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It's not easy being green, and, even more than druids, rangers suffer from a split personality in *Pathfinder*. Somewhere between fighters and druids, with more than a dash of rogue, it can sometimes be hard to say what being a ranger is all about, other than that they're in touch with the wilderness except, of course, when they happen to be bounty hunters, trappers, or just plain expert archers.

A Necromancer's Grímoire: Bounty of the Ranger is a celebration of the ranger class. From prestige classes, to archetypes, to new feats, there's something in here for everyone, whether you have a ranger character or not (and by the time we're done, you'll certainly want one). here are just a few things you'll find:

• The ace marksman prestige class, which specializes in archery and produces incredibly accurate, deadly archers.

• The inexorable stalker prestige class, members of which can find anyone, anywhere, and even follow tracks through a teleport or planeshift spell.

• The landbond shifter, who leaves humanity behind to become an animal permanently, but shifts from one species to the next depending on where he roams.

• The pack lord archetype for rangers, which grants an entire pack of animal companions.

• The greenstalker sniper archetype for rangers, a ranged specialist that focuses on careful aim and well-planned ambushes.

• The nature's voice archetype for rangers, which strikes a closer balance between martial prowess and spellcasting ability.

• The twin blade marauder archetype for rangers, whose members are capable of doing things with two weapons that others can only dream of.

• Five new archetypes for "ranger—adjacent" classes such as fighter, druid, and rogue, which help them get a taste of being a ranger.

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# Editorial

by Dave Paul, Illustration by Storn Cook



Last month I asked about monsters, specifically, about the joys players find when they have a chance to play monsters. In contemporary fiction, there are ample expressions of this through anti-heroes, dark heroes, and lots of interesting NPC-like characters. Whether we consider Angel, Spike or Anya from Buffy the Vampire Slayer, or the somewhat more Twilight-esque threesome from *Being Human*, the options for examples of nearly-human, or once-human monsters is currently overflowing. Alas, too many of them are werewolves, vampires and ghosts. I, for one, would welcome some interesting tales starring the likes of Tom, Bert and Bill; I don't have much expectation that a gang of orcs would ever have gotten loose from whomever ultimately handled their leashes, but, they too could be fun to examine.

I got wind of a tale a fiction writer in the industry was working on along these themes while I attended a workshop at GenCon this past summer. I won't reveal any more here, largely because I'd get everything wrong and screw stuff up (such is the nature of both rumors and my own brain). But, the gist just fascinates me. I really would like to see some adventures designed around players who are monsters, not werewolves and vampires, mind you, and certainly not in keeping with 1970s-Disney material like talking dogs and cats. No, I want to play a hobgoblin. And I want someone else at the table to play an ogre, and someone else to play a hill giant. Something like that. I know that Paizo has We Be Goblins, and that's in the spirit and direction of what I want to see. I'm sure there's stuff out there already like this, but I want to see more. Alas, perhaps I am alone, or in a small minority, and it'll fall to me and my idiosyncratic group to put something together so that I can have my longings satisfied.

Is there something that you've itched to play but haven't found? Back in the 80s, it was probably too common to find *Star Wars* characters showing up in dungeons during weekend sessions in teenagers' basements. I'm sure we've had plenty of home-brew crossovers. While those can be fun (a campaign I ran a few years ago included characters inspired not only by the *Star Wars*  universe, but also from *The Belgariad* and *The Wheel* of *Time*). But, even in that case, precious few played monsters (though one player played a lizardman and another consented to continue playing a character who was killed and returned as a ghost). There was an orc (about whom there are stories being written even now), and there were plenty of monstrous NPC allies. But, for all the elves, dwarves and halflings in the party, no one wanted to join in with a bugbear or a gnoll. What fun that could have been!

Do you have amazing adventure-writing skills? Do you have a group of players who could playtest an adventure, using both traditional and monster PCs, so as to determine its "balance"? I'd love to hear from you. I'd love to get my hands on what you've created – use it with my own group. (If only I can talk one of the others into GMing, because I want to *play*!) Heck, I might even talk my boss into allowing it to be published in this magazine. After all, we're going to offer an adventure in an upcoming issue so the precedent will have already been set.

I'd like something short. I don't know that people want to play monsters in a campaign, so much as maybe take a break from their usual games to do something a little different. I have, in the past, taken a break from the usual and had my players all play imprisoned orcs. They had to escape from a compound where some politically weak devils had gotten it into their heads that roughing up some local orcs was going to help them accomplish their ultimate aims. I put that within the context of the larger campaign (after all, their regular characters were dealing with these orcs, and I wanted to reveal some things to the players without revealing it to their characters, just because I had a reason for making some meta-game announcements that I wanted to do in a way other than just telling the players). That worked very well, and everyone enjoyed it. What I'm looking for here is a little different. Nothing that has to fit within a broader context. Just a plain, short, fun adventure, where all the good guys happen to be monsters.

Happy gaming.



# CHARACTER MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE FOR PLAYERS AND GMS

Ten Foundie Sungeren Tools Sera	gs License Develop Help View Update
ame Hakkon Truesilver	Human Bbn 4, Clr 3 HP: 95/95 AC: 17 Cash: ~791 GP
asses Background Abilities Barbarian C	leric Skills Feats Weapons Armor Magic Gear Other Personal Journal Special In-Play Adjust Spells
Ability Scores: 20 of 20	Basics Skills Feats
STRR Bread         12/16         +1/+3           DEX DEX         12         ↓           CON         16/20         ↓           INT         11         ↓           NUMBER         16         ↓           Vision         16         ↓           Charama         12         ↓	Attack (Bonus: +6/+1 Attack (Meles): +5/+4 Attack (Meles): +5/+4     16' +3' Strength 12' +1' Dexterity     +4     Acrobatics Acrobatics     Acrobatics Acrobatics       Attack (Meles): +7/+2     12' +1' Dexterity     0     Apraise     Arror (Medium)       10' 10' Intelligence     16' +3' Wildown     +5' Diglomacy     Arror (Medium)       CM Defense:     18' /17FI     16' +3' Wildown     +5' Digluids     Digatise Device       CM Defenses     18' /17FI     4' Barbarian     Digatise Device     Fortitude       Portitude Save: +14     35000 XP     9'     19' Head Animat     Trow Anything       Fortitude Save: +23     5/56' 5/19'     -1' Head Animat     Trow Anything     Towheres +7'       Armor Class:     17 / 9'Tch / 16FI     17' /3'Ch / 16FI     2' Ride     +7' Strength     +9' Perception       Armor Class:     17 /9'STch / 16FI     40' J0' Speed     40' J0' Speed     -5' Sleight Hand
Spent: 20 of 20	Initiative:         +1         +6/+1 Attack Bonus         +5         Spelicraft           Speed:         40 / 30 feet         +9/+4 (Melee)         +3         Steath           Hit Points:         95/95         +7/+2 (Ranged)         +3         Swinval           Encumbered:         57.82/230/bs, Lgt         +9         CMB         - Use Magic Devic           Medium (5' space, 5' reach)         +14 Entrude Sme         +         -         -

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	Hakkon T	ruesilver		LIEDO
Male Human B Chaotic Good; Weight: 220lb.;	Deity: Bhrian B	hor; Age: 21; H	leight: 6';	FIERO/
Ability	Score	Modifier	Temporary	
STRENGTH	12	+1		1.0
DEXTERITY	12	+1		1
CON	16	+3		1
INT	11	0		
WISDOM	16	+3		5
CHARISMA	12	+1		
Saving Throw FORTITUDE (CONSTITUTION) REFLEX (DEFLEX		Ability Resist Misc +3 +2 +1	Temp Notes	
WILL (WISDOM)	+7 = +4	+3		1
AC 19 =	Armor Shield De		ec Dodge Misc	
Touch AC			18	-
CM Bonus CM Defense	18 = 10	Strength         Size           +1         -           3AB         Strength           +6         +1           mage / Current HP	Dexterity Size	1
HP 81				
Base Attack	+6	Initiative	+1	Skil Name Acrobatics
		Speed	40 / 30 ft	Appraise Bluff
+)	2 Battleaxe, F	laming, Keer	ı	Bluff <sup>♥</sup> Climb
Mainhand: + Both Hands:			Crit: 19-20/x3 1-Hand, S	Craft: Weapo Diplomacy
	Unarmed			Escape Artis
Mainhand: +	7/+2, 1d3+1		Crit: 20/x2 Light, B	<sup>♥</sup> Fly Handle Anima
	Breast	plate		Heal
+6	M	lax Dex: +3, An ell Fail: 25%, N	nor Check: -4	Intimidate Perception
	Shield, Lig			Ride Sense Motive
+1		Max Dex: -, An Spell Fa	nor Check: -1 ail: 5%, Shield	Spellcraft Stealth Survival



WIS (3)

STR (1



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# Tempest Creature Template

by Steven D. Russell illustrations by Ramses Melendez

These creatures are the living embodiment of the power of storms, be they super cells, typhoons, hailstorms, or a brace of tornados, these creatures are calamity incarnate. The deities that control the sky, weather, or destruction often create them for their own purposes. They rouse to action quickly but are dangerously easy to anger, having no patience and violent temperaments. A few of them find delight in widespread destruction and flashy displays but seldom target specific individuals or objects. A tempest creature's body appears to have been replaced with a storm, its hair with wind, lightning, and rain, its eyes with lightning, its body a rolling mass of dark clouds, rain, lighting or tornados.

# Creating a Tempest Creature

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

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

**CR:** HD 4 or less, as base creature +1; HD 5 to 10, as base creature +2; HD 11 or more, as base creature +3.

Alignment: Chaotic Evil or Chaotic Neutral

**Size and Type:** The creature gains the incorporeal subtype.

**AC:** The base creature's armor and/or shield gains the ghost touch special ability. Its natural armor becomes a deflection bonus to which it adds its Charisma bonus or +1, whichever is higher.

**Defensive Abilities:** Incorporeal; Immune cold, fire, electricity, sonic, inhaled poisons and gas-, fog-, or cloud-based attacks and spells.

**Speed:** A tempest creature loses all the base creature's speeds and gains a fly speed equal to the better of either the creature's former fly speed or double the base creature's highest land speed, with perfect maneuverability.

Attacks: The tempest creature retains all the base creature's natural attacks, and its weapon and armor proficiencies. However, all its natural attacks become incorporeal touch attacks, retaining the same primary or secondary status they had for the base creature. The tempest creature gains a primary incorporeal touch attack if it has no other natural attacks. Its manufactured weapons gain the ghost touch special ability. Because an incorporeal creature has no Strength score, its Dexterity modifier, rather than its Strength modifier, applies to all its attack rolls and prerequisites.

**Special Attacks:** Trample (DC is modified by its Dexterity modifier rather than its Strength Modifier).

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

*Breath Weapon (Ex):* Once every 1d4 rounds, a tempest creature can breathe a cone (25 ft. +5 ft./2 CR) of electricity,

sonic, and wind. This deals 1d6 per CR, half the damage is electricity and half is sonic, which leaves the creature stunned for 1 round and permanently deafened, the wind knocks the subjects prone and blows them away to the end of the cone's range. A successful Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2the tempest creature's HD + its Con modifier) halves the damage, and negates the stunned, deafened, prone, and blown away effects.

*Cloud* Sight (Ex): A tempest creature can see through clouds, gases, fogs, mists, precipitation, and smoke as though they didn't inhibit vision. Creatures and objects do not gain concealment from a tempest creature due to such conditions.

*Gale Aura (Su):* A tempest creature generates a 30-foot aura of gale-like winds that slows the progress of other creatures. Other creatures in the aura cannot take a 5-foot step. Opponents in the aura treat each square as difficult terrain.

*Ride the Lightning (Su):* When a tempest creature uses any spell or effect with the electricity descriptor (including its breath weapon), it may teleport with no chance of error to any unoccupied space within the area of effect as a free action. It must take this action immediately after using that ability.

Storm Strike (Su): Whenever a tempest creature makes a successful incorporeal touch attack, or hits with one of its ghost touch weapons, or makes a trample attack, there is momentous explosion of thunder and lightning. This deals damage equal to 1d6/2 CR it possesses. Hence a CR 10 creature will deal 5d6 damage, half the damage is electricity the other half is sonic. A successful Fortitude save (DC 10 +1/2 the tempest creature's HD + its Con modifier) results in half damage. Upon a failed save the victim is confused for 1 round and permanently defended. A creature that makes its save is immune to this tempest creature's storm strike's confusing and deafening effects for 24 hours but not the damage.

Creatures that hit a tempest creature with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take damage as though hit by the tempest creature's incorporeal attack, while creatures with weapons must treat it as if their weapon had been successfully sundered. A successful Reflex (same DC) negates this effect for creatures that successfully hit a tempest creature.



*Vulnerable to Earth and Silence (Su):* A tempest creature constantly surrounds itself with the sound and fury of air and thunder, and can't stand any form of silence or earth. Whenever a tempest creature is affected by a spell or effect with the earth descriptor or that causes silence or is rendered deaf by any means, it cannot take any action other than a move action for the duration of the effect. These spells or effects overcome its incorporeal nature as if they were force effects and the creature suffers a-4 penalty to its saving throw against such effects and they ignore spell resistance, energy resistance, immunity, and damage reduction, If the effect deals damage it deals +50% more.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** A tempest creature with an Int or Wis score of 8 or higher has a cumulative number of spell-like abilities set by its HD. Unless otherwise noted, an ability is usable 1/day. CL equals the creature's HD (or the CL of the base creature's spell-like abilities, whichever is higher).

Hit Dice	Spell-Like Ability
1-2	Wind churn*
3-4	Gust of wind
5-6	Call lightning
7-8	Discordant blast**
9-10	Call lightning storm
11-12	Sirocco**
13-14	Control weather 3/day
15-16	Whirlwind
17-18	Deadly tempest*
19+	Storm of vengeance

\* New Spell

\*\*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Advanced Player's Guide

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

# New Spells

#### **Deadly Tempest**

School: Evocation [Air, Cold, Electricity]; Level: Drd 9, Sor/Wiz 9
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Components: V, S, F (100 gp exotic feather)
Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
Effect: Swirling winds in a 20-ft. radius, 40 ft. high
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Reflex partial; see text; Spell
Resistance: Yes
This spell creates a powerful vortex of raging wind, hail, and lightning that moves through the air, along the ground, or over water at a speed of 90 feet during your turn. The deadly tempest deals 2d6 points of cold damage, 2d6 points of electricity damage, and 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage to all creatures and objects in the area of effect. Any Large or smaller creature coming into contact with the vortex must also succeed on a Reflex save or be picked up bodily and held suspended in its powerful winds, taking the same damage each round on your turn (no save). Huge creatures (and Large or smaller creatures making successful saving throws) are limited to one-half speed within the vortex but take damage as normal. Gargantuan and Colossal creatures take damage but are otherwise unaffected.

Within the deadly tempest, a creature takes a -4 penalty to Perception checks, and all air or land movement is at one-half speed. Missile weapons are deflected (automatically missing) if they enter or pass through the vortex, while any other normal ranged weapon passing through the wind has a 30% miss chance (giant-thrown boulders, siege engine projectiles, and other massive ranged weapons are not affected). Gases, most gaseous breath weapons, and creatures in gaseous form cannot enter or pass through the vortex (though it presents no barrier to incorporeal creatures).

As a move action, you can concentrate on controlling the vortex's movement or specify a simple program (move forward or backward, follow a circular path, move from corner to corner through a room, and so on). As part of this move action you may direct the vortex to eject any carried creatures whenever you wish, depositing them wherever the vortex happens to be when they are released.

If the vortex of a deadly tempest exceeds the spell's range, you lose control of it (even if it comes back within range) as it moves off in a random, uncontrolled fashion for 1d3 rounds and then dissipates.

#### Wind Churn

School: Evocation [Air]; Level: Drd 1 Casting Time: 1 standard action Components: V, S Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels) Targets: Flying creatures in range Duration: 1 round

Saving Throw: Reflex negates; Spell Resistance: Yes

You cause the air around and above you to churn. While creatures on the ground merely feel a breeze, the chaotic winds buffet those in the air. All flying creatures who fail the saving throw must either land or spend the next full round keeping themselves righted. If a flying creature does neither, it falls. Creatures flying magically do not fall but merely suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and checks during that round. The spell also inflicts 1d6 points of air damage per two caster levels (maximum 5d6) to all flying creatures in range, although the Reflex saving throw negates all damage.



#### 'The Typhonian Spirit" CR 24 XP 1,228,800

Tempest Elysian Titan CN Colossal outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, incorporeal) Init +9; Senses cloud sight, darkvision 120 ft., true seeing; Perception +33 Aura gale aura 30ft.

### Defense

AC 50, touch 16, flat-footed 45 (+9 armor [ghost touch], +5 Dex, +32 deflection, +2 shield, -8 size) hp 451 (21d10+336); regeneration 15 (lawful) Fort +23, Ref +17, Will +21; +8 resistance vs. mindaffecting

Defensive Abilities incorporeal storm strike (Ref DC 29, 10d6), DR 15/lawful; Immune aging, death effects, disease cold, fire, electricity, sonic, inhaled poisons and gas-, fog-, or cloud-based attacks and spells; SR 32 Weakness vulnerable to earth and silence

# ()ffense

#### Speed fly 60 ft. (40 ft. in armor)

Melee ghost touch maul of the titans +21/+16/+11/+6 (6d8+3 plus storm strike/17-20) or 2 incorporeal touch attacks+18 (storm strike)

Space 30 ft.; Reach 30 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (85 ft. cone, DC 36, 24D6) trample (storm strike, Fort DC 27), storm strike (DC 29, 10d6), ride the lightning

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +29) Constant—air walk, mind blank, true seeing

At will-bestow curse (DC 24), break enchantment, divination, greater dispel magic, sending 3/day-control weather, greater scrying (DC 26), heal, mass suggestion (DC 25)

1/day- call lightning (DC 22), call lightning storm (DC 24), deadly tempest (DC 28), discordant blast (DC 23), freedom, greater planar ally, gust of wind, meteor swarm (DC 28) sirocco (DC 25), whirlwind (DC 27), wind churn (DC 20), storm of vengeance (DC 28)

Statistics Str --, Dex 20, Con 43, Int 21, Wis 28, Cha 28 Base Atk +21; CMB +36; CMD 46

Feats Awesome Blow, Critical Focus, Greater Sunder, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Staggering Critical, Vital Strike Skills Bluff +33, Craft (any) +29, Diplomacy +33, Intimidate +33, Knowledge (engineering) +26, Knowledge (planes) +29, Perception +33, Perform (any) +31, Sense Motive +33, Spellcraft +29, Use Magic Device +33

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common; telepathy 300 ft.

SQ change shape (any humanoid; alter self)

# Ecology

**Environment** any land (Elysium) Organization solitary, pair, or crusade (3-6) Treasure standard (+3 breastplate, maul of the titans, large steel shield, other treasure)



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# Can I Have the Blended Game System Please, Extra Roleplay?

By Liz Winters

"Roleplaying games have changed a lot since D&D came out 39 years ago." That thought kept popping up in my mind as I sat with one of my gaming groups last weekend playing in a game of Star Wars: Edge of the Empire.

After just one session of Star Wars, I was keenly aware of the differences between it and the more tactics-focused games out there, like Pathfinder and recent editions of Dungeons and Dragons. It was an eye-opening experience, especially since I've never connected well with the tactical side of RPGs. Once combat starts, it just always seems to drag (yeah, I'm *that* person in your Pathfinder group).

I still love the experience as a whole – something was just missing for me, and I don't think I'm alone. Luckily for people like me, narrative-based games have been exploding in popularity! It's become easier for gamers to try out new games to find the right mix between tactical and narrative, or to take my example and play in multiple games to balance out the game play. What are some of these new games that have the RPG world buzzing? Four have caught my eye recently - 13<sup>th</sup> Age, Numenera, Fate Core and Star Wars: Edge of the Empire.

13<sup>th</sup> Age is a d20-based system within a fantasy setting, but unlike many of the tactics-heavy games, there are very few rules and tables. Instead the players are encouraged to tell a story *with* the GM. Characters are fairly balanced and there are rules in place to prevent players from min-maxing.

While combat *can* take place in 13<sup>th</sup> Age, it's drastically different from the combat players would see in more tactically focused games. Combat mechanics include an escalation die to encourage the continuation and resolution of a fight, distance is measured by ranges and not a grid, and absent or incapacitated players can still influence combat. The escalation die and ability for absent players to impact conflict help make the combat go by a lot faster, which is a major boon for the impatient players like myself.

Looking to branch out from the d20 system? Numenera is a new game by Monte Cook with entirely new game mechanics called the Cypher System. It's likely very few gamers haven't heard about Numenera, especially after its Kickstarter campaign set a record for the amount raised (half a million dollars) for a tabletop RPG. Backers were obviously excited by the sci-fi/ fantasy blended setting and the promise for a focus on storytelling. The community response to Numenera has been overwhelmingly positive as gamers welcome the ruleslight approach to exploration and combat. However, like 13<sup>th</sup> age, players looking for a grid-based combat will find themselves disappointed. Combat is much more abstract in positioning and timing, potentially frustrating the tacticians in the group. Yet, many GMs running Numenera have said that the abstraction in combat caused their players to be more creative, dashing up stairs or diving behind barrels, leading to a more vibrant storytelling experience.

Another game that raised record numbers on Kickstarter was Fate Core. Fate has been around for 10 years now and was originally based on the Fudge system, which has been around since the early 1990s. The game system recently got a revival with Fate Core and Fate Accelerated during the Kickstarter. Backers embraced the promise of a distilled system using FUDGE attributes and dice, with the hope that its simplicity would allow players to focus on the story. Fate Core ends up being heavily narrative and full of options. Combat essentially boils down to an opposed roll, making fights a quick and simple part of the game. Unsurprisingly, Fate doesn't use a grid system either. However, strategists can (and are encouraged to) take advantage of Aspects, a described part of the scene that can influence the conflict. This mechanic rewards creativity by providing a character with an opportunity for a bonus.

Finally, there's Fantasy Flight®'s Edge of the Empire, which uses narrative dice - every dice roll yields a narrative reaction. That narrative is sometimes outlined in the rules, though players are encouraged to be creative. While some decry the need for "special dice", the majority of player reviews are positive. Personally, I've witnessed some great roleplaying due to the narrative dice as a player explains how their character failed an action but still ending up with an advantage. However, like the three previous narrative-based game systems, there's no grid for the tacticians, only abstract ranges (engaged, short, medium, long and extreme). I would be remiss if I didn't mention D&D Next. It's too early to tell if this edition will be a smash hit, as the only experience players have had with it is through play tests. However, Wizards of the Coast seems to be attempting to find the perfect blend between tactical and narrative RPGs with this new edition. Descriptions of D&D Next boast simplicity, flexibility and a focus on creativity. The community is going to be watching it closely. "But Liz," you may be thinking to yourself, "I'm

perfectly happy with my favorite RPG!" If so, that's awesome! If you're like me and looking for balance in your RPG experience, I encourage you to check out one or more of these new RPGs. I've found that playing in multiple systems with different styles allows me to satisfy the story-teller and the occasional tactician in me. Nonetheless, I'm going to continue to explore new systems.

It's apparent that the roleplaying community is not only willing to try new systems, they're actively supporting them (as evident by the wildly successful Kickstarters). Companies like us (Lone Wolf Development), which provide tools and support to gamers, need to support the GMs introducing these new systems to their players. Our newest tool, Realm Works, aids GMs in campaign building and management, and is game-system neutral. As I explore these new RPGs, I know it will be easy to bring an adventure to my group without worrying about it being a supported system. Game system neutrality can be difficult to support, but it's worth the time because of the benefit GMs will see.

Hopefully, we'll continue to see a wider variety of systems emerge over the next few years. If you're content with your current RPG or you've found your perfect blend, you may not be as excited about the possibilities as I am. However, I've been having fun trying out new systems, because I've seen the rewards that can come with branching out. If you're like me and finding something missing from your tabletop experience, I encourage you to grab a group of friends and add a new RPG to your gaming routine!



# Rite Publishing Presents

# In the Company of Fey

By Wendall Roy





# **TRAPPED!**

By Creighton Broadhurst of Raging Swan Press

Illustrations by Caspar David Friedrich, Joseph Wright, and Thomas Cole

This encounter can take place in any hilly or mountainous area. In a push, it can also take place in a wood as long as the area supports cave systems. This encounter is an oddity in that it doesn't have any opponents for the PCs to fight; instead the PCs must survive an earthquake while sheltering in a cave from a ferocious storm. A GM can use this encounter simply as a change of pace, as the start of a side trek style adventure or as a way to get the PCs into a new, underground adventure. (See "Aftermath & Escape" for more information).

At the start of this encounter, it is late afternoon and a heavy rain has begun to fall. Read:

As you travel onwards, heavy rain lashes down from the dark, glowering clouds above. Before long, you are soaked to the skin; water streams down your face, partially blinding you, and the sheets of rain severely obscures your vision.

A DC 15 Survival check reveals the rain is unlikely to stop until well after midnight and that camping in this weather will be a miserable affair. It should be clear to all but the densest PC that finding shelter is a wise plan.

# FINDING SHEIJER

Sadly, the weather makes finding such shelter tricky. The heavy rain has the following relevant effects:

- Visibility: Heavy rain reduces visibility ranges by half and inflicts a -4 penalty to Perception checks.
- **Flame**: Heavy rain automatically extinguishes unprotected flames and also has a 50% chance of extinguishes protected flames such as lanterns.

At this point, the GM should make a point of describing how miserable travelling in the storm is and how wet and cold the PCs are becoming. PCs making a DC 15 Perception check spot the opening of a cavern partially obscured by brush.

# CAVERN FEATURES

When the PCs find the cavern, read:

Beyond its entry way, the cavern's rubble-strewn floor slopes steeply downward.

The cavern has several features of note:

**Narrow Entrance**: The cave mouth is only 10 ft. wide. Beyond the entrance, a rubble strewn tunnel drops steeply downwards. After about 70 ft., the passageway opens up into a large cavern, roughly 30 ft. square.

Air Temperature: The cavern is cool, but comfortable.

**Deep Pool**: A deep pool of fresh water (DC 10 Swim) fills roughly a quarter of the cavern.

Rubble: Light rubble covers much of the floor.

**Quiet**: In the cavern, the sounds of the storm are muted.

#### EARTHQUAKE

During the PCs' rest, an earthquake strikes the area. This earthquake could have several sources depending on the GM's whim:

- **Spellcasting**: A powerful cleric or other being uses an *earthquake* in the nearby area to destroy his foes. Unfortunately, the earthquake also affects the chamber.
- **Natural**: The earthquake is natural in origin.
- **Burrowing Creatures**: A burrowing creature's – perhaps a bulette, purple worm or ankheg – activities have dramatically weakened the cavern roof. The heavy rain saturates the ground above, causing a localised collapse.

Irrespective of its origin, the earthquake spells disaster for the PCs:

**Round 1**: The ceiling remains as normal, but the stones above the PCs' head begin to groan.

**Round 2**: A powerful earthquake strikes the area. Characters standing up must make a DC 15 Reflex save or fall prone. While the earthquake shakes the chamber, characters standing up or moving must make a DC 15 Reflex save or fall prone. Characters moving in the area move at half speed.



**Round 2**: Rubble and debris fall from the ceiling. A DC 10 Knowledge (geography) check reveals the passage-way ceiling will imminently collapse.

**Round 3**: All characters in the main cavern suffer 4d6 damage from falling rocks (DC 15 Reflex halves). The ceiling collapses in the passageway creating two distinct areas of affect:

- **Bury Zone**: The bury zone fills the entire passageway and extends into the cavern for 15 ft. Any character in the bury zone take 8d6 damage (DC 15 Reflex halves) and is buried.
- **Slide Zone**: The slide zone extends out from the bury zone for 15 ft. in all directions. Any character in the slide zone suffers 3d6 damage and is buried (Reflex negates both effects).

**Round 4:** The earthquake ends and the PCs must deal with its aftermath:

 Buried Characters: Buried characters take 1d6 nonlethal damage per minute; when a buried character falls unconscious, he must make a DC 15 Constitution check or suffer 1d6 lethal damage each minute until dead or freed. A buried character can free himself with a DC 25 Strength check.

• **Freeing Buried Characters**: Characters who are not buried can clear rocks and debris from a 5-ft. by 5-ft. area in 1 minute. Armed with appropriate tools, the same character can clear twice this amount.

# AFTERMATH & ESCAPE

The cave-in fills the long entry tunnel, completely blocking it with rubble and seemingly trapping the PCs inside the cave. Once the earthquake has abated, the PCs can pick themselves up, tend to their wounds and assess the situation.

- Entrance Passageway: This passageway is completely blocked.
- Main Cavern: Although much rubble has fallen from the ceiling, a DC 20 Knowledge (engineering) check reveals there is no danger of further collapse. Enough air exists in the cavern to enable four Medium creatures to breathe easily for three hours. Additional characters or a fire source (such as a torch) reduces this time pro-

portionally. Small characters consume air at half the rate of a Medium creature. After that time, each character suffers 1d6 nonlethal damage every 15 minutes. Once a character falls unconscious, he accumulates lethal damage at the same rate.

Getting out of the chamber is as hard as the GM wants it to be. For example, if the GM wants to steer the PCs toward an underground adventure, the collapse should be hard to clear and open up a hitherto unknown tunnel that leads further down into the eternal dark of the Ebon Realm. Pick the relevant level of difficulty from the list below:

- **Easy**: The rock fall is basically stable (DC 20 Knowledge [engineering] reveals) and can be cleared as noted above (it takes a character one minute to clear a 5 ft. by 5 ft. section of rock fall).
- Medium: The rock fall is basically stable (DC 20 Knowledge [engineering] reveals) but there is a small danger of collapse. Thus, progress is slower than normal: it takes a character five minutes and a DC 15 Strength check to clear a 5 ft. by 5 ft. section of rock fall. Failure indicates no progress is made. Failure by 5 or more results in a small collapse inflicting 2d6 damage to the digging character.
- **Hard**: The rock fall is inherently unstable (DC 20 Knowledge [engineering] reveals) and there is a high risk of further collapse. Thus, progress is slow and dangerous: it takes a character ten minutes and a DC 15 Strength check to clear a 5 ft. by 5 ft. section of rock fall. Failure indicates no progress is made. Failure by 5 or more results in a small collapse inflicting 4d6 damage to the digging character and completely filling 1d2 squares with rock that must be dug out again.

#### NOTES

When determining the PCs' progress through the cave in, consider the following points:

- **One Digger**: Due to the danger of collapse and the cramped conditions, only one character can work at clearing each 5 ft. by 5 ft. square.
- **Knowledge (Engineering)**: A character making a DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) check shouts useful instructions to the digger and provides a +2 bonus to the digger's next Strength check. Failure by 5 or more results in the character providing very bad advice and the digger suffering a -2 penalty to his next check as he removes the wrong rocks.
- Profession (Mining): A character making a DC 15 Profession (miner) check shouts useful instructions to the digger and provides a +2 bonus to the digger's next Strength check. Failure by 5 or more results in the character providing very bad advice and the digger suffering a -2 penalty to his next check as he removes the wrong rocks.

# 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.



# PREPARE QUICKER, PREPARE BETTER



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# Player's Advice: Run Away! Run Away!

by Crieghton Broadhurst; Illustrations by William McAusland and Henry Toogood

Amid the screams of pain and the clamour of battle it becomes clear our heroes cannot win this fight. With their resources running low and injuries mounting the party face a stark choice: retreat or die.

Sometimes things just go wrong. Sometimes, the party are outmatched or low on resources and a "tactical retreat" or "regrouping manoeuvre" is necessary. Most groups, however, don't seem to ever make plans for running away. That's a silly, and potentially deadly, mistake to make.

- Go Decisively: When you've got to go, you've got to go. In my campaign, often the players discuss retreating for several rounds before actually getting around to it. That's extra time spent in a fight you are already planning to leave which means your enemy has more chances to kill you.
- Treasure: If you are fighting intelligent foes (such as goblins, orcs or bandits) throwing some minor treasure behind you is a great idea. Your foes will no doubt stop to pick it up, giving you time to escape. Keep a pouch of coins at hand for just such an eventuality. It's not like you are losing the treasure anyway – you'll be back later to wrest it from their cold, dead hands!
- **Food**: If you are fighting non-intelligent foes (wolves, vermin and so on) throwing food behind you is a great tactic to aid your escape. The food may just distract them along enough

for you to get away. And let's face it, rations are cheap. You can buy more.

- Magic: Keeping back a spell, scroll or other magic item to aid your escape is always a great idea. Blocking a corridor (once you've fled down it) with a *web* spell is going to dramatically slow down pursuit. Even spells like *obscuring mist*, *fog cloud* or almost any half-way believable illusion can obscure enemies' vision. This makes it easy to hide or dodge pursuit. They also stop your enemies effectively targeting you with missile fire. That's kind of handy. Being shot in the back while running away is embarrassing!
- Mundane Equipment: Bags of caltrops, handfuls of marbles or smashed flasks of oil can all slow down and hinder pursuit. Scatter them on the ground behind you as you flee.
- **Rally Point**: When you are running away, it's always a great idea to know where you are going. In the chaos of retreat, you might lose track of your friends or get separated. Knowing where they'll be is far preferable to wandering around the dungeon or wilderness on your own.

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About Creighton 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.

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# About Will

William McAusland is a freelance illustrator and designer who has produced role playing game imagery for a wide assortment of publishers. Among his clients are Wizards of the Coast, Scholastic Books, Goodman Games, Kenzer & Company, Fantasy Flight Games and many more. You can check out his portfolio at http://www.mcauslandstudios.com.





The Demolished Ones

# Stonewarden Gargoyles:

# Alternate Racial Traits and Favored Class Bonuses

by Steven D. Russell, illustrations by Mark Hyzer

'n September of 2011, Rite Publishing brought you In the Company of Monsters by T. H. Gulliver, Jonathan McAnulty and Steven D. Russell. In the *Company of Gargoyles* by T. H. Gulliver brought you stonewardens of the night who have left behind the evil predations of their feral brethren. They emanate fear making your foes flee, while still allowing you to soar above it all. This article updates the stonewarden gargoyle race with alternate racial traits and favored class bonuses.

# Racial Traits Stonewarden Racial Traits

+2 Strength or +2 Dexterity, +2 Constitution, -2 Charisma: Stonewardens are either strong or agile and tough, but also a bit aloof.

Medium: Stonewardens are Medium creatures and have no bonuses or penalties due to their size.

Normal Speed: Stonewardens have a base speed of 30 feet.

Darkvision: Stonewardens can see in the dark up to 60 feet.

Freeze: A stonewarden can hold itself so still it appears to be a statue. A stonewarden that uses freeze can take 20 on its Stealth check to hide in plain sight as a stone statue.

Long Sleep: Stonewardens do not age while they sleep. They can sleep for long periods of time-months, years, or even centuries. Most stonewardens prefer to slumber only when perched high on sturdy and familiar buildings. They are able to determine the conditions under which they wake from this sleep, such as being called by name or when threatened. During this sleep, they appear to be a stone statue (see freeze above). Stonewardens do not need to sleep regularly, but many choose to do so to avoid aging more rapidly. They are not immune to sleep effects. Stonewarden spellcasters need to meditate for 4 hours before preparing spells, and can only achieve the state of mind needed to do so once per day.

Natural Armor: Stonewardens' stony hides grant them a +2 natural armor bonus.

Recognize Gargoyle: Stonewardens get +4 on their Perception checks to detect a gargoyle using the freeze ability to resemble a statue.

Stonewarden Stubbornness: Stonewardens get a +2 racial bo-

nus on saving throws to resist enchantment spells but, when affected, suffer the effects of the enchantment for double the normal duration. Stonewardens must roll a save to resist enchantment spells that are harmless or beneficial such as heroism and rage regardless of their intentions.

Languages: Stonewardens begin play speaking Common and Terran. Stonewardens with high Intelligence scores can choose from the following: Dwarven, Giant, Gnome, Goblin, Orc, and Undercommon.

# Stonewarden Gargoyle Alternate Racial Traits

Dangerous Defender: Some stonewarden gargoyles learn how to avoid a blow while still maintaining their offensive posture. When they use Combat Expertise or fight defensively, reduce the number they subtract from their melee attack rolls by 1. This replaces the recognize gargoyle racial trait.

Earth Affinity: Stonewarden gargoyle sorcerers with the elemental (earth) bloodline treat their Charisma score as 2 points higher for all sorcerer spells and class abilities. Stonewarden gargoyle clerics and inquisitors with the Earth domain use their domain powers and spells at +1 caster level. This replaces the stonewarden stubbornness racial trait.

Family Custodian: A few stonewarden gargoyles are dedicated to defending members of a particular family. When they use the aid another action to give a member of their chosen family a bonus to AC, increase the bonus by 2. This increase is a racial bonus (and therefore doesn't stack with increases granted by other stonewarden family members using this trait). This trait has no effect when using the aid another action to increase a family member's next attack roll. This replaces the recognize gargoyle racial trait.

Hunter-seeker: Some stonewarden gargoyles are known for their superior tracking skills, especially when hunting urban criminals. Stonewarden gargoyles with this racial trait receive a +2 racial bonus on Diplomacy (gather information) and Survival (tracking) checks. This replaces the recognize gargoyle racial trait.



**Lifewarden:** A few stonewarden gargoyles are known to be some of the best bodyguards in the world. Stonewarden gargoyles with this racial trait gain the bodyguard feat as a bonus feat even if they do not meet the prerequisites. This replaces the freeze and long sleep racial traits.

**Lock-eyes:** Some gargoyles have an innate ability to focus on a single opponent, ignoring everything else. Once per day when they attack a foe with a spell, and they do not hit or their spell fails due to spell resistance or the enemy makes a save to negate the spell, they gain a +1 racial bonus to their touch attack, caster level check, or the DC of the next spell they cast against that same enemy. (If they use an area spell, they gain this benefit only against a single enemy in the area.) This bonus lasts for the duration of that combat encounter. This racial trait replaces the natural armor and long sleep racial traits.

**Magic Resistant:** Some of the stonewarden gargoyle lines are particularly resistant to magic. Stonewarden gargoyle lines with this racial trait gain spell resistance equal to 5 + their character level. This resistance can be lowered for 1 round as a standard action. Stonewardens with this racial trait take a -2 penalty on all concentration checks made in relation to arcane spells. This racial trait replaces the natural armor racial trait.

**Gargoyle's Ward:** A rare few stonewarden gargoyles have learned the secrets of warding evil spirits. Once per day as a standard action, they gain the effect of a *protection from evil* spell (caster level equal to your class level) at 5th level this becomes *magic circle against evil*. This replaces the freeze and long sleep racial traits.

**Gargoyle's Optimism:** Some stonewarden gargoyles learn to keep a realistic view of their situation and avoid falling into the trap of cynicism with a healthy dose of wit. As a swift action, they can joke about a troublesome situation to lighten the load of dealing with it for themselves and others. Once per day they and all allies within 30 feet who can hear them gain a reroll on any failed fear- or pain-based saving throw with a +2 morale bonus. This replaces the stonewarden stubbornness racial trait.

**Protective:** A number of stonewarden gargoyles dedicate their lives to defending their communities or the few rare friends they have. Once per day when an adjacent ally is subject to a melee attack, the stonewarden may use an attack of opportunity to attempt to parry the melee attack; if the stonewarden's attack roll is equal to or higher than its opponent's roll, the attack misses. The stonewarden must declare the use of this ability before the result of the foe's attack roll is known. This

replaces the stonewarden stubbornness racial trait.

**Sinister Stalker:** Several stonewardens, but not all, are born with an especially terrifying visage and exude an ominous presence. They gain a +1 racial bonus on Intimidate checks, and Intimidate is always a class skill for them. Once per day, they may attempt to demoralize an opponent as a swift action. This replaces the stonewarden stubbornness racial trait.

**Sky Fighter:** Stonewarden gargoyles often enjoy fighting other flying opponents. Stonewarden gargoyles with this racial trait receive a +1 bonus on attack rolls against creatures that are flying. This replaces the stonewarden stubbornness racial trait.

**Stoneskin:** When a stonewarden gargoyle reaches 7th level in any combination of classes, he gains *stoneskin* (self only) as a spell-like ability usable once per day. A stonewarden's caster level is equal to his total Hit Dice. This replaces the long sleep and stonewarden stubbornness racial traits.

**Suspicious Steward:** A rare few stonewarden gargoyles discover at an early age that there is some dark secret related to the creation of the gargoyles, leaving them quick to question the claims of others. Once per day they can roll twice for a Sense Motive check taking the highest result. Sense Motive is always a class skill for them. This replaces the stonewarden stubbornness racial trait.

**Truth-seeker:** Stonewarden gargoyles often value truth over all else and have an innate ability to find it. Stonewarden gargoyles with this racial trait receive a +2 racial bonus on Sense Motive skill checks. This replaces the stonewarden stubbornness racial trait.

Watcher Traits: Some stonewarden gargoyles used to be dwarves and were transformed by a divine ritual; while they gave up their former lives, some did hold on to some of their previous racial traits. Stonewarden ability score modifiers can be replaced by dwarven ability score modifier traits. Stonewarden stubbornness can be replaced by the hatred and hardy racial traits. Normal speed can be replaced by the slow and steady racial trait. Natural armor can be replaced by the defensive training and weapon familiarity racial traits, recognize gargoyle can be replaced by the greed racial trait, long sleep can be replaced by the stonecunning racial trait.

Waterwarden: Some stonewarden gargoyles are closely related to kapoacinth gargoyles. Stonewardens with this racial trait gain the aquatic subtype and amphibious special quality. This racial trait replaces the long sleep racial trait.

Genius Games.)

**Sorcerer:** Add +1/2 to acid and earth spell or spell-like ability damage.

# Stonewarden Gargoyle Favored Class Bonuses

A stonewarden gargoyle with any of the watcher racial traits can use the favored class bonuses of a dwarf.

Alchemist: Add +1/2 to the number of bombs per day the alchemist can create.

**Armiger:** Grant DR +1/3/magic to any ally to whom the armiger is giving a cover bonus. (DR 1/magic for every three times you select this option. See *The Genius Guide to the Armiger* by Super Genius Games.)

**Barbarian:** Add +1 to the barbarian's total number of rage rounds per day.

**Cleric:** Select one domain power granted at 1st level that is normally usable a number of times per day equal to 3 + the cleric's Wisdom modifier. The cleric adds +1/2 to the number of uses per day of that domain power.

**Divine Channeler:** Add +1/2 to damage when using the combat channeling effect of the earth domain. (See the *Secrets of Adventuring* by Rite Publishing.)

**Gladiator:** Add +1/2 to the gladiator's reputation score (see *Paths of Power* by 4 Winds Fantasy Gaming/Purple Duck Games).

**Inquisitor:** Add a +1/2 bonus on Intimidate checks to demoralize humanoids.

**Ranger:** Add +1/4 to the natural armor bonus of the ranger's animal companion. If the ranger ever replaces his animal companion, the new animal companion gains this bonus.

**Shadow Assassin:** Add a  $\pm 1/2$  to damage rolls with deadly focus. (See *The Genius Guide to the Shadow Assassin* by Super

**Stonewarden Paragon:** Choose a natural weapon from the following list: claws, bite, or gore. Add  $\pm 1/2$  on critical hit confirmation rolls made while using that weapon (maximum bonus of  $\pm 4$ ), when you reach the maximum you may choose another natural weapon from the list. This bonus does not stack with Critical Focus.

**Time Thief:** +1/2 mote/day. (One additional mote for every two times you select this option. See *The Genius Guide to the Time* Thief by Super Genius Games.)

**War Master:** +1/2 to all Intimidate and Knowledge (nobility) checks. (Add +1 to these checks for every two times you select this option. See *The Genius Guide to the War Master* by Super Genius Games.)

Witch Hunter: Add +1/6 of a devotee talent. (One additional devotee talent for every six times you select this option. See *The Genius Guide to the Witch Hunter* by Super Genius Games.)



Author, Game Designer: Mike Myler\_www.mikemyler.com

The Clockwork

Jenders of

Fatters

Graphic Designer: Neil Myler www.neilmyler.com

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# 

DATHFINDER

Coming Soon!

Background map by Jonathan G. Nelson - RPGcartography.com

# Twenty Questions with Mike Myler

by Steven D. Russell

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

Several months ago my fiancée convinced me to try selling some of my house game material to an independent publisher. Since then, I started pressing out <u>my own material</u> and now content I've written is starting to sprout up<u>everywhere</u>. The individuals that can boast the most claim to my work are over at AdventureAWeek. com, but I've pressed with Avalon Games and Louis Porter Jr. Design thus far as well.

In the layout phase, there's several products on the way from Skortched Urf' Studios (*Adventurer's Essentials:* 10-Foot Pole and Thieves' Tools, as well as Unrest in Syrenteh), an entire psionic adventure path from Purple Duck Games (*Varakt's Halo*), a module from Frog God Games, an adventure for Amora Games (*A Fisherman's* Bounty), and then projects that are sitting at the feet of a half dozen other publishers, their final fates no longer in contention but their ends decided.

Oh, and of course, Rite Publishing is sitting on two pieces from me, one for this wonderful publication and another for *Adventure Quarterly*. There's more - I've released three products myself, and two more are in the pipeline. It's a staggering workload and I definitely caught a wave in the industry that's been helping me surf along.

I live in Pittsburgh, graduated from the University of the same name (majored in Film Studies, minoring in Classics and Philosophy), and am engaged to a beautiful, crazy, fierce woman named Stephanie. Her cat Olive has all the same qualities she does, whereas my tuxedo feline, Felix, likes to sleep and hang out (specifically, on my lap while I'm trying to work). Unlike my cat, I barely sleep and spend something like 12 or so hours a day pounding away at the keyboard. Stephanie and I like to play video games, binge watch anime series, make fun of how other people dress (almost always prompted by my warrior princess, but sometimes I can't help it when a Where's Waldo hipster saunters by) and drink at the local bar, where we engage in The Adventures of Baron von Munchaussen RPG with an appropriate level of enthusiasm and mirth.

Fun, surprising facts about me most people don't know: I can pole-vault (about eleven feet was my maximum height but whatever, I can pole-vault), I played the original Star Wars: Knights of the Republic for 300 hours before my first Xbox died and another 150 on the second (I recorded <u>the part</u> where my sith lord forced that wookiee to kill the stupid twi'lek girl on VHS; if you know who I'm talking about but haven't seen it, it is cathartic), I've been on a TV quiz show, I miss using construction vehicles (it's like driving a mech), I had dreadlocks in college (of which I was an early graduate), and I'm allergic to milk (touches-my-skinand-I-break-out allergic).

2. What is your home game like? Filled with intrigue, great twists and intriguing wonders! To get an idea of what's



going on in my home game, check out The Clockwork Wonders of Brandlehill or The Mysterious Peaks of Baranthar, because that's my home game. My players are all contributing to the campaign setting, which is very much in the works (I just finished cleaning up the document for the first continent, as a matter of fact) and will eventually see their characters become demigods. We'll be releasing it sometime next year, but Grethadnis is a realm similar to many western fantasy settings, but with an element of collusion that precipitates the chaos the kind folk of the world are about to be thrown into. I know that there's no shortage of similar locales in the industry, and because of that we're going to load it up with archetypes and prestige classes that highlight the really fascinating parts of the setting. The other continents, Urethiel and Trectoyri, are different matters entirely (I won't go into detail about them here!) but the former introduces new ways to utilize magic while the latter offers up an entirely different playing experience than what most players are used to. I've got a second group specifically for playtesting material for other publishers, and may have to start a third. Oh, the horror.

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

That's an enormously difficult question to answer, but I would have to say it's the *Core Rulebook*. They revolutionized the industry when they pressed - and posted - that wonderful tome, and it literally changed my life. After the base betrayal that was 4th Edition (that may be a little much, but I was real sour) I fell out of gaming for a while, and Pathfinder kept me around after another <u>innovative product</u> had managed to bring me back into the fold.

My runner up is the *Advanced Player's Guide*, because they managed to expand the real core of what we all know and love about *Dungeons and Dragons* into roles I think we've all dabbled into before anyway, *without* ruining the basis of what makes the system so great (i.e.: the ridiculous number of classes in 3.5).

#### 4. You are currently Master of the AaWBlog for AdventureAWeek.com. How did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

It's only been a few months and it seems like forever ago, but I've been working pretty closely with AdventureAWeek.com since I submitted my first pitch for them. I published my first adventure with AaW, <u>The</u> <u>Damned Souls of Fenleist</u>, back in August but the work for it began in March (it's really something else) and I think my final rough draft had only one or two editing mistakes? During that time, Jonathan Nelson and I were bouncing ideas off of each other and he asked me about the <u>AaWBlog</u>, and if I'd be interested in contributing something.

In about twenty minutes, I think, I sent him a schedule for weekly posts and ideas on how to grant the endeavor a sense of permanency - after that it's just been dominoes. I edited a few products for them and got asked to jump in on <u>Rise of the Drow</u> book as a Contributor, then got kicked up to Guest Author/Lead Editor when it became clear that I've some talent for all of this.

AdventureAWeek.com is the best supplemental RPG site on the Internet, hands down. From dozens and dozens of adventures, to hundreds of maps by Todd Gamble (the cartographer of every 3.0 book you've ever picked up), to a sound board and special subscriber content for the AaWBlog, it is without doubt the most valuable resource a Pathfinder or 3.5 gamer can access for everything they need to run a game.

You want to get your foot in the door of the RPG Industry? Send me something for the <u>AaWBlog</u> at mike@adventureaweek.com.

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

This thing is monstrous - over 550 pages of incredible artwork, fantastic storytelling, mind-numbingly beautiful maps, statistics and rules for both 3.5 *and* Pathfinder and a slew of new creatures, items, spells, feats, traps and more stuff I'm probably forgetting about.

Moreover, it's an entire setting in its own right - this isn't just a really big adventure path, *it is an entire subterranean world* (and unlike other settings I won't mention here, it is not filled with a bajillion drow). 6. What was your best moment working on that product? That's a toss up they gave me free reign in the Fungi Forest section, which yielded some incredible material (both



literally in one case and figuratively as well). Getting to write a pretty considerable portion of a hardcover book was amazing, but what was even better was including my own dark elf PC from my youth (D'thul, the barbarian/ sorcerer cannibalistic anti-drow). I had to pull him from another product elsewhere and I am so happy I did he fits within the story structure and thematics of the Underworld of AdventureAWeek.com's setting like he was made for it.

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

Another killer question! There's no shortage of amazing material in this book - the drow city of Holoth, the dwarven cities of Stoneholme and Embla, the travels in between them all - each of these is an impressive gaming element to bring to bear. Overall though, I'm throwing it up for the Fungi Forest again. Some of the things we worked into that section of the book are really clever and I can see entire adventures that never leave the confines of the mushroom groves.

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

AdventureAWeek.com is a very modern, new age kind of operation that values open discourse and highly collaborative efforts, making it a joy to work on projects with them. There is, however, a lack of process that sometimes gets frustrating. I edited the last section of the book (60,000 words) only to find a few days later that 20,000 words were added, with no clear way of knowing where they were. I almost had an aneurysm. I'm really looking forward to the next AaW Kickstarter project, a hardcover edition of Snow White (which is freaking awesome, by the by), and setting up a procedure from authorship to layout so that we can clean up the inefficiencies in the process so far. I count myself as quite lucky, however - I am positive that as far as negative experiences in publishing go, I got off the hook pretty easy.

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

British English is more different than I expected. Organise, recognise, whilst, armour, discolour - I've definitely become more familiar with the dialect from across the pond. What I got most out of <u>Rise of the</u> Drow was confidence in my abilities; whereas before I wasn't positive that what I had to offer was unique and engaging, now I know that's just not the case (and that I've got considerable facility with the written word to boot).

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

These questions are killing me!

Since I can't point at myself or AdventureAWeek.com, I'd suggest looking at Storm Bunny Studios'<u>Rhune:</u> <u>Dawn of Twilight</u> products or LPJDesign's <u>Neo Exodus</u> line. Both are slick as all get out and painfully original (and delightful to work within, I might add).

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

It needs to make you say wow. I don't care *how* it does so - maybe the art is phenomenal, maybe the ideas presented are innovative, maybe the characters within speak to you - if you aren't walking away from it with a smile on your face as you ponder the *possibilities and ramifications* of said product, it does not qualify.

#### **12. Who is your favorite designer of Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible products?** Sean K. Reynolds.

I think I annoyed the bejeezus out of him at GenCon, but that guy is literally my hero - if he had never released. <u>The New Argonauts</u>, I wouldn't be gaming now or doing this interview (although please, let's not blame him). An honorable mention goes out to Ryan Macklin, who told me everything that was wrong with my house system (*Time Gestalt*) inside of about five minutes by utilizing an alacrity and insight that made my brain pop like a microwaved peep.

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

1) *Write every day.* Every single day. Yes, even then. Then too. *Every. Day.* 

2) Don't be discouraged by a low rate - everyone starts somewhere. Write for free if the payoff is worth it (I'm a great example of that being true, but I'm an exception in that regard and most of the time, you *will* get shafted) but remain wary of content farms. It's really hard swallowing a 1 cent/word rate, but the fact of the matter is that unless you've won a contest or placed in RPG Superstar, you're probably going to face just that. Because of how grueling it can be to break into the industry via the grind, I set a word/rate limit for myself - 7,000 words at 1 cent isn't a very good deal, but for the first time I write for you? Sure. Just this once. A week later (sometimes less) when you're sitting on my first draft, maps and all, we'll know why the rate will be higher next time. Until you're a known entity, that's the word of the day - you can enjoy a livable wage farther

down the road when the Publications Sheet in your resume is more robust.

3) *Get known*. Use social media. Get a Google+ page, a Twitter account, a Facebook account, get on Skillpages, start a profile on LinkedIn, make your own website show that you have initiative, that you are active and that you are definitely leaving a mark.

4) *Invest in yourself.* Be that with cash, time or both - release your own products (it's not hard to get a compatibility license, or to follow the rules for its use) and treat every single job like your first.

5) Be ready to learn that you are not always right, and to amend your mistakes.

# 14. Who is your favorite tabletop RPG Illustrator?

<u>Ramon Lucha</u>.

He did the cover for <u>The Damned Souls of Fenleist</u> and the key image (part of the cover) for <u>The Mysterious</u> <u>Peaks of Baranthar</u>. His art is easily as disturbing and talented as my writing, if not more so. When I got the first draft of the *TMPoB* piece, I asked for more blood, and what I got in return was *far better* than what I envisioned and really highlighted his talents as a legitimate artist. It wasn't just splayed everywhere on the image - he increased the thickness of the flows and used it lightly to color the whole piece more. It's amazing. Go download the book to see it - easily worth the \$4 entry fee.

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

When my fiancée finally gave up and started to love Pathfinder. She's a huge fan of *Black Crusade* (as am I - Fantasy Flight Games puts out some amazing material) but just wasn't enjoying the setting and feel of Pathfinder. It *finally* clicked when we were playtesting the thing for Frog God Games - she started to pester and bother me all week to find out what was going to happen next. I was so happy I almost cried.

**16. Could you give us an exclusive hint or teaser about an upcoming product you are working on?** Oy, I could give you more than a hint or teaser, but fell dark elf assassins might do away with me in the night! Still...okay, I'll let slip a little bit: one of the new domains in *Rise of the Drow* is for all those fungus freaks out there and covers every spell you'd ever want for mushrooms. Exploding mushrooms, mushrooms that you ride, mushrooms that you wear, mushrooms that you eat, mushrooms that eat *you* - it's all in there, it's all mine and it's all been meticulously considered by some of the most critical minds in the RPG industry. It is freaking awesome.

17. Do you have any goals for your work or your company that you have yet to obtain or

#### overcome?

Hell yes I do: HEY PAIZO, I AM OVER HERE. I've also got my eye on Green Ronin (one of their Line Producers assured me of a contract during GenCon and I eagerly look forward to it), Dreamscarred Press and Kobold Press - you folks are next on my list, so be ready for a deluge of critical ideas to flood your entryways. This is also a good place to mention that my talented cartographer and layout guy, Neil Myler, is available for work other than what I throw at him. If you need some maps or general publication layout done, hit him up (he also put together our advertisement in this issue!). Then there's my home system, Time Gestalt, which I'm looking to publish next year. Of all the things I've written, it is by far the one to garner the most enthusiastic response from players. Once the numbers are in line (which, given the expansive breadth of what's contained therein, is a bit of a task) it'll start seeing the light of day. It is charmingly similar to the flagship so many of us first rode out into the RPG seas, granting a sense of familiarity, yet far more diverse and inclusive. It's something else - keep an eye out.

# **18.** Can you tell us a little about <u>The Mysterious</u> <u>Peaks of Baranthar</u>?

It is easily one of the cleverest things I've ever written. The twist at the end, which I reckon was foreshadowed extremely well by any regard, dropped the jaws of every single player that I tested it with - in one case I actually got a standing ovation. The magic items within are also sweet - the *mimetic crossbow* is unlike any other weapon I've seen and the *mirrored club* has quickly become the party's favorite go-to-baddy-smasher. It's also more than just monsters - I'd never written a proper encounter against the elements and the results I got were fantastic.

# **19.** What's proven to be the most difficult obstacle to your publishing efforts?

Art. Finding a talented, reliable, efficient, communicative and genuinely cooperative illustrator has been a nightmare, and a frustrating one at that. If I could just get somebody on board who draws like I write, there would be twenty self-published products up for sale, rather than three.

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

If you pick up a product with my name on it, I promise that it will be awesome; if it is not awesome, tell me and I'll rectify that situation as soon as I possibly can. If you're wondering, "what god awful avenue of hell spawned a creature that moves with the alacrity you've shown, Mike?!", thank my fiancée's mother. She disapproves of my 'lifestyle choices' and wanted a career before the wedding. With the wit of a recently-concussed horse, I promised my wife-to-be that I'd become a legitimate game designer (fun quote from Owen K.C. Stephens - "There are more astronauts than full-time professional game designers").

#### That'd be the fire.

Stan Lee put it best, and I'm paraphrasing here but, "I never would've been the success I am today were it not for my wife: without her spending all my money, I'd never have been so driven."







# Reviews

#### In the Company of Medusa

**Publisher:** Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 out of 5 Stars



This new supplement in Rite Publishing's "In the Company of"series is 19 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 2 pages of advertisement, so let's take a look, shall we?

"We were born from blood and tears, venomous as jealousy." If you're like me, these words resonate – as has become the tradition with

Rite Publishing's offerings, this pdf is written in incharacter narratives, as told by characters to Qwillion of Queesthaven - and the prose here is ... well AWESOME. The medusa-society is described in ample detail as per a schooling book/an instructor, including information on how to keep both scales and snake-hair proper and trim and keep the latter in control - fluff-wise, these paragraphs are pure gold; Take for example the mentioning of a bed of invisibility, hinted at , but never explicit elaborations of subtle and brute force ways of seduction... these pages reminded my pleasantly of Catherynne M. Valente's Orphan's Tales-series and author Liz Smith has indeed delivered pages that are not only a joy to read, but which breathe vast narrative potential for adventuring hooks, while, with the three dominant philosophies (Euryale, Sthennos and Medusa) covering all types of way of life/conceptions of how medusa act - kudos, but can the crunch live up to the fluff?.

Regular medusa get +2 to Con and Cha, -2 to Str, darkvision 60 ft., all-around vision, a secondary natural bite attack at 1d4, a poison (DC 10+1/2 HD+con-mod for 1d2, 6 rounds, cure 2 saves), immunity to medusa poison and the petrified condition with the exception of the own gaze and a petrification gaze – usable 1/day as a standard action, range 30 ft, save scales with HD and is based on cha. Said petrification, however, is not permanent until 11th level/HD and lasts until then 1 round per HD.

Greater Medusa get +2 to one ability score of their choice, darkvision 60 ft., all-around vision, 1d6 secondary natural attack with the same poison as their regular kin, the same immunities and petrification gaze, but also cannot be tripped due to a lower body of a snake – which conversely also precludes them from having a slot for feet.

We get age, height and weight tables for both and 15 (!!!) alternate racial traits – unfortunately, the very first would be alternate racial attribute modifications

that have been mixed up - +2 Con and Cha, -2 Str replace .. +2 Con, Cha, -2 Str? That ought to read something like +2 to Dex, at least judging from the text - unless, of course, said racial trait is intended exclusively for greater medusa - which I'll assume due to in dubio pro reo, even though the specifically mentioned attribute-suite belongs to the regular medusa. Another alternate trait nets +2 Con and Int, -2 Dex and getting augury and later divination or commune in lieu of darkvision is possible as well. Archery mastery with a chosen bow type (in exchange for poison) can also be found, as can a trait that nets the hold breath quality of amphibious creatures, +2 to swim and two secondary claw attacks at 1d4 in exchange for medusa immunities and all-around vision. Another trait allows the medusa to gain a point (up to a maximum of 10+HD) whenever they roll a "1" on an attack or saving roll, with the option to exchange a point for +1 on an attack or saving roll nice for unlucky players. +2 to saves versus necromantic spells or cha-based skill checks (regular medusa only) as well as three traits representing aforementioned 3 philosophies can be found herein, as can one that sees a medusa ritualistically shave her hair in exchange for the extra hex or extra malediction-feat - cool 3pp-synergy here.

We also get a suggestion of suitable archetypes (nice, seeing how many are out there) and favored class options for Alchemist, Bard, Druid, hellion (by SGG), Magus, Malefactor (by TPK Games), Occultist (Pact Magic by Radiance House), Oracle, Ranger, Rogue, Sorceror, Shaman (by Kobold Press) and witch -Very cool to see this level of support for some of the finest 3pp-classes out there!

Of course, we also get 2 unique racial archetypes, with the first being the gorgonic shaman for the druid -these shamans are restricted in their choice of companion and get impeded wild-shape, but also learn to commune with the earth (making catching them by surprise HARD unless flying) to temporarily take on an improved aspect that allows them to temporarily enhance their own body with a variety of special tricks – from uncommon speeds to a temporary petrification stare up to natural weapons, this archetype allows other characters to take on a semblance of being medusa-like or medusa to offset some of the losses they may have incurred via the choice of their alternate racial traits – nice indeed, as it conjures up images of a society of servants striving to take on aspects of their mistresses...

Sorcerors may opt to become stone-eyed sorcerors, who may supplement their body temporarily with the fortification quality to nondetection and similar defensive qualities.

The star herein, though, is the racial paragon-class for the medusa – this 20-level class gets d10, 6+Int skills per level, proficiency with simple weapons plus longbow, shortbow, rapier, scimitar, shortsword, light armor and their own bite and tail if applicable (i.e. if the character is a greater medusa). The class gets full BAB-progression, good ref and will-saves and the poison of the medusa scales up from 1d3 str to 1d8 str as well as +4 natural armor at 1st level, +2 at 3rd level and every 3 levels after that. Medusa paragon of first level can fascinate foes not in combat within 50 feet by using the hypnotic wriggling of their hair as a standard action, learning to fascinate more adversaries at higher levels, also benefitting from improved reactions to them. And no, not overpowered since it doesn't work in combat and upon a successful save, the ability stops to function versus that foe for 24 hours. Now if you were underwhelmed by the gaze attack of the base medusa races, you'll enjoy the fact that petrification gazes vastly improved over the course of the class, gaining an additional use at 7th level and becoming continuous at 10th level. Rather cool, at even higher levels, their gaze can turn mud or quicksand into rock (think about it: vast planes of quicksand, with rocky palaces crafted in a waveless sea of sand), selective gaze (at 16th level) and may even animate the statues that once were the victims of their gaze to fight for them at 18th level - rather cool. At 3rd level, they also grow to large size and learn to use their hair to manipulate or hold items (leaving hands free for e.g. two-handed large weapons...ouch...) and at 6th level, medusa may extend their hair to grapple foes at range (25 ft. + 5/2 levels) – and you'd expect me to scream "OP" here, but the fact that moving or pinning foes is not possible as well as the fact that sunderattempts versus your hair count as attacks versus you should limit the usability of this ability, though I do get some headaches when thinking about the hair extending from the body counting as part of the character and the potential for attacks on it - clarification on how to resume this/perhaps a scaling mechanic for sundering strands of hair would have gone a long way here especially since at higher levels, constricting, pulling and even strangling foes garrote-style via hair also are possible and at this point, the range-grappling component, limited though it may be, gets rather complex.

As 2nd level and every 3 levels of the class after that, the medusa also gets one of the medusa talents from 20 talents – these include further ability growth, a bonus feat, blindsense, climb speed, the constrict special quality, may grow wings (and learn to use them as weapons) and learn to tail-slap (which is btw. required for grabbing, constricting etc.) as well as gain stonerelated tricks and movement and gazes. The capstone is an outsider transformation, including DR 15/ epic good/ evil, depending on alignment – but what about neutral medusa?

We also get a feat for an extra medusa talent and the half-medusa CR+1 template.

# Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are good, though not perfect, I did notice a couple of minor glitches. Layout adheres to a unique full-color two-column standard with green, scaled borders and the pdf offers neat full-color artworks -especially cool at this low, fair price-point. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. Author Liz Smith has woven a yarn that ranks very highly indeed, with superb fluff drawing you deep into the race - even if you're just looking for inspiration for a culture, this serves the role superbly. Crunch-wise, the offering is solid indeed, though the ranged grappling feel a bit problematic depending on your campaign's power-level. The racial paragon class and the greater medusa both feel a bit like on the strong side of the power-level, with the class allowing you to become a true melee grappling/constricting threat that may rend foes asunder. That being said, I did not consider any part of the crunch herein broken or overpowered per se – the overall combination of them may be a bit much for some campaigns, though. The regular medusa, on the other hand, is completely fine with me and could potentially see uses in all but the most low-powered campaigns. The minor glitches here and there and the slightly high power-level for my tastes and the fact that the range-grappling could use some minor clarification are, however, the only complaints I can muster against this pdf – especially the superb writing offsetting these minor flaws in my book, thus seeing me settle on a final verdict of 4 stars - especially the proper implementation of snake hair and gaze attacks without unhinging the game deserving accolades for the author.

Endzeitgeist out.

#### Jords of Gossamer and Shadow

**Publisher:** Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Mike Knights **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5 stars!



This morning I was busily typing up my first blog post for October (by the way, The Pathfinder Chronicles turns 1 this month) when I realised that I was out most of the day yesterday and so I better do an email catch up, then a G+ read through. Wow I am glad I did as amongst my emails, four hours old was the link to my fully illustrated copy of Lords of

Gossamer and Shadow, the diceless RPG on offer written by Jason Durall and published by Rite Publishing. I was a backer of the Kickstarter so I have this release a little earlier than it actually goes on sale so I want to be the first to put out a review for it! I have actually had the text only version of the game for a long time and have run a small session of the game so I am excited to release my review that looks at the final pdf version and I can't wait for my signed copy! Please note that this review is based on the Kickstarter PDF which may be altered before the December release date to the public. Also note that all artwork contained in this review is official art created by Jason Rainville for the game. The cover of the book from the Kickstarter page Lords of Gossamer and Shadow is essentially Amber with a new setting. It has been called the "spiritual" successor to Amber which is something I can't really comment on. As much as I have wanted to play the game I never actually got around to it. I can say that the new Rite Publishing game is right on the money though. I have often wondered how a dice-less system worked and I have to say that it works well! The characters are made in a group setting and an attribute auction is held with every player having a set number of points to spend on these attributes. In game play the actuality is all actions are referred back to the attributes and in essence the highest wins (of course tactics and circumstance have a role to play). In essence, the system is elegant and streamlined. It is quick and painless and allows for a focus on story.

This game is a story tellers wet dream. For both the GM and the player it offers an open set of realms to play around with. This game is GURPS except you play with one character across as many settings as you want to! It is a version of Rifts or the TV series Sliders with much, much more powerful lead characters! The setting of Lords of Gossamer and Shadow is that of the Grand Stair which in essence is a realm that exists between realms! It is a stairwell that alters its appearance and structure throughout its entire length (not that anyone has found a top or a bottom to it) and the Lords and Ladies of Gossamer and Shadow travel its paths to enter realities that are connected by doorways.

A Lord/Lady of Gossamer or Shadow is what the players are. They are beings capable of finding, and opening, the doors to different realities on the Grand Stair. They may only be new to the stair or have had the ability to traverse it for some time. They are an elite few amongst all of the realities and they see the forms of power that create the realities in the form of the Eidolon (structure and form in magic) or the Umbra (Chaos, destruction and wildness in magic). Players can draw from either aspect but generally a Lady of Gossamer is a follower of the Eidolon or Umbra whilst a Lady of Shadow would be something more sinister altogether. My favourite image that illustrates the war between light and shadow, the Lords/Ladies and the Dwimmerlaik

The lords and ladies of shadow are a race of creatures known as the Dwimmerlaik who use a power separate to that of the Eidolon and Umbra. They war with the Lords as they see the Grand Stair as theirs and theirs alone. They had recently been thought but a myth by the travellers of the Grand Stair but have made attacks that cannot be explained away recently.

So, you have a meta-plot (the Lords of Gossamer vs. the Dwimmerlaik or Lords of Shadow) and you have a Grand Stair that has doors to an infinite number of realities. Realities with any setting and any genre to play with. Same characters for the players and an infinite number of realities. I can see why I love this game so much. I wander the internet and see so much good stuff going on and right here is a system I could use to represent it all, in one game! The book is beautifully written and is a great system for those of us who are story tellers at heart. It talks more about the way to weave a good story and tackles some big topics in its pages.

It is a game that focusses on players and their wants and needs. It seeks to generate conflict and drama for the players and may often even pit them against one another with crossing one players goals with another. The attribute auction from the very get go points to the possibility of this as the players compete against one another to develop their character. So although they may align and travel the Grand Stair together it is quite possible that they will end up at odds with one another in the long run.

The illustrated PDF that I have is lush and filled with full coloured gorgeous artwork with lead artist Jason Rainville . Most of these images focus on one individual giving a feel for them and the world they may come from. You feel like you know these characters immediately and the images help you overcome the initial shock of "so many genre choices" as they are laid out across many genre fields. You may laugh but when I read the rules as a straight pdf I was a little numb to how I would GM this game because of the immense scope of the realities! The artwork really helps me factor all this in to the game as a whole. The small game I did run all occurred on the Grand Stair so I could avoid putting it in a setting! The art is not on every page though and you will get runs of up to six or seven pages at a time where vou will see no art at all.

Lucien of the Grand Stair. These images have been taken from Rite Publishing's page for the game.

This game will of course not be for everyone. I have had some very strong reactions when I have talked about the dice-less nature of the system and how it works. There are a large number of people that believe that what happens is purely up to the GM which is simply not true. I have had people say that you might as well have no character sheets at all and sit around a circle and tell a combined story. Again not true. I really wish that this game would appeal to everyone but if you are a player that must hold on to the random element or loves the tactile nature of dice and will feel lonely without them then perhaps this is not the game for you.

I do implore anyone though that has a slight interest in this system to give it a go. I love this game and its possibilities. I will eventually run a campaign with this game. It will not be immediately but it will happen. The beauty of the setting combined with the elegance of the rules is just fantastic. I am keen to build a story in this world that centres around the characters and their abilities. The book is beautifully presented and I can not wait (yes +Steve Russell I know I will have to) to get my signed backers copy and also my game provided by one of the developers that is on offer as part of my Kickstarter backer level.

This game is for me (and see above about dice-less systems that will cause some to turn away from this) a five out of five star game. It ticks every box for me and is written in a readable and interesting format. Once you get your head around the rules and the setting you will see the infinite possibilities that this game brings to your table. Keep rolling!

Wilderness Dressing: Primal Forests Publisher: Raging Swan Press Reviewer: Thilo Graf Rating: 5 out of 5 Stars



This pdf is 13 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page advertisement, 1 page editorial/ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 8 pages of content (though one is taken up by a full-page b/wartwork), so let's take a look, shall we?

Want an example how Raging Swan Press listens to customers? This pdf

would be one – when reviewing the Wilderness Dressing for regular forests, I suggested further supplements for other types of forests – and this is one. Whether it's the Margreve or a similar ancient forest, this pdf has got you covered regarding the weird and wondrous things that can be encountered herein, with the first table sporting a whopping 100 distinct entries – and oh boy, these are GOLD.

Pony-sized rabbits hopping through the forests, eerie mists settling at noon, will-o-wisp-like motes of light beckoning off the trail, animals warning of big teeth – these are not forests men often tread – all the more disturbing once the PCs find a filled, abandoned picnic basket or are showered with weird cocoons... Being hit by smelly shroom-spores, listening to the conversations of woodpeckers, falling potentially victim to tumbling trees or spheres of frogs that are unceremoniously dumped on the PCs – these entries breed primal wonder and the spirit of faerie-tales, instilling a subtle certainty of antiquity.

The second table provides yet more, in fact 100 dressings, many of which also feature crunchy consequences and short rules to supplement them, while retaining the superb quality of the first table's entry: From allegedly extinct trees to harvestable wild mistletoe and streams that mysteriously turn blood red for seconds before returning to their normal coloration, wonder and a sense of not being in Kansas anymore is breathed by every word within these tables. The final table of the book offers 12 different random encounters, following the format of the Dungeon Denizens-series, offering the respective critter, the bestiary in which they can be found as well as a short piece of fluff herein – from hunting bandersnatches seeking to outdo one another to a jubjub bird and even a forest giant with her aurumvorax, the sample creatures fit well in tone with the respective atmosphere.

# Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, as expected from Raging Swan Press' almost immaculate track-record. Layout adheres to Raging Swan Press' crisp two-column b/w-standard and the pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience and the pdf comes in two versions, with one optimized for screen-use and one to be printed out.

Each entry a mystery, a hook, a peculiarity – this is pretty much the apex of what can be done within the constraints of tables. This pdf is extremely awesome – author Mike Welham, not by incident one of the people whose name you'll notice on a LOT of great supplements, has created a Wilderness Dressinginstallment that is simply legendary. This is perhaps my favorite installment in the WHOLE product-line. It's that good. If there was an option for me to rate this higher – I would. For fey woods, for the Margreve, for any magical forest or for DMs seeking to add the extraordinary to their game, this is a required, awesome purchase and can only get one verdict – 5 stars + seal of approval – and is a candidate for my Top Ten of 2013.

Endzeitgeist out.

# The Genius Guide to More Cavalier Talents

**Publisher:** Super Genius Games **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 out of 5 stars



The more than due expansion for the talented cavalier is here and clocks in at 9 pages, 2/3 of a page front cover, 1 page editorial/SRD, leaving us with 7 1/3 pages of content – less than what the monk got, but let's take a look, shall we? Unlike the addendum to the talented monk, though, we kick this one off with new edges – and one of them makes good of the promise evoked by the great cover artwork – Yes, there is a dragon mount option herein. While you'd use the Dragon Rider base-class essentially as a guideline to use the ability (or check d20pfsrd.com for the class), the codification of the rules in a talented context are nice to see - even for someone like me who is rather opposed to the whole dragon-riding concept per se. The second new edge introduced herein would be Rally - and it is no less a courageous decision to put in a product: Rally allows the cavalier to once per day heal all allies within 30 ft. (more if using a banner)by 1d6 hp (+1d6 for every two additional cavalier levels) via nonmagical healing to represent an increased staving power of the allies in the face of overwhelming odds. However, the allies can never exceed 50% of their max hp when being thus healed - the wounds do not vanish and the ability draws inspiration from rallying speeches as recorded/ shown in multiple media. I've rarely been this torn about an ability - to me, this one smells suspiciously of the hated "bloodied" condition from 4th edition, but on the other hand, it is limited by action, availability and caps, making it impossible to actually close serious wounds. It's a border-case of what my suspicion of disbelief can take, but one that, due to its limits, still works out for me. I do hope, though, that not too many such mechanics creep into PFRPG in the future - tracking degrees of being wounded in a game that has not been specifically designed for it (like shadowrun) can be quite the hassle ...

Now both edges can be improved via talents, with one taking the edge off (haha) the edge, making cavalier levels count as dragon rider levels (instead of at -2 as per the edge) and rallying being able to get rid of negative conditions (which works better than hp-healing in my book), expand these conditions to be removed further via advanced talents and finally combine these with the hp-gain as a grand talent. Now also rather iconic would we what I'd call "honorific position"-talents, i.e. talents that denote the cavalier's standing and thus net special bonuses: These talents generally provide you with a class skill and allow you to make skill-checks in that skill with d20+cavalier levels +attribute mod+3 instead of the regular check - i.e. no need to invest skills! This may sound like a simple idea, but it really isn't – it allows a cavalier to excel at what s/he's meant to be good at without tempting wildering in the skill monkey's area. Speaking of which - via classic education, you can count as if you have all skills, allowing you to check essentially untrained in all of them. But back to those position-talents - rather awesome, you can actually reap additional benefits that should make kingmaker-players or captains grin - by flying a banner from a stronghold or vessel with the appropriate talent, you can extend the effect to the whole vessel/fortress in question. Awesome, since it makes capturing the banner/flag and its morale effect also palpable in a crunch-context. Also: Unobtrusive, optional synergy with kingdom-building/ downtime-rules? HELL YEAH!

Granting the shield's bonus to adjacent allies may be nice, but at least for me, the Dragoon-talent takes the awesome-cake: It allows you to dismount fast with a significant bonus and later even automatically/sans action – nice, but what's so great about it? Played Final Fantasy 4 (or 2 in the US)? Well, cavaliers with this talent may apply mounted charge feats when charging unmounted. Spirited charge and all those signature tools – right at your command! And in one talent, unmounted cavaliers suddenly are cool and work. This talent is... GLORIOUS. Worth the asking price alone. And yes, I'm aware that this could become problematic when in the wrong hands – but it makes the class DISTINCT. Powerful? Yes. Broken? At least in my opinion, no. Thank you. Fighting from a Houdah (or Howdah, if you prefer that spelling) is now also possible at neat benefits, including faster dismounts.

On the side of advanced talents, we get a massive array of planar knight options (including individual edicts for the respective planes) and associated with it, we also get a capstone that acclimates the cavalier to his planar domain – cool indeed!

As has become the tradition with "Talent"-pdfs, we end with a list of talents by theme.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting re good, though not perfect while we don't encounters any significant issues, we probably don't want cavaliers to take "Grant Talents", as the text mentions once. Nothing serious, though. Layout adheres to SGG's full-color 3-column standard and the pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. Dragon Rider talents are awesome if that floats your boat. Rallying is nice and just on the edge of what I'd consider good design - but the "honorific position"talents strike a chord with me - after all, the symbolize oh so well what separates a cavalier from fighters and the like. And then there's Howdah-fighting. And the Dragoon-talent. The latter makes in one fell swoop (See what I did there?) the cavalier class awesome and on par with other martial classes – while maintaining the identity of what being a cavalier should be. This pdf is AWESOME. In fact, it mops the floor with all previous, excellent "More Talent"-Genius Guides, since it provides all those cavalier-tools its basic pdf (and the base-class said pdf was based on) lack - here we have the talents that make the concept of the noble fighter not only work, but do so in an iconic, fun way - this should be a) considered all but required for all talented cavaliers and b) makes one thing clear: I want more! The cavalier deserves more tools like this, deserves to shine - and this pdf is definitely not the end of the line conceptwise - so when do we get part II? Even More Cavalier Talents?

I forgot the verdict? 5 stars + seal of approval. Do your knight a favor, give him an edge and get this pdf – asap!

Endzeitgeist out.

# In The Company of Fey (PFRPG)

**Publisher:** Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Megan R. **Rating:** 5 out of 5 stars



Opening in delightful style in the words of a captured fey, this work tells of the nature and culture of the fey as they themselves see it, for this enables you to make fey characters should you wish to take these enchanting yet often foul and grim beings out of the realm of the 'monster' to mix with an adventuring

party.

Here we read of how fey have three different forms: their natural one, their 'seeming' and another unique one which is the monstrous aspect, the appearance of which gives rise to tales of boggarts and wil'o'wisps and the like. The 'seeming' is the one used to walk amongst normal folk and can look like a human or an elf. There's plenty more detail too about fey outlooks and behaviour and attitudes.

Then we get down to the rule mechanics of creating a full-blown fey character. There are racial traits galore, favoured class options and a couple of archetypes which go some way to giving background to just why a fey has chosen to live in mortal realms long enough to take up adventuring. Also there is a 'paragon class' that blurs the lines between race and class for those seeking to be the epitome of a fey. Truly potent beings, a paragon fey is a force to reckon with... treat with care lest one unbalances your game. But with a strong role-player this could be intriguing indeed.

The product rounds off with a collection of feats for fey alone. This is a fascinating concept - stories abound of fey coming to live amongst mortal men. Now you can make this happen at your table!

# So what's the Exotic Mount like, anyway?

**Publisher:** Raging Swan Press **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 out of 5 stars



This pdf is 22 pages long, 1 page front cover, 2 pages of editorial, 1 page advertisement, 1 page ToC/ foreword, 1 page SRD, 1 page advice on how to read statblocks and 1 page back cover, leaving us with 14 pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

It's been some time since author

Mike Welham's "So what's the Mount like, anyways?" redefined the whole series, making for one of the best, most useful table-book I've ever seen – to the point where it scored a place among my Top ten list. Yes. That good. If you don't have it yet, get it now! All right, back to the topic at hand – this is the sequel for all those less common mounts paladins, cavaliers and

similar characters may acquire – but can it live up to its predecessor's quality?

Well, we kick off this pdf with a massive table of mount's appearances, providing a whopping 100 entries – and oh boy are they inspirational: Whether it's a pegasus with gold-tipped wings, a horse with draconic scales, an elk with reins, but no saddle, a giant bat with a rider's harness hanging from a building – these entries ooze flavor and tell stories in their very own right, inspiring DMs to experiment with templates and craft stories, hooks and sidetreks. Oh, have I mentioned the stallion touched by weird non-euclidian transdimensional beings, subtle shifting around due to being not fully anchored in our world?

The next table comes with mount traits - 98 plus roll twice/thrice - and they actually ALL HAVE RULES-**REPERCUSSIONS.** This table alone is worth the asking price. Yes. That good. But don't take my word - take entry 95, anti theft: When away from the rider for more than 8 hours and touched by a creature other than the rider, the mount detonates in a fiery explosion! Don't tell HETA (Humanoids for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), but damn, how cool is that? Of course being docile, having a temper and similar more down-to-earth qualities are also featured herein. What if your mount e.g. has spikes? Check the table, entry 10. Aspiring creature/mount-designers: Buy this, read this absorb and cherish it - so much wonder, so much awesomeness here. I am absolutely in LOVE with this table - the sheer amount for modifications of magical breeds this provides is staggering and makes questing for certain mounts a much more rewarding experience. Still dumbfounded or simply hard-pressed for time? 20 adventure hooks are here for your perusal to weave mount-centric yarns and a total of 8 sample mounts are provided with statblocks - from the boring, but obligatory giant eagle to axiomatic heavy horsed to trained skunks and war corgis, these make for cool basecreatures that can easily be spiced up. Better yet, we get d20 tables listing burrowing, swimming, cold- and firethemed mounts, all with information in which bestiary they're found as well as some advice on how to handle awarding/gaining a specialized mount.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to Raging Swan Press' elegant 2-column b/w-standard. The pdf comes with nice b/w-

artworks, two of which span a whole page and in two versions – one optimized for screen-use and one to be printed out. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

#### 20 Variant Foes - Red Dragons

**Publisher:** Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 out of 5 stars!



So this is the first installment of Rite Publishing's new "Variant Foes"series – content-wise, it clocks in at a more than solid 47 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 2 pages of advertisement, leaving us with a massive 42 pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

Red dragons...the most iconic

apex predators EVER. I have, at length, complained about overusing dragons, forgetting that these majestic creatures are supposed to be the most powerful threats PCs face – and this pdf seeks to bring back the unpredictability back to dragons – and unpredictable they are. In case you didn't know, statblock supremo Justin Sluder, responsible for the deliciously complex characters we know from the Faces of the Tarnished Souk-series, is also responsible for the statblocks herein – you won't find a single lame dragon/simple build herein. Now in this series, he has teamed up with Elaine Betts -so let's take a look at what this duo delivers, shall we?

Well, first of all, we get Rite Publishing's by now almost trademark frame narrative that cloaks the content herein in a guise that makes the crunch not only more digestible, but actually a pleasure to read. Each entry features an IC-narrative of the respective draconic entity, supplemented by a note from the researcher Leiraleen Amelour. Now CR-wise, the entities herein range from CR 30 (!!!) to CR 3. Now the CR 30 beast would be Seer Hekush - a chronicler of ages not really from this planet and neither a true dragon in the classic sense – this man is actually a LN bipedal accelerated dread mummy undead lord very young red dragon diviner 11/loremaster 10 that wields his sarcopahgus as a kind of armor and who has seen at least two ages come and pass - at AC 56 and more than 400 HP, this eternal chronicler of the ages sets a high standard - one, as I'm happy to report, the other beings herein live up to: Take the Fould Dcotor Feulzik - CR 28 mythic runecarved savant great wyrm red dragon (OUCH!) who experiments with the very essences of life and death, seeking to probe (and possibly transcend) the limitations of vital essence itself. Or take Unja of the Undying Fire, a divine ravener divine channeler undead dragon that can blast foes to smithereens with fire both black and searing hot, annihilating any opposition and "elevating" adversaries to glorious living death. Need

some draconic goodness that is a bit more subtle? What about a bipedal exemplar multiarmed mystic dragon ninja? OUUUUCH!!! Just contemplating the PAIN these beings may mete out makes me chuckle with fiendish glee!

Are you a fan of Warhammer's two-headed chaos dragons? Well, this supplement has got you covered and also features one (or is it two?) of these as well as hellfire dragons, furnace dragons with weapon master levels, stealthy pygmy dragons, a crippled invulnerable rager, a dragon tired of life, yet afraid of death, young (and cowardly dragons) and a (probably) kind of cute wyrmling that has been unhinged by being suffused with chaos magic that infects those around him. The book also chronicles the tools made to create these magnificent beasts: 7 templates,11 feats, 1 spell, 1 magic item, 2 arcane discoveries, all necessary information for divine channeling as well as the properties of quintessence.

# Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, though not perfect - I noticed some minor glitches here and there, no crucial ones, though. Layout adheres to RiP's twocolumn full-color standard and the pdf comes with a significant amount of full color artworks, many of which I have not seen before – and some of these artworks are downright awe-inspiring, so kudos indeed! The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. OH BOY! What a way to start a series, what a way! The dragons herein run the gamut from cool in character and build and rather common and easily inserted to downright GLORIOUS BEASTS that should more than satisfy even the most discerning of tastes wishing for exceedingly complex builds. Even in Rite's tradition of complex, cool builds, these stand out and mark this pdf as one damn fine example of the art of NPC/ monster-craft that has me clamoring for more! If you liked the complex builds of the Faces of the Tarnished Souk-series, if you hate standard dragons as used in so many modules, give these a go - the beings herein live up to the terror they ought to inspire and definitely are anything but common. Remarkable, complex and a good read to boot - well worth 5 stars + seal of approval! You can unleash these fearsome apex predators on your PCs here on OBS and here on d2opfsrd.com's shop!

Endzeitgeist out.

# Throne of Night, Book One: Dark Frontier

**Publisher:** Fire Mountain Games **Reviewer:** Megan R. **Rating:** 4.5 out of 5 stars!



Amazing adventure awaits in these beautiful pages (with printerfriendly alternative). Here is an epic tale of underground exploration and adventure, with plenty to engage characters in a diverse range of activities far beyond mere brawling. Moreover, there is enough of a 'sandbox' feel to enable the party to feel somewhat masters of their own

fates, combined with sufficient direction for the GM such that the plot will not flounder whatever the characters decide to do.

The introduction lays out some of the thoughts behind this adventure, and the entire adventure path of which this is the first volume. One delight is the way in which two completely different plotlines weave through the whole, sharing some locations and notable NPCs. You can follow one or the other as you please and as the choices your players make dictate. This adds to the realism, the feel that this is something taking place anyway, and that whilst the presence of the adventurers will have great effect, if they went home events would carry on regardless. The fundamental choice you - and they - need to make is, are you good(ish) adventurers exploring the depths or are you a pretty nasty bunch of Drow hell-bent on dominating them?

The background is equally impressive and sweeping in scale. Two hundred years ago, the greatest dwarf city of all fell in spectacular black flames, and since then dwarvenkind as a whole has been in decline. In a quest to reestablish themselves the dwarves seek to reclaim their lost city, Dammerhall... and it is to the party that they have turned. This makes at least one dwarf character useful, indeed an all-dwarf party could be run with considerable justification... this is, if you have decided to be the Good Guys.

A full second background is provided for groups interested in becoming Drow overlords, with a mistress who has been 'promoted into obscurity' after losing a power struggle seeking help as she rebuilds her fortunes. This parallel approach continues once you reach the adventure proper. Separate introductions are provided to lead the party into essentially a common situation: a deep gnome settlement struggling to remain free from Drow influences. Help them or take them over yourselves are the basic options depending on which track the characters have chosen to follow. Whatever they are doing, they have vast trackless wastes of underground labyrinth to travel through, complete with a massive fungal jungle - home to unimagined horrors, of course - and the dearth of anything much to eat, even if you do like mushrooms! It is an unfamiliar environment, an alien place where fine marble and metals are commonplace, firewood is rare and sunlight is never seen.

The adventure comes in three main stages: the deep gnome village, the fungal jungle and a Drow outpost. Each event is approached in parallel with notes aimed at both styles - tagged Explorer and Overlord for ease of reference. Once the scene is set it is up to the party how to reach and what they decide to do. All the details you'll need are provided in the event descriptions, making the adventure very easy to run. There is a tremendous amount to see and do down here, it should keep any party, Explorer or Overlord, occupied and entertained for several sessions at the very least, and there are wonders to be seen and surprises galore. Given the sandbox nature of the adventure, there are some notes to aid in troubleshooting should the party depart completely from what has been intended ... although in many ways, they cannot really go off the rails whatever they decide to do.

Map support is excellent. Players are provided with a virtually blank 'map' to chart their travels on, whilst the GM has copious maps and descriptions to aid in keeping everything straight. There's even a bunch of 'random map elements' you can throw in as appropriate. The illustrations are awesome and some will work well to show the players what their characters can see... and all the maps (unlabelled) and some images appear in a separate 'handouts' file for ease of use. Adventure done (for the time being) there are appendices. One covers playing dwarf characters, including how to build an all-dwarf party that works coherently within the scope of the game. A second covers drow in much the same way, because if you have chosen the Overlord track, the party will be of necessity drow. Finally there is a fascinating Patron system to aid in creating a divine patron for a group of characters. Whilst aimed at creating some measure of party cohesion for a bunch of self-seeking drow, it works equally well for more conventional good-intentioned groups. A neat idea is that it is designed as a collaborative exercise for players and GM together.

Overall, an exciting start to what has potential to be an epic campaign.

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