involved in self-cancelling plotlines which have no impact on the overall game. Choices are generally very limited for such players. Often the only choice is to acquiesce to the “script”, doing your small pre-ordained part and grovelling to the King at the endgame ceremony.

One warning sign of such a plot is that many “minor” character will often be competing for the attention of a “major” player; the design seems to be basically intended to boost the egos of the elite. Note that “minor” characters are not informed of their true status—in fact, they are made to think that they have



some choice in the kind and importance of the characters they play. After all, who would pay full price to be a second-class citizen?

Back to the game. Aggravated by the tail-chasing of my role, and by some astonishingly nasty treatment from the “elite” who controlled my fate, I made the only choice open to me, under the circumstances: I went rogue, working against the inner circle altogether (at that point I wasn’t taking the game too seriously, anyway).

To my mind the inner-circle play was clearly unfair. Therefore, I decided to try to break it. Since the purpose of the game was for a selection to be made from among the elite, I chose to work against **all** of them—against the game itself, in effect. So I made up an Anarchy Society, called it “Barni Seldon” (the name amused me), and tried to have some fun. Putting on an enormous black cloak that shrouded me completely, I made my way down to the posting area in the GM’s room. Leaning against the signs, I put up a manifesto proclaiming that:

**“The current riot of violence and intrigue on Terminus proves only one thing: NO ONE is qualified to rule the Galaxy. Clearly the only acceptable form of government is ANARCHY. Let the oppressed, the underclass, Rise Up! Throw off your chains! Pick up a blaster, a chair, a knife. Strike a blow for Freedom! Death to the oppressor! signed, BARNI SELDON”**

At about 3 AM that night I put on the cloak once again. Again I went down to the GM’s control room anonymously. It was shut for the evening (as I planned), and the corridor was quiet; therefore, working under cover of the cloak, I taped the GM’s room doors shut with a large sign that said:

**“WARNING! DEATH! THIS ROOM HAS BEEN FLOODED WITH RADIOACTIVE DUST (tm). IT MAY NOT BE OPEN UNTIL 30,000 YEARS HAVE PASSED. LONG LIVE THE INTERREGNUM! LONG LIVE BARNI SELDON!”**

Of course the sign was ripped down and

thrown away when the room was opened the next morning. I hadn’t expected anything else, really. You pretty much know how things ended up, of course—the Empire collapsed, the Plan failed, and the Galaxy was plunged into 30,000 years of anarchy. So I guess I won, didn’t I?



From your “on the edge of the favored in-group” position you may not realize it, but we outsiders (by which I mean most players) eventually realize what is going on—and when we do, we get angry. This sort of stacked-deck situation is not what I expected from an adult organization. I believe that this anger was responsible for the ending of Foundation & Destiny; and for the low participation in the OZ game the next year.

To be fair, let me say that not all SIL/ILF/whatever games are like that. “Spaceport Adeline” by Walt Frietag and Barbara Lanza used quite a different plot structure, and was wonderful. The OZ game looked like a lot of fun too (I sat in on their endgame). But I’ve had enough bad SIL experiences that I’m not likely to try it again—I’ve had enough aggravation.

**Dunham:** You have a Macintosh Powerbook? I’ve been wondering about those. How do you like it? How much was it, if you don’t mind saying?

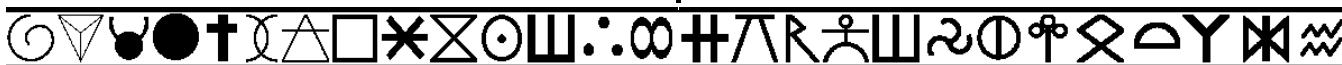


I’m a little confused about your Compuserve game. How do you run it? How do you deal with die rolls, and other mechanics which rely on sight? In fact, what mechanics/system are you using for this? I’ve been asked to run a game on a local BBS, but have no idea how it could be done—if it would be desirable. How can you have good roleplaying without personal contact?

Also, isn’t Compuserve really expensive?

I enjoyed the the Blue Boar HeroQuest and the Joseph Campbell review in *Tales of the Reaching Moon*. Just out of curiosity, are you running a RuneQuest game now?

**Erlanden:** As I mentioned, I recently started playing in a new RuneQuest game set in western Genertela (Malkioni territory). It’s





an area that hasn't really been covered by and of the published material. I may start a game soon myself. Apart from that, my Saturday night GURPS Space game just went bi-weekly (every other week, that is), and Nereyon is restarting after a two-month hiatus.

I've never thought of *Max Headroom* as cyberpunk. It's bleak, but not *that* bleak. In my experience, cyberpunk generally includes a sort of soulless desperation, a state of moral vacuum. Anything or anyone good is inevitably forced to repudiate it/themselves, in the most horrible and demeaning way imaginable. When I think of cyberpunk, I think of the truly hellish writing of Jack Chalker—which is strange, since he doesn't do cyberpunk as far as I know. Still, the way in which he creates appealing, sympathetic characters and proceeds to degrade them mentally, sexually, spiritually, biologically, and just about every other way he can seems cyberpunkish to me. I view it as an assault on the reader, much like "American Psycho". I guess I read the wrong books, huh?

**Jorenby:** Down with conformism! I for one hope you'll use the old font, at least occasionally. After all, it's not as if your print quality was bad. Now, if I used that font... 8^>}

Great clip art. Where do you get it? I have the feeling you've already told me. Is there more?

Your definition of cyberpunk interests me—I really like the old film noir genre. Yet I haven't seen any of that in the cyberpunk I've read. Apparently I'm missing something.

The idea of "mystery" cyberpunk appeals greatly, but I suspect that it must be difficult to run as an RPG. I can't see Sam Spade running around with six companions all the time—in other words, I find it hard to imagine a *noir* situation without a loner protagonist. Such cyberpunk games as I've seen, however, bore no resemblance to a mystery; they were more of the "kill and kill and kill" variety. Not nice.

**Keller:** Just how are you trying to find players for your Twentieth-Century Paranoia? By the way, you've given me an idea: Historical Paranoia. Among the cavemen. "The Saber-

tooth is your Friend!". The possibilities seem endless...

**Phillies:** "Pickering" is really outstanding—I hope there's much more. What are your long-term plans for it? Will you be submitting it anywhere?

The GM was **not** my SO. He was, however, a good friend at the time, who had stood by me when I needed support. Despite your doubts, he was also a brilliant GM—*some* of the time. That was the frustrating thing: he'd come up with a great game concept, run ten or twenty sessions of it, and suddenly drop it without warning. Over time, this unreliability became more and more pronounced. I'm no longer in touch with him.

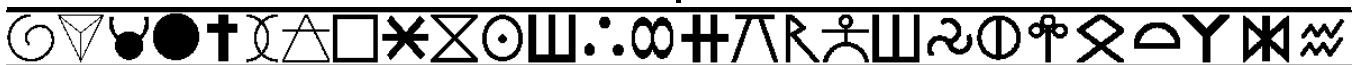
**Ruggles:** Sorry to hear that you're tapering off. Still, I suppose that's better than going cold turkey. After all, they don't make an APAenders Patch (tm) yet.

What re-enactments are those?


**Blacow:** Glad to see you back. Your travails remind me of why I refuse to go to doctors if I can possibly help it. Hope your health takes a turn for the better soon.

I've made the mistake of trying to roleplay among wargamers too, and was hated for it. I entered the group playing Ash, a borderline-psychotic deep gnome illusionist/fighter who insisted on always wearing a large and hideous mask—which, it turned out, was merely a copy of his own features. I based his personality on Rorschach from Alan Moore's "The Watchmen"; a trifle eccentric, to say the least. The players thought I was obnoxious, and were ready to throw me out of the game. When their actions made it impossible for Ash to continue with the party, I brought in a new character—this one was a parody of the wargamers attitude, deliberately designed to be liked by the party. They loved him, and made him party leader. After a while the humor got a little flat for me, and I left. But they never realized that I was making fun of them.

A "getting to know each other" session is a great idea, both for characters and players, if they aren't already acquainted. I've used it



frequently. Here's an idea: how about a "getting to know each other" campaign, designed to run for several sessions, set in the characters youth? What do you think?

**Collier:** Great cover again! Even the Personnel Flunky couldn't object to it (although it *would* confuse her). Do the symbols mean anything? Friends were wondering. Also, how about another 'zine? 8^>} 

**NEREYON: HORROR IN THE BASEMENT**

When last we left our heroes, they had returned from a trip to find that their old tutor Coradan had been captured by the new NeMarren Lord in the town. He was being held in the basement of the Town Hall, waiting to be experimented on by the NeMarren's Chaos-using human sorcerer. Bear had followed, and had also been captured. The **had** to be rescued.

The need for haste was great, and so the characters had little time to prepare. Gathering together what weapons they had, they set forth: Dara the Sensitive, Robert the Sneak, Sam the Chaos-Sealer, and Vlad the Healer. In the dark of night they snuck into town, staying close to Robert; while they were nearby, his Watcher stealth power was able to affect them, too. Making their way through the town, they saw clear evidence that the atrocities they had heard of were true—a ghastly pile of human bones (with toothmarks) lay stacked behind the Manor. They moved past the Manor to the Town Hall. Entering through the second-floor window, Robert and Vlad proceeded to the basement. Sam waited on the basement stairs, while Dara lagged behind—she sensed Chaos somewhere in the building.

Below was a scene of horror. Prisoners were chained to the walls, awaiting their hideous fate. After frantic search, Coradan was found—in terrible shape. He was clearly starved and weakened, and seemed to have been beaten. Worst of all, his tongue was gone—ripped by from the roots. However, he had not been exposed to Chaos. Bear was found chained nearby in good health. They began freeing the prisoners.

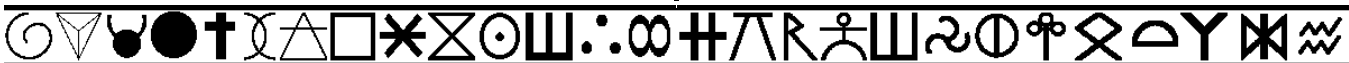
Upstairs, Dara had found the source of the Chaos: a large altar in an adjoining room, with an opening to Primal Chaos held in delicate balance above. She called Sam to help. He did, just missing the Chaos sorcerer who was coming to investigate the sounds he heard coming from the basement. One glimpse of bear standing on the staircase and he knew that something was wrong. Aiming the black staff he held in his hand, the sorcerer fired a bolt of black flame at the sturdy old Northern warrior, neatly blowing off his right arm. He collapsed in shock. Vlad and Robert leapt to attack the sorcerer.

The noise had awoken the NeMarren Lord himself. Entering through the main doors, he went towards the Chaos altar only to find Dara in his way, between him and Sam. Sam's hands were outstretched, as he attempted to close off the portal of Chaos; an extremely dangerous feat, not unlike stemming a flood by throwing your body in its path. Dara stood before the Lord, lightly armored in leather and holding Sam's broadsword ready for battle. The NeMarren laughed sardonically and strode forward, confident of victory.

Somehow, Dara managed to survive for several rounds against the NeMarren—in all likelihood he was simply playing with her, amusing himself. He discovered his mistake when the others, having slain the sorcerer, mobbed him. After that, he never had a chance.

Meanwhile, Sam had Sealed the Chaos opening. The group gathered the prisoners together on the main floor, while Dara, Vlad, Robert, and Sam went downstairs to tend to Coradan. Outside, the first sounds of alarm were beginning.

Bear and Coradan's wounds were largely beyond the healing powers of sorcery. In a desperate gamble, Dara used a pebble she had found in a dream, and tried to heal Bear's wound—she didn't know *why* it should heal, but it did. Though his arm was still off, his massive stump seemed well on the road to recovery. Coradan was another matter. She tried to use the second of her three pebbles, but with little effect. Bandaging up Coradan as best they could, they went upstairs.



There they found that the main doors had been shut and barred against entrance. A loud pounding against the door made exit that way seem ill-advised. The prisoners were panicky, desperate to escape. Working together, the Watchers led them up the stairs to a window set in the back wall of the second floor. Several prisoners were carrying Coradan; Bear was walking, albeit unsteadily. The prisoners began to climb out onto the roof. Meanwhile, the main door downstairs had given way. An inhumanly tall form stood in the doorway: a Justicar, dread Sword of the NeMarren. Panic ensued. The prisoners scattered into the night, seeking out their homes or places of refuge. As the PCs got on their horses, preparing to escape, three figures on horseback came around the site of the building. One was tall, the Justicar from downstairs. The next was of slightly less stature, but clearly a NeMarren of some sort. The last, a human, was dressed as a sorcerer. As the PCs readied their hasty escape, the NeMarren threw something at them, saying "Catch!". Whatever it was struck Robert in the chest, and he caught it instinctively. Surprisingly, it did no harm. The party then galloped away, while the three figures on horseback made no attempt to follow.

### **Colophon**

Rack & Rune #7: The Care & Feeding of Dice was generated in ASCII form using PC-Write 2.5. It was formatted for desk top publication using Publish-It 2.0. It includes clip art generated with the Windows 3.0 Paintbrush utility, as well as clip art downloaded from several BBSes. It was printed on an Epson LQ-570 dot-matrix printer.



### **NEXTISH**

How should I know? ->PM

