

Abyss 14

AUGUST, 1981

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EDITORIAL NOTES

We keep launching issues of ABYSS with some regularity now. I'm pleased to say that we are getting somewhat more solvent here at RE, mostly due to the increase in subscriptions to ABYSS because of MINI-CON '81, and reviews at THE DRAGON, THE SPACE GAMER, and SORCERER'S APPRENTICE. As far as expanding the readership of ABYSS things are moving along quite well. Of course, you should still do your best to spread the magazine around. I've set a goal of 500 subscribers by 1982, a goal which I hope to meet.

This issue contains some interesting material, some of the most notable is from Jon Schuller, who has given use two excellent new systems suitable to most games. For once we are overstocked for material, so there are already a lot of good pieces stacked up waiting to be put in. #15 is already shaping up to be an excellent issue.

We will be at GENCON EAST, also known as EASTCON, on the weekend of the 24th to the 26th. We are running 7 or more events, all of which are filled up and promise to be excellent. You'll be able to spot us at the convention by our stylish RAGNAROK ENTERPRISES T-Shirts, which sport a large dragon by Karl Zivek. They are available in limited numbers from us for \$7.00 each, plus \$1.00 for postage and handling. I hope I'll see some of you at GENCON EAST, though most of you won't get this until the convention is over.

Tell everyone you know about ABYSS. We'll try to keep up the quality which we have maintained for quite a few issues now. Do send us any comments, suggestions or gripes.

Dave Nalle
Washington, DC
July, 1981

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Under the return address on the back cover there is a small box. In this box should be an X with a number after it. This number is the number of the last issue of ABYSS on your subscription. If there is no number and just an X, this is your last issue, and you need to renew!

THE BURNOUT MAGIC SYSTEM

JON SCHULLER

Since the birth of Fantasy Role Playing many years ago, be it in England or Wisconsin, many different systems have been devised and published to treat the functioning of magic in the fantasy world. Many of these systems have been created from principles or examples expressed in fantasy literature, for example, the AD&D system, which is based in large part on the ideas of Jack Vance.

It has been increasingly popular to use magic systems which have spells thrown off of regenerative fatigue or spell points. These systems are close to the type of system presented in most fantasy literature in most respects. There is one aspect which has not been included in the past. I call this the "Burnout Factor". In this system I would like to present a complete spell cost system which takes into account both fatigue, and magical deterioration in the spell caster.

The "Burnout Factor" is the expression of the wear and tear on the mage which arises from his use of magical power. It is logical to assume that each mage has only a limited potential for spell casting, and that if he spends his power profligately, he will burn himself out, though with moderate employment of magic he can keep his power for a long time. A fatigue cost system is used in conjunction with this, and thus the system functions to limit daily use and general use.

SPELL CASTING AND MANA COST

Each character has a certain level of Mana Points. When he is rolled up he has a Mana Reserve, which is a back-up supply of MP which he has built up to that point. In addition, he can regenerate MP at a rate dependant on his age and characteristics. Thus, as a character gets older he must begin to dip into his reserve. As MP are generated they go into the reserve, and are only removed if used. They are expended at a rate exactly equal to the level of the spell. Thus a level 3 spell would cost three MP to cast Once.

To establish the basic MP reservoir, use the table which is given below and to the left. For AD&D use INT instead of TAL.

TAL(INT)	MPR
10	100
11	121
12	144
13	169
14	196
15	225
16	256
17	289
18	324
19	361
20	400
21	441
22	484
23	529
24	576

TALs which are too low to be reasonably mages have been left off, but they can be determined by squaring the TAL, as that is all that is done to find the MPR.

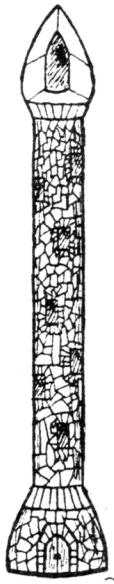
To determine the rate of MP regeneration in addition to the reserve, consult the second table, which is given below. Once again, AD&D players should replace TAL with INT. It is obviously essential for this system that you keep track of the age of PCs as the campaign progresses. Regeneration is in game months.

TAL	AGE															
	13	17	21	25	29	33	37	41	45	49	53	57	61	65	69	
12	9	18	36	18	9	6	5	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	
13	10	20	39	20	10	7	5	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	
14	11	21	42	21	11	7	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	
15	11	23	45	23	11	8	6	5	4	3	3	3	2	2	2	
16	12	24	48	24	12	8	6	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	2	
17	13	26	51	26	13	9	6	5	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	
18	14	27	54	27	14	9	7	5	5	4	3	3	3	2	2	
19	14	29	57	29	14	10	7	6	5	4	4	3	3	3	2	
20	15	30	60	30	15	10	8	6	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	
21	16	32	63	32	16	11	8	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	
22	17	33	66	33	17	11	8	7	6	5	4	4	3	3	3	
23	17	35	69	35	17	12	9	7	6	5	4	4	3	3	3	
24	18	36	72	36	18	12	9	7	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	

As you can see from this table, a mage with a first class TAL of 20 or so would have a reserve of 484 and regenerate at a rate of 60 per month, or 2 a day, in his prime, at 21.

If he followed a career as an adventurer he could be expected to use up his reserve by the time he was 69, and at that point he would be regenerating only IMP every 10 days. In such a situation he could only adventure rarely, and then only very cautiously.

One note. This can be adapted to Clerical Magic, by making the MP obtainable in exchange for sacrifices to ones god, or similar major services to the faith.



FATIGUE COST FOR THROWING SPELLS

Each time a spell is thrown a subtraction must be made from MP and from Fatigue Points. The rate at which FP are subtracted is determined from the character's TAL(INT). The number of FP which he has is found from his level and his CON. The table to the left below gives the Spell Cost/Spell Level, which is multiplied by the level of the spell to find the amount subtracted. The table below and to the right gives Fatigue Point levels. FP are restored each day of rest or sleep. The schedule for FP regeneration is given on a later table.

TAL(INT)	SC/SL	CON	LEVEL			
			1	2-4	5-9	10-16
1	7	3	12	15	18	21
2,3	6	6	24	30	36	42
4-6	5	9	36	45	54	63
7-10	4	12	48	60	72	84
11-15	3	15	60	75	90	105
16-21	2	18	72	90	108	126
22-24	1	21	84	105	126	147
		24	96	120	144	158

As you can see from this set of tables a character with a low TAL and to some degree a low CON is somewhat disadvantaged in being a mage. The next table which is given is for regeneration of FP by rest. The last is for regeneration of FP by sleep. All of a character's FP can be regained if he sleeps a

full night. In stressful situations it is possible to regenerate up to about 1/2 of the total FP by resting and meditating. In the case of resting the percentage of the total FP restored depends on how often the character has already rested that day, and on how long he has rested for. The first rest period is the most effective and the last is the least. If the first rest is cut short of maximum length, the end of it can be tacked on to the second rest period, and so on. The percentage restored by the rest should be totalled and then determined.

REST REGENERATION %										SLEEP REGEN. %	
Rest #	#Turns Rested									HR	%Regained
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
1	14	12	10	8	6	4	2	1	0	2	20
2	12	10	8	4	2	1	0	0	0	3	18
3	9	7	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	4	16
4	7	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	14
5	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	12
6	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	10
7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	7
											3

In the case of sleep, the percentage is taken straight. If sleep is interrupted, when it is resumed, if it is resumed within 12 hours, it commences in percentage as if it had been uninterrupted. It does not start over. The first hours of sleep are more effective than the later hours are. The two tables for rest and sleep are given to the left. Note that a turn is considered to be ten minutes.

Thus, a character with a CON of 14, a TAL of 15, and Level 8, would have 90 FP, and a SC/SL of 2. If he threw a 7th level spell it would cost him 14FP, and if he were out of FP, his first rest would regain him 57% of his FP if he stayed for 8 turns. This would leave him with 51FP.

FINAL EXAMPLE

Malanshrak the Master Mage is 48 years old, and has a CON of 15 and a TAL of 18. He had 324 MP when he was rolled up and now has 185 at level 13. He has a SC/SL of 2, 105FP, and regenerates 4MP/Month. If he were to go on an adventure where he would probably use all of his FP in spell throughing, and all of his rest FP as well, he would probably expend 261FP in one day, halving that for his SC/SL means he threw 130 levels of spells, which would knock his MP reserve down to only 50. He would have to make quite a bit on such an adventure for it to be worth so many MP. In a year, of course, he would gain back 48.

CONCLUSION

One of the greatest advantages to this system is that it puts limits on how much mages can do, both by day and in the long term, yet it maintains a great deal of realism and freedom of choice in the use of magic. It does involve a little bookkeeping, but the charts are simple and easy to work with. It also leads to the voluntary assumption of non-adventure status by high-level mages, which can be a great addition to a game if they work behind the scenes as benefactors.

IN THE SPECULUM

TOME OF TREASURES

This is an 8 1/2 x 5 1/2 booklet of 60 pages of small, offset print. It deals exclusively with new magic items. Several immediately clear flaws are the large amount of white-space (They average 4 short descriptions per page), the general dullness of the Magic Items, and the tendency to illogic and randomness. The

first thing presented is a table for randomly rolling up the treasures listed in the book. This idea is lifted straight from D&D, and immediately encourages the DM to avoid thinking and picking his Magic Items logically. The second major problem comes out as you examine the items themselves. They are neither new or logical in design. For the most part they are variations on old items or spells. Some just are not new, for example, "Wand of Sleeping", and "Armor of Immolat-ion". Some are just senseless, like the "Helm of Rabbits", or the "Wand of Punching". However, there are also some very good newish ideas and idea variations, which are worth seeing, especially in the whimsical items, and items of marginal usefulness. Oh yes, the art is sort of poor, but the typesetting is very nice. It is by Richard Lucas, Ed Gottsman, and Steve Amundson. It is published by GRP Enterprises, POB 4146, Arlington, VA 22204, and costs \$5+.

THE WILD HUNT

This is an APA published in Massachusetts by Mark Swanson. It is offset, 8½x11, and about 100 pages in most issues. They say they offer a "strong tradition of critical scrutiny, and coherent discussion." This is to some degree true, and the APA features an unusual degree of guided discussion of proposed questions. There are a dozen or more regular contributors, and it comes out once a month. On the whole it is the most organized of the APAs, and in general it is a cleanly run magazine. It doesn't feature much in the way of new material, but it has a lot of good general ideas about play, and interesting presentation of theory. It costs \$1+postage per issue. The address is 40 Bow St. Arlington, MA 02174.

DARK FANTASY

This is a first-class semi-professional fantasy magazine from Shadow Press in Canada. This is a 8½x5½ publication, usually of at least 40 pages. It features excellent art and fiction by rising stars of fantasy, among them Charles de Lint, Galad Elflandsson, and Charles Saunders. It comes out on a somewhat irregular quarterly schedule, and is developing quite a following in the US and abroad. Subscriptions are \$6 for 5 issues. Write Box 207, Ganon-que, Ontario, Canada, K7G 2T7.

WHISPERS

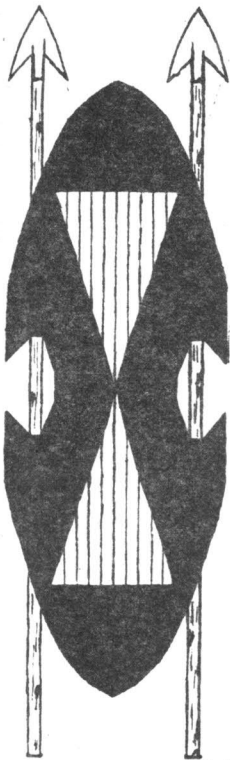
This is probably the top fantasy magazine in the country, or even the world. It is semi-pro in name only. It is 8½x5½, typeset, offset printed, and with full color covers. It is edited by Stuart D. Schiff and David Drake, and comes out twice a year. Even the editors are major forces in the fantasy field. Drake's recent novel The Dragon Lord is a recent classic. Fiction is also featured by such great names as Fritz Leiber, Gerald Page, Charles Grant, Roger Zelazny, Manly Wade Wellman, H. Warner Munn and others. The magazine has an amazing reputation, and

features a lot of art by Steve Fabian. Issues run 50+ pages or so, with nice, dense type. All in all it is a must for anyone seriously interested in what's new in Fantasy and Swords & Sorcery. Excellent critical articles are also featured. Subscriptions are 4 issues for \$7, from Whispers Press, Box 1492-W, Azalea St., Browns Mills, NJ 08015.

THIEVES GUILD

This is a set of three D&D supplements from a new company called Gamelords. They are written by Kerry Lloyd and Richard Meyer. They run about 60 8½x11 pages of computer-type each, offset. The art is awful, but the material itself is quite good. They feature ideas, background, and adventures for thieves and related classes. There is a lot of good material here, though the rule system which they develop in the series is an uninspired D&D variant. On the whole the series is not bad, and it is supposed to be expanded regularly. It runs at \$9.95 an issue. The address is Gamelords, Ltd., 435-A East Diamond, Gaithersburg, MD 20760.

If you check any of these out, tell them you saw this review in ABYSS.



BACKGROUNDING—THE THEARCHS OF PTOLEMEIAS

ROY NICOL

SITUATION

In the world of Ysgarth trade centers on the great city of Ptolemeias. This medieval megalopolis has a population of some 330,000, and so compares on a level with such historical mamoths as Constantinople, Paris, and London at their heights. Ptolemeias is a major sea port, and the hub of many overland trade routes. It is situated centrally on the coast of the continent, and between the great Saexe Empire and the Kingdoms of Kymria.

Ptolemeias is a free city, maintaining itself as such by its great population and mercantile strength. There are three general divisions to society in the city. There is the religious aspect, strong in a city housing the home temples of over 100 faiths. There is the mercantile power, whose importance is immediately clear. There is also the realm of magic. In a city so large it is inevitable that the finest colleges of mages and most renowned masters should have gathered.

These three divisions of the city are summed up in three political and governmental bodies. These are The Court of the GuildLord, the Thearchy, and the College of Archimages. The Court of the GuildLord is the official governing body of the government, presiding over all matters secular, but the political and emotional power of the unified faiths in the Thearchy is so great that the GuildLord is virtually obliged to consult the High Thearch on many matters. At the same time, the Archimages work secretly within the city, acting with their powers, non-politically to guide things covertly. There is friction on many levels between these three powers, which at the best times is manifested in intrigues and assassination, and at the worst in riot in the streets. Each has its clear realm of power and its own nature and interests, and these interests are often clearly opposed.

I will be taking over this column for a time to examine life in Ptolemeias, and there is no better place to start than with these three powerful bodies of government. While the Court of the GuildLord is the clearest and most truly governmental body, I will begin with the Thearchy, because of its intriguing and unique nature.

THE THEARCHY

There are some 127 churches in Ptolemeias, some great, like that of Gilrod, some weak, like that of Lorca. These temples are in a state of constant struggle, trying to advance their status in the city, a status represented by their position on the winding "Street of the Gods". For years a church may hold the highest position, and then be cast down as others rise.

The main method of establishing rank among temples is in Trial by Combat between champions of the churches. However, it is equally common for a church to be advanced by the wealth and number of its devotees, who can purchase a better seat on the street from a declining church. Thus it comes out that both the most militant and elite faiths and the most popular and benign faiths will tend to be found high on the street, and the less exciting ones farther down.

It is common practice for the champions of high churches to issue open challenges once a year, usually on a festival day. These are rarely taken up, except by the most militant and ambitious rivals. Specific challenges are often made by a lesser church to a higher one. These are usually accepted only by those faiths of a nature warlike enough that they would lose status by refusing such a challenge.

The result of all of this is that the top churches at this time are those of Gilrod, Aranrhud, Ormuzd, Ahriman, Thor, Gwyn, and Ra. Of these two are of a virtually pacifist nature, those of Aranrhud and Ormuzd, and three are very contentious, Gilrod, Ahriman, and Ra. Thor and Gwyn are both moderately popular and moderately warlike. Another key twist is the right of the issuer of an open challenge to set terms of victory, which apply to both issuer and challenger. Until recently Odin ruled the top spot on the road, but his champion, Thane Ormsson, made the mistake of issuing an open challenge with the provision that the loser would be exiled to outside of the city walls for five years. This was done at a time when they were sure no warrior in the city could beat Thane. Unfortunately, the Cult of Gilrod, an unpopular fire-god about midway up the street put forward a champion in an all or nothing bid for the top of the street. Tottenjager, their chosen one was formidable, and he was able to win a marginal victory, much to the chagrin of the quickly exiled priests of Odin. Thus, a very popular and important god fell quickly, though with the wealth of his followers he should be restored to his former place at the end of the term of exile.



This type of incident is not uncommon, but generally the top seven positions do not change much. The only two to fall from that rank in a generation have been Odin and Kronos. Kronos fell because his three priests and their handful of worshipers could not keep up the massive temple they had built in better times over a century before, and so had to sell their position to the rising



Ahrimanites. Positions often switch, and large jumps up the street are made, so religions who maintain steady position and look ahead are easily able to advance to about three quarters of the way up, one temple at a time, reaching an area in which there are quite a few such staid and respectable congregations.

The position to covet, however is the top of the street, for the seven temples which circle the Citadel of the Thearchs are considered the leaders of the religious community, and become the ruling council of the religions on the street. This group is large enough that its members can represent groups of gods with similar sympathies who are farther down the street, thus, as in the case of Ormuzd, a near aspirant faith can gather a coalition, in this case Baldr, Heimdall, Mithras, and several others, and with their support take a place in the council.

The seven Thearchs, who are the high-priests of their faiths or their representatives, meet weekly. In these meetings all religious disputes are set aside, and they do their best to govern religion in Ptolemeias, and to a fair extent in all of Ysgarth. The council is currently presided over by the High-Priestess of Aranrhud, because she has seigniority in the council. It is the seigniority of the representative which is counted, as all in the top seven are viewed as equals.

The Thearch's Citadel occupies the center of a square at the head of the street, and it is there that the council meets. This large, circular tower of some 8 storeys also houses administrative offices made up of lesser priests on loan from churches all up and down the street. It also houses an office for each temple on the street, where a representative/lobbyist should be in residence, though in practice many churches cannot afford such a representative.

The Council of Thearchs decides such matters as the scheduling of holy festivals, the regulation of the sale of religious wares, and rules for the interrelation of the churches. It also keeps order when conflict arises, and generally works for the promotion of religion in the city and abroad. It is responsible for debates and colleges, and supported from a tithe from each of the 127 churches on the street. It also oversees all challenges, and has taken on a world-wide function as an arbitrating body in inter-national disputes. It wields a great deal of power because of its hold on the churches and their support of it, and because of the popular support for religion in general.

Like any such quasi-governmental body, the Thearchy has its secret police and para-military. This force, called "The Eagles", for their observing and regulatory function is officially under the command of the High-Thearch, or High Priestess of Aranrhud, but traditionally she has relegated this power to a more appropriately inclined Thearch, currently the High-Priest of Ahriman. The actual control of this force is, however in its Captain, appointed by the general council for a life term. This leader is Drwst "Iron-Fist", a very capable leader of intense loyalty and a disposition sufficiently sneaky to maintain his organization well.

ROLE IN THE CITY

Religion plays a large role in the city, both politically and economically, and because of this relations between the Thearchs and the other major forces in the city are tense and changeable. A good working relation has developed with the GuildLord, who generally sticks to temporal matters. Their main area of conflict is over taxes and tithes, and the sale of religious wares. The Thearchs try to maintain a tradition of tax-exemption for churches, while they demand a tithe for their own support. Naturally the GuildLord would like to muscle in on this source of revenue, and each time a new one comes to power this is one of his first moves. The main area of debate is whether the sellers of religious wares and holy beggars come under tithes or taxes. There is also the general conflict here between two powers both of whom want to run the city.

If they could find them, the Thearchs would love to totally destroy the Archimages, who they see as a threat to their power and to faith in general. They look down on the Mage Guilds and Colleges, which the Archimages protect, and have on occasion tried to stir up trouble against them, always with dire result.



the Archimages are always a feared unknown in the city, and seen as a great and present danger by the Thearchs. Unfortunately the GuildLord has a tendency to protect and defend them, both out of fear, and because the Mage-Guilds are a part of the guild structure and a major source of revenue.

In general there is a tense day-to-day balance between the Thearchs and their fellow powers in the city. In the long run they are a useful and necessary body in this city where religion has become such a large industry.

QUO VADIS?

DAVE NALLE

I suspect most of you have noticed it. TSR is pushing something called THE ROLE PLAYING GAME ASSOCIATION. Well, just what the hell is the RPGA. When I first hear the initials I thought it might be a new golf league, but no, it seems to be some new plan to both get money from young role-players and draw them into some sort of TSR-manipulated octopus organization too.

Now for "only \$10 a year, you can...get a membership from TSR." "Can you afford not to?" They ask. Can we afford to?

For years, ever since they recovered from the first shock of success, TSR has been struggling to brainwash the vast hordes of young players who are introduced to FRPping for the first time. Now, I can't blame them for this, after all, these players are indeed attracted almost exclusively because of TSRs work in popularizing AD&D and related paraphernalia. They have done a spectacular job at this, and it is largely because of them that the field is booming. Yet, at the same time I feel for these new players.

The TSR way is not necessarily the best way in gaming. Their products are at best shoddy, inspite of flashy production. They are pedestrian in their good design moments, and they are arrested 5 years behind the field in game design theory. TSR has a hell of a lot to learn before they can design a game I'll admire, and they aren't going to learn it until they pull themselves out of the mire of success.

There is a lot more out in the field than there is in TSR, and although much of it is worse, a good deal of it is better. There are some fine things in FRPping, games and concepts which are Jaguars to TSR's Volares. TSR has no duty or rational reason to expose any of their converts to this material. Its too damn bad, but its business.

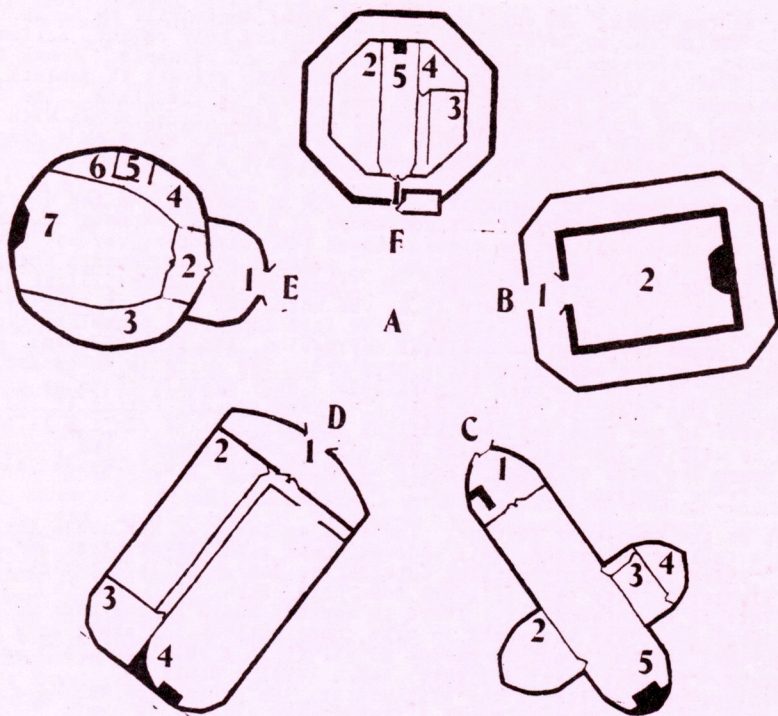
The RPGA is symptomatic of this. The theory is bombard, bedazzle, and brainwash. By exposing new players to varied, expansive and beurocratic organizations and structure in the gaming world that they are first born in the hope is that they will a) See so much in this realm they will never reach beyond, or b) Bomb them into mindless one-true-wayism by submerging them in a totally overwhelming mass of TSR products and accessories. In this kind of situation it will be very hard to find the world beyond AD&D, and for those who can be complacent, unnecessary. The RPGA is the new instrument of this, and it is designed to make sure that the days when FRPping was a free and wild world will never come again. TSR cannot repair the damage done to their control of the market from 74 to 77, but they can make sure that no more mistakes are made.

They cannot be faulted for this program, however repulsive such repression and subtle manipulation is. We have no right to rail at them or abuse them. They are acting in their own best interests and not doing anything to harm the type of person who can read this article.

What we can do is work alongside the RPGA but without supporting it. We must not give in to regimentation. Do not join the RPGA. There is nothing to gain from it. All you do is give TSR another name for its mailing list. We should work to improve the hobby outside of TSR, so that those few who escape the tentacle of the Great Kraken will find a welcome haven outside. By doing this a movement may begin which could domino into the world of TSR domination and draw more and more new players out into the real world.

The RPGA is the beginning of a movement to close minds in FRPping, by registering DMs with the TSR stamp of approval. At conventions there will be the RPGA approved dungeons, and the others, who RPGA members will be encouraged to look on as riff-raff who don't "play by the rules". This is a new form of ghettoization, and as such, we can turn it against itself, by making a ghetto which is so beautiful that the rest of the world will want to get in.

To end, I have to say that there is hope in Lake Geneva. Kim Mohan and THE DRAGON have been kind to the outside world in the last few years, a great change from the days when Gygax and Kask viewed ALARUMS & EXCURSIONS as the D&D AntiChrist. THE DRAGON raises the dream of a thread of foresight from the borderlands of TSR. The RPGA is a sign of the attitude which may stifle AD&D by locking it in its own trademarked world. THE DRAGON remains the only sign that anyone there has looked outward and seen the wolves howling at the gate.



Mini-Adventure #5

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for a party of 4 to 6 characters of levels no lower than 3 and no higher than 9 or so. It is aimed towards level 7, but a good GM should be able to make it serve higher or lower in the given range. It is explained fully, with all information given in terms of AD&D and NYR, so that it can be used immediately with those systems. It should be easy to adapt it to other systems from the information given.

BACKGROUND

One evening as the members of the party were sitting around a large table in The Falcon, a popular dive in the city of Sardis, a stranger joined them, taking up an empty seat at the table. None of them noticed his arrival, until he moved back a bit from the table, scraping his chair on the floor. He was a tall humanoid whose race and nature were unclear because of the all-concealing robe he wore. He instructed them to "Go to the Plaza of the Dark Gods, and take the blessed talismans of the five temples there." They were told that they would find these talismans on or near the altar, and that they could be anything, but would be identifiable by the mark of their maker, the God-Smith Vidar. If any of the characters are unwise enough to argue with their instructions they may catch a glimpse under the being's hood to see a featureless grey face, and make a -5 save against insanity, lasting for 3 days. They are given a week to complete the task.

The plaza is in an unsavory part of the city, and though they have a week, it is clear that their job must be done all at once. They do, however have their choice of night or day, though this will make little difference, as the temples and plaza operate on 24 hour shifts.

They may choose any of the available approaches shown on the maps above, and spend as long as they want examining the situation. However, they are subject to observation and the encounters listed for the plaza in section one.

DESCRIPTION

A: This is the Plaza. At any time, day or night there will be about two-dozen vendor's stalls set up here. They will be selling holy relics, talismans, maps, guide-books, refreshments, sacrificial animals, and trinkets. Among the items being sold are a variety of ornamental items, from statues to amulets, bearing the likenesses of the five gods whose temples are on the plaza. The images are of a cloaked and wolf-headed man, a beautiful, dark-haired woman with silvery horns, a thin, older woman with very long hair, a tall man with a giant scimitar and empty eye-sockets, and an old, hooded man with a black sickle.

B: This is the temple of Thanatos. There are no guards, and the doors are always kept open. The power of the god keeps it clean. Thanatos is the god of suicide, and this will become clear, though the characters may not yet know it.

1-This is a well kept-up lawn, but if someone probes beneath the grass, they will find old bones everywhere, shallowly buried as fertilizer.

2-This is the temple. There is no one here, but there is a knife on the altar. It is a large knife, almost three feet long from pommel to tip. The area all around the altar is a slight depression, and it has drains. This is to take care of the mass sacrifices provided. The knife is enchanted with god-level magic. Anyone who sees it must make a save against charm or else pick it up. Anyone who picks it up must make a -5 save against taking it and attacking anyone else in the room and then killing himself. If he can't kill the other people he will do his best to slay himself in the attempt. The pommel of the blade bears the mark of Vidar. There is a statue of a wolf-headed man on the altar. It is Thanatos.

C: This is the temple of Nerthus. There is an image of her above the door. She is a tall, dark haired, well-endowed woman with silver horns and bearing a bow. There is a guard lounging outside the door. He is a typical 3rd level hired fighter. Note that visitors come here often.

1-This is an antechamber. There is another guard by the back door, and a bored-looking acolyte who wants to take contributions for admittance to the holy shrine. He has about 20 pieces of silver in a small box, and wants 5 sp per person. He is a level 3 fighter and a level 4 druid.

2-This is the office of the high-priest. He is in here behind a desk. He is named Gythrion. He is a level 8 fighter and a level 12 druid. He has with him a Staff of the Moon. This item has a half-moon cap of silver, and the power to induce madness in one person per hour with a -3 save.

3-This is the guard room. There are 3 priests in here, with a bottle of wine and some bread. They are level 6 druids. With them are 5 level 4 fighter guards.

4-This is the treasure room. Its door is locked, and the High-Priest has the key. In the room is a small chest with 5000sp. Guarding this chest is a very old priest, who is seated in front of it. He has a huge sword, which it looks like he couldn't even lift. In fact, he can wield it as a level 12 fighter. He is a level 3 druid.

5-this is the altar. There are always 1D20+3 worshipers kneeling here, and when the moon is out there are 3D20+10 present. There are always 2 level 8 guards by the altar, and a priest of level 9. The high-priest is here when the moon is out. When the moon shines through the horns of the statue of Nerthus on the altar a chalice will materialize in the moon-beam on the altar. There is a window for the light to come through in the roof. Sacrifices of human blood are made into this chalice. It will vanish when the moon sets, or if it is moved out of the moonlight. It bears the symbol of Vidar. However, the thing to steal here is actually the horns of the statue, as they are what focus the light to make the chalice. The chalice has the power to restore crops and heal any disease if directed properly and filled with blood. Naturally the priests don't love the idea of having the altar robbed.

D-This is the temple of Ran. The doors are open, and there is an old man seated by them to accept any donations.

1-In this lobby there are several supplicants waiting. They all look sad and generally depressed, and many are wearing mourning clothes. There are two level 4 guards by the door to keep them out. Supplicants are admitted at a rate of one group per hour.

2-This is a dormitory for the lesser priestesses and for the acolytes. In it there are usually 1D6 level 6 priestesses and 1D10 level 3 acolytes. Treat them as mages, equivalent to Necromancer/Devines. There are possessions worth a total of 250sp here.

3-This is the chamber of the high-priestess. She will be sleeping here in the daylight. Her name is NARTHALLA. She is a level 13 Necromancer and a lev-

el 8 devine. She has a Wand of Necromancy, which gives her 1.5 times normal power in casting death and necromantic-related spells. She also keeps the temple treasure of 6,000sp under her bed.

4-This is the main part of the temple. This is where the supplicants are brought. It is hung with concealing tapestries, and there is an image of Ran, a tall, thin, elderly woman with long, dark hair, engraved above the altar. On the altar is a crystal sphere. In this the spirits of the dead can be called up. Supplicants are brought in one at a time, or one group at a time. They may then see departed loved ones, for a suitable fee. There are always at least 3 regular priestesses here, and at night the high-priestess is here as well. The sphere bears the mark of Vidar, and can be activated at will by any Necromancer of 6th level or more.

E: This is the temple of Dis the Destroyer. The doors are always open, and cloaked, haunted-looking worshippers pass in and out frequently. Services are always in progress.

1-This is an entry-hall. Several worshippers may be sleeping here, exhausted, at any time of day.

2-Here a priest meets people and administers a drug essential for the ceremony, which increases susceptibility to illusion and charm effects. He will not let anyone through the door who has not taken it. He is a level 5 pyromancer, and a level 6 fighter. The drug lowers saves mentioned before by 5.

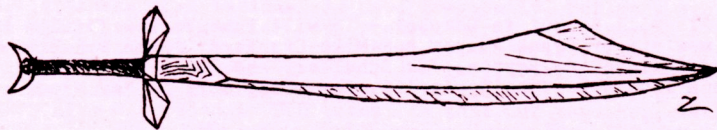
3-This is the chamber of the High-Priest Morkesht. There is a 30% chance he will be here. If he is not, he will be in room #7. There is a sack with 2,000sp under his pillow, and he has a wand which can be used in combat to hit with a flaming tip for 1D20+5. It has 30 charges of this effect. He is a level 15 pyromancer and a level 5 fighter.

4-This is the chamber of a level 7 priest/pyromancer.

5-This is the chamber of a level 6 priest/pyromancer. There are 50sp here.

6-This is the chamber of a level 9 priest/pyromancer. There are 125sp here.

7-This is the main temple. The roof is open to the sky and there is a large bonfire before the altar, surrounding the statue of Dis, a giant man with empty eye-sockets and a huge scimitar. There are some 3D20 worshippers swaying and mumbling feebly before the altar. The sword the statue holds bears the mark of Vidar. The worshippers are unresponsive. Anyone who enters the room who is not a true-worshipper will have to make a -3 save against leaping through the flames to take up the sword, which he will then use on everyone present, with no discrimination. The drug further lowers this roll. Once in this rage the character has a WIL(INT)% chance per round of regaining control. The sword is +5/+3, hits for 2D8, and flames for 1D8 more. It is a 2 handed sword, and has the additional power to cause fear in those seeing it in use.



F: This is the temple of Kronos. It is a tall, domed building of black stone, and seems to attract only occasional worshippers.

1-There is a guard-house here. An ancient man is asleep on a cot in the back. He will act as a guide if roused, but grumbling all the way. Kronos is a god of time, and his worshippers are very passive, seeing that they will be victorious in the end, whatever happens. Everything here is in disrepair. The floors need sweeping, and things are generally unwholesome looking.

2-This is the library. It is full of ancient tomes guarded by an ancient priestess with no special powers. If taken, the books will quickly crumble to dust from age.

3-This is a dormitory for 3 priests. They are basic old men. First level Clerics, perhaps with some Physician spells, and little fighting ability.

4-This is the chamber of the High-Priest, an unbelievably ancient man, but spry and vital nonetheless. He is wearing an amulet which makes him immune to time spells, age, and disease. It has on it an image of a sickle. In a small chest at the foot of the bed is a potion which when spread on any object will preserve it for ever. It will have a horrible effects on people, effectively causing an anti-leprosy in the area covered, making it fall off. The potion is enough to cover 10sq ft area. There is also a sack with 8,000sp in it.

5-This is the main temple of Kronos. There is a statue of an old man with a sickle at the back. The sickle is marked with the symbol of Vidar. There is no one guarding it in any effectual way. Anyone who enters the room must make a -3 save against disease. If he fails, in 1D8 days he will notice that he has leprosy. While they are in this room the characters age at 5 times normal rate. The sickle may be taken. It is adamantite, +5/+5, hitting for 1D8. Wounds it causes cannot be healed in any way, ever. In addition, anyone within 20ft of it will age at 10 times normal rate while he is within its range. This will quickly become clear in fatigue effects, as the character will not be aware of the aging effect.

CONCLUSION

When they return to The Falcon they once again meet the being who sent them on this quest. He takes the items from them, and will chastise them if they did not bring them all. If they failed, he will take what they did get and leave, muttering. If they succeeded, he will let them choose any three of the items from the collection to keep for the group of them. Before they take the items which they choose he will lay them all in such a way that the marks of Vidar touch a 5-spoked wheel he has, and say an incantation over them. The items will glow blue, and he will have what he wants. None of the items will work for the next 4 months, but after that they will return to full power, and the characters may use them.

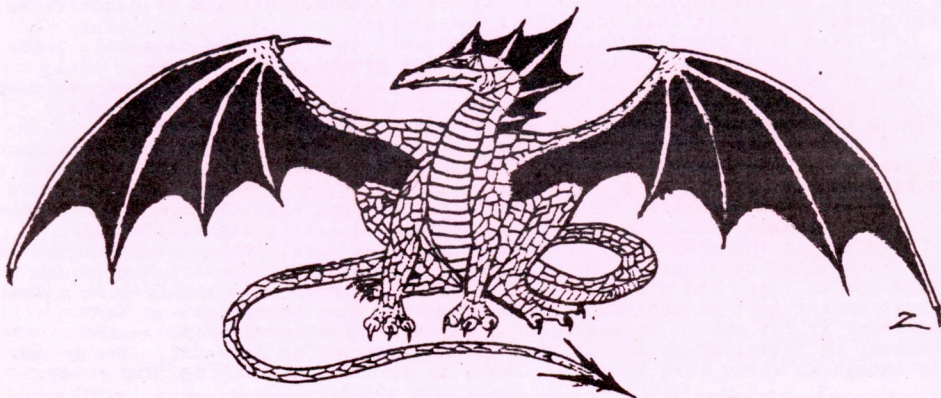
RAGNAROK ENTERPRISES T-SHIRTS

Now available from RE are T-Shirts bearing a becoming dragon logo by Karl Zivek, in a variety of sizes and colors. These are similar to the very popular Mini-Con '81 T-Shirts. They are all cotton, color-fast, and washable. The logo is in black ink. A rough copy of the dragon is at the bottom of this page.

Order now as the supply is limited. The cost is \$7 plus \$1 for postage and handling. Specify size: Small, Medium, Large, X-Large, and color: Kelly Green, Orange, Beige, White, or yellow.

COMING IN ABYSS #15

ABYSS #15 will be out in October. It will feature new fiction by David Jacobson, new art by Frank Weaver and Mike Cranford. Some writers who will be featured include Lew Bryson, Jon Schuller, and Henry Dove. All of our regular columns should be running in #15, including more by Roy Nicol on the city of Ptolemeias.



A GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

From time to time you will see abbreviations used here in ABYSS. Some of these may be familiar, and some may not, so this glossary is intended to make as many of them as possible clear. a listing with explanations follows.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| AG-Arduin Grimoire | TN-Turn(10 Minutes) | |
| D&D-Dungeons & Dragons | HR-Hour(6 Turns) | |
| AD&D-Advanced D&D | MN-Minute(10 CR) | |
| C&S-Chivalry & Sorcery | | SA-Sorcerer's Apprentice(FBI) |
| RQ-Runequest | | TD-The Dragon(TSR) |
| T&T-Tunnels & Trolls | | DW-Different Worlds(Chaosium) |
| HF-High Fantasy | | S&T-Strategy & Tactics(SPI) |
| AIF-Adventures in Fantasy | | TG-The General(AH) |
| NYR-New Ysgarth Rules. | | WD-White Dwarf(GW) |
| SQ-Space Quest | | JG-Judges Guild |
| SO-Space Opera | | FBI-Flying Buffalo, Inc. |
| S&S-Swords & Sorcery | | TSR-Tactical Studies Rules |
| or Starships & Spacemen | | SPI-Simulations Publications, Inc. |
| FRP-Fantasy Role Playing | | AH-Avalon Hill |
| AA-Arduin Adventure | | RE-Ragnarok Enterprises |
| TFT-The Fantasy Trip | | EP-Eon Products |
| ITL-In the Labyrinth | | GG-Grimoire Games |
| | | GDW-Game Design Workshop |
| AR-Attack Rating(used in NYR) | | GW-Games Workshop |
| DR-Defense Rating(used in NYR) | | |
| AC-Armor class either NYR or D&D | | STR-Strength |
| LVL-Level same for NYR or D&D | | CON-Constitution |
| HT-Height | | DEX-Dexterity |
| WT-Weight | | AGI-Agility |
| HP-Hit Points | | TAL-Talent(PSI) |
| ST-Saving Throw | | PSI-Psychic Ability |
| AL-Alignment | | WIL-Willpower |
| CR-Combat Round(Melee Round) | | JUD-Judgement |
| SC-Size Class | | WIS-Wisdom |
| WR-Will Rating(for mental combat) | | INT-Intelligence |
| SP-Skill Points or Spell Points | | END-Endurance |
| MP-Mana Points | | SIZ-Size |
| MR-Magic Resistance or Melee Round | | BOD-Body |
| MPR-Mana Point Reserve | | |
| | | APP-Appearance |
| | | VOI-Voice |
| | | BVC-Bardic Voice |
| | | HEA-Hearing |
| | | EYE-Eyesight |
| | | SOC-Social Standing |
| | | MEM-Memory |
| | | EDU-Education |
| | | LEA-Leadership |
| | | PAI-Pain Threshold |
| | | CHA-Charisma |
| | | BUI-Build |
| | | MOV-Movement |

Not all of these abbreviations are used frequently, but many are. Any of these items which seem unfamiliar are probably from a system which you are not acquainted with. In most cases things which are described will be made clear enough so that they can be used with at least two FRPing systems, one of them a major one. For example, although monsters are described fully in terms of the NYR, they are also described in D&D terms, so that put together, there is more than enough given for most systems. Note that D between numbers means "Die Type".

If you have any questions or don't understand anything feel free to write ABYSS. I think that things are generally clear enough, but I'd be glad to explain anything which is hazy.



GUESS WHAT'S COMING TO DINNER

JABERWOCK
 NYR AR:10 LN:10' Attacks: 2 Claws for 1D8+2, and grasping
 NYR DR:7 WT:225 1 Bite for 2D8+4
 NYR AC:5 HP:65
 D&D AC:4 ST:9
 Level:9 AL:C/E/A

This is a good, medium-level monster from the work of Lewis Carrol. It is a scruffy-looking winged serpent, with unusually overdeveloped claws and beak-jaws. Its bite is particularly devastating, and its grasp has the added advantage of being able to hold a victim, because of its opposable talon. Thus, if a person is grasped by the Jaberwock, he must roll within his STR on 4D10 to break free. Otherwise the monster will carry him into the air and drop him to his death. (Martin Leigh)

MNERRAR

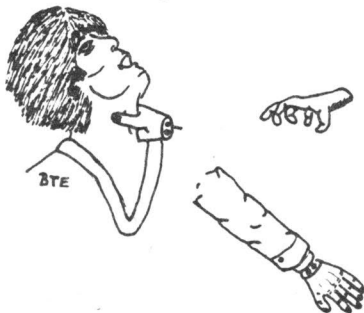
NYR AR:15 HT:4'6" Attacks: 2 Claws for 1D6+3
 NYR DR:17 WT:75 1Bite 1D4+2
 NYR AC:2 HP:25
 D&D AC:5 ST:9
 Level:8 AL:L/E/A

These are a race of feline humanoids who walk erect. They are of high intelligence, and because of their natural affinities they are particularly skilled in working with poisons and drugs, which they will often use to coat their claws. They are a warrior race, with a complex caste and ritual combat system for both sexes. The males tend to be unreasonably temperamental and contentious. They are usually similar to a tiger in markings, though there are tribal variations. (Jon Schuller)

PSEUDO-HAND

NYR AR:8 LN:8" Attacks: 1 for 1D3 or special
 NYR DR:11 WT:2
 NYR AC:0 HP:12
 D&D AC:8 ST:12
 Level:3 AL:C7E/A

These are small spirits who possess human hands. They merge with the flesh and bone of the victim while he is sleeping (this takes 2D4 rounds). They may then control the hand, perhaps remaining dormant for a while. In most cases once the hand is in a populous area with many potential victims it will attempt to kill its host. They also like to possess the hands of corpses and detach themselves to attack any who come close enough to the body. They can strike their target as a fist, for the damage given above, or they may attempt to choke the victim, doing the same damage in that area, but on a roll of 19 or 20 they will crush the windpipe of the victim, causing him to die in 1D3 minutes unless radical aid can be brought. Their armor class is modified appropriately if they are wearing gauntlets, gloves, or whatever. For more effectiveness they may on occasion travel in pairs. (Byron Estes)



NIGHT-GHAUNT

NYR AR:7 HT:7' Attacks: 2 Claws for 1D6+1 each, or weapon
 NYR DR:11 WT:150
 NYR AC:5 HP:30
 D&D AC:3 ST:13
 Level:5 AL:N/E/N

The Night-Ghaunt is a night-flying, winged, leathery humanoid with black hide and bat-like wings. They are of medium-low human intelligence. They are unusually good at working with wood and stone, and live in mountainous areas. They are primitives, usually hunting at night with spears. They have infrared vision, and tend to be nocturnal, though only by choice. They are vicious fighters, and will defend eyrie to the death. (Dave Nalle)

A BALANCED EXPERIENCE SYSTEM

JON SCHULLER



There are many systems about for determining the amount of experience to be given out during a FRP adventure. I propose this system, which is suitable to D&D and related or variant systems.

It is more complete than previously designed systems, and assures equitable and appropriately balanced level advancement. The rate of experience generation is geared to an advancement of one level per character per adventure session. If this does not suit your campaign, it is easy enough to modify the numbers given either higher or lower for the rate of advancement you desire.

The first part of the process is to establish an Experience Value for each room of the dungeon, outdoor encounter, or similar interactive unit. There are some guidelines for doing this. Given below is a list of encounter factors with appropriate EVs. The EVs of the factors in the encounter should be tallied to determine the total EV for the encounter. The EV will later be key in finding the total experience for the adventure.

NATURE OF ENCOUNTER FACTOR

EXPERIENCE VALUE

Basic Mechanical Trap(Darts, poison, etc.)	1
Complex Mechanical Trap(Balances, moving walls/rooms, etc.)	2
Lesser Magical Trap(Trigger effect, reactive magic)	2
Greater Magical Trap(Charming effect, Illusion, etc.)	3
Each guardian or being	0-25 HP
fought or dealt	26-50 HP
with or fought:	51-75 HP
	76-100 HP
	101-125 HP
	126-150 HP
	151-175 HP
	176-200 HP
	201-225 HP
	226-250 HP
Attacked with Surprise	10
Characters in disadvantaged position	1
Trick/Trap magic item	1
Riddle/Puzzle/Problem/Test situation	1-3
Each monster magical power or magical defensive power	1-5
	1

Using these categories as a rough guideline and totalling up the EVs for the different factors, it is possible to establish an EV for each encounter. This can be made clearer with the following sample encounters.

EXAMPLE #1-The party enters a room and the door closes behind them(1). In the room is a 50HP monster(2) guarding a chest with a poison barb on the lock(1). There is a small statuette in the chest, which if bathed in blood will become a 75HP monster and attack anyone of the choice of the person whose blood is used. If it is left unattended outside of the for more than a minute it will come to life and attack the party(4). This encounter has a total EV of 1+2+1+4=8

EXAMPLE #2-The party is walking along the road when three bandits step out into the road in front of them heavily armed, asking them to "stand and deliver". In the woods to the sides of the road are 12 more bandits with bows. The EV for an encounter of this sort would be about 17, assuming the bandits had 20 or so HP each.

With these guidelines you can estimate more complex situations. Usually in an adventure for low level characters the EVs of the encounters should be low, usually no more than 10. As the level of the characters gets higher, so should the EV of what they meet. Once you have set EVs for the encounters in the adventure, all that remains is to run the adventure and actually give out the experience.

In the course of play, while the players meet the encounters you should credit the party either partial or total EV for each encounter, depending on how well they deal with what they face. If they get as much as they can from the encounter they should get the full EV. If they get some benefit, but do not use the full potential of the encounter they should get half. If they lose any members of the party they should lose 1 off the EV for each one slain. At the end of the adventure the EV obtained should be totalled, and the experience for the entire party found on the table to the right. No EV should be gained from rooms passed over or ignored. The experience should be divided evenly between the members of the party.

In addition an individual modification is suggested to the experience. You should rate the players on a scale of 1 to 10 for the skill with which they roleplayed their character, with 10 as the best and 1 as the worst.



<u>TOTAL EV</u>	<u>PARTY EP</u>
1	10
2	40
3	90
4	160
5	250
10	1000
15	2250
20	4000
25	6250
30	9000
35	12250
40	16000
45	20250
50	25000
60	36000
70	49000
General	(EP=EV ² x10)

Using this relative ranking, consult the table to the right and find the given multiplier for each ranking. Use the appropriate one for each player to multiply his character's experience. The result is the final experience for that character for that adventure.

CHARACTER RANK	EP MULTIPLIER
10	1.5
9	1.4
8	1.3
7	1.2
6	1.1
5	1.0
4	.9
3	.8
2	.7
1	.6

Taken all together, this system allows you to run adventures with a guarantee that the allocation of experience will to at least some degree follow a regular pattern so that if you were to run the same adventure and the players repeated their action, you would give out the same amount of EP. At the same time it also leaves a decent amount of latitude to the GM in rewarding individual excellence. It is very easy to adjust this system to fit the specifics of your campaign, as all you have to do is change a few numbers.

FROM VIDAR'S FORGE

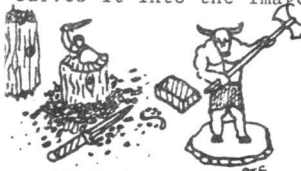
ANSYN

This is a skillfully crafted face-mask made by the master-craftsman Wulfhere. It covers the entire face, acting as heavy leather armor to cover face areas, except the eyes and mouth. In addition it has a single unique magical power. If a character wears it, anyone who meets him or encounters him in any way where they meet face-to-face, will forget him completely within 103 hours, not even remembering that the character ever existed. This can cause some interesting complications. For example, a character might be imprisoned, and then forgotten by his jailer. A more beneficial effect might be that someone powerful who was offended by the character might forget the slight. The mask cannot be removed. (Dave Nalle)



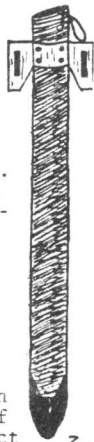
WOOD OF CREATION

This seems to be no more than a block of normal, fine-grained wood, about 4"x4"x6", but if a character with a DEX of 18 or more, and some artistic talent carves it into the image of something, living or non-living, the magical power soon becomes apparent. When cast upon the ground, the carved image will grow, and become the actual thing it represents. It will then serve until it is destroyed, or the carver orders it to self-destruct. The creature created can have up to 50 HP. If something is carved which would have a greater number of HP, it will come to life, but instead of serving, it will attack the creator. The properties of the wood derive from its origin as part of the trees Ierperion and Laurelin, kept sacred by the Valar of Middle-Earth. It is quite valuable. (Byron Estes)



SCABBARD OF HOLDING

This is a magical scabbard. It looks no different from a normal scabbard, though clearly of high quality and elastic properties. It has the magical power to accept any sword, of any size. Unfortunately, an aspect of this power which is not immediately clear, or even magically detectable is that once a sword is placed in the scabbard it cannot be removed in any way, including force and attempts to destroy the scabbard. The only way to remove a sword from the scabbard is by soaking it in the blood of a sacrificial victim. Only an amount of blood equal to the total contained in an average human will be enough to get a sword released. Note that whatever the scabbard holds is completely contained in every way and kept safe and undamageable. (Karl Zivek)



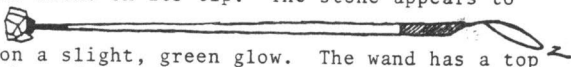
RING OF RELOCATION

This is a small and finely-worked ring of gold and enamel, with a thin band and a triangular plate of red-enamel. When worn it gives the ability to relocate blows to the wearer. It generally has a limited number of charges, no more than 15, and these can only be used at a rate of two per day. The actual effect of the relocation is to take one blow, before it actually strikes, and direct it to the area of the body of the wearer's choice. This is mostly of use in systems with hit-location, and in battles where every blow counts. (Tam Chang)



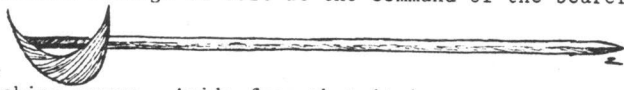
WAND OF PHOBOS

This is a rare and very powerful magical wand. It appears to be a long, tapered wand with a large, irregular stone on its tip. The stone appears to be of some porous rock, and non-magical type of stone. However, when the wand is in use, it takes on a slight, green glow. The wand has a top limit of 25 charges, and can be recharged by exposure to moonlight, at a rate of 1 charge per hour. It cannot discharge charges more often than once every 5 minutes. The power of the wand is that of causing the target to fear one thing, at a cost of 1 charge, or a type of thing, at a cost of 5 charges. The fear lasts for 1D10 minutes. Any number of charges can be used in one discharge, and more than one target can be effected by the attack if the number of charges is raised appropriately. Only one thing can be made the object of fear per use. Thus, 5 attackers could be made afraid of swords as a general group, at a cost of 25 charges, or they could be made afraid of the wand-bearer (as an object) at 5 charges. (Dave Nalle)



SWITCHBLADE

This is an unusual sword, whose value lies not in itself, but in what it can get for the bearer. Specifically its power is to switch itself with any other sword within a range of 50ft at the command of the bearer. It can do this only once a day, and only in the course of a combat. It will switch the next day on command, and use the switching power. Aside from that it is an epee type weapon, which hits for 1D8 as an edged attack or 1D6 as a point. It is +3/+2, and has no other magical powers of note. (Jon Schuller)



APPRENTICE & ADEPT: MYSTERY GUILDS

BRIAN MACAFFEE

When designing a world, or a city, guilds are always something which comes to mind. So far this column has done an amazingly good job of melding history and fantasy to create an excellent source of guild background for any campaign. One lesser area which has not yet been touched on, and which serves as a good introduction to some subjects scheduled for this column in the future, is the subject of Mystery Guilds.

Guilds are essentially mutual-protection organizations founded by merchants to preserve trade and craft rights. One of the first forms of these was the Mystery Guild, similar in nature to a modern fraternity, or the Freemasons. In essence these were social groups, who met once a month, usually near the beginning of the month. They had no official mercantile role, but were usually gathered for a religious purpose, and to celebrate "mysteries", or secret rites. These were usually a bit of made-up mumbo-jumbo, and a lot of drinking and eating.

The role which they actually played in the days before commerce had really bloomed, was to bring merchants together to discuss common concerns and plans, and to foster a feeling of brotherhood. They also provided helpful support for the chosen church.

The value of this concept to a Fantasy Campaign should be clear. In a small town, or a primitive area, where the people are religiously inclined, it is much more likely that a simple guild of this sort, with only one or two officers, and a mystical nature would exist. So, it would act as a sort of a merchant Mafia, unofficially monitoring business in the region, and keeping things in order. Such a guild would be supported by church and people, and would be most natural in a region where strangers were looked down on and local trade was doing fairly well.

It is from this type of pseudo-guild and several types like it that the greater guilds of a high-medieval equivalent world would grow. They are also the origin in small towns of early borough government and courts, thus you might, in a transitional period, find the guild administering the town, or settling many civil disputes.

Its just another thing to think of about guilds and social structure in the medieval period which might help add a bit of realism and depth to adventures in primitive areas and rural villages. This kind of organization has a tendency to spring up as the first signs of growth in a region which is going through a transition from agriculture to craft and material production, similar to what England went through in the 11th and 12th centuries.

THE NINJA: A NEW D&D CHARACTER CLASS

RONALD PEHR

When the original D&D rules were expanded to include the Thief character class, the idea of a Ninja, as a combination Fighter-Thief, occurred to me. But, no sooner did I conceive of such a class than the rules were further expanded to include the Monk. I shelved the Ninja for the time being.

However, because of rigid requirements and vulnerability at low-level, few players elect to become Monks. Thus, the Ninja still has appeal. It would be a useful class in strife-torn worlds. Competing factions--be they kingdoms, temples, guilds, tribes--would surely be able to use loyal specialists for spy work, assassinations and the like.

Although patterned on the historical Japanese figure, my concept presumes a different basis of origin, and relies more on legend and concept than on the historical facts. Rather than being a hereditary caste in a feudal structure, the Ninja arts would be a learnable area of skill, perhaps a sub-section of thieving ability, reserved for the most promising guild members.

Ninja masters would be free agents, contracting their skills as teachers, or taking on apprentices. Beginning Ninja would be assumed to be in the training of a master in one of these capacities.

This offers a good opportunity for role-playing, as the master or his employer can be the generator of adventurour missions. This might also serve to limit the amount of loot which the Ninja keeps himself. Naturally, where alignment is used, the young Ninja would be expected to follow that of his teacher, and variation from this might result in the master essentially kicking him out of class. The teachers should be NPCs, but a Player Character may become a master at 9th level, upon earning the Black Belt. At that point he may take on Player and Non-Player Character students of his own.

A Ninja should not generally be interested in collecting treasure. His highest prize should be the improvement of his art. Treasure is needed mainly for his support in a modest lifestyle, and the support of his school and any adventuring missions. If he is in the hire of a benefactor his pay will depend on the service he performs and his level and abilities.

Staunch critics may have noticed the reference to the Black Belt. This is not historically accurate, but I have chosen to use the modern color division system of the martial-arts to indicate level-division and provide a symbol for achievement in skill of the Ninja. It can be considered a ceremonial custom of the class.

Prerequisites-The Ninja must be human, and must have a STR, DEX, and CON of at least 12 (15 if AD&D is used).

Hit Dice-Ninji roll for HP on a 4-sided die for each level (6-sided for AD&D). A die is rolled for each level, up to a maximum of 18. A character reaching so high a level would, of course, be esteemed and known for his skill world-wide. Such a character could command the willing aid of any lesser Ninja of his alignment. Ninji of equal or unequal level generally will not duel. They will only fight non-Ninja foes and when on a mission. Training does not count. Only in extreme duress will one Ninja fight another.

Experience-They use all of the same matrices and charts for combat, and Saving Throws as Fighters, and the same experience table as Rangers.

Weapons-Ninji use those weapons allowed to a thief or a monk. If you use the AD&D proficiency system, they learn weapons as a fighter. A Ninja wears no armor heavier than leather. They may use a small shield.

Magic-A Ninja can never learn spells or even cast them from a scroll. An enchanted weapon can be used if it is of an appropriate type. Generally they can use any magic device which fighters can use.

Special Abilities-A Ninja may disguise himself, in the manner of an Assassin but there is twice the chance of discovery. A Ninja may move silently, or hide in shadows, as a Thief of 1/2 his level, rounded down. He does not get the Thief bonuses for high DEX. A Ninja may strike unarmed as a Monk of 1/2 his level, rounded down. The ability to stun or kill with one blow does not apply, nor does the Ninja get the monk's speed and armor class bonuses. With level advancement additional abilities are gained, as described in the following table.



LEVEL	RANK	ABILITY
1	White Belt	None
2	Yellow Belt	Uses Save v. Magic against Sleep Spell
3	Orange Belt	Additional Save v. Fear
4	Green Belt	Detect Invisible, 5% chance/Level
5	Blue Belt	Throw Darts at +3
6	Purple Belt	Avoid surprise as a Ranger
7	Red Belt	Detect Poison, 5% chance/Level
8	Brown Belt	Parry/dodge missiles as monk of 1/2 level
9	Black Belt 1st degree	Detect sloping passages as Dwarf
10	Black Belt 2nd degree	Detect secret doors as Elf
11	Black Belt 3rd degree	Detect living things, even in darkness
12	Black Belt 4th degree	Can harden skin 1 AC per level over 12 1/day for 1 turn
13	Black Belt 5th degree	May use any allowed weapon at normal proficiency
14	Black Belt 6th degree	Make poisons as assassin, but only for use by Ninja

The Ninja is an interesting character, adding a new area of endeavor for players. They are potentially powerful, though more restricted in many areas than fighters. They must be kept carefully in check by their teacher or their employer to keep them from outshining other characters.

NEW ADVENTURES FROM RAGNAROK ENTERPRISES

This summer Ragnarok Enterprises is introducing two new serial adventures, each set in a fascinating world of Fantasy Adventure. These adventures are designed to be run in sequence, and put a whole campaign-world at your fingertips. New adventures in each series will be published 4 to 8 times a year. Subscriptions are 4 for \$5, or 8 for \$10. Single adventures are only \$1.50. The first adventure in each series is for newly-created characters and the rest proceed from there with a specially designed experience system to insure regular level advancement.

YSGARTH-Ysgarth is a world of order and peace threatened by dark forces from the Great Abyss. #1 is "Blood Tribute", an unusual adventure designed as a challenge to the low-level characters, and as an introduction to the world.

UTTGAART-This is a world where chaos, personified by Gilrod, Lord of the Dark Flame, rules. It is a world embattled where great forces contend. #1 is "The Ring of Gilrod", an original and impressive introduction to the world and its nature.

FEEDBACK RESULTS—#13

ARTICLE	RATING	CHANGE	SPECIAL FEATURE	RATING
In the Speculum	55	--	Cymric Creatures	72
The Arts Arcane	60	-5	Determining Structural Strength	76
From Vidar's Forge	72	-17	Some Ideas on Alignment	46
Backgrounding	74	-22	Yet another Critical and SS.	68
Apprentice & Adept	73	+17	What Can You Do with C&S	36
Guess What's Coming...	55	+10	Whither the Munchkin?	98
Filling the Pentacle	53	-26		
ART: Frank A. Weaver	96	--		
Mark Wiker	25	-52		
Karl Zivek	69	+13		

which was rated at 75, and #11 which was rated as this small sampling shows, at least.

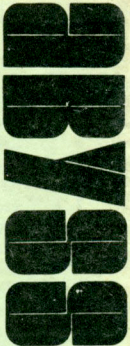
On the whole #13 could not be fairly described as our best issue ever. The regular features dropped a total of 43 points, for example. The overall rating for the issue was 68, as opposed to #12 65. So we are doing about average,



FEEDBACK

Please answer the following questions and send us this form. Rate items on a 1 to 100 scale, with 100 as the best, and indicate your least favorite article in the indicated section. Rate this issue and only this issue. Send in your response by September 1st.

In the Speculum	_____	The Burnout Magic System	_____
Backgrounding	_____	Quo Vadis?	_____
Guess What's Coming to Dinner	_____	Glossary of Terms & Abbreviations	_____
From Vidar's Forge	_____	A Balanced Experience System	_____
Apprentice & Adept	_____	The Ninja: A New Character Class	_____
Mini-Adventure #5	_____		
ART: Mark Wiker	_____	Worst Article	_____
Karl Zivek	_____	What You'd Like to see	_____
Byron Estes	_____		



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