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Editorial

By Dave Paul

I'm sure I've written about this before, though not necessarily here or quite in this context. In my geographical region, we've had the driest November on record. This previous summer, we had one of the driest summers, and, throughout my country, we've had several of the "hottest years ever" again and again. Part of what all this does, for me anyway, is mess with my sense of how things "are supposed to be." There are long stretches of human history during which people could take for granted certain facts about the seasons, about the tides, about storms and droughts. Much of that seems to be shifting right now.

I wonder about all of this from a fantasy setting perspective. How many of your characters have lived in a time when the world was undergoing growing pains? Plenty of settings take place after something after an age of dragons, after the rise and fall of an undead army, after a war of the gods, etc. But, what is it like, from the point of view of the people in that world, to be living through the change?

One of the campaigns I played in for years (about which I've written here before) was set in pre-Renaissance Europe, modified heavily by the fact that magic was real, certain discoveries were never made, and some important historical events turned out differently than in our own past. In this campaign, our characters pretty much always bedded down for the winter. The specific area our characters did most of their living and adventuring was far enough north, and the world was assumed to be in an era of cold-enough and snowy-enough winters, that even with the advantages of some magic, surviving in the wilderness for several nights in a row, with just blankets and tents, was pretty much out of reach for characters below about 7th level. And, even higher level characters wouldn't put up with this. It was a constant throughout societies, a sort of given, that people just took the winters off. In much of Europe and the Americas today, a huge number of people just don't go to work on December 25, and this is widely accepted, known, and expected. When I was a child, nobody ever went shopping on Sundays because no stores were open for business on Sundays. There are expectations about how things "are supposed to be," some of them fit within the context of the environment of the world, some within the environment of other people. But, most folks have some sense for things (which is probably why so many people, after certain holidays, will remark something like "I know today is Tuesday, but it feels like a Monday").

Part of what it is to be in the world, part of what it is to have relationships with others, part of what it is to work and live and become educated, is this participation in how things "are supposed to be." I've always questioned it. I, for one, am quite skeptical of the claim that people ought to do something on the grounds that it's supposed to be done that way. Nevertheless, I admit to having that sense. I understand when I'm standing outside, in very northern latitudes, in December, and it's warm enough to go out without a hat or boots, that something feels off. I understand when almost all of the birds that used to live in my area no longer live here, that something feels off. of a game? Is there enough longevity and consistency in your games that it even matters? Or, is the focus elsewhere? I don't know about others' preferences, but I really enjoy the immersion. I prefer very long-running campaigns during



which my character gets to know dozens (maybe hundreds!) of NPCs very well. I prefer campaigns that are so well-developed and so long-lasting that when my character hears of some NPCs death at the age of 90, that I (not my character) feel sad about it. When the GM points out to a druid PC that the number of a certain species of butterfly seems inappropriately low this spring, that might matter.

I like GMing campaigns that have long-standing traditions. I enjoy starting a campaign with enough background on everything that no matter what my players have their characters do, no matter where they go, no matter what they explore, I have sufficient context on how things "are supposed to be" that I can maintain verisimilitude.

Don't get me wrong—I enjoy the modular convention approach too. I like taking a break from a campaign and doing a few one-shots on the side. And, of course, like most GMs, sometimes I burn out and need a break.

But, the continuity is important to me. Probably this says more about me than it says anything about anything else. And that's fine, I don't mind revealing things about myself. But, for me, the world I live in feels a little off these days. Especially the weather, the seasons, and the climate generally. I don't quite know how to place myself in it all. I'm accustomed to winters with several feet of snow, I'm accustomed to several snowfalls before the first of December. I haven't seen that in several years now. A few years ago, I was moving the lawn on December 7th. That just did not feel right. When I was a child, I remember several Thanksgiving holidays that required everyone to be bundled in coats, gloves and scarves. Recently, people have been out jogging in shorts. And I haven't moved. I've lived in the same area, roughly for more than 40 years.

Do our characters notice these things? Does it matter to them? How would they respond to something "big" changing around them? What if permanent magic items stopped being permanent, what if spells stopped working the way everyone was used to? Would they says that things "are supposed to be" a certain way and wonder what could cause the change?

I'm curious.

Do PCs notice this? As a GM, do you ever fiddle with this element



The Firemaker

A Pathfinder Roleplaying Game adventure for 4-6 characters of level 1.

Goblins have been raiding the crops and livestock of "Pig's Trotter" for the last few weeks now. Nobody knows where they've come from or what they're doing here but local farmers are sufficiently displeased with their activities to have offered a 200gp reward to have them stopped.

Sounds like a nice little job for a neophyte group of adventurers out for their first taste of fame and glory. "I mean it's just a Goblin-Bash, right? What could possibly go wrong ..."



Four Dollar Dungeons are standalone adventures designed to be logical, entertaining, challenging and balanced, and easily integrated into any campaign world.

Each adventure has enough material to last two to three playing sessions and enough experience to raise four characters of the appropriate level up by one extra level. Treasure is commensurate with the encounter challenges faced. Scaling information is included for adventuring parties of five or six.

Although The Firemaker begins in a small village, most of the action takes place underground.



Soulfire Creature Template

By Steven D. Russell; Illustration by Lucilla Lischetti

ur Smiling Lady of Hearth and Home and the sovereigns of heaven sometimes grant their champions special powers or seek to redeem a vile foe, infusing them with the essence of celestial flame. These righteous powers grant this gift only rarely, since its strength can remain in a bloodline for many generations. In fact, soulfire creatures occasionally become races unto themselves. Soulfire creatures may have bodies enshrouded by fire and have green-gold skin, hair, or scales, while some forms of soulfire radiate a blue, verdant green, brilliant gold or even white flame.

Creating a Soulfire Creature

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

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

CR: +2

Alignment: Changes to any Good.

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

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

Soulfire Body (Ex): Soulfire creatures' bodies gain some of the qualities of elementals. Each time a soulfire 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 soulfire creature retains all the special abilities of the base creature, plus the special abilities as described below:

Breath Weapon (Su): A soulfire creature can breathe a 30-foot-long cone of soulfire (or substitutes an existing breath weapon attack) once every 1d4 rounds. The breath deals 1d8 points of damage per two HD to each neutral creature or 1d6 points of damage per HD to each evil creature and causes it to gain the blindness condition. Every creature in the area must attempt a Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 the base creature's HD + its Constitution modifier); a successful Reflex save halves this soulfire damage and negates the blindness effect.

Rapture's Burn (Ex): A soulfire creature deals soulfire damage (+1d8 to neutral creatures +2d6 to evil creatures) in addition to the normal damage it deals on a successful hit in melee. Those affected by the rapture'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 soulfire, not normal fire), taking same amount of soulfire damage for an

additional 1d4 rounds at the start of its turn. A rapture creature can attempt a new save as a full-round action. Dropping and rolling on the ground grants a +2 bonus on this save. Creatures that hit a soulfire creature or a burning creature with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take the same amount of soulfire damage and must make a Will save (same DC) to avoid catching on fire (again this is soulfire, not normal fire).

Gaze of Rapture (Su): The gaze attack of a soulfire creature can cause ecstasy and damage to any non-good, 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 awe-inspiring euphoria that inflicts a circumstance penalty on attack rolls, skill checks and ability checks equal to the soulfire creature's Charisma bonus (minimum -1), and also suffer soulfire damage (1d8 to neutral creatures 2d6 to evil creatures) each round for 1 round per CR of the soulfire creature. The flames can be put out as per rapture's burn but the penalty due to euphoria remains for the duration.

Soulfire Substitution (Su): A soulfire creature can modify any spell, magic item, or effect with an energy descriptor to use soulfire instead as a free action. The effect's descriptor changes to good and fire—for example, a cone of cold composed of soulfire energy is an evocation [good, 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 Constitutionbased 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: Soulfire creatures gain a +8 racial bonus on Intimidate and Knowledge (religion) checks; both of these skills are always considered class skills for soulfire creatures.



Rapture's Remains

CR 13

XP 25,600 CG Large dragon (water)

Init +7; **Senses** dragon senses; **Perception** +24 Aura frightful presence (180 ft., DC 21)

Defense

AC 30, touch 12, flat-footed 27 (+3 Dex, +18 natural, -1 size) hp 189 (14d12+98) Fort +16, Ref +12, Will +12 Defensive Abilities heaven's purity, soulfire body DR 5/magic; Immune acid, fire, paralysis, sleep; SR 25

Offense

Speed 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft. **Melee** bite +23 (2d6+13 plus rapture's burn), 2 claws +20 (1d8+9 plus rapture's burn), 2 wings +17 (1d6+4 plus rapture's burn), tail +17 (1d8+13 plus rapture's burn)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks breath weapon (80-ft. line, DC 22, 12d6 acid or 7d8/14d6 soulfire), corrupt water, gaze of rapture (-X penalty, DC 21, 13 rds), rapture's burn (1d8/2d6 soulfire, DC 21), soulfire substitution

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th)

At will-darkness (60-ft. radius)

Spells Known (CL 3rd)

1st (6/day)—alarm, faerie fire, shield

o (at will)—*dancing lights, detect magic, mending, message, read magic*

Jactics

Before Combat Rapture's Remains prefers to use its alarm spell to protect various areas near its lair in an abandoned temple, and will cast shield before entering combat.

Soulfire

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

Any non-good, living creature that would be killed by soulfire damage must make a Will saving throw (DC 10 +1/2 the creature's CR + the creature's Charisma modifier); failure renders the subject under the effects of a sequester spell with a permanent duration, caster level equal to the soulfire creature's CR.

During Combat Rapture's Remains prefers to attack its target from stealth, often hiding from beneath the waterways of its home. It always attempts to line up multiple targets for its soulfire breath weapon attack.

Morale When outmatched, which is rare, Rapture's Remains retreats to its lair, though it will not flee from there, fighting to the death to protect its temple and its treasure.

Statistics

Str 29, **Dex** 16, **Con** 25, **Int** 14, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 18 **Base Atk** +14; **CMB** +24; **CMD** 37 (41 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Fly +14, Handle Animal +16, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Perception +24, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +22, Swim +34

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant

Ecology

Environment warm marshes Organization solitary Treasure triple

Special Abilities

Corrupt Water (Sp) Once per day Rapture's Remains can stagnate 10 cubic feet of still water, making it foul and unable to support water-breathing life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. Liquid-based magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will save (DC 19) or become ruined. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is 180 ft.

Speak With Reptiles (Sp) Rapture's Remains gains the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

Swamp Stride (Ex) Rapture's Remains can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

Water Breathing (Ex) Rapture's Remains can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

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Alternate Treasure/Wealth Level Rules

By Owen K.C. Stephens, Illustrated by Lance Red and John Wigley



The standard assumption in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* is that characters will receive a certain value in gold, gems, and magic items. The treasure characters are designed so that, on average, if you face enough monsters to get from 1st to 2nd level, you will also have managed to put together useful equipment and magic items worth 1,000 gp. The difficulty of higher CR monsters is based on the idea that characters will have a minimum amount of gear by the time they get to those greater threats.

Overall, this system works well, but it's not perfect. A host of other variables make it easy for a character's wealth by level to vary wildly from the values assumed by the game rules. Additionally, for some campaigns this strains credibility. Magic swords, rings, and staves are fairly common in fantasy literature – a blue book where such things are regularly valuated is not.

The following alternate system takes many assumptions about random treasure and wealth tracking out of the game, without altering the basic power assumptions of higher-level characters. It assumes that no one can buy or sell magic items for gp (and that the amount of gold a GM gives characters only impacts their ability to buy mundane equipment, hire services, and build strongholds), but that heroes do somehow end up with what they need, when they need it.

The Rules

The system works on four points.

1. No magic item can be bought or sold. The values of items are not discussed in character, and are used only as outlined below.

2. At each character level after 1st, players are allowed to equip their characters with whatever equipment they wish, to a maximum value equal to the standard wealth of a PC of that level (see the "Character Wealth By Level" table in Chapter 12 of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*). Magic items are limited to those provided in the rulebooks in use for the campaign (no custom magic items).

Unless a character has earned an item voucher (see below), no single item the character owns may have a value greater than 20% of the character's total wealth. Items with multiple charges that cannot be recharged (such as wands) have 20% of their maximum charges, and no more than 20% of the character's total wealth may be spent on one-charge items (such as potions).

3. Characters who take item creation feats may have items worth 5% more than normal (25% without an item voucher), and may buy custom magic items (using the rules for Magic Item Creation in Chapter 15 of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*) subject to GM approval and the limits noted in point 2, above.

4. When an encounter is defeated, the GM still rolls for



random treasure. If the treasure determines a magic item is found, the GM notes what magic item slot the item is (weapon, armor, shield, none, or body slot), and whether it was rolled as a minor, moderate, or major item. This becomes an item voucher, and characters take them as they would a normal magic item. An item voucher allows a character to spend a larger portion of their wealth on the specific item defined by the voucher. If the character has this item stolen, lost, or destroyed, it is the voucher that is lost – at the character's next level he still receives the full wealth by level, but must stick to the normal 20% of his full wealth for each level.

A minor item voucher can have a value of up to 35% of a character's total wealth. A moderate item voucher can have a value up to 45% of a character's total wealth. A major item voucher can have a value up to 55% of a character's total wealth. When a character receives an item voucher, he can reduce the value of one other item to allow them to reassign gp value to an item appropriate to the voucher.

For example, Swift is a 6th level elven rogue. She has total wealth of 16,000 gp, but cannot have any item worth more than 3,200 gp (20% of her total). When Swift receives a major weapon item voucher, she can immediately reduce the power of one item to give her the value to go from her +*1 shortsword* to a % (worth 8,310 gp, less than 55% of her total wealth). If her new sword is stolen, lost, or destroyed, she loses the voucher and must go back to a +1 weapon. If she still has the voucher when she reaches 7th level, she may select a weapon worth up to 12,925 gp (55% of her new maximum wealth).



Book Of Donster Gemplates

ROES

Bv: S. ven D. Russell





Reavers of the Bloody Jears (EI §; XP 4,800)

By Creighton Broadhurst of Raging Swan Press Illustrated by Eric Quigley, Tamas Baranya, and Jeff Ward

s they journey through a mountainous region, the PCs encounter a small band of renegade orcs. Led by the antipaladin Gork, the group are the survivors of a failed attempt to overthrow their tribe's chieftain, Lerg.

The encounter starts when the two groups are 4d10 x 10 ft. apart. When the PCs spot the orcs, read:

A half-dozen orcs crest a rise ahead of you. Four wear chainmail and carry longspears while another wears full plate armour and rests a greataxe on her back. The final orc wears nothing but travel-stained clothes.

Surprisingly, the orcs don't immediately attack. Rather Gork attempts diplomacy. Her plan is to woo the PCs to her cause and use them to attack the Bloody Tears. To this end she tells terrible stories of Lerg's atrocities.

Gork

Gork lusts for bloody revenge against Lerg, after the chieftain forced himself upon her. She revels in the dark powers granted to her by her unholy faith. She is Brak's lover. Obviously, she plans to betray the PCs later, but for now she hopes to dupe them into attack the Bloody Tears' lair by painting herself as a victim and highlighting Lerg's many atrocities.

Brak

As devoted to Gork as he is cunning, Brak loves burning his enemies to death. He revels in their death throes and cackles when he slays an enemy. Brak is incredibly arrogant and believes orcs are a master race destined to conquer the world.

Jactics

Using typical orc tactics, the spearman drink their *potions of shield of faith*, charge into battle using their longspears in conjunction with Power Attack and pole fighting.

Brak: At the first sign of trouble, Brak casts *mage armour*, *shield* and *fox's cunning*. He hangs back from melee and uses his spells (typically *fireball* and *scorching ray* to burn his enemies). Before battle begins he casts *keen edge* on Gork's greataxe and *haste* on his companions.

Gork: A fearless warrior, Gork rushes into battle to support her men. She uses *magic weapon* and fiendish boon (to add the flaming weapon quality to her greataxe) and simply hacks away at the nearest opponent. If surrounded and outnumbers she repeatedly channels negative energy. She saves smite good for the enemy's champion.

Area Features

The area has several features of note: Rubble

(Dense): Rocks cover the ground. It costs 2 squares of movement to enter such squares. The rocks increase the DC of Acrobatics checks by 5 and the DC of Stealth checks 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): It costs 2 squares of movement to move up hill by one square. Characters running or charging downhill must make a DC 10 Acrobatics check or stumble and end their movement 1d2 squares later. A character failing this check by 5 or more falls prone in the square in which it finishes this movement. The 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.

Orc Spearman (4)

CR1(XP400)

Clad in studded leather armour, this orc wields a long, slender spear.

Male orc fighter (polearm master) 2 CE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0[0+0 Wis], Sense Motive +0[+0 Wis]

Defense

Speed 30 ft.; **ACP** -5; Climb +3, Swim +3 **AC** 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; **CMD** 17 (+6 armour [chainmail], +1 Dex) **Weakness** light sensitivity **Light Sensitivity (Ex)** Orcs are dazzled in areas of bright light or within a *daylight* spell. **Fort** +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0

Offense

hp 24 (2 HD); ferocity

Ferocity (Ex) An orc spearfighter remains conscious when its hit point total is below 0. It is staggered and loses 1 hit point each round, and dies when it reaches -14 hp.

Space 5 ft.; Base Atk +2; CMB +6

Melee longspear (reach 10 ft.; Power Attack [-1/+3]) +7 (1d8+6/x3) or

Melee dagger (Power Attack [-1/+1]) +6 (1d4+4/19-20) **Atk Options** pole fighting

Pole Fighting (Ex [immediate]) The orc spearman can shorten his grip to use his longspear against adjacent targets (but with a -4 penalty on attack rolls). He can use an immediate action to return to his normal grip.

Combat Gear potion of cure light wounds, potion of shield of faith (+2)

Statistics

Abilities Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6 **SQ** weapon familiarity

Feats Power Attack^B, Toughness1, Weapon Focus (longspear)^B **Skills** as above

Languages Common, Orc Gear as above plus 1 gp

Gork

CR 5 (XP 1,600)

This orc wears battered, blood-splattered full plate.

Female advanced antipaladin 5

CE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +2, Sense Motive +2

Speed 20 ft., base speed 30 ft.; **ACP** -5; Acrobatics -3 (-7 jumping), Ride +4

Defense

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 21; CMD 24 (+ 9 armour [mwk full plate], +1 Dex, +1 dodge [Dodge], +2 natural)

Immune disease; Weakness light sensitivity, smite evil

Light Sensitivity (Ex) Orcs are dazzled in areas of bright light or within a *daylight* spell.

Smite Evil (Su) A paladin using smite evil on Gork deals bonus damage equal to 2 points per paladin level on the first successful hit.

Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +9

Offense



hp 57 (5 HD); ferocity

Ferocity (Ex) Gork remains conscious when her hit point total is below 0. She is staggered and loses 1 hit point each round, and dies when she reaches -18 hp.

Space 5 ft., aura of cowardice (10 ft.); Base Atk +5; CMB +11

Aura of Cowardice (Su) While conscious, Gork radiates an aura of dread that causes enemies to take a -4 penalty on saving throws against fear effects. Creatures immune to fear lose their immunity, in the aura.

Melee mwk greataxe[+5 BAB, +6 Str, +1 weapon, +1 Weapon Focus] +13 (1d12+9/x3) or

Melee Touch touch of corruption (5/day) +11 (2d6 plus shaken [DC 15 Fort save negates shaken])

Ranged mwk sling (range 50 ft.) +8[+5 BAB, +2 Dex, +1 weapon] (1d4+6)

Atk Options fiendish boon, smite good

Fiendish Boon (Sp [standard]) Gork can enhance her weapon for 6 minutes by increasing its enhancement bonus by +1 or by adding the *flaming*, *keen* or *vicious* weapon properties.

Smite good (Su [swift; 2/day]) +3 attack, +5 damage (+10 damage on first strike against good-aligned cleric, paladin, outsider or dragon), +3 deflection. Smite good overrides the damage reduction of the target

Special Actions channel negative energy

Channel Negative Energy (Su) 3d6 negative energy (DC 15 Will halves). Using this ability consumes two uses



of Gork's touch of corruption.

Antipaladin Spells Prepared (CL 2; concentration +5)

1st—*magic weapon, protection from good* **Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5th; concentration +8) At-will—*detect evil*

Combat Gear +1 human bane bullets (7), potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of protection from good

Statistics

Abilities Str 23, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 16 **SQ** cruelty (shaken), evil aura (strong), plague bringer, weapon familiarity

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (greataxe)

Skills as above plus Intimidate +11, Knowledge (religion) +4

Languages Common, Orc

Gear as above plus belt pouch, 12 gp skull drinking cup

Brak CR 5 (XP 1,600)

This powerfully-built orc wears faded, mud splattered clothes. He carries a longbow and has many pouches at his belt.

Male advanced orc wizard (evoker) 5 CE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6, Sense Motive +1

Defense

Speed 30 ft.; **ACP** 0; Climb +7, **AC** 19, touch 13, flatfooted 17; **CMD** 20 (+4 armour [*mage armour*], +3 Dex, +2 natural)

Weakness light sensitivity

Light Sensitivity (Ex) Orcs are dazzled in areas of bright light or within a *daylight* spell. **Fort** +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6

Offense

hp 45 (5 HD); ferocity

Ferocity (Ex) Brak remains conscious when his hit point total is below 0. He is staggered and loses 1 hit point each round, and dies when he reaches -18 hp.

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +7, **Melee** mwk falchion +8 (2d4+7/18-20)

Ranged force missile (range 150 ft.; 7/day) hits as *magic missile* (1d4+2 force)

Ranged mwk composite longbow (range 110 ft.) +6 (1d8+5/x3)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 5; concentration +9 [+13 casting defensively or grappling]; arcane bond [masterwork ring], intense spells)

3rd-fireball (DC 19), haste, keen edge

2nd-flaming sphere (DC 18), fox's cunning, scorching

ray (2)

1st—*expeditious retreat, mage armour, shield, true strike* (2)

o—detect magic, mage hand, message, read magic Intense Spells (Su) When Brak casts an evocation spell that deals hit point damage, he adds 2 damage of the same type as the spell. This damage is only applied once per spell, not once per missile or ray.

Combat Gear arrows (20), potion of cure serious wounds, scroll of fireball, scroll of invisibility

Statistics

Abilities Str 21, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 10 SQ weapon familiarity

Feats Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus (evocation)₃, Spell Focus (evocation), Scribe Scroll^B

Skills as above plus Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +12, Knowledge (engineering) +12, Spellcraft +12

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc, Undercommon

Gear as above plus spell component pouch, *cloak of resistance* +1, 15 gp

Spellbook (enchantment, illusion) as above plus 3rd *lightning bolt*, 2nd—*false life*, *resist energy*; 1st—*magic missile*, *protection from good*, *shocking grasp*; 0—all

Scaling the Encounter

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes: EL 7 (XP 3,200): Remove the orc spearmen. EL 9 (XP 6,400): Add four orc spearmen.



PATHWAYS MAGAZINE

Rite Publishing Presents Heroes of the Jade Oath 一方方 ale in January DER



By Frank Carr

Sigbin

by Will Myers, illustrations by Carrie Muir, Jason Rainville, and Torox

ou feel a pinprick on your neck, and as you turn, you notice a horrible smell. There's a blur, and then a large, goat-headed monster is standing on your shadow. You try to run, but you can't move. The last thing you see before falling unconscious is this horror taking a bite of your shadow, your blood dripping from its lips.

Sigbin XP 9,600

CR 10

XP 9,600 CE Large aberration Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9 Aura Stench

Defense

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (+2 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size) hp 128 (15d8+60) Fort +4; Ref +2; Will +10 Weakness light sensitivity

Offense

Speed 30 ft.; fly 50 ft. (poor) Melee +16 bite (2d6+4) Melee +14 2 slams (1d6+2) Ranged +14 4 spines (1d6 plus sigbin's sleep) Special Attacks shadow bite, shadow pin

Statistics

Str 18; Dex 14; Con 18; Int 11; Wis 15; Cha 13 Base Atk 12; CMB +16 (+20 on pin attempt with surprise); CMD 28 Feats Ability Focus (shadow pounce), Acrobatic, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack, Improved Natural Armor, Multiattack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Stealthy Skills Acrobatics +22, Climb +11, Fly +22, Intimidate

+13, Knowledge (pick one), Perception +9, Stealth +16, Survival +9

Racial Bonus Fly +8, Stealth +4 Languages none Special Qualities betwixt and between, invisibility

Special Abilities

Betwixt and Between (Su): A sigbin is made up of the slightest bit of shadow stuff, which allows it to treat shadows as solid. The sigbin can affect the real world as usual. This grants no concealment benefits nor does it grant the shadow drinker the *ghost touch* ability for any of its attacks.

Invisibility (Su): The sigbin can make itself invisible as per the *invisibility* spell. Due to its centuries of hunting humans, the sigbin's invisibility is particularly effective against humans, increasing the DC to detect



the sigbin by 5. This ability does not negate the sigbin's Stench aura.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): A sigbin is dazzled in areas of bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Shadow Bite (Su): If the sigbin begins a round with a creature's shadow pinned, it can take a bite of that shadow, dealing 2d6+4 points of damage and 1d4 Constitution damage to the creature. For every point of Constitution damage it causes, the sigbin gains 5 temporary hit points. The shadow of the creature bitten has pieces missing from it, evidence of the Constitution damage. This Constitution damage can only be healed naturally, not by *heal, lesser restoration, restoration,* or any other magic that heals ability damage. The bite damage heals normally and by magic. This attack can only be made against corporeal humanoids, animals and magical beasts that cast shadows. Creatures made of shadow or creatures from the Plane of Shadow are immune to this attack.

Shadow Pin (Su): If the sigbin pounces on a creature's shadow, the shadow drinker can attempt a grapple check without incurring an attack of opportunity. If successful, the creature is considered pinned and cannot move. If the sigbin has surprise, it gains a +4 bonus to its grapple check. The pinned creature can escape with a DC 21 Escape Artist check, a successful grapple check, or a DC 24 Strength check. The DC is Constitution-based.

Sigbin's Sleep (poison) (Ex): Sting - injury; save Fort DC 21; frequency 1/round for 2 minutes; initial effect unconsciousness for 1 minute; secondary effect unconsciousness for 1 hour; cure 2 consecutive saves.

Spines (Ex): Four times per day, once every 1d4 rounds, the sigbin can whip its tail in an arc, sending a long, thin spine at a single target up to 40 feet away. Each spine deals 1d6 points of damage (only one spine is released per attack) and affects the target with the poison sigbin's sleep.

Stench (Ex): The sigbin is surrounded by a noxious cloud. All living creatures within a 30-ft. radius of the shadow drinker must make a DC 21 Fortitude save or become *sickened* for 4 rounds. The DC is Constitution-based.

No one is entirely sure where or how the sigbin originated, but there are two prevailing theories. The first is that at some time in the past, a creature from the Plane of Shadow came to our world and bred with a large blood-drinking creature, creating a lineage of these vampire-type monsters. The second is that a shadow mage purposefully created this beast, but didn't count on it being able to breed. This second theory also holds that breeding did occur, somehow, creating an entirely new population. The truth, as it usually is, is more terrifying.

Under the right circumstances, a vampire's shadow, stripped from the vampire's mortal form and flung into the universe, takes on a life of its own as a sigbin. This shadow, discarded because it was no longer linked to a soul, remembers nothing of its previous life. The only remnant of its former host is the vampire's unquenchable thirst for blood. The sigbin searches for the being that it once belonged to. It is uncertain what would the result would be if this happened.

The sigbin, also known as the zegben or shadow drinker, is fifteen feet long and weighs about 400 pounds. It has dark gray fur covering its body, large bat-like wings, short arms, and long legs that end in curved claws. Its face resembles that of a demonic, hornless goat, with a mouthful of sharp, red-stained teeth. The long serpentine tail is tipped with poisonous spines. The sigbin is a predator that seeks out the living for its sustenance, in a way similar to its vampire parent. Due to its unusual connection to the Plane of Shadow, the sigbin can attack a person not only physically, but also through its shadow. While the sigbin can harm someone physically, it receives no benefit from this, other than possibly incapacitating the victim allowing it to then drink from the victim's shadow.

The sigbin hides in the darkness far enough away from prey so that its stench aura is not detected. It prefers to attack creatures that are alone. Using its *invisibility*, the sigbin will sometimes stalk its prey for hours before acting. Attacking from the darkness, the sigbin will first attempt to use its poison spine to cause unconsciousness and then use its shadow pounce in case the victim wakes up. If faced with a large number of foes, the sigbin uses its *invisibility* and tries to fly away.



TRIBES ANTHOLOGY I

A Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Compatible TRIBES supplement by Creighton Broadhurst and Eric Menge



VILLAINS II

A Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Compatible GM's RESOURCE by Creighton Broadhurst and Martin Tideswell





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Twenty Questions with Wolfgang Baur

By Steven D. Russell; Illustrations by Bruno Balixa

1. Could you tell us a little about yourself?

Sure! I'm a game designer, editor, and publisher of long standing, starting out with *Dragon* and *Dungeon Magazines* at TSR in Lake Geneva. I'm currently the publisher at Kobold Press. Most of my work has been for *D&D* and *Pathfinder*, with occasional ventures into *Call of Cthulhu* or other systems.

I like fairly traditional fantasy, with dark elements drawn from European myths and from the work of Clark Ashton Smith. Lovecraft was OK and all, but C.A. Smith was the real master of high macabre weirdness. Read *Xothique* and tell me I'm wrong.

2. What is your home game like?

My home game isn't a long-arc game, but a series of short campaigns, playtests, and one-shots. The fantasy campaign is set in the <u>Midgard Campaign Setting</u> and we play at least one adventure there every year. The *Call of Cthulhu* campaign consists of a rotating Keeper running published adventures like <u>Red Eye of Azathoth</u> and the Goodman Games stuff. The playtests cover new Pathfinder material like the *Mythic Adventures Beta*, the *D&D Next* open playtest, and 13th Age.

Heck, I ran *Empire of the Petal Throne* a year ago as a one-shot, and we had a blast with a game from the 70s. The main thing for me is having great players and a fun set of characters with room to roam.

3. What is your favorite Paizo product and why?

Probably *Fortress of the Stone Giants* for Rise of the Runelords, because I wrote it the way I like adventures to work: big risks, big rewards, and some dilemmas that aren't solvable without extreme cleverness. And the new Collector's Edition is a thing of pure amazingness,



a book that should really be called a tome. Great work on that edition by the whole Paizo staff.

If we're talking about books I didn't write for Paizo, then probably the Mythic Adventure playtest document. It's deep magic and bigger stories that suit the Midgard setting very well. 4. You are currently doing a good deal of work for Kobold Press; how did that start and how would you characterize your relationship with the company today?

Well, I'm the publisher, so I guess my relationship is that I'm responsible for Kobold Press's releases, even



the ones I don't design or edit. I started out writing all our products, but that role has declined quite a bit: these days, I spend most of my time helping others publish their designs. This includes talented game designers like Christina Stiles, Ben McFarland, and Richard Pett (all Gold ENnie winners with Kobold Press releases), as well as relative newcomers.

I'm always looking for a way to offer gamers something fun and something useful. It's quite a challenge to keep the schedule together and we don't always hit our deadlines, but I think the quality of work we put out is among the highest for the 3rd party publishers of Pathfinder RPG adventures and sourcebooks.

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

I think my favorite is usually the most recent project, and in this case, that's an adventure called <u>To the Edge of</u> <u>the World</u>. The PCs go off on a voyage of discovery into unknown lands, and quickly get pushed around by some power player types like a lich queen. But the beauty of it is that the PCs get the last laugh, if things go well. If they go poorly: well, might be time for a new character!

The design goal was to give low-level PCs something more interesting to do, something sort of epic, really, and throw them into the deep end of the heroism pool. It's ideal for playtesting the Mythic Adventures rules, actually. The results have gotten love-it-or-hate-it responses, with about 80% on the love it side. I'll take those odds.

6. What was your best moment working on To the Edge of the World?

Playtesting it with some very smart players, Chris Lozaga, Carlos Ovalle, Christina Stiles, and Ben McFarland. GMs everywhere know that the adventures you think you are going to run are not quite the same



as what happens at the table, and sometimes you miss big, obvious stuff. Well, that playtest was a great reality check for some elements of the design.

I know some designers think playtest is a drag and just generates more work, but for me, the playtest is where the design work proves itself in actual play. I tend to love them,

especially when they highlight something I would never have noticed from the text alone.

7. What do you feel was the most ingenious part of the To the Edge of the World adventure?

I think the use of the Midgard cosmology and flavor while still making it generic enough to fit into anyone's home campaign or Golarion is probably the most ingenious part of it. It's not difficult to make an adventure portable, but you have to be conscious of that aspect.

Mechanically, I think the use of compressed stat blocks is pretty great, but you know, some people hate those. The emphasis, though, is meant to be on mythic adventure, not grinding tactical combat, and that means less time and space for big stat blocks.

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

The hardest part of making a low-level adventure feel awesomely heavy-metal epic is that, of course, the characters don't have a million powers, feats, and hit points. They can't even bluff very well. So the fluff was very hard, creating that sense of wonder and possibilities while working with a limited range before a TPK was a sad inevitability. Some of this was designing for player psychology as well: making sure that the lich-queen is so dangerous-looking that even the dimmest-bulb hackmeister would decide to maybe kick her ass some other time.

9. Did you learn anything while working on it?

I learned all the ways that a dim-bulb hackmeister can be persuaded that maybe, just maybe, this is not a good idea and -Look! Squirrel! Over there! --- how to distract the distractible into doing something that won't get the whole party killed. That's one of the GM skills I used to have in abundance, but I lost it a bit when my campaign moved into the higher levels for a while.



10. Other than

your own work, what is the best Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible product out there?

Hm. That is a tough one, and it really depends on what you like best. There's some great material from Super Genius like the Bullet Points and DungeonADay. For me, I think whole variant systems are the way to go, things that Paizo would not necessarily tackle. The *Pact Magic* releases by Radiance House are at the top of that list. I'm also very fond of the retro throwback Frog God material, like *Rappan Athuk*, which feels like a refugee from the 70s (in a good way). It makes me laugh in that maniacal way that all GMs know and players fear.

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

I'm fond of adventures and bestiaries far more than anything else, because that's the stuff I find myself using. So to me, the best *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* compatible products are those that enhance play and speed up prep time, rather than just another throwaway PDF with six feats in it. More most of all, to me, the best ones are really meaty supplements.

I like the big ambitious efforts like *Rappan Athuk* and *Pact Magic*, or even the unsuccessful *Pathfinder Modern* Kickstarter. These are people looking to show a style, expand options in a big way, not afraid to try something really, really big.

Sure, some of these efforts disappoint, but some of them change the way we think about *Pathfinder RPG* rules and possibilities. I love those projects.

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

I am currently extremely impressed with at least a dozen writers, all of them turning out superior work. And there's probably a dozen more I just don't know about. The field is rich in talent.

Until recently, I would have said that Adam Daigle was my favorite, since he wrote the *Midgard Bestiary for*

Pathfinder RPG, but now he's gone to work for Paizo I suspect that he won't write

many 3rd-party books.

So... Of the current freelancers, I'n most delighted by Dan Voyce, who wrote Dark Roads & Golden Hells as well as the incredible Northlands He took book. really difficult topics, and nailed them completely. The reviewers on both made it clear that he's working at a level exceeded only by the Paizo staff.



13. What advice would you give to would-befreelancers?

Write something every day, even if it is just for yourself between assignments. Writing is a muscle, and it's worth keeping in shape. Every time I forget this rule, it takes me time to get sharpened up again—and that's usually on a project with a quick turnaround!

14. Who is your favorite illustrator?

Just one? If it's a historical illustrator, probably N.C. Wyeth, but his work is all from 100 years ago, and predates the invention of roleplaying games.

Of the modern, living illustrators.... It's very hard to choose. I'm extremely fond of William O'Connor for his strong design sense and compositions, I love the faces and realism of Mark Nelson, I'm enchanted by how Tony DiTerlizzi makes lines dance and characters both whimsical and creepy. Every artist has strengths and weaknesses (just like game designers, I suppose). Sometimes I'm in the mood for one thing, sometimes it's something else.

If I gotta pick just one today, I think I'm going with Aaron Miller, who did the cover for the <u>Midgard</u> <u>Campaign Setting</u> and the <u>Midgard Bestiary for</u> <u>Pathfinder RPG</u>. He's got a great eye for animals and landscape, and I love his color choices. I fear he'll soon be working just for video game companies!

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

The one that cracked me up lately was someone who accused me of swiping Ed Greenwood's material from the Forgotten Realms because Midgard mentions something called "orichalcum." I read it and was happy about that comment for weeks: orichalcum is one of those bits of realworld history that predates both me and Ed Greenwood by at least 1,000 years, maybe more like 2,500.

The other, more positive fan response I got lately made my week. Someone wrote "I purchased the [Midgard] setting and the players guide so far and I have gotten that old time feeling, which to some may be a bad thing, but rest assured in my case it is a grand thing! This setting, this wondrous creation ... is a thing of immense beauty.

"Not since, well, not since I was a teenager and first peeled back the plastic that had been wrapped around my first Forgotten Realms campaign boxed set have I felt the giddiness that I feel right now... a feeling that many 43 year olds have to shell out a sum for more than what I paid to obtain."

Well, damn. Gamers often complain about negativity in the hobby, the piracy and complaints and the way that we often tear things down. But you know, that post is the sort of thing that makes me just want to bear down and work even harder on the next one. Good fan response is crucial to keeping (largely underpaid and overworked) game designers working. Say something nice to your favorite *Pathfinder RPG* designer.

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

Sure! The upcoming *Journeys to the West* and the associated *Pirates of the Western Ocean* are seafaring supplements, new islands and adventures and spells and items.



There's a ton of great stuff in these, but one of my very favorite bits is something I wrote for one of these, a leviathan island that submerges beneath the sea. There's several related adventures, items, and bits of lore around the leviathan, but my favorite part of it is that it is totally portable to any setting with an ocean full of islands!

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

I still haven't written a humorous adventure that satisfies me. I still haven't designed a core system from scratch that satisfies me. And I would love to tackle a card game design one of these days. I have these notes for it...

I think every designer probably has more ideas and goals than they have time to finish them. I've gotten pickier about my projects as I get older.



18. Can you talk a bit about the Valhalla Calling contest?

Sure! The first 100 people to submit a proposal to Kobold Press have a shot at a fullblown adventure design contract and professional publication. I'm looking for an adventure writer who knows his way around the *Pathfinder RPG* and (ideally) the *Midgard Campaign*

Setting, though we're taking submissions for generic adventures as well as Midgard adventures.

The deadline for submissions is mid-December. Hope to see some of your readers pitch their concepts! The <u>contest guidelines</u> are available now.

19. With Kobold Quarterly magazine ending, are you worried about the future of Kobold Press, or a backlash?

Oh, Kobold Press is fine. We have a roster of freelance authors, designers, illustrators, editors and cartographers that represents some of the best talent in this business. We're bursting with ideas for great new adventures and sourcebooks. And now that I'm not spending my nights and weekends running a quarterly print magazine, I can devote more time and loving care to those projects. (Hey, I'm German. Did you think I was just going to kick back and relax?)

I confess I was worried that people would be angry over the news that *Kobold Quarterly* was ending. But the response from fans has been amazing and deeply touching. It has been a great run on *Kobold Quarterly*, and about two years longer than I spent with *Dragon* magazine. It's a shame that *KQ* never got a huge audience, but honestly it was fun to do something smallbut-fierce, and the sense that not that many people were watching was liberating. We experimented and ran some completely awesome material, and I'm very grateful to everyone who bought one or subscribed or contributed to an issue.

While I wish the magazine had turned into a gigantic success and I could have quit the day job, I don't regret spending 5 years working on it.

As to a backlash: Well, if people tell me that the hobby needs a print magazine, I will wholeheartedly agree with them and will be the first to subscribe to their title. But nothing lasts forever, and *KQ* lasted about as long as some editions of *D&D*. That ain't bad!

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

I'm fond of tricksters, I am starting to brew up a standalone rule set for a one-night story game, and I have a fondness for working with new writers and old friends. Come check out what we're up to at <u>Kobold Press</u>!



Pathways Magazine



Reviews

Legendary () II: More Legendary Items by Thilo "Endzeitgeist" Graf 5 out of 5 Stars!

This pdf is 36 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial/ToC, 2 pages SRD, 2 pages advertisement, leaving us with 30 pages of content for new legendary items, so let's check these out!

If by now you don't know what legendary items and pieces of equipment are, you should definitely check out Purple Duck Games' whole product range - they essentially are weapons, armors, shields and miscellaneous items that are not your run-of-the-mill magic Walmart-crap, but unique items that improve with your character-levels, gaining new and often unique powers. If you are familiar with the 3.5-book Weapons of Legacy by WotC, think Weapons of Legacy minus penalties and suckage.

All right, this general introduction out of the way, the items usually improve every second character level, though the first slew of non-combat items provided by PDG only had 5 improvement-steps instead of 10. Now how do these new ones hold up in direct comparison? Well, we're off to a good start with an item so iconic I was actually asking myself why no-one bothered to do it before -we get an enchanted broom for witches! The Broom enhances flying acrobatics, improves hex-DCs and finally even allows witches to form coven sans hags. Very cool! It should also be noted that each item in this book is lavishly illustrated in full color, with the broom being no exception and looking rather awesome. The crusader's banner, its fluff rooted in Prophyra's NewGod-war, is also interesting in that its properties are a collection of knight's pennon and lord's bannerabilities - unique abilities instead of collecting several others would have been preferable, though - as written, the item lacks a unique signature ability that sets it distinctly apart.

Next is the Eye of Plaetius, a crystal ball that provides us with all the divinatory needs we'd expect to see (get it? *EZG puts 2 bucks in the bad pun jar*) and while its fluff is again interesting, the ball allows the user to combine e.g. telepathy and true seeing with scrying, which allows for nice gaslighting options for sadistic DMs. The item also grants access to the new "Sun's Brilliance"-spell, essentially a lesser type of daylight. Now the Favor of Kalashi is interesting in all ways: This quiver not only comes with nice fluff, produces ammunition etc., it also grants the user the option to deal elemental damage and grants a pool of hunter's points the bearer can use to temporarily enhance ranged weapons (even stacking on preexisting





plusses!) and add the equivalent of progressively better enhancements to the respective ranged weapons. Nice ideas, mechanically solid and cool. Neat!

We also get a flagon that starts off as a decanter of endless water and later allows its wielder to produce sweet wine or oil, and later even tidal waves and the summoning of water elementals. Two spells granted by the item are part of the deal - including the option to summon a fully statted water dragon that even gets a neat full color artwork. For campaigns in the far north, the boots of Giald should not be left under the polar bear-rug - after all, they allow the user to raise igloos and even castles of ice! Beware of Dwarven Ice Wights, though! And what about a hat of tricks that may later gate things and beings in?

There is also a sinister necromancer's cauldron that may raise the dead (though its use should drive sweat to e.g. paladin brows), but where the items kick into full gear is with the Mechanism of Torl that kicks off as a new vehicle (again, with all required stats) and develops into two other vehicles, one of which is an apparatus of the crab and there also are special abilities. EPIC WIN! The boots called Orphan's Rise are all about acrobatics, agility, tightrope mastery etc. - and perhaps it's me, but I immediately had a Dickens-style-story in the back of my head after reading the entry - beyond that, the boots are a godsend for catburglars.

There also are halfling gloves that deflect arrows and make all weapons return to the owner as if they possessed the quality. And then, there's the Rod of Bound Chaos, which deserves special elaboration: Working as both a weapon and an improving rod of wonders, this weapon spans more than 3 pages with random enhancements beyond the versatility of the of basic item-classes it's based on, all but ensuring that the weapon is not the same on any given day. Have I mentioned the vampire's cloak that allows all the iconic vampiric hovering and flying and multiple bat-related abilities? Or the horn that can summon the legendary boar of the Great Hunt, Goldenmane?

Finally, we get a severed hand that improves hand-related spells.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to PDG's 2-column standard and the full color artworks deserve special mention at this price-point, the items are rivaled only by LPJr Design's Treasures of NeoExodus-line. The pdf comes fully bookmarked and it should be mentioned that it is relatively printer-friendly, sans background. WOW! The Legendary Series never fails to satisfy my constant hunger for more of these neat items and this one in particular has some items that teem with creativity, iconicity and coolness without resorting to tried, true and boring territory. The mutable vehicle in particular is pure gold - every adventurer group should have one! Now while I'm still not a fan of the 5-level progression of many of these items, there also can be found several in here that adhere to the 10-level standard and thus, I won't hold it against the pdf: Better 5 good abilities than 10 with a 50%-bland-quote.

I'm happy to report that this pdf fails utterly in being bland, though - instead providing us with one of the best installments of the legendary-series released so far. Author Josh McCrowell did a great job and only due to the banner e.g. falling slightly short of what it could have been (it's still good) will omit my seal of approval. My final verdict thus clocks in at a very easily given 5 stars and an all-out purchase-recommendation.

Endzeitgeist out.

Faces of the Jarnished Souk: Nameless Nil, the Beggar of Self by Thilo "Endzeitgeist" Graf 5 out of 5 Stars!

The latest installment of the FoTS-series is 23 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD and 2 pages advertisement, leaving us with a total of 18 pages of content . quite bunch, so let's checkout Nameless Nil!

Following my format for the series, I'll first examine

the new rulescontent we get: We get the bloody maw, halfconstruct, hungry nightmare templates and Nil uses horrifically overpowered feats from SGG's book of said name, namely the Gestalt feat, which is reprinted here. Nil also makes



use of the autohypnosis-skill you might know from Dreamscared Press without being psionically active (psionic-haters may breathe a sigh of relief) and its incarnations have multiple Savant-levels (KQ, if I'm not mistaken) and sport 11 (!!!) feats in addition to the horrifically overpowered one. Oh, and Nilcomes with stats for scorpion whips and 9 (!!!!!) magic items (including illustrious items like the Belt of Consuming Teeth that can literally eat you up and a minor artifact) as well as a Relic from SGG's Relics of the Godling, the 7 league boots. Latter improve over the levels much like Purple Duck Games' acclaimed Legendary Items.

Oh, have I mentioned the steal combat maneuver? Also, Nil's mid an high-level incarnation can call upon different versions of Rimeheart, a white dragon rogue as support. Of course both come fully statted. And finally, Nil also comes with two new unfettered eidolon evolutions and two traits related to the dreamburning mechanic of Coliseum Morpheuon.

At CR 6, 13 and 21, the incarnations of Nil span all playstyles, so I guess it's time to talk about the creature. SPOILERS. Seriously. I usually don't do SPOILERS in FoTS-reviews, but here it's justified - potential players, jump to the conclusion.

Still here? All right! A being of masks, clad in ragged robes would be a strange sight anywhere but in the Tarnished Souk. Here, Nil, pitifully, is begging for dreams of other people, requiring the consumption of both dreams and magic items to sustain its existence. At first, Nil may actually evoke pity, for it can be pleasant and attach itself utterly to a person, a quest, whatever seeking to emulate the heroics of characters or others But if the boots, whip etc. were not ample clue enough this being is, among others, about making escape a nigh impossibility, for Nil is a conglomerate of beings, each mask representing one personality buried in the vast network of Nil's jumbled mind. If you recall the undeadconglomerate One-as-Many from Mask of the Betrayer, that would be an analogue - only that Nil can't even evoke the sympathy of a broken being that needs to be put out of misery.

Nil is not broken. Nil was never whole. Born from the imaginary friend of a summoner, its core is an empty void, its emulation of life, humanity, feelings, conscience being just that - a pantomime in search for something it can neither attain, nor grasp. The horror of Nil's utter alienness (btw.: Its Masks can swallow you whole...), once exposed, goes even beyond the chill of Many-as-one: It is the horror of a mirror-image through a darkened glass trying to eat you and replace you without gasping truly what all of this entails. The advice provided for the DM on using Nil, btw., is more than sound. Oh, and have mentioned that Nil comes not only with its basic statblock, but with 8 (!!!!!!!!) fully statted ability suites for the different roles it can take on, each with different powers, attacks etc.? There is much space in the Hollow and it tends to consume all that encounter it - will your PCs prevail versus such a versatile for?

Conclusion:

editing and formatting are top-notch this time around - I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to RiP's old rune-bordered b/w-standard in 2 columns and the artwork of Nil by Bran Brinlee is brilliant. The pdf comes with extensive nested bookmarks.

Take a look at all the FoTS-reviews I've written, at the vast array of 5-star + seal of approval-verdicts. Nil blows them all out f the water. I can't recall when we ever had such a complex character with so many different supplemental pieces of information and neat combat options provided. Matt Banach and Justin Sluder have transcended their usual great work and married their mastery of complex crunch and far-out ideas with a sense of wrongness the likes of one usually only sees by the hands of Richad Pett or Nic Logue; And even when compared to the oeuvre of these two demented geniuses, Nil would stand out. This is hands down my favorite FoTS-character so far. Hell, I'll make Nil a legend in my next campaign. I'm hard to excite anymore, but this thing is gloriously demented, its iconography so disturbing it's a joy for my malicious DM-heart. If I could, I'd slap 6 stars on this one - 5 stars + seal of approval, easily earned: A new benchmark for Character-pdfs à la FoTS, Infamous Adversaries etc.

Endzeitgeist out.

A0: Crow's Rest Island by Thilo "Endzeitgeist" Graf 5 out of 5 Stars!

This module is 23 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page SRD, leaving us with a total of 19 pages of content, so let's check this out!

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



All right, still here?

After a short introduction to the area in which it is set in the default campaign setting of AdventureaWeek. com - essentially, the PCs will be people of the Klavekian kingdom, largest of the human realms and sent to the icy frontier of the kingdom to help the settlement Rybalka, which lies right at the border of Vikmordere-territory: Feared savages that could be considered a wild blending of Viking and Native American cultures. That out of the way, the module kicks off without much ado - the PCs are traveling en route to Rybalka for fame and fortune and on their way, they'll need to pass the notorious "Crow's Rest Island".

When passing the island on their ship of Vikmorderebuild (which comes fully mapped in gorgeous detailed full color with maps (on deck, below deck, in a snowstorm and in full-blown snow-storm - awesome), they are forced ashore by the weather and see a weird white crow. In the island's woods, they encounter a party of kobolds and it is also here, the PCs can start to piece together what has happened here. When kobolds were washed ashore on this island, their shaman summoned an ice demon to get rid of the local Vikmordere population. The wild men, confronted with the demonic entity faced annihilation and in order to save them, an adopted Vikmordere attempted a ritual that was interrupted by the kobolds. This ritual gone haywire has trapped the spirits of the Vikmordere on the island. The lavishly illustrated village of the Vikmordere contains the remnants of the kobolds and there, amid ghostly visions, the PCs can secure the missing item for the ritual and help the spirits of the dead find peace.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to AaW's latest 2-column standard with its more streamlined boxes and easier to read fonts and the artworks in full color range from awesome (vista of the village) to not-so-awesome (cover). As I've come to expect from AaW, the cartography is simply stellar and especially the weather and its effect on the ship is AWESOME. A great idea and something I'd love to see used in other modules as well. If you register at Adventureaweek.com, you can also download for free all artworks (including a handouts through a spyglass), profiles of the AaW-iconics, highres jpegs of all the maps, png-tokens for NPCs and adversaries and herolab-files. While usually I would complain about a lack of a backgroundless version of the pdf, this module is free, so it gets a pass on this one. The pdf is extensively fitted with nested bookmarks.

There are sometimes modules that as written are not too exciting, but spark the imagination via iconic locales, nice presentation etc. and this is one of them: The location presented in the module is cool, creepy and offers quite some potential for expansion by the DM and expanded it should be, for the simple encounters fall flat of the awesomeness of the backdrop. Indeed, I wished this was not a free prequel module, but rather a full-blown haunting-investigation. Think about it: Traps in the wood, a deserted village, the sense of being watched, mysterious crows, weather worsening and keeping the PCs stranded on the place and then, the strange hauntings begin - every DM worth his salt can construct a complex investigation from this yarn instead of handing out the solution to what happened on a silver platter to the PCs. Were this a commercial module, that would exactly be what I'd complain about. It's FREE, though, and every module that excites me enough to even contemplate expanding it like I just described is worth downloading and in fact, does a great job. Were I only to rate the module as it can be seen in the pdf, I'd probably go for 4 or 3 stars, depending on a hypothetical price. But since this pdf is free, comes with good production values and sparks one's imagination, I'll instead settle on a solid verdict of 5 stars - come on, it's free and you know you at least want to scavenge the maps.;)

Endzeitgeist out

Up From Darkness

by Joshua "KTFish7" Guillion 5 out of 5 Stars!

Up From Darkness, Rite Publishing's latest offering in the continuing attempts to punish PCs everywhere, i a tale woven by Jonathan McAnulty. 35 pages, with the obligatory page count adjustments made for covers, OGL, credit pages



such on and so forth give us a total page count for the adventure of 22, with a 5 page section of GM aids...we'll get to those, you'll like. The pdf also gives you 5 pregenerated characters to utilize, which in this case are an extremely handy thing, which shall be explained.

Formatting follows the standard dual column layout, with embedded artwork, as well as a few pages with a solo art piece tucked in here and there. The pages are decorated in a pattern that will have invokes thoughts of stylized oriental bamboo framework. Michael K. Tumey's cartography brings a very old school feel to this project, and gamers with an appreciation for older generations of RPGs, or even fans of the many nostalgia clones on the market will instantly feel comfortable with the mapping style used for most of the cartography used in this adventure. Now, I say most as there is one seriously odd duck in regards to the cartography. One particular area has not only been done in the classic style for the interior, but a 3 dimensional CG model has been provided to show the exterior of the section as well. The purpose behind it makes sense in that it helps visualize the manner in which the rooms relate to each other, but the two drastically conflicting styles really make this particular map page look odd.

OK....so all of the basics and non story-point specifics out of the way, this is an adventure review...and we all know what that means, now don't we? That's right. Players, begone. Seriously, stop reading, forward the link on to your GM, close the page and go peruse your GM's wishlist to see how you can further let them know you appreciate all they do for you....OK, we alone now? Just us GMs and such? Alright. Let's take a look into this story, shall we?

First off, this is not anything I would call a standard adventure. The basic story idea is as follows...The PCs are attempting to earn a spot amongst the Hakayami, an elite unit of Shogun within the Kaidan setting. How elite? Final initiation involves ritual suicide and transference of one's soul into a "loaner" body entombed at the bottom of a pitch black dungeon. The PCs assume the roles of these newly self assassinated initiates. They awaken within stone coffins, alone, in the dark, with no memories or clues as to how they got there, who they are, and what the hell is going on. Throughout the adventure there will be key times that the PCs will trigger snippets of memory to surface, as well as moments that they can trigger through roleplay (much like a reward system, earning additional memory snippets). Along with the loss of identity, and of course their original bodies, comes the loss of gear....all gear. The PCs start with kimonos, and must explore to put together enough gear to survive the challenges that roam the dungeon, as well as the obstacles through which they must go on their upward ascent to escape the dungeon. Surviving the dungeon and regaining their memories as they go will earn them the coveted position amongst the Hakayami...it goes without saying the ranks of the Hakayami don't often swell with new recruits.

So...what we have here, story-wise, is a self encapsulated adventure. As a GM I would be hard pressed to sell this to my players as something to incorporate into an ongoing campaign or storyline. And, truth be told, I think that is where this adventure's strength lies. It is not concerned with where the characters were before this, who they were, or where they thought they were going. By limiting the playing field down to what it is, and stripping the PCs of their memories, it forces the players to go back to basics and work as a team to survive, period. The pregens supplied are recommended to be used as they have been written with this adventure in mind, and lets face it, most players are not going to be to happy to hear that their characters killed themselves to earn a right to be part of this adventure, so pregens avoids that entirely. Now, are there potential issues with this, yes. Right off the bat I find myself wondering about spell casters...the PCs have no memories, why would a

spell casting character still have spells available to them? And no, I'm not even thinking along the lines of study time being lost to the whole dying situation, no I am thinking why would I, as a person, try to cast a spell unless I knew I could do it? Also, we have a pregen with some physical enhancements, for lack of better wording. Very cool concept utilizing a necrotic warrior (bone).... but I don't see why the "loaner" body would automatically get the bone spikes and spears abilities, as I see that as more of a physical concept of the PCs body, not an attachment to their soul...So, these would be what I see as being hurdles to the idea of waking up 1) in someone else's body, and 2) amnesia...both can be worked with and around, just giving a heads up to GMs, as this would be something for me that I would want to put some thought into to be prepared to answer when a player challenged it at the table.

Now here is where those GM aids really come to bear, with a selection of random memory snippets, as well as finishing touches for the pregen characters. A very nice touch in making sure that every time this adventure is played through it will be a different game. There are a few editing issues here with misspelled words though, and that does not help sell these as well as they should have been.

Now, right off the bat the PCs can manage to get themselves into trouble, as the room within which they awaken contains more than just the bodies they are inhabiting. Opening any other stone coffins runs the risk of allowing the creation of a tamashinaki, as an elemental spirit may take control of the "empty" body and immediately attack. Obviously this would pose an interesting challenge for the group, as they are weaponless at this point, but a great way to make sure they understand what level of danger they are up against.

Ghostly samurai, haunts, traps and hungry critters all await the exploring PCs on the lower levels of this dungeon...with areas set up to equip the PCs with the gear they will need to survive. And thematically I am really liking the feel of where the story is going at this point as far as the over all vibe of the dungeon itself... crawling their way from the bottom to the top, facing an ever growing level of difficulty in creatures that are not your standard run of the mill grab bag of creatures, the PCs are in for a gauntlet that will more than likely cost a few of them their lives. The adventure is prepared for that though, remember there are additional bodies in the lowest level. Yep, if a PC dies they wake up and get to start all over again, no memories, no clues...evil...love it. I am not a huge fan of adventures that are as self contained as this one is, I will not lie. But this one surprised me, pleasantly. The story idea is a good one, the idea of this being a one off with pregens works well for me and my playgroup, a nice break from our normal game. I can easily see this being used as an opener for a Kaidan campaign as well, if one were looking to attach the PCs to a faction for story purposes. My point here, this is a good story. An extremely good story. Which is why the next part of this really sucks. The pdf has several editing issues, odd spaces in the middle of paragraphs, irregular underlining format to the statblocks, misspelled words...and the map keys not being present. I can overlook a great deal of editing hiccups if they don't truly cause issues with comprehension...but being told in text that trap X is marked on the map at location C, only to go to the map and find no C...over and over...that I can not overlook.

-EDIT-

OK...take note folks...for this is an important thing to realize. When things are not right, and people are willing to listen and go back in and fix them, that is how customers are won...period. This adventure is an excellent story concept that for me was held back by the original maps drastically. Not only have the maps been updated with proper markings to tell you where the author intends for encounters, haunts and traps to be located, the secret doors and stairs have been properly labelled. In addition, the second map's odd style change has been addressed, and I have to say the new map showing the ascent path is very impressive. This type of willingness to bring a product up to the bar it sets for itself is to be commended. Well done, well done indeed. Rating has been happily changed to reflect a well earned and solid 5 star rating.

The Sinking: The Mole

by Thilo "Endzeitgeist" Graf 5 out of 5 Stars!

This pdf is 15 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page SRD, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with a total of 9 pages of adventure, so let's check this out!

This being an adventure review, the following contains SPOILERS, so potential players should please jump to the conclusion.

Still here? All right! When an earthquake makes it possible to find a new way down the sinkhole via newly

discovered tunnels, the PCs embark on a visit to wealthy widow Hassebruk (who will be a recurring character in the happenings around the strange sinkhole) and their best option is to attend her conveniently soon to happen masquerade. At the party, the PCs will have to navigate a shark's basin no less



dangerous than the typical dungeon, gathering favor points to score said permission and engage in battles of wits with a bardic agent of the Trypus Academe indirectly sent to discredit the heroes.

Once they finally have managed to gain the permit to enter the warehouse, they are in for the investigation of a short-five-room-dungeon, where the brave adventurers will not only have to fend off attacks by an assassin root, but also by a multitude of draugr and a guecubu (whose stats are provided, should you not have Bestiary III), an undead spirit of earth and bone, who will endeavor to seal the PCs alive in the tunnels, making for a potentially deadly cool adversary and finally allowing the PCs unearth a tragedy long past – but alas, no entry to the lower levels of the sinkhole.... For now.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting, while not perfect, can still be considered good – I did not notice any glitches that impeded my ability to understand the content or rip me out of the narrative. Layout adheres to oonegames' 2-column standard and the b/w-artworks and map provided are of top-tier quality. The pdf also thankfully comes fully bookmarked.

It is rather interesting, how many ideas the authors of the sinking-serials manage to cram into the precious few pages the modules consist of – and David Schwartz' Mole is no exception, succeeding in providing a nice social challenge as well as a cool mini-dungeon. While lacking the utter brilliance of e.g. "Politics Unusual", this module still remains a very good purchase – in the end one that I feel I can rate 4.5 stars and round up to 5 due to the low price.

Endzeitgeist out.

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