

# LOSTR DREAM

Matt Banach

Dream

a surreal realm where delusions roam free and nightmares hold court.

A man called Rube is on a perilous quest, searching this unhinged land for something more precious than life or sanity – his own lost child. Captive on a black ship crewed by the dreaded Men of Leng, he finds himself crossing the Slumbering Sea in chains, brought face-to-face with a mischievous blue monster who might just be his salvation – or his doom. Struggling to reunite father and daughter, their odyssey past the edge of reality reveals ancient evils, fiendish plots, and a trans-planar scheme which threatens the very foundation of Dream.

Bursting forth from Rite Publishing's epic *Coliseum Morpheuon* and the highoctane *Faces of the Tarnished Souk*, Matt Banach's debut novel blends the wonder of Lewis Carroll and the mythos of H.P. Lovecraft to produce a

wicked and witty fantasy adventure with a bittersweet heart, testament to the enduring power of a parent's love.

This Novel is now On Sale now at DrivethruRpg.com and Amazon.com in Print, PDF, Kindle and Nook formats

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Editor Dave Paul

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PATHWAY8 #39

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# Come Explore the Mysteries of Heaven and Earth!

*The Secrets of the Divine: Adventure, Earth, Magic & Water* is a modular presentation of specific churches that you can easily place in nearly any campaign setting; including information on who these deities are, who worships them, quotes, prayers, special orders to help suspend the disbelief of Players and Game Masters alike.

You will also find out how each church interacts with society, governments, and the everyday lives of folks from all walks of life, but with a primary focus on adventurers so that those interactions can be role-played seamlessly. It also includes local mythology related to the deity making the religion have an actual impact upon campaigns; Manifestations of the deity so divine power so you can show both through subtle omens and blessings but through the wrath of the gods as well. Each church also gives information on religious holiday's to spice up the passage of time in a campaign, as well as including a dark secret each church holds close.

Along with a host of new divine archetypes, domain feats, and other new custom game mechanics to bring The Secrets of the Divine to life!

This product contains:

- Our Grandfather of Water and Wave a church for sailors, privateers, and those who make their living upon the waters.
- Our Grandmother Earth a church for those who worship agriculture, fertility, gems, Life, Growth, and Metal Ores.
- Our Heavenly Archmage of Secrets a complex chaotic deity of magic, knowledge, and secrets.
- *Our Laughing Traveler of Passages and Messages* a religious group dedicated to adventurers, merchants, and travel.

Its new game mechanics include

- **Domain Feats** for use with specific Domain powers even more useful and fun.
- Rogue Talents for Pirates and Privateers
- Ascetics of the Sea (Paladin Archetype) heroic knights errant who travel where ever the currents take them, bringing with them the power of the sea god.
- Gleaners of the Hare (Monk Archetype) humble hermits who can endure nearly any hardship or condition like a mountain.
- Warden of the Earth (Paladin Archetype) A Lawful Neutral paladin variant who zealously seeks to rid the earth of those that don't belong on this plane of existence.
- League of the Ruby Mongoose (Magus Prestige Archetype) The enforcers of the magic item crafters guild and defenders of those great works hollowed and eldritch might.
- Gemcaster (Wizard Archetype) Spellcasters who enhance their arcane spells through the manipulation of powerful gems and jewels.
- Jaunters of Our Sovereign of Paths (Rogue Archetype) a time thief manipulates chronomancy, and the luckbringers spins out possibilities, so the Jaunter takes shortcuts via teleportation.
- **Rebel Champion (Paladin Archetype)** a Chaotic Good paladin variant who seeks to overthrow tyrannical governments, bring about change, and lead insurrections.

## Editorial

by David Paul Illustration by David Lewis Johnson

My favorite time of year to play is winter. Once upon a time, my favorite time of year, period, was winter. That delusion has long since left me: last year I drove 500 miles each week during the most brutal winter in 30 years. It was a daily exercise in overcoming horror and that almost ruined winter for me. Years before, the weekly treks along west Michigan's icy roads was bad enough. But, as I was recently discussing this with a friend of mine, we each waxed nostalgic for days gone by when, as twenty-somethings, we spent countless weekends with friends, warm and dry inside a well-lit dining room, engaged in endless excursions across the planes, through space, and against all manner of imaginary foes. All the while, of course, the rest of the world, outside the windows, was cold, dark and wet. While we were pretending to be the greatest transmuters in all the world, or the most daring swordsmen of all time, the rest of the world was busy scraping ice from windshields or shuddering at the thought of another hour battling the driveway's endless snow.

With any luck, this winter, I'll have more time for both gaming and writing. I hope to churn out a few hundred more spells and to get some playing accomplished. In particular, I have two campaigns to look forward to this winter. One is a homebrew hybrid Pathfinder setting, the other is set in a fictional variant of this world's late 19th century. I haven't played yet in the latter campaign, it'll be starting soon. The former has been around for a few years now and the players and GM are folks with whom I've played for decades. In both, I'll be keeping my eyes open for ideas for writing. I find that playing is good inspiration. Maybe a quarter of the spells from *101 Swamp Spells* came to me while I was gaming.

Maybe I'll be inspired by the ice, snow and cold and my muse will send me ideas for winter-themed spells. I've been taking my dogs on long walks in the woods lately, and this has served as inspiration for some spells that I hope you'll see in my next collection. For some reason, and this was true of the swamp spells as well, I've had a fondness for druids and rangers lately. In this month's showcase, I try to make the case for *witchflame aura*, which, honestly, I'd absolutely love to use against players at some point. While the spell itself isn't particularly dangerous, it does substantially increase the risk of danger for its targets, and, if they're not familiar with what it does, at first, they certainly won't forget if its more perilous effects kick in. In the short piece in this issue, it brings to end to the lives of a few trolls—and there's nothing wrong with that, right? Speaking of ingame deaths...

Since last issue, one eager reader has come forward with a response to my request. Featured in this issue is his contribution to the memorable death topic I proposed. Jaren has provided you with the amusing and sad tale of countless dead elves. If you really prefer dwarves or orcs, I'm sure you'll find the article even more pleasurable. In my own gaming group, there are two players in particular who have a tendency to play characters who are opposed to one another. A few years ago, one played a dwarf and the other played an elf and we probably had as much fun goading their characters into arguments as we did anything else. Speaking of memorable deaths that campaign had dozens. I should pester my players about writing stories of their characters' memorable deaths.

I hope you're encouraged and inspired by Jaren's piece to submit your own. We have quite an opportunity with *Pathways*, not just to bring you Pathfinder content, but to bring together the voices of Pathfinder players. So, please send me your own tales and let's make them available for the other readers.

Happy gaming.



Jords of Gossamer & Shadow

# Gossamer Worlds: Aethersaur Island





by Matt Banach



# Heartless Creature Jemplate By Steven D. Russell; Illustrations by Patricia Smith

The heartless are different from other monsters for they are born out of the negative emotions of the most noble of beings; like poltergeists, they are filled with only the worst of what sentient beings can feel. Like demons or angels, they are physical representations of souls. In this case, though, they have separated from the beings whose emotions have created them. Some vile creatures seek to create heartless creatures, seeing them as a way to corrupt the righteous and turn them into allies. Heartless creatures always have an oppositional color scheme to the creatures' normal appearance, giving them a much darker look.

#### Creating a Heartless Creature

"Heartless" is an acquired template that can be added to any intelligent creature who can experience negative emotions (for example a marut inevitable could not become heartless).

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

#### **CR:** +1

Alignment: Always chaotic evil.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to outsider with the appropriate augmented subtype, plus the native subtype. Do not recalculate hit dice, base attack bonuses, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

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

Aura of Abuse (Su): Non-heartless creatures who enter this 30 ft. aura experience visions of the abuse the heartless creature suffered from. A failed Will save DC (see below) determines the effect of the aura; the effect lasts for 5 rounds. Upon a successful save, the subject is shaken for one round.

DC	Condition
1/2 the heartless creature's HD	Cowered
+ its Cha modifier 5 +1/2 the heartless creature's HD	Denisland
	Panicked
+ its Cha modifier 10 + 1/2 the heartless creature's HD	Frightened
+ its Cha modifier	Fightened

Create Heartless (Su): Once per day as a standard action, a heartless creature can create an exact duplicate of a target creature within 30 ft. That duplicate gains the heartless creature template. A heartless creature does not gain use of this ability until 24 hours after its original creation. The new heartless creature has all the possessions and powers of its original (including magic, though it cannot duplicate artifacts). Upon the defeat or destruction of either the original or the heartless duplicate, the duplicate and her items disappear completely (though the items reappear with improved rejuvenation).

The motives of the heartless duplicate, if needed, are determined by the GM. The duplicate is not under the control of its creator.

Improved Rejuvenation (Su): In most cases, it's difficult to destroy a heartless creature through simple combat: the "destroyed" or "slain" heartless creature restores itself in 1d4 hours. Even the most powerful spells are usually only temporary solutions. The only way to permanently destroy a heartless creature is to have its originator slain or destroyed, or to have the originator absorb the creature. The originator can automatically absorb a helpless or pinned heartless creature, otherwise it must make a successful touch attack against the heartless creature and succeed on an opposed Charisma check. A failed check cannot be attempted again for 24 hours.

Mocking Laughter (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds as a swift action, the heartless can unleash a torrent of braying laughter combined with a stream of vile expletives and invective, this is directed against one target within 200 ft. If the target fails its Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 the heartless creature's HD + its Cha modifier) it suffers 1d6 points of nonlethal damage for every 2 HD the heartless creature possesses.

In addition, upon a failed save, the target is filled with humiliation, shame, and self-loathing, taking a -1 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks for 1 day per HD. This penalty increases by -1 for every 2 HD the heartless creature possesses This penalty can be removed by application of any effect that grants a morale bonus to any attack roll, saving throw, ability check or skill check. Targets that make their save are immune to this heartless creature's mocking laughter for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Malevolence (Su): Once per round, the heartless creature can merge its body with its originator. This ability is similar to a magic jar spell (caster level 15th or the heartless creature's HD, whichever is higher), except that it does not require a receptacle. To use this ability, the heartless creature must be adjacent to the target. The target can resist the attack with a successful Will save (DC 10 +1/2 the heartless creature's HD + its Cha modifier). An originator that successfully saves is immune to that same heartless creature's malevolence for 24 hours.

Treasure none

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# Ulyssa the Unkind CR 8 $x_{P4,800}$

Heartless Lillend CE Large outsider (azata, chaotic, native, evil) Init +3; Senses low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13 Aura of Abuse (30 ft. DC 17, 12, 7)

#### (J)etense

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 17 (+3 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 73 (7d10+35)

Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +10

Special Defenses improved rejuvenation Immune electricity, petrification, poison; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10

#### Offense

**Speed** Fly 80 ft. (perfect) Speed 30 ft., fly 70 ft. (average) Melee +1 longsword +12/+7 (2d6+8/19-20), tail slap +6 (2d6+2 plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks bardic performance (20 rounds/day), create heartless, constrict (2d6+5), mocking laughter (200-ft. target, 3d6 nonlethal damage, -4 penalty attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks Will DC 17 negates, usable every 1d4 rounds as swift action) malevolence (DC 17)

#### Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th)

3/day-darkness, hallucinatory terrain (DC 18), knock, light

1/day-charm person (DC 15), speak with animals, speak with plants

#### Spells Known (CL 7th)

3rd (2/day)-charm monster (DC 17), cure serious wounds

2nd (4/day)-hold person (DC 16), invisibility, sound burst (DC 16), suggestion (DC 16)

1st (5/day)-charm person (DC 15), cure light wounds, identify, sleep (DC 15)

o (at will)-dancing lights, daze (DC 14), detect magic, lullaby (DC 14), mage hand, read magic

#### Tactics

Before Combat Ulyssa the Unkind attempts to use her malevolence ability to possess her originator, while invisible, she often recruits allies to her cause via use of her charm spells.

During Combat Ulyssa will often cause chaos by the use of her create Heartless and mocking laughter while wading into combat with her longsword and tail slap. Morale Ulyssa is utterly fearless depending on her improved rejuvenation to return her to the battlefield.

#### Statistics

Str 20, Dex 17, Con 21, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 19 Base Atk +7; CMB +13; CMD 26 (can't be tripped) Feats Combat Casting, Hover, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Bluff +14, Diplomacy +14, Fly +11, Knowledge (nature) +9, Perception +13, Perform (stringed instruments) +16, Sense Motive +13, Survival +14; Racial Modifiers +4 Survival

Languages Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech

**Special Abilities Bardic Performance** A lillend has the bardic performance ability of a 7th-level bard, granting her access to that ability's countersong, fascinate, inspire courage, inspire competence, and *suggestion* aspects.

Spells A lillend casts spells as a 7th-level bard. They favor enchantment and healing spells.

#### Ecology

Environment any

**Organization** solitary

Treasure double standard (from the collapsed bodies he has created)

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**Rite Publishing Presents** 

August 2014

Issue #6

# DUENTURE QUARTERLY

Mike Welham, Bret Boyd, and Alex Putnam



Coming in January

# Welcome to Adventure Quarterly 6...

With our next installment to the *Ruins Perilous*, dangerous wonders are birthed from the spoils left by those that came before. "The Fungarium" carved itself into being from the leavings of a formerly grand banquet hall, an excursion by myceloids, and the exacting corruption of a deal with a dragon with an uncanny twist. How fares Questor candidates in a test of diplomacy between a pair of races with alien frames of reference and points of view. *Ruins Perilous - The Fungarium* is intended for a party of 4th level characters by Mike Welham.

*"Fire & Ice"* is a mission of destruction for 9th level characters by Bret Boyd. Are the PCs up to the mission of destroying a minor artifact? A mission that all-but destroyed the prior party to attempt to complete it? On an island that intersects with the Plane of Fire, the party must complete their mission before an unknown nemesis lays waste to them all.

"And so the hero fought the corrupting god, in hand the ageless brand / withstood its sickened whisperers, the knight in iron clad." Deep within a badlands, against

> insurmountable foes, a party of 14th level characters finds themselves as the blood, heart, mind, muscle, and sinew of an ancient construct known as the Iron Knight. "*In Iron Clad*" by Alex Putnam, challenges a party in this most unusual event-based adventure.

Additionally, Creighton Broadhurst offers up a pair of drop-in encounters, *Bal's Garden* and *Deluge of Death*, respectively for 6th level and 13th level characters. Suitable for underground adventures, Broadhurst's talented mind offers enjoyable one off encounters to challenge your players. Then Steven D. Russell continues his demonstrable advice on how to use and work sandbox campaigns.

However you slice it, this issue of *Adventure Quarterly* is chock full of adventure and excitement, something we all crave.



# Cultural Magic Items: Compass and Square of the Mason

By Steven Russell, illustration Orphaned

This series introduces magical items I am designing. Readers are given a glimpse of how magical items would affect the history and sociology of a campaign setting, specifically Questhaven, but these articles will also be modular enough to port into any standard fantasy setting.

These vessels of eldritch and hallowed might are not likely to be ones that players would necessarily crave; they rarely, if ever, grant +X to attack, damage, saves, or AC. However, I do believe they will make great McGuffins that can help to drive a story.

### Compass and Square of the Mason

Aura strong conjuration; CL 17th Slot —; Price 91,600 gp; Weight 2 lbs.

#### Description

Floating in the air are two separate pieces, a square and a compass, each composed of gold and intricately designed colored glass. Inside the glass can be seen a number of small runes floating in the light.

#### Jore

**DC 10:** These vessels of eldritch might sparked a vicious debate over magically constructed architecture, land use, planar access, and the rights to airspace within the Protectorate of Questhaven when over 300 magic castles were created within one year's time. When the item disappeared, use of the item (and its underlying spell) was under deliberation by the Circle of Heroes. However, when the items disappeared, The First Hero postponed his ruling. He had much more pressing matters to deal with, such as floating castles that collapsed when their owners died.

**DC 15:** The runes are, castle, stone, wood, portal, float, barrier, death, and the numerals 2, 1,000, and 100,000. It is through the use of this item that Questhaven and its protectorate is dotted with disputed, abandoned, collapsed, and/or extra-planar magical castles.

**DC 20:** This pair of objects are highly sought after, by dragons and wealthy stonewarden gargoyles; Jotun Giants distain their use, saying "We build with our own two hands." The great wyrm pyroclastic dragon Ardonnue "The Breaking Fire," and The Last Warlord, who threatens the southern Protectorate, both possess a pair of these. For some reason these items are considered a delicacy by the Riven creatures (accursed beings who feed upon magic), while their products are considered an abomination.

**DC 25:** The stonewarden gargoyles refer to this as *Fargan* "Of the Stronghold Builder" while its draconic name is Majiermurh "The Slumbering Fortress," but the ironborn name *Compass and Square of the Mason* is the most widely accepted. Three of these were crafted by the ironborn construct known as Firstbuilt apparently at the request or demand of the great wyrm pyroclastic dragon *Ardon-nue "The Breaking Fire"* 

**DC 30:** On the day Firstbuilt was to deliver them, thieves stole them. Firstbuilt defended them to breaking and near ruin, but one of the thieves escaped with the collection. When Ardon-nue arrived, disguised in human form to collect them, she rebuilt the shattered ironborn, rewarded his loyalty by paying for the eldritch items, and set about hunting down the thieves.

**DC 35:** The Silver Stalkers of The Questor's Society accidentally recovered one, and began using it, which is what brought it to the attention of the Council, but they also earned the attention of Ardon-nue and did not survive it. Since then, Firstbuilt has refused to create any more and destroyed all his notes. Many believe Ardon-nue has lain some kind of obscuring magic upon these items to keep other seekers from recovering them. The original thieves are long since dead, along with their friends, family, loved ones, and business associates (some are now undead servants tasked with washing The Breaking Fire's scales for all eternity). There is at least 1 remaining lost set, and the pieces may be separated.

**DC 40:** Ardon-nue does not really care about the remaining set; it is simply that someone dared to steal from her. Now that she has carried out her vengeance, she no longer cares about who possesses it unless they make such a possession so public that it becomes an affront she cannot ignore.

#### Abilities

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Once per day, when the square and compass are placed so as to form a hexagram, and a special ritual that takes 30 minutes is performed, there is a grand display of magical energies, instantaneously creating a castle of the wielder's design that has up 34 rooms. The entire square footage of the castle cannot exceed 100,000 square feet. The castle walls are made of stone, the doors of wood (with DC 30 locks), although the hardness of all materials is increased by 5. The interior of the castle is fully furnished, and each room is magically lit with a brightness level that varies with the original wielder's whim (from daylight to magical darkness). The castle also automatically contains weapons (melee and ranged) and chain hauberks enough

to outfit 50 guards or defenders. In addition, the wielder can choose one of the following options:

- The castle exists on another plane (an otherwise empty pocket dimension), with the only doorway existing on the plane on which you cast the spell. The doorway the wielder attaches to this effect to must be within 1,000 ft. at the time of activation or the item creates a freestanding doorway to the wielder's specifications.
- The castle floats in the air at a height of the original wielder's choosing. The magic keeping the castle in the air cannot be dispelled or suppressed.
- The castle is surrounded by a ward through which

one general type of creature, chosen by the wielder, cannot pass (undead, aberrations, humanoids, etc.). Lastly, the wielder can choose to have any portion of the castle disappear or fall apart upon the original wielder's death, or the wielder can choose to have the whole place collapse at the time of the wielder's demise. If the castle floats, the wielder can have it fall when the original wielder dies.

#### **Construction** Requirements

Craft Wondrous Item, *magic castle (See 1001 Spells* by Rite Publishing), Cost: 45,800 gp.







# Swamp Spells Showcase

By David J. Paul, Illustration by John Waterhouse

"Are you sure you're ready for this?" Arianna wasn't nervous, she almost never was. But, most of her friends were on the verge of risking being set on fire and attracting some of the most dangerous nemeses of the swamp.

The enormous half-ogre's grin reflected jaggedly along the shiny broad side of his enormous sword, "A-yup." Chandus recited an old maxim he'd learned from his religious confidant: "Fire is the source of all things." Tacton nodded.

Something, apparently, had been taken down in the shallows of the swamp by this gang of northern brutes, and the sharp-clawed ugly critters were enjoying the blood, bones and flesh of whatever it was they'd dropped. Tacton, the party's leader, against the counsel of the majority, had called for their elimination.

"Scrags are as much a part of this environment as wolves Tacton," Ari had concluded after a terse remonstration to his call.

"Even so, they're evil and a threat."

"Not to us." Palin's subtle voice was clear because it was directed, otherwise it would have been as obscured as his camouflaged person. Unlike the others, his breath wasn't visible in the humid cold of north's late autumn.

In an instant, Herk, Tacton and Chandus were galloping, without their horses, through the knee-deep waters of the bone-chilling swamp. Like the rest of the king's creatures, those in this swamp were reducing their activities in anticipation of another long, brutal winter. Not so the members of the White Party. Until "a week's worth of stuck snow," they'd continue exploring the countryside, ridding it of children's nightmares.

The trolls' ever-vigilant senses couldn't have missed the noise of the three champions running sloppily toward them. Pleased at the prospect of more food, the trolls charged at their charging attackers. What they didn't see, because of the distraction of the sword-wielding maniacs, was the druid and wizards standing on slightly drier ground just behind trees a dozen or so yards beyond the bearded aggressors.

"Very well then" Arianna spoke to the spaces left absent by the eager fighters running toward their prey. Palin, Arianna and Wynston stepped out, and, in perfect, practiced synchrony, the druid and hooded wizard placed the witchflame aura upon two of the distant scrags even as a streaking ember left Arianna's ivory and elegant palm on its trek into the center of the trolls.

Two of the five scrags were immediately wreathed in sickly green flames even as the explosion of fire combined the awful stench of seared troll flesh into the ever-present and persistent odors of the swamp itself. Ari smiled with satisfaction as she turned to glance at her hooded friend "Our job's done." Wynston nodded. The screeching pierced the usual hush of the stagnant waters and oppressive fog. In their confusion and surprise, each of the wreathed trolls lashed out at a neighbor, and before the armed allies could fall upon the shocked scrags, all of them were beacons of green light—one had fallen onto a knee, retching up the partially digested pieces of leg it had recently swallowed.

The real flames had lasted but an instant; the mystical flames, which did not burn, persisted. Nevertheless, the memory of the already-and-always threatening fire's burning more than usual was enough to send two of the trolls into utter terror. Their eagerness for food or fight was suppressed, much to the dismay of the hulks bearing down on them. As Tacton and his bloodthirsty allies fell upon the remaining three, the two most-singed trolls had run off in opposing directions into the willows and waters of the surrounding bog.

"With any luck, the witchflames bring out the wisps," Wynston noted quietly, "with greater luck, this will happen after we've left." Arianna nodded "They'll be done in a moment," she spoke to her nearby friends as she nodded again at the other three, now falling upon the soon-to-be killed scrags. Each of the others acknowledged the truth of this with a glance and the three scanned the area, not eager to be fallen upon by more dangerous adversaries even while their gleeful comrades were finishing off the outmatched trolls.

Soon enough, the six were moving again as one. The encounter had happened somewhat late in the day, and after they'd already been headed toward the drier moors. As they walked, unmolested from will-o'-wisps or more nefarious beings, the three outlaw users of magic listened as the others recounted with endless delight the most exciting moments of the soggy melee.

Another of my favorites from *101 Swamp Spells* is *witchflame aura*. The witchfire creature is a wonferfully flavorful undead; it caught my eye as I was doing research for this project. This text in the PRD really gripped me:

When an exceptionally vile hag or witch dies with some malicious plot left incomplete, or proves too horridly

tenacious to succumb to the call of death, the foul energies of these wicked old crones sometimes spawn incorporeal undead known as witchfires. These ghostly creatures appear much as they did in life, although the grotesque undead energy that births them makes them appear young and attractive and wreathes their insubstantial bodies in a powerful aura of sickly green flame, a ghostly fire referred to as "witchflame" in local legends.

Strings of will-o'-wisps are often found in the immediate vicinity of witchfires and are typically led by the undead, leading scholars to speculate that the creatures feed off of a witchfire's flames and fury.

I wondered what else I could do with this "witchflame." What if local witches, wizards and druids could find some way to tap into the magic that the witchfire uses to produce these effects? The spell showcased here is my response.

#### Witchflame Aura

School: Evocation [curse, light]; Level: Druid 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 3, Witch 3 Casting Time: 1 standard action Components: V, S Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level) Area: Creatures and objects within a 10-ft.-radius burst Duration: 1 min./level (D) Saving Throw: None; see text;

#### Spell Resistance: Yes

Witchflame aura functions like faerie fire with the differences mentioned here. The outline's glow appears as sickly green flames and the targets are sickened unless they make a successful Fortitude save. The targets gain vulnerability to fire and take half again as much damage (+50%) from fire attacks of any sort. Any creature who enters the square of, touches, or who attacks with a melee attack against, a creature subject to *witchflame aura* must succeed on a Will save or also become subject to the aura.

Creatures subject to *witchflame aura* are peculiarly likely to be targeted by will-o'-wisps whenever they are in or near marsh terrain. Under such circumstances, each round, on your turn, there is a 1% cumulative chance that one or more will-o'-wisps will investigate (roll d12, 1-6: 1 will-o'-wisp, 7-9: 2 wisps, 10-11: 3 wisps, 12: 4 wisps). The will-o'-wisps will enter the area on your turn, 60 ft. from a randomly chosen subject of the *witchflame aura* and will attack as seems best to them as circumstances dictate (though they are likely to target creatures subject to the aura first). If any will-o'-wisps investigate, then no more will investigate on this casting of the spell.

The *witchflame aura* can be removed by a successful casting of *break enchantment, limited wish, miracle, remove curse*, or *wish* (though in the case of *remove curse* the caster must touch the target which subjects the caster to the possibility of being affected).



Requires the Mutants & Mastermind's Hero's Handbook by Green Ronin Publishing for Use.

# SUPER POWERED CLERIC

# Jacob E. Blackmon

# Twenty Questions with Dale McCoy

y Steven D. Russell

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

Well my name is Dale McCoy. I was raised just outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. For my senior year in high school, I studied in Saxony, Germany as an exchange student. I went to college at Alfred University where I studied ceramic engineering. My first job out of college was as an engineer in a fiberglass insulation factory in Alabama. I currently reside in New Jersey, just outside of Trenton. My day job involves writing manuals for a government contractor.

I have been a geek the whole of my life. I kid you not; my first memory is of watching The Empire Strikes Back in the movie theater. My next memory is my 3rd birthday where I had a Superman birthday cake. I was the kid at my school that both went to Space Camp and wrote a report for school that would now be classified as "Alternate History." While other kids in my grade had Steelers or Penguins posters on their walls, I had a cutaway schematic of the Starship Enterprise-D.

My first roleplaying experience was at a summer camp where I played a Robotech game. While I did not really care for the anime itself, that game started my childhood fascination with roleplaying. When I got home, I mentioned this to a friend and he told me all about Dungeons and Dragons. My first character was a grey elf fighter/magic user named Xavior. In college I discovered White Wolf and it changed my outlook on roleplaying from a simple game to a serious part of my life.

I met my girlfriend of almost 7 years at a roleplaying table. Janel was a friend of one of the players at the game I attended back then. Before starting up the new campaign, the game master split everyone up into pairs to role play away from the table. She and I were paired together, and we hit it off. We've been together ever since.

Always wanting to be a writer, I was asked about 8 years ago, "What do you want to accomplish in a year? Do you want to have a high level video game character or do you want to have a book with your name on the cover?" I decided to take the latter option and approached Bards and Sages about writing a 3.5 compatible book. The announcement of that first book came the same day as the announcement that 4th edition was coming. Needless to say, that one did not go over too well. I wrote for a few other companies before realizing that with the transition between editions, the future was rocky, and I decided to

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take my destiny in my own hands. Thus was born Jon Brazer Enterprises.

I started my company by writing supplements for Mongoose Traveller. Between monsters to shoot up and new tech to use in games, there were a good number of areas to expand the game. All the while I was still playing the Pathfinder playtest. So when the game finally launched and after playing it a few times at GenCon, I decided to have a go at writing a few things for the game. I tried a few releases, but I really fell in love with the game when the Kingmaker Adventure Path came out. I knew the moment I heard about it that I wanted to make something that would be easily applicable for it. *Book of Beasts: Monsters of the River Nations* and the *Book of the River Nations* proved that there is a market for

supplemental material to existing adventure paths. In addition to my own company I wrote kobold and vampire entries in Paizo's *Monster Codex* and a few archetypes in the *Advanced Class Guide*.

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

I always come up with a voice for any character I play. More than once I have gotten odd looks or laughs the first time someone hears me instantly shift into a higher-pitched halfling voice with a bad British accent or a terrible Scottish accent for a dwarf. If I can't come up with a voice for it, I don't play the character. I try to do the same when I run a game, but there is just too much for me to keep in my head at once that I only do that for important characters.

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

Without a doubt, the *Advanced Race Guide* is my favorite. My introduction to fantasy involved books like *The Neverending Story* and *The Last Unicorn* and movies like The Labyrinth. I never read a single Tolkien novel until after college. So elves, dwarves and halflings are not what I think of as fantasy races as much as dragons, will-o'-wisps, giant rock people, unicorns, and much more. The more exotic the better. So an entire hardcover dedicated to fire people, frog men, shadow-plane gnomes, half-vampires, and presents rules on how to make fourarmed, desert raiders is definitely something I can geek out about.

#### 4. You are currently President for Jon Brazer Enterprises, how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

Jon Brazer was originally a character in a Vampire the Masquerade game back in that college game I mentioned. He was a ghoul (living human that drank vampire blood to gain power over other humans) that ran a business by day and fought the Sabbat by night. Up until that point, that was my favorite character I ever played. So when I started my own company, naming it after him was the best homage I could think of.

Today, we are at the top of our game with our monsters, races, adventures, and much more. We are in competition with ourselves, always trying to do better than yesterday, always striving for greater things. We challenge ourselves to be the best we can be. And I am proud of our accomplishments.

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

The inspiration for the **Book of Heroic Races Compendium** came from D&D 3.5's Races of series. I enjoyed the numerous new races featured within. The whisper gnomes, dream dwarves, mongrelfolk, I could go on and on. One day I just up and realized that as a publisher, there is nothing stopping me from doing my own such book series. I placed an open call, and numerous people responded. To describe it in movie terms, I was not the writer in this series but was the director.

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The book focuses on four races. presenting the new race's traits as well as new feats, archetypes, spells, prestige classes equipment deities, and a few ready-made NPCs Half-faerie dragons are the first race. If you enjoy kinder or other whimsical races from previous editions. this is your race. This winged and lovable tricksters get into trouble with incredible ease and do it all with



joyous heart. You can't help but love them. Next up are the reapers. This race centers on those with one foot in the world of the living and one in the land of the dead. These half-psychopomps connect ghosts, banshees, and wraiths to the reason they cannot move on just yet. After that come the seedlings. The best description of them I heard was, "Plant creatures finally done right." These are humanoids with a strong plant theme and flavor tied into their whole being. The last race with significant development is the umbral kobolds. This race was originally developed for Shadowsfall, my Plane of Shadows setting. Kobolds are an underpowered race and I wanted them to be just as balanced as humans, elves and goblins. Umbral kobolds retain all the lovable flavor of kobolds while being a viable player race.

The book ends with four more races. The fosterlings are a Lovecraft-inspired race of half-horrors. This is where your "Innsmouth look" comes into play. The melodians are a half-fey race for the musically-inclined characters. The sashahar are a psionic kobold race in the same way that the blue are a psionic goblin race. The last new race in the book are the ursine. This bearfolk race are sturdy, powerful, and can maul their opponents with little difficulty. The first appendix provides favored class options for all the races presented in this book as well as many of the races in the *Advanced Race Guide* that did not get enough love. A few feats and archetypes for a number of other *ARG* races fill the final appendix.

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

There are a number of great moments. The first time I read each and every single race submitted, the moment when the artwork came in and it was just right, seeing the final book and being amazed at how great it turned out. But my favorite moment was when it was all over and I had a moment to reflect on it. I realized that since beginning the project, Marie Small and Mark Seifter have since proven themselves to be amazing designers. I mean sure, Todd Stewart was already a well-known author, but I got to see the early work of two excellent authors. It's like the moment when you realize that you watched

Jon Stewart or Chris Rock in the night club doing stand up before they became famous or listened to Weird Al back when the band consisted of him on the accordion and Bermuda Schwartz playing drums on the accordion case. There's just something magical about being the first person so see the work of a new author and then seeing some time later just how far that author has gone.

Marie has since worked on a number of projects for both Jon Brazer Enterprises and Rite Publishing, and Mark went on to write *Fey Archetypes* for Rite Publishing and is now living the dream with a day job at Paizo.

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

The level of depth that the authors developed the races in this book I would consider to be its most ingenious part. I mean, all the races within could have been simpleone trick races, but instead all the races took the idea and developed it and expanded it into ways I had never considered before. Between the deities, the magic items, the equipment and so much else, the races themselves are what I would call ingenious.

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

This was a much larger project than I was prepared for when I started the whole thing. I really did get myself in over my head. Hiring Kevin Morris and Richard Moore as editors was the only way I was able to complete the **Book of Heroic Races Compendium**. Without them, this book and many others simply would never have seen the light of day, let alone be as amazing as everything they work on.

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

I started Jon Brazer Enterprises to be mainly an outlet for my own writing. I hired a few others before this, but doing an open call for these races was really my first large-scale test of throwing open the doors to anyone. Many authors that pitched ideas to me had never written before and I was not disappointed by what they handed in. And the *Book of Heroic Races Compendium* is a much better book because of it. So I would say I learned to take a chance on trying something new from someone new.

I also learned the hardest lesson of them all: I can't do everything myself. At least it finally made it through my thick skull. I hope.

#### 10. Other than your own work and Jon Brazer Enterprises products, what is the best Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible product out there?

*Ultimate Psionics.* I must admit prejudice against psionics because of their 3.5 roots. But the crew at Dreamscarred Press have done an excellent job of making these rules well-balanced and feeling unique. I prefer a more fluid spell-casting system and *Ultimate* 

*Psionics* really fits the bill. This well-made, point-based spellcasting system can work right alongside spellcasters of all stripes.

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

The designer must first love what they write. Without that, the book feels flat and even uninspired. Passion brings out the heart and soul and can turn a simple concept into an amazing product.

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

I would have to say Andreas Ronnqvist and Jeremy Smith over at Dreamscarred Press are two knock out designers. I love their psionics work and now that they are expanding beyond psionics, I can only hope their work will make it to tables that ban the psionics rules due to their 3E roots.

I would like to add that I also really enjoy Brian Berg's work at TPK Games. His work, such as the malefactor class, possesses a unique take on the game that more should be used at more tables.

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

First off, write what you love and love what you write. Give what you write everything you have and don't be afraid of what others will say. Someone out there will absolutely love it, and someone will absolutely hate it. Next up, I'd say remember that all of us started off at some point with not a single writing credit to our names either so do not tell yourself that you are not good enough because you do not have a long writing resume. And finally, meet your deadlines and follow the guidelines for the specific company. Not turning something in by deadline is a problem for a publisher and not following the guidelines is a real headache.

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

Luis Lastra started off as an art student with a DeviantArt portfolio that I liked. When I needed a cover image for the *Book of the River Nations*, I asked him to draw it for me. He did an incredible job on that and he has only gotten better since. My favorite image of his that he created for me is the cover image for *Deadly Delves: Reign of Ruin.* I loved it so much, I turned it into wallpaper to share on everyone's computers. What's more, he recently illustrated a children's book teaching Chilean children about drugs. He's a great guy and an excellent illustrator.

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

One of the early archetypes that people loved about the *Advanced Class Guide* was the sacred fist for the

warpriest. It replaces the fighter part of the class with monk-ness. When I mentioned on the Paizo boards that I wrote that archetype, someone there had a total fan-boy moment. That is possibly the most memorable reaction to what I wrote.

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

The Book of Heroic Races Advanced series will be coming out throughout 2015. Unlike the previous *Book of Heroic Races*, this one focuses on races from the *Advanced Race Guide* that people are clamoring for more. These races include the tengu, wyrwood, mermaid, catfolk and many others. When all twelve are released, we will bundle them all together into a single tome. You can get these individually or as part of the subscription, available now.

#### 17. Do you have any goals for Jon Brazer Enterprises that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

I have done just about everything a publisher can do. I have had print books for sale on four continents, gave away a book for Free RPG Day, ran a successful kickstarter, talked personally with fans from different continents, flew across the country to work a convention and meet fans there. The only things left are to live the dream of making my roleplaying company my day job and to have my own roleplaying game itself.

#### 18. Can you tell us a little about Deadly Delves: Reign of Ruin?

This adventure is the first in our new adventure line. A dragon is terrorizing the countryside and the adventurers are asked to deliver news of the dragon's latest attack. As they deliver their report, the dragon and her cult attack the town. With the attack turned back, the adventurers must delve into an old forgotten temple to end the dragon and her lizardfolk minion's reign of terror.

# **19. Is there a campaign that you want to write but have not yet written?**

A campaign based on *The 13th Warrior* would be a heck of a lot of fun, in my opinion. I always wanted to play a great, high level character that takes on a legion of savage raiders. James Bond 007 is another one that is just screaming to be made into a campaign. I mean I have yet to see a fantasy covert operations game, where you have to infiltrate an opposing side to uncover deadly secrets and troubles coming from another nation and stopping it before they hurt many. Something like Spycraft but for fantasy. In a game like that, you could play an evil character trying to stop a greater evil, all for a good cause.

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

I love to hear how gamers are using something we at Jon Brazer Enterprises created in their games. Share with us on Facebook, Twitter, or Google+ how you are using our stuff. You can find us at: facebook.com/JonBrazer, twitter.com/JonBrazerEnt, and google.com/+JonBrazer.





### Reviews

Illustrations by Rick Hershey and Johannes Gherts.

Urban Dressing: Mining Jown

URBAN DRESSING: MINING TOWN Publisher: Raging Swan Press Reviewer: Thilo Graf Stars: 5 stars out of 5!

This installment of what I'd tentatively call the "new" Urban Dressing-series clocks in at 12 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial/ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us vith 7 pages of content, so let's take a look!

First: What do I mean by "new" Urban Dressing? Well, the first run of the series had a certain hit-and-miss quality; It endeavored to take components of the city and use the Dressing-formula to depict them. Alas, cities are complex and organic and the success not always guaranteed. Then, with a certain pirate town, the series changed – away from describing a single component (like a park/temple etc. and failing to take some moving bit or another into account), instead focusing on a general theme and the means for the DM to evoke this theme. This, then would be the second of these new Urban Dressings.

We kick off this UD with a massive, 100-entry-strong table of sights and sounds – from taskmaster's whips a-crackin' to prostitutes, desolate picks and wheel marks embedded deep in the mud, to essentially miner gangs/ factions or just singing people – there is a lot to see and embellish here.

Now the business-section deserves special mention in this file -a total of 50 different entries can be found herein and range from guild halls to shoemakers and drug dens to even people where you can buy bad luck and curses to get rid of your rivals and foes – and yes, the latter example just screams murder-investigation to me and immediately made me come up with a complex module.

Now if you're like me, there is one thing annoying about designing settlements - the non-story-relevant NPCs. You know, the guys that have a name and look only so that your plot points don't stick out like sore thumbs. Well, this pdf provides a total of 50 short fluffy descriptions of sample characters, with suggested alignment/class/ race info in brackets. Why do I consider that awesome? Because, apart from making the world more dynamic and believable, it helps add a sense of momentum to the game – what may just have been a note may resonate with your players, resulting in extensive development of such a sketch and adventures beyond that - and this organic growth is what makes a town come to life. It does help that the characters here run the gamut from bitter, old crones with a slight magical aptitude to philanthropic ladies of the elven aristocracy. Two thumbs up!

The final page, then, covers different complications, which range from eerie green mist rising from the ground to cave-ins, mysterious perpetrators breaking every piece of mining equipment in town to gas explosions and troll/bugbear bouncers/suppression tools – each of these is varied and should at least be able to spark one full session of adventuring, perhaps even more. They also run the gamut from relatively common to weird and span thus a range for various playstyles.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed no glitches. Layout adheres to Raging Swan Press' 2-column b/w-standard and the artwork is thematically fitting b/w-stock. The pdf comes fully bookmarked and in two versions – one optimized for the printer and one optimized for screen-use.

Josh Vogt's Mining Towns are in one word, awesome. The plethora of local color one can add via this pdf to any mining town is impressive, diverse and just smells of grime, dust and hard work – and I love it! This is well worth a final verdict of 5 stars + seal of approval for its creativity and diversity.

#### Zeitgeist: Act One - The Investigation Begins

**Publisher:** EnPublishing **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Stars:** 5 stars out of 5!



The massive collection of the first Act of the Zeitgeist AP clocks in at 559 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 6 pages of ToC, 1 page back cover, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 549 pages of content.

So let's...wait. Let me get this straight – this is the compiled version of the first 5 Zeitgeist-adventures PLUS Crypta Hereticarum, Player's Guide and Campaign Guide; It also includes (with

2 hick-ups) cleaned up nomenclature regarding elves/ eladrin high/wood elves that resulted from conversion. All of these components are simply glorious -5 stars + seal of approval badassery in its truest form. I've also reviewed all of the modules, so if you require details, please check those out.

The book also contains "Seas of Zeitgeist", which provides the quick and dirty (imho VERY BAD) naval combat rules of "Admiral o' the High Seas" for the AP -and constitutes the one component of the AP I don't love o death. In design philosophy quite remote from Pathfinder, it pales before Paizo's naval combat rules and especially before Frog God Games' superb "Fire as She Bears", which I will use to provide proper naval combat rules for this AP. Beyond these, item-cards, a metric ton

of maps, hand-outs and supplemental information help running this beast.

#### Conclusion:

Wait, what? Well, production-wise, this killer tome is a layered pdf that can be made printer-friendly, the maps can be made player-friendly if they aren't already. The writing by Ryan Nock, Matthew J. Hanson, Jacob Driscoll and Thurston Hillman is superb. The book comes extensively bookmarked for your convenience.

I will cut this review far shorter than the page-count would suggest since I've already covered the constituent pdfs. This is the most ambitious AP you can buy and also the most intelligent - with a focus on a complex weave of narratives, deceptions and espionage, it cannot be compared to any other AP in scope and focus and is ambitious to an unprecedented level. The story is so compelling, diverse and challenging, it is bound to become a legend, far surpassing even War of the Burning Sky and similar epics with its daunting focus on smarts and roleplaying over killing everything that moves. The sheer amount of glorious mini-games and decisions make Deus Ex run to the corner and cry itself to sleep and apart from the subpar naval rules, there is NOTHING on can truly complain about - and honestly, these are easily replaced.

Now if you are a new DM, first master something less demanding – Zeitgeist is intended for experienced dungeon masters and the amount of plots, characters, etc. you have to juggle is significant. However, this also makes the AP exceedingly cool, challenging and SMART. This is a thinking man's AP, one that dares to assume that its audience is intelligent and capable -and I \*love\* it for that. In fact, the \*only\* reason I'm not running this AP RIGHT NOW is that I'm waiting for it to finish. This may very well be one of the best APs ever written, depending on your taste, possibly the best.

It is to my eternal regret that I cannot comment on the premium hardback edition in color - my meager funds do not allow me to get this book as per the writing of this review. That being said, this is still a milestone for storytelling in a d2o-based system, the first AP to reach the narrative complexity and depth usually reserved for legendary CoC/ToC/etc.-campaigns. If am of the firm belief that this tome belongs into a DM's arsenal and that running this, will one day be a kind of rite of passage. If you thought the "War of the Burning Sky" was good - it has NOTHING on Zeitgeist. My final verdict will come as no surprise, seeing how the first 5 installments were the first ever AP to succeed at such an unbroken string of superb ratings from yours truly; it will clock in at 5 stars, seal of approval, nomination as a candidate for my top ten of 2014 and a shed tear of longing for the physical book. If you can, get this NOW!

10 Paladin Magic Items

**Publisher:** Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Trev W. **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5!

This is a short review for a compact product. If you are playing a warrior of justice, kicking in doors and smiting the lowly and malevolent,

this is the book for you. If you are dming for a paladin player or a group of paladins then this will make the game more fun—although they may argue over who gets the cool new items.

To the magic items themselves, they are pretty potent. We have weapons and wondrous items, boots, a bracer and even a tabard. I liked that the bracers, gauntlets and ring had varying levels of power and abilities, so they can come into a high or low level game. That type of consideration for the players is great to see. My favourite would probably be the Ring of Honour's Justice. It really punishes those that use "cowardly" attacks upon the wearer. This includes ranged attacks! A lot of thought went into this, and for those that fight fair and honourably against those that do not, it can really even the playing field. It can curse and debuff, and its greater version truly handicaps a coward. Which, could actually leading to the enemy being more cowardly to try and win and escape. So using the ring will really add something to games. There is also an artifact, and yes, it is potent.

#### #30 Mercenary Companies

**Publisher:** Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Aaron H. **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5!

This 23 page product contains 21 pages that provide succinct and really fleshed out descriptions of 30 different mercenary companies that both players and game masters can use in their Pathfinder campaign as well as other fantasy settings with few or no adjustments. Entries are formatted just like the entries one would expect to find in a Bestiary or Monster Manual and include the alignment



of the company, the name or a brief description of the company's' headquarters, the name of the company's leader, resources, structure and leadership (Order of battle), uniform and banner, an overview described using Difficulty Class (DC) to determine how much information a player can get on the company, a description of the company normally narrated by one of its members (usually one of the common soldiers rather than the



commander) and a statblock that allows you to use the company not only in an encounter, but in the Pathfinder mass combat rules.

The folks over at Rite Publishing have been listening and this is one of the tightest, most cohesive products that I have seen from them. I've always loved their products, but in every one it seemed like there was some little thing that kept a really well done product from being the best that it should be. Those problems could be a tiny editing problem or even stock art that varied between amazing and dreadful, or even the mixing of very desperate types of art to ruin the flow of a product. #30 Mercenary Companies had none of those problems. If you look at the list of problems you will notice that I didn't mention content as one of the problems, because Rite has always done a great job of bring its customers interesting and affordable content.

Liz Smith, the author, was on point with her vision for this product and the gang really supported her. All of the art in this product was public domain and it all worked really well for the entries near which it was placed. All of the art was in a similar style, and it was all in color, no color on one page, and then black and white on the next page followed by three more pages of color. The cover evokes thoughts of swords for hire and the interior art syncs well with the entries. The page borders are the normal Rite Publishing "lions head" style which blended well with the theme of this product.

As a GM this is such an elegant product; in a very small space and with minimum amount of time I can reference this book and generate 15 different ideas for encounters or even adventures and campaigns based on the companies presented. Smith was smart to include some companies that tend to operate in environments other than the typical European type forest with interspaced mountain ranges. I was a big fan of a few of the nautical companies especially. Who doesn't love a group of aquatic elves that likes to cut holes in the hulls of ships and attack them from below? That right there is fodder for a series of amazing at sea encounters or even an undersea/above sea campaign.

#### **Ultimate** War



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

The third expansion of the kingdom building/mass combat rules presented in Ultimate Campaign, expanded by the very man who wrote the original rules, clocks in at 45 pages, 1 page front cover, 2 pages editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 2 pages on how-to-use/what to expect,

page ToC,

1 page advertisement and 1 page back cover, leaving us with 36 pages of content, so let's take a look!

This supplement kick off by eliminating two of my most serious gripes with the base mass combat rules from Ultimate Campaign. Number one: Ultimate Campaign does not distinguish between ranged and melee capacity, instead subsuming both under the termino umbrellone of OM, Offense Modifier. This resulted potentially in ridiculous scenarios of elven archer beating orc berserkers in melee. Ultimate War gets rid of OM in favor of separate Melee Value and Ranged Values, abbreviated MV and RV. YES!!! Secondly, the hit points as an abstract measurement to determine an army's deceased is replaced with casualties - which can be tracked individually/separately for sub-units etc., allowing much more detailed and finer tactical nuances. Best of all - both allow for easy downscaling back into Ultimate Campaign's base system, if you prefer the simpler take.

Leadership Bonus of a commander is equal to +1 for every full 5 ranks in Profession (Soldier) and high BABs (+6, +11, +16), Wis or Cha modifiers, certain feats etc. can further increase this bonus. The rather rudimentary selection of command boons is also expanded by this supplement – and the boons are great – Battlefield illumination (or making light-conditions worse!), autosupplying itself, con/desecrate battlefields, divine healing or barrages, smoke screens or particular proficiency when deployed against aerial armies – glorious! Have I mentioned the awesome effects of war chants or the option to execute precise, less damaging assaults via surgical strikes? Brilliant!

Speaking of which - combined arms. Where the general army as a base unit type would be the catch-all default, the rules provided herein allow for a finer distinction. Via these rules, armies are made up of units, which in turn can be made up of several divisions. This is analogue to the distinctions between fleet->squadron->ships. The number of soldiers in a unit is the same as the one in the default rules' army. Creating a unit follows, according to these rules, simple steps - you pay and gather them, you assign a commander (with PCs being particularly potent!) – which influences the amount of divisions in a unit a commander can handle -3+ cha-mod, max 5 divisions can be contained and losing a division penalizes the unit. Each division can take casualties equal to its ACR before being defeated - this concludes that each unit has hit points equal to ACR times 5. Divisions reduced to o hp can be healed normally, but additional damage annihilates them. MV and RV are ACR+leadership bonus of the commander, provided the unit is properly equipped. If not all divisions are equipped to execute one type of attack, the overall value suffers - cool!

Morale score is the kingdom's loyalty divided by 20, min 1, max 10 and determines all the psychological components. A default value and advice for using morale sans kingdom building (Kudos!!) can also be found here. Determining overland movement, scouting capacity, camouflage, name and home-base – in 12 easy steps, just about every DM should be able to create an army – on my first try, it took me less than 5 minutes to properly apply

these rules and generate a unit – WITH double-checking that I got everything right.

Each army may contain a number of units equal to the general's cha-mod+3, further increased by leadership, certain boons, etc. Battle Phases are influenced by the new distinctions between ranged and melee values - hence, a concise run-down of the phases is provided, thankfully including proper inclusion of not only the new casualties mechanic. It should also be noted that recruiting armies works perfectly in synergy with Ultimate Rulership as well as the base system. Applying simplified combats between aerial and naval ships etc. would also be discussed here. Now I've already mentioned aerial combat and indeed, aerial reconnaissance, altitude levels, visibility, concise effects of different wind strengths - the peculiarities of aerial combat are well addressed in sufficient details from balloons to flying carpets and floating fortresses, this chapter adds the third dimension to mass combat - war rockets, solar sailors - every companion of the firmaments-using campaign should consider this the way to add mass combat to their arrays - glorious! (Be honest - you always wanted to fight dragons while aboard a war rocket!) And yes, this does provide full DVs, cover, dmg, stall, crash etc. values - and if that doesn't mean anything to you by now, then only because you don't have the pdf before you - the system is ridiculously easy to grasp and concise in its presentation.

Easy to grasp stats for vessels with drift speeds or those being able to climb altitudes, hovering etc. – all here and supplemented further by 12 unique tactics – from soaring sweeps to dogfighting and strafing runs, aerial

combat has scarcely been this awesome and tactical! Now, of course this opens a whole new field - i.e. the combat of earthbound units versus airborne assailants - and from options like digging in to using grapnel shots, a whole new dimension, literally, is added to mass combat. Now if that isn't yet enough for you, let's take a look at yet another expansion - the one to the sea. "But wait, EZG," you say "I already have 3 systems for naval combats to choose from and didn't you say that Frog God Games' "Fire as She Bears" was absolutely awesome? Yes, I did, and I still consider the system the best naval combat system available for any d20-iteration. However, we're not talking about skirmishes between a couple of vessels, we're talking about the clash of whole fleets! And for that, well, let's just say that the rules herein apply the same thoroughness to naval warfare as to that in the skies - depth zones (which allow for submarines and magical threats), wind effects and naval units...ask and ye shall find herein. By the way: All you require, once again provided in detail including required buildings to procure them (forgot to mention that regarding aerial units - yes, when used with kingdom-building, required buildings etc. are provided!) alongside massive tables of sample vessels in one handy tome. Want to know the level of detail these rules support - the difficulty of fighting back once your vessel's been sunk may impose a massive penalty, but it doesn't mean that your unit can't take down a hostile ship.

Which also becomes relevant since the system utilizes one unified frame of rules. Why is that important? Let's say a unit of sahuagin on board of a balloon has attacked



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your galley; You manage to put down the balloon and it crashes into the sea – you can continue playing all levels of combats like that with one single system. Want to play the fantasy-equivalent of the D-Day? Go ahead, these rules have you covered! Now while there is bound to be some overlap with the aerial tactics, I should not fail to mention that naval combat also receives quite an array of unique, naval tactics that add even more options to the fray.

Now sooner or later, assault on fortifications is bound to happen – and if you ever tried to use ultimate combat and campaign in one and the same campaign, you may have noticed some discrepancy there – instead of assuming abstract siege engines to be a part of a given unit, we receive a special, Knowledge (engineering)-and int-based LB to determine how commanders of units of artillery work – which makes MUCH more sense and allows for generals to specifically target these weapons...

Speaking of strategies – the array of ranged and closequarters siege weaponry and the vast array of associated strategies, from bombardment (e.g. via smoke, plagued corpses, etc...) to infiltration and scatter volleys makes for a superb selection of choices – even before the 7 new magical siege weapons – like apocalypse zombie siege shots, adamantine rams or ooze-siege shots – glorious!

The pdf also comes with a neat index of the tables for quick reference and it should be noted that perfect rulessynergy with Ultimate Campaign, Ultimate Rulership and Ultimate Battle is maintained.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I didn't notice any significant glitches. Layout adheres to legendary Games' two-column full-color standard with awesome full-color artworks. The pdf is relatively printer-friendly and comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. The pdf also contains the good type of hyperlink, making the rules presented even easier to grasp.

Jason Nelson took a \*long\* time making this final piece of the triumvirate of expansions and refinements to Paizo's kingdom building/mass-combat system (which he also wrote, just fyi). It is not a big surprise then, that the resulting books, unfettered from the limitations of page-count and relative simplicity, have been an utter BLAST to read and use. Offering options to get rid of some overly generic simplifications of the base system, the first two books were beyond superb and managed to add so incredibly much to the base systems I never, ever want to play kingdom building and mass combat without their options again.

Now the thing is – Ultimate War was pending and its task was to close the final gaps and cover the true clash of armies, remembering all the small modifications AND refining the base system. I'll make this short:

If you even remotely plan to run mass combat BUY THIS NOW. The additional options, even if you use neither aerial, nor naval or siege combat, are GOLD: The fact that they work perfectly together makes for truly dynamic mass combat. the vast expansion of boons and tactics translate to mass combat that is infinitely more exciting, strategic and ultimately fun. Now it's perhaps due to approximately 15K points of warhammer miniatures in my attic, but I expect some tactical options from a given system and Ultimate War's expansion fits the bill perfectly – indeed, the variance and peculiarities of aerial combat and naval combat allow for a finer gradation in these areas.

The most impressive component of these rules, beyond their modularity and synergy, though, would be the fact that this one system supports not only all those particular special cases, it allows for transparency and overlap between them – ships that can turn aerial? Why not! Cadres of wyrms rising from the waves to take to the skies, then land and wreck havoc among the elven archers?? Go for it, with this book, you can properly portray that - and the dogfight between the draconic assault and the giant eagle riding knights in the air! The assault of the gnomish submersible-riding saboteurs on the siege-weapon bearing frigate. This book is glorious, a must-buy for everyone who considered the base rules of Ultimate Campaign too simple, too rudimentary – with this, you could conceivably play a thoroughly compelling, interesting, strategic CAMPAIGN of warfare - and honestly, I'd probably have a nerdgasm if Legendary Games released a full mass combat-AP using these rules. For now, I have to plot, devise strategies and generate \*a lot\* of adventure material; I just have resolved to up the emphasis on war in my current campaign!

This book is brilliant, a worthy successor to its stellar companion books, and well worth a final rating of 5 stars + seal of approval + nomination as a candidate for my top ten of 2014. An absolute must-buy-level tome and one that also receive the endzeitgeist essential-tag as one of the must-have tomes for a campaign!

#### Animal Races: Clan of the Cat

**Publisher:** Eric Morton Presents **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5!



This installment of the Animal Races-series clocks in at 11 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 2 pages of SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 6 pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

We kick off this pdf with a superblywritten piece of in-character prose, provided by a feline therian, extolling the virtues and peculiarities of cats

and their experience – for example the custom to measure time in 12-hour-cycles. The level of detail provided for the feline therians is up to all expectations – age, height and weight-table, relationships, adventuring – all covered.

Rules-wise, we receive two different attribute arrays

- medium catfolk receive +2 Dex, -2 Wis, while small catfolk receive +2 Dex, -2 Str. Small catfolk receive a base speed of 20 ft., medium catfolk the normal 30 ft. Members of the clan of the cat also receive low-light vision, scent, natural armor +1 (increase to +2 at 10th level), a primary natural bite attack of 1d4/1d3 (M/S) and have these base traits modified by the chosen clan:

Cats receive +2 to Int and may choose Cat Clan Heritage as a rogue talent, cheetahs receive +2 Cha and may use Cha as governing attribute for monk class features and receive the Cat Clan Sprinter-feat as a monk bonus feat. Leopards also receive +2 to Cha, which somewhat conflicts with the fluff, which asserts their toughness and athleticism – was Con intended here? Anyway, they may choose Cat Clan Lurker as a rogue talent. Lion Clan members also receive +2 Cha and may select Cat Clan Heritage as a rage power. Lynx Academy members who left their clan receive +2 to Int and may opt for Cat Clan Heritage as an alchemist discovery. Tiger clan members receive +2 Int and can select Cat Clan Heritage as a witch's hex.

Now the modularity of the race goes beyond that – the three aforementioned feats (Cat Clan Heritage, Cat Clan Lurker and Cat Clan Sprinter) can be taken multiple times and allow for the progressive accumulation of additional racial traits, which include claws, climb speeds, faster movement etc. – the interesting component here would be the fact that e.g. adding the grab quality to bites, increasing bite damage etc. – the available options scale within the feats: Upon taking a feat a certain amount of times, your selection is broadened to include advanced tricks and options Pounce, rake etc. – all possible, but only at the investment of a significant amount of resources -as they should be. I tried hard to break these three feats and balance-wise, they withstood my endeavors -kudos!

Now, as with the Clan of the Dog, proper heraldry is provided for the clan, and we receive a deity-write-up, this time Ishtar, and the folkloristic take on somewhat feline monsters – from the borrowed pugwampis to shiras and silvanshees, we receive a lot of rather damn cool pieces of information that help ground and root the Clan of the Cat within the framework of a campaign. Now, if you haven't read my review of Clan of the Dog, you should be aware that aforementioned heraldic symbols also double as traits to choose from. Relationships among sub-species and with other clans are also covered.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed no glitches. Layout adheres to a printer-friendly, easy to read and elegant two-column b/w-standard well complemented by the fitting b/w-artworks. The pdf comes fully bookmarked with nested bookmarks for your convenience.

Eric Morton's Animal Races-series ranks among the most impressive discoveries that has landed on my virtual desk in guite a while, at least as far as race-pdfs are concerned – so far. I have read two and both provided superb content, extremely modular, balanced races and much like the pdf on dogs, the feline therians just brim with imagination, style and wonder. Studded to an almost unprecedented brim with grand ideas, this pdf offers a varied and distinct take on catfolk - to the point where, for the very first time, I consider catfolk more than just elves with fur and will allow them in my game. Not only thanks to the rock-solid rules, but mainly due to this pdf generating a distinct, viable identity for these feline fellows. If my gushing wasn't indication enough - this pdf is a true steal and well worth the low asking price final verdict: 5 stars + seal of approval.

#### Kitsune Compendium

#### **Publisher:** Everyman Gaming, LLC **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5!

This massive pdf clocks in at 29 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, leaving us with a massive 26 pages of content, so let's take a look!

Base Kitsune, as presented herein, receive +2 Dex and Cha, -2 Str, are medium shapechanger humanoids, get +2 to acrobatics, may change shape



into a specific human form, receive +1 to the DC of their saves versus enchantments, low-light vision, a bite attack that deals 1d4 (I assume usable as primary – since that's the default for bites, but still wished the Kitsune-entry in the ARG, from which this was taken, had specified that -I like my racial information in one place, if possible...) and Kitsune with a Cha of 11+ may cast dancing lights 3/day as a spell-like ability.

Got that? Well, this is, of course, not where everything ends here. Let me embark on a slight tangent, okay? One of the issues I tend to have with race-supplements would be their tendency to create some crunch, slap some fluff on it and then assuming an alignment-based psychology and culture. That's boring. That's just slapping new crunch on a blank humanoid frame. There is more to a race its psychology ought to be complex, its abilities should influence the society and the morals of the creatures and their interaction with other races should also be taken into account - essentially, a well-crafted race ought to be a significant choice beyond min-maxing crunch and feel distinct. Well, this pdf helps those not familiar with Kitsune mythology by leaps and bounds - from general observations on psychology to 5 "facts" everyone knows about them and their behavior, which provide amusing tidbits and maxims to their biology, physiology - in a level of detail only seldom seen nowadays - taking even their digitgrade stance into account, though, of course, as just a cosmetic detail you may ignore.

Now the cool thing about aforementioned "facts" and other fluff, beyond helping craft a distinct racial identity, would definitely be that these guys receive quite an array of alternate racial traits that are based on these observations - from being able to always take 10 when disguising as human to limited fey sorcery and even a ki-pool (that does thankfully NOT stack with other kipools), the racial traits are generally rather awesome one of the traits, though, strikes me as a tad bit too strong – nimble dasher nets the Kitsune +5 ft. movement (+10 ft. in true form) as well as the run-feat - exchanged only for the agile-trait of the base race. Compare that to another alternate racial trait that nets a +1 bonus to three skills and makes one a class skill and you'll notice somewhat of a discrepancy here - not a game-breaking one, mind you, but still one I felt obliged to mention.

Beyond these, we are also introduced to Kitsune culture -from birth to marriage and death, the book is surprisingly detailed here – including information on architecture, crafts, languages, names and even cuisine (!!!) as well as relationships with other races. Beyond that, this compendium takes a cue from the best racial supplements and provides an extensive origin myth – rather interesting here: The origin myth has representations in crunch as well, this time in the guise of 3 bardic masterpieces – one allows for the lessening of conditions (cool!), one creates wandering star motes and one provides a powerful calm emotions. Nice ones!

Of course, in such a comprehensive take on a race, racial religion (including a new deity and two associated subdomains) and its peculiarities can be found as well. If you'd prefer a somewhat variant take on the Kitsune, you might be interested in the 5 general variants – the default kitsune are Earthkin and beyond Voidkin, the three other classic elements are covered with at least one subtypeexclusive racial type – each subtype receives a short take on the peculiarities of the clan they belong to. Now, the following is a nitpick, I know. It won't influence the final verdict. But why not use the eastern elements instead of the western ones? Feels more logical to me, but oh well – personal preference, I guess. FCOs for many classes, including ACG-classes, can also be found herein.

Now polytailed kitsune have been popular in fiction and the misconceptions regarding them are addressed herein as well - including nice suggestions that a DM may govern to determine possible reasons for why a kitsune has more than one tail -from being mythic to blessing, bloodlines and ki - the options are interesting. Jiuweihu exchanges the shaman's spirit animal with a star jewel and receives magical tails over the course of the class progression. The Kyuubi Visionary monk replace stunning fist with selective spell-like abilities and even combine these with flurry of blows, casting one spell in lieu of his/her highest BAB attack Messing with flurry of blows is a complex endeavor, but Alexander Augunas pulled it off this time - kudos! The Nine-tailed Mystic for the oracle has a nice synergy between magical tails and spellcasting.

Non-nine-tailed kitsune also receive new archetypes – fighters may opt to wilder in the swashbuckler's toolbox,

while a new ninja archetype can use ki to enhance her shapechanging - learning to assume new forms and even beasts and plants: nice infiltrator! The swashbuckler may opt for the ronin archetype, combining unique deeds with order abilities. Rogues may wilder in kitsune-exclusive tricks (great and thematically fitting!) and make onehanded weapons eligible for finesse via new talents. Skulking Hunters receive extended spell-lists to choose spells from (taking spells that show up on multiple lists into account) - nice. Additionally, studied targets of the slayers replace animal focus. Inquisitors can choose to become communal guardians. These guys establish a link with certain individuals and tie this connection with judgments, teamwork, movement etc. - somewhat akin to how Tacticians can establish networks - rather cool! Two new hexes allow for a jewel-shaped familiar, allowing the familiar/intelligent item to be magically enhanced while in gem-form and better shapechanging with access to skulls makes for a cool blending of hex and racial ability. Now rather interesting would be the decision to provide not one, but two kitsune bloodlines one for the bloodrager and one for the sorceror - rather than trying to jam one bloodline in and make it fit for both, this way we receive better tools for both classes. The bloodrager transforms into a foxlike quadruped upon raging and learns to cast even while in bloodrage, receiving some truly deadly bite-tricks as well - nice! The bloodline for sorcerors has a completely different focus, centering more on illusions, shapechanging and similar mischief - neat as well!. Wildblooded sorcerors may also elect to choose the nine-tailed bloodline to receive access to a ki-pool and several ki-powered tricks, while the onibased nogitsune bloodline is not hampered by the dark and has particularly potent compulsions.

Now next would be magic – which includes takes of Kitsune, in-character, on the respective schools. Nice! A total of 3 new spells are provided, one granting the target an animal head, one balefully transforming targets into foxes (with the potential to retain or lose their special tricks) and one version that shifts creature's heads to those of animals AND potentially reduces their int to animal levels as well – amusing and potentially disturbing, if done right!

Of course, a book like this also sports new feats – here, we receive equipment tricks for kitsune star gem and the new concealment-granting fox-style focused on feints and its follow-ups are rather well made – thankfully taking the stealth-hiding caveat into account. Kudos! Feinting versus foes set to counterspell your magic is also an interesting option – but what I personally like more, would be something completely different: Remedial shapechanging – difficult, non-overpowered healing for shapechangers as an optional rule, limited daily to prevent abuse and expandable via new feats – thematically fitting, logical and concise – two thumbs up!

The final page of this pdf is devoted to an array of cool traits and a fitting drawback for kitsune, involuntary shapechange – all rather iconic and well-balanced!

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed no significant glitches. Layout adheres to a beautiful 2-column full-color standard that sports several stunning, original full color pieces of art by Jacob Blackmon. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. Now there is a minor downside – the pdf, due to its layers, loads rather slowly – if you're using this on an electronic device, that may be annoying. I happen to know, though, that Alexander Augunas is trying to fix this as per the writing of this review and if you're like me and print books out, no issue.

Alexander Augunas \*loves\* Kitsune and it shows – I am of the firm conviction that passion for a product always shines through in the end and this is no exception – from the level of detail and attention devoted to cultural and psychological peculiarities to the tie-in of said pieces of information with appropriate crunch, this book reflects well the enthusiasm of Mr. Augunas. Now, the downside of quite a few such projects tend to be that they overshoots the target, resulting in somewhat Mary Sue-ish options that fail to properly balance coolness with the general rules – to say I was skeptical would be an understatement.

And here, on can see the author's experience the amount of important, but easily missed rules (concealment-stealth, to name one example!) this pdf catches in its options is indeed laudable and shows the experience of an accomplished designer. The crunch, though, is honestly not what I'd consider the crowning achievement of the pdf - this honor belongs in my book to the fluff and the fact that it's so ingeniously tied to the crunch. Indeed, this book makes kitsune feel like a proper race – distinct, unique, fun – this is essentially an ecology for the race PLUS crunch tool box. And then there would be the icing on the cake on a meta-level there is a paradigm regarding racial archetypes and class options in general - if something can be achieved by any race and does not build on a race's unique options, it probably should not be a racial option. Good raciallyspecific crunch builds on existing abilities and this pdf does just that for not only a content-wise great book, but also one that pleases me on the level of rules-aesthetics.

All right, so how to rate this? Its fluff is glorious, the crunch is nice, it oozes passion, has at best the most minor of issues...and it is a fun read. My final verdict will clock in at unsurprising 5 stars + seal of approval, now can someone please give all those identity-less, fluff-wise boring and underdeveloped ARG-races please a similar treatment? Please?

Endzeitgeist out.

Jucien's Guide to the Black Files

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

If you read this review, one of the following is true:

1. You're me. Hello, handsome devil!

2. I have shared this information with you – don't screw this up!

3. You have stolen this homepage – I have been notified of your identity and location.

4. You have killed me. Good for you, but you have eliminated the ward that left a whole bunch of nastiness in check.

5. I have died and you took up my mantle – good for you, but I hope I've had the chance to provide the keys, because I wasn't joking in 4.

•••

This intro mirrors (in less vivid prose) how this guide begins – to give you an inkling of the level of quality of the writing. The pdf clocks in at 14 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 12 pages of raw content, so what is contained in these pages?

This pdf blasts off with a rant that actually had me laugh – on the nature of scholarship and misidentifying artifact and relics as Typhonian – only to provide what can only be called a cornucopia of diverse theories regarding the nature of Typhonians – as in the best of LoGaS-supplements, the content herein is all about potential – the theories are provided with cues to what is or may be true, but no universal monolithic truth is prescribed – we receive ideas: How the Typhonians and the grand stair interact, for example. What actually constitutes a Typhonian as to opposed what makes one an Echidnan – the added diversity makes for a truly compelling addition to the lore.

The second file contains information on a civilization kind of lost – the Ildari. A vast star-spanning empire that has been subject to a cataclysm, much like Warhammer 40 K's empire, it still looms strong, if not as powerful as before – having mastered space travel, the Ildari may



conflict brewing...awesome! Especially since proper mechanics for Ildari supplement the information provided -secret realms, arrays and cosmos make for great additions for the DM to weave stories around!

The third file kicks off with an amusing rant on the cliché of an evil overlord who called himself "Harbinger" – alas, the irreverent tone of the narrator is only half justified – unlike many similar pseudo-villains that think they're big shots until a Gossamer Lord/Lady puts them in their place, this guy actually had a very powerful patron – an entity called Matekai. This entity gobbles up world. Yes. And the irreverent tone might be justified, but on the other hand, this creature may be a Typhonian...or something completely different.

Speaking of different (and to me, profoundly frightening) – Basta. A plant that controls the biome of its whole world, the size of a town, which must have consumed an entity of significant power, receiving impossible knowledge. Worse, its strange psychology makes for a difficult decision on whether it is benign or simply amoral...and it's rooting on other planets.... \*shudders\*

The modification Basta-controlled for worlds and attributes for lesser and greater basta are provided.

A total of 4 diverse mini-hooks of outstanding Black Files are also provided before we're introduced to the Black Office -and the caretaker of the files, one lady Kitabu, fully portrayed in all her glory as an NPC servant of Lucien.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed no glitches. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column full-color standard for LoGaS and the pdf comes studded with GLORIOUS full-color artwork of the highest quality. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

It is, in one word, ASTOUNDING how many awesome ideas Rob Donoghue has managed to cram into these pages – the content herein is universally inspiring, topnotch, and each and every Black File quoted herein can fuel an adventure, perhaps even a campaign. This book is one brilliant, superb supplement full of awesome ideas and should be considered not only a great buy for LoGaSfans, but also for any DMs looking for inspiration (or simply a good read!) beyond what one usually receives in pdfs.

Genius Adventures: Spring of Disorder

**Publisher:** Rogue Genius Games **Reviewer:** Thilo Graf **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5! This module clocks in at 27 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 24 pages of content, so let's take a look!

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

#### All right, still here?

of the second seco

The village of Feiknstafir (fully mapped and statted with a player-friendly map!), sheltered and peaceful, has seen the last of its serene days - odd things are afloat, as the PCs will almost immediately realize when the wolves attack the village and the local horses. There is something weird going on, and the PCs better investigate the string of unusual circumstances. While some of the townsfolk blame the animals of the forest for the antics and grief that has befallen them, it quickly becomes apparent that the PCs will have to venture into the woods to unearth the truth - also, since diligent investigation may point them towards the horse of the first man to go missing, one Varsk. meanwhile, things may slowly be pilfered from the PC's purses, with one particularly cunning thief doing his best to relieve them of their tools - including counter-measures to bypass e.g. alarm-spells etc. We all know players HATE being stolen from, so that's a nice way to get them invested from the get-go, though by far not the only one. And even if the PCs catch the thief who could be angry at the cute raccoon?

While exploring the forest, this module will do its utmost to annoy the players – squads of animals will seek to create a thoroughly unpleasant experience for them by stealing whatever they can get their paws on. Thus, when the PCs finally find some goblins, they'll be happy to fight – only to have the goblins surrender and guide them towards their tree village. This particular goblin tribe is usually at home in the high branches of the trees, and, as the chief explains, currently they are losing quite a few goblins – with bodies nowhere to be found. The surprisingly reasonable chief offers a magical weapon to the PCs for their investigation and threatens repercussions versus the forest's wood elf enclaves.

Following the information gleaned from the goblins, the PCs can find caches of the wood elves, deserted and featuring encoded messages, from which they can pierce together that the elves have lost people as well and blame the goblins and the villagers of Feiknstafir – seems like the PCs are sitting on a powder-keg here, ready to erupt! Extremely cool – if you're like me and your players like a challenge for their mind instead of simple dice-rolling, the series of messages can also be deciphered manually in a simple, nice puzzle I won't spoil here. Kudos!

The scrawl leads the PCs to the gnomish settlement of Smaparmar (again, fully mapped!) – subterranean... and utterly overrun by unpleasant creatures. Uncanny

valley territory indeed – no corpses, but traces of combat abound...including the fact that someone or something has cleaned up after whatever has eliminated the gnomish folk. Worse, upon leaving the complex, the animals attack in full force, potentially even kidnapping one of the PCs! (And yes, the array of animals are deadly – with multiple class levels, they can be deemed an almost functioning adventurer group!)

The finale of the module has the PCs find Kreller's spring (again, fully mapped), where all the dead have been carried, and fight the true mastermind behind the animal uprising, a certain horse, which, alongside its brethren, has been awakened by the malevolent ghost of an adherer drowned by an adventurer in said spring. Whether the PCs just attempt to destroy the ghost and all opposition or reform the now intelligent animals for truly unique cohorts at higher levels, there is plenty of adventuring potential here.

#### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed

no glitches. Layout adheres to Rogue Genius Games' 2-column full-color standard with nice full-color artworks and solid cartography supplementing it. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Mike Myler's "Spring of Disorder" is an uncommon module in that it oscillates between funny and utterly creepy, between suspense-building and minor frustrations, all ultimately leading towards a satisfying conclusion. Add to that the wholly unique opposition and the obvious (subdued) nods towards one particular Orwellian book and we have a great module here – with combat, investigation, social encounters, wilderness, easy puzzles and smart foes, there is nothing could complain about in here – my final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this uncommon, cool module here on OBS and here on d2opfsrd.com's shop.







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