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CHARACTER MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE FOR PLAYERS AND GMS

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| ame Hakkon Truesilver | Human Bbn 4, Clr 3 HP: 95/95 AC: 17 Cash: ~791 GP | |
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2011 Gold ENnie Award Winner Best Aid or Accessory



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Editorial

by Dave Paul

I've had a cold for about a week. I think it's the same cold that about half of North America seems to have had recently. I have weird dreams when I have a cold. I also don't sleep well when I have a cold. I can't really figure that out. Usually, getting lots of rest is what's best for someone who's sick. My whole life, whenever I've been sick, both the quality and the quantity of my sleep is compromised. I don't get it. How I've sometimes wished I had access to something like a sleep spell in real life.

The good news, if there is some, is that my dreams, when I'm sick, tend to be repetitive and annoying. That's good news, in this case, because I've been working on lots of Rite Publishing material and so whenever I doze off, my fevered unconscious works on this stuff furiously. So, I get these insane bursts of creativity, often coated in the goofy, inarticulable blur of whatever it is my brain is doing when it's filled with viruses.

The most recent inventory of whopping weirdness includes:

1. A bunch of necromancy spells based, somehow, on drinking hot tea,

- 2. Kaidanese horror stories,
- 3. Swamps,
- 4. Cowboy hats,
- 5. Dread banshees.

I'm sure I can put all this together into some kind of coherent whole, but, there's no real reason to do that. I did find all the weird necromancy spells interesting. I was dreaming of a sort of magic jar spell that allows the caster to select a bunch of targets and then hop from one to another. That's been done before, of course, in various works of fiction, but, the version I dreamed up

works a little differently. It relies on some mechanics of a demiplane idea I've had rattling around lately. I'll probably bounce all of this off of Steve in a few months, once some of my other issues have settled down (maybe this would be a good post-GenCon task). What I have planned would work in the Plane of Dreams (though it would work elsewhere too).

I think the whole business of the hot tea was a link through the quasi-oriental theme into the Kaidan stuff I've been working on lately as well. I really want to get that material finished and into others' hands. There isn't a connection I can think of between the cowboy hats and anything else I was dreaming about today, but, my wife has been binge watching Justified, so, there's probably some of that swirling around with the rest of the junk in my brain. The dread banshee that I was dreaming of is on the cover of this issue. I wasn't specifically thinking about the image before I napped this afternoon, but, I had been working on the template recently. She's a lot more dangerous than a regular banshee, for several reasons, but one in particular stands out. I wonder if you'll find it.

I left the swamps out on purpose. I know why I was dreaming of swamps, and, with any luck, I'll be sharing some of that with you in these pages over the coming months. Despite the surrealistic fun that my dreams deliver when I'm sick, I really would prefer to be healthy and getting normal sleep again. Even better, if I am feeling well, you won't have to read about my maddening dreams next month.

Happy gaming.



Rite Publishing Presents

The Secrets of the Masquerade Reveler





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Dread Banshee Creature Semplate By Steven D. Russell; Illustrations by Eva Maria Töker

Like a normal banshee, a dread banshee is the enraged spirit of a female creature who either betrayed those she loved or was herself betrayed. Maddened by grief, a dread banshee visits her vengeance on all living creatures-innocent or guilty-with her fearsome touch and deadly wails. The appearance of a dread banshee is as varied as that of a standard banshee except she can appear as she did in life, or as a beautiful, ghostly female creature that glides through the air.

Creating a Dread Banshee Creature

"Dread banshee" is an acquired template that can be added to any living, intelligent female creature. A dread banshee uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: +3

Alignment: Always chaotic evil.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead with the appropriate augmented subtype, plus the incorporeal subtype if the base creature did not already have it. Do not recalculate base attack bonuses, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Change all racial Hit Dice to d8s.

Speed: A dread banshee loses all the base creature's speeds and gains a fly speed equal to double the base creature's highest speed, with perfect maneuverability.

Armor Class: The base creature's armor, shield, and natural armor bonuses no longer apply, but the dread banshee gains a deflection bonus to AC equal to its Charisma bonus or +1, whichever is higher.

Attack: The dread banshee losses all the base creature's natural attacks, and its weapon and armor proficiencies. The dread banshee gains a primary incorporeal touch attack. A dread banshee uses its primary incorporeal touch attack when making an attack action. Because an incorporeal creature has no Strength score, its Dexterity modifier rather than its Strength modifier applies to all its attack rolls.

Damage: The dread banshee's incorporeal touch attacks deal negative energy damage equal to 3d6 + an additional 1d6/CR plus terror (see below). For example, a CR 13 dread banshee would deal 16d6 negative energy damage plus terror.

Special Abilities: A dread banshee creature retains all the special abilities of the base creature, and gains the special abilities as described below.

Daylight Vulnerability (Su): A dread banshee takes a -4 penalty on all attack rolls, checks, and saves when in natural sunlight (but not within the radius of a daylight spell).

Dread Terror (Su): A creature damaged by the dread

banshee's touch attack must make a successful Will save (DC 10 $\pm 1/2$ the dread banshee's HD \pm her Charisma modifier). Failure means that the victim cowers in fear for 1d4+1 rounds. A successful save renders the target shaken for 1 round. If a target is protected against fear by a dispellable effect (such as *heroes' feast* or *mind blank*), the banshee's touch attempts to dispel one such effect with greater dispel magic (CL equal to dread banshee's CR). Negative energy damage caused by a dread banshee's touch can both harm the living and heal undead. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Dread Wail (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds, a dread banshee may wail as a standard action. The wail lasts until the beginning of her next turn. All creatures within 80 feet of the banshee when she begins her wail, as well as all creatures that end their turn within that radius, must make a successful Fortitude save (10 + 1/2 the dread)banshee's HD + her Charisma modifier, this save is only required once per wail.) Creatures under the effects of a fear effect take a -4 penalty on this save. Creatures that make their save are sickened for 1d8+1 rounds. Those that fail take 10 points of damage per CR of the dread banshee (as if affected by a wail of the banshee with caster level equal to her CR). This is a sonic death effect. Dread banshee wails are supernaturally powerful, and penetrate the effect of any spell of 3rd level or lower that creates silence.

Hear Heartbeat (Ex): A dread banshee can sense the beating hearts of living creatures within 120 feet, as if it had the blindsight ability.

Abilities: Dex +12 (+6 to incorporeal touch attacks, AC and touch AC, Initiative, and Ref saves; +6 to Acrobatics, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Fly, Ride, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth checks, add +6 to any of the base creature's Dexterity-based DCs), Wis +8 (+4 to Will saves, +4 to Heal, Perception, Profession, Sense Motive and Survival checks, add +4 to any of the base creature's Wisdombased 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). As an incorporeal creature, a dread banshee lacks a Strength score, and as an undead creature, it has no Constitution score.

Feats: Dread banshee creatures gain Dodge, Eschew Materials, Mobility, Spring Attack and Weapon Focus (touch) as bonus feats.



Rhysslra the Releaser CR7

Dread Banshee Serpentfolk

CE Medium undead (augmented [monstrous humanoid]) Init +15; Senses darkvision 60ft., hear heartbeat 120 ft. (as blindsight) scent; Perception +14

Defense

AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 17 (+7 deflection, +11 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 57 (5d8+35)

Fort +3, Ref +15, Will +10

Defensive Abilities incorporeal; **Immune** mindaffecting effects, paralysis, poison, undead traits; **SR** 15 **Weakness** daylight vulnerability

Offense

Speed Fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee incorporeal touch +17 (10d6 negative energy plus dread terror)

Special Attacks dread terror (DC 19), dread wail (100 points DC 19)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +7)

Atwill-disguiseself(humanoidformonly,DC16),ventriloquism1/day-blur, mirror image, suggestion (DC 18)

Tactics

Before Combat Rhysslra likes to move about scouting out her opponents seeking to identify those who could channel positive energy and those who might wield ghost touch weapons. She will often act like a helpful phantom until she makes a determination.

During Combat Rhysslra makes good use of her spring attack, incorporeal nature and ability to hear heartbeats to attack creatures and then to move to hide inside a wall; she likes to hit those who have ghost touch weapons or can channel energy with her dread terror first and then to let lose her wail the following round.

Morale Rhysslra favors hit and run tactics over prolonged confrontations and will retreat and use her negative energy touch to heal herself.

Statistics

Str -, Dex 33, Con -, Int 18, Wis 23, Cha 24 Base Atk +5; CMB +5; CMD 26

Feats Dodge, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (touch)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Disguise +12, Escape Artist +24, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Perception +14, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +9, Use Magic Device +14; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Use Magic Device, +8 Escape Artist Languages Aklo, Common, Draconic, Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.



RICE MAD DACK



"Wait, he's her half-brother?"

Handling Complicated Relationships in Realm Works

By Liz Theis

Complicated families! Political intrigue! Warring cities! These events and backstories can make a game more interesting for your players, but are hard for a Game Master to keep track of. Over the past month, I've been on over half a dozen podcasts to talk about Realm Works and I've had a chance to talk to many members of the RPG community. In almost every case, the gamer I was speaking with brought up their frustration with tracking relationships between the people, places, and things within their game.

Now, Realm Works can do a whole lot more than just track relationships. You can bring your world to life with images, statblocks, and even audio and video files. Once built, you can automatically link your game details together and visualize your world's relationships and connections. You can even share your story with players by revealing your world using Realm Works' patentpending Fog of World[™] tools. This ground-breaking technology can be used to share every aspect of your story with your players – maps, portraits, NPCs, locations, relationships, plots, and a whole lot more, either on your laptop screen or an external monitor.

While Realm Works can assist Game Masters in many ways, I thought it would be helpful to explain how it can make a GM's life easier when it comes to tracking relationships. As a couple of the podcasters pointed out, keeping track of relationships can get in the way of world building as you struggle to keep track of every connection. It can even bog down the game as you try to remember how everyone and everything in your world is related. How does Realm Works assist a Game Master with managing all of this? Realm Works starts with the objective "make it easy to manage relationships" and takes it to the next level.

Family Trees Enhanced

Family trees are the one of the most obvious examples of relationship tracking that's supported within Realm Works, and help you visualize how a family is connected. As you can see in my royal family tree, Talia is the daughter of Seliese and Frederick. Seliese is the daughter of George and Eliese, and has a sister Nicolette. Just like a family tree, Realm Works provides you with a visual representation to help you and your players understand a complicated family. This is perfect for helping your players get their heads around the details of a royal dynasty!

What about other types of relationships? We recognize that people are connected by much more than family. For example, my campaign has a smuggling ring in one of my cities. I can track who is in charge and which characters



make up the other ranks within the organization. I just tell Realm Works which characters are the supervisors and which are the subordinates, and I suddenly have an organization chart at my fingertips! You can also keep track of a master and his minions, or an employer and her employees, or other similar structures.

You can even use Realm Works to track relationships between groups, locations, and more. For example, in my world there's a large wizard's council that helps further magical study and research. There are smaller chapters in many large cities, where wizards can go to find rare texts, learn the latest news, and share information. I told Realm Works that each chapter is part of the larger council, and now I can keep track of all of the many chapter locations within my world. You can also manage which characters live within a certain location, or track which characters are members of a specific organization.

Friends and Enemies

In stories with intrigue and political infighting, one of the characters may publicly like another character, but actually secretly despise them. This adds greater complexity to your world and can be troublesome to handle manually, but can be easily managed and visualized within Realm Works. Just like specifying a relationship with another character, you can give your characters separate public and private attitudes ranging from "Gracious" to "Hostile". Now you can easily keep track of which noble lords and ladies are conspiring to overthrow the king behind his back.

You can use this same feature to track attitudes between cities, countries, and even worlds. You can see which countries are allied together, and also their private feelings towards one another with just a few clicks. Realm Works is perfect for stories with complicated conspiracies and politics.

Navigate through the Story

11

Because the relationship trees and your story are stored within the same tool, you can use the relationship diagram to find information throughout your world. For my royal family, I just need to click on "Seliese de Maere" and Realm Works will bring me to my information on

Queen Seliese. Now I not only see my royal family in one place, but I can use it to find information about each character in a matter of seconds.

This quick navigation makes it easier to move between your content as you build your world, or to find information during the game.

Master Your Game

Users are praising the organization and flexibility that Realm Works provides through its management of relationships. As Barbara W. shared with us, "The flow charts and relationship tracking and links alone make it so easy to organize everything at the touch of a button." Mark T. agreed, saying, "The relationship tracking, and its flexibility, helps me add the complex political elements I like in my games." But don't take Barbara's and Mark's word for it, judge it for yourself! You can learn more about Realm Works or purchase a copy from our web site at <u>www.GetRealmWorks.com</u>. Realm Works is available now for \$49.99, and includes 6 months of free standard tier cloud service (a \$24.99 value).

Transform your game today, and find out why Realm Works is the best tool to manage your story's relationships!





RICE MAD DACK

RIVER RADIOS

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CARTOGRAPHY BY TOMMI SALAMA

Sost

By Creighton Broadhurst, Illustrated by Fadly Romdhani

A devoted adherent of the living flame, Sost delights in consigning unbelievers to a fiery death in the bowels of his ever hungry patron.

Background: When he was just a boy, a young girl in Sost's village began to manifest sorcerous powers. Sadly, she couldn't control her powers and a series of fires marred the community. The fires culminated in a fatal conflagration in which the girl died. Sost witnessed this final fire – and heard the screams of the dying girl – and ever since then he has been fascinated by fire

Personality: Sost is black-hearted and selfcentred. Obsessed with fire, he takes every opportunity he can get to study it. Sost is also a sadist and loves to consign living things to the flames so he can watch their death throes. A thoroughly foul individual, Sost loves manipulating those around him and thinks nothing of doing so to get what he wants.

Sost has heard tales of volcanoes and the elemental plane of fire. He would dearly love to visit either or both.

Mannerisms: Sost often cackles to himself – as if enjoying some private joke – during conversations. In fact, he is imagining the person he is talking with being consumed by fire.

Distinguishing Features: Sost has big, bushy eyebrows that meet above his nose. His hair is similarly unkempt and thick.

Hooks: Sost preys on the weak-minded and the desperate. When the PCs encounter Sost, he is living in a small borderland village. The last harvest was bad and the peasants fear another disastrous year. Using his clerical spells and powers of diplomacy, Sost has convinced the village to make a great sacrifice to please the gods. The peasants have built a huge bonfire atop a nearby hill. As the PCs arrive, the villagers are drawing lots to see who will be hurled, as a living sacrifice, into the flames.

Sost _(<u>XP 2,400)</u>_

Tall and slender, this man wears a fine breastplate and clerical vestments of red and orange.

CR

6

14

Male human cleric 7

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +4, Sense Motive +4

Speed 20 ft., base speed 30 ft.; ACP -3; Acrobatics -4 (-8 jumping)

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 18; CMD 14

(+7 armour [+1 breastplate], -1 Dex)

Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +9

hp 63 (7 HD)

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

Melee +1 morningstar +6 (1d8+1) or

- **Melee Touch** touch of darkness (7/day) +5 (target's foes have concealment for 3 rounds)
- Ranged Touch fire bolt (range 30 ft.; 7/day) +5 (1d6+3 fire)

Atk Options Blind-Fight

- **Special Actions** channel negative energy (6/day; 4d6; DC 16)
- **Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 7th; concentration +11 [+15 grappling or casting defensively]; Darkness, Fire; spontaneous casting [*inflict* spells])
- 4th—freedom of movement, unholy blight (DC 18), wall of fire^D
- 3rd—bestow curse (DC 17), dispel magic, fireball^D (DC 17), protection from energy
- 2nd—darkness, hold person (2; DC 16), blindness/deafness^D (DC 16; blindness only), silence (DC 16)
- 1st—bane (DC 15), burning hands^D (DC 15), cause fear (DC 15), protection from good (DC 15), sanctuary (DC 15), shield of faith
- 0-bleed (DC 14), detect magic, mending, read magic, resistance
- **Combat Gear** potion of barkskin, potion of cure moderate wounds, wand of sound burst (14 chgs.)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 12



${\bf SQ}$ aura of evil (moderate)

Feats Blind-Fight^B, Combat Casting^B, Extra Channel, Improved Initiative, Improved Channel, Toughness

Skills as above plus Diplomacy +7, Heal +14, Knowledge (religion) +11, Profession (surgeon) +14, Spellcraft +5

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal

Gear as above plus component pouch, silver unholy symbol, 40 gp



Tords of Gossamer & Shadow

Threats: Dawn of the Dwimmerlaik





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Yorg

By Creighton Broadhurst, Illustrated by Irontree

An accomplished warrior, Yorg is a wanderer who searches for a place to call his own.

Background: Thrown out of his home when barely more than a child by uncaring parents, Yorg has wandered for his entire adult life. Particularly ugly, even or a half-orc, he has rarely found a welcome in the settlements through which he passes. He has tried his hand at both the adventuring and mercenary life and, while he is good at both, neither felt right to him.

Personality: Warped by his early life experiences, Yorg has learnt the only person he can truly rely on is himself. Thus, he never makes friends, and is genuinely surprised if someone is nice to him. Yorg wants to settle down in peace and searches constantly for somewhere that will afford him the acceptance he craves. Recently, he has begun to believe his quest is a hopeless one and has begun to think it would be easier to force people to like him.

Mannerisms: Yorg's hand is never far from his sword's pommel. His eyes constantly dart about, measuring potential threats.

Distinguishing Features: Ugly even for a half-orc, Yorg stands out in a crowd. His huge tusks, thick forehead and piggy eyes combine to make all attempts at disguise hopeless.

Hooks: The PCs likely meet Yorg on the road. Trudging along in search of a place to stay the night, he is a foul mood. If the PCs anger him, he may challenge one of them to a duel. Alternatively, if the PCs are friendly and offer him the warmth of their campfire he is suspicious and withdrawn. He leaves before dawn, unless the party has made a strong impression.



(XP 3,200)

Clad in a fine mesh shirt and bearing a steel shield and bastard sword, this half-orc warrior radiates an aura of barely-restrained violence.

 $C\mathbf{R}$

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Male half-orc fighter 8

NE Medium humanoid (human, orc)

- Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +1, Sense Motive +1
- Speed 30 ft.; ACP -1; Acrobatics +3, Climb +9, Swim +10

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19; CMD 24

(+6 armour [+2 *chain shirt*], +2 Dex, +3 shield [mwk heavy steel; Shield Focus])

Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +6 (+8 vs. fear)

hp 72 (HD); orc ferocity

Orc Ferocity (Ex [1/day]) When below 0 hp, Yorg can fight on for one more round as if disabled. At the end of this turn, unless brought above 0 hp, he falls unconscious.

Space 5 ft.; Base Atk +8; CMB +12

Melee +1 bastard sword (Power Attack [-3/+6]) +15/+10 (1d10+8/19-20) or

Melee mwk dagger +13/+8 (1d4+4/19-20)

Ranged mwk heavy crossbow (range 120 ft.) +11 (1d10/19-20)

Atk Options Vital Strike

Combat Gear bolts (12), potion of cure serious wounds

- Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
- **SQ** armour training (2), bravery (+2), weapon familiarity, weapon training (heavy blades [+1])
- **Feats** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialisation (bastard sword)
- **Skills** as above plus Intimidate +12, Profession (mercenary) +7

Languages Common, Orc

Gear as above plus cloak of resistance +1, 34 gp, 17 sp



Rite Publishing Presents

20 Variant Foes: Worgs & Winter Wolves









By Elaine Betts and Justin P. Sluder

Twenty Questions with Brian Berg

by Steven D. Russell

1. Could you tell us a little about yourself?

Hello! I'm Brian Berg, cofounder and CEO of Total Party Kill Games. I have been playing RPGs and reading every ounce of fantasy literature I could get my hands on since I was a teen. RPGs gave me great friends, a creative outlet and a thirst for knowledge. I was almost always the GM for my respective groups, famously once running a public game of 2nd edition D&D Birthright for 12 regular players at the local mall. This is simply further proof that I'm slightly crazy.

I think it's natural for GMs to become mechanical tinkerers in their own right. Eventually, you find that the existing mechanics for many things can be tweaked to suit your own settings and ideas, or you would simply change them for a different flavor. My own amateur work actually began in earnest when I launched a very large Rifts d20 conversion. I was always a huge fan of the setting for the Rifts game, but the rules left a lot to be desired. Our forum had thousands of visitors and hundreds of collaborators. It was during that time that I was really exposed to design and found that people really enjoyed what I was able to create. That fueled the fire for my publishing career. That and beer money.

Total Party Kill Games (TPK Games) became our outlet for creating the sort of products we had wanted to purchase. We emphasized our brand over trying to be another face in the sea of third party publishers creating the same sort of products. In fact, we chose the name TPK Games because it is evocative. Everyone knows what a TPK is, and the sort of adrenaline-laced fear the name brings to mind. You've all had those games where you only just barely scraped by using your wits and awesome team effort, or just plain luck. That's the sort of fun we bring to the table. As such, our adventures are wildly popular and we have sort of a cult following of loyal (some would say rabid) fans. You might see a number of our t-shirts out there these days and our logo is very distinctive in the RPG market.

On a personal level, I've written for a number of other publishers as well. I've done work for Adventure-A-Week, Open Gaming Monthly and Samurai Sheepdog off the top of my head. Gygax magazine invited me to pen an article for them, and there are a number of other great authors and companies that I would enjoy working with. I made the mistake of becoming a publisher instead of an RPG Superstar contestant and/or freelance writer first. I absolutely love what I do though; there is almost no greater satisfaction than to hear people tell you how much fun they've had playing with your products. That, to me, is what it is really all about.



2. What is your home game like?

I'm very lucky that my immediate and extended families are all gamers as well. We play board games and Munchkin quite often as a social pastime. My actual Pathfinder game however, is much more serious. It's set in a campaign setting we have been putting together since the Pathfinder Beta. It's a very dark game, one that tells a story of madness, greed and tragic loss. Imagine a setting where a Hyborean-inspired world grows to reach its pinnacle, then collapses upon itself. Shame and destruction cause the great races to migrate and flee their homelands, themselves becoming invaders on new lands. Lovecraftian horrors fester within the earth and drive the under-races mad. The resulting setting is one where the common tropes have been thrown on their ear, yet there is a deep connection with our own world. It somewhat parallels the misgivings of our own race in the actions of the fantastical. It's a setting that lends itself well to deep roleplaying. The final chapters are still yet to be written by the heroes, as the players can still do great things and their actions have a powerful impact on the future of the world.

When we have everything finalized you could probably expect to see us produce this as a campaign setting of sorts. I've already commissioned a painting (yes... painting) for our first setting product by a legendary ex-TSR artist. We'll reveal our partners in this gambit later this year.

3. What is your favorite Paizo product?

There are so many good books, that it is like asking which of your children you love most. I really like the *Monsters Revisited* line. *Undead Revisited* in particular is a favorite of mine, mostly because when it comes to gaming, I love the darker options and those products allow you to surprise your players with some fresh new abilities. I'd also have to say that Paizo really surprised

me with *Bestiary 4*. By the time WotC had published their fourth monster manual, I was already yawning. The fourth bestiary for Pathfinder is chock full of great content and I don't see them slowing down if that title is any indication.

4. You are currently CEO for TPK games how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

As one of the founding members of the company, I chose to direct our company, launching our vision of dark fantasy. I have a silent quiet partner, PJ Harn, who also helps guide our vision and rein me in from time to time. I'm pretty vocal about Wis being my dump stat. After all, I did become a third party publisher right?

We had been toying around with the idea of publishing some of our ideas, as we both loved to tinker around with game mechanics. We had been loyal customers of several third party publishers over the years and we really thought we had something unique to bring to the table. It turns out we did, but only because we chose a specific brand and direction to differentiate ourselves. I think we would have easily been lost in the sea of amateur publishers had we not.

Today we've broadened our scope somewhat, and hire a number of talented freelancers to work with us. Many of the fine folks that work on our publications are also contributors to the Paizo core books and authors of Pathfinder Society adventures. I'm tackling one of my greatest pet peeves, critical hits, with our upcoming Laying Waste supplements and we are doing more player-driven material. One thing that is probably evident with our products is that they are never just a cash-grab. As independent publishers, we have the ability to write whatever we want, as opposed to attempting to write something that appeals simply to the masses for a quick buck. Consequently, you'll see some interesting material from us, like Servants of Shadow: Five Necromancy-themed Races. That's content that Paizo is never going to publish, and few other third party publishers would consider. Still, it sold extremely well and was a top 5 in DriveThruRPG's hottest small press and the number one Pathfinder category product for a long time. We've actually only been publishing for a couple of years and our releases are consistently in DriveThru's top 10. This tells me that TPK's brand of dark fantasy is on the right track.

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

I think my most sentimental product is *The Malefactor*. It was our first class sourcebook, and I absolutely loved the class, feeling that marrying game mechanics and roleplaying was a stroke of genius. The con though, was that it wasn't going to be a party friendly character, and it would take a particular sort of person to play the class and enjoy it. We took the gamble, and it was very well received. I mean, who doesn't love it when one of your allies rolls a '1' and you benefit from it!

My favorite project though is the upcoming *Laying Waste: A Guide to Critical Combat* sourcebook. It's a gargantuan-sized book dedicated to critical hits and fumbles. It includes a fully modular critical hit and fumble system to replace the existing one in Pathfinder and d20-based games. Add to that some awesome archetypes, magic weapon properties, tons of feats and more, you have a unique book that will change the way a lot of gamers play the game.

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

I think the tagline for *Laying Waste* was very bold. We told people that "everything you know about critical hits is wrong." While not entirely true, it sold the product as new and inventive. People on Kickstarter definitely agreed, as we funded 640% of our goal. To me, that meant that there was definitely an audience that agreed with my vision and were seeking more from combat other than sheer hit point destruction.

On a secondary level, I tapped a number of really great freelancers and industry leaders to join the project. I loved working with everyone and the hive mind was able to come up with some really cool ideas that the fans will love.

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

I have a tremendous amount of passion for this project. I didn't decide to write it just to make money, I really feel strongly about the issue. Consequently, I feel pleased with everything about the whole project. What really is ingenious though is that I address one of the biggest flaws (in my humble opinion) with the d20 system. Players are always rewarded for rolling critical threats! There was nothing more defeating than rolling a natural 20, and hearing the cheers of your friends and then not confirming your critical. That's just not good design in my opinion.

In *Laying Waste* we reward players with max damage for rolling a threat, and the confirmation roll is replaced by a severity check. You make a roll to determine how well you strike, and even if you don't gain a critical effect, you still end up with max damage.

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

The most challenging aspect of working on *Laying Waste* was ensuring that the new system was fair and balanced. It introduced pretty sweeping changes to how combat works, and if it wasn't done well, then people would be very disappointed. We spent a full year testing the system in-house and then allowed our backers to serve as a second wave of playtesters. Now that everyone is happy, I think we are in a great position to release it.

9. Did you learn anything while working on it?

My biggest issue was that one of my product partners went out of business and was no longer able to provide the promised rewards. Because this project ran behind

the scenes for a year before we even launched the kickstarter, much transpired outside of our control during that time. I can't stress enough the importance of keeping in touch with your business partners throughout the process.

10. Other than your own work and TPK Games products, what is the best Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible product out there?

There's a ton of good stuff out there. The product that probably makes the most impact to my games is Dreamscarred Press' Ultimate Psionics. It's a solid book that adds a great element to your games that doesn't exist in Pathfinder currently. It's a gorgeous book, and the gents at Dreamscarred have been great partners with us. We carry the book at our convention shows as well. When I believe in another company's work, I'm more than happy to promote their work.

Another excellent product is Rogue Genius Games' Spellpoints Compilation. I've never been a fan of Vancian magic. Never. Their system is a great alternative to those who feel that magic should be more of a channeling of arcane energy and less rigid. You'll see it play a role in some of our future products.

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

The beauty of Pathfinder RPG compatible products is that they are able to explore ideas that are too great of an outlier for mainstream production by Paizo. This means you get unique ideas and fresh thought. Leave Paizo to do the core design and let the other publishers delve into some of the fringe ideas. Paizo might shy from a book on sacrificial blood magic, but we wouldn't.

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

I think I'd have to universally choose Owen K.C. Stephens. Owen's sheer volume of ability is staggering. Even if you aren't wowed by every product he designs or produces, there are still tons of great gems. Super Genius Games was the impetus for creating TPK. We realized we had the capability and thought the business model was doable, so they are really the ones responsible for inspiring us to get into the business.

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

I fear I could go on and on. I've worked with a lot of freelancers and they range widely in ability and talent. The first step is to actually do something. Be able to execute *something*. Even if your ideas are not perfect, we have a team that can help flesh them out and a great editor. But, before you ever reach that point, you must do something. Publishers will want to see your past experience. What have you done? What have you created? What are you good at? What are your weaknesses? You can talk yourself up all you want, but if you can't show us a single completed work, you probably are just blowing smoke and could be a waste of time and resources, something publishers have precious little of already.

Next, be open to feedback and act like a professional. If someone gives you constructive criticism of your work, and you throw a tantrum, you probably aren't going to ever work with that publisher, nor will you ever work with any of the inner circle of Pathfinder Compatible publishers. We all chat amongst ourselves, and the best and worst experiences carry quickly.

Put yourself in the RPG Superstar contest. This is simply a great way to see if you have both the chops and the mental fortitude to be an RPG designer/author. You will get great feedback if you have thick skin. Did you think it was going to be easy? Much like anything in life, you must put forth a lot of effort in order to get any rewards. Also, that's a great way to have your name publicized and publishers take note of your abilities. You don't have to win either. I've recruited several of the contestants simply because they designed ideas that fit our brand. I look for people who fit our vision. If you love our work and want to pitch something though, don't be shy. Find us on Facebook or email me directly at necro@tpkgames.com.

14. Who is your favorite tabletop RPG Illustrator?

While a tough choice, I'd have to go with Brom. He hasn't been active in the Pathfinder community, so many of the younger gamers might not even know his work. However, his art was hugely impactful and inspiring to me in my youth. His White Wolf work and Dark Sun imagery set the stage for what I imagined. I actually own a print of Brom's 'Elric' hanging in my office.

It's really interesting to think what an impact artists have on an RPG. Art is what helps you visualize the setting. It breathes life into the game, and gives you a baseline for your mind's eye. Guys like Jeff Easley, Gerald Brom, Larry Elmore and Tony Szczudlo were highly instrumental in their work on their respective game settings. I've met each, and they are all gracious fellows with some outstanding tales to tell about their days working for TSR. Would Pathfinder be *Pathfinder* as we know it without the amazing work of Wayne Reynolds? It would have a very different feel, I suspect.

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

We have been premiere events at GenCon each year we've ran games there. That's some incredible recognition for a third party company. That told us early on that our *Bleeding Hollow* adventure was going to be widely received. We had some folks tell us that even though they paid for some Magic the Gathering tournaments, they were going to blow them off to continue our next sessions of *The Bleeding Hollow* because they were so enraptured and *had* to find out what happened next. That too, spoke volumes.

Really though, the fan responses are why we

publish. I share the hobby with our fans. It's *our* hobby. I'm a gamer too, obviously. When someone comes up to our booth at a convention and tells us all about how their party dealt with the challenges of *The Reaping Stone*, and that they'd be talking about those game sessions for years to come, that's why we publish games.

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

I'd love to. We are currently working on a trilogy of dwarven adventures. The first of which is *The Ruins of Honor*, and is actually set in the campaign setting we are building. The trilogy tells the tales of the dwarves in this world and if successful, we'd work towards a full blown campaign setting. While that alone is cool, there are some gaming legends attached to the writing and setting as well. I grew up in TSR's backyard so to speak, so I'm friends with a number of vets who share my passion for the game. We are brewing up something very original and exciting.

17. Do you have any goals for TPK Games that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

I'm never satisfied with where I am in life. I'm always striving for the next level of achievement (I blame gaming for that...). I would love to see our work in a wider distribution. Great as that idea is, there are still hobby stores that don't carry RPGs in our area because "D&D no longer sells." Obviously that means no RPGs sell right? I'm a champion for gaming as an excellent hobby, and simple-mindedness like that gets under my skin. I'd like to see us continue to grow, but I want the industry as a whole to grow.

18. Can you tell us a little about Servants of Shadow?

I'd love to chat a little about *Servants of Shadow*. This is exactly the sort of reason I'm a publisher, and not just a freelancer. I get to write crazy things from the deepest, darkest recesses of my brain. Five necromancy-themed races was a pretty wild idea, but a very successful one. I had a number of ideas for races, and was able to put them all to pen. Some served better as templates, and were created as such, but in all we were left with some options for players that would create some really interesting and compelling roleplaying complexities. I mean, who wouldn't want to play a barbarian or shaman from a tribe of half-ghoul cannibals...

19. What do you do outside of gaming?

I have a few other hobbies. I love music. I could talk for hours about my favorite bands too. My mother introduced me to the Beatles, the Doors, KISS, David Bowie and Alice Cooper at a pretty young age and no doubt those bands had a huge influence on me as well. I still listen to the old classics, but I love 90's industrial, 80's hair metal and modern metal too.

Oddly, at 6'4" I never enjoyed playing common sports. I love martial arts and boxing, but never bothered with basketball or football. I have studied jiujitsu, kickboxing, shorei-ryu and goju-ryu karate for over a decade. Despite all that, I'm probably one of the nicest guys you'll meet, and never have to crack skulls in real life. These days at least. I enjoy biking a lot too. The area where I live has some really nice parks and recreation trails, and that's one sort of exercise that can be fun with the whole family. Rural Iowa isn't exactly exciting.

I also enjoy board games and video games, though I do a lot less video gaming than you might think. Being a publisher is 10 or 20 times more difficult than simply being a writer. There are huge investments of time needed to accomplish your goals and objectives, and video games aren't really conducive to that. Every once in a while though, I pull out my bounty hunter and shoot fools in the head with some Star Wars the Old Republic. I'm also really watching with anticipation at the Goblinworks Pathfinder MMO.

I love to read also, but that has sadly gone by the wayside as I pour myself into writing and publishing. If for some reason you haven't read the *Thieves' World* anthology, get your hands on the first few today! Also, authors like Dennis McKiernan, Raymond E. Feist, Ed Greenwood, Elaine Cunningham and Anne Rice really crafted my "fantasy reality."

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

I think some people become publishers for the money or because they want "geek fame." I'm not that guy. Some of the luminaries of the gaming field I've met were great people. Others were self-important egotists (which is a shame, you should be eternally grateful for every single fan). I make gaming products to promote the hobby and to create something memorable and fun for people. To me, the game is almost more about the social interaction than the game played. If you are having fun with your friends, it doesn't matter what you play or how. My goal is just to add to that enjoyment. That gives me a tremendous amount of satisfaction.

I really lead a rather charmed life. My family is very supportive of my creative endeavors and that support lets me do a lot of the day-to-day efforts. We also have a fantastic fanbase, who I credit for our ever-growing success and survival in the industry. Everyone has been tremendously supportive, even my publishing "competitors." I consider myself very lucky to have all of these things and I don't take a single one of them for granted. If you love gaming, we are already friends. Feel free to friend me directly on Facebook or seek out our Total Party Kill Games pages on Facebook, Google+ or Twitter. I'll look forward to hearing from you all!

Fibe Merromancy Abemed Kares





Reviews



about?

Gossamer Worlds: Brokeworld Publisher: Rite Publishing Reviewer: Thilo Graf Rating: 5 stars out of 5 stars

Infinite worlds lie on the Grand Stairs – here, we get Brokeworld in a 6-page pdf, of which 1 page is the front cover, 1 page the editorial, leaving 4 pages – so what is Brokeworld all

In in-character prose, this little supplement introduces us to the Brokeworld, a cosmic dumping ground for other gossamer worlds – plagued by size/shapechanging gremlins that propagate via fecal matter, roamed by the Unmade, broken practitioners of Eidolon, this world not only is notoriously hard to leave, its domain table also makes sure that poor saps stranded there have their good stuff slowly drained and means of taking control etc. all are present – a truly destitute, apocalyptic vista indeed!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's purple-bordered two-column standard for LoGaS and the pdf even comes with bookmarks, in spite of its short length.

Written by Matt Banach, who has proven his mettle for the weird before in RiP's superb Faces of the Tarnished Souk-series (which remains my go-to benchmark for NPC-supplements), Brokeworld is a captivating read of a supplemented by a superb top-notch artwork by Trung Ta Ha. Mechanically interesting, with ample narrative potential, it makes for a great place to integrate into a LoGaS-campaign and should also act as a neat inspiration for planar adventures of other settings. Final verdict? 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this inspiring little trek to a world of debris here on OBS and here on d2opfsrd.com's shop!

Another thing, if I may: Rite Publishing is currently holding a funded kickstarter for a print compilation of aforementioned Faces of the Tarnished Souk-series. This series is the benchmark regarding NPC-books for Pathfinder, both in crunch complexity and writing quality – for the former, Justin Sluder, for the latter, Matt Banach, the author of this little pdf. If you haven't seen the KS, check it out **here**!

Endzeitgeist out.



Eclipse: The Codex Persona Publisher: Distant Horizons Games company Reviewer: Thilo Graf Rating: 5 stars out of 5

Okay, today I'll do something different – and take a look at a free

d20-supplement. This review has been requested last years and it took forever. Why? Because we're talking Eclipse, 202 pages, 1 page front cover, 3 pages editorial, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 197 pages, so what do we get?

First of all – if you like this pdf, you can buy the print edition or pay for it here – in the fine shareware tradition, I encourage those of you who find this book interesting to do so.

So, what is this about? This book is essentially the world's biggest character class-generator for d2o-based systems. Don't believe me that this system is massive? Well...you could conceivably play children, infant characters even with it. The system introduces CPs – character points, which are used to buy EVERYTHING – skills, feats, Hit Dice – everything can be customized via these points, of which a character receives 24 per level. How does HD work? Essentially, a character gets d4+con-mod for free – bigger HD cost progressively more CP, allowing, provided the DM allows it, up to d20 HD.

This is a running theme – the system herein offers maximum flexibility, but never tires of emphasizing that a DM should retain the final say.

Skills not on the class-skill-list start as essentially the equivalent of cross-class, becoming class skills at 6 invested CP- with 1 CP equal to 1 rank. Now relevant for PFRPG would be that class skills/cross-class skills are handled more in line with PFRPG than its 3.X predecessor here, but with a catch – the character can also buy very specialized knowledge, i.e. knowing about a specific tome, a ritual etc. – these cost CP as well and provide in-depth information on those topics. Generally, that makes for a very interesting way of handling very specialized information. Saving throws cost 3 CP per point and most specialized abilities clock in at 6 points, but could theoretically also cost more, depending on the ability in question.

BAB is increased similarly – via the slightly unfortunately named Warcraft – which is an ability that costs 6 points and nets +1 BAB. Base Caster Level works similarly and have a limit of level+3, surprisingly. This also extends to the BAB, allowing you to potentially go above the level in question. Spellcasting per level is purchased in a similar manner, with fixed costs. And yes, these include the 3.X psionic classes.

Now beyond tables upon tables, there are roleplaying modifications to CP earned – depending on the campaign you run, you could prescribe X bonus CP to be used in a specific way. On a character's side, players may enter

obligations, restrictions and the like to increase or decrease the CP gained each level. Disadvantages, much like flaws, are presented here as well. Action points are part of the deal as well, mind you, and represent just another buy-in option of specialized abilities available for CP.

Want to have a dominion, an equippage? Doable. Want to get completely rid of any class-distinctions? There you go. Point-buy casting via mana (which could be used to generate power points or spell-levels?) – in here. Return from death, villain-style? Possible. Shapeshifting? Sacrificing treasure in favor of mystic powers? Oversized combat maneuvers and weapons? Yep. Deal ability damage with attacks? Yup. Block attacks via fixed ref-DCs? Yep. This would also be one example (of many), where a particular rules-solution is inelegant and wouldn't see use at my table – ever – non-scaling, competing throws? Not my cup of coffee and similarly, not particularly balanced design.

Metamagic, lacing of spells – the same exceedingly modular approach applies. The same goes for handling ECL+X races and race-generation – including size modifications down to cellular levels. Some existing templates are also broken down by CP-cost and channeling energy, monster abilities etc. are covered in their own chapter, allowing for quite an array of alternative options for channeling.

Now, I've noted the option to have a dominion – this one nets Dominion Points, which allow further options for customization and achieve with the political might. Cardthemed casting, godfire, occult abilities, martial styles, ritual magic, witchcraft – all there. Have I mentioned spells from the levels 10 -23? Yes, in case these meteor showers just don't cut it anymore.

World generation and motivations for characters would also be found herein – the system supports anything from anime-style campaigns to gritty ones and even pokémon-style gameplay. Sample character class (and PrC)-break-downs, handling different power-levels – and even checklists to make sure your now class-less character has proper motivations etc. – all of this is covered and infinitely more.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I didn't notice significant glitches. Layout adheres to an easy to read 2-column b/w-standard with fitting stock art. The pdf comes extensively bookmarked with nested bookmarks.

Paul Melroy and Patrick Bryant have created an interesting book for 3.X – one that can be made compatible with PFRPG, by the way, if you're willing to do some work.

EDIT: I've been made aware that the system has been made Pathfinder compatible – you can find the respective information here:

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2011/09/19/eclipse-

pathfinder-basics-and-races/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2010/09/24/ eclipse-pathfinder-the-barbarian/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2010/09/26/ eclipse-pathfinder-the-bard/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2010/09/27/ eclipse-pathfinder-the-cleric/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2010/09/28/ eclipse-pathfinder-the-monk/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/ eclipse-pathfinder-the-fighter/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2010/10/01/eclipsepathfinder-the-druid/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2010/10/03/ eclipse-pathfinder-the-paladin/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2010/10/04/ eclipse-pathfinder-the-ranger/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2010/10/05/ eclipse-pathfinder-the-rogue/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2010/10/11/eclipsepathfinder-the-expanded-alchemist/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2011/05/19/eclipsepathfinder-the-sorcerer/

http://ruscumag.wordpress.com/2013/03/12/eclipsed20-the-soul-knife/ (notes on the Dreamscarred Press-Pathfinder version at the end)

Thanks to the comments that pointed this out!

Over all, Eclipse provides a superbly modular framework, essentially breaking down d2o-based gaming to its base constituents in the endeavor to allow maximum flexibility. And generally, the authors have done an exceedingly fine job with it. The major problems I found were system-inherent – maximum flexibility allows for maximum options and hence also maximum fluctuation between PC power levels. While generally, the system tries hard to maintain a sense of balance, overall, eclipse is less about standard number-crunching and more about narrative-driven playing environments. "But why not go diceless or old-school in that case?" Well, perhaps you like the framework, perhaps you want some choices...or perhaps you just want general ideas on what *could* make for compelling, non-standardized options.

Now what makes Eclipse different, concise within the d2o-framework? It is a system that breaks just about EVERYTHING down to CP – everything. Attacks, sneak attack, psionics, mana, runes, being a lord – everything. This is the system of ultimate possibilities and this vast array of options, some of which you probably won't even think you desired, makes this book such a mile-stone.

For a mile-stone it is. This book, true to its name, eclipses by far other race/class generators I've seen and over all, remains MUCH MORE balanced than e.g. the race generation in Paizo's ARG or just about all similar generators I've read so far. I still wouldn't unanimously recommend it as a base for a campaign if your players enjoy the power-gaming/number-crunching game, unless you're willing to do quite a lot of checking, also because some of the individual rules simply aren't balanced (or

not scaling) or rather clunky. While in no way true for the majority of content herein, I managed to break a couple of sample concepts – which is acknowledged and in line with the more narrative-driven focus of this book. So what is the grand achievement in this book? This is essentially the talented concept, taken a significant step further. Now while it's theoretically compatible with Pathfinder, I'd contest that claim somewhat by pointing out the changed ability-suites, power-levels, skill-emphasis etc. – it *IS* compatible, yes, but it also imho requires A LOT of work and quite a few design-decisions not all DMs will be capable of making to fully break down PFRPG in CP. While the conversion on the blog are extensive, they necessarily can't cover the entirety of material out there, so be aware of the necessity to do some conversion.

This is modular...in the highest sense. And it also is one of those books that get the juices flowing. Even if you don't use this book, there are so many ideas for classes, archetypes, feats, magic systems etc. in here that any designer who hit a writer's block regarding such concepts can flip open this book and get inspired – not necessarily by the individual mechanics, but by their proximity, their concepts, their general idea and general CP-cost – the same holding true for balancing more esoteric means and CP as a means of specialized knowledge is a stroke of genius idea that could easily be integrated into a given game, even without the rest of the rules – this is crunch/ idea-cherry-picking at its finest – and it's free to check out. If you like what you're reading, support these guys.

All in all, this may not be perfect, but the book is an inspiring read nonetheless and should be checked out by anyone intrigued, even slightly, in the idea of a truly modular character-generator that gets rid of all the classborders. As such, I will rate the inspiration, what can be drawn from this, at 5 stars. You should be aware, though, that the experience provided here is radically different from standard d20 and requires a crunch-savvy DM as well as a lot of dialogue between DM and player and should not be considered a toolkit for anyone. Personally, some of the rules-components rub me the wrong way, I'm a bit too balance-obsessed and too time-starved to break down NPCs etc. in CP, but at the same time loved the inspirations this book provided.

Endzeitgeist out.



Heart of the Razor Publisher: Frog God Games Reviewer: Thilo Graf Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This expansion anthology of 4 adventures to enhance Razor Coast clocks in at 162 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 3 pages of SRD,

1 page ToC, 2 pages char-sheet, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 152 pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

This being a review of an adventure-anthology, the following contains SPOILERS. Potential players should jump to the conclusion.

All right, still here?

First of the adventures would be Richard Pett's "Angry Waters" for 10th level characters - which could be summed up in the words "Quest for Eldorado," at least on a superficial level. The PCs are recruited by one dazzling lady-captain, captain Mercy and her crew – they require the PC's assistance, since they've found the legendary veiled isle - unfortunately, it's within the territory of Armada. What's Armada, you ask? Well, if you've read China Miéville's "The Scar", you'll have an idea – Uriah Tame, the vile lord of the place, lords over a lawless city made of vessels tethered together. Unfortunately, Tame and Mercy aren't exactly on speaking terms. Thus, accompanying the crew on their voyage, the PCs are off to said place. Here, a rather cool mechanic takes root -the PC's actions accrue Victory Points, which serves as a means for the DM to determine the loyalty of Mercy and her crew towards the PCs...and whether they'll be betrayed. Neat! It should also be noted that the module offers quite an array of troubleshooting advice, should the PCs betray Mercy at given stages in the module, making it rather easy to run. But back to Armada - in order to secure passage, the PCs will have to brave the decadent, chaotic revels on Armada in a cool mini-game of skill and, potentially, combat.

Securing passage, the PCs then finally reach the isle in question...which first brings me to an issue. Armada... ought to be more detailed, Seriously, I love the concept (air elementals as spies, btw.!) and its presence in the module, but at the same time, I feel that Armada would change the power dynamics in Razor Coast as a setting, whereas it here is mostly an afterthought to the plot of this one module. So DMs using this in razor Coast probably ought to give some thought to the change of dynamics Armada's existence poses to the power dynamics of the coast. That complaint out of the way, the island is interesting - displayed as a mini-hex-crawl (YEAH!), not only has another crew of pirates been stranded there (and make neat adversaries/allies, depending on your PC's actions!), the island is also home to degenerate orcs sired by the local girallon populace, which makes for formidable guerilla foes. Worse, said intelligent primates are led by a deadly girallon vampire, offering the true Petthorror in terrible traps and truly spooky environments. What about e.g. a corpse of a fallen pirate, stuck on a tree and stuffed with rotten fruit, thus attracting swarms of hornets? Yeah, shudder-worthy...in a good way.

Sooner or later, the PCs will finally reach the city of gold – beyond the gold, deadly guardians remain, as do sadistic traps (which I will not spoil) as well as some old-schoolish puzzle-like hazards. Exploration of the city will sooner or later put the PCs in a position, where they may wake an ancient evil and defeat it...also dooming the island, which proceeds to sink, while all hell breaks loose. As they are trying to escape with as much gold as possible, the PCs will reap what they have sown throughout the module and potentially have final chances to out-gambit their opposition. A rather uncommon module that shows well that Richard Pett's talent is not limited to dark adventures – he can obviously craft oldschool explorations just as well!

The second module, would be Gary McBride's "Black Spot" - in which the PCs are once again hired for a mission, this time by one captain Riggs, who wants them to help him salvage the grounded wreck of the Flying Fortune, which is stranded on a tooth-like mountain in the middle of the sea. Once again, the journey provides ample opportunities for bonding with the crew. As soon as the PCs reach the iconic locale, though, a completely different tone begins - exploring the Flying Fortune proves to be one of the finest examples of mood-setting I've seen in any mystery/horror module - the slowly creeping suspicions rising, inquisitive PCs may soon deduce that something's not right with captain Riggs. Indeed, he was the captain of the Flying Fortune and as clues accumulate, the PCs may actually find out that he's possessed by a weird, parasitic black leech. Taking the captain prisoner, killing or saving him or falling prey to his wiles, the PCs find themselves in a nightmare most uncommon: Riggs ran afoul of the wiles of the Engineer - the vanguard of a planned neh-thalggu invasion, whose ship is hidden in the depths, just missing a few brains to launch true otherworldly death on the Razor Coast. In order to stop the aberration's plan, the PCs will have to brave the vastly iconic and superb ship and its dread inhabitants:

From strange undead-like creatures to jade butterflies used for scrying (which are also rather deadly!) up to a heart-pounding race to escape the self-destruct of the ship upon the defeat of the dread engineer, this mystery/ horror-module makes for a superb offering – even in Gary McBride's great oeuvre, this one stands out as one superb example of adventure-crafting, including the extensive notes on possible aftermaths. Glorious indeed and both as stand-alone and as part of Razor Coast, a great module!

The third module, intended for 11th-12th level, would be Owen K.C. Stephens' "Jungle Fever" - yes, grandmaster crunch actually took up the pen for an adventure - but how does it fare and what's it about? It starts with a simple, vet uncommon hook - the PCs are hired by the mistress of a brothel, which has suffered from a curse/returning disease that is, of course, bad for business. But, and that is no hyperbole - your players won't see where this module is going with that angle. Soooo...players, seriously, skip ahead ... All right. What happens if isolated Tulita become desperate? They, in this case, turned to a dragon turtle as a false deity, cannibalism and worse and no one would care. Problem is, their island harbors a special plant which amplifies the power of the dragonsmoke-drug. A Tulita survivor seeking help stumbled across a truly vile captain with this drug and she promptly set out to erect her own, no less vile and despicable colonial nightmare

on the island, enslaving everyone, poisoning the dragon turtle and killing the spiritual leader of the tribe in a most gruesome manner. Now her super-drug didn't catch universally due to limited supplies and the wanton cruelty of her men - and now, only one of her former crew remains, for the wench has reaped what she's sown - the dread cannibalistic shaman turned the tables upon his vanquishers upon returning from the dead, making terrible disease-creature-incubators of the living and turning the island into full-blown nightmare territory. In order to stop the disease and its undead carriers, the PCs have to find the island, navigate its treacherous reefs and end the various despicable existences on the island as well as the false turtle-totem and its degenerate offspring -preferably including all the dread dragonsmoke enhancing flowers and before Pele smashes the island for the atrocities there. Seriously...wow. If I hadn't known better, I would have assumed one of the masters of dark horror here - Owen K.C. Stephens delivers in spades here, with a module that encapsulates all the terrors of colonialism without falling into the "tulita are good"glorification some parts of Razor Coast fall prey to. This module is dark, iconic, action-packed and full of great, unique creatures. If you've asked yourself why Paizo got Owen for their module-series - here's a superb reason. I've always said that I'd enjoy it if Owen wrote more fluff - this one is an excellent example for that stance. Impressive indeed!

The final module, by Tom Knauss, would then be "Sinful Whisper" for 5th level characters - but can it stand up to its predecessors? The PCs are hired for a task they're bound to hate rather soonish - escort a noble scion, a pampered (but capable!), arrogant elven woman to a taboo island where her former vessel was attacked, her fellow noble scions taken by bestial men. The thing is – the island isn't taboo for nothing – chocked in hallucination-inducing, paranoia-enhancing spores, populated by degenerate subhuman creatures, the trip to the island not only will lead them all into dire danger, but also on a journey into the heart of the surprisingly dynamic elven maid - who may be turned towards good or evil, all by the PC's actions - if they manage to survive the truly dastardly creatures and not lose their sanity to the plants of the place, the vile practices there or the ancient evil slumbering beneath the island's soil, waiting patiently for its time to return to truly vile glory... This module is psychological horror paired with some truly disturbing imagery and on par with the best and most disturbing ones I've read for PFRPG - a good indicator that Tom Knauss should try his hand at these types of modules more often!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I didn't notice an undue amount of glitches. Layout adheres to Razor Coast's two-column full color standard and the pdf comes with quite a few iconic, awesome original pieces of full-color artwork. The pdf comes with one bookmark per adventure, which makes navigating rather hard and in the pdf, at least the cover is a bit blurry – something absent from my hardcover copy. The maps in full color are great, though I wished they had player-friendly versions included in the map folio.

4 modules by masters of their craft - and I don't use that lightly - and all 4 are killer. Seriously, all 4 of the modules in this book greatly enhance not only a Razor Coast campaign, but can easily stand alone. In fact, at least "Angry Waters" probably works slightly better as a stand-alone, with Armada otherwise changing the political landscape of the coast a bit too much for my tastes. The other 3 are plug-and play in the truest form, with the last one offering actually a way into Port Shaw's elite sans rubbing shoulders with the despicable masters of the place and thus making for an all but required addition for particularly virtuous groups. Now let me say this again, loud and clear - each module herein is killer. Each one, 5 star + seal of approval material. However, the scarce bookmarks and lack of player-friendly maps make for somewhat significant detriments. Usually, I'd rate this down a whole star for these issues...but the modules don't deserve that. They're too good, even providing, in multiple instances, vistas that help make the Tulita less annoying one-dimensional good guys. As such, I think they should be considered required for Razor Coast. If I may offer a piece of advice for DMs: Don't fall back quite as often on the "island-sinks"-gimmick as implied here; a given campaign should probably one employ this plotdevice once and I'd suggest "Angry Waters" as the best candidate. Owen K.C. Stephens' module doesn't require the sinking and actually poses an interesting conundrum if the island remains...

But I'm rambling. Long story short – too good to be rated down, in spite of some comfort-detriments – 5 stars + seal of approval.

Endzeitgeist out.



The Secrets of the Divine: Pantheon, Love, Sky & Wright (Revised Edition) Publisher: Rite Publishing Reviewer: Thilo Graf Rating: 5 stars out of 5

This massive pdf is 36 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1

page SRD and 2 pages of advertisement, leaving us with 31 pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

So if you've been following Rite Publishing's releases for some years like I have, you probably will have to have noticed by now the implicit setting of the books, Steven D. Russell's much-anticipated Magnum Opus Questhaven. This supplement constitutes one of the releases that can be considered very much tied to the setting, with us getting an introduction to some of the deities of the setting and their servants. Thus, one could call this a sourcebook of divinities as well as of their adherents.

First of all, it should be noted that the respective deities are not called by their name, but rather by epithets – a notion which I have adapted to my campaign: The deity of song and love would be for example known as "Our Laughing Traveler of Passages and Messages", while, when talking about e.g. Asmodeus, a good character would probably call the archdevil "Their Dark Lord of Fire" or "Their Infernal Tyrant" – a great way to utilize processes of identity construction and othering to create identities. The respective entries of the deities come with full (sub-)domain-information, portfolios etc. as well as information on the respective church's background, secrets, manifestations, holy days, mythology and hierarchies, written in lavish, awesome in-character prose that actually makes the pdf a joy to read.

So let's get into the meat, shall we? Well, first would be the church of the great pantheon, which is essentially the catch-all pantheon sans evil deities – and thus, clerics of the pantheon can choose from almost ALL domains or subdomains. Read that again. Yes. When I showed this to the player in my group who almost always likes to play divinely-inspired characters, he was grinning from ear to ear. On one hand, it's awesome because you get to finally choose the obscure domain/subdomain combination you always wanted. On the other hand, this can be potentially problematic if you use a lot of domains in your game and consider the assignment of domains to deities a balancing factor – after all, some domains simply are, at least regarding their granted abilities, better than others. So yeah, DMs beware regarding that one.

The first servant of the Pantheon we're introduced to would be the Deacon of the Great Church, a 10-level PrC that gets d8, 6+Int skills per level, 3/4 BABprogression, 1/2 ref-and will-progression, +1d6 sneak attack progression on every odd level and full bardic spellcasting progression, should you have bardic levels. It should be noted that the classes HD are somewhat hidden directly below the table above the requirements, a slightly confusing place layout-wise. Beyond the obvious agentangle, the PrC also get a discount at most places. At 4th level, Deacons get the Astute Planning-ability – 1/day, the Deacon can devise a plan as a move action that adds the Deacon's class level to any roll and even flat-footed AC of an ally. EDIT: Now, the ability is fixed, comes with a limit that makes sense – nothing to complain anymore!

They also get a cohort and as a capstone, may use suggestion at an increased, rather evil DC, with mass suggestion also being possible. Another quick fix that over all, makes the PrC now completely bereft of complaints on my part.!

We also get a new paladin archetype, the Orphans of Ecumenical Commandments. These paladins replace their detect evil with the option to assist healing by maximizing numerical variables of their own or another's healing, but only for one target. They also are keepers of the law, modifying smite evil to work against known lawbreakers instead and get law-themed auras. What's downright genius is their mercy that nets them essentially an extra-dimensional holding cell to temporarily keep hostiles you don't want to kill. This one is glorious and wills be quite a bit use in my campaigns – great to see some non-lethal ways to deal with foes, though the lack of any form of increased non-lethal capabilities mean that the archetype could have used a bit more options in that array. Nice: We get a proper code of conduct!

Then there would be Divine Vessels – summoners that cast from the inquisitor spell-list as divine spells and divine variant of any directly eidolon-influencing spells. Additionally, they may enter what can be considered a kind of avatar as a standard action. This form allows you reassign your attributes (with a bonus), skills and even feats, but also temporarily prevents you from using some abilities. This form has its own hit points to take care of and effects, curses etc. all are covered. Essentially, this allows you to pseudo-gestalt with your eidolon, though the armor-bonuses the form may have beyond those granted for eidolon-form, are negated. A former issue here has been fixed as well – the avatar now has fixed stats.

The new feats for the archetype allow you to have your animal companion change to fit your avatar form or hit harder when charging while transforming. 1/day formchange as an immediate action is also rather powerful, as is an elemental aura, and similar effects to accompany transformations – now all with concise, nice limits to eliminate an exploit that was there before. Now, this archetype is actually THE way to go Captain Marvel on your foes and one of the most ambitious ones I've ever seen. Kudos!

5The Fairest Lady of Love and Song's two new domain feats that allow you to expend domain abilities to create unique effects - rather cool ones, if I may say so! Lacing spells with channel energy as damage is a concept I like, as is inciting permanent megalomania. Hedge Knight cavaliers replace mounts and cavalier's charge with an option to temporarily make armor or shield magical, choosing from a wide array of possible spontaneous enchantments and at 11th level, may combine full attack with total defense - interesting take on the mount-less cavalier! Speaking of cavaliers - they get a new order with the Order of the Nightengale: These knights may grant temporary hit points with inspiring poetry and are buffed by permanent heroism (which can be suspended to temporarily become its greater-version) as long as they have a love. Awesome RP-potential there! At 15th level, they may also force all creatures within 30 feet to take the same damage they do - though the cavalier may not willingly fail saves while the ability is in effect. WHICH IS AWESOME! Seriously, now perfectly working!

We also are introduced to 6 bardic feats (one of which you'll know from 101 bardic feats), on allowing you to duplicate dimensional lock via bardic performance, antimagic field summoned/called creatures, inflict damage to aberrations or steel your will against will-saveprompting effects. Nice feats.

Next up would be Our Master of Thunder, who comes with a (YES!!!) Legendary Curse that depicts the consequence of speaking the deities names in vain – loved this one in 101 Legendary Curses, still love it. The first archetype in service to which we're introduced to would be the Hawk of Vengeance, an inquisitor archetype with a full BAB and no spellcasting..and it may also execute coup de graces as a MOVE action – OUCH! Rather cool – instead of killing adversaries, these inquisitors may elect to instead withhold damage to instead main/scar etc. their targets, the effects requiring a CL-check to heal. I only wished the pdf had a table of more varied effects regarding the consequences of maiming/scarring etc.

Rogue Genius Games' Dragonrider also gets support in the guise of the windrider, who may choose just about any flying creature. They also cast spells as a divine caster and use the ranger spell-list. Essentially, the class is a more versatile than the standard dragonrider in its mountselection. There also are two new feats, one of which lets you create a net of thunder and lightning on your weapon or add the thunder/lightning to attacks, Sphinxes, Griffons, Hippogriffons and Birds of Prey, Manticores, Pegasus, Chimeras and Perytons are included among the steed choices. Nice one for flying-heavy modules.

The final deity would be the Grand Wright of Heaven. Via a domain feat, clerics may grant items 3 temporary charges, which you can expend in increments to activate items as certain actions sans expending charges – thankfully with a caveat that leaves the final say to the DM. The first archetype would be the Relic Seeker, an inquisitor who gains SR against curses instead of detect alignment and is particularly adept at finding and identifying items. Not that interesting.

Artisans of Hallowed Vessels, a type of rogue who is particularly adept at crafting magical items (and counts as with a caster level etc.) and also get a pool of points that scale and refresh with levels (but don't accumulate - not spending = your loss!) - these may be used as substitutions for gold when crafting. The archetype also gets an array of rogue (and advanced rogue) talents, themed around item creations Doing the math for this one took FOREVER. While the archetype shares some characteristics with the artificer that can become problematic for very WBL-strict campaigns with a lot of downtime, I did not experience a significant detriment to balance as long as a DM isn't too careless with it. So yeah, while the archetype could be slightly abused, I do think that in most campaigns, the class will not prove to be problematic - so yeah, kudos. One thing that's somewhat a pity – this would also have been a nice opportunity to fix the broken crafting of mundane items .

The pdf closes with a short 2-page introduction to Questhaven.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good now – Rite Publishing has wasted NO time and immediately started fixing just about all issues I pointed out. See, that's them doing things the rite way! Artwork contains awesome holy symbols in full color for the deities and original

pieces, but also features some nice b/w-pieces you may know from other supplements.

This pdf is a joy to read, and, much like the best of Steven D. Russell's writing, not only contains glorious prose, but also several distinctly high concept-ideas: From the mostly awesome feats to the cool deities to the archetypes, there is no filler material herein. Everything breathes inspiration and there are quite a few pieces of crunch here that are downright inspired, brilliant. The complaints I had have been almost unanimously been purged and what remains is a thoroughly cool supplement, full of great prose and evocative character concepts, just waiting to be unleashed upon your players. Hence, I upgrade my review to 5 stars, omitting my seal only by a very slight margin – this revised version is worth your every buck.

Endzeitgeist out.



Rite Map Pack: City by the Sea Publisher: Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Megan R. **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5

If you love designing cities for your campaign world but are handicapped by the inability to draw city plans this is something to pounce upon.

It's quite a big sprawling city - at least by the codmedieval standards appropriate for a fantasy game - set on a coastal plain. It's a little unusual in that there is no natural harbour nor is it at a river mouth, but if those are in short supply in the area the nice flat land it sits upon is probably what attracted those who founded the city to build here.

It is all set up to make customisation easy too. The PDF includes an unmarked single sheet version and a series of pages that you'll have to stick together to make a poster-size map. With good use of 'form fillable' technology, there is also a labelled map where you can enter in your own city name and the names of selected numbered locations ready to show the important places to your players once their characters start to find their way around (or purchase a map).

The ZIP file that also comes with your download contains large JPEG files which can be worked on in your favourite graphics package, used in a virtual table top or even printed if you have access to poster printing facilities.

All you need to do is decide who dwells there and what adventures will take place when the party visits town!

Dungeon Dressing: Ceilings Publisher: Raging Swan Press **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out 5

This installment of the Dungeon Dressing-series is 11 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page advertisement, 1



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

As often with the Dungeon Dressing-series, we kick off with a DM's primer on construction – this time offering no less than 5 different quality modifications to apply to ceilings as well as 6 base materials. Beyond that, rafters, beams and

handholds as well as climb DC and a short primer on ceiling style vocabulary kick off this installment with a bang of customization options even before 42 entries of a d%-table introduce us to a wide array of different appearances of ceilings – from ceilings created to look like scrolled parchments to strange apertures emitting miniature waterfalls, the entries contain from regular to the wildly wonderful quite an array of excellent and evocative appearances.

Next up would be a massive 100-entry table (though no. 100 is the roll-twice-entry) that contains walls studded with faerie fire, knowledge (dungeoneering) DCs to realize the presence of suspended ceilings, embedded ammunition, chains and rings and even dead people with doom-laden messages. Over all, a versatile, cool table.

The final page contains 3 new traps, including different CR-variants with additional effects. The base ones clock in at CR 2, 8 and 8, with the variants covering 4, 5, 6 and 12. The traps per se once again partially span multiple rounds and come with crushing blocks, cave-ins and collapsing ceilings. Per se, nice.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to RSP's 2-column b/wstandard and the art is fitting stock that takes up about 2/3 of a page. The pdf comes in two versions, with one optimized for screen use and one for the printer. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Aaron Bailey covers ceilings in this installment of Dungeon Dressing – and weaves a surprisingly awesome yarn with quite an array of cool options, superbly useful first page (DMs – archive that and never leave home without it!) and imaginative tables. All in all, an exceedingly great installment on a topic that is many things, but probably not that easy to write for. So all superb? Not exactly – the traps, while not perfect, are cool and useful, but also not completely in line with the awesome start of the pdf. Still, that is me complaining at the highest level – this is still a 5 star-file, though one slightly short of my seal of approval.

You can get this cool supplement here on OBS and here on d20pfsrd.com's shop!

Endzeitgeist out.

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