

d12 Monthly

DEITIES
ISSUE

Issue 30
December, 2023

FREE VERSION

**CALLING ON
THE GODS**

THE PERILS & BENEFITS

**OTHER-WORLD
BUILDING**

CRAFT YOUR OWN PANTHEON

**GODLY
ARTEFACTS**

Interview with the Creator of *Legend of the Bones*



d12 Monthly is a helpful resource for fantasy roleplayers.

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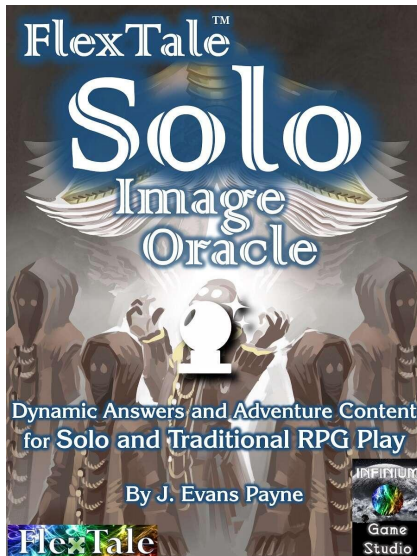
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The Deities Issue

What is a cleric or paladin without the Gods?

Who do the peasants and other unfortunates turn to in their most desperate hour?

Deities, and to a lesser extent, Demi-Gods serve an important function in fantasy roleplaying and literature.

They are part of the very fabric of the world, and give life and power to those who seek out their guidance and spread their gospel.

May the deities bless your next adventure!

And, as always, happy gaming!

- Russ from YUMDM

<https://yumdm.com/>

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About Me

I have been roleplaying for over 30 years and DMing for most of those. I have played over 50 different roleplaying games, but my first love is fantasy - it's like coming home.

Other TTRPGs I like: WEG D6 Star Wars, Feng Shui RPG, & Warhammer FRP.



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... for making this zine as good as it is.

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Other-World Building

Crafting Your Own Pantheon



In the realm of fantasy world-building, creating a pantheon of gods and goddesses is a captivating, and usually, an essential task.

A pantheon not only adds depth and flavour to your campaign world but also provides a rich source of inspiration for stories, quests, and character development.

This article will guide you through the process of crafting your very own pantheon for your fantasy campaign world.

I will also showcase what I did to create my own pantheon in my home campaign world - Aythia - as an example.

Establish Your World's Theme and Concept

Before diving into the specifics of your pantheon, it's important to have a clear understanding of your campaign world's theme and concept. What kind of setting are you creating? Is it high fantasy, dark and gritty, or something in between? Knowing the tone and style of your world will help shape the nature of your pantheon.

Example: I already had a fair idea what Aythia was like (that is, mid-level fantasy) before I started thinking about what deities would be in it.

Having said that, I did create 12 deities fairly quickly (most only by name) as I wanted to have the months of the year be the same as the 12 major deities.

So, I created 12 deities in name and domains only.

Determine the Number of Deities

Decide how many gods and goddesses will be in your pantheon. A small pantheon might have only a handful of deities, while a larger one could consist of dozens. The size of your pantheon should align with the complexity of your campaign world and the role of deities within it.

Example: As mentioned above, I started with 12 major deities, and these served as a

bedrock for the pantheon, but I also left room for the deities the players came up with as well.

One wanted to worship a storm god, and so Kandor: God of Storms, Lightning, and Thunder, was born as a lesser deity.

Define the Pantheon's Hierarchy

In many pantheons, there is a hierarchy among the deities. Some are more powerful or prominent than others. Consider the relationships between the gods and goddesses. Who is the chief deity, if there is one? Are there subgroups or alliances within the pantheon?

Example: With the Aythian pantheon, I didn't want a human-like group of gods, who bickered and made deals with each other, so there is no real hierarchy other than between the 12 major deities, and the lesser ones - and even this is due to their popularity, rather than any political affiliation.

Create the Deities

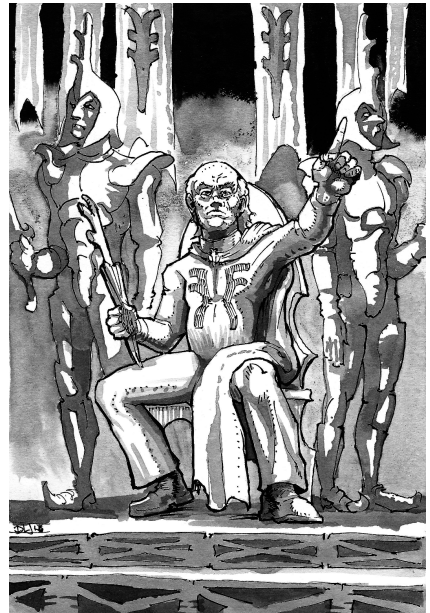
Each deity should have a distinct personality, domain, and backstory. Consider the following elements when creating your gods and goddesses:

Name

Choose names that reflect the deity's nature and role. These names can be unique or derived from mythology and culture.

Example: For names, I took an aspect of what the deity represented and then played around with the word.

As an example, Dusrin, the god of travel, messages, and perseverance, was created from the word 'dust' which I imagined would be created when his riders galloped past.



Domain

Assign each deity a specific domain or portfolio. These can be related to aspects of the world, like nature, war, love, or magic. Make sure there is variety to cover different aspects of life and the campaign world. And feel free to give deities more than one Domain.

Example: This is probably my one regret when I originally created my pantheon: I didn't think long enough on the major 12 deity's domains.

Use the list at the end of this article as a starting point to figure out what would be the most important domains to the people of your world - these would most likely be the domains of the most powerful deities.

And these can be region-specific as well.

The deity representing water and life could be a major deity in dry or desert regions, and just a lesser deity in more temperate regions.

Appearance

Visualise how each deity looks, as it can be a source of inspiration for descriptions and artwork.

Example: I haven't really progressed that far with the deities' appearances in my pantheon, except to write down how they can appear to worshippers.

I have not gone into any real detail on what a god or goddess actually looks like as it would be super rare for any mortal to actually see the deity. Instead, they would see representations of them in dreams, visions, or even when praying.

Personality

Think about the personalities of your deities. Are they benevolent, capricious, vengeful, or wise? What are their motivations and goals?

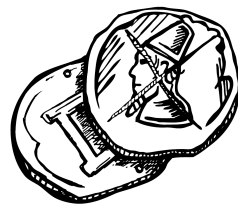
Example: As mentioned above, I tend not to give individual deities human-like personalities. They are a superior being and the human-based concept of appearance and personalities simply does not apply to deities.

I do, however, understand their motivations (basically to grow their base) and goals (to grow more powerful and relevant in the lives of their followers).

Some deities in my pantheon want to add to their domains, gaining more followers in doing so, and so domains certain deities represent may change over time.

Symbols

Deities often have associated symbols or icons. These symbols can be used as religious icons, on temples, or in the attire of their followers.



Example: I have written out or had drawn (I cannot draw all that well) various symbols and icons for each of the deities. It's important to do this as it gives some details for when the characters come up against evil religions or cults, and just to add some depth to their own religiously-devoted characters.

Relationships

Consider the relationships between the deities. Are there rivalries, friendships, or alliances among them? How do these relationships affect the world?

Example: The deities of my pantheon don't really have relationships with each other. On very rare occasions, some may band together to save the world, but this is a very rare exception.

In fact, it has only happened once in recorded history, and that is when the original god of magic was replaced.

Develop Myths and Legends

Every pantheon is steeped in myths and legends that explain their origins, interactions, and the creation of the world. Develop stories that showcase your deities' powers, quirks, and influence on the world. These myths can be the basis for quests and adventures in your campaign.

Incorporate Mortal Worship

Think about how mortals in your world worship these deities. Are there organised religions, cults, or simple rituals that pay homage to the gods and goddesses? Consider the consequences of divine intervention in the mortal realm, including miracles, blessings, and curses.

Include Clergy and Orders

Create clergy, priesthoods, and orders dedicated to each deity. These religious organisations can provide depth to your world and serve as allies or antagonists in your campaign.

Design Holy Sites and Artefacts

Identify places of worship, temples, and shrines dedicated to your deities. These locations can become focal points for quests and adventures. Additionally, think about divine artefacts, magical items, or relics associated with the pantheon that players can seek or interact with.

See *Relics of the Gods* in the FULL version of this issue.

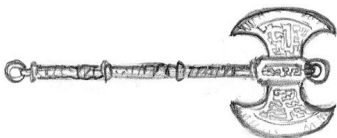
Integrate into the Campaign

Now that you have a fully fleshed-out pantheon, incorporate it into your campaign. Allow your players to interact with the deities, undertake divine quests, and witness the effects of the gods and goddesses on the world.

By following the steps outlined in this article, you can create a pantheon that is both engaging and integral to the narrative of your fantasy campaign.

List of Domains

Air	Artifice	Balance
Beauty	Curses	Chaos
Darkness	Death	Destruction
Dreams	Earth	Fate
Fertility	Fire	Harvest
Healing	Hope	Illusions
Invention	Joy	Justice
Knowledge	Law	Life
Light	Love	Luck
Music	Nature	Plague
Protection	Prophecy	Radiance
Shadows	Silence	Skill
Sorrow	Stars	Storms
Strength	Subterfuge	Sun
Time	Trade	Travel
Trickery	Unity	Victory
War	Water	Wealth
Wind	Wisdom	Winter



The Pantheon Unveiled A Guide to the Gods in Aythia



This is an introduction to my home campaign's pantheon. Hopefully, it will inspire you to come up with your own (see article *Other-World Building* in this issue).

How it Works

Deities, or Gods, are powerful beings who represent certain aspects of life in the Known World.

They hold sway over these Domains - death, nature, fire, etc - and can bestow on those who follow the tenets certain spells and other abilities and powers.

The deity itself does not give the power to the follower, but rather facilitates it from the Astral Plane where the natural energy - powered by the belief in it by mortals - resides.

The deity is also the protector of this energy.

The individual deities who represent the Domains are not actual beings as mortals

understand that concept, but visual representations.

This is why deities can look different to various believers but still represent the same Domain.

The Gods

There are 12 major deities, who each of the 12 months are named after, and who have the largest number of followers in Aythia.

There are also lesser deities who are not as well-known, either through a smaller number of worshippers, or due to being worshipped only in certain areas of the Known World.

The Domains

Each deity holds sway over one or more domains. These domains represent important aspects of life in Aythia, and are powered by the faith of those who worship them.

The Major Domains

Listed below are the 12 major deities and the domains they represent.

Arkeris [ARK-ker-IS]

Night, Trickery, Lies, and Illusion

Arinix [A-RIN-icks]

Luck - both bad and good

Banoth [BAN-oth]

Wisdom, Knowledge, and Insightfulness

Damus [DAM-us]

Justice, Chivalry, and Law

Ferast [Fer-AST]

Magic

Gruan [GRU-an]

Nature, Growth, and Life

Kalisvar [KALIS-var]

Battle and War

Lucindar [LU-sin-DAR]

Rebirth, Guidance, Fire, and Summer

Taliiya [TA-lee-A]

Winter and the cold

Ullarl [Ool-LARL]

Death and Loss

Vaal [VARL]

Revenge, Pain and Suffering

Venren [VEN-ren]

Protection

Which Domains?

Assuming each deity you create represents one or more domains, then you should really try and understand what domains would be important to your civilization.

A sea-fearing civilization would probably worship weather and water deities above all others. While a war-like civilization may worship gods of war, battle, and destruction more.

Feel free to create domain lists for each civilization, and build the deities based on those.

Divine Favours

How to Gain the Blessings of the Gods



In many fantasy worlds, the gods play a pivotal role in the lives of mortals.

To secure their blessings and favours, individuals, and societies alike, often embark on quests and devotional practices.

Mortals have a range of methods at their disposal to earn divine favour, from traditional offerings and prayers to heroic quests and acts of charity.

Offerings and Sacrifices

One of the most traditional and prevalent methods of gaining divine favour is through offerings and sacrifices. Mortals can present valuable items, food, or even animals to the gods at shrines or temples.

These offerings demonstrate dedication and devotion to the deity. The gods may reward such acts of piety with blessings, protection, or guidance.

Prayer and Worship

Prayer is a fundamental way to communicate with the divine. Mortals can pray at temples, churches, or even in the privacy of their homes.

Through prayer, they can seek the guidance of the gods, request their intercession in times of need, or express gratitude for their blessings. Consistent and heartfelt prayer can strengthen one's connection to the divine.

Acts of Charity and Kindness

The gods often favour mortals who exhibit compassion, generosity, and kindness.

Engaging in acts of charity, helping the less fortunate, and protecting the vulnerable are ways to earn the gods' goodwill. These virtuous deeds reflect the values associated with various deities and align mortals with their divine principles.

Heroic Deeds and Quests

Fantasy worlds are often rife with quests, adventures, and epic struggles. Mortals who undertake heroic deeds and quests aligned with the will of a particular god may earn their favour.

These deeds can range from slaying monstrous creatures to retrieving sacred artefacts, and they often involve acts of valour and selflessness.

Pilgrimages to Sacred Sites

In many fantasy settings, there are sacred places imbued with divine energy. Mortals seeking the gods' blessings may embark on pilgrimages to these sites. The journey itself, along with the act of devotion, can be a transformative experience. Pilgrims often hope to gain insight, healing, or divine guidance from their journey.

Clergy and Religious Orders

Clergy, priests, and religious orders are intermediaries between mortals and the gods. They serve as conduits for divine communication and are often granted special powers by their chosen deity.

Seeking the guidance and assistance of these holy figures can help mortals secure the favour of the gods.

Offer Service to the Temple

Serving in a temple or religious institution dedicated to a specific god is a direct way to gain their favour. Mortals who commit their lives to serving the divine, whether as acolytes, healers, or protectors of holy places, are more likely to receive blessings and divine assistance.

Solve Mysteries and Enigmas

Some gods revel in mysteries and enigmas. Mortals who solve riddles, decipher cryptic prophecies, or unravel ancient secrets may earn the favour of such deities.

Acts of Faith and Trust

Sometimes, the gods test mortals' faith and trust. Mortals who demonstrate unwavering faith and trust in their chosen deity, even in the face of adversity, may be rewarded with divine favour. These acts of faith are often associated with the gods of endurance and resilience.

Deities' Blessings

Below is a list of some minor blessings that a character might receive from their deity after an act of devotion.

These can be rolled randomly, or chosen based on the deity in question.

Guidance: The character receives a +2 to all wisdom-based checks (not saves) for one day.

Luck's Favour: The character gains +2 on their next saving throw or attack roll.

Swift Travel: The character's travel speed is increased by 50% for a specific journey.

Divine Insight: The character gains temporary proficiency for one day in a specific skill.

Healing Touch: Minor wounds or ailments are instantly healed. The character is healed by D4 hit points and any disease or poisoning is negated.

Protection Ward: The character is surrounded by a protective aura, granting a +1 to AC for the next combat.

Clarity of Mind: The character gains a +4 bonus (or advantage) on their next saving throws against mental effects.

Gift of Communication: The character gains the ability to understand a verbal or written language they previously did not know for D4 hours.

Eagle's Eyes: The character gains enhanced vision, granting a +4 (or advantage) on any perception checks for one day.

More blessings can be found in the FULL version of this issue.

The Creation Mythos

Origins of the Gods



The creation myth is a fundamental element that provides depth, meaning, and context to your world. In this article, we will explore the art of developing a creation myth and the origins of the gods in your fantasy universe.

Define the Purpose of Your Creation Myth

Before diving into the specifics of your creation myth, it's essential to consider its purpose within your world.

Creation myths serve various roles, including explaining the origins of the universe, defining the relationships between deities, shaping the moral and ethical framework of a society, or providing the backdrop for major conflicts.

Determine the primary objectives of your creation myth to ensure it aligns with your world's themes and narrative.

Establish the Cosmic Setting

Begin by describing the state of the cosmos before creation.

Is it a void, a primordial chaos, or an existing world in need of divine intervention?

This setting provides the backdrop against which the gods' creation will unfold.

Introduce the Primordial Entities

Most creation myths feature primordial entities that exist before the gods.

These entities might represent elemental forces, abstract concepts, or cosmic beings.

Consider how these primordial entities contribute to the creation of the gods or the universe itself.

Birth or Emergence of the Gods

Explain the emergence of the gods from the primordial entities or the cosmic setting.

This can involve a divine birth, a moment of enlightenment, or a transformation from mortal beings.

Determine the nature of your gods – are they benevolent or capricious, unified or in conflict?

Assign Divine Roles and Domains

Each god in your pantheon should have distinct roles and domains. Consider how their personalities and powers align with these roles.

For example, a god associated with the sun may represent light, warmth, and life, while a god of the sea may be linked to the depths and mysteries of the ocean.

Explore Divine Relationships

Elaborate on the relationships between the gods. Sibling rivalries, love stories, and alliances among the deities can add depth to your pantheon and influence the world's events.

These relationships often mirror aspects of human nature and can serve as a source of inspiration for your world's storytelling.

The Act of Creation

Describe the various gods' acts of creation, whether they involve shaping the physical world, breathing life into mortal beings, or crafting the fundamental laws of magic.

Detail the specifics of these divine acts and its consequences for the world.

The Role of Mortals

Consider the role of mortals in your creation myth.

Do they play a passive or active part in the divine plan?

Mortals may be seen as children of the gods, created in their image, or simply as observers and inheritors of the world they have shaped.

Echoes in the World

Explore how the creation myth has left echoes in the world.

This can manifest as sacred places, ancient relics, rituals, and beliefs that shape the cultures and societies within your fantasy world.

These echoes provide a tangible connection between the gods and the mortal realm.

Aythia's Creation

As an example, here is my campaign world's creation myth.

The world was born out of a swirling mist that coalesced into the planet, sun, and the moon. Along with these, the planes were also born, and the elemental planes (with help from powerful elemental entities), shaped the world, while the Astral Plane gave it life.

This life manifested in different ways, creating animals and sentient beings.

As these sentient beings began to grow in number and build settlements, they started worshipping those important parts of the world around them: the elements, nature, animals, the weather - as more and more being worshipped these various parts, the domains were formed. They gained in strength, and eventually the deities were formed by various cults to represent these domains.

There are no relationships between the gods. They merely represent their Domain(s).

Mortals, by their act of worship, powers the domains, and thus these domains (and thus the deity) get more powerful and more popular.

Gods and Mortals

Relationships and Interactions



In my home campaign, the deities never directly contact mortals. Instead, they send emissaries on their behalf.

These beings are called angels or devils, depending on the alignment of the deity.

There are also other ways deities and their servants can contact mortals (see article *Ascension of the Pious* in the FULL version of this issue).

These methods of communication can add depth and mystery to the relationship between deities and mortals, creating opportunities for quests, character development, and rich storytelling in a fantasy roleplaying game.

Divine Symbols and Omens

Deities can send messages through natural or supernatural symbols and omens.

For example, a ray of sunlight breaking through storm clouds, a specific animal appearing, or a particular constellation alignment can all be signs from the deity.

Dreams and Visions

Deities may communicate with mortals through dreams or visions.

Characters may receive prophetic dreams, offering guidance, warnings, or cryptic clues about future events.

Sacred Texts and Scriptures

The deity can inspire the writing or discovery of sacred texts and scriptures.

Mortals can interpret these writings to gain insight into the deity's will or to solve problems.

Divine Artefacts

Deities can imbue artefacts with their power or influence, making them conduits for divine communication.

These artefacts might reveal hidden messages or offer unique powers to their wielders.

See article *Blessed, They Be* in Issue 16 of **d12 Monthly** for more on blessed weapons. There are also more powerful divine artefacts in the article *Relics of the Gods* in the FULL version of this issue).

Mystical Portals

Deities may create or manipulate mystical portals, gateways, or mirrors that allow

mortals to glimpse their realm, receive guidance, or access divine knowledge.

Whispers in the Wind

The deity's voice may be carried on the wind, rustling leaves, or in the sound of a babbling brook. Nature deities tend to use this communication method.

Devotees who are in tune with nature might hear these whispers and interpret them.

Inspiration and Creativity

Deities can inspire mortals to create works of art, music, or literature that indirectly convey their messages or teachings.

See the blog post [Muses in D&D](#) on my website for information on how muses can be used for this purpose.

Synchronicities and Coincidences

The deity can manipulate events or create synchronicities to guide mortals. This might involve seemingly random encounters, objects, or situations that lead characters in a particular direction.

Animal Messengers

Deities can send animals as messengers, each with a specific meaning.

For example, a white dove might symbolise peace and a black raven could be a harbinger of ill omens*.

* In fact, ravens are seen in many cultures as birds of ill-omen, and this particular symbol surpasses just the word of deities.

Oracle and Seers

Oracles, seers, or other gifted individuals can act as intermediaries between the deity and mortals.

These individuals may have the ability to interpret the deity's will through rituals or trance-like states.

Miraculous Cures and Blessings

Deities can grant blessings or miraculous cures to those in need, demonstrating their favour and will, indirectly.

Personal Trials and Challenges

Deities might subject mortals to personal trials and challenges, which, if successfully completed, reveal insights into the deity's intentions and desires. This could be used as a solo mission for the party's cleric or druid.

Nature's Reactions

The deity can influence the natural world to respond to the emotions or actions of mortals. For example, storms might rage in response to anger or nature may bloom with the arrival of a hero.

Portents in the Stars

Astrological signs, celestial alignments, and astronomical events can all be used to convey messages from the deity.

Silent Temples and Shrines

In sacred places, the deity's presence can be palpable, and mortals may feel guided or enlightened when visiting these locations.

Interview With Simon From Legend of the Bones



Q. What made you decide to create a podcast in this style (instead of something else TTRPG-related)?

When I came back to the hobby in 2018, I tried listening to a number of different actual play podcasts but none of them resonated with me. I found the table-talk, people eating nachos, and the general goofiness quite distracting. I don't mind that in my live table games, after all, it's about folk having fun, but it wasn't what I wanted to listen to... I wanted something more serious in tone and well-edited...I wanted to feel immersed..

Then I came across *Tale of the Manticore* and I was blown away.

This was the show I had been looking for, but not only that, I had no idea you could play an RPG solo. I was hooked.

I've always been a creative person. I've drawn and painted for as long as I can remember, I was the singer/songwriter/producer in a couple bands in my youth, as well as solo projects, and of course, like many, I am a 'Forever GM'.

In short, I'm addicted to creating stuff.

So after listening to TotM for a year or so, I started to get the itch - I wanted to create my own solo rpg/storytelling podcast.

I had heard Jon say a few times that there was plenty of room for others in this space, so I created an episode and got in touch with him. Jon was generous and gracious - he was incredibly encouraging, and subsequently mentored me through prepping the show for launch. I owe him a debt in that regard.

Q. Why did you choose the ruleset you use?

In truth, I never played much D&D as a kid. I have 2e on my shelf but I only played that a couple of times. My first love was always Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (WFRP) 1e, but I didn't want to use GW's proprietary setting.

I wanted to homebrew a relatively low-magic, grounded fantasy setting with a feel more akin to Britain in the 9th-11th

centuries. I also wanted a system that was deadly like WFRP, but without the crunch. I needed something lighter weight that would work better in a podcast format.

At the same time, I'm also time-poor so I needed a system I could learn quickly and just get going. OSE (Old School Essentials) was perfect.

Q. How do you go about creating what happens in the story?

At first I needed to put the characters somewhere unknown, as this would force exploration and survival.

So I had this idea of a shipwreck, with the character's being the only survivors, washed up on a beach far from home.

There was an old lighthouse on the clifftop, which had been used by a mage and his apprentice (Vaylan). I had this idea, that Vaylan and his master had been attacked by a group of fanatical Witch-hunters.

Vaylan's master was killed which immediately set up a revenge motivation for the mage.

The party was quickly thrown into a location-crawl, and quite soon I had this idea that there is an overarching event going on in the world, linked to the Witch Hunters.

After that, whenever the party interacts with a location or significant NPC, I ask my Oracle whether it has any link to the wider

events. If it does, then that adds to the emerging story.

Other things also will affect it though. For example, the party recently failed an important reaction roll. This led to a whole new side quest, which provided the opportunity for some great world and lore building, as well as contributing to the emerging narrative - you quite literally have to roll with it!

Q. Who is your favourite character you have created so far?

Ah, the old 'who is your favourite child?' question! When I was a kid, I always wanted to play Fighter or Ranger types - probably because I've always been very slim, and wanted an alter-ego very different from myself. I was never interested in playing magic users (or Clerics for that matter).

So it has been a real surprise to me that my favourite character is Vaylan, the mage. I think it's because I find his character interesting; he's a man struggling with his inner demons.

I've discovered that the thing I love most about doing this, is the discovery of the characters; learning who they are, the interrelationships, their hopes and fears.

For me, it's that which deepens my immersion, and makes the game feel more 'real'.



Q. What tools do you use, and what's your favourite to use?

I have loads of random tables for different terrain or locations which I use and update constantly. I also have random weather and direction tables (for getting lost, wind direction etc), a reference of both NPC and PC relationships, and a web of how events relate to each other as they happen.

This is all essential to ensure continuity.

But my most important and favourite tool by far is my D6 yes/no oracle, which I think I pinched from your good self! (Editor Note: I pinched it from Jon from Tales of the Manticore!)

When playing solo, an Oracle is an absolutely essential tool - solo doesn't really work without it. Some people swear by MythicGME and it is very good, but for me, the simple D6 Oracle does everything I need.

Q. Where would you like to see all this go? What would be a "success" for you?

To be honest, I'm making the show because it pleases me to do so; because I love playing it, exploring the world and its characters, and finding out what happens next - I'm entertained by it. As long as that remains the case, I will keep doing it.

Having said that, I do love that other people are enjoying the show, it gives me validation of what I'm doing, and so I would love the audience to grow as much as possible - hopefully it might encourage others to give solo play a try.

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For January 2024, we delve into the new TTRPG *Tales of Argosa* by Low Fantasy Gaming



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