



19th-42nd Mallard 348 + Sickle-Moon Edition + Sorcery, Necromancy, Fraternity!
Sold wherever you see the sign of the hanging basilisk

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Graduation Edition, Year 348 of the Aura of the Polymantic Suzerainty



On a Roll, Herzog Talks Reform: Sooner or Later

Herzog Twing (Collegium, 331) is a man with a mission. Standing four feet eight inches tall, a -2 to-hit modifier right there, he's the last wizard you'd expect to be challenging our conventions of hacking and slaying. Yet that's just what he's doing, and it's a movement that could catch on yet.

"See, it's the turns I don't understand. You take a wallop, he takes a wallop. The mechanics are so terribly... crude," he says, unafraid of the crowd of jeering fighters who have gathered. "For instance, you there," and he picks on a hulking warrior.

"Don't you think it's unfair that you take such terrible damage when fighting more than one foe at once, because everyone gets a go, every turn? Didn't I hear that you were once reduced to a STR of 2 by a party of three fieldmice?"

The bystanders laugh, good-naturedly, when the barbarian yells out "Were-rats, not fieldmice!" They know Twing's protest will never amount to anything, not when the spells governing our happy world are stronger than the stones, the trees and the wind. His petition to the Grand Conclave of the Collegium was dismissed amid laughter in 343, but after the Gnome Uprising of 345 sources close to the Archmage were said to be "worried" by what they called "the Herzog factor" — Twing's rising popularity among wizards of level 3 and below. Last year he was back, with a proposal to abolish the Critical Miss (the rule that a to-hit roll of 1 or 2 actually harms the attacker, no matter how feeble his opponent).

In the event Demiarchmage Toblunym of Amathusia talked the measure out with a fortnight-long filibuster on his hundred favourite recipes for using up leftover spinach. But Toblunym, said to be "sick of greens", may not stand in the way again.

"Reform will come, sooner or later," Herzog says, polishing his infravision spectacles with an old buff-coloured handkerchief. "The Conclave needs to realise that even though magic-users get to cast defensive and offensive spells during combat, it's not enough. And don't get me started on the saving roll required to break away from a fight!" His handlers, friendly-looking level 2 mages with 2d4+3 short swords casually sheathed at their belts, hustle the meeting to an abrupt close, and afterwards one of them tells me that Twing was speaking "figuratively". There was no question that some kind of test was needed to see whether a wizard could simply move elsewhere during combat, and so escape its consequences. The saving roll had served us well in the past. Herzog was only talking about a Commission, perhaps to report to the Conclave by the month of the Leopard 349, to make recommendations on future rule changes.

Of course, the obituary pages of collegio are full of the names of would-be reformers. Who can forget Morgo Knapcherry, level 6, whose campaign of civil disobedience against trapped strength potions led so tragically [continued, p. 17]

COLLEGIUM CLASS OF

348

Congratulations! To be a member of the graduating class of 348 is to join a thaumaturgical community unequalled in all history. All here are equal, from the 23rd-level Archmage to the newest wet-behind-the-ears young pipsqueak, for what can a difference of a mere 42,300 experience points (and the ability to raze whole continents at will) matter when it comes to the easy equality today's magic-users enjoy? For every wizard must know that there is now no hole in the ground so deep that he cannot expect rescue. A fellow magic-user is sure to happen by, and with strife and competition amongst wizards long since laid to rest by the Treaty of Phlibble (347), all will join together with a merry song in praise of our Collegium. Remember always our common motto: Never Undone!

Just In

It's been a busy month in the workshops of the Collegium. It's only the month of the Mallard, and already 348 looks like a record-breaking year for seriously *mano* stuff...

New Spells

bloodrage

Cost 7 STR, and requires a "flesh" material focus – typically an animal, or the remains of one. Lasts 4 turns, acting as +2 to-hit and on damage, but makes flight impossible.

quartet

Cost 3 STR. After months of rumours, it looks as if the Collegium has finally licked those technical glitches with viola da gamba counterpoint (remember the "compose trio sonata" product recall?) and a fully practical string-quartet arrangement spell is at last on the market. Cool.

Weaponry

Latest stats

dagger..... 1d3
quarterstaff..... 1d6
battle axe..... 1d8
short sword..... 1d6
broad sword..... 2d4
spear..... 1d6
lance..... 1d8+1

Protection

leather jerkin..... -1
ring mail..... -2
chain mail..... -3
plate armour *..... -4

* Currently subject to a Collegium prohibition, pending the outcome of a trademark lawsuit (Huffings Dinner Service Inc. vs Guild of Armourers). Plus, it was too damn heavy anyway.

Babelicious

1. **Marie-Therese the Devout**, voted your top anchorite of 346. Face it – you need a little spiritual cleansing. Mmm

2. The Clutterbuck Twins, **Honey** and **Flopsy**, heirs to the "magelight" spell fortune. But imagine the indecision...

Lingerie tips

Embarrassed? No need, says **Madame Flotte**. "Guys buy from us all the time, and we totally understand that you secretly want to wear it yourself. Just remember the size chart. If you need 'extra brawny', stop asking us for 'perky'! It's real demoralising for my sales pixies, that ripping sound from the changing room..."



Gadget of the month: the Air+ XL-5200 extreme sports diving sundial

This is serious kit for a serious diver. Proof to 1500 atmospheres at depths of up to seventy leagues. Infravision-enhanced. This baby gives a good clear reading in any medium whose material is "air", from water to the soul-sludge of the nethermost infernal planes, where some of the finest diving in the Underworld can be found. At 1,650 g.p. the XL-5200 isn't cheap, but some things in life are worth paying for. Be sure to take it off before bed – she could get into quite a strop about that anodised titanium gnomon...

Road Test: Quad Ox 7 Series

You never forget the first time you see a Quad Ox cart. Even unharnessed, it trembles like a racehorse. That sumptuous build quality, with pure "wood" materials almost throughout, takes your breath away. Real, magic-focusable "wood" is hard enough to find even in forests these days, what with every viable stick or twig stripped out back in the Hamadryad War. True, a quick "know nature" revealed a few "metal" fittings, but still, if you're the kind of wizard who spends all day looking for something to "fashion staff" with, this little heartbreaker will leave you whimpering. Come to daddy...



Hitching the 7 Series was no problem, but as with any top-performance cart, match those oxen or it will pull wildly to one side. Axial leeway distortion was a very acceptable ±0.002 nanoleagues per fortnight. Some will sniff at the rain-handling, a rather basic umbrella fitted as standard in the rear hay/apples/giggly peasant girl compartment, but we found it to be practical and effective. Out on the corniche roads around Lapethos, the 7 Series pulled well over double walking pace and sustained it for upwards of twenty minutes. You get good days and bad days working for collegio, but you don't ever get better days than this.

Outdoorsman

Hanging from a thorn-creeper, after a six-hour rock climb in the burning Syrian sun, it was hard to believe we were just bird-watching. "No," said Nick patiently, "They're not birds. The giant bat is a mammal." Nick, whose real name is Nicodemus (level 4), is kind of a literal guy, but it's good to have company up here. A long, long week, and we've seen maybe one breeding pair of giant bats. "Once, these kings of the sky –" I interrupt. "Okay, so rocs were bigger. But these princes of the twilight –" I just can't stop myself, you know? "All right. Yes. Harpies are scarier. But giant bats are so noble..." And this time I let him talk, and talk and talk, because he's right: it's so pointless the way we've exterminated the giant bat, once indigenous to garden mazes and other outdoor obstacle traps right across the islands. Sure, a bat will come at you, but it only wants to feed, and a simple spell is perfectly good defence, as so often with airborne attackers. Nick stops abruptly. "Sorry," he says. "I know they're monsters. But isn't our world going to be a little poorer when the last one takes a critical hit?"



Ultra-minis from the Orion collection available at Mankib, 390 g.p. Boots, 420 g.p., from Glorious Isosceles. Absurdly pointy hats and other accessories, 30 g.p. from the dockside market (try Thursdays). Hair by Dislocated Suzy

❀ Don't "Know Nature", Know Polly! ❀

TELL YOUR TROUBLES TO TOP COUNSELLING WITCH POLYCHRESTIA

Dear Polly, My husband and I have been happily married for seventeen years, and have always enjoyed experimenting in the four-poster. Now it seems "web" and "silence" are not enough for him, and he has begun to suggest that we try out "magic missile". I am so worried, as apart from anything else, our pet newts Terpsichore and Fred are frightened by the loud noises. What can I do?

Dear Worried of Paphos: Megalomania is a perfectly normal sign of the onset of early middle age among magic users, as is "the 15,000 experience point itch", that feeling that it is high time one were being worshipped as a demigod. Try hinting subtly that there are whole continents out there to conquer, or if that doesn't work, suggest that he construct an intricate model universe, subject to meticulous rules of his own devising, so that he can play god without scorching the cushions. ❀

Dear Polly, My girlfriend's driving me crazy with her obsessive use of the "mend" spell. It's like she can't see a crack, a fold or even a smudge without trying to cast "mend" on it! She's great and all, but I'm starting to tiptoe round my own apartment in case I tread on the tapestry the wrong way.

Dear SpellDude, Has she only recently memorised the scroll? It's not unusual for new users of this spell to think it can solve everything – rebuild whole cities, raise the dead, make Varkston the Dread Polymancer good-humoured again – but she'll soon learn the limits. "Mend" is for broken things of a reasonable size, not the ravages of time or ordinary wear and tear. Besides, wasn't your place a little untidy before she arrived? Be honest now. ❀

Dear Polly, No-one at the Collegium seems to understand me. I'm so shy, I have to cast "detect trap" if a boy even comes near me, and nobody knows but I write all these sonnets about never being asked to dances [Note: collegio reserves the right to edit readers' letters] so can you tell me if I am normal? Also, I get very tired and always seem so short of STR.

Dear Shy and Putrid: Which of us has not at some time in her life felt lost and neglected? Especially if we are wholly tedious to know, as in your own case. Keep up the good work on "detect trap", though it really alerts one only to hidden traps in inanimate objects, and remember – to detect a trap is not to disarm it! What you do from there is up to you. STR loss is, again, a universal problem. If you've no sanctuary to hand, try fashioning a staff. In later life, consider a misanthropic campaign of vengeance upon the townsfolk who "never appreciated" you, or shock your neighbours by taking up with a pretty but dumb half-goat satyr. ❀

How Bare Will You Dare?

The raunchy new look that's sweeping Paphia

It wasn't so very long ago that an ultra-mini like this could get a gal arrested, even in traditionally easy-going Paphia. Meg, 34, a free-lance exorcist, is rueful. "The first time I tried on one of these, the Bellatrix (second from left), I just felt naked. I've never been comfortable about, you know, showing my neck. But now, I feel so liberated. It's the real me!"

Okay, so feeling that sensuous breeze on your lower forehead is a thrill but, no gloves? I mean, ewww! "You just have to get over that!" laughs Trebonya, 117, tyrannical hereditary ruler of the Laminia dynasty (far right, in the Nair al Saif ensemble). "There's nothing shameful about knuckles. Maybe it wouldn't do for work. But a girl's gotta unwind."

AURATIDE RECIPES

131. Salamander Drizzle Sponge

The perfect complement to a festive meal, or keep in a "suspend time" casket for freshness. Serves 4-6 humans, 2-3 giants.

18 scruples flour (ready-blessed will do)
1 rounded teaspoon baking soda
3 wyvern eggs at room temperature
6 4/17ths scruples very soft butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 caged live salamanders, fairly riled

Take a very large mixing bowl. Sieve the flour, then add eggs, soda, vanilla and butter. If it is very soft, a single "contrarotate spoons" spell (1 STR) will beat the mixture perfectly to a thickness where it will drop off the spoon at a tap. Make menacing gestures to the caged salamanders throughout. Divide the cake mixture between two tins, and – this is the tricky part – behave as if to trap the salamanders between the layers, but allow them to escape just in the nick of time. Ensure that the magical gratitude drizzles evenly across the mixture as they fly away. Bake for 30 minutes with a "domestic heat" spell (2 STR) and stand until fully cold.



Cassiopeia

A Neglected Constellation?

We all know Collegium textbooks on stargazing can be, well, a little dry. Even though generations of ink-fingered magic users have discovered the famous “queen who swallowed a pumpkin” illustration in Tycho Brahe’s classic textbook, how many of us ever looked closely at the actual stars?

Something old, something new...

One of Ptolemy’s 48 originals, Cassie certainly isn’t a newcomer in the northern sky. But boy, did she get a surprise back on 8th Camel 326, when the subsequently deposed Archmage Ptahmon tried out his new “detonate star” spell. Thousands of textbooks were called back in for the word NOVA to be added, and it was the scholastic guilds who successfully engineered Ptahmon’s retirement “to spend more time with my tortoises”.

Star quality

Schedar, the breast; Caph, the hen-naed palm; Tsih, the whip [omitted from most juvenile texts]; Ruchbah, the knee; Segin, Marfak, Achird – the list goes on. Classic stars, proved by generations of astromancy.

But isn’t she upside down?

Only for half of the astral cycle. Don’t worry – from Leopard through to Hawthorn each year, your Cassiopeia-governed spells run true.

Correction In last month’s *collegio*, our feature on Orion contained a number of regrettable misprints. Bellatrix is dimmer than Rigel, Mintaka and Betelgeuse do not form a binary, while Alnilam is the belt buckle, not Alnitak. Saiph means “sword”, not Hatsya, while Meissa and Thabit are not made of marzipan, as incorrectly stated on page 2. The printer’s devils (STR 43) have since been dealt 4d4+3 points of damage.

Professor Scrofulax writes...

“I don’t know why young magic-users are so obsessed with the astral planes. Points of light! That’s all they are. Every year I say so, and every year it falls upon deaf ears. Hey ho. Would you pass me that parrot? Thank you, and perhaps a little mint tea. They say, why should we remember all these star names? And I think to myself, quite right. I would rather remember a rabbit casserole I had back in 412, marvellously done it was, at that perfectly splendid quayside tavern in lower Paphia. Rabbit-fishing was still in its infancy, with many magic-users even denying that it was possible, so a really fresh... But I wander from my point. They say I do that often nowadays, hey ho, hey ho. Cassiopeia! Now there’s a name to conjure with, ah, just my little joke you know. The vain queen, that’s what they say, but her comb always looks more like a barbed metal feather to me, I expect it came in handy when she needed to keep up with her correspondence, letters to the deities of the southern skies, thank-you notes to Perseus and the dogs after particularly successful parties, that sort of thing. I had a party myself the other night, just a few local kobolds and half-orcs, members of the Conclave, you know the thing don’t you? Oh I feel sure you do, but ah! I seem to be drifting away again. Away, away... D’you know, once I started a lecture on pomegranate seeds and finished up an hour later having worked my way round to the rheumatism of sparrows?”

Professor Nigel Scrofulax will be known to all *collegio* readers as the head of the Collegium’s natural sciences wing, a post he has occupied since 571 following, or preceding, an accident with a time travel scroll. He expects to celebrate his retirement in 280, at the age of thirteen.

In the next *collegio*...

Ursa Major: still great, after all these years? + Exclusive interview with Miles Horty, the bestselling author of “A Critical Miss” and other romances