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# KAIDAN CAMPAIGN SETTING

# KICKSTARTER

# The dark shores of Kaidan beckon, are you brave enough for the journey?

Last year, Rite Publishing, with the support of Cubicle 7 Entertainment, released *"The Curse of the Golden Spear"* trilogy of modules for use with the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game. These critically acclaimed adventure modules introduced players and Game Masters alike to the cursed island realm of Kaidan. Now we are ready to take the next step: the production of a campaign guidebook, detailing more fully the people and places of Kaidan. And we would like your help with this project.

# What is Kaidan?

An oriental fantasy-horror setting, Kaidan derives its mythos exclusively from the legends and histories of Japan. The very word, Kaidan, is Japanese for ghost story, or spooky tale, and such a name is apropos. Ruled over by an undying shogun in the name of an immortal child emperor, Kaidan is a land of trapped souls, restless dead, vengeful demons and afflicted spirits. In Kaidan, death is never the end, but only one more unhappy spoke in a bleak and twisted karmic cycle. Here, adventurers are sorely needed, if only to hold back the darkness a little longer.

# What do we want to produce?

Complete Gamemaster's Guide to Kaidan (150 - 200 pages) Complete Player's Guide to Kaidan (150 pages) Kaidan Bestiary (100+ pages)

Soft cover printed books with B/W interiors and PDFs.

Jonathan McAnulty. T.H. Gulliver, Will McCardill, Michael K. Tumey







#### Editorial

When I read submissions that include NPCs I often wonder whether the individual created by the author was based in any way upon someone that the author knows. I don't know how complex a task it is for others, but, for me, creating individual personalities is a bit of a challenge. I enjoy the challenge, don't get me wrong. But, it's a challenge nevertheless.

In a campaign I started around 2003, I created a folder of about 500 NPCs for the campaign. Because of the structure of the campaign (the PCs would be restricted to the same island for the entire campaign, there would be no leaving the place to visit other cities, kingdom, planes, or anything like that), I knew that the success of the campaign fell to memorable NPCs who seemed real.

For the most part, I created each one from scratch. Naturally, any fiction writer reaches into a full history of actual lived lives for ideas. We've all read, seen, or interacted with thousands upon thousands of people and draw from this for ideas when we create fictional characters (even if we don't do it intentionally). But, there were a few who were based to some degree on people from my own past, even if those were people I'd only known briefly (and in those cases, I knew that the NPC was based strongly upon my own projections and assumptions that I brought to that limited relationship).

As I was reading through Ron Lundeen's final third of his Scattered Sheaves adventure, I was wondering about the personalities of the NPCs in that piece. There is one individual, Master Zulon, who plays an important role in the story, but he's unlikely to serve as a long-term recurring individual in the lives of the PCs. However, he could be drafted into that role. A GM might decide that Master Zulon would make for a great long-term opponent (or ally!) and could redirect some of the adventure so that he could serve as an NPC for many adventures. Or, perhaps Master Zulon himself serves a more powerful, more cunning master and that individual, currently behind the scenes, will turn out to be someone interesting and compelling for the PCs to meet before long.

In any case, I wondered whether (or to what degree) Ron had crafted Master Zulon's personality from individuals he already knows. From a certain point of view, there are hints of both Ebenezer Scrooge and Bartleby the Scrivener in Master Zulon—but only hints. But that got me wondering whether maybe Ron had known some people in college or something after whom he drew inspiration for Master Zulon.

There are, of course, archetypes. Whether it's Gandalf or Obi Wan, we recognize the sagely grandfather type whenever we see him. This may be a European thing (as those two in particular certainly seem to fit the mold), but I rather doubt it. I am rather certain of the nearuniversality of this archetype and am confident that, were I to look, I'd find examples in Chinese, Japanese, Mayan, Zulu and Aborigine tales. I suspect that this kind of person and the role he plays in our stories is so old that it transcends divisions of human beings into the modern things we call races.

What kinds of archetypes does a Master Zulon touch? Is the inspiration of a minor character in a minor story really connected to something so much deeper? Perhaps not. Perhaps Master Zulon is just who he is, fleeting and ephemeral and no more than an incident in the imaginations of his creator and of those who play games where he shows up to play his part.

I know from my own reading of other authors' commentaries on their own work that there are plenty of stories filling the shelves of bookstores (or electronic memory spaces on people's e-book readers) with characters who have bits and pieces (sometimes more) of real life people from their own histories. J.K. Rowling, for instance, wrote about enjoying writing the Rita Skeeter character even more than she otherwise might have thanks to the many journalists (presumably annoying ones) she'd met.

We all carry without ourselves vast repositories of personalities and personality traits. We've all met so many people, who themselves have personalities which are amalgams of so many others, that we cannot help but place others into our characters (PCs or NPCs). I find both the intentional and unintentional placement of those bits and pieces into characters interesting. I'd love to hear your own stories of characters in your games and their inspirations.

David Paul

Editor-in-chief



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# Hellfire Creature Jemplate

By Steven D. Russell; Illustration by Claudio Pozas

Our Dark God of Fire (Asmodeus) and the lords of hell sometimes grant their champions special powers or seek to corrupt a hated foe, infusing them with the essence of damnation's inferno. These fell powers grant this gift only rarely, since its strength can remain in a bloodline for many generations. In fact, hellfire creatures occasionally become races unto themselves. Some sages argue hellfire dragons owe their origins to hellfire-infused red dragons. Hellfire creatures may have bodies enshrouded by fire and have red or orange skin, hair, or scales while some forms of hellfire radiate a bright blue, sickly green, deep red or even black flame.

#### Creating a Hellfire Creature

"Hellfire" is an acquired template that can be added to any creature.

A hellfire creature uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

#### **CR:** +2

Alignment: Changes to Lawful Evil.

**Defenses/Qualities: Immune** Fire **SR** 12 + hellfire creature's CR

*Hell's Purity:* Reduce alignment-based damage by an amount equal to the base creature's hit dice.

*Hellfire Body (Ex):* Hellfire creatures' bodies gain some of the qualities of elementals. Each time a hellfire creature is exposed to a bleed, poison, paralysis, sleep, or stunning effect, it has a 25% chance to avoid it. In addition, there is a 25% chance that a sneak attack or critical hit deals no extra damage.

**Special Abilities:** A hellfire creature retains all the special abilities of the base creature, plus the special abilities as described below:

Breath Weapon (Su): A hellfire creature can breathe a 30-foot-long cone of hellfire once every 1d4 rounds. Every creature in the area must succeed on a Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 the base creature's HD + its Constitution modifier) or take 1d6 points of hellfire damage per 2 hit dice the fire-infused creature possesses (minimum 1d6 points). A successful Reflex save halves this hellfire damage.

Damnation's Burn (Ex): A hellfire creature deals +2d6 hellfire damage in addition to the normal damage it deals on a successful hit in melee. Those affected by the damnation's burn ability must also succeed on a Will save (DC 10 +1/2 the base creature's HD + its Charisma modifier) or catch fire (though this is hellfire, not normal fire), taking 2d6 points of hellfire damage for an additional 1d4 rounds at the start of its turn. A burning creature can attempt a new save as a fullround action. Dropping and rolling on the ground grants a +2 bonus on this save. Creatures that hit a hellfire creature or a burning creature with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take 2d6 points of hellfire damage and must make a Will save (same DC) to avoid catching on fire (again this is hellfire, not normal fire).

*Gaze of Damnation (Su):* The gaze attack of a hellfire creature can cause pain and damage to any non-lawful-evil living creature within 30 ft. The target must make a successful Will save (DC 10 +1/2 the base creature's HD + its Charisma modifier) or suffer wracking pains that inflict a circumstance penalty on

attack rolls, skill checks and ability checks equal to the hellfire creature's Charisma bonus (minimum -1), and also suffer 2d6 points of hellfire damage each round for 1 round per CR of the hellfire creature. The flames can be put out as per damnation's burn but the penalty due to wracking pains remains for the duration.

*Hellfire Substitution (Su):* A hellfire creature can modify any spell, magic item, or effect with an energy descriptor to use hellfire instead as a free action. The effect's descriptor changes to evil, fire, and lawful—for example, a cone of cold composed of hellfire energy is an evocation [evil, lawful, fire] spell.

**Abilities:** Increase from the base creature as follows: Str+4 (+2 to attack and damage, +2 to Climb and Swim skill checks, +2 to Strength, and CMB checks, +2 to CMD), Dex +4 (+2 to Ranged attack rolls; AC and touch AC, Initiative, and Ref saves. +2 to Acrobatics, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Fly, Ride, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth checks, add +5 to any of the base creature's Dexterity-based DCs), Con +4 (+2 hp per HD, +2 to Fortitude saves, and any of the base creature's Constitution-based DCs), Cha +4 (+2 to Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Perform, and Use Magic Device; attempts to influence others, and Channel Energy DCs, +2 to any of the base creature's Charisma-based DCs).

**Skills:** Hellfire creatures gain a +8 racial bonus on Intimidate and Knowledge (religion) checks; both of these skills are always considered class skills for hellfire creatures.

#### Hellfire

Half the damage dealt by hellfire is fire damage, but the other half results directly from unholy power and is therefore not subject to being reduced by resistance to fire-based attacks.

Any creature killed by hellfire damage must make a Will saving throw (DC 10 +1/2 the creature's CR + the creature's Charisma modifier); failure means the creature's soul is damned to Hell as a burst of brimstone appears around its corpse. A non-lawful-evil spellcaster attempting to bring the character back from the dead must make a caster level check (DC equal to 10 plus the slain creature's CR) to succeed; failure means thespellcaster cannot try again for 1 day.





# Damnation's End CR 17

**XP 102,400** Hellfire Marut

LE Large outsider (extraplanar, inevitable, lawful) **Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *true seeing*; Perception +26

# Defense

AC AC 32, touch 15, flat-footed 26 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +17 natural, -1 size) hp 246 (16d10+158); regeneration 10 (chaotic) Fort +18, Ref +10, Will +13 Defensive Abilities constructed, hellfire body, hell's purity (16); DR 15/chaotic; Immune fire SR 27

# Offense

Speed 30 ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +29 (2d6+14 plus 2d6 hellfire and damnation's burn plus 3d6 electricity, sonic, or hellfire and blindness or deafness)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (30-ft. cone, DC 26, 24d10 hellfire), damnation's burn (DC 27), fists of lightning and thunder, gaze of damnation (- 9 penalty, 30 feet, Will DC 27 neg), hellfire substitution\*

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th; concentration +23) Constant—*air walk, true seeing* 

At will—dimension door, fear (DC 23), greater command (DC 24), greater dispel magic, mass inflict light wounds (DC 24), locate creature

1/day—chain lightning\* (DC 24), circle of death (DC 24), mark of justice, wall of force

1/week—earthquake (DC 27), geas/quest, plane shift (DC 24)

## Jactics

**Before Combat** Damnation's End often prefers simply to move irrevocably toward its target; assassin for the Church of the Burning Pentacle, it uses its *earthquake* and damnation's burn to flush out its quarry. It often uses its *dimension door* ability to cover vast distances quickly.

**During Combat** It prefers to attack its target when the target is alone and unaided, waiting with utter patience until such time as that occurs. If forced to, however, it uses a hellfire-substituted *chain lightning* and its breath weapon to disperse allies. It always allows its damnation's burn or one of its hellfire attacks to kill a creature so that its soul is damned to hell.

**Morale** When outmatched, which is rare, Damnation's End flees, using its *dimension door* or *plane shift*, allowing time for its regeneration to heal it, and then it returns as soon as it has reached full health to strike its foes while they are still weak.

## Statistics

**Str** 39, **Dex** 20, **Con** 27, **Int** 12, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 28 **Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +31; **CMD** 47

**Feats** Ability Focus (fists of lightning and thunder), Awesome Blow, Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Vital Strike **Skills** Diplomacy +28, Intimidate +36, Knowledge (planes) +20, Knowledge (religion) +25, Perception +26, Sense Motive +22, Survival +22

**Racial Modifiers** +8 Intimidate, +8 Knowledge (religion), +4 Perception

Languages truespeech

# Ecology

**Environment** any **Organization** solitary, pair, or patrol (3–5) **Treasure** none

# Special Abilities

Fists of Thunder Lightning and (Su): Damnation's End's fists strike with the power of a thunderstorm. For any given slam attack, Damnation's End can choose whether that attack uses lightning or thunder. A lightning attack deals an additional 3d6 points of electricity damage, and the resulting flash blinds the target for 2d6 rounds (Fortitude DC 28 negates the blindness). A thunder attack deals an additional 3d6 points of sonic damage, and the resulting thunderclap deafens the target for 2d6 rounds (Fortitude DC 28 negates the deafness). The energy damage is subject to its hellfire substitution ability. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

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# The Ties That Bind: Druid Terrain Bond

by Thomas LeBlanc

Illustrations by Moritz von Schwind and E. F. Schute

#### **Terrain Bond (Druid Class Option)**

A druid is first and foremost the keeper and guardian of the land. Some druids form a bond with the land, rather than with an animal companion or with an aspect of the natural world (domain). As bond grows stronger, the world bends to the druid's wishes, aiding her with her desires and duties.

**Terrain Bond**: This bond is added to the choices for a druid's nature bond. If a non-druid gains the nature bond ability, she may not select a terrain bond. If a druid selects a terrain bond, she selects a single type of terrain from the Table: Bonded Terrain. The druid's bonded terrain's abilities are determined by the druid's level using the Table: Terrain Bond Advancement. If the druid is using an archetype that makes her choose a particular animal or domain, such as an animal shaman, she may choose a bonded terrain, but the terrain must be an environment where the animal is naturally found.



#### Jable: Bonded Jerrain

Each type of bonded terrain grants a unique bonus while in that terrain type

Terrain	Benefit			
Cold (ice,	The druid gains a bonus to			
glaciers, snow,	Acrobatics skill checks in cold			
and tundra)	terrain and Fortitude saves to resist			
	non-lethal damage from the cold			
	equal to the bonded terrain bonus.			
Desert (sand	The druid gains a bonus to			
and wastelands)	Acrobatics skill checks in desert			
	terrain and Fortitude saves to resist			
	non-lethal damage from the heat			
	equal to the bonded terrain bonus.			
Forest	The druid gains a bonus to Climb			
(coniferous and	skill checks when climbing plants			
deciduous)	equal to the bonded terrain bonus.			
	She increases the cover bonus from			
	plants by +1 to her Armor Class and			
Iumalo	Reflex saves.			
Jungle	The druid gains a bonus to Climb			
	skill checks when climbing plants equal to the bonded terrain bonus.			
	She increases the miss chance by			
	+10% from concealment granted by			
Mountain	plants and undergrowth.			
(including hills)	The druid gains a bonus to Climb skill checks on natural stone equal			
(including inits)	to the bonded terrain bonus. An			
	attacker on higher ground does not			
	gain an attack bonus to hit the			
	druid.			
Plains	Bonus to Ride skill checks equal to			
	the bonded terrain bonus. She gains			
	a +1 bonus to perform the overrun			
	Combat Maneuver.			
Terrain	Benefit			
Plane of	The druid gains electricity			
Elemental Air	resistance equal to the bonded			
	terrain bonus.			
Plane of	The druid gains acid resistance			
Elemental Earth	equal to the bonded terrain bonus.			
Plane of	The druid gains fire resistance equal			
Elemental Fire	to the bonded terrain bonus.			
Plane of	The druid gains cold resistance			
Elemental	equal to the bonded terrain bonus.			
Water				
Swamps	The druid gains a bonus on Swim			
(including	checks equal to the bonded terrain			
marshes and	bonus. Deep mud and shallow water			
moors)	do not count as difficult terrain for			
Un donge J	her.			
Underground	The druid gains a bonus to			
(caves and	Acrobatics skill checks in			
dungeons)	underground terrain equal to the			
	bonded terrain bonus. She does not			

Water (above and below the surface) take a penalty to attack rolls when squeezing through a space. The druid gains a bonus on Swim skill checks equal to the bonded terrain bonus. She can hold her breath twice as long.

### Jable: Jerrain Bond Advancement

Class Level	Special Abilities
1st	Bonded Terrain
3rd	Nature's Interference (Ref)
5th	2nd Bonded Terrain
8th	Nature's Interference (Fort)
10th	3rd Bonded Terrain
13th	Nature's Interference (Will)
15th	4th Bonded Terrain
18th	Nature's Interference (Spell Resistance)
20th	5th Bonded Terrain

**Bonded Terrain (Ex):** The druid gains a +2 bonus on initiative checks and Knowledge (geography), Perception, Stealth, and Survival skill checks when she is in this terrain. A druid traveling through her bonded terrain normally leaves no trail and cannot be tracked (though she may leave a trail if she so chooses). At 5th level, and every 5 levels thereafter, the druid may select an additional bonded terrain. In addition, at 5th and 15th level, the skill bonus and initiative bonus in any one bonded terrain (including the one just selected, if so desired), increases by +2. At 10th and 20th level, the skill bonus and initiative bonus in any two bonded terrains (including the one just selected, if so desired), increases by +2. The maximum bonus to a bonded terrain is +10. If a specific terrain falls into more than one category of bonded terrain, the druid's bonuses do not stack; she simply uses whichever bonus is higher. The bonded terrain bonus is also applied to the unique bonus granted to that terrain.

**Nature's Interference (Su):** The bonded terrain interferes with any creature affected by the druid's spells. At 3rd level, the bonded terrain shifts to hinder creatures, increasing the DC by +1 on all Reflex saving throws for her druid spells.

At 8th level, the bonded terrain interferes with the health of creatures, increasing the DC by +1 on all Fortitude saving throws for her druid spells.

At 13th level, the bonded terrain affects the mental faculties of creatures, increasing the DC by +1 on all Will saving throws for her druid spells.

At 18th level, the bonded terrain imparts knowledge of creatures's metaphysical auras to the druid, granting her a +2 competence bonus to overcome spell resistance with her druid spells.



# What Treasures Lie Within the Kobolds<sup>,</sup> Vaults, Guarded by Fearsome Dire Weasels?

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### TROLL HUNT



# (EL7; XP 3,200)

By Creighton Broadhurst of Raging Swan Press Illustrations by Bruno Balaxia, Tamás Baranya, and Karl Friedrich Schinkel

As they journey through a mountainous region, the PCs stumble upon a troll and its pets trying to tear a dwarf limb from limb. The canny dwarf has managed to scramble up onto a narrow ledge where the troll and its hounds cannot reach him. He is, however, trapped and needs the PCs' help if he is to escape the situation alive.

The encounter starts when the two groups are  $4d6 \times 10$  ft. apart. Although the PCs are unable to see the battle at first, a DC 5 Perception check reveals the sounds of savage barking and snarling coming from the west over a steep rise. Once the PCs climb the steep slope, read:

Beyond the rise, the rocky ground slopes steeply down to a sheer cliff face rising almost 100 feet into the air. A dwarf occupies a ledge about 30 feet up. Below the ledge stands a tall creature with a green hide. Near him are two snarling powerfully-built, vaguely canine beasts.

The troll and the trollhounds are intent on Arathan, but gladly attack any new foes presenting themselves. When Arathan sees the PCs he calls loudly for aid.

### TACTICS

The troll and his hounds are savage, brutal and unimaginative combatants. The trollhounds race ahead of their master and try to trip and savage the nearest foe, flanking him for maximum effect. They savage a prone character and only move on once it has stopped moving.

The troll, meanwhile, lumbers up to the PCs and attacks the nearest obvious warrior. It knows about fire and instinctively stays as close to his enemies as possible.

Arathan aids the party from the ledge, firing his crossbow at first the troll and then the trollhounds. He only descends to melee if the PCs are in danger of being overwhelmed.

# TROLL(1)

(XP 1,600)

This tall creature has rough, green hide. Its hands end in claws and its bestial face has a hideous, tusked underbite.

 $CR_5$ 



CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +8, Sense Motive -1

Speed 30 ft.; ACP 0; Stealth -2

- AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 14; CMD 22 (+2 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)
- Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +3

**hp** 63 (6 HD); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

- **Space** 10 ft.; **Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +10
- **Melee** bite (reach 10 ft.) +8 (1d8+5) plus 2 claws (reach 10 ft.) +8 (1d6+5)
- Atk Options rend (2 claws 1d6+7)
- **Rake (Ex)** When a troll grapples an opponent it gains two additional claw attacks against the grappled foe. It must begin its turn already grappling to use rake.

Abilities Str 21, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6 Feats Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception)

**Skills** as above plus Intimidate +9 **Languages** Giant

TROTITOUND (2)

#### (XP 800)

Foul-smelling fluids ooze from weeping sores across the scaly skin of this squat, powerful and vaguely canine beast.

 $CR_3$ 

N Medium magical beast

- Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +8, Sense Motive +0
- **Speed** 40 ft.; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +1 (+5 jumping), Stealth +5
- AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; CMD 19 (23 vs. trip)

(+1 Dex, +4 natural) **Fort** +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1 **hp** 30 (4 HD); regeneration 3 (acid or fire)

Space 5 ft.; Base Atk +4; CMB +8 Melee bite +8 (1d10+6 plus disease and trip) Atk Options disease, trip

- **Disease (Ex)** A trollhound's saliva contains bloodfire fever (DC 14 Fort [2 consecutive saves]; *onset* 1 day; *freq.* 1/day; *effect* 1d3 Str damage, 1d3 Dex damage and the target is fatigued). Trolls and trollhounds are immune to bloodfire fever.
- **Trip (Ex [free])** If the trollhound hits with its bite attack it can attempt to trip its opponent without provoking an attack of opportunity. If its attempt fails, it is not tripped in return.

**Abilities** Str 18, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 6 **Feats** Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception) **Skills** as above plus Survival +1 (+5 scent tracking)

# AREA FEATURES

The area has several features of note:

**Cliff**: The cliff is 80 ft. high. A small ledge studs the cliff 30 ft. off the ground.

A character requires a DC 15 Climb check to scale the cliff. Arathan currently occupies the ledge; it is roughly 5 ft. wide and 15 ft. long.

**Rubble (Light):** Small rocks are strewn across the ground, increasing the DC of Acrobatics checks by 2.

**Rubble (Dense)**: Rocks of all sizes cover the ground. It costs 2 squares of movement to enter a square containing dense rubble. The DC of Acrobatics checks increases by 5 in such areas and the DC of Stealth checks increases by 2.

**Slope (Gradual)**: This slope does not impede movement, but it grants the benefit of higher ground (+1 on melee attacks) to characters fighting opponents below them.

**Slope (Steep)**: Characters moving up a steep slope must spend 2 squares of movement to enter each square. Characters running or charging downhill must make a DC 10 Acrobatics check. A character failing this check stumbles and ends its movement 1d2 squares later. A character failing this check by 5 or more falls prone in the square in which it finishes this movement. A steep slope increases the DC of Acrobatics checks by 2. Characters on a slope gain the benefit of higher ground (+1 on melee attacks) against opponents below them.

# ARATHAN WERSTEN

Arathan is one of several members of clan Wersten searching for new mining sites. His journey has taken him deep into the mountains. Although his trip has thus far not turned up any promising leads, he is still confident of success.



Arathan was chased up the cliff several hours ago, but has thus far managed to hold off the troll and its pets. The troll has tried to reach the ledge several times, but Arathan has knocked it from the wall with either a well-placed quarrel or strike from his warhammer.

When the PCs arrive, Arathan is growing tired; without a decent quantity of oil or acid he knows he does not have the capability to actually defeat his attackers.

**Background**: A faithful son of clan Wersten, Arathan has trained from an early age to be a miner. Recently, the clan decided to expand several of its mining operations and despatched young miners into the surrounding area to search for suitable areas to exploit.

**Personality**: Arathan is fascinated by how things work; he loves taking apart locks and other complex mechanisms to learn how they work. He is equally at home alone or in a group, although he often questions the wisdom of the shorter-lived races such as humans and halflings.

Hardworking, Arathan is stoic in the face of adversity and rarely gets worried or scared. As any true dwarf, he hates goblins, orcs and giants and battles them at every opportunity. He is not stupid, however, and sees little need to sacrifice himself needlessly.

He also loves gems and jewellery, but has no talent for cutting or crafting such, his few attempts looking like a child's first creations.

**Mannerisms**: Arathan strokes his beard when contemplating a problem or solution. Direct and straightforward, he holds the gaze of the person he is speaking with; some find his gaze a little unsettling. **Distinguishing Features**: Almost as broad as he is tall, Arathan's jet black hair is particularly thick.

**Hooks**: If the PCs rescue Arathan, he is very grateful. He explains his mission and offers to guide the PCs to his clanhold to rest. If they decline, he provides them with a map and a password that identifies them as dwarf-friends thus ensuring they will always be welcome in Azak-Kal.

Alternatively, he could travel with the PCs if they allow it; although not a skilled combatant, he knows the surrounding area well.

# ARATHAN WERSTEN CR1

#### (XP 400)

This broad and muscular male dwarf has a long, thick beard and dark brown eyes. He wears a fine chain shirt and carries a warhammer.

Male dwarf rogue 1

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

- **Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4 (+5 vs. traps, +6 vs. unusual stonework, +7 vs. stone traps; stonecunning, trapfinding), Sense Motive +4
- **Speed** 20 ft.; **ACP** -1; Climb +5, Stealth +5
- AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; CMD 12 (16 vs. bull rush or trip); +4 vs. giant-type foes

(+4 armour [mwk chain shirt], +2 Dex)

Fort +2 (+4 vs. poison), **Ref** +4, **Will** +0; +2 vs. spells and spell-like abilities

hp 11 (1 HD)

**Space** 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +0; **CMB** +2 **Melee** warhammer +3 (1d8+3/x3)

- **Ranged** light crossbow (range 80 ft.) +2 (1d8/19-20)
- Atk Options +1 vs. orcs and goblinoids, sneak attack (+1d6)

Combat Gear bolts (13)

- Abilities Str 15, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10
- **SQ** trapfinding (+1), weapon familiarity

Feats Weapon Focus (warhammer)

**Skills** as above plus Appraise +4 (+6 for nonmagic metals and gems), Disable Device +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +4, Profession (miner) +4

Languages Common, Dwarven

**Gear** as above plus backpack, thieves' tools and adventuring equipment, 4 gp, 3 sp

# SCATING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes: EL 6 (XP 2,400): Remove one troll hound. EL 8 (XP 4,800): Add one troll.

#### COMPETITION

This encounter is subtly linked to another Raging Swan product. The first five people to email me at creighton@ragingswan.com with the correct name of that supplement wins a fabulous prize. Simply email me with the name of the linked supplement and the name of the PDF you'd like for your chance to win. One entry per person please!





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# Scattered Sheaves 3: The Bedeviled Scribes

by Ron Lundeen of Run Amok Games runamokgames.com Illustrations by Bruno Balixa and Public Domain Cartography by Eric Blische (made with Dundjinni)



Scattered Sheaves is a trio of urban mini-adventures regarding pages stolen from a manual of bodily health. These adventures are suitable for 7th or 8th level PCs. The three Scattered Sheaves adventures are The Underground Alchemist in Pathways #15, The Dream-Haunted Brothel in Pathways #16, and The Bedeviled Scribes in Pathways #17.

#### Background

The PCs become involved in the *Scattered Sheaves* story when they follow up on a rumor that a reputable merchant named Bydlo Victus is selling a *manual* of bodily health +1 at a

discount. When the PCs discover Bydlo within a large city of your choosing, Bydlo's stall is in shambles and he is clutching the valuable book, pages torn and askew, to his chest. Bydlo explains that he was just attacked by an invisible flying creature. The creature tried to steal the book from Bydlo's grasp, but Bydlo held the book tight. Still, in the scuffle, the thief managed to steal several pages from the book and fly away. Without the missing pages, the book cannot be used. If the PCs recover the pages, Bydlo can repair the book and restore its magic. Bydlo will then sell the book at an even deeper discount to reward the PCs for their trouble. Bydlo even offers to use his *wand of locate object* to identify the building (or buildings) where the pages have gone.

As a GM, you can run any or all of the *Scattered Sheaves* mini-adventures. If you choose to use only one adventure, then all of the missing pages of the *manual of bodily health* are together in the same location. If you choose to use more than one adventure, the PCs must recover all of pages, split up in each location, in order to reconstruct the manual. If you run only one *Scattered Sheaves* adventure, Bydlo sells the reconstructed manual for only 20,000 gp (instead of the standard price of 27,500 gp). If you run two adventures, Bydlo charges only 14,000 gp. If you run all three adventures, Bydlo charges only 8,000 gp. In addition, PCs that participate in all three *Scattered Sheaves* adventures should accumulate enough XP to gain a level.

The thief, an imp named Arkthatek, hoped to steal Bydlo's valuable book to curry favor with one or more



lurking evils within the city. When Arkthatek only gained a few pages, he gifted the pages to one or more powerful villains in the city (although each turned Arkthatek away after receiving the imp's trifling gift). To recover the missing pages, the PCs must confront and defeat these villains, each with their own motivations and unique urban lairs.

Bydlo directs the PCs to as many of the buildings as you choose, and the PCs can investigate the buildings in any order. To aid the PCs, Bydlo gives each of them a piece of torn page from the *manual of bodily health*. A PC carrying one

of these page pieces gains a +1 to all Constitution checks to stabilize when at negative hit points. Bydlo ultimately needs these pieces returned in order to restore the book.

### The Bedeviled Scribes: Introduction

In this mini-adventure, the merchant Bydlo directs the PCs to a printing shop called Wordsmiths. Wordsmiths runs a brisk trade in transcribing legal documents, copying records, archiving papers, and printing high-quality notices on its innovative printing press. Wordsmiths employs several scribes who toil for long hours but are paid well for their exacting work. Wordsmiths is depicted in the map on this page. This solid-looking building takes up most of a city block in the government section of the city.

In the past few months, Wordsmiths received everincreasing transcription orders from a mysterious patron named "Master Geb Zulon." Master Zulon was apparently a lawyer, as his transcription orders were for exceedingly complicated contracts, and the scribes of Wordsmiths were happy for the business. Master Zulon never visited Wordsmiths in person; his orders and payments were dropped off overnight, as though by invisible couriers, in the front room of Wordsmiths. As the workload increased, Master Zulon paid extra for the scribes to defer or cancel their other contracts. Soon, the scribes were working almost exclusively for Master Zulon, but his transcription work kept increasing. Master Zulon appeared in person at Wordsmiths once the work became practically unmanageable. Master Zulon offered an assistant for each of the scribes in order to keep their pace up. The contracts for assistant services were the most complex the scribes had ever seen, but they were so eager for the aid and the excellent pay that each signed a contract. The delighted Master Zulon moved in to the back office of Wordsmiths—the head scribe had mysteriously disappeared the previous day—and insisted on overseeing the scribes personally. The scribes were surprised to learn that the "assistants" were imps, one imp contracted to each scribe.

The scribes are quite concerned about the arrangement they've entered. Some question whether infernal assistance is wise, and each wonders what precisely they've agreed to in the contracts they signed. Master Zulon's pace is relentless, however, and none of the scribes have had any chance to review their contracts in detail or press the reclusive Master Zulon for answers. The scribes do not realize that "Master Zulon" is actually Gebezulon, an up-and-coming contract devil using Wordsmiths to accelerate his devilish contracting.

All rooms in Wordsmiths are 12 feet high. Each room is brightly lit by everburning torches in chandeliers and wall sconces. Doors throughout the shop are good wooden doors with average locks, although only the side entrance is locked when the PCs arrive.

## Area 1: Front Desk (CR 8)

The front entry to Wordsmiths leads to a large room lined with wide counters. These counters are awash in papers, scrolls, and tomes. The northwest section of the room is ringed with a wide counter. A few ledgers, notices, and a discreet door indicate that this counter is the business area where scribes meet with clients. When the PCs arrive, a middle-aged human scholar with a haggard expression sits behind this counter. This is Enden Knurl (N middle-aged male human expert 3), the scribe most skeptical of the scribes' contracts with Gebezulon. Enden is busy copying over a few intricate contract provisions; performing work in the front room is the closest to "fresh air" the scribes get these days. Enden attempts to shoo the PCs away, expressing that he is much too busy to take on more work at this time, or even to chat.

The room is divided in half by more cluttered counters, but is open to view. The western half of the room is taken up with an enormous contraption of wood supports, metal plates, leather belts, and a dizzying array of cogs and pistons. This is a platen printing press, which the scribes of Wordsmiths used to mass produce high quality pamphlets and notices (before their time was filled with Gebezulon's transcription work).

The printing press is also a guard, as Gebezulon granted it a glimmer of sentience. The scribes have no



idea that their valuable printing press is now animated, as they haven't used it in weeks. If the PCs pester Enden unduly or try to leave this area other than by retreating through the front door, the printing press lurches into motion and attacks. Enden ducks for cover behind the counter and pleads with the PCs to help him, as he doesn't realize that the animated printing press won't attack him.

## Animated Printing Press CR 8

#### XP 4,800

N Huge construct **Init** -2; **Senses** darkvision 60, low-light vision; Perception -5

#### Defense

AC 17, touch 6, flat-footed 17 (-2 Dex, +11 natural, -2 size) hp 78 (7d10+40) Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -3 Defensive Abilities hardness 10; Immune construct traits

# Offense

Speed 10 ft. Melee 2 platen slams +15 (3d6+15) Ranged ejected type block +3 (2d6+10) Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

#### Jactics

**During Combat** The printing press moves forward to swing its heavy metal platens at the PCs. The printing press won't move through the low counter separating it from the customer reception area, but it has sufficient reach to attack into the customer reception area from its location. If it cannot reach any opponents in melee, it launches heavy metal type blocks at foes. The printing press does not attack any of the devils or scribes in the shop.

Morale The printing press attacks until destroyed.

#### Statistics

Str 30, Dex 6, Con –, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1 Base Atk +7; CMB +19; CMD 27 SQ construction flaws (slow (2)), construction points

(additional attack (2), exceptional reach, improved attacks (melee), ranged attack, metal)

After the printing press is destroyed, Enden is much more forthcoming about the scribes' recent troubles. He relates the following:

- Enden knows nothing about any missing pages from a magical tome, but he admits that Wordsmiths is now home to several imps.
- Enden shares all of the background in the Introduction.
- Enden is convinced that Master Zulon, who initially appeared to be a half-elf, is in fact some kind of devil. A DC 25 Knowledge (planes) check confirms that Master Zulon seems like a phistophilus, or contract devil. (In fact, Gebezulon uses magic to disguise his plainly devilish features when in public.)
- Enden's own imp, a rascally creature named Arkthatek, hasn't been around recently. Enden is distressed by the lack of assistance but is otherwise relieved. (In fact, Arkthatek has been trying to improve his station by currying favor with Gebezulon and other powerful evil entities in the city, as described in the Background; Arkthatek doesn't appear in this mini-adventure.)
- Enden has been reviewing his contract with Master Zulon in detail during his few moments of respite at work. He has isolated what appear to be a few key provisions: notably, that the contract is void only if both copies of the contract—Enden's copy and Master Zulon's copy—are destroyed. However, Enden is no lawyer and therefore confused as to the contract details. A DC 18 Intelligence check, Profession (lawyer) check, or similar check indicates that the scribe has exchanged his eternal soul for the services of an imp.
- Enden indicates that the imps, hard at work in the scribe's cells, likely know more than they are letting on. He encourages the PCs to interrogate the imps. He also explains that Master Zulon is at the rear of the shop, in the master scribe's office.

## Area 2: Storage

This hallway is packed with equipment and supplies. Cartons of paper and replacement parts for the printing press are all neatly stacked here. Also present are several neatly labeled tubs of ink containing heavy concentrations of arsenic. A forgotten *wand of resist energy* (32 charges) has rolled behind a replacement platen. The metal platen shields the wand from



discovery by *detect magic*, but can be discovered with a DC 24 Perception check.

**Poison** Arsenic—ingested; *save* Fort DC 13; *onset* 10 minutes; *frequency* 1/minute for 4 minutes; *effect* 1d2 Con; *cure* 1 save.

## Area 3: Scriptoria (CR7)

These rooms are the private rooms for the scribes to work. The side door to this area is used only by the scribes when they leave for the evening, and is currently locked with an average lock (Disable Device DC 25). Five of these six rooms contain a scribe (each, a LN or N expert 3) copying and illuminating contracts for Gebezulon. Each scribe is accompanied by an imp. Although the imps are diligent in assisting the scribes with their tasks, the imps also watch the scribes for errors or disloyalty. If the PCs enter this area, the imps intercept the PCs and intend to have some murderous "fun" with them.

# Imps (5) CR 2

#### XP 600 each

LE Tiny outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful) **Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect good*, *detect magic*, see in darkness; Perception +7

### Defense

AC 17, touch 16, flat-footed 13 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, +2 size) hp 16 (3d10); fast healing 2 Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +4 DR 5/good or silver; Immune fire, poison; Resist acid 10, cold 10

### Offense

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect) **Melee** sting +8 (1d4 plus poison)



Space 2-1/2 ft.; Reach o ft. Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th) Constant—detect good, detect magic At will—invisibility (self only) 1/day—augury, suggestion (DC 15) 1/week—commune (6 questions, CL 12th)

### Tactics

**Before Combat** The imps turn invisible in order to move about unseen and avoid being bottled up in the hallway.

**During Combat** The imps open with *suggestion*, suggesting that a PC drink from the arsenic-tainted ink in Area 2. Thereafter, the imps attack with their poisoned stingers or fight in the form of giant spiders. **Morale** Any imp reduced to fewer than 10 hit points flees.

## Statistics

Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 14 Base Atk +3; CMB +1; CMD 15 Feats Dodge, Weapon Finesse Skills Acrobatics +9, Bluff +8, Fly +21, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (planes) +7, Perception +7, Spellcraft +7

Languages Common, Infernal

**SQ** change shape (boar, giant spider, rat, or raven, *beast shape I*)

# Special Abilities

**Poison (Ex)** Sting—injury; save Fort DC 13; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Dex; cure 1

save. The save DC is Constitution-based, and includes a +2 racial bonus.

The scribes cheer on the PCs as they fight, as they are all sick of the imps' presence. If questioned, the scribes reveal the background information in the Introduction and beg the PCs to confront "Master Zulon." The scribes turn over the wealth "Master Zulon" has already provided them, which amounts to 900 gp.

Any captured imp openly admits Gebezulon's nature, plan, abilities, and location in exchange for its life (as it hasn't been specifically ordered not to). The imps are not aware of the trap in Area 4 or the *symbol of pain* on the door to Area 5.

## Area 4: Tibrary and Archives (CR9)

This room is the scribes' reference library, crowded with books on grammar, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other mundane materials. The scribes also archive client documents here. As this room is the only easy entrance to Gebezulon's chambers, and as he feels these materials are irrelevant for the scribes' transcription work, he has trapped this library. When any non-devil spends more than two rounds here, dozens of heavy reference books telekinetically fly off the shelves and whirl about the room, battering intruders into submission.



Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

#### Effects

#### **Trigger** visual (*true seeing*); **Duration** 1d6 rounds; Reset none

Effect Atk +10 ranged touch (4d6 bludgeoning damage); multiple targets (all targets in Area 4)

The doorway to Area 5 is not locked, but a sheet of folded paper is taped to the door. The paper's visible half reads "DO NOT D". The other half, which the PCs might expect to contain the letters "ISTURB," instead contains a symbol of pain that is triggered when the paper is unfolded. The symbol does not affect devils.

# Area 5: Master Scribe's Office (CR 9)

This office is lined in bookshelves, all overflowing with partially-drafted contracts. Gebezulon now uses this room as his headquarters (two days ago, Gebezulon plane shifted the former master scribe to the Elemental Plane of Fire). This room is in disarray because Gebezulon is in quite over his head. He has taken on far too many contracts for his junior status, and is running himself-and the scribes of Wordsmiths-ragged just trying to keep up. Gebezulon does not brook any interruption, for fear he will become further behind in his contract deals. If the PCs are very forthright and direct about their desire for the missing pages from Bydlo's manual of bodily health, Gebezulon flings the pages at them with an exasperated sigh and demands solitude. If the PCs try Gebezulon's patience, he attacks with a fury, attempting to eliminate them as efficiently as possible.

# Gebezulon, Inexperienced Contract Devil CR 9

#### XP 6,400

LE Medium outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful) Init +11; Senses darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; Perception +24

#### Defense

AC 23, touch 18, flat-footed 15 (+7 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural)

**hp** 115 (11d10+55)

Fort +8, Ref +14, Will +15

**DR** 10/good; **Immune** fire, mind-affecting effects, poison; Resist acid 10, cold 10; SR 19

#### Offense

Speed 30 ft. Melee binding contract (whip) +18/+13/+8 (1d4+7) plus bleed), gore +9(1d8+3)**Space** 5 ft.: **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with binding contract) Special Attacks binding contract, bleed (1d6), impale (1d10+4)



#### Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +17) Constant-tongues

At will-bestow curse (DC 20), detect thoughts (DC 18), dimension door, erase, identify, major image (DC 19), produce flame, sending

3/day-arcane eye, break enchantment, greater teleport (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), hold person (DC 18), locate creature, scorching ray, silence (DC 18), vision

1/day-contact other plane, dismissal (DC 21), plane shift (DC 23), summon (level 4, 1 bearded devil 50%), symbol of pain (DC 21)

#### Jactics

Before Combat Gebezulon is likely absorbed in his work when the PCs arrive. If he has advance notice of the PCs, he attempts to summon a bearded devil, casts produce flame, and uses detect thoughts and arcane eye to gather information.

During Combat Gebezulon prefers to fight with his binding contracts, but uses his scorching ray and produce flame spells on foes at a distance. He uses plane shift and hold person on melee opponents getting the better of him.

Morale Gebezulon has a lot on the line, but if reduced to 20 hit points or less he attempts to bargain for his release. Gebezulon offers an infernal contract to the PCs if they agree to let him go and never return. If Gebezulon surrenders, he also agrees to destroy his copies of the scribes' contracts.

## Statistics

**Str** 16, **Dex** 25, **Con** 20, **Int** 24, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 22 **Base Atk** +11; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 32

**Feats** Alertness, Deceitful, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Persuasive

**Skills** Bluff +24, Diplomacy +24, Disguise +8, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (nobility) +21, Knowledge (planes) +21, Knowledge (religion) +21, Linguistics +18, Perception +24, Profession (scribe) +17, Sense Motive +24, Sleight of Hand +18, Spellcraft +18

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnome, Goblin, Halfling, Ignan, Infernal, Orc, Sylvan, Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft., tongues SQ infernal contract, infernal investment

## Special Abilities

**Binding Contract (Su)** All contract devils carry numerous lengthy contracts draped over their horns or within their numerous carrying cases. They can wield these contracts like whips, but deal lethal damage regardless of the armor bonus of their target. A contract devil modifies attack and damage rolls when using a binding contract by its Intelligence modifier, not its Strength modifier (this equates to a +7 bonus). Wounds created by a binding contract

resemble horrifically deep paper cuts and cause 1d6 points of bleed damage. A contract devil can use its binding contract to disarm and trip foes as if the contract were a whip. If it is itself disarmed of the contract, the devil can rearm itself with a new contract as an immediate action.

**Impale (Ex)** As a swift action, a contract devil can impale an opponent grappled by its binding contract, dealing 1d10+4 points of piercing damage.

Infernal Contract (Su) As a full-round action, a contract devil can produce an infernal contract for a single living mortal creature. This contract can grant a wide range of abilities and effects. To receive any of these bonuses, however, the mortal must sign its true name to the document of its own free will. Upon doing so, that mortal's soul is sworn to the contract devil, condemning the soul to an eternity of servitude in Hell rather than whatever fate would naturally befall it upon the mortal's death. Breaking a contract with a contract devil requires the destruction of the copy of the contract retained by the mortal as well as destruction of the copy of the contract retained by the contract devil; as long as the infernal contract remains in effect, the victim cannot be restored to life after death save by a *miracle* or a *wish*. If a mortal is restored to life in this way, the contract devil immediately senses the development-it not only knows which soul has been restored to life, but also gains the benefits of a discern location spell targeted on the character or creature that restored the damned soul to life.

**Infernal Investment (Su)** As a subclause of all infernal contracts, a contract devil can use *greater scrying* at will upon any creature it has a contract with. The target creature always fails its save against the devil's scrying attempt—this ability otherwise functions at caster level 20th.

The missing pages from Bydlo's *manual of bodily health* lay amid the papers on Gebezulon's desk. The desk also contains receipts and scrip that can be exchanged for 1,950 gp at local banks, a *scroll of countless eyes*, a *scroll of locate creature*, and a set of *manacles of cooperation*.

Sorted within the office's closet are Gebezulon's copies of the scribes' contracts. If destroyed, these contracts are void and the scribes' souls freed from damnation. In this event, the scribes are effusively grateful to the PCs for freeing them from their ill-advised contracts.

### Scaling this Adventure

**5th level**: In Area 1, remove the platen slams from the animate printing press; all it can do is shoot type blocks at opponents. In Area 3, two of the imps hide rather than fight, although the other three fight as indicated. In Area 4, the trap inflicts nonlethal damage rather than lethal damage. In Area 5, use the stats for an advanced bearded devil for Gebezulon.

**9th level**: In Area 1, the animate printing press is reinforced with adamantine (hardness increases to 20, natural armor bonus increases to +15) and has two additional slam attacks. In Area 3, apply the advanced simple template to all the imps. In Area 4, increase the trap's damage to 6d6. In Area 5, use a normal contract devil for Gebezulon, and Gebezulon is assisted by two advanced bearded devils.





## New Monster: Relliumm

ADVENTUREAWEEK.COM, LLP Relliumm concept and illustration by Tim Tyler Relliumm background and statistics by Will Myers Ring of Relliumm by Will Myers Elf illustration by Silvano

## Relliumm

**CR** 24 **XP** 1,228,800 CN Gargantuan ooze (outsider) **Init** +11; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +33

## Defense

**AC** 43, touch 15, flat-footed 36 (+7 Dex, +28 natural, -2 size)

hp 420 (23d12+276); fast healing 10 Fort +29, Ref +22, Will +24 DR 15/epic and lawful; Immune amorphous, blindness, charm effects, cold, deafness, sonic; Resist acid 20, electricity 20, fire 20; SR 30, reflective eye

# Offense

**Speed** 50 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 50 ft. **Melee** 4 slams +32 (4d6+21/19–20 plus grab) **Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 60 ft. with tentacles **Special Attacks** constrict (3d6+21), consume, engulf, horrible constriction

### Statistics

Str 53, Dex 24, Con 35, Int 25, Wis 22, Cha 23
Base Atk +17; CMB +40 (+45 grapple); CMD 57 (cannot be tripped)
Feats Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Staggering Critical
Skills Climb +25, Perception +33, Swim +25
Racial Modifiers +4 Perception
Languages Tortuous telepathy
SQ chaos aura, *plane shift*, ring sense

# Special abilities

#### All-Around Vision (Ex)

Rellumm's many sense organs grant a +4 racial bonus on Perception and immunity to flanking.

#### Amorphous (Ex)

The creature's body is malleable and shapeless. It is immune to precision damage (like sneak attacks) and critical hits.

#### Chaos Aura (Ex)

Rellumm is constantly surrounded by an aura of chaos 60 feet in diameter. Every creature that enters this aura must make a DC 30 Will save. Lawful characters or creatures that fail the Will save take 2d6 points of damage and are pushed back to the edge of the aura. Neutral characters or creatures take 1d6 points of



damage and are *stunned* for 1d4 rounds. Chaotic characters or creatures do not take any damage, but are *staggered* for 1 round by the strength of the aura. This aura does not affect the wear of Rellumm's Ring.

#### Consume (Su)

Rellumm consumes the souls of those who die from being engulfed (see below) or from his constrict attack (but not horrible constriction, see below). These souls are used to power Rellumm's *plane shift* ability (see below). These souls are unable to respond to spells such as *speak with dead* or to reanimate their bodies for spells such as *raise dead*. Once these souls are used for the *plane shift* ability, they are completely destroyed and nothing can restore them except a deity's direct intervention.

#### Engulf (Ex)

To use this ability, Rellumm must begin its turn grappling a creature. Rellumm may attempt to engulf as many creatures as it grapples. Grappled creatures are entitled to a DC 35 Reflex saving throw to avoid being engulfed. This ability otherwise functions as swallow whole, save that a creature that cuts its way out leaves no hole in Rellumm's body.

#### Horrible Constriction (Ex)

Instead of dealing damage with constriction, Rellumm may instead decide to use one of two effects on a grappled opponent. Rellumm may either inflict the opponent with madness (permanently affecting them with *insanity*, as per the spell; Will DC 35) or the opponent is blasted with extra-dimensional energy, which affects the opponent as the *disintegrate* spell (40d6; Fort DC 35 for 5d6 points of damage). This second ability can be used twelve times a day.

#### Plane Shift (Su)

Once Rellumm has absorbed ten souls through the *consume* ability, he can use *plane shift* to travel to the ring's location. This functions as the *plane shift* spell, except that Rellumm will appear 1d10 yards away from the ring's wearer (or the ring's location if it is not being worn).

#### **Reflective Eye (Ex)**

If a spell that targets Rellumm specifically (not an area effect) does not overcome his spell resistance, Rellumm can choose an opponent to affect with that spell.

#### **Ring Dependency (Ex)**

Rellumm is bonded to the ring and must have possession of it in order to travel the planes at will. If Rellumm travels to a plane in search of the ring, Rellumm has 10 rounds plus 1d20 rounds to retrieve the ring or is forced back to his plane of origin.

#### Ring Sense (Su)

Rellumm can sense the location of his ring regardless of distance, even across planar boundaries. By concentrating for one round, Rellumm can gain information about the wearer of the ring (name, race, class, level, location) and by concentrating for another two rounds, Rellumm can gain information about the area surrounding the ring up to one hundred yards distance.

#### **Tortuous Telepathy (Su)**

Rellumm can communicate telepathically with any creature within 500 feet that has a language. However, contact with Rellumm's alien mind is extremely disturbing. For every minute after the first minute Rellumm is in telepathic contract with a mortal creature, that creature is dealt 1 point of both Intelligence and Wisdom damage. Reaching 0 in either statistic causes the contacted creature to fall unconscious.

#### Description

Those sages who have studied the little remaining lore of the Gods From Before tell us that these gods, powerful beings who came to our primordial universe, were a stabilizing force that organized our cosmos and created the beginnings of life within it. They stood fast against the attack of Rellumm, a primeval being that ripped his way into our universe and began assaulting it in his chaotic rage.

But those who study the sparse literature from a different point of view believe that the Gods From

Before were criminals or runaways and Rellumm was sent to retrieve them or punish them. These alternate beliefs assert Rellumm was destroying the creations of the Gods because they did not belong in our universe, and with each thing the Gods created, the Gods gained a greater foothold in our reality.

During a battle that lasted for centuries, some of the Gods From Before were utterly destroyed by Rellumm's power, while others were gravely injured. The Gods fought Rellumm with weapon and spell, but they could not destroy him, nor he they.

Finally, a few of the Gods of Magic pooled their powers. Using this power, they found the thread that held Rellumm's form together and snatched it away, leaving Rellumm a formless blob. With his form weakened, the Gods From Before created a demiplane around Rellumm and hid it away in the multiverse. The Gods knew this prison wouldn't hold Rellumm forever but they were unable to destroy him.

The thread was taken by Kagto the Smith, woven with mithral, and forged into a ring. Lipil, Goddess of Fate, flung the ring out into the multiverse, keeping it from Rellumm's grasp and leaving him in his less powerful state.

When they had recovered from the battle, the Gods tore a hole in our reality and left. Rellumm raged against the walls of his prison to no avail.

Then, seventeen thousand years ago, eons after the departure of the Gods From Before, new gods appeared in our reality. These were young deities, and powerful, but they lacked the wisdom of their predecessors. Upon finding Rellumm's demiplane, they could not understand it from the outside, so they ventured inside to see what lay hidden from them. They were woefully unprepared for Rellumm's eons-long accumulation of rage.

The spells and strikes of these new gods were nothing to Rellumm. He savaged them, brought them into his mass, and absorbed their power. Expending all of the divine energy, Rellumm broke through the walls of his prison, but he was still bound to it. He could sense the ring on another plane, but could not break completely free of his demiplane.

Rellumm began absorbing the essences of any who came near. He found that once he had consumed enough power, he could leave his demiplane and go to the plane where his ring was. He learned, though, that his time on that plane was limited and when he did not possess the ring, he was snatched back to his demiplane to start all over again.

Woe be to whomever wear Rellumm's Ring, the Ring of Sight, for they are now targets. It is only a matter of time before Rellumm comes to find his ring.

## Ring of Sight

Aura strong transmutation; CL 20 Slot ring; Weight –

#### DESCRIPTION

This ring, forged in ages past, appears to be made from mithral. It is set with a dark ruby cut to resemble an eye surrounded by what appears to be red skin. No mortal tool can score the ring. The mithral is permanently tarnished and if the patina is watched, the pattern shifts subtlety. This ring appears on a random plane and will rest there for one month before vanishing and reappearing on another plane. It disappears, even if worn.

The ring of sight grants the wearer a +6 luck bonus to its Wisdom score and darkvision to 60 ft. If the wearer already has darkvision, the range is extended by 60 ft.

#### **All-Around Vision**

The ring produces a magic effect that allows the wearer to see 360 degrees around himself. This gives the wearer +4 to Perception checks and prevents the wearer from being flanked. However, this vision is extremely disorienting for the first three days of wearing the ring. The wearer must succeed on a Will save once per day for the first three days.

Day 1 DC 25 Day 2 DC 23 Day 3 DC 21

If any Will save is failed, the cycle starts over again. When a Will saved is missed, the wearer takes -4 to both melee and attack rolls, and any skill check or feat use that requires sight. The Blind-Fight feat (including the Improved and Greater versions) does not overcome this penalty, but blindsense and tremorsense do.

#### **Corporeal Instability**

The physiology of the wearer changes slightly when the ring is worn, shifting the organs around haphazardly. The first time this happens, the wearer must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or be *sickened* until the ring is removed. If the saving throw is failed, the wearer must wait one full day before wearing the ring again. If the wearer makes the saving throw, it gains a 10% chance to avoid extra damage from critical hits or precision-based attacks, such as sneak attacks. If the ring is removed or disappears after its month-long rest, the wearer must make the Fortitude save again as its organs realign. Once the ring is removed, the wearer loses the 10% chance of negating extra damage.

#### **Hidden Made Clear**

Once per day, the ring allows the wearer to see an arcane spellcaster's connection with magic. The wearer is able to instinctively understand the relative power of the spellcaster's spells and is aware of the highest save DC of that caster's current spells. If the wearer can make a Wisdom check equal to that DC, the spellcaster loses a number of spells equal to the wearer's Hit Dice (spells lost are determined randomly). If the Wisdom check fails, the wearer is *stunned* for a number of rounds equal to the arcane spellcaster's spellcasting modifier and the spellcaster is aware of the use of this ability. This ability's range extends to any arcane spellcaster the wearer can see and to whom the wearer has line of effect.



#### Seer

By tapping into the chaos that surrounds Rellumm's flesh, the wearer gains the ability to see five seconds into the future once per day. When using this ability, the wearer may reroll any one of its own attack rolls, saving throws, or skill checks. The choice to use this ability must be made after the original roll is made but before the GM reveals the success or failure of that roll. After making the second roll, the wearer chooses which result to take.



# The Breaking of Forstor Magar A Pathfinder adventure for 4 8th levels PCs



#### Daffyd

Male human NG cleric 8 of Lada Init +3; Senses Perception +10

DEFENSES AC 19 touch 9 flat-footed 19 hp 59 (currently 47) Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +14

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30

Melee +1 cold iron mace +8/+3 (1d8+2)

- Spells (CL 8, +14 concentration)
- 4th—cure critical wounds, death ward, holy smite, imbue with spell ability
- 3rd—cure serious wounds, dispel magic, magic vestment, protection from energy, searing light

Live Stat Blocks

- 2nd-calm emotions, cures moderate wounds, remove paralysis, restoration, lesser, shield other, spiritual weapon
- 1st—bless, comprehend languages, cure light wounds, cure light wounds, endure elements, obscuring mist, protection from evil
- 0-create water, guidance, light, mending

Domains: community, protection

#### STATISTICS

#### Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 13 Base Atk +6: CMB +16: CMD 7

PRD hyperlinks, player/GM views, online play,



http://ritepublishing.com



### Delve into the Secrets of the Inquisitor

by Thomas LeBlanc (edited by Will McCardell) Illustration by Toby Gregory

## Jemple Warrior

The temple warrior is an inquisitor who focuses on solo tactics and weapons rather than relying on teamwork and spells. Each day she meditates with weapon in hand, preparing to hunt those offensive to her god. She relies on solo tactics to win the day and draws power from her god and focuses it into a weapon to which she has bonded. The options set forth below are changes to the inquisitor class in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Advanced Player's Guide*<sup>TM</sup>.

**Godly Moves:** At 1st level, a temple warrior adds Acrobatics and Perform, and removes Ride and Spellcraft, from the list of the inquisitor's skills.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Temple warriors have the same weapon and armor proficiencies as the monk class. When wearing armor, using a shield, or carrying a medium or heavy load, a temple warrior loses her AC bonus, fast movement, and weapon mastery abilities. These proficiencies replace the normal inquisitor weapon and armor proficiencies.

**AC Bonus (Ex):** At 1st level the temple warrior gains the AC bonus as the monk class ability.

**Weapon Katas:** Temple warriors meditate while performing a choreographed set of movements called katas. A temple warrior must spend 1 hour each day performing katas while wielding her bonded weapon(s). After 24 hours, if katas have not been performed, the temple warrior loses her temple mastery ability until the weapon katas have been performed.

**Temple Weaponry (Su):** At 1st level, the temple warrior forms a bond with a two-handed weapon, a double weapon or 2 one-handed melee weapons with the monk special feature. Once this choice is made, it can't be changed. Temple warriors begin play bonded with the selected weapon(s) at no cost. If the temple warrior is not proficient with the weapon, she takes a -4 on attack rolls. These weapons are always masterwork quality. Weapons acquired at 1st level are not made of any special material.

A temple warrior can add additional magic abilities to her bonded weapon(s) as if she has the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat if she meets the level prerequisites of the feat. Ranks in Craft (weapons) count as caster level for the purposes of qualifying for the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat. A temple warrior can only add abilities to her bonded weapon(s), substituting her ranks in the chosen skill for her total caster level. The DC to create the weapon still increases for any necessary spell requirements (see the magic item creation rules in Magic Items).



If a bonded weapon is damaged, it is restored to full hit points the next time the temple warrior performs her weapon kata. If a bonded weapon is lost or destroyed, it can be replaced using the same rules a wizard uses to replace a bonded item via the wizard's arcane bond. This ability replaces the inquisitor's domain.

**Temple Mastery (Ex):** At 1st level, the temple warrior treats her inquisitor level as her BAB when attacking with her bonded weapons and has learned a special attack style. The style depends on the type of bonded weapon:

*Rain of Strikes:* The temple warrior can make a rain of strikes as a full attack action, using her bonded double weapon or two one-handed weapons. She attacks as if she had the Two-Weapon Fighting feat (even if the temple warrior does not meet the prerequisites for the feat). At 8th level, the temple warrior can make two additional attacks when she uses rain of strikes, as if using Improved Two-Weapon Fighting (even if the temple warrior does not meet the prerequisites for the feat). At 15th level, she can make three additional attacks using flurry of blows, as if using Greater Two-Weapon Fighting (even if the temple warrior does not meet the prerequisites for the feat).

A temple warrior applies her full Strength bonus to her damage rolls for all successful attacks made with rain of strikes, even if the attacks are made with her off-hand. She may substitute disarm, sunder, and trip combat maneuvers for one of her attacks when making the rain of blows.

*Vehement Strike*: A temple warrior can make a vehement strike as a full-round action using her bonded two-handed weapon (except double weapons). A full attack is made as if using the Power Attack feat, but she takes no penalty to combat maneuver checks. At 8th level, she can use Cleave if the attack at her highest base attack bonus hits. At 15th level, she can use Great Cleave if the attack at her highest base attack bonus hits. All Cleave attacks using this ability suffer a -2 penalty to hit. She may substitute disarm, sunder, and trip combat maneuvers for a Cleave attack with a -2 penalty to CMB.

At 6th level, the temple warrior can choose to apply one of the following weapon abilities to her bonded weapon: *Enemies' Weakness:* Your weapon's threat range is doubled. This does not stack with the Improved Critical feat or *keen* weapon special ability.

*Force of Will:* The weapon is treated as aligned to a single alignment possessed by the bearer (chaotic, evil, good, or lawful).

*Scourging Blows:* Treat the damage of the weapon as if it was one size larger. The size or weight of the weapon is not affected in any way.

At 12th and 18th level, the temple warrior may select an additional weapon ability. Add the following abilities to the list:

*Break The Shell:* The weapon counts as adamantine for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction and bypassing hardness.

*Guided Swing:* Decrease the penalty for using Power Attack or Two-Weapon Fighting by one.

Each day, when performing her weapon kata, the temple warrior may change a single weapon ability. Each weapon ability can only be selected once. This ability replaces the inquisitor's orisons and spells class feature. Temple warriors do not gain any spells or spellcasting ability, do not have a caster level, and cannot use spell trigger and spell completion magic items.

**Bonus Feats:** At 2nd level, and every even level thereafter, the temple warrior gains a bonus feat in addition to those gained from normal advancement. These bonus feats must be chosen from the solo tactics feat list or have solo tactics as a prerequisite. The temple warrior counts as having the solo tactics class ability to meet the prerequisites when selecting the feats. This ability replaces the inquisitor's teamwork feats.

**Fast Movement (Ex):** At 3rd level, the temple warrior gains the fast movement ability as the monk. This replaces the inquisitor's solo tactics class ability.

### Inquisitor Feats

Each of the following feats references one or more abilities found in *Secrets of the Inquisitor*.

#### **Paralyzing Blow**

Your ominous blows can freeze an opponent in its tracks.

**Prerequisites:** Raider's ill omen class feature, base attack bonus +3.

**Benefit:** You can choose to spend 2 omen points when trying to hit a brigand, pirate, or enemy privateer. If the

opponent fails the save, it is paralyzed until the beginning of your next turn. An enemy that makes the save is staggered until the beginning of your next turn.

#### **Resist Your Enemy**

You have learned to anticipate the spell-like abilities of monsters you are familiar with.

**Prerequisites:** Stalwart of the supernatural class ability, 5 ranks in one Knowledge skill. **Benefit:** When you succeed by 10 or more on a Knowledge skill check to identify a creature, you gain a morale bonus equal to your Wisdom bonus (minimum +1) on saving throws against the creature's spell-like abilities. This bonus last a number of rounds equal to your Wisdom modifier.

#### Watchful Tracer

When you place a tracer on a creature or item you are aware of its condition.

**Prerequisites:** Thief-taker's tracer class ability, Perception 5 ranks.

**Benefit:** You are aware of the condition of a creature or item on which you have placed a tracer. You know the health of a creature as the spell *deathwatch*. You know if an item is unharmed (full hit points), unbroken (less than full hit points and more than 1/2 hit points), broken, or destroyed.

# Solo Jactics Feats

#### Meditate Your Enemy's Downfall

You meditate in battle to increase your chances of defeating your foes.

**Prerequisites:** Solo tactics class feature, Perform (kata) 6 ranks.

**Benefit:** As a standard action, you can attempt a Perform (kata) skill check with a DC equal to 15 + your inquisitor level. If successful, add your Wisdom modifier to your CMB for a number of rounds equal to your inquisitor level.

#### Mongoose in a Nest of Snakes

You are able to deny enemies a flanking bonus. **Prerequisites:** Solo tactics class feature, Perform (kata) 3 ranks.

**Benefit:** As an immediate action, you can make a Perform (kata) skill check to deny creatures flanking you a flanking bonus to their attacks. You must succeed at a DC check equal to 10 + HD of the most powerful creature flanking you. If more than 2 enemies flank you, add + 2 to the DC for each additional enemy. The enemies still count as flanking you.

Be sure to find more ideas like this in Rite Publishing's The Secerts of the Inquisitor on sale now!

# Rite Publishing Presents Coliseum Morpheuon: Anthology of Preams

Edited by David Paul With short stories by Matt Banach, Jess Carson, Ewan Cummins, T.H. Gulliver, L. Jagi Lee Collect Rob (anning Jonatha McAnry, John C. Keek, Steven E. Schend, and Neil Spicer



#### Sage NPC Class By Mike Welham

Illustrations by Arthur Rackham

Focused on the study of esoteric knowledge, the sage sequesters himself in his library. He spends more time with dusty history books and rotting parchment than he does with people. However, if someone pays him plenty of coin for the unique lore he has accumulated, or he desires a source of information he cannot obtain, he will deign to work with others. Rarely, a sage decides to leave his home in order to gain firsthand knowledge in a hidden, trap-filled tomb, in which case he needs all the protection he can find with an adventuring party.

The sage presented here evinces the fantasy staple of party adviser, whom the characters consult when they are stuck solving a riddle or need to know critical information about an adventuring site's history or creatures and traps protecting the site. Once in a great while, the party might require the sage's physical presence to help them decipher a passage written in a forgotten language, and the sage makes the perilous trip with the group, relying on them for protection.

If a GM wishes to include a sage NPC who puts a monetary value on his time and knowledge in her campaign world, the sage charges a standard rate of 100 gp per point of DC in the skill check. A sage will waive this fee for ancient texts a party might find or useful magic items the sage can benefit from. Considering the sage will hardly provide incorrect information, especially in his areas of study, most parties find the price to be well worth the lore they receive.

### Sage

Alignment: Any Hit Die: d6

#### **Class Skills**

The sage's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Ranks per Level: 6 + Int modifier.

#### **Class Features**

All of the following are class features of the sage NPC class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency**: A sage is skilled with only one simple weapon. He has no proficiency with any other weapons, and he has no proficiency with any type of armor or shield.

**Dedicated Study**: At 1st level, and every 6 levels thereafter, the sage can choose the Linguistics skill or one Knowledge skill for which he focuses his study. For the chosen skill, the sage gains twice his Intelligence bonus on checks involving that skill, and he can take 10 on the skill check. Additionally, once per day per, he can take 20 on a skill check for any of his chosen skills. He can take 20 in this way one additional time per day for every 6 levels beyond 1st. In order to benefit from



dedicated study, the sage must have max ranks in the chosen skill(s).

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NPC	Base	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
Level	Attack	Save	Save	Save	
	Bonus				
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Dedicated Study
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Dedicated Study
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	
11th	+5	+3	+3	+7	
12th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	
13th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Dedicated Study
14th	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9	
15th	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9	
16th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	
17th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	
18th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	
19th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	Dedicated Study
20th	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	

# Sample Sage

Presented below is an NPC that higher level PCs may encounter during their adventures. The party may even find themselves escorting her through a set of catacombs.

#### Kelwryn Jorgh Female human sage 11

Female human sage 11 N Medium humanoid (human) Init +0; Senses Perception +1

#### Defense

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +1 deflection) hp 49 (11d6) Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +11

## Offense

Speed 30 ft. **Melee** +1 dagger +5 (1d4/19-20) **Statistics** Str 8, Dex 11, Con 9, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 10 Base Atk +5; CMB +4; CMD 15 Feats Armor Proficiency (Light), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Magical Aptitude, Skill Focus (Knowledge [arcana]), Skill Focus (Knowledge [planes]), Toughness Skills Craft (books) +18, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +18, Knowledge (geography) +18, Knowledge (history) +18, Knowledge (local) +18, Knowledge (nature) +18, Knowledge (planes) +27, Knowledge (religion) +24, Linguistics +18, Spellcraft +22, Use Magic Device +18 Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnome, Halfling, Ignan, Infernal, Sylvan, Terran SQ dedicated study (Knowledge [arcana]), dedicated study (Knowledge [planes]) **Combat Gear** potions of cure moderate wounds (2), scrolls of locate object (2), wand of comprehend languages (50 charges), wand of knock (30 charges), wand of detect secret doors (50 charges); Other Gear +1 leather armor, +1 dagger, ring of protection +1, cloak of resistance +1, headband of vast intelligence +1, 188 gp

Kelwryn Torgh, a raven-haired, rail-thin human woman of average height in her mid-30s, spent most of her youth in the city library. During those rare instances one could find her outside, she had her nose buried in a book. This academic proclivity and her tendency to share her knowledge unbidden meant she had few friends, which suited her, because it meant she could spend more time in her studies.

As she grew older and gained a wealth of knowledge, she discovered she had reached a limit to the information her books provided her. She also desired active pursuit of the knowledge she craved, as she had seen enough of the confining walls of the library and her own study. When adventurers came to her seeking knowledge, instead of the usual gold she used to purchase books, she asked for magic items in return. She trained with a suit of leather armor gifted to her by a rogue as an expression of gratitude for life-saving information about an ancient civilization's propensity for scything traps. When she finally felt she was ready to venture out, she joined a group looking to search (and plunder) a nearly forgotten pharaoh's tomb.

While she does not acquit herself well as a combatant, she rankles at the thought of being a "damsel in distress" and she makes up for her deficiencies in fighting with incredible utility in exploring old ruins and dungeons.





# Book Of Donster Gemplates

HEROES

# Bv: S. ven D. Russell

D2D



# Twenty Questions with Gary McBride

By Steven D. Russell

# 1. First, congrats on your ENnie nomination, now could you tell us a little about yourself?

Sometime in the very early eighties my unsuspecting mother bought me the *Dungeons &Dragons Basic Set* boxed set (the one that came with the dice, the crayon and "Keep on the Borderlands"). I and a rag-tag band of young budding geeklings – we ate this like candy. We had no idea what we were doing and we did just about everything wrong. But what did it matter? This was pure, uncut imagination food.

By the age of twelve, I managed to convince my parents to take me to the 1984 Origins Game Fair (which at that time moved about the country). They dropped me off largely unattended at my first con. It blew my little unprepared 6<sup>th</sup> grade mind. I played AD&D run by a DM who knew what he was doing. He was telling a story and we were a part of it. I played Car Wars and Ogre for the first time. I played Champions and Traveller. I shot my way out of a bar nine years before I was legal to drink. It was like drinking from the fire hose.

I never got over what I saw and did that weekend. I was locked into the way of the gaming geek from then forward. I came back from that convention like a prophet returning from the mountain. I brought news to my fellow geeklings of what we were doing wrong. I was ready to GAME.

I remained a devoted fan of RPGs into the nineties and through college. In 1999 I got my first writing credit doing an article for Steve Jackson's *Pyramid* magazine. In 2003 I went full time as a freelancer. I worked on Earthdawn, Warhammer Fantasy RPG, and countless other projects during the d20 boom. By 2011 I was ready to try my hand at being a publisher and that is when I started Fire Mountain Games.

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

I am currently involved in three regular home games. Every Thursday night I run a rollicking game with six friends of pure pizza-powered gaming bliss. We are currently finishing up a retro-clone sandbox campaign known as "Lords of Dunharrow" that just had its sixtieth session. We are reclaiming the once savage isle of Cambria and making it into our personal domain – great fun! As I write this, we have only four sessions left before I bring that epic to a close. After that, I will be running "Way of the Wicked," Fire Mountain Game's evil adventure path. Mostly because they threatened that if I didn't, they would poison my scotch. Villains!



On Friday nights I'm a player alongside my wife and similar circle of friends. We are right now starting the "Jade Regent" Pathfinder adventure path. I'm playing an evil wizard named Hadrian Winterbourne who works ceaselessly to woo and corrupt Ameiko, a major NPC with a great destiny. My wife's character, comically enough, is trying to get me to repent or at least to get my hooks out of poor Ameiko. So far, evil prevails. However, for someone playing an allegedly good cleric, my wife is certainly doing more than her share of scheming these days.

Every other week, I run a game for a group of autistic kids here in Portland. I'm running a D&D 4<sup>th</sup> edition campaign that just hit 16<sup>th</sup> level entitled "Dragon Isle." I can't tell you how much fun and how rewarding it is for me personally to work with these kids. I heartily recommend to every experienced game master to seek out parent support groups and volunteer to run an RPG for a similar band. The energy and enthusiasm these kids bring to the game is both amazing and infectious.

You know what's really amazing about these kids? They are completely unjaded about roleplaying games. For them, this is all fresh and new. Fighting a fire elemental and not getting burned to death is something to celebrate. Their sense of wonder is one hundred percent intact.

It really reminds me of that kid coming home from Origins in 1984...

# 3. What is your favorite Paizo product and why?

Tough call. Paizo has made many world-class products over the years. Still, I'll go with an adventure.

"J1: Entombed with the Pharaohs" by Michael Kortes. This is a powerful, atmospheric, intense adventure tale. It's not just about killing monsters. It's about surviving a potent curse that has inflicted misery about the world for centuries. With very little modification, it's an adventure that works as well for the Call of Cthulhu RPG as it would for Pathfinder. And, oh yeah – it's got a mummified dragon in it. How cool is that?

4. You are currently are one of the masterminds behind Fire Mountain Games, how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

Fire Mountain Games started because of a character sketch in my Thursday night home game.

I moved to Oregon from Texas in 2008 leaving behind a thriving network of friends and fellow gamers. For almost three months, I didn't game. I was in serious gamer withdrawal. So, I recruited some new players online and there I met Michael Clarke. He joined my newly born Thursday night game and we hit it off. He submitted an amazing, professional quality sketch for one of his PCs in that game and it got us talking about his background in art.

It turned out Mike had worked for Atlas Games as a freelance artist and was currently slaving away in the computer game industry art mines. I knew right then we had to make a book together. I had this persistent nagging idea for an evil adventure path and I sat down with Mike and we cranked out some preliminary sketches, maps and an outline.

Using that initial work, I raised some money and Fire Mountain Games was born. The name, by the way, comes from the fact that I live atop a volcanic cinder cone on the outskirts of Portland. My realtor assures me it is inactive.

Right now, Fire Mountain Games is my baby. I write almost everything we publish. Mike does all the art. I know this will have to change if the company is to grow beyond certain bounds, but for now I'm enjoying the complete creative freedom. These are my books. Love them or hate them – these books are entirely my fault.

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



"Way of the Wicked Book Two: Call Forth Darkness" – this is the product where you own your own dungeon. For two hundred and twenty two days you conduct a ritual so vile, so evil that you must be stopped or countless innocents will perish. Local authorities, adventuring parties, good dragons and outsiders, everyone is going to try and stop your wicked work. You must not let them. Let nothing stop you from calling forth darkness.

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

The best moment on that book was the best moment on any book – the moment it is finished. I am tremendously proud of that book and seeing it done, fully illustrated and ready to ship out the door was amazing.

I've never gotten over that moment. I've contributed to more than thirty five roleplaying games in my writing career. Even today, having a finished book or article that I'm proud of - it's like lightning.

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

The most ingenious part of that product is how we handle both time and minions. Rather than keep track of every second of the seven months, we break the game down into week-long turns. Every week you get to manage your legion of minions and send them on various errands and then you deal with any challenges that may arise that week. It is, in my opinion, an innovative way to move through larger swathes of time in an RPG.

Often RPGs feel incredibly cramped because of just how active adventurers are. They rest as little as they can. They carry as much as they can. They fight as long as they can. Let's face it - no one could actually live that way. By incorporating larger units of time into the mechanics of the adventure I think we give a much more natural flow to the adventure itself and to character advancement.

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

I had no guidebook. To the best of my knowledge no one had ever done an adventure quite like this. I had one hundred blank pages and no idea how a dungeon management adventure should work. All I had was an intense desire to write the sort of adventure that I want to play.

I think that's the most important thing I always keep on my mind. I am a game master. I run at least one game a week. Some weeks with cons, I run a lot more. I love running roleplaying games and do it as often as my schedule as a writer, husband, father and small business owner allows. I want any book I write to be game master friendly. I believe we've really managed that in "Way of the Wicked" and it's one of the things of which I am most proud.

The greatest compliment I can receive about these books is: "We've started running that. It's been the most fun we've had a while in our game."

Mission accomplished.

# 9. Did you learn anything while working on it?

That book and Book One of "Way of the Wicked" are the first two books I ever completely wrote and produced entirely on my own. Only my partner in crime, Mike Clarke, was there to aid me at first. The amount I learned on those two books was immense. Climbing that learning curve was an epic journey. This was book publishing boot camp.

I learned more about adventure design, writing, editing, layout and the publishing business in general in the first six months of Fire Mountain Games than I have in my entire life. It's been an amazing journey and I eagerly look forward to continuing it.

10. Other than your own work and Fire Mountain Games products, what is the best Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible product out there?

"The Slumbering Tsar Saga" by Greg Vaughn (Frog God Games).



This massive, almost thousand page, tome of gaming goodness details one adventure location – the cursed city of Tsar. We've all fantasized about doing something like this – one massive dungeon, completely laid out and ready to challenge anything your players can throw against it. While we dreamed, Mr. Vaughn did it. To say that this half-a-millionword adventure is epic is almost trite.

I don't know how. I don't know when. But I will run this.

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

A good game book demands that I play it. I read it and realize that I have to run this. I have to use this in my current game or my next campaign. I can't leave an idea this good and this well implemented sitting idle upon my shelf! This book must be used. If your book accomplishes that, then I'm a fan.

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

I recently had the privilege of working with my favorite Pathfinder designer, Jason Bulmahn. As the lead designer of Paizo, I have long admired his work in the Core Rulebook and the Advanced Player's Guide (just to name two of his many credits). I was thrilled when he agreed to take a freelancing job for Fire Mountain Games and write what would become "Hellbound," a two-part article on player options that will be appearing in Books Five and Six of "Way of the Wicked."

Jason is an amazing writer and a joy to work with. What he did in the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook* changed roleplaying today without a doubt. But I think it has been in later books where he was the lead designer on works like the *Advanced Player's Guide* and *Bestiary 3* that his creativity has really been on full display. My only complaint – he has proven himself such an adept crafter of crunch that we rarely get to see any of his adventure writing any more.

We paid Jason for his work in single malt scotch. He told me this was the most memorable freelancing gig he's ever gotten. I wonder if that was because of the whiskey or the wickedness. Regardless, I was glad to oblige.

#### 13. What advice would you give to wouldbe-freelancers?

Marry the first gamer-doctor that you meet. It worked for me.

Failing that, write only what you love. To be a successful freelancer you must be punctual, cooperative and able to take constructive criticism. But love is what makes a product amazing. When you love what you write, when you can't wait to unleash it upon an unsuspecting world – this is when a game book can be something better than a bone-dry collection of rules, stat blocks and room descriptions.

#### 14. Who is your favorite Illustrator?

My favorite illustrator right now without a doubt is my co-conspirator at Fire Mountain Games – Michael Clarke. He does all the covers and all the interior art for every one of our projects. The man is an amazing talent and I hope to hold on to him as long as I can before someone with a bigger budget wises up and steals him from me.

Not only is he a versatile artist with a well-honed fantasy repertoire, he is also a great gamer who I happily roleplay with once a week. He understands this material. I don't have to explain to him what a lich or a type I demon is. He knows that, like he knows his name.

He has his own website of personal work outside of Fire Mountain Games: <u>http://spiralmagus.com</u>. It's worth a visit.

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

This is an easy question. Let me tell you the story of M. I'm calling him M, not because he runs British intelligence, but because he asked me to keep his identity a secret. M prefers his anonymity and I'm only too happy to honor the request.



M approached me via email before PaizoCon and thanked me personally for "Way of the Wicked." That was nice enough. I always appreciate that sort of fan feedback. But M wasn't finished. He had heard that I enjoy a single malt scotch (very true indeed) and offered to buy me a bottle as a present. He asked me what sort I'd enjoy. I told him and honestly I expected that to be the end of it. It wouldn't be the first time someone has made great promises online to deliver nothing.

At PaizoCon he delivered to me a beautiful 17 year old whiskey from a small island off the western coast of Scotland that spent the last years of its life finishing in vintage rum casks. He asked for nothing and when we chatted several times that weekend, proved to be a great guy. M, if you're reading this, thanks again. It was easily the nicest thing a fan has ever done for me.

Next year, drinks are on me.

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

I am right now deep in work on the last two chapters of "Way of the Wicked." As an exclusive teaser, I'll reveal that this adventure path is going to have two endings.

The first ending is more traditional – the PCs succeed. This band of villains defeats the forces of good and establishes a devil's paradise. All their dreams come true and they rise as dark lords without peers. They are lords of their nation and its legacy is in their hands.

But then there is ending number two. "Way of the Wicked" is about playing villains. Have you really experienced what it is to be the bad guy if you haven't been utterly defeated by the forces of good? Toward that end, we are giving you the "Good Wins" ending. Just as it looks like their scheme will work and the world is theirs, the good guys rally. The PCs face a foe they can't possibly defeat. If they are lucky, they escape with their lives as all their wicked schemes come crashing down around them.

Both are fully described and provided with mechanics. We even recommend taking a meta-game moment and actually discussing with your players which ending they would prefer. By the adventure path's
end, you'll have earned the right to decide your own fate.

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

I am only starting out along my journey of writing and designing games. I have countless other ideas and projects I would love to see come to fruition that remain unfulfilled.

Here's one. "Way of the Wicked" will soon be complete. Book Four is already out. Book Five is close on its heels. I'll have managed what more than one game designer I truly respect told me was impossible – publishing a successful evil campaign. I'd like to push the envelope of RPG adventure design further.

Right now most RPG fantasy adventures are written with two conceits – you'll be playing heroes and the PCs could be any race or class. I'd like to take apart that second conceit. What about adventures where the story is more focused on one sort of PC? Imagine a story that wasn't about just anyone exploring that long-abandoned dwarven ruin but was about the dwarves reclaiming that ruin. I think that's rich with potential and right now largely unexploited. I would love to overcome that barrier with a commercially viable product.

# 18. Can you give us a teaser about "Way of the Wicked", and why you believe it is so popular?

"Way of the Wicked" is Pathfinder's only evil adventure path. From levels 1-20 to you get to tread a path of irredeemable villainy and be the sort of bad guy you've only dreamed of.

Talingarde is the most noble, virtuous kingdom in all the land. They have dealt faithfully with their friends and honorably with their foes. You will burn this insipid paradise to the ground.

They arrested you for a crime you did commit. They threw you into prison not to rot but to wait for your well-deserved punishment. In three days, you die for what you did. Three days – more than enough time to break out. And then, it won't be you facing the fire. Then you will have your revenge.

Why is this popular? I've said it before. I'll say it again. It's fun to be the bad guy. Bad guys have style. Bad guys get all the best lines. Bad guys rule. If, by the end of this adventure path, you aren't sipping your wine out of a silver-dragon-skull cup while you sit on your iron throne and issue orders to your army of minions to find the paladin and bring him to you alive – you are playing some other game.

## 19. Once "Way of the Wicked" is complete, what next?

We will definitely be following "Way of the Wicked" with a second adventure path. Details are sketchy and we are not ready to make any announcements yet. However, if you would like to tell us what you'd like to see, go to <u>www.firemountaingames.com</u>. There you'll find links to our Facebook page and Paizo's message boards. I always love feedback and I'd love to hear what you'd like to see.

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

You know all those panels at cons you've been to where game designers wearily relate "Please don't tell me about your character or your game"? That isn't me.

I love hearing about your character. I want to know how your home game is going. I want to know what makes your campaign different from every other campaign in the world. If you meet me at a con, I'd love to chat as time permits about that very thing.

Roleplaying is a personal experience. I truly believe that no two groups game exactly the same way. And the variations and eccentricities – they fascinate me. I feel that the more I learn about these different styles, the better I am able to provide material useful to those styles of play. And that's what I do. I am trying to write books that make your game better.

If my work accomplishes that, then I am victorious.





## So What's The Tavern Like, Anyway?

by Raging Swan Press *Review by Endzeitgeist* 5 out of 5 Stars!

This pdf is 23 pages long, 1 page front cover, 2 pages editorial, 1 page advertisement, 1 page ToC/foreword, 1 page SRD and 1 page back cover, leaving 16 pages of content, so let's check this out!

As with all the pdfs in this series, this installment kicks off with a bunch of tables - to be precise, 100 tavern name descriptors and 100 tavern name descriptors and 50 ready to go tavern names. After these basics, we get a two-page spread table on interesting tavern features ranging from paintings of raunchy fey to excellent cuisines and leaking roofs - neat! Even better, we get two pages of sample customers and 2 pages of sample staff NPCs in short write-ups to populate your taverns.

Even better, sample food and drink is provided, 3 d2olists for different poor fares (drinks, food and house specialties), 3 d2o-lists for common lists and the same for good fare - awesome to add spice, quite literally to an adventure's fare.

Even better, since taprooms are a place of encounters, we get a total of 100 different taproom events and 50 different forms of taproom entertainment. And then the awesomeness amps up: We get 3 perfectly spelled out sample songs for bards to recite in taverns as well as two pages of different forms of entertainment like arm wrestling, broom jousting, tavern dice games etc. - all with different rules that are provided for your convenience.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to RSP's two-column standard in b/w and the pdf comes in two versions, one for the printer and one for screen use. The pdfs are fully bookmarked.

This installment of the "So what's..."-series is just plain awesome and up to the highest standard of any installment, providing detail upon stellar detail at your fingertips, offering cool tavern-games etc. - and honestly, I would have loved more tavern songs and games! Especially when combined with RSP's excellent Barroom Brawls, this pdf makes for a truly stellar offering that should not be missing from any DM's library - hell, if you're running an urban campaign, the staff and customers alone might make for awesome pdf, but combines with the cool lists and the awesome games, we're in for a vast amount of fun. Now I want a sequel to this and a high-level barroom brawl-pdf! My final verdict? Stars seal of approval! 5

Endzeitgeist out.





RAGING SWAN PRESS

#### Faces of the Jarnished Souk: Perfect Aneshka, Fate's Immaculate Blade

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

The latest installment of te FoTS-series is 15 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD and 1 page advertisement, leaving a total of 11 pages for the latest addition to Rite's roster of far-out NPCs, so let's take a look at her!

Following my standard for reviews of the FoTS-series, I'll start with the supplemental material: There are archetypes in here, and a lot of them. Special mention deserves the weapon champion generic archetype, one, that akin to those innovated by SGG in what seems to be a long time ago, can potentially be taken by every class: This archetype enables one to

specialize in a very close set of weapons and receive rather versatile bonuses when using them, from additional damage to shield bonuses, improved CMBs etc. The physical exemplar is another such generic archetype and portrays a character that tries to hone his/her/its physical form towards perfection, resulting in improved attributes etc. To properly realize which abilities Aneshka has given up in her classes, the ki master and woodland spellcaster archetypes (which are part of the regular classes ability roster) are also defined. Beyond that, we get the urban ranger archetype as well as the serene savage (barbarian) archetype. Due to Aneshka being a half-giant, her racial traits (originally appeared in Psionics Unleashed) are also reprinted. Now, before all the psionics-haters start screaming, you shoull know that half-giants only get one psionic ability and that is to cause a shockwave with a stomp and said ability is reproduced as well. And come on - that is not particularly psionic now, is it?

Aneshka also comes with 6 feats and a particular specialty: The synergy with SGG continues to my enjoyment and this illustrious member of the FoTSseries is lethal even for the Coliseum - especially due to utilizing two feats from SGG's guide to horrifically overpowered feats: "Gestalt", which grants her the abilities of a monk with the physical exemplar archetype and a barbarian with the serene savage archetype and "Prestigious", which grants her access to the special powers associated with the assassin PrC. Both feats are reprinted here and their benefits are explained in detail. 2 new traits associated with the dreamburning mechanics of Coliseum Morpheuon are part of the deal, as are 6 items, one of which is actually a major artifact. Have I mentioned her 25point buy or her PC-level wealth? All that is fractored



into her Cr and explained, should you wish to create similar characters. Even her lowest incarnation can be considered deadly at CR 8, but the true terror is her CR 22 incarnation - we're talking about up to 9 attacks, the worst of which is at 17!

But what about her as a character? Aneshka has once won the Coliseum she has drunk from the cup of desires and her prowess is partially a result of this - however, still, she has lost all she ever held dear, her family dead and gone. Seeing this as a twist of fate and punishment for her scrupulous past, the giantess has turned towards a cold fatalism and a belief in the strands of

fate and change - at the same time a devoted observer of other's destiny and a harbinger of doom for others. She comes with dreamburning information as well as some rather devious hooks, one in particular awesome if you as a DM manage to stage her continuous reliance and driven nature and belief in the whispers of fate early on and escalate it - but I won't spoil that one here.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to RiP's old two-column b/w-standard and the artwork portraying her is nice. The pdf comes fully bookmarked. When I heard that this installment would use SGG's HO-feats, I gibbered a bit - FoTS-NPCs are formidable, cool foes and Aneshka even more so due to them. The amount of options her highly volatile build has are staggering and her combat prowess is frightening indeed, I love it! Her character feels multi-facetted and the additional content - well the additional content and specifically, its implementation, is what makes this interesting: The combination of high point-buys, HOfeats, generic and specific archetypes and all the abilities coming together in one deadly, glorious being of raw destructive power: This NPC and its statblock is a beauty to behold. As a character, Aneshka is also interesting and a multi-facetted being, though there are FoTS-installments I personally prefer - Smiles, Nix-Ra-Bael etc. But from a mechanical point of view and regarding her build, she might yet be the most complex (!!!) character in an array of NPCs that is famous for its elaborate builds. Seeing that I can't find a fault with the pdf and love her build, I am practically forced to rate this the full 5 stars seal of approval,

Endzeitgeist out.

## A12 - When the Ship Goes Down

By AdventureAWeek.com Review by Thilo "Endzeitgeist" Graf 5 out of 5 Stars!

This pdf is 78 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial/front cover, 1 page SRD and 1 page back cover, leaving a total of 74 pages of content, so let's check this out!

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

All right! Still here? The weather around Rybalka has not been the best and that is an understatement of epic proportions. When the seasoned captain Duglig Merimies (identified via a captain's token - a cool piece of culture that is also represented via a neat artwork) is found adrift in the seas, his tongue missing, dead and tied to crates, something is obviously amiss and it's up to the PCs to find out what happened and accompany captain Ertaran Honamatrus. After an extensive research-section (nice), there unfortunately are some problems -Huriendor, obviously upset about the PCs (by now probably accomplished heroes in and around Rybalka) leaving and has gathered a mob to keep their precious heroes - thus we are introduced to the first cool bit of crunch in this module - a crowd-control tug of war between the sailors and the Rybalkan locals, both groups of which want the PCs. That is, the Pcs are not facing a straight-forward combat, but rather a complex, yet easy to run and ultimately more or less harmless and fun encounter, which may nevertheless turn easily ugly, making this perhaps the best introductory scenes in the whole line of adventures and making it rather easy for the DM to make his PCs encounter the results of their actions from prior adventures.

The journey per se will be a kind of paper chase aboard the vessel and feature elementals, a potentially friendly ice roc that may clear up what has happened and even an ice-water Elasmosaurus. And then, they reach the island that is the location of the adventure. AaW does it again. Turns out that the strange weather phenomena are the result of an artifact, the Troposheroscope: Housing a shard of the sun (see also the latest Pathways e-zine...), the device was utilized and kept in the care of a storm giant's floating island. Unfortunately, said keeper has died in a maintenance accident of the device, which has promptly turned haywire. Worse yet, the floating island's keel has been torn off by a collision with a cliff, flipping the whole floating island upside down. Yes. The Pcs will have to explore a floating, upside down fortress of a storm giant above a lake. Now if that's not awesome, what is? Even better, the top of



the structure is guarded by multiple traps that belong to the good category - they can be observed and worked around, much like good puzzles. The location also gets neat artworks and the fortress itself is plain awesome - magical horns, a devious trap (paralysis, gelatinous cubes, force cages - ouch!) including a respective warning, mobs of mephits, a library (including 3 sample, rather interesting books) and one of the funniest ways to die, impaled by giant cutlery, are part of the deal. Have I mentioned the electrohydra and the showdown against 2 young blue dragons (tundra is also a kind of desert, after all) that comes with hoards as well as a selection of tactics? And after the PCs have braved this section of the island, they still have to navigate the upside-down caverns (with side-view map) and stop the malfunctioning artifact and defeat the now undead former keeper of the weather-control device while solving the puzzle on how to disable the artifact and avoiding its deadly blasts. Ladies and gentlemen -THIS is a climax worthy of the name! Iconic, challenging, with both a cool location, an interesting adversary and even a puzzle strewn in, this is an awesome final battle... that may see essentially a kind of magical equivalent of an atomic bomb in the hands of the PCs to determine whom to give the artifact or keep it themselves. I know that my players would try to keep it, if only to give new credence to the phrase "blaze of glory" - removing the lead from the shard, they'd look at a whopping 444 points of damage some forces are not for mortals to tamper with...

26 pages are taken up by the full stats of the creatures encountered herein, both for PFRPG and 3.5. We also get player-friendly versions of all maps in the module, and a map of Rybalka and a typical Rybalkan house.

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I didn't notice any significant glitches that would have impeded my enjoyment. Layout adheres to the Pre-B2-two-column layout and the maps, as I've come to expect by AaW, are top-notch. The artworks are ok. The pdf comes fully bookmarked, and while the player handout bookmark doesn't work, it's nested bookmarks do work - no harm done. The pdf comes with a second, printer-friendly version. At the time of me writing this review, Herolab files have not yet been added, but I'm positive they will. This module is AaW at their best an awesome, iconic location, a cool mini-game, internal consistency, cool effects and a climax that deserves the name and provides us with an excellent set of cool effects. The only potential gripe a DM should be aware of is that the Pcs may very well end this adventure with a powerful weapon of destruction that they may use as a last resort - at the cost of all their lives. However, this is easily remedied by making it impossible to dismantle said tool. Let me say it again: This one of the modules that is not only good, it is excellent, fun and exciting and your players will enjoy exploring the cool location. My final verdict for this one will be 5 stars endzeitgeist seal of approval.

Endzeitgeist out.





### 101 Bard Feats

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

The latest installment of RiP's 101-series is 30 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD and 1 page advertisement, leaving a total of 26 pages of content, so let's check this out!

The first 6 pages are devoted to lists of the new feats for the up until now painfully neglected bard-class and after that, we delve right into the crunchy bits and BAM - the pdf opens with a smackdown of a feat - in the tradition of Rite's supplements, the almost universally neglected archetypes (of which there's an increasing amount, but next to no support for the existing ones), the Magician bard archetype gets a feat that makes dweomercraft finally stop sucking: You and your allies get a bonus to touch AC and saving throws thanks to your dweomercraft - if you take the new abjuration dweomercraft-feat, that is. And only two feats later is already one that is an instant classic:

Accelerate Performance. Use bardic performances as move actions instead of standard actions and later, at 10th and 15th level, even as swift and immediate actions respectively. Why this feat had not yet been designed, I can't fathom - it's simple, elegant and closes a hole in the rules. Two thumbs up!

If you're familiar with Super Genius Games' Anachronistic Adventurers-line and the superior

design of the Investigator-class in particular, the Analyze Site feat for the detective archetype essentially takes the crime scene-analysis and makes it available as a feat for the archetype - on the one hand, you could call that lame, but on the other hand, the mechanics are still awesome, allow for great detective stories without player frustration and make the detective, at least imho, finally work as he should, so no complains there on my part. There are several investigator abilities turned feats herein and all of them can be considered that well-made.

Fret not, though - similar to the 101-book on barbarian-feats, this book takes a twist on round powers and treats them like points in several feats e.g. use 3 rounds of bardic performance to let your performance originate up to 30 ft. away from your position, non-lethal damage foes via brutal, derisive slights (Can you see the fainting maidens yet? If you do a character à la Morte from Planescape Torment, this is a must... - as is infuriate foe), implant delayed suggestions in a victim's subconsciousness (And even make the hapless foe your sleeper-agent)and even maximize the non-lethal damage you deal with weapons to subdue rather than kill foes. The latter is an awesome trend in my opinion - blame it on too much Batman-comics, but I always consider heroes to be the ones that subdue other people rather than kill them - there are enough monsters out there to bash, after all. (though this feat could work well to capture exotic beasts for menageries...hmmm.)

Another feat that stands out to me, but could potentially need some minor DM supervision is the Celebrated maneuver: Essentially, you choose three component move actions, combat maneuvers and melee attacks - by expending 3 rounds of bardic performance, you can perform them all, once per combat, as a full-round action, even if they usually would take more actions. The maneuver can't be changed once selected, though, making it a touch choice and balancing its economy of action-advantage with its limitations.

Less complex, but nevertheless interesting is counter turning - if you counter a spell and expend 3 rounds of bardic performance, you can hurl the incoming magical assault back at its originator, as per the spell turning-spell. Archaeologist's should rejoice as well, for a couple of feats improve the options available to their archaeologist's luck by e.g. delaying trap triggers, force crits to reroll and sprint through difficult terrain. Now, if you're more inclined towards nature's allure, rest assured that animal speakers and even arcane duelists and dervish dancers get some neat feats to expand upon their arsenal and make the respective archetypes feel more distinct - especially the latter's option to increase the fleet class feature makes the class take a more distinct focus.

And then there are feats like "Denundate" that had me gawk with an open mouth: If you initiate a dirge of doom, you may expend 3 rounds of your performance to force an enemy to save: If your foes fail, he/she/it loses ALL equipment-based bonuses to defense apart from artifacts and divine relics. Are you staring stunned at the screen? Yeah, I did so too - however, the feat is limited to a range of 5 foot, which serves as a sufficiently limiting balancing factor - yes, the feat is powerful. But the cost is steep (min of 4 rounds BP) and the range short - a risky gambit, but one that may pay off.

Remember these nifty high-level options from 101 Combat feats? The ones that finally made high level fighters feel less boring? Yeah, bards also get a neat new toy at 18th level- "Destructive Resonance" is consumes 6 rounds of bardic performance and essentially shatters your foe to pieces via sound, dealing a whopping 40d6 points of damage on a failed save (20 Cha, btw.) - finally a destructive pulse for the bard to magically kick ass and take names. SPeaking of destructive usages - feats to let you dismiss outsiders, stagger opponents, smack flying creatures with downdrafts (sea singers) and even use your experience in choreographed battles to your advantage in real ones.

If you're more into the money-earning abilities of a bard, Grand Gathering enables you to draw big crowds, while "Grant Quarter" could come right out of a fairy-tale, eliminating the annoying prisonerdilemma by putting the vanquished foe into an extradimensional space - rather neat and potentially very iconic with some rather cool uses like bards carrying other Pcs (sans equipment alas, but that's a problem that can be solved, can't it?) with them to infiltration quests. Speaking of fairy-5tales - want to summon a nereid, including drowning kiss with your songs? There's a feat for it!

"Jack of all Spells" is another feat that deserves special mentioning in my book, as it lets a bard e.g. use two 2 1st level spellslots to cast a second level spell, 2 second level spells to cast a 3rd level spell etc. - neat, not too strong but adds a tactical edge of versatility. Another cool one would be Metamagic performance, which lets you use 3 rounds of bardic performance to lower the spellslot increase of a metamagic feat by 1 and another feat lets you exchange 3 rounds of performanceto reclaim an already expended spell. Secret of the Spheres also deserves mentioning - by performing a ceremony costing 20K Gold, you get detailed information from the GM on one topic, in a non-cryptic fashion. HOwever, if you share the secret thus gleaned, reality destroys you ( no save) and is altered towards the detriment of your goals - cool feat that lets a DM pull off even the most complex of plots while providing a good reason to avoid the captain exposition effect. As another neat piece of 3ppsynergy, 4WFG's scoundrel gets a neat multiclass feat and if you're sick of loud bards, there's a feat that lets you use bardic performances and spells while forcing the unaware foes to make perception versus your stealth-checks to realize your presence - another simple, yet awesome feat.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, though not perfect - I noticed some minor punctuation glitches etc. - nothing serious, though. Layout adheres to RiP's 2-column, full-color standard and the artworks are mostly stock, with the notable exception of e.g. Mark Hyzer's cool Ironborn-bard on the cover (electric violin, anyone?). The pdf is fully bookmarked. This pdf could have so easily been a total let down à la 10 feats of "Use bardic performance to impose bad condition y", 10 feats of "Metamagic effect z to performance" etc. Instead, Steven D. Russell has created a wide array of feats that provide iconic and cinematic options galore and, at least for me, made the bard-class and its archetypes infinitely more appealing by bridging minor gulfs in the rules, adding tactical versatility and flat-out enabling you to do things heretofore impossible by the rules. Better yet, I didn't find a single feat in this pdf I'd consider overpowered or broken, not even one that just felt like bland and boring filler. You bard has too long played the second fiddle, let him take the "Superstar"-feat herein and take center stage once in a while when adventuring! My final verdict? 5 stars, seal of approval, in spite of the minor glitches - this pdf is simply too good to not all-out recommend it.

Endzeitgeist out.



## Monsters of Sin: Gluttony

by Open Design Review by Thilo "Endzeitgeist" Graf 5 out of 5 Stars!

This pdf is 10 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial/ToC, 1 page advertisement/SRD and 1 page back cover, leaving a total of 6 pages of content, so let's take a look!

As has become a tradition in the series by now, the pdf kicks off with a short introduction and a simple template (this one clocking in at CR+1) for the respective sin before going into the details regarding the new monsters.

-Bottomless Pit (CR 5): A disgusting somewhat pig-like aberration of fat masses, this ugly creature comes with a swallowing ability that hastes it and a sectioned stomach that can contain multiple humanoids .

-Gnarljak (CR 6): An animated bear-trapconstruct, this thing attacks anyone coming close, even its creators and are quite deadly - if it trips someone, the things chomps down hazard with multiple additional attacks. It also comes with 3 variants, from CR 0 to CR 2 and all information necessary to create the things yourself - and it's a brilliant take on one of the concepts of gluttony mindless, unnecessary and futile consumption that doesn't nourish (a soul), but rather consumes for any kind of consumption's sake.

-Trap Bush (CR 10): These bushes have goodberries and punish gluttonous - anyone who tries to pick too many of the berries are subjected to a fight with a porcupine-like, rather lethal thorn-dart flinging plant. Another winner indeed.

-Embodiment of Gluttony ( CR 18): A fleshy, unintelligent ooze that gobbles everything mindlessly up, growing larger and larger, this embodiment destroys food, potions etc., regenerates, staggers foes with its acid and comes with a dual aura. A terrifying blob-being with unique, cool signature abilities.

The pdf closes with the embodiment of sin- monster type and a side-bar on gluttony in the upcoming Midgard Campaign setting.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to a full-color twocolumn standard and the disturbing b/w-artworks are top tier quality. The pdf has no bookmarks, but doesn't necessarily need one at this length. I'll make my ramble short - the thematic focus is tight, the signature abilities rock hard and we even get variations on one critter. What's more to want for? I have nothing to complain about apart from that I would have loved for the Bottomless Pit to have one more unique ability. Thus, my final verdict will be 5 stars.

Endzeitgeist out.

#### 101 Not So Random Encounters: Urban

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

This installment of Rite Publishing's 101-series is different and that becomes readily apparent by taking a look at the page-count - 51 pages, 1 devoted to front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD and 1 page advertisement, leaving a whopping total of 47 (!!!) pages of content devoted to new encounters, so let's check them out!

If you're a patron of Questhaven (Rite Publishing's upcoming city-setting), you'll be familiar with the basic premise of this pdf, if not, I'd suggest especially players to jump to the conclusion. Just let it be said, that the basic premise is awesome and that this pdf takes a completely different approach to encounters than e.g. one can see in Raging Swan's excellent "Caves & Caverns". Instead, the creatures indeed are distinctly "Not so" random. This pdf is dedicated to me (thank you, Steve!) for reviews good and bad - so in which category does this one fall?

#### SPOILERS follow.

You have been warned. Still here? All right! In the magical renaissance of Questhaven, there is an organization called "The Fold", essentially an organization of organized monsters - think "The Godfather" with monsters. Worse, all the individual monsters can thus combine their powers, making the Fold a formidable force indeed. Spawned from the rich background currently being developed in the Questhaven-project, this installment of the "101-series" provides us a plethora of NPCs that are tied together by this frame-organization. It should be noted, however, that the individual entries can be taken and used by their own - in no way are you restricted by the narratives to use the beings herein as part of the Fold.

It should also be known that most of the creatures herein have more than one use, one CR respectively and can not only be considered foes to kill, but actually intriguing characters to interact with. Need an example? What about the Rakshasa maharaja who awaits the natural death of his powerful wife to reincarnate her as one of his own people. Oh, and she's an advanced exemplar harridan lamia. (With full stat block!) Said rakshasa also gets his own, modified war juggernaut. Even better, while not every NPC herein gets a full statblock, where applicable, quick modifications provided in the entries can be applied to the basic statblocks.

Not only are there multiple instances for interesting (and often rarely used) beasts that have been made true characters, including a whole network of



relationships entwining the different component parts of this cell of the Fold, the characters also can be considered beyond all doubt iconic: Take Jack Straw, for example: A pale stranger that has lost all ties with mankind and usually appears disguised as a scarecrow! Undead, gunslinging scarecrows? Yes, please! Or take lonely Skanda of the thousand whispers: A collective of thousands of mandragora plants, the creature comes with both a single, swarm and collective form and takes up three of the entries and its roots are, truly, everywhere - keeping a secret from this spymaster should provide to be a rather challenge. Hunting-falcon significant style domesticated stirges? Medusa apothecaries? Or what about an enforcer who is actually a dream-spectre and known as the "Romantic Nightmare" due to its disturbing courtship habits?

In the end, the pdf provides tables by party levels for the creatures to roll, if you're so inclined.

### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good - while I noticed some minor glitches, they were few and far inbetween and did not impede my enjoyment of the pdf. Layout adheres to RiP's two-column standard and the artworks are ok. The pdf comes with bookmarks for every 10 NPCs - Cr-information for the respective beings would have helped. I'll come right out and say it: This pdf is not perfect in its formal criteria - there could be more bookmarks and there are minor glitches. Usually, that would deter from my enjoyment of the pdf enough to warrant a downgrade in the final rating. However: This pdf is awesome. Steven D. Russell is an expert writer and I'm a huge fan of his fluff. Enjoyable to the extreme, this pdf is one of the rare pdfs that immediately make you come up not with a hook, not with an adventure-idea, but with a whole array of possibilities, enough to spark a whole campaign in fact. It is rare these days that a pdf can truly surprise me with its imaginative potential. Rarer even is the pdf that has me smile at the coolness of the idea and indeed, this pdf had me smile - a lot. Colorful enough to be the cast of a novel (or a whole series of them) the beings herein a so different from what one usually expects that I can wholeheartedly say that NONE of the beings herein can be considered filler. Add to that the intricate web of connections and social relationships and you not only get a vast variety of interesting creatures, but also a portray of a complex crime family that has a staggering array of options and strategies at their disposal, challenging your PCs when trying to outwit the Fold. The writing and imaginative potential contained in these pages is superior and frankly, the characters in most novels are less colorful.

This is one of the installments of the "101 series" that BELONGS into any well-stocked GM-library - and if you're e.g. planning an urban campaign, this is essentially a must. Even better, if your own campaign has become stale, take this pdf and make the creatures herein perform a hostile takeover of a local underworld or even a kingdom and watch your players struggle. The potential is vast and thus, in spite of my minor gripes, I'll settle for a full verdict of 5 stars endzeitgeist seal of approval.

Endzeitgeist out.



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