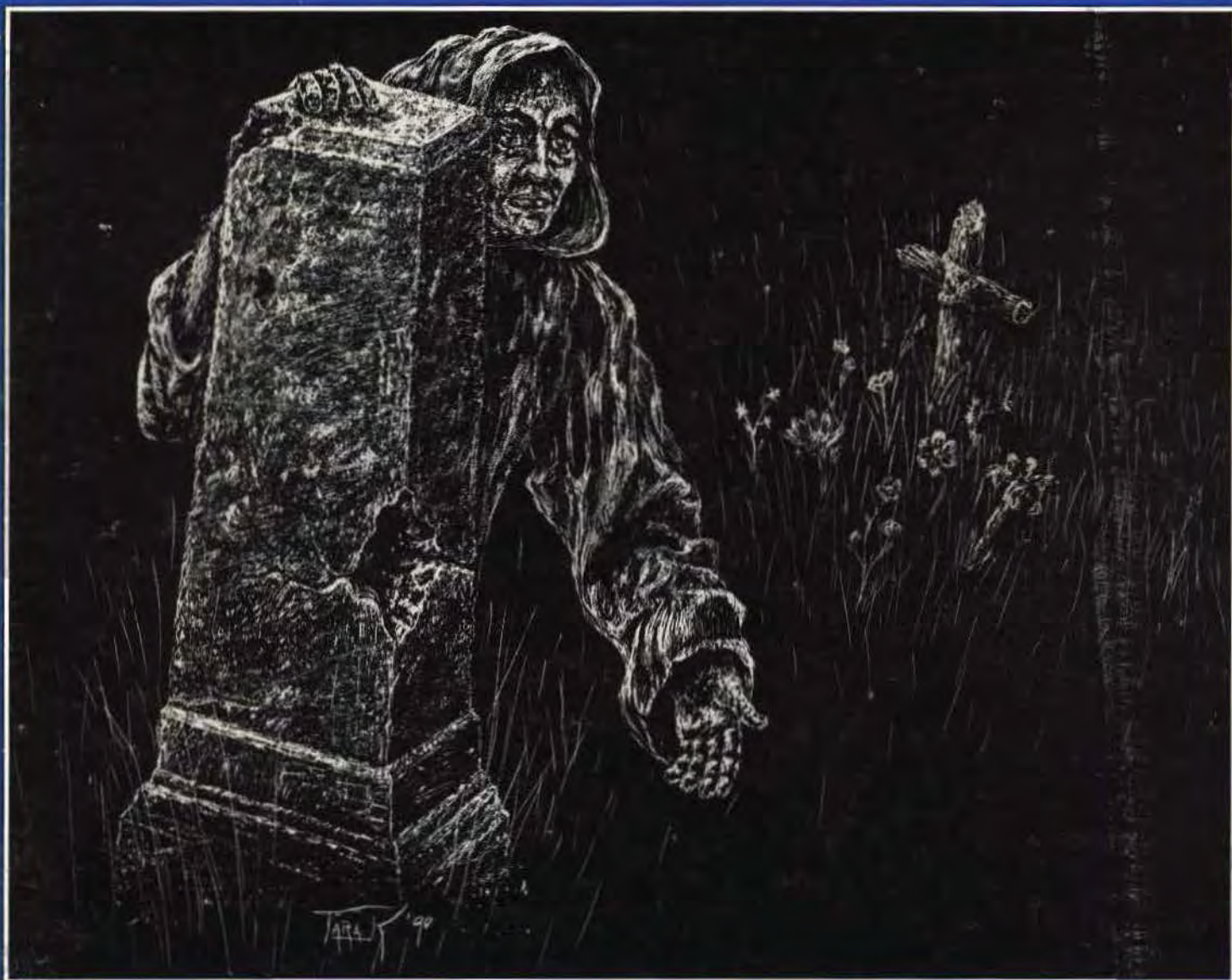


Tales of the Dark Ages

A Collection of Ars Magica™ Fantasy Role-Playing Adventures



Atlas
Games

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first anthology of adventures published for the **Ars Magica™** game, and the first product to appear under the label of Atlas Games. While we have obviously designed this product for players of **Ars Magica**, we would hope that players of other RPGs may be intrigued by this collection. In the tradition of **Ars Magica**, our emphasis has been on writing a good story, not legislating rules or catering to their peculiarities. We hope that we have successfully done so, and that these stories will appeal to adherents of every game—and perhaps even intrigue non-gamers.

ABOUT ATLAS GAMES

Atlas Games is a brand new company, a small publisher of role-playing games and related materials. By special arrangement with Lion Rampant Games, we are licensed to produce materials for the **Ars Magica™** game. Atlas Games is envisioned as a small company, one that caters to the sophisticated gamer, the reader willing to delve into the unusual and experimental, as well as to enjoy creative new variations on mainstream design.

This vision is informed by the belief that any art, such as role-playing, grows through risk and experimentation. Large companies, because of the scale on which they operate, are often hesitant to take such risks. As in other arts (and technologies), many of the exciting innovations originate in the small, obscure, “underground” companies. These ideas, and the companies that spawned them, may later—often in “watered-down” form—become accepted as “mainstream.” The creation of role-playing games in the first place attests to this process.

This all means that to renew and grow, the hobby requires a continuous supply of small ventures, business risks that may survive or fail, but which inevitably make their impression on the hobby. While the average gamer may never have read **Ars Magica**, for instance, he may have already felt its repercussions. This is because the best designers, though they may be employed by the larger companies, keep a close eye on the “underground.” They know

that new ideas and approaches will show up there. Consciously or not, each designer is influenced by those ideas to which he or she has been exposed; in this fashion, the best ideas are distilled out and preserved as a legacy for all games.

Atlas Games is pleased to be a small company. Certainly we will not throw away profit, should it come our way; but at the outset our dedication is foremost to innovation, to experimentation, whether exploring new territory or re-charting the familiar. We believe this approach will have a crucial impact on the gaming hobby, whether or not a particular product is widely recognized; and we hope that the core of quality that survives the ravages of time and criticism will redeem whatever inferior contents may have been discarded along the way.

Tales of the Dark Ages is the first step toward our vision. In it, we invite you to taste the cutting edge of role-gaming design. Won't you join us?

WHAT IS ARS MAGICA™? (AND WHAT IF I PLAY SOMETHING ELSE?)

Ars Magica is a fantasy role-playing game published by Lion Rampant Games (P.O. Box 29942, Atlanta, GA 30359). The game focuses on the medieval wizard in an authentic setting, as close to the historical Medieval Europe as possible. It has received critical acclaim from nearly every quarter for its fresh approach to role-gaming, and its innovative magic system.

Tales of the Dark Ages was designed specifically for **Ars Magica**. If you use another game system, do not fret; you can still adapt these adventures for your campaign (—or “saga,” as we would say in **ArM** terms)! Here we'll give you a quick introduction to the basics of **ArM** game mechanics. If you have some idea of what all the numbers and abbreviations mean, it should be easier to draw up analogous details for the game of your choice.

Out of the haunted mists of the past come...

TALES OF THE DARK AGES

A collection of adventures for the *Ars Magica*[™] game, featuring:

The Ghoul of St. Lazare

by John Nephew

A horribly mutilated body floats downstream to the players' covenant. It is discovered that the *pox* killed the unfortunate *girl*—and afterwards someone did this to the corpse. What evil brews upstream? Instigators, a necromancer, or worse? In the course of their investigations, the characters encounter a bizarre priest, twisted by lies and secrets of the dark past, who has lost much of his hold on reality. What evil fate awaits him and the investigating adventurers?

Tongue of Vipers

by Thomas M. Kane

Magi of the players' covenant are invited to the court of the Viscount Sturt von Grstadt, in the Lorraine region of France, at the behest of Lady Claire, a member of the court. When the PCs arrive, they find that their would-be hostess has been accused of attempting to poison the count! Can they find if she's really guilty—or who is responsible—while avoiding suspicion themselves, and winning access to the viscount's treasured, magical *Seir Waters*?

Copse of Skulls

by Thomas M. Kane

When a novice sorcerer of the covenant, dispatched as a messenger, disappears, word returns that he unleashed a nameless horror from the wood known as the *Copse of Skulls*. Now the player characters are dispatched to rectify the situation, and free the sorcerer—if he yet lives. To do so they must face bandits who are not quite human, and the forest's monstrous master—to whom the ancient pagan Celts sacrificed human skulls, as well as challenges of a more subtle character.

The Inheritance

by James P. Buchanan

A companion of aristocratic lineage has been bequeathed a holding of land. When he and his friends journey to it, they find it holds an ancient Roman aqueduct. If they could restore this aqueduct to working condition, drought in their tenants' lands may be alleviated. But there are ancient forces which oppose such meddling.

This collection has a story for everyone. With helpful explanatory notes in the introduction, even role-players unfamiliar with the *Ars Magica*[™] fantasy role-playing game will find this a valuable gaming aid.

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