**Rite Publishing Presents** 

# Issue #28 • July 2013 PATHUJAY8





# A Devil of a Deal!

So you want to make a deal with the devil. Or at least some kind of demon. We've all seen it done in fantasy movies and TV shows, and read about it in books. Numerous pre-made adventures hinge on the ability of some NPC to summon fiendish servants to eater to his every whim. Bottom line? Summoning demons and devils is an exciting plot point for fantasy settings, and has the potential to provide not just memorable rokeplay experiences, but also difficult challenges in the form of complex summoning and binding rituals, and, of coutse, making the actual bargain in the first place. Not to mention the potential rewards for success.

Of course, in the average game of *Dathfinder*, your only real option is to grab a seroll of lesser planar binding, make a Charisma check, and hope your GM's in a creative mood. But what if summoning and binding fiends could be something more?



At 180 pages, The Deluxe Guide to Hend Summoning and Haustian Bargains is the ultimate authority on summoning and binding evil outsiders. here's some of what it includes:

Comprehensive rules for researching, summoning, and binding evil outsiders.
Detailed rules for bargaining for favors from

Detailed rules for bargaining for favors from evil outsiders, including dozens of potential boons and numerous ways to pay for them.
Detailed information on implementing these

• Detailed information on implementing these rules in conjunction with existing fiends from the *Pathfinder Bestiaries* 1, 2, and 3.

• 72 new unique fiends, each with a detailed statistics entry and at least one exclusive special ability never seen elsewhere, perfect for GMs who just-want new monsters.

• Detailed background and personality information for each of these 72 fiends. Use them in conjunction with the summoning rules, or as a basis for your own NPC fiendish villains!

## The Ultimate Authority on Fiends! On Sale Now!

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## Editorial

by Dave Paul

Guilds are interesting things. How exactly do people with something in common organize? What makes a lodge, order or league what it is? When several professionals in an area (geographically or by profession) form an organization, why do they do so? Which clubs or associations exist only as a reaction to another club or association?

Those who've enjoyed the world's most popular roleplaying game and its variations and iterations long enough know that guilds and gangs and organizations are a common feature in many of the cities of the worlds we pretend to inhabit. In Rite's own products, in Kaidan, in Questhaven, etc., there are many naturally occurring groups, such as clans of beings of any particular race. Within *In the Company of Henge*, for instance, there are many clans within this one race. The race is a shapeshifting one, and over time, the race has settled into several different animal types into which individuals change. And, the members of the cat clan and the members of the dog clan are, to no one's surprise, often quite different from one another in temperament.

Contrary to such natural-seeming organizations as the clans of the henge, in *101 Not So Random Encounters: Urban*, we meet The Fold, a criminal cartel of at least 101 members. This group contains lamias, rakshasas, demons, nagas, golems, and all manner of less fantastic races. Normally, one wouldn't find such kinds of individuals working together (and, don't be fooled, just because they're all members of The Fold doesn't mean they have similar motivations or play well together – at all). However, every member of The Fold is still a member, and membership means something.

In the world of the players of such games, never mind for a moment the worlds of the characters of such games, there are professional organizations (for doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc.), unions for members of various trades (electricians, plumbers, etc.), labor unions of factory workers (once upon a time, to be employed in the auto industry meant to be a member of the auto workers union), social and service organizations (Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, Elks, etc.) and, of course, on campuses there are various clubs, guilds and other gatherings and groupings of students. In general, these kinds of organizations are motivated by a mission or purpose. And, of course, there are organizations like the RPGA, The Pathfinder Society, Wizards Play Network, etc.

Many such groups exist to provide people with similar interests the opportunity to find and remain in contact with other like-minded folks. Some of them exist to give the individual members power that they could otherwise not have. In other cases, such a group exists because its leadership gains great advantages from doing so and its members have little choice but to join if they want to be safe, left alone, allowed to be employed, etc.



Peering back into the cities of fantasy worlds, we find thieves guilds, loose associations of wizards, adventuring companies, temples full of priests devoted to similar causes or deities, political organizations of all stripes, and more. In a campaign of mine, years ago, there were several major cities and the three largest each had a wizards' guild. The guilds competed with one another, but, sometimes their members cooperated on certain tasks. One city's guild was decidedly militaristic (keeping in step with the city itself and the nation it served), its mages tended to focus on the contributions magic could make on the battlefield and to its soldiers. The larger, more revered guild was in another city. In part, some who studied magic and who lived elsewhere eventually aspired to move to one of those two places and join that guild. The competition was fierce.

In all such cases, whatever the professions of the individual members, there will be political power associated with large gatherings. Sometimes power results from the accumulation of votes, sometimes from the accumulation of wealth, and sometimes from the accumulation of other attributes. But, it's all about power. Whatever the sweet seeming, fair-haired priestess tells you when she heals you, her act of healing is connected to bringing power to her temple. Whatever lie the cutpurse spins before emptying someone's pack, that act of thievery is connected to bringing power to his guild. And on and on it goes.

The end goal of the urge to organize is power. What organizations are in your campaigns? What are their ultimate ends? What power do they seek to control?

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## Jostling Creature Demplate By Steven D. Russell; Illustration by Mike Burns

ostlings are the pitiful corpses of disoriented individuals who died in the wilderlands from starvation, accident, or madness. These pitiful undead beings despise their likeness to their former self, they possesses virtually no understanding or recollection of their former life; consumed as they are by their bewilderment, they seek to share their pain by damning their victims to share the same fate that caused their unnatural lives. A solitary lostling is usually the sole survivor of some catastrophe, while larger gatherings of these creatures consist of entire parties that lost their way in the woods or a lostling's transformed victims.

#### Creating a Jostling Creature

"Lostling" is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

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

**CR:** +2

Alignment: Always chaotic evil. Armor Class: +4 natural armor bonus.

Immune Lostlings that succumbed to the elements still bear marks of the weather conditions that killed them. Select an energy type (acid, cold, fire, electricity, or sonic) that is most closely associated with the conditions that caused the subject to become a lostling. The lostling gains immunity to that energy type.

Weakness Select an energy type that is the opposite of the energy type chosen for the lostling's immunity, the lostling gains vulnerability to that energy type.

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

Aura of Disorientation (Su): Any living creature within 30 feet of the lostling must make a successful Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 the lostling's HD + its Cha modifier) or become cursed with disorientation. Disoriented creatures suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to initiative checks, attack rolls, Acrobatics, Climb, Fly, Perception, and Swim checks (if a lostling is CR 11 or higher this penalty increases to -8). In addition, whenever the creature moves, it must roll 1d8 to randomly determine the actual direction traveled though the creature believes it is traveling in the correct direction. If the save is successful, the foe is immune to this lostling's disorienting aura for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting curse effect.

This curse can be broken if the subject is lead around blindfolded for 24 hours by an ally, making no decisions as to the direction it will travel and only following the ally, otherwise it requires a spell or effect that can remove a bestow curse spell.

Control Weather (Sp): Once per day, a lostling can control weather as the spell (caster level equal to its HD).

Create Spawn (Su): Any creature killed by a lostling, including those that die as an indirect result of its aura of disorientation, rises as a lostling in 1d4 days. If a lostling creature is CR 11 or higher this changes to 1d4 rounds. A

lostling created in this manner is under the command of its creator and remains so until either it or the creator is destroyed.

Divination Suppression (Su): An invisible barrier (one-mile radius per HD of the base creature) surrounds a lostling creature, suppressing any divination spell or effect within that radius, as if it were affected by an anti-magic field.

Harsh Elements (Su): Lostlings that succumbed to the elements still bear marks of the weather conditions that killed them. Select an energy type (acid, cold, fire, electricity, or sonic) that is most closely associated with the conditions that caused the subject to become a lostling. That lostling deals an additional 1d6 points of damage of a chosen energy type with its melee, ranged and touch attacks. If the lostling creature is CR 11 or higher increase this damage to 2d6 with half the damage being divine in nature and not subject to resistance or immunity.

Upon a successful critical hit, in addition to the extra energy damage, the lostling deals an extra 1d10 points of chosen energy type damage on a successful critical hit. If the attack's critical multiplier is ×3, add an extra 2d10 points of chosen energy type damage instead, and if the multiplier is ×4, add an extra 3d10 points of chosen energy type damage. If the lostling creature is CR 11 or higher increase by an additional 1d10 with half the damage being divine in nature and not subject to resistance or immunity.

Wisdom Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by a lostling's melee, range, or touch attacks must make a successful Will save (DC 10 +1/2 the lostling's HD + its Cha modifier) or suffer 1d3 points of Wisdom drain. On each such successful attack, it gains 5 temporary hit points. A creature reduced to o points of Wisdom falls into a deep, nightmare-plagued slumber (subject gains the helpless condition). As a result of this catatonic state, the unfortunate victim eventually dies from starvation or thirst.

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), Cha +6 (+3 to Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Perform, and Use Magic Device; attempts to influence others, and Channel Energy DCs, +3 to any of the base creature's Charisma-based DCs).





#### Unvoliant The Vanishing Venom

XP 3,200

lostling phase spider CE Large magical beast Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +6 Aura disorienting (30 ft. DC 16), divination suppression 6-mile radius)

#### Defense

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size) hp 69 (6d10+36) Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +3 Defensive Abilities ethereal jaunt Immune cold Weakness vulnerability to fire

#### Offensive

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.
Melee bite +10 (2d6+7 plus 1d6 cold, 1d3 wisdom drain, poison, and grab/ +1d10 cold on successful critical)
Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.
Special Attacks create spawn, ethereal ambush, harsh elements
Spell-like abilities (CL 6, concentration +9)
1/day-control weather

#### Statistics

CR7

Str 20, Dex 17, Con 22, Int 7, Wis 13, Cha 16 Base Atk +6; CMB +12 (+16 grapple); CMD 25 (37 vs. trip) Feats Ability Focus (poison), Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Stealth) Skills Climb +18, Perception +6, Stealth +7 Languages Aklo

#### Special Abilities

**Ethereal Ambush (Ex)** A phase spider that attacks foes on the Material Plane in a surprise round can take a full round of actions if it begins the combat by phasing into the Material Plane from the Ethereal Plane. **Ethereal Jaunt (Su)** A phase spider can shift from the Ethereal Plane to the Material Plane as a free action, and shift back again as a move action (or as part of a move action). The ability is otherwise identical to ethereal jaunt (CL 15th).

**Poison (Ex) Bite—injury;** save Fort DC 18; frequency 1/round for 8 rounds; effect 1d2 Constitution damage; cure 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

#### Ecology

**Environment** temperate mountains **Organization** solitary **Treasure** triple



## THE SUNKEN PYRAMID

A Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Compatible Adventure for 7th-level characters by Creighton Broadhurst and Marc Radle

Only a few miles from a small seaside village, the mysterious underwater edifice known as the Sunken Pyramid lies hidden beneath the waves. The handful of sages and scholars with any knowledge of this massive stone structure debate whether it is a completely natural rock formation, a natural site that has been intentionally modified or something built long ago by human, or inhuman, hands.

Locals and ship's crews alike report signs of increased sahuagin activity in the waters around the Sunken Pyramid. Is the recent rash of disappearances and abductions which have plagued the area connected in any way? Can these abductions be stopped before even more people are taken? Can those already abducted be found and rescued? And what of the strange and often conflicting rumours which whisper of something far more terrible lurking far beneath the Sunken Pyramid?

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## JHORNHILL AT A GLANCE

By Creighton Broadhurst; Orc Illustration by David Rabbitte

#### JHORNHILL AT A GLANCE

Standing on the fringes of a vast and noisome fen, Thornhill is a miserable, hard place. The folk are insular and superstitious, keeping to the old ways and worshipping the spirits of the marsh. Surviving on a mixture of hunting, fishing and desultory trade with nearby tribes of lizardfolk, the folk here care little for the world beyond their dismal domain.

Thornhill stands atop a large island in the centre of the deep, but sluggish waters of the Fenwater. A once formidable stockade of aged, sodden timbers surrounds the place. Stands of sickly, dense thorn bushes grow over much of the island and the villagers have deliberately let the bushes grow wild to form an almost impenetrable barrier around the island's periphery.

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Aelfgar Wymer (LN male human expert 2/warrior 2)

Government autocracy

**Population** 157 (127 humans, 15 half-orcs, 12 half-elves, 2 halfings, 1 elf)

#### Alignments N, LN, CN, NE

Languages Common, Draconic

Corruption +0; Crime -5; Economy -1; Law +2; Lore -1; Society +1

Qualities insular, superstitious

Danger 0; Disadvantages impoverished

#### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

- **Aedwen Sirett** (location 5; NG female human cleric 2) Kind hearted, Aedwen is well-liked by the villagers. She often preaches to villagers and travellers alike.
- Aelfgar Wymer (location 5; LN male human expert 2/ warrior 2) This sullen, boring man is the village reeve.
- **Gyric Walwin** (location 6; N male half-elf wizard [diviner] 2) The longest lived of Thornhill's residents, Gyric cares little for his neighbours, most of whom he labels as inbred idiots.

Odda Kerrich (location 2; NE male half-orc cleric 1/

rogue 2) Beset by a perpetual hacking cough, Odda is overly friendly to travellers staying at the Drunken Lizard.

- **Ricola Wymer** (location 5; LN female human aristocrat 1) Spiteful and deliberately rude to her fellows, Ricola is universally seen as ill-mannered and stuck up.
- **Sithric Siggers** (location 2; NE male human warrior 1/ expert 2) A boorish, oft-drunk fisherman normally found at the Drunken Lizard, he has a reputation as a troublemaker and brawler.
- **Wulfric Isgar** (location 8; N male human expert 2) This sour faced poet chants dirges and elegies while at his forge.
- **Zissren** (location 10; NG female lizardfolk adept 3) A tall, cunning lizardfolk of exceptional intellect, Zissren works to mollify her fellows' more savage instincts.

#### NOTABLE JOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

- **1. Mud Bridge** This often muddy, stout wooden bridge is the only way to easily reach Thornhill.
- **2.** The Drunken Lizard Thornhill's only tavern is a dank, shadowed place. The food and drink are adequate at best.
- **3.** Wennell's Thornhill's trading station is run by the family of the same name. Densely packed with all manner of mundane things, there is little of obvious interest here for adventurers.
- **4. Aelfgar Wymer's House** Here dwells the reeve and his spiteful, shrewish wife, Ricola Wymer. The house is well maintained.
- **5. Hall of the Sun** Dedicated to Darlen, elaborate carvings of the rising sun decorate this otherwise humble hall.
- **6. Gyric Walwin's Home** An elderly sage, Gyric Walwin, dwells in this ramshackle old building. Vines and ivy grow over much of his home, crowding out most of the light from the building's narrow windows.
- **7. Osred's House** Home to Ymma Winbow, this stone building is the oldest and largest in the village. The windows on the third floor command sweeping views over the locality.



- **8. Blacksmith** This large building features a workshop at the front containing not only the normal accoutrements of the blacksmith's trade but also a small pool.
- **9. Yonwin's** The stench of this place permeates the whole village. Here the villagers sell their excess catch to Yonwin, a crippled halfling merchant.
- **10. Isle of the Lizards** A single hut stands upon this island, which the lizardfolk claim as a holy place; most nights, Zissren leads her fellows in worship to their primitive gods.

#### MARKEJPLACE

Resources & Industry fishing, hunting

Base Value 250 gp; Purchase Limit 1,250 gp; Spellcasting 1st; Minor Items 1d4; Medium Items 1d2; Major Items –

When the PCs arrive in Thornhill, these items are for sale:

- Potions & Oils invisibility (300 gp), light (25 gp)
- Scrolls (Arcane) misdirection (150 gp), reduce person (25 gp)
- Scroll (Divine) remove curse and spiritual weapon (525 gp)
- Wands alarm (30 charges, 450 gp)

#### VIIIAGE JORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) may know some information about the village. A successful check reveals all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10**: Thornhill is a muddy, cheerless place. Its folk survive by fishing and hunting in the surrounding marshes. Occasionally, lizardfolk trade with the villagers.

**DC 15:** The villagers are insular, superstitious folk. They keep to the old ways. They are poor and have little of value. Most of their houses are ramshackle wooden affairs.

**DC 20:** An ancient stone house stands at the highest part of the village. It is said to predate the village and to once have been the home of a powerful, exiled (and blackhearted) adventurer.

#### VIIIAGERS

- **Appearance** Dark of hair with grey or brown eyes, the folk of Thornhill are often dirty; their clothes normally streaked with mud.
- **Dress** Villagers' clothes are sturdy, of boring earthy colours and invariably muddy. Most wear well worn knee-high boots.

Nomenclature male: Aelfgar, Brid, Eadgar, Gyric, Liofa, Osgar, Sithric, Ulf, Wulfric; *female*: Aebbe, Bebbe, Ealhild, Heiu, Inga, Ricola, Saeith, Ymma; *family*: Almer, Elvery, Isgar, Kerrich, Osmer, Siggers, Walwin, Woolgar, Wymer.

#### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Thornhill and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A character exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

#### D6 Rumour

| 1* | Sithric Siggers has friends among the lizardfolk of<br>the marsh. They lead him to many of the sunken<br>tombs hidden in the swamp                               |
|----|--|
| 2  | A huge snake has recently been seen swimming in the lake. Recently, several chickens have gone missing.  |
| 3  | The lizardfolk living nearby are angry about some-<br>thing and shun travellers.   |
| 4  | Lights have been seen burning late at Gyric Walwin's<br>house; the sage has started taking a much more se-<br>rious interest in travellers visiting the village. |
| 5  | Osred's House has a hidden, deep cellar said to lead to a partially flooded cavern.  |
| 6  | Ricola Wymer is the third daughter of a minor noble<br>house. Caught in a youthful indiscretion she was<br>married off to Aelfgar against her wishes.            |

The full version of the village of Thornhill is part of Raging Swan Press's Village Backdrop line. To learn more, check out <u>ragingswan.com/thornhill</u>.





#### YORN

The quintessential mercenary, Yorn is honest to a fault and holds to the letter of any agreement with obsessive precision.

**Background**: A child of war, Yorn was born into the filthy squalor of an orc tribe to a human mother who survived his birth by minutes. Even as a child, Yorn was large; raised to a life of war and pain, he grew dissatisfied with the wanton chaos, disorder and destruction endemic to orcish life.

Leaving his tribe, he embraced the safety and certainty afforded by law and order, but could not throw off his savage nature. A brief spell adventuring, and an even briefer stint in a city watch, proved unsuitable for this savage killer. With few other suitable professions, he fell into the life of a mercenary. During his decade-long career he serve in many different lands under scores of masters.

**Personality**: Yorn is a perfectionist. He practises obsessively with his scimitar for several hours every day for he understands his life depends on his skills. As a youth, Yorn was brash and confident – trusting to his strength and vitality to see him through. Now, as middle-age approaches, he has grown more cautious and fights only when he must. Yorn is no coward, though, and fights savagely showing no mercy.

Yorn likes an ordered, uncluttered environment. He is also an obsessive organiser and his backpack and pouches have many pouches sown into them to better organise his gear.

**Mannerisms**: Yorn wears his greying hair cropped very short and rubs his hand through it when thinking.

**Distinguishing Features:** Yorn's face and body are horribly scarred. A legacy of his childhood, most of the scars are old; few foes have managed to injure him severely in the last several years.

**Hooks**: The PCs could encounter Yorn in many places. He could be drinking in the same tavern or searching for an employer and approach the PCs if they are searching for followers or warriors.

Alternatively, the PCs could witness him beating into unconsciousness a hapless brawler who took his reluctance to fight as a sign of cowardice.

Finally, of course, the PCs could battle Yorn if he serves their enemy. If they do, they find him to be an in-tractable, incorruptible foe.

YÒRN

(XP 19,200)

This huge, scarred half-orc wears a gleaming breast-

plate and effortlessly wields a razor-sharp scimitar and large shield of black wood.

Male half-orc fighter (weapon master) 12

LE Medium humanoid (human, orc)

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +1, Sense Motive +1

Speed 30 ft.; ACP -1; Climb +15, Swim +15

AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 21; CMD 30 (33 vs. disarm and sunder with scimitars); +3 vs. scimitars

(+7 armour [+1 *mithral breastplate*], +3 Dex, +1 dodge [Dodge], +4 shield [darkwood heavy; Greater Shield Focus])

Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +9

hp 94 (12 HD); orc ferocity

**Orc Ferocity (Ex [1/day])** When brought below o hp (but not killed) Yorn can fight on for one more round as if disabled.

Space 5 ft.; Base Atk +12; CMB +16

**Melee** +1 human bane scimitar +21/+16/+11 (1d6+10/15-20)

Ranged mwk throwing axe (range 10 ft.) +16 (1d6+4)

- **Atk Options** Bleeding Critical, Critical Focus, Improved Vital Strike, reliable strike
- **Reliable Strike (Ex [immediate; 2/day])** Yorn can reroll an attack roll, damage roll, critical hit confirmation or miss chance.
- **Combat Gear** *elixir of fire breath*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of fly*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

- **SQ** mirror move (+3), weapon familiarity (orc), weapon guard (+3), weapon training (+3)
- **Feats** Bleeding Critical, Critical Focus, Dodge, Greater Shield Focus<sup>B</sup>, Improved Critical<sup>B</sup>, Improved InitiativeB, Improved Iron Will, Improved Vital Strike<sup>B</sup>, Iron Will, Shield Focus, Vital Strike<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialisation (scimitar)<sup>B</sup>

Skills as above plus Intimidate +10

Languages Common, Orc

CR11

**Gear** as above plus *cloak of resistance* +2, belt pouch, 15 gp, 3 pp



# Now in Print and PDF. oes of the Jade Oath



行影

By Frank Carr



### Introduction to Questhaven, part 1

by Steven D. Russell; Questhaven Heraldry by Jonathan Roberts, Illustrations by Mark Hyzer

Questhaven is Rite Publishing's default campaign setting (currently in development) for most of the material it produces with connections to such product lines as The Plane of Dreams (*Coliseum Morpheuon, Faces of the Tarnished Souk*), Jade Oath, and Kaidan. Listed below are the primary themes of the Questhaven Campaign Setting written as a first person account by the adventurer Owain Northway.

#### Themes of Questhaven

This is really what makes Questhaven different from any other place you have ever been.

It's about the Adventure !: This book will not take the time to name all the flowers found within Questhaven and its Protectorate. It was written as a tour guide book, for adventurers, by an adventurer. I, Owain Northway, am that adventurer. Within my book I will highlight what I consider to be some of the most evocative sites, shops, organizations, inns, lodgings, restaurants, taverns, "dungeons" and other exciting locations with the Protectorate, that would-in my not so humble opinion-interest you the adventurer. Additionally, included with my notes on each piece within my book are my answers to some of Questhaven's greatest secrets. I will include historical and cultural context within these pages so that you know how and why Questhaven functions the way it does, but my main focus will be about what is important to you as an adventurer.

Adventurer's Rule, Literally: The adventure's guild, known as the Questor's Society, reigns over Questhaven as an Oligarchy. In order to form an adventuring company or fellowship here you need to seek out a commission, but more about that later my friend. Upon receiving your commission, you and yours become members of the ruling elite. While this eliminates some of the more mundane problems that you as an adventurer might face, such as commoners not doing what you know is wise, it instantly embroils you in the cut and thrust that is political intrigue of the city, its Protectorate, and the Questor's Society. Just by choosing this lifestyle, you and your fellowship have become a very important part of my homeland.

**Magical Renaissance Society:** Unlike some backwaters of the world that have never seen a cantrip or run afoul of a giant rat, much less a dragon, Questhaven flows with magic, especially when wielded by the companies belonging to the Questor's Society. Yet beyond this, the greatest masters of the hallowed and eldritch arts are discovering and rediscovering



true wonders of magic, for this is a golden age. The spells, magic items, and supernatural creatures you are so familiar with as an adventurer affect Questhaven's culture, economics, and government just as the basic laws of nature do in the most mundane of rural hamlets. And yes, you can order and purchase magic items in the city, but their purchase is governed and tracked by a powerful guild—The Honorable Order of Theurgic Master Craftsmen—and trust me, they use and abuse that power to maintain their government-sanctioned monopoly.

Beyond the Core: Questhaven reaches beyond the scope of what you know as the three core books of adventuring. It is on the edge of the wilderness, out on the rim of the known world. A vast number of renegade products and ideas find their home in the Evocative City, and nothing in it relates to just the traditional experience of an adventurer. For example, in most traditional cities of your world you find elves, dwarves, gnomes, half-orcs, half-elves and halflings; within this land, while you might find a member of those races, you are far more likely to find wyrd (elves/ogre magi), stonewarden gargoyles (former humans and dwarves), jotun giants, lurkers (gnomes/cloakers), wretches (hags/ orcs), blinklings (halflings/blink dogs), restless souls (spirits returned from beyond the grave) and ironborn (artificial humanoids). You will find much more within these pages, from Time Thieves to Gutter Mages, from 1001 spells to long forgotten foes, it has just about everything including the kitchen's water basin.

Secrets: Nearly every major piece within my book,

be it an evocative site or quirky character, has some unanswered question surrounding it, a secret if you will. I want you to explore Questhaven, and nothing in my opinion captures the thrill of adventuring quite so effectively as the search for answers, especially when it comes to secrets. Within my book, I have done my best to put answers to these questions, and while I have based them on the best information available, backed up by my vast experience and keen intellect, sometimes circumstances have forced me to base my answer on rumor, circumstantial evidence, and guesswork. So, do not get complacent, there is a tremendous number of secrets still to unravel, and I have spent an entire adventure attempting to uncover the answer to just one of these secrets. Always remember that I will not lie to you, but that does not mean what I write here will prove to be true. This also does not even begin to cover the secrets relating to the pieces of Questhaven and the Protectorate I have not touched upon, nor what I failed to consider as a truly important part of the realm. There is always another secret yet to discover.

Complex Characters: In my homeland, you will find agents of chaos and evil working right alongside those who serve the lords of order and good. Yet both of these groups are patriots, they love their families, they both genuinely believe that what they do is for the best and yet still they make horrific decisions. Some, such as the vengeful wyrd, believe their acts are virtuous when laid against the backdrop of the culture; others, like members of House Larkchild, are suffering from circumstances beyond their control. Even the Righteous Servants of Heaven still disagree over the paramount path towards forging a better world, and these disagreements can lead to devastating conflicts. People, monsters, and even the Last Warlord of Cynmark have complex motivations and their own personal agendas, so be careful when you label something as a vile abomination with no redeeming qualities, for it's hardly ever true, for in the city of Questhaven there is rarely a single side to a story, usually there are at least three.

Cultural Mosaic: Questhaven is a mix of ethnic groups, languages, and cultures that co-exist remarkably well. This is due to its inhabitants being composed mostly of slaves imported from all over the world. The Immortal Emperor and Dread lich Cynmark, who enslaved the land for over two thousand years, enforced this co-existence by imposing a single common language and a single religion (the Great Church of the Pantheon) upon all the Protectorate's denizens. While many of the humans assimilated to the ideals of the Cynmark Dynasty, others rebelled, most especially the nonhumans, by holding on to their cultural identities, made easier by their longer lifespans. After the Insurrection of Adventure that freed my homeland from the yoke of tyranny, this love of one's original culture exploded, yet all hold a sense that Questhaven is their true home. This has gone further by a number of refuges having fled to Questhaven due to its cultural tolerance from war torn or less tolerant societies.

**Crossroads:** The Protectorate is a center of politics, commerce, religion, culture, and even crime. Ships from nearly every ocean visit Questhaven. Some travel down the Oneiric River, brave merchants travel from out of the north braving the wilds of Steelcrag, while others come up from the south passing around Mt. Jotunheim. In addition, a few strange travelers arrive on the shifting shores from the Plane of Dreams, as planar travel from there to Questhaven is comparatively easy. No matter the adventurous path you take, you will eventually find yourself in Questhaven.

#### Crossroads of Dream/Dream haven

Any spell or effect that attempts to travel from Questhaven or its Protectorate to the Plane of Dreams, or vice versa, has its effect enhanced. Here are some examples.

*Teleport:* The results of off-target, similar area, and mishap result adds the additional effect of the true location the subject has arrived as being on the Plane of Dreams.

*Maze:* The extra dimensional labyrinth created by this spell exists on the Plane of Dreams.

*Plane Shift:* If you do not possess a forked metal rod attuned to the plane of travel, or if you do and it is damaged, you arrive on the Plane of Dreams. If you use it to travel to the Plane of Dreams, you arrive on target rather than 5 to 500 miles from your intended destination.

Any spell that is limited to the same plane treats the Plane of Dreams, Questhaven and its Protectorate as if they were the same plane.

**Special Note:** While one cannot bypass the Gorgon Walls that surround Questhaven, one can transport to the Plane of Dreams within those walls arriving at the city's reflection in Dream.

#### Themes Behind The Screen

**Beyond the Core:** What Owain is saying is that Questhaven draws from beyond the core books of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, from Rite Publishing products and from other 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Publishers. However, I never assume you own the original source material; if I reference something here, it is always available for free access via d20pfsrd.com.

**Modular not Generic:** When designing the Questhaven Campaign Setting I wanted to make sure that each piece I designed for Questhaven could be picked up easily and placed in another campaign setting with little to no retooling, but when placed together as a whole it creates a unique setting. For example, the people of Questhaven do not refer to their deities by name, as they consider that a blasphemy, they refer to them by their title. This makes the religion very fungible, as you can substitute *Our War Marshal in Heaven* for

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any non-evil deity of war. I have attempted to make every piece of the campaign setting maintain a modular nature, so that it makes it easier for GMs to mine for ideas and tools to enhance their homebrew setting or customize an existing one.

**Owain Northway:** This is a theme about presentation, Owain has already talked about the book's tour guide format but what I did as a designer is use Owain Northway's point of view to describe the campaign setting. Giving you the in character perspective of an actual resident, along with all of his opinions, suppositions, beliefs, prejudices and mistakes. I wrote the Questhaven Campaign setting so that it does not read like a DVR instruction manual, but rather like an immersive form of exploration, so you learn as you discover each new place Owain chooses to take you.

**Secrets:** GMs should remember to strew hints and clues through adventures and campaigns, weeks, months and sometimes even years ahead of time so that Questhaven seems alive, further enhancing the player's willing suspension of disbelief. The simplest way to drop a clue is to have an NPC or perhaps a book put forward the question to the player. However, GMs should use the secrets in moderation lest PCs start to feel overwhelmed, secrets are simply here to help inspire adventures, and so PCs always have something else to explore.



# TOME FOR THE ADVENUES, STAY FOR THE SHORE





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# Twenty Questions with Jonathan G. Nelson By Steven D. Russell

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

Hail and well met! My name is Jonathan G. Nelson; I got started with role-playing games almost 25 years ago with the red box and AD&D 1st edition. Of course, times change and so did the game, thus we moved into AD&D 2nd edition (my fave), D&D 3.5, and now Pathfinder. Throughout the years, I played the role of DM/GM and crafted entire worlds for our PCs to explore and created engaging stories which I dutifully acted out for my players. My favorite gaming memories involve eliciting an intense emotional response from my players, whether it was watching their faces contort in fear or light up with pride or anticipation. The satisfaction I get from role-playing games is definitely rooted in acting and emotional release. It's important to mention that I frequently GM on my feet, moving about the room, acting out various roles and using different voices and accents. I've been known to throw myself around quite a bit when acting out combat scenes for my players and have even come close to breaking a couple windows and a sliding glass door.

I've been a creative person as long as I can remember; my greatest passions in life being role-playing games and music. For almost 10 years I played drums in a professional rock band called Los Burbanks. We were signed with INFIDEL Records in NJ, and recorded our records with NYC producer Michael Barbiero (Red Hot Chili Peppers, Guns N Roses, John Lennon, James Brown). It was a pleasure to make music with a man who knew so many musical greats. Barbiero shared many of his stories over many months together which filled us with a sense of joy having this connection to the history of music. As the years rolled on we spent most of our time on tour, playing hundreds of shows in nearly every state, and in every type of venue you could imagine.

I have since retired from the musician lifestyle and settled down in my childhood hometown of Snogualmie, WA in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. I wished to raise my family in the same beautiful valley that I grew up in. I simply must mention my amazingly supportive family here: my beautiful wife Maxine and our two children Justice and Gwendolyn. Thank you for giving me the time I need to follow my dreams and share this creative vision with the world.

It was here in Snoqualmie that Todd Gamble and I met each other and became fast friends. Together we built our creative dreams into a reality and

formed the RPG publishing company Adventureaweek.com, LLP.

As far as writing goes, I have credits in numerous 5-star adventures including Alagoran's Gem, Snow White, and the Rise of the Drow trilogy. With our company just a little over a year old, Adventure-A-Week has published over 60 adventures, many of which have received 5 star reviews from ENDZEITGEIST. All of these adventures are instantly available to subscribers on our



website Adventureaweek.com.

Todd Gamble, Joshua Gullion, Stephen Yeardley and I also planned the madness that was the Rise of the Drow Kickstarter trilogy (550+ page hardback). This trilogy was originally a PDF series which Stephen Yeardley and I wrote in mid-2012. Our subscribers on Adventure-A-Week loved the trilogy so much they requested (no, demanded) that we publish it in print. Our Kickstarter was incredibly successful and 100% funded within the first day, thanks to the efforts of our backers and supporters. This massive tome is slated for an early 2014 release and includes guest authors such as Owen KC Stephens and Christina Stiles, and guest artists Rick Hershey, Jacob Blackmon, Mates Laurentiu, Jen Page, and Satine Phoenix.

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

My home game is typically rescheduled to another date, due to one RPG project or another interfering; trust me I'm not complaining, I love what I do! When I do find the time to game, I typically run the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, and take my players (or my family) through an upcoming adventure release as a way of play testing new products. I have found this to be a fairly easy way to test new material whilst coming up with a multitude of ideas to make a product even better.

Once per year I run an AD&D 1<sup>st</sup> edition game in one of those old-school, tried and true adventure modules from my childhood. I typically invite all my old punk rock gaming buddies from Seattle and we gather around the table drinking beers and yelling at the gnome to keep his mouth shut. Crazy gnomes.

A couple times a month I sneak out for a late night D&D session with my Snoqualmie neighbor Cliff Jones (The First Paladin, Gen Con). CJ runs a really cool set up with Fantasy Grounds II, he places the player map on a giant monitor for those without a laptop, and has a server running Fantasy Grounds for those who would like to log in. It's fun for me to be a player as it requires a lot less thinking on my part and the chance to BS about anything RPG related with fellow old school gamers! (*On a side note: CJ is helping to convert all AaW adventures for use with Fantasy Grounds II. We have three scheduled for release in the next couple weeks!*)

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

That's a tough one. Paizo has a lot of books, most are great, but some are completely unbalanced, such as the Advanced Race Guide (with the appropriate acronym of ARG!).

The Core Rules seems like an obvious choice, as does Ultimate Equipment *(I'm a sucker for equipment books, remember Aurora's Whole Realms Catalog?),* but I have to say that the Pathfinder Beginner Box is currently my favorite product. It's the reason my 10 year old son obtained an early love of tabletop role-playing games (well I guess dad played a part as well!). The Pathfinder Beginner Box gave him and his friends an easy way to quickly throw together a game and run with it. It was also great fun using the beginner box along with Kevin Michelson's BASIC-Series to run the family through a few original adventures. After learning the Pathfinder Beginner rules, teaching my son how to play Pathfinder has been a cinch!

#### 4. You are currently the owner/operator of Adeventureaweek.com, how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

We began construction on our website, <u>Adventureaweek.com</u> in early 2011. We had a clear goal: to provide GMs with a new adventure every week, in both PDF format and a new tablet-friendly web experience with open/close javascript boxes for combat stat blocks and cool little color-coded icons used to designate whether a text-box represented a trap, skill check, or otherwise. Throughout the seasons we brainstormed. We sat inside, sipping hot coffee during snow storms and dreamt up the layout of the website. In summer, we relaxed outside on Todd's small porch drinking iced tea and sketching world maps and heraldic crests for our campaign setting, soaking up that rare Washingtonian sun. We launched the site on March 1st, 2012.

Adventureaweek. com started with a simple concept: Provide subscribers with a new adventure every week. At first we planned on something quite short, the equivalent to a *Dungeon Magazine* adventure. As time went on, our "side quests" grew into full blown



scale adventures. Now we publish entire adventure paths as well as the occasional stand-alone. We know most GMs like to run games in their own settings and campaigns, so we tend to keep certain aspects of our adventures system agnostic so that integration into one's own campaign is not only plausible, but entirely possible.

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

That question is a tough one. I would probably say that my most memorable experience from a writing perspective was *Wild Thing*, an adventure involving a love sick human who falls head over heels for a bog troll runt in the Vast Swamp.

Vying for the top position is Alagoran's Gem, a salute to my heroes Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, and of course the incredibly talented David C. Sutherland III.

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

*Wild Thing:* I wrote this product on a tiny notepad, then transcribed my nearly illegible handwriting and drawings into a fantastic adventure on a computer disconnected from the internet while being locked in a closet (this was of my own doing). What came out of this was a very sandboxy adventure with some really fun rules and concepts.

*Alagoran's Gem:* I wrote this adventure on an old 1950's typewriter which I bought at a thrift store for \$1. I got it working and despite the sticky keys and awkward typing angle, I found that I could put myself in the shoes of some of the early adventure authors, completely detached from the constant drone of the internet and Facebook. I unplugged, so to say, and told the story of Alagoran's Gem, and the dungeon constructed to protect this rare dwarven heirloom. It turned into one of the most dangerous and classic style dungeons I have ever constructed. I still get excited to run this adventure

when I flip through its pages! Mwa, ha, ha... bring extra character sheets, you're gonna need them!

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

*Wild Thing:* Introducing a fun new way to navigate without using traditional rules. I made a system using "Swamp Points" which are determined based on the skill level of the hired captain as well as the type of vessel the PCs commandeer to explore the swamp. Certain types of encounters which included environmental, meteorological, and bestial could be avoided by spending Swamp Points. I also created a number of tables involving insect bites, infections, and even rules for trench foot and how to deal with survival in a swamp environment.

*Alagoran's Gem:* The traps cannot be overcome simply by rolling dice; the players must actually outsmart the traps or die trying. The foolish die and the wise survive!

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

As many 3PP can attest, finding the free time and a quiet place to actually get to writing is almost always the most challenging obstacle to overcome. Once that was out of my way, most of it came easy, although as Kobold Chieftain Wolfgang Baur says, there's always the "Muddle in the Middle." If you want to know more about that, you best check out the *Kobold Guide to Game Design*, a book I highly recommend for any prospective game developers and adventure authors (you may want to down the free *Adventure Composition Tutorial* from the Adventureaweek.com site as well.)

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

While working on this adventure and a dozen others I learned that I needed to step back and provide support to other freelancers so that I could assume the proper role of publisher at Adventureaweek.com, LLP. Writing adventures is great fun, but it is quite difficult to manage along with a full time job, children, publishing company, and a website which cranks out adventures at such a rate that men with straitjackets frequently hide in the bushes outside both Todd's house and mine.

> 10. Other than your own work and Adventureaweek.com products, what is the best Pathfinder Roleplaying Game

#### compatible product out there?

That's a very difficult question to answer, there's a lot of amazing stuff out there right now. Companies which immediately pop into my head include Super Genius Games, Rite Publishing, and Frog God Games. Although, I'm admittedly a huge



fan of the stuff Kobold Press (formerly Open Design) is putting out, I think in part because I share Wolfgang's love for Norse mythology. *Have you seen Vikings* on the History channel yet? Good stuff. So, if we're talking strictly Pathfinder compatible, I really dig the Midgard Campaign Setting due to the obvious links to Vikings and Norse lore. The Midgard book has been a long time in the making and is Wolfgang's first self-published setting. Wolfgang contributed heavily in many settings released by TSR back in the day such as Planescape, Al-Qadim, and Birthright so I knew he wouldn't disappoint with this book, and he didn't. What really brought this book alive for me were the maps, done by none other than the talented cartographer Jonathan Roberts. Jonathan is a really nice, down to earth guy who recently obtained a good deal of fame by providing cartography for the Lands of Ice and Fire books (Game of Thrones anyone?) If you haven't checked out the Midgard Campaign Setting or Jonathan Robert's maps, I highly suggest you do so.

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

There are many things to think about when designing a product for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game. It must be something that is needed. Why create a new spell domain if there are already three just like it? I mean, if the three in existence are terribly unbalanced or just downright suck, yeah, I can understand why you would take that route, but if it's been done, why add to the pile? I like products that think outside the box, color outside the lines, and yet have balance. It is also important to design knowing that every gaming group handles things differently or could come at your product from an unexpected angle. Play testing is a must, especially when it comes to rules which may change the way the game is played.

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

There are too many incredible game designers out there to choose just one, folks that immediately come to mind include Nicholas Logue, Stephen Yeardley, and Sean Reynolds, but if you're going to put me on the spot I would have to say my all-time favorite designer is Wolfgang Baur. I love the way he writes, the referenced mythology, and his knack for meaningful and insightful encounters.

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

First of all, take a deep breath. At Adventureaweek. com we get a lot of ambitious freelancing adventure authors who are just getting started. They are filled with fantastic energy but just seem to be running in circles, getting nowhere fast. Many times they have great ideas but shoot themselves in the foot by trying to bring their own setting into an adventure, introduce a new deity, use plagiarized materials or copyrighted names, or most commonly, they start out by proposing an adventure for high level characters. I will be blunt here: If you come to me with an adventure for high level PCs, and you've never before had your work published, I will say no. The best way to test a new freelancer's mettle is by putting them through the most basic of tests, a simple 1st level adventure for 4 PCs. Why? Because it's so hard for most folks to think past the simple cave filled with goblins or kobolds, and while these adventures are fun, they've been done to death.

I love when someone comes to me with a new way to use an existing creature or spell, this can open up a whole new realm of possibilities and adventure concepts. These types of ideas are what game design is all about. Why rewrite the book if you can take what's there and truly make it shine?

Before you even start sending pitches to RPG companies, do your homework. Buy every single book on RPG design you can. Read them all, and then read them again. Write some stuff, test it out on your friends, see what they think of your material. Ask them to be completely honest, and do not let their honesty hurt your feelings or stop you from pushing forward. Everyone has to start somewhere and no one starts at the top. Always pull yourself back up, dust yourself off; you'll be stronger because of it.

Once you have a concept for your adventure, the next step is to send in your pitch. Start with a straightforward pitch; make sure your spelling and grammar are absolutely perfect. If a pitch is riddled with errors we can probably expect the same in your final draft, thus we will turn you down. If this is your first pitch, start with a simple proposal such as an adventure for low level PCs with a truly incredible twist. Don't worry; you'll get the chance to write higher level adventures once you've established yourself, but you have to get your foot in the door before we'll open it the rest of the way. BE PREPARED: If we like your pitch and want to see more, you should have more ready to send on over. It seems like many people write a pitch just to see if it will be accepted before they flesh out the synopsis of their adventure. Without going the extra mile you're just making things harder on yourself and the publishing company. We're busy, so we don't have the time to help you flesh out and write your adventure; that is all up to you.

Last but not least, follow through with your commitments. Aim to get your documents in well ahead of schedule, this way we're not waiting on you. If you are professional, punctual, and creative you will go far. *Good luck!* 

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

At the top of my list is none other than Larry Elmore. Not only did I grow up with his art, I was a huge fan of *Dragonlance*, both the books and the setting. Next up is Tony DiTerlizzi, I've always loved his stuff, and talk about coloring outside the lines, he has a style that is all his own. Tony's characters seem to hail from some faroff twisted fey realm, yet strangely, they feel as if they really could exist.

In the world of realistically priced art (no offense Elmore and DiTerlizzi, you guys have earned it), I would have to go with Rick Hershey. His work on the *Rise of the Drow* trilogy has really impressed me. He has a knack for constructing dark and twisted drawings combined with real world imagery and bodies. Somehow it just works. I'll be honest with you, at first I didn't know if I liked it, but as soon as I got a feel for his style I just wanted to see more! I can't wait until the *Rise of the Drow* hardback is complete as much of it will be filled with completely original work by Rick.

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

The response to our 500-page *Rise of the Drow* trilogy. Our fans and subscribers loved every bit of it and immediately asked when we were going to get a Kickstarter underway to make this thing a hardback. When your own fans are coming to you asking for a book in print you know you've got something to share with the world. We were very pleased with ENDZEITGEIST's reviews of these PDFs as well. Now the fans and subscribers will finally get to see their wish come true in early 2014!

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

It's no secret that we recently released a two part adventure for SNOW WHITE. We have similar adventures in the works which revisit some of the Grimm Fairy tales but delve back to the original tales and legends which spawned the Grimm versions. Snow White was just such an adventure, but what's coming next? Let's just say that it won't be anything like the Disney version.

#### 17. Do you have any goals for Adventureaweek.com that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

We have been working on and off toward publishing our own campaign setting. It's still a long ways out though, and although I would absolutely love to focus on it right now, we have bigger fish to fry and thus must be patient and wait until the time is right. In the meantime, subscribers can enjoy what has been written for the setting thus far on Adventureaweek.com. We've got some of the countries fleshed out and in depth material on the Klavekians and Vikmordere, especially in the area around the village of Rybalka (our campaign setting focus).

## 18. Can you talk a bit about the *Rise of the Drow* trilogy and why you believe it is so popular?

AaW has a knack for retelling classic tales in a new and unexpected light, with twists, turns and pivotal moments that engage and challenge your group. We also enjoy including mini-games which allow players to step away from traditional play and experience something entirely new. I relied heavily on spelunking books and information found on the web regarding cave exploration. I also frequently referenced my worn-out copy of the Dungeoneer's Survival Guide (yes, from AD&D 1st edition) for those extra tidbits of information that I could find nowhere else. We truly paid our respects to Gary Gygax and David C. Sutherland III in this trilogy, and fans of D&D, both old and new, 3.5 or Pathfinder will find something incredible within these pages. We really wanted this trilogy to breathe realism yet also pay homage to the masters responsible for setting the stage that is the "Underdark."

The huge popularity of the *Rise of the Drow* trilogy stems from the starring role of the drow, those dark elves that we've come to know and love through Ed Greenwood and R.A. Salvatore's tales in the Forgotten Realms. The huge success of our Kickstarter was due in part to the popularity of this underworld race, but the driving force was in fact our existing fans and supporters who had already played through the original trilogy in PDF format and wanted to see it transformed into a brand new hardcover edition.

19. With a new adventure every week, how do you keep things fresh?

Our adventures are written by in house professionals as well as a large group of freelancers and aspiring adventure authors. With a couple dozen viewpoints and literally hundreds of new ideas monthly, it's easy to write something new; however, keeping things truly fresh and exciting is what every creative company aspires to do. The way Stephen Yeardley and I generally address this is to think outside the box and come at things from a slightly unexpected angle. Here's an example, the intro description for Arcineum Devaneas 1, one of our newest adventures: An adventure for 4-6 PCs of any level, although it is best suited for either players relatively new to the game or characters below 12th level. A series of events and puzzles that allow players to experience encounters at different levels and as creatures other than "themselves", so whatever level the PCs actually are doesn't have any great bearing on immediate actions. However, the adventure is a good way to introduce particular items if you so wish; the protagonists reward party members for their efforts and as GM, you can bring almost anything to the reward table as the NPCs setting the tasks are of a very high level.

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

Todd Gamble, Stephen Yeardley, Joshua Gullion, Will Myers, and Jonathan G. Nelson are the force behind Adventure-A-Week and are also good friends living hundreds and even thousands of miles apart. We come together to create these adventures out of pure love for tabletop role-playing games and specifically adventures.

Our entire team feels a real sense of accomplishment when we make someone happy with our products. We hope to make our subscribers and fans even happier in 2014. We have found that it is not the end goal, but the journey and experience that make life worth living.



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DOUENTURE



## Reviews

picture by Eric Quiggly

#### Races Revisited: The Kitsune Clans

by Alex Putnam Super Genius Games rating: 5 stars out of 5 stars!

**Review** by Thilo Graf



This pdf is 21 pages long, 2/3 of a page front cover, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 19 1/3 pages of content, so let's take a look! The Kitsune-race, like many ARG-races, at least to me lacked what makes a race work – a distinct culture – and hence we kick this pdf off with a massive introduction that features several

possible origin myths before we delve into 4 subtypes of Kitsune: Zenko are the ARG-kitsune, whereas Tenko are shrine guardians and Yako are the clanless kitsune. Finally, there are the Nogitsune, kitsune with a malevolent, oni-like streak – essentially the vile, black sheep among the fox clans. (Sorry for the bad pun...). Physical characteristics, relations with other races etc. are provided as well – as is an extremely useful sidebox that allows you to reflavor Kitsune for european-style fantasy by tying them to e.g. the legends of Reynard (or Reinecke Fuchs, for Germanic audiences) – by the way: Not at all a nice collection of children's fables, but rather quite grim and dark – definitely a recommended read, though not for the faint of heart. Reynard does some pretty despicable things...

6 general personality-dispositions are explained and give ideas for players and DMs alike to properly portray Kitsune as a valid player race with its own identity before we get into a MASSIVE Kitsune name-lists with suffixes and their meaning explained – two thumbs up for that level of detail!

Next up would be the racial traits of Zenko: Zenko get +2 to Dex and Cha, kitsune-subtype, low-light vision, change shape to one form, +2 to acrobatics, +1 DC for their enchantment-spells, 3/day dancing lights if Cha>10 and a bite of 1d4. Balanced – nothing to complain here!

Tenko get +2 Wis, +2 CHa, -2 Str, are kitsune, get low-light vision, can turn into astral foxes,, 1/day reroll Bluff or Diplomacy and take the better result, +1 to saves versus divination magic, 3/day dancing lights if Cha>10, 2 claws for 1d4 each. Again, nothing to complain here! It should be noted that thankfully, age, height and weight-tables have not be forgotten – nor have alternate racial traits:

A total of 5 options allow you to get agathion magic for kitsune magic (i.e. +1 effective paladin level for lay on hands, Cha>10 1/day cure light wounds), be a outsider and darkvision, change shape faster, impose a -2 penalty to resist your wiles when having won a foe over, 1/day reroll sense motive, proficiency with a light weapon and only 1/day dancing lights if Cha >10. Nothing to complain about these either. Racial subtypes like the Kiko spirit foxes can be made with these and a Yako (wild fox) instead of Cha gets the bonus to Int. After that, we get a massive array of favored class options for all Paizo-classes - as well as SGG's archon, armiger, death knight, death mage, Dragonrider, Godling (Adept, Clever, Eldritch, Mighty), Hellion, Magister, Riven Mage, Mosaic Mage, Shadow Assassin, Shaman, Templar, Time Thief, Time Warden, Vanguard, War Master and Witch Hunter - awesome! Next up would be racial archetypes, starting with the Arsonist, a type of alchemist that is an expert and precise master of the flame and precise bombing. Youko Barbarians turn into massive fox-beasts instead of regular raging and are particularly deadly versus spirits. Spirit Envoys are oracles that can read the interwoven threads of life and thus better influence some creatures, sense enchantments and bewitchments and hamper compulsion effect's efficiency. Finally, the Kitsune Trickster (rogue, if you haven't guessed it) may use Int for social skills that use disguise, diplomacy, sense motive and bluff and charm person 1/day. We also get 3 new rogue talents - One that allows you to insinuate that a person you don't know actually is your friend, one to interdict stories and usurp their content and one that may destroy thus reputations. We also get a kitsune sorceror bloodline - with iconic fox fire, keen senses, make your weapon count as silver or cold iron and later shadow walk and finally become ageless.

Next up are 8 new feats:

-Accent Mastery: Determine where one is from – uncommon and cool!

-Magical Tail: Disguise self, charm person, misdirection, invisibility, suggestion, displacement, confusion, dominate person -Gain Disguise Self as a 2/day as a spell-like ability. Every additional time you take the feat, you get the next Spell-like ability in the order 2/day. Interesting design choice – and one that imho works.

-Nogitsune's Palate: Eat livers of killed animals to heal/ gain temporary hitpoints up to 2 hp per level and +1 to will-saves.

-Nogitsune's Foul Feast: Int-mod times per day, death knell foes with + Int-mod temporary hit points. Also, Nogitsune's palate is enhanced.

-Realistic Likeness: Take the form of individuals via racial shape change at +10 to disguise.

-3-Tailed Oath: Grow a second tail (and more over the

levels) and gain a tail pool – the number of points being equal to your tails. You may spend these points to get + tail-number luck bonus to skill-checks, + dex-mod to damage with light, thrown or ranged weapons that require an atk-roll or +1/2 tails-number as bonus to one ref-save. This being a vow, it has a drawback – You MUST adhere to the letter of contracts and promises made or lose all benefits.

-6-Tailed Oath: More tails, more options: Use tail pool points as substitute charges for wands, make a weapon flaming for 1 minute or reroll a concentration-check – these all take multiple tail points, btw. As drawbacks, your tama now is required for casting as if it was a bonded object, may not initiate violence versus humans and must make a will-save to defend against melee attacks from them and get a more significant penalty versus canines and cannot pass them when they guard a door, portal or gate.

-9-Tailed Destiny: Now you may recharge charges of staves, force foes to reroll attacks at -2 luck penalty or 1/day spend all points to gain resiliency and 3 hp per tail-point spent. Furthermore, you age categories are changed, making you extremely long-lived. To offset these benefits, you may fail casting even cantrips/ orisons sans tama, must use non-damaging spells or indirect means to harm humans and are automatically shaken when within 30 ft. of a canine.

After these rather innovative feats, we get some items to round out this installment – Whispering Maple Leaves may add+1 to the DC of figments and glamers, whereas Kitsune Star Gems (also known as Tama) act as pearls of power for spent spell-like abilities, and shed light and are required for the oath-feats. The final item would be Steel Flames Dancing – a +1 flaming/+1 limning METEOR HAMMER (Hell yeah!) – rather cool, envisioning battles with the weapon...

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to SGG's 3-column full-color landscape-presentation and the full color artworks featured are universally fitting and neat. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Relative newcomer Alex Putnam has created a rather cool supplement here – drawing from mythology without just chewing the tired old tropes, we actually get thoroughly balanced, well-crafted options – neither that, nor the cool crunchy ideas are this pdf's crowning achievement, though:

The culture nomenclature etc., deeply steeped in mythology, should ensure that these Kitsune are not only a tempting option for those inclined to play anthromorphs in the first place, but actually makes the race stand out and have both fluffy and crunchy peculiarities that are all but guaranteed to make many a player contemplate playing a Kitsune – a thoroughly well-crafted supplement and well-worth 5 stars + seal of approval. And if you followed my reviews, you know how high my standards for races are and that I rarely give any racial supplement such high accolades...

Endzeitgeist out.

#### 101 Not So Random Encounters: Winter

By Mike Whelham **Rite Publishing Rating:** 5 stars out of 5 **Review** by Thilo Graf

I'm posting this on the 26th of June and astute readers might deduce from what I still haven't reviewed that this pdf isn't due on my schedule until next week. Well, as an early birthday present from me to myself (tomorrow, I'll be a year older once again...), I'll review only excellent pdfs today. This is one of them!



101 Not So Random

Encounters: Winter

This installment of the

101-series is 40 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 2 pages advertisement, leaving us with 35 pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

Mike Welham has a tough act to follow up - in case you're not familiar with Rite Publishing's 101 Not So Random Encounters: Urban - that pdf introduced us not only to a massive array of encounters (both fluffonly and crunchy with templated weird creatures), but actually linked them with essentially a monster's mafia meta-plot that would make it possible to craft a WHOLE CAMPAIGN from its encounters - the bangfor-buck ratio was simply glorious. Mike Welham took this approach as a template and began crafting - and the results are interesting, spanning CRs from 1/2 to 23, organized from the highest CR to the lowest in the book. As an additional means of organizing the content herein, the final page contains tables that organizes the encounters by effective party level, showing you the appropriate encounters organized by page.

That being said, since essentially we get a whole array of interwoven encounters/characters, the following part of the review contains SPOILERS.

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The main-mover/mastermind behind this pdf's array of encounters is one Halbin Brindlefrost – one glorious beast of a level 20 half-fiendish arctic druid – shunned from birth due to his odd blue skin-tone, he was tainted both by birth and his adventuring career and has since gained control of the frostfire font, a well that allows one to add the frostfire template – he is the main source of encounters herein, endeavoring to bring eternal winter to the region of Nordhelm. Slowly, as the cold is inexorably creeping southwards, the druid schemes and waits for his frozen utopia.

And his experiments have yielded results - he has for example managed to create a fire elemental dragon suffused by frostfire and there also is a massive barbarian 12 of the frost giant-species - dread jarl Vannis and Gregor Tantalus, a level 19 Tiefling Graveknight Wizard and Halbin's childhood Halfling Sorceror friend and so much more (all of which come with full stats) - take for example the fluff-only awakened glacier inhabited by a tarn linnorm or a recently awakened bandersnatch - indeed, primal forces accompany the onslaught of winter. And yes, a humbaba can also be found in the higher echelons of the encounters herein, as can Gregor's deadly adamantine golem. We also get e.g. twin nightwalker nightshades, a slorath or a thunder behemoth - "winter is coming" takes a whole new apocalyptic meaning when taking a look at the dread forces unleashed ...

Of course, Winterwights (at CR +4, template included, as well as a winterwight adlet with full stats), CR 16 abhorrent sowmen and similar iconic beings are in here - but cooler, at least to me, would be one Jargath Snagglejaws, a bizarre nine-headed Jotund Troll. Beyond varying giants/trolls, we also get willow creepers and deadly elasmotheriums (i.e. giant wooly mammoths) serving directly or indirectly, the mastermind of the winter. Speaking of the devil - the PCs may find unconventional allies in the guise of an arctic dragon and a fully statted Drachenchor lich shade, both once at the apex of the north's power-structure, now displaced to mere second class by Halbin and his primal forces unleashing assault. The thematically fitting Frozen Corpse creature template is reprinted (from 101 Not so Simple Monster Templates) and utilized in this pdf. The frostfire font's powers have also e.g. enhanced the powers of gellid beetles and a winter-wolf-sired pack roams the land, as do the numerous half-breed offspring of the fecund dragon Hidegseggia, smilodons and similar prehistoric predators roam free.

Beyond these, ogres, covens of hags, ogre spiders, failed and abandoned experiments of Gregor and Halbin and finally arctic tengu druids might make for interesting encounters.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to RiP's twocolumn full-color standard, tinged in a thematicallyfitting blue. Artworks are mostly stock of varying quality. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Much like its direct predecessor, this pdf provides enough encounters to fuel a complete campaign, oozing with great ideas and providing a treasure trove of creatures that can not only act as a great supplement to Reign of Winter-campaigns, but which could easily stand on its own – full of glorious ideas, it evokes an imagery of frosty cataclysms and primal incursions – a thoroughly well-crafted supplement that once again cements Mike Welham as one damn fine writer. I whole heartedly encourage you to check it out and remain with a final verdict of 5 stars + seal of approval.

Strike at your PCs with a cold-snap they'll never forget – here on OBS or here on d2opfsrd.com's shop!

Endzeitgeist out.

#### Amazing Races: Svirfneblin

by Daron Woodson Abandoned Arts Rating: 5 stars out of 5 stars Review by Thilo Graf

This installment of the Amazing Races-series is 4 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 2 pages for new options for the Svirfneblin, so let's take a look, shall we?

To go on a short tangent: I consider the ARG's Svirfneblin-race to be one of the most broken pieces of race-designing toxic waste to come out of the book. Now that that's off my chest, let's take a look at the new feats:



-Alchemical Wonderworker: Ignore caster level prereqs for Brew Potion and create a selection of wondrous item-types as if you had Craft Wondrous Item. You may also use Craft (Alchemy) instead of Spellcraft when creating potions or wondrous items.

-Expert Alchemy: + 5 to Craft (Alchemy) when creating potions or wondrous items.

-Stone-Faced: Sense Motive-check to get a hunch about your motives take a -10 penalty.

We also get 4 new traits for +1 to atk with alchemical weapons (but not bombs) and + 5ft range increment when throwing them, +5 to opposed charisma checks, +2 to Knowledge (Arcana) and Spellcraft while your spell resistance is lowered or finally +5 to Perception to see through magical disguises.

We also get 4 new alternate racial traits that allow you to get +4 to saves versus figments, patterns and divination spells, cast darkness 1/day and gain +4 to stealth to hide in an area darkened thusly, +1 point healing whenever subjected to magical healing, or prevent spells that fail to overcome a Svirfneblin's SR to affect them for one round.

Finally, we get a Svirfneblin Druid archetype, the Fungal Shepherd – who gets modified class skills, can modify terrain to spontaneously sport fungal undergrowth, create faerie circles that enhance conjured creatures with the fey creature template, a subterranean version of trackless step and a limited wildshape that allows you to turn into fungoid versions of plant shapes.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to Abandoned Art's 2-column no-frills standard and the pdf has no bookmarks, but needs none at this length.

I hate the Svirfneblin-race as a playable race, but as a pdf, this is actually not bad, offering a multitude of nice options. Personally, I enjoyed especially the first feat and the fungus/alchemy theme of the content herein and while the respective crunch never truly is mindblowing or particularly brave, we do get a solid assortment of different pieces of crunch to modify your characters. As such, I'll settle on a final verdict of 3.5 stars, rounded up to 4 due to the low and fair price and lack of issues with this pdf.

Endzeiteist out.

#### F0TS - Y0g'vhus'chuul, Harbinger of the Deeping Void

by Matt Banoch and Justin Sluder **Rite Publishing Rating:** 5 stars of 5 **Review** by Thilo Graf

The final installment of the FoTS-series is 25 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD and 2 pages of advertisement, so let's take a look! Following my format established for the FoTSseries, I'll first tell you about the additional content herein: Template-wise, this pdf provides us with teh Worm-that-Walks-template (CR +2), the Divine Creature template (CR +1), the Hive Creature template (CR +2), the Beyondling template (CR +2) and the aquatic creature template (CR +0). Beyond



these templates, we also get the universal beastlord and mystic archetypes as well as the Blight Druid archetype for...surprise: The druid. Didn't see that one coming, now, did you?

Kidding aside, we also are introduced to the Void domain and the dark tapestry subdomain and 6 new feats: 3 of these feats allow you to create wondrous creatures and advance/augment them via the respective feats. The other feats cover the monkey style, gaining a spell from a spell-list you usually have no access to or increase your caster level. There is also a new trait that allows you to conjure forth a being from the stuff of dreams. We also get the information for the breaking and shattering magic weapon qualities.

And then there are the signature magic items of Yog'vhus'chuul - Bracers of the Monkey may seem common, but then things start getting ... unique. His mask combines the benefits of 2 magical masks, his vest is a combined version of no less than 3 (!!!) magical vestments and his amulet also combines 3 item-benefits. His slippers have the combined properties of no less than 6 (!!!!!) different magic items - and that is not where everything stops, quite to the contrary: His weapon, teh rod of the veiled mastsers falls just short of being artifact-level powerful, while his robe is a major artifact: Protecting against all elements, it allows the wearer to conjure forth massive amounts of powerful elementals - and even shoggoths! And he also gets a Lokanaut-ring - a godling-relic. What are godling relics vou ask?

Well, Super Genus Games has so far released two pdfs providing rules for magic items that improve in power over the levels – each and every level of your character unlocks a new ability for the item and the Lokanaut, introduced in the Genius Guide to Relics for the Godlings II, is part of Yog'vhus'chuul's arsenal. Ouch!

Beyond regular supplemental crunch, we also get a host of stats that are not different incarnations of the NPC – we get stats for the Advanced Grindylow (CR 1),Blotfly swarms (CR 4), Advanced Froghemoths (CR 14), 6- and 10-headed Cryohydras (at CR 8 and 12), advanced stirges (CR 1) and finally, Syncs – weird humanoids that gain strength when fighting prolonged fights as they start adapting to their foe's power.

The statblocks of Yog'vhus'chuul clock in at CR 10, 15 and 21 and each comes with two variants that use other templates, adding more versatility to the stats, but as with any FoTS-installment, it's not only the stats that make this installment interesting – it's the story as well.

Here are minor SPOILERS. Potential players may wish to jump to the conclusion.

Still here? All right – we actually get dreamburning information for this character as well as a how-to-use – for the creature called Yog'vhus'chuul is not your regular villain: It considers itself rather benevolent, the influence of the dark tapestry a step forwards in evolution – for he is a druid, though one devoted to the alien nature of foreign dimensions, gleefully watching the progress of not only his minions, but the blending of dimensions itself. And all the while, he is posing as a relative harmless fishmonger with a gassy froghemoth – in plain sight.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's old rune-bordered 2-column b/w-standard and the artwork of Yog'vhus'chuul by Juan Diego Dianderas is awesome. The pdf comes extensively bookmarked for your convenience.

So...this is it. The final installment of what has by now become my go-to-series for awesome NPCs with complex builds, for the one series that continuously brought us complex characters worthy of the name with advanced, extremely versatile statblocks. The series that combined more third party publications in unique ways than any I had ever seen and that has vastly enhanced the already impressive awesomeness that is Coliseum Morpheuon. It is with one teary eye I read the farewellnote included in the pdf, but I'm glad as well – glad that the series can go on a high note. While probably no NPC ever will beat my all-time favorite Nameless Nil, Yog'vhus'chuul is both an interesting build and cool character to end the series on.

What I do know is that I'm looking forward to what Justin Sluder and Matt Banach are up next – Matt is currently writing his novel – and I'm sure we'll be seeing some interesting content from both. Oh, I forgot my final verdict – this, once again, due to awesome content and fair price, is worth 5 stars + seal of approval.

#### Endzeitgeist out.

#### The Sunken Pyramid

By Creighton Broadhurst and Marc Radle Raging Swan Press Rating: 5 out of 5 Review by Thilo Graf

I'm posting this on the 26th of June and astute readers might deduce from what I still haven't reviewed that this pdf isn't due on my schedule until next week. Well, as an early birthday present from me to myself (tomorrow, I'll be a year older once again...), I'll review only excellent pdfs today. This is one of them!

This module is 87 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page advertisement, 2 pages



editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page ToC, 1 page statblock-list by CR/foreword, 1 page advice on reading statblocks for novice-DMs, 1 page basic advice on using adventures, leaving us with 78 pages of content

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

All right, still here? The sunken edifice close to White Moon Cove (or any other coastal village ... ) has become the new throne of the Atl'utaal-tribe - and found a weird being known as Nahuatal: Which demands blood sacrifice of sentient beings. If you haven't guessed -players will need to delve into the depths and a list of abilities are noted that will greatly help in exploring the sunken pyramid - preparation is essential, for underwater adventuring is not particularly simple. Before we delve into the meat of the module, we essentially get the full Village Backdrop for White Moon Cove (please check my review of that one for a more detailed look) -complete with Village Map (which can be btw. downloaded as high-res versions for free on Raging Swan Press' homepage), rumors etc. And, of course, we also get varied different adventure hooks to draw the PCs into the action. Now that basic set-up is out of the way, we'll also by this point have read an ecology on sahuagin that will help depicting them and their culture -including nomenclature, religion etc.

We also get a timeline of 13 days that should feature enough events to draw the PCs into the action as well as potentially even providing some support. Now it should be noted that this module does not take the easy route out and indeed does not provide magic items to cancel out the environmental peculiarities of underwater adventuring, but more on that later. The action kicks off with a sahuagin raiding party assaulting the docks of White Moon Cove and, as with every encounter, scaling information (e.g. to either EL 9 or EL 11) are provided as well as a wide array of different terrain specifics that may be utilized as cover, broken etc. – rather neat and in the level of detail we've come to expect from raging Swan Press.

After the raid, doing some research and getting some information in the town, both via rumors and NPC-interaction, the PCs will have to settle off aboard a vessel towards the sunken edifice and delve into the depths - and here, the crawl starts becoming rather interesting - in contrast to most modules I've seen, we actually get information on counter-tactics of the inhabitants, organized defenses etc. - so PCs better be on their a-game when exploring the pyramid. Oh, and if you're like me, you'll also enjoy the, which cannot be emphasized enough, vast amount of details to be found herein - which actually makes this location work organically and make it seem plausible - there for example is a kelp/seaweed farm found herein. While perhaps looking like something irrelevant, it is VERY relevant - your unconsciousness will notice such details and they will help immersing both you and your players into the module's alien vistas.

Or e.g. skull-filled niches, barracks with a variety of items hidden? Beyond even random encounters, we also get dressing-tables for e.g. the second level – and then there are the Cal' Mecac Teachings – a combination of pictograms and aquan texts teachings that are simply awesome and give a fascinating insight into sahuagin culture. Want an example? Here you go!

All the world is a grave and none escape it

A warrior hastens to send blood

to the vast realm of the gods.

Once exulted in pride, majesty, fortune and power,

nothing recalls a warrior when gone but his deeds.

And yes, we get more of them! Two thumbs up for this very immersive pieces of fluff – they serve to vastly improve the alien sense that sahuagin mindset should evoke. Alien? Yes, for even the young and females demand no quarter, nor give it – vicious foes abound, even before meeting bone oracles and skeletons made from shark jaws... – though not all is a killfest. Aforementioned oracle, sinister as he might be, actually wants the PCs to slay Nahuatal and may offer some crucial hints that may well mean the difference between a repudiated assault and a successful infiltration... Of course, disposing the oracle and defeating his necrophidius guardian and enervation-beams blasting skulls is also an option for less diplomatically-inclined PCs.

It should also be noted that even the treasures that can randomly be found in sahuagin quarters are interesting – shark-tooth carvings, for example. Since underwater combat is different – so are the spelllists and the tactics based on the spells – e.g. by the sorcerors. A nasty surprise for PCs not familiar with Malenti (i.e. sahuagin that actually look like aquatic elves!) is also waiting in the wings as one hard-hitting assassin - and assassination in 3d, with kelp-beds as cover is nothing but cool! Speaking of interesting battle/ terrain uses - what about a stone oracle swimming in and out of walls via Earth Glide? Yeah, nasty! Ally-wise, the PCs may also enter the fray in a sahuagin-arena and save a doomed triton gladiator from being torn to shreds and loot-wise pillage sahuagin armories and barracks (also for magical items wi8th neat unique fluff) -before invading the throne room to save a merfolk damsel in distress (and/or an imprisoned sea hag)s and SUFFER against Baron Xilochtel - a four-armed mutant giant sahuagin magus.

Have I mentioned devious traps like poisoned seaweed curtains or that that's not all? For it isn't – even beyond the deadly baron, beyond the sahuagin cleric, in the depths, dread cleric No'Chilok and Nahuatal, the drinker of souls stand between the PCs and the freedom of the hostages/sacrifices to be – and the CR 10 ancient shark-abomination with its deadly breath weapon and ability to smite good/swallow whole is DEADLY – hence also the advice on how to avoid TPKs and scaling it down – it should also be noted that the fully depicted NPC-hostages feature two combatants that could mean the difference between life and death – nice!

In the appendix, we get full write ups for Nahuatal as well as Sharkjaw Skeletons and also magic items – like crystal sahuagin skulls, shark tooth amulets and the item called "Obsidian Trident" – which houses the personality of Pyvanel, a long-slain merfolk sorceror – whether they keep it or return it, they'll have gained useful allies – whether in the tritons or in the very weapon itself.

The second appendix is gold and essentially consists of a massive DM-cheat-sheet that makes running underwater adventurers so much easier, it's glorious – all the compiled information, including the effects of swim speed/freedom of movement and attack/damage modifications make running this actually surprisingly easy on the DM.

The final appendix contains 6 pregens for your convenience.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting, as we've come to expect from Raging Swan Press, are top-notch. Layout adheres to an elegant two-column standard and the b/w-artworks and cartography are nice. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience as well as in two versions, one optimized for print and one for screen-use.

This has been a long time in the making -and it shows: Polished to a gleam, this module shines like a pearl in the murky depths – in spite of its hard challenge of living up to one of my most favorite trilogies of all time

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- my direct comparison for this one is the legendary 2nd edition Monstrous Arcana Sahuagin Trilogy and much like the first installment of said module, I want MORE. Marc Radle and Creighton Broadhurst should definitely go for sequels, for this underwater sojourn left me wanting more. Now if I had to nitpick, there would be two minor things I could complain about - the reprinted information from the White Moon Cove-village backdrop means that the two products have some overlap, but since the bang-for-buck-ratio still rocks, so no issue there. Beyond that, I would have started drooling if this module had a web-enhancement for the buoyancy-rules/Cerulean Seas-rules by Alluria Publishing, but the absence of support for that does not drag this down in any way, since both can easily be combined. (In any case, I'd still recommend Cerulean Seas for ANY campaign - you won't find a better underwater adventuring resource anywhere!)

But where the module is working best is hard to describe - it's in the details - almost subliminally so. We've come to expect terrain peculiarities and things to do with chairs, tapestries and similar items in other RSP-publications, but the attention to detail is not all that makes this work - it is the combination of the details, the implied culture of the sahuagin that can be glimpsed at in tantalizing minutiae the mind cobbles together over the module's course to a glimpse of a vastly larger whole, the jigsaw-like minutiae that evoke one's anthropological and archeological curiosity combined with smart nomenclature that makes this work. What do I mean with smart nomenclature? Well, do some basic etymological research into the name "Nahuatal" and you'll know what I mean! (And if you can't find it, feel free to drop me a line and I'll explain!)

All in all, we get one awesome, first class underwater module – one I really hope will result in more modules, sequels – MORE! Final verdict? Unsurprising 5 stars + seal of approval – you'll never find an underwater module as easy to run as this one while still remaining engaging, concise and just smart – even beginner's DMs should have a nice time running this and as a change of pace, are encouraged to take a look as well.

Endzeitgeist out.

#### The Raven's Call

By Wolfgang Baur Published by Kobold Press Rating: 5 stars out of 5 Review by Thilo Graf

This module is 21 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD and 1 page advertisement, leaving us with 17 pages of content, so let's take a look!

This being an adventurereview, the following contains SPOILERS. Potential players may wish to jump to the conclusion. Still here? All right!

The world of Midgard, the Northlands – rather specifically, the small thorp called Nargenstal... has seen better days. Thankfully (depending on the hook), the



Shadow Road known as Raven's Road opens for the PCs and dumps them near it – for unfortunately, the village has been taken. By whom will become apparent once the PCs encounter the few villagers that have escaped: Trollkin (which btw. are fully statted) and their kobold allies have taken the thorp and most of the surviving villagers hostage. The PC's objective thus will be to infiltrate the village and take it back – but how they do that is up to them – trying to kill foes one by one for example might result in revenge-killings f hostages and if trollkin perish, their shaman will demand weregild and start joining the fray. Shaman? Yes, from Kobold Press' New Paths-series, the shaman is essentially a prepared caster variant of the druid – with quite a few different unique options.

Speaking of options: Two mercenaries are selling enhanced alchemist's fire (so-called demonfire) that burns longer and produces soporific vapors, but while they sell them for a price, DCs and regular market prices for the item would have been appreciated. The sandboxy environment that is this module also is ehnaced by 12 optional minor tasks/subquests DMs may introduce to the fray to make the village and its surrounding areas come more to life. Speaking of life: The thorp was guarded by gaint crab that has been trained and is now under the command of the invaders - saving it might make for an uncommon ally. Counter-tactics for the PC's actions and sneaking in are covered as well - the latter option being particularly interesting, since it require first luring the swarms of ravens away that have taken a liking to the carnage.

The village is beautifully mapped by Alyssa Faden and the bulk of the foes will soon either retreat or be waiting in the thorp's inn – where the Ogre lord as well as the trollkin shaman make for interesting final bosses of the module. Said inn also holds a secret – its cellar hides 3 ancient sarcophagi and 3 javelins of Thor, mythic items. Mythic? Yeah, for this, at least to my knowledge, is the first module that actually has information for mythic tasks etc. – whether saving the crab, finding the javelins etc. Nice! Midgard's status-rules also get a nice nod. The inn, again, is beautifully mapped in b/w, but since a secret compartment is included in the map, at least one of the 3 levels of the inn won't be shown to them – which is a pity. A player-friendly map would have helped there.

Speaking of help: DM's get help in tracking the

occupying force by an easy-to-use table with percentile chances of particular creatures being in one location, while the PCs may encounter a help (or complication) in the guise of a dhampir treasure-hunter of questionable morals who is also after the javelins...

#### Conclusions:

Editing and formatting are very good, though not perfect: I was at first stumped when a particular entry pointed my towards a "Blood Money" boxed text – which isn't boxed. It's there, it's easy to find – it's still a minor glitch. Layout adheres to a beautiful 2-column full-color standard that is a joy to behold and the b/w-artworks are universally awesome – especially at this very fair price point. The pdf comes fully bookmarked.

I really like this module: There aren't that many good low level sandboxes out there and this one in particular deals with a trope that has been left mostly untapped and, in spite of the few pages it has to develop it, makes for a compelling scenario indeed – not one that is particularly exciting story-wise, but still a great scenario. It is not perfect, though: The alchemical stats, though pressganging/negotiating with them into saving the thorp is something most groups will probably try. That being said, the amount of detail crammed into his module is still interesting – swim and climb-DCs etc. –all provided. The optional side-quests also help to make this module come alive – to an extent that few modules manage.

There is a reason why Wolfgang Baur is such a celebrated author and this module shows experience in design, story-telling and details that are the hallmark of an experienced designer. The Kobold-Commanderin-Chief has crafted a cool module indeed, though one that is not as ambitious or mind-boggling in scope as e.g. "To the Edge of the World". It doesn't try to be – it's a different beast, but another minor nitpick I had was that I would have enjoyed a slightly tighter focus of the mythic javelins in the story – as provided, they feel slightly like an afterthought added to the module.

Mind you, this is complaining at a VERY high level and I'm still wholeheartedly recommending this module – my final verdict will clock in at 5 stars, just short of the seal of approval.

Endzeitgeist out.



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Rule the Razor you say? A fool's ambition. The subtleties and perils of this realm are manifold. Land and sea murder at the whim of ancient gods. Men's smiles hide a thousand knives. Those fooled into believing that the Kraken's tentacles are more fearsome than its insidious and far-reaching schemes soon find themselves cruelly enlightened – usually moments before calamity claims their souls. The Razor is too vast, its terrors too multitudinous, for even the bravest adventurer to conquer. It won't stop them from trying though, and that means good business for me. I thank the gods daily for sending so many fools into this world.

