



December 1981

V4, N1



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Artwork by:

John Mortimer, Karl Zivek, David Randrup, Mike Cranford

ABYSS is published bi-monthly by Ragnarok Enterprises. Subscriptions are 6 issues for \$5.00 and 12 issues for \$10.00. Single copies are \$1.00 each. Back issues are available for #4 (\$2.00), #5/6 (\$3.00), #7 (\$1.50), #8 (\$1.50), #9 (\$1.50), #10 (\$1.50), #12 (\$1.50), #13 (\$1.50), #14 (\$1.50), #15 (\$1.00). Overseas subscribers should add \$1.00 per copy for additional postage. All payment should be in U.S. funds. Dealers inquiries are welcome.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

This is a particularly star-studded issue of ABYSS. Of particular note are David A. Hargrave's lead-off article on "Sex and the Fantasy Role Playing Game", and Lew Bryson's critique of TSR's examination of Finnish mythology. David Hargrave is the author of the Arduin Grimoire and associated rules and supplements. Lew Bryson is a regular writer for ABYSS who has also had work in THE DRAGON.

For some reason we were deluged with long articles this issue. That and the Mini-Adventure meant that many regular features and articles had to be put off until next issue, so that issue promises to be excellent as well. This is also why there are fewer items in this issue than usual, though the quality is as high as in any issue of any gaming magazine.

We've also got some good new artists with this issue, John Mortimer and David Randrup, both of whom will be in some future issues. As you might also notice, we've changed the cover design as we do with the start of each new year. With this design we are trying for a more striking and modern-looking appearance. You comments on this change would be quite welcome.

Next issue we'll be featuring the next part of Lew Bryson's story, some material from the YSGARTH RULE SYSTEM which will be released in February, an article by Edward R. G. Mortimer, who is featured in Guess What's Coming to Dinner this issue, and more articles and regular features.

Finally, I hope you can take the time to send in the feedback form this issue, as it includes a survey which will help us figure out just what will be appropriate to put in ABYSS, and what direction the magazine should go.

Enjoy this issue, and send in any comments you have.

Dave Nalle
Washington, DC
November, 1981

ART CREDITS

John Mortimer: FC, 4, 6, 7, 14, 15
Mike Cranford: 2, 8
Karl Zivek: 5
David Randrup: 16, 17, 18, 19



ABYSS STAFF

Editor/Publisher	Dave Nalle
Assistant Editor	Jon Schuller
Art Editor	Karl Zivek
Consulting Editors	Tom Cheney
	Tom Curtin
	Henry Dove
	Lew Bryson
Contributing Editors	Roy Nicol
	Brian MacAffee
	Carl Jones
	Lew Bryson

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SEX AND THE FANTASY ROLE PLAYING GAME

DAVID A. HARGRAVE

One of the most taboo subjects in role playing games appears to be the all-too natural human function called *SEX*. It seems that most of the heroes and heroines of these kinds of games, *unlike* their literary counterparts, are simply not interested in "adventures" involving things of a sexual nature.

Perhaps this is an outgrowth of the unfortunate fact that the great majority of Game Masters are male, under the age of "consent" (18), and usually not the socially active type most generally involved with "steady girl friends."

Perhaps it is simply because these young, male, GMs are not as self-assured as they might be, that they tend to shy away from all situations of a "sexual" nature in their games.

Whatever the reason, the absence of something as *natural* as the physical relations between consenting *characters* leads many role-playing campaigns down some very bizarre pathways. The total lack of the most important human drives and instincts is a distinct aberration.

This aberration leads to contrived and artificial scenarios, counterfeit cultures, and even to *anti-sexual* attitudes among the younger players who are left without any role-models to observe in the game.

The fact that this sort of "snicker and ignore" attitude has become more visible as the "hobby" has expanded lends substantial support to the theory that the overall intellectual maturity of role playing gamers is in a drastic decline (in a proportion to the ever increasing number of new players).

Therefore it is up to the more mature GMs to directly attack this problem by *not* sidestepping any sexual encounters that may occur within their own games. GMs should not be intimidated by the presence of females in their games as I have found that they are a lot less shockable than their male player counterparts.

My last game was a "demo game" run for the Game-A-Lot store in Santa Cruz California, and consisted of eight (count them, 8!) female players. They ranged in age from 14 to 40+ and even included a mother/daughter team of novices. The game was fast, furious and at times raunchy, with the ladies initiating and controlling the action all the way (from a silver-skinned, monkey-tailed *female* Uruk-Hai warrior *always* on the make, to a pair of sadistic hobbits). Much fun was had by all, and no sensibilities were even dented during the nearly twelve hours of play. I'll admit that this is an extreme example, but it serves to illustrate the point that it is *not* the female players who are "gun shy", but the males.

My campaigns currently have two regular female players and they never feel in the least bit inhibited so long as the sexual situation is relevant to the game and arrived at without outside manipulation. Most of the males have adjusted to this more realistic style of play and are having a ball (no pun intended).

Because of this element of reality in the lives of the characters, we can deal with such things as dynastic struggles (with the bastard offspring in the wings fomenting trouble), lovers quarrels, jealousy, etc. The players are freer to say and do what they feel is appropriate and this manifests itself in a much higher level of role-playing all around.

This does not mean that every game will be an orgy or that every monster will be out ravishing all the maidens in the countryside (although such things *do* happen occasionally). What it really means is that there is a lessening of the chauvinistic double standards of the past, and that the role-playing is just that, regardless of the situation.

Without trying to moralize or preach, I can only hope to make you see the simple truth of the matter: sex in life and in fantasy has a most clear "time and place". If done without leering chauvinistic bullshit, which some people think passes for "being grown up", it is a valuable asset to any game or campaign. It will broaden the horizon of all the gamers concerned and open up new avenues of role-playing they had not realized were there. Down with platonic relationships as the only ones between characters! Put a little life and truth into their characterizations! *BE NATURAL.*

I expect that this brief piece will draw a lot of flack from some quarters. So be it. I regret only that I have so little space to make such a vital point.

IN THE SPECULUM

CARL JONES

This issue we're breaking format a bit to let Carl Jones get in a few words here about the FRP'ing game market in general in place of the usual specific reviews. From time to time we need a close, critical look at the field and products.

There's a world out there where game stores stock all manner of play-things: rule-systems, variants, expansions, supplements, play-aids, games, scenarios, dungeons, and a myriad of others. A multi-million dollar industry has grown out of the modest roots of fantasy role-playing in a period of no more than 7 years. In this brief period dozens of companies have been formed, all marketing different approaches to fantasy adventure, new innovations, or specific game designs. In this vast field of games and companies there are a few that stand out for their visibility and volume. Among these are TSR, GDW, Judges Guild, Chaosium, FBI, and Metagaming. I'd like to look at these companies and some of their products and draw a few conclusions. I will be harsh, but don't worry, I plan to condemn all of these big companies.

The average fantasy gamer is young and naive in many ways. He starts playing, and then he buys everything associated with his chosen rule system, taking the name of the manufacturer as a seal of excellence. After a few years and a couple of hundred dollars the average gamer will come to realize that much of what he has bought is crap, and he may start to become a des-criminating game-buyer. I'd like to give some guidelines and suggestions to help lessen the length and expense of this learning process for other gamers.

Let's look at the situation. There are two ways in which a game or a supplement can be unacceptable. It can be of poor quality, or overpriced. This is essentially a balancing of price and quality. You have to look for items which come close to being worth what they cost. The first thing which you might as well understand is that fantasy role-playing games and aids are almost universally overpriced, even considering the high cost of printing in these times. Profit margins in this industry are considerable, though it is hard to blame business men for making profits, for they only charge what the market will bear. Perhaps we let ourselves bear too much.

What about the companies and their products. TSR has produced a lot of material. Some of it is very well done, or at least complete, such as the Monster Manual or DM's Guide. Some is shoddy and poorly researched, for example the Fiend Folio or Gods Demi-Gods and Heroes. Their only products which are really poor in quality and do nothing for the purchaser are their dungeon scenarios, which are generally mindless, mechanical and depressingly unoriginal. Chaosium produces good games. Their supplements I can't say so much for. Runequest is excellent, but the follow-up material is even less useful than TSR's dungeons, containing not much more than random statistics in many cases. GDW is in many ways similar to Chaosium, but they have diversified less, and produced greater failures. Such things as Animal Encounters are an insult to any gamer with enough intelligence to roll his own die. FBI and Metagaming aren't really too guilty. They've both put out some less than good publications, but they are so only because of poor workmanship and hasty production. Judges Guild deserves its own article. They have produced a vast number of supplements for many games, and they are almost all disgusting in their evidence of thoughtless and random design. Such items as Ravenscrag, Dark Tower, Of Skulls & Scapfagot Green, or Wilderlands of the Magic Realm are excrescences. Not only are these vacuous nothings of diddling mindlessness, but they are so overpriced that anyone stupid enough to buy them should be laughed out of gaming. It is almost as if Judges Guild is trying to assault and destroy the good aspects of gaming all by themselves.

As far as overpricing is concerned, use this formula $\$Cost/\#Pages$, using pages of text, and the price of the item. Don't count non-functional package material. The resulting number should give you an idea of the value you get from the item. For a total analysis of the item count only the number of the pages which you found useful and do the formula again. Using this formula I made the following calculations:

Deities & Demigods:	.0083	.113
Runequest:	.0100	.141
Tunnels & Trolls:	.0094	.111
Ravenscrag:	.0143	.400

The first number is just the cost per page. The second is value per page by useful material. Under no circumstance would I buy something with more than a .0100 on the first scale or .125 on the second. A reasonable result if prices were reasonable would be about .006, but such a price is rare in reality, so you must pay more. In anycase, check over some things you thought were good buys, and use the average result as a gauge in buying.



There are products out there which seem to almost deny all of the good ideas of fantasy role-playing. Many scenarios and aids, especially those of Judges Guild, embody principles which progressive designers have been trying to expunge for 7 years. All of the ridiculous concepts of the "dungeon" are still alive in these publications, and thousands of new-players are plunged by them into a morass of pointless playing styles, and may never raise themselves out to really experience the joys of true role-playing. This is the pitfall of which players and GMs should be particularly wary when they buy game products.

No company is faultless, no product perfect. Take care, look everything over well, and do a few calculations. As more goes on the market so does a larger amount of crud. Don't get ripped off. I could say it's a jungle out there. I'll just recommend discretion. Think about what you buy and what it will do for your campaign. Don't buy things which are less good than what you could make yourself. Imagination is free.

FROM VIDAR'S FORGE

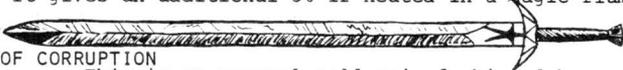
THE HELM OF THARIOS THE DREAMER

This helm has a reflective metal face-plate, which makes it impossible to see out of when it is worn. However, the wearer may use the inside of the face-plate as a mental receptor to broadcast any thoughts he wishes into the dreams of any person he knows of in a 10 mile radius. Simple dreams can be sent to everyone in a 1 mile radius. There are no charges, but the use is quite tiring. Dreams can be mistaken for oracular visions quite easily by the dreamer. (Jon Schuller)



THE SWORD OF SORCERY

This is a weapon, a broadsword to be specific, but it has no powers of any unusual nature when used in combat. It is forged of a ruddy metal, and is very magical, but its powers are for use in a sorcerous ritual of demon summoning. The use of the sword in a summoning has the effect of increasing all of the sorcerer's attributes and pentacles and WR for the purpose of the summoning by 20%. This results in a general increase of 20% in the chance of success. It gives an additional 5% if heated in a magic flame. (Steve Ong)



THE COIN OF CORRUPTION

This is an unusual gold coin fashioned by a wizard who had in mind gaining some power in court. When exchanged in the proper situation as a bribe it will have the effect of automatically subverting the subject. It will not work on those who are only subject to unusual or non-material bribes, such as holy-men, kings, the extraordinarily wealthy, and similar types who have either no use for money, or more money than they know what to do with. It will only work once, and then become a normal coin. (Dave Nalle)



RING OF ENHANCEMENT

This ring increases the effective level of the spell-caster as pertains to duration and range of any and all normal spells cast, but it does not improve his ability to actually cast spells. For example, a 6th level mage with a +1 ring of enhancement would not be able to cast a 4th level spell, but spells he could cast would function as if he were a 7th level mage; that is he would get four magic missiles, 7 die fireballs, etc. A superior version for use in a spell-point system would increase the mage's level for determining his number of spell points. (Lee Butterfield)



DRUM OF CAMEL SUMMONING

This is a somewhat whimsical item. It is a wooden drum with camel hide stretched over it. Each time that it is beaten it will summon a camel from another plain. There is no limit on the frequency of use, but it will only hold up to summon a total of some 200 camels before the hide will break. (Dave Nalle)



THE WHIP OF CHANGES

This is a normal, light whip in all respects, except that when it strikes the area hit is transmuted randomly into some other form of organic or inorganic matter at the GMs discretion. This works on organic and inorganic matter, even living things, and has 20 charges. (Marc Lecos)



TSR'S FINNISH MYTHOS: REDONE & UNDONE

LEW BRYSON

Some months ago I rolled up a new character, and I was paging through the AD&D guide to Deities, Demigods, and other Immortals, looking for a good new or used deity. I'm kind of partial to Northlanders, but after 4 years even the Norse pantheon can get dull. Odin's wise, Thor's crazy, and Tyr is stupid enough to put his hand in the mouth of Fenris. I had become so jaded that one of my characters worshipped Mimir. Naturally I took to the idea of the Finnish mythos, which I (blush) knew nothing about. Having already taken whip as a weapon skill, the choice of Loviatar, Maiden of Pain, was a foregone conclusion. The racy picture was pretty key, too.

Sometime after my first monogrammed flaying knives I got an urge to get to know more about the mythos. So I started reading every translation and commentary on the Kalevala I could get my hands on. Boy, was I surprised? The beautiful goddess with the off-chest dress and high-school pout I had been worshipping was a sham! Loviatar was a hag, a dumpy, half-blind crone, the Whore of Death's Domain. The entity described by TSR is actually one of Louhi's daughters, one Vainamoinen wanted to marry, and I don't blame him, but she is not Loviatar!

Being devoted to truth, justice, and the Ysgarthian way, I've decided to lay the results of my extensive research before you. Besides, Nalle's been trying to get something other than warped fiction out of me for months. I've tried to put together a Finnish pantheon which stays true to the spirit of the Kalevala, yet retains a good measure of power and playability. If you don't like it don't complain to me. I'll be in the sauna with a beer.

THE GODS

I'm only starting with the gods to honor convention. In this mythos they are not nearly as important as in others. Be sure to read the section on the heroes before you start throwing Ukko all over the place.

UKKO: The Old Man, Ruler of the Sky, The Thunderer

First, Ukko is not Lawful/Good. He is Lawful/Neutral, with a tendency to N/N/ He is no man's tame, holstered god, he is interested in balance and justice. He picks sides with this in mind. Don't ask for help when robbing a priest. Above all the GM must be adamant on one point: Ukko never makes a public appearance. He will send advice, loan weapons, or help out with indirect magic, like a covering fog (he has control of all weather). He has a wife, Akka, but she's just window-dressing.

If you feel you need stats, for fighting other gods perhaps, try these: HP-400, Level-22, AC--20, MR-100%, and regenerate 30HP/round. He uses a flaming sword which always severs any limb or neck it hits, hits 2 times a round, is +5/+5, hits for 3D12 with an additional 3D10 of fire which cannot be put out. He also has a crossbow of infinite range, which does no damage, but can cause death, with a -10 save on poison and magic. He sends lesser versions of these weapons to heroes in need.



AHTO: King of the Waves

If Ukko is aloof, Ahto is an absolute anchorite. He is never mentioned in combat in the Kalevala, and only makes an appearance once, when Vainamoinen was playing the miraculous pike-bone harp, and everyone came to that. It would be a waste to worship Ahto if you didn't live on a ship. If you are on a ship he will send either his sidekick Tursas or else blow away the problem completely. It will cost more than deity points. The going rate is your most prized possession which is not a weapon. Ahto has some of the pieces of the Sampo. His alignment is N/N.

Tursas is Ahto's right-hand half-man. He is a dwarf who does his master's dirty work. He is immensely strong and can grow to a fantastic size, like 100' tall. He fights with a double axe, +5/+5, hitting for 4D8 with 30% Axe of Sharpness. His other

characteristics are HP-250, Level-14, AC--1, Saving Throw about 3, and his strength is an outstanding 35 or thereabouts.

UNTAMO: The Seer

This god is the joker in the deck. He is supremely intelligent, but only when he is asleep. He dreams well. He will absolutely never enter combat, but it is possible that he'd make an appearance. Don't expect much from him, but don't fret about capricious acts either. He won't screw you over, he'll be asleep. He will send enemies to sleep if a worshipper is hard-pressed, especially if they are attacked in their sleep. Some things are sacred! His alignment is N/N, but very passive.

HIISI: Evil Spirit, Demon, Devil

It would be best to treat Hiisi as a high-power free demon. This "richly robed man" stuff is pure crap from Lake Geneva. Hiisi is a backwoods boy, a nature demon, an evil spirit of woods, hills, and lakes. He'll have every nasty Druid, Beastmaster, Windmaster, and Herbalist spell, but no weapons. They're below him. He'll send lesser demons to fight, and attack with spells. He won't get into combat himself. He has a sea-going second-in-command, his son Turso, called "The Eternal". He is just freelance nastiness. If you call on Ahto or Hiisi and they think your call is out of line they might send Turso to take care of you. He and Hiisi are C/E. Turso's stats are: HP-120, Level-12, AC-77, MR-65%. He only attacks with a crossbow, +4/+3, 1D12. His forte is mischief. Fairly rough mischief, like ripping out the bottom of your ship. He's an ugly little dwarf with big ears, suitable for grabbing hold of, as Vainamoinen once did.

TUONI: Death, Grave Spirit

Tuoni is evil, true, but it is a passive evil. He usually won't stir outside of Death's Domain, which is an underground place reached by going down a whirlpool. But if you come to him, kiss your ass goodbye, because it will belong to him. Within the borders of his land he is supreme. C/E. His worshippers are well-guided by two mottoes: "Never kick a man when he's up," and "No mercy for the helpless." They should never miss a chance to take advantage of other's misfortune. The Surma mentioned by TSR is just another name for Tuoni, but since he does have a son who is unnamed, we'll call him Surma. If that bothers you, think of him as Surma, Jr. He's Tuoni's hatchet-man. He has HP-150, Level-15, AC--5, MR-100%. He uses a +4/+4 1D12 crossbow and a +5/+3 2D8 short-sword which hits twice per round with 35%SS. Tuoni has no wife. Tuonetar is just another name for Loviatar, another of the incredible errors in TSR's book.

LOVIATAR: Whore of Death's Domain, Maiden of Pain

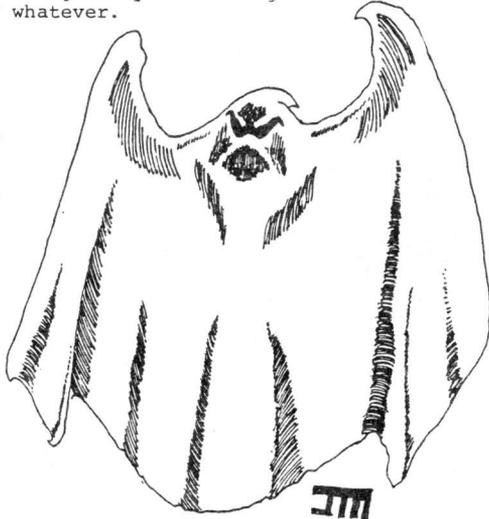
I put Loviatar in with the gods because she doesn't fit in anywhere else. She's not terribly important, but since my character worships her, I'll be damned if I'm going to toss her out! As an interesting note, the archaic form of her name (Louhiatar) and her other name, Tuonetar (trans., "Daughter of Tuoni") suggests that Tuoni did get out occasionally. Make her hideously ugly, blind in one eye, and just hatefully, malevolantly evil. N/E. The ice dagger is a sheer fantasy, as is the cold wind. She fights by inflicting her victims with disease and pain. No fighting ability whatever.

THE SPIRITS

This is the area where mortals and gods get their work done. Sorcerers and bards will clean up in this area, for they are the ones who summon spirits. There is a spirit for just about everything. Some of the more important ones are listed below. These beings are not real powerhouses, with a few exceptions, but they are quite useful. Those few who need stats are given them.

ILMATAR: Air Spirit

Best known as the mother of Vainamoinen, Ilmatar, having performed in this way proceeds to forget her son, probably the only woman in the world to do so. Ilmatar can answer questions about whatever has happened on the surface of land or sea, for she sees everything and likes to talk.



MIELIKKI & TAPIO: Forest Spirits, Flora & Fauna

TSR actually did a fair job on Mielikki. Her mate, Tapio is one of the two spirits who will actually enter combat. While not actually mentioned in battle in the Kalevala, it seems reasonable from his character and position. His stats: HP-170, Level-16, AC-2, attacks with a spear +3/+2 2D8, and a crossbow +5/+2 1D10. He can move silently, blend into background, and move freely in snow. He hunts with a pack of 1D4+1 wolves. Senseless slaughter will draw his anger and lead to a guerrilla attack on those responsible. His crossbow is totally silent. He can be sought for help in tracking, and may lend a wolf. Mielikki is basically a dryad. Leave her trees alone and she's happy. If you don't, she'll harass you with druid spells and animal and plant attacks until you leave the forrest or this mortal coil. They have a daughter Tellervo who's a breeze spirit, and a son Nyyrikki, who's good for almost no thing. He's a swamp spirit, someone to remember if you get stuck in one of the ubiquitous bogs. The whole family is L/N.

PAKKANEN: Jack Frost, Sharp Air

Pakkanen is an intelligent, powerful ice elemental. He should not be east to unleash, for he can freeze the ocean to a depth of 3 feet, or drop 4 feet of snow in about 15 minutes. If you're immune to cold, the best bet is to corral the little sucker and wrestle with him. His stats are: HP-40, Level-8, AC-3. He attacks only with spells. Fire annoys him, but it does not do double damage.

TERHENETAR: Fog Spirit

Terhenetar is a good bet to get rid of pursuers or set up an ambush. She is happy to help people out occasionally. She's N/N.

KIPUTYTTO: Pain Spirit

This is one of TSR's more glaring errors. The Pain Spirit is not a giver of pain as EGG's henchmen present, but an easer of pain, Loviatar's direct opposit. A good companion for someone like a berserker.

KUUTAR: Moon and Great Dear(Big Dipper) Spirit

Help for the lost. Kuutar will tall you how to get unlost and how to get where you're going.

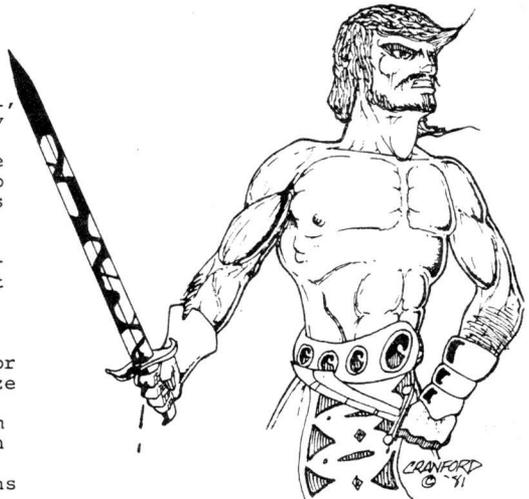
JUORTAN: Juniper Spirit

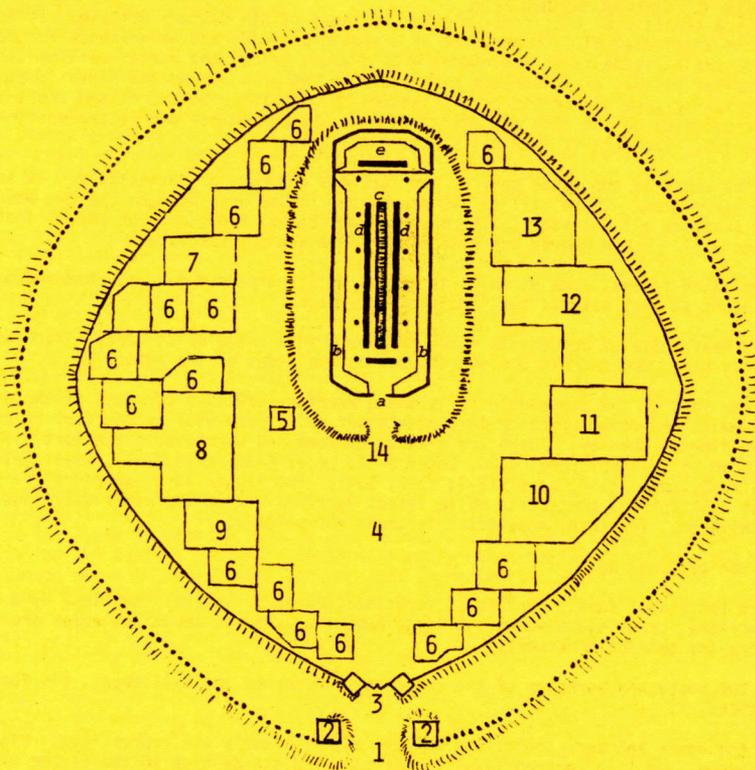
I mention this to prove that there's a spirit for everything. Sorcerer's use Juortan when they are making djinns. I haven't found a tonic spirit yet.

THE HEROES

This is the heart of the Kalevala. The "big three", Vainamoinen, Ilmarinen, and Lemminkainen, are men that do it all, fight, spell, sing, love, and face down gods. They are not gods; they are men and have faults and limitations. By the same token, Louhi, her mate, and Kullervo are not the shallow, evil characters that TSR has made them out to be. Kullervo is a tragic figure of the stature of Oedipus. Louhi is deserving of a measure of compassion. It is important to remember that there is no room in this mythos for the Paladin or the overly pious cleric. The Finns were too busy surviving for such damnfoolishness. They recognize that people are basically on their own in this world. There is no room for altruism. The only things which last are blood kinship and the bond of warrior fellowship. This explains many things.

There is a strong overall tendency towards neutrality here, with a touch of evil as well. These are the facts of life in this environment. Louhi does not hate Vainamoinen and Ilmarinen because she is evil and they are good. She hates them because the bastards stole the marvelous Sampo from her. (This





Mini-Adventure 6

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for characters between levels 7 and 9, and is aimed for level 8. Any number of characters can be used, but we recommend at least three and no more than 10. Everything is in terms of D&D and YRS. With the information given it should be easy to convert to other systems as well. All characters must be Warriors, or at least be able to pass for fighting men effectively. It should run about two hours, and could easily be extended with some logical extrapolations.

BACKGROUND

Jortak Gundalsson, Jarl of the Mark of Naftsar by right of conquest, has sent out the call for strong men-at-arms to join an elite force of Huscarls which he is forming to keep order in the Mark and protect him from Cymri assassins. Cymri serfs are certainly not welcomed to apply, though Saexe and Vaen tribesmen would be welcome, as might some Gaels and outlanders.

Jortak is one of the Saexe conquerers of an area south of the Kingdom of Ceredigiawn, which has a mainly Cymric population. Taredd Edwyg, the Cymric Lord of Gwyneddare in Ceredigiawn is planning a counter-invasion of liberation, so Jortak is trying to strengthen his position. Caught between these two forces is the Free City of Ptolemeias, which is less than happy about the situation.

The source of the adventure is in the interest of the characters, who should be of appropriate background and race, in joining up with Jortak's forces. To add a twist, while they are in Ptolemeias before deciding to join up with Jortak, one of them is approached in secret and alone by an unnamed agent of the Guild-Lord of Ptolemeias, who informs him that there is a 75,000 Mark reward for anyone who happens to bring the Guild Lord the head of Jarl Jortak. Of course, the Guild Lord will deny any connection with such an assassination in public, though his thanks would be clearly manifested in private. The character may or may not reveal this bounty to his comrades. Explain to the players the prestige and wealth which will go with acceptance to this elite guard for their characters. Jortak's headquarters is a hill-fort some days ride to the south of Ptolemeias. It is mapped above.

THE FORTRESS OF JORTAK GUNDALSSON

This is a traditional hill fort, similar to those of 6th century Britain. It is built up on an artificial hill, surrounded by a wooden palisade and embankments for defense. Inside the palisade is an embankment with a wood, brick, and mortar wall on top. There are regular patrols of 5 Warriors each guarding the area around the fort. These men are standard viking-type 5th or 6th level fighters, armed with broadswords and short-bows. The specific sections of the fort are described here, by the number and letter designations given on the map. The fort is in a hilly area near the coast.

1: This is the entry to the outer part of the fortress compound of Jortaksholt. It is the first major guard area. There will be two men posted in the area between the two embankments to stop and question all intruders. There are an additional 1D6 guards on patrol inside of this palisade wall. These guards are similar to those already described.

2: These are watch-towers, each of which is manned by 3 sharp-eyed guards. Beacons are lit on them at night so that patrols can find their way back.

3: This is a heavy gate of bonded-oak which is closed in a seige or at dark. There are additional guards here, one each in the guardhouses on the sides of the gate.

4: This is the yard of the compound. It is where Warriors practice for most of the day. There are dummies and other practice instruments set up. There will be warriors at practice at any given time of the day. There are a total of some 140 warriors in the fort. They are broken down as follows: Level 4-20, Level 5-30, Level 6-30, Level 7-20, Level 8-15, Level 9-10, Level 10-5, Level 11-4, Level 12-3, 13-2, 15-1. The higher level warriors are quartered in the Great Hall for the most part, while lesser warriors are in the other dwellings with the women and children. The total population is about 400 persons.

5: This is the communal well.

6: These are individual family dwellings, sometimes shared by several families, by a group of young warriors, or by slave-women. A large number of slaves, about 75% women are kept on to do work and provide amusement.

7: This is the house and workshop of the carpenter who serves the settlement, his family and his apprentices.

8: This is the house and workshop of the armorer and his family and apprentices. His name is Njal Uriksson. He is a retired level 13 warrior, and stands high in the esteem of the Jarl, as one of his father's great warriors. He has a magical +3/+2 broadsword which hits for 1D12 and has the effect of numbing all areas immediately adjacent to one hit, so that they cannot be used. This effect lasts 1D20CR. It is named Hafnaring.

9: This is the house and workshop of the leathersmith/tanner of the community, and his family and apprentices. He also handles Bowery and Fletching.

10: This is a dormitory for lesser warriors and visitors. It has room for about 30 people.

11: This is the shop of the Farrier and Currier, his apprentices and family live here with him.

12: This is the stables. There are 30 horses kept here. The rest are herded in the area between the outer palisade and the inner wall. There are a total of 60 horses. Five stable boys sleep here.

13: This is the kitchen, served by a dozen female slaves and a number of the smaller boys, who cook and serve in the great hall. Most of the other households also cook here.

14: On this raised hill is the great hall. It is used for a dozen functions, feasting, entertainment, planning, and sleeping for single men. There's a feast here every night, and there are always a number of warriors here. The 40 highest level warriors sleep here at least part of the time, though they are often collapsed from over-indulgence. Some of the specific features are described below by their letter designations.

A: This is the entrance. It is guarded by Rork ThorkeIsson, who is not allowed into normal battle, but serves as a guard. He is over 7ft tall, but has only one arm. He is overweight, and in advanced middle age. He is also not too bright, but he is strong(28). He swings a Double-Axe with his one good hand for 1D20+5. Treat him as a 10th level warrior with 125HP, AR-30, DR-5, no armor to speak of.

It should be noted that the doorway into the hall goes through the skeletal jaws of a large sea-serpent, which is rumored to be enchanted so that if any traitor or person who means harm to the Jarl passes through them they will close, crushing him. The rumor is quite true, and the bite will hit with 1D6 teeth on the victim, doing 2D20 per tooth.

C: This is a large cooking fire. It is always kept lit, and food is kept warm on it. It is also used for most of the major roasting, while the kitchen is reserved for more complex concoctions. It is a sunken pit so that diners can see across the flames.

D: These are great tables for the diners. They can seat 120 or so people between them. People only sit on the outside, so that none have their backs to the fire.

E: This table and sleeping area is for the Jarl and his family. He usually dines here and sleeps here, where he has men to protect him. There are several major Non-Player Characters who should be noted here. They all dine with the Jarl, and sort of form a council of advisors. He and they are described below. Buried in the earth floor under the Jarl's chair at the table is his treasury, some 110,000 silver marks, much of it in gold ornaments.

JORTAK GUNDALSSON-Jortak is a broad, short middle-aged man. He carries a broadsword called Caelring, which is a long, thin blue-steel blade with runes all over it. It is highly magical, +4/+5, hits for 2D8, with 20%SS. It has powers of protection from cold, fire negation, meaning that the touch of the blade will kill flames, and command of snow-bearing clouds, to make them release their contents in a blizzard. Jortak is a level 18 warrior with an AR of 30, and a DR of 17. He is DC 12, also known as +4 on damage. He has 100HP. He is a good leader, but rather bestial and degenerate in his tastes and interests. Half the children in the place are his bastards. He wears heavy studded leather.

THORKELL JORTAKSSON-This is Jortak's son. He is 17, a proven warrior, but young. He is tall and muscular with blond hair. He carries a Greatsword, and a longbow of the Cymric style. He is quiet, but anyone who talks to him will be impressed. He has the makings of a great leader, perhaps great enough to forge the Saexe into a nation. He is a 20th level warrior, very wise, and very intelligent. He gets most of this from his mother, who was half Cymri. He has an AR of 25, a DR of 23, and 80HP. He is DC 15, or +5 on damage.

GROM STROMSSON-This short, ancient man is the court magician. He is nasty, bad-tempered and very vengeful. He is a 15th level Sorcerer, a 8th level Thaumaturge, a 10th level Darkmage, and a 9th level Pyromancer. He is quite powerful, but doesn't make it known until it is too late for his victim. He has a Staff of Sorcery named Naelsvar, which gives him the power to summon up to 10 Snow Demons per day, and increases his effective level by 25% with sorcery. Snow Demons are 5ft tall, silver-scaled lizard men whose claws have a numbing effect on the area of the body they touch. They have 40HP, AR-10, DR-15, and their claws hit for 1D12 each. If 5 areas are numbed, the victim is frozen solid instantly. The number of Snow-Demons available through the staff is limited to 50 total. Grom has 25HP, and AR and DR of 11.

WULFHRE NORTSSON-Wulfhere is a thuggish fellow. He stands taller than anyone else there, say 7ft, and wears a white wolfskin. He is a shapeshifter, and takes the form of a white wolf. He is level 22, a good warrior, with AR 20, DR 12. He has 100HP, he hits with a Greatsword. He has a nasty temper and really holds a grudge. In wolf form he is tireless, can track anything, has AR 35, DR 20, 150HP, and AC-10(D&D-4). His bite does 1D12, and his claws do 3D6 each. He tries not to make it too obvious that he is a werewolf.

When the characters arrive to sign up, Jortak will assign them a task. They will be given a choice of how to prove their worthiness. They can wrestle with Wulfhere, not in wolf form, or face Thorkell in combat to first blood, or match the champion archer, Morhere Rolffson, who is a 20th level archer with an AR of 40 with a bow, treat him as about the best possible. If they choose one of these they have only to match or beat the person in question, or get him to judge them good enough that they might be able to do so with practice to do so. Then they will be in. Alternatively they may do one of two available local quests. They can bring back the head of the giant Hrothmog who lives in a cave on the coast, or come back with any item from a nearby Grave Mound, said to be that of King Llawan Morrigan. These are described below. The wages for a warrior are 500SM/month, fairly good. If they kill Jortak they'll have to find a good way out. Its up to you to improvise.

THE CAVE OF HROTHMOG-This is nearby on the coast. Hrothmog is indeed a giant. He is old and has sores all over his body. He is a pitiful sight, and will inspire remorse and guilt in any would-be killers. He has 175HP, AR 10, DR 5, Level 16, and hits with a giant broadsword which hits for 3D20 in his hands, but no one else can lift. In his cave are riches of a total of 25,000SM, plus a potion of restoration(brings up to 3 corpses to life for 1 hour, after which they die permanently), a suit of +4 chainmail, and a pair of +5 gauntlets.

THE MOUND OF KING LLAWN MORRIGAL-This ancient burial mound can be dug into. It is a grassy hill on a cliff by the coast. Inside a quester will encounter the animate liche of the king with 20 zombie retainers. The king will give one item to the quester in exchange for something. He will not specify what. If the quester accepts, he may have any of the items, and will lose one attribute, usually good, such as dropping a characteristic up to 10 points, or even taking a limb or sense away. If the king is slain everything there will collapse and rot away, including the zombies and the treasure. The zombies are standard. The king is a liche with 80HP, DR 18, AR 22. He uses the sword Llaesgymin, one of the items of the treasure. The treasure includes a chest of ancient gold worth 50,000SM, Llaesgymin, which is +4/+3, hits for 1D12, flames for 1D8 10 rounds per day, and does double damage against any creature of evil nature. There is an old crown worth 20,000SM, and a scepter which is encrusted with jewels and gives the bearer the power to command his level in levels of undead. The king has the magical power to admit only one person to the mound. He will charge any

who he lets leave to take up the cause of the Cymri against the Saexe invaders. This is an irresistible order of a magical nature.

If either of these quests is taken on, a group of 6 guards will be sent to make sure that there is no cheating. In both cases the quest is only good for qualifying one person, and he must perform it alone. The others may go to advise or observe, but they may not participate. Most comers have opted for the contest with the champions of the hall.

CONCLUSION

This is more of a setting for adventures with which you can work. Using this scenario you can introduce the characters into a situation which logically leads to more scenarios which you should be able to derive from the background material.

THE END

Ragnarok Enterprises

PROJECT REPORTS

A CROWN OF STARS

ACOS is complete and ready to go into action. The test-game is about to begin and looks promising. Spaces are still available to interested players in the set up game, and some players will be allowed in after play starts. The second game will not be started until game #1 is well along, so if you want to get in the reasonable future, sign up now. The rules are \$3.00, the set-up fee is \$10, and includes the rules and several turns.

For those who don't know, ACOS is a play-by-mail space interaction game with nine different character type civilisations. It is a challenging game with a lot of room for player innovation.

THE YSGARTH RULE SYSTEM

This major project is well underway, though the schedule has been moved back a bit. The rules are now scheduled to be released in February, so the one dollar discount off of the \$10 price is extended to the end of January for advance orders. Add \$1 for postage.

Book #1, "The Fantasy Character" is complete. It is 28 pages of reduced type on setting up characters for a fantasy campaign. Book #2, "Battlecraft" is partially completed, with material on warriors and combat. #3 will be on magic, #4 on religion, and #5 on world set-up. An introductory adventure will also be included in the ziploc package. ART IS NEEDED FOR THE RULES! We have some, about 3/4 of what we need, but more would help.

MINI-SYSTEM #2

Finally, after months of delays, the new mini-system "Character Role Playing" will be out at about the same time as ABYSS #16. It will sell for \$2.00 plus 50¢ for postage and handling. It gives guidelines for role-playing any type of character for greater pleasure, plus ideas for GMs who want to add personality to their NPCs and world.

UTTGART SCENARIO #2: THE MOUNTAINS OF IKURNA

This is an interesting new adventure, the second in this series. It is just about done, and will be released in mid-December. It sells for \$1.50, and a subscription to the series is \$5 for 4 adventures. This scenario concerns a quest for knowledge and enlightenment in the mountains which divide the civilised parts of Uttgart from the wilderlands.

YSGARTH STRATEGIC CAMPAIGN

This is a new project tentatively planned to start in early 1982. It is a campaign for play by mail, where players assume the roles of major characters in the religious, political and mercantile areas of the world of Ysgarth. There are parts for Master Mages, High Priests, Guildmasters, Generals, Kings, Merchant Princes, Master Thieves, Assassins, and the like. It is an attempt to open new horizons of role-playing. Each character will control the actions of auxiliary characters in an attempt to dominate the world. Play will start in the Free City of Ptolemeias on a limited basis and at a reasonable turn cost. If you are interested write for more information.

is another egregious TSR error. They never mention the Sampo, the single important artifact in a conspicuously artifact-free mythos) She hates Lemminkainen because he killed her husband. Fair enough, eh? But EGG & Co. seem to think, "Hmmm, ab ugly old woman, she must be evil. My mother was." No excuse, boys.

This neutral attitude is also reflected in the role of the gods. Their aversion to public appearances cannot be over-emphasized(Yes, I know, I've tried). Play it to the maximum. Ukko sends aids to his favored ones often if their cause is just, but never appears. Divine assistance should be through item-loaning, aid by appropriate spirits, or god-sent magic.

So far as descriptions go, use TSR stats with the following changes and corrections.

VAINAMOINEN: The Eternal Sage, Man of Slack Water Farm

Vainamoinen is not L/G. In addition to his aforementioned theft of the Sampo, the Eternal Sage is not all sweetness and light. Make him N/N, with a shading of L/N. HP should be about 150. Note that even with a high Charisma(18), he couldn't get a girl. I looked, and I never came across even a single mention of him using a battle-axe. Make it a +5/+5 LD20 30%SS sword that can speak. The crossbow he uses is one of speed and accuracy. He is a great bard, and before the Sampo incident he had a kantele(harp) made of the bones of a pike. It is the most powerful bardic tool in the mythos. He loses this to Ahto when it goes overboard in the struggle for the Sampo. He makes one of birch which is second only to the other. The magical canoe is authentic, but the dancing crossbow and the magic horse are pure pipe-dreams.

LEMMINKAINEN: Man with a Far-Roving Mind

Lemminkainen is highly reckless, impulsive, he's got a screw loose. TSR even admits it. So why a Wisdom of 18? Cut it to 10. He's C/N. He uses a +4/+4 LD12 crossbow, not a javelin. The sword they give him is fine, but he should be in leather, not chain, and the snowshoes should be skis. Otherwise the description given is okay.

TIERA: Lemminkainen's Shield Man

This is the other person TSR did well on. It couldn't have been too hard. His nickname is Snowfoot, if you care.

ILMARINEN: The Eternal Smith

Forger of the Sampo. He is N/N. An Intelligence of 18 and Wisdom of 17 both seem high. Try 15 and 13, after all, this is a man who made himself a golden woman and couldn't figure out why his bed was cold. Something else which really pisses me off(besides the fictional self-propelled sledge) is the +4 hammer. Just because he's a smith! Give him a sword, damn it! He is mentioned as using one. +5/+3, LD20.

KULLERVO: Kalervo's Handsome Son.

This boy is, as we say, whacked in the gourd. His tribe was wasted by another tribe when he was young. It warped his perspective. He's taken on as fosterling by Ilmarinen, and screws up(violently) the simplest tasks. Then, when Ilmarinen's bitch wife bakes a stone in his bread just to piss him off, it does, and he kills her. He's not really evil, he's just very chaotic, C/N. He should be a 12th level mage, and a 10th level bard, and he fights with a sword send by Ukko(see what I mean?). +5 2D12 35%SS, and hits 2 times a round. He can be a good Finnish substitute for the furies. He eventually wiped out the tribe that killed his own.

LOUHI: Mistress of Pohjola

Know what Pohjola means? North Farm, that's all. Louhi is not evil. She is L/N, but a bit ruthless. She needs it. Everybody picks on her. Play her like a pain-in-the-ass old woman, with 15th level mage powers. She has two beautiful daughters, one of whom Ilmarinen traded the Sampo for.

LOUHI'S MATE: Master of Pohjola

Not her son. Use the stats given, drop the wolf, make him fumble on a roll of 1-5. It doesn't matter if he's a klutz. He's mainly around so that Lemminkainen can cut his head off. He's a loser. L/N.

THE ARTIFACTS

SAMPO-This is the premier artifact of the mythos. This baby is a 3-faced mill that cranks out grain, salt, and money continuously. That's about 10 tons of grain, 1 ton of salt, and 100,000GP per month. It also increases the fertility of the surrounding area for 20 miles. It has a swirling, multi-colored

lid, and roots itself to the ground. When it was stolen it was smashed in the struggle. The fragments work as luckstones or for the fertility effect with a 5 mile range. Before being broken it's about 3 feet in diameter and weighs about 350lbs. If you plan to steal it yourself, you'll need something to cut it loose, like a plow and oxen. The roots are thick.

RAKE OF IRON-As TSR. The magic wool isn't real. It only came from a spell cast by Lemminkainen.

THE MAGIC OAK-Use the TSR powers and some others. The leaves act as a charm spell on the opposite sex, the branches allow the user to determine the outcome of one die-roll, the topmost twigs add 50% to a mage's spell casting power.

SKIS-The maker of Lemminkainen's skis, Kauppi, probably made others. They are of many types, speed, silence, trackless, non-tiring, obstacle-crossing, etc.

WEAPONS-The Finns go for flaming swords and swords of sharpness. Crossbows reload quickly and shoot far. Markkahattu uses a poisoned dart to kill Lemminkainen, seemingly from a blowgun. If, as TSR says, he is immune to poison, this must be potent stuff, say -10 on the save. There are no hints of "name-swords" of other European myths. A sword is a sword, though it may be of unusual quality.

REFLECTIONS

Well, there it is. I'm leaving myself wide open, I realize, but I challenge anyone to do a better job in one week while reading 950 pages of graduate level history texts and completing a paper on newspaper reporting in Bolshevik Russia. I've tried to give the feel of the Kalevala. It's a good set of myths for a campaign, there's plenty of room in Finland, and you can send characters out on expeditions with the big three, and let them do things on their own. I hope this spurs you on to look into the Kalevala yourself. I used The Kalevala and The Old Kalevala, both compiled by Elias Lonrot and translated by F. P. Magoun, Jr., which have excellent appendices. Don't get upset if I've pointed out that your character worships an unfamiliar diety or a non-existent one. Adapt! My character, K'Kawalnesh, just had one of his eyes put out (without anaesthesia, of course) in honor of the goddess, and has started a program of disfiguring every beautiful woman he sees. Good running, and Puhaltaa Kaatra!

GUESS WHAT'S COMING TO DINNER

EDWARD R. G. MORTIMER

SHADE
 YRS AR:V HT:V Attacks: Touch for 1D3
 YRS DR:25 WT:0
 YRS AC:0 HP:V
 D&D AC:0 ST:7
 Level:V AL:V

A Shade is a being which has died before finishing an all-important task, such as a quest or obligation. He haunts his deathsite, waiting for someone to pass by. A Shade will try to take over the body of a passerby to finish his task. This can only be done if the host is willing. The problem is that to communicate the shade has to touch a person, and his touch does damage and drains one point of STR. If the host lets him take control the damage and drain stop. STR comes back in 10 rounds. While in control of the body the Shade has the powers he had in life, but none of those of the host. The host will know what goes on, and communicate with the Shade, but cannot take control until the Shade permits it. An Evil Shade will not want to end its new life. When the Shade has done its task it may leave the plane to its just reward in the afterworld if it chooses. Shades can be turned like Ghosts. If a person is drained of STR he will die, to become a wandering, disembodied spirit, unless the player rolls over 30 on 1D100. As such he may fight the Shade in non-corporeal form for possession of the body. Shades must stay within 50ft of their deathsite when out-of-body. They are immune to Sleep, Hold, Charm, and Cold spells.





MARSH GIANT
 YRS AR:22 HT:20' Attacks: 1 Fist 6D6
 YRS DR:9 WT:4,500
 YRS AC:3 HP:85
 D&D AC:4 ST:12
 Level:13 AL:C/N

Marsh Giants dwell in marshes, quagmires, bogs, and swamps. They make huts of living grasses and weeds, almost always in the deepest area of their marsh. They have a 40% chance of guarding these dwellings with 1D4 Giant Lizards(50%), 1 Hydra (30%), or 4D4 Lizard Men(20%). If more

than two Marsh Giants are met the third and fourth will probably be females, and there is a 10% chance per female that they will have a young one with them of 10%-40% growth. Marsh Giants do not throw rocks, but they do have some magical abilities. Marsh Giants can Breathe Water, Transmute Ground to Mud, both 3 times a day at 10th level effect. They are immune to any water-based attack and take -1 damage per die against fire-based attacks. They take +1 on each die from electrical attacks. There is a 40% chance that a Marsh Giant will speak the language of local Lizard Men. They have greenish-brown skin, green, scraggly hair, and warts all over their bodies. There is a 75% chance that they carry a parasitic infection.

THE FOMORI: DARK LORDS OF IRELAND

DAVE NALLE

In *Deities & Demigods* TSR has done a disservice to all of their customers by radically mis-representing what they call the "Celtic Mythos". What they actually provide is an incomplete amalgamation of gods from several different Celtic Cultures. The Celtic tribes include The Gael of Ireland, the Cymri of Wales, the Caledonians of Scotland, and the Bretons and Gauls in France, as well as the Dacians in the Balkans. TSR's Celtic Mythos is mostly Irish, and features Dagda, Brigit, Cu Chulainn, Diacecht, Goibhnie, Lugh, Manannan Mac Lir, Nuada, and Oghma, all of whom are Irish, though this is by no means all of the gods revered by the Gael, and leaves out some major ones, such as Coel, and Crom Cruaich. Stuck in with this are the Gaulish gods Dunatis and Silvanus, and the Cymric gods Arawn, and "Master of the Wild Hunt", who is not identified as Gwyn, which is his name. The write-up is strikingly inaccurate, and needs some corrections.

Once major element of the Gaelic Mythos which is left out is the Fomori. What they have written up is mostly members of the Tuatha De Dannan, but they leave out their foes, the Fomori, a tribe of god/giants who invaded Ireland in the legendary past, and fought major battles with the Tuatha De Dannan and their worshippers. Descriptions of some of the major leaders of this race of evil lords of darkness from the north are given below.

ELATHAN THE GOLDEN, Chief of the Fomori

Elathan is the hereditary ruler of the tribe. He is a very handsome man with long blond hair. He wears robes and jewelry of gold as well. He bears two silver spears, which each hit each round, for around 3D10, returning, and a golden sword which is +4/+5 and hits for 3D20. He is the father of Bress and oath-brother to Balor. He is noted for his Wisdom and judgemental skill.

BALOR SON OF BUARAINECH

Balor leads the Fomori in war. He is a truly dreadful monster. He is a giant man with the head of a bull. One eye is always kept shut, and he has servants who use special sticks to open it, because its gaze causes instant, painful death to all it falls on. It should be treated as a -8 death spell. He fights with a +5/+5 hand-spear which hits for 4D20. He has 12 sons who are called The Sons of Balor. They are berserkers, and foam at the mouth. Treat them as equivalent to level 18 berserkers. The sight of Balor causes a -3 fear in all mortals.

BRESS SON OF ELATHAN, The Evil Beauty

Bress is without question the cleverest leader of the Fomori. He is unsurpassed in his cunning. He is a slender man of dark and beautiful appearance, and amazingly charming. He can convince anyone of anything, unless they are well-prepared. He can assume the appearance of anyone on a moments notice. He is also a great lover. He was used as an agent, and actually usurped the throne of the gods for a time.

MORC SON OF DELA

Morc was one of two mage-kings of the Fomori who maintained the earthly outpost and invasion-launching position of their race on Tory Island, where they had a magical fortress/tower made of glass. Morc is a horse-headed giant who thinks himself an outstanding bard and harper. He is in fact, totally unmusical, in fact, his playing causes fear(-1 save). When people flee his harping he will be offended and get violent. Treat him as a 20th level Darkmage and Necromancer, and a 15th level Warrior.

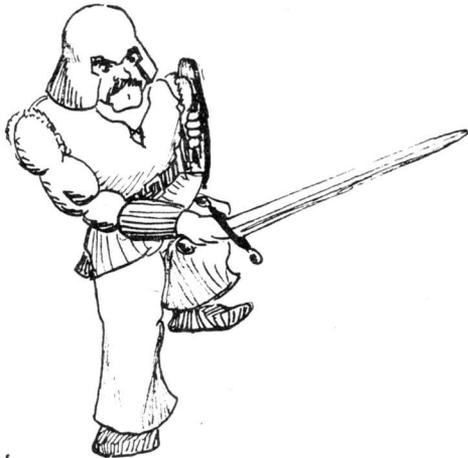
CONANN SON OF FEBAR

This Fomori is Morc's more presentable partner in maintaining the tower on Tory. He is a handsome middle-aged man, and an outstanding mage, say 25th level, specializing in Sorcery and Enchantment. He is a 10th level Warrior.

The Fomors are thought to live under the sea somewhere in the North Atlantic. Less is known about the rest of them, but I'll tell you some names and attributes. Indech is another major king of the Fomori. He is the son of Domnu, who is an earth-mother/moon-goddess type, and considered the queen of the Fomori. She represents the evil aspects of the land. Tellen is a lesser king. Dulb is the smith of the Fomori. Cethlen is a being called "Crooked Tooth", and seems to be a thuggish sort. Ruadan is a half-god, half-Fomor, the son of Bress and Brigit. He is similar to his father, but more of a mild sort, with lesser form-taking abilities. Ethmiu is the daughter of Balor, but is as beautiful as he is hideous.

Samhain is a sacred day for the Fomori, when they celebrate their conquest of Ireland. They are ruthless and bestial in many ways, and may have been meant as a parody in myth of the Norse gods, with Balor as Odin, Elathan as Baldr, and Bress as Loki. They do seem to share attributes, especially Odin and Balor, and the Norse were invaders as the Fomori were, so the struggle between the Gael and the Norse might have been mirrored between the Tuatha De Dannan and the Fomori. It is also important to note that many of the Fomori had the heads of animals, especially Goats, Horses, and Bulls. They all have animal associations, and seem to be divided into two groups, the fair and the foul, representing bald-faced evil, and deceptive evil.

The Fomori are a good addition to any campaign, and give the Gaelic gods something to worry about and fight with, similar to the conflict between the Aesir and giants.



SKILLS & TRAINING: FALCONRY

STEVE SUTTER

This class is proposed for use in campaigns which use the YRS, but most of the ideas can be adapted to D&D and other systems. It can also be used as just an auxiliary of the YRS skill system, rather than a complete class, and included under Native Skills. It is not necessarily advanced or complete enough to stand as a class by itself.

A falconer raises birds of prey for hunting, fighting, and sport. It is often a hobby of the upper-class, but may be a full-time profession for lower class sorts who work for major nobles. It should usually be doubled with at least one other class if used by a Player Character. The PR is WIS, and the SR is INT. Falconry is EC 2. Given below are the Falconry skills and their cost in Skill Points.

SKILL	DESCRIPTION	SP COST
Locate Nest	This skill lets a falconer find wild birds to train. He has a WIS+INT+(SLx5)% chance of finding a nest. There is a SLx10% chance of capturing a bird. This roll can only be made once per day.	4
Tame Bird	This lets a falconer tame a bird so that it can be trained. This is for use with adult birds. There is a WIS+(SLx7)% chance of success.	4
Raise Bird	This is similar to taming, but for birds raised in cap-	5

SKILL	DESCRIPTION	SP COST
	tivity. It includes nursing the young. There is a WIS+(SLx10)% chance of the bird reaching maturity.	
Command	This lets the falconer tame an adult bird and direct its actions. There is a WIS+INT+(SLx5)% chance of the bird responding. This must be rolled each time it is sent out.	3
Train	This lets the falconer teach his birds to attack, hunt and fight better. Birds normally start with low AR, DR, damage, and accuracy, as assigned by the GM. Talons should do 2D6, and the beak should do 1D8, though this should be varied for the size of the bird and his STR or DEX. There are four training skills which follow:	
Attack	This makes the bird hunt and fight better. Each Skill Level lets the falconer raise his bird's AR by 1. A roll as in taming must be made for each 3 added to AR. It takes a week per point of AR added.	6
Defense	This is the same as the previous skill, but it adds to DR to increase defensive ability for dodging and maneuvering.	6
Damage	This lets the bird's damage be raised by 2 points per attack for each level the trainer has of the skill, the equivalent of an increase in damage class or one die type. A tame roll is needed with each level applied to the bird, and the falconer cannot add more than 1/3 his level.	12
Accuracy	This lets the falconer teach a bird to dive and swoop with more accuracy. Each SL applied to a bird can subtract 10 from location rolled on a 1D1000 scale on damage location.	3

NOTES

Once a tame or command roll is made the bird returns to a wild state, and is untrainable for the time necessary to capture him again. Purchasing a fine falcon or other bird-of-prey could run from 100 to 15,000 marks, depending on the level of prior training. A falconer can only train his level/3 (round up) birds at one time. The bird's HP are equal to the HP it started with plus the sum of all adds to DR, AR, Damage, and Accuracy. For example: A sparrow-hawk starts out with 15HP, plus, perhaps, 3 levels for AR, 2 for DR, 1 for Raise Damage, and 6 in Accuracy, for a total of 27HP, as well as the advantages of the bonuses.

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA
PART IV

LEW BRYSON

This is the third segment of Lew Bryson's ongoing fantasy/humor classic which has had a bit of a hiatus from these pages. For those who are interested part one, "A Narrative Concerning Certain Events off the Coast of Polarion" was in ABYSS #5/6, part 2 was in ABYSS #7, and part 3, "Fairies Don't Always Have Wings", was in ABYSS #9. Part 5 will be in the next issue of ABYSS, and the conclusion should be in ABYSS #18 or #19. These back-issues are all available, at \$3, \$1.50, and \$1.50 respectively. Because of a space squeeze this issue, parts 4 and 5 are actually part of the same chapter.

Rumbling through the village in the crowded oxcart, Unferth sat up front with Implotius, his mind racing over the plans for the evening. If things went well at the festival, the locals would be paralyzed. The only thing that really worried Unferth was the moment right after the stunning plot development he had added to "William Tell". With only five troops at his disposal he was horribly vulnerable to accidents, like Talos shapeshifting into a pool of water in front of a thirsty horse, or worse, Mithrandir chasing after a hobbit. That brought back another weak point; he'd been forced to leave the inn they had taken over unguarded. The thought of all those hobbits with nothing to do gave him an insight on Mithrandir's compulsive hobbit-hate.



"Yo, Viking! Look, over there! Competition!"

Mithrandir was pointing down a side-street where hung the sword and battle-axe, the familiar sign of the Mercenary's Guild. "Maybe we can get a little help...or at least make sure no one else does. Got any spare Djals?" The wizard patted the bulging pockets of his leather cape, blithely ignoring the clink of stolen gold. He grinned. "I seem to be a bit short of cash. Or, hey, maybe we could just sell Talos to them!"

The shapeshifter's head came up. "Sell me? What for? Here, I've got a few Djals. Don't sell me!" Talos just didn't understand Mithrandir at times.

What a stupid thing to suggest. After all, Talos' father had tried to sell him, several times, but couldn't do it. Dumb wizards.

"Thanks, Talos. I think we will get some more blades. But any from this town get bumped off. We can't trust them." Yes, I'm a cruel man, thought Unferth. Fair, but cruel.

Implotius pulled the oxcart over to the guildhall, and he and Unferth jumped down. They sauntered into the building and saw six wooden markers on the rack, one for each available man. The greek pounded on the desk and a man appeared in the doorway. "Can I help you?" He said, viewing his customer with disdain. "Free Beer," said Implotius, two of the words he knew in Polarian.

"What my friend means is that we're interested in mercenaries. How many of those six are from this village? We need a guide." Unferth rolled one of Talos' fat, gold Djals across the counter to the man, who pocketed it with a smile.

"Only one is from the village, sir. The others are Mhu Thulanx, trained in the Duke's army, some of the best..."

"Yeah, that's nice. Send out the local boy, okay?" The Duke's army crap was familiar. The only men that left that army went feet first. The Polarian swordsman came in, and turned to the Greek, taking him for his customer. "Trakhen, at your service. What would you like a guide for, sir?"

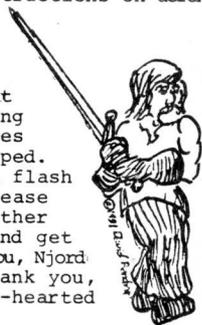
Implotius stared at him "Free Beer." It seemed like a good answer to an alien question, but the confused look it brought out was unrewarding. He didn't mind being isolated in his Greekness, but he couldn't find anyone who understood about squid. That rubbery sweetness..."

"No, over here," Unferth spoke, and gestured towards the door. "I'll take your contract, and my friend outside will explain. I'd also like the other five. Could you send them out?" The Polarian called back into the barracks and headed out the door. The five other mercenaries came in from the barracks. Unferth paid their retainer and they all left. There was no sign of the one Polarian, but Alroy was grinning and stropping a knife on Talos' boot. Unferth send the mercs back to the Inn of the Stunned Cow with instructions on defenses. He and Implotius climbed back on the oxcart and the Greek lashed the team as they headed towards the festival again.

Alroy liked the festival by the lake. It was nice. Everybody was smiling. He was excited. Unferth had said that if he did good tonight, he'd buy Talos some roast goat sausage. Alroy liked that best of all. He started juggling his knives for sheer joy. All eight penguin-embossed blades whirled about him, and people stopped to watch. They clapped. Alroy liked that. Then some threw money at his feet. In a flash Talos had his cap off and was going around the crowd. "Please help, gentlefolk. We're trying to get to Cerngoth, my brother and I, so he can make a sacrifice at the temple of Njord and get his mind back. He lost it at sea five years ago. Thank you, Njord bless you, thank you, my brother thanks you, my parents thank you, Njord thanks you..." The cap filled with cash as the kind-hearted and weak-minded villagers watched the knives cascade.

"Damned grandstanders. Trying to screw things up. Moronic juggling machine. With our luck he'll throw one of those at me." Mithrandir was muttering again, deep in his hooded cape. He didn't trust anyone in this scheme. As the stage manager he had to run illusions of scenery. It seemed like a particularly dull and insignificant task, not equal to his talents at all. He should be the star, not that moron. Anyone can throw a knife, it takes hear to act, and Mithrandir knew he had it. He had been the Hydra in the Wizard Guild's Solstice Pageant of Hercules' Labors, not an easy part at all. Unferth would learn.

(Continued on Next Page)



FEEDBACK RESULTS: ABYSS #15

COLUMN	RATING	CHANGE
In the Speculum	83	+19
Vidar's Forge	70	+7
Skills & Training	67	-8
Backgrounding	82	-13
Arts Arcane	50	-16
Filling the Pentacle	64	+11

FEATURES

FEATURES	RATING
Should Magic Items be Crooked	88
Fantasy Role-Playing and the Fanatics	93
On Designing Magic Items	95
Characteristic Based Saving Throw System	76
Two Traps	68
A Summer's Dream	70
Mixing in Science Fiction	63
Challenge of Champions	75

ART: Cranford	98	---
Zivek	82	-13
Estes	69	+17
Wiker	72	+16

WORST: Mixing in Science Fiction
 BEST: Fantasy Role-Playing and the Fanatics

This issue had an overall rating of 75.8, the highest rated issue yet. Once again the features beat out the columns. The most read magazines: DRAGON-21%,SORCERERS APPRENTICE-18%.

The oxcart rumbled across the field to the judge's stand. Unferth got down and hailed one of the sages. "Ho, wrinkled worthy! Is there time to put on a real show at this penny-ante parade? We have here a real rip-roarer, a drama to stir the hearts of even the dullest villager, a superfluity of which I've seen here, and suspense so great as to stir even your ancient and ossified blood! Thrilling it is, sir, and we ask not a bit to put it on for you, even though it may ruin our reputations." The white-haired dotard was gasping by now and about to explode, however feebly, when Implotius shoved a foaming mug in his face. "Free beer?" Methuselah lit up and drank up. Shortly, between sputters and smiles, he gave his pleased permission.

Within an hour the show was ready. Mithrandir had slapped an extended Magic Mouth on Alroy's face and would be speaking his lines from backstage. The costumes had been stolen from another troupe. "Just a little plunder, that's all," Unferth passed it off.

They went before the audience on a low wooden stage at the edge of the lake. The people sat around in a natural amphitheatre, a gentle, grassy bowl. The local lord was visible for the first time, seated with his family on a raised platform about forty feet from the stage. As they stood before the crowd, Unferth could hear the slight humming as Alroy's Hawk Helm focussed. "Can you do it?" he hissed. The moron nodded, confident. He stood dressed as a hunter, William Tell. Unferth was in silks and satins, the heavy. Talos was shapeshifted in the form of a small boy, Tell's son. Mithrandir stood in the middle of a crowd of illusions, the cast of thousands. Implotius was at the front of the stage to give the introductory speech to the rabble.

"Does anyone here speak Greek?" Implotius heard no answer, grinned, and kept talking. "We're here to steal all your gold and jewels, kill your cattle, burn your houses, rape your women and little boys, and drink all your beer!" He hoisted a mug and drank it off. The crowd cheered and he bowed low. "Thank you, scum! I've wiped better things than you off my boots. But enough petty insults. On with the show! The sooner we start the sooner we'll pillage your village!" With a snappy flourish of his bright blue weirdsword, he bowed low to more applause and walked off the stage to the oxcart. A guard stood by it. Implotius tapped a beer from the keg and handed it to the guard, who smiled. The Greek smiled back "Enjoy it, it's your last one."



Continued in ABYSS #17

FEEDBACK ON ABYSS #16

Please respond to the following items and send in this form. Rate all of the items on a 1-100 scale, except where otherwise indicated.

In the Speculum _____
 From Vidar's Forge _____
 Mini-Adventure #6 _____
 Guess What's Coming to Dinner _____
 Skills & Training: Falconry _____

Sex and the Fantasy RP Game _____
 TSR's Finnish Myths _____
 The Pomori: Dark Lords of Ireland _____
 A Night at the Opera _____

ART: John Mortimer _____
 Karl Zivek _____
 Mike Cranford _____
 David Randrup _____

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Your Age _____
 Your Sex _____

Your Occupation _____
 Highest Level of Education _____
 Marital Status _____
 Income _____
 Musical Preference _____
 How Many Books do You Read/Year _____
 How Many Hours per Week do You spend Playing Games(any kind) _____
 Do You Play Wargames(Strategic) _____
 Do You Play Wargames(Tactical) _____
 What FRP Rules do you use(top 3) _____

 How Long Have You been Playing _____
 How Many Players in Your Group _____
 How Much do You Spend on Games/Yr _____
 Average Level of Characters in Your FRPing Campaign _____
 Average # of Magic Items/Character in Your Campaign _____

I hope you can help us out by answering these questions so that we can give better service in the future, addressing your interests more closely. It is to your benefit as a subscriber to respond to this questionnaire.

X128

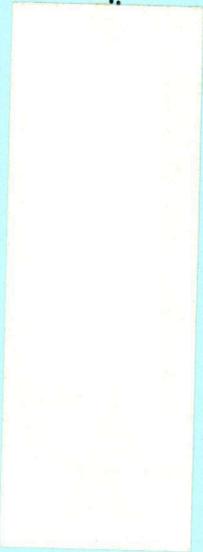
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