

# Queensland Wargamer

ISSUE # 36 July 1993





# **THE QUEENSLAND WARGAMER**

**A Queensland University Games Society Publication**

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## Editorial

Well, here it is, the first Wargamer of the year. Apologies for its lateness, but articles have been thin on the ground. Almost anything that is given to me gets printed. You can give me old assignments, character sheets, or relate the adventures your characters have had. Rule changes, reviews, and hints on gaming style are all useful. Don't forget artwork or brain teasers like crosswords (its been ages since we had a crossword).

The first article in this issue may require a little explanation. Some months ago I was part of a freeform on a spacestation. There was the usual conflict between the dictatorial Federation and the rebel alliance. This time the rebels did not succeed, and the only reports available are those given out by those in authority. Read and compare, especially the last message which is the official report to the public, then try to guess what really happened.

Nick Lawrence

Cover art done by David Lloyd



TO:- Federation Customs Central Department  
SENDER:- Agent FZ4X5C835  
CLASS:- Secret  
TIME:- 0348040393

One copy each to Customs Department  
Customs Department - Internal Affairs  
Customs Department Archives

#####

Suspected smuggler Kit Kerswell confessed to smuggling under interrogation by security forces of Remote Research Establishment CX702. Escaped from installation with the assistance of Fallen Sandaver, the regional Governor's bodyguard, in the confusion following the murder of Lieutenant Stanton Kershler and the deaths of Governor Terrill LeClair and known resistance operative Dallas Tyler, after being released to help remaining base security identify a potentially hostile unknown vessel. Current location uncertain.

Identity has been compromised. Plastic surgery and new identity required. Apologies, Sir.

END OF MESSAGE

#####

TO:- Federation Central Court  
SENDER:- Military Command - Zeta Mavrides Sector  
CLASS:- Secret  
TIME:- 1031050393

One copy each to Chief of Justice  
Prosecution for the Laker Case  
Defence Council for Roy Laker  
Chief Archivist

#####

The following evidence has become available regarding the incidents, that took place on the date of 030393 at the Military Refuelling/Listening Post CX702, surrounding the death of the Sector Governor Terrill LeClair. Note its relevance to the forthcoming trial of Roy Laker (former Base Commander of CX702) on charges of Treason. We suggest that a further charge of "accessory to murder" be considered against the aforementioned Laker.

Security Officers Log #1853246  
2nd Lt Stanton Kershler - 1100030393

1100 hrs

A distress call is received from the Zeta Mavrides-Perrin shuttle service requesting immediate landing permission at the base. Problem is apparently a loss in air tight integrity of the craft. Permission to land granted by Base Commander.

Crafts passenger log and computer info. available:

Crew

Kit Kerswell - Pilot for several years in this sector  
Evan Miles - Steward

Passengers

Dallas Tyler - Employee for GeoInfo(computer systems)  
Ker Mavrick - Works for the mining company Pippen who  
tried to get a mining lease for the asteroid that  
the base is situated on but this was turned down.  
Terrill LeClair - Governor of the local sector for about  
3-4 yrs. Ex-military with no great career.  
Fallon Sandaver - Bodyguard for the governor.

Base personal. All of these people seem reliable unless otherwise stated:

Bran Carras - Political Officer with possible military exp.  
Be very careful about.  
Voss Morrad - Good Engineer but weird.  
Hal Rashid - Scientist quite capable.  
Jef Hurst - Chief Scientist(little known)  
Roz Dellosa - Marine Corporal who doesnt want to be here  
Roy Laker - Base Commander

Upon shuttle landing all crew and passengers pass through airlock scanner with only BODYGUARD being positive(not questioned due to protocol) to weapons or illegal substances.

Shuttle had large(2m)hole in hull of the personal luggage hold and this was the cause of loss of air tight integrity. Scanning revealed no info. on the type or amount of explosive but the bomb didnt seem to be focused(.ie. nondirectional). Shuttle crew are asked to ascertain what luggage has been lost. Scientist Hal is asked to do computer simulations of different types of explosives to determine what and how much was used on craft.

The BASE ENGINEER mentioned that repairs for the one week journey to the next port of call would take a while. The PILOT seems to want to be with every inspection team that goes near the shuttle.

During this the MINING REP requested to be able to take samples of the asteroid - permission denied as he may have access to mining explosives. It is possible the mining company wants to get rid of base to have better chance of getting a mining lease on the asteroid. Instruct Chief Scientist to run his own lab tests on the asteroid to determine if it is of any value.

COMPUTER CHECK on BODYGUARD revealed he has a small handgun license and has worked for governer for 3yrs.

Hal's(good scientist) BOMB SIMULATION showed that a large quantity of "military available only" explosive was used. Also the amount was enough to only burst a bulkhead, not destroy the ship. The explosion was let off near the external hull of the craft and passengers have no say in where luggage is put. Assume that this was not an assassination attempt on the Governor. Likely that bomb was used to stop the shuttle at the base as it appears not to have gone off accidentally(i.e. no hot pipes or wires in luggage area to accidentally set off raw explosive). Deliberate sabotage by either rebels(that exist on Zeta Mavrides) on craft or by ex-army governor suspected.

Most other luggage lost from the ship and no other explosives or weapons found by shuttle crew, with governor writing all loss cheerfully off to insurance company(including personal medals?).

COMPUTER CHECK on GOVERNORs monetary situation revealed that he had been receiving "gifts" from the mining company for about a year. Mining company showed up in sector same time as governor. Governor appears mildly corrupt.

ASTEROID LAB TESTs showed that asteroid was mineable for Iridium. Chief Science Officer told mining rep. that nothing showed up(good man).

GOVERNOR seems to want to leave in a hurry to go open an interstellar shopping mall and the BASE COMMANDER is suddenly interested in weapons(hmmmm).

The CORPORAL reported that she was approached by DALLAS with the offer that she may be able to leave here early if she lets a ship travel in this space sector unnoticed by the bases scanning equipment. Corporal is instructed to go along with this idea and try and get more info. Hal is asked to run full diagnostic on all scanning equipment, but no problems are found.

INTERVIEW with MINING REP reveals that he has worked for the mining company approx 7 yrs and been in this sector for about 1 yr. He also mentions that his employer has already tried to move here. By monitoring his outgoing transmissions to company and girlfriend and his openness as to his desires and willingness to discuss his employer it appears he is a NOTHING.

INTERVIEW with the BODYGUARD reveals that he is carrying a sidearm and no other weapons.

POLITICAL OFFICER ARRESTS (for no apparent reason) both of shuttle crew. A long interview with the PILOT (part of which my corporal was asked to leave during - this smells bad) and a short interview with the STEWARD. Political officer lets on that the PILOT is a possible smuggler with suspect associates(and what about the political officer?). Steward is released.

DALLAS and SCIENTISTS seen around life support system during arrest of the shuttle crew. DALLAS ordered out of area immediately.

COMPUTER CHECK on POLITICAL OFFICER reveals very little useful info.

While in a holding cell the PILOT seems to be getting regular attempted visits from the Governor, Base Commander and bodyguard(why). She also mentions that she has heard a rumour that the STEWARD is a Customs Officer.

The corporal informs me that the BODYGUARD appears to be quite friendly with the PILOT. Due to this and the long association between guard and governor the latter two should be treated with caution.

The STEWARD Evan Miles informs me that he is actually a customs agent who has been with the pilot for about 2 flights. He is working for the governor(but possibly he doesnt realise that the governor is corrupt). Also informs me that PILOT IS A CONFIRMED DRUG RUNNER. STEWARD appears RELIABLE.

INTERVIEW with DALLAS reveals that he has worked for GeoInfo for about 2 weeks(and questions make him nervous). COMPUTER CHECK reveals that GeoInfo is attached to the mining company but this seems mere coincidence.

The corporal reports in that she has learnt that DALLAS IS A REBEL (Top Marks). HE IS SKILLED WITH SECURITY SYSTEMS AND COMPUTERS. HIS MISSION IS TO USE THE BASE COMPUTERS TO ENSURE THAT THE SCANNERS DO NOT DETECT AN APPROACHING REBEL SHIP. ALSO THAT THE BOMB WAS SET BY SOMEONE IN HIS ORGANISATION AND NOT BY HIM (this last piece of information is probably garbage as he was trying to gain the trust of the loyal corporal at the time). Corporal is instructed that DALLAS is to be shot dead if he enters either the bridge or the laboratories where computer terminals exist.

Time to take the POLITICAL OFFICER aside. We both distrust each other immensely and the comparison of notes and information takes place with our guns trained on each other. He confirms that the steward is a Customs Officer and that the governor may be corrupt and possibly dangerous. He appears very interested in the DALLAS information. By end of conversation I have deemed this very different POLITICAL OFFICER to be RELIABLE.

The BODYGUARD has allowed the PILOT (prisoner) to disarm him. Due to the relative difference in physical capabilities I believe that the bodyguard gave the prisoner his handgun to aid her escape. The weapon was promptly recovered and secreted in the security office (not in an obvious place like the armoury with so many security experts about). It is possible that both the governor and the bodyguard are both shady, and as such the sidearm was not returned to the governor upon his many requests.

The BASE COMMANDER is becoming, along with the GOVERNOR, very twitchy. Maybe Marines and Political officer are getting near some toes.

PILOT contracts violent illness after receiving a drink that went through the hands of both the GOVERNOR and DALLAS. A blood test carried out by Hal (these scientists are actually quite useful) indicates that no regular poison or disease is present. Possibly faking illness or allergic reaction to something (like imminent questioning by the political officer).

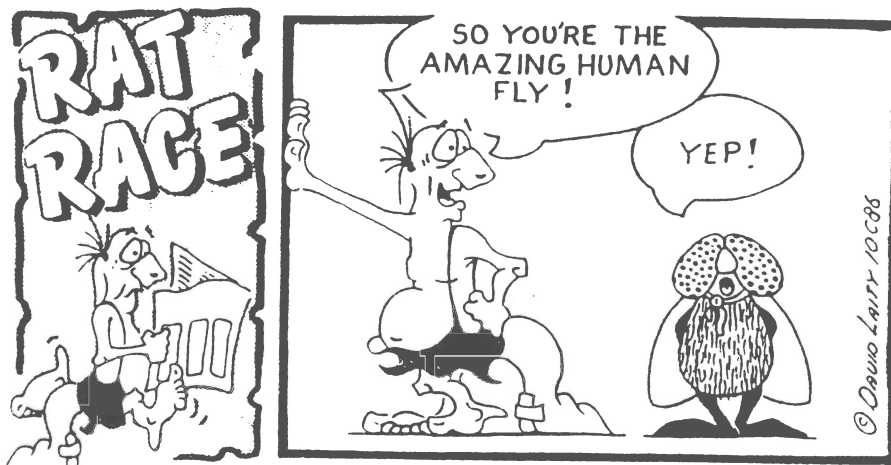
DALLAS is taken in for questioning by POLITICAL OFFICER. He is worried.

INTERVIEW with the GOVERNOR and BASE COMMANDER reveals tha

\*\*\*\*\* End of Security Officers Log #1853246 as he was shot dead  
\*\*\*\*\* during this interview.

END OF MESSAGE

#####





TO:- Military Command - Zeta Mavrides Sector  
SENDER:- Chief Justice Department  
CLASS:- Secret  
TIME:- 1745140393

One copy each to Sector Commander  
Sector Political Officer

#####

The charge of "accessory to murder" was deemed unnecessary as the charge of treason has been carried out on Roy Laker.

The Political Officer Bran Carras was apparently subjected to an internal disciplinary hearing. We hope that he will be of further use to you, upon his resumption of duty, in his new position of Chief Anti-Corruption Field Officer( to be read as Resource Wastage Monitoring Officer).

We note that Cpl Delloso has been promoted to the rank of 2nd Lt and is currently engaged in the suppression of rebel activity on Zeta Mavrides. We also note the posthumous award of the "Federation Star" to 2nd Lt Kershler.

The undercover customs agent Evan Miles is being relocated with a new name, face, and family. The mining engineer Ker Mavrick is undergoing counselling to aid him in forgetting the trauma that he underwent.

We assume you have dealt with the bodies of the rebel Dallas Tyler, and the corrupt Governor LeClair in an appropriate manner. We note that the bodies of Kit Kerswell and Fallon Sandaver were not recovered after their stolen shuttle had a brief encounter with the Battlecruiser Manxtan.

END OF MESSAGE

#####

TO:- Federation InterNet - Public News  
SENDER:- Chief Justice Department  
CLASS:- General Exposure  
TIME:- 1746140393

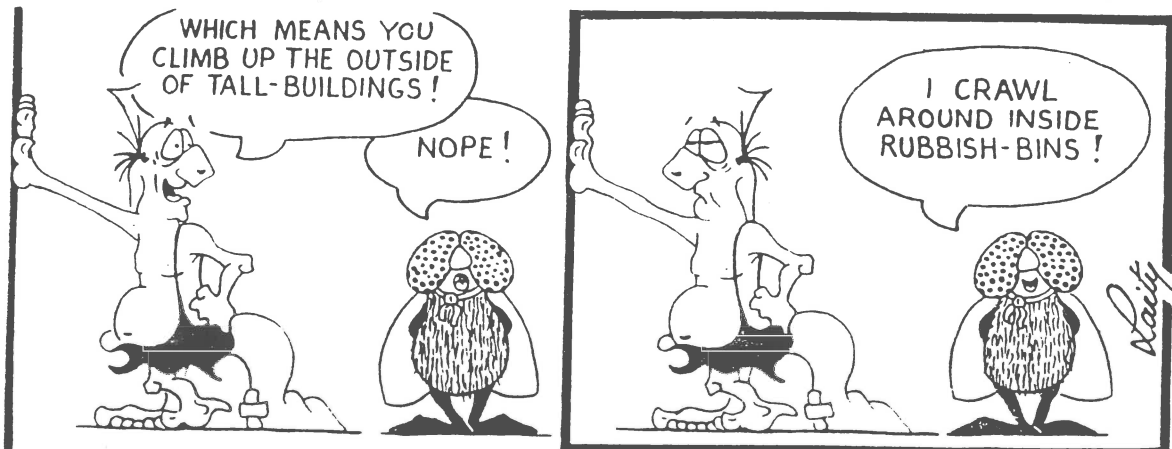
#####

Governor Terrill LeClair died during a terrorist attack on the shuttle on which he was travelling early on the morning of 030393. The Zeta Mavrides-Ferrin shuttle suffered severe damage with many dead. Among those who died were the pilot Kit Kerswell, steward Evan Miles, the passenger Dallas Tyler, and both the Governor and his bodyguard Fallon Sandaver. The terrorist attack originated from the planet Zeta Mavrides and police are currently rounding up all those responsible. Some of the terrorists have died resisting arrest whilst others are expected to follow shortly.

Remember, you could be a victim of terrorist activity. Report all suspicious persons to your local Law Enforcement Officer so that they may be dealt with.

END OF MESSAGE

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SUNDAY SUN, August 4, 1991

## ROLE PLAYING IN ASIAN SETTINGS III

### CHINESE IDEAS OF HEAVEN AND THE AFTERLIFE (PRE-BUDDHIST)

#### *The Chinese Soul*

The ancient Chinese idea of the soul was dualistic and materialistic. Every person was thought to have two souls: the *po* and the *hun*. These were different kinds of souls, and probably represent the historical reconciliation of the northern *po* and the southern *hun*. (Early China had more than one culture; the one from the north China plains left the bulk of classical literature and is therefore considered to be the real "Chinese" culture.) The *po* appeared around the sixth century B.C., somewhat earlier than the *hun* (but the southern traditions were not written down until some centuries after the northern ones). As the northern Chinese expanded and had increasing contact with the southern people, the idea of the *hun* and the *po* met. By the third century B.C. (at the latest) they had fused into a single concept of the dual soul.

The *po* was the earth soul, characterized by *yin*. It appeared at the moment of conception. The *hun* was made of lighter stuff—*chi*—and was *yang*. (*Chi* is the "spirit" that animates everything and permeates the universe.) The *hun* came into existence at the moment of birth. The *po* soul was sustained by eating food, the *hun* soul by breathing *chi*. (Eating and breathing, the two essentials of life, were thus nicely accounted for.) The two souls separated on death and had different destinations.

The souls were also fundamentally materialistic. They were not immortal, they needed sustenance, and (to some extent) they depended upon the preservation of the body. Both souls eventually ceased to exist as individuals and dissolved back into their constituents: the *po* into earth and the *hun* into *chi*. The length of survival could be increased by feeding them through the sacrificial offerings (meat, rice, wine etc.) that were a part of the rites of ancestor worship. The preservation of the body was also thought to prevent the dissolution of the *po* soul, by keeping it with the body. This also prevented it from wandering and inflicting misfortune upon surviving relatives. The ancient Chinese, like the Egyptians, spent a great deal of effort in trying to prevent the decomposition of the body.

Each soul had its own afterlife. The *hun* went to heaven, according to the earliest ideas, and later to its own special underworld. The *po* either stayed with the body or went to an underworld. (There was no suggestion that these were places of reward or punishment.)

#### *Heaven*

Heaven is a very early Chinese notion. According to Shang Chinese (c.1700 to 1100 B.C.) ideas, Heaven was the dwelling place of God-on-High (Shang-di). Later, Heaven became an impartial governing principle, in scholarly philosophical theory anyway. Heaven was always a strictly hierarchical place, and its bureaucracy developed in pace with that of the earthly Chinese government. (Given that the Chinese government has been characterized by

bureaucracy since its inception, it seems only natural that they should have ascribed the same characteristics to heaven and the underworld.)

According to Shang ideas, not all *hun* went to heaven—only those of the powerful were admitted (that is, those of earthly kings). The government of Heaven was responsible for overseeing human activities. There were (in its later development) four Departments: Fate, Longevity, Good Deeds, and Evil Deeds. Each Department kept detailed personal dossiers on all living people. If a person did enough good deeds, their dossier might be evaluated and transferred to the Department of Longevity (which might then grant them a longer life span). The records were updated on a daily basis and were subject to transfer from one Department to another. This record keeping was a major function of the celestial bureaucracy.

### *The Underworld of the Yellow Springs*

The idea of the Yellow Springs is also early, dating from the eighth century B.C. It was the destination of those *po* souls which did not stay with the body. It was a miserable place where souls were under the bondage of the Lord or Queen of the Earth. No doubt this was because the Yellow Springs faithfully reflected the hierarchical nature of the mortal world—if a person had a poor and miserable time while alive, they would have the same in the afterlife.

Life could be made easier for the *po* if it was provided with the necessary amenities: food, clothing, money, precious objects, and servants. These would be placed in the tomb by the surviving relatives. The servants (human and animal) were at first provided by immolating the actual servants of the deceased in the tomb, but with time (during the first half of the first millennium B.C.) this practice ended and inanimate representations of the attendants were placed in the tomb instead.

### *The Immortals and Mount Tai*

Other developments occurred during the second and first centuries B.C. One of these was the appearance of a new and truly immortal spirit—the *hsien*. A person became a *hsien* by cultivating the right esoteric practices. These spirits ascended to Heaven, and because the *hun* (being mortal) could not exist in the same place as the immortal *hsien*, the *hun* were summarily evicted.

This meant that a new home had to be found for the *hun*. Mount Tai (specifically the lower slopes, not the summit) suited the purpose. A new underworld was opened, presided over by the Lord of Mount Tai (who was already in existence and co-opted into the position). The Lord of Mount Tai was the grandson of the god of heaven, whereas the human Emperor was the Son of Heaven.

This underworld was not a hell—Mount Tai was second only to Heaven in the scheme of things. It too had a bureaucratic government, with the capital at Liang-fu. The power of this bureaucracy gradually expanded until it had the power to send to the mortal world for those souls whose allotted span of time on earth was up, according to the Register of Death.

A newly dead soul had to report to the capital and register. By the second century A.D., their conduct in life had become the subject of investigation. If the

soul refused to cooperate, it would be imprisoned and tortured (as was the practice in actual Chinese judicial practice). Mount Tai was for the *hun* only; the Lord of Mount Tai had no jurisdiction over the *po*.

The *po* souls continued to go to the Yellow Springs, which grew its own bureaucracy. The capital was at Gao-li and, as in Mount Tai, the dead soul was required to report there and register.

These ideas changed dramatically as Buddhism brought into China the idea of immortal souls, heaven and hell as opposing sites of reward and punishment, and the idea of reincarnation. Early translations of texts often rendered *niraya* (the Buddhist word for hell) as "the underworld prison in Mount Tai." These ideas changed Chinese conceptions of heaven and the afterlife, but the foreign ideas themselves were adapted to Chinese culture. In particular, the underworld bureaucracy remained intact (the Buddhist hell was administered by bureaucrats) and continued to be feature of popular Chinese tradition.

Taina Nieminen

#### FURTHER READING

(All available in the University of Queensland library.)

##### Main

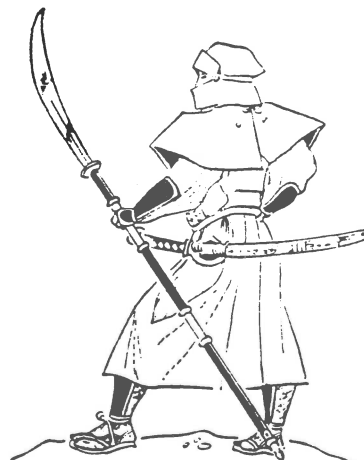
Yü Ying-shih, "'O Soul, Come Back!' A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 47 (1987): 363-395.

##### Supplementary

Yü Ying-shih, "New Evidence on the early Chinese conception of afterlife—a review article," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 41 no.1 (November 1981): 81-85.

Michael Loewe, *Chinese Ideas of Life and Death: Faith, Myth and Reason in the Han Period (202 B.C.-A.D. 220)*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982.

Joseph Needham, "The Cosmology of Early China," in Carmen Blacker and Michael Loewe (ed.), *Ancient Cosmologies*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975, pp.87-109.



## IDEAS FOR ENERGY BLASTERS IN CHAMPIONS

Of the four basic categories in Champions, Energy Blasters are probably the most varied and diverse group. In Champions, nearly any special effect can be applied to the power Energy Blast, and the advantages and disadvantages are sufficiently extensive to allow all manner of permutations to arise. Given this fact, there seems to be little point in providing ideas for different types of Energy Blast. Instead, I shall look at tactics that can be used by any intelligent Energy Blaster.

Comparing Energy Blasters to Bricks is an interesting exercise. Bricks have a large attack that cannot be used over any real distance, and high defenses to complement their offense. Energy Blasters can also have a large attack, often comparable with a Brick's punch (though not their haymaker), and one that can be used at range, but usually their defenses will not differ significantly from a Martial Artist's. Also, an Energy Blaster will probably be slower than a Martial Artist, and they may not have a great Dexterity and Speed advantage over a Brick. In short, an Energy Blaster combines great offensive potential with comparatively little defense. They can dish it out, but they can't take it.

The classical Energy Blaster conforms to this pattern. An excellent example is Cyclops of the Uncanny X-Men. He has an enormous attack (over 20d6) and "human-level" defenses. Cyclops can defeat an entire team by himself (e.g. he defeated all the other X-Men back in issue 175), but he can also lose to individuals. Most Energy Blasters will find themselves behaving in a similar manner. If they have reasonably high defenses they have an advantage, but it is not insurmountable. Movement powers, especially flight, increase their flexibility, especially against opponents who can't reach them, but flying also forces your character out into the open, where they can be a sitting duck. The best solution is to think and plan, just as Cyclops does.

As I have said before, all characters should try to plan and to outwit the opposition. Like Martial Artists, Energy Blasters lack the defense to sit there and take big hits when something goes wrong. Several guidelines quickly spring to mind:

**[1] If you can see them, they can see you. Furthermore, if you can shoot them, they can shoot you.**

This may seem perfectly obvious in theory, but in practice it is often overlooked. Clear lines of fire do cut both ways. The range of attack powers in Champions is huge, and limits are rarely reached in superhero battles. If anything, the players are often at a

disadvantage in combat, since they may not know about the bad guys' powers and may not pay careful attention to what they try and do, whereas the villains should have done their homework on the local superhero group (unless they are stupid). Often, the enemy will form a pattern, with Bricks in the front line, Martial Artists off to the side and Energy Blasters, Ego Weeds, and whatever else sitting at the back. Do not ignore these people at the back. They are often the most dangerous, because they will usually have the ranged attacks.

**[2] Don't look conspicuous, it draws fire.**

Flying characters please note: when you are in the air, everyone has a direct line of fire at you - upwards. Also, taking knockback can be a real pain. I have seen players move their characters to where all the supervillains can see them, demonstrate that they have dangerous attack powers, and then become upset when two or three of the enemy shoot them out of the sky (and out of that particular battle). An Energy Blaster is dangerous, and should be treated with caution by all but the most invulnerable of characters. Trying to remain inconspicuous is not a bad idea. If you wait for someone else to act before shooting at them, you greatly reduce the defensive measures they can take. Waiting is rarely a worse tactical choice than blindly charging in.

**[3] Teamwork is essential (it gives them someone else to shoot at).**

Use your team's strengths. Hide in the shadows (if they're not too crowded with skulking Martial Artists) or behind the invulnerable Bricks. Shoot the stunned and marginally unconscious among the enemy. Be willing to spread your energy blasts to hit several opponents at once. Knocking someone off their feet can sometimes be crucial, so be prepared to spread to hit the "dancers" that the Bricks can't touch. Try and take fliers, especially if no-one else can. Force the other side's Energy Blasters to go for cover if possible. Your offense makes you formidable, so try and use it to advantage, because once you're knocked out, that offensive power is useless. Be a team player - if only because, like a Martial Artist, you can't easily go it alone.

Energy Blasters can be very challenging to play. I would say that, if they are not invulnerable, an Energy Blaster is harder to play than a Martial Artist, because there is a greater emphasis on using your offensive powers, which are often much more flexible than the attacks of a Martial Artist, and because your offensive powers make you a more important target. The sheer variety of effect and flexibility of strategy make Energy Blasters an excellent vehicle for budding tacticians and scene-stealing showoffs. They are, in short, capable of being a lot of fun, as long as you can cope with being knocked out fairly often.

Gary Johnson

## COSMOLOGY AND ROLE PLAYING IN THE AFTERLIFE

*"If we all die, can we role play the afterlife?"*

One of my players asked me that once, when things were looking a trifle dangerous. Well, why not? Why should you have to give up your favourite character just because you're dead? I'll tell you why—most fantasy systems just aren't set up to handle it. The typical D&D heaven/hell/deity structure is a part of the cumbersome (to say the least) system of planes. (It's the result of a mix-and-match design strategy by TSR, and of GMs who take over the whole D&D/AD&D cosmology, perhaps because it's "official," perhaps because it's easiest.) Planes do give you a stack of new and exciting environments to play in—but for living high-level characters only! There is no provision in the system for actually role playing in the afterlife.

But if you like designing your own campaign world (and aren't stuck on "official" and "the rules say"), then why not give some thought to tailor-making your cosmology? Make the structure of the universe (the mortal world, heaven, hell, the role of the deities) fit in exactly with your conception of the campaign. What I'm going to do here is give some general directions on how to create your own plausible (internally consistent) fantasy universe. Probably the most clearly structured ideas about heaven, the underworld, and the afterlife are those from Chinese mythology, and I use them liberally. That is to say, you should read "Chinese Ideas of Heaven and the Afterlife," the third installment in the "Role Playing in Asian Settings" series.

*In the beginning there was E. Gary Gygax....*

Two types of people play D&D/AD&D: those who keep strictly to the rules and those who are more flexible. The suggestions I'm going to make involve minor and major changes to the D&D system. Some involve simply omitting parts of the corpus. Others involve actually changing the mechanics at a fairly basic level. Of course, it's up to you entirely which ones, if any, you choose to use.

### *First Questions*

You are now ready to create! Start with a clean slate. Take the *Manual of the Planes* and *Legends and Lore* and put them carefully to one side. Most of that stuff you won't be using, no matter how attractive it looks. You have to accept that in the interests of a consistent and reasonable campaign world, you have to be selective about what you put into it. It's your world that you're making, not TSR's.

First you need a working universe. Is the earth round or flat? If it is round, what keeps it up? Is it a part of a galaxy like ours? Does that mean you could fly to other planets? If it is flat, does it sit on turtle after turtle, all the way down? What stops the oceans from running out? HINT: a flat earth is easier to map. And if you bend light the right way it still looks as though you have a horizon—instead of light travelling in a straight line, it bends upwards as it moves away, hence the earth will appear to bend downwards. If you don't do this on a flat world, a mage can sit at the top a tower with a telescope and see to the end of the world.

Other fiddly questions are: what is the sun and how does it move? Does an ether fill all of space? What holds up the sky?

### *Deities*

Are there deities? Do they intervene (interfere) in mortal affairs? And do people believe in them? There are a few permutations: (1) deities exist, intervene in mortal affairs, and people believe that they do; (2) deities don't exist, but people think they do—if you pray for long enough, sooner or later it rains; (3) deities don't exist and people don't believe that they do; and (4) "The gods exist, but they live a long way away and aren't overly concerned with mortal doings." You also need to explain why they do or don't intervene in mortal affairs. And if they do intervene, why bad things still happen, or why more bad things don't.

HINT 1: Dump the never-ending pantheons found in *Legends and Lore* and issues of *Dragon*. Come up with your own (preferably small) set of deities and decide exactly what they do. Remember that people would worship more than one deity: they would pray to the sea deity before going on a sea voyage, pray to the merchant-banker deity before closing an important business transaction, and pray to the fertility deity when they want children.

HINT 2: Deities are—well—deities. Decide what the limits (if any) on their powers are. You may not easily be able to put them into game statistics—doesn't matter. If, however, you feel uncomfortable without specifying levels, hp, etc., have a look at *Dragon Lance*. There you will find real deities: 1000 hp, 40th/40th Magic-user/Cleric, does damage 1-1000hp.

Where do the deities live? In heaven? Do they have to share that with other beings (such as dead souls)?

### *Souls—Dead or Alive*

Who has souls? Humans? Elves? Orcs? Kobolds? Dolphins? Horses? Eagles? Frogs? Grasshoppers? This question can tie in with which beings are sentient, if you equate soul with sentience. What happens to souls when the being dies? Does it dissolve into the ether? Does it continue to exist eternally? HINT: Drop the distinction between human souls and Elven spirits. It's just there to give Elves some disadvantages in game mechanics.

The Chinese idea of the dual soul is an idea foreign to Westerners. It would be difficult to build any fantasy campaign around it. The Chinese idea of the mortality of the soul could be used, though, to bring an interesting twist into the game. The length of survival after death depends upon two things: feeding the dead soul (through sacrificial offerings) and the person themselves. Characters would want to ensure that should they die, someone will feed them while measures are taken to resurrect them. (If resurrection is not possible, slain characters might simply want time to exact vengeance on their killers—as wandering ghosts, of course.) To guarantee that someone will feed them generally means having children—who else can you trust! Also, the more powerful (= high level) the character at death, the longer the soul survives. Some changes would have to be made to certain spells. *Talk with Dead* spells would have new, absolute, limits. If the soul has dissolved into the ether, even a high level cleric can no longer contact them. The same with



resurrection spells: if the soul has dissolved, it is a final death. The character cannot be brought back to life.

Is there reincarnation? If reincarnation is not in the cosmological scheme of things in your campaign, then reincarnation spells shouldn't work. If there is reincarnation, then all souls get reincarnated. Your characters can continue playing the same soul in a different life. HINT: Trying to reconcile reincarnation with an afterlife in heaven and hell gets *really* messy.

### *Heaven and Hell*

Is there a heaven or hell or both? Do they exist on the same physical terms as the mortal world? Are they completely other-worldly? Or a bit of both? How do heroes (the kind who go to the underworld in search of their loved ones) get there?

HINT 1: dump the planes—all of them. Leaf through the *Manual of the Planes* if you need ideas for layout or appearance, but keep it consistent. (And dump the monsters that inhabit them. Their only function is to slow down boredom onset by making players guess about monster statistics. A good GM doesn't need that kind of artifice.)

HINT 2: The simplest thing is to have heaven above and hell below. If you dig down deep enough, you get to hell. Heaven is above the sky curtain and the stars are holes which let the light through. Is there only one level of each? (Mini-hint: seven and three are good magical numbers.)

Is hell a place of evil and punishment with heaven the seat of good and reward? Or is heaven reserved for deities? Is there just one underworld (where all the dead go, regardless of conduct or merit)? If the former, read Dante's *Inferno* (or better and easier, the modern SF version). If the latter, the Chinese ideas might be useful.

HINT 1: Hell as an evil place will be populated by evil creatures—demons. The differences between demons/devils/whatever else are at best pointless, adding little to the game, and at worst inconsistent and senseless. Coalesce all demon spawn into one category. (If you must have alignment, make them lawful, neutral, or chaotic individual variants.)

HINT 2: If the underworld is just a dim and dreary place populated with dead souls and their keepers, you may not even want demon spawn.

### *The Celestial Bureaucracy*

Who runs things? Does it happen according to impartial natural law? Do the deities personally oversee it? Or do they delegate? In any case, with so many mortals around, there's bound to be a bit of paperwork....

HINT: The Celestial Bureaucracy is guaranteed to drive your players crazy at some point.

The Chinese bureaucratic structure of the afterlife is the best model you can use for the celestial bureaucracy. The first adaptation you have to make is to ditch the dual soul concept. (You don't want to give your players a split-personality!) The second one is to make the souls immortal (unless you specially want mortal souls). Given

this, there are three models of the Chinese afterlife that you can choose from (*hun* souls turn into good souls and *po* souls into bad ones):

- (1) Good souls go to Heaven where they live with the deities. Bad souls go to the underworld (Yellow Springs or hell). Heaven has a bureaucracy, so does the underworld. HINT: Evil deities might live in the underworld.
- (2) Heaven is reserved for the deities. Bad people go to hell, as in (1). Good people have their own underworld (Mount Tai) which has its very own bureaucracy, making a total of three.
- (3) Heaven is reserved for the deities and there is only one underworld.

### *How the Bureaucracy Works*

The Celestial Bureaucracy is nominally in charge of everything. The Permanent Head is the deity responsible for law and order (or perhaps writing). There are either three or two Departments: Department of Heaven and Department(s) of the Underworld (Meritorious/Demeritorious). Each Department keeps its own dossiers on mortals and their actions, and they may swap information with each other (copies are always sent in triplicate, as one must go to the Central Registry and another to the Permanent Head).

The Central Registry of Death contains books on all souls: when they were born, what they have done in their life, and—most importantly—when they will die. These records are supposed to be continually updated.

Who staffs the bureaucracy? Important bureaucrats are probably minor deities. For the general clerks, you can borrow from *Beetlejuice*: people who have killed themselves are forced to become bureaucrats.

When a soul dies, it is called up in front of a tribunal with representatives from all Departments and its life judged. Judgment determines to which afterlife the soul is sent, and whether any special treatment is warranted. (Some bureaucrats may be influenced by bribery or blackmail.)

If a soul is scheduled to die and doesn't show up, the Central Registry will empower its Collection Agency to retrieve said errant soul. They have been known to make mistakes. ("It's not my time yet, honest!")

### *Role Playing with the Celestial Bureaucracy*

There are a number of situations in which the players are likely to cross the bureaucracy:

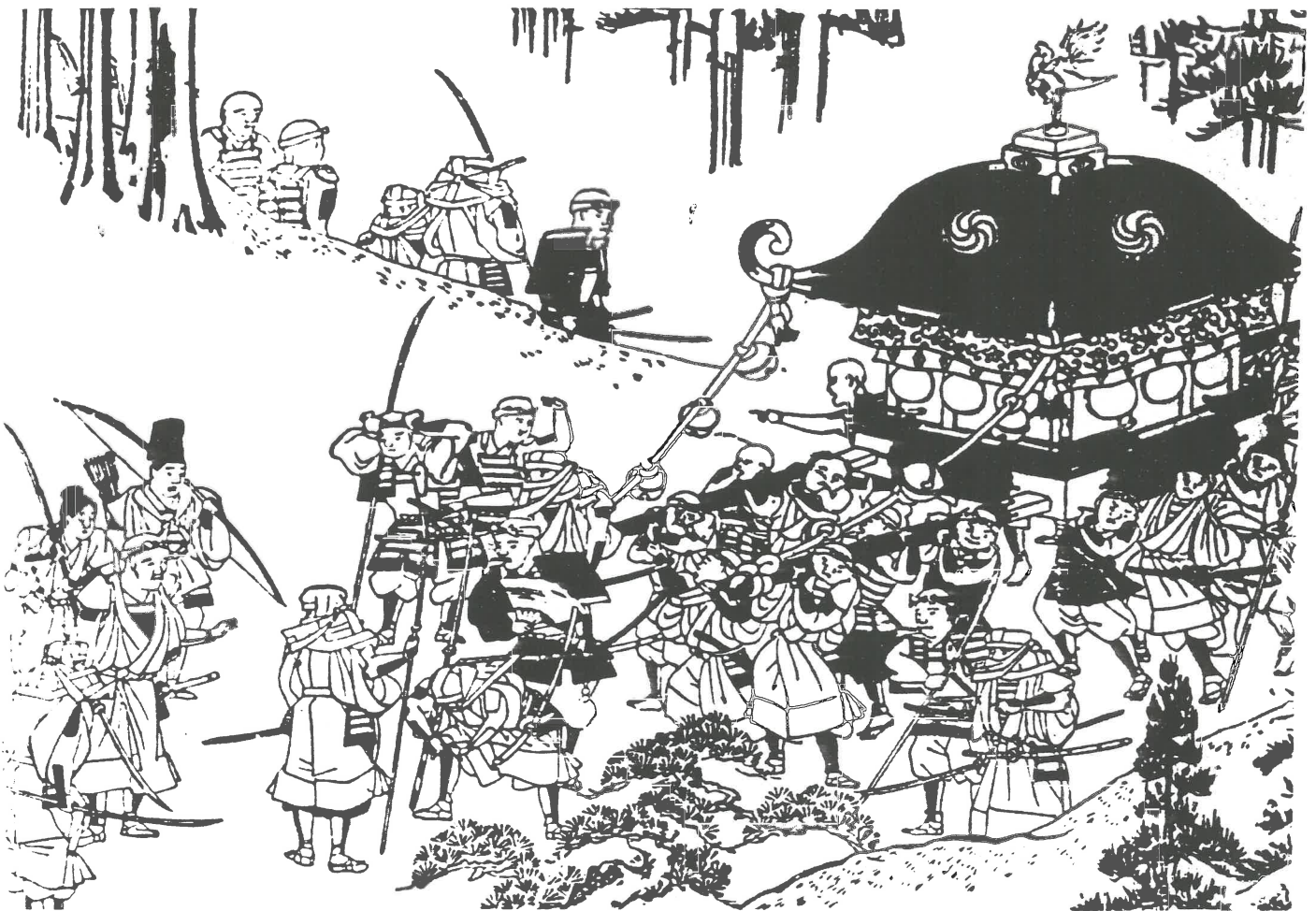
- (1) The character dies and comes up in front of the tribunal.
- (2) The character is supposed to die, but doesn't and tries to evade the Collection Agency.
- (3) The Collection Agency makes a genuine mistake. (Role play before or after or both.)

- (4) The character dies and other characters try a *Raise Dead* spell. (They have to convince the bureaucracy to let the dead soul go.)
- (5) Live characters descend into the underworld (or ascend into heaven) for any purpose. (Perhaps to physically retrieve a comrade, if that is the way in which *Raise Dead* spells work.)
- (6) Live characters try to tamper with the Central Registry to alter their dates of death and give themselves a longer lifespan.

Like all bureaucracies, the main function of the Celestial Bureaucracy is to shuffle paper and to obstruct anyone who tries to evade the system. They are a formidable adversary and only extremely high-level players should take them on. The average bureaucrat probably has about 10 HD, no normal damage, special attack: immobilizes character with monotonous droning while forcing them to fill out form Z35A/67-B2 in triplicate (with a blunt lead pencil).

You never know, role playing in the afterlife could turn out be more epic than dragons and bandits ever were.

Taina Nieminen



## Claws of Bagh Nakh

### Figures and Fiends

Figures: Some would say that brutal, fist-studded, blast-punctuated super-combat is the heart and soul of Champions. Some players even seem to wither away if deprived of their weekly dose of (fantasy) steroid-enhanced violence. So thus our battlefields, being so very important, should be made as spectacular and attractive as possible. How? Try using figures! (For both characters and scenery.) Even if you're not a violence-head, you have to admit that it might look nice. And most importantly, it will perform very useful bookkeeping, namely keeping track of where everybody and everything is. Figures won't do this automatically; you have to make them do it for you. You will need: something to put your figures on, something to tell distances, and recognizable figures.

What you put your figures on depends on where you play; if you play at a large table, it will probably have room for you to put your figures. The available surface will affect our choice of scale to use, as we must be able to fit enough "scale distance" into our space. How much do we need? Well, how big is a Champions fight? Energy blasters will want to stay a safe distance from their foe, but probably want to stay within about 20" to avoid those pesky range mods. Knockback can move people about by 10" at a time. So if we make sure that we have about 24" by 24" available, we won't be too far wrong. These inches are Champions scale inches, but in the old traditions of D&D and wargaming, the idea is that we use them as real inches on our tabletop. Do you have 2 feet by 2 feet available space? Otherwise, we will have to change our scale, and use maybe 1cm = 1 Champions inch, or if we have lots of space, even 5cm = 1 Champions inch.

Once we know what our scale will be, we can find out what size figures we will use. Champions characters are (roughly) 1" tall. (Though at 2m, this is a bit on the tall side.) So our figures should be about 1" tall. Old time D&Ders will recognize this as their 25mm scale. (D&D characters are a strange size; in D&D, 1" = 10 feet, and as the typical 25mm D&D figure is about 28-30mm tall...) Figures

of this size are readily available. They will either be called 25mm scale or 1/72 scale. 1/76 figures will also be close to the same size. You could also use HO scale (ie railway figures, or 20mm scale). If you are not using 1" = 1 Champions inch, you will use figures of some other size, such as 15mm, 54mm (1/35), or even 1/24 scale. Even if you use 25mm, you might want some larger and smaller figures, to use for characters with growth/shrinking, or to use for giant purple robots. You can spend lots of money on lead figures or you can buy really cheap plastic figures, such as those multicoloured 25mm cowboys and indians. With a scalpel and a bit of paint, they can even look like superheroes. Look around, buy any good cheap figures, and keep an eye out for anything that might work. Don't neglect scenery! Look for cars, tanks, alien spacecraft, trees, anything that might appear on your battleground.

Hint: if you use 25mm, get an inch tape measure. Mark the range modifiers on it. It'll save you time in the long run.

Next hint: your figures do not have to look like your characters exactly. If only one character has a mostly blue costume, and only one figure is blue, it can't be readily mistaken for anybody else.

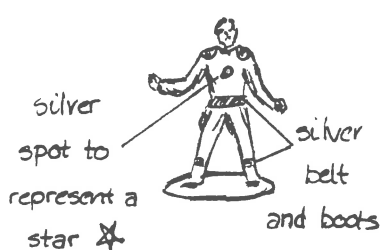
Don't be afraid to get fancy. Make a permanent floor plan of the superteam's HQ. Put low walls in if you want. If you can get hold of a 1/72 Hind-D gunship, just imagine the player's reaction when it flies round a skyscraper and shoots at them, and you can sit the model there on the table.

Fiends: Get your plastic cowboys, get a scalpel or hobby knife. Cut off the guns and hats. Add some colour, with a nikko pen if lazy, paint if you want to do it properly. Result: tranformation!

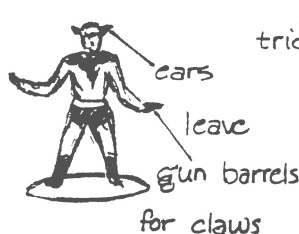


\*Cut off hat and guns

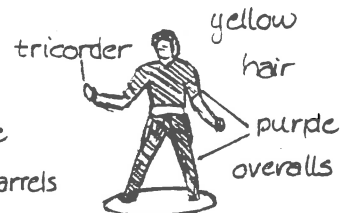
"Original figure"



blue figure makes  
"Southern Star"



yellow figure makes  
"Wolverine"



green figure makes  
"Brainiac V"

# BALKAN FRONT - AN ANALYSIS

by JACK FORD

Balkan Front (B.F.) is the first full Europa-system game to be produced by Game Research Design (G.R.D.). Previously Europa games had been published by Game Designer's Workshop (G.D.W.), but when GDW gave up on their divisional-level simulation of World War II, GRD stepped in to continue the game system. Since Balkan Front, GRD has published First to Fight (Poland 1939) and Winter War (Russia vs Finland 1940).

B.F. is a simulation of the Italian/German campaign in Greece, Crete and Yugoslavia from November 1940 to August 1941 (20 turns). B.F. is a re-issue of GDW's. Marita-Merkur, but in many ways it is a totally new game, especially as it has new political rules which represent the madness that was (and still is) Balkan's politics. Represented in the game are air and army units for Greece, Yugoslavia, British Empire, Italy, Albania, Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

## GERMAN ASSISTANCE

Victory is through the accumulation of points, and the way points are won or lost dictate the strategies employed by the Allied or Axis player. German assistance is available to the Italian army in Albania for a possible 12 turns (December 1 to April II turns). Five regimental equivalent per turn (RE) are available to Italy if there are no British army units on mainland Greece, but if the British do land on Greece, this assistance increases to 10 REs. Thus a maximum of 120 RE or 60 RE of German assistance are available to the Italians, but such assistance reduces the 2 German armies that are allotted to invade Yugoslavia later in the game. As German 2nd Army contains 40½ RE of units and 1st Panzer Group contains 24½ RE of units plus 15 air units then Italy is unable to benefit from the maximum 120 RE available if the British do not land on Greece. As well Italy has a problem in that the majority of the units that can be drawn from the 2 German armies are combat motorised which count as double their RE size for the assistance rules, while the air units each cost 2 RE for assistance. As Albania is almost all mountain hexes and these hexes are prohibited terrain (except on roads) for motorised or artillery units during winter turns then they are not much use as German assistance. Albania is likely to suffer winter for up to 7 of the 12 turns of possible German assistance, then the weather almost ensures that Italy chooses the 41 RE of non-motorised/artillery units left in 2nd Army/1st Panzer Group. The 15 air units would provide 30 RE of assistance, while the 24 RE of motorised or artillery units provide 48 RE of assistance. Thus a total of 113 RE of assistance in cost terms can be sent to help out in Albania, but they all cost a victory point, so German Assistance could give - 113 victory points to the Axis player, - not really an option.

The Axis player usually takes a minimum or no German assistance, while grimly holding out against Greek attacks in Albania, until such time (turns 10,11 or 12) when German intervenes, and invades Yugoslavia and Greece. Then the Axis player goes berserk, finally ending up facing a possible costly invasion of Crete.

### YUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslavia is a tricky situation for both players. It is a hopeless place to defend for the Allies, but it can cause some costly losses for the Axis player, if it is invaded. Although the Axis player does not score any victory points for destroying Greek or Yugoslav ground units, the same does not apply to their air units, and Yugoslavia has 6 air units that could provide 18 victory points for the Axis player. To decide whether Yugoslavia becomes an Allied, Axis or Neutral power, the Axis player must roll a dice before the turn that Germany intervenes. As Germany can only intervene in the Balkans on the first clear weather turn in 1941, which is March II (turn 10) or at the latest April II (turn 12), then the Axis player must choose to roll the dice on the turn before any of these three turns. If the Axis player doesn't roll on March I (turn 9) he/she might be taking a chance that Yugoslavia stays neutral (therefore cannot be invaded), which is the result if the Axis player fails to roll for Yugoslavia before Germany intervenes in the Balkans. Depending on when the dice roll for Yugoslavia is made and when Germany intervenes, Yugoslavia will lack at least its first turn and up to its third turn of mobilisation before it is invaded.

### WITHDRAWAL

Germany must withdraw most of its forces from the Balkans in order to prepare for the invasion of Russia. As intervention costs the Axis player - 12 victory points, he/she does not want to be further penalised by not withdrawing German units on time, Turn 13 (May I) is when German withdrawal must occur without incurring penalty victory points. Thus as the earliest that Germany can intervene is Turn 10 (March II) and the latest is Turn 12 (April II). German forces can be fully used in the Balkans for between 4 or 2 turns. An extra turn of May II costs -10 victory points.

Withdrawal requires the removal of the 43½ RE of motorised units, 66 RE of non-motorised units and 8 air units (3 fighters, 2 bombers and 2 dive bombers plus 2 others). On Turn 15 (June I) Germany must withdraw a further 5 air units (except gliders and transport planes). Thus by Turn 13 (May I) the Axis player has only 10 German non-motorised diversions and 7 fighter, 7 bomber, 7 dive-bomber, 12 transport and 1 glider units left. By Turn 15 (June I) the German army transport planes and glider units are still but 5 of the fighter, bomber and dive-bomber units must go.

## OCCUPATION

The Axis must garrison captured cities or lose 2 victory points per city. Yugoslavia has 8 reference cities that require 8 RE of Axis occupation garrisons, while Greece has 6 reference cities requiring 6 RE of Axis garrisons. Yugoslavia has 3 dot/hex cities requiring 9 RE of Axis garrisons while Greece has 2 dot/hex cities requiring 6 RE of Axis garrisons. As Hungary can provide 4 RE of garrisons in Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria could garrison 6 RE in Greece, which accounts for 10 RE of the 29 RE required for Axis garrisons, which means that 19 RE or 6 1/3 German or Italian diversions must be used up as garrisons.

Thus as Hungarian and Bulgarian units have limited operational areas, after Turn 12 (April II), the Allied player only has to hold onto Athens (for the Greek government victory points) and fight off all the Italian forces and 30 RE of German units (of which 16 RE could be in garrisons).

## REPLACEMENTS

The Allied player receives a total of 7 mountain replacement points which can be used to rebuild anything other than motorised, cavalry, artillery, anti-aircraft or engineer units. They are best spent on rebuilding the two 3-2-8 mountain regiments the 5th mountain regiment.

The Axis player receives 10 infantry, 3 mountain, 2 armoured and 2 air (all Italian) replacement points. These points cannot be used to rebuild cavalry, artillery, anti-aircraft, engineer or marine units, therefore losses of these kind of units should be kept to a minimum.

## Hagar





## The Saga of El-Corn

Many have been the tales of the great blades blessed by Gnosis, God of Learning, but none are greater than the tale told of the ancient heroine Shanna, who placed a holy sword blessed by Gnosis into the heart of the three-headed dragon that guarded the underworld and then proceeded therein. This is not that story.

For Shanna was not the only mortal to venture into the underworld and return alive. Very recently a party of seven elves, humans and half-humans ventured deep into the underworld to foil the plots of demons and to rescue the King of the Elven homelands. And with them was borne El-Corn who carried out the will of Gnosis deep in the heartland of demons. This then, is El-Corns Story....

I was but a young sword, newly blessed and placed in the care of the elf-King. I was eager for some great paladin of Gnosis to bear me into battle, a paragon of virtue, a master tactician, an upholder of all great Elven traditions who would use me to rid this world of evil. Well, the fates have decreed that events have a tendency of not turning out the way we wish, and this sadly was the case.

You see, the King had been kidnapped by demons, and his daughter took it upon herself to seek out the nearest adventurers to go to his rescue. She wished to aid them any way she could, and bade each of them take any two magical items they wished. So it was that I was seized up by a red-haired muscle-bound human named Kahn. Kahn's first act was to celebrate his good fortune and display his courtly etiquette by sampling some of the fine elven wine. Some insignificant time later, he was removed from court by his companions, who seemed somewhat unsurprised at his behaviour.

Nevertheless, it is not a blade's place to criticise, and I waited in the hope that things would improve. Once we engaged in battle I would discover what kind of a warrior had chosen me. This soon occurred in the wilderness to the north, where the party had travelled towards the nearest entrance to the underworld.

It was night (of course) when the attack occurred. The dogs started a fearful commotion, and I had just spied the two on watch moving quietly through the undergrowth towards our attackers when Kahn awoke. "I am Kahn!" he cried aloud, and after a moments thought he added "and this blade is El-Corn!". Thus I was named and was still quivering in disgust when Kahn seized me up and bounded through the woods towards our attackers. Of course the orcs immediately turned and ran and it was only due to the castings of our magic-users that we captured any at all.

Kahn's first action upon returning to the camp was to declare the captured orcs his prisoners and therefore under his protection. This made questioning impossible until Kahn was led away for the others to have free rein. Eventually a plan was made, the orcs would lead us to their fort and we would enter in the disguise of being their prisoners. Two of our magic-users would follow invisibly and the druid would assume the shape of a wolf.

We reached the castle in a few days and after a brief conversation in orcish (which none of us understood) we were admitted. We were soon in the throne room facing two ladies, one drow, one human, and about a score of crossbow-armed orcs. Platonius, our cleric of Gnosis, explained that we wished to enter the underworld which amused them greatly. We were escorted to a tunnel leading downward and told to be sure to greet the queen of the drow, Bathekisis. We were ushered through a great iron gate, and when it closed behind us, there was nothing but solid rock.

Then on it was but walking for days. Eventually we came across a great three-headed dragon. Kahn wished to charge it but was held back by Platonius. The spell-casters then quickly divined that it was an illusion, and Kahn proceeded to kill it. And then we sighted the drow's castle at the base of a great sloping pit.

The plan was to approach it silently, but Arcane did slip and fall to the bottom with a mighty clang. Kahn ran to her aid and the two were accosted by some drow guards. I

quivered in my sheath in eagerness to slay them, but they admired his muscles and Kahn was bashful and did nothing.

So it was that four of us did enter the drow castle, while those of us that could hide outside did. Bathekisis demanded of Platonius his mission and he refused to answer. So she ordered her spell-casters to attack Kahn until Platonius answered and still he refused. It took five fireballs to kill Kahn, and he slew a great many drow. I was almost sorry to watch him die. Then Platonius told all to the queen and she slew us all anyway.

My next waking experience occurred in the waiting room of the heavenly bureaucracy. It appeared that most of us that had died were not fated to die then, and were to be called up before a tribunal for judgement. I had thought I might be rid of Kahn but no. He swept me up with a delighted cry much to the annoyance of several bureaucrats, apparently Kahn couldn't write and they had been forced to fill out his forms for him.

Eventually our three live companions found their way past the drow castle, sneaked invisibly past the dragon (cheats!) and rejoined us. All was explained and we were ushered into the underworld where the demons and dead souls were.

Contrary to popular legend, the underworld is not a place of torment, unless that torment is boredom. Arcane was lost to us in that place, she just seemed to give up and disappear. It was on the second level that we found excitement.

There was a gathering of many armed demons at a castle, and Platonius went forth and accosted three, explaining that we were on official business from the heavenly bureaucracy. They attacked and he ran. Kahn leapt out and I slew one, the spellcasters slew the others. We decided to descend.

On the fourth level we met some demons who appeared to recognise our authority, and they wished to escort us to their castle. But they were an arrogant lot and did not wish to let our spellcasters rest (to regain their spells). One took out a whip and I slew him. Two more were blasted down by lightning and the last was very co-operative. Basically, the second level was going to join with the drow to invade the heavenly bureaucracy, and level four would then take them over while level two was still weak. Level four would beat them with the might of its mortal wizards. We decided to proceed to the castle.

Once there, we met the Demon-Lord, who was very interested in our wizards as live souls are very rare in the underworld. After some discussion, we arranged to meet the wizards he had collected. The Elf-King was there and anxious to escape. But he was the only one, the others had all been promised parts of the world to rule and were willing to co-operate with the Demon-Lord. Fortunately, the parts of the world they had been promised overlapped and the others decided to spread suspicion and dissension among them so that we could escape during the resulting conflict. But Kahn and I decided to provide a better distraction.

With one kick Kahn broke down the doors to the throne room. The Demon-Lord was there, with many wands of death-magic, but we were both dead already. "I am Kahn!" Kahn cried, "and this blade is El-Corn!" And thus battle was joined.

Truly, it was long and bloody, and at the end of it Kahn could barely stand. But I had been blessed by Gnosis and the Demon-Lord could not survive my holy strength. Our companions watched on in awe as Kahn and the Demon-Lord beat each other back and forth across the throne room. But at last Kahn beheaded the Demon-Lord and it was done. The clerics poured bucketfuls of holy water over the corpse just to make sure.

We retreated from the castle hurriedly, as bits were falling off as the argument between various wizards progressed. The Elf-King then used his wizard powers to teleport us to the ninth level. There we climbed down through the last gate and entered a place where down turned into up. We emerged on a mountainside, the sky was blue, the birds were singing and Kahn had returned to life. Ah well, perhaps another time.

