

Rite Publishing Presents

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PATHWAYS



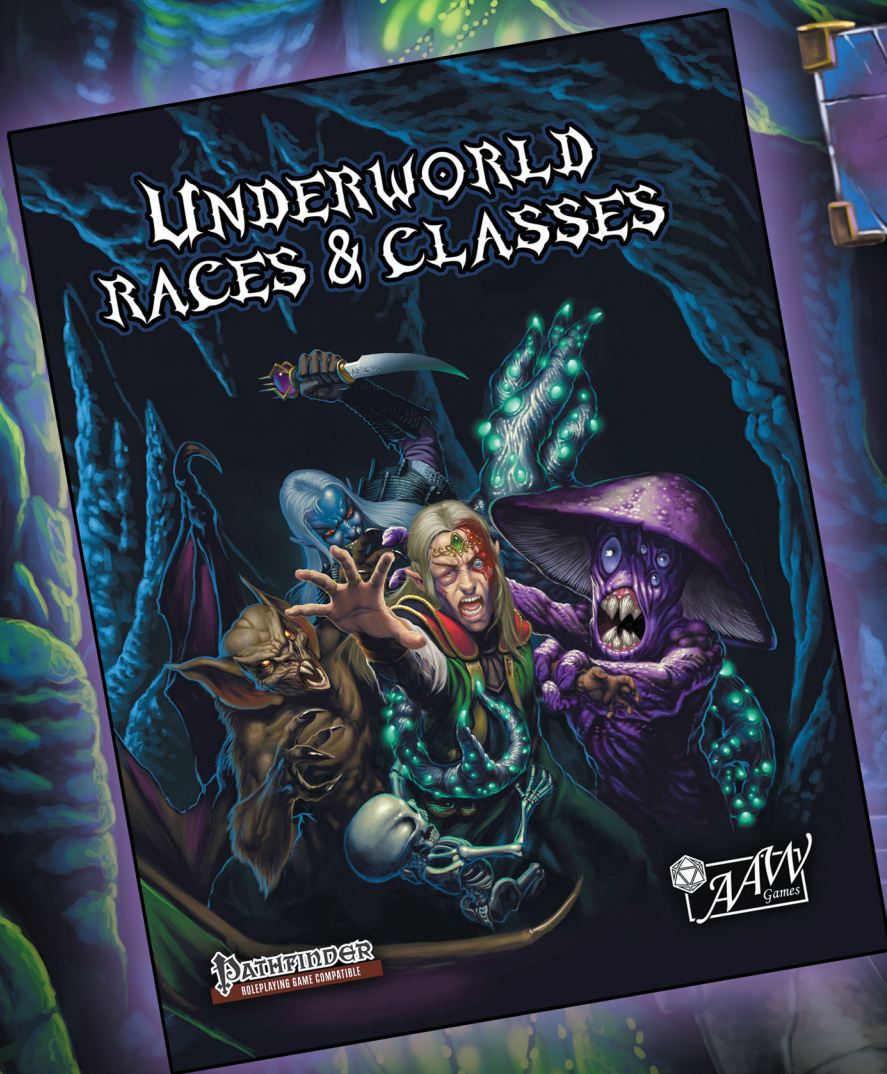
MICHAEL SYRIGOS

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Table of Contents

Hexen Creature Template	8
Acid, Metal, Plasma, and Vacuum <i>by Owen K.C. Stephens</i>	
10 Sailors with Personalities	13
A few remarkable crew <i>by Creighton Broadhurst</i>	
Elements Spell Showcase	16
Something hot, something cold <i>by David J. Paul</i>	
Heavy Metal Heroes	20
Metal options for shaman and incarnates <i>by Margherita Tramontano</i>	
Sail and Sky, Ember and Earth	23
Swashbucklers of the Plains <i>by Sasha Hall</i>	
Border Elements and Elementals	27
Ice, Magma, Mud, and Soot <i>by Mike Welham</i>	

Departments

Editorial	6
The Art of Rite Publishing	32
Reviews	38
On A Roll	47
The secret life of dice	
OGL	50

PATHWAYS #73

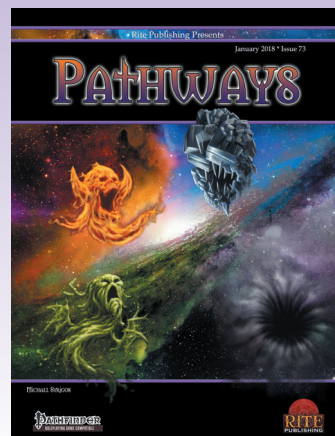
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Editorial

by Dave Paul

Pathways magazine continues to evolve. In addition to the usual Pathfinder-aimed content, whether tethered to Paizo directly or through third-party publishers, we're going to skim into Pathfinder-related content a little bit more than we sometimes have. (Admittedly, when 5e came out I wrote an editorial about the evolution of RPGs writ large, and that's not really getting out toes wet in the not-exactly-Pathfinder-content world.) We'll be offering some thoughts, material, voices and enjoyment in something we on the *Pathways* team have been calling "starways." We're not quite ready for something like a separate *Starways* magazine (though who knows what the future may hold—the future is a funny thing), we are ready for a *starways* section of *Pathways* magazine. So please do keep an eye out for that and please do share what you find with others whom you know who are interested in Starfinder and Starfinder-related content. I assure you: we're interested in them.

In this month's Border Elemental Wizards article, gifted writer Mike Welham gives us some wonderful alternatives in the elemental wizard vein: ice, magma, mud and soot border elementalists. I've always been a fan of elementalists and way back in the 80s, in the early days of the predecessor to Pathfinder, a fellow GM and I worked out all kinds of house rules for elemental wizard and so this

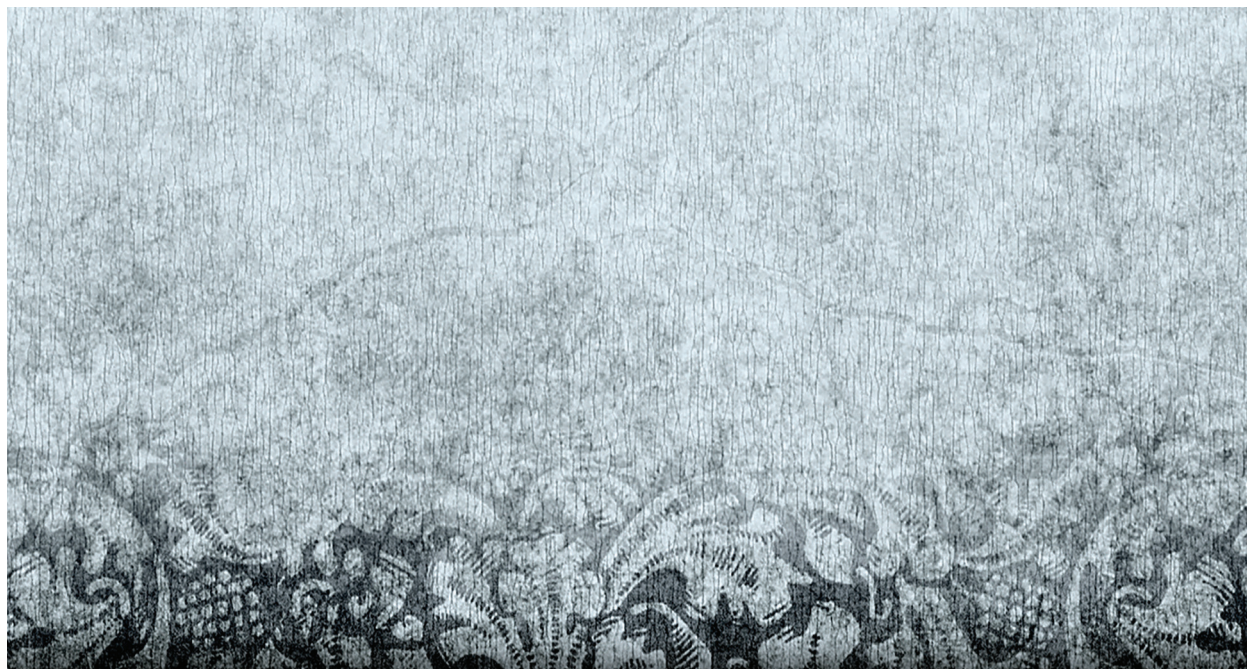
article gave me all kinds of nostalgic pleasure. I hope you enjoy this piece as much as I did and I certainly would love to hear from you if you or your players give any of these a try in your home games.

Also for those who enjoy casters, Margherita Tramontano gives us some shamanic and incarnate fun with her Heavy Metal Heroes article. We've never shied away from publishing content that draws on our cooperative partners (why call them competitors?) in the industry. In this case, we're tapping into Wayward Rogues Publishing and I have to admit I'm going to have to keep adding to my library so I can expand my own game. Keep an eye out for Margherita, she'll be filling pages in future issues of *Pathways*.

Rounding out the articles for this month is Sasha Hall's Sail Sky and Sea, Ember and Earth where those who are more interested in swashbuckling than spell-slinging get a little elemental love too. All the elements get their due, so everyone at the table should find something to enjoy.

As always, if there's something in particular you'd like to see, we encourage you to drop us a line, or get our attention on Facebook or elsewhere. While we always welcome feedback, we're particularly interested in your views as *Pathways* undergoes some changes. Please do keep in touch.

Happy gaming.



Their Books, Your Mods, One Unified Solution



The image features a collage of various Pathfinder roleplaying game books. The books shown include 'The Pirate's Guide to Freeport', 'The Grande Temple of Jing', 'Razor Coast', 'We Be Goblins!', 'The Bestiary', and 'The Rise of the Runelords'. The books are arranged in a fan-like pattern, overlapping each other. In the center of the collage is a circular logo featuring a blue and white globe with two interlocking gold gears. Below the books, the text 'REALM WORKS' is written in a large, stylized blue font on a parchment-like background. The background of the entire image is a dark, atmospheric illustration of a ruined, ancient city with tall, crumbling stone structures and a full moon in the sky.

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Semi-elemental Creature Template

by Owen K.C. Stephens, Illustration by Michael Syrigos

The Elemental Planes are thought of as discrete, infinite places that exist between the Material Plane and the Astral Plane and/or Outer Planes... and much like Newtonian Physics that definition is good enough to handle the vast majority of experimental needs while not being actually accurate.

The Elemental Planes are, while unimaginably vast, not truly infinite. They have outer borders, and those borders are fluid and ever-changing. Similarly while the rules of each Elemental Plane are quite consistent for the vast majority of their existence, there are places (especially near their borders) where their rules become as fluid as the exact shape and scope of their territorial limits. Each plane overlaps with a few others, including those transitive planes that overlap the elemental planes rather than neighboring them—the Astral, Ethereal, Shadow, and Positive and Negative planes. Within the core region of each Elemental Plane, the primary residents can be considered “elementals,” whether that’s the true outsiders

of the elemental subtype, or the creatures closely tied to those pure elements, such as efreeti with their strong ties to the pure element of fire, or the dragons with strong ties to the elements, such as the black dragons and their water affinity.

When non-elemental planar forces mix in with the elemental planes, the result can be semi-elemental creatures, which are infused with both elemental energies and forces drawn from other planar realities. Where the Plane of Shadow overlaps with the Plane of Water, Acid semi-elementals come into existence. Where the Ethereal Plane overlaps with the Plane of Earth, Metal semi-elementals come into existence. Where the Positive Plane blends into the Plane of Fire, Plasma semi-elementals come into existence. Where the Negative Plane blends into the Plane of Air, Vacuum semi-elementals come into existence.

Each of the semi-elemental combinations can be represented by using one of the semi-elemental templates presented below.

Creating a Semi-Elemental Creature

Acid Semi-Elemental

Any creature of the water subtype can become an acid semi-elemental.

CR: +1

Ability Scores: Constitution +4



Caustic Touch (Ex): Anytime the acid semi-elemental would normally deal acid or fire damage, it instead deals caustic damage (treated as half acid and half cold). Additionally, if the acid semi-elemental touches a creature (including with any natural attack, the attack does an additional 1d6 caustic damage, +1d6 caustic damage per 5 CR of the base creature. Any creature or item that touches the acid semi-elemental takes the same damage (including weapons, though hardness applies normally).

Acid Body (Ex): The body of an acid semi-elemental is infused with caustic, smoking fluids. It is both difficult to harm with acids and freezing temperatures, and surprisingly resilient to fiery energies. Any resistance or immunity it has to acid or cold also applies to the other energy type, as well as against fire. If it does not have acid immunity, it gains it. Additionally, it does not take any additional damage from fire, and loses any fire vulnerability.

Toxic Fumes (Ex): If an acid semi-elemental spends a full round in the same location, its caustic body begins to produce a cloud of fumes. These grant it concealment against any attack made by creatures

not adjacent to it, and force any creature that is adjacent to it to make a Fortitude save (DC 10 +1/2 CR + semi-elemental's Constitution bonus) or take damage equal to its caustic touch.

Small Acid Semi-Elemental CR 2

XP 600

N Small outsider (elemental, extraplanar, water)
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+6 natural, +1 size)
hp 17 (2d10+6)

Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +0

Immune elemental traits, acid

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 90 ft.

Melee slam +5 (1d6+3+1d6 caustic)

Special Attacks drench, toxic fumes (d6, DC 14), vortex (DC 14, 10–20 ft.), water mastery

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 17, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13

Feats Power Attack

Skills Acrobatics +4, Escape Artist +4, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +4, Stealth +8, Swim +14

Languages Aquan

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Drench (Ex): The semi-elemental's touch puts out non-magical flames of Large size or smaller. The creature can dispel magical fire it touches as dispel magic (caster level equals elemental's HD).

Toxic Fumes (Ex): See above.

Vortex (Su): An acid semi-elemental can create a whirlpool as a standard action, at will. This ability functions identically to the whirlwind special attack, but can only form underwater and cannot leave the water.

Water Mastery (Ex): An acid semi-elemental gains a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls if both it and its opponent are touching water. If the opponent or the acid semi-elemental is touching the ground, the semi-elemental takes a –4 penalty on attack and damage rolls. These modifiers apply to bull rush and overrun maneuvers, whether the semi-elemental is initiating or resisting these kinds of attacks.

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Plane of Water)

Organization solitary, pair, or gang (3–8)

Treasure none

Metal Semi-Elemental

Any creature of the earth subtype can become a metal semi-elemental.

CR: +1

Ability Scores: Strength +4

Metal Body (Ex): A metal semi-elemental's natural attacks count as cold iron, silver, and adamantite for purposes of bypassing DR and hardness. It gains DR/— equal to 3 + 1/3 the base creature's CR. If it is not a creature of the elemental subtype, it gains elemental immunities. If it is a creature of the elemental subtype, it gains a +2 increase to its natural armor bonus, +1/4 the base creature's CR.

Knockdown (Ex): The first time each round a metal semi-elemental successfully strikes a foe with a natural attack, it gets to make a free trip combat maneuver against that target (regardless of the creature's size) with an additional bonus equal to the base creature's CR. This trip does not provoke an attack of opportunity, and no matter how much it fails by the foe cannot attempt to trip the semi-elemental in return.

Made of Money (Ex): A metal semi-elemental's corpse contains valuable metals worth the same amount as standard treasure for a creature of its CR.

Small Metal Semi-Elemental CR 2

XP 600

N Small outsider (earth, elemental, extraplanar)

Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (–1 Dex, +9 natural, +1 size)

hp 13 (2d10+2)

Fort +4, **Ref** –1, **Will** +3

Immune elemental traits; DR 3/—

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft., earth glide

Melee slam +8 (1d6+6, adamantite, cold iron, silver)

Special Attacks earth mastery, knockdown (+7 total CMB)



STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 8, **Con** 13, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11
Base Atk +2; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 15
Feats Improved Bull Rush^B, Power Attack
Skills Appraise +1, Climb +9, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +1, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +4, Stealth +7
Languages Terran

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Earth Glide (Ex): A burrowing metal semi-elemental can pass through stone, dirt, or almost any other sort of earth except metal as easily as a fish swims through water. If protected against fire damage, it can even glide through lava. Its burrowing leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripple or other sign of its presence. A *move earth* spell cast on an area containing a burrowing metal semi-elemental flings the elemental back 30 feet, stunning the creature for 1 round unless it succeeds on a DC 15 Fortitude save.

Earth Mastery (Ex): A metal semi-elemental gains a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls if both it and its foe are touching the ground. If an opponent is airborne or waterborne, the metal semi-elemental takes a -4 penalty on attack and damage rolls. These modifiers apply to bull rush and overrun maneuvers, whether the semi-elemental is initiating or resisting these kinds of attacks. (These modifiers are not included in the statistics block.)

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Plane of Earth)
Organization solitary, pair, or gang (3–8)
Treasure standard (precious metals only)

Plasma Semi-Elemental

Any creature of the fire subtype can become a plasma semi-elemental.

CR: +1

Ability Scores: Dex +4



Plasma Strike (Ex): Anytime the plasma semi-elemental would normally deal fire damage, it instead deals plasma damage (treated as half fire and half electricity). Additionally, if the attack or effect is one that does bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing with some fire damage added, the plasma damage is increased by +1d6, and an additional +1d6 for every 5 CR of the base creature. If the attack or effect is one that normally does exclusively fire damage, the plasma damage is increased by +1d8, and an additional +1d8 for every 3 CR of the base creature.

Plasma Body (Ex): The body of a plasma semi-elemental is infused with pure focused energy. It is both difficult to harm with positive energies, and surprisingly resilient to negative energies. Any resistance or immunity it has to electricity or fire also applies to the other energy type, as well as against cold. Additionally, it does not take any additional damage from cold, and loses any cold vulnerability.

Burn Through: A plasma semi-elemental gains a 30 foot burrow speed, but can only burrow through materials with a hardness equal to 5 + the base creature's CR or less.

Small Plasma Semi-Elemental CR 2

XP 600

N Small outsider (elemental, extraplanar, fire)
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural, +1 size)
hp 11 (2d10)
Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +0
Immune elemental traits, cold, electricity, fire

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., burrow 30 ft. (burn through)
Melee slam +6 (1d4 plus burn)
Special Attacks burn (1d4+1d6, DC 11)

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 17, **Con** 10, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11
Base Atk +2; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 15
Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative^B, Weapon Finesse^B
Skills Acrobatics +7, Climb +4, Escape Artist +5, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +4
Languages Ignan

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Burn (Ex): A plasma semi-elemental deals electricity and fire damage in addition to damage dealt on a successful hit in melee. Those affected by the burn ability must also succeed on a Reflex save or catch fire,

taking the listed damage for an additional 1d4 rounds at the start of its turn. A burning creature can attempt a new save as a full-round action. Dropping and rolling on the ground grants a +4 bonus on this save. Creatures that hit a burning creature with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take electricity and fire damage as though hit by the burning creature and must make a Reflex save to avoid catching on fire.

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Plane of Fire)

Organization solitary, pair, or gang (3–8)

Treasure none

Vacuum Semi-Elemental

Any creature of the air subtype can become a vacuum semi-elemental.

CR: +1

Ability Scores: Wisdom +4, Charisma +4

Airless Body (Ex): Vacuum semi-elementals need not breathe. Their own space is devoid of any gas or liquid, including dust, smoke, vapors, acids, and potions. Such materials cannot be brought into their space, and thus they are immune to all effects that require a gas or liquid of any kind to convey the effect, including magic effects based on liquids or gases. Their flight is of perfect maneuverability, and if they do not have a fly speed they gain fly 30 ft. This normally means no communication is possible with a vacuum semi-elemental, as words do not reach it, and make it immune to all sonic damage and sound- or word-based effects. Because attacks sometimes fall into a void around a vacuum semi-elemental, its deflection bonus to AC is increased by an amount equal to its Charisma bonus.

Edge of Vacuum (Ex): Any creature adjacent to a vacuum semi-elemental must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + ½ semi-elemental's CR + semi-elemental's Wisdom bonus) each round or have the air drawn out of its lungs. Such creatures take bludgeoning damage equal to 1d6 + the semi-elemental's Wisdom bonus (plus a number of additional d6 equal to 1/3 the base creature's CR), begins to suffocate, and cannot speak or make any noise. An effect creature must move to be not adjacent to the semi-elemental and beyond its reach before the creature's next turn, or it automatically suffers the same effect again (including this being another round of suffocation).

Small Vacuum Semi-Elemental

CR 2

XP 600

N Small outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar)



Init +7; **Senses**

darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural, +2 deflection, +1 size)

hp 13 (2d10+2)

Fort +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities air mastery; Immune elemental traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 100 ft. (perfect)

Melee slam +6 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks edge of vacuum (DC 13, 1d6+2), whirlwind (DC 12, 10-20 ft.)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 4, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 15

Feats Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative^B, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Acrobatics +7, Escape Artist +7, Fly +17, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +6, Stealth +11

Languages Auran

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Air Mastery (Ex): Airborne creatures take a –1 penalty on attack and damage rolls against a void semi-elemental.

ECOLOGY

Environment Plane of Air

Organization solitary, pair, or gang (3–8)

Treasure none

Creature Components

Volume 1



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10 Sailors with Personality

By Creighton Broadhurst; Illustration by Prokhoda and Egonzoli

During a voyage, the vast majority of a ship's crew fade into the background—nothing more than faceless NPCs or window dressing. Usually, an adventure details the ship's captain, but few other crew members.

That's a shame as a ship's complement can be a handy source of role-playing opportunities. Of course, not all the crew will be notable—most are just sailors with nothing to differentiate them from their fellows. A few, though, are remarkable for one reason or another.

Use the table below, to determine the details of notable crew on the PCs' vessel:

- Azthur Kildann** (NG male dwarf fighter 2): Azthur never seems to feel the cold; he rarely wears any more than a ragged pair of cut-off trousers. His chest is impressively furry—secretly he is proud of this as it showcases his “boundless virility”—and sometimes it seems his beard and chest hair are one and the same. An oddity for a dwarf, Azthur loves the sea. He is a skilled carpenter.
- Agler** (LN male human fighter 1): Agler has a pet mongrel dog, “hilariously” called Dogon. They are devoted to one another and the dog goes everywhere (except into the rigging) with his master. The rest of the crew also love Dogon, who has grown fat on their titbits. Agler himself is a cheery, happy-go-lucky fellow. He does not realise that Dogon's name is blasphemy to the mad cultists of Dagon, Shadow in the Sea. Even more worryingly, one of the newly recruited crew, Sangasu, worships that fell power and is plotting to hurl the dog overboard as a sacrifice once he can get the accursed beast alone.
- Sangasu Girsu** (CE male human fighter 1/rogue 2): A devotee of Dagon, Sangasu has come aboard specifically to sacrifice Dogon to his insane master. A competent sailor, he has yet to fit in with the crew—who find his humour off-putting. Perceptive PCs might notice Sangasu's appearance is a little strange—essentially hairless he is extremely sensitive to bright light. He is happiest in the bilges, pumping out the water. In a shadowy corner of the bilge, he has set up a small shrine to his demonic master. If confronted with proof of his vile practises he jumps into the sea, confident his master will save him.
- Meania Apisala** (NG female human fighter 1): Meania loves the sea. Enraptured by its beauty she composes long poems and songs about life on the ocean waves. She has a beautiful singing voice, but her compositions are not as polished as she would like. If the party includes a bard, she badgers him or her for songwriting tips.
- Egino Chali** (NG middle-aged male human fighter 1): Beset with a seemingly permanent squint, Egino looks to be in constant pain. Almost blind, he tries to hide his impairment from the rest of the crew, although they all well-know his inability to see anything beyond arm's length. A friendly chap, Egino believes he is too old to be scampering about the rigging anymore and wants to become first mate.
- Heva Dol** (N female human fighter 1): Strong, but slightly plump, Heva is a skilled sailor and navigator. Fascinated by the stars she often volunteers for the night watch (which makes her popular with the rest of the crew). Diligent in her duties, at night she both keeps watch and draws detailed sketches of the night sky. She





is a skilled artist and has a book filled with her drawings. Recently, a slight change in one of the constellations has intrigued (and worried) her.

7. **Hardrad Omer** (LN old male human expert 2): Hardrad is far too old to be a sailor. He's been at sea man and boy and doesn't know any other life. He clings to his position on-board due to his prodigious skill in splicing ropes, mending sails and tying all manner of knots. He's found on deck puttering through his day's tasks and never ventures into the rigging. Hardrad is virtually bald and his skin is weatherworn and wrinkled.

8. **Ima Ubi** (CN female human rogue 1): Obsessed with tales of the sea and the many creatures lurking in its depth, Ima is superstitious and often on edge. She permanently worries some vast underwater creature will emerge to drag the ship down to a watery grave. Recently, she's been dreaming dark dreams of glistening, coiled tentacles stirring in the depths. Ima is incredibly impressionable and has been subliminally affected by Sangasu's (see #3) prayers to Dagon.
9. **Gislin Taetel** (CN male human rogue 2): Rail thin, Gislin has a prodigious appetite and can often be found trying to wrangle extra food from the galley. While not lurking below decks, he does as little work as possible and has a reputation among the crew as a work-shy skiver. When the ship reaches port, the captain plans to dismiss him.
10. **Myvainir Shakirae** (CG male elf fighter 2/wizard 1): A rarity among the crew, Myvainir fell in love with the sea when he saw it for the first time a decade ago. Since then, he's worked on a variety of ships. His goal is to sail every sea and ocean and to explore as much of the world as possible. Like many of his kind, he has almost unending patience and plans to spend the next 50-100 years doing just that. If the party are planning future voyages to far-off places he might well join them!


This article appears in 20 Things #22: Ocean Voyage which is a System Neutral release from Raging Swan Press.

Are you a busy GM? Does session prep take too long? Do you never have time to work on the cool little details that can bring your session to life? Well fear not! That's where the 20 Things line comes in.

Compiled from the free 20 Things posts available at Raging Swan's website, this short, focused compilation gives you, the time-crunched GM, the tools to effortlessly add verisimilitude and detail to your adventure. Use the material herein either before or during play and bask in your players' adulation.

This instalment provides five tables designed to help you to flesh out and bring to life an ocean or sea voyage.

Challenge your PCs Like Never Before!

An illustration of two characters in a dark, cavernous setting. On the left, a character with red hair and a green hat holds a spear. On the right, a character with blue hair and a brown tunic holds a sword. The background features large, cracked stone spheres and skeletal remains.

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Spells Showcase: Elements!

By Dave Paul; Illustration by Shirokuro and Modexho001

Arianna noted with some amusement the dancing shadows as the campfire flickered. Once again, she'd be sleeping out of doors, in the cold, but under some of the world's most beautiful night skies. Mid-spring was one of her favorite times to travel, the snows had receded except in the higher elevations, many plants, insects and animals had returned to some kind of normal, post-hibernal schedule, and generally the intelligent creatures of the world were still too busy setting things in order for the year to cause too much mayhem. "I realize that what others might call your impetuosity is really something akin to a honed instinct and ability to adapt with amazing speed Chandus," she said as she stirred the embers with a long oaken stick. She continued talking, still without looking up at anyone, "but John's cautions shouldn't be dismissed. I realize you're inclined to accept his advice—and you should, don't get me wrong—but even so, what he's offering is no small thing. Your soul will be affected."

Tacton leaned farther back, enjoying the night air and noted the seriousness on John's face as he spoke. "She's right Chandus. I do offer this knowing full well that you accept my connection to the elder fire gods, and I know your own devotion to them and so I have no fear either in offering this to you or in your accepting it from me. But please only consent after having giving it some thought."

Chandus wished for Palin's advice on this matter, but he was busy walking through the dark woods nearby, keeping an eye out for trouble. "I understand your concerns, and I appreciate them," Chandus replied. "But I don't see any downside. Sure, part of me will be nestled within the roots of these very wild-growing grasses, I understand that. And perhaps Palin with his connections to nature could counsel me better on that than any of you. However, even with the minor disadvantages of leaving some part of myself behind in this earth, I will be unable to be killed by fire. For as honorable a thing as that might otherwise be, blessed be the fire gods whose names I will not utter, I would really prefer to survive the summer and I know what we have planned."

Tacton smiled impishly as he taunted, "If only there were a way to render you to be unkillable by stupidity."

Chandus rolled his eyes and retorted, "My own or yours?"

Tacton's smile disappeared, but only for a moment before it got much larger.

"Nothing ever changes," Arianna muttered just loudly enough for everyone to hear, "I'm going to bed."

~~

You'll find *withstand the fire* in [101 Plains Spells](#). The aim of the spell was to offer GMs and players an interesting new things to do with magic, incorporating elements of nature and necromancy, and to also offer something more for those who've begun using the ritualistic and communalistic spells I've added to several of my books. Even without those components, GMs and players can tweak the spell just a little and allow it into more traditional settings and I think they can get just as much mysterious fun out of it. I've always liked spells that felt *magical* and not just like some feature of a let's-count-hit-points exercise. And, if there are PCs or NPCs in your game who are all about the mysterious powers of fire, or the living earth, this gives you some opportunities to explore that otherwise are easy to overlook. (What happens during those 16 or so hours when the body which had been consumed by fire is restored? Does the individual who seems to others to have been raised from the dead have experiences during that time? What impact does that have on that individual's future interactions?)

Withstand the Fire

School: Necromancy; **Level:** Alchemist 5, Cleric/Oracle 5, Druid 5, Inquisitor 5, Magus 5, Ranger 4, Shaman 5, Sorcerer/Wizard 5, Witch 5

Casting Time: 8 hours

Components: V, S, DF

Range: Personal; see text

Target: You; see text

Duration: Permanent until discharged (D)

Casting *withstand the fire* is an arduous ordeal requiring 8 hours of uninterrupted casting. You may only benefit from the spell if you have a soul and if the entire casting time takes place while you remain within contiguous grasslands. When you finish casting the spell, some of your soul rests deep within the underground roots of the grasses around you. Until the spell is discharged, you gain 1 negative level which cannot be removed except

by dismissing this spell. (Any spell or effect which would remove that negative level automatically fails, though you may choose to dismiss this spell instead and accept whatever benefits you would otherwise get from that other spell or effect.)

Withstand the fire grants you no protection or immunity from damage caused by fire (though it does not impede such benefits if you have them from some other means). Instead, while the spell is in effect, you cannot be killed by fire so long as your essence remains tied to the grasslands into which you've infused your spirit. If your body is killed by fire, your spirit returns to the deep roots of the grasslands where you cast the spell and begins reincorporating your form. Because a portion of your soul had been sequestered in this way, the reincorporation of your body does not impose the kinds of penalties or limitations involved with other spells such as *raise dead*. You raise, restored to the same general health condition you had when you cast this spell (though modified by however many years may have passed) in a safe space anywhere within the contiguous space of the grasslands where you cast the spell. (Subject to GM adjudication.) This occurs 8 + 2d8 hours after your body had been otherwise killed by fire.

Withstand the fire ends if you vacate the plane where you had cast the spell; this removes the negative level. If you engage in dimensional travel, such as *teleport* or *dimension door*, if you move into an extradimensional space such as a *rope trick*, or if you enter an adjacent plane such as the Shadow Plane, your tie to the rest of your soul is not severed and *withstand the fire* remains intact. However, if you are moved more than one plane away (for example, you travel to the Hells), or take up residence in an adjacent plane, then *withstand the fire* ends.

If you are a cleric with the plant or fire domain, a druid, an oracle with the flame, life or nature mystery, a ranger with plains as a favored terrain, a shaman with the flame, life or nature spirit, or a witch with the endurance patron, then you may instead target a fellow clan member (see *plains clan member*) who must remain within 30 feet of you throughout the casting time and must also remain within the contiguous grasslands region. When the casting time is complete, the clan member's soul is sequestered and that person gains the benefits of the spell and the negative level (and is subject to the same limitations regarding planar travel).

~~~

*Mountain winds* may appear in forthcoming Rite Publishing product (sorry...not sorry for the tease). Unlike the previous spell, this one was designed to be able to be dropped into just about any Pathfinder

game. It's not terribly fancy: in some respects, it's just a cone that causes cold damage (I know, I know, *cone of cold's* little sibling). But in fact it's designed to be a lot more fun.





## Mountain Winds

**School:** Evocation [air, cold]; **Level:** Magus 4, Shaman 5, Sorcerer/Wizard 4, Witch 5

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Components:** V, S, M (a bit of rock once exposed to powerful mountain winds)

**Range:** 60 ft.

**Effect:** Cone-shaped burst

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** Reflex half and see text; **Spell**

**Resistance:** Yes

*Mountain winds* produces an incredibly powerful quick burst of frigid wind accompanied by a brief howling sound. Creatures in the area suffer 1d6/level points of nonlethal cold damage from the exposure (maximum 10d6) and suffers a -2 to all hearing-based Perception checks for 1 minute; a successful Reflex save halves the damage (objects are unaffected) and reduces the duration of the Perception check penalty to 1d4 rounds. Creatures suffering any nonlethal cold damage from this wind are fatigued until they recover from this nonlethal damage.

Medium and smaller creatures are also knocked prone and pushed 1d4 x 10 feet, taking 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per 10 feet pushed. Medium and smaller flying creatures are blown 2d6 x 10 feet and take 2d6 points of nonlethal damage per 10 feet blown back. Medium and smaller creatures succeeding on a Strength check (DC 10 + 1/2 your caster level + your ability score modifier) are not knocked prone; those succeeding on a Fly check (DC 20 + 1/2 your caster level + your ability score modifier) are not blown back. Creatures succeeding on a Reflex save take half damage from the cold wind and gain a +5 on their respective Strength or Fly checks to prevent being knocked prone or blown back. Any nonlethal damage sustained from being pushed or blown back prolongs the fatigue sustained from the cold wind.

Unsecured objects subject to being pushed about by high winds are likely to be tossed aside, though

extremely heavy or sturdy objects will be unmoved or undamaged. If *mountain winds* causes sufficiently many objects to be moved (per GM adjudication), creatures in the area suffer 2d6 bludgeoning damage (unless the objects would be more likely to cause piercing or slashing damage). If there is sufficient debris in the area, the winds cause a momentary cloud, obscuring vision as if *fog cloud* were active in the area for 1 round.

As the damage is described as “nonlethal cold damage” it’s a bit rascally with respect to protections and resistance. A spell like *endure elements* protects someone from being in a cold environment, but not from cold damage (even if it is nonlethal damage). In particular, the spell says of the target: “It can exist comfortably in conditions between -50 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit (-45 and 60 degrees Celsius) without having to make Fortitude saves.” So the target doesn’t have to make the kinds of Fortitude saves normally associated with exposure to extreme heat or cold. But, the *mountain winds* spell produces a cold much more severe than what *endure elements* is designed for (think something akin to much colder than -100° F or -73° C). One might think that *resist energy* could work, but it is designed to protect against lethal damage caused by energies and so it’s not unreasonable to rule that it doesn’t prevent the nonlethal cold damage. (A reasonable GM might say that once someone had taken sufficient nonlethal damage so that further effects from the spell were dealing lethal damage, resist cold would then apply to any cold damage caused by the spell.)

So imagine their surprise when the party of adventurers is geared up to overcome the environmental dangers and has potions of resistance at the ready, when a monstrous sorcerer of some kind emerges from some cave in a snow- and rock-covered mountain, and blasts the party with this extreme cold. PCs are freezing, tumbling down the mountainside, temporarily blinded by the whirling snow, perhaps being pelted from some loose, small rocks lifted by the wind, etc. Who knows, maybe it’s a white dragon toying with them....







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## Heavy Metal Heroes

By Margherita Tramontano

The beloved of the forge—not just dwarves, but all manner of warriors and priests inspired by metal, and those with enviable talents with weapons and steel—are everywhere. There is already a metal subdomain and a metal oracle mystery, so it seems right to expand to other classes the joys of fighting as heavy metal heroes, warriors and spellcasters. After all, the spirits can speak from the fires of a smith's laboratory as well as from the whispers of a forest's trees.

### Metal Spirit (Shaman)

*A shaman who chooses the metal spirit has a golden-steel glint in her hair and eyes and a metallic quality in her voice. The clang of swords can be heard around her when she calls upon her spirit powers.*

**Spirit Magic Spells:** *lead blades* (2nd), *heat metal* (4th), *keen edge* (6th), *versatile weapon* (8th), *major creation* (metal items only) (10th), *wall of iron* (12th), *statue* (metal statue instead of stone) (14th), *repel metal or stone* (16th), *iron body* (18th).

**Hexes:** A shaman who chooses the metal spirit can select from the following hexes.

**Iron Ward (Su):** The shaman touches a willing creature (including herself) and grants an iron ward. The target is encircled by a number of tiny blades and rocks of ore that grant it DR 3/— against the next attack (as if the creature were wearing a heavy armor made of adamantine). Each subsequent time the target is attacked, the damage resistance reduces by 1 (to 2/— for the second time she's attacked and 1/— for the third). The ward fades after the DR 1/— reduces an attack's damage or after 24 hours, whichever comes first. At 8th level, the ward's starting DR increases to 4/—. At 16th level, it increases to 5/—. A creature affected by this hex cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours.

**Iron Weapon (Su):** The shaman can create a melee simple or martial weapon that lasts for 1 minute for every shaman level she possesses. This weapon is appropriate for the shaman's size and entirely made of metal (even if it would normally include non-metal parts, such as a spear's shaft) but functions as if it were a normal weapon of its type. The shaman is considered proficient

with this weapon. The weapon disappears after 1 round if it leaves the shaman's grasp. At 3rd level, the blade is made of cold iron. At 7th level, 15th level, and 19th level, the blade gains a cumulative +1 enhancement bonus. At 11th level, the blade is made of adamantine. The shaman can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

**Metal Curse (Su):** The shaman causes a creature within 30 feet to become slightly magnetic until the end of the shaman's next turn. Whenever the creature is attacked with a melee or ranged weapon constructed primarily of metal, it takes a –2 penalty to AC. At 8th and 16th levels, the penalty increases by –2 and the duration extends by 1 round. Once affected, the creature cannot be the target of this hex again for 24 hours.

**Shape Metal (Su):** The shaman is able to create metal items of almost any shape. This ability functions like *stone shape*, but targeting only metal, not stone. The shaman can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

**Steel Scarf (Su):** As a swift action, the shaman can harden a scarf, sleeve, cloak, or other piece of her clothing into something as hard as steel that stretches out to be up to 30 feet long. She can then strike outward with it as if it were a weapon making a melee attack. For the purpose of this ability, the shaman is proficient with this weapon. She can use the weapon to perform combat maneuvers. The shaman can make a melee attack roll against a creature within 30 feet, and she may use Weapon Finesse with this attack. If the shaman hits, the weapon deals 1d8 points of slashing damage +1 point for every two shaman levels she possesses. After this attack, the clothing returns to its normal length and hardness. The shaman does not threaten an area with this weapon and cannot use it to make attacks of opportunity. She can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

**Spirit Animal:** The shaman's spirit animal has hair or skin that glitters like gold or steel, and razor-sharp teeth and claws. It gains the rend universal monster ability.



**Spirit Ability:** A shaman who chooses the metal spirit as her spirit or wandering spirit gains the following ability.

*Armor Mastery (Ex):* The shaman becomes more maneuverable while wearing armor. She can move at her normal speed in medium armor that is made of metal. This does not grant proficiency in armor. At 5th level, whenever the shaman is wearing metal armor, she reduces the armor check penalty by 1 (to a minimum of 0) and increases the maximum Dexterity bonus allowed by her armor by 1. At 10th level, and again at 15th level, these bonuses increase by 1.

**Greater Spirit Ability:** A shaman who chooses the metal spirit as her spirit or wandering spirit gains the following ability upon having access to the greater version of that spirit.

*Metal Transmutation (Su):* The shaman gains a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves. In addition, she can confer the properties of special metals to her armaments. This works as *heart of the metal*, but can be used on armor too. The shaman can use this ability three times per day, but she must wait 1d4 rounds between each use.

**True Spirit Ability:** A shaman who chooses the metal spirit as her spirit or wandering spirit gains the following ability upon having access to the true version of that spirit.

*Iron Skin (Sp):* Twice per day, the shaman's skin hardens and takes on the appearance of iron, granting her DR 10/adamantine. This ability functions as *stoneskin*, using the shaman's level as the caster level, except it only affects her.

**Manifestation:** Upon reaching 20th level, the shaman becomes a master of iron and steel. She gains the benefits of Weapon Focus, Greater Weapon Focus, and Improved Critical with any one metal weapon with which she is proficient. The shaman's armor is like a second skin to her—while wearing metal armor with which she is proficient, the armor's maximum Dexterity bonus increases by +5 and she suffers no armor check penalty. In addition, any metal the shaman creates with her magic (such as *wall of iron*) has its hardness increased by +10.

## Incarnate Metal Mystery

The incarnate is a class from Wayward Rogues Publishing's *Hybrid Classes Vol. 2: Horror Heroes*.

She's an oracular version of the bloodrager, gaining a curse and revelation powers as she increases in level. It is a very interesting and fun class to play, which deserves a bit of expansion. In the class description the main mysteries from the *APG* are converted for the incarnate; here we add a new one.

**Class Skills:** An incarnate with the metal mystery adds Appraise, Bluff, Disable Device, and Intimidate to her list of class skills.

**Bonus Spells:** *lead blades* (7th), *heat metal* (10th), *keen edge* (13th), *versatile weapon* (16th).

**Revelations:** During soulrage an incarnate with the metal mystery becomes an incarnation of the forge.

*Ironclad Warrior (Ex):* At 1st level, you become proficient with heavy armor and tower shields while raging.

*Armor Master (Ex):* At 4th level, you gain the Swift Iron Style feat as a bonus feat. You don't need to meet the feat's prerequisites.

*Rusting Grasp (Sp):* At 8th level, once per soulrage as a standard action, you can perform a melee touch attack that rusts iron, as the *rusting grasp* spell.

*Dance of the Blades (Ex):* At 12th level, while raging, your base speed increases by 10 feet and you gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls with a metal weapon in any round in which you move at least 10 feet. This bonus increases by +1 at 16th and again at 20th level. As a move action, if wielding a metal weapon, you can maneuver your weapon to create a shield of whirling steel around yourself until the start of your next turn; non-incorporeal melee and ranged attacks against you have a 20% miss chance while the shield is active.

*Body of Steel (Sp):* At 16th level, as a standard action you can harden your body when you rage, as *iron body*.

**Apotheosis:** Upon reaching 20th level, you become a master of iron and steel. You gain the benefits of Weapon Focus, Greater Weapon Focus, and Improved Critical with any one metal weapon with which you are proficient. Your armor is like a second skin to you—while wearing metal armor with which you are proficient, the armor's maximum Dexterity bonus increases by +5 and you suffer no armor check penalty. In addition, any metal you create with your magic (such as *wall of iron*) has its hardness increased by +10.



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## Sail and Sky, Ember and Earth

By Sasha Hall

Many believe that the swashbuckler was founded of duels and pirate ships, of qualities inherent to the Material Plane. However, recent research has revealed that there are many similar arts on different planes, including distinct styles of swashbuckling native to the elemental planes.

### Torpedo Privateer

On the plane of water, the art of swashbuckling is alive and well, born not of elegant pomp but of daring maneuverability in the depths. These torpedo privateers ply their trade by swimming and charging through the waters, harpoon in hand, to target the various leviathans and raiders of the endless blue.

**Harpoon Finesse (Ex):** At 1st level, the torpedo privateer gains Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Harpoon) as a bonus feat, and can use her Dexterity to determine her attack bonus with harpoons, as if using the Weapon Finesse feat, even though it isn't a light weapon. She can wield a harpoon in one hand without penalty, and it counts as a light or one-handed piercing weapon for the purposes of her swashbuckler class features.

This replaces swashbuckler finesse and the swashbuckler's proficiency with martial weapons.

**Privateer Deeds:** The torpedo privateer replaces four deeds with new ones.

*Depth Charge (Ex):* At 1st level, so long as the torpedo privateer has at least 1 panache, she can charge while underwater without having to make Swim checks. She can spend 1 panache when charging to gain an additional +2 to attack and take no penalty to AC (to a total of +4 attack) from the charge.

This replaces opportune parry and riposte.

*Rebalance (Ex):* At 3rd level, the torpedo privateer can spend 1 panache as a swift action while off-balance to stop being off-balance without needing to make a Swim check.

This replaces kip-up.

*Privateer's Grace (Ex):* At 7th level, so long as the torpedo privateer has at least 1 panache, she can make Swim checks instead of Acrobatics checks to move through threatened spaces, but must still move at half speed.

This replaces swashbuckler's grace.

*Blood in the Water (Ex):* At 11th level, the torpedo privateer increases the critical threat range and critical multiplier of harpoons by 1 against creatures suffering from bleed damage.

This replaces subtle blade.

**Deep Dive (Ex):** At 3rd level, the torpedo privateer gains a swim speed equal to half her base land speed. This increases to her full land speed at 7th level.

This replaces the instances of nimble gained at 3rd level and 7th level.

**Torpedo Training (Ex):** At 5th level, the torpedo privateer gains a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls with harpoons, and gains the Improved Grapple feat when wielding one, even if she doesn't meet the prerequisites. Additionally, she can make up to one 90-degree or two 45-degree turns while charging with a harpoon.

The bonus to attack and damage rolls increases by +1 for every 4 levels beyond 5th (to a maximum of +4 at 17th level).

This replaces swashbuckler weapon training.

**Privateer Mastery (Ex):** At 20th level, whenever the torpedo privateer hits with a harpoon, she can automatically succeed at a grapple check with it as a free action.

This replaces swashbuckler weapon mastery.

### Candelabrist

A noble duelist of the plane of fire, imitating the many branches of a candelabra by matching a rapier with a flamberge dagger, deflecting blows to strike to the heart in both battles of blade and wit. These candelabrists are experts of the duel and of the social intrigue of the court.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The candelabrist is proficient with all simple weapons, with rapiers, and with light armor, but not with bucklers. This replaces her normal weapon and armor proficiencies.

**Candelabra Finesse (Ex):** At 1st level, the candelabrist gains Two-Weapon Fighting as a bonus feat, and whenever she wields a rapier in her main hand and a dagger in her off hand, she can use her Dexterity modifier to determine her bonus to attack rolls with said weapons, as if using Weapon



Finesse. She need not attack with both weapons to gain this benefit, but she must wield them at the same time.

Any class features that require her to be using a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon instead function whenever she wields a rapier in her main hand and a dagger in her off hand.

This counts as having Weapon Finesse and Combat Expertise for the purposes of prerequisites.

This replaces swashbuckler's finesse.

**Candelabrist Deeds:** The candelabrist swaps out two deeds with new ones.

*To The Pain (Ex):* At 1st level, the candelabrist can spend one point of panache as a swift action to declare a meager challenge against a foe within 30 feet that can see, hear, and understand her. She gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls with rapiers and daggers against that target which lasts until that foe deals damage to her. This bonus increases by +1 at 4th level and every three levels thereafter (to a maximum of +7 at 19th level), and at 7th level, 13th level, and 19th level, she can be damaged by that foe once more before losing this bonus (to a maximum of being damaged four times before losing it at 19th level).

This replaces opportune parry and riposte.

*Flamberged Rend (Ex):* At 3rd level, when the candelabrist hits with an attack with a rapier and an attack with a dagger against the same target in a single turn, as a swift action she can spend one point of panache to deal extra damage equal to her level against the target. This counts as slashing damage and if either weapon used is magical, it counts as magical. If either weapon used is made of a special material, it counts as that special material (and can therefore count as two materials if each weapon is made of a different special material). When she does this, she also increases the shield bonus she gains from her dual defense class feature by +1.

This replaces precise strike.

**Courtly Life (Ex):** At 2nd level, the candelabrist can, three times per day, add her Charisma bonus a second time to any Charisma-based skill check made outside of combat. She must do this before rolling. She can do this once more per day at 6th level and every four levels thereafter (to a maximum of 7 times per day at 18th level).

This replaces charmed life, but counts as it for the purposes of prerequisites.

**Dual Defense (Ex):** At 3rd level, the candelabrist gains a +1 shield bonus to AC whenever she has a rapier in her main hand and a dagger in her off hand. Her dagger counts as a buckler, and therefore as both a weapon and a shield, for the purposes of prerequisites. She cannot enhance her dagger as if it were a shield, but if her dagger has an enhancement bonus, she adds it to this shield bonus.

This shield bonus increases by +1 at 11th level and again at 19th level.

This replaces the instances of nimble gained at 3rd level, 11th level, and 19th level.

**Candelabrist Weapon Training (Ex):** At 5th level, the candelabrist gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls with rapiers and daggers. Whenever she hits an enemy with a rapier and a dagger on the same turn, she adds this bonus as a Dodge bonus to AC for one round. This bonus increases by +1 at 9th level and every four levels thereafter (to a maximum of +4 at 17th level).

This replaces swashbuckler weapon training.

## Pick Militant

A hardened soldier from the plane of earth, these dour warriors practice the wisdom of stone instead of attacking with undue flair. Their skill with a mining pick is unmatched.

**Dour Panache (Ex):** The pick militant uses her Wisdom in place of her Charisma for her panache, and for all swashbuckler deeds that use Wisdom.

This alters panache and deeds.

**Militant Deeds:** The pick militant replaces three deeds with new ones.

*Thick Skull (Ex):* At 1st level, as an immediate action, the pick militant can spend 1 panache to add her Constitution bonus (minimum +1) to a Will save she is attempting, or her Wisdom bonus to a Fortitude save she is attempting.

This replaces dodging panache.

*Sturdy Mindset (Ex):* At 11th level, so long as the pick militant has at least 1 panache, whenever she succeeds at a Fortitude or Will save that has a partial effect on a successful save, she instead suffers no effect. She also counts every successful saving throw against poison and disease as two successes.

**Pick Finesse (Ex):** At 1st level, the pick militant can use her Dexterity in place of her Strength to determine her attack bonus with light picks and



heavy picks, and can use her Wisdom in place of her Intelligence for the prerequisites of combat feats.

This replaces swashbuckler weapon finesse.

**Sturdy Life (Ex):** At 2nd level, the pick militant can, up to three times per day, add her Wisdom modifier as an untyped bonus to her CMD against a single combat maneuver. She must choose to do so before the result of the combat maneuver roll is announced. She can do this one additional time per day at 6th level and every four levels thereafter (to a maximum of seven times per day at 18th level).

This replaces charmed life.

**Tough Skin (Ex):** At 3rd level, the pick militant gains a +1 natural armor bonus to AC. This increases by +1 at 7th level and every four levels thereafter (to a maximum of +5 at 19th level).

This replaces nimble.

**Militant Training (Ex):** At 5th level, the pick militant gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage with light picks and heavy picks, and gains the benefits of Improved Sunder when using one. This bonus increases by +1 at 9th level and every four levels thereafter (to a maximum of +4 at 17th level).

This replaces swashbuckler weapon training.

**Militant Weapon Mastery (Ex):** At 20th level, whenever the pick militant hits with a light pick or heavy pick, she can choose to make a sunder check against an item wielded or worn by the creature as a free action, with an additional +10 bonus to her CMB for the check.

This replaces swashbuckler weapon mastery.

## Skybar Darter

A seedy gambler from the ports and palaces of the plane of air, the skybar darter is a master of the punch and masterful when it comes to both darting across the room and throwing darts at foes.

**Skybar Acumen (Ex):** At 1st level, the skybar darter gains the Improved Unarmed Strike class feature as an unchained monk of her level, and can use her Dexterity bonus for attack rolls with unarmed strikes. Unarmed strikes and ranged attacks made with darts count as light or one-handed piercing melee weapons for the purposes of swashbuckler class features.

This counts as having Weapon Finesse for the purposes of prerequisites.

This replaces swashbuckler finesse.

**Darting Deeds:** The skybar darter replaces three deeds with new ones.

*Darting-Do (Ex):* At 1st level, the skybar darter can spend 1 panache as a swift action to roll 1d6 and multiply the result by 5. Her land speed increases by this amount until the end of her turn.

This replaces derring-do.

*Opportune Hurl (Ex):* At 1st level, so long as the skybar darter has at least 1 panache and has a dart in her hand, she threatens out to her natural reach with darts. Further, she can spend 1 panache as a swift action to designate one creature she can see. She treats her natural reach as 10 feet greater for the purposes of making attacks of opportunity with darts against that creature until the start of her next turn.

This replaces opportune parry and riposte.

*Lead In (Ex):* At 3rd level, the skybar darter can spend 1 panache as a full-round action to make a single ranged attack with a dart against a creature that is up to her base land speed away, and then move in a straight line to become adjacent to that creature and make an unarmed strike against them. The skybar darter takes a -2 penalty to both attacks made as part of this deed.

This replaces menacing swordplay.

**Up the Ante (Ex):** At 2nd level, the skybar darter can, up to three times per day before making a saving throw, choose to roll twice and take the higher result. If the higher roll still fails, she takes a -2 penalty to all saving throws for one minute.

This replaces charmed life.

**Mobile Reflexes (Ex):** At 3rd level, in any round that the skybar darter has moved at least 10 feet, she gains a +1 dodge bonus to AC and Reflex saves. This increases by +1 at 7th level and every four levels thereafter.

This replaces nimble.

**Darter Weapon Training (Ex):** At 5th level, the skybar darter can use her unarmed damage in place of the normal damage of darts that she throws.

At 9th level, she gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage with unarmed strikes and darts. At 13th level, and again at 17th level, this bonus increases by +1. This bonus increases by +1 whenever she moves at least 10 feet in a given round.

This replaces swashbuckler weapon training.

**Darter Weapon Mastery (Ex):** At 20th level, the skybar darter can make an unarmed strike and a ranged attack with a dart (in either order) as a single standard action.

This replaces swashbuckler weapon mastery.





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## Border Elements and Elementals

By Mike Welham

*With the emergence of border elementals, creatures mixing both aspects of their parent elements, it was only a matter of time before spellcasters decided to emulate them just as others emulate the single-element relatives. It's all fine and good if you enjoy playing in mud or lava, but I'd prefer to keep my hands clean and not melted off, thank you. I admit that while I was researching these border elementals, I had the singular joy of discovering a previously unknown border elemental known as the soot elemental, which straddles the line between the Planes of Air and Fire.*

—Melnor, Sage (second class) of Questhaven

### Border Elemental Wizards

An elemental wizard might become inspired by bordering elemental planes and attempt to emulate the power of ice (bordering air and water), magma (bordering earth and fire), mud (bordering earth and water), and soot (bordering air and fire) elementals. A border elemental wizard's bonus spell slot can come from either of the bordering elemental's spell lists. However, border elementalists must take the remaining elements as his opposition schools, requiring two slots to prepare a spell from the opposition schools as normal.

#### Ice School

The ice elemental taps into the combination of air and water, which produces ice, a more solid substance than both its constituent elements. The semi-solid material provides him with protection and the ability to slice open his opponents.

*Ice Lattice (Su):* You gain a +1 natural armor bonus. This bonus increases by +1 for every five wizard levels you possess. If you take fire damage equal to twice your caster level, you lose this armor bonus for 1 minute. You also gain resistance 2 to cold. At 10th level, this resistance increases to 5, and at 20th level, this resistance increases to 30. Additionally, you can move across icy surfaces without penalty. At 10th level, you can climb icy surfaces as if using *spider climb*. Finally, at 5th level, you gain the additional ability to see in snowy and icy conditions without penalty.

*Icicle Spray (Su):* As a standard action, you can unleash a barrage of icicles in a 15-foot cone. Anyone in the cone takes 1d4 points of cold damage

and 1d4 points of piercing damage + 1 point of piercing damage for every two wizard levels you possess; the icicles also inflict 1d2 points of bleed damage. A successful Reflex save negates the bleed damage and halves the cold and piercing damage. The DC of this save is equal to 10 + 1/2 your wizard level + your Intelligence modifier. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Intelligence modifier.

*Sheet of Ice (Su):* At 8th level, you can create a sheet of ice centered on your location with an initial radius of 20 feet. For every additional round you use this ability, the radius increases by 10 feet. Creatures on the icy surface require 2 squares of movement to enter a square covered by the ice, and the DC of Acrobatics checks on the ice increases by 1/2 your caster level. In order to run or charge across the surface, a creature must succeed at an Acrobatics check (DC = 10 + 1/2 your caster level + your Intelligence modifier). You can designate a number of allies equal to your Intelligence modifier as immune to the effects of the ice you created. After you stop using this ability, the radius of the ice shrinks by 10 feet per round. You can use this ability for a number of rounds per day equal to 1/2 your wizard level. These rounds do not need to be consecutive.

#### Magma School

The magma elemental understands the beauty of the combination of earth and fire as a flowing mass of rock and flame that consumes everything it touches.

*Magma Affinity (Su):* You gain resistance 2 to fire. At 10th level, this resistance increases to 5, and at 20th level, this resistance increases to 30. Additionally, when you are exposed to or immersed in lava, you only take half damage. At 10th level, you become immune to fire damage from lava, and you can swim through lava as though you had a swim speed equal to half your base speed.

*Lava Fountain (Su):* As a standard action, you can create a 5-foot-radius, 10-foot-high jet of lava within 30 feet. This fountain deals 1d6 points of fire damage +1 point for every two wizard levels you possess to all creatures in the area. A successful Reflex save halves this damage. The DC of this save is equal to 10 + 1/2 your wizard level + your Intelligence



modifier. Creatures that fail their saving throw are coated in cooling lava and take half damage on their next turn. Additionally, affected creatures have all their movement rates reduced by 10 feet until the lava is removed. Removing the lava requires a full round action, but can be done by any creature. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Intelligence modifier.

*Lava Pool (Su):* At 8th level, you can exude a pool of lava centered on your location with an initial radius of 20 feet. For every additional round you use this ability, the radius increases by 10 feet. The lava has a depth of 3 inches and counts as difficult terrain. Any creature moving through the lava takes 2d6 points of fire damage, and this damage continues for 1d3 rounds after the creature leaves the lava pool (though only inflicting 1d6 points of fire damage per round). You can designate a number of allies equal to your Intelligence modifier as immune to the effects of your lava pool (including treating the lava as otherwise normal terrain). After you stop using this ability, the radius of the lava pool shrinks by 10 feet per round. You can use this ability for a number of rounds per day equal to 1/2 your wizard level.

## Mud School

The mud elemental uses the bordering elements of earth and water to create something with more pliability than the former and with more substance than the latter. He can use this mud to protect himself or to smash and hamper his foes.

*Mud Everywhere (Su):* You gain a +2 enhancement bonus to your CMD to resist bull rush, drag, reposition, trip, and overrun attempts as long as you are touching a solid surface. This bonus increases by +1 for every five wizard levels you possess. In addition, when you strike a foe with a melee or ranged attack from a natural or manufactured weapon, the target must succeed at a Reflex save or become smudged with muck. You can also attempt a touch attack that deals no damage but still requires this Reflex save. The DC of this save is equal to 10 + 1/2 your wizard level + your Intelligence modifier. Creatures that fail their saving throw take a -2 penalty to Charisma-based checks that affect other living creatures, until they clean off the mud (requiring a quart of water or its equivalent, or *prestidigitation* or its equivalent). The penalty increases by 1 for every five wizard levels you possess. Finally, you can walk across muddy surfaces without penalty.

*Entrapping Muck (Su):* As a standard action, you can unleash a torrent of mud in a 15-foot cone. Anyone in the cone takes 2d4 points of bludgeoning damage + 2 points of bludgeoning damage for every two wizard levels you possess. A successful Reflex save halves the damage. The DC of this save is equal to 10 + 1/2 your wizard level + your Intelligence modifier. Creatures that fail their saving throw are entangled, but can break free with a Strength check or Escape Artist check with a DC equal to 10 + your caster level. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Intelligence modifier.

*Soften Ground (Su):* At 8th level, you can cause any natural stone within 10 feet of you to become mud to a depth of 5 feet for 1 round, as per *transmute rock to mud*, reducing the speed of all creatures caught in the area to 5 feet and inflicting a -2 penalty on their attack rolls and AC. Your allies are unaffected by this effect, but can accept a 10-foot decrease in base speed to gain a +4 enhancement bonus to CMD against bull rush, reposition, trip, and overrun attempts. You can use this ability for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 your wizard level.

## Soot School

The soot elemental has his heart in the fiery embers kicked up by the wind and finds himself at home in smoke that would otherwise choke and blind his opponents.

*Smoke Inured (Su):* You gain a +2 enhancement bonus to saving throws against inhaled poisons or gases. This bonus increases by +1 for every five wizard levels you possess. Additionally, you gain fire resistance 2. This resistance increases to 5 at 10th level and 30 at 20th level. Finally, you can see through smoke without penalty.

*Smoke Cloud (Su):* As a standard action, you can create a 5-foot-radius cloud of soot within 30 feet that lasts for 1 round. The cloud deals 1d4 points of fire damage +1 point for every two wizard levels you possess to all creatures in the cloud and blinds and sickens them for 1 round. A successful Fortitude save negates the blinded and sickened effects and halves the damage. The DC of this save is equal to 10 + 1/2 your wizard level + your Intelligence modifier. Creatures that begin their turn inside the cloud can move out that turn without penalty, but those that enter the cloud are affected. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Intelligence modifier.



*Soot Form (Su):* At 8th level, you gain the ability to partially transform yourself into a cloud of soot for a number of rounds per day equal to your wizard level. While you take this form, you negate critical hits and precision damage 50% of the time. Additionally, you can squeeze through spaces as if you were two size categories smaller, and you gain a +8 bonus on Escape Artist checks. These rounds do not need to be consecutive.

## New Spells

The following spells can be added to the appropriate border elemental wizard spell lists.

### Ice Morningstar

**School** conjuration (creation) [cold]; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 3

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, M (small chunk of ice)

**Range** 0 ft.

**Effect** morningstar fashioned from ice

**Duration** 1 hour/level (D)

**Saving Throw** none; **Spell Resistance** no

You create an icy morningstar, complete with icicles forming the spikes, which appears in your hand. The morningstar has a +1 enhancement bonus on attack and damage rolls. This bonus increases by +1 for every five caster levels above 5th, to a maximum of +4 at 20th level. Additionally, the weapon deals an additional 2d6 points of damage to creatures with the earth or fire subtypes. Finally, on a successful hit with the morningstar, you can break off one of the icicles, dealing 1d4 points of bleed damage. On a confirmed critical hit, the bleed damage increases to 2d4. You can break off a number of icicles in this way equal to half your caster level.

The morningstar disappears if it leaves your grasp, unless you hand it to another creature. If you do so, the spell's remaining duration decreases to 1 minute/level (minimum 1 minute). This decrease in duration does not change even if the morningstar is returned to you.

### Magma Armor

**School** transmutation; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 3

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, M (chunk of igneous rock)

**Range** touch

**Target** living creature touched

**Duration** 1 min./level

**Saving Throw** none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

**M**agma armor encases the recipient in a rocky substance that does not hinder movement. The effect grants a +2 enhancement bonus to the recipient's existing natural armor bonus (creatures without a natural armor bonus are treated as having a +0 natural armor bonus for the purposes of this spell and so benefit from the bonus). This bonus increases by 1 for every three caster levels above 5th, to a maximum of +5 at 17th level. Additionally, the recipient increases its resistance to fire by 10. This increase in resistance to fire improves to 20 at caster level 11th. Finally, if the recipient is struck by a natural weapon, unarmed strike, or a slashing or piercing weapon, the attacker must succeed at a Reflex save or take 1d6 points of fire damage. Creatures attacking with melee weapons with reach do not take fire damage.

### Mud Body

**School** transmutation; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 3

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

**Range** touch

**Target** living creature touched

**Duration** 10 min./level

**Saving Throw** none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

The recipient of the *mud body* spell becomes a partial being of mud. For the spell's duration, the recipient takes a 10-foot reduction to its base speed, but it also gains DR 10/piercing and has a 25% to negate critical hits and precision damage. In addition, the recipient gains a +4 enhancement bonus to its CMD against bull rush, drag, reposition, trip, and overrun attempts. Finally, the recipient can take an immediate action to attempt a combat maneuver to disarm an opponent that struck the recipient with a melee weapon. This disarm attempt gains a +4 enhancement bonus and does not incur attacks of opportunity.

### Smoke Cloud

**School** conjuration (creation) [fire]; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 3

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

**Range** medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Area** cloud spreads in a 20-ft. radius

**Duration** concentration plus 1 round/level

**Saving Throw** Reflex half, see text; **Spell Resistance** no

A cloud of choking and burning soot billow out from the point you designate. The soot obscures all sight as a *fog cloud* does. In addition, the cooling, yet still hot, ash contained within the cloud deals 2d6 points of fire damage to everything



within the cloud, and causes affected creatures to become blinded and nauseated for 1 round, on your turn each round. All targets can make Reflex saves each round to take half damage, negate the blindness, and reduce the nauseated condition to sickened.

While concentrating on the spell, you can move the cloud 20 feet per round. you can resist attempts to disperse the soot cloud with wind by succeeding at a caster level check (DC 11 + the spell's caster level). Against natural winds, the DC equals 10 + 5 per wind force category greater than strong. If you don't move the cloud or stop concentrating on it, it remains stationary.

As with *fog cloud*, this spell cannot be cast underwater.

## New Monster

### Elemental, Soot

*This cloud of smoke contains bright embers, clusters of which form what appear to be eyes. The cloud darkens deeper into the mass of smoke.*

#### Soot Elemental

**Languages** Auran

**Environment** any (Plane of Air)

**Organization** solitary, pair, or gang (3–8)

**Treasure** none

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Air Mastery (Ex)** Airborne creatures take a –1 penalty on attack and damage rolls against a soot elemental.

**Choking Strike (Su)** A soot elemental that successfully hits an opponent causes the opponent to become sickened for 1d6 rounds if it fails a Fortitude save. A creature already sickened as a result of this ability becomes nauseated for 1 round if it fails its save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

#### Small Soot Elemental CR 1

**XP** 400

N Small outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar, fire)

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 11 (2d10)

**Fort** +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +0

**Immune** elemental traits, fire

**Weaknesses** vulnerability to cold

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

**Melee** slam +4 (1d4 plus 1d3 fire and choking strike)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** 11, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 12

**Feats** Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative<sup>[B]</sup>, Weapon Finesse<sup>[B]</sup>

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Escape Artist +5, Fly +11, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +4, Stealth +9

#### Medium Soot Elemental CR 3

**XP** 800

N Medium outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar, fire)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 natural)

**hp** 30 (4d10+8)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1

**Immune** elemental traits, fire

**Weaknesses** vulnerability to cold

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)

**Melee** slam +6 (1d6+1 plus 1d4 fire and choking strike)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 12, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 17

**Feats** Blind-Fight, Hover, Improved Initiative<sup>[B]</sup>, Weapon Finesse<sup>[B]</sup>

**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Escape Artist +7, Fly +10, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +5, Stealth +7

#### Large Soot Elemental CR 5

**XP** 1,600

N Large outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar, fire)

**Init** +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 19, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+4 Dex, +6 natural, –1 size)

**hp** 60 (8d10+16)

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +4

**DR** 5/—; **Immune** elemental traits, fire

**Weaknesses** vulnerability to cold

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)



**Melee** 2 slams +11 (1d8+3 plus 1d6 fire and choking strike)  
**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 18, **Con** 15, **Int** 6, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11  
**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +12 (+14 dirty trick); **CMD** 26 (28 vs. dirty trick)  
**Feats** Blind-Fight, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Dirty Trick<sup>[APG, B]</sup>, Improved Initiative<sup>[B]</sup>, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse<sup>[B]</sup>  
**Skills** Acrobatics +11, Escape Artist +13, Fly +12, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (planes) +4, Perception +9, Stealth +9

## Huge Soot Elemental CR 7

**XP** 3,200  
N Huge outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar, fire)  
**Init** +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

## DEFENSE

**AC** 21, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+6 Dex, +7 natural, -2 size)  
**hp** 85 (10d10+30)  
**Fort** +10, **Ref** +13, **Will** +5  
**DR** 5/-; **Immune** elemental traits, fire  
**Weaknesses** vulnerability to cold

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)  
**Melee** 2 slams +14 (2d6+5 plus 1d8 fire and choking strike)  
**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 20, **Dex** 22, **Con** 17, **Int** 6, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11  
**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +17 (+19 dirty trick); **CMD** 33 (35 vs. dirty trick)  
**Feats** Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Dirty Trick<sup>[APG, B]</sup>, Improved Initiative<sup>[B]</sup>, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse<sup>[B]</sup>  
**Skills** Acrobatics +14, Escape Artist +16, Fly +12, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (planes) +5, Perception +10, Stealth +8

## Greater Soot Elemental CR 9

**XP** 6,400  
N Huge outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar, fire)  
**Init** +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

## DEFENSE

**AC** 23, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+7 Dex, +8 natural, -2 size)  
**hp** 123 (13d10+52)

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +15, **Will** +6  
**DR** 10/-; **Immune** elemental traits, fire  
**Weaknesses** vulnerability to cold

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)  
**Melee** 2 slams +19 (2d8+6 plus 2d6 fire and choking strike)  
**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 24, **Con** 19, **Int** 8, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11  
**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +21 (+25 dirty trick); **CMD** 38 (40 vs. dirty trick)  
**Feats** Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dazzling Display, Flyby Attack, Greater Dirty Trick<sup>[APG, B]</sup>, Hover, Improved Dirty Trick<sup>[APG, B]</sup>, Improved Initiative<sup>[B]</sup>, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse<sup>[B]</sup>, Weapon Focus (slam)  
**Skills** Acrobatics +17, Escape Artist +20, Fly +14, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (planes) +10, Perception +16, Stealth +15

## Elder Soot Elemental CR 11

**XP** 12,800  
N Huge outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar, fire)  
**Init** +12; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +19

## DEFENSE

**AC** 27, touch 17, flat-footed 18 (+8 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural, -2 size)  
**hp** 152 (16d10+64)  
**Fort** +14, **Ref** +18, **Will** +7  
**DR** 10/-; **Immune** elemental traits, fire  
**Weaknesses** vulnerability to cold

## OFFENSE

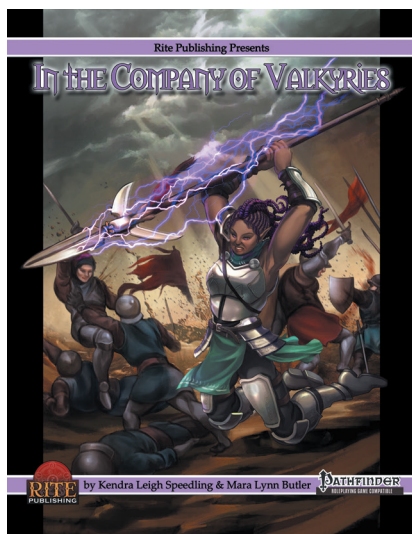
**Speed** 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)  
**Melee** 2 slams +23 (2d10+7 plus 2d8 fire and choking strike)  
**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 24, **Dex** 26, **Con** 19, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11  
**Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +25 (+29 dirty trick); **CMD** 44 (46 vs. dirty trick)  
**Feats** Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dazzling Display, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Greater Dirty Trick<sup>[APG, B]</sup>, Hover, Improved Dirty Trick<sup>[APG, B]</sup>, Improved Initiative<sup>[B]</sup>, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse<sup>[B]</sup>, Weapon Focus (slam)  
**Skills** Acrobatics +24, Escape Artist +27, Fly +15, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (planes) +18, Perception +19, Stealth +19



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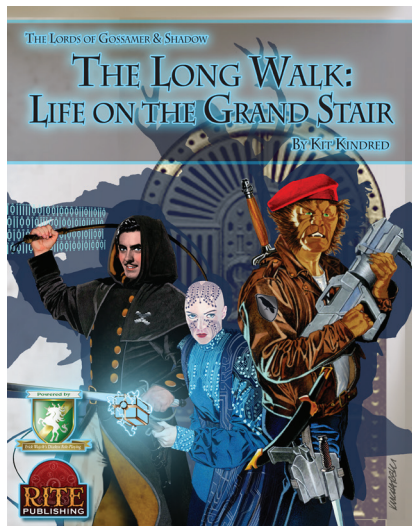
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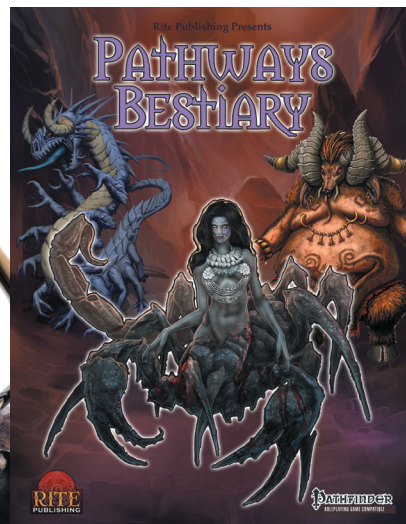


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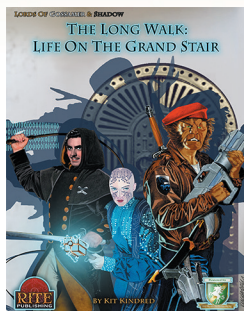


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## THE LONG WALK

**Publisher:** Rite Publishing

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This HUGE tome for Lords of Gossamer & Shadow (Abbreviated LoGaS below for brevity's sake) clocks in at 205 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page dev and playtester

thanks, 1 page dedication to Steven D. Russell (Rest in peace, you're missed, man...), 1 page ToC, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 199 pages of content, so let's take a look!

This book was moved up in my reviewing queue as a prioritized review at the request of my patrons.

All right, we begin with a well-written piece of prose before we dive into this book...but what exactly is this? The question here is less simple to answer than what you'd think – you see, this massive tome is at once a kind of meta-campaign setting for the worlds-spanning LoGaS-setting and a massive toolbox, as it features a TON of powers. It also sports some new worlds to explore and acts as an NPC-codex of sorts. In other words, this is a massive book and I can't mention every detail herein, if I want to avoid bloating this review beyond what would be useful – hence, I'll be painting with broad strokes here.

The first chapter is pure crunch, showing us new powers: These usually come in different variants for different point costs: You may e.g. learn Aetheric Projection for 35 points...or its advanced brethren, for 55 points. An upgrade, just, fyi, is possible for 20 points – so no, nothing lost there. Each of the powers features herein comes with a distinct definition of its dangers and abilities granted, which, in the best spirit of LoGaS, provide a distinct and diverse variety. The aforementioned ability, for example, would be the separation of mind and body, allowing for potentially quicker travel, visions of other times and concise possession rules; the advanced version allows for the influence of the physical worlds, as well as e.g. the erecting of barriers. Enchantment would be the second power, and does not require Sorcery per se; to use spells with Enchantment, the character will still require it, though. Basically, this ability is about... well, enchanting places, objects, etc. with gossamer material and is thus more aligned with the forces of Umbra. Detailed examples illustrate how it and

its two more advanced options work, building on LoGaS' artifact and construction engine in a sensible manner. Slightly faster Enchantment, disguising it...there are a lot of things to consider here, though ultimately, this will probably be one of the most beloved ability-suites.

An interesting addition to the lore would be the inclusion of Keeper of the Void – this ability represents that the character has come into contact with the shadow between worlds, gaining the shadow within as well as a weakness to both Umbra and Eidolon – but also thoroughly unique abilities that center on the manipulation of, you guessed it, the void – sinister and interesting, it makes for a great option for villains and anti-heroes. Scrying is probably self-explanatory in what it does – it is most certainly a great narrative tool for more intrigue-heavy campaigns.

But what about the existing abilities? Won't they be somewhat devalued by the new ones, lacking the multiple steps many of the new ones sport? Well, you'll be delighted to hear that Channeling, Eidolon Mastery, Invocation (which comes with 3 upgrades!), Sorcery (also 3 upgrades), Umbra Mastery and Wrighting all get upgrade/specialization options – this means that you can, power-wise, further escalate the already impressive options at the beck and call of the lords and ladies. Huge plus here!

The second chapter deals with talents, which are intended for use with NPCs – after all, not every adherent of Eidolon/Umbra is an adept/master, respectively – talents represent a limited knowledge or mastery of a power, but they are subject to strict limitations and as not as cost-efficient as buying a proper ability-suite. This means that proper lords and ladies will have an upper hand, but it VASTLY diversifies the arsenal of the GM, allowing for significantly more credible weirdness without an annoying inflation of the appearance of really powerful lords, ladies and wardens. This does manage to alleviate one of my concerns with longer LoGaS-games and diminishing returns for the encountering of such powers – by making them fragmented and more specific, a GM vastly expands the narrative arsenal at his/her command, which, once more, is a very good thing in my book. The fact that you retain full control over how many, if any, of these you wish to include in your game further helps. The chapter, then, constitutes mostly a massive list of these talents – as an aside, the progression from warden to master is covered as well...and in case you haven't figured that out:



It is very much possible to employ this engine for PCs as well, allowing for very fine-grained differentiation and dabbling...and these talents can also be used rather gainfully as a kind of story-reward in-game...so yeah, this section alone imho warrants getting this book.

We are not done, though – chapter 3 deals with idiosyncratic powers and qualities, and, while only 2 pages long, represents another MAJOR boon for LoGaS – special abilities granted by tech or magic usually do not work beyond the world of origin. This chapter changes that, providing guidelines to translate such abilities to talent-like options, at the cost of +10 points per Quality, +15 per Power – this uses vampires, fey messengers and e.g. Fantastic 4's The Thing (minus the IP) as examples, illustrating the process rather nicely.

Chapter 4 provides yet another very welcome expansion of the options of LoGaS, namely character creation rules for beings that are meaningful regarding their power, but not on the level of lords/ladies – the easy to grasp rules and considerations are supplemented by several sample NPCs – and yes, this obviously ties back to the talent-system, which allows for specialized characters with a meaningful array of options at lower power-levels. (As an aside, I am a big fan of progression-style games, so this helps me tremendously – in GUMSHOE, I e.g. transitioned from Fear Itself to Esoterrorists to Night's Black Agents when the PCs reached milestones in their abilities – a similar process can now, arguably even more organically, be achieved here.

After this massive array of customization options and tweaks, we come to what essentially constitutes a gazetteer of the Grand Stair – we learn about history, customs, language, the Pax Escalara, economy and travel, long-distance communication and the traditions surrounding the deaths of gossamer lords, hinting at the fabled Polyandrium as a mythological resting place, and yes, burial on the Grand Stair is mentioned.

Now, I did note that we'll get new Gossamer Worlds to explore, and this is where that section starts: We can visit the Academy at Arbanes and learn about the multiversal, massive empire of Bastiano, the Ascendancy, which can make for either hope or deadly foe; we visit the impossible pyramid, bigger on the inside and connected to 4 primal gossamer worlds that otherwise are isolated and share no connections with each other or the Grand Stair; I am not going to SPOIL its details here; suffice to say, unlike the previously mentioned

ones, the domain of the impossible pyramid comes with a proper table, and the respective primal worlds are similarly covered. Need a reason to like there? Twin-world. Hurricane world. 'Nuff said.

The market of agora comes with stats for two unique races taking care of business there, and in less detail, we also gain more information on the black market and the previously mentioned Polyandrium. From there, we move to the unique types of people that can be found on the Grand Stair – we learn about ambassadors, the castellans, the allied guilds of the cicerones and porters, heralds and the bardic praecones.

All right, I did mention that this was a kind of NPC Codex as well, right? Well, there is a whole chapter devoted to sovereigns, and they are creative: A somewhat lecherous, nut sympathetic gunslinger with a heart of gold, the Indalo Kid, and his faithful bull-horned horse, for example, would be the master of Helldorado. Wanna picture Kaspar the Fixer? Visualize him as an orc in a tuxedo, with a cigar in one hand and a glass of bourbon in the other. Lord Sparda should put a grin on the face of fans of "V for Vendetta" or the Dishonored franchise – the masked individual is currently acting as the Ascendancy's sword...though he shows up, strangely, on worlds impossibly far apart. We also btw. get stats for none other than Luther, oldest of the known Gossamer Lords and a true mystery... he may have won the last Dwimmerlaik war with his designs...but no one knows for sure if he enacted his horrid Stairbreaker... We also meet the archmaster of the impossible pyramid, the general of the Raven Legion. We meet a professor who REALLY knows people; the caretaker of Agora; Sybelle the Arbiter, happy-go-lucky Uwe, who knows the really weird places; the honorable and dutiful Shield of the Ascendancy is btw. a badass Walrus in cuirassier armor.

Now, no matter how powerful a lord or lady may be, ultimately, you need reliable, potent organizations – these are represented by 4 different organizations/knightly orders that are discussed in-depth: The Conciliatore are the foremost defenders of the Ascendancy. They also get their own unique torcs and sport detailed information on ranks and relationships with others and a sample NPC – a structure that is btw. also employed for the Doormen of Lord Drake and the previously mentioned mercenary Raven Legion. Finally, there would be the Khalderi Host, the step nomads that claim to have always been there. Really cool, btw.: Their entry sports their own glyph-alphabet



(numbers included), which I'm \*SO\* going to present to my players sans comment to decode.

The final section of this module presents a campaign outline, namely the "Dwimmerlaik Inquest", intended as a potential sequel to the adventure "The Gathering Storm" featured in the LoGaS-rule-book; this goes beyond a few, fluffy lines, mind you: cast of characters, timeline, suggestions for alterations, using factions, etc. – all detailed in a rather nice and helpful manner.

The book also contains no less than three brief adventures; in order to avoid spoilers here, I will be brief: The adventures follow a similar structure as the outline of the campaign – cast of characters, structure, etc. – a plus would be that they are pretty character-driven, allowing the PCs to make meaningful interactions. The modules deal with the PCs being chosen to undertake the Last Walk and put a deceased Lady to rest; in the aftermath of this module, the PCs may learn about the Impossible Pyramid while investigating the cause of death of the Lady...but the third module is where things get really interesting...though, frankly, module may not describe it adequately: The connected realms of Iridess, unique in composition and nature, come with details, NPCs and are absolutely inspiring – this section could carry a whole campaign!

The book btw. also contains talent flow-charts (!! ) that break down the respective powers (super convenient and amazing), a detailed index, and form-fillable character, creature & artifact and domain sheets – Wow!

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are surprisingly good for a book of this size: Perry Grosshans and the cadre of proofreaders did a great job. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's neat two-column full-color standard for LoGaS-books. The artworks deserve special mention: There are a ton of nice original pieces herein, and while they do not adhere to a unified style, I haven't seen any of them before – and they stand out. This is a beautiful book. The pdf version comes fully bookmarked with detailed and nested bookmarks, making navigation easy. I can't comment on the print version yet, since I don't own it – but oh boy is it on my to-get-list!

J.P. Brannan, Thierry De Gagne, Perry Grosshans, Adam Easterday, John Lee, David A McCreless, Selene O'Rourke, Joel Saul and Cliff Winnig would be the developers and contributors to the work of lead author Christopher "Kit" Kindred.

In more rules-heavy systems than Diceless,

reviewing a core book is often rather tedious, particularly if it's based on D&D; you'll inevitably have the standards covered; it is only with the second book, for PFRPG the Advanced Player's Guide, for 13<sup>th</sup> Age "13 True Ways", that these systems really come into their own, become distinct – and it is these books I will most fondly remember in the years to come. While the core Lords of Gossamer and Shadows book was already a reinvigoration of Amber and Erick Wujcik's engine, it is in my opinion this book that really makes it come into its own. While purists may scoff at the talent system presented herein, it is exceedingly elegant, easy to grasp, and the flow-charts simplify the process of using it to the point where it is a no-brainer. The system not only exponentially increases the array of options for the GM, but also for the players; it allows groups to explore a vast plethora of new and exciting narratives with the system.

Beyond that, the book also represents a MASSIVE setting sourcebook of the quality we have come to expect from Rite Publishing's "Lords of Gossamer and Shadows" – the new vistas depicted herein are diverse, intriguing and captivating; they provide options without being prescriptive, adding political angles and details to the Grand Stair without infringing on the GM's ability to customize what the Grand Stair means and represents in his/her game.

In short, this is art from adversity. The author has evaded blindness as a kid, courtesy of transplants; now, these transplants and the scarification cause crippling headaches and impede his reading and writing ability. It is testament to his passion and vision that this book exists; indeed, it can be \*felt\* that this was a book he \*needed\* to write. When you read as many RPG books as I do, you get a sense of when someone is phoning it in, and when someone is really and truly passionate about a task. This book not only represents a true must-have for any Lords of Gossamer and Shadows-group, it should be considered to be the essential work for it. This is a masterpiece, worthy of 5 stars + seal of approval. It also qualifies as a candidate for my Top Ten of 2017 and receives the EZG Essentials tag for Diceless roleplaying, meaning that I consider it an absolute must-have for any such campaign I'd run.

You can get this massive, evocative tome here on OBS!

Curious about the game? You can find the core-rules here on OBS!

**Endzeitgeist out.**





## THE VILLAGE BACKDROP: FULHURST MOORS

**Publisher:** Raging Swan

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This Village Backdrop clocks in at 11 pages, 1 page front cover, 2 pages advertisement, 1 page editorial/ToC, 1 page SRD

and 1 page back cover, leaving 5 pages of content, so let's take a look!

What once was a lush forest inhabited by brutal savages, is now a desolate windswept moor where the waters of Blackraven Creek burrow into the acidic, infertile soil. Haunted by will-o'-wisps attracted in times long gone by, the plain is now home to peat-diggers – a harsh folk that reflects the unpleasant environment they live in. The anxiety of the populace is almost palpable, as the locals await a doom most dire.

Unbeknownst to them, one greedy individual has struck a pact with the dread will-o'-wisps and the resulting tragedies have not managed to warm the local folks to strangers... It should be noted that this version sports a properly modified marketplace section of minor magic items to get.

Beyond brief notes on the diverse population that includes the best and worst of people, we have the usual 3 village lore entries that players doing their legwork can unearth. Speaking of the NPCs, and since some of my readers are consider that a pet-peeve: Nomenclature-wise, some characters are referred to by names like "rogue" and "wizard" instead of "thief" or "magic-user."

Beyond these, we also get a write-up of local appearances, dressing habits and nomenclature, we also get the traditional 6 whispers and rumors. Similarly, no less than 6 different events can be used by the GM to establish the proper mood. Big kudos: The special moonshine that is sold in town comes with proper effects tailored to old-school gameplay – kudos!

Now, in Pathfinder, we got a sample statblock – in the system neutral version, we instead gain something I actually prefer: A massive ½-page table depicting uncommon will-o'-wisps. These creatures are no less deadly than their common brethren, but they seem to prefer a more...specialized diet...like folks that drowned, that became insane, etc. – each of these

sample wisps comes with a brief, fluff-only entry that makes each of them a great potential antagonist for an investigation...and if you combine them, you can challenge even experienced players! Now, in the system-neutral version, it would have been nice to get some slightly different suggestions when compared to 5e, since the rules-lighter games tend to e.g. not differentiate between damage types, or at least, to a lesser degree, but that is me nitpicking at a high level.

### Conclusion:

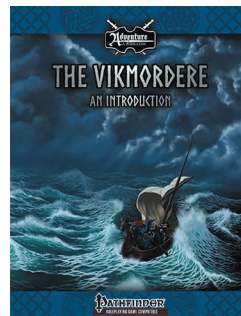
Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to RSP's superb, streamlined and printer-friendly 2-column b/w-standard. The pdf's b/w-cartography is just as awesome as I've come to expect from the series. The pdf comes fully bookmarked and in two versions, one optimized for screen-use and one to be printed out.

Okay, my first impression was "Oh yeah, another swamp/moor"-village – but know what? This is VERY distinct from anything you'd expect in a SWAMP. While Jacob Trier's village works with the tropes, it also subverts them -no degenerate fish-people, no voodoo cults, no looming lizard-men, instead painting a picture of a village of hard-working people that cover the broad experience of humanity and morality, suffering from a climate of fear invoked by some vile individuals. Fulhurst Moors may not be a nice place at first glance, but it can be the town where, once the loyalty of the populace is earned, the evil rooted out, PCs may find haven even if hunted by the king. Remote and believable, with a rich history to develop and hooks galore, Jacob Trier's village is great. Jeff Gomez' additional design has made sure that the system neutral version is very much worth getting, in spite of my nitpicks. My final verdict for this version will hence clock in at 5 stars, just short of my seal of approval.

You can get this village here on OBS!

You can directly support Raging Swan Press here on patreon!

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## Vikdormere: Player's Guide

**Publisher:** AAW Games

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This pdf clocks in at 19 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 6 pages of sheets for notes/ancestral appellations, 1 page SRD, 1

page back cover, leaving us with 9 pages of content, so let's take a look!



This pdf was requested to be moved up in my reviewing queue by my patrons.

First things first: This is basically the Player-friendly, SPOILER-less and system-neutral version of Ancestral Appellations; it deals with the known fluff etc. and allows a Gm control over which items and abilities to allow/use. I wholeheartedly applaud this strategy.

So, what are the Vikmordere? As the nomenclature used in the introduction makes abundantly-clear, they are a culture of various indigenous peoples, steeped in the nomenclature and cultural trappings of Nordic myth, something I find myself inexorably drawn to. However, unlike pretty much all renditions of fantasy vikings, the Vikmordere are more than that: Basically, picture what would happen when you'd replace the (amazing!) fatalism and mythology with a mysticism that is, theme-wise, more in tune with Native American aesthetics. The Vikmordere, as such, employ a thoroughly unique blending of tropes that set them distinctly apart from both the depiction of pseudo-Native Americans or Vikings; they worship the ancestor spirit and still use observe the Old Ways, but in their remote and rugged valley, they have since dwindled in numbers...though, ultimately, they are very much feared beyond.

Their home, the rugged Vikmordere valley is depicted with notes on clime, flora and fauna painting a vivid and wondrous picture. Vikmordere society centers around the use of natural resources, and while they may once have worshipped petty and vengeful gods, they have, in a surprisingly enlightened and encompassing stance, since then resumed a form of ancestral worship that should resound with quite a few contemporaries. The clans and tribes do not sport a centralized government, though a sort of Ping-equivalent does exist around Serpent Lake, with the Northern Fury Council.

Does that sound too friendly for your tastes? Well, the Vikmordere in Aventyr (AAW Games' default world) are basically surrounded by the Klavek kingdom, which seeks to exploit their natural resources; much like medieval Vikings, their ships are superior and they have a pronounced tradition of raiding and capturing individuals; while these captives may be considered to be slaves by some, the enlightened notions suffusing the culture also mean that these individuals are treated fairly, allowing them to gain freedom and integrate into the respective tribe, another notion that resounds with historic themes, while changing them in an intriguing manner.

Okay, at this point, you should have a good idea why I consider these fellows to be pretty much an amazing addition to a given world, but that is not where the pdf stops: In the lavishly-depicted map of Serpent Lake (included as a pretty glorious one-page version as well), we learn of the wondrous locales in the valley – from the Everflame Isle that houses a forest of red-leaved Everflame Trees in its sunken interior to Ighdenholm, the top of the world, ostensibly seat of mighty evil unvanquished to the snowfields of sorrow, where a particularly warm summer may well unearth artifacts of conflicts long past, the little write-ups are excellent.

Beyond that, we move on to something particularly important for the Vikmordere – their names. A d20-table with two columns allows you to create a spiritual name, with the first being a descriptor, the second a noun; in the aesthetics of Native Americans, you could thus end with a spirit name of "Sulking Sky" or "Ghost Shadow"; as per Norse/Icelandic nomenclatures, Vikmordere also often introduce themselves as "X, son of Y", where Y would be the father's (or mother's!) name; in light of that, the massive 100-entry-strong table of sample names for males and females is certainly appreciated.

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I noticed no serious hiccups. Layout adheres to the drop-dead gorgeous 2-column full-color standard for "Into the Wintery Gale"-supplements. The pdf sports excellent full-color artworks, though fans of AAW Games may be familiar with a few of them; same goes for the neat map. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Justin Andrew Mason, with contributions from Jonathan G. Nelson, delivers something I have been keen to see for a while: More information on one of my favorite cultures in current fantasy roleplaying. The Vikmordere have, even during the humble beginnings of AAW Games, been something that set world and modules apart; their culture, practices etc. feel plausible and fresh in a way that we don't get to see that often.

You see, in many Tolkienesque fantasy (or non-Tolkienesque fantasy, for that matter), the depiction of cultures most often employs a construction-paradigm alongside the line of least resistance:

"Like culture x, but with twist z." This twist is then thought through to its logical conclusion, with different degrees of success. Sometimes, something amazing comes from that procedure. However, most of the part, we end up being...well. Bored.



Okay, so elves, but Egyptian. Got it. Okay, so dwarves are Scotsmen, got it. Elves that are touched by fire/abyss/etc.

Notice something? Those tropes, in and of themselves, have become cliché in the games we play. It is my ardent belief that they are responsible for the tendency often bemoaned by old-school gamers, that races are just stats in more modern games. And know what? Thinking back, I can relate. When I started playing, the German AD&D supplements about races talked about gnomish roby wine, about elven funeral customs, etc. and painted a picture far beyond “You get +2 to two attributes”; The cultures, while Tolkienesque, were WONDROUS, because they felt like more than an accumulation of stats. It is from this solely number-based design aesthetic, that soulless “template” racial variants sprang. If I had a dime for every lame desert-x variant of a race I had to read over the years...but I digress.

As a result of the customization-demands of modern gamers, many racial supplements have simply lost the means to make a culture/ethnicity/race feel plausible...and as a result, gamers skip the ever shortening flavor-texts; it’s a vicious circle and most folks that have encountered it are probably not even aware of it. So, back in the day, when I was tearing through AAW Games’ first offerings, the crew asked me what I’d consider to be their greatest strength.

I replied that it’s hard to grasp, and frankly, it took me a while to enunciate my feelings properly. As someone with a basic grasp of cultural anthropology and social sciences, it dawned upon me that one crucial, undeniable strength was that they managed to tap into a sense of wonder, while remaining plausible. I could picture this strange culture that never was...and in another world, it may well have been. Beyond just a blending and twisting of tropes, the details elevate the culture beyond a mere blending of themes, to something that is separate, but thoroughly distinct from its parents.

While the elevator pitch for the Vikmordere would be “Viking Native Americans”, that ultimately does not do them justice; I find myself excited, always, for new adventures set in the Vikmordere valley, always in the hopes of learning something new...and that is something only precious few cultures have managed to accomplish in the last couple of years.

It should be noted, that the similarities to parent cultures, while only running skin-deep, also allow the Vikmordere to be easily and seamlessly plugged into pretty much any fantasy world; it is only slowly that they transcend the connotations

of their parent cultures, becoming something different...which may, in and of itself, generate a sense of tension and excitement at your table.

In short: This is a really good, system-neutral first look at the Vikmordere, one that does not SPOIL any of the modules featuring them, while giving players a good first grasp of these peoples. That being said, for maximum fun, I’d urge you to use this differently: Make the PCs part of an expedition; have them encounter and interact with the Vikmordere, separate fact from fiction...I used that particular strategy in my own campaign to great effect.

...yeah, I think I like these fellows. In fact, I find myself hoping that AAW Games will continue to craft their thoroughly and unique races and cultures, above the ground and below. My final verdict? Well, have I mentioned that this is FREE? As in “costs \$0.00”? Yeah, I’d strongly suggest downloading this – well worth checking out! My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this cool booklet for FREE here on OBS!

The Into the Wintery Gale mage-adventure can be found here on OBS!

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## Letters from the Flaming Crab: Libraries

**Publisher:** Flaming Crab

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This installment of the cool Letters from the Flaming Crab series clocks in at 24 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 3 pages of editorial, leaving us with 19 pages of content, so let’s take a look!

This review was moved up in my reviewing queue at the request of my patrons.

All right, we begin this pdf, as always, with a great little letter dropped from the planes- and worlds-hopping vessel UCS Flaming Crab, found and faithfully transcribed by J Gray – and we begin this pdf with a brief recap of the institutions of libraries before defining it – for the purpose of this book and fantastic contexts, a library ultimately is a collection of information and similar forms of entertainment, composed most often, of written words. This definition, as the pdf acknowledges, is rather technical, though – ultimately, a library is more. If you have ever walked the hallsof a proper



university library or perhaps even the thoroughly impressive ancient ones out there and felt the sheer awe they inspire, you'll know what I meant. The nature and composition of the books, its building and nature all thoroughly influence the character of the place, a notion that can be easily amplified in a fantastic context, while knowledge even more directly translates to power than in our world.

Now, the pdf begins with a general step-by-step guideline regarding the creation of libraries – first, one should determine the type: Whether public or private, and then we move on to take a look at accessibility – after all, pretty much all governments, particularly those inclined towards totalitarian modes of operation, have a tendency to restrict access and information...same goes, obviously, for religions: Heresy, false information – the propaganda conflicts of the medieval ages once more sound pretty contemporary these days, in our brave new world...so yeah, society, groups and persons that established the libraries will ultimately define the accessibility and themes of a library. Similarly, circulation is a potential issue – curators, librarians and assistants, organization and audience should be taken into account. Nice: The effects of the various starting attitudes of curators have been noted, with extensive behavior guidelines for the GM – and yes, friendly curators can have pretty nice tangible benefits for the PCs.

Now, the pdf employs Ultimate Intrigue's nice research rules to provide a vast variety of different libraries – these come with several research thresholds each and sport interesting ideas that rang from the obvious adventure angle to the more fantastic – there is e.g. the Dwarven Mining College Library, which can yield important notes on hidden veins of ore...and there's a wagon of children's books, some of which cannot be deciphered by adults and only make sense to children reading them...who curiously never tell what they read. If you wanted an excuse to employ Everyman gaming's cool Childhood Adventures-rules...there you go! Mistress Sandwind's unfinished magnum opus' trail can be found beneath the desert sands. Another interesting example would be a national library (minor complaint here: One line is missing blank spaces – a little layout hiccup, I guess...) and, following the pretty loose definition of "library", the court of Lishaz, sage of winter, is provided as an interesting example of an unconventional library.

Within a sunken city, last remnant of a once resplendent civilization, beckons – all those that can reach it. Reading rooms can be found...and the medical collection of a temple comes with a

rare disease that only very few are susceptible to... and notes on how it could be caused. So if you're looking for a Dr. House-like story to tell, there you go. Speaking of plague: Picture a metropolis, wrecked, like clockwork, every 150 years by a plague – and holds e.g. a hidden mummy...and ancient pictographs may well hold the secret to end this scourge. Oh, and yes, there is a virtual library, remnant of a crashed starship, so if you're enjoying a bit of sword & planet/science-fantasy, this has you covered.

Okay, after this pretty diverse and inspiring chapter, we move on to defining and discussing a variety of different document types – from tablets to codices to the virtual, this section is nice...and then, we move on to one aspect of PFRPG near and dear to my heart. As a polyglot and language-nerd, I always hated how most d20-based systems, including PFRPG, handle languages – one skill point per language?? Seriously? Anyways, this trivializes many of the cool scenes and hooks I enjoy in horror literature, sword & sorcery, etc. – hence e.g. the elimination of common in my games...and some house-rules. The pdf proposes a rather simple and elegant system here, one that is focused on gradient fluency. There are 3 general levels: Competent, fluent and proficient – if you ever took a language test, you should be familiar with the meanings, right. For each skill point in Linguistics gained, you assign two fluency points. This makes mastering a language a bit more complex and allows the GM finer distinction between proficiency-levels...and allows for more complex roleplaying situations. The benefits and limitations of the respective fluency levels are concisely defined, with proficiency providing minor benefits to award specialization – I really, really like this solution! Huge plus for the pdf here and what I'd consider to be a selling point – if you're planning an occult, horror or intrigue-based campaign (or one with a more sword and sorcery-esque theme), then this should be considered to be mandatory reading. And yes, the rules are simple and rewarding enough to not overly complicate any book-keeping required – I'd suggest a superscript C, F or P noted with the languages. As a final aside here: Knowing a few words to get around is covered – really helpful!

Really cool, btw.: The pdf has collected a whole page of class options, items and spells that tie in with the concept of libraries – helpful and neat... kudos for going the extra mile here.

The pdf also sports some class options, the first of which would be the library subdomain, which is associated with Community and Knowledge,



replacing either calming touch or lore keeper, respectively. The ability granted is narrative gold: Mind palace lets you read a tome as part of your morning prayers, allowing you to nigh-perfectly recall content, reflected by a bonus to Knowledge checks that scales with levels. This is gold for detective scenarios and sports a really nice imagery; it is also convenient for narrative games, as the quicker study can be helpful indeed. There is also a new oracle mystery, the words mystery, which nets Linguistics and Perform as class skills. Bonus spells range from the usual suspects like *comprehend languages* to *spellcasting contracts*, being a bit more vanilla than the notably cool replacement domain spells provided by the cleric subdomain. (Which include, just fyi, *psychic asylum* (library only) – which made me recall one of my favorite scenes from the Hannibal franchise. But I digress. The revelations available in the mystery are interesting – there is e.g. automatic writing that is prophetic and later upgraded to *commune* (spell-italicization missing)...which is interesting, but I consider it cooler to learn about an author by analyzing a text written – this makes for a pretty cool tool, which, at higher levels, also duplicates spell-effects. Here, the italicization's correct, just fyi. Countering effects based on written or spoken words a limited amount of times per day is cool, but I am not 100% sold on how it works – you see, it references countersong as how it works – but countersong is based on bardic performance rounds, while the ability instead has a daily use array, which you'd expect from e.g. an immediate action counter ability and which makes it quite hard to decipher how this is supposed to work. Clarification would be appreciated here. "Esoteri Research"[sic!] is utterly broken. It lets you research spells from one class list of your choice as though they were two levels lower. Once you complete research of the spell, you gain it at +1 spell level as an oracle spell. Notice the issue? Well, oracles are limited by being spontaneous casters and their limited spell array – this allows you to basically use research to not only poach in another spell-list, it also eliminates the limit imposed on the spellcasting of the class. Not cool.

The next revelation is not properly formatted and looks like a continuation of the previous revelation, having its name indented as well. It is written has a terminology issue: Once per day, you can write a spell in air, earth or paper. (Oddly specific – why not in water?) The spell then is treated as not having verbal or "cheap material components" – okay, what is cheap? No cost? Anything below 1 gp? No idea. This is not proper rules language.

Gaining access to symbol spells is nice and I really like the idea of swift action enlarging pens, quills, etc. to act as longswords, with a bit of class-level-based bonus damage. The ability only allows for one attack before reverting to standard size, though, and with a swift action and limited daily activations, is unfortunately rather weak. I really like the visuals of wall of text: You yammer on, creating a wall that deflects arrows, etc. – basically a variant *wall of sound*...and once more, the interaction with the referenced base are what sinks this. You see, it can be maintained for 10 (!!!) minutes per class level and you may spend them in 10-minute increments; unlike the spell, you do NOT RAW need concentration to maintain it. I am also not sure if it cause *wall of sound*'s damage...or not. Instead of the damage, the wall seems to be able to STUN targets on a failed save for ridiculously long times. Even stranger – the ability has a separate stun chance when near the oracle, which implies that the oracle needs to be directly behind the wall...which contradicts the range of *wall of sound* and leaves me utterly incapable of determining of how this should work. All in all, a promising mystery that is severely hampered by its rules-issues.

The final component of the pdf would be a magic item, the *bookring*, whose gems can hold non-magical tomes – which ends the pdf on a high note and with some cool, inspiring ideas.

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are not as good as usual for the series – I have noticed a couple of typo-level glitches and the rules-language hiccups I found are pretty obvious and left me a bit puzzled. Layout adheres to Flaming Crab Games' nice two-column full-color standard and the pdf employs neat, thematically fitting artworks – some from public domain and some really nice books with landscapes on their pages, visualizing the imaginarity process.

June Bordas, Lindsey Shanks-Abel and Margherita Tramontano deliver a per se really cool installment here: I absolutely adored the section on libraries, the GM-guidelines and the fluency-section is gold – personally, I'll employ an even finer distinction, but the rules are simple and concise enough to allow a GM easy modification: I'd suggest, for example, paying off of competence penalties and/or gaining proficiency benefits on a point-for-benefit-basis. I pretty much liked everything about this book apart from the formal hiccups and the disappointing oracle mystery, which represents a weird dip in overall quality; it is more vanilla than the subdomain and falls e.g.



short of R.O.D.'s (Read or Die for non-Otakus – an anime classic) extensive tricks...or the more down to earth research tricks. Balancing of this one is really wonky as well and it drags, alongside the smaller glitches, down what otherwise would be a truly excellent supplement. As written, I cannot go higher than 4.5 stars, rounded down, as I have to rate the whole book as a reviewer. If you can look past a couple of minor glitches and the mystery, then you should consider this a 5 star + seal file instead.

You can get this neat supplement here on OBS!  
**Endzeitgeist out.**



## Be Awesome At Village Design

**Publisher:** Raging Swan Press

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This little design-guide clocks in at 17 pages, 1 page front cover, 2 pages of advertisement, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, 1 page

editorial/ToC, leaving us with 11 pages of content, so let's take a look!

Okay, so this pdf is basically a brief DIY-design-guide to villages, published by arguably the most prolific publisher of truly phenomenal villages. Raging Swan Press' excellent cadre of authors has, under the auspice of Raging Swan's mastermind Creighton Broadhurst, created some of the best villages you can find for any system out there, so yeah, the author knows what he's talking about. The advice here pertains villages of a somewhat gritty, Greyhawk-ish, yet fantastic theme, but most of the advice can easily be extrapolated to pretty much any context.

The focus here is villages, and after a brief introduction, we begin with the basic village design tips: Conflict, flavor, etc. are noted – this section btw. also includes some reminders for the GM to not forget a couple of crucial, basic components. The basics out of the way, the former tie in with the peculiarities of village locations – these are similarly presented in a concise and easily graspable manner.

So yeah, the prospective designer in all of us gets a concise and interesting check-list here.

That out of the way, we enter what I'd think of as the second section of the pdf, where we get a massive generator to speed up the process: We can determine government, alignment, prominent features, industry, population, conflicts, notable buildings, secrets...and the latter comes with some added notes. 100 ready to go village names (and some suggested naming schemata) also help here.

Then, the book ges into the details: Street and road names and names to consider! We also get some naming conventions for them, as well as suggestions for other landmarks that may similarly be named. Beyond this section, we also mention village festivals as a way to add local color to a village and proceed to get 10 fully depicted and easily adapted types of village festivals to include and expand upon, ranging from cheese racing to the dance of the dead. 20 sample events and traditions finally complement this pdf.

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed no glitches. Layout adheres to Raging Swan Press' elegant b/w-standard in either 2 or 3 columns, depending on the pdf's needs. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience and in two versions – one for print use and one for screen use. The pdf sports several nice b/w-maps of sample villages to jumpstart your imagination.

Creighton Broadhurst knows what he's doing – while the main focus here is undoubtedly classic, gritty fantasy, the material herein can be extrapolated for pretty much every system and setting; the advice collected herein remains viable even in a modern context, in truly rural areas. In short: This humble little generator does a fantastic job and is well worth getting. It is not an omni-design book and instead focuses, crisply and concisely, on its designated task. I consider this well worth getting. My final verdict will hence clock in at 5 stars.

You can get this nice little design-guide here on OBS!

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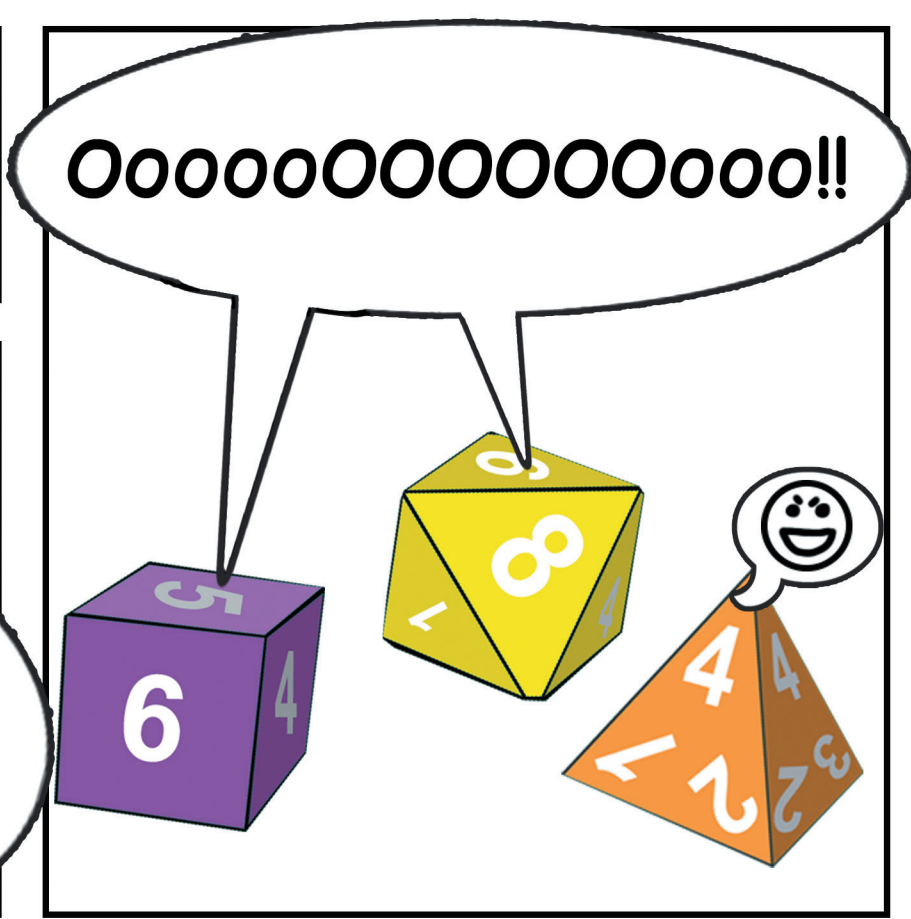
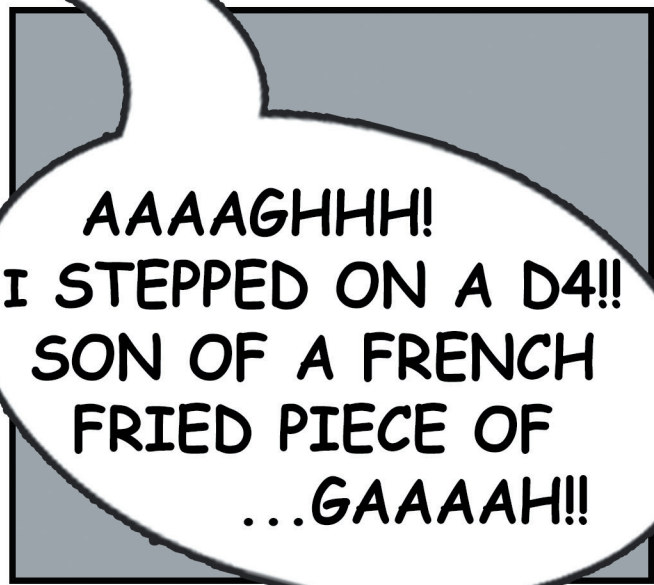
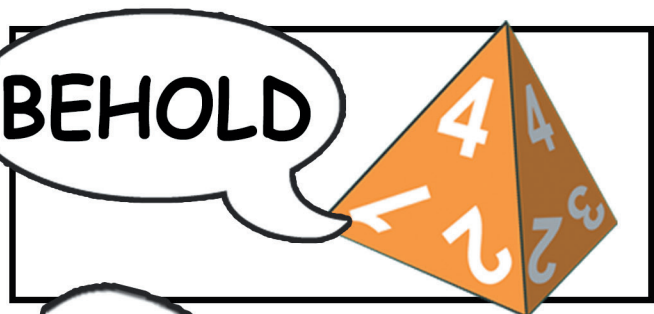
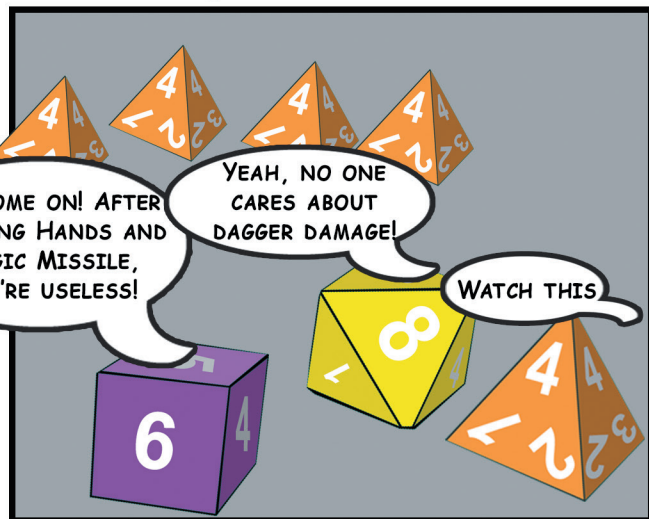
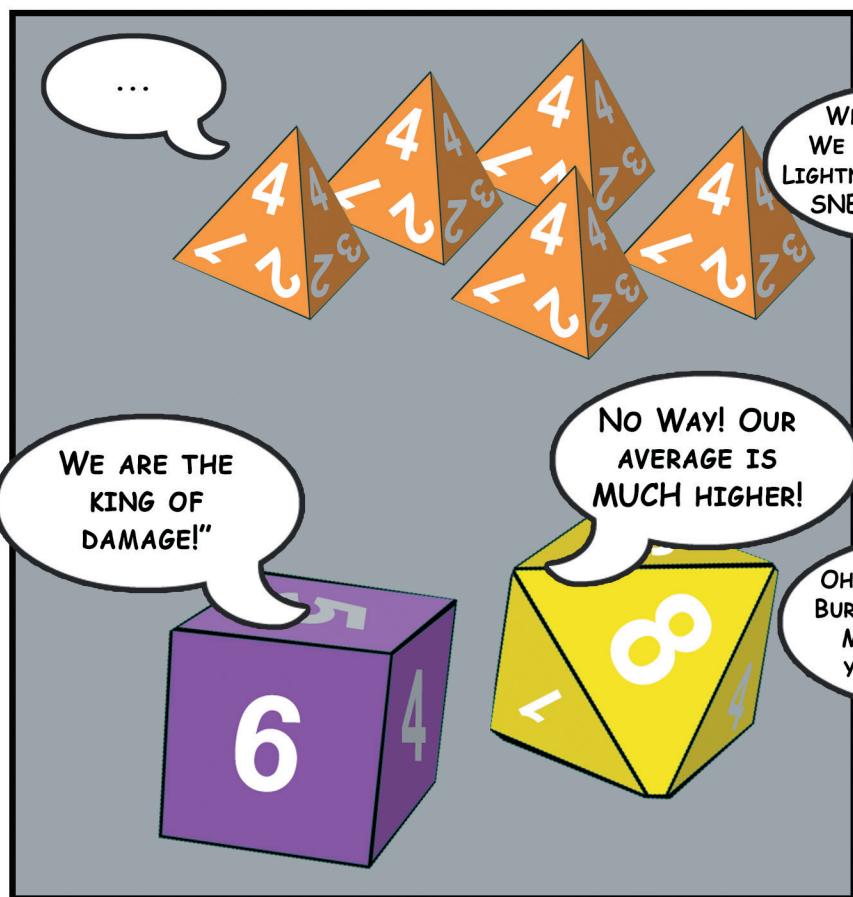
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