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Dedicated to **Jonathan McAnulty** For always going above and beyond.

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Death comes to all things. Most role players are familiar with death; most characters spend a tremendous amount of time killing things. Interestingly, this isn't talked about much. Some gamers prefer edgy, rough campaigns where character death is significant because there is no resurrection or reincarnation in that campaign. Some gamers prefer to stick with characters for many years of play and prefer games where bringing a fallen character back to life is possible. There are examples of resurrection in fantasy literature, though in many novels it's a rare thing indeed (far rarer than in many campaigns I've enjoved).

There is more to death in role playing, however, than immediately meets the eye. Most serious gamers are familiar with Charon, the ferryman from Greek mythology who escorts or transfers the dead across the Styx (or Acheron) to the underworld. Of note in those stories is the coin that must be paid to Charon. In the Pathfinder Role Playing Game, a common variant of this is the onyx gem which is used in a great many necromantic spells having to do with undead. From what people have unearthed in the Egyptian pyramids, tombs have often been found with all manner of elaboration, but, almost always (for the wealthy in life, anyway), the bodies have been accompanied by riches of various sorts. And, of course, this has served as an important and memorable part of many D&D modules over the years - what player worth her dice doesn't make sure that her character investigates every coffin and crypt? As disturbing as it would be to wander through a funeral parlor taking the rings and necklaces of the deceased, this is roughly what our characters are doing, all the while hoping that those rings and necklaces are magical (and for some reason believing that some kind of "Finders, keepers" rule applies to their characters).

There are some common, perhaps universal themes here. The one I'm going to tackle here is this notion of owing something to the god of death. In the game, we often recognize this with the sheer cost of spells like *resurrection*. But note the overwhelming seriousness of lines like this from the PRD: "Even *true resurrection* can't restore to life a creature who has died of old age." There is a price to pay for cheating death; but death cannot be cheated forever. Eventually, Hades claims the soul, and no offering can be made to change this.

For at least the entire period of recorded history, humans have confronted death. We rationalize, we suffer, we grieve, we implore, we worry, and, ultimately, we all succumb. But, not every death is, well, death. It's not just we who die. And, this is just as true in the game as it is at the table.

Gaming groups die. I have had several excellent bands of fellow gamers over the years. Some of us no longer play together. That's a death. Like the passing of a loved one, I have fond memories of those groups, of the good times we had at the game, of those impossible 20s that were rolled when the only roll that could have saved the party was a 20. Have the members of that group paid Charon? If someone didn't, then perhaps he's stuck reliving the "glory days" of that campaign and no session today can live up to the heyday of the past. Are you a player like this? Are there players like this in your group? You might become a better player – you might enjoy the game even more – if you take the time to find out what it will mean, for you, to pay Charon his coin. Until you do, you're that ghost, wandering the shores, waiting to cross.

Editions of the game die. Some players have been playing variants of today's Dungeons & Dragons or Pathfinder since the 70s (or, in some rare cases, even earlier). Some were born after 3e first appeared. Veteran role players have seen many deaths of many editions. Like real life, death brings change, and, for those who remain, "life goes on." Are you a junky of some past edition? I have gamers in my group who still can describe in exacting detail the images in the original Monster Manual, or who long to play in a campaign that is centered around a pantheon described in the first Deities & Demigods. Loving a game is finethere are plenty of gamers who still sit down with the first edition books and play by those rules for the fun of it. But, attachment is attachment. Are you stuck on an old edition? Is the community split between 4e and Pathfinder? Is this split a form of death? "How," the grieving widow asks "do I go on?" Indeed, the same (albeit to a *much* lesser extent) is asked by members of a gaming group when half want to remain with a known edition and half want to "move on."

Artists, writers, and heroes die. Whether it was Tim Hildebrandt, Douglas Adams, or Gary Gygax, all gamers have lost a hero. Here, I think, we do pay Charon. We commemorate, we honor, we acknowledge. I remember sitting with Gary Gygax at a GenCon in the 90s. My older son was with me (he was about a third the size as the man of 22 he is today), and after we'd left the exhibitor's hall that day, I asked my son if he knew who that was. "He's one of the men who created this game," I told him with a voice filled with appropriate awe. Years later, after Gary passed, I remember remarking to my son and my friends that I was sad that I wasn't going to see him at any more Cons. But, collectively, the community of gamers has paid tribute. In our own way, we've paid Charon in this case.

All this talk of death was inspired by the passing of a friend's mother. Steve Russell, the heart and soul of Rite Publishing, lost his mother recently. The grieving has begun and some sadness lingers, but, tribute to death is being paid. With the final words of this month's editorial, I want to acknowledge her for giving of herself to Steve and for giving Steve to all of us.

Thank you.

David Paul Editor-in-chief



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Dread Revenant Creature Template

A dread revenant is the animate remains of a sentient creature whose desire to fulfill a special goal is so powerful it allows it to return from beyond the grave. This can also happen when a powerful deity or ethos returns a dead champion from ages past, disturbing the champion's well-earned rest, forcing the dread revenant to go on a quest that no living mortal would dare to undertake. Such a revenant may be just as intelligent as it was in life, but the dread revenant's will is usually bound by the deity or ethos that summons and compels it.

Dread revenants look much as they did in life, depending on the condition of their corpse. Some easily pass for living creatures, others are rotting corpses that appear not much different from the average ghoul, wight, or zombie. A few are so old their bodies have become petrified.

Creating a Dread Revenant Creature

"Dread revenant" is an acquired template that can be added to any living corporeal creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature). A dread revenant uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: As base creature +2

Alignment: Always lawful evil.

Type: The creature's type changes to undead with the augmented subtype. Do not recalculate BAB, saves, or skill points.

Senses: A dread revenant gains blindsense with a 60-foot radius.

Armor Class: Natural armor improves by +4.

Hit Dice: Change all racial Hit Dice to d8s. Class Hit Dice are unaffected. As undead, dread revenants use their Charisma modifier to determine bonus hit points (instead of Constitution).

Defensive Abilities: A dread revenant has channel resistance +4, regeneration (equal to the dread revenant's Charisma score [choose an attack form specific to the base creature that will negate this ability]).

Melee: A dread revenant gains two slam attacks appropriate for its size if it does not already have a slam attack (see Natural Attacks). Its slam also causes energy drain and can potential inflict a death grip (see below).

Special Attacks: The dread revenant gains the following. Save DCs are equal to 10 + 1/2 the dread revenant's HD + the dread revenant's Charisma modifier.

Death Grip (Ex): A dread revenant can attempt to strangle an opponent it successfully hits with both its slam attacks, it requires a successful grapple check as if it possessed the grab ability; it is not considered grappled and does not suffer the usual -20 grapple penalty. Its opponent is able to hold her breath (unless she is flat-footed). Opponents add +4 to their CMD if wearing full plate or a leather collar, or +10 if wearing a gorget. If its combat maneuver check is

successful, then in addition to double its normal slam damage (and normal negative levels) damage, if the target was also not able to hold her breath she must make a DC 10 Constitution check. The check must be repeated each round, with the DC increasing by +1 for each previous check. If the target fails one of these Constitution checks, she begins to suffocate. In the first round, she falls unconscious (0 hit points). In the following round, she drops to -1 hit points and is dying. In the third round, she suffocates and dies. If the grapple fails or is broken, the subject is free. If the dread revenant's combat maneuver check exceeds the CMD of the target by 10 or more, add a +2 circumstance bonus to the DC of the Constitution check.

Energy Drain (Su) A creature hit by a dread revenant's slam (or other natural weapon) gains a negative level, if the base creature possess at least 10 Hit Dice, this effect increases to two negative levels.

Rejuvenation (Su): In most cases, it's difficult to destroy a dread revenant through simple combat: the "destroyed" creature restores itself in 2d4 days. Even the most powerful spells are usually only temporary solutions. The only way to permanently destroy a dread revenant is to determine the reason for its existence and set right whatever prevents it from resting in peace. The exact means varies with each dread revenant and may require a good deal of research, and should be created specifically for each different dread revenant by the GM.

Abilities Str +4 (+2 to melee attack and damage rolls and thrown weapon damage rolls. Climb and Swim checks, CMB, CMD, Strength checks, and any of the creature's Strength-based DCs), Dex +2 (+1 to Init, ranged attack rolls, AC, touch AC, and Ref saves; +1 to Acrobatics, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Fly, Ride, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth checks; add +1 to all of the creature's Dexterity-based DCs), Cha +4 (+2 to diplomacy, Bluff. Disguise, Handle Animal. Intimidate, Perform, and Use Magic Device; attempts to influence others, and Channel Energy DCs, +2 to all of the creature's Charisma-based DCs). As an undead creature, a dread revenant has no Constitution score, all Constitution-based DCs are now Charisma-based DCs.

Skills A dread revenant has a +8 racial modifier on Stealth checks.

Revered Father Kalfa "Pillar of Wrath"

CR 14 XP 38,400

Traditional and the second sec

Defense

AC 32, touch 11, flat-footed 30 (+2 Dex, +21 natural, -1 size) hp 90 (12d8+36) regeneration 16 (fire) Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +13 Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, rejuvenation; Immune electricity; Resist cold 10; SR 27; Weaknesses vulnerability to fire

Offense

Speed 10 ft.

Melee bite +22 (4d8+22/19–20) 2 slams +22 (1d8 +11)

Ranged 6 strands +11 touch (1d6 Strength) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks death grip (2 slams), energy drain (slam, 2 negative levels, DC 19), pull (strand, 5 feet), strands

Tactics

Before Combat: Kal'fa always prefers to take advantage of his rejuvenation ability, by making himself the keystone or primary structural support for his lair, so that if he is destroyed it causes a cave-in, burying his opponents; he also prefers to attack from utter stealth so that he can use his death grip upon his foremost opponent.

Combat: In combat, Kal'fa uses his strands against the physically weakest of his opponents so that he can eliminate them as quickly as possible, leaving physically stronger opponents till last. When down to one final opponent he has a habit of tormenting them, especially if they belong to the Questor's Society, often leaving them paralyzed to suffer some other grizzly fate.

Morale: Fearless, as Kal'fa knows with his rejuvenation ability he cannot be eliminated until the circle of heroes has been shattered.

Statistics

Str 38, Dex 15, Con -, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 16

Base Atk +9; CMB +22; CMD 33 (can't be tripped) Feats Ability Focus (energy drain), Absorb Spell, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Overwhelming Energy Drain, Wail of the Sorrowful Dead Skills Climb +29, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +16, Knowledge (religion) +13, Perception +24, Stealth +24; Racial Modifiers +8 Stealth Languages Aklo, Undercommon

Ecology

Environment Questhaven underground **Organization** singular plus the Fold **Treasure** triple standard

Special Abilities

Strands (Ex) A roper can extend up to six, thin, sticky strands from its body at a time, launching them to a maximum range of 50 feet. A roper's attacks with its strands resolve as ranged touch attacks. These strands are quite strong, but can be severed by any amount of slashing damage (a strand is AC 20). A creature struck by a strand is numbed and weakened by the strange material, and must make a DC 19 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of Strength damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

The roper is capable of altering the coloration and shape of its body; a roper in hiding looks remarkably like a stalagmite of stone or ice (or in low-ceilinged chambers, a stony or icy pillar). In areas without such features to hide among, a roper can compress its body into a much more squat, boulder-like shape. The strands it extrudes are not flesh but a thick, semiliquid material similar to partially melted wax but with the strength of an iron chain and the ability to numb flesh and sap strength. The roper can manipulate these strands with great finesse, and can fling them as far as 50 feet to snatch objects that attract its attention.

Description:

"The vices of your circle of heroes and their Questor's Society have caused The Powers That Be to bring me out of what I thought was eternal, petrified sleep. The blameless and righteous monsters died, crying out for vengeance, causing The Powers That Be to return me from beyond the veil of death time and time again. The divine wrath of The Powers That Be is slow indeed in retaliation, but it makes up for its tardiness by the severity of my punishments"

Excerpt from <u>*The Fold of Wrath*</u> by Qwilion of Questhaven.

My petrified frame has the appearance of multihued crystal and though I can change my shape and form I am often betrayed by a single tear drop that constantly flows from my eye; this, however, is often taken as condensation upon disguised frame.

I hate adventurers, seeking always to hinder, harm, assault, and steal from them. Nothing we do to hinder them is too small or petty, be it destruction of their property, gouging them for coin, or simply slowing their progress toward their goals. I will work with any creature or force to reach my goal. I seek profit so that we can hire mercenaries and because I have learned that the majority of adventures value their equipment more than they value their own lives.



After being returned to the mortal world by The Powers That Be I formed a loose association of "monsters" that pay a tribute to the Progenitors of the Fold and in return receive the benefits of membership in the Fold, not the least of which is vengeance and protection. We play upon most creatures' fear and hatred of the Questor's Society, along with their desire for power and territory. We use retaliation and intimidation along with various forms of magical charms and compulsions against those "monsters" we choose to recruit (we are quite selective) that refuse to join our organization. We actively avoid those 'monsters" we Progenitors deem too wild and uncontrollable. Especially those that would fail to follow our code of conduct or who would inevitably create infighting amongst our membership. The Fold offers to its members specialized training, equipment, information on society members in the local area, and even services to retrieve or revive members who have suffered capture or death at the hands of the Questor's Society, along with enacting retribution, usually against a loved one or ally of the Questor's Society.

Those who serve me and The Fold must follow a specific code of conduct;, though I am exempt from most of it since I am a Progenitor, I do my best to follow the code so that I may lead by example.

- Obey the Progenitors of The Fold
- Never harm another member of The Fold unless obeying a Progenitor.
- Never speak of The Fold to those outside The Fold unless obeying a Progenitor.
- Never let your own goals interfere with the goals of the Fold.
- Pay your tribute to the Fold.

My original death was one of simple old age, earned after slaying many adventurers in the deep places of the earth. The depredations of the circle of heroes and the Questor's Society cutting a swath through the populations of "monsters" is what caused "The Powers That Be" to return me to the mortal world. I desire most of all to slay them and return to my eternal rest.

Jore

Knowledge (local)

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering, local or religion) can learn more about Kal'fa. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Common (DC 14): This undead aberration is Revered Father Kal'fa "The Pillar of Wrath," a vengeful and powerful beast that seeks to harm adventurers in any way possible.

Uncommon (DC 19): This is a roper brought back to unlife, other creatures similar to this are known as "dread revenant creatures;" read excerpt from <u>*The Fold of Wrath.*</u>

Rare (DC 29): Kal'fa is a remarkably intelligent, if evil, creature. He is immune to electricity, resistant

to cold, and possesses nearly unsurpassed regenerative abilities such that even after its destruction it can return to life sometime later. Its ability to alter both its shape and coloration make it extremely difficult to locate in virtually any environment. The strands of Kal'fa can sap an opponent's strength. These strands have an incredible reach and grow back if severed. Its tentacles also have a powerful slam attack that can both drain and choke the life out of any creature.

Obscure (DC 39): Fire is the only known weakness of The Pillar of Wrath, but even this will not overcome his rejuvenation.

Epic (DC 49): It would require the Circle of Heroes to all be slain at once or for them to disband for Kal'fa to be permanently destroyed.

New Feats

Absorb Spell [Monster]

"Your paltry magic does not harm me fool; it gives me strength!"

Prerequisite: Spell resistance

Benefit: If a spell or spell-like ability fails to overcome your spell resistance you again a +1 circumstance bonus to your own attack rolls, saves, and skill checks for 1 hour. This bonus increases by 1 every two spell levels, so a 6th level spell such as chain lighting would grant a +4 circumstance bonus. In addition, you gain 5 temporary hp for every two spell levels of the spell. These temporary hit points also last for 1 hour.

Overwhelming Energy Drain [Monster]

"I laid my hand upon him, the darkness of my touch shattering his divine shield like so much glass."

Prerequisites: Energy drain, Ability Focus (energy drain), Cha 13

Benefit: Your touch has a chance of dispelling spells and effects that protect against your energy drain attack (such as death ward). Your caster level is equal to your Challenge Rating. Even if you successfully dispel this effect, you cannot bestow negative levels until the following round.

Wail of the Sorrowful Dead [Monster]

"My song is a mournful tale of dread and horror." **Prerequisite:** Undead creature

Benefit: Once per day you can make a mournful song so that all that hear it (within 10 feet per your Hit Dice) suffer a morale penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks equal to half your Hit Dice, unless they make a successful Will save (DC 15 + 1/2 your Hit Dice + your Charisma modifier). This is a sonic-based, mind-affecting fear effect.



Divine Devotion: Clerics of Charm, Jove and Just

by Jonathan McAnulty

Clerics devoted to the charm domain and its two subdomains (love and lust), recognize the power of such emotions and endeavor to teach their followers how to properly use and channel these feelings. Though the actual, physical mechanics of desire, charm, and beauty are much the same, regardless of alignment, the definition of what constitutes a valid expression of love differs from one religion to another, depending on the personality and alignment of the deity served, for it is in such expression that the worshiper can best imitate the divine. The emotional (and physical) attachment of one person to another is indeed a powerful thing, and a vital foundational component of most cultures, being the standard foundation of the family, and, ideally, the impetus for procreation. Love and affection, as noble sentiments, motivate individuals beyond pure self-interest, causing them to sacrifice their time, monies and talents for the good of others. Yet such feelings are likewise the cause of heart-ache, murder and even war. Thus, goodly gods might proclaim a doctrine of self-sacrifice, fidelity and genuine affection. More base deities encourage a carnal lifestyle, one focused on sating physical desires through the use (and abuse) of others. Whereas the former view love as a grand motivator, the latter see it as a game, a way to gain followers and fulfill selfish desires. It is perhaps natural that the subdomain of lust is more often associated with evil religions and the subdomain of love is typically the purview of good-aligned faiths. Neutral religions, on the other hand, may emphasize one or the other at different times, seeing both as natural and desirable within the proper social context.

Sacred Tomes of Love and Lust

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

The Crimson Tie

This book, traditionally bound in scarlet leather, is a treatise on the manipulation of emotions and the seduction of others, especially the innocent. Besides being a spirited theological defense of such behavior, the book also contains practical advice on how to best use other individuals, while simultaneously making them believe you have their best interests at heart. Though the tome is associated with evil religions, its usefulness makes it popular with politicians, con artists and gigolos everywhere. An individual who spends an uninterrupted hour meditating on the tome gains a +2 bonus to Bluff checks and a +1 bonus to his Leadership score. This is a profane bonus which lasts for 24 hours and it does not function in a *zone of truth*.



Love's Sacrifice

This scroll relates three parables concerning a sacrifice made in the name of love. The first tells of a mother who devotes her life to the care of her children. The second speaks of a father who sells all that he owns to provide for the needs of a sick son. The third, and longest parable, describes the thoughts of a soldier who marches into battle and dies in order to defend those he loves, both family and stranger. While the scroll itself does not elaborate at length on the lessons of these parables, over the years, theologians have added such commentary so that while some scrolls still contain only the original parables, many copies of the scrolls are also filled with sermons and devotionals based on the parables. Individuals who devote an hour each day to meditating upon the lessons of the parables gains a +2 bonus to any aid another attempts. This is a sacred bonus lasting 24 hours.

The Swan's Dance

This thin folio contains a poem describing the courtship of a young couple, their marriage and their life thereafter. It is a beautiful, eloquent poem which speaks to the love and affection of two people through the changing years. It talks of the joys of matrimony,



children and growing old together. The poem is considered a divinely inspired work and lines from the poem, including the vows within, are often used in wedding ceremonies. A speaker who utilizes the poem in connection to a wedding ceremony or a speech about marriage gains a +2 circumstance bonus to any relevant Performance (oratory) checks.

New Feats

The following feats are not unique to clerics possessing the charm domain, but they are each thematically appropriate for the topic.

Charming Diplomat

You are quite skilled in reconciling quarreling factions.

Prerequisites: Cha 13, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

Benefit: When attempting to use Diplomacy to improve the attitude of an individual, you gain an extra +3 bonus to the attempt and can shift any creature's attitude by up to 3 steps with a successful skill check.

Diplomatic Theologian

Your study of theology and the scriptures of your faith makes you better able to relate to people.

Prerequisites: 5 ranks in Knowledge (religion), Charm or Nobility Domain

Benefits: For every 5 ranks you possess in Knowledge (religion) you gain a +1 competence bonus to Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks.

Love's Devotion

You possess a strong emotional attachment to a particular individual, putting you somewhat at that person's mercy, but also enabling you to better serve and defend that individual.

Benefit: When this feat is chosen, you must choose a character you know and make that character the object of your devotion. That character gains a +4 bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks made against you. Whenever that character is threatened (i.e. within melee range of an attacker) or injured, you gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage the assailant. You may, on any given round, make a 5-foot step for free if doing so would put you between the object of your devotion and a charging assailant. Finally, you gain a +2 bonus to any aid another attempts made to assist the one you are attached to.

Special: You may, at any time, end the devotion to the chosen individual. When you do so, the feat slot is lost for 2 months or until you gain another character level, at which time you may elect to choose a new object for your devotion. If the devotion to an individual is brought to an end, you may not elect to replace this feat with a new feat.

Sensuous Charm

You are quite talented in appealing to the carnal instincts of others.

Prerequisite: Cha 13

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks and a +2 bonus to Perform (dance). If you have 10 or more ranks in one of these skills, that bonus is doubled.

Channeling Effects for the Love and Lust 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.

Love Domain

Sensorial Imagery: Golden energy, tinged with light pink, and a smell like flowers.

Minor Channeling Effect: Kindly Spirit: You can, as a swift action, employ one of your uses of channel energy to create a momentary feeling of goodwill in one creature within range of your channeling. When you use your channeling ability in this way, you may add a sacred (or profane) bonus to a single Diplomacy skill check equal to 2 + the number of dice you would normally roll when

channeling energy (1d6 would equal a +3 bonus, 2d6 would equal a +4 bonus, etc.). The use of the channeling use must be declared before any dice are rolled.

Combat Channeling Effect: A Taste of Honey: You can, as a standard action, utilize one of your uses of channel energy to increase the Charisma of all those within range of your channeling. All those affected receive a bonus to Charisma equal to the number of dice you normally roll when channeling and lasting an equal number of rounds (2d6 equals +2 Charisma for 2 rounds, 3d6 equals +3 Charisma for 3 rounds, etc.). This effect stacks with *eagle's splendor*.

Major Channeling Effect: Love's Kiss: You can, as a standard action, utilize one of your uses of channel energy to improve the mutual attitudes of two individuals, other than yourself, within the range of your channeling. Both individuals are allowed a saving throw and if either succeeds in the saving throw, both resist the effect. If both fail their saving throws, each individual has his or her attitude toward the other individual improved by two steps, to a maximum of helpful. 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.).

Major Channeling Effect: Cloak of Affection: You can, as a standard action, employ one of your uses of channel energy to create an area of goodwill and love within the range of your channeling. All those within the area of effect must succeed at a Will save if they wish to attack or harm another individual during any particular round. The intent to attack must be declared before the save is attempted. Those who fail the save find themselves unable to act during the round. Creatures who do not attempt an act of violence or harm are not required to make a saving throw and may act as normal. 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.). This effect is not subject to selective channeling.

Lust Domain

Sensorial Imagery: Pink energy, streaked with vivid scarlet, accompanied by a heady musky smell.

Minor Channeling Effect: Lustful Spirit: You can, as a swift action, employ one of your uses of channel energy to create a momentary feeling of lust in one creature within range of your channeling. When you use your channeling ability in this way, you may add a sacred (or profane) bonus to a single Bluff skill check equal to 2 + the number of dice you would normally roll when channeling energy (1d6 would equal a +3 bonus, 2d6 would equal a +4 bonus, etc.). The use of the channeling use must be declared before any dice are rolled.

Combat Channeling Effect: A Taste of Honey: This effect functions as described above.

Major Channeling Effect: Two Hearts Beat as One: You can, as a standard action, utilize one of your uses of channel energy to create an emotional bond



between two individuals, other than yourself, within range of your channeling. Both individuals are allowed a saving throw and if either succeeds in the saving throw, both resist the effect. If both fail their saving throws, each individual finds him- or herself emotionally drawn to the other, though their initial attitude toward each other remains the same, and they are able to better work together to achieve success. As a result of this effect, the two individuals gain an extra +1 to hit when each attacks the same creature, and when either successfully aids the another, the bonus from the aid provided is doubled.

Major Channeling Effect: Cloak if Desire: You can, as a standard action, utilize one of your uses of channel energy to create an area of intense lust and physical, sexual desire within the range of your channeling. All those within the area of effect must succeed at a Will save each round in order to act as normal. Those that fail their Will save may take no other action, other than one which might sate them physically. A failed save does not require an individual to act in a manner contrary to their alignment nor does it force them to perform in a way repugnant to their own moral values. However, any creature which attempts an action which they can rationalize as helping them to fulfill their carnal needs (grappling a member of the desired sex, making a leap to be closer to one's beloved, etc.) gains a +4 morale bonus to any relevant d20 rolls. 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.). This effect is not subject to selective channeling.

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Kaidan: Monsters of Ice and Snow

By Jonathan McAnulty

Though gaijin frequently think of Kaidan as a temperate land of warm forests, the mountains of the archipelago, especially in the north, are no stranger to snow. Travel through these peaks, especially in the winter, can be quite dangerous, for the cold and the snow serve as weapons in the hands of evil spirits, three of which are presented here.

Koori no Oni (Ice Oni)

With a look of manic glee, the blue-skinned, rime covered giant charges, glaive held high. A whirlwind of snow and freezing wind surrounds him as he moves.

Ice oni are violent and cruel, though they lack personal initiative and are seldom a serious threat on their own. Like their cousins, the oni brute, koori no oni are most dangerous when in service to others. Koori no oni will work for any number of masters, including frost giants, yuki-onna, and white dragons. Though their personal appearance can vary wildly from one koori no oni to another, all of them, in their natural form, possess light blue skin and stand between eight and nine feet tall.

Koori no Oni CR 5 (XP 1,600)

CE Large Outsider (cold, giant, native, oni, shapechanger) Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; snow vision; Perception +8 Aura Frost

Defense

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20 (+3 armor, +8 natural, -1 size) hp 47 (5d10+20); regeneration 3 (fire) Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +4 Resist Electricity 10; Immune cold, poison Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

Offense

Spd 40 ft., fly 30 ft.; Ice-walk
Melee masterwork glaive +11 (2d8+7 plus 1d6 cold)
or 2 slams +9 (1d6+5 plus 1d6 cold)
Range icy sphere +5 touch (2d6 cold)
Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.
Special Attacks frost aura, icy sphere (DC 13)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)
3/day – invisibility (DC 13)

Statistics

Str 21, **Dex** 10, **Con** 17, **Int** 8, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 12 **Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 21



Feats Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Focus (glaive)

Skills Bluff +9, Climb +13 (+23 on ice-covered surfaces), Fly +8, Perception +8, Stealth +12; Racial +10 Climb (on ice-covered surfaces), +4 Stealth Languages Abyssal (Jingoku dialect), Giant, Kaidanese

SQ change shape (Medium or Large humanoid, Large ice elemental; *alter self, elemental body II, giant form I*)

Gear standard (studded leather armor, masterwork glaive)

Ecology

Environment cold mountains **Organization** solitary, pair, gang (3-4 assorted oni), family (5-16 assorted oni) **Treasure** standard

Special Abilities

Frost Aura (Su) A koori no oni radiates an aura of cold. All creatures within 5 feet of the oni take 1d6 points of cold damage. Additionally, any melee weapons used by the koori no oni function as if they were frost weapons. The koori no oni can suppress this ability at will.

Ice-walk (Ex) The koori no oni can move across icy surfaces without penalty and does not need to make Acrobatics checks to run or charge on ice or snow. **Icy Sphere (Su)** As a standard action, a koori no oni can form and throw a sphere of icy force as a touch attack with a range of 35 ft. (25 ft + 5 ft/2 HD). Those struck by this sphere take 2d6 points of cold damage (DC 13 Fortitude halves). The save is Charisma-based **Snow Vision (Ex)** Koori no oni can see perfectly well in snowy conditions and do not suffer any penalties to Perception while in snow.

Mukurokoori (Frozen Corpse)

The rime-covered corpse shambling toward you is blue from the cold, with lips and eyes caked with thick ice.

Similar to zombies, mukurokoori are animated corpses brought to life in order to serve evil powers of cold and ice. These frozen corpses typically do as they are bid by their creators. When not given a task, they cease to move, resting, frozen in position, until living creatures approach. Then they begin to move in order to slay those whose still-living warmth so offends them.

Mukurokoori

CR 2 (XP 600)

NE Medium undead (cold) Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0 Aura cold

Defense

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (+5 natural) hp 16 (3d8+3) Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +3 DR 5/bludgeoning; Immune cold, undead traits Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

Offense

Spd 20 ft.; Ice-walk Melee slam +6 (1d6+4) Special Attacks freezing touch

Statistics

Str 19, Dex 10, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 10 Base Atk +2; CMB +6; CMD 16 Feats Great Fortitude, Toughness

Ecology

Environment any cold Organization any Treasure incidental

Special Abilities

Freezing Touch (Su) Those struck by the mukurokoori's slam attack must succeed at a DC 11 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of cold damage and 2 points of Dexterity damage for 1d4 minutes.



Cold Aura (Su) A mukurokoori radiates an aura of intense cold. All creatures within 5 feet of the undead monster take 1d6 points of cold damage. **Ice-walk (Ex)** The mukurokoori can move across icy surfaces without penalty and do not need to make Acrobatics checks to run or charge on ice or snow.

Yuki-onna (Snow Woman)

Dressed in a snow-white kimono, this enchantingly beautiful woman, with her pale skin and long white hair, smiles wickedly before vanishing into the snowy night.

The yuki-onna are ancient spirits of the snow and ice. Typically evil and cruel, these creatures wear the form of a beautiful woman. Most yuki-onna are tied to a single geographical area, such as a forest or mountain. Some of these, dwelling in areas of perpetual cold, employ lesser oni as minions and maintain small mountain estates, in imitation of human nobles. Others merely haunt their territories, working mischief as it suits them. While popular romances tell of yuki-onna who fall in love with mortal men, such occurrences are rare. More often, a yuki-onna spares a man only when she perceives she might gain some advantage.

While the majority of yuki-onna are now evil, they were not always so. Some speculate they came under the power of the yama-uba, mountain hags in league with the oni. Regardless of how it happened, the yukionna are now allies of the oni and have, as a race, rejected their celestial roots. They actively work to torment the mortal races. Despite this, they are reluctant to act against their kami kin; at least until it is clear the oni truly have the upper hand in their war against humanity.

Yuki-onna CR 7 (XP 3,200)

LE Medium Outsider (cold, evil, extraplanar) **Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., snow-vision; **Perception** +15 **Aura** Frigid (10 ft.)

Defense

AC 25, touch 18, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, +4 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural) hp 58 (9d10+9) Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +7 DR 5/+1; Immune cold, poison; Resist electricity 10; SR 18 Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

Offense

Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect) **Melee** unarmed attack +12 (1d4+1 plus 1d6 cold) **Special Attacks** Chilling Kiss, Breath of Frost **Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 13th) At will – meld into ice*, invisibility, control weather

Spells Known (CL 7th)

3rd (6/day) – cure moderate wounds, wind wall 2nd (8/day) – chill metal (DC 19), fog cloud, resist energy

1st (8/day) – animate element (snow or ice), charm animal (DC 18), endure elements, obscuring mist, speak with animals

Orisons (at will) – create snow, crystal symbol, detect magic, know direction, light, read magic, resistance

Statistics

Str 13, **Dex** 17, **Con** 13, **Int** 19, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 24 **Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23 (cannot be tripped)

Feats Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Knowledge [nature]), Weapon Finesse **Skills** Acrobatics +15, Bluff +19, Diplomacy +19, Fly +23, Knowledge (nature) +19, Knowledge (planes) +16, Perception +15, Perform (sing) +19, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +15 (+23 in snow); **Racial** +8 stealth (in snow)

Languages Abyssal, Draconic, Giant, Kaidanese, Sylvan

SQ change shape (Medium or Large air, ice, or snow elemental, *elemental body I* and *II*), trackless

Ecology

Environment cold mountains and forests Organization solitary Treasure standard

Special Abilities

Breath of Frost (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, the yuki-onna can unleash a freezing breath attack (20 ft. cone, 9d6 cold damage, DC 15 Reflex save for half, usable every 1d4 rounds).

Chilling Kiss (Su) As a standard action, a yuki-onna can kiss a willing or helpless character, inflicting 9d6 points of cold damage (no save) and 3d6 points of Dexterity damage (DC 15 Fortitude for half). **Cold Aura (Su)** A yuki-onna radiates an aura of intense cold. All creatures within 5 feet of the snow witch take 1d6 points of cold damage.

Meld into Ice (Sp) *Meld into ice* functions as *meld into stone*, but all references to stone in the text of the spell are replaced with the word ice.

Snow Vision (Ex) Yuki-onna can see perfectly well in snowy conditions and does not suffer any penalties to Perception while in snow.

Spells A yuki-onna cast spells as a 7th level sorcerer, but she draws her spells from the druid spell list. She gains no other class features from either the druid or sorcerer classes.

Trackless A yuki-onna leaves no tracks or footprints of any kind and can never be tracked using the Survival skill.

KD02 DIM SPIRIT Curse of the Golden Spear: Part 2

An adventure recommended for 4 characters at 6th level

Jonathan McAnulty







Ecology of the Invisible Stalker

By Matt Banach

Yesterday, upon the stair, I met a man who wasn't there He wasn't there again today I wish, I wish he'd go away... ~ from "Antigonish", by Hughes Mearns

The Man Who WasNot There: Ecology of the Invisible Stalker

"We stared in shock. The apprentice hovered several feet above the muddy cobblestones, suspended from a noose of invisible hands violently wringing the life from him. His eyes bulged in vain, searching for the face of an assassin that wasn't there. His legs kicked wildly at nothing, and there was no sound, save for the flapping of clothes in the wind. Shamefully, we waited for it to be over. Soon his panicked movements ceased, and he hung there, pale and still, for an unseemly long time. The body finally dropped limp upon the ground, and we all felt a presence leave our midst. We swore and prayed, and were thankful that we knew nothing more about how, who, or why."

Twisted and scarred under the yoke of arcane subjugation, each invisible stalker seethes with silent rage as its wizardly masters summon and send it out again and again to do their dirty work. The spells which summon and bind the stalkers have been in use among the arcane elite for countless generations; there is hardly a wizard's academy or sorcerer's circle in existence that can truthfully claim that its members have never played a part in the serial subjugation of these unseen beasts.

Despite their foul attitudes, invisible stalkers provide easy answers to messy problems. They are supremely stealthy, mobile, and vicious. In addition to making excellent assassins, they have also been employed as bodyguards, spies, and messengers. Most of all, their identities, activities and very existence are inherently covert, making it difficult to guard against them and nearly impossible to track them back to their master. Many wizards have paid gladly to hire a ruthless assassin which they don't even have to look in the eye when the deed is done. Of course, invisible stalkers don't actually get paid. Repeatedly conscripted into thankless service by powerful spells which exploit vulnerabilities in their very essence, invisible stalkers often resent their "masters" and have been known to turn - or at least twist - if kept on a leash too long.

HISTORY - Unseen Servants and Unintended Consequences

"Be careful what you call forth to do your bidding, young wizard. The 'stalkers are vicious, resentful



things, and if your headmaster was more cautious he would not so blithely instruct you in their supposedly 'textbook' subjugation. Those invisible attack dogs have a troubled past, and a mean streak to match, so you'd do well to learn a bit about them before you order one around all as-you-please.

"It stems from the impure history of a common spell - the workaday unseen servant. What few know, and fewer admit, is that some versions of unseen servant summon forth and enslave a quiet, obedient, and perfectly *sentient* creature, and not a mindless simulacrum of maid-like force as commonly expected. Called invisible attendants, these meek creatures originate on the elemental plane of Air and have an unfortunate susceptibility to magical binding. Ages ago, researchers employing unseen servant discovered the truth, realizing that for centuries - and probably longer - an entire species had been subjected to uncountable instances of magical kidnapping and slavery by wizards across the world. Morally-minded wizards organized a recall and revision of unseen servant among the respectable wizarding community and issued an incommensurate apology to a few of the creatures, supposedly on behalf of wizards everywhere. Nowadays many, if not most, versions currently taught and used have been corrected to conjure only pure, lifeless force, leaving the invisible attendants in peace. But that is not universally true, and the slavery and suffering of invisible attendants is surely not ended, nor forgotten. Some wizards possessing uncorrected versions remain ignorant of the true nature of their arcane maids, while the hardhearted do not care so long as the things obey and their chores get done.

"What does this have to do with the 'stalkers, you ask? Think for a moment, and consider all the onerous, mind-numbing tasks even you have commanded an 'unseen servant' to perform. Lifetimes of constant summoning to carry out the menial tasks of lazy, ungrateful magicians would grate upon the nerves of any creature. But recognize that the dirty jobs of wizards extend far beyond mere housework, especially when the 'servant' employed is believed to be insentient, amoral, and completely disposable: looting corpses, triggering traps, prodding failed experiments, assisting with profane rituals, or just cleaning up bloodbath after gory bloodbath. Whatever may have happened to each individual attendant, a significant number suffered gruesome ordeals while bound in silent service; those traumatized past the breaking point, or those "killed" in the line of duty and violently dispelled back to their home plane, experienced a drastic metamorphosis, twisting and ballooning into the creatures now known as invisible stalkers. It is unknown whether the metamorphosis from invisible attendant to invisible stalker was always in the cards, a natural transformation simply triggered by unnatural stress, or whether the invisible stalkers truly would not exist but for this magical mistake.

"But... the more things change, the more they stay the same. Though vastly more powerful than the domestic spirits they once were, invisible stalkers enjoy no respite from repeated enslavement at the hands of wizards. Still quite susceptible to summoning and binding, as your headmaster has instructed you today, in their more aggressive incarnation they are conscripted to hunt and kill rather than sweep and carry. And so it has been for ages, with a stable of invisible stalkers existing somewhere out there in the ether, ready to be beckoned over and put to work.

"Remember this tale, young wizards, the next time you consider summoning such a beast to be your assassin. There is more to them than meets the eye... and they would just as soon strangle you to death as clean up another one of your messes."

~ Steppano Tomebound, arcane historian and controversial guest lecturer.

"Invisible attendants" courtesy of Tricky Owlbear Publishing, Inc. See *Behind the Spells: Unseen Servant*, <u>http://www.koboldquarterly.com/k/article981.php</u>

PHYSIOLOGY

Invisible stalkers are not composed of flesh and bones. Those who have seen an invisible stalker's corporeal form via *see invisibility* or more acute magic see a roughly humanoid shape – a torso, two arms ending in crude digits, a head, and a trailing, genie-like abdomen that tapers off without legs. Their bodies are amorphous yet solid clouds of sentient force which form a balloon-like exoskeleton around a hollow core of air. Their interiors are not strictly sealed, remaining semi-permeable until they choose to make an air slam attack; the invisible stalker rapidly "inhales" air through its exterior, inflating itself like a balloon then violently expelling the air through an open-ended limb towards a target like a cannon. This process does not work underwater. As such, stalkers detest and avoid being submerged, and they will not swim or dive. Air slams are not the only option; if necessary their force-bodies can slam and grapple normally to deal damage by throttling or crushing a foe. They are fond of strangling wizards.

Despite their lack of voice box, invisible stalkers can speak aloud by reverberating air within their hollow cloud-form. This produces the Auran language quite easily (which they speak amongst themselves and other elementals), but human speech is more difficult. When conversing in human tongues, invisible stalkers are short-winded, constraining themselves to fragmented phrases and simple words. These laconic tendencies cause many to believe them far stupider than they are; a gross underestimation that the naturally intelligent stalkers see no reason to dispel. When they do speak, their voices sound like low-pitched, booming echoes.

Though innately invisible, average invisible stalkers enjoy no special ability to see other invisible creatures and objects (unless imbued with divination magic through a spell or special ability). The exception to this is the innate invisibility of itself and other invisible stalkers. Whatever substance constitutes the body of invisible stalkers, these creatures see *something* when they peer into a mirror, and can readily observe others of their ilk. This fact in mind, wizards fearing attack by an invisible stalker may summon their own to defend, setting up savage duels which occur entirely unseen.

Invisible stalkers are elementals and share the traits common to such beings. They do not eat – speculations that invisible stalkers hunt prey in their natural habitat on the plane of Air mistake the stalkers' cruel sport as food-gathering. Neither do they sleep or breathe, and they are immune to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, and stunning. Their forcebased elemental forms do not contain differentiated organs and are not subject to critical hits or flanking, nor do they take additional damage from precisionbased attacks. Ageless, invisible stalkers can live for a very, very long time; ancient stalkers do exist and are puissant and sagely creatures.

Like other elementals, invisible stalkers do not have a dual nature - their souls and bodies form one unit. When slain, no soul is set loose (and as such cannot be restored by *raise dead*, *reincarnate* and *resurrection*) but they can be restored to life by other magics, such as *limited wish*, *wish*, *miracle*, or *true resurrection*. This is tested infrequently, since due to arcane intricacies of their true nature, invisible stalkers can only be permanently killed while on the elemental plane of Air. All other attempts merely banish them back to that plane. Dissections of invisible stalkers are thought impossible, but bizarre rumors exist of tightly sealed vault-ships hovering in the far reaches of the infinite Air where djinni vivisectionists probe captured invisible stalkers, watching their work through thick invisibility-seeing goggles.

PSYCHOLOGY/SOCIOLOGY

The psyches of invisible stalkers are twisted. Plagued by memories of the terrible things they have seen and done both in their current incarnations and during their past lives as downtrodden menial servants, the aberrant psychology of the invisible stalker most closely resembles that of a traumatized soldier. These creatures lead haunted existences, shuffling along quietly, occasionally lashing out at others as retribution for their lives of toil.

Contact between the mortal world and invisible stalkers usually arises within the context of a stalker's arcane summoning and tasking. When mystically hauled across the planes to do the bidding of a wizard, invisible stalkers stand mute, rarely having anything constructive (or pleasant) to say. Conversations tend to be one-sided; wizards consider this only proper, invisible stalkers simply wish to receive their instructions quickly so they can complete their assignment and go home. When they do speak, invisible stalkers are snarky, grumbling malcontents prone to sarcastic jabs and brusque threats.

While performing an assigned task, invisible stalkers are single-minded, unmoved by logic, threats, or pleading. But free-roaming invisible stalkers are susceptible to persuasion if approached properly. After leading thankless lives of toil at another's bidding, invisible stalkers deeply enjoy having favors done for them. Sometimes the substance of the favor is not as important as the fact that it is the invisible stalker being served instead of doing the serving; a stalker being courted might conjure up a difficult task out of whimsy alone just to see if it might be performed.

While they roam the elemental plane of Air, invisible stalkers cherish their freedom. For leisure, invisible stalkers enjoy pleasure-flying, hunting exotic flying creatures for sport, and playfully jostling airships piloted by explorers. Above any other diversion, they delight in tormenting self-important wizards with anything from playful practical jokes to outright assaults, although they vet their targets to avoid picking fights with archmages.

Invisible stalkers on assignment carry nothing, leaving behind neither equipment nor treasure if defeated. But in their home territories, stalkers maintain small caches of treasure and valuable items, tending (often unconsciously) to collect curios related to their past, including their previous incarnations as more domestic servants.

Invisible stalkers lead private existences, most living, toiling, and reacting as solitary individuals without appeal to any larger community. Though they have all suffered as a species, sharing common pains and experiences, invisible stalkers have never banded together in groups larger than small packs. However, the possibility of a massive unionization of invisible stalkers does exist, and that thought keeps some wizards up at night.

Most invisible stalkers maintain their natural neutral alignment, remaining detached from material and moral concerns. Most wish simply to be left alone. Evil invisible stalkers exist, and are truly dangerous. Older (advanced) invisible stalkers that have gained experience and power over lifetimes of bloody work are the ones most likely to turn smoldering resentments into burning hatreds which fuel acts of deliberate evil. Chaotic evil invisible stalkers are the stuff of nightmares; once one succumbs to bloodlust, its supreme stealth and mobility allow it to wreak havoc and sow carnage with little concern for reprisals. Not stopping for food, rest, or mercy, entire settlements could easily be slaughtered by a single rampaging stalker left unchecked. Good-aligned invisible stalkers are extremely rare, since most are far too jaded to care about the well-being of others or maintain ideals of altruism. However, invisible stalkers temporarily aligned with noble causes are not completely unheard of, in unique cases where heroes have successfully gained a stalker's interest and favor.

Rare, curious tales exist of invisible stalkers inexplicably imprinting on individual humanoids, becoming loyal silent companions. Usually dismissed by others as non-existent, these "imaginary friends" bring surprising and brutal ends to threats against their wards.

Invisible Improvements

In between summons, even invisible stalkers have the opportunity to grow and change, and some have developed rare but deadly additional abilities.

Free Spirit (Su): The invisible stalker has rewritten its arcane nature and broken free from the cycle of mystical enslavement. It is no longer called by *summon monster* or similar spells that summon members of its species but do not target it as a specific individual. It gains a +4 bonus to Will saves, and may save to resist castings of *master invisible stalker* (Will save, negates; invisible stalkers usually get no save at all). It also gains spell resistance equal to its CR +8. However, the stalker can be permanently killed on any plane, not just on the elemental plane of Air. (+1 CR)

Ghostwalker (Ex): The invisible stalker can briefly loosen the bonds of its force-cloud form, evading attacks and slipping through walls. Three times per day, the invisible stalker can become incorporeal for 1 round as a standard action. While it is incorporeal, it can move through solid objects and pass through walls of a thickness equal to or less than its own space (5 ft. for a Medium stalker, 10 ft. for a Large one). (+1 CR)

Invisible Talons (Ex): Instead of battering with slam attacks, the invisible stalker slashes with long, razor-sharp talons of force. Replace the stalker's slam attacks (and any related feats) with claw attacks which overcome hardness and damage reduction as if they were adamantine. Should the invisible stalker score a critical hit against a creature that bleeds, the GM may suppress the stealth bonus it gains from natural invisibility as blood-drenched hands give away its position for one round. (+1 CR)

Steal Breath (Su): As a standard action, the invisible stalker can instantly suck the air out of a single adjacent 5-ft. space. Any creature in the target area that breathes reflexively chokes and must succeed on a Fort save (DC 10 + 1/2 the invisible stalker's Hit Dice + Constitution modifier) or be dazed for 1 round. With the breath stolen from their lungs, creatures deprived of air cannot speak and cannot cast spells or prayers with verbal components for 1 round, regardless of whether or not they become dazed. The save DC is Constitution-based. (+1 CR)

Adventure Hooks

Assassin's Monologue: A powerful enemy sends an invisible stalker to assassinate a party member. However, the disgruntled invisible stalker has twisted its assignment, complying with the letter of its instructions to kill but glad to spite its ungrateful taskmaster in the process. The invisible stalker mercilessly assaults its mark, striking to kill, but each round it attacks it also mutters words, dropping hint after hint about its master's identity, location, plans, and other helpful details. The longer the fight lasts, the more the party stands to learn - if the unlucky target can survive.

Hide and Seek: Whilst travelling the elemental plane of Air, a wizard's airship was ransacked by unseen assailants that absconded with valuable property including his prized spellbook. The beleaguered mage pleads with the party to return his cherished tome, promising favors and any other magical items recovered. The invisible stalkers responsible play an extreme game of keep-away across the skies, weaving through natural hazards and the lairs of dangerous creatures. If recovered, the spellbook contains removed pages; the pages for unseen servant, master invisible stalker, and all summon monster spells have been destroyed. (All the new owners will know, of course, is that there are missing pages; without divination, they should not know for certain which spells were removed.)

The Kidnapping Bodyguard: A wealthy nobleman fearing a plot against his household summoned an invisible stalker, commanding it to protect his child heir. The stalker stood silent guard until one night it whisked the child off into the sky without explanation. Believing himself betrayed, the nobleman hires the party to find the child and kill the disloyal beast, unaware that the stalker had discovered the plot against the child and was loyally acting to protect its ward. Once its remote and dangerous hiding place is found, the invisible stalker parlays but steadfastly refuses to return the child home unless the party foils the plot. Provided with critical clues, they must return and unravel a sinister conspiracy if they hope to avoid a fight with the child's well-intentioned bodyguard.

Invisible Stalker Lore

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (arcana) can learn more about invisible stalkers. When a character makes a successful skill check, reveal the following lore, including the information from lower DCs.

10 Invisible stalkers are heartless killers that are always invisible. They attack without weapons and come and go without a trace.

15 Invisible stalkers serve powerful wizards as assassins. They attack using air itself with while flying

20 An invisible stalker's invisibility is inherent and is not subject to *invisibility purge*, though it may be observed with *see invisibility* or *true seeing*. Creatures of the air, invisible stalkers cannot swim and hate being submerged in water.

25 An invisible stalker can only be killed on the elemental plane of Air. If it takes damage sufficient to destroy it while elsewhere, it automatically returns there. Invisible stalkers are controlled by wizards by a special spell, *master invisible stalker*, and rarely hold true loyalty to their master.

30 Invisible stalkers are closely related to smaller, meeker invisible creatures from the Elemental Plane of Air known as invisible attendants. Invisible stalkers have been known to brutally attack wizards they observe casting *unseen servant*.

Master Invisible Stalker

School: Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]; Level: Wiz 7 Casting Time: 1 round Components: V, S, M (a piece of string and a glass dagger worth 500 gp) Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels) Target: One invisible stalker Duration: 1 day/level (or until task is completed) Saving Throw: None; Spell Resistance: No

You command the subservience of one invisible stalker within range, instructing it to perform a specific task. The task may be dangerous, but prolonged and complex tasks are deeply resented by the stalker.

Each day that the stalker is bound it has a 1% cumulative chance to pervert its instructions, possibly twisting the wording to make the task easier to

perform and thereby "earning" its freedom earlier, or performing the task in a way that spites its master.

The duration and terms of this spell supersede any magic which brought the stalker forth in the first place, but it ends prior to the full duration if the stalker completes the task, at which point the invisible stalker is sent home immediately. If the stalker is not on the elemental plane of Air and would be reduced to zero hit points or fewer or killed outright, it is instead instantly banished back to Air at zero hit points and disabled, and the spell ends.

You may transfer some of your prepared spells, and the ability to cast them, to the stalker; you cannot prepare new spells to replace these spells until *master invisible stalker* ends. Only wizard spells from the schools of abjuration, divination, illusion, or universal of 3rd level or lower (4th level if the stalker has 13 HD or more) can be transferred. Variable characteristics (range, duration, area, and the like) function according to your level, not the level of the stalker. The stalker may cast spells with material components as if it had those components, so long as components are expended by you when the stalker is so imbued.

Material component: A piece of string and a dagger made of clear glass worth at least 500 gp, which is not consumed when the spell is first cast. If the stalker completes the task, the dagger crumbles into powder. If the stalker fails or the spell ends with the task unfinished, the dagger blackens and shatters. While whole, the dagger may be used as a connection for scrying upon the invisible stalker as if it were a body part.

The imbued spellcasting possibilities afforded by *master invisible stalker* make invisible stalkers resourceful and unpredictable. Crafty wizards favor the following spells to augment a stalker's capabilities while on the hunt: arcane mark to leave a calling card; detect thoughts to spy; dispel magic to penetrate magical defenses; ghost sound to distract; invisibility to conceal a captured item (or body); minor image or magic mouth to convey a message; or protection from arrows, protection from energy, resist energy, or shield to abate counterattacks. Advanced invisible stalkers could use *dimensional anchor* to prevent escapes, locate creature to find a mark, or even phantasmal killer to assail a target. Invisible stalkers have no particular fondness for spellcraft, but take full advantage of any tool that helps them accomplish their mission faster and with certainty.

Basic invisible stalkers can be called via *summon monster VI* or *VII*. Advanced invisible stalkers, such as described below, can be summoned by *summon monster VIII* and above.

Advanced Invisible Stalker CR 11 XP 12,800

N Large Outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar) INT +9; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +20

Defense

AC 25, touch 14, flatfooted 20 (+5 Dex, +11 Natural, -1 Size) hp 189 (14d10+112) Fort +19, Ref +16, Will +7

Defensive Abilities natural invisibility; **Immune** elemental traits

Offense

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 (perfect) **Melee** 2 slams +22 (4d6+8) **Special Attacks** flyby attack

Tactics

During Combat Invisible stalkers attack without warning, focusing on a single target until it is slain. They exploit their invisibility and mobility, making repeated flyby attacks to evade counterstrikes and keep opponents guessing as to their position. **Morale** Invisible stalkers are fearless and fight relentlessly until defeated/banished.

Statistics

Str 27, Dex 20, Con 27, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 12 Base Attack +14; CMB +23; CMD 38 Feats Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (slam) Skills Acrobatics +22, Bluff +18, Fly +28, Knowledge (planes) +19, Perception +20, Sense Motive +20, Stealth +18, Survival +20

Languages Auran, Common SQ Improved tracking

Ecology

Environment any (Plane of Air) **Organization** solitary **Treasure** none (standard on Plane of Air)

Special Abilites

Improved Tracking (Ex) An invisible stalker takes no penalty to Survival checks when tracking and moving at any speed.

Natural Invisibility (Ex) This ability is constant an invisible stalker remains invisible at all times, even when attacking. As this ability is inherent, it is not subject to the *invisibility purge* spell. Against foes that cannot pinpoint it, the invisible stalker gains a +20 bonus on Stealth checks when moving or a +40 when standing still - these bonuses are not included in the statistics above.

Rite Publishing Presents

101 Mpc Boons



BOLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

Twenty Questions with Dean Siemsen

By Steven D. Russell

Everyonce in a while Rite Publishing likes to touch on a new and up and coming designer rather than always giving you the established names. Today we are talking with Dean Siemsen

1. Could you tell us a little about yourself?

I've been an avid role-playing game enthusiast since 1989, I hadn't really gotten into RPG's with Dungeons and Dragons 1st Edition, what really got me interested was TSR's Marvel Super Heroes Role-Playing Game. I had hours of enjoyment with that system. My local comic shop, Collector's haven [now closed however] had the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd Edition Player's Handbook and Dungeon Master's Guide, I bought them and began reading them. For roughly 10 years I ran games in the Forgotten Realms setting (with a stint in Al~Qadim). My longest running game was a three year campaign in Forgotten Realms. My entire group took the plunge with 3rd edition (and later the 3.5 revision) and we continued to meet with some regularity. Players came and went, games (campaigns) started, stalled, and would re-start. It seems to be the way of the gaming world when you grow-up and have other real-world responsibilities.

When the newest edition of the world's oldest roleplaying game came out, I gave it a try. Ultimately it just wasn't for me. I found my true "home" RPG with Paizo Publishing's Pathfinder RPG and I (and my friends) have been pretty happy since. I suppose I've been a "closet" game designer (or

maybe wanna-be is a better term) for a long time. Tried my hand at submitting articles to Dragon Magazine (several "themed" prestige classes for Forgotten Realms). My ideas/design weren't ready and my ideas were rejected. I didn't know what to do (at the time) to rework them and submit again, and I quietly gave up. I continued hosting regular games, and thought about "what might have been". I came out of my shell and tried for Paizo's RPG Superstar contest... I've made attempts for the last three years and while I've learned a great deal, I have yet to get into even the Top 32. Well, this year was a little different. In addition to making the attempt at RPG Superstar 2011, I took a chance and submitted three psionic monsters into Dreamscarred Press's Psionic Bestiary contest. I couldn't have been more shocked, surprised, proud and awed that my three monsters (Chiondaru, Lianshai, and Uruklaar) were the Grand Prize winning entries. And the best part of that Grand Prize... earning a paid commission to write/design the Psionic Bestiary. Wow!

Jeremy asked that I have the manuscript submitted by June 1st. (And I must admit I didn't think I'd have it done in time). But, I dug in and dug deep within



myself, and submitted it at 12:22 am on the 1st of June.

So, while this is supposed to be resume-like for those who don't know me... that really is my background as a freelance designer. I'm not (yet) a game designer... I'm still working full-time in Department Store retail. I would enjoy getting to a level of skill, and ability to make game design my fulltime gig... but it's going to require baby steps. And writing, writing, and more writing. (Plus some designing too).

2. What is your home game like?

My home game (I'm actually "crazy" enough to have recently started a second one) is the Kingmaker Adventure Path, and the recently started Carrion Crown Adventure Path. Many of the same players from one game are in the other. They are both a lot of fun to GM, and different enough that it's not boring running two different games during the week. (Early in the days of 3rd edition I made an attempt at worldbuilding and homebrewing a game setting that I called "Argoth; the Drowned World"). The basic idea came from the dramatic 2nd edition module trilogy featuring the Sea Devils as the main villains... the PCs failed at a crucial point, were captured, and killed in a ritual sacrifice that saw the rebirth of new godling. "Argoth" was that campaign setting after the events from that failed adventure, and the subsequent flood that "drowned" the world.

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

). I wish I had a favorite Paizo product that I had worked on Steve. I haven't (yet) had the honor of working with the folks at Paizo Publishing. (Maybe I'll get into the Top 32 for RPG Superstar 2012... and we'll see how far I get after that).

4. You have done a lot of work for DreamScarred Press, how did that relationship start and how would you characterize it today?

Thanks for saying "You have done a lot of work for Dreamscarred Press", but I've actually only done one thing, create about 24 new monsters (nothing really from folklore or cryptozoology) for their upcoming Psionic Bestiary. (Although having said that, and not intending to diminish my work) Ι guess building/concepting/and stat blocking 24 new monsters is a LOT of work. I guess I've already "runoff at the mouth" and told you how the relationship started (won their contest)... as far as how I'd characterize it today ... Jeremy and Andreas have been really great to work with (although Jeremy has been my primary contact throughout this process). I hope to design more supplements for them in the future.

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

I suppose the Psionic Bestiary (or whatever Jeremy and DSP decide to call it) is my favorite Pathfinder RPG compatible product that I've worked on. (Of course it's the only one I've worked on thus far).

6. What was your best moment working on that product?

My best moment? Getting a great wave of inspiration and cranking out 4 monsters in several hours was a pretty good feeling for me. But my BEST moment... submitting the manuscript on time. (A good friend said to me, "Don't blow your deadline.")

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

Most ingenious part? That is a GREAT question Steve, one I'm not entirely sure how to answer. It's either my sentient "automatons" that hunt aberrations, or my wicked psionic undead flying skull. Although I think I tried to have something "new" or innovative with each monster.

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

The most challenging? Definitely coming up with Psionic Dragons. That was the most challenging part for me. Jeremy and Andreas had a certain vision for their dragons, and I had to make sure mine meshed with theirs, and that they would work. I'm pretty pleased with the result (and I think Jeremy and Andreas are as well).

9. Did you learn anything while working on it?

I learned a lot while working on this Bestiary. The best way to come up with monster HD, statistics, abilities, background, tactics, and more. Jeremy was extremely D R E A M S C A R R E D PRESS

patient with me throughout all of it. With his guidance I think I've become a better designer in general.

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

Wow. What's the best Pathfinder RPG compatible product out there? That is a tough question. And I think it's all subjective. I'd only have my opinion to back up my claim. I'm no authority when it comes to declaring something the "best". *Tales from the Old Margreve* was one I really liked from Open Design. It has a lot to offer Game Masters and Players alike.

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

something for everyone I think; Class Options, new Feats, new Spells, perhaps a themed and well thought out Prestige Class, several new monsters, and openended adventure sites with "hooks" or rumors to get the PCs curious. I'd buy something like what I just described.

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

13. My favorite Pathfinder RPG compatible product designer? I have to pick one? I don't think I can pick just one. Dreamscarred Press, 4 Winds Fantasy Games, Headless Hydra Games, Super Genius Games, Rite Publishing, Frog God Games... I have something from each of these companies. The diversity of what each of them creates is my favorite thing about them.

What advice would you give to would-be-freelancers?

Write, submit, create, brainstorm... and continue that in any order. Write down something daily. Even just a page or half a page. Keep those creative juices flowing. Submit to Kobold Quarterly, submit to Pathways, Wayfinder... put yourself out there and don't let rejection put you down (or keep you down). That would be my advice to potential freelancers

14. Who is your favorite Illustrator?

Wayne Reynolds is my all time favorite illustrator. (Although I feel compelled to mention Rick Hershey (as he is the artist that brought my lianshai to "life").

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

The most memorable fan response? Hands down the fan who commented on my lianshai's consume cognizance ability (you know who you are) as written is it very broken. I have since reworked/re-wrote the ability and I think it makes my intentions with the ability much clearer. (So... thank you for that).

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

An exclusive hint or teaser? As it happens I have been asked to work on a PDF for Headless Hydra Games. It details their Mor Aldenn: The City of Mages campaign setting's new race... the gaiant. (They are mentioned on their blog/site so I don't think I'm spoiling anything at this point). Axel has asked me to work on approximately 8 - 12 pages of material for the gaiants. Stat blocks for iconic NPCs, the a few general or "generic" stat blocks, racial feats, and magic items.

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

I suppose my overarching goal would be to have the opportunity to work with/for Paizo Publishing. Either being lucky and winning a future RPG Superstar, or being contacted to perhaps contribute to an Adventure Path Bestiary. (My ultimate goal would be actually getting to work on a chapter of an Adventure Path itself. I'm holding out for the Irissen Witches vs. Linnorm Kings Vikings Adventure Path. Or something in Numeria).

18. Can you talk a bit about winning your ENnie award? (grumbles about being beaten by you) Which one?

Any advise for those that don't use psionics in their current game? It will

sound cliche (maybe) but I say... give it a try. Make a villain a psionic using character (maybe mix it up and have the PCs face off against а psion/wizard/cerebremancer). Have them fight some psionc monsters (several new ones coming soon)... If it doesn't "fly" then at least you tried it out. But if it works well, maybe allow some PCs to take a psionic feat or two, dip into a psionic class (or prestige class). And that did sound like it was more from a GM's perspective. Sorry about that... old habits. For players ... ask your GM... unless he/she has stated NO PSIONICS in the game allowed... he/she might allow it.

19. Anything you would like to follow up on?

I've been pretty verbose already Steve. (Perhaps nearly as verbose as Neil Spicer). But, seriously, I



honestly can't think of a follow up to something from the prior questions.

20. Is there anything else that folks should know about you and/or your work?

Is there anything that folks should know about me and/or my work? That is an excellent question Steve. I'm willing to give anything a try as a new freelancer, I feel it's important to "get myself out there" and get my work seen. Develop a solid work ethic, and go from there. Once the Psionic Bestiary is published (or Jeremy gives "previews" on the DSP site) I hope my work speaks for itself.



Midgard: Streets of Zobeck

by Open Design Review by Dark Mistress

This product is 94 pages long. It starts with a cover, credits, forward and ToC. (4 pages)

Faces of Zobeck (8 pages)

This is a section of stat blocks for important NPC's in the book. There is 8 NPC's full stated out with a short background, goals and plots laid out. There is also 5 feats and 2 traits in this section by the NPC that possess them. I am unsure if they are new or from other Open Design books and just reprinted here.

Places of Zobeck (14 pages)

This covers 6 locations in the city. With a map, description, location keys, key NPC's and some stat blocks as well. Basically everything you would need to help bring the location to life. There is also two traps stated out, a new rogue archetype, and a new rogue talent. At the end is a full stated out NPC using the new rogue archetype.

Everyone Lies (9 pages)

This is a 1-3rd level mini adventure. It uses one of the locations detailed in the previous chapter. In addition there is a single new magic item stated out, one that is common with the City Watch.

Rust (9 pages) A 4-5th level mini adventure.

The Fish and the Rose (8 pages) A 5th level mini adventure.

The First Lab (8 pages) A 7th level mini adventure. Rebuilding a Good Man (7 pages) A 9th level mini adventure.

Ripper (8 pages) A 10th level mini adventure.

Flesh Fails (11 pages) A 9-11th level mini adventure.

Races of Zobeck (4 ¹/₂ pages) This has 8 new feats, 16 new traits, 4 new spells, 6 new magic items, 1 new magic weapon property, and 3 new mundane gear items.

It ends with a OGL, ads and back cover. (3 ¹/₂ pages) Closing thoughts. The artwork is black and white and good. Layout and editing are good, I didn't notice any errors. The author forward was a nice little read and it explains what the product is about and what inspired it. The whole product is a grim and gritty urban supplement to help bring the city of Zobeck to life. The locations are well done, the mini adventures are all interesting. Some use some of the NPC's in the first section or some of the locations in the second section.



Others add new locations of their own or NPC's which can be used. Most of the book can be used over and over, other than the adventures of course. It adds a nice continuity as the PC's will go to the same places and see the same people over the course of their adventures. Reading this book it reminded me a great deal of the Thieves World series of books. While this product is made for Zobeck and the world setting of Midgard it would be fairly easy to use the vast majority of this book in any setting.

So what's my rating? Well I admit I am biased I like urban based adventures and I like grim and gritty adventures and settings as well. Not to mention I am a big fan of the listed works that inspired the authors of this product. With that said though if you are looking for more flavor for your Zobeck game or just looking for some urban adventures and locations then I highly recommend the book. I have settled on a 5 star for this product. If you liked the Thieves World series of books, pick this up. You won't be disappointed.

Trust me, I'm a Succubus.

ANCESTRAL RELICS

30 ANCESTRAL RELICS

Ancestral relics are powerful magical items, powered by the very souls of a family member. Of near artifact quality, these rare creations become progressively stronger as your honor increases. Likewise, if you suffer a loss of honor, the ancestral relic becomes weaker.

Ancestral relics are priceless, and the secrets to their manufacture were forcibly lost by imperial decree over 600 years ago. At that time, the crafting of Ancestral Relics was the province of the onmyoji wizards, who jealously guarded the secrets of their manufacturing. These wizards would make the Relics for any house which desired one, whether they were noble or commoner. However the price was steep.

It is known that the creation of the relics demand the soul of a prominent member of the household and that the individual was sacrificed in a most gruesome and murderous way. Of some debate is whether the sacrifice was voluntary or not. Regardless, the ancestor's soul is what fuels the item.

#30 Ancestral Relics

by Michael K. Tumey

An Item Book for Kaidan designed for use with the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game



Michael K. Tumey COMING SOON





Faces of the Tarnished Souk: Arhanoht, the Iron Gavel

by Rite Publishing Review by Dark Mistress

This product is 16 pages long. It starts with a cover, credits. (2 pages)

Iron Gavel (11 pages) He is designed to be used with the Coliseum Morpheuon. It starts off with a history, some lore charts about him, his dreams, and advice on how to use him. He has 3 stat blocks of different levels, CR 6, 12, and 21. The CR 21 is a Exemplar suzerain time seer lesser kolyarut inquisitor 13/monk 3. The CR 12 is a Broken exemplar time seer lesser kolyarut inquisitor 5/monk 3. The CR 6 is a Broken (x3) exemplar lesser kolyarut.

In addition to his stat blocks we also get. A new weapon Meteor Hammer, two new traits, and Three new magic items. Bracers of Determination – Like AC bracers but with breath of life as well. There is a lesser and greater version of these. Hammer of Justice – A very cool weapon with several interesting powers.

There is also three new feats.

Extended Bane – adds wis bonus to bane length. Extra Cohort – gain a extra cohort if you have leadership

Lasting Judgment – A judgment last for a little while after a combat is finished. Allowing you to possible use it in two combats or more.

A new variant monster a lesser kolyarut, and four new templates. Broken, Exemplar, Suzerian, and Time Seer.

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

Closing thoughts. The artwork is black and white and good. Layout and editing is good, there was one minor error I noticed but nothing major. The character is well done and interesting. The magic items, feats, templates and such are all well done and almost worth the price of the book alone. He is heavily stacked with templates and classes, which will make him be a pretty nasty surprise to most PC's as a lot of what he



will do will be unexpected. If you are a fan of Coliseum Morpheuon and looking to add more or just wanting a some stat blocks for a interesting NPC then this is worth picking up. So what's my rating? Well it gives exactly what it claims in a well done manner with only one single tiny editing error. So going to give this one a 5 star review.

Trust me, I'm a Succubus.

Rite Publishing Presents

The Breaking of Forstor Nagar City of Grinding Ice



2D

An adventure for 8th level characters.



Midgard: Book of Drakes

By Open Design Review by Thilo "Endzeitgeist" Graf

This full-color pdf is 62 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page (almost) logo-less front cover, 1 page editorial & ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement and 1 page back cover, leaving 54 pages for the drakes. So...what are drakes?

Well, drakes are lesser draconic creatures and, as the introduction by Adam Daigle and Mike Welham discusses, there is a certain necessity for these critters that has as of yet been neglected. But wait, let me elaborate on the thesis: I am an adherent of the mindset that dragons should be the most iconic of antagonists and monsters and subsequently I hate the tendency that was prevalent in 3.5 for some time to make anything half-draconic and spam dragons without any context into a given adventure. However, I still sometimes am drawn into said adventures, probably thanks to said iconic quality and the fact that I can't escape the pull and the temptation to include them once in a while. Oh, there'S another dimension: I don't like too young dragons: They are not large enough to evoke the awe I feel is an integral part of a dragon-encounter and more often than not, are easily killed by the PCs, which again undermines what I consider a good dragon encounter. That's where drakes come in - have your cake and eat it, so to speak: Drakes are related to dragons, but are not true dragons, thus offering a nice way to use draconic themes without detracting from the iconic qualities of true dragon encounters.

After a page of introduction to the topic at hand, we get the first section of the book, an ecology of drakes prefaced by a short, yet aptly-written fluff-text, which is interspread throughout the whole discussion of the drakes, greatly enhancing your reading enjoyment. Three classes of drakes are introduced: Esoteric, Material and Geographic drakes. After a short discussion on these types, all of the different drakes and their roles in the Midgard-setting. The ecology also features 30 sample drake pieces of treasure as well as 10 short write-ups of sample drakes, each an adventure hook in its own right.

Chapter 2 focuses on the interaction between players and drakes, respectively the part going beyond encountering and potentially killing them. With a rich and rather interesting mentality as companions, we also get 10 new feats related to drakes, some of which enhance their combat capabilities, some rather exciting and one feat being the basis to get a drake as a semi-permanent companion that has to be appeased with items. Inquisitors don't like drakes though, and from the table I gather there's a reciprocity there malice and whimsy don't mix well with harsh judgments. I had a problem with one feat: "Tooth and Claw Form" has very low requirements and enables the user to either deal piercing, slashing or



bludgeoning damage with his unarmed attacks. Depending on the focus of your campaign, this feat could potentially impede the character's necessity to plan/bring the right weapons to a fight. In addition to the new feats, we of course get new alternate class features for all the classes (including APG, but not the Magus from UM): Alchemists get a cool draconic mutagen, barbarians get a rage-focused breath weapon, bards get a calming performance based on euphoria, the cavaliers get a new anti-tyrant/rather chaotic order, Clerics can take the Drake Subdomain, Druids become Drakeshape druids, fighters get 2 alternate abilities to better combat dragons and drakes, Inquisitors can get a new anti-dragon judgment, monks can get a better focus on their stun, oracles can be cursed with claws or scales, Paladins get the very iconic "Dragon Challenger"-archetype, Rangers can replace favored terrain, with favored nemesis, specializing on being even better to kill a subset of his foes. Rogues get two new rogue talents and in contrast to the other abilities, I've got problems with one: While one cool one lets the rogue use sneak against blindsense, the other is simply overpowered: Crush Windpipe lets a rogue force an enemy to make a fort-save when sneaked AGAINST THE DAMAGE OF THE SNEAK ATTACK. If the save fails, the creature CAN NO LONGER USE ITS BREATH WEAPON OR VOCALIZE UNTIL HEALED! This is broken beyond repair. Wow. This talent screams "Abuse the hell out of me!", practically making ANY caster with verbal components easy prey for rogues and, to add insult to injury, fails to mention how it works on foes with breath-weapon and no windpipes and potentially deprives dragons of their most iconic breath weapon. This talent screams power-creep and I don't get how it could stand among the other, balanced and cool class features. Ähem. *Endzeitgeist calms down from a fit of nerd rage* The sorceror gets the nice new drake bloodline. Summoners can exchange half of their bond sense ability rounds for a bonus feat. Witches get an excellent new hex to temporarily take away flight via a new hex and expand upon their blight with a major hex. Wizards get a new draconic focused arcane school.

Summoners are kind of the winners on the class-sides, as they get a fully stated 20-level alternate base-class, the so-called dragon tamer focusing on summoning and modifying drakes and working with them. There is also a new PrC, the Master of Drake Forms (d8, 2+Int skills, medium fort and ref-saves, moderate BAB) focuses on shape-changing, draconic abilities up to an apotheosis. While shape-changing is required to qualify, no spell-progression is offered by the class, which makes it an interesting pick: I'd be screaming "unbalanced" from the top of my lungs otherwise, but breath weapons, resistances and natural weapons make for nice replacements of the lost spells: Nice job! Additionally, if you want to play a drake PC, full racial modifiers and information on how to use them for both Pseudodragons and candle drakes are given. Next, we're into the obligatory spell-section: 16 new drake-centric spells are provided, from the selfexplanatory drake form-spells to veiling companions and mislead presences. There are two spells in particular, though, don't fit well with me: One spell "Greater to lesser" transforms a dragon of 15+ HD to 1/3 of its HD, with all the accompanying ramifications. It's also permanent. Wait, what? Yes, there are plenty of tales that feature similar themes, but a) I never liked them and b) this is one fort-save deciding between a climatic encounter of epic proportions and a completely whipped minor draconic being. Did we really need to potentially pussyfy dragons? And while I like the fact that having a piece of the dragon's hatching-shell can provide a -8 penalty to said save, I don't think we need it here. If this was a temporary effect, I could possibly look over it. As written, I'll never, ever use it. I also hated the spell "Protection from lesser dragons", which is essentially a protection from evil-spell against all things draconic. Quite frankly, I think this particular spell wastes space that could have been put to better use and don't really get why dragons should have their own protection spell. Isn't evil/good/chaos/law enough already? "Wingspan", on the other hand is visually cool and increases, you guessed it, the creature's wingspan, thus improving its flight capabilities.

We also get 7 new magic items, 4 weapons to increase the damage potential of the natural weapons of drakes and 3 new pieces of adventuring gear to carry around and/or capture drakes. The companion replica can force companions temporarily into the replica, making for potentially interesting roleplaying opportunities between the free-spirited companions and their masters. Dimming Paste also makes for a cool item: It impedes blindsense and blindsight. I had no problem with any of the items.

The third chapter is the meat gamemasters have been clamoring for - we get 20 new drakes ranging from CR 1 to CR 14. From the drunken-revelry inducing mischievous alehouse drakes (that had me chuckle and which focus one of the cutest artworks ever), the malevolent ash darkes, the benevolent candle drakes, the dwarf-stalking rather hunter-themed crag drake and the mist drake to the others - we get a lot of cool ideas. Want to know more? Well, there are the rather impish, breath-weapon using crimson drake, the deadly stalker of the depths called deep drake or the ephemeral dream drakes. Steam and Gear drakes are also provided for the steam-punk/clockworkaficionados out there to the lycanthrope-allied moon drakes and their strange powers over lycanthropes to the drake-incarnations of law, the pact drakes and their negotiation skills, we are in for cool creatures.

Conclusion:

Editing is top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches. Formatting suffers from some VERY minor textalignment issues, but the content does not suffer, so I'll let this one pass. The full-color pdf is also extensively bookmarked. Let me comment on the layout: It adheres to the two-column standard and is beautiful, elegant and just a pleasure to the eyes. Speaking of which: Both cover artist Kieran Yanner and interior artist Hugo "Butterfrog" Solis went out of their respective ways to create some of the best, iconic artworks I've seen in quite a while: Each drake gets an iconic, cool artwork and the ones that are spread throughout the book all adhere to the highest quality. Some of the drakes might elicit a squee from the female demographic out there - my non-gamer lady got all gooey-eyed over the alehouse drake. Even better, the drakes all have their unique, cool abilities that make you actually want to use them - signature abilities rock. The alternate Drake Tamer-class is awesome and most of the alternate class features rock, as do the "Create-your-own-drake"-rules. Where the book does not adhere to its otherwise almost stunningly high quality is in the one broken rogue talent and the, at least in my opinion, rather not too special new feats and spells, that left me rather cold, especially when compared to the other crunch. So, what's my final verdict, then? While my review might be considered harsh in spaces, it's mainly because the rest of this product is STELLAR - were it not for the gripes I mentioned, I'd gladly give this one my seal of approval. I'd rate it 4.5, but it's quite frankly too good to be thus downgraded, resulting in a final verdict of 5 stars, in spite of the bits I abhorred. If you're only remotely interested in things draconic and willing to ignore some rather problematic component parts, you have to own this.

Endzeitgeist out.
Rite Publishing Presents:









Secrets of the Magus

By Rite Publishing Review of Thilo "Endzeitgeist" Graf 5 out of 5 Stars!

This pdf is 13 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD and two pages advertisements, leaving 8 pages of new content for the Magus base-class.

I've long liked Gish and once I get finally reviewing some of my SGG-products, I'll also look at how their takes on the Gish-trope work - for now, though, Paizo has released the lauded arcane knight base class called the Magus in Ultimate Magic, which chances are if you read this review, you'll possess. To cut a long debate short - whether you like it or not, the Magusclass gets some new toys to play with in this supplement: 34 new magus arcana are contained herein, so let's take a look at them for now: To come out with it right away - I didn't have significant problems with any of the new arcana options and liked the additional options they provide for the magus-class. My favorites were "Damage Shield", which gives you a kind of buffer for any damage for one round and "Nigh Irresistible Strike", which can reduce spell and energy resistances as well as damage reductions. Of course, some of the abilities also feature some iconic abilities, like the "Energy Web" that throws a web of deadly energy at opponents and "Charge of the Magi", which propels you with force towards enemies. "Slice through Wardings" had me experience a knee-jerk "no way"-reaction when I first read it: The ability lets you ignore all magical defenses of the foe. However, it takes both 1 point of arcane pool and it only works for a single attack. I guess I can live with this limit. There are also 4 special songarcanas associated with the elven/half-elven bladesinger-trope and they ROCK. Oh yeah, "Wave of Mutilation" lets you hit enemies in cones, Sauronstyle. Nice!

Furthermore, we get the new "Singer of Blades"archetype, a cool take on the bladesinger with some rather iconic abilities: The capstone creates replicas of the magus' weapon and attacks all foes in 30 ft. and the focus rests on mobility and rapiers/longswords. The 7 new feats are nice, I especially liked the "Deny the Afflicted"-feat, which disables the last attack (lowest BAB) of enemies afflicted by your hex/curses a great feat not only for the magus, but also for the as of yet somehow underpowered Witch.

Finally, there are 2 new items dealing with enchanting weapons and transferring touch spells into arcane pool and even better, we get a cool legacy weapon sword, Mournsky. I've said it multiple times and I'll say it again - I love well-crafted legacy weapons and this one is no exception.

Conclusion:

Layout adheres to the full-color-two-column standard set by the Pathways e-zine and subsequently is



beautiful. Editing is good - while the first version still suffered from some glitches, this review is for V.2.0 of the book which has cleared all the typos I noticed in the first version. (Also the reason it took me so long to review this - I've rewritten my review.) The pdf is also extensively bookmarked and offers a nice value and additional fodder for the Magus. Balance-wise, I didn't notice any ability/feat or other piece of equipment. I'm not a big fan of the cover-art, but that's personal opinion. Usually, a set-up like this would lead to a 5-star-rating, but somehow, I'm loathe to give this one 5 stars - while the book does everything right, I still feel like there's something missing - not rules-wise, but rather with regards to the abilities. You can do awesome things like walking on vertical surfaces etc., but I didn't get the "this blew me away"-vibe from this book, thus, my final verdict for this book will be a good 4.5 stars, rounded up to 5 for the purpose of this platform as I think it's closer to 5 than to 4.

Endzeitgeist out.

Rite Publishing Presents

#30 Not So Mundane Items





By David Mallon

The Gift: Curse of the Golden Spear Part 1

By Rite Publishing Review by Megan Robertson <u>RPG Resource Review</u> 5 out of 5 Stars!

Plunging straight in, this adventure begins with a brief outline of this richly-detailed Japanese-inspired setting. In a neat twist, the characters too are seeing it for the first time, arriving as 'gai-jin' (the Japanese word for 'foreigner' although it's a word with somewhat negative connotations) and seeing it with all the wonder of outsiders visiting a new and very different place, even as their players are finding out about a new setting.

Much of the discussion, though, is best kept for the GMs' eyes. Unlikely to be common knowledge elsewhere, although it may be a topic of discussion in some academic and theological circles, life and death here, the state of the souls of both the living and the dead, is somewhat unusual. Reincarnation gone mad, shall we say, and leave characters to discover it for themselves as they begin to piece together what is going on. Japanese-inspired this setting may be, but it draws on the darker side, on the tales that are told, that create a setting filled with oriental horror.

Setting outlined, on to a summary of the adventure itself. The characters have been hired by a 'gai-jin' merchant who's sailing to Kaidan to trade... but all is not as it seems. (When is it ever?) He's been there before, came into conflict with a local (undead) noble and... suffice it to say, the situation is fraught with difficulties and the characters will encounter many adversaries all intend on achieving their own ends. Several adventure hooks are provided to ensure that the characters are drawn in effectively. Many of these have been designed so as to encourage the characters to explore and investigate their surroundings, thus getting a far better introduction to the setting than some quick in and out errand!

From the outset, the characters are plunged straight into the action, even as their ship arrives at its destination port on Kaidan. It's not only swordsmen that they have to contend with, there's also a mountain of bureaucracy to overcome as well as local attitudes to anyone who is a foreigner ... and as for those who are non-human! As they explore the port town (while waiting for the paperwork to be sorted out), multiple plotlines entwine them... with events scattered in such a way that it will take careful consideration to discover what is going on, and plenty to keep the characters busy whether they prefer to interact with those that they meet or let their swordarms do the talking. The township is mapped and described well, enabling the GM to allow the characters to prowl and explore as they please and giving him plenty to keep them occupied. As several



encounters may be resolved by single combat, there's an interesting sidebar of ideas about how to keep other players engaged with the game whilst only one of them is actually involved in a brawl.

Once documentation is straightened out, the characters' employer is ready to travel to his ultimate destination inland, a journey of some 100 miles and, needless to say, not without incident. Inns, the wilderness, townships, bandits and plenty of undead provide a variety of challenges, including a fine pitched battle. This episode of what is a three-part adventure ends as the characters reach their destination.

Throughout the adventure, clear maps are presented as appropriate, all of which highlight the oriental nature of the setting. Each encounter is laid out clearly, with suitable progression of events to enable the GM to build up the horror as well as the action. Dreams and visions interleave with more tangible events, and good use is made of supernatural tools provided by the Pathfinder ruleset such as haunts. Overall, it is a nicely-crafted adventure with an unusual and beautifully coherent plot integrated into the setting. Oriental settings are fairly common, but this one has its own twist that should make for some memorable adventures.

In the Company of H E N G E

IN THE COMPANY OF HENGE

We are hengeyokai. We are children of the woods. We are shapechangers, walking where we will, dwelling at once in two worlds. Ours are the gifts of men and ours are the gifts of the wild. Who has been blessed as we have? And yet, is it not our very gifts which so cause the simple to turn on us? It was not always thus. Once we were honored by men. Now we dwell apart them, feared and from fearing. Yet we continue in the old ways, the right ways.

Listen now and I will teach you better who we are...

A player character race designed for use with the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game

Jonathan McAnulty COMING IN JULY 2011







Anachronistic Adventurers: The Enforcer

By Super Genius Games Review by Megan Robertson <u>RPG Resource Review</u> 5 out of 5 Stars!

Everyone sometimes wonders how a 'modern' person would get along in the fantasy setting of their choice, here is a character class that lets you find out without all that tedious modification (says she who took a bunch of Dark Conspiracy characters and dropped them into an AD&D 2e world based on the Conan stories!). The 'Enforcer' is defined as that individual who is trained and accustomed to use brute force to impose his will on those around



not possible, an Enforcer with basic gunsmithing and handloading skills will be able to keep a firearm operating in a fantasy setting, even before enlisting the help of wizards and alchemists for more fantastical solutions. There is also a new take on rules for using firearms, designed to reflect the use of

him (especially if your concept

settings). Even if restocking is

includes the ability to

commute between the two

designed to reflect the use of MODERN firearms in a fantasy world, rather than the alchemical and primitive ones envisioned in such as Pathfinder's Gunslinger class. This is optional, and it would be perfectly possible to run an Enforcer without them. The two sets of rules can even be run in tandem if you wish to

highlight the difference between a modern firearm and the sort developed in the fantasy world itself.

There are also some new Feats designed with the Enforcer in mind, some of which could be useful for any combat-honed characters. Then comes a discussion of Progress Level, which is being introduced to explain what a character from a particular setting is familiar with and is able to use. It cuts both ways, of course, the average fantasy wizard is as inept with a modern TV remote control as a modern person might be with the use of a sunrod. It's not impossible, but the item in question is not something you're used to so you need to be told or shown how to make use of it. To use the system, determine the Progress Level where the character was raised and with which he's most familiar. Whenever that character levels and might take a new weapon proficiency, he can choose to instead take a Progress Level proficiency in the use of everyday items (including weapons) appropriate to the Progress Level in which he is now operating. An interesting and elegant solution, which should go some way to modelling how a character will, over time and with experience, become familiar with the things around him in the new setting in which he finds himself.

This is a well-presented piece, going beyond the mere new class itself to look how to deal with some of the issues that arise with the underlying concept of taking someone out of their own time. All the discussions are presented thoughtfully, so that in understanding how the designer reached his conclusions, you can decide if you want to use them or provides a basis on which, if you're so minded, you can modify them to suit your own needs.

him, whether at behest of the state or a mob boss... SWAT team member, elite soldier, even a mixed martial artist.

Naturally, our Enforcer is assumed to have been raised and trained in the modern world, before he ended up in a fantasy one. To reflect this, an additional two skills can be taken as class skills, and the character gets 3 +Int bonus skills ranks per level. Depending on background, the character may or may not have access to skills like Spellcraft or Use Magical Device. They can also choose an 'archetype' and have access to a range of appropriate talents - being able to duck, to shake off the effects of adverse conditions (dazed or confused and so on) or focus on producing an extreme effort. And should an enforcer reach 20th level he gains the quality of Enforcement, the ability to be so calm in combat that he can take 10 on an attack roll or CMB check - talk about presence of mind!

The Archetypes enable you to customise your Enforcer to suit the background and role that you have in mind. Some - like the Devil Dog - are aimed at a particular type of combatant, perhaps with reference to the historical time period in which he operated, whilst others are more generic. The Knee-Breaker is for those who serve mob bosses as 'muscle' and the Prize Fighter serves to model anyone who fights for his living and others' entertainment, irrespective of what style he uses. It can also be used in the creation of any professional-level athlete or the 'augmented' soldier trained and perhaps modified to the ultimate.

Next, a glance at Anachronistic Equipment. Given the concept of transporting the Enforcer from his modern world to a fantasy one, you will have to account for any weapons or other equipment that he brought with

Beathr Midnigh

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The Faerie Ring: Along the Twisting Way *2-Red Jack

By Zombie Sky Press Review by Shane O' Conner 5 out of 5 Stars!

I should admit straight-up that I was a bit biased in regards to this product. As a student of Japanese culture, I was naturally intrigued when the Prelude to the Faerie Ring products noted that kitsune and yokai were among the fey it'd be covering. And when the next in that series, Along the Twisting Way #2: Red Jack, came out, that turned into full-blown eagerness. But what sort of presentation did the book make? Let's find out.

Two-dozen pages in length, Along the Twisting Way #2 makes a strong showing of itself in terms of technical presentation. Presented with full, nested bookmarks and with the copy-and-paste on, the book hits all of the high-water marks. Much more notable, however, is the imagery. Presented on a light bluish background, the book only had four illustrations, but they were spectacular. I say this even with one of those being the cover illustration again, and another being reused from Along the Twisting Way Prelude. Julie Dillon's artwork is just that vibrant.

Turning to the book itself, I was surprised by just how much Zombie Sky Press was able to squeeze into twenty-four pages. The book opens with Red Jack's background and current sketch, before talking about his domain (with a sidebar noting its planar traits) and its major features (which also has a sidebar on a new major artifact, the Murder Stone).

Following this is an unexpectedly lengthy discussion about kitsune, and some subtypes of kitsune, before talking about Red Jack's daughter, Ren. At this point we're just over halfway through the book and it's been almost entirely flavor text with little in the way of game stats. While I'm usually a bit of a curmudgeon about that, here I confess that I was captivated by the writing. There's a style in this book that seems to suggest that it's presenting only a piece of a larger whole, but feels no need to give additional details (though in several places it does make reference to where further information may be found).

It also helps that the second half of the book (noted as appendices I and II) is where the game stats come out in full force. In appendix one we get the stat block for Red Jack, who is a walloping CR 27, making him one of the highest-CR'd creatures for the Pathfinder RPG to date (notwithstanding v.3.5 material).

Following this is a sidebar discussing how fey lords of Jack's type have a singular item, a memento mori, that gives them greater power. After this is the stat block for Red Jack if his memento mori is lost or



destroyed, busting him down to CR 23. This part of the book made me frown a bit, simply because the jump from CR 27 to 23 is comparatively small, as are the tweaks to his stat block that make up this drop in power. While I can certainly understand the utility of having fully-formed stat blocks for each version of Jack, I wonder if it wouldn't have been more economical to just list the changes made if his memento mori is lost (or have his power be reduced to a point where an alternate stat block was more necessary, like CR 21), since there was a lot of repeated text. Of course, this is a PDF, so space isn't really a concern anyway.

After a listing for Jack's personal major artifact (something to which I tip my hat to the author; it's been too long since writers remembered that unique, powerful individuals should have unique, powerful artifacts) we move on to stats for kitsune.

The three types of kitsune – the normal kitsune, the ghost fox, and the pipe fox – are all presented here. Except, not really. Rather, we're given a ghost fox NPC (since ghost fox is a kitsune-specific template given immediately after this), a kitsune NPC (since they're a playable race), and generic stats for the pipe fox (which, to my delight, can be taken as improved familiars) and their elder variant. A sidebar discussing several new subtypes that kitsune have closes out appendix one.

Appendix two is PC-related information, in regards to the kitsune. After basic PC race stats (which include the method whereby the gain more tails), we're presented with a series of feats that allow for different uses of fox magic. I liked this section, but it was too short by half (and it noted that these weren't all the fox magic that there were); mostly absent were fox magic feats designed for having multiple tails (that is, being higher level). Hopefully there'll be more in a future supplement of web enhancement.

Some discussion is given to a uniquely kitsune magic item, the star ball. It's interesting that the star ball is designed to allow kitsune (which in their natural form have no opposable thumbs) to utilize magic items they otherwise couldn't, since they can imbue their star ball with those items (using a new spell presented here). However, the basic construction information for how a star ball is made wasn't presented here. A minor oversight, to be sure, but it would have been useful. The book closes out with an incantation that allows a kitsune to, upon a success, possess someone for a short while (something I'd keep out of the hands of a PC, even despite its built-in limitations).

Overall though, I greatly enjoyed this product. The references to Japanese mythology alone (particularly the story of Tamamo-no-Mae, which the author acknowledges and gives a surprising twist on) were enough to win me over. But even had they not been, the engaging writing and excellent new mechanics would have. Red Jack is a powerful foe who has long arms thanks to those kitsune who serve him, and with his wily daughter out there, there's a built-in campaign waiting to happen, especially if you have PCs who want to play a kitsune.

The only real complaint I have about the book was that it was much too short. The section on new material for PCs could easily have been twice as long (more fox magic feats, stats for human-kitsune children, etc). And though I thought Red Jack's two forms could have used more distinction, the character himself was truly epic (pun intended). If you're looking for a method to add fey foxes to your game, look no further. The Faerie Ring: Along the Twisting Way #2 – Red Jack gives you a fox-faced foe you won't soon forget, and all that he en-tails.





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

There's an art to making monsters that can really challenge the PCs. Some of these are obvious, like correctly matching the power of the monster(s) to the power of the player-characters. Others are the sort of thing that only experience can really teach you, like how only an overwhelmingly strong creature can stand up to the fact that the PCs have greater economy of actions. And of course, one important part of keeping the PCs on their toes is to have the monster utilize powers and abilities they don't expect or are unfamiliar with.

It's on that last note that we come to the topic of this particular review, Rite Publishing's 101 Monster Feats.

Almost twenty pages long, this book needs no description for its contents. All of these feats have the "monster" descriptor which expressly forbids them from being taken by PCs. Not that they'd likely be able to anyway, as almost all of these hinge on having a particular monster ability or a given type or subtype.

While discerning gamers will be able to pick out one or two feats from another source (another Rite Publishing book, in some cases), the vast majority of these feats are brand new, and quite innovative in what they offer. One lets a lich turn a victim of its paralysis attack into an ad hoc phylactery. Another lets an outsider take a creature with it to the Astral Plane (the better to deliver the poor soul unto damnation). One lets a creature with a breath weapon use the swallow whole ability, and has the victim take breath weapon damage once swallowed.

That last one was part of a few recurring themes throughout the book. Several feats were obviously directed towards certain types of monsters, such as how there were somewhere around a dozen feats dedicated to breath weapons. This isn't a bad thing, since monsters have very few universal points, it's just an observation. Another set of feats gave what was essentially the same power (choking a creature so as to kill it via suffocation) to different powers, e.g. constriction, pouncing, tripping, etc. I can appreciate why this was done, but perhaps it would have been more economical to make those feats simply have any one of those powers as alternate prerequisites.

Beyond that, there were a few spelling and grammar errors, but nothing that made any of the feats impossible to understand. Likewise, I have to give props for the book having alphabetical bookmarks. But what really made this book fun to read – beyond the new mechanics it offered - where the in-character descriptions for the feats. You know how, right after the feat title, there's usually a line of text describing what the feat does? Here, that's replaced with a monster talking about having used the feat against someone. It's a small touch, but it puts a devilish tone to the material here, invoking exactly the right frame mind for enterprising of an GM.

Ultimately, while 101 Monster Feats has a few problems, they're negligible compared to the value of what's here. Want your incorporeal monsters to be able to damage creatures just by flying through them? How about lycanthropy that can't be healed so long as the originating lycanthrope lives? Or night hags who can haunt the dreams of the innocent, alongside the guilty? It's all here, and so much more. 101 Monster Feats is itself quite a feat for what it offers your Pathfinder game.

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Ten Question with Illustration Joe Calkins

(Paladin Archetype) Bonus Article by Steven D. Russell

1. Could you tell us a little about yourself and your background doing illustration for RPGs? I really started to enjoy drawing when my 3rd grade teacher let us draw while he read The Hobbit aloud in class. We took all of our drawings at the end and made a huge mural in the hallway. It was about that same time that *Dungeons & Dragons* hit the stores. I've been lucky enough to work on projects such as Cyberpunk the CCG, Call of Cthulhu the CCG and a few other indie projects.

2 What are your influences as an artist?

I would have to say that I'm influenced by any sort of eye-catching imagery. Not only art but photography, film, any sort of media really. In terms of other artists that have influenced me, number one would have to be Frank Frazetta. Hands down. Brom and Todd Lockwood have also had a great influence on me.

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

Most of my work goes from the sketchpad to the scanner and is painted in Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. I also occasionally will work in watercolor or ink before scanning the image.

4 Why do you make art?

To me art is a great release. It's relaxing and challenging at the same time.

5. What is your studio/workspace like?

I have two spaces that I work in. One is a dark corner of my garage with spilled paint and various art supplies and half-finished artwork strewn about. The other is a bedroom which is where I do my digital work and admittedly spend too much time playing computer games as well.

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

If I watch anything it's usually something in the Fantasy/Sci-Fi genre. Generally I listen to music which ranges from Nora Jones to Rob Zombie.

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

I would say very little. Of course I own anatomy books and so forth that I refer to if I'm having trouble in the sketch phase. But usually I'll see something that inspires an image in my head and think "Hey that's pretty cool. What if..."

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



I used to play pen and paper RPG's all through school. We played *Dungeons & Dragons, Traveller, Rifts, Shadowrun, Star Frontiers,* I'm sure there are some I'm forgetting. I don't play anymore as my time is spent doing artwork or playing PC games. I'm a World of Warcraft junkie and a big fan of military shooters.

9. Tell us a little about your work on the cover for Pathways #5.

It's always a pleasant challenge for me to work under direction. Most of my art is done for stock art or personal work so I'm seldom challenged to illustrate something like a multi-colored crystalline Roper.

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

No. The less you know about me the better.

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