

LOG THAT FILES

#21

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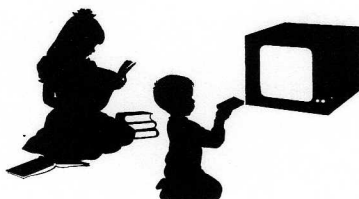


TONIGHT'S EPISODE: a feast in time of famine

TV UPDATE

Ah, Spring...that magical time of the year when a TV executive's thoughts turn to axing science fiction shows. It seems as if shows get less and less of a chance to be successful before being cut; time was when a producer could count on at least a season before the decision was made, but now it seems that the call is made after just an episode or two. I'm firmly convinced that the day is fast approaching when series will be routinely be cancelled *before* the first episode is even shown!

I've only heard about three shows that are getting the axe, but I'm sure that other IR contributors (Virgil, for example) know more than I do.



Going Nowhere

I was surprised that **Nowhere Man** was cut; it seems as if only it was only weeks ago that UPN was blaring commercials calling it "the hottest new show on the air, the one that *everyone's* talking about!". Nonetheless, the show is officially dead. There had already been some odd shenanigans behind the scenes: Larry Hertzog, the show's creator (and one of the few TV producers who spends time on the Internet) had somehow lost control of the series, and was no longer associated with it. It was at that point that the show took a major turn towards action/adventure/conspiracy, and started giving "answers". The final episode was supposed to answer all questions, but was only mildly informative at best; the hero, Tom Veil, discovered that he wasn't Tom Veil at all, but rather an FBI agent who had been assigned to investigate a secret organization. Apparently he'd been captured and brainwashed. He discovered that the technique that was used on him was eventually going to be used on the entire world. Beyond that, the conspiracy seems to have the power to kill people

and replace them with exact doubles. The number two man in the FBI is revealed to be a member, and commits suicide rather than talk to Veil.

As final answers, those don't really cut it; there's no real conclusion to the series. There's been some talk of TV movies, and it's possible that Disney (who produce the show) may try to market it to some other network (maybe ABC), but at this point resurrection of the show seems unlikely.

That's not a *terrible* tragedy in my book. *Nowhere Man* was a pretty watchable show (certainly far better than the always excerable *Star Trek: Voyager* that preceded it in the schedule), but it had failed to mark out a clear new territory for itself, and was in serious danger of becoming an exercise in futility. The conspiracy was simply too *powerful*; they were always one step ahead. Veil's few victories were minor at best, and he could never be sure if they were real. It was frustrating that he always seemed to end up back at square one. Furthermore, the issues weren't clear. Mind control and reality alteration are difficult to represent in a visual medium without causing the viewer to become confused, and ultimately turned off; only *Videodrome* comes to mind as a successful example of reality alteration in a movie, and it was as confusing as a movie can be (if anyone would care to explain it to me, please write). *Nowhere Man* had potential, but seemed to be threatening to fall into a rut; I'd have liked to see where it would have gone, but that no longer seems to be an option. So it goes.

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Odds & Ends

Also reported cancelled are *Space: Above and Beyond* and *Kindred: The Embraced*. Perhaps this reflects some hostility on the part of TV execs towards colons? In any case, since I didn't watch either show I can't really make any comment.

On a positive note, the producer of *Babylon 5* recently announced during a radio interview that the show's numbers had been run by the network execs and it's making money; the network is happy. "It would take an act of God" to stop renewal now.

I'm still mulling over the 2-hour Doctor Who TV movie; I'll have to watch it again before I make any solid judgements. Offhand, it wasn't too bad. But they really needed Daleks. ☺

THE WEDNESDAY GAME

It has been several months since a group of **IR** people met to set up a regular game. Much has changed since then; of the original crew, four have dropped out, leaving only four to play. Fortunately, that seems to be a workable number—though we've missed two sessions in a row recently.

The participants (in no particularly order) are Mark Sabalauskas, Scott Ferrier, Gil Pili, and me. The system is RuneQuest (mostly RQ III, with a few admixtures and improvements), and the setting is the standard RQ world of Glorantha. Since the position of GM rotates between all the players, it's convenient that we're all familiar with the world.

The campaign is a relatively low-level one. Characters started as comparatively weak Initiates in a small village called Storlock, located in a somewhat remote hilly area not terribly far from Prax; the closest city is Alone. The culture is Orlanthi, a barbarian people who worship Orlanth, self-styled King of the Gods, a god of Air. Worship of Orlanth is forbidden by the conquerors of the region, the huge and decadent Lunar Empire, but the cult remains the main source of resistance to the invaders.

A quick thumbnail sketch of the PCs:



Roc, a baker. Scott Ferrier plays this short, ugly, comical fellow. Bright and versatile, he has many spells—all of which are for use in baking. *Strength*, for example, aids him to pummel the dough. *Bladesharp* makes his knife extra keen as it slices a pie crust to fit the pan perfectly. *Endurance* helps him to stay

up late, baking into the wee hours. *Disrupt*...helps him to kill enemies who might otherwise slay him, ending his baking career. ☺

During the campaign thus far Roc has become a Thane of the village, won the Great Hunt by killing a Sabre-tooth Tiger, and was crowned the King of Flowers at the Flower Festival. He worships Orlanth and Odayla the Hunter God.

Vuli, a shepherd. Although technically of genius intelligence, Gil Pili has given Vuli a certain naive quality that can inspire fear in his companions. Vuli almost always says what's on his mind.

Vuli's most notable accomplishments of late have been the adoption of a Telmori (werewolf) boy, the murder of a Lunar horse (a tale that *must* be recounted in a future issue), and the kidnapping and ravishment of a Voria maiden at a Spring Ceremony (he later married the maid). Despite all this he has the best of intentions. ☺

Nalissa Sharptongue, a Chalana Arroy Initiate. This is Mark Sabalauskas' new character. A Healer, she is the only female in the party. She takes her vows of non-violence seriously, which on occasion has lead to acrimonious discussion in the group.

Gunner Smith, formerly the apprentice smith who recently moved up to run the shop. Since this is my own character, I'll forgo comedy and try to explain him a bit.

I decided to make a character who would stretch me a little, and counter my worst roleplaying tendencies. Gunnar would be tall, a good fighter, not particularly adept with magic, and—the most difficult decision of all—not bright. In fact, with an intelligence of 13 (exactly average for humans in RuneQuest) he was the moron of the group.

However, I'd decided that I'd roleplay him with a quality that isn't represented by a number in RuneQuest: wisdom. Though not a deep thinker, Gunnar would be cautious, careful, and considerate. I fear that in the game I may have played him as a little more intelligent than is appropriate, but in regard to his wisdom things seem to have worked out fairly well.

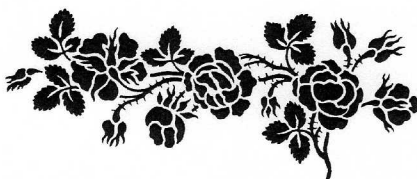
Gunnar is humble (though not entirely blind to his own abilities), a devout Initiate of Orlanth with no ambition to rise to higher rank (until recent events forced a re-evaluation of this stance), and genuinely fond of children. A peaceful man at heart, he can fight quite effectively if necessary—and obediently fights those that his cult and village say are his enemies. He is shy, a bit of a prude, and rarely drinks.

Physically Gunnar is tall and quite strong, as would be expected of a good smith. His dexterity is only average, and his constitution good but not astonishing. He's a relatively good-looking guy, in a rangy, raw-boned, sort of way; to my mind he looks vaguely Swedish. Due to some unusual

experiences, his Power (soul-force) is very high, though his repertoire of magic is limited. His most powerful spell is Healing (5), which he uses freely on the children of the village who come to him with injuries.

Gunnar's most unusual quality, however, is his voice. Although he has not gone through intensive training, his singing voice is almost supernaturally beautiful. I wanted this to be a natural quality, but since RuneQuest has no way to express such qualities I represented it with a high Sing skill instead. As the odds would have it, he has increased that skill several times since the campaign began, putting his Sing very close to 100%. Despite this (or perhaps because of it) Gunnar doesn't perform publicly. He considers his voice good, but has no idea how good it really is. If he did, he'd be quite embarrassed.

He's noted for little else. He's a competent smith, a passable woodworker, and a poor leatherworker. He has practiced his First Aid skill a great deal but his skill hovers in the 50% range. His combat skills are very good, and have improved greatly in the course of the campaign; as a result, he has been made a Thane of the village. This is ironic, since at heart he doesn't like to fight.



THREE FLOWERS

This was the first scenario that I ran for the Wednesday game. Perhaps I should briefly explain my scenario design approach: I set up situations. There are gamemasters who can devise wonderfully clever problems, puzzles for which the only proper answer becomes blindingly obvious only *after* it has been deduced. I respect the hell out of those rare GMs, but I'm not one of them. My strengths as a GM are probably my NPCs and my ability to work with a situation off-the-cuff. I design scenarios to play to those qualities.

When creating a scenario, therefore, I work up a situation that has certain tensions and plot flows built in. Various NPCs will likely be in conflict in some way, and the players will find themselves in the middle of it all. I plan exactly what the NPCs want, what they know about each other, and what misunderstandings they have. I also try to figure out at least a few ways that the situation might develop, and how the PCs will become involved. Almost always the party finds a new angle of approach, and complications always develop that lead to situations that I haven't anticipated at all. In that sense, my design philosophy is an open-ended one, not necessarily suitable

for everyone else. I'll include notes in italics to indicate how things went in actual play.

"Three Flowers" was designed for RuneQuest's Glorantha, but it should be possible to adapt it for other game systems. It took me about six three-hour sessions to finish, but your mileage may differ. ☺

The Setting

A grand "Festival of Flowers" is held once every five years at a point several days travel from the home village. The festival lasts seven days, and serves a number of functions. It is an extremely large market. It gives people from distant villages a chance to meet and strengthen their cultural bonds. Most importantly, the Festival is a major religious ceremony for the cult of Voria and the Orlanthi pantheon in general. Other activities include plays, dances, and songs.

Technically the cult of Voria (Spring) is the host of the festival. However, as part of the ceremony the Vorians (mostly female children) remain hidden for much of the event. Priestesses and Initiates of the cult of Ernalda serve as proxies for the Vorian maidens.

The Festival is held at a huge field near a major crossroad. Since most of the dwellings there are temporary, tents cover the field; however, there are a few permanent buildings. A sturdy wood and stone inn called the Broken Flagon is within the Festival area nearest to the crossroad. A wooden barn that is used by the inn serves as a Temple to Uleria (the Goddess of Love), and does a brisk business. A large stage is erected at the center of the festival. Several large barbecue pits are spaced through the area, and vendors everywhere hawk goods and food of all kinds. For the seven days of the Festival, the area is more like a city of tents than a field.

Groups tend to set up tents in distinct areas: the Orlanthi, Yelmalian, Ernaldans, and other groups all have their own "districts". A delegation of Chalana Arroy healers set up a fair-sized clinic in a good location. A small delegation of Humakti are present, their campsite notable for several duelling and practice rings.

The Ceremony

The primary purpose of the Festival is to insure the return of Spring. It is an ancient ceremony, a re-enactment of the loss of Spring in the earliest days of Time, when Winter reigned for three years. It was then that the people of the region gathered together to chose a Queen of Flowers, rediscover Spring, and drive out winter. Since that mythological event, every fifth winter has been unusually cold until the successful completion of the ceremony.

There are two main parts to the ceremony: the crowning of the Queen of Flowers and the Rediscovery of Spring.



Only the most beautiful women of the region may compete to win the crown. Since this is a religious event, entries are by cult; there is only one Orlanthi entrant, one Yelmalian entrant, etc. These are referred to as “Flowers” with a cult-appropriate prefix. The Orlanthi is known as the Windflower. The Yelmalian is the Sunflower. An Ulerian contestant would likely be called the Loveflower. If a worshipper of Malia were ever to compete (unlikely—although no cult is specifically barred from entering the contest except Valind, the people would destroy an openly chaotic delegation) she would no doubt be called the Sickflower.

When I ran this scenario a couple of Irripi Ontor sages played an amusing little game of wits with a Lhankor Mhy PC by coming up with unusual cults and trying to create an appropriate prefix for each. “Trickflower” or possibly “Squirtflower” (for obscure reasons) for the Trickster; “Healflower” for a Chalana Arroy worshipper; perhaps “Splitflower” or “Headflower” for a Thanatari; etc.

Thirty judges are selected by the Ernalda priestesses to select the Queen of Flowers. Most of the judges are highly placed or reputable men of good standing in their community. Women are traditionally excluded from judging the contest.

There are four main categories for the contest: Song, Dance, Oration, and Beauty.

The Queen of Flowers receives many gifts from visitors to the festival. Her cult and home village are especially blessed by Voria in the following year.

When I ran “3 Flowers” I had only three serious competitors in the contest: the Windflower (a thinly-disguised Orlanthi entrant), the Sunflower (Yalmalio), and the Moonflower (Lunar). Other “Flowers” could easily be added, depending on the makeup of the party.

The second part of the ceremony is the Rediscovery of Spring. Spring, in this case, is represented by a small ancient flower, carved with superlative skill from pure gold and studded with gems of all kinds; before the festival it is placed in a wooden case and hidden somewhere in the fairgrounds by the Ernalda priestesses. The only rule to its hiding is that it is not hidden within any private dwelling, nor in the sacred place of any temple.

All the men at the Festival are eligible to take part in the search. He who finds the Spring Flower is crowned the King of Flowers. He receives a portion of the gifts that are presented to the Queen of Flowers. His cult and home village are also especially blessed by Voria in the following year. The King of Flowers is usually considered lucky for

the rest of his life, and is likely to receive several advantageous offers of marriage.

When the Spring Flower is found, the Voria Initiates (all young children) come out from hiding, all carrying flowers which they give to one and all. The air, formerly chill, begins to warm.



This is a good example of a time when I wish that I could come up with a clever puzzle; were I better at that sort of thing, for example, a priestess might have recited an obscure poem that would reveal the hiding place when properly interpreted. Since I couldn't think of one, though, I simply went back to the original myth; since Winter reigned while Spring was lost, I decided that the boxed Spring Flower had been buried next to the spot where the Valindi (Ice) worshippers camped. Scott's character Roc followed that chain of logic (a path which Vuli started, but failed to pursue) and searching that area, he found the box. Roc made an odd King of Spring, but it seemed fair that he should have won that prize—particularly since he'd nobly wasted a one-use Divine Heal Wound spell at the start of the game.

Opening Moves

I. Travelling Orders. The village elders have delegated the PCs to represent the village at the Festival of Flowers. Their duties there will be light: to uphold clan honor, serve as judges of the contest if asked, and to present a gift to the Queen at the final ceremony: a beautifully crafted bronze rose, studded with semi-precious gems. They are given a large tent, (sufficient to house the entire party) to use at the Festival; although it is marked with wind runes it is not explicitly Orlanthi. The party is advised to look up Azeth Strongarm at the cooking pit, who will tell them where to pitch their tent.

II. On The Way. Travel encounters are traditional in RPG scenarios, of course. None of the encounters on the seven-day trip need be of great import, and as many or few may be used as you wish. Here are three possible encounters:

A) A white deer races through the party camp in the middle of the night. Following swiftly after it is an old Wild Hunter, a man who lives alone in the woods. He is friendly, and willing to talk for a short while, but must continue the hunt before long. *I find it convenient to sometimes pattern NPC personalities on minor characters from film and TV; this makes it easy to give them a distinctive feel quickly, and players have never caught on. In this case I patterned the Hunter after Oliver Reed's portrayal of the god Vulcan in The Adventures of Baron Munchausen.*

The Log That Flies

B) As the party marches along, keen-eyed characters may spot something odd ahead: a large swath of brush on the side of the road is simply gone. As they get closer they may see an odd glimmering at one end of the bare area; it looks like a lump of water one meter across. Close observation will show that this is a gorp, an acidic and chaotic blob-like creature. It possesses two chaotic features: it looks like a blob of clean water, and it can leap up to eight meters once per day (yes, even though it has no legs. That's chaos for you!).

C) A fellow traveller hails the party, and asks if they are going to the Festival. He claims to be a storyteller. In fact he *is* an accomplished storyteller, but of the con-man variety; he is a rogue and ne'er-do-well. If he finds out about the gift for the Queen, he may try to steal it at night and sneak off—but only if he's *sure* to get away with it. He's a cautious, charming fellow, and if the party is polite but wary they will find him a pleasant companion.

III. Arrival. The PCs may well feel overwhelmed when they finally reach the Festival; it's the largest gathering of people they've ever seen. Once they make contact with Azeth they are guided to a place to set up their tent. Their campground is in a comparatively quiet corner of the Festival.

IV. In The Night. Late that evening after the group has gone to sleep a figure staggers pell-mell into the party's tent. It is a man, apparently an Orlanthi but lacking any clan markings; he is bleeding copiously from numerous stab wounds in the back, and is obviously dying. He has no weapons, and a small object is clenched tightly in his right hand. Gaspingly he tells the PCs that he is one of the Secret Wind; a Lunar agent is after him. He has a message that must be given to the Wind Lord tomorrow at the Broken Flagon. He knows that he's dying, and insists that someone must go for him. The courier doesn't know what the Wind Lord looks like, but whoever goes should wear his green serpent broach (which the courier is presently wearing). The password is "the Bull's guts".

Just before he dies, he opens his hand and gives the contents to one of the PCs. It is the message: a common lunar (silver piece). The back is covered with fine scratches, which look random to a casual glance but reveal an odd pattern on careful inspection. The pattern is not decipherable by any of the party, however.

If the party attempts to heal the courier, they find that most of his wounds do not respond to healing magic. Some sort of

poison must be in the wounds, which are oddly small and deep. No matter what they try, the courier dies.

V. Stuck! The party is now in a real pickle. For one thing, they have an extremely inconvenient dead body on their hands. For another, they'll soon discover that Lunar patrols are on the hunt for a man with a green serpent broach—someone (the Lunar Agent in disguise) has tipped off the law that a criminal at the Festival is wearing it. Their religious affiliation demands that they try their best to deliver the message, nonetheless...

The Festival Calendar

Day 1—Selection. The Flowers arrive, an opening ceremony reenacts the loss of Spring, and people settle in. Judges are selected by the Ernalda priestesses.

Day 2—The contestants are shown to the people on the great stage. This event is not judged; it is as much to give bookies a chance to set odds as anything else.

Day 3—Song. The contestants take turns singing. They may also play musical instruments.

Day 4—Dance.

Day 5—Oration. A five or ten-minute oration is typical, on whatever subject each Flower chooses. Poetry is a popular choice.

Day 6—Beauty. The contestants show themselves in their most beautiful clothes, one at a time. At the conclusion of this event the votes for all four categories are totalled, and the winner is crowned the Queen of Flowers. As she stands on the stage with the King of Flowers warmth and the perfume of flowers spread through the air; Spring has finally come. The Queen spends the rest of the Festival parading around the ground with the King of Flowers (who spends that night with her as well, though she is not obligated to sleep with him).

Day 7—Closing ceremony.

The Conflict: Two major conflicts obtain at the Festival; one is obvious, one secret.

Conflict 1: An Uninvited Guest.

Though they have never competed in the Festival before, there is a large contingent from the Lunar Empire (conquerors of this region) present at the Festival this year. Among them is the Moonflower, who will be competing to become the Queen of Flowers. The Lunars have roped off a large area for their use, and have erected large and elaborate tents; their campground is





heavily guarded and patrolled by a force of forty troops.

The Moonflower is the subject of much gossip and speculation. She is almost never seen, and the few who glimpse her are unable to see her face beneath her heavy veil. Some say that she has danced before the Red Emperor himself, and is acquainted with dark and seductive mystic arts. No one in the Lunar contingent will discuss the Moonflower at all.

The Lunar presence makes life difficult for Orlanthi at the Festival; since worship of Orlanth is banned throughout the Empire, they must be careful not to reveal their religious affiliation. Beyond that, all good non-Lunars will be concerned that the Moonflower not be selected Queen of Flowers, since that would constitute a blessing on the Empire and give them a notable cultural foothold in the region. The obvious threat of the troops on hand and the power of the Lunar Empire which backs them makes direct action difficult and dangerous, however.

One or more of the PCs should be chosen as a judge of the contest, if possible; the politics of judging should lead to interesting conversations and debates. Throughout the festival the competition between the Flowers is a common subject of discussion, argument, and wagering.

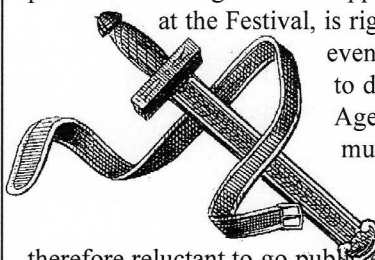
Note that the Lunars do not wish to win the Festival. It would be difficult to do so in any case, since the majority of judges will necessarily be anti-Lunar. The Lunars have come to establish a greater presence in the local culture, establishing a foothold in the regional consciousness. An outright win would antagonize many in the region.

Conflict Two: A Secret War. A continuing battle between the Lunar Empire and the underground Orlanthi resistance movement known as the Secret Wind has entered the Festival as well. Agents of the Secret Wind have amassed a large cache of magical weapons. Some are ancient artifacts discovered in ruins within the Empire. Others have been stolen from the Empire itself. The weapons have been buried in a hidden spot a few hours ride from the Festival, and a Secret Wind courier is at the Festival to hand over the consignment to a disguised Orlanthi Rune Lord for transport deeper into Orlanthi territory. Although the courier and the Rune Lord do not know one another by sight, a rendezvous has been planned to take place at The Broken Flagon.

Unfortunately an agent of Lunar Internal Security has been close on the trail of the weapons. The agent has

captured and killed several Secret Wind agents within the Empire, and has pursued the courier to the Festival. The true battle at the Festival is thus between the Lunar agent and the Rune Lord of the Secret Wind.

Both are anxious to keep the affair secret. The Rune Lord desires secrecy because it will be virtually impossible to smuggle the weapons quietly away if things get out of hand. The Lunar agent cannot afford a major diplomatic incident with the people of the region; if the Empire disrupts an ancient and important ceremony they will make many enemies at a time when their resources are stretched thin. Another problem is that the Lunar contingent at the Festival is unaware of the presence of the agent. Telo Apporat, the Lunar Constable



at the Festival, is rigorously honest and fair even to barbarians. If he were to discover that the Lunar Agent had committed several murders in the area, he would probably cause trouble.

The agent is therefore reluctant to go public except as a last resort. Instead, the agent will use a hired gang of thugs to threaten the party and manipulate events.

Non-Player Characters:

The Lunar Agent. The agent possesses a daunting array of Hero abilities (for those not familiar with Glorantha, a capital-H Hero is a mortal who has attained virtually superhuman abilities). These include mastery of most types of weapons and superhuman strength, vitality, and dexterity. Most valuable in the agent's arsenal of abilities is a Heroic disguise ability. The agent is able to create disguises that are virtually impenetrable. Alteration in appearance, voice, gender, and class are ridiculously easy for the agent. Height may be increased or reduced by up to eight inches, and weight by a comparable amount. The Agent also speaks an enormous number of languages, *including Stormtongue*, the Orlanthi holy speech. A vast repertoire of powerful spells may be assumed as well. The Agent has a small dagger of unusual shape; the metal is dark and of an unknown type. The handle is a sharp crescent moon, making it virtually impossible to wield in combat; it should be treated as a dagger with a -25% chance, doing 1-3 points of damage. However, the dagger acts as a slave collar when inserted in a victim, blocking their ability to cast spells or seek Divine Intervention. The dagger also causes a feeling of extreme pain and cold.

In straight-on combat the Agent has an excellent chance (at least 50-50) of defeating the entire party. Fortunately, such combat is unlikely.

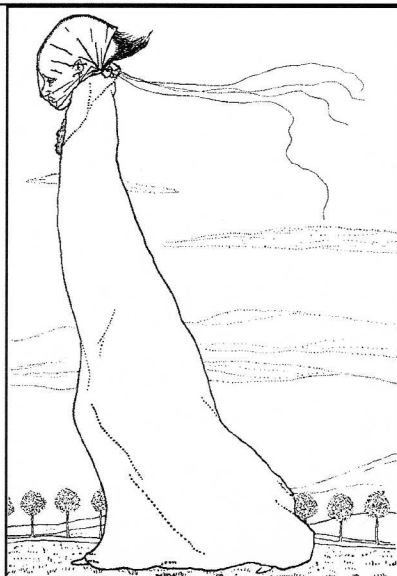
The Log That Flies

If the Agent has a weakness it is a touch of arrogance and over-confidence. The use of disguises is almost an addiction for the Agent. In fact, the Agent is *two* of the other NPCs on this list! If the Agent becomes aware that the party is somehow involved in this affair (which is likely) a plot to trick them is the first course of action. If the PCs happen to notice who is present and who isn't during various events they may start to draw connections and develop suspicions...

Unfortunately I can't reveal the identities of the Agent here; in the ongoing game some or all of those identities remain unknown, and since all the players read Interregnum it simply isn't possible to give that information without ruining that part of the game. If you're dying of curiosity, or think you have a good guess as to who the aliases are, drop me a line!

Azeth Strongarm, Orlanthi Initiate. Human male, 58 years old. A tough and grizzled old Orlanthi, he is a distant relative of one of the clan elders and is kindly inclined towards the characters. He spends most of his time running a large cooking pit, where he hears and recycles most of the gossip and rumor of the Festival. Bluff and boisterous, he knows almost everyone who is anyone at the Festival and is respected by all. He is not part of the Secret Wind, though he has heard of it. Physically, he is slightly taller than average but very stocky; his arms are extremely burly, his skin browned by long exposure to smoke and fire, and his beard singed in spots. When he is away from his fire it can be noticed that he smells strongly of cooked meat and smoke.

Telo Apporat, Seven Mothers Initiate, Lunar constable. Human male, 35 years old. A fundamentally decent man with a strong conscience, which is why he is working as a Constable in the barbarian hinterlands. His responsibilities include Low and Middle justice at the Festival, as well as law enforcement and investigation. He has been assigned twelve regular troops to patrol the Festival. They patrol in groups of four.



Telo is intelligent and scrupulously fair. He will investigate the murder of an Orlanthi as rigorously as that of a Lunar citizen—that is, both to the best of his ability. If his investigations imperil the activities of the Lunar Agent, the Agent will contact his superiors and have him taken off the case. In that case Apporat will suspect corruption is involved, and will attempt to secretly interrogate party members to discover what is going on. If he is informed by the Agent or a credible proxy that the entire matter is one of State security he will reluctantly drop the investigation.

Nameless Lunar Noble, human male, 35, tall. He may be called in by the Lunar Agent to sit on Telo Apporat if necessary. This scary gentleman dresses in black (except for tiny red insignia), and silently exudes an aura of menace. He may bring up to 100 additional troops if these seem necessary, though that would be a highly inflammatory choice.

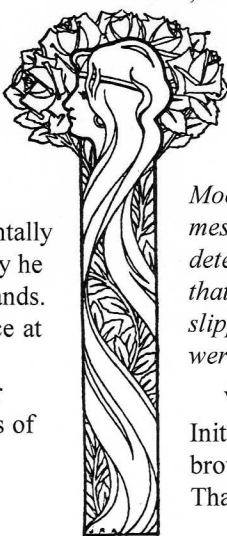
The Windflower, Orlanthi. A human female, age 17. As is to be expected she is beautiful, talented, lighthearted and brave. Her hair is a pleasing shade of gray. Her instrument of choice is a small bagpipe. She is constantly surrounded by her kinsmen and female friends.

The Sunflower, Yelmalian. Human female, age 19. Tall, beautiful, blonde, and patrician in bearing. She is somewhat distant and very proud of her education. A cold fish by Orlanthi standards. Her instrument of choice is the harp. While her talents are undeniably great, her approach is comparatively aloof and her song and dance are obscure and emotionally cold; she is not a favorite with the audience.

The Moonflower, Red Goddess worshipper. Human female, age 26. Always heavily guarded, and heavily veiled except during the contest itself. Pale skin, long blood-red hair, very graceful. Knows a dance which clouds men's minds (Heroic Dance skill). Her instrument of choice is her voice; if she wishes, her singing voice can sound like many birds singing at once (an eerie but beautiful effect). If caught in conversation she is polite, but careful; she is very aware that this territory is still not entirely pacified.

In play I rolled a critical success for the Moonflower's dance. She had not intended to mesmerize the audience, but since I'd already determined that she had Heroic Dance skill, I decided that such knowledge can be a two-edged sword; she slipped into the dance without meaning to. The results were startling, as may be seen below. ☺

Via Bladesong AKA Deathflower, Humakt Initiate. Human female, age 25. She is tall, has light brown hair, and is extremely skilled in the arts of war. That and her great beauty have led some to nickname



her “Deathflower”, a title that she does not find amusing. A child of privilege (both of her parents are Priests of Humakt) she is kind but somewhat distant to all but fellow Humakti.

Urin Thegg Trickster. Human male, age 24. The party may not even meet this rascal, but will surely be impacted by his great trick at the Festival—as is everyone else attending. He is thin, dark, and accomplished at running away from angry mobs. He has a respectable selection of spirit and Divine magic, and is extremely clever. He is also rather ruthless, as can be seen in his treatment of the:

Nameless Trollkin AKA “Darkflower”. Trollkin slave, age 10. The “Darkflower” is entered into the competition by his owner, Urin Thegg. He is kept hidden even more completely than the Moonflower until the contest begins. At that time he is wheeled onto the stage in a large covered wagon. When the cover is removed it may be seen that the trollkin is dressed in a red wig and gown that strongly resemble those of the Moonflower. The reaction of the crowd will likely give Thegg time to escape; the fate of the “Darkflower” is less certain.

The Darkflower endured much abuse in play. When the Moonflower’s Heroic dance began bewitching onlookers at the Dance Contest, a Eurmali used Divine Intervention to place the Darkflower directly above the Moonflower, twenty feet in the air; the resulting impact broke the spell of the dance. It should be noted that DI does not normally allow such direct action against others, but the argument that Eurmali does not always follow rules, along with the humor of the situation, persuaded me that an exception would make sense. Incidentally, the Moonflower tended the trollkin’s wounds after the contest, and had it taken safely away from the Festival.

Thurin Farwalker, Issaries trader. Human male, 35. Actually a Wind Lord of Orlanth and a member of the Secret Wind, he is big, brave, handsome, and clever—a storybook hero. Depending on how the PC’s dispose of the courier’s body he may be aware that his contact is in jeopardy. Nevertheless he attempts to complete the rendezvous at The Broken Flagon. If no one present is wearing a green serpent broach (which, given the number of Lunar patrolmen about, would be a dangerous thing to do), he will attempt to make contact by employing the services of:

Ged Sweetvoice, Donandar Initiate. Human male, age 17. A scraggly punk, as minstrels go, and a very poor harper. Only charity has allowed him a place by the fire at The Broken Flagon. When the big Issaries trader makes a special request and offers silver, he’s more surprised than anything else. Nonetheless Ged sings a song which includes a reference to a snake. Thurin’s hope is that the party will make the connection, but the Lunars won’t...

In the actual run the players mistakenly thought that Ged was their Secret Wind contact, followed him outside after the performance and gave him the message coin (he assumed that it was a tip). This led to a situation I’d been hoping for: the coin was loose in the Festival, one among many thousands of others. By the time the party was contacted by the true Wind Lord, Ged had spent the coin. The party searched everywhere he’d been, and at long last found the coin and gave it to the proper recipient. But there was definitely a moment of panic. ☺



Old Storm Bull worshipper. Human male, age approximately 40 - 60. Is never seen sober enough to tell his name. Somewhat short and grizzled, he bears an axe that he uses with incredible berserk skill, if roused. He’s mostly interested in alcohol, however, and spends most of his time in a state of stupor. If the party will give him alcohol, he’ll drink it and sleep it off on the floor of their tent.

Gerth and Geddy, Issaries Initiates (traders). Human male, 29, and human female, 31. This married couple are typical innocent bystanders. As feelings run high among attendees (over the Flowers and any other issues that may have risen), Gerth finds himself caught up willy-nilly in a fight between two gangs of thugs near the PCs’ tent. Geddy will plead with the characters to save her husband. If they do, the grateful couple will reward them as best they can—they aren’t rich, but they do know some important Issaries people who have many connections. They could get the party a free consultation with a Lhankor Mhy Sage, for example.

Unkel Feg, Black Fang Initiate. Ogre male age 26. This bulky and moderately handsome fellow has a gang of humans (as many as needed) who follow him slavishly. If the it seems necessary, the Lunar Agent will hire Feg and his gang to manipulate the group—by planting false evidence, say, or stealing their possessions. Feg has few scruples.

In play, Feg and his gang were hired to make a midnight attack on the party. Their orders were to hurt them, but not to kill them. As it happened the old Storm Bull was in the tent at the time of the attack, however. Berserk, he killed all of the gang members with the help of the PCs, and ran off into the night. This led to a long session of questioning of the PCs in Telo Apparat’s tent.



The Log That Flies

Wrap Up

As the Festival draws to a close, the party is contacted by Thurin of the Secret Wind. Several people (including the courier) were supposed to help him retrieve the weapons after the Festival. As a number of them have been killed, however, he asks the PCs to help him. They are not obligated to do so; the task is dangerous. If they do accept, they will find themselves in a race to beat the Lunar Agent to the cache. How close the race is depends on how much information the Agent has gained during the Festival. A battle of titans is a strong possibility, in which Thurin and the Agent will attempt to destroy each other.

At this point the true identity of the Agent will become apparent. In all likelihood the Agent will be alone; this is not entirely hubris, however. The Agent has a notable advantage in ability and magic. However, if Thurin has reached the weapons first (as is likely) the balance will be even again. It remains for the players to make the difference in the combat. In any case, the Agent is unlikely to be killed; an escape via Divine Intervention is assured.

In play the party chickened out, and declined Thurin's request for aid. They came up with a reasonable excuse, but there's no denying that the end of the scenario was a little anticlimactic as a result. Still, I can't fault them for taking the sensible course of action.

Magic Items from the cache:

A shaman's belt of bindings that contains 100 spirits of various types. These include spell spirits, power spirits, and a great variety of others. Unfortunately many of the uses of the belt require a password, but there are certain features that will work for anyone: the belt will cast a spirit magic Heal 6 spell once per round on the wearer when they are injured, up to a total of 80 points of healing. A spirit in the belt will cast a Strength 4 spell on the wearer in combat, and another will cast Bladesharp 6 at the same time (if a bladed weapon is in the wearer's hand).

A giant's ring of invulnerability. This bronze ring is large enough to be loose around an armored man's waist. As long as it is around the wearer, they are protected with the equivalent of a divine magic Shield 10 spell (protecting from 20 points of damage and up to 20-point spells). Unfortunately the ring is *enormously* heavy—its weight is equal to to a STR 30. Holding it up requires a STR vs STR roll, with the wearer at half chance if only one hand is used. The ring could be *tied* on, but its excessive weight will make movement difficult. Others could stand behind the

wearer and hold up the ring, but they would not be protected by it—and the situation would be very awkward in combat.

A scimitar of iron and Adamantium (?)

A piece of Moon Rock in a lead box

An ebony rod with a Mistress Race Troll hand on the end. This rod allows the creation and manipulation of vast amounts of darkness. It may be used to command or destroy Shades.

The Wind Shield. An ancient air spirit of great power is bound into this shield. At the user's command a driving wind bursts from the shield, blowing against anything before it. The wind has a STR of 25 that must be overcome to approach it, and attacks against the holder are at -50%. Missile weapons and arrows cannot strike the user. If the user falls or loses hold of the shield, the wind will continue

to blow for one round—during which time chaos (small “c”) is likely to ensue as the shield flies around at random. There are legends that the shield may be used to fly by directing its flow against the ground, but this would require superhuman dexterity and much painful practice.

All of these are major objects of power, of course, vitally necessary to the success of the Secret Wind. The PCs will not be allowed to keep them. Even if everyone else dies someone will soon come along to take these weapons away. However, if Thurin prevails and the weapons are recovered the Secret Wind will likely reward the characters at a later

date. A reasonable (though not huge) amount of money is likely. The PCs may also be gifted with small serpent-shaped amulets of luck. These are very minor magic items: when the wearer must make a luck roll, they count their POWER as being one higher than it actually is.

The characters will have the gratitude of the Secret Wind, and their names will be remembered in the future should they be needed. On the other hand, the Lunar Agent may well remember them too, depending on what happened at the Festival...

FROM THE CLOSED SHELVES

Although his work will probably never go out of print, the stories of **H.G. Wells'** are “closed” in another way; they are admitted classics. I suspect that many won't bother to read them if not required to for a class. That's understandable; many old classics can be intolerably boring. I've never seen much of interest in the works of **Jules Verne**, for



example, though poor translation may be part of the problem.

But H.G. Wells was more than just one of the first modern science fiction writers: more than anything else his work is *readable*. His short stories make it clear that this was a writer who knew what was interesting; he used the English language skillfully to tell exciting, imaginative, thought-provoking tales that are as effective now as they were when they were first published. What's even more astonishing is that Wells discovered so many of the basic themes of science fiction *first*: time travel, interplanetary war, invisibility, biological warfare...an astonishing record of creativity, and Wells' treatment of these themes is better than 95% of the latter-day rehashings that fill science fiction bookshelves.

Wells' short stories may be roughly divided into three types: hard science fiction, fantasy vignettes, and stories about modern technology. There can be no doubt that Wells was a technophile; machines and inventions are frequent features in his work, though he never allows technical exposition to be a burden to the story. Even something as comparatively prosaic to Wells' time as a dynamo has the makings of a fascinating story. But it's the human touch—love, jealousy, revenge—that gives his work its lasting quality.

There are many cheap "classic" paperback collections of his short stories. They usually feature ugly pastel drawings or old-fashioned paintings; one has a singularly unattractive photograph of Wells at an advanced age, a particularly unfair choice since his best stories were written when he was young. In this case, the maxim "don't judge a book by its cover" couldn't be more true.



COMMENTS #18



(CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE)

George Phillius: I can sympathize with your continued lack of letters for *Communications*; although we have many readers, it's a very rare experience to hear from one. ✱ Knock on wood, but my problem with the post office may have finally run its course. While mailing #20 I was questioned as to the contents of the package; I replied that I'd checked with the main office at South Station, and that the material fell within the definition of printed matter. My explanation was accepted without difficulty (I think that they may have sensed that I was very prepared for that question, and that I was quite ready to make an issue out of it if I was forced to). ✱ Re *The Witches of Karres*, I will no doubt wonder to the end of my days why Schmidt did not write a sequel. The novel was obviously *set up* for a sequel! I don't know if he's alive (I

assume that he isn't writing—he must be quite old), but I do wonder if anyone has ever asked him what happened. I'd love to play a game set in that universe, but it would take an outstanding GM... ✱ Bruce Campbell, the actor who played Ash in the various "Evil Dead" movies and Brisco County in the TV series of that name, would be perfect to play Captain Pausart. ✱ Quite a large gap in this installment of *The Warrior Unseen*, but the high point seems to have been hit and it's helpful that you filled in the missing pieces. ✱ It wasn't too bright of Pyrrin to announce during combat that his weapon would be harmless for the next two minutes in Elaine's hearing. ✱ This installment was very dramatic, very exciting, lots of action; Bob Dole would probably object. ☺

Mike Lavoie: You picked up on a number of important developments in the RPG field that presage a continued decline. I'm not sure if I agree that the future of gaming lies on the electronic frontier in the way that you describe, though; for one thing, there's still no practical way to make money through electronic publishing. Lacking the potential for profit, I fear that conventional roleplaying games cannot flourish. That doesn't apply to "actualized" games, however, in which interactive adventures are fully represented and modulated. The problem with these, though, is that no one has yet found a way to allow such a game to include the creative ability and flexible reactions of a good gamemaster. I doubt that such a program can ever be written, but some adequate substitute will no doubt be found. I'm sure that it will lack the scope of action and imagination of some of the best GMs I've known. In that sense, I'll continue to argue that gaming is an art form: at its best, it can never be replaced by a machine. ✱ The Tuos adventure sounded well-rounded and fun; a high-level campaign in the better sense of the word. I like a game that has the freedom to allow the characters to acquire a flying stone ship. The party in my old *Disque* campaign received something similar, I remember, and it changed the game in myriad ways. For one thing, it speeded up the flow of action and intensified the story "arc", as they used it to travel to exactly where they wanted to go. On the down side, the party also used it to avoid encounters that I'd really expected that they would have to deal with, and found unorthodox ways to use to boat to solve major problems. I've become used to creating major plot elements only to discard them, though. Have you had the same experience? ✱ "A Star Is Hatched" continues to be good, light, and entertaining. I have to wonder how the chicken held the cards, though. And where did it get its money from?

Scott Shafer: You do have my sympathy on the difficulties you've had this year. It does seem to be true that the most unpleasant people I know are the ones who live longest, and have the most successful lives; that was certainly true in the law firm where I spent so many years in *durance vile*. That sort of thing must be one of the more common reasons that people lose faith. ✱ Given your technophilic leanings, I'm surprised that you haven't picked up a number of Bible-related CD-ROMs. ✱ By coincidence, "The Village of Homlet" (sp?) was the first RPG scenario that I ever ever purchased. I don't think that I ever managed to get anyone to play it, and as light reading it was less than engrossing. I seem to recall that I thought I'd learn all sorts of Great Secrets...perhaps if I had I'd still be a TSR booster today. ☺ ✱ My suspicion is that CCGs will do great harm to the RPG industry, though they probably won't kill it. ✱ "TSR will continue to be the Microsoft of the gaming industry"? I haven't purchased a TSR product in many years, and I don't know any gamers who have. Granted, TSR probably approaches their market with something of the same attitude of the tobacco companies: concentrating on young new customers to replace the older ones that they lose (though for different reasons, of course). Still, if the people I know are representative of the late 20's/early 30's segment, TSR is missing out on a potentially large market—one that I believe could be quite lucrative given the greater amount of disposable income for that group. ✱ As an aside, I wonder if there might be a market for "nostalgia" gaming products in the next few years? ✱ I hope that you're right about the elections. At this point it seems that there's no depth to which Al D'Amato and the GOP will not sink—no level of hypocrisy too great. I'm

not the only one who strongly suspects that there may be some very dirty tricks pulled if the GOP is still behind in the polls come election time. As it is, they'll clearly be doing Whitewater hearings until bare months before the elections, and they may well drag them out right through November. This is particularly disgusting given that the GOP insisted that the Democrats end Iran-Contra hearings months early to avoid holding them in the same calendar *year* as the elections! Despite the fact that the hearings had been much shorter than the Whitewater ones, and turned up many more indictments. Now that the shoe is on the other foot, Dole et alia have shown no shame at all...they are utterly contemptible in my book. *Thus ends my political rant for this issue.* ☺

Tim Emrick: Very impressive material from your CoC campaign, Tim! I always wish that I had the time to prepare high-quality handouts for my games, but I rarely do. I was also *very* interested in the use of the Tarot in the game. Did you actually use a deck? If so, did you stack the cards or simply make use of whatever came up? (As I write, an idea occurs to me: a fortune-teller who cannot see the future, but who can alter events to make her predictions come true). ✱ I never saw that Moore article; my period of *Dragon* reading was comparatively short, as I started gaming rather late in life. ✱ I wasn't wild about Peter Beagle's *The Folk of the Air*, not because of any SCA affiliation but rather because I thought that his earlier work was so very much better. Many consider *The Last Unicorn*, *A Fine and Private Place*, and "Come Lady Death" to be corny and manipulative, but I have to admit that I found them enchanting. I wish that I could write like that. *TFOTA* was comparatively flat and uninspired. ✱ I don't know if I ever mentioned this before (probably in *TWH*), but while I never actually *joined* the SCA, I came close to it a few times. The possibility of a household always loomed over the campus at Allegheny College, and of course the Penzic Wars were always a big event (they was only an hour or two away). I never went to Penzic, though. As I recall, I was frightened off by the stories of mixed nude bathing in the mud hole. ☺

Andrew Howes: "The Arcane Ruin" is a fun, dramatic adventure with an old-fashioned feel to it. I have a question or two, though. The half-orc cook "insists" that her kobold helpers are actually her children. Is she insane, or is there some other explanation for that odd belief? It strikes me that green paint would probably not hide blood stains in the shrine of evil very well—and that the statue and painting would give away the nature of the room in any case. This makes me wonder about the original purpose of the entire structure. ✱ "A pouch with his victims' eyes in it"? Sounds squishy and perishable, to say the least. ☺ ✱ Nice work on the maps. Tell me, how many years of GMing experience had you had when you first wrote this? Do you still put so much detail down? I ask because I used to work in much the same way, but am now too lazy and short of time to write down anything more than notes that will remind me of key points. ✱ Regarding the "Page Filler" joke: I did think twice before I ran it. But one of the advantages of not distributing free copies is that I don't have to worry as much about offending anyone in the world.

Curtis Taylor: Congratulations on your marriage, Curtis! I can't help but wonder how many *IR* contributors are still single. Not that it *matters*, I suppose. I doubt that we'll have any second-generation *IR* contributors cropping up any time soon (unless we count Tara, of course). ✱ The RuneQuest news was interesting, as always. I've heard a rumor that Chaosium may be attempting to recover the rights to RQ from Avalon Hill. Given that AH's big success story right now seems to be *Girl's Life* magazine, that might not be a bad thing. I'm sure that RQ hasn't been a startling commercial success for AH. Not that it possibly *could* have been, given the so-so support that it received from the company. ✱ I'm not surprised that the translation of *Heroes of Wisdom* from the original German didn't go smoothly. It's rare to see a translated document from *any* language that isn't awkward, at best. I suspect that the translations are often done by someone who has a passable speaking ability with English, but relies heavily on a dictionary for the finer

points—and English is far too quirky and idiosyncratic for that approach to succeed.



COMMENTS #19

Rich Staats: I'm glad to see *The Guest* as an *official* zine for the first time, Rich! Here's your official welcome. ☺ ✱ I'm sorry that I didn't print the Widdershins Rabbit cartoons in that issue; I hope that readers weren't too confused. ✱ I was very interested to see the Stafford, Perrin, and Petersen principles of GMing. I don't know Steve Perrin at all (though if I recall correctly he was one of the people who devised the Basic Roleplaying system, in which case I respect him quite a bit), but it seems to me that the Stafford and Petersen approaches are typical of their individual styles and personalities. ✱ A truly impressive campaign introduction! And quite large. Did you ever worry that players would be intimidated by the sheer volume?

Gil Pili: It would be nice if all (or even a fair number) of the *IR* contributors could meet in *any* circumstance, Gil. It doesn't seem likely, unfortunately, and the attendance at the Arisia *IR* parties seems to indicate that things aren't likely to get better soon. ✱ Re *Anchor*: Ah, conspiracy! Very trendy, Gil. ☺ The dialogue is smooth, and the internal thoughts are handled well; they're easy to follow, and there's no confusion with expository text. I wonder, though, if there may not be too *much* of Seaj's thoughts on the page. They make the story seem a little talky and passive in spots. Just a thought...I'm looking forward to the next installment.

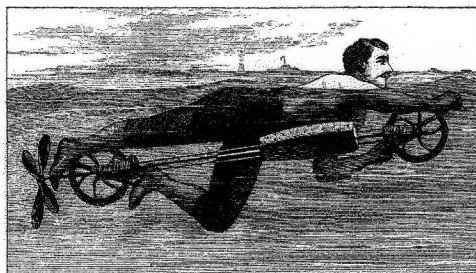
Mike Dumais: Welcome to *Interregnum*, Mike! It's good to have you aboard. ✱ I wouldn't take a grade from a Creative Writing course too seriously—I've yet to meet a CW teacher that I respected. Heinlein portrayed them as ignorant, vile idiots. ☺ ✱ In any case, no matter what your level of writing skill the old saw still applies: practice makes perfect (or at least better). I've noticed marked improvements in the styles of many *IR* contributors over the last two years, my own included. ✱ Tuoni's story was highly dramatic; some of the dialog was a bit... "modern" is the word I'm looking for, I guess. Doesn't quite fit the tone. I don't suppose that you had much control over that, though? ✱ Did you make notes during the game, or were the details from memory? Was Namo a PC, or just a conceit? ✱ Your points on party structure and character ethoi made me think. "Lawful" and "good" characters (I use quotes since I generally play in games that don't use alignments) offer more potential for *internal* roleplaying and character development—lawless characters are less likely to suffer pangs of conscience. This could easily be a topic for another issue...

Mike Lavoie: Congratulations on the completion of your first year, Mike! You're right, it seems like only yesterday that I found *True Magick* #1 in my mailbox. ✱ I wonder how much a GM can allow players to alter the structure of a game world? Perhaps it varies depending on the GM. ✱ I often wonder where the time has gone, too; it's hard to believe that I started running Nereyon eight years ago. Here's an odd question: have you ever thought about what would happen to the game if you died? I sometimes think that I should write down all the secrets of Nereyon in a file, just so that the players won't feel that they've wasted eight years if something happens to me...weird, huh? ☺ ✱ Re "Hatched": Playing on Dal's sympathy for kids was a nice touch. It's an old ploy, but you used it

well. Dal's dialog really works for me, by the way. In fact, you've differentiated all the speaking styles nicely, though Tio sounds just a bit too much like Senator Quimby P. Hornswaggle. ☺ * I like the theatrical angle. Have I already asked about your own experiences with theatre, if any?



George Phillies: I'm filled with curiosity: what's it like running for Senator? I hope that we'll get a report when you have the time. * The



whole issue of third party politics is an interesting one. I'll bet that it's hard to get attention from the mainstream press. I remember being quite astonished several years ago when I realized that the Democratic and Republican parties were private organizations, not mentioned in the Constitution at all, and by no means the ordained keepers of political power. * The mind-rape of Elaine was deeply nasty, almost Chalkeresque; the difference being that you didn't exult in it and use Elaine's degradation as a twisted form of titillating S&M, which that bastard Chalker always does. * "Ichor" flowed out of Pyrrin's head? Did I miss something? I thought he was human. * All in all, an excellent installment.

Joe Teller and Kiralee McCauley: All these woes! My sympathies on your teeth, your ankle, and Cindy's wrist, Joe. * Do you really think that the end of the world is something that players in a fantasy game wouldn't expect? Seems to me that it's the most common threat around. I'd bet that more than 50% of fantasy campaigns have the End of the World as their ultimate conflict... * "The Unexpected Situation" is a very good treatment of surprise in RPGs. Was *Creating Characters* specifically talking about *roleplaying* characters? Is it a recent publication? * I'm fascinated by the idea of a game with all female PCs. Were the *players* and GM also female, Kiralee? I'd like to hear more about that game some time. * Perhaps cross-gender gaming should be a topic soon. * Another point in favor of surprising characters with the unexpected: it hugely increases the dramatic impact. I've heard players say that they won't allow out-of-game knowledge to affect their in-game actions, but preknowledge definitely takes the edge off—one reason why I avoid reading spoilers for *Babylon 5*, by the way. A policy that paid off *hugely* during the last few shows... * Excellent job on "Fesha: A Beginning". Good fiction is the best way I know of to give information about a fantasy world (and why haven't I tried that approach?). Please write more stories whenever you get the urge! * Were Fesha and Giovanni both PCs? If so, who played them?

Dave Dickie: I'm glad to hear that your wife is all right after her accident, Dave. Head-on collisions are no joke, as I know all too well (and mine was only at 20 mph at most). Thank goodness for insurance, eh? * Thanks for the congrats on my job freedom. I'll never regret leaving that hellhole, though I *am* starting to worry about money a little. I'll probably have to start looking for a real job in the next few weeks...the problem is that there are a number of things that I can do, but the only thing that I have outstanding professional qualification for (photocopying supervision) is a complete waste of my abilities. I spent eight years on a job that I was grossly overqualified for, and that's enough... * I enjoyed the Kethem writeup, as always. The background in italics is very helpful; it makes it easier to keep everything straight, since otherwise I'd have to go through back issues. * Have your players ever met in person, or indicated

a desire to? * Trollish brandy intrigues me. *Gloranthan* trolls brew interesting drinks, but I normally don't think of trolls as sophisticated enough to brew brandy...

Tim Emrick: I suspect that the Lovecraft LARP was the best of the three run at Arisia; Lovecraft seems to inspire a weirdness that supersedes petty group politics. When you can always choose to go mad and chew the scenery, there's no way to keep a player from having fun... ☺ * It seems that you missed out on a hazard of IL-type LARPS: having out-of-game friends unintentionally give away your secrets. At Mike McAfee's mad scientist game Lois and I nearly ruined things for Scott; we asked what he was doing, and when he quietly told us we questioned him by repeating what he'd said loudly. He wasn't pleased...I don't know if he got in trouble for that. ☺ * Had you asked for a mundane character? * *Very* nice job on the handout replica of the Globe column! Where'd you get that font? It's perfect! * *Future Boston* sounded fascinating. I've heard of it before, but never got the details. Now I'll have to look up the books, if they're available. * I've heard good things about SCA dances, though I fear that my formal outfit wouldn't pass muster with anachronism purists. And I couldn't flirt (much less "flirt madly") to save my life. I saw some of Mike McAfee's flirting seminar at the con, but it was all Greek to me...

COMMENTS #20

...are for next issue. Sorry, but I'm terribly short of time!

NEXTISH

We'll see. I don't think it will be *quite* as long as this one, though. Take care!

—>Pete

