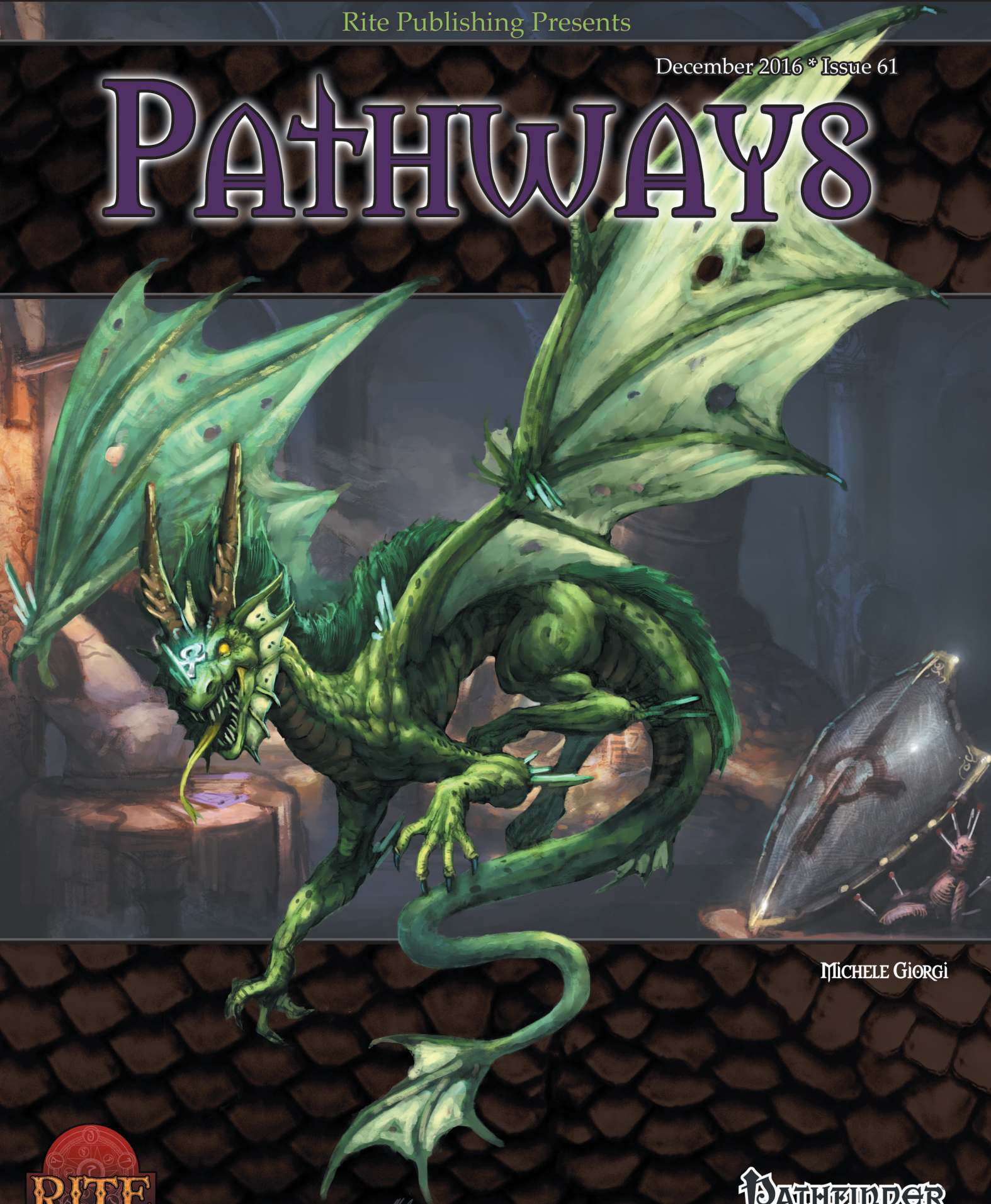


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December 2016 \* Issue 61

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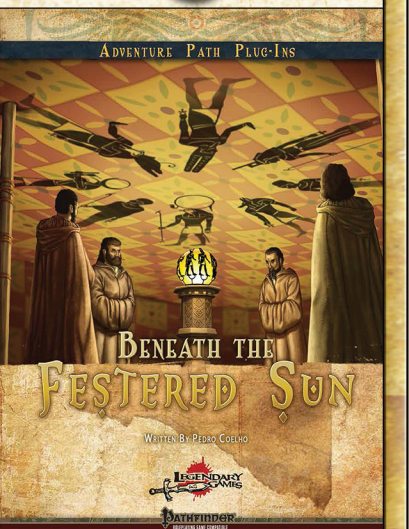
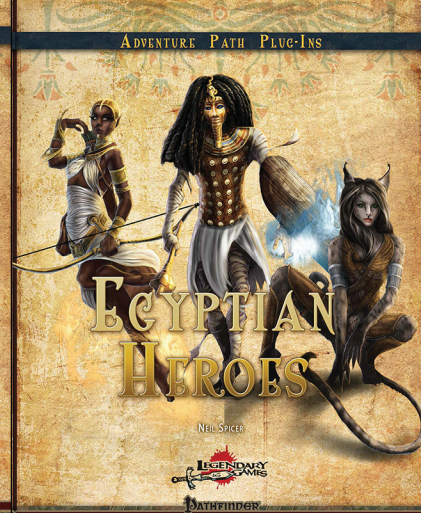
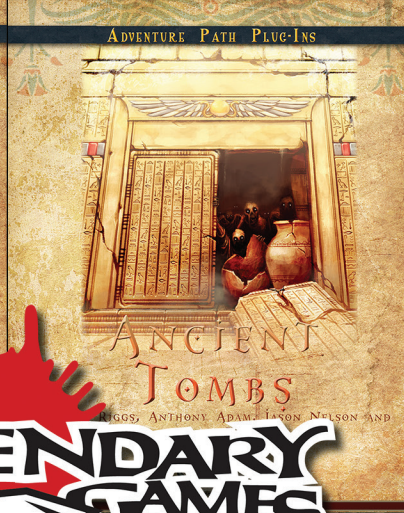
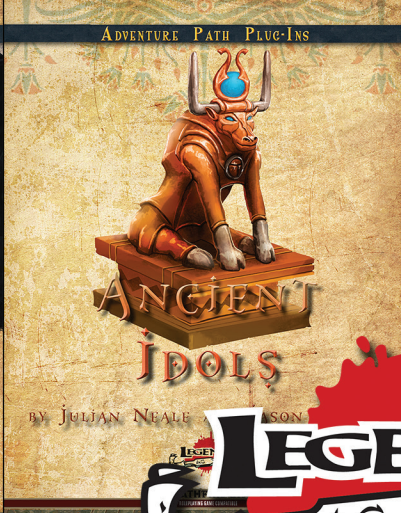
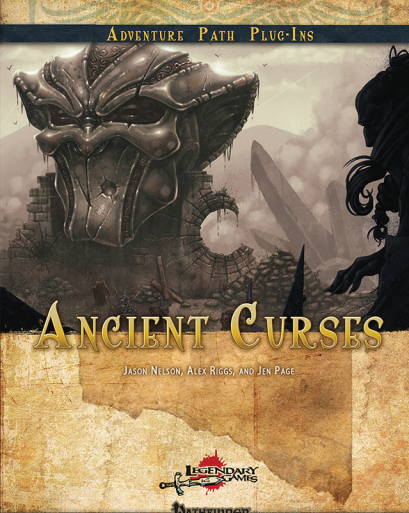


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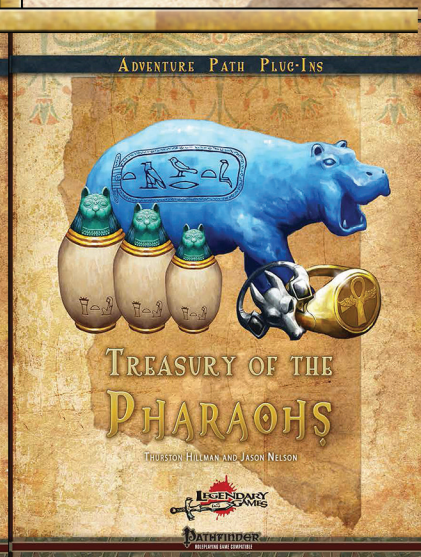
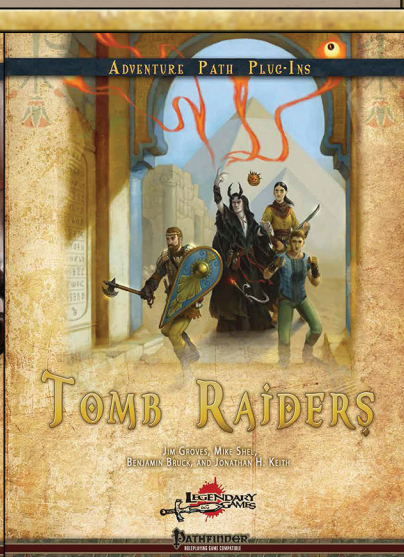
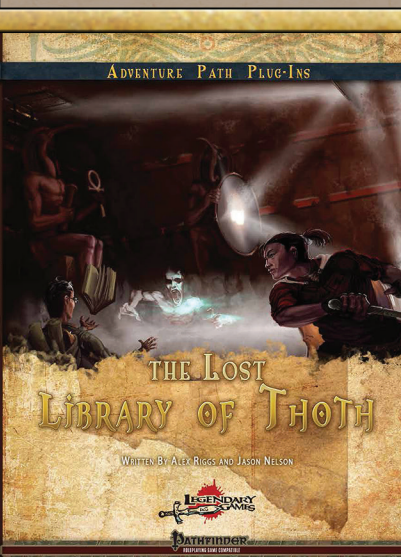
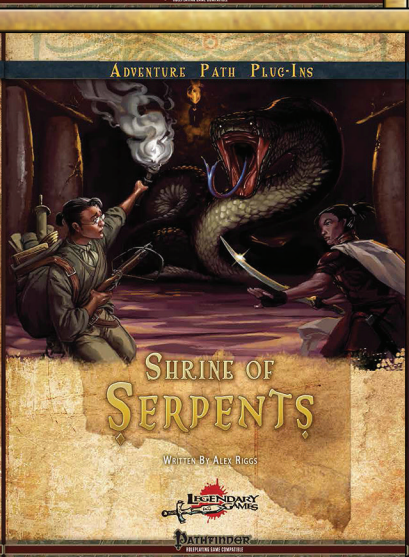
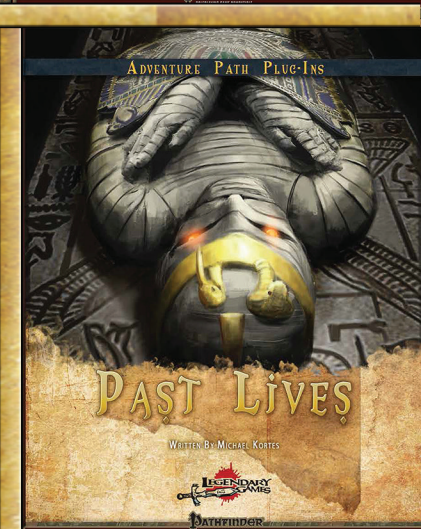
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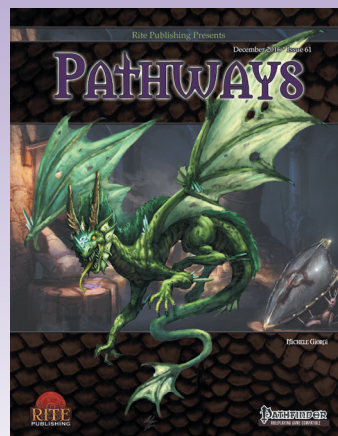
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## Editorial

by Dave Paul, Illustration by Yunaxd

I don't know what others' experiences have been with gaming. My own early teen years were a patchwork of school, D&D, television shows, and books about the unexplained or paranormal, and obsessions with religions, myths and history. I was hopeful that J. B. Rhine's work would pan out and that we'd find ESP and telepathy were real. I wondered if Shirley MacLaine's instincts about past lives would turn out to be validated. I thought about whether Donald Shimoda was more than a fictional brother to Jonathan Livingston Seagull. My own religious upbringing was twice-a-week visits to a Catholic church, once on the weekends for mass and once during the week for what were called catechism classes (a friend referred to them as "cataclysm classes," thank goodness for friends with senses of humor).

For me, thinking about "the occult" was just normal. That there might really be ghosts or pyrokinesis in the world seemed obvious. Films like *The Exorcist* and *Salem's Lot* were staples of my upbringing. They spoke of fictional things as though they were real in a way that satisfied my predilections (and scared me, sometimes profoundly). What if the Nazis, like those depicted in the *Indiana Jones* films, really were on to something? What if there were, buried in Rome or Cairo, ancient beings or artifacts that could truly transform the world?

It wasn't so much that I wanted it to be true that malevolent and undying spirits were merely hidden away, waiting to be unleashed. But, ever since I'd read *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a boy, I'd wanted there to be something *more* to the world. I got glimpses of it through the ontological presumptions

of my religious upbringing (though, frankly, I found too much in common between my experience of Catholic mass and the chantings of the worshippers in the Temple of Doom, to settle my nerves, but that's a story for another time, perhaps). I grew up in a white, suburban America that spoke aloud beliefs about Truth, Justice, and the American Way, and at the same time insisted that if Santa Claus wasn't real, the *spirit* of giving was real. This upbringing accepted that there really was this *more* even if what it was couldn't quite be articulated. What was it? I wondered. If it wasn't Santa, if it wasn't ghosts, if there weren't really monsters and elves and faeries, if Newton and Darwin and Einstein were right and theological thinking was really just a relic of purpose-seeking creatures looking for comfort, then was there really anything else?

Rather than let cynicism and skepticism drain away all that remains, I agreed with myself to embrace my ignorance. I don't know what surprises the universe has in store. I don't know what the limits and boundaries of reality are. Maybe there aren't any secret texts in the Vatican or buried with a pharaoh somewhere. Perhaps all the visions of oracles in the past were due to hallucinogens. That's okay. I have a fertile imagination and gaming is fun. Regardless of what's true in the non-fictional world where we live and work and someday die, we can decide for ourselves what will be true in the shared fictional world that we might prefer over our non-fictional world. There is where I find room for the occult. And, in this issue, in this little slice of my contribution to some of these shared experiences, I welcome you.

Happy gaming.





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## Hoard-Bonded Creature Template

by Owen K.C. Stephens, Illustrations by Michele Giorgi

A hoard-bonded creature has grown so attached to the treasures it possesses that it gains powers from them as long as they are secure, even if they aren't currently in the creature's possession. While many hoard-bonded creatures are dragons, whose love of treasure and innate magic powers makes the leap to full hoard-bonding easier, other kinds of hoard-bonded creatures exist as well. Mummies who rest in their own tomb often become hoard-bonded to the things buried with them. Vampires and liches may bond to items that were of significance in their living existence. Giants often have a hoard-bonded chieftain who is treated as semi-divine for being able to call upon the clan's greatest relics. Minotaurs who have vast wealth within a labyrinth, and sphinxes with strongholds guarded by trapped riddles are also classic hoard-bonded options.

### Creating a Hoard-Bonded Creature

Any creature with treasure can be a hoard-bonded creature.

**CR:** +2

**Hit Dice:** The hoard-bonded creature's hit dice do not change, but it does gain bonus hit points equal to its new CR total x2.

**Saves:** A hoard-bonded creature gains a luck bonus equal to 1/3 its CR before adding this template (minimum +1) to all saves. All objects in its hoard are considered attended and receive saving throws, and also gain the same luck bonuses to saves.

**DR and SR:** A hoard-bonded creature does not gain DR or SR, but if the base creature has them, they increase by 2.

**Save DCs:** The save DC of any spell, spell-like ability, or supernatural ability the hoard-bonded creature has increases by +2 as long as it is hoardlinked to at least one item from its hoard.

### Special Abilities

The hoard-bonded creature gains the following special abilities.

**Hoard (Ex):** A hoard-bonded creature has a single, well-defined and secure hoard. This is normally kept in its lair and protected by being in a secret location, being behind vault doors and locked chests, being guarded by servants or traps, or a combination of all of these. As long as an item cannot be removed or damaged by a foe, it is considered secure and part of the hoard. If an item is removed from the secure location by anyone other than the hoard-bonded creature, or is damaged by anyone other than the hoard-bonded creature, it is no longer considered secure, and stops being part of the hoard. The hoard-bonded creature cannot

use it with its hoardlink or implements ability until it is returned to the treasure trove and secure for 24 hours.

**Hoardlink (Su):** A hoard-bonded creature can benefit from magic items it has safely cached, even if they are not currently on the creature's body. The total number of items a hoard-bonded creature can benefit from at once is equal to 1/3 its CR before adding this template (minimum 1 item). Each hoardlinked item takes up an item slot, but it need not be the same item slot that would be required if the item was actually worn. For example, a hoard-bonded giant with no magic rings could wear a magic helmet, and benefit from two more magic helmets from its treasure trove by assigning them to its unused ring slots. While it has an item hoardlinked to a magic item slot, it cannot can the benefit of any magic item it actually wears in the slot.

A psychic mirror of the item a hoard-bonded creature has been hoardlinked to the longest appears as a glowing image on its body, usually close to the body slot it is assigned to. It appears to be physically present, though its appearance may change to match its new location (a cloak hoardlinked to a head slot might appear as a veil or turban, a ring linked to the chest might appear as a very large loop of metal bolted to a breastplate). A knowledge (arcana) check at the same DC as needed to identify the creature, reveals the object as a psychic mirror of an item kept safely elsewhere. To change what items are hoardlinked, the creature must spend at least 8 hours in the near presence of its treasure trove. It must be able to touch and manipulate the new item it wishes to bond to throughout this time. The hoard-bonded creature may change multiple items in one 8-hour period, if it has access to all of them.







**Hoardsense (Su):** A hoard-bonded creature is strongly attuned to its hoard. The entire hoard is always protected as if by an *alarm* spell with the silent alarm function, which reaches the hoard-bonded creature at any distance, even on other planes. The hoard-bonded creature gains scent, only to sniff out items that are or have been part of its hoard, and can *find the path* at will to find any item removed from its hoard within 1 day per HD.

**Implements (Su):** In addition to being able to use the properties of magic items in their treasure troves, hoard-bonded creatures gain powers from the history and latent psychic powers of various items in their hoard. These act as the implement schools class feature of the occultist. The hoard-bonded creature gains a number of implement schools equal to 1/3 its CR before adding this template (minimum 1). The creature gains the resonant power and base focus power of each of its implement schools. It treats its HD as its occultist level for all calculations and prerequisites regarding its focus powers. The hoard-bonded creature does not gain points of mental focus, but instead is able to use any ability that requires spending mental focus once per day.

It is considered to have mental focus equal to 1/2 its HD (minimum 1) in each mental focus.

The hoard-bonded creature need not have implements with it, but can access them and their abilities as long as they are secure in its hoard.

## Sample Hoard-Bonded Creature

*This silent dragon has a glowing symbol apparently imbedded in its forehead.*

### Adult Etheric Dragon

CR 13

XP 12,800

N Large dragon (extraplanar)

**Init** +4; **Senses** dragon senses, see in darkness;

**Perception** +26

**Aura** frightful presence (180 ft., DC 20)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 27, touch 9, flat-footed 27 (+18 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 175 (14d12+84)

**Fort** +21, **Ref** +15, **Will** +18

**DR** 7/magic; **Immune** paralysis, sleep; **SR** 24

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor); ghost stride





**Melee** bite +23 (2d6+15), 2 claws +24 (1d8+10), 2 wings +21 (1d6+5), tail slap +21 (1d8+15)  
**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (80-ft. line, DC 25, 12d8 force), spectral attacks, spirit eater

**Psychic Magic** (CL 14th; concentration +17)  
 9 PE—*mage hand* (0 PE), *mind thrust I* (1 PE)

**Psychic Spells Known** (CL 5th; concentration +9)  
 2nd (5/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *false life*  
 1st (7/day)—*anticipate peril*, *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *magic missile*, *shield*  
 0 (at-will)—*bleed* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound* (DC 15), *grave words*

## STATISTICS

**Str** 30, **Dex** 11, **Con** 22, **Int** 19, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 17  
**Base Atk** +14; **CMB** +25; **CMD** 35 (39 vs. trip)  
**Feats** Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (claw)  
**Skills** Appraise +21, Fly +11, Intimidate +30, Knowledge (arcana, planes, religion) +21, Perception +29, Sense Motive +20, Stealth +13, Survival +20

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Draconic  
**SQ** compression

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Ghost Stride (Su)** While traveling overland or in flight, the hoard-bonded etheric dragon gains the incorporeal subtype, but its statistics do not change; it keeps its natural armor bonus and does not gain a deflection bonus to AC.

**Hoardlink (Su) & Hoardsense (Su)** See above

## Implements (Su)

*Abjuration (holy symbol)*

**Warding Talisman (Su):** The implement wards against adverse effects. The hoard-bonded dragon gains a +3 resistance bonus on saving throws. This bonus is included in the saving throws above.

**Mind Barrier (Sp):** Once per day as a swift action, the hoard-bonded esoteric dragon can create a shield of mental energy around it that protects it from harm. The shield prevents a total of 28 points of damage. It lasts until the start of the dragon's next turn or until exhausted.

*Divination (book)*

**Third Eye (Su):** The hoard-bonded esoteric dragon gains a +3 insight bonus on Perception checks. This is added into the skill bonuses listed above.

**Sudden Insight (Sp):** Once per day as a swift or immediate action, the hoard-bonded esoteric dragon gains an insight into its immediate future before any ability check, attack roll, or skill check to gain a +7 insight bonus on that roll.

*Illusion (hat)*

**Distortion (Sp):** As a standard action, the hoard-bonded esoteric dragon can gain a 35% concealment miss chance until the next time it makes an attack.

**Minor Figment (Sp):** Once per day as a standard action, the hoard-bonded esoteric dragon can create a minor figment. This can function as either *ghost sound* or *minor image*. The figment lasts for 14 minutes, and the hoard-bonded esoteric dragon can cause the figment to change once during its duration when a specified condition occurs.

**Spectral Attacks (Su)** This dragon's bite and claw attacks are considered to be *ghost touch* weapons.

**Spirit Eater (Su)** A creature devoured by this etheric dragon cannot be raised from the dead with any magic less powerful than a mythic *wish*.

## ECOLOGY

**Environment** any (Ethereal Plane)

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** double

This hoard-bonded etheric dragon is a pragmatic and survival-oriented being who dwells in the farthest reaches of the Ethereal Plane, and keeps a secret cathedral floating in that plane as a vault to house its hoard.





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## 10 Minor Side Effects of Returning from the Dead

By Creighton Broadhurst

Sadly for adventurers (violent, painful) death is a part of life.

Of course, death isn't the end of the adventure! A powerful—or rich—PC probably has the wealth or the friends to return him to the living. In game, this is often handled quickly and easily. At worst, the PC might lose some experience points or perhaps lose a level. Sometimes, there is literally no penalty for dying (except embarrassment or the loss of thousands of gold pieces).

That's a little sad as a PC's death (and subsequent return to life) should be a huge part of an adventurer's life. It's not like they caught a cold or strained a muscle; they were dead—they stood in Death's own hall awaiting judgement. There should be (fun) consequences.

Of course, like all the best consequences, these shouldn't be merely mechanical. Mechanical consequences are often quick forgotten once factored into the PC's attack rolls, saving throws or whatever. The best consequence are something that changes the character and that the player and GM can have fun roleplaying.

The table below, to generate a minor side effect for a PC recently returned from the dead. Depending on the side effect, it might be worth taking the player aside privately to discuss what has happened—this way, he can have fun roleplaying the side effect without everyone else knowing exactly what has happened.

1. The PC has night terrors and often wakes in the dead of night screaming. He can never remember his dreams, but has a lingering sense of foreboding. Over time, he develops an irrational fear of shadows.
2. When the PC returns to life, Death did not wholly relinquish his grip over the adventurer. The unfortunate's skin takes on a grey, unhealthy pallor and his voice always seems flat and lifeless.
3. Time in Death's realm has changed the PC; he returned chronically colour-blind and can now only see black, white and shades of grey.
4. Shades of the fallen cluster thickly about the PC. While this has no in-game benefit, the light around him always seems slightly darker and suspiciously deep shadows seem to cluster in the folds of his clothing.

5. When he was in Death's realm, the slain PC spoke with many folk. Their whispered voices have stayed with the PC and occasionally he hears them still. The whispers are not loud enough for anyone else to hear, and the PC cannot make out what is being said. However, they are loud enough to distract him occasionally. They are strongest when the PC is in mortal peril or badly injured.
6. The intense pain associated with his death have dulled the PC's senses. Pain often feels distant to him now and even the worst injuries sometimes feel like nothing more than a scratch.
7. Undead sense the PC's connection with death. This sometimes confuses them—particularly mindless or unintelligent undead. Such creatures may ignore the PC on occasion, perhaps believing he is one of them.
8. While in Death's realm the PC absorbed much of the fell energy of that terrible, forlorn place. This energy is anathema to living plants. Plants in prolonged close proximity (such as when the PCs camp overnight) to the PC wither and die. Even when he is passing through vegetated areas, perceptive viewers may notice the surrounding plant life seeming to shrink back from his presence.
9. The PC no long casts a shadow except in the brightest of sunlight or magical light.
10. The PC always feels cold to the touch, and his skin seems clammy. When exposed to natural cold—such as that generated by bad weather and so on—he is affected as if the cold is one-step worse.

### GM's Miscellany: 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.



# Creature Components



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*Magic Has Evolved...*



## 10 Strange, but Fun, Village Festivals

*By Creighton Broadhurst, Illustration by Markus Art Design*

Every settlement is unique and has its own traditions and customs. Whether a festival is relatively normal, or downright odd, they are a tremendous way to breathe character and verisimilitude into a settlement.

Village celebrations are community events—an excuse to come together and celebrate (or commiserate) previous events of import. Often they draw in folk from the surrounding area. The odder the festival, the more powerful the draw.

Use the table below to generate the details of strange local festivals the PCs can watch (or even join in).

1. **Cheese Racing:** The village is well known for its cheese industry. To celebrate, the villagers practise cheese chasing in an annual race. Every year, they gather atop the nearest steepest hill where the most prominent cheese producers unleash large, circular cheeses down the hill. The goal of the race is to get your cheese as far as possible down the hill without carrying it. Competing teams of farmers work together to protect their cheese from the attentions on their rivals. Fistfights invariably ensue as scores of villagers charge after each cheese.
2. **Witch Hunting:** In the past, the village was beset by a coven of witches. After a reign of terror, a witch was caught and burnt at the stake. To celebrate their liberation, the villagers have a witch hunt every year. Four local women dress up as witches and hide in the village or its locality. The other villagers must find them. Afterwards, the villagers celebrate late into the night around a huge bonfire on which are burnt the effigies of the original four witches.
3. **Dead Raising:** Once a year, the village exhumes the decaying bodies of the recently dead and carry them through the streets in celebration of their lives. Afterwards, the dead preside over a great feast eaten by the flickering flames of giant bonfires set about the village.
4. **River Dunking:** A river runs through or near the village. Every year, when the winter snows have melted and the river is at its most swollen, the villagers gather at the river for a day-long tug of war competition. Rivalry among teams is fierce and—of course—there's lots of eating and drinking. By the end of the day, almost everyone is tired, cold, wet, drunk and happy.





5. **Pig Racing:** Every year, the villagers gather as part of the harvest festival to race their prize pigs. Farmers ride their favourite pigs through the streets in a mad race to the finish. The ensuing race is pure chaos and little more than a rough and muddy free for all. Although participants cannot carry weapons, injuries are common as good-natured fistfights erupt along the course between riders (and sometimes spectators). There is no set prize for winning the race, except for the prestige of being the best rider.
6. **Barrel Burning:** For this celebration, participants fill old barrels with tar and set them aflame. The competitors then carry the barrels as far as possible through the village while being cheered on by spectators. The winner is the person who carries the barrel furthest. Injuries are common in this bizarre practise and the use of magic is frowned on (at least until the race is over). This race normally takes place at night and is a spectacular sight. Afterwards, there is much drinking and merriment.
7. **Barrel Boating:** The villagers take to their barrels and attempt to “sail” them down the river that runs through the settlement. In the same manner as the pig racing described above, the race is wild and has few rules. Competitors work at capsizing or holing their rivals and just actually finishing the race is considered an achievement. The first person to finish gets his barrel filled with ale by the local lord. Folk come from the surrounding villages to watch (and/or participate).
8. **Wife Stealing:** This festival’s roots go back hundreds of years to when the villagers raided other nearby settlements for womenfolk. In it, participants—or raiders—must carry a neighbour’s wife over a set course comprising several obstacles. The “stolen” wives’ husbands lurk on the course and try to recapture their wives. Of course, the competition is good-natured. If a raider gets to the end of the course with a stolen wife he can claim a prize from the wife’s husband—usually a flagon of ale, handy tool or suchlike. Shocking, afterwards much drinking ensues.
9. **Gods Awakening:** In this once-yearly festival held at the winter solstice, the villagers light a huge bonfire on the highest hill near the village. Building the bonfire can take weeks. Once it is lit, the villagers stand about and sing songs of praise to their gods and pray for a year free of raiders and pestilence. During bad years, the villagers build particularly large fires in the hopes this will please the gods and return favour to the village. Persistent rumours whisper that sometimes the villagers secretly practise human sacrifice; unfortunates are said to be tied to a stake in the midst of the bonfire and burnt alive as an offering.
10. **Dance of the Dead:** In this macabre celebration, held every year to mark the village’s deliverance from an evil necromancer’s undead army, the villagers dress as skeletons and zombies and dance through the streets in wild abandon. Some of the villagers’ costumes are disturbingly realistic—comprised as they are of actual bones. The festival is held at night and adventurers witnessing it without knowledge of the celebration’s significance could be forgiven for thinking an evil cult is at work in the village.

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# Playground Adventures



## After School Adventures



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## Hill and Mountain Spell Showcase (Occult)

By Dave Paul, Illustration by Aruncpdy

I looked into [101 Hill and Mountain Spells](#) for a couple of spells that felt appropriate for the occult theme for this month. The two I've chosen come from the schools of enchantment and necromancy. I think just about any school can be an appropriate school for showcasing occult themes. In particular, I think transmutation and conjuration are obvious choices. Here, though, I thought I'd take a different turn and explore the occult in ways other than turning someone into a rat or summoning creatures from the beyond.

I think that GMs can probably get more fun out of *rise from death* than PCs can—most spellcasters I've played would probably be prepared with very different 4th level spells than this one. But, this is precisely the kind of thing that a really creepy NPC could take advantage of in the right kind of setting. A very powerful enemy spellcaster who seems unable to die is a common enough theme in gaming; this spell serves as a vehicle for making it happen. One of the easy-to-miss perks of this spell is the material component. The spell does not work if the component is lost. The caster not only has to possess the onyx gem throughout the casting, but also has to possess it for the spell to trigger its effect. If the characters can learn this; if some oracle tells them or some prophetic text reveals this; then the characters can stop the caster from rising.

### Rise from Death

**School:** Necromancy [see text]; **Level:** Alchemist 4, Antipaladin 4, Cleric/Oracle 4, Inquisitor 4, Magus 4, Sorcerer/Wizard 4, Witch 4

**Casting Time:** 8 hours

**Components:** V, S, DF/M (an onyx gem worth 500 gp)

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 round/level

You spend 8 continuous hours casting *rise from death*. The onyx gem component of the spell must remain on your person for the spell to take full effect. When the spell triggers, the gem is consumed. Unless you are subjected to a successful *dispel magic* or a similar effect, *rise from death* remains viable. Until the spell triggers, you gain 1 negative level which cannot be removed by any means; when the spell triggers, the negative level is removed.

One round after you die, provided your body (or enough of it) remains intact and the gem remained in your possession when you died, your life is restored. You are alive, awake, and have one-half your normal maximum hit points, though your body continues to suffer from any conditions it

had when you died (so if you had ingested poison, you are still poisoned). Any conditions your mind suffered from (including any curses that are not specifically associated with your body) are removed. You remain in this condition for 1 round/level. When this duration ends, you again gain the dead condition and your body remains in whatever state it is currently in (and continues the decay that would normally accompany death). You may be raised or resurrected after this, but, during the brief period while you are alive after *rise from death* triggers, you cannot be affected by any conjuration (healing) or necromantic magic. A *limited wish*, *miracle* or *wish* spell, while you are alive after *rise from death* is triggered, could still affect you.

If you cast *rise from death* using divine magic, it gains the evil descriptor.

If the entire casting time of *rise from death* takes place within a hilltop cairn that you have built, and the cairn remains legally yours when the spell triggers, then the duration of the spell is doubled.

~~

In the Pathfinder game, the redcap is described as hating religious symbols (in particular those from good-aligned deities) and as being capricious and sadistic. There are lots of ways to explore the occult that do not go down these paths, but there is plenty of traditional crossover between these themes that *gory indulgence* seems a perfect fit for this month's issue. The material component for this spell should be hard to acquire considering the power that the spell can offer in the right circumstances. Like the previous spell, this one is almost better in the hands of an NPC caster. If a player is particularly interested in role-playing, a spell like *gory indulgence* can provide opportunities that other spells simply do not. I usually could trust my GMs. And every once in a while, one of them would throw something like this at me after my character had failed a save. "Your mood changes from steadfast resolve to scorn. A moment ago, it wasn't clear to you that your compatriots' failings is what got you into this mess. Now everything has been revealed. You can see their shortcomings as



never before and you feel that it is imperative to advise them, loudly, of their incompetence.” What an opportunity! If the GM works in the ambiance well, the player will be notified about the extra damage and fast healing as extensions of playing out the spell. “As you cut down the minions that your allies have failed to stop, you notice yourself healing. You notice that the healing feels clearly associated with your righteous fury over their inability to step up. Because they are so weak, you have become stronger.”

## Gory Indulgence

**School:** Enchantment (compulsion) [evil, mind-affecting]; **Level:** Antipaladin 1, Bloodrager 2, Cleric/Oracle 2, Magus 2, Sorcerer/Wizard 2, Summoner 2, Witch 2

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Components:** V, S, M/DF (a pinch of powdered, dried blood from a redcap’s red cap)

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** Creature touched

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** No

The creature touched experiences a need to indulge in bloodletting and willful slaughter. In addition, the creature temporarily ignores its own shortcomings and becomes hyper-sensitive to others’ failings. Throughout the duration, the creature is prone to scornful, critical outbursts of others. These feelings are associated with a chilling and supernatural self-confidence that manifests in both a greater ability to cause and resist damage. The creature touched gains a +2 profane bonus on damage and fast healing 1.

If the touched creature is in temperate forest, mountain, or underground terrain, the target instead gains a +4 profane bonus on damage and fast healing 3.





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## Occult Archetypes

By Carl Cramer, Illustration by Leksaart

### Awakener

*The awakener has the ability to awaken objects, activating the latent powers of items and animating objects to fight for him.*

This is an occultist archetype that can change focus items from day to day.

### Class Features

The awakener has all the standard occultist's class features, except as noted below.

#### Awaken Item (Ex)

At 8th level, the awakener can exchange one of his implements for another implement of the same school when he prepares spells. An object must have a history known by the awakener, and the GM may limit the spell selection based on the item's history. This allows the awakener to re-select the spells tied to the implement. He keeps the same implement powers. If an awakener re-uses a previous implement, that implement continues to hold the same spells it used to, plus new ones if the awakener has learned to cast new levels of spells since the last use. Awaken item replaces outside contact.

#### Object Possession (Sp)

At 8th level, the awakener can use *object possession*<sup>OA</sup> (sp) at will. At level 12, this becomes *greater object possession*<sup>OA</sup>. At 16th level, the awakener can possess a Colossal object. This replaces magic circles and fast circles.

#### Animate Objects (Sp)

At 12th level, the awakener can use *animate objects* (sp) at the cost of one point of mental focus. This point can be spent from any implement or from generic mental focus. Animate objects replaces binding circles.

### Token Occultist

*The token occultist uses symbolic representations of occult phenomena as implements, most commonly cards but sometimes other divination tokens.*

This is an occultist archetype that can cast random spells rapidly.

### Class Features

The token occultist has all the standard occultist's class features, except as noted below.

#### Token Ties (Ex)

At 1st level the token occultist forms a bond with a deck of cards or set of divination tokens. This set functions as an implement for all the occultist's implement powers and serves as his implement component to cast occultist spells of all the schools that he knows. The set must consist of 54 or more unique tokens. Rune stones, divination sticks, cards, sets of bones or teeth, and different-colored stones can all be used as implements by token occultists.

If a token is lost, the token occultist must replace any missing parts before he can prepare spells again. The initial set of tokens is free. The token occultist can carry spares or create a replacement token with an hour of work and an appropriate Craft check (DC 10), or he can purchase spares at a cost of 1 gp each.

Each particular spell is tied to a specific token in the set, as determined by the token occultist when the spell is learned. There will always be a number of "blank" tokens that are not associated with any spell. As a swift action, the token occultist can randomly select one token from the set. If the token picked is tied to a spell, the token occultist can immediately cast that spell with a reduced casting time. A spell with a casting time of 1 standard action or less can be cast as a free action (this doesn't change the number of spells that can be cast in a turn). A spell with a casting time of 1 round can be cast as a standard action. A spell with a casting time longer than one round can be cast in half the usual casting time. Casting a spell in this manner uses up a spell slot of the spell's actual level. It is not possible to alter a spell cast this way using metamagic feats. If the token occultist chooses to not cast the spell, there is no effect. In either case, the card or token must be returned to the set (a free action).

A token occultist who wishes to share an implement power with another character hands all the tokens related to the spells of that implement school to their ally. Sorting out a set of tokens is a full-round action.

This is a modification of the implement's ability and replaces the implement gained at level 18. The awakener can still cast occultist spells in the normal manner.



## Linking Spells to Cards

Token occultists who use cards as implements tend to use a system when assigning spells to cards. One suit is assigned to each school of spells, while the numbers indicate the level of the spell (10 indicating level zero). A token occultist who picks the same school more than once assigns each set of spells to a separate suit. Once the token occultist learns a fifth implement school, the court cards plus jokers are treated as two suits (black and red). Similar systems can be used with other kinds of decks; most convenient would be a deck of six suits numbered 0-8. Using such a system is optional; spells can be assigned to tokens in any manner as long as the set has at least 54 tokens and each spell is assigned a unique token.

## Magic Circles (Su)

To create a magic circle, the token occultist places 10 random tokens in a circle, one per round. This puts the occultist's tokens at risk. The token occultist need not return these tokens to his set, and often cannot do so if they are destroyed or the circle is left behind.

When using fast circles, the token occultist need only place a single random token on the ground.

## Ghost Tamer

*The ghost tamer attracts new spirits as she encounters them, offering them to resolve their trauma in exchange for service.*

This is an archetype for the medium and spiritualist classes, specialized in redeeming undead.

## Class Features

The ghost tamer has all the medium's or spiritualist's class features, except as follows.

### Weapon and Armor Proficiency

Ghost tamers are proficient with all simple weapons, kukris, saps, and scythes. They are not proficient in any armor or shields.

### Spells

Add the following spells to the ghost tamer's spell list at the indicated levels.

- 1—*Mage armor*, *command undead*, *repair undead*.
- 2—*Phantom steed*<sup>UC</sup>, *sentry skull*<sup>ARG</sup>.
- 3—*Animate dead*, *unliving rage*<sup>ACG</sup>.
- 4—*Create undead*, *ethereal jaunt*.

ACG: Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Advanced Class Guide. ARG: Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Advanced Race Guide. UC: Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Ultimate Combat.

## Phantom Armor (Sp)

At 1st level, a ghost tamer can use *mage armor* as a spell-like ability twice per day.

At 4th level the armor bonuses granted by *mage armor* and *bracers of armor* stack when worn by a ghost tamer (only the armor bonuses from these two particular sources stack, phantom armor does not permit other pairs of armor bonuses to stack). These bonuses do not otherwise stack with armor, either normal or force. The armor created by ghost tamers looks similar to their tame spirit, displaying a mix of the phantom's and spiritualist's aura colors.

## Tame Spirit (Su)

At 1st level, when an undead creature is destroyed within 100 ft. and sight of the ghost tamer, she has the option of absorbing its spirit into herself within the next minute. This is a full-round action. The ghost tamer learns the emotional focus or legend of the tamed spirit and can then accept it or send it on its way with no effect except the time spent.

An undead creature that is tamed cannot rejuvenate or otherwise be restored to an undead creature as long as it is tamed by the ghost tamer. It must make a Will saving throw each day when the ghost tamer prepares spells, using the Will saving throw it had as an undead creature and a save DC of 10 + half the ghost tamer's class level + the ghost tamer's Charisma modifier. If this check fails, the spirit is freed from its mortal ties and will not rejuvenate or otherwise return to being an undead creature without outside help. Any phylactery or similar binding object it has loses its power. The ghost tamer can continue to use a redeemed spirit as a tame spirit until she decides to release or replace it, whereupon it will go to its final reward.

Once redeemed, the tame spirit loses its memories and motivation. Before that point, the tamed spirit keeps the agenda it had as an undead creature, but it must still accept the ghost tamer's orders and fulfill them to the letter. The tamed spirit has the undead creature's memories, but are not forced to divulge these and uses such knowledge to bargain to achieve its personal goals. If the tamed spirit is voluntarily released or the ghost tamer is killed before the tamed spirit is redeemed, the tamed spirit immediately rejuvenates into its prior form (undead or haunt) with all hit points and limited-use abilities restored.

In addition to the effects on the captured undead creature, the tame spirit also affects the ghost tamer, with different results for medium ghost tamers and spiritualist ghost tamers.



## Designing Captured Creatures

The ghost tamer changes a spirit or phantom at the drop of a hat, and this puts a burden on the GM, who is expected to design these creatures. If the GM trusts the player, it can be the player's task to create the spirit, based on a description of the undead creature. Or perhaps another player with sufficient imagination and rules knowledge can be given the task. As usual, the GM has final say and can reject or modify what the player creates.

If a particular undead is important to the plot, it automatically succeeds on redemption saving throws until its plot is resolved. This creates a conundrum for the ghost tamer, who cannot safely tame other undead until the plot is resolved.

## Medium Ghost Tamer

If the spirit is accepted, it works the same as a spirit gained through a seance, except that the GM decides all the details, the spirit's legend, taboo, and spirit powers. These should all reflect abilities the undead creature had, but need not be an exact match. If the spirit would offer a duplicate of a feat or spell

the medium already knows, the medium is free to pick any other feat or spell she desires, within the normal constraints of the spirit type.

The new spirit has one point more influence than the spirit it is replacing had. Accepting a new spirit restores all the medium's spell slots, spell-like and supernatural abilities with a limited number of daily uses. An unredeemed spirit that gains control either rejuvenates or uses the medium to achieve its own goals.

For every three points the spirit's challenge rating is less than the medium's class level, the spirit loses one spirit power it would normally give the medium, with the normal influence effect of channeling a weaker spirit. This is the only way a ghost tamer medium can channel a weaker spirit. The spirit remains channeled until the ghost tamer uses tame spirit to channel a new spirit, regaining all daily abilities when the ghost tamer prepares spells. This replaces seance.

## Spiritualist Ghost Tamer

If the spirit is accepted, it replaces the ghost tamer's current phantom. It works as a normal phantom, except that the GM decides all the details, emotional focus, skill ranks, feats, and how it has spent its attribute increases. These should all reflect abilities the undead creature had, but need not be an exact match. It begins with full hit points and all abilities unused and available.

A tamed phantom keeps the agenda it had as an undead creature, but it must follow the spiritualist's orders. The phantom has the undead creature's memories, but is not forced to divulge these and uses its knowledge to bargain for its personal goals. This is a modification to the phantom ability.

### Ghost Touch (Su)

At 2nd level, any weapon the ghost tamer wields gains the *ghost touch* property while wielded. Weapons fired, thrown, or dropped lose the property at the end of the ghost tamer's turn. This replaces shared seance for the medium and bonded senses for the spiritualist.

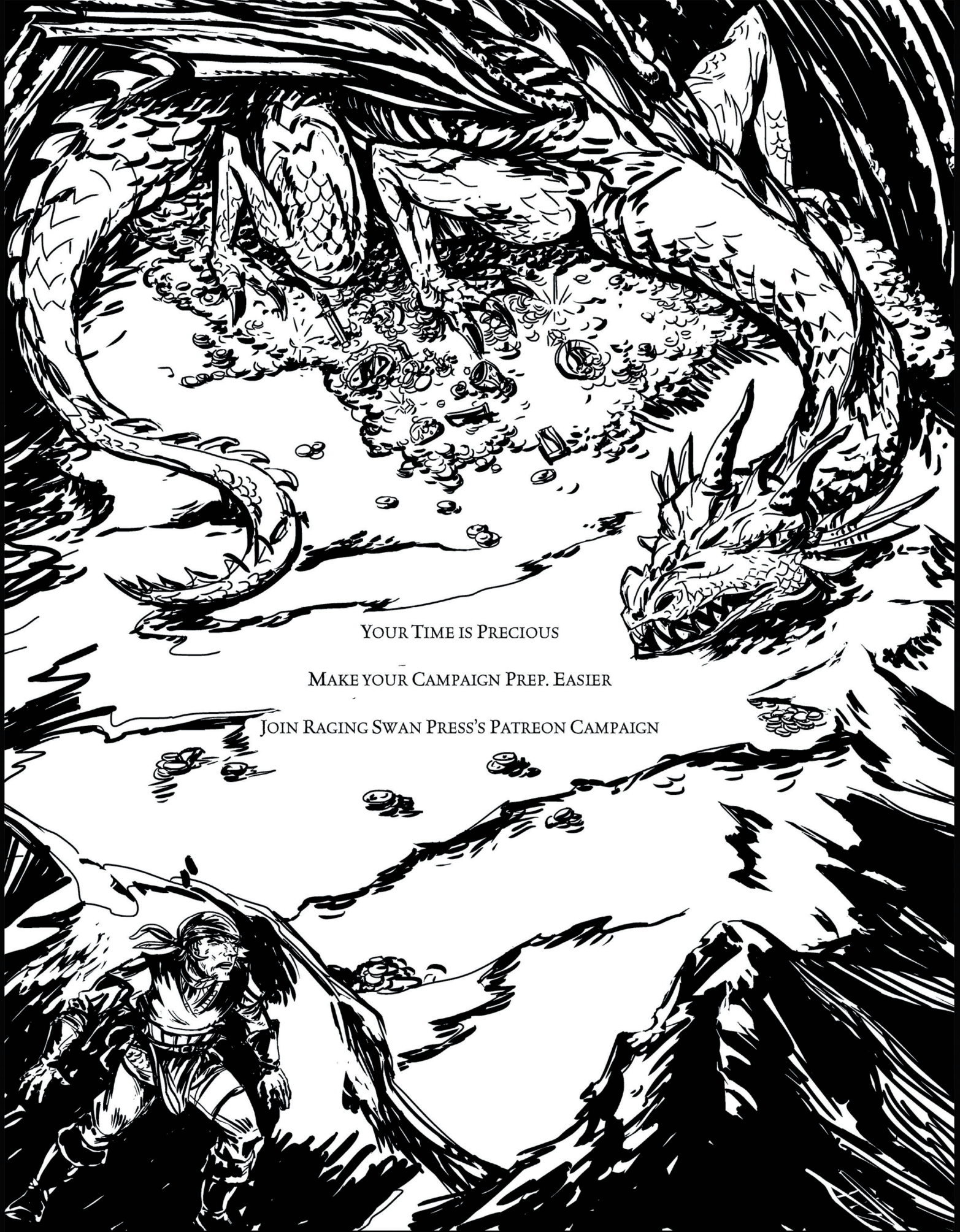
### Haunt Trap (Su)

At 4th level, a spiritualist ghost tamer gains the medium's haunt channeler ability. This replaces the spiritualist's spiritual interference ability.

When a ghost tamer uses the haunt channeler ability to completely absorb a haunt, she can choose to capture its spirit as the tame spirit ability. While tamed, a haunt cannot recharge and can be redeemed in the same manner as an undead affected by tame spirit; a haunt has a Will save bonus of 2 + half its challenge rating.







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## Junkers and Trappers and Seaspaces, Oh My: A Guide to Uncommon Races' Views on Occult Magic

By Joshua Herrington

With the release of *Occult Adventures*, the realm of mystery and psychic powers was set free into the dreaming minds of players and characters across many worlds – both those in which we live and those of the mind. It is well-documented how the so-called ‘established’ races of the fantasy worlds view such occult powers – however, some lesser-known races also use psychic abilities in their lives, albeit in different ways than the core races would. Listed below is a small collection of these races; to be specific, this article will delve into the worlds of the goblin, the kobold and the merfolk. sleep for any reason, they become unable to use any oracle or shaman class abilities specifically relying on their ability to be asleep or resting.

### Goblins

The goblin is a curious creature, possibly the last thing one would expect to exhibit abilities that open the powers of the mind. Knowing their primitive and tribal ways, they would be expected to be stuck in a cultural rut, what with their baby-eating and dog-killing. However, they do use occult abilities to some degree in their daily lives. Whether these abilities are drawn from their collective mental determination or their demonic and barghest patrons, few can say. Listed after the race’s views on each class are various favored class options; these function as any other racial alternate favored class bonus.

**KINETICIST:** Kineticists, especially pyrokineticists, are semi-common among goblin tribes, as the constant love of and exposure to fire suffuses their culture. After all, what self-respecting goblin would reject the ability to make fire from nothing? Granted, most of them wind up killing themselves due to not being careful with their inborn element, but that’s a small price to pay. Other elements, while not unheard of, are far less common. When possible, they do favor the elemental annihilator archetype, as most goblins have little use for fire besides using it to burn the world. **FCB:** Add 1/3 point of fire damage to fire-element blasts that deal damage.

**MEDIUM:** Goblins’ history is largely recorded orally, as writing is abhorrent to them. As such, those who can channel the spirits of goblin heroes past are regarded highly in a tribe. Most goblin mediums take the storyteller archetype, as they use the stories of goblins who came before them to suffuse themselves in their rich past. ‘Rich’ here denotes primal savagery. **FCB:** Treat your medium level as +1/3 higher for the purpose of your spirit bonus.

**MESMERIST:** Goblins do not place much stock in the power of the mind, despite favoring some psychic classes. As a result, mesmerists are not common among the rabble in a goblin tribe. A mighty chief or his closest advisors, however, may dabble in such arts, so as to weaken the minds of their servants. Some even use these powers to puppeteer the chief of a tribe; while this hold may be tenuous, a goblin who exhibits unusual foresight may be content with this arrangement. They favor the vizier and vox archetypes; the former for subtle manipulations, and the latter for espousing the sung glories of the goblin people. **FCB:** Increase the mesmerist’s painful stare damage by 1/3 point.

**OCCULTIST:** While the goblin people favor spoken history over that of physical remnants, occultists are surprisingly on the rise amongst the goblin people. They have less an appreciation for what has happened in the past, however; they prefer to scavenge whatever junk they think is important, and impart psychic powers and imagined importance onto them. A favored archetype for goblin occultists is the tome eater, for obvious reasons. **FCB:** Subtract 1/2 rounds from the time to takes to use shift focus (minimum 1 round).

### Kobolds

Kobolds are very communal beings. They live, work and die for the tribe. When anything threatens the safety of their livelihood, they band together in terrifying swarms of bodies to repel the intruder, be it an invading adventuring party or a roaming burrowing monster. This leaves kobolds usually investing in skills that only contribute to directly helping the tribe. Psychic magic is no exception to this rule; rather, they harness it in several devious ways to prove their mettle to themselves, their tribe, and for the lucky, their draconic overlords.



## Merfolk

**KINETICIST:** The most common exposure to elemental energy a kobold can undergo is that of their dragon lords and masters. While breath weapons and powerful magicks make for an amazing leader, it can also leave a legacy on a tribe, similar to that of a sorcerer. The elements that they wield vary, depending on their scale color and that of the dragon they're associated with, with a few outliers. Telekineticists and geokineticists, while uncommon, can play an especially important role in excavating and collapsing warrens as necessary.

**FCB:** Add 1/2 to your effective kineticist level for the purpose of one utility wild talent.

**MESMERIST:** Kobolds love exerting their superiority over others, whether they are within their tribe or outside of it. The mesmerist class gives them ample opportunity to perform this ability, as they feed their egos far too large for their diminutive stature. The gaslighter and cult master archetypes are favorites of theirs, especially for tribe chieftains who want nothing but unswerving loyalty from their followers. **FCB:** Increase the penalty from mesmerist's stare by 1/8 (maximum penalty of -4).

**PSYCHIC:** Those of a kobold tribe who dedicate themselves to the mental mastery of the psychic tend to receive praise and accolades from their fellow tribe members. When that power can be exerted over anyone and everyone within and without...a kobold begins to get nasty ideas. Many a trapsmith has created psychically charged traps, usually a *node of blasting* for the snarer on the go. Some have gone into excruciating detail, imbuing more powerful attacking spells with invisible, mental effects scattered throughout a warren – some raiding parties don't even know what hit them. **FCB:** When casting psychic spells that deal damage, add 1/2 to the damage dealt.

**SPIRITUALIST:** To say that kobolds value the wisdom of age is an understatement. Any kobold that has lived past 20 years is a wonder of the tribe – only the wildest survive for that long. To have the wisdom of a kobold from a bygone age, to know what worked for them in days gone by – it is a great honor for a kobold to play host to one of these spirits. Kobold phantoms tend to have the dedication, fear and greed emotional foci, as reflecting their personality traits. **FCB:** Add 1 skill rank to the spiritualist's phantom.

Beneath the waves, there are a people who keep largely to themselves, only interacting with other denizens of the deep when necessary. They have created a culture all their own, which stretches back for many millennia. These are the merfolk, and while their touch is not as felt across worlds as that of, say, the aboleth, this is merely because they have chosen to not spread their reach across the oceans. What psychic abilities they possess, they see as tools to help their village and assist in their adventuring ways.

**MEDIUM:** Merfolk villages are not as historically invested as one might think. Yes, they value tradition, but by and large they focus on the now of their troubles and bounties. What spirits they do contact, they tend to be invested in relics of significant importance to the specific merfolk or the merfolk's home. The relic channeler archetype accompanies many merfolk mediums, as they use their familiarity with said spirits to their own advantage. **FCB:** Add 1/4 to the medium's spirit surge.

**OCCULTIST:** Merfolk occasionally make a living by harvesting various sunken treasures from the depths of the ocean. It isn't uncommon for these relics and knick-knacks to have latent psychic energy associated with them, allowing some the ability to access unknowing powers. Very rarely, a specific weapon of significance is found that imbues the merfolk with power; this is a more common form of the battle host archetype, as countless valuable armaments are found in the icy depths. **FCB:** Gain 1/6 of a new focus power.

**PSYCHIC:** The oceans are filled with unspeakable creatures, and great treasures. The touch of the aboleth and other bizarrenesses fill the depths, leading to more than one merfolk with the abomination discipline; however, the merfolk's natural proclivity for socialization leads some to consider the rapport discipline. **FCB:** Add 1/4 use per day to one of the psychic's class-given spell-like abilities.

**SPIRITUALIST:** Strangely, not all merfolk spiritualists are attuned to merfolk phantoms. There are several who met an untimely end in the deep, all of which have prices to pay and unfinished business. Merfolks who share a bond with these phantoms do what they can to help them adapt to their aquatic environment; however, most of them remain in their incorporeal form the majority of the time. **FCB:** The phantom gains a +1 bonus to Swim checks. When this reaches +8, the phantom gains a swim speed equal to its base land speed.



Rite Publishing Presents

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# ADVENTURE QUARTERLY



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## Twenty Questions with Tommi Salama (well, 19 actually)

By Dave Paul

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

I'm a 36-year old graphic designer from Finland. I've also been a freelance cartographer for about three years now. I've played role-playing games for almost 30 years, and been playing Pathfinder since the Beta stage.

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

We have mostly played Paizo's Adventure Paths, I've run Age of Worms, Rise of the Runelords and Curse of the Crimson Throne to completion myself. I've been tinkering with a new campaign for a while now, this time using 3<sup>rd</sup> party material, mostly from Raging Swan Press, Kobold Press and Rite Publishing. I've been also drawing lots of custom maps for it, so we'll see how long it takes to actually get to play it.

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

I love the Adventure Paths. The adventures are great, and the setting material is always awesome to read. Although the first thing I always do with those is to look through all the awesome maps.

### 4. You are currently a freelance cartographer, how did that start and how would you characterize your situation today?

I've been a cartographer for about three years. I know it's a short time, but I do have years of experience in other graphic designs. My road to making maps for professionally published products started as a simple thought: "This is fun, I wonder if someone would commission me for making maps for their products?" I went to this awesome forum, [Cartographer's Guild](#), and looked through the map request sub-forum. There was a post from Steven D. Russell from [Rite Publishing](#) looking for a cartographer for Adventure Quarterly magazine. I sent him an email although I had no prior experience, or even a good portfolio. I just attached some of my old maps and hoped for the best.

Right after I sent that email I knew I was never going to get the commission with the samples I sent. Steve was looking for a cartographer for mostly dungeon and encounter maps, and my samples were overland maps. I launched Photoshop and worked all night to make a tavern map with a small dungeon underneath it. I sent the map to Steve next morning, before he even had the time to answer my first mail. I did land the job later on, and Steve was



making a huge leap of faith for me, an inexperienced wannabe cartographer looking to get his maps on a published product. I think I owe a lot to Steve for believing in me and making it possible for me to get in this industry. I'll miss him forever.

Nowadays I make a lot of maps for a lot of different companies. I've worked for AAW Games, Raging Swan Press, Kobold Press, Dreamscarred Press and many more.



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

AAW Games' Snow White. It's the first hardback book I've done all of the cartography for, and it was the one that got me an Ennie nomination. The book is a critically acclaimed adventure, a tale we all know—at least the Disney version of it—but with a new twist on the story,





while keeping true to its Hessian roots. The amount of cartography is huge in that one, it has a lot of isometric maps, encounter maps, a town map and an overland map. It was great to get to draw a lot of different maps while keeping the fairy tale mood in all of them.

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

Most of the illustrations for that book was made by Mates Laurentiu, and he basically designed the castle where a lot of the adventure takes place. I got to draw the isometric maps and the top down maps of said castle after Mates finished his art, and got a lot of advice from Mates for it. I think this was so great because most of the time the artists and cartographers don't get to work together on their pieces, and it's hard to get the different artwork to match each other. Another example was that I drew the town map first, and Mates finished his art of the town afterwards, so I got to see my map truly come to life!

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

The sheer amount of maps. Mostly I draw one to three maps per product, but as this had so many of them, it was a challenge to keep the style unified, and to make them look equally good and fascinating. The most important thing in cartography in my opinion is patience, and Snow White required a lot of it.

**8. What did you learn while working on it?**

I always learn new techniques when drawing new maps as I like to challenge myself, but I think

with this project I learned mostly about isometric cartography. Isometric cartography is really different from classic top down maps as they're much more personal and really capture the feeling of adventure.

**9. What was one frustrating experience you had working on the maps for Snow White?**

Overall it was a surprisingly smooth experience. Most frustrating moments were with the isometric catacomb maps, I think. Map turnovers always come as top-down maps, and when converting the layout to isometric perspective, the dungeon rooms often collide with each other, especially when there are many different levels. It often requires some advanced magic to make everything fit, and it can be a bit frustrating at times.

**10. What in your opinion makes a good map?**

Well of course as with every work of art, it needs to be pleasing to look at. But I think there's a lot more to making a great map than to just make it look good. A good map sets the mood of the place the players are visiting. A great map has some additional details, not just the ones written in the adventure or source book, but something that gets the gamemaster's imagination running. I like to think this encourages GMs to add stories of their own, or helps the PCs see the location as a living, fantastic place of adventure. I love maps that have a lot of details, especially world or town maps, because those maps can be looked at for the duration of an entire campaign.

**11. Who is your favorite cartographer of Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible products?**

I have many of them. To name a few, I love the work of Jonathan Roberts, Jared Blando and Robert Lazzaretti.

**12. What advice would you give to would-be-freelancers?**

You need to have patience. Cartography requires the artist to draw same objects hundreds of times, so patience is really important. Other than that, get yourself out there! Don't be afraid to contact publishers and show off your work. Make a good online portfolio and share it a lot!

**13. Are there common mistakes that novice map-makers make? How did you learn to overcome them?**

There are few things that can be avoided. First of all there are rules of nature. These apply especially in overland and world maps. For example very often in maps, even professional ones, I see rivers



that defy rules of nature. Most common one is that rivers split in two. In reality rivers and streams join together, but never split in two. If a river would split in two, the other one would eventually dry up. There are of course exceptions to this, such as river deltas, but most often it's best to follow that rule. These kind of things are very common mistakes in cartography. The more technical mistakes are most often related to resolution problems. For example low resolution objects are used that get pixelated, or the entire map is in a resolution meant for web use and it gets printed.

I didn't have any difficulties with the technical issues because of my long background in graphic design. Most of my cartography related knowledge I learned from this awesome place called Cartographer's Guild. It's a forum for cartographer's, novice and professionals alike, and people there are very friendly and ready to share their knowledge. There are lots of awesome tutorials, and also many posts explaining things like the aforementioned river rules.

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

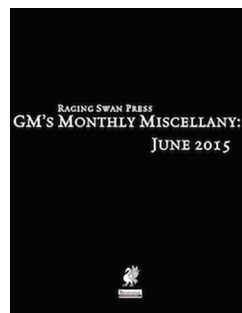
I'm not sure I have any fans yet, but I'll always remember the first Enzeitgeist review that mentioned my work. I was really nervous about my first published cartography, and it was a huge relief that he called it stunning.

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

I have a huge project brewing on with AAW Games, but I'm afraid that's all I'm allowed to say...

#### 16. Do you have any goals that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

At some point I would love to work with Paizo, but with the cartographers they already have, it's going to be a long-term goal...



#### 17. Can you describe any of your personal favorite maps that you've used in your own games but which haven't been published?

My new campaign will use Raging Swan Press's Duchy of Ashlar as the region where all adventure happens. It's Creighton Broadhurst's world, and I drew the map for the Duchy for his upcoming Gloamhold campaign setting. In my own campaign however, I wanted to present a larger world for my players. So I drew a huge map, set Duchy of Ashlar and Lonely Coast (Raging Swan's other setting) there and made up the rest myself. It was very fun to place many of the official places in a world of my own, and I've really grown to love that map.

#### 18. What kind of product, adventure, or encounter that you haven't yet worked on would you like to provide a map for?

Sci-fi maps! I haven't made any sci-fi maps, but I hope the upcoming Starfinder from Paizo will change that!

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

If you're not familiar with my work, go to [www.tommisalama.com](http://www.tommisalama.com) and take a look!





Rite Publishing Presents

# 5th Edition Module: *Fire & Ice*

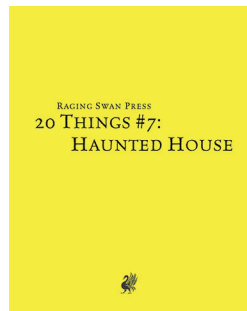


By Bret Boyd & Keith Byers





## Reviews



### 20 Things #7: Haunted House (system neutral)

**Publisher:** Raging Swan Press

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This installment of Raging Swan Press' system-neutral #20-series clocks in at 12 pages, 1 page front cover, 2 pages of advertisement, 1

page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 6 pages of content; so let's take a look!

We begin with two types of haunted houses and themes. One of the collections of dressing focus on 10 things you'd find in a burned-out house; the second 10 things would pertain to plague houses. Both of these entries are very flavorful and complement the PDF very well: Soot-wrapped bones or bloody, cloth-sacked packages certainly put a chill on my spine.

Don't want to run with one of these general themes? You're in luck, for 40 entries (20 regular, 20 more entries), from oddly shaped black mold to rotten floorboards complement the PDF and 10 perils help the enterprising GM generate some nice obstacles/mechanically-relevant challenges... in spite of the system-neutral nature of this PDF. 10 nasty rumors about the house help provide a significant sense of foreboding doom. It should be noted, though, that some entries here may be familiar for veterans of Raging Swan Press supplements, namely those of us who are familiar with the dressing talbe from "[Alternate Dungeons: Haunted House](#)."

A sampling of 20 evocative treasures and 10 objects to be found within the confines of a rat's nest do provide a fine array of rewards...but none are easily gained: "20 Unfortunate Discoveries" do not have their name for nothing! Bloody scribblings that note "One of you has been taken.", an inability to remember the name of deities, bloodshot eyes watching from the cracks of the walls...these are amazing. Finally, 10 intriguing things to be found within spider's webs provide a nice finish for the so-far best installment in the series.

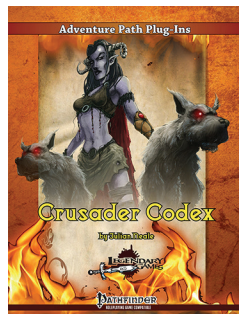
### **Conclusion:**

Editing and formatting are top-notch; I noticed no significant glitches. Layout adheres to Raging Swan Press' elegant two-column b/w-standard and the PDF comes fully bookmarked for your

convenience. Additionally, the PDF comes in two versions, one optimized for the printer and one for screen-use—kudos for going the extra mile there!

Alexander Augunas, Creighton Broadhurst, and Cole Kronewitter's take on the 7th "20 Things" supplement contains significantly less retreading of previously published material; beyond that, the quality and redistribution of the material is awesome. There is a lot of evocative, thematically concise dressing to be found for the fair asking price. 5 stars + seal of approval.

**Endzeitgeist out.**



### Crusader Codex

**Publisher:** Legendary Games

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This collection of NPCs clocks in at 38 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC (with CR/MR-notes), 1 page introduction/how to use, 1 page SRD, 2 pages of advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 30 pages of content; so let's take a look!

There never was an Adventure Path so in need of more challenges and expansions than "Wrath of the Righteous." While I love the story, personally, I'd only run it with a gazillion of Legendary Games supplements to avoid the PCs curb-stomping everything. Anyways, this means you need stats and I don't know about you, but I don't always have the time to crunch x statblocks. Enter this book—where the excellent unrighteous Villains was about adding in NPCs and adversaries and their subplots, this one would be the collection of more "generic" statblocks for more rank and file beings.

That out of the way, this does not mean that the presentation lacks notes on tactics or the like—quite the contrary! It just means that you should expect something akin to the "NPC Codex" by Paizo on a smaller scale and tied directly to the respective parts of WotR. Demons invading town? There's a CR-appropriate statblock for that here. The statblocks come with automatic bonus progression notes for the respective builds, just FYI! One step beyond that: the PDF actually begins with a handy table of CEL+Tiers/party-level/book progression through the AP, providing a great guideline from the get-go. Additionally, the supplemental pieces of advice provided here should be pretty helpful for not only reading the entries, but for GMs of the AP in general. It's only a little introduction, but it



adds that little amount of extra care, feels like it's going the extra mile from the get-go.

Got that? Great! We begin this collection with a tiefling witch at CR 1 (and disturbing artwork)...but adversaries are not everything: Two slayers at CR 2 and 6 as progressions can be found herein as well.

A half-orc paladin at CR 6, a broken soul unicorn (!!!) oracle, a fiendish troll inquisitor...notice something? Yep, Julian Neale went all out this time! I mean, who could say no to a fiendish redcap barbarian? An oracle/pala-combo is cool...but personally, I'm partial to evilly-grinning over shadow demons with rogue levels! There also would be a CR 11 dwarven vivisectionist to be found, a fated champion orc skald at CR 11, and I can't wait throwing a night hag mesmerist (oh yes!) at my players.

Sounds too freaky for you? There also is a neat human cleric build, all vanilla...but personally...I get my groove on when looking at blight druid/medium (relic channeler) multiclass (yep, with fighter/medium (relic channeler)/ranger cohort! What about lilith, an awakened devilbound cephalohore sorceress? OH YES! bebilith fighter? Yes! Stradaemon fighter creature? Yes, please! What about a CR 20 glabrezu antipaladin with unholy good saves and a beautiful damage output and enough defense to potentially actually survive to attack PCs? What about a massive mythic immense mandragora at CR 20/MR 8 (including a swarm?) or a tiefling investigator/guardian (who lacks her MR-rating in the header in a minor hiccup)? Pretty amazing!

And yes, the aforementioned immense mandragora and the swarm, which could come right out of the Berserk video game do get their own statblocks here as well. Now this would be my overview of the statblocks, but it certainly deserves mentioning that designer commentary and EXTENSIVE tactic notes actually help run these engines of destruction.

## Conclusion:

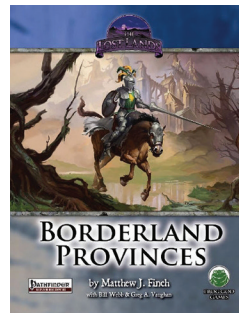
Editing and formatting are very good; I noticed no grievous glitches. Layout adheres to Legendary Games' two-column full-color standard with a lot of fiery orange employed for the WotR-plugins. The PDF features several pieces of neat full-color artwork, though they will be familiar for fans of Legendary Games. The PDF comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. As for statblock accuracy, I have reverse-engineered a couple and encountered no issues.

What happens when Julian Neale finally unleashes the daring creativity lurking? When he lets loose that rampant Id and makes critters and

builds beyond the normal, that dare to kick your behind? Awesome, that's what! Don't get me wrong—there are plenty of options that will satisfy more conservative tastes, but oh boy do I love this book. It's bar none my favorite statblock-centric offering released by Legendary Games so far. The builds and NPCs are so creative and cool, I really want to use them...and the fact that there are some that dare to be a challenge for capable groups is a HUGE plus for me. Beyond that, the tactical notes provide an excessive level of support for the hassled GM and render actually using the book much simpler than it otherwise would. This reminded me of Rite Publishing's legendary "Faces of the Tarnished Souk" series in that its builds go one step beyond what you'd see in the default monster codex in support, creativity, etc. In fact, this felt more like a proper NPC book than a collection of anonymous stats to me, mainly because there is so much love oozing from them.

This is a great, fun collection of NPC-stats and should be considered to be a definite recommendation, not only within the context of WotR, but for any GM looking for some challenging, diverse builds. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## **The Lost Lands: Borderland Provinces (PFRPG/OSR (S&W)/D&D 5e)**

**Publisher:** Frog God Games

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This massive book clocks in at 269 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page advertisement, 2 pages of SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with a colossal 262 pages of content; so let's take a look!

This book was moved up in my review-queue due to me receiving a print copy for the purpose of a fair and unbiased review.

All right, so we have been to the Sundered Kingdoms and taken in all the sights and cults...but this is something different. While situated in the adjacent region to aforementioned adventure collection, we actually have a massive setting sourcebook. As such, the tome begins with a breakdown of the history of the region as well as massive time lines denoting the respective years in the different means of counting the time line. The general overview provides a myth-infused and concise take on the ethnicities and races found



within this region; from the savage vanigoths to the supposedly river-born Gaeleen and the Foerdewaith, the notes provided here already exhibit a level of detail and care that makes more than sense. The book talks about how the respective ethnicities see themselves or depict themselves in these tumultuous times, for they indeed are.

Even a cursory glance provides some rather intriguing notes of cataclysms past—beyond the obvious collapse of the Army of Light, the end of an empire in a magical conflagration that consumed vast stretches of land, 10-year-long rains that resulted in famine and failed crops—these lands have indeed seen their fair share of evocative and inspiring catastrophes, but still the lands stand. Fans of the Lost Lands will consider the time line to be truly inspiring and chock full of notes: from the founding of the metropolis of Bard's Gate to Endhome's history (the city of "[The Lost City of Barakus](#)" fame), notes that acknowledge some lesser known modules (like "[Mires of Mourning](#)") or the influence of [Razor Coast](#). For veterans of Frog God Games/Necromancer Games, this book pretty much can be considered to be the very glue that pulls everything together, or the skeleton of the body of the region, if you will. Wait, that does not evoke the proper connotation since it implies being somewhat basic, and nothing could be further from the truth here. Different technology levels for the respective ethnicities and people add a feasible and evocative tone to the subject matter. But how to give you a proper insight into the leitmotifs of these borderlands? Well, for one, let me talk a bit about nomenclature. In case the names of ethnicities were not ample clue, the provinces and stretches of land, from a linguistic point of view, do something smart: with names like Aachen, Exeter and the like, they employ our dormant knowledge of medieval ages and a palpable Old Europe-style aesthetic. With crests and everything, the presentation of the respective countries further enforces this. So flavor-wise, we're looking at a place that feels distinctly more like the end of the Middle Ages than most settings.

On a formal criteria, within the details of the powerful individuals noted, the book sports a sufficient array of powerful people mentioned... but never becomes bogged down in them. You do not have the Oerth/Faerûn issue of an archmage/demigod in every second town; capable folks exist, but ultimately there are barely enough to maintain a sense of cohesion. The general scarcity of truly mega-powerful individuals mean that there is ample potential for PCs to act and shine without

thinking that the "big players can't be bothered." On the other hand, some settings have fallen prey to the inverse issue: you know, where the super-powerful forces of darkness only don't seem to win because they are damn stupid. The Borderland Provinces do not fall prey to this trap either; instead, a general level of threats suffuse everything here, providing ample need for adventurers without threatening an apocalypse at every corner. This balancing act emphasizes further as sense of the believable. We can imagine the darkness lurking, but we do crave people and places worth saving, and making the PCs the only capable (or not ignorant) characters is generally an approach that undermines this. Hence, while there are capable NPCs, at least in my mind the chief achievement for this component lies in painting a picture that is believable.

The aforementioned history, nay historicity, evoked by the book is further underlined by the political leitmotif: You see, the nomenclature and catastrophes echo some real life disasters. For example, the political landscape of the Borderland Provinces is not unlike that of the trials and tribulations and collapse of the Carolingian Empire, which ultimately gave rise to the Holy Roman Empire. Much like these historic empires, the once powerful empire of Foere is within the process of dissolution and decadence; nobles think of secession, provinces are not properly defended and when even the loss of tax revenue is deemed acceptable, you will note that something is going wrong big time...meanwhile, the kingdom of Suilleigh has won its independence and is going through the growing pains of the rapid expanding empire—growing pains which may cause it to collapse yet under the issues inherited from years of mismanagement... if external forces don't do the job for the young kingdom. Similarly, the discrepancy between these two major players feel like bookends of the cycle to me, but that may well be due to my Nietzschean leanings when it comes to the structure of the history of mankind. On a less pretentious note, one could construe the political landscape as one that provides pretty much the maximum of adventuring potential. With the threat of war looming, political infighting and shifting allegiances all provide a rich panorama of inspiring metanarratives to develop...and that is before free cities and city states on the rise and the pseudo-colonial angle [Razor Coast](#) provides enter into the fray.

The book then goes on to underline yet another widely component that is a crucial glue often neglected in fantasy gaming: religion. What's Endy now talking about, you ask? Well, beyond the



presence of clerics, palas and the like, the function of religion for societies as a unifying thread is often neglected in gaming supplements, but not so here. In the decline of Thyr's worship due to ever thinner margins and thus, possibilities of making an impact on the daily lives, Mitra's worship is gaining ground amidst the folk, adding another sense of *Zeitenwende*, of a radical change of the times to the social and political powder keg that is the Borderland Provinces. Conversely, this does echo similar proceedings in Europe—from Lutherans and Calvinists, a crucial component of their success ultimately can be attributed to the entwinement of the Catholic Church with the political establishment of those days, resulting in a disenfranchisement of a significant part of the body politic.

There is another component I feel obliged to mention, for, by the above, you may fall prey to the erroneous assumption that this book offers basically only a repackaging of historical occurrences, when nothing could be further from the truth. After all, we are playing fantasy games and thus, the aspect of magic is deeply entwined with themes like religion: Beyond escalating the aforementioned cataclysms that have haunted these lands, magic also is firmly entwined with the aspect of religion—for, in a world where demon lords ever plot the ultimate collapse of civilization, a heresy suddenly becomes more than something to stamp out in order to maintain control over the doctrine and its narrative. Instead, heresy can range from the harmless to the soul-damning and as such, the task of the ever fewer agents of the organized religions traveling these lands is one of prime importance, as smart and devious cults operate beneath a veneer of respectability.

Which brings me to the shadowy forces, whose threats are less obvious than warfare, racial conflicts, barbarians and monsters; namely, the leitmotifs of heresies. Whether benevolent or willfully incited by demonic cultists, the organized religions are having a tough time to maintain supremacy over their own teachings, considering the diverse challenges the lands face. In an age of flux, it is in the cracks left behind by the failures of the respective nobility and governments that darkness thrives. That brings me to the component that I have not yet mentioned: up until now, I have mainly talked about the themes of this book and less about its actual use as a gaming supplement. You see, each of the areas introduced herein not only features notes on religion, major players and settlements, but the regions also provide monsters to be found within this area and a plethora of partially interconnected quests. Not

content to simply depict hooks, the book goes into an almost-adventure-level of detail, with some statblocks and evocative quests there; to retrieve the train of thought associated with heresies, a whole village has fallen prey to false teachings and is thus doomed unless the PCs can find a way to save their souls.

Beyond the monuments that litter the landscape and the traditional, exceedingly evocative indirect story-telling that comes together here, the book also is defined by a massive array of different random encounter-tables at the beck and call of the GM (and yes, the PDF does make a difference between regions, roads and the wilderness). Indeed, it should be noted that the narrative impulses contained herein blend all concisely. In an age where printing is not yet common, the appearance of potentially madness-inducing pamphlets, for example, would make for a unique angle. Have I mentioned yet the fact that this book also introduces a demon prince who may be one of Azathoth's Pipers, somehow turned sentient and...different, providing a long overdue thematic and innovative connection for the themes of the creatures of the Outer Dark and the forces of the Abyss.

Of course, there is more to the aspect of the fantastic than just an abundance of monstrosities haunting the wilderness: there would be the occurrence of a kind of truce between an archmage and the most powerful dragon of the region; there would be dangerous locales; neutral ground taverns at the intersection of no less than three territories; and there are places where the chivalric ideal still lives, with jousting and the means to rise in the social hierarchy. Numerous settlements in detail and a plethora of shrines and sacred or profane sites await the exploration by the PCs... and the sense of realism is further enhanced in its logical consequences: There is, for example, a mighty city that has come to an understanding with a foul-tempered black dragon: the dragon defends the city...and who better to defend versus adventurers...than a whole city loving the creature, worshipping it...including the more powerful small folks? The component of the fantastic, from spells to the presence of creatures like ogres or worse, are not just simply slapdashed on like a thin fantastic coating—the internal consistency bespeaks careful and thoughtful deliberation and is baffling in its panache. Have I mentioned the region that uses giant ox beetles for beasts of burden?

Now the aspect of the fantastic even extends to some extent to the unique nature and economy that can be seen in parts of the borderland provinces;



these lands are NOT just Europe-rip-offs. Quite the contrary, for example the opium-studded fields of Pfefferain, originally introduced in the criminally underrated 3.X module "[Vindication!](#)" by Necromancer Games and the truce between ferry-operators and river giants all seems to be connected in a tapestry of myriad colors and tones that nevertheless generate a concise whole. The level of deliberate care and internal consistency extends beyond the basic: MASSIVE name generators by region for both males and females; massive place-names by region; and similarly ridiculously detailed and colossal amount of stats for ready-made 109 encounters to supplement the numerous adventure locales that are interspersed in the write-ups of the respective regions. Exceeding this, the book also features hazard generators and stats for aerial traveling – for example wind whales. Aforementioned heresies are similarly depicted in lavish detail...and the book provides a gigantic index that features pronunciation guidelines for the respective places. The book also features the previously released FREE "[Rogues in Remballo](#)" scenario and an impressive array of b/w-maps alongside player-friendly iterations; the inclusion of these just adding the icing on the cake this is. The physical iteration also has a gorgeous full-color hex-map of the regions.

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good; while I noticed some minor hiccups like a superscript "B" that was not properly formatted, as a whole this book adheres to FGG's high quality standards. Layout adheres to an easy-to-read b/w-2-column standard and the book sports numerous gorgeous b/w-artwork. The electronic version sports numerous bookmarks for your convenience...but frankly, if you can somehow afford it, get this in print: with high quality binding and paper, this book's physical version is just so much more awesome to hold in your hands. The b/w-cartography is nice and the presence of player-friendly maps is amazing.

Matthew J. Finch, with additional content by Greg A. Vaughan and Bill Webb, has created something special here. When I heard about this book for the first time, my reaction, to some extent, was bewilderment. While I could see Rappan Athuk and Endhome occupy the same general geographic region, while I saw the more conservative aspects working in perfect unison, it is the weirder, the darker and subtle aspects of the modules that stumped me as to how this could ever work as a whole.

You see, setting-books of this size face an almost impossible Catch-22 situation. Too much detail and you wreck their adaptability for a given round; not enough and the thing becomes too opaque and some jerk like yours truly starts complaining. If you add the excessive canon this unifies, you have another issue: bastards like yours truly that have too much fun contemplating and considering the ramifications of the presence of creatures, the political landscape, etc.—sooner or later, unless you \*REALLY\* think it through, internal discrepancies will creep into the game and someone will find them and have his/her game ruined by them, as immersion comes crashing down. On the other hand, if you take the reins too tightly, you only generate a free-form adventure with a restrictive metaplot, not a sourcebook. You need to maintain consistency, yes, but if you overemphasize it, the book becomes a dry enumeration of facts and densely entwines facts; not everyone wants to read such a book.

It is against these challenges that I have read this massive tome...and it holds up. More than this, however, the achievement this represents lies within not only succeeding at maintaining internal consistency and fusing a gigantic array of disparate files into a thematically concise whole. It also maintains its efficiency as a gaming supplement: much like the Judge's Guild books of old, certain wildernesses and city states, this very much represents a sourcebook that does not require preplanned adventures or the like. Instead, you just throw your PCs inside and watch them do whatever they please...and if you do want a module, well, the region provides a vast array of mega-adventures that gain a lot from the proper contextualization within the region. In fact, I frankly wished I hadn't played some of them, since their context herein adds significantly to their appeal.

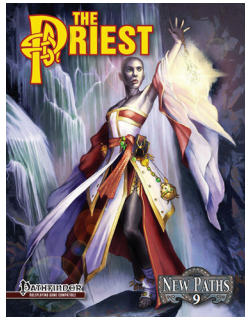
I have not even managed to scratch the surface regarding the number of things to do and experience within the borderland provinces and that is intentional, for I have so far failed to explicitly state the biggest strength of the book: Perhaps it is the internal consistency of the book and its lore...but I experienced something while reading this tome I have only scarcely encountered: a sense of Fernweh (think of that as the opposite of being homesick), of a wanderlust for a realm that does not exist, of a world so steeped in lore, vibrant and alive that this book managed what only a scant few have accomplished. I actually managed to dream lucidly a journey through these fantastic realm in a sequence of dreams of several days. This



peculiar experience is usually reserved for books of the highest prose caliber, books that manage to generate a level of cohesion that is so tight my mind can subconsciously visualize it. A prerequisite for this, obviously, would be some desire to do just that, meaning that ultimately, the book in question must have caught not only my attention, but provided a sort of intense joy beyond the confines of most books, let alone gaming supplements.

To cut my long ramblings short, the prose herein is absolutely superb and exhibits the strengths of the exceedingly talented trinity of authors, making the reading experience of the book a more than pleasing endeavor. Moreover, the significant attention to detail regarding the actual use of the book as a gaming supplement ultimately also deprives me of any complaints I could field against it in that regard. While this review is based on the PFRPG version, it is my firm conviction that even groups employing systems beyond the 3 for which this has been released will have an absolute blast with this book. Even without any of the book's gaming utility, this is an excellent offering and hence receives the highest accolades I can bestow upon it: 5 stars, seal of approval and nomination as a candidate for my Top Ten of 2016. This makes the Lost lands truly come to life and I can't wait to see the next massive sourcebook of the world. If the Frogs can maintain this level of quality and consistency, we'll be looking at my favorite fantasy setting among all I know. Get this – you will NOT regret it!

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## **New Paths: The Priest**

**Publisher:** Marc Radle

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This installment of the New Paths-series clocks in at 12 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page advertisement, 2/3 of a page SRD, leaving us with 8 1/3 pages of content; so let's take a look!

The priest class receives d6 HD, 4 + Int skills per level and gets 1/2 BAB-progression, good Will-saves and proficiency in only simple weapons. The class begins play with an aura as per the cleric's default and bonus languages include the respective languages of the alignment-related outer planes. Similarly, the restrictions we know regarding opposed alignment spells still apply. A priest draws her spells from the cleric spell list and must prepare

them in advance; however, they are not expended upon being cast, instead consuming a spell slot available. The governing spellcasting attribute for the priest would be Wisdom and the priest begins with 1 + 1 spells of first level prepared, +4 orisons. Obviously, as a full caster, she progresses to learn up to 9th level spells and the maximum spells per day per spell level clock in at unmodified 4, with prepared spells capping at 4 + 2 per spell level.

The pluses in the list refer obviously to the domain spells; a priest selects 3 domains from her deity and she gains all domain powers of the chosen domains. The priest's spellcasting is also tied to her holy symbol, with which she shares a sacred bond; much like an arcane bond, casting without it becomes problematic, but here's the kicker: the priest may use the holy (or unholy) symbol to cast cure or inflict spells as though they had a range of close instead of touch, which is a huge boon. Back in 3.X literally EVERY cleric in my games had the feat to do just that.

Also at 1st level, the priest receives a so-called divine gift that can be used 1/day as a swift action. 10 such gifts are provided and all are available so you don't have to choose. The priest may use the ability, as mentioned, 1/day, but may use it +1/day for every 3 levels beyond first. If a gift enhances a spell, it may only enhance cleric spells and only one gift may enhance each spell. The gifts include CL and DC-increases of the next spell cast, *invisibility* (that scales up to *greater invisibility* at 7th level), metamagic enhancements, immediate action rerolls, wings at 5th level, AC, and save bonuses with DR and SR or bursts of raw, divine power... or, well, spell-swapping.

The priest also receives access to *channel energy* at 2nd level, though it is governed by Wisdom for the class and 7th level decreases activation action to move, 14th to swift. Personally, I think the ability should have a catch here to prevent the priest from executing multiple channel energy uses per round; in spite of the limitations in daily uses, three channels in one round can be pretty devastating. 6th level and every 6 levels thereafter net a bonus feat from a nice selection and, as a capstone, the class becomes immune to death attacks and negative levels and may never be reduced below 1 in any ability score. Additionally, she remains alive until 2 x negative Constitution score.

The PDF provides two feats: +1/day divine gift use and the option to channel energy as a full-round action, but instead roll d10s, but at the cost of being fatigued for a number of rounds equal to the channel dice rolled. I LOVE the visuals of this feat!



We also receive a brief archetype, the Chosen of Nature. These guys get an expanded class skills list (but oddly lose none) and draw their spells from the druid list instead of the cleric's. The archetype replaces the channel energy progression beyond 6th level with progressively better *beast shape* and *plant shape* SPs. Decent, but honestly, not that cool; the archetype feels a bit like an afterthought.

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch; I noticed no glitches. Layout adheres to a beautiful 2-column full-color standard and the PDF features gorgeous full-color artworks. The PDF comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Marc Radle's priest addresses a very crucial need I always felt: the need for a divine adherent that feels like a caster. I mean, when you think about agents of the divine in the context of our world, you probably won't think of mace-wielding, armor-clad quasi-crusaders. You'll think about men and women of the cloth. The priest fills this niche rather well. Divine gift also represents a cool mechanic, though frankly, I would have loved to see the whole thing go one step further; divine spells never really felt that "divine" to me and while the priest does a great job of emphasizing this component, I think the engine could carry more.

But I am rambling. Frankly, I feel that this should be the base class, with the more martially inclined cleric being something of a specialist. In my games, most clerics tend to not be too martially inclined (except when adventuring or when the background/deity fits), so the priest is guaranteed to see a lot of use. The divine gifts and at range cure/inflict casting also make for great balancing tools to offset the loss of the decent 2nd line fighting options of the cleric. In short: I really, really like the class. Deceptively simple, fun, and elegant. Similarly, the feat provided is nice and while I think channel spamming should be prevented with a cap, that operation's pretty simple to perform. The one thing that left me somewhat disinterested herein would be the archetype, perhaps the space would have been better served with FCOs. Oh well, this is certainly a cool class for the fair asking price. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars.

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## Nightmares on Parade

**Publisher:** Playground Adventures

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This module clocks in at 35 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page inside of front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 1

page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 30 pages of content; so let's take a look!

This review was moved up in my review-queue as a prioritized review at the request of my patrons.... ah, who am I kidding? After the absolutely super Pixies on Parade, I would have covered this as fast as possible even without that.

Speaking of which, I strongly suggest playing Pixies on Parade before this one. While it can stand alone easily, I do believe that it has an added sense of gravitas when played as a kind of sequel. The PDF makes use of the concept of imagination magic and the inclusion of the dream-subtype should make pretty clear that yes, this will have an excellent reason for championing a thus more mutable reality.

**...and this is as far as I can go without SPOILING anything. Potential players SHOULD jump to the conclusion. This also includes some SPOILERS for Pixies, so please don't read on if you want to play them. They're worth it.**

In Pixies on Parade, the PCs have managed to save Edwin from the clutches and malign influence exerted over him by the Nightmare King. He may not be escaping anytime soon...but he does not sit idly by, instead using his considerable power to draw the picturesque village of Glavost right into his nightmare realm! Uniquely empowered by their experiences in Pixies on Parade, the PCs thus receive the ability to manipulate reality: wishing for a unicorn, for example, may actually manifest one, though the created dreams generated do not feature the abilities of the things they're modeled after, instead employing the lesser dream creature's statblock. Indeed, the somewhat parasitic/dependent nature of these dreams allows people tied to them to shape them.

Anyways, the module begins with an ominous darkening sky, a quake and mists drawing in; if your PCs have gone through the gauntlet of Ravenloft at one point, that alone will make them paranoid as all hell. Aforementioned dreams seek out the PCs and bond with them. As the PCs walk outside, they will notice Belle Leafflower walking the streets, unable to communicate or, well, perceive anybody. Creative problem solution is the name of the game, as her anxieties manifest themselves and thus influence the next encounter, namely saving the ancient Elas Leafflower, who is obsessively trying to read as many books as possible at once, fearing that he is running out of time, and if the long beard and constantly multiplying books are any indicator, he'd be right. The PCs will have to



contend with falling bookshelves, book swarms, and find a way to convince Elas that his quest his futile: his books, as they are wont in dreams, are gibberish.

This would be a kind of leitmotif to be found here: the Nightmare King has provided some delightfully twisted (and goofy) nightmares for the folks of Glavost. For example, Dwarven chef Rus Ulden is hunted by jello-oozing killer cupcakes. And yes, you can actually eat these...which makes for a cool prop when fighting them...just as a note... Beyond these detailed encounters, however, there are also more simple, optional ones provided for your convenience: the more invested the PCs are in Glavost, the better. The fight for the minds and imagination of Glavost takes the PCs, ultimately, to the major's house, where a semi-solid sheathe of darkness covers everything and Edwin needs to be saved from what seems to be the nightmare king... though it is, in fact, "only" the most powerful dream plaguing Glavost. Having defeated this threat, the PCs now will have the proper power of a town's imagination backing them up, namely in the ability to duplicate *mirage arcana* as an SP...

But the Nightmare King is not just going to throw in the towel because he's been foiled here. Instead, he figures he might as well go big or go home...and sends a friggin' army in the direction of the PCs. And this is where the plot thickens and parents and adults alike should take a good, long look: the kids of Glavost, while considered to be "heroes," were basically treated with condescension by the adults, as kids all across the globe are wont to be. One crucial and important lesson anyone can draw from this book and project to the real world is that kids deserve respect. In real life, kids may not create phantom armies...but that doesn't mean that they can't save the lives of others, that they may not be the triumphant factor in the battle for the hearts and minds of the adults around them. Just something to figure: kids are not property, they are people we accompany for some time along the way, that we try to help prosper and hopefully leave the world a better place for them...but I digress.

The PCs have saved the adults and so they may shore up the defenses and use their imagination to save the town with offenses and defenses created. There may a saboteur in their midst: the teenage night hag Isabeth, who proceeds to trap the PCs and request them doing horrible, annoying chores, but they will have to do them, if they are to escape. There's a way to befriend Isabeth in the process...which may well be used as a means to teach kids to deal with folks in puberty...but that just as an aside.

The module continues to "teach," if you will, life lessons while being played. There is a detention scenario next, where the PCs are targeted by suggestions and the gremlins running the show try to get them to acknowledge that they should not be brave etc. The idea here is simple, yet brilliant: it is mathematically unlikely that all PCs fail the save (though such a scenario is accounted for as well), and thus, the PCs will have the chance to rebut the theses thrown at them, with grudging acknowledgment from the gremlins....but, of course, the more PCs fail, the more will they be forced to reply as per the wishes of the "teacher." This is something that the current generations definitely should take to heart: my experience with the younger kids is that, more often than not, they are taught to cave to peer pressure, to maintain a "pleasant" environment with their comrades, even if goes against their beliefs and convictions. When I compare my cousin's school experience to mine, for example, we have been horribly rowdies and rebels who stood up for what we believed in. I think that kids should be taught, as soon as possible, that their convictions have value and that the majority is not always right. This encounter does just that, without jamming its message down one's throat. It's also creative, so yeah – amazing!

Next up would be yet another interesting one: a satyr skald offers the PCs a fair deal. He was tasked to delay them, but finds this strategy distasteful and thus offers to fill the PCs in on the background story of the Nightmare King, which is provided in lavish detail. It is here that the old truism of knowledge equaling power may be taught...and the respectful demeanor and no-strings, straightforward, and respectful attitude of the satyr progresses the thematic sequence of being show proper respect for one's achievements... and once the PCs have heard the story (or left or their own free will), it will be time for the army of Glavost's dreams to duke it out with the servants of the Nightmare King! Here, things become once again amazing, as, while the module recommends a descriptive and flavor-centric take on the battle of the armies, groups that enjoy rules-intense scenarios can employ the mass combat rules! Yup, army stats provided. I intentionally did not write "kids will use descriptive, adults the rules," mind you – I certainly know enough young ones that are REALLY into the nit and grit of rules! The amazing thing here is that the PCs may use their imagination to greatly influence the way the battle works: mass imagination magic, flexible benefits – if properly employed, this is frickin' amazing indeed!



Speaking of the theme of respect— as the nightmare armies crumble, Behast, the Nightmare King, waltzes to the PCs and actually offers an imagination duel: a scenario wherein he creates obstacles with his power for the PCs to overcome... and usually a respectful way of solving conflict sans violence amidst otherwise immortal beings. Having even the BBEG actually treat the PCs with respect is a truly amazing progression of the themes employed in this book. Speaking of amazing: the PCs' actions throughout the module have direct consequences here. Behast may not enter the fray directly, but his champion has several abilities, each of which is tied to one specific type of action the PCs may have done...the better they treated their fellows, the more they helped them, the better are their chances against Behast's champion! Know how in those cool 80s/90s kids' movies at one point, the kids would combine their powers, reap the benefits of the good deeds they have sown previously? It may be a bit cheesy, but it always put a good kind of shiver down my spine.

Oh, and don't tell anyone, since the PCs have to find out the hard way...but don't worry about player frustration in this book – a sidebar's got you covered.

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good; with the exception of one purely cosmetic formatting hiccup (an ability indented one step too much), the book is pretty flawless. Layout adheres to a beautiful two-column full-color standard with a turquoise background. This may not make it too printer-friendly, but I'd suggest getting this in print anyway. The artwork adheres to Jacob Blackmon's style and is nice and internally consistent. The PDF comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. Apart from a darker map of Glavost, the PDF lacks precise maps, but considering the morphic theme and the set-up of every encounter, it does not need them; I was a bit skeptical regarding this component, but actual playtest did affirm that the module works smoothly.

Stephen Rowe has been a kind of anomaly among RPG-designers in that he's equally at home in the writing of crunch and fluff. Additionally, his modules so far have not failed to impress me, with both [Pixies on Parade](#) and [Directive Infinity X](#) being examples of excellence.

[Nightmares on Parade](#) is a whole different level. Let me elaborate a bit: Playground Adventures generally provides modules that can help educate kids, teach concepts and knowledge in a manner that is not obtrusive. [Pixies on Parade](#) was a pretty much

perfect homage to 80s' kids' movies—you know, when we still treated kids as proper beings, not as second-class citizens to be sheltered to the point of generating narcissists, to the point where they're not ready facing a reality that does not cuddle them all the way. [Pixies](#) was brilliant in that it provided a scenario that dipped into creepy themes, but at the same time maintained a child-friendly levity in theme and execution. Oh, and in the hands of an even remotely capable GM, you could run it as a balls-to-the-wall horror/dark fantasy module. Think of a certain Goblin King's labyrinth, think of the last member of an equine, horned species and you'll see what I mean: Watching these movies as a child delighted me; watching them as an adult provided a wholly different context for both. [Pixies](#) did that and did it perfectly. Age-wise, all but the most sensitive of kids should be good with it and I ran it for a then-4-year-old sans issues. The target demographic, though, should be about ages 6+, for really, really sensitive kids probably 8+. It always depends on the kid in question.

[Nightmares on Parade](#) is the successor in that theme in more ways than one, maintaining the leitmotifs...but also presenting a dimension that far exceeds what regular modules offer, what you can witness in any of its predecessors. What do I mean by this? I have to wax poetically a bit here: The German concept of "Bildung" denotes the collective process of education and personality formation, including a development of one's own personal ideology, convictions, etc. The very word generates an association with building one's self as an eternal process, of describing the totality of construction work of your own personality and accumulated knowledge in all fields of life. There is exactly one other module, Richard Develyn's brilliant [Seven Sinful Tales](#), which has ever made me employ this word in the context of adventures you can run. You see, the structure of this adventure teaches not precise information in a traditional sense; it goes beyond that. By virtue of its meticulously structured encounters and their diverse themes, it imparts genuine Wisdom upon the players, life lessons if you will. The module shows, rather than tells, what happens if you let fears (like not having enough time) define you; what happens if you're consumed by work (with a kid-friendly, literal analogue); to stand up for your convictions and what's right in the face of authorities and peer-pressure...and to never underestimate the power of imagination that so many adults have lost. (Though roleplayers tend to be safer there...)



There is not a single encounter in this module that does not provide, in unobtrusive subtext, a truly valuable, morally and ethically valuable lesson. And this does not only extend to kids: parents running this module for their kids should carefully read this module and analyze it, for the aforementioned leitmotif of respecting your child, the importance of that aspect for the development of adults and the way in which this module treats kids can, in my most deeply held convictions, potentially improve the horizon of parents alike. The theme of respect that ultimately is awarded to the PCs and their players by the BBEG culminates in a glorious experience that may well, in some cases, end night troubles...after all, the Nightmare King has conceded defeat. But that as just an aside.

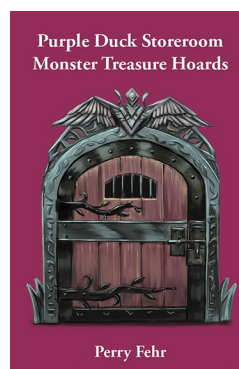
Beyond these psychologically relevant aspects and the wonderful, respectful way this book treats its audience, regardless of age, one should not be remiss to emphasize the downright amazing use of imagination magic throughout the book and the fact that, beyond the glorious lessons imparted herein, it ALSO is a truly amazing module. Whether or not you go mass combat, whether or not you play this as horror (concerned parents: rest assured that this module, as written, is as wholesome as it gets...but any only semi-decent GM can make this very dark very easily and basically transform it on the fly into a horror-module just by adding non-kid-friendly dressing!) for adults, as a kid-friendly adventure as written, as emphasizing the crunchy aspects or de-emphasizing them via Imagination Magic, you retain maximum flexibility in the module. I've run this twice and both times in radically different manners and in both cases, the structure held up: the kid-friendly run worked as amazing as expected, replacing Pixies as their favorite module. The experience of running this as an adult module with my own trademark tweaks went over just as well.

Ultimately, Nightmares of Parade may be a glorious module on its own...but its value lies beyond that. It is a module that not only dares to teach in a didactically unobtrusive manner, it is one tailor made, carefully and in a truly intelligent way, to leave particularly kids and parents as better persons for having played it. If you think I'm overanalyzing this, then I'd point you straight towards the fact that this obviously is intended to achieve said stated goal; each and every facet of the module is devoted towards cultivating a respectful and benevolent development, a component of "Bildung" not only between the players, but also in their interaction with others and among themselves. It teaches spine and courage in the face of adversity

and the value of behaving in an upstanding, honorable manner while still being kids. In short: Nightmares on Parade is a masterpiece not only on a formal level, but also is one of the scant few modules that dares to try to leave its audience better off for having played it; it is one of the very few incarnations of our favorite medium that tries to do more than entertain without losing sight of entertainment being the primary purpose. Stephen Rowe has surpassed himself with this module and catapulted himself into a level of adventure-writing excellence that is rarefied indeed, that is a very small class of its own.

With all my heart, I encourage you to get Pixies and this, the sequel. We need authors that dare to do more than just entertain (though it certainly does excel here as well!); it is my firm conviction that roleplaying games already are a great way of helping people, regardless of age, connect, develop and improve in numerous aspects of life. This, however, takes everything one step further: it can actually be seen as a module that could be canon as something that truly benefits everyone involved, that helps form personalities and strengthen positive character traits. This is Bildung given the form of an exceedingly fun and modular adventure. This humble masterpiece is worth 5 stars + seal of approval and, unsurprisingly, a candidate for my Top Ten of 2016. If you share my firm belief that roleplaying games can make us all better people... then take a look. This module, frankly, is art in the most unpretentious manner you can define it; it leaves you better for having witnessed it.

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## Purple Duck Storeroom: Monster Treasure Hoard

**Publisher:** Purple Duck Games

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This installment of Purple Duck games' Purple Storeroom-series clocks in at 25 pages, 1 page front cover, 2 pages of SRD, leaving us with 22 pages of content,

though these are 6" by 9"-sized (A5); so what do we get here?

Well, it's pretty evident, right? Basically, this PDF provides a massive array of different tables of treasure, and yes, they do include a ton of gems and pieces of art...but at the same time, a ton of mechanically relevant magical items. Whether it's



*potions of reduce person*, spellbooks with a couple of spells, *feather tokens*, *robes of needles*...you get the idea. This is not just dressing, it is also mechanically relevant.

How much do we get? Well, a gigantic amount. From CR 1/4 to CR 20, we get a table at each CR. This means that this PDF contains no less than 230 entries for monster treasure. The respective header suggests a sample creature to have the treasure... but I honestly haven't properly depicted the detail this offers—for example, there even are entries of boxes with TRAPS. Aye, full rules. In a dressing table. That's some pretty impressive detail and shows a willingness to go above the requirements. There also is the level of imagination that you can find in this to be considered: what about the high CR entry that may cause you to find a bottled soul of a king's son? Yeah, that is pretty amazing indeed!

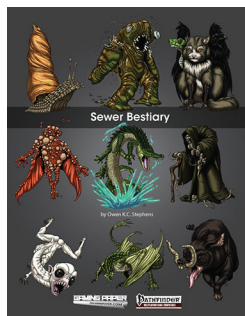
The PDF ends with a new item, the *abacus of inventory*, which streamlines the looting process and should be of particular use for groups starved on time.

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good; I noticed no significant glitches. Layout adheres to Purple Duck Games' one-column standard and is pretty printer-friendly; due to the size, I could fit 4 pages on one A4-page when printing this out. The PDF has no artwork apart from the cover, but comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Perry Fehr's monster hoards are an amazing assortment: creative, diverse, mechanically-relevant and we also get quite a lot of them for the more than fair asking price. What more can you ask of such a book? Not much! That's why I'll settle on a final verdict of 5 stars + seal of approval. Neat indeed!

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## Sewer Bestiary

**Publisher:** Gaming Paper

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This little bestiary clocks in at 16 pages, 3 of which are devoted to editorial, etc., leaving us with 13 pages for the critters herein.

The review is based on the dead-tree version I received at Gencon in exchange for an unbiased, critical review. Due to me receiving a print copy, this was moved up in my review-queue.

All right, so we begin this bestiary with the CR 1 Chimerette, which is an AMAZING concept: think of these guys as anti-familiars, instilled with an intense hatred for spellcasters and a will to free

their enslaved brethren. And yes, non-spellcasters may gain these as companions with a new feat presented herein.

The CR 4 Cystling is a similarly evocative concept: basically a fey that has literally been consumed and transformed by the cancerous growth of unchecked civilization's refuse into a horribly disturbing mockery of its former self. Yeah...evocative.

The Giant Cone Snail and its increased Emperor iteration at CR 1/2 and 3, respectively, are similarly cool: trails of slime make terrain difficult, poisonous stings, soft bits, and the option to traverse walls make these nasty threats. Speaking of animal-like threats: the vessel-capsizing CR 5 Black Boar with its jagged tusks is another effective, deadly threat that maintains the streamlined emphasis on efficiency you expect from animal builds.

The Denlock, at CR 3, are basically long-necked, hairless degenerate dwellers of the realms below, adept at swarming and leaping pounces. The CR 2 Plague Drake is a great story foe: they hatch from dragon eggs corrupted and diseased and thus can make for a perfect angle to introduce draconic mentors or do one of the scaled majesties a favor.

At CR 7, the Gatorpede is actually one of the few examples of weird hybrid creatures where I really can see it work; unique and deadly, it has the potential to become as popular as the classic owlbear. The CR 3 Filth Golem is usually not created; it happens when refuse manages to gain accidental sentience, emitting a powerful stench, nauseating blows and the classic immunity to magic make this for a great foe.

The CR 6 Prismatic Cube determines its color and precise effects anew every single round; from fire to acid and poison, it is a unique twist on the gelatinous cube. I've, as often, kept the best for last: the CR 9 Rat Emperor is basically a composite entity composed of a swarm of rats that grant it a collective intelligence. As such, it can swarm, spellcast, inflict the bubonic plague on foes...and worse. That's campaign BBEG-material, just add the required class levels and there we go, even at higher levels. My favorite critter herein, though...is one you will never see. No, not even with *invisibility purge*. Dire Midge Swarms, at CR 4, cause horrible itching and painful welts and they are particularly nasty when facing foes that are bleeding...oh, and they are so small you can't see them. This is amazing and I already know how I'll be using these critters.

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good; I noticed a minor formatting glitch of a purely aesthetic nature, but the Gaming Paper crew has since told me they



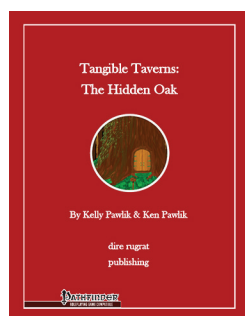
had fixed it, so consider this to be excellent. Layout adheres to a printer-friendly, solid 2-column b/w-standard, and each critter herein has a nice, original piece of artwork, all adhering to a uniform style. The softcover is solid and does not leave much to be desired for such a booklet.

A bestiary at this length has a tough job: it NEEDS to be all killer, no filler to warrant its dead tree price point, which is why you don't see too many small bestiaries at this length. Thankfully, the Gaming Paper crew has hired industry legend Owen K.C. Stephens to write this PDF. This may be the first bestiary of his I have read and it's absolutely glorious, an all-killer, no-filler beauty that I really want to use in my games. Not a single creature herein is even "only" good; every single critter here is superb, making this one of the best small bestiaries I have read in a long, long while, and Legendary Games has spoiled me big time regarding great creature design. This is superb and well worth getting in print. 5 stars + seal of approval.

This was made originally to supplement the cool Gaming Paper Mega-Dungeon game-aid.

You can, as per the writing of this review, only get this gem at Gaming Paper's shop.

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## **Tangible Taverns: The Hidden Oak**

**Publisher:** Dire Rugrat Publishing

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This installment of the Tangible Taverns-series clocks in at 22 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial/

ToC, 1 page foreword, 1/2 page advertisement, 2 pages of SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 15 1/2 pages of content; so let's take a look!

This PDF was moved up in my review queue as a prioritized review at the request of my patrons.

The PCs are traveling along a path through the forest, when they suddenly encounter a weather-beaten sign next to a small, but well-used path. The sign points towards "The Hidden Oak," and after a quarter mile through sunlit, light forest, the PCs arrive at a clearing, where colorful mushrooms and gorgeous flowers provide a carpet that leads straight up to a ginormous tree, which sports double doors, secured to the tree with bronze. Upon entering the place, they'll see an impressive badger snuffling around the place, as a halfling cheerfully ventures forth to greet them. They

obviously have found sanctuary...but they'll only realize that if they can take their eyes off the oak tree growing from the ceiling of the inside of this place, sending sparkling, warm magical light down upon the common area.

The respective rooms are no less enchanting and the tavern comes with information regarding the cost of staying there. As always, we receive exceedingly detailed rumors to kick off encounters or even adventures, with read-aloud text for each rumor – nice! Similarly, the events that take place here (8 of which are provided) sport a sense of the relaxed and benign, if weird: when griplis challenge for a friendly wrestling bout, remarkably good-natured quicklings enter the tavern or visions are to be had, you know that adventure and a nice diversions are right here. The PDF, just FYI, also goes into mouth-watering details regarding the food served here.

Beyond Beatrice the halfling who acts usually as greeter (and is a hunter 11 – don't mess with her or her badger Lola!), this fantastic place's owner, at least one of them, mind you, is Shadril, a dryad druid, whose stats (including an owl companion) are provided. And there would be Crescenzo, an old man smoking a pipe. Yep...and much like Elminster, Gandalf, Veranthus and similar icons, it is a damn BAD idea to cause any trouble around this fellow. He is peaceful, yes...but...well...I could spoil what he's really capable of, but that would be no fun, now, would it? \*cough\* CR 21 \*/cough\* Yep, stats provided. No, he's not the ole' cliché archmage. No, he's not a fey lord in disguise either. Yes, I have seen the trope before, but the execution is pretty fresh.

The tavern also includes Kaapo, a gripli martial artist and Thestrel, an elven unchained rogue wandering swindler, who are both engaging in various arm wrestling contests...and a non-statted mockingfey causes mischief with all but the dourest patrons. Speaking of which: there would be Kachina. She has a pumpkin head and walks on vines and is covered with gray 'shrooms that make her face...well, somewhat disturbing. She is a fungal gourd leshy with a temper (and horribly ineffective in combat, as you can see by her stats)... and she is not the only plant-being here: A treant named Burtsch (stats provided) who has lived through several bouts of deadly fungal diseases, which left him quite sociable and only barely larger than an elf, also frequents this place. He's been modified with the accursed template, in case you were wondering. There is also a fluff-only atomie called Tat to be found in the Hidden Oak. Pdraig



O'Bunley the leprechaun would be the final character featured here.

Now, in a piece of 3rd party camaraderie I enjoy, the PDF gives credit where credit is due and instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, features two of the culinary magic recipes originally debuted in the amazing "[Letters from the Flaming Crab: Culinary Magic](#)" by Flaming Crab Games. Better yet: there are two new ones! One for Mushroom Flowers and one for Fairy Rings – nice, btw.: I tried the recipes and the results were pretty tasty, though I did add some additional spices, since I'm pretty big on those. As a minor nitpick, one provides an untyped bonus, which I'd rather have seen codified.

Moreover, the appendix also features templates and material taking from Rogue Genius Games' "[The Genius Guide to Gruesome Undead Templates](#)" and Rite Publishing's superb "[The Book of Monster Templates](#)." Nice means of making the builds herein more diverse!

Oh, one more thing: The player-friendly one-page map is by far the most beautiful and creative I have seen so far in the series! Neat work there!

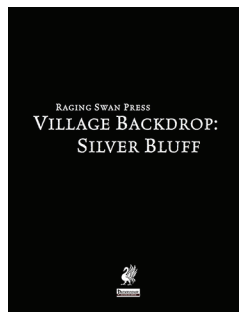
## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top notch; I noticed no significant hiccups. Layout adheres to Dire Rugrat Publishing's two-column b/w-standard and is printer-friendly. The PDF comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. The artwork featured herein is a blending of original pieces of b/w-artwork and some stock pieces: Ken Pawlik's drawing of the mug of Crescenzo, just FYI, is pretty much the best drawing I have seen by his hand...it's pretty neat. The cartography is less bare bones and more creative than that featured in earlier installments of the series as well.

Kelly & Ken Pawlik's "The Hidden Oak" is the best tavern they put out that I've reviewed so far; it takes the trope of the enchanted woodland sanctuary, perfect for PCs during prolonged wilderness trips and weaves a wholesome, light-hearted atmosphere that an enterprising GM can turn really grim, if s/he desires to. As written, this is a shelter, a sanctuary, a place for the misfits and the magical, the lone and the lost to find their way and enjoy a positively magical meal. The shout-outs to fellow 3PPS are nice to see, and the use of rules provided in these supplements to enhance the tavern and its denizens adds a level of complexity and care to the builds featured herein. It's frankly nice to see designers do their homework and going one step further. You may have noted a distinct lack of complaints: that would be simply because I don't

have any grievous claims beyond what would be unfair nitpickery. This is an excellent offering, well worth the low asking price. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## Village Backdrop: Silver Bluff

**Publisher:** Raging Swan Press

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This installment of RSP's Village Backdrop-series is 11 pages long, 1 page front cover, 2 pages of 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!

Silver Bluff is a mining town with a twist – sprung up as little more than a better camp, it began in a promising manner...but then, the mine's silver started to run out. At danger +30, you pretty much immediately realize that the local population did not take kindly to these changes and the ramshackle ethnic composition alongside the lack of a governing body mean that this is very much a dangerous place to be.

The vast chasm that separates the camp from the mine is also one of the reasons why this village is haunted by howling windstorms, which also influence the dressing habits of the place. The PDF features notes on nomenclature, appearance of locals, and 6 rumors for your convenience. The village also features notes on the local tavern, paranoid representatives ...this is not the nicest place to spend your time, though, e.g., mountain climbing equipment and a local dwarven cleric can help adventurers here. The PDF also features no less than 6 sample events...and one glorious hazard, which would be the semi-sentient, disintegrated machine that slowly regains its sentience and becomes a lethal, unique hazard. Stopping it will be hard...and I wished it and hazards like it had been more prevalent here.

In an example of less is more, the notes of what's hidden in the chasm feel a bit less intriguing and tied to the settlement – by emphasizing the wind theme instead, it would have become even more compelling...but that may just be me.

## Conclusion:

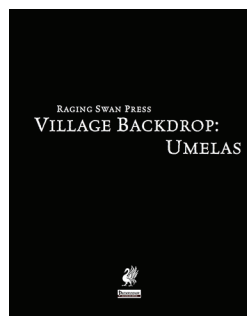
Editing and formatting are top-notch; I didn't notice any glitches. Layout adheres to RSP's smooth, printer-friendly two-column standard and the PDF



comes with full bookmarks as well as a gorgeous map, of which you can, as always, download high-res jpegs if you join RSP's Patreon. The PDF comes in two versions, with one being optimized for screen-use and one to be printed out.

Mike Welham's Silver Bluff is an evocative village with unique hazards and a nice theme. While it does not reach the apex of the series, the village still remains an excellent purchase and is well worth the low asking price. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars.

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## Village Backdrop: Umelas

**Publisher:** Raging Swan Press

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This installment of RSP's Village Backdrop-series is 11 pages long, 1 page front cover, 2 pages of 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!

Umelas is an utopian experiment and an adventure in disguise; formerly ruled by Hiswin Baeler, it is not an easy place to stay in. With a steep ravine and an ever-present saccharine stench suffusing the town from its sweet wines and cloying scent of white oak, the place perfectly embodies the creepiness of the sweet: the association with decay painted over by a scent of sugar and spice.

Everyone is smiling. There is joy all around...but much like a trip to Disneyland for a cynic, it makes you wonder, makes you see the darkness beyond... and indeed, only a few years ago, Umelas was wrecked by depression. Where today, sickness is rare and everyone seems healthy, that was not always the case. There are some rumors that this prosperity is the working of a benevolent fey named "Smiling

Bracken" and it indeed is...but what is the price the village has paid for its seemingly timeless blessings?

Well, the fey, for one, is unique and fully statted and from strange nightmares to the harsh consequences of unraveling the village's secret, the place stands as a grim reminder for cutting corners, for short-cuts...one that may well leave PCs asking themselves, whether the place wasn't better off before...or not. There is some complex morality and philosophy to be found in this little supplement. Oh, and yes, the PDF obviously comes with the usual notes on nomenclature, events, etc.

## **Conclusion:**

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

Jeff Gomez' Umelas is one of the most amazing villages in the series, but, much like the sweet wine it produces, Umelas is not for the faint of heart. Decidedly dark, it is a supplement perfectly suited for gamers craving a bit of horror or dark fantasy, a richly-detailed and amazing little piece of concise writing, presented in lavish prose. In fact, this could be run as basically a pocket domain of Ravenloft, if you'd so choose. And I mean that as a compliment. The experience of adventuring in Umelas will, much like eating sickeningly sweet food, stay with your PCs and players after they're done. I tried hard not to SPOIL anything here. This is a great adventure, just waiting to be fleshed out and any GM worth half his salt can throw the PCs in and improvise a full-blown module out of this gem. Suffice to say: Get this! My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

**Endzeitgeist out.**



*Illustration by Evgeny Averin*



## THE PATH LESS TRAVELED #30: LFG!

By Jacob E. Blackmon





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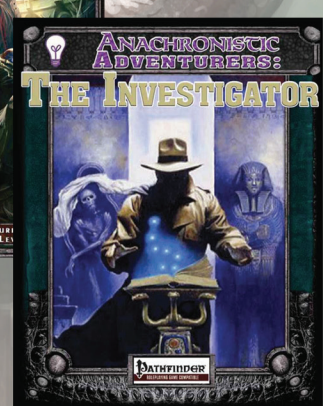
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