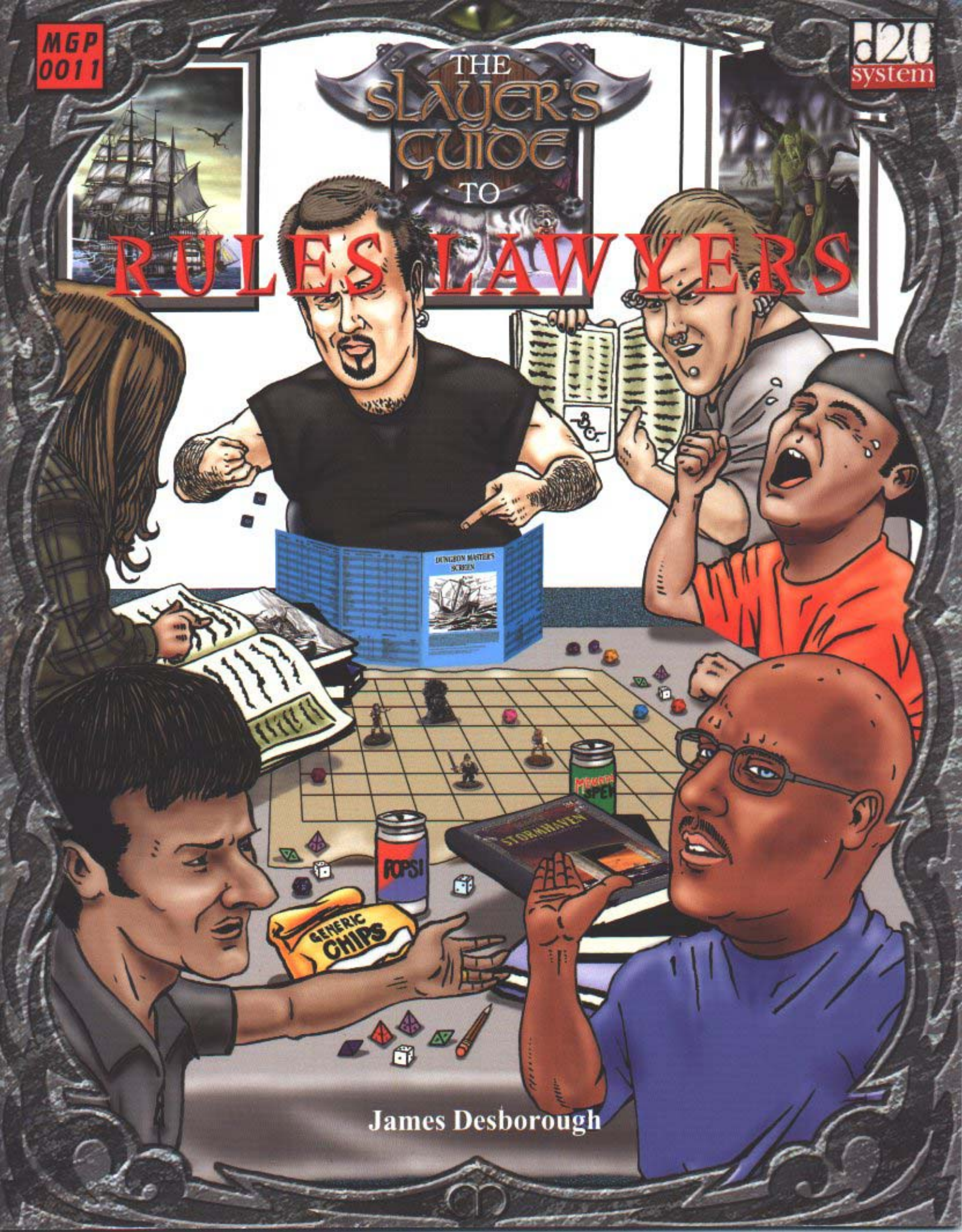


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THE
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO

RULES LAWYERS



James Desborough

The
Slayer's Guide
To
Rules Lawyers

James Desborough

Contents

- 2 Introduction
- 5 Rules Lawyer Physiology
- 16 Habitat
- 20 Rules Lawyer Society
- 25 Methods of Warfare
- 28 Role-Playing with Rules Lawyers
- 29 Rules Lawyer Character Class
- 32 D20 & OGL License

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Open Game Content & Copyright Information

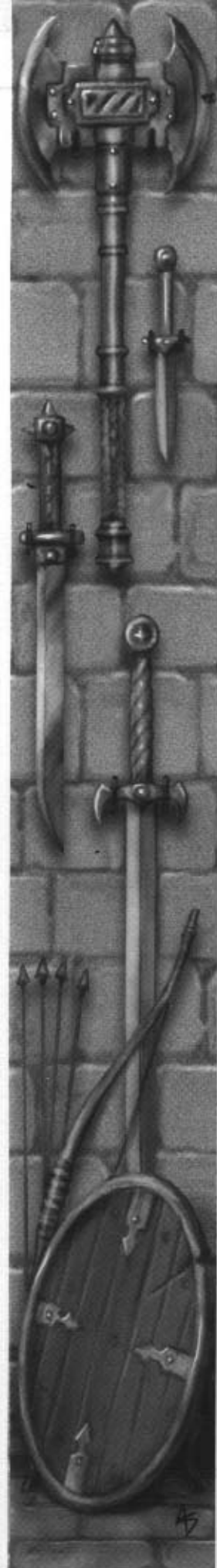
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MONGOOSE PUBLISHING

Mongoose Publishing, PO Box 1018, Swindon, SN3 1DG, United Kingdom

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INTRODUCTION

Rules-Lawyers are an unexpectedly hardy breed of disgusting humanoid (at least in physique) creature.

To all outward appearances they are a normal human being, like you or me, and it is only by their strange behaviour and by very close (often post-mortem) physical examination that they are revealed to be anything other than Homo Sapiens.

Scholars are in agreement that Rules-Lawyers have been around at least as long as games of any kind have existed. Some go as far as to say they have existed as long as *rules* themselves have existed in this universe. They are said to have lived among us, alongside man and his more primitive and slope-headed ancestors since time itself began, waiting for them to lose interest in football and develop the wheel.

There is a school of thought that accredits God Almighty with being the supreme, original, Rules-Lawyer. What other kind of consciousness would have the necessary mindset and tenacity to come up with every single one of the laws of nature and physics? The way the biosphere interacts with its complex ecological niches, the way the various chemicals mix and react with one another, the force of gravity, the laws of thermodynamics and all the other sundry little rules of the universe that we all have to live with day to day. Rules-Lawyers refer to this particular aspect of the divine as *'The Source'*, that from which all rules are spawned. The rest of us tend to refer to it as *'A pain in the arse'*. Especially when we find ourselves dropping buttered toast or searching for missing socks in the back of the washing machine.

When the first amino acid chains formed in the primeval oceans Lawyers were there, tutting at their organic molecule cousins and telling them that they could not possibly do that.

When a few primitive cells got together and decided to cooperate with each other, they were there, bluntly protesting that such a thing was impossible and could only lead to trouble.

When the first amphibious fish fitfully dragged themselves onto dry land to test their flippers on soil, the Rules-Lawyers were shouting that nothing good

would come of it and that it went against all precedent. After all, did it not say on page 37 of the *'Fish Scales & Clamshells'* player's guide that *'Dry Land'* meant instant doom to all who travelled there?

In Egypt they ruled the land with their geometry and their religious laws, adding more and wilder gods to their pantheon and more and more religious observances until every day of the year was a religious holiday with full pay and the empire collapsed.

In the Middle Ages they were the ones who sided with Prince John and the Sheriff Of Nottingham against Robin Hood (after all, he was breaking the law of the land, whatever his motives).

Just this morning you may have met one of this ancient breed telling you . . .

'You can't park there mate, not even for just a couple of minutes while you unload. Its more than my job's worth.'

But it is not in *'Real Life'* that they most make their terrible presence felt, for reality is fluid, mercurial, changing, the laws of physics and of life have yet to be completely discovered and pinned down, opinions change as often as hairstyles, theories override each other on a daily basis. There does exist within the Rules-Lawyers' hearts the faint hope that on one glorious day all of reality will conform to The Rules and be under their sway but with Chaos Theory still in vogue the Rules-Lawyers are filled with such an abiding sense of dread that they find themselves seeking refuge in the one place they can be sure of how everything works.

In games.

Games have set and defined rules that are laid out plainly visible, that do not have to be discovered and are not subject to the whim of longhaired Californian scientists. The Rules-Lawyers can even create rules for themselves thereby controlling the games, their own little pockets of reality in which all things must conform to the glorious numerical laws that they worship so completely and wholeheartedly.

The most famous of these Rules-Lawyer experiments into creating their own rules is known colloquially as *'Rulesmaster'*, a spirited and frighteningly fanatical attempt to provide a rule and table for

absolutely every possibility in existence, including killing yourself by tripping over invisible turtles and stoving your skull in on a rock.

Times do change though and the general trend of role-playing has shifted away from the heavily rules-intensive and realistic books of yesteryear¹ and more towards story-based and background-intensive games with minimalist or cinematic rules. This has decreased the power of the Rules-Lawyers dramatically and has placed them under threat but you should not discount them too readily, for they are still there, ready to launch a fresh fight for control once this simplistic, populist nonsense in science has faded away again.

In these mathematical domains they like unto gods but they stray into other realms that are not their own, stalking the land, seeking to leech the fun and enjoyment from the games of others, to enforce their own twisted perception of The Rules upon others.

Here then, oh brave adventurer, is the terrible truth about this ancient and dreaded foe of all role-players. Read and be damned!

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of game supplements are normally designed with the d20 System firmly in mind. This book however is an exception, a piss take, a piece of humour and a satire. It extracts the urine, removes the Michael and otherwise plinks the nose of sober and serious discussion with a comedically appropriate fruit.

Here, instead of carefully and painstakingly analysing the various habits and characteristics of a minor fantasy race of underdeveloped baddies, we will be turning the gaming microscope outwards to you, the players. In particular, towards a certain type of player who sits out there hidden in plain sight amongst you, The Rules-Lawyer, the killjoy, the fun-vampire. Many names, but a single horrific purpose.

Role-playing has long been ripe (even overripe) for some self-referential humour and as any proponent of fortune cookie wisdom will tell you *'Many a true word is spoken in jest'*. Hopefully you will find something of at least passing interest in this book,

hopefully something in here will be funny enough to make you laugh, or at least crack a smile. In case you do not, here are some amusing potty words to make the purchase worth your while.

Bum, wank, poop, scat, peepee and crap.

RULES-LAWYERS – A THREAT TO THE MULTIVERSE

The Slayer's Guides focus on a single 'race' in each book, this time the Rules-Lawyers. Within this book you will find invaluable and hard to find information about this dreaded breed of player, feared even more than the more common Rampant Fatbeard, the expensive Model-Crushing Oaf or even the ubiquitous Munchkin. You will learn all about the complexities of their physiology, society, unique habitat and devoted worship of The Rules.

This will give you an important understanding of these creatures and the threat they pose to the greater gaming world. With a true understanding of their motives and methods you will be able to counter their attacks, make them work for you, or defeat them wherever they raise their bespectacled, acne-ravaged heads.

If you are a Rules-Lawyer reading this then we hope, perhaps, you will see the error of your ways and turn back from the evil path of page references, clean books and designer interviews.

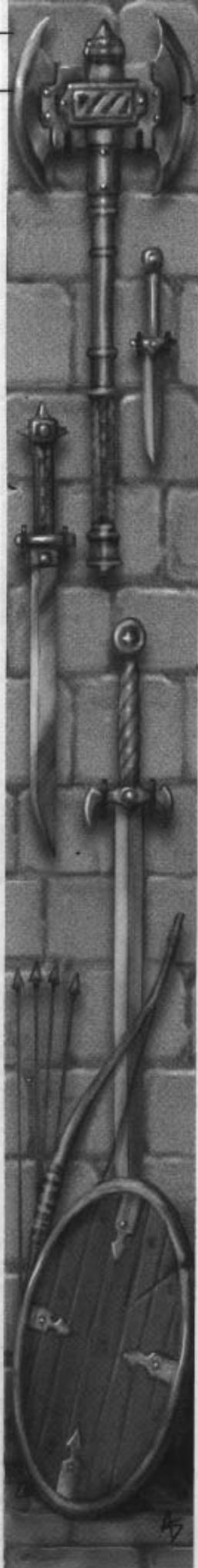
'Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Rulawyah Li'braya wgah'nagl fhtagn.'

LEXICON

Fatbeard

A common type of gamer, especially amongst the older fans of the hobby, fat and bearded. The clue is in the name. More generally this can refer to a fan boy of any geekish pastime such as comic collecting, Star Trek or anime fandom. Remember kids, FIJAGH, not FIAWOL.

¹An extremely complex Sci-Fi Game supplement, for creating any technological device, was probably the last dying gasp of 'Old Skool' game design and gave Rules-Lawyers many tremendously happy hours as they tried to convert it to work on spreadsheets or other computer programs. Imagine their delight in finding some of the equations were wrong.



INTRODUCTION

Munchkin

A gamer that places their character's own personal power above every single other aspect of the game.

Rules-Lawyer

Also called the 'Lawyer' or the 'Fun-Vampire' or even 'You Git'. A Rules-Lawyer is a role-player who places the letter of the rules above all other aspects of gaming. Even fun.

The Rules

A higher ideal of predictable normalcy that the Lawyers worship. The embodiment of every law or rule in the Universe.

The Source

This is a mythical place or person from which The Rules originate.

Jeremy set out the carbonated beverages, spicy tortillas and chocolate mini-cakes he'd purchased specially for the gaming session on the table. They'd get some kind of family-sized pizza or six later, a great big mountain of it, plus garlic bread. For now the sugar would have to keep them awake and alert while they gamed. He stepped over the piles of old and rotting pizza boxes and peered at his incongruously expensive stereo, selecting three classical CDs suitable to the fantasy atmosphere of the game they were going to be playing tonight.

The doorbell rang, playing the opening bars to the theme from *Knightrider* and carefully climbing over a discarded pile of scenario and equipment hooks and a compost heap of discarded character sheets with fast food orders scribbled on the backs of them, he made his way ever so carefully to the front door. It opened to reveal his gaming group: Small Dave, Medium Dave, Large Dave, Kat and Sprog.*

Small Dave grunted a quiet hello and toddled his way into the gaming area, already muttering away to himself some half-finished and half-arsed anecdote about something or other he'd read on the Internet. Small Dave played a wizard and was fanatical about collecting in game wealth and magical items. He wanted absolutely everything.

Large Dave followed, manoeuvring his not inconsiderable bulk through the door of the porch, working up a sweat as he moved the whole ten paces to the gaming room, which was more movement than he'd done the rest of the week, settling his massive bulk into one of the comfier seats with an inauspicious creak. Immediately Small Dave began to regale him, at length, with his practiced anecdote. Seeing them together Jeremy smiled, for they had always reminded him far too much of Jabba The Hutt and Salacious Crumb, especially when Small Dave laughed or Large Dave ate something unpleasant.

Then in came Medium Dave and the lovely Kat, darling of the gaming table. Medium Dave was one of those semi-good-looking Goth gamers that sprung up overnight like mushrooms when *White Wolf* came onto the scene. Kat was his girlfriend, something previously unknown in the majority of gaming circles. It was hard on them all having a fellow gamer who not only was getting some but was getting some from a girl who gamed and didn't resemble some kind of swamp-dwelling donkey. Still, it was worth the sacrifice just for the times she had to bend over to retrieve fallen dice from the floor. They were utterly shameless in their appreciation and she seemed to lap it up, so there was no harm done he supposed. Finally, there was Sprog. Sprog was a young 'un. He'd only recently joined the group, was still at college (with Kat) and had never gamed at all before he'd hooked up with them. They'd taken him under their wing, taught him their favourite games and treated him in all ways like an honoured padawan apprentice. Until now he'd been a munchkin but something had changed, something was different... wrong.

Jeremy's finely honed Games Master senses kicked in as they said hello. Sprog was carrying a satchel, a heavy satchel, filled with books. Books? Jeremy was the Games Master, what need did Sprog have of books? Why had he bought them? Where had he gotten the money? Why was his beetle sense tingling?

'Hi Jeremy, I've been really, really liking the games, so I scraped together some cash and bought myself a few of the books. I've been reading through them very carefully since I bought them and I do not think we've been doing initiative correctly, or experience points and that's just for starters.'

Jeremy dropped his bag of chilli-cheese tortillas in shock. They'd got to Sprog. The absolute bastards had turned him into one of them. He was no longer one of the group, he was...

A Rules-Lawyer.

* By an obscure and little known law of nature it is inevitable that any gaming group consisting of six or more players will have at least two members with the same name, requiring the use of nicknames.

RULES-LAWYER PHYSIOLOGY

The Rules-Lawyers seem hardly to be the most alien of threats. At worst they appear to be ordinary human scum, much like thieves, muggers, infomercial presenters or people who drive Volvos. They are very easy indeed to write off as harmless compared to other threats either in the real world or to your continued gaming success.

This is an easy mistake to make, and certainly they appear to have once been human, before evolution diverged.

Perhaps somewhere in their ice cold hearts and reptilian brains there still lurks some last pathetic dreg of their lost humanity that has not been pushed out by various rules interpretations and quotes from obscure magazines.²

Other gamers, for all their multitudinous faults, enormous bulk, hideously pronounced Adam's apples, polluting body odour, abysmally poor personal hygiene and distinct lack of social skills are still basically human (provided we grant generous leeway), with human needs and weaknesses. The Rules-Lawyers, in the state they are now, are not entirely human, as we shall see. Combining the very worst traits of *The Borg*,

The Daleks, *The Saurians* and Traffic Wardens they are a much bigger threat to world happiness than we give them credit for.

Rules-Lawyers live a peculiar existence, one bounded by hard and fast rules that cannot be questioned and an absolute degree of right and wrong, black and white. Where humanity is intuitive they wield cold logic and solid interpretation.

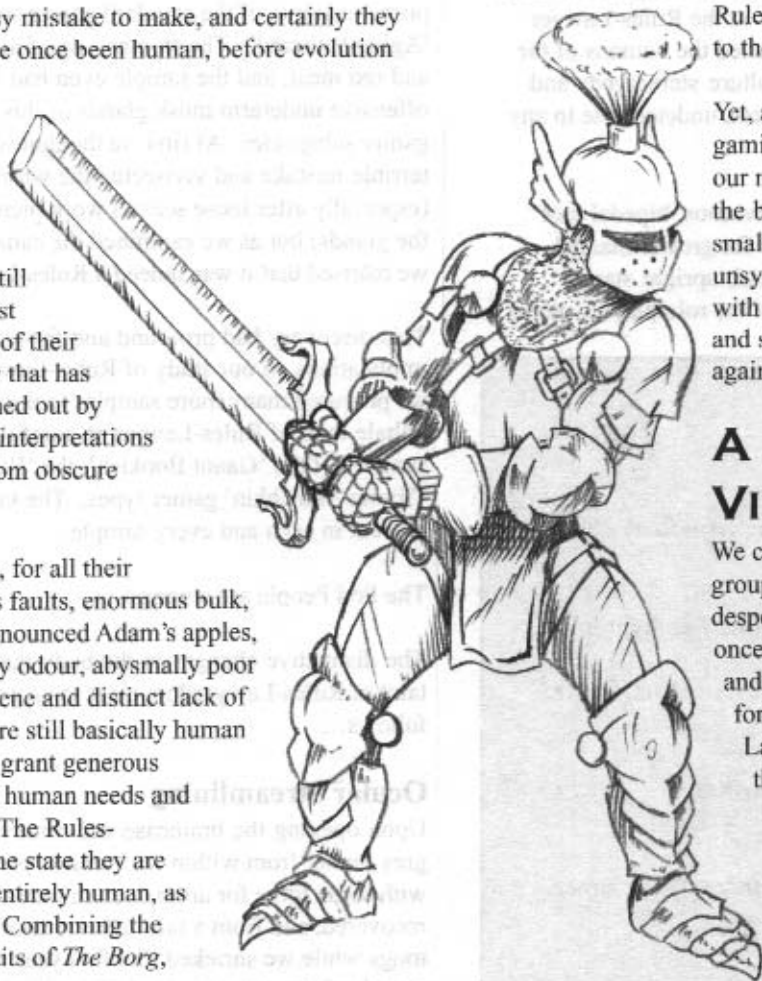
Many of you will have never even met a Rules-Lawyer in person; in recent years the role-playing scene has undergone some drastic and fundamental changes. Story has taken supreme precedence over the rules, loose guidelines have replaced tables or complex mathematical formulae, house rules are even talked about within the main core books but still

Rules-Lawyers remain, clinging to the far fringes of the hobby.

Yet, across the gulf of the gaming table, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects small minded, cold and unsympathetic, regard our games with envious eyes and slowly and surely they draw their plans against us.

A CLOSER VIEW

We contacted several player groups around the world (several desperate groups contacted us once word had gotten around) and arranged several 'accidents' for their resident Rules-Lawyers. After breaking into the morgues and making off with the bodies like ninjas³, we returned to *The Alexandrian Institute For Pointless Studies* and began a detailed



² Until we gave him a lethal injection, then dissected and pickled his brain, one of our test subjects demonstrated the amazing ability to recall, from memory, the contents of every single *Wyvern Magazine* since it first started. If only he had used this ability to count cards we'd all be fabulously wealthy.

³ We planned out and simulated this action as a tabletop game first. Who said gaming did not provide useful life skills? Pity the days of Burke and Hare are gone. Hmmm, who might still have a use for cadavers?

examination of the bodies using our keen minds and an array of kitchen, garden and DIY equipment.

The video of this intriguing autopsy is available from our subsidiary company, *Gullible Mongoose Films* for a knockdown price of £5.99 plus postage and packing and contains all the highlights of our extensive examination. Regardless what you might have heard from other unreliable sources the tape is entirely genuine and the apparent continuity errors are actually considered to be signs of authenticity. We assure you that any fakers would have taken much greater pains to ensure everything was the same in each and every scene.

Examination of the dead on the kitchen table and observation of living specimens existing in the wild showed an amazing diversity in the Rules-Lawyer species. Their diversity matched the humans of the usual Role-Player/Counterculture stereotypes and the mimicry was almost perfect, undetectable to any but the most trained of eyes.

The Rules-Lawyers are omnivorous, bipedal tool users with opposable thumbs for greater manual dexterity and a straight-backed, upright stance. While most appeared to be of the role-playing gamer

subtype, many of those examined were also relatively successful in real life positions. The majority of these were found to work as security guards, traffic wardens or middle management in large corporations. Places where a strict and utterly insane adherence to the letter of The Rules was not a disadvantage but a positive boon.

PHYSIOLOGY

The surface mimicry of the gamer form was absolutely perfect; in fact it appeared that changes had been imposed upon the standard gamer physiology rather than a brand new creation or a separate species.

One specimen appeared, at least externally, to be a prime example of the standard gamer subtype, the 'Aging Fatbeard'. The stomach was full of real ale and red meat, and the sample even had the unique offensive underarm musk glands of this particular gamer subspecies. At first we thought we had made a terrible mistake and vivisected the wrong person (especially after loose scalpel work pierced one of the glands) but as we examined the cadaver further we realised that it was indeed a Rules-Lawyer.⁴

This discovery had profound and far-reaching implications on our study of Rules-Lawyers and so we procured many more samples looking for the telltale taint of Rules-Lawyer in carefully selected samples of the 'Gaunt Bookish', the 'Hippy' and the 'Young Munchkin' gamer types. The taint was present in each and every sample.

The Pod People are amongst us.

The distinctive changes in the body that made the taint of Rules-Lawyerdom clear to us were as follows...

Ocular Streamlining

Upon opening the braincase and removing the pulpy grey matter from within we vomited profusely and with some force for around ten minutes. After having recovered, and from a fair distance with a pair of tongs while we shrieked like first year schoolgirls in a spider farm, we examined the remaining cavity and discovered something particularly interesting. The optic nerve had shortened dramatically in the specimen and was much thicker than normal, and far

Stomach Contents

4 pints of Fiddler's Elbow.
 Four chocolate rolls.
 Six slices of Pizza.
 One plastic pizza protector. (unchewed)
 One small Db.
 One large Db.
 One Character Sheet 'Badgnt The Hobbit'.
 (partially digested).
 One lead-alloy miniature. (unidentifiable)
 47 Spicy Tortilla chips.
 50 grams dip.
 2 large Strawberry milkshakes.
 Two 500 gram bezozars.
 Two large kebabs.
 Four Burgers. (Two McDonalds, Two Burger King)
 Two large sacks.
 50 feet of rope.
 A ten foot pole. (in sections)
 One Whale (Biblical) with human skeleton inside. (Biblical)

⁴ We finally managed to get the horrific stench out by bathing repeatedly in diluted sulphuric acid and exfoliating our top layers of skin. Keep that in mind if an Aging Fatbeard manages to spray you with his skunk juice.

more densely packed with nerve fibres, linking directly to the memory centre of the brain as well as the visual cortex. This specialised adaptation appears to enable the Rules-Lawyer to almost instantly absorb any form of written information and to store it for immediate use in the situations the Lawyer finds himself in. This seems to be at the cost of picking up the more subtle nuances of visual information, such as the rest of the group glowering at them and beating their heads on the table.

Aural Selectivism

Much like the nictating eye membrane in lizards, or the secondary eyelids of camels that protect them from flying dust and sand, the Rules-Lawyer has an adaptation to the outside of the eardrum. A very fast reacting sphincter-like muscle enables the Rules-Lawyer to selectively cut out any conversation or protest that is not to their liking. Above the ear on either side of the skull are two small, specialised nerve clusters attached directly to the Aural Sphincter. These are not linked to the conscious mind of the Lawyer but appear to be mildly telepathic, picking up any comment that agrees with or supports the Rules-Lawyers position on an issue and reflexively opening the Aural Sphincter to accept those words. These neural nodes may also be able to hear a short way into the future, closing before anyone else has even begun to state their counterargument.

Cranial Modifications

The skull was slightly thinned out, perhaps two-thirds of the thickness of a normal human skull and the brain was pressed up against it on all sides rather than being suspended and cushioned by cranial fluid. This appears to cause pressure on the brain leading to increased irritability in monitored live subjects.

In addition, the areas of the brain related to social interaction were comparatively atrophied, while the parts concerning memory and the logical areas of the brain had expanded in size and were much denser than normal brain tissue, containing thousands

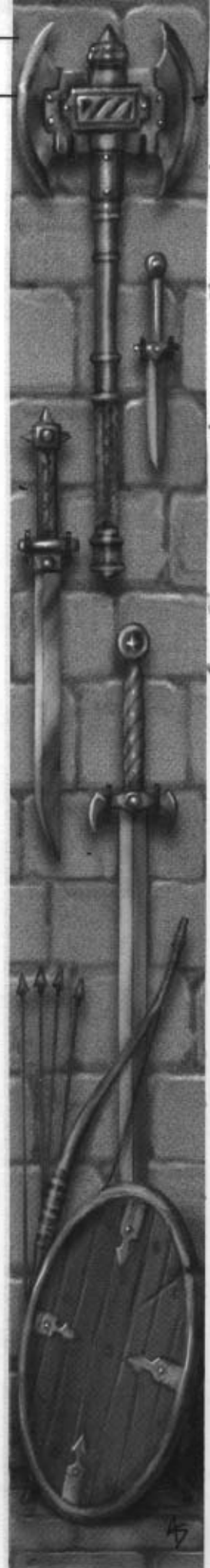
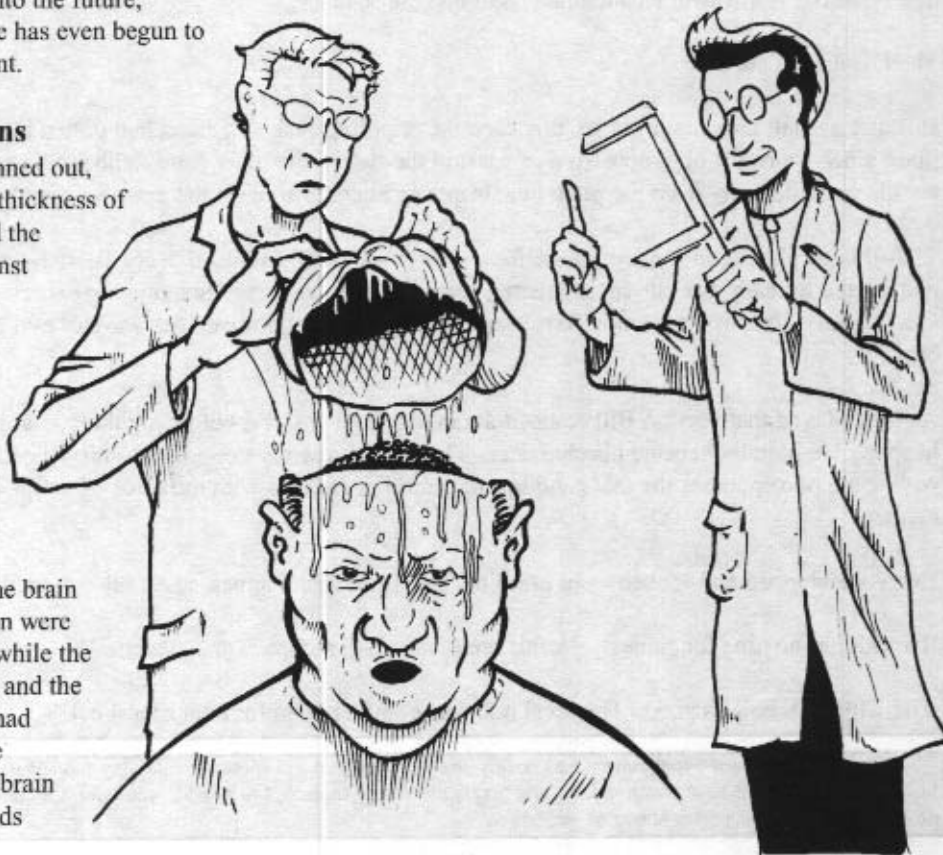
of times the normal amount of interconnections.

Sticky Pads

The fingertips of the Lawyer cadavers were slightly tacky and the wrist joint adapted almost exclusively for left to right movement. Observing the live specimens in action we concluded that this modification was extremely useful for quickly flipping through source books, turning the pages at a phenomenal speed. This adaptation must make masturbation, something thought in folklore to be very strongly associated with Rules-Lawyers, very difficult. Perhaps this helps us explain why, being unable to commit the solitary act for relief, the Rules-Lawyer reacts so very badly to being called a wanker.

Spinal and Anal Flexibility

The extreme bendiness of the spine and the expansive stretchiness of the subjects' sphincter muscles appeared to have been developed to allow the subjects to spend a great deal of their time curled up tightly into defensive balls. This may, perhaps, be an evolutionary adaptation held over from a time in which they were spineless invertebrates and in that time they would roll up inside their shell for self defence.



Scarlet Cheek Pouches

Rules-Lawyers were found to have extremely stretchy cheeks on their faces packed with large blood vessels and containing a small air bladder that enabled it to be puffed up in size and turned scarlet.

This is used when getting into loud and shouted arguments, and is usually accompanied by profuse sweating and a deep furrowing of the brow. In times of yore this may have been used by the Rules-Lawyer as a dominance or mating signal. These days of, course, it's just funny to laugh at.

THE RULES-LAWYER IN FOLKLORE

In times of yore people would believe (being credulous and covered in cow muck) that the fairies would, on occasion, come into their houses and take away their children replacing them with Changelings crafted from the fairies' flawed glamour. These days we can account for these legends through various

mental and physical hereditary diseases.

It is not as well known that there are similar folk stories that appear in legend relating to Rules-Lawyers. Sometimes a peasant's children would be taken and replaced, not with a fairie changeling but with an officious and supercilious little brat. In these cases they would think to themselves that their own children had been taken away and replaced, not by the fairies or the wee folk but by the tax collectors of the realm.

ORIGINS

There is much in the way of scholastic infighting over the true origins of the Rules-Lawyer here at The Institute. There are several rival theories as to the source of this great menace and no one outside the Institute in the real world really giving that much of a monkey's about it in the first place greatly hampers effective research. At a scientific Symposium, at The Rat & Parrot in Highgate, the various theories over their origins were summarised thusly.⁵

They crowded into the room around the table, peering at their sheets of paper, handouts, miniatures and various and assorted books. Jane was a good Games Master. She always helped everyone get into their characters and described the world with consummate skill and consistency.

Then, it happened.

Bill was a small unassuming man, tiny even. A crippling case of asthma had gotten him into gaming in the first place since sport, for him, consisted of passing the ball to the other team deliberately and staggering, wheezing for his very life away from the pitch in a desperate attempt to reach the nurse's office before asphyxiating.

They'd been playing in this campaign for a couple of months now, on every Tuesday, regular as clockwork. Bill had started to really get into his character, years of schoolyard repression being exorcised as his Viking Chieftain, Hrofnir of the Bloody Axe, cleaved his way through wave after wave of evil creatures with his Axe of Smiting.

As they played that session Bill reached a gaming epiphany and before anything could be done, it began to happen. He literally became his character. There was a tearing noise as his shirt ripped open, buttons flying with some power across the table and hitting Jimbo in the face with the force of wasps hitting a motorcycle helmet.

Everyone stopped and looked as in place of their little friend appeared a foul-mouthed blond barbarian.

'Hrofnir has no time for games! Hrofnir seeks ale, gold, monsters and wenches!'

And with that, he was gone. The local pub was going to be in for a bit of a shock.

⁵ In actual fact Professor Montgomery was deeply into his cups and his speech, while very passionate, was virtually unintelligible to the human ear. We have had to take a few liberties with the transcript to provide you with a more fitting summary, minus the profuse vomiting and protestations of adoration.

Parallel Evolution

This theory postulates that Rules-Lawyers have evolved alongside humans in lockstep, existing among humanity as a separate race, yet masquerading as normal people. This theory has been largely discredited since perfectly normal gamers appear to spontaneously turn into Rules-Lawyers.

A more recent take on the theory suggests that Rules-Lawyers are so close to human, even closer than bonobo chimps, that they are able to interbreed with humans and that, occasionally, the Rules-Lawyer traits come to the fore in the offspring, causing the physiological and psychological changes during the onset of puberty. This theory falls down because the idea of a gamer getting any nookie, let alone a Rules-Lawyer, is considered laughable and far too improbable by the scientific community at large and, more importantly, by the fairer sex. Discounting the use of drugs and alcohol to subdue potential mates, this is rather unlikely.

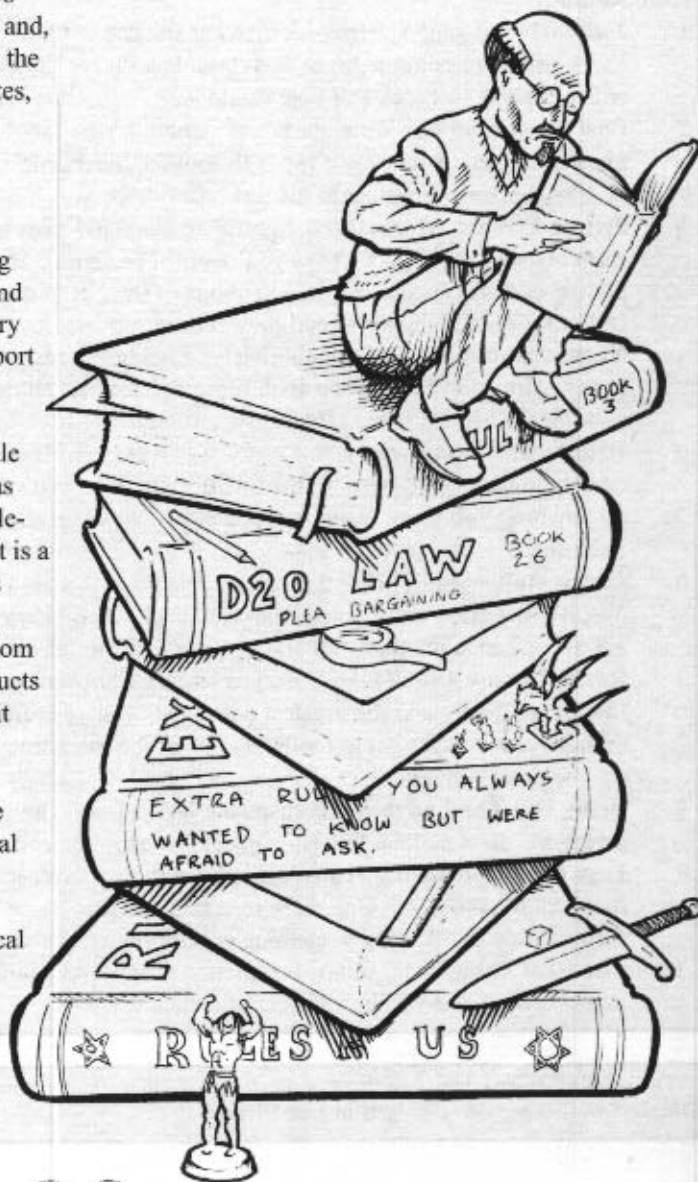
Infection

This theory suggests that Rules-Lawyerdom is acquired from an outside source rather than being innate, that normal individuals are infected by and subsequently changed by a pathogen. This theory has somewhat more in the way of scholastic support but as of yet no viral spore, bacterium or rogue protein chain has been found in the samples we took that could wreak such massive and wholesale change upon a person. However, a correlation has been found between the ownership of certain Role-Playing game products and Rules-Lawyerdom. It is a chicken and egg affair, hard to distinguish. Does ownership of *Rulesmaster* or *Delvings & Dingos* cause Rules-Lawyerdom, or does Rules-Lawyerdom cause ownership of these products? Do the products carry the pathogen? Is it deliberate? Why does it only affect some people and not others?

A more modern and progressive theory doing the rounds is that Rules-Lawyerdom is a meme, a viral idea that spreads from mind to mind by conversational contact changing the way they operate but this does not explain the physiological changes associated with the condition, unless one believes that mind over matter is really that powerful. If it were so potent then surely gamers would be constantly mutating into their characters mid-session. That being the case we do not think that this is an entirely plausible explanation.

Chosen Race Of The Gods

This speculation infers that Rules-Lawyers were human right up until the very point they gave their eternal and binding pledge to The Rules. Rules-Lawyers do not just follow the rules, that doesn't begin to cover the devotion they have - they embody them and The Rules are their one and only god. The Rules are also a powerful force over reality, an incarnation of all that is possible or impossible, and a manifestation of the boundaries of reality. Admittedly this theory was arrived at after an unwisely large sampling of imported Czech Absinthe but it is compelling whether you're hallucinating out of your tree or not.



MATING PRACTICES

None, zip, zilch, nada, nowt, nothing, nuffink, not a sausage, fuck all, less chance of happening than of Satan tobogganing to work on a toboggan pulled by flying pigs who've just had a massive tax rebate from the government.

Oh come on, they're gamers *and* anal-retentive? What kind of massively improbable odds are there that they will ever get the chance to breed?⁶

Fine, fine, you will not let me cop out on this chapter . . . That or your weasel-like, perverted little virgin

minds are hoping for a healthy dollop of filthy smut. I remember the *Breasts of Fantasy* calendars, you cannot fool me.

Rules-Lawyers do not get to mate with anything the vast and overwhelming majority of the time but it is not for want of attempting to. Unfortunately for their race and fortunately for ours, Rules-Lawyers are almost exclusively male and attempts to seduce human females are so insanely difficult for them as to be nigh on impossible.

All a Rules-Lawyer knows is rules, so when a potential mate joins the gaming group, their

Wandering Poontang Chart

Roll Result

- 1 **Jailbait!** Look out! She may look 18 but she doesn't have her GCSEs yet. Best make a Sense Motive check or you're going to be in deep trouble with her father and the police. Wouldn't want to share a cell with a certain 70's rock star now would we?
- 2 **Low Resolution Fox** Wow, she's hot! A body to die for. Until you get a bit closer that is and *oh my god!* She's a munter! Your only hope is to spot the hideousness and get away before you speak your cheesy pick up line and are committed to the task. Best hope your Spot skill is up to par.
- 3 **Fifteen Dowar!** Who is this delightful creature and what is that sexy foreign language she's speaking? It certainly sounds dirty. Perhaps you're on! The Games Master should select a random language and if the player speaks it, determine the intentions of the girl in question. Otherwise, have the player get the wrong end of the stick, whichever end they choose.
- 4 **Naaaaaaaaaughty Schoooooolgirls!** Ah, schools with sixth forms. All of the uniforms, none of the legal issues. How do you separate sixth formers from jailbait though? It will take cunning, daring and a few good Sense Motive checks, that's for certain.
- 5 **Drunken Nympho** Who is this crazy lady reeking of Bacardi and why is she wriggling on my lap and demanding I go with her into the toilets? Oh dear, you've been latched onto by a drunken nympho! She'll do anything you want, anywhere you want, but when she sobers up expect the police to be called and you to be sued.
- 6 **Crazy Stalker Lady!** Hey this chick's really hot... wait a minute... don't you know her from somewhere? Yes, it's that crazy ex of yours from way back when. How she found you here you'll never know but she's got surveillance photographs and never intends to leave you again.
- 7 **Really Intense Chick** Like wow, you know? Philosophy, politics, history, art, this girl knows it all. Intelligent, funny and the greatest pair of tits you've ever seen! If you can't impress her intellectually though, you'll never get to fondle them. Best make some Knowledge and Profession checks if you want to see the promised land.
- 8 **Bring Out The Ladyboys!** Perhaps the fact you met 'her' in the men's room should have been a bit of a giveaway. Best make a few Hide checks to avoid detection, hadn't you?
- 9 **Less Than Convincing Transvestite** It's a rugby player in a dress! Well, they're easy to spot and avoid but that isn't the problem. One more rejection and they're crying into their lager and smearing mascara down their stubbly cheek. Say something comforting or everyone will think the worse of you.
- 10 **The Real Thing** Cute, smart, sexy, witty, funny, everything you could ever ask for and no catch. Except that everyone else will be after her of course...

⁶ The actual odds have been calculated at precisely 678946256:1. Or roughly the same chance you have of finding a troupe of limbless performing circus midgets in your fridge.

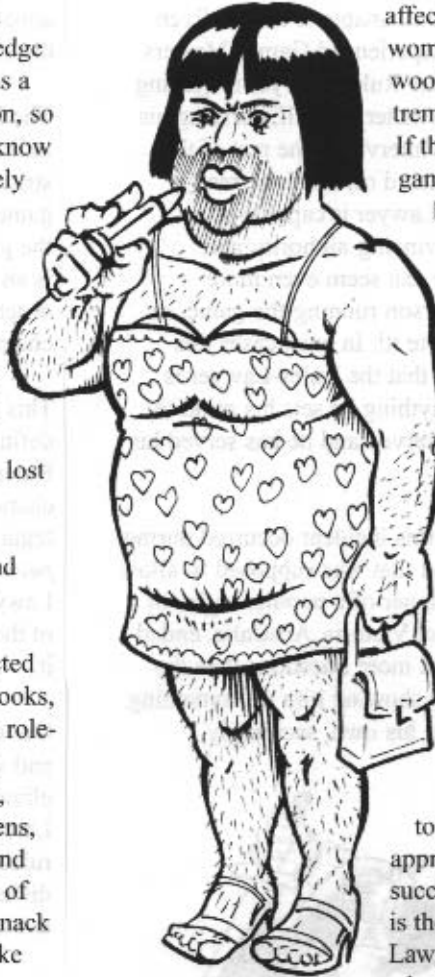
behaviour intensifies by a factor of ten or even a hundred. Amongst other Rules-Lawyers knowledge of the various intricacies of The Rules is taken as a sign of great intelligence and supreme dedication, so they will try to impress females with what they know - The Rules. For fairly obvious reasons, this rarely works.

There was a brief and intense flurry of excitement in the Rules-Lawyer community when a certain book came out about dating called *The Rules* but when this turned out to be some kind of annoying feminine self-help book and not to contain any Romantic Encounter Tables or Wandering Poontang charts they soon lost interest.

Rules-Lawyers may also try to bedazzle, woo and impress the current object of their affections by building a well designed little fort around

themselves, constructed entirely out of rulebooks, games supplements, role-playing magazines, computer printouts, character sheets, pens, pencils (wooden and propelling), dice of all kinds and snack food. Just like those little weaverbirds in Africa. To the Rules-Lawyer this represents a fine and impressive investment of time, effort and money and also displays the breadth of their knowledge. The interpretation of their beloved is usually far different from what the Rules-Lawyer might wish.

Like the majority of the gamer subspecies the Rules-Lawyer will interpret any sign of acceptance or



affection displayed by a woman as a green light for wooing and will read a tremendous amount into it. If there are any single girl gamers reading this, my best advice is to not let them do anything for you, not even so much as pass you the bowl of sweets. Then again, maybe you get off on the idea of being trailed by love-slave minions, in which case knock yourself out.

For these reasons, amongst others, the gamer Rules-Lawyer is rarely, if ever, successful in finding a mate. The only form of Rules-Lawyer to show anything even approaching moderate success in the romantic field is the Real Life Rules-Lawyer, especially those who manage to make it as far as middle management, and therefore have money and a powerful car to compensate for a lack of social skills and personality.

WEASELLING & QUOTATION

These amazing offensive/defensive abilities of the Rules-Lawyer are possible only due to the remarkable physiological changes that have taken place within him. With such a vast memory capacity for rules trivia and the ability to use convoluted and twisted logic to cut them any way he wishes, the Rules-Lawyer is able to bombard others with an endless stream of elegantly constructed rules interpretations, compelling examples and cases that make his personal position on the call seem completely unassailable, no matter how it runs counter to the progress of the game.

This intense stream of data overwhelms the meagre cognitive functions of the targets, rendering them

slack-jawed and incoherent, unable to resist. Even the most hardened and experienced Games Masters can be overcome when the Rules-Lawyer is quoting verbatim from the game-writer himself, deriving his information from online interviews the rest of the group have never even heard of, let alone read themselves. The Rules-Lawyer is capable of speaking with such convincing authority and personal gravitas that he can seem even more authoritative than the person running the game, or even the person who wrote it! In most cases this cows the group so much that the Rules-Lawyer is able to get his way in anything he sets his mind to. The Rules have been observed and he has served his god all the better for it.

An extreme example of this incident occurred during an online question period that was supposed to allow people to talk to the designer of a popular series of games. Barry Manning of Victoria, Australia, ended up answering a great deal more questions than the game's designer, thereby showing him up something rotten and demonstrating his own, seemingly



unparalleled, mastery of the system to all present at the time.

The Rules-Lawyer uses these powers freely and indiscriminately but his assaults become most strident if his character comes under threat during a game or is about to die from any cause. At this point the gloves are well and truly off, for a character death is an element of chaos and the Rules-Lawyer requires order above all things (unless it's someone else's character and The Rules are being followed).

This does backfire sometimes when The Rules would definitely require the death of their character - The Rules are above all things, even possessions and characters. Some Games Masters and players would regard this as poetic justice, a '*hoisting by their own petard*' of the annoying bastards but the Rules-Lawyer will be perfectly satisfied so long as the letter of the 'Law' is followed, even if he pays the price for it.

Our researchers secretly taped some of these assaults and when they were played back under careful, clinical conditions it was discovered that the Rules-Lawyers were taking many different spins on the rules and using the same quotes to support entirely different conjectures at different times. Conjectures that most suited them in that instance.

Since this has only previously been seen in religious sects of a fanatical or dubious nature it supports the idea that the Rules-Lawyers are some kind of cult. Albeit one without nubile female followers, drugs, money, guns, or any of the other attractions that cults normally have. Which explains why they're usually a cult of one.

TECHNOLOGY

Rules-Lawyers are capable of using all forms of human technology from the jawbone of an ass to high tech video recorders and DVD players as well as all the gaming paraphernalia in existence. However they make noteworthy and particular use of a few choice items . . .

Dice

As with other things in The Rules, Rules-Lawyers require everything to be *just so* with their dice. The usual gamer entertainments of dropping them in people's drinks/pants, or sticking them up your nose will not be appreciated and can lead to screaming fits. The Rules-Lawyers will always keep their dice

in a proper bag or box, not their pocket, and certainly not in the very bottom of their overnight gaming bag amongst the pants, socks and rotting snack debris of yesteryear. Rules-Lawyer dice are generally clean, unchipped and uniform in colour and size. Normal gamer dice are chipped, doodled on and covered in various bodily excrescences.

Books

Books are extremely important to the Rules-Lawyer as part of his worship of The Rules. These hallowed tomes contain the various laws that govern the Rules-Lawyer's gaming; they are his sword, his shield and his hopelessly out-of-control drug addiction. Use of these tomes varies though and the Lawyers appear to be divided into two distinct camps.

One camp, The Evangelists, take their books with them everywhere, finding their weaselling all the more effective when they can yank out a printed sourcebook and jab their finger at something that agrees with them, there on the page in black and white for all to see. It lends a note of finality to an argument usually only achievable through firearms.

Evangelists evolve to become either muscular (relatively) or squat due to carrying all their books everywhere they go. An Evangelist will often show up for a quick two to three hour session with his entire book collection and boxes of printed notes from online all in a big rucksack on his back. Sometimes the sheer volume of books means there is no room for people to get to the table and play.

The other camp, The Librarians, gather the books together and preserve them for posterity. They keep shelf upon shelf of carefully protected books, many of them still in the shop's plastic, or sealed in new plastic wrappers and vapour lock bags to prevent them being damaged or destroyed by air, bacteria, fungus or careless drink spillage. Not for them the well-thumbed, stained and blim-burned books of your normal gamer. It has even been rumoured that a Rules-Lawyer of this camp has the ability to maintain a first edition copy of *'Dark & Spooky Industries'*, without the pages falling out and scattering throughout the land, though we are yet to corroborate this story with an actual sighting.

Some go as far as to buy two copies of everything, keeping one in pristine, mint condition and the other designated for day-to-day use. This probably helps

keep some of the smaller gaming companies in business. Every cloud has a silver lining.

Librarians spend a lot of time in their cave-like rooms and may have additional physical adaptations to enable them to better use their library. Big cow-like eyes behind thick glasses giving them dark sight, more cranial adaptations to help them better catalogue their games internally within their cerebrum and find what they need when they go into their library, and a more noticeable Fatbeard-like defensive musk that dissuades others from entering their library on pain of gagging.

Lifecycle

Rules-Lawyerdom may or may not be in-bred from the very start but susceptibility and tendencies towards it can be spotted from the very first squealing blood-soaked moments of life when the little homunculus first emerges from the birth canal.

They are born just the same as normal human children but while in infancy they require absolutely everything to be 'just so' or they will be reduced to screaming, tearful fits of the heebie-jeebies. The food must be correct and properly ordered, their cot in exactly the right place and their toys arranged in precisely the correct order. Anything else is less than satisfactory. Watch out for regimented teddy bears, regular polyhedral building block structures, their sides exactly the same length, and other telltale signs of an impressively anal-retentive mind. If only babies were anal retentive in the more literal sense, all would be well.

Once they can walk and talk and can start getting their grubby little mitts into important and breakable things they have an insatiable desire to know how everything works. Endlessly they will question 'why' and 'how' and it is generally at this age that they gain their first exposure to games of any kind, usually something like *Snakes & Ladders*. While this game is simple enough and requires little in the way of rules, they may well add more rules to the existing set, typically of a needlessly complex nature. Slotting them in as they see fit, often reducing entire groups of children to snotty-faced tears of confusion and defeat, they give different breeds of snake different qualities and change the numbers on the dice so that only they can understand the game, and therefore win.



Once they get to school they begin development of their full potential. Board and schoolyard games become rigidly and unswervingly enforced when they are present and they are always the banker when playing monopoly, which is convenient for rhyming slang if nothing else. This love, this ardour for The Rules will not go unnoticed by the machinery of school bureaucracy and will almost certainly guarantee that the child gets chosen as a Hall Monitor or Prefect, a position of power from which the Rules-Lawyer will make sure all other children feel the bite of his unwavering tyranny.

It is usually at around this time that they first discover the glories of role-playing games and with them a new and exciting world of Rules, a vista of interpretations, arguments, applications and misapplications. With exposure to these games and their wonderful levels of complexity, they transcend, something in them finding its place in the universe, and they turn to it with their full and devoted attention. It is not long after this that The Cult Of The Rules finds them out and inducts them into its many-layered secrets, at which point they become fully-fledged Rules-Lawyers able to bring their unique brand of terror to gaming groups the world over.

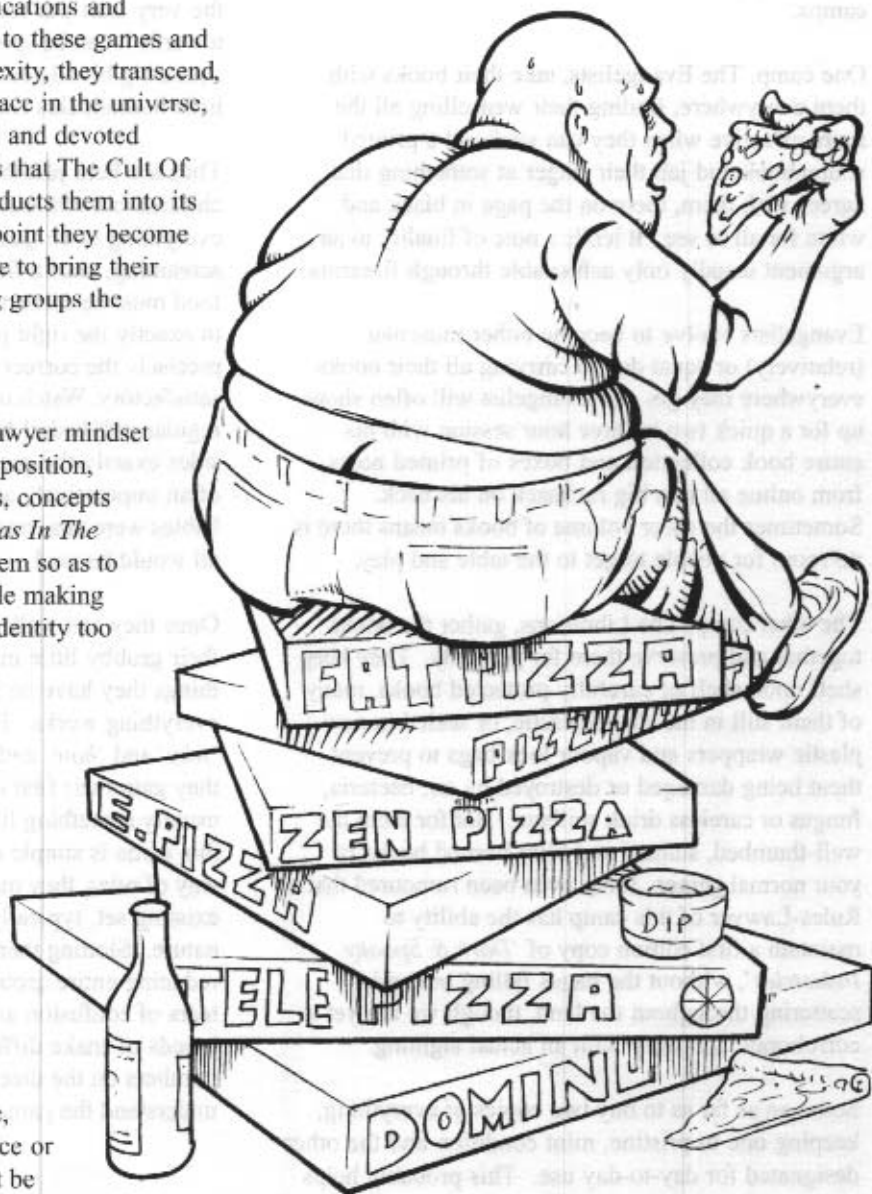
Rules Lawyer Mindset

To fully understand the Rules-Lawyer mindset you must put yourself into their position, immersing yourself in their ideas, concepts and culture. Much like in *Gorillas In The Mist* you must learn to imitate them so as to not arouse suspicion, all the while making sure you don't take your cover identity too far and become one of them.

According to their beliefs everything must be ordered, tabulated and governed by nice, controllable rules and numbers. Everything must make sense to their logical brains and have the rules of its existence governed and defined somewhere, preferably on paper or if not, then on computer disc or CD.

Anything chaotic or troublesome, anything that threatens the balance or the supremacy of The Rules must be removed from the existence of the game, quickly.

Plot? Story? Why would you need those things? Often they clash with the beautiful symmetry of The Rules. The Rules provide for every single eventuality and every possible circumstance and if they do not? Well, we can make up another Rule! There is no need to 'wing it'. Rules for everything! Tables for everything! What kind of beer do they serve at the tavern? What kind of ammunition does the Desert Smuggler have for sale? Which shops are on Little Walnut Street in the City Of Skeldermir? You can fill volumes with every conceivable circumstance and question until no room is left for personal creativity or interpretation, just hour upon hour of trying to find the right table.



No matter what is occurring in the game the Rules-Lawyer will always insist on following the absolute letter of The Rules. Even if it's a key plot moment that requires everyone to just stop for a second and listen . . .

Outside Context Problems

Rules-Lawyers have a mind as tight and narrow as a duck's arse; anything that does not conform to their expectations causes a brain-fry deep inside their cerebrum, sometimes causing a spluttering of the mouth and vocal outbursts. This is tragic for them and a weakness that can be exploited in the right situations. It is also highly amusing, at least once

the spittle dries. This tragic problem is most commonly observed at conventions, where in the middle of the free gaming hall Rules-Lawyers can be seen leaving games in a massive huff, pronouncing;

'I signed up to play 'Wizards & Wombats'! Not someone's half-baked home rules! This is ridiculous!'

The O.C.P. causes such massive disruption in the Rules-Lawyers' minds that they will probably knock over a chair or spill beer on themselves in the exodus. Boo hoo.

The guards lay in tattered heaps around the weary adventurers. Thorgrim The Mighty had taken many cuts and blood loss had made him weak. Jeremiah the Wizard was exhausted from spell casting and Mitimo the Halfling lay dead under a pile of Goblins. Only Drummond, the archer, was unharmed and hopped down from his perch in the rafters to assist his friends.

The door at the end of the hall opened and from inside swept the evil Magus Hafnar of the Crimson Hand. He regarded them coolly and took breath . . .

'You have done well to come this far but it is too late. Already my plan -'

'I shoot him with my bow,' said Derek.

The Games Master and the other players turned to look at him with a due sense of fear and trepidation.

'You can't,' said the Games Master. 'He's mid-soliloquy.'

'There's nothing in the rules that says I can't!'

'He's using *entrancing majestic aura*.'

::clatter::

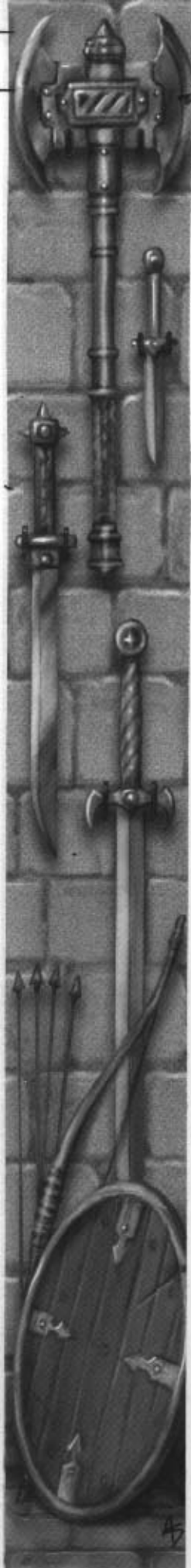
'I made my Will save. I shoot him with my bow.'

'But...'

::clatter::

'Critical, and we already know what level he is from our earlier encounter with him and the Flesh Golem. With my longbow that means I just did more damage than he can possibly have hit points, even with magic. He's dead.'

The rest of the group glowered at Derek. He was right, of course, but now they would never know what victory they had achieved.



HABITAT

Rules-Lawyers like a predictable and well-ordered environment in which to reside. This much is obvious from what we know about them. Occasionally economic circumstances will require the Rules-Lawyer to share its lair with other creatures such as the Greater Slovenly Fatbeard, (also known as a Borelax) but this just makes them easier to spot, as the ground around their sleeping area will be the only clean spot in the entire lair - just like The Odd Couple, only with gaming books. Other key things to watch out for are spreadsheets, databases, alphabetisation and card indexes, all a dead giveaway a Rules-Lawyer lives within.

The Rules-Lawyer's collections of things will be ordered, bound, cased, sealed, bagged and otherwise protected from the elements. They will be gathered in a strict order and placed neatly, probably in a bookcase made especially for the task.

Action figures will always be in the original packaging, Never Removed From Box, to keep their value as collectables. These things are not toys to a Rules-Lawyer, they're financial investments. Comics will be in PH Neutral storage boxes, bagged and back boarded and collected not only by numerical order but also by storyline. Often multiple copies will exist, one for reading, one for keeping. Gaming is not the only hobby that can have the fun sucked out of it by these nefarious creatures.

GAMES SHOPS

These places are a dying breed, driven to the dingier corners of towns by endless and forgettable shopping malls and town-centre improvement schemes. They cling on despite Internet ordering and sell *Pokey-Thing* cards to pre-teens, or crack, whichever that particular shopkeeper finds the least morally questionable. It is pretty much 50/50.

These Oases are wonderful places in which to observe many different breeds of gamer in the wild, from the Character-Proud Bigmouth and the Whensthiscomingout to the Confused Mother and her I-Want-That offspring. Our interest, however, lies solely with the Rules-Lawyer.

Within the relatively safe confines of the Games Shop and with what he believes to be a sympathetic

audience, the Rules-Lawyer feels very much at ease. After a time he may feel comfortable enough to talk about his gaming experiences. This conversation will always take the form of talking about statistics; good rolls he made or how he found a loophole in the rules that gave him extra abilities. The quests he has taken part in, the enemies he has fought, his character's background or story, these things will be rarely touched on, if at all, in the Rules-Lawyer's meandering conversation. They will always think that the person behind the counter will be one of their kind, this being part of their natural feelings of egotism and superiority combined with the thought that anyone who looks after ledgers and money must be at least a little anal retentive. This also leads to the poor till guy having to put up with things like . . .

'And he entirely forgot I had plus one to my attack for being on slightly higher ground, I mean, in my opinion he's just not fit to run a game. If you forget one of the most basic and simple rules, like then how can you be trusted with something more complex? What if one of us had been playing a wizard? I don't have to tell you how complex the magic rules can get; you know, I'm sure. So anyway, he then rules that the goblin was trying to strike past my armour! Honestly, that's not even in any of the optional rules that I've got, he just 'made it up' if you can believe that. Well, if it's not in the rules-I think he must just be picking on me for some reason. Maybe its just because in the previous game his warrior was killed. He might construe that as being my fault but all I did was point out that he wasn't entitled to a saving throw in such a confined space. I find it rather petty, he went on for hours about that and really, its a minor thing. Its not really that important is it? He can always make up another character; it'll take a while to get five years of experience on a new one again though. Yeah, so anyway, I'll buy these two dice and this booster pack of cards please...'

After a time and if sufficiently flush with money, the Rules-Lawyer will begin to browse through the store looking for a new purchase. The Rules-Lawyer will not tend to go to the shelf for his favourite game straight away. Rather, he will go through each and every shelf methodically and thoroughly, searching for lost or rare treasure. When he arrives at a particularly thick tome, or rules based supplement, he will stop and read. Lately the pickings have become slim and many 'poisonous' non-rules items have been as thick and heavy as rules supplements. The trend towards story-based systems with lots of

background means rare pickings for the Lawyer's voracious mind, the book equivalent of tofu or nouvelle cuisine, all presentation and no substance. For this reason he is more likely to attend those games shops that have book swapping or trade in services. These places are likely to have the older games and books the Rules-Lawyer craves. Musty and old, torn and tattered they might be, but to the Lawyer it's like fine aged wine (overrated because of its mystique and age). For this same reason they are frequently the highest bidders at convention auctions, bidding for signed copies of various games in the hope that the writer had made some notes about some of the rules, or scribbled something in the margins.

Having selected a potential purchase, the Rules-Lawyer approaches the desk where, reclining, sits the resident (usually Fatbeard) shopkeeper. Before buying, the Rules-Lawyer will test the patience of this Buddha of gaming by asking a great many questions about the new rules and how they interact with the old, release dates of new supplements, and rumours the shopkeeper may have heard about any and all aspects of the gaming business. Should the shopkeeper be able to satisfy the Rules-Lawyer's curiosity then he shall be rewarded with money and repeat business. Should he not, he will likely still get paid but will have to sit through grumbling and the possibility of a five minute tirade on how people that work in these shops should know the ins and outs of everything they sell, no matter how many products there are.

CONVENTIONS

Here the Rules-Lawyer is in his true element. Herds of Majestic Games Masters and players far from their own comfortable stomping grounds, many without their friends or their familiar gaming groups, and therefore psychologically weak and easy prey.

Here the cosy rules agreed to by friends in their front rooms do not apply. Here the game book truly is King and The Rules paramount. Here they can really shine, here they can win tournaments, here their knowledge is guaranteed to be useful.

Tournament Games

Often overseen by the (relatively) Big Cheese Companies of the role-playing world these are where it's at for the Rules-Lawyers. The Games Masters are on a strict time limit, have to use the official rules of the game and the players may not have met each

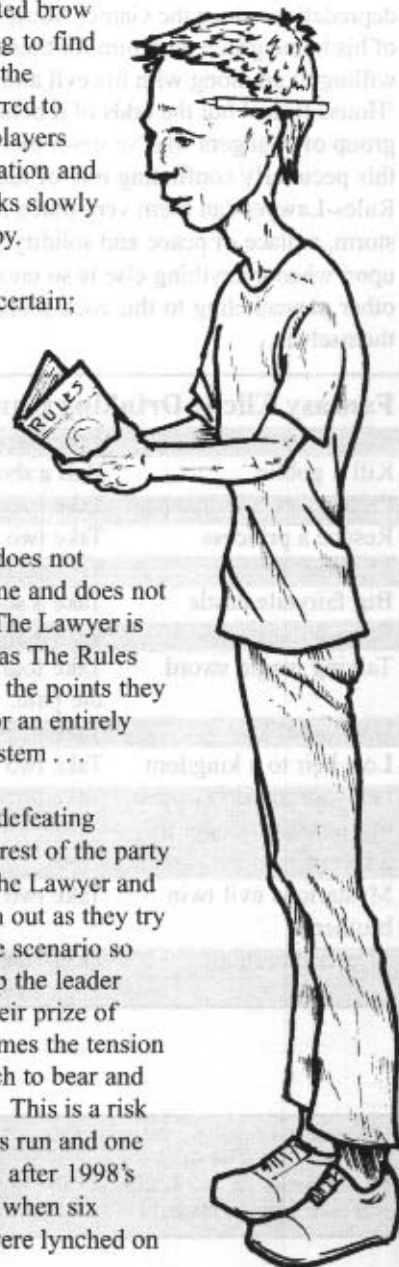
other before they started the tournament.

Here the Rules-Lawyer reigns supreme. His rules knowledge is quite likely to outstrip that of the Games Masters and his commanding presence will allow him to dominate the group, scaring them into cowering submission and thereby scoring the most points for himself personally. The time limit means the Games Master is far more likely to cave in once the argument has dragged on for a little while and the constant pressure is in the Rules-Lawyer's favour.

You can spot the groups afflicted with Rules-Lawyers by observing the Games Master flicking frantically through his books with knotted brow desperately trying to find the obscure rule the Lawyer just referred to while the other players look on in frustration and anger as time ticks slowly and inexorably by.

One thing is for certain; they'll never win any awards for Role-Playing. Their delaying and argumentative tactics often mean the group does not complete the game and does not win any prizes. The Lawyer is satisfied so long as The Rules are followed and the points they are scoring are for an entirely different level system . . .

This can be self-defeating behaviour as the rest of the party comes to resent the Lawyer and slowly edges him out as they try to get on with the scenario so they can move up the leader board to claim their prize of goodies. Sometimes the tension becomes too much to bear and somebody snaps. This is a risk all Rules-Lawyers run and one they accept, even after 1998's 'Black Saturday' when six Rules-Lawyers were lynched on



the second day of a Tournament at PixieCon after an argument over a cocked die-roll spread between several tables. Their bodies hung undisturbed for the crows to feast on for the rest of the convention as a warning to others. Rules-Lawyerdom does have its martyrs to The Rules.

Unofficial Games

These are the ones that take place in people's hotel rooms after the Con has officially closed down, the free tables or any other available nook or cranny where two plump gawky adolescents and a six-sided die can squeeze.

These are less vulnerable to Rules-Lawyer depredations since the Games Master may have some of his home group with him for these sessions, willing to go along with his evil and nefarious use of 'House Rules' but the odds of it being a disparate group of strangers who've never met are high and in this peculiarly conflicting mix of ideas and rules the Rules-Lawyer can seem very much like the eye of the storm, a place of peace and solidity that can be relied upon when everything else is so uncertain. The other players cling to this rock foolishly, dooming themselves.

Fantasy Cliché Drinking Game

Kill an orc	Take a shot.
Kill a goblin	Half a shot.
Princess gets kidnapped	Take two shots.
Rescue a princess	Take two shots.
Sleeping dragon	Three shots.
Big fairytale castle	Take a shot.
Enter a dungeon	Take a shot.
Talking magic sword	Take four shots to numb the pain.
Gandalf-alike	Take two shots.
Lost heir to a kingdom	Take two shots.
Get your mission from a mysterious stranger in a tavern	Take three shots.
Mysterious evil twin brother	Take two shots.
Mysterious ring	Drink the bottle and toast Peter Jackson.

Unofficial games are harder and harder to find at the bigger and more commercial conventions. Perhaps Lawyers have infiltrated the ranks of the organizers to make sure that those who play are playing in the more easily corruptible tournament games, rather than being scattered all over the place. Free tables too have been harder and harder to find and without set accommodation nearby at some of these conventions, retiring to your rooms for a game becomes more complex than ever.

Soon the poor hapless Games Master will be trying to guide the players through his story while the Lawyer acts as his unofficial sidekick Games Master, making calls on every rule and practically running every combat themselves while getting their kicks unsettling yet another game for the sake of The Rules.⁷

The Bar

The convention bar, the site of illicit business meetings, drunken character comparison, tales of gaming glory and attempts by sex starved adolescent Fatbeard *Babylon 5* fans getting one of the visiting star guests drunk, again (often with success). Not to mention vomiting, drinking competitions and role-playing based drinking games.

Some people come here in order to relax, shoot the breeze, smoke, and there is generally less gaming talk in the bar and more socialising. Some people, perhaps, might regale others with tales of their character but the Rules-Lawyer would rather bitch and moan about the tiniest matters of the game they just completed. Drink does not ease the pain of having an irate Rules-Lawyer buzzing in your ear after you've just run a six-hour session of *Rulesmaster*.

LAIRS

While it is becoming more common for young adults to not leave the familial home for an extended period of time after leaving education, many Rules-Lawyers take this to an absolute extreme, some not leaving home until their parents are deceased and not even then. Fortunately there have not been any confirmed

⁷ Why they actually do this is another subject that divides the academic world. While they claim to only be seeking to enforce The Rules they do seem to gain a sort of perverse pleasure and satisfaction from annihilating everyone else's fun around them. The current theory *du jour* is that they literally suck up the joy from those around them like a big and very boring vampire, using it to fuel their heavily adapted brains.

instances of them dressing up as their mothers and killing people yet. About the worst excesses you'll see are an unhealthy obsession with Sailor Moon and panty raiding.

This can, perhaps, be attributed to the Rules-Lawyers' preference for everything being in its place and predictable - the real-life equivalent of a well indexed players' guide that's seen many game's use. It could also be attributed to their common lack of social skills and inability to deal with the outside world. Either way, they are likely to be found within this domestic setting, waited on hand and foot (they are usually the only child of the family) and otherwise indulged. One or two rooms will be set aside, dedicated entirely for their use and it is here where you should seek them out.

The Lair Of The Beast

Wherever they choose to live, Rules-Lawyers create a lair all their own. This room is usually a bedroom but if the Lawyer finds himself in shared accommodation with other gamer subspecies he can migrate into the lounge. Generally though, the Rules-Lawyers cannot stand other people getting their horrible mess all over their precious tomes and files and so they will not be kept somewhere that is available to the 'public'. Other gamer species use their books for everything from nesting material to food trays and flat surfaces from which to snort sherbert and so cannot be trusted to look after them properly. A Lawyer never lends his books to another gamer after the first time. At least not without a signed agreement (in blood) that they will make good any damage that they do to it.

The books will likely be ordered alphabetically or by the publisher's own numerical system. They may possibly still be in their original plastic wrappers, in pristine and uncrumpled boxes, or hermetically sealed with a mystical wax covering, awaiting the attention of archaeologists in years to come.

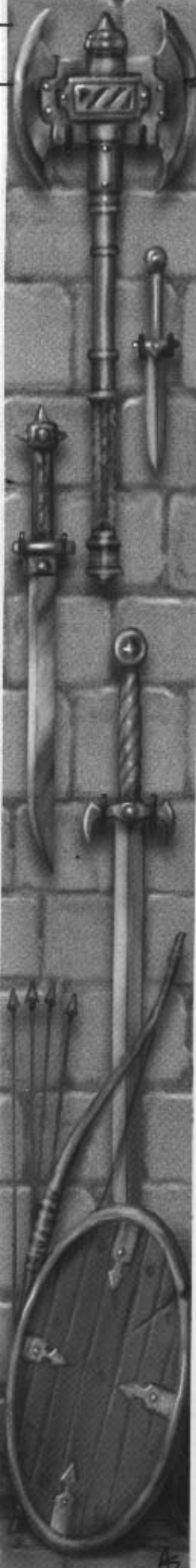
There is some speculation that the Dead Sea Scrolls are in fact the campaign notes of a particularly assiduous Rules-Lawyer from days of yore but this is obscenely blasphemous and has lead to people being burned at the stake before now. Therefore we absolutely *cannot* confirm that a Players' Guide To Disciples, or The Quintessential Messiah exists and we certainly do not have copies of those books. There are no plans for a Slayer's Guide To Firstborn Sons Of Egypt or a Jericho campaign pack and we do not recommend *walk on water* spells as a way to pick up sailors.

Against all previous experience with other gamer subspecies, the Rules-Lawyer's nesting area is usually clean and tidy, even spotless. It is devoid of the scattered books, empty pizza boxes, food wrappers, beer cans, ashtrays, bhongs and other general detritus, which are so *de rigueur* for your normal gamer. The only remaining slight area of familiar mess might be a stack of books which are currently being perused and a desk covered in copious character notes, schemes, game exploits and extensive and detailed plans for world domination.⁸ The Rules-Lawyer spends a lot of time lurking deep within his lair. That is the place that computer access is found, and via that he can access the hive-mind of his like-brained brethren across the world.

Your games will be assimilated; your rules calls and page references shall be added to our own; role-playing is futile.

The lair is also where vast collections of various tomes resides. These books need to be protected and the Lawyer does not like to stray too far away from them except to make his way to games and conventions.

⁸ You need not worry; no plan is ever perfect and foolproof enough for the Rules-Lawyers as a race to agree upon, so they will never even attempt to take over the world, let alone succeed. Should they even try you can guarantee that the plan will not survive contact with the real world, and will collapse faster than DIY shelving when implemented.



RULES LAWYER SOCIETY

The Rules-Lawyer is by nature a solitary beast. He is reclusive, perhaps a natural defence to prevent identification and eradication by others. Each Lawyers latch onto a gaming group where they leech fun from the other players to feed themselves, imposing The Rules brutally upon all who are around them. More than one Lawyer in a group is rare but scholars have observed entire groups made up of Lawyers playing the older, more rules-intensive games, perhaps to hone their skills before they take on the more normal groups. These events are rare because The Rules are complicated things and Rules-Lawyers often argue over the most minor nuance of them, often leading to internecine violence, which, in turn, could cause blood to get on the precious books.

Games in Rules-Lawyer exclusive groups can take many times the normal amount of playtime to complete due to the complications of rules arguments. An extreme case of this is the Birkhamsted Gaming Society's 'Delvings & Dingos' Session which has been going on since the original white-box edition first came out and is yet to progress beyond the tavern in which the adventurers have met. The Games Master's plans for the dungeon now make up the foundation of the newest offshore expansion in Hong Kong, having been abandoned for a revision in late 1996.

E-MAIL LISTS & USENET

Unable to stand each other in person, Rules-Lawyers have to resort to other methods of communication. In The Good Old Days this used to be via magazines, fanzines and other gaming periodicals that eked out a hand-to-mouth existence. In those times they were, thankfully, subject to editing, censure and were forced to be somewhat concise and to the point. These days, thanks to the wonder of the Internet, we can experience pure, unadulterated, one hundred percent proof Rules-Lawyer arguments on such wonderfully diverse forums as Usenet, Bulletin Boards and e-mail lists. These arguments spawn sub-

arguments and flames over the minutiae of The Rules and spread to become online wars of words between the role-playing and rules camps.

A typical Rules-Lawyer e-mail can be spotted fairly easily. It will be longwinded to the point of absurdity and will contain a plethora of references. References by book, references by chapter, references by page, references by paragraph, references by word, references by letter and sometimes all of the above at once in a beautiful moebius strip of numerical complexity perfectly capable of disappearing up it's own arse. Their interpretation will be represented as the only possible one anyone but a fool could come up with and it will make you feel like you're back in school, being lectured at length by a teacher for a slight spelling mistake.

In extreme cases the sheer amount of condescension and platitudes contained in one of these e-mails can cause the reader to feel so small, insignificant and childish that nothing is left but a poor little confused looking foetus sat on a slowly rotating swivel chair. For the love of god, and to spare your parents having to bring you up again, screen your e-mails.

Rules-Lawyers are incapable of accepting that any other interpretation of the rules is possible. If another view is presented, even backed up in the usual Rules-Lawyer fashion, this will send them into a frenzy during which they may send in excess of twenty e-mails an hour!

The absolute worst thing you can do though is to rouse their ire by talking about making up your own 'House Rules' or waiving The Rules for any reason. This will earn you the indignant huffy e-mails of several Rules-Lawyers who will seek to impress upon you that . . .

'The Rules are there for a reason!'

'If you play it like that, then you're not playing the game!'

'We all have to use the same rules so it's easier to play together.'

'It's not on, its morally wrong and it's against the spirit of the game.'

All things considered, it is better to ignore these kinds of posts but it can also be a good idea to monitor them without replying - forewarned is

forearmed, as they say. Amongst the normal posts and flames, Rules-Lawyers from different places all around the world confer, swap notes, compare books, plot, scheme and try to find new and interesting twists on obscure rulings. By observing this complex exchange of data the wilier Games Master can stay one step ahead of the game, knowing exactly what tricks his own resident Rules-Lawyer is going to attempt pull at the next session.

SCORING POINTS

Within The Cult Of The Rules, advancement is gained by several different methods combined together to give one overall rank. The various methods are described as follows...

Method One: Tome Ownership

This is marked in three ways, first by sheer volume for which *'Delvings & Dingos'* in all it's various incarnations is a must have.

Second, by completeness. A complete collection is worth a lot in the cult, for it houses almost every ruling ever made in regard to a game. With a complete collection at their disposal, they can speak with complete authority in any argument they find themselves in.

Third, by obscurity. The more obscure and difficult to get the reference material, the more kudos it earns Lawyers within their twisted society, and the more unlikely it is an opponent in an argument will have access to the book in question.

The largest gaming collection in the known world belongs to one Mary *'Galadriel'* Winnower of Austin, Texas, who owns not only every role-playing game in existence but also every edition and print run of those role-playing games, along with every published role-playing magazine and fanzine ever printed. Mary herself has not been seen since Spring 2001 when she disappeared into her labyrinthine gaming collection looking for her original edition *'Wanderer 2300'* boxed set. Seismic detectors placed within the area by the local university picked up an earth tremor similar in magnitude to a complete *Grey Puppy Games* collection toppling over catastrophically. Emergency services dug for two hours trying to find her but so many of the books had pictures of blood of some kind on the front cover that they could not tell if they had found her or just a slightly garish gaming supplement. Eventually the search was given up and the collection is slowly

being auctioned off. So, if you find a tooth in your second hand books, can you please send it back so they can confirm it was her from dental records.

Method Two: Longevity

The longer the Lawyer has played one particular system, the more seniority he has and therefore the more rank. This is also an argument winner for them since they will be able to claim greater experience in the system than newbies, thereby dismissing their questions and comment without the need to formulate a counterargument.

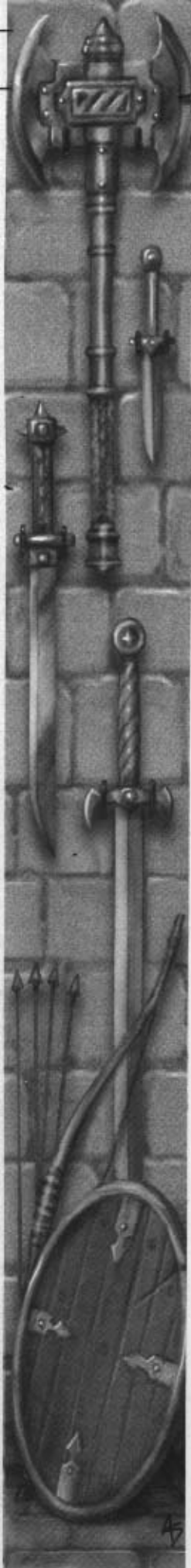
The need for rank amongst Lawyers has led some of them to claim ridiculous amounts of time for their experience in games. The longest amount of time claimed to have been played in any system was made by Brian Taylor of the Wicklestaff Gaming Society in 1997 when he claimed to have been playing *'Advanced Delvings & Dingos 2nd Edition'* since 1971. When it was pointed out to him that the original *'Delvings & Dingos'* had not been written until the mid-seventies he claimed to be an alien with a time machine who had taken a copy back to 1971 BC and begun playing. He later claimed the Pyramids are in fact giant polyhedral d8's half-buried in the sand and that it was his sacred mission to assassinate the chairman of *Hasborg* to save the art of role-playing for the future, without which we were at the mercy of invaders from another galaxy who played *'Delvings & Dingos'* to the death.

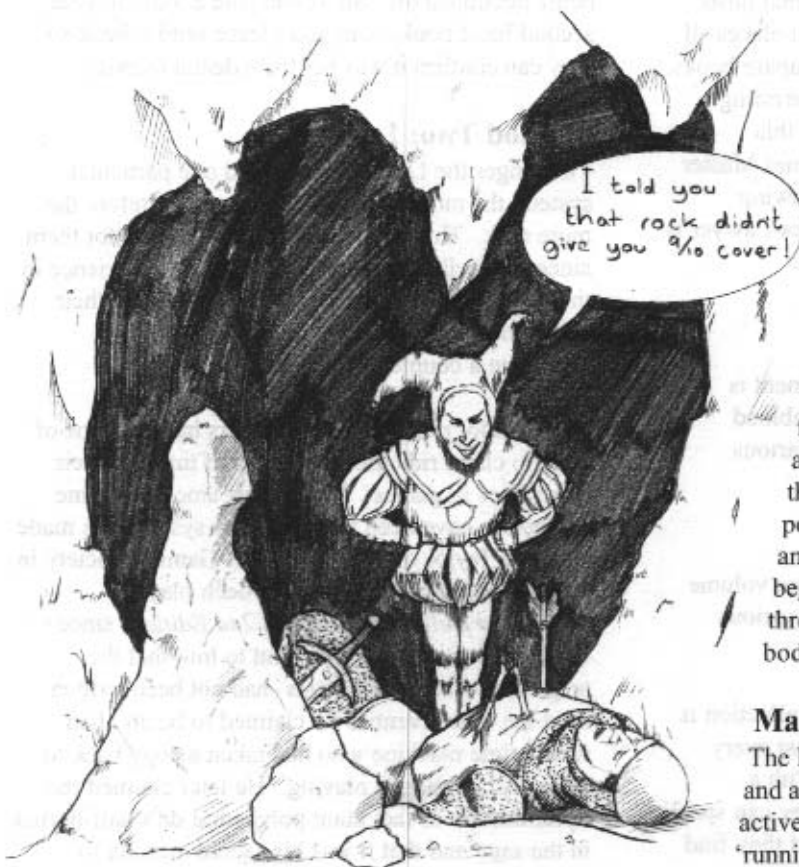
Truly ancient Rules-Lawyers are acclaimed with the rather grand Commemorative Gyax Gaming Grandad Award For Extended Geekdom, a meaningful accolade indeed, not to mention shiny.

Method Three: Point Scoring

Even with the other two methods ranked highly, a Rules-Lawyer needs to be 'blooded' before he can rise in the ranks. This is achieved either on the Internet or at a game; raising rules-based objections to the running of the game or tenaciously arguing a point with the Games Master until they are finally forced to give in scores such points.

The Lawyer can also score points by raising Rules-Objections that cause characters to live or die and by insisting that every single little minor rules fluctuation be enforced regardless of circumstance. The more experienced the character this destroys, the more points are accrued.





The largest number of points scored in one sitting by any Rules-Lawyer was 237, amassed by Jeremy Monroe of Scunthorpe, who argued the point on every single individual action during a fight between his second level adventuring party and some kobolds, thereby making a two minute fight scene last twenty-six hours and resulting in the death of three characters.

THE RANKS OF LAWYERDOM

Initiate

Ah, that precious moment, when you open your first role-playing game. The delicious new-book smell, the discarded carcinogenic package wrapping, all the promise contained in that one little book you so eagerly claw open.

It is within this very moment that most neophyte gamers' destinies are made. Some will begin to read the background material, absorbing it and reflecting upon it. Some will turn to the Monster and

Equipment sections looking for what to kill and how to kill it, some use it as a tea tray and others will turn straight the rules.

Those who do are forever damned . . .

Fellow

Young Lawyers begin to progress along their chosen path with their system, and have made themselves as *au fait* as possible with its rulings and idiosyncrasies. They can only progress further by scoring their first point and achieving their first year of seniority in that game system. Once they pass this point, the process of change is irreversible and the physical and mental changes begin to make themselves manifest throughout the nascent Rules-Lawyer's body.

Master

The Master has seniority in several systems and a library to match. Such members are active on the Internet and in spite of who is 'running' the game, the Master is truly in charge of each and every one. This is as high as one can progress but Masters have their own pecking order, apparently loosely based on how many Games Masters they have driven to gibbering insanity. Virginia Croft's interpretation of the 'Evil Tentacled Things' sanity system caused a mental breakdown of an entire room of Games Masters during a panel discussion at *DeCon* in 1988, though some were grateful afterwards and felt that experiencing true otherworldly incomprehension and terror, expressed by a truly alien and inhuman intellect, actually improved their games.

The Source

The Source is the font from which all Rules flow, a mythical place and intelligence that gives order to the universe and to games in particular. The Source manifests as a large, bearded man with pens arrayed in his top pocket, holding The Rules and with his arsecrack on show for all to see.

RULES LAWYER PERVERSITY

There is a paradox deep in the hearts of Rules-Lawyers. They insist that without The Rules there can be no game and they take The Rules above all other constituents of the game. However, without the game, there would be no Rules.

Rules-Lawyers are self-destructive in that they are perfectly willing for a game to crash in flames as a total disaster and die, rather than for them to concede a point or waive the rules. To a Lawyer, The Rules are the game and anyone who says differently is a fool, probably a communist or an alien pod-person to boot. Liam Lloyd of Reading has not played a game since his first session in 1983, but nonetheless owns a large collection of gaming books and gains his enjoyment by reading, creating never-to-be-used characters and running test scenes with himself under various circumstances. Liam never cuts his fingernails, lives exclusively on ice cream, believes a small blue leprechaun named Derek makes him start fires, and masturbates like a wild spider monkey in the cinema during the jeans adverts.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER PLAYERS

Rules-Lawyers are not team players by any stretch of the imagination and do not get on well with others. This is, in part, due to their acute degree of social retardation but is mostly to do with the fact they're

weasel-faced little bastards who gleefully destroy games.

Pretentious Art Whores

Artsy gamers are the antithesis of everything the Rules-Lawyer stands for. With their concentration on characterisation, story and plot over The Rules they flaunt the very qualities the Rules-Lawyer regards as being destructive and chaotic to the world of games. In return, the Artsy types regard the Rules-Lawyers as stifling, dull and difficult to role-play with since they keep making little asides about this or that attack roll and how that skill combination is not allowed.

Artsy gamers currently have the upper hand in the gaming subculture, something that Rules-Lawyers resent - it makes them go out of their way to pick on the Artsy types. The two are opposites, like matter and antimatter. When they mix there is always a nasty reaction and the rest of the group will be caught in the explosion or rendered sterile by hard radiation.

The record for a Rules-Lawyer reducing an Artsy player to tears is 4.3 seconds, which was achieved by Jason Jones at character check-in during a large convention-based 'Bloodsucker' live-action event. He loudly insisted that the victim, a Miss Jennifer Hollister, should wear a badge to describe her character's appearance since The Rules stated she must do that for anything that was wildly different to her appearance and she clearly was not *gorgeous*, *seductive* or *sexy*. Jennifer spent over ten thousand

Games Master – 'The ceiling opens up and the entire length of the corridor collapses. You have nowhere to escape to and so take... 16 points of damage.'

Dave – 'Ah well, that's me dead then. I'll start making a new character up...'

Henry – 'He didn't give you a saving roll! Clearly you should have one against traps, that's what the saving rolls are for - look, it says right here on this page...'

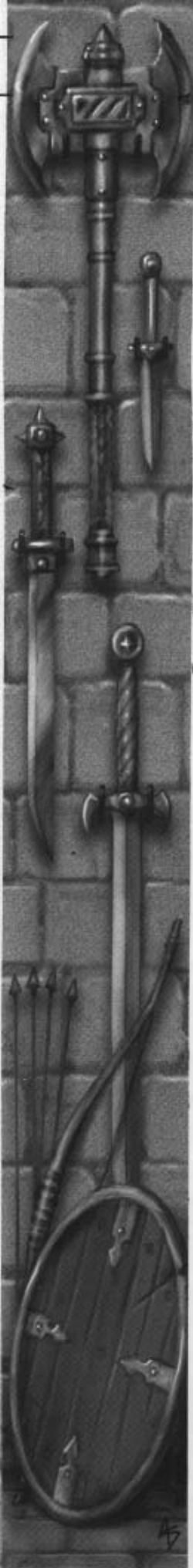
Dave – 'Don't worry about it, he's right there wasn't anywhere to run; besides I was tired of that character. I'd like to make up a new one.'

Henry – 'But, The Rules say...'

Dave – 'Fch... doesn't matter.'

Henry – 'Aaaaaaargh!' ::BURST::

The group wipe Henry's brain juice from their T-shirts and carry on.



dollars on plastic surgery and never played again. Jason now runs his own live action game for himself and no one else.

Munchkins

Munchkins and Rules-Lawyers would seem to be natural allies on first appearances but this is entirely misleading. Rules-Lawyers enjoy the purity of The Rules and finding exploits within them is its own reward. Munchkins take or leave The Rules as they please, using them where they help, arguing against them when they do not and even cheating or asking for (gasp!) House Rules!

To the Lawyer, what he does is not cheating. This is an important distinction, for the Lawyer merely quotes the 'Bible' to support whatever contention he is making at the time. The fact that it supports contradictory explanations is beside the point - it is there in black and white for each situation.

Munchkins, however, gleefully admit to cheating when outside of the games themselves and score their own points by putting one past the Games Master. It is this important philosophical difference that stands between the two.

Casual Gamers

Casual gamers are those who game on occasion but generally would rather go out for a beer with friends in some loud, obnoxious, overpriced and dark theme pub. They are the ones who used to do it when they were younger and still have some of the same gamer friends hanging around, clinging to their college years with desperate tenacity.

To the Rules-Lawyer, who takes everything very seriously, the Casual's approach to the game is unacceptable. The Rules and the game are the most important things in the world, and should be taken seriously with The Rules treated with the pseudo-religious awe they are due. The frivolity of the Casual gamer can drive the Lawyer into a frenzy of incomprehension.

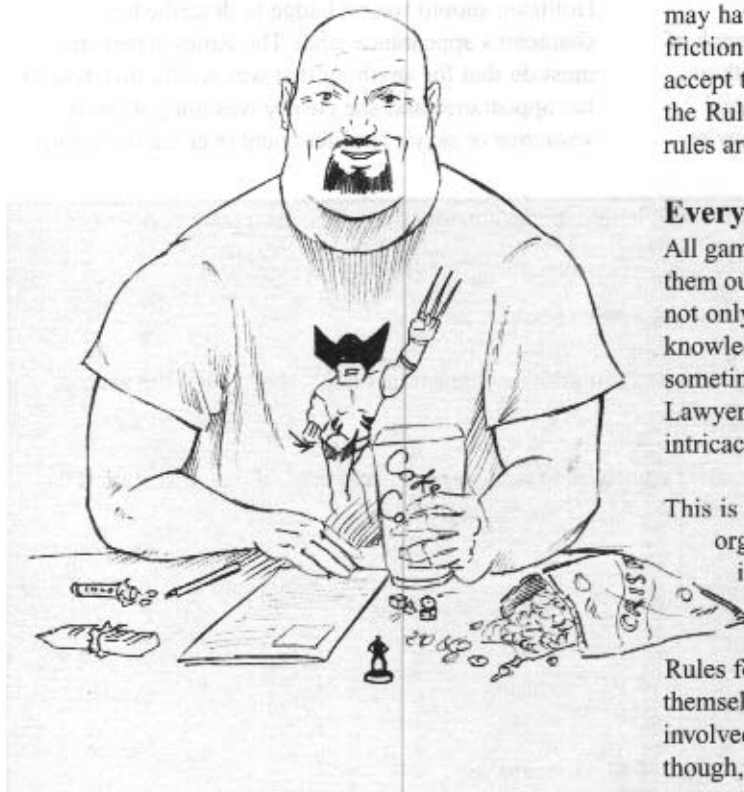
Fatbeards

The Fatbeard is as close to an ally of the Rules-Lawyer as you can get. The Fatbeard shares the Lawyer's obsession with details, it is only the focus that differs. Fatbeards are more concerned with accurate and faithful portrayal of the setting but the sheer attention to detail and the role The Rules play in portraying the setting is important. Fatbeards are also fanatically loyal to The Rules of old and even original editions, and are a valuable resource for locating historical rulings that the Rules-Lawyer may have difficulty unearthing. The only sources of friction between the two are the Fatbeard's refusal to accept the supremacy of The Rules over setting and the Rules-Lawyers perception that new, additional rules are a good thing.

Everyone Else

All gamer breeds tolerate Rules-Lawyers and seek them out for their services from time to time. They're not only called Lawyers because of their intricate knowledge of the game system. Other players sometimes seek 'representation', getting the Rules-Lawyer to argue on their behalf after looking into the intricacies of The Rules.

This is particularly prevalent in large gaming organisations, clubs and LARP groups where the internal bureaucracy can be as choking and slow as the real world judicial system, especially since those who make up The Rules for the organisations tend to be Rules-Lawyers themselves, as nobody else cares enough to get involved. It also takes place in smaller groups though, usually following character death.



METHODS OF WARFARE

The Lawyer's approach to games is, as with everything else he does, guided by The Rules. The Lawyer will not stray from The Rules, as the most he will do is to reinterpret them, or choose different rules for different occasions.

The character type he plays will be characterised by having either beneficial rulings attached to it, or by a profligate amount of associated rules. Generally this means specialist classes such as magicians, hackers or other similar character types with lots of complex fiddly bits and their own sourcebooks. The Lawyer does not regard characterisation as an important part of the character design process and will generally play as himself, regardless of the game, character class, race or background (if there is one).

Lawyers do not see themselves truly in the role of players. Rather, they see themselves as a sort of auxiliary Games Master or narrator, making sure the game runs smoothly (to their perception) and that The Rules are followed to the letter - sort of like a film's continuity person for the game. This can become wearing to even the most experienced Games Master after a time so they usually fall into a sort of uneasy equilibrium where both vie for overall control of the game. Eventually a Games Master's willpower can be broken and they're left a shallow, empty husk while the rest of the players turn to the Rules-Lawyer for answers to almost every query they have.

Lawyers are not especially interested in gathering experience or wealth in the game; most of their concerns exist away from the table, such as the acquisition of new books, or the learning of new rules. It's as though you plucked a mage from a game and contorted them so to fit into the real world, poring over tomes and finding new 'spells' with which to wield power. The only time they do seek such in-game rewards is where extra experience means that they can gain access to all kinds of additional powers and rules, either by purchasing items or by gaining new abilities through new levels.

Lawyers do find the loss of a character a setback though, as they specialise (while they have the character) in The Rules associated with it, and while

creating a carbon copy of the original character again can be done, not many gaming groups are especially tolerant of the practice. To that end you can expect Lawyers to use every 'legal' loophole they know to preserve the continued existence of their characters.

The main tool in the Lawyer's arsenal is the indignant complaint. This is used when the Games Master does something with which the Lawyer does not agree. The Lawyer leans back in his chair and puffs up his cheek pouches, thereby making him seem bigger and more aggressive, much like a cat arching its back or a halfling fetching a stepladder. Then will begin the tirade at the Games Master, roving over such topics as older rules supplements, precedent, magazine articles, the intentions of the designer, discussions over e-mail lists and Usenet, as well as their own interpretations of the vagaries of the English language.

'This isn't on! Lightning bolts normally do that amount of damage, I concede that, but we're in a damp dungeon in a temperate zone - the dampness of the air will dispel some of the charge into the walls and floor. In addition to that, you stated earlier that the roof supports were held in with iron spikes. Surely one of those would ground the blast before it ever got to me. That's without even touching on the interesting answer to this very problem that was printed in Kobold Magazine back in '87. There they decided that metal armour over leather (like mine) would act as a sort of Faraday's Cage deflecting most of the current. Then, if you remember way back when we started playing two years ago, I wasn't sure what particular breed of elf I wanted to play and you said I could choose at a later date. I think I want to be a Storm Elf, those get a natural resistance to Lightning, halving the damage, not that any of it should actually hit me since last week you clearly used the Realistic Physics option from the Third Edition World Book when we were fighting the lava beast, and that means the lightning automatically strikes the first person in the party order, and that's Jim's Dwarf Stonebutt. Take him! Not me! Dear lord, dear sweet Jesus I've only been playing this character four years, he's too young to die, you hear me?'

DICE

Lawyers like their little security blankets. Regular gaming at a regular time, their books close to hand for reference and people they know well (and know they can bully) to play with. They also have their

special dice.

Lots of players have special dice, Munchkins being the most exceptional in this regard believing certain dice have their own special Chi. Lawyers have their own hang-ups. The dice may well be official sets for the particular games the Lawyer plays⁹ and they will be clean and pristine. No colouring in the white numbers with a biro for the Rules-Lawyer, oh no.

As far as using the dice goes, Lawyers always roll on a clear flat surface where everyone can see exactly what he or she rolls. They get extremely irate at people who obscure their dice rolls and are immediately suspicious of cheating when anyone covers their roll with their hand or otherwise fiddles the numbers.

The only instance in which a Lawyer could be construed to be fiddling the dice would be when determining if the little dot means the number is a six, or a nine. If there is a ruling set out in the book (actually present in some games) they will go with that, otherwise they can argue the toss either way to get the result they desire.

TOMES

The Lawyer, above all other things in his possession, values his books. They are taken care of in a fashion the most diligent lepidopterist would be proud of and most people would regard as a sure sign of obsessive-compulsive disorder. If they had the means, most Rules-Lawyers would enclose their book collection in a climate-controlled Area 51 style edifice with armed men on duty 24 hours a day and a dedicated security guard constantly patrolling the warehouse solely tasked to making sure there are no bookworms. Should there be a nuclear apocalypse, the one thing we can be sure of is that the cockroaches will be able to role-play.

Lawyer books (unless they 'keep one for best') are

Crates 372-B-A4

A large collection of clay tablets stored in jars, written in cuneiform and labelled carefully with translations into English.

Jar One - Offices & Deadlines, Players Guide.

Jar Two - Offices & Deadlines, Office Master's Guide.

Jar Three - Monster Manual Vol. I, Architect to Bank Manager.

⁹ At least we assume so. Someone has to buy them.

generally well thumbed, even with the care some take over them, cleaning the tweezers every time a page is turned and using ultra-low UV lighting.

Neophyte Rules-Lawyers will fill their tomes with bookmarks and post-it notes at the positions of particularly interesting rules. The truly advanced Lawyer will know the page references by heart, which is damned useful when most gaming books do not have anything approaching a useful index (which is in and of itself a source of much vexation to Rules-Lawyers).

They have a lot of books. A great deal of them indeed. The death of noted Rules-Lawyer Talbot 'Ginog' McMahon was attributed directly to the large stack of hardback books he had beside his bed while searching for a particularly hard to find rules reference. Talbot lived in the upstairs bedroom of a Victorian-era house and the woodworm-eaten beam could not support the sheer weight of books confined in such a small space. Talbot fell through the ceiling onto the stove and was immolated in a pyre of 'Advanced Delvings & Dingos Second Edition' character class books. Most of his friends considered this a fitting Viking funeral considering his opinion of the new d20 System and the flames he'd been dealing out over the Internet on that very issue.

HARANGUING

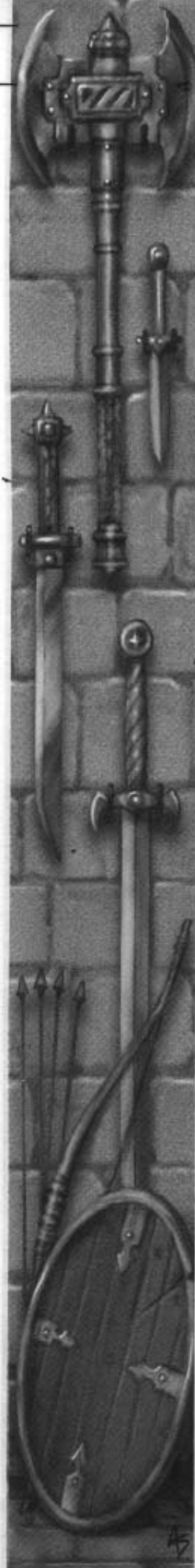
This is an extension of the indignant complaint and may go on for months or even years. Haranguing occurs when the Lawyer has made his indignant complaint and has been overruled regardless. He will continue to protest, long past the point at which it matters any longer, talking about it after the game, before the game, at the pub, while you're watching TV, on the phone, if he runs into you on the street, and discussing it on the Internet with other Lawyers

to strengthen his case and get additional arguments in support.

It is not a reversal of the Games Master's decision that he is seeking; all he wants is to be proven right and to have that admitted. Correctness to The Rules is everything - anything else, even the loss of a character, is secondary. The haranguing continues

until the Games Master is either driven mad, gives in, or the Rules-Lawyer dies.

The longest known haranguing took place between Messrs Andrew 'Nobber' Jacobs and Philip 'Wiz' Musty from spring 1976 to summer 2001, a period of almost 25 years. The feud (over a particularly lucky hit by an orc) was only ended when Philip was struck by lightning during a live-action role-play session in the Cotswolds and killed. Even then, incorporated into his will was an appeal asking that Andrew apologise for his mistake and acknowledge Philip's correctness. Since Andrew did not attend the funeral, technically the dispute is still ongoing.



ROLE-PLAYING WITH RULES-LAWYERS

Gaming with Rules-Lawyers can be a harrowing experience for the rest of the group at the best of times, but there are ways to handle their participation in a useful manner without them leeching the enjoyment for the other participants. They can even contribute to the fun.

The first and most obvious solution is to play something with a minimum of rules, or no rules at all. Fringe games are the best bet for this, as are home-brewed concoctions of the Games Master's own devising. The drawback to this is that the Lawyer may in turn invent a system of his own and expect you to play it. With their home-brewed rules consisting of a minimum of five large ring binders filled with very small type double-sided printout, this can be something of a headache. So before you resort to that, think of the trees!

Another thing you can try to do is to simply ignore the Lawyer's twittering and carry on regardless. This does marginalize one of the group and excludes them from the action somewhat but does allow the rest of you to complete the scenario at some kind of exciting pace rather than a slow, desperate crawl. The Rules-Lawyer player may not be expendable to your group though. They are likely to take offence at being left out and may quit your group forever, taking their extensive game collection and knowledge with them.

One particularly cunning solution is for the Games Master to defer every single rules matter to the Lawyer as a sort of reserve Games Master. Once they are busy dealing with the everyday mundane matters of initiative, combat and encumbrance

they will have less time to worry about finer points and nitpickings. This has the added advantage of taking a massive load of work off the Games Master's shoulders, leaving them free to devote a lot more time to plot and role-play - the real meat and gravy of the game.

RULES-LAWYER NAMES

Rules-Lawyers do, of course, have normal human sounding names appropriate to the culture within which they live and hide. There does seem to be a preponderance of Steves and Daves but this may just be a local phenomenon.

Within *The Cult Of The Rules*, our undercover reporter Dave Steve managed to discover that the Lawyers give themselves glorious titles and appellations, recounting their deeds in the service of *The Rules*. He encountered such book-thumping luminaries as . . .

- The Grand High Lord Of All Things THACO.*
- He Who Maketh Games Masters Tremble.*
- The Eternal Dread Lord Of Page Referencing.*
- That Which Rolleth Dice In Plain View And Yet Still Succeeds.*
- The Steel Duke Of Haranguing.*
- She Who Enforces Encumbrance On The Unwilling.*
- He That Interrupts The Games Master With No Comeback.*
- Bringer Of Books, He That Memorizes.*
- The Librarian, Master Of All Things Shrink Wrapped.*
- She Who Argues Without Breath.*

These are their secret names of power and so are not a warning to gamers but a proclamation of strength to other Rules-Lawyers. It is a part of their internal power structure that also enables them to call on the correct person for assistance with their personal problems. For example *She Who Knows All About Cyberpunk* would know to call upon *That Which Had A Hand In D20* for advice on such games.



RULES-LAWYER CHARACTER CLASS

To become a Rules-Lawyer is a calling, a feeling deep within one's bones that order is correct and proper, and that the world must be made to conform to The Rules. In a world of chaos and disorder, the Lawyer sets out to bring some solidity and dependability, whether people like it or not. Mostly not.

The Rules-Lawyer class is like a specialist form of cleric and any character may convert to it at any time. They keep all of their old abilities and powers but are adjusted to reflect their new position.

ADVENTURES

Rules-Lawyer adventures take them to acquire new rare tomes, learn new laws or take those they already know into chaotic regions and impose order. In all things they serve The Rules, even if it means their own grisly death at the hands of an angry, torch-wielding mob. Everything they do is for this motive and nothing else will move them unless it also serves The Rules.

Lawyers sometimes receive callings from The Rules or are granted new chapters to The Rules from The Source. During these times (which they call The Time Of The New Edition) they can become positively evangelical, going out into the world to spread the word and the 'good news'. According to the Lawyers, we currently all live in the Time Of The Third Edition and they are already preparing for a fourth age and the great upheaval this will bring. Other motivations for adventuring might be to collect money with which to buy new books or to outfit their library, though they might also decide to accompany others to make sure chaotic elements continue to conform to The Rules in their presence.

CHARACTERISTICS

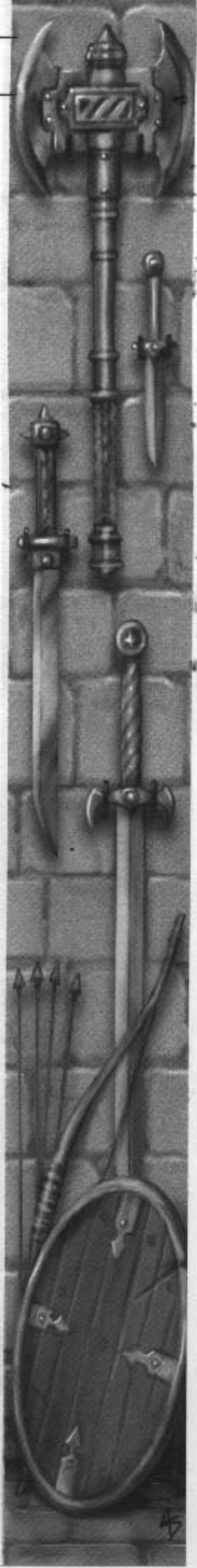
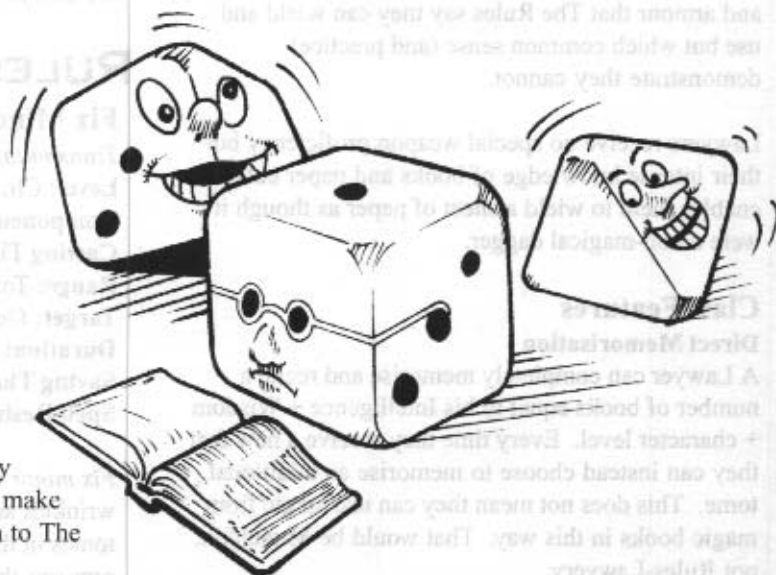
Rules-Lawyers are the embodiment of law, rules and stability in the world and as such are good at smiting the chaotic and enforcing order. Rather than a standard cleric's ability to turn undead a Lawyer can drive away creatures of chaos. This ability can cause disgust and horror in non-chaotic creatures but this is just a side effect. Lawyers have little combat training and rely on their brains and magic to get them through any conflict.

ALIGNMENT

Rules-Lawyers may only be lawful in alignment. Lawful good, lawful evil or lawful neutral are all permissible but whichever way you cut it, they're on the side of order. Good, evil or in-between, they all serve law above all things and so it is not really much of a source of contention within them.

However, The Rules themselves lead to wars and schisms between groups of Lawyers especially during the times of the New Editions.

A great war between factions was just fought as the era changed from The Time Of The Second Edition to the Time Of The Third Edition. The Superhighways of the land are still littered with the bodies of the fallen and flames which refuse to die out. Such a great schism has not been seen since The Coming Of The Plot Stomp in the Land Of The Wolf, an event that caused great distress to many wizards in the land as well. Some fighting continues.



RELIGION

Lawyers do not see their belief as a religion and many also worship other gods. Religious law is a great source of rules that Lawyers descend on hungrily and enforce, sometimes to the surprise of the temple leader as he is carted off and burned for some obscure and long forgotten blasphemy. In this way Lawyers have usurped many temples and while things carry on as normal to outward appearances, inside the Lawyers hold sway, creating new and interesting religious prohibitions to inflict upon the masses.

BACKGROUND

Most Lawyers are educated, literate, good with magic and live with their parents. They are often the children of merchants or minor nobility and are spoiled rotten while they are young.

It is generally during adolescence or later that they feel the calling in their blood and take up the banner of The Rules. If they are not diverted by a career in the local Traffic Guard, clamping carts for illegal parking, or as a tax collector making the common folk's lives miserable, they may be spotted by another Rules-Lawyer and set upon their path.

Hit Die: d4

Armour & Weapon Proficiency

Lawyers can wear any armour and use any weapon, provided they can lift it. The Rules do not care what they use to execute their duties. Some Rules-Lawyers get their comeuppance by using weaponry and armour that The Rules say they can wield and use but which common sense (and practice) demonstrate they cannot.

Lawyers receive no special weapon proficiency but their intense knowledge of books and paper cuts enables them to wield a sheet of paper as though it were a non-magical dagger.

Class Features

Direct Memorisation

A Lawyer can completely memorise and recite a number of books equal to his Intelligence + Wisdom + character level. Every time they receive a new feat they can instead choose to memorise an additional tome. This does not mean they can use magic from magic books in this way. That would be Munchkin, not Rules-Lawyer.

Aural Selectivism

Lawyers are immune to any sound or speech-based attacks as well as any attempts to fast-talk or persuade them. This is a very useful ability and very irritating.

Irritability

Upon becoming a Rules-Lawyer, you lose one permanent point of Charisma because you're an annoying, pedantic berk.

Sticky Pads

You can read through books somewhat faster than normal individuals and also gain a +1 bonus to Climb checks thanks to your natural gooey ichor.

Anal/Cranial Inversion

No use other than comedy value.

Cheek Pouches

Inflating their cheeks the Lawyers become bigger looking and more intimidating, gaining a +1 bonus to any attempt to scare people or to turn the chaotic. (Games Master Note: In fact, if they succeed at all, it just makes enemies laugh).

New Feat

Harangue (Rules-Lawyer)

By virtue of nagging incessantly the Lawyer can (given enough time) wear down any resistance to any idea. This takes a number of hours equal to the target's Wisdom plus character level, minus the Lawyer's Charisma. It may be complicated by factors such as earplugs, deafness, or snapping and killing the Lawyer before the time period is up.

RULES LAWYER SPELLS

Fix Minor Wear

Transmutation

Level: Clr, RL 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 Action

Range: Touch

Target: One book

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: Will, (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: Yes, (harmless object)

Fix minor wear mends the little tears, fingerprints, wrinkles and scuffs that occur to a Lawyer's valued tomes in the presence of other gamers. In addition it removes the smell of beer, cigarettes, dope, and

cleans the shreds of tobacco out of the spine. In the case of Elmore illustrated works and fantasy art books by the likes of Chris Achilleos it also removes more dubious stains.

Uttering a curse and cradling the book, the Lawyer is able to work seemingly mundane repairs that nonetheless magically fix the problems. If cast on an undamaged book it enables it be surrounded by a translucent force field protecting it from any of the normal causes of harm.

Book Bond

Abjuration

Level: Clr, RL 1

Components: V, S, F/DF

Casting time: One hour per twenty tomes

Range: Close (25ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Area: Entire library

Duration: Since last use of library

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Book bond sounds a little alarm inside the Rules-Lawyer's head when someone other than them touches their book collection. The hairs stand up on the back of their neck and they may involuntarily inflate their cheek pouches.

The focus for this spell can take many forms from sticking a hair across the door, leaving books and papers on the floor of the room, or leaving the door to their library ajar.

Leech The Fun

Necromancy

Level: Clr, RL 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 gaming session or one hour

Range: 10 ft.

Area: 10 ft. radius

Duration: As per casting time

Saving Throw: Will

Spell Resistance: Yes

Leech the fun is how the Rules-Lawyers feed on the special bioelectric energy they need to power their peculiar minds and to store their memorisations. The Lawyers engage in proselytising about The Rules and picking up those around them on their transgressions of The Rules, until all humour and joy gained from the happy occasion of a group of friends getting together to have fun is drained away.

All the participants lose one hit point and the Lawyer gains a pool of an equal number of points that they can use to boost their Intelligence and Wisdom ability scores temporarily for one day, or heal their own damage.



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Note the mimicing of the humanoid.
Fig 1.



Paper thin skull provides extra room for useless facts.



Sticky fingers adapted for page turning, note the clammy handshake

3.



Perhaps some kind of symbiote? Maybe the true intelligence behind the fiends!

4.



DESTROY THE CUBIC MENACE!

5.

Feet, soft and venerable through lack of use.



Caltrop?



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THE
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO

RULES LAWYERS

A Fiend in Human Form

Rules-Lawyers are an unexpectedly hardy breed of disgusting humanoid (at least in physique) creature. To all outward appearances they are a normal human being, like you or me, and it is only by their strange behaviour and very close (often post-mortem) physical examination that they are revealed to be anything other than Homo Sapiens. Scholars are in agreement that Rules-Lawyers have been around at least as long as games of any kind have existed.

Some go as far as to say they have existed as long as rules themselves have existed in this universe. They are said to have lived among us, alongside man and his more primitive and slope headed ancestors since time itself began, waiting for them to lose interest in football and develop the wheel.

Inside You Will Find:

Physiology: It is a dirty job but someone has to do it. Our team of experts have dissected a Rules Lawyer and made some disturbing discoveries. Includes the acclaimed Wandering Poontang Table.

Habitat: There are few lairs more recognisable than that of the Rules Lawyer. Find out just where they are likely to be found, and how to avoid them.

Rules Lawyer Society: It is hard to believe, but Rules Lawyers actually congregate together. Such an unholy meeting can only have the

direst of consequences for normal gamers like you or I.

Methods of Warfare: Be prepared. Here we give you a full arsenal with which to combat the dreaded Rules Lawyer.

Role-Playing with Rules Lawyers: It can happen to the best of us. A Rules Lawyer makes his way into the gaming group and refuses to leave. Here we have a look at how to co-exist with this feckless creature.

And introducing the Rules Lawyer character class, together with unique spells and feats!

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This Product Requires the use
of the Dungeons and Dragons®
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Published by Wizards of the Coast®

US \$9.95

ISBN 1-903980-36-4



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