

ABYSS



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CONJURINGS



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Better late than never, here's another issue, sometimes thought to have the most unmanly cover to date. Right now we're running about two months behind schedule, thus the lateness of this issue. As a result, we have to do two more issues after this one and before the end of the year, so you should expect #32 to come firing your way pretty soon.

This is an interesting issue, or so we hope. Note that Eric Olson is back with his adventure 'The Lake of Korshar', and we have the first in a pair of articles on Japanese mythology from Vincent Burchett, plus an article on the new Ysgarth magic system and the first of a series of brief reports from Mike Lewis of **DRAGONLORDS** on the British gaming scene.

Coming up next issue are some strange and new items including the first full-size RPG aid to be published in ABYSS, a little number called 'By the Gods', a role-playing system for playing mythological characters in a mythological context. Also planned are the return of Jon Schuller with a new 'Berserkergang', the second half of the Japanese mythology article and a piece on communications in the fantasy world, plus a nice selection of other articles and features.

We'd like to encourage all of you to renew your subscriptions now, as there is a fair chance that the price will be going up at the end of the year and that we'll be expanding the number of pages a bit to go with it. We also need more subscribers to keep going, and if you have a local gaming store, get them to order some copies. To keep the price down we have to expand the circulation, and to do that we need more subscribers and much, much greater distribution through stores, so it is in your interest to keep the price of this odd little journal down by keeping the circulation up.

Finally, take note of the demographic survey at the end of this issue. It would be a real help if those of you who are capable of going so would fill it out and send it in, so we can get some idea of what's going on in your world. It will only take a minute, and would be a great help. Remember we always welcome comments and reactions. I'll leave the rest of the column for art...(DFN)



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ARTISTS #31

Peter Chen(3,5,13)
Rick Pressley(4,7,8,18,19,20,21,22)
Other Artists(FC,6)



GODS & MYTHS OF JAPAN PART ONE

VINCENT BURCHETT

Several years ago, while serving with the Airforce stationed in Japan, I received the long awaited **Deities & Demigods** in the mail. Excited over finally receiving this new AD&D book I quickly tore through the pages, and as I was living in Japan at the time I was especially interested in the section on the Japanese Mythos. I was sorely disappointed. They made numerous errors in every mythos presented and the Japanese section was no exception. For example, TSR's greatest error in their Japanese examination was altogether neglecting the influence of Buddhism in Japan and how it intermixed with Shintoism, the original pantheism of early Japan. TSR also did not mention any of the various groups of deities, practically ignored the many artifacts and items, and only briefly mentioned a single monster. I don't know what they were trying to accomplish as they certainly did not provide the material needed for a GM to create a campaign or adventure.

This article is intended to be more than a listing of deities and heroes. Built into the story of the Creation and the listing of the major gods, demi-gods and heroes is a summary of the myths and legends that make up part of the Japanese mythology to give the reader a feeling of what went on for possible use in a campaign background; something that was ignored in all of the write-ups TSR did in **Deities and Demigods**.



THE CREATION

In the beginning there was chaos, like an ocean of oil, shapeless yet bearing seed. From this ocean of chaos arose a thing like a reed shoot which was called a deity and given a name. Almost immediately afterward other deities came into being. The exact number of these varies according to different accounts but they are of minor importance and soon faded into obscurity. In all there were seven mated pairs of these deities who were also brother and sister. It is the last of these pairs who are the most important. They were **Izanagi**, the 'male who invites', and his sister **Izanami**, the 'female who invites'. It is also interesting to note that in some versions of the myth they are husband and wife as well.

THE MAJOR GODS:

These are the major deities springing in various ways from the first pair of gods, **Izanagi** and **Izanami**.

Izanagi & Izanami

I will never understand why TSR neglected to include these two deities. Not only did they give birth to the entire Shinto pantheon, but they also created man, the earth and the Japanese isles in particular.

At the command of the deities born before them, **Izanagi** and **Izanami** went together over the bridge of heaven to the ocean of chaos and plunged a jeweled celestial spear into the ocean which they began to stir. They stirred until the liquid thickened to become the earth. Then the spear was withdrawn and from the drops of brine that fell from it formed the island of **Onogoro**, the island 'that coagulates of its own accord'.

Izanagi and **Izanami** then went down to the island of **Onogoro** and made it the 'central pillar' of the earth. When they arrived, **Izanagi** asked his sister "How is thy body made?" Then **Izanagi** said "My body grows also in all parts except one." Then **Izanami** said "My body grows also in all parts, especially one. Good were it that I should join this part of my body with that of thine which grows not. Thus we shall engender many regions." To this **Izanami** replied "In truth it would be good." At **Izanagi's** suggestion the two deities then went around the 'central pillar' with **Izanagi** going left and **Izanami** going right. When they met **Izanami** cried "Oh what a beautiful man!" Then **Izanagi** cried "Oh what a beautiful woman!" **Izanagi** quickly gathered his senses and scolded his sister for speaking before he did, saying that it would bring bad luck.

Of their union many deities and islands were born but the deities were malformed and were cast adrift on small reed boats. **Izanagi** and **Izanami** consulted their superiors, the other six pairs of major deities, inquiring of their failure to give birth to healthy children and they were advised to return to the pillar of **Onogoro** and rectify **Izanami's** error of speaking first. They went to **Onogoro** and repeated their meeting at the pillar with **Izanagi** speaking first this time and after that all was well.

With her error corrected, **Izanami** continued to give birth to a multitude of deities. However, as she gave birth to **Kagu-tsuchi** the god of fire, she was fatally wounded by his fires. Other gods arose from her blood, urine, excrement and vomit before she finally died. **Izanagi** was bereaved and angered at her death and other gods were born from his tears. He seized his sword and proceeded to hack **Kagu-tsuchi** to bits in retribution. From **Kagu-tsuchi's** blood and pieces more gods were born.

Unable to resist the desire to see his sister, Izanagi journeyed to the Land of Darkness where she had built her castle. Izanagi begged her to return so they could continue their 'creations' but she said that since she had eaten the food from the Land of Darkness she could not return. Not to be deterred, Izanagi entered her castle to force her to leave, but on finding her he discovered that she was a maggot ridden, decomposed corpse, so he fled in terror. Humiliated, she sent a horde of demons after him, but he dodged them by pulling out his right side hair comb and tossing it behind him. The comb turned to bamboo shoots which the demons stopped to devour. Then Izanami sent 1500 warriors to attack him, but he held them off at sword point long enough to cross into the Land of Light and block the passage with a boulder. Izanami then threw a curse that she would kill 1000 living beings a day on earth. To counter, Izanagi allowed a thousand and five beings to give birth each day, thus creating the balance between death and life. Izanagi then pronounced the vows of divorce with his sister.

After his contact with death and the lower world, Izanagi began to purify himself by bathing in a little river on Kyushu. Born from the water which fell from his left eye was **Amaterasu**, the sun goddess and henceforth the chief deity of the Shinto pantheon. Born from his right eye was **Tsukiyomi**, the moon god, and from his nose was born **Susanowo**, the storm god. From here on Amaterasu and Susanowo become central characters of the Shinto pantheon while Izanagi and Tsukiyomi receive only a rare mention.

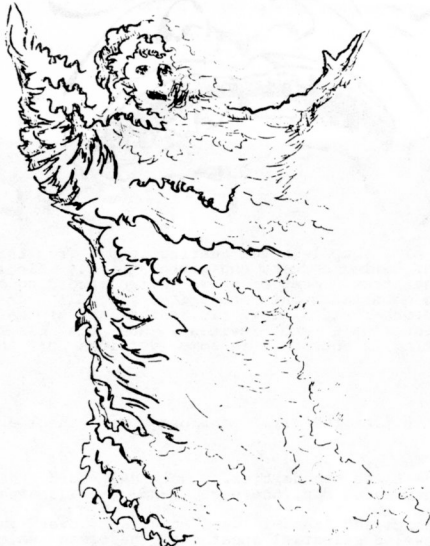
Amaterasu

This is the celestial sun goddess from whom the Japanese Imperial family claims descent. TSR's basic description of her was fair, but they seem to have padded her out with some made up abilities to fit her to their idea of 'playability'.

Before her relations with her brother Susanowo became strained they got together and exchanged gifts. Susanowo gave her his sword and she gave him her necklace which they had both received from Izanagi after their birth. Together they chewed on their gifts and from the pieces which they spat out many more deities were formed.

After a while, Susanowo began acting very rudely; he broke the divisions between rice fields, defiled her house, and threw a backwards flayed horse (a supreme insult) into her weaving hall. Angered and indignant, Amaterasu hid in protest inside a cave causing darkness to fall upon the world. The other gods, dismayed, conferred on how to get her back out. They gathered together several roosters and hung them by their feet with a chain of jewels beside a mirror so that when Amaterasu looked out of her cave her attention would go to the roosters' crowing and the mirror beside them. The goddess **Ame-no-uzume** began a dance that had the other gods laughing so loud that Amaterasu was curious about all the noise and peeked out. As she stepped into the open she saw the mirror and was so attracted by her own reflection that she failed to notice that another god blocked the cave with a boulder, keeping her out and restoring light to the world.

Her main place of worship is the Grand Shrine at Ise which is the most important Shinto shrine in Japan. Inside the shrine is the mirror that was said to have lured Amaterasu from her cave.



Tsukiyomi was asked by Amaterasu to go down to the earth and enter the service of **Ukemochi**, the food goddess (hence the connection between the moon and farming). When he reached her palace she greeted him by vomiting rice; then she turned her head toward the sea and filled it full of fish, and then faced the mountains and filled them full of animals. All of this was presented to Tsukiyomi as a banquet in his honor, but he became angered by the offerings from her vomit and slew her. On this return to the heavens he told Amaterasu what happened and she became so angered that she refused to ever meet him face-to-face again (hence the separation between the sun and moon; the sun being assigned to daytime and the moon to the night).

MAJOR DEMIGODS & HEROES

These are lesser entities of varied origin but of importance and significant power.

Okuninushi

This is the son of Susanowo who was once ruler over the earth. He had many brothers who desired to marry the same woman, a princess named **Yakami**. His brothers went to court her, bringing Okuninushi along as a servant, but along the way he encountered a hare which was being tortured by the gods and he restored it to health. The hare turned out to be a deity from princess Yakami's land and in return for his help he promised the princess to Okuninushi. Angered, his brothers sought to kill him, but he escaped with help from his mother, though he was slain at least once in that conflict. His father Susanowo was upset by Okuninushi's treatment of his brothers, but he eventually allowed him to marry her (actually Okuninushi tricked him into agreeing).

Susanowo

This is the Shinto storm god. Izanagi gave him command over the seas and storms at his birth. TSR did a better job with him than with Amaterasu or Tsukiyomi.

After Susanowo angered his sister and caused the sun to disappear, the other deities punished him by imposing a fine of 'a thousand tables' plus they pulled out all his nails and banished him from all the heavens. He then entered the land of Izumo in western Japan and noticed a pair of chopsticks floating down a river. Thinking that people were near he went upstream and found a family of earth-spirits lamenting the loss of their daughter to an eight-headed dragon that had been ravaging their land. After a brief search Susanowo found their daughter and defeated the dragon in a long fierce battle. As he was slicing up the dragon his sword was chipped on an object in the dragon's tail. He dissected the dragon to find the object and discovered the famed sword **Kusanagi** which he later gave to Amaterasu as a peace offering. The sword is now one of the three Japanese Imperial Treasures.

Susanowo later married the daughter of the earth-spirits whom he rescued. Her name was **Kushi-inada-hime** and together they produced many offspring, the most famous of whom is **Okuninushi**, the 'spirit master of the great land (Izumo)' who later became master of that land.

Tsukiyomi

This is the moon god. Very little is said of him in all my resources, and it seems that TSR has probably done a fair descriptive job here.



After this was out of the way Okuninushi continued to finish the building of the non-celestial world and in this task he received aid from a rather strange deity named **Sakuna-bikona** who was a dwarf. Together they also discovered means of curing various plagues and ailments. Okuninushi continued to reign over the earth until Amaterasu sent her grandson **Ninigi** to rule in his stead. Okuninushi was forced to comply and with Ninigi he established a joint government with himself in control of religious matters and Ninigi in charge of temporal matters.

Ninigi

This is the grandson of Amaterasu who established the roots of the Yamato clan when he descended from the heavens to rule the earth. This clan is still the present ruling family of Imperial Japan and its origins through him establish their claim to divinity (though Emperor Hirohito, the present ruler, was asked to renounce that claim after Japan's defeat in WWII). He is said to be the great-grandfather of **Jimmu-tenno**, the first emperor of Japan.

Amaterasu allowed Ninigi to rule over the earth and Japan in particular despite Susanowo's objections. She gave him the Japanese Imperial Treasures as a sign of power.

Jimmu-tenno

This is the legendary first emperor of Japan. It is said that he began his rule in 607bc, after subduing opposing tribes, which means that the present dynasty has lasted for almost 2600 years. Emperor Jimmu-tenno (or Kamu-yamato-ihare-biko, his lesser known and rarely used name) was a descendant of Amaterasu through Ninigi and later married a descendant of Susanowo, ending the longstanding feud between the followers of Okunishi and Ninigi. Despite his link to the ruling family and the gods he never developed a large cult following.

Hachiman

This is the god of war, the patron deity of the warlike Minamoto clan, and one of the most popular deities in Japan. Over half the present Shinto shrines in Japan are dedicated to him. He is referred to as the deification of Ojin, the 15th emperor of Japan, and is usually worshipped along with his mother, the empress **Jingo**. His first shrine was dedicated in 725ad. TSR was basically correct in their portrayal of this demigod, but they also appear to have attempted to flesh him out to fit their conception of playability. He was the first Shinto deity to be given the title **Dai-bo-satsu** (Great Buddha-to-be or bodhisattva) by the buddhists. He is also the guardian of the colossal buddha image at Todaiji.

Yosha-iyé

This is an early hero and the founder of the Minamoto clan. As another patron deity and protector of the clan he is known as **Hachiman-taro**, the first born of Hachiman. TSR's description of him was fairly accurate.

Yorikitsu

This hero is also known as **Raiko**. He is one of the more popular heroes in Japan and also a member of the Minamoto clan. TSR's basic description of him was fairly well done. One of his adventures concerned a battle with the giant **Shuten-doji** who lived on human blood. TSR even illustrated Yorimitsu fighting this creature, but didn't mention him. Yorimitsu eventually tricked his way into the giant's castle using his well known skill with disguise and beheaded the giant after a long fight. To his surprise the head continued to fight on after death. He was later slain by an earth-spider disguised as a little boy bringing him medicine, though he killed the earth-spider before he died.

Yamato-takeru

This is another hero that even TSR couldn't mess up too badly. He is also known as **Yamato-date**, a member of the ruling Yamato clan, he once used the famed sword **Kusanagi** to escape a grass fire giving **Kusanagi** the nick-name 'the herb quelling sword'. His adventures ended on the plains of **Tagi** where he fell ill during a battle and his legs refused to carry him any further. According to legend, when he died he turned into a white plover and ascended to heaven in that form. His tomb at Ise is known as the Mausoleum of the White Plover.

Tenjin

This is the title given to **Sugawara Michizane** (845-903ad), a Japanese minister and scholar of Chinese literature who was deified after his death as the patron god of learning and calligraphy. He was the Japanese equivalent of the Chinese Confucius. He was exiled by the jealous Fujiwara clan and soon died. After his death a series of disasters struck Japan, so the frightened Fujiwara clan erected shrines in his honor to appease him. His festival is held on July 25-26 at his main shrine in Osaka and as a witness to it I can tell you that it is quite spectacular. It features a large boat procession on the nearby **Dojima** river.

Yama-no-kami

These are the popular deities of the mountains in Shinto myth. **Yama-no-kami** literally means 'spirits of the mountains'. They are of two types, deities who rule over agriculture on or near the mountains and are worshipped by farmers and deities who rule over the mountains themselves and are worshipped by hunters, woodcutters and charcoal burners. When worshipping these gods it is customary to offer them some **Okoze**, a meal of salt sea fish. The two main deities of this group are:

O-yama-tsumi-no-mikoto: This is the chief deity of the group and one of the agricultural orientation. He was born from a piece of **Kagu-tsuchi**, the god of fire, as **Izanagi** was slaying him.

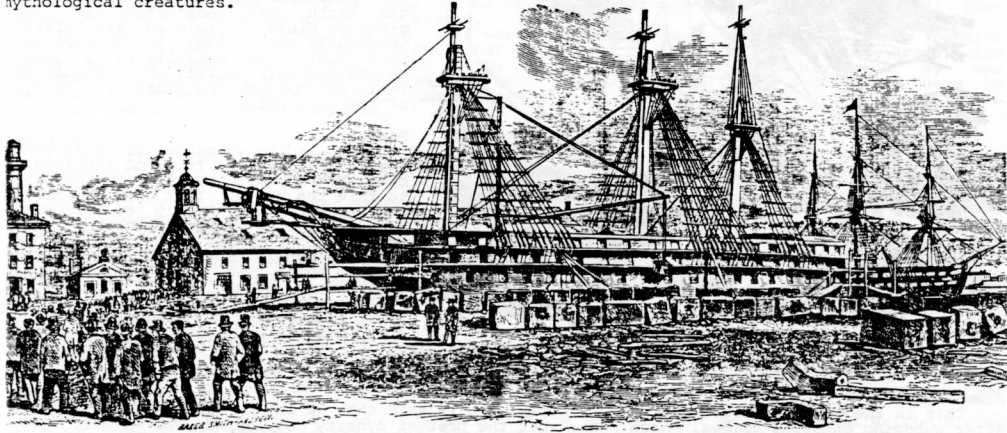
Ka-no-hana-seku-ya-hime: This goddess is of the second type and is also the wife of **Ninigi**. She resides on Mt. **Fuji**.

Kamado-gami

These are the Shinto deities of the hearth. A miniature shrine to them used to be kept in the kitchens of households in the past, though the practice is rare today. Their duties were to protect the family and ensure prosperity. They are sometimes identified with the **Kojin**, deities who live in cooking fireplaces.

FINAL NOTE

These are only the main Shinto deities of Japan. In the next section of this examination we will look at the buddhist pantheon of Japan, the lesser deities and some of the curious mythological creatures.



TACT & TACTICS

JERRY EPPERSON

INTRODUCTION

Sooner or later, especially if you play **Middle Passage** often, it will get to you. Eventually the lack of a good interception system will begin to nag at you. It happened to me just shortly after my fifth 'black ship' (laden with Rio gold and Haitian rum bound for Valencia) was pirated at sea.

There is something very distressing about spending all that money only to have it filter into someone else's coffers. Especially bothersome is the tendency for players to become pirates rather than traders as it can be more profitable to intercept merchant ships in the middle of the Atlantic than to sail around as the prey of encountered pirates. This variant is designed to increase the feasibility of being a 'merchant prince' in **Middle Passage**, as it is, in essence, a trading game...

INTERCEPTION

As the **Middle Passage** rules stand, whenever two opposing players' ships occupy the same area (and in some instances moving through an area occupied by another ship) they are automatically aware of each other, and may initiate combat if either player wishes it. If there is any single rule which puts merchants at a disadvantage, this is it. It is fairly easy to make a change. To modify this, ships occupying the same area may enter combat only when one of two situations exist:

- a: Both players desire to have combat (if only one wishes it and the other does not, combat is not joined unless 'b' applies), or...
- b: The player wishing to initiate combat can make a successful interception roll.

Interception rolls are made on a D20. To determine the probability of interception players should square the number of areas they've both (added together) travelled through the past turn (if more than one ship is on a side use the ship which moved the least distance). To this figure add the square of the number of ships in the intercepting player's fleet. Double the number of ships in the evading player's fleet and add this to the total. Subtract from this value five times the number of areas the encounter is from the nearest port, not counting the area the ships occupy. The formula for this is: (Least number of common areas)² + (Number of intercepting ships)² + (Number of evading ships x 2) - (Number of areas to nearest port x 3). This is a bit complex but useful. The intercepting player rolls the D20 and on a result equal to the previously determined value or less he succeeds in spotting and closing with the evading player's fleet. A roll of 1 always succeeds and a roll of 20 always fails. If the roll results in failure to intercept, the evading player cannot be attacked by any ships from the intercepting fleet for the remainder of the turn.

EVASION

Rather than having the fate of the evading player rest on the roll of the interceptor's die, you may wish to (this is optional) allow the evading player to attempt an Evasion roll after it has been determined that he has been intercepted.

Evasion rolls are made on a D20. To determine the probability of a successful evasion, determine his chance of evading. This is equal to: ((Evader Highest Captain Level + Fastest Ship Speed) - (Interceptor Highest Captain Level + Fastest Ship Speed)) + 5. If the evading player rolls within this value on a D20 he evades successfully. If he succeeds he cannot be attacked by any ships of that fleet for the duration of the game turn. If the roll fails then the fleet is intercepted and combat begins. A result of 1 automatically works and a result of 20 automatically fails.

EXAMPLE

Three merchant ships, each with a movement of 4, are far out at sea when two large pirate ships attempt to intercept them, one with a movement of 3 the other with a 5. The pirate ships started in different areas, one trailing the merchants since leaving port and the other intercepting them along their route.

The merchant player decides not to initiate combat. The pirate player must then attempt to intercept, as he does want to battle. He determines that his chance of interception is extremely poor, with a 5 (one area in common= $1^2=1$ + two ships intercepting= $2^2=4=5$ + 3 ships evading $\times 2=6=11$ - two areas to nearest port $\times 3=6$, leaving only 5). The pirate rolls a 4 on his D20, so he intercepts.

The merchant may now attempt to evade, which is where the pirate has an advantage, as one of his ships has a 6 Captain while the merchant's best is only a 3. This yields a chance of evasion of 1, rather hard to roll, and as good as the automatic success roll on any 1. The merchant must decide whether he will surrender or fight at this point.

WATCH IT MAYNARD OR THE CARGO DIES

When the merchant has done all that he can to keep the pirate away and they still catch him, there is nothing left to do save fight, right? Wrong. The merchant can still bargain for his ships with the cargo in his hold. Failing that there is only one way to make it expensive for the pirates, start throwing the cargo into the ocean. Watered-down rum is of no use to anyone and everyone knows how well gold sinks.

If the pirate refuses to bargain then practically everyone should be assigned to cargo removal. There can't possibly be a more pleasant sight than the facial expression of a pirate as he sees a fortune in gold being dumped overboard. When I pulled this trick, my opponent just left me alone, sailing off into the sunset (searching for bigger and better prizes no doubt).

For every five crew assigned to garbage detail, mark off one unit of cargo per round of combat. If the ship is being boarded, then the rate of dumptage should be halved. The important thing to remember is to tell the pirate what is being destroyed, as it totally unnerves some players.

Though the above tactic does little to increase the profits of the merchant, it does discourage piracy and keep purloined profits down.

MODIFIED VICTORY CONDITIONS

The final change I suggest is in the victory conditions. To win you normally have players total up all Cargo, Ships and cash. Instead, have players get either 50% of the value for ships or the resale value for the ships as used. By changing this, the pirate is forced to either capture twice as many ships to get the same rewards or find another source of income.

CONCLUSION

This may seem a bit hard on pirates, but they can get a bit out of hand in some games, depending on the style of play, though encounters and events do pose some problems for them. Thanks to the open-ended system provided in **Middle Passage** expansion is quite easy. The limitations of the game are mostly in your mind. Currently I am experimenting with a simultaneous movement system and one based on a network of informants (mainly for the pirate-types or those who like to raid warehouses). Perhaps, if there is demand, Dave will let me indulge myself again at a later date. May your ships never flounder nor your crew come down with scurvy.



Wyrd Tales

SECRET(TRUE) CHRONICLES OF OLLAZREN

Orm strode wyrd weary over the burnt weeds
 Bold stepping Thane's son broke through the fire ring
 Then midst the grave mounds mighty stood the horseman
 There at the dark delve where stirred the un-thing
 Up stood the dead lord silver and gold girt
 King of the old ones father of spear fields
 Slowly the once kingly lifted a bare blade
 Long in the fire light lingered the man's eyes
 Runes spoke the unseen red in the flame glow
 Spelling the doom wyrd worked to wreck
 Hot rose his blood at the sight of the blade
 Forth fared the warrior daring the un-king
 Asking for battle seeking the wyrd sword
 There by the grave mound clutching his life thread
 (From the **Ormspell** of Ollazren the Storyteller)

We rode to the barrows that night, I Ollazren the Dwarfen Storyteller and the Vaen Shaman Orm Thegnson. Our business with the new King of the Ukral was ended and I was eager to return to the rest of our traveling party as quickly as possible. First we faced the task of claiming the sword Tyrving which had been buried with Athman, once king of all the northern tribes.

As we neared the grounds of the dead, the night thickened around us. My heart came close to slamming from my chest. The horses grew skittish and their breath smoked in the chilling air. I could barely keep rein on the packhorse which followed behind my pony.

Suddenly we came on a clear high plain, just as the moon rose over the southern mountains. The pale light showed a ring of grave mounds rising from the scrubby grass of the steppes.

Orm reigned in his mount and scoured the plains for a few moments with his special 'I am in complete control' look (he had been practicing throughout the trip and was quite good at it by now). His gaze only faltered when the barrows began to shudder, opening like toothless mouths to elch forth their decaying contents, lifeless beings which rose and assembled before us. At their ore was the draugr which had been King Athmir. His tall gaunt frame was recognizable by the rror he wore and sword which hung at his side. As the dead arranged themselves before him within he mystic circle of the barrows, his tattered lips moved and he hailed us in a voice like a orthern wind.

"Welcome warrior, have you come freely to accept your wyrd?"

"Hail king, I have come for the sword that was ours and seems to be my wyrs." He tried to keep is voice firm.

"If you feel worthy come forth and take the word." With the challenge his voice rose from he whisper of the dead to the battle cry of a ighty warrior and ruler of tribes.

A wall of flame sprung up around the mounds. t burned the ground until there remained nothing ut dirt and continued to burn with no apparent uel. It rose thirty feet in the air and ten feet ick, a wall of searing flame and blinding light.

"Well, he's got me this time," Orm whispered. I don't suppose you have any way of getting me ver that thing," he asked hopefully.

"I think our course is clear," I replied. "We're going to have to ride through and survive."

"Right!" Orm agreed rather hastily. "You're oing to have to teach me how to use a sword ometime though." His gullibility never ceased to maze me.

I got on the back of his horse and we spurred im through. It managed to take us two thirds of he way before falling as the smell of roasted orse flesh rose around us. We stumbled through he last of it. Orm's clothes were smoking and he idn't look good.

"Keep them busy for a moment or two," he gasped as his eyes went blank and he entered a rance. I heard him mumbling under his breath as is burns slowly began to disappear.

I addressed the king, "Athmir, noble lord of he north, the hero Orm Thegnson has come for the sword which you bore in life. He claims right to it by his wyrd and demands that you deliver it to im."

The dead king looked at Orm where he crouched behind me. His hollow eyes seemed filled with sadness and pity. "He was burned by the fire. If he cannot control his own wyrd, how can he hope to bear the curse of Tyrfinn as well?"

By now Orm had risen and looked somewhat better, more like a rare steak than the rather well one cinder he had been a few moments before. "I am Orm Thegnson and Tyrfinn is my wyrd," he ried to the gaunt king whose coldly glowing eyes met his in a long stare.

"It matters not to me. I cannot just give you the sword. If you are fool enough to want it you must wrest it from my grasp."

Orm didn't look happy at this. He knew better than anyone else that a sword was not his weapon. He was just fine with a horse and a lance, but in most cases such refined skill can prove quite useless. Now he faced a dead king and his host with the nearest living horse beyond a wall of flame he had already nearly died in once. A look at his unfamiliar and as yet un-nicked sword was almost enough to break his will. At best the situation looked disastrous and he was almost ready to wet his breeches. Still, against what judgement he had, he stepped forward.

"Very well, king. A sword is my destiny, and if I have to defeat you an all your men for it I can do it with another sword." With this he raised the sword awkwardly and attacked.

The king moved to engage him. The battle was dismayingly brief. They traded looks and then blow, Orm landing a feeble slap on the king's bony thigh and the king burying his blade deep in Orm's chest. After a brief moment Orm lay coughing out his life at the king's feet. His wound seemed to emanate a strange feeling of the unnatural, something far worse than cuts from clean metal. Even with my small knowledge of medicine I could see the life fading from Orm's glazed eyes.

After a troubled thought and a few curses for the dreaming vision which had brought us here, I broke the silence. "You have shamed my hero. I wish to fight in his stead so that if I vanquish you the sword will be his."

The king seemed puzzled for a moment. "You wish to accept the wyrd of your friend?" "NO," I replied quickly, "I'm a storyteller. It's Orm's wyrd and his sword, but the strings of the Norns seem to need a little tying together. I'll win the sword, the curse, the wyrd, the whole thing for Orm."

"Your friend has fallen to Tyrfinn, there is no hope for him."

"Leave that part to me."

"Very well, if you can defeat me, the sword and all it brings with it shall be yours to dump on your friend if you will. May the gods pity him if you succeed, and both of you if you fail."

At these words I ducked through the smoke and leapt into battle. "To my hand, might of Frey!" I screamed as my battle cry. Drawn forth from the ground by holy force burst the shining sword Hundinsbana, which I caught and brought up in a smoothe motion. Parrying the king's blow, I drove him backwards, trying to gain the advantage.

This fight took quite a different course from Orm's. Though the king proved a very skilled swordsman, even magic cannot restore full strength to limbs long dead and I knew how to use my sword. I took a few nicks, but I broke his guard at the mouth of his grave and severed his neck with a clean blow. The false life faded from his face leaving behind a fleshless grimace which was more of a smile than a sneer.

When the king fell, the flames died out and his grave born servitors gathered him up and returned him to his delayed rest beneath the ground, returning to their own graves afterward.

As they sealed themselves in I noticed that it was now dawn. My wounds ached and seemed more painful than they should have been. Behind me I could hear my war pony tearing at the short grass. I took up Orm's body and the sword which I had carefully wrapped in a cloak. I loaded the pack horse with my grisly burden and rode back toward the road which would take us to meet the rest of our band.



IN THE SPECULUM

BOOKS

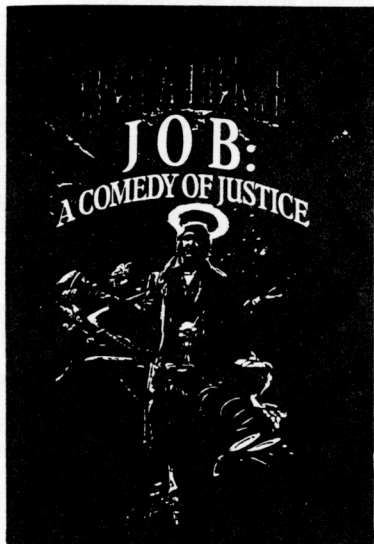
JOB: A COMEDY OF JUSTICE

Robert A. Heinlein (Del Rey)

Robert Heinlein's new novel, *Job* is a good confirmation that he may stay on the track set by the release of *Friday* after the conclusion of the health problems which marred some of his work during the 70s (particularly *Number of the Beast*). *Job* is encouraging, not because it is brilliant, or even as good as the best moments of *Friday*, but because it is good, consistent and enjoyable. It shows that Heinlein can still produce new characters and ideas while keeping a story interesting.

This is the tale of an evangelical minister named Alex Graham, who goes on a vacation, loses his identity and his world, but finds love as he hops from one alternate reality to another, a pawn in a somewhat obscure struggle between god and the devil in the face of an immanent eschaton. This modern day *Job* is indeed sorely put upon, and Heinlein gets a nice opportunity to give brief sketches of divergent planes and provide a cosmically oriented drama clearly descended from the themes which surface in *Glory Road* and other earlier works. A lot happens in the course of the novel, but the two or three central characters remain a unifying force as they hop from plane to plane and situation to situation with increasing rapidity as the End approaches. Some of the Christian overtones are a bit cloying at first, but Heinlein yields to the temptation to give a little sympathy to the devil, and like Milton, his pictures of Heaven and Hell end up betraying themselves, with Heaven falling a bit flat and Hell having just the right fascination. This is a particularly fine achievement from a literary standpoint, as he manages to do what Milton did in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* while maintaining a modern framework and idiom and some subtlety.

Like almost all of Heinlein's work of the past decade or more, *Job* partakes more of fantasy than SF. It is a bit soppy, soft on science, and tied up with the big questions of life, and not really finding any answers, but if you liked *Time Enough for Love*, *Door into Summer*, or *Glory Road*, *Job* is a nice reminder of the type of skill with which Heinlein can stimulate the intellect and imagination without being heavy handed about it. (David Nalle)



BEARING AN HOURGLASS

Piers Anthony (Del Rey)

This is the second in Anthony's *Incarnations of Immortality* series. It moves to concentrate on a new central character, Chronos the incarnation of time. The book starts off with an interesting premise and situation, and the first fifth of the story is rather interesting, developing a fascinating character who in a situation which holds our interest rather well until he becomes an incarnation and the story begins to fall apart.

Original though it may be, there are some serious technical problems with a story in which the main character lives his life backward. It is rather hard for a plot to gel when the hero has not yet met other characters who see themselves as his old friends, and he is constantly trying to catch up on his own past which he has not yet experienced. As a result of this philosophically curious device the storyline falls apart about half way through the story, and the ending which is reached rather abruptly is somewhat dependent on the first book in the series.

Until it begins to get confusing and disjointed this is better than most of Anthony's other recent work, a notch above the *Juxtaposition* series and light years better than the *Xanth* series, though it comes no where near the level of quality of the *Cluster* books. If Anthony can pull the rest of the series up to the level of the first volume (*On a Pale Horse*), it would be among his best work, but he will have to avoid the technical problems which mar *Bearing an Hourglass*.



MOONHEART

Charles de Lint (Ace)

This is the second novel in the last few months to come from the pen of this rising Canadian fantasist and editor of various fantasy magazines, most recently *DRAGONFIELDS*. De Lint's first novel was *Riddle of the Wren*, released early this summer. *Moonheart* follows his interest in things Celtic as adapted to different aspects of fantasy, but unlike his earlier novel it is closely tied to the real world of modern-day Ottawa, which brings a reassuring sense of perspective. *Riddle of the Wren* has not been reviewed in *ABYSS*, but it is a traditionalish fantasy set in a series of alternate worlds of magic and strange creatures derived from several branches of Celtic myth, but filtered through the perspective of fantasy rather than presented as pure borrowed legend. While it was an enjoyable read, it was a bit long and static, dependent on mood and atmosphere with a bit too little action to keep what is a rather long novel as interesting as it could be. The ideas are fascinating but the story is not really anything new.

Moonheart is in some ways a less original work, as it is set mostly in the real world, yet for many readers pure heroic fantasy has become more familiar through the works of Tolkien and his imitators than this more venerable, but less popular mixture of fantasy, horror and mystery. Beneath the familiar surface of this novel are ideas and combinations of ideas which make it newer and more exciting than anything else published of late. Unlike de Lint's earlier work, **Moonheart** has the diverse threads and characters which support it tied together nicely by consistent and ongoing action, and interest is maintained even though there really isn't even a single central character.

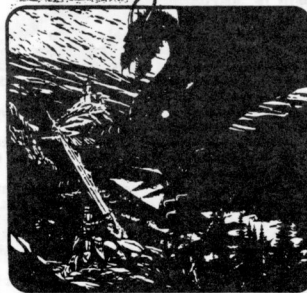
Moonheart is a long and complex book, combining a number of major characters and elements, including multiple plots and sub-plots in what are essentially three separate worlds or times, and central elements of horror, mystery and mythological fantasy drawing on both Celtic and Amerind background. The plot cannot be broken down briefly and the narrative alternates focus between 4 or 5 major characters, and as it has a mystery as its core, there is nothing to be gained by sketching out the action. It is sufficient to say that it combines a struggle between millenia-old bards, different styles of magic, planal/time travel, political intrigue, murder, corruption, organized crime and a number of curious and genuinely interesting plot twists. It is a long book, and a surprisingly large number of characters are memorable and stand out with nice distinction and enough variety for everyone to find one to identify with.

There are problems in **Moonheart**. Even at almost 500 pages, it isn't really long enough and the plot and some of the situations are resolved with rather startling bursts of speed towards the end, and there are some secondary questions left hanging. The Celtic aspects are nicely worked in, but as that particular myth background becomes more and more popular it begins to get a little bit cloying, and de Lint's tendency to present a rather flattering portrait of mythical characters whose personalities are mixed at best is a bit trying. One particularly nice connected touch is the brief glimpse which de Lint gives of the Celtophilic sub-culture and nagging remnants of the society of the sixties as they survive in Ottawa.

Moonheart is strikingly versatile and enjoyable, and I can recommend it with few reservations. I suspect that as de Lint's work matures and more of it sees print he will rise to a well deserved position in the forefront of modern fantasy.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME
SET 3: COMPANION RULES



Most of the rest of the volume is the same old stuff, refined from the general AD&D rules, with monsters and magic items plus three very basic adventures with minimal development (we're talking less than a page of text each, heavily battle oriented). On the whole, this is not an offensive game aid, save that its main aim is to get more money from munchkins. It is well put together, practically presented, nicely illustrated and the rules seem more coherent than AD&D when stretched out like this. However, this volume could be described as 'what to do with your characters when they've killed all the monsters in the MM and have all the magic items in the DMG, not to mention being about 50th level'. It is sort of a guide to diverting and retiring the characters of munchkins so they can play off their insecurities against each other. In short, if you have a brain and AD&D you don't need this, and if you're just starting out and have a brain you'd be better off with the less restricting and less confusing Original D&D three book set.

Let's move from TSR at its best (or at least its most predictable), to a whole new realm of gaming, good old-fashioned shameless belly-to-the-floor exploitation. We're talking **Indiana Jones**, but are we talking role-playing? Hard to tell. This one is a curious beastie. TSR seems to have found an answer to the vital question 'how do you design a role-playing game for four-year-olds with no requirement for imagination or intelligence?' The answer is to derive all material directly from a series of movies which both GM and player have seen at least several times, leave events and content unchanged, make players play characters right out of the movies, and pretty much dispose of mechanics altogether. In short, **Indiana Jones** is the first virtually contentless RPG. Perhaps the greatest surprise about this game is that the authors actually have their names on it. Certainly, if I had done it I would have asked for a written contract keeping my name off it. Well, maybe all 15 people credited are pseudonyms. The central part of the boxed game package is a 68 page rule book filled with text, rules and an adventure, plus a selection of grainy badly reproduced photos taken from the two movies. Look, it isn't easy to review this game, there's just too much wrong for this little space. Examples? How 'bout a rules section which explains how to role dice? How 'bout no rules on creating characters and a set up which forces you to play a pre-created character from the movies? How 'bout 'Instinct Checks' in place of player logic and decision making? We've got it all here, a bogus skill system with almost two dozen skills but no relative levels or advancement, combat based entirely on the attacker's attribute rolls with no guiding structure at all, 3-D figures, little terrain maps, tacky visual aids, I could go on and on. This is a simple system, the simplest, but there comes a point where simpler is not better. There really aren't any rules here, and what rules there are (movement, vehicles, combat) bear no conceivable relationship to reality. The

GAMES & AIDS

TSR
POB 110, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

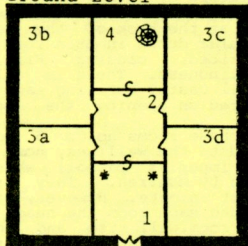
Trivia question: How many people out there remember what 'TSR' stands for? Well, we know, and it certainly has very little to do with anything they publish these days, not that it is a bad thing for a game company to evolve. Evolution is usually thought of as a progressive and uplifting process, and in the case of TSR that process has been rather troubled and mired down by the pursuit of the big dollar sign in the sky. Well, for the first time in quite a while, we're going to give some attention to one of the two giants in gaming (and maybe AH will get some attention at some point as well). Thus, this first in a series of overviews of recent releases and re-releases from TSR.

TSR is so productive in their efforts to wall in their devotees with products that we can't do more than give a general glimpse of some of the most interesting new items. Out fairly recently are the **Companion Rules**, sequel to the Basic and Expert versions of D&D. This comes boxed with two books (one for players and one for GMs), plus some crayons and what we affectionately call 'gummy dice' (as they seem to be made of bubble gum). Essentially, the **Companion Rules** is a hodgepodge of additional information for use with its two predecessors. The player's book gives some new weapons and rules for combat, plus a rather confused and misleading set of guidelines for setting up a stronghold community. Almost everything in this book is a reiteration of material in the normal AD&D rules or insignificant variants easily developed by applying a bit of common sense. The second book is for the GM, and has some interestingly contrived rules for setting up a fantasy society and a campaign level game where characters rule territory, a good idea, although some of the mechanics seem unrealistic and extremely dependent on random die rolls and arbitrary comparisons. There is also a fairly basic mass combat system rather reminiscent of SPI's old 'Prestaps' system, which is not too bad, intended to be tied in to the War Machine rules, presumably a complete army combat system.

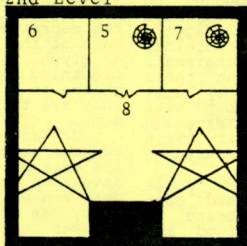
THE LAKE OF KORSHAR

ERIC OLSON

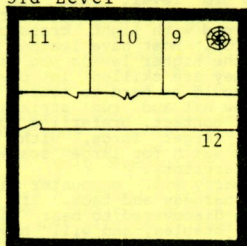
Ground Level



2nd Level



3rd Level



INTRODUCTION

This adventure can be hazardous to your health. The average level should be 7th to 9th, with a minimum of 4 characters. Certain Abyss notaries complained to our editor of the lameness of the last few adventures, particularly 'Gathering in the Daisies'. So it was decided to do one with a few more manly challenges. Unfortunately, the best I could scrape up was this background and adventure set up as a mini-campaign, though I hope it will satisfy your cravings for blood. It is intended for use with *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, but could be adapted to most other systems by an intrepid GM.

HISTORY

The majority of this adventure occurs within what is colloquially known as the 'Dead Area'. Centuries ago this was the stronghold of the worshipers of the Demon Lord Mogfren. Their capital Mogfren (the connection should be obvious) was a veritably impenetrable fortress city buried deep in the mountains. It took the combined efforts of the major states in the area to stop their evil from spreading. Finally, after driving the Mogfrenites back to their capital, the allied force of 300,000 men laid siege. The defenses of the city held firm for 193 days before mysteriously crumbling in a night of unparalleled bloodshed. Civil war between rival religious and political factions broke out within the city during the siege and disease preoccupied the defenders. Still, the siege and final assaults cost the allied army greatly; with only 40,000 men (including wounded) of the allied army leaving the field--destroying the countryside as they left. This area never recovered or became reinhabited. The surrounding regions entered an age of darkness and social regression. The continent is only now recovering some of its former glory. Over the centuries, the 'Dead Area' has been feared and avoided. The fear is supported by the presence of malignant creatures, bandits and raging disease lingering from outbreaks of earlier centuries, still striking down travelers in the central regions. The area seems possessed of an almost tangible presence of evil. Animals react negatively in the area and will bolt if given a chance, and it will have a depressive effect on humans. This forboding worsens as one approaches the

central mountains, and one will become well aware of why the area is shunned.

SCENARIO

The evil lives again. The cult of Mogfren has resurfaced behind a new 'prophet'--Millandar. The Mogfrenites successfully shielded themselves from detection as they spread their corrupt cult throughout the population centers of the Empire of the Il-Khans. Overestimating their strength, they rose up in an attempt to seize control of the empire. After several days of street fighting, the Mogfrenites were driven from the capital with serious losses. They added to their mistake by trying to hold the southern cities against the imperial army. The Mogfrenites were slaughtered in great numbers and driven into the wastes, a shadow of their former force. However, the body of Millandar was not among the piles of dead. Six years passed, and the threat seems to have subsided. Their temples were looted and razed, and their underground agents were ferreted out, tortured and then burned to death. Little has been heard from the cult in the past years, and it is assumed that the 'Dead Area' swallowed these deserving victims. Few remembered the past history of the area for the records had been destroyed, and none thought of the potential threat of this combination. Now the Mogfrenites are resurfacing with a vengeance. Key leaders of their enemies are dying off mysteriously. The latest, a royal governor, was found strangled under very odd circumstances, in a room with no windows and with guards outside his door. The only clue to the killings was an escaped slave who said that he had been forced to help rebuild a tower far to the south beyond the borders of the Dead Area. The night after his revelation, he was found horribly mutilated in the fastness of the imperial prison. In response to this the Emperor dispatched a handpicked group of guardsmen to investigate the supposed tower. It has been three weeks and they have not returned. Afraid of possible leaks within the government, the Emperor has secretly recruited external agents to form a new investigating party (naturally these are the player characters for this adventure). They will be instructed to head south into the Dead Area to the area of the Lake of Korshar to discover all they can of the Mogfrenites and their tower stronghold.

ENCOUNTERS ON THE WAY

There are several encounters possible while travelling towards the Dead Area. Three suggested encounters are described here, but more can be added if it seems appropriate at the GM's discretion.

A: As the party approaches the southern boundaries of the empire, getting closer to the Dead Area, the cities and towns seem to be virtually empty except for soldiers and support personnel. Raiders from the wastes have ridden in to plunder and to enslave the population, dragging people away with them. The people are suspicious of any armed band, and any dealings will be difficult for an armed party (finding food, shelter, etc), with high prices as the result.

B: Once outside the limits of the empire, the party will be harried by a surprisingly well organized group of bandits. They are the advanced force of a Mogfrenite strike force about five times the size of the bandit group. There 50 men in all, led by a 7th level Warrior with two 5th level assistants, the rest ranging from 1st to 3rd level. All are mounted on light war horses (many stolen from imperial stables), armed with light crossbows, daggers and longswords. Most have leather and shields, except for the higher levels who have chainmail instead. They are skilled in covering their trail and should be hard to track. They will attempt a few hit and run strikes, but will avoid direct contact, preferring to observe and inform the larger force, with their main objective to watch for large scale incursions into their territory.

C: The party will encounter a few loose horses with harness and tack. If chased down they will be discovered to bear the brand of the imperial stables, and will have food and some equipment on them, as well as some useful items like a map of the region. Personal items in saddle bags will identify them as the horses of the imperial guardsmen who were previously sent out. There is no sign of their riders.

THE LAKE OF KORSHAR

The tower which is their objective is in the middle of a small lake in the periphery of the Dead Area. It appears to have been the central pivot of a small formerly walled community, a set of ruins which surrounds the lake. The town is now in ruins, with most of the buildings completely levelled. The ruins are inhabited by a pack of Ghouls led by 104 Ghasts. The size of the pack should vary for the strength of the party. They should be strong enough to fight, but not too much of a challenge (unless the party acts foolishly). This encounter should build up a false sense of security and draw them into searching the ruins. Just for chuckles, if you want, you might throw in a pack of wild dogs. They will all be in the buildings away from the shore due to the presence of Water Demons in the lake. The party might not notice this fact if the ghoul encounter is broken down into a series of encounters all well away from the water. The party will also find a few more recent human and horse remains. A further reference to the imperial party. The bones will be stripped clean and cracked for marrow.

The lake is in the center of the town, oblong, about 200ft x 500ft, and almost 2000ft deep. It cannot be plumbed practically. It is guarded by 1 large Water Demon (75 HP) and 2 small Water Demons (55 HP). They will obey the commands of Korshar but they are independent and will attack those who stray down the banks near the water. Whatever treasure they have is in small caverns 600 or more feet below the water surface.

The tower is reached by a bridge of sorts, consisting of a 5ft wide ramp only 1 foot above the water surface, seemingly made of mother-of-pearl. There are no handrails or obstructions of any kind on the bridge, and it ends at the door to the tower. The door of the tower is made of some silvery metal. There seems to be no other entrance to the tower.

THE TOWER OF KORSHAR

The tower has three levels and a single entrance, reached by the bridge across the lake. It is mapped in three levels above,

keyed by number to this description. In general, walls are of stone, with external walls 3ft thick and internal walls 1ft thick.

1/ This room is lit by two braziers. From these will come four Smoke Demons to defend the entry. They have 5 Hit Dice each, averaging 25 HP. They cause damage through suffocation at 1D10 points overall per round. They can attack only one target each per round. Once they hit they continue to do damage to that target automatically until they are dispersed. They can only be hit by magical weapons and no STR bonus counts in damage. Due to their composition and immunity to normal weapons, it is very easy to strike the person they are attacking by accident while attacking them. Once the brazier fires are put out (which they will try to prevent), they will last for only 1D10 melee rounds. Those they attack successfully are immobilized by their attack. The secret door at the back should be relatively easy to find.

2/ This is the room of fate. On the north wall is a fresco depicting a Gorgoz, a demon resembling a mixture of an ape and a vulture. Pushing on the right eye of the image will open the secret door at the back of the room. On each of the regular doors in this room there is a glyph inscribed, causing Fire, Cold, Lightning and Blindness. There is only a 5% chance of a spell caster noticing each one, and they are triggered on opening the appropriate door.

3/ Each of these rooms holds 5 mouldering corpses shackled to the wall (yes, now we meet the rest of the imperial patrol) whose souls have been stolen by Mogfren. They are quite dead and will not animate. However, after the party has searched each room the heads of the corpses in that room will rise and they will speak, uttering a few faint words, different in each room: 3a-"You...will...find", 3b-"Your...death...at", 3c-"The...hell...spawnd", 3d-"City of the Modofren". This will only be revealed once as they are searching each room. If they don't search them all they won't get the complete message. After the entire message has been passed on, an eerie wail will fill the tower and a voice will whisper: "You will find me there; with a vengeance!!"

4/ This is a stairwell and landing, with a spiral staircase leading up to the floor above. There is a 55 HP Shadow Stalker waiting in the stairs, well concealed where only one person can take it on at a time.

5/ This is where the stairs from the level below arrive. The doors leading out of the room are locked.

6/ This is a storeroom for sacral items as well as some relics and remains which should be destroyed.

7/ This is a stairwell with a spiral staircase leading up, unguarded.

8/ This is the temple area. Each of the pentacles has 5 candlesticks, all unlit, until the party enters. As the party comes in, all the candles will light one by one, and then one in each pentacle will go out and a Shadow Stalker with 40 HP will appear. When one dies, another candle will go out and another shadow stalker will appear each round, until all of the candles go out. Only holy water can put the candles out and prevent the summoning.

9/ This is the exit of the stairways from the level below, guarded by two 40 HP Shadow Stalkers.

10/ This is a combination storeroom and small kitchen with stores of food to last 3 or 4 weeks.

11/ These stairs lead up to the next level. It is guarded by a Type 3 Demon under the control of Korshar which will be dispelled if he dies. For YRS purposes, use a Dimension Demon instead.

12/ This is Korshar's room. It is spartanly furnished to suit his tastes. Korshar is a 9th level Priest of Mogfren. He has: STR16, INT14, WIS18, DEIX15, CON16, CHA14, HP72, +1 Chainmail and a shield, for a total AC of 1. He has a Snake Staff (Adder), +1 Footman's Flail. He is one of the Mogfrenites top leaders. He has organized the bandits into a strike force. In his room there are maps of past and current operations. His room also contains a complete map of the wasteland and at

least a partial map of the northern parts of the Dead Area. There are three areas marked on the map that are not labeled. One is the city of Modofren, where Millandar is wrecking his vengeance on the empire. He is attempting to expand his power by drawing on the natural power of the region and the relics of Mogfren that still remain. He is also organizing a small army to supplement the demons he has already summoned and the underground which he has built up in the human community. The room also contains the more valuable items seized from the imperial guards and other victims, the payroll for the bandit group, and some choice personal possessions. The value is somewhere in the area of 25,000 GP. The point of the information in the room is to encourage the party to seek deeper into the Dead Area, where the GM can develop further adventures.

NOTES ON KORSHAR AND THE SITUATION

Korshar has been granted a selection of special abilities from his deity as a reward for his service and devotion. He has the ability of a 3rd level Illusionist (choose spells as you see fit), if you are using YRS, 30% of his LSP should go to Conjuror spells, as Mogfren is a master of illusion. Korshar can also plane shift once per day at no special cost. Adjust his stats to fit your campaign, but with his illusionist and clerical abilities he will need a high DEX and WIS.

Once Korshar becomes aware of the party, he will use his spells to slow the party's progress to the tower, while not risking himself in combat. If the party survives the guardians, he will attempt to grab his maps and all important documents and plane shift out. If possible, he should signal one of the rebel bands to come and harry the characters after they get out of the tower. As the characters enter the tower, the Water Demons in the surrounding lake have the following orders: 1/ to use their lower/raise water ability to confuse and drown the characters, 2/ only the two smaller Water Demons will attack the party on the way in, 2/ to attack the party when it exits, raising the water level of the lake to flood the ruins so so that they can chase the party beyond their normal 30ft range from the water's edge.

The tower and lake area can be used in the future, either as an advance base for the characters' forays into the Dead Area, as a point of conflict for control with the Mogfrenites, or as a nice place for the Mogfrenites to besiege the party. Basically, the lake is a good starting point for a continuing campaign towards the city of Modofren and the other mysteries of the Dead Area.

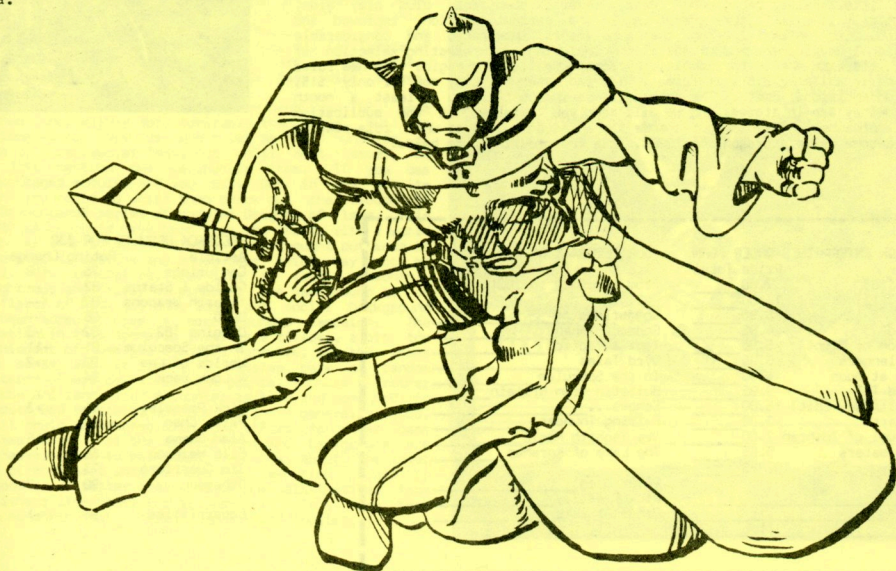
CREATURES OF THE LAKE & TOWER

Described in brief here are the basic characteristics and nature of the unfamiliar creatures mentioned above.

Water Demon: This is a fairly powerful demon type. They are able to purify/putrify water at will. They can raise or lower the level of water at will. They have a 5% chance per HD of controlling a water elemental of equal or lesser size. They appear as giant waterspouts vaguely similar to water elementals which are their lesser kin. They attack with watery arms, attempting to drown or pull victims under the water. In the water they appear as dark splotches. They fear fire and will attack it first, taking extra damage from fire attacks (+1/HD). Once in water they regenerate 1 point per round. If killed in water, they will only be temporarily dissipated, regenerating fully in 1D10 turns. As the demon moves out of water, he will lose 10% of his stats per 10ft he moves from the water, and if killed out of the water it will die. Because of this, they will never move more than 30ft from the lake. The HD of those encountered are 8x2 and 1x12 HD. AC is 2(8HD version) and 0(12 HD version). They move 15" or 36" in water. They have 4 attacks for 1D6 or 1D8, and if 3 attacks from one Water Demons hit the same character, he must save against drowning.

Smoke Demons-Korzani: These demons take the form of humans made of smoke. They can only be hit by magical weapons, and no STR bonus is added. Due to their composition and immunity to normal weapons, it is easy to strike the person they are attacking when you try to hit them. Once their source (flame) is extinguished, they will only remain for 1D10 rounds. They are AC4, HD4, move 18", and do 1 attack of 1D10 suffocating damage. After they hit they automatically hit with a choking attack for 1D10 for each round after that until disposed of.

Shadow Stalkers: These are dwellers of the half planes. They are servers of Mogfren. Their sole purpose is to destroy and bring misery. Their touch burns their victims from intense cold. They can be turned by a cleric according to his level. Their powers vary in different conditions of light. In full darkness they turn as a Wraith, in half light or shadow as a spectre, and in daylight as a ghoul. They absorb light and appear as long-limbed, emaciated humanoids. The statistics below are given by lighting conditions (dark, half light, and full light). AC 2/5/8, LEV 8/4/2, Move 12/9/6, HD 6, Magic Resistance 25%, and 1 attack for 2D6/1D10/1D6.



PLUG PAGE

ADVENTURE UNLIMITED

If you're looking for role-playing adventures to run with either AD&D or Ysgarth, we have the answer. Zounds! If you've got the guts to do a little adapting we've got what you need for any system. These aren't just hack and slash pre-packaged pap, but real, full developed episodes in fully developed backgrounds, with an emphasis on role-playing, imagination and variety. We've got a back library of some 15 adventures in print, all available at the shockingly reasonable price of \$2 including postage. Just out are two new adventures, *The Citadel of Zushran* (a raid on the ruined capital of a merchant empire) and *Dark Waters* (murder and magic on the docks of Ptolemais). More are coming up soon, but these are the latest and most interesting now available. Use the order form, set a couple of bucks free to pick up something worthwhile.

TCT EXPANDS

To *Challenge Tomorrow* is building a growing following and the schedule of expansion sets is bulging out nicely. TCT is the first really adaptable role-playing game, ideal for use in any kind of background from the historical past to the speculative future. The rules are simple and progressive, with a flexible skill system. We actually have what so many recent systems are offering. The complete rules are available for only \$8.95 including postage. Each expansion contains background, rule adjustments and 3 or 4 scenarios +plus adaptation rules for other major systems.

Triad (SF in the far future:\$4.95) is the first TCT expansion set and has been doing well. Just out is *London by Night* (Adventure in Victorian London:\$5.95), our most extensive expansion to date, with loads of maps, facts and scenarios, which has already been quite a hit. Just out is the best and newest, *Challengers* (The ultimate in superhero adventure:\$5.95), which can also stand on its own as a complete game system with the best new idea for running a comic-book type campaign. For winter we'll have *Guns at Noon* (Wild West adventure:\$4), a special advance offer. Planned for release next year are *Across a Million Years* (Time travel adventure), *Dark Continent* (An adventure supplement for *London by Night* dealing with Africa), *Impact* (Adventure in the wild cities of the 21st century), and *West Indies* (Pirate adventure in the 17th and 18th centuries). All of those listed with prices are available on advance order and postage is included. Use the order form below.

YSGARTH AIDS

Ysgarth continues to fill its role as the leader in gaming innovation and playability. The revised second edition is still available at \$13.95 including postage, providing the best systems and ideas for fantasy role-playing with an emphasis on character, development, background and realism. Four Ysgarth supplements are already out (\$3 each with postage), with new material, ideas and scenarios. Just out this summer and available now is supplement #4, *The Old Powers*, which provides a selection of background material with an emphasis on demons and undead, plus a scenario and new magic system variants. Coming up soon is *Uttgart*, a world background supplement for the world of Uttgart, the original world which the Ysgarth campaign grew out of. Use the handy order form below.

YSGARTH SPECIAL OFFER

As you've probably guessed from hints here and there, we're working on a new edition of *Ysgarth* for release in early '85. Development and playtesting are progressing rather nicely, and systems are being refined and simplified. The new system will include basic rules, variants, advanced rules, complete skill lists, spells, background ideas, several scenarios, plus play aids. Essentially it will feature everything in the current edition, improved and updated, with material from the supplements integrated and considerable additional development and organization, including an interesting selection of handy reference sheets for combat, character creation and magic. The new rules will be in a larger 8.5 x 11 format. You can reserve a copy now for only \$15, with no additional costs. The rules will be sent out to you at least a month before they are in stores, and we will keep you informed as the publication date approaches. This is your chance for an advance look at what role-playing will become as we approach the 1990s. Use the ordering form below.



RAGNAROK ENTERPRISES ORDER FORM

#	Item	Price	Total
—	ABYSS(6)	7.00	
—	ABYSS(13)	13.00	
—	TCT	8.95	
—	Triad	4.95	
—	London by Night	5.95	
—	Challengers	5.95	
—	Guns at Noon	4.00	
—	Boxed TCT	9.95	
—	Ysgarth(New Edit)	15.00	
—	Uttgart	3.00	
—	Citadel of Zushran	2.00	
—	Dark Waters	5.95	
	TOTAL \$		

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

YOUR FEEDBACK ON #30

Rate these items on a scale from 1(aawful) to 100(great)

Conjurings	_____
Gods of Japan	_____
Tact & Tactics	_____
Wyrd Tales	_____
In the SpēCulum	_____
Bulletin from Britain	_____
Echoes...	_____
Falling Thunder	_____
New Ysgarth Magic	_____
The Lake of Korshar	_____
Peter Chen	_____
Rick Pressley	_____
Other Artists	_____

FEEDBACK RESULTS FOR #30

Article	Rating	Change
Conjurings	75	-10
Guilds & Status	82	--
Ysgarth Weapons	87	--
AD&D	96	--
Origins '82	92	-3
In the Speculum	91	+11
Worlds of Lee	93	+7
A Look Back	94	--
Rick Pressley	84	+3
Peter Chen	82	--
Alan Summa	77	-15
Eric Heinsoo	65	--
Jim Guerriero	73	--
Others	90	+7
Cover/Titles	96	+1

PACSETTERS

Box 451, Delavan, WI 53115

This is a new company with only two major releases so far, but their production standards are high, and they seem to have already caught on at least a bit with the hard core of role-players who give a try to everything new which has a promising topic. Their two major games are on popular and current topics, time travel in *Timemaster* and the supernatural and horror in *Chill*. Both games are interesting in several ways, though there are some curious and noteworthy problems in systems and design.

Timemaster comes in a nice looking red box with first-class, full-color art and the box has an interesting selection of contents. There are two main books, the 'Travelers' Manual' and the 'Guide to the Continuum', plus an adventure set in France during WWI. The 'Travelers' Manual' contains the rules and tries to offer a little something for everyone. It starts off with the most basic information, like how to roll dice and moves on logically if a bit slowly to character creation, though they don't actually explain how to create characters, requiring the player to skip ahead two sections and then come back. Without explaining how characteristics work or more than what they are, they go directly into how they are played into the game, including examples of play and the mechanics in action (none of them explained yet). Then they move on to describe a basic background of a time war of sorts between the Time Corps and a race called the Demoreans. They give a simple and sensible description of how time works, subscribing to a playable but unconvincing mix of popular theories. Much of the background is derived conceptually from popular novels, particularly certain works from the 60s by Fritz Leiber or Keith Laumer. They set out some regulations for the Corps, and make it look like there is only one right way to think of time. Finally, we get back to the characters and how to play. There are only eight characteristics. These are all rolled randomly, and include the standard assortment, oriented towards physical and social characteristics, with a seemingly somewhat random assortment. There is a fairly open section on setting character background. After describing some secondary characteristics we get to where things bog down, the combat system (note that we have not yet discussed skills). Combat takes up almost half the book, and is very tactically oriented (note that the game contains terrain maps and counters, and is clearly set up for fighting wargame like combat on an individual and small group scale. Skills do get involved in combat, but you have to refer forward again to find out what they do, and the effects of combat and skills in combat is ambiguous and simplistic, with no located damage and a very limited number of options available, and those unusual tactics possible are handled by special case rules. The effects of skills in combat are rather



topper is that the entire system is written in an offensively condescending tone. They concentrate on explaining the most simplistic basics of G.Ming and playing with as little hard rules or data as possible presented. Now, let's be a bit more objective. This is a game clearly designed for young players who have no role-playing experience. As such, it is approachable for sillier pre-teens, but the childish tone will offend anyone much over 12. Admittedly, the fast moving action of the movie series would get bogged down with super-accurate mechanics, but anyone with more than a minimal tie to reality is going to get annoyed pretty fast with the pointless die rolling and abstract or arbitrary nature of many of the rules. This is lowest common denominator role-playing. You don't have to think or imagine, just roll dice. You don't even have to think up characters or develop a personality since you've seen the characters in the movies. As a matter of fact, if you've ever thought of role-playing and have seen the movies you don't really have any reason to buy the game unless you have a really short memory. Game collectors and designers should go right out and get *Indiana Jones* though. It is a great example of the depths to which gaming can sink in the service of holy lucre. By the way, there are two modules already out, one for *Temple of Doom* and one for *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. You've seen the movies, make them up yourself to play with a real role-playing system.

I've got a lot of other items on hand from TSR, some of them considerably more admirable than these, but the big time editor guys just won't let me fill hundreds of pages with reviews (at least not until next issue), so I'll just mention one worthwhile item. If you use pre-packaged modules and you play *D&D* in any of its forms, you could do worse than check out the second in the *Dragonlance* series of modules *Dragons of Flame*. This is *D&D* as it could have been from the start, with a world which has some actual development and thought put into it and events situations and encounters which may not be brilliantly innovative, but are at least reasonably thought out and fairly convincing. The background is of the flavor of *D&D*, but some logic and social background has been added to give a more rounded campaign. The situation in this scenario involves a citadel, a bit too reminiscent of some old standard formulae, but the rooms make sense and it isn't a massive maze of random monsters. There are a few weak points, such as a rather sketchy and randomized encounter section and some nods to standard *D&D* monsters, but the design is generally good, and it could be adapted with some effort to other game systems as well, as the descriptions and background are not heavily tied to mechanics. This is about the best work of this sort which I have ever seen from TSR and is as good as or better than some of the alternatives from publishers like *GameLords* or *Mayfair*. It's more than just munchkin bait. More to come. (Jon Schuller)

ADVENTURES IN THE 4TH DIMENSION

Role Playing Fun
For Ages
12 and Up

Pacesetter

Great Time
Any Time

curious as well, as they seem to do little but add more attacks per round for the characters who have them. One reason the combat system is so lengthy is the attention paid to vehicles of all eras and to movement for men and vehicles in various situations. Then we move on to the skill system. The skills consist entirely of combat, espionage and survival related skills with no background or other skills. Skill percentages are worked out sensibly, but there are only three levels of advancement, so characteristics are of paramount importance here. Advancement in all areas is based on success points, and we are referred back to chapter 2, but of course they are actually described in chapter 3. These points allow one to buy advancement in different areas at set prices, with all skills treated the same and maximums set on skills and characteristics. After skills we go to paranormal talents, which follow a similar pattern, though the selection is limited. Finally there is a straightforward section on equipment. The second book of *Timemaster* is pretty straightforward, giving general background and some information on 7 different historical periods for play, containing mostly information on tactical combat units and battle scenarios. The adventure forms a third book, and is titled 'Red Ace High', and is fairly straightforward and combat oriented. The game system here is simple and easy to play. The rules are a bit disorganized and strangely arranged. The background is basic but playable, and though there could be much more, it isn't really practical given all of history to work with. The real problem here is that *Timemaster* seems more like a tactical wargame with some character rules thrown in as an afterthought. The skill selection does nothing to encourage role-playing. The rules are totally battle oriented, and it seems that they expect players to fight rather than think their ways through situations as is aptly demonstrated in the scenario, which is essentially a raid in the midst of battle to interfere with a plot to upset the balance of a battle at Cambralis, with lots of gunfire and trench-hopping.

Chill follows the model of *Timemaster* fairly closely. Again, there are two main books, maps, counters and a scenario. The main difference is that now the topic is horror. The nice aspects here are that they've gotten things in the right order this time, so you come on things as you need them rather than having to jump around. The same basic stats are used as are the basic rules, but somewhat different skills are offered, plus rules on magic and additional ideas on running the system. The background book is almost entirely made up of notes on evil magic and on creatures and monsters. The scenario 'Death in Warwick House' is pretty standard, but involves some investigation. Unfortunately, it is rather rigid, almost like a solo-adventure, offering few options and choices for the players. On the whole, this is better organized and presented than *Timemaster*, and definitely more playable, but the major problems remain.

Unlike *Timemaster*, *Chill* is a complete game, but they still take simple mechanics and junk them up with exceptions, the emphasis is still very tactical and anti-role-playing, and they've added a tendency to encourage puzzle-solving as well.

Overall, Pacesetter has made a good try with these two games. They are easy to learn and play, but I'm afraid they won't hold much lasting interest for experienced gamers. The skill system is too limited and inflexible, and as gamers develop role-playing skills they want to play characters with personality and use their imaginations. They don't want to blast and burn in the trenches as pieces in a wargame. In general, I'd recommend *Chill* with a few reservations, as a nice aid to be integrated with a more progressive game system, and *Timemaster* only because there are too few attempts of any quality to do time-travel games (not an easy task). Perhaps future releases will be better integrated and more progressive in design. (David Nalle)

LONG LIVE THE KING

ECI, POB 13190, Charlotte, NC 28211

This is a curious and rather interesting scenario/module. It presents the background for a power struggle in the Kingdom of Jana. It sets up the characters, situations, and a 10 day sequence of events in the kingdom. It involves both an investigation of the death of the old king, and the maneuvering connected to the determination of the succession. The basic ideas here are quite good, and the background and situations which are set up are nicely done. Yet, as good as the general design is, it is a bit weak on development of specific situations and events. The module really isn't very long, and is essentially the bones of an excellent mini-campaign which, with some elaboration could be excellent. Too much structuring and an overabundance of fact and data can be restricting, but *Long Live the King* is under developed to the point that there is a bit of the burden on the GM to add information and elaborate on the material provided. The format of presentation and the ideas are excellent, but to realize the potential of the module the GM will have to do a fair amount of advance preparation. (JS)

FANTASY WARGAMING

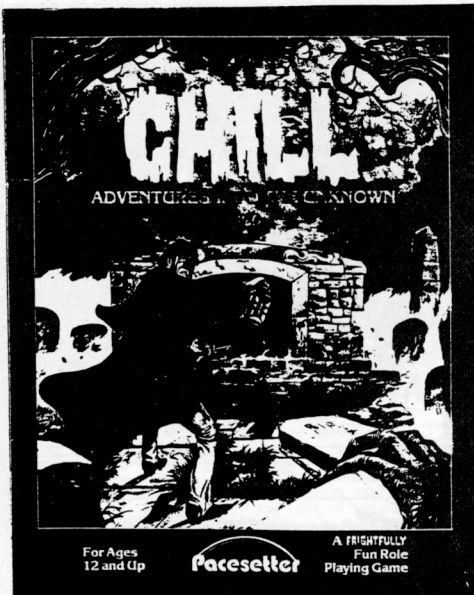
Stein and Day

This book/game was compiled in 1961 by a UK Napoleonic group. Sound familiar? It should, this is just a bloated version of *Charmail* in 300 pages and ten years too late. While there are some interesting points to it, it falls as a book and is a miserable FRP system. It's desert dry and disjointed, and as a FRP system it is too complicated, emphasizes the wrong points, and is basically unusable.

One of the interesting points is its 'Estiary'. The editor has apparently decided that something is lacking from TSR's efforts in this area. For example, the Bonnacore, which "when he turns to run away emits a fart...which covers three acres. And any tree that it reaches catches fire." This lovely creature was a heraldic figure. I'd rather have a slug crossed by a bar sinister as my coat of arms. Most of the book is devoted to the author's idea of what a FRP system should be. This system is so complex that even if a GM or a player has the intestinal fortitude to learn the rules, no one that I know has the patience of a saint, which is what it would take to play by them.

Locating a secret door requires a formula with nine factors, unlocking and opening said door requires a different formula with eleven more factors. Each round of combat lets you strike a blow (24 factors involved), and make a morale check (30 factors). The magic system is even worse.

This system has been 'thoroughly tested' for hours (during which three goblins, two players and the GM probably bit the dust). While the 'system' might pass as the most realistic ever created, it also qualifies as the least playable. No one but bibliophiles and masochists should invest in this torpid tome. (John Dashaw)



BULLETIN FROM BRITAIN

As *ABYSS* readers may know, Mike Lewis was one of the editors of *DRAGONLORDS* before it faded away earlier this year, but with a bit of persuasion, he agreed to add *ABYSS* to his rather extensive writing schedule, so with any luck, he should be appearing here from time to time with some glimpses of gaming in Great Britain.

As I type this, *DRAGONMEET* was held last weekend, and I'm still recovering! *DRAGONMEET* is a single day games convention held at Central Hall, Westminster, in London, organized by Games Workshop, the giants of gaming in the UK. While it does not reach the proportions of attendance that *GAMES DAY* draws, you get a fair size crowd and the set-up manages to combine both the commercial side with trade stands and the hobby side of actual gaming quite successfully.

I had thought that *DRAGONMEET* was hot last year, but the past weekend surpassed that with the hottest day of the year in London--it isn't known as *DRAGONSUEAT '84* for nothing! Still, we gamers must suffer for our art, I suppose.

Having paid a pound to get into the hall, there were plenty of official games on offer just waiting for you to sign up. They ranged from *A&D* to *Call of Cthulhu* as well as playtests of some new games systems. Unlike the situation in the states (I believe) these events are all free, without a charge being made by the organizer; mind you I have seen some games running which I doubt many people would play!!

It was interesting to note that there was no official *RuneQuest* game organized by Games Workshop unlike the previous years. Could this be because Games Workshop have lost their license to print the game in the UK now that it has been sold to Avalon Hill? In fact, they've even lost distributorship rights, with Tally-Ho Games scheduled to handle the new edition when it finally appears--as they are the established distributors for most of AH's stuff. The absence of an RQ game was probably just sour grapes on GW's part, and of course, a reflection of their sharp business practices. Don't give support to a product you don't sell.

The two most interesting playtests being run were for Games Workshop games, but with my two ex-co-editors for *DRAGONLORDS* involved, what else could I do but praise them? Marc Gascoigne (now Games Editor for Games Workshop) was demonstrating the half complete *Judge Dredd* role playing game, involving a massive shoot-up in a car park--looks excellent, however; while Ian Marsh (now Editorial Assistant for *WHITE DWARF*) was showing off the even less complete *Dr. Who* role playing game. Both games are promised sometime in November, which probably means Christmas or early 1985.

Games Workshop is pushing the idea of home-grown role playing games with some enthusiasm and it is something that most UK fans want. Imported games are just far too expensive; with *A&D* at 40 pounds or more for the set, and most games in the 15-20 pound bracket. There are admittedly some versions printed in the UK, with *Call of Cthulhu* as the most recent (meaning a price drop from 18.95 pounds to about half that), but they are few and far between. The sale of *RQ3* to AH has obviously upset a lot of UK gamers as it will mean a massive hike in price. Those talking of the death of *RuneQuest* in the UK may not be far wrong.

New products were scarce at *DRAGONMEET*, most people prefer to delay to *GAMES DAY* and give new stuff a bit, push there. *Ringworld* was one of the few new things around, but again, at 25 pounds a throw it isn't going to sell that well.

Because the UK games scene is so small compared to the USA, you can be sure that most people involved in it will appear at conventions. *GAMES DAY* is the usual gathering place, where anyone who is anyone can be seen. *DRAGONMEET* still drew its share of personalities though, with people like Ian Livingstone (Editor of *WHITE DWARF*) sharing amonities with Paul Cockburn (Editor of *IMAGINE*) and the rest of the TSR(UK) crowd. The fanzine editors were out in force as well, with an impromptu editors

stand being set up when it was discovered that the official stand hadn't materialised. I'll look at the leading UK fanzines in another column.

DRAGONMEET was enjoyable and exhausting. Perhaps it lacks the excitement that *GAMES DAY* seems to engender, but then perhaps that's not such a bad thing--*GAMES DAY* is even more tiring!

A full report on *GAMES DAY*, the awards and much more next time!

ECHOES FROM THE ABYSS

Dear RE,

I am very impressed with your work, to say the least. When I first saw the sample issue you sent me, I thought, 'Well, the art's pretty good, but the printing is not so hot.' Then I saw the typeset, which was rather small. But when I began reading the innovative articles within, I was delighted! This is the magazine for me! I was impressed with the personal feel of the articles, which seemed much more 'feeling' (for want of a better word) than those in *DRAGON*. I was also impressed with the fact that the director of the company himself wrote me, and he was very helpful (when I wrote Fantasy Games Unlimited all they sent me was an order form). I plan to stick with this company, especially if *YRS* is as exciting as the articles in *ABYSS*.

Brian Mackenzie,
St. Catherine's, Ontario

Dear Mr. Nalle & Everybody at RE,

ABYSS #30 was a great issue! As an avid gamer and a reader of several other gaming magazines, yours is a step in the right direction. On the outside it may not look like *WHITE DWARF* or *DRAGON*, but you can't judge a book by its cover. The informal approach in the articles is what attracts me most as well as the quality of the content.

Dave Johnson
Edison, OH

Dear *ABYSS* Staff,

I got my second issue of *ABYSS* and I have a few comments. You have a great magazine but it could be better. I think you over emphasize your own games a bit. Put in some *D&D* modules and more *D&D* related articles. How about a comic strip! In issue #29 you have two pieces of fiction. How about cutting out things like the 'Jaqueral' story? You definitely have a great magazine and for that I send my praise, but let's improve it even more. Also, in response to Billy Ray Joe Bob Ezekial Fuchs, God Fearing American, I can only say 'Amen Brother, Amen!'

John Green
Chicago, IL

Dear Mr. Nalle,

I recently purchased a subscription to *ABYSS* and I am very pleased. It's a wonderful magazine, but I'm concerned that there is too much *D&D* related material and not enough *Ysgarth* oriented material. I understand and encourage the idea that the magazine should try to reach a wide, varied audience, but I would rather see material suitable to *RuneQuest* and *Man, Myth & Magic* or other more advanced games, rather than *D&D* which I try to avoid. Also--I think that you run a few too many gaming-magazine reviews. I would rather see that space filled with *Ysgarth* related material, general gaming material, or at least reviews of role-playing games. But, as I said, I still love the magazine and plan to obtain as many back issues as possible.

Steve Kersten
Green Bay, WI

FALLING THUNDER

KEVIN ANDERSON

With a flourish of blood-red clouds, the sun dropped beneath the low horizon, leaving a shadowy dusk to sift over the two opposing armies camped on the vast plain. In the twilight stillness, every anxious noise carried up into the clear evening air: soldiers fighting nervously in their armor, swords scraping against whetstones. No one knew if the battle would begin in the morning, or if a fragile peace might be struck during the night.

Just outside the perimeter of one encampment stood a parley tent, within easy hearing range of the army of Rataan. With each angry word shouted from the discussion table, the anxious soldiers turned to look nervously where their king was trying to make peace.

Waiting silently at their posts, or crouched around campfires while playing games of chance to keep their minds from the impending battle, the soldiers tried to picture what took place inside the tent, piecing together what their ears told them and what their imaginations suggested. Behind the closed flap of the tent someone was yelling again...

"You are trespassing!" Lord Tultan shouted. His fat upper lip trembled. He was a huge bald-headed man clad in rich furs and ornamented arm bands. His jeweled broadsword hung limply from his belt; Tultan had refused to remove it on entering the parley tent, bellowing that he would not disarm himself at the very threshold of his enemy's encampment.

Tultan stood up menacingly, glaring at the younger, crowned lord who stood across the table. Tultan had a habit of speaking in strident tones, but now he held his bearlike voice to a low growl. "I would suggest, Ariell, that you remove your army from Shikarr before I force them out!"

Kenath, Tultan's advisor, tried in vain to make his king be seated again and to bring relative calm to the heated discussion. He frowned and tugged at his golden beard, sighing.

"Trespassing!" Ariell cried, standing of his own accord. His wooden chair clattered backwards, but he paid it no heed. His ice-blue eyes smoldered with rage at the other king. Kenath, the advisor, grumbled at the futility of his self-appointed position as mediator.

"You marched through my land, destroying my fields, trampling my crops, eating the stores set aside for times of famine--and you talk to me about trespassing!" he shouted, his moustache quivering with every word.

Tultan appeared ready to explode and, when the warrior-king's massive hand flicked as if toward his broadsword, Ariell drew a hidden dagger from his cloak and crouched, standing ready in case the other should use his blade.

Tultan's green eyes bulged as if in shock at the very thought that this young king would dare to draw a blade against the undefeated Tultan of Shikarr. But Kenath leaped between them, cutting short all possibility of a duel. "Peace between you! This is a parley tent! No weapons may be drawn!" He glared at Ariell, piercing him with angry eyes.

"It appears my Lord Tultan is not the only one to disarm in the parley tent--though he made it clear that he carried a blade. I expected other than concealed weapons from you, Ariell of Rataan!" he snapped, his thin voice biting like a razor.

Ariell fumed quietly, muttering something about how Tultan could be so stupid and yet remain the leader of his people. Probably only through Kenath's moderating counsel. Kings such as Tultan needed advisors in order to hold back their royal tempers; Ariell did not. He sat alone at Rataan's end of the discussion table.

"Sire," Kenath spoke again, cutting through the agitated silence with a voice that managed to calm Tultan slightly. "I suggest we listen to Lord Ariell for but a few moments without breaking into senseless arguments."

The mediator glared silently at both of them until Tultan finally relaxed his grip on the hilt of his sword and sat down. Ariell laid his dagger in plain sight on the table and was seated himself, but only after Tultan had settled into his chair.

Kenath looked at Ariell. "I trust the Lord of Rataan has a reason for invading your land of Shikarr...?"

Tultan was quick to anger again, but a powerful motion from his advisor silenced his outburst. "Yes, Lord Tultan, I most certainly do! I had thought my intentions to be perfectly apparent, but now I see that what is obvious to some is incomprehensible to others." He paused a moment to calm his infuriated countenance, "You have visited Rataan, Lord Tultan. You know how hilly and wooded my country is, now little farmland is available...?"

Ariell waited for acknowledgement, but the warrior-king only glared back at him. "No doubt you recall when recently your armies crossed my land to do battle with Patalca. Do you also recall marching through my wheat fields, ripping up my harvest with your booted feet, then eating my stores?"



A faint glimmer of understanding flickered into the barbarian's eyes, but Kenath nodded his head in full comprehension. Ariell continued.

"My people now need to replant everything, replot our fields and clean seeds from the wreckage of our warehouses which your men cleaned out and destroyed! My people have no food for the winter because of your campaign! We need to build up our stores again for times of famine. We must repair the damaged lands and storehouses.

"But Rataan has not the farmland to retrieve that much grain in one, nay, even five planting seasons!" He paused, making totally sure Tultan understood. "However, Tultan, this vast plain on which we have camped could yield enough grain in just one year to feed my people and replenish my stores. And with the help of your men we could clear enough wilderness in Rataan that would make up for the destroyed land...and we would trouble you no longer. Just one year, Tultan, to repay the damages you have inflicted on my people."

He looked at the astonished expression on the other king's face, an expression he had known would be there. Ariell placed his hands on the table.

"We did not come to battle, Lord Tultan, but to plant."

The warrior-king reddened gradually, finally exploding after building up to it with a long seethe. "What? You would turn my best training area into a...a wheat field? Impossible! I will not allow it!"

Ariell frowned ominously. "Perhaps it would be wise for you to submit, Lord Tultan--while I am still asking."

Tultan bellowed again, but Kenath physically held him down with surprisingly more strength than he appeared to have. "Before we bicker again, I think it would be nice to have our story told. Agreed, Lord Ariell?"

Ariell scowled coldly.

"And perhaps you should tell it, Sire." Kenath suggested.

"What! Are you suggesting I cannot control my temper long enough to relate a simple story!" he roared.

"Yes, Sire."

Tultan fumed for a few seconds, then seated himself, nodding in embarrassment. "Very well...but mind you tell the truth!"

The blond-haired mediator turned to the other king. "Lord Ariell, where is your advisor? He should hear this so that he may offer better counsel."

"Theold is my astrologer, not an advisor." Ariell corrected sharply, "I can think for myself." Tultan squirmed, but refrained from making a counter insult. "He has gone outside to read the stars, looking for a solution to your stubbornness."

"All right, Lord Ariell." Kenath brushed his yellow beard and touched his fingertips together. "You are aware that Shikarr is a military state. No matter what your personal prejudices may be, we have kept your own land out of the clutches of war several times. Our latest campaign against Patalca served not only to protect our country, but also to defend Rataan.

"As for your granaries--our soldiers must eat. Perhaps, in their battle-strung condition, they did more damage than was necessary. But it is still a small price to pay for protecting you from war, Lord Ariell."

He silenced an outburst from the king of Rataan, and continued. "Many potential invaders lurk in the surrounding lands. My lord Tultan must continually keep his armies in practice, fit for battle should a sudden assault come upon us. Shikarr is also mountainous, like Rataan; and we conduct our military maneuvers, cavalry training, battle and target practice on this plain where you have camped your army, Lord Ariell. Here is the only suitable area in all of Shikarr which has the expanse needed for elaborate battle staging.

"We cannot let it be used for your planting, Lord Ariell. My lord Tultan does not deny you the use of this property out of pure spite, but out of greater necessity."

"Greater necessity!" Ariell gasped, "My people will starve! And you place greater importance on your war games?"

The tent flap rustled, and Theold, Ariell's gray-haired, lame astrologer entered. "Your pardon, Lords."

Ariell turned, sighing. "Ah, Theold, enter. Your timing is good."

The old astrologer smiled wryly. "From what I could hear outside, I thought it might be, Lords."

Ariell fought back an embarrassed scowl and waited in silence for a few moments as the astrologer limped to the table. Theold's leg didn't hurt him anymore, even though it had never healed properly from when, years ago--before Ariell was born--he had been in the forest seeking shelter from a thunderstorm; lightning struck a tree nearby, causing a bough to come crashing down on Theold's leg. He lay there pinned for the rest of the night as the storm cleared, leaving him to stare at the stars wheeling overhead. Ever since, he claimed to be able to read the events of the world as depicted in the night sky.

"Tell me, Theold," Ariell prodded, "What have the stars to say?"

The astrologer flinched for a moment, tugging on his scraggly beard, then bent to whisper in his king's ear. Tultan was greatly displeased.

"What is he saying?!" The bellowing voice carried out of the tent, causing several warriors outside to glance nervously toward the parley tent again.

Theold stood up slowly and looked at Ariell with obvious disapproval, questioning the warrior-king's command. But the Lord of Rataan shrugged, "Very well, Theold. Tell us all, since some of us have not the patience to allow a king to speak privately with his own astrologer!"

Tultan winced, but Kenath laid a hand on his shoulder, squelching an outburst.

"Lords, I have observed the stars and interpreted their meanings." He paused, "I have read that Rataan and Shikarr will have peace."

The others breathed a sigh; Tultan seemed almost disappointed.

"I meant that not as a prophecy--" Theold continued, "But as a warning. You will have peace. Or else. You must find a peaceful solution to this, or the consequences will be far worse than anything you anticipate--for both of you."



"What does that mean?" Tultan was baffled and uneasy.

"It means that you will not interfere with our planting!" Ariell snapped.

Tultan's eyes flew open in rage. "Or it means that you will remove your troops from my lands immediately!"

Kenath quickly leaped between them. "Please, Lords!" He slapped his hand on the table, and the loud cracking silenced both kings. He paused to look at them.

"Perhaps we have had enough discussion for this night...?"

Tultan fumed and strode to the flap of the tent. "We have had enough discussion on this entire matter! Shikarr will not concede to your demands! Take your people and depart, Ariell--before my soldiers begin their practice again!" The warrior-king stormed out of the tent with Kenath tagging futilely behind him.

After a few moments of silence, in which he didn't know whether to be shocked or happy, Ariell went slowly to the tent flap, looking out at his camp enshrouded in night. "Did the stars truly speak such to you, Theold?"

"The stars do not lie, my Lord. You must make peace. Even though it may mean a retreat back to Rataan. You will not battle. You must find some compromise, or some other solution will be forced upon you." The astrologer looked up at his king, but Ariell was staring into the darkness.

"You are so wise, Theold, yet so ignorant. You know every manifestation of the heavens, yet you realize nothing of the earth at your feet. Is peace worth the price of the starvation of our people, while Shikarr pays nothing? This must not be."

"Sire--" Theold turned, but Ariell had gone outside, alone.

The king walked silently among his troops, passing campfires where men sat laughing, or playing games of chance, but Ariell's ears could detect a sharp note of nervousness in their voices. He watched a game of dice, shaking his head as he saw the impossible wagers. The men knew they had nothing to lose. Some of the soldiers greeted him, but he did not hear.

The light of the campfires swam before his eyes, and he saw a vision, more his imagination than anything supernatural. He looked on these same warriors, only months further in time. They were shuddering in the cold of winter; sickness crept among their emaciated bodies--they were starving.

Ariell thought of his own infant son, closing his eyes to bring the memories clearer. The boy was already thin and sickly, struggling to gain the health that should have been the right of any babe his age--but not even a king's son could afford to have a richer health bestowed on him. Ariell knew without a doubt that the boy would not survive the winter unless he was kept well-fed and warm.

Then his imagination showed him a small mound of earth, newly formed. His son's name was graven in a stone place on top. It was spring now, and the grave was fresh only because it had taken until now to dig into the frozen earth. Few of his subjects attended the funeral, because so few had survived the winter.

Rage grew within him as the images crumbled away. He would not have his only heir, and half his people, perish so that Shikarr could conveniently play out their war games!

His voice was hoarse as he shouted for a scribe and courier. Two young men came up to him, panting, only seconds after he had called. "I wish to send a message to Lord Tultan!"

The scribe removed papers with shaking hands, as if nervous about taking any sort of message to the other Lord. The courier shifted uneasily.

"Lord Tultan," Ariell dictated, "The people of Rataan have peacefully requested the use of this plain for the space of one year. You have denied us this simple demand, knowing full well that my people will starve without its grain." Ariell paused, then continued with renewed determination.

"We have reached the conclusion that you must relinquish your stubbornness, or we shall take this plain by force! Either way--we shall plant tomorrow!"

The scribe placed the king's seal on the message, and the courier took the paper, running off with his fateful letter.

Ariell looked across the night to the dim fires of Shikarr's army, burning on the other side of the plain, and he knew what the answer would be.

The two armies stood on opposite sides of the plain as the dawn glinted off their armor and drawn swords. Anxiety spoke from them with sounds of shifting feet and general uneasiness. The sun rose higher, as if to get a better view of the battle which was about to take place below.

With a word from Ariell, the army of Rataan began to march with clanking swords and mail. The soldiers' firm white lips betrayed their inner feelings of terror. Ariell shouted, "We must win this battle! Our people will starve this winter if we do not capture this plain and begin planting immediately!"

But the soldiers knew that Shikarr's army was unbeaten...

None of them had any desire to succumb to the slow death of starvation in the winter. If they were killed in combat, at least that worry would be behind them...

Tultan's army did not appear so uneasy on the surface because of their military training, but conscience and reluctance seemed to hand darkly over them. The soldiers remembered that their campaign against Patalca a few months ago--in fact, some of them were still stiff from wounds taken in those battles. They had marched through Rataan, and many of the warriors of Shikarr remembered breaking into storehouses, marching through fields and trampling the new-planted crops that had grown there. They had created unnecessary destruction merely because they had needed release from the tension of impending war. Now they must do further damage to Rataan by slaughtering Ariell's untrained army...had they not already hurt their neighbor enough?

But, their Lord Tultan had ordered them to battle. And so they would fight.

"No," Theold thought sternly. "They will not!"

The two armies marched forward and, as they come closer together, the warriors began to change, howling their battle cries as they ran forward, brandishing arms and spears. Their fear was transported into bestial fighting energy, necessary for their survival.

But then a hush rippled through the ranks as the advance of the armies was checked. The battle cries trickled off as their charge tapered into a walk, and then they stood, confusedly muddling the ranks. One by one they turned to look skyward at a growing rumble, a falling thunder from the skies.

The roar grew louder, like an ear held too close to a furnace; and, from out of the sky, dropped a blooming cluster of fire, howling as it fell. The light blinded the soldiers as they turned to run away.

A flaming missile of rock hurtled down at them, plunging into the center of the plain like a heavy stone into mud. With an explosion of steam, lava, dust and rocks, the boulder from the heavens set the plain shuddering as the waves of its crater rushed up to form a circular wall.



The soldiers were cast to the ground by the aftershock, many of them dying with screams as they fell on their own weapons. The men wept in terror. War is a kind of hell, but this was worse.

The roar died down to be replaced by a raining hail of rocks and debris; and the soldiers, crying out in pain and superstitious fear, covered their heads, trying to escape the wake of the explosion.

Then it was over.

Tultan was too afraid to open his eyes until several minutes later. He raised his shaking head to look cautiously around him. Kenath already stood beside him, staring in awe at the great crater where the center of the plain had been.

Steam and a bright glow rose from the crater as the surrounding rock cooled; smoke belched into the air. Tultan finally picked up the necessary courage to stand beside his advisor; but Kenath didn't notice his king. His eyes were wide, and his face pale. He mumbled, but didn't realize what he was saying.

"We have seen stars fall from the heavens at night--but the chances of one this large! Falling now! Here! I..."

A confused, terrified murmur grew louder among the armies as the warriors finally realized they were still alive. Tultan, knowing his duty as king, beckoned Kenath to come with him, and went out to the crater, trying to hide his terror from his men. He saw that Ariell was coming also.

Tultan stood on the rim, staring down into the murky, boiling pit. Steam continued to rise, and he realized the rock must have struck an underground spring.

Kenath was turning suddenly religious.

Ariell and Tultan stood beside each other, speechless with awe at the spectacle they had just witnessed. Neither of them understood what had happened.

"I told you, my Lords," Theold seemed less shaken than the others as he limped up towards the rim of the crater. He spoke quietly, but loud enough in the stillness. "The stars never lie--this is but warning."

Ariell nodded sluggishly and looked toward Tultan's bald head. "Perhaps we had better try again to find a peaceful solution?"

Tultan bowed his head shakily, all pride gone from his arrogant features. His booming voice was now a whisper.

"Agreed."

They stared for a long while into the smoky depths of the crater, and then turned to go back to the parley tent.

NEW YSGARTH MAGIC DAVENALLE

INTRODUCTION

As the new Ysgarth system is developed and refined, some of the ideas seem to be spilling out onto these pages. Last issue we looked at a version of the new combat system, and this issue we can move on to go over some ideas on magic for the new system.

One of the best things about Ysgarth is that as new editions are released we update the mechanics to be more realistic, more flexible and more playable, making it more current and close to the state of the art than more stagnant systems. The improvements and changes which we are exploring here are examples of new systems and variants which either replace or add to previous systems to bring them up to date.

Magic as it was presented in the 2nd edition of Ysgarth was a fairly straightforward affair, with characters learning a variety of spells and tacking them together to make up their magic index, with little real thought of the underlying patterns of magic and of spell casting styles or techniques. The purpose of this system is to take magic from being the practice of picking a more or less random assortment of spells to a real art, with characters learning skills which enable them to throw certain spells and determine the costs and effects of spell use. This new system is a bit more complex than just picking spells, but no more complicated than either version of the combat system. The rewards of using this system are that magic becomes a real profession, based on skills, with proficiency determined by ability and devotion. Peripheral effects include a balancing out of mage power between classes and levels and the imposition of some reasonable limits on the power of mages, as well as limiting the huge range of spells which they acquire. Although at first it may seem that it puts unbearable expense on characters who wish to both fight and use magic, a closer examination will show that the limits and requirements are not really too acute, though it may be difficult to split one's areas of skill too much before 3rd or 4th level.



The basic premise of this system is that all magic is not alike and that magic is based on skills of which each spell is merely a specialized application. Initially a mage must learn at least two skills, one of each of two types, Empowering Skills and Focal Skills. These cover the two main areas of magic, the gathering of the force for magic and preparing it for use (empowering), and the direction of that power to a specific target (focusing). There are five main skills in each of these classifications, representing different means towards the general objectives. Each of these skills has a cost in LSP and has set effects on such things as Casting Time (Activity Point Cost), Mana Point Cost, Fatigue Point Cost and Magic Index. Different skills have different effects in these areas, and some are better for certain purposes than others. Note that spells are still learned, at the same cost, but the effects and nature of the spell are determined by the new skills. These skills are described in the following sections, and the stats are summed up on the accompanying chart.

EMPOWERING SKILLS

These skills serve a preparatory function, setting up the pattern of magic which shapes the spell. Each has an LSP cost and certain limitations dependent on situations in which it works and particular types of spells which it can be used with. The skill will not work with other spell types. In addition, each skill also has a Magic Index Rating (MIR), which helps determine the character's MI, and an Activity Point Cost, which is used to determine the time as found from Activity Points to cast the spell (higher APC indicates longer time to cast).

Meditation: This skill involves intense concentration to prepare a spell, but no gestures or vocal elements, so as a result physical hindrances will not interfere with it. LSP Cost: 5, Spell Types: DEFHIJKLMO, MIR: 16, APC: 100

Ritual: This skill involves both gesture and vocal elements in extensive formulaic and ritual activities to prepare the spell, so loss of voice or the use of arms will halve effective SL. LSP Cost: 5, Spell Types: DEFGHIJKLMO, MIR: 17, APC: 140

Somatic: This is a skill for fast spell preparation involving only gestures. As a result, loss of the use of hands will reduce SL by 50% per hand lost. LSP Cost: 5, Spell Types: ABCDEFHIJKLM, MIR: 8, APC: 40

Symbolic: This skill involves the incscription and examination of symbols and symbolic aids to concentration to prepare a spell. Loss of the use of hands reduces effective SL by only 30% per hand, as there are mental as well as manual components. LSP Cost: 5, Spell Types: ABEFHIJKN, MIR: 14, APC: 50

Incantation: This skill involves primarily vocal components for concentration and preparation through chanting or prayer. Loss of voice reduces effective SL by up to 100% depending on degree of loss. LSP Cost: 5, Spell Types: DEGHJKLM, MIR: 10, APC: 70

FOCAL SKILLS

These skills direct the magic prepared by the previous skills, and determine the efficiency with which it is used. They have several key characteristics. As with the other group, they have MIR, Spell Types (the only types which will work with that skill) and LSP Cost. In addition, there is a rating for Mana Point Cost (MPC), from which the cost to cast the spell in MP is determined.

Contagion: This skill involves directing magic toward a target through the use of an object which has been closely associated with the target, in intimate contact with him as a possession or whatever for at least a day, with the strength of the contagion varying for the remoteness and length of contact at the GMs discretion. Naturally, the difficulty here is in obtaining something which has the necessary history of contact with the target. In addition to the standard effects, each SL increases skill with appropriate targeting skills by 5%. LSP Cost: 3, Spell Types: ABCEIKLMO, MIR: 10, MPC: 6

Sympathy: This works on the same principles as the previous skill, but instead of using something which has been in contact with the target, it requires an image of the target for focusing. The effectiveness of the skill should be modified for the character's skill in creating a sculpted or painted image, and the targeting modification works as above. LSP Cost: 4, Spell Types: ABCEHIKLMN, MIR: 13, MPC: 7

Relative: This is rather similar to Contagion, but more powerful and more difficult, as it requires that the caster have a piece of the target's body of some sort or other for it to have effect. It also has the targeting bonus. LSP Cost: 5, Spell Types: ABCEHIJKLMO, MIR: 14, MPC: 8

Resonance: This is the fall back lazy mages. It is the most basic of magics, working on the relationship of resonance which exists between all beings and objects. It has no targeting bonus, and requires no objects or tools to work. LSP Cost: 6, Spell Types: ABCDEFGHIJKLMO, MIR: 8, MPC: 9

Component: This focuses through the use of chemical, herbal, mechanical or other aids. For this to work, some GM discretion is needed to determine the availability of appropriate aids. This availability should be based on the possession of appropriate skills in alchemy, herbology, mechanics or the like. LSP Cost: 7, Spell Types: ABCDEFIJKLM, MIR: 16, MPC: 5



EMPOWERING	SPELL TYPES	LSP	MIR	APC
Meditation	DEFHIJKLMO	5	16	100
Ritual	DEFGHIJKLMO	5	17	140
Somatic	ABCDEFHIJKLM	5	8	40
Symbolic	ABEFHIJKN	5	14	50
Incantation	ABDEFGIJKLMO	5	10	70

FOCAL	SPELL TYPES	LSP	MIR	MPC
Contagion	ABCEIKLMO	3	10	6
Sympathy	ABCEHIKLMN	4	13	7
Relative	ABCEHIJKLMO	5	14	8
Resonance	ABCDEFGHIJKLMO	6	8	9
Component	ABCDEFIJKLM	7	16	5

USING MAGIC

To use this skill based magic system spells in need to be learned in addition to skills, and then the key stats and ratings can be determined as indicated in the following sections.

Magic Index

This determines the chance of success in casting a spell. A mage starts with a Base Magic Index (BMI) of DEX+WIL+JUD. Added to this are the following values determined from skills: Focus MIR x Focus Skill Level and Empowering MIR x Empowering Level. This gives general MI, which is modified for specific spells at a rate of Spell Level minus Character's Level times 5%. So the formula for total MI is: $BMI+(FMIR \times SL)+(EMIR \times SL)-((\text{Spell Level})-(\text{Character Level}) \times 5)$. This yields the percentage chance of success with that spell, and is adjusted for casting level as well. For example, a character with a BMI of 45, 5 SL of Sympathy and 5 SL of Ritual would have a general MI of $45+(5 \times 13)+(5 \times 17)=195$.

Activity Point Cost/Casting Time

Activity Points are being added to the new system to help play run smoothly, and they determine time to cast a spell or do other actions. In the old system use APC/50 to determine CT in rounds. APC is determined from the APC rating for a given spell. Base APC is APC times Casting Time times the Casting Level of the Spell (not real spell level, but incremental increase) or the formula $APC \times CT$. This is reduced or increased for Skill Levels with the empowering skill at a rate of $(\text{Spell Level}-\text{Skill Level}) \times 3\%$, but APC can never go beneath 50% of the base APC. For example, a character with 5 SL of Somatic throwing a CT 5, Level 3 spell would have an APC of $40 \times 5=200$, increased to $3/5 \times .94$ of that or 188 AP, equal to a CT of about 4 rounds. Note that Fatigue Point Cost is $(\text{Spell Level} \times \text{APC})/200$.

Mana Point Cost

This is worked out along the same lines as the APC, but MPC is just equal to base MPC times Spell Level, divided by 3: $(MPC \times SL)/5$. Again, this is modified for skill level of the focusing skill at a rate of $(\text{Spell Level}-\text{Skill Level}) \times 3\%$, but MPC can never go beneath 50% of the base MPC. For example, a character with 8 SL throwing a 10th level spell with Relative would have an MPC of $(8 \times 10)/5$ or 16, increased by 6% to 17 total MP cost.

Other Notes

As with the original Ysgarth system, CL with spells can be increased for greater effect, and doubling time or AP to cast has the effect of reducing the effective spell level by 50% for each 100% increase in time or AP spent. As the opposite, if MI is halved in casting, the AP spent can also be halved, or any other parallel reduction. Most of the other flex-magic rules work fine with this system. Note that 'O' indicates basic priestly spells.

CONCLUSION

This system is designed to make it possible to simulate the different types of magic found in fiction and legend so that players will get more of a feel for just what their characters go through to cast spells. It allows a character to be proficient without learning millions of spells or borderline skills, and opens up some more flexible options. The system is a bit more complex, though progression is simple once established. Not all characters can use all skills for the spells they want because of the type limitations, and they may find themselves channeled into taking more challenging and imaginative methods of applying their power. As it works, this is a way of limiting the raw power of mages to dominate everyone around them, without robbing them of the potential to defend themselves and be useful when needed.

With experience certain skill combinations will begin to show their logic for particular types of spells, for example, missile spells are usually thrown with Somatic for the speed benefits, and characters with high numbers of MP may opt for Resonance for the fuller range of spells usable. Low level mages might go for the combination of Ritual and Component for the high MI potential.

However you use it, new possibilities for characters are opened by these skills and mages can be made considerably more believable and balanced.

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

To better serve our readers it is nice to know just who and what they are, so we've put together this little questionnaire which will help us get to know the audience a little better. You don't have to answer the questions or send in the form, but it would help us and be greatly appreciated if you did. Please fill in blanks or check answers where appropriate. You need not answer all questions, we'll be pitifully grateful for anything you'll daign to tell us.

Do you own a computer & if so, what type _____	Income _____	Age _____ Sex _____
Do you use pre-packaged adventures or modules (Y/N) _____	\$0-10,000 _____	Top Grade Completed _____
Do you own a VCR & if so, what type _____	\$10-15,000 _____	Jr. High _____
Do you own home video game equipment & if so, what type _____	\$15-20,000 _____	High School _____
Do you subscribe to a cable TV service (Y/N) _____	\$20-25,000 _____	Jr. College _____
List any major hobbies other than gaming _____	\$25-30,000 _____	College _____
Do you belong to a local gaming group with regular meetings _____	\$30-40,000 _____	MA (equiv) _____
Do you belong to any national gaming organization _____	\$40,000+ _____	PhD (equiv) _____
Where do you buy most of your gaming supplies _____	\$Spent on Games/Yr _____	Occupation _____
How many people read your copy of Abyss _____	\$0-50 _____	Main RPGs Played(3) _____
What would you most like to see change in Abyss _____	\$50-100 _____	Strategy Games Played(3) _____
	\$100-200 _____	_____
	\$200-300 _____	_____
	\$300-500 _____	_____
	\$500+ _____	Comic Books Read(3) _____
	\$Spent on Books/Yr _____	_____
	\$0-50 _____	_____
	\$50-100 _____	Game Magazines Read(3) _____
	\$100-200 _____	_____
	\$200-300 _____	_____
	\$300-500 _____	_____
	\$500+ _____	_____



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