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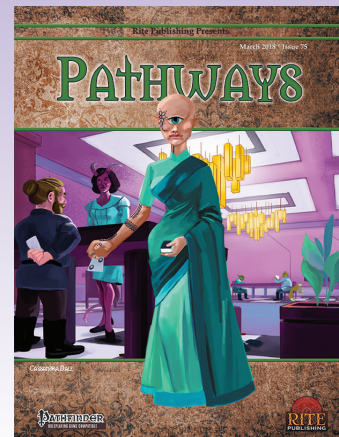
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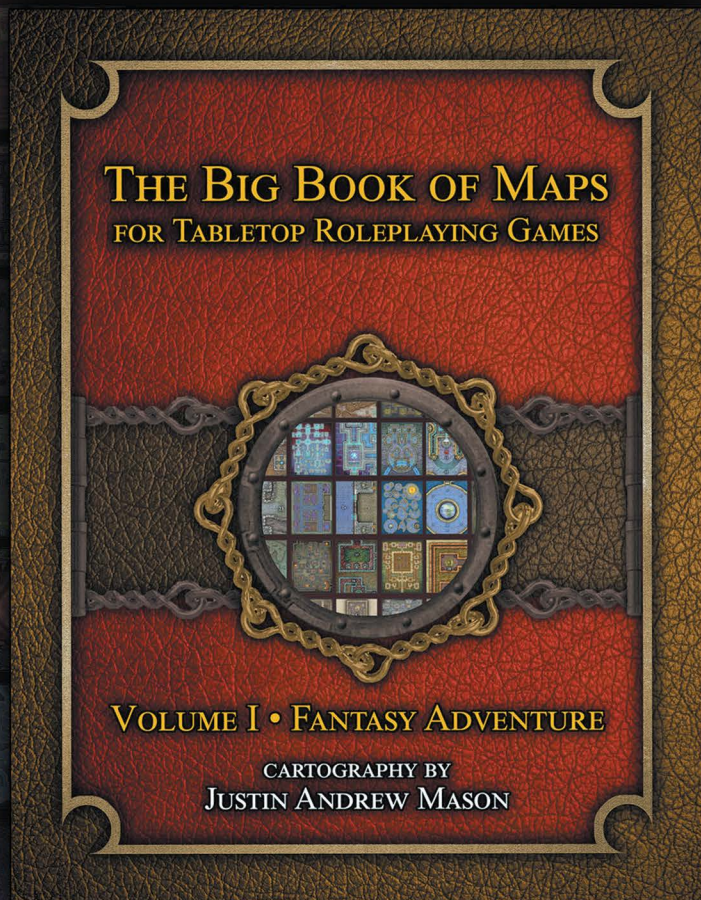
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Editorial

by Dave Paul

I'm not quite sure what I want to say about luck. On the one hand, there's the side of luck that's about superstition, on the other hand there's the side of luck that's just randomness. Sometimes, I'm at the right place at the right time and something good happens. Other times, the combination of time and place results in something bad happening. Sometimes, I couldn't have done anything about being at that place at that time, and sometimes I could have. And, given the tricks my own mind plays on me, when I could have played some role in avoiding being at a place at a time when something bad happened, I sometimes blame myself even if I shouldn't. And, I suppose that sometimes people's actions play a role in their being at the right place at the right time and so they feel like they deserve whatever good thing happened as a result. I'm not so sure about any of this.

The superstition side of things, though, I've always been fascinated by. I happen to believe that there's a connection between the superstitious beliefs of people (if I wear the right shirt, my favorite sports team will win, etc.) and the learned behavior studies that psychologists have done with animals. I know that animals will develop all kinds of habits when they're exposed to randomly timed rewards. Birds in cages will strut in circles and press levers in certain orders in part because the last time they did it, they got the food pellet. So they repeat it. And if they repeat it enough, sometimes they get rewarded with more food, and so they just keep doing it. I see this as remarkably similar to praying for rain (or whatever). Someone did something when it was dry and the next day it rained. So, that person asked "What did I do? I need to repeat it when we need rain again." And then, next time it was dry, the person tried duplicating the ritual. If it doesn't rain, it must have been performed incorrectly (or it was the wrong ritual). If it does rain, then clearly that was the right thing to do. Either way, superstitious behavior gets rewarded. We feel a certain way when we try something and

it works, and then we try it again until it works again. (Gambling establishments thrive on things like this.)

Part of me doesn't want this to be what religious experience is all about. Part of me is quite sure that at least some of the established religious rituals are in fact connected to this sort of thing. I'm interested in how we might tease out the differences and get at what's legitimate and what's mere superstition. I'm not entirely sure how to do that. But even so, these things affect us. Heck even people who claim to be atheists or not superstitious still sometimes say things like "knock on wood" or "don't tempt fate" without realizing it.

On the other hand, some people win at games of luck and every once in a while someone seems to win a bit more frequently than would be expected, and that's a kind of luck.

At the gaming table, there are all kinds of superstitions, especially as regards dice. I have witnessed the destruction or abandonment of more than one twenty-sided die because its former owner was disappointed in the results it produced. And, the roleplaying games that we play assume the reality of luck, take advantage of the randomness element of luck, and so it infuses everything we do.

I myself have never rolled more than five 1s in a row. I have heard tales of someone who once rolled seven in a row. I have seen three d20s rolled at once and all turn up 20. And, once, I saw someone playing the first edition of the predecessor of Pathfinder actually roll an 18 on 3d6 for a Strength score and then roll "double-zero" on percentile dice. Once. It was probably about 1986 and it was in a friend's basement, and I can picture us sitting around the ping-pong table (it was the only table in the basement so we used it), and I remember the outbursts and yelling like it was yesterday.

I think that's what I want to say about luck. Sometimes, when something happens that feels really lucky, it sure is fun.

Happy gaming. And, best of luck.



Luckeater Creature Template

by Wendall Roy, Illustration by Cassandra Dale

A luckeater is a creature that is attuned to the energies of chance, able to steal other creatures' fortune in order to bend probability as it sees fit. They can use stolen luck both to boost their own fortunes and to tarnish those of their enemies. Luckeaters most commonly originate in

areas where grand feats of improbable success or unlikely series of calamitous events have shaped history. They also can be found among species with a natural attunement to luck and insight, where they are revered as symbols of good luck and inspiration for their community.

Creating a Slothful Creature

"Luckeater" is a template that can be added to any creature.

CR: Same as the base creature +2.

Defensive Abilities: The luckeater gains a +2 insight bonus to AC, saves, and CMD.

Offensive Abilities: The luckeater gains a +2 insight bonus to attack rolls and CMB, and the exploit fortune and gobble luck special abilities.

Ability Score: +4 Wisdom (minimum 14)

Special Abilities: A luckeater gains the following abilities:

Exploit Fortune (Su) The luckeater doubles the threat range of all attacks it makes against creatures with a luck bonus to AC or saves. This ability does not stack with other abilities that increase threat ranges, such as the Improved Critical feat.

Gobble Luck (Su) When the luckeater damages a creature with a melee attack, it can steal 1 grit point, inspiration point, panache point, or moment of chance from the creature as a swift action. The luckeater can instead dispel an effect providing a luck bonus on the creature (or suppress the effect for 1d4 rounds if the effect is being granted by an equipped magic item). When the luckeater steals any of these points or dispels or suppresses an effect, it regains 1 moment of chance.

Moment of Chance The luckeater has a pool of moments of chance that refreshes daily, equal to its Wisdom modifier. If the luckeater has levels in the luckbringer class (*The Secrets of Adventuring*, Rite Publishing), it instead increases the pool from that class' moment of chance class feature by the same amount and uses the pool to fuel both luckbringer class abilities and luckeater special abilities. A luckeater can expend a moment of chance to do any of the following:

Ill Omen (Sp) If the luckeater successfully confirms a critical hit against a creature or suffers a critical hit from a creature, it can cast *ill omen* as a spell-like ability targeting that creature as an immediate action. The luckeater's effective caster level is equal to its Hit Dice.

Twist Fate (Su) When a creature within 100 ft. rolls a natural 20 on an attack roll, skill check, or saving throw, the luckeater can change the result of that roll to a natural 1 as an immediate action. The luckeater can also use this ability to change a natural 1 on an attack roll, skill check, or saving throw to a natural 20. The luckeater must expend two moments of chance to use this ability, and can only use this ability once every 1d4 rounds.

Weal and Woe (Su) The luckeater can apply a +1 luck bonus or -1 luck penalty to a single d20 roll resulting from an action that occurs within 100 ft. The luckeater can use this ability once per round as a free action, even if it is not the luckeater's turn.

Sample Luckeater

Luckeater Cyclops

CR 7

XP 1,600

NE Large humanoid (giant)

Init -1; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, -1 Dex, +2 insight, +7 natural, -1 size)

hp 65 (10d8+20)

Fort +11, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities ferocity



OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee greataxe +13/+8 (3d6+7/x3)
Ranged heavy crossbow +7 (2d8/19-20)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Special Attacks exploit fortune, gobble luck

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 8, **Con** 15, **Int** 10, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 8
Base Atk +7; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 24
Feats Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack
Skills Intimidate +9, Perception +13, Profession (soothsayer) +12, Sense Motive +7, Survival +8;
Racial Modifiers +8 Perception
Languages Common, Cyclops, Giant
SQ flash of insight, moment of chance

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Flash of Insight (Su) Once per day as an immediate action, a luckeater cyclops can peer into an occluded visual spectrum of possible futures, gaining insight that allows it to select the exact result of one die roll before the roll is made. This effect can alter an action taken by the luckeater cyclops only, and cannot be applied to the rolls of others.

ECOLOGY

Environment any temperate or tropical
Organization solitary or tribe (1-2 plus 7-18 cyclops)
Treasure standard (hide armor, Large greataxe, Large heavy crossbow, other treasure)

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10 Things to Say When a PC Makes a Perception Check and Finds Nothing ...

Because (sometimes) a little player paranoia is a good thing ...

By Creighton Broadhurst; Illustration by krstovukoje

Adventurers are always poking their nose in where it doesn't belong. They seem to incessantly search even the most boring, featureless rooms in search of treasure. Sometimes, they get lucky and find hidden or forgotten loot, but—more often than not—there is simply nothing to find. Saying, “You find nothing”, though, is boring. Use the table below to inject minor interest into the proceedings (and perhaps to feed your players' paranoia):

1. You see nothing out of the ordinary, and hear nothing but the laboured breathing of your companions and the creak of their equipment.
2. A slight breeze plays across your face, but you can't make out where it comes from.
3. Some of the nearby shadows seem slightly deeper than they should be.
4. For just a moment, you thought you heard a faint whispered conversation, but it is gone now.
5. As you search the area, a shiver runs down your spine. Is someone watching you?
6. You suddenly feel warm, as if you had exerted yourself for some time. Perhaps it's just the stress of the adventure?
7. Dust—illuminated by the light—swirls and shimmers in the air creating intricate patterns that form and reform.
8. A faint odour—perhaps sweat or damp—hangs in the air, but you cannot identify its source.
9. Your heart pounds loudly in your chest and the roar of blood fills your ears. However, in the area you detect nothing seemingly of interest.
10. You detect nothing of interest, but something just feels “wrong.” Perhaps it's paranoia or perhaps it's your sixth sense warning of a lurking danger...

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: Luck!

By Dave Paul, Illustration by Michael Kucharski

The following spells can be found in Rite Publishing's [101 Urban Spells](#) and [101 Hill and Mountain Spells](#). The first two here are in the Urban product and the last one in Hill and Mountains. I myself have a fondness for spells that affect luck and I have a pile of them growing in a folder on my hard drive just waiting for me to get through the projects I'm working on now. If I were luckier, I'd have been able to get them published by now....

~~

It's far more likely that cats land on their feet as often as they do because their bodies have adapted over the eons to the kinds of environments and circumstances for which jumping, pouncing and tumbling have been priorities than that cats are just lucky. But, if magic were to be able to bestow a cat's speed and nimbleness regarding movement onto someone and top it off with a one-time bonus to avoid damage when quick reflexes were involved, it would probably look a lot like luck. And so it was that *land on your feet* ended up granting a luck bonus. As the spell was crafted for the Urban book,

it is designed to be even better when the caster and cat that grants the material component are from the same settlement. Sometimes we find city-dwelling felines to be a nuisance, but if you're a spellcaster, they can be lucky indeed.

Land on Your Feet

School: Transmutation; **Level:** Alchemist 2, Bard 2, Bloodrager 2, Magus 2, Ranger 1, Sorcerer/Wizard 2, Witch 2

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, M (a few hairs from a cat)

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: None; **Spell Resistance:** No

You gain a 10-foot bonus to your speed when using the charge, run or withdraw actions, and a +4 luck bonus to your Acrobatics checks when used to attempt a jump. You may end *land on your feet* as a free action to grant yourself a +4 luck bonus on a single Reflex saving throw. You must declare this use before the saving throw is attempted.

If you cast *land on your feet* in a settlement and the material component is from a cat from that same settlement, the luck bonuses are +6 instead of +4 and the duration of the spell is doubled.

~~

I don't know about you, but I have many acquaintances who believe that some people have extraordinary luck when shopping. I am enchanted by superstitious beliefs and I thought that this could play an interesting role in the lives of the PCs, especially if they had an NPC friend who was somehow able to always score them a great deal at the local bazaar. But, to keep things interesting, I wanted the spell to have built-in opportunities for future encounters, hence the text about there probably being complicated reasons why the caster has just found a +2 *longsword* at such a cheap price.



All the Best Deals

School: Divination; **Level:** Alchemist 3, Bard 2, Sorcerer/Wizard 3

Casting Time: 2 rounds

Components: V, S, M (a loaded die)

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 hour/level or until discharged

You gain an uncanny knack to find extraordinary deals. The likelihood of finding an item and the value of the items you might find are modified by your extraordinary luck. The base value of a magic item you might find is increased by 50% (see the Available Magic Items table). The likelihood of finding what you're hoping to find increases as well; add your Charisma modifier and one-half your caster level as modifiers to the base chance (your base chance is normally 75%, so if you have a 16 Charisma and are 7th level, your chance of finding what you're looking for is 81% instead). Your chance of finding an item with the assistance of this spell can never exceed 99%. See the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide* for information about what items are available in settlements. This spell does not compel anyone, it simply changes your luck.

Just because you can find a great deal doesn't mean the transaction might not be complicated. There is probably a reason why the seller is willing to part with whatever it is that you've just found. Further, your tremendous luck might also get you noticed.

The spell ends as soon as you complete a transaction for an item that would normally not be available but for your great luck. If you do successfully complete a transaction, you may not cast the spell again for 24 hours.

~~

Even though the theme of this issue is luck and so we might be inclined to immediately think about good luck, bad luck is still a kind of luck and I thought I'd share a spell that focuses on bad luck. I like the weird combo of being worse at perceiving things except when you're alone. There's something deeply creepy about that effect that could be particularly fun with a small group and players who are okay with their characters wandering off from the others in the party. The spell promotes seclusion for the victim as others will find themselves particularly unlucky when the person is around. And, in certain spaces (caves, abandoned buildings, etc.), the target also adopts a rather foul and disturbing sense of humor (also

fun at the gaming table, with the right group of players). It feels to me like it fits best with the witch class, but as it's a curse I wanted it to be available to some of the other classes that traditionally cast curses. I'm curious what others do with it.

Wretched Outcast

School: Necromancy [curse, mind-affecting]; **Level:** Antipaladin 3, Bloodrager 4, Cleric/Oracle 3, Shaman 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 4, Witch 3

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, M/DF (a nail or tooth of a pugwampi)

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** No


The creature touched gains the unluck aura and others quickly find good reason to keep a safe distance. If the curse is not lifted within 24 hours, the isolation experienced by the target begins to manifest in other ways. Twenty-four hours after the curse has taken effect, and until the curse is removed, the target gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all Stealth checks and a -4 penalty on all Perception checks it attempts when listening. This penalty to Perception checks is removed whenever the target is actively hiding.

Unluck Aura (Su): The target radiates an aura of unluck to a radius of 20 feet. Any creature in this area must roll two d20s whenever a situation calls for a d20 roll (such as an attack roll, a skill check, or a saving throw) and must use the lower of the two results generated. This is a mind-affecting effect that does not work on animals, gremlins, gnolls, the target herself or the individual who cast *wretched outcast* on the creature with the aura. Any creature who gains any sort of luck bonus (such as that granted by a *luckstone* or *divine favor*) is immune to the unluck aura.

Wretched outcast can be removed by a successful casting of *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish*. The individual attempting to remove the curse may very well be affected by the unluck aura.

Whenever the target of *wretched outcast* is in caves, abandoned buildings, or warm hills terrain, the curse also manifests by inducing a sick sense of humor in the target who then becomes prone to telling disturbing jokes. Until the target leaves this terrain, it suffers a -2 penalty on all its Charisma-based checks.

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An illustration of two adventurers in a dark, ancient tomb. On the left, a character with red hair and a green hat looks startled, holding a spear. On the right, a character with blue hair and a brown tunic looks equally concerned. The background features a large, cracked stone archway and skeletal remains scattered on the floor.

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Lucky Charms

By Joshua Hennington

The concept of lucky charms is firmly embedded in favorites of legend and myth, whether it is the family heirloom that never fails or a lucky pet that always stays true to its owner no matter what happens. These items or companions may not be mechanically important, but they're nice to have on your character sheet; they mean something personal to your character, and by extension, to you. This article contains several options meant to expand on and give substance to that special little object you always carry around; after all, it's got to have some luck in it, right?

CHARM BEARER (OCCULTIST ARCHETYPE)

While all occultists see the value in items beyond their material worth, a charm bearer takes this approach one step further. They obsess over a few items, seeing them as the best, most luckiest trinket they can find. What's even more shocking is that they consider themselves lucky for wielding them – and they're probably right.

Force of Will: A charm bearer draws power from his belief in luck, and uses Charisma to determine the Difficulty Classes of his occultist spells as well as his spells per day; additionally, he uses Charisma to determine his points of mental focus and the Difficulty Class of his focus powers.

Obsessive Implements (Su): At 1st level, the charm bearer only learns to use one school of implements. He gains another school at 2nd, 10th and 18th level. This alters implements.

Fortunate Focus (Su): At 1st level, the charm bearer learns to channel a form of raw luck through his implement. By spending 2 points of mental focus from any implement in which he has invested mental focus, he may reroll one failed saving throw as an immediate action.

Raw Belief (Sp and Su): At 1st level, the charm bearer believes so much in his inherent luckiness that he can draw upon more power for his spells when it would run out for any other. As a full-round action, he may expend generic focus to regain spell slots, with each spell slot requiring a

number of mental focus points equal to double its level. He may not use this ability to have more spell slots available at a time than his designated spells per day.

Beginner's Luck (Ex): At 2nd level, a charm bearer is uncannily adept at things he's never tried before. He gains a bonus equal to 1/2 his occultist level on all checks using skills in which he has no ranks. This does not give the charm bearer the ability to use certain skills untrained (such as Sleight of Hand or Use Magic Device). This ability replaces magic item skill.

Absorb Focus (Su): At 4th level, a charm bearer can use shift focus to move mental focus from an implement into generic focus; however, the points converted into generic focus are reduced by 2 instead of 1. This alters and otherwise functions as shift focus.

Beginner's Mastery (Ex): At 6th level, a charm bearer is so confident in his luckiness that he can attempt all skills untrained.

Knack for Belief (Sp and Su): At 8th level, a charm bearer starts to gain true confidence in his ability to draw on his luck. He reduces the cost of converting mental focus to 1st level spell slots by 1, to a total cost of 1 mental focus. At 12th level, this effect extends to 2nd level spell slots, to a total cost of 3 mental focus points for conversion. At 16th level, this effect extends to 3rd level spell slots, to a total cost of 5 mental focus points for conversion. Finally, at 20th level, 4th level spells benefit from this effect, but the cost of each spell slot is reduced by 2 (minimum 1). This results in 2nd level spell slots costing 2 points of generic focus, 3rd level spell slots costing 4 points of generic focus, and 4th level spells costing 6 points of generic focus. This ability replaces outside contact.

Fortunate Friend (Su): At 14th level, a charm bearer can extend his fortune to his companions; by expending 4 points of mental focus as an immediate action from any implement in which he has invested mental focus, he can allow an ally to reroll a failed saving throw.

**PLUCKY PAL
(FAMILIAR ARCHETYPE)**

Some familiars have such good luck that a little bit rubs off on their masters.

Note: All the abilities listed in this archetype are voluntary; a plucky pal cannot be made to grant luck against its will.

Fortunate (Ex): While a plucky pal occupies the same space as its master, any luck bonuses the master benefits from are increased by +1. This ability replaces alertness.

In a Pinch (Su): As an immediate action a number of times per day equal to 1/2 the master's level (minimum 1), a plucky pal can lend its luck to another creature who shares its space. The creature gains a luck bonus on an attack roll, skill check or saving throw equal to 1/2 the master's level (minimum +2). Furthermore, the plucky pal permanently gains the same luck bonus to its Armor Class and saving throws; these bonuses are suppressed for 1 round after it lends its luck to another creature. This ability replaces share spells.

Ward against Unluck (Su): At 3rd level, a plucky pal is able to protect against unlucky effects. It, as well as any creature whose space it occupies, is immune to any effect that forces a creature to roll two d20s and take the lower result on a check. Furthermore, it may expend two uses of its in a pinch ability to allow a creature sharing its space to roll twice and take the higher result on one d20 roll. This ability replaces deliver touch spells.

Curse Resistance (Ex): At 11th level, the plucky pal grants its spell resistance to any creature whose space it occupies, but this shared resistance only applies against curse effects. This modifies spell resistance.

Dispel Curse (Su): At 13th level, the plucky pal is able to so finely manipulate fortune that it is able to disrupt curses at will. This ability functions as *dispel magic* (CL = master's level) when used against spells and spell-like abilities; against supernatural abilities, the plucky pal attempts an opposed check with the cursing creature. Both roll a d20 with a bonus equal to their HD; if the plucky pal succeeds, then the effect is suppressed for a number of rounds equal to the plucky pal's level. Any creatures affected by the curse effect have their durations similarly suppressed. This ability replaces scry on familiar.

Rogue Talents

These talents are selectable by rogues and investigators.

Lucky Jacket (Ex): When this rogue talent is selected, the rogue must select one nonmagical article of clothing to be their lucky jacket; it need not be a jacket, but could be a sock, shirt, or even underwear. When the rogue attempts a Reflex saving throw, they may nimbly dodge it with their lucky jacket; this adds a bonus equal to their Charisma bonus (minimum +0) to the result of the saving throw. The rogue may use this ability twice per day.

Rabbit's Foot (Ex): When this rogue talent is selected, the rogue must select one nonmagical item to be designated as her rabbit's foot. It need not be an actual rabbit's foot; it could be a holy symbol, a lock of hair, or any small, personal object that could bring the rogue good luck. The rogue can rub it as a move action to gain a +2 morale bonus on any one d20 roll that the rogue attempts before the end of her next turn.

TRINKET-BOUND (ORACLE CURSE)

There's a small cursed item that you just can't get rid of, no matter how hard you may try. This item is nonmagical in its base nature, but usually fits in your hand (such as a rock or a bottle). It vexes you when you try to find anything else; there's a 25% chance that when you try to retrieve a stored item from your gear, you draw this item instead. If you destroy this item, it reappears complete on your person again. However, this item is possessive of you, giving you a +4 bonus on all saving throws against effects created by cursed items. At 5th level, add *ill omen* and *oracle's burden* to your spells known; when casting the latter spell, it manifests a small object akin to yours. At 10th level, you can spend a full-round action to foist this item on another creature within 30 feet and force it to potentially draw the cursed item when it tries to retrieve a stored item. This effect lasts for three rounds (no saving throw), and you still possess a copy of the cursed item while it is in your foe's possession. At 15th level, you are immune to effects created by cursed items.

PLAY RECENT PATHFINDER RPG RELEASES ON FANTASY GROUNDS

STRANGE AEONS

IN SEARCH OF SANITY

ADVENTURE PATH PART I



AND LOOK FOR NEW D&D MODULES ON NOVEMBER 10TH

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

XANATHAR'S

GUIDE TO EVERYTHING



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Painted Paper

By T.H. Gulliver

"This is foolish," Althred muttered. "There is no magic in painted paper."

"No, but *she* has magic," replied Cassinder, pulling a few worn coins from his pouch.

The priest wondered again why he had allowed the disgraced noble to drag him away from what had been a promising night of drunkenness and debauchery—more the former than the latter most likely, but, still, this was going to be the last night they would spend in the city before leaving for the greywastes.

"Trust me. I've been here before," Cassinder said in a slurred whisper, pointing at the leather painting covering the door, a blue-eye emblazoned on a red background, the sign a fortune-teller. "Before my famed 'Assault on the Frosthold,' I came to her. The cards foretold ..."

From inside the hovel, a husky woman's voice called: "Who now approaches? Someone familiar, I sense."

"See? 'Someone familiar,' she senses. She *sensed* me before she saw me! She is truly gifted" whispered the drunk poet, as if this alone proved her powers.

"Or she heard your blather and recognized..."

"Enter!" commanded the woman's voice again. "Put your coins on the table and find favor in the cards."

"I suppose the cards favor us more if our coins are shiny," said Althred as he pushed through the red-dyed leather sign that covered the entrance. The leather sign was slit vertically, so that entering meant stepping through the open eye.

The priest tried to hide his surprise at how warm the small hovel was on the inside. The huts on this edge of town were surrounded by swamp and he had not expected to find any comfort there, but within the tiny room candles lit beautifully painted tapestries. With an informed glance, the studious priest took in a dozen allegorical paintings from a mess of different faiths and traditions. He immediately felt dismissive of the jumble of symbols and meanings but, then, began to see the connections. Here, for example, was Al-ghe-red, after whom he was named, slaying Garinder the wyrm. But, then, across from that canvas, hung its opposite and match, one depicting Arturno the Keen slaying Redring, as if the holy story and the sacrilegious lie were the same tale, as if Al-ghe-red

was Arturno, an impossibility, but one that filled him with joy. The thought was blasphemous and beautiful. He must be drunk! His face flushed and his heart pounded; then, she spoke again.

"No. *I* will favor you more if your coins are shiny. There is no magic in painted paper."

He looked at the woman for the first time, with kinder eyes than he had looked at anyone in a long time. He saw a woman of intelligence and wit. She may make her means by misleading the gullible, he thought, leading them away from the one true faith, but perhaps she needs the money. He took a chair across from her and emptied his pouch on the table. He would consider this an act of charity to a beautiful but misguided soul. Her sardonic smile cut him deeply and alone was worth the coin.

Using the Tarot in Your Game

While some false histories of the Tarot claim the painted cards originated in ancient Egypt, the cards actually took their current form in Europe during the Medieval and Renaissance period. The ongoing balancing of the four or five suits of the Minor Arcana suggests the cards—or some of them—have always been used in games, as playing cards. The more decorative Major Arcana tell a story for those prepared to be inducted into their mystery; for those prepared to take the Fool's journey through the 21 other cards of the Major Arcana and their richly symbolic imagery.

The combination of the Major and Minor Arcana provide practical guidance to those who use them. They help the querent to see her problem from different perspectives and to draw upon her own subconscious for solutions. In the hands of a gifted card reader, perhaps they provide guidance of a more mystical sort.

Using them in your games is by no means cultural appropriation; the symbols on these cards draw upon a range of cultures. The cards were made to be played with, in gameful ways. Even those who believe that reading the Tarot connects one to higher forces recognize that the connection is within them, not in the painted paper in their hands.

Within the context of an adventure, a quick reading can be used to foreshadow events, provide subtle clues, and, with the help of the table below, give small benefit to your players.

There are a number of different 'spreads' used by readers of the Tarot. For the purposes of a reading within a roleplaying game, I suggest the following simple procedure:

The game master or card reader draws three cards, laying them left to right, representing the past events relevant to the adventure, the current context relevant to the adventure, and the future possibilities relevant to the adventure. Each player then draws another card

representing their fate or fortune within the adventure.

If you do not have a deck of Tarot cards handy, you could also use a deck of playing cards. In that case, allow each player to draw one playing card and roll 1d20, consulting the table for Major Arcana for the effects of the playing card and the table for Minor Arcana for the effects of the 1d20.

Where a card grants a bonus as per a spell it does so at the character level of the recipient of the card.

MINOR ARCANA

TAROT CARD	EFFECT	PLAYING CARD
Ace of Wands	Turn this card in for a +1 bonus to initiative.	Ace of Clubs
Two of Wands	Turn this card in for a +2 bonus to initiative.	Two of Clubs
Three of Wands	Turn this card in for a +3 bonus to initiative.	Three of Clubs
Four of Wands	Turn this card in for a +4 bonus to initiative.	Four of Clubs
Five of Wands	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to initiative.	Five of Clubs
Six of Wands	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to initiative or a +2 bonus to any one Reflex save.	Six of Clubs
Seven of Wands	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to initiative or a +4 bonus to any one Reflex save.	Seven of Clubs
Eight of Wands	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to initiative or a +6 bonus to any one Reflex save.	Eight of Clubs
Nine of Wands	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to initiative or a +8 bonus to any one Reflex save.	Nine of Clubs
Ten of Wands	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to initiative or a +10 bonus to any one Reflex save.	Ten of Clubs
Page of Wands	A young man or woman will bring the recipient of this card good news or helpful information.	
Knight of Wands	Someone in a position of authority will provide assistance at the beginning of a journey.	Knight of Clubs
Queen of Wands	A woman of dark hair, complexion, or character will provide assistance to the recipient of this card.	Queen of Clubs
King of Wands	A man of dark hair, complexion, or character will provide assistance to the recipient of this card.	King of Clubs
Ace of Cups	Turn this card in for a +1 bonus to any Will save.	Ace of Hearts
Two of Cups	Turn this card in for a +2 bonus to any Will save.	Two of Hearts
Three of Cups	Turn this card in for a +3 bonus to any Will save.	Three of Hearts
Four of Cups	Turn this card in for a +4 bonus to any Will save.	Four of Hearts
Five of Cups	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to any Will save.	Five of Hearts

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Six of Cups	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to any Will save or a +2 bonus to any one Wisdom-based skill check.	Six of Hearts
Seven of Cups	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to any Will save or a +4 bonus to any one Wisdom-based skill check.	Seven of Hearts
Eight of Cups	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to any Will save or a +6 bonus to any one Wisdom-based skill check.	Eight of Hearts
Nine of Cups	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to any Will save or a +8 bonus to any one Wisdom-based skill check.	Nine of Hearts
Ten of Cups	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to any Will save or a +10 bonus to any one Wisdom-based skill check.	Ten of Hearts
Page of Cups	A studious young woman or man will provide helpful advice to the recipient of this card.	
Knight of Cups	A man of peace, perhaps a cleric, will provide guidance and support to the recipient of this card.	Knight of Hearts
Queen of Cups	A beautiful woman will bestow a gift upon the recipient of this card.	Queen of Hearts
King of Cups	A man of authority will be predisposed to help the recipient of this card. The man in question may be associated with water or be a noble.	King of Hearts
Ace of Swords	Turn this card in for a +1 bonus to an attack roll.	Ace of Spades
Two of Swords	Turn this card in for a +2 bonus to an attack roll.	Two of Spades
Three of Swords	Turn this card in for a +3 bonus to an attack roll.	Three of Spades
Four of Swords	Turn this card in for a +4 bonus to an attack roll.	Four of Spades
Five of Swords	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to an attack roll.	Five of Spades
Six of Swords	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to an attack roll or a +2 bonus to any one Intelligence-based skill check.	Six of Spades
Seven of Swords	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to an attack roll or a +4 bonus to any one Intelligence-based skill check.	Seven of Spades
Eight of Swords	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to an attack roll or a +6 bonus to any one Intelligence-based skill check.	Eight of Spades
Nine of Swords	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to an attack roll or a +8 bonus to any one Intelligence-based skill check.	Nine of Spades
Ten of Swords	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to an attack roll or a +10 bonus to any one Intelligence-based skill check.	Ten of Spades
Page of Swords	The recipient of this card has attracted the attention of a young man or woman, perhaps a spy or an informant.	
Knight of Swords	The recipient of this card has attracted the attention of a soldier.	Knight of Spades
Queen of Swords	A strong and independent woman is predisposed to help the recipient of this card, if she believes that they will do good or, at least, lessen the amount of pain in the world.	Queen of Spades
King of Swords	The recipient of this card has attracted the attention of a lawful king. Also, the recipient of this card may turn it in for a +1 bonus to any blade as the spell <i>magic weapon</i> .	King of Spades

Ace of Coins	Turn this card in for a +1 bonus to any Perception check.	Ace of Diamonds
Two of Coins	Turn this card in for a +2 bonus to any Perception check.	Two of Diamonds
Three of Coins	Turn this card in for a +3 bonus to any Perception check.	Three of Diamonds
Four of Coins	Turn this card in for a +4 bonus to any Perception check.	Four of Diamonds
Five of Coins	Turn this card in for a +5 bonus to any Perception check.	Five of Diamonds
Six of Coins	Turn this card in for a +6 bonus to any Perception check or a +2 bonus to any one Charisma-based skill check.	Six of Diamonds
Seven of Coins	Turn this card in for a +7 bonus to any Perception check or a +4 bonus to any one Charisma-based skill check.	Seven of Diamonds
Eight of Coins	Turn this card in for a +8 bonus to any Perception check or a +6 bonus to any one Charisma-based skill check.	Eight of Diamonds
Nine of Coins	Turn this card in for a +9 bonus to any Perception check or a +8 bonus to any one Charisma-based skill check.	Nine of Diamonds
Ten of Coins	Turn this card in for a +10 bonus to any Perception check or a +10 bonus to any one Charisma-based skill check.	Ten of Diamonds
Page of Coins	A young merchant, wealthy noble, or tradesperson is predisposed to help the recipient of this card.	
Knight of Coins	A solemn and serious person, perhaps a paladin or another lawfully-aligned soldier, will grant an audience to the recipient of this card.	Knight of Diamonds
Queen of Coins	A woman of nobility or intelligence will grant an audience to the recipient of this card. She may support the recipient financially.	Queen of Diamonds
King of Coins	A man of wealth, perhaps a merchant or skilled craftsperson, will find a way to align his interests with those of the recipient of this card. He will provide support that is calculated to benefit both the recipient and himself.	King of Diamonds

MAJOR ARCANA

CARD	EFFECT	1d20
The Fool	<p>The Fool stands apart and moves freely amongst the Major Arcana, shifting, travelling, and keeping things fluid.</p> <p>A player receiving this card must turn it in immediately in exchange for three other cards, one of which may be kept until it is time to use it.</p>	None
The Magician	<p>The Magician represents new beginnings and creative energy. He may be wielder of truly magical ability or may be a charlatan.</p> <p>When a spellcaster draws this card, the DC of all spells cast increases by +2 for one day.</p> <p>Other characters drawing this card can increase one of the following skill checks by +5: Bluff, Disguise, Stealth, Sleight of Hand, or Use Magic Device. The player must announce their intention to use the card before making the roll.</p>	1

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The High Priestess	The High Priestess represents mystery and intuition. A player holding this card gains +5 to any checks made to Sense Motive for one day.	2
The Empress	The Empress represents sensuality, fertility, and presence. She counters the martial discipline of the Emperor. A character holding this card gains a +1 benefit to any Charisma-based skill checks for the day or can turn the card in for an immediate bonus of +8 to a Diplomacy, Handle Animal, or Perform skill check.	3
The Emperor	The Emperor represents authority and discipline. A character of 1st to 3rd level holding this card can turn it in to receive the benefit of <i>protection from chaos</i> . A character of 4th to 5th level holding this card can turn it in to receive the benefit of <i>protection from chaos, communal</i> . A character of 6th to 7th level holding this card can turn it in to receive the benefit of <i>magic circle against chaos</i> . A character of 8th to 9th level holding this card can turn it in to receive the benefit of <i>dispel chaos</i> . A chaotic character cannot use this card.	4
The Hierophant	The Hierophant represents morality and judgement, determining what is right, wrong, and appropriate. A player receiving this card may exchange it with another player for any card, with that player's agreement. That player can then turn it into the game master and draw another card.	5
The Lovers	While the card often represents sexual love, it may represent loyalty and devotion as well. A player turning this card in can <i>shield other</i> as the spell.	6
The Chariot	The Chariot card usually depicts a victorious hero and represents confidence and victory. A player can turn this card in to automatically confirm a critical hit. The player must turn the card instead of making a roll to confirm the critical hit. It cannot be held until after a failed roll to confirm.	7
Strength	The Strength card represents both mental and physical energy. A player can turn this card in to gain a +5 bonus to any skill check for which the base ability is Strength. Alternatively, a player can turn this card to gain a +5 bonus to a Will save. In either case, the card must be turned in after the roll is made but before the results are announced.	8
The Hermit	The Hermit represents seclusion for the purposes of meditation and preparation. A character who must rest or meditate to prepare spells can turn this card in to lose one prepared spell for any spell that they knew and were capable of preparing.	9

Wheel of Fortune	<p>This card represents change and good fortune, usually for the better of the person who receives this card.</p> <p>A player turning this card in initiates a lucky streak and gains +3 to attacks until the first missed attack, at which point the effect ends.</p>	10
Justice	<p>Justice represents truth, good judgment, and the law.</p> <p>Turning this card in manifests a <i>zone of truth</i> as per the spell for 1 minute. Until the card is turned in, the player gains a +2 bonus to Sense Motive checks for one day.</p>	11
The Hanged Man	<p>The Hanged Man may be an outlaw waiting to return to power. Although he appears to be presently at a disadvantage, a closer look reveals him to be surprisingly comfortable despite his circumstances and, in fact, he may have allowed himself to be hung like this so as to gain wisdom, as Odin allowed himself to be hung from the world tree.</p> <p>A character of 1st to 3rd level holding this card can turn it in to receive the benefit of <i>protection from law</i>.</p> <p>A character of 4th to 5th level holding this card can turn it in to receive the benefit of <i>protection from law, communal</i>.</p> <p>A character of 6th to 7th level holding this card can turn it in to receive the benefit of <i>magic circle against law</i>.</p> <p>A character of 8th to 9th level holding this card can turn it in to receive the benefit of <i>dispel law</i>.</p> <p>A lawful character cannot use this card.</p>	12
Death	<p>Death represents endings but also new beginnings.</p> <p>A character who receives this card gains the attention of Death. Undead creatures and necromancers sense this and will often identify this character as their target. If a character holding this card dies, the character is reincarnated within a week as per the spell <i>reincarnation</i>.</p>	13
Temperance	<p>This card represents balance, connectedness, and timing.</p> <p>A player turning this card in receives the benefit of <i>owl's wisdom</i> as the spell.</p>	14
The Devil	<p>This card represents weakness, selfishness, addiction, and pain. Those who receive it are cursed as the spell <i>bestow curse</i>.</p>	15
The Tower	<p>While Death is a card of beginnings and endings, the destruction this card depicts is more complete. Those receiving this card find their circumstances changing for the worse. The village guards may appear immediately at the door of the card reader's hut to arrest the player receiving this card based on false, but very convincing evidence. Allies become enemies and that which could be trusted proves false. The loss foretold by this card is not easily recovered from.</p>	16

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The Star	<p>The Star is a symbol of healing and recovery.</p> <p>If the Tower card comes into play, the recipient of this card can turn The Star card in to counter, or at least ameliorate, the effects of the Tower.</p> <p>When a character holding this card is healed by any healing spell, the maximum number of hit points healed by the spell are healed. The card must be returned to the game master when the spell is cast.</p> <p>If the character who holds this card casts a healing spell, the maximum hit points are healed for all those benefitting from the spell.</p>	17
The Moon	<p>This card indicates uncertainty and unpreparedness. The recipient of this card is discouraged from taking immediate action and is urged to be patient. Not heeding this advice creates internal tension. A PC who receives this card takes a -2 penalty on Will saves for 1d4 days.</p>	18
The Sun	<p>The Sun is a card of joy, fulfillment, and victory. If a player turns this card in, her character and her allies are filled with courage, as the spell <i>bless</i>.</p>	19
Judgement	<p>The judgement indicated by this card is a spiritual and transcendent one. It represents higher consciousness, renewal, and liberation.</p> <p>A player may turn this card in to provide inspiration and encouragement to one other character, as the spell <i>brilliant inspiration</i>.</p>	20
The World	<p>The Fool journeys through the Major Arcana with the goal of arriving at the state of achievement represented by The World. The successful adventurer is victorious and realizes her desires. The rewards for success are particularly sweet.</p> <p>If a player holds this card at the end of an adventure, her character receives double the XP for the most significant encounter.</p>	

"Well, this did not go as planned," the poet shouted over the roar of one of the beast's heads. It was getting closer, and their exit was now blocked by the fallen rocks.

"It never does," the priest replied.

"I guess you were right," conceded Cassinder. "There is no magic in painted paper."

The priest had been prepared to die, but this saddened him. He felt within his vest for the card she had given to him. "I told her I'd return this," he said, pulling out the damp King of Swords from the pocket over his heart.

He looked at the card again and grinned grimly. "And, I intend to."

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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 gunslinger 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.



Revolutionary Background (5e)

By Brandes Stoddard; Illustration by Assem Hardy

Here's a new background that is ideal for stories set in later historical periods, or those that set aside real-world history for a more stylized, but highly urban, fantasy. Peasant uprisings and rebellious nobles belong to every period of history, but the professional revolutionary is primarily an artifact of the 18th century and later. Viewed through the proper lens, though, this background could also fit into settings resembling Rome in the Late Republic.

The Revolutionary Background

You struggle to overthrow what you see as a corrupt order. Your cause might be a radical, reactionary, nationalist, anarchist, or religious revolution – whatever your aims, you prepare yourself every day to fight and possibly die for the sake of the revolution. This puts you in deadly opposition to the established order and “decent” society. For some revolutionaries, there is an endpoint at which they could set down their banner and live in peace. Many find no peace after their victory, as a result of the compromises that victory requires, and continue the cause of the revolution or come to a messy end at the hands of those they put into power. This is not the life for those who prefer to sleep in comfortable beds – revolutionaries spend many nights on the move or in hiding.

When you choose this background, work with your DM to establish your cause and any network of support you may have.

Skill Proficiencies: Persuasion, Survival

Tool Proficiencies: One musical instrument

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: 3 vials of alchemist's fire, a set of common clothes, a book or pamphlet explaining your revolutionary cause, a belt pouch containing 10 gp

Cause

What cause have you chosen to spend your life fighting for?

Feature: Hardened Against Privation

Long hours and desperate circumstances have been your life and your training, and many nights you've had nothing to feed you but the fire in your belly. You can survive indefinitely on half rations, and can go an additional 3 days without food before suffering noticeable ill effects. When you undertake a forced march, you can march an additional 4 hours before you need to make saving throws to avoid exhaustion. At any appropriate time during play, you may exchange this feature for the Alternate Feature, below.

Alternate Feature: Disillusionment

In the course of bringing about the revolution, you became disillusioned. Your passion for the cause is not what it was, though in time that flame could be ignited once again. You recall the hard-earned lessons that kept you alive, but you have lost the zeal that swayed others to your cause. Many of your personality features become the inverse of those shown below. You gain proficiency in Insight rather than Persuasion. You can pass as a loyal adherent to your old cause. If your rejection of revolutionary principles is revealed, however, you will be treated as an enemy of the revolution and (in many cases) executed. At any appropriate time during play, you may exchange this feature for the standard Feature, above.



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d6	Cause
1	Political representation
2	Society-wide behavioral change (abolition, temperance, etc.)
3	Installing or replacing a ruler or governing body
4	Instituting or dissolving a state religion
5	Improving the standing of a racial, ethnic, or other societal group
6	Protection of nature

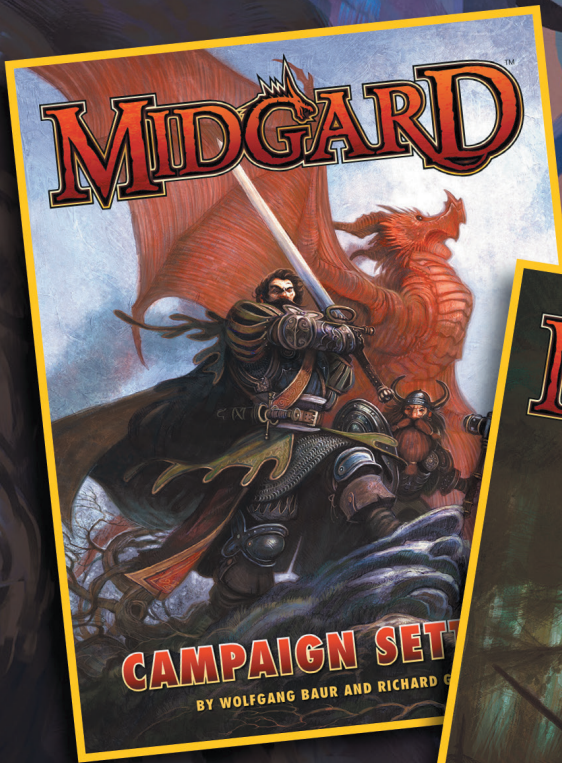
d8	Personality Trait
1	I idolize a martyr for the cause, and any mention of them can stir me to action.
2	No matter how hopeless the situation, I keep a cheerful and confident attitude.
3	I plan to live fast and die young, so why not have another bottle of wine, maybe two?
4	I present an embittered, sarcastic facade to the world, but my dedication never wavers.
5	Anyone could be a spy or counter-revolutionary, so I keep secrets from everyone.
6	A pretty face is all it takes to distract me from my revolutionary zeal.
7	I disregard dire risks – this is just the life I have chosen.
8	I always have an inspiring speech prepared for when my comrades falter.

d6	Ideal
1	Greed: The revolution sounds great, but who says we can't make some money on the side? (Evil)
2	Peace: No matter how the enemies of the revolution persecute us, we must not be the first to offer violence. (Good)
3	Independence: My own vision of the revolution is the only one I trust – I'll rebel even against the leadership if they go astray. (Chaotic)
4	People: My true devotion is to my friends; the rest of the revolution is incidental. (Neutral)
5	Honor: No cause can end in honor if it begins in dishonor. (Lawful)
6	Glory: Dying for a noble cause is a kind of immortality. (Any)

d6	Bond
1	I must build a better world for my spouse and children to live in.
2	The revolution is my one chance to win fame, glory, and a better station in life.
3	I fight to take down the corrupt order that unjustly executed my parents.
4	I can never allow an innocent to suffer without doing all I can to aid them.
5	I want to complete the revolution so that I can return to the person I love.
6	A former friend betrayed the cause, and I must bring them to justice.

d6	Flaw
1	I pounce on any sign of an ally's weakening devotion to the cause.
2	I use accusations to draw attention away from my own faults.
3	I hold myself to unattainable moral standards.
4	I blindly trust those who say the right words in support of my revolutionary cause.
5	My hot temper is going to get me in real trouble someday.
6	When things turn bad, the first to flee has the best chance to survive, and I am a survivor.

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PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

Poker Faces (Starfinder)

By Stephen Rowe; Background by Publisher's Choice

Reward is always paired with risk. If gains were always earned safely, then everyone could be rich and powerful. Incredibly smart and talented individuals who never roll the dice can end up in dead-ends with few prospects. Fortunate fools can practically fall backward into giant piles of money. Most successful gamblers are somewhere in-between... understanding luck is a mixture of persistence and perception. They know not every chance is worth taking, but go all in when opportunity presents itself. A gambler might lose more than they win, but they go to their grave without regretting a hundred missed chances.

The following new theme and archetype for the *Starfinder Roleplaying Game* support themes of the gambler — those who know how to make their own luck.

Gambler (Theme)

+1 Wis

You know gambling is more than playing games—it's a way of life. You see every possible move, weigh the odds, and fearlessly take risks whether it is a hand of cards, or a gauntlet of mercenaries out for blood. You might be an eccentric mathematician obsessed with probabilities, a secret agent who reads people with a glance, or a confidence artist fleecing rubes across the galaxy. Regardless, you always understand the odds, and come out on top. Many call it dumb luck, but you know fortune is a mindless god. Instead of praying, people should be paying closer attention.

Theme Knowledge (1st)

You know every game of chance the universe has to offer and can tell a lot about a person, group, or world by their favored pastimes. Reduce the DC of Culture checks to recall knowledge about games, sports, gambling, and famous athletes or gamblers by 5. You gain a +1 bonus to your Profession (gambler) checks. In addition, you gain an ability adjustment of +1 Wisdom at character creation.

Slow Play (6th)

To outside observers you might seem incredibly lucky and can succeed at impossible feats. You

simply know the odds, and patiently work for the perfect moment. You gain a +2 bonus on any skill check when you take a 10 or take a 20.

Play the Player (12th)

You understand game strategy, and how it easily applies to most social interaction. This gives you an edge against people who can't see past their next move. After interacting with a target for at least 1 minute, you gain the following benefits. You know the target's initial attitude toward you (per the Diplomacy skill). You know if any Bluff checks made to lie would be opposed by the target's Sense Motive (per the detect deception task for Sense Motive) because the target is suspicious. If the target is not suspicious of you, when making a Bluff skill check to lie (DC 10 + target's total Sense Motive skill bonus), you can always take a 10 on your Bluff skill check even if stress or distractions would normally prevent you from doing so.

All In (18th)

Your reputation as one of the Pact World's best gamblers grants a certain amount of prestige and legitimacy to any locations you frequent. This gives you an open invitation to every high-stakes game of chance and skill in the galaxy, whether it is a private table at an upscale space station casino, or the dirty backroom where organized criminals take breaks from breaking knees. Your presence becomes worth taking a loss on your winnings, and so there are never hard feelings when you walk away wealthier. Whenever in a settlement you can spend 1d4 hours (as if making a Diplomacy check to gather information) to automatically find the most lucrative gambling opportunity in the area and get an offer to take part. You can then choose to risk any number of credits and make a Profession (gambler) skill check with a DC based on the multiplier applied to the credits risked. On a successful check, you win (multiply the credits risked by the multiplier). On a failed check, you break even and do not gain or lose credits. If you fail the check by 5 or more, you lose all risked credits. Each Profession (gambler) check made in this manner requires 1d4 hours of effort, and each check made within a 24-hour period adds a +5 modifier to the DC.

Multiplier	DC
x1.1	15
x1.2	20
x1.5	25
x2	30

Highroller (Archetype)

There is a wide divide between people who occasionally place little bets for entertainment and whales who actively get courted by organizations making games of chance their business. The former is the target of mass marketing, but the latter gets special privileges, access, and treatment. However, sometimes what looks like a whale turns out to be a shark. A highroller knows exactly how to play greedy systems to maximize profits, but also to leverage influence into favors money can't buy.

Not all highrollers are gamblers, or vice versa. A highroller can simply be an individual who seems like they've got a lot of money (whether true or not), and is really good at wielding that perception like a tool. This archetype could also represent an expert high-class socialite with access to money, connections, and influence throughout the galaxy.

The majority of highrollers are envoys and operatives, though highrollers who have levels in other classes also exist. A character with the outlaw theme cannot select this archetype.

Alternate Class Features

The highroller grants alternate class features at 2nd, 6th, and 12th levels.

Wealth (Ex) (2nd level)

The more money you have, the less you tend to spend it. You gain a reputation for being extremely wealthy, whether it is true or not. Perhaps you have a family name associated with riches, are a semi-famous business tycoon, or simply concoct an elaborately well-supported cover. Regardless, prominent business owners think you have a lot of credits to burn and work to get on your good side. You can find and purchase anything with an item level no greater than your character level + 3, and at major settlements items, up to your character level + 4. If you are purchasing an item with a level of your character level or lower, you

reduce the price of the item by 10%. Once per day you gain one commonly available item or service within a major settlement for free. The maximum level of an item is equal to half your character level.

Hedged Bets (Ex) (4th level)

You always have fallback strategies and backup plans in place helping smooth things over when you manage to royally screw up. Whenever you fail any check by 5 or more, you do not suffer any additional negative consequences beyond not succeeding at the check.

Admission (Ex) (6th level)

You've found a few credits or implied favors works best when gaining access to well-guarded areas or secret information. You can spend 1d4 hours networking within a settlement and make a Diplomacy skill check (as if attempting to gather information). On a success, you can gain a legal invitation to a business, event, home, or other normally secure or restricted area. The DC of the check is equal to 10 + the CR of the highest CR individual associated with the area or event. A relatively public area or event is DC 5 + the individual's CR, and an extremely secure or exclusive area or event is DC 15 + the individual's CR. When making a Diplomacy check to either gather information or gain access to an area or event, you can gain a +1 circumstance bonus per 100 credits you spend on bribes or gifts (up to a maximum bonus equal to half your character level).

Connections (9th level)

If you don't know someone, you at least know someone who does. This functions as the legal corruption and black market connection outlaw theme abilities, except it can represent perfectly legitimate connections to businesses, wealthy individuals, or even governments.

Confidence (Ex) (12th level)

You understand power is an illusion existing only in the mind. Money has whatever worth people place on it, and you are a master of seeming mighty, even when weak. You can make a Bluff skill check in place of the Intimidate skill when attempting to bully or demoralize a creature. Whenever any creature is attempting to bully or demoralize you (per the Intimidate skill), you can choose for the DC of the check to be equal to 10 + your total Bluff skill bonus. If you do so, and the creature fails to bully or demoralize you, they function as if you had successfully bullied or demoralized them instead.



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RITE PUBLISHING PRODUCT SAMPLERS

In the Company of Valkyries

Valhallan Spear

Aura strong divination; **CL** 15th
Slot none; **Price** 25,715 gp; **Weight** 9 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This +2 heartseekerUE longspear is engraved in silver with depictions of battle, showing fierce winged women striking down foes. The spear acts as the hand of fate itself, condemning those gravely wounded in battle to death by the wielder's hand.

Whenever the wielder confirms a critical hit against an opponent, the target and wielder's fates become entwined. They both witness visions of the target's inevitable defeat. The target must succeed on a DC 22 Will save or become permanently shaken and sickened. This is a curse effect. The wielder simultaneously sees a vision of the target's death (as the vision spell), specifically gaining insight into the means and methods necessary for the target's destruction. The wielder is fatigued at the end of this vision. Should the target survive the attack, the Valhallan spear loses this ability until the target is destroyed or the permanent shaken and sickened conditions are removed.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *death knell*, *geas/quest*, *prediction of failure*; **Cost** 13,015 gp

Be sure to check out Endzeitgeist's 5/5 Star +Seal of Approval review of this product included in the review section of this magazine.



In the Company of Fiends

Piercing of Unnatural Delights

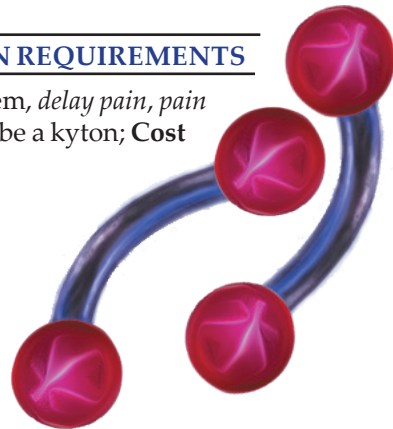
Aura faint evocation [evil]; **CL** 5th; **Slot** none; **Price** 8,000 gp; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

This tiny bar of black metal has an iridescent sheen. Designed to pierce flesh, its ends are capped in beveled rubies that seem lit from within by a dark fire. The piercing can be installed virtually anywhere on the body without taking up an item slot, shifting size and shape to accommodate a desired placement. However, the benefits of the piercing are only gained if it is worn prominently where casual observers can see it. While the piercing is worn, the wearer suppresses the effects of any pain spell or effect, and gains a +1 morale bonus on attack and damage rolls if they are at less than half their maximum hit points or affected by a pain spell or effect. If the wearer is at negative hit points, and still conscious, the morale bonus to attack and damage increases to +2. If the wearer is affected by a pain spell or effect, they can transfer the spell or effect to a foe they damage with a piercing or slashing melee weapon. The damaged creature is entitled to a save against the pain spell or effect if any is allowed (at the original DC of the spell or effect).

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

Craft Wondrous Item, *delay pain*, *pain strike*, creator must be a kyton; **Cost** 4,000 gp



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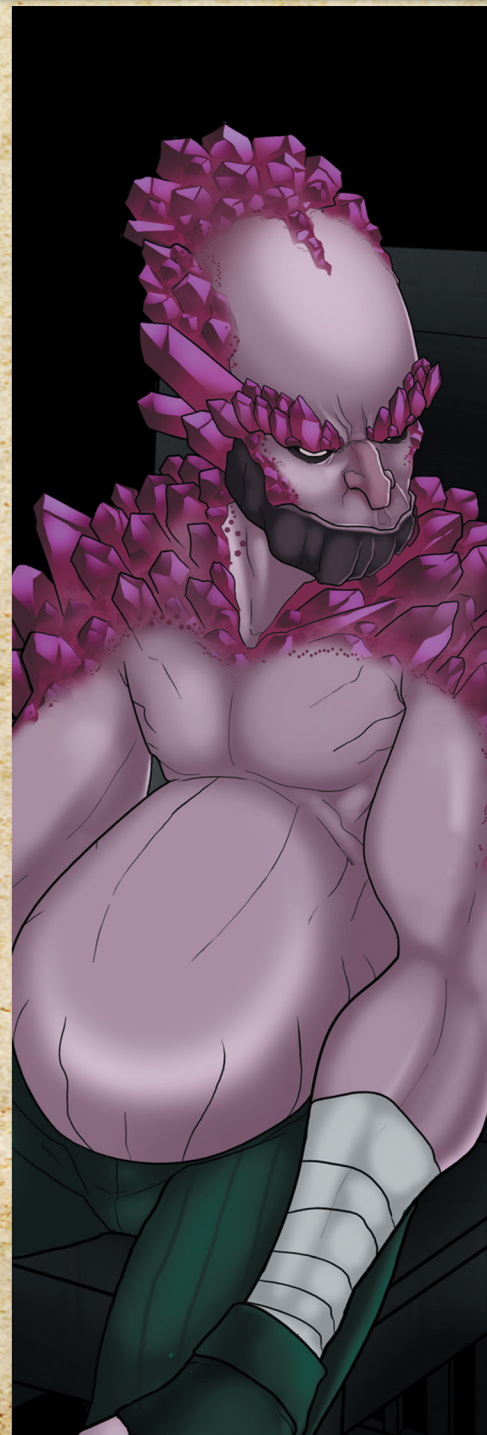


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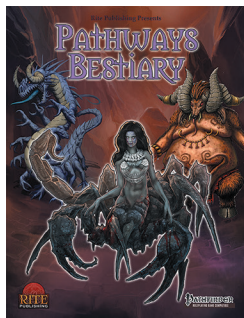
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Reviews



Pathways Bestiary

Publisher: Rite Publishing

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This massive tome clocks in at 229 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with no less

than 223 (!!)

pages of content, so let's take a look! This review was moved up in my reviewing queue as a prioritized review at the request of my patrons.

Okay, so the thing that drew me to Rite Publishing back then was the blending of really imaginative concepts and deadly, highly template adversaries. Here were monsters that did not need me to beef them up to stand a chance against my PCs. When the *Book of Monster Templates* hit sites, I was ecstatic: It took the monster template concept from 3.X's beloved *Advanced Bestiary* by Green Ronin and one-upped it. Not only were the templates super-interesting, they sported unique and diverse abilities, many of which pushed the boundaries of what I expected to see. I liked the *Advanced Bestiary* (who didn't?), but I loved Steve's *Book of Monster Templates*.

As the master of Rite Publishing, Steve continued to provide amazing templates – and for FREE/PWYW, no less, for every installment of the *Pathways* e-zine featured one of the templates, always with a unique sample creature added, often with absolutely gorgeous flavor. Now, I adore these, I still do; however, the game evolved, Rite Publishing grew to become Steve's dayjob and the time-constraints and limited budget a free magazine, of a 3pp, no less, could afford, meant that there were a couple of instances where the wording could have been tighter, where editing needed to be rushed.

Even when I had to bash one of Steven's designs, he took the criticism in stride, encourages and supported me; he was there not only as a publisher, but also as a friend, and when he was taken from us too soon, I was crestfallen. I miss him to this day and his writing continues to influence my games, my own writing, and what I expect to see. In many a way, he pushed the boundaries of what I dared to expect and demand from roleplaying games. I am incredibly happy that Rite Publishing continues to prosper.

Where am I going with this? Well, this book, in a sense, is a monument to Steve's work. It collects the first 60 templates released in *Pathways* by him and his talented cadre of freelancers, and polishes them, brings them up to speed and presents them in a refined, new manner. In a sense, this is the second *Book of Monster Templates* that I always bugged him to write.

Now, from all of this you can glean that I am, to a degree, emotionally invested in this product. Frankly, I'd have a hard time going full-blown analysis-mode and review-bot, abstract my own emotional investment. But then again, Steve would tell me to buckle up, call things as I see them and tell me to rate this as neutral as usual. To review this the rite way and not to make any excuses on behalf of his legacy, so there goes.

After a brief introduction of none other than legend Owen K.C. Stephens, we dive into the respective creatures and templates. Here, I am going to deviate a bit from my usual formula. If I were to discuss the respective templates and monsters in detail, this review would be bloated beyond any usefulness for the customer, so instead, I'm going to paint the picture in broad strokes, all right? Great!

So, first things first: Know how the 7 deadly sins are kind of a big deal in *Pathfinder*, beyond the neutral evil outsiders? Did you want templates to *really* reflect them, to e.g. represent champions and creatures of the Thassilon empire? Well, we get one template plus associated creature for each of the sins. These are not just any templates, mind you: The gluttonous creature gets a grinning maw in its belly; the lustful creature's gaze can wreck your equipment-based bonuses; prideful creatures fight not simply to win, but to prove their superiority – which is actually a thing, thanks to the rules. These examples do not even begin to encompass what the templates offer, though.

You see, the templates herein are not simply content with just providing some numerical bonuses and perhaps one cool ability; no, the templates in this book sport multiple unique signature abilities per template, sometimes even going so far as to add a whole subsystem of trickery to the ability complex bestowed on the base creature. In short, you will NOT just mistake such a creature for a weirdly colored version of its base creature; you won't just find animals with slightly fiendish touches, or critters that add a bit of elemental energy damage. Instead, you'll find templates that really make a difference in how the creature operates, in its options, etc.

Now, there are a couple of somewhat elemental-themed critters within: E.g. the +1 CR pyroclastic template. To give you an extent of the level of modification you can expect to see from each template within: We have type change to elemental, immunity to crits and flanking and precision damage, vulnerability to cold perfect flight as well as burrow speed. They get a long burn, that adds not only fire damage, but has it last. Their aura causes Con-damage on a failed save and they get a breath weapon. Gentlepersons, that is the *least* amount of modification you'll see herein. Yep, beyond the usual play with abilities and standard offense/defense tricks, we get no less than 3 signature abilities. Oh, and you don't want to add the template, but need a brutal boss ASAP? What about a CR 23 pyroclastic red dragon? AC 39, over 500 HP. Need I say more?

Okay, another way to illustrate the extent to which the respective templates go to make the playing experience unique, would be the Agent of Chaos. One of the abilities bestowed by the template is the chaos field. Whenever someone nearby uses supernatural, SP or spell, the ability automatically causes a mishap, and the ability takes longer effects into account. Here's the thing: We don't get one, or 20 different effects; no siree, we actually get a massive 100-entry-strong table of chaotic effects! These are not brief ones either – in total, the table takes up 3 whole pages. And yes, these are not just cosmetic, but mechanically relevant! And that is before the next ability, the warpwave, which can have 20 different effects! Speaking of which: There actually are two feats to further build on the warpwave, so yes, the monsters and templates herein do actually come with supplemental material where appropriate.

Speaking of the monsters: Take the amber template – obviously, this makes creatures adhesive, and the creatures can negate *freedom of movement* and they can encase and suffocate victims. The sample creature here, lavishly depicted in full color, would be The Glorious Snare – a CR 4 amber unicorn. Yes, it is CE. Yes, it actually is pretty lethal. There are also rules-components that exceed significantly the frame we usually expect from templates: Take the bladeleaf creature. Not just a template for plant creatures, it provides basically a statblock that is based in part on the stats of the respective base creature, representing the animated swarm of leaves. Yes, the template actually allows for swarm-creation. Blood magic creatures can enhance their abilities via killing other beings. In this case, we get no less than 4 new spells to tie in with the template, one of which actually conjures forth fully-statted creatures.

Need some creatures that embody the cataclysmic end of days? Well, what about a template that will do just that, increasing CR to 25? Speaking of super-potent stuff: What about the DIY-Kaiju-template Daikaiju? Divine champions can assume frickin' avatar form...yeah, there is definitely a ton of amazing, high-concept stuff here.

Fans of the mythos aren't left out, either: We get a Dark tapestry template and the many-angled template, for example. Really neat! That being said, even though the editing has improved, there are a couple of snafus left: In the many-angled creature's write-up, we have an erroneous reference to the lostling instead; there's a statblock that has a double "AC" in the line – this book is not perfect in that regard.

Now all templates are this epic in scope, though: Want a representation of the not-at-all-wholesome prankster? The deadly prankster template offers just that, turning whimsy to being full-blown creepy! Prefer something more twisted? The Mad Harlequin allows you to make your own Joker or works as a nice foundation for Jack-of-Tears-inspired creatures. Want an undead jester instead? Red Jester template. As a fan of things macabre and dark, these struck a chord with me.

Dichotomous creatures are another example I adore: The creature represents a duality, rather than a singularity in morals, allowing for the fusions of e.g. demons/angels. Not happy with all representations of some classic undead? Dread Banshees, Phantom Armors, Revenants, Sayona and Crucifixion Spirits make for brutal, interesting takes on the respective concept, more in line with the level of deadliness than the more standard iterations.

We can find dream killer and false idols represented here, and there is a template to turn you into a gallows-based construct. The grandmaster template comes with an integrated cabal of servants and unique tactical tricks that, in conjunction with similar commander options, make for a deadly threat. Combine these fellows with the destined kingkillers, a template representing figures like Mordred or V, and we have a great coup-d'état scenario. The kingkiller's wounds are cursed, btw., and not in some pansy manner – they can only be healed under a specific circumstance, which makes the old "the good king lies dying" actually work within the confines of the game! And that is before the sub-ability sections. Oh, and yes, we get kingdom-building-rules-synergy for the kingkiller!

Heartless creatures take a trope from classic fairy tales, creating duplicates...and the only way to truly slay them, as they're born of negative emotion,

is to find the origin. If played to their capabilities, Heartless can make for a potentially world-ending threat...and make for a super-difficult, cool investigation if handled properly. The template only clocks in at CR +1, but frankly, I could see this carry a whole campaign.

Need more forward threats to throw against the PCs? Both hellfire and hero killer should do a good job there. And yes, the latter isn't called "Hero Killer" for giggles. Are you one of the folks who wished that Iron Kingdoms had continued support for d20-based games? Well, this book contains the iron lich! Speaking of classics: Poison and Deep dragon templates

Now, Pathfinder is an offense-heavy game – it's much harder to establish a good defense than a good offense – and if you're a GM whose players just steamroll over most published monsters... well, then you may want to check out the nigh-invulnerable template. This template represents something I loved in 2nd edition, where a few creatures like Greater Wolfweres actually fully regenerated each round, unless killed in a very specific manner. Well, the template represents just that, allowing you to create a classic, nigh-unkillable monster. This template, on its own, could be used to duplicate a more classic horror gameplay. Just modify it to suit the respective creature, add/deduct cooldowns, etc. Gold.

It's not all evil, though: Creatures infused with the fires of heaven or beings that represent the concept of the sublime can make for potent allies for stalwart heroes, with feats like Too Pretty to Kill further enhancing this trope.

If you're like me and enjoy esoteric, weird or philosophical concepts in your game, then the notion of the timebreaker creature will most certainly appeal to you as well....and even if the concept per se is not something you like to explore theme-wise, the abilities are uncommon enough to warrant integration. If you're bored of the standard treasure golems, why not use the treasure hoarding to represent the concept of the self-defending treasure? And if you enjoy the aesthetics of the Soulsborne games, you'll probably also enjoy the walking weapons, the disintegrating void creatures, the walking wastelands. Creepy and eternal, the eye-studded watchmen creatures eternally hold vigil, while witchfire and whispering phantasms speak of dark things just beyond your ken.

Beyond all those templates, the last 30 pages are devoted to appendices: We first get recaps of creature types, then subtypes, then universal

monster rules, then templates by CR-adjustment. After that, we get sample monsters by CR. These appendices are incredibly useful and make navigation of the book simple and smooth.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are better than in the original iterations and quite a few rough patches have been smoothed over and properly codified. However, there are more glitches in the book than in comparison to most of Rite's recent offerings. Layout adheres to the two-column full-color standard used by Rite Publishing and the pdf comes with a ton of full-color artworks, most of which were previously used for Pathways covers, so yeah – the artworks, while not adhering to a uniform style, are amazing. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. As per the writing of this review, I cannot comment on the print version, since I do not yet own it.

Steven D. Russell, Matt Banach, Jonathan McNulty, Will McCardell, Mike Welham and, of course, Owen K.C. Stephens are the authors of this tome, and they have in common that their names are synonyms for amazing books. All of these authors have, in more than a few cases, gained my highest accolades and they all know what they're doing.

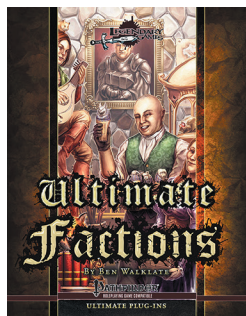
Now, as a reviewer, I have to admit to not being too happy with the minor verbiage deviations and cosmetic hiccups that have crept into the book; but frankly, I'd rather have a couple of those than a book full of bland standard templates. You see, this book is, in a way, an epitome of the Rite Publishing mentality: We receive a vast array of truly formidable, high-concept templates, with unique critters attached to them. The templates are not content with just representing the base concepts, they utterly embrace them and make them not a side-flavor, but the leitmotif of the creatures. They also do not shirk away from making creatures challenges, which is a huge plus for me. In comparison, the only series of monsters that, in design-philosophy, feels similar, would be Legendary Games' Mythic Monsters series. Considering the amazing standards set by that series, this should be considered to be high praise indeed.

The creatures and templates within this tome are geared towards more experienced GMs and players, and the book is better off for it. Considering how often I hear from GMs whose players steamroll through many published modules, this book is pretty much required. Beyond the simple challenge, the design philosophy of the templates excels in another level: The book does

not just escalate numbers. The templates grant power-boosts, yes, but at the same time, the book emphasizes smart tactics and roleplaying as well: Quite a few of the creatures herein can inspire whole campaigns and make for truly deadly foes, but at the same time, their strong motifs also make sure that clever players are rewarded when tackling them. Your brain and creativity will provide better angles to win than just rolling high with a min-maxed character. Now, that does not mean that folks who like ROLLplaying won't get a ton of challenges here; quite the contrary. It is interesting, though, that the unique abilities of the templates go one step beyond the usual rules-confinements in favor of making the creatures distinct, unique and rewarding to face.

Now, this massive bestiary may not be perfect, but its ideas can keep your game going for literally decades. In the rare and distinguished air of its predecessor and Green Ronin's [Advanced Bestiary](#), I actually prefer it over them, courtesy of the truly distinct, creative and courageous design-decisions that suffuse the templates herein. My final verdict will, in spite of the hiccups here and there, clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval. This is absolutely worth getting and any GM I know will love pouring over these pages...and start cackling with diabolical glee. This is a wonderful monument to a design philosophy and the man that championed it. Do yourself a favor and check it out.

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



Ultimate Factions

Publisher: Legendary Games

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This supplement clocks in at 28 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page inside of front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 2 pages of introduction/how to use, 1

page ToC, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 19 pages of content. It should be noted, though, that much like in every LG-book, these pages are chock-full with text and information – we get a ton of content in these pages.

So, what did I complain about regarding kingdom building? What did people really want to see there? What's a big weakness of the base kingdom building system, even after LG's massive and glorious expansions like [Ultimate Rulership](#)? Well, it represents kingdoms as cohesive entities, when both in fiction and reality, they never behaved

as such. The vizier wants to be caliph instead of the caliph, religious cults and mage guild vie for control, and the noble families are plotting.

Now, I am perfectly capable of plotting complex machinations of a ton of factions in the background of the campaign, seeing the information in tiny nuggets. My players like piecing together complex happenings – but what happens when a large group of NPCs in a kingdom-building game exerts its influence, either under the control of PCs or in opposition to them? In the more abstract kingdom-building, seeding hooks and the like becomes tougher. Enter this supplement.

As an aside, this also acts as a bridge of sorts between regular and kingdom-building gameplay: The PCs could e.g. begin using the rules for large organizations in kingdom building as well as *Ultimate Intrigue's* organization influence rules to influence organizations, via them kingdoms... and perhaps actually become caliphs instead of the caliph. (Kudos if you got that reference, btw.) This allows for a more organic playstyle – from rags to leaders, to kings, this book allows for a linear progression and acts as a synthesis between *Ultimate Intrigue* and *Campaign*.

Okay, so how do factions behave? First thing you'll notice is that factions actually get tangible benefits from their alignment: Lawful factions get +2 resources, chaotic ones +2 power, good ones get +2 reputation and evil factions +2 to power. Neutral factions get +1 to reputation and power, while true neutral factions get this bonus, obviously, twice. If the combined size of a kingdom's factions exceeds 10 times the kingdom's size, it'll get +1 unrest during upkeep's Step 4. Goals designate the faction's endgame; operation denotes the means by which the organization seeks to achieve its goal.

Power, Reputation and Resources are pretty self-explanatory and constitute the attributes of the organization. A point of size roughly represents 25 members, and in a cool twist, we get [Ultimate Rulership](#)-synergy here. If the members are dissatisfied with the faction's leadership, then this leads to tension, which translates to a scaling penalty to faction checks. Factions may have types and measure their wealth in Wealth Points (WP), each of which is worth approximately 400 gp, or 1 BP in kingdom building. WP may be purchased during the income phase.

In order to create a faction, you first calculate its size. They begin with a size of 0, and buildings in the kingdom increase the maximum initial size. A MASSIVE table of a detailed building-list provides an easy 1-page-stop-reference for the sizes, and,

once more also covers Ultimate Rulership's buildings. Factions may start as a smaller size than maximum, should they choose to do so. This table also the 9 types of factions – for example, an academic faction obviously benefits from an academy, while a military or religious one does not. These 9 types, just fyi, each convey a total of +2 to the faction's attributes, though obviously, some of them split the +2 bonus between two attributes.

As an aside: The engine allows, as presented here, for pretty easy changes of faction type: Wanted to subvert those religious fanatics via wit? Change the type of the faction. Looking for a representation of growing fanaticism and radical thinkers, or an increasing enlightenment? Type-changes can provide an easy means to write a new chapter of your faction's history. After the type, you determine the secrecy of the faction – a faction may be open, covert or disguised. After codifying different basic types of possible goals, we take a look at the scale of the goal, which obviously may range from local to encompassing the whole kingdom. Note that public and covert goals may be different from another! Goals have a basic DC 15 to achieve, with aims, scale and privacy determining the DC-modifier to achieve a goal.

So that's the base engine for the faction. From here, we proceed to take a look at the faction turn. A faction turn takes place during the kingdom turn sequence, after the Edict phase. Results of the faction turn should take place before the start of the Income phase. All factions perform each faction phase before moving on to the next phase. Power acts as an initiative of sorts for factions, and on a tie, the smaller faction goes first.

First, we have the upkeep phase – here, we check tension. If tensions become particularly bad, we may well see a splintering of factions here! After that, we pay upkeep costs.

After that, we move on to the operations phase: Here, factions may act, with their sizes governing how many operations can be initiated. Operations happen in a contiguous sequence, not parallel: First OP #1, then OP #2, etc. The sequence may be freely chosen. Here, gp can be converted to WP and income is determined. Operations are classified in two categories – active and maintenance. These include advancing a goal, abandoning one, aiding factions, earning wealth, pursuing alliances, engaging in faction conflict, recruitment...you get the idea. These interact in meaningful ways with the kingdom building rules.

Now, I mentioned splintering factions before, and this indeed is a part where the intrigue

component comes into play – you see, the pdf provides the tool to treat factions as organizations and vice versa, allowing you to switch between them with relative ease. This makes it very much possible for individual characters to matter and provides an uninterrupted line of player agenda from the personal to the kingdom level, which, to me, represents a HUGE selling point. This is also relevant, obviously, for the easy to grasp splintering rules. If you already have a kingdom in play, fret not – the book contains rules for creating actions for existing kingdoms.

Now, if we assume factions and PCs as a constant line of sorts, it should become obvious that PCs will sooner or later want to use skills in the context of factions, right? Well, the pdf provides concise rules there as well.

Does that all sound too complex for you? Fret not! Simple faction rules included. Now, the pdf is not content in just providing an unbroken line from intrigue to Campaign – it actually ALSO provides the means to use the downtime rules in context with factions! Yes, this is purely optional, but oh boy did I smile here. Of course, kingdoms may attempt to support or suppress a faction and, as noted, the faction/intrigue rules, are presented in a concise manner: The process covers approximately a page and is tight and was understandable on my first read-through. Considering the systems in question, that is quite an achievement.

Now, the book is content with just providing you with tools – it proceeds to elaborate on why factions matter and how you can use them in play – and, if you're a lazy fellow like yours truly, you'll certainly appreciate the 6 generic sample factions that allow you to throw factions into play without much hassle. The pdf concludes with a handy table-index.

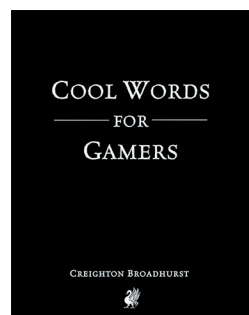
Conclusion:

Editing and formatting re top-notch, I noticed no glitches on a forma or rules-language level. Layout adheres to legendary Games' nice two-column full-color standard. The artworks are in full-color and nice, though fans of Legendary Games will be familiar with all but one of them. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

WTF has just happened here? This is, to my knowledge, Ben Walklate's FIRST RPG-supplement. As in: Freshman offering. At least I couldn't find any previous rulebook. This pdf has no business being so darn impressive! I expected that this book would be good; after all, Legendary Games would not jeopardize the reputation of their phenomenal kingdom-building supplements.

Still, I did not expect this little book to actually succeed in such an impressive manner in a task that can well be deemed a squaring of the circle of sorts: We have a seamless progression from character to faction/organization to kingdom-building level, providing not only perfect synergy between *Ultimate Intrigue* and *Campaign*, but also with the must-own [Ultimate Rulership](#). This is baffling. I mean it. The systems presented are organic, precise and, best of all, remain easy and painless to sue and integrate. Indeed, the rules presented herein sport an almost effortless elegance that, from a design-perspective, is a true achievement.

This book is a missing link of sorts; whether you take the analogue of Conan (Solitary PC -> faction -> king) or just kingdom-spanning intrigues that oscillate between the different levels, this book delivers; with transparency and much-needed interactions between the different levels, this represents an absolute masterpiece that allows you to tell a whole cosmos of new stories. There are very few book that attain this level of game-enhancing characteristics, much less in such a tight manner. *Ultimate factions* is a masterstroke and the single most impressive freshman offering I have read in a long, long while. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval, and this qualifies as a candidate for my Top Ten of 2017. This is a must-have offering and should be considered to be an EZG-Essential for any games that want to blend intrigue and kingdom-building. This is a true masterpiece. Get it.



Cool Words for Gamers (system neutral)

Publisher: Raging Swan

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

And now for something completely different!

This book clocks in at 72 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page dedication, 1 page introductory quote, 7 pages blank, 2 pages advertisement, 1 page author bio, 1 page acknowledgements, leaving us with 57 pages of content, laid out for a 6" by 9" standard, meaning you can fit up to 4 pages on a given sheet of paper when printing this one. It should be noted that the book comes with jpgs for the cover and an .epub and .mobi version as well, making it easy to use in the context of e-readers.

After a brief preface, we begin with exactly what this says on the tin – rarely used words that can enrich your vocabulary. Why should you bother? Simple: Our language obviously does not only influence our own social interactions. Within the context of roleplaying games, it illustrates very much how linguistic conventions and the use of words shape our perceptions of reality.

You see, as human beings, we all have certain associations with certain words and the words we use, while conventionalized by social standards and languages we speak, ultimately, our languages differ in crucial ways from person to person – even within the context of the same language. A rather famous example for this would be the linguistic concept of degrees of category membership – is an ostrich a bird? If so (yes, it is), is it a better bird in its “birdiness” than e.g. a nightingale or a sparrow? Our concept of “bird” is arbitrary and yet we use it every day – because that is how language works. It categorizes infinite, disparate phenomena in information-clusters whose meaning we can convey with at least moderate accuracy. It is a necessary tool for any kind of society to work.

Many of our disputes in daily life, both domestic and in a professional context, can be traced back to misunderstandings, to people not being sufficiently precise with the language they employ and the associations they may elicit. In roleplaying games, this issue is exacerbated and may be most famously illustrated by the old tale of the gazebo, misunderstood by an increasingly desperate player as a monster. This by now famous and classic meme/anecdote obviously puts its fingers on a crucial part of roleplaying – it is almost entirely contingent on the mastery of language. In more rules-heavy systems, we need to know syntax and semantics of the system; in any system, regardless how rules-lite it may be, we require language and an understanding of language in order to create the shared imaginary worlds in which our games take place.

It is evident, then, that each individual will have a different idea of what exactly is happening, how everything looks like, etc. – and yet, there is a consensus regarding some aspects of what is happening. The task of the author and GM/Judge/referee/etc., then, would be to create vivid descriptions and prose that manage to set the neurons of the players ablaze with excitement, each in their own way.

Nothing is as frustrating as reading a per se interesting adventure that sports horrid prose; similarly, there is nothing as frustrating as not getting the elaborate, flowery prose that the GM

employs – as such, this book can be considered to be a true help for PCs and GMs alike – GMs learn about strange and archaic words, while players can read the book to lower the chances of suffering from a gazebo-moment.

Chances are, for example, that many a roleplayer may know what an “adyton” is, but even with my extensive reading and expertise under my belt, I was not aware of the meaning of “agruw.” I knew what a “chamfrain” was, and “chthonic” is a word we read rather often, but I had never even seen the word “dandiprat” before. Why should you care about such words? Well, for one, immersion; secondly, to improve your writing. Thirdly, perhaps because you want to expand your active vocabulary. There is power in words, and if you’re like me and enjoy reading e.g. the old Icelandic Sögur in the original, or if you e.g. enjoy Catherynne M. Valente’s flowery prose, Voltaire’s or Wilde’s wit, you’ll know that there is beauty in the written word, in the properly phrased happenstance.

Now, if you believe that I’m just pulling the importance of language out of my academic behind, rest assured that I am not: Gary Gygax himself was known to use language to convey hidden characteristics in names – if you knew where to look. Hence, the final chapter of the book is devoted to “Gary’s Clever Names.” We take a look at pregen names and what they actually mean, which makes this book a rather interesting piece of linguistic gaming archaeology: Take, for example “Cloyer Bulse the Magsman.” As most gamers versed in old-school games will know, magsman is an 8th-level title for the thief. Here’s the thing: Did you know that “Cloyer” denotes either a pickpocket’s accomplice or the guy who blunders into a bunch of thieves and demands a share? Did you know that a “bulse” is a package of diamonds or gold dust? Or take the grey elf fighter/magic-user Ycore Rixie: This fellow may well be suffering from delusions of grandeur – “Ycore” means chosen/elect, while “Rixle” means “to rule” or “to have dominion.”

The book comes with a suggested further reading list, which is nice to see.

A drawback of the pdf-version here is that the book has no bookmarks, which represents a comfort-detriment. I’d suggest getting the PoD-version, particularly since it makes for nice reading when you put in on the table and a player has to wait its turn or has already finished the obligatory pizza during the lunch-break. For the pdf-version, you should probably detract a star from my final verdict.

Now, unlike pretty much every other book I’ve reviewed, this handy little booklet by Creighton Broadhurst is highly contingent in its appeal on whether you value cool words/language etc. If the idea sounds boring to you (which it frankly shouldn’t, but I’m not one to judge), I can understand that. If, however, the idea sounds exciting or interesting to you, then this is very much worth getting! Hence, my final verdict will clock in at 5 stars.

Endzeitgeist out.



Mini-Dungeon: The Blight

Publisher: AAW

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This pdf clocks in at 2 pages and is a mini-dungeon. This means we get 2 pages content, including a solid map and all item/monster-

stats hyperlinked and thus, absent from the pdf, with only deviations from the statblocks being noted for the GM. Oh, and the series now comes in an archive that also contains...*drumroll* a .jpg-version of the map! Yeah, that’s pretty amazing! Better yet: GM-friendly version of the jpg’s included as well!

Since this product line’s goal is providing short diversions, side-quest dungeons etc., I will not expect mind-shattering revelations, massive plots or particularly smart or detailed depictions, instead tackling the line for what it is. Got that? Great!

This being an adventure-review, the following contains SPOILERS. Potential players may wish to jump to the conclusion.

...

Still here?

All right!

For almost a millennium, a vast oak, buildings in the branches, stood as the proud regent of the forest, guarded by a proud dryad and druidic allies. The druids have gone, though, and now, rot is spreading through the vast forest, courtesy of the dryad being infected by the eponymous blight, represented rules-wise by the blighted fey template here. Now, a flayed druid, plant monsters and worse remain, and the dryad enjoys hit and run tactics – tree stride is really effective when everything around you is a tree...so the PCs will need to be smart, withstand the dryad and her cold iron hedgeclippers...and hopefully find a way to stop the fungal blight.

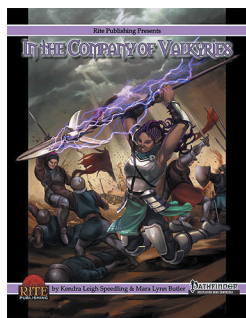
Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I noticed no significant glitches. Layout adheres to a beautiful 2-column full-color standard and the pdf comes sans bookmarks, but needs none at this length. Cartography is full color and surprisingly good for such an inexpensive pdf. The .jpg version included here, which you can easily cut up and hand out to the players as they progress is a huge bonus -and even better: A KEY-LESS VERSION sans the annoying letters/numbers is included as well for full VTT-compatibility!!!. The pdf does sport one nice piece of original full-color art – kudos!

Colin Stricklin provides a great sidetrek for travels through extensive stretches of forest – the mini-dungeon is easy to insert and very flavorful. The nasty spore-clouds and smart primary antagonist add further value to this mini-dungeon, continuing the streak of exceedingly strong mini-modules. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

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

Endzeitgeist out.



In the Company of Valkyries

Publisher: Rite Publishing

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of Rite Publishing's „In the Company of...“-series clocks in at 39 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial,

1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 35 pages of content, so let's take a look!

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

Okay, the first thing you'll note: New and improved layout! Really nice one, at that! Parchment-like background, central page numbers against a red backdrop, lion-like glyphs in the borders. Elegant and neat!

Now, as always, we begin this supplement with a missive to Qwilion of Questhaven, chronicling and interview with a member of the species in question, which means that, yes, this pdf, like all installments in the series, is actually a nice reading experience, as what otherwise would be dry notes, takes on a personal touch: “Hail and well met, scholar!” indeed, as this is how we begin the supplement. Now, obviously, valkyries are chosen, not born – the initiation sees the valkyrie, according to narrator

Scoria Stormcrow, gaze down a chalice in a hall, where no drop may be spilled; they gaze into a well, reliving the final, mortal fight, as weakness bleeds out of the valkyrie to be. The new initiate receives a mentor and the pdf proceeds to explain the details of the choosing, the importance of drink and poetry, and indeed, the valkyries retain some aspect of their erstwhile race, though it usually is cosmetic – yes, this means that half-orcs, elves, dwarves, etc. all can become valkyries. The pdf also explains the meaning of some famous names associated with valkyries.

Now, basic stats-wise, valkyries are native outsiders with +2 Strength and Charisma and -2 Dexterity. They are Medium, have darkvision 60 ft., resistance 5 to acid and cold and gain *deathwatch* as a supernatural ability 1/day, using character level as caster level – though only for the purpose of seeing creatures with souls. As battle-trained fighters, armor the valkyrie is proficient in never impacts her speed, nor does it add its armor check penalty to Ride checks. A valkyrie gains a valiant steed, which acts as a druid animal companion that does not automatically improve over the levels. The steed must be a horse, which is always combat trained and gains Light Armor Proficiency as a bonus feat. It does not gain share spells, and may be replaced if slain after a 1-week mourning period.

The signature ability, though, would obviously be the choosing of the slain: 1/day as a standard action, the valkyrie may draw a soul from a recently deceased body and safeguard it indefinitely, as per *soul bind*, but she may only do so for creatures willing to have their souls thus carried. The ability may only be used on a target if the target has been slain within a timeframe equal to a number of rounds that is equal or less than the valkyrie's character level. If the soul is reluctant, the valkyrie may use Diplomacy to attempt to convince a target. In order to carry a soul, the valkyrie's character level must be equal to or greater than the creature's HD and she may only have one soul at any given time. She may free a soul as a full-round action. And before you ask: The pdf does talk about souls, what does or doesn't have them, and retains full GM-control. The valkyries won't wreck your world-building.

We get a proper height and weight table, fyi – being immortal, no age is given, obviously. The race comes with a total of 9 alternate racial traits. Instead of the standard darkvision and resistances, we can choose negative energy resistance and 1/day immediate action + Cha-mod (min 1)to saves versus negative energy, energy drain and death effects as well as +2 racial bonus to saves against the like – however, upon using this boost, the valkyrie loses the benefits of the trait for

24 hours. Cool! The resistances may also be replaced in favor of 10 resistance to one of the default energy types. Instead of being battle trained and the resistances, there is an option for a Charisma-based *mage armor* like effect and one for better divination CL as well as an initiative boost after casting such a spell. Speaking of divinations: We can replace the steed with a better form of *augury* 1/day. Fated sight may be replaced with Knowledge (planes) as a class skill and perfect knowledge of where she is in the planes as well as the knowledge about the closest *gate*. We also get a racial trait to make Small valkyries and the signature spear wielding: Instead of the steed, valkyries can use a standard action to call a masterwork spear to their side, which may be enchanted as usual and retains the enchantments, but may not be permanently destroyed. Finally, the steed may be replaced with wings: Here, we can see the mastery of the designers: The wings start off as gliding and synergy with the battle trained trait is covered. It should also be noted that the pdf qualifies these traits as racial feats – so yeah, you can take them sans trading in other options, and we get different prerequisites for qualifying traits!

Favored class options cover arcanist, bard, bloodrager, cavalier, magus, medium, occultist, skald, sorcerer, warpriest, witch and wizard as well as the racial paragon class., but more on that later.

Before we dive into the details there, let us talk for a second about the feats: We get no less than 18 racial feats, which include the ability to have the companion steed scale, quicker summoning and banishing of the spear, halving the duration of divinations with casting times exceeding a round, divination-based SPs...and yes, there is a feat-sequence that nets you flight! Yes, it is locked behind the appropriate minimum ranks/levels and will not hamper your game's assumptions at low levels. The wings can be further upgraded to serve as natural attacks (properly codified!) AND the upgraded metallic wings may act as shields and cause bleed damage. HECK yes! (And yes, the prerequisites for these make sense, regarding level-range!) The paragon class can choose an extra insight (more on that later) and mid-level *death ward* that also acts as a safety net to keep you from falling below 0 hp, can be found. *Aura sight* is also here and really high-level valkyries can 1/day claim the soul of a living being.

Now, two of the feats tie in with Norse lore particularly well – these allow for the creation and improvement, respectively, of enchanted meads, a new item category of sorts, which can take four forms. The first is a more potent spell than what can usually be contained in a potion; the second allows for the creation of a potion-equivalent of up to 6th level. The third combines two spells into a single potion and

the fourth uses strong alcohol to lower the cost of the brewing process, which is amazing – and before you ask: If you attempt to cheese these by being immune to the effects of alcohol...well, you can't. The respective basic crafting mechanics are explained in a concise and precise manner that bespeaks that the authors did their math. Kudos! Beyond the basic crafting system expansion provided here, we also get 5 special, specific meads, which provide potent spell benefits, but, like the base engine, they come with risky drawbacks if you can't keep your mead down. This represents, in short, the flavor of the race really well in the mechanics. We can all picture amused valkyries smirking over mortals that can't keep their mead down, right?

Now, while pretty much every feat in the racial section is for valkyries (surprise), there are three that aren't: The Valkyrie Style and its two follow-up feats. Valkyrie Style lets you wield a two-handed polearm one-handed while using a light shield or buckler, but, following the rules, you don't get the 1.5 Str-mod to damage when doing so. The follow-up feat, Valkyrie Strike unlocks this damage boost and adds +1d6 precision damage with it – and this bonus precision damage bypasses all forms of DR. That is really interesting: Precision damage is easily one of the least valuable damage types in PFRPG and the DR-ignoring, while usually not something I like, makes it actually valuable. Kudos! The third feat, Valkyrie Fury lets you add a shield bash when making a full attack – sans losing the AC-bonus. Oh, and free trip attempt on a hit, sans AoO! Really cool style-chain! The base feat for this Style-chain also acts as one of the prerequisites of the Shield Maiden PrC, which represents one way other than dying to become a valkyrie.

The PrC requires the Valkyrie Style feat, BAB +5, 3 ranks in two Knowledge skills. Here is a great way to note one fact that made me smile and that is rather important for quite a few of my readers: Valkyries are obviously gendered entities, right? In another supplement, we'd probably read a "female only" line in the prerequisites for the PrC and be done with it. Well, guess what? Both regarding being chosen after slain and PrC only cares about how your character identifies – a shield maiden must identify as female, but doesn't have to be female. This is really cool, as one could see the struggle, bloodshed and fights throughout a character's progression as a symbolic, potentially cathartic representation of the struggle of transitioning, adding potentially deep symbological depth to the playing experience. So yeah, big kudos!

The PrC, on a mechanical side, gets d10 HD, 4 + Int skills per level, proficiency with simple and martial weapons as well as all armors and shields, excluding tower shields. The PrC gets full BAB-progression as

well as ½ Fort-save progression. At 1st level, we get + Cha-bonus to saves (not stacking with the paladin's divine grace, thankfully), and she may 1/day reroll a save, but upon doing so, loses the benefits of the ability for 24 hours. The shield maiden also gets the valkyrie's ease when operating in armor at this level. At 2nd level and every even level thereafter, the shield maiden gains a boon, chosen from a selection of 6: She may substitute the armor or shield bonus she has with her Charisma-modifier (thankfully, min and max values included); 3+ Cha-mod valkyrie-style *deathwatch*, gaining an insight from the paragon class, a bonus feat (fighter level caveat included), resistance and gaining valkyrie traits may be found here. 3rd level nets fatebond: Either, you get a cool spear with enhancement bonuses and special abilities (scaling, caps intact) or a steed – and paladin-synergy is once more covered. Kudos! 5th level nets *light fortification* while wearing armor, and, in a cool twist, actually provides synergy with armors actually enchanted to grant the property. 7th level nets glory, which is a mini-smite of sorts usable up to ½ class levels times per day, each use lasting 1 round. When confirming a critical hit against a target of her character level + 2 in CR or higher, she regains uses – cool, and uncheesable! 9th level yields a *death ward* that may be used reflexively and 10th level provides the coveted valkyrie ascension upon dying. Really cool PrC!

Now, we also get quite an array of different racial archetypes for valkyries, the first of which would be the fortune weaver witch, who is locked into a raven or eagle familiar. 5th level yields a cool ability that lets you 1/day speak a target's fate, causing a *suggestion* – if the target disobeys it, he is cursed. Cool! The ability may be used more often by expending spell slots, but only may target a creature 1/day. Similarly, rerolls for allies (9th level) may also be used more often via spell slot expenditure and at 11th level, we get, following a similar design paradigm, the dispelling of charms, curses, compulsions or mind-affecting effects, potentially redistributing them. Two major hexes and grand hexes complement a flavorful, cool archetype. The keeper of souls warpriest is locked into repose and builds on it, with the soul shepherding and *planar ally* options representing the agent of the valkyries and their agenda – nice!

The raven feeder would be a bloodrager who modifies bloodrage to add bleed damage. Raven familiar and the ability to select alus instead of bloodline powers complement this one, building on the bleeding theme. The runecaster magus is one of the coolest archetypes for the class I've seen in a while: Basically, arcane pool is replaced with a rune pool, which allows for the improvement of weapons to provide passive benefits, from which other characters can benefit. These

runes, once inscribed, may be activated, granting fitting benefits, getting stacking issues right and unlocking combo'd runes add higher levels, which is, engine-wise, amazing and could carry its own class. Runic tattoos and armor also are included. Cool one! The Saga singer skald's song can yield Diehard and further improves if the target has Diehard already. The telling of heroic sagas (urgh, I shudder when writing that plural, even though it's the commonly used one – to me, the correct term for the plural is *sögur*, but that as an aside) replaces several passive abilities with these active boosts, which btw. may be combined at higher levels.

Speaking of which: We get no less than 5 bardic/skaldic masterpieces, all of which are epic: Brynnhild'r Lament nets an improved *rage*; Deliberation of the Norns nets save rerolls for allies. Kenning is amazing, allowing for the prevention of verbal communication of tactics, aiding, etc. via potent poetic allusions. Love it! Saga of Unbreakable Fate nets a slew of immunities, and the epic Ragnarok's Requiem, usable only by the mightiest of heroes, provides a combo *meteor swarm/mass cure serious wounds*. All of these are worth taking for their price.

All right, so let's move on to the valkyrie paragon, shall we? The class gets d8 HD, full BAB-progression, good Fort- and Will-saves, 4 + Int skills per level, proficiency with simple and martial weapons as well as all armors and shields, excluding tower shields. The class begins play with a mount that works as a druid companion. If the character has the valiant steed trait, the mount is treated as class level +1, which makes it really strong at low levels. The mount may be called to the valkyrie's side 1/day. First level also nets 3 + Cha-mod *deathwatch* as a SP, usable versus creatures she is unable to see, but sans pinpointing them. 5th level allows for somewhat *status*-like information for those under the effects of her deathwatch. 7th level also adds knowledge of conditions to the information and 13th level makes the ability constant.

6th level yields a 1/day *plane shift* with up to 8 other creatures – it is not perfect, though, and may put the valkyrie and her entourage at other places if she is not familiar with them. Yes, random plane table provided. This risk is eliminated at 13th level and 19th level makes it flawless. At 11th level, the valkyrie can attempt to choose unwilling souls slain (which can be a really cool plot point!) and 17th level allows the valkyrie to destroy souls of the slain she carries to grant herself boons – a decision she should not lightly make. The capstone yields automatic critical confirmation against all creatures with a soul, as well as 1/day attack, skill, save or ability-check reroll with + Cha-mod added. Additionally, she can force such a reroll 1/day on a foe, using her Cha-mod as a penalty.

Of course, this is Rite Publishing, and as such, the class obviously sports some serious player agenda. This time around, that would be represented by the insights the class gets, which are the talents. The first is gained at 2nd level, with an additional one unlocked every 2 levels thereafter. Some of these build upon another and some have minimum levels – at 10th level, we for example have automatic *planar adaptation*. The theme of future's sight is represented by the very potent augur's strike at 4th level, which nets *true strike* as a SP, usable 3 + Cha-mod times per day...with the difference that she must select the foe against which the bonus applies and the fact that the bonus lasts and halves in subsequent rounds, as the ability represents seeing into the future. This also prevents novaing of the ability, which is a really smart way of handling the concept. Swift action performance-like minor boosts, *bleed* with temporary hit points added, bonus feats... At high levels, full attack charges are possible (again, locked behind a sufficiently high cap), seeing in perfect darkness, sensing deceit, a variant lay on hands, retaining AC when charging, making the return of those slain by her from the dead harder, ensuring that the sanctity of the dead is retained – the insights are MANY. We get more than 4 pages of different insights, which run a gamut from mechanically potent and engine-wise interesting to extremely flavorful, often blending them. You can make a really potent guardian valkyrie with constant *detect* spells; you can make a fearsome charge, a true champion of spear fighting, guardians of the fallen and any combination of such themes. The leitmotifs are represented in a concise and well-crafted manner.

No, we're not done yet! Remember how I mentioned the *cup of welcome* before? Well, the pdf also contains 6 potent valkyrie-themed items, including the cup, which represents the classic theme of hospitality from the myths; a potent armor, a shield, *seiðr runes*, a bracelet from the world tree and a very potent spear complement this book.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch on both a formal and rules-language level – I noticed no issues in either. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's new two-column full-color standard and is really nice. The pdf is chockfull with cool full-color artwork, with only one piece being somewhat less nice. It should be noted that the artworks do not contain unbecoming cheesecake and just depict badass warrior ladies. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

As some of you know, one of my fields of academic expertise is actually Scandinavian literature and

culture. I am actually fluent in Norse. I loathe most depictions of valkyries in mainstream media, mainly because they don't get what makes them fascinating. The whole ideology and culture that provided the cultural underpinnings of the concept of the valkyrie is, ultimately, not one that has stemmed from the Judeo-Christian dichotomous thinking process and ideology that resulted in the creation of cultural artifacts like our RPGs – in a world where good and evil are absolutes, it is hard to properly convey the concept of valkyries and the depiction of paladin-like battle-angels makes me barf internally. It is testament to the obvious love and attention to detail, that the representation of the valkyrie-concept, in spite of being codified with the confines of a system where good and evil are tangible forces, works here.

The love for concept and lore is apparent in each of the design-components, and detailed stacking caveats and a vast amount of small stumbling stones are avoided left and right, with the grace befitting of the valkyrie. Now, Kendra Leigh Speedling has already penned one of my favorite hybrid classes, but I **think** this may be the first time I have reviewed anything by Mara Lynn Butler – and the two ladies and their designs seamlessly gel together herein. No authorial voice clash can be found and the book, beyond getting the tone right, juggles complex and unique concepts in an admirable manner. There is a ton to love in this book, with race and paragon class as well as archetypes being pretty damn amazing; the addition of the PrC as a central concept is another huge plus here, and once we're almost done, we also get the neat mead-engine, which represents the cherry on top of something truly amazing. This is a phenomenal representation of the concept, that neither compromises the rich lore associated with valkyries, nor the integrity of PFRPG. The pdf manages to actually blend the two components in an elegant and amazing manner.

In short: This continues the streak of absolutely phenomenal books in the series, standing as an impressive and amazing example of the cool things you can do with the system, even after all these years: From tweaks to SPs to new items, this oozes care and passion, always takes, design-wise, the high road. Now, excuse me, I have a distinct craving to listen to the Crüxshadows, a ton of good pagan metal, and build some badass valkyries. Rating? Oh yeah, forgot that, didn't I? Obviously, this is an easy 5 stars + seal of approval, given sans hesitation. "Fate is armed with arrows – and she watches our battlefields."

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

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

WRITTEN BY OWEN K.C. STEPHENS

ILLUSTRATED BY LJ STEPHENS

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