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Table of Contents

Slothful Creature Template	7
Can't be bothered ... <i>by Owen K.C. Stephens</i>	
10 Things Found in Giant Spiders' Webs	10
Whole pile o' Nope! <i>by Creighton Broadhurst</i>	
Sloth Spell Showcase	12
Just two spells <i>by David J. Paul</i>	
Slothful Spellcasters	14
New class options for casters <i>by Mike Welham</i>	
Sloth	18
New base class <i>by Ian Sisson</i>	
Department of Humanoid Resources	25
5e NPC companions <i>by Brandes Stoddard</i>	
Starways	28
Adapting monsters to Starfinder <i>by Owen K.C. Stephens</i>	

Departments

Editorial	5
The Art of Rite Publishing	34
Reviews	40
On A Roll	50
The secret life of dice	
OGL	51

PATHWAYS #74

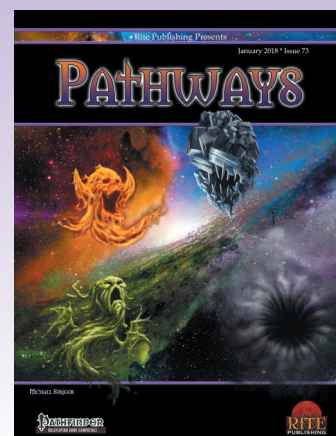
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Editorial

by Dave Paul

As I mentioned last month, as *Pathways* magazine continues to grow we'll be delivering some new material. With this month's issue you should be seeing some new things though if I've managed to pull it off, some of it you won't even notice (at least, not at first). Please do let us know what you like (or don't) when we make changes, and please do let us know what you'd like to see if you're not seeing what you want.

The sloth theme was a tough one for me. I have a weird relationship with laziness. Those who know me well know that I don't fit the stereotype of lazy because I have several employers, work more than one full-time job and several part-time jobs, and at many of these I put in hours beyond what's asked. But, this does mean that I'm almost always falling behind here, there, or somewhere, and forever having to ask forgiveness for missing a deadline or missing something else. It's frustrating, but most of the people I work with know about my multiple projects and they tend to give me some leeway. But, anyone who doesn't know me well and only knows me in one of these areas might think that I am lazy and that my tardiness is a consequence of, well, slothfulness. And, frankly, I really, *really* miss the days of lounging about for hours with nothing to do and nothing pending. I honestly don't remember having one of those in probably more than 30 years, but I have to say, I remember them with some nostalgia.

Even though I struggle with my own conflicts in these regards, I work with an amazing team who generate fantastic content, perform minor miracles behind the scenes to get this magazine published each month, and generally make my days and weeks far more interesting and fun than I have a right to experience. In addition to the inner Rite Publishing family and the *Pathways* crew, we have a profoundly talented pool of contributors. This month, we get a complete class in addition to some of the other, usual offerings. In addition to the sloth class, I'm quite pleased with the slothful spellcasters article (in some measure because of my fondness for spellcasters). And, while perhaps it is a stretch, Creighton Broadhurst's contribution this month fits nicely with the theme (at least, I thought so). Say what you will about spiders, there's something at least somewhat slothful about building a trap and then letting your food come to you.

I'm never entirely sure what people will make of my spells showcase pieces, though I do hope that you enjoy the freebies I send your way. I have developed several spells in my books that really play to the conditions in the game, and I find that being fatigued, slowed or staggered all seem to fall within the broad theme of sloth. But, it's not quite as easy as it might seem to find appropriate matches. Here again, I've done what I thought might be appreciated and I hope you enjoy.

Happy gaming.



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Slothful Creature Template

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

Sometimes the most powerful foes are those who don't want to do anything. The drive to have the power, wealth, and influence to be able to indulge in total sloth can (for short bursts) make the slothful remarkably efficient and merciless. Those who embrace this philosophy strongly enough come to embody it in supernatural ways, becoming archons

of inactivity and paragons of indolence. These creatures are rare, as it takes a lot of powerful "not doing anything" to be imbued with the mystic ability to personify total languor. But for those few who reach the pinnacle of idleness, the reward is the ability for your most effective option to be to do nothing.

Creating a Slothful Creature

Slothful creature is a template that can be added to any corporeal creature.

CR: +1

Alignment: A slothful creature's alignment must be partially neutral—extreme alignments such as lawful good or chaotic evil simply require more dedication than a slothful creature can summon. Most slothful creatures are neutral evil, but any partially-neutral alignment is theoretically possible.

Special Abilities: A slothful creature gains the following special abilities. When it takes no actions, it gains all the benefits of all the abilities that apply as described below. Often taking no actions for a round is a powerful option for a slothful creature.

Can't Be Bothered (Su): A slothful creature always has the option to take no actions, even if other effects (such as charms, compulsions, and enchantments) would normally require it to choose to take some specific action. At the end of a full round of taking no actions, a slothful creature may make a new save against any ongoing effect and, if the save is successful, end the effect.

Sedentary Defense (Su): If a slothful creature takes no actions for a full round, it gains DR equal to its half its CR (minimum DR 1/—), and resist to acid, cold, electricity, fire, and sonic equal to its CR, until the beginning of its next turn. While taking no actions a slothful creature need not eat, sleep, or breathe and any poisons or diseases in its system are suspended until it takes an action (and may then be ended as a result of the can't be bothered special ability).

Short Rest (Su): If a slothful creature takes no actions for a full round, at the end of the round it heals hp equal to 5 + double its CR. It also gains a bonus to attack rolls, the save DC of its abilities,

AC, saving throws, and skill checks equal to the number of consecutive rounds it has taken no actions (to a maximum bonus equal to half its CR). The bonus lasts through the first round in which the creature takes an action, until the beginning of the next round.

Your Pathetic Efforts (Su): The power of inaction is strong in a slothful creature, and it imbues them with the power to mock and punish those who waste effort trying to do something, and failing. When a slothful creature takes no actions, until the beginning of its next turn, if a foe attacks the slothful creature, or tries to affect it with a spell or ability, and for any reason the attack, spell, or ability has no effect (the attack misses, the effect or spell is negated, the effect or attack cannot bypass the slothful creature's DR or resistance, and so on), the foe takes damage equal to the slothful creature's CR. As long as a creature has any of this damage on it, it is fatigued (even if normally immune to fatigue). This is a curse effect.

Example Slothful Creature

Slothful Sorcerer

CR 8

Slothful Storm Sorcerer (Human Sorcerer 8)

XP 4,800

Female human sorcerer 8 (slothful creature)

NE Medium humanoid

Init +6; Senses Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 48 (8d6+20)

Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +6



Resist electricity 10, sedentary defense (DR 4/–, resist all 8), short rest (heal 21 hp, +1/round bonus max +4)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk spear +4 (1d8–1/x3)

Ranged mwk spear +7 (1d8–1/x3)

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +12)
7/day—elemental ray (1d6+4 electricity)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 8th; concentration +12)

4th (4/day)—*ball lightning** (DC 19)

3rd (6/day)—*fly*, *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *protection from energy*

2nd (7/day)—*invisibility*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*
1st (7/day)—*burning hands* (DC 16), *identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*acid splash* (DC 14), *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost* (DC 15), *read magic*

Bloodline elemental (air)

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 17

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (evocation)

Skills Appraise +6, Fly +9, Heal +1, Knowledge (arcane) +12, Knowledge (history) +3, Linguistics +2, Perception +4, Ride +6, Spellcraft +12, Use Magic Device +12

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant

SQ can't be bothered, bloodline arcana, sedentary defense, short rest, your pathetic efforts

Combat Gear *elixir of fire breath*, *potion of bear's endurance*, *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of eagle's splendor*;

Other Gear masterwork spear, *handy haversack*, ring of protection +1, bedroll, tent, 438 gp

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10 Things to Find in a Giant Spider's Web

By Creighton Broadhurst; Illustration by ptitvinc

As hunters, giant spiders often ensnare prey in their webs. In turn, once brave adventurers slay the giant spider they inevitably search its web for treasures—normally plucked from the decomposing bodies of previous victims.

Use this table to add objects of interest—but little value—to proceedings.

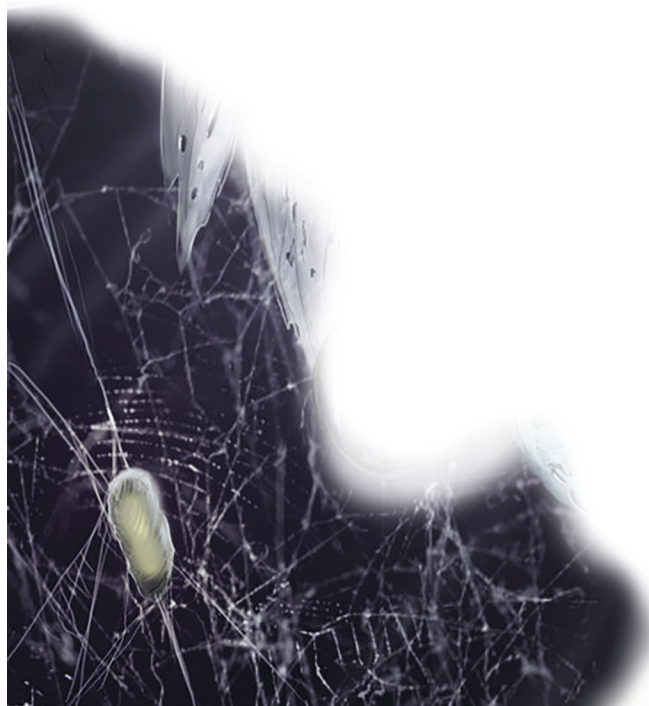
1. A thick bundle of webs holds the dried and desiccated remains of a gigantic rat. The size of dog, the rat's corpse bears several jagged puncture wounds.
2. Dust covers part of the web. When it is shaken—perhaps in battle or while being searched—the dust cascades to the floor temporarily obscuring vision and causing anyone in the area to cough as it fills their lungs.
3. A pile of bones—obviously from a human-sized humanoid—lie scattered below the spider's web. Investigation reveals the skull and spinal column are missing; PCs searching the web find them suspended in a ripped cocoon.
4. A myriad of small spiders scuttle about the web, busily spinning their own tiny webs. The

tiny spiders are the spawn of the giant spider, but there are not enough of them to swarm. Individually, they are no threat to explorers although perceptive individuals note that some of them have a jagged red pattern on their body.

5. One part of the spider's web has been cut down. Wisps of webbing hang from the surviving portions of the web and several desiccated, partially eaten rat corpses lie scattered about the floor.
6. Water drips through the ceiling over one portion of the web. Consequently, that part of the web glistens in the party's lights—perhaps enticingly or suspiciously so.
7. Incongruously, a finely wrought dagger with a discoloured blade hangs in the webs just above the party's heads. Retrieving the dagger is easy, but may alert whatever lives in the web to the presence of intruders.
8. Thick webs fill the area. In one particular area, the webs are wrapped tightly around a yet moving humanoid form. The humanoid is completely enmeshed but still struggles to free itself. If the party free the trapped individual, they discover an adventurer recently succumbed to ghoulish fever...
9. Part of this web has a strange red hue to it. Investigations reveal a spray of dried arterial blood covers much of the webbing. Clearly, from the amount of blood splattered about the place, whatever lives in the web has recently dined well.
10. The skeletal remains of a half-dozen individuals lie scattered about the floor beneath this thick web. Casual examination reveals all the skulls are missing. A search of the web reveals all the missing skulls still embedded in the webs.

GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing

If you enjoy the table above and like dungeon dressing, check out *GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing* from Raging Swan Press—Endzeitgeist's choice as the number one book of 2014! Crammed with over 300 pages of information and charts designed to bring your dungeon alive, *GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing* is an essential part of any GM's arsenal.



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Spells Showcase: Sloth!

By Dave Paul

I felt it would be appropriate to not write anything at all leading up to the spells this month because, well ... sloth. But I decided that for as much fun as that would be, I'd be accused of not doing my job, and we don't want that. So instead, I'm going to write as little as I can get away with and still give the appearance of doing my job because, well ... sloth.

~~

You'll find *torporific bog* in [101 Swamp Spells](#). The spell was designed for both low- and mid-level casters. For low-level casters, hitting a couple of enemies with something that prevents them from running, charging, effectively gives them a -1 on attacks and damage, threatens them with a drop in speed and deeper cuts to Strength and Dexterity if they push themselves, and takes away half their actions in a round, is really, really powerful. The spell requires close range and has a save so there's risk involved, but if it works, this can save a party. For mid-level casters, the spell is a nice use of a second-level slot because it can affect a bunch of targets (which means there's a better chance that someone will miss a save) and lasts long enough to matter in a longish combat encounter. The combination of fatigued and staggered is potentially quite impactful, and the swampy bog imagery is nice.

Torporific Bog

School: Enchantment (compulsion); **Level:** Bard 2, Druid 2, Ranger 2, Sorcerer/Wizard 2, Witch 2

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, M (a bit of bog muck)

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Targets: One creature/level, no two of which may be more than 30 ft. apart

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes

Targets failing their save feel overwhelmed by lethargy. They gain both the fatigued and the staggered conditions.

Targets in a bog or swamp continue to be afflicted by either the fatigued or staggered condition (50% chance for either) for 1d4 rounds after the feeling of lethargy lifts when the spell ends.

~~

Gravesleep curse is from [101 Subterranean Spells](#) and, like many of the curses I've written, one of my favorite flavorful spells. It's almost utterly useless in something like a combat situation and so players who are really only interested in the flash and bang spells will have to look elsewhere (though if I may

say so, I provide plenty of those in my products as well). But, imagine your players' characters enter a town where a whole bunch of people seem to have this weird thing about sleeping in coffins—maybe the well-to-do have coffins in their homes. Wary players will stock up on garlic and holy water, but imagine their surprise when it turns out there's some cruel necromancer in the area who is using his power over people to get what he wants elsewhere. A spell like *gravesleep curse* is much more fun in the hands of a GM than a player, and it provides interesting and weird problems for players when their characters are beset with it. Is it *slothful* per se? Perhaps not, though there's something in the intersection of graves, sleeping and sloth that makes for a natural fit and I've been waiting for an opportunity to slip this one into a spells showcase.

Gravesleep Curse

School: Necromancy [curse]; **Level:** Cleric/Oracle 5, Sorcerer/Wizard 5, Witch 5

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, M/DF (grave dirt)

Range: Touch

Target: Living humanoid touched

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes


The subject is obsessed with sleeping in spaces or in ritual items associated with burying the dead (e.g. coffins, graves, etc.). Whenever the subject gets a full night's rest under such circumstances, she heals twice as many hit points as usual from restful sleep. In addition, sleeping in a grave, coffin, or other similar place associated with the burial of dead causes the subject to recover ability damage at twice the normal rate.

If she sleeps anywhere else, her dreams are upsetting, her sleep is fitful, and she does not recover hit points from sleep. Furthermore, any ability damage caused by undead is not recovered by sleeping.

Finally, all forms of magical healing are minimally effective when used on the subject (a *cure light wounds* spell will cure 1 point plus 1 point per caster level and a *lesser restoration* will cure 1 point of temporary ability damage though it will still eliminate fatigue and reduce the subject from exhausted to fatigued).

The curse bestowed by this spell cannot be dispelled, but it can be removed with a *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish* spell.

Challenge your PCs Like Never Before!

The background of the entire page is a dark, atmospheric illustration of a tomb or dungeon. In the center, a large, cracked stone sphere sits on the floor. To the left, a skeleton is partially visible, and to the right, another skeleton is seen in the background. Two characters are in the foreground: on the left, a character with red hair and a green hat, wearing a green tunic and red-and-gold striped leggings, holding a spear; on the right, a character with blue hair and a blue tunic, wearing a brown leather vest and dark leggings, holding a sword. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the center of the image.

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Slothful Spellcasters

New Class Options for Spellcasters Not on the Move

By Mike Welham; Illustration by Kenlo and Leksaart



I would think as one grows more powerful in terms of arcane might, one would become much lazier. Why walk when you can teleport? Why carry all that treasure you looted from the tome, when you can summon a disc to hold it and move it around for you? I know when I ended my apprenticeship, I enjoyed sitting at my desk and ordering (well, politely asking) apprentices to find books for me while I got in a few sips of tea.

—Melnor, Sage (second class) of Questhaven

Inertial Wizard (Wizard Archetype)

The inertial wizard makes minimized effort into an art form, barely moving as he wields magical might. This lack of movement is his own choice, though, and he resists attempts to speed him up or slow him down. An inertial wizard has the following class features.

Arcane School: An inertial wizard can still select an arcane school. Many inertial wizards choose enchantment, necromancy, or transmutation as their arcane schools to complement their abilities. The inertial wizard must only select one other school as his opposition school.

Additionally, the inertial wizard adds the following spells to the list of spells he can choose to prepare in the additional spell slot reserved for this specialty school. Even if the wizard's opposition school includes these spells, he can prepare them without penalty in his additional spell slot.

1st—*litany of sloth*; 2nd—*hold person*; 3rd—*slow*; 4th—*enervation*; 5th—*hold monster*; 6th—*interposing hand*; 7th—*waves of exhaustion*; 8th—*euphoric tranquility*^{APC}; 9th—*mass hold monster*

Champion of Underexertion:

An inertial wizard has difficulty expending much personal energy and barely responds to spells or effects that change movement. His base speed decreases by 10 feet (to a minimum of 15 feet), and he cannot benefit from

spells or effects that increase his speed. However, he gains a +4 enhancement bonus on saving throws against spells or effects that restrict movement.

During combat, if the inertial wizard moves before casting a spell, he must attempt a concentration check (DC 15 + 1 per 5 feet moved + spell level) or lose the spell. If he takes a standard action and a move action, a full-round action, or a 5-foot step and a move or standard action, during his turn, or if he takes an attack of opportunity, he must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 10, or DC 5 if he only took a 5-foot step and a move or standard action) or become fatigued; if he is already fatigued, he instead becomes exhausted. For each consecutive round he exerts himself in this manner, the Fortitude save DC increases by 5.

Still Spell: At 1st level, an inertial wizard gains Still Spell as a bonus feat. If an inertial wizard prepares a spell with somatic components without applying Still Spell to it, he must use two spell slots of that level to prepare the spell. This ability replaces scribe scroll.

Minimal Effort (Su): Beginning at 5th level, an inertial wizard can cast a spell as if it were modified by the Still Spell feat without increasing the spell's

casting time or level. However, the adjusted spell level cannot exceed the highest level spell slot he can cast (for example, a 5th-level inertial wizard cannot use this ability on a 3rd-level spell). He can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Intelligence modifier. Beginning at 10th level, the inertial wizard can ignore the adjusted spell level limit up to 3 times per day when using this ability.

This ability replaces the bonus feat gained at 5th level.

Steal Momentum (Su): At 10th level, an inertial wizard can steal energy from a foe with a touch. If he succeeds at a touch attack, the target becomes staggered for 1 round, and gains the fatigued condition (or the exhausted condition, if the target is already fatigued) if the wizard had the fatigued or exhausted condition. The wizard, in turn, loses the fatigued condition, or reduces the exhausted condition to fatigued; if the wizard had neither condition, he can take a full round's worth of actions without penalty. The inertial wizard can use this ability as an attack of opportunity and does not need to make a Fortitude save, as per champion of underexertion, if he successfully strikes his target. This ability replaces the bonus feat gained at 10th level.

No Effort (Su): At 15th level, an inertial wizard gains Quicken Spell as a bonus feat. Three times per day, he can cast a spell as if it were modified by the Quicken Spell feat without increasing the spell's casting time or level. However, the adjusted spell level cannot exceed the highest level spell slot he can cast (for example, a 15th-level inertial wizard cannot use this ability on a 5th-level spell). This ability replaces the bonus feat gained at 15th level.

Stillness Sorcerer (Sorcerer Archetype)

The art of minimal action applies even to spontaneous spellcasters, such as stillness sorcerers, who take a very similar tack to inertial wizards.

Champion of Underexertion: A stillness sorcerer has difficulty expending much personal energy and barely responds to spells or effects that change movement. Her base speed decreases by 10 feet (to a minimum of 15 feet), and she cannot benefit from spells or effects that increase her speed. However, she gains a +4 enhancement

bonus on saving throws against spells or effects that restrict movement.

During combat, if the stillness sorcerer moves before casting a spell, she must attempt a concentration check (DC 15 + 1 per 5 feet moved + spell level) or lose the spell. If she takes a standard action and a move action, a full-round action, during her turn, or if she takes an attack of opportunity, she must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 10, or DC 5 if she only took a 5-foot step and a move or standard action) or become fatigued; if she is already fatigued, she instead becomes exhausted. For each consecutive round she exerts herself in this manner, the Fortitude save DC increases by 5.

Bonus Feat: At 1st level, a stillness sorcerer gains Still Spell as a bonus feat. If a stillness sorcerer casts a spell with somatic components without applying Still Spell to it, she must expend two spell slots to cast the spell. However, due to her desire for a lack of exertion, she does not increase the casting time when using Still Spell to modify a spell.



Bonus Spells: A stillness sorcerer can choose to learn one of the following spells instead of a spell derived from her bloodline. Additionally, she may exchange a bloodline spell for one of these spells (or vice versa) at higher levels, but she must observe all other restrictions for exchanging spells. For purposes of other class abilities or feats, the chosen spell counts as a bloodline spell.

3rd—*litany of sloth*; 5th—*hold person*; 7th—*slow*; 9th—*enervation*; 11th—*hold monster*; 13th—*interposing hand*; 15th—*waves of exhaustion*; 17th—*euphoric tranquility*^{APG}; 19th—*mass hold monster*

Lack of Exertion (Su): Beginning at 7th level, a stillness sorcerer can cast a spell as if it were modified by the Still Spell feat without increasing the spell's level. However, the adjusted spell level cannot exceed the highest level spell slot she can cast (for example, a 7th-level stillness sorcerer cannot use this ability on a 3rd-level spell). She can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier. Beginning at 13th level, the stillness sorcerer can ignore the adjusted spell level limit up to 3 times per day when using this ability.

This ability replaces the bloodline bonus feat gained at 7th level.

Stolen Action (Su): At 13th level, a stillness sorcerer can steal energy from a foe with a touch. If she succeeds at a touch attack, the target becomes staggered for 1 round, and gains the fatigued condition (or the exhausted condition, if the target is already fatigued) if the sorcerer had the fatigued or exhausted condition. The sorcerer, in turn, loses the fatigued or exhausted condition; if the sorcerer had neither condition, she can take a full round's worth of actions without penalty. The stillness sorcerer can use this ability as an attack of opportunity and does not need to make a Fortitude save, as per champion of underexertion, if she successfully strikes her target. This ability replaces the bloodline bonus feat gained at 13th level.

Zero Exertion (Su): At 19th level, a stillness sorcerer gains Quicken Spell as a bonus feat. Three times per day, she can cast a spell as if it were modified by the Quicken Spell feat without increasing the spell's casting time or level. However, the adjusted spell level cannot exceed the highest level spell slot she can cast (for example, a 19th-level stillness sorcerer cannot use this ability on a 6th-level spell). This ability replaces the bloodline bonus feat gained at 19th level.

New Witch Hex

The following hex is available to all witches and uses the standard rules for hexes. The save to resist a hex is equal to 10 + 1/2 the witch's level + the witch's Intelligence modifier.

Laziness Hex

The witch can cause a creature within 30 feet to suffer from the pains of overexertion. If the target takes more actions than a standard action or a move action (including a 5-foot step), it takes a –2 penalty on AC, attack rolls, and damage rolls. Additionally, the target cannot take attacks of opportunity; it can take a single attack of opportunity if it only took a move action or a standard action, but does not benefit from abilities granting it additional attacks of opportunity. This hex lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the witch's Intelligence modifier. A Will save reduces this to just 1 round. At 8th level, the penalties increase to –4.

New Major Hex

Starting at 10th level, a witch can select this major hex whenever she could select a new hex.

Curse of Inactivity

The witch can cause a creature within 60 feet to suffer when it exerts itself in any way. The target cannot take any attacks of opportunity. If the target only takes a standard action, a move action, or a 5-foot step, it takes a –4 penalty on AC, attack rolls, and damage rolls. If it takes more actions, the penalty increases to –8 for AC and attack rolls, and –6 for damage rolls. This hex lasts for a number of rounds equal to the witch's level. A Will save reduces this to just 1 round.

New Oracle Curse

An oracle can choose the following curse at 1st level.

Curse of Slothfulness: You cannot exert yourself more than necessary. You can only take a move action or a standard action during your turn, and you cannot make attacks of opportunity. If you wish to take more actions during your turn, you can attempt a DC 20 Will save (the DC increases by 5 for every round you exert yourself in this way), but you are fatigued at the end of your turn. You gain a +4 competence bonus on saves made against compulsions and spells or effects that restrict your movement. At 5th level, you are immune to the staggered condition. At 10th level, you gain immunity to compulsions. At 15th level, you gain immunity to spells or effects that restrict your movement.

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Sloth

A Base Class for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game

By Ian Sisson; Illustration by Karla Frazetty

Sometimes doing nothing is as important as great deeds. Sloths are men and women who have, through inaction, attracted the attention of a powerful supernatural patron — often without their intent. They are empowered by powerful demons of slothfulness, harmonistic deities embodying the Taoist philosophy of *wu wei* (Effort, without effort. Action, through inaction), or by deities associated with slumber or apathy. To these entities, inaction in dire times is a form of prayer.

Sloths, once chosen by a patron, evolve into armored warriors slowing the world around them, by coercion or by force. Filled with an innate lethargy, they drag others down and punish any showing a spark of energy.

Sloths see the world differently. They don't view hustle and bustle as progress, but as wasted effort. They take the path of least resistance, efficiently gaining the most for their actions.

Hit Dice: d10.

Role: Sloths excel at hampering the actions and movements of their enemies. They tire out those standing against them, before pummeling them with powerful strikes. Intelligence determines the duration and strength of most of their class features, and increases the save DCs of their abilities, while Strength helps ensure that the enemy goes down and stays down.

Alignment: Any neutral. Sloths come from many backgrounds, but have difficulty with the zeal required for a more polarized alignment.

Starting Wealth: 4d6 × 10 gp (average 140 gp.) In addition, each character begins play with an outfit worth 10 gp or less.

Class Skills

The sloth's class skills are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str).

Skill Ranks per Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are the class features of the sloth.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The sloth is proficient with all simple weapons and with the light hammer, sap, warhammer, and greatclub. Sloths are also proficient with all armor (heavy, light, and medium) and shields (including tower shields).

Potential Energy (Su): The sloth stores energy normally spent performing actions and can expend this energy to power his class features. At 1st level, the sloth gains a pool of potential energy. He can store a maximum amount of potential energy equal to his sloth level plus his Intelligence modifier (minimum 1). The pool empties at the end of the sloth's turn. On the first turn of combat, the sloth is assumed to have either his pool 1/2 full if he acts during the surprise round or was surprised, or completely full on the first round he acts if he chooses not to act during the surprise round. At the start of his turn, the sloth gains points of potential energy based on the types of actions he took on his last turn, as shown on the table below. The sloth can expend any number of points from his pool of potential energy on his turn, although certain abilities may require a specific type of action.

Table: Potential Energy

Actions Taken	Energy Gained
Full round action, move action and standard action, or double move action (or some equivalent)	0 points
Single standard action	Intelligence modifier
Single move action	1/2 sloth class level
Only free, immediate, or swift actions, or no actions taken (didn't move, attack, use an item, etc.)	Sloth class level + Intelligence modifier

Table 1: The Sloth

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Curse of sloth, potential energy
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Armor of apathy, mark of sloth
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Idle gift
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Bed rest
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Mark of sloth
6th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+2	Idle gift, weighty blows
7th	+7/+2	+5	+2	+2	Slow to feel
8th	+8/+3	+6	+2	+2	Mark of sloth
9th	+9/+4	+6	+3	+3	Idle gift
10th	+10/+5	+7	+3	+3	Aura of unreadiness
11th	+11/+6/+1	+7	+3	+3	Mark of sloth, weighty blows
12th	+12/+7/+2	+8	+4	+4	Idle gift
13th	+13/+8/+3	+8	+4	+4	Social loafing
14th	+14/+9/+4	+9	+4	+4	Mark of sloth
15th	+15/+10/+5	+9	+5	+5	Idle gift
16th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+5	+5	Weighty blows
17th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+5	Mark of sloth
18th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+6	Idle gift
19th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+6	Aura of inaction
20th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+6	Mark of sloth, sloth incarnate

At 1st level, the sloth can expend potential energy in the following ways.

- **Heavy Strike:** When declaring an attack, the sloth can expend potential energy as a free action. Each point of potential energy expended adds +1 to the attack roll. The sloth can expend a maximum number of points of potential energy equal to 1/2 his sloth class level per attack.
- **Lethargy:** The sloth can expend 2 points of potential energy as a move action to cause a creature within 30 feet to become fatigued for a number of rounds equal to the sloth's Intelligence modifier (minimum 1). A Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 sloth's class level + sloth's Intelligence modifier) negates this effect. This is a mind-affecting curse effect.

Curse of Sloth (Ex): Sloths are slow to take action, lazily waiting until forced into the fray. At 1st level, the sloth takes a penalty on initiative checks equal to 1/4 his sloth level (minimum -1). If the sloth goes at least 24 hours without resting at least 8 hours, he

loses all class features exception weapon and armor proficiencies until he rests for at least 8 hours. In addition, a sloth gain additional attacks or actions within a round from any spell or effect. He can still gain any other benefits from the spell or effect. For example, a sloth affected by a *haste* spell would not gain an additional attack when taking the full attack action, but would still gain a bonus to attack, dodge bonus to AC, increased movement speed.

Armor of Apathy (Su): While slow to take action, sloths can be difficult foes to fell, shrugging off lesser blows with indifference. At 2nd level, if the sloth takes only a move or standard action on his turn he gains damage reduction equal to half his sloth level until beginning of his next turn. This damage reduction cannot be penetrated (as DR/—). If the sloth takes no actions (even free, immediate, or swift actions) this damage reduction becomes equal to his class level.

Marks of Sloth (Su): Lazily tracing a rune in the air or sloppily slapping a sigil upon a creature ensures prey doesn't get the upper hand while a sloth

Apathetic (Condition)

The sloth introduces a new condition — apathetic. This functions as being fascinated, only the creature has no point of focus. Instead the creature maintains an emotionally deadened state, showing no interest in their surroundings. Anything that would end a fascination effect also ends the apathetic condition.

rests. At 2nd level, and every 3 levels thereafter (to a maximum of 7 at 20th level), the sloth chooses one of the following benefits. The saving throw DC for any mark of sloth is equal to $10 + 1/2$ sloth's class level + sloth's Intelligence modifier. On a successful save, a target is immune to that specific mark of sloth for 24 hours. A mark of sloth cannot be selected more than once. A mark of sloth is a mind-affecting curse effect.

- **Apathy:** A rune traced in the air literally saps the will to work from a creature within 30 feet. The sloth expends 3 points of potential energy as a move action. The creature must succeed on a Will save or gain the apathetic condition for a number of rounds equal to the sloth's Intelligence modifier. **Break Spirit:** Displaying rare alacrity, the sloth seizes upon a moment of failure to twist the metaphorical knife. As an immediate action in response to a creature within 30 feet failing an attack roll or skill check, the sloth can expend 2 points of potential energy to inflict the apathetic condition on the creature if they fail a Will save. If the sloth has already acted, he lowers the potential energy they gain on his next turn by 2. The sloth can only use this mark if he took no more than a standard or move action on his last turn.
- **Despair:** A rune scrawled in empty air drains the hope from the target. As a standard action the sloth can expend 3 points of potential energy to dispel or end all active morale spells or effects on a target within 30 feet. A Will save negates this effect.
- **Exhaustion:** Sloths hate getting up, getting out of a warm bed, tramping across a marsh, into a dungeon, through a group of goblins, and then having to slug it out with jerks. A sloth can expend 4 points of potential energy as a move action to share this feeling with a target creature within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a Fortitude save or become *exhausted* for a number of rounds equal to the sloth's Intelligence modifier. The sloth must be at least level 10 to select this mark of sloth.
- **Inactivity:** The sloth falls upon a foe and drinks their frivolously spent energy. When attacking, the sloth can expend 3 points of potential energy. On a successful hit, the creature must succeed on a Will save. On a failed save, the target gains the staggered condition for a number of rounds equal to the sloth's Intelligence modifier. The sloth must be at least 10th level to select this mark of sloth.
- **Minimal Effort:** A mystic symbol entices the target to only try so hard. As a standard action the sloth can expend 2 points of potential energy to cause a creature within 30 feet to treat any d20 result of 11 or higher as a 10. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the sloth's Intelligence modifier or until the target rolls an 11 or higher on any d20 roll. A Will save negates this effect.
- **Plodding:** A sloth can cause fervent runners to slog and dally. When attacking, the sloth can expend 3 points of potential energy. On a successful hit, the creature moves at half speed for a number of rounds equal to the sloth's Intelligence modifier. A Fortitude save reduces the duration to a single round.
- **Sleepy Time:** With a mighty, supernatural, yawn the sloth makes another creature mimic it, then slumber. The sloth can expend 3 potential energy as a standard action to cause a creature within 30 feet to succeed on a Will save or fall asleep for a number of rounds equal to the sloth's Intelligence modifier.
- **Stumble:** With a heavy blow, the sloth causes his foe's knees to buckle as they struggle under the weight. When making an attack the sloth can expend 3 points of potential energy to make the creature to go last in the initiative order on a successful hit. If the creature has acted before the sloth, the target goes last in the next round. After 1 round, the target's initiative returns to normal.

Idle Gift (Su): At 3rd level, and every 3 levels thereafter (to a maximum of 6 at 18th level), the sloth gains a powerful supernatural gift from their patron selected from the following list. Unless otherwise noted an idle gift cannot be selected more than once.

- **Deeply Indifferent:** Creatures affected by the apathetic condition caused by the sloth do not automatically break free of the condition when confronted with a hostile action. Instead, they succeed on a Will save (DC $10 + 1/2$ sloth class level + sloth's Intelligence modifier) as a free action when confronted by any hostile action in order to break free.

- **Energy Decay:** Even natural law seems slower and lazier in the presence of the sloth. The sloth can expend 2 potential energy as a move action to exude a 30-foot aura of entropic decay for 1 round. Acid, fire, and electricity damage affecting any creatures within the aura is halved after any resistances or weaknesses are applied. This also has some other, more superficial, effects such as slowing water or slightly reduced wind speeds.
- **Excuses:** The sloth gains a competence bonus equal to half his class level on any Diplomacy check made to request a creature not take an action or cease performing a current action, or any Bluff checks made to either lie about an action the sloth hasn't taken, or to fabricate a reason excusing the sloth from needing to take an action.
- **Monotony Trap:** Any time a creature within 30 feet of the sloth takes actions on their turn identical to the actions they took on their previous turn, the creature takes a -1 penalty on saving throws against any sloth class features until the start of its next turn. This penalty increases by -1 at 6th level and every 3 levels thereafter (to a maximum of -6 at 18th level).
- **No Rush:** The sloth gains the Stand Still feat as a bonus feat, even if he doesn't meet the prerequisites. In addition, when using Stand Still, the sloth can make a normal attack of opportunity instead of a combat maneuver check. Any creature taking damage from the attack of opportunity is affected by Stand Still.
- **Supine Shield:** Focusing slowing energies into his own flesh, the sloth reduces damage dealt. The sloth can expend 2 points potential energy as a swift action to gain the benefits of the armor of apathy ability even if he takes a full-round action, a move and standard action, or a double move action. If the sloth only takes a move or standard action, he can expend 2 points of potential energy to increase the damage reduction gained from armor of apathy equal to be equal to his class level.
- **Unimpressed (Ex):** The sloth can enter a flat state of emotion it is impossible to jar him for good or ill. As a swift action the sloth can become immune to any spell or effect which grants a morale bonus or inflicts a morale



penalty, such as the crushing despair spell or a bard's inspire courage bardic performance. This ability remains constant until the sloth ends it as a swift action.

- **Utter Indifference (Ex):** It is remarkably difficult to influence or frighten someone who doesn't care about anything. The sloth gains a +1 bonus on Will saving throws against mind-affecting effects and fear effects. This bonus increases by +1 at 6th level and every 3 levels thereafter (to a maximum of +6 at 18th level).

Bed Rest (Su): At 4th level, the sloth can burn stored energy to accelerate his own healing. At the end of his turn, if the sloth has taken no actions, he can expend any number of points of potential energy as a free action. Each point of potential energy expended heals 1 hit point of damage. A sloth cannot heal more hit points of damage per day in this manner than his class level x his Intelligence modifier.

Weighty Blows (Ex): Sloths hate making a greater effort than necessary, so focus on ending fights with singular overwhelming strikes. At 6th level, the sloth gains the Vital Strike feat as a bonus feat. As a full-round action, the sloth can take a single attack at his highest attack bonus to gain the benefits of the Vital Strike feat and also add double his Strength modifier to damage.

At 11th level the sloth gains the Improved Vital Strike as a bonus feat. As a full-round action, the sloth can take a single attack at his highest attack bonus to gain the benefits of the Improved Vital Strike feat and also add triple his Strength modifier to damage.

At 16th level he gains Greater Vital Strike as a bonus feat. As a full-round action, the sloth can take a single attack at his highest attack bonus to gain the benefits of the Greater Vital Strike feat and also add four times his Strength modifier to damage.

Slow to Feel (Su): At 7th level, the sloth does not immediately register harm on such a fundamental level it makes him hard to swiftly kill. Whenever the sloth takes hit point damage, he does not suffer the effects of the hit point damage until the end of his next turn. Even if the sloth has taken hit point damage sufficient to make him unconscious or dead, he does not become unconscious or dead until the end of his next turn. If the sloth receives any healing (such as magical healing or the bed rest class feature) before his next turn ends, then it can potentially prevent his death or unconsciousness. This does not affect any secondary effects (such as poisons or magical effects), and only temporarily prevents hit point damage.

Aura of Unreadiness (Su): At 10th level, the sloth exudes a 30-foot aura of hazy smoke. This does not provide concealment, but hampers creatures attempting to react to the changing battlefield conditions. Any creature (including allies) other than the sloth within the aura take a -4 penalty to initiative, cannot make attacks of opportunity, use any feat which reduces how quickly an action can be performed (such as Quick Draw or Rapid Reload), ready actions, or benefit from the evasion (or improved evasion) class feature. A Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 sloth class level + sloth's Intelligence modifier) resists the effect. On a successful save, a creature is immune to the sloth's aura for 24 hours. A creature exiting and reentering the aura can attempt a new saving throw to resist the sloth's aura. who leaves the area and later returns must make a new save. The sloth can suppress or resume this aura as a swift action. This is a mind-affecting curse effect.

Social Loafing (Su): At 13th level, if a conscious creature within 30 feet of a sloth takes no action on their turn during combat (such as when stricken with the apathetic, paralyzed, or stunned condition), the sloth gains an additional 1 point of potential energy at the start of his turn. This benefit is cumulative if there is more than one creature within 30 feet taking no action. This cannot increase the sloth's points of potential energy to more than his normal maximum.

Aura of Inaction (Su): At 19th level, the sloth becomes the center of a 30-foot aura of cloying miasma. Any creature (including allies) other than the sloth starting their turn within the sloth's aura must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 sloth's class level + sloth's Intelligence modifier) or become staggered for 1 round. On a successful save, a creature is immune to the sloth's aura of inaction for 1 minute. The sloth can suppress or resume this aura as a move action. This is a mind-affecting curse effect.

Sloth Incarnate (Sp): The sloth has become the personification of inaction and laziness, and all in his presence find it hard to fight with full effort. At 20th level, any creature (including allies) other than the sloth within 30 feet of the sloth cannot make more than one attack on their turn. A Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 the sloth's class level + sloth's Intelligence modifier) negates this effect. On a successful save, the creature is immune to this ability for 1 minute. This affects only attacks made while within 30 feet of the sloth, and a creature moving far enough away can potentially make more attacks in a round even on a failed save. The sloth can suppress or resume this ability as a standard action. This is a mind-affecting curse effect.

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MUSKETEER

Musketeers are brave (or foolish) swashbucklers who wield firearms with reckless abandon on the battlefield. Favored by swaths of organizations and kingdoms, a musketeer's daring nature makes him ideal for the high-risk, high-reward gamble of brandishing firearms.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: At 1st level, a musketeer gains proficiency with all simple weapons and martial weapons, as well as two-handed firearms. This replaces the swashbuckler's weapon proficiency.

Deeds: The picaroon gains the following deeds, each of which replaces an existing swashbuckler deed.

Quick Clear (Ex): At 3rd level, as a standard action the picaroon can spend 1 panache point to remove the broken condition from a single one-handed firearm she is currently wielding, as long as the firearm gained that condition through a misfire. This deed replaces kip-up.

Gunsmithing: At 1st level, a musketeer gains the gunsmith class feature, as a gunslinger, including a battered firearm. This ability replaces the base ability of the swashbuckler's personage.

Firearm Finesse (Ex): Beginning at 3rd level, a musketeer can select a two-handed firearm that she is proficient with using the finesse training ability instead of a melee weapon that belongs to a fighter weapon group that she has selected with swashbuckler weapon training. If she does so, she adds her Dexterity bonus (if any) to damage rolls with the selected firearm. This ability alters finesse training.

Picaroon Training (Ex): At 1st level, a musketeer gains the benefits of the Weapon Finesse feat with light or one-handed melee weapons that belong to one fighter weapon group of her choice. This ability counts as having the Weapon Finesse feat for purposes of meeting feat prerequisites. She also gains the benefits of the Rapid Reload (musket) feat. This ability counts as having both the Weapon Finesse and Rapid Reload feats for the purpose of meeting feat prerequisites.

Every four levels thereafter (5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th), a musketeer gains a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls with two-handed firearms and weapons belonging to her chosen fighter weapon group, and she gains the benefits of the Improved Critical feat with those weapons. This ability alters swashbuckler weapon training and the precise strike deed.



The Department of Humanoid Resources (5e)

By Brandes Stoddard; Illustration by Nomad Soul@DollarPhotoClub

In campaigns inspired by old-school playstyles, and in campaigns with smaller groups of players, Companion NPCs may join the adventuring party. These NPCs provide color commentary, additional muscle in combat, and – if it suits the group’s style – some light comic relief.

The GM develops the names and personalities of Companion NPCs. In general, the GM portrays Companion NPCs in conversation. Control shifts to the player that the NPC is attached to during combat – after all, the GM already has enough to worry about in fight scenes. Some groups may wish to try a more troupe-style approach, in which a player portrays both their own character and a Companion NPC attached to another player.

Attracting Companion NPCs

Players gain the services of these NPCs through various means. A **torchbearer** is typically hired from a local settlement, and seldom willing to travel more than a few days from home, depending on their personality. On the other hand, the party’s torchbearer might be the younger sibling of a PC, hoping to survive long enough to become a full-fledged adventurer themselves. Hiring a torchbearer costs 2 silver pieces per day, plus bonus danger pay that likely doubles or triples this rate.

An **apprentice wizard** generally can’t be hired directly. Instead, they come from the PCs’ social standing and interactions. A sorcerer or wizard of even modest accomplishment might attract a promising (or hapless) apprentice, or suborn a rival’s apprentice. An apprentice wizard is on the way to being a skilled hireling, and might cost 1 gold piece per day, plus bonus danger pay. It’s also entirely reasonable to leave apprentices back in one’s home base, where they maintain the master’s ongoing projects and try very hard not to cause any catastrophes.

A **squire** usually can’t be hired directly; they serve knightly warriors and nobles. The knight becomes responsible for the squire’s costs of living, but does not otherwise have to pay the squire. Some squires, on the other hand, are not youths pursuing knighthood, but are older warriors who can’t gain the full status of knighthood for various social reasons. They might be hired as skilled hirelings, for 2 gold pieces per day, plus bonus danger pay that likely doubles or triples this rate.

A **scholar** is often the one hiring the PCs. They pay according to their means, and expected danger, for the PCs to guard them as they explore crumbling ruins of historical interest. They aren’t usually helpful in combat. In some cases, the PCs might know that a dungeon holds clues to a deeper puzzle and hire a scholar to help them understand these mysteries. Such scholars expect to be paid as skilled hirelings, including danger pay.

A **talking skull** is a great source of unreliable information on a vast range of topics. Most talking skulls are found in the course of an adventure and decide on their own to accompany the PCs. The good news is, you don’t have to pay them. The bad news is, you can’t dock their pay. You should trust whatever the talking skull tells you. I’m sure it’s fine.

Experience Points and Hirelings

If you’re using an XP system that divides XP for monsters slain by the number of PCs participating, each hireling counts as a half-share of the XP earned. They have a decent number of hit points and other defenses, but otherwise don’t offer the full array of character features.

Apprentice Wizard (Companion)

Small or Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft

STR 8 (-1) **DEX** 12 (+1) **CON** 10 (+0) **INT** 15 (+2)

WIS 12 (+1) **CHA** (+0)

Skills Arcana +4

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Sycophant. When the apprentice uses the Help action, the creature they help also gains advantage on Wisdom and Charisma saving throws until the beginning of the apprentice’s next turn.

Spellcasting. The apprentice is a 1st-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12). The apprentice has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (3 per short rest): *light, prestidigitation, ray of frost*

1st level (2 slots): *detect magic, color spray*

Ritual Assistant. The apprentice cannot (yet) cast rituals on their own, but they aid their teacher in the daily rituals of spell preparation. If their teacher prepares spells as part of a long rest, the apprentice grants them one additional spell preparation slot.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Scholar (Companion)

Small or Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (padded armor)

Hit Points 28 (8d8 – 8)

Speed 25 ft

STR 8 (-1) **DEX** 12 (+1) **CON** 8 (-1) **INT** 16 (+3)

WIS 12 (+1) **CHA** 12 (+1)

Saving Throws Int +5

Skills Arcana +5, History +5, Investigation +5, Nature +5, Religion +5

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic, and two others

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Sage Advice. When the scholar uses the Help action and the attack or ability check succeeds, the target creature gains 1d6 + 3 temporary hit points. The scholar can use this feature 3 times, regaining all expended uses when they finish a short or long rest.

Danger? Where? The scholar is typically oblivious to the danger of anything but the most dangerous monsters. When a trap makes an attack against the scholar or forces the scholar to roll a saving throw, the scholar must spend a reaction to choose a different target if any other creature is within the trap's reach or range.

Live to Tell the Tale. As a reaction when the scholar would take damage, the scholar can move up to half its speed. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks. If the scholar ends this move behind cover, the cover counts as one grade better, up to total cover.

Equipment. The scholar typically has a random collection of 1d4+1 spell scrolls of 1st and 2nd-level spells. The scholar can use them as if the spell were on their spell list.

ACTIONS

Interesting Facts. The scholar chooses a creature within 30 ft and rolls an Investigation check against

DC = target's CR (or level) + target's Wisdom score. On a success, one other creature that can hear the scholar gains advantage on its next attack roll against the target, and on a hit deals an additional 1d8 damage.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Squire (Companion)

Small or Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (ring mail and shield)

Hit Points 38 (7d8 + 7)

Speed 30 ft

STR 15 (+2) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 12 (+1) **INT** 10 (+0)

WIS 10 (+0) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Skills Animal Handling +2, Athletics +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Team Player. When the squire uses the Help action to grant advantage to an attack, the attack deals an additional d6 damage on a hit.

Shield-bearer. While the squire has a shield in hand, when a creature within 5 feet moves, the squire can spend a reaction to prevent opportunity attacks against the moving creature.

Ready to Serve. When the creature that the squire primarily serves regains hit points and the squire is within 10 feet of them, the squire also regains hit points equal to half that value.

ACTIONS

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage.

Talking Skull (Companion)

Tiny undead, any alignment

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 31 (9d4 + 9)

Speed 5 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR 14 (+2) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 12 (+1) **INT** 12 (+1)

WIS 8 (-1) **CHA** 14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +1

Skills Deception +4, History +3

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Untrustworthy. No effect, including mind control, can compel the talking skull to speak the truth. No spell effect can reveal a lie the talking skull has told.

Harangue. When the talking skull uses the Help action to aid a creature's attack and the attack succeeds, the target of that attack suffers disadvantage on next attack roll, saving throw, or ability check. If the attack fails, the creature that the talking skull aided suffers 1d4 psychic damage from the talking skull's vicious mockery.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Torchbearer (Companion)

Small or Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft

STR 12 (+1) **DEX** 13 (+1) **CON**

14 (+2) **INT** 8 (-1) **WIS** 10 (+0)

CHA 8 (-1)

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Shine the Light. When the torchbearer carries a light source and uses the Help action to aid an ally within the area of their light, if the ally succeeds at the task, they gain a +5 bonus to passive Perception until the beginning of the torchbearer's next turn.

Flame in Hand. While the torchbearer carries a lit torch, when the torchbearer or a creature they can see within 5 feet would roll a saving throw to avoid cold damage, the torchbearer can spend a reaction to grant advantage on that saving throw.

ACTIONS

Torch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) fire damage.

Dagger. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 20/60. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.



Development Through Play

As the PCs advance, Companion NPCs may fall by the wayside if they do not gain hit points and additional features to keep contributing to the party's success. If everyone is happy with that outcome, then there's no problem: they simply stop having hirelings around. On the other hand, many groups develop emotional attachments to their Companion NPCs, especially if they're portrayed as dedicated friends rather than burdens on the party. If the players want to see the hirelings advance and remain a part of the team, gradually increase their hit points, ability scores, and proficiency bonus. Also take into account any magic items or other improved equipment that the party lavishes upon them. The NPCs should never outshine the PCs, of course.

Introducing Starways

By Owen K.C. Stephens; Background by Publisher's Choice; Illustration by Doppingqnk

Welcome to the Starways! Pathways Magazine has, since its inception, been focused on bringing you material for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game and interviews and previews relevant to fans of that game system. It's one of the longest-running RPG magazines still available in a print format, and shows no sign of slowing or changing its successful formula.

Well, no sign of changing it *much*.

With the release of the science-fantasy Starfinder Roleplaying Game, Pathways is going to start periodically having previews, reviews, and new articles to support that game system. We'll pay attention to how those are received, so if the idea of a "Starways" section isn't popular, we'll dial it back. If it's a huge hit, maybe we can even expand things. But for now, it's just a small part of Pathways designed to let fans of the Starfinder Roleplaying

Game benefit from the same kind of coverage and material Pathfinder Roleplaying Game fans have enjoyed for years.

Of course, we hope this inclusion means we'll draw in some new fans to the magazine. If you are one of those fans, and you're wondering if it's worth picking up past issues let me assure you that a LOT of the material from back issues can be used in a science-fantasy setting just fine. Things like GM tips, dungeon dressing, and interviews with game designers are largely system-neutral. And the Starfinder Roleplaying Game has a "Legacy" chapter that discusses legacy conversions from one game system to the other. And since Pathfinder magazine has a lot of monsters, it seems worth going over some quick and easy ways to use those monsters in a Starfinder Roleplaying Game campaign!

Adapting Fantasy Monsters

Adapting fantasy monsters (perhaps taken from the newly released *Pathways Bestiary*!) to work in your science-fantasy campaign isn't really much work, and especially when converting things from Rite Publishing, Rogue Genius Games, or other major publishers of compatible material, there's no need to go through the more involved process outlined in the Legacy chapter of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*. In general, all you really need to worry about is the special abilities that make a monster interesting and memorable. No player is going to reminisce about how a medusa has a +6 Reflex save or Weapon Finesse. It's the petrifying gaze that everyone recalls, and that's easy to convert to a science-fantasy game. After that, everything else is just numbers that should be close to appropriate, but don't have to hit any one exact value.

Obviously some threats rely on spells or combat maneuvers to be interesting—a constrictor snake should constrict—but in most cases the Starfinder Roleplaying Game has the same basic special abilities (grab, swallow whole, and so on) as its fantasy-

focused cousin, and it's easy to pick universal creature rules to match standard fantasy most abilities. It's when you want to convert some interesting ability from a monster that you may need to do some work, but even then it's rarely very difficult. As an example of this process, we're going to go through the steps needed to take the Slothful Storm Sorcerer (from the Slothful Creature article in this same magazine issue) and turn it into a science-fantasy monster ready for any Starfinder Roleplaying Game encounter.

The most important thing for this process isn't the Legacy chapter of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook*, but "Appendix One: Creating Monsters and Other NPCs" from *Starfinder Alien Archive*. Again, an exact conversion of numbers isn't necessary, or even helpful. The fastest way to make a Pathfinder Roleplaying Game monster a good Starfinder Roleplaying Game encounter is to use the statistics array for the type of creature you want (combatant, expert, or spellcaster), and then add the interesting abilities unique to it.

So for the first step in our conversion, we just note down all the numbers from the spellcaster array for a CR 9 creature. There's no need to make complicated calculations or try to match any of the values of the original slothful storm sorcerer. In fact, at its simplest, we could run our slothful technomancer just by looking at the values in the spellcaster arrays, adding any of the special abilities from the fantasy version that apply to the new rules, and picking two 3rd level spells for her to cast. I've done that kind of on-the-fly adjustment when running Pathfinder Roleplaying Game adventures for the Starfinder Roleplaying Game, and it's absolutely good enough for anything the players are just going to attack and kill. If you want to use a fantasy creature as a major long-term antagonist or recurring ally or patron you may want to go through this full process, but for the vast majority of cases you can use the array numbers without change and add the special abilities of whatever creature you want to convert, and the end result works fine as a conversion for your science-fantasy campaign. A GM has enough work to do without spending more than a few minutes updating cool fantasy monsters to a adjacent game system.

In most cases, you don't even need to worry much about the monster's ability bonuses. Your can assign the ability scores as you like without affecting much—Dexterity impacts initiative and Strength impacts melee damage, but things like skills, saving throw, attack bonuses and so on aren't affected. In this case I used the fantasy slothful storm sorcerer as a guideline for where to put my ability bonuses, but I could have used exactly the same values, or changed everything to a flat +2, and neither would have made enough of a difference to change the end result's CR. There's nothing wrong with dotting all your I's and crossing all your t's, but if you just want to grab an awesome monster and throw it into your Starfinder Roleplaying Game campaign, once again it's the special abilities (and maybe spells) that matter most.

But let's assume we want a full stat block. Maybe the slothful technomancer is going to show up for multiple encounters? So, once we have the array values, let's make the changes we need for being human, and being a technomancer. The first means we add grafts for the humanoid type and human subtype. It wouldn't be a big deal if we skipped this step, but this is where most races pick up iconic



abilities by type, such as darkvision or having four arms... though neither of those apply to our slothful creature. So we'll boost the Will save by +2 for being humanoid, and tack on an extra good skill for being human. Speaking of skills, this is a place where the Legacy chapter may be helpful. Telling you what skills you use in place of a monster's original choices. A few skill choices are important—if you can fly, you likely want to know your Acrobatics score—but in most cases it's more important to know how you want to use your converted monster than worry about how the creature functioned in a fantasy setting with no computers or starships. Since we're going for a technomancer here, I picked some tech-related things, but I could just as easily gone for Life Sciences, or a mix of options. I also get +1 special ability, but I'm ignoring that for now. I'll discuss why in a bit.

The technomancer graft is a bit more involved, but still not a big deal. A CR 9 technomancer gets a spell cache, cache capacitor I, one 8th-level and one 5th-level magic hack. Again, these can just be chosen to match the theme of your monster. If you make a demon technomancer, don't worry about what magic hacks are "right" for it. Just pick some from the core rulebook you think sound appropriate. You can even ignore these, or replace them with other special abilities (yes, we're about to get to those).

A few final choices, and we're done with the base statistics. For spells I used the choices a CR 9 spellcaster NPC gets, and picked a few that have the same names as their fantasy version, and a few that just felt storm-related. Similarly with weapons and armor, picking anything appropriate in roughly the right item level range for the NPC's CR is good enough. In this case there's a spear with an item level of 8, really close to our CR 9 and similar to the weapon of the original slothful storm sorcerer, so we used that. The armor matters less unless you need armor upgrades for a well-equipped NPC, but in this case it's mostly just loot and a way to know how long our slothful technomancer can float around in a vacuum.

Now, we look at the special abilities of our original creature.

Anything that just gives an always-effective bonus to some number, you can ignore. That's

already going to be handled by setting the monster's CR where you need it. If you are adapting an ogre with the Advanced simple template, don't create a CR 3 conversion then try to apply the flat bonuses of the Advanced template to boost it by +1 CR—just make a CR 4 ogre to begin with, and you'll have the statistical numbers you need. Similarly if a template or ability is just supposed to make a creature tougher, or change it's type or subtype or alignment, or give is class features, just make the change and don't worry about adjusting any numbers. Yes, an ogre with the fire subtype has some advantage over an ogre without it, but you can just add the benefits of the subtype and let the players figure out they want to use cryoguns rather than flamethrowers.

Also, don't worry too much about the number of special abilities a monster should have when making a conversion. Yes, your umbral half-dragon phrenic flenser may have a few too many special abilities, but again as long as you are using the correct array for its CR and category (combatant, expert, or spellcaster), the end result is close enough. There's a wide range of potency within every CR, and if one CR 3 fight is slightly tougher than another, that's fine.

So, in many cases, you can just add all the special attacks and abilities of the fantasy creature to the statistics of the science-fantasy version, and it works fine. If a monster has special attacks, breath weapons, gaze attacks, multiple melee options or so on, the monster creation rules in "Appendix One: Creating Monsters and Other NPCs" from *Starfinder Alien Archive* can tell you how to generate a version that matches the expectations of the *Starfinder Roleplaying Game*. Don't worry if your 9-headed hydra only ends up with 3 attacks in a full attack—how likely was it that it could get 9 heads all on one target to begin with?

The main thing you need to look at is cases where the fantasy rules work differently than the science-fantasy versions, most often in how actions and full actions work, bonus types, and how damage scales. Again, this is a place where the Legacy chapter of the *Starfinder Core Rulebook* DOES help, because it call out some of those broad cases and tells you how

to deal with them. With that in mind, let's look at the special abilities of our slothful storm sorcerer—can't be bothered, sedentary defense, short rest, and your pathetic efforts (see the Slothful Creature temp[alte] in this issue for the full write up of those abilities.

Can't be bothered and sedentary defense work just fine with the Starfinder Roleplaying Game rules, so we don't need to make any changes.

Short rest could be left alone, but healing works a little differently in the science-fantasy version of the game, so maybe we should adjust it. Rather than free magic healing, we could allow a short rest to instead act like a 10-minute rest. This means she gets a lot more healing (all her Stamina Points), but it also requires her to spend resolve Points (which she only has so many of, and which she needs for some of her magic hacks). That still seems like a big benefit, but it matches the game rules a little better. The bonuses granted are untyped, so those don't need to be changed.

Your pathetic efforts CAN be used as it... but with the scaling of damage in the Starfinder Roleplaying Game, it's generally better to rewrite damage to match the NPC creation array. So instead of doing flat damage based on CR, we'll have to do damage based on the ranged energy damage of a CR 9 spellcaster—2d6+9. The rest of the ability works fine, and is unchanged.

We could add some serums, or grenades, or spell gems if we wanted to, but even without those we now have a fully functional science-fantasy antagonist!

Slothful Storm Technomancer CR 9

[COMBATANT]

XP 6,400

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; Perception +17

DEFENSE

HP 120 RP 8

EAC 21; KAC 22

Fort +8; Ref +8; Will +14

Defensive Abilities can't be bothered, sedentary defense

OFFENSE

Speed 25 ft. (30 ft. unarmored)

Melee sentinel spear +15 (2d6+9 SP)

Ranged sentinel spear +17 (2d6+9 SP)

Spell-Like Abilities (CI 9th) base DC 17

3/day—*arcing surge* (DC 20), *flight* (3rd level spell)

6/day—*caustic conversion*, *fog cloud*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*

At will—*jolting surge*, *magic missile*

Offensive Abilities distant spell, spell cache

STATISTICS

Str +0; **Dex** +3; **Con** +0; **Int** +4; **Wis** +0; **Cha** +6

Skills Acrobatics +17, Computers +22, Mysticism +22, Physical Science +17

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant

Other Abilities Cache capacitor I (*unseen servant*), flash teleport

Gear D-suit III, sentinel spear

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Short Rest (Ex) When the slothful storm technomancer takes no action for a round, she can spend 1 Resolve Point to regain all her Stamina Points as if she had taken a 10-minute rest. She also gains a bonus to attack rolls, the save DC of its abilities, EAC, KAC, saving throws, and skill checks equal to the number of consecutive rounds it has taken no actions (to a maximum bonus equal to half its CR). The bonus lasts through the first round in which the creature takes and action, until the beginning of the next round.

Your Pathetic Efforts (Su): The power of inaction is strong in a slothful creature, and it imbues them with the power to mock and punish those who waste effort trying to do something, and failing. When a slothful creature takes no actions, until the beginning of its next turn, if a foe attacks the slothful creature, or tries to affect it with a spell or ability, and for any reason the attack, spell, or ability has no effect (the attack misses, the effect or spell is negated, the effect or attack cannot bypass the slothful creature's DR or resistance, and so on), the foe takes damage equal to the slothful creature's CR. As long as a creature has any of this damage on it, it is fatigued (even if normally immune to fatigue). This is a curse effect.

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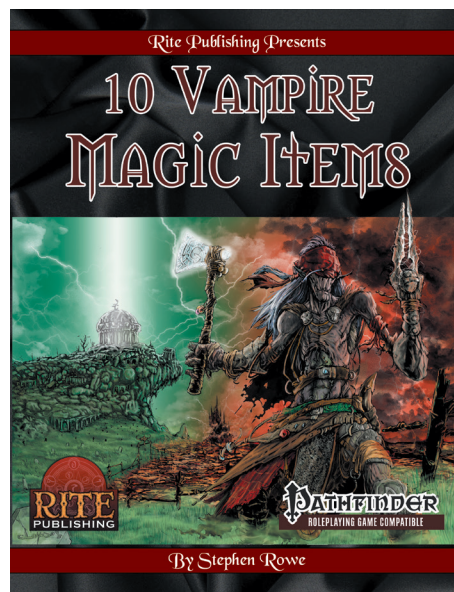
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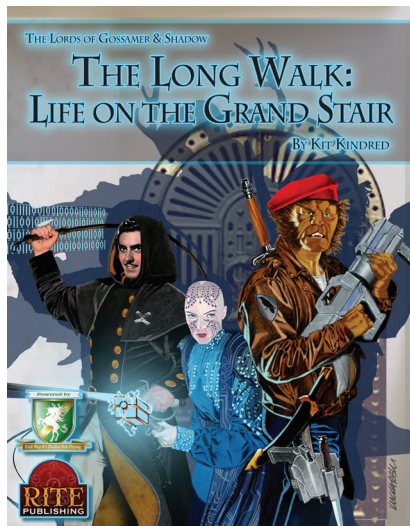


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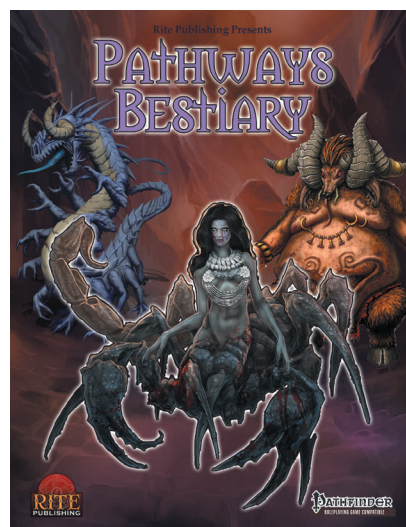
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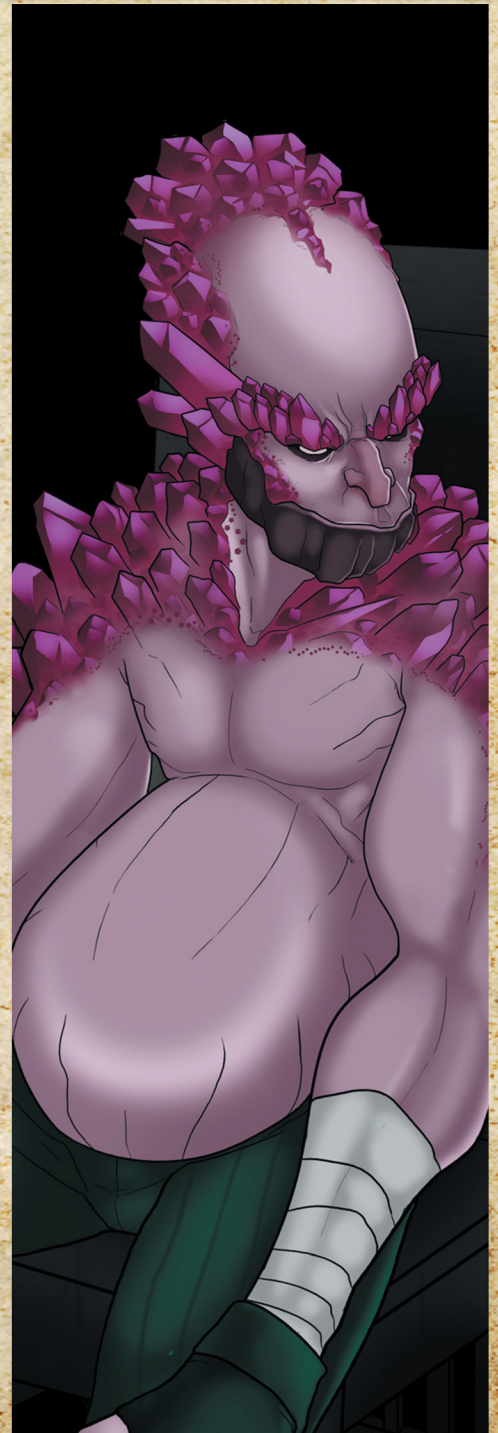
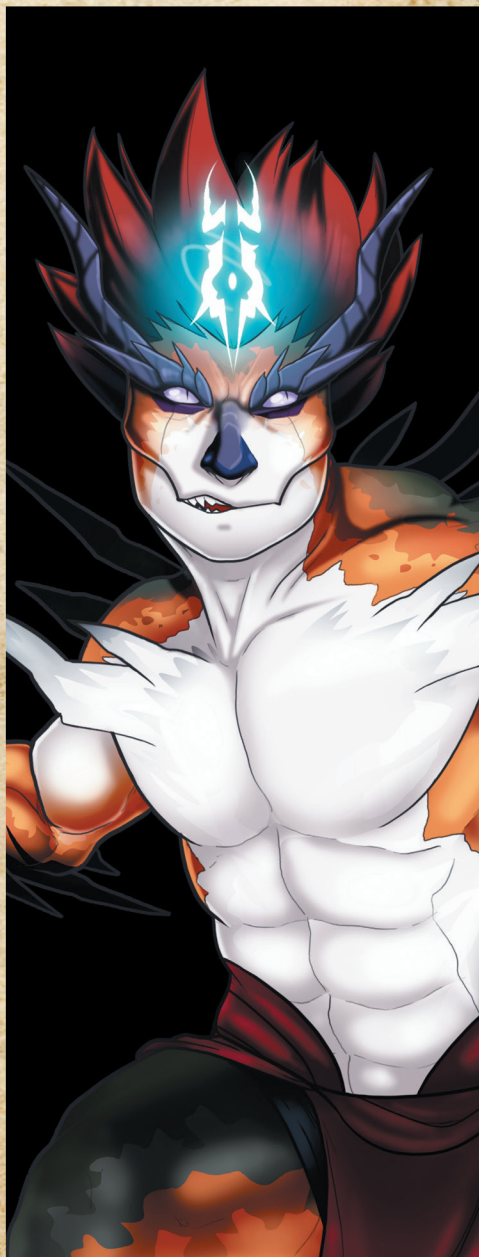


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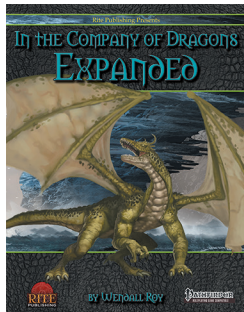
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Reviews



In the Company of Dragons Expanded

Publisher: Rite Publishing

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

The massive expansion hardcover of „In the Company of Dragons“ clocks in at a massive 199 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 194 (!!) pages of content, so let's take a look!

This review was moved up in my reviewing queue at the request of my patrons. It was further expedited by me receiving a print copy.

All right, so we begin with a massive foreword by Bill Slavicsek, original author of the by now classic Council of Wyrms...and then we dive right in. Okay, usually, I assume a degree of familiarity regarding the “In the Company of...”-series, mainly, because it is by far the best monster-playing option series out there for any d20-based game. Yes, I'll stand by that. Since this book is a massive hardcover expansion of the original content, it must be considered to be special. Let us be a bit more in-depth.

So the first thing you'll note upon starting to read this massive tome, particularly if you're new to the series, is that this does not read like your average splatbook: Rite Publishing employs a cool framing narrative, wherein Qwilion of Questhaven requests members of specific species to talk about their own race; we basically get the inside scoop, and this is amazing for a couple of reasons. In the hands of a talented author, this inadvertently means that we get a glimpse at the psyche, biases and Weltanschauung of the respective races featured, one that goes beyond what we'd otherwise receive from a neutral depiction. As an aside, this also makes paragraphs that many readers are likely to skip in other publications a joy to read – this book is no difference and does not read like a phone-book of stats, but rather like a compelling, intriguing glimpse at draconic psychology.

These write-ups, obviously, also tap into creation myths and an oftentimes delightfully positive view of physical descriptions. Qwilion's draconic correspondent, Thunders in Defiance, for example, wastes no time mentioning how the draconic form is the crest of royal houses, a symbol of destruction and majesty. These are little components that accumulate, enhancing the

profile we have of the race: When e.g. the dragons tell us about how a clan of Taninim (that's the name of the dragon-race herein) consumed a divine clam, losing their wings and becoming compelled to organize the world as a potential origin story for imperial dragons, I couldn't help but smile at the compelling mythweaving. Now, beyond these components, we also learn, in depth, about the structuring paradigms of the taninim society in the Lost Isles, the backdrop/setting that houses them – more on that later; for now, let it be known that taninim differ in a couple of key aspects from regular dragons, but fret not: This does NOT mean that they are anything short of majestic apex predators. The Lost Isles is what I'd call a tie-in mini-setting; much like the Plane of Dreams or the Shadowplane, it allows for easy plugging into another campaign setting and its presence explains why few folks had heretofore heard of the taninim.

Anyways, the reputation of a taninim is important and the pdf explains the various grand rites of the race – these are relatively rules-lite rituals that account for example for banishment, challenges, changing alignment, etc. The acquisition of names and titles is also a big deal, with additional, grandiose titles gained...and there is a rite that governs basically a mating ritual of the otherwise mostly asexual taninim, who btw. also can change sex. These entries do codify their effects in proper rules-language, just fyi, so yes, while flavorful, they also carry game-mechanics with them that make their success or failure relevant in game-terms.

It should be noted that alignment changes may actually yield a painful process in which the character gets new scales, and the extensive discussion also delves into taninim religion and the psychology of hoards and lairs – territory is important. Now, it should be noted that chromatic/metallic distinctions are not *necessarily* color-coding. All right, I know, I'm waffling – so let's take a look at the rules-chassis, shall we?

Taninim are dragons, receive +2 Con and Cha, -2 Dex, are Small, receive regular movement, can use manufactured weapons et al (at a -2 penalty) with their claws (secondary, base damage 1d3), receive darkvision and low-light vision, are immune to sleep and paralysis, can glide, receive +1 atk and +2 AC versus dragons as well as +2 to saves versus SPs, spells, etc. of such targets and +2 to Knowledge (arcana) to identify dragons. They also get a properly codified natural primary bite of 1d6 +1.5 Str-mod; Their hide yields +2 natural AC, but their form requires special armor. They increase ACP by 2 and suffer the same amount as a penalty to atk when wearing one; oh, and they reduce their maneuverability by one step when

wearing armor while flying. They also get a +2 racial bonus to Perception and Sense Motive. Taninim are quadrupeds, receiving modified slots (armor, belt (saddle only), chest, eyes, headband, neck, shoulders and wrist. Armor costs are doubled, but they get a greater carrying capacity, depending on size, as well as the usual +4 to CMD versus trip and overrun.

Alternatively, they can elect, racial ability modifier-wise, for +2 Str and Con, -2 Int, +2 Dex and Cha, -2 Wis, or +2 Wis and Cha, -2 Dex. Among the alternate racial traits. Beyond these, we get alternate racial traits. It should be noted that the alternate ability arrays are not simply that – instead, they are tied to certain types of flavor and additional benefits – the Dex and Cha-boosting option, for example, comes with Tiny size and sports only a 20 ft. base movement rate, but also provides a fly speed from the get-go. Yeah, in case you didn't know that already, we're talking DRAGONS right here; I'm not going to complain about the first-level flight here. If you're reading this book, you're not going for a gritty low-fantasy game where that would become overly intrusive. There is a trait to use Wisdom instead of Intelligence for Knowledge skills where the character has at least 1 rank. +2 concentration, better giant killing (+1 to atk, +4 to AC), being a Lung dragon, immunity to altitude sickness and no lost Dex-bonus when climbing; better aerial combat, toxic blood and spiny hides complement this array. The alternate racial traits contain meaningful tweaks beyond their mechanics.

The race also receives a couple of favored class options -barbarian, druid, fighter, magus, monk, paladin, ranger, sorcerer, [taskshaper](#) and [war master](#) are covered. Before I delve into the respective archetypes provided, let's not mince words so far – the taninim are strong. On a cosmetic level, the slight feature-bloat and two alternate attribute-sets that gear the race towards caster/martials are not something I'm overly fond of. Still, generally, the race itself can be considered strong, but manageable. It should be noted that we get tables denoting sizes by category, which is really neat.

Now the racial paragon-class is the draconic exemplar, which covers 20 levels, nets the taninim full BAB-progression, 3 good saves, d12 HD, 4+Int skills per level, no proficiencies apart from natural weapons. The taninim also receives a draconic essence – each of which provides one type of scaling energy resistance, a color, a breath weapon type and a unique compulsion, which always remains hard for the dragon to refrain from doing – which fits in thematically nice with the overall theme of draconic types. How many do we get in the expanded edition? Well, not “just” 20 as before...but rather than that

4+ pages of them!! Twice as many as before! And yes, these include trifling dragons, zealots, primeval ones, etc. Upon taking level 1 in the class, claws are upgraded to primary weapons and 1d4 damage. (The claws and how they work are one of the changes in this expanded version.) And yes, the role of e.g. linnorms in the context of the Lost Isles is covered.

Additionally, at 1st level, 7th, 13th and 19th level, the draconic exemplar can choose draconic weaponry – these can be used 1/2 class level + Con-mod times per day. Rather interesting – if applicable, their save-DC is governed by either Con or Cha, depending on the ability. They include fascination-inducing gazes, bolstering oneself against assaults, blinding *gusts of wind*, receiving the breath weapon associated with the chosen essence, elemental aura, charging through allies, enemies etc. The iconic whirlpool of bronze dragons, faerie dragon euphoric gas, frightful presence, spellcasting, roars, rampages, channel energy, retributive attacks after crits...and at higher levels, growing additional claws or even a second head can be gained thus – and yes, before you ask, draconic essence requirements prevent combining these two – thankfully! And yes, e.g. death curses by linnorm-y subtype are provided for your edification...if your PC falls, at least the enemy will suffer...There also is a sub-category of draconic weaponry that almost takes up 5 pages on its own, the draconic flair, which allows for the use of draconic weaponry uses to power SPs, with 1st, 7th, 10th and 13th level unlocking new options. Some of these sport unique tweaks to the SPs; zealots get their own unique abilities here; minor hiccup: The 13th level ability states 10th level in its explanation, but it is pretty evident what the intention is.

Additionally, at 2nd level and every 3 levels thereafter, the exemplar receives a draconic defense, which is chosen from its own list – rerolls versus sonic/language-dependent spells, evasion while airborne, all-around vision (at higher levels) spell resistance (even reflective one!), 1/day save-rerolls (upgrades at higher levels), scaling resistance to negative energy, an aura of slowed time (class level rounds per day), scales that apply ½ natural AC to touch attacks (does not stack with other such abilities, thankfully) – quite an array of iconic tricks here. High-level swimming through lava can be found alongside fast healing, which thankfully sports a daily maximum cap, preventing abuse. A blinding aura, fortification, nictitating membranes (called “nictating” here), being breath-less – you can basically make very linnorm-y or esoteric-style dragons – the expanded section provides a serious array of unique tricks.

This is not everything, mind you: We receive a third list of special abilities, the draconic gifts.

These are chosen at 3rd level and every 3 levels thereafter, they are also governed by Con or Cha, depending on the ability. These gifts usually require a specific draconic essence to pull off – without access to energy (acid) and a corresponding breath weapon, you can't make pools of acid, to give you an example. Most of these provide alternate uses of draconic weaponry and similar tweaks. Here, we can find high-level adamantite claws, the option to use two heads (if you have them) more efficiently, adding an auto-trip on a failed save to the breath weapon...and e.g. lacing the breath can be found.

Now, it is pretty awesome and something I'll get back to later, but the book makes, courtesy of stretch-goals, use of quite a few amazing supplements: If you're like me and like the [time thief/warden](#)-classes by Rogue Genius Games, for example, you'll enjoy seeing the option to learn a bit of time-dabbling via aevum here. Blindsight and forming a potent living bottleneck in cramped conditions is another cool trick – after all, you are bound to explore dungeons sooner, rather than later, right? Camouflage, capsizing vessel, various gaseous weapons, poisonous chrome crystals, magnetic pulses, crushing foes, summoning temporary *crystal balls*, flinging foes...and have I mentioned basically bleed added, clinging napalm-y breath, oozing ice breath, no penalty to Perception while asleep, partial bypassing of energy immunity/resistances, touching spirits with claws, starflight, rending armor asunder, sweeping breath weapons...and yo know you want to unleash a tungsten sandstorm, right? How many of these do we get? Well, I only touched the tip of the iceberg here – more than 15 pages (!!!) of these gifts are included. Yes, you heard me. This is vast. It should also be noted that the array of gifts available often taps into the respective essence and other class options, generating specific progressions based on prerequisites that prevent OP combos...but rest assured, even a moderately capable player will get something rather cool out of this section.

10th level provides spell-trigger/completion items as though a sorcerer/wizard, using class level as caster level.

But we're Small! That sucks, right? Well, here's where dracomorphosis comes into play – gained at 4th level, this one nets you size increases, secondary wing attacks (or primary gore for Lung-dragons), AC and attribute bonuses – and flight. Dracomorphosis is gained every 4 levels thereafter, allowing the taninim to grow to Gargantuan size at 16th level – the race also reduces Dex during the size-increases and receives tail sweeps, crushes etc. Which is damn cool, granted...but what happens if Dex drops to 0? No, I'm not kidding – with a total reduction of -8 to Dex, this is a real possibility. And yes, I am aware

of how this sort of thing is usually handled with monster-advancement, but the point remains that this pdf ought to have tackled this particular issue. I am also a bit disappointed here, for this issue already cropped up in the original version. The capstone is, of course, the final great wyrm apotheosis.

The book also contains no less than 3.5 pages of feats, with the options to swallow snatched foes, changing spell damage a limited amount of times per day to mirror the breath weapon, one that helps capture foes alive and the usual "additional class feature"-feats. More guardians for the lair, high-level appendage serving, etc. – quite a cool, if potent array. The section also contains suggestions for monster feats suitable for the taninim.

Now the archetypes – first would be the draconic hero – an archetype that allows a taninim of any class to gain draconic essence and grow via Dracomorphosis at the cost of some class abilities usually gained – as a massive multiclass-covering archetype, the abilities replaced vary from class to class, including Rite's [taskshaper](#) and RGG's [hellion](#) and [war master](#) classes, as well as the ACG-classes among the supported classes. No occult classes support, though. This archetype is very much a required component of the book, for it provides means for various different draconic PCs to further diversify the party's portfolio without compromising the integrity of the classes and balance. Speaking of [hellions](#), a new archetype herein would be the defiler of lairs, which necessitate that I elaborate on a crucial flavor component of the Lost Isles – you see, there is the Well of Oblivion, an almost cosmic-evil level source of power and corruption that can taint the dragons to become what they call "worms", undragons; the spiteful corruption of all dragonkind. And you wondered why dragons reacted so picky when not called "wyrms", as proper... Anyways, the ultimate representation and a sort of satanic adversary for dragonkind would be the White Worm, tapping obviously into the literary tradition of the conqueror worm imagery. The defilers are tainted dragons with a slightly modified patron spell list and 1st level yielding the White Worm's taint, modifying the basic combat capabilities and form of the defiler of lairs, replacing the bonded object ability. Instead of 8th level's hellion talent, we get an aura that can suppress luck bonuses as well as better combat capabilities while, bingo, assaulting lairs.

Scaled Juggernauts are essentially taninim fighters specializing in combat with their natural weapons, gaining rake and pounce at higher levels, as well as better defenses. Stormclaw magi are a natural weapon-based tweak of the magus-engine, combining that with draconic essence. Trueblood Sorcerers are

locked into the draconic bloodline, but receive a scale-spell-component that replaces material components/divine foci and replace regular bloodline powers with a breath weapon. The wardrake [war master](#) archetype replaces consul with better Diplomacy with dragons and may even get a dragon cohort later. Followers may have the drakeling template added.

White Worm Apostates, oracles tainted as undragons, receive degrees of fortification and may disgorge a swarm of consuming, maggot-like worms and later, rise as a twisted phoenix from their corpse 1/day – a very powerful archetype that absolutely *requires* the immense social stigma associated with the white worm to be added to the campaign. Amazing one, though!

Now here is one aspect of the book that is slightly annoying so far as I'm concerned: The player-facing material is split to a degree: The psionic dragon-chapter penned by Jeremy Smith is basically an appendix at the back of the book, which is, organization-wise, not ideal – we get, for example, psionic class support for use in conjunction with the draconic hero general archetype, requiring page-flipping. Similarly the draconic exemplar racial paragon class sports psionic support here, with 5 psionic essences for dragons, which do interesting things, like e.g. tying the breath weapon to active energy, or providing cryptic support; we also get a new array of even more draconic flairs based on psionic powers – weird formatting decision: While functional, they are not presented in the same table-style manner. A total of 6 different draconic defenses may be found here, which include a dream shroud, negative energy resistance, astral suits, a buffer versus psychic enervation, a nightmarish mind and the option to attune to attacks after suffering them, gaining DR versus the creature's weaponry from that source. We also get a massive 20 new draconic gifts that include astral cages, being right at home in astral or shadow plane, gaining cryptic insight, dream surges, bursts of ectoplasm and a scaling, cool mastery of oneiromancy. Beyond these massive expansions to the core features, the chapter also contains 3 new archetypes: Psychic warriors can elect to become black dragon heralds, locking them into the feral path, which is further enhanced. The bonus also applies to acid-damage-causing damage-rolls. Instead of the secondary path power, we get *exhalation of the black dragon*, which may not be changed out. 12th level yields *claws of energy* and 15th level *breath of the black dragon*. The gale dancer would be another psychic warrior archetype, gaining a draconic essence if the character doesn't have one; the archetype also comes with its own path, which focuses on aerial combat mastery and basically pounce while flying for psionic focus expenditure as soon as 3rd level

– OUCH. The archetype also nets better overland flight and 12th level yields all the unique dogfighting techniques we expect – death spiral, hovering... pretty neat. 15th level provides further adaptation to airborne assaults as well as yielding the ability to form shape and solidity of clouds. The third archetype would be the winged horror dread, employing terrors via claws and natural attacks and the tapping into the terrifying draconic weaponry; bonus feats and draconic gifts complement this one. A total of 6 psionic feats complement this section for e.g. temporary fast healing for psionic focus expenditure, with a hard cap. Rerolling Will-saves via psionic focus expenditure, but only versus non-dragons and options to increase the potency of the new options complement this section. We also get 5 favored class options for psionic classes. ([Ultimate Psionics can be found here!](#))

The second player-facing chapter relegated to the back of the book deals with Rogue Genius Games' [Dragon Riders/Dracomancers](#) – Since Taninim are similar, but different from the classic draconic threats, the book provides one archetype for either class: The Spirit-Bonded Rider and the Spirit-Bonded Theurge – these two focus mainly on modifying the base class engines to account for the taninim ally, modifying e.g. bonus spells etc.

Thirdly, there would be a massive chapter penned by none other than Jason Nelson of Legendary Games, and the chapter is glorious: Some dragons once were overcome by the Elder Voices, making the eldest of these titans the *cairna drakh*, the First Fangs; in recent years, the younger *glorven muun* have risen, a new generation of mythic heroes. While the default assumption of the Lost Isles is that mythic powers are restricted to NPCs, the material herein is extensive. If you do go the NPC-route, be sure to pick up Legendary Games' superb [Path of Dragons](#) and [Path of Villains](#), but that as an aside. In addition to notes for PCs within the context of the Lost Isles, we also receive notes on mythic hoards and lairs and more than 3 pages of mythic modifications for the racial paragon class, including augments and meaningful changes. Beyond that, we get no less than 18 different mythic feat-upgrades for the material herein and beyond, making these adversaries really, really deadly. I love how this section ties deeply into the captivating lore presented in the book.

All right, now I've already mentioned time and again the Lost Isles mini-campaign setting, gorgeously mapped by none other than Tommi Salama in full color. The islands, sheltered behind the mystic barrier, sport an absolutely GORGEOUS map and more detailed looks at the respective islands are covered – this whole section acts as

basically a massive gazetteer of different regions: There would be Borealis, land of ice and snow, where the glasslike aurora coral grows; rugged and mountainous Earthspine sports the majestic Windscur Cliffs and the small fireflower islets and the ones known as jetsam promise more adventure still; war-torn Stormhome calls to the brave, in spite of its foreboding skies, the earth lush and rich, maintained by draconic might...and wooded Verdance is home to the fey Keith, human settlements and may well be refuge if you manage to hassle the powers-that-be...and, of course, there would be the festering wound that is the Well of Oblivion...but I touched on that before. The Lost Isles breathe the spirit of high fantasy in the best of ways, providing glimpses at unique vistas that may well have carried their own book; as far as I'm concerned, I'd love to see this unique tie-in setting developed further.

The role of regular dragons in the setting is btw. also covered, and we get a chapter on the unique magic items that may be found herein – several of which would be *barbules*, which are implanted in the thick draconic hide, allowing e.g. weapons to be treated as *dancing*. The downside to these potent implants is that they cause permanent damage while implanted. Really cool for big dragons – with the proper *barbules*, you can generate a missile-deflecting shield, guarding allies within your space with a powerful 75%, non-stacking miss-chance. Ability-score boosts and spell storing is also included in the deal...and if you're afraid that the big dragon won't accompany his allies into dungeons, well, there is a collar that allows for compression. Class ability enhancers can also be found and the *eye of elemental focus* allows the taninim to form breath weapons into *fireball*-like blasts. The *steelrain war howdah* also rocks and yes, there are *vambraces* to duplicate the standard benefits of unarmed damage escalation. Even better, we actually also get *Elder's Pixane*, a legacy item collar. Legacy items are Rite's scaling magic items, just fyi. What begins with a basic defensive item becomes pretty amazing pretty fast. Now, as noted before briefly, there is a CR +1 drakeling template and we get 2 new critters: At Cr 8 and CR 11, the Screaming and Whispering Entropy, respectively, horrid clouds that can exsanguinate and possess targets, tied into the rich lore of the setting.

Okay, so the book has another chapter that made me smile from ear to ear: This book is, in fact, also a Dragon-NPC-Codex of sorts. Why should you care? Simple. When someone asks me for the best NPCs in the 3pp-circuit, my response is usually to list a whole variety of Rite Publishing books first; the complex

and challenging builds are what, a long while back, led me to become a fan of Rite Publishing. So yeah, we don't just get some standard codex stats, we get fully developed characters...and not any characters either, mind you: We get full stats of the Elder Voices, and they are EPIC. Take e.g. "Darkened and Bloodied", the mighty draconic hero [war master](#) wardrake: This lady clocks in at CR 22/MT 5, and she will mess you up – if not with superb tactical acumen, then her ridiculously potent physical tricks. Beyond here, we get to know the most accomplished spellcaster of the isles, the mighty green sorcerer Gardener; Heart of the Mountain; Infinite (includes an artifact); Winterglide (again, with unique item) – none of these sport less than CR 20 and guess what? They come with stats sans buff-suite as well. Beyond these mighty demigods, we get 10 mighty dragons of note, including the narrator of this missive, Thunders in Defiance – and yes, the stats are pretty complex and diverse. This one is pretty epic. Beyond this aspect, however, we also get the rules to make undragons and an archetype for the jotun (see Rite's [In the Company of Giants](#)) – the race sports a pretty cool tie-in with the tale of the taninim, putting a spin on the classic giants vs. dragons-conflict.

Okay, so this also includes an adventure intended for dragons of level 1, guiding them up to level 6. The adventure is billed as a scripted sandbox and comes with, once more, gorgeous full-color cartography by master Salama. Even better: We get player-friendly versions of the maps in the back AND high-res jpgs of them for VTT-use. Dear publishers, please take note: This is how it's done. When you have amazing maps, make sure that players get to see them sans secret door markers, keys, etc. Kudos to the Rite team! Oh, I didn't mention the most important thing, did I? Guess who wrote it? None other than Ben McFarland. If you have any kind of experience with adventures, this alone should be enough to make you grin. Oh, and guess what? The adventure is not some brief 10-page standard supplemental adventure – we're looking at a proper, full-length module. The adventure takes place on the volcanic island of Pani Ura (explorable via hex-map!) and deals with taninim granted a fiefdom there. Years passed, no sign remained. Sounds familiar? Well, one way to think of the module is to consider it a reclaiming of a Roanoke-like aftermath, through the lens of a brilliant writer and high fantasy.

Want to know more? Well, sure, but for that, I'll have to go into SPOILERS:

...

The taninim PCs are sent to Pani Ura by none other than Raging Tide, to figure out what happened on Pani Ura and to secure the island for the taninim – which is depicted as a hex that contains tribal lands, wilderness, villages – etc. Heck, we even get entries for subaquatic animals noted, for the PCs will need to sustain themselves; the island is inhabited by several tribes: The Maohi, who btw. are the native gripli (yay for frogfolk!); the Otsjanep tengus; the Pu'oku locathah and the Saissut iguana-lizardfolk; all of these tribes come with notes on their settlements, sample statblocks, story seeds and potential threats/developments. Similarly, there are several threats the PCs will have to contend with – like the interaction with the tribes, these threats are tied into the environment and can be used in a pretty freeform manner by the PCs. After establishing contact, it will be up to the PCs to unify the island: Seeds for the dealing/negotiations with the respective tribes are provided and ultimately, the PCs will have to explore the old taninim lair within the dungeon of Pani Ura. The dungeon comes, once more, with a superb full-color map and the locations sport read-aloud text here as well. It is here that the PCs will have to deal with taninim that have been utterly corrupted, as well as a body-jumping menace that was foreshadowed before. Once the PCs have defeated these foes and destroyed their tainted idol, they should have managed to consolidate their rule, right? Well, no. Unfortunately for the PCs, crusaders have found the island; the crusader's ship is fully mapped and the invaders are hostile, belonging to an order dedicated to the enslavement and eradication of all dragonkind. Usually, those guys would be potential allies for PCs... but this time around, the PCs unfortunately are the dragons. If the PCs are smart, they better prevent the escape of the vessel and defeat these fellows...but this is not the end. The order won't just take a loss; instead, they send really potent, really nasty folks atop the mighty *Drake's Misery*, a fully staffed vessel, armed to the teeth...and if the PCs don't intervene, the crusaders will deal serious damage to the island...let alone the PCs... The literally only thing I didn't love about this great module is that I have finished it; while the replay-value is huge, I wish this was a full campaign. I mean, seriously, the defending the isle angle is great!!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are excellent on a rules-language level; on a formal level, I noticed a couple of minor, purely aesthetic hiccups, missing blank spaces and the like, but less than you'd expect from a tome of this size; in this category, I'd consider this to be good. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's classic 2-column full-color standard and the pdf

comes with a ton of amazing full-color artworks. The cartography is excellent and in full-color, comes with player-friendly versions and even high-res Jpgs for VTT-use. The pdf-version comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. The massive hardcover is really neat and well worth getting.

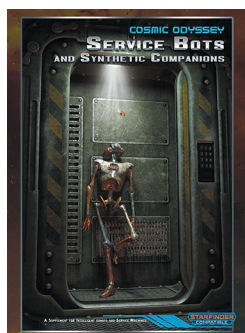
Wendall Roy's original "In the Company of Dragons" was a "squaring the circle"-sort of file; on one hand, he had to capture the power of dragons; on the other, there had to be some sort of balance. He succeeded in a truly impressive manner. This expansion, then, represents a massive evolution and refinement. We add Steven D. Russell's draconic flairs as basically a whole sub-engine; well-done psionics by Jeremy Smith; kickass mythic support by Jason Nelson and a masterclass adventure by Ben McFarland. Sounds like an all-star team? Yeah, well, it is.

Beyond the mega-impressive chassis and the subtle, unobtrusive balancing that prevents the worst potential combinations, this oozes flavor and flair; the prose is stellar and the mighty NPCs can carry whole campaigns. The added details to taninim culture and Lost Isles is a joy to read and radiates creativity and heart's blood. The adventure is unconventional, creative and amazing and the supplemental material otherwise never goes the lame route, instead opting for creative and unique solutions.

The Lost Islands are unique enough to carry a campaign by themselves, but please indulge me for a second, for this book made me come up with a pretty cool idea: So, you know how PCs often are supposed to "save the world"? Or, when evil, lose in the finale, à la Way of the Wicked? Well, what if the evil guys don't lose? What if the PCs get squashed by a certain, unleashed Worm-that-Walks, what happens when the comet-summoning ritual isn't stopped and the world as we know it ends, nations fall, gods follow? When darkness claims the world, for the PCs have failed and been TPK'd? Here's an angle: A few mortals managed to escape to the taninim and the Islands remained. In the aftermath of the downfall of deities, divine energy was released. Now, if you take the rules from Purple Duck Games' [Dragon Thanes of Porphyra](#), you can do something cool: The latter book assumes that dragons, with enough followers, can learn to grant divine spells to followers! The new PCs could thus be a single taninim with his followers, attempting to become a new good deity of sorts, guarded by the other mortals, in a world that has fallen...or all PCs could be taninim, using the universal leadership rules from Everyman Gaming's Ultimate Charisma; they are basically a new, draconic pantheon in the making, as they venture forth to bring hope to a defeated world! Come on, can you honestly not be excited by this idea?

Anyways, the fact that I mentioned this angle should tell you how excited this book made me. Yes, I freely admit it. I go review-bot whenever I have to deal with the notion of playable dragons and focus on the crunch, the fluff and turn off my personal biases. As a private person, I don't even LIKE the notion of playable dragons. I consider it to be a horrible idea in most games. I rated the original version grudgingly, with respect for the design and vision, but no truly pronounced desire to use it, as my games tend to gravitate towards grittier playstyles. This book changed that. Not only did the crunch duly impress me, the whole vision, the setting, the cool NPCs...there is an incredible amount of love poured into this book, and it shows. This is one of the tomes, where the synergy of evocative prose, unique crunch and a daunting vision coalesce and form something greater even than the sum of the parts. In short: This is pretty much the definite option to play dragons. It oozes passion from all of its pages. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval and the book is a candidate for my Top Ten of 2017. If the notion of playing dragons even remotely intrigues you, then look no further.

You can get this magnificent tome [here on OBS!](#)



Cosmic Odyssey – Service Bots and Synthetic Companions (SFRPG)

Publisher: Fat Goblin Games

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

The second book in Fat Goblin Games' series of Starfinder-supplements in the Cosmic

Odyssey-series clocks in at a massive 62 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover and 1 page sample robot-sheet (Nice!), leaving us with a massive 55 pages of content, so let's take a look!

Okay, we begin this massive tome with a nice introduction (which also specifies that the book uses gender-neutral pronouns for the service bots and synthetic companions within) and moves on from there to a list of influences on the design, which could be taken as a brief Appendix N-like section of sorts. In a rather surprising twist, we go pretty sci-fi-y, in that the pdf actually discusses nuances between artificial and autonomous intelligence, qualifying e.g. androids as the latter. A SB, or service-bot, is assumed to have an artificial personality, as roleplayed by the player, and they will not provide preset responses to threats etc. unless the like was

specified by the owner; as such, one could argue that we do not have autonomous intelligence in this context. In analogues from Pathfinder, we'd treat them more akin to the automatons of tinkers than like e.g. eidolons or similar companions.

Now, SBs are constructs with the technological subtype and they consist of a power source, computer, frame, controller interface, propulsion and add-ons. SBs have a tier, which is calculated based on its computer, +1/2 tier per add-on. Service bots are assumed to be capable of surviving briefly in extreme environments: Without the respective add-ons, they have 1 minute of unimpeded functionality in zero-g, extreme heat, etc. – after that, it will take damage and after 5 minutes, it will cease operations. This does help with the old "zombie-defusing"-problem – send an expendable critter into danger. PCs can't do that with service-bots. Service bots are assumed to be waterproof and vacuum-proof, but prolonged exposure/full immersion can fry them – the GM retains control over when this happens.

Ability scores and saves are optional for SBs – they are assumed to automatically fail a saving throw if these are not specified, and the same holds true for ability scores and related checks. They are assumed to have 10 in the ability scores, and 0 in saves, except for one, which is equal to the tier, most commonly Fortitude. SBs are assumed to have 0 ranks in skills, with the exception of one skill (optionally), where they have ranks equal to their tier. Provided a service bot has a skill or appropriate add-on, it can Aid Another. The total price of a SB is dead simple to calculate. You just add the costs of the components together – and example illustrates this rather neatly. Most SBs are Small or Medium, though Tiny and Large SBs exist as well, though uncommon sizes adds +1 to tier per size and doubles power consumption of the frame. SBs with a bulk of 25 or more requires propulsion. The frame determines appendages, add-on slots, etc. Their durability may be upgraded at increased costs and tier. Appendages also determine the number of operators that can use a service-bot. Similarly, more advanced controller interfaces may be purchased, but cost credits and require an add-on slot as well as 1 OU to power. A massive 1 page table of frames provides a lot of different basics to choose from.

Now, I mentioned propulsion – once more, we have quite a few cool options here – these are btw. tied to the number of appendages the Sb has; for example wheels require none, but if you want a SB with arm propellers (!), you'll need at least 6. SBs have 5 times tier hit points and 2 + tier hardness unless otherwise upgraded, and they may be broken relatively easily. Now, PS and OU (power Source and Output Units) also provide a

variety of different options and, in a really cool twist, you can split OUs and e.g. only have certain functions powered at a given time. You still have to meet the minimum requirements to power the SB, obviously, but yeah. Really cool and considerate! Oh, and if you think about jamming a starship power source into a SB – bad idea. But yeah, the book even covers that.

SBs are usually programmed to never harm another being, so combat utility, in case the stats didn't make that abundantly clear, is limited. If they take more than ¼ of their hit points in damage, they may incur serious damage. Want to ride a service bot? Well, turns out, you can! A SB can integrate into the mechanic's class feature as either drone or exocortex. In the case of drones, simply add a free add-on slot as a place to slot each drone mod, and the SB takes on base drone statistics and chassis. For the exocortex, you remotely and telepathically control the SB by loading the exocortex into it. Done. See, I really wanted to see this, and, much like the detailed care that went into previous options, this covered it.

And this concludes the section on DIY-service bot creation. It stands out as an excellent example of what I expect to see in *Starfinder*: Concise rules, presented in an easy to grasp manner, which tie in seamlessly with those in the *Core Rulebook*. Beyond that, they show awareness and consideration for an impressive assortment of individual choices and needs. The section is empowering in its creativity and I dare say that pretty much everyone will come out of this with at least one cool idea, probably a whole plethora! We all wanted a service-bot beer-barrel that you can ride, with arm propellers. Right? Right! This section really, really excited me – but it is nowhere near to where the pdf stops.

Instead, we get 5 different service bot manufacturers – and these corporation write-ups don't just stop with brief write-ups; instead, each manufacturer has a bonus and a drawback: Friendly Face Sbs get +1/2 Diplomacy per ties, but have a 5% chance their holoskin DC is 0 when a creature attempts to disbelieve it, to give you an example. In addition to these rules-relevant and fluffy components, we actually get corporate slogans (!) and even notes on legality, copyrights and trademarks (!!). Heck, we even get corporate logos (!!!) and notes on DIY SBs! Yes, at this point, I am officially impressed. Beyond these aspects, we get a smattering of rumors, which may work as adventure hooks pertaining service bots etc.

Now, I know, I know. Why do these bots exist? Because sentient life is programmed to conserve energy, to make life easier, nicer. As such, it is only fitting that a HUGE chunk of this book is devoted to making life easier for GM and players alike: We get

a COLOSSAL amount of pre-made sample SBs. As in: 100 of them. They are organized first by tier, then alphabetically within the tiers. They sport prices and denote manufacturer etc. as well as brief write-ups. Cleanybots! Petsybots! Lifters! Snake-shaped SB-storage units! An inefficient, bouncing SB-model called pogo, a favorite of kids! Emergency-loss-of-atmosphere bots! Movement detectors! A MMO-bot! Search-and-rescue units! An automated magician's assistant! Do you play in a pan-galactic death metal band, one whose sounds can't be handled by regular SBs? SounderBot has you covered with its extra foam dampening! Do you hate cooking? A CookerBot can provide gourmet food without the hassle of having to cook. Like cooking and need an aide, but you have a temperament that lest Gordon Ramsey look mellow? We have a bot for that!

...Can we please develop SBs in real life RIGHT NOW? I so want ALL of them.

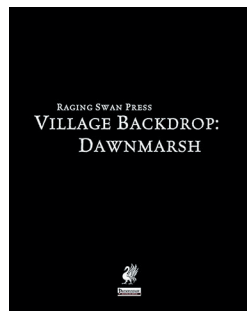
Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch. I noticed no formal hiccups and in the SB-stats I dissected, no issues either. Kudos! Layout adheres to a really nice two-column full-color standard and the pdf sports a lot of rather cute full-color artworks I haven't seen before, some of which quote the aesthetics of e.g. Wall-E. The pdf comes with bookmarks, but only per tier, not for individual service-bots, which remains pretty much the only organizational complaint I can field against this book.

Wow. I mean...wow. Kiel Howell's service bots and synthetic companions are pure amazing. They make sense on so many levels, it's not even funny. It makes absolute sense for a sufficiently advanced civilization to have a ton of these little helpers, so this aspect does add quite a bit to the credibility of a setting into which they're introduced. From a game-perspective, they are challenging: They have to provide a tangible benefit and warrant resource-expenditure and a player's investment; sure, it's fun to roleplay the service-bot buddy, but if it's useless, why bother? The pdf solves this tight-rope act admirably. Service bots do matter, but they will never be able to steal the thunder of PCs and their allies, while at the same time being potentially a) funny and b) life-savers...or c) integral parts of plots. The attention to detail regarding a lot of the finer interactions and things you may want to do with SBs and the seamless integration into *Starfinder*'s rules-chassis left me positively blown away and surprised. This is the best book by Mr. Howell I've read so far and should be considered to be must-reading for any *Starfinder* group that wanted a cool robo-sidekick: Whether C3PO, R2D2, Marvin...

or, well, a heli-beer-dispenser-roadie, this book has you covered. I adore this tome and the vast amount of sample SBs make this super-convenient for the GM as well. All in all, an excellent, highly recommended file, well worth 5 stars + seal of approval. Get this asap!

You can get this inspiring, amazing book [here on OBS!](#)



Village Backdrop: Dawnmarsh

Publisher: Raging Swan Press

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of Raging Swan Press' Village Backdrops-series clocks in at 13 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 2 pages

of advertisement, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 7 pages of content, so let's take a look!

Well, first things first: Dawnmarsh is playing against the classic trope of the isolationist, xenophobic lizardfolk tribe – instead, the lizardfolk of Dawnmarsh are actually welcoming trade, dealing with rare remedies etc. – this opening is not happening unopposed, with particularly the non-lizardfolk populace being welcomed into the village being too much for the more conservative elements. As such, there is some internal tension going on in the lavishly-mapped AND illustrated village. Yes, we actually get an impressive b/w-artwork to represent the settlement.

The spiritual leader, Kassarin the wise, the venerable lizardfolk cleric, is one of two NPCs of note that comes with a fluff-centric write-up, noting no stats, but dressing habits, distinguishing features, etc. Now, as always, we get more than that: We do have a total of 6 different whispers and rumors to help PCs that do their legwork. Similarly, village lore may be unearthed and local color is added via nomenclature, dressing habits, etc.. The lizardfolk worship the sun deity (makes sense, lizards and sun and all) and thus, this also is a part of the local culture and customs. If the basic set-up does not suffice your needs to make this as spontaneously useful as it should, well, rest assured that no less than 12 events/village dressing encounters can be found within, adding some life to the settlement.

Of course, we do get a properly depicted marketplace section, and yes, we also receive a PFRPG settlement statblock...Dawnmarsh is, just fyi, a pretty safe place!

Really cool: The write-up for the surrounding locality provides an optional tie-in with Raging Swan Press' classic Tribes: [Lizardfolk of the Dragon Fang-supplement](#) – combine both for one aggressive and one conservative tribe, whose agendas may well be on collision course! The pdf also follows the evolved Village Backdrop formula that was pioneered in Needlebriar and made possible by the success of raging Swan Press' patreon: While we still get write-ups for the locations of note for the village, they sport the improved presentation and detail: We get brief pieces of read-aloud prose describing the key-locales in basically read-aloud text; services available and items sold are noted by locale and we actually also get mini-quests/adventure hooks for the respective key locales. Better yet, there are actually specialized events in two areas: 6 events for the market circle, 4 for the dawn shrine.

The pdf also sports the mechanical effects of two different, unique elixirs sold in the settlement: One that makes you quicker and one that nets a slow regeneration of lost limbs, but also some lizardfolkish quality. Yeah, fans of spider-man will probably have a few ideas there.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I noticed only minor, cosmetic hiccups. Layout adheres to Raging Swan Press' two-column b/w-standard and is elegant and printer-friendly. Speaking of which: We get one version optimized for the printer and one that is optimized for screen-use. The b/w-artworks featured within are great and the b/w-cartography by Maciej Zagorski is really nice. A key-less high-res version of the map is, to my knowledge, provided to Raging Swan Press' patrons. The two versions of the pdf come fully bookmarked with nested bookmarks for your convenience.

David N. Ross is one of the few designers I know that excel at designing mechanically complex classes as well as writing great, GM-facing supplements. Dawnmarsh's basic premise did not exactly blow me away. That being said, the execution is a whole other matter – Dawnmarsh greatly benefits from the improved, expanded village backdrop formula and is extremely easy to use. The reasons for the PCs to travel there, the politics and surrounding environments all conspire to make the settlement a really nice, fun place to explore. My final verdict will hence clock in at 5 stars.

You can get this village [here on OBS!](#)

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Endzeitgeist out.

Ancient mask, from before the
time of man. Has a strong
Transmutation dweomer.
Obtained from a sailor who took
it from the body of a pirate.
Constructed of bone, hide,
and wood. The type of wood
is native to swamplands.
Origins of the bone and
hide is unknown.



SEEKING ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Anyone who can help with this scholarly research
is invited to see Professor Morthaben at the
Institute for the Study of Ancient Artifacts



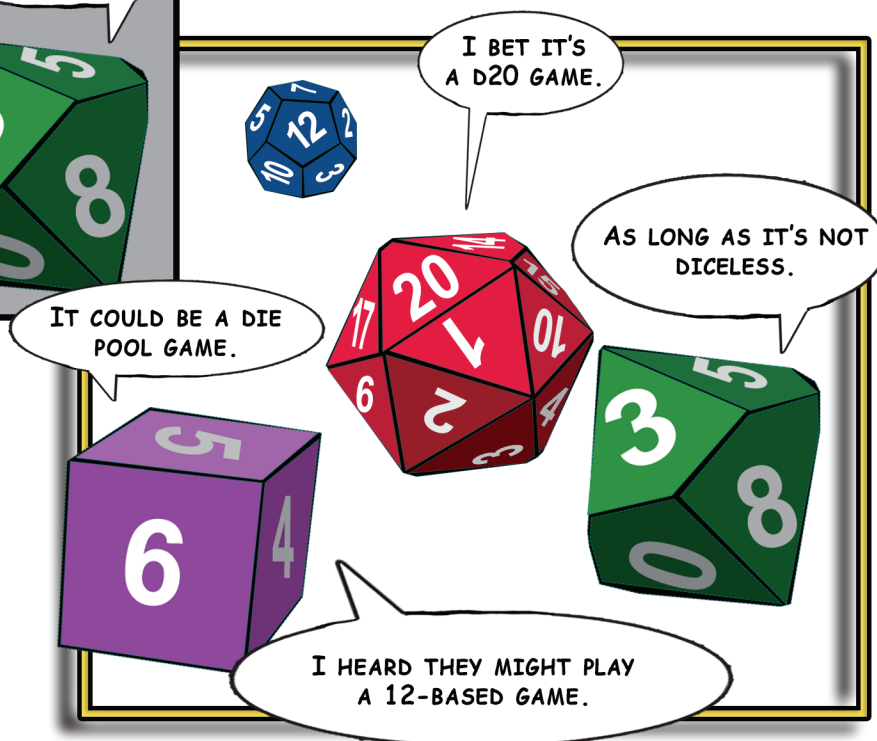
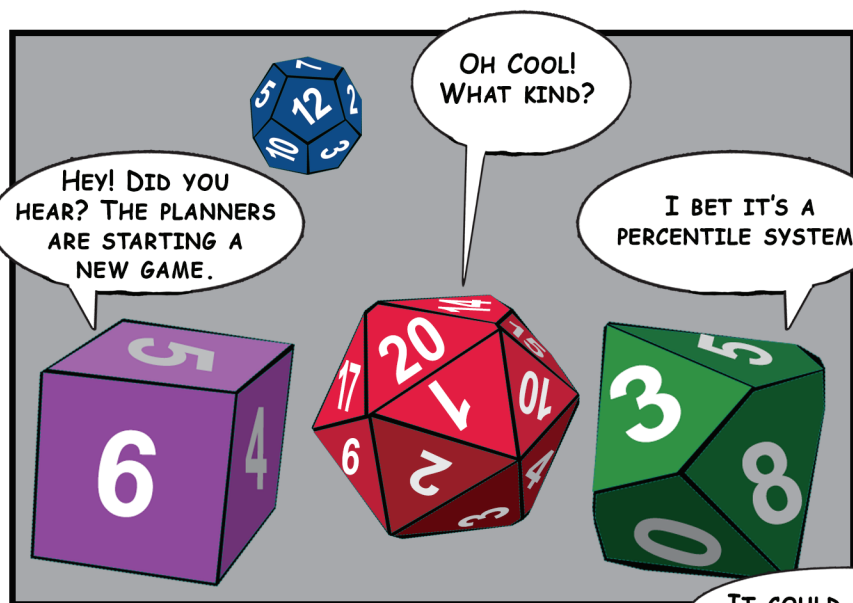
GameMaster Syndicate hopes GMs find this
excerpt from our forthcoming Newspoint series
useful. Print this page and cut the bottom part
off for a player handout. See our full product
for helpful adventure ideas and more information.

ON A ROLL

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REEAALLY?!



AAAAAHHHHHHHHAAAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!



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