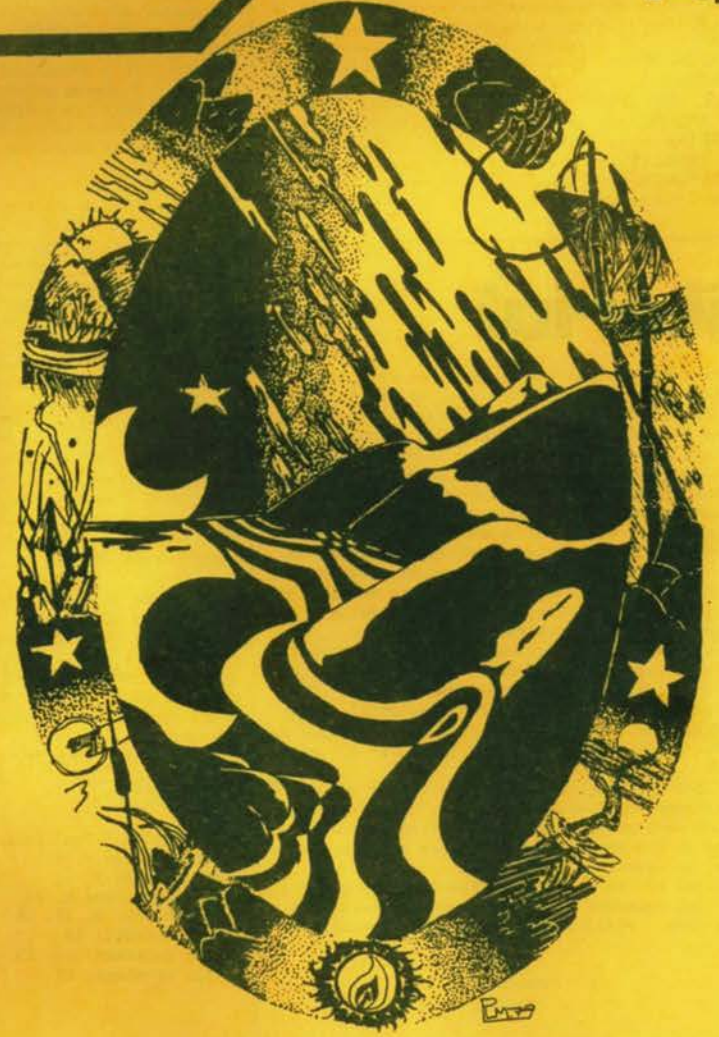


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New Realms of Fantasy

55

February 1982  
V4, N2



**David Hargrave**  
**Lew Bryson Mason Jones**

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**New Realms of Fantasy**  
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# Contents

## SPECIAL FEATURES

CREATIVE MAGIC .....Mason Jones 4  
 ARDUIN DAWN.....David Hargrave 6  
 THE ASSYRO-BABYLONIAN MYTHOS.....Dave Nalle 9  
 DRAMATIC LICENSE.....Lew Bryson 16

## REGULAR COLUMNS

EDITORIAL.....Dave Nalle 2  
 ART CREDITS.....2  
 ABYSS STAFF.....2  
 IN THE SPECULUM.....3  
 VIDAR'S FORGE.....5  
 APPRENTICE AND ADEPT.....Carl Jones 8  
 THE ARTS ARCAE.....Jon Schuller 15  
 BACKGROUNDING.....Roy Nicol 17  
 FEEDBACK RESULTS.....18  
 PROJECT REPORTS.....19  
 FEEDBACK.....19

# Editorial

As we kick out another issue there are several notes for me to make. First, I hope that most of you noticed the various format changes with this issue. I think that the new heads for features and columns add a lot. The new cover, with art instead of text, is an experiment. I'd like to hear your reaction to both of these changes.

On another note, ABYSS is moving upwards in several ways. Within the next 4 or 5 issues we will be making a radical change. We should be expanding to 28-36 pages per issue, and raising the price to \$2.00, though we are going to try to hold this off for as long as possible. I think that this change will serve the readers better, and the price will stay reasonable, but I want to delay it until it is unavoidable for economic reasons.

Also, we need to expand circulation at all times to keep the magazine alive and growing. If you have a chance take a copy of ABYSS into your local gaming store. Tell them to get in touch with us about carrying ABYSS or our other products. The more copies we sell the less each one costs, and the longer we will be able to go without raising the price.

Take a look through this issue. We have some really excellent features, including bits by old favorites like Lew Bryson and Carl Jones, plus special features from two major writers in the field, David Hargrave and Mason Jones. On the whole, an excellent issue.

Submissions are still needed, especially art, and I'd love to hear any comments which are in more detail than the feedback form. Send in your gripes and suggestions.

Dave Nalle  
 Washington, DC  
 January 1982

### TAKE NOTE:

If you have an "X" on your label after the issue number under your address, or a penned in "X" under the "A" of ABYSS, then your subscription expires with this issue. You ought to renew immediately at the cost of \$5 for 6 issues or \$10 for 12.

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### ART CREDITS

Phil Malin: Front Cover  
 Mason Jones: 4, 8  
 Karl Zivek: 5  
 Valerie Olson: 6, 13  
 Dave Nalle: 9, 12, 16  
 Paul Stewart: 10  
 John Mortimer: 11, 15  
 Mike Cranford: 19

# In the Speculum

## WARLOCK

This is a new game from England's Games Workshop. It is a card game designed to simulate magical combat between mages. There are a large number of cards with good art, and the rules are brief and clear. Duelling can be in the realm of physical or magical attacks, and there are a large number of cards for each type. Spells also have defensive capability, and costs for use, which are subtracted from "energy points". There are powers for both white and black wizards. Each of the players gets a sheet for comparing effects of the cards and for keeping records. It is an excellent, easy to play game for up to 6 players, perhaps the best card game since "Nuclear War". Price is variable in the U.S., write: Games Workshop, 1 Dalling Rd., London W6 0JD, ENGLAND.

## ARDUIN TREASURE PAK

This is a recent release from David Hargrave's Grimoire Games, and designed for use with his Arduin system, though it is compatible with D&D. It consists of 9 sheets of illustrated cards(72 cards total). Of these sheets, 3 are monsters from the Arduin Grimoire, with full descriptions. The remainder are blank, with space for your description of the magic item pictured. The art in this set is excellent, but there is hardly any new material(most of the monsters are in the AG books). In any case, it can be a good visual aid, although the price seems a bit stiff. \$7.95 from Grimoire Games, POB 4363 Berkeley, CA 94704.

## THIEVES GUILD IV

This is another in the ongoing series of thief-oriented scenarios and background essays from Gamelords. This one is by Richard Meyer and Kerry Lloyd. It is 46 loose-leaf pages in a zip-loc. The print is small but readable. The cover art is still lousy, but the interior art is considerably better than in previous issues. Some new thief abilities are included, most of which I have seen before in several places, including the NYR, but it was nice to see them all together in one system. Included are such things as hearing, sight, and smell, and some ideas on trailing a quarry. There is a brief catburglary scenario, and another on armed robbery. It also includes excellent maps, including one of the free city of Haven. At \$5.95, the cost is not really too high compared with the rest of the market, and the material is unusually logical, if only moderately exciting. Order from Gamelords, 18616 Grosbeak Ter., Gaithersburg, MD 20760.

## THE PALLADIUM BOOK OF WEAPONS AND ARMOR

This is a 50 page sourcebook on arms and armor by Matthew Balent. The print is dense, and there are lots of good technical illustrations by Mary Walsh and Kevin Siembieda. It is printed on newsprint, and the reproduction quality is fair. This work shows a great deal of research, and details a vast number of unusual weapons, all with adequate illustrations. A system for armor and damage is given which allows easy conversion to other systems, and tells a good bit about the capabilities of the item. A number of cultures are covered in detail, and every type of weapon is mentioned. There are only a couple of faults. One is that the index is arranged strangely(though its a pleasure to have one). Another fault is in the division of the weapons by types. Just where they are divided is unclear as there are no group headings given, and some weapons don't fit too well into the unavoidable definition classes. Finally, the rating system for the items is not made totally clear. These faults are minor. This is an excellent aid for any serious medieval or fantasy referee. \$4.95 from Palladium Books, 5669 Casper Ave., Detroit, MI 48210.



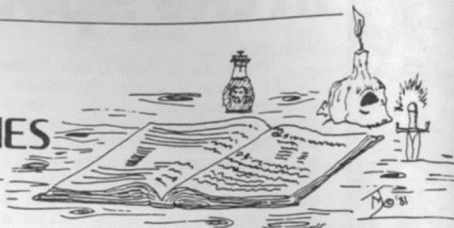
The Free City of

Haven



# CREATIVE MAGIC

MASON JONES



Mason Jones is a frequent contributor to *Alarums & Excursions* in his 'zine "From the Balrog's Egg". He appears here for the first time, giving his views on spicing up magic use. To the great pleasure of our overtaxed artists he provided some illustrations which seemed quite appropriate to illustrate this piece.

When players think about magic use, what comes to mind? Using magic in the same old situations, battling monsters, etc. GMs rarely think much about magic, except for the occasional encounter with a magic-using creature or NPC.

Still, when one thinks about it, there are many more uses for magic than in these common instances. There are many opportunities for the GM to use magic, especially in such areas as attacking fortresses, carrying out assassinations, etc. A multi-classed assassin/magic-user could wreak havoc. What could be of more use to an assassin than *Invisibility*? *Change Self*? Being able to make oneself look like one of the victim's friends would certainly be of use, eh?

For besieging enemy castles there are more spells that can be used in sneaky ways than one might realize. *Rock to Mud* is an especially good one. Turning the front wall of a castle to mud is a neat way to get in, and it could be even crueller, trapping enemy soldiers in the rock as they wallow about in the mud.



Moats, when one thinks about it, are not too useful against a cleric with *part water*. Or, for that matter, *Lower Water*, if the cleric is of a high enough level to lower it to an insignificant depth, shallow enough for soldiers to wade through.

For the defender there are also many good spells. For example, *Cloudkill* has the effect of automatically killing anyone of low level, which most foot-soldiers certainly are. It lasts for a good while, and can float about, killing anyone in its way. The user should be wary of the wind, especially with a druid among the enemy. *Warp Wood* is a lower level druid spell which can disable enemy catapults and siege machines. A catapult is not cheap and easy to replace, either.

Even if the long-range weapons survive, a couple of magic-users with *Telekinesis* can turn

missiles back fairly easily, and won't the enemy be surprised to see their catapult's rocks returning!

For those of you with illusionists, you could simply leave your castle open and no one will dare enter if you take a few precautions. A permanent *Misdirection* spell on a circular room with many exits makes the chance of finding the right entrance rather small. Pits under illusory floors can cause paranoia in the bravest, while *Programmed Illusions* can make illusionary creatures spring out of the walls when the victims pass by. A permanent *Emotion* might make the group be at odds with each other, and a *Veil* could make the lair of a pet look like your treasure vault.

If you ever want to torture someone to get information, there are a few useful spells for this too. For instance, the little-known druid spell *Control Temperature 10' Radius* could make things a bit hot for the poor guy, while the opposite of *Heal* might cause some unpleasant wounds. *Heat Metal*, given time, can be very painful, and if your GM will allow location-specific *Flesh to Stone*, it can be very persuasive.

If your problem is hush eliminating someone, a magic-user can help there, too. *Stone Shape* can be a great help in fashioning a solid stone cell with no entrances or exits, which could be great help in keeping someone confined. If you're sure they can't get out you could even leave a small window so that they can breathe. Of course, *Imprisonment* is the last word in such things, but it is a ninth level spell. *Polymorph Others* can do the job, but it is easily removed by a *Dispel Magic*. *Geas* is not used as much as it could be, though it has the power to send the victim off looking for whatever you might want. It could dispose of him for years on end.

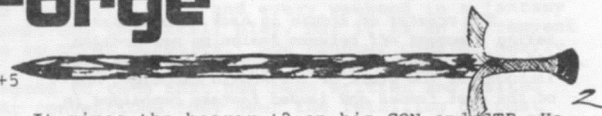
For my money, a very rarely used spell has great potential, *Vanish*. It has the effect of a teleport on things weighing less than 500gp per level of the caster, and it is most useful with the heavier objects in the hands of a higher level mage. These can be placed in the etherial plane and replaced by stone. Using this on a dragon would be nice, but can you imagine using it on a ship at sea? The enemy captain will be quite charinned.

I am sure that more imaginative uses for even the lowliest spell are possible. With some creativity a first-level magic user has the potential to defeat even a mighty archmage. Spells are only as good as the mind which casts them.

## Vidar's Forge

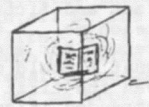
### THE SWORD OF THE VOID

This blade is +3 to hit +5 on damage, and adds 4 to the character's defensive ability. It gives the bearer +2 on his CON and STR. He has a -2 on his DEX. The sword will only allow Fighting-men to bear it (no Berserkers, Paladins, Fighter-Mages, etc.). Its base damage is 1D10 and it does an extra 1D12 of disintegration. It gets doubled damage on demons and undead. It can hit in any plane or half-plane. It has a special 30% sword of sharpness. It has a 17 EGO and is a one-man sword. It will only allow one user, and will limit him to owning 3 artifacts or items of its choice. On a roll of 1 the sword will always fumble and the sword of sharpness will be doubled. It kills permanently, as it annihilates what it hits mortally. The blade is actually an energy field which glows a blackish-purple and pulsates. (Tom Curtin)



### THE CUBE OF CRYSTAL

This 1 inch by 1 inch cube is transparent. With it mages who are unable to memorize every spell available to them may clairvoyantly consult their books and cast spells they left at home. In doing so the mage risks the permanent loss of a point off CON. The chance of such a loss is 4 times the spell cast's level. A mage using the cube to cast a 5th level spell has a 20% chance of losing a point of CON. The cube has 1D6+4 charges. It may not be recharged in any circumstances. (Tom Youngjohn)



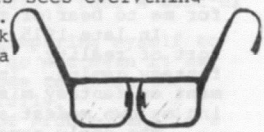
### THREAD OF THE HIGH-PRIEST

When used to sew-up the wounds of a single dead character, this thread will cause the character to return to life. The resurrection is triggered by casting Bless, Strength, or Haste on the subject. He must make his survive resurrection roll. The process of sewing the victim up takes at least 2 rounds, and is modified upward for just how badly he is cut up. There is a limited amount of thread, enough for 2D20+20 points of damage to be sewn up. Any left over damage remains after resurrection, and must be cured normally. The player using the thread should keep a needle handy. (Tom Youngjohn)



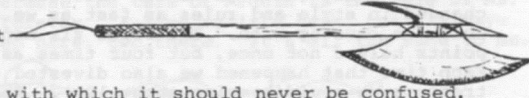
### SPECTACLES OF ROSY VISION

These look like common spectacles with thick lenses with a slight rose-color, and heavy black lenses. The wearer of these glasses sees everything as much better than it is. Everything will look good to him. An orchurger will look like chateaubriand, a hovel will look like a palace, an ugly ogre on the rampage will look like a seductive nymphet. Get the idea? (Clancy O'Hatch)



### AXE OF THE DERVISH HORDES

This is the famous traditional magic item found in every D&D campaign. It was forged by the ancient Dervish fathers to fight for chaos down the ages. It looks exactly like the Axe of the Dwarvish Lords, with which it should never be confused. On picking the axe up the victim will take a firm grip on the handle, and begin to spin around in circles, moving faster and faster, trying to slice up anyone he can. He achieves a state of nirvana-like fugue, in which the axe does 2D20 damage with 25% sword of sharpness, and he is +4/+4. This can be a very nasty surprise for a party of traditional D&Ders. The wielder also gains 50% magic resistance. He does get to make a -5 save to try to drop the sword before going into his spin. (Dave Nalle)



# Arduin Dawn

## David Hargrave

The creator of Arduin is back with us again, taking a moment off between designing new modules and updating the Arduin Grimoire to give some reminiscences of the start of the Arduin campaign, one of the most famous and lauded fantasy campaigns in the U.S.



The idea of a world where magik and fantasy were the rule and not mere myth has been kicking around in my head for about 23 years now. I guess I drew my first "map" of the "world" when I was about twelve. Even then it was an ambitious, full-color attempt at something that, at that time, I really couldn't grasp. I was looking for an escape into my dreams of unknown lands. The impetus for this came from two sources. I was an avid reader of Clark Ashton Smith (especially his stories of Zothique), and Robert E. Howard's Conan stories. These two were chief among my "mentors", guiding me towards what I strongly felt to be destined.

I didn't know then that I would have to literally create a locale for my fantasies, so I spent fruitless years searching through thousands of books of fact and fiction, and picking up "esoteric" tidbits from people I could get to teach me. I travelled the world; 26 months in Europe, 13 in Viet Nam, then a return for another 23 in Asia. On the second tour I avoided the war and saw what I could of Burma, Thailand, and other far lands. I fell in love with Taiwan the first time through and returned once again to that mountainous, mist-shrouded island. Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, even Australia. I tried to soak it all in, or at least as much as my work would allow. Being involved with the Defense Intelligence Agency is not all travel, and has its drawbacks. This was all about 11 years ago, at a time when many parts of my life were beginning to come together. I had played my way through the myriad boardgames available, but I couldn't find anything that was even close to the kind of play I felt a need for.

Stateside again, I was a "free man". I widened my search through the miniature rules which were then extant. I also got hooked up with an organization called Spartan International. Through them I began a four year odyssey through what they called "Panorama Games". In these games the player controlled a nation or empire and could run it as he desired. As in real life, all of the thousands of little details of administering a nation soon made these games too difficult to keep up with. Being the leader of such a state requires 8 hours a day, 7 days a week. This venture did have a spark of something special which kept me active for several years, but the cost in time and money was too much for me to bear (or my first marriage).

In late 1975 I decided that I needed to put my dreams and ideas into some sort of reality. So I began collecting everything I could on the subject of fantasy gaming. Initially I had just TSR's Chainmail booklet with its supplement on fantasy miniatures gaming. Then came D&D and all of the others, including my own modest additions to the genre.

The early games in Arduin were wild and woolly to say the least, and they changed in style and rules as fast as we could experiment with the new ideas which we came up with. The first six months alone saw our characters experience points halved not once, but four times as we whizzed through game after game. Each time that happened we also divested ourselves of every piece of magical treasure we could (keeping about 10%). The monetary loot was also depleted by 90% in attempts to make the game more challenging and realistic. This was a nearly impossible task with the original D&D rule system. We were finding that it was too chaotic and undefined to play properly without doing major rule re-writing and augmentation ourselves. Thus began the serious and ongoing (even to this day) updating and improving of the rule systems of the world of Arduin.

Perhaps I have been more fortunate than most in that I spent the first 4 years gaming at least 40 hours a week. It reached a point of near-obsession with me. So much so that I was only averaging 25-30 hours of sleep a week. When

I wasn't playing the game I was still "working" on it. It was killing me and I knew it, but as the momentum of the game called Arduin gathered, I was bound into more and more game-related things; conventions, seminars, game clubs, fan clubs, and either a FRP oriented game store that I hocked my soul to put together. I was living, breathing, and (infrequently) even sleeping all that was Arduin.

It was those first burning days that were, somehow, the best. There were a whole series of quality players who had the will and time to play for hours on end, and who "believed". For it is the very belief in the world that makes everything fun and worthwhile.

Today things are different. I usually only play 15-20 hours a week in two games (Thursday night and all day/night on Saturday).

It seems that all of those dedicated and believing people now (for the most part) have better things to do than spend each and every weekend in a fantasy world. Oh, they're still around, and they still play, but it is an infrequent thing now as they have turned to other pursuits. Now younger ones (by nearly half) flock to play in Arduin. They are drawn by its patina of age and consistence of play. Arduin is a legend to them that has been written and talked about everywhere they look. At conventions they hear the retelling of past games of glory; at game stores they see its books and boxes, modules, and reviews of them. It has a sort of legitimacy because it has been around so long as an ongoing force in the FRP world.

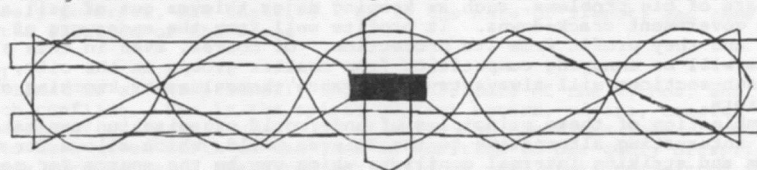
These youngsters do not seem to have the same spark in them that I so frequently saw in the players of the past. They are a different breed; one that is more knowledgeable about the genre, and has as much enthusiasm. But they are different nonetheless in a manner that I can't seem to put my finger on. I miss the old days terribly, but again for reasons I cannot really define. The truth is, I think, simply that those tunes of glory sound better now, echoing in the gilded halls of the past.

I guess that I have played in or run some 800-1000 games in the last six or so years. And the really scary thing about these awesome numbers is that I don't really feel like I've been in a game every 3 or 4 days during that time. It's as if it had all happened to someone else, and I've been watching through a window at that bearded guy huddled over a cluttered table with all of the ever-changing faces of the people who have flitted through his life. It's odd that I should feel this way, but I do. Perhaps it is an outgrowth of being a part of a world of my own creation, a world that has become as real to me as the mundane one I actually trudge through each day. Now don't get me wrong here, I am no stupid and introverted slug who can't distinguish reality from fantasy. On the contrary, I lead a full and productive life turning out new games and articles. I have a wondrous and loving wife with whom I still carry on a dizzying love affair, and several close and true friends with whom I share many fine moments (most of which are NOT game-related). I like movies and books and freely indulge myself in them. I usually find time now and again to prowl the beaches and byways of northern California discovering new things to see or do.

No, I'm not too wrapped up in fantasy and fantasy gaming for my own good. However, I still have a gut-level belief in what I've created, or perhaps I should say, what I've chronicled. For that's what I think I've done. I have simply put down the perception of something that I "know" and "experience" as an alternate truth. I think that many people have shared this sort of experience. Clark Ashton Smith and Robert E. Howard are two literary examples who come to mind. Lovecraft also saw into other realities, though his was a darker and more forbidding realm than I have ever glimpsed. Still, I feel a sort of kinship with him as well.

I guess this all sounds rather egotistic, what with comparing myself to three of the finest writers of our time and genre. But I do not mean it as such, I'm just telling you what I really feel. I feel close to these three great figures, bound by something I can't really express fully.

All of this was supposed to be about the early days of Arduin, and in a round about manner I think it is, because the tale of Arduin is the tale of ME. Both are one and the same, now and forever. I live my life here, but I always tread the ground of Arduin. One step here, two there. It's all the same to me.





# APPRENTICE & ADEPT: Brotherhood of Crime

Carl Jones

Many rule-systems, scenarios, and role-playing campaigns seem to be enamored with the idea of a Thieves Guild. There is even a moderately popular series of supplements and scenarios with that title. Yet, historically and logically such an institution is highly unlikely, at least in the form in which it is most commonly described. The popular idea of a Thieves Guild originates primarily in the "Swords" series of Fritz Leiber, and was latched onto by GMs and designers who seemed to think that it legitimized the Thief as a character class.

In fact, there is no historical precedent for a thieves union to which all thieves belong, either as a legitimate organization or an underworld force. A chartered and officially recognized Thieves Guild is a ridiculous concept. Such an organization would be stamped out by government and merchants before it could get started. Organizing thieves in this way works against their best interests, because it brings them together and makes it easier for the forces of law and order to get their hands on them. Even an underworld guild of thieves would be unlikely, because thieves tend to be independant minded and greedy, and without any regulation or official status, competing guilds would spring up. Also, the problem of centralization remains, because the leadership could easily be wiped out by a government which wasn't shackled by adherence to due process.

Since it is clear that the traditional Thieves Guild is an impossibility except in a society of the most unusual morals and qualities, we have to look at what sort of thieving organizations would actually exist. Even in our odd modern world no Thieves Guild exists, though the Mafia has extended control to an unusually high level. Even so, the Mafia is merely the largest of many such organizations.

A far more reasonable arrangement is one of competing gangs, mobs, syndicates, or other underworld organizations. These are mutually protective groups of few or many thieves and criminals of other kinds, in some cases with a specific area of practice, or in the case of larger groups, a finger in many pies.

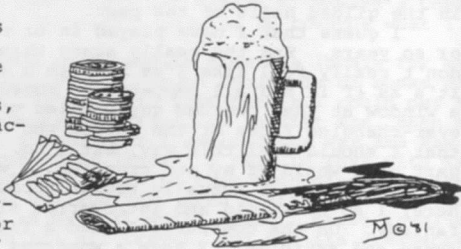
Small gangs can operate in any of several areas. They can be gangs of brigands preying on travellers on the road, or robbing banks, houses, or whatever. They could work in limited areas of petty extortion, specializing in a single area of commerce, for example all the stores in a given area, or all dealings in wine and beer for a region, or perhaps in prostitution or gambling. There are as many areas of specialization for a small gang as there are types of crime. In such a gang there would be thieves of limited skill and similar interests, and perhaps one highly skilled leader. There would be fewer than 20 members in most cases, depending on prosperity and need.

Larger organizations might control large regions of a city, several areas of commerce, or many different sub-divisions of crime. Such groups would have specialized members, including administrators, hit-men (assassins), and myriad other experts in fine areas of the craft. They might garner a great deal of power and political influence through blackmail, extortion, and bribery.

Pirates and Brigands fit into these groups, as they perform a gang-type thievery in open country or water, similar to the smaller gangs in a city, usually with a regional preference, and certain types of commerce which they prefer to trade on.

Another possible aspect is that of the over-gang, a concept similar to the Mafia, or a fast-food chain. This concept also holds many of the elements of feudal government. Essentially a gang becomes so powerful that it becomes highly weighted towards administration. To survive it begins to let-out franchises in key local areas or topics of criminal activity. It absorbs smaller groups, which keep their autonomy while it performs necessary administrative functions and takes care of big problems, such as keeping major thieves out of jail and staving off government crack-downs. It profits well from the endeavors of its many parts, and they profit from its protection. Of course, even in this situation there will be annoying competition from smaller groups in the city, and leaders of sub-sections will always try to advance themselves by knocking off their superiors.

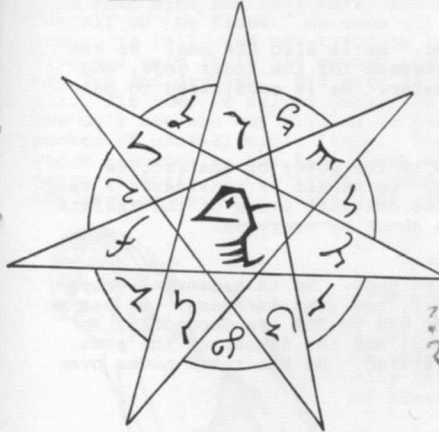
The combination of these principles of underworld organization can make for a much more interesting alternative to the Thieves Guild, which allows for strong factionalism and striking internal conflicts which can be the source for many adventures. They also open the option for fighters and mages who are involved in criminal pursuits, as well as the traditional thieves and assassins. On the whole it is a more realistic and more enjoyable approach to crime.



# The Assyro-Babylonian Mythos

Dave Nalle

Lew Bryson's treatment of Finnish mythology last issue was so well recieved that it seems appropriate to look at another mythology which was maligned in *Deities and Demigods*. None has been more mangled than the mythos of Mesopotamia, and none has greater potential for playability.



In the third millenium b.c. a powerful civilisation grew up among the tribes on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the region called Mesopotamia. It was a culture heavily oriented towards urban living, and boasted a number of famous cities, among them Babylon, Sumer, Akkad, Eridu, Nippur, Lagash, Erêch, Larsa, Ur, Agade, Borsippa, Kish, Kutha, and Sippar. There was a basic north-south division between the two main tribal groups, the Sumerians and Akkadians. Control of the fertile valley fludtuated between these two groups, and changed from one major city to another with shifts in power.

By far the longest ruling and most powerful of the cities was Babylon in the south, which ruled in a period when united Sumer and Akkad were known as Assyria, or by the name of Babylon itself.

This urban nature is important, because above a national identity the people of the region were attached to and proud of their city, so the nature and interests of many of the gods are intertwined with the city which claimed that god as its benefactor.

In *Deities and Demigods* the wizards of TSR have done another botch-job on a fascinating and complex mythology, glossing over the productive internal conflicts, omitting the important magic items, including one which generated almost all of the action of the myths, and generally obscuring the nature of the mythos. I will try to set some of this straight.

The gods of Babylon and the surrounding lands can be divided into three groups. There are the Elder Gods, the parents and creators of the world and the other gods, and two groups of Younger Gods, the Igigi who rule the skies, and the Annunake who rule the earth and underworld. The major gods in these groups are described below, followed by a look at the artifacts of the mythos.

## THE ELDER GODS

These are the gods of the primordial universe, who existed before the creation of man or even the other gods. They gradually faded into the background and pretty much out of the mythos. TSR missed almost all of these gods, a bad error, since one of the main conflicts in the mythos was between Tiamat and her children.

## APSU

Apsu is the principle of the still waters and the deep ocean. He is also considered to be embodied in the great ocean which surrounds the world. He is immensely powerful, but inactive. He is the mate of Tiamat, and came into being with the creation of the world

## TIAMAT

Tiamat is an exceptionally important feature of the mythos, and the source of much conflict. She is the spirit of fast waters, rivers, coastal waters, and the forces of the primal chaos out of which the earth was made. She is considered to have given birth to the land in addition to her godly offspring. She is not a nice mother. She hates her children, and seeks to destroy them and even the land itself. The first generation of her offspring try to help her with the war on the 4th generation gods. Generally it is the 1st 3 generations against the 4th one. She has the unusual power of being able to spontaneously



give birth to any creature, including scorpion men, serpents, dragons, and many other monsters. She is present in all coastal and river waters, and never actually takes a human form.

**LAKHMU AND LAKHAMU**

These are the firstborn of Apsu and Tiamat, and they are identical twins and mates as well. They are the parents of the next generation of gods. They appear as huge snakes and live in the sea. They travel between deep and shallow waters, and are very loyal to their parents. They can be assumed to be over 200 yards in length, and extremely powerful, with magical powers including control of waters and storm. They can move and live on land, though they prefer not to. Lakhmu is the male.

**MUMMU, VOICE OF THE WATERS**

Mummu is the chief advisor and aid of Apsu. He is also his son. He can take a human form, and fights well. He is spokesman for the Elder Gods, and cannot be slain if he is standing in running water. He is considered to be the wisest of the gods.

**KINGU**

Kingu is the son and lover of Tiamat. He is the power of destructive waves, and the main champion of the Elder Gods. He should be considered a very formidable warrior, a giant man/fish. He is the original owner of the Tablets of Fate, the great artifact which gets stolen about by everyone.

**ANSHAR**

This is the only Elder God in Deities & Demigods. He is a general celestial diety, embodying the entire dome of the sky, not just darkness. He has no physical form, and none of the attributes given him by TSR are documented in any real way. He is a spirit of air and the sky, and the father of the gods. He is held in reverence, but is more or less retired. He has total power over light and darkness, but is generally inactive.

**K'SHAR**

K'shar is Anshar's twin and wife, mother of the gods. She embodies the earth principle, and is a relatively minor goddess, except for her role as the mother of the gods. She does not appear in physical form.

**THE ANNUNAKE**

As much as anyone in this rather nasty group could be considered the good guys, I suppose I'd have to pick the Annunake. They are mostly the children of Anshar and K'shar, and they are dieties of the sky and its different attributes. They are the defenders and protectors of mankind, and they are the main foes of the Elder Gods. They the 4th generation, and some are of the 5th. Most of the 5th generation gods were earth-gods, however.

**ANU**

Anu is chief of the Annunake. It is hard to believe that TSR missed him, as he is mentioned frequently in the legends. He is a powerful sky-god, associated mainly with the winds, especially the powerful and destructive storm-winds. He is the judge of the gods, father of the Annunake. His symbol of power is a tiara on a throne, and he bears a sceptre, diadem, and crown. He is also the possessor of the Staff of Command (explained later). He appears as an aged human king, and never comes to earth or appears to men. He is unwilling to engage in any form of battle. He has delegated most of his power to Marduk. His mate is Antu.

**EA, HOUSE OF THE WATER**

Ea is Anu's 1st son. He is a god of intellect and rivers and springs. He brings abundance, happiness, growth, knowledge, and wisdom. He is called Ningiku, "Lord of the sacred eye", and is all-seeing. He has oracular powers of vision, and is the god of crafts, especially goldsmithing. He is a mason and fashioned mankind of clay. Eridu is his holy city, where his temple/house, Ezuab is located. In the garden of the temple is the tree Kishkamu, which is described in the section on artifacts. He is a man with goat horns and the lower body of a fish. He has the Crown of Light, which was stolen from Apsu. He is also a god of healing. He is all



knowing. His mate is the goddess Damkina.

**ENLIL**

Enlil is the second of Anu's sons. He is a god of the storm, rains, and related areas. He is god of the hurricane and the deluge. He is called "The King of the Land", and dwells on a huge mountain to the east. He has control of wolves, commands the plague, and can cause mass sleep. He has the additional and greatest power to command the Amaru, or great deluge, a flood of truly mamoth proportions.

**MARDUK**

TSR's physical description of this god is passable. He is a tall humanoid with four eyes and four ears, though these are spaced evenly around his head, not all on the front. He sees all and hears all. He breathes fire, has poison fangs, is tall, and beautiful to look on. In a storm he can breathe in lightning and spit it at his chosen target. His body is radiant. He is a god of the sun and dryness. His city is Babylon, and his temple there is called Esagil. His home is called Duku. He is the acting leader of the Igigi, as he is the only one who was willing to face up to Tiamat, who he defeated. He has a number of unusual magic items. They are a chariot drawn by four horses who are storm elementals, the Palu a net which repels foes, a Bow of Lightning, the Marru or Spade of Cultivation, and a Scimitar of Flame. These are described in the section on magic items. He also has the Cloak of Terror.



**ASSHUR**

Asshur is the warrior god of the Assyrians. He is a muscular man who rides on a bull. His symbol is a winged disk. He leads armies into battle and often appears to inspire warriors. Warriors often sacrifice part of their pillage to him after battle. He seems like a huge, muscular man, and can literally tear men apart with his hands. He is the god of Ninevah

**OTHER ANNUNAKE**

Also of note among the Annunake are several gods and goddesses of lesser stature:

- Gaga: Messenger of the Annunake.
  - Aruru: Mate of Marduk.
  - Ninkhursig: Mate of Enlil, her milk nourishes chosen king.
  - Damkina: Mate of Ea, she rules over accord and peaceful negotiation. Goddess of fate.
  - Zarpanit: An alternate mate of Marduk.
  - Ninlil: Mate of Asshur.
  - Gibil: Son of Anu, fire god, especially cooking fires.
  - Nusku: God of sacrifices and sacrificial fires. His symbol is the lamp.
  - Nanshe: Daughter of Ea, goddess of canals and springs. Her symbol is a vase with a fish. Her cities are Lagash and Eridu.
  - Nisaba: Daughter of Ea. Harvest goddess.
  - Geshtin: Goddess of the vine.
  - Ninkura: Goddess of plants and harvest.
  - Nabu: God of wisdom and subterranean streams. The bite of the two snakes he carries brings understanding. Also Sabu. Guardian of priests.
  - Ramman: Mostly made-up by TSR. Primarily a god of storms and justice. He is very minor. *cf Rimmon in the tale of Elfa!*
  - Gula: Goddess of healing.
  - Zarpanit: Goddess of spring, fertility, and children.
  - Anahita: Goddess of fruitfulness, life, and warfare.
- Also of note about the group is their practice of meeting on the festival of Zagmuk at the first of each year to determine the fate of man. They meet in the banquet hall of Upshukina.

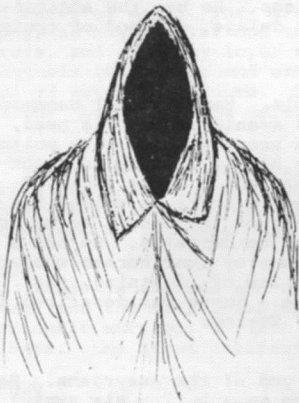
**THE IGIGI**

These are gods of the night sky and the underworld for the most part, while the Annunake rule the sea, land, and day sky. They are generally opposed to Anu, and would love to cast him down. They are not strictly evil, though more of them have evil tendencies than do the majority of the Annunake. Their origin is not totally clear, though much more is known about them as individuals than is known about the Annunake. Take particular note of Sin, as he is a bit of an exception among this crew of nasties.



**SIN, THE UNKNOWNABLE**

Sin is one that TSR couldn't have missed, but they did. Don't ask me how. He is the number one Igigi, father of the others. He is a moon god. He is father to both Shamash and Ishtar. He appears as an old man with a long green and black beard. He wears a turban. He has horns, sort of standard for a moon god. He measures time and has control over it. He is stand-offish and very obscure in his intentions. He does not really take part in the fights between the Igigi and Annunake, and sort of dislikes his children, who don't think much of him either. He appears only at night, controls darkness and dreams, and gives oracular visions. He is exceedingly wise, and wears an item called the Diadem of Darkness, which is described in the artifact section. He hates Marduk. He is also called Nannar, and his city is Ur. By night he watches from the moon to catch criminals, who he has a great dislike for.



**SHAMASH, LORD OF JUDGEMENT**

Shamash is the Igigi competitor for Marduk as sun-god. He has an intense dislike for evil, and he will pursue the evil by day and apprehend them. He can be considered N/G. He rules over divination and is celebrated at the divinatory festival of Sippar. His rays can capture people by solidifying around them and imprisoning them. He carries a sceptre of office and wears a golden horned crown. He is considered to be the giver of life, and opposes Marduk's role as destructive sunlight, representing the growth and life engendered by the sun. He is pliable, and easily convinced to fall in with the schemes of Ishtar and Nergal. He is the chief of the Igigi as Sin, his father, will not take command. He is also called Utu.

**ISHTAR, STAR OF LAMENTATION**

Ishtar is the single most important goddess in the mythos. Most of the powers given in Deities & Demigods are spurious, though she does have the chariot drawn by seven lions, and she is an unbelievably beautiful woman with the power to madden men with lust. They also added a lot of irrelevant stuff. She is called the "Goddess of Morn & Evening", and this symbolizes her dual nature as a goddess of war and of love. She is a remarkable archer, very temperamental, and falls in love easily. She is vengeful, and destructive. She is the goddess of dissent, and most important, she represents infidelity and destructive love. Those she loves usually kill themselves, and she drives men to self-destruction for love and war. She will often slay her own lovers as well in a fit of pique. Her cities are Ninevah and Arbela. She is also called Inanna. She accepts as sacrifice animals and newborn infants. Her temples feature both male and female prostitutes. She is considered to be the sister of Ereshkigal, though by a different set of parents. She has a seat in hell, though she does not sit there as a ruler. She is the daughter of Sin.

**NERGAL, LORD OF THE GREAT DWELLING**

Nergal, also called Meshlamthea, is the sometime lover of Ishtar, and the lord by conquest of the infernal region of Arallu, though he shares this duty with Ereshkigal. He is covered by TSR, but there are major errors. He does not take human form. Rather, he is a man with a lion's head. The shield which they mention is also a fantasy. In fact, he is a god of war and death, and fights with magic, in the form of a numbing darkness, or with a great golden sword, which strikes for 3D20. He fights mainly through his many demonic aids. He is married to Ereshkigal. For most of the time of the mythos his power is greatly augmented by possession of the Tablets of Fate which were stolen for him by Zu. Nergal is powerful and nasty. The main source of his power is his sneaky manipulation, by which he gained control of Arallu, and his use of many powerful demons. He hates the Annunake who rejected him, and he doesn't like his own relatives much better. He is a small-souled failed social climber who gets revenge in petty ways. He is both feared and disparaged by friends and foes. He is a god of death and darkness only because he failed as a god of war. His personality is fascinating and convoluted, a real Freudian nightmare.

**ADAD**

Adad is a peripheral god of this group. He is a god of violent storm. He bears thunderbolts, and rides standing on a bull's back. He is stupid and bellicose. He roars constantly. He has the power to see the future, but not to do much about it, and he controls rains, winds, and river-floods, including the beneficial aspects of silt-depositing floods.

**TAMMUZ, LORD OF THE WOOD OF LIFE**

Tammuz is another of Ishtar's lovers, a short-lived one at that. He is the son of Ningishzida. He is a harvest god and appears as a beautiful blond-haired youth. He is a parallel of Adonis. He is lord of the woods and wilderness as well. He is also called Dumuzi. He dies and is reborn, so he is the god of all annual vegetation. He is a popular cultural figure.

**ERESHKIGAL, PRINCESS OF THE GREAT EARTH**

Ereshkigal is the original underworld goddess who took Nergal in and wed him, and with whom he shares the throne of Arallu. She appears as an old woman, and has power over the dead, including reanimation, and the like. She basically handles the dead spirits, while Nergal handles the demons. The 7 Galla are her personal agents. They are described with the other creatures after this section.

**ADDITIONAL IGIGI**

There are a number of lesser underworld deities and beings associated with the Igigi. Those who are unique are given here. Demons and monsters are in the later section on lesser creatures.

Zu: "The Storm-Bird", is a being who embodies evil, theft, and greed. He is a raven-man, and a pal of Nergal. He stole the Tablets of Fate.

Ningal: The wife of Sin.

Bunane: Coachman of Shamash, drives the sun across the sky.

Baru: Demi-god prophet of Shamash.

Aya: Mate of Shamash.

Kittu: Son of Shamash, god of justice.

Misharu: Son of Shamash, god of Law.

Ninurta: God of Lagash. God of irrigation and precious stones. Has spiked club.

Bau: Mate of Ninurta. Breathed life into man.

Shala: Mate of Adad.

Ninazu: God who inspires those who make prophecies through divination by water.

Namtaru: Lieutenant of Nergal, the god of plague.

Belit-Seri: The scribe of Arallu. Keeps a book in which he marks down the names of the dead.

Neti: Gatekeeper of Arallu.

Ninshabur: The steward and butler of Ishtar.

Enkimdu: God of animals, brother of Tammuz.



**CREATURES, DEMONS, AND SPIRITS**

There are a number of strange beings in the mythos. These were totally missed in D&D. They can be divided into three main groups, the Demons, who are for the most part from Arallu, the Spirits, who are all from Arallu, and the creatures, who issue from the body of Tiamat, or the power of other gods.

**THE ASHIPU**

These are a caste of wizard/priests who specialize in exorcism. They are not bound to specific temples, and are available for hire in disposing of some of the nastier spirits who like to oppress or possess people.

**THE UTUKKU**

These are the evil genii of the deep ocean, the main servants of Tiamat. They also rent-out to Nergal. They are unstoppable, cause disease and discord, and often possess victims. They can take the forms of goats, fish, snakes, and men. They are quite powerful and fairly numerous. They oppose the Sheddu and Lamassu.

**SHEDDU AND LAMASSU**

These are good genii created by the younger gods. They are bulls or lions with the heads of men, and often winged. Their main duty was to guard temples, regardless of the god of the temple. They are loyal and know their duty, and they can become super-invisible. They hate all disorder.



**THE MASKIM**

These are seven demons, perhaps the most dreaded things in the entire myth-cycle. They are outside of the power of all gods, though they may be summoned. They represent total destruction and chaos in the form of earthquake, whirlwind, tidalwave, plague, famine, drought, and war. When summoned together they cause total devastation. Even the gods quake at their presence. In form and general powers they are super-utukku, plus the appropriate type of destruction.

**KURGARRU AND KALATURRU**

These are two giant golems created as guards by Ea. They can be treated as 100ft tall stone golems under his control.

**SCORPION MEN**

These are a popular creation of Tiamat which have been written up before. They are giant scorpions with the upper-bodies of men, sort of like scorpion-centaurs. They fight with spears and their stings. They live in the desert.

**EDIMMU**

These are the spirits of the dead who were denied funeral rights, and cannot rest in Arallu. They resemble gauzy, ethereal birds, and will possess the living.

**GALLA**

These are Erishkigal's seven pet demons. They resemble tall mummy women. They drink human blood, and love to kill children. They need no other food or drink.

**THE ARTIFACTS OF THE GODS**

There are a number of godly artifacts missed by TSR which should be taken at least brief note of.

**THE TABLETS OF FATE**

These are large stone tablets on which everything is written. The owner is omniscient and omnipotent. Everyone wants to steal them. They were originally Kingu's, and ended up with Nergal. Reading them might kill a mortal, and only possession gives full use.

**STAFF OF COMMAND**

This is the father of all staves of commanding. It can make anyone do anything with a wave. In the hands of a mortal it should be less potent.

**CROWN OF LIGHT**

This appears as a disk of bright light over the wearer's head. It can cause blindness to all who look in its direction, and can fire a light-beam for 3D20 5 times a day.

**KISHKAMU**

This is a tree of black lapis-lazuli. The leaves can cause total and all-encompassing darkness. They are made of black crystal.

**PALU**

This net acts as a high-power repulsion field, or can be used to entangle.

**BOW OF LIGHTNING**

Arrows from this bow become 2D12 lightning bolts.

**MARRU**

Ground turned by this spade becomes super-fertile, growing things at a great rate.

**SCIMITAR OF FLAME**

This hits for 2D20 flame damage, and cauterizes all wounds so that they become scar tissue instantly.

**CLOAK OF TERROR**

Any who face the wearer must save -8 against paralytic fear.

**DIADEM OF DARKNESS**

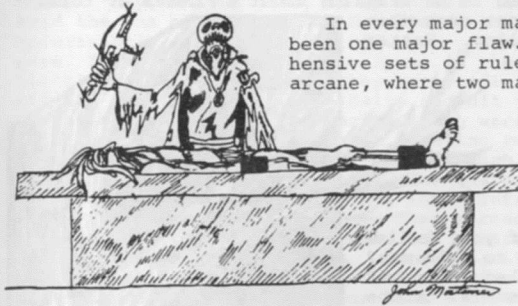
This black gem has the power to reveal to the wearer all thieves or ill-intentioned persons in sight, and to surround them with total darkness. This does not apply to those intending open violence.

**ADDITIONAL NOTES**

This is a complex and devious mythos, which has room for a great amount of conflict and interesting encounters. If played wisely it can be an engrossing and challenging realm for adventure. Remember that while the gods are powerful they can be defeated if not slain.

As to TSR's treatment. As a final note, disregard Dahak and Druagga, they are drug fantasies, and quite unnecessary as there are plenty of much more interesting beings who actually belong to the mythos.

**THE ARTS ARCAINE:  
Duelling** **Jon Schuller**



In every major magic system designed to date there has been one major flaw. None of these excellent and comprehensive sets of rules has made any provisions for the duel arcane, where two mages face each other in mortal combat, curse to curse and spell to spell.

Invariably, meetings between mages either end in stalemate or obliteration. There is either a near instant victory or no victory at all. Never does such a duel have the more logical outcome of a protracted and hard-fought contest with a result which is at least a little bit in question.

The problem is that mage spells are either offensive or defensive, but not both, and when a mage may only use

one spell per round, he may attack or defend, but not do both. This makes such a battle very limited, and often one-sided. The mage who makes a lucky choice in the right attack will win on the first round, because no defense covers enough general attacks to be useful when anything is possible, and because in most cases the defending mage will buckle under the first spell which gets through to him. Depending on making repeated saving throws to stay in combat just isn't adequate. This is a problem.

I hate to propose such a problem without an answer, and I have one. The key to solving this problem and setting up the potential for playable duels is spell interaction. Who knows what happens when two spells meet? With a little thought, a good GM should. When spells collide, whether they be attacks or defenses, a lot of magic is mixing together, and something must happen. Just what happens in each situation is the GMs problem.

A simple guideline is to know your spells. If you understand the nature of the spells in use and the principles on which they work you can get a good idea of how they will interact. For example, what happens when a Fireball and a Cold Cone meet? Clearly the fireball will be cooled, but the material aspect will still hit, perhaps for half damage. On the other hand, the Cone of Cold is wholly immaterial, and would probably get heated out of existence. This is the simplest and most straightforward example. Think about some other combinations. Sleep and Finger of Death? Perhaps the severity of each would be lessened? Two fireballs? Perhaps a huge explosion? Creeping Doom and Wall of Fire? Bugs burn! The only difficulty is with the subtle combinations. In these cases something should get past and they should have a limited effect, but perhaps a bit of twisting, augmentation, or reversal is possible. By allowing refereed interaction the power of mages is kept down in a duel so that technique and a bit of thought will replace raw power.

Another good aspect in a spell point system or the equivalent might be to allow spell negation by spending the cost of the spell which hits you in spell points as if you were casting it, in order to negate it. In this way, a mage could get worn down and run out of power to lose the combat. An alternative aspect might be to let a mage cast any spell he knows as a counterspell if he is hit by the same spell from his foe, though this would not work with low levels, and it might have to be done allowing one spell at the start of the round and a counterspell at the end.

By combining these elements you can make magic much more interesting and make mage duels much more playable. The possibilities in such a system make NPC mages much more useful in an adventure as well, as they are able to defend better and do some intriguing things. On the whole I can think of no simpler or more important expansion which could even try to add as much to a fantasy campaign under any rule system.



# Dramatic License

## Lew Bryson

Once again Lew Bryson brings us the latest installment in his series of tales about brave adventurers in the land of Polarion. For the record, part 1 was in ABYSS #5/6, part 2 was in ABYSS #7, part 3 was in ABYSS #9, part 4 was in ABYSS #12, part 5 was in ABYSS #16, and part 7 will be in next issue. This tale is drawing to a close with only one more section, plus an epilogue, but Lew has promised us another series to take its place.

On stage the play had begun. Unferth stalked the boards, twirling his long blond moustache and feeling every inch the potentially evil and intelligently cruel satrap of the Empire. Acting is life, he mused. "So, Tell, you've been spreading discontent in your village, eh?" He spread his arms dramatically to take in the illusory townsfolk, who seemed to be standing about in poses of total boredom, yawning, and slumping against each other. Damn wizard. The audience was giggling. Better save this with some superior acting. "I think all of you had better think about the consequences of disobedience to an Imperial Satrap! Think about it!" He thundered, turning on Alroy. The wizard's magic mouth was sticking its magic tongue out at him. "Tell! How will you feel when the men of this village are tortured because of your foolishness? Villagers! Why do you listen to this man? Why do you resist?" THUMP! He whirled as one of the illusions fell to the stage. Several of the others stretched out, snoring loudly. The audience laughed at his impotent rage. "GUARDS!," he bellowed.

Talos watched as Mithrandir's illusory Imperial troopers clumped into the illusory village square. He winced as the last one tripped over his own pike and fell into the next one, who obligingly fell into the next, until all 20 had fallen flat on their faces. "Yes, sir!" the commander shouted at Unferth's feet. The crowd was roaring, but Talos was worried. If the moron got confused, anything could happen. Why had Unferth cast him in this role? He watched the Viking kick the supine soldiers, barking orders. Maybe it wasn't such a bad role for Talos. There weren't any lines, and very little action. Just Talos' speed.

"All right, Tell, let's see how you like to see others suffer for your actions." Unferth was seething now. "Captain! Is that a pomegranate tree over there?" "Yes, sir, it is, sir!" the phantasmal officer roared in his ear. Unferth yanked out his throwing axe and whipped it off stage into a wooden post a foot from Mithrandir's ear. "Well, go get me a pomegranate then, jackass!" The illusory soldier froze for a moment, in unison with Mithrandir, then he hopped off stage, returning with the fruit. "Thank you captain, you're a true wizard." He saw Mithrandir making obscene gestures in the corner of his eye. He smiled and turned to Alroy. "Is this wretch your son, Tell?" He motioned for Talos to come to him. "Yes, troll-tupper, that's my son," came Mithrandir's voice from Alroy's bemused face. "He knows his father, more than some here can say."

Implotius watched as Unferth put his hand on Talos' shoulder. That was his signal. He tapped another beer, watching the stage. "I hear you're pretty good with knives, Tell. Think you can take the fruit off of this little fellow's head? I hope so, because if you can't I'll just kill you both." The mug was filling. Alroy's reply came as he loosened Mimir in its scabbard. "I can quarter it on his head." Implotius handed the beer to the guard by the wagon, and as he turned back to the stage, Alroy drew two knives. Mimir slipped silently from its scabbard. As the Greek raised the cobalt blade, Alroy pivoted from Talos to face the crowd. Mimir whistled down, slicing through the guard from shoulder to hip. The body just fell apart, gushing blood and drenching the Greek. His eyes followed the swift course of Alroy's knives as they flew above the audience to sink into the right eye and heart of the local lord. The Greek vaulted



ted onto the oxcart and grabbed the whip. Mithrandir had just put a lightning bolt into the lord's wooden dias. Implotius twisted in his seat and lobbed a crystal back into the middle of a group of confused merchants. As it hit one of their elaborate hats, the magic was triggered and a field of whirling blades appeared. Screams shattered the silence of the amphitheatre, flesh and bone flew, and Implotius whipped the oxen.

Mithrandir took the lead as the rest of the gang cleared off the stage. He made a beeline for the cart and leapt aboard. "Faster Greek, if the guards get us, we're done!" Alroy and Unferth bounded onto the cart and Implotius laid into the team. "How in the name of Hodr do you run so fast?" panted Unferth. "I just picture an escaping hobbit in front of me," the wizard said. "We've gotta keep moving, I counted about 50 guards, where's Talos?"

In reply, Alroy cast a knife into the floor of the cart. It grew into the shapeshifter. "I just hitched a ride. He had an empty sheath, and he runs faster than me." He didn't mention that it's pretty hard to wound a knife.

They clattered down the street with the sounds of pursuit growing behind them. "Hey, what's going on up there?" Mithrandir blurted. The square ahead held the Inn of the Stunned Cow, where they had planned to make their stand. Unfortunately, they were cut off. They hired swords were scattered about the square, four in hiding, and one lying in the open doing a pincushion imitation. "Little halfling bastards, they revolted! I'll destroy them!" Mithrandir lept off the cart, shifting in midair, and hit the ground in bulette form, burrowing into the street as if the packed earth were water.

The others sat on the cart, getting ready to fight the guards on the street if they had to. Unferth didn't think much of their chances without the support of Mithrandir's lightning-bolt. The guards had just come into sight, running hard, when screams came from the inn. Unferth dropped the lead runner with an arrow and their speed slacked. They spread out and began nocking arrows. Then the doors of the inn burst open, and Mithrandir appeared grinning, holding a squirming hobbit upside-down. "Come on, it's clear!" The mercs and the oxcart bolted for the inn in a shower of arrows which came to late to hit anyone.

The captain of the guards sent a lieutenant to the inn. "Open the door immediately."

"I'm sorry, no rooms left. Come back in the morning."

"Open this door, in the name of Baron Lakhna!"

"I'm sorry, no credit for dead men. You'll have to come back in the morning." There was a slight giggle as Mithrandir warmed to his work.

"If you don't open up now we'll come in for you. Surrender assassin and it will go easier for you. Otherwise we'll hang you all."

"Oh, since you put it that way, we surrender, come on in." Mithrandir suddenly swung the door open and fired a lightning bolt into the guard's stomach at a range of four feet. KKKRRRACCKKKK! The clap of thunder was deafening in the front room, and the lieutenant was almost blown in half, his shattered body left twitching in the square. "Come and get us, you stupid provincials! Learn what it means to be killed with style and grace! I've killed men like you for practice, and..." Unferth and Implotius grabbed the wizard and hauled him back into the inn as the troops filled the door with arrows, "Always got to have the last word, don't you?! What do you have to say for yourself?"

Mithrandir considered for a moment. "Sure blew him away, though, didn't I? Besides, listen, they're so mad they're firing at the walls!" The thunk of arrows could be heard. "Pretty pointless, eh?"

"Hey, Unferth, they're shooting fire arrows into the inn! We're up the creek! Talos came racing down the stairs. "The whole front wall is catching!"

Homicidal thoughts went through the Vikings mind. Wizards! "We'll have to take them. Get everyone in here, we'll come up with something." Maybe he should have listened to his mother and taken that vacation in Ynisgael...

## BACKGROUNDING: The Archimages of Ptolememeias Roy Nicol

The third major institution in the city of Ptolememeias is the youngest by far. In the year 744 a group of powerful mage adepts gathered together in a conclave for the first time in over 100 years. The main concern of this meeting was the misuse of the arts magical within the city, and what role the mages should play in limiting this misuse.

Mage adepts are the class of mages who are of sufficient power and renown to be guildmasters, but have instead opted to retire to private study and are considered to be guild members emeritus, not subject to dues or responsibilities.



They are for the most part the most talented and experienced practitioners of the magic arts, and they are usually expert in several areas of magic. A conclave of these free spirits is very rare, and is called only in the times of the most dire crisis or concern. All in all there have been three conclaves, the Conclave of 127, which met to consider the threat posed to the city by the southward migration of the Saexe and Vaen tribes, the Conclave of 635, which met to consider the threat posed by the Saexe empire, and the one with which we are concerned. Conclaves are usually held in secret, and there were a number of lesser alliances between adepts to meet other crises when the full conclave of adepts refused to gather for one of many factious reasons.

The outcome of the Conclave of 744 was the establishment of an Archmage Council, a secret organisation consisting of elected adepts who were to meet in regular council to keep a watch on the practice of magic in the city and limit its abuse. The conclave and the formation of the council was mainly the result of campaigning by an adept Sorcerer/Necromancer named Thazaydon and his faction of socially aware mages. Not too surprisingly he was elected High-Archmage, and three members of the 7 mage council were of his faction. This was a subtle power-grab, made possible by the passivity and disinterest of most of the adepts.

In the conclave some basic principles were established. It was determined that a group of mages would be kept on duty 24 hours a day, consisting of one adept and 3 apprentices. Their function would be to use special equipment made by the adept Enchanter Anzar to scan the city for any use of magic in the commission of violent and fatal crime, with some limits for latitude. This supervision did not extend to private dwellings, and only covered public streets and buildings. The council was then authorised to act as a court, and pass sentence on mages violating this basic tenet. The punishment would be the stripping of the violating mage's powers.

Once the council was established, with general approval from the adepts, it was presented to the guildmasters of the mage guilds who had little choice but to approve it. The council remained semi-secret, or at least without official status, but it did serve to bring the abuse of magic within the limits of the city into check.

The Council of Archimages has only a vaguely altruistic purpose, but serves mainly the functional purpose of keeping magic in control to stave off uprisings and reprisals from churches and the rabble. By maintaining a lower profile the adepts felt that they could continue to gain in power and keep themselves safe from interference. Subtly has ever been the realm of magic, and there is more value in controlling events indirectly than in interfering in an open and perhaps annoying way.

The archimages follow the general pattern of a powerful secret organization which holds its power in secret and works by indirect influences, because that is the best way to protect the members. It is an alliance for mutual protection and benefit, similar in many ways to a traditional guild, but tailored to the particular needs of those who wield great magical power and wish to do so in peace and safety.

**FEEDBACK RESULTS #16**

| COLUMN                   | RATING | CHANGE |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|
| In the Speculum          | 77     | -6     |
| From Vidar's Forge       | 79     | +9     |
| Mini-Adventure #6        | 85     | -5     |
| Guess What's Coming..... | 67     | =      |
| Skills & Training        | 73     |        |
| Sex and the FRP Game     | 90     | --     |
| TSR's Finnish Mythos     | 97     | --     |
| The Fomori               | 91     | --     |
| A Night at the Opera     | 87     | --     |
| ART:J. Mortimer          | 83     | --     |
| K. Zivek                 | 64     | -18    |
| M. Cranford              | 96     | -2     |
| D. Randrup               | 67     | --     |

This Issue had an overall rating of 81.2, another new record.

**DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

Average Age: 18.9  
 Sex: Female-7.6%, Male-92.4%  
 Occupation: Student-55%, Game Designer-7.6%, Computer Programmer-5%.

Education Level: Jr.High-15.7%, High-School-37.6%, College-27.6%, Graduate School-19.2%  
 Marital Status: Married-10%, Single-90%  
 Income: Full-Time-\$22,000, Others-\$8,810.  
 Musical Preference-New Wave-34.8%, Rock-17.1%, Jazz-7.4%, Classical-5%  
 Books/Year: 93.9  
 Hours Playing/Week: 10.95  
 Wargaming: Strategic: 70%  
 Tactical: 49.5%  
 Favorite FRP Rules:  
 Ysgarth Rule System-28.3%  
 Advanced Dungeons & Dragons-21.2%  
 Arduin Grimoire-15.9%  
 RuneQuest-12.4%  
 The Fantasy Trip-5.3%  
 Less than 5%-Gama World, Traveller, Tunnels & Trolls, Arms Law, Stormbringer.  
 Years of Play: 4.3  
 Players/Game: 8.7  
 \$ Spent/Year: \$130.08  
 Average Level of Characters: 6.6  
 # Magic Items/Character: 3.5

On the whole some interesting discoveries.

**RE Project Report**



**DUEL MAGICAL**

This is a new release. It is a game of duels between powerful sorcerers. It features a large number of spells for attack and defense, and a simple, non-random system for magical combat.

The rules are easy to learn and surprisingly flexible. There are a large number of scenarios for any number of players, including a solitaire scenario. Record sheets are provided, and the tables are printed on card-stock so that they will hold up under constant use.

Duel Magical comes in a ziploc bag. The price is \$1.95 plus 50¢ for postage and handling.

**A CROWN OF STARS**

ACOS is progressing well as we go into the third turn. There are now some 15 players in the prototype game, but there is still room for more. Players who start late will be in adjusted positions so as not to be at a disadvantage.

ACOS is a play-by mail game where each player leads an interstellar civilization in the conquest of other planets. There are many character types and a versatile but simple play system. The game is refereed by us. Turns are every 20 days or so by mail. It is a challenging game with lots of room for player innovation.

Set-up is \$10, the rules can be had for \$3, but they are included in the set-up. Set-up includes 3 turns, and turns run less than \$1 each in the prototype game.

**USS #2: THE MOUNTAINS OF IKURNA**

This and other scenarios scheduled for the winter have been put on hold until March, so that we can get the YRS done. USS #2 is complete, except for a few finishing touches, and will come out right after the YRS.

**THE YSGARTH RULE SYSTEM**

At this point we've finished book #1: The Fantasy Character, book #2: Battleground, book #3: The Arts Arcane, and most of book #4: Holy Orders. The system is being delayed until the end of February, because we are adding about 40 more pages of text, though we are not raising the price. Those who have reserved copies will get them as soon as it's ready.

If you send \$9 plus \$1 postage before February 15, you can reserve a copy. We hope there will be no further delays, as it is already running a month and a half behind schedule. It is looking excellent, however.



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**FEEDBACK #17**

|                          |       |                 |       |                              |       |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|------------------------------|-------|
| Creative Magic           | _____ | ART: Phil Malin | _____ | New Cover Style              | _____ |
| Arduin Dawn              | _____ | Mason Jones     | _____ | Interior Titles              | _____ |
| Assyro-Babylonian Mythos | _____ | Karl Zivek      | _____ | Do you want to see articles  | _____ |
| Dramatic License         | _____ | Valerie Olson   | _____ | on this summer's conventions | _____ |
| In the Speculum          | _____ | Dave Nalle      | _____ | in #s 20 & 21?               | _____ |
| Vidar's Forge            | _____ | Paul Stewart    | _____ |                              |       |
| Apprentice & Adept       | _____ | John Mortimer   | _____ |                              |       |
| The Arts Arcane          | _____ | Mike Cranford   | _____ |                              |       |
| Backgrounding            | _____ |                 |       |                              |       |