

The Dragon #11

\$1.50
Vol. II, No. 5
December



Featuring . . .
Sea Magic
S&S by Fritz Leiber

Groth



By M.A.R. Barker

In this edition I shall carry on with the answering of questions put by players via the mails. If anyone has other queries about "Empire of the Petal Throne," "War of Wizards" (which fits into the game scheme as a one-on-one duel between two wizards), or TSR's new set of miniature rules, "Legions of the Petal Throne," please do send them in, and I shall try to reply.

(1) *One sentence was left incomplete by the typist in the rule-book for "Empire of the Petal Throne": p. 52, in reference to the Shin's tail. How many hit dice does the tail do, is a saving throw against poison (etc.) needed, and is it possible for a Shin to coordinate his combat, allowing him to use both his tail and some other weapon in the same combat round? [Paraphrased from a letter from Mr. Dale Dunn of Palm Bay, Pa.]*

The Shén tail ends in a mace-like horny elongated ball, rather similar in texture to a pineapple. It is hard and is swung with great force, but it is not very heavy. Therefore, if a tail hits, I let it do one four-sided die of damage (no damage plusses on this). The Shén tend to lash their tails in battle-rage and cannot thus consciously coordinate both the tail and their other weapons in a fight. Indeed, if the Shén has a low dexterity, I would roll each round to see if he accidentally hits one of his companions — probably not doing much damage but knocking the comrade's aim off, disconcerting him, etc. To check this (and other dexterity problems), roll percentile dice, and if the score is less than the being's dexterity score, then he has no difficulty; if it exceeds his dexterity, then — he has accidentally struck a companion, failed in what he was attempting, etc. No saving throw is needed for a Shen tail blow since the thing is hard and mace-like and thus not poisoned. To see if it hits, use the table for nonhumans, etc. in Sec. 720. I allow no hit plusses or damage plusses for this sort of involuntary tail-lashing, but referees may modify this if they wish.

(2) *On page 28, paragraph five under Sec. 710, you say that "nonhumans having a basic potential of two dice are thus intrinsically twice as strong and resistant to wounds, and they rise in levels accordingly." Does this mean that "point-wise" for every level a Hlýss rose, a human would have risen two? [Also from Mr. Dunn's letter]*

No, I never considered that nonhumans would rise at a different rate than men; only that they could go up in levels like men, and when they achieved a new level they would have more hit-dice than men. Thus, when a Shén reaches 2,001 experience points, he will be Level II, and if he is a warrior, he will have four dice of hit-points to a man's two. My use of the word "accordingly" is admittedly a source of confusion here. The problem is that "monsters" do not go up levels or attain experience, while intelligent nonhuman races should certainly do so.

(3) *Is it not too difficult for players to attain really high levels in the game? Reduced experience points make it next to impossible for one to climb from Level X to Level XI, for example. [From an unknown questioner at GenCon]*

The answer is that I more or less deliberately tried to keep players (and nonplayer allies and henchmen) from rising far too fast for the game. I have played in D-and-D campaigns in which we all shot right up to 27th level wizards or whatever, and — in my opinion — the fun was lost. As a result, I may have made it TOO hard for players to get up into the rarified atmosphere of the Imperial court. On the other hand, looking at it more realistically, a foreigner who

has just got off the boat a few months ago could hardly rise to be president of Standard Oil, be elected to the U.S. Senate, and be ordained a bishop of the Catholic Church all within a year could he? The higher levels should only be achieved by those who stay in a campaign, play intelligently and use all of the possibilities, and who gradually become known in the Empire for their abilities. — It is also true that it is more entertaining to remain at a comparatively lower level where one has more freedom of action and can move around. Not so low, however, that any passing critter can do the player in, but still below that point in one's career where the temple authorities lay a pile of parchments upon one's desk and say, "Your daily administrative tasks, m'lord." There is a fine balance between making the game too easy and too hard: if one is permitted to rise too quickly, the court intrigues and Imperial bureaucracy can be deadly, and if it is made too difficult then one's players all die too easily and become discouraged. To solve the latter problem, it is wise to search for helpful nonplayer characters who will accompany a party of low-level people, loan them magical devices (in return for some goal, of course), or who will provide them with troops and flunkies to take the brunt of the action. Some of our most enjoyable adventures have been in the company of aspiring nobles, greedy tomb-robbers, devious scholars, and Imperial officials on some sort of mission. The only limitations are those of the referee's skill in developing a "scenario."

(4) *Who — or what — are the "Demons" you mention here and there? Are they allied with the gods and cohorts?*

I have no complete list of Demons; I only know of about a hundred of them thus far, and there are others I do not want to know about! Some of these creatures are only "monsters": i.e. single entities of a purely physical sort which inhabit areas of one or another of the ancient labyrinths, a particular remote outdoor area, etc. Others are minor beings of the same interdimensional sort as the gods and cohorts — but of far less power and usually of limited potentiality of appearance. A number of these beings are under the control of the inner circles of one temple or another, set as guardians of treasure or secret shrines, etc. They are invariably hostile to man, and the wizards and high level priests who control them run terrible risks. Of course, there are also "purely legendary" beasts which are simply fictional and play a part only in the epics and the mythology of the five empires. The development and placement of these "Saturday Night Specials" should be the job of the referee — who will hopefully take pity upon his unfortunate players by making each such demon somehow vulnerable or amenable to neutrality.

(5) *How are the Ssú organized, where are their cities, etc.?*

Ssú cities are mainly underground — they go on for miles. The Ssú live in large nest-groups, and not much is known about their social organization. Since they are basically inimical to man, their deities and other such matters are unknown. I have had players who wanted to start the game as Ssú, but this is difficult in that no Ssú can ever cooperate with a human, or vice-versa. If one is fighting a miniatures battle (with The Old Guard's excellent figure of a Ssú — and the armoured Ssú may be coming soon as well), then their military organization becomes relevant: they usually carry the weapons shown in the book, but they may have halberds, maces, long spears, and even pikes. They also use missile weapons (shortbows and composite bows, light and medium crossbows), and in their burrows they have light bolt throwers (ballistae) with which to defend their tunnels. "Legions of the Petal Throne" provides a rough percentage breakdown of these forces.

Ssú society, so far as is known, is divided into workers and fighters; the latter category is subdivided into warriors and magic-users, with administrators being chosen from the latter group. Their means of reproduction is oviparous, their young being born in leathery sac-like eggs. Current theory has it that there are only two Ssú sexes, plus the neuter workers, but this is not proved so far as I know.

Ssú cities exist under the rocky wasteland of hexes 2931, 3032, 3133, 2934, and a few off the map to the east. Not much shows on the surface — a tunnel mouth here, a few rounded, alien-looking surface structures there — except at the place humans call just "Ssú" in hex 2932. There, I am told, there are crumbling black obelisks and monolithic tumbled ruins. The ruins of Ssuganá, now in human-occupied Pecháno (hex 2831) are of this same type. They are

connected by the underground tube-car system with various other Ssú cities. Indeed, these means of transportation, mostly relics of the days when human technology was at its height on Tékumel, are well known to the Ssú, who use them with considerable skill. They have mapped out some of the routes and know a great deal -about cities halfway around the planet. Both the Ssú and their cousins the Hlýss make use of these vehicles for exploration of the ruined cities of their human neighbours, and they have laid traps in some tunnels for unwary human adventurers.

The Ssú are mainly an underground race and would come out to fight a pitched battle only if they were forced to do so; otherwise they simply retreat into their labyrinthine burrows and await any human party with considerable relish.

The larger subspecies of the Ssú, the Black Ssú, occupy an area on the other side of Tékumel, reachable only by underground transport. They are much larger (approximately eight feet or so in height), and their ragged integument is dark grey ranging to black, rather than the grey or brownish grey of the Ssú seen in the five empires. Their region is largely an island or series of islands, and they prefer to remain there, sending out only rare forays into human territory. Their scouts have contacted the human peoples of the nearby mainland; these people are culturally at about the same stage as the early middle ages of Europe, a somewhat loose feudal confederation, living in small villages under the protection of petty lordlings. Their only real advantage is that they possess a primitive form of cavalry: the Denebian Bazháq, mentioned on p. 4 of the book. This six-legged, rather reptilian-looking beast is slower and somewhat weaker than a horse, but it provides pretty good riding stock, and the local people have used it for centuries. They have never developed formed cavalry, however, because their social structure is so fragmented — hostile lordlings and localized clan control. The Black Ssú prefer not to fight pitched battles in any case and content themselves with sending scouts and small parties to harass and destroy human settlements. There is an ancient human city (with a subterranean transport depot still in barely operable condition) in the vicinity of this region, but only one of the vehicle routes leads to this place, and thus far only one group of player characters has found it — and they have yet to get back! This will take some considerable ingenuity since the

Bazháq are too large to fit into one of the little cars.

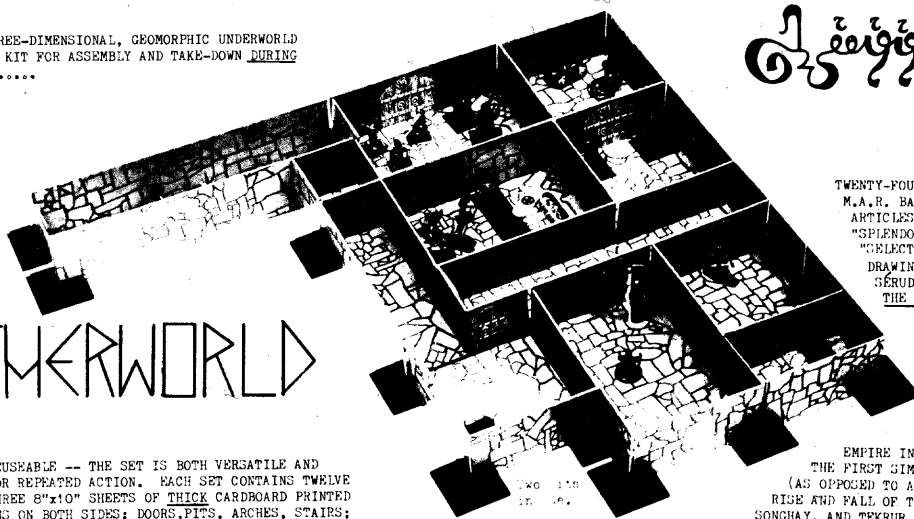
(6) *Who does the female warrior figure just produced by The Old Guard represent?*

She is a Yán Koryáni javelin-girl, a common troop type in their light infantry. Clans in Yán Kór are often matriarchal, and their legions (called Gurék) may contain both men and women. Both sexes receive military training from childhood on, and adolescent girls frequently fight alongside the boys as slingers and javelin-throwers — skirmish troops. Older women serve with their husbands and brothers as well, and there is one legion, the Gurék of Lord Dáiche Hetrudákte, which permits only couples in its ranks; should one partner be captured or slain, the other must remarry at once or leave the legion. This legion is based at the village of Gregeésa in hex 5727, but it is now in hex 5112. Should one fight against this unit, the figures for it would be approximately half male and half female! Almost any Yán Koryáni battle array should contain a good percentage of light female infantry, plus some medium troops and even some heavies. Yán Kór also has some good women generals: e.g. Lady Si' Zi'ris Qáya, the "princess of the North," whose Lorún Gurék (based in hex 6120, now at Tléky Miriyá) is considered a good unit; it is composed of the Lorún, the semi-nomadic hunters and fishers of the northern steppes. Lady Si' Zi'ris Qáya is a rival of another female general, Lady Mmi'r Quayél, the Baron's current mistress and the sister of Lord Ssá Quayél. She commands the Second Gurék of Mighty Yán Kór, and he is in charge of the First Gurék. Her troops are famed as heavy infantrymen, and the unit also contains some good heavy bowmen. A third woman officer of note is Lady Déq Dimáni, general of the Gurék of Vrídu. This legion is based on the island of Vrídu and is now at Kái in Pijéna. These troops consist of priests and priestesses devoted to the Lord of Sacrifice, a local variety of Vimúhla, and they fight as fanatics. Female figures are thus needed in order to simulate a properly balanced Yán Koryáni army.

(7) *Who writes the magical scrolls which are found on Tékumel? Are the priests of Ksaral still actively making the Underworld creatures of the ancient days (e.g. the Hrá)?*

Scroll-writing is a secret art in several temples, particularly Thúmis and Keténgku for the "good" alignment and Ksarul-Gru-

THE FIRST THREE-DIMENSIONAL, GEOMORPHIC UNDERWORLD CONSTRUCTION KIT FOR ASSEMBLY AND TAKE-DOWN DURING "ADVENTURES".....



NETHERWORLD

EVERY PART IS REUSABLE -- THE SET IS BOTH VERSATILE AND STURDY ENOUGH FOR REPEATED ACTION. EACH SET CONTAINS TWELVE BRACE PIECES, THREE 8"x10" SHEETS OF THICK CARDBOARD PRINTED IN STONE PATTERN ON BOTH SIDES; DOORS, PITS, ARCHES, STAIRS; INSTRUCTIONS. NETHERWORLD..... 6.95

MODULAR PACK #1 EIGHT BRACE PIECES..... 2.95

MODULAR PACK #2 THREE WALL/FLOOR SHEETS; DOORS, PITS, ARCHES, STAIRS; INSTRUCTIONS..... 2.95

ALL ITEMS SHIPPED POST-PAID, BY THE IMPERIUM PUBLISHING COMPANY BOX 9854 MINNEAPOLIS, MN, 5544

DEALER INQUIRIES WELCOMED. MN RESIDENTS ADD 4% SALES TAX.



THE Tékumel JOURNAL

TWENTY-FOUR PAGES OF ART AND ARTICLES ON PROF. M.A.R. BARKER'S FANTASY WORLD OF Tékumel! ARTICLES IN THE FIRST ISSUE: "TEMPLE OF THÚMIS", "SPLENDOR OF SHÉRYU", BOTH BY PROF. BARKER; "SELECTED BIOGRAPHIES", AND "NON CUSTOMS". DRAWINGS OF A PÉ CHÓI WARRIOR IN ARMOR, A KÁYI, SÉRUDLA, RU'UN, PESHÉNGA, AND MORE! THE Tékumel JOURNAL #1..... 2.00

Timbuktu

EMPIRE IN THE WEST AFRICAN SUDAN 1050-1550 A.D. THE FIRST SIMULATION OF AN AFRICAN HISTORICAL SUBJECT (AS OPPOSED TO A COLONIAL WAR IN AFRICA) WHICH COVERS THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GOLD-TRADING EMPIRES OF GHANA, MALI, SONGHAY, AND TEKRUR. TRIBAL EMPIRES STRUGGLE TO OVERCOME EACH OTHER AND THEIR OWN INTERNAL DECAY IN ATTEMPTS TO GAIN GLORY. RULES COVER LOCAL RAIDS, MAHDIS, DESERT MARCHES, REVOLT, MAJOR TRADE ROUTES, TRIBE AND EMPIRE. OPTIONAL RULES OFFER POSSIBLE PORTUGUESE INTERVENTION, THE SONGHAY RIVER FLEET, SLAVERY, AND MORE. NINE-COLOR MAP, 21 DIE-CUT COUNTERS, RULES BOOK. TIMBUKTU..... 7.95

IMPERIUM

gánu for the "evil." Other sects occasionally produce scrolls as well, though they are not famed for it. It requires much preparation, special training, and ascetic dedication to the art to produce a magical scroll. Upon attaining about XVth level (by the standards given in the book) a priest might enroll himself-herself with one of the scroll masters. It then takes a year or two to learn: the making of special paper and ink, the ceremonies connected with the production of a scroll, instruction in the secret forms of calligraphy and writing which make it efficacious, the purification of the writer so that his own imperfections do not creep through into the scroll, etc. It then takes a few years more to master the art of writing higher and higher level scrolls. Really powerful scrolls may take a year in themselves to write and are done by a team of priests. The referee must set up special rules for those who wish to enter this field. So far as the priests of Ksáru are concerned, much of their ancient skill is now lost — or so well hidden that it cannot be seen by others. There are rumours of concealed laboratories in which Hrá, Vorodlá, and others are produced — often to be sold to the priests of Sáru, who have much to do with the Underworlds — but none of these places is known to the Imperium, so far as I know. Creatures encountered by the players are thus usually centuries old — possibly millenia — and could not be constructed today, at least so Lord Fereshma'a hiKúrodu, High Priest of Ksáru in Jakállá, confided to me. I suspect that there may be some very secret workshops yet, but I doubt whether players in the game could find them, so well are they guarded.

FLORIDA'S LARGEST

Fantasy and military wargame shop. Airfix • Archive • A-H • Battleline • C in C • Garrison • GDW • GHO • Genadier • Heritage • Mcewan • Metagaming • Minifig Ral Partha • SPI • Superior • TSR • WRG • and others. **Quantity discounts.** Catalog 50¢-refundable first order.

MODELERS MART — Dept D

760 N. Indian Rocks Road
Belleair Bluffs, Fl 33540 (St. Petersburg Area)

STARSHIP & EMPIRE

THE NEW SPACE WARGAME !

Gather your starships in *FLEETS* to scout the enemy and invade thru hyperspace. Experience effects of inertia and gravity, as you *PLUNGE* into the space of distant suns. Tap the energy of each vessel to maneuver and *ATTACK!*

R² GAMES \$8⁷⁵ postpaid
P.O. BOX 8314, DPT 2
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84108

Convention Schedule 1978

Winter Fantasy 2 — Jan 7-8, Lake Geneva, Wis. — Legion Hall, 735 Henry St. Sat. 8:00 AM-Midnight Sun. 8:00 AM-6:00 PM Games Scheduled: D&D, Warlocks and Warriors, Dungeon!, Legions of the Petal Throne, Metamorphis Alpha, Lankhmar, Star Probe, Star Empires, Snit Smashing, Snit's Revenge, Boothill, Pit, Fight in the Skies, Ogre, War of the Rings, Mahjong, Swords and Spells, Chainmail, Orbit War, + Open Gaming. Gift Certificates as prizes. Registration Fee \$3.00. For more info contact — Winter Fantasy 2, P.O.B. 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. (414) 248-3625.

MITSCS WinterCon VI — Jan. 13-15, at the MIT Student Center, Cambridge, Mass. Featuring Dungeons & Dragons, Victory in the Pacific, Napoleonics, Godfire, Third Reich, Russian Campaign, Diplomacy, Armour Miniatures, Open Gaming & our very own Tactics Pl. Cost \$5.00/weekend, \$1. Fri. \$2.50 Sat. \$1.50 Sun. Discounts for pre-registration, AWA MITSGS. For more info contact Paul Bean, 13 Grove, Apt. 7, Boston, MA 02114.

The Return of ORCCON — Jan. 13-15, Cal. State Univ., Fullerton. D&D, miniatures & boardgames. \$2 for pre-registration, \$3 at door. For more info, write James J. Meyers, 13718 Norbeck Dr., La Marina, CA 90638.

Winter War V — Jan. 20-22, Foreign Language Building, University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill., Dungeons and Dragons, Diplomacy, WWII armour, Napoleonics miniatures, a marathon Terrible Swift Sword game (to be judged similar to a miniatures game), and the new space/economics game Hyperspace Explorer refereed by the designers. In addition sponsored tournaments will include Traveler (sponsored by GDW) and naval miniatures (by Cin C), computer game demonstrations, auctions, a variety of game dealers, and a series of seminars on all aspects of historical simulations. Entry Fee is \$2. for the weekend, plus \$1. for any tournament entry. No advanced registration required. For further information, including parking, lodging, and how to get there write to: Tony Svajlenka, 2020 N. Mattis, #201 M Champaign, Ill., 61820, Phone: (217) 359-6307.

War Con IV — Jan. 27-29, College Station, TX, at Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M University, \$1.50 Advance \$2.00 at Door. Tournaments: Kingmaker, D&D, Third Reich, Empire of the Petal Throne, Patrol, Panzer Leader, Stellar Conquest, Fight in the Skies, Chickamauga, Features: Auction, Seminars, Naval Miniatures, Armour Miniatures. For further info: write Gromets, Memorial Student Center, Box 5718, College Station, TX 77844. (713) 845-1515.

GenCon South — Feb. 9, 10 & 11, Robert Meyer Hotel, Jacksonville, FL. Endorsed by TSR Contact: Cowford Dragoons, 5333 Santa Monica Blvd., N. Jacksonville, FL 32207.

DunDraCon III — Feb. 19-21, 1978 DunDraCon, the science-fiction, fantasy, and role-playing game convention, returns for the third year; bigger and better than ever! We've moved to the Leamington Hotel so we have more room for Hucksters, Seminars, and the Tournaments. There will be plenty of room for all night games and expeditions. We have even added a film program! Memberships cost \$6 until February 1st. Memberships at the door will be \$7.50 for all 3 days, or \$3 for a single day. We have firm room rates at the hotel: \$18 single and \$22 double. Please contact the hotel for reservations: Leamington Hotel, 19th and Franklin, Oakland, Ca. 94612, (415) 835-5200. For information, write: DunDraCon III, 386 Alcatraz Avenue, Oakland, California 94618.

TEXCON — March 10, 11, 12, 1978, sponsored by the Austin Brigade of the Republic of Texas (ABRPT). Held at the historic Stephen F. Austin Hotel at Seventh and Congress, Austin, Texas.

TEXCON will feature: Boardgames; Miniatures; Diplomacy; seminars by such personalities as Howard Thompson and Steve Jackson of Metagaming Concepts, Forrest Brown of Westwall Enterprises, and Duke Siegfried of Heritage Models; Auction; Numerous Dealers; Commemorative TEXCON stamp cancellation; fully embroidered TEXCON patches; New games and miniatures releases; Mil Militaria; Art Room; Door Prizes; Exhibitions; Costume Competition; two full days of movies; Custom Trophies; Figure and Diorama competition in most nationally recognized categories. For further information phone Dan Kagan, (512) 926-4321 or write TEXCON, P.O. Box 12385, Austin, Texas 78711.