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Editorial by Dave Paul

I've been spending some time lately thinking about the relationship between political authority and human nature. What, for instance, is it about human beings (or, in Pathfinder terms, what is it about the nature of sentient, aligned, intelligent beings) that can explain legitimate political authority? It strikes me that there have been (real and imagined) governments that were illegitimate. Sometimes, these immoral or illegal governments maintained themselves with violence or power. But, eventually, they fail. Why?

Even in a campaign with some very dark, very oppressive central theme, with no government or a horrible tyranny, there's an expectation and anticipation that this is the sort of thing that must be resisted or overthrown. Why?

Is this a teleological phenomenon? Some might argue that all things in the world, ultimately, are acting through various divine purposes, and the struggles against tyranny and oppression are demonstrations of rational beings aligning with their true, divinely-inspired purposes. Is there some kind of metaphysical imperative for sentience or consciousness to, eventually, ultimately, fight against constraints, aggression, imprisonment, etc?

So why, then, are there evil leaders? Why are there followers of such individuals? How does it happen that a Sauron emerges in the world, comes to power, and so utterly dominates others? Note that there are always those who oppose and fight against such beings. But, how come they even arise?

And, is this principally political? Consider the realworld examples of dictators and tyrants who rose to power and dominated whole nations (sometimes, indeed, much of the world). We recognize, even if we cannot always articulate the details, that such things are illegitimate. We recognize that these people and their followers are just wrong. But, we also accept that there are good leaders, that there are righteous authorities of people. What separates legitimate from illegitimate authority?

Is it really "consent of the governed"? Couldn't it possibly be the case that some nation was led by a great person, who followed ethical precepts, and guided the people well, and did not come to power via consent of the governed?

When you consider the various political powers in the campaigns you run or play in, what thoughts do you give to the legitimacy of those who govern? How does



this influence your thinking about how the people so governed react to those leaders?

It's easy, I think, to consider these topics in the context of a world's religions, of the various temples and their worshippers and their enemies, and in the activities and rules of the clerics and paladins of those temples. Consider, for instance, the article in this issue of *Pathways* focusing on The Great Church of the Pantheon in Questhaven.

But, there's more. Great settings give us details about this. A handful of the most well-loved and oftenplayed-in settings have these rich, deep, living textures. Reading the authors' passages about this country and that kingdom and how and why this place's economy recovered from that political turmoil is deeply engaging, and it gives players context and realism and depth that, frankly, a "plain old dungeon" can lack. (By the way, this isn't a knock against spending a Saturday with a handful of characters, made up on the spot, wandering through a dungeon beating the daylights out of a bunch of monsters—that has its own charm.)

Consider some of these questions. If you're a player, probe the campaign's innards, push the GM into a corner and have your character get involved in the politics of his town. If you're a GM, push your players into situations where the issues of political authority are a little more complicated than wicked step-mothers or cruel kings. And, step it all up a notch. Give the clerics a break, don't put all this on the temples and churches. Don't forget, wizards and rogues are tremendously clever, tend to have some interesting (and often dangerous) connections, and are often happy to make things happen from behind the scenes. There's plenty of material for you, right there.

Happy gaming.



CHARACTER MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE FOR PLAYERS AND GMS

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Hiveskin Creature Semplate

Hiveskins are aggressive creatures that have developed a supernatural bond with a flying swarm, which they use either as an early warning system against potential threats or as a means to flush out their prey. Hiveskins often evolve in supernatural environments or are specifically bred by those who seek to hunt or defend against extremely elusive creatures. Scholars believe divine spiritual energy fuels this bond though sometimes arcane experiments with souls can also produce a hiveskin creature. A solitary hiveskin 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 hiveskin's transformed victims. Hiveskin creatures grow layers of thick, grey natural armor and are surrounded by a swarm of small, flying insects that whiz in and out of the creature's hide, seeking refuge in the hallows of the beast's skin.

Creating a Hiveskin Creature

"Hiveskin" is an acquired or inherited template that can be added to any corporeal creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature) and one or more flying swarms (see hiveskin swarm).

A hiveskin creature and its swarms use all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: +2

Alignment: Always chaotic.

Armor Class: +4 natural armor bonus (hiveskin creature only, the swarm does not gain this bonus).

Defensive Abilities Due to the mystical symbiosis with a hiveskin creature's swarm, a hiveskin and its swarm gain fast healing equal to the hiveskin creature's Constitution modifier (or 1, whichever is higher). Its swarm gains all the base creature's defensive abilities including damage reduction, immunities, resistances, spell resistance, and weaknesses. The hiveskin creature's swarm does not gain defensive abilities that rely on the base creature's size, strength, weapons, or reach, including combat maneuver defense. The swarm also gains all the base creature's ranged and area special defenses except those that rely on manufactured armor.

Special Attacks A hiveskin creature's swarm gains any special attacks that rely on touch or melee attacks. It does not gain spell-like abilities or those that rely on the base creature's size, Strength, manufactured weapons, or reach, including combat maneuvers (such as grab), rending, or trampling.

Special Qualities Due to the symbiosis with a hiveskin creature's swarm, its swarm gains all the base creature's special qualities. The hiveskin creature's swarm does not gain special qualities that rely on the base creature's polymorph effects, size, Strength, manufactured items, or reach.

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

Hiveskin Swarm (Ex) A hiveskin creature is constantly surrounded by 1 flying swarm (usually wasps) for every 3 CR the hiveskin creature possesses, which make their home in its hide. Their relationship is symbiotic. If a hiveskin creature loses a swarm, it attracts new ones (or the eggs of the old swarms hatch to produce new ones within a week). Alternatively, if the base creature has the regeneration quality and the hiveskin creature is not destroyed it revitalizes the swarm in the amount of time it takes to heal the swarm to full hit points. An intelligent hiveskin creature can control its swarm(s) through the symbiotic link as if it were a summoned creature, and can direct them as a free action. The swarms attack in the hiveskin's defense. The swarms never travel more than 400 ft. + 40 ft./HD from its host.

All-Around Vision (Ex) As long as the hiveskin creature is within 5 ft. of one of its swarms, it can see in all directions and cannot be flanked.

Swarm Senses (Ex) As long as the hiveskin creature is within 60 ft. of one its swarms, both it and its swarms gain the senses of both including racial bonuses to Perception. The hiveskin also instantly becomes aware of any creature its swarm encounters. For example, a wasp swarm grants the hiveskin creature darkvision 60 ft. and a +8 racial bonus to Perception checks and if an invisible creature, a displaced creature, or a creature protected by a mirror image is encountered by the swarm, the hiveskin becomes aware of its exact location.

Fly on The Wall (Ex) A hiveskin creature can focus its mind through its bond so it can see and hear a single member of its swarm, effectively using it as a spy.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature and its swarm as follows: Str +4 (+2 to attack and damage, +2 to Climb and Swim skill checks, +5 to Strength, and CMB checks, +5 to CMD), Dex +4 (+2 to Ranged attack rolls; AC and touch AC, Initiative, and Ref saves. +2 to Acrobatics, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Fly, Ride, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth checks, add +5 to any of the base creature's Dexterity-based DCs), Con +6 (+3 hp per HD, +3 to Fortitude saves, and any of the base creature's Constitution-based DCs), Wis +4 (+2 to Will saves, +2 to Heal, Perception, Profession, Sense Motive and Survival checks, add +5 to any of the base creature's Wisdombased DCs).





Hounagh "The Sower Vespine"

CR 5 XP 1,600

CN Large magical beast

Init +5; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft., detect magic, fly on the wall, low-light vision, swarm senses; **Perception** +19

Defense

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+5 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size) hp 42 (4d10+20); fast healing 5 Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +6 DR 5/magic Weaknesses vulnerable to dispel magic

Offensive

Speed 50 ft.
Melee trunk +9 touch (disenchant), 2 hooves +4 (1d6+3)
Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with trunk)
Special Attacks hiveskin swarm (range 600 ft.), power spray
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +3)
Constant—detect magic 3/day—magic weapon 1/day—dimension door

Statistics

Str 23, Dex 21, Con 20, Int 5, Wis 16, Cha 8 Base Atk +4; CMB +11; CMD 26 (30 vs. trip) Feats Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception) Skills Escape Artist +7, Perception +19, Racial Modifiers +8 Perception Languages none

Ecology

Environment warm land **Organization** solitary, pair, or family (2 adults and 1-2 calves with the young creature template) **Treasure** none

Special Abilities

Disenchant (Ex) Hounagh can use its trunk to make a melee touch attack against a target's worn, held, or carried magic item in an attempt to drink the item's magic, swarm automatically affects an item and does not require a melee touch attack or to target the item. Hounagh makes a caster level check (+4) opposed by the target's Fortitude save. If the check succeeds, Hounagh drains the item's magic (or all magic items if it is the swarm), rendering it non-magical. To determine which of a target's magic items is affected, use Table 9-2 in the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook (though a disenchanter never uses this ability on a headband or similar head-slot item unless it has first tried to wear the item). Hounagh may instead target specific visible items, in which case it generally targets the most obvious items. Artifacts are immune to this ability. Hounagh and its swarms's disenchant ability only works against objects that a disenchanter or its swarms can touch, and even a thin layer of cloth effectively protects items from it.

Powerspray (Su) Once per day, Hounagh can release a 20-ft., cone-shaped burst of raw magical energy through its trunk. Creatures in the cone take 4d6 points of damage (DC 14 Reflex save for half). Creatures immune to magic effects that allow spell resistance (such as golems) are immune to this ability. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Vulnerability to Dispel Magic (Ex) If Hounagh is targeted by dispel magic it takes 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6, Fortitude save for half). Greater dispel magic functions similarly (maximum 20d6 damage, Fortitude save for half).

Wasp Swarm **XP 1,600** $C \mathbb{R} 5$

CN Diminutive vermin (swarm)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft. detect magic, lowlight vision; **Perception** +11

Defense

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 14; (+3 Dex, +4 size) hp 52 (7d8+21) fast healing 5 Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +5 Defensive Abilities swarm traits; DR 5/magic Immune weapon damage Weaknesses vulnerable to dispel magic

Offense

Speed 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)
Melee swarm (2d6 plus disenchant and poison)
Space 10 ft.; Reach 0 ft.
Special Attacks distraction (DC 16), poison

Statistics

Str 5, Dex 17, Con 16, Int –, Wis 16, Cha 9 Base Atk +5; CMB –; CMD – Skills Fly +13, Perception +11 Racial Modifiers +8 Perception SQ swarm traits, vermin traits

Ecology

Environment temperate forests **Organization** solitary, pair, fury (3–6 swarms), maelstrom (7–12 swarms) **Treasure** none

Special Abilities

Poison (Ex) Swarm—injury; save Fort DC 16; frequency 1/round for 4 rounds; effect 1 Dexterity damage; cure 1 save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

You wake in a room.

You don't know where you are, where you came from, what's happening. You don't know who you are. Your identity has been taken from you. It will come back with time, but can you trust it? This world is not what it seems. Are you?

And then there's the murder.

Who killed the dead man? Was it you? Was it one of the people who woke in the room with you? Are you all being blamed for a crime you didn't commit? If you want to keep your freedom, you'll need to solve the mystery of Jack Smith's murder while you solve the riddle of your own identity. But is freedom even possible, or is it just another lie?

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This is a story.

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Find out more at www.RitePublishing.com

Print + PDF launch at GenCon via the Chonicle City Booth (#1751), PDF only to release August 22nd! Find out more at www.RitePublishing.com





IURKING OGRES (EI §; XP 4,800)

By Creighton Broadhurst, Publisher at Raging Swan Press Illustrations by Eric Quigley and Thomas Cole

A small band of crafty ogres from the Black Haft tribe has set up a clever scheme to fleece travellers of their hard-earned gold. They recently captured Aeron, a human warrior, and have been using the threat of his execution to extort money from travellers. Read:

Up ahead, a man with a noose around his neck balances precariously on a piece of tree trunk under a huge tree. Next to the man stands a grinning, ugly giant holding a flail. At your arrival, the giant hefts his weapon menacingly and shouts, "You pay toll or he dies!"

The ogre spearman next to Aeron is the only ogre immediately visible; the others hide (probably poorly) among the trees on either side of the road. If the PCs try to negotiate, Brak shouts (from cover) that the travellers must each pay 5 gp to pass safely. While he does so, Aeron begs loudly for help – which earns him a wallop from the nearby ogre.

Jactics

If combat breaks out, the ogre near Aeron kicks the stump over, and the warrior begins to choke to death. The two hiding ogre spearmen and Kol burst from cover and attack. Brak prefers to remain in cover and shoot his crossbow at obvious spellcasters.

Choking to Death

If Aeron starts to choke, he has five rounds until death:

• **Rounds 1 & 2:** Aeron jerks wildly at the end of the rope.

• **Round 3:** Aeron falls unconscious (0 hp).

• **Round 4:** Aeron drops to -1 and starts to die.

• **Round 5:** Aeron dies.

The PCs will likely attempt to save Aeron:

• **Cut Rope:** AC 11, hardness 0, DR slashing 5, hp 2, DC 23 Break.

• **Hold Up Aeron:** A PC holding up Aeron so he can breathe arrests the fighter's progress toward death. However, doing so is a full-round action that provokes attacks of opportunity.

Area Features

The area has several features of note:

Trees: A creature standing in the same square as a tree (AC 4, hardness 5, hp 150, DC 15 Climb check) gains partial cover (+2 to AC, +1 on Reflex saves).

Massive Trees: Huge trees (AC 3, hardness 5, hp 600; DC 15 Climb check) fill an entire square. They provide cover (+4 to AC, +2 on Reflex saves).

Light Undergrowth: A square filled with light undergrowth costs 2 squares of movement to enter,

but provides concealment (20% miss chance). Light undergrowth also increases the DC of Acrobatics and Stealth checks by 2.

Heavy Undergrowth: A heavy undergrowth square costs 4 squares of movement to enter, but provides concealment (30% miss chance). It increases the DC of Acrobatics and Stealth checks (to move quietly) by 2, but bestows a +5 circumstance bonus to Stealth checks made to hide. Running and charging in such squares is impossible.

Ogre's Camp: The ogre's camp is a filthy place set back about 50 ft. from the road. Dumped about it are the following items:

• *Camping Equipment:* The campsite comprises several crude tents and a smouldering campfire.

• *Rubbish:* Rubbish and broken, dirty gear is dumped about the area.

• *Aeron's Gear:* Half-plate, heavy steel shield, mwk short sword, light crossbow, bolts (6), backpack, belt pouch, 14 gp, 17 sp and other equipment as the GM determines.

• Tolls: The ogres have "hidden" all the tolls they have gathered in an old, smelly backpack (DC 15 Perception locates). The backpack contains 136 gp, 201 sp and 87 cp.

Ogre Spearman (3) CR 3 (XP 800)

This lumbering giant has small, beady eyes and a wide mouth filled with ill-fitting teeth. CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init -1: Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +5, Sense Motive +0 Speed 30 ft., base speed 40 ft.; ACP -3; Climb +7, Stealth -8 AC 17, touch 8, flat-footed 17; **CMD** 18 (+4 armour [hide], -1 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size) Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +3 hp 30 (4 HD) Space 10 ft.; Base Atk +3;



CMB + 9

Melee longspear (reach 20 ft.) $+7(2d6+7/x_3)$ or Melee heavy flail (reach 10 ft.) +7 (2d8+7/19-20) Ranged javelin (range 30 ft.) +1 (1d8+5) **Combat Gear** javelins (4) Abilities Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7 Feats Iron Will, Toughness Skills as above Languages Giant Gear as above plus mixed coinage (5 gp)

Kol



CR 4 (XP 1,200)

This lumbering giant has small, beady eyes and a wide mouth filled with ill-fitting teeth. It wears half-plate armour and carries a gigantic shield. Male ogre fighter 1 **CE** Large humanoid (giant) Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +6, Sense Motive +1 Speed 30 ft., base speed 40 ft.; ACP -14; Climb +10, Stealth -18

AC 26, touch 9, flatfooted 26; CMD 22

(+8 armour [mwk half-plate], +5 natural, +4 shield [mwk tower], -1 size) Fort +10, Ref +0, Will +4

hp 54 (5 HD) Space 10 ft.; Base Atk +4; CMB +12 Melee mwk bastard sword (reach 10 ft.) +12 (2d8+7/19-20)

Ranged javelin (range 30 ft.) +3 (1d8+7)

Combat Gear javelins (4), javelin of lightning, potion of cure moderate wounds

Abilities Str 25, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 5 Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)B **Skills** as above

Languages Giant

Gear as above plus mixed coinage (20 gp)

Brak

$(\mathbf{XP} 4 (\mathbf{XP} 1, 200))$

This ugly giant wears muddy banded mail and carries a huge battleaxe over her shoulder. In her hands, she holds an immense crossbow.

Male ogre ranger (guide) 1

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +6, Sense Motive +2

Speed 30 ft., base speed 40 ft.; ACP -5; Climb +3, Stealth -4

AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 21; CMD 20

(+7 armour [mwk banded mail], +1 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)

Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +6 hp 38 (5 HD)

Space 10 ft.; Base Atk +4; CMB +9

Ranged mwk heavy crossbow (range 120 ft.; Rapid Reload) +6 (2d8/19-20)

Melee mwk battleaxe (reach 10 ft.) +8 (2d6+6/x3) Atk Options ranger's focus

Ranger's Focus (EX) The ogre ambusher focuses on a single enemy within line of sight to gain +2 on attack and damage rolls against that target until it is reduced to o or fewer hp or surrenders. *swift 1/dau*

Combat Gear bolts (10), screaming bolt (2), potion of cat's grace

Abilities Str 19, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 9 **SQ** track (+1), wild empathy (+0)

Feats Iron Will, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (heavy crossbow)

Skills as above plus Handle Animal +3, Heal +6, Knowledge (nature) +3, Survival +8 (+9 tracking) Languages Giant

Gear as above plus cloak of resistance +1, 53 gp in mixed coinage

Seron

eron Battered and bruised, this man wears bloody, dirty clothes.

Male human fighter 2

NG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; Senses Perception +3, Sense Motive +3 Speed 30 ft.; ACP o

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; CMD 15 Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +1 (+2 vs. fear)

hp 21 (currently 6) (2 HD)

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

Melee unarmed strike +5 (1d3+3 nonlethal)

Abilities Str 17, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 13

SQ bravery (+1)

Feats Alertness^B, Improved Initiative, Shield Focus^B, Weapon Focus (short sword)^B

Skills as above plus Intimidate +6, Knowledge

(engineering) + 4

Languages Common

Gear traveller's gear plus as listed above under "Aeron's Gear

AERON

This fighter is delighted to be rescued and profusely thanks the PCs for their assistance.

Background: Aeron has been in trouble since the day he left home. Although he is basically a good man, he is crude and often lets his excitement and lust for danger get him into dangerous circumstances.

Personality: Loud and brash, Aeron's brush with death has not fazed him; he still craves excitement and adventure. In his guieter moments he dreams of becoming a famed weaponsmith, but lacks the necessary focus and determination.

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Distinguishing Features: Aeron has an ugly scar around his neck from the noose that almost ended his life.

Hooks: He offers to get the PCs drunk at the earliest opportunity as thanks for saving this life. If allowed, Aeron joins the party; his lust for danger, however, likely gets him into many dangerous situations.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes: **EL** 7 (XP 3,200): Remove two ogre spearmen. **EL** 9 (XP 6,400): Add one ogre spearman and apply the advanced creature template (+2 on all rolls [including damage rolls]) to Kol (AC 30, touch 13, flat-footed 30; CMD 26; hp 64) and Brak (AC 26, touch 16, flat-footed 25; CMD 24; hp 53).

About the Designer

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

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





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New Races for your Undersea Campaign

By Elton Robb

Illustrations by: Pasco295, Kapitan B. Bar, and Howard Pyle

Dolphs and makos are a pair of races you can use for your underwater campaigns. Both of them are from land dwelling humans and one is from land dwelling orcs, both transformed by magic. This allowed them to adapt to the sea and build civilization. Dolphs are hybrids of bottle-nosed dolphins and humans, and makos are hybrids of mako sharks and humans. Both races were created by a major artifact that changed land-dwelling creatures into new creatures to allow them to adapt to the sea, and back again.

The artifact was used for two hundred years by a thalassocratic nation (like the Phoenicians), to allow their people to work long periods under the water, until it was swapped with a fake and stolen. Sold to the orcs, three tribes had used it to explore the sea until an orc, convinced that the artifact was devilish, utterly destroyed it with a swipe of his axe.

Unable to turn back to their land-dwelling forms, the two races found their niches, survived and multiplied and now compete for living space. There is room for these races in any campaign world with oceans. These two races offer new options for your undersea Pathfinder campaigns.

Dolphs

Physical Description: An eldritch artifact created the dolphs: an uncanny melding of humanity with bottlenose dolphins. Dolphs, or "dolphmen" and "dolphmaids," are mostly humanoid. They do not have tails, but they have fins on their shins and forearms. Their head and skin resembles a bottlenose dolphin with a blowhole on top of their head. They also have a dolphin's dorsal fin. Males have a decidedly male physique and hide their genitalia within their bodies. Female dolphs have two breasts and child-bearing hips. All dolphs have five toes on their feet and four fingers and an



opposable thumb on their hands. Also, all dolphs tend to have swimmer builds.

Society: The majority of dolphs has migrated to the infratidal zone and has built villages there. For the past five thousand years, they've lived as barbarian tribes and continue to live around estuaries where they trade with surface folk for goods and services. Being a seawater species, dolphs can stand brackish water for a time but they must return to the sea on occasion. The settled dolphs have a patriarchal pattern of rulership and genealogy.

A minority of dolphs forms nomadic lifestyles as they swim from region to region. The nomads form pods, and often the pods are segregated into fraternities and sororities. The nomadic pods follow a matriarchal pattern of rulership and genealogy, with most of the able bodied males operating as an army.

Dolphs seem to have inherited both the dolphins' and the humans' joy of sex. While the settled dolphs along the infratidal zone seem to put more taboos on sex to more resemble humans and to be accepted into human society, the nomadic dolphs have little taboos when it comes to sex. In both settled and nomadic cultures, sex is celebrated as part of their religion and part of their lives.

In settled cultures of the dolphs, familial relations are more human with the dolphs forming permanent couples and rearing families where the father takes an active role. They also partake in marriage covenants with each other and have elaborate marriage ceremonies.

In nomadic cultures, the sexual bond is much more fleeting. Nomadic dolphs, because of their environment, gave up any semblance of permanent mateship. As a result, the nomads have taken up polyamorous mating rituals. While homosexuality is frowned upon by the settled dolphs, the nomadic dolphs celebrate any sex and homosexual parings are much more accepted, but expected to stop when one of the pair finds a mate of the other sex. Among nomadic dolphs, the males compete for their females by making themselves pretty and dolling themselves up to attract a mate. Competition between males can be fierce for female mates, although it's the female nomad's right to choose. Children are born in the open sea and raised by the females. The father has little to do with childrearing except to be expected to hunt for and bring home food.

Relations: Dolphs have a strong kinship with humans and with sea elves. In fact, dolphs seem to have the dolphin fascination with humans and other sapient creatures (except the sea orcs and sahuagin, see below). Dolphs, with their joy of sex, often try to get the humans and sea elves they are friends with to have sex with them. Most humans and sea elves are reluctant to do this. Only mating with sea elves has produced offspring: a sea elf/dolph hybrid.

Dolphs do not get along well with sahuagin, although they do get along well with the makos and sea folk. They also hate merrows and scrags, and often compete with merrows and scrags for space to settle. Dolphs usually fiercely compete with sea orcs, also for resources. The competition is often fierce enough to start undersea wars. Dolphs get along well with the sea folk but are unable to mate with them.

They also feel kinships with selkies, mostly because they can become human. As a result, they often try to get the selkies they befriended into having sex with them, and the selkies are even more reluctant than humans or sea elves about having interspecies sex. As for the deep drow, dolphs do not come into contact with them very much; deep drow friends are as rare as goldfish teeth.

Alignment and Religion: Settled dolphs and nomadic dolphs worship in the Church of the Walesong, where the dolphs worship the Creator of All Things through song and rhyme and look forward to the promised redeemer. The Church maintains that the songs of the Wales are the history of the Sea and therefore take part by recording the songs and singing them. Also, sex is celebrated during congregational meetings. The meetings that have been observed have been described as communal sex orgies filled with beautiful hymns of song.

Adventurers: Dolphs are as adventurous as the humans and dolphins they came from. Adventurers are a special lot to dolphs, as they are seen as brave souls to go exploring the unsettled regions of the world ocean. Adventuring for some dolphs is seen as a thrill, a way to get high. Others seek knowledge, to increase the Church's archives of wale songs and to compose songs themselves, arcane knowledge, or to satisfy curiosity. Although riches aren't really sought after, as the concept of money is alien to the dolphs.

Names: Dolphs have adopted elven names for their naming traditions.

Dolph Racial Traits

+2 Dexterity, +2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom: The dolphs are agile and highly intelligent, having a mixture of human and dolphin intelligence. However, they approach the world with a naivety and childlike innocence and having increased curiosity.

Base Land Speed: All dolphs can survive out of water for a time (10 minutes for each Constitution point) and have a base speed of 30 ft.

Hold Breath: A dolph has the cetacean diving reflex, and highly oxygenated blood. Dolphs can hold their breath up to 6 times their Constitution score before they risk drowning.

Swim: Dolphs have a swim speed of 30 feet and gain the +8 racial bonus on Swim checks that a swim speed normally grants.

Curiosity: Dolphs are naturally inquisitive about the world around them. They gain a +4 bonus on Diplomacy checks to gather information, and Knowledge (history) and Knowledge (local) become class skills for them. If they choose a class that has either of these Knowledge skills as class skills, they gain a +2 racial bonus on those skills instead.

Powerful Swimmer (1 RP): Prerequisite: Swim racial trait; Benefit: Members of this race receive a +10 foot bonus to their swim speed.

Echolocation (Ex): To simulate echolocation, dolphs can use the spell *locate object* at will when underwater up to medium range as a psi-like, *not* a spell-like, ability.

Languages: Dolphs begin play with Common and Aquan. Dolphs with high intelligence scores can choose any language they want (except secret languages and Druidic).



Physical Description: Makos are humans that have hybridized with mako sharks. The result is a sleek creature that is more man than shark. They have a humanoid body plan and a flat, human-like face. But they have no hair and a fin on their back. Like dolphs, they have no tails, have four fingered hands with opposable thumbs, and shark skin all over their bodies. They have two feet and two human-like legs. And they have shark fins on their forearms and the backs of their shins. They typically have sleek swimmer bodies, but variations exist.

Society: Mako society is built along patriarchal lines, and the makos have built their cities below the infratidal zone along coral reefs. Mako society is truly urban, with cities built out of coral. Male makos are typically much more dominant and the female makos more submissive than the dolphs, but makos tend to permanently settle along coral reefs and do not have nomadic groups like the dolphs do.

Relations: The sahuagin have been trying to lure the makos into a racial alliance with them, and the makos have responded violently. There is no love between the sahuagin and the makos from the makos' point of view. Sea elves are wary of the makos because of their shark-like appearance, and the seafolk are cool with them. Makos do not hunt the selkies for food, although selkies also avoid them because of their shark-like appearance. Sea orcs tend to avoid makos and do not settle the tropical reefs where they live.

Alignment and Religion: Makos worship Poseidon, and praise him for the bounties of the sea. Worship is usually done in a churchhouse, and sacrifices are made by ritually killing a great white shark.

Names: Male mako names include: Alaula, Feleti, Kaipo, Keola, Lio, Moke, and Ulani. Female names include: Akamu, Kailani, Keon, Konala, Mauli, and Palila

Mako Racial Traits

+2 Strength, +2 Charisma, -2 Constitution: Makos ares typically strong and personable, although their cartilaginous skeleton reduces their Constitution.

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Aquatic subtype: Makos have gills on their necks that allow them to breathe only water, their lungs have become air bladders.

Frenzy: Makos can fly into a frenzy when they take damage. They can do this once a day, and for up to a minute. The result is a +2 bonus to Constitution and Strength, but a -2 penalty to AC.

Scent: The Makos' shark heritage gives them the scent ability under water.

Swim: Makos receive a swim speed of 30 feet and gain the +8 racial bonus on Swim checks that a swim speed normally grants.

Powerful Swimmer: Makos receive a +10 foot bonus to their swim speed.

Languages: Makos begin play speaking Aquan. Makos with high intelligence may choose whatever language to speak they see fit (except secret languages).





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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www.ragingswan.com/sahuagin



Ashford at a Glance

by Creighton Broadhurst

Once a prosperous village, Ashford now stands as a decayed shadow of its former self. A year ago, it was a busy place; its streets and gardens echoing with the sounds of life, love and commerce. Then the stranger came and death followed upon his heels. The stranger – a well-travelled bard – stayed at the Jolly Farmer and regaled the assembled guests with many tales and songs as he walked among them. The next morning, he awoke with a high fever and coughed up blood over his bed-partner, one of the tavern's serving wenches. Plague had come to Ashford.

Within a week the bard was dead and the serving wench lay dying. Within a month, the sound of hacking coughs, the pain-filled moans of the dying and the wails of the survivors mourning their dead echoed through the village. Before the winter snows began to fall, over half the population was dead, and many of the survivors had fled.

A few folk yet dwell in Ashford among the abandoned, deserted homes of their friends and neighbours, but it is now a quiet, mournful place. Weeds choke abandoned gardens and untilled fields while wolves, foxes and other less natural predators gnaw at the weathered bones filling the village's open plague pits. The surviving villagers are distrustful of strangers, shunning them whenever possible, and few find welcome, cheer or solace in Ashford.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Baron Aelfgar Stannard

Government Overlord (anarchy)

Population 75 (68 humans, 4 half-elves, 3 half-orcs) Alignments Neutral

Languages Common, Elven, Orc

Corruption +3; Crime +1; Economy -5; Law -6; Lore +0; Society -8

Qualities Strategic location

Danger +18; Disadvantages Impoverished, plagued Lingering Plague Every day a traveller spends in

Ashford, there is a 5% chance he is exposed to plague. This chance rises to 20% if the character explores any abandoned building containing the corpses of plague victims. Such folk must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or contract the plague:

• Bubonic Plague: DC 17 Fortitude [2 consecutive saves]; onset 1 day; freq. 1/day; effect 1d4 Con damage and 1 Cha damage and target is fatigued.

NOTABLE FOLK

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

Baron Aelfgar Stannard (location 1; LN male human warrior 1/aristocrat 2) Ashford's liege lord, Aelfgar has not been seen in the village since the plague struck. Dunn Frewin (location 6; CE male ghoul cleric 2) Once one of Ashford's priests, Dunn has returned from the grave to revenge himself upon Waldere.

Waldere Elvery (location 3; LN male human cleric 3) Radicalised by Ashford's horrific fate, Waldere is a raging alcoholic.

Janaela Fisfelond (location 5; N female half-elf wizard [abjurer] 5) Consumed with her magical research – and little empathy with the common folk – Janaela rarely emerges from her tower.

Praen Alston (location 2; N male human expert 1) The village miller, Praen hates Waldere – blaming him for his family's painful death – and stymies him whenever possible.

Ailred Lewin (location 4; LN female human expert 2) Landlady of The Jolly Farmer, she is never seen without a vinegar-soaked mask about her face.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. Ashford Manor: Abandoned by its lord, Ashford Manor is thought unoccupied by the villagers. Unbeknownst to them, three plague survivors lurk within.

2. Mill: Although the mill's wheel still turns, Praen Alston spends most of his time looking after, and protecting, his young daughter.

3. The Wailing Hall: The village church is rarely visited now, except by a few fanatical worshippers who are led in their devotions by Waldere Elvery.

4. The Jolly Farmer: Little cheer is to be found at the village's inn. Guests are served in their rooms and almost no villagers now drink there.

5. The Burning Tower: Home to the enchantress Janaela Fisfelond, the tower stands amid the shattered ruins of a castle thrown down after its lord rebelled against his liege.

6. Plague Pits: While the plague savaged Ashford, the villagers dug two plague pits and dumped the dead within. Feral dogs, woodland predators and Dunn Frewin have uncovered these grizzly reminders of Ashford's fate.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Farming, fishing

Base Value 220 gp; Purchase Limit 2,500 gp;

Spellcasting 3rd; Minor Items 1d4; Medium Items 1d2; Major Items –

When the PCs arrive in Ashford, the following items are for sale:

Scroll (Arcane) arcane sight (375 gp)

Weapon +2 hand crossbow (8,400 gp)

Wands call lightning (12 chgs.; 2,700 gp); find traps (37 chgs.; 1,665 gp)

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VILLAGE LORE

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

DC 10: Ashford was a prosperous village until last year when the plague struck. Now most travellers avoid the village.

DC 15: A handful of folk still live in the village. The few travellers to visit Ashford have spoken of quiet, distrustful folk and strange religious practises.

DC 20: At the height of the plague, terrible deeds were wrought. Some families were burnt alive in their homes in a desperate attempt to halt the contagion's progress.

D6 RUXOUR

1	Janaela Fisfelond (a local wizard) slew several villagers with her magic when they tried to break into her tower.
2 [‡]	The village was cursed by a witch!
3	The local priest, Waldere Elvery, survived the plague – although most of his congregation died. He is a drunk.
4	The old burnt-out Eanith home is haunted by the vengeful spirits of those that died within.
5	Something unnatural has been disturbing the plague pits.
6+	A necromancer lich desires some ancient treasure buried deep beneath the village. He sent the plague

VILLAGERS

Appearance Of sullen countenance, most villagers have long, dark brown or black hair and either brown or grey eyes.

Dress The villagers wear old, muddy clothes. Most wear thick fur cloaks, believing such garments ward off the plague.

Nomenclature male Ahlred, Ceol, Daela, Gyric, Praen; female Bebbe, Hild, Oshild, Saeith; family Burch, Eanith, Isgar, Sirett.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Ashford and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC 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.



Pathways Magazine

TOME FOR THE ADVENUES, STAY FOR THE SHORE





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Questhaven Part 2:

The Great Church of the Pantheon and Our Orphans of the Ecumenical Commandments

by Steven D. Russell

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 is a partial example of one of the 21 churches found within the setting, written as a first person account by the adventurer Owain Northway. One special note: Questhavians consider it blasphemy to speak the name of a deity and as such they refer to deities by their titles. For example, if you worshiped a deity like Tyr or Mars as the god of war, a Questhavian would tell you to refer to your deity as Our War Marshal in Heaven, or if it was Asmodeus he would be referred to as Their Dark Lord of Fire. "Our" generally means you worship the deity and that it is good and "Their" refers to a deity you do not worship. Sometimes this is referred to as "Your" when you don't find the deity objectionable but that you do not worship that deity, this is more likely to happen when speaking to a foreigner though, as Questhavians almost universally worship the pantheon as a whole.

The Great Church of the Pantheon

"Heaven, hear our prayer! May Our Fairest Lady of Love and Song bless us. May Our Father of Star and Sky shelter us. May Our Grandfather of Water and Wave anoint us. May Our Grandmother Earth feed us. May Our Grand Wright of Heaven forge us. May Our Heavenly Archmage of Secrets teach us. May Our Laughing Traveler of Passages and Messages favor us. May Our Mother of Many Ways inspire us. May Our Queen of Wisdom and Mercy guide us. May Our Reaper of Death and Rebirth spare us. May Our Smiling Lady of Hearth and Home welcome us. May Our Steely-Eyed Judge cleanse us. May Our War Marshal in Heaven protect us. May Our Trinity of Sisters intrigue us. May Our Dark Lady of Ladies ennoble us. May Our Crimson Lady of Victory and Strength embolden us. and May Our Golden Huntress of the Wilds escort us. Heaven, Hear our prayer!" - From The Sacred Writ of Heaven by Dharmaphim

"We must lead all life to the feast of heaven, but we cannot force them to partake of it." – From My Sacred Work by Chardab the Awakened, the Saint of the Wheel, the First Prophet, the Supremely Enlightened

Alignment: Neutral Good

Portfolio: Agathions, Angels, Archons, Azata, All Creation, All Living Creatures, Goodness

Worshipers: All, aasimar, godlings, errant paladins

Aliases: The Pantheon, Sovereigns of Heaven, Masters of Righteousness, Deities of the Wheel, Sacred Ones of the World Tree, Lords of Good

Cleric Alignments: Any

Superior: None

Allies: All non-evil deities

Foes: All evil deities

Domains: All except Evil

Subdomains: All except Daemon, Demon, Devil, and Fear

Favored Weapon: Club or Greatclub

Symbol: A figure strapped to a wheel or a figure sitting beneath a tree

The Great Church of the Pantheon, of which I am a member, worships all the deities of heaven equally as a unit. We see those who worship any member of the pantheons as part of our faith, and consider them devoted servants offering them guidance as well, never pressuring them to worship all Our Sovereigns of Heaven. Henotheists, those specializing in the worship of one particular deity, are allowed to worship within our church, though most tend to gravitate toward that particular deity's temple. There are, however, several kathenotheists, those who worship different deities at different times and they are also welcomed with open arms. Most worshipers, like myself, give praise to Our Sovereigns of Heaven as a whole. I once encountered a follower of two deities, one of justice and one of thunder from the far north. I explained to him that speaking the names of his deities is seen by myself and other locals as a blasphemy (a serious crime in the city of Questhaven), but that he could still worship them as Our Father of Sky and

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Star, and *Our Steely Eyed- Judge* within The Great Church of the Pantheon. He has since risen to the rank of bishop within the church.

We worshipers often refer to the pantheon as *Our Masters of Righteousness*, for they are the totality and embodiment of all holy and sacred essences. Clerics and other favored followers can select from the entirety of the domains of these deities, as they recognize everything in the portfolios of each member of the pantheon. For our most holy book, The Sacred Writ of Heaven tells us "The pantheon cares about the most mundane action of the smallest ant as well as the mighty deeds of those that walk among the stars." Many members of the Questor's Society, some of whom are close friends, are clerics of this type who chose to remain only holy fathers and mothers, seeking not to progress to the rank of dean, roaming about doing the work of heaven.

As a pantheon, our deities' motives are multifaceted. Each of Our Deities of the Wheel seeks to further his or her own ends; they have ancient eternal grudges and feuds, plus different ideologies, with some fostering structure and unity while others seek to promote individual achievement. Yet for all this strife, our church, like our deities, finds unification in our opposition to evil and the promotion of the worship of the pantheon. We, the devoted, oppose useless murder, wonton destruction, and the trappings of the vile. *Our Sacred* Ones of the World Tree prefer more followers not less, and they oppose those who seek to lead their followers astray. Our pantheon loves the whole of creation and would see it grow; and while some have a taste for chaos, they do not seek to be destroyed by it. The purpose of the unified church is to aid all living things in their struggles against evil and promote the worship of the heavens as Chardab the Awakened taught. The finest example of this I have seen is that despite the massive number of followers and powerful divine servants that serve the church, our current leader, Most Holy Mother Mabyn, The Supreme Matriarch, has chosen never to attempt imposing a theocracy upon the citizenry during her reign over the last 60 years. She has even smashed attempts to do so, with the help of the Questor's Society.

The Great Church of the Pantheon, whose members simply call themselves "the devoted," is the dominant religious organization in Questhaven and its surrounding Protectorate. With shrines, churches, temples, and monasteries throughout the region, the church, and hence all religion, pervades the culture of the realm. Because of the church's efforts to promote the worship of Our Sovereigns of Heaven, there is a site dedicated to the entire pantheon in almost every location where intelligent creatures gather. In Questhaven, there is at least one major cathedral in each section of the city, though the most prominent is the Holy House of the First Prophet (often times simply called St. Chardab's Cathedral) in the chantry canton. I once discovered that beneath St. Chardab's is a vast and dangerous catacomb where the cathedral once buried its dead, falling into disuse two hundred years ago with the Fall of the Cynmark Dynasty. The ministry walled off access from the church to the Canton Catacombs but there are still a few secret ways. Many parts of the catacombs I discovered lead into the Adamantium Mines of Kilwich and The World Below; it is just the place for an adventurer to visit!

The land each of the church's many shrines, churches, temples, and monasteries sits on, along with the area around it, referred to as "The Gift," were originally granted by the Immortal Emperor Cynmark before he became The Dread Lich. The Circle of Heroes has decreed these places remain the property of the church and as such, it makes them the most pervasive landholders in the Protectorate. It is against orthodox church law to sell these properties, but the renting and leasing of these lands, along with tithes, makes the church extremely wealthy and influential. I have noted that the land the Immortal Emperor granted for use as monasteries are always located near nexuses of strife, whether in entrances to The World Below, vile dungeons, mystical sites, or planar, rifts there is always something nearby. I once discovered on one of my adventures that the Priory of the Harmonious Fist sits right atop the only entrance to the 8th Fell Repository.

The Great Church of the Pantheon has two great schools of thought in approaching this doctrine of promoting worship, and while they usually operate in harmony, they do sometimes come into conflict. The first denomination, exemplified by the clerics, paladins, and archdeacons, is the Ministry of Heaven's Work or what most would call the orthodox church, and are primarily represented by the symbol of the Chardab the Awakened broken on the torturer's wheel. According to this faction, the Great Church of the Pantheon exists to spread the worship of Our Sovereigns of Heaven (particularly missionaries to strange lands with different faiths), to tirelessly oppose those that cause suffering, and to make sure that the devout never lose sight of the faith. This involves making sure that the Great Church of the Pantheon has a strong organization and presence of shrines, chapels, temples, and cathedrals throughout the land. They also believe that it should be involved in secular matters so that it can more easily spread and build their places of worship. Paired with this are the adventuring clerics and paladins who seek to oppose those they deem to be evil.

This has caused some harsh criticism as many see the church as practicing imperialist expansionism, rank opportunism, declaring all opposition evil, and/or simple greed seeking to fill the coffers of the ministry. However, unscrupulous priests and deacons are rare, quickly disavowed, and publicly punished by the church. The vast majority truly believe that mortal lives improve when they worship *Our Masters of Righteousness* and suffering is ended in the fashion set down by Chardab the First Prophet and Saint of the Wheel.

Within this faction is a more militant order, The Paladins of the Pantheon, which carries out the second major activity of the Ministry of Heaven's Work, seeking to end suffering and destroy what it deems evil. They do not, however, go about enforcing the church's will, or serve as formal protectors to religious leaders. They are an order of knights-errant with their own will and purpose, wandering the earth to fight against evil and depravity in their many forms. If the great church of the pantheon would ever become corrupt, this branch would set things right. The Paladins of the Pantheon also have a more organized group of paladins within it, Our Orphans of the Ecumenical Commandments, who seek to enforce nine universal laws in the borderlands.



The second major branch of church philosophy, personified by its monastic orders and to which I myself subscribe, believes in following in the footsteps of Chardab the Awakened and his path of self-enlightenment; we, the "Agnostics of Heaven's Faith," are primarily represented by the symbol of the Chardab the Awakened sitting meditating beneath the World Tree. We wish to know the whole of existence, including Our Sovereigns of Heaven, by a daily practice of the seven virtues. This second faction grants absolute and complete freedom of belief and worship. We practitioners conceive all existence as defining one truth, and therefore we accept all forms of beliefs and dismiss labels of distinct religions, which would imply a division of identity. Hence, our teachings are devoid of the concepts of apostasy, heresy, and blasphemy. We will not, however, balk at accusing someone of doing evil, and oppose those who seek to promote Their Masters of Damnation.

I have only once in my life come into conflict with the orthodox church and that was with a fanatical branch of inquisitors who sought to stop me from spreading my agnostic beliefs; they held me imprisoned until more traditional members and my allies were able to free me. My only conflict with the agnostic members of the church was over me wanting access to the 8th Fell Repository. Eventually I stole my way in rather than upset them needlessly; however, they took great offense upon learning of my entrance when I departed and I am no longer welcome at the priory.

Jocal Mythology

Chardab, the founder of *Our Great Church of the Pantheon*, was born in what would one day become the city of Questhaven. Writings attributed to the Awakened One tell us that he abandoned his throne, his wife, and his children to follow the calling of our faith. "For after meditation under the world tree *Our Masters of Righteousness* bid him to help the mortal races, and so he went out amongst the people. He spread the worship of the *Our Lords of Good* together, without exclusion, from the back of his humble cart." Chardab the Supremely Enlightened preached from his cart for many years, until his brother, who was by then Emperor, built for him a cathedral in which to gather worshipers together, but after training many acolytes, he left to spread the word ever further. He did so until the followers of *Their Dark Lord of Fire* captured and tortured him, breaking him upon a great spinning wagon wheel; when he died, he ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of *Our Sovereigns of Heaven*.

I am often struck by the fact that the orthodox church takes its symbol from death and suffering while orthodox followers take their symbol based on enlightenment.

Manifestations

Our Sovereigns of Heaven have given over supervision of the church to the divine being known as Dharmaphim and the church considers all celestials (agathions, angels, archons, aasimar, azata and godlings) as truly sacred beings. Dharmaphim shows the favor of *Our Masters of Righteousness* by sending such a creature or with a rare personal visit. He appears as an eight-foot long, slender, celestial king cobra with shining scales, white wings, and six bright eyes. While he has no arms, he can carry them using *telekinesis* as if he did.

Dharmaphim could use any of the omens, blessing, or servants of the other deities, but he will often use those that represent The Sacred Ones of the Wheel as a whole. The Pantheon's omens are often sightings of sixteen of the world's rarest animals such as sixteen red-crowned cranes, sixteen thylacines, or sixteen angel sharks; sometimes this manifests as a broken sixteen-spoke wagon wheel when all the other wheels spokes do not number sixteen. His blessing is usually the discovery of some new or forgotten part of creation, or the discovery of some new or long-lost living creature.

His foremost servant is Mikha'el who was once a great prince in the ages before the rise of the Cynmark Dynasty. He was transformed into a dark-haired archangel and often stands up for the future of the mortal races that dwell there. He has stopped protean agents and the lords of the inevitables from using the Protectorate as a battle ground in a devastating war that had already consumed one plane of existence. He has also redeemed the fallen Paladin Talinor Rowinmatle bringing him out from beneath his service to the Immortal Emperor Cynmark the Dread Lich. He is hated by Their Dark Lord of Fire, for the righteous violence he commits against infernals and the messages he bears from heaven to Their Masters of Damnation. He is said to make his home somewhere in the Oneiric River, and that his tears can create new forms of life. Mikha'el opposes most forms of sacrifice, and encourages adventurers to take up a destiny of promoting the Great Church of the Pantheon. He is said to have argued for the ascension of Chardab the Awakened into heaven, and the disposition of his mortal remains.

I myself saw sixteen marvelous spatuletails the morning I was set to start this section of my book. Yet I am still struck by the fact that no one has ever even claimed to have seen a manifestation of Chardab the Awakened, in all our history.

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Holy Days

We, the devoted, celebrate every secular and religious holiday, so that the city of Questhaven has a holiday nearly every lunar cycle. Our greatest holiday is The Festival of Change, which celebrates the ascension of Chardab the Awakened into heaven. We hold The Festival of Change over the first 11 days of the 5th month.

During these days the holy powders and waters of the Great Church of the Pantheon take on the additional magical quality of causing those who are struck by them to be affected by a *seeming* (during the festival there is no save or spell resistance against this spell). This is symbolic of the time Chardab spent in the form of every living and unliving creature so that he could understand the nature of existence which *Our Sovereigns of Heaven* had created.

I, and many of the devout, consider the festival a fine moral lesson, teaching empathy for forms other than your own. Others consider it the most dangerous threat to the realm's security as it is extremely taxing on city resources to identify criminals during the festival.

The church's ministry takes in a significant amount of donations for the church during this time in exchange for the vast amount of holy water and powder that are purchased by every member of the city, from the lowliest beggar to the First Hero. Each day also celebrates a different form of entertainment: dancing, music, songs, opera, oratory, juggling, sports, games, literature, puppets, and jesters. Each day also has a communal fondue meal; the fondue need not be cheese but must contain sixteen separate spices to honor our sixteen Sovereigns of Heaven (many of these are quite decadent containing stiff amounts of alcoholic spirits).

I once used the holiday to visit a paramour of mine in the town of Eldritchton, a community from which the mayor (her father) had exiled me from under pain of death.

Our Orphans of the Ecumenical Commandments

Beneath my favorite house of worship, The Cathedral of Sixteen Spokes, is an elaborate underground monastery and prison serving a unique order Our Orphans of the Ecumenical Commandments, who believe in nine "natural" or universal laws, which all governments must honor. They are a variant militant order of the Paladins of the Pantheon. Their members at one point all belonged to orphanages run by The Devoted, their training and indoctrination beginning the moment they entered the orphanage, though these requirements have loosened with the passage of time and it now requires on the calling of the divine, and the taking of the vows.

The Orphans seek to unify the world, in the same manner that the gods united, not by war or one government, but through universal agreements. They sometimes serve as bodyguards to the deacons, who are seen as diplomats and as such are given the protection of the order (see Code of Conduct) but since they will not enforce the Will of the Deacons, some decline their offer of service. The orphans offer their services to every diplomat in Questhaven, as they honor the ideal of diplomatic immunity. Due to this, man folk in the city accuse them of honoring the law above what is right, but they counter that honoring the law is right.

Now as members of The Questor's Society you need to know that the orphans have members within our ranks, but you will still often run afoul of the orphans, just as I have, when they attempt to enforce their Ecumenical Commandments upon our wilder associates. Most commonly they enforce a treaty upon our fellows, or stop a Questor from violating a legal boundary (such as entering the lands of the Last Warlord), or when we seek to loot a recently wrecked ship, or when some of our less honorable brothers and sisters engage in piracy. (Note: the orphans are fine with privateers as war has been openly declared against the targeted ship, by the consigning government.) The most common cause, though, is when orphans enforce a lawful extradition upon a Questor who has committed a crime in the allied Protectorate. I must admit that I was forced to flee from them, a small misunderstanding over a wrecked ship and some valuables that had been stolen from me; they were quite confused, thinking I was a pirate who caused the ship to run aground.

Orphans of the Ecumenical Commandments [Paladin Archetype]

Aid Healing (Su): At 1st level, an Orphan of the Ecumenical Commandments can, as a full-round action, call upon her deities' or ethos' blessings to aid in the casting of a healing spell-her own or another's-or her Lay on Hands. Her deities or ethos grants her the potential for massive healing that lasts for a number of rounds equal to her Charisma modifier. While she is infused with this potential, she may, as a free action (which is capable of being used outside of her turn), cause one spell with the [healing] descriptor being cast within 60 feet, or one use of Lay of Hands, to heal the maximum amount possible. In addition, the recipient of the healing receives one additional point of healing per class level. In the case of a spell or modified Lay on Hand that can affect multiple targets, only one target, chosen by the paladin, receives this additional HP. The potential is discharged after the first use. If the paladin doesn't use this potential before a number of rounds equal to her Charisma modifier, it is wasted.

The Orphan of the Ecumenical Commandments can aid healing once per day. At 5th level, and every 5 levels thereafter (10th, 15th, and 20th), the Orphan of the Ecumenical Commandments can aid healing an additional time per day. This ability replaces the *detect evil* ability.

Smite Lawbreaker (Su): At 1st level, instead of gaining the ability to smite evil, an Orphan of the Ecumenical Commandments can, as a swift action, choose one target within sight to

smite. If this target is an intelligent creature that has knowingly violated the law while not under any charm or compulsion effects (or other such effects), the orphan adds her Charisma bonus (if any) to her attack rolls and adds her class level to all damage rolls made against the target of her smite. If the target of smite lawbreaker is an outsider with the chaos subtype, a chaos-aligned dragon, or an undead creature, the bonus to damage on the first successful attack increases to 2 points of damage per level the orphan possesses. Regardless of the target, smite lawbreaker attacks automatically bypass any DR the creature might possess.

In addition, while smite lawbreaker is in effect, the orphan gains a deflection bonus equal to her Charisma modifier (if any) to her AC against attacks made by the target of the smite. If the paladin targets a creature that is not intelligent and has not knowingly violated the law, the smite is wasted with no effect.

The smite lawbreaker effect remains until the target of the smite is dead or the next time the orphan rests and regains her uses of this ability. At 4th level, and at every three levels thereafter, the orphan may smite lawbreaker one additional time per day, as indicated on Table: Paladin, to a maximum of seven times per day at 19th level. Abilities, feats, and spells that apply to Smite Evil or have a prerequisite of Smite Evil apply to Smite Lawbreaker as well. This ability replaces Smite Evil.

Water Walk (Su): At 3rd level, an Orphan of the Ecumenical Commandments is continually under the effects of the spell *water walk*. She can suppress this ability as a standard action. This ability is automatically shared with any divinely bonded mount. This ability replaces divine health.

Aura of Law (Su): At 14th level, an orphan's weapons are treated as lawful-aligned for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. Any attack made against an enemy within 10 feet of her is treated as lawful-aligned for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. This ability functions only while the orphan is conscious, not if she is unconscious or dead. This ability replaces Aura of Faith.

Aura of Integrity (Su): At 17th level, an orphan gains DR 10/ chaos and immunity to compulsion spells and spell-like abilities. Each ally within 10 feet of her gains a +4 morale bonus on saving throws against compulsion effects. This ability functions only while the paladin is conscious, not if she is unconscious or dead. This ability replaces Aura of Righteousness.

Additional 3rd Level Mercy

Bonds of Mercy (Su): You create an extradimensional prison where you store captured foes (without gear) in stasis for one day per class level. The touched creatures (1 per class level) must be either helpless or willing—often, when granted an option between this type of imprisonment and death, a sub-



ject will submit to the spell. Willing targets cannot be tricked or magically compelled. This places the subject into a state of suspended animation. For the creature, time ceases to flow, and his condition becomes fixed. The creature grows no older. His bodily functions virtually cease, and no force or effect can harm him. This prison is tied to you, so that when the effect ends, the freed subject appears next to you. You may end this ability by spending a full-round action thinking of the target you wish to free from the bonds of mercy.

Code of Conduct: In addition to the normal strictures on the life of a paladin, Orphans must follow the Nine *Ecumenical Commandments*

- 1. Enforce the peace (except in declared wars);
- 2. Enforce truces, peace treaties, and boundaries;
- Protect recently wrecked ships and persons thereon;
- 4. Prosecute piracy;
- 5. Provide aid for prisoners of war;
- 6. Defend embassies and diplomats;
- 7. Enforce proper extradition;
- Abolition of slavery and prosecution of slave traders;
- 9. Prosecution of genocide.

Pathways Magazine

Rite Publishing Presents

The Secrets of Aventurin

By Steven D. Russell, Jonathan McAnulty, Will McCardell, Benjamin Rombeaut, and David Mallon

Print/PDF launches at Gencon, PDF only

release follows in September 2013.



Interview with Steven D Russell



1. Could you tell us a little about yourself?

My name is Steven D. Russell; I am a full-time professional tabletop roleplaying game designer, developer, and publisher. I am currently the owner and operator of Rite Publishing, a micropress PDF publishing company that has produced over 250 products for Monte Cook's Arcana Evolved, Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, Fate, and Erick Wujcik's Diceless Roleplaying. We also produce a number of tabletop supplements and tools like Jonathan Robert's Fantastic Maps and Lone Tree Game's Fold-n-Go papercraft models. My company operates under a print/distribution partnership with Chronicle City, publishers of Space 1889, and Achtung Cthulhu! I have worked as a freelance designer for Paizo Publishing, Expeditious Retreat Press, EN Publishing and many others. I have been gaming for 20+ years, and I have an ENnie nomination for my work as a Publisher on Heroes of the Jade Oath BETA, and as an author for To Kill or Not to Kill, I spend what little free time I have listening to audio books, writing Questhaven, working out, and plaving games.

2. What is your home game like?

I GM, and rarely ever play, and I just moved from Dayton, Ohio to Plano, Texas (about a 1,000 miles) so I just started up with an entirely new group via Meetup.com (Denton Gaming Group) and another with my local gaming store (Madness Comics and Games). Both of these are playtests of the Questhaven Campaign Setting, which I am laser focused on right now, it's a big wide-open sandbox adventure out on the edges of the setting called The Dam War. After playing with the same folks for 15+ years it's a big change for me, but we are having a lot of fun. My games tend to be very character driven and improvisational, using outlines rather than complete set ups, allowing my players to go wherever they want. I try to operate under the idea that I do not control their actions, but I do control the outcomes of their actions. As far as my play style, I like jigsaw puzzle piece plots, mysteries, and mythic story arcs, and you can usually expect a twist at some point along the way.

3. What is your favorite Paizo product that you have not worked on and why?

It is still the Advanced Player's Guide; the new base classes and the idea of archetypes absolutely captured me. I am constantly finding inspiration in this book, more so than I have from any



other supplement in a long time. I have created two whole books based on what I have found in here, and I expect I will go on developing more; plus I have a summoner and an oracle in my current game so I get the joy of seeing things in actual play as well.

4. You are currently the head of Rite Publishing, how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

I got mad. I was working as a freelancer for a very talented developer, when one day the publishing company told the developer they were no longer supporting that product. Therefore, I got mad, and decided to do it myself. I had worked a long time in various fan communities. I had everything I needed but a cartographer and hooking up with Jonathan Roberts solved that, the rest is a crazy rollercoaster ride. This also makes it a very hard road; it has cost me dearly in my personal life, having dedicated a lot of time and energy to making this work, in order to turn it into a full time job. I spend most of my time administrating and less time as a author or designer that ever before, but I still work up an article or three for Pathways, and Adventure Quarterly while working on Questhaven. It's the best job I have ever had.

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

My favorite right now is *The Secrets of Adventuring, which* will come out in Print and PDF at GenCon this year (via our print/distribution partner's booth Chronicle City). It's maybe a bit of a cheat since it's a compilation product of almost all *The Secrets of* PDFs we have done, but

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there is so much I love in there. The Luckbringer base class is still one of the best things I have done, there is a big update to the Taskshaper base class, and our support for the Magus, Combat Maneuvers, and so much jmore. It had tremendous editorial



support from Robert N. Emerson, and we spent a great deal of time focusing on the balance of this product and increasing its flavor, while trying to find new and interesting takes on existing mechanics. When I am looking for inspiration on how to do something, I find myself referencing this book more and more—with 219 pages of content I can usually find a kernel of an idea and run with it.

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

Getting a chance to rework the Taskshaper base class to address players concerns, and to add a huge amount of flavor text to the class so that I could let people see this as the class played by the children that the fey from fairy stories steal away, and what happens to them. It's either that or getting the physical book into my hands, or getting to talk about it on the Atomic Array podcast. There were a lot of high points. ©

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

Besides the sheer volume? The divine channeling, even if you do not use the divine channeler base class the rules for making channeling work differently based on your domains is just awesome. Add in the fact that Jonathan came back and started showing examples in Pathways of how the subdomains affect this as well, and with this, we get to compile it all in one sourcebook. The use of this does not just affect clerics but anyone with access to domains, including paizo's own inquisitor base class.

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

The Secrets of the Inquisitor section, has a bit the solo tactics feats. The inquisitor is one of the few core class whose mechanics are based in themes of thoughtful insight (judgments), looking for a creatures weak points (monster lore, bane, exploit weakness), and finally strategy (solo tactics). Yet often times we see inquisitors as a wholly western archetype. The solo tactic feats however are inspired by zealous religious warriors who seek to root out corruption from eastern history such as Gochiin no Tajima and Saito Musashibo Benkei, the Shinsengumi of the late Tokugawa period, and fictional eastern characters like Sun Wukong from *Journey to the West*, Jei-San from *Usagi Yojimbo*, Kaname Tosen from *Bleach*, along with many others.

So I took a real risk, the 36 Stratagems often attributed to Sun Tzu and/or Zhuge Liang, inspired the themes and names of these feats (because only a 3PP would ever get to use names like this). In addition, the outlook that "all war is deception" and that war has no code of conduct, that you do whatever you have to do in order to win, fits well with the outlook of the inquisitor. Remember the inquisitor is not nice or honorable, that is the role for the paladin, the samurai, and the cavalier to fill. So understand that some of these solo tactic feats will offend your allies as you make your own way.

9. Did you learn anything while working on it?

I learned a great deal about having a great idea and then having to make it fun to play while still being balanced. You can have the most balanced game mechanic in the world but if it does not have that "cool" and "fun" factor no one is going to want to use it much less buy a product based around it. I also like the idea of being able to come back and make updates and changes to the work when we decided to do a compilation; it makes the Taskshaper a much more balanced class. I will be doing updates to the individual PDFs when this releases.

10. Other than your own work and Rite Publishing's products, what is the best *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* compatible product out there?

That is hard for me as I spend so much time working on Rite Publishing products I do not get my head out of the trenches to look around and see what other people are working on. Ultimately, I am going to choose *The Genius Guide to the Time Thief* by Super Genius Games. Some folks don't like the live model artwork but what I love are the game mechanics. Owen K.C. Stephens did an amazing job; it's something I tell everyone to look at, especially those people who are fans of Prince of Persia games or The Matrix. Owen has created a framework here that depends on a limited resource that allows for a unique style of supernatural magical effects that has deeply influenced my own work, plus I got to play it at his house on my way down to texas! Both the Luckbringer base class and the Taskshaper class are based on this framework

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

Great Flavor mixed with Great Crunch. I am a fan of products that do not read like instruction manuals but instead are as fun to read as the game I want to play in. You also need an audience; it does not even have to be a large audience, but you need to develop one or have one for your product. I spend a good deal of time talking about what I am doing so that people who like how I do things become my customers, whether this is a Kickstarter project or one of our weekly releases. You can see this in all of the successful companies; Open Design has its blog, newsletter, and Kickstarter projects. Super Genius Games has one of the most interactive social networks you could ask for, and my good friend Louis Porter Jr., besides having some of the best layouts in the industry, just never shuts up.

12. Who is your favorite designer of *Path-finder Roleplaying Game* compatible products?

If it's rules design, then it's Owen K. C. Stephens. Besides the aforementioned Time Thief, there a host of other classes that include some of my favorites from the Godling, the Dragon Rider, the whole talented class eries the list goes on and on. If it's adventure design, it's Wolfgang Baur. I live by a lot of what I have learned from his writings on the subject as well as what I have learned as a patron on his patronage projects, (not to mention the Kobold *Guide to Game Design*). Yet there are many people who do amazing work that I try to pay attention to (remember, most of the time my head is in the trenches): T H. Gulliver, Matt Banach, Ben McFarland, Jonathan McAnulty, Tim Hitchcock, Lou Argesta, Gary McBride and etc.

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

Submit, get rejected, submit again. Wash, Rinse, Repeat. Do this until you get accepted. Submit to Pathfinder Society, AdventureAWeek, Gygax Magazine, Pathways, Adventure Quarterly. Try out for RPG Superstar. Find anyone who will let you do open submissions. You also need to start selling yourself, start a blog and get your social media going. Post regularly and show what you can do. You could even build this to an extent that you can go your own way and start releasing your own products or a set up your own Kickstarter (but to do that you need to develop an audience, and learn how to make products first).



15. Who is your favorite Illustrator?

Jason Rainville, when it comes to full color. Jason's skill continues to grow and grow; every time I think I have seen his masterwork, his next piece ends up being better. I have this dream project where Jason just draws whatever the hell he wants and I get to write about it. For black and white I am stuck right now between Mark Hyzer, who is a machine that can just keep turning out work, while drawing the creepiest monsters imaginable and Ian Greenlee who has become a real work horse for us, who can do the most amazing patterns. I await the day they all leaves us all behind to work full-time for larger companies.

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

I was at the Origins game fair working a booth, and a fan brought up *The Book of Monster Templates* to me, and said, "This is my favorite monster book, would you sign it." Now, I was not there to sign books. I was there to promote my books. But that book was not even for sale at that booth, nor was it on sale anywhere in the convention hall. This fan brought the book with him, hunted me down in that booth, just so he could have a signed copy. That was an awesome feeling

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

The Secerts of the Divine. I am writing a Summoner archetype called the Divine Vessel that fixes some of my issues with the Synthesist archetype while doing something completely different. I have included the flavor text below which is told from the point of view of the adventurer Owain Northway of Questhaven

"I have found in my experience that while Divine Vessels are an unusual occurrence in most lands they are somewhat more common in Questhaven and its surrounding Protectorate. The Powers That Be create them under extreme circumstances, for example the divine servant Hadroniel the Majestic, Doorwarden of the Second Gate, could not enter the earthly realm in its true form or when the elder

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titan Oreithyia, Prophetess of Tragedy sought to cheat death after having foreseen her own eminent doom. At times like these one of *Our Sovereigns of Heaven* choses a wayward follower, like Coel the Carter, to serve as the instrument of its will, making Coel a divine vessel for Hadroniel; while Lucky Anwyl o' the Antegate stumbled upon a fortunate opportunity to oblige Oreithyia. Yet there are even more examples, the Chardab's Cart, now a sacred relic, judged the mere mortal Ren Dyrfanson worthy of "the gift" of becoming a Divine Vessel though I know not which spirit inhabits Ren, and once the Sisterhood of the Rose Wheel, powerful conjurers, bound Sahrewathe the Bounteous Immortal to the poor undeserving wretch Lynwen Quayle.

Divine Vessels are usually simple folk who can after being fused with this divine being can now summon a mighty avatar of near deific might. This avatar does not come to the vessel's side, however; it takes over the vessel's body, transforming the mortal into an obvious being of power to smite its patron's foes. The sight of the unleashed avatar is either beautiful or terrifying, but few would suspect that such power erupts from so humble a servant.

Some mortals such as my friend Coel the Carter, see this as divine favor, forming a deep bond of friendship with their alter ego, while others such as Lynwen Quayle see it as divine penance for their transgressions, despising the possession and violation of their body.

Qwilion's Note: Owain Northway has left one important point out of his comments on the nature of the Divine Vessels. I would be remiss if I did not mention that Divine Vessels are not limited to divine beings, and that any outsider or extraplanar creature could fill a mortal shell, including those that serve the forces of Damnation. I have more than a few examples, but the most prominent was Angra the Inhibitive Immortal who inhabited Captain Madern Barrett of the Stygian Myrmidons a servant of *Their Lordly Brother of Cunning*. "

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

Well I have been nominated for an ENnie twice but have yet to win one, so that would be nice, and I still have a video game design floating around in my head that I want to get out. The big thing for me right now is to finish writing the Questhaven campaign setting and publish *The Lords of Gossamer and Shadow* (Diceless)

19. Can you talk a bit about Questhaven,

and what makes it a different from other PFRPG campaign settings?

Questhaven takes a different approach to world building, focusing on the mechanics of the Pathfinder Roleplaying



Game and how they would affect the flavor of a setting. The biggest impact this had is that the main city of Questhaven and its surrounding protectorate is ruled by the adventurer's guild. Player Characters who are members of the guild are treated like another setting's nobility. Their fame and prestige can let them skirt the law or eventually lead them to rule the city. This has the effect of immediately immersing the players in the cultural, economic, political and military concerns of the world, along with creating a world that properly reflects the role of a magical renaissance society while still remaining modular enough for GMs to loot what they like for their own homebrew worlds or to stick in another company's world.

20. Do you see Kickstarter continuing to have an impact on independent development?

Yes. I think as long as companies are transparent about their work, this will create the trust that you need to convince customers to support your products. Right now, you only need a dream and an audience to put up a Kickstarter; but, to make it work, it takes work. Backers have come to expect promotional videos, art previews, and specific kinds of rewards to be offered, and they like a proven record of accomplishment. I think every person should comb through Kickstarter until they find the product they have been dreaming of and then support that idea (and not just be looking for great "deals"). If you do not find the product of your dreams, well, then you have an idea for your own Kickstarter.

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

That I have way more ideas than I will ever have time for. Regardless, no matter how busy I get, I love to just sit around and talk about games. I love gaming; I love to see pictures of folks with my books; and I die for stories of people using what I have worked on. You can always find me on our Facebook page, Google + page, Twitter, or the Paizo compatibility forums.

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Reviews from Endzeitgiest.com

illustrations by Mohommed Agbadi

and Dennis Darmody

Cerulean Seas: Azure Abyss Publisher: Alluria Publishing **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5

> This massive sourcebook for the aquatic unfathomable depths is 100 pages long, 1 page front cover, 2 pages editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page kickstarter-backerthanks, 1 page poem and 1 page back cover, leaving us with 92 pages of content, so let's take a look!

So what is the Azure Abyss? Essentially, it is the aquatic equivalent of the Underdark – the

unfathomable depths and after a basic introduction including a glossary we delve into the hostile terrain that is encountered in the very lowest depth of the sea – abyssal depths and hadal depths – 10.000 ft beneath the waves until 20.000 feet for abyssal zones and below that, the hadal zones. Terrain, from trenches to sediment to mini-ecosystems that spring forth from the cadavers of massive beings to finally cold seeps, infectious slimy warts and mussel beds. Hydrothermal vents, acidic zones, megaplumes (essentially aquatic volcanic eruptions) and 6 forms of geologically poisoned areas as well as pools that act as teleportation gateways further suffuse the depths, making for a crunchy and thoroughly intriguing toolbox to spice up your terrain.

The second chapter details deep sea-races and kicks off with a revisited section on other aquatic races that allows you to create deep sea versions before providing new aquatic races, which of course include buoyancy information and depth tolerances. The first would be the Asterak, who gets +2 to Int and Con,-2 to Str, count as merfolk, get darkvision 60 ft, may 1/day utilize shocking grasp, electricity resistance 5, can control their bioluminescence and are susceptible to low depths. beyond these luminescent creatures, we also get aquatic dwarves - the austorian Dwarves. They get +2 Con and Wis, -2 Cha, pressure and geopoison immunity, slow swim speed, darkvision 120 ft., breathe only water, get +2 to appraise, cold resistance 5, +2 to saves versus poisons, spells and spell-like ability, may move on land at 75% of their speed, stonecunning, +4 to CMD versus bull rush, trip and proficiency with austorian weapons.

And then, we get perhaps one of the insanest, most badass races to ever spawn – if the artwork doesn't blow you away, I don't know what will – Echinns are essentially giant humanoid sea urchins – glowing tentacle-like fingers, arachnoid-resembling eyes, bristling spines. O M G. Want. Crunch-wise, they get +2 to Str and Con, -2 to Int and Wis, Pressure and Geopoison immunity, are gilled anthromorphs, get a normal swim speed, low-light vision, can use bioluminescence at will to glow like a torch, get natural AC of +2, cold resistance, +4 to saves versus poisons, echinn weapon familiarity and poisonous spines. Usually I'd complain about the racial attributes gearing them too closely into the melee-roles – but seriously, they simply are TOO COOL.

If you read Alluria's Remarkable Races Compendium, you'll enjoy the aquatic take on the Obitu – neither dead, nor undead, these beings get +2 Str, +2 Dex, -2 Cha, darkvision 60 ft., +4 to saves versus disease/poison. improved initiative as a bonus feat at 1st level, +2 to acrobatics, escape artist and sleight of hand, 5+1/2character level negative energy resistance and immunity against sleep. And no, they are not undead - they just look that way and thus you won't have to deal with all those pesky immunities. Viden Oculi look somewhat like a beholder – with long rubbery tentacles that act as legs and hands and two of them featuring additional eyes it's a weird creature to describe and one you'll have to see to truly get. The Viden get +2 to Dex and Wis, -2 to Str, are small aquatic aberrations, can secrete slightly acidic tears as slime from their eye, get 30 ft. swim speed, all-around vision, can shed bioluminescence as a torch, suffer from light blindness, are pressure sensitive and choose two detect spells of the first level, which then are constantly active for the creature. Unfortunately, at least personally, I consider that ANNOYING AS ALL HELL. I hate the detect spells and having to consider two that are permanently in effect just sucks - sorry. It's just busy-work for the DM who will have to look at all those pesky auras all the time. Annoving,

The final new race would be the Abyssal Rusalka, a feykith with a lower torso resembling a jellyfish. These embodiments of deadly beauty get +2 to Cha and Dex, -2 Str, count as feykith, can exude luminescent blood that provides concealment 1/hour, may shed bioluminescence as a torch, get +1 to DCs of enchantment-spells they cast and those of cha 15+ may use charm person 1/day – but what's rather cool is their shirt of tentacles: It AUTOMATICALLY drains 1d4 hp from foes, healing 1 hp to the Rusalka. They may suppress this ability. And I like its idea -though the execution made me cringe...for a second. Creatures have to begin their round in the Ruslka's square (!!!) – not an adjacent square, but the Rusalka's. This is enough of a limitation for me – hence: Two thumbs up!

Deep Drow and anthropomorph crossbreeds of Seafolk and Echinn complete this chapter before we get tables for all the vital age, height and weight/ depth tolerance etc.-tables and dive into a discussion of existing classes in a Deep Sea context and get into a new base class, the Angler. Anglers get d8, 6+Int skills per level, 3/4 BAB-progression, good fort-saves and proficiency with light and martial weapon as well as light armor proficiency. And the class is interesting indeed – essentially, its angle (pardon the pun) is battlefield control: They may, via preparation, change 5-foot square upon 5-foot square, into a deadly area – impeding defense, movement, offense – make hindrances only happen to one character etc. – as well as creating traps much like those of the ranger to further pepper the battlefield. Per se a great class, though honestly, I would have loved to see more hindrances/traps, though Drop Dead Studios' "Vauntguard"-class could easily be scavenged for more traps – at least that's what I'll be doing!

We also get 3 10-level PrCs: First would be the Halionaut, who gets d10, 6+Int skills, full BAB, medium fort-saves and essentially are masters of the depth diving, being able to divine how warp pools work, gaining favored terrains both planar and common and terrain mastery for these new terrains, all depending on the chosen terrains. Interesting PrC, though not one that blows me away. Myxinmaves get d6, 4+Int skills per level, 6 levels of spellcasting progression and are all about the hagfish - their slime covering the myxinmave's body with protective coating. They also get a giant hagfish servant, a bite attack that only works against foes with flesh, immunities to all things putrid and an armor of living hagfish as well as the option to transform partially into the creatures, the option to become flexible as if boneless and a poison before gaining a hivemind as a capstone. Cool PrC with some disturbing imagery... (And yes, we get a full page of rules for creating hiveminds and determining their stats - and eventual spawning spellcasting prowess...)

The final new PrC is the Seductor, who gets d8, 6+Int skills per level, 1/2 BAB-progression, medium will-saves, 5 levels of sneak attack progression and essentially are the secret agents of the depths, combining deadly sneak attack with touches that may charm and paralyze foes. while hiding their alignment. Again, not a bad PrC, but not one that got me overly excited.

After that, we're introduced to Special materials and weapons of the deep (the latter coming with full color artworks!!!) before getting, of course, more feats - 21 to be precise. I won't go into details for every one of them, but I will mention the following: Eating special materials to heal yourself, emit a siren song 1/day, dazzle with bioluminescence, expand poison clouds and Viden may take a whole array of feats to transform their base forms and finally even see slightly into the future. Of course, some new toys for anglers, sharper spines for echinns, etc.. can also be found here - my favorite feat, though, would be the female ceratiodi piscean's Dual Mind after having mate graft himself into your side, you may now use your mate's mind to gain two weapon fighting and ignore dex-requirements for the follow-up feats, get +1 favored class and +4 to saves versus mind-affecting effects. Weird and cool.

Speaking of cool – the 10 new spells are absolutely glorious: Ever wanted to make a foe want to attack him/ herself? Or create acidic zones? Yeah. Extinguish pesky bioluminescence? Yep. Or merge part of your body with a greater creature, highjacking its body for your purposes, essentially becoming a parasite? Now THAT hasn't been done before! After 8 new magical items, we dive into the campaign setting specific part of the book with A LOT of awesome adventuring potential.

The Deep Sea Bestiary deserves special mentioning -Alluria's monsters usually at least are good, as are their artworks. Seriously, you have to see this book's bestiary to believe in its existence. We get a minimum of at least one signature ability for each one, but the artworks - OMG. I've never seen anything like it. Seriously. Paizo-level and beyond. These artworks can stand their ground, toe-to-toe with the industry-leader and perhaps even surpass them. Yes. That good. This bestiary may be the most beautiful one I've EVER SEEN. From the disturbing deep sea dragons to squid imps and the alien grandfather worm, these artworks will BLOW YOUR MIND. And the best thing about them is: Their crunch lives up to these artworks. From the humble to the CR 23 behemoth, these creatures are glorious, ooze iconicity and set the bar higher for ANY monster-book out there. Have I mentioned starfish people that manage to look badass?

We also get a pronunciation guide, a list of deep sea critters by CR (including the Bestiaries and Alluria books!), an index of tables, an art index and 1 page of cardstock minis.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches – which is a massive feat at this length. Layout adheres to Alluria Publishing's drop-deadgorgeous 2-column standard and the pdf comes fully bookmarked, though sans printer-friendly version. Expect a massive drain on your printer (or get this in full color print). I HAVE to mention the artworks – even by Alluria's insanely high standards, they are insanely beautiful. They actually are the best-looking artworks I've ever seen in any 3pp-book. They surpass many 1st party publisher artworks, whether Paizo or WotC. It boggles the mind, incites imagination. Thoroughly impressive – the artists have been up to their a-game!

At first, I was blown away – the new races actually included two ones I'd want to play and WILL include in my campaigns – something that rarely happens! When the class and PrCs didn't stand up, at least for me, to the predecessor-pdf's awesomeness, there's nothing particularly wrong with them, but still - my enthusiasm was slightly dampened. And then, via feats and spells and items, the book once again managed to build up tense expectation that was released in a blast in the bestiary and campaign setting information. While I first thought this would clock in as 4 stars after reading the class-section, I can wholeheartedly recommend unanimously ALL THE REST of the book - from terrain to fluff, from crunch to creatures, we get a massive array of superior content that provides some of the coolest creatures to have ever featured in a given bestiary – to the point where any verdict not a 5/5 and a seal of approval would be a disservice to this book's stunningly awesome content - so there you have it. GET THIS! Even if you don't play beneath the waves - for

aberrations and strange cthulhoid creatures, there is so incredibly much to scavenge here that I'll guarantee you won't regret getting this, even for usage above the waves. Don't let this gem slip through your hands and dive

right into its depths here on OBS!

Wilderness Dressing: Sea Voyages Publisher: Raging Swan Press Reviewer: Thilo Graf Rating: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of the wilderness dressing-series is 13 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page

WILDERNESS DRESSING: to SEA VOYAGES

advertisement, 2 pages editorial, 1 page ToC/foreword, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 6 pages of content, so let's take a look!

The pdf immediately kicks off with a massive table – shipboard events. Starting with petty thefts, strange signs burnt into the wood, crumbling steps on ladders (sabotage?) up to multiple entries featuring varied capricious weather

peculiarities, we get a nice basic list. Now we all know sailors are a suspicious lot and hence the second table covers 50 omens – with entries spelling whether the omens bode weal or woe. Whale corpses, accompanying dolphins, cormorants and albatrosses – the gamut of delightfully superstitious signs should make sure that keeping morale high is not to easy...

50 minor encounters, whether with wreckages of other ships, giant clams, fins on usually humpbacked creatures or mysterious singing voices – quite a bunch of instances that should help make the travels less tedious.

We also get a table of 12 entries with more developed random encounters, in the format we know from the Dungeon Denizens-line: Though this time around sans statblocks. The creatures covered, from sea hags to kraken and sea serpents run the gamut of iconic beings and even include a globster!

The final page of the pdf is devoted to an immensely useful DM-cheat-sheet for running combat on a ship – whether regarding deck, hatches, hull, mast, sails or rigging or steep steps – all hardness-values, ACs, possibility for cover and climbing etc. are given and even different weather is featured in e.g. the deck write-up. VERY useful indeed!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting, as I've come to expect from raging Swan press, are top-notch – I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to RSP's concise 2-column b/w-standard and the pdf features some neat little b/wartworks. The pdf comes in two versions, one optimized for screen-use and one optimized for the printer. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Brian Gregory has delivered an excellent product that complements well RSP's "So what's the Pirate Ship like, anyways?" and should serve as a great way of making long, dreary aquatic journeys much more exciting. As a toolkit to enhance random encounters and long treks, this works superbly, though honestly, I wish that the specific encounter table had some kind of creature that is a tad more uncommon – the encounters are pretty standard fare with an exception in the globster. This, however, remains my only gripe and hence I will still gladly settle for a verdict of 5 stars, but sans my seal of approval. You can get this neat supplement here on OBS and here on d2opfsrd.com's store!

Endzeitgeist out.

Rappan Athuk Publisher: Frog God Games Reviewer: Thilo Graf Rating: 5 stars out of 5

This pdf is 676 pages long, 1 page editorial,

2 pages ToC, 10 pages of thanks for kickstarter backers, 4 pages of SRD, 15 pages of space for character obituaries, 5 pages of advertisements,1 page front cover and 1 page back cover, leaving a total of 635 pages of content.

How does one review the third iteration of Rappan Athuk? Seriously. I asked myself this question for quite some time. Slumbering Tsar, the last monster-book by Frog God

Games came in installments. Not so the granddaddy of dungeons, the so far highest grossing PFRPG-kickstarter and one of the highest funded RPG-products ever -Rappan Athuk starts off as this vast monster of content and here I am, at the point of writing this, after bigmouthed announcing that my review for this monster would be ready for Gencon. How am I to do this? In order to fully appreciate the book and quality-check the new content, I'd have to go through all of it and that's exactly what I'm planning to do. I initially thought about comparing it to its former two iterations, but with the review going to be as bloated and the limited use for people out there, I'll refrain from doing so. Since asking for mercy would be futile, I'll leave off for now with another wish: May Orcus look the other way, I once again open the pages that contain the most deadly dungeon I've had the pleasure of running in 3.X.

And how else to kick off such an epic milestone than with a tribute to the true legends among the RPG-designers like Arneson, Barker, Bledsaw, Gygax – touching and well-written. Speaking of well-written: If you know one of the older iterations of the dungeon,



you'll know the legend of Rappan Athuk and have a warm (or clammy, if you're a player) feeling when reading the 66 rumors about the dungeon of graves. While an introduction on how to read the dungeon entries was expected, we also get a nice overview of all the levels and their names and then a 2-page side-view map, which makes it (relatively) easy for the DM to get how all the levels are connected. After that, we get into the first chapter, entitled "Wilderness Areas: Dying outside the dungeon". Now THAT's an announcement. Before I go on, I have another little thing to talk about: In the last two iterations of the dungeon, there were several monsters that are IP of certain wizards – when I recall such monsters being there, I'll try to comment on how they've been replaced.

Since from now on, I'll delve into massive SPOILERterritory and since this dungeon is probably the most epic you'll ever play in, I encourage players to skip to the the first time and knew that RA doesn't Screw around... In contrast to the other incarnations of the dungeon, we now also get two alternate, although also rather problematic entrance to Rappan Athuk – and deep levels of the dungeon to boot. However, the entrance is underwater, the caves are guarded by a kraken and at low levels, the PCs will probably die here – if they persevere and e.g. find the solution to a great puzzle, they might score the help of a neat ally – and the PCs can use ANY help they can get.

Another potential location from which to gain access to the legendary dungeon now rests atop a desolate ridge over the marshland and comes with a stellar artwork that immediately evokes a sense of almost lovecraftian foreboding – the cloister of the dread Frog God with two different cloisters and multiple levels of crypts and dungeons containing chthonic remains, dread intelligent killer frog swarms, old artifacts and challenges aplenty – creepy, unique in atmosphere and mood, the cloister of the Frog God would have made for a stellar adventure on its own, especially with the nice, player-friendly

"The new area 2A will be hated by players – now, Rappan Athuk also has its teleporter-maze level. Yes. Teleporter Maze. Ouch."

conclusion (after about 3 metric tons of text).

Still here? If you're a player, you may incur the wrath of Orcus AND Tsathoggua by reading on. They watch us. They watch us all...

...Still here? Sure? All right, let's explore the area around Rappan Athuk! The chapter kicks off with the one ways to start old-schoolish wilderness-depictions - random encounters by area (And, again a map), thankfully also including non-hostile patrols - 5 of these general areas are presented. After that, we're introduced to the less savory individuals that haunt the area around Rappan Athuk. If you expect standard bandits, you'll be in for a surprise, though: What about a doppelganger rogue that not only comes with cronies, but also NPCcompanions as a kind of party-anathema or a wizard that has enslaved a bunch of trolls? Not only are the respective bandits listed in their own entries, we also get encounter areas for PCs looking for some serious trouble/stamping out of the lawless beings: Care to take on the dragonmarsh's froghemoth, for example? Or PCs wanting to participate in a not particularly harmless fey festival? Other highlights include two mapped banditmini-dungeon, a fane with a dread prophecy, a sea-hag coven, a wrecked pirate ship and can purge a tribe of vicious bugbears from an (Also mapped) ruined fort and if the PCs are REALLY eager to die outside of Rappan Athuk, they can also try to invade the island home of the local wyrm...

And then, we get to the inverted-cross-shaped surface graveyard under which the dungeon rests – as well as a one page of grave-markers and the iconic entry to the dungeon: The very first trap is deadly and a potential TPK-machine – when I first ran my players through the first Rappan Athuk installment, they died here for overview map: Here, though, it's just a precursor of the dread to come and a possible entrance to a sublevel (4A) of the dungeon of graves. But one thing remains before we delve into the dungeon of graves itself: Zelkor's Ferry, the small settlement and its immediate surroundings are detailed as well, including a nice old necromancer whose resurrection attempts may have some unforeseen consequences for the PCs subjected to theme – rules-wise an awesome throwback to the risks of returning to life.

But we've stalled long enough: Let's go through the dungeon, level by level. And yes, this review will probably be rather bloated and long... After passing the dread trap at the beginning, The PCs delve into the stinking, disgusting first level of Rappan Athuk and meet one of the place's iconic inhabitants – the slow, unkillable and truly dreadful Dung Monster (nicknamed "Dungy" by my players), which has probably slain A LOT of PCs. The level 1A, temple of the final sacrament, is another personal favorite of mine -accessible via more than one location, it features mocking, taunting inscriptions reflecting the challenges faced in this temple and PCs should beware - not only is the temple HARD, it also features an entrance to the dread bloodways, but more on these later. On Level 1B, the abandoned bastion, the PCs can encounter mist-filled alcoves containing strange and deadly connections to the otherworld as well as an organized force of goblins that will respond dynamically to incursions. Special mentioning also goes to the rather cool traps contained on this level. In direct contrast, the "Mouth of Doom" (level 1C), a mostly deserted and rather easy level makes for a new way to introduce characters to the rigors and dangers of Rappan Athuk – among the challenges and



ideas on this level, most intriguing, at least to me, was the option to play at a rather neat divine slot machine and get some uncommon boons – or summon disaster! On the classic level two, insane madman Marthek still looms, but those familiar with the older installments will notice that Saracek the fallen, skeletal champion and dread adversary, has been upgraded to antipaladin in this iteration, making the undead menace even more deadly than his prior fighter/blackguard version. Of course, the third "boss" menace is also still here in the person of Ambro the Ogre.

The new area 2A will be hated by players - now, Rappan Athuk also has its teleporter-maze level. Yes. Teleporter Maze. Ouch. On the plus-side, the PCs can actually find a surface one-way teleport out of the dungeon. On the downside (for them) and to my everlasting glee, they actually have a chance to die by BUBBLES! Yes. Rappan Athuk can even kill you with friggin' bubbles! I love it. "How did your character die?" "Welll...ehh...he...was killed by bubbles." I HAVE to kill some PC off this way, I just have to! The Demon's Gullet, the sequel to the Mouth of Doom, also provides rather appropriate challenges (still being deadly, but not as bad as the main levels...) for low-level PCs and even features a wishing statue that could grant you your heart's desire - or swallow and suffocate you. Speaking of swallowing and related deaths - with level 3 and its eponymous warning of purple worms, the dungeon gets deadly. Prior to this level, Rappan Athuk is challenging - from here on out, it gets deadly as hell (or rather abyss) and this incarnation is no different - old favorites like the oracle are still present in this version of the dungeon and Scramge (now a rakshasa maharaja, btw.) and his assault should challenge the hardest of parties - unless they act smart indeed, this level WILL see the end of

your PCs.

Speaking of the end of PCs - the warning "Don't go down the well" still applies - and level 3A, still features some of the deadliest, most sadistic encounters written - not to speak of this level's boss and his iron golem bodyguards. That's NOTHING, though, compared to the sick and deliciously evil traps that can be found on level 3B - here, the PCs can get into CR 20+ encounters. Several of them. E.g. Greater Stone Golems plus hasted regular stone golems. Or Stone Treants. Have I mentioned the ancient mummy lords guarding the creatures known as ravager spawns (CR 20), gibbering orbs (CR 27) and then, the legendary Ravager, a CR 30 beast that could very well be a spawn of Rovagug. Compared to the apocalyptic dread of level 3B, 3C, the third of the "beginner's levels" of RA feels almost tame an enclave of healers wanted to once flush out the threat of Orcus. Now, though, only a bleak disease-ridden complex populated by vermin and worse remains. Especially the fountain of pestilence, which generates demons, rats etc. will make for a cool encounter indeed also thanks to the disturbing artwork that portrays it.

It is in level 4 that the PCs will face off with the main quest of Rappan Athuk for the first time – since the ultimate goal (and who are we kidding – rather futile) is to kill Orcus, it is here that the PCs will have to invade the first temple of Orcus and get a sense of the depravity and things to come – and face challenges that will have them sweat blood and tears: The NPCs make use of the Disciple and Zealot of Orcus Prestige Classes (more on those MUCH later), making the adversaries more deadly. Max the intelligent and potentially benevolent (at least as far as RA goes...)otyugh also makes a return. How challenging is the boss encounter? Well, the text tells the DM to buy the players a drink if they prevail and indeed, the finale is lethal...though in the context of the dungeon, it's just the beginning. The Basilisk Caverns (level 4A) include a potential dwarven cohort, the eponymous basilisk(s), a team of lethal goblin adventurers and even a mated pair of vampire/succubus with a rather evil trick up their sleeves... Level 4B, the "Gut" is essentially not a regular level, but a vast tunnel with several sub-sections that links the "beginner's dungeon" (understand that "beginner" means NOT easy) with the main-levels of Rappan Athuk – via Zombie stables, a subterranean inn run by a mongrelman, a colony of plantoids and more foes – including a Tiefling fighter with a rather interesting two-weapon build.

Level 5 provides us with the lair of Banth, wicked transmuter and his creations. Here, players can recruit further allies (or replenish their ranks after suffering losses) with two characters and especially rangers and druids might have a chance to shine/get nice companions in this level. A stream of lava runs through level 5A, the prison of time, in which time elementals guard the so-called Dark Thelaroi are contained – I look forward to reading more about these weird beings in future adventures. In level 5B, "Aladdin's Lament", some problematic, genie-themed items can be recovered - if the PCs manage to survive e.g. the ingenious and awesome trap that will make them feel like frogs in a blender. The level also utilizes some rather neat inscriptions to set the mood. Level 6 has always been one of my player's hate-levels - the Maze not only contains a storm giant ghost and the remains of the legendary titan Ereg-Tal, but also comes with 10 (!!!) sample mazes for your perusal - making sure that PCs will hate these labyrinthine corridors. Level 6A once featured a mind flayer in a gorgeous illustration - unfortunately, with the IP-problems, we only get the intellect devourer-substitution and no new illustration to depict the aberration. The bosses of the level, 3 ancient, well-equipped trolls and the spider/human hybrid, the Spider Queen, also make this level a nice challenge.

Level 7, the aptly-named gates of hell, has also been redesigned: While the cerberus-like 3-headed hellhound being still here, we also get a great substitution of the mind-flayers and giths that once populated this level in the guise of encephalon gorgers and morlocks a much better r3eplacement for illithids, though I still bemoan the absence of the good ol' squid-heads. In Level 7A, the halls of the phase minotaur king, the PCs not only will have to defeat this legendary minotaur and navigate even more deadly labyrinths, they will also have to deal with more lethal goblins from the subterranean city of greenskins and a crimson death as well as water weirds in their native elements... Level 8 contains the "Tomb of the Evil King", a breather for PCs – at least partially - the vast amounts of cave scorpions, the river flowing through the level and the eye of the deep (which replaces a beholder) still make this a challenge, as does the option to find and unleash a banshee, but generally, this level feels less lethal than others. Level 8A, the tomb of the beacon, on the other hand is one of my favorites: This vast level set in a primarily vertical cave features

not only a waterfall, antimagic fields and a side-view map, but also offers PCs the chance to meet the utterly disturbing Blood Orchids and even form an alliance with flumphs! Come on, who doesn't like flumphs? The new level 8B contains not only a neat subterranean jungle, but also has the chance for the PCs to find evidence of a now extinct breed of intelligent apes and utilize their leftovers: Turns out the mummified monkey dung is explosive and that among other treasures, the PCs can find a banana of holding! Now that is cool!

And honestly, the PCs will need all the potential tools they can get their hands on, for starting with level 9, things start to get truly painful: The second temple of Orcus awaits and its caretaker. Gudmund, has a vital key the PCs will need. Unfortunately for them, the disciple of Orcus is not exactly a nice fellow and the demon-enhanced showdown will challenge your PCs to the breaking point - especially if you're a sadistic DM like me - there's a maze with a bunch of teleporters on this level and making a running dash for the area allows your NPCs e.g. time to rebuff - just as a tip in case players first manage to breach the temple's defenses and seem like they're winning. Level 9A, the Hydra's Lair, contains one of the truly evil dick-moves of this dungeon: Extremely well-hidden, there's a tomb of a CR 26 death knight AND a CR 27 Demilich. When compared to these "bonus-bosses" of epic power, the normal foes like huge groups of trolls, a pair of umbral dragons and a 12-headed Pyrohydra guarding the mithril gates leading to level 11 feel almost easy. Until you recall and experience their power that is. Hope that your PCs are smart enough to let the two ancient beings lie... Level 9B and 9C make up the two levels of the well of Agamemnon and while the first level is not too hard, the whirlpool the PCs will have to brave to access the latter level will test their luck and ingeniousness, a good precursor for the difficulty that awaits the PCs in the person of Agamemnon, the now-corrupted vampire archwizard and his groaning spirit-brides.

Level 9D are the bloodways, first introduced in Rappan Athuk Reloaded: Taking the trope from the classic "Desert of Desolation"-set, the bloodways are a labyrinth filled with bloody, red mist that obscures vision, are almost impossible to truly navigate and make up 4 (!!!) levels of dungeon – the bloodways are flavorful and confusing, though their boss, Duke Aerim the bloodwraith, feels rather like a bit weak for the level. That being said, the confusing and lengthy nature of the Bloodways makes it still a disturbing challenge and perhaps one of the hardest levels - and there are the forgotten tombs, where undead mummy-priests and even a marilith awaits, so enough potential for death and mayhem here. Let's hope that by the time PCs reach level 10, the aptly-named Lava Pit, they have some option to make themselves immune to fire, otherwise the local salamander-population under the command of CR 28 noble salamander sorceror Irtuk will annihilate the PCs. Who are we kidding? Even if they are prepared, Irtuk and his elemental creatures will constitute a challenge that could break all but the



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.



most experienced players - and let's hope that their curiosity doesn't kill them - there's essentially a nice "story-kill" also possible on this level. Level 10A, the "Great Cavern" is appropriately-named – with another total of 4 pages of maps depicting both an overview as well as the respective sites. Among the creatures herein, the PCs can find the "Mother of all Purple Worms", two legendary orcus-mummies, negotiate with an insanely powerful lich who actually is a foe of Orcus, navigate a colony of fungus people and find another set of mithral gates and even a vein of gold! In level 10B, the goblin outpost features some rather interesting green-skins - armed to the teeth, having multiple class-levels and teamwork powers, they and their unit training should make the PCs reconsider hard any notion of underestimating goblins and provide them with a taste of the things to come.

In level 10C, the Talon of Orcus, another outpost of the Orcus-worshippers, has also a rather large contingent of deadly foes and overshadows the goblins from the prior level – the Seer of Orcus, special stone golems etc. won't make things easier for the PCs and the broken, MPD-afflicted adventurer they can rescue may vet succumb to the traumas he had to endure - with potentially fatal consequences, but also some very fun roleplaying potential. On level 11, the PCs can encounter, among other beings, a neothelid (which replaces a beholder, if my memory serves me correctly) as well as find the statue of a high priestess struck by a divine curse - greed and risk/reward ratios of groups are put to the test here, though I always considered it a pity that per se no way to free the priestess has been included. Oh, have I mentioned the mithral vein? Level 11A not only features the gates to the subterranean city of goblins, but also perhaps the hardest group of NPCs in the "rival adventurer"-style encountered so far with non only a hall of 40 wraiths at their beck and call, a group of high-level vampires will bleed the PC's resources further dry. Wait, you say: Goblin City? Yes, one of the largest levels of Rappan Athuk is the meticulously detailed Goblin City of Greznek in level 12A - a roleplaying town that comes with its own attitude-adjustment sidebox and the options for starved adventurers to not only stock up, but actually do some trading and even side-questing, making this city a great alternative and break from all the dungeon crawling. Level 12 contains a whole array of potential cohorts and the reason is rather evident by its title: The Slave Dens contain all those unfortunate enough to have been caught by the servants of Orcus or the goblins and it is from here, if anywhere, that the PCs will need to stage their escape attempt should they get caught alive by anyone. Worse for the PCs, two elite priests, their mohrgs and their option to summon a balor also are a part of the fun things they can encounter this level. Another cool break from standard dungeon crawling would be level 12B, Tiamat's Puzzle, in which the PCs do explore a dungeon, yes, but one focused very strongly on riddle-solving and with a different theme. It is here the PCs may find a potent sword, which remains cursed for now - until they find the parent-sword in

the vermin-themed level 12C, that is. This level is more about mass than threat and probably will have the PCs feel a surge of power, which is ok, I guess -especially since the giant amphisbaena anaconda is waiting for worn-down, overconfident PCs...

Level 13 houses a dread ghost antipaladin - and options to die. Hard. By becoming cursed, by facing a mirror duplicate and by failing to properly navigate the portal on this level, for it is here that the only point of access to the final level can be found. But we'll return to examine that later – after we've checked out the Goblin Barracks and the military commander of the greenskins (13A), followed the winding Dark River (13B) to Zombieland (13C). Where, bingo, a LOT of zombies wait. To be chopped to pieces. That's fine, let the PCs smash through whole armies of them and find a way to access the "Lost Levels" as soon as they are released. As soon as the PCs are overconfident enough, they can find a wall of force – if they bash it down, they'll have fun with 2 CR20+ liches and the dread evil artifact, the Zombiestone of Karsh. Now if you're familiar with the classic mythology of demon-princes, you may not be surprised to find that the defense of the lowest of the three temples of Orcus falls to not only extremely powerful beings, but actually to a combination of demons, undead and disciples as well as Maphistal, a demon lord of his own right. If the PCs manage to clean this temple as well, they might actually have a teeny-tiny sliver of a chance against the Demon Prince of Undead. Level 14A houses a tragedy - it is here that the defeated army of Tsar retreated to and that a fallen angel and a dwarven undead abomination still lead an army of hundreds (literally, there are that many) undead in their congregation, guarding level 14B, aptly titled "The Grand Cornu of Orcus" - here, the high-priest of the demon-lord of the undead makes his final stand, here his shadow-advisor Pagonis, his Kyton torture-master, his denizen of leng librarian Ashfallen and his personal, powerful undead servants wait and work tirelessly for the detriment of all that is good and holy and it is here that the epic battle against this stain upon the planet will reach its penultimate climax- at least, that's what one would think until one sees the "Architect's Workshop" (level 14C) – where legendary planar architect Glazerel waits alongside his anima engine, where PCs can be hurtled to seemingly prehistoric times, a strange mercane-bar tended by valkyries, awaken stranded in a Kyton-hospital (Silent Hill is calling ...), travel to a strange garden eden, battle an undead gold dragon and visit a plateau that might very well be adjacent to Leng itself - the planar chaos and dimensional sidetreks are plain awesome and make this my favorite new level of the dungeon.

Speaking of which: Only one to go: Level 15. The Den of the Master. When the PCs, covered in their own blood and naked, pop up in this dimension, they are in for an immediate blasphemy for fun and giggles, continuing blasts of evil energy and can kiss regaining clerical magic goodbye. Apart from highest echelon demons, we also get a selection of Orcus' most powerful level 20 allies as well as..well. Orcus' friggin' avatar. CR 35. The PCs better be running for that teleporter circle to et as fast away as possible from the Demon Prince. Though, of course, if they prevail, Orcus is gone for 666 years and their feat will be sung of in legends forevermore...

The pdf also contains stats for all new monsters, an appendix with the "Disciple of Orcus"-archetype, the Archwizard and Zealot of Orcus-PrCs, a total of 38 new magic items (of which many are artifacts), an appendix detailing the presumed default gods of the Necro/FrogGod-verse, illustrated pregens for level 1 and 6 of all CORE-classes, but not of the APG/UM/UCclasses, a total of 37 pages of battle-maps as well as the aforementioned obituary-sheets, which imho will see a lot of use...

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any significant glitches and the scarce minor formatting glitch did not detract from my enjoyment of this megadungeon. Layout adheres to FGG's two-column b/wstandard and the most iconic of the b/w-artworks have been re-used from the previous two iterations. It should be known, though, that we also get a vast slew of new pieces of art of a comparably stellar quality. One major upside since the latest incarnation of Rappan Athuk is that all encounters feature directly the CR-ratings for the respective areas, which is a huge help, as is the decision to include major statblocks where they are needed in the dungeon - layout wise, especially in direct comparison, this version of Rappan Athuk first mops the floor with its predecessors and then gobbles up the remains. The pdf has also been lovingly bookmarked, enabling easy navigation in this monster.

Rappan Athuk is perhaps the best dungeon released for 3.X. In my opinion, it's the best dungeon-centric module for the system. However, it had its weaknesses: While the initial levels had been detailed to the nth degree, the final levels felt a bit more abrupt and less imaginative. Another weakness was that the module(s) did not offer anything for low-level PCs to do. And finally, the wilderness was not as detailed as I would have liked it to be. These three weaknesses have been purged in the PFRPG-iteration - with the new low-level dungeon, PCs can suffer from 1st level on. The new wilderness-areas and o-level entry-levels to the dungeon of graves are glorious. The sideview map means I don't need a spreadsheet of connections between areas to navigate the dungeon. The Frog God's Cloister would have made for an awesome module in itself. And the bonus-content keeps on coming: Even when compared with the reloaded version, the latest iteration feels vastly superior - minor ties to Tsar and the upcoming Sword of Air (which are always unobtrusive and don't require the ownership of either), top-notch new levels at the higher levels of the dungeon, more deadly foes, more artifacts and even cool utilizations of PFRPG-rules -

Plain awesome all around.

Now is there something I did not enjoy as much? Well, yes. I'm a huge fan of the APG-classes and you'll find no alchemist, no inquisitor, no magus etc. here (though witches are there). I would have enjoyed more support for them. The replacements of IP-protected monsters make sense and work well in the context of the dungeon and serve to mostly enrich their environments, not detract from them. (Though I still miss mindflayers...)

So. After writing this review for x hours, reading the whole monster thrice, I can say I look forward to my kickstarter-exclusive level and the bonus modules as well as the player's guide, all of which will also be reviewed in due time by yours truly. For now, I'll have to give my final verdict and even if my copy of Slumbering Tsar wasn't growling at me from my bookshelf, I couldn't rate this any lower than the full 5 stars + endzeitgeist seal of approval – this could literally be all the deadly, imaginative old-school dungeon-goodness you'll ever need.

You can get the Granddaddy of Dungeon Crawls on OBS or on d20pfsrd.com's shop for Pathfinder.For oldschool grognards, a Swords & Wizardry version can be purchased on OBS and on d20pfsrd.com's shop!

Endzeitgeist out

Adventure Quarterly #4 Publisher: Rite Publishing Reviewer: Thilo Graf Rating: 5 stars out of 5!

The fourth installment of RiP's spiritual successor to Dungeon magazine is 85 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 79 pages of content, so let's take a look!



After one page of introductory musings of Robert N. Emerson (on the nature what is "right" gaming), we delve into what will from now on be a continuous series of articles: Ruins Perilous.

Now if you're not familiar with the concept, here's the deal: Questhaven, as some of you may know, is a city ruled by adventurers – and as a means of improving your social standing and moving up in the adventurer's guild (the Questor's Society), you can explore the mega-dungeon called "Ruins Perilous", which is actually a lethal proving ground for the guild, its challenges artificially created by the society to test the mettle of wanna-be heroes. The first level was featured in AQ #2, and, much like it, the second level, this time from the pen of one of my favorite supplement authors out there, T.H. Gulliver, can stand on its own, should you so desire.

That being said, apart from the note that this level is intended for PCs of 2nd level, that's about as far as I can go without going into massive SPOILERS. Potential players should jump to the conclusion.

You've been warned! Here we go! As with the first 10 levels of the Ruins, the dungeon dragon Carcera is in charge of resetting/repopulating the complex. When not using the guild-rings that are used to activate some of the dungeon's effects, some suggestions for replacements via magical energies are given. So- what is level 2 about? Well, for once it is inhabited by the Hammer Mountain Ratfolk - refugees from their eponymous home-complex and the ones that reset the traps on the first 5 levels of the dungeon and know all those nifty secret tunnels. Unfortunately (or fortunately), not all is well in the state of the rats – one may even call things rotten, since the king has been killed by his pet giant snake which is supposed to be no longer poisonous and blind to boot. The corpse has vanished and the deceased king's brother has married the queen, while the prince has vanished and the ratfolk's master trapsmith Ophelia (here any pretense of subtlety is dropped) refuses to work.

Yeah, if your literature classes are all but forgotten, let me spell it out for you - this is Hamlet with rats only it's more. True to the concept of the dungeon and the ratfolk's predisposition towards traps, the level starts as a trap gauntlet (which is btw. reproduced in a cut-out, enlarged part of the level's map - as are the other parts) before the PCs encounter ratfolk and are thrust into unconventional social dynamics - whether they just hack and slash through the level (dealing with ninja rats...) or engage in diplomacy, they can either have some hack and slashing or a microcosm of social intrigue upon their hands - the exploration of the inner warrens and the fungal garden (two complexes), where the prince is hiding and the huge cobra lairs have I mentioned the neat fungal hazard taken from 101 Hazards and Disasters? Whether as an orgy of bloodshed or courtly intrigue, it's up to the PCs on how to resolve this sandbox and show that in their version. Hamlet could have had a less cruel ending.

The second module, by Agoston Petz, is called Legend of the Huntress and it is in here that adventurers are hired by a disreputable man on the behalf of one greedy merchant called Jospeh Hackesh, who hires them to acquire a specific ruby hidden in a manse in the notorious Dire Weald - last known resting place of lady Jacqueline of House Nadaly. Having found proof of the manse's location in a hidden study of his, the players may check the study and engage in dialog with the merchant - which is depicted in quite vicarious detail. The Dire Weald makes the best of its name, coming with some rather deadly potential random (and not so random) encounters, the latter covering an elder forest drake, the skeletal undead remnants of the deceased lady's lover and huntsman and also a drow hunting party (with a sidebox to spice up the warriors of the patrol) already hinting at the things to come, for the abandoned manse is not that abandoned and now a drow stronghold - and hidden below it lurks the dungeon, where the spectre of Jacqueline along her twisted spellbook await

to test the PC's mettle, also filling in the blanks of her fate and her dealings with a notorious vampire lord – whether they keep their bargain or not, of course, remains up to the PCs...

The final module herein is Bret Boyd's (the mastermind of Tricky Owlbear Publishing, btw.!) "Self-Determination" for level 15 PCs - The PCs awaken as strange blue tendrils recede - and they are naked. Disoriented, they take the rudimentary equipment from an adjacent room and find a map of the surrounding sites – showing places the PCs have never heard of before. Exploring the complex further, the PCs find strange evidence of an organization called the "Black Hand" (comic-book geeks should get a chuckle out of that one), before encountering strike-squads of twoheaded trolls and deadly harm traps - and probably realizing that they bleed blue and require less sleep... something is odd here. Escaping from the complex, the PCs will probably sooner or later stumble across the village of Pelkiin.

Turns out, the PCs are not in their own world anymore, but on Caldina, the continent of Quitan. Among other pieces of information, the PCs get to know about an abandoned temple in the mountain, the fact that the community needs to pay tribute to the trolls once a year and that a world-hopping elven wizard only known as "the Albino" is probably the man to seek out – only he's none too pleasant and lives in the swamp. Worse, an infiltrator of the Black Hand has travelled to this world, shadowing the PCs...

The Albino is not sporting for a fight, hitting the PCs with the blunt truth - that they are clones of the original PCs, created on behalf of the Black Hand to create evil versions of the PCs. There is no home for them to return to and just as the albino tries to goad them into helping him, the commander Xanivexilom arrives and commands the Albino to return the PCs to their cages - to which he replies with the fact that they have a free will. And yes, if the name was not enough indication -the commander is a dragon. Beyond the deadly fight, the albino is not telling the whole truth – he is actually an offshoot of a deity – and in order to get the PCs and warn the red-blooded originals back home, the clones will need to brave the temple that is now the roaming ground of the trolls. Braving the trials herein, the clones may now actually go "home" - serving multiple purposes - whether as a backdrop solution for a high level TPK (a plan b that backfired, so to speak), as an option for PCs to talk to themselves, a set of extra lives, a change of scenery (a new campaign world - insert your own choice!), a way to introduce a shadowy cabal - the choices are massive. What if the war god returns and wants to reabsorb the albino? And what if the cloned bodies need something to sustain themselves? You could easily go full-blown Fringe with this set-up, creating world-spanning plots - and what if the free will of the clones struggles against an ingrained programming of the Black Hand? The massive amount of potential herein is interesting - there is so much going on here, as a kickoff for a new arc, this is simply superb. We also get stats for the two-headed trolls, two new magic items and, of course, maps.

Creighton Broadhurst has done something glorious for this issue as well: As far as I can remember, I've complained about the Dungeon Dressing-series installments on doors, double doors etc. lacking handles and hinges – and this pdf finally nets us these dressings – with a massive d%-table with 100 entries covering the subject – 2 thumbs up!

The second appendix is titled "Wide-Open Sandboxing: The Dam War" that essentially sketches a sandboxy environment that could be developed into an adventure or a whole campaign alongside some neat pieces of advice for DMs – again, neat -though that was to be expected from Steven D. Russell!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, though the second module could have used some blank lines to make the block of text easier to read. Layout adheres to RiP's two-column full-color standard and the pdf comes with some original, beautiful full color artworks mixed with some fitting stock art. The pdf comes fully bookmarked and with an archive containing maps of the areas, partially as high-res jpegs (for Ruins Perilous) and as jpegs. The maps are made with dundjinni and are ok, though nothing to write home about. Unfortunately, we don't get player-friendly versions of the respective maps, i.e. all come with letters inside, making them not particularly suitable as hand-outs.

Speaking of not particularly subtle – a slightly more subtle nomenclature in the first module would have been nice, as would have a slightly more detailed note on social interaction. If your group is like mine and well-versed in classic literature, you may want to rename some NPCs to make things slightly less obvious. The second module feels a bit cluttered – by focusing on the module's boss (and adding some haunts) or on the new inhabitants, making either a more constant threat, the module could have been improved, though there's per se nothing wrong about it. The final module is GLORIOUS in its set-up and idea and not too interesting regarding the primary opposition, but it doesn't have to be - it opens up some rather interesting questions on free will and transhumanism while remaining firmly entrenched in fantasy. Kudos to Bret Boyd!

All in all, though, in spite of the cool appendices, this issue of AQ feels slightly weaker than the superb third issue, missing 5 stars by a margin and among others, due to the lack f player-friendly maps. As such, my final verdict will clock in at 4.5 stars, still rounded up to 5 for the purpose of this platform, though, for even with my nitpicky gripes, it remains a more than neat offering.

Ask your players what makes their characters tick – and get this collection of modules on OBS and on

d20pfsrd.com's shop!

Endzeitgeist out.

Convergent Paths: Students of Arcanum Archetypes Publisher: Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5!

This supplement is 11 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 2 pages of advertisement, leaving us with 6 pages of content, so let's take a look!

After a short summary of the content, we get a well-written piece of ICprose introducing us to the Arcanum College of Wizardry, which serves as a thematic backdrop and unifying theme for these



new options – each of the college's prestigious houses featuring one specific area of expertise.

The first of said houses would be House Dweomerden, which specializes in utilitarian spells and replaces the scribe scroll feat and arcane school with a bonus spell slot that has to be used for an array of spells featured in a list. Starting at 8th level, they may prepare two spells in this additional slot, choosing which to cast, adding a tad more versatility. Also,3+Int-mod times per day, they may also substitute spellcraft for heal, craft and survival skill-checks.

The second house would be Glamerforge, which nets its wizards access to the Perform-skill and wizard-level + int-mod rounds per day, these wizards may utilize a kind of bardic performance tied to their spells as swift actions – but only one at a time and tied to their spellcasting. What does that mean? They can only activate distraction, countersong or fascinate - and each has its own required condition, with distraction e.g. requiring the wizard to have cast a spell with a somatic component this round and countersong only if he has cast a spell with a verbal component this round. Really cool mechanics! They may also expend rounds of this ability to duplicate uses of prestidigitation and at higher levels even dancing lights, flare and at 20th level even glitterdust and hypnotic pattern. They may also fuse their scrolls with inanimate objects (great for infiltrations!) and have spellbooks concealed in poetry, drawings etc., making them good potential agents.

House Nethervault wiazrds gain intimidate and use magic device as class skills, add half their class levels to a variety of knowledge-skill-checks and learn a secret language. These guys are the wardens of forbidden lore and as such learn to craft items whose prerequisites they don't meet at +5 insight to Spellcraft. They also become resilient versus curses, diseases and poisons and death effects, gaining +4 to the respective saves and at 20th level even immunity. When using contact other plane, their int and cha is not decreased thanks to the influence of otherworldly patrons, instead lowering their wis and they may, as long as their wis is 9 or higher, automatically tell whether their contact is lying.

The final house is archetype-less, but requires the specialization in a school nonetheless.

After these archetype, we are introduced to 4 new spells – Dweomerden Shelter wards a tent with endure elements, Glamerforge Fanfare is a versatile spell that nets you +2 to intimidate and perform, accompanying everything you do with a soundtrack, but also makes pinpointing you easier. Nethervault Whispers distracts foes, allowing every person to target your victim to count as flanking, while Spelltower Beacon allows you to set a beacon – whenever targeted by a teleport or shadow walk or similar ability, you may instead opt to come out at the location you set your beacon. And yes, this is one of the spells that makes organizations and NPCs act smarter and which is great to plan.

Finally, we get 6 new traits – One allows you to prepare extracts or spells in half the time once per day, one allows you to cram a spell or formula in half the number of pages, one nets you a Knowledge skill as a class skill (with a 1/week reroll) and makes you a child prodigy, allowing you to take PC-levels before becoming an adult. There also is a trait that does essentially the same for Bluff and Diplomacy and also makes it possible to play young characters, and one for drop-outs, who get the benefits for Bluff and Use Magic Device. Finally, accomplished students may use spellcraft to earn money akin to perform and 1/week reroll a spellcraft check – all in all, solid traits.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to RiP's twocolumn full color standard and the pdf comes with thematically fitting stock-art – some pieces of which are drop dead gorgeous. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

The convergent paths-series, if this is an indicator, will be a fun one – tying archetypes and similar class options to a background makes them in my opinion come more alive, feel more organic - and said background can in the end also be ignored, if you don't like it. But why would you? The bits and pieces of short fluff greatly add to the appeal of this pdf and make everything feel more concise, more organic. Add to that the fact that author Eric Morton has crafted an interesting array of archetypes that do innovative things with the rules, spiced everything up with neat spells and provided traits that actually matter, while still not being too strong and we get a thoroughly well-crafted supplement that is in contrast to many crunch-books actually a good read! While apart from the beacon I wasn't completely blown out of the water (apart from the Glamerforges - I really like the ideas there!), this still is an excellent pdf and one well worth my 5 stars - though I'll omit my seal of approval. Looking forward to the next one!

You can get this cool blend of crunch and fluff and enroll your wizard on OBS and on d20pfsrd.com's shop!

Endzeitgeist out.



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BOOK I: DARK FRONTIER



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