



Doom of the Sky Sword





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Editorial

by David Paul

I know that I didn't have a clear picture of what *Pathways* would be when it launched. I had some ideas, and they were more than a little rough. Part of me was attached to the idea of a fanzine, part of me was attached to the idea of a platform for assisting others with breaking into the RPG industry, part of me was curious about how well Pathfinder would do as an alternative to the other population RPGs. I certainly hoped that the magazine would be around for 50 issues, though I wouldn't have said that I was confident it would happen. I figured there were too many things that could go wrong, with the industry, with the game, with the community.

And here we are, 50 issues later, still going strong. There have been great leaders at all levels: Rite Publishing has been well-led, Paizo has been well-led, and the entire gaming community has been well-led (by which I mean that there have been many people who have chosen to be leaders of the community, regardless of whether specifically called, and certainly not necessarily with pay).

Rite Publishing has had some amazing talent wander its virtual halls. Some of those folks have gone on to notable success elsewhere in the industry. And, while it's made some amazing leaps in areas other than Pathfinderrelated content, it continues to produce quality content for the Pathfinder community. Paizo, of course, leads the way. The Pathfinder game has grown far beyond any expectation that I had had, and I continue to be stunned by the incredible quantity and quality of work produced. The Pathfinder community—in person, at conventions, and online—continues to be an amazing mix of professionalism and neighborliness. Being proud and happy to be part of this community is as meaningful to me as being proud and happy to be part of other, often geographically more proximate, communities. One of the best parts of my job as editor of *Pathways* is the interviews. I've met, admittedly often only indirectly, dozens of writers, designers, publishers and other folks in the industry through this role. I like that the interviewees are asked about their favorite illustrators and designers; some of them have picked people I didn't know much about and as soon as I finished editing the interview I'd spend time exploring someone else's work. One of the pitfalls of this job is being drawn in to so many new projects (Kickstarter and otherwise). I'm going to need to add another job to support my hobby.

One of my favorites, someone I know only tangentially (though we've met at GenCon), is Owen K.C. Stevens. It may not be fair of me to say this, but, for those that know Owen (even if only indirectly), you know that he's on a lot of peoples' favorites lists.

We've broken with tradition a little bit for issue 50. As a rule, we have new illustrators for each of our covers, we interview someone new every issue, and we don't usually interview Paizo employees directly (we've interviewed people who ended up doing work for or working for Paizo, but, we aimed to interview those who've worked primarily for 3rd-party publishers).

With Paizo's blessing, we're interviewing Owen for this issue. We've interviewed him before (Issue 1); feel free to compare interviews to see how things have evolved for him and us. I think he's a great choice for our 50th issue. His work in the industry, with 3rd-party publishers, within the community, and at Paizo, exemplifies the kind of great leadership and professionalism that makes this a great neighborhood to play in.

Happy gaming.



Rite Publishing Presents

101 Subterranean Spells







Grandmaster Creature Semplate By Steven D. Russell; Illustrations by Pei Wei Li

A rare few creatures embrace the ethos of competition and rivalry to such an extent that the divine powers of the multiverse respond. These forces conspire to place this "grandmaster" in opposition to a destined group of heroes. It gains the ability to assemble a group of villains or rivals to oppose a group of designated champions. This group does not necessarily mirror the heroes; in fact, many grandmasters and their opposing forces are in place even before the fellowship of heroes is. Grandmasters can change the membership of their assembled force, if they quit or are captured/killed, but the assembled cabal cannot change who the grandmaster is. Most grandmasters have an inner circle of minions to do their bidding and often lead armies as well. Grandmasters can be difficult to distinguish from other creatures unless they chose to identify themselves.

Creating a Grandmaster Creature

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"Grandmaster" is an acquired template that can be added to any creature that can communicate and has an Intelligence of 8 or higher. It is most often applied to humanoids.

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

CR: +4

Alignment: Becomes Lawful

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

Assemble Cabal (Su): The grandmaster may designate up to 4 creatures known to her, plus herself, to be considered a cabal member (this designation takes a standard action, but once done it lasts until changed). Twice per day when she focuses and speaks the name of her cabal, this group of creatures is called to unoccupied squares adjacent to the grand master (an immediate action). They appear at the grandmaster's location along with their gear, even if the grandmaster and the subjects are not on the same plane. The cabal members know who is attempting to teleport them, and this ability only functions on willing travelers. This is a conjuration (teleportation) effect.

Cabal Boost (Su): For 1 minute per HD after the cabal is teleported to him the grand master gains a +4 morale bonus on attack rolls, saves, and skill checks, immunity to fear effects, and temporary hit points equal to his HD.

Cabal Brute (Su): One cabal member, chosen by the grandmaster, that does not possess an ability granted by this template, gains the following abilities when he is within 100 ft. of the cabal's grandmaster.

- Strength +4 inherent bonus
- Constitution +4 inherent bonus

Perilous Strike: When a melee weapon wielded by the • cabal brute scores a critical hit, its critical can cascade: the cabal brute continues to reroll confirmations of a critical hit at a -5 cumulative attack penalty even after the first confirmation until there's a miss, and each successful strike increases the weapon's critical multiplier by x1. Thus if cabal brute scores a critical with a perilous dagger (base critical x2), first he must roll a hit to confirm the critical, then roll again at a -5 attack penalty, then again at a -10 attack penalty, then again at a -15 penalty, etc., until he misses (for example, at a -20 penalty). The dagger in this case scored three additional successes beyond the initial critical, so the dagger's critical multiplier is increased to x5.

Cabal Genius (Su): One cabal member, chosen by the grandmaster, that does not possess an ability granted by this template, gains the following abilities when he is within 100 ft. of the cabal's grandmaster.

Intelligence +4 inherent bonus

All Intelligence-based skills are considered class skills, and the cabal genius gains a bonus equal to half his HD to an Intelligence-based skill check as a free action. He can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Intelligence modifier.

 Amazing Tactics: As a swift action, the cabal genius selects one combat feat a member of the cabal knows. All members of the cabal within 100 feet that meet the prerequisites for the selected feat gain use of it. He can use this ability for a number of rounds equal to his HD, these rounds don't need to be consecutive. This is a language-dependent ability.

Cabal Mystic (Su): One cabal member, chosen by the grandmaster, that does not possess an ability granted by this template, gains the following abilities when he is within 100 ft. of the cabal's grandmaster.

- Wisdom +4 inherent bonus
- Charisma +4 inherent bonus

٠ Curse Ability: The cabal mystic can activate this curse a number of times per day equal to her Charisma bonus as a swift action. The target of this curse which must be within 30 ft. has one named class ability or named universal monster ability (see Pathfinder *Bestiary*TM), that is spoken at the time of activation, rendered non-functional (a rogue cannot sneak attack, a dragon cannot use its breath weapon etc.). A successful Will save (DC 10 +1/2 the cabal mystic's HD + his Cha modifier) negates this effect.



The curse bestowed by this ability cannot be dispelled, but it can be removed with a break enchantment, limited wish, miracle, remove curse, or wish spell.

Cabal Sniper (Su): One cabal member, chosen by the grandmaster, that does not possess an ability granted by this template, gains the following abilities when he is within 100 ft. of the other members of the cabal's grandmaster.

Dexterity +4 inherent bonus

+2d6.

Perfect Shot: When the cabal sniper hits with a ranged weapon, he can maximize his weapon damage as a swift action. Don't roll for damage-the ranged weapon deals the maximum possible damage instead. This affects only the weapon's base damage dice, not additional damage from sneak attack, magical weapon properties, or critical hits. If the cabal sniper confirms a critical hit with this attack, he increases his ranged weapon's critical multiplier by 1. He can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Dex modifier. Elemental Shot: Choose acid, cold, fire, or electricity, once chosen this cannot be changed; the cabal sniper's ranged weapon attacks deal +1d6 points of this energy type. If the cabal sniper is CR 10 or higher this becomes

Disparaging Command (Su): As a swift action, the grandmaster can issue a disparaging command to his opponents. The disparaging command affects one opponent plus one additional opponent for every three HD the grandmaster possesses, these opponents must all be within 60 feet of the grandmaster. Affected opponents gain a -2 morale penalty on attack rolls, AC, combat maneuver defense, and skill checks for 1 round. This is a language-dependent, mind-affecting effect.

Disparaging Word (Sp): As a swift action, the grand master can speak a disparaging word to a creature within 60 feet. That creature receives a -2 morale penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks, and saving throws for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 the grandmaster's HD (minimum 1). She can use this power a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Wisdom modifier. This is a language-dependent, mind-affecting effect.

Ability Scores: Int +10 (add 4 bonus languages, add 4 skill points per HD, +5 to Appraise, Craft, Knowledge, Linguistics, and Spellcraft checks, +5 to any of the base creature's Intelligence-based DCs), Wis +10 (+5 to Will saves, +5 to Heal, Perception, Profession, Sense Motive and Survival checks, add +5 to any of the base creature's Wisdom-based DCs), +10 Cha (+5 to Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Perform, and Use Magic Device; attempts to influence others, and Channel Energy DCs, +5 to any of the base creature's Charisma-based DCs).

Feats: Gains Leadership as a bonus feat.

Organization cabal (see above)

Treasure triple standard

Grandmaster Clovik **(R** 18 XP 153,600

Grandmaster Hobgoblin War Master 15 (see The Genius Guide to the War Master by Rogue Genius Games, Author: Owen K.C. Stephens) LE Medium humanoid (hobgoblin) Init +5; Senses Perception +23

Defense

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+7 armor, +1 Dex, +3 natural) hp 82 (15d10)

Fort +12, Ref +17, Will +20

Defensive Abilities rally 6d6, heavy fortification

Offense **Spéed** 30 ft.

Melee +1 bane (human) longsword +22/+17/+13(1d8+3 plus 2d6/19-20)

Ranged dagger +20/+15/+10 (1d4/19-20)

Special Attacks Battle tactics (assail, countering tactics, covering maneuvers, deployment, individual tactics goad, guarded tactics, raid tactics, assault tactics, heroic tactics), cabal boost (included as part of the stat block), consul, disparaging command, disparaging word, mark of quality +2, war master talent

Tactics

Before Combat Clovik makes use of her shout of warning, hold, lasting tactics and backup plan class features expending 6 rounds of battle tactics +1 round for every reroll.

During Combat During combat Clovik primarily makes use of assault tactics, deployment, lasting tactics, backup plan and rally class features (expending 6 rounds of battle tactics +1 round for every reroll) while making ranged attacks when possible.

Morale Clovik is a master strategist, she knows when to retreat and regroup, and will do so, allowing her fight another day.

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Statistics Str 12, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 28, Wis 18, Cha 30

Base Atk +15; CMB +19 (+23 dirty trick); CMD 34 (38 vs. dirty trick)

Feats Combat Expertise, Great Fortitude, Greater Dirty Trick, Improved Dirty Trick Improved Vital Strike, Leadership^B, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Knowledge [nobility]), Vital Strike

Skills Bluff +32, Climb +23, Diplomacy +36, Intimidate +36, Knowledge (engineering) +31, Knowledge (geography) +31, Knowledge (Local) +31, Knowledge (Nobility) +37, Perception +26, Profession (military leader) +26, Ride +31, Sense Motive +26, Ride (Dex)

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Infernal, Goblin, Giant, Orc

SQ assemble cabal

Combat Gear feather token (anchor) (3), feather token (bird), feather token (fan) (2), feather token (swan boat), 2 potions of bull's strength, potion of cure serious wounds, potion of shield of faith (CL 12th); Other Gear +1 heavy fortification breastplate, +1 bane longsword (human), belt of mighty constitution +6, cloak of resistance +3, headband of mental prowess +6 (Int, Cha), necklace of adaptation, gold ring worth 50 gp, 413 gp

Special Abilities

Battle Tactics Clovik is trained to use tactics and strategy to direct units and individuals to create beneficial combat situations that favor her allies. (Clovik may always choose to count as one of her own allies, both for fulfilling conditions required by tactics, and for receiving the benefit of them.) She can use this ability for 37 rounds per day.

Starting a war master's battle tactic is a swift action or move action, but it can be maintained each round as a free action.

• **Assail (Ex)** Clovik can direct her allies to overwhelm a foe's defenses, forcing the enemy to divide its attention among multiple targets. Clovik selects one foe she can see. This power causes that foe, if it is threatened by at least three allies, to be flanked for the first attack each ally makes in a round.

• **Countering Tactics (Ex)** Clovik can counter the advantages foes gain by superior planning, morale, or position. Each round of the countering tactics she makes a Knowledge (nobility) skill check (+37). Clovik compares this to every foe she can see and has line of effect to. If her Knowledge check overcomes a DC of (10 + target's hit dice or level), that foe gains no benefit from morale bonuses, luck bonuses, or battle tactics; cannot flank; and suffers a -4 penalty to all attacks of opportunity made. A creature Clovik fails to affect with a use of countering tactics remains immune to any further use of the ability by Clovik for 24 hours.

• **Covering Maneuvers (Su)** Clovik can use her tactics to direct her allies to watch out for one another, and assist each in remaining safe and protected. Any affected allies adjacent to at least one additional ally receives a +3 morale bonus to armor class, CMD, and Reflex saving throws. Covering maneuvers requires both audible and visual components.

• **Deployment (Ex)** Clovik can direct allies to get into advantageous positions quickly. All her allies she can see gain a +15 foot enhancement bonus to their base movement if they take a double move or run action.

• **Individual Tactics (Ex)** Clovik can use her tactics to help an ally use combat strategies outside the ally's normal repertoire. The war master selects one ally within 30 feet. Clovik grants that ally the use of one to three combat feats selected by Clovik that she knows, and for which that ally meets the prerequisites. Clovik can change what feat the ally gains access to as a move action while maintaining the war master's tactic.

Individual tactics requires both audible and visual components.

• **Goad (Su)** Clovik can use her tactics to force a foe into immediate action. Clovik selects one foe she can see and has line of effect to within 60 feet. That target must make a Will save DC 26. If the foe fails, it cannot ready or delay any actions. If it does not take its turn in the normal initiative order, it loses its action until the next round. The targeted foe is allowed a new saving throw against the goad at the beginning of every turn. Goad is an enchantment (compulsion), mind-affecting ability.

• **Guarded Tactics (Ex)** Clovik can employ tactics to protect weaker allies from being hampered by complex maneuvers by foes. All allies within 60 feet able to see and hear Clovik may use her CMD rather than their own, if they choose to do so.

• **Raid Tactics (Ex)** Clovik can use her tactics to develop quick raids that maximize the potency of her allies while minimizing their weaknesses. This ability affects allies within 60 feet that can see and hear Clovik. Affected allies ignore penalties from confused, exhausted, fatigued, frightened, shaken, and sickened conditions for the duration of the tactics. These conditions are not removed, but they have no effect on creatures under the effects of the raid tactics. Each round Clovik maintains the raid tactics, she expends two rounds of her battle tactics daily maximum. Raid tactics requires both audible and visual components.

• **Assault Tactics (Ex)** Clovik can direct her allies to take positions that makes the most of their attack types. This ability affects allies within 60 feet that can see and hear Clovik. Affected allies deal an additional 1 hit point of damage for each die of damage they deal, to a maximum of +7.

Coordinated Attacks (Ex): All allies affected by Clovik's battle tactics coordinate their attacks, aiding each other in locating and targeting foes. An ally can ignore a target's concealment, or treat total concealment as normal concealment, if she can hear an ally against whom the target does not have concealment. An ally able to reduce an invisible target's concealment as a result of this ability is considered to have pinpointed the invisible target.

Hold! (Ex): Whenever Clovik grants benefits to her allies from any war master's tactic, the allies also gain the ability to ready a full round action (rather than ready a standard action, as normal).

Shout of Warning (Ex): As a move action Clovik can shout a warning of impending danger to her allies. All allies able to hear her cease to be flat-footed, even if they are surprised.

Stay Down! (Ex): Any ally able to see and hear Clovik gains an additional +1 bonus to AC and Reflex saves when the ally has any kind of cover. This increases to a +2 increase if Clovik is 8th level or higher, and to a +3 increase if Clovik is 16th level or higher.

Take Them Alive! (Ex): Whenever Clovik grants benefits to her allies from any war master's tactic, the allies also gain the ability for half the damage they deal to be nonlethal damage.

Back-Up Plan (Ex): Whenever Clovik grants benefits to her allies from any battle tactic, each ally also gains the ability to reroll any one attack roll, damage roll, or saving throw. If an ally does choose to reroll one of these die rolls, the ally must take the second result even if it is worse than the original die roll. An ally may only make one reroll from Clovik's back-up plan talent in a given day, even if Clovik uses this talent multiple times during the day. Each time an ally chooses to make a reroll, the war master expends one additional round of battle tactics from her daily limit. **Lasting Tactics (Ex)**: With this talent, Clovik may opt to have her battle tactics continue to be effective for 2 rounds after she stops maintaining it (even if she begins a new set of tactics). These 2 rounds count against the war master's daily total of battle tactics.



Infinite Worlds Means Infinite Options

Gossamer Options: Characters is a different kind of supplement for Lords of Gossamer & Shadow.

Originally created as a set of fan blog posts by designer Mark Knights, about 30 character builds presented at three different point levels (Low, Medium, and High), providing you with over 90 ready to use statblocks. These variant character builds of different power levels make them useful to players and GMs at all levels of play.

This product can function as both a collection of pregenerated characters for players and as a toolbox of NPCs for GMs. Rite Publishing is happy to be able to present them here as a 60+ page full-color Print and PDF product which will be available in June (The preorder is available now!).

Gossamer Options is a line of optional non-cannon content that Rite Publishing brings you to help support Diceless Roleplaying.

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Jords of Gossamer & Shadow

Gossamer Options: Characters





by Mark Knights



20 THANGS TO FAND AN A PAT

By Creighton Broadhurst, Artist Arthur Rackham

Adventurers are always falling into pits. Well, they are in my campaigns anyway...

The bottom of a pit shouldn't be a featureless cube. Beyond a simple trap designed to kill or impede intruders, a trap is a great opportunity to tell a bit more of the dungeon's story.

Some pits hold trapped monsters—or even adventurers—while others have additional dangers such as iron spikes and so on. More, however, hold the detritus of previous delves. Use the table below to generate minor points of interest a PC might find at the bottom of the pit.

- 1. A DC 15 Perception check reveals small holes cut into the pit's wall near one corner. A climber using the holes gains a +5 circumstance bonus to escape the pit.
- 2. Iron spikes line the floor of the pit. Dried blood covers several toward one of the pit's walls showing where someone (perhaps) fell in.
- 3. An adventurer's rotting body lies twisted and broken at the bottom of the pit. Stripped of all useable equipment by his companions, he lies abandoned. His mournful ghost might linger nearby... and it might mistake the PCs for his perfidious companions.
- 4. This pit intersects with a natural cavern, the entrance to which breaks through one wall. The cavern has no other exits, but water dripping down through the ceiling could keep a trapped explorer alive for quite some time.
- 5. Four burnt out torch stubs lie on the floor of the pit. The burnt and shriveled remains of thousands of tiny spiders carpet the floor.
- 6. Dungeon denizens use this pit to dispose of their garbage and waste. Anyone falling into the pit takes 1d6 less falling damage than normal because the rubbish cushions his fall. However, the pit is rife with disease and a character in the pit must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or contract filth fever.
- 7. An empty wineskin and the faint smell of wine linger at the bottom of the pit.
- 8. Iron spikes, driven into the wall, provide a makeshift ladder of sorts for those trapped in the pit.
- 9. A discarded, dented helmet lies in one corner.
- 10. The remains of a healer's kit are scattered about the floor. Some of the bandages are caked in dried blood.

- 11. "Forgive me" is daubed on a wall in large, chalk letters.
- 12. A near-empty sack holding 13 gp and 16 sp mixed in with shards of glass from a large mirror is the only thing in the pit. Unwary PCs investigating the sack suffer 1 damage from the glass shards.
- 13. A torn, brown jerkin hangs from a natural protrusion on one wall.
- 14. A bent iron spike protrudes from one wall at knee height. It falls out if anyone puts their weight on it.
- 15. The pit's walls are slick with water oozing from many small cracks in the rock. The walls are hard to scale (+5 DC) and water fills the pit to a depth of roughly 1 ft.
- 16. The pit's walls are slick with moisture; faintly glowing mold grows in the many cracks, providing a sickly yellow light (equal to dim illumination) throughout the pit.
- 17. A narrow crack splits the pit's floor. A faint, cold breeze sporadically issues forth.
- 18. The shards of a broken flute lie discarded in the pit. Nearby, a frayed length of rope and a discarded ration pack are piled neatly in a corner.
- 19. A small niche in one wall of the pit holds a primitive clay statue of a squat, naked woman. Four silver coins fill a bowl in front of the statuette.
- 20. Cracks crisscross the walls of the pit. Bent and twisted copper coins have been hammered into many of the cracks—perhaps in some sort of bizarre offering. Coins only fill cracks up to a height of about 3 ft. Three discarded small sacks lie in one corner. Careful examination of the coin-filled cracks reveals they (crudely) spell an unfamiliar name.

GM'S MISCERRANY: DUNGEON DRESSING

If you enjoy the table above and like dungeon dressing, check out *GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing* from Raging Swan Press—Endzeitgeist's choice as the number one book of 2014! Crammed with over 300 pages of information and charts designed to bring your dungeon alive, *GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing* is an essential part of any GM's arsenal.

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RAGING SWAN PRESS GM'S MISCELLANY: DUNGEON DRESSING



20 JHINGS TO FIND IN A SEA CAVE

By Creighton Broadhurst, Art by Thomas Cole

Adventurers are always investigating remote and isolated sea caves in search of ancient shrines and sunken treasures.

Such places are rarely devoid of any interesting features, but not all hold the locale of the PCs' next adventure. Use the table below to add minor points of interest to your PCs' adventures in such locales:

- 1. A thick line of seaweed—rife with hundreds of tiny crabs—marks the high tide mark. The tangy smell of salt hangs thickly in the air.
- 2. Flotsam and jetsam bobs in the water, bumping against the slick cave walls.
- 3. Deep rock pools dot the cave's foreshore. Surprisingly large crabs lurk within.
- 4. The cold remains of a small campfire stand upon a high, stony promontory.
- 5. A battered rowboat—its mooring line floating nearby—bobs in the water near the cave mouth. Of its occupants, there is no sign, but congealed blood covers the only oar still in the boat.
- 6. A ledge high up on one wall holds a multitude of burnt, melted candles. The rock above is black-ened with soot.
- 7. A precarious tower of single stones piled one on top of another stands upon a prominent rock overlooking the water. The slightest touch causes it to collapse.
- 8. A small cairn toward the back of the caverns protects the body of a fallen adventurer. Explorers digging through the cairn discover scraps of bone and rotting or rusted equipment.
- 9. Oval, black barnacles grow in profusion below the waterline of the cave. Most seem normal, but a few have odd purple flecks upon their surface.
- 10. The cave is bereft of seaweed, except for one corner where someone or something has created a great mound of the stuff. Within, swarms of tiny crabs lair.
- 11. A small passageway leads away from the cave mouth. Perceptive PCs (DC 15 Perception reveals) notice signs the ceiling has been at least partially worked. The passageway comes to an abrupt halt after about 30 ft.
- 12. Bizarrely, the shattered curve of part of a stone archway is visible in the water at low tide. Of the

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rest of the arch, there is no sign.

- Small fish swarm in the waters within this cave. Survival checks made here to get along in the wild gain a +2 circumstance bonus.
- 14. The cave's mouth is wide, but low. Within, the cavern roof is much higher, but its low mouth makes entering the cave several hours either side of high tide impossible without a short underwater swim.
- 15. At the rear of the cave, a small stream of fresh water trickles out of a narrow fissure in the rock.
- 16. A rock fall fills one corner of the cave. It looks unstable, even to the untrained eye. The next storm will carry away several boulders at its base, causing the rest to collapse. Beyond lies a previously unknown and unexplored passageway.
- 17. Remnants of carven stone steps rise out of the water. Several of the lower steps have been all but worn away by the remorseless tides, and slick green slime covers much of the remaining stone-work.
- 18. Incongruously, a large sodden branch still bedecked with many leaves bobs in the water.
- 19. This cave is, or was, something of a lover's grotto. Graffiti scratched into the walls proclaims many couples' undying love for one another.
- 20. The rock around this sea cave's mouth is covered by lush vegetation that hangs down and obscures the entrance (DC 15 Perception notices). Within, a pile of large stones serves as a small altar. Crude holy symbols daub the walls and various esoteric sigils (drawn with various different colored chalk) complete the decorations. The air here is noticeably colder than normal.

GM'S MISCERRANY: DUNGEON DRESSING

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Rite Publishing Presents

10 Angelic Magic Items



By Steven D. Russell



Questhaven: The Leviathan Archipelago Part 1 - Undersea Basics By Elton Robb,

illustrations by Kelly Chong and Moh Brenton

You have all heard the legend of the empire sunk beneath the waves, the fabled lost utopia that was drowned by Our Grandfather of Water and Wave for their hubris. I am here to tell you that one of their outpost cities exists to this day in the depths of the Leviathan Sea somewhere along the eastern edge of the Plumbless Trench. It is an advanced ancient acropolis with strange lost artifices and wondrous forgotten magical arts. However, my fellow Questors, you should beware: though it is ripe with treasure Our Sovereign of Waters wants no part of the city to escape his depths, and so he has set many monstrosities of the sea to guard it. Foremost among these monstrosities are the ship breaker sea serpent Ghalvoar Lhamatar and the stygian leviathan Old Mad Jack. All the while, many of the undersea races war amongst themselves within the ruins trying to lay claim to the strange bits of artifice and magic. Many an expedition from the surface has never returned and few members of the Questor's Society, excluding myself, know of its exact location...

For years, rumors have drifted of an ancient empire located in the Leviathan Sea. Few have attempted to plumb its depths and far fewer have returned. In addition to the rumors are the legends about a sunken empire long ago claimed by the sea. Tales persist of a mountain of treasures yet to be discovered in the city's deepest depths.

This article is the first in a series. The first installment deals with the basics of ocean science. The second article deals with an island as big as the island of Hawai'i, which is populated by gillmen. The gillmen will be presented with a fantastic Hawaiian culture, with their allies - a group of merfolk inhabiting the coral reef off the west coast of their island - and their foes, including a sahuagin village 15 miles away built on a sea ledge off the east coast.

The next island is an island the size of Oahu, which is populated by humans with a fantasy culture based on Easter Island's lost Polynesian culture. The lagoon of the island hides a city of a different type of merfolk: the Nommos, which has been slowly guiding the humans. The humans of these islands have a pact of friendship with the gillmen. A Questhaven colony is found on the island as well.

The next article deals with a series of keys, ruled by crocodile-men called the Sebekas. The followers of the crocodile god Sobek, the Sebekas, have an Egyptian-like culture, but one more directly impacted by the sea. The penultimate article deals with the northern-most island which is the size of Tahiti. Although there are gillmen



there, the main culture covered will be the Lockgelly selkies that keep away from the gillmen, and the strange beings known as the Melusine. The final article will deal with the Isle of Gone and the strangest parts of this sea.

Oceanography Basics for Gamers Although the Cerulean Seas Campaign Setting (and

other roleplaying games such as Blue Planet and GURPS Atlantis) goes over the basics for using oceanography in roleplaying games, some of the basics of how oceanography impacts your undersea game are provided here. Specifically, this article covers light zones and undersea topography. Others, such as the tides, ocean currents, and water pressure will be covered elsewhere. Some of the terminology used here will be real-world terminology rather than in-game, fantasy terminology. Use what you'd like within your campaign and feel free to create terms that provide the atmosphere or mood you want to convey.

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For game purposes and ease, the sea is divided into three light zones.

The Sunlit Zone: the sunlit zone is the topmost layer of the ocean, so-called because enough light penetrates the ocean's surface to cause photosynthesis in the plankton.

More than ninety percent of all life in the sea lives in the sunlit zone; therefore most fish and other organisms are found here.

The Twilight Zone: only a small amount of light penetrates to these depths. As the water becomes deeper, the pressure increases. Only animals that have adapted to low-light and moderate pressures can survive. The twilight zone begins about 600 feet (100 fathoms) under the water's surface and extends down to 3,000 feet (500 fathoms).

The Midnight Zone: the midnight zone begins at five hundred fathoms (3,000 feet) and extends to the bottom, whether that is the sea floor or the floor of an ocean trench. Over ninety percent of all the ocean water is in this midnight zone. It's incredibly dark, the pressure is crushing, and the temperature is near-freezing. Surprisingly, life exists at these depths, clinging to survival, from a variety of Ediacaran biota (e.g., sea pens) to the tube worms and bacteria that live near white and black smokers.

Table: Sunlight as a Light Source

Depth	Bright	Shadowy
60 ft. or less	100 ft.	200 ft.
60 - 120 ft.	60 ft.	120 ft.
121 - 240 ft.	30 ft.	60 ft.
241 – 360 ft.	20 ft.	40 ft.
361 - 400 ft.	10 ft.	20 ft.
401 – 600 ft.		10 ft.
601 ft.+		

"Shadowy" in this context means that creatures with low-light vision can see objects twice as far away as the given distance.

Undersea Topography

The regions under the sea's surface is an alien world for those that live on land. On a world like Earth, the land is divided into continents; between these continents are the seas and oceans. In fact, a continent extends beyond the point where the sea meets land along its beaches and cliffs. The continental shelf is the region that reaches out beyond the edge where the sea and land meet. Farther out, beyond the continental shelf, is the continental slope which itself often ends abruptly at the continental break. The space beyond that is the aptly named abyssal plain.

Traversing the abyssal plains are underwater mountains and seamounts that are typically flat on top. The plains stretch to the sea ridge, which snakes across the undersea like a tail or a backbone. The sea floor slowly spreads as lava seeps up and splits the ocean floor apart, making the sea ridge a tectonic plate boundary. It is on the continental shelves, however, where there is the greatest biodiversity, and it is there where many undersea civilizations would exist. Here, you will find merfolk, gillmen, and sahuagin, at the least. While these civilizations live on the continental slope, others like the deep drow and other deep sea sentient races thrive in and around the deep abyssal plains.

Sea Zones

Scientists have divided the sea into several marine zones. These may be useful to the GM who wishes to explore the sea in her campaign. First of all, all zones related to the open sea are grouped together in the pelagic zone, while zones related to land, the continental shelves, and the abyssal planes are grouped into the benthic zone. The photic zone is the region where light from the sun causes photosynthesis; the zone where there is no light is the aphotic zone. The pelagic zone includes: the epipelagic zone, which is the upper-most zone and the home of most of the ocean's inhabitants; the mesopelagic, which is an area of deep blue light and were a few creatures live, and where the thermocline is located; the bahypelagic, which is a zone of crushing pressures; the abyssopelagic, which is where giant squid live; and the hadalpelagic, which is the zone of water that fills ocean trenches. The aforementioned thermocline is a body of fluid water or air where the temperature changes rapidly.

The Benthic Zone

The benthic zone is composed of the littoral, the bathyal, abyssal, and ultra-abyssal zones. In layman's terms they are as follows: the continental shelf, the continental slope, the undersea plain, and the trench zones. The one that is closest to land, the *littoral zone*, is further subdivided into the supra-littoral, the littoral, and sub-littoral zones. The supra-littoral zone is also called the spray zone. The spray zone extends from the high tide line to land and is only underwater during storms. The intertidal zone is located in the tidal zone and the sub-littoral zone is always underwater. The littoral zone extends from the surface of the sea to around 650 feet. It is in the sublittoral zone where the sahuagin, the gillmen, the aquatic elves, and the seafolk often build their cities and live their lives. This is because these races, with the possible exception of the sahuagin, cannot tolerate depths beyond 300 ft. The sublittoral zone extends to where the continental shelf gives way to the abyssal plain. On the continental slope live the Pisceans, the Nommo, and the Melusine along with other deep sea races.

Beyond depths of 200 ft. is the bathyal zone and the other abyssal zones. The Pisceans and the Nommo make their homes in the bathyal zone. It is in the deepest, abyssal zones, where the aquatic deep drow, a race of aquatic dwarves, and other, stranger, sentient races may be found there as well.

Sea Currents

It's best to think of a current as a river in the sea. A current usually moves in a particular direction and speed depending on several factors, including heat. Currents may affect PCs; for example, if a particular character is swimming with the current, he has something like a tail wind that increases his speed. If he is swimming against the current, that current slows his movement. If the current is more powerful than his speed, (like a powerful equatorial current), the character is swept away by the current. For those from an underwater civilization,

currents have be utilized like highways.

The *Cerulean Seas Campaign Setting* goes into greater detail about how currents work. Here, the factors of a sea current are its speed, direction, and diameter. The speed of a current is the speed that a character moves if the character is swept up in the current; the direction is the direction the current flows toward; and the diameter is the approximate shape of the volume of water that is moved.

Three major ocean currents affect the islands of the Leviathan Sea. The Leviathan Current, which gives the Sea its name, originates from the polar waters. It moves fairly slowly and has a diameter of fifty miles. It also changes direction every two years. The second current is the Southern Tropical Current, and is the one responsible for giving the Archipelago its mild temperature. The last is the Questhaven Terrestrial Current, and is the one responsible for bringing prison ships to the Isle of Gone.

Water Pressure

Water is heavy and that weight exerts pressure. Water exerts liquid pressure, meaning that the pressure comes from all sides. PCs seeking to go underwater will be affected by liquid pressure, just as the human body is affected by air pressure as one ascends from sea level.

Land dwellers are accustomed to liquid pressure of 14 pounds per square inch at sea level. At a depth of about 50 feet, the pressure is roughly 28 pounds per square inch. This increase in pressure has an effect on members of land-based races. (Per the Pathfinder core rules, water pressure causes 1d6 damage per minute for every 100 feet below the surface; a successful Fortitude save (DC 15 + 1 for each previous check) negates this damage.) The denizens of the sea, however, are adapted to live at greater pressures and they are not subject to this damage. This includes the sahuagin, the sea folk, the gillmen, and other denizens of the sea. In *Cerulean Seas* (Alluria Publishing, 2010, p. 14), a new mechanic called *Depth Tolerance* was introduced. This mechanic allows the GM and players to know the depth tolerance of a monster, animal, or race/

species when it's submerged at a certain depth. This allows the sea-based character to be affected by pressure for every 100 feet or so past its depth tolerance. This usually equates to requiring occasional Fortitude saves. Missing a save usually means a character takes damage, although one might acclimate if the save is successful.

The Bends

The bends, or decompression syndrome, isn't a sickness at all. It's just gas physics. When a human dives deeper than a few atmospheres of pressure under the water, the water pressure forces nitrogen to dissolve into the bloodstream. If the diver rises too quickly from a zone of high pressure to a zone of low pressure, the nitrogen bubbles out into the bloodstream. He usually "bends" over from the gas that is bubbling out of his bloodstream. The bends is no laughing matter since people have died from the bends. To represent this in Pathfinder, a character who rises more than one hundred feet per minute will take 1d4 Constitution damage for each additional 100 feet traveled in that minute (Alluria Publishing, 2010, p. 14).

On Earth, those suffering from the bends are put into a hyperbaric chamber to help the body slowly acclimate to the sudden drop in pressure. In a fantasy world, a *cure disease, limited wish, wish,* or *miracle* spell will remove and repair the effects of the bends if administered quickly enough. Plants, undead, and constructs are immune to the bends. Also, creatures with the water subtype are immune to the bends (i.e. tritons, half-elemental creatures, and water elementals).

Conclusion

These are the basics for a game based on land but that significantly includes water. This should be enough for a Questhaven adventure set on the Archipelago rather than beneath the waves around it. *Cerulean Seas* goes into much more depth for underwater gaming and campaigns. This series covers the races found in *Cerulean Seas*, including the psionic races from *Waves of Thought*. The next article will cover the gillmen and their society.

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Tords of Gossamer & Shadow

Gossamer Worlds: Poetica Mundi





by Matt Banach



The Secrets of the Divine: Our Mother of Many Ways

By Steven D. Russell

Illustrations by James "Devin Night" Hazelett and Mark Hyzer

"Our Mother of Many Ways always adds a touch of madness to the blessing of genius." - The Babbling Basileus

"Cast off your attachments, for change is the only constant in the world.

Covet not control lest you become a slave. Drink Deep for the wine of life is sweet.

Embrace your suffering so that you may know the heights of joy.

Feel the call of thine own inspiration, for it cannot be heard.

Find worth only in what you have not yet done." -- The Six Mandates of Our Mother of Many Ways

Our Mother of Many Ways Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Portfolio: badgers, creativity, geniuses, half- wits, hyenas, inspiration, intuition, invention, jackals, lurkers, madness, oracles, prophecy, titans, tragedy, wine, wolverines

Worshipers: artists, geniuses, gnomes, hedonists, inventors, lurkers, oracles, prophets, titans, vinters

Aliases: Titan's Womb, Mistress of Madness, Red-Haired Sovereign of Inspiration, Hyena of Tragedy, Wildeyed Gnome of the Heavenly Vineyards, Shifting Oracle of Genius

Cleric Domains: Chaos, Madness, Knowledge, Trickerv

Subdomains: Azata, Deception, Insanity, Inspiration (see below), Nightmare, Prophecy (see below), Protean

Favored Weapon: Morningstar

Superior: Our Mother of Wisdom and Mercy

Allies: Our Heavenly Archmage of Secrets, Our Grandfather of Water and Wave, Our Grand Wright of Heaven

Foes: Their Dark Lord of Fire, Their Lordly Brother of Cunning

Symbols: wine bottle, cluster of grapes, hyena

I have found the churches of Our Mother of Many Ways to be raucous and lively places. They are not places of stringent authority and it seems each temple determines its own individual hierarchy. I found very few constants in my many visits to their temples, and it is quite common for them to serve as places of celebration, wild revelries, invention, folly, a fair bit of debauchery and sometimes even true danger.

The church believes that everything changes, that it is a follower's holy duty to seek out these new experiences, finding joy and vibrancy in all things even that which has not yet changed. Yet I have also learned that they teach



we must remember that there is no joy without strife and trust that our intuition is the voice of Our Shifting Oracle of Genius. The final tenant I have found in every holy vineyard I have visited is that control, especially control over change, joy, and strife, is an illusion that can enslave us all.

The Holy Vineyard of Wild-Eyed Celebrations, the local church near Questhaven, is enormously popular among the common folk and many members of the Questor's Society, such as myself, first and foremost because they make and sell the finest wine in the Protectorate, along with controlling the production of all other the wines in the region. Many folk also come to seek the prophecies of the oracles who guide the governance of the vineyard (rather than the clergy). These oracles are under the command of The Babbling Basileus, an extremely intelligent blind jabberwocky that may or may not be insane, possessing tremendous powers of prophecy.

The refined and more orderly members of Questor's Society, who would not know a good time if it swallowed them whole like a purple worm, consider the holy vineyard a place of ill repute and a vice for the lowly. However, even hypocrites that they are, they will still come visit the oracles when in need, but often do so in disguise to keep their fellows from seeing them enter. There is little concern that one can earn the wrath of Our Mother of Many Ways for all know she cares not for the opinions of lowly mortals.

The oracles of The Holy Vineyard of Wild-Eyed *Celebrations* believe that their prophecies are only what is most likely to happen, not what will happen. They make

predictions, for only *Our Sovereigns of Heaven* can truly know the future. This ties into their belief that even fate is subject to change, this has made them very popular with my fellow Questors for we truly enjoy the idea that our choices are greater than our destiny.

The clergy of *Our Mother of Many Ways*, known as "apostles," are half-mad or more so. A surprising number are full-blooded gnomes, with the occasional wild-eyed lurker, but they are rarely found in the *The Holy Vineyard of Wild-Eyed Celebrations*; wanderlust strikes them, so they spread the teachings of the Mistress of Madness and lend a hand to her works. The clergy dye their hair red, never cutting or combing it. They dress in simple robes and a rope belt with a weapon in one hand and a flagon of wine in the other.

The oracles move in strange ways, guided by their visions, and due to this farsighted power their actions can seem quite bizarre, but in the long term they always benefit the Holy Vineyard. They can aid a vile foe and deny an ardent worshiper, but eventually this revels itself as wisdom and often cunning as well. The newest order to have sprung up in the city of Questhaven with the rising of the Questor's Society is the Joyous Fellowship who enter battle in a religious euphoria and bliss that grants them great strength and power.

In the interest of full disclosure, I have attended many a celebration at the Holy Vineyard; at oneI discussed this writing with a number of other bards from beyond the Protectorate, who had written similar works about other locales, and much of my work drew what I consider divine inspiration from these works.

Mythology:

The Goblet of Inspiration's Vintage is one of 16 cups into which *Our Wild-Eyed Gnome of the Heavenly Vineyard* poured the first wine in all creation. For countless ages *The Holy Vineyard of Wild-Eyed Celebrations* kept one of these within its cellars until it went missing during the Interregnum Anarchy, and now lays hidden even from the eyes of the oracles. The legends and myths I have read state while consuming wine from the goblet, the wielder states a specific conundrum aloud and the goblet then grants a new solution to that conundrum that has never been tried before. Drinking from the goblet a second time apparently destroys the wielder. The church sponsors a quest during the week of the festival of The First Pressing (see below), I myself have participated in this quest, and during it I found the first inspiration for this body of work.

Manifestations:

Our Mother of Many Ways shows her favor by the appearance of a short multi-limbed gnome with wild, unkempt red hair and solid black eyes. Her omens always consist of two twin hyenas, badgers, or wolverines. I encountered a pair of twin dire hyenas when on a quest to defeat the derro savant Ovvar Noravir, in the depths of the Mithral Deep, leading me to capture him rather than

slaying him. Her blessing is granting a vision of a possible future or the discovery of a previously unknown prophecy that usually branches out showing two of the most likely futures. I myself saw such a vision when starting on my writings known as Evocative City Sites. Her foremost servants are the twin hyenas Genius and Madness, a powerful empyreal lord known as the Vintner said to rival the power of the Solstice King, and the titan Oreithyia, Prophetess of Tragedy.

Holiday:

The followers of Our Hyena of Tragedy do not really need a reason for a holiday, only the divinely inspired announcements of an oracle that Our Mistress of Madness has deemed an appropriate time. The First Pressing, a celebration of the new harvest of grapes each year, is their only true standardized festival. This usually happens in autumn during the first week of the 11th month, though if the oracles deem the grapes have ripened early or late this too is subject to change. This festival is by far the most untamed and hedonistic display in the whole of their religion. Scandalous costumes along with even more outrageous behavior always accompany it. Deaths related to the consumption of wine (and other intoxicants, herbs, and alchemic potions) are well known, though the Holy Vineyard has been known to track down an apostle to raise the dead to keep public outcry to a minimum. I will never miss The First Pressing, as this is where I met my second wife, and later my first mistress.

New Subdomains

Inspiration (Subdomain)

Associated Domain: Knowledge.

Replacement Power: The following granted power replaces the lore keeper power of the Knowledge domain.

Inspire (Su): With a touch, you can cause a creature to feel a touch of divine inspiration. The creature can attempt one skill check designated by you, gaining an insight bonus on the next check with that skill equal to your Wisdom modifier. You can use this ability a number times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.

Replacement Domain Spells: 1st-*message*, 3rd-*heroism*, 6th-*greater heroism*

Prophecy (Subdomain)

Associated Domain: Knowledge.

Replacement Power: The following granted power replaces the lore keeper power of the Knowledge domain.

Prophetic Warning (Su): With a touch, you can cause a creature to gain a sixth sense that will warn it of danger. The creature can, as an immediate action, use this warning to act in a surprise round, gain an insight bonus to a single saving throw, an insight bonus to initiative, or an insight bonus to her armor class against a single attack. A creature gains no benefit from multiple prophetic warnings, it cannot gain another until the one it has been

given has been used. You can use this ability a number times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.

Replacement Domain Spells: 1st-*true strike*, 5th-*contact other plane*, 7th-*vision*, 8th-*moment of prescience*

New Feats

Unbalanced Reciprocity

"His answer was death, my answer was madness." **Prerequisites:** Madness domain (or its subdomains) class feature, oracle's curse class feature, or hex class feature

Benefits: Once per day if you are successfully damaged by a melee attack, you can choose to inflict a madness affliction (chosen by you at the time of activation) on the attacker with an onset time of instantaneous as an immediate action. A successful Will save (DC 10 +1/2 your caster level +your Wisdom or Charisma modifier) negates this effect, however you only expend one use per day of this ability if the subject fails its save. A subject that makes its save is immune to this effect for 24 hours. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier (or Charisma modifier).

Quicken Revelation

"I've foreseen the need for speed."

Prerequisites: Revelation class feature

Three times per day you can use one of your chosen revelations as a swift action. This does not provoke an attack of opportunity. An ability that has an activation time greater than 1 round cannot be activated by this feat.

Bitter Vinter

"We will serve no poi...I mean wine until its time."

Prerequisites: Madness and trickery domains (or their subdomains) class features. Caster Level 9th.

Benefits: Once per round as an immediate action you can transform one container of wine up to 1 cu. ft. in volume within close range (25 ft. +5ft./2 levels) into the poison of your choice. The wine becomes any of the ingested poisons listed in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*; you cannot transform wine into a contact, inhaled or injury poison. Thus, although you could transform wine into the equivalent of "lich dust" (*save* Fortitude DC 17; *onset* 10 minutes; *frequency* 1/ minute for 6 minutes; *effect* 1d3 Strength damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves), you could not transform it into the equivalent of wyvern poison. The wine still tastes and smells untainted. The wine remains poison for 1 hour and you can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.



The Joyous Fellowship (Paladin Archetype)

The holy warriors of Our Mother of Many Ways are filled with religious euphoria and bliss and gain special powers from this elative force. These Joyous Brothers and Sisters are ecstatic soldiers of the faith dealing in more secular matters than those of the apostles. They wander about befriending and helping the helpless in their small local struggles. When two great forces clash they seek to defend the innocents caught in the middle. They are trained at noticing the details and people others ignore as the fellowship directs its efforts towards service to those folk who are ignored and providing opposition to those who enslave minds and hearts. They fight with both their weapons and their happiness and give aid with both. They are sometimes known as the "vulgar fellowship" or "vulgar brothers (sisters)" as they disdain decorum and proper manners, don't mind drinking to excess (especially with wine), and only hold their tongues in the service of some helpless innocent. They believe they are divinely graced by their deity and that they must embrace every joy they can find while not shrinking from potential tragedy which makes them loud, brash and uncommonly bold. While you may see them as wastrels and drunkards they are dangerously functional drunken zealots.

The order occasionally runs afoul of the Questors Society's members who have a tendency to use charm (and occasionally even compulsion) magics to get what

they want, but usually these are isolated incidents.

Aura of Chaos and Good (Ex): The power of a joyous brother/sister's aura of chaos and good (see the *detect chaos* or *detect good* spell) is equal to her class level. This ability replaces aura of good.

Perceptive Gaze (Ex): Joyous brothers and sisters are skilled at noticing what others ignore and at sensing deception. She receives a morale bonus on all Perception and Sense Motive checks equal to 1/2 her paladin level (minimum +1). This replaces detect evil.

Aura of Hope: At 3rd level a joyous brother/sister can fill herself and allies with hope. As a free action, she and each ally within 10 feet gains a +2 morale bonus on saving throws, attack rolls, ability checks, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls for 1 round per class level she possesses. This ability functions only while the paladin is conscious, not if she is unconscious or dead. This ability replaces aura of courage.

Joy of Faith (Su): At 4th level, the joyous brother/ sister learns to use the power of her religious euphoria to enhance her abilities. This class feature replaces the paladin's spells class feature. A joyous brother/sister does not gain any spells or spellcasting abilities, does not have a caster level, and cannot use spell trigger or spell completion magic items. She must, however, have wineskin from which half the wine has been consumed by the joyous brother/sister.

At 4th level, the joyous brother/sister gains the rage ability as a barbarian equal to her class level. She gains a new rage power at 8th, 12th, 16th and 20th level. This power is not fueled by rage but is instead powered by religious ecstasy, euphoria, and in some small part madness, but functions as rage in all its mechanical aspects.

Aura of Ecstasy (Su): At 11th level, a joyous brother/ sister can expend two uses of her smite evil ability to grant her joy of faith ability to all allies within 10 feet, using her bonuses. Allies must use this rage ability by the start of the joyous brother/sister's next turn and the benefit lasts for 1 minute. Using this ability is a free action. Lawful creatures gain no benefit from this ability. This ability replaces aura of justice.

Aura of Madness (Su): At 14th level, a joyous brother/sister's weapons are treated as chaos-aligned for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. Any attack made against an enemy within 10 feet of her is treated as chaos-aligned for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

This ability functions only while the joyous brother/ sister is conscious, not if she is unconscious or dead. This ability replaces aura of faith. **Aura of Creativity (Su)**: At 17th level, a joyous brother/sister gains DR 5/law and immunity to compulsion spells and spell-like abilities. Each ally within 10 feet of her gains a +4 morale bonus on saving throws against compulsion effects.

This ability functions only while the joyous brother/ sister is conscious, not if she is unconscious or dead.

Drunken Champion (Su): At 20th level, a joyous brother/sister becomes a conduit for the power of her deity. Her DR increases to 10/lawful. Whenever she uses smite evil and successfully strikes an evil outsider, the outsider is also subject to a *banishment*, using her class level as the caster level (her weapon and holy symbol automatically count as objects that the subject hates). After the *banishment* effect and the damage from the attack is resolved, the smite immediately ends. In addition, whenever she channels positive energy or uses lay on hands to heal a creature, she heals the maximum possible amount.

Code of Conduct: A joyous brother/sister must be of chaotic good alignment and loses all class features except proficiencies if she ever willingly commits an evil act.

The Joyous Creed

1. Befriend and aid the helpless and the hopeless (provided they do not abuse the help).

2. Act with honor but ignore decorum (not lying, not cheating, not using poison, and so forth, making great use of mockery and japes).

3. Do not hold emotions in check or stay your tongue (provided they would not cause harm to the helpless and hopeless by doing so).

4. Punish those who seek to enslave minds and hearts. 5. Live to the fullest and savor life's wonder and despair, do not live a life of caution, better to be a fool than a coward.

6. Be as dark and sorrowful as you are joyous and wild, do not avoid tragedy for there is no joy without suffering.7. Share with others, so that they may build off your work, and seek those whose worthy ideas and inventions have not yet been shared.

8. Seek that which you have not done.

Associates: While she may adventure with good or neutral allies, a joyous brother/sister avoids working with evil characters or with anyone who consistently offends her moral code. Under exceptional circumstances, a joyous brother/sister can ally with evil associates, but only to defeat what she believes to be a greater evil. A joyous brother/sister should seek an *atonement* spell periodically during such an unusual alliance, and should end the alliance immediately should she feel it is doing more harm than good. A joyous brother/sister may accept only henchmen, followers, or cohorts who are chaotic good.

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Rite Publishing Presents

In The Company of Angels





By Steven D. Russell



Forest Spells Showcase

By David J. Paul

One of the things I wanted to do with 101 Forest Spells was provide some low-level spell options for PCs and NPCs (including for classes like the adept; look out for an adept list in a future publication) to give players and GMs alike some opportunities to give life to individuals in a campaign that wasn't entirely centered around dungeon crawls, high-seas adventure, or unearthing crypts (all of which are coming in later spell supplements). Two I've chosen to highlight here, declaw and detain animal are really simple spells. At first, the applicability may seem limited (though some might find it fun to cast declaw on the local tavern's cat), but, given time and thought, you'll find clever uses for spells like this. Another thing I wanted to do was provide some story-oriented options through spells. The spell, sleuth of bears (as an aside, I really love all the weird names for groups of animals), provided just exactly the kind of flavor I wanted.

Declaw

School: Transmutation; Level: Cleric/Oracle 2, Druid 1, Ranger 1, Shaman 1, Sorcerer/Wizard 2 Casting Time: 1 standard action Components: V, S, DF Range: Touch Target: Animal touched Duration: 1 round/level Saving Throw: Fortitude negates; Spell Resistance: Yes

With a touch, you cause an animal's claws to be temporarily rendered useless. Affected creatures attempting a claw attack do so as if using an improvised weapon (-4 on attack rolls, critical threat only on a 20). In addition, the attack, if successful, is treated as an unarmed attack, not a claw attack, and the damage is accordingly reduced (1 for Tiny creatures, 1d2 for Small creatures, 1d3 for Medium, 1d4 for Large, GM adjudication for other sizes) and made nonlethal. Feats which depend on a claw attack (such as Weapon Focus) cannot be used, though other feats, such as Weapon Finesse, may still apply.

When the spell ends, the animal's claws return to normal.

Detain Animal

School: Enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; Level: Druid 1, Ranger 1, Shaman 1 Casting Time: 1 swift action Components: V, S Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels) Target: One animal Duration: 1 round/level Saving Throw: Will negates; Spell Resistance: Yes



The target animal failing its save will not voluntarily move out of its space unless it believes its life is threatened. If the target's HD are more than twice your caster level it gains a +2 on its save; if the target's HD are more than four times your caster level, it gains a +4 on its save. If the animal's attitude toward you is friendly or helpful, it voluntarily fails its save. If the animal's attitude toward you is unfriendly or hostile it gains a +2 on its save (this bonus stacks with its HD bonus, if any).

Sleuth of Bears

School: Transmutation; Level: Druid 3, Shaman 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 4 Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, M (hair or nails from 1 bear/target) **Range:** 20 ft.

Target: You and up to 1 ally/level

Duration: 1 min./level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance Yes (harmless)

You and up to 1 ally/level (maximum of 8 allies) are transformed into black bears. Your sizes are Medium, you all gain a +2 size bonus to Strength and a +2 natural armor bonus. Everyone gains low-light vision and scent.

If *sleuth of bears* is cast in temperate or cold forest terrain, you all also gain Endurance and Run, a +2 competence bonus to Perception and Survival checks, and the duration is 1 hour/level.

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The idea behind *declaw* is disarmingly simple (pardon the obviously intended pun). There are rules for disarming an opponent who uses a sword or spear, but, it's not so easy to disarm a creature when that creature's primary attack is a claw. Admittedly, this spell affects animals and, as such, has limited application (hence the low level). But, as you might guess, it's a pretty simply extension from declaw to declaw monster. Also, while the spell would have tremendous effect on something like a tiger, because the spell has a range of touch and the animal is permitted a save, the option is a better choice for a higher-level caster than for a lower-level caster against such a target. Against something like a black bear, if a caster has run out of other options or doesn't really want to harm the animal, this spell might be worth trying. Also, if a spellcaster has a feat that can turn a touch spell into a close-range spell, this makes the attempt against really dangerous animals a lot simpler.

I played a ranger many years ago who had two dogs as traveling companions (and they were pretty handy in a skirmish). There were times when it would have been really handy for my character to have been able to use *detain animal* on them to have them stay put while my ranger poked his nose into business that might have been a little too dangerous for the dogs. Similarly, there are times when a party has an animal with it that just won't mind its manners and gets folks into trouble. While *detain animal* is only a very temporary solution, sometimes that's all that's needed.

A group I played in years ago consisted of five regular players and two or three regular NPCs. This large group was set in a campaign akin to northern Europe around 1200 AD in the real world. One of the motivations for *sleuth of bears* was that group and one of its explorations through something like the cold northern forests in winter. On several occasions, we traversed short distances, punishing our horses and subjecting all of us to terrible environmental effects. Had my character, the party's wizard, or the half-elven druid in the party, had access to *sleuth of bears*, we could have left the horses at home and made the trek through the hilly, snowy forests as bears. I really enjoyed the feel of what this spell allows. And, for groups of players that keep journals of their travels, this would be a fun addition to their notes.



GENIUS GUIDE TO SIMPLE CLASS TEMPLATES FOR MONSTERS



ENNY JARZABSKI



Twenty Questions with Owen K.C. Stephens by Steven D. Russell

1. Could you tell us a little about yourself?

I'm a native of Oklahoma, though I moved to the Seattle area 14 months ago to take a job at Paizo as a developer. I was initially put in charge of the Pathfinder Modules line, and have since transitioned over to the Player Companion line.

Gaming, particularly tabletop RPGs and even more particularly D&D and its inheritors, have been a very important part of my life. I got my start in gaming in 1982 when my uncle showed me a 1st edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* he'd just gotten and told me if I could figure out the rules, we could play it. With no *Player's Handbook*, I had to figure out what things we were missing and write them down for us to play. So I was designing RPGs before I even played my first game – though that early effort was obviously pretty terrible. I, however, was hooked.

I had a lot of personal problems as a teenager, and it's not overstating things to say RPGs kept me alive. They acted as something I could do at parties, a way to identify fellow geeks and nerds, meet new people, build support networks, and something to focus on when the real world was unbearable. Roleplaying games are how I found most of my friends, including my wife, and are still my social activity of choice.

2. What is your home game like?

I'm currently running one game and preparing to run a second. The current game is the Wrath of the Righteous adventure path I run at the Paizo office, which is as crazy as you'd expect a mythic campaign with Pathfinder designers, developers, and editors as players.

I'm also preparing a campaign to run for some close friends, called Nightmares of Absalom, set on the Isle of Kortos in Golarion. People who want more about it can read the original pitch to players on the May 3, 2015, entry on my blog (owenkcstephens.com), or just go to http://wp.me/p1Mw9t-5N.

3. You are currently the Developer running the Player Companion line for Paizo, what can you tell us about that?

Our Editor-In-Chief, F. Wesley Schneider, has described the role of a Paizo developer to being akin to that of a movie's director. Before a project is written it's the developer's job to conceptualize it (including its theme, name, and general content) and get the publisher's approval (generally through our Editor-in-Chief). Once that concept is approved we write an outline that often breaks down what's going on each 2-page spread of the final book. For an adventure we don't write out every encounter, but we do hit the highlights of where it begins and what the major beats of the storyline will be.

Once an outline is ready, we assign it to freelance writers. Some projects are written by a single author, while others get assigned to numerous different freelancers. We assist



the freelancer if needed, answering questions about style and intent, and vetting ideas the freelancers propose to fill specific sections. If something is particularly tricky, we might write that section ourselves. But the general idea is to have a good enough outline that we can trust our valued and experienced freelancers to produce a manuscript that both fills our needs, and occasionally surprises us.

That's one of my favorite things about the job, actually. Even when I outline exactly what 7 things need to be in a 2-page section of a book, our freelancers often find ways to write those 7 things I'd never think of on my own.

4. Other than one of your own works for Paizo, what has been your favorite Pathfinder Roleplaying Game product?

Well, beyond my work for *Paizo*, I'm a big fan of the Pathfinder-compatible work I've developed with Green Ronin, especially the huge 500+ page Freeport book that's now available.

5. Could you tell us a little about the Pathfinder Player Companion: Monster Summoner's Handbook?

One of the primary goals of the entire Player Companion line is to offer context for Pathfinder Roleplaying Game rules and options within the world of Golarion, our campaign setting. For example, the summoner class is in *Pathfinder RPG: Advanced Player's Guide* which gives you all the game rules you need to play on, but doesn't offer any suggestions on where in Golarion a summoner might be common.

So, *Monster Summoner's Handbook* is designed to give ideas, background, and options for summoning-focused characters (PCs and NPCs both) operating in a Golarion campaign. We talk about various groups that are wellknown for summoning monsters to assist them (ranging



from the god callers near the Worldwound to Magaambyan arcanists who can learn arcane versions of druid spells.

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

I sat with the rules team and tried to figure out if there was a way to make a druid who has such close ties to elements that she could summon one of each element, starting at 1st level. I had an idea that involved

adding four different eidolons (outsider companions normally only summoners have) to a druid, but was afraid it'd get nixed. Eidolons are very powerful, and druids already have better spellcasting than summoners. But the design team liked my idea, and we put the elemental ally archetype in the book as a result.

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

The guardian spirits, that allow a character with summon monster or summon nature's ally spells to summon a specific creature each time, and gain special bonuses when the guardian is present. It's an idea fairly common in fantasy fiction that we haven't had a good way of emulating for lower-level characters.

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

Figuring out what level spell is appropriate to summon what new monsters. That took more time than any other section of the book, and more people had input on the question.

9. What did you learn while working on it?

Although adding the celestial template to a monster doesn't change the creature's alignment, if you use summon monster spells to summon such creatures their alignment does match yours, and change the spell to have that alignment as a descriptor. It's a minor rules fact that doesn't normally come into play, but is crucial when designing something like the herald caller archetype we added.

10. What is the next Pathfinder Player Companion that is coming out that you can talk to us about? Could you tell us a little about that product?

That's *Player Companion: Dirty Tactics Toolbox.* It's a collection of nasty tricks, dirty deeds, and underhanded organizations set in Golarion. I had a lot of fun outlining this book, and enjoyed getting to have sections on poisons, the dirty trick combat maneuver, sneak attacks, ambushes, and generally using any means necessary to get the job done. The collection of spells are particularly fun, broken into poison-themed spells, and dirty trick-themed spells.

11. What is your usual process for developing a Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Module?

First I have to go over the adventure as a whole, and make sure it makes sense from both a GMs' and player's point of view. It's easy for writers to get so involved in the details that they lose sight of the big picture. A manuscript can have a series of balanced, interesting, evocative encounters, but fail to make sure there's a reason for characters to run into them, or give the GM the tools necessary to deal with players asking related questions. If there are obvious options left out, or gaps in the logic of getting from



encounter A to encounter B, or weird assumptions, those need to be fixed before anything else is done.

Then I "develop" the text, which is a rewriting process where I take the good material our freelancers give me, and make it better. Paizo developers look for clarity, good word choice, rules balance, and having a consistent voice throughout a product so it doesn't feel like a patchwork of ideas. The truism is "another set of eyes never hurt," and the staff developers are Paizo's professional "other set of eyes." Once we feel the text is clear, balanced, and awesome, I send it on to the editing team for them to start the hard work of making us look good.

12. What in your not-so-inconsiderable opinion is the best Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Module would-be designers should be studying?

First, I recommend picking up a LOT of different adventures, of different lengths and different levels, and seeing how they are put together. But if I have to pick just one, I'd say *Pathfinder Adventure Path: Reign of Winter Part 5 - Rasputin Must Die.* That adventure manages to accomplish a lot of different narrative and game-focused goals, and it does so in fun and interesting ways.

13. What is the best way to learn adventure module design?

Run a lot of games, and play in a lot of games. There are lots of other things that help (I recommend the Kobold Guide books, such as the *Kobold Guide to Game Design: Adventures*), but nothing is as useful as having a good feel for how RPG adventures actually tend to run at the game table, seen from both sides of the GM screen.

14. What advice would you give to a first-time GM running a Pathfinder Roleplaying Game **Module**?

Spend as much time reading the module and being prepared to run it as you expect your game session to last. You need to know the module well enough to mostly not need to read it during the game itself. Also, it's useful to know what monsters you need full game stats for and what uncommon rules may come up.

15. What advice would you give to a first-time player of a Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Module?

Ask your GM if there's any kind of characters it would be useful for the players to run, and build your character in conjunction with the other players. It's easier to have fun if everyone works at it together.



16. Could you give us an exclusive hint or teaser about an upcoming product, other than Pathfinder Player Companion: Monster Summoner's Handbook you are working on?

Sure! *Pathfinder Player Companion: Occult Origins* has a minor reference to the archwizard Nex in a way that revealed information I had not previously

known.

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

Back in 2001 I got a death threat from a fan who felt I had misrepresented some information about a fictional universe in a licensed RPG I worked on. The fan still thought I lived in Seattle after I'd moved back to Oklahoma and was living in a house that didn't have anything in my name, so I didn't worry about it. But it was certainly memorable.

18. What professional goals have you yet to obtain that you aim to achieve?

I'd like to publish a campaign setting of my own.

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

Here's the advice that got me my first few freelance assignments. "Put your name in front of people who can give you work, in a positive context, as often as possible."

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

I love hearing from fellow gamers! I can be found on Facebook and Twitter and the Paizo messageboards, and I'm really quite approachable.



Reviews

101 Forest Spells

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

What you want in a spell book is a lot of spells. This book definitely provides that and they range across the levels and classes. Even paladins, bards, witches and summoners get new spells.

Now are they any good, are they interesting, are they unusual and worth the purchase? Yes, yes, and indeed yes. These spells are not all violent or offensive, some are about sensing or passive powers; the alchemist transformation spells into forest troll and mandragora really fit (and make you think they should be in the base game). There are spells for many classes here, and a lot of thought has gone into them. I like the bard spells like *Korred's beard* (entangling), the fey *obsession* spell forcing a target to count grains of salt is deliciously cruel, and *labyrinthine forest* proves that the focus isn't solely on damage, but also bafflement and confusion.

The cleric and oracle gain such intriguing possibilities as creating undead out of branches (very Blair witch, but they can fight for you), which I will be using next game for a evil forest cleric. As I said before, some really feel like they should have always been in Pathfinder, like *deadwood drop* for dropping trees on people and *mass barkskin*.

I like the magus spells (satyr form here I come), but what is central to take away from this excellent book is that any spellcaster from a forest origin or fighting the players within a forest is going to be much stronger and memorable with the unusual, atypical spells they can unleash.

The art is very good and fitting. The design is very light and green and quite calming actually.

Get it, and make forest encounters more interesting. The players won't know what hit them (then probably offer them the new spells over time).

Coliseum Morpheuon

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

Planar Adventure and Mini-Setting for High Level Adventuring

This astounding document is 130 pages long, including beautiful front and back covers, a credits page, two pages for Table of Contents, and introduction, 10 chapters plus 3 appendices, and a single-page OGL. It is clearly intended primarily for GMs to use as a new planar minisetting that can be used for plug-and-play within your own setting/campaign, and includes a full adventure for high-level adventures (intended for 16th to 20th level PCs), centered around a major event in the Coliseum Morpheuon: The Damnation Epoch.

I have a few beefs with the layout of certain bits that are spread across pages, but given the nature of the adventure's non-linear layout, the overall structure of the document is nice. It should be easily accessible (physical

printed document is best), since it's clear a GM running this setting or adventure module would want to easily reference material from many sections of the book. There are sections that would be more appropriate for players appropriate to functioning well in the Plane of Dreams (feats and spells, specifically), and should be printed out separately for player reference. Along with a few bits of text for major NPCs and creature entries running across pages that feels awkward, I feel these minor setbacks to the document only take off 2/10 deduction, and will end with a 5-star review (4.8). This is a great product that, if employed properly, is everything needed to run a really amazing and memorable adventure at high-level.

Furthermore, this product is not just an adventure, because it is also the entire description of elements of the Coliseum (and all surrounding sites) within the Plane of Dreams, in a moderately stable, finite planar region. This planar site serves as the central focus for the adventure and all related plotlines. Being strange and ephemeral, the Plane of Dreams has new rules and planar traits that allow both GMs and PCs a chance to have a lot of fun in a free-form manner, allowing the PCs to follow a central storyline, while still giving them a chance to interact with a very lively and imaginative setting that never has to be the same thing twice. The product outlines major NPCs, including patrons who may employ/mentor PCs during the coliseum events, as well as a host of other individuals who are involved in the mini-politics and plot hooks of the adventure. It is not intended to be linear, and PCs have a lot of choice in how things play out, and how big and tough the opponents are which they wish to take on. It has all the elements of an epic story, no matter how you look at it.

Chapter 1-2 covers the Plane of Dreams and dreamrelated abilities and effects. Chapter 3 includes other inhabitants of the dream realm, and specifically the site of the Coliseum Morpheuon. Chapter 4 is an overview of the island region within the dreamscape, and chapter 5 is all the major NPCs within the adventure and surrounding plotlines. Chapter 6 gives the overview of the Damnation Epoch and the adventure to come, while chapters 7-9 is the actual adventure. Chapter 10 ends with the secrets of the region, the major NPCs, and ways to continue the adventure beyond its scope of the tournament's trials. The appendices include the two major rival groups of adventurers, as well as four other pre-generated characters that could be PCs or potential other gladiators or NPCs.

This includes several new map images (very nice

looking and useful, both in the adventure and possibly for other application), and the adventure clearly has ties to other related products in the <u>Faces of the Tarnished</u> <u>Souk</u> series, which can expand the diversity of faces at the site if things start to get boring or repetitive (and you would have a difficult time accomplishing that, IMHO). It's hard to add anything to what other reviewers have said about this great product, but it's worth checking out and putting to use at the game table!

Gossamer Worlds: Poetica Mundi

ssamer Worlds:

Poetica Mundi

Publisher: Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Trev W.

Rating: 5 stars out of 5

Gossamer Worlds: Poetica Mundi presents a most unusual realm. Within "Poetry is both the spiritual substance of the world and the motive force behind all forms of creation, destruction, and change"; that is right, poetry is the force of life, movement and alteration, and all powers of destruction are under the control of poetry. This creates a setting whereby, as is stipulated,

"All communication, whether it be spoken, written, or conveyed telepathically, shall be in poetry." From such expressions of poetry come power and this means potentially anything can be changed and influenced via poetry.

Now this got my attention, as I was looking over Macbeth for an upcoming lesson when I decided to procrastinate. This PDF is what I opened appropriately enough, and I think it presents a wonderful roleplaying challenge. The setting, the world, is medieval, but it is also extremely high in magic, as the sole mode of effective communication—poetry--opens up immense possibilities. There are still stats and abilities and the system still stands, but think of the challenge of Poetica Mundi as an overlay to the system. This is an immensely original idea, and there is advice offered for helping a game master realise the full potential of the setting. Of course it would fit if one wanted to bring any of the stories from poems and plays to life in a game.

Suitably, almost everything written in this text is a poem, except stats (always resistant to the charm and beating life of poetry) and the help section. I wish this were a bit longer, as it is colourful in language and images but somewhat short. This is not quite enough to lose a full point for me. Fortunately, the price is excellent and you are buying something original in the world of RPGs.

The final thoughts deserve to be included so as to consider if this product is right for you:

Poetry made real, recited with such zeal, great beauty and appeal, coax even jaded hearts to feel. Mini-Dungeons: Jorment at Jorni Jower



Publisher: AAW Games Reviewer: Endzeitgeist Raiting: 5 stars out of 5

This PDF clocks in at 2 pages and is a mini-dungeon. This means we get 2 pages content, including a solid map (although, alas, sans a player-friendly version) and all item- and monster stats are hyperlinked to d2opfsrd.com's shop and thus, absent from the PDF.

Since this product line's goal is

providing short diversions, side-quest dungeons etc., I will not expect mind-shattering revelations, massive plots, or particularly smart or detailed depictions. Instead, I'll be tackling the line for what it is. Got that? Great!

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

Still here?

All right!

Somervel has not been treated kindly by the seasons: its pale forts, somewhat akin to beaver lodges, earthen mounds on islands in the marshlands, have been isolated for quite a while. Most of the complex is below ground, with one tower jutting forth from the mound. Torni's tower has fallen to the weather.

When the PCs are sent to investigate the place, they are greeted by a haggard female, but that's just the beginning of the trouble. It turns out the female is a disguised annis hag who not only single-handedly (or better: single-clawedly) took the fortress and slaughtered its inhabitants. She makes off to rouse her ogre minions, some of which are in states of drunkenness (which is accounted for by the mini-dungeon) and to prepare her detailed and rather awesome tactics. For example, she collects stirges in a bag to throw at the PCs and uses speaking tubes. Yeah, smart! The presentation provides the roster of inhabitants, the rooms, and the tactics of the annis hag. All in all, it provides a surprisingly awesome and best of all, organic mini-dungeon against foes with unique tactics and in a distinct backdrop.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good; I noticed no significant glitches. Layout adheres to a beautiful 2-column, full-color standard and the PDF comes sans bookmarks, but needs none at this length. Cartography is full color and surprisingly good for such an inexpensive PDF, but there is no key-less version of the map to print out and hand to your players. The PDF provides a nice piece of full-color artwork.

Stephen Yeardley does it again. This mini-dungeon is inspired, cool and does everything right: from an awesome, unique locale to smart adversaries and a surprising amount of fluff crammed into the scant

few pages, this mini-dungeon is concise, logical, and downright awesome. No complaints and one of the high points of the series. Well worth 5 stars + seal of approval! **Endzeitgeist out.**

Psionics Unleashed Revised

<u>Publisher: Dreamscarred Press</u> <u>Reviewer: Endzeitgeist</u> <u>Rating: 5 stars out of 5</u>

This Core psionics system clocks in at 236 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 232 pages of content, so let's take a look!

First of all: What is this book? There are multiple answers to this question, the first of which would simply be: The properly tidied-up, pretty version of the original

<u>Psionics Unleashed</u> book, with some added material.

To be more precise: this book contains the two new races of Forgeborn and Norals introduced in <u>Psionics</u> <u>Augmented Vol. I</u>. It also fully implements the talentsystem introduced in <u>Psionics Expanded</u> (think of that book as the <u>Advanced Players Guide</u> for psionics – just as good and just as distinct), thus fully integrating the one "patch" of the base rules that wasn't 100% elegant.

This review will be a bit different from my usual indepth analysis shtick, mainly since I have already tackled the classes and content in detail in previous reviews – and repetition is boring. As a general assessment, the 10 races provided can be considered rather well-balanced and diverse and provide fitting substitutes for the closed-IP losses of some races from 3.X. It should be noted, though, that the races as provided herein do not sport favored class options, which are present in <u>Ultimate Psionics</u>. Personally, I think that including those for the classes herein would have made sense.

The main focus of the book, and where—in my opinion--it excels, though, is be the presentation of the base system of psionics as a point-based spellcasting system and, more importantly, the way in which this book makes what once (in 3.X) were boring, linear one-trick-pony classes work properly. Whether it is the wilder, soulknife, or psychic warrior, the respective individual takes on the base classes greatly increase the diversity of builds available and overall, are easy to understand and execute. If you've read the Paizo CORE-rules and the APG, none of these should prove a daunting task to understand.

Indeed, one can argue that the same holds true for the copious Prestige Classes provided, which, while more linear than the base classes, most of them arguably do not suck, something I wouldn't say about the Prestige Classes provided for the CORE system. If you need advice on what to steer clear from: the Pyrokineticist still is very much unfocused and none-too-awesome and the telepathy-enslavement-specialist thrallherd can be broken by an experienced player; other than those two,

the Prestige Classes all have something unique and fun going for them.

Since you're reading this review, I assume you're not particularly familiar with the system, so let me give you a run-down: psionics work pretty similar to spellcasting. You have your levels governing attributes, etc. Where things are different is with the resource. Psionic characters can be likened to spontaneous casters in that they need not prepare powers (that's the name of the psionic "spells"); unlike spontaneous casters, though, they draw their casts from ONE resource, the power points, which regenerate after resting. This is a numerical value that increases over the levels. In other words, to manifest a power ("manifesting" being the term for psionic "spellcasting"), you need to expend power points. These are streamlined by level: level 1 powers cost 1 PP, level 3 powers cost 5 PP, etc. However, unlike regular spellcasting, quite a few psionic powers do not get automatic scaling. Putting player-agenda higher on the radar, there is an augment-option for quite a few powers, allowing you to increase their potency in one way or another. To avoid abuse, a firm cap is placed on the amount of points you can spend on a given power. Know all those rants about psionics and nova-problems? Most of them boil down to not understanding this cap.

Psionic powers do not sport somatic or verbal components, instead providing displays; from odd smells to eerie lights, this component of the system deserves special mention because almost all reviewers tend to overlook it, when it makes, in my opinion, for a cool, constant and subtle differentiation from regular spellcasting.

Psionics is not just spellcasting with a different flavor, though. It also extends to enabling people to do things beyond the providence of non-psionic creatures; for example whether it's helping to avoid death by poison via the new autohypnosis skill or via one of the myriad ways in which one can use the psionic focus. This can be considered an infinite, yet limited resource. Basically, you can expend actions to gain your psionic focus and then expend it at a later time to fuel some thoroughly unique tricks. However, expending it always may not be wise either, for there are quite a few passive abilities that require you being focused. It's simple, concise, and fun.

It should be noted that this PDF does an excellent job at explaining the various different concepts in a very concise and easy to grasp manner; if you understand basic PFRPG, you'll get how this works and a handy glossary at the end makes looking up terminology very easy.

One crucial difference from the <u>Ultimate Psionics</u> book would be the inclusion of a base array of psionic monsters with which to harass your players; while obviously not reaching the depth and breadth of the <u>Psionic Bestiary</u>, it does provide a solid first glance and some nice drag-anddrop adversaries. Whether you prefer monsters in a book that will be used by players or whether you prefer them in their own book depends on taste, but I personally prefer them separate and thus consider the <u>Ultimate Psionics/</u> <u>Psionic Bestiary</u> combo superior.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch; I noticed no significant glitches. Layout adheres to a beautiful two-column full-color standard and the PDF comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. The copious amounts of gorgeous full-color art render this a beautiful PDF indeed – and a huge step up from the admittedly pretty ugly original <u>Psionics Unleashed</u>.

Andreas Rönnqvist and Jeremy Smith (with additional design by Philip J. Leco II) are considered the fathers of PFRPG psionics – and for good reason. Not only did they vastly enrich my 3.X games back in the day, their psionics for PFRPG are as close to a cross-publisher industry standard as one can get with a subsystem.

Psionics RULE. I love them. I love the system. I love the flair. I love psionics. There's a reason Ultimate Psionics is on my EZG Essentials List as one book ALL of my campaigns use. Conversely, Ultimate Psionics, as massive a tome as it is, probably makes for a significant investment; because it covers Psionics Expanded and the advanced options from that book, it can seem overbearing. Think about a book that sports the mechanics of both the CORE rules and the APG for a fitting analogy of what Ultimate Psionics does. Beyond providing a huge amount of material to digest, the complexity of the rules utilized vary between material from Psionics Unleashed and Psionics Expanded; in my opinion, the latter obviously sports the more interesting classes and options, but it also requires more system mastery that can be daunting for players new to psionics.

This is where this book's raison d'être can be discerned. This is essentially the CORE-book sans frills: the fancy, complex material is left for the other books and we get an inexpensive way to take a look at the basic system and material and dip one's toes into psionic waters.

Basically, this is "<u>My First Psionics Sourcebook</u>," an easy, all-encompassing way of taking a look at psionics and integrating its basic classes, races, items, etc. and ideas into your game without needing to buy the glorious, massive <u>Ultimate Psionics</u> and the <u>Psionic Bestiary</u>. Yes, you don't get the favored class options and the more complex classes from <u>Psionics Expanded</u>, etc., in this book, but you get all you need and the presentation and layout make grasping the rules pretty simple.

While my firm recommendation for players and DM with some experience under their belts would still be to get the combo of <u>Ultimate Psionics</u> + <u>Bestiary</u>, if you're looking for an easy one-book-and-go way of using psionics, this should make for a great way of judging whether you like the system or not. (Note: If you want more complexity, the other books do provide that!) Groups and players with less experience regarding subsystems and the like can consider this book a nice way of getting to know how psionics work. Conversely, groups that already have <u>Ultimate Psionics</u> have no reason apart from the copious artwork to get this book.

How to rate this, then? I consider this to be a good introduction/core book for psionics, one specifically targeted at an audience who is not yet that familiar with psionics. As such a book, it accomplishes its task in a formidable manner and deserves a final verdict of 5 stars. Why no seal of approval? Because I'm a sucker for complexity and still croon over <u>Ultimate Psionics</u> when no one's looking. All kidding aside, I do believe that the aforementioned Prestige Classes could have used some streamlining; inclusion of favored class options would also have made sense to me. Still, consider this a testament to how good <u>Ultimate Psionics</u> is. If you like this book, you'll love its bigger sister!

Endzeitgeist out.

Remedial Jinkering: Happy Tittle Automatons

Publisher: Interjection Games **Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist Rating: 5 stars out of 5

> This expansion for the tinker base class clocks in at 6 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 4 pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

What do most of the *really* cool tinker expansions have in common? Many of them come into play

in mid- and high levels. This PDF is geared for 1stlevel usefulness, though admittedly, it will retain its usefulness far beyond the low level range. The PDF also handily points out that this and the excellent grafter Prestige Class as well as the "Tinkering 301" PDF provide some pretty interesting synergies.

In addition, this may well be the most concise tinker supplement to read so far: we get an explanation of the alpha and design descriptors as well as some of the tricks one could execute with the copious supplements for the class. A short explanation on interaction with the grafter also helps here. Among the basic explanation, one can also find the rationale for the unobtrusive "Bob Ross" jokes herein, the new paint descriptor. Essentially, inventions with this subtype provide a coat of paint for a target automaton and, per default, only one paintjob can be applied to one automaton. Still, this is Bradley Crouch we're talking about here, so yes, there are means to break this rule.

A total of 6 innovations are provided to modify and play with this pretty interesting concept: for example, when an alpha would lose an invention with both design and paint subtypes, the alpha retains the bonuses for class level rounds. Further innovations allow you to apply paint to yourself and relatively spontaneous reassignment of paint jobs to grafted creatures and adjacent automatons can also be executed. This quick, spray-based paint job may also be utilized as a makeshift flamethrower and yes, you can potentially change the coats of more than one target at once via spray nozzles. A greater innovation allows for "happy little accidents" for quicker paint jobs and expands the inventions used in conjunction with some of your innovations. Where things become VERY

tactical is with the means of doubling kamikaze directives with paint-dispersal. And yes, if you think about this one, you can set up absolutely awesome "See what I did here" combos! A thing of beauty indeed!

Okay, let's take a look at those inventions, all right? The base one would be the *primer coat*, which renders an automaton eligible for becoming a target for the painter's station. This invention, usually only applicable to alphas, allows the automaton to change the paint-coats of deployed automatons 1/day; additionally, automatons deployed with the *primer coat* invention can have their coats changed after being deployed, thuPs bringing aforementioned BP-limit shenanigans into play. Oh, and ves, whirlwind splashing of colors is possible. Need to get rid of *primer coats* in another way? An automaton with the Homogenization Enforcement Protocols can be deployed to eliminate primer coats and replace them with any paint invention part of its BP. Oh, have I mentioned the invention that allows for two paint coats at once? The combo potential of this

system is VAST! It is utterly beautiful! Automatons with paintjobs targeted by fire may elect to burn the paint to burst into flames or lose their paint to get DR 5/- versus an attack...or lose their paint to net additional uses of low level inventions with a limited number of uses. The combo-potential keep stacking up, but you're probably wondering whether the basic paint coats are worth anything. Short answer: YEAH! Long answer: what about a paint coat that nets temporary hit points (with anti-abuse caveat), dazzling added to kamikaze, increased base speed, DR 1/-, save bonuses, better feinting or a reroll, though at -2? Yes, you may note that some of these benefits look slightly stronger than the others; they come balanced via a once per 24 hour caveat. I also like the paint that nets your automaton + 1 fire damage by day, +1 cold damage by night - cool!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch; I noticed no glitches. Layout adheres to Interjection Games' printerfriendly, two-column, b/w-standard and the PDF comes sans bookmarks, but needs none for this length.

Beyond the awesome imagery evoked, Bradley Crouch delivers perhaps the most awesome base system expansion I've seen for one of his classes so far. The paintjobs with their massive combo potential and versatility exponentially expand the options at your disposal in such cool, diverse ways, I can't wait to see even more of these great tricks. More so than even the previous installments, this expansion does not simply roll with one high-concept image: it gives you a stellar toolkit to play with, one that has changed how tinkers, all tinkers, work in my game.

This is perhaps THE must-have expansion for the class, with a superb quality that makes the fair price point an utter steal. It is also the single best example for the fact that the tinker's concepts are not yet depleted; the combo system provided herein renders the class more fun and can easily be further expanded. No other tinker expansion made me this excited, made me want more this much. This humble PDF enhances the class in absolutely stunning ways. Everyone using this great class NEEDS this PDF. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval and nomination as a candidate for my Top Ten of 2015.

Endzeitgeist out.

Village Backdrops: Aldwater

Publisher: Raging Swan Press **Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5

^{racing}swan fash VILLAGE BACKDROP: ALDWATER This installment of RSP's Village Backdrop series is 10 pages long, 1 page front cover, 1 page advertisement, 1 page editorial/ToC, 1 page SRD, and 1 page back cover, leaving us with 5 pages of content, so let's take a look at the settlement!

> Aldwater is immediately set apart by the map it sports; you see immediately an uncommon village on raised platforms, situated where

the Blackraven Creek runs off into the Deepmire Marshes, with one bridge connecting the platforms with an island containing a labyrinth, which doubles as a final resting place for the village's ancestors. Navigating the labyrinth has been the providence of the spiritspeaker of the town since time immemorial.

Against this backdrop of old, pagan customs, the village has certainly seen its fishing grounds become less fertile, with the spirits being goaded to provide information for strangers on such things as strange ruins in the swamp. Alas, at this point no one knows what the ultimate consequences of outsider meddling will turn out to be, rendering this a nice potential set-up for either nasty Wicker-man-like scenarios or progress vs. tradition narratives..

Two sample characters/villagers complement this set-up, rife with adventuring potential. As always, this village comes with the full array of marketplace, village statblocks, demographics and yes, information on names, garb worn by the villagers, etc. Rumors provide more hooks and local color and yes, there are 6 sample events, as always.

The strange practice of the town and the magic item facilitating it are provided as a bonus in the PDF and both make sense, though I wished the ritual itself to have a slightly more complex depiction.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch; I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to RSP's smooth, printerfriendly, two-column standard and the PDF comes with full bookmarks as well as a nice map, which you can as always download as high-res jpegs on RSP's homepage. The PDF comes in two versions, with one being optimized for screen-use and one to be printed out.

Jacob Trier's Aldwater is very much one of the more

subtle village backdrops – it doesn't bash you over the head with its premise and very much puts in your hands how it will work in your campaign. From acting as a travelling station/waypoint on a journey to horror or benevolent interpretations, this place has all the potential for untapping right at your fingertips without forcing your hand via a written-in basic conflict. Whether you go for benevolent mysticism or full-blown horror, Aldwater supports your choice and thus can be considered a great installment in the series; granted, it's one I had to read more than once to make it "click", but when it did, the results were beautiful. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

Endzeitgeist out.



Faces of the Tarnished Souk: an NPC Collection

Publisher: Rite Publishing **Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist **Rating:** 5 stars out of 5

This massive book clocks in at no less than 323 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 2

pages of ToC, 4 pages of SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 314 pages of content, so let's take a look!

This review was moved ahead in my reviewing queue as a prioritized review at the request of my patreons.

Well, first of all, I will deviate from my usual take on detailed analysis of the individual pieces of content herein -why? Because that would take AGES and bloat this review beyond the page-count where this would have any semblance of help for anyone of my readers. Beyond that, there is another factor – I have written detailed reviews for each and every NPC (apart from the new one) sported in this massive compilation – combining them would result in more than 30 pages, so there you go. If you're interested in one particular NPC, you can have a detailed analysis of said build in my individual review of the respective pdfs. If you have read them, here's a general summation of what sets the NPCs apart.

Fluff-wise, the Tarnished Souk can be considered an interplanar nexus situated on the plane of dreams, right outside the legendary Coliseum Morpheuon, where the most powerful mortals and immortals duke it out under the auspice of the khan of nightmares, all hoping to gain the cusp of desires. Oh, and yes, the tarrasque is actually part of the competition's challenges, to give you an inkling of the level of expertise required in this competition. Dreams are a vaulable currency in Coliseum Morpheuon and thus, they actually carry relevance beyond the story's basic requirements for the characters in question. As such, they may actually be found by PCs and provide a level of background information one regularly does not expect. Dreams are more, though - they are power. While dreamburning rules from Coliseum Morpheuon are not required for this book, it does add a nice further dimension and honestly, Coliseum Morpheuon is the best high-level module available for Pathfinder, so you definitely should have that beast anyways.

So what is special about the NPCs herein? Well, regarding crunch they are special to me because they don't suck. There. I said it. Pathfinder's high-level gameplay and the general experience of many a DM that high-level gameplay comes apart, at least partially, is due to just about all published books simply having an impossible job at their hands: The directive is to create adversaries that a casual gaming group can vanquish and the more the levels pile up, the bigger the discrepancy becomes between people that exhibit a high degree of system mastery and those who don't. At high levels, this ultimately leads to whining I've seen on boards about ACs of 36 in high levelranges where that is not an insurmountable defense. At the same time, posts complain about 1-round curbstomping BBeGs, a problem exacerbated by the mythic rules, famously being quoted by Alexander Augunas as the Rocket-launcher-standoff.

In my main campaign, I run next to no unmodified published modules – why? Because, if I took Karzoug against half my group, they'd mop the floor with him. Yes, I'm talking about the enhanced Anniversary Edition. Playtesting published modules only VERY rarely results in any PC deaths at my table, even in Frog God Games killer beasts. And I'm not alone in this issue. While my group may be an extreme example, it is a trend that is exacerbated with each new release, with each slight power-creep. In 3.X that resulted in me wearing down my Advanced Bestiary and templating EVERYTHING. In PFRPG, I follow a similar modus operandi, though one supplemented with many, many base classes, archetypes etc. So that would be problem No.1.

Problem number 2 is a more pleasant one to have – ultimately, there are MANY awesome 3pp-products out there -glorious base-classes, exceedingly fun subsystems etc. – and yes, I'm using more 3pp material than Paizo material at this point. Alack and alas, there is no big 3pp NPC Codex and that means making A LOT of NPCs and monsters from scratch. Faces of the Tarnished Souk did something rather unique – it provides a vast array of templates,. both original and from the best of sources and combines them with unique classes – taskshapers and time thieves, malefactors – whatever your heart desires, there is a good chance you'll find some of the unmitigated stars within these pages. Add to that unique, customtailored magic items and you get an array of NPCs that is ACTUALLY CHALLENGING.

Now that would be awesome in and of itself, but it becomes even better when you take into account the vast imaginative potential that lies at the roots of the characters provided herein – you won't find "Human Paladin 20" herein – instead, you'll find, for example, Nameless Nil, the Beggar of Self. An imaginary friend turned killer turned beggar, whose wonderful class/template line reads "Bloody Maw Half-construct horrifically overpowered hungry nightmare unfettered eidolon savant 10." This is, as the back cover proudly proclaims, NOT your pappy's NPC book. Nameless Nil's prose and background story

ranks among the best pieces of character writing I have seen in ANY roleplaying product, btw. – this guy is my favorite NPC for Pathfinder. Yes, I'm talking about allout number 1 spot. Oh, and have I mentioned that, for example the legendary bulwark Ahnkar-Kosh has an AC of 64? This should put an end to the smirk on your level 20 min-maxers face...

But wait, before you put away this review – no, not all NPCs in this book exist only in the CR ~20-range – instead, each of the NPCs herein comes with a build for low levels, mid levels and high levels, allowing you to introduce the NPCs at any level you like and depict their progression to greatness- or utilize the statblocks of the lower iterations for servants, creatures or whatever you like. Another issue you may expect to face would lie in the aforementioned presence of a lot of 3pp-content utilized in the truly beautiful builds created herein. Well, approximately the last 100 pages of the book are used to provide all rules used in the builds of this massive cadre of glorious CHARACTERS. For, thanks to the interplay of glorious prose and superb crunch, the NPCs become more than the sum of their respective parts.

If you are not inspired by the glorious write-ups of the respective NPCs, many of which can spawn multiple adventures (or even campaigns!), boxes with pieces of advice further help using the NPCs and integrating them into the mythos of your campaign. Have I btw. mentioned Smiles-Under-teh-Bed, the legendary Cheshire cat that is pretty much a psychotic, playful killer that clocks in at CR 19 in its most powerful iteration? The eidolon that is the summoner that wants to be mortal? The goblin time thief convinced that things between the seconds are gearing up to tear time and reality asunder? If you have ANY joy contemplating high-stakes games, personal tragedies, captivating NPCs and a level of imagination I have not seen since the heyday of Planescape, and there only in its better products, then this compilation should be considered a ridiculously glorious must-buy.

How can this be further enhanced? well, the original pdfs sported some artwork which has since been used by other supplements as well - this has been expanded by new pieces that seamlessly fit with the respective character portrayals, with Juan Diego Dianderas and Kamil Jadczak delivering great pieces in the fitting b/w-standard this book offers and adding to the talents of illustrators that not only include master of the creepy Mark Hyzer, but also Tamás Baranya and Hugo Solis and many, many more. How can this be made better on a content-level, you ask? Well, what about adding a brand new NPC by none other than legendary, Ennie-award-winning design Ben McFarland? This would be Strai Tkossirk, the whispered word of dream. This would be, in his highest CR-iteration, a psychic (telekinetic) vrock oracle (aetherurgist) - and the level of imaginative potential of this NPC in no way falls back behind the ridiculously high standard of the series, utilizing for example a magical drug-addiction in the mid-level version. And yes, as per the tradition with this series, vivid prose, GM-advice and tactics combine to create a creature that is more than the sum of its myriad parts. On a nitpicky side – I think it would have made more sense to include him in the NPC-roster instead of in the appendix, but that is ultimately one design in a huge book....and remains the only true gripe I can muster against this tome.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, especially for a massive tome of this size. Layout adheres to a printerfriendly two-column b/w-standard with elegant borders and the artworks provided, as mentioned above, are thematically fitting and, in many cases, awesome. The book comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

I have all individual pdfs printed out. I want this book in dead-tree. This is not "an" NPC collection – to me, this is THE NPC collection. Faces of the Tarnished Souk epitomizes what made me a fan of Rite Publishing in the first place: The combination of awesome prose and imaginative fluff that goes one step further. I guarantee that the vast majority of characters herein, once encountered, will remain the talk of your gaming groups for years to come. Beyond the cool mechanics, this series has pretty much defined what I consider apex-level NPCcrafting and remains my point of reference for any such book. It should be noted that exactly ONE pdf can claim to adhere to this level of awesomeness beyond the series – LPJr Design's Cyrix. That's pretty much it.

When anyone asks me for challenging or simply evocative NPC builds, this book immediately comes to mind. When someone asks me for the spirit of truly uncommon fantasy, this book is what I think about. Whether as antagonists, allies or both, the characters herein pretty much define my campaigns in subtle ways – by the legends they have crafted, by the guidance they provide, by the growth my PCs can witness. Matt Banach, Justin Sluder, Steven D. Russell and Ben McFarland have quite simply created THE NPC collection for the discerning game-master, the remedy for players bored with standard builds and, via the builds herein, a great toolkit for GMs to use themselves.

Even if you never plan to run any of the characters herein and are not interested in Coliseum Morpheuon, this book provides so many iconic characters that it remains my honest belief that this book can serve as an inspiration for other settings as well. If my gushing diatribe before was not ample clue, I consider this quite frankly the best NPC collection out there, one distinguished by excellence in the beautiful statblocks AND the prose that draws vivid pictures of truly unique characters that deserve the moniker while epitomizing the key strengths of Rite Publishing as a publisher. This book, unsurprisingly, receives a final verdict of 5 stars + seal of approval as well as being a candidate for my Top Ten of 2015.

You can get this legendary compilation here on OBS and here on d2opfsrd.com's shop!

Endzeitgeist out.

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JACOB E. BLACKMON

THE AGE OF MAN HAS ENDED, AND NEKROTRON SHALL FORGE ANEW!

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