The Queensland Wargamer
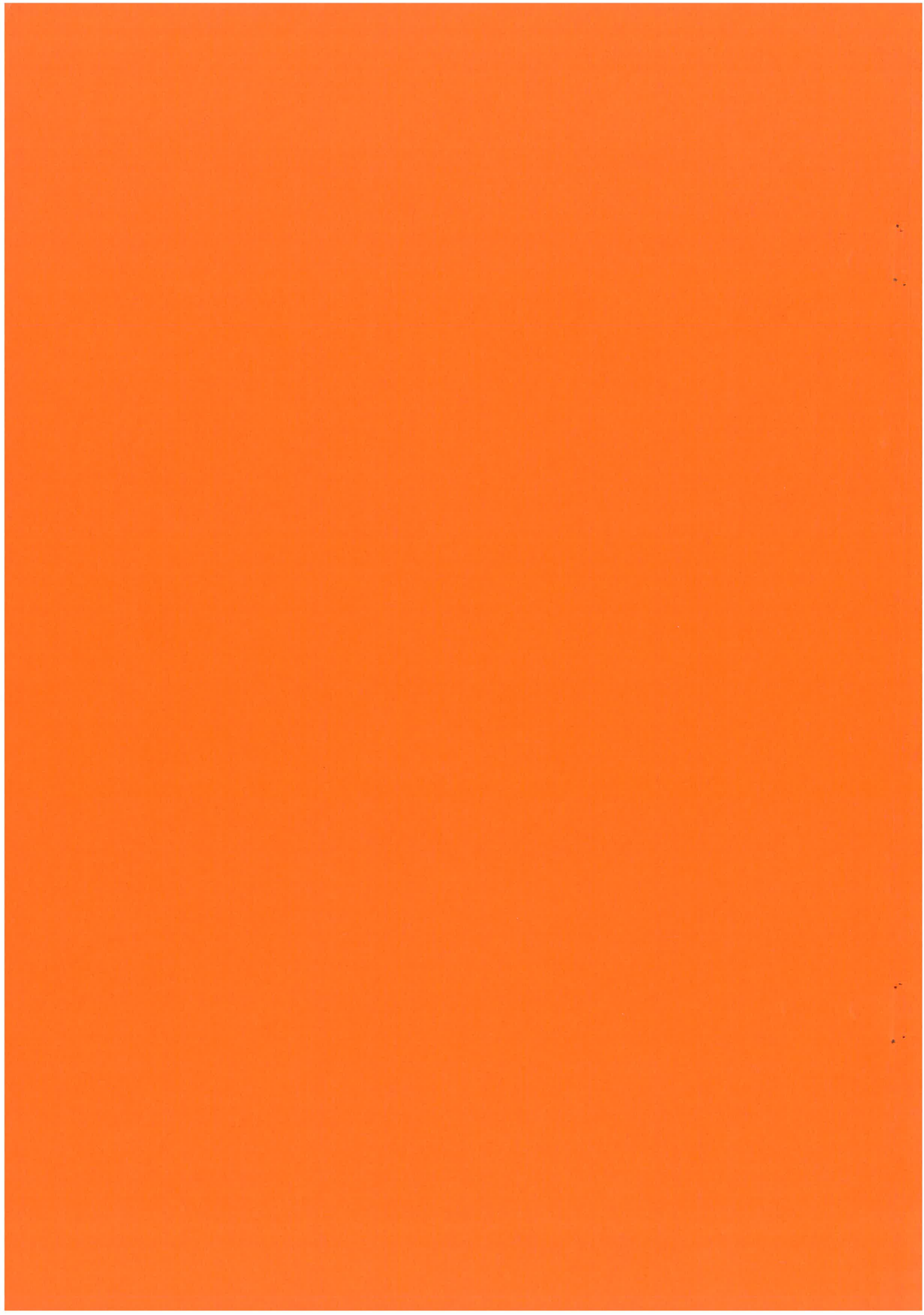
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Graeme McCarthy, 1991

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In this issue

Editor

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Editorial

Computer games have been with us for some time now. Even the simplest of them take away much of the burden of preparing and maintaining the game from us. Describing the environment, resolving conflict, adjusting the map, moving the props: computers do an awful lot of the boring stuff, letting you (the user) go crazy and have fun. It's even possible to play some games with other players on other computers: see the review of Diablo in this issue for some of Julian Smith's experiences of multi-player Net games.

So, the computer is the GM, you are the player; it provides a service, you reap the benefit. No complicating problems like the GM needing to get something out of running the game, right? Right. Does this mean that computers are going to replace GMs? Hell, no! Aside from the intrinsic enjoyment some of us derive from GMing, the biggest obstacle to computer GMs replacing human GMs is the absence of creativity.

There are some things computers do much better than us: solving complicated equations, for instance, or calculating how many of the eighty-six Orcs hit this round. However, computers can't improvise. They may have many options programmed into them, but you simply can't cover everything that someone might think up on the fly. Anyone remember those old text games where you had to figure out what you could and couldn't do? The endless hours of frustration trying to think of ways to ford the stream instead of paying all your money and then some to the Black Knight?

Until computers are capable of creative thought, they won't be capable of being proper role-playing GMs. If sentient computers are developed some time in the far distant future, then the provider-user dynamic that currently makes them such an attractive proposition to some people will have to change. As some of our contributers this issue have noted, players should be courteous towards their GMs; GM are not here merely to provide a service.

Enough pontificating. The deadline for the next Wargamer is Friday July 18. We are waiting for your contribution. Start writing now! You've only got two months.

Oh, before I go: does everyone know that Wizards of the Coast are buying out T.S.R.?

Gary Johnson

Writing for the Wargamer

1 The Queensland Wargamer is a forum for members of QUGS to express their views and ideas on gaming. Any contributions that are in some way related to any form of gaming will be considered: reviews, rules suggestions, short stories, discussions of games or gaming, articles about history, mythology, philosophy, or whatever else tickles your fancy. We always need filler artwork for the Wargamer, so if any of you are artists, please consider helping out. Letters to the Editor are welcomed.

2 You will not be reimbursed for any contributions you make to the Wargamer. Sorry.

3 We are required by Clubs and Societies to meet some standards set by the Student Union. Sexist, racist and homophobic material is unacceptable, and will not pass the examination each Wargamer undergoes before being printed. Non-inclusive language (i.e. the generic "he") comes under this prohibition. Current editorial policy is to avoid sentence structures that require the generic first person (by recasting the sentence in the plural and by using proper nouns) and to alternate between "she" and "he".

4 The Wargamer is not the place to insult other people. Libelling and defaming people is not acceptable, and such material will not be printed.

5 If you submit material that debates or takes issue with points raised by other people, whether in the Wargamer or elsewhere, the Editor will extend the right of reply to the other party.

6 After you submit written material, it will be reviewed by the Editor, typed and formatted, and then returned to you if there are substantial or potentially contentious revisions. You can, if you want, revise this edited article, and resubmit it. This process will go on until both you and the Editor are satisfied with the article (or willing to let what's left of it see print). This could take a while, so please submit material well before the published deadlines for each issue of the Wargamer if at all possible.

7 The Editor may ask other people to review your submission, particularly if the submission discusses something the Editor is unfamiliar with or cannot fairly evaluate.

8 You are entitled to withdraw your submission at any point up to the time the Wargamer is submitted to Clubs and Societies for review (usually less than a week before printing). You retain copyright over anything you submit and anything that sees print.

The Magic Within Us

Aaron Rubin

As a devotee to Dungeons and Dragons for over half my life, perhaps the thing that bothered me most about it has been the magic system. Fantasy literature is full of spell-slinging heroes and villains, but never once have I read a good book where the mage had to memorize her spells every morning, only to have them wiped clean from her mind when she cast them. No sane warlock would ever leave the dubious comfort of his citadel! Thus I offer budding magi alternate spellcasting rules.

Spellcasting

Although I have heard the idea of spell points rubbished before, they seem the most efficient way of setting up this system, requiring minimal record keeping (less than the orthodox system) and allowing new players to pick up the system quickly.

To determine the mage's pool of spellpoints to distribute, calculate the total number of spell levels she could normally cast. For example, Wanda, a fifth level mage, could normally cast 3 first level spells (3), 2 second level spells (4) and 1 third level spell (3). She thus has a total of 10 spell points (3+4+3) to distribute.

These points must now be distributed amongst the 8 schools of magic: Alteration, Abjuration, Illusion, Divination (*all*, not just greater), Necromancy, Conjuration, Invocation and Enchantment. The result gives the number of *spell levels* the wizard may cast from that school on a given day. Any spell which the mage knows may be cast, so long as he has enough spell points of that type left.

Note that, no matter how many spell points she has in a school, a wizard cannot learn a spell of a level higher that she normally would be able to. Furthermore, the allocation of points to a school is irrevocable.

For example, Fly, a third level alteration spell, will cost 3 alteration points. Simple eh?

All spell points are recovered after the standard 8 hours of undisturbed rest. If the spell-slinger doesn't get this, the DM might allow her to have a percentage of her spellpoints—or might not. Furthermore, the mage does not need to study his spellbook each morning, and thus can leave the damn thing at home. As an option, the DM might require the wizard to study the book for 1 to 3 days every month, just to brush up on unused spells.

Any spell which belongs to more than one school can be cast using either type of spell point, but I favor the explanation that there are two separate ways of casting the spell: the mage knows one, unless she specifically learns both.

One other idea I had (really a rip-off from Ars Magica) is to have *vis*, or pure physical magic of different types found in supernatural areas. This could be used by the mage as spell points. For example, the wings of a faerie might contain 3 points of enchantment *vis*, and could be used to cast any 3rd level enchantment spell the mage knows.

General mages vs. Specialists

The specialist mage gains a generous number of benefits that his generalist counterpart does not have. I disallow these, but it is not strictly necessary under these rules.

General mages have a special 'school' they can put their points into—the 'general' school. Points in this category can be used to cast *any* spell. The catch is that every point put into this category comes at the cost of two points from the pool. Thus flexibility is gained at the expense of overall power.

Specialists get a 50% bonus to the points they put into their specialist school (i.e. one bonus point for every two they put in) as compensation for sacrificing the other schools.

Other types of mage (e.g. wild mages, elementalists, shadow mages, etc.) get a new category of spell points for their speciality. They also receive the 50% bonus. My group briefly tried a wild mage, and I let him 'burn' one of his daily wild magic points to get a random point from another school.

Conclusion

This system, I believe, better approximates the high fantasy magic we are used to. No more will Gandalf be unable to magically light his pipe because he has not memorized that cantrip! I also think that having strengths and weaknesses in various schools adds flavour to a character, and does a better job of describing its capability in various arts. The system has been playtested a little, and seems to result in more flexibility and fun, but not really more powerful wizards. I suggest that the maximum number of spells learnable at each level rule (as per Intelligence tables) be strictly enforced to keep it this way.

I am keen to refine these rules, so anyone who has any comments, criticisms, suggestions or whatever, please e-mail me at **s334391@student.uq.edu.au**.

Playing Hints and Advice

Peter Fordyce

Most of my hints and suggestions are fairly obvious. However, both new and old gamers often overlook or forget them. Hopefully, this will serve as a useful introduction or reminder, depending on your previous gaming experience.

Role-playing

- before you start playing in a game, find out the style of game (e.g. realistic, heroic, or cinematic).
- co-operate with the other players and the GM. Think about the other people you are with.
- if possible, warn the GM what your character plans to do in the future, so the GM can think about it. The GM is not your enemy!
- when making a character, start out with a character concept. It is easiest to use a person or fictional character as a model, and then modify it to meet your specific needs and the needs of the game (e.g. playing a spy like James Bond in ancient Rome will require some modifications to the basic character concept).
- work out why the character associates with the other characters. It's fine to have a great concept, but if it won't fit in, it's useless.
- make sure the GM approves of your character concept.
- don't let game mechanics dictate your character's actions. That is, have the character do what a real person would do, not what is the optimal choice according to the rules.

- keep player knowledge and character knowledge separate.

  Often you, the player, will know more about what is happening than your character does. For example, if the GMs talks to one player in a separate room, it doesn't mean that your character should become suspicious of the other player's character because the character is keeping secrets.

Other Gaming

These branches of gaming are usually competitive, and include such things as boardgames, wargames, play-by-mail games and card games. I found the article "George Baxter on Competitive Psychology" in #18 (Feb. 97) of the *Scrye Guide to Collectable Card Games* interesting, but most of the tips given there were dishonourable. Whether you use them or not depends on how much you want to win. My advice boils down to two points: plan ahead and have the initiative. Doing these things will let you

- have a focus for your play. Rather than working out how every unit/piece/card will be used individually,

you know what you have to do to keep to the plan.
- save time, since in many games you will be operating with a time limit.
- act rather than react. You can do what you want and plan to do, while the other players are forced to follow your lead and do what they don't want to do.

Let me share with you Machiavelli's description of a Spanish king, and his use of my two points.

"Ferdinand of Aragon ... has always planned and executed great things which have filled his subjects with wonder and admiration and have kept them preoccupied. One action has grown out of another with such rapidity that there never has been time in which people could quietly plot against him."

Go, and do likewise.

Finally, remember that you are playing a game. This isn't real life, but something you, and everyone else, is doing for fun. Don't take it so seriously that it stops being entertaining.

Dreamers

Hamish McKenzie

Introduction

Welcome to *Dreamers*, the first in the Tales of an Apocalyptic Earth series. You are about to embark on a journey which will take you to a world so similar to our own that it will scare you. Scare you because of its apparent likeness, but also because of its complete lack of similarity. Confused? You'll see ...

Imagine a world populated by ten billion people, each with one thing in common: their mutual lack of imagination, creativity and ability to dream. This is the world of *Dreamers*. But don't let this put you off, we've only just begun.

Dreamers is set in a world where humankind as a whole has undergone some strange transformation that has destroyed most people's ability to imagine and to dream. However, there is a light that glows dimly in this vast sea of darkness. This light is kept alive by a small, very small, group of people collectively known as the dreamers. The dreamers are a people who have, somehow, managed to not only retain their creativity and imaginative prowess, but also magnify it.

Dreamers is a role-playing game of intrigue, romance, horror, imagination and hope, where you take on the role of one of these dreamers, and battle to keep yourself from losing your imagination, sanity, and your life. In the process, you will discover many universal truths, which will help you in your quest to revive the human race's imagination, and possibly aid you in your eternal struggle against the powerful Seconanti, the arch-enemy of dreamerkind.

Your Guide, Mendelson

Greetings, my name is Mendelson. The document you now hold before you comes as a compilation of some of the musings done by two of the world's greatest beings. The first is a brief discussion of the realities of dreamerkind, written by the masterful Anaheim Belmont. Anaheim was undoubtedly the oldest dreamer ever to have lived, and unfortunately, he is no longer with us. He was recently found missing, presumably kidnapped by persons unknown. The next manuscript, written by him, was found hidden away in his archives, along with many of his other musings. It is by far the most insightful piece, and for this reason, you are holding it now. Remember while you read it that Anaheim is no longer with us, and he spent much of his life making our world an easier place to live in.

The second character is a famous Dragon who goes by the name of Morreidissian. Morreidissian lives in the dream realms, and has done so ever since the days of old, when dreamerkind and dragonkind once ruled the world. But first, I present to you, the famous Anaheim Belmont.

Upon Being Dreamer

We are the precursors of human civilization. I do not mean to boast, but for this reason, at least listen to, and think about my words, even if you do not care to take heed of them.

In the beginning, right at the start of the human species' existence on earth, there was no such thing as imagination and creativity. The only thing that existed was life. Eating and reproduction was all there was to live for. No one cared, of course, because they had not the ability to imagine anything greater. Basically, your species as you know it today did not exist.

Gradually, over the years, a few of our kind, the more intellectually gifted in particular, began to awaken to their own imaginative prowess, and more importantly, they began to dream. At first there were only a few of these dreamers, but eventually more and more began to appear. These special few could not only dream, but could also visit the realms of the imagination where ideas and imagination as a force, flow from.

The time came when suddenly these dreamers began to realize what was going on. They realized that they were different from the rest of the human race. They realized that they had awakened, while everyone else slept, and decided to explore their differences and this new awakened state of theirs so they could understand these differences. With their findings, they went on and taught the then unawakened humans to reach inward and find their own imagination and ability to dream. Through the techniques developed over those early years, the human race became almost completely awakened, and the world as it was back then became full of dreamer people. These people still exist, albeit barely, in your world today, and I am one of those people. This brief document you are now holding is one that has been compiled from the experiences of the last 200 years of my life. The story of

my people is tragic, but fascinating nonetheless. There are few of my kind who have knowledge of what I am about to relate to you, and this is one of the reasons for writing these words. I wish to educate not only my kind but hopefully also the rest of humanity, so that once again we may all dream in unison, and the world will again be whole.

During these early times, people discovered and created countless wonders of the world. Reality, as we know it only through our dreams, was theirs to control, create, and explore. This was essentially humankind's Garden of Eden.
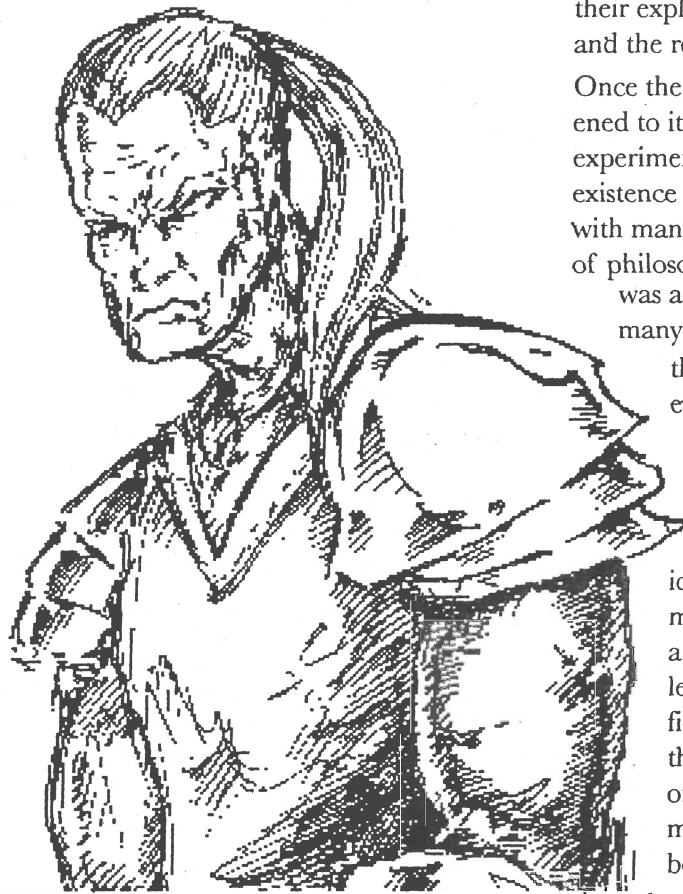
But unfortunately, this fantastical Garden of Eden was taken from the human race early on. The few humans who remained unawakened became restless, and began to seek a different truth. This is when the cold power of reason manifested itself. The reasoning prowess was easily discovered by these unawakened humans, and soon after this discovery came the downfall of the imagination. The awakened humans were rent from their Garden of Eden by this proverbial apple of reason, and thrust into a world of cold, pure, logical reasoning, where the imagination was the entertainment of children only.

After this event, the many dreamers that populated the world began to diminish. They did not completely lose their imagination and creativity: they retained some of their powers, and the human race as you know of it today was born.

With this small ounce of imaginative prowess, the human race advanced in its supposed knowledge of the world. People began to create

reasons for physical events, such as why certain things taste bitter, why stones fall to the ground, and so on. Eventually this lead to what you know of today as science.

The success of science was seen as huge, and indeed, there are many creations of science that impress even myself. With your feeble powers of reasoning and logic, you have managed to form such wondrous monuments and devices which you can utilise to help you take command of the nature in which you live. However, this command over nature pales in comparison to the power of the

imagination. This is the power that my kind wield, this is the power of the dreamers.

In many ways, the advent of science was one of the worst things that could have happened to humankind, but maybe it is also true that it was a necessary step in our mental and spiritual evolution.

Science's tool of the trade is pure

reason, with a little bit of guess-work mixed in. This tool, often, strongly opposes intuition and the imagination. It is my fond hope that by pursuing the dead end road of pure reason, you will discover that there must be something else to the world. This something is the imagination.

Science still has room for people's imagination. The disciplines of mathematics and physics are very imaginative sciences, but they are sciences which mix imagination with reasoning, which is a novel idea for those who realise it. In the end, however, they are doomed to fail in their explanations of the universe and the reality in which we reside.

Once the human race had awakened to its imagination, it began to experiment and think about its own existence and its origin. It came up with many ideas through the skills of philosophy and logic. Religion was a popular explanation for many things until the rise of the scientific method, and even after that point it remained strong for quite some time. People from different continents came up with many different ideas, and consequently, many different cultures arose. Legends of these legends are dismissed as fiction, and the creations of the over-active imaginations of many peasants), and mythology was born.Because of these, altogether artificial, creations, humankind in general was content with itself, and the world around it. It is my conviction that today, because humankind has been lulled, by itself, into this false sense of security, that the Slumber has occurred, and we dreamers have come about to be the only ones strong enough to support our own beliefs, and thus stay as we have always been.

To break the Slumber, and re-awaken all the humans on the earth once more, I believe that we must teach them how to think for themselves, and to teach them to make up their own beliefs and paradigms. By doing this, the Dreamlands can once again interact with our world, and imagination will once again rule the lands.

The factions are becoming a dangerous construct for the reason that they are allowing dreamers to rely on the thinking done by others. The factions allow dreamers to let beliefs be told to them instead of them discovering their own beliefs for themselves. This could lead to the downfall of dreamer society, just as has happened to the humans not half a century ago, during the Slumber.

Please beware of the factions and view them with caution, as they could be leading you to your demise. Freelance dreamers and freelance magic are both part of the true essence of being dreamer, so embrace them with haste and conviction.

I pray you take heed of these words, as they consist of my life's beliefs and understandings. Do not take them as gospel, as they could never be that, but do think about them, and what they imply. I hope that you will be able to find your own way to eidolon, and that your path their shall be short and simple.

Yours sincerely,
Anaheim Belmont

The second character is a famous Dragon who goes by the name of Morreidissian. Morreidissian lives in the dream realms, and has done so ever since the days of old, when dreamerkind and dragonkind once ruled the world. But first, I present to you, the famous Anaheim Belmont.

Anaheim was one of the greatest freelance dreamers in history. He founded a prominent minor faction, but drifted from it once he realized its futility. He then worked to try and unify the factions once he saw what the factional conflicts were doing to dreamer society. For this he is considered a God by many of the binders. Probably the greatest achievement of his life was his discovery of the dream realms.

But enough said. The list of his accomplishments continues, and if you are interested, I suggest you do some personal research into Anaheim's life.

Now to Morreidissian. As mentioned earlier, Morreidissian is a dragon who lives in the dream realms. The only known person ever to have spoken with a dragon of any kind anywhere was Anaheim Belmont, and this following script was recorded from what Anaheim could remember after he conducted an "interview" with Morreidissian. Keep in mind that this interview was conducted just before Anaheim's disappearance, and its contents are not fully understood. It is believed that the script was altered before it was found, and what follows is what was left, given word for word.

Tell me ... Dragon

Morreidissian: Ahh, look yonder, it is a human, or is it a dreamer? I have forgotten which tastes better, dreamer or human. It has been so long after all ...

Anaheim: I come here not to be eaten by you, dragon.

Morreidissian: And what makes you think that I shan't eat you?

Anaheim: I have the name of your darker half, dragon. If you wish to test me, then I suggest you take your best shot.

Morreidissian: Where would a feeble dreamer, which I presume you are as humans have nowhere near this much gumption, obtain the name of my darker side? It has been unsaid for over 2000 years.

Anaheim: Well, dragon, that is my secret. You are not the only cunning being in this foul cave.

Morreidissian: Enough of your feeble chatter. I have made my peace with my dark side—your threats are no longer amusing. Prepare yourself for death, brave one.

Anaheim: You may have made your peace with your dark side, but do you risk having that peace broken by the utterance of his name, and his reawakening? I think not. I too know the power of the Nemesis, whether you be dragon, dreamer or any other creature.

As I spoke the name of Morreidissian's Nemesis, he shrunk backwards into the cave, closed his eyes and roared. The shock threw me to the floor, and as I rose, I knew that I had command over a dragon. After a long while, Morreidissian raised his head, and spoke.

Morreidissian: I am humbled by the power you have, dreamer. It has been a long time since I have seen such power. The lengths you must have gone to, simply to obtain such information, humbles me. Your need must be great. I ask that before you leave, you at least tell how you discovered the name of my Dark One, so I can guard against such intrusion next time.

Anaheim: I shall do as you ask, Morreidissian.

Morreidissian: Thank you, you truly are noble. What is your desire, noble one?

Anaheim: I wish to discover the true nature of these creatures which we call the Seconanti. They have plagued the Earth, and there seems no escape from their wrath. The only hope for our kind is to discover the truth behind them. You are one of the oldest dragons alive, and, I have been lead to believe, the most knowledgeable. Tell me now, what you know of these creatures?

Morreidissian: The creatures you speak of come from lands you could not even begin to comprehend. They are an old people, and they seek new experiences. Your kind and theirs have a deep-rooted hatred of each other, as you have battled each other since before the universe ever existed. The true nature of them is complex. The only way you will ever comprehend the true nature of these Seconanti is to discover your own true nature, and from this, understanding and empathy will come. But forgiveness is something different. From forgiveness will come peace, and also the end of your pointless feud.

Anaheim: Tell me, dragon, why do we feud? What is the reason behind our hatred?

Morreidissian: This is something I think only your kind will be able to answer. Your kind and theirs. I am only a dragon, and my home is here. I have seen your people come and go from this Earthly realm, but I cannot be the judge of your personal irrationalities.
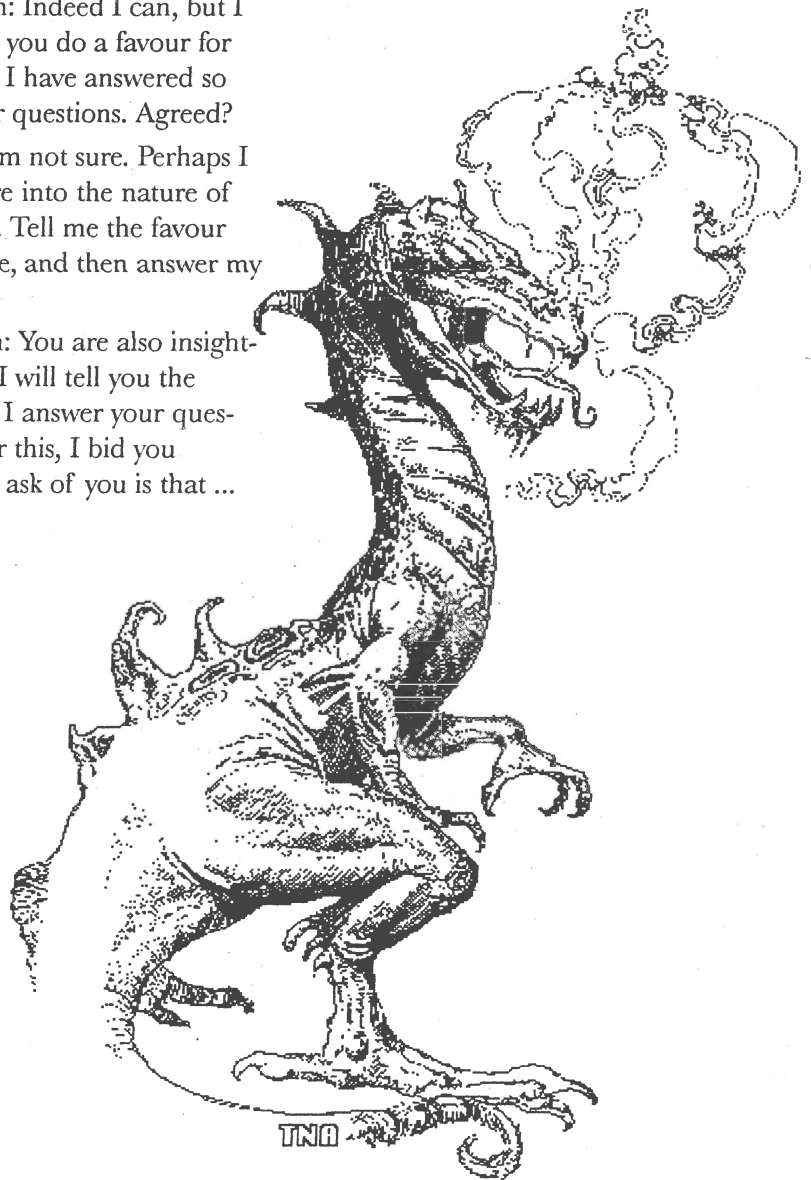
I did not understand exactly what the dragon had said, but I took it with me, so that I would be able to think about it in further detail.

Anaheim: Can you tell me what the world was like just after it was born?

Morreidissian: Indeed I can, but I must ask that you do a favour for me, now that I have answered so many of your questions. Agreed?

Anaheim: I am not sure. Perhaps I should inquire into the nature of such a favour. Tell me the favour you wish done, and then answer my question.

Morreidissian: You are also insightful, dreamer. I will tell you the favour before I answer your question, and after this, I bid you farewell. All I ask of you is that ...

This is all that exists of the script. The rest was torn away, and presumably destroyed. It is curious as to why it was torn off here. Some say that it was torn off here so that everyone would think that Anaheim disappeared because of the favour asked of him by Morreidissian, and will thus not suspect the Seconanti. Many simply say that he did disappear because of the favour. The simple truth is no one knows why or where Anaheim has gone. For now, all there is is speculation.

These are the two greatest documents, in my opinion, in the whole of dreamer history. Cherish them, as they are a large part of your history and heritage.

Mendelson.

Hamish is looking for people to review and play-test Dreamers. If you are interested, give him a call on 3870 2935.

Horses, a User's Guide

Marina Brooks

Okay, where do we start? Over the next few issues I will be giving advice and tips on on basic horse care, breeding, training, and so on. Let's face it,some of you role-players out there honestly would not know one end of a horse from another, and over the last two years as a role-player I've seen and heard role-players do some pretty ridiculous things with horses or other animals. In this issue I will just start with some basic points for you to follow. Before I start with that, I just want to let you know that I do have experience with horses: nineteen years of it to be precise. I've owned a couple of horses in that time as well. Let me emphasise that I do not claim to be an expert, just someone who is drawing from past experiences to give you some advice and information. I'll do my best.

Right, let's talk about some do's and don'ts of behaviour around horses. They can be gentle as you like, if they are treated well; if not,they can be extremely volatile animals. When you go to saddle a horse, approach the horse from a point where it can see you, especially if you and the horse are meeting each other for the first time. This way, the horse should stand still for you (assuming the horse has had some training and is tied to a post, a tree, or someone is holding it). Don't ever run towards one unless you have an extremely good reason for doing so. Otherwise, walk towards the horse in an even manner, because if you run towards the horse with anything that is in the least bit flappy and the horse does not know you or is not used to you, the flappy stuff will certainly give the horse good reason to shy away or bolt from you. Which would not be good, especially if you wish to get away in a hurry.
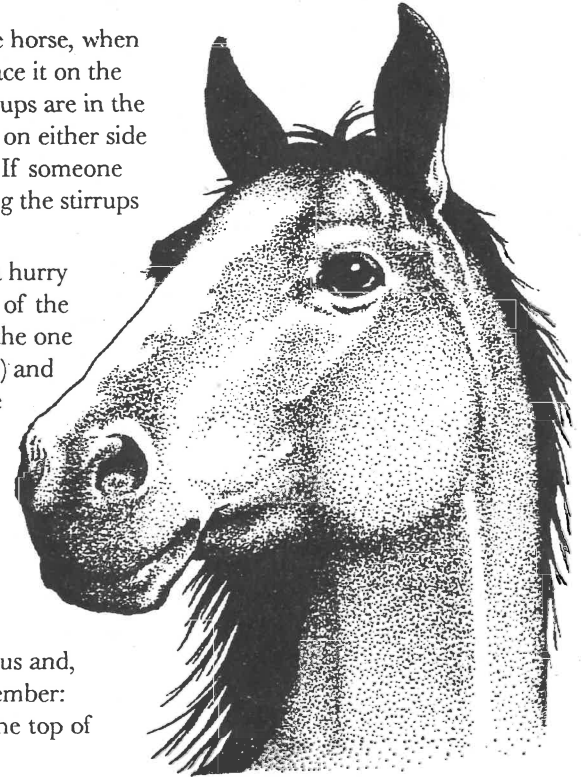
Even the most sub-intelligent being would realise that you never, ever walk around the back of the horse for the obvious reason that it could kick you and do some rather nasty damage. Some people can get away with this, usually only because they and their horses know each other really well and have been together for a while. If it is absolutely necessary to go behind a horse, keep one hand in contact with it at all times. It also helps if the rider talks to the horse and reassures it while you are moving about, possibly sparing you a painful experience. This is not so much of a problem if the horse is blind.

If you and the horse are meeting each other for the first time, let the horse smell you and get to know you and your scent. This will be very useful at night. If you are saddling the horse, when you go to raise the saddle to place it on the horse's back make sure the stirrups are in the correct position (hanging down on either side of the saddle, free from twists). If someone thinks they are smart by crossing the stirrups over the top of the saddle,

when you need to get away in a hurry there is a good chance that one of the stirrups will come free (usually the one that you use to get on the horse) and strike you somewhere about the head. This may cause quite a lot of damage to you. If this does happen to come about, and you are lucky, you will only get some rather large bruises and a raging headache. If you are unfortunate, then you may get knocked unconcious and, if it's really bad, killed, so remember: never cross the stirrups across the top of the saddle.

Next, when you are taking the bridle off the horse's head, never ever jerk it off. If you do, you could scare the horse into pulling its head back rather sharply, possibly hurting itself and you. Also, unless the horse is trained well, never yell at it unless it is absolutely necessary. As I have mentioned before, the horse may bolt, which can be rather unfortunate for you if you happen to be on it at the time and you aren't a good rider. Now, when the time comes to unsaddle the horse and settle in for the night, after you have taken the horse's tack (bridle, saddle, blanket, etc.) off it, make sure you walk the horse around for a while to cool it down before allowing it drink. If you let the horse drink cold water while it is still hot and puffing, there is a good chance it would get colic and that, for you, the rider, would mean a long night of walking the horse

around in circles to help it get rid of the pain and wind. If there is no chance of the horse having any sort of a rest before moving on, make sure that the water is at least reasonably warm (**not** hot!). Always remember to check your horse's hooves for obstructions before travelling anywhere. If anything is stuck there (pebbles, sticks, whatever), prise it out as gently as possible with a hoof pick. Hoof picks look like a screw driver that someone has bent over nearly in half. This may seem a little tedious to you but it will always ensure that you have a reliable steed when you need it.

If anyone has any questions or whatever please don't hesitate to write to me at duana@mailbox.uq.edu.au. This is about it for now, but there's lots more to come, so look out for the next installment in #49.

Banzai: A Kamikaze Kit for 2nd edition AD&D

Dale Edwards

A friend and I thought up this kit as a joke. However, when I began to put it together on paper I decided to refine it a little, making it possible for a character with the kit to survive their first adventure. It is conceivable that characters already in play could take this kit if campaign events compelled them to. I have deliberately left parts of the kit undefined so that players can decide whether they want to use the kit as a challenge or for a laugh.

Description: A Kamikaze is someone who is prepared to die in battle to further some cause. Historically they were suicide squadrons organised by the Japanese air force in the closing stages of World War Two as a last-ditch effort to stop the American advance. These pilots flew their aircraft, packed with explosives, straight into U.S. naval vessels. Kamikaze actually managed to sink about forty U.S. ships!

Requirements: The most willing and effective Kamikaze are Fighters, Paladins, Rangers, and Wizards. Many are of lawful alignment, since they must be prepared to willingly give up their lives if ordered to. There are, however, numerous Kamikaze who are driven by personal motives, and may be of any alignment. Most players will decide against playing a Kamikaze because of the likelihood of a quick death.

Role: Kamikaze either operate as part of an organised force which has received orders that are tantamount to suicide, or are individuals who wish to further some personal goal by their self-sacrifice. A Kamikaze's role must be chosen upon taking the kit.
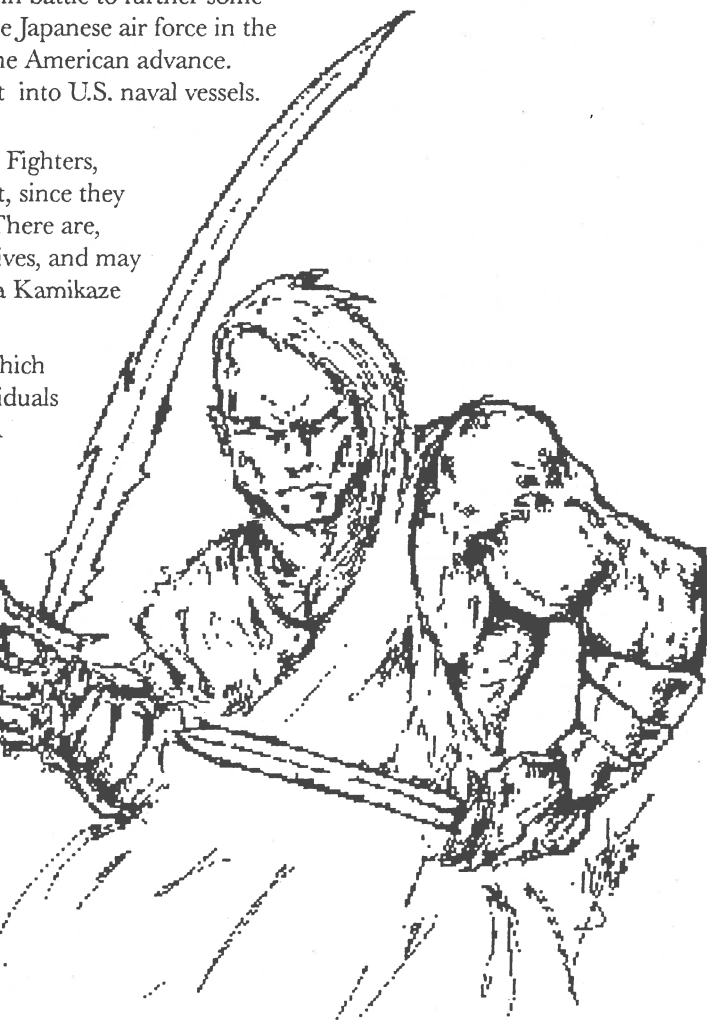
Secondary Skills: Any.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Recommended*: Any applicable to class. Note that they do prefer high-damage weapons such as two-handed swords.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Recommended*: Anything applicable to class.

Equipment: Kamikaze prefer equipment which is highly effective at causing damage. Things such as smoke/gun powder (if available), oil, and fireball spells (for wizards—centred extremely close) are obvious choices. Large, high-damage weapons are appropriate, though unfortunately they often require two hands and thus preclude the use of a shield. Kamikaze disdain armour—they are planning to die anyway, so they prefer to be less encumbered, and thus more effective, in their suicide attack. *[But if your goal is to kill lots of the enemy, why wouldn't you wear armour to increase your chances of surviving longer in battle? Ed.]*

Special Disadvantages: Because they are so intent on eliminating their enemy, Kamikaze fail to focus on protecting themselves when fighting (-2 penalty to AC). As a result of their unusual methods Kamikaze are almost certain to die fulfilling their chosen purpose. Kamikaze who are part of an organisation are given the highest accolades available, and any relatives are honoured. Independent Kamikaze may become martyrs if their cause is popular enough. Any Kamikaze who intentionally avoids a death that would further their cause is not worthy to be called a Kamikaze. Others who have the same cause will ostracise the character and some will seek to track down and destroy the traitor to the cause (i.e. there will be Kamikaze out to get the character!). Also, the failed Kamikaze gains experience at a quarter of the usual rate.

Special Benefits: Kamikaze have two unique benefits. Firstly, they receive a +3 bonus to attack if their opponents do not know they are Kamikaze, which is reduced to a +2 bonus to attack if their identity is known to the enemy. Secondly, as a result of their obsession Kamikaze are completely immune to all fear, charm, and mind-affecting spells, powers, and items.

What's Sauce for the Goose .....

Being a good GM is all about keeping your players happy. Okay, you knew that. But, shocking as it may seem, the opposite is also true: being a good player is about keeping your GM happy.

Most players out there will question this obligation. Surely the GM is there to entertain them, not the other way round? However, we play these games to have fun—all of us. So if the players stop the GM having fun, she's going to ask herself why she bothered to go to all the work of writing the scenario, planning the game, and even turning up. Players should always remember that GMs have the biggest job of all, and if they don't get any reward for it, why should they continue? They could be a player in someone else's game at the drop of a hat.

If you want to continue playing your game, you must keep your GM interested in continuing to play it too. In other words, you've got to keep your GM happy. And this is not achieved simply by being a good role-player. It is achieved by respecting your GM, and by attempting at all times to make his job easier. Here are a few tips on how to do this.

Appreciate the GM's job.

Never forget that the GM has the hardest job of all. Remember that the GM is not just a rules-enforcer, but also a book-keeper and a narrator; has to play every NPC and control the plot. Always keep in mind that GM's give up their spare time to entertain you with their ideas. All you have to do is turn up. So if something does go wrong, and the game goes off the rails a bit, don't you think the GM deserves a chance to fix her own mistakes? In other words, give your GM a break. They're the ones doing all the work.

Be sensitive to their style.

Just like players, GMs have their own preferred style. Some like a specific genre, such as horror or high fantasy. Others have preferred scenarios, like treasure hunts or mysteries. Some may like to run huge combats, others intense role-playing. The point is, players should be ready to adjust to their GM,

as well as vice versa. If a new GM tried to get some gung-ho rambos into a murder mystery, most players would quickly inform the GM to change style or get out, but if the GM is the only one forced to compromise, then the players will never stretch their role-playing wings, and will miss out on new experiences. Try a compromise next time.

Give feedback.

GMs love to get praise. This is why we spend all that time planning scenarios: it is great fun to have people enjoy your work. So, if you like a scenario, or setting, or character, or play style, tell your GM. And likewise, criticism is equally as important. If you don't agree with a ruling, dislike the setting, object to the lack of story control, or whatever, tell the GM. This is doubly important when your GM tries something new, like a new setting or rule book. The more you tell the GM what worked and what didn't, the better the game is going to get. On the other hand, don't be over-critical. If you complain all night about a few measly rules, you'll ruin the game.

Get into the game.

A GM's greatest challenge is to make the players actually believe in their world, and feel what their characters are feeling. However, it's like swimming upstream if the players won't meet the GM half-way. Why should the GM role-play every NPC if the players don't bother to role-play their own characters? Why describe characters and scenes in great detail if the players don't listen and imagine them? The GM sets the stage, and lights the lights, but if no-one does the acting, he's going to think he's wasting his breath. The more you role-play, the easier it is for the GM to suspend your disbelief.

Be imaginative.

The GM's got it all down on paper. She'd covered most of the main angles the PCs can take; the problem is that sticking to this can appear too scripted. While it may help the plot, it becomes boring if the characters merely follow cliché. It is much more fun and challenging for the GM if players do the unexpected and imaginative, especially

if it's in character for them to do so. A highly bizarre tactic might catch the GM off-guard, who might let you succeed simply because it was an idea he'd never considered. Nothing impresses a GM more than building a perfect deathtrap and watching the PCs escape it through sheer imagination.

Go with the flow.

Being imaginative is great, but it can completely derail a game when taken too far. Sometimes it's better to follow the dramatic needs of a story. And drama must have its conventions: for example, if there is a climactic showdown, it is much more effective if it takes place during a raging thunderstorm. Watch the GM clench her teeth when the players decide to wait until morning to go after the villain! So, even if you've figured out the whole module, go with the flow. You may have to be predictable, heroic or even stupid in the service of the plot, but creating a good story is what it's all about. Also, just because something is predictable doesn't mean it's boring.

Come prepared.

As I said before, GMs have the hardest job of all. There is no reason why, on top of everything else, they should have to look out for their players as well. Players who turn up late, who forget their characters (dice, pens, pencils, etc.), who forget the plot, who forget game mechanics, and so on, are infuriating. When players are so apathetic they can't even remember when and where they're supposed to be playing, or to bring the tools of the trade, it sends a very strong message to the GM and the other players. If you can't be bothered, why should they?

Role-playing games are all about collaboration. The players and GM have to work together to make a fun game for everyone involved. This can only happen if there is mutual respect between all participants. If the GM is willing to bend over backwards to please you, don't you think you should return the favour? To paraphrase JFK: "If you want to play good games, ask not what your GM can do for you, but what you can do for your GM!"

The Happy Wanderer

Julian Smith

The wind whistled echoingly around the dank, stonewall dungeon. Flickering torchlight dimly illuminated moist flagstones and walls smothered by lichens.

Out from the shadows padded a lone figure - a rather fetching redhead. She was breathing quite heavily and a room full of corpses paid grim tribute to her skill. She stood there coming down from the battle, quietly assessing, her bow still half cocked. In the labyrinth, it was lethal to relax even for a minute. Pausing only to pick up a magical staff off a fallen body, she purposefully continued through the archway on the far side of the room.

Her gait was unusual, she led with her bow at the ready and it arced from side to side with the fluid motion of her hips. The air in front of her shimmered and a large, brown, viciously clawed hand swung out of mid air missing her face by inches. By now, the rest of the hideous ogre type being had materialised and was attempting to enclose her with it's massive arms. A point blank bow shot made it stop and think a bit, and two more quickly finished it off. It toppled backwards with a throaty gurgling sound not to rise again.

The air around her erupted with disturbance as three of them attacked at once. Festering talons tore at her and she cried out before she knew what was happening. Turning, she fled back across the room. Stalkers! What were stalkers doing this high up in the labyrinth? Blessed with invisibility, they could attack without warning and in large groups preyed on the unwary.

Running through the far doorway, she turned, smiled grimly and let loose into the room with a hail of arrows, curses and insults. That was one thing about stalkers, they were a little slow when push came to shove. The bowstring sang and the room started to sound like an emphysema clinic.

Arrows poured into the room, only to stop dead and disappear with a gurgling noise. They were fast learning the difference between invisibility and invincibility. Shooting through the narrow doorway prevented them outflanking her and strangely, still they came on, over the bodies of their brothers. It was WWI without the artillery support.

Stepping over now visible corpses, she scooped up little piles of gold lying scattered around, hating the outrageous price of artefacts in town and how much it took to maintain her equipment. She was doing them a favour Godammit! She didn't see them down here getting cut, bitten, scratched, clubbed, booby-trapped, shot at and Lord knows what else lay ahead.

Her cut ached badly. "Too bad", she thought, "I'll look at it later." This stank! She wanted a drink like nothing else. She had gone to the tavern an hour ago for that very purpose, but Ogden, that whiny prat hadn't let her in. He had stopped her at the door as usual, but this time with some load of twaddle about King's and kidnappings and curses and undead armies. One bloody drink was all she wanted, who the hell was he to deny her that. She had a good mind to head back and soil the top two feet of her long bow after this was all over. Keep her on the wagon would he. He wasn't the one down here sliding around on entrails in perpetual gloom.

A piercing cry shattered her spiritual musings. A huge bat was hurtling down the corridor at breakneck speed. She watched with intense satisfaction as arrows thudded into it, first halting it's momentum then dropping it like a guy who had copped a steel capped boot in the nurries hard enough to lift him off his feet.

A veritable cacophony erupted at the end of the corridor as a swarm of the bloodthirsty sods poured into the corridor impeding each other in their haste to close. That was one thing about rabid flocks of giant killer bats, you didn't have to bother that much with aiming...

"Great" she thought, stepping over piles of mangled wings and sodden fur, "Now the floor is really slimy". She had a mental picture of slipping over and Pepin the healer picking rows of dead bats teeth out of her butt.

Entering the room, she quickly dispatched the pitiful remnants of what used to be a thriving flock of black terror and her breath momentarily caught as she stood looking at the far wall - she had found what she came looking for. Two huge stone knights stood sentinel on either side of what was undeniably a tomb.

Leoric's tale was not a pretty one. King Leoric had ruled the region wisely, justly, and was loved by all. One day however, his son, Prince Albrecht was kidnapped and his trail had led to the church above the labyrinth. The King's soldiers searched in vain for the boy, and with each passing day and each mounting failure, the King's rage drove him deeper into madness. The King's knights and priests tried to placate him, but he turned against them, and sadly, they were forced to kill him.

Maybe it was the alcohol deprivation, but somehow she found this rather hard to believe. Whoops, the King is dead. Damn, and we were trying so hard to only stun him. No wait, we panicked, right guys? Just because we outnumbered him fifty to one didn't mean we weren't in mortal terror of our lives. I guess the Prince will have to rule now. No wait, he's been kidnapped, how could we forget that. Bummer, I guess it's up to us. Let's go stock-take the treasury. Just so we know what we have when Albrecht's ransom note comes of course. Oh of course.

Absolutely. After you. No, no, no after you, we insist. Frocks before suits and hurry up about it. Shall we? We shall. La la lalla. Tee Hee Hee... Race you, last one there's a rotten leg.

Anyway, if one held stock in such things, with his dying breath, the King called down a terrible curse upon his former followers and vowed that they would serve him in darkness forever. And if Ogden is to be believed, Leoric has now risen from his eternal sleep and now commands a legion of undead minions. Then again, Ogden also feels that they are going to march forth and conquer the known universe. Still, at least now she might get her drink out of the paranoid bastard.

Reaching the stone door, she paused, there was something weird about being on the side of righteousness that took all the fun out of looting a king's tomb. Talk about spoiling a good party.

Tortured cries, ever so faint, circulated on the musty, whispering breeze, resonating with a macabre choral quality.

The door to the tomb seemed to escape the eternal slime onslaught. It was dry to the touch, and the dry air smelt of old death. Chugging back a healing potion, she took a deep breath of stagnant air and ventured down the stairs.

A voice broke through the silence. Imagine for a moment, Beavis was seventy and had a microphone lodged in his vocal chords. It was a dry voice. It was raspy. It was loud.

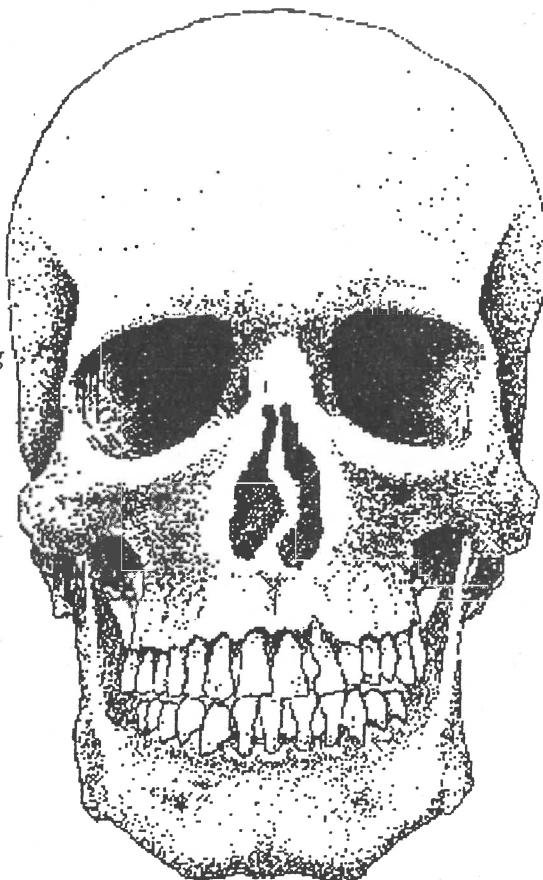"The warmth of life has entered my tomb!" it intoned.

"Prepare yourself mortal," it continued, "to serve my master for eternity." before it tailed of into insane chuckling.

"Bite me big boy!" she shot back reflexively. She was pissed. The bloody prick was actually right! That was so annoying. She was not impressed.

The initial onrush was fierce and fast. Skeletal warriors closed quickly and attacked in groups. Although surprisingly fast, and scoring several hits, they never were anything more than nuisance value and satisfyingly disintegrated into neat little piles.

She briefly debated switching to a mace she had found, but decided if she

was going to christen it, well Ogden really should be involved.

This place was huge, she was currently in a small ante room. The room in front of her stretched off into darkness. Walking out, she was met with a shower of light brittle arrows pattering around her, coming from all directions. She cried out as several stung her, although most sailed harmlessly by.

Keeping moving ensured most of the puny arrows shot wide or high and her armour repelled most that did not.

She fought back mental images of skeletons running out of arrows and sneakily trying to borrow their friends femur while they were not looking. Closing on a corner, she took aim whilst still moving and cleaned it out with a continuous stream of fire. Changing tack but never stopping, she dealt with several skeletons trying to close with swords and started on another corner.

The majority of fire seemed for be coming from the far end of the room, and a large contingent of boneheads were closing from that direction. Taking a deep breath she lunged at a side door, opened it and swiftly entered her bow singing out before she had bothered to sight anything. A skeleton in the room disintegrated under fire and a volley of arrows shot above it's head cannoning into the next in line. It was a small room, with only one archer and soon it was as quiet as a crypt should be. Turning to face the door, she again opened up and soon a rapidly growing pile of bones denoted she had a thing about being followed. On a whim, she tried a spell she had learnt earlier. A blue light shimmered around her as magical energies gathered in a decreasing circle. A whooshing sound accompanied bright tracery that crackled across her body before a blue blast of flame shot off at waist height and hurtled through the door. A skeleton that had chosen that moment to enter the room, exited the room at high velocity and various angles that would have put Humpty Dumpty to shame in the mess factor.

"Nice", she thought as she went back to sending a stream of arrows through the door.

All good things must come to an end and soon nothing else was queuing up to be spitted. Feeling vaguely lost, she surveyed the room, noticing a large lever sticking out from the floor. Never one to die wondering, she quickly pulled it, heard stone rumbling and was delighted to find a section of wall slide back and more skeletons pour out.

Quickly running out of playmates, she walked to the other side of the room. prompting more to come running out. None of them made it very far and she burst into the middle of the new room dropping the archers that

had stayed behind. A large chest sat on the far side of the room captivating her attention. Opening it she discovered a magical flail, magical cloak, and a ring. Pocketing the weapons and popping the ring on, she rummaged through her possessions for a scroll of identification. It was a ring of accuracy (+12 to dex, (no typo)) and one healing potion later, she was on her way out of the rooms to test it.

Exiting via an extremely blocked door, she left a room that now vaguely resembled an elephant's graveyard, and was met once more by streams of arrows. Taking out a third corner, she moved there and was out of line of fire from the central mass. Lining up the fourth corner, she let loose and there wasn't any reply.

Hordes of skeletons were packed solid behind an enormous portcullis system. Moving to the opposite side of the room she let loose with another Holy Bolt spell. It arced across the floor lighting the dungeon in the process and careened into the mass of well, fodder. Moving a few steps to dodge incoming fire, she repeated the process. Amazingly, despite the loud crunches and flying bones, the ranks hardly seemed to be touched as those behind moved forward to fill in. What this achieved was questionable - that was the problem with skeletons, the zombies had eaten all their brains. The only difference was the new skeletons had bits of their friends rattling around in their ribcages. Moving again, she unleashed again and this was one magic spell that could really animate skeletons (if somewhat temporarily). Another ball of light blazed across the dungeon and another lot of bones underwent traumatic dislocation. It was the sort of scene that would have prompted Robin to say, "Holy blowing to buggery Batman", except he would've sounded like he was reading a header from the Boy's Bumper Catholic Dictionary of Transgressions.

Feeling mentally fatigued, she drank a potion of full mana restoration and was back to her old self again, complete with her bow she currently was using to mop up those still standing.

Wishing she had a sack of holding so she could start an extensive skull collection for Ogden, she travelled through a similar door to before, annihilated a similar number of skeletons as before and noticed a similar lever. Deep rumblings ensued, but unfortunately this one did not invite undead attentions. Heading back out, she noticed that the portcullis was now open.

Walking on a carpet of singed bones, she entered what was either a medium sized room or a very short, very wide corridor - ahead was only blackness. Nearing the edge of the room, again she was greeted by needling arrows. Studying the trajectory of one she released a few arrows and was satisfied to hear a few thunks, followed by a collapse of old bones, like die rattling in a cup, and a jingle that promised much more. Similar fates awaited those others that gave away their positions with futile shots.

Beavis was back. Beavis was making an obscene phone call. There was heavy, raspy breathing. There was heavy, raspy chuckling. There was a skeleton bathed in an unholy light stepping round from behind a broken tomb. It was ten bloody feet tall and was wearing field plate. Why the hell didn't Ogden tell her about that. Mind you she wouldn't have believed him. Ten feet tall huh. Honey, you don't grow four feet when you die, two feet rot away, but no growing, you'd get headaches in your coffin.

Leoric moved very quickly, he wielded his famed 6" mithril sword in two hands, but now being ten feet tall, he wielded it much like a baseball bat. He closed from the left and suddenly all that space to the right looked mighty inviting.

Arrows arced in from all directions and skeletons closed for the kill. She took one down as it charged her and it crumpled in front of her face. Heading through the gap, she temporarily spoiled their aim, but the skeletons still converged. Leoric was pretty much on the other side of the tomb from her, and although much quicker than her, he was meandering about in his own time, and pausing occasionally to reanimate a pile of bones. She took down an archer and turned back to the soldiers. They were dangerous because they could block her movements making her an easy target for arrows.

Leoric was starting to slowly make his way around this side, and three horrors were barring her path, they were dark skeletons, quicker, tougher and immune to lightning. They closed and slashed away. A concentrated burst of fire took one down, but she was already hurting very badly. Casting healing paused her onslaught, and they took a few more shots and the incoming arrows were peppering her mercilessly. Running a few steps, brought brief respite and ignoring the arrows she concentrated on another horror and brought it down before the third was upon her. Frantic shots finally won through, but not before she again was hurting badly. Healing once more, she had no choice but to fight the next wave of skeletons. Leoric was closing a little more purposefully and several created archers were adding to her already numerous problems. Another skeleton went down, but the onslaught continued and arrows continued to score her mercilessly.

There were only a few skeletons left, but Leoric was uncomfortably close, towering over her even from a distance. Another crumpled and she backed off a few steps, using the leeway to take down a truly annoying archer. The skeletons were upon her again and Leoric was making more archers. She was starting to get pissed off again and this did not bode well for those in close, but Leoric was practically upon her. At the last minute, her nerve broke and she turned and bolted, but not before a skeleton scored a vicious hit down her back, slowing her for critical moments. Leoric was still a good ten feet away and she fled for all she was worth. With blinding quickness and a sickening crunch Leoric lashed out with his sword and cut deep into her side. She screamed, and fortunately the force of the blow knocked her momentarily out of reach. Gathering herself, she quickly began to cast another healing spell, watching an armada of arrows closing to finish her off. Arrows thudded into freshly healed skin and once more she was in pain, but had the presence of mind to run safely out of range. This brought her to the side of the room she had not been in before. It was also the

DIABLO⊕

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON HACK-FEST

Diablo is Blizzard Entertainment's latest software release and it has quickly reached cult status with a world-wide following. Most of its success can rightly be attributed to its *battle.net* feature, a free multi-player environment on the World Wide Web. Games support up to four players and it is not uncommon to log on and find over three thousand games running on *battle.net*.

Even without *battle.net*, the game is an absolute marvel to behold. It possesses a killer introduction; graphically rendered cut scenes at strategic points; lush high resolution, realistic colour, glorious SVGA graphics; astounding character and monster animation; isometric game play; excellent, distinct sound effects; a point and click interface; fitting, haunting background music; 200+ different monsters; tens of thousands of different items; random level generation; many quests (King Leoric's Tomb being an easy one); three different character classes; a superb magic system; awesome game balance; rooms overflowing with monsters; magical shrines; treasure chests and sarcophaguses littered everywhere; gratuitous power gaming; decapitated bodies to loot (I am not kidding); this game has it all!

For those that had trouble with the last paragraph, essentially, it all adds together to make one hell of a game.

Blizzard have created a totally addictive game world that is not only stunningly beautiful, but intricately detailed, wonderfully balanced, and packed with pulse racing excitement. Game depth, character development and random dungeon generation add volumes to the replayability factor.

Diablo could be viewed as D&D the way it should be played - consistent rulings, instantaneous real time conflicts, and visually impacting, adrenalin producing wall to wall action. Imagine walking into a room with 30+ multi-dice monsters. It is great to walk out of there a minute later, much richer and into the next room where the same thing happens. A real GM would still be labouring over trying to describe the

side that Leoric had been busy creating an undead mosaic. Changing her tactics slightly, she concentrated on the archers, staying on the run she could outmanoeuvre the skeletons, stay away from Leoric and slowly whittle down the number of things taking pot shots at her.

Occasionally a skeleton impeded enough to be quickly dispatched, and warming to her task, the lessening numbers soon hardly rated an inconvenience. She started to clean with the methodical thoroughness of a professional and soon her problem was solely with Leoric.

Leoric was an impressive problem. Ten feet tall, glowing, could raise the dead and obviously wanted to play tee-ball with her head. Another archer sprang up at his feet, and she dispatched it with ease. "No, not that one again, I'm sick of killing that one, go play over there will you."

Leoric advanced in, sword brandished menacingly, a battle crown hanging over one side of his face at a jaunty angle. "What the hell are you smiling at boy? You sure are going to look dumb at the skeleton's ball with no teeth", she growled as she released a stream of arrows. Some of them glanced harmlessly of his field plate, but most thudded in with metallic popping sounds.

He didn't slow down in the slightest. She swallowed slightly, "Is this the best that you have got, you son of a bitch?" God that Ogden is an embarrassment she thought.

Another skeleton popped together and sprung to life at his feet. "That took two seconds to make Leoric, no wonder they fall apart so easily", she taunted and to prove her point, cast a Holy Bolt spell and blew the hapless thing all over him.

Unmoving, she braced and sent

forth a stream of arrows, pinking sounds told her every time she struck home. Still he came on, chuckling evilly. Closing under the barrage, he stood there weathering the hailstorm and each time she missed, he swung. It went much like a prize title fight, whoever inflicted damage got another free shot during recovery. He did the most damage, but she scored most frequently and the air hummed with magical energies as she healed herself. Leoric chuckled happily to himself wearing blow after blow until, without warning, he exploded. Bones flew everywhere, his mithril sword fell to the ground useless and his crown flew up in the air to fall audibly to the ground.

"Rest in peace Leoric, I'll find your son" she caught herself saying tenderly before she knew what had happened. So she mentally added, "And if he's anything like you, I'll whoop his arse too!"

room let alone thirty things with initiative. And a feature to strike joy into any gamer's heart, a precise AUTOMAP facility. Maybe Diablo is not role-playing the way it should be played, but it certainly is dungeon hacking the way it should be played (a good comparison would be to try to imagine playing Doom™ the dice game).

I have had this game for nearly four months now and love it even more than when I first played it. Replayability is by far the biggest factor when determining the value of a game. This is where the adventure game genre such as the King's Quest series truly collapse. Who wants to pay $100 for a game that you never play again because you know all the answers.

Diablo on the other hand, just keeps on keeping on and inspires fanatical devotion other smash hits, such as Quake (ID), Warcraft I & II (Blizzard), Command and Conquer (Westwood) and Civilisation II (Microprose) could never emulate. Quake and C&C Red Alert, after enormous, protracted hype, both took the market by storm selling millions of copies, but after all the waiting, ultimately, both failed to live up to their potential and proved to be disappointing. Diablo however, promised little, delivered much, and continues to rule the best seller chart months after its release as the buzz catches on.

Warcraft, Command and Conquer (especially Red Alert) and to a lesser extent, Civilisation have an optimal game progression, from which any variance is detrimental, if not suicidal. And when every game is the same old thing, interest should quickly wane for those that are not mildly autistic. Civilisation is nowhere near as bad as the others, simply because games take so much longer to play, there are handicap settings, and there is scope for slightly more variety. It is worse, however, because each scenario for C&C clones are controlled and how well or badly you did in the previous war has absolutely no relevance upon the new battle. In Civilisation, doing very well early on makes the rest of the game an absolute drag.

Tactically, Diablo is a joy to behold. The monsters can be divided into

approximately twenty main groups, each possessing very different attacks and character traits. These groups then have different species, with different hit points, attack magnitudes, magical resistances and immunities. Add to this intelligently generated, random terrain, a vast array of weapons, 20[+] extremely useful spells, potions, scrolls, and rooms packed with more than one variety of species.

The main tactical difference relies upon your choice of character, being a warrior, sorcerer or rogue. Rogues are not thieves, rogues are archers that belong to a guild called 'The Sisters of the Sightless Eye', which in my opinion is a very, very unfortunate name for a women's guild.

Part of the beauty of Diablo is the non-exclusivity of the character classes - sorcerers can shoot bows and wear full plate mail, and warriors and rogues can cast spells. The classes mainly differ in their respective skills and their prime attribute. Skillwise, sorcerers can recharge any staff in the field, but partially sacrifice its maximum capacity. Warriors can repair any item in the field, but partially sacrifice its maximum durability. That is, they both do botch jobs and really it is best to pay to have them repaired in town (unless you plan on dumping the item later and are just milking it to death.) Rogues have the innate ability to detect trapped items and their skill is to disarm traps (unlike the other two skills, you can fail this). There are certain differences inherent to each class, and each class excels in its chosen speciality. Sorcerers cast spells at a much quicker rate (very handy), can learn spells to a higher level and have mana bonuses. Warriors use a sword at a faster rate and have hit point bonuses, and rogues shoot much faster than the others. Even a low level character will have a faster rate of attack than a high level character not in its field of expertise. The main difference, however, lies in the fact that all attributes possess class ceilings, except for the prime requisite, or if there is one, I haven't been able to find it yet. Each class has a very different fighting style, and multi-player groups add a whole new dimension to tactics, not only with different party make-ups but also the fact that people are all very different.

Each character has such a different style that everybody soon quickly adopts their preferred choice and would not even consider another. Strangely, they are so well balanced, that on the web, there are even distributions of the three character types.

Diablo, when you pull all the fancy gimmicks aside, is essentially an exercise in power gaming (and this has no small influence on its addiction). Each character starts off with 85 points pooled between 4 attributes,(STRength, DEXterity, MAGic and VITality), 30-35 of which is in the prime attribute. Each time a character goes up a level, they receive 5 points to distribute as they wish. There is scope in the multi-player game to reach level 50. You also need 1.3 billion exp to do this, and the sad thing is there are a lot of people who have done this - what can I say, it is a damn good game. There are three other categories. Armour class is DEX/5 plus whatever you are wearing. Hit Probability is 50% plus DEX/2 and some weapons have hit bonuses. Damage is the weapon damage plus a STR bonus. From this, high level warriors do massive damage, and high level rogues are harder to hit and hit almost invariably (this makes up for their MANA and HIT POINT shortcomings).

However, it is with the items that power gaming truly starts to come to the fore. You can find full plate mail called Godly Plate of the Whale, which has an armour class of 225 and +100 hit points (in case you have not cottoned on yet, larger is better). There are Obsidian Rings of the Zodiac which have +20 to ALL attributes, +40% magic resistance, +40% fire resistance and +40% lightning resistance. Two of them, a juicy amulet, GPOW, a kick ass helmet and hideously lethal weapons and your weakest attribute is approaching 150. But, to put this in perspective, on the hardest multi-player setting, Blood Knights, a permanent fixture in the lower levels of 'hell' (where else would you find Diablo) are completely immune to magic and lightning attacks, have a high resistance to fire, are extremely smart and aggressive, hit for 150[+] damage and have exactly one thousand hit points. You also expect to find 50-100 of them on the last level

alone. Yes, Diablo is about power gaming, but it also is very well balanced. Multi-player has skill settings to enable people to hang onto a favourite character and take it to new heights. A normal game of Diablo will earn a single player around 4 million exp and their first 25 levels. A normal game will have around 5000 monsters in it and not be completed in one sitting. A game is divided into four distinct parts, the labyrinth under the church, lower still, the catacombs, then the caves (complete with flowing lava), and finally the depths of hell. In the multi-player game, due to the fact that saving is impossible, one's character can choose the difficulty of game they play, and furthermore in the game, which segment to visit, hence always finding the difficulty of opposition desired. monster types are always confined to one of the four segments and the rapid escalation of power makes it certain one can always find challenging gameplay.

Taking a moment now, it would be time to talk about bugs and annoying faults in the program. Sometimes, with poor server performance, things tend to teleport a little when it gets very busy, but that is no fault of either Blizzard or the game (and in fact, Blizzard are currently doing their utmost to further optimise performance).

There is only one magic user, warrior or rogue profile to choose from. This is because they chose to go for quality over quantity with over 2,000 animation frames per character, and while it is no real inconvenience having packs of identical twins running around dungeons, it would be a nice touch for a sequel to add some variety.

Another gripe is that some of the higher level monsters, have immunities and or resistances to all spell types making them practically indestructible when magic users are concerned (especially ones that live in large groups and have ranged weapons). To be fair though, it really is only another thing to factor into tactics, each class has monsters that they are particularly vulnerable to.

One thing I felt, and I am not alone in saying this, is that the single player game, consisting of 16 levels and 4 or so quest levels, is over all too soon. You can of course start a new game keeping

the same character, but experience points are not awarded to high level characters for killing low level monsters.

The only thing that really gets to me is the lack of audible dialogue each character possesses. Every time you go to the store, some Scottish pillock says, "Wheel, what kin I dooo fa yee?" Every single bloody time!! Characters only have limited space to carry things - space that very quickly fills up. This generally is a total pain in the arse as you have to head back to town to sell stuff or sort through your inventory to find something to drop. Either way, you have to stop exploring and killing things. The game needs to let us know, so our character mercifully has two or three things to say in this scenario, unfortunately they all are associative with the annoyance, and let me assure you that when your lovely rogue says for the thousandth time in her best 0055 voice, "Where can I put this?" everybody in earshot has more than a few suggestions.

That said and done, I could talk further on quests, monster types, potions, elixirs, unique items, unique monsters, game mechanics, magic shrines or a wealth of other things, but in truth, Diablo's strength is *battle.net* and I should devote the rest of this review to Diablo's multi-player feature. It is possible to play many games head to head with other gamers on the net. These need either, the purchase of a separate generic software package to run the interface (eg KALI), enrolling to a game site with membership fees, and sometimes both. Blizzard have incorporated access to the *battle.net* into the Diablo experience and maintain a completely free game site. Logging in is as simple as logging onto your server, starting Diablo, selecting MULTI-PLAYER choosing your character then selecting BATTLE.NET. It is most important to NOT try this unless you have unlimited net access or an arrangement that does not bill hourly or you will rack up the price of the game in no time at all. YOU CAN PLAY MULTIPLAYER WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS. If you have a modem, you can play two player with someone else with a modem. It also supports serial port, null modem cable links between two computers in the

same house and finally local area networks, which if you had one of those, you wouldn't be reading this. You can also play multi-player mode by yourself and no multi-player hardware by creating a cable connection game, but it is more fun with other people.

For some reason, multi-player Diablo neglects the quests that exist in the single version. Leoric for instance is still there, but he is packed in a room with at least a hundred other skeletons on level 3. The quest is much more fun, it also involved two more rooms, a secret room and five more treasure chests stuffed full of goodies that I did not have time to cover in the story.

There is this something about multi-player Diablo that is hard to describe. Sure there is the gratuitous power gaming, but there also is this strange fuzzy feeling you get standing in a now empty room, hearing your new friend pillaging corpses next door and seeing two others marching through the door to find something else to admonish. It is quite simply a pack mentality. Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war. There is a sense of conformity, belonging and camaraderie as you roam the neighbourhood at will exploring in organised mayhem; and if anything crosses your path, lookout. Four, to

quote a football friend, 'seething random masses' looking for a bit of fun.

Experienced players soon realise that treasure plays a very secondary role to experience points. At lower levels, you need to scrounge every single gold piece and soak in the whole Diablo atmosphere, but later, you can collect gold faster than you could ever dream of spending it. Experienced player realise that they are only in the session for a limited time and it therefore is beneficial to kill as many things as possible in that time. Your multi-player friends therefore, although a joy to collaborate with, are out there stealing what could be your exp and the race is on. It is a truly impressive sight to see four finely tuned killing machines racing each other headlong into rooms that are so very briefly chock full of monsters. Four miniature whirlwinds of destruction cleaning out anything that moves.

Then there is the whole people experience. You get to play with and talk to people from all over the world. People can be so unpredictable though, I remember having this wonderful session with this other person. We blazed through six levels of the dungeon completely in synch, vanquishing foes without a hint of vulnerability. Then the little redheaded computer sprite killing machine turned to me after we demolished a particularly packed room and said "Wait a sec". "Sure," I said figuring she had to head to town to sell war booty. This was until a misspelled message came through that she had to go change her kid's diaper. This is not really the kind of thing that computer AI can ever simulate. It was a vaguely surreal conversation after that. Two seasoned veterans trooped through a dungeon dispatching evil hordes and talked about living in Maine. This lasted until one of her other kids knocked over all the orange juice.

Diablo as I said earlier, is the be all and end all of power gaming. This means that you meet some individuals who think they are the world's hottest piece of shit because a few numbers on a screen they can pull down have three digits. Perhaps they mistakenly believe that everyone else loves their character as much as they do, a trait common amongst players in all sorts of games. Invariably, they then compound this by

acting insufferably. I have a theory that their ego is proportional to their level to the power of itself. For those familiar with Avogadro's number, this equates that the ego of a 20th level character is equivalent to that of 174 complete moles. (We can also calculate from this that the ego of a 50th level character is approximately 500,000 times larger than the known universe.)

So you meet these characters, that strut around thinking they are absolute heroes (when in fact they are running away from the harder levels, where the game is balanced for them) and you can see right through them to the weedy, dysfunctional pathetic being tapping away at the keyboard with two thumbs. For some reason, they believe that because your character has numbers that are slightly smaller than theirs, you should bow down and worship them in reverent awe. There was a character, that for some reason had decided to call itself LLLL (any ideas, I have none). It was level 34 and decided to drop in on a game with 2 brand new level 1's just starting out. This was fine for a while

and everyone separated and ran around doing their own thing until around level 3 or so, when I went into a room and the level 34 guy stood in the doorway. After a puzzled twenty seconds or so, I asked him what he was doing. He replied that I was trapped and could not get out. "No shit Sherlock!" I responded because this guy was weirding me out. "Move." I said regretting that I did not have a teleport spell on me as rematerialising on the other side of him would have truly stolen his thunder. (long typing pause) "You'll have to fight me" he replied. "Why would I want to do that?" I said, thinking I'm level 5, you're level 34, why the eff would I want to do that. He then asked, "Do you love me?" (ie I mustn't want to fight him because I want to be his friend rather than I could count.) And I replied, "I love anyone with more than ten million exp honey!" with nothing but contempt and thinking, perhaps he'll sod off and stop bothering me now. He wandered into the room and after a typing pause, said "Look, I can take all my clothes off." He had plate mail on, which gives a different charac-

ter appearance to the default leather armour character and toggled between his plate and leather armour appearances. The display in itself was very, very unimpressive, and the thoughts behind it were even worse. I simply walked out the room and the stupid bugger was too busy typing in something else to even notice. I didn't even have to resort to "What's your real name gorgeous?" and disappear while he typed in something harder than LLLL. I then wandered discretely off and happily started killing things again with the occasional plaintive "Where are you?" and such junk being typed up on the screen as the lovesick level 34 character wandered forlornly round the dungeon, lost and wondering why his new friend wasn't replying. This only really goes to show that character levels have absolutely no correlation to IQ. In his wanderings, he bumped into the other player, Lothar (male), whom I immediately felt sorry for. After a few minutes of banal chat up came, "Do you want to fight me?". A split second later, up came the message - PLAYER LOTHAR HAS LEFT THE GAME. Vaguely comical, but here is the moral of the story. Important rule number one! If someone bugs you, don't put up with it. Hit ESCape and find a new game with people worth spending time with. After feeling vaguely stupid for a second or two, I joined him, leaving LLLL master of all he surveyed - and completely alone.

Two hints on finding games. A game will have what game difficulty setting it is and not let you in if it is too hard. It will also have the level and type of character that created it. Join a game with similar level characters to you, you will get far more out of it that way. The other hint is look at the title of the game. There was one once called "Cyber-sex on Diablo" where the inhabitants were just going to use it as a free dirty talk room. Needless to say, I did not pop in to check it out. Also, if a game name appears to be gibberish, someone is using a foreign keyboard and speaking a foreign language so stay out.

Something that must be covered here, is cheating in Diablo and it is something that quite a lot of people are sensitive about. Blizzard periodically

bring out Diablo version updates to prevent cheating, but the new virgin coding is like a platter of fresh cheese to a horde of starving rats and so it goes on. There are even software programs you can download to help spot cheats. I have downloaded one and never got around to using it. It is not particularly difficult to spot a cheat, they are the ones with 40,000 hit points. Cheats are by any other name, hackers. They are nerdy, weedy, wimpy pathetic guys again, but unlike LLLL, they have remnants of brains. Cheats however join that group of guys that just have to boast about how wonderful their character is and they run around thinking they are gods because the character they 'created' can kill anything it wants to. There are a plethora of cheating utilities and patches that you can download from the web, such as character editors and so forth, but really, we must ask 'WHY?' Why suck all the satisfaction out of a great game. People who use character editors, do not even get the god kick from doing it yourself. The main thing that helps with cheats, is now most of the games are usually called something like "NO CHEATS" and the cheats actually stay away as the other players would verbally lampoon them until the cows came home and they have no one to boast to or swap ideas with.

Duping is another contentious issue amongst players. Duping is a bug in the Diablo program, that unfortunately Blizzard cannot work around. It essentially allows you make multiple copies of any items you find (which can be handy when a good item is found and you are playing with three other people you will probably ever see ever again) and is really nothing more than a license to print money. Somehow, because it is a game flaw, rather than a hacked cheat, 90% of people have no moral problems with it, 9% of people haven't heard of it, and the other percent are undecided. It is contentious because Blizzard do not like it very much, and really, it does spoil the sense of earning. I try not to like it, but I am yet to meet someone else who agrees with me. For those interested, Diablo's Altar tells you how to dupe.

I remember after LLLL and hordes of idiots giggling about how good their

hacked characters were, I decided to try creating my own game. Extremely dissatisfied with rampant cheating, I decided to aptly call it "I hate Manly". The first person to materialise was a delicate character called 'Rose'. The first words out of her mouth were not the obligatory, "HI", but rather "I like men" and "Why do you not like men?" This was greeted with stunned silence, followed by a gentle, "What country are you from?" "Sweden." "Oh. (pause) I am from Australia." "Wow!" "We have a football team called Manly, they are a bunch of dirty, cheating, dishonest, slimy mongrels" "Oh." 'Rose' was a level 1 character. She was new, she was female, she was interested in men and was from Sweden. She then spent a while telling me how she was surprised how nice everyone was to her. She had hopped into a game and everyone had showered her with gifts. This was something I found very early on. The warrior and the sorcerer are both men, but the rogue is a slender, athletic redhead. Most of the rogues are called things like Black Death only not as imaginative. My rogue was called Xenaphobia, simply because Xenaphillic would be annoying to explain every game I walked into. Having a gender neutral name, playing a female made all these testosterone charged, aggressive sexist pigs, treat me very differently. Perhaps I should have said that to LLLL, "I'm a guy, back off." Perhaps I should have said, "Big deal, that's nothing I haven't seen before", considering that it was the starting generic warrior character, but that probably would have only excited him further. Oh yeh, talking of names, some guy created a game, called "I am from Texas". His name was Xenophobe. I had to drop in. "Cool name" he said. "I thought so" I replied. I left quickly before I asked him what colour pick-up truck he drove.

Back to Rose however, some guy had given her a Royal Circlet, a crown that had +10 to all attributes, +10% light radius, +40 to mana and an AC of 40 (scale mail has an AC of 20). Her comment on this royal circlet thingy was "Gee it's ugly." (Months later, I found a royal circlet; it is ugly.) My comment was something about vanity being overrated. She didn't want to

play with us, because we were about level 9 and it took a while to explain that this helmet alone made her more powerful than us. We had an interesting time wandering through the dungeon, me being the helpful big sister type mentor when my server chose to boot me off and not let me back in for an hour, I was not impressed. I usually play late at night and do not have this problem, but most Diablo players have internet packages at cheap rates that boot you off when things get busy. Games will pass on the message 'Blah just timed-out' and you usually never see them again. This adds bucket loads to the slaughter-fest syndrome.

Starting a multi-player game at level 1 with other level 1's is an interesting exercise in group dynamics. Everybody does pretty much their own thing at first, but as you go down levels in the dungeon, with a quarter of the exp your normally possess at that stage, things get pretty hairy and co-operation is essential. It is not that hard, but you do need to co-operate (something that may be quite hard for some people). My level 34 Xenaphobia character disappeared under very suspicious circumstances (along with her 120,000 gold piece bow, sob!) and I was happily restarting with several other level 1's in a game called 'I need Help', created by one "Ugly-Kid-Joe". It has been interesting, ever since writing *The Happy Wanderer*, each time I have played Xenaphobia, I have been thinking more of her in the terms of the character in the story, rather than me the smart-mouthed, cynical sod up at 2am. Kyla, another level 1 rogue walked up to UKJ (a sorcerer) and said "You don't look that ugly." I was vaguely disappointed at such an ordinary thing to say, and decided to add, "I'm guessing that it's an attitude thing sweetie." after considering if too much offence could be taken. This beat in, "I'm ugly as your butt crack." "Bingo", said me trying not to gloat and wondering how anyone could not like the rogue's butt. Of course, Ugly-Kid-Joe had sealed his own fate and I called him 'butt-ugly' for

the remainder of the game. Kyla and I popped down to the dungeon to kill things, breaking for the occasional butt-ugly wise-crack, while butt-ugly stayed in town duping to his hearts content. Eventually he joined us, and Kyla pressed to go to level 2 even though we had not finished level 1 properly. We popped down, and ran into Hiddens, lesser versions of Stalkers, and level 2 was absurdly high for them. Kyla promptly died. When you die in Diablo, you can be resurrected at no cost to anyone, but you do need a resurrect scroll or staff, which no-one had. It also gives you the option of restarting in town, but it leaves half your gold and what you were wearing down in the dungeon. Kyla bought new gear and dutifully trooped back down to join us, much further into level 2 and promptly died again. I waited until BU and I had cleaned our current room out, typed in wait to Kyla, who was by now effectively broke and told Joe I was going up to town when I was halfway across level 1 and it was too late for him to argue (How female is that). The rest of the trip up consisted of cracks about women going on shopping trips in town and how it was women bonding through the ancient ritual of accessorising and how he wouldn't understand. He mumbled something about 'Fighting' and I got to give him a dismissive "MEN!". The Sisters of the Sightless Eye would have been proud of me.

Round about now, I am regretting that I was too new at this to give LLLL the whole feminine Kahuna. You know. "Where are you?" "Somewhere." "What?" (pause) "Where are you?" "Humph!" "Are you mad at me?" "What do you think!" "Why are you mad at me?" (silence) "Talk to me?" (silence) "Why are you mad at me?" "If you don't know, I'm not going to tell you." and all that stuff that women totally destroy men's minds with.

After a while of this, butt-ugly's number came up and he timed-out. A level 34 guy actually called STUPID popped in. Tempted as I was, I

refrained from asking if he was related to LLLL, because that could have opened a very ugly can of worms. "Looks like STUPID could totally kick our ass." I said to Kyla and some other rogue who had popped in with the inspiring name of "Arrowhead". I said this because it was too good a line to pass up, and I knew I would never have the chance to say it again except if I wanted to get shot in a nightclub. The three of us verbally shredded STUPID for a while before we decided he was harmless and could tag along. It was completely pointless him being there, and he was only foraging for a little awe and respect, but not being completely obnoxious about it. He didn't brag, he just stood in the middle of a room and pathetic creatures tried to hurt him. We stood in the doorway and pasted them. There is another very important button that many people do not know about. When you are typing in text to say to other players, the names and levels of the other players are displayed below that and a default setting of voice. Clicking on the voice toggles it to mute and back again. I put STUPID on mute and started dropping Forrest Gump quotes, "My mommy says, STUPID is as STUPID does" and such like. Remember the mute button, it is extremely useful if you want to ditch a game and bring selected company to a new game. This went on until we returned to town to sell and repair stuff. I typed in, "It's 6.15am over here, I need a nap." Diablo people type in NP of no problem, they also type in HEHEHEHE for laughing and boy it gets annoying after a while, especially at 6.15am.

In conclusion, I would recommend Diablo thoroughly, and if you are buying the game, take the time and play a few single-player games first to get a feel of things and avoid making an arse of yourself online. I now am going to play the game until the sun comes up even though I have to work tomorrow - all this writing about it is driving me crazy.

History of the World

— a review

Gary Johnson

One of my most recent acquisitions, along with Colonial Diplomacy. Both games are excellent, though they have very different conflict resolution mechanics and on-board dynamics. History of the World is simple to play, elegant in design, and diplomacy between players can be the difference between winning and coming second or third. Want to know more? Read on!

Up to six people can play History of the World, and it is highly suited to solitaire play. Each player controls seven empires, one in each turn of the game. At the start of a turn, players draw their empire for that turn at random: since the empires follow each other in a set order, the order of play changes from turn to turn. Empires have a set number of strength points with which to build armies and fleets, and expand from their starting areas until they run out of units. At this point, you calculate your victory points based on control of cities, monuments, and presence in or control of geographic regions (such as the Middle East or Sub-Saharan Africa). Once it has finished expanding and you have totaled victory points, that empire sits there and does nothing except defend against new attackers. After seven turns (representing 5000 years of history) have passed, the player with the most victory points has won the game. Simple, hey?

Players also have nine event cards, drawn at the start of the game, one from each pile. These cards are used to improve your active empire or to wreak havoc via natural disasters and barbarians. Some event cards increase your empire's strength points, others give its troops a bonus to die rolls while attacking or the special ability to win all ties. Combat itself is pretty abstract and straightforward: the attacker (usually) rolls two dice, the defender (usually) rolls one, and whoever rolls the higher number wins. As you can see, the odds are stacked in favour of the active, expanding empire, what with the extra die and any special bonuses derived from event cards. Thus, the game tends to be a perpetual whirl of empires rising and failing at alarming speed.

As far as the game's visual appearance, I have to give the mapboard an enthusiastic vote of approval. The entire world is on it, albeit grossly distorted so that the board centres on the Europe-Middle East-India-China band. As a result, the Pacific Ocean covers the northern and eastern edges of the mapboard! Groovy! The pieces are alright, though the army counters can be confusing because they are double-sided. Perhaps if I sorted the countermix a little better, that wouldn't be such a trauma …

The game is reasonably historically accurate, though it can take unusual twists because there are seven empires to choose from in each turn after the first. Thus, even if there are six players, one empire a turn won't appear. I have seen games without the Roman, the Arab, and the British Empires, and this gets worse when you have less than the full complement of players. Also, in the last turn (1550-1900) the European powers usually find they earn more victory points taking over Europe than creating colonies in Africa and Asia. After all, once you've had your last turn, you can't earn any more victory points, so it doesn't matter if you don't garrison France (or England or the Netherlands or Germany) and other players capture your capital later in turn seven. I find this a touch annoying, though the example of Napoleon reminds me that this sort of thing did happen.

So, you ask, how do you win? It usually isn't worth the effort to control an area (have an army in every land); you'll get more for your units if you try to dominate areas (control more lands in an area than anyone else, with a minimum of three lands) and have a presence (control a land) in areas you can't dominate. Try to avoid empires based in the same areas: having one empire in India and another in Europe will get you more points than two in China. Having armies scattered about is not as bad as it looks, as every army counts towards presence, dominance, and control. Monuments are worth the extra point each, so seek them out. Since they cluster around cities and resource-rich lands (which you have to control to build new monuments), those areas will often be your targets anyway. Go get them!

Most importantly, if you can get a strong empire late in one turn and follow up with an empire early in the next turn, getting to count the victory points for the strong empire twice, you will almost certainly win. The Romans, Mongols, Spaniards, and Persians are the empires that best fit the bill. Even if you don't get the follow-up empire early the next turn, you'll still do reasonably well. Furthermore, if you wind up getting more than one of these strong empires (or Britain), you should be well on the way to winning. If anything, this is the worst aspect of the game: it isn't necessarily fair or balanced, and such problems won't necessarily fix themselves over time. If you're very unlucky, you will get the Aryans and Scythians in the first two turns, crippling your victory points progression (they both start in Eurasia, which is worth nothing early in the game, and they are the only empires in the first two turns that don't have a capital). Finally, try to avoid

making the early running, unless you **pull out** to a big, big lead. If you get the Romans, make the most of it, because everyone will be scared of you after your turn and may spend the rest of the game trying to bring you down. As in most multi-player games, running second or third for much of the game can be better than leading all the way, especially in the all-important final turn.

History of the World
Avalon Hill
$80.00

Ease of Play: good.
Complexity of Rules: low.
Solitaire Play: good.
Fun: good.
Historical Accuracy: reasonable and variable.
Value for Money: good.

Results of the Q.U.G.S. Magic Tournament

(23/3/97)

Rank	Name	Matches Won	Duels Won
1.	Chris Hudson	6	18
2.	Russell Johnson	6	15
3.	Scott Barlow	5	14
3.	Stuart Lauder	5	14
5.	Jason Chapman	5	13
6.	Chris Kwan	5	12
7.	William Gallagher	4.5	12.5
8.	David Redfern	4.5	11
9.	Shawn Batty	4	13
10.	Philip Thorn	4	12
11.	Joshua Gan	4	11.5
12.	Millin Bear	4	11
12.	Daniel Edwards	4	11
12.	Justin Murray	4	11
15.	Matthew Kelly	4	10
16.	Darryl Greensill	4	8
17.	Ing Toh	3.5	11
18.	Alan Wong	3.5	8
19.	Jihad Hani	3	11
19.	Tarek Hani	3	11
19.	Greg Romans	3	11
22.	David Astley	3	10
22.	Paul Chan	3	10
24.	Michael Wong	3	8
25.	Ian Johnson	2	9
25.	Eddy Wong	2	9
27.	Tim Johnson	2	8
27.	Matthew Tuxworth	2	8
27.	Neville White	2	8
30.	Karl Palsson	2	6
30.	Nathan Zoontjens	2	6

Optional Tables for Creating Interesting Characters

Ok, here it is, Version 1 of Steve-o's Attributes, a listing of 300 physical attributes for characters in RPGs. This list was compiled to help players create their characters by defining what they look like. To use the list, first roll 1d20 to pick the section, then 2d8 to pick the attribute. Repeat how ever many times you want. I usually have my players roll 1d4 first to see how many of these attributes their characters have. Multiple combinations either come out really cool, or really dorky, so stick with 6 or less.

While this list is free, there is a condition to its use. If you use this list and you like it and keep it around for your games, you MUST contribute to the list. Think up 2 or 3 things that you would like to see on the list and e-mail me. As soon as I have enough new attributes, I'll put out version 2.

Contact Addresses: Internet e-mail at Starbelly@Clockwork.com or Strangeness@Geocities.com or you can reach me on the Majornet at Starbelly@CWK

Disclaimer: Hey, this is free. I don't care what you do with it as long as you don't claim it as your work or make any money off of it. If you pass it on to anyone, just leave all the above text so they know who you got it from. I want to thank Pirana, Stephanie, Diogenes, and everyone else who contributed to this list.

Steve-o's Attributes (1d20 for section, then 2d8 for attribute)

1. Eyes

2 Eyes are a strange colour. Roll on colour table.

3 Eyes are a strange colour, and have no pupils. Roll on colour table.

4 Left eye is a different colour to the right (blue/green, black/brown, etc.).

5 Eyes are strange colours. Roll once on colour table for left eye, once for right eye.

6 Eyes glow a strange colour. Roll on colour table to determine colour.

7 Eyes are larger than normal.

8 Walleyed: eyes bulge out of their sockets (e.g. Marty Feldman, see the movie "Young Frankenstein").

9 Eyes are spaced abnormally wide.

10 Squinty eyes. The character may be of asian decent, or just have squinted eyes. Player's decision.

11 One eye is squinted (e.g. Popeye).

12 One eye is missing or scarred shut.

13 Character has one, cyclopian eye. This has no effect on attributes.

14 Character has a third eye. Doesn't affect attributes.

15 [3d4] eyes. Character is harder to surprise and has better aim. Exact bonuses are up to the GM.

16 Eyes have an extra eyelid. Lid is tinted, but see-through. Character is immune to MACE and other irritants, and has a high tolerance to light.

2. Eyes

2 Eyes have an extra, clear eyelid that is completely water resistant. Character has normal vision under water.

3 Eyes are compound, like an insect's. Vision is limited to 40 feet, but character is less likely to be surprised than other characters. Exact bonuses are up to the GM.

4 Eyes are yellow and pupils are slits, like cat eyes. Character can see normally up to 30' in non-magical darkness.

5 Eyes are on the sides of the head, where the temples normally are. Character has a high resistance to being surprised, but has a lower than normal aim. Exact bonuses/penalties are up to the GM.

6 Eyes are sharp and piercing, like a hawk's. Vision is acute up to a distance of a mile, unobstructed.

7 Eyes are out of sync and wander, like a chameleon's. Character is harder to surprise than normal, but aim is worse. Exact penalties and bonuses are up to the GM.

8 Character is blind, but is still aware of everything around him. No penalties or bonuses are given and the character may act and perform normally.

9 Character wears a ribbon in his/her hair. Random colour optional.

10 Lock knot - the hair on top of the character's head is pulled back in a pony tail while the hair from the ears down falls freely.

11 Hair is pulled into a ponytail on the top or side of the head instead of the back.

12 Long side burns.

13 Bald.

14 Bald except 1 braid.

15 Bald except 1 dreadlock.

16 Bald except for [2d6] braids.

3. Hair (I)

2 Bald except for [2d6] dreadlocks.

3 Bald except for bangs.

4 Long Bangs.

5 Crew Cut.

6 Owl Ears: hair meets in two points, one on either side of the head (e.g. Wolverine of the X-men, or Dilbert's boss).

7 Mohawk. Random colour is optional.

8 Hair is wild and unkempt.

9 Widow's Peak: hair meets in a sharp point at the center of the forehead (e.g. Eddie Munster).

10 Hair is pulled into two ponytails or pigtails.

11 Spit Curl: a large curl extends down over the forehead.

12 Abnormally hairy body.

13 Hairless body.

14 Mottled hair. Hair has flecks of another colour (e.g. red with blonde flecks, black with brown flecks).

15 Mottled hair. Hair is a normal colour (brown, red, etc.) but has flecks of an abnormal colour. Roll on colour table to determine random colour.

16 Mottled hair. Hair is a strange colour with flecks of a different colour. Roll on colour table once to determine colour of hair, then again to determine colour of flecks.

4. Hair (II)

2 Mottled hair. Hair is a strange colour with flecks of two different colours. Roll on colour table once to determine hair colour, then twice more to determine colours of flecks.

3 Striped hair. Hair has one or more stripes of another colour (e.g. black hair brown stripes, blonde hair with red stripes, etc.).

4 Striped hair. Hair is a normal colour (red, blonde, etc.) but has one or more stripes of an odd colour. Roll on colour table to determine random colour.

5 Striped hair. Hair is a strange colour with one or more stripes of a different colour. Roll on colour table once, to determine hair colour, then again to determine colour of the stripes.

6 Striped hair. Hair is a strange colour with two or more stripes of different colours. Roll once on colour table to determine hair colour, then twice more to determine colour of stripes.

7 Hair is a strange colour. Roll on colour table to determine colour.

8 Hair is constantly worn in a ponytail.

9 Hair is cut in a bowl cut.

10 Hairstyle is held together by 1d6 metal pins.

11 Character wears a simple hat made of soft cloth.

12 Character wears a type of uraeus (Egyptian crowns).

13 Character wears a metal skull cap (e.g. Merlin in the movie "Excalibur"). Magic users become slightly more powerful. Exact bonus is up to the GM.

14 Character wears a helmet with a large plume. Random colour optional.

15 Character wears a helmet with hawking (e.g. the red brush along the ridge of a roman centurion's helmet). Random colour optional.

16 Character wears a helmet with horns.

5. Helmets

2 Character wears a helmet with wings on the sides, front, or rear.

3 Character wears a helmet with chainmail that extends down the back of the neck and below the chin.

4 Character wears a cap made of chain mail.

5 Character wears a type of kaiser helmet (e.g. those German helmets with the spikes on top).

6 Character wears a football or other sports style helmet.

7 Character wears a baseball cap or something similar.

8 Character wears a beret. Random colour optional.

9 Character wears a turban.

10 Character wears a turban with an overcloth, a piece of cloth draped over the turban and held in place with a strip of ribbon.

11 Character wears a head band. Random colour optional.

12 Character wears a head band with a feather. Random colours optional.

13 Character wears a hood that covers the shoulders (e.g. Many medieval jesters, and sometimes Robin Hood, are seen wearing such hoods).

14 Character wears a cloth headdress that covers the entire head except for the eyes (e.g. ninjas).

15 Character wears a cap made of fur (e.g. the cap in Russian folk-dancing outfits).

16 Character wears a cowboy hat or something similar.

6. Hats and Distinctive Features

2 Character wears a yamulka (a cap traditionally worn by orthodox Jews) or a beanie (multi-coloured caps that have a small, plastic propeller on top).

3 Character wears a had made from the head of an animal.

4 Character wears a cloth hat that extends from the top of the head down the back (like those worn by snowboarders).

5 Character is an albino, with white skin and hair and pink eyes.

6 Character has no wrinkles at all, including finger prints.

7 Large scar or scarring. Roll on LOCATION table.

8 Religious/Cultural scarring (in the TV show "Kung Fu," Kain had two scars shaped like tigers burned into his arms, while in the movie, "A Man Called Horse," Richard Harris has large metal hooks stuck into his chest and is lifted off the floor by them during an Indian ceremony). Roll on LOCATION table.

9 Tattoo. Roll on LOCATION table.

10 Pale complexion.

11 Character has small "plates" beneath the skin, similar to turtle shells. Any armor bonus is up to the GM.

12 Character has reptillian scales. Any armor bonus is up to the GM.

13 Skin is banded, like a worm's.

14 Large moll. Roll on LOCATION table.

15 Birthmark. Roll on LOCATION table.

16 Skin is an odd colour. Roll on colour table.

7. Skin and Face

2 Skin is a normal colour (between dark brown and peach for humans), but has stripes of an odd colour. Roll on colour table to determine colour of stripes.

3 Skin is an odd colour with stripes of a different colour. Roll on colour table once to determine skin colour, then again to determine the colour of the stripes.

4 Skin is an odd colour, with the belly, pads of the hands and feet, and the undersides of the arms and legs, being a lighter shade. Roll on colour table to determine random colour.

5 Skin is a normal colour (between dark brown and peach for humans), but has spots of an odd colour. Roll on colour table to determine colour of spots.

6 Skin is an odd colour, with spots of a different colour. Roll once on the colour table to determine skin colour, then again to determine colour of spots.

7 Skin has some sort of natural patterning. The exact nature of the patterning is up to the player (e.g. rainbow trout, tiger, zebra, or dalmatian).

8 Duotone skin. Roll once on colour table to determine colour of the left side of the body, then again to determine the colour of the right side of the body.

9 Chameleon skin, capable of adapting and camouflaging into surroundings. Bonuses are up to the GM.

10 Metallic, shiny skin.

11 Facial paint (e.g. American Indian war paint, African tribal ceremonial paint).

12 Heavy eyelid makeup.

13 Severe acne.

14 Hairlip.

15 Sunken features. Eyes are sunk back in the sockets, cheekbones and chin bone are clearly visible, and the skin is thin and papery.

16 Missing teeth.

8. Face

2 Childish facial features.

3 Pierced lip.

4 Pierced tongue.

5 Pierced eyebrow.

6 Pierced nose.

7 Rodent Teeth.

8 Square chin.

9 Pointy chin.

10 Large chin.

11 No chin, jaw bone is small and barely noticable.

12 Forked tongue.

13 Long tongue.

14 Bulbous, veiny nose.

15 Flat nose.

16 Hooked nose.

9. Face

2 Button nose.

3 Pug nose.

4 One nostril.

5 Missing nose.

6 Bucked teeth.

7 Cat-like facial features. Extremity is up to the player. Could be as mild as having a split upper lip, to looking like Vincent in "Beauty and the Beast," to as severe has having a furry face, a snout, and whiskers.

8 Bird-like facial features. Extremity is up to the player. Could be as mild as having a pointy nose, to looking like Hawk on the TV show "Buck Rogers," to having a bird head.

9 Lizard-like facial features. Extremity is up to the players (e.g. Cardassians from "Star Trek").

10 Rodent-like facial features. Extremity is up to the player. Could be as mild as having a pointed nose and bucked teeth, to having a split upper lip and whiskers, to looking like the mutant rat in the movie "Arena."

11 Canine facial features. Extremity is up to the player. Could be as simple as having a black nose, to looking like John Candy in the movie "Space Balls," to having a dog's head.

12 Goat facial features. Extremity is up to the player. Could be as simple as looking like Torgo or Pan, to having a goat's head.

13 Simian facial features. Extremity is up to the player. Could be as mild has having a sloping forhead and a prominent jaw, to looking like a character from "Planet of the Apes."

14 Fishy facial features. Extremity is up to the player. Could be as simple as having "buggy" eyes and a small, low mouth, to having a fish's head.

15 Character has tusks.

16 Toothbrush mustache. (e.g. Charlie Chaplin)

10. Face

2 "Fu Manchu" mustache, one that extends from the corners of the mouth down to below the chin.

3 Long beard (e.g. the guys in ZZ Top).

4 Long, braided beard.

5 Goatee.

6 Beard is twisted into 3 points.

7 Handlebar mustache (e.g. Dirk Dastardly from the Rocky and Bullwinkle show).

8 Mutton chops.

9 Pointed eyebrows.

10 Monobrow. Eyebrows join above the nose.

11 Character wears a mask that covers the eyes.

12 Character wears a mask that covers the entire face.

13 Eye patch.

14 Goggles (flight or swimming).

15 Glasses.

16 Has an earring in one ear.

11. Face

2 Has one earring in each ear.

3 Has 1d10 earrings in one ear.

4 Has 1d10 earrings in each ear.

5 Character wears sunglasses constantly.

6 Character has a second head. Magic-users suffer a penalty because of the extra thoughts, but psychic characters get a bonus because of the added mental power. Exact bonuses and pentalties are up to the GM.

7 2 small horns.

8 1d6 small and/or medium horns.

9 1d6 small, medium, and/or large horns.

10 Fangs.

11 Antennae. Psychic characters get a bonus, at the GM's discretion.

12 Character has a fleshy hood that he/she can raise at will (e.g. a king cobra, or those spitting dinosaurs in "Jurassic Park").

13 Character has an unusually small head.

14 Character has an unusually large head.

15 Character has an unusually long neck.

16 Character has an unusually short neck.

13. Arms and Legs

2 Character wears bracers (e.g. Wonder Woman).

3 Character wears arm bands.

4 Character is always wearing gloves.

5 Character is always wearing fingerless gloves.

6 Character is always wearing one glove on one hand.

7 Character's forearms are wrapped in cloth.

8 Character's non-writing arm is covered in chain or banded mail (e.g. Roman gladiators).

9 Webbed hands/feet. Swimming speed is doubled.

10 Character wears buff-cuff boots (knee high with large, flapping cuffs that extended down to the middle of the calf, like the Three Musketeers).

11 Character constantly wears military-style combat boots.

12 Character wears caligas (Roman sandals with laces that twist up the calves).

13 Character wears knee-high boots made of fur.

14 Character wears knee-high boots.

15 Character wears thigh-high boots.

16 Character has sucker cups for hands, and cannot drop an item or have an item pulled away from the suckers. The GM may also wish to give a bonus when trying to grapple, climb a ladder or rope, etc. Sucker cups are not strong enough to hold the character's weight for longer than a few seconds, and cannot be used to climb walls.

12. Face and Hands

2 One ear is missing.

3 Unusually small ears.

4 Unusually large ears. Exact size is up to the player.

5 Pointed ears.

6 Character has a bony carapace about the skull. This can be as simple as the Klingon forehead lump or the protective ridge of a triceratops. Exact size and shape are up to the player. Any defensive bonuses are up to the GM.

7 Character has a double-hinged neck, like an owl. Head can rotate up to 180 degrees.

8 Character wears long sleeved leather hawking gloves that extend to the elbow.

9 Character has extra fingers and toes, one on each hand and foot.

10 Character is missing [1d4] fingers on one hand. Any penalties are at the GM's discretion.

11 Character has an extra pair of arms. May use an extra weapon without penalties and gains one extra attack per round, but no extra actions. Ambidextrous characters may use 4 weapons at a time, but only get the one extra attack. Any strength bonuses are at the GMs discretion.

12 Character has a hook or blade in place of non-writing hand. Weapon attacks and does damage like a regular knife.

13 Character wears a peculiar, ornate ring. Exact value is at the GM's discretion.

14 Character wears a signet ring engraved with an initial.

15 Character wears a metal gauntlet on the dominant hand. Any punch delivered by this hand does double damage.

16 Character wears wrist bands.

16. Clothing

2 Character wears sashes across its chest and waist. Random colour is optional.

3 Character wears hakami and kami (the traditional baggy pants and loose, three-part shirt worn by the ancient samurai).

4 Character wears black clothing.

5 Character wears some obvious holy symbol.

6 Character wears a bandana.

7 Character wears a trench coat in all weather.

8 Character has a small, drawstring wizard's pouch. What's in it is up to the player.

9 Character wears a penula (a pointed hood that clasps under the chin and angles down over one shoulder).

10 Character wears a belt made of rope.

11 Character wears a collar made of rope.

12 Character wears tights.

13 Character wears a sporran.

14 Character wears a tunic.

15 Character wears a kilt or a dress (player's preference).

16 Character wears a scarf.

14. Hands and Feet

2 Character has sticky pads on hands and feet. The secretion can be controlled by the character. The glue is strong enough to hold the character's weight and can be used for climbing near-sheer walls. The glue will not hold on glass or non-stick metal. Glue will adhere to dirt walls, but would probably just pull the dirt away from the wall. Note that the character will tire quickly if lifting and supporting it's own body weight for extended periods of time.

3 Claws. Damage of the claws and penalties for using firearms and other items are at the GM's discretion.

4 Retractable claws. Since the claws can be withdrawn, there is no penalty for using firearms or other weapons and items. Damage is up to the GM.

5 Character has bear-like paws, and cannot use any item that has a trigger or requires an opposable thumb. Damage of the nails on the paws is up to the GM.

6 Character has crab-like pincers, and cannot use any item that has a trigger, but may still use items with long handles such as axes and long swords. Damage from the pincers is up to the GM. -

7 Character has simian hands and feet, with long fingers and an unopposable thumb. Character may suffer a penalty when using firearms, but gets a bonus when climbing. Exact bonuses and penalties are up to the GM.

8 Character has lizard-like hands, with three fingers and two opposable thumbs. Character gets no bonuses or penalties.

9 Character has tentacles from the elbows down, and may only use items with long handles such as swords or axes.

10 Character has insectoid hands, with three fingers equally spaced around the edge of a fuzzy palm, and suffers a penalty when using heavy items with handles such as swords, but may use firearms with no hindrances. Exact penalties are up to the GM. (Take a triangle and put a circle in the middle that touches the three sides. Now try to picture it as the hand and you'll get the picture.)

11 Character has long, ridged hooks, like the hands of a praying mantis, that extend from the sides of the forearm out past the hands. Character's hands can be used normally. Exact damage of the hooks is up to the GM. (Just take a look a praying mantis' hands and imagine them coming out of your forearms.)

12 Unusually long fingers and toes. No bonus or penalty.

13 Character is pigeon toed. Both feet point out to the side. No penalty.

14 Character is under toed. Both feet point in, toward each other. No penalty.

15 Character is missing one hand. Penalty is at the GM's discretion.

16 Character has a withered hand that is useless. Penalty is up to the GM.

15. Hands and Clothes

2 Character has 1 long fingernail.

3 Character has 1 long fingernail on each hand.

4 Character wears the teeth of those beaten in battle as jewelry. Note that the character doesn't stop at every fight to pull the teeth of everyone who was killed, only important victories, as a trophy.

5 Character wears the scalps of those bested in battle on a belt. Note that the character doesn't stop after every fight to scalp everyone who was killed, only after important victories, as a trophy.

6 Character wears the ears of those beaten in battle on a belt. Note that the character doesn't stop after every fight to cut off the ears of everyone who was has killed, etc.

7 Character wears the finger bones of those beaten in battle as jewelry. Note that the character doesn't stop after every fight, etc.

8 Character wears a leather jacket (the pilot type or the biker kind). The exact style of the jacket is up to the player.

9 Character wears a mexican style baja.

10 Character wears a chadar (a long cloak that covers the entire body, leaving only the space between the bridge and the tip of the nose exposed). Chadars are usually black, but may also be red or green.

11 Character wears a bliaud, a cape that either joins on one shoulder, or has a thick swatch of cloth that covers the front of the shoulders (e.g. Prince Valiant).

12 The character wears a palla, a form-fitting cloak with a hood that extends down below the ankle (e.g. Morticia Addams' dress with a hood attached).

13 The character wears a tanned leather, buckskin shirt.

14 The character wears tanned leather, buckskin pants, often with a fringe down the sides of the legs.

15 Character wears a sash around its waist. Random colour is optional.

16 Character wears a sash around its chest. Random colour is optional.

Random Location table

(1d10)

1 forehead
2 face
3 chest
4 arms
5 hands
6 legs
7 back
8 neck
9 stomach
10 head

17. Clothes

2 Character wears a loin cloth.

3 Character wears a loin cloth with a flap of cloth that hangs below the knees.

4 Character wears a necklace. Value is up to the GM.

5 Character wears a necklace with 1 medallion. Value is up to the GM.

6 Character wears a necklace with 1 charm. Value is up to the GM.

7 Character wears a necklace with 1d4 charms. Value is up to the GM.

8 Character wears [1d10] necklaces. Value is up to the GM.

9 Character wears a shirt made of chainmail. This may be worn over another shirt. Any armor bonuses are up to the GM.

10 Character has metal studs implanted under the skin that stick out. Roll on LOCATION table to find out where. If the studs are on the hands, any additional damage from punching should be determined by the GM.

11 Character's clothing is dirty and tattered.

12 Character wears a tight-fitting bodysuit or wetsuit.

13 Character wears a "weaper" cloak, a long cloak with a baggy hood that covers most of the face (e.g. Death).

14 Character wears a cape with a "weaper" hood, a baggy hood that covers most of the face (see Enigma's "Sadeness" video clip for examples).

15 Character wears a pointed hat and robe (e.g. Gandulf). Magic using character gain a bonus. Exact bonus is up to the GM.

16 Character carries a satchel.

Random Colour Table (2d12)

2 green	13 blue
3 yellow	14 white
4 black	15 silver
5 orange	16 pink
6 grey	17 aquamarine
7 turquoise	18 violet
8 peach	19 bronze
9 gold	20 copper
10 purple	21 coral
11 tan	22 olive
12 red	23 khaki
	24 lime

18. Clothes

2 Character wears a bandolier.

3 Character carries a wooden staff or shillelagh.

4 Character wears a visor. This could be the type worn by casino dealers, or the kind that covers the eyes.

5 Character wears a breather. This could be something as simple as a gas mask, or as complicated as a full SCUBA type apperatus.

6 The character wears a shepherd's cape (a large, rectangular piece of cloth with a round hole cut close to one of the longer edges for the wearer's head).

7 Character wears suspenders.

8 Character wears a neckerchief, a bandana tied around the neck (e.g. cowboys).

9 Character has a bony shell. Roll on LOCATION table to determine where. Any armor bonuses are at the GM's discretion.

10 Character has armor plates protruding from its back. Any armor bonuses are up to the GM.

11 Character has gills and is amphibious.

12 Character has quills or spines. Roll on LOCATION table to determine where. Quills on the arms or hands may be used as a weapon, exact damage is up to the GM.

13 Character has a gliding membrane stretched between the elbows and the knees, and is capable of gliding short distances. For every 50' the character glides, lose 10' in altitude.

14 Character has a biodefensive spray. Roll [1d6] to determine type.

(1) Stink—the character can project an awful stench, like a skunk. This will drive off most non-sentient creatures.

(2) Stun—the character can stun with the spray. Targets hit with this spray lose consciousness for [1d10] minutes.

(3) Poison—character sprays a potent poison. Poison is as strong as cobra venom.

(4) Paralyze—character can paralyze targets. Victims are still aware of things around them, but cannot move

(5) Blind—spray blinds those affected for [1d12] rounds.

(6) Burn—spray burns exposed skin. Exact damage done by sprays and character's ability to use the spray are up to the GM.

15 The character has bioluminescence. A gland on the character's body glows with the intensity of a torch. The character can turn the glow on and off at will. Roll on LOCATION table to determine where the gland is.

16 The character has a thermal sensor, and can track heat sources up to 100' away.

19. Body

2 Character has the body of a horse from the waist down. Typically, the height of the horse-body is less than 4 feet. Speed, weight capabilties, and kicking ability are the same as a small horse. The player may also choose to have the body of a deer, zebra, cow, or similar creature, rather than a horse. The Centaurs of legend had full-sized horse bodies from the waist down. However, on the TV show "Hercules, the Legendary Journies," centaurs have pony-sized bodies.

3 Character has the legs of a goat. No bonuses or penalties suffered other than finding clothes that fit.

4 Character has the body of a bird from the waist down. There are three basic types of bird body:

(1) Eagle/bird of prey. This gives the character dangerously sharp talons.

(2) Ostrich. This increases the character's running speed.

(3) Owl. The short, powerful legs of an owl increase the character's dexterity. Exact bonuses are up to the GM.

5 Character has the body of a snake from the waist down. The body is [1d12] + 6 feet long. Note that the character cannot rise higher than 1/3 of the total length of the body (i.e. a character with a 6' long body must have 4' of that body on the ground for support). The character suffers a penalty when trying to dodge an attack, but its walking speed is doubled. The player may wish to have a worm, centipede, or similar body instead of a snake. Exact penalties and bonuses are up to the GM.

6 Character has the body of an octopus or squid from the waist down. Dexterity is increased, but walking speed remains the same. Exact bonus is up to the GM.

7 Character has animal ears. The type of ears are up to the player. Hearing is twice as sensitive as normal.

8 Character has the body of an insect for legs. Dexterity is unaffected, but walking speed is doubled. Some typical insect bodies: bee, ant, spider, cricket, and mantis. Note that if the character chooses a bee body, the stinger will detach if used, killing the character. Also, if the character chooses a scorpion or other stinging insect, the stinger may be used as a weapon, but is not poisonous.

9 Character has the body of a large cat body for legs. Walking speed is doubled, and dodging ability is increased. The claws can be used as a weapon, and balance is greatly increased. Exact bonuses and claw damage is up to the GM.

10 Unusually long arms & legs. No bonus.

11 Unusually short arms & legs. No penalty.

12 Oversized musculature. The character's muscles bulge through the skin in a grotesque manner. Strength is unaffected, but looks or charisma suffers.

13 Character is a midget/dwarf. Strength and dexterity suffer. Exact penalties are up to the GM.

14 Character has prominent veins/arteries, clearly visible through skin.

15 Character has a prominent skeletal structure and looks anorexic. Character's bones are clearly outlined underneath the skin.

16 Character has a dorsal fin or decorative membrane protruding from his/her back.

20. Body

2 Character has extra-thick fat. Apparent size is unaffected, but weight is doubled. Character has a high resistance to cold, but suffers in warm temperatures.

3 Character has a scorpion-like tail. Exact damage and potency of the poison is at the GM's discretion.

4 Character has an alligator-like tail. Tail is thick and heavy, and not very mobile, but may be used as an attack by clubbing. Exact damage and striking ability is up to the GM. The tail could resemble an alligator or crocodile tail, or could be more similar to a dinosaur's tail.

5 Character has a thin, prehensile lizard-like tail. The tail can't pick things up, but may be used like a whip in an attack. If the tail is cut off, it regrows in 2 weeks. Exact damage is up to the GM.

6 Character has a rodent-like tail. Tail is 3 feet + 1d20 inches long. It may be used to pick up objects less than 2 lbs. in weight.

7 Character has a feline tail. Dexterity is increased.

8 Character has an possum-like tail. The tail is not maneuverable enough to be used for carrying objects, but may be used to suspend the character from tree branches, bars, or other such objects that it can wrap around.

9 Character has a reptile tail. Roll [1d6] to determine the type:

1-3. The tail is spiked. Does the same damage as 3 knives. Exact striking ability is up to the GM.

4-6. The tail is clubbed. Does the same damage as a heavy club. Exact striking ability is up to the GM.

10 Character has a canine tail. The tail may not be used as an attack, cannot lift objects, and cannot be used to perform any functions, but the character's true emotions are always known.

11 Character has wings and can fly at a rate of twice the character's walking speed. Character can fly carrying up to its own weight. Wings heal at twice the speed of arms. The wings may or may not be attached to the arms—the player may choose to have them project from the back. (e.g. bat, bird, butterfly, dragonfly)

12 Lanky build.

13 Childish facial features.

14 Character has a dark aura, and seems evil not matter what is said or done.

15 Character has a bright aura, and seems good no matter what is said or done.

16 Character is perfectly normal. The character is so normal, in fact, that people rarely notice it is there.