

Tales From The **MAGICIAN'S SKULL**

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A gong shivers... the mists part to reveal a grisly visage lying upon a mound of rubble, dead but for one glowing, malefic eye...

It speaks, in a voice of cold command: *Silence, mortal dogs! It is time now for*

Tales From The MAGICIAN'S SKULL



NO. 1

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<i>In the moonlight hundreds of once-human hands, wrinkled and barnacled and stinking of ocean slime, rose from the waters and clawed blindly at the hull. They covered the painted eyes that glowered at Sea-Glare's prow, scuttled toward the oar-ports, and crawled up the rudder.</i>		
The Guild of Silent Men	by James Enge	23
<i>"If Reuk died with his eyes open, as seems likely," Morlock explained, "the last image he saw will be lingering in the back of his eye. With the light fluid and the lens, I may be able to see it."</i>		
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<i>Bao dropped over the side, massive plate of silver held tightly against his body, and sank without a trace into the bay of black waters.</i>		
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<i>"Don't squirm," the headsman says, leaning down to whisper into my ear. "Stay still, and the axe will bite clean."</i>		
Crypt of Stars	by Howard Andrew Jones	43
<i>On he ran, uncaring, splattering cave muck with every stride. At any moment he expected to feel the talons rending his arm, the awful, diseased maws shredding the back of his neck like saw-toothed daggers. Something brushed the back of his shoulder, his hair—</i>		
There Was an Old Fat Spider	by C. L. Werner	55
<i>Motion in the web-ridden branches above made him look upwards. His eyes went wide with horror as he watched an immense spider slowly emerge from a cave-like nest of cobwebs. Even as the merchant drew back in fear, a sharp cracking pain smashed against the back of his head.</i>		
The Crystal Sickle's Harvest	by John C. Hocking	65
<i>He stared at the tomb's open door in mesmerized fascination, involuntarily anticipating some movement, any movement, there. It was a blackness greater than the night, and as old.</i>		

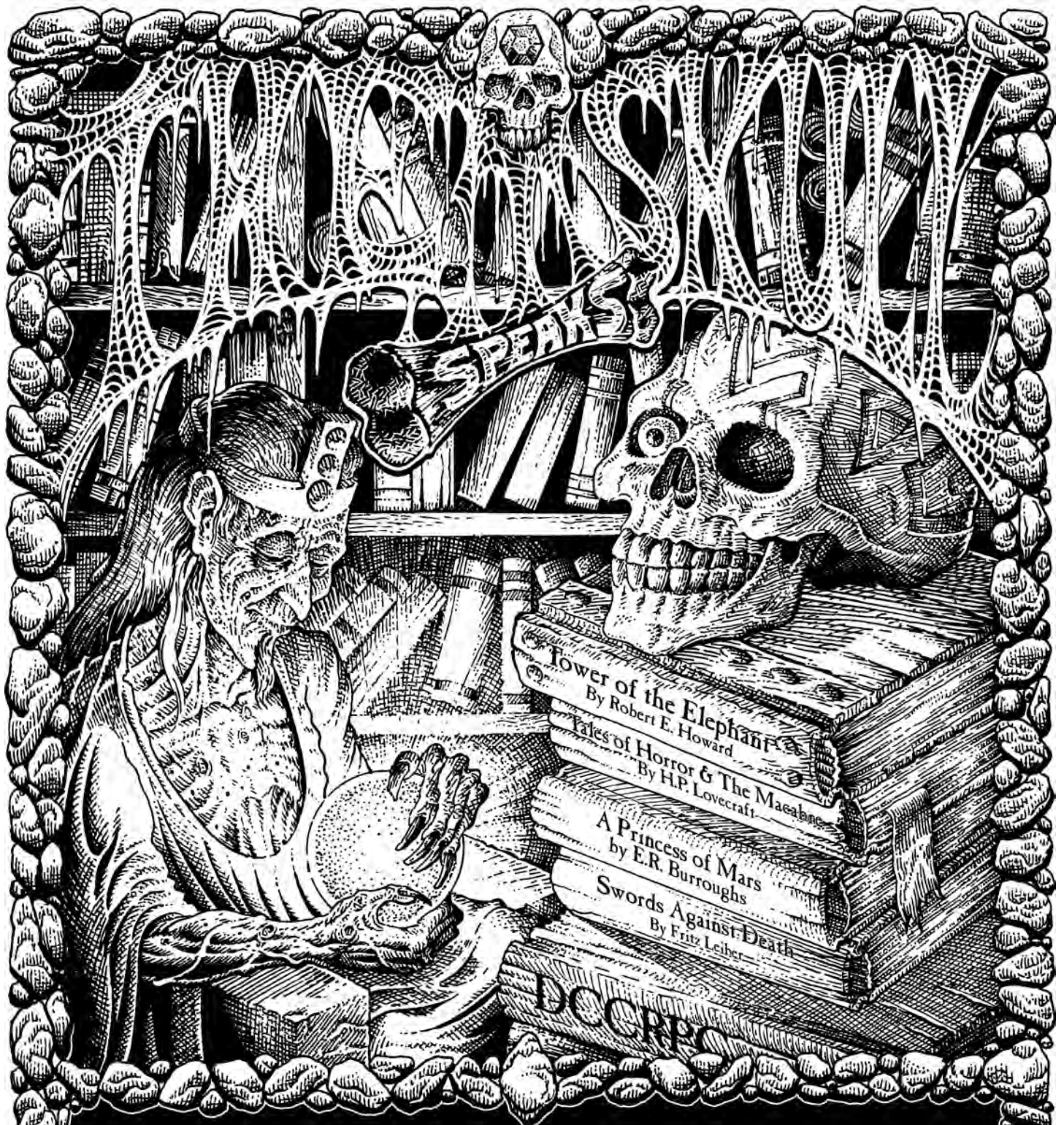
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HEAR this, mortal dogs. You hold in your hands a magazine the likes of which has not been seen for many suns. Once there were magicians whose weird tales could change the wormy earth. They infiltrated your waking world, bringing wonder and glory and imagination. Fantastic visions you dogs could barely grasp. But mortals they were, all of them. They're dust now. With their passing a Thing was gone, a Secret passed. Well, no more. Magicians of the word, the weird tale-tellers: they may be gone, but their vision lives on. I am the skull and soul of one such word-wizard, and I'll bring you Secrets that haven't walked the earth in this century. Stories they'll be, stories that make you bolt up and hunger for adventure. You'll remember what glory could be, you'll realize how you worms have lost sight of the sun.

I am the Magician's Skull. Which magician? One you've never heard of: a peer of Howard and Lovecraft, Burroughs and Derleth, Dunsany and Leiber. A wizard who knew Merritt and St. Clair and Vance and Brackett and Wellman and Weinbaum, and Clark Ashton Smith and even grand Gygax himself. All the word-wizards wove wonder, and it matters not whose bones I rot with today. All you need to know is: I bring tales of great fantasy and wondrous adventure. Get ready, mortal dogs. Enjoy this first issue. Enjoy the adventure!

TALES FROM THE MAGICIAN'S SKULL

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

STRANGE but true: this project didn't begin life as a magazine, and I didn't plan to be its editor. It happened like this. In 2015 Joseph asked if I'd be interested in contributing some fiction to the *2016 Goodman Games GenCon Program Guide*. I naturally said yes, just as I said yes when he asked last year if I wanted to write a story for the 2017 Program Guide.

After I turned it over he wondered if I knew any other authors who wrote in a similar vein, because he'd decided to add more stories. Once again I naturally told him yes. I've been published with a lot of writers over the years who like to craft the same sort of fiction, so it was actually harder to narrow down their numbers rather than to hunt them up.

Once Joseph had more stories it wasn't long before he proposed publishing them all in a separate magazine, along with a final few to round things out. When he mentioned he'd need an editor I don't think he realized just how hard he was about to be lobbied.

You see, I've long had two editorial daydreams. The first was to travel back in time and become a story editor for the original *Star Trek*. The second, and slightly more plausible, was to edit a magazine publishing great adventure and horror stories that wouldn't have been out of place in some of the grand old magazines of the past.

I've briefly had an opportunity to do that before, first with a little e-zine titled *Flashing Swords*, and later when John O'Neill brought me aboard to help with the final issues of *Black Gate*.

This time, though, if I could convince Joseph to let me aboard, I'd be helping to shape the voice of a print magazine from the very first issue! It was an amazing opportunity, and I didn't just throw my hat in the ring, I somersaulted into the center myself. I must have been convincing, because here I am.

As for what we're publishing here and going forward, it has a lot to do with Appendix N, the recommended reading list near the back of the original *Dungeon Master's Guide*. It wasn't just a list, it was a touchstone for a lot of young fantasy readers back in the '70s and '80s, me included. Some time late in the 1970s I copied down that appendix and rode my bicycle to the library, the bookstore, and the used bookstore and discovered a world of adventure.

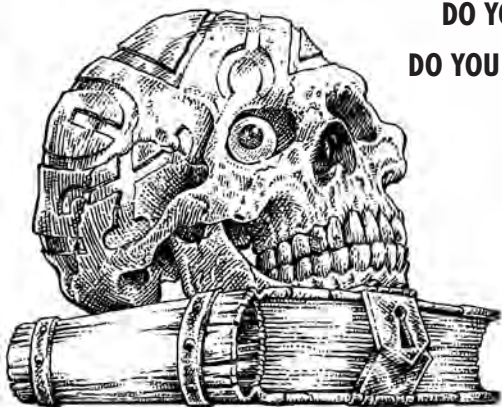
I'd be lying if I said Appendix N fired my desire to write, because I'd already dreamed of becoming a professional writer and even scribbled some fiction. But Appendix N changed the kinds of stories I wanted to tell. Before it, I was pastiching *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. The first books I found from the list blew the doors off my imagination, starting with *Leiber's Swords Against Death* (which I still consider the best collection of Lankhmar stories) and Zelazny's original *Chronicles of Amber*.

After those, the way was opened and I've never really looked back. I still love some good space opera, but I fell in love with heroic adventure and I've been writing in some related flavor of it ever since.

What Joseph and I hope to do with *Tales from the Magician's Skull* is blow the doors off of someone else's imagination by publishing stories rooted in that same rich fictive soil that produce different and delicious flavors of thrill. Tales with the drive and color and vivid originality from days of yore that feel familiar without being derivative, and new without breaking with the past. We fervently hope to provide these tales for many issues to come, and we sincerely hope you'll join us for the ride.

Swords Together!

— Howard Andrew Jones



**DO YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS, QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR CONCERNS?
DO YOU WISH TO SEND US ACCOLADES, INVITATIONS, OR JEWELED GOBLETS?**

IF YOU DARE TO CONTACT THE SKULL, REACH OUT TO US AT:

skull@goodman-games.com

WHEN THE STARS ARE RIGHT, SOMEONE SHALL RESPOND.

RETAILERS: Interested in stocking Tales From the Magician's Skull?

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