

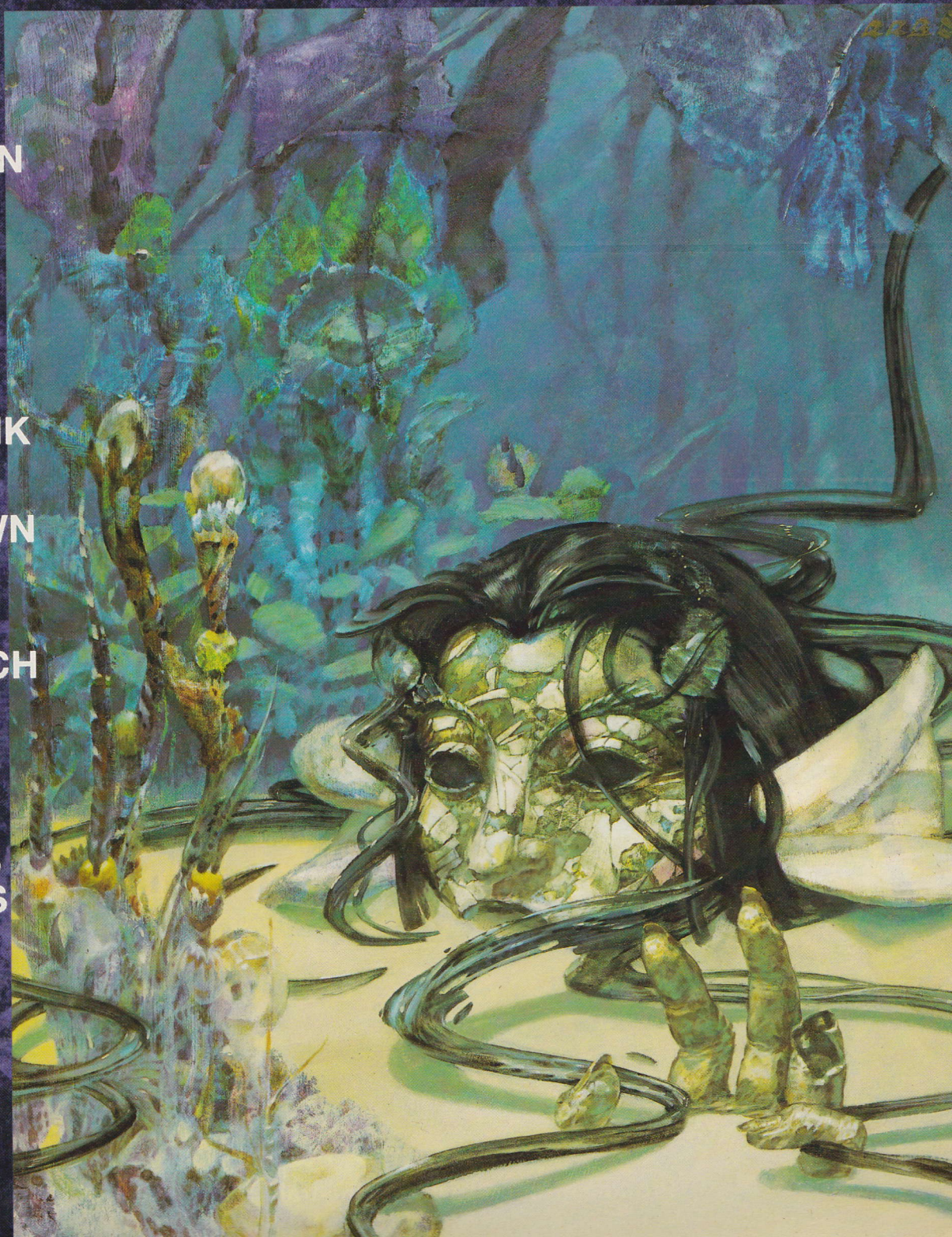
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A Woman's Scorn

Written & Illustrated by Karen Ogden

Khai twiddled the sapphire and gold ring on his finger in annoyance. He detested the merchant sector of the city, but what could one do when one needed to make something made in a hurry. He had his best chance of real money and position if he could gain the confidence of the Baron. But he must look the part. The tailor had been recommended to him as one skilled with the needle and quick in delivering.

Khai handed the tailor coinage and turned to leave. A young girl with dirty face and matted black hair looked up and smiled at him as he opened the door.

"The colour suits you, sir," she offered politely.

"What would you know, ugly child," he snorted as he back handed the girl for her impudence. She fell to the floor clutching her left eye, blood trickling through her fingers. She watched as he wiped the blood from the ring before pushing his way into the street...

Most referees usually relegate the female non-player characters to minor roles - the little old lady, the harlot, the suffering or loving wife, the beggar woman, or if you're 'lucky' the scantily clad female (usually elven) warrior with big boobies.

The 'daughter in need of rescue' syndrome is all too common with the only variation being whether the father is a king, baron, chieftain, rich merchant, or farmer. More often than not, the female character concerned is just window dressing (as little as possible seems preferable). Her name is mentioned in passing, then all other details are glossed over. Given this scenario, the players mentally note "Mission: Rescue Female, fight monsters, collect any loot, maybe get sexual favours in gratitude to her rescuers, and perhaps an Earldom with huge tracts of land." It is a tired formula which does not help the image of women in role playing games!

Well, what if she doesn't want to be rescued by boorish male player characters? In the days of arranged marriages, usually without the consent of the woman concerned, some women may do anything to avoid life-long bonding to an overweight, older, smelly warrior who only wants instant gratification when he returns from the battlefield. Perhaps the only way to escape a male dominated future a girl has to plot her own abduction,



then abscond to marry the one she loves, join bandits or even lead a life of adventuring. On one occasion I used this idea quite effectively. The lady in question was the daughter of a mage who'd promised her in marriage to a local noble for various political reasons. She detested the noble, of course. She also detested the closeted life her father led in pursuit of his magical research. To escape the boredom she took long rides into the local hills

where she met the leader of a bandit group. In true cliched tradition, she fell in love with the bandit leader and fled her home to join him as his wife. The mage, assuming his daughter had been taken against her will, asked his past apprentice (a player character who, incidentally, had mentioned in his character background that he loved his teacher's daughter) to rescue her. The player's party followed their mage on his quest to save his

love from the clutches of the bandits, winning against almost impossible odds, only to find her staring back at them down the shaft of a drawn arrow.

This scenario served several purposes. First it gave some wonderful opportunities for the player to role play using the background he had written. Second it provided the party a 'good' motive to attack the bandits. Third it developed some interesting political ramifications as the noble was left out in the cold. And finally it meant that the player mage had ongoing difficulty acquiring spells as his master was none too pleased with the outcome.

This illustrates how a woman can be more than single dimensional plot device and shows how important it is to use player's own background detail.

Another option is the big beefy fighter who is a bit of a loner because he is secretly searching for the noble who killed his mother. When he finds the offender he fails to account for the noble's wife who isn't about to let her meal ticket die. The pair form a formidable partnership.

Or what of the dear little old lady that the players take for granted and abuse when she doesn't co-operate completely with their unreasonable demands. She has children and grandchildren. Woe betide if she is harmed as one of her kin may be Captain of the guard, or a powerful mage, or the local magistrate.

The harlot is popular with a lot of male players who think its a real laugh to have their way with her in a fantasy session. But while they are sleeping, she may turn out to be a member of the local assassin's or thieves guild. Or she could be a spy for a rival party, or she may be diseased and sent by an enemy to infect the players. In a year's time, she could have the cavalier's only son and demand her son's birthright from the player!

The suffering wife could be looking for a lover to add spice to her life, and one of the party is an eligible bachelor. But watch out. Her husband is very jealous and very big! She may claim she is being beaten by her husband, and her pleas for justice may end up with the players facing justice themselves for injury or even murder of the husband.

The beggar woman the party habitually ignores or insults could be a holy priestess, sworn to poverty but willing to reward the benevolent with healing. She could also be a polymorphed dragon after some fun. Or she might just be an old woman begging.

The scantily clad, female elven warrior with the big breasts? She would be very cold and very stupid. Warriors need protective clothing - all over their bodies - or they die. And if she was that well endowed, any major physical exertion would be very painful. Chainmail beside skin chafes!

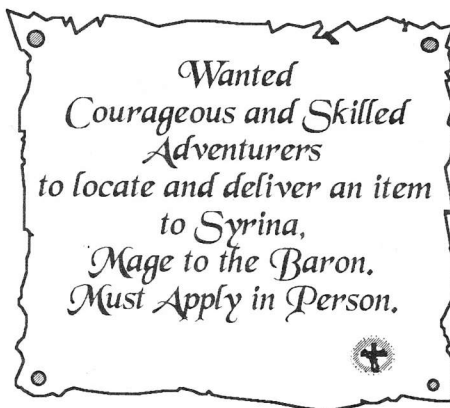
The most important rule to remember when players are misusing female non-player

characters is that a woman's revenge hits where it will hurt the most. Killing is too good for them. I find the best form of revenge is the slow, painful one. This rarely involves death of the victim. Instead I troll through the character backgrounds, looking for the Achilles heal.

I once had a player who was a loyal cleric, Galeron. Unfortunately for him, he had an eye for the ladies. He met a woman, dressed as a fellow cleric, with whom he fell madly and passionately in lust. He did all the right things. Married her and gave her his magical mace and ring of protection as wedding presents. They adventured together with the party over several months as they searched for several magical orbs (which would restore balance to a ravaged kingdom). Finally, the group found their first orb which glowed a brilliant green under the touch of the party's other cleric, Nyissa, who found it could be used for healing. One by one, she healed the party until she came to Galeron;s wife who flinched away from the orb. Nyissa sensed a surge from the orb as it began to burn furiously. She reached out to touch Galeron's wife who screamed in horror, disappearing in a rush of flames.

Galeron was stunned, the player was stunned and the rest of my players scratched their heads. I was peeved. I had set up the revenge. She was a cleric of an evil church personally humiliated by a member of the Galeron's church. She was plotting to destroy an artifact of Galeron's church which he had come by and was trying to return to its rightful place. Although I had failed in the revenge, the situation had provided some pretty good role playing, a new quest for the party and a personal dilemma for Galeron, trying to explain his fratination to his superiors.

And what happened to our little urchin girl? Well she hooked up with the Baron's mage, became his prized apprentice through unheard of diligence, and after several years of study and adventuring advanced to being the second most powerful mage in the land. All for revenge...



Moth pulled the parchment from the town square's Hiring Post and handed it to Khai. Khai smiled. Maybe this job would regain him the Baron's favour.

The mage's quarters were opulent. The walls lined with tapestries and velvets worth a small ransom. This job could restore some of

his lost fortune. The servant led them into a large room with ornately tiled floor which rang under their footsteps. The mage sat at the fat end. They could see her profile as they walked up to the large oak desk and chair.

As Syrina turned to face them, Khai saw the flowing black hair sway away from her face, and the piercing eye. The left eye was partially closed by a deep scar.

"Do you remember me?" she asked.

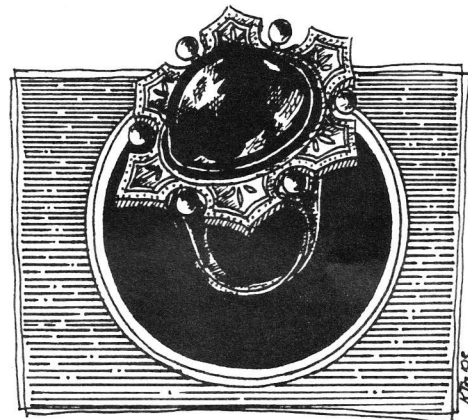
Khai stared blankly back and twisted his signet ring nervously. One could not forget such a face. Be he could not remember this woman. She looked down at the ring. It was beautifully carved with a dragon of gold encircling a sapphire.

"That is all that is left of your family fortune, isn't it," she stated calmly.

"How... how did you know?" he whispered.

Khai felt pain sear through his body, starting at his finger tips. A piercing blue light consumed him. He could faintly hear a voice echo in his tightening skull...

"I am the ugly child., I always remembered that ring."



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