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# Abyss 7

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Editor:David F. Nalle

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**EDITORIAL NOTE**

In this space I want to mention a few things about this issue. There are a number of interesting articles from new and old contributors. Of special note is the second installment of Lew Bryson's fiction piece, which first appeared in #5/6. It arises out of an adventure run by Nick Knisely. The characters were played as follows: Implotius-Lew Bryson, Mithrandir-Tom Curtin, Alroy-Alan Sutter, Talos-Rick Shaw, and Unferth-Dave Nalle. It was a good adventure run by a novice DM. There should be 3 or 4 more installments.

I am currently working on the 2nd edition of the YSGARTH RULES, which will be released this summer. They should run about 50 pages of reduced type and sell for about five dollars. There will be some major improvements over the original rules.

Also in the works are the next 3 in the WYRDWORLD ADVENTURE series. One is unnamed, the other two are "The Eye of Ba'al" and "The Cobra Throne." The first should be out in April. WA #1, "Kahldath: The Messiah" was very well received. These adventures sell for 3 dollars each.

ABYSS #8 should be out in late May. It will be a standard 16 page issue, like this one. #9 will be out in July.

Dave Nalle  
Lancaster PA  
March 1980

**EXPLANATION OF TERMS**

Some of the terms used in some articles may be unfamiliar, so this explanation is attached with notes for conversion to AD&D or similar systems.

HD: Hit Dice, rolled to determine the amount of damage which a subject can take. It is expressed in die ranges, like 8D6, for 8 six-sided die, or 8 to 48.

AC: Armor Class, in a range starting from 0 for no armor, and ranging to 8 for full plate. Armor with a + and a number is magical or of superior metal. The plus is added to the armor class. Plus armor can only be pierced by plus weapons.

DC: Defense Class, this indicates a subject's ability to dodge blows. The higher the DC is the better the character is.

HT: Height, usually in inches.

WT: Weight, usually in pounds.

SC: Size Class, indicates size of target. Should be treated as a minus on defense class against man sized foes.

MR: Magic Resistance, indicates percentage of immunity to magic attacks. The subject is only affected by the remaining portion of the magical attack.

ST: Saving Throw, the roll needed on a D20 to avoid the effects of magical attacks, poison, and several other types of attack.

+S: Bonuses to hit and on damage, due to skill and natural abilities.

CR: Combat Round one round of attack and defense. Usually 5 or 6 seconds of play time.

Note #1-To find the general movement rate for monsters in feet/CR multiply the DC by 3. Maximum movement is DC times 9. If a monster can fly, its DC is assumed to be x2 when it is in flight.

Note #2-To find AD&D Armor Class from DC, SC, and AC, use this formula:  
AD&D AC = 10 - (((DC - SC) + AC) / 2.2)

Note #3-Spells are levelled differently on occasion here. If they seem to be too high level for AD&D, or are above level 9, divide the level by 1.7.

**CUSTOMIZING CHARACTERS**

David Dunham

I use these charts to determine additional features about characters in my campaign.

Handedness

All characters roll to see if they are right or left handed. They then roll to see if they can use the other hand with equal dexterity. Both rolls should be made. If the second shows that the character is ambidextrous, the first indicates the favored hand.

(roll 1D6) 6=Left-Handed  
(roll 2D6) 12=Ambidextrous

Idiosyncracies

Each player rolls a D6. If he rolls a 6 he must then roll on the Idiosyncracies table. If a player so desires, he may always elect to roll on this table or on the C&S phobia table. Roll 1D100 when using this table.

01-25	Nothing
26-28	Obese
29-31	Skinny
32	Blind
33	Deaf
34	Dumb
35	Multiple Identical Birth <sup>1</sup>
36-37	Lame
38	Night Vision <sup>2</sup>
39	Albino
40-41	Farsighted
42-43	Nearsighted
44	Excellent Vision
45	Excellent Hearing
46	Bald
47	Haemophilia
48	Allergies <sup>3</sup>
49	Webbed Fingers/Toes
50-51	Speech Problem
52	Hermaphrodite
53	Sterile
54	Schizophrenic
55	Colourblind
56-57	Melancholia
58-59	Paranoia
60-61	Megalomania
62-63	Psychopath
64-97	Phobia <sup>4</sup>
98-99	Roll twice more
00	Roll three times more

<sup>1</sup>Roll again to see if twins, triplets, etc. On a D6, 1-3=twins, 4-5= triplets, 6=quadruplets or more. Duplicate the character onto the appropriate number of sheets.

<sup>2</sup>In my campaign, Night Vision lets the character see in near total darkness. Infravision can be used in total darkness. Elves and Dwarves have Night Vision.

<sup>3</sup>Roll to see what type, as desired.

<sup>4</sup>I use the chart in Chivalry & Sorcery; you can make your own, or let the player choose, if you wish.

**INTELLIGENCE**

Dave Nalle

In determining a creature's reactions in an encounter type of situation, one of the main things to know about the creature is what level of intellect it is. The table below gives the range of intelligence and their classifications. The classifications are described below the table.

<u>Intelligence</u>	<u>Classification</u>
0	Non-Intelligent
1,2	Animal Intelligence
3-5	Sub-Human Intelligence
6-18	Human Level Intelligence
19-21	Super-Human Intelligence
22,23	Super-Natural Intelligence
24	Transcendant Intelligence

**Non-Intelligent**-This includes all things ranging from rocks to the most highly intellectual of trees and other plants. These types just cannot form a though process of any noticeable type.

**Animal Intelligence**-This represents those creatures ranging from the lowest insects to the highest non-intelligent animals. Some examples of 1 intelligence are bees, ants, birds (with some exceptions), lizards, and fish. Some examples of 2 intelligence are hive minds, larger and more versatile animals, and the larger birds and lizards. Some of the traditional animal types fit into the next class.

**Sub-Human Intelligence**-This includes those creatures which are capable of limited communication, ranging from Chimpanzees to very stupid cave men. Many monster types fall in this range, including Ghouls, and the slowest of Ogres.

**Human Level Intelligence**-This is divided into three sub-classes. These are: Low, 6-8, Normal, 9-14, and High 15-18. Some animals and most monsters are classified as Low. This group includes Ogres, Orcs, Goblins and such. Normal includes Humans, Dwarves, Hobbits, and some Elves. High includes the top Humans and Dwarves, most Elves, and some other types.

**Super-Human Intelligence**-This group includes some Elves, the Sidhe, many lesser godlings, and some lesser Demons, Angels and Elemental creatures. A rare human will achieve this level.

**Super-Natural Intelligence**-This group is as far above man as man is above the animals. This includes Demons, Angels, greater Elementals, Sphinx, Lammasu, and some Gods.

**Transcendant Intelligence**-Minds of this magnitude make men seem almost non-intelligent. The only examples of this group are the greater gods. Intellectuals of this power tend to care very little about reality, or any being but themselves, being mostly unaware that such things even exist.

## NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Tom Curtin

**Can of Spinach**-When consumed this gives an effective 24 Strength and a 23 Dexterity for one full turn.

**Napalm Grenades**-These grenades, which look like plain canisters, will explode when detonated for a concussion which does 3D10 in a 8ft radius. This is followed by 5D12 immolation damage to anyone or anything within a 40ft radius of the explosion. The immolation lasts for 1D4 +5 Combat Rounds.

**Bangstick**-This resembles an ordinary singlestick, but it does 1D8 club damage, and when it hits, it sets off a thunder-like bang, which deafens the victim and causes him to save against stun which lasts for 1D4 CR.

**Mirror Shield**-This shield is worth 5 points of armor and adds plus three to the users defense. The reflective surface of the shield is unmarable. The shield will randomly deflect or reflect rays, beams, lasers, and other similar types of attacks. It will work handily against Gorgons and Basilisks and will confuse monsters of lesser intelligence.

**Amulet of Ray and Beam Reflection**-This item is fairly clear cut. It will automatically reflect any ray or beam type attack back on the caster. It is an effective deterrent against the miserable vermin that make a living as light-beamists. It should have a limited number of charges.

**Auroric Frisbee**-This average looking frisbee, when flung, will transform into a plane of pure Auroric Force, which will do 3D6 in the area hit. It has an additional rating of 80% Sword of Sharpness effect. This gives it an 80% chance of slicing off limbs, or doing triple damage in the torso. It has a limited number of charges.

## Nanoc the Berserker

Ronald Pebr

One of the most forbidding warriors of the Age of Re-Birth was Nanoc. In the Summer of the Second Year he strode forth into the land, and his fame followed his bloody exploits. It is well known to all who have ears to hear the talespinners, how Nanoc travelled in company with a disgraced Paladin of Odin to convey a lost maiden to her rightful kin--and everyone laughs at how he remained drunk for the two weeks of the journey--how he was captured by treachery, escaped to lead an army of rescuers back to where the maiden was still imprisoned, and how he slew the great Sea Serpent which attacked his ship on the voyage home. All who know the tale grieved with Nanoc that his young torchbearer fell victim to the venom of the Serpent before the great Warrior could slay the beast, and how he had to watch helpless as the boy perished in agony.

This tale then, is of the adventures of Nanoc which began in the hot August of that year, when he strode out on foot, again in company with the Warrior-of-Odin-who had-been-a-Paladin, who was called Vzn, and another boy the Berserker hoped to train as a servant, retainer, and assistant. In spite of his many adventures, Nanoc was without wealth. He had his weapons, armor, and a small portion of dried food. Vzn had no more, and the young boy--an orphan of the streets--had nought save the food Nanoc had purchased for him. They were on foot, and walked south along the only road which connected the City with the Elf Lands.

It is said that this realm enjoys the King's peace and that the High Road is safe in his domain. This may be true in theory, but every minor lordling or landholder with a few men will dispute this (when the constables are elsewhere, of course). So it was, on the morning of their third hot and tired day of walking, that the adventurers saw a wagon driving towards them. It was pulled by two sturdy horses. On the driver's bed were two men in plate-armor. The wagon halted, and they hailed the adventurers.

"Who might you be, and where do you go this early in the morning?" said one man, "You've the look and bearing of strangers."

"True," replied Nanoc, cautious not to reveal too much, "We are travelers. Who might inquire?"

"We are the road patrol," the man said, "The local peasantry pay us to guard this section of the High Road, for in truth the King's arm cannot defend everyone. We keep the road safe from bandits, for they dare not attack men so well armed and armored." To this Nanoc said naught, for the man seemed anxious to speak further.

"In truth, it is always a lonely task. Especially in farming season, as hot as it is now, few travel the roads--we are as uncomfortable in our armor as your friend must be," he pointed to Vzn, "and you must realize that the remuneration for our good works is small."

"Yes," said the other man as he casually rubbed thumb and fingers together, perhaps suggestively, "It is so good when we find travellers who appreciate what we do for them, and help us out in accomplishing our tasks."

At this, Nanoc realized that the road patrol were themselves little better than the bandits they protected the roads from. They might not kill victims, and they probably wouldn't strip travellers of everything they owned, but they certainly seemed willing to accept a "donation" for their work. Realizing that the party would be at a disadvantage against the men in the wagon, as they were on foot, Nanoc took the initiative.

The leather-armored warrior brought his crossbow to bear, and fired. The quarrel hit, knocking its target from the wagon's seat into the road. But, just as Nanoc kept his crossbow cocked at all times, so his foes kept their weapons at hand in the wagon. The second man pulled from behind his seat a loaded, cocked crossbow, and fired into the party. The quarrel hit Nanoc's servant, entering his arm; he fell down with a yell and thrashed about in pain on the ground.

Vzn drew his great-sword, and joined the fray. Even this early in the morning his armor was hot and uncomfortable, he hadn't expected a battle, but Nanoc's attack had committed the party. Nanoc had already dropped his crossbow, and unlimbered his battle-axe, rushing on his downed foe.

Nanoc swung the axe, slaying the armored man before he could rise. As his axe touched blood, Nanoc felt the rage of the Berserker begin. He turned, his mind conscious only of the need to slay his enemies, to see Vzn slashing at his only other opponent. To the Berserker the two men seemed to move in slow motion. The wagoneer had dropped his crossbow, and was now thrusting at Vzn with a spear, while Vzn countered with his sword.

Although he had the advantage of the wagon's height, the spearman could not deliver a strong enough thrust to penetrate the warrior's armor.

Nanoc jumped on the wagon seat, swung, knocked the man down, and slew him before Vzn could protest the needless death. They would have had the man at their mercy soon enough, fighting two-on-one, but Nanoc, in his berserk rage saw only another target for his axe. The melee was over.

His fit passing, Nanoc returned to the side of his servaat, withdrew the quarrel--the wound was more painful than it was damaging--bandaged the wound, then suggested to Vzn that they sever the heads of their enemies and leave them on spikes by the road as a warning to those who would take advantage of travellers. It was a harsh way to give warning, but Vzn agreed it might deter other bandits, and keep the patrols honest. They did this, rolling the corpses off the road, and keeping their armor to sell as scrap. They took the horses and the wagon.

"But this is robbery, no different than what they intended," said Vzn.

"Had I not fired when I did," replied Nanoc, "That's what would have happened. Meanwhile, I'm tired of walking, as you must be in that metal suit, and my young bravo here is wounded. They've no use for the wagon."

"Should we not try to return the horses and wagon to their rightful owners?"

"Only if you try to convince them that we killed the patrol by accident," said Nanoc, "Whoever was responsible for them, doubtless thought them to be honest. No, I think we'll just keep the wagon from going to waste, and be on our way in greater comfort than we began."

Vzn accepted the Berserker's logic. They climbed into the wagon. Nanoc took the reins, and they continued along the High-Road. Both adventurers thought to visit the lands to the East of the highway. They knew from maps they had seen that a lake was there, but they knew nothing else of it, and it was curiosity that had caused them to venture forth from the City to begin with.

So, after another two days of travel, they left the road, and drove across the dusty, dry lands to the east, knowing they'd eventually come to a river and then a lake. As the third evening found them near a small citadel, they decided to seek shelter there.

"Hail the tower!" called Nanoc. The inhabitants were not slow to reply. Archers appeared on the battlements, among them a tall, heavy-set man who shouted to Nanoc.

"Who comes to the Citadel of Klar?"

"Weary travellers," replied Nanoc. He already didn't like the look of this place, but he was there and had been noticed, so he decided to see it through.

"Come in, come in," the man called, "Company is always welcome." The gates of the tower opened. Men and women came out to escort the trio in and to stable their horses. They noticed that all of the men had the bearing of fighters, and that even the women walked with an arrogant step, and carried knives in their belts. They were taken to the central hall of the tower where the big man who had hailed them from the tower walls waited. He offered them refreshment, which they gratefully accepted. He mentioned their wagon. It was of the type used by their road patrols, and his men had told him of the armor pieces in it.

"I am Klar," he said, "I welcome the diversion of such interesting company. You did not purchase that armor. Where did you get it? Who did you slay?"

"Those who would have slain us," replied Nanoc. "Do you like it, can you use the metal? We'll trade it to you for a couple of weeks of field rations."

Klar laughed, "Why should I trade? Why not just take metal, horses, and the wagon, and let you walk out in the morning?" From his manner, Nanoc realized that Klar was goading him, and sought entertainment, not booty.

"Because we took them in honorable combat and are proposing fair and honorable trade," Nanoc told him. He sensed that there would be another fight before the night came, though he didn't like being in a room which now held some 15 or 20 potential foes, and Klar alone looked highly formidable.

"Are you any good in combat?" asked Klar. Nanoc said nothing and continued. "Why don't we see? How about a bout against some of my men?"

Vzn spoke, "Oh noble lord, we'd not trespass against your generous hospitality." But Klar was not to be easily turned from his fun. He made mention that perhaps even his women were superior fighters. Nanoc countered that even his servant boy was more than their match.

"Let it be so," declared Klar, "your boy against one of my women. Hand him your crossbow." Reluctantly, Nanoc did so. "Now, your boy stands at that side of the room, Wilma here at this side," he said, indicating the opposite ends of the chamber. "Wilma, take your bow."  
 A young woman with long dark hair, dressed in tight-fitting garments, picked up a longbow and a quiver of arrows, and strode to her place. She had a confident look on her face. Surely she could skewer this inexperienced youth with ease. At Klar's signal she put an arrow to her bowstring. At his call she drew and fired, even as the boy aimed his unfamiliar weapon and discharged it. The quarrel grazed her side. She staggered, but didn't fall, and immediately drew another arrow from her quiver. Her first shot, hastily fired, had missed. The boy was frantically attempting to re-load the crossbow, as she nocked her arrow.

"The duel will continue while they both stand," cried Klar, "You will continue!"

"Wait!" shouted Nanoc, "Give him a chance to re-load."

"I've said nothing about re-loading. They are to fire on each other until one falls."

"Let the boy fight!" demanded Nanoc.

"Very well," chuckled Klar, "hold your shot Wilma." The woman kept the arrow nocked, and waited, unperturbed by the blood trickling down her side. The crossbow was finally loaded, presented, and Klar called again.

The quarrel hit, the arrow missed, and Wilma fell. "It's over, he won, she went down!" cried Nanoc. Klar was grieved. Not at the loss of an archer, but that a mere, untried boy had outshot his best. Wilma was not badly injured. The blow had merely knocked her down, and given her a minor wound. Still, she had fallen, if only for a moment, and the melee was over on Klar's terms. Rough and rude he might be, but he was honorable in his own fashion. He let them stay the night, feasted them, traded rations for the armor they had with them, and waved them off with good cheer the next day.

It is until another day that we must wait to hear the sad tale of how this servant of Nanoc perished at the claws of a vile creature, and how Nanoc and Vzn came to the country of the Brotherhood of Elfblades and duelled with two of their number, and the adventures they had after....

**CRITICAL HIT SYSTEM**

Bob Ellis

I do not care for fixed damage systems, where someone who is +6 on damage for some reason will do 1D4+6 with a dagger for 7-10 points. This neglects both the fact that a grazing blow should always be possible, and that the maximum damage possible should be dependant on the weapon.

I propose that the bonus be equal to the number rolled on the die, up to the character's bonus on damage. Using the dagger example:

D4 Roll	1	2	3	4
D4 + 6	7	8	9	10
Revised	2	4	6	8

This will make the range of damage more reasonable, so that a one will still be a mild blow.

Second, on a roll of 20 to hit, roll again against the same "to hit" number with a D20.

<u>2nd Roll</u>	<u>Result</u>
Misses	Misses
Hits	Damage=2x(normal(roll + Bonus)
20	Automatic Maximum Damage x 2

Using both of these systems, the absolute maximum damage which a weapon can do is 4 times its die, no matter who is wielding it. This strikes me as a more reasonable system than most in use today.

**BERSERKERS**

Jon Schuller

The Berserker described in AD&D is a little detailed type of character. Throughout Norse and Gaelic mythology, such persons were the most feared and loathed fighters, because of their legendary endurance and resistance to pain. The Scandinavian Berserker and the Irish Gealt were fighters who

were afflicted with a manic psychosis which was manifested as a blood-rage. They were awesome in battle, tearing through foes, oblivious of their wounds, and disliked by their comrades, because of their tempers and blood-lust.

They make a worthy subclass of the standard fighting man, at least as interesting as the Paladin, though very different. Given below is a table showing the bonuses and penalties of a Berserker when in the Berserker-gang. It also shows the number of EP per level.

Level	# of EP	+to Hit	+on Damage	-on Defense	+on Saving Poison	Throws Spells
1	0	+0	+1	-3	+0	+0
2	2500	+1	+1	-3	+1	+0
3	5000	+1	+1	-3	+1	+0
4	10000	+1	+2	-3	+1	+1
5	20000	+2	+2	-3	+2	+1
6	40000	+2	+2	-3	+2	+1
7	75000	+2	+3	-2	+2	+2
8	150000	+3	+3	-2	+2	+2
9	300000	+3	+3	-2	+3	+2
10	600000	+3	+4	-2	+3	+3
11	900000	+4	+4	-2	+3	+3
12	1200000	+4	+4	-1	+3	+3
13	1500000	+4	+5	-1	+3	+4
14	1800000	+5	+5	-1	+4	+4
15	2400000	+5	+5	-1	+4	+4
	+600K/Lev					

Berserkers also follow a large number of character class restrictions. These are:

1. They may use only edge or club type weapons when they are in the Berserker-gang.
2. They may wear no more than leather armor.
3. They may not use shields.
4. They cannot learn any magic.

The nature of Berserker-gang is such that, when in the state, the Berserker will immediately rush into combat, hand to hand. While in this state, he will not think to use any magic items, or artefacts, except those that apply directly to hand to hand combat. He will fight, when berserk, until all foes are dead, or he is stopped. There are, however, benefits.

The berserker can take double damage without fainting, dying, or losing the use of parts of his body. He has triple the normal number of Fatigue Points, and can fight on for Level/5 Combat Rounds after he should be dead. Double damage in an area will eliminate it, causing death, just as a normal fighter, but single damage will not even incapacitate the area.

The berserker-gang can be brought on by pain, or the sight of spilt blood. In such a situation, there is a Level x 15% chance that the Berserker will go berserk. He has a Level x 10% chance of going berserk at will. In addition there is a Level x 10% chance for the Berserker to return himself to normal if he wants to. When Berserk there is a 60-(Level x 5)% chance that the Berserker will decide that the first friend he sees after dealing with his foes is also a foe. He may make this roll again each round of combat with the friend. In combat with enemies, the berserker-gang lasts until they are slain, with no check needed.

The prime requisite for a Berserker is Pain Threshold, or if you do not use it, Constitution. Berserkers tend to foam at the mouth, and often have low Intelligence and Charisma. High level Berserkers who can control the rage are formidable foes. Gealts, as opposed to Scandinavian Berserkers should have a level% chance per combat of going permanently berserk, until they can find a pool with water which is holy, or of high Lithium content.

UNDEAD DRAINING

Dave Nalle

In AD&D and D&D there is an unacceptably unrealistic treatment of the strength sapping bite or drain or powerful undead. Removing levels of experience makes little sense, as it is the equivalence of taking the character's knowledge, rather than his vitality. When Dracula bit Lucy Westenra she did not forget how to read, she became weak and sickly.

The best way to deal with this is through the use of a Fatigue Point system. In the YSGARTH RULES, each character has a number of Fatigue Points equal to 2 times his Constitution. These are drained by normal activities like combat and movement, and regained by rest, eating, and sleep. For example, each round of combat drains 1 Fatigue Point each turn.



of normal movement. Each turn of rest restores 5% of the total FP, up to a total of 30%. An hour of sleep restores 15% of the total FP.

Thus, the draining bite of an Undead affects fatigue. In addition, there are penalties to Strength and Constitution. Different Undead drain as follows:

Type	Strength	Constitution	FP
Wight	0	0	-2
Wraith	-1	-1	-4
Succubus	-2	-1	-6
Vampire	-2	-2	-8

Loss of fatigue lasts until it is replaced, by whatever means. The losses from characteristics return naturally after 1 to 3 days without further draining. If a character's constitution reaches zero, he becomes the appropriate type of undead. The drain effects can be used cumulatively once per Combat Round by the Undead. Total loss of Fatigue causes a character to faint from exhaustion.

**SPELLS REDEFINED**

Rick Baird

Some spells could be defined and clarified better than they are in any of the standard rule books for FRPng. I suggest the following versions of some common spells.

**Animate Dead**-This will animate an intact dead body to follow the direct orders of the animator. The number of dead which can be animated is 106 per level of the caster. All of the animate dead's actions must be directed by the animator. Necromancer. Level 5.

**Create Undead**-This spell will animate intact, or semi-intact bodies and skeletons, or their parts. They remain animate and capable of independant action indefinitely, though they will obey their creator. They have limited memory and intelligence. They can follow reasonably complex orders, and make limited decisions. A casting of the spell animates the Caster's Level times 2 Hit Die of undead. Hit die for intelligent beings are assumed to be the minimum possible for that race. Thus dead humans have 1 to 3 Hit Die, when dead, whatever their level. Range:Touch. Class:Necromancer. Level:12.

**Crimson Bands**-This creates a magic web, which there is a STR/3% chance of breaking. It will envelope any single creature with a mass under 1000 lbs. There is a -7 Dodge type Saving Throw against the spell when it is thrown. Range:100ft. Class:Wizard. Level:10.

**Wind Walk**-This makes the caster and his level times 20 lbs of additional mass, cloudlike, and able to drift at high speeds in that form. In that state, he cannot affect, or be affected by physical attacks. He can move at up to 120mph, or 1150 ft/cr. It must be recast every time it is dispelled or terminated. It lasts for 1D12 times the Caster's Level tuens. Class: Windmaster. Range:Self. Level:10.

**OFF POLARION**

Lew Bryson

As the ship pulled out of the sheltering cove where repairs and refitting had been done, Mithrandir again found himself in a contemplative mood. This expedition was not going well. He had actually built up some callous on his hands, while repairing the ship. By the Ring of Gilrod, things had better get more exciting, or he was going to start target practice on the Shape-shifter.

Talos swung in the rigging. He had finished raising the sails about ten minutes ago, but he knew that if he came down to the deck, Unferth would give him something else to do, so he stayed in the ropes, and looked busy. All he had to worry about was Alroy drooling on him from high above in the crow's nest. The moron had good eyes, but, Formless Foot of Xiombarg, he was

stupid! No control over his bodily functions either.

Alroy was happy in the crow's nest. It was nice up here. It was sunny, and when he was up here, that bad man, Mithrandir left him alone. That mask was bad, bad. That's what his friend, Talos told him. He could do what Unferth told him without that dumb mask anyway. He had to watch the ocean and look for other ships. He'd been up there a long time now. The sun was just about a dagger above the horizon. There was only that one ship all day. That one sailing towards them from the East. What was he supposed to do when there was a ship? Come down? Wave to Unferth? Wave to the ship? No, tell Unferth, that was it! Alroy smiled. He was happy again. He scanned the horizon. There was a ship! He'd better tell Unferth!

Unferth Utlagian Skjoldung, second son of Haakon of Urthr, heir of the line of Odin, and Captain of the RPB "Seagang", stalked the quarterdeck. The mast was well lashed, but another storm like the first would likely carry it away. This crew was no band of Vikings; Talos was the most shiftless shape-shifter he'd ever seen, Alroy was a basket case, the wizard was more caustic than lye, and he didn't like the way the greek looked at him after too much ouzo. Worst of all, everything was so damned dull! Odin's empty socket, he was hungry for action! He went to tell Implotius to head for shore. Sacking a small coastal village was better than nothing.

A Greek at the helm, that's the only thing that kept this ship going, thought Implotius. The Viking was okay, but the rest were incompetent. Oh well, they were headed North. Action and pillage were in the offing. He felt confident about this voyage. The Captain was coming up to talk to him. Maybe something was going to happen.

Unferth mounted the steps to the helm. He walked to the wheel to speak to the Greek--THUNKKK! A thrown knife slammed into the helm not two inches from Unferth's hand. The Norseman and the Greek dove for the deck, Unferth scrabbling for his throwing axe, Implotius unlimbering his sling. Unferth rapidly scanned the ship. Mithrandir was still moping around in the bow, Talos was loafing in the rigging, and Alroy--wait a minute! That throwing knife! Sure enough, the handle bore Alroy's familiar trademark, the grinning penguin. Unferth peaked around the rail and saw Alroy mutely pointing East. What the hel did he want? Unferth looked into the darkness. A ship! Action! "Talos, Mithrandir, crowd on more sail! Give her the linen men! Alroy, down out of there! Implotius! That way, towards that ship!"

The Seagang heeled over towards the other ship, and Unferth joined Talos and Mithrandir in the rigging. Alroy was sticking throwing knives into the rail, getting ready for boarders. The Greek was steering with one hand on Mimir, and a gleam in his eye. The other ship was coming closer.

"Mithrandir! Out of the rigging. Prepare a spell. We've got to get that ship." Unferth saw that the ship, a sleek galleas, was unarmed, and he hoped to capture it to replace their limping vessel. If the crew could be picked off without damaging the ship, they would be in great shape for the rest of the run to Polarion. He motioned for Implotius to close with the other ship.

"Ho there! Clear off, you're coming too close!" A man on the deck called. Unferth waved lazily, keeping his arm up. The man was going wild. "You're going to hit us, you fool, shear off!!" Unferth reckoned that they were close enough, and dropped his hand. Alroy struck first, whipping a knife across the gap, into the man's right eye. There was a scream and the man folded over, going down. Before he hit the deck, the ship's wheel exploded in a shower of blasted fragments from Mithrandir's lightning bolt.

Mithrandir downed the sails with another blast, as they grappled the ship. It looked as if this ship would be a pushover. Implotius watched with a detached air as a hatch opened in the side of the ship. It made no difference to him if a few men jumped to escape. There were all those rowers.

Unferth saw the man too. An archer? He hefted his throwing axe. WHOOSH!! A fireball leapt from the hatch and streaked over Unferth's head to light in the mainsail, starting a crackling fire. "Talos, get the fire out!" Unferth saw that the other ship must now be captured, and pointed out the opposing mage to Mithrandir.

Mithrandir was enraged. Another magician? By Gilrod's gullet, he'd have the bastard! There he was--KRAACCCCKKKK! Damn, missed! Another fireball crashed into the rigging. The ships were both drifting now, and although the Seagang had more headway, the Galleas seemed to be regaining control and pulling away.

Implotius noted the other ship's increased speed, and knew what he had to do. With only his sword, gauntlets of swimming, and an amulet of water breathing, he jumped over the side, and made off the other ship at high

speed.

"Greek overboard! Greek overboard!" sang out Talos as he labored to extinguish the fire in the rigging. "Shut up! do you want to attract attention to yourself?" Mithrandir yelled at Talos. He only had the energy for one more spell, and he knew that there were at least three mages over there, a Pyromancer throwing the fireballs, probably a Sorcerer or Hydromancer to summon the Water Elemental who had to be pushing the ship, and a Wizard, who had just snared Talos in a web of Crimson Bands. He had to get one, but which? Well, the Wizard was on deck, so he was the one. KRRACCCCKK! A scream! The Wizard's arm was blown off. Success!

The Pyromancer was still busily popping off fireballs from his side hatch. Unferth had strung his longbow, and nocked his best arrow. A long pause, a deep breath, the pull, exhale, release... he hit. Another scream. Unferth smiled. The Pyromancer's hand was pinned to the hatch.

As Implotius came closer to the ship, he saw a disturbance at the stern. It was the expected Water Elemental. Well, preferring to deal with the conjurer than the conjured, the Greek climbed aboard the ship. He peered across the deck and saw the Wizard Mithrandir had hit dying slowly, twitching spasmodically as the blood surged from his right arm. The Greek made a quick check; nobody else was above deck. He vaulted over the rail and ran to the Wizard. Drawing the cobalt-blue blade he stood over the mage. His eyes tracked and focused on the sword. "Know you that your soul goes to feed the well of Mimir!" cried Implotius in Greek. "What?" asked the Wizard in total linguistic confusion. Damn, another imbecile, thought the Greek as Mimir neatly bisected the Wizard's neck. Why don't these people learn a civilized tongue?

Talos swung from the rigging again, but this time webbed in Crimson Bands. He could shift shape into something small, and get away, but he was safe here. Nobody would fire at a webbed target. Now he'd just stay here until the fire came too close, then he'd do something.

Nothing was moving over there. There was nothing for Alroy to kill. He was upset. He started to cry. He was really sad. People had shot at him and missed, and he had thrown knives at them and killed them. Now they were sailing away. Alroy threw himself on the deck and had a fit.

Unferth paced the deck, clenching and unclenching his fists. The wizard had no spells left. The shapeshifter was contemplating a career as a professional coward. The Greek was probably swimming for home. The moron was kicking and screaming on the deck below him. The ship was on fire, and the other ship was sailing away. Things had been so much simpler in Urthr, when he had crews of real Vikings. A pyre was the only answer. What the hel, the gods would look on it with favor. If he could only get Alroy to curl up at his feet.

Implotius saw no motion abovedecks, so he looked down into the rowing well. There were the rowers, resting while the elemental pushed the ship. He vaulted down, shouting "Stay where you are or die!" The men rose around him. Damn he thought, swinging Mimir and severing two heads, the world is full of savages and their heathen tongues. His demonstration worked better than his words. The men sat down. Pain lanced through Implotius' back. He whirled to see the Sorcerer preparing to throw another dagger. He charged, and sliced the Sorcerer open from head to groin. He winced in pain, but managed to convince the rowers to row, with a few clear gestures.

Unferth had prepared a pyre for himself, and was about to try to capture Alroy, when he saw that the other ship was turning around. Coming back to fight like men, eh! Well, that was another matter! "Talos, get the hel down from there or I'll kill you myself! Alroy, snap out of it. Look, targets. Mithrandir, Loki take you, get up here. They're coming back, they're coming back!

Mithrandir poked his head up through the hatch. Sure enough, they were coming back. Damn, he'd have to risk getting hit. He was a magician, not a swordsman! He went to talk to Unferth. He looked at the approaching Galleas. The oars were out for the first time, and something else caught his eye, a nude figure on deck! What in Uttgart was he doing here? "Alroy, look there! What's that?"

"Where?"

"On the other ship, that man."

Alroy took one look and grinned, "Its 'mplotius."

"Unferth!! That thrice-cursed Greek has captured the ship."

Implotius had always wanted to be captain of a ship. Maybe he could turn it into a trawler. How he longed for the Aegean, the blue water, the

rocky isles. But, a little Rape, Pillage, and Burn in Polarion would be a definite pleasure. "Faster", he called to the puzzled rowers, brandishing Mimir.

Talos finally put out the fires and collapsed from exhaustion. Repairs were made to the Galleas and the RPB Seagang was sent to the bottom. Alroy cried, Talos slept, Mithrandir sneered, Unferth saluted, and Implotius tried to remember the ship's name.

That day, they reached Polarion and put in at a cove with a dock. Unferth decided they would explore the area in the morning.

**NEW MONSTERS**

Tom Curtin

**CHUMP**  
 HP:5D8 HT:30in MR:50% Attacks:2 Front Claws for 1D6 each  
 AC:0 WT:20lbs ST:12 2 Rear Claws for 1D8 each  
 DC:20 SC:-12 +S:0

This monster came to me in a drug-induced hallucination in which I was with Dorothy in the "Wizard of Oz"(No, I was not Toto). They are simian-type creatures. They are winged, very small, and very agile when in the air. They are not smart, but they are very troublesome.

**SLUDGE TROLLS**  
 HP:15D8 HT:100in MR:40% Attacks:2 Claws for 2D8 each  
 AC:6 WT:500lbs ST:8 1 Bite for 1D12  
 DC:4 SC:4 +S:+4/+5

These are a common breed of non-intelligent troll, often found in underground sewers, and the sludge dumps of large cities. They live beneath ground, as light will turn them to sludge. They have acute hearing and smell. They also have double power infravision. They will eat anything, especially dwarves and elves. They regenerate 4 points each Combat Round. They often befriend Otyughs who, in return, guard their treasure.

**FIRE GOLEM**  
 HP:20D8 HT:90in MR:70% Attacks:fireball for 6D8  
 AC:5 WT:500 ST:8 or two fists for 3D6 each. If both hit,  
 DC:5 SC:3 +S:+4/+6 additional immolation for 4D8.

These are deadly Golems. They appear as regular Stone Golems, except that their bodies are enveloped in flame, which does 2D8 to all who enter into combat with them. They do considerable club damage with their fists, and if both connect, they also immolate. They can also cast fireballs. They are immune to fire attacks, but take double damage from cold.

**GUMBY GOLEMS OF DEATH(AKA-SILICONE GOLEM)**  
 HP:15D10 HT:75 MR:80% Attacks:2 fists for 4D6 each  
 AC:8 WT:300 ST:6  
 DC:8 SC:1 +S:+5/+7

This is another interesting type of Golem. These look like small Stone Golems, but their silicone composition makes them very special. They take no damage under 10 hit points, and over that, take only 1/2 damage. Fire will melt them, and cold and lightning will crack them. Weapon inflicted blows will also do 1/2 their damage to the attacker as shock damage, because of the rigidity of the silicone. It is also able to be elastic, and stretch to an amazing extent.

**WEAPON SKILLS IN D+D**

Ronald Pehr

While my style of play may not always be what TSR intended, the name of the game I play is Dungeons and Dragons, not Ysgarth, Arduin, or Melee. I've played it for years, enjoy it, and have made a few rules modifications to include ideas from other gaming systems which aren't found in it. One of these is special skills with weapons. There are two aspects to such a system; what the original manner of choosing is and what benefits are derived from a special skill. The five methods of choosing skills which I have seen are:

1)You choose a category(e.g. polearms), and may start out with some skill in

that category, and special skill in a particular type, and unskilled in other weapon areas. The Arduin Grimoire uses this type of system.

2) You may choose X number of weapons to be your basic ones, usually depending on your profession. For instance, Fighters may choose a greater number of weapons as basic ones and have a larger selection from which to choose. This system is found in Chivalry and Sorcery, and now in Advanced Dungeons and Dragons.

3) There is a formula, based on level, or hit points, or prime requisite, or some other set of factors. The formula generates a number, and each weapon has a number. You can learn as many weapons as you wish, until you use up the formula number. This type of system usually allows an increase in the base number with increase in level. It also often includes a provision similar to #1 above, in that knowledge of a weapon helps you learn a similar weapon. Formula based systems are often to be found in amateur or Semi-professional magazines on rule variants, because they are a bit more complex than what the general public prefers to deal with.

4) Some weapons automatically allow greater skill. This premise is used in RuneQuest, where the reasonable assumption is made that anyone is more proficient with a fist or club than with a sword, and more proficient with a sword than with a bow, until such time as he has learned to use the more complicated weapon.

5) Certain tribes or racial groups have basic familiarity with certain weapons. You might decide that Hobbits know how to use slings from the word "go", Orcs use scimitars and spears, Pygmy Poison People use blowguns, Vikings use axes and broadswords, etc.

All of these methods gives two results. Either the favored weapon allows the user to fight at normal odds to hit and the others give him a minus, or he's at normal odds with all weapons except the favored ones, with which he has bonuses. RuneQuest, and Chivalry and Sorcery also allow the bonuses to be extended to parrying.

Any, or a combination of the five methods of choosing is workable. I dislike complicated formulae, so I've utterly rejected #3. I like the idea of variety, so I've also rejected #4. I find that #1 allows too many skills to start. My primary interest is in role-playing, so I favor #5. If a player is limited to the artifacts of the type of character he has chosen to play, then maybe, just maybe, he'll try to role-play the character instead of figuring the odds and picking the weapon which he thinks will give him the best die rolls. I further limit the player by decreeing a maximum number to start, as in #2. My rule is that Warrior and its subclasses get 3 to start, with thieves considered Warriors, but not allowed to bear what are called in Chivalry and Sorcery "chivalric arms."

Clerics may start with 2 weapons, and Magic-Users with 1. Unless the character is specifically stated to be Christian, a Cleric need not be kept to only non-edged weapons, and all characters may use a knife or their fists. Naturally, if a character can't use a weapon for a particular reason he may not elect it no matter how many he could otherwise start with. For example, the Monk character in my campaign is patterned after the Bloodguard from The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant Trilogy and never use weapons. However they have the hit points and strike on the same combat matrix as true Fighters.

Since most characters somehow manage to acquire heavy-duty characters with all sorts of bonuses tacked on for high requisites or magical augmentation, I prefer that the non-favored weapons be at a minus, with the favored weapons at normal odds to hit. This lessens the power output a bit. My rule is that the favored weapon hits normally and all others hit at -2.

So far, my system might seem to most resemble that of Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, what with general election of weapons with number depending on profession, and minuses for the non-favored weapons. However, there system gives different minuses, depending on the profession (not a bad idea, but I already had my system before AD&D came out), and further, it allows that every X levels you can add another weapon at normal hit odds.

Arduin Grimoire suggests that unless you've actually used a weapon for a level, you can't elect proficiency with it. That seems reasonable. A 9th level anybody can use an unfamiliar weapon better than a 1st level anybody. But, if he's been using a spear all his life he can't suddenly acquire the

same competence as another 9th level anybody with a sword, if the other has used a sword all his life. If you were to change from broadsword to short-sword, I might buy it.

Where I differ with all other systems is the effect of having a skill. The basic 1st level character only knows that he hits at normal odds with his favored weapon. But, weapon skill is not just basic. There is room for improvement. I don't merely want plusses to hit. There are enough pluses from normal bonuses, and the whole idea of going up levels is to, in effect, gain pluses to hit with increase in level.

I allow several different things to happen when a character gets more skilled with a weapon. (for convenience I use levels as the point where things happen) If it is a non-favored weapon that's been used on a semi-regular basis, you go from -2 to -1. If you had worked it to -1 then it becomes normal odds. If the weapon is a favored weapon, you get an extra blow per round. This may be expended as an extra attack or as a parry. Each level you use the weapon you gain another blow per round, up to the maximum listed in C&S. When a non-favored weapon is brought up to normal odds, you begin to acquire extra blows. It is a slow process, but remember that your proficiency with all weapons increases as you go up levels.

The next result of increased weapon skill occurs at each column on the combat matrix. You get an extra blow or an automatic parry for each column you are above your opponent. In addition, if battling opponents who are on a lower column you do not incur the minus to your armor class that usually accrues to someone trying to defend against multiple attackers. In addition, you may select any weapon you've used at any level up to that one, and do extra damage with it. For instance, let's say a Novice Mage elects to specialize in using a dagger. At 2nd level he gets 2 blows per round, at 3rd he gets 3, at 4th, he gets 4. At 5th level he moves on to the next column on the combat matrix. He still gets the 4 blows/round, with an extra if duelling a lower level mage-- or with an automatic parry--but now he does D6 damage instead of D4. If he started out with a quarterstaff, he would do D8 instead of D6 and also, uniquely for staff and some oriental weapons, add +1 to his armor class.

There is an alternative to acquiring the extra damage option. That is to specialize in 2 weapons at a time such that both can be wielded together to allow two blows at -2 instead of -4, in addition to whatever other extra blows you have acquired, and still get an automatic parry for one of the weapons. The automatic parry is always at least +2 to armor class for the blow parried.

For those who are wondering, it is possible to specialize in boxing, wrestling, or the oriental martial arts, gaining extra ability in unarmed striking or grappling. This gives the character far greater ability than the ordinary character attempting to punch, kick, or grab, though less than that of a Bloodguard.

The system outlined in this article allows flexibility to characters with inordinant power. A character skilled enough to allow 3 blows/round with an axe, doing 2D6 damage, is a one-man army when opposing a group of ordinary men, but is at no great advantage against another skilled character, and is still small potatoes against a dragon who bites for 6D6, strikes first, and has more than 3 times the hit points.

I've not gone into how to choose the basic favored weapons. That could be an article twice this length and only begin to get at the subject. I suggest that game referees be quite definite about it, allowing the character only those weapons he could rationally have learned according to his background in the campaign. Further, he shouldn't be able to elect to begin building up a non-favored weapon if it is one he couldn't come to own. For instance, let's say that Elves start out with bow, spear, and Elfblade. The elf notes that his 2 hand weapons do only 1D6 damage each, but he has just slain a foe with a Battle-Axe which does 1D10. The player says "Ah ha, I've now got a Battle-Axe. I know I'm at -2 with it, but I'll take my chances, only use it when it looks like I've got a sure victory, and in a couple of levels I'll have a much better weapon than my spear." That's when the referee says, "Ah ha, no you wont! Even if you had the 14 strength necessary to use it, Elves dislike cold iron. You aren't even crazy about touching the axe, let alone using it. So, you will never want to use it long enough to gain experience with it, so in fact, you'll always hit at -2 with it, even if you reach 100th level.

Players may gripe at first, but they will soon accept these limits as an interesting addition to their characters, leading to better role-playing.

**HEIGHT, WEIGHT, AND BONUS**

Carl Jones

To determine height, roll a percentile die and consult the table for the appropriate race. When the base height is determined roll 1D4 and add it on to find the final height. Using the height consult the weight table, and roll percentile again to determine the proper weight.

**HEIGHT**

Height(in)	Roll by Race			
	Hobbit	Dwarf	Elf	Human
16+1D4	03			
20+1D4	13			
24+1D4	29			
28+1D4	52	03		
32+1D4	68	13		
36+1D4	81	29		
40+1D4	91	52		
44+1D4	97	68		
48+1D4	00	81	03	
52+1D4		91	13	01
56+1D4		97	29	03
60+1D4		00	52	13
64+1D4			68	52
68+1D4			81	68
72+1D4			91	81
76+1D4			97	91
80+1D4			00	97
84+1D4				99
88+1D4				00

**BONUS ON HIT DIE**

CON	Weight									
	80	140	170	200	260	350				
3+	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0				
6+	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1				
9+	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2				
14+	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3				
16+	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4				
18	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5				
19	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6				
20	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7				
21	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8				
22	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9				
23	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10				
24	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11				

This system assigns height and weight to characters, and also adjusts damage and hit die according to weight. When rolling weight, Hobbits are +5%, Elves -10% and Dwarves are +10% on the %ile roll.

**WEIGHT**

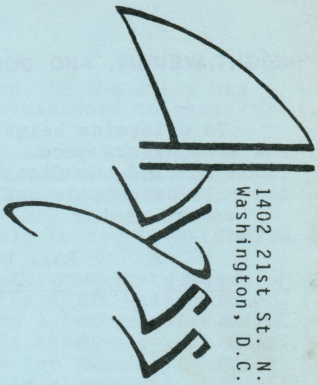
Roll	Height																	
	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50	52
07	9	10	11	13	14	16	17	19	21	24	27	29	33	36	41	45	50	56
20	10	11	12	14	15	17	18	20	22	25	28	30	35	38	43	47	53	59
47	10	11	13	14	15	18	19	21	23	26	30	32	36	40	45	50	55	62
67	11	12	13	15	16	18	20	22	24	28	31	34	38	42	47	52	58	65
80	11	12	14	16	17	19	21	23	25	29	33	35	40	44	50	55	61	68
90	12	13	15	17	18	20	22	24	27	31	34	37	42	46	52	57	64	72
96	12	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	28	32	36	39	44	48	55	60	67	75
00	13	14	16	18	20	22	24	27	29	34	38	41	46	51	58	63	70	79

**WEIGHT (Continued)**

Roll	Height																	
	54	56	58	60	62	64	66	68	70	72	74	76	78	80	82	84	86	88
07	63	70	78	86	95	105	115	126	137	149	162	176	190	205	220	237	254	273
20	66	74	82	91	100	110	121	132	144	157	170	184	199	215	232	249	267	286
47	69	77	86	95	105	116	127	139	151	165	179	194	209	226	243	261	281	300
67	73	81	90	100	110	121	133	146	159	173	188	203	220	237	255	274	295	316
80	77	85	95	105	116	127	140	153	167	181	197	213	231	249	268	288	310	331
90	80	90	100	110	122	134	147	160	175	190	207	224	242	261	281	303	325	348
96	84	94	105	116	128	140	154	168	184	200	217	235	254	274	295	318	341	365
00	89	99	110	122	134	147	162	177	193	209	228	247	267	288	310	334	359	383

**WEIGHT (Continued)**

Roll	Height			BONUS ON DAMAGE										
	90	92	94	STR	Weight									
07	292	311	332	4+	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2			
20	306	327	349	6+	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3			
47	321	343	366	15	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4			
67	338	361	385	16	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5			
80	354	379	404	17+	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6			
90	372	397	424	19	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7			
96	391	417	445	20	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8			
00	410	438	467	21	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9			
				22	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10			
				23	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11			
				24	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12			



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