

ISSUE  
18

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# REALMS

- AD&D & WFRP  
SCENARIO
- VAMPIRE
- SHADOWRUN  
BY TOM DOWD
- PLANESCAPE
- FORGOTTEN  
REALMS
- SHADOWRUN  
POSTER
- THE UNAE  
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# Australian Realms

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## Features

FRIENDLY GUISE	A competition winning scenario for <b>AD&amp;D</b> and <b>WFRP</b> . By <i>Alan Michell</i>	9
THE DOOR IS OPEN	A first up look at <b>AD&amp;D</b> 's new campaign setting <b>Planescape</b> . By <i>Adam Whitt</i>	16
DANCING IN THE DARK	How to get the most out of the <b>Vampire</b> Storytelling game. By <i>Michael Butler</i>	21
THREAT RATINGS	New ideas for <b>Shadowrun</b> supplied by the game's creator. By <i>Tom Dowd</i>	24
BURVOY	A chivalric realm in the Realms fantasy campaign world of <b>Unae</b> . By <i>Lee Sheppard, Andrew Daniels, Colin Taber and Adam Whitt</i> .	26
OSSARD II	King Giovanni and Benefice Verrocchio react to the madness in <b>Ossard</b> . By <i>Colin Taber</i>	30
CLOTHES MAKETH THE WOMAN	A guide to sensible dressing for <b>female adventurers</b> . By <i>Karen Ogden</i>	32
POISONS AND VENOMS OF THE FORGOTTEN REALMS	Some secrets revealed about the noxious substances available in <b>Waterdeep</b> . By <i>Scott English</i>	34

## Special Feature

SHADOWRUN POSTER	The Lone Star book cover art, courtesy of FASA Corporation.
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## Columns & Departments

EDITORIAL	A thank you, a hello and a quick ride on the super highway.	2
LETTERS	Readers make themselves heard.	2
REVIEWS	<b>AD&amp;D</b> , <b>BloodBowl</b> , <b>Cyberpunk</b> , <b>Earthdawn</b> , <b>Pendragon</b> , and more.	4
LIP SERVICE	The inside running on what's happening at <b>Australian Realms</b> .	39
ANALYTICAL ENGINE	Book reviews.	40
DICE ARE DEAD	<b>Victory</b> and <b>Dino Wars</b> reviewed plus PBM industry news.	41
ADVENTURES OF THE A-TEAM	Mango learns a valuable lesson - don't annoy the Master of the Manuals!	45
NEWS	News and information from around the gaming world.	47

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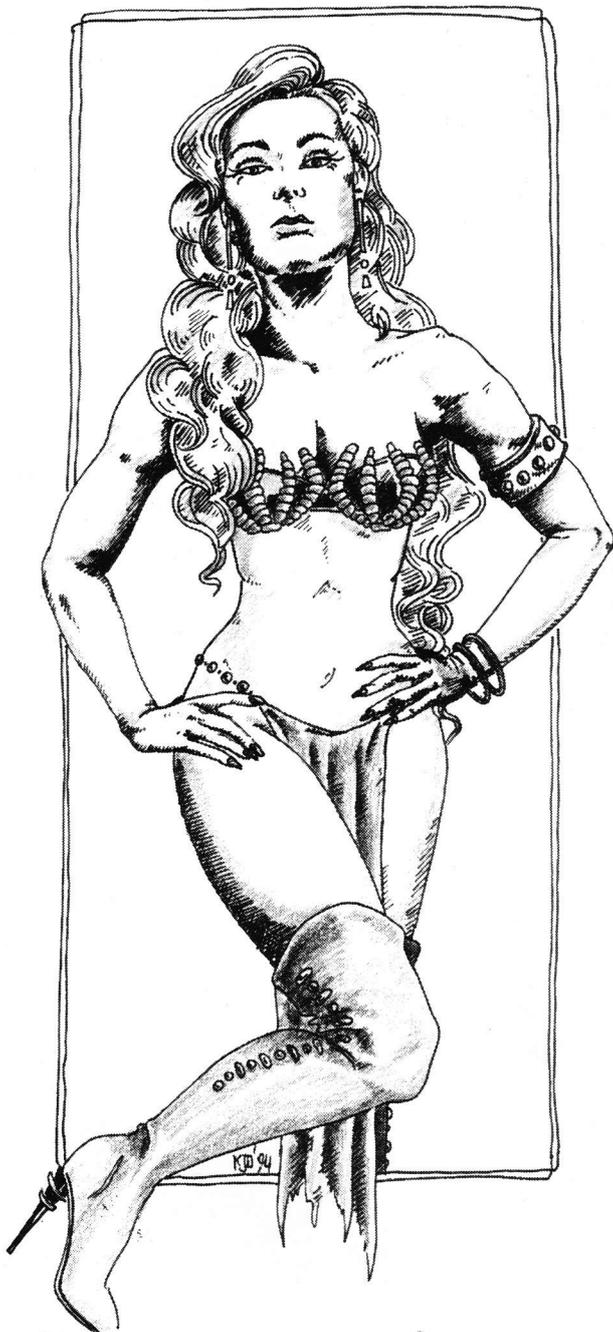
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# CLOTHES MAKETH THE WOMAN

A Guide to Sensible Dressing For Female Adventurers

Written and Illustrated by Karen Ogden

This is a partly serious, partly tongue-in-cheek discussion on how to dress to avoid hypothermia, scratches, sore feet and sunburn, mainly to inform male players and referees of what we female players already know...



*Bambi tottered down the track, balancing perilously on the loose stones which crunched under foot. Her thigh length, patent leather boots glistened in the midday sun. Long golden tresses bounced, along with everything else Bambi had on display, as she tried to keep up with the rest of the party.*

*"It's cold," she whispered as she tried to rub away her goose bumps.*

*"Shhh, I think I can hear orcs up ahead."*

*Bambi reached for her sword but she wasn't wearing one; there simply wasn't anywhere to carry it without a belt around her bare midriff, and besides, it would have clashed with her boots.*

*"Oops," she whispered under her breath.*

Why is it that most women depicted in fantasy art, particularly on the cover of roleplaying products, are wearing so little clothing? Why are these women shown with enormous double-D sized breasts and wearing stilettos in an environment of peril where they are certain to suffer harm as a result of their inappropriate dress? The answer to this question that bewilders us women is, because most are drawn by men and are the embodiments of male FANTASY.

Well, that's fair enough. You can't police someone's fantasies. Big Sister, I ain't. But I do find it quite silly that a female adventuring character should be shown drawn in this fashion. Take, for example, the female fighter who is the most common object of these misrepresentations. She's shown with big boobs, very long flowing hair, a skimpy (if any) breast plate, a translucent piece of flimsy material protecting her modesty, wearing ridiculously high heels on thigh high leather boots, and enough makeup to embarrass a transvestite. Not only is this very poor dress sense, it is also uncomfortable to wear, and extremely foolhardy on the part of the female character expecting to go adventuring attired this way. And where do the weapons go? This outlandish get-up is best left to Madam Lash, or the local harlot. Revolting!

So what is wrong with this gear? First lets look at the 'protective' clothing - the bikini breast plate. This is akin to a metal version of the bustier which can be uncomfortable enough without its being made of tempered steel. Imagine the chaffing and the effect that a *Heat Metal* spell would achieve. All characters wearing metal armour, male or female, would wear it over a padded hauberk of some kind (cloth or leather). It simply is too painful to bear otherwise. And what about the size of these supposed accoutrements? The type of 'saucer-shaped' breast plates for women favoured by fantasy artists leaves very little room for movement and are almost impossible to swing a sword in without having the obligatory double-D breasts pop out for all and sundry to ogle at... and remember the whole purpose of armour is to protect these vulnerable areas. Unless the strategy is to distract the bad guys while the rest of the party deliver the killing blows, forget skimpy armour and get something more effective.

Next item, the translucent dignity preserver with fine metal chain ties. Well, if it was me, I wouldn't want to be adventuring anywhere outside a temperate climate. Hypothermia would not take long to set in. Frost-bite, besides being extremely painful and life-threatening, is very unattractive. A warm climate wouldn't be much better, the metal chains would soon warm up and burn, and the amount of flesh left exposed by this garment would leave a woman lobster-red from sunburn before too long. And those chains may look sturdy, but attached to cloth, they count for nothing. One good tug and the whole thing would disintegrate; even professional strippers wear a double row of dental floss for added strength and wouldn't trust to such a flimsy attachment - and they're not adventuring over rough terrain or fighting rabid orcs in their outfits (well, not usually!).

Now to the stiletto-heeled, thigh high boots. They may look impressive to the fevered male imagination, and could prove useful as impromptu daggers, but practical adventuring wear they definitely are not. They are a chiropodist's nightmare, forcing all of a women's weight onto the ball of the foot, making it difficult to balance properly or even to walk for any length of time. Mountain climbing is out of the question, descending uneven steps into a dungeon improbable, and running away from a monster breathing down your neck, impossible. And the long, flowing, golden tresses? I myself have long hair and do like it. As far as fashion goes, a lot can be done with long hair and short hair needs constant cutting to maintain the look. But long hair, left unfettered, has the irritating habit of getting in your way. Wind will catch it in the nearest tree, bush, or hook on a dungeon wall. If it's not kept clean (a difficult proposition when you are adventuring away from the creature comforts of civilisation for extended periods) things start to grow in it; in fantasy worlds some of these things can be very hazardous to your health. Orcs can catch you by it and pull, quickly achieving maximum pain levels. Female characters are advised to wear their hair up; plaits are usually the most efficient way. Or simply cut it.

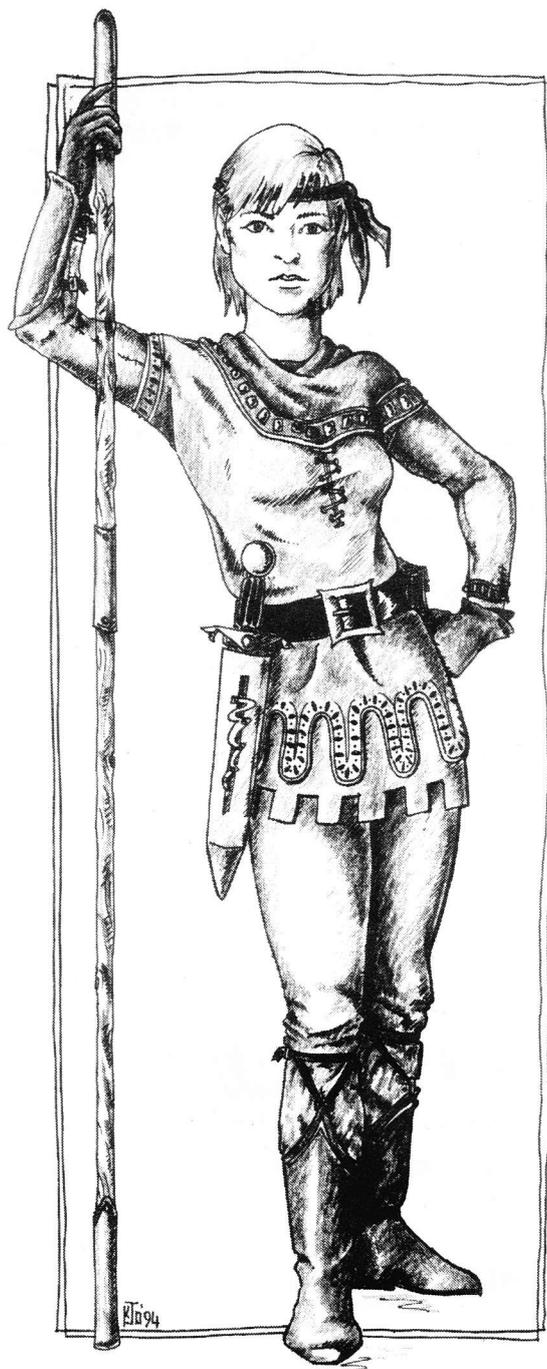
So how do we fix this adventurer's fashion nightmare? Let's get constructive and take a look at how a sensible fantasy female warrior really would dress. There are three main areas to consider when dressing for adventure; comfort, cover/protection and individuality.

Comfort really depends on where you are adventuring. The climate and terrain is one of the first things I try to discover from the referee. As you know, he or she doesn't always have to tell you, so be prepared for any environment. If you are going to be travelling in hot, desert conditions, there is no point trying to show off a svelte outline. Figure hugging clothes are too hot and restrictive. Wear loose, light coloured clothing that covers everything and don't forget to wear a wide-brimmed hat. If it's colder climes that you will be bashing through, rug up. Soft leather is warm and relatively easy to move in. Gloves will help prevent numbing hands - important if you are a thief character expected to disarm traps and unlock doors. In all weathers, forget the stilettos. Soft, flat-sole boots allow for long hours of trudging to the next encounter and will cause less blisters.

Adventuring is a dangerous business. It is what makes it exciting and fun to do. But don't make it too dangerous. Protect yourself. Travelling through forests or over jagged rocks you'll want sturdy pants and a jerkin to avoid painful snags and tears without overly restricting movement. Again, a soft leather or heavy wool is usually the best material, as thinner materials (especially all those that give that translucent effect beloved of fantasy artists) have a mind of their own and will float with the slightest breeze, catch and tear easily and leave the adventurer with torn skin. Any female adventurer who engages in combat will need maximum protection. I once saw a comic strip of a female in an arrow peppered chainmail bikini, with not a scratch on her. The caption read "Lucky I was wearing my armour." Sorry guys and gals, referees don't play that way. Well, not the ones I know. Look at the history books available in any library or gaming store; fighters wore full plate, chainmail, or leather from neck to knee, and they didn't forget head protection. Wear a helmet, even if it does obscure your face and hair - what good is it to protect your body and leave the most vital part exposed? One good hit on the head and you're either unconscious or dead.

Dress has always been a form of code, allowing those that look at you to know your caste or station, even your trade. Everyone wears some sort of uniform, or standard dress that serves as a visual signal to others who and what you are. To this you want to add a touch of individuality. It is true, for some women clothes mean a lot. Other women really couldn't give a damn. This, however, should be always a matter of individual choice, and not a degrading stereotype forced on women by the fantasies of men. If your character is well off, you'll probably buy good garments made from quality materials with plenty of adornments. Full plate armour is within the financial reach of any moderately successful adventurer. If you're just starting out, or are in any way impoverished, seconds or patched gear will have to do. Sometimes you'll want to give the impression that you're from a different background, or class. All this can be achieved by selective purchases and a bit of imagination.

So, as a general rule, remember the following. A lot of adventuring involves long treks through orc-infested mountains covered in dark, overgrown forest, or across open plains in searing heat. Imagine all the damage that could be done to naked flesh. Ouch! Get real, get protection, get dressed.



*Liz edged silently down the track, her soft boots carefully searching out stable footholds. She stopped and listened carefully. Something moved up ahead. Turning to the following party, she raised a gloved finger to her lips then pointed ahead. The rest of the adventurers nodded, and moved quietly off the track.*

*Liz melted into the nearby tree line, her dappled clothing merging with the foliage. She reached for her sword and slowly drew it from the well-oiled scabbard, hefting it easily in one hand.*

*She smiled and waited.*