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## September 2014 Issue 41 PATHURAYS

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## CHARACTER MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE FOR PLAYERS AND GMS

ce Yiew Po	etfolio Charact	er <u>I</u> ools Sett	ings License Develop Help			View Update
lame Hak	on Truesilver		Human Bbn 4, Clr 3 HP: 95/95 AC: 17	Cash: ~791 GP		
Classes Bac	Abilitie	s Barbarian	Cleric Skills Feats Weapons Armor Mag	ic Geat Other Personal	Journal Special In-PI	ay Adjust Spells
Ab	lity Scores: 20	of 20	Attack Bonus	Basics O	Skills	Feats
STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA	12/16 12 16/20 11 16 12	<ul> <li>+1/+3</li> <li>+1</li> <li>+3/+5</li> <li>0</li> <li>+3</li> <li>+1</li> </ul>	Attack Bonus: +6/+1 Attack (Melee): +9/+4 Attack (Range): +7/+2 Combat Mansurer CM Bonus: +9 CM Defense: 18/17FI Defense: 18/17FI Defense: +9 Fortitude Save: +14 Reflex Save: +3 Will Save: +9 Armor Class: 17/9Tch/16FI	16° +3° Strength 12 +1 Dexterly 20° +5° Constitution 11 0 Intelligence 16 +3 Witsdom 12 +1 Charisma 4 Barbaran 3 Cleric 7 Level 35000 XP 95/95 HP 57 8222010s, Lgt Encc 17 / JPIch / 16F1 AC 17 / JPIch / 16F1 AC	<ul> <li>44 Acrobatics</li> <li>40 Appraise</li> <li>41 Biult</li> <li>41 Biult</li> <li>47 Climb</li> <li>46 Diptomacy</li> <li>Disable Dence</li> <li>41 Disguise</li> <li>44 Escape Artist</li> <li>49 Heat</li> <li>47 Handle Animal</li> <li>49 Heat</li> <li>49 Perception</li> <li>42 Ride</li> <li>47 Sense Motive</li> </ul>	Acrobatic Armor (Light) Armor (Medium) Great Fortitude Weapons (Al Martial) Shield Proficiency Weapons (Al Simple) Focus: Climb (Climb) Throw Anything Toughness +7
Charisme	Spent: 20 of 2	0	Miccellaneoun Initiative: +1 Speed: 40/30 feet Hit Points: 9595 Encumbered: 57.82/230lbs, Lgt Medium (5' space, 5' reach)	40 / 30 Speed +6(+1 Attack Bonus +9(+4 (Melee) +7/+2 (Ranged) +9 CMB 18 / 17FI CMD +14 Fortitude Save +3 Reflex Save +9 Will Save	<ul> <li>Sleight of Hand</li> <li>Spelicraft</li> <li>Steath</li> <li>Sunival</li> <li>Swim</li> <li>Use Magic Devic</li> </ul>	

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Best Aid or Accessory

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Pathways #39

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## PAthways Magazine Editorial

by Dave Paul

So GenCon came and went. I caught a cold, probably gave it to a dozen people (unintentionally), but otherwise had a great time. One of these years, I'm going to have the time and resources to turn GenCon into a week vacation, arrive in Indianapolis on Tuesday and leave on the following Monday. But, I digress.

For the first time this year, I sat on the presenter's side of the table in two of the seminars. I accompanied Steve at a seminar detailing what Rite Publishing is doing and another describing how to start a publishing company (which was not a seminar on how to publish things, or how to start a game company, or how to write for the RPG industry). I also attended a half-dozen seminars on writing, editing, and publishing. It's always good to improve my craft by learning from others. It's especially satisfying to learn from the mistakes of others rather than have to make those mistakes myself. I have no aversion to making mistakes, because I know that I learn from them. But, they're an inefficient way to move forward. If a hundred people can learn from one person's mistake, then they don't all have to wait to make it themselves, and the pace of progress jumps rather than steps ahead.

The first seminar I attended was given by Scott Rice-Snow from Ball State University. He spoke on geology and he aimed his presentation at world builders. How I wish I had had this information 30 years ago! I remember pouring over maps and globes in my bedroom and in the school's library when I was a kid, trying to figure out if there were rules about where rivers were, how they worked, which directions they flowed, etc. I wanted to know where deserts should be located; I wanted to know whether it made more sense for a swamp to be next to an ocean, a river, or a big lake. I wanted to know more about prairies and forests. If one kingdom was famous for its horses, it might not be smart for me to place that kingdom primarily in a forest. This presentation covered all these topics and more. I learned that most deserts don't have sand dunes, that in communities living along shorelines the people would know the early warning signs of tidal waves, and that near geysers the locals would probably fight over the mineral rights near the springs. Many of these bits of knowledge aren't hard to get, and some of them will reveal themselves with enough quiet contemplation and reflection, but, like with the making of mistakes, this is an inefficient way to share the wealth of knowledge. Thanks to this and the other presenters, my ability to write better locations, to include more realistic conflict zones, and to have realistic and informed locals, improved considerably.

Another seminar I attended, on myth and exploration, covered some deep issues. What does it mean, for instance, that centaurs attack a village? Is this just a random event that an unprepared GM throws into a game? It shouldn't be. Consider the origins of these creatures. The centaur is half animal and half human. This helps represent the conflict we all feel between our animal instincts and powerful, physical impulses on the one hand, and our rational, moral, and self-aware characteristics on the other. Are we going to be civilized or are we going to be barbarous? Perhaps the thread of the adventures is leading the characters to a monumental choice; at some point, they will face a foe and, in the end, defeating that foe might come through either raw, barbaric, wild force, or it will come through cool, dispassionate logic, managed teamwork, and appeal to ethical principles. As it's just becoming clear that this choice is looming on the horizon, the party (or village) might be visited by centaurs, representing a deeper meaning to the story. The GM is telling the players: these centaurs are a mirror, and I'm holding it up to you. Right now, you are an admixture of human and animal. Soon, you will face a choice, you cannot remain in this state forever; it is conflict. Which will you choose?

After a total of nine seminars, a handful of games, some really campy sci-fi movies, and the joy of watching Aliens on the big screen again, GenCon was over. On Sunday, it occurred to me that I need to start planting seeds for GenCon 2015 so they can start growing in the dark, rich soil of the unconscious while I go back to everyday life for a while. In particular, I have a page in my notebook with "Seminar Idea" at the top. I'm giving some thought to a seminar that focuses on this: *Pathways*. There are a few ways this can be done, at least one of which wraps it inside a more complex seminar focused on Rite Publishing. What do you think? What would you like to see?

Happy gaming.

**Rite Publishing Presents** 

# In the Company of Dragons

037





2

- State

by Wendall Roy

## Vindicator Creature Template

By Steven D. Russell, Illustrations by Ernanda Souza

Sometimes, rather than executing a creature, or simply killing it in battle, an enemy seeks to suck the marrow from its foe's bones, to grind its enemies' skulls to powder. Tear down their cities, blacken their sky, sow their ground with salt! Completely and utterly eradicate them! This kind of foe, rather than simply achieving victory, commits atrocities. It is from this defeat that sometimes the deities of retribution reincarnate an avenging spirit.

#### Creating a Windicator Creature

/

"Vindicator" is an acquired template that can be added to any living creature.

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

#### CR: +3.

**Defensive Abilities:** Regeneration equal to Constitution score (acid and fire), **DR** 5/epic (if the vindicator creature is CR 10 or higher this becomes DR 10/epic, if CR 15 or higher this becomes DR 15/epic)

#### Immune: acid, fire

**Weakness:** Vulnerability to Warded Creature. (A vindicator creature suffers +50% damage from a warded creature's attacks, and suffers a -4 penalty to saves against spell or effects controlled by a warded creature; its regeneration and damage reduction are also suppressed against attacks from a warded creature.)

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

Augmented Critical (Ex): Select a single melee or ranged attack the vindicator creature possesses. With this attack (and only this attack), the vindicator creature threatens a critical hit on 15–20 and inflicts x3 damage on a successful critical hit.

Augmented Special Attack (Ex): Choose one of the base creature's special attacks. If it is a single special attack, it deals half again as much (+50%) damage as normal. If this single special attack does not deal damage, add a +4 bonus to the save DC of the attack. If the attack has no save and does not deal damage, this ability has no effect.

*Healer's Bane (Su):* Damage caused by the vindicator creature's critical hits are subject to the legendary curse Healer's Bane (see sidebar). The special Will save DC for this legendary curse is 10 + the CR of the Vindicator creature + its Con modifier. *Cure:* The specific creature type must be a warded creature, the specific circumstance is the site of the vindicator creature's death.

*Warded Creature (Ex):* When a vindicator creature appears, the violated race, sub-race or cultural back-ground is granted the status of warded. A vindicator creature can sense the direction, distance (exact), emotional state, and *status* of all warded creatures within 1 mile per the vindicator's CR. Warded creatures within 120 ft. of the vindicator creature gain the benefits of a *greater her*-

oism spell (does not affect himself).

#### Healer's Rane

"May you suffer a vicious wound that will not heal!"
Type curse; Save Will

**Background** This curse was first uttered by dreaded blade tyrant Kah, the Dark Captain, against the famed paladin Talinor during the Insurrection of Adventure and was said to mar the knight's formerly handsome visage. Many mages and religions use this curse upon their opponents, save those who follow *Our Queen of Wisdom and Mercy* whose church consider it a blasphemy, and many of them refuse to risk harm to someone struck by this curse.

**Effect** Damage caused by critical hits to the subject cannot be healed; this includes healing by conjuration (healing) spells, channeled positive energy, natural healing, regeneration, fast healing, etc.

**Cure (DC 27)** If a specific type of creature under a specific circumstance creates an effect that removes a *bestow curse*, this combination grants a +20 circumstance bonus on any attempt to remove the curse. These specific requirements are subject to GM adjudication. Examples include: a creature that is immune to curses, a creature of the same type as the creature that uttered the curse or inflicted the first critical hit, a creature who has never committed violence, on the dawn of the third day, on the site of the curses original creation, or on holy ground dedicated to the ethos of healing.

**Abilities:** Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +10 (+5 to melee attack and damage, +5 to Climb and Swim checks, +5 to Strength, and CMB checks, +5 to CMD), Dex +10 (+5 to ranged attack rolls, AC and touch AC, Initiative checks, and Reflex saves. +5 to Acrobatics, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Fly, Ride, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth checks, +5 to any of the base creature's Dexterity-based DCs), Con +10 (+5 hp per HD, +5 to Fortitude saves, and any of the base creature's Constitution-based DCs).

**Feats:** Vindicator creatures gain Bleeding Critical, Blinding Critical, Critical Focus, Staggering Critical, and Stunning Critical as bonus feats, if they meet the prerequisites.



### Díoltas the Discourager CR 6

XP 2,400 CE Small fev Init +12; Senses low-light vision; Perception +9 Aura warded creature (fey 120 ft.)

#### Defense

AC 25, touch 24, flat-footed 12 (+12 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, +1 size) hp 38 (4d6+24)

Fort +7, Ref +16, Will +6

Defensive Abilities evasion, natural invisibility, regeneration 23 (acid, fire), supernatural speed, uncanny dodge; **DR** 5/epic; **Immune** acid, fire

Weaknesses slow susceptibility, vulnerability to warded creature (fey)

### Offensive

Speed 120 ft.

**Melee** short sword +15 (1d4+4/15-20) Special Attacks augmented critical, augmented special attack (sneak attack), healer's bane (DC 22) sneak attack +1d6(+50%)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +8) 1/day-dancing lights, flare (DC 12), levitate, shatter (DC 14), ventriloquism (DC 13)

#### actics

Before Combat Diotas the Discourrager, having been slain by the local human kingdom when it attempted to stop them from clear-cutting the forest, has been reincarnated by the empyreal lords of the primal plane as a vindicator. It now uses traps to ensnare its foes while it lays in wait to take its revenge upon the human kingdom. She takes advantage of her invisibility so that she can sneak attack her foes and hopefully score a critical hit as well. She will often use *dancing lights* and *ventriloquism* to lure creatures into these traps.

During Combat The Discourager hits with spring attacks, often running deep into concealment and cover so as to avoid ranged attacks, and prefers to attack outlying foes.

Morale: If forced to flee, it relies solely on its speed and regeneration so that it can return to fight again another day. Fleeing means it continues its long war of attrition against all the humans it knows.

#### Statistics

Str 18, Dex 34, Con 23, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 14 Base Atk +2; CMB +5; CMD 28 Feats Dodge, Mobility<sup>B</sup>, Spring Attack<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +19 (+55 jump), Bluff +9, Craft (traps) +9, Escape Artist +19, Perception+9, Spellcraft +6, Stealth +23, Survival +4, Use Magic Device +7 Languages Aklo, Common, Sylvan SQ poison use

Special Abilities Natural Invisibility (Su) Dioltas the Discourager is invisible when motionless. It loses this invisibility and remains visible for 1 round in any round in which it takes an action other than a free action.

Supernatural Speed (Su) Dioltas the Discourager moves with incredible speed, save for when it remains motionless (at which point it is invisible); Diolats' shape blurs and shimmers with this speed, granting it concealment (20% miss chance). In addition, this ability grants Dioltas evasion and uncanny dodge (as the rogue abilities of the same names).

Slow Susceptibility (Su) If Dioltas the Discourager succumbs to a *slow* effect, it loses its supernatural speed ability and is sickened as long as the effect persists. This sickened condition persists for 1 round after the slow effect ends.



Rite Publishing Presents

## The Secrets of Renegade Archetypes II





By Benjamin Rombeaut

## PATHWAYS MAGAZINE Kingsfell Village

Cartography is by Tommi Salama, words by Creighton Broadhurst

#### Art from the Public Domain

### Notes

Standing on the Ost's muddy banks, Kingsfell is seemingly a tranquil and prosperous village. However, the village stands on the site of an ancient battlefield and not all the dead rest easily in their graves. While the paladin and lady of the village, Mira Lankienen, keeps watch over her lands, a subtle unease has settled over her folk.

This is an extract from an upcoming Village Backdrop appearing in GM's Miscellany: Village Backdrops II which comes out next month.

## Kingsfell at a Glance

Kingsfell stands in a strategic location upstream from the extensive saltmarsh sprawling outwards from the River Ost's muddy banks. The village straddles the road looping around the marsh's sodden bounds and consequently many travellers stop to rest and recuperate after their harrowing journey.

The paladin Mira Lankinen rules Kingsfell with a firm, fair hand, as her family has done for generations. However, an elder shade of fell aspect lies upon the village. Centuries ago, a great battle was fought on the site. After the slaughter was done, the dead were interred in the burial mounds about which the village eventually grew. Some of the dead rest uneasily and wait for the return of their ancient enemies and a resumption of the slaughter. This malice and hate are beginning to leach into the villagers' psyches creating an aura of unease over Kingsfell.

#### Demographics

Ruler Mira Lankinen Government Overlord Population 174 (148 humans, 12 half-orcs, 11 halflings, 3 dwarves) Alignments NG, LN, LG Languages Common, Orc, Halfling Corruption +3; Crime -3; Economy +1; Law +3; Lore +1; Society -3 Qualities Historic site, strategic location

Danger 0; Disadvantages None

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

Elren Araral (location 6; LN female dwarf wizard [diviner] 4/cleric 3) Elren has traced the legend of Thegn Delthur Werlan's final battle to Kingsfell and is preparing to begin digging into the village's various burial mounds.

Heimo Eskola (location 5 & 8; N male human expert 2/wizard [universalist] 1) A failed wizard, but successful merchant, Heimo is the richest commoner in the village.

Issodair Highhill (location 2; NG male halfling bard 3) The young and dynamic owner of the Rat and the Cup is popular throughout the village.

Merla Shortstep (location 5; CN female halfling rogue 2/expert 1) Merla runs Eskola's, but is less than honest; she has been skimming a small take off the top for years.

Mira Lankinen (location 4; LG female middle-aged human paladin 5) The lord of the village is beloved by her subjects.

Riku Markku (location 1; N male middle-aged human expert 2) The taciturn miller is often seen poking about in the exposed mud of the Ost's banks, when the tide is out. Teuvo Eerola (location 7; LN male human cleric [Conn] 3) This pompous, but well-meaning, priest leads Conn's congregation.

#### Historic Site

The settlement stands on a site of historic importance. This site could be a fallen temple, ancient burial ground or the site at which an ancient, powerful ritual was enacted. (Lore +1; increase spellcasting by 2 levels).

#### Notable Jocations

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers: Redshank Mill: Here dwells the taciturn miller Riku Markku and his family. Because the Ost is a tidal river, the family keeps odd hours.

The Rat and Cup: This offers a homely, basic welcome to travellers. Those on a budget stay here, while the wellto-do end up at the Weary Traveller.

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**The Kingstones**: Five carven stones of stout dwarven warriors surround a sixth regal-looking dwarf atop this burial mound.

**Vigil**: This towering fortress stands atop the highest of the burial mounds. Deep below its foundations lie the bleached, jumbled bones of hundreds of orcs.

Eskola's: This large shop has an eclectic range of goods.

**The Weary Traveller**: Kingsfell's best inn, The Weary Traveller, provides welcome rest to those visiting the village.

**Hall of the Lawgiver**: Dedicated to Conn, the hall is the spiritual heart of the village.

**Heimo's House**: This large, well-appointed house overlooks much of the village. Here dwells the failed wizard and wealthy merchant Heimo Eskola and his family.

**Shrine of the Shining Light**: This temple of Darlen also serves as a watchtower. Few worship here beyond Mira Lankinen and her retainers and family.

#### Marketplace

**Resources & Industry** Farming, fishing **Base Value** 500 gp; **Purchase Limit** 2,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 5th; **Minor Items** 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** –

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

Armour +1 scale mail (1,200 gp)

Potions & Oils hide from undead (50 gp)

**Scrolls (Arcane)** *fog cloud, rope trick* and *arcane lock* (475 gp)

Wand misdirection (8 chgs., 720 gp)

**Weapons** +1 sling (2,300 gp), +2 rapier (8,320 gp) **Wondrous Items** boots of speed (12,000 gp), chime of opening (3,000 gp)

#### Village Jore

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

**DC 10**: Standing on the banks of the River Ost, Kingsfell is a busy place. Many travellers and merchants stop in the village, which is quite prosperous as a result.

**DC 15**: The village stands about several ancient burial mounds. Farmers often turn up splinters of bones and rusting metal in their fields. A battle was once fought on the site.

**DC 20**: Fanciful ancient legends place a long-dead king's crypt somewhere under the village.

#### Villagers

**Appearance** Predominantly dark of hair and pale of skin, the villagers of Kingsfell typically have dark or light brown eyes. Light-coloured eyes are rare among them.

**Dress** Villagers working in the fields wear drab, sensible clothes; those with businesses in the village dress in more colourful, fashionable clothes.

**Nomenclature** *male* Aaro, Ilari, Ossi, Uljas, Vesa; *female* Alma, Elena, Irina, Pia, Ulla; *family* Alanen, Hirvonen, Leino, Varala.

#### Whispers & Rumours

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about the village and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

D6	Rumour
1	An ancient king slumbers beneath the earth waiting for the rise of an elder evil. When the time is right, he will return to smite it down.
2	Every now and then, farmers tending their fields plough up bones or rusted, broken weapons and armour.
3	The treasure of the slain lie interred with their owners within the village's burial mounds.
4	Riku Markku is odd. At low tide, he is often seen poking about in the Ost's muddy banks. For what is he looking?
5*	Fell things dwell in the depths of the Ost. Odd ripples have been seen and strange tracks have been found on its banks.
6*	Teuvo Eerola shares a very close, personal relationship with both his acolytes.





# GENIUS GUIDE TO CHE ORAGOMANER

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# Owen K.C. Stephens

## Alternate Encumbrance System for Pathfinder

By Nico Cortes, Illustration by Arthur Rackham

I recently spent much of my time on *paperandpencils. com* looking for articles on house rules to use in my *Pathfinder* campaigns. A really useful article I stumbled upon was a revision to streamline the *Pathfinder* encumbrance system. I liked the simplicity of items either having encumbrance or not having encumbrance. This binary solution was simple, and I love simple. In retrospect, though, perhaps the house rule was a little too simple for my taste as a GM.

Shortly after reading the article, I took it upon myself to implement the rule into a fresh campaign I'd be GMing with some buddies from my hometown. As I began explaining and subsequently walking through the use of the house rule with my players, I suddenly realized a big issue I had; the binary nature of whether an item was encumbering was simply too broad for most smaller items. Does an iron pot count the same as a bastard sword in weight? Interpreting whether an item was heavy enough to be a "significant item" became laborious for me, a quality of the original encumbrance system I wanted to avoid. So back to the drawing board I went.

The printed table in the Pathfinder Core Rulebook provides a Strength score in one column, with a corresponding weight in pounds for "light," "medium," and "heavy" loads. Just eyeballing the table, I quickly recognized that for each increment in Strength score, about 3 to 5 pounds were added for the three corresponding load categories, at least for Strength scores that were not particularly high (below 17 or 18). It occurred to me that item encumbrance could be determined in a system by 3 to 5 pounds increments. So a longsword, at 4 pounds, would just be 1 encumbrance since 4 pounds is pretty close to 5, while a greataxe, at 8 pounds, would be 2 by the same logic. This would more or less coincide with the original rules, but make the associated numbers smaller and more manageable for the players. I didn't want to oversimplify though, so I took the rule a few steps further.

So far the rule seemed sound; round an item's encumbrance based on a close approximation of its weight to a multiple of 5 pounds, then divide by 5 for a much smaller encumbrance value. Finally, add up all item encumbrance. If the sum is equal to or less than the Strength score of the character in question, it's a light load; if the encumbrance is up to double the Strength score, it's medium; up to triple, it's heavy. But there were still some kinks that needed to be worked out; namely, how the rule would account for higher scaling of increased encumbrance capacity for particularly large Strength scores, and how to deal with items under 3 pounds. Thankfully, these special cases were easy to address. The former could be solved by simply adding the Strength score modifier of a character to its total encumbrance capacity, but only if the modifier were a bonus and not a penalty. That way the amount of encumbrance a character can bear scales with a large Strength score, just like in the printed rules. The latter issue was resolved simply by expanding upon the idea of "insignificant items" from the *paperandpencils* article; 3 insignificant items (that is, items under 3 pounds) count as 1 encumbrance. This makes sense for the most part since 3 one-pound items add up to 1 encumbrance, and 3 two-pound items add up to 1 encumbrance. So with the revisions, the rule finally seemed to work... I was wrong again!

Well maybe not wrong as much as negligent of another consideration: fillable containers filled with liquids or small items in large quantities. Is a half-full waterskin as heavy as a full one? Is a half full quiver as heavy as when there are 20 arrows in it? In the scope of my final simplification, yes! What about if the container is below half full? In that case, the container with contents included is 1 encumbrance point less than usual. So if a full or halffull waterskin is 2 ENC, a quarter-full waterskin is 1 ENC. Similarly, a 1 ENC container will become an insignificant item when significantly less than half full.

So that's it: a revision of a revision to the Pathfinder encumbrance system that I hope you find useful at your gaming table's adventures. As a final note I'd like to mention that I do not wish to belittle or discount the work of the author of the article I mentioned; I merely wished to share a revision I believe strikes a balance of the simplicity of the pragmatic author's rule, and the depth of the rules devised by the fine people over at Paizo. You may find that either of those rulesets works better for you, and if they do, more power to you! System choice is one of the many pleasures of being a GM. But for those of you who find my revision beneficial to your game, I'll leave a quick reference at the end of this article for you to get the meat and potatoes of the rules I devised more quickly. I hope you all found the article useful, and most importantly, play on!

#### QUICK REFERENCE

Item ENC = (Item's weight in pounds rounded to a multiple of 5)/5

ENC capacity (light load threshold) = Str score + Str bonus

(x2 for medium load threshold, x3 for heady load threshold)

Note: All rules regarding the varying weight of items depending on the size type (e.g. a small-sized longsword compared to a medium-sized longsword) are applied normally. This shouldn't affect the houserule outline in the article. Nico Cortes is an avid gamer from Denton, Texas. He now resides in Austin and is currently attending the University of Texas. He thoroughly enjoys GMing and playing just about any system; although, he often uses the Pathfinder system. His GMing philosophy emphasizes player freedom, narrative, and character development.



**Rite Publishing Presents** 

## 10 Dragon Magic Items







by Wendall Roy

## PAthways Magazine Twenty Questions with Wendall Roy

by Steven D. Russell

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

I'm a freelance writer and game designer who has done d20 and PFRPG-related work for a number of 3<sup>rd</sup>-party publishers: Rite Publishing, Louis Porter Jr. Design, Tricky Owlbear Publishing, Jon Brazer Enterprises, and Dreamscarred Press. I've been at this for about 10 years, but didn't really get serious about it until around 2011-2012. Most of my products fall into one of two categories. Character and culture development is my true passion, as I enjoy digging into psyches and cultures both real and imagined to figure out what makes them tick. Small thematic collections of items are my second most common type of publication, mainly because I work on them to stimulate my creative energy and help clear my head when I'm in the middle of a larger, mentally challenging work.

I currently reside in the Twin Cities but am a proud son of New England who misses his ocean. When I'm not working on game design, I occupy my time by bouncing between more hobbies than is probably healthy and trying to convince myself that I'm not just a professional dilettante.

#### 2. What is your home game like?

A sporadic therapy group for 30-something husbands and dads? I have a few games running on an infrequent basis whenever enough people can make it. My Pathfinder home game has been operating under PFS rules for the past couple years to make it easier for people to drop in and out, but we really enjoy sandbox-style play and traditionally have done that in a variety of campaign settings.

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

Wow, that's a tough question. They have done an amazing job developing Golarion as a compelling campaign setting, and it'd be very challenging to pick out a single one of their campaign setting products. My brain doesn't really think in, "bests and favorites," but if I have to hold up one Paizo product as a benchmark I'll say the *Advanced Player's Guide*. Its publication was a defining moment for Pathfinder as something truly unique, not just an iteration of the d20 OGL rules.

#### 4. You are currently doing a lot of work for Rite Publishing, how did that start and how would you characterize your relationship with the company today?

Back in 2011 I was at home for a couple months acting as a medical caregiver, and I decided to take a real stab at game design to keep myself occupied. I basically spammed every third-party publisher I could with open solicitations for work. Steve was one of the people who



responded back, and let me know he was looking for additional writers for the *#30* series. I sent him a short list of ideas for the series and a couple samples, he greenlit *#30 Alchemical Gadgets*, and the rest is history.

Working with Rite has been terrific. Steve is a standup guy and has been great to work with from day one. He gives plenty of constructive feedback to my drafts, doesn't micromanage, communicates promptly, and pays his freelancers on time. He also puts up with my overcommunicative, spammy (and occasionally neurotic) emails without complaint, which is a very generous thing for him to do.

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

In the Company of Dragons is my favorite product to date. When my first foray into the series – In the Company of Fey – sold better than expected, Rite offered me the chance to develop a dragonbased product. This was pretty much the holy grail of the series; you just cannot get a more iconic creature than a dragon. In the Company of Dragons allowed me to create a lot of cool content. You get a 20-level paragon class that allows you to play a full-fledged dragon as part of an adventuring group. You get an archetype that allows you to instead play that dragon as any core class instead. You

get a backstory and culture development of the original dragon race, and the surface of an all-dragon campaign setting in the Lost Isles that I'm eager to develop further.

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

"I am Thunders in Defiance, the Bronze Bulwark, He Who Endures, Master-in-Exile of the Windscour Cliffs, the Disrespectful Outcast."

That sentence was the first time Thunders in Defiance's voice popped into the manuscript without revision or me even needing to think about what he would say. It was a cathartic moment. After that, all of the fiction really came together.

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

The draconic hero archetype. I was struggling with how to balance the power of a dragon with individual core classes through 20 levels when I had an epiphany – why does an archetype have to be class-specific, and why does it have to replace/modify class abilities on a 1:1 basis? Creating a single overlay that provided X ability to any base class but with a tailored list of replaced abilities for each class let me keep things balanced without a lot of text and rules bloat.

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

The most challenging aspect was dealing with arguably the most iconic creature in fantasy role-playing. You want to be evocative of, and do justice to, everything that came before while at the same time bringing something new to the table. There were times when I worried that half of readers would find it too different from their mental image of dragons in Pathfinder, while the other half found it too derivative and not worth their time. Ignoring the second-guessing and fully committing to the vision I had for *In the Company of Dragons* was definitely the most challenging part of it all.

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

I learned that open playtests are great for polishing up the mechanics of a product. We got a lot of useful feedback that helped make the crunch sections work smoothly. Getting an early sample out definitely seemed to help sales, too.

#### **10. Other than your own work, what is the** best Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible **product out there**?

*Ultimate Psionics. In the Company of Monsters.* Rogue Genius' *Talented* series. That's in no particular order and a very incomplete list... there is a lot of quality third-party content out there.

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

1. It brings something new to the table. 2. Its crunch focuses on being elegant, functional and balanced. 3. Layout, art and editing are not neglected.

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

Nope, not naming names. I want everyone to like me and ply me with booze/food when I eventually make it to GenCon or PaizoCon.

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

Write when you don't feel like writing. Accept criticism and understand your weaknesses as well as your strengths. Meet deadlines. Play nice with others.

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

Ernanda Souza did a spectacular job on the cover of *In the Company of Dragons*, especially considering I sent her a very specific and restrictive description. I look forward to seeing more of her stuff appear in the game industry.

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

The one that will stick with me is from a favorable review done by Josh Gullion for my first PFRPGcompatible writing credit, a handful of the spells selected for Jon Brazer Enterprises' *Book of Magic: Pirate Spells.* He dug my animate figurehead spell, and the fact that I could inspire someone to go buy a particular miniature explicitly to use something I wrote in a game was a motivation I sorely needed at the time. I didn't really know Josh, only exchanged a single email with him, but the outpouring from the Pathfinder community at his passing speaks volumes to the quality of his character. His review and complimentary email were probably no big deal to him, but they are why I kept at this when I was ready to give up.

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

There could be a manuscript in progress to further develop the Lost Isles as a dragon-centric campaign setting, including expansion material for both dragons and giants. I could also be working on something secretive for Obsidian Apocalypse, but if I give any hints Louis Porter Jr. might trigger my self-destruct button.

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

I'd like to expand into game systems beyond PFRPG, do some world-building for video games, maybe even

non-game-related fiction. As much as I enjoy what I'm lucky enough to currently get paid to do, I'm a fiction writer and student of humanity at heart.

#### 18. Can you tell us a little about ...

Have I mentioned this little thing I did called *In the Company of Dragons* yet?

I've had a few smaller products come out in the past month that may interest you. *10 Dragon Magic Items* is a nice low-cost supplement that introduces some new item ideas for dragons, from magical effect-producing barbules they can implant between their scales to an extradimensional howdah that carries humanoid servants into war. Tricky Owlbear Publishing (via Fat Goblin Games) has put out another installment of *Pug's Bazaar*, a fun little series that highlights a motley assortment of magic items and spells from your favorite sleazy goblin merchant. They have also recently published *Fantastic Fighting Styles*, a collection of style feat chains inspired by creatures of myth – Cockatrice, Couatl, Doppelganger, Manticore, Peryton, and Phoenix.



## 19. How difficult would it be for you to come up with a question I should have asked and provide an answer?

There's a good chance you could catch me completely unawares and stump me. In a situation like that, it is likely that I would turn your question into my question and create an infinite loop of questioning metaphysical feedback. It wouldn't be pretty.

I'd then try to salvage the situation with something like this – speaking of all things "meta" there is another secret product I'm working on and planning to pitch to unsuspecting publishers. Wade Wilson would be proud.

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

Having fun in life is just about the only thing I take seriously. (I was serious about hoping to be plied with food and booze at Cons, however.)





## Third Party Product Reviews

#### Plight of the Juath II - Vasily's Woe



**Publisher:** Mór Games **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out of Five

Have you ever wanted to swash your buckle, breeze through adventure with wild abandon, living for the moment? Perhaps the new base character class of the bravo is for you.

Presented in the main as if one such

bravo had paused for a moment to recount to you the details of his chosen career, no doubt over an ale you have had to buy him, this work presents a coherent and exciting review of all the material you need to know if you want to create and play a bravo character. This includes a lot of the material that is normally covered in more prosaic terms, things like alignment and religion and which classes a bravo character gets on best with, which races do best in this class, and even what the perceived 'role' of a bravo might be. This last involves skill in melee combat and social interactions, with wit and flair - and sheer luck - to get out of tight corners.

Only then do we get down to game mechanics, with progression table, starting wealth, class skill list and - of course - the special abilities that make this class unique. The most interesting one is 'fighting technique' which enables the bravo to develop his own distinctive fighting style. He may have come up with it for himself, or perhaps he has travelled far and wide studying with masters of the sword (or whatever he's decided to specialise in) to blend together something that will become his trademark style. Other abilities are designed to reinforce and expand that style, it all hangs together rather well.

There are a couple of new feats and a whole raft of fighting styles, conjuring up images of a party-full of bravos vying with each other as they develop their personal styles! Well worth a look if the swashbuckling style appeals.

The second installment in Mór Games' epic saga clocks in at a massive 101 pages, 1 page front cover, 2 pages of editorial, 1 page ToC,1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with a massive 94 (!!!) pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

This being and adventure-review, the following contains SPOILERS. Potential players may wish to jump to the conclusion.

#### All right, still here?

After triumphing in the former module, Philiandrius the mage contacts the PCs again to travel to the town Innskittering to reclaim the so-called "Antecedent of Easement" as a first step towards foiling the invasions of the Fomoire and their dread deity. Providing them with a means of contacting him and some scrolls, the PCs are sent on their way toward the town of Safeharbor - provided they can prevent their ship from being sunk by magma elementals. In Safeharbor, the PCs may unwittingly gain the attention of the Sect "The Culling" - people that hunt good clerics and wizards because they want the peace bought from the evil gods to remain intact. Morally interesting, this fascinating nod towards the structure of deities and belief in the Imperiums Campaign Setting makes for a compelling set-up that adds a unique dimension to the setting, but one you can easily ignore or reappropriate. Which also brings me to a point - in case you have not played Plight of the Tuath's first module, you are not left alone - the module offers ample advice on running this as a stand-alone, though it mho loses some of its glorious fluff if you do so. Advice on additional tricks to challenge exceptionally capable parties also can be found throughout the module, which renders running it for pros (like my players) easier.

Now back to the plot – I mentioned the Culling already, and know what - the first killer of them the PCs may encounter actually gets a massive, concisely-written background story and actually is a well rounded character. Now Innskittering, guarded by magical mists, hits a soft spot with me - the sinister village, with its old hagish barkeeper, the module's eponymous creepy rhyme-song "Vasily's Woe" and the subtle sense of decreptitude and death, the town and its non-too-friendly inhabitants may well end up as troop-style mobs out for the PC's blood after all, the temple the PCs will have to enter is taboo ground for strangers. In the exceeding, cool flavor of the module, the very guardian statues of the temple receive their own legends. Unbeknownst to the PCs, the recent outbreaks of plagues (which, as a backdrop of looming despair, is also reflected in tinctures and long-nosed plague masks as available items to purchase - including a stunning artwork for the mask) has had the despairing villagers transform people into soul-bound marionettes -and the path of breadcrumbs leads to Petrov Manor.

In the dark manor, the PCs may save a gnome as they explore the place – now if you're like me, here's one final example why this module is such a great read: A small box fills us in on a gnomish custom – the small folk have been hunted by doppelgangers for generations and thus tend to show their "colors" by picking their skin and bleeding, believing doppelganger blood to be of a different color than red. This also influences jewelry, which often comes with a means to picking one's skin. Now mind you, small cultural tidbits that make sense on a very fundamental logic level within the context of a setting might seem paltry to you, but you \*notice\* these things on a subconscious level and they all come together.

Now, beyond the investigation of the manor, which in its dressing and challenges, remains distinctly medieval (and unlike most haunted manor scenarios), the PCs can also explore the manor grounds, where a dread cult taken root -or go directly to the witch Yaga Petrov, who makes

for essentially the boos of this module – if they manage to survive her unique spells, the demonic infestation and oh so much more.

The module also comes with a full-page hand-out of stats for a certain gnome, information on the 4 exceedingly cool emergences the PCs may receive during this module (think of trait-like/spell-like rewards for actions that may be lost...or further explored...), fully detailed and statted villages with legends, properly narrated and phrased galore, 10 magic items with EXCESSIVE background information, 6 original monsters, optional rules for minor and major divine rituals, write-ups for the religions of 4 deities (including rituals, SAMPLE BLESSINGS and subdomains...) and finally, 4 pregens, all with their own full-color artworks.

Easy to print-out b/w-cheat cards for DMs to show or have ready for key-NPCs and player-friendly versions of 6 of the maps (all they could conceivably research in the module) are provided.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch – while e.g. one of the statblocks has a "1" missing before the 6 in the AC-entry, the modifiers remain and that was the most grievous glitch I noticed – for a module of this length, quite impressive. Layout adheres to a 2-column full-color standard that is easy to read...and makes me weep that I don't have this in print...yet. Seriously, the first "Plight of the Tuath"-module was beautiful, this perhaps is even more so. The artworks are, no hyperbole, on Paizolevel, depending on your tastes, perhaps even beyond it. It should also be noted that the module is internally hyperlinked and excessively bookmarked for your convenience. The cartography is line-drawn and nice – and plentiful.

"Vasily's Woe" is an exercise is great story-telling that even has some sand-boxy, non-linear qualities to it. While, in its heart, a relatively simple investigation/ explore spooky places-module, this adventure actually made it hard for me to put it aside. I'm not kidding. I do not often come across a module I want to read to the end, taking my laptop to bed with me after staring all day long at text. William Moomaw's "Vasily's Woe" did just that. Where the first module by Mór Games had some slight issues with a potentially overshadowing NPC, some nonstandard rules in the climax etc., this one also provides unique rules – but ones that actually make sense within the context of the module, and sans contradicting existing ones. But you don't necessarily will want to buy this for the crunch.

You want to buy this for the atmosphere, the ingenuity of the writing, the mastery of the little cultural tidbits that make a world come alive. The atmosphere can be perhaps described as a captivating blend of Russian and Gaelic myth, dosed with a nice sprinkle of danse macabre, an a coherent world-building that may be based on systems and creatures we know, but gives them a whole new dimension. This is more "The Witcher" than Golarion – grittier, but not necessarily darker. The amount of detail provided for...well, EVERYTHING, steeps everything in a sense of antiquity that utilizes subtle techniques of mythweaving to create a beautiful tapestry of interconnecting dots PCs and players alike may explore at the same time, generating an (Almost always optional) level of detail scarcely seen in modules. Better yet, the overall panorama drawn here is one I really, really love – while managing to generate a sense of antiquity, of an old and ancient world, at the same time, this module succeeds in being FRESH.

This module and its setting, from what I could glean of that, manages to be at once defiantly old-school and suffused with a sense of the ancient and mythological (in the proper academic term's various notions), while at the same time carving its own identity and making a defiant stand against settings that have bloated themselves with races, thinking that by adding a race with x modifiers, they can create a richer backdrop of cultures, when they can't even get proper human cultures right. This module has more awareness of what makes a world believable than the vast majority of settings I've read (and enjoyed). It boils down to the attention of detail and the proper THINKING THROUGH of its components, which come together as something greater than the sum of its parts.

You may have noticed that I have remained relatively opaque throughout the review – this is not due to an inability to describe the plot, but rather from my desire to not spoil this one and the reading experience, this offers.

William Moomaw and Mór Games deliver a module, which, while not flawless, makes for a superb reading, a compelling adventure and top-notch production values. Add to that the fact that this is only the second product of Mór Games and I'm really stoked to see where the company and its Imperiums-campaign setting will go in the future. I remain with a final verdict of 5 stars + seal of approval and a nomination as a Candidate for my Top Ten of 2014.

### Mythic Minis: Mythic Martial Arts II



Publisher: Legendary Games Reviewer: Thilo Graf Rating: 5 stars out of 5

All right, you know the drill – 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial/SRD, 1 page content, so let's take a look!

This Mythic Mini about martial arts provides 6 new mythic martial arts, so

what do we get?

-Boar Style: Tear flesh more than once per round, also versus multiple adversaries, provided you hit the target twice. Expend mythic power to deal con damage. Ouch! Awesome!

-Boar Ferocity: Add 1/2 tier to Boar ferocity's demoralize duration. Additionally, if the target would be shaken for 4 rounds or more, you may exchange 4 of these for 1 round of the nauseated condition. Use mythic power to make the target frightened instead. AWESOME! That's what I'm talking about!

-Boar Shred: +1/2 mythic tier bleed, use mythic power for con-bleed. Nasty!

-Crane Style: Better defense, enter crane style as if fighting defensively as an immediate action. Keep threatening AoOs, but at -2 to atk. Neat.

-Crane Riposte: +1/2 mythic tier on AoOs with Crane Riposte. Additionally, when hit while fighting defensively in crane wing, make a retaliation attack either via AoO or as an immediate action. This is very iconic.

-Crane Wing: Expend mythic power to extend Crane Wing to more attacks on a 1 for 1 basis. Also potentially force attacks directed on you on other creatures. Cool!

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice glitches. Layout adheres to legendary Games 2-column full-color standard and the cover-art is neat. The pdf has no bookmarks, but needs none at this length.

Alistair Rigg, after the first pdf on martial arts, may deliver slightly less content here, but each and every mythic feat of these styles ROCKS. They take the base concept of the styles and make them work in much more awesome ways for a glorious pdf for martial artists - well worth a full-blown recommendation of 5 stars + seal of approval!

You can get these awesome styles here on OBS and here on d2opfsrd.com's shop!

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#### 20 Dariant Foes: Worgs & Winter

20 Carriant 2

Worgs & Wint

#### Wolves

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

This pdf clocks in at a massive 64 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, leaving us with a massive 61 pages of content, so let's take a look!

All right, before I get into the creatures herein. there is something I need to address: Know how so many monster books provide statblocks where you just think "Yawn, could have done that myself."? Well, this is NOT one of those. Over 15 (!!!) templates have been used in the creation of those creatures, drawing from the ample fund of awesome templates pioneered in Rite Publishing's legendary "Book of Monster Templates" and similar sources, with all the necessary crunch provided - and yes, while some of the templates are simple, others consist of rather complex brutes that are quite some work to properly apply. Beyond these 9 items, two of which have artifact status, a spell and 13 feats have been used here as well. Statblock wizard Justin Sluder uses some of Rogue Genius Games "Horrifically Overpowered" feats here as well, making for what boils down to mini templates for the most powerful of adversaries herein. Beyond that, no less than 8 archetypes, including the aberrant aegis archetype for Dreamscarred Press' cool psionic class are provided and in case that's not enough for you, what about a RPbreakdown of worgs and winterwolves as 15 and 40 RPraces to be potentially played via the ARG rules to round this one off? Even for Rite Publishing's excessive, very high standard of NPC-supplemental crunch, this is very close to the absolute apex of what one could ask for.

Now another thing that makes this book a joy to read would be the fact that all creatures herein get their own chance to comment and talk - in Rite Publishing's timehonored tradition, the crunch is supplemented by great in character prose that makes reading what otherwise would be a dry collection of cool statblocks actually compelling. Furthermore, the respective fluff further supplements the crunch - take the lowest CR creatures herein, Erox, Onyx and Grux - phalanx terror worgs linked by a kind of hivemind that don't always see eye to eye - ranging from CR 3 to 5, the most simple of them also has the young template and expert levels applied, while the threatening Erox instead comes with maneuver master levels - yes, not even standard class levels, but properly archetype'd ones. And seriously, the build is nasty for CR 5...in a good way.

On the weird side of the spectrum, an arctic druid pygmy winter wolf that considers himself the incarnation of winter and on the more disturbing, what about a spellless ranger worg that makes for a superb pack commander and has a deal most disturbing with a community he protects...in exchange for the sick and old ...

Endzeitgeist out.

If you're looking for something less identifiable as the original, take a look at Qixa, an entropic worg oracle of fire and flames, feared as a spirit of vengeance and death. On the other hand, do not think that every creature herein was necessary an antagonist – Judge Kerist is actually a sacred, celestial worg inquisitor, a true hunter of the wicked, on the hunt to punish those who slew his adopted parents and stamp out evil, and ingrained within the character, the old argument of nurture vs. nature still looms, making for roleplaying potential galore... Speaking of which – if you're looking for a celestial force of good, the Half-Solar worg bestial oathbound paladin Lady Ferra, clocking in at an impressive CR 19, might just suit your needs

Now for truly diverse and agile worgs, what about one who actually uses Rite Publishing's superb shapeshifterclass, the Taskshaper? On the build-side very interesting would be Tirusta, the Hag Wolf, who had the winter wolf racial HD reverse-engineered away in favor of great hero/hexen cavalier levels. Especially suited for eastern/ WuXia-style settings would be the mithral-clad Silver Wolf that utilizes Zombie Sky Press' Yamabushi class – here let me insert something: You may have noticed that these builds use A LOT of cool 3pp material – essentially mostly a best-of. The epic thing here would be that you do not require these pdfs to run these creatures. The spirit of 3pp-camaradrie breathing from these pages, sources are directly cited and if I had none of the respective sources , I'd go for more than one of them after reading this pdf.

Now if you're looking for a lesser of two evils type of scenario or want to get rid of a certain magical beast companion, look no further than the vile kinslayer – specialized in slaying pups and magical beasts, this apex predator ravenous martial artist 10 worg is a terror to behold and comes with a single-minded, sadistic intellect to supplement this brawn.

On my "Almost too awesome to not squee at" list would be the dread "W" – a bipedal dread vampire worg pistolero – at once potential savior and dread wolf-insheep's clothing... Now if your PCs start yawning at werewolves and the like – know a surefire way to make them stop? Have them run like crazy from the CR 20 gargantuan bipedal Gr'Zelha and grin at their surprised gasps when the huge beast starts further fortifying herself with deadly psionic powers.

Or do you require a truly nasty, yet in a strange way, honorable taskmaster? What about a schizoid, twoheaded worg mystic theurge that desperately want to be turned "back" into two sisters – if, indeed the creature ever was anything but what it seems to be today and this belief is not the result of some strange delusion. Iythous the trickster is a winter wolf clever godling with ample templates applied that takes the fluff of the winter wolf on its head, giving it a distinctly Caribbean/Polynesian flair and adding essentially a hook on imminent divine ascension to the fey creature for a fickle and fearsome foe that should challenge even the most powerful of PCs. For a more straightforward, yet nonetheless terribly impressive adversary, the CR 25 Degrith the Defiler worg champion build that provides a quasi-deity, perhaps of cthulhoid origins, threat.

Want to know something funny? This guy isn't the hardest foe herein. Not by a lot. The Legendary Baywulf of the Nightvale, a lupine wight of the color of blood may sound like a nightmareish legend and have the stats to supplement this claim, but he's not the toughest brute in here either. This honor has to be split among two creatures whose statblocks are so beautiful, one's eyes might glaze over - on the one hand, there would be Lord Shong Vutok, the Boeal Inferno, an accelerated, bipedal, half-balor winterwolf primagus/champion (via talented rogue-gestalting) CR 30/MR 7, on the other hand no other than the friggin' CR 29/MR 10 coolest incarnation of the world-ending Fenris Wolf I've seen in guite a while: While Shong Vutok is awash in options, the Fenris Wolf's raw death-dealing potential and brute power more than make up for this and fit thematically with the concept.

Have I mentioned the bonus creatures at the end of the pdf, an advanced shadow and two highly complex NPC builds? Well, now I have.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I didn't notice significant glitches. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column full-color standard and the pdf deserves special mentioning for its interior art – the cover is by far not the best or most iconic piece herein and while I've seen the rendition of one wolf before, the vast majority are original, glorious, beautiful pieces indeed that help the critters come alive. The pdf comes excessively bookmarked for your convenience.

The team of Justin Sluder and Elaine Betts have delivered one of the finest NPC-books currently available for Pathfinder here. Yes, NPCs. For while the creatures herein are monstrous, they all come with compelling stories and should be considered full-blown characters of their own right, running the gamut from friendly to nightmareish, from cool to legendary lethality levels that could even challenge a capstone mythic party. The fact that this makes use of all those cool 3pp-supplements without requiring you to own them is just another piece of awesomeness to add to this beast of a book. And then there's Rite's signature complexity regarding statblocks. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy standard builds as much as the next dude, but at best for mooks. My NPCs, my villains, they better be special.

This book delivers just that, builds that would otherwise take ages to get right, to apply the templates etc. for the distinct connoisseur of brutal beasts. This is the haute cuisine of NPC-builds. This is a book of excellent instant NPCs of the lupine variety, both friends and foes, that will be remembered by your players for a long time. Combined with the superb bang-for-buck-ratio and the cool artworks, this is a clear 5 star + seal of approval book and a candidate for my Top Ten of 2014.

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#### Gossamer Worlds: Nexopolis

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

This installment of the Gossamer Worlds-series depicting infinite worlds along teh Grand Stair clocks in at 51 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 48 pages of content, so let's...

...wait. What? Yes, this is a break of form for the series: Where usually, Matt Banach provides, short, extremely affordable primers for worlds that can be essentially considered campaign seeds, this one is penned by Matt Forbeck and is more of a full-blown sourcebook.

Now the book kicks in with a 2-page full color map of the island and city of Nexopolis and while not bad, it is one weak spot of the pdf - compared to the awesome, original pieces of full color atwork, the map didn't wow me - it is functional, but nothing special. That being said, LoGaS stands and falls with its setting - and here, the foreword sets a theme - much in line with e.g. Catherynne M. Valente's "Palimpsest" and similar weird cities that act as a kind of nexus, Nexopolis has a welcoming committee one exemplified by the character (and player!) potentially reading this as an introduction to the setting at hand.

The city of Nexopolis and its island is ultimately one island that is the last inhabitable place in a world ravaged by the war with the dwimmerlaik - here, survivors of once the more door-rich worlds on the Grand Stair still dwell and here, countless doors still exist. Though legendary Finnian has some control here, via specially created keys. So Finnian's the leader and lord? Well, yes and no. Finnian is the none-too-subtle power behind the leaders, the constant power behind the throne, so to speak - Finnian's not about politics, but rather governing: Managing and ensuring survival. And in a world ravaged by war, where poisonous storms may howl with the ghosts of the dwimmerlaik slain in the war, where people from countless worlds come for trade (or vacation the weather's nice!) and where both magic and high technology reign supreme, that's something.

Indeed, Nexopolis can be considered the ultimate melting pot - in the tradition of planar metrolpolises like Sigil, next to everything you can imagine can be found here - hence, the local populace tends to exhibit a jaded, somewhat condescending stance toward less cosmopolitan dwellers of other Gossamer Worlds. Also in tradition of similar hub cities, law and its enforcement is less conventional; to prevent constant ideological issues and gripes, law is more about keeping the peace here and different zones (i.e. neighborhoods) with their own styles, rules and things to do are provided. And surprisingly, the respective neighborhoods actually transcend the standard depictions one would expect from e.g. the slumlike area.

Rather interesting would be, that often ignored issues like e.g. the transport of military and WMDs are covered as well, including the outside of the inhospitable world, ravaged by the wars long past. Glorious! The book also features quite an array of different NPCs - from the Lord Finnian to the in-character author of the pdf to Marhseeba, Finnian's scientist-come-trade-advisor to the leader of the Vigilance Council, the leader of the Official Business Development, the justicar, the mysterious potentially reverse aging Mother Girl sorceress -all these characters come with full-blown stats - and fluff-only write-ups of even more intriguing characters provide quite an array of hooks. Bevond that, even the stance of well-known Gossamer Lords and Ladies regarding Nexopolis and its special position is discussed, adding further potential for story-weaving.

Now beyond this vast panorama of narrative options, we also are introduced to an array of no less than 8 cantrips, 6 spells and 4 artifacts. Not enough? What about rats that use coconuts like hermit crabs use shells? The fabled white squid?

Now beyond these, this supplement opens a whole new dimension of LoGaS-gaming - the primer for creating nonpowered characters! While the primer is short, the total usefulness of the short section rocks.

Finally, the pdf closes with a smattering of adventure hooks, just in case you're not inspired enough yet - and if neither reading this book, nor the hooks helped, I really don't know what will.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's 2-column full-color standard and the pdf comes with a neat plethora of awesome, original full color artworks. The pdf comes with extensive, nested bookmarks.

Matt Forebeck delivers what could essentially be summed up as a inter-planetary/planar Nexus meets tropical, post-apocalyptic casablanca meets high-intrigue capitalism and CEO-business-level intrigue. This supplement actually managed to carve out its own niche within the plethora of planar nexus-style cities I've read for various supplements and systems and that's a feat in itself. The lively, cool characters add vast array of angles to pursue is staggering - even before adding other gossamer worlds. Add to that the more than required rules for nonpowered characters and we have a supplement on our hands that should be considered a non-optional purchase for anyone invested in Lords of Gossamer and Shadows. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

Endzeitgeist out.

#### Magus of the Jade Oath

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

> This pdf clocks in at 32 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, leaving us with a massive 29 pages of content, so let's take a look!

We kick off this supplement with a short piece in-character prose and continue this approach in the respective discussions of magi throughout the book,

as written by one member of the Forbidden Mantis, formerly of the Beautiful Silk Tigers -and indeed, in lavish, captivating prose, we are introduced to the respective magi traditions of the diverse factions of the Lands of the Jade Oath. And indeed, the blend of arcane and martial feels as if predestined for a proper in-depth look in such a setting and here and there, the combinations of the schools, factions and abilities just rock – take the Jade Griffon Guard, who may, via a new arcana, deliver spellstrikes via their mounts, offering more storytelling potential via these traditions than one would expect – indeed, the wealth of organizations and ideas in the discussions of these alone suffices to power at least one, potentially more campaigns set either in the Lands of the Jade Oath or similar Asian settings.

Now I can't get into the awesomeness of the fluff in detail sans bloating the review beyond all compare, but rest assured -it is glorious indeed and writing-wise actually quite a step upwards from the HotJO-main book. The pdf goes on to provide favored class options for magi and all the uncommon races provided in the Heroes of the Jade Oath setting.

Now the first archetype would be the curse-eater, who receives the misfortune oracle curse and may identify curses, spellblights etc. This curse essentially increases the botch-range anyone nearby experiences - think of the class as a kind of herald of misfortune akin to TPK Games' Malefactor. As a damn cool idea, any beneficial spell cast on an ally that is 3rd level or higher carries either a curse or a spellblight with it – and no, these cannot be beneficial -DM-control is maintained and ensured. Now at 5th level, items in possession of the curse-eater become cursed and infected with spellblights as well. Now the catch is - as long as the curse eater wears his/ her white ceremonial mask, spellblights and curses don't affect the character. Now beyond that, the curse eater may, of course, eat curses - and that's easy to screw up, mechanics-wise, especially since the curse eating, while requiring the expenditure of , spells, potentially regains arcane points. Alas, I found no way to break this via curses or hexes and at higher levels, the ability even can be used as an immediate action.

The archetype also features 6 new, specialized arcana – from acting as a magnet for curses and hexes and the like to opting to gain temporary DR instead of a point of

arcane pool, temporary SR versus curses, locate creatures via the scent their magic items and spells leave on them and even steal prepared (or otherwise available/ spells known) spells from target foes temporarily – awesome! THIS is how archetypes should imho be – this one is so damn full of style and wrestles with highly complex and hard to phrase abilities managing to properly pull of the concept of curse-eating sans breaking the narrative potential inherent in these hazards. Wow. Seriously, one glorious beast.

Next up would be the Lantern Warrior, who gets diminished spellcasting and loses spell recall, but gets access to a cavalier's order and at 4th level, also the challenge class feature. Nice. The next archetype would be the martial alchemist, who may utilize craft (alchemy) analogue to a full-blown alchemist – including extracts! No spells, as you can imagine, but a modified list that thankfully includes crucial classic of the magus spelllist. At 4th level, he even gains access to a discovery, but, of course, mutagens are out of the question. 4 exclusive arcana that include fast drinking, poison resistance and use and swifter poisoning are also part of the deal – one glorious take on the swordsman with the magic bottles/ travelling apothecary/swordfighter.

The Menmonic Warrior gets access to 8 unique arcana from tongues per arcana point expenditure to a confusion inducing touch, a wildcard teamwork feat (changeable as a standard action), a defensive prescience, better skill checks by delving into the akashic collective unconscious, temporary blindsight or inciting fear with a touch. High-level mnemonic warriors may even induce terribly crippling pain with a mere touch. At 5th level, they gain an adaptive feat they may change via the expenditure of arcane pool points. Here, a minor glitch has crept in – the end of the ability specifies "he gets another adaptive feat at 5th level and another one at 17th level." -The 5th and "another" don't work here - at 5th level, the ability is gained in the first place. At 11th level, delving into the collective unconsciousness for a selective amount of times per day is possible for minor auto-buffing. The archetype does pay for this flexibility with 3 bonus-feats, though. Once again, a glorious beast of an archetype, full of iconic fluff and cool crunch, but also one slightly on the strong end of the spectrum – the adaptive feats are powerful indeed, but at least they require the expenditure of finite class resources.

The Threadcaster has diminished spellcasting and imbues thread with arcane pool points to make mere thread into a lethal, terribly sharp weapon – through which the threadcaster may also deliver spells. 4 unique arcana further enhance the tricks the threadcaster has up her sleeve (haha) -using threads to supplement her acrobatics, climbing and flight, better entangling and grappling spells, dominating foes via a touch (puppetmaster-style) and whispering wind can be found among her tricks They may also spontaneously create snare traps with the threads (with or without a leash). Web of Defense is also glorious – by setting threads in the threadcasters square, she may increase her defenses and even generate a chance foes become grappled. This

archetype is awesome in so many ways it almost hurts – all those iconic spider-themed ninja and characters you know from anime and WuXia-movies, all those deadly thread-users -FINALLY a way to play that! AWESOME! And yes, diminished spellcasting, less armor proficiencies and no knowledge pools feel like appropriate trade-offs. I NEED to try this one out.

The Warrior of Fortune is also awesome in many a way, gaining access to "improbable" abilities from Rite's glorious luckbringer class as a kind of specialized arcana, spending arcana instead of moments of chance to power the respective arcana. Now while all the eligible arcana are provided (often with fluff-descriptions of the respective abilities!), here I can muster a nitpick – the abilities don't explicitly state the amount of points or arcana they require, though a default of one can be assumed.

As a bonus for those using the rather cool sutra-casting rules from "Sutra Magic", we get the new sheathe sutra that can actually temporarily make objects akin to bags of holding. The two spells also rock, with one creating a temporary bond of life between two characters that allows one to save those reduced below 1 hp by sacrificing their own vitality, whereas the second one can turn the tide of yin and yang by turning natural 20s into fumbles/ failures.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch – I noticed next to no glitches in this pdf. The pdf adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column, full-color standard and is easy on the printer in grayscale. The pdf comes excessively bookmarked and the artworks provided are copious and diverse in style, but also stylish, thematically fitting and nice – and I haven't seen them in other publications – kudos for the neat art.

Frank Carr has so far been mostly prominent with his work on Arcana Evolved, but this pdf is either testament to his exceedingly quick mastery of the system or the impressive editing and development prowess of Søren K. Thustrup. Either way, I did not expect to like this book. Once you've read as many magus archetypes as I have, you get bored easily. You get the "been there, done that"feeling -fast. This books avoids this trap by actually being a good read. Seriously, even if you don't plan on using it - the prose is captivating enough to carry the book on its own, the diverse organizations meaning that there is so much going on, so much to scavenge storytellingwise, that you just WANT to read this. If you're even remotely interested in Asian WuXia/WuShu-style setting. Now admittedly, this fluff takes up quite some space, but it is space well used and not something I'd consider a downside. Now the crunch is what I dreaded - and was absolutely WRONG to do so: Not a single one of the archetypes herein is bland or boring; I haven't seen even one of these done before in this manner. The Threadcaster and a couple of other archetypes herein have to wrestle with rather complex abilities, wording-wise, and actually manage to get them right. Furthermore, the supplemental material, whether they be spells, the sutra, the luckbringer-crossover (which does not require you owning the luckbringer to use) – all of these conspire to make this pdf actually one that I WANT to use.

These days, getting me excited about an archetype book is hard; Getting one in front of me that actually makes me get pen and paper and immediately make a character – now that is even rarer. This pdf did exactly that. THRICE. While I'm still on the fence about the wildcard-style feats of the mnemonic warrior, the lost feats proved to in-game to be a harsher penalty than expected on the paper: It's essentially the pay-off of depth versus flexibility and I'm game for that. This book surprised me in the most positive of ways. A highly-recommended must-have for fans of the magus, WuXia, the Lands of the Jade Oath or simply those enjoying complex archetypes that are more than just abilities, that live and breathe and...inspire. That's the word. Inspiring. This pdf is glorious in all the right ways and hence receives 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get these immesely flavorful options here on OBS and here on d20pfsrd.com's shop.

Endzeitgeist out.

#### In The Company of Dragons

**Publisher:** Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Mark K. **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5!

Have you ever wanted to play a Dragon? Perhaps you already have in the old 2nd Edition Council of Wyrms campaign. Maybe you are a GM that really wants to offer up some surprising modifications to a Dragon and do not know where to start. Well,

let me tell you, I have a product that you will be interested in come 1 August 2014. Written by Wendall Roy this book adds to the In the Company of series that Rite Publishing offers for players to take on the roles more traditionally considered monsters. The book is geared for Pathfinder and/or 3.5 and there would be some work converting to other systems.

I have always been a fan of Dragons and yet have had trouble getting the tone and approach right in game. I have bought several supplements that take an in depth look at the Dragon type but I have never really been truly satisfied that I get the motivation or approach right. I was suitably sceptical when I heard that this book was on its way and it offered me some private amusement at the thought of PC's trying to fill the role of these marvellous menacing creatures.

Cover of the In the Company of Dragons bookThe new source book from Rite Publishing written by Wendall Roy for playable dragons!

I now have to apologize for that presumption because from the moment I started reading this book it got me. The tone of the source book for much of it is from the point of view of Thunders in Defiance a Dragon who is seeking the help of us ephemerals to educate his wards in



the ways of the material plane. I'll not go into too much detail here but the background given to the formation of the dragons and their current situations and habitats is compelling and brilliant. The story captivated me, made me laugh and made me intensely curious. Take for example my favourite paragraph;

In the material plane, dragons are seen as forces of destruction and hoarders of wealth by most ephemerals. I will not disagree with this assessment, but it is a very narrow view of our kind. There are exceptions to the rule, but as a whole ephemeral societies avoid rousing the anger of dragonkind and we have little to do with your settlements unless they encroach upon our territory (or possess something we covet).

The tone that is included in this is fantastic. It tells me of the nature and the superiority complex that Dragons have as well as their duplicitous nature. The back-story here is top notch and scary. Hidden here is the idea of an area completely populated by dragons and a fantastic notion of the Well of Oblivion the home of those that follow the Undragon. Great stuff that can be woven into existing campaigns or introduced with the idea of playing a dragon.

The presentation of the book is also top notch. Some great artwork is included and nearly every page has something new and intriguing for you to look at. The layout is exceptional and it all combines into a nice mini book that is really easy to read on an iPad, tablet or computer.

#### Rules for Dragons

The rules for playing a dragon offer up the rules as a racial template for a character much like any other. They then talk about some alternative racial traits and some archetypes for existing classes. the one thing that I was disappointed with here is the lack of dragon breath. It is not gone completely, but only one class archetype takes it on (a variant of the Sorcerer). To me a dragon needs a breath weapon but apart from the archetypes of the sorcerer and the new class included in the book this is not a staple. Moving away from the archetypes though they offer up a Racial class called the Draconic Exemplar. That is a class that basically increases you to be like a dragon as opposed to focussing on a class (though you can multi-class). It gives breath weapon and modifications to that breath weapon as a possibility and offers a heap of different paths for you to take as a dragon.

You are treated as a taninim (the name the dragons call themselves) and start as a Small creature, likely being a young dragon. There are some archetypes that have you increase in size over your levels including the Draconic Exemplar and your character may end up a Gargantuan beast by the end of their career which is pretty cool when you come to think about it. A nice unique race the dragon is actually very well balanced in the long run and I can not think of a single reason why I would say no to having one in my game.

#### Dragons and the GM

Largely being a GM though I am more excited about the idea of using this book as a tool kit. A tool kit in which I can create a multitude of alternatives for dragons. Think of this little 39 paged book as a gold mine of ways to surprise your character with one of the most feared and sought after foes! From mirrored scales to complex essences you will find this booklet invaluable if you want to mix things up. In fact it sets my evil GM mind to thinking there are so many possibilities in this little book I do not know where to start...

I wholeheartedly suggest you consider getting this book if you are a GM and dragons figure prominently in your games. If you are a player and want to play as a dragon grab it and thrust it under your GM's nose. then start whining if they say no. Then if they still say no, tell them to come see me and I will slap them for their stubbornness. It is dragons for dragon's sake!

#### Mythic Monsters: Sea Monsters

**Publisher:** Legendary Games **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5!

This installment of the Mythic Monsters-series clocks in at 34 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page ToC, 3 pages of how-to-use/ introduction, 2 pages of advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 24 pages of content, so let's take a look!

As has become the tradition with this series, we kick off with a kind of supplemental content appropriate for the theme of the issue, this time in the guise of 8 feats to expand your aquatic combat options for mythic creatures (and if you need further oomph for non-mythic aquatic foes, check Alluria Publishing's Cerulean Seas-books - they're awesome!) -sporting the very much required swim-by-attack (both regular and mythic), faster swim speed (potentially powered by mythic power for impressive bursts), the ability to share breath with landdwellers (now that one's iconic!) and feats that make you count as having a running start from water to e.g. smash on foes and superior flanking options in the water make sure that these feats are actually awesome and should be considered non-optional for DMs looking for more tools for mythic aquatic foes (or players!).

But you're here for the monsters, aren't you? At CR 4/ MR 1 Bunyips essentially get an amped up version – their roar for example can deafen foes. AT CR 15/MR 6, the Clockwork Leviathan gets a reflexive ability to temporary counter the electricity vulnerability it has via mythic power – damn cool! But that's not all – the Legendary Games masterminds went all-out on this beauty – what about a kind of ionic reactor, including meltdown upon its destruction? Deadly grinding? Immunities conveyed

by orichalcum alloys? A breathw eapon? This one is so glorious! Two thumbs up!

At CR 5/MR 2 Devilfish may emit clouds of deadly fiendishly infused blood...cool upgrade, especally considering how low level critetrs don't have as much room to maneuver in. The CR 11/MR 4 Dragon turtle may execute AoE-bull-rushes (YEAH!!!) and a shell that may deflect rays et al – AWESOME! The CR 12/MR 5 Draugr Crew is awesome – a type of troop, these guys get shipbased spawn-making, press gang mortals and generally makes for one of the most awesome creatures I've seen so far in the Mythic Monsters series – not even the relic "XX Melee damage is unusually low" that was forgotten in the melee line does not in any way impede my enjoyment f this beast of a creature. This is on par in creativity with what one usually sees from Rite Publishing – and yes, I think that is a compliment.

At the lowest end of the spectrum, CR 3/MR 1 Incutilis may not just puppeteer the dead – they paralyze and animate foes as lacedon-like creatures that nonetheless aren't undead. Now \*THAT\*, ladies and gentlemen, is how to make a low CR-creature feel mythic and awesome. Two thumbs up! The CR 22/MR 9 Kraken is a beast I was looking forward to – and what can I say, the beast can throw creatures from ships and even make the friggin' sea TURN TO BLOOD. That inflicts bleed damage. Fans of the Scarred Lands – you need this! NOW!

The CR 4/MR 1 Seaweed Leshy is adept at strangling foes by turning into a kind of Sargasso-variant of assassin vines – and comes with bonus information on how to grow these guys yourself. Awesome! CR 5/MR 2 Mythic Sea Hags not only gain great hexes (by taking the Salt Wife trope -do some research on the term and e.g. the Farese Islands for great alternate origins for these beasts...) and a cursed gaze, they also are masters of their own hexed harpoons. The CR 15/MR 6 Sea Serpents get superb bursts of speed AND optional nondetection, making tehm superb hit-and-run predators and they also learn to generate deadly vortexes. Two thumbs up! (Also: Nice 1-page artwork depicting it!)

At CR 6/MR 2, the Selkie is an incredibly persuasive creature, but when compared to the other creatures herein, falls slightly short of its potential. The CR 17/MR 7 Great White Whale is intelligent and superb at smashing vessels...and call me a nerd, I don't care – I would have loved a proper nod, ability-wise, to Moby Dick here – a curse of obsessions, a comment on the nature of wrath, something like that in the guise of an ability. And no, I won't hold it against the pdf that it did not indulge in my need for literary allusions.

At CR 8/MR 3, the new creature herein is the Jorganth. Oh boy – first of all – the one-page artwork of this beast is one of the finest artworks I've seen in ages – a vast, eel-like, tentacle studded deep-sea predator aberration from the oceans of the lands of the fey. Electrical fields, capability to emit deadly beams, reflexive attacks and the ability to create will-o'-the-deep servants and feed on fear – this creature is glorious in its statblocks and the superb full-blown write-up superbly supplements one of the best creatures I've seen in quite a while, even within the exalted ranks of the new creatures Legendary Games provides for the Mythic Monster series. The fullblown fluff that accompanies it makes it oh so much more awesome and I stand by the claim that Paizo's bestiaries would be so much more awesome if they all featured proper full-blown write-ups like this one does. This beast made me come up with 3 adventures while reading its entry – without trying in any way. That good.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good – while I noticed one relic, that's not enough to rate this down. Layout adheres to Legendary Games' 2-column full-color standard and the pdf comes with 2 original full-page artworks, both of high quality. The pdf is hyperlinked for your convenience, but has no bookmarks, which is an unnecessary comfort-detriment in my book.

Jason Nelson and Alistair Rigg have surpassed themselves herein - the creatures are so cool, so iconic, I don't ever want to use their non-mythic equivalents ever again. Ever since the advent of Mythic Adventures, I've used the rules to make bosses more challenging in my game (they tend to get killed in 2 rounds or less otherwise...) and these beings just blow my mind. The unique, cool abilities this pdf offers for so many creatures just can be considered glorious, even before the new creature, which is just the icing on the awesome cake. This installment, in spite of the lack of bookmarks, is so far the apex of the series for me and is well-worth 5 stars + seal of approval and should be considered a mustbuy for anyone running aquatic adventures – this pdf is worth the asking price for ability-scavenging alone. That good. Get it.

You can get these awesome aquatic beasts here on OBS and here on d2opfsrd.com's shop.

Endzeitgeist out.

#### B18: Three Faces of the Muse

**Publisher:** AAW Games **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5!

This module clocks in at 51 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial/ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 46 pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

Before we begin, I should mention that this is an adventure review and as such contains SPOILERS. Potential players should jump to the conclusion.

All right, still here? Okay, first of all, all you history and art-buffs out there, especially those with some knowledge in Renaissance art and the greats will have a

field day here: Imagine a vast cathedral, where an artist called Michello, known for his superb magical crafting prowess died while making his epic fresco. Remind you of something? Yeah.

Now in a fantasy world, that wouldn't be too big of an issue – alas, the cathedral has since been haunted by strange phenomena and the artist's soul remains lost. Enter the PCs, as they explore the massive cathedral – fully mapped and coming with player-friendly maps, btw. And these renaissance-style drawings reminiscent in style and execution of DaVinci's famous drawings are simply AWESOME, even for the high standards of AAW Games.

Now while the goal is clearly defined in the resuscitation of Michello, in order to succeed, the PCs will have to brave the cathedral, which proves to be surprisingly deadly – choirs of madness-inducing allips (complete with sample insanities) and various, cool foes make for a challenging if not exceedingly lethal first part. Where the module becomes thoroughly awesome is with the second act – turns out, an asura called Aprame-Vara-Dharme, muse of Michello, has (kind of) claimed the artist's soul. Via some detective work and clues, the PCs will find that taking the pigments and completed brush of Michello to finish the fresco.

Upon completion, the PCs have to venture into the thus opened demiplane in one of the most iconic scenes I've read in a while and brave the dangers of the Elysian fields and vanquish diverse, weird threats and finally the asura to free the soul of Michello. The module also provides an xp-per-encounter run-down and a new item as well as statblocks for both D&D 3.5 and PFRPG for the challenges herein.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to a drop-dead, gorgeous 2-column full-color standard, testament to Joshua Gullion's prowess and talents – they will be sorely missed. The pdf comes fully bookmarked with nested bookmarks and the cartography by author Michael Allen is superb and fits the module's theme.

Wow. Even by AAW Games' standards, this module is one glorious blast – the encounters are inspired, the theme is uncommon, the hints and nudges towards real life are there, but unobtrusive and not distracting at all and the added twist of the fate of Michello and the cool villain make for an overall cool experience. Now if you've read "Gallery of Evil" – this is essentially superior in just about every way. It's smarter, the encounters are more diverse and the second act is just weird in all the right ways. Author Michael Allen delivers in spades here – this is a great module and worth every cent. We need more unique modules of this quality – 5 stars + seal of approval: A module not only for art and history buffs, but also for everyone who looks for a thematic change of pace and truly iconic imagery.

Endzeitgeist out.





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## The Secrets of the Bravo





By Ciaran Barnes