

BECOMING A MAGIC-USER IN POWERS & PERILS

by
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Powers & Perils provides some of the most detailed rules for creating a magic-user found in role-playing; and once a magic-user is created, there are vast opportunities for the development and improvement of magical skills. Likewise, the combat characters can learn new weapon skills and have a great number of choices in defining their persona. But what about the character who wants to cross over? For the magic-user this is relatively simple. Anyone can pick up a weapon and wield it under the Untrained Use category. Weapon masters can, with little difficulty, be encountered and influenced to teach a character a combat skill. Eventually, with training and experience, the magic-user can become adept at wielding a number of weapons.

Matters are not so simple for the combat character who wants to learn magic. The great difference, from a technical standpoint, is there is no Untrained Use category for magic. "New spells are only learned with expertise points that are gained educationally. You may NEVER gain experiential expertise in anything that you are unable to do." (Book 2, Page 14 of Powers & Perils) So what is the aspiring magician to do?

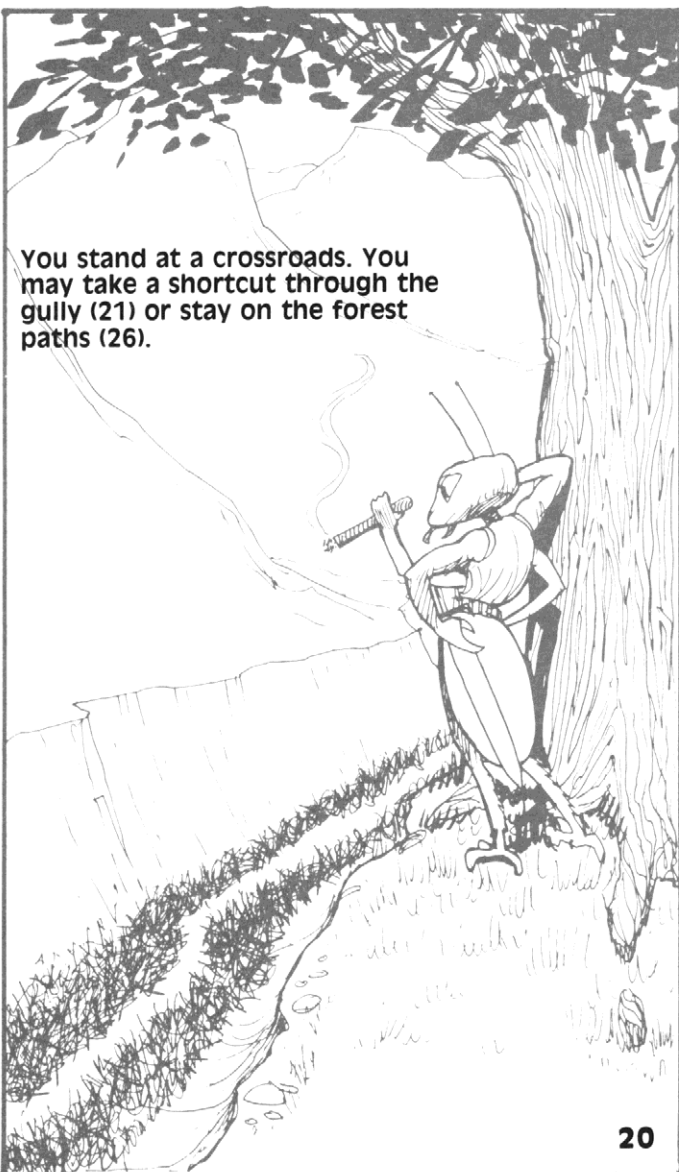
This question arose in my playing group in connection with my character, a Law-oriented human Great Swordsman, who wanted to learn how to work Law spells such as Sanity and Painlessness. We felt that such a route was in keeping with his character as a Paladin in the mold of the Grail Knights. So we read and thought about magic and how it works and came up with a number of principles to guide us in creating a magic-user. We feel that these rules are a logical outgrowth of the rules in the game books and that they will help your group to devise step-by-step rules for creating magic-users in your specific group.

The first, and most obvious, point to make is that anyone can learn magic. This arises from the fact that mana, the basic stuff that magicians manipulate, is everywhere. All a person has to do is recognize it and control it. Mana is recognized and controlled through spells, which channel mana through the use of language in a magically potent way. Every character has language skills. Therefore, any character could, presumably, speak in such a way that they tap the mana around them. Not every character is capable of comprehending the depth of knowledge necessary or using his language skills effectively. Some, because of their characteristics, will find it difficult to realize the magic in their words, the mana-controlling potential of speech. This is indicated in the rules by the requirement, in creating a magic-user, of a success roll to get instruction. (*Editor's Note — This roll gauges the potential of the student yielding the percentage chance that a trained magician of the type will consider it to be worth his while to instruct him. Few wizards care to waste their time with dullards who have little, or no, real potential in the arts.*) Presumably this is designed to weed out those characters whose characteristics indicate that they would take too long to learn. Thus, we feel it is important that a similar type of success roll be taken here. The roll should be geared towards the characteristic that is most important to the magic path chosen. The would-be magic-user would roll against some formula including Intelligence (Wizardry), Will (Shamanism) or Empathy (Sikh). This roll ensures that the apprentice does have the aptitude to learn from his or her experience.

What the apprentice must learn to become a magic-user is how to form mana. Magicians control and direct mana by speaking a precise sequence of words. In order to manipulate

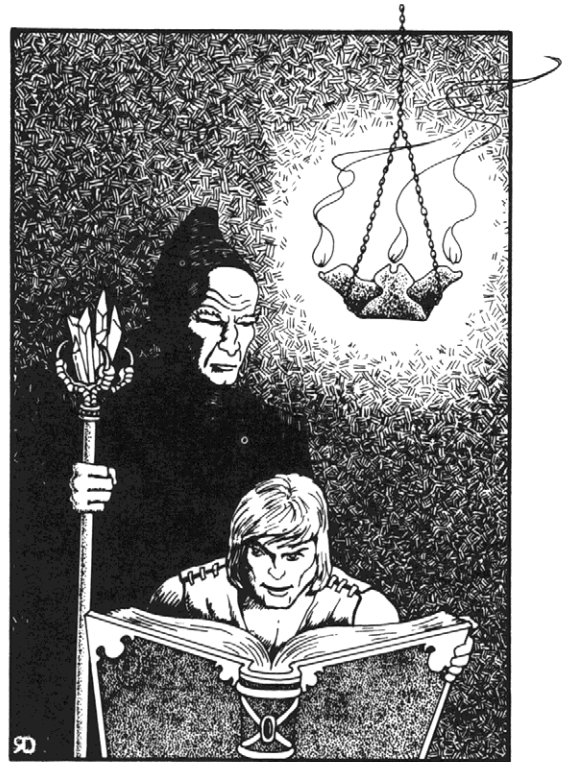
mana and become a magician, the apprentice must learn a spell. But even trained magic-users fail, sometimes abysmally, so there must be more to learning a spell than just language ability. This something must be the way that the words are said. We call this the nuance of the spell. If a character gets the right nuance, he or she realizes the magic in the words — a sentence becomes a spell.

Saying a spell to gain magical knowledge about, and through, the words is a very dangerous game since you are tapping uncontrolled mana. You are just as likely to kill yourself as you are to learn magic. It is ESSENTIAL that the apprentice have the aid of a trained magic-user. This master controls the conditions and learning environment so that the apprentice can safely progress in the arts. He can send the apprentice on Interworld journeys to the ideal realm for success, i.e. place him in a Law realm when he is working on law magic. He can also



Purify an area for the type of magic being studied. The method used depends on the magic path chosen, as we will see later. In each case, the trained magician guides the apprentice through the words and nuance of the spell, providing the correct environment for learning, until the apprentice has reached ELO in the spell. At this point the apprentice will have mastered the basic foundation for the spell and can begin to learn through normal experience as well as further education.

A look at each of the three magic paths should help to clarify just how this process can be undertaken. To start, with Wizardry it seems that the first spell to be learnt is one for seeking the presence and nature of mana. In our minds, the best spell for this is Detection. Thus the apprentice would be learning to detect the presence and nature of mana around him or her. (Editor's Note — Except for certain Priest skills, usable mana only exists externally unless the person has some kind of Innate Power.) To do this, the student goes to an area purified for the correct alignment. He then reads the spell from a book or scroll. You can decide on the number of success rolls you want to take for him to gain knowledge of the spell. The important points to remember here are that the apprentice must read the spell correctly, speak it correctly, give it the proper nuance and roll against the appropriate characteristic (Intelligence) to see if they have learned from experience. If all of this is done correctly, partial expertise points would be gained in the spell. This process continues until ELO is attained in the spell, at which point the apprentice is able to manipulate mana.



21



While fighting through the underbrush you stumble into a bed of thorn leeches. You must cut your way through, inflicting eight hits, before you are entangled and slain. If you win go to (22) otherwise see (23).

22

You find an old ruin, now serving as a Roach Motel. You may sneak by (25) or attack (24).



The process for creating a Shaman differs from wizardry in that the Shaman's power is the gift of his Tonah. The apprentice Shaman must establish a Tonah tie, either through adventuring in the Middle World or seeking one in the Lower World. To best accomplish this, he must influence a Shaman to take him as a disciple. Once the Tonah tie is gained, usually with the aid of the experienced Shaman, the novice is taught Orient Self to channel the powers that he has been granted. After this is done, he makes his drum and can begin to master other forms of Shamanic magic. Gaining a tonah tie and mastering Orient Self can be greatly influenced by the aid of a master Shaman.

The case of Sidh magic is special since Sidh Magic requires training in the Tongue of the Sidh and can not be gained from any book or scroll. Given this restriction, it seems clear that Sidh Magic must be learned from a master who speaks the Tongue of the Sidh, primarily Elves, Faerries and the Alfar. The apprentice must influence this master to accept him as a student. The master can best aid his pupil by sending him or her to the Realm of the Alfar because that realm is the major focus of Sidh power in existence and all of its denizens "exude the power of the Sidh." Here the student can learn the Tongue of the Sidh and one Sidh spell at ELO, in the general manner set for wizards without the reading requirement.

We have started to use these principles in our own game and have drawn up explicit step-by-step guidelines for each of the three magic paths. Your own guidelines will differ from ours if you take a different interpretation of just what magic means or how a trained magician would be able to help. We hope that you

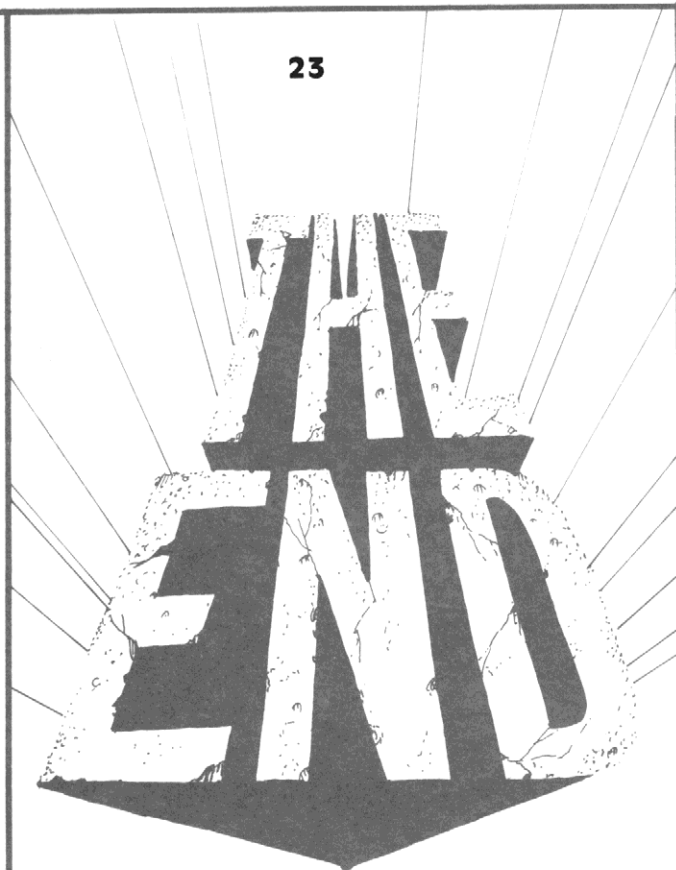
find the general idea of our principles to be logically derived and that you can use them to expand your combat characters into something far more versatile. Obviously, creating a magic-user out of a warrior is a difficult and long-term process. My own character, a Great Swordsman, has taken many weeks of study just in the Read and Write part of the process. Eventually, he will become a Law Wizard, though not a particularly good one, who will be useful for more than his strong sword arm.

These kinds of projects help to keep you interested in your character and on the lookout for other means of expansion. They also help to remind you that magic is in the world and always has been. Anyone, even warriors, can, with training and dedication, learn how to find and use that magic in whatever way they choose. (My thanks to Michael MacKay and John Vervaeke for their collaboration and assistance in the creation of this article.)

Editor's Note — This article is of interest because of the detail it gives to the basic educational process available within Powers & Perils. It shows an insight into specific occurrences that can occur when players are educating themselves after play has begun. As for learning magic after a character commences play, all the rules demand is a means of instruction (almost always a master) and time. There really isn't any simple way to learn magic. It is much too dangerous a field.

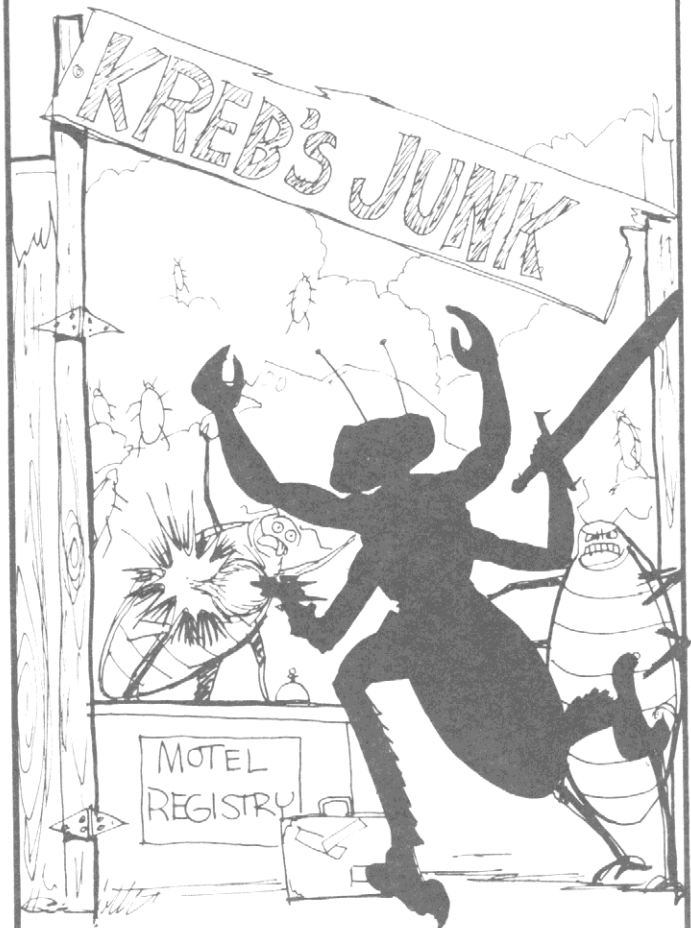
THE END

23



The Great God Murphy is victorious once more.
What can go wrong has.
THE END

The attack is on. You have three turns to kill two roaches and still have time to escape the sixty that are coming to join the fun. See (25) if you succeed and (23) if you fail.



24