







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	
asses Background Abilities Barbarian C	Ieric Skills Feats Weapons Armor Magic Gear Other Personal Journal Special I	n-Play Adjust Spells
Ability Scores: 20 of 20	Basics Skills	Feats
STRR 12/16 +1/+3 DEX 12 ↓ CONSTRUCT 16/20 ↓ INT 11 ↓ WISS 16 ↓	Operation Attack (Melles): + 99/-4 Attack (Melles): + 90/-4 Attack (Melles): + 90/	Weapons (All Simple) Focus: Climb (Climb) Throw Anything
Charisma 12 +1 Spent: 20 of 20	Armor Class: 17 / 9 Tch / 16 Fl 17 / 9 Tch / 16 Fl 2 Ride Mitcollaneous 41 / Initaire 40 / 30 Speed 7 Sense Motive Initiative: +1 64/1 Attack Bonus 5 Spelicit of Han Speed: 40 / 30 Speed +9/44 (Meleo) +3 Steith Hit Points: 96/95 -7/2 (Ranged) +3 Swim Encumbered: 57.82/2301bs, Lgt 18 / 17Fl CMD +Use Magic De 18 / 17Fl CMD +14 Fortitude Save +3 Refex Save +3 Refex Save	nd

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Amber Template

Large pieces of Amber can take on a whole life of their own in your game with this template. *By Steve Russell*

Share Your Story With Images It is said that a picture can be a

thousand words. Liz Theis shows you how Realm Works can work with pictures. *By Liz Theis*

Arlan and Bral

It isn't easy being dead, or being capable of hitting people. Creighton Broadhurst presents Arlan and Bral, one a mage that refuses to die, and another a fighter that makes enemies die.

By Creighton Broadhurst

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Editorial

by Dave Paul

I've been studying game design lately. By this I mean that I've been sitting in a classroom for about three hours a day for the last week, learning from a colleague who has been teaching a course for various faculty members at one of the universities where I teach, and that he's an experienced designer having spent more than twenty years working for a variety of firms, mostly in video game design, principally as an art director for those firms.

It's been eye-opening. I've done a little designing already. A few years ago, I was selected by an employee of a great big company to work on the statistics for some teeny, tiny figurines. I worked with a team of people and we collectively worked on sets of statistics for about five dozen such figures at a time. It was glorious. I learned a lot from that.

I've judged games at GenCon (role-playing and otherwise, competitive and otherwise) and that was wonderful. I've sat through some really wonderful seminars given by leaders in their industries. It's all been great. But, recently, in this game design class, I've finally had a chance to look at games within a much broader context. We looked at Blokus (© 2012 Mattel, Inc.), King of Tokyo (© 2012-2014. Iello USA LLC), Ticket to Ride Europe (© 2002-2014 Days of Wonder Inc.), Monopoly (© 2014 Hasbro), and a whole bunch of other games. As a group, we'd play the game and then tear it apart. What worked well? What didn't? What was fun? What wasn't? How would you change it? What theme might you change? Could the game have been more fun with another focus or theme or character or dynamic?

I hope that your own gaming includes games other than Pathfinder, other than roleplaying. I hope that you have opportunities and friends and game stores and all of that. It's good for the soul, I think, to have the time, friends, money, and opportunities to play games of many different sorts. I also hope that, if you want, you get a chance to learn about design. I hope you have a chance to participate in a workshop and build your own board game or card game or roleplaying game. It's a blast. It's a lot of work; the process of testing and testing again and testing yet again is challenging. Listening to someone else honestly tear your ideas to shreds, and realizing she's right and that you're better off just scrapping what you've done so far, is tough. But, it's healthy.

Hopefully, this experience strengthens my RPG design muscle. We'll see how that goes. I have a few ideas in the works that I'm planning to bounce off of some others shortly. I'm mentally and emotionally prepared for "Dave, I gotta tell ya, you're a decent guy, and a fine editor, but, this stuff you gave me isn't going to work." That's fine. If that happens, I roll up my sleeves and start the process of making my work better.

Inside the pages of *Pathways*, you've had dozens of opportunities to read from and about some of the most prolific and ingenious minds in the RPG field today. The interview with Wolfgang Baur in this very issue stands as an exemplar. Clearly, he's one of the industry's best.

Interested in producing for the industry? Go back and read some of the more than three dozen interviews in the other issues of *Pathways*. Check out their companies' websites, read their blogs, visit them on the various forums and read, read, read. Then start writing. Bounce your ideas off your fellow gamers. Email them to people in the industry who have an open door policy about giving advice. Who knows? Maybe we'll be interviewing you soon.

Happy gaming.



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101 Not So Random Encounters: Forest Kingdom





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Amber Creature Jemplate

By Steven D. Russell; Illustrations by Julia Metzger

In a world of monstrous flora, massive pieces of amber sometimes form and are carved into impressive pieces of artwork; other times, exquisite pieces of statuary are transmuted into amber. So lifelike and beautiful are these pieces that it comes as only a small shock when one begins to take on a life of its own. Animated by some strange spirit, they sometimes gain mobility and free will. They take on a rather insidious personality of the form they were given, escaping or overcoming their creators to pursue whatever ends suit their developing minds and sprits as they seek to trap living creatures within them so they can continue to maintain mobility.

Creating an Amber Creature

"Amber" is an inherited template that can be added to any creature.

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

CR: +1

Alignment: Usually evil.

Size and Type: Change the creature's type to construct. Do not recalculate base attack bonuses, saves, or skill points.

Hit Dice: Amber creatures gain bonus hit points as constructs based on their size. See the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary.

Defensive Abilities: Hardness (equal to its HD); **Immune** construct traits.

Armor Class: Increase natural armor by 2.

Special Abilities: An amber creature retains all the special abilities of the base creature, and gains the special abilities as described below.

Adhesive (Ex): A creature that successfully strikes an amber creature with a melee weapon (including natural weapons or unarmed attacks) must make a successful Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2 the amber creature's HD + its Str modifier) or have its weapon become stuck to the amber creature. If the attacker is armed, he can voluntarily release the weapon as a free action to escape the amber creature's hold. A stuck weapon can be freed with a successful combat maneuver or Escape Artist check (this provokes an attack of opportunity).

If the attacker is unarmed, is using a natural weapon, or fails to drop the weapon, that weapon is stuck, and the subject is entangled; both can be freed with a successful combat maneuver or Escape Artist check (this provokes an attack of opportunity). But if not freed before the beginning of the amber creature's next turn, the victim is automatically subject to the amber creature's engulf attack (see moving engulf).

Amber Composition (Ex): All amber creatures, like objects, take only half damage from energy attacks. Divide the damage by 2 before applying the amber creature's hardness. Spells and effects that deal additional damage

to objects (such as shatter) deal additional damage to amber creatures and ignore this ability and the amber creature's hardness. All amber creatures' natural attacks bypass all material types (though not other types) and any hardness.

Anathema of Movement (Su): If an amber creature comes into contact with a *freedom of movement* spell or effect it automatically attempts to dispel that effect as *greater dispel magic* with a caster level equal to its HD; if it fails to do so, it suffers 1d6 per caster level of the *freedom of movement* effect +50%.

Moving Engulf (Ex): An amber creature can engulf creatures in its path as part of a move action or charge attack. It can make other attacks during a round in which it engulfs. The creature merely has to move over its opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Targeted creatures can make attacks of opportunity against the amber creature, but if they do so, they are not entitled to a saving throw against the engulf attack. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity can attempt a Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2 the amber creature's HD + its Str modifier) to avoid being engulfed—on a success, they are pushed back or aside (target's choice) as the creature moves forward. Engulfed opponents gain the pinned condition, are in danger of suffocating, and are trapped within the creature's body until they are no longer pinned (though they are still entangled if they escape the pinned condition).

Trapped in Amber (Ex): An amber creature must suffocate a living creature once a week or it becomes immobile (but not helpless) until it suffocates a victim. If a victim suffocates inside it, the amber creature is repaired for 1d6 hit points per HD of the victim.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4 (+2 to attack and damage, +2 to Climb and Swim checks, +2 to Strength, and CMB checks, +2 to CMD), Dex +4 (+2 to ranged attack rolls; AC and touch AC, initiative checks and Ref 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). As a construct, an amber creature does not have a Constitution score (reducing its bonus to hit points and Fort saves plus Con-based DCs)



The Glorious Snare CR4

XP 800

Amber Unicorn

CE Large construct

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +10

Aura magic circle against evil

Defense

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 14; (+5 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size; +2 deflection vs. evil)

hp 52 (4d10+30)

Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +6; +2 resistance vs. evil **Defensive Abilities** amber composition, anathema of movement (+4), hardness 4; **Immune** charm, compulsion, construct traits, poison

Weakness: trapped in amber

Offense

Speed 60 ft.

Melee gore +8 (1d8+6), 2 hooves +5 (1d3+3)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks adhesive (DC 18), moving engulf (DC 18), powerful charge (gore, 2d8+12)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th)

At will-detect evil (as free action), light

3/day-cure light wounds

1/day-cure moderate wounds, greater teleport (within

its forest territory), neutralize poison (DC 21)

Tactics

Before Combat The Glorious Snare seeks to appear to be a unique living unicorn enticing people to approach it so it can line up a devastating charge attack. It may even do so using its *teleport* spell-like ability.

During Combat The Glorious Snare prefers to use its powerful charge in combination with its moving engulf attack.

Morale Once The Glorious Snare has a victim inside it, it often runs or teleports away so that it can consume its victims rather than risk being injured, but until it does pin a victim, it fights fearlessly.

Statistics

Str 22, Dex 21, Con –, Int 11, Wis 21, Cha 24 Base Atk +4; CMB +11; CMD 26 (30 vs. trip) Feats Multiattack, Weapon Focus (horn) Skills Acrobatics +8, Perception +10, Stealth +8, Survival +7 (+10 in forests); Racial Modifiers +3 Survival in forests, +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Sylvan

SQ magical strike, wild empathy +17

Special Abilities

Magic Circle against Evil (Su) This ability continually duplicates the effect of the spell. The unicorn cannot suppress this ability.

Magical Strike (Su) A amber unicorn's gore attack is treated as a magic good weapon for the purposes of damage reduction.

Wild Empathy (Ex) This works like the druid's wild empathy class feature, except the unicorn has a +6 racial bonus on the check.



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Share Your Story with Smart Images

By Liz Theis

Last month, I talked about our new campaign management software, Realm Works[™], and how it can assist GMs with tracking relationships in ways never before possible in one tool. But Realm Works can do a lot more than just manage relationships! This month, I want to talk about another of the main great features in Realm Works – what we call "smart images" – and explain how it can revolutionize the way you organize your content and share the story with your players.

How can images revolutionize a game? Running a roleplaying game is a lot like telling a story, and as with any story, images can be a powerful aid for bringing the world and events to life. First, let me talk about some of the basic uses of smart images, which serve as the foundation for the rest of Realm Works' game-changing image features.

Bringing the Story to Life with Images

In any game, it's common for GMs to share maps with their players. Sometimes a GM will also share a picture of an NPC, artwork of a battle, or even an image of a document or secret message. These could be printed and given to players at the table, saved in a separate folder on your computer, or maybe stored somewhere in the cloud. Wherever they are, it's likely a hassle to transition smoothly between finding/showing the image, and carrying on with the game. It can also be a pain to keep track of where all your "props" are located, especially between game sessions – the last thing you want is an important map or document going missing.

Realm Works makes it easy to organize everything in one place. You can **store all of these different images within Realm Works** by associating them with specific people, places, events, and more! So when you build an NPC, like Queen Seliese in the first screenshot here, you



can actually add a picture of her for reference. If you have more than one picture, add them all! Realm Works can keep track of as many images as you want.

Are your players meeting the queen, or viewing a painting of her? Realm Works lets you show them Seliese as they see her! Any image you add within Realm Works can be revealed to your players and shared via a special Player View window on your laptop or an external monitor. Now your players can visualize the story as you tell it, immersing them deeper into your game world!

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Connecting Your Content

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Realm Works doesn't just store images and allow you to share them with your players, it can also connect your images to your content in ways not previously possible with other campaign management tools or wikis. If you have a map of an island where your players are traveling to, there are likely a number of places on the map that are important to the story. With Realm Works, you can mark these locations of importance with **map pins**, and even tie those locations to various places and events in your world.

In addition to connecting the map pins to people, places, and events, Realm Works also helps you navigate through all of that information! The moment you connect a map pin to a place or event, you can just click on one of your pins, and the corresponding content will be displayed for you to use. This is especially helpful at the game table if your players are traveling through a mapped out area, and you want easy access to information about the locations they're travelling to.

Immerse Your Players with Fog of World™

Once you have your maps in Realm Works, you can display them to your players as I mentioned before – but Realm Works even goes one step further. Instead of just showing the whole map to your players, you can conceal portions of it and **only show what your players have explored so far.** Take a look at the last two images – the area that hasn't been explored by the players is completely cropped out. Now players can't simply explore the big dark area on the right, foiling the plans of the meta-gamer in your group.

This awesome feature can even be used in other situations, beyond just traveling through a location. Imagine your players find a ciphered letter that they need to decrypt. In many game systems, the players would need to roll some kind of check, and if they're successful, you tell them what they learned. Easy enough? Well, imagine revealing the message bit by bit as they roll their checks or discover new clues to the message. Suddenly a simple skill check or quest is significantly more engaging with the help of Realm Works!

Master Your Game

Speaking from experience, smart images bring a new dimension to the game table – one I can't imagine gaming without now. Try your hand at a different type of storytelling, and *show* your players the world around them.

To learn more about Realm Works or purchase a copy from our web site, visit www.GetRealmWorks.com. 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 smart images can keep you organized and bring your world to life!





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Compendium Ackanum Volume 1: Cantrips & Orisons

Introducing "Multi-Variable" spells for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game by *Timothy Wallace*!

> Multi-variable spells are spells which, once learned, can be cast as one level higher or lower than normal. Spells which can be cast in this way include either a Diminished or Heightened Effects entry.

This is the first of a series updating ALL SPELLS from the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook Advanced Player's Guide, Ultimate Combat, and Ultimate Magic to include Heightened and Diminished effects!





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by Creighton Broadhurst

Illustrated by Eric Quigley

Once a nobleman enchanted by the lure of thrilling adventures and daring do, Arlon is a horrible example of that which he once hunted – an unliving abomination.

Background: A nobleman of high birth, Arlon nevertheless lacked station in life. The fifth son of an old and respected family, power and prestige were never going to be his destiny. To forge his own way in the world, he took up an adventurer's mantle and wandered the kingdom in search of glory. On one such adventure, he fell foul to the depraved minions of a necromancer.

"Reborn" as a ghast, Arlon still coveted glory, but this hunger was matched by a powerful lust for revenge. By the time he had come to terms with his new status, the necromancer had moved on – forced to flee by another band of (more successful) adventurers. Undeterred, Arlon hunts for him still.

Personality: Although wholly evil, Arlon's primary goals in "life" are the death of the necromancer he believes responsible for his current station in life and the acquisition of glory. He dreams of returning to his home estates in triumph and of his brothers' reactions to his deeds. Sadly, these will not be what he expects.

Although he has forgotten much of what he once knew, Arlon believes himself to be a cultured, learned individual. He grows frustrated when others do not share that option.

Mannerisms: Arlon wears fine clothes of excellent quality. He covers these with a deep, velvet cloak to hide his features as he knows they spawn fear and loathing in most viewers.

Distinguishing Features: Arlon has long, sharp teeth, an unnaturally long tongue and red-hued eyes. He is obviously undead. He uses powerful perfumes and scents when among the living to hide the stench of death hanging about his person.

Hook: Arlon could join the party (or at least assist them) if they end up hunting for the same necromancer. Such an association may provide interesting roleplaying opportunities if/when the good-aligned PCs discover his undead status.

Arlon

(XP 1,600)

This humanoid's hairless skin is pallid and drawn tightly over its almost skeletal frame. It has long, sharp teeth, an unnaturally long tongue and red-hued eyes.

Male ghast wizard (necromancer) 5

- Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13, Sense Motive +10
- **Speed** 30 ft.; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +9, Climb +8, Stealth +16, Swim +5

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14; CMD 22

(+6 Dex, +4 natural)

CE Medium undead

Immune mind-affecting effects, death effects, disease, paralysis, poison, sleep effects, stunning, nonlethal damage, ability drain, energy drain, damage to physical abilities, exhaustion, fatigue, massive damage, any effect requiring a Fortitude save (unless it affects objects or is harmless)

Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +12 (+14 vs. channelling)

hp 77 (7 HD)

Space 5 ft. (stench 10 ft.); Base Atk +3; CMB +6

- **Stench (Ex)** The stink of death and corruption surrounds a ghast; creatures within the area are sickened for 1d6+4 minutes (DC 17 Fortitude negates). A creature that successfully saves against the stench attack cannot be affected by the same ghast's stench for 24 hours. This is a poison affect.
- **Melee** bite +9 (1d6+3 plus ghoul fever and paralysis [DC 17 Fort negates; duration 1d4+1 rounds]) and
- 2 claws +9 (1d6+3 plus paralysis [DC 17 Fort negates; duration 1d4+1 rounds]) or
- Melee Touch grave touch (8/day) +9 (shaken [2 rounds])
- **Ghoul Fever (Su)** Fort DC 17 [2 cures]; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1 day; *effect* 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex damage. A humanoid who dies of ghoul fever rises as a ghoul at the next midnight. A humanoid who becomes a ghoul retains none of the abilities it possessed in life. A slain humanoid of 4 or more Hit Dice rises as a ghast.

Atk Options Combat Reflexes

CR5

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- **Special Actions** channel energy (8/day; Command Undead [DC 18])
- **Wizard Spells Prepared** (CL 5; concentration +10; barred schools: enchantment, illusion; arcane bond [ring])



- 3rd—empowered *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 20), *fireball* (DC 18), *vampiric touch*
- 2nd—false life, fox's cunning, glitterdust (DC 17), scorching ray, see invisibility
- 1st—magic missile (2), obscuring mist, ray of enfeeblement (2; DC 18), shield
- 0—bleed (17), detect magic, mage hand, message, prestidigitation
- **Combat Gear** *elixir of fire breath, potion of inflict moderate wounds, scroll of invisibility, wand of blindness/ deafness* (25 charges)

Abilities Str 17, Dex 22, Con -, Int 21, Wis 20, Cha 22

- SQ power over undead
- **Feats** Combat Reflexes, Command Undead^B, Empower Spell^B, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Scribe Scroll^B, Spell Focus (necromancy), Weapon Finesse
- **Skills** as above plus Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (religion) +15, Spellcraft +15
- Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Infernal
- **Gear** as above plus spell component pouch, spellbook (as above and as determined by the GM), adventuring gear, 13 gp



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inspiration.

Bral

By Creighton Broadhurst,

Illustrated by Juan Deigo Dianderas

Bral (XP 2,400)

CR6

This powerfully built man has the head of a snarling bull. He wears finely crafted scale mail and carries a huge sword.

Male minotaur fighter 2

CE Large monstrous humanoid

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13, Sense Motive +1

Speed 30 ft.; ACP 0; Stealth +3

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20; CMD 27 (+29 vs. bull rush); natural cunning

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

Natural Cunning (Ex) Bral is never caught flat-footed.

Immune maze

Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +6 (+7 vs. fear)

hp 82 (8 HD)

Space 10 ft.; Base Atk +8; CMB +16 (+18 bull rush)

Melee mwk greatsword (reach 10 ft.; Power Attack [-2/+6]) +16/+11 (3d6+10/19-20) and

gore (reach 10 ft.; Power Attack [-2/+2])+9 (1d6+7)

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Vital Strike, powerful charge (gore +14, 2d6+7)

Abilities Str 23, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 6

SQ bravery (+1)

- **Feats** Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Vital Strike^B, Weapon Focus (greatsword)^B
- **Skills** as above plus Intimidate +4, Survival +11 (cannot get lost)

Languages Giant

Gear as above

A warrior for hire, Bral's innate savagery and lust for blood and battle mean few patrons can satisfy his atavistic desires for too long.

Background: The lone survivor of a gang of minotaurs that had claimed a small network of caves overlooking a busy trading route, Bral was hunting for victims when adventurers stormed his gang's lair. When he returned to discover the torn and smashed bodies of his companions, he realised that banditry was no longer an option.

In typical straightforward fashion, he simply marched up to the next caravan he encountered and announced he was now guarding it. His first commission did not last long, and soon he was wandering the wide world serving one master and then another.

Personality: Bral is straightforward, crude and loves violence. He never employs diplomacy – unless given no other option – and frequently starts fights for the fun of it.

Bral is relatively happy. He is being paid to do what he loves and he has no intention of settling down or retiring.

Mannerisms: When angry – or excited by the prospect of imminent violence – Bral breathes deeply, expelling great snorts of breath.

Distinguishing Features: Bral delights in daubing woad all over his body in a series of crude but meaningless patterns.

Hook: Bral could serve as the surprising bodyguard for a merchant with whom the PCs must deal. Alternatively, he could approach the PCs in the wilderness and offer his services as a guard, perhaps after making a series of disparaging remarks about the group's warriors' apparent toughness. In any event, he won't stay with the group long.

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CARTOGRAPHY BY TOMMI SALAMA

Twenty Questions with Wolfgang Baur

by Steven D. Russell

1. Could you tell us a little about yourself?

Sure. I'm a game designer and publisher, and have been the last 20 years, starting as a freelancer for *Dungeon Magazine*. I went on to edit that and *Dragon Magazine*, plus writing chunks of Planescape and Al-Qadim for Dungeons & Dragons at TSR, and then moving to a staff job at Wizards of the Coast.

Currently, I write for Paizo (most recently a level of the *Emerald Spire Superdungeon*, plus the *Herald of the Ivory Labyrinth* for *Wrath of the Righteous*), and of course I publish for Pathfinder RPG and 13th Age RPG as Kobold Press. I also write for other publishers on rare occasions; I'm doing some work for Chaosium this month.

Our most famous book for Pathfinder RPG is *Deep Magic*, the gigantic spell collection with contributions by many Paizo staff, famous freelancers, and adventure path designers. It has 733 spells, dozens of bloodlines and mysteries, new toys for everyone from the alchemists to the wizards and all the druids, shaman, and inquisitors and magus characters in between. Kobold Press is doing some great things as a third-party publisher.

2. What is your home game like?

It's all over the map. I do a lot of Pathfinder playtesting, a lot of *Call of Cthulhu*, some oddball one-shots like *Empire of the Petal Throne*, as well as checking out new games like the new edition of D&D and 13th Age. I have a few games running a new system I'm working on, and I play in Monte Cook's OD&D game about once a month. I'd say the main theme is variety. Even my "campaigns" rarely last more than 6 to 8 months—one of the perils (or perks) of being a publisher.

Oh, and I tend to kill off beloved PCs way too often, apparently. Not sure when I turned into the killer GM I am today, but I probably blame PFS for that. I used to be such a nice GM, now I'm always notching the GM screen with the bodycount.



3. What is your favorite Paizo product?

Pretty impossible question, but I'm rather happy with the *Rise of the Runelords* because it gave them a chance to survive and thrive as an independent publisher. I was also a big fan of the Planet Stories novels while they lasted, and I really, really liked *Lost Cities* because it scratches my own itch for pulp stuff.

But my very, very favorite products from Paizo are the Bestiaries. Whenever I get burnt out, I can page through the latest volume and find something new to inspire me. Before you know it, I've got my bwa-ha-ha back on track, and the GM mojo is working again. Gimme monsters.

4. You are currently the Publisher and Overlord for Kobold Press—how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

Back in 2006, I decided to self-publish a limitedrun adventure called *Steam & Brass*. I put up a link asking backers to contribute to fund art and development costs, and then I went to bed. I woke up the next morning as a publisher using a patronage system. A few months later, I published my first—and very modest—release. Since then, it's been a learning curve but I've been very fortunate in being able to work with a lot of very talented folks who all helped Kobold Press level up in one way or another.

Today, I'd say that Kobold Press has grown out of the smallest tier of publishers and is verging on mid-list by RPG standards. We have 100 titles in PDF and print, on Paizo and Amazon and DriveThruRPG. We're not exactly competing on the level of Paizo, Fantasy Flight, or Wizards of the Coast, but Kobold Press has released three hardcovers, and it has consistently made the Top 10 lists, won ENnie awards, and kept fans coming back.



5. Could you tell us about *Deep Magic* for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game?

Sure! *Deep Magic* is the big tome of magic I have always wanted: a real meaty book that oozes magic in every way, with some material updated from 3rd Edition D&D,

and some written just for Pathfinder RPG but playtested and updated over time. It's sort of a dream come true for everyone who plays a wizard or cleric or—especially!—for an inquisitor, magus, alchemist, or any other class that doesn't have decades of spells to draw on.

These pages from the mages include 733 new spells for every class in the Pathfinder RPG, plus lots of new schools of magic. Those new schools and subschools include chaos magic, shadow magic, clockwork, and even blood magic and temporal magic. Plus we have new bloodlines from a mystic forest bloodline (hellooooo Margreve!) to aboleth to vampiric, and mysteries for oracles, a new set of antipaladin doom spells, and much more. Some are very quirky but just feel right, like dwarven ring magic. Others are especially appealing to gamemasters, such as the new dragon magic spells. All told, *Deep Magic* is almost 400 pages of magic, lavishly illustrated.

Deep Magic is a huge love letter to spellcasters, and it was written by both Paizo staffers and some of the best freelancers in the business. Oh, and some art by Brom and a school of minotaur magic by Pathfinder lead designer Jason Bulmahn.

I love this book. Deeply. And it happens to compile all the best of Kobold Press into one

volume, so I no longer need to dig around in 20 reference works to find that one spell!

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

There were several, all of them related to being able to ask a particular artist or writer to contribute, and having them say "Yes, I'd love to." That would be asking Margaret Weis to write the introduction, and asking Ed Greenwood for a short story, asking Jason Bulmahn for spell design work, and asking Brom for help with art and illustration. Those people are all hugely creative, they understand magic and fantasy from decades of experience, and (until the success of *Deep Magic* on Kickstarter), they seemed mostly out of reach for Kobold Press.

As a publisher, I felt empowered to ask to work with my heroes, thanks to the backers and the power of the crowd. I think each of those people turned over some great material, and that's probably why the book is getting the raves it has gotten. I also got to further develop things that I love, those odd bits of magic like dragon magic and ring magic that Carlos Ovalle and I worked on, and the ley line magic that is unique to the *Midgard Campaign Setting*—but which is easily adapted to any campaign with geomancy and the power of the land.

7. What do you feel was the most ingenious part of *Deep Magic*?

Just one? For design, I have to point to the demon binder archetype by Paizo designer Stephen Radney-McFarland as pretty great for villains, but I also think that Paizo freelancer Jim Groves' cursed books are absolutely glorious and rich in story possibilities (and found their way into my campaign immediately). Ben McFarland's fusion of rune magic and aboleth glyphs and angelic seals into a continuous whole is elegant design. And Brandon Hodge made me a believer in Vril magic as a style of uber-magic, ancient beyond the telling. Honestly, there is so much smart design that it's hard to choose. Everyone will have their own favorite bits.

Structurally and as an editor, I am a big fan of the way *Deep Magic* uses specific spellbooks—like my own *Book of Nine Dooms* for antipaladins—to

make introducing all these spells easier for the GM. If that book is found as treasure, well, okay, most parties would be right to burn that particular vile tome! But most of the spellbooks introduce a theme or style of magic to a campaign, like RPG Superstar Mike Welham's axe magic sharing the secrets kept in *Anotov's Battle Book*, or Paizo developer Owen Stephens giving us *Taergash's Exsanguinating Tome* as an introduction to blood magic. Providing those spellbooks along with the lists of which spells belong to the new themes and schools made the whole book easier to digest, and easier for a GM to say yes or no to entire categories, to suit their own campaigns.

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

The main problem was just the scale of it. The original spec called for us to compile all the previously written spells and incantations from 8 years of Kobold Press adventures and sourcebooks. That amounted to about 120 pages of material, which we organized, brought up to date, and improved on with spell lists, clarifications, and expansion. But then we added about 266 more pages of spells, and the Kickstarter opened the gates to some backers to submit spells (about 60, in total). Having that many designers, artists, and contributors can lead to chaos, but the developers and editor Ben McFarland and Amanda Hamon Kunz kept it together.

9. Did you learn anything while working on it?

Never promise anyone an Android app! Good grief, that platform is a nightmare to develop for. We'll get there, but it's been a challenge. Distributing phone apps and ebooks can be damned hard, once the lawyers get involved.

But hey, that's my worry, not the backers'. It is worth noting that you can get an awesome, searchable, iOS version of the *Deep Magic* spell corpus for about four bucks, though. It's like 5 cents per spell. Should be live by the end of May, 2014.

10. Other than your own work and Kobold Press products, what is the best Pathfinder Roleplaying

Game compatible product out there?

The Advanced Bestiary from Green Ronin probably will be the undisputed king of the ring when it ships. But it's still in production, and I'm a backer, so let's choose a different one.

In terms of actually out there this minute, I'd say that Dreamscarred Press has done very, very good work with *Ultimate Psionics*. I know a lot of people don't use psionics, but for those who do, this book is a lifesaver.

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

It needs to be both inspiring and useful. A set of 10 feats might be useful, but if it has a title like "10 Fighter Feats" I'm bored before I even crack it open. So, the art or the title needs to be interesting, it can't just be another "same but different" set of stuff.

And it has to be mechanically flavorful. Bruce Cordell wrote about this recently in a <u>blog post for</u> <u>Numenera</u>, but the best mechanics are the ones that reinforce a particular view of the world and that engage gamers at a gut level. That is, the best monster design both provides rules for a horrible cloudlike swarm that devours you whole—and it also describes the horror and fear and paralysis of being eaten alive by a swarm of nanobots, so that the character defeating it has overcome more than 3d10 damage/round. Your character overcame or outsmarted that swarm in a way that is more memorable if the designer combined rules text and flavor text into the writeup. Keeping them too separate is a rookie mistake.

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

Well, I guess Paizo products are Pathfinder RPG compatible, but naming "Adam Daigle" or "Jason Bulmahn" or "Stephen Radney-MacFarland" feels like a dodge...

As a magazine editor, I learned quickly that different designers always bring different strength. I like different designers for different things. I love Richard Pett for his sense of the macabre and his dark humor, and also for his amazing whimsy and flights of fancy. The burning monkey spells and the rakshasa magic he did for *Deep Magic* were amazing, as was his section on familiars. I think Stephen Radney-MacFarland knocked it out of the park with his work on shadow magic and his Mythic spells in *Deep Magic*.

And I have to give the trophy for "ancient wonderment" to Brandon Hodge, whose Vril spells and Vril archetypes in *Deep Magic* are just wonderful. He really dug into both the math and the flavor of what it means to tap the "raw magic" or the pure power source, the primitive roots of magic use.

Adventure writers talk about "ancient magic" all the damn time, but Brandon really makes it feel real and immediate, full of peculiar batteries and spears charged with lightning. You can just about smell the ozone, and I definitely want to play a Vril magician soon—even if I wind up running one in a *Call of Cthulhu* or OD&D game rather than Pathfinder.

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

"Don't quit your day job" is the standard answer, and it's good advice. Especially if you ever hope to support a family or buy a house.

But my advice would be, "marry a spouse with good health insurance." Because it's a crying shame that we frequently see RPG designers, artists, and publishers have to beg for crowdfunding of their medical bills—I can think of at least 3 such cases in the last year. The industry's low wages are part of this problem, and certainly too many gamers refuse to pay game creators for their work, which makes it hard for them to afford insurance (but that's a separate rant).

If game creators could afford health insurance, we'd probably have some of them with us longer, making great art and great games. It's not a pleasant thought that people have to sacrifice their health for the work they love. It bothers me when I see how few freelancers can afford to make it their full-time gig. It's a bad sign for the health of tabletop RPGs that we can't (or won't) pay people enough that they can afford basic medical care.

Inevitably, some people will blame freelancers for this, and say they chose the profession freely. And that's true, and it's true that some freelancers don't lead healthy lives, but many do. Many talented folks probably leave the field because they can't afford their insulin or they can't get a needed operation on freelance wages. As freelancers grow older, it becomes harder to continue to work as an RPG creator, because inevitably you want to see a doctor about something. And that's very hard to do on ramen wages.

So really, before you go freelance: make sure that you won't go through a medical bankruptcy.

14. Who is your favorite tabletop RPG Illustrator?

This one's got different answers depending on the day you ask me, and I love all the artists I've worked with over many, many years. If I like their work, I often keep up with their work after they leave RPGs for greener pastures like Disney, or *Magic: The Gathering*, or New York book covers or what have you. I think that RPGs have, for a long time, been a wonderful place for illustrators to hone their skills.

That said, I have art by Tony DiTerlizzi hanging on my office wall, as well as work by Aaron Miller (who did the Midgard Campaign Setting cover and the cover of *Northlands*).

If I start listing all the artists whose original work I *wish* I could hang on my walls: well, it's a long list, but it probably starts with Jeff Easley, who painted the cover of *Assassin Mountain*, the very first standalone product I ever wrote. So yeah, for me it tends to be the artists whose work relates to a personal milestone or achievement as a designer. Call it self-centered if you like, but I tend to think that every writer really, really remembers the covers of their first work and their favorite work.

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

I still get fan letters about particular adventures, and people seem to react strongly to it (usually positively, but not always). The response that caught me most off-guard was a fan reaction to *Eberron: The Five Nations*, where I worked on a set of history, background, and maps about the five great nations of the setting. For those familiar with it, one of those nations is Thrane, a theocracy devoted to the Silver Flame, and that particular religion is sometimes villainous, sometimes heroic, but it's a relatively new faith in the setting,

about 700 years old.

One section of my history for it (which Wizards of the Coast seemed to like, since they published it as official and canonical) was about the early and fanatical phase of the church's development. Historically, it's often the case that religions are quite fanatical in their founding days—it's a way to win over a critical mass of followers and transform from a small cult to a mighty faith. Think of the conquests of Mohammed, or the great tribulations of Joseph Smith, or even the martyrdom of Christians, which were powerful propaganda tools for Christian evangelists.

Well, I described that sort of phase for Thrane, a time of great devout movement, fanaticism, martyrdoms, the whole bit, and then a slow calcification into orthodoxy and less dogmatic times. The fan reaction still makes me shake my head, as there were a few posts that said "This is so unfair to Thrane!" or "This history is all wrong, Thrane isn't like that!". The big surprise for meand the lesson I took away from it—was that at least some gamers think of nations, religions, and people as unchanging and eternal. Thrane in the past should be exactly the same as Thrane in the present: a disruptive religious revolution just didn't make any sense to them. The idea of a past so very different from the present was just considered a horrible design mistake, and entirely implausible.

It still makes me wonder whether those same people would argue that the nations they live in now are exactly the same as they were when they were founded; or if they're the same folks who can't accept things like continental drift or natural selection. It was a human-nature moment for me, that reaction deeply opposed to change. And it was a little depressing, because it is a sort of reaction I associate with either ignorance or a poverty of imagination—neither of which I think of as at all typical of gamers. Most tabletop gamers are bright, well-read, and highly imaginative people.

But that particular fan reaction to a plausible history of religion in Eberron was perhaps right about one thing: fantasy history should not work the same way as real history. It should work to reinforce the patterns of the present-day campaign setting, and not show much change over time—heroes should be the agents of change or the agents of the status quo. Gaming history, in other words, should avoid showing too much disruption in human events. Leave those disruptions to non-human actors like giants, undead kings, or invasions of aboleth minions. Keeps 'em busy.

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

Well, I've been reading up on my Arab history lately, and the mechanics of the caravan trade. And compiling interesting facts about lost cities and Persian treasures, Ethiopian churches, and the snake cults of West Africa. And visiting some of the old Al-Qadim materials, and looking at art catalogues.

And I've been dreaming about the Stairs of Beldestan.

17. Do you have any goals for Kobold Press that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

I'd very much like to quit my day job and dedicate myself to Kobold Press full time. Unfortunately, the RPG market is small and much of the money from Kobold Press has gone into funding future projects. But someday, I'd like Kobold Press to have enough paying fans to make it possible to pay for groceries and mortgage without a second job.

Right now, that's still a dream, but with Kickstarter and with the increasing ability to sell directly to gamers, it looks more likely than ever before.

18. Can you tell us a little about the *Kobold Guide to Magic*?

This one is the newest in the Kobold Guide series, and it's amazing, as it really addresses the heart of fantasy games and fantasy stories. The editor –Ray Vallese—invited some great Paizo writers and editors, plus Paizo's creative director James Jacobs and editor-in-chief Wesley Schneider, to contribute their thoughts. They offered up great material on summonings and on selling your soul in an RPG, respectively.

The series continues to grow in other ways as well. In addition to the thoughts of great game designers and editors, it has also tapped into



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some novelists like James Enge and Tim Pratt and Martha Wells for their perspective. I'm enjoying it tremendously, because it's a discussion by people who have made it their life's work to make great fantasy games and books, and they're willing to share some of their experiences as gamers and as writers.

I did write two pieces for this book, but the one that seems to have engaged people most is the "Why I Hate Teleport Spells." It's an argument against the use of teleport in tabletop games, weighing the pros and cons, and suggesting that teleport destroys the ability to do certain types of adventure and warps play above a certain level. The reaction has been really split, with some "Yes, OMG, this is so true" and some "You've got teleport all wrong! It's not like that." I'm enjoying the discussion, perhaps because I've so rarely been the heretic in game design circles, but this is a little taste of what that's like. Don't expect me to start getting tattoos and playing all-indie games anytime soon, though.

19. What can you tell us about the *Advanced Races* series?

This is where we do crunchy experiments, and let our hair down a bit (assuming that some kobolds have hair). We started with tieflings, including a chunk by their creator, David "Zeb" Cook, and that was a good start. The most recent one (#9 in the series! People like these!) is about the righteous wrath of the aasimar, which seems timely for anyone playing a particular demonic set of adventures, or anyone playing in the southerly portions of the Midgard Campaign Setting.

In between we've covered everything from centaurs to gearforged to ravenfolk to lamia and yes, even kobolds. Which for *some* reason got a print edition when the others didn't, and we have it on sale at the store at KoboldPress.com. There's some wild talk about taking all the PDFs and creating a monstrous 300-page hardcover out of it. Which is possible, mind you, but right now I'm taking a tiny little break from gigantic hardcovers.

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

I'm happy to do the work, and I'm grateful to everyone who has supported Kobold Press with their hard-earned dollars. I plan to keep doing new, flavorful, and useful work in RPGs as long as I can, and I'm hopeful that the field will continue to attract new players, new game masters, and new designers and artists for many years to come.

To that end, I've learned how to become a little bit more of a salesman than I used to be, because if I don't stand up for the quality work that Kobold Press publishes, well, that would be a sad day. Please do support your favorite game publishers, big and small. Maybe I could interest you in a Kobold Guide, with a little advice about designing a world or making the magic at your table a little more wondrous? I certainly hope you'll take a look at what Kobold Press is publishing these days, and support us if you like what you see.

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Y OF ADVENTURE

Reviews

Illustration by Rick Hershey, Empty Room Studios



Monsters of Porphyra Publisher: Purple Duck Games Reviewer: Thilo Graf Rating: 5 stars out of 5!

This massive bestiary clocks in at 199 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 2 pages ToC, 6 pages of SRD, pages blank, 1 page back cover, leaving

us with an impressive 186 pages of content, so let's take a look!

We kick off this bestiary with an interesting introduction, one, in fact I feel the need to mention: The genesis of this book is uncommon. Once upon a time, Purple Duck Games released small monster pdfs, where patrons could choose old-school monsters to be updated to PFRPG - alas, the small pdfs didn't catch and so, instead, this massive book became a flicker in the eyes of the creators. As you probably can imagine, a monster book ranks among the most expensive things you can do as a publisher, with artworks clocking in among the most expensive components in any rpg-product. Thus, this one went on the back-burner and PDG slowly, but steadily, acquired the funds (all sans kickstarter, mind you!) and crafted this massive tome. Since then, some of the artworks commissioned have been sold to other 3pps for use, so here and there, avid readers of 3pp-material may stumble across a piece of artwork already known well, this book is where they were supposed to show up in the first place.

As always with monster books of this size, I will not do the math for each and every statblock – instead taking a broader look, checking here and there and looking for obvious glitches, flawed formatting or those that impede the game – like badly worded signature abilities, nonsense types and the kind. Got that? Neato – It should also be mentioned that the monsters all come with a small paragraph that tells us about their role on the world of Porphyra.

Now the first creature herein would be looking like a bird – the Alaihar, a small CR 10 avian creature with majestic, iridescent wings – that actually is a dragon! No, seriously – including breath weapon, interesting spellcasting (both sorc and cle-lists), this sacred bird makes for an interesting ally for good PCs and a cool twist of the holy bird-trope. Now if the gods of good are angered, their wrath is all too often downplayed – enter the alticorns of Idumea, gargantuan, equine beasts of righteous wrath, these beings can crash castles – 1/turn dealing x10 damage to objects and structures makes them fearsome bringers of ruin indeed – especially since they also are rather adept at sundering objects... OUCH!

Speaking of ouch – yes, there is a concise table to

create amalgam creatures, with types being determined by awesome ranks – which reads more fun and insincere than the concise template should – for actually making ooze/outsider-combinations and the like, the template is nice, though *personally* I would have preferred a slightly more stream-lined, simpler template here or a more complex one, but either way, that's a personal preference and will not influence my final verdict.

Now if a certain anubis-headed race has been missing from your game ever since Arcana Evolved, you'll notice that there also are a bunch of humanoid races in here, one of which, the Anpur can be considered the heirs to the Sibeccai. Races like the yeti-like Ithn' Ya'roo, the fourarmed sabertooth feline Knük or the ogrillons – the races in here tend to fit some classic niches and should make some of the readers positively nostalgic.

Now if you prefer some more apocalyptic creatures, this is the book for you: Whether it's truly apocalyptic creatures (via the new template), remnants of a bygone age can also be created via another template for two truly dastardly killer-creatures indeed. Have I mentioned that Fenrir is in here as well? If you want to go Giger/need beings from the cold expanses of space, the void-creature template should cover that itch. The pseudonatural creatures have also been updated, but changed dramatically from previous incarnations - no longer true strikes, but instead a changing of shapes. Paragon creatures also make a return - with optional mythic rules! Neat! Better yet, the sample paragon flumph gets up to CR 7/MR 3 and also comes with a full-blown origin story - which is rather awesome! Speaking of old favorites - a template-based version of creating beast lords can be found herein as well. Vampiric dragons and vampire thralls are back - though the dragon's former treasure-hoard dependency is gone. Also: The stakeweakness doesn't make much sense to me in the case of vampiric dragons, so overall, this template could have used some more specific divergences to help drive home the uniqueness of the undead apex predators. Not sold on that one. Magical constructs and even transformer-style constructs can be created via the material herein as well.

Beyond templates like this, we also get quite an array of fey – like the regal fey, the Njuzu, the new imperial jade dragon or the magi dragon – the apex predators also have a selection of dragon-hybrids and lesser versions like dragonnels, scorpion/dragon hybrids and similar classics you might know from previous editions – with respective, new, unique rules-representations.

If you wanted the eye-beasts to return – they are back in these pages as well – as are the crystalline horrors, gem golems and beholder related beasts that can somewhat fill the void of these ip-closed critters. It should also be noted that a new devilish archdevil-level creature can be found herein as well. Ioun remnants (are also in here as an example of a cool, unique adversary) are also in here – and, fans of the Iron Kingdoms should take heed – the legendary Ironclad Lich gets the Pathfinder treatment herein – finally, one of the most iconic 3.X monsters back in the game! Strange creatures and beasts like the devil dogs, burrow-mawts and the like are back again as well – though personally, I would have preferred a more deadly rules-representation of the devil dog's throat rip than making resurrection harder. Fans of Asian critters can also rejoice – fukuranbou, komori ninja and Rokurobi, for example can be found in these pages – and some of the creatures, like the earth-gliding rognak burrowers, even come with Ultimate Psionics-compatible psionics. Haters of psionics should know, though, that the pdf is not centered on these, though. What about the rather deadly stirge swarm, the memory-stealing, decapitating, disturbing and perpetually silent stillfiends?

The monstrous lycanthrope template also deserves special mentioning – creating e.g. were-stirges or were-otyughs is just awesome! And yes, there also are interesting undead herein and while the barrow wight is rather bland, zombie rats, corpse orgies and similar disturbing adversaries like a hound with a cluster of maggot-like tendrils for a head also mean that aficionados of the macabre get enough food for their campaigns herein.

The book also comes with a list of making monsters, simple templates, advice for monsters as PCs, a table of monster-stats by CR, universal monster rules, lists of creature types and subtypes, monster cohorts and animal companions, monsters by type, by CR and even by roles – awesome and extremely handy for getting the right creature in a pinch – kudos for making the book that user-friendly.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, especially for a massive book of this size. Layout adheres to a neat, easy to print two-column full-color standard with one for artwork for each and every creature – even for the sample creatures of templates more often than not! The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

The design team of Mark Gedak, Perry Fehr and Stefen Styrsky deliver one massive, impressive bestiary with the art of Tamas Baranya, Jacob Blackmon, Gary Dupuis, Mark Hyzer, Matt Morrow and Tim Tyler delivering solid representations in gorgeous full color. Purple Duck Games has these spontaneous inspirations, where sometimes, their pdfs come out of left field and blow your mind - and this book does reach this level of brilliance in quite a bunch of the entries. It should be noted, though, that not all of the critters reach this level of creativity and awesomeness -some of the adversaries could have used an additional signature ability or two - mainly, this is due to being creatures converted from previous editions, when it does show up - so essentially, complaining about that goes against the design intent. Still, personally, I did tend to gravitate to the creatures where PDG went all out, went utterly original. Some of the templates and creatures herein had me grin from ear to ear - and taking

the extremely fair price-point into account, this bestiary is indeed a superb purchase with a great bang for buck ratio.

However, one should also mention that by now, my expectations for bestiaries are extremely high -Alluria publishing's underwater bestiary Beasts of the Boundless Blue raised the bar regarding artwork, whereas Legendary Games' shorter bestiaries have done the same for unique signature abilities – and while the production values of this book are great, personally, I would have loved to see a bit more in the latter department – more truly unique abilities. Still, it should be noted that this remains me complaining at a high level: The respective creatures more often than not come with at least cool combinations of abilities and unique fluff, even in the case of creatures sans unique signature abilities – and hence, my final verdict will clock in at 5 stars, omitting my seal of approval by a margin.



Endzeitgeist out.

Psionic Bestiary Part 9 Publisher: Dreamedscarred Press **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Stars:** Five stars out of five!

The 9th part of the Psionic Bestiary is 10 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, leaving us pages of content, so let's take a look!

with 7

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We kick off this mini-bestiary with a new CR 5, tentacle-mouthed monstrous humanoid with emergent brain lobes, the Brataurus, who can emit wis-damage dealing screams and worse, they actually feed on said damage, healing themselves. Cool!

The CR 3 Dedrakon, a scaled predator that adds crystal shackles to their prey via their attacks, which increase in movement-hampering potency the more creatures are shackled with them – oh, and they can emit roars to paralyze shackled foes on a failed save – throw these in groups, add some hit and run-tactics/feats and watch them squirm. And yes, the base creature is inspiring enough for me to actually do that.

At CR2, the 3-eyes lizard-like Dulah-humanoids have a nice ability – they can barf their treasure at foes! Since my version of the dire beaver barfed splinters at foes, yes, I do like that one!

At CR 6 and 8 respectively, the Ensnared Earth Elementals and their Greater cousins are glorious – part elemental, part plant, they may strike through stone and ground those nasty fliers with psionically chargeable pulses of gravity! Awesome!

At CR 2, the somewhat ferret/cat-like Ferax have some nice minor psi-like abilities and can emit bolstering hums. Finally, at CR 3, the bat-like, winged, one-eyed Reva can manipulate objects, target foes with force damage and are superb spies indeed that can detect sentient, sapient lifeforms. Nice spies for the BBeG – or your PCs, for these "builder bats" are actually LN and rather intelligent!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are good, though I did notice minor typo-level glitches, nothing rules-problematic. The pdf adheres to DSP's 2-column full-color layout, with bookmarks being there, but broken (and unnecessary at this length) and the artworks for the creatures, all in fullcolor, being simply WEIRD and awesome. Add to that the lack of glaring glitches in the math – and we also get in that department, one damn impressive little bestiary!

Authors Jeremy Smith, Andreas Rönnqvist, Dale McCoy Jr. (commander in chief of Jon Brazer Enterprises) and Jade Ripley deliver a bunch of psionic creatures that are just fun – each one coming with at least one cool signature ability and production values to supplement their unique abilities as well as with the more than fair price point, this bestiary can be considered 5 star material indeed – which also reflects my final verdict, omitting my seal only by a margin.

Endzeitgeist out.



Lucien's Guide: The Black Files (Diceless) Publisher: Rite Publishing Reviewer: Mark K. Stars: 5 stars out of 5!

Released last Thursday this is the latest supplement to hit the LoGaS line. Written by Rob Donoghue this source

book offers up some of Lucien's (a major NPC of the Grand Stair) secretive and darker files that point to dangers or threats on the Stair that are little known. The cover of this book grabbed me as soon as I saw it and I was delighted to finally get my hands on this gem.

The book is broken up into a selection of files and they are largely themed to items and worlds that may have been affected by Typhonians at one time or another. The preface to the book talks about how many people attribute a lot to the effects of the Typhonian's and also talks about a possible Typhonian "event" that may have occurred. This makes for a really interesting introduction and gives some great insight into possible genesis events of the Grand Stair, even perhaps the purpose of the Stair.

There is a new mechanic introduced in this booklet that I have gotten excited about too. The mechanic is attached to domains and expands them to include "realms". Now a realm means that you can expand the scope of your domain to perhaps include other realities (like perhaps an astral realm, a fey realm etc) all overlaid to the current world. It would also suit the idea of different planes as set out in most fantasy RPG's. Also there is the option here to include interstellar communities and realms. This is worth the price of the book alone!

The book is very piecemeal by design. It contains compartmentalized information and it is very clear where sections start and end. It is a good format and one that I hope they return to, perhaps giving out more of the "Black Files" in the same format. As a format it also gives the GM the idea on how to and what to write in this way for their own adventures. I can already see my NPC Fambol the Kind trying to get his hands on as many of these as possible.

The art work is incredible and really adds some great visual prompts to the files being discussed. My absolute favourite is the picture of Tyran the Demon God. Check it out as he looks like a horrifying school girl with pigtails. I love it. It is possibly not the effect sought after but it made me giggle like a schoolgirl with pigtails and so it is my favourite picture followed by the image of Sophia.

So, after writing all of that I can see that I have had nothing bad to say at all about the book. Well then, it is obvious that my summary is about to say GO GET THIS BOOK. Lucien's Guide: The Black Files is another top quality addition to the Lords of Gossamer and Shadow dice-less role playing game and I give it 5 out of 5 horrifying school girl's with pigtails! What are you doing still reading. Go get the book!

Rite Map Pack: Ocean Cave Publisher: Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Megan R **Stars:** 5 stars out of 5



Home for some pirates, the temple of a sea-god's cult... or a deserted cavern discovered by shipwrecked

sailors or curious explorers - how you use this map is up to you.

It is an inlet surrounded by cliffs, with a small shingle beach and some crafted steps and platforms. Perhaps you can delve into caves, or there may be a path to the clifftop, but neither are evident here.

There is a single sheet that shows the full layout, then a PDF of segments you can print out and stick together to create a battle map with one-inch squares. There are also two JPEGs - one with grid and one without - which can be used with a virtual table top or even tinkered with in a graphics program if you are so inclined.

It is a nicely-drawn and interesting little place, the sort of thing that makes you start turning over ideas for adventures to run there or ways you could use that location in your game.



Against the Cult of the Bat God Publisher: Raging Swan Press Reviewer: Thilo Graf Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This module clocks in at 63 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page advertisement, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page advice on how to read statblocks, page help on using the adventure, 1 page

back cover, leaving us with 55 pages of content, so let's take a look!

We kick off this module with a handy gazetteer of the immediate area, which would be the lonely coast, Raging Swan's easily plugged in, free mini-setting – which you btw. should have downloaded years ago. Kidding aside, travel distances etc. are part of the deal and mainly, that due to this module taking place in Oakhurst, the most remote of the villages of the decidedly old-school, oldworld style lonely coast. Oakhurst (previously spotlighted in a village backdrop), is also one of the most unpleasant places to visit.

Insular and xenophobic, dirty and illiterate, rumors of cults and stranger things abound and still, no matter y which hook – it is here the PCs have to travel. Nestled deep inside the tangled forest, Oakhurst is not a pleasant place, and both its statblock, rumor- etc. tables drive that home.

Now I'm going to deviate from my usual format for a bit – there still will be SPOILERS here, but not as many as usual. Players should probably still skip to the conclusion, though.

All right, only DMs left here? Good! The events that transpire in Oakhurst have a loose timeline of 3 days, forcing the player's hands without becoming hectic – and here's the first peculiarity of the module: The level of detail. It's staggering. From the thoroughly unique areas, villain machinations and plans that make sense to the massive table of sights and sounds around town, this place jumps to life from the very page.

Especially the latter table makes for a joy to read – each entry offering some direct or indirect way of characterizing townsfolk, coming with subtle, yet disturbing nods towards something just being WRONG around town. The sense of decay and decrepitude are more than prevalent and, as any DM with a bit experience in that regard knows – the devil (or rather: horror!) lies in the details.

Even before anything happens, the sheer level of detail makes this module stand out like a lighthouse – and helps with one crucial task: Making this investigation so easy to run, I bet any DM with even a bit of experience under his/her belt can pull it off sans preparation, just reading this book while running the module. For stumped PCs, alternate helps to come to conclusions and provide cues they might have missed are just as much part of the deal, as are thoroughly interesting adversaries. I'm not spoiling much (given the title), when I'm saying that the cult of the primal bat god has reactions to the PC's meddling that make sense, their responses working exceedingly well and taking both terrain and creature peculiarities into account. Furthermore, we get a thoroughly unique "grimoire" (you'll understand what I mean by that when reading this module!), a chance for PCs to be kidnapped (and the first handling of such a gambit that makes sense!), awareness of spell-usage to handle challenges...

Have I mentioned the supremely creepy mansion of decadent, inbred scions, the intimidating as all hell, dreadful final encounter with boss fight-level special arena "features" (again, not spoiling!), the unique and lavishly illustrated final adversary? The fact that, throughout the module, not only PCs, but actual players have to show bravery with the actions of their characters? The inclusion of one damn cool haunt?

Oh, and the pdf comes with pregens, should you wish to run it as a one-shot.

Conclusion:

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Editing and formatting are slightly less superb than in many RSP-products – but I don't care. The few glitches can be easily ignored. Layout adheres to RSP's 2-column full-color standard and the b/w-artworks are neat and thematically fitting. The superb maps can be downloaded for free as web-enhancements on ragingswan.com, which is simply superb customer service. The module also comes with an optimized screen and print pdf. I do own the dead-tree copy as well and the quality of this book is nothing to scoff at – elegant, nice paper, no printerglitches. If you can, get the dead tree version. Also, the pdf comes fully bookmarked with excessive nested bookmarks for your convenience.

John Bennett's "Against the Cult of the Bat God" is one thing: Supreme. This is the best gothic horror (not splatter/dark fantasy, but true GOTHIC HORROR) module I've read in ages.

If the spirit of the best Ravenloft modules had a love child with Raging Swan Press' excellent quality control, production values and attention to/level of detail – this would be it.

This module is ridiculously good if you have even the slightest soft spot for horror. Each sentence, each paragraph BREATHES atmosphere, mood – and it's incredibly easy to run to boot! This module is one of the best modules currently available for Pathfinder and can stand alongside the works of giants of horror like Nicholas Logue, Richard Pett or ascendant masters like Tim Hitchcock or Tom Phillips, all while having its very own style, its very own, distinguished voice. Have I mentioned that I could actually read this somewhat like a novel? Yeah, the writing is that good.

This book is so good that I will take a look at Vathak again (which I have dismissed as not working for me), Fat Goblin Games' setting, which is now under the tender care of John Bennett.

This module is so good, I deleted my original draft of the review, went back and killed spoilers, just to drive home that you SHOULD get this and avoid just about all notions of spoilers for peeking players – because I *know* that neither my ramblings on the content, nor a tight synopsis would do this one credit.

If you're like me and come from a Ravenloft background, if you're looking for a change of pace and mood, if you enjoy somewhat gritty and SUBTLE horror that plays with your mind and that does not end with "roll initiative" (though there are combats to be had!), then you NEED this.

This is a hot contender for my no.1 spot for 2014. This is a module that makes me recall how joyous being a reviewer can be. 5 stars + seal of approval – and damn it, would I go higher if I could. I do hope, from the bottom of my heart, that we'll see more collaboration between John Bennett and Raging Swan Press, more modules of that caliber.

If you have even the remotest soft spot for Gothic Horror, you should go ahead and get this superb, excellent module, here on OBS and here on d2opfsrd. com's shop! Buy it for your DM! I guarantee you won't be disappointed!

Endzeitgeist out.



101NotSoRandomEncounters: Forest KingdomPublisher: Rite PublishingReviewer: Trey W.Rating: 5 stars out of five

This book is a welcome discovery. I was surprised by not only the amount of monsters and variants inside, but the breadth of CRs covered. The first one is

CR 23, and they go through and down to CR 1/2.

The monsters and enemies are the guts of this book, and their stats are either complete, or they are variants of existing monsters with added special abilities and more description. What I most approved of was the "scaling the encounter" sections, which explain what to do to drop or increase the CR.

Having gone through the book, I will be using some of these in my game tonight. I especially liked the Green Guardian Alraune, the Greater Verdurous Ooze (that sleep effect could be fatal), the Dweomercat (to deal with spellcasters), the swamp eels and green hag encounter and Yooli the fearsome owlbear scaled up in CR.

Now for my rating, I am giving it 5/5. I really didn't like the cover art, but that is not enough to detract from the high quality monsters and enemies inside—which is why we are really here.



Dungeon Dressing: Floors Publisher: Raging Swan Press **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out of 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!

"Ahhh, the FLOORS!!!" Insert here all Spoony/Ultima-Killerfloor-jokes of your gaming group. *takes a breather* Okay, so we kick this pdf off with the by now obligatory DD-cheat-sheet of terrain features/construction option. 5 types of different flagstones/hewn floors with respective consequences when traversing them, (and hardness, hp etc.) are included here, as are light and heavy rubble and chasms.

The first table contains 46 descriptions of different floor characteristics – what can there be to make floors interesting? A surprising lot! What about steps every 5 feet? Coffin lids jutting from the floor? Etched maps and glyphs in the floor? Wooden floors with springs that reduce falling damage? This table baffled me by its adherence to the maxim of all-killer-no-filler – what about e.g. illusions of crashing waves? Or strange ceramic tiles with inscrutable mosaics? This table BREATHES creativity.

The second table of dressings contain 100 entries as well and provides a broad spectrum of options – droppings of bat guano may work for the rather subdued instances, but oh boy, does this table also offer some more far-out options . Special mentioning deserves one of the iconic tricks from the conan-comics of old – floors that temporarily liquefy to turn solid again. Yes, not a trap, an entry! What about bulges that turn out to be skulls of colossal creatures? Glorious! And yes, standard dressings like water, rubble etc. for less strange instances also feature herein.

The final two pages contain 4 new traps at CR 3, 4, 5 and 14 (including 2 variants for CR 7 and 9) – and...wow. Even staples like spinning floors or musical floors get a nice twist and come with multi-rounds effects, extremely detailed means of activation/destruction – oh, and have I mentioned the delightfully sadistic venus floor trap?

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.

Mike Welham...I'm starting to consider this author somewhat of a savant in creativity. More often than not, I look at his offerings and see a topic that could be considered rather bland, only to see him turn it into something magical. Like the floors in this installment. My first impulse was "here I am, reviewing a book about floors..." – after one page, I was hooked, grinning and kept this expression throughout the whole pdf. This installment of Dungeon Dressing is simply awesome and a superb example of the power of imagination, of creativity. Every author that can make a book on FLOORS exceedingly fun should be commended indeed – final rating: 5 stars + seal of approval. Get this, and your players will actually mind where they're stepping for once, even if you don't litter your dungeon with pits.

Endzeitgeist out.



Grave Undertakings: The Tomb of

Caragthax the Reaver (Revised Edition) Publisher: TPK Games Reviewer: Thilo Graf

Rating: 5 stars out of 5 stars

This revised edition of TPK Games first module clocks in at 43 pages of content, one page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 40 pages of content – quite a bunch, so let's take a look, shall we?

So this is it – the revised version of the one pdf TPK Games had put out I didn't like – now mind you, the first iteration of this module had an awesome boss battle in a dread cairn – multiple phases etc. – cool, yes. But that was about it. Fast forward to NOW.

Want to know what's changed? Well. Everything. No, seriously. Let's start with the maps – superb, linedrawn b/w-maps -all originals. While we don't get keyless versions to hand out to the players, the maps are sufficiently large to print out. Additionally, the pdf comes

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with quite an array of seamlessly fitting, glorious b/wartworks, again, original – so from the get-go, vastly improved production values! It should also be noted, that like the creatures in other recent offerings by TPK Games, you'll see next to no boring standard adversaries – whether with unique options, class levels added to monsters or the like – just about every foe herein has some interesting peculiarities that should drive home the fact that the PCs aren't up against a harmless module... not that this one would punch any punches, even in the first encounter we have...

Wait. Sorry, forgot – from here on reign the SPOILERS. Potential players should jump to the conclusion.

All right, still here? Well, I mentioned the cairn the PCs find – via one of several hooks, or a combination thereof, the PCs enter the cairn – and are in for a nasty surprise – crypt thing teleport to ghoul cells. Here's to hoping your fragile casters are up for the task. This sets the scene – as does the advanced, grisly legless ghast that makes for one of the most shocking adversaries I've seen in quite a while. Faint stomachs need not apply! (And yes, said adversary has no less than 3 simple templates applied!)

This was essentially when the original module ended – Caragthax showed up, deadly battle ensued, that's it. And yes, Caragthax is next on the to-kill list – but something happens – the floor collapses and the PCs plunge down through the collapsing floor into the second level of the module. At page 19 of 43.

Yeah, I wasn't kidding when I said the module has been revised! The unholy reliquary hidden by the cairn is now the PC's trap – and in order to escape, they not only have to brave the deadly adversaries within, they also have to contend with the weird effects of the dungeon. These deserve special mentioning: Sleeping is impeded, summoned creatures turn hostile and evil... and worst of all, magical healing is corrupted, potentially dishing out negative levels. Now since my players usually yawn at dungeons as written, this amount of lethality is EXACTLY what gets me DAMN STOKED! It also drives home how nasty the place is and makes it feel wondrous – in a rather delightfully twisted way... Just imagine you cleric realizing his/her healing here makes the flesh of his allies pallid...undead-like. Yeah. Priceless.

Better vet - Dossenuses, doom-laden riddles and prophecies of the reaver reborn set the stage to prepare your PCs for their A-game – which they better bring. There's e.g. a room, where the door slams shut - and vanishes from the inside, CEASING TO EXIST. Yes, potentially, PCs can be entombed for an eternity, undying (due to the sustaining quality of the dungeon)... Hope they've got their mining-equipment or similar tricks up their sleeves. Unforgiving? Yes, but a good dungeon ought to be about using both brains and brawns, the former being more important than the latter. Oh. and PCs drinking from a fountain could see the water turn into an elemental INSIDE THEM. Yeah. OUCH! Mummified gremlins? Yes. What about complex multi-round traps? Hag rangers? Broken Souls? An improved swarm of IRON ROT GRUBS? A smart little riddle that penalizes wrong

decisions? Living Walls? The option to recreate a holy blade sworn to defeat Caragthax? An undead belching beheaded skull? Deadly haunts? This dungeon does EVERYTHING RIGHT – including a deadly showdown with the returned and turned unique demon Caragthax!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch – I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to a printerfriendly 2-column b/w-standard and the artworks are thematically-fitting and awesome. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience and both artworks and maps complete an overall A regarding production values, with unobtrusive hyperlinks being the cherry on top.

Well, Brian Berg, PJ Harn and Tom Phillips took one great encounter and made one of the best dungeons crawls I've read in quite a while out of it – breathing dread atmosphere, this module is not only glorious regarding the mood, but has something unique going for every room, every encounter. There's always something unique, something lethal and mechanically interesting around the next corner. Sure, social skill specialists may not have their field day here, but that does not detract from this gloriously difficult dungeon crawl – this now truly deserves being called HARD. This is one of the few modules I could run as is and not have to upgrade everything. So if your players are looking for a challenge (or if you want FGG-level difficulty) or if you want to show off how truly disturbing and dark a dungeon crawl can be, while having a true blast, this is the way to go.

Let me say that loud and clear – the revised edition of this Grave Undertaking deserves its name, is simply awesome and its content makes this an actual steal at the price-point. If you have at least some soft spot for balls to the wall horror, for deadly dungeons, then this is a must-buy purchase. The team of TPK Games deserves my highest accolades for this revised module, which, I hope, will be the standard for all their things to come – 5 stars + seal of approval.

Endzeitgeist out.





Tords of Gossamer & Shadow

Jucien's Guide: The Black Files





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