









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
CHA 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 -77/2 (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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Pathways Magazine Proudly Sponsored by: Jable of Contents PATHWAY8 #39 HERO **Avaricious Template** "I am rich beyond the dreams of 7 avarice." So says the avaricious frog PUBLISHER in the treasure room. Steven D. Russell By Steve Russell REALM **Choose Your Own Adventure** Editor The Pathfinder game is a branch of 11 interactive fiction. Liz teaches you Dave Paul how the RealmWorks tool can help you put more of the interactive in vour game. By Liz Theis LAYOU₁₈ Elton Robb **The Relunctant Bandits** 14 Well, this encounter are with the Relunctant bandits! An encounter COVER ARTIST that could be played for laughs as Mark Bulahao well as screams. By Creighton Broadhurst

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Editorial

By Dave Paul Illustration by Camus Altamirano

One of the things I like most about games like Pathfinder is the opportunity it affords me to talk about socially taboo topics like politics, unions, religion and social structures. It's great. I engage people on these topics anyway (my academic training is philosophy), but, this kind of outlet is wonderful because of the frame it affords me.

In this issue, Steve provides us with the Avaricious Creature template. Wonderful! This gives us a chance to explore things like the often mistaken "Money is the root of all evil." The better quotation is "The love of money is the root of all evil." (Frankly, I like Kierkegaard's "Boredom is the root of all evil," but I suppose that's a template for another time – Steve, could you possibly make the Bored Creature template not be boring?)

Avarice is a love for riches that goes so far out of whack that people are harmed. Teleology, a branch of philosophy I enjoy very, very much, studies "final causes." In other words, a teleological perspective on the world is one which says that things have purposes. Clearly, all the stuff that humans invent are invented with purposes, but, what about other things? Does it make sense to ask "What is rain for?" or "What are mountains for?" Some philosophers think so, and, clearly in a fantasy world filled with gods who give meaning to the lives of mortals, it surely can make sense to think so. What, then, are riches for? And, can the acquisition of wealth and possessions be enough of a purpose for someone that such accumulation is the point of life?

What happens to the soul of a being directed toward, say, the acquisition of riches not for the sake of charity or knowledge, but merely for its own sake? This is explored in the avaricious creature in these pages. One of the notions expressed in this creature is that "everyone has a price." This theme extends into the more sinister one of forcing someone into the commission of evil by repeated temptation. Plenty of stories in fiction center on getting someone who is chaste to break her or his vows to remain chaste, or getting someone who stands for certain political principles to compromise those principles in the name of some other objective. While not avaricious in the sense of being aimed at wealth, the notion of "price" is broad. A politician's price might be political power, a chaste person's price might be physical pleasure. Whatever the case, the avaricious creature is willing to find that price, exploit it, and, whenever possible, engage in that exploitation for its own financial gain.

I really like the Covetous Aura. As soon as I read it, I imagined the creature on the cover actually saying "Mine! Mine!" when near an enemy spellcaster trying to heal or protect its allies. The idea that this creature can just take something that isn't rightfully its own really fits with the theme. Avarice isn't just the inordinate desire for wealth and stuff, it's the pathological point-of-view that anything I want is rightfully mine.

Ironically, Creighton Broadhurst's submission this month is quite a twist on that theme. We're presented with some bandits who aren't interested in banditry for banditry's sake. We're confronted with an old moral puzzle of what to do when confronted with conflicting duties. If I have a duty to feed my children and a duty not to steal, but the only way I can feed my children is to steal, what should I do? Perhaps, of course, there's another way out – maybe it's not true that the only choices are steal or starve. Maybe another option, "receive help from kind strangers" will emerge and the problem will be solved in a very outside-the-box way. Then again, maybe not; we can count on players to make things interesting...

I image that an avaricious creature wouldn't be terribly interested in the plight of the starving, especially if they deigned to take anything from it. Perhaps this could set up desperation versus avarice. Surely that would make for some good role playing.

Happy gaming.





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Avaricious Creature Template

By Steven D. Russell, Illustrations by Mark Bulahao

While simply attempting to earn more gold or certain goods to make oneself better off is not a sin, this simple need to create a better life through the accusation of wealth can easily transform into avarice, the desire for things. As attempts to garner ever greater amounts of treasure simply for the sake of having more than everyone else it drives the individual to perform immoral acts all in the pursuit of things at the cost of mortal lives and livelihood, as the love of money is the root of many kinds of evil. For greed is *never* satisfied - as soon as one obtains the thing sought after, the obtainer starts craving more, and more, *ad infinitum*. This addiction in the worlds touched by the fiends of sin transform one into an avaricious creature.

Avaricious creatures believe everyone has a price, including themselves, but often cannot comprehend motivations like justice and revenge as they are not luxurious and have a horrible return on investment. An avaricious creature wears the finest garments, and accents its body with bits of luxury, it favors the color yellow and the motif of frogs, and its appearance often changes to reflect this.

Creating an Avaricious Creature

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

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

CR: +3.

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Defensive Abilities: fast healing equal to CR; **DR** 5/good (if the avaricious creature is CR 6 or higher this becomes DR 10/good, if CR 12 or higher this becomes DR 15/good); **Immune** death effects, disease, fire mind-affecting, poison, petrification; **Resist** acid cold, electricity 10; **SR** 11+ CR

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

Breath Weapon (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds an avaricious creature can vomit up a cone of molten gold (5 ft. per HD) as an immediate action dealing 1d6 points of fire damage per 2 HD and the subjects are staggered. A successful Reflex save (DC 10 +1/2 the avaricious creature's HD + its Cha modifier) halves the damage and negates the staggered effect. On the following round the molten gold sticking to the subjects deals the same amount of damage again. The gold disappears after the following round, and the subject is no longer staggered.

Covetous Aura (Su): An avaricious creature is surrounded by a covetous aura (5 ft. per HD). Any time a harmless spell of a level equal to 1/2 its HD or a supernatural effect of a creature of equal to its HD is cast or activated within this aura, the avaricious creature can choose to have the spell or effect affect it as well.

Luxurious Glide (Ex): An avaricious creature can glide through places of luxury and piles of treasure as easily as a fish swims through water. Its movement leaves no sign of passage nor disturbs a single coin. It is almost as though they melt and flow through the objects of luxury, art, coins, and gems to their new location. It is barred from moving through anything of premium quality unless it is

a form of coinage or valued for its rarity (it could move through an antique a vaunted keep, but would be stopped by the adjacent miller's cottage).

Touch of Gold (Sp): Once per day an avaricious creature can make a touch attack (or as part of a melee attack) and transform a subject into gold (or other valuable substance) as *polymorph any object* with a caster level equal to the avaricious creature's CR. The DC for the save is equal to 10 + 1/2 the avaricious creature's HD + its Cha modifier), if a subject makes its saving throw the ability is not used up for that day.

For up to one hour per day, the avaricious creature can mentally communicate with the subject, although she is in no way compelled to answer any questions or even respond.

Vulnerability to Charity: If the avaricious creature ever performs an act of true charity (giving with no expectation of reward) it permanently loses the benefits of this template and can only perform move actions for 24 hours. This act can be performed against its will, and/ or it could be tricked into performing it.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: 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), Con +4 (+2 hp per HD, +2 to Fortitude saves, and any of the base creature's Constitution-based DCs), +8 Cha (+4 to Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Perform, and Use Magic Device; attempts to influence others, and Channel Energy DCs; +4 to any of the base creature's Charismabased DCs).

Feats: An avaricious creature gains Greater Steal and Improved Steal as bonus feats even if it does not meet the prerequisites.

Skills: Gains bonus ranks in Sleight of Hand equal to its HD and it becomes a class skill.



The Rapacious One CR 13

Avaricious Frog Demon (Greruor) NE Large outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar) **Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *see invisibility*; Perception +27 **Aura** covetous aura (65 ft.)

Defense

AC 29, touch 17, flat-footed 24 (+5 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size, +3 profane)

hp 135 (10d10+80)

Fort +15, Ref +12, Will +5 DR 15/good; Immune death effects, disease, electricity, fire, mind-affecting, poison, petrification; Resist acid 10, cold 10, ; SR 25 Weakness vulnerability to charity

Offensive

Speed 40 ft. **Melee** bite +16 (2d6+7) or tongue +16 (grab) or ranseur +16/+11 (2d6+10/x3)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks acid and fire spittle, breath weapon (60-ft. cone, 5d6 fire damage and staggered repeats following round, Reflex DC 22 for half negates staggered, usable every 1d4 rounds as immediate action); Touch of Gold (DC 22)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th) **Constant**—see invisibility **At will**—confusion (DC 22) day

At will—confusion (DC 22), deeper darkness, hold person (DC 20), detect good, shatter(DC 19) 2/day—blasphemy (DC 25) 1/day—summon (level 9, 1 greruor 35%)

Jactics

Before Combat The Rapacious One often tries to negotiate before combat, finding it a waste of resources to have to kill someone who could be a powerful ally. During Combat The Rapacious One does not enjoy combat, but when forced to he always collects battle trophies from the dead, looting their treasures. Normally he likes to use his natural attacks and his touch of gold ability to fell the strongest opponents, taking the gold statue back to his treasure hoard and maintaining it for a time. If outmatched, it also uses confusion to disorient opponents, followed closely by its breath weapon. Grabbed opponents are often held in the mouth and then it uses its breath weapon or another of its summoned frog demons stabs the victim with its ranseur. Morale: If someone attempts to steal from him, The Rapacious One will not retreat until he recovers what is his. Otherwise, he will always withdraw from a losing battle, cutting his loses.

Statistics

Str 24, **Dex** 21, **Con** 26, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 24 **Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +18 (+22 grapple); **CMD** 36 **Feats** Alertness, Cleave, Greater Steal^B, Improved Initiative, Improved Steal^B, Improved Sunder, Power Attack

Skills Acrobatics +5 (+25 jump), Climb +20, Escape Artist +26, Intimidate +20, Knowledge(planes) +15, Perception +27, Sense Motive +19, Sleight of Hand +18, Stealth +14, Survival +15; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Escape Artist, +8 Perception, +20 Acrobatics to jump

SQ luxurious glide

Languages Abyssal, Common; telepathy 100 ft. Gear ranseur



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"Choose Your Own Adventure" -Using Plot Outlines to Transform Your Game

By Liz Theis

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Last month, I talked about our new campaign management software, Realm Works^{*}, and how a feature we call "smart images" will revolutionize the way you organize content and share the story with your players. This month, I want to talk about another great feature in Realm Works – **storyboards**.

Every game has a story, whether you've planned it out before the session, or are creating it with your players as you go along. You can use Realm Works' storyboards to create plot outlines, which are perfect for building and managing a story – along with so much more! You can use storyboards to connect the story to your world, recall what your players have done in previous sessions, and even build a richer, more vibrant world for you and your players. Like so many other features in Realm Works, we took a simple idea, and built it into an indispensable tool to develop stories and immerse your players in the game.

Visualize and Connect Your Story

With storyboards, you can easily keep track of the plots in your world or campaign. Storyboards can show anything from a simple, linear plot outline, where event B occurs between event A and event C, to a story with lots of deviations and different options, as I did in the outline you can see in the first screenshot.

An important option in the storyboard is the ability to link a plot point to people, places, events, and other things that you've created in Realm Works. For instance, one of the locations my players can travel to is the "Kobold Ruins." While not a critical part of the main story, the location has a lot of history and useful information for the players to discover. It even has a hidden cavern system with rooms. Because it's too complicated to describe in a sentence or two, I've created and described the location within Realm Works. I even added a map of the caverns, with descriptions of the location's history and treasures.

With just a few clicks, the "Kobold Ruins" plot point is tied to the actual page with more information and the map – what we call a "topic" in Realm Works. Now when I click on that plot point, I'm taken directly to the "Kobold Ruins" topic. Instead of having separate descriptions of the Kobold Ruins in both the plot point summary and the topic, it's all kept in one location. Now

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it's easy to find information in the game – all it requires is one click! This keeps your plot outline from becoming cluttered with duplicate information, and ensures the complicated parts of your story are kept organized.

For instance, I love to use my plot outline to find information when I'm running games. When my players were traveling across Shipwreck Isle and came across the ruins, I just clicked the Kobold Ruins plot point and all of the information I needed was right there on the screen, while keeping the rest of the plot outline at my disposal.

This was refreshing compared to other games that I've played in or run. Often, the GM had the story overview on one piece of paper and the info for an event on the other. They spent time constantly flipping through the pages, creating awkward pauses in the game as they tried to find the details they needed. With Realm Works, it was easy to find the information I needed, and I managed to avoid those interruptions that often plague gameplay.

What Did My Players Do Last Game?

While storyboards can help you find information during the game, you can also use them to find information in-between sessions. For instance, my players have multiple paths they can take through my story. During my player's trip to Shipwreck Isle, they may encounter a sea turtle that they'll need to fight or try to escape. If they ignore it, they'll simply skip it and continue on with the rest of the story. Some GMs have even more complicated stories with subplots, or dozens of story options.

In complex stories (and even simple ones), it's important to keep track of what your players have and haven't done. It's also helpful to show your players what they've accomplished, without giving away the rest of the story. Realm Works can solve these problems – just click the grey circle on the plot point and it changes to a green orb. The green orb means that your players have reached that part in the story. Now it's as easy as glancing at your plot outline to see where your players are in the game.

If your players need a refresher at the beginning of a game session, you can even show your story to them with the special player view window Realm Works can display on your laptop or an external monitor. They'll only see the parts of the story that they've encountered so far, and nothing else. As you can see, to them it looks like they've followed a straight path to the Kobold ruins. But by looking at my story outline, you can see that they had quite a few other options... storylines that may go unexplored until it's too late!

Using the Storyboard to Build Your World

Besides tracking your story, you can also use Realm Works' story boards to **help build your world**. When preparing for a game, I like to create the story first, and then build the world around it. With this in mind, I use the storyboard to build the framework for my story. From there, I create subplots for the various points in my story. As I get into the subplots, I begin to create and develop the people and places in my world. This approach works well for me, but not everyone approaches game development in the same way. Some GMs like to do the exact opposite – build their world first, and then flesh out the story. The storyboard works extremely well with both approaches, and many other GM styles.

For instance, some GMs don't create a story ahead of the game, and just let their players lead the story through their own exploration and roleplaying. The storyboard is a great tool to keep track of what your players did during a free-form game. It just takes one click to add a new plot point - give it a descriptive enough name that you can come back to later to enter more details, and then continue on with the game.

Master Your Game

However you run your games and build your world, storyboards are an amazing asset for any GM. Use them to visualize your game's story, and connect it to the world you're building within Realm Works.

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 the storyboard is one of the favorite features of countless Realm Works users!





Compendium Ackanum Volume 1: Cantrips & Orisons

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

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Reluctant Bandits (EL6; XP 2,400)

by Creighton Broadhurst

In this encounter, while travelling through a forest, the PCs meet a group of desperate bandits who demand food to let the party pass. The bandits are starving – as are their families – and they have no interest in more traditional forms of treasure. However, they are desperate and attack if the PCs refuse their demand.

This encounter has been deliberately designed to be easy for most groups of the appropriate level to overcome. With one exception, none of the bandits pose much danger in melee. Instead, the bandits presents a significant opportunity for role-playing as well as the possibility of making lasting friends (or enemies).

The encounter begins when the PCs are 2d6x10 feet from the ambush site. When the PCs spot the lurking bandits, read:

Several dirty, dishevelled men emerge from the trees and point crossbows at you. One – a half-orc – shouts at you, "That's far enough. If you leave all your food, we'll won't hurt you."

At this point, the PCs can elect to talk or fight.

Jactics

The bandits don't really want to fight, but are desperate to feed their families. They prefer to use their crossbows, while Crorg wades into melee with the idea of taking a PC hostage.

Attack of the Women and Children

After a few rounds of combat, and likely when several bandits have fallen, several women and children rush from the woods and try to help their fallen men. While they do not attack the PCs, some interpose themselves between the party and fallen bandits while others drag away the injured. All the while, they beg for mercy. If the PCs stop fighting, proceed to "We're Hungry."

Randit (8) CR 1/2(XP 200)

Clad in dirty studded leather armour this dishevelled human has a distinctly unsavoury look about him.

Human warrior 2

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; Senses Perception +3, Sense Motive +0

Speed 30 ft.; ACP -2; Climb +2, Stealth +2

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; CMD 14

(+3 armour [studded leather], +2 Dex, +1 shield [light wooden])

Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0

hp 18 (2 HD)

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

Melee morningstar +2 (1d8)

Ranged light crossbow (range 80 ft.) +4 (1d8/19-20)

Combat Gear bolts (10)

Abilities Str 11, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8

Feats Skill Focus (Perception)^B, Toughness

Skills as above plus Intimidate +3

Languages Common

Gear as above plus 1d6 sp

Crorg (XP 800)



CR 3

This hulking half-orc wears dirty studded leather armour. He wields a huae areataxe.

Half-orc fighter (mobile fighter) 2/rogue (bandit) 2

CN Medium humanoid (human, orc)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8 (+9 vs. traps; trapfinding), Sense Motive +1

Speed 30 ft.; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +9, Climb +8, Stealth +12, Swim +8

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; CMD 19; Dodge

(+4 armour [+1 studded leather], +2 Dex, +1 dodge [Dodge])

Fort +5, Ref +5 (evasion), Will +1; +1 vs. paralysis, slow and entangle effects

hp 38 (4 HD); orc ferocity

Orc Ferocity (Ex [1/day]) When the bandit leader is brought below o hit points he can fight on for one more round as if disabled. At the end of the next turn, unless brought above o hit points he falls unconscious and starts dying.

Space 5 ft.; Base Atk +3; CMB +6

Melee mwk greataxe $+8(1d_{12}+4/x_3)$ or

Melee mwk dagger +7 (1d4+3/19-20)

Atk Options sneak attack (+1d6)

Combat Gear *potion of bull's strength, potion of invisibility,* tanglefoot bag (2)

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

SQ agility (+1), rogue talent (combat feat), trapfinding (+1), weapon familiarity (orc)

Feats Dodge^B, Improved Initiative^B, Skill Focus (Stealth), Toughness, Weapon Focus (greataxe)^B

Skills as above plus Disable Device +7, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +5

Languages Common, Orc

Gear as above plus 1 gp, 7 sp

We're Hungry

If the PCs elect to talk and not fight (or if they stop fighting once the women and children join the battle) the bandits explain they are starving. A month ago, their village was destroyed by raiders and they were forced to flee into the woods. With few supplies and almost no wealth, they have been reduced to preying on travellers for food. They don't want to be bandits, but they don't see what choice they have.

Resolution: If the PCs resolve this encounter without fighting award them 800 XP. If they provide the reluctant bandits with a long-term solution to their problem – perhaps with enough cash to start new lives – award them 2,400 XP (as if they had defeated the bandits in battle).

The Band

- Male (8) Use the bandit stat block to portray these men; *names* Coel, Dunn, Eadgar, Gyric, Praen, Sidrac, Ulf and Wulfric.
- **Female (7)** Use the camp follower stat block to portray the bandit's wives; *names* Aebbe, Buce, Ealhild, Heiu, Inga, Oshild and Ymma.
- Children (12) Use the camp follower stat block modified by the young creature template (+2 to

all Dex-based rolls, -2 to all other rolls; hp 4) to portray the children.

CR 1/3

Camp Follower	' (7)
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(XP 135) Human commoner 1

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; Senses Perception +1, Sense Motive +1

Speed 30 ft.; ACP 0; Climb +5, Swim +5

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; CMD 11

Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1hp 6 (1 HD)

Space 5 ft.; Base Atk +0; CMB +1

Melee dagger +1 (1d4+1/19-20)

Abilities Str 13, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 9

Feats Alertness^B, Skill Focus (farmer or similar)

Skills as above plus Profession (farmer or similar) +6

Languages Common

Gear as above plus belt pouch, 2d4 cp, peasant's outfit

Crorg

This hulking half-orc has done his best to help the reluctant bandits, but he is not a skilled leader.

Background: Crorg was resting at the village with the rest of his adventuring party, when the raiders struck. His fellows were slain, but Crorg managed to lead some of the villagers to safety.

Personality: A reluctant leader, Crorg hates responsibility and is completely out of his depth. Unfortunately for him, he has grown fond of several of the children and so won't willingly abandon his charges.

Distinguishing Features: Crorg's nose has clearly been broken several times; he also has large tusks protruding from his mouth.

Mannerisms: Crorg coughs up great gobs of phlegm which he spits noisily to the ground during conversations.

Area Features

The area has several features of note:

Trail: A muddy, rutted 10 ft. wide trail wends its way through the trees. Movement on the trail is uninhibited.

Woodland Sounds: Background noise increases the DC of sound-based Perception checks by 2 per 10 ft., not 1.

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

Massive Trees: Huge trees (AC 3, hardness 5, hp 600;



DC 15 Climb check) fill an entire square. They provide cover (+4 AC, +2 Reflex).

Fallen Tree: A fallen tree provides cover (+4 AC, +2 Reflex). Characters can clamber over it with a DC 5 Climb check or leap atop it with a DC 12 Acrobatics check. Characters on a fallen tree gain the benefits of higher ground (+1 on melee attacks) but are considered balancing.

The fallen tree's canopy fills adjacent squares; treat such areas as heavy undergrowth.

Light Undergrowth: Vines and roots cover many non-trail squares, increasing the DC of Acrobatics and Stealth checks by 2. It costs two squares of movement to enter such squares.

Scaling the Encounter

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes: **EL 5 (XP 1,600)**: Remove four bandits. **EL 7 (XP 3,200)**: Add four bandits.



Tords of Gossamer & Shadow Gossamer Worlds: Verse Arcanum

New Ma



On Sale Now!

by Matt Banach





Twenty Questions with Erik Bauer

by Steven D. Russell

Could you tell us a little about yourself?

I was born on an Air Force base in Nebraska in 1972, but only lived there for a short time before moving to a suburb of Chicago. It was a great place to grow up. My older brother brought home a D&D box set. He ran the family through an adventure. I was hooked – no one else was particularly excited. Many nights growing up I would sneak to my brother's room and listen to him spin adventures and I would tell him what I wanted to do next. It was like D&D without the dice or a choose-your-own-adventure book with only a big brother (sometimes mean, sometimes nice) to decide success or failure!

We started playing with friends at church while my parents donated their time. The minister would let us play in his office. This was, of course, before we were told of the evils of role playing. We had some great times and my favorite character was MonsterL. That's not a typo. For some reason monster with an L at the end of it was the best I could do. To me he was sort of Beast from Beauty and the Beast. A monstrously tough and rugged guy who appreciated luxury (L). Sigh.

After the evils of D&D were exposed, we gave up playing for a while. I don't know if we were told not to or if we were just steered away. Part of me missed it very much. Months later I went looking for our books, papers, and stacks of maps; they were all mysteriously missing. My parents kept saying I wasn't looking hard enough. I spent hours with no luck.

I stopped playing until just after high school. I was working at a very trendy bar. Before a shift I was reading Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* and a coworker mentioned he was reading the same book. We got to talking and he asked if I played D&D. Next thing you know, I have been in the same gaming group for over 20 years!

For my day job I am now an executive at a meat processing equipment company, and at night and on the weekends I run Gaming Paper!

Gaming Paper...that is why I am being interviewed right?! You want to know about Gaming Paper, not Erik Bauer!

It was a number of fortuitous situations that led to the creation of Gaming Paper. First, as discussed above, I am a gamer. Second, I married a wonderful woman and her father (also wonderful) happened to have some equipment for printing and rolling paper. Third, my DM draws slowly and meticulously. Fourth, I quit smoking (and so should you).

My game group used a dry erase mat and still does on occasion. While the DM took the time to draw out maps on the dry erase mat we would all go outside and smoke cigarettes. At some point I realized smoking cigarettes was not a good idea so I quit and was bored. Bored of watching my DM count squares and draw maps. BAM! Gaming Paper was born. I made a product that allowed my DM to draw up all of his maps before our session (unless we zig when he thought we would zag...then back to dry erase).

Gaming Paper really caught on! I owe Steven Schend credit for much of its success. He talked me into sending out free rolls to some of his old



friends from his TSR and WoTC days. Gaming Paper was mentioned on social media by amazing folks like Matt Forbeck, Monte Cook, Ed Greenwood, Stan!, and many others. In fact, we won a couple of ENnie awards (silver) for which I probably take far too much pride.

We began putting out our Megadungeons, and a few adventures that go with them, a few years ago with the help of Christopher West. In fact, as you read this we just finished up our latest Megadungeon 3 – Sewers on Kickstarter and are probably working feverishly to get it ready for GenCon.

So that is a little about me and Gaming Paper.

2. What is your home game like?

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As I mentioned, we have been playing together for 20+ years. It is a comfortable group and sometimes when I play with new people I get a little nervous. We have been making the same jokes for so long! One of the players, let's call him Dave, was playing a psionicist dwarf. We were battling a dragon. All I remember is we were dropping like flies and Dave kept trying "establish tangents" on the dragon. This was probably 18 years ago! To this day, when we are getting beat up and Dave's turn comes around...I ask if he wants to "establish a tangent." He doesn't laugh.

We play every other Sunday as often as possible. We all have families and obligations, so it becomes difficult. Our group plays Pathfinder and I am a big fan.

Our playgroup kind of passes the GM hat around. When an adventure path is nearing completion someone will say they are interested in running and there we go.

The group is very tight knit and we are true friends outside of the game that brought us together.

3. What is your favorite Paizo product?

I am going to go with Advanced Players Guide. It made what was a really good game into a great game. The APG improved the number of options, but didn't overdo it like some other books.

Big nod to the *Ultimate Equipment*. I love the way the book is laid out and it's brimming with equipment old and new.

4. You are currently the Governor of Gaming Paper how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

I totally covered that earlier! Haha. Really, the beginning was all about building an audience. We made videos, we sent out our free copies to the who's who of the gaming industry, and we bought a booth at GenCon.

Now, it is more relaxed. Slightly more grown up. We have an audience and loyal customers. The focus has changed from chasing them down to showing them how much we appreciate them. So, we put out the very best products we can and try to get them out on time or early.

We constantly want to grow our product line, but rolls and sheets of paper with squares and hexes is limiting. So we have added a few other products. We release them slowly and methodically. I finally realized that I am the customer. This isn't something that I am making for some customer that focus groups or experts tell me exists. This is for me! If I like it, chances are, gamers like me will like it too! If I would buy it, chances are gamers like me would buy it too.

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

Right now my favorite is the Megadungeon 3 - Sewers. Christopher West is back again with a huge dungeon. These are printed sized for miniatures on $8.5^{\circ} \times 11^{\circ}$ sheets of paper that fit together to make a Megadungeon. One side is furnished and the other side is unfurnished. All the maps are "geomorphic" meaning the entrances and exits are at approximately the same spot so they are interchangeable. In other words, there are millions of ways to lay out your Megadungeon.

It also has a Sewer Bestiary, Sewer Ecology, and a handful of adventures being published using the map pack. Some of the adventures use its complete Megadungeon form and others in unique configurations. One fantasy, one modern, and one steampunk adventure.

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

Best moment! Clinton Boomer of Paizo's RPG Superstar fame approached me on Facebook about doing a modern/

Cthulhu adventure using the sewers. Blew my mind. Hadn't even thought of that as an option! He's writing it for us by the way. Clinton Boomer was a stretch goal. Funny thing. When we reached the stretch goal I announced EVERYWHERE on the website, the Facebook page, Kickstarter update, and the Twitter feed that Boomer Clinton was writing an adventure. I transposed his name from Clinton Boomer to Boomer Clinton. More impressive, I did it exactly backwards on every post. I didn't get a single one right. Clinton, being a gentleman, politely pointed out my error and asked me to fix it when I had time. I asked him to change his name instead, but he declined.

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

The Christopher West part. Chris makes amazing maps. He truly is an artist when it comes to textures, looks, and feels of maps. That artistry translates really well when working on this scale and with this kind of structure (being geomorphic). It is so much more captivating and immersive than playing on paper or a dry erase pad with marker lines.

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

I am not and should never be the creative talent on a project. The talents I do possess are more geared toward marketing, planning, executing, and selling. So, because it was my focus, getting previous customers the information that we were sending out another product and trying to introduce the product to new supporters were my biggest challenges.

My small but growing network of gaming professionals is really professional. That makes the planning and executing side much easier.

9. Did you learn anything while working on it?

Always! On this project I tried some different marketing approaches. I tried some paid Twitter and Facebook ads and we made an amazing commercial (I think!). These things came at a cost. So, about the same time you are reading this, I will be trying to measure if that cost was justified by the return. If I was asked to go with my gut, I would guess they were break even at best. Time will tell. I do have to say, making the commercial was my favorite part. If you have had the opportunity to see it, I die.

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

Such a tough question. I am going to go with the Tome of Horrors Complete from Frog God Games. Last year at Gen-Con, Skeeter from Frog God and I got into a buying frenzy at one another's booths. He ended up with everything we have ever made and I ended up with a bunch of cool stuff and the awesome Tome of Horrors Complete. I gave the Tome, which is like the encyclopedia of monsters, to my GM. It was like a shot of adrenaline for our Pathfinder game. Honestly we have fought like twenty completely new-fangled monsters,

demons, and beasties.

So that has been the best product for my personal game.

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

Options, the more the better.

Rules, remember Pathfinder is all about rules. So, a good product has to have very specific, well-thought-out rules. If there is room for manipulation of rules it will be exploited – so it is important to write in a way that places hard and fast rules on all those big and wonderful options.

Art, Pathfinder has specific art and layout. It just screams Pathfinder. You can differentiate, but this stuff works, so I like to find somewhere else to be creative.

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

I am going to go with a writing team that has worked for Gaming Paper in the past. Lou Agresta and Rone Barton. They wrote the Citadel of Pain for the original Megadungeon. I took my group through it and they are still talking about the adventure.

They really put together something totally different from your run of the mill adventure, but something incredibly fun and interactive. Most amazing is they built this whole adventure starting with nothing but a map!

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

As the non-creative guy who has to manage the product, I would say deadlines! Hit them. Always. If you can't hit a deadline - say so loudly and as early as possible. But, hit it. We have long memories. I didn't go nuts on you, but I will remember that you can't hit a deadline and that will affect what projects you get and what you get paid.

Some folks say don't overwrite. I don't care. Overwrite as much as you want. Just make it good and hit your deadline. Most likely I will use it in the book you are writing, or somewhere else.

Contracts, get one. It is true in freelancing and selling meat processing equipment. Get a contract.

Engage the publishers. If you want to write for someone or illustrate for someone, find out what they are after OR what they didn't know they were after. Follow their sites, Facebook pages, and Twitter feed. When I started marketing the Megadungeon 3 – Sewers I saw them as fantasy sewers. In fact, I sold them as sewers under ANY fantasy city. Clinton Boomer saw a great opportunity to turn that on its ear. Who says the unfurnished side of the sewer maps is part of a fantasy world? Could it be a modern sewer system? He pitched it and I fell in love with the idea. Now we are collaborating to make a great modern/Cthulhu adventure for the Megadungeon 3. If he had just sent me a note saying, "Hey, I write" it would have sailed right on by into my electronic trash bin. Instead he engaged and learned about what I wanted and needed.

14. Who is your favorite tabletop RPG illustrator that you have worked with?

All of the illustrators I work with regularly are top notch.

I work with Joel Biske on a regular basis. He is amazingly talented and

does RPG illustrating in addition to his full time job.

Another great guy to work with is Marco Morte.

Gaming Paper is lucky to have a home store at GrandLAN Gaming in Grand Rapids, MI. It is kitty corner from Kendall College of Art and Design. So many amazingly talented students attend the college and frequent the store. Nolan Nasser and Megan Pardee are two graduates of Kendall who come to mind.

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

On our last Kickstarter I was told by a backer that he had backed over twenty Kickstarter projects and we were the first one that showed up on time. That felt pretty great! Not only that we exceeded his expectations, but that he took the time to say thank you. I could tell it meant the world to him.

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

We have a great writer working with us named Daniel Comrie. He has done some really amazing fiction and RPG work. He has been working for quite some time putting together our world of Orbis, a steampunk-style world incorporating many real world aspects and real world concerns. Things like the struggles between the haves and have-nots, nature versus technology, and friction between races and religions. All that AND super cool steampunk gadgets, weapons, and toys.

We hinted at Orbis during GenCon 2013, but it is growing into something even cooler. I hope to have something ready for release before or during GenCon 2015.

17. Do you have any goals for Gaming Paper that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

No. I am so happy to be a small part of something I really love, I can't ask for more.



18. Can you tell us a little about The Demoncall Pit?

Sure! That is the adventure written by John Ling Jr. for the Megadungeon 2 – Lost Catacombs. Again, it uses Christopher West's map as a backdrop for a 7th level Pathfinder Role Playing compatible adventure. This one features demons, demons, and more demons with some undead, fiendish animals, carnivorous plants, and evil outsiders thrown in for good measure.

John outdid himself and brought some really chilling life to the Megadungeon 2. It includes some plot twists and player puzzles that will have your gaming group talking. This adventure is next in the lineup for my gaming group. I am planning to wear the GM hat.

19. So I asked you about your most memorable fan response your work and you gave me something favorable. Any less favorable fan responses to your work?

Funniest less favorable response to our product was at GenCon 2010 when we debuted Gaming Paper rolls. I had a young guy come up to the booth and I went into the pitch. 12' x 30" roll of paper printed with 1" squares (this is before hexagons were added to the lineup), rolls out flat, takes a marker and dries in seconds, great for pre-drawing maps and only \$4. The kid looks me right in the eyes and says "sounds



like a scam" and walks away before I recover from my failed save vs stun roll.

I still wonder how he thought I was scamming him. In my mind, he gets home opens the roll and all the lines just fall off the paper. He throws his head back and his arms wide and yells "NOOOOOOO!"



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

When I ran my first rolls of Gaming Paper to sample and test, my uncle took a look and asked if anyone other than me would ever buy it or if I was just making it for me. It was a tough question because I was making it for me. There are many gamers like me and like you. That's when I knew I was my main customer, if I liked my products then gamers like me will too.

Oh, and in your face Uncle Steve. People like it.



The Demoncall Pit

by John E. Ling, Jr.





Reviews

Parsantium: City at the Crossroads Publisher: Ondine Publishing Reviewer: Thilo Graf Rating: 5 out of 5 stars

This massive city sourcebook clocks in at a brutal 178 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page blank inside the front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC,1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with a whopping 172 pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

Author Richard Green kicks off the book by telling of its genesis - the city's inspiration would essentially be a Byzantium-inspired metropolis, closer to far-east influences than our real world equivalent was - and of course, as one glimpse at the superb 2-page map by Jonathan Roberts (Yes, THE Jonathan Roberts you know the Fantastic Maps/Song of Fire and Icecartographer!) tells us, the city is vast and detailed. Nestled around a massive river delta flowing into the ocean, the city covers the north and south banks with its sprawling streets, while the merchant quarter, situated on the central island, the walls, the extents of the harbor and docks just feel right- all of these, at a glance, convey the believable illusion of a city that actually could have existed and developed. It may be a small thing, but people tend to note when settlements feel inorganic, constructed. This one feels RIGHT, including wards extending beyond the confines of the city walls, which also separate the respective wards. Even the array of streets, the bridges all of these feel like they belong and this is seriously not an easy task to achieve, especially for a city of this size.

Now, as befitting of a city of this size, we kick off with an overview from the ruler, the so-called Basileus Conrandias XVIII and his less than popular consort (nicknamed Mendatrix – two brownie-points if you can guess the meaning, though the pdf explains for the lesslinguistically-inclined among us) to the city's history and quarters and development. With a good overview out of the way, you'll be happy to note that the city gets a fullblown PFRPG-city statblock complete with demographics etc..

Now if you've been to Athens, Rome or Venice (or less famous: Rothenburg, Dresden...), you'll notice something peculiar about these cities – they have a kind of living, breathing flair, their very own mythologies steeped in stone and ready to be discovered at your leisure, if only your eyes are open and your mind (and literature/ language-skills) sharp. Much of this has developed slowly over the ages, with the very rocks of the pavement, the ancient monuments speaking a language for those inclined and willing to hear. Ah, how glorious must that be in a world, where fantastical elements actually exist? Well, here's the crux – Parsantium's massive history, including a timeline stretching almost 2000 years, actually manages to lay the foundation for just such an endeavor – the basic mythologies of the place are in place. and the roles of the races, including dragonkin and gnolls as well as the default-races and their respective roles within the context of Parsantium are provided - but how are your player characters going to fit in? Well, know my ranting about boring character traits? Well, herein are traits (called character backgrounds) that allow you to customize your character within the confines of Parsantium.. Now in contrast to most traits, these actually come with extensive fluff-text detailing the precise implications and possibilities growing from these, making them so much more compelling. On a nitpicky side - why not call them properly "traits"? Why are the bonuses of the backgrounds untyped and not traitbonuses? Nothing to break the content here, but good indicators that the focus on the narrative potential here is warranted.

Now beyond people, of course, government (with classic style b/w-artworks for the rulers), law and structure in general shape a city's life and experiences – and from bureaucracy, the Strategos, tribunes to praetor and council and yes, even FINES for crime and the respective punishments are included here. Don't believe these influence and mirror a society/are important? I'd suggest Michel Foucault's "Discipline & Punishment" – and the punishments detailed here actually conform much to the proper etiquette of punishment and the city's culture technology-level work well with these in context. Then again, you might not care at all, but the culture science-teacher in me rejoices when I see things make sense.

Speaking of making sense – from city watch to possible sources of entertainment like chariot races, local festivals, bathhouses, brothels and drugs to proper greeting and social customs and even superstitions, trade-routes and currencies, this chapter misses NOTHING of the constituting elements that make a city and its culture come alive. Commodities, healing and the trade of magical items also is covered in their own respective entries and, taking a cue from Raging Swan Press' superb offerings, a random table of different events happening in the city help further make the place feel organic. This also constitutes one gripe I have with the city - one of the reasons Raging Swan Press' villages and cities feel so organic would be the short entries of whispers and rumors and events available in tables for the DM to randomly roll - having one of these for the respective quarters would have made the city feel even more alive.

"I don't care about your academic squeeing, Endzeitgeist, tell me about what this does for me as a DM!" All right, what about a selection of campaign themes ranging from street gangs (perhaps with a Streets of Zobeck gone Byzantium tie-in?) to politics and intrigue or the return of a legendary rakshasa – Parsantium supports just about all play-styles you can conceive and the pdf offers some interesting guidance and inspiration for the DM in that regard.

Speaking of helping the DM – the districts are detailed in an exceedingly detailed manner that would blow the format of my reviews out of all proportions, so let's just say that the respective areas of the city are exceedingly

Now a city sans people is just a ruin waiting to happen

detailed and also come with their own symbols, iconography and landmarks the local populace might use to tell you where to find certain areas.

Caravan-centric wards, forums, hippodrome, clubs for gentlemen arcanists (the Fireball Club - nice nod to the Hellfire Club...) - the wards come with first impressions, sample passer-by characters (fluff only) and places of interest. And yes, a 200+ feet colossal bronze statue is in here as well as just about all variations of sample businesses relevant for adventuring - taverns (also those frequented by the wizards of the esoteric order of the blue lotus +2 browniepoints if you get that allusion), shops, scribes, theatres, a garden mausoleum, mosques, a secret temple of Kali, a chinatown-like sub-ward, gambling halls on galleys and even a tasteful (and non-explicitly depicted!) BDSM-brothel and yes, even a flotsam town within the city - the mind boggles at the amount of surprisingly concisely fitted elements that constitute the sprawling metropolis and the adventure hook potential just about each of these has. Even before the tunnels that constitute the hidden quarter (including random encounter chart, btw...) and e.g. a mapped hideout for your convenience. From halfling camps outside the city to forests, the area around the city is also glanced at, just should you feel this wilderness itch.

If you require more motivation or some sample pro-/ antagonists, you'll be happy to hear that no less than 16 organizations, from aforementioned mage-order to the friendly half-orc society and even more guilds provide for ample social networks for PCs to work and DM to use to tailor proper adventure potential....even before the obligatory noble houses and rakshasas influencing the city's fortunes. It should be noted, though, that none of the organizations provides distinct prestige-mechanicsrelated benefits – as fluff-only, they work, though.

Finally, religion of course shapes a city's life and feeling and Parsantium is no different – well, actually it is. At least for ole' Europeans like yours truly who isn't that used to religious multiculturalism from everyday life as some of you fellow American city dwellers might be – The eclectic mix of Byzantium-inspired gods and those drawn from the Indian and Chinese folklore makes for a broad selection that supports well the multicultural nature of Parsantium. It should be noted, though, that this supplement was released prior to "Gods of the Inner Seas" – thus, we get no explicit notes on obeisance, but also no inquisitions or sub-domains, restricting the gods to being rather rudimentary and, compared to the rest of the source-book, disappointing.

The pdf concludes with a massive index.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I didn't notice any particularly grievous issues – in fact, for a book of this size, the editing is very, very tight, so kudos! Layout adheres to a printer-friendly 2-column b/w-standard with scarce (but as far as I could tell) original and fitting b/w-artworks. The embroidered line of glyphs on the top of the page is nice to look at, but had a curious effect on me – during the course of this review, I skipped a lot of pages back and forth and the odd and even pages have a slightly different set, which means that staring at the screen while skipping pages might be slightly disorienting. Note that as an utmost nitpick, though. The pdf comes with EXTENSIVE nested bookmarks for your convenience, making reading Parsantium easy on the DM.

Superbly ambitious for a first product, I did not expect much from Richard Green's metropolis - and I'm seldom so glad to be proven wrong. Parsantium BREATHES authenticity and love - New York City meets Byzantium, modern metropolis meets swords & sorcery - this book actually manages to portray a believable, interesting, unique city that oozes the spirit of Al Qadim, early weird fiction and recent phenomena like the god of warseries, all while staying believable. Down to earth grit, high fantasy epics - this place supports everything and is better off for it -and manages to walk the tightrope and NOT become generic. Think Kaer Maga if a book of this size had been devoted to the city - only larger. The drop-dead-gorgeous map by Jonathan Roberts (which btw. also comes as high-res jpeg for your perusal) is just the icing on the cake here. Not since books like 3.0's Hollowfaust or since the Great City by oonegames have I read a city and actually wanted to visit it. This is on par with how iconic Zobeck by now is - and feels thoroughly, wholly RIGHT. Concise. Well-conceived. A stunning achievement indeed! Now I wouldn't be me if I had no complaints now, right? So yeah, what hurts the city is its obvious intention to be multi-format. Don't get me wrong – I don't object to fluff-centric books and honestly, by now I'd rather have good fluff than the oomphteenth bad archetype, feat etc. But e.g. the Esoteric Order of the Blue Lotus screams at least PrC to me. The organizations practically demand prestige benefits. Concise addictionrules for the drugs and beverages would have been so cool...what about vehicular combat rules expanded from UC for e.g. the chariot-races? Yes, I know - not the intention.

But these things, at least to me, are the only things missing from this glorious city. Now don't get me wrong - look at the price-point - exceedingly low. Note that this has been made sans kickstarter. Add the SUPERB writing and good production values and we still get a city that should find a home in Qadira, in Al-Qadim, in Conanand similarly Sword & Sorcery-themed campaigns. We still get a superb milestone of a book, one of the best settlements available out there right now. There's a reason I evoked some of my all-time favorites in the above text you simply won't find any comparable resource out there. This city is unique and daringly so, bravely carving its own niche and making for one of the most furious freshman offerings I've seen in quite a while. Light on the crunchside ves, but any writing that manages to draw me in to the extent I want to walk a city's streets does it right in my book. Parsantium establishes one superb framework,

one I hope will get ample crunchy books and especially, adventures to support it. If the muses and fates be just, this will be remembered just as fondly as e.g. Freeport in the years to come. Yes, the absence of whispers, rumors and events and lack of statblocks are minor downsides, but not enough to drag this down. The place deserves a chance – give Parsantium a visit! Final verdict? 5 stars + seal of approval. And yes, the relative absence of crunch and somewhat disappointing entry on the gods are the only minor nitpicks I could muster. For the exceedingly low price, this is a true steal!

You can get this awesome city-book here on OBS and here on d2opfsrd.com's shop!

Endzeitgeist out.

#30 Mercenary Companies Publisher: Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Trey W. **Rating:** 5 out of 5 stars!

rom the front page and the first entertaining quote on a mercenary mocking adventurers, I knew this would be a good book.

I confess bias! I really like mercenaries. I put them in my games, I've got an interest in the Condottieri and the history of mercenaries and warrior tribes that fought for profit since ancient times. So I was really looking forward to going through the pages, but I also had high expectations. I want mercs done right, I want interesting leaders, and I don't want clones of Daario Naharis everywhere—they have to have character the companies must have invigorating stories with a discussion of their speciality, background and appearance. This book didn't disappoint, it covered exactly what I wanted.

As we proceed through we move through many different types of mercenary bands, and they have different motivations and leaders. It also gives their HQ and strength, characteristics and abilities, making them easily able to come in as allies or enemies to a campaign. One even has a song in the description, which makes a lot of sense for a mercenary company. It is great to see so much detail describing their uniforms and banners.

Of note, the pictures are actually very colourful. This gives a sense of life and certainly not dreariness or "Grim-dark" in this product. There are a few spelling and formatting errors in the piece, so I feel it should have been edited just a little more closely.

My favourite company is the Fins of Blood, and I would definitely put them in a maritime game. Second would definitely be the Wolflings, and a company of Lycanthropes is an excellent idea. The Dwarf cavalry are also very interesting. The Motlies would fit into dangerous border regions and a lot of quests concerning hunting fugitives could be tied to them.

5/5

It gave me more than I wanted and my high expectations were reached. Get into it if you like mercenaries and want some ideas for roving groups of highly varied combatants for your games. The price is also crazy good.

The Genius Games' Guide to the Talented Barbarian Publisher: Rogue Genius Games Reviewer: Thilo Graf

Rating: 5 out of 5 stars

The first of the much-applauded "Talented"-treatments under Owen K.C. Stephens' new Rogue Genius Games clocks in at an impressive 38 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 35 (!!!) pages of content, so let's take a look!

So let's take a look at the class, shall we? talented Barbarians must be of non-lawful alignment, get d12, 4+Int skills, full BAB-progression, good fort-saves and proficiency with all simple and martial weapons and light armors. They also get a so-called edge at first level, 2nd level and then at 5th level and every 6 levels after that. Barbarians also get a so-called talent at 1st level and every level except 5th, 11th and 17th. Starting at 10th level, advanced talents become available and starting at 20th level, so-called grand talents are there as capstones. So far, so good – that's essentially what you had expected after the previous installments of the series.

Now where things get really interesting is with the new level 1 ability Primal Reserve. A barbarian starts play with 4+con-mod points of Primal Reserve and adds +2 points. Primal reserve can be used to automatically stabilize. All core-resources that would increase rage rounds instead net primal reserve points. These, as you can imagine, make for the basic resource of the talented barbarian.

Generally, a certain type of ability-tree can be gleaned herein -while primal reserve powers all the rage-like edges (rage, cod fury, berserker and also savagery), only one can be chosen - savagery allowing btw. the barbarian to add +1d6 to ability/skill-checks based on two chosen attributes other than Int for a more canny/versatile adversary. Additionally, rage powers and the like can be used by barbarians with this edge even when not in rage. This makes for an interesting inherent design-decision, also by adding additional benefits according to the rage chosen - berserkers getting e.g. free proficiencies and the like. Skinwalking and the oracle-mystery-wildering totems also are part of the deal -and before you get out your power-gaming utensils - skinwalking/totems have a caveat that helps them not stack at the lower levels, but which still makes it possible to combine them, should you wish to. Skinwalking? Yep, essentially wild-shaping fuelled by primal reserve, opening a vast array of new character concepts. And before you ask - the ability is balanced re animal modes of movement and attacks,

requiring higher levels to turn into predators and the like – nice! It should also be noted that barbarians are explicitly allowed to wilder in the rogue's talent selection via a specific edge, increasing your potential arsenal even further.

Among the talents, armored swiftness, using improvised weapons, longer non-combat wild-shape, crowd control (with a caveat that addresses the problematic wording of the origin ability!), ignoring bad weather - rather awesome, very extensive selection, though personally, I had hoped the Titan Mauler's ability to wield oversized weapons and one-hand two-handed weapons and all the confusion surrounding it had been cleaned up in a similar manner as aforementioned crowd control. Oh well, guess you can't have everything. And before you ask - yes, rage power is now a talent as well, allowing you access to the list of rage-powers, which still apply their potential additional prerequisites. Have I mentioned the ability to use foes grappled as weapons to bludgeon others while in rage? What about rerolls of failed saves versus conditions upon drinking alcohol? Of course, totem rage powers are also included herein - with the totem edge (which may be taken multiple times) offering potentially access to multiple rage totem powers. Beyond the alignmentbased/obvious beast totem powers, the fans of Midgard will surely enjoy the world-serpent totem powers or the hive totem, the latter of which is a godsend if your DM's just as evil as yours truly and loves throwing deadly swarms at the poor melee characters after the AoE-spells of the casters are drained...

We also get an index that groups the respective content according to theme. Very interesting indeed – beyond the by now traditional advice on how to handle synergy between talented classes, we get essentially a suggestion called heroic warrior, who is a synergy of fighter, barbarian and cavalier for those who wish to play in all toolboxes sans breaking the game -really like that one, though a full-blown table for the class would probably have been nice.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to RGG's printerfriendly two-column standard and the pdf comes with thematically-fitting stock art and is EXTENSIVELY bookmarked with nested bookmarks for each edge, talent and rage power. It also comes hyperlinked to d2opfsrd. com, though not with the perfect bookmarks, but rather the automated ones – I doubt that customers require "GM" to be hyperlinked and more than once, I clicked by accident on a hyperlink, in the end printing this out to avoid just that. Oh well, at least the hyperlinks per se aren't obtrusive.

Back to a more positive topic - the content. This takes the slobbering, wrath-filled barbarian and, as the intro suggests, separates it from the savage warrior, essentially allowing for non-raging barbarians from less urbanized cultures to civilized people who need anger management classes to shamanistic warriors that may slip in and out of animal skins - the barbarian as reimagined herein is much more versatile than the base class it inspired, offering much, much more in the variety of character concepts it supports - and that, ladies and gentleman, is why this one, much like the other talented classes before, now is the standard at my table. f problems can be found herein, they are minor at the very best and not the result of the class, but of the base archetype-abilities the framework took and adapted. And, let me emphasize this, even these minor hick-ups do not detract from the usefulness of this class in the slightest - final verdict: 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this cool version of the Barbarian-class here on OBS and here on d2opfsrd.com's shop!

Endzeitgeist out.

Gossamer Worlds: Verse Arcanum (Diceless) Publisher: Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Mark K. **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5!

Matt Banach is back with another Gossamer World and this is one of my favorites. Gossamer worlds full of fantasy tropes and wizard towers. I have created a similar one in my own Grand Stair and it was quite nice to see the details that Matt picked up on with Gossamer World: Verse Arcanum.

I have to say that the writing in these little source books keep getting better and better. I even have a favorite passage from this one that reads "would produce inevitable and acrimonious conflict between covetous claimants". Such an awesome descriptive passage and the little book packs these in all the way through giving a layered, textured feel to the world.

I especially like the approach given in here of how many of the Gossamer Lords and Ladies have infiltrated this realm and that they are seen as a threat by the local denizens. They are disgusted by the gaudy towers erected by these interlopers and some of the denizens even have the power to do something about them. I especially like the narrative characters discussion on his own tower and I can see the point of the natives.

This is a world filled with elves, dwarves, humans. There is a touch of Tolkien, a bit of Asgaard and even the fey realms to keep you on your toes. I even think there may be a tongue in cheek reference to disc world in this one if you can find it.

This one is a nice little fun romp into fantasy. It has some beautiful descriptions in it and the art suits it fantastically as well. Great work Matt Banach, I look forward to your next one. If you are looking for inspiration have a look at my NPC's and steal a world from there :) That would be awesome! Anyhow, everybody buy this book. It is fantastic. 5 out of 5 missing dice!

Bill Webb's Book of Dirty Tricks Publisher: Frog God Games **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5 Stars!

This book for the mean DM is 82 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 2 pages of SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 74 pages of content, so let's take a look!

So...Bill Webb has somewhat of a reputation for not only being FGG's mastermind, but also for being a capable and deadly DM – one I didn't yet have the honor to play with, but from what I've heard – wow. And this book, well, it contains some of his nastiest tricks – which makes for an interesting read, so let's see if even jaded DMs like your truly can draw some neat tricks out of this one!

The pdf kicks off with an introduction -and something that makes the book rather interesting in sensibility – Bill's game is a blend of old-school, Sword & Wizardry and 3.X/PFRPG sprinkled in and hence, throughout the book, Skeeter Green has boxes, where he explains changes in terminology in the system, provides spellconversions into a given system and generally elaborates peculiarities, making this book MUCH more useful than it would be otherwise. All right, got that?

One glorious house-rule herein is rather interesting -XP for GOLD SPENT. No, seriously - think about it: Clerics building temples and sniffing good incense, paladins giving alms, rogues and fighter gambling and whoring -it makes for a great way to handle e.g. XP gained via downtime etc.- even better if you want to have leveling actually take some time and entail some ... things that happen. A great roleplaying catalyst! Alternate weapon damage, attributes and bonuses, travel etc. are also provided, though these will probably primarily be a godsend for DMs who want to defuse the rules-heaviness of PFRPG's crunch, for they represent essentially concise, but still a bit quick and dirty simplifications. Now the "got lost" charts and rolls on the other hand are truly awesome and simple for just about every system they're used in -especially thanks to proper survival DCs etc. also provided.

Simpler rules for food and drink, foraging etc. are also in here – more interesting and yet another godsend-level table would be the concise 50-entry-three column table to generate unorthodox door opening mechanisms – so simple and yet so flavorful – awesome! This also extends to actual specific trigger-mechanisms for traps.

We all have been there – the moment where players just are incredibly LUCKY. I once had it happen that a PC could ONLY survive by a) winning initiative (enemy rolls 1, he a 20) – he did that. Thereafter, he had to crit the foe and confirm – two twenties required, both rolled. THEN he still had to roll max damage with a d10 and 5d6 AND then, in order to not be destroyed by his godlike adversary, he would have to roll a 10 on a d10 (indicating fatal head wound) and then a natural 100 on a d% in order to manage an instant-beheading according to the crit rules I used back then. Every other outcome would have seen him SLAUGHTERED. Well, do the math – I did not expect this character to survive. He did. Players are lucky...and this one suddenly had the regalia of literally one of the most powerful warrior-lords EVER to walk the lands, plus his fortune as by custom of trial by combat.

Where I'm getting at with this anecdote is – sometimes players are lucky, deservedly so – but the consequences might prove to become issues for the balance of the campaign. Hence, the next chapter is all about handling players with too much treasure via quite an array of options – several of them rather nasty, but concise and best of all: They make sense -both in a historical context of fantasy and in-game – just think about all those times in the stories and comics Conan got a fortune and was subsequently deprived of it (when he didn't squander it to convert gold to XP, that is!) – yeah, that level of loss. Now here's a huge issue I have as a reviewer – I *could* go into detail regarding all of the tricks, as I usually do – but that would somehow defeat the purpose of this book.

As soon as the tricks as made obvious, players are more likely to consider them as such and not as just a concise development of the campaign – by exposing them, I'd hurt their effectiveness. So I'll refrain from that – just one thing: Whether it's an AP kind of on the wrong side of a despotic city's law, a certain mythic incursion into an abyssal landscape or a certain kingdom-building experience – there's a fitting trick for just about every context here.

The next chapter is called "Situational Advantage" – and is glorious – generally, it is a DM's primer for some cool environmental hazards/modifications/tactics, with neat mechanics to supplement them – and you gotta love the Pepé-Le-Pew giant skunk-entry. Now there are also some other glorious terrain books out there, but this chapter still makes a great supplement for some rather nasty hazards...

Next up would be a chapter that my players would HATE – because I've used similar tricks: Magical keys that do nothing, Unobtanium and similar nasty tricks and time wasters are exceedingly efficient at making players not analyze EVERYTHING – but there's another benefit: A DM can use these tricks as blank spaces to later revisit and improvise contexts that weren't there before, retroactively fit in storylines and the like – and no, not going into all the details of this chapter. Once again – less effective if players know what they're up against.

The next two chapters also are smart – Wolves-insheep's clothing and vice versa – with these, you can drive home the fear of the unknown, read advice on unkillable (no, seriously! You CAN'T kill these! Yes. Pointy sticks and arcane fire aren't always the solution!) monsters or traumatize your players to be afraid of mold. No seriously – my players start gibbering and running whenever something mold-related comes up. Demons? Pfff. Bring out the unmoving fungus! With the tips herein, you can make YOUR players afraid of whatever you like! (And if you require further assistance – drop me a line!)

Now the trick-chapter is also interesting -from stacking certain hazards/obstacles to puzzle-style combat to tesseracts and portals – a lot of goodies here.

Finally, we have a great chapter called "Greed is bad" – from pointing towards the timeless "Don't drink two potions at once"-table from 1E (seriously – hunt that one down!) to some other...interesting tricks to make players stop succumbing to Karzoug's favorite sin, this is a fitting conclusion to this nice booklet.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to a one-column b/w-standard reminiscent of small booklets like digests. The print-edition, which is btw. of top-notch quality, does also adhere to this size. The pdf provides ample, cool and iconic old-school b/w-artworks. The pdf also comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Wow, this was an uncommon ride for me - mainly because reading this book was somewhat a blast from the past, with many tricks implicit in the old-school of adventure design properly and concisely spelled out. While the house-rules herein may not be to everyone's liking, DMs and groups looking for simplification got one awesome resource here. Furthermore, some of the tricks are glorious, while others elicited a "D'unh" from me - the latter though, as I realized, mostly due to me coming from kind of (though not wholly – Bill Webb's old-school credibility vastly outclasses mine!) this school of DMing. I.e. my game is lethal, PCs die and the world is not conveniently CR-stacked for PCs to slaughter. I started thinking, and relatively soon realized that most new-school modules simply don't use tricks like these and worse, were limited to the module, whereas most of the tricks herein actually help keeping a campaign going, not a simple module.

And as every DM who ran something that was not a plot-driven AP can attest, it is campaigns, with freedom, strange choices and especially sandboxes that can provide the problems this booklet combats. As such, and due to the ridiculously low price, I can wholeheartedly recommend this useful book – even if you're a better Dm than me and know every trick in this book already, it still makes for a cool blast-from-the-past-style reading and should inspire some rules-changes/refreshing of the mentality at the heart of FGG's success. Congrats to Bill Webb and developers Skeeter Green and Matthew J. Finch – well worth 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this cool little booklet full of nasty tricks here on d2opfsrd.com's shop!

Endzeitgeist out.

Numenara

Publisher: Monte Cook Games **Reviewer:** Christopher S. **Rating:** 5 stars of 5 stars!

Numenera is Monte Cook Game's first offering as a company. It's actually the game that created the company through their highly successful kickstarter. It garnered over five-hundred thousand dollars. The game is set a billion years in Earth future and uses Monte Cooks Cypher System. The ideology of the game is based on the French artist Mobious and the works of Gene Wolfe, especially his The Book of the New Sun. If you're unfamiliar with those works they mix science fiction and fantasy to provide a images and texts filled with mysticism and technology to create worlds which expand our minds to alternate perceptions as good art does. Numenera takes those ideas and gives us a game and world in which we can explore and tell our own stories in the science-fantasy genre.

The Rules

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The Cypher System uses a D20 and target numbers like other d20 games but the procedures of the game provide a very different feel when playing. Everything in the game that isn't a player character is based on a level from one to ten, from hitting a metallic spider who spins webs of razor wire with your blade of projected force to negotiating terms in your favor with the mutant human lord of a city built upon the back of a giant mechanical walking machine that no longer moves. Unlike other d20 games you don't have modifiers. The characters have skills, assets, and can use effort. The players start leveraging their skills, assets, and may spend effort to reduce the level of the challenge. Depending on the situation the GM may or may not tell the player what the level is. Once the level is set you multiply it by three and that's the number the player needs to roll equal to or above on a d20 to succeed. That's most of the game but shifting from static modifiers to getting the players involved in reducing the level changes play into a much more narrative style. But what about the characters?

The characters are comprised of three descriptors, an adjective noun who verbs. This could be a Clever Glaive who Fuses Metal and Flesh or a Tough Jack who Howls at the Moon. Each of these descriptors give you some mechanical benefits in the form of skills, abilities, effort, edge, and points for your pools. The phrase also gives you some cues as to what your character is like in broad stroked. Skills come in two levels. You're trained or specialized. Trained means you can reduce a challenge down by one level, while specialized reduces the level by two. Your pool is three stats: Might, Speed, and Intellect. These pools comprise your "hit points" and are also a resource to activate abilities and effort. When you take damage it comes off the pool that is appropriate for the attack. When one of your pools hits zero you become When you activate abilities it sometimes has a cost

associated with one of your abilities. The Onslaught power of the Nano - a Nanos a noun - costs one intellect. Effort is another place you can spend your pool points. If you're attempting to do something which requires a roll it falls into one of the three pools categories. You can spend three points from a pool to gain one level of effort which reduces the level of the challenge by one. You can increase your effort when you advance to another tier but at first tier you can only apply effort once per action. Edge is a way to reduce your costs when spending points from you pool. Your Edge is associated with one of your pools. In the case of the Nano and his Onslaught ability they would have an intellect edge of one and could choose to reduce the cost of Onslaught to zero. You can have multiple edges and when you advance tiers you can gain more edge. You can only apply edge once per action.

One of the last things to chat about mechanically is experience points and how they're used. Experience points in this game are given in two situations. One is you get experience points for discovering new things. That means you don't get XP for killing things. You get it for finding the Vessel of Imbrilyn that no one has seen in a thousand years that the nasty gorilla looking thing created from a mass of sentient vines is guarding. The other way is through GM Intrusion. I don't think I would of called it that but it's function is pretty cool. The GM gets to introduce some complication to the scene and for the players trouble they get an experience point and get to give another player an experience point. You can spend experience points as a resource too. For one XP you can re-roll a d20 roll. Two XP give you a short term benefit like a skill that only applies to a certain area/ location or ability that a character has for the duration of a scenario. Three XP gains a long term benefit like an artifact of familiarity. Other long term benefits are generally the result of the evolving story. For four XP you gain a permanent benefit such as Edge, More points for your pools, another level of effort, or a new skill or ability. You have to select each of these options once before you move onto the next tier. This keeps players from getting five effort before they select a second edge or add points to their pool.

A couple of things I didn't mention. Pools are "Hit Point" if one drops to zero your impaired which makes it harder to do things, two at zero and you're disabled, three at zero and your dead. The d20 has a little more information on it. If you roll a 1 the GM gets a free GM intrusion and you get more benefits on 17 - 20.

So those are the rules of the game. Together they still have some of that d20 feel with a lot more bent towards narrative play. Players are a little less at the mercy of the dice and they have a lot of choices to make during the course of play in managing their pools, when to spend effort, and if spending XP on re-rolls is really worth when it will keep you from advancing as quickly.

Setting

Here are the true things that everyone knows about The Ninth World:

• At least one was the center of a galactic (or perhaps intergalactic) space-faring empire.

• At least one wielded the power of planetary engineering and stellar lifting.

• At least one had knowledge of the fundamental forces of reality and could alter those forces as they wished. The very laws of physics were theirs to play with, like toys.

• At least one filled the world with invisible, moleculesized machines called nanites (or nano-machines) that could deconstruct and reconstruct matter and manipulate energy.

• At least one explored the multi-verse of other dimensions, parallel universes, and alternate levels of reality.

· At least some of these civilizations were not human.

That is some excellent fodder for just thinking about the world and it's strait from the book. There are some interesting things going on in the described setting but we're given some very understandable concepts to go along with the strangeness of Numenera.

In general the people of the Ninth World are very similar to those who lived at around 1000 AD. They just have all this stuff around them which has altered the environment which they barely know how to use and if they can figure it out they adapt it in a way to help make their lives better. Still, they don't understand how it works, just that it works when they press a button or stick some water in one end. Now that we know a little about the people let's move onto the big sections of the world which are described.

The Steadfast is nine kingdoms which have all the political intrigue you could want as they wrest for power and land from each other. The Order of Truth and the Aeon Priests manage The Nine, as they are called, as they search for and attempt to study the Numenera which is what anything from the previous worlds are called.

Beyond the Steadfast the world looks a little more like a science fantasy version of the wild west mixed with city-state politics. There are little bastions of civilization and they might turn into larger kingdoms except it's just a dangerous place out there filled with unexplained phenomena like The Cloud Crystal Skyfields, The Ausren Woods (don't eat the fruit), The Great Slab, and the Amorphous Fields. They also don't have the strong presence of the Aeon Priests to help keep things in check.

Then there's Beyond the Beyond which has the Clock of Kala. Think of a thirty thousand foot mountain range that creates a perfect ring with one way in and out called the Sheer which is just as strange since it's an artificially created path that cuts through three hundred and twenty miles of the Clock of Kala and is uniformly seventythree miles across the entire time with smooth walls and ground the entire way.

In all three of these places there are plenty of opportunity

for stories to be told and a variety of hooks for adventures to be started but the map of the Ninth World only shows a very small portion of the world leaving a great deal for players and GMs alike to create their own places and tell their own stories using the ideas of Numenera instead of the presented setting details. I felt that was a nice touch.

The last thing I want to mention about the setting are Cyphers. Cyphers are one time use Numenera which the players are supposed to acquire and use often. From pills which allow you a one time teleportation to antigravity soles which only work for ten minutes. I think the Cyphers and how they're supposed to be used in the game are the mechanic which makes the game feel most like Numenera. The rest of the Cypher system and maybe even Cyphers themselves, in the mechanical sense, can be lifted right out of the game and used to play something else.

The Book

The book's layout is nice. It's better in print than PDF. Reason being in the creatures chapter on the first page all of the creatures are listed by level in the left hand column. None of them are hyperlinked. That would of been useful. There are some other spots I would of like to see things hyperlinked but that's the most glaring one. It's still a pretty book and well written. I only had to read the rules section once to understand how to play it.

Personal Thoughts

I'm a fan of the game. I think it's a clever design using ideas from d20 games, or f20 games if we're using Robin Laws nomenclature, and spinning them to create something new. I feel the mechanics of the game could be lifted out to play something else and have heard of people using them to play Cyberpunk and Shadowrun type games. I've even thought of a way to run my ongoing fantasy game using the Cypher system. I still don't think that detracts from the setting material presented. It's Monte Cook and if nothing else the man knows how to "cook" up a different world. Still, the idea's are sharp, the ideology is cool, the mechanics are sound and familiar enough that you can get d20/f20 players to play and understand it, and it's really right in my wheel house of hybrid games mixing traditional and narrative mechanics.

GM's Miscellany: Urban Dressing Publisher: Raging Swan Press **Reviewer:** Megan R **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5!

This is a massive resource for any GM interested in developing their own townships or indeed making any town or city within their campaign world come to vivid life. It concentrates, in the main, on those little features that bring a setting to life in the imaginations of those participating in your shared alternate reality, the little details often overlooked in the broad strokes of plot (whether you use published adventures or write your own) but which make that settlement take on a feeling of reality - perhaps somewhere, somewhen, this city really does exist!

Even if you have been collecting Raging Swan's Urban Dressing series you will find even more here, as well as having it all handily collated within one book. From the built environment around the party to the people they can meet or trade with, the ones who'll try to rob them or brawl with them, the places they can get a drink or go shopping - it's all here.

To populate your township, there are plenty of 'incidental' inhabitants to choose from, all neatly listed by CR and presented in appropriate contexts, anything from a street urchin to sages, experts and shopkeepers, guardsmen and rogues... even a 'bogeyman' to lurk in an alley. Use these in conjuction with named NPCs involved in your plotline, local notables and people the party have met before (maybe on their last visit) to create a vibrant community with which the characters can interact.

Then there's the businesses. Most parties go to town to conduct business of some sort, and even if they are just passing through - or live there - they'll need the necessities of everyday life whilst they are in town. Maybe they need supplies or have loot to sell. They may need to consult a sage or seek divine guidance. Perhaps they need to call upon local notables - seeking work or wishing to be paid for a job well done. Maybe they just want a drink, or need to take ship to get elsewhere. It's all here, how to come up with good names, the incidental details that make them come to life and more.

There is a selection of encounters that can happen as they move around town. Some will occupy no more than a moment, many have the potential to develop into a fullblown adventure, or at least a side-trek, of their own - if the party chooses to take an interest in whatever's going down.

There's a collection of sample taverns to drink in, or if things get a bit quarrelsome, to brawl in - along with rules and suggestions for running effective barroom brawls, including improvised weapons and making use of the surroundings... and of course, dealing with the Watch afterwards! (Vivid memories of one of my characters fleeing a brawl and getting arrested, on being asked why he was leaving the inn he explained "But it was on fire!")

If you like designing urban settings or just wish to make existing ones spring into vibrant life, check this out.



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