

# **DUENTURE** QUARTERLY

DUENTURE

(IIR)

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DUENTURE



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### PATHWAY8 #23

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# 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.



# Editorial

By Dave Paul

I have always loved a good curse. There are sports curses, Biblical curses, political curses, and on and on. People from all walks of life believe in curses, participate in curses, avoid them, profess them, and ward against them.

Consider, for instance, the Curse of the Billy Goat. The Chicago Cubs were cursed in 1945; they hadn't won a World Series in decades, and, today, haven't won a World Series in more than 100 years. Since the 1945 curse, they've never won the National League pennant. Just as fascinating, attempts have been made to break this curse. In the 1980s and 1990s, people (relatives of the man who spoke the curse!) have brought a goat onto Wrigley Field. This is amazing! Modern-day people believing in and trying to break curses. Even more amazing, in several of these cases, something particularly good (but not good enough, as it were) came about for Cubs fans after these attempts.

The real-world examples of believed-in curses are tremendous, but, the examples from myths and fiction are staggering. From Midas to the Little Mermaid, we're suckers for a story with a great curse. It's no surprise that they ended up playing a part in our favorite role-playing games. I've had a weakness for curses in RPGs for more than 30 years. Once upon a time, I threw them at my players all the time. They probably grew sick of all my machinations.

I'm sure some of my players got tired of having their characters have their sex changed, their hair fall out, their weapons turn into snakes, etc., etc. This didn't stop me. Cursed items were much easier to keep in the game if there was a payoff along with the curse. Giving a character an intelligent sword that doesn't reveal either its intelligence or its tendency to burst into song whenever ogres are present is a great deal of fun. It's even better when that sword keeps finding ways to make sure it's the weapon of choice for that character no matter the circumstances.

In previous iterations of the game, curses were sometimes too powerful. If you've played long enough, you've experienced the utterly unjust "save or die" curse. Thankfully, present iterations, especially Pathfinder, offer GMs great options for curses that fit well within the rules and context of the game.

But, what happens when you want a curse that goes above and beyond? What if you as GM really need something that rises to the level of the curse on poor King Midas? You're in luck. This month, in addition to the joy you'll get from reading the content of this months' P a t h w a y s magazine, Rite Publishing has also released 101 Legendary Curses. Let me whet your appetite...

A character s u f f e r i n g from the curse Death's Disrespect has



made the terrible mistake of speaking too soon the name of one who has recently died--a terrible sign of disrespect. The curse manifests via the body or spirit of the dead returning as an undead and attacking the victim of the curse. And, as befits a good horror theme, good luck getting rid of this haunting curse; if the character doesn't perform the appropriate ritual to rid herself of the curse, none of the traditional means of dealing with that undead creature will be anything but a temporary reprieve.

Perhaps you're running a campaign and one of the characters has found the warm bed of an aristocrat's favorite mistress. If that aristocrat knows his curses, he might pronounce the Scorn of Broken Hearts upon this scoundrel. And woe to this character who, until the curse's cure is found, will constantly find himself avoided by others. Every NPC he encounters will somehow know what he's done, will judge him to be bad (even if the NPC in question is himself guilty of such misdeeds), and certainly won't happen to have a room available no matter the weather.

There are 99 more, ranging across every part of the game. Let us know how you use them, let us know how your players coped with them.

Enjoy.

I am lost in Dream, and I hate it.

I didn't start out to have an adventure.

I didn't intend to escape some dreary hell by fancying myself up some wonderland of tricks and treasures.

No. Someone precious to me was taken, and I was left with no choice but to plunge into the infinite bowels of unreality – or do nothing.

Given that, what else was a father to do?

Enter a world which is strange beyond strange.

It is a realm of feverish thoughts floating on bubbling notions, with nightmares holding court and hopes set out to melt like snowdrifts.

All the terrible things people imagine just run around here, killing and living in equal measure. This place is Dream, and you'd be mad to expect something sane.

But that said, there are still beings here that do things for reasons - slavers, kings, gladiators - all



struggling to exist for just a little longer than their due. This is a journey to an island where the impossibles battle, and somewhere in all that bloody mess there's a hope that all is not lost.

Join Matt Banach as he returns to the Dreamlands of Coliseum Morpheuon! This novel delves again into Dream, across the Slumbering Sea, perhaps to reach the far-flung shores of the Coliseum Morpheuon, or the stranger isles which dot the edges past the edge of reality. Captured by the Men of Leng, one man begins his struggle to wake and be free, and from there, to find that which was taken.

With your support, our Kickstarter campaign hopes to fund and present another journey you can only dream of...

With cover art by Jason Rainville and editing by Perry Grosshans, we want to take you back to realms so vividly portrayed in the Coliseum Morpheuon: Anthology of Dreams, with a new 40,000+ word novel and we're hoping you'll help it happen!

Find out more at RitePublishing.com

I will survive this place.

I will not go mad.

Or, if I do, Ill make the most of it.

But no matter what, I will get through this. I made a promise to a little soul I love so dearly, and the warm certainty of that purpose is stronger than any dream.



# Dark Japestry Creature Jemplate

By Steven D. Russell; Illustrations by Gennifer Bone

The ancient, eldritch abominations of the darkness between the stars are beings of immense power that normally show little interest in the mortal world. Yet occasionally insane cultists and power-mad mages contact these cosmic beings in the hopes of controlling the hungering might of the dwellers in the darkness. Yet no mortal can fully control the dwellers' might for their sole existence is an affront to all reason. Dark Tapestry creatures, those touched by this incomprehensible otherworldly incursion, are often the result. Dark Tapestry creatures' eyes are often burnt out by what cannot be unseen, their mouths also take on an alien appearance, seeming more and more like a hungering maw; finally parts of their bodies take on a likeness of the night sky. Their minds, however, have gone far afield.

## Creating an Dark Japestry Creature

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

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

#### CR: +2

Alignment: Changes to Chaotic Evil.

**Type and Subtype:** The creature's type changes to aberration, with the augmented subtype; do not recalculate base attack bonuses, saves, class skills, or skill points.

**Senses:** A dark tapestry creature gains darkvision 60 ft. and lifesense 120 ft. (as blindsight).

**Defensive Abilities:** regeneration (equal to Constitution score; acid, sonic); Immune cold, confusion, electricity, fire, insanity; Weakness vulnerability to acid and sonic.

**Special Abilities:** A dark tapestry creature retains all the special abilities of the base creature, and gains the special abilities as described below.

**Brush of the Incomprehensible (Ex):** If the dark tapestry creature makes a successful attack its opponent must make a successful Will save (DC 10 +1/2 the dark tapestry creature's HD + its Cha modifier) or be instantly inflicted with a madness affliction (see *Pathfinder* ® *Roleplaying Game: GameMastery Guide*<sup>TM</sup>) ignoring its onset time and replacing its normal DC. An attack is considered successful if the dark tapestry creature deals damage to an opponent, performs a successful combat maneuver against an opponent, or an opponent fails a save against one of the dark tapestry creature's spell, spell-like, supernatural or extraordinary attacks.

A dark tapestry creature can inflict any madness affliction but a new one is listed here for convenience.

#### Psychospecies Disorder

Type insanity; Save Will DC 16 Onset 1d6 days

Effect –8 penalty on all Wisdom-based skill checks; cannot take 10 or take 20; delusional (see below)

#### Description

This disorder is specific to fantasy environments and involve the victim believing that she is a different type of creature. A victim might believe that she is a construct (and therefore immune to critical hits) or any other creature type that she has encountered. When a victim has a psychospecies disorder associated with a creature that has specific weaknesses (for example, a human thinking he's a vampire), then the victim's behavioral changes become more noticeable (such as a fear of holy symbols and sunlight). The subject will always make attacks in favor of its delusional form's best attack. For example, if it believes it is a dragon, it will attempt to use its breath weapon, while its body attempts to make a fire-based attack.

**Distort Reality (Su):** The dark tapestry creature exists in defiance of natural law, as mortals understand it, touched as they are by what should not be. Because of this, dark tapestry creatures have a 50% chance to simply ignore an attack, spell, or other action targeting or affecting it. Acid and sonic attacks ignore this ability. This does not affect its own attacks, spells or other actions in any way. However, the dark tapestry creature may not voluntarily fail this percentage check to allow a beneficial action caused by other creatures' actions to affect it. This distortion often appears as a fold into outer space.

**Overwhelming Madness (Ex):** A dark tapestry creature's mind is overwhelming in its alien structure. When a creature other than an aberration makes mental contact with a dark tapestry creature, it must make a successful Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 the dark tapestry HD + its Cha modifier) or be instantly subject to the effects of its brush of the incomprehensible. On a successful save, the creature is staggered for 1 round. This effect can occur whether the dark tapestry creature initiates mental contact or another creature attempts to do so. Once a creature is exposed to a specific dark tapestry creature's overwhelming mind, it is immune to this effect from all dark tapestry creatures for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting effect.

**Abilities:** Increase from the base creature as follows: Con +6 (+3 hp per HD, +3 to Fortitude saves, and any of the base creature's Constitution-based DCs), +6 Cha (+3 to Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Perform, and Use Magic Device; attempts to influence others, and Channel Energy DCs, +1 to any of the base creature's Charisma-based DCs).



#### Ctlhak Starspawn

#### CR7

XP 1,600 Dark Tapestry Cloaker CE Large aberration Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft. lifesense (as blindsight) 120 ft.; Perception +14

#### Defense

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 69 (6d8+42)

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

**Defensive** Abilities distort reality, regeneration 25 (acid, sonic), shadow shift; Immune cold, confusion, electricity, fire, insanity; Weakness vulnerability to acid and sonic.

#### Offense

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average) Melee bite +8 (1d6+5), tail slap +3 (1d8+2) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (5 ft. with bite) Special Attacks brush of the incomprehensible (DC 18), engulf, moan, overwhelming madness (DC 18)

#### Jactics

Before Combat Starspawn likes to disguise himself as a cloak of the dark tapestry in order to engulf a target. It lives to inflict madness upon creatures, often returning later when they are most vulnerable.

During Combat Starspawn prefers to attack using its moan ability (often the unnerve ability as it has the largest area of effect) and inflicting its brush of the indecipherable ability upon opponents when they fail their saves. Those that succeed in making their saves he attacks physically.

Morale When outmatched, Starspawn will fly away as quickly as possible, using its moan ability to delay pursuers.

#### Statistics

Str 21, Dex 16, Con 25, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 20 Base Atk +4; CMB +10; CMD 23 (can't be tripped) Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception) **Skills** Disguise +8 (+16 as cloak), Fly +10, Knowledge (religion) +11,Perception +14, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +8; Racial Modifiers +8 Disguise to appear as a cloak, sheet, manta ray, or similarly shaped object or creature **Languages** Undercommon

#### Special Abilities

**Engulf (Ex)** A cloaker can try to wrap a Medium or smaller creature in its body as a standard action. The cloaker attempts a grapple that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and bites the engulfed victim with a +4 bonus on its attack roll. It can still use its whip-like tail to strike at other targets. Attacks that hit an engulfing cloaker deal half their damage to the monster and half to the trapped victim.

**Moan (Ex)** A cloaker can emit an infrasonic moan as a standard action, with one of four effects.

• **Fear:** All creatures in a 30-foot spread must save (Will negates) or become panicked for 2 rounds.

• **Nausea:** All creatures in a 30-foot cone must save (Fortitude negates) or fall prone and be nauseated for 1d4+1 rounds.

• **Stupor:** A single creature within 30 feet is affected by hold monster for 5 rounds (Will negates).

• **Unnerve:** Anyone within a 60-foot spread automatically takes a -2 penalty on attack and damage rolls. Those in the area for more than 6 consecutive rounds must save (Will negates) or enter a trance, helpless until the moaning stops.

Cloakers are immune to these sonic, mind-affecting attacks. A creature that successfully saves against the cloaker's fear, nausea, or unnerve moans cannot be affected by that same moan effect from that cloaker for 24 hours. All of the save DCs against a cloaker's moan are DC 15. Save DCs are Charisma-based.

**Shadow Shift (Su)** When in dim illumination, a cloaker can manipulate shadows as a free action to create one of three effects: blur (lasts 1d4 rounds, self only), mirror image (CL 6th), or silent image (DC 15, CL 6th, save DC is Charisma-based).





# Book Of Donster Gemplates

HEROES

# Bv: S. ven D. Russell



D2D



# Blood & Muck (EL 8; XP 4,800)

By Creighton Broadhurst, Publisher at Raging Swan Press Illustrated by Frederic Edwin Church



As PCs journey along a causeway through a marsh comprising stretches of deep bog interspersed with areas of shallow bog, they come to the attention of a shambling mound preying on travellers. The shambling mound is not alone for it has recently slain a pair of lizardfolk and swarms of leaches now feed upon their decomposing remains. Read:

The causeway you are on cuts through a low-lying area of boggy marsh. Tall trees occasionally rear from the fetid morass.

If any PC makes a DC 15 Perception check, continue:

Twenty feet from the causeway, the decomposing bodies of two lizardfolk float amongst the filth.

When the PCs reach the area, the shambling mound is lurking at the base of a large tree (Stealth +16) while the leach swarm (Stealth +24) feeds on the decomposing lizardfolk. The two giant leaches hide nearby in an area of deep bog similarly waiting for prey to enter the water.

#### Jactics

The shambling mound attacks as soon as any creature enters the bog. It seeks to grab a tasty snack as quickly as possible and to drag it into a deep pool there to feed upon it. If the PCs flee the mire, it attacks the nearest giant leach.

As soon as it detects movement in the water, the leach swarm leaves the drained lizardfolk and attacks – seeking fresh blood. They ignore the shambling mound, and it ignores them.

The giant leaches arrive two rounds after combat begins and attack the nearest creatures in the water seeking to drink their blood. They stay away from the shambling mound (which views them as food).

The leaches attack until slain, but the shambling mound flees if reduced to one-quarter hit points.

#### Shambling Mound

CR 6 (XP 2,400)

A mass of tangled vines and dripping slime rises on two trunk-like legs, reeking of rot and freshly turned earth.

N Large plant

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +11, Sense Motive +0

**Speed** 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +0 (-4 jumping), Stealth +8 (+16 in swamps or forests), Swim +13

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19; CMD 22

(+10 natural, -1 size)

**Immune** mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, morale effects, patterns, and phantasms), paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep effects, stunning, electricity; **Resist** fire 10;

#### Fort +9, Ref +5 (electrical fortitude), Will +5

**Electrical Fortitude (Ex)** A shambling mound takes no damage from electricity; rather, such an attack increases the shambling mound's Constitution by 1d4 points. The shambling mound loses 1 temporary point an hour.

#### hp 67 (9 HD)

Space 10 ft.; Base Atk +6; CMB +12 (+14 grapple)

**Melee** 2 slams (reach 10 ft; Power Attack [-2/+4].) +11 (2d6+5 plus grab)

Atk Options Cleave, constrict (2d6+7), grab

**Constrict (Ex [standard])** The shambling mound can crush an opponent with a successful grapple check dealing 2d6+7 bludgeoning damage (in addition to any other effects of the successful check).

**Grab (Ex [free])** If the shambling mound hits a Medium or smaller target with its slam attack it can attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Abilities Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 9 SO plant traits

**Feats** Cleave, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills as above

Languages Common, Sylvan (can't speak)

#### Area Features

The area has several features of note:

**Foreboding Mists**: Fog blankets the swamp. The fog obscures all sight beyond 40 feet, including darkvision. Creatures 10 feet away have concealment (20% miss chance).

**Causeway:** A 10-ft. high, 5 ft. wide steeply-sloped causeway provides a path through the swamp. The causeway is built from a pile of stone, each roughly a foot in diameter, overgrown with coarse marsh-grass. Climbing or descending the causeway does not require a Climb check, but is considered difficult terrain (it costs 2 squares of movement to enter each square). Creatures at the top of the causeway gain the benefit of higher ground (+1 on attack rolls) against creatures on the causeway's slopes.

Bogs (Shallow): It costs 2 squares of movement

to enter a square containing shallow bog; the DC of Acrobatics checks in such a square increases by 2. Bogs increase the DC of Stealth checks by 2.

**Bogs (Deep)**: A square that is part of a deep bog has roughly 4 feet of standing water. It costs Medium or larger creatures 4 squares of movement to enter a square with a deep bog, or they can swim (DC 10 Swim check). Small or smaller creatures must swim to move through a deep bog. Tumbling is impossible in a deep bog.

The water in a deep bog provides cover (+4 AC, +2 Reflex saves) for Medium or larger creatures. Smaller creatures gain improved cover (+8 AC, +4 Reflex saves). Medium or larger creatures can crouch as a move action to gain improved cover. Creatures with this improved cover take a –10 penalty on attacks against creatures that aren't underwater. Deep bogs increase the DC of Stealth checks by 2.

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

**Lizardfolk Corpses:** The corpses have been partially eaten and the cadavers are now horribly decomposed. A few leaches yet linger on the remains, but not enough to injure the PCs.

**Sunken Treasure**: A PCs searching in the vicinity of the corpses must make a DC 25 Perception check to discover the lizardfolk's treasure (which has sunk into the mire):

**Masterwork Spears (2)**: Each is crafted from hardened mangrove wood; the wood's grain has been picked out with black dye.

**Pouch of Gems:** Four transparent dark green stones (bloodstones worth 50 gp each) and an orange translucent stone (a garnet worth 200 gp) lie in a waterlogged, muddy pouch. A DC 20 Appraise check values and identifies each type of gem.

**Emerald Statuette:** This exquisitely carved fingersized statue is of green transparent stone (emerald). It depicts a lizardfolk female heavy with child. A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) reveals it depicts the lizardfolk's fertility goddess and the statuette has great significance to a local tribe (The Black Shafts); its return will earn the PCs the tribe's grateful thanks (and possibly even tribal membership). A DC 20 Appraise check values it at 2,000 gp, however.

#### Giant Jeach (2)

CR 2 (XP 600)

This gigantic parasite has a circular maw filled with a spiral of teeth.

#### N Medium vermin (aquatic)

**Init** +1; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft., scent; Perception +0, Sense Motive +0

**Speed** 5 ft., base speed 20 ft.; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +1 (-7 jumping), Stealth +1 (+9 in swamps), Swim +8

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; CMD 13 (can't be tripped) (+1 Dex)

Immune mind-affecting effects; Weakness susceptible to salt

**Susceptible to Salt (Ex)** A handful of salt burns a leach swarm as if it were acid, causing 1d6 damage.

Pathways Magazine

#### Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1 hp 19 (3 HD)

**Space** 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +2 (+10 when attached) **Melee** bite +2 (1d6 plus attach)

Atk Options attach, blood drain

Attach (Ex) When a giant leech hits with a bite attack, it latches onto its target and automatically grapples. The giant leech loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and has an AC of 10 and automatically inflicts bite damage each round. An attached giant leech can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself—if its prey manages to win a grapple check or Escape Artist check against it, the giant leech is removed.

**Blood Drain (Ex [free])** A giant leach drains blood at the end of its turn if it is attached, inflicting 1 Strength and 1 Constitution damage.

Abilities Str 11, Dex 12, Con 14, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1 SQ amphibious

#### Jeach Swarm

CR 4 (XP 1,200)

A mass of tiny wriggling black creatures oozes through the water.

N Diminutive vermin (aquatic, swarm)

**Init** +4; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft.; Perception +0, Sense Motive +0

**Speed** 5 ft., swim 30 ft.; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +4 (-8 jumping), Stealth +16 (+24 in swamps), Swim +12

AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 14; CMD –

(+4 Dex, +4 size)

**Immune** mind-affecting effects, critical hits, flanking, mind-affecting effects, weapon damage; **Weakness** susceptible to salt, vulnerable to spells or effects with an area (+50% damage)

**Susceptible to Salt (Ex)** A handful of salt burns a leach swarm as if it were acid, causing 1d6 damage.

Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +2

**hp** 39 (6 HD)

Space 10 ft.; Base Atk +4; CMB – Melee swarm (2d6 plus poison [DC 15 Fort {1 save}; *freq.* 1 rd./2 rds.; *effect* 1d4 Dex drain] plus distraction [nauseated {1 round}; DC 15 negates]))

Atk Options blood drain, distraction

**Blood Drain (Ex)** Any living creature that begins its turn with a leach swarm in its space has its blood drained for 1d3 Strength and Con damage.

Abilities Str 1, Dex 18, Con 15, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2

#### Scaling the Encounter

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

**EL7 (XP 3,200)**: Remove the leach swarm and one of the giant leaches. Apply the advanced creature template to the remaining leach (+2 on all rolls [including damage rolls] and special ability DCs; AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed14; CMD 17; hp 25).

**EL 9 (XP 6,400)**: Add a second leach swarm and apply the advanced creature template to it (+2 on all rolls [including damage rolls] and special ability DCs; AC 22, touch 22, flat-footed 18; hp 51).

#### About the Designer

Creighton lives in Torquay, England where, apparently, the palm trees are plastic and the weather is warm. He shares a ramshackle old mansion with his two children ("Genghis" and "Khan") and his patient wife. Famed for his unending love affair with booze and pizza he is an enduring GREYHAWK fan.

An Ennie Award winning designer (*Madness At GardmoreAbbey*) Creighton has worked with Expeditious Retreat Press, Paizo and Wizards of the Coast. He believes in the Open Gaming License and is dedicated to making his games as fun and easy to enjoy as possible for all participants. Reducing or removing entry barriers, simplifying pre-game prep and easing the GM's workload are the key underpinning principles of the products he now releases through Raging Swan Press. You can read his thoughts on game design at <u>raging-swan.livejournal.</u> com.

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Award Winner

Best Aid or Accessory

# Mek'Madius's Hideout

# Jocation: Dead End Junnels

By Will Myers of Aventureaweek.com

Illustration by WTArnold

After the party has passed Iqus'cath the Aquamia (*Pathways* issue #18), they find themselves in a cave system that has numerous branches from the main cavern, almost all of which lead nowhere. The air here is humid, as an unseen source of heat warms the air combined with some of the water from the waterfall. Without guidance (or a helpful Survival check), adventurers could get lost in these caverns for a long, long time, unless they want to go back the way they came. Getting lost isn't the only threat down here, though.

Mek'Madius has used the power of the Sun Shard Fragment to increase his power. The Fragment also gives him a unique arcane component to create new spells. Occasionally, these spells will not work...at least at first. Those spells are forgotten, the effects unnoticed, until they create enough havoc to get Mek'Madius's attention. One such spell is *curse of the scorched mind*.

Mek'Madius created this spell in an attempt to make a type of minor lich that was powered by the Fragment of the Sun Shard. They would be powerful, but not so powerful that he couldn't control them. He wanted to create a new race of underlings, as the Aquamia was reticent to join him, and his shard-blessed creatures are not on his par intellectually. He wanted them to be able to think and reason like he did. Try as he might, he failed, leaving a trail of dead bodies in his wake. These bodies were taken and thrown into the cave system below the hideout and left to rot.

He began trying the spell with non-mages, hoping that a warrior would spawn as a lich and could be taught. This failed as well. While Mek'Madius didn't achieve his goal, he did create something new. What he accomplished was the creation of quasi-intelligent undead that could remember some of their previous life, but not everything. These new creatures remember some of their training and some of the skills that they learned while they were alive, but their deeper memories, such as their name, the place they were born, or who their families are, are completely wiped away.

Curse of the Scorched Mind School Necromancy (evil); Level Sorcerer/Wizard 7 Casting Time 10 minutes Components V, S, M (Fragment of the Sun Shard) Range Touch Target One living creature touched Duration Instantaneous Saving Throw Fortitude partial; Will negates (see text); Spell Resistance No

This spell takes a small piece of the Sun Shard Fragment's power and transfers it through Mek'Madius and into his target, killing the target unless it succeeds on a DC 23 Fortitude save. A successful save means the target still takes 7d6 of fire damage. A failed Fortitude save means that the target must then make a DC 23 Will save, or else its soul is trapped in its body as a pseudointelligent undead.

This spell functions like *animate dead*, except that it creates an advanced type of burning skeleton called a scorched skeleton. The scorched skeleton retains a small portion of its Intelligence from its previous life and has the following qualities as well as those listed for a skeleton on page 250 and the burning skeleton on page 251 of the *Pathfinder Bestiary*:

Intelligence becomes 3.

Retains full Hit Dice from class levels but those Hit Dice are changed to d8. The CR for a scorched skeleton follows the chart on page 250 of the *Bestiary* but is +1 to that CR.

Retains class-based saving throws and base attack bonus; unless the weapon used by the scorched skeleton has the *speed* special ability, the scorched skeleton gets one extra attack per round at its highest attack bonus. It can still attack with both claws in one round.

Retains a number of skills, feats, spells, or special abilities equal to the spellcasting modifier of the mage that cast *curse of the scorched mind*: i.e. Mek'Madius has an Intelligence modifier of +6, so any scorched skeleton that Mek'Madius creates will retain six abilities that it had in life.

You see what appears to be a torch or lantern flickering in the distance and you hear the scraping of metal on stone. When the flame gets closer, you see that it envelops the heads of two beings, each dragging a large sword behind. They raise their swords and begin to attack.

# Fighter of the Scorched Mind (2) CR14XP 38,400

LE Medium undead (fire) Init +5; Senses ; Perception -Aura fiery aura

#### Defense

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21 (+9 mithral plate, +1 Dex, +2 natural) hp 99 (18d8+18) Fort 12; Ref 7; Will 7 DR 5/magic; Immune fire Weaknesses cold

#### Offense

Speed 30 ft. Melee +20 +1 flaming burst greatsword melee (2d6+15 plus 1d6 fire/17-20/x2) or 2 claws +20 (1d6+2 plus 1d6 fire)

Statistics Str 18; Dex 13; Con -; Int 3; Wis 12; Cha 12 Base Atk +18; CMB +22; CMD 33 Feats Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Penetrating Strike, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (greatsword) Skills Intimidate +22 Languages Common (does not speak) Special Qualities fiery death

# Special Abilities Fiery Aura (Ex)

Creatures adjacent to a scorched skeleton take 1d6 points of fire damage at the start of their turn. Anyone striking a scorched skeleton with an unarmed strike or natural attack takes 1d6 points of fire damage.

#### Fiery Death (Su)

A scorched skeleton explodes into a burst of flame when it dies. Anyone adjacent to the skeleton when it is destroyed takes 1d6 points of fire damage. A Reflex save (DC 11) halves this damage.

#### Tactics

The scorched skeletons essentially have no tactics, but are just smart enough to recognize spellcasters and target them first and foremost. If there is no arcane spellcaster, they will attack a cleric or paladin. If none of those are present, they will attack whoever is closest. The two will start combat attacking the same target, changing targets only if they are dealt significant damage from another source.

After the scorched skeletons have been dealt with, a DC 25 Survival check will spot human footprints leading off to a cave that rises for about 100 ft. until the floor becomes a carved stairway. At the top of these stairs, there is a solid, steel-banded door that has no handle. Next to this door hangs a large metal bell that is suspended from a thick chain. Next to the bell, on a small shelf carved from the cave wall, is a mallet.

What does this bell do? Find out in the next issue of Pathways!



**Pathways Magazine** 



# **TRANSFORM THE WAY YOU RUN YOUR GAMES** EVERYTHING CHANGES 2013



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# Magical Branding Irons Wondrous items that identify your mount as yours

Wondrous items that identify your mount as yours and give it special abilities

By Mike Welham



Ranchers and other livestock owners have used brands for centuries to identify their stock. It stands to reason that a fantasy society would develop branding irons that not only identify a creature as belonging to an individual, but also confer beneficial abilities to that creature. The base branding iron merely identifies ownership, so the brand's owner must add effects to the base brand to grant additional benefits to the mounts and animal companions.

Base Branding Iron Aura faint transmutation; CL 5th Slot none; Price 500 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Description

Once per day, this branding iron allows the owner to mark an animal or magical beast as hers. The brand must represent the owner's unique personal symbol—typically her initials with a bar over them—and may only be applied to a creature that she owns (or has as a companion), up to a total of six creatures. If the branded creature does not belong to the branding iron's owner, the brand fades after 1 hour (this also applies when the owner gives away or sells the branded creature). The brand deals 1d4 points of fire damage to the branded creature, and no magical healing may be applied to the creature or it loses the brand's benefit(s).

A quadrupedal monstrous humanoid, such as a centaur or lamia, may brand itself and gain benefits from the magical brand, but it must choose from the list of benefits below to gain any real benefit.

An enchanted branding iron can hold up to five

enhancements (detailed below). A creature may receive a number of branding effects (including the base brand) equal to its Constitution bonus (minimum 1). If the creature's Constitution bonus drops below the number of branding effects it benefits from, it loses the most expensive benefit(s) until it has the appropriate number of benefits. Likewise, if the brand confers more benefits than the branded creature can accept, it gains the least expensive benefits up to its Constitution bonus.

The branding iron may be wielded as an improvised weapon, dealing 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage and 1d4 points of fire damage. The fire damage can only be applied once per day, assuming the owner has not already used the brand for its intended purpose earlier in the day. Construction

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *arcane mark*, *burning hands*; **Cost** 250 gp

The branding effects listed below may only be applied to a base branding iron. Each effect's additional requirement(s) and price are listed after the benefit's description. Unless otherwise noted, the brand may only add each benefit once.

#### Armoring

This brand, shaped like a shield behind the owner's symbol, grants a +1 enhancement bonus to the branded creature's natural armor.

Additional Requirements *barkskin*; Price +1,000 gp

#### Attuned

This brand adds smaller symbols—indicating other owners—which encircle the main symbol. Another five characters may use this brand to confer its benefits to creatures they own, but the maximum number of branded creatures remains unchanged. Additionally, the brand's effects do not fade if the owner gives the creature to another character to which the branding iron is attuned.

Additional Requirements phantom steed, communal (Ultimate Combat); Price +1,500 gp

#### Calming

When this enhancement is applied to the brand, the branded creature gains a measure of resistance against fear. It is immune to another creature's unnatural aura, and it gains a +4 morale bonus to mind-affecting fear effects and spells.

**Additional Requirements** calm animals; **Price** +500 gp

#### Charging

This brand features a charging beast (usually a horse), and it grants benefits to the branded creature's rider, depending on the rider's prowess. A rider gains the Mounted Combat feat's benefit while on the branded creature; if he already has the Mounted Combat feat, he gains the benefit of Ride-By Attack; if he already has the Ride-By Attack, he gains the benefit of Spirited Charge; and a rider who already has Spirited Charge adds one to his weapon's multiplier when he uses Spirited Charge.

Additional Requirements *bull's strength*; Price +1,000 gp

#### Combat-Trained

This brand adds crossed swords to the owner's symbol, and it confers combat training (per the Handle Animal skill) to the branded creature without combat training. If the creature is already combat trained, it gains Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (claws) or Weapon Focus (hooves) as appropriate.

Additional Requirements magic fang; Price +500 gp

#### Cooperative

Featuring a mounted rider, this brand allows the branded creature to anticipate its rider's needs almost instantaneously. This brand grants a +8 competence bonus to Ride checks made by the branded creature's owner.

Additional Requirements speak with animals; Price +750 gp

#### Eagle-Eyed

This brand's stylized eagle eye grants improved eyesight to the branded creature, which gains a +8 competence bonus to its Perception checks.

Additional Requirements clairaudience/ clairvoyance; Price +1,250 gp

**Elemental Resistance** 

Featuring a rounded shield deflecting an energy attack, this badge grants resist energy 5 against acid, cold, electricity or fire (chosen when the branding iron is created). The brand may have any or all four energy resistances, at a price of 1,000 gp per chosen energy type.

**Additional Requirements** resist energy; **Price** +1,000 gp

#### Energizing

This brand is emblazoned with a symbol representing the energy type the brand adds to the branded creature's damage. The creature deals an extra 1d4 points of acid, cold, electricity or fire damage, which is chosen at the brand's creation. The brand may have two different energizing effects, at the same cost for each effect.

**Additional Requirements** *acid arrow, call lightning, chill metal* or *flame blade*; **Price** +1,500 gp

#### Jumping

This brand displays a leaping horse, and it grants a +12 competence bonus to the branded creature's Acrobatics checks for jump attempts.

#### Additional Requirements jump; Price +1,250 gp

#### Luck

Emblazoned with a four-leaf clover or other luck symbol, this brand grants a +1 luck bonus to all saving throws made by the branded creature. It also grants this bonus to the branded creature's owner, provided the owner is mounted on the creature.

Additional Requirements resistance; Price +500 gp

#### Merciful

This branding iron inflicts no fire damage to the creature it brands, and it does not count toward the maximum number of benefits a branded creature may receive, but it does count toward the branding iron's maximum enhancements. Many druids and rangers employ merciful branding irons to avoid treating their companions inhumanely.

**Additional Requirements** *cure light wounds*; **Price** +1,000 gp

#### Mighty

This brand adds a bull's horns to the owner's symbol, and it empowers the branded creature with greater strength. Treat the creature's Strength as 4 higher for purposes of carrying capacity; additionally, the creature gains a +2 enhancement bonus to its CMB for bull rush attempts.

**Additional Requirements** *bull's strength*; **Price** +750 gp

#### Returning

The owner of a creature with this brand can recall the branded creature to a designated space adjacent to the owner. The branded creature can be no more than 1,000 miles from the owner and the owner must hold the branding iron enchanted with the returning brand in order for the recall to work.

#### Scenting

This brand shows a wolf's muzzle behind the owner's symbol, and it grants the scent ability to the branded creature. If the creature already has scent, it doubles the ranges at which it can detect other creatures.

**Additional Requirements** beast shape *I*; **Price** +750 gp

#### Scrying

Featuring an eye floating above the owner's symbol, this brand allows the branded creature's owner to access the creature's senses to see and hear what the creature does. This benefit has a 1-mile range.

Additional Requirements clairaudience/ clairvoyance; Price +1,500 gp

#### Silencing

After this brand is applied, the branded creature's gait becomes much softer, even while it runs. The brand grants a +8 bonus to the creature's Stealth checks, and the creature may make Stealth checks while running or charging (at a -20 penalty).

Additional Requirements silence; Price +500 gp

#### Speed

This brand features speed lines emanating from the owner's symbol; it increases the branded creature's land speed by 10 feet. This enhancement may be applied a total of three times, but the price doubles each time beyond the first.

Additional Requirements longstrider; Price +500 gp

#### Tireless

A branded creature benefitting from this enhancement can hustle for 4 hours before it takes nonlethal damage. Additionally, the creature gains a +4 morale bonus to saves against any spell or effect that would make the creature fatigued or exhausted.

Additional Requirements *bear's endurance*; Price +1,000 gp

#### Trackless

This brand features fading hoof prints below the owner's symbol. A branded creature benefitting from this enchantment leaves no tracks.

Additional Requirements pass without trace; Price +500 gp







# The Curse of the Golden Spear Adventure Trilogy set in Kaidan



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

Rave reviews make this adventure trilogy an instant classic!

Jonathan McAnulty
NOW AVAILABLE









By Endzeitgeist



Is it this time of the year again? Yes, yes it is. Another year has gone by and it's time for my top ten of 2012 list. As with my older lists, this list is purely subjective. Even if there are files out there that got a higher rating from me, this list represents my personal favorites, which may, due to some shortcoming or another, fall flat of the full 5 stars, but still feel awesome to me. As with any list or review, your mileage may vary. Also, I'm not engaging in hyperbole when I say that deciding what should be on the list has never been so hard for me. That out of the way, here's my list:

#### 10. Sneak Attack Press - Terrain Toolbox

There sometimes are those little, humble books out there that you as a GM find yourself returning to - and this is one of them. Providing concise rules for intriguing terrains, Sneak Attack Press has created a superbly useful book for any GM to make combat more dynamic and interesting. Highly recommended even for experienced GMs.

#### 09. Alluria Publishing Waves of Thought

Like a phoenix, Alluria Publishing has risen from the ashes thanks to a kickstarter to grace us with a product that not only exhibits a mastery of psionic rules, but which also takes the STELLAR Cerulean Seas Campaign Setting one step further. Add the excellent production values, top-notch



artwork and masterful design and we get a supplement that is daunting, features one of the best classes I've ever read and should be considered a must-have for any GM wishing to delve into an aquatic terrain and/or add a bit of disturbing/weird to his/her campaign. Glorious and for fans of psionics, a must-buy.

# **o8.** Super Genius Games - Anachronistic Adventurers: The Investigator

Once in a while, Owen K.C. Stephens shows why he is considered the grandmaster of crunch and once in a while, this crunch transcends even the usually extremely high quality of SGG-products. *The Investigator* is one such example. Beyond being the very first example of any d20-based scholar-class that doesn't suck, this PDF features the STELLAR rules for research that are easy to





implement and grasp, modular and genius indeed!

#### 07. Kobold Press - Dark Roads & Golden Hells

This collection of planes and excellent ideas is the very best planes-supplement released since the original Planescape-supplements. This is THE book of planes for me - intelligent, smart, ingenious and above all, innovative, this and its web-enhancement are stellar books indeed that, imho, further fortify Dan Voyce's status as one of the designers to watch.

## o6. Raging Swan Press - So what's the Mount like, anyways?

Raging Swan has released a vast amount of extremely useful supplements to help the beleaguered GM and if you're not familiar with them, then preparation/fleshing out details takes you much longer than it should. Even among them, though Mike Welham's contribution goes above and beyond, making



handling mounts much more rewarding, unique and detailed - this one set a new platinum standard in details and usability for a price that can't be beaten. Highly recommended to make mounts truly have character and mechanical benefits as well.

#### 05. Rite Publishing - 101 Hazards and Disasters

One in a while, Rite Publishing's 101 series goes above and beyond its usual, high quality to grace us with a supplement that can be considered truly astounding. This is one such example. Chockfull with genius hazards and dangers, this contains intriguing plants that are on par with the iconicity of green slime, an update of meteorite impact-rules, rules for cheetah- or even howler-drawn carriages and battles, rules for conveyor-belts (and traps) etc. - this is a gold mine for GMs, full of awesome, innovative ideas and will provide a true enrichment for your campaign.

#### 04. Kobold Press - Midgard Campaign Setting

Now this should come as no surprise: The Midgard-

setting is extremely high-concept, different, dark, interesting and even if you don't plan on using it, has options and ideas galore for you to scavenge. It's also the home of beloved Zobeck, Margreve and so much more intriguing locales it's almost ridiculous. It's also the most beautiful book I've read this year. Since I've only just completed the review, let me point you towards it



- it happens to be my 1000th review and goes into much more detail.

#### **o3.** Dreamscarred Press - Psionics Expanded: Advanced Psionics Guide

I'm a fan of psionics and in another year, this would have potentially made my number 1 - this is the APG of psionics, the book that crystallizes a unique identity of PFRPG-psionics that sets it apart and transcends feeling like 3.6 of the rules to become something more: Stylish, daunting, innovative, each class has something unique going for it and the designs are bold and beyond: "Psionic

rogue", "Psionic Priest" etc., instead opting to create truly astounding classes with a very distinct and cool sense of identity. The amount of additional material included since the release of the initial PDFs, the willingness to not rest on one's laurels and instead support UC etc., means that this book is one of the most-used, well-beloved tomes in my campaign. The APG of psionics. 'Nuff said.



#### 02. Frog God Games - Slumbering Tsar

If you're following my reviews, this will come as a surprise. I LOVE *Slumbering Tsar* to death and was one of the guys who continuously annoyed people to get this released.



Greg A. Vaughan's magnum opus is one of the most iconic, brilliant, deadly environments I've ever seen oozing iconicity, superb ideas and providing enough gaming material for years, Slumbering Tsar is not only the biggest book on my RPG-shelf (beyond the complete WotBS), it is also one of the most cherished ones. Supreme in scope and ambition, it, at least in my opinion, even leaves legendary Rappan Athuk in the dust, making this my favorite sandbox-module for old-school gaming ever, with so many locales and ideas to scavenge and use that it boggles the mind. Additionally, the very final part is a fitting, extremely epic conclusion to this massive book. Add to that the appeal that makes it also suitable for post-apocalyptic roleplaying (the wilderness-areas and city are all feeling like an endtimes scenario akin to Stephen King's Dark Tower-saga) and we have a legend. Old-school. Dark. Lethal as all hell. This is a legend in the making and if you can get your hands on a copy, do so. You won't regret it!

#### 01. Fire Mountain Games - Way of the Wicked #2: Call forth Darkness

This will come as a surprise to many, I wager. Fire Mountain Games came from nowhere with their evil AP and delivered an excellent first book, with the ENnieaward-nominated "Knot of Thorns." This book, part 2, though, is, imho, what should have been nominated. Book 1 was an excellent module, but conservative. One good book can happen - two is a trend. And oh boy, what a trend! "Call forth Darkness" made me experience "jamais-

vu," something I almost never feel anymore.

The task: Succeed at an unholy ritual spanning 666 days. A ritual that puts big, unpleasant a neon-sign of "EVIL LOCATED HERE" on the area. Holding the place would be cool in and of itself. But that's not where the book stops: We get extremely easy to use rules to head your own evil organization



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and the players get to actually have their very own dungeon to shore up defenses versus incoming adventurers trying to stop them at the most inopportune moments! Striking a delicate balance between micromanagement and playability, options and responsibility, consequences of actions and weighing gains, this module is DIFFERENT. Completely different from ANY module I've ever run. Its grand scope, its supplemental rules, its novel idea - all of that, mixed with the option to let the players experience the other end of the side, when all goes wrong for the villains, and watching them wrestle with the consequences, is priceless, as is the option to let them encounter the tactics they employ usually via the intruding adventure parties. This is one of the rare modules that ranks in my category as "legendary," as "innovative" as awesome in every conceivable way and is, alongside "Coliseum Morpheuon" and "Bleak House: The Death of Dr. Rudolph Van Richten" one of my all-time favorite modules. The Way of the Wicked is great - this is stellar and even if you don't run the AP, I wholeheartedly encourage you to at least check this book out, for innovation like this is rare indeed, especially in a product that leaves nothing to be desired in any way.

#### Honorable Mentions:

Rite Publishing - Heroes of the Jade Oath (PFRPGversion)

While not perfect, the ambition and intriguing rules made this my go-to book regarding WuXiastyle fantasy. In a year less packed with stellar supplements, this would have been on my list.

#### Kobold Press - Journeys to the West

The only reason this is not on my list is that I haven't read through it yet and the deadline for it is looming, so there you have it - along with HotJO, another book I'd urge you to check out!

#### Frog God Games - Rappan Athuk

This is going to meet with a lot of protest, isn't it? How can I rate the legendary Rappan Athuk's best incarnation as only an honorable mention? Well, simple, really: While the new content is stellar, the book gorgeous and its design brilliant, it also contains a lot of threaded ground and I



opted to ONLY take the new content into account - which is still awesome enough, but misses the list by a very slight margin.

#### Rite Publishing - Faces of the Tarnished Souk -Nameless Nil, the Beggar of Self

Hands down the best, coolest, most disturbing and awesome NPC I've ever seen in a commercial supplement.



#### Pathways Magazine

# **Rite Publishing Presents**

# Heroes of the Jade Oath

# On Sale January 2013!



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# Twenty Questions with Jaye Sonia

By Steven D. Russell



#### Could you tell us a little about yourself?

Professionally speaking, I'm still making a name for myself in the Pathfinder RPG community. I've been writing since I lived in Japan (early 2005), but really didn't start getting serious about it until after I moved to Kuwait in 2007. Between 2008 and 2010, I spent a lot of time involved with (and learning from) the talented folks over at Open Design, LLC. I spent most of that time wearing multiple hats, bouncing between everything from making graphics to writing and designing - all the while learning that failure was very much still an option. At the time, however, I was just happy to be involved. I'm still pretty proud of the gear graphic that I designed for the ENnie nominated Tales of Zobeck and the graphic for Monster Chronicles. This was before I had managed to get some solid design work under my belt. Later on, I wrote a lot of the spells that appeared in the Dwarves of the Ironcrags. In 2010, I released my first official PDF (a free download supporting my setting, Rhune: Dawn of Twilight). I think it was from this point on that I knew, no matter what, that I wanted to design games and should leave the art to the professionals! Since then, I've written for Kobold Quarterly, Wayfinder, Open Design, LLC, and Black Star Studios, LLC.

Currently, I'm one of the lead designers for the Shadowlands Campaign Setting. I'm also the proud creator of *Rhune: Dawn of Twilight* and founder of Storm Bunny Studios, LLC. When I'm not writing about haunted ælves, strange chaos beasts or clockwork monstrosities, I enjoy writing a monthly column called 'Geeks & Gamers' for *Bazaar Magazine* (a local lifestyle magazine).

As you might imagine, I stay pretty busy.

#### What is your home game like?

My home game is pretty non-standard, at least by Western standards. The first thing you'll notice about my group is its unique demographic. My players are all expats – like myself – from a multitude of diverse backgrounds. While the majority of my current group of gamers is from America, I've run for gamers from Egypt, Canada, Kuwait, Britain, and even Pakistan. My group also contains a high percentage of female players. In the past, three of the six players I had were women, which I think is quite a feat when you're running an RPG in a country with very strong Muslim traditions (the public schools are still segregated by gender here).

I run my games on Fridays, working to incorporate a fair mix of combat. roleplaying, and problem solving. Because I also design material for gaming, my players get often sneak previews of things I'm working on (as well as a few other companies) and play-testing has become a big part of what we do. Otherwise, though, we're pretty combat heavy. My



group loves getting into the mix of things. So, while there is a definite narrative with unique characters in the foreground, they're quick to stab an NPC. Or shoot a guard in the knee.

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

That's a hard call, but I'm going to say their adventure paths. Really, any of them will do!

I loved running the Second Darkness adventure path when it came out several years ago and hold it close to my heart. The adventure was epic and I frequently felt as if I was painting the narrative in massive strokes. Better still, it had just enough of the classic dark elf elements to keep it familiar to older fantasy fans. Everyone involved in that AP here in Kuwait loved it and I think it was a real success.

I'm currently running Carrion Crown (I'm The Replacement GM on the Paizo boards) and I love everything about this story. I think the team behind *The Haunting of Harrowstone* (Adam Daigle, Brandon Hodge, Michael Kortes, Patrick Renie, and F. Wesley Schneider) did a marvelous job evoking that classic, gothic feel.

#### You are currently the head of Storm Bunny Studios, how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

I founded Storm Bunny Studios, LLC last February after a single realization – that I needed a legal entity in which to grow my intellectual property. At the time, I was working on several projects that involved a great



deal of personal investment (good art, dear readers, is pretty expensive) and I was struggling to justify further expenditures. Worse, the online vendors I was dealing with refused (and I don't blame them for this) to host my product if some of it wasn't also available for sale. So, in order to give parts of *Rhune: Dawn of Twilight* away, I had to at least sell small parts of it. To do that, I needed a tax ID number. At the end of the day, the decision to found SBS was as much one of personal ownership as it was simple need.

Of course, once I founded SBS it took on a life of its own. Darren Calvert, shortly after hearing the company name, illustrated what I believe will become the iconic image of 'Stormy' (our logo). Others, some of whom I worked with in Open Design, also came around to wish me well and offer helping hands. Over the course of a year, I started to build up quite a team. Last summer, we released our first products (as a company) and things have been building up steam since. So far, all of our reviews have been in the 4-5 star range and from what I'm told, people love the look of our products.

I would characterize Storm Bunny Studios, LLC as a young, bold, and inventive company. While our major focus is on Pathfinder-related products, we're already exploring potential side projects, up to and including TCG and LARP-friendly products. We're exploring a variety of themes, as well. So, you're just as likely to see some Mythos-inspired adventures as you are more Steampunk sourcebooks.

We're growing pretty quickly, too. This year we're working with Stephen Michael DiPesa (known for his work on Mage: The Ascension) and Will Cooper (2012 RPG Superstar top 16 finalist). We're also continuing our work with the top-notch Canadian Art/Layout Team of Stephen Wark and Terry Maranda. We're also working with some new writers, as well as the very talented Jon Roberts (who has almost exclusively mapped out the lands of *Rhune: Dawn of Twilight*). Finally, we're working hand-in-hand with Tyler Poncho Toys to develop an exclusive line of plushes based on our logo. It's not really a route I had originally considered, but it's pretty exciting nonetheless.

#### Which Pathfinder Compatible product you worked on is your favorite and could you tell us a little about it?

That's not an easy question to answer, especially having been a senior patron on multiple Open Design projects! The first thing that comes to mind (and this may be because we just finished it) is *Children of the Hammer*. I co-wrote this with the very talented Will Cooper and cannot tell you how cool it was to finally watch it go live!

*Children of the Hammer* is a source book that expands on the clockwork elves and dwarves of *Rhune: Dawn of Twilight*. It details the dwarven clans, the clockwork elven lines, offers alternative racial traits, and gives both GMs and players a whole host of new options for their game.

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

The whole experience was pretty positive, to be honest. I think my favorite part,



however, was watching others (and in this case, Will Cooper specifically) play in my proverbial sandbox. It was rather enjoyable to see how he interpreted the setting and, as a result, developed material for it. He 'got' *Rhune: Dawn of Twilight* right away and it shines in this product because of it.

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

My hat goes off to Will, again. He developed both the Forge Heart bloodline (for sorcerers) and Spellshot (a new magus archetype) for this product and I love them both. Not only are they cool twists on established mechanics, they fit perfectly with the setting!

What was the most challenging aspect of working on it? The dreaded timeline of doom! I'd explain, but it's really one of those topics that Should Not Be....

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

We're pretty adept at this sort of thing, but this product made it clear that a master file – especially when it comes to product continuity – is a must! Not only would said file have saved us considerable time, it would have freed us to do more in our allotted time. I've since developed one!

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

Dreamscarred Press's Psionics Unleashed all day.

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

I think there is a tendency to over-develop character options and those options often clutter the game, so I'm always happy to see simple, developed alterative rules. Going back to the *Haunting of Harrowstone*, I'd happily point out that haunts are a great example of this. They provide cool tools for a GM, offer interesting challenges for the player, and enhance the overall dynamic of the game without burying it under a metric ton of new feats or traits.

That said, I'm a big fan of highly specialized traits or feats. I loved the achievement feats from the *Legacy of Fire* AP as well as the society feats from the old *Iron Kingdoms RPG* (the 3.5 edition). Mechanics that enhance a character's story are always welcome in my book.

To answer your question, however, I'd have to say 'tipping the balance.' When you build a product, I think

it's important to keep an eye on balance, but without being afraid to innovate. You shouldn't be afraid to slightly tip that balance, especially if doing so let's you create that 'wow' moment for gamers.

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

That's not easy to answer. I'm a little biased toward Mr. Wolfgang Baur (whom I consider a mentor of sorts). I'm also very appreciative of Monte Cook's work. Of course, I'm continually impressed by Brandon Hodge, Adam Daigle, and Ben McFarland, as well. So, I suppose I'm going to have to plead the fifth – and buy them all beer this year at Gen Con.

#### What advice would you give to would-befreelancers?

That's easy. Know the mechanics. I've seen some very poorly executed 3PP products that could have really shined if only their designers/developers/writers knew the mechanics better.

#### Who is your favorite Illustrator?

I'm a big fan of Wayne Reynolds, but right now, Terry Maranda is the man!

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

I think, above all things, getting my first review (which, at the time, was a 5-star review by Endzeitgeist) over at DrivethruRPG.com is my most memorable response.

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

We've got a pretty ambitious schedule for 2013-14 that includes another source book, some adventures, and even a plush doll. But that's all in the works, so I'll say this – we're releasing an updated (and once again, free) version of the *Rhune: Dawn of Twilight Stormpunk Character Guide.* We're also working on an extended version of that guide with a whole host of extras. We'll make that available for sale to the public, hopefully by the end of this summer.

# Do you have any goals as a publisher that you have yet to obtain?

Actual profit (laughs).

**Can you talk a bit about Storm Bunny Presents?** Storm Bunny Presents is a line of products that are not necessarily linked to any given setting (or in some cases, even mechanics), but that aim to make a storyteller's life easier. This line will include encounter locations, interesting NPCs, iconic items, new spells, and even unique monsters (and sometimes a combination of all of those). The whole concept behind the line is to give GMs inexpensive (we're talking \$.99-\$1.99) options that reduce preparation time but continue to enhance their overall narrative. The focus is on flavor rather than mechanics (although we do pay careful attention to the latter), with art to match. Our first product from the SBS line is out this year!

As I said in the Demiplane of Gaming podcast late last year, you like to do things big! Why is that?



Ha! I don't

necessarily think that I do things 'big' so much as I focus on the finer details and the overall quality of a product. I want to produce products I'd buy and read, so I tend to go a little overboard when it comes to development, especially in the art and cartography departments. Sadly, I can't always afford to meet with the standards that Paizo and Wizards set (and I still want a Wayne Reynolds cover and will continue to pursue this), but I aim to match or exceed them whenever possible. I think the whole 'don't judge a book by its cover' metaphor, while well meaning, is a little dishonest. People, especially gamers, do just that. Designers and game companies know that an exciting cover sells books, even when the packaged material might be lackluster at best. In gaming, this is even more important. Not necessarily because good art sells books (or excuses bad material), but because good art (and a great cover) excites the imagination - which, in my occasionally humble opinion, is the cornerstone of fantasy tabletop gaming. If you can't evoke a scene in your GM's mind or excite the senses, your players won't be long for your table (or your setting).

So, while big and flashy never excuses poor design, poor art or layout can outright kill an otherwise stellar product! Talented writers will tell you that you must catch your reader in the first few sentences. The same could be said for any gaming product.

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

Yes! If you aren't aware of what's going on with Storm Bunny Studios (or you're just hearing about us for the first time), pop over to our web site and check out what we've got going on. Readers can find it at: <u>www.</u> <u>stormbunnystudios.com</u>. We're also on <u>Facebook</u> and on <u>G+</u>. We've got an ambitious year planned, so fans – both new and established – are going to find things that will excite them!

Of course, I also want to thank you for the opportunity to talk to folks about both Rhune: Dawn of Twilight and SBS! It's an honor to be in Pathways! Thanks again buddy!

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