




RACK & RUNE


RACK & RUNE #11: Bite Me!

Copyright © Peter Maranci 10/1992 / 81 Washington St., #2, Malden, MA 02148 / (617) 397-7958
 InterNet address: trystro!rune@think.com or rune@trystro.uucp



“NOT YOUR BEST WORK”

I've heard this comment about *Rack & Rune #10* time and again in the past few weeks. I strongly suspect that more of the same will be printed in this issue of *The Wild Hunt*. Don't get me wrong: I appreciate the value of criticism. But just to keep things straight, let me refer all critics to the subtitle of this 'zine. 8^>}



On a different note, with any luck this issue should look pretty good (physically speaking). My Epson printer was doing pretty poorly with graphics, so I looked through my DTP manual and found that I could indeed produce an encapsulated PostScript file on a floppy; barring some last-minute screwup, this should be the first issue of R&R to be laser-printed. And how likely is a last-minute screwup? 8^>}



MY FIRST MURDER

We've discussed a number of 'firsts' in these pages; here's another that stuck in my mind.

Those who know me only from *Rack & Rune* may be surprised to hear it, but I'm a pretty tender-hearted guy. I can't watch slasher films, closed my eyes during the bunny scenes in "Roger and Me", and even had to get someone else to stun mice

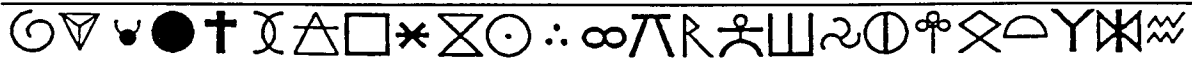
for the snakes when I worked at a nature center. This is not normally a big handicap...unless you want to gamemaster.

It's possible to argue that you need not kill player characters in order to have a good roleplaying game. In fact, I agree with that position. When I first started GMing, however, I was a strong believer in the principle of fairness. Characters had to face the risk of death, I reasoned, or else their accomplishments would become meaningless. And if certain of my players were to get the idea that their PCs couldn't die, they'd run roughshod over the game. A dilemma was apparent.

For a long time I was lucky. The game held the player's interest, but never came close to killing a PC. Finally the day came when a character pulled a really stupid move; there was no alternative to death. So I killed him, and spent the rest of the game apologizing. It was sheer coincidence that my victim was my roommate...

But he wasn't my roommate for very long. It may not have been related, but a couple of months later he left the country for good.

What's the point? Well, I have to wonder about other's experiences with PC death. Was



it a matter of concern for others? Has anyone lost a friend or had a serious argument because of events in a game? Or am I just a magnet for this sort of thing? I wonder...



UNITED FEDERATION OF SCUMBAGS

A friend recently pointed out something strange about both the old and new Star Trek shows: 99.9% of all Federation higher-ups are complete bastards. They want to disassemble Data...take his 'daughter' away...refuse permission to Spock to go home for Pon Farr...install a McCarthyite reign of terror on the Enterprise...and generally make all the wrong decisions. So maybe someone can tell me why this is supposed to be an *optimistic* show? Sounds more like CyberPunk to me! 8^>}

LIFE IMITATES ART?

Speaking of McCarthy, did anyone else notice an amazing display of synchronicity during the first Presidential debates? At one point, Clinton turned to Bush and said (I'm paraphrasing here) "When Joe McCarthy was attacking people's patriotism, a Senator from Connecticut stood up and opposed him. His name was Prescott Bush. Your father was right, and you were wrong to attack my patriotism."

This seems amazingly close to an epi-

sode of Star Trek: The Next Generation from last year. A spy was discovered aboard the Enterprise, and a Federation official was brought in to investigate the situation. She hit it off with Picard, who'd read and admired the works of her father, a great statesman and judge. Before long, however, she'd set up a regular Inquisition, destroying reputations and lives heedlessly with witch hunt tactics, and eventually even turning on Picard. As she relentlessly questioned his loyalty, Picard quoted words deploring witchhunts and the tactics of fear; the words, of course, were those of her father. Shattered, she babbled and ranted helplessly, a broken woman.

Some strange coincidence, eh?

REVIEW: THE PRIMAL ORDER

A while ago I bought an interesting-looking game book: The Primal Order, written by Peter Adkison et alia, and published by Wizards of the Coast (it says \$20 on the sticker — I assume that's correct). It purports to be a 'capsystem', intended solely for Divine interaction; this can be used for God-like PCs, or be used to handle the Gods of a campaign world.

Physical:

Physically, the book is quite handsome. It's an 8.5 x 11 perfect-bound book, about 240 pages long. The binding seems sturdy, and the pages are reasonably heavy stock. The print is clear and readable, though unusually it runs in a column covering only two-thirds of the width of the page; the

outer margin are used for notes and art. Hmm. This might be padding, but it does seem to make the book more readable.

The cover art is striking (and unfortunately seems to be uncredited): against a deep blue background a cloaked figure of indeterminate gender makes mystical gestures about a large blue world floating before it. In the foreground the back of another apparently Divine being may be seen — it seems to be winged, though it's hard to be sure.

The internal is a mix of styles that seems traditional in gaming; some rather impressive fantasy art intermingled with captioned cartoons. It's okay, but the cartoons do detract from the professional quality of the work a bit.

Contents:

To begin with, the book is well written — the style is chatty (in a good way) and clear, very accessible. There's a little silliness (a sample God is Joey, God of Basketweaving), but this is not unbearable. With the **Amber** book from Phage Press, this seems to indicate a possible improvement of standards of writing for the industry as a whole.

The system itself is intended to deal with Gods and Planes. The concept is a good one, I think; the general idea is to give greater depth and realism to the Gods

of a normal mortal campaign, and to introduce challenges and balance in a God-level campaign. As such, this book should be mandatory reading for Monty Haulers.

The system itself is interesting, but a bit confusing. Gods are separated from mortals by the possession of a characteristic known as *Primal Base*. This is similar to Power in RuneQuest, a representation of essential magical strength — though in TPO, this is a representation of a sort of meta-characteristic, a fundamental energy of existence. Like the concept of Amber, Primal Base is more real than anything else in the universe.

Primal Base generates Primal *Flux*, which is used for Deific effects of all sorts — it's the daily working stuff of Godhood. The relationship is much like that of Magic Points to Power in RuneQuest 3. This Flux is also generated

by the prayers of followers, ownership of a home Plane, and other means.

In practice, the terms Primal Base and Primal Flux are awkward. They lack poetry, and are too similar to each other. But this is a minor complaint.

Perhaps the weakest area of the book is the section on Spheres of Influence. Typical areas of Divine power are listed, such as Death, War, Love, and others; the

Foot-In-Mouth Department

(Character occupation):
Witch Doctor:

"...the Witch Doctor is hardly likely to fit in well in urban surroundings. Even if you take the boy out of the jungle, so to speak, it will be hard to take the jungle out of the boy."

— Gary Gygax,
Gary Gygax's Dangerous
Journeys



cost in Primal Base to gain these spheres is listed, along with research time required. However, only a few (four or five on average) specific abilities are detailed for each. Each ability must be purchased; Gods do not receive all abilities. A God of War would still have to pay points of Primal Base to gain specific War abilities, rather than being able to influence all matters of war, for example. Thus the abilities are rather like spell lists — and four or five of them are woefully inadequate. I expect the Gamemaster would have to work out other abilities and calculate appropriate costs, which they recommend; such a procedure would be time-consuming.

The book includes powers for Gods, different forms of attack and defense, means of gaining power and worshipers, Planes of existence, construction of Divine artifacts and relics, Divine Ascension, and much more. Statistics and adaptation information is given for most major fantasy game systems, and a number of minor ones.



For myself, I doubt I'll make much use of this book; nor are RuneQuest Glorantha players likely to have need of it. The Gods and Divinity of Glorantha are too well detailed to make this capsystem necessary, and even the vague promises and hints about HeroQuest indicate that The Primal Order might be irrelevant in Glorantha. The Primal Order is primarily a roleplaying system, composed primarily of mechanics for handling Divine matters; Heroquesting is something more, an interaction of myth and character that makes statistics irrele-

vant.

Still, for those who would like to add greater Divine depth to their campaigns, or would just enjoy an interesting (and long) read about roleplaying, this book is worth picking up.



NEREYON: GOODBYE TO BIG HILL

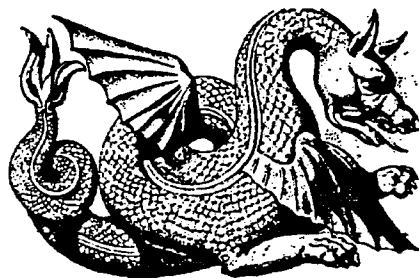


When last we left the young Watchers, they had just rescued their tutors and a number of townspeople from the cruel attentions of the Hemnevar Thak. He was a NeMarren lord of unusually bestial temperament, and they were forced to slay him in the process. As they made their escape with the panicked mob from the building of torment, three mounted figures confronted them — from their height, two were clearly NeMarren, while the third gave every sign of being a human sorcerer. Rather than charging to the attack, as might be expected, they merely watched impassively. As the surprised and relieved Watchers prepared to ride off into the darkness, the human sorcerer threw a bag which struck Robert in the chest. It did no harm, and he clutched it as they rode away.

When they arrived, they opened the bag to find a number of oilskin packets

within. They proved to contain a healing salve of no little virtue, accompanied by a note: it spoke of an offer, and named a remote spot in the desert as a rendezvous point, three days hence. After consultation, they decided to go. Sam remained behind to care for Bear and Coradan, who was gravely wounded.

In the desert, they met the sorcerer, who was mounted and alone. He told them that his name was Tec, and that he worked for a NeMarren lord who was interested in their services — he had detected their Watcher abilities via an ancient and illegal spell while they were in town. As unprocessed Watchers, they could be most valuable indeed. His lord was a kindly master, and felt that humans should be treated with dignity and respect; furthermore, he had a spell which could be used to disguise their Watcher natures. They would come to Torrington, a large and bustling walled city filled with opportunities. He offered good pay, and promised that the Watchers could refuse any duty they found unconscionable. In addition, they'd be allowed to leave the Lord's service whenever they wished, with only an oath of eternal silence required. The tutors would be cared for, and a house would be available for their use in a wood near the city. He would come to their house in two days time to hear their decision.



The characters immediately disagreed. Dara objected to the idea of living in a

city; she had been a servant girl in a Merchant House in a city before she was found by the tutors and brought to Big Hill. Vlad was already packing his bags, which seemed strange and a trifle ominous since he had sworn vengeance years ago upon the entire NeMarren race. Robert was cautious, but eager to experience city life again. Sam, as usual, wasn't sure. The tutors were too injured to participate much in the discussion, but were willing to go.

They had not yet come to agreement by the time the sorcerer Tec arrived. Vlad was determined to go, whether the others would or not; Dara was loathe to give up her life at Big Hill, the first place where she had felt truly safe. Robert wanted to, but reassured Dara that he wouldn't leave without her. Sam was willing to go, but also willing to stay — he also refused to desert Dara. Tec was able to win their agreement by promising them the use of a large hidden house located in the woods near Torrington. Though Tec impressed most of the Watchers with his honorable nature, the ever-paranoid Vlad could not resist the opportunity to hold a dagger at the back of Tec's neck and question him more rigorously, while the others looked on in dismay. Nonetheless, Tec accepted their service when they agreed to the terms, and gave them badges signifying them as members of the Merchant House Hasan. These badges allowed them to legally practice Sorcery, and travel without restriction within the area. They would join a Hasan caravan and travel with their belongings to



Torrington; Coradan would ride in a covered cart with them.

The trip was uneventful. Traveling with the caravan was an old sorcerer, who had thirty-two spell matrices — one carved into each of his false teeth, with whom they passed the time. Under the leadership of Joak'im, a son of House Hasan, they progressed smoothly to Torrington. The only disturbance occurred when Vlad decided to go fishing in the river — using Venom spells stored in a staff that the Chaos-using sorcerer servant of the evil NeMarren of Drin had used.

Finally the great walls of the City were opened before them. They had arrived at their new home.



COMMENTS #175

Swanson Ah, the Siggraph! I saw some of that stuff at the last Arisia — it was very impressive indeed. I was particularly pleased to note that there was a real artistic vision in many of the pieces, as

some past Siggraph stuff seemed...a little effects-heavy. Of course I realize that effects is the name of the game for Siggraph, but a lack of storyline or overall concept is arguably emphasized by amazing animation. Kind of a matter of seeing the lack of forest for the trees, perhaps.

You know, I think that metaphor applies to roleplaying as well. 8^>}

Why are you voting for Clinton, if you don't mind my asking? I'm just curious...

Derryberry Dare I say...procrastination? As the Grand Master of the P-word, I suppose I can. I hope that things will settle down for you soon, so you can get back to full-time writing on Dicing Mice! 8^>}

Nice job on the Greentech fiction. Wish I had time to do that sort of thing.

Fiction about campaigns is always interesting. I've heard that Steven Brust's Jherag series is based on a variant AD&D (r) campaign that he ran. I'd sure love to have played in that, despite the system! I've often thought it might be a good idea to get a bunch of good writers together, run a game for them, and let them novelize sections from their characters perspectives. Two things make the success of such a project unlikely: one, you'd need a great campaign to novelize, and I think that any GM who set out deliberately to create greatness for novelization would choke, and two, most roleplayers aren't very good writers! The exception being represented in TWH, of course... 8^>}

Erlandsen Regarding Gencon, I suspect that TSR™ (and perhaps some other game companies) would rather that the majority of gamers not read APAs! After all, there aren't too many AD&D (r) supporters in these pages...

I doubt that potential liability was the real reason for the T\$R™ ban of LARP at Gencon. As you probably know, major LARP organizations carry their own insurance, with special provisions for conventions — I know the IFGS does. Now, I wonder what the *real* reason could be for the ban? 8^>}

By the way, the “Fortress T\$R™” indicates an interesting mentality on the part of the company, no? Castles, after all, are defensive structures. And who might be laying siege to those walls? By the way, I laughed myself sick over the idea of “Fortress T\$R™”...

Speaking of LARP, the local New England IFGS chapter has suddenly picked up an extra head of steam (no, it's not mine 8^>)). Though it's getting cold outside, a number of games have been scheduled this autumn, including one that may be held on an actual island! Most of the summer New England games were held over in New York (where the other half of the chapter members live), but these new games will mostly be in the Boston area. Looks like Zanzibar will get to 5th level this year after all.

In addition, the chapter is moving up a step in rank — unfortunately I don't remember what the new status is! But it's a step closer to being able to approve our own games, which would be nice.

I hope that various GAMA officials read your piece on gaming and the public.

Re GM 'cheating' Well, I've been able to tell when most GMs are crocking the dice, or stacking the deck in some way. In some cases I've resented it — most often when it was being done for me, strangely enough. It takes something away from your accomplishments if God (metaphorically speaking) is too obviously on your side...

All this is a bit old for me. After a

certain point, the question of die crocking becomes completely secondary to the ability of the gamemaster to create and sustain an exciting and imaginative campaign. As has been said before, the *feeling* of free action is what matters for player enjoyment — and an attempt by the GM to run by an absolute standard would cripple the game. Dice seem more and more irrelevant these days.

Re a Code of Decency I guess I'm sensitive about *any* sort of censorship. A large organization enforcing its will on the small and helpless gets me worked up. Comes from childhood experiences of being beaten up in the playground, I suppose.

Jorenby I'm tempted to repeat much of the comments I sent to you privately about Pallas' Podium here; however, in the interests of space I'll limit myself to saying that I find the 'token male' category offensive. There is NO justification for discrimination, no matter how much the discriminator has suffered at the hands of the discriminatee; I understand hatred and revenge quite well, but fear that this sort of damned obstinate stupidity will be the downfall of the human race. I've been discriminated against, and I didn't like it; but I was perhaps fortunate, in that my first experience in such matters came from fellow Armenians, who have suffered more persecution than many of the peoples of the world. And yet they hadn't learned that it was wrong.

Of course, I doubt that Pallas' Podium is likely to topple the Earth. I'm overreacting, no doubt. But that's just me...

Hmm. Your point about imminent deities is an excellent one. I've often wished to play atheistic



characters in Glorantha; though the Gods do manifest quite often in that setting, not all characters accept them *as* Gods. "Just a big spirit" was a frequent comment, which was also used by a Malkioni Sorcerer I played — the Malkioni are monotheists, denying the 'godhood' of Glorantha's obvious deities. As I recall, there is also an atheistic culture in Glorantha, centered around the Casino Town in the Isles of Gods Forgot.



As a GM, I always know just how much truth there is in the myths of the game world, and make sure that some are true, some false, and some just plain wacky. In Nereyon, there are virtually no myths anyway. The purge of all religious functionaries and knowledge was one of the first actions of the NeMarren invaders. The players have had to feel their way into the world of myth, which has been a large part of the game.

How about a game in which no myths are true? I suppose that could be a "realistic" Medieval setting, which I've heard proposed but never played in.

Perhaps we are indeed cheating ourselves out of a sense of wonder!

The Gamer seems to be the up-and-coming prozine; I may submit my long-neglected Bar Wars article to them, if I can summon enough will to look at it

again!

Re "Dark Roleplaying: Threat or Menace?", I've realized ever since reading 1984 that dark could be beautiful. Gaming is not moral instruction; it is an artistic and social pastime.

By the way, I may have been too strident and intense in my remarks about comments. 8^>}

I hate to admit it, but I have no idea of what *Y Ddraig Goch* is!

Phillies As usual, Pickering is running along smoothly — which makes it hard to make any comment other than "Keep it up, George!". 8^>} What with publication here and in A&E, I supposed you've heard that more times than you can count. I have to wonder how non-gamers would see the story. The few people I know who've seen it liked it, but may have felt a little lost. The concepts are a bit strange for those who aren't familiar with the genre.

I have no idea of the powers and limitations of GAMA. In fact, I have very little knowledge about GAMA at all!

While I realize that anti-trust laws are on the books, enforcement of them seems to be...selective. And even if the Government did act it could take years of litigation before any real effect, by which time most small independent companies would be out of business. Look at what the Secret Service did to SJ Games!

I just realized that I didn't remark on how well you've handled telepathy in Pickering. You have, and it's been refreshing. Thanks.

Butler Bad stuff first: Bob, I'm saying this against the advice of many; but the reason a "certain person" moved from the IFGS to NERO had nothing to do with

a poor ruling by that IFGS official. I'm afraid it probably had much more to do with the greater adulation and power she was able to get from the NEROids. The local IFGS has no ingrained power structure, which is a handicap for any egocentric social climber...

Re Dragon Friend: BRAVO! WELL DONE! I enjoyed this one very much indeed. You really must submit this one someplace — got any possibilities? I'll admit I saw the end coming. but that's because my mind works that way — and nonetheless I liked it very much. Sounds like a wonderful background to game in, too.



Forget about a naked seagull — you showed a naked *Dragon!* Risky. 8^>} Seriously, an X-rated RPG APA is hard to imagine, though I'm sure it could be done. I spent about six months working at a porno and Adult products place after I graduated for college (I was doing data entry, please hold the puns), and I was amazed at the stuff they could come with...

Bob, you're working too hard. Relax a little! At this rate there'll be no room for

anyone else's 'zines. On the other hand I'll take a double dose of whatever you've been taking. Tell you what: from now on, let's have a piece of Butler fiction in every 'zine! 8^>}

Ricker re cmt Dunham re Computer tools — latest word is that there's now a version of VisualBasic for DOS. I'm relieved, because I REALLY HATE WINDOWS! I just picked up a 386/20 clone with Windows 3.1 for my sister, and the stupid program started crashing as soon as we got it home.

Say, did you do all that sketching? It looks neat. Just how did it work?

In regard to game censorship I guess what I'm worried about is self-censorship — not that GAMA or TSR™ will control/destroy small game companies, but that the threat of such control combined with Fundamentalist pressure, will cause them to censor themselves. And while I am somewhat familiar with underground comix, it seems to me that such works were pushed by reaction into an almost juvenile mentality. Or perhaps I didn't read the right comix. But I've never seen anything like *Sandman* from that era.

Re Humanity Points — I see your point. Of course I realize that the mechanic could work; the problem is that I've never seen *anybody* use it, though I've tried to encourage GMs to use it in the games I've played in. If a rule isn't used, does it matter if it's mechanically sound? This seems to relate to a basic concern I've had about gaming in general: there is no reliable means of educating people to good roleplaying, and as a result thousands of players never get to experience the full impact of roleplaying. I suspect that this is why so many people give up gaming when they "grow up" — because the only gaming they've ever experienced was

juvenile!

Collier & Bates Applause
applause! Once again a fine job. I only
wish I knew something about art, so I
could say something intelligent. 8^>}



FROM THE CLOSED SHELVES

Shadow On the Land

Once again I venture into new territory: *Shadow On the Land* is not a book at all, but a made-for-TV-movie. I only saw it once in my life, at least sixteen years ago. Yet it made such a strong impression on me that I've been looking for it ever since. It's black and white, was produced in the early sixties, and I can't remember who wrote, produced, or acted in it — it is listed in a few books listing rare movies, however.

The plot is simple. A group of freedom fighters are attempting to overthrow a brutal and dictatorial regime, which operates concentration camps and enforces absolute obedience. The setting seems to be the near future, as anticipated from an early-sixties viewpoint; few real differences, but the soldiers carry rifles that fire beams of

energy.

It was the details that made it live. The totalitarian government was lead by a man known only as The Leader. The flag was a two-headed eagle, each claw clutching not arrows or garlands, but nuclear missiles. At one point, one of the protagonists walked by a bookstore; the camera panned by at thigh-level. Every book displayed in the storefront was the same: *My Struggle*, by The Leader. I trust that readers recognize the translation?

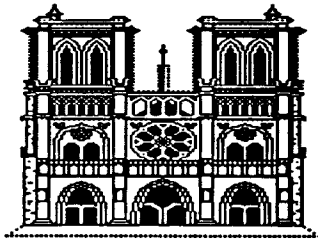
At the end, the protagonists broke into a concentration camp to rescue some captured comrades who held vital secrets of the Resistance; they succeeded in temporarily freeing the camp, but a massive attack by The Leader's storm troops wiped them out. As the last of them were being gunned down, they spent their last moments taking down the double-headed eagle from the flagpole, and hauled up...the Stars and Stripes.

It was hokey, perhaps, and I suppose you could see it coming. But it was powerful piece of film. And the implication was clear. This was a world in which Hitler-had happened not in 1930's Germany, but in 1990's (?) America. *It could happen here.* And ever since, I've believed that: what happened in Germany was not an accident or aberration, but an expression of something deep in human nature — something that has to be watched for and guarded against.

V for Vendetta, a graphic novel by Alan Moore

Alan Moore is one of the best known of the new breed of comic writers; so well known that he does very little in the field anymore. But back when he was starting out, he did a partial series for a magazine in England, now defunct, that was home to many of the best of the new school:

Warrior magazine. The series was called V for Vendetta, and in it Moore once again was playing with the concept of the superhero.



In a near-future post-Holocaust Britain, the land itself has been spared. However, the country is ruled by a brutal corporate-sponsored dictatorship. Led by a Leader (inevitably), the regime spies on everyone. Those who refuse to obey are taken to concentration camps, never to be seen again. In this hellish situation appears a mysterious figure: a man dressed in an enveloping dark cloak, with a peculiar hat and grinning theatrical mask. He kills secret police without warning, and with amazing speed; he goes on to blow up several major chunks of British history, including the Houses of Parliament. It soon becomes clear that he is an anarchist of sorts, and is labeled a terrorist by the State — which perhaps he is.

At the same time, he has been murdering specific people high in the Government — people who all share a single common experience in their pasts. A rumpled and practical detective is assigned to find and kill him. But “V”, as he comes to be known, is clearly no ordinary human...

I'd hate to ruin this story for anyone, so let me simply say that this is one of the most philosophical pieces I've read in the genre, and will bear many re-readings. It always makes me think, and I recommend it highly. In my opinion, it's Moore's best

work by far.

RUNEQUEST: NEWTLING LIFE CYCLES



I've been in the process of starting a RuneQuest game online at the local Argus BBS; this has resulted in many hours spent answering questions from prospective players. One decided to play a Chalana Arroy worshipping Newtling, and asked for information on Newtling culture and life-cycles. To my surprise there was little published material available, so, like any good GM, I made something up. I'm including it here, and plan to write it up in greater detail and send it over to Tales of the Reaching Moon at some point.



The Newtling social structure is very secret from outsiders. The Pond is the center of the Newtling's life; they may only spawn in the Pond in which they are born. The location of the Pond is highly secret, which is not surprising — many species (particularly Trolls) would view a Newtling Pond as a deliciously-stocked pantry. All of Newtling society is focused on hiding the Pond from strangers. If the secret of the Pond is broken, Newtlings will fight outsiders to the death, without regard for their own lives.

Newtlings go through three life cycles: tad, bachelor, and adult. Tads are mindless, and are born in great numbers; many of

them are eaten, both by predators and by older Newtlings. Tads are small, green, and resemble large but slender frogs. In this stage, only the fastest survive.

At a certain point in their lives, Tads develop a spore shell, and become dormant. This is usually during the Sacred Time, and lasts an year. Newtling belief has it that in that time, the spirits of ancestor Newts "choose" bodies from their sleeping descendents. After a year (usually), the spore break, and the infant bachelors awake. Their forms are largely altered, with the head and tail being most predominantly enlarged. They are intelligent, but have no knowledge beyond swimming and fishing instincts; they must be taught about the world. This learning period can take up to six years.

At some point, the bachelor will suddenly be afflicted with wanderlust. He will have a strong desire to see new faces and learn new things. He will travel away from the Pond, taking only a few personal possessions. It is not uncommon that as many as ten or more bachelors will leave the Pond at the same time. They will spend twenty years or more in the outside world, only to be suddenly struck by a homesickness as strong as the wanderlust that impelled them from their homes.

Travelling home, the prodigal bachelors arrive and are welcomed to the Pond. They contribute what they have earned and learned to the Pond — this is a long process, often taking several years. Some of this time is spent training newly awoken Bachelors in basic knowledge.

When six Returned Bachelors are judged ready by the adults, a great ceremony is prepared. At the Sacred time, the Six are sent alone into the *Sarredt Vurz* — the Inner Pond, the Holy of Holies. What happens there is unknown — adults will

not speak of it, preferring to die first. It is known that many spirits reside in the walls of the *Sarredt Vurz*, and that it is impossible to scry or send spirits into them. All that is known is that when the two-week ritual is ended, an adult emerges from within — and only one adult.

The adults are very different physically from the earlier stages. Their heads are flat and enormous. Their bodies are nearly perfectly oblong. Their arms and legs seem atrophied, though useable. Physically, they are not very capable at all. Adults rarely speak to other beings, though they are capable of doing so. They seem to exhibit strange abilities, and are known to be able to speak with spirits. Adult's names are different in type from Bachelor names (Tads are nameless) — they are named for their prowess. Giver-of-Water-Knowledge, for example, or Judge-of-New-Life.



NEXTISH

More Nereyon, The Two Kinds of PC, Attack of the TV Executive Pinheads, and more...

—>PM

Colophon:

Rack & Rune #11: Blite Me! was generated in ASCII form using PC-Write 2.5. It was formatted for desktop publishing with Publish-It 2.0. It includes clip art from many sources. As for how it was printed, how should I know?

OK, enough—now go outside and get some fresh air! 8^>)