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20 Questions with Brandon Hodge

May 2011 Issue 3

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Articles by Creighton Broadhurst, Jonathan Mcanulty, Michael Welham, T. H. Gulliver, and Steven D. Russell



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#### **Dedicated** to Sylvia Russell Until I see you again, mom.

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## A DARK STAR FELL FROMITHE SKY BRINGING WITH IT THE END OF ALL THINGS!

THE SANCTITY OF THE WORLD KNOWN AS ABADDON WAS SHATTERED WHEN A GLOBAL APOCALYPTIC EVENT OF A METEOR IMPACTING THE PLANET CAUSING A DESTRUCTIVE ECOLOGICAL AND ELDRITCH CHANGE. NOW THERE IS NO DAY OR NIGHT, JUST NEVER ENDING TWILIGHT.

AN UNDEAD WORLD RULED BY FEAR AND HORROR. UNDEAD NIGHTMARES PROWL THE DARKEST FOREST WITH MALEVOLENT GHOULS, GRIM DEMONIC FIENDS AND HORRIFIC VAMPIRES PREY ON A FEARFUL POPULACE. THE WORLD IS DEMINATED BY THE MENSTREUSLY POWERFUL IMMORTAL VAMPIRIC LICH LORD KNOWN AS CALIX SABINUS REIGNS SUPREME OVER THIS WORLD. AND WITH ALL THIS THE MYSTERIOUS FORCE KNOWN AS NIGHTWALL. EVIL DOMINATES THE WORLD TO BE CHALLENGED BY NOBLE HEROES FIGHTING TO TAKE BACK A WORLD THAT SHOULD BELONG TO THEM.

### ARE YOU WILLING TO TAKE UP THE FIGHT?



LEARNIMERE ABEUT BSIDIANITWILIGHT AT WWWAPPIDESIGNCEM



BATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE I'd like to thank Ben McFarland for his tough-act-tofollow guest editorial in the previous issue. I rather enjoyed his piece and it's kept me thinking this past month. I wanted to write a thousand-word editorial about our responsibilities as players. You know, "What do we owe the game?" and that sort of stuff. Heck, I even thought about throwing out some snippets about players bringing snacks to the session since the GM has enough to deal with. But, after a few hundred words, I said to myself "Dave, readers don't want a lecture on player responsibilities: they're *players*, their focus is fun."

But, this responsibilities thing kept coming back to me. More than just a little voice inside my head, the damn thing wouldn't leave me alone. Write about ME, Dave! Say something more about writing and designing and developing and GMing and how it's NOT all fun and games, there's real work behind the scenes. Stupid voices. Why won't they go away?

The voices are right though. While running an adventure or maintaining the consistent themes in a campaign can really bring life to the game and offer the players hours of fun, there's work involved. A decade or so ago, when I was running about 30 hours a week of game time (really!), many of my consistent players would thank me after the sessions for all the effort I put into the game. The immersion, the detail, the well-thought-out plot lines were really, really appreciated.

Alas, nobody can maintain that level of focus for long—at least not while working full time and being part of a family. Do you have a GM that puts that much work into the sessions? Thank her. Find out what her favorite snacks are and bring them to the sessions. Then again, you already knew that. One of my gaming buddies, who is sitting to my left as I write this (on my right is my son, today's GM—we're playing an edition that shall not be named), used to help me quite a bit back in those 30-hours-a-week times. A couple nights before the next session he'd give me a call; they'd go a little like this:

### *Rod: Hey Dave, you need anything for this upcoming session.*

Dave: You know, there are these fire giants you guys are gonna be facing, the one over by Storm Thrower's lair.

*Rod: Cool! I wondered when we'd get back to those guys.* 

Dave: Well, the leader is also a 10th level fighter and he's a half blue dragon. I haven't had time to put together his stats yet.

Rod: You want me to do that?

Dave: Um. Well, I'll tell you what. He has a handful of other half-blue-dragon fire giant younger brothers. They don't have quite the seniority in Storm Thrower's chain of command. How about you put those together for me. No levels, just run of the mill. I'll email you a list of items for them, and you put together some stats as they'll be when the encounter starts

#### Rod: I can do that.

#### Dave: Thanks man, that will save me some time.

Not every GM has players who can rise to this. Rod and I have played D&D in its various incarnations since the early 80s; we know each other's GMing styles and playing styles and we've each trusted the other before to produce material for the other person without using the information to his character's advantage during play. If you have a player who can do this for you once in a while, do it. Ask her to help if you're in a bind.

But we all have other responsibilities as well. Way back in the old days, back when all I knew about Wizards of the Coast was that it was a funky lit outfit writing books like *The Primal Order*, I wrote to their staff, after the release of a new book, with a list of the editing errors I'd caught. Back in those days I figured I could impress people by getting a book on opening day and sending them a letter post marked the next day with a detailed list of editing catches.

I was pleasantly surprised. I was contacted by someone with an official-sounding title about taking some kind of test to prove my worthiness. I had no idea such things existed. I knew nothing of the business; I just knew games and fancied myself competent in the language (turns out I had a lot to learn). Though I wasn't quite what they were looking for, I was thanked anyway. This taught me a few lessons: 1) I probably had a lot of work to do to put myself in a position of actually being paid for this stuff, 2) publishing companies that produced fun things like gaming materials were actually companies, with staff, and maybe even some of them wore pants with pleats and didn't live in a room in their parents' houses, and 3) editing is harder than it looks and if an editor does a good job, almost no one even notices.

Editors, even if they cringe, generally prefer that you point out their mistakes (if you're nice about it). Publishers, even if they think you're wrong, like to hear what you think they should be publishing. These days, people aren't writing nice letters on actual paper and waiting days for a similarly produced reply.

There are things you as a player or GM can do to make the game better. On a small scale, you can help out with your group. On a larger scale, you can contact the people who are working in the industry producing the material you're using. They want to hear from you. Really.

*David Paul* Editor in Chief 2+2 =54

To Slay: Monster-Yes Barmaid-No?





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### Wrathful Creature Jemplate

Hatred and anger have such power that they sometimes transform a creature into a personification of selfdestruction, violence, and hate, provoking blood feuds that last for centuries. These creatures often put their revenge before anything else, acting with great impatience, and never waiting on the forces of law and order to enact any kind of justice as they see that brand of justice as a pale shadow of what their foe deserves.

These creatures are never selfish or motivated by self-interest; they have a deep love of justice, warped by their spite and desire for vengeance. The power of wrath often symbolically marks these creatures, with scars, bloody colorations, and various tools of violence.

### Creating a Wrathful Creature

"Wrathful" is an acquired template that can be added to any creature with an Intelligence of 3 or more. Upon gaining the template the wrathful creature selects a chosen foe. The chosen foe can be a singular individual, list of individuals, or an organization. A wrathful creature uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

#### **CR**: +1

#### Defenses/Qualities: Ferocity

**Special Abilities**: A wrathful creature gains the following special abilities.

*Blood Feud (Ex)*: If a wrathful creature kills or entirely eliminates its chosen foe, it loses the benefit of this template. The template is then transferred to the closest blood relative (or friend) of the chosen foe that the wrathful creature killed, destroyed or used its Worse than Death ability on (see below).

*Cold Vengeance (Ex):* Wrathful creatures attain a tranquil fury on the far side of rage. Once per day the wrathful creature can gain the benefits of any single barbarian rage power as a free action using its Hit Dice as its barbarian class level without suffering any of the penalties.

*Discern Kith (Sp):* A wrathful creature often assaults the friends, family, and loved ones of its chosen foe rather than attacking the foe directly. Most often, the wrathful creature wants the opponent to suffer as the wrathful creature has suffered. Once per day it can learn the names of one of these creatures (GM's choice), its relationship to the opponent, and can locate this person as a *discern location* spell.

Disproportionate Retribution: (Ex) Once per day a wrathful creature can, as part of a melee attack action, deal an amount of damage equal to the amount of damage dealt to the wrathful creature by a single attack within the last round plus an additional 50% of that damage. This ability replaces all damage and effects that would normally occur as part of the wrathful creature's melee attack.

Taking You With Me (Su): When killed by its chosen foe, a wrathful creature explodes in a blinding flash of fire that deals 5 points of damage per Hit Die (half fire damage, half divine damage) to anything within 10 feet per Hit Die; a successful Reflex Save halves the damage (DC 10 + 1/2 the wrathful creature's Hit Dice + its Constitution Modifier).

Vengeful List (Su): Sometimes at the time it gains this template, a wrathful creature makes a mental or literal list of those chosen foes against which it has sworn vengeance. If it does this, it gains the benefit of the *bane* special weapon property against these listed chosen foes. If the wrathful creature's new CR is 15 or higher, the enhancement bonus of the *bane* property increases by two and adds an additional +3d6 damage. In addition, if it scores a successful critical hit against the listed chosen foe, that opponent must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 the wrathful creature's Hit Dice + its Constitution modifier) or suffer 10 points of damager per Hit Die of the wrathful creature. (This even affects creatures immune to critical hits or death magic.) The wrathful creature does not gain this benefit against chosen foes who are added to this list later; once the list is completed the creature's vengeance is sated and it loses the benefits of this template (See Blood Feud)

Worse than Death (Su): When a wrathful creature deals damage or creates a spell or effect that would result in its opponent's death or destruction, it can instead choose to negate that damage, spell or effect. Instead, this attack renders the opponent permanently unconscious (the wrathful creature can awaken the creature at will, such as after the wrathful creature has buried its foe alive). It can also leave a vicious scar(s), permanently blinds the opponent (or only take one eye), removes an appendage, and/or permanently suppresses an opponent's extraordinary, spell, and spell-like abilities (this opponent also cannot activate or use magic items as if it were in an anti-magic shell).

The curse bestowed by this ability cannot be dispelled, but it can be removed with a *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish* spell. However this spell must be cast by a divine spellcaster with a caster level greater than the wrathful creature's CR and whose deity's portfolio (or ethos) governs the power or nature of mercy; or if the wrathful creature forgives the opponent.

**Abilities:** Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +6 (+3 to melee attack and damage rolls (and thrown weapon damage rolls), Climb and Swim checks, CMB, CMD, Strength checks, and any of the base creature's Strength-based DCs), Con +4 (+2 to Fort, +2 hp per HD, and its Constitution-based DCs) if the base creature has a Constitution score.

### Roggziel of the Ire CR 15

XP 38,400

NG Medium outsider (angel, extraplanar, good) **Init** +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +26 **Aura** protective aura

#### Defense

**AC** 29, touch 14, flat-footed 25 (+4 Dex, +15 natural; +4 deflection vs. evil)

**hp** 172 (15d10+90)

**Fort** +16, **Ref** +13, **Will** +11; +4 vs. poison, +4 resistance vs. evil

**Defensive Abilities** ferocity, taking you with me (DC 24), uncanny dodge, **DR** 10/evil; **Immune** acid, cold, petrification; **Resist** electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 25

#### Offense

**Speed** 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (good) **Melee** +2 hindering\* torso blades +29/+24/+19 (1d8+17/×3 plus stun) and slam +26 (1d8+15) **Special Attacks** cold fury, disproportionate retribution, vengeful list (DC 24), worse than death **Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 13th) At Will—aid, continual flame, detect evil, discern lies

(DC 20), dispel evil (DC 21), dispel magic, holy aura (DC 24), holy smite (DC 20), holy word (DC 23), invisibility (self only), plane shift (DC 23), remove curse, remove disease, remove fear

7/day—cure light wounds, see invisibility 1/day—blade barrier (DC 22), heal

#### Tactics

**Before Combat**: Roggziel of the Ire usually travels about in disguise as an outlander barbarian or as one of the inquisitor orders known as the Hawks of Vengeance. He always casts *dispel magic* on members of the Questor's Society (his wrathful chosen foe), before engaging them in combat, and will often use *blade barrier* to split their forces knowing that he cannot handle a half dozen Questors at once.

**Combat:** Once entering combat, this angel of wrath seeks to defeat a single member of the Questor's Society and then use its Worse than Death ability.

**Morale:** Roggziel is no coward but he knows he has a long way to go to kill every adventurer on his list that belongs to the Questor's Society. Thus, he has nothing against retreating so that he can assault his enemies when they are weakest.

#### Statistics

**Str** 26, **Dex** 19, **Con** 21, **Int** 18, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 23 **Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 37

**Feats** Alertness, Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (warhammer)

**Skills** Acrobatics +22, Craft (weaponsmithing) +22, Diplomacy +24, Fly +26, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (planes) +22, Knowledge (religion) +19, Perception +26, Sense Motive +26, Stealth +22 **Languages** Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech **SQ** blood feud, change shape (*alter self*), discern kith

#### Ecology

**Environment** any good-aligned plane **Organization** solitary, pair, or squad (3–6) **Treasure** double

#### Special Abilities

**Stun (Su)** If Roggziel strikes an opponent twice in one round with his torso blades, that creature must succeed on a DC 28 Fortitude save or be stunned for 1d6 rounds. The save DC is Strength-based. **Uncanny Dodge (Ex)** This ability functions identically to the rogue ability. If Roggziel gains uncanny dodge from a class level, he instead gains improved uncanny dodge.

#### Description

"The innocent and the upright were murdered by the hubris of the Questor's Society, their blood kin cried out for justice, which the High Courts of Questhaven denied them. Then their restless souls cried out for vengeance. The Sovereigns of Heaven answered them by sending me."

Excerpt from <u>The Massacre of Last Change</u> by Qwilion of Questhaven

I am the true power of vengeance given flesh, and in the white-hot fires of pure wrath I have been forged into an immaculate instrument of justice. I am the spear that pierces the heart of evil, and the smoldering brand upon the flesh of the unclean. What men have made dirty, I shall make clean. What men have made sinful, I shall make righteous. You are right to fear me, and if you be mine enemy, you are right to despair.

Behold my form. My muscles shatter all walls of stone behind which mine enemies might hide. My fists are clenched in undying rage, set to smash the skulls and break the bones of those who have trespassed against that which is good. My great wings splay out behind me, the color of fire and blood, carrying me through the skies as swiftly as the pure light of burning dawn. My helm is the face of retribution—a mirror in which the guilty shall see their crime reflected, just before their punishment falls. My body is all of the implements of war, held by the chains of duty that bind me to this most worthy cause. I am the blade which cuts away sin. I am the axe which chops down foes. I am the hook which hauls the guilty to judgment. I am the maul that crushes all hope of escape. I am the perfect weapon of my god, and my wrath is glorious.



This angel has an inhuman face and unusual blood red wings, along with a lower torso of weapons attached to chains beneath a blood-stained skirt. To ask what motivates me is to ask the rain why it falls or the sun why it burns. A force of nature as sure and eternal as any force in the universe has set me in motion, and like the arrow I fly.

All that remains is to ponder the foolishness of my quarry and learn a lesson from their sin. The Questor's Society abused the power that they held. Instead of using their strength for righteous action, they committed cowardly sin, massacring innocents for reasons most petty. The shame and guilt that should burn in their souls should be great, but compared to the fury of my wrath is but a candle before furnace. Other wrongdoers have met punishment at my hands and suffered fates worse than death, but my war of vengeance against the Questor's Society has just begun. The song of my deeds shall be sung by their screams, and the fires of their ruin shall twinkle in the night, as beautiful and as many as the stars.

#### Jore

Knowledge (local)

Common (DC 23): Roggziel of the Ire is a wrathful angel, sent by the god of vengeance for the singular purpose of punishing the guilty. He knows no compromise and will not rest until his god's will is done.

Uncommon (DC 28): Roggziel is presently tasked with punishing the Questor's Society because members of the society massacred a gathering of the common folk during the Festival of Change

Rare (DC 33): Roggziel can fly very fast. He is immune to acid, cold and petrification, and is resistant to fire, electricity and spells. His strikes against members of the Questor's Society are fueled by wrath, capable of stunning or permanently crippling their targets.

Obscure (DC 43): Roggziel's singularity of purpose makes him predictable. He has a list of his targets in the Questor's Society, and if he can't find them, he will strike at their family, friends, or acquaintances, he is most likely to start with weakest members of the society attacking them when they are alone, injured, or helpless.

Epic (DC 53): Should Roggziel ever succeed in eliminating all of his targets, he will lose his wrath and therefore some of his power. However, should that occur, the violence will not stop. Roggziel's fury will not abate, he will simply find a new host affiliated with his final victim and the cycle of vengeance will continue.

### Magical Weapon Property

Hindering: Select one of your opponent's natural weapons. As an attack action, if you make a successful combat maneuver check, your opponent cannot use that natural attack until the damage dealt by your attack is healed or a successful Strength check is made (as a standard action, DC 10+ your Strength modifier). As an attack action you can also make a combat maneuver against the part of your opponent's anatomy (target CMD has a +4 bonus due to specific targeting) that is obviously the source of, or provides the power behind, a supernatural or extraordinary ability, such as a creature's mouth (for a breath weapon) or its eyes (for a gaze attack). You cannot target a spell-like ability unless the DM judges that the creature generates it through the use of a specific organ or body part. If your combat maneuver succeeds, the creature loses the benefit of the targeted ability until the damage dealt by the attack is healed or until it makes a successful ability check (standard action, using the ability that modifies the lost special ability, DC 10 + your Strength modifier). Use of these abilities does not provoke attacks of opportunity. Faint necromancy; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and



### Jaboring for the Gods: Clerics of Artifice, Constructs, and Joil by Jonathan McAnulty

While most deistic religions have some concept of the work of the gods in relationship to creating and sustaining the world, few clerics focus on this precept more than those clerics who dedicate themselves to the artifice domain. Through the construction of new works, and the repair of the old, they encourage their followers to emulate the creative and nurturing impulses of the divine. The exact nature of the divine entity in question naturally colors this doctrine; yet the overarching principle remains remarkably similar in religions both good and evil: as the gods work, so should their followers, in their honor and to their glory.

The artifice domain, and its two subdomains, the construct subdomain and the toil subdomain, are each aligned strongly with Law and Order. They are not of themselves good or evil, for while labor itself is sometimes regarded as a good activity, even evil religions can preach the virtue of toiling and building. Sometimes such evil groups, especially those with a connection to slavery, promote labor as the duty of individuals, especially those individuals at the bottom of society's ladder. In such schemes, labor is something which is forced upon you by another and virtue is found in submitting to one's situation. In other evil religions, labor, whether through manufacturing weapons for the church's faithful, or in providing food for the priests, is understood to promote the cause of the organization, and thus necessary and desirable. Still yet, other evil religions promote a mindless production of inferior goods, stressing the action of work over the quality of the work. In good religions concerned with artifice, labor and construction, the emphasis is most often on the quality of the goods being created and the care of the crafter in his labor. Doctrinally, these religions generally promote the need for high standards in one's work for two reasons. Firstly, and not least, each work should be done as if it were being done for the god. Each act of creation is a sort of sacrifice of talents for the god's glory, reflecting, as it does, the use of god-given talents. Additionally, it is not uncommon for good-aligned religions with an interest in the crafting skills, to emphasize charity and a willingness to serve in its doctrines. That is, there is a need to be good and loving and such love is shown better in deed than in word. Finally, neutral-aligned religions with access to the artifice domain typically stress the action of the work itself. How the work is used is less important than the quality of the work. There is, in these neutral religions, less of a focus on the community (a focus found, ironically, in both good and evil versions of the domain) and more of a focus on the individual. Such religions typically stress the skill of the craftsman, teaching enlightenment and spiritual ascension through the perfection of a craft.



Clerics trying to choose whether to use the artifice domain, or its two related subdomains, should ask themselves which aspect of craftsmanship is most personally appealing, as there is a great deal of overlap in the three. The artifice domain is more generally concerned with the actual product being made while the toil subdomain is more concerned with the act of making a thing. The construct subdomain, meanwhile, is a much more specialized interest, being concerned with the act of giving life and movement to the product of the craftsman.

#### New Feats

The following feats are available to divine casters possessing the Artifice domain, or one of its associated subdomains.

#### Craftmaster

Your religious training, and the blessings of your god, increases your crafting abilities.

**Prerequisite:** Wis 13, Artifice, Construct or Toil Domain

**Benefit:** In addition to your Intelligence modifier, you may add your Wisdom modifier to any Craft skill checks.

#### **Encouraging Word**

You are adept at helping people in their efforts by providing verbal encouragement.

Prerequisite: Cha 13, Artifice, Construct or Toil Domain

**Benefit:** When aiding another, you can add your Charisma modifier to your own d20 roll. When another character is engaged in an action which is not normally subject to aid another, such as an attempt to pick a lock, you can attempt to give them verbal encouragement by making a DC 10 Charisma check. If you succeed, they gain +2 morale bonus to the effort. If you fail, you distract them and they suffer a -2 morale penalty to the effort. The morale bonus does not stack with other morale bonuses but the penalty does.

#### Toolmaster

Your religious training, and the blessings of your god, increase your ability to get the most out of your tools.

**Prerequisite:** Wis 13, Artifice, Construct or Toil Domain

**Benefit:** When using a set of masterwork tools, you gain a +4 bonus to your Craft checks.

**Normal:** Masterwork tools normally add a +2 bonus to your Craft skill checks.

#### Sacred Tomes of Artifice, Toil and

#### Constructs

GMs can use the following texts as religious books in their campaigns. Each of the following sacred writings is associated with the artifice domain, or one of its associated subdomains.

#### A Perfect Flower

This religious book begins by describing the perfect flower, and how it was divinely made. It then proceeds to examine the way in which a mortal can replicate this feat using bronze and iron. Having described such a process, step by step, it then goes on to apply the lessons learned from crafting the perfect flower to other types of work, such as building a home, sewing a shirt, and carving a child's toy from wood. As the book progresses, intermingled with the practical instruction are spiritual insights and practical advice for life. This book is used by good-aligned religions and is popular with craftsmen. Individuals who spend an hour each day reading the book, after 1 week, receive a +1 sacred bonus to any Craft, Knowledge (engineering), Knowledge (religion), or Profession skill checks. The bonus lasts for eight hours after the book has been read for one hour. If the book is neglected for more than a week, it is necessary to spend another week reading it daily before once more receiving the bonus.

#### **Building the Dream**

This long scroll contains a collection of lessons on the benefits of labor done for the good of one's superiors and one's community. The homilies within are written in a pleasing, motivational manner, masking the rather evil nature of the reasoning. The scroll begins innocuously enough, arguing that an individual's path to happiness begins with selfless conformity for the greater good. With everyone serving, everyone will be served. The scroll uses many illustrations of people who have achieved blessings as slaves, while making it clear that the path to true fulfillment lies in having other people who are working for you. The scroll is popular with slavers and in slave-owning societies, though it teaches that the right to own slaves is universal and that every good citizen, even the king, is a slave to someone.

#### The Joyful Hammer

This hymnal contains a collection of labor-centric psalms. The songs remind workers of the reasons for their labor and the glories awaiting those who excel in the name of the gods. Popular with laborers and craftsmen alike, the steady beats, encouraging words and simple melodies of the hymnal are conducive to being sung while working. Anyone singing from The Joyful Hammer who succeeds on a DC 20 Performance check, adds a +2 morale bonus to Craft checks made by those who hear them. This bonus lasts for ten minutes and stacks with other bonuses, such as those granted by a bard's inspire competence ability.

#### Channeling Effects for the Construct and Joil Subdomains

The following effects use and supplement rules from *The Secrets of Divine Channeling*. If you do not have that book, sensorial imagery describes noticeable effects which accompany the use of channel energy. Minor channeling effects are available to characters through either GM fiat, or the possession of the appropriate trait or class. Combat Channeling effects and Major Channeling effects are made available to a character through the acquisition of the appropriate feats. The DC of any saving throw is 10 +1/2 character level + Charisma modifier. Effects granting bonuses are either sacred or profane bonuses. None of the effects stack with themselves, though they may stack with other, similar effects. For more information, consult *The Secrets of Divine Channeling*.

#### Construct Domain

**Sensorial Imagery:** Silvery grey energy, touched with gold, and the faint smell of smoke.

**Minor Channeling Effect: Divine mending:** You can, as a standard action, use one of your uses of channel energy to repair a single damaged object, as with *mending*, except that the amount of damage restored is determined by rolling the amount of dice you would normally roll when channeling energy.

**Combat Channeling Effect: Dancing Steel:** You can, as a standard action, employ one of your uses of channel energy to cause all non-secure metal objects (that is, objects not physically attached to another object) within range of your channeling to vibrate and twitch. Those attempting to use a "dancing" object as

a weapon in combat suffer a -4 penalty to attack rolls for the duration of the effect. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the number of dice you would normally roll when channeling energy (2d6 equals 2 rounds, 3d6 equals 3 rounds, etc.).

Major Channeling Effect: Life to the lifeless: You can, as a standard action, utilize one of your uses of channel energy to impart a measure of "life" to a single stone or metal object, sized Large or smaller, within range of your channeling. The object moves too slowly and clumsily to effectively attack living objects but can otherwise be made to perform according to your desires. The object has a speed of 10 ft., and a Strength score according to its size (Tiny: Str 6, Small: Str 10, Medium: Str 14, Large: Str 18). Objects given life while being securely attached to another, larger object, are unable to move. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the number of dice you would normally roll when channeling energy (3d6 equals 3 rounds, etc.).

Channeling Major Effect: Hold the Construct: You can, as a standard action, utilize one of your uses of channel energy to paralyze and freeze a single creature with the Construct type in its place so that it cannot take an action. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the number of dice you would normally roll when channeling energy (3d6 equals 3 rounds, etc.) but the construct is allowed a Will save each round to overcome the effect. Flying constructs, while paralyzed, begin falling, and swimming constructs, while paralyzed, may begin to sink.

#### Toil Domain

**Sensorial Imagery:** Silvery grey energy, streaked with brown, and the faint feeling of warmth.

**Minor Channeling Effect: Restful Wave:** You can, as a standard action, use one of your uses of channel energy to refresh the minds and bodies of those within range of your channeling. Those affected by this effect are benefited as if they have slept for 1 hour for each die you would normally roll when channeling energy (1d6 equals 1 hour, 2d6 equals 2 hours, etc.). The use of this ability does not increase the number of uses of channel energy a cleric can use per day nor does it increase the number of spells or spell like abilities a creature can use per day, though it can be used to supplement or eliminate the eight hours of sleep a spellcaster typically needs before preparing spells.

**Combat Channeling Effect: The Invigorated Soul:** You can, as a standard action, utilize one of your uses of channel energy to invigorate those within range of your channeling, giving them a rush similar to that produced by adrenalin. Those affected by this effect ignore both the effects of encumbrance when moving and any penalties imposed by armor. They also receive a +1 bonus to any physical activities requiring a d20 die roll (including attack rolls and physical skill checks). This effect lasts for a number of



rounds equal to the number of dice you would normally roll when channeling energy (2d6 equals 2 rounds, 3d6 equals 3 rounds, etc.).

**Major Channeling Effect: Bless the Worker:** You can, as a standard action, use one of your uses of channel energy to bless a single individual (including yourself) for 12 hours in regards to his labor. The blessed worker labors more efficiently so that the tasks he performs are done in half the time, doubling his output for the day. Furthermore, he receives a sacred (or profane) bonus to any Craft checks made that day equal to the number of dice you would normally roll when channeling energy (3d6 equals +3, 4d6 equals +4, etc.).

**Major Channeling Effect: Bless the Tools:** You can, as a standard action, use one of your uses of channel energy to bless a single tool or set of tools, so that it functions as a masterwork item. This effect cannot be used on weapons or armor, but it can be used on craftsman's tools, instruments, thieves tools, or any other kind of equipment used in connection with a d20 skill check. The effect lasts for a number of days equal to the number of dice you would normally roll when channeling energy (3d6 equals 3 days, 4d6 equals 4 days, etc.).

Rite Publishing Presents

# The Secrets of Divine Channeling



By Jonathan McAnulty

## Malevolent Manifestation

By T. H. Gulliver

In <u>#30 Haunts for Houses</u> and <u>#30 Haunts for Ships</u>

and Shores, I described minor haunts—a class of haunts that a GM can use to set flavor or harass PCs, but which are not dangerous on their own. These haunts can become dangerous when combined with other dangers, and it is only under such circumstances that the GM should award XP for these haunts.

When an intelligent undead creature resides in an area with minor haunts, the undead can choose when these minor haunts trigger, delaying their trigger until a moment it chooses. An undead creature can control a number of minor haunts equal to its Charisma score. The haunt still has the same duration and amount of time to wait before resetting.

Kalil Tamar, ghost of a fratricidal antipaladin I mentioned in <u>#30 Intelligent Magic Items</u>, haunts the Cairn Fields of Ferr, a blood-soaked battleground in The Many-Storied Empire. He uses minor haunts to trick divine channelers into wasting positive energy on harmless shadows and to frighten, separate, and weaken PCs before he attacks.

#### Kalil Tamar

Male human ghost antipaladin 16th

**Description:** Kalil Tamar shared the rule of the Satrapy of Ata'Tamar with his brother, Tayib the Good until insidious lies shattered the trust they shared, filling Kalil's soul with hate and desire for vengeance. The brothers' armies met in battle on the blood red plains of Ferr.

Thousands of young men were buried under the cairns in the field. Kalil and his brother were among them. Kalil's ghost, still burning with misplaced rage, haunts the Cairn Fields of Ferr taking out its wrath on those who seek treasures on this ancient battleground.

#### Kalil Jamar CR 17

LE Medium undead (incorporeal) Init +10; Senses darkvision (60 ft.); Perception +13 Aura cowardice, despair

#### Defense

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 15; (+5 deflection) hp 168 (16d10+80) Fort 18, Ref 10, Will 16 Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; Immune undead traits

#### Offense

**Spd** fly 30 ft. (perfect) **Melee** corrupting touch +16 (17d6, Fort. DC 23 half); draining touch +16 (1d4 Con. drain)



**Special Attacks** aura of sin, aura of vengeance, channel negative energy (8d6, DC 23), cruelty (deafened), cruelty (diseased), cruelty (frightened), cruelty (shaken), smite good 6/day (+5 attack, +16 damage), touch of corruption 13/day

**Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th)** 1 per 1d4 rounds—*telekinesis* (as a standard action) **Spells Prepared** (CL 13th)

4th—*fear* (2, DC 19)

3rd—animate dead, bestow curse (DC 18), contagion (DC 18)

2nd—blindness (DC 17), darkness, desecrate, hold person (DC 17),

1st—bane (DC 16), cause fear (DC 16), command (DC 16), curse water (DC 16), doom (DC 16)

#### Statistics

**Str** -, **Dex** 10, **Con** -, **Int** 8, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 20 **Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +16; **CMD** +31

**Feats** Cleave, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Great Cleave, Forge Ring, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-by Attack, Spirited Charge, Trample

Skills Craft (Armor) +13, Handle Animal +13, Perception +13, Ride +9, Spellcraft +9, Stealth +13; Racial Modifiers +8 Perception, +8 Stealth Languages Common

**SQ** *detect good*, fiendish boon, unholy resilience

#### Special Abilities

**Aura of Cowardice (Su)** Kalil radiates a palpably daunting aura that causes all enemies within 10 feet to take a -4 penalty on saving throws against fear effects. Creatures that are normally immune to fear lose that immunity while within 10 feet of Kalil.

**Aura of Despair (Su)** Enemies within 10 feet of Kalil take a -2 penalty on all saving throws. This penalty does not stack with the penalty from aura of cowardice.

**Aura of Sin (Su)** Any weapon Kalil grasps is treated as evil-aligned for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. Any attack made against an enemy within 10 feet of the ghost is treated as evil-aligned for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

**Aura of Vengeance (Su)** Kalil can expend two uses of its *smite good* ability to grant the ability to *smite good* to all allies within 10 feet, giving them a +5 bonus to attack rolls and +16 to damage. Allies must use this *smite good* ability by the start of Kalil's next turn and the bonuses last for 1 minute. Using this ability is a free action. Good creatures gain no benefit from this ability.

**Channel Negative Energy (Su)** Kalil has the supernatural ability to channel negative energy like a 16th level cleric. Using this ability consumes two uses of the antipaladin's *touch of corruption* ability. This is a Charisma-based ability.

**Corrupting Touch (Su)** When Kalil passes part of its incorporeal body through a foe's body as a standard action, it inflicts 17d6 in damage. This damage is not negative energy—it manifests in the form of physical wounds and aches from supernatural aging. Creatures immune to magical aging are immune to this damage, but otherwise the damage bypasses all forms of damage reduction. A Fortitude save (DC 23) halves the damage inflicted.

**Cruelty (Su)** Whenever Kalil uses touch of corruption to deal damage to one target, the target also receives the additional effect from one of the following cruelties:

Shaken: The target is shaken for 16 rounds.

*Diseased:* The target contracts a disease, as if Kalil had cast *contagion* (CL 16th).

Frightened: The target is frightened for 8 rounds.

Deafened: The target is deafened for 16 rounds.

Paralyzed: The target is paralyzed for 1 round.

This choice is made when the touch is used. The target receives a Fortitude save (DC 23) to avoid this cruelty. If the save is successful, the target takes the damage as normal, but not the effects of the cruelty.

**Detect Good (Sp)** At will, Kalil can use *detect good*, as the spell. Kalil can, as a move action, concentrate on a single item or individual within 60 feet and determine if it is good, learning the strength of its aura as if having studied it for 3 rounds. While focusing on one individual or object, Kalil does not *detect good* in any other object or individual within range.

**Draining Touch (Su)** Kalil can make a touch attack that drains 1d4 points of Constitution on a hit. On each such successful attack, Kalil heals 5 points of damage to itself. When Kalil makes a draining touch attack, it cannot use its standard ghostly touch attack.

**Fiendish Boon (Sp)** Kalil's dark patrons rewarded their servant with a fiendish servant, which serves the ghost even in death. Three times per day, as a full-round action, Kalil may magically call this servant – an advanced bebilith with +27 spell resistance—to its side as a 5th level spell. The bebilith immediately appears adjacent to Kalil. If the bebilith dies or is banished, Kalil may not summon another servant for 30 days. During this 30-day period, Kalil takes a -1 penalty on attack and weapon damage rolls.

**Malevolence (Su)** Once per round, Kalil can merge its body with a creature on the Material Plane. This ability is similar to a *magic jar* spell (CL 16th), except that it does not require a receptacle. To use this ability, Kalil must be adjacent to the target. The target can resist the attack with a successful DC 23 Will save. A creature that successfully saves is immune to Kalil's malevolence for 24 hours.

**Phantasmagoria (Su)** Kalil died enraged, his mind warped by jealousy against his brother whom he slew before falling to a hail of arrows. Five times per day, Kalil's twisted spirit recreates the scene of the battle on the red fields of Ferr. Hundreds of ghostly soldiers charge across the field, crashing together around the PCs in bloody mayhem. Leather clad soldiers fall to the ground and attack each other in the dirt, until they die on the end of a blade or beneath the hooves of horses. The entire effect is treated as a 6th-level illusion spell (caster level 16). The entire illusion can be disbelieved with a DC 23 Will save.

**Rejuvenation (Su)** If destroyed through combat, Kalil's spirit restores itself in 2d4 days. Even the most powerful spells are usually only temporary solutions. The only way to permanently destroy Kalil is to identify the source of its rage—the false belief that his brother Tayib Tamar slew their father to seize control of the Satrapy of Ata'Tamar—and persuade the disillusioned spirit of Tayib's innocence.

**Smite Good (Su)** Six times per day, Kalil can call out to the dark powers to crush the forces of good. As a swift action, Kalil chooses one target within sight to smite. If this target is good, Kalil gains a +5 bonus to attack rolls and a +16 bonus to all damage rolls made against the target of this smite. If the target of *smite good* is an outsider with the good subtype, a good-aligned dragon, or a good creature with levels of cleric or paladin, the bonus to damage on the first successful attack increases to +32 points of damage. Regardless of the target, *smite good* attacks automatically bypass any DR the creature might possess. If Kalil targets a creature that is not good, the smite is wasted with no effect. The *smite good* effect remains until the target of the smite is dead or the dawn of the next day.

**Touch of Corruption (Su)** The ghost carries a phantom version of the longsword Kalil carried in life. The longsword burns with a fiendish flame. Kalil can make a touch attack with the longsword 13 times per day causing 8d6 points of damage. Using this ability is a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity. Alternatively, Kalil can use this power to heal undead creatures, restoring 8d6 hit points.

Below are some of the minor haunts that Kalil uses to soften up the PCs before attacking.

### Cairn Pile Haunt CR1

XP 400 CN minor haunt (5 ft. by 5 ft. pile of stones) Caster Level 1 Notice Perception DC 10 (to notice a groaning noise from beneath the cairn) hp 4; Trigger proximity; Reset 1 day

Effect Too many died to bury well in this rocky soil, so the living piled dozens of bodies in natural craters and then piled hundreds of stones above these crude graves. The stones served as both markers and to keep the dead buried as the amount of pain and suffering on that field was the kind that would wake the dead. As the PCs pass a pile of stones, an invisible force manifests, reaches up from the grave below, as per the spell unseen servant, and begins to push some of the rocks from the pile. This haunt manifests within seven of the cairns. Kalil triggers it to distract PCs or lure them deeper into the cairn fields.

**Destruction** The haunt is destroyed when the bodies are exhumed and reburied in separate graves.

#### Abandoned Soldier Haunt

CR 3

#### **XP** 800

LE minor haunt (5 ft. radius around one corpse), persistent

Caster Level 3

Notice Perception DC 20 (to notice the sound of a groan rise from the corpse)

hp 13; Weaknesses tricked by hide from undead; Trigger proximity; Reset 1 day

Effect The dead outnumbered the living on the bloody battlefield and many corpses began to rot before they could be buried. After a week, the living abandoned the grisly task of burying their kin. Although there are hundreds of these unburied corpses, haunts manifest around only a dozen.

When the PCs pass any of these unburied corpses, phantom soldiers spring from the corpses and attempt to grapple the characters. If the phantom figure makes a successful melee touch attack, the target is paralyzed for 1d6+2 rounds as per the spell ghoul touch. If successful, the phantom glowers at the paralyzed PC, staring deep into its face, as if trying to decide which army the PC belonged to. The paralyzed subject exudes a carrion stench that causes all living creatures in a 10-foot-radius spread to become sickened (Fortitude DC 13 negates). A neutralize poison spell removes the effect from a sickened creature, and creatures immune to poison are unaffected by the stench. The stench ends suddenly after the duration of the haunt.

Destruction The haunt is destroyed when the corpse is buried.

### Solid Phantoms

**XP** 2,400

CR 6

NE minor haunt (5 ft. by 30 ft. area of the battlefield between two cairns), persistent

Caster Level 6

Notice Perception DC 10 (to notice a yellowish mist rising from the cairns and taking form)

hp 27; Trigger proximity; Reset 1 minute

Effect A putrid looking yellow mist rises from two of the cairns and quickly forms into the ghostly shapes of dozens of soldiers, swords drawn, shields readied. The soldiers completely block the area between the cairns. Visibility and movement are impaired as if by the spell



solid fog. The phantom soldiers and the effect remain for 10 minutes. If severe winds disperse the phantoms or they are neutralized by positive energy, they reform a minute later. Kalil triggers this haunt to separate groups of PCs and attack them in smaller numbers.

Destruction The haunt is destroyed when a PC identifies the phantom of highest rank (Knowledge (history) DC 15) and explains in the Dry-tongue that the battle is over. The phantom does not respond verbally but dismisses the soldiers.

#### Cairns Without End CR7

**XP** 12,800

LE minor haunt (5 ft. by 35 ft. stretch of field), persistent

#### **Caster Level** 7

Notice Perception DC 17 (to notice the earth trembling), persistent

hp 31; Trigger proximity; Reset 1 day

Effect Over the years, many grave robbers have gotten lost in the cairn fields. The sheer horror they experienced before they felt the fingers of the undead at their throats provided sufficient negative energy to manifest as a new haunt. Behaving as the spell hallucinatory terrain (Will save DC 16), this haunt creates the illusion that the cairn fields continue far into the distance. This haunt is persistent and remains active until dark. Everyone in the proximity makes a new saving throw every hour. If neutralized, the haunt manifests again after one day.

Kalil attempts to trick PCs into remaining within the cairn fields long after they have realized the danger it poses. He triggers this haunt before the PCs approach an outer limit of the cairn fields to convince them they are still well within the territory or have gotten lost.

**Destruction** The haunt is destroyed when creatures of good alignment find the body of a grave robber and take its possessions into their lawful custody.

## Rite Publishing Presents #30 Intelligent Magic Items



By J. H. Gulliver

## Synergixxik part 2 (The Flyers)

By Michael Welham

Seemingly built for stealth, these beetle-like insects change color to fit their background. At the first sign of trouble, they take flight simultaneously, merge together, and then finally disappear, leaving nothing but a choking cloud behind.

### Synergixxik Scout CR 2

**XP** 600 N Small vermin **Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

#### Defense

AC 16, touch 15, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size) hp 22 (3d8 + 9) Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1 Immune mind-affecting effects

#### Offense

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (good) **Melee** bite +2 (1d6) **Special Attacks** merge, deterrent cloud

#### Statistics

Str 11, Dex 19, Con 16, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 3 Base Atk +2; CMB +1; CMD 15 (23 vs. trip) Skills Fly +10, Perception +4, Stealth +12; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception, +8 Stealth

#### Ecology

**Environment** any **Organization** solitary or squad (4-8) **Treasure** none

#### Special Abilities

**Deterrent Cloud (Ex)** Once every other round as a move action, a synergixxik scout can release a 10-foot radius cloud, which acts as *fog cloud* for all other purposes.

**Merge (Ex)** As a full-round action, a group of at least 4 scouts combine into a gestalt form. The resulting creature becomes size Medium, increasing its fly speed to 40 ft. The creature gains +2 to its natural armor—including the size change, its AC becomes 17 (touch 14, flat-footed 13). For every 2 scouts (up to a maximum of 8) in the combined creature, add 11 hit points; +2 to its base attack, CMB and CMD; and +1 to its bite damage. For example, a creature composed of 4 individual scout synergixxik would have 44 hit points, and its bite attack would be+6, doing 1d6 + 2 damage. Additionally, the creature's deterrent cloud effect instead acts as a *stinking cloud* effect (Fort DC 16 + 1 for every 2 scouts; save DC is Constitution-based), with a radius equal to 5 times the number of



scouts in the gestalt creature. As a final benefit, the combined creature gains one use of *dimension door*.

A synergixxik scout comes from the builder ranks, based on the needs of the synergixxik commandant (see below). The creature is designed to stealthily survey areas surrounding the hive to help the queen and commandant allocate soldiers and bombardiers used to conquer those areas. If another creature spots and pursues an individual scout, it can secrete a chemical which reacts with air to create an obscuring cloud which might deter the pursuing creature. As with other synergixxik, multiple scouts combine to create a more powerful version, which has a more effective cloud and gains the ability to make a short jump to evade pursuit.

A synergixxik king can transform his builders into scouts. A scout synergixxik remains genderless, but it cannot become a new king like a builder can. After transformation, a fielded scout answers to a commandant.

These bright red, bulbous insects dart through the air furiously, spitting nettles at enemy fliers. When the fighting becomes too fierce, the creatures merge together to create a tremendous monster which shoots larger, acidic, nettles.

### Synergixxik Interceptor CR4

**XP** 1,200 N Medium vermin **Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

#### Defense

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +4 natural)



#### Offense

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (perfect) Melee bite +4 (1d8+1) Ranged 3 nettles +6 (1d6+1) Special Attacks merge

#### Statistics

**Str** 12, **Dex** 16, **Con** 19, **Int** –, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 3 **Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 17 (29 vs. trip) **Skills** Fly +15, Perception +8; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Fly, +8 Perception

#### Ecology

**Environment** any **Organization** solitary or squad (4-8) **Treasure** none

#### Special Abilities

Merge (Ex) As a full-round action, a group of at least 4 interceptors combine into a gestalt form. The resulting creature becomes size Large, taking 10 feet of space and gaining a 10-foot reach as well as a new fly speed of 60 ft (good). The creature gains +4 to its natural armor-including the size change, its AC becomes 20 (touch 12, flat-footed 17), and it also takes a -2 penalty to its Fly skill. For every 2 interceptors (up to a maximum of 8) in the combined creature, add 17 hit points; +2 to its base attack, CMB and CMD; and +2 to its bite damage. As part of the merge, the creature can now fire an additional nettle for every 2 interceptors, each nettle doing 1d6+3 points of damage plus 1d4 points of acid damage for every 4 interceptors. For example, a gestalt creature formed by a group of 6 interceptors would have 94 hit points, a bite attack with a +10 bonus to attack which does 1d8+7 damage, and can fire 6 nettles per round which inflict 1d6+3 damage plus 1d4 points of acid damage each.

A synergixxik interceptor is a specialized soldier crafted to fight aerial battles and to defend bombardiers or the hive from an aerial assault. A lone interceptor can spit nettles from an internal reservoir it builds by devouring thistle plants, while a merged creature coats nettles with digestive acids to inflict greater damage.

A synergixxik queen transforms a solider into an interceptor, and then turns control of the creature over to the commandant. Once transformed, an interceptor remains in its new form permanently.

These large, round beetles seem to defy gravity by staying aloft. On approach to an apparent target, one of the creatures releases a glowing orb from its abdomen. The orb strikes its target and explodes in a ball of fire. When dealing with a more resilient target, the creatures merge into a much larger representative which then layers the resistant target with a series of exploding orbs.

### Synergixxik Bombardier CR6

**XP** 2,400 N Large vermin **Init** -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

#### Defense

AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20 (-1 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size) hp 76 (9d8 + 36) Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +3 Immune mind-affecting effects

#### Offense

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor) Melee bite +10 (2d8 + 4) Ranged orb +5 (2d6+4 plus 1d4 fire)—can only attack targets below it Special Attacks merge

#### Statistics

**Str** 18, **Dex** 9, **Con** 18, **Int** –, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 3 **Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 20 (32 vs. trip) **Skills** Fly +5, Perception +8; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Fly, +8 Perception

#### Ecology

**Environment** any **Organization** solitary, squad (4-8) **Treasure** none

#### Special Abilities

Merge (Ex) As an action requiring 2 full rounds, a group of at least 4 bombardiers combine into a gestalt form. The resulting creature becomes size Huge, taking 15 feet of space and gaining a 15 foot reach. The creature's DR improves to 20/adamantine and piercing, and it gains a +8 bonus to its natural armor-including the size change, its AC becomes 27 (touch 7, flat-footed 27). For every 2 bombardiers (up to a maximum of 8) in the combined creature, add 24 hit points; +2 to its base attack, CMB and CMD; and +2 to its bite damage. Additionally, the creature can drop up to 3 orbs per round, which each inflict 2d6+6 points of damage plus 1d4 points of fire damage for every 2 bombardiers. For example, a group of 5 bombardiers has 124 hit points and a bite attack at+14 which does 2d8+8 damage. The gestalt creature can drop up to 3 orbs which each attack at+9 and cause 2d6+6 damage plus 2d4 points of fire damage.

Similar to all other synergixxik flyers, the bombardier derives from an existing synergixxik. In this creature's case, the queen transforms an interceptor into a bombardier, which retains its new form until it dies. A bombardier follows a commandant's instructions as did its interceptor predecessor.

Bombardier synergixxik are called upon to level nearby opponents' structures which might threaten the hive. Once an area has been softened up, soldiers can be dispatched to finish off the remaining resistance.

This shiny, silver beetle coasts through the air, hundreds of feet above the other flying beetles. Multiple antennae on the creature's head focus on different individual groups of beetles, possibly giving them direction.

#### Synergixxik Commandant

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CR7

**XP** 3,200

N Medium magical beast **Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +22

#### Defense

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural armor) hp 85 (9d10 + 36) Fort +10, Ref +13, Will +5

#### Offense

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect) **Melee** bite +11 (1d6+2) **Special Attacks** coordinate, disorient

#### Statistics

Str 14, Dex 21, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 16 Base Atk +9; CMB +14; CMD 26 (34 vs. trip) Feats Ability Focus (disorient), Agile Maneuvers, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes Skills Acrobatics +17, Fly +25, Perception +22; Racial Modifiers +8 Perception Languages Common; telepathy (600 ft.)

#### Ecology

Environment any

**Organization** solitary or corps (1 commandant, 20-40 scouts, 10-20 interceptors, 4-8 bombardiers) **Treasure** none

#### Special Abilities

**Coordinate** A synergixxik commandant within telepathic range of a scout, interceptor, or bombardier improves its ability to perform its tasks. A commandant grants a +2 morale bonus to attack rolls and Fly skill checks for all affected creatures.

**Disorient (Su)** A commandant forgoes its coordinate ability for 1 round to target one flying creature within its telepathy range. The creature must succeed at a Will save (DC 19) or it falls. The save DC is Charisma-based.

A synergixxik queen chooses a promising soldier to become commandant, which then becomes responsible for all fielded flying synergixxik; within the royals' telepathy range, control reverts to them. Depending on the needs of the hive, up to 4 commandants may be created to handle different theaters of battle.

Unlike lesser synergixxik—and like royals commandants cannot merge with other synergixxik. Instead, the creature has been gifted with extremely long-range telepathy to enable it to coordinate spreadout flyers. A commandant can eschew its coordinate ability to disrupt an enemy creature's ability to fly.

Many synergixxik hives survive perfectly well skirmishing with enemies in various land battles. However, some hives found themselves beset by flying creatures which have an inherent advantage over the land-bound synergixxik. Almost spontaneously, the queens ruling the afflicted hives developed the ability to transform builders and soldiers into flying creatures to drive off the airborne threats. Individual synergixxik queens also came to realize the value of air superiority, and developed bombardiers to destroy targets from afar, while individual kings transformed builders into scouts to locate suitable targets.

Since synergixxik royals remain with their hives to drive activity there, a queen creates a commandant to maintain a similar level of control over far-flung corps of fliers. Within the hive, control reverts back to the royals, with the king assuming command of scouts and the queen assuming command of the rest. Commandants are conditioned to follow the royals' orders without question, so the idea of leading a "coup" does not ever occur to the creatures.

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## Ogre and Freinds

By Creighton Broadhurst Publisher, <u>Raging Swan Press</u>

#### Ogre Huntress (EL6; XP 2,400)

As they journey through a forest, the PCs encounter an ogre huntress and her three loyal hounds. The encounter starts when the two groups are 2d8 x 10 ft. apart. If the ogre spots the PCs first, read:

Ahead, through the trees you spy a female giant and the three gaunt, black-furred wolves moving in your general direction.

If the PCs spot the ogre first, read:

Without warning, a huge crossbow bolt flies towards you and a chorus of howls heralds the arrival of three black-furred wolves.

#### Tactics

The ogre hangs back, using her heavy crossbow in conjunction with Rapid Reload to shoot opponents injuring her beloved wolves. If all her pets fall, she becomes enraged and rushes into combat using her battleaxe two-handed to cut down her foes.

The wolves flank the party before using bites to trip foes. Prone targets are immediately swarmed by wolves.

#### Area Features

The area has several features of note:

**Background Noise**: The background noise of the forest makes hearing-based Perception checks difficult, increasing the DC of the checks by 2 per 10 ft.

**Trees**: A creature standing in the same square as a tree (AC 4, hardness 5, hp 150, DC 15 Climb check) gains partial cover (+2 to AC, +1 on Reflex saves).

**Massive Trees**: Huge trees (AC 3, hardness 5, hp 600; DC 15 Climb check) fill an entire square. They provide cover (+4 to AC, +2 on Reflex saves).

**Light Undergrowth**: A square filled with light undergrowth costs 2 squares of movement to enter, but provides concealment (20% miss chance). Light undergrowth also increases the DC of Acrobatics and Stealth checks by 2.

**Heavy Undergrowth**: A heavy undergrowth square costs 4 squares of movement to enter, but provides concealment (30% miss chance). It increases the DC of Acrobatics and Stealth checks (to move quietly) by 2, but bestows a +5 circumstance bonus to Stealth checks made to hide. Running and charging in such squares is impossible. Scaling the Encounter



To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 5 (XP 1,600): Remove two wolves.

**EL 7 (XP 3,200)**: Apply the advanced creature template to two wolves (+2 on all rolls [including damage rolls] and special ability DCs; AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 16, hp 17). Add one normal wolf.

### Ogre Huntress CR4 (XP 1,200)

This large, ugly female giant wears muddy banded mail and carries a huge battleaxe over her shoulder. In her hands, she holds an immense crossbow.

Female ogre ranger 1 CE Large humanoid (giant) **Init** +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +6 (+8 vs. humans), Sense Motive +2 (+4 vs. humans) **Speed** 30 ft., base speed 40 ft. **ACP** -5; Climb +3, Stealth -4 **AC** 22, touch 10, flat-footed 21 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +7 armor [mwk banded mail], +5 natural); CMD 20 **Fort** +9, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6 **hp** 43 (5 HD) Space 10 ft.; Base Atk +4; CMB +9 **Melee** mwk battleaxe (reach 10 ft.) +8 (2d6+6/x3) Ranged mwk heavy crossbow (range 120 ft.; Rapid Reload) +5(2d8/19-20)Atk Options favored enemy (human +2) **Combat Gear** 20 bolts, *screaming bolt* (2), *potion of* cure moderate wounds (2) Abilities Str 19, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 9 **SQ** track +1, wild empathy +0 (-4 vs. magical beasts) Feats Iron Will, Rapid Reload, Toughness Skills as above plus Bluff -1 (+1 vs. humans), Handle Animal +3, Heal +6, Knowledge (local) -1 (+1 vs. humans), Knowledge (nature) +3, Survival +8 (+9 tracking, +11 tracking humans) Languages Giant Gear as above plus cloak of resistance +1, 53 gp in mixed coins WOLF (3) CR 1 (XP 400) This powerful, gray-furred canine has fearsome jaws and piercing yellow eyes. N Medium animal Init +2; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +8, Sense Motive +1 Speed 50 ft. ACP o; Stealth +6 AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 natural);

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 natural) CMD 14 (18 vs. trip) Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1 hp 13 (2 HD) Space 5 ft.; Base Atk +1; CMB +2 Melee bite +2 (1d6+1 plus trip) Trip (Ex) If the wolf hits with its bite attack it can immediately attempt to trip its opponent without provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the wolf is not tripped.

Abilities Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6 Feats Skill Focus (Perception) Skills as above plus Survival +1 (+5 using scent to

track)



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BP-1 THE MAITOR OF DECEIT AN ADVENTURE FOR 4-6 PLAYERS OF 2ND LEVEL COMPATIBLE WITH PATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME AND CHAPTER TWO OF THE DARK VEIL CAMPAIGN. WRITTEN AND CREATED BY JEFF GUPTON



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## Twenty Questions with Brandon Hodge

By Steven D. Russell



## 1. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your gaming history?

Well, I'm from Austin Texas, where by day I operate my toy store, Monkey See, Monkey Do, and my candy store, Big Top Candy Shop. I stay pretty busy with all that, as they're really popular destinations. I eventually drag myself home to a house full of creepy Victorian antiques and get right to work on the halfdozen freelance projects I always seem to be juggling. I've been gaming since 1983, and was raised on a steady diet of Basic Red Box, Larry Elmore paintings, and the Dungeons & Dragons cartoon, where, like many boys my age, I found myself in the yard soon afterward imagining I was Hank, energy bow drawn back, protecting Sheila from the approaching hordes of bullywugs. I was lucky to have an incredible independent toy store in one adjacent town full of Monster Manuals, Dragon Magazines, miniatures, etc., and the largest gaming and comic book store in the state in the other adjacent town, so I was flanked on all sides from an early age-no use resisting the call!

## 2. What got you into designing games and freelancing?

Like most everyone, I've been writing my home games since I was a kid, and by my twenties was taking it really seriously, typing everything out in a Dungeonstyle format and everything and saving every scrap. But I actually came into the freelancing world a little late, at the incessant urging of my good friend and cofirst project conspirator Adam Daigle. My contributions were to the Open Design project that included Halls of the Mountain King and Dwarves of the Ironcrags. I guess I did alright, because immediately afterward I stepped up as lead designer on the subsequent Open Design/Paizo patron project that produced From Shore to Sea and Sunken Empires. I really broke through to a big audience there, and before you know it I was conjuring up all sorts of nastiness for oOne Games, Frog God, Green Ronin, Paizo, and Kobold Quarterly. I've had more than I can handle ever since!



#### 3. What is your home game like?

I have a very long history with my group, as our core players have been playing together since high school, so we all know our individual quirks, likes, and dislikes pretty well by now. At the moment we have a fairly large group of 6 players plus a GM. We play every Sunday, and have just wrapped up two back-toback Adventure Paths—"Rise of the Runelords" followed by "Council of Thieves." I think we're entering an era of shorter campaigns with lots of talk of "E6" to combat character fatigue. Our group tends to rotate GMs these days. While it is the seat I'm most comfortable in after years of writing and running campaigns, including one 2-year, 1st-through-20thlevel Greyhawk monster, nowadays I tend to save my energy for atmospheric one-shots, creep-filled playtests, experimental alt-history stories, and some occasional Call of Cthulhu. Our new game room at my home is just about complete, as well. Imagine a dark wood, dimly-lit Freemason lodge with lots of old taxidermy, a full-service bar, and a huge gaming table. Fun stuff. What will my neighbors think?

## 4. What is your favorite Paizo product that you worked on and why?

*From Shore to Sea* is pretty much the product that put me on the map, and it was just such a unique, synchronized situation that led to it becoming a reality that even now I can't believe it happened. It was just such a longshot for Paizo to let a newborn game designer lead patrons on a Golarion-based project. I mean, I only had one project under my belt, and I wanted to toy around with one of their most enigmatic settings-Azlant-at that! My patrons and I just really created an elegant adventure. Without giving too much away that might spoil things for readers who may one day play the scenario, the lighthouse encounter is really a unique mechanism that is just so beautifully balanced between PC action and consequence, so I'm really proud of that. And some of the set-piece encounters, as well at the modular elements of the adventure events, are just full of evocative imagery and cool mechanics that work simply and efficiently in new and unique ways. It took awesome collaborations to get it there, and my debt to patrons is infinite. I mean, after that, I kind of became Paizo's go-to guy for Azlant, and was thrilled to be able to expand on some of the themes we introduced in that project in the similarly-themed Sun Temple Colony chapter for Lost Cities of Golarion. I have to say, though, I'm currently writing Feast of Ravenmoor for Paizo, and it is going to give my previous adventure a run for its money in the creepiness department!

#### 5. You have done a lot of work for Wolfgang Baur's Open Design and *Kobold Quarterly*, how did that relationship start?

I still remember the exact date. It was January 4th, 2009. Adam Daigle had been bugging me to join since before *Tales of Zobeck*, and when *Halls of the Mountain King* was starting up, he was kicking me in the pants to sign on. I remember on a car ride to our game when he was talking me into the newly-proposed dwarven-centric project. I said: "Dwarves, eh? You know what they need? Freemason dwarves. A whole secret society running the scenes from the shadows with some deep, dark secret that led to the downfall of their people."

Well, the next day, I ponied up as a Senior Patron, and my first post was this wall of text making my case for why the whole project had to stop everything it was doing and turn its attention to this Freemason dwarves idea. Well, as luck would have it, that post did change the whole project. It was amazing. The timing of the post was just so that it came right when patrons needed that direction, and the whole tenor of the project changed. I went on to have my first pitch ever-for the adventure's first chapter, no less-accepted by patrons, and even managed to score a later chapter that let me close the book on a lot of themes my first adventure contribution introduced but didn't get to play with as much. It was just amazing synchronicity. I guess I did something right, and I learned so much from my cowriters on the project. Patrons liked what I did, and before you know it, I was running my own Open Design project in From Shore to Sea/Sunken Empires.

6. What has the relationship settled into after almost 3 years of collaboration with Open Design?



These days, I'm in the really blessed position to have a publisher who absolutely respects me and rarely says "no" to any of my ideas. There's just a lot of trust, and I'm not one to abuse that. I can't thank Wolfgang enough for his tutelage and support over the last few years. I try to repay him with solid articles for *Kobold Quarterly* like "Relics of Zobeck" and "The Right Way to Do Wrong," but the truth is, I'll always be in his debt for taking me under his wing and teaching me all the hard lessons.

## 7. What is your favorite *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* compatible product you worked on and could you tell us a little about it?

Sunken Empires, by far. That book was born out of a weird circumstance, in that I'd envisioned From Shore to Sea as an AP-length book. You know, 96 pages, with a cool adventure and a lot of Azlant sourcebook material and a bestiary in the back. Well, it turns out that Paizo's internal development infrastructure wouldn't support that, so Wolfgang pitched Sunken Empires right back at me as a kind of sympathy gesture, since 32-pages seemed a little meager for an entire patronage project.

So, no sooner had we wrapped up *From Shore to Sea* than we turned our collaborations toward the hidden secrets of ancient societies and lost technologies that make up *Sunken Empires*. The idea morphed quite a bit as we moved forward, but we eventually ended up with this incredible sourcebook inspired by the best of Atlantean and Lemurian legends, and we struck a delicate balance between undersea explorations and adventuring on the edge of the waves where many PCs prefer to keep their feet less wet.

## 8. What was your best moment working on that product?

There were some hard moments leading up to the good ones, for sure. I mean, when you spend so much time writing and fine-tuning a document like From Shore to Sea, you really need a break, but the real collaborations that make a patronage project successful-and something on the quality level of Sunken Empires-came hard on the heels of our turnover to Paizo, so we were just getting to work! I think the finest moment had to be when the levee broke on collaborations. The first half of the project when we were assembling the first book for Paizo was under a tight deadline that focused more on playtesting and fine-tuning, but when Sunken Empires came along, patrons were just chomping at the bit to get in there and blow the whole thing open, and they did. It really was like a dam bursting. I'd post a morning brainstorm thread on, say, the concepts of vril magic, and by mid-afternoon I'd have dozens of posts, every one of them incredibly clever. It was this amazing rush of inspiration and a pleasure to channel to the written page.

## 9. Can you talk a bit about how *Sunken Empires* went from being a pirate/underwater sourcebook to being more Atlantean in nature?

Well, it's true that when we got started, we weren't really sure how it was going to end up. I was exhausted, and really relying on patrons to find the right voice and secure footing for the book. It was discombobulated, because I'd throw up a magic item contribution thread and we'd get this mix of Freeportesque pirate stuff like magic ship's wheels or animated figureheads, right next to Azlant-inspired glyph items or magic that focused on diving and underwater exploration. It was great, but lacked focus, and I didn't want to do a "merfolk adventuring under the sea" or a pirate book. That much I knew.

But then I stumbled onto this treasure trove of books. I was on a rare book kick, and ordered a lot of the classic Atlantean literature from the golden age of crackpot scientific theory. We're talking Donnelly's Atlantis: The Antediluvian World, Churchward's The Lost Continent of Mu, and Edgar Cayce's writings, among many others. I devoured them all trying to find that one thing that would set my mind reeling. The real breaking point was this totally crazy book called Dweller on Two Planets, written by this 20-year-old kid named Frederick Oliver, who claimed he was channeling the spirit of a dead Atlantean named Phylos (the book's credited "author"). I'll tell you-Jules Verne had nothing on this kid. In it, he describes this world of Atlantis in absolutely amazing terms, with this incredibly awesome technology well ahead of his time, from electromagnetic rifles, antigravity submersibles, and an Atlantean precursor to the iPad. It was shocking, and just the thing that kicked me over the edge of the cliff. Sort of like my



Freemason dwarves inspiration on the previous project, it totally changed the scope of everything, and we finally had the direction we needed to make it the book it would become.

## 10. What do you feel was the most ingenious part of that product?

The lost technology. Boy, did patrons ever come through for that! From Steiner's *The Coming Race* I'd stumbled across the concept of vril—which is a sort of psychic mana—and combined that with the imagery of old voltaic pile batteries I'd seen at a museum while attending PaizoCon to create the concept of vril batteries, which became the modular power source for all the vril technology we based the weapons, gadgets, and technological items on. It sort of sets up a wandlike charge system for non-magical items like vril rifles and other cool stuff, and is a great mechanic.

## 11. What was the most challenging aspect of working on it?

I've never been much into underwater adventuring, so even from the get go, I wasn't excited about those aspects of it, and really had to come to love it. Freelancers have it the worst when they take an assignment they aren't into, but my enthusiasm for the underwater stuff really grew as the project progressed, and I didn't expect that. Ultimately, I think the push and pull between my trepidation on the subject and patron's inspired ambition struck the perfect balance that straddles the pelagic zone between the shore and the sea.



Well, as with many aspects in real life, you have to know when you can't handle the whole load and learning when and what to give up to others is an important skill to develop. Sometimes, you just have to trust your editor or developer, and other times you have to know that the artist gets your vision without pages of references and instructions. In my case, I was lucky enough to have Stefen Styrsky on the project. Stefen is such an awesome guy, and a truly odd beast. He'll kind of quietly lurk in the shadows of a project and watch things take shape, and he has this special knack for sensing just when and where he's needed. No sooner are you ready to give up on new spells, or can't for the life of you think of a single new sorcerer bloodline, he'll just send you this totally unsolicited document containing a dozen of what you're looking for, out of nowhere! And they're brilliant! I'm not sure that a patron has ever been singled out for special recognition for their contributions in the credits, but he was. He's the unsung hero of Sunken Empires.

## 13. Other than your own work, what is the best *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* compatible product out there?

*Tales of Old Margreve* came right after I wrapped up my own project and had shouldered a heavy burden with Paizo projects, and it is one of my big freelancing regrets that I couldn't take part, because I knew from the start just how incredible the Connors would be on it, and how great it would turn out. I spent a lot of my youth wandering around the pines of the Big Thicket imagining I was a goblin or something, and every page of that product just captures the essence of the dark forest perfectly. It can fit in any campaign world, and is just amazing.

## 14. What in your opinion makes a good *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* compatible product?

It focuses on the experience of the PCs. Even if it's a GM sourcebook, the only thing that should ultimately matter is how the information translates to the PC experience. History of a world is fine, but if that history doesn't directly correlate to something that you can feel, see, and sense at the game table, it is just wasted word count. Strong mechanics are important, too. Well, strong *and* balanced, but also concise. I think simple, elegant mechanics with tight word count that do exactly what you need them to do is the only way to go.

## **15.** Who is your favorite designer of *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* compatible products?

Though it brings me great pain to admit this publicly and in print, my great interscholastic rival (I'm a Texas Longhorn, he's an Okie Sooner) is someone I greatly admire, and his name is...aagh...can I say...it? It's...Greg Vaughan. Whew. There's this joke among freelancers that adventure writers are the jocks of game designers, and despite my meager build, that's



all I ever wanted to do when writing games. And Greg is sort of the quarterback among us adventure jocks. His design is just so solid and flawless. Simple. Reasonable. Tight. I aspire to the same goals. No flash or fancy tricks. Just solid, airtight game experiences. After *Feast of Ravenmoor*, though, I think he'll be benched for a while so I can throw a few passes! I'll win the big game while he's out with a sprained ankle!

Of course, Adam Daigle truly is the King of Monsters. He can write a creature like no one else, and his design of special abilities mechanics is aweinspiring. I'm envious at his talent and the prodigious rate that he seems to create them. I just can't keep up. My friend Mike Kortes is another solid adventure writer I really admire, with such a solid grasp of intricate and involved story-telling. John Ling is my favorite mechanic monkey. We worked together on the *Freeport Companion* and he's so whip-smart when it comes to the crunch of the game.

## 16. What advice would you give to would-be-freelancers?

I think all good writers approach projects like songwriters. They know that if the song is in the key of D minor, you don't strike an F-sharp chord, even if you really like that chord. You've got to stay in tune, and stay on theme from the intro to the finale. Good songwriters also know that great music is not as much about what notes you play, but what notes you don't. RPG writers could do well to learn that lesson, and one of the first things I tell aspiring freelancers is to resist the urge to "wow" your audience with the excruciating minutia of setting information, for example. GMs, or much less players, don't need to know the king's ancient lineage back to the beginning of time. But that one sentence that hints that he might be possessed by the ghosts of his restless dead ancestor? *That's* something a GM can work with, and gets the gears of imagination turning. Finally, you've got to write for PCs. Whether it is an adventure where they are the subject of the action, or a GM sourcebook to inspire those adventures, the only thing that matters at the game table is what PCs experience directly. That was the first—and most important piece of advice Adam Daigle ever gave me, and I repeat that refrain between every word I type.

#### 17. Who is your favorite illustrator?

Growing up, I always liked the art of Earl Greier and the team of artists behind all those creepy skaven drawings for 80s-era Warhammer projects. Now I get to make special requests of artists on projects, and that's such a cool thing! My favorite artist these days whom I have greatly enjoyed working with is my good friend Hugo Solis. I'm so grateful to him for putting up with my bizarre requests. He always nails it, though, and as a consequence I own a lot of his originals. Wolfgang always gets a kick out of my art briefs to Hugo, because I like to include evocative descriptions alongside reference pics, but also funny notes and, if I can't find what I want, shabbily-Photoshopped pics of what I'm talking about. But for an artist, that can be stifling. Hugo will probably be thrilled to learn that I've curbed that behavior since!

### 18. What has been your most memorable fan response to your work?

Probably the guy that built a 3D tabletop version of the airship Manticore from Halls of the Mountain *King* to use in his home game. It was so cool! To make it even more awesome, he adapted one of the adventure's signature encounters-a clever countdown mechanic for a boiler explosion on the airship-into a game of Jenga, so every time a PC took a turn, they had to remove a block. When the tower fell? \*Boom\* Boiler explosion! As freelancers, we tend to forget that when we're done with a project, its life isn't over-it is just beginning! It goes out into the world and GMs from everywhere bring your story to life for people you may never meet, in games filled with fun, laughter, and frustration that you'll never even know about. So, when I meet some of my game designer heroes, I always let them know the sorts of experiences their writing brought me. That's an incredibly fulfilling thing, and makes all those hours when a project *isn't* coming together totally worth it.

## 19. Could you give us an exclusive hint or teaser about an upcoming product you're working on?

Funny story. When I first plotted *From Shore to Sea*, the initial village scenes were really super-creepy thanks to repeat watchings of *Children of the Corn* and *Village of the Damned*. It had a <u>lot</u> more *Shadow over Innsmouth* influence, too, with things taking a really bad turn with the villagers. But as we pitched it back and forth with Paizo, James Jacobs had me take



a lot of that stuff out, and I always thought his explanations as to why were a little mysterious. I didn't want villagers that garnered sympathy. I wanted them to eat the PCs' faces off!

Then James pops up a year later and asks me to write an adventure he'd outlined called Feast of Ravenmoor, and everything suddenly became really, really clear. James was saving up all the super-creepy, face-eating villager stuff for this later adventure he already had planned, and he got me to write it! So, yeah. This next adventure is going to be the definitive creepy-village horror adventure. It wears its influences in its sleeve, but there are so many false leads and red herrings that PCs will never know what hit them. They'll be jumping at shadows while the real threat creeps up on them in plain sight. It is going to be fantastic, and I think GMs will really like the modular plotline that strikes a nice balance between sandbox design and linear exposition, which is hard to do with an adventure of that style. Misdirection is everything!

### 20. Do you have any goals as a game designer that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

Well, patrons of the last few Open Design projects well know of my desire to write the definitive sourcebook for Civil War-era Call of Cthulhu, and it is something most likely looming on the horizon after the Midgard project wraps up. It is going to be such an utterly cool thing, and my approach to it is something I'm really excited about, so stay tuned. Beyond that, I spent a lot of my free time collecting turn-of-thecentury Ouija boards, planchettes from the 1860s, and other Spiritualist paraphernalia, and I've got notebooks' worth of game design notes for this grand Victorian-era spiritual warfare horror game. Probably just a pipe dream of mine, but at least I got to contribute a Haunts article, a Secret Society write-up, and a horror adventure in the Carrion Crown AP! Sort of got some of that stuff out of my system for a little while, I guess. Another vanity project would be a little niche indie game like Dogs in the Vineyard that I'd build from the ground up, just to call my own. Maybe one day when my publishers stop putting up with me I'll have to make that happen.



#### Midgard: Northlands

by Open Design Review by Dark Mistress

<u>Midgard Northlands</u> is 114 pages long. It starts with a cover, credits, and ToC. (3 pages)

#### Chapter One (16 pages)

This chapter is about the people of the north, culture, religion, lifestyles. Basically what life is like for those to live in the north and how you can bring that to life for your players or for a player to make a character from the north come to life.

#### Chapter Two (16 pages)

Campaign setting. This talks about the lands, cities and major land marks for the north.

#### Chapter Three (23 pages)

This is the character creation section of the book. There is four human ethnic groups, mechanically they are the same but from a RPing point of view they are fairly different. There is also two variate humans as well the Dayborn and Nightborn. Typically it is just those born on Hyperborean that show the traits of one of the two. There is also a new type of Dwarf with fey subtype and Trollkin of fey subtype as well. Next it gets into the classes. They get the following new.

Barbarians – They have three rage paths to follow. Nine new rage powers and two archetypes. Bard – Skald variant bard. Cleric – Cold and Fate domains.

Monk – 1 archetype.

Nonk – Lateretype.

Oracle - two new mysteries, Fate and Revelations.

Paladins – have a new code.

Sorcerer – two new bloodlines, Giant and Hyperborean.

Witch – two new patrons, Fate and Grudges. Wizard – may take Rune mastery as a specialty.

There is some expanded skills on what all you can do with them, which is followed by new feats. There is 15 achievement feats, 9 combat feats, 6 general feats, 1 item creation feat, 10 meta magic feat, 5 monster feats, 2 team work feats and 38 traits. After that it gets into new equipment. There is 3 new armor, 11 new weapons, and 35 new varies equipment.

#### Chapter Four (27 pages)

This section is about new magic. There is two new types of magic, Grudge magic and Rune Magic. There is also 4 new incantations, 45 new spells, 59 new magic items of varies types from artifact, to cursed items to general magic items and finally 5 new weapon properties.

#### Chapter Five (12 pages)

New rules for Arctic Chases, Coastal Ship Chases, Snowshoe/Ski Chases, New environmental rules for server cold, altitude, frostbite, food/drink, cold water, and scurvy. There is also a bunch of new hazards. Fate



Afflictions, new haunts and pretty much anything you might think of as needing a rule for characters traveling and surviving in arctic like conditions.

#### Chapter Six (14 pages)

There is twelve new monsters in this section ranging from a CR 4 to a CR20. There is also one new template that adds a +2 to a monsters CR. The monsters are well done with very good artwork. They fit the setting and myths of the north well.

It ends with a OGL, full page map and back cover. (3 pages)

Closing thoughts. The artwork is black and white and very good. Editing and layout was very good. I did notice a couple of spots here and there but that's to be expected in a book this size. Everything about this book was well written and interesting. If you are looking for a new campaign setting then this book has what you need, if you are looking for information to add to a existing setting to cover the northlands of a campaign world then again all you need is here. Or even if you are just looking for idea's for adventures and characters from such a environment. I really have nothing negative to say about this, other than to say this book does for the northlands what Tales of the Old Margreve did from Grim Tales folklore forests. I highly recommend this book if the subject interest you in the slightest. So what's my rating? Well despite a couple of minor editing/layout errors this book is outstanding. So I am going to give it a 5 star review.

Trust me, I'm a Succubus.



#### \* 30 Intelligent Magic Items

by Rite Publishing Review by Dark Mistress

<u>#30 Intelligent Magic Items</u> by is 21 pages long. It starts with a cover and credits. (2 pages)

Introduction (1 ½ pages) This part is a IC introduction told from Pers Veilborn's point of view. It is a very interesting IC introduction. Next is a section about why some magic items are intelligent.

30 Magic Items (14 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> pages) Here is the 30 magic items, they all have full stat blocks. Construction costs, special purpose, powers, personality, history, and appearance.

Altairvat, Seeker of the Dark: A crystal ball of true seeing with the mind of a diviner driven insane by entities from beyond the stars. Very Cuthuluesk. Astijhen: A full-plate mail for horses with some fear and curse-related powers.

Atham the Blacktongued: Pan pipes that can cause fear in all who hear it, fall into a nightmare filled deep slumber or make a corpse speak as per speak with the dead.

Bahijja the Flatterer: A mirror that grants Chr bonus, can scry, or cast alter self on the user. The mirror is paranoid and tries to make the user so as well. Bassa of Masad: Heavy shield with the face of a lions head, can bite foes and can summon a lion ally. Gathib's Teeth: Set of hyena teeth to be worn in mouth grants bite attacks and speak with animals. Ghorev the Unlooked-For: Shrunken crows head, that can at will be ordered to transform back into a crow and carry a message. If the user dies the crow carries a message to the person of the users choice. Ha-Min's Circlet: Head band with bonus to Chr, detect magic at will. But cast lesser geas on user to

preform charitable acts. Ha-Min's Trinket (Artifact): Can take the form of a kappakin, or once a day elemental body. Jaril-Junaid: Anarchic scimitar that can let the user

rage. Do bonus dmg and by pass DR on lawful creatures.

Javar Javarah the Comforter: Greatsword that can cast righteous Might, shield other and bless. Jealous Jaden: A Shatterspike longsword that tries to make the user destroy all other magical weapons. Kassantera the Deceiver: Wooden harp that can cast suggestion, confusion or modify Memory when played.

Karkinos: A giant barrel that turns into a giant lobster to protect others.

Ma-Oot-Mah-Zoor: Crystal skull mask that casts vampiric touch, disguise self and finger of death. Marrija: A Mirror that lets you make a clone of





yourself. If you die at any time in 24 hours, your clone steps out of the mirror, knowing all you know. Marav Azab: A walking stick with travel and wilderness type powers. Nasirdil: Bloodline-associated ring with limit regen ability, summon a eagle and teleport the user when dead.

Navishan: Amulet that improves negative energy channeling, cast fear and at times cast animate dead. Nukramajin's Hand: Skeletal hand the if placed on a corpse allows speak with dead or animate dead. Parzamon: Cloak for stage magicians, give glibness and dimension door in a puff of smoke. Ranklikor: Full-plate for horses, can cast haste, overland flight and daylight.

Red Najaddi: Flying carpet that can cast feather fall and tiny hut as well.

Sageseeker: Headband that give Wis bonus, cast calm emotions and prot from chaos.

Salchuk Carpet: A flying carpet the protects the owner with poison, summon swarm and web spells. Stormshaper: Hide Armor that can cast giant form 2, obscuring mist, levitate, and fog cloud. Giants gain bonus against wearer.

Tam: Mummified gnome hand that can cast mage hand and light.

Tannarik: Crossbow of wounding, that can cast, true strike, Wind wall, and freedom of movement. Tchottochtum: Thundering Spear, that does bonus damage on crits, detects thoughts, wants to unit all orcs and make war on humans.

The Bat Queen's Cloak: A cloak that can cast, glide, screech, summon swarm and invisibility.

It ends with a OGL and 2 pages of ads (3 pages)

Closing thoughts. The layout and editing was very good, it is nice borders. The artwork is a mix of black and white and color. It ranges from meh to ok. The items are all well done, with interesting histories, personalities and desires of their own. The worst of the items are just merely interesting, while the best ones make you want to figure out a way to get them in the hands of your PC's or NPC's. Really other than the art work which I wasn't a fan of, I have nothing even remotely negative to say about this product. If you want some interesting intelligent magic items for your game then pick this up, you won't be sorry. So what's my rating? Well artwork aside there is nothing at all wrong with this and the artwork doesn't distract from the product. Though art of each item would be been nice. So I am giving this a 5 star. I liked it that much I am forgoing my normal half star deduction I would give for the lack of art for each item.

Trust me, I'm a Succubus.

# KAIDDAN Curse of the Golden Spear

## The Shores of Kaidan Beckon ... Beware

For centuries Kaidan has been isolated from the world. Now, at long last, by Imperial decree, its ports are open to gaijin sailors and merchants. You come to Kaidan, escorting a merchant and the gift he carries, a gift meant for a powerful Kaidanese lord. But Kaidan is cursed and once within its borders you may find that not even death will release you from the Islands' powerful grip. Do you have what it takes to survive the *Curse of the Golden Spear*?

The first of a three part campaign, *The Gift* is an adventure set in the cursed land of Kaidan and is suitable for a group of 5th level characters. Drawing inspiration from Japanese folklore, and fully compatible with the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*, Kaidan is a land of horror and mystery. In Kaidan, demons stalk the land in human form, the dead seldom rest easy, and life is cheap. This adventure serves to introduces players and game masters alike to the cursed realm of Kaidan.

An adventure for 4 players of 5th level Designed for use with the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game








#### Dark Oak

By Raging Swan Press Review by Steven Russell

<u>Dark Oak</u> is 39 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page blank inside of the front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC and SRD, 1 page advertisement and 1 page back cover, leaving 33 pages of content.

The newest adventure by Raging Swan's mastermind, Creighton Broadhurst, "Dark Oak" is closer in style to "Road of the Dead" than to "Retribution" in the sense that it is a quite straightforward adventure.

After a brief synopsis, the adventure background, lore sections on the background, a short random encounter table, side-boxes on hooks and rumors as well as a section on tactics, we get a nice 1-page b/wmap of the complex to be explored by the PCs. This is where, once again, Raging Swan's high quality and thought for the stressed DM shows: Among the player aids we also find keyless maps, both with and without grids, that you can print out and then cut up to show to the players when they enter an area. This additional benefit is just what makes the difference between a good and an excellent product. It should also be noted that two magic items get their own artworks and are presented in another hand-out for players. The pdf does not stop there, though: There are also 4 b/wartworks of adversaries to print out and show to your players. The adventure also comes with 6 pregenerated characters that come fully equipped. The attention to detail is nice, as one of them actually has some cold iron and silver arrows (without necessarily needing them in this adventure). There is, of course, also the obligatory page that explains how to read stat-blocks to novice DMs. The adventure itself spans 16 pages and can be played in one session.

This is where the spoilers begin, so potential players beware!

The adventure itself is a very straightforward minidelve that centers on the PCs trying to vanquish already almost broken tribe of Lizardmen. On the apex of their might, this particular tribe managed to corrupt a treant, who now lies charred and semiinsane in front of their caves and send it towards the human settlements. Now, some years later, they resume their attacks in a final blaze of non-glory, as the paranoia of the druidic tribal leader has forced the tribe on the slippery slope towards drug-induced extinction. Rules for the new drug as well as the mold that befell the treant are provided along rules for 2 new magic items. In the fine tradition of the former adventures by Raging Swan, this one also requires vour PCs to fight smart - environmental hazards, area features, tactics - these enemies don't fight like cannon-fodder. More importantly, though, is the fact that your PCs don't HAVE to fight - diplomacy is also an option in more than one encounter, e.g. in the one with the semi-mad treant, who may actually reward the PCs for fulfilling his vengeance against the



lizardfolk. There is but one encounter where I would have enjoyed a section on diplomacy and found it lacking, an encounter with a crocodile. I would have loved a section on PCs taming the beast, but that is nitpicking at the highest level. Each encounter has some kind of environmental hazard, feature or peculiarity that makes it unique and not run-of-themill - be it the drug, a giant Lizardfolk or the NPCs. The attention to detail is also stunning, as several mood-setting little details have been included on both the map and in the descriptions.

#### **Conclusion:**

Editing is top notch, I didn't notice any typos. Formatting also rocks and layout adheres to the clean, printer-friendly Raging Swan standard. It should be noted, however, that this adventure marks the advent of Raging Swan's Dual Pdf-initiative, which means that you also get a 1.8 Mb small version of the adventure optimized for the use with iPads and similar e-readers. Better yet, the older Raging Swan releases will be updated, too, and get their own versions. While I'm old-school and prefer dead tree, I still think it's a great idea. There are some very minor downsides to report, though: One of the artworks (Lizardfolk Chieftain) is beautiful, granted, but I will always associate it with Ahnkar-Kosh (by RiP). Another artwork, Lizardfolk Champion, looked more like a Kobold to me. On the other hand, the artwork for the treant just ROCKS. The adventure itself is straightforward but cool and features roleplaying encounters to solve problems without fighting. While I don't consider this adventure to be genius, I do consider it to be a supreme example of an adventure you can just pick up and play with your group without having to prepare it in advance. Thus, due to all the comfort and the low price I'll settle for a 5-star final verdict for this little delve - well done!

Rite Publishing Presents:











#### Circle

By Louis Porter Jr. Design Review by Thilo "Endzeitgeist" Graff 5 out of 5 Stars!

This pdf is 80 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page SRD, 2 pages mini-sheets, 2 pages char-sheet and 1 page combat & initiative tracker, leaving 73 pages for the folding circle, so let's check them out! Detailing a kind of evil terrorist/guerilla-army led by powerful antagonists, the first PFRPG-compatible book of the "Enemies of NeoExodus"-line kicks off as it should, with the narrative of how the group of beings that make up the inner circle of the organization came together. The narrative is concisely and yet compellingly written and had me actually want to continue reading. The methodology of the group is explained, but the book does not stop there we get paragraphs that explain which leaders are used for which tasks, which symbols they use (great for foreshadowing) and even some unusual details of their headquarter. On the mechanical side, we also get a short table of the leadership-effects of individual soldiers fighting under the command of leaders.

#### The commanders are:

-Makesh the Undying, the glue that holds the group together. A human turned divine construct, he, as the other leaders, is presented in several incarnations: CR 4, 10, 14, 20 and 24. The stat-blocks come with EXTENSIVE tactics sections and even goes one step further than just progressing the stats- depending on the incarnation, he actually gets some cool completely unique abilities related to his background story and even his signature weapon is updated in each incarnation.

-Nysska, the renegade exodite assassin among them (CR 3, 7, 11, 15, 19) also gets this versatile treatment, her stats also containing signature poisons, tactics dependant on the level of her incarnation and once again unique signature abilities.

-The Destroyer, Enuka-incarnation of war and destruction also comes in several incarnations: Cr 5, 9, 13, 17, 21. Being the one creature that more or less could kill Makesh, this incarnation of destruction, as the other two, comes with cool signature abilities like a rebirth in blood or the ability to suddenly adapt to incoming energy. Or rip bone quills from his body and throw them at his enemy.

-Emok Zenyaka, a demon of corruption and life sealed in the body of a now genderless Prymidian. He comes as CR 2, 6, 10, 14, 19 and comes with diseaseassociated attacks and a special ability that defines how he uses his considerable magic power and culminating in terrible abilities that define how he can destroy and taint his enemies.



-Haru Anon, the condensed and combined terror and pain of both thousands of souls slain by Makesh (who is one day supposed to lead them to the afterlife) and his former tribesmen was bound into a hybrid undead/construct form by Emok. It comes as CR 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and actually has extremely cool ability progressions. As the other leaders, this IMMENSELY cool thing gets terrible destructive powers. Wow.

Next up, we get sections on how the organization of the folding circle interacts with the other powers of Exodus. However, apart from fluff, we also get mechanical benefits in the respective regions for members, even presenting feats to become the protégé of the respective leader, sans Haru Anon, of course, who is not interested in followers.

Followers...we get those, too: For example Seeker-in-Flame, a CR 10 burning Dalrean ranger with some very cool unique abilities and his mephit companion. Or Axo, crystalline Cynean apprentice to Emok who can focus arcane energy like a destructive lens.

Then, there is the Brotherhood. A sub-organization of assassins, they come just as varied and detailed in background as their leaders, though they "only" get one stat-block as well. From an Enuk-warrior who was fused with an elemental, a fate-twisting assassin wielding an artifact, a druid touched by elemental air, a Sasori monk possessed by an inner fire that can even create him anew, a Cavian sorceror disconnected from the hive-mind and muted in both bloodline, a corrupted nature-spirit and finally, a MPD-afflicted, undead child with terrible power over sleep.

#### Conclusion:

Layout is just as beautiful as you would expect it, from LPJr Design. What I didn't expect, though, was how both writing and editing have improved in this file in comparison to others I've seen. I've scarcely encountered typos, to be precise, 2, (quite a feat with a book of this size) and stumbled across no glaring errors. While there are minor formatting glitches (I e.g. noticed a section that was supposed to be bold and wasn't), they are few and far between - I noticed 2 formatting glitches on 73 pages with a similar number of very minor punctuation errors that did not deter from my ability to understand or enjoy the text. The artwork in most LPJr-books rocks. This is even more true in this one - the full-color illustrations (One for EACH character) are beauties and only the portrait of ram (the corrupt nature spirit) didn't match up to a quality you could potentially see in a Paizo product. Especially the portrait of Haru Anon just blew me away and even surpasses the usually excellent artworks of NeoExodus books. More importantly, the NPCs detailed herein make AWESOME villains. Seriously. Just about every character comes with signature abilities, a new magic item or artifact or similar powers that would qualify them as being a major antagonist for your PCs. Even if you only use one of them, he/she/it is almost guaranteed to surprise your PCs. Add to that the fact that each one gets at least a page of background and you're in for quite a treat. While I have to admit that I didn't do the math on everyone of them. I noticed no obvious glaring inconsistencies and quite frankly, at this level I don't really care. The writing is cool, the NPCs rock, their organization is unique in design and agenda and the small bits and pieces like the aforementioned leadership bonuses make for a great reading experience. If you'll excuse me, I'm going to think about how to implement them in my campaign and which one to throw first at my PCs. What? I forgot the rating? 5 stars - this is by far the best book by LPJr Design I've read so far and I heartily recommend it to just about any DM looking for deadly villains, even ones who don't intend to play in NeoExodus. With cosmetic changes, these fellows can be the final bosses of your campaign.



## **Rite Publishing Presents**

## The Breaking of Forstor Magar City of Grinding Ice







### Advanced Feats: The Inquisitor's Edge

By Open Design Review by Shane O'Conner 5 out of 5 Stars!

Feats are one of the best and most differentiate obvious ways to characters. Two characters of the same race, class, and level can be radically different depending on what feats they take, not just mechanically but also in terms of characterizing what sort of person they are and what their background is. Now design feats based around the inquisitor class from the APG – a class which is already full of flavor - and you've got some exceptionally colorful feats waiting to happen. Case in point, Advanced Feats: The Inquisitor's Edge.

This sixteen page book introduces thirty new feats, only four of which are specific to the inquisitor class. The remaining feats cover thematic areas that the class excels at, but which most other characters could conceivably fill. For example, the Track Spirits feat lets you track incorporeal creatures, whereas Magical Savant lets you treat one mental ability score as though it were 4 points higher only for the purpose of determining what level of spells you can learn and cast.

Of course, the best part of this book (and indeed, all books in the Advanced Feats series) is the author's insights, presented with a small commentary section at the end of each feat. Getting to peek "behind the curtain" as it were has always been both entertaining and informative, and this is no exception. The author telling us how the Eschew Divine Focus feat can be used to make an inquisitor who goes undercover since he doesn't need a holy symbol is as evocative as it is fun.

There are also three sample class builds at the end of the book. These present a series of specific steps (telling you race to take, what feats to take when, what ability scores to raise, etc.) to make an inquisitor that excels in a certain area. These are the bloodhound (specializing in tracking down his prey and giving it a beat down), the wolf in sheep's clothing (specializing in infiltration via lies and enchantments to make people think they're trustworthy), and the detective (a Sherlock Holmes-esque blend of crime solver and skilled combatant using an enemy's weaknesses against them). Each of these also has a sidebar



covering the themes that these characters tend to deal with in game.

Unfortunately, a few errors did creep into the book. In a few places the author lists the Track feat (which doesn't exist in Pathfinder) as a prerequisite. That's a bit of an embarrassment (though certainly an understandable one) for one of the primary guys behind the Netbook of Feats. Also, in a number of places where there's supposed to be a dash there's instead a boxed X symbol, which throws off the next letter's formatting slightly. These are small things, but they do mar what's otherwise a flawless book.

Having said that, this book is still an excellent addition to any Pathfinder game. The new feats it presents are a boon to any character, particularly inquisitors, and the sample builds offer some great ideas about how to make an inquisitor that performs a given suite of tasks exceptionally well. Give your inquisitor an edge with Advanced Feats: The Inquisitor's Edge.



## Jords of Gossamer and Shadow

Patronage Project Powered by Erick Wujcik's Diceless Roleplaying

This world is but one of untold many, a flux of chance caught between shadow and light. It is a world poised between great powers that shape and define all matter, one of many battlegrounds in an epic struggle between form and cacophony. The lords and knights in this battle move between realms with impunity: they are the creators, shapers, and destroyers of worlds.

In *Lords of Gossamer and Shadow*, the player-characters are agents caught up in this immense, multi-dimensional struggle. Born into it, their birthright is one of unimaginable power... and with it great danger! They will bear unique and idiosyncratic magical artifacts, command legions drawn from the myriad of otherworlds, and wield incredible powers that alter the very substance of reality. They are players in a Machiavellian conspiracy with the greatest of stakes, and arrayed against them are the deadliest of foes... each other!

The *Lords of Gossamer and Shadow* patronage project is an original sourcebook and roleplaying game using Erick Wujcik's diceless rules system. Lords of Gossamer and Shadow will be a standalone product, but is fully compatible with the existing rules system and can be readily used in new and existing campaigns.

Lead Designer: Jason Durall

(Amber Diceless Role-Playing, Shadow Knight, A Game of Thrones RPG, Supernatural RPG)



Illustrator: Jason Rainville





## Faces of the Tarnished Souk: The Dark Lady Ninyantë, Mistress of Venom

By Rite Publishing Review by Shane O' Conner 5 out of 5 Stars!

Rite Publishing's Coliseum Morpheuon was a watershed product for the Pathfinder community, providing not only an excellent mini-campaign specifically designed for high-level play, but also providing a great new backdrop for campaigning. This was best highlighted by the incredibly colorful and diverse cast of characters that inhabited the city around the Coliseum. Given that, I was quite pleased to see that Rite Publishing is expanding that roster with their Faces of the Tarnished Souk line, which continues with <u>Dark Lady Ninyante, Mistress of Venom.</u>

A fifteen page PDF file, the product is fully bookmarked, which is always a plus, even for shorter books. The page borders are quite ornate, in Rite's signature style, which may make printing somewhat difficult. Several black and white interior illustrations are spread throughout the book, showing Ninyante herself and a few of her toys, among other pictures.

The book opens with an overview of Lady Ninyante and her place in the City of the Coliseum. A poisonmerchant and socialite, a sidebar covers several ways to intermingle her into a campaign with the PCs – delightfully, there's also information specific to Coliseum Morpheuon, as it outlines plot threads from that book, and lists Ninyante's dreams (for dreamburning rules).

Ninyante herself is presented next, providing a stat block that's every bit worthy of its 21 Challenge Rating. Following this are two new feats, one to grant a creature the Poison Use ability, the other of which

lets you make a poison specific to a creature; there's even a way it lets you poison a creature normally immune to poison, on top of that! Further are three new magic items, all of which Ninyante herself uses. I quite liked these, as one of the big draws among the NPCs of the Coliseum was how they're not only unique, but have unique stats and equipment. The PCs shouldn't know exactly what they're up against, as they're just a few more fishes in a very big pond.

We're then treated to two more stat blocks for Ninyante, each at lower CRs. It's never explicitly stated, but these are probably for campaigns that want a lower-level NPC to use. I can understand that, but



perhaps more could have been done here, like outlining that these were Ninyante as she was gaining power and rising up through the ranks of the Tarnished Souk.

Helpfully, the book then lists in full the two templates used in Ninyante's construction: the Amalgam and Spellpowered templates. While both of these are from other sourcebooks, it was nice to see them here (and updated to Pathfinder as well). I consider this a bonus, since these are among the most versatile of all templates – one lets you merge two creatures into a new creature, and the other lets you assign any number of spell-like abilities.

Overall, this book adds a great new character in the tradition of Coliseum Morpheuon, helping to round out and present new opportunities for such a rich, evocative location. Ninyante, if used as more than a direct antagonist, presents some great opportunities for characters to make an uneasy ally or deadly new enemy among the Coliseum. And like other NPCs in that place, she can easily cross paths with the characters simply because she has a relationship with someone else the PCs might know. Even if you don't play Coliseum Morpheuon, this is still an exotic, powerful character that'll add a lot to your game. Pick your poison with this latest entry among the Faces of the Tarnished Souk!

# **Endless Terrain** Battlemaps

Unfortunately most RPG terrain maps lose their value the second time you use it, as it looks exactly the same as the first time.

Endless Terrain Battlemaps are four 11 x 17 inch double-sided, geomorphic map tiles that allow you hundreds of layouts on your tabletop with just a single set. (Square, Hex or No Grid)

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#### Jen Questions with Illustrator Malcolm McClinton

By Steven D. Russell

## **1.** Could you tell us a little about yourself and your background doing illustration for RPGs?

I have been drawing and painting science fiction and fantasy subjects as long as I can remember, but drawing and paint was only a hobby, something I would do to relax. Most of my efforts had been in academics. After earning advance degrees in Physical Anthropology and Archaeology I spent five or six years working out in the field excavating. But, I experienced burn out and took a job at Dark Horse Comic. This reunited my creative drive and after three years I left to pursue my own painting and projects. I have been illustrating as a means of making a living for a little ever since. I have found a nice little niche myself that satisfies my natural for antiauthoritarianism, reclusive and need for adulation all at once.

#### 2. What are your influences as an artist?

I think my earliest influences were comic books. Especially from the 70's and 80's. Artist, like Berry Windsor smith and Bernie Wrightson, Jeffrey Jones and Neil Adams. Later influences were Art Nouveau, Pre Raphaelites and the Orientalist. I think that that is what make my art a little un-hip, I'm stuck in the nineteenth century. Even when I'm doing aliens and space ships it has an old fashioned feel. Every now and then I try to create something a little more cutting edge, but it usually fails. I comfort my self by the notion that as styles and tastes continually cycle some day me and my art will be hip--providing I live that long.

## 3. What technique/medium do you use and what do you prefer to use?

I started out working primarily with watercolor and color pencil, but I have gradually migrated to using the computer. water color is such un unforgiving medium I had become risk adverse in my images --For instance, for years I was afraid of using black. It was so final. Because of the transparent nature of the medium there is no going back with watercolor. But once I started using the computer and had the ability to undo and try again I have become much more experimental with dark on dark images with lots of black. I have found working on the computer has made me a much bigger risk taker then ever before.

However, the way I create my images could be used as a guide in art school on how not to illustrate. For instance, I hate to do preliminary sketches. I tend to work in a more free form organic way. I have a general idea of the image but no firm picture of what I want it to look like. Usually I start by creating a central character and build out from there. I often do very



large and complex scenes involving multiple characters, and battles and I am often surprised by the direction and shape that my images take as they grow and expand across my canvas. I will create each element in the image, their shading and highlights are on different layers (some of my more complex images have upward of 300 layers). That way I can move elements around the canvas, change their lighting, put them in the back ground or move them to the front. It is a lot like stage blocking a scene for a play and In a real sense my newer stuff has a more cinematic feel to it.

#### 4. Why do you make art?

I would draw and create images no mater what-- it is in my DNA. If I had no computer or paint, no paper I would scratch images into stone and trace contours in sand. I would search for images in clouds and find figures in the stars of a pitch black night. I am a story teller, it is just that my medium for telling stories are pictures instead of words.

#### 5. What is your studio/workspace like?

I have this wonderful unfinished garret space. its huge (one could almost set up a basketball court if it were not for the slanted roof). It gets incredible light, especially in the long days of summer when the sunlight stretches across the floor of the space. The down side is that there is no insulation so I am pretty much exposed to the raw elements giving it a touch of the garrets of a Dickensian story

## 6. What do you listen to or watch while working?

I listen to a wide variety of music. Everything really, from bossa nova to rap. Sometimes I will get stuck on a particular artist or group and find that I cant listen to anything else. I remember being stuck on modest Mouse for several months. I think it drove every one crazy as I played the same music list over and over and over. There are times when particular image gets linked to a particular piece of music. I find the when I am The music becomes a theme to that image, and that I will listen to it over and over while working on the painting.

## 7. How much research do you do for any given piece of art?

The more unfamiliar I am with subject or an object the more dependant I become on references. But as rule, I tend to use references in a post hoc way. As I am working on an image and encounter a problem with something I am painting I will then search out reference to help me solve the problem. So for instance if I am having trouble getting the twist of a body to look right I will go through anatomy books, magazines, pose books, comic books or search online--whatever, to find help in solving the problem.

#### 8. Do or have you played tabletop RPGs and if so what is your home game like, if not why not?

lets keep this between just us,,,,,ahhhh no, I do not play any table top RPG's. I know, I know. it is not something I am proud of and I am going to a support group in hopes of curing this affection.

#### 9. Tell us a little about your work on the Cover for Open Design's Sunken Empires (short anecdote)

This is one of my all time favorite covers

I mentioned above about how sometimes a piece of music can become a theme to an image, This was the case with the cover for Sunken Empires. Steve Via's 'For the Love of God' became so interwoven into this piece so that I can not look at it with out the music playing in my head. Even now, talking about the cover, I am playing the music in the background.



## 10. Is there anything else that we should know about you?

I live in a battleship of an old house out here in Portland Oregon that is slowly crumbling around me as fast as it can be restored (much like the city in sunken empires). I've one dog, one cat and no kids. I am fiercely liberal in my politics and a optimist at heart. In contrast to my art which deals in the fantastical I have a very empirical, logical view of the world, and do not believe in any gods

*Rite Publishing* would like to thank Malcolm McClinton for taking the time to do this interview for Pathways #3. You can find more of his work at his blog <u>Hanged Man Studio</u>

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