Pathways

Dionisis Milonas

Letters from the Flaming Crab

40+ WONDROUS & ALCHEMICAL ITEMS AND SPELLS IN THE TRADITION OF AURORA'S / SEARS CATALOG "ABUSE-PROOF, HILARIOUS, NIGH-PERFECT"

Household Magic Catalog

Alex Abel   Alex Coley
Phoebe Harris   Kelly Pawlik
Kendra Leigh Speedling

Pathways Magazine

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Editorial

by Dave Paul

Ironically, this month's theme is memory. I say ironically because I forgot that I hadn't written the editorial until the last possible moment. This morning I was reading the editorial of a book written by collaborators. The editor wrote about how she does both writing and editing, that she often publishes under the Creative Commons license, and that most of her work is uncompensated. My own experience is so similar (though I am now mostly compensated for my work, I wrote and edited uncompensated for more than a decade) that I found myself reflecting on how her experiences were similar to my own and wondering about our other similarities. Before I could reflect deeply on that, or look for those other similarities, it occurred to me that I might not have written the editorial for issue 66 of *Pathways* and that I'd better go check. And here I am.

We usually have an article or two that deviates from the theme. This time Creighton Broadhurst's contribution is one of those. I really like how simply one can get to a thousand different variations on what can so easily be boring. Sometimes, I'll admit, an encounter doesn't really call for elaborate description. I mean, sometimes your party is following a trail through the woods and you're surprised by 15 kobolds and it really doesn't matter how each one of them is attired, what their background stories are, etc., in part because your party's wizard is going to drop five of them with a lightning bolt a few seconds before the fighter and rogue settle into positions from which they can take out all but the three who manage to run away. After the fact, it might be fun to find out that one of them was carrying a weird little human child's toy in its belt pouch (along with two copper pieces and a decomposing rabbit's foot). But, honestly, there are times when the enemies can be generic. There are other times when you want some complexity. In these cases, sometimes you have a specific NPC in mind and the creature will be detailed and with any luck won't fail a critical save on the first encounter and ruin the GM's plans. In other cases, you want some complexity because it'll be fun but you don't want to put in all the time necessary to do the work from scratch. Here's where three tables like the ones in this article come in handy. Roll d10 three times, consult each table, and now you have a one-in-a-thousand hill giant for the players to encounter. Brilliant.

There are more spells than usual in this issue. I don't know whether that's a good or bad thing, but it's what we have. Jeff Duncan gives us some clever options for spell casters who are interested in manipulating memory in their adventuring. I suppose these would also be nice tools for the GM to allow NPC casters to have access to information that they might not otherwise have. Sometimes, it's a joy to mess with players by having NPCs know more than they should – in this case we get rules and techniques to justify what might otherwise be GM fiat. The other piece that has several spells in my Spells Showcase piece. It took a while to find already-published spells that fit nicely with the theme. I think two of them fit better than the third, but if you look, you'll find why all three are appropriate. I have to admit that I enjoy the challenge.

Until next month…

Happy gaming.
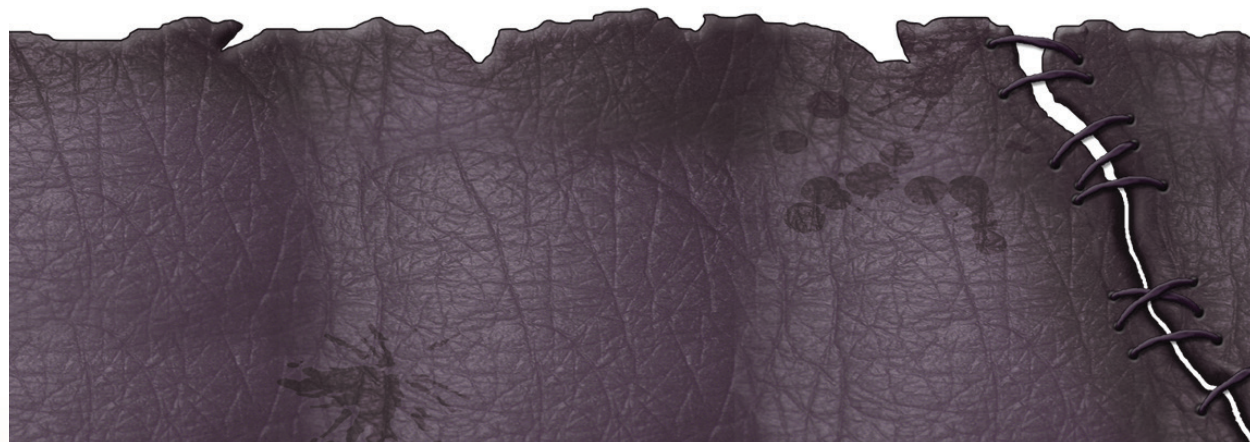
Lethe Eater Creature Template

by Owen K.C. Stephens, Illustration by Dionisis Milonas

A lethe eater is a horrific creature that subsists on the memories it steals from others. They are believed to have been created by some psychic experimenter in a project gone horribly wrong, or be the result of a divine cure (or possibly both).

Creating a Lethe Eater Creature

"Lethe eater" is a template that can be added to any corporeal creature.

Alignment: Alignment changes to any evil.

CR: +1

HP: A lethe eater gains bonus hit points equal to double the base creature's original CR.

Offensive Abilities: The lethe eater gains a +1 untyped bonus to all attack rolls and to the save DC of any spell or ability the base creature possesses.

Defensive Abilities: The lethe eater gains a +1 untyped bonus to all AC (including flat-footed and touch) and all saving throws. If the base creature had DR or SR, its value increases by 2. If it had energy resistances, they all increase by 10. If it had a resistance of 30, that becomes an immunity.

Special Abilities

Consume Memory (Su): As a standard action, the lethe eater may make a single melee or ranged attack. If the attack hits the target, it does normal damage, and also forces the target to make a Will save (DC 10 +1/2 the lethe eater's HD, + the lethe eater's Con or Cha modifier, whichever I higher). If the target fails its save, the lethe eater enters on of the target's memories, and begins to consume it.

A phantom version of the lethe eater appears, which only the target can see. It has the same stats as the lethe eater, except it has a -2 penalty to saves, AC, and attack rolls, and has only 1 hp per hit die. The target sees this phantom as literally being in an old memory, eating everything in sight. A lethe eater can maintain a maximum number of phantoms at once equal to 1 +1/3 CR, but can never have more than one phantom eating the same target's memories.

The target has 1d4+1 rounds to destroy this phantom, or it consumes one memory permanently. No one other than the target can see or affect the phantom lethe eater, unless they have a way to alter to enter another creature's dreams or memory. For example, a *modify memory* spell could be used to add the spellcaster to the target's memory, allowing the spellcaster to see (and affect) the lethe phantom. A lethe phantom is always staggered, and cannot use the consume memory ability.

If the lethe phantom is not destroyed within the given time frame, the target character loses a memory permanently, this results in the loss of 1 feat, or 1 skill point per level. The lost feat or skill points cannot be prerequisites for anything unless there is no other feat or skill points available. The lost skill points or feat are regained by any ability that can restore lost memories or cure insanity. Otherwise, they are regained when the target next gains a character level *as new memories allow the target to tap its unused potential), but they cannot be spent on the same feat or skills. (However other skill points or feat slots can be used to regain any lost ability).

If a lethe phantom successfully consumed a memory, the memory becomes visible as a section of glowing brain within the lethe eater's belly. The lethe eater gains a +1 morale bonus to skill checks, attack and damage rolls, and saving throws for each memory it has consumed within the past 24 hours, to a maximum equal to 1/2 its CR.

If the attack that created a lethe phantom kills its target, or the target dies while fighting a lethe phantom, a new lethe eater is created from the lost, consumed memories of the dead creature within 1d8 days. Apply this template to the slain target to represent the new lethe eater.

Memory Vulnerability (Su): Any spell that can erase or modify memories can badly damage a lethe eater, which is dependent on its stolen memories to survive. The lethe eater takes 1d4 points of damage per level of the spell, plus must make a Will save (DC based on the save DC of a spell of the same level from the same source) or be confused for 1 round per spell level. While confused if the lethe eater receives a result that would cause it to hurt itself, and it has a lethe phantom active, it instead consumes that phantom (destroying it). If the lethe eater is normally mindless or immune to mind-

affecting effects, it remains vulnerable to those that affect memories.

A lethe eater that has not eaten a memory from a creature with an Int of 3 or higher within 30 days begins to starve, using normal starvation rules and treating memories as its food.

Memory Sucker

A bloated, belly filled with glowing brains dangles beneath the furiously beating wings of this massive mosquito.

Giant Mosquito Lethe Eater	CR 7

XP 3,200

N Medium vermin

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 18, flat-footed 13 (+7 Dex, +2 natural, +1 untyped)

hp 72 (8d8+24+12)

Fort +10, **Ref** +10, **Will** +4

Immune mind-affecting effects

Vulnerability Memory vulnerability (see above)

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee bite +11 (1d8+6 plus bleed, disease, and grab)

Special Attacks bleed (2d4), blood drain (1d2 Constitution), consume memory (see above)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 25, **Con** 17, **Int** —, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +10 (+14 grapple); **CMD** 27 (35 vs. trip)

Skills Fly +11, Perception +9; Racial Modifiers Perception+8

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Consume Memory (Su) See above.

Disease (Ex) Malaria: Bite—injury; save Fortitude DC 18; onset 1d3 days; frequency 1 day; effect 1d3 Constitution damage and 1d3 Wisdom Damage; cure 2 consecutive saves.
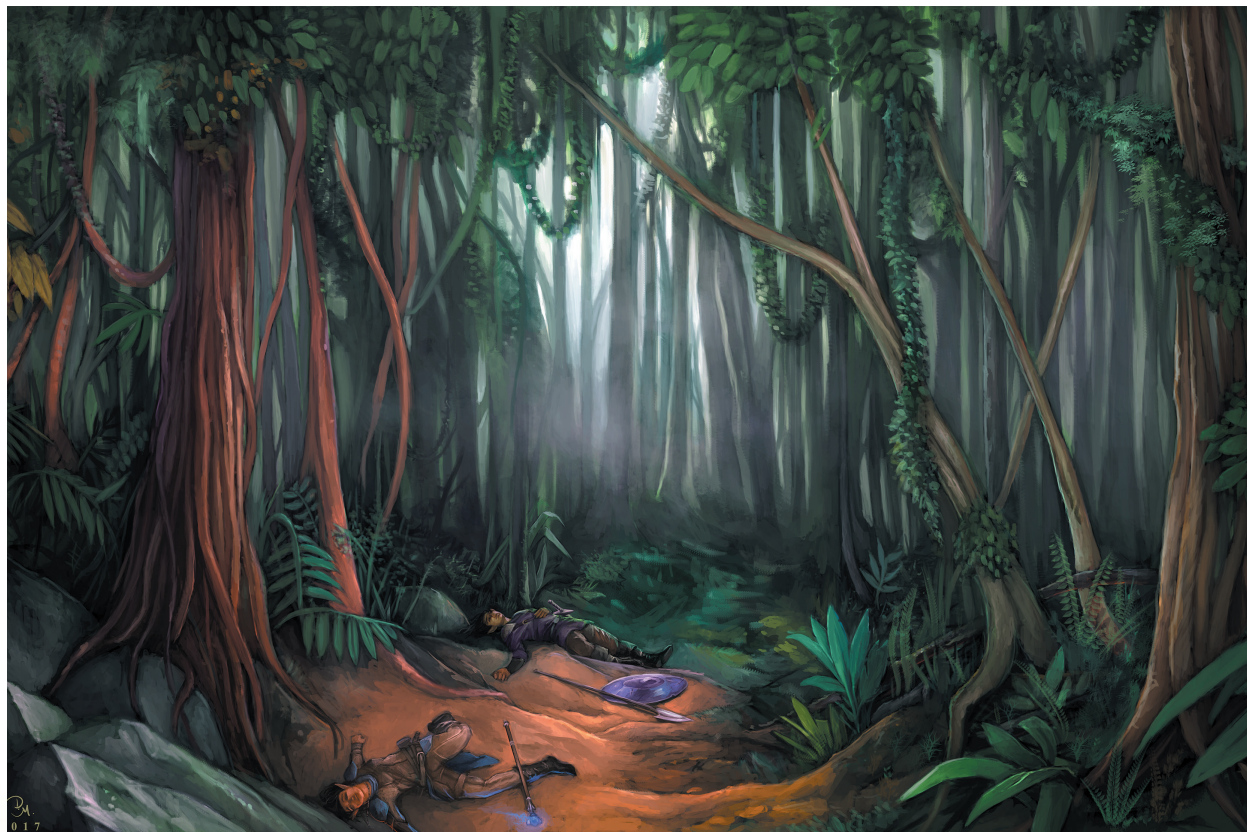
The save DC is Constitution-based.

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or tropical swamps

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

Creature Components

Volume 1

For generations wizards have sought ways to augment their already substantial magical abilities.

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"There is narrative potential for years in the system presented here and I absolutely love it to bits. This book is stellar and deserves a final verdict of 5 stars + seal of approval, is a candidate for my top ten of 2016 and receives the EZG Essentials-tag". - Endzeitgeist

PLAYGROUND ADVENTURES

1,000 Abnormal Hill Giants

By Creighton Broadhurst, Illustration by Elder of the Earth
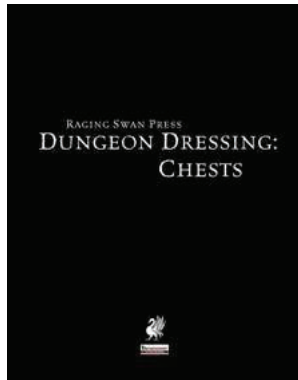
Brutish and nomadic, hill giants wander their upland homes in search of food and treasure. They are selfish, rapacious raiders and only seek battle against the little people when they believe they'll win. The hill giant's roving nature make them relatively common foes for adventurers travelling through hilly borderland regions. A single giant can be a real threat for even a mid-level party and an entire tribe on the move is a terrifying sight.

A standard hill giant appears thusly:

This hunched but muscular brutish giant wears filthy furs and torn clothes.

Appearance

To the basic description above, apply one of the entries below.

1. Balding with a single, bushy eyebrow, this giant's face is fixed in a perpetual snarl.

2. A simplistic tattoo—perhaps of an eagle—decorates the giant's forehead. The tattoo is so bad, though, in truth it is hard to determine exactly what it really depicts.

3. The smell of sweat and other noxious stenches precedes this giant by a good ten feet.

4. This giant wears a crudely made wolfskin cloak that isn't really long enough. If the party includes any wolf or dog companions, the giant goes for the animal in preference to other targets.

5. Although bald, this giant has a full beard and thick sideburns.

6. This giant's clothes smell of smoke, and other foul things.

7. Missing an eye, this giant wears a furry eyepatch. She has an impressive head of elaborately braided hair.

8. A berserk, this giant prefers to battle in the nude, to better terrify his enemies. He spends the first round of combat screaming insults at his enemies…and stripping.

9. Massively fat, and swathed in layers of animal fur, this giant waddles into combat.

10. Something of a tribal champion, this giant wears the bleached skull of a large draconic creature (a wyvern) as a helmet.

Battle Tactics

In battle, some hill giants fight differently than their brethren.

1. Particularly stupid—even for a giant—this giant gets so excited he throws his club at an enemy, disarming himself. If he can't retrieve his club, he wrestles the weakest-looking enemy.

2. This giant shouts and screams terrible, but colourful, threats before charging into battle to intimidate his foes.

3. A bully, this giant goes for the smallest available target.

4. This giant is scared of dwarves, and avoids fighting them if at all possible.

5. A keen "slinger" this giant prefers to hang back from battle and throw stuff—anything—at his enemies. He targets spellcasters and archers.

6. Short-sighted, this giant gets very close to her enemies before rolling stones at her target as if she was playing marbles.

7. Terrified by fire, this giant flees battle if an enemy demonstrates command over magical fire.

8. This giant has just captured a live goat he plans to eat later. With his hands full, and without any stones, he uses it as a missile weapon.

9. This giant has a comically high-pitched voice, and uses it—badly—to inspire his comrades in battle.
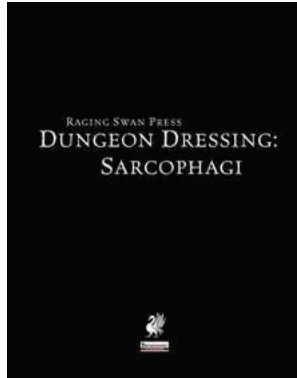
10. Violent, even for a giant, this warrior loves to bite into the flesh of his enemies. He savages any helpless or unconcious opponent.

Trinkets & Treasures

Sometimes hill giants carry small trinkets or treasures in their bags. Roll on the table below, if you determine the creature has an item of treasure or interest.

1. A mangled sheep's corpses fills this giant's bag.

2. This giant wears a wyvern's skull as a helmet (see #10 in Appearance). He has wedged a pair of large onyxes into its eye sockets. Each is worth 150 gp.

3. This giant's cloak, is cut from the fur of a single gigantic mountain lion. Its head comprises the cloak's hood. Such a large and impressive example—if cleaned—is worth 50 gp.

4. A haunch of burnt meat fills this giant's pouch along with some small (for the giant) shiny stones he thought were pretty.

5. A necklace of fangs—from wolves, bears and so on—hangs around the giant's neck on a leather thong. Many of the teeth are worn and yellowed with age.

6. The giant keeps a bent longsword in its bag to use as a knife. The blade is ruined, but tentacle etchings on its pommel are picked out with wound silver wire. The pommel is worth 50 gp.

7. Something of a thinker among her fellows, this giant keeps a bloodstained, faded and weather-worn libram in her bag. It seems to be an ancient treatise on the surrounding terrain depicting some (now ruined) ancient fortresses unknown to the PCs.

8. This giant uses a backpack sized for a human as a pouch. It contains 50 ft. of rope, a flask of brandy (which the giant hasn't found) and a thick winter blanket.

9. This giant is unlucky. His bag has a hole in it, and his treasures have been falling out for weeks. All that remains are 3 gp caught in a fold, a small boulder and a battered and empty bone scroll case.

10. This giant's (oversized) bag is actually a mimic that had recently attached itself to the giant…

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.

Spell Showcase - Memory Themed

By Dave Paul

Generally, spells designed to function particularly well in environments aren't ideal for having an impact on memory or being in some other way related to memory. However, there are three of my environment-themed spells that do seem to fit nicely with this month's theme. In particular, *pixie's arrows* from *101 Forest Spells* and *nondescript* from *101 Urban Spells* seem like good fits from much older books, and *witchcrow covey* from the very recent *101 Plains Spells* also fits in a peculiar sort of way.

~~

When I was writing *nondescript* I wanted to capture the meaning of that often-used word and give casters a chance to really exploit what it means for someone to not remember them. I played a wizard in a campaign where magic was outlawed in many areas of the world and it was very dangerous for her to be remembered. I did what I could with spells like *alter self,* some other spells, and too much time spent changing clothes and relying on being able to use disguises. A spell like *nondescript* would have been wonderful for her. Without wanting to assume too much about others' play styles, I wanted this spell to be useful for arcane casters of a variety of types, but it occurred to be that inquisitors and rangers would really benefit from being able to track others without folks in the area having any sense that they were around. Before long, the spell really seemed useful to quite a few casters and so I opened up the options for this one. I do think it would have been just a little too powerful, even for its level, if the range were touch. I think there are ways to make that happen, and with the level being what it is, there are ways of getting this spell into magic items in a way that could really be fun for a player (or a GM).

Nondescript

School: Illusion (pattern) [mind-affecting]**; Level:** Alchemist 3, Bard 3, Inquisitor 3, Magus 3, Ranger 2, Sorcerer/Wizard 3, Witch 3
Casting Time: 1 minute
Components: V, S, M (skin of a chameleon)
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: Will disbelieve (see text)**; Spell Resistance:** No

When others encounter you they treat you as one of the many nameless people they might encounter every day. You are utterly unremarkable to everyone. People who do encounter you will have no memory of it.

Anyone who directly and purposefully interacts with you is granted a Will save after the exchange. For every 4 ranks in Bluff you have, the DC of the save is increased by +1. If the target succeeds on the save, it remembers some features about the encounter. For every 2 points by which the save succeeds, the target remembers one additional fact. Only if a target succeeds by 10 or more, or rolls a natural 20, does it remember enough to be able to provide an account of you that is accurate enough for another to recognize that the target encountered you and not someone else.

Certain behaviors may override your tendency to blend into the background. In order for *nondescript* to be maximally effective, your own behaviors shouldn't arouse suspicion. Suspicious behavior (as determined by the GM) alter the saves of those with whom you interact.

If you cast *nondescript* in a settlement you know very well (as determined by the GM), the save DC is increased by +2. Add the settlement's society modifier to the DC of the save (whether that modifier is positive or negative).

~~

I assume that there aren't many GMs who will just let characters find pixie dust lying around. One of the greatest limitations of this spell is that the material component should be really challenging to acquire. But, once you've got some pixie dust, you have a really nice spell. The first time a wizard has access to it, it shoots 3 arrows and could very well charm, put to sleep, or radically affect the memories of up to 3 targets. Many casters would avoid the spell because the effects are random and each arrow requires a successful attack to work. But a sleep effect that isn't limited by the target's HD, and *charm monster* are potentially encounter-changing (or game-changing). I would think that certain sorcerers with particular bloodlines might actually revel in the possibilities here.

Pixie's Arrows

School: Conjuration (creation)**; Level:** Bard 4, Sorcerer/Wizard 5
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Components: V, S, M (pixie dust)
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: One or more arrows
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates; see text**; Spell Resistance** Yes

Several tiny arrows shoot forth from your hands and speed toward targets you select. *Pixie's arrows* produces 1 arrow per 3 caster levels (maximum of 5 arrows). The arrows may be aimed at the same or different targets, but all the arrows must be aimed at targets within 30 feet of each other and fired simultaneously. Each arrow requires a ranged touch attack to hit. The effects of the arrows are determined randomly as follows. The save DC for each effect is the save DC of *pixie's arrows*.

1d3	Effect
1	*charm monster* (5 minute duration)
2	*sleep* (2 minute duration, not limited by creature's HD)
3	*memory loss* (per *modify memory*, 5 minutes of memory are lost)

If a subject is affected by the same effect more than once, the durations stack. If a subject is affected by different effects simultaneously, resolve them per GM adjudication, but allow each to have an effect if possible.

If this spell is cast in temperate forest terrain, the save DCs are increased by +2 and the spell produces 1 additional arrow (to a maximum of 6 arrows).

~~

I doubt there are many spells with a casting time of 13 rounds or an effect identifying 13 creatures. However, at least in the English-speaking American audience I was aiming to rattle, 13 is a provocative number and I needed to establish strong limitations with a spell that can call so many creatures. Further, and this is what makes the spell work in this issue of *Pathways*, if the spell gets screwed up during the casting, the witchcrows that you were planning to call will remember that you were calling them (and the GM is encouraged to turn this into something unsettling for you later). In particular, I felt that this spell could be a great way for a GM to spy on characters throughout a campaign over many years. The caster could be a nemesis who grows in power as the characters gain levels and there is something compellingly creepy about a campaign where the characters always have to be wary of the fact that all the birds in the world are potentially agents spying for the enemy.

Witchcrow Covey

School: Conjuration (calling) [chaotic, evil]**; Level:** Antipaladin 4, Cleric/Oracle 5, Sorcerer/Wizard 5, Witch 5
Casting Time: 13 rounds
Components: V, S, M/DF (1 or more magic items worth a total of no less than 1,000 gp)
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: 13 or more called witchcrows
Duration: Instantaneous; see text
Saving Throw: None**; Spell Resistance:** No

Despite the spell's name, you call a murder of witchcrows. In the first round of your casting, the calling reaches across the realms and a group of at least 13 witchcrows responds. If the spell is interrupted before the casting is complete, the witchcrows never appear and those particular witchcrows remember you (the meaning of which is left to the GM). If the spell's casting is completed, the duration of the spell ends immediately after the witchcrows appear. The magic of this calling exhausts the witchcrows' daily use of their apportation ability for this day. Each witchcrow acts entirely on its own and will act in whatever way it chooses (though they recognize the value in working together and understand that they have been called together as a group).

You may request a service from the murder of witchcrows. The more valuable the gift you offer to the witchcrows, the more likely they will remain and serve you. They are particularly fond of being asked to spy on, harass, or steal from arcane casters and will be eager to engage in such pursuits especially if they are free to keep some of the treasure they find while carrying out your wishes. The more complex and time-consuming the task, the more valuable must be the offering. They will collectively use their apportation to return home when they finish their task. In general, you should expect to offer gifts worth at least 1,000 gp per day that the task is expected to take to complete, and especially complex or dangerous tasks will usually cost at least twice this amount.
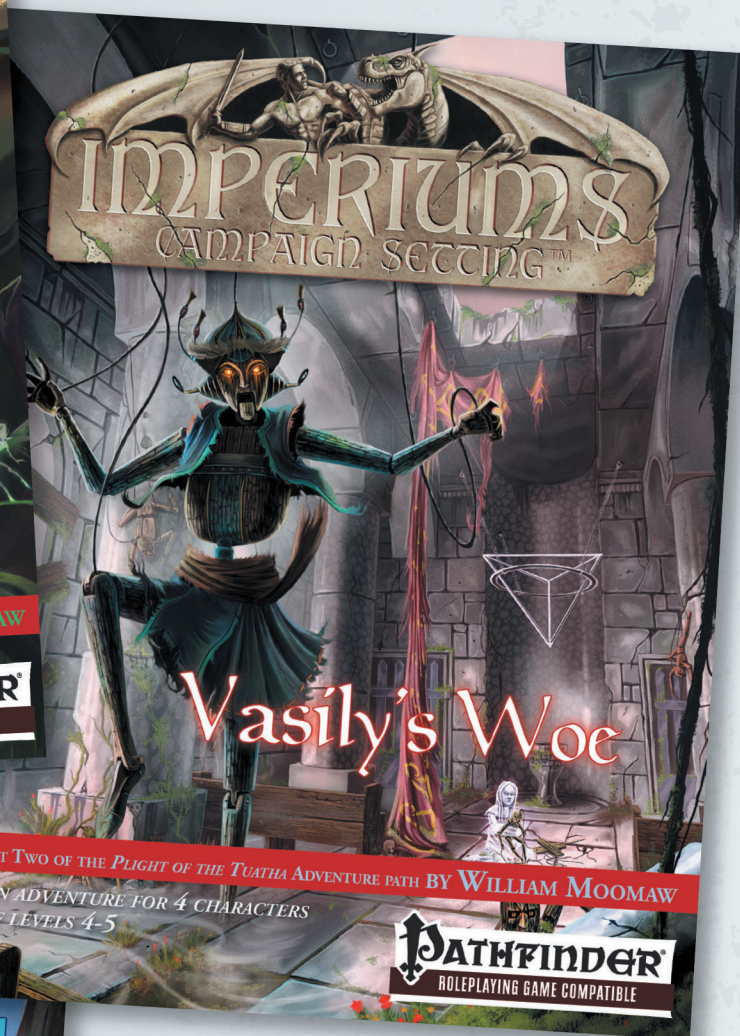
They make excellent use of all their special and spell-like abilities, work very well together, and are exceptionally resourceful (as they can communicate with birds, they will often engage in hours of research as part of carrying out your plans, should you provide them with sufficient time to do so).

If your caster level is 13 or higher, you call an additional 1d3 witchcrows/level when you cast this spell. You may not cast this spell again while a covey is carrying out your wishes and you must wait at least 13 days after the task has been completed before casting it again. If the covey is prevented from completing the task, if several of the witchcrows are killed attempting to complete the task, etc., and the witchcrows determine that this is due in some way to what you have done or failed to do, future castings of the spell are likely to fail without significantly costlier gifts.

The magic involved in the casting of *witchcrow covey* prevents them from using their apportation ability except to return home (this is an exception to the normal restrictions on that ability). Normally, they will use this ability to return home when they've completed their task. They may choose, however, to use it to return home at any time at least 1 day after you called them.

Memory Incantations

By J.L. Duncan, Illustration by Egonzoli

This short collection of memory spells presents some ideas about how magic can be utilized with the faculty of memory. While the one aspect of the writing is intended as a GM's boon in regards to plot fulfillment and adventure seeding, players won't find a less arduous device for finding clues or gathering evidence. The latter fact should be seriously considered for GMs running occult- or mystery-themed adventures.

Enjoy and game on.

Behold Memory

School enchantment [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 6, sorcerer/wizard 8
Casting Time 2 rounds
Components V, S
Range touch
Target you, one living creature or memoria essence
Duration Concentration to a maximum of 5 minutes +1 minute/level
Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

You probe into a creature's mind or your own mind and are able to experience a nearly perfect memory of a specific event. The memory is observed from a first- or third-person perspective, with all five senses of this memory intact. You can alter your perspective within this memory at will. For this spell to have effect, the memory of the event cannot exceed 3 days, or the memory must have been strengthened prior by a mind-affecting enchantment.

In first person, the memory is experienced directly and can be used to ascertain the basic identity of a person, place or thing (GM's discretion). If the creature is a witness of an event or has committed an act, the nature of the act or identity of person witnessed, if available in the memory, is not in question.

In third person, the memory can be used to obtain specific details and allows the caster to move about the theater of the memory, relevant to the creature's cognizant experience and sense ability. The distance the caster can travel from first person perspective is equal in feet to twice the creature's Intelligence score, as long as this location is not obscured by physical barriers and/or out of the experiencer's range of sense. Specific details, such as the features of a face

or the decorative craft on the hilt of a sword or any such element can be closely scrutinized and committed to the caster's active memory for later identification, if the element is within the above mentioned range. Each detail (request) requires 1 minute of duration/concentration.

You will know if a specific memory has been tampered with via the spell *modify memory*. A modified memory is inconsistent with the normal sense experience of the memory theater; sounds which were once clear might be muffled or specific faces might appear blurred, where others are not. If the creature's mind has been wiped of a memory, you do not have access to it.

You can cast this spell on yourself and share a specific memory with up to two creatures with the same casting; one in first person, one in third person. This effect can be used with a memoria essence.

If a target creature fails to save, you can visualize and scrutinize the memory until the duration expires. If your concentration is disturbed before completion, or the creature is beyond physical touch, the spell is lost. This spell does not alter a memory in any way. Agents within a memory are intangible observers.

Behold Memory, Lesser

School enchantment [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 2, sorcerer/wizard 4
Casting Time 1 minute
Components V, S
Range touch
Target you, one living creature, or memoria essence
Duration 1 minute +1 minute/5 levels
Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes (memoria essence: no)

You probe into a creature's mind or your own mind and are able to experience the memory of a specific event. The memory is beheld from a first-person perspective. The caster has no conscious control to change the sense experience (looking left, when the creature of the memory looked right) or take in more than what the memory offers from this first-person perspective. The memory is experienced directly and can be used to ascertain the basic identify of a person, place

or thing (GM's discretion). If the creature is a witness to an event or has committed an act, the nature of the act or identity of persons witnessed (if available in the memory), is not in question.

You can cast this spell on yourself and share a memory with one other living creature. For this spell to have effect the memory of the event cannot exceed 1 day or the memory must have been strengthened prior by a mind-affecting enchantment.

Create Memoria Essence

School enchantment [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 2, sorcerer/wizard 4
Casting Time 2 standard actions
Components V, S, M (a sealable decanter/flask, to place the essence)
Range touch
Target you, or one living creature
Duration 24 hours
Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

This spell enables you to create a duplicate of a specific memory and extract this duplicate beyond the source mind. The original memory is unaffected and retained in the mind of the creature. When the spell is concluded the extracted memoria takes shape as luminous marble, which floats at your will.

The memoria can be joined with your own mind or guided into vessel for later study. Outside of a mind and without further magical treatment the memoria will disintegrate in 1d6 minutes. If you meld the memoria into your mind, or place it in a sealable vessel, the memoria will be sustained for 24 hours.

Casting *sustain memory* on a memoria holds the memoria for that spell's duration. Casting *permanency* on it causes the memoria to be sustained indefinitely. If the memory is in a transparent glass container, the memoria needn't be removed for

use with other magic such as *behold memory*. The memoria has one hit point and can be destroyed without magic or at any time by the will of the caster. The memoria cannot be altered without a mind, by any means.

Placing a foreign creature's memory in a caster's mind occupies a first level spell slot. The memory can be evacuated from this slot at any time, at will.

Fizzle Minds

School enchantment [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 4, sorcerer/wizard 6
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (2 marble-sized gems for each target worth 250 gp per marble)
Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Target one living creature/2 levels
Duration 1 minute/level
Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

This spell confounds targets' memories. A failed save disrupts the proper functioning of each creature's mind shutting down its ability to utilize feats and cast arcane spells. What was once second nature, from the mental recall needed to cast a spell, to muscle memory required for feats, is temporarily unavailable. This spell has no effect on character traits, ability scores or skills. Creatures

with an aura as a class feature (for example, clerics and paladins) are immune to *fizzle minds*.

When an affected target attempts to cast an arcane spell something goes awry (the phrase is out of order, the wrong material components are obtained, etc.) and the spell fails. When an affected target attempts to use a feat, the competence or experience normally associated with that feat simply fails the person.

Mine Memory

School enchantment [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 3, sorcerer/wizard 6
Casting Time 1 round
Components V, S
Range 60 ft.
Target one living creature
Duration concentration up to 1 minute/level
Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

The spell enables you to source specific details embedded within a creature's memory. With this spell you mine real world knowledge, not frivolous thoughts or concerns. If the creature fails the save, the mine temporarily disrupts aspects of the collected memory, causing the target creature to gain the confused condition each time the creature attempts to rely on this memory to perform a task; this condition persists for 1 round per caster level. Each request of knowledge (whether it is known by the creature or unknown), takes one minute to mine properly. You retain mined knowledge for 3 days.

Person: You mine the creature for the memory of a specific person; the creature must have had interaction with the person in question for the placement of the memory. This mine also gives you an approximate timetable as to when the person was last seen by the creature.

Place or Thing: You mine the creature for the memory of a specific place or thing (the last time it was perceived by the target). The layout and inner chambers of a dungeon, the location of traps and heavily fortified areas, the layout of a city or something specific like the location of a secret guild etc., are within knowledge per GM adjudication.

Skill: If the creature has a higher skill rank in a specific skill you share, you can temporality borrow the memory of that training to gain a +1 competence bonus to that skill's checks until the spell ends. You cannot increase the bonus to any skill beyond +1, but you can mine a maximum of three different skills.

Mine memory does not put a specific memory into focus, but uses a collection of memories which equals the experience and knowledge of the creature targeted. You cannot use this spell on yourself.

Mine Memory, Lesser

School enchantment [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 1, sorcerer/wizard 2
Casting Time: 1 round
Components V, S
Range 60 ft.
Target you or one living creature
Duration concentration, 1 min
Saving Throw: Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

The spell enables you to source specific knowledge embedded within your own or another creature's memory. If you cast *lesser mine memory* to share your own collected memory you must cite your overall knowledge (using fewer than five words) of a specific thing as part of the casting. If you cast *lesser mine memory* on a creature, the spell acts like *mine memory* except that only one item of knowledge can be mined, skills cannot be mined, the target does not gain the confused condition, and any mined knowledge is retained for 1 day.

Sustain Memory

School enchantment [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 1, sorcerer/wizard 2
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S
Range touch
Duration 1 week + 1 day/level
Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

This spell maintains the integrity of a specific memory beyond the capability of the source mind. The purpose of the spell is to preserve the existence of the memory, for use with other spells. The recipient of *sustain memory* gains a +1 enhancement bonus to saves against mind affecting spells and effects for the duration.

This spell is opposable and can be used to weaken the details of a specific memory. The features of a face can be placed beyond recall, the memory of an interaction nearly forgotten, etc. This spell does not remove the memory, but makes it unimportant in the mind of the creature affected. Higher level memory spells such as *modify memory*, *mine memory* and *behold memory*, proceed unaffected.

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Memory Games to Challenge Your PCs
By Lj Stephens

Puzzles, riddles, and mysteries are a fun addition to your games. Usually though, they are resolved with the roll of a die, and based on the characters' knowledge skills. Sometimes, it's more fun to work things out through roleplaying or through simple out-of-character games inserted into the evening to break up the monotony. You can make up anything you like to simulate this from things as simple as three card monte, or using an old Simon (electronic light up color/pattern) game, to something as difficult as trying to remember a random string of letters and numbers without the benefit of notes. Whether you choose to do this in character or out, below are a few memory games a GM can use to add some flavor to the evening.

Each game is presented with level of complexity (how hard it is to set up), level of difficulty (how hard it is to solve), and a list of materials needed for play.

Interesting Historical Note: Even Mark Twain published a memory game in the late 19th century, though it was not well received by the public.

Check it out!

Memory Match

Complexity: Simple

Difficulty: Varies

Materials: Any deck of cards

Take any deck of cards that features matched sets (ie. Poker cards have two red queens, Uno cards have at least two green sevens, tarot cards don't have matches, but you could use cups, swords, etc.). If you don't have playing cards of any kind, you can always go to a paint store and pick up sample color swatches in sets of two, but this does make for an easier challenge. Choose several sets of two, and some cards without matches; we'll call them "fail" cards. See table below to help you decide how many of what type of cards to choose, depending on the level difficulty desired. Shuffle your deck. Deal out all the cards face down on the table. Go around the table, letting each player turn over two cards at a time. If they turn over two matching cards, they remove the set from play. If the cards do not match, they are turned back over and the next player tries. The goal is to find every matching set before they find all the fail cards.

Difficulty	# of sets	# of fail cards
Easy	3	3
Medium	4	3
Hard	5	2
Nigh Impossible	6	1

If you really want to make this challenging, try using Mahjong tiles instead of playing cards.

Shell Game

Complexity: Simple

Difficulty: Easy

Materials: A ball and three cups

Well, in this case, I think we'll use plastic cups. Make sure you have opaque cups, or else, this will be over pretty quick. You'll need at least three, more if you want to make it harder, and a quiet, soft ball, or other object (like maybe a cotton ball), that doesn't make any noise when moved. This one is pretty straight forward. You show the players where the ball is, then cover it with a upside-down cup. Place another two cups upside-down next to it and shuffle as quickly as you can. Be careful not to tip the cups and let the players see what's under them. The party's ability to follow the shuffle and find the location of the ball in one try is the only determination of success.

Covered objects

Complexity: Complex

Difficulty: Hard

Materials: A stopwatch, or an egg timer, or a watch with a second hand; also see below

Find a dozen or more simple household objects, small enough to fit under a cloth on your tabletop. Set them up while your players are out of the room. Cover them with a cloth that doesn't give away what's beneath. Lift the cloth to allow the players to see the objects on the table for as long as the difficulty level calls for (see table). Then cover them back up. The goal for the players is to remember as many of the items as they can, in whatever order is determined by the difficulty level. The percentage of the number of objects remembered determines the success level of the party.

Difficulty	# Objects	Time	Order	% Remembered
Easy	12	15 seconds	any	50%
Medium	12-18	15 seconds	any	75%
Hard	18-24	10 seconds	left-to-right, or front-to-back	80%
Nigh impossible	18	10 seconds	alphabetical	85%

If you want to allow character abilities to influence this challenge, let your players make Int checks to add +1 second of time, per point over 15, to the total time the items are exposed.

Examples of objects to collect: Thimble, scissors, pencil, tape dispenser, spool of thread, monster mini, d20, con button, lip balm, matchbox car, small TV remote, box of mints, ring, brooch, spoon, bracelet, glasses, individual sugar packet, toothbrush, charger cord, pet rock, pill bottle, nail clippers, small barbell, cell phone, cotton swab, you get the picture.

Word Retention

Complexity: Medium

Difficulty: Medium to Hard

Materials: d%

This one has many different ways to play. The crux of the challenge is to roll on the tables to choose some words or phrases. Say those words aloud, but do not allow your players to write them down. Then go on with your game for five minutes, ten minutes, an hour, whatever time period you think is equal to the challenge. Once the time is up, see how many words your players can remember. Add difficulty to the challenge by rolling more than three words, or requiring that they be recited in exact order, or backwards! It's all up to you. If you don't want to decide for yourself, roll on the random difficulty table below to determine your ultimate word outcome.

d20	Result
1	Roll once on table A
2	Roll once each on tables A and B
3	Roll once each on tables A, B, and C
4	Roll once each on all tables
5	Roll twice on table A
6	Roll twice each on tables A and B
7	Roll twice each on tables A, B, and C
8	Roll twice each on all tables
9	Roll twice on table A, and once each on tables B and C
10	Roll twice on table A, and twice each on tables B and C
11	Roll twice on table A, and twice on table C
12	Roll twice on table B, and three times on table C
13	Roll once on table A, and twice each on tables B and C
14	Roll three times on table A
15	Roll three times on table B
16	Roll three times on table C
17	Roll three times each on all tables
18	Roll twice on table B, and once on table C
19	Roll once each on tables A and B, and twice on table C
20	Roll four times each on all tables

See tables A - C on next page.

Who's that NPC?

Complexity: Simple

Difficulty: Easy

Materials: 3x5 cards and a sharpie

Okay, this one might sound a little silly, but it can be both fun, and helpful to your game. When games get deeper into the intrigue, or just go on for long periods of time, there get to be a lot of NPCs that are important to the story, but that your players have a hard time remembering. Make a set of flashcards with the names of important NPCs on one side, and who they are, or why they are important, on the other. Let your players go through the deck once, then quiz them by flashing one side or the other, and asking them for the information that's on the other side.

If you really want to get fancy, you can draw the pictures of the NPCs, or cut out and paste on images on one side, and put their names and information on the other. And if the players don't enjoy this challenge, you can still keep the cards for your own use, or even to hold up in front of you while you are talking as that NPC, to help everyone keep things straight.

Word Retention Game – Random Word Generator Tables

Table A

#	Word
1	Acquiesce
2	Adamantine
3	Anvil
4	Arbalest
5	Archetype
6	Archipelago
7	Arch-nemesis
8	Aristocrat
9	Avatar
10	Bag of gold
11	Bailey
12	Bardiche
13	Barrow
14	Beleaguer
15	Bones
16	Brain
17	Caltrops
18	Castle
19	Cauldron
20	Champion
21	Chronicle
22	Coat of Arms
23	Conflate
24	Coward
25	Crusade
26	Crypt
27	Crystal ball
28	Demesne
29	Denouement
30	Devil-may-care
31	Dice
32	Domain
33	Drawbridge
34	Dretch
35	Druid
36	Epiphany
37	Falchion
38	Familiar
39	Feat
40	Fizgig
41	Fork-tailed
42	Fracas
43	Fungus
44	Geas
45	Gluttony
46	Glyph
47	Heal
48	Hoard
49	Hocus pocus
50	Horror
51	Hourglass
52	Hugger-mugger
53	Imbroglio
54	Imbue
55	Kell
56	Knight
57	Knock down, drag out
58	Legend
59	Legerdemain
60	Lily-livered
61	Love
62	Loyalty
63	Marital
64	Melee
65	Mercy
66	Mortar and pestle
67	Myrmidon
68	Offal
69	Onomatopoeia
70	Periapt
71	Petrify
72	Phylactery
73	Plethora
74	Portcullis
75	Potion
76	Presitigitate
77	Psychic
78	Rancor
79	Realm
80	Scry
81	Serendipity
82	Shaman
83	Smite
84	Snicker-snack
85	Sorcerer
86	Souk
87	Spell
88	Spice
89	Talisman
90	Tomb
91	Tome
92	Torch
93	Trickery
94	Turpitude
95	Valkyrie
96	Vanity
97	Venom
98	Villain
99	Warcraft
100	Widdershins

Table B

1	Aardvark
2	Ankheg
3	Balista
4	Bandersnatch
5	Beluga
6	Breastplate
7	Brood
8	Cacodemon
9	Catapult
10	Changling
11	Chupacabra
12	Clockwork
13	Cockatrice
14	Codpiece
15	Coif
16	Cuttlefish
17	Cyclops
18	Devil
19	Dinosaur
20	Doppelganger
21	Dragon
22	Dulcimer
23	Elephant
24	Ettercap
25	Gargoyle
26	Gauntlet
27	Genie
28	Ghast
29	Ghoul
30	Giant
31	Goblin
32	Golem
33	Gorget
34	Gorgon
35	Gremlin
36	Griffon
37	Hag
38	Harbinger
39	Hauberk
40	Inevitable
41	Ingenue
42	Jabberwock
43	Jack-a-nape
44	Kobold
45	Kraken
46	Lagoon
47	Lair
48	Leprechaun
49	Lich
50	Linnorm
51	Lizardfolk
52	Lycantrhope
53	Lynx
54	Mantis
55	Mephit
56	Minotaur
57	Mite
58	Moat
59	Mummy
60	Naga
61	Narwhal
62	Nemesis
63	Ogre
64	Ooze
65	Orc
66	Otyugh
67	Paguasus
68	Panacea
69	Pastiche
70	Pauldron
71	Penumbra
72	Petard
73	Phantasm
74	Phoenix
75	Piranha
76	Pixie
77	Pseudodragon
78	Rakshasa
79	Remorhaz
80	Rhamphorhynchus
81	Rhinoceros
82	Scabbard
83	Scorpion
84	Shoggoth
85	Skeleton
86	Slime
87	Spurs
88	Troll
89	Unicorn
90	Vambrace
91	Vargouille
92	Vegepygmy
93	Vulture
94	Will-o'-wisp
95	Witch
96	Wraith
97	Wyrm
98	Yeti
99	Zephyr
100	Zombie

Table C

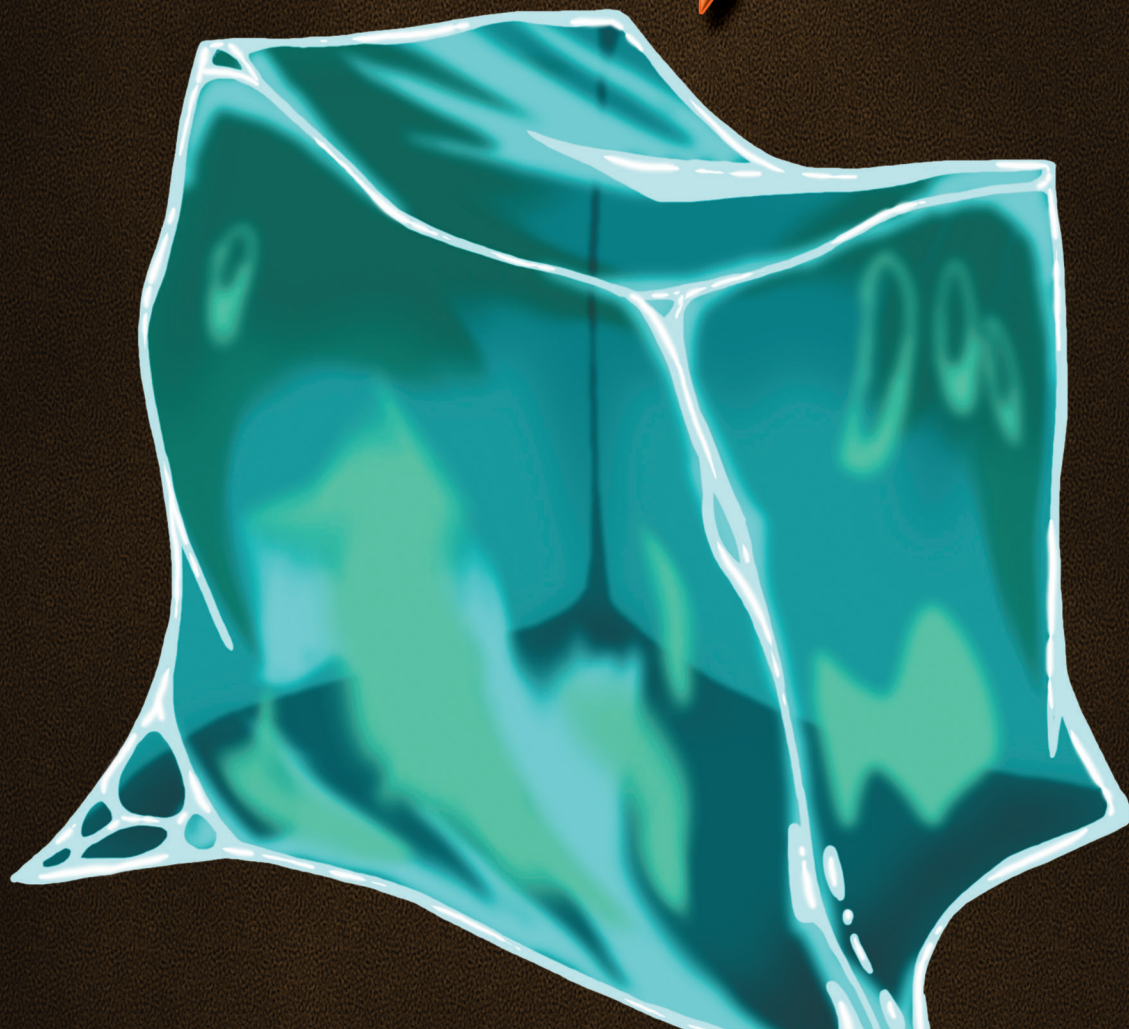| #	Word
1	Ablative
2	Alchemical
3	Allegorical
4	Aquatic
5	Archeological
6	Azure
7	Bec-de-faucon
8	Bucolic
9	Bulbous
10	Buoyant
11	Cacophanous
12	Callipygous
13	Cathartic
14	Cavalier
15	Ceremonial
16	Chivalrous
17	Circumspect
18	Conceited
19	Creepy
20	Cthonic
21	Deceitful
22	Diaphanous
23	Dire
24	Doubtful
25	Dour
26	Eerie
27	Elder
28	Electric
29	Elemental
30	Entropic
31	Ephemeral
32	Erstwhile
33	Ethereal
34	Fanciful
35	Fel
36	Frightened
37	Gelatinous
38	Gisarme
39	Glaive
40	Haggard
41	Halberd
42	Heroic
43	Hilarious
44	Hungry
45	Infectious
46	Invisible
47	Jaunty
48	Labyrinthine
49	Leprous
50	Lighthearted
51	Loquacious
52	Magical
53	Magnificent
54	Malevolent
55	Mercurial
56	Mithril
57	Morning Star
58	Mummer
59	Mythical
60	Noble
61	Obsidian
62	Ombudsman
63	Ostentatious
64	Paunchy
65	Pestilent
66	Poisonous
67	Potent
68	Privvy
69	Purified
70	Quintessential
71	Quixotic
72	Ranseur
73	Respectful
74	Revered
75	Rotting
76	Sickened
77	Siege Tower
78	Spongy
79	Staggered
80	Stone
81	Stunned
82	Supernatural
83	Surreptitious
84	Susurrous
85	The Eye of Argon
86	Tragic
87	Trebuchet
88	Trustworthy
89	Two-handed
90	Undead
91	Untoward
92	Valorous
93	Vampiric
94	Venerable
95	Vestigial
96	Whimsical
97	Woolly
98	Yeasty
99	Zealous
100	Zug zwang

In the Company of Gelatinous Cubes EXPANDED

by Wendall Roy

Top Ten of 2016
By Endzeitgeist

Iknow, it's getting later each and every year. I'm honestly sorry for that, but, in my defense, I do have a lot of ground to cover!

As always, let's take a look at the rules for my Top Ten: In order to qualify, books may not have won a previous Top Ten spot (being a candidate is okay!), mainly to keep compilations and revisions from popping back up on the list.

Secondly, this list, while containing only excellent books, is very much a representation of my own taste - minor blemishes and the like are less important to me here than how much I enjoyed a given book, though they still need to hold up to my rather strict quality requirements.

Thirdly, I started branching out a lot regarding systems, so this year, we're no longer looking at a pure PFRPG-list. My considerations for candidates do take into account what they do for their respective systems and how they enhance them. It should also be mentioned that competition has never been as fierce as this year - it took me forever to decide the respective places. As always, if I have not yet covered a book that would be potentially eligible for a spot, it'll qualify for 2017's list.

First, here are the ...

Honorable Mentions:

Eyes of the Stone Thief (13th Age)
by Pelgrane Press:

One of the best, most evocative mega-adventures I have ever read, this translates well to other systems and while it has been released in 2015, I only got it last year. This would have made 2015's list, but this year, competition was incredibly fierce. This a thoroughly amazing mega-adventure and well worth getting - even if you don't play 13th Age. 13th Age fans should consider this to be THE must-own adventure.

Letters from the Flaming Crab:
Household Magic Catalog (PFRPG)
by Flaming Crab Games:

I have never seen a product with such a dedicated and effective layout; if you need further testament to why a good layout is important, look no further than this gem. There is literally no better example of how you can elevate a relatively simple, conceptual pitch with layout, art and presentation.

Last Gasp (5e)
by Kobold Press:

This module was an eye-opener for me, showcasing the cool and distinct things you can do with 5e's engine. This humble little module sets the bar higher for what I expect from a 5e-module and highlights perfectly the potential of 5e for roleplaying, of how its engine can be used to tell amazing stories.

Wrath of the River King (PFRPG)
by Kobold Press:

One of the best system-conversions I have read in a long time; a thoroughly amazing module and on any other year, this would have made my list. If you even remotely enjoy Midgard, fey or fairy tale-style modules, then consider this a must-purchase.

The Rhûne: Dawn of Twilight Campaign Guide (PFRPG)
by Storm Bunny Studios:

This may very well be my favorite campaign setting in a long, long while. Rhûne is mighty, evocative and absolutely glorious. If its editing was tighter and if its okay, but not too mind-blowing class-options were up to the awesomeness of the tech-rules and the glorious prose, this could have made number #1. I'm not kidding. If you haven't checked this out, do it right now.

All right, got that? Great! Without further ado, here is what blew my mind in 2016!

#10 Four Horsemen Present: Mythic Kingdoms (PFRPG)
by Rogue Genius Games

If you're a busy forumite, you probably won't be surprised by this one. When the Four Horsemen asked what we'd like to see in the future, I replied that we need rules for magical, truly fantastic kingdoms - well, there we go. Seamlessly blending mythic and kingdom building rules, this is not only impressive, Stephen Rowe's booklet also is extremely evocative. It literally can inspire whole campaigns!

#9 The Tarot Variation (Castle Falkenstein) by Fat Goblin Games:

I am relatively new to Castle Falkenstein and when the Fat Goblin Games crew reactivated the system, I was pretty hesitant. That being said: A) This system neeeds a new edition RIGHT NOW. B) I have never seen a small, humble pdf enrich a system so thoroughly. The Tarot Variations in this humble booklet enhance the atmosphere of the game and the whole engine, making it more rewarding than it already is. For a buck. Talk about bang-for-buck-ratio. I'm never playing CF without this pdf again.

#8 The Lost Lands: Bard's Gate (PFRPG/OSR/5e) by Frog God Games

This mighty, powerful city sourcebook makes the simulationalist in me cackle with glee; rules for social standing, owning houses, etc. make Bard's Gate predisposed for all manner of intrigue and detail. Considering that I really hated the original 3.X-incarnation of the city, this book showcases perfectly why I consider Frog God Games to be a thoroughly amazing company.

#7 Akashic Mysteries (PFRPG) by Dreamscarred Press

Design difficulty. It's a thing. It's one thing to make a cookie-cutter archetype. It's a completely different task to actually make an Incarnum-style system with a vast amount of moving parts work and maintain balance there. Michael Sayre's Akashic Mysteries manages this monumental task, has camel-people, amazing flavor and ranks as one of my favorite subsystems for any d20-based game ever.

#6 The Assassin: A Modular, Momentum Base Class (PFRPG) by Interjection Games

Bradley Crouch is a brilliant designer. His classes are rewarding, complex and amazing and play in wildly different ways, tweaking ever new engines and innovations out of the PFRPG-chassis. Better yet, they work with high fantasy and really gritty games in equal measure, with pitch-perfect balance.

The assassin portrayed here stands out even among his cadre of excellent classes, providing a versatile, extremely fun playing experience for the discerning connoisseur. This is pretty much my favorite PFRPG-class right now. That says it all, right?

#5 Creature Components Volume I (PFRPG) by Playground Adventures

Lavishly illustrated, this book brings more to the game that its simple premise would make you believe, codifying the claws, organs, blood and fur of all those fantastic creatures as items that can be used to enhance magic. You know, like magic's supposed to act? This humble book vastly enhances the sense of the magical, makes each encounter and its creatures matter more and brings the game closer to a holistic vision of a living, breathing fantasy world. Daniel Marshall's toe is ridiculously amazing. We need sequels. Plural.

#4 Tome of Beasts (5e) by Kobold Press

I'm a monster-snob. I confess. At this point, I've seen so many critters out there, it's become really hard to impress me. The only reason I get the first bestiary for any game is that I need it for reviewing. I usually end up bored by them. This is where the massive Tome of Beasts comes in: With challenging, diverse foes, a vast assortment of unique beings and truly astonishing creativity, it takes Kobold Press' impressive canon, expands it and makes 5E more challenging and more rewarding. I'd take this tome over the vanilla Monster Manual any day of the week.

#3 The Dracula Dossier & Dracula Unredacted (GUMSHOE) by Pelgrane Press

You are smart and well-read. So are your players. You are looking for a means to challenge them, their astuteness and minds. You are looking for an epic-length campaign-toolkit. Look no further. This is the Night's Black Agents system seller campaign, pitting the PCs against a superbly modular and customizable, well-researched Dracula...and it has the most amazing handout I have ever seen: Rewriting the classic Dracula-novel to make it, with annotations and new content that unobtrusively fits in, a massive handout, this saga is purely glorious and is worth getting for the reading pleasure alone.

#2 The Northlands Saga Complete (PFRPG/OSR)
by Frog God Games

Did this surprise anyone??? If so: Seriously?? A massive, gritty campaign, set against a Sword & Sorcery version of the Northlands, with mass combat, challenging modules and pitch-perfect tone? Surprise, Endy loves it to bits! Kidding aside, even when divorced of my personal preferences, this is a fantastic campaign and a glorious reading experience. The one downside (beyond the "only good" class options in the PG) I can find here is that it ends at one point. If I was rich, I'd throw money at the frogs to write a direct sequel, Northlands Saga II. I mean it. After almost 1000 pages, I still don't have enough. I'm honestly missing reading a couple of pages before going to bed. I don't have enough. Just thinking about this book makes me smile.

#1 Seven Sinful Tales (PFRPG)
by Four Dollar Dungeons &
#1 Nightmares on Parade (PFRPG)
by Playground Adventures

Okay, so I'm cheating! It's my list! Kidding aside, there is a reason these two books occupy my top slot for this year. They have more in common than you'd think: Both Richard Develyn and Stephen Rowe are superb adventure designers and AUTHORS; their adventures are amazing reading experiences. But these two modules go one step beyond, in that they exemplify, to me, all that is good about roleplaying games - and I don't mean that exclusively as a measure of quality, but as pertaining the moral concept of goodness, as far as it can be ascribed to forms of media. These two modules have in common that they actually enrich your life by playing them; they teach, unobtrusively, life-lessons. Stephen Rowe's "Nightmares on Parade" focuses on young gamers and kids (though it still is a blast for adults!), while Richard Develyn's "Seven Sinful Tales" does the same for adults and adolescents.

Now, yes, all roleplaying games have in common several aspects that enhance the respective person's skills: Beyond social skills, math, other cultures and history and even languages, these two have something to offer that I have never seen before, they literally make you better for having played them.

Let me elaborate: "Nightmares on Parade", to me, is a Bildungsmodule - the concept of Bildung does not really translate to English, since it encompasses more than lifelong education and self-improvement. Its connotations speak of an active act of becoming, of consciously forming yourself while being formed, all in the effort to become what you want to be, with an emphasis on humanist ideals, moral integrity and intellectual self-consciousness.

I have never seen a module drive life lessons home this effectively and unobtrusively. If I one day should have kids of my own, this will be on my must-play-list for them.

Richard Develyn's "Seven Sinful Tales," in contrast to that, deals to an extent with the disappointment of expectations regarding parents. There is an adage, which states that parents are gods to kids, and I am inclined to believe that to a degree. Now, at one point or another, we, as imperfect human beings, are bound to disappoint our offspring; we are bound to be disappointed by our parents. Heck, chances are you can relate. I know I can.

This module, then, could very well be considered to be a form of therapy, if you will. It depicts, with heart, sympathy and without judging, actions and consequences of parenting (or rather: Lack thereof in some instances) and its pitfalls. It extends a sympathetic hand to troubled youths, can potentially help adults see flaws in their own behavior and does so while portraying a thoroughly versatile, extremely well-crafted adventure. It can offer a form of personal catharsis.

Both of these modules, each in its own way, transcends the limitations of the roleplaying hobby, dares to make a difference, dares to try to make the world a better place. Both are thoroughly immersed in humanist ideals, both are more than enlightening entertainment. They can be just that, sure...but they can also be so much more.

To me, these modules represent a maturing of our hobby - to the realization that our favorite past-time can be more than just an amazing time spent with friends; that the media we consume as part of our playing experience, that we partake in, can leave us as better persons, all while providing more fun than any another medium can hope to convey. These modules, in short, have an inherent intellectual and moral value that makes them, literally, valuable from a Bildungs-perspective. They also represent a diversity of emotions and themes and transcend hitting things with the pointy end of your stick. They are, in short, paragons of their craft and it is my fervent hope that we'll see more modules with this much moral integrity, this much guts. These belong into the collection of any GM.

All right. I...don't really know how to end this, so let me close with a heartfelt "Thank you" that goes out to all my readers, all the authors and publishers that send me their work...and in particular, to my patreons.

Without you, my amazing ladies and gentlemen, I couldn't do this. Without the support my patreons provide, there would be no more endzeitgeist, no new Top Ten, no rambling essays.

I may just be bleep in the internet's ether, but it is my fervent hope that, at one point or another, I have managed to brighten your day, enrich your games, conveyed some knowledge and, perhaps, made one or two folks out there better designers. I may not be able to do this forever, but, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you all. You are my inspiration, my motivation to keep going. You are the fuel for the fire that burns in my heart. I am very much your creation.

Thank you.

Endzeitgeist out.

Gamemaster's Guide to Kaidan
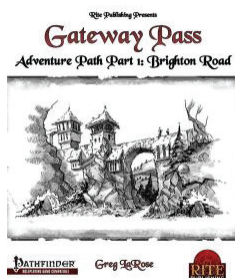
Setting Guide for the Kaidan setting of Japanese Horror

Jonathan McAnulty

PATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

KAIDAN

RiP

Reviews

Gateway Pass Adventure Path #1: Brighton Road

Publisher: Rite Publishing
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This module clocks in at 44 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 40 pages of content, so let's take a look!

Well, before we dive into the nit and grit: To me, an adventure path is a campaign that covers the majority, at least 2/3rds, of an adventurer's career. I get why many a publication uses the AP-moniker, but personally, I'd consider anything less than that an arc. I know, I know, not too relevant, but I still felt the need to spell that out.

Anyways, what do Star Trek, Twin Peaks, Esoterrorists in station duty mode, Red Dwarf and daily sitcoms have in common? Simple: A central location. Many a campaign has a hub, from Lankhmar to Feeport and this location and its quirks and NPCs slowly grow upon the PCs, It's one of the points of criticism fielded against the otherwise excellent CotCT-campaign that the PCs had to leave their home. It thus should come as a surprise, that so far no series of adventures has really capitalized on the notion of the PCs really getting to know their home, their base, and defending it from whatever may come their way. This series of adventures, then, would do just that – the premise centers on two feuding fiefdoms, the Ottonians and Goodchilds, and a border fortress between them. The PCs, via one of various hooks, will be in the employ of the Ottonians, specifically, in the employ of the charismatic inquisitor Nathaniel Lyon, who has opted to reopen the Brighton road, for in the years since the road's closure, the area has become poor and destitute, with many a former soldier falling to a life of crime.

And this is pretty much as far as I can go without getting into serious SPOILER-territory. Potential players should definitely jump to the conclusion.

All right, still around? Great! You see, Nathaniel has begun covertly recruiting the less corrupted of the criminal elements, for he suspects something lurking…and how better to ensure plausible deniability than via a band of miscreant low-lifes? Opposed to Nathaniel's agenda would be

the rebellion slowly engendered by one Robert Cornelius, who is using smuggling tactics and whisper campaigns to build his strength, all in the ultimate goal of ending the serfdom system that has ruined his life. The primary foe of Nathaniel would, however, be the armiger Cadwell Brunson, a former guardsman who has retained his bandit network and seeks to lead Nathaniel into an ambush and eliminate him for once and for all. So these three fully statted individuals would be the power-players here, representing the matrix of intrigue and machinations here.

The PCs, however, won't know any of this right away. Instead, this adventure will begin with a burning wagon crashing into the doors of the Starry Sky Inn, while the PCs are en route to reopen the Brighton Output. Dealing with the fire and bandits constitute an interesting first encounter, though one that does not feature a map or the like – granted, most GMs have a bunch of tavern maps ready… but yeah. In the aftermath of the combat, the GM gets a chance to introduce the PCs not only to the excessive poverty in the area, but also to a helpful witch named Rosin Sinti and their fellow guards, who come with brief, fluff-descriptions to set them apart. En route, tracking can help determine some pieces of information about the environments and a handy random encounter chart is included as well.

The outpost has obviously seen better days – it receives a nice b/w-map and the PCs will have a chance to start cleaning up the place, fixing roofs… and then there's the dead cleric outside, killed by a storm. Her spirit lingers in the officer's quarters as a haunt, guarding the children she sought to guide to a better life. The kids, all marked by poverty, can make for interesting sidekicks or, in some cases, potential apprentices/cohorts…for their home, the hamlet of Wassail, is one sans perspective for them. Beyond that, the PCs have a chance to deal with a shambling stalker and potentially find a secret tunnel, which may become relevant later. A handy table of 8 random events helps, by the way, to establish a concise mood here. Speaking of mood: From dining to the sheer amount of information herein, the adventure takes a refreshing stance regarding that aspect – we take a bit of time, yes, but from tax costs to be levied to the NPCs, there is quite a bit of roleplaying.

This extends, by the way, to day 2, where perceptive PCs get to notice a scout and his hunting crows keeping an eye on the outpost and have their first major social encounter, as they check the wares of Mr. Lilliputian, a dwarven diplomat. And indeed, the PCs can find various

discrepancies in his papers…and several pieces of cargo he tries to smuggle through: Black powder weapons and baby rust monsters, to be more precise. (And yes, alternatives are included if you don't like blackpowder firearms in your game.) While in the end, when bribes etc. fail, Lyon does let him off with a warning, this still represents a rather fun encounter.

During the night, a guardsman, however, will have found a rather mysterious death, as his fellow watchman dozed the night away, which will cast a somber tone on Roisin the witch returning – she can act as courier between the output and civilization, offer healing and return every other day…she also has her own agenda, but precisely which, I won't spoil here. In the following days, the PCs will have a chance to deal with a shambling mound hunting in the vicinity. Beyond that, a local baker is probing the waters to come over once in a while to sell cookies, and a pig farmer asks for the possibility to leave some of her pigs she is bound to buy in Norwich here. It is such pieces of local color that make the place feel organic, that make players fond of it in the long run.

Lilliputian will return (and continue his smuggling), though this time, a man named Kier is following hot on his heels, arriving soon after the dwarf has passed through. Kier is a ranger, has no travel papers…and claims that Lilliputian is wanted for carrying contraband across territories. While he is not wrong, having no papers would make it within the purview of the PCs to refuse him…and a similarity between the attire of the man and that of the scout watching them should also make the PCs rather suspicious. When later, a wealthy merchant arrives, a subsection of Cornelius' men attempt to kidnap the fop in broad daylight, unaware of the strength of the outpost's folks (read: The PCs) – though their knowledge of smuggler's tunnels may help them escape. Later, the PCs will meet a hermit with, surprisingly, imperial travel papers, setting up an interesting mystery for the future.

On day 6, the PCs may get a day off, but the pdf still depicts, in detail, what actually transpires regarding the various NPCs that return. In the following days, the PCs will have a lot of choices on their hands: Do they help Roisin smuggle folks who can't pay the high taxes through the gate? How do the react to the disguised Cadwell, who poses as a Goodchild…and the man seems to know the hermit, who utters some warnings…Daniel, one of the folks, wants forged papers (and may slip off into the night as a deserter later); new guardsmen arrive, And indeed, from day to day, the intrigues

subtly grow – trolls need to be dealt with, Kier returns, will-o'-the-wisps haunt the night, drawn by the sorcerous power within one person's blood..

Beyond further smugglers, wine merchants and a Romeo and Juliet-undercover-scene with the children of the rival fiefdoms, there is a lot to be found…interestingly, the latter may actually blow Cadwell's cover. At one point, a fight between heavy drinkers passing through on a gambling night may erupt into violence and Kier…well, he'll find a rather nasty end at the hands of a doppelganger, who is, by the way, surprise, up to no good.

Beyond aforementioned star-crossed affair is discovered by the hermit, he mentions several key facts about the environment to the PCs…before a frickin' CR 17 green dragon swoops in. And no, the PCs should not try to fight that beast…and instead perhaps establish a tithe or something like that? On their next day, the PCs may find a camp within the woods if they choose to escort the hermit, including several pieces of much needed loot…and encrypted papers…but they'll also have to evade Goodchild guards.

Cadwell arrives on day 14, demanding payment from Nathaniel, for he has been blackmailing the inquisitor…and, depending on the PCs' actions, he may bring grisly trophies along….and it is here that the PCs get to defend the fortress against the forces of Cadwell. How the adventure ends depends largely on the PCs' actions – Nathaniel Lyon may well be hanged…or the PCs could keep him in charge, forgiving him his well-meant duplicity… though not all story ties have been closed…

The pdf comes with a high-res labeled .tiff of the fortress and an unlabeled, high-res jpg. for use as a player's map.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are pretty good, but not perfect-there are quite a few minor hiccups regarding punctuation. Layout adheres to a nice b/w-version of Rite Publishing's standard layout. The pdf features b/w-artworks for all key NPCs, though I have seen most of them before. The cartography is really good, but I do wish that e.g. tunnels, environments, inside of buildings, etc. had also been covered.

Greg LaRose's Gateway Pass is completely different from what I expected – this could actually, theme and atmosphere-wise, be an old-school Bandit Kingdom Greyhawk module, an OSR module or the like; it breathes this sense of antiquity, of a world at a declining stage in its phases, of a place that has moved on. This is a surprisingly low-magic, down

to earth module that works rather well thanks to its very dense atmosphere, remarkable characters and details –the details, repetition of characters and the like generate a rather interesting, very organic and believable simulation of an organic world and appropriate consequences.

The level of detail, however, also means that this module requires that the GM tracks quite a few decisions, which, while not hard, could have been better laid out. You see, this is basically a LOT of text and the lack of highlights via bolding, references to consequences and the like can make the module slightly harder to run than it needed to be. I for example, had totally forgotten about the tunnel mentioned and had to look that back up. This module basically represents scenes, but doesn't concisely separate the rules-relevant aspects from the key-story aspects and agendas in the respective encounters – you need to know precisely how it'll work, particularly since, unfortunately, in two cases, an editing glitch of a typo-level made such a key sequence a bit more opaque than it needed to be – I was more than once both tantalized and surprised by some new revelation/note while reading a day's event. Much of this could have been avoided, if the adventure synopsis in the beginning simple featured a cliff-notes version of day-to-day-events for the GM: You know, like "Day 1: Event x, event z; NPC y arrives, NPC W leaves; if a) has happened, then c)."

I also think that the decisions the PCs make regarding smugglers, etc. could matter a bit more and that excelling at a given encounter/acting with tact and smarts, should yield a bit more rewards… but that may just be me.

So, in short, structure-wise, this is not the best module; however, its concept is pretty novel and exciting and the set-up is great. The best component would be the almost realistic atmosphere and (mostly) low fantasy-feeling nature of the proceedings, with the eerie and fantastic only sometimes rearing their heads…but when they do, they do so rather neatly. You can *feel* like a soldier in a dangerous wilderness, hunting trolls and slowly putting two and two together regarding the agendas and allegiances of the NPCs. In short: This series has plenty of potential.

I was, however, also kind of disappointed to not get maps for the inside of the buildings and the lack of a scale on the maps means that this is a module that's mostly intended for mind's eye-style playing, though in the finale, the works slightly less well than in the rest of the module.

How to rate this, then? I adore the atmosphere herein, as you may have noticed – it's my kind of gritty fantasy, of realism and simulated life; the module achieves the illusion of an organic world. At the same time, the module does have a few drawbacks on the formal side that drag it down a notch. Ultimately, I can't go higher than 3.5 stars, though I will round up due to *in dubio pro reo* on this one. This is not a go-play module, but if you like gritty fantasy, this may well be worth getting. You can get this module [here on OBS!](#)
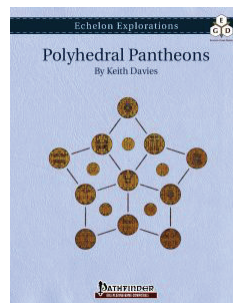
Endzeitgeist out.

Echelon Explorations: Polyhedral Pantheons

Publisher: Keith Davies
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This supplement clocks in at 42 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page ToC, 2 pages blank after ToC and SRD, respectively (odd), 1 page back cover, 2 pages of SRD, 1 page reading "appendices" before the SRD, leaving us with 33 pages of content, so let's take a look!

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

So, what is this? Well, have you read *Rose of the Prophet?* No, well, all right: Basically, it is a system that defines deities and their values, if you will, as an interconnected geometrical shape – which also, by virtue of connections, situates neutral deities as a mix of good and evil -it is basically a way to generate a spatially-consistent model of a pantheon's abstract interactions and, by its spatial depiction, of contextualizing the deities thus.

We have a system for pantheon-creation on our hands here, and one that has an intrinsic value as far as I'm concerned, but we'll get back to that in the conclusion. Before all of that, the pdf actually, like a proper scientific paper, explains and defines its nomenclature. In all brevity: points are corners of the polyhedron, faces are flat surfaces, edges are folds between adjacent faces. All of these are subsumed under the hyperonym "site" and adjacent sites… well are sites adjacent to one another. neighboring sites are defined as sites that require the crossing of an edge. If all of that sounds complicated, it is only due to me being exceedingly brief – visualizing the definitions isn't difficult.

Sites sport a primary and a secondary domain and faces and points are the places where deities can be found in this abstract geometric shape.

So, how do we proceed regarding pantheon-creation? We choose a polyhedron, with the common roleplaying dice all covered – we count sites, points and faces – and if you want to use one of the standard roleplaying dice-shapes, you won't even have to do that, for the pdf lists these in a concise table. Then, we assign a domain to each face and point, group domains and identify, finally, chosen weapons. If the domain breakdown sounds like work, it's not: a) the calculation is really simple and b), the pdf actually takes care of that aspect as well in aforementioned table.

Better yet – this cliff-notes version is explained in surprising detail and in a didactically sound manner. A handy d% table even may take that domain/subdomain/favored weapon choice aspect off your hands, if you just want an easy to use generator…or need a place to start. Roll a couple and then start choosing. Even cooler: If you're using Exalted domains (from Rogue Genius Games' books) or hybrid domains, the pdf has you covered. Interesting here: The pdf observes that most of the dice employed here are duals – i.e. faces and points hold the same spatial relationships – but the human mind does seem to treat these different shapes differently. In my uses of the system, I ended up creating different pantheons with different dice, pointing towards interesting observations regarding the interaction of our spatial conceptions and the way in which we design.

I digress, sorry.

So, this is the base system – it is elegant and surprisingly effective; in contrast to traditional pantheon-building from scratch, it can generate some rather astonishing concepts for deities that are surprisingly different from those we know and quote endlessly. It's uncanny, really – I never noticed how much my knowledge of mythology had shaped design-paradigms I employed in pantheon creation until I used this pdf.

Anyways, the pdf then proceeds to guide us through a step by step process – first, create a simple deity description; then establish setting information and after that, go for the fine details. As an aside that should be evident for anyone using this: Obviously, the *absence" of a deity and domain can can make for an amazing story as well – what happened to those deities? Did they die? Were they banished? The system, while explained for polyhedrons, btw. also works for pretty much any geometric shape you can picture, with only a minimum amount of work – you could conceivably generate uneven shapes, shapes with holes, etc. – all possible, though perhaps slightly more advanced than a vanilla use of the system.

But perhaps you are not yet sold on the use of the engine – well, the pdf does not provide one or two, but 3 fully detailed pantheons for your convenience: We get to know the shu-shi pantheon of halfling deities, based on China (!!!) and the goblin pantheon, both of which sport 3 general groups and the elemental tetrahedron, which sports 4 groups of deities. Each of these deities sports favored weapon, symbols, alignment domains and the fluff for the deity, usually around 100 – 150 words. Beyond the shu-shi being a BRILLIANT idea, the pantheons also showcase their creation, with a filled-out work-sheet depicting the respective polyhedrons and the sheets do an amazing job illustrating how the system works – the correlation between the placement and the respective deities, the way by which the spatial place influences character and design, is uncanny…in a good way.

Wait a second? Work-sheets? Yep, the pdf comes with a second file that contains pdf work-sheets for d20s, d12s, d10s, d8s, alternate d8s, d6s and d4s… oh, AND it comes with an excel spreadsheet as well!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I noticed no significant hiccups. Layout adheres to a printer-friendly, clean and well-structured two-column standard with blue highlights – it's nothing to write home about, but then again, swirlies, pictures and graphical elements would actually detract from the appeal here. The pd has no artworks, but needs none. The pdf comes with detailed, nested bookmarks for your convenience and the inclusion of worksheets and excel table must be applauded. Minor nitpick: It would have been nice to have the worksheets as form-fillable, but oh well.

Keith Davies' Polyhedral Pantheons have been an amazing experience to review. I can honestly say that I have NEVER reviewed anything like it for a roleplaying game. This brought me back to my days in academia in the most amazing of ways. Perhaps you can relate, if not, let me elaborate: You see, I absolutely relish the feeling when I am presented with an interesting system; then, I ponder it, use it and suddenly, a whole infinity of possibilities, an eureka effect, an unfettering of one's mind from a preconceived notion, happens. What was previously a subconscious, defining and limiting trait suddenly is exposed and abolished in favor of a system that can generate and inspire beyond even its specific thesis.

In short: Science! The ideal of humanist growth. Call me pretentious, but it is my firm conviction that this is the very foundation of what makes roleplaying games so amazing: We constantly have theses about worlds, rules etc. – we experiment with them and modify our canon of shared knowledge. To a degree, we are engaging in a playful variant of scientific experimentation whenever we roll those dice and create new worlds, rules and places. We employ the canon of our accumulated knowledge and even have a sort of peer-review system – among gamers at one's table, among designers and reviewers.

It is astounding to me, then, that this pdf manages to so thoroughly blow my mind. While it has sample pantheons, I am hesitant to call it a supplement – this is a tool, but not one that expands an existent line of thought, but one that applies a unique concept in a didactically sound manner and thus expands one's horizon. I know, I know. The above sounds dry. I don't want to lie – it kinda is… until you actually use it and realize something.

The pantheons we grew up with, from Greek to Norse to the Forgotten Realms and beyond… they operate by similar tropes and rules and, by employing this system, you have a geometric shape, which, by virtue of its existence, can generate basically an infinite amount of deities and relationship-structures that transcend these notions. The one limiting factor is no longer there – the conception of hegemonic pantheons is replaced with a highly fluid and diverse, extremely hackable process that eliminates easily and reliably the shackles we unwittingly place upon our own imagination.

As mentioned before, creating blank spaces, modifying shapes etc. and the domain-selection itself can all be used to add basically infinite possibilities to the system. And the results of these uses will provide plenty of surprises that can get the creative juices flowing in ways I have not seen in a long time.

Even better: Guess what? Even while this has been written for PFRPG, actually, it can be used for pretty much any system you'd want to use. Replace domains with abstract concepts, virtues, sins…and you can conceivably generate your own system of morality, deific interactions and the like, regardless of system employed.

Which brings me to the statement above, when I mentioned an intrinsic value: This humble pdf, to me, is an eye-opener, a glorious tool and a great way to jumpstart one's imagination. The main

draw here does not lie within flowery prose or tight math – this, in short, has value because of its IDEA. Because, like the best of ideas, it generates a cascade, an infinite oscillation of inspiration.

I could ramble on for days about how this pdf changed how I think about the pantheon aspect of world and culture-building, but then again, you probably already have realized it: If you want a ready to go pantheon, this delivers, yes – but you're missing out on the best this has to offer if that's all you want. This is a tool for creators, for designers, for the inspired, for those that want their horizons expanded.

This is an absolutely glorious, amazing tool. I adore it. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval and this gets my EZG Essentials tag as a must-own GM-design-tool. It also, unsurprisingly, qualifies for my Top Ten of 2017. Seriously. Get this. Think about it…and then realize that you'll never design pantheons the same way.

You can get this glorious tool here on OBS! Endzeitgeist out.

Everyman Minis: The Skinsuit Ritual

Publisher: Rogue Genius Games
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of Everyman Gaming's minis-series clocks in at 7 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 3 pages of SRD, leaving us with 2 pages of content, so let's take a look!

Okay, so first things first: This is an occult ritual. I assume that you have Occult Adventures on hand (If not…why?? It's literally one of the best books Paizo has ever made!) and thus know how occult rituals work.

All righty, so, the ritual herein would be a level 8 and represents an evil polymorph effect. As befitting of a proper ritual, the materials required are delightfully exotic: Living steel buttons? hag's hair twine and boiled calamus root, licorice and lilacs? A sewing needle made from keketar bones? HECK YES, this breathes flavor in the components/focus line – big time. So, backlash is deadly – the ritual causes the hapless caster's skin to slough off…oh, and if you botch it, you may well be transformed by the 4d6 Cha drain into a doppelgänger. The primary caster also develops a delusion, fugue and mania pertaining the ritual's target…so risky, yes.

The main draw here and what makes this AMAZING, though, would be the in-depth description of the ritual itself – basically, you sew the buttons on the target…and then things get icky… you see, you transform the target, LITERALLY into a skinsuit you can wear. Yes, dear readers – that actually means that we get a potentially more concise version of the ritual employed in Second Darkness back in the day…and we actually get a polymorph effect that lasts longer than a combat… oh, but one word of warning for the potential evil-doers out there – one button amiss…and your disguise falls.

Still, seriously, if you're a GM and can't weave a glorious plot from this, then I don't know how to help you. This is seriously amazing and inspiring.

### Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed no glitches. Layout adheres to Everyman gaming's two-column full-color standard and the pdf comes with a nice piece of art by maestro Blackmon. The pdf has no bookmarks, but needs none at this length.

Alexander Augunas delivers big time here: This ritual is amazing, flavorful and inspiring – even if you do not play PFRPG and e.g. prefer OSR or DCC, the pdf provides some seriously delightfully twisted inspiration. I love this. It's a perfect example of how amazing a ritual can be – 5 stars + seal of approval. Get this asap!

You can get this cool pdf here on OBS!

Endzeitgeist out.
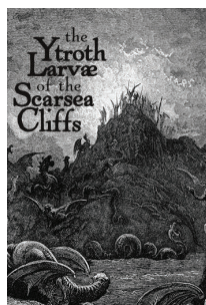
The Ytroth Larvae of the Scarsea Cliffs (system neutral)

Publisher: Karl Scheer
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This module is system-neutral and clocks in at 2 pages – all content. Structure-wise, we have a basic 3 locations – each of which sports a brief read-aloud text, a more detailed elaboration of the respective area and then a couple of different dangers that the GM can use. Creatures are explained, with notes like "medium damage, high health", notes on "moves" and "impulses." Additionally, each of the 3 sections sports sample treasures (using gold standard, just fyi).

All right, and this would be as far as I can go sans going into SPOILERS. Potential players should jump to the conclusion.

All right, only referees around? Great! Let me paraphrase a part of the setting the scene section:

"To the South there are twisting, jagged ravines covering the barren earth like lashes on the back of a whipped prisoner. The lands provide no crops or lumber…[…]…Crawling up from the bowels of the earth are the chitinous and undulating Ytroth Larvae, devouring and churning up the ancient stone below. They rest like colossal cicadas against the cliffs. Within their stomachs and hearts have accumulated the riches and artifacts of civilizations long dead."

Stoked yet? Yeah, guess where the PCs are going? The first location would be the maw, where parasitic scrapworms, corpses of failed Ytroth miners and sudden convulsions and flexing jaws may spell doom for those brave or foolhardy enough to dive into the larvae's titanic jaws. Within the stomach, beyond the esophagus, there are guthawks circling the insides and bug-like tinsniffers are dangerous as well…oh, and have I mentioned the acid lake undercurrents constantly changing the topography? Via a rend in the stomach, the PCs can make their way through a coagulated tunnel to the heart, where molefolk bloodcultists roam and heart valves or spasms may prove fatal for those tiny fools crawling through the place…a fact well known to the degenerate molefolk…

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I noticed no serious hiccups beyond minor punctuation hiccups. Layout adheres to a 3-column horizontal landscape format and the pdf sports 3 nice, thematically-fitting pieces of stock-art. The pdf has no bookmarks, but needs none at this length. It also has no cartography, but once again, doesn't need it courtesy of the amazing prose.

Karl Scheer's humble pdf shows that you do not need rules, nor room or word-count to deliver something truly amazing. Heck, it doesn't even have branching paths and still is amazing! The environment is awesome, the complications cool and the prose is absolutely inspiring. The pdf is inspiring and costs a lousy single buck – and there are very few such small dungeons/adventures that come close to this in quality. Need one gaming day worth of an amazing environment, glorious prose and fun? Look no further. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this cool mini-module here on OBS!
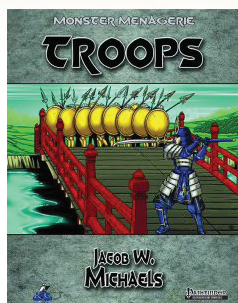
Endzeitgeist out.

Monster Menagerie: Troops

Publisher: Rogue Genius Games
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of Rogue Genius Games' Monster Menagerie-series clocks in at 22 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial/ToC, 1 page introduction, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 17 pages of content, so let's take a look!

Okay, let me state something from the get-go: I LOVE the troop subtype. I always hated that mobs of low-level commoners and soldiers sucked so much and the troop subtype keeps these low-level threats viable and simulates the "advantage in numbers"-aspect. As you may have noticed, I tend to enjoy a somewhat gritty and high-challenge playstyle and troops help immensely in that regard – hence, I'd be lying if I said I didn't look forward to this pdf. But what exactly do we get?

Well, we start with a full recap of the troop subtype, which is really appreciated and from there, move on to the CR 9 centaur warband…and here, you'll notice that, yes, these troops have a plethora of signature abilities: The centaurs, for example, can deafen foes with their thundering approach, rain AoE arrows on squares at range and even heal on the fly – amazing and adds some serious depth to the troop!

Eternal misfits and mascots of PFRPG, the gleefully inept goblin raiding party at CR 5 is fearsome to behold: They can fire the looted belongings of homes as ranged, fiery bombardments and their goblin war chants (see Pathfinder #1 for a sample…) bolster morale. Of course, they're goblins and thus, much like Warhammer's morale checks, they have a chance of…not behaving exactly as planned, with the chances of gobbos wandering away…and yes, that is a level 1 boss fight I'd love to run: PCs using their guerilla tactics to draw gobbos out of formation? HECK YEAH!!

Perhaps you've been playing Way of the Wicked and arrived at book #6. If you're like me and have serious doubts that the PCs will encounter an appropriate challenge (GMs of book #6 know what I'm talking about…) – then may I introduce the heavenly host? At CR 18, the armies of Mount Celestia can unleash channel energy…and with Alignment Channel and Channel Smite as well as their protective capabilities, they are one incredibly tough nut to crack and showcase well why the heavens haven't fallen to the demonic or infernal hordes.

We're not even close to done. CR 17, all amazing: May I introduce the legion of the damned? Oh boy, if you thought undead lost their scariness at high levels, think again: These fellows can beckon *black tentacles*-like corpse hands from the ground to ensnare foes; their very TOUCH causes the loss of Con and, sadistically, the save to end it is Fort. Worse: Their miasma hampers healing and they LITERALLY can't be stopped by anything in their inexorable march. Imagine me grinning my most sardonic, sadistic GM-smile right now…

At CR 6, a mite rumpus is driven by hatred for gnomes and dwarves and may fire volleys of darts (with a nice cooldown mechanic)…oh, and their SPs…are really hard to break and they actually *doom* those nearby!

At CR 7, the classic peasant mob is not missing from the file either…and they gain strength/heal when reducing foes to less than half HP, hurl torches and may swiftly demoralize and ever scare away foes…oh, and their defense is better than you'd expect. Love them! The same CR, just fyi, would be the secret police squad that it perfect for a crackdown on low-level PC's illegal operations – with improved chances to resist being lied to and the ability to take foes alive and secure targets, they make for an amazing storytelling tool. Huge kudos!

The CR 11 sahuagin frenzy inherits blood frenzy and adds steal to those damaged, pillaging the unfortunates that stand against them. With ranged volleys and the ability to speak with sharks, we have a nice, concise troop here as well.

Wanna go full-on Isengard? Cr 15 Treant Grove. 'Nuff said. Oh, okay, just because I love you folks: These guys can hammer down with crippling blows (Str and Dex damage on failed saves) and their entangle actually damages those caught in it. And oh boy, don't you want to be in an edifice that has offended the radical trees…and no, you also don't want to find yourself in a position where you run from them in a forest. PAIN, I tell you!

For fans of the creepy or the playful at the same time, the CR 1 toy soldier brigade plays well with the classic Ravenloft-modules. These guys can duplicate a variant of *entangle* that may knock you prone, are experts at disguising themselves…and, being (toy) soldiers, they are disciplined: Huge plus: Construction notes included!

At CR 15, the warparty of the Fell hunt would be a take on the classic wild hunt trope, but with an emphasis on the cold – -with icewalking, weapons

of ice and *phantom steed*s, they make for a deadly foe…and they have a nice weakness savvy players can exploit.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed no glitches. Layout adheres to Rogue Genius Games' two-column full-color standard with multiple original Jacob Blackmon artworks. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

My heartfelt congratulations to Jacob W. Michaels! At this point, I have seen a metric TON of critters and, in spite of my admittedly pronounced soft spot for troops, I am also an incredibly spoiled bastard: LG's Mythic Monsters-series, for example, has set the level of what I expect originality-wise from monsters very, very high. This delivers. BIG TIME. I am not kidding when I'm saying that this is, hands down, my favorite book in the whole series AND my favorite book from Jacob's pen. This is one amazing, no filler, all killer monster book – even old concepts like the hunt get their unique twists. The builds are challenging and cool and inspire by their very rules. This is, in short, excellence. The only reason this is not a Top Ten candidate is that it's too short – I want MOARRR!!! Feed the greedy reviewer-prick! Kidding aside, this is a must-own book. Get it. 5 stars + seal of approval, given sans hesitation or complaints!

Amazing collection of evocative troops! Get them here!

Endzeitgeist out.
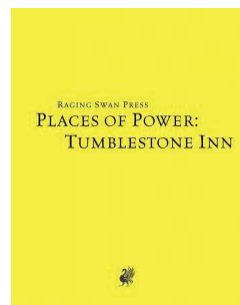
Places of Power: Tumblestone Inn (system neutral)

Publisher: Raging Swan Press
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of the Places of Power-series clocks in at 11 pages, 1 page front cover, 2 pages of advertisement, 1 page editorial/ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 5 pages of content, so let's take a look!

In the middle of the borderlands, in the middle of the wilderness, situated atop the ruins of an erstwhile keep, there lies a place, equal parts armed camp of sellswords and mercenaries and bastion of civilization, bazaar of the exotic and recruiting ground – this place is tumblestone inn, and it may be precariously close to the territory of orcs…but so far it stands, also thanks to the continuous influx of adventurers…and they keep coming, because it has pretty much become THE place to get hired…and so, shadowy patrons always frequent the corners of the place and gold is always changing hands.

Led by Aelliah Wilmaytn, an erstwhile mercenary captain and guarded by many of her fellow soldiers, the place is also surprisingly safe for its location and concentration of capable individuals -some of which come with nice, fluff-only write-ups. As often in the series, we get information on local dressing-habits and nomenclature – but this time around, we also get a marketplace (with custom-priced, lesser magic items for sale – these should not break anyone's sense of immersion, considering how this is basically an adventurer's homebase…), ale and room-prices and the obligatory events and rumors to add further spice to this locale.

Going one step beyond, we also get 10 fluff-only write ups of different mercenaries as well as 8 patrons, making this basically a fully staffed environment to drop into pretty much every hexcrawl or wilderness environment you could conceive. The noted class-lines for the respective NPCs make use of the proper terms like magic-user and thief, so no complaints there.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch. Layout adheres to RSP's elegant 2-column b/w-standard and the pdf features some nice b/w-artworks. The pdf comes in two iterations, one optimized for screen-use and one made for the printer – kudos there! The cartography by Simon Butler and Maciej Zagorski is excellent. I think by joining Raging Swan Press' patreon, you can actually get the high-res map for the evocative place, but I am not 100% sure. The map provided is cool, but sports keyed rooms.

From the Black Tower, still standing from the original keep, to the mercenaries herein, Creighton Broadhurst proves why he's this highly regarded – the man *KNOWS* what he is doing. Frankly, I should not be liking this pdf to the extent that I do; it's concept is so old and done, it doesn't have this novelty I tend to crave…which just goes to show what good prose and concise writing can achieve, for I indeed found myself loving this extremely useful home away from home, this ready to drop in adventuring hub. There is something about the totality of this place of power that transcends the building stones from which it was crafted, making it stand out and feel distinct, in spite of its conservative theme.

In fact, Tumbledown Inn may actually work best in this iteration – it resonates with the old Greyhawk and Judge's Guild flavor and feels like

a perfect drop-in for old-school campaigns. It is unpretentious, yes, but it perfectly captures the feeling and flavor of these regions…and OSR-fans will most certainly experience this warm smile slowly manifesting on their faces. In short: Unlike in PFRPG or 5E, I am not missing the extra crunchy bits here and thus, my verdict for this version, will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this cool supplement here on OBS!

You cand irectly support Raging Swan Press here on patreon!
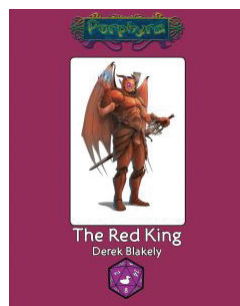
Endzeitgeist out.

The Red King

Publisher: Purple Duck Games
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This supplement clocks in at 11 pages, 1 page front cover, 1.5 pages of SRD, leaving us with 8.5 pages of content, so let's take a look!

The red king is the dictator of the North in the amazing patchwork planet of Porphyra, an ogre-mage half-dragon with a single, purple eye that seems to be too large for his head – and yes, there is an amazing hand-out-style 1-page version of the glorious artwork depicting him within this pdf.

Ahem. Sorry. I can't do that neutral routine. LOOK AT THOSE STATS! I am drooling here!!

CR 22. AC 48 almost 450 hit points. Yes, please! His class-line reads "Male unique half-dragon ogre mage cavalier (longshanks/warlord) 6/inquisitor 5. And his average damage output is a beauty to behold! While his cohort and followers (an army in its own right) don't get stats, he is a beauty!! He actually killed his father and implanted his eye in his own face, wearing his sire's scales!

His armor employs the *grace* ability, which increases the maximum Dex-bonus and aforementioned eye can pierce illusions…oh, but that's not all!! You see, unlike many comparable supplements, we do receive a gloriously detailed background for this villain – beyond the detailed and lavish story, which has ventured into the realm of legend, the red king also sports a rather intriguing array of tactics – and yes, he has actually strategies to escape death.

Beyond these lavishly detailed aspects of the pdf, we also get specific adventure hooks and a new legendary weapon, namely the *Red King's Judgment*. In case you're new to the concept of legendary weapons: These were introduced by Purple Duck Games as an alternative to the concept of Legacy Weapons – but unlike those, they don't impose unnecessary penalties. The respective items have prerequisites and increase in power over the course of the wielder's levels, with the weapon featured herein increasing in potency in 10 steps. I love these items, as they help combat the Christmas-Tree-syndrome and makes magic matter more.

Anyways, beyond gaining multiple straight upgrades, we gain increasing, scaling invulnerability to fire, minions via Vile Leadership, nets Proficiencies/Focus and provides e.g. *flame strike* with 1/2 unholy damage…which does not exist. I get what it tries to do, but still -an obvious and unnecessary glitch. It also can bypass fire resistances and allow the wielder to discorporate and weather the storm, emerging once again from the flames…

It should also be noted that material uses and special weapon properties featured in the build – kudos!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good – I noticed no serious hiccups and rules-language is similarly concise, with the minor exclusion of the aforementioned unholy damage glitch. Layout adheres to Purple Duck Games' two-column standard, which is printer-friendly with purple highlights. The artwork of the king is GLORIOUS. The pdf has no bookmarks, but doesn't necessarily require them at this length.

Derek Blakely has made a little dream of mine come true. I don't know about you, my readers, but I know that my players crave challenges and many a published module doesn't really live up to that aspect: If I threw a vanilla AP final boss at my group, then chances are in many (not all!) cases that they'd utterly annihilate the foe. I am a huge fan of really challenging, deadly villain-builds and when both the amazing Faces of the Tarnished Souk-series and Enemies of NeoExodus ran their course, I sighed and got back to making builds.

I expected not that much from this humble pdf and I got so much more: The red king is a glorious foe – lavishly illustrated, detailed and deadly, he makes for an amazing BBEG in the tradition of these two superb series. I adore this NPC and his tricks and the addition of the legendary weapon is a nice plus as well. For the low and fair price-point, this provides a great, deadly villain that should really challenge even powerful groups. What more can you ask for? Exactly! The one aesthetic glitch

I found wasn't enough to rate this down – this is a great, amazing little pdf, well worth the asking price and deserving of 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this glorious, amazing villain here on OBS!

You can directly support Purple Duck Games here on patreon!

Endzeitgeist out.

10 Kingdom Seeds: Plains

Publisher: Rite Publishing
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This inexpensive pdf clocks in at 12 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement, leaving us with 8 pages of content, so let's take a look!

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

After a brief piece of introductory fluff, we dive right into the nit and grit of this file, namely villages that you can use to craft, bingo, kingdoms from them – each of these settlements comes with a village statblock, but does not end there: Beyond a small summary of the village, we also get one or more sites of interest and 3 different rumors per village to potentially jumpstart adventures from.

So that's the format employed here – but what kind of villages are we talking about? Well, for starters, LG Belpond, is a surprisingly lawful and cozy village of guild-organized structures, where a visit of the local tavern may see your pockets emptied…only to have the goods be returned to you before leaving! Lightley, in contrast, would be a LE thorp of only 13 folks and is known for its bears.

Taking the example of settlements tied to creatures, the hamlet Morlea, situated between these spectra of the alignment axis at LN, actually does not rest – instead, it follows the migration patterns of the mammoths, making for an interesting and rather evocative backdrop. Ornesse would be an interesting, touristy destination with serious population fluxes, for the chariot race tracks always draw plentiful folks to the hamlet during the racing season.

In contrast to this place, the folks of Prydwin are living by their herbs, which are grown in excessive herb gardens that are meticulously maintained by the populace. Have I mentioned the druidess and her pest-devouring chameleon companion? Revale is either white or red – steeped in snow or showcasing its red sandstone beauty – and the theme of color extends to the primary industry, which hinges upon the extraction of color from rare lichen. Unlike its name, the hamlet shadowhurst is actually known to be a rather lively place, famed for its straw-related craftsmanship and corn.

Soulhill sounds foreboding – and indeed, the village, after an uprising and burning of the previous rulers, has taken to a rather selfish and dangerous demeanor. Westerfox is build around a horseshoe-shaped abbey, with sprawling buildings around, and represents a community that is rather disciplined and tight-knit – formally a meritocracy, but in fact, controlled by a nasty elite. Finally, Woodedge would be a place you don't want to visit: Buried in banks of tall flowers and flanked by beehives, it may seem idyllic enough, but gigantic bees and rather nasty halflings make this place a dangerous prospect for visitors.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed no serious glitches. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column full-color standard and the pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience: While the bookmarks haven't been labeled properly, they are functional. The pdf sports nice full-color artworks.

Liz Smith delivers a nice variety of small settlements to visit and develop. The respective places have sufficiently diverse themes to make this worthwhile and while I wished this had more room for the individual villages, it does provide enough to jumpstart one's imagination. Considering the very fair price point and the writing, which provides a nice array of different concepts this time around, my final verdict will clock in at 4.5 stars – and due to the low price, I'll round up for the purpose of this platform.

You can get this inexpensive pdf here on OBS!

Endzeitgeist out.
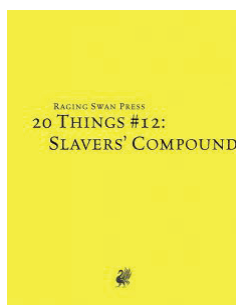
20 Things: Slaver's Compound (system neutral)

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 11 pages, 1 page front cover,

2 pages of advertisement, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 5 pages of content, so let's take a look!

All right, much like in the installment on creepy graveyards, we begin with minor events to spice up the game – a total of 8 such entries are provided and range from guttural laughter of bored (and drunk) guards to horribly disgusting smell leading to the slave pens…

Next up, in the tradition of the series, we get some fluff-only entries of slaves with a pronounced personality: These folks include a wizened sage, an mad guy who thinks he is the emperor of the world or a heavily-tattooed, blind seeress – white a few folks here that can use the PC's help…and who may well prove to become rewarding assets! Of course, a righteous, yet completely bloodthirsty and savage slave may be a potent ally…but can he be allowed to roam free? Can he be redeemed? Pretty cool!

Of course, there also are beings on the other side of the equation – and thus, 10 sample slavers with a personality would be next: From the clichéd, disgusting and thoroughly vile to the guilt-ridden man faced with an impossible choice, these guys are surprisingly nuanced: We have different justifications (or lack thereof) showcased here in a surprisingly versatile selection. Big kudos!

Next up would 20 entries of dungeon dressing tailor-suited for the compounds of slavers: These include, but are not limited to, whips and torture devices, bloody handprints on the wall, complex tally systems, various brands or treasures hidden from view – once again, an evocative and well-written page.

Finally, we'll take a look at what one can loot from the bodies of slavers: From crude and coiled rope used as a makeshift whip to meager coins, bone dice and other, grisly items associated with the trade, we end this pdf with a potentially inspiring and intriguing table here.

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!

Creighton Broadhurst knows his craft – it's simple as that. The chief of Raging Swan Press is a master of concise writing and manages to evoke a surprising sense of diversity and fun in his brief elaborations; the entries herein all have been lavishly hand-crafted to add dimension and hooks to a given environment. They also fit the theme perfectly and manage to achieve a sense of cohesion. In short: This is a great, fun dressing-pdf, well worth 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this amazing dressing file here on OBS!

You can directly support Raging Swan Press here on patreon!
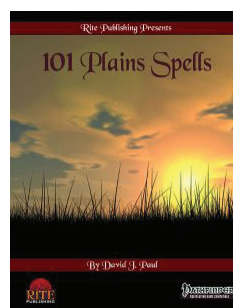
Endzeitgeist out.

101 Plains Spells

Publisher: Rite Publishing
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This pdf clocks in at a massive 65 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 2 pages of advertisement, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with an impressive 59 pages of content, so let's take a look!

There are few environments with such a bad rep as plains – compared to trackless deserts, swamps or mountains, there are next to no good modules or supplements for them out there. In fact, it took Frog God Games' phenomenal "Fields of Blood" to make them really stand out and finally get their due.

The pdf provides spell-lists for all pre-Occult Adventures spellcasting classes, organized by class first, then by level and then alphabetically.

Oh, one more thing: This review was moved up in my review-queue as a prioritized review at teh request of my patreons.

All right, so far these terrain-specific spell-books by David J. Paul have been characterized by pure excellence, but can this pdf retain this impressive streak? Let's see!

Taking a look at the spell-selection provided herein, we begin with a feasible and interesting variant of disease-curing magic: *Alleviate Animal Affliction* mitigates the disease suffered by animals, which makes sense in an environment of vast plains, where a broken leg of one's horse may well spell doom for the weary traveler. This is particularly relevant, considering the effects of spells like *sore horse* or the ability to summon giant drone ants as mounts – come on, that is damn cool!

Once again, the pdf provides a selection of spells that is directly entwined with the terrain:

For example, while *ankheg's awareness* is a pretty straight attribute-buff when considered neutrally, those that cast the spell in a plains terrain also gain senses even further extended. In a great and fun interaction with the material component, an ankheg's leg, we also gain additional abilities within the hunting grounds (qualified, area-wise, btw.!) of the ankheg used in the casting of the spell. This is a simple operation and frankly, one that more magic should sort: It rewards players for engaging with the world, nets a GM an easy way to motivate PCs and also explains potentially nasty advantages of spellcasters in their home-turf.

This design-paradigm is btw. one that thankfully graces the spells contained herein rather often. These interactions that modify the spellcasting engine per se are not limited to the interaction with the terrain or creatures, though – if one takes a look at the *Assured Diviner* spell, for example, one can see that characters with the knowledge domain, lore mystery or the lore spirit double the duration of the spell. While the base spell is not one I'd consider mind-blowing, it is this thematic connection that rewards character choices that makes this remarkable, at least to me. I am a big proponent of diversification among characters and the more player choices matter, the better – spells often are rather static and linear pieces of crunch and this pdf taking some of that linearity and tweaking it makes sense in all the right ways.

This also extends to the summoning spells contained herein, with e.g. the *atomie gang* that you can call forth being an interesting example – while GMs may need to exert a bit of caution regarding these group summon spells, it is interesting to note that chaotic clerics with the arcane subdomain may select the aforementioned spell as a substitute domain spell. Also intriguing: Fey bloodline sorcerors and witches with specific hexes generate the maximum number of creatures summoned, tying the base spell mechanics to player choice here as well.

What made me go "AWWW!" when reading it would be *Bevy of Bumblebees* – I love bumblebees. They're fat, clumsy and the cutest insects you could fathom. (As an aside – research bumblebees and aerodynamics -the folklore that they can't fly is inaccurate…) While uncontrolled, the giant insects can be held at bay with smoke, allowing for interesting combinations of spells and effects for the savvy players. If there was one prevalent leitmotif to the magic herein, it would most certainly be "choice" – in particular, choice that hinges upon

magic feeling less static – it makes sense that those, whose character choices represent the spell thematics can enjoy additional benefits.

Similarly, the terrain-centric and localized benefits make use of the old adage of magic working by appropriating a part for the whole, a maxim most popularly represented in e.g. voodoo dolls. But these do actually, to a degree, entwine. If you takes a look at *black art of the bouda*, you'll notice the requirement of a bouda's fetish as a focus, which represents an obvious adventuring angle. The spell does allow for a variety of choices themed around the creature – and the abilities directly interact with the choices of abilities tapped in: The more you utilize the powers, the more the total duration of the spell is reduced. This is rewarding from a game-design perspective, as it emphasizes resource-management once again.

What about growing metallic wings, Archangel-style, including the option to fire them? Oh, and you can actually ruffle them in bright conditions, creating a blinding effect. While we're at the topic of spells that should put a smile on the faces of superhero fans – *burn on through* hearkens to speedster-like acceleration – including overruns with trails of fire. There would also be an interesting *cleave herd* spell, which can make for a rather intriguing narrative device, allowing you to cause fear among great numbers of animals and magical beasts – either to hunt stragglers or bypass areas that would otherwise be beyond the PC's abilities to traverse.

Beyond the narrative and design-aesthetic components, we should also mention that tactics are an important component for a lot of spells: *Divine doe's grace* allows the cast to immediate action move, potentially negating attacks (and yes, the spell-level assigned is appropriate for the power this offers). Better yet, the spell's wording manages to make the complex concept work – and emphasizes a concept I very much enjoy. As you may have noticed in a couple of my statements, my own game tends to feature a lot of terrain hazards, shifting frontlines and dynamic arenas. I absolutely loathe it when an epic duel boils down to two characters just trading full attacks for rounds on end. It's boring and non-cinematic to me. However, PFRPG, as a system, rewards exactly this type of melee and every help we can get to render combat more fluctuating, more versatile. The downside of this ambition is, obviously, that it requires some serious consideration on part of the GM and players to make combat this interesting. This pdf does offer quite a few interesting spells that help in this way.

Speaking of tactical options: Remember the tunnels popularized in StarCraft etc. – what about a pathway that modifies spells and allows you to channel spells through the established conduit…and you may reassign its endpoint! So yes, there are some specific spells within this pdf that can radically change the dynamics of combat or make a specific combat unique. Speaking of such scenes that will be kept in mind: Well, there are spells, much like in previous examples of these pdfs, that represent serious ritual-like benefits and generate epic environments – *eclipse the sun.* The effects of this very powerful spell should be rather evident, right?

Feed from friends, a life-leeching spell, is an excellent example for a spell that manages to depict the vampiric leeching concept in a way that precludes use of kittens or similar cute critters – by virtue of the rules-language focusing on actual hp transference and allies as viable targets – thus, kittens could only yield pitiful amounts of hit points. Big kudos! I tried poking holes in this one and did not succeed. Generating slashing fields of grass is cool – but it is not as cool as *Fire Bleeder* – this spell launches missiles that cause piercing and bleeding damage – and temporarily adds the fire bleeder Su to the creature hit, which aerosolizes and ignites the blood seeping from bleeding wounds. Alas, as thoroughly amazing as this spell is, I am pretty confident that this ability should not be permanent – the duration reads "instantaneous, see text", which makes me believe that this ability should probably be lost after a certain duration has elapsed.

It should be noted that, in particular these volatile fire spells herein, have additional effect for the pyromaniac goblin race, emphasizing racial spellcasting traditions. Another interesting one would be *giant flea leap* – which requires the consumption of a potentially sickening drop of blood, but which also allows for VAST jumps when successfully used…oh, and in a feat of internal consistency, the spell actually is easier for alchemists to use. There would also be a variant of *mage's magnificent mansion* that generates a run-down, gremlin-haunted abode, a Thinner-curse that renders a target incapable of sustaining nutrients, spells that help hunting down the users of the arcane arts…and a spell, which allows you to *join the swarm*, allowing you to potentially evade a horrid fate AND making for an evocative getaway-strategy. Speaking of swarms – conjuring forth a butterfly swarm (fully statted) at 1st level, a

harmless swarm, should provide some interesting options for the adherents of Desna etc.

Relatively accurate *long-range forecasts* (the coldest winter is coming…), mesmerizing foes via *waves of grain* or similar plants make for an interesting array of visuals and narrative possibilities – one exemplified as well by the *plains clan* spell, which generates a kind of mystic union between the participants – and it actually generates a true reason for PCs to strive to become part of a clan; it is a viable benefit provided for belonging. I love this type of design. It also ties in with a low-level spell/cantrip that allows for the easy identification of clan companions.

If you've been waiting for the flashy, devastating high-level spell in this discussion so far, fret not: *Prairie Lightning Storm* will indeed result in a highly flexible and devastating environment that will even push high-level PCs to their limits. *Transmute Gnome to Goblin* is an evil polymorph effect that may have significant repercussions on lore. As a minor complaint – *variant volume fireball* obviously is a more controlled, powerful iteration of the classic spell and as such, it is pretty obvious that it inflicts fire damage, RAW, the spell does not "damage" – sans the type. This is me nitpicking for nitpicking's sake, but I figured it'd be worth mentioning, since the pdf's flaws are so few I honestly need to strain this much to find anything worthwhile to complain about.

What about a spell that adds poisonous tentacles to a given shield, which may be severed by attackers failing to hit you, spraying them with poison? In an environment where horrid blazes can eliminate whole communities, *withstand the fire* comes at a horrible cost…but also allows you to weather even death by fire, tying into the purification and rebirth effects…and explaining why NPC xyz survived the encounter with the red dragon, why the mystic could live through the cataclysmic inferno. I adore this spell and its serious drawbacks do mean that constant maintenance is not something PCs will want to do.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are excellent on both a formal and a rules-level. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column full-color standard and the pdf comes fully bookmarked with nested bookmarks. Artwork-wise, we'd get quite a bunch of cool full color pieces.

David J. Paul's series of spells blows me away. If I were to choose a single series of spellbooks to

the exclusion of all others for my PFRPG-games, it would be this one. Why? Because the magic is precisely-structured; it taps into evocative concepts, features thoroughly glorious concepts, feels magical and sports rules-innovations. The emphasis on player-choice is glorious, the support for GMs and the roleplaying component of the whole game is extremely rewarding. A lot of the spells featured within this book practically demand being used – their visuals are amazing and more than one can generate a glorious adventure, or at least, scene/encounter. Spellcasting, magic, as featured herein, does feel magical: As a tradition, its shamanistic components, its arcane components – all FIT. All feel real to an extent; all transcend just providing numbers – they are magic in a sense that is often lost on more rules-intense games. Just take a look at the page-count – these are not spells that just palette-swap components and the vast majority of them do something unique and creative in some manner.

In short: This is a phenomenal, inspiring pdf and should be part of the library of any group that looks for well-crafted magic. Very highly recommended as a superb spell-book. My final verdict, in spite of my nitpicks, will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval. And this is a candidate for my Top Ten of 2017.

Check out this gem!

You can get these phenomenal, evocative spells here on OBS!

Endzeitgeist out.
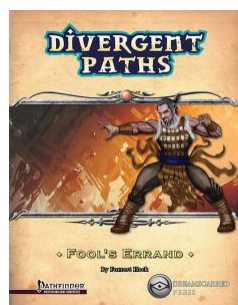
Divergent Paths: Fool's Errand

Publisher: Dreamscarred Press
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This expansion for Dreamscarred Press' Path of War system clocks in at 21 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page advertisement and 1 page SRD (though this page also contains the available services of the new martial tradition contained herein), leaving us with slightly more than 17 pages of content, so let's take a look!

Since this requires Path of War and Path of War Expanded to use, I assume that you're familiar with the terminology of the system herein. Furthermore, it should be noted that I will rate this as an expansion for the Path of War system and

its significantly increased power-level and not as something divorced from it – this review assumes that you're familiar and okay with the boost of PC power it creates.

So, this pdf depicts the new discipline Fool's Errand – so named because of the haughty words uttered by a mage – to shove it down that mage's throat would be the goal that ultimately led to the creation of this discipline. Something that should strike a chord with path of War's fans, as it encapsulates pretty much the raison d'être for the whole series. Anyways, Fool's Errand's associated skill is Climb and it plays well with a lot of combos, for all weapons are treated as associated weapons for the discipline. This easy accessibility is also mirrored in how it can be gained: Any class may trade one of its disciplines in to gain Fool's Errand and its Climb skill instead.

Quite a few of Fool's Errand's maneuvers make unarmed strikes – these are made at the highest BAB, may deal lethal or nonlethal damage (cool!) and do not provoke AoEs. They add the full Strength modifier to damage and initiators may execute them even when their hands are full or if they attacked with their hands already. These are treated as unarmed strikes for all intents and purposes and if a character is prohibited from making such strikes, they may still initiate a maneuver. However, other weapons may not be substituted for the unarmed strikes granted by Fool's Errand maneuvers – with the exception of gauntlets, obviously. It should also be noted that, while this makes Fool's Errand strikes operate as though they were Improved Unarmed Strikes, the discipline does not actually specify granting it, which serves as a multiclassing/prerequisite hurdle. All in all, a solid array of clearly defined limiting conditions.

Next up, we're introduced to a new condition imposed by many of the maneuvers herein, the "locked" condition. Only creatures within melee reach may be locked. Locking a creature does not provoke AoOs and while it is treated as a melee attack for purposes of miss chances, line sight etc., it is not a melee attack per se. It ends any Stealth you may have and a creature affected must succed a Reflex save versus 10 + 1/2 your highest initiator level + your Strength modifier or highest initiation modifier, whichever is highest, or become locked. Locking is considered to be a Fool's Errand maneuver for the purposes of DC-increasing abilities and a discipline weapon's bonus is considered to be already included in the save DC. In the case you are allowed to substitute

another ability score modifier for melee attacks or CMB, you may use that one instead of Strength for the purpose of determining the save DC.

A creature that has been locked may not voluntarily move from their current space without escaping the lock and airborne creatures locked do not fall. *Freedom of movement* and *slip the bonds* (both not properly italicized) prevent being locked. A lock may be ended as a free action and ends if a creature is no longer in reach. The initiator of the locked condition may move freely while locking a target and may drag creatures by moving at 1/2 speed, in relation to your position. Creatures thus dragged need to have a viable place – you can't drag them into or through solid objects, but you *can* drag them into dangerous terrain. The locked creature's movement, however, does not provoke AoOs and neither does the initiator's movement provoke AoOs from the locked creature. Creatures dragged into harmful locales may attempt a new save to escape the lock – on a success, they fall prone. Similarly, a locked creature may attempt a save on its turn as a move action/whenever it tries to move – that means 5-foot steps are potentially possible, but also expended on a failure – in either case, on a failure, the attempt is treated as having moved, preventing further 5-foot-steps for the target.

As a peculiarity, the Reflex save of the creature may alternatively employ their Strength modifier. Creatures that do not attempt to move may try to break free of a lock as a free action instead at the end of their turn. It should be noted that, unlike the last-second-save for being dragged into hazardous terrain, a regular saving throw to end the condition does not render the target prone. Finally, if the initiator becomes helpless, all creatures locked are released. In short: "Locked" is like a more swingy version of the drag maneuver that ignores creatures sizes – in fact, considering the sucky Ref-saves, but decent Strength-scores of many gigantic creatures, it does not immediately become a dragon slayer, while still retaining a chance for success.

All righty, those basics of the discipline out of the way, let's move forward and take a look at the maneuvers the Fool's Errand grants, shall we? The most basic strike, *iron grip*, would allow for an attack and lock attempt in combination; regarding stances, we have the Improved Unarmed Strike (or greater variety if you have it already) as well as substituting Climb for Acrobatics in the stance *Lesson I: Balance. Lesson II: Control* nets you the option to penalize locked foes and the counter *lock step* allows you to counter the attack

of an incoming attack by a locked foe via a Climb check. *One-Two Punch* duplicates the two attacks for -2 to atk flurry as a standard action and there is a Climb check based option to throw targets up to 10 feet. The second level options include a boost for movement as a swift action within the threatened squares of a target and another boost, *death at ten paces*, nets your next melee attack, which must be single target, a range of 30 feet – while I personally think that this should still be treated as a ranged attack (it makes no sense to me that this does not apply the rules for firing into melee), I get the design decision. *Lead and Follow* is an AoO-lock attempt, initiated as an immediate action counter. *Hurricane kick* would be the kick that nets you temporary Fly – you know the iconic visual of the kicking, freeze-framed martial artist flying towards the foe? Yeah, that one.

At 2nd level, we also have a strike that combos weapon and unarmed strikes and ignores all hardness and DR – I have never been a fan of these, but there's precedence in Path of War and if you're using this system, DR and hardness don't matter much anyway, so yeah. At 3rd level, we have a combo of lock and entangling and *Lesson III: Suppression* represents a powerful stance: The first attack you execute each round is resolved as though the target is flat-footed and it also nets you a 1/round free action lock attempt. Countering melee attacks with Climb-based Disarms and the option to catch the enemy weapon can also be found here. *Windmill Waltz Flurry* nets you a weapon and two unarmed attacks with AoO-less 5-foot steps in between and full movement after resolving the attack, though this does provoke AoOs. 4th level yields the intriguing *make them humble* counter – which can be initiated to negate *freedom of movement* and similar effects, with the check based on ranks of Climb. Cool! Speaking of which – *Night Falls* is a strike that pins and silences those hit with its lock, helping infiltrators and providing versatility beyond numerical escalation.

The sincerest form of flattery is a potentially rather potent option that nets you a readied non-stance maneuver when used, though one that caps at what you could conceivably initiate. An upgrade to the throwing angle can also be found at level 4. The flurry angle is further upgraded at level 5 with a new strike. Cool: The stance *Lesson IV: The Ladder* lets you jump in sequence to the air, with Climb ranks acting as a non-cheesable limit. There also would be a counter that nets you a competing attack roll versus all incoming attacks for that

round, negating them potentially. W whirlwind lock strike is also included for this level. At 6th level, we have a combo attack that locks a foe, drags it along and then follows up with a standard action attack or a strike. *Lesson V: Expression* is a stance that nets your unarmed attacks a range of 10 ft. with 5 range increments and also allows you to perform cone-based attacks – which are btw. explained in a helpful sidebox regarding their placement. Nice catch there. *No Escape* counters a foe's successful escape from your lock, either following up on it or flat-out negating it. We also get yet another flurry-style upgrade and one option to air-juggle foes with the boost *To the Skies*.

Throwing creatures by using Climb to surpass their CMD and combo-ing that with disarm/picking up weapons would be one of the level 7 option, whereas the boost *Lightning Strikes Twice* can be added after your attack – it then repeats last round's damage, haled, including any adverse conditions or the like, but with saves potentially applying. No, there's no save to resist this boost. *Utter commitment* nets a 30-foot cone and a bonus damage equal to 7 times initiator level, half that for those affected by the cone. The 8th level maneuvers provide the final upgrade for the flurry tree and the final stance, which nets a free lock attempt each round, another stance of 7th level or lower, AoO locks and better dragging/hostile creature movement negation. The level also provides the culmination of the throwing moves with *sky-shattering throw*, which allows for meteoric throws. The level 9 capstone can duplicate any 8th level or lower maneuver of a discipline you know one maneuver or stance for or a 7th level or lower maneuver or stance from a discipline you know no maneuver or stance from.

The pdf also contains archetypes, the first of which would be the contender brawler, who begins play with 3 maneuvers readied and known, 1 stance and increases that to 15 known, 7 readied and 5 stances. The archetype gets a maximum of level 6 maneuvers. His initiation modifier is Wisdom. He may choose Fool's Errand and two other disciplines of his choice. Readying maneuvers takes practice in the form of 10 minutes of exercise. Expended maneuvers are regained by using the ambush class feature or expending a standard action. The archetype loses knockout, awesome blow and 4 combat feats. Ambush lets the contender regain a maneuver whenever he successfully attacks or locks a foe denied his Dex-bonus. This may be done 1/round, plus an additional time per round at 4th level and every 4 levels thereafter. The brawler may

use martial flexibility to temporarily learn a new maneuver instead of a combat feat, exchanging it for a readied maneuver, but is limited in choice to disciplines he knows at least one maneuver of. Instead of brawler's flurry, the archetype gains point of concentration, which nets the option to lock adjacent foes hit with melee attacks 1/round, increasing that by +1/round at 8th and 15th level. The brawler may forego his movement to instead move all creatures he has locked for the distance they could have been moved via him dragging them. Maneuver training may be applied, bonus-wise, to lock-save DCs.

The second archetype herein would be the Night Terror vigilante, who, discipline-wise, gets Eternal Guardian, Fool's Errand, Tempest Gale and Veiled Moon, using Charisma as initiation modifier. The night terror features the same maneuver progression as the contender and has the same readying mechanic. However, recovering maneuvers works differently: As a full-round action, he makes A Stealth skill check while being observed to hide and move up to his speed. This recovers initiation modifier, minimum 2, maneuvers. Movement thus taken is not reduced by dragging locked creatures, and neither does the night terror take a Stealth penalty. Alternatively, we have the standard action for one maneuver default. Night terrors are locked into the stalker specialization and they increase hidden strike's potency to 1d8, increasing that by a further +1d8 at 4th level and every 4 levels thereafter. This bonus damage may be foregone in favor of a lock attempt, with a bonus to the DC equal to hidden strike damage dice. Such an attempt is still treated as a successful use of hidden strike for ability interaction purposes.

First level night terrors become proficient with improvised weapons and treat them as unarmed strikes for the purpose of *amulet of mighty fists* interaction (item not properly italicized). Starting at 8th level, the night terror may use such pieces of environment to perform attacks sans wielding them and 15th level increases the option to make attacks with unattended objects to 30 feet, treating these as thrown weapons, but sans the shooting into melee penalties. He still needs, thankfully, line of effect to object and target. The night terror may select Combat Skill, Fist of the Avenger, Heavy Training, Unkillable and Nothing Can Stop Me avenger talents and may choose Discipline Focus, Stalker Arts or learn to perform potentially unnoticed attacks, access to Mithral Current, the option to lock targets and pin them to the wall, silent takedowns or pinning foes to

walls….Yeah, you probably noticed it, right?? This is basically Batman, the archetype, done via Path of War's rules!

The pdf also contains 5 new feats, three of which would be devoted to the Fool's Errand Style: The base Style feat lets you substitute entangled or sickened for your attack against a locked target, while Fool's Errand Scholar provides wildcard feats, taking limited resource feats into account. Nice. The third one, Fool's Errand Sensei provide the options to temporarily buff your AC or kip up via the expenditure of readied boosts or counters, respectively. Quicksilver Grip represents a discipline crossover feat for Fool's Errand and Mithral Current, providing the option to sheathe the weapon when hitting foes and adding the option to threaten locked foes with sheathed weapons and the option to draw as part of AoOs. SU Mithral Current maneuvers also becomes EX. Vortex Rush would then be the Elemental Flux & Fool's Errand crossover feat, which lets you and targets you force to move leave a trail of elemental energy that that causes initiation modifier energy damage of the associated energy of the element, but only once per creature and action and each trail is considered part of the one trail. Still, pretty cool!

The pdf closes with a brief write-up of the eponymous fellowship of fools, sticking it to magicians and psionics alike with martial potency.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are excellent on a rules-level, with the formal level sporting a few minor formatting hiccups. Layout adheres to Dreamscarred Press' two-column full-color standard and the pdf comes with a second, more printer-friendly version. Artwork is nice and full-color. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Forrest Heck knows her math and rules-language. I have yet to read any pdf she created that was anything short of thoroughly impressive in these regards and this is no different. Fool's Errand's "locked" condition is something I'd expect to be set up for failure: Introducing new conditions is a bad idea in 99.9999% of cases. The interaction with spells etc. makes sense, though avoiding the whole CMD-mechanic (and thus means for other classes to avoid it) can be seen as problematic. The Str-to-Reflex mechanics do somewhat alleviate that, though not completely, as they necessitate a on the fly calculation not there in other contexts. Similarly, class features and the like that fortify

against forced movement do nothing against being locked and dragged around. Where you like that or not remains a matter of taste.

On the plus-side, Fool's Errand ties in exceedingly well with the play-style and aesthetics of non-stop action Path of War employs and, in fact, to me is one of the coolest disciplines that came out of the system. It's no secret that I have a plethora of points wherein I completely disagree with the design decisions, power level and ramifications of the system, but that does not mean that I condemn it. Quite the contrary. While I wholeheartedly wished that the system was balanced with more conservative, non-Path of War options, I most certainly appreciate the design of the ideas and playstyle the respective options and disciplines generate. I am mentioning this in spite of the blowback this probably will once again create, mainly due to one thing:

No matter how you stand on the divisive system, from a design point of view, Fool's Errand is one magnificent beast and has a remarkable engine and flow.

The discipline may not look like it on paper, but actually playing it generates a flow of movement and assaults, quick sequences of stabs topped off by brutal blows, maneuverability and an overall aesthetic that makes me grin from ear to ear, as it manages to simulate perfectly the wire-fu WuXia movies I so love. To me, this is what Broken Blade should have been. It is elegant finesse and power, dragging foes through tree-tops while trading blows, and is surprisingly non-reliant on vanilla damage escalation.

Now yes, all of my usual complaints regarding the base system are there – obviously. This expansion requires embracing Path of War's playstyle, still is utterly incompatible with gritty fantasy and will not convert anyone. If you hated Path of War so far, this will not change that – it can't, being an expansion. If you like Path of War, however, you will absolutely adore this discipline. It plays well with others, has a ton of combo potential and diverse tricks, provides much needed versatility (breadth of options rather than depth) and represents one of my favorites in the whole system.

The neat archetypes are just icing on the cake and yes, I'm totally redesigning the Batman archetype for my grittier games. In short: This is an excellent addition to the Path of War-options. The craftsmanship is excellent and manages to make a concept work that could have been clunky and highly problematic in a lesser designer's hands. As always, we also receive an impressive high-concept touch of artistry herein, rendering

the overall pdf a must-own for every fan of Path of War. Since I really adore the flow of the discipline, my verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval, in spite of the few formatting hiccups – for Path of War-fans, this is a no-brainer must-have addition to the game.

You can get this pdf here on OBS!

You can directly support Dreamscarred Press here on patreon!
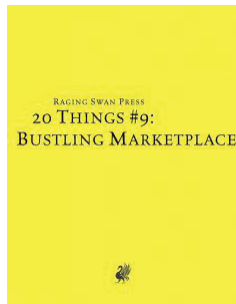
Endzeitgeist out.

20 Things: Bustling Marketplace (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 13 pages, 1 page front cover, 2 pages of advertisement, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 7 pages of content, so let's take a look!

Okay, we begin with something I really appreciate – namely a contextualization, location-wise, of a marketplace – there is a reason for them being at one point or another, after all, and the pdf starts by providing 5 different suggestions – from dock and bridge to churches and ruins and the underground. While it may sound obvious, such a context adds quite a bit of depth to the proceedings, so big kudos there! It's also interesting to see how the explicit consideration here can already spark some ideas.

Next up would be 10 merchants with a personality – as befitting of the system-neutral line, we don't get statblocks or the like and instead focus on the respective merchants' personalities: From extremely vain and self-conscious haberdashers to alchemists skeptical of magic-over-dependence, these are actually winners with intriguing and memorable personalities.

Need some hooks? This pdf has got you covered: 20 deals too good to be true are just that: Too good to be true! From angry wizards looking for spell books to items acting as a beacon to the friends, galleons with press-ganged slaves – there is a catch in these and the respective issues are intriguing and diverse, ranging from the mundane to the magical.

We move on to 20 interesting stalls – and they truly deserve the "interesting" moniker – when,

for example, a fat dwarf with a melted sugar and apple juices-dripping beard is carrying a ton of rotten caramel apples, when elven kids sell beaded talismans or when tall, impossibly gaunt humans sell "fresh" "animal organs", a prospective GM has his work cut out. Once again, we oscillate between the wondrous and mundane, between the potentially dark and whimsical. Big kudos!

If all of that does not yet suffice to kick the group into adventuring mode, it's quite possible that 20 rumors will do just that: Some of them pertain where to find rumor-mongers, while others speak about pickpockets, comment on certain people being charlatans, etc….or where to get magical tattoos from a savant halfling of the art. The direct follow-up would be yet another 20-entry-strong list of things you can see while exploring such a market-place: From bards hawking wares to wealthy women strolling past with their retinue, there are quite a few intriguing events – basically, you can just spring these upon your players and watch them interpret things…chances are, you'll have a hook on your hands!

We end this pdf with more notes to bear in mind when making a marketplace that feels alive – and a list of 20 general types of goods (with ample subtypes!) of things that may be for sale…and 10 brief characteristics for respective stalls to flesh them out on the fly.

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!

Creighton Broadhurst, Jeff Gomez and Alex Riggs deliver a humble, amazing pdf here: The hooks are well-crafted and flavorful, the respective NPCs evocative and the additional considerations go one step beyond, making this pdf a truly inspired little piece of dressing, guaranteed to enrich any game. 5 stars + seal of approval for this very impressive and well-made supplement.

You can get this glorious little dressing-file here on OBS!

You can directly support Raging Swan Press here on patreon!

Endzeitgeist out.

The Long Night of Winter: One Night in Valhalla

Publisher: Frog God Games
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

The series "The Long Night of Winter" was conceived as supplemental material/ optional tie-ins for the massive Northlands Saga, but each of the modules can be run as a standalone module as well. I backed the kickstarter for Northlands Saga back in the day, but otherwise was not involved in this project.

This module is intended for levels 12- 14 and is set in Frog God Games' Lost Lands campaign setting. It can be run in another context/setting without any hassle whatsoever, provided Norse deities exist; its raw content clocks in at 14 pages, if you take away the pdf's editorial, cover, etc..

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

So, Freyja has an issue: Guess what happens when immortal warriors and valkyries get horribly drunk each and every night? Bingo, their capacity for investigative reasoning…well, isn't that developed. And lately, there has been strife among the einherjar, strife that can compromise the readiness for Ragnarök. Worse, souls that come to Valhalla are not yet einherjar before they have completed their feasting…and souls have gone missing. This is a troubling development and hence, the PCs are slipped some sacred mead…and as they slumber, ethereal, translucent forms emerge and manifest in FRICKIN' VALHALLA. These spirit forms are immune to the dazed, exhausted, fatigued, nauseated, sickened and stunned conditions… unless they get voluntarily drunk. Yeah, you may notice that this module does undertake some interesting modifications to the standard rules that make the adventure at once REALLY hard and really easy – It's easy because, upon being reduced below 2/3 of maximum hit points,, you're "flung back" a room via an involuntary *teleportation* and healed of half current damage and half ability score damage. Slain PCs become specters that can contribute via passive skills and thus help their fellows before fading away – and no PC can truly be slain: Detah just equals waking up, guarded by valkyries, back in the mortal realms.

This makes the characters at once feel like immortal einherjar and really fragile and emphasizes another aspect:

This module, in essence, has satirical angles and could be seen as one prolonged puzzle. You see, einherjar drinking songs and dirty jokes are included and the behavior of valkyries is similarly codified in a concise manner…and the feasthalls of Valhalla, these gigantic edifices, are connected in a linear manner, with relatively few terrain-based obstacles – special note would deserve the vomit/ excrement slop-buckets and fire pits, which the PCs should learn to use for tactical advantages- after all, they're treading on the holy ground of their gods!

Their briefing is handled by Brunnaharr, the personal shield-maiden of Freyja…and the einherjar are not particularly cooperative: The PCs, in their interactions with them, have to *get* the mentality; craven behavior or groveling will get them nowhere – diplomatic aggression may actually be the contradictio in adjecto that best summarizes a valid strategy for success here – after all, the spirit-like shape of the PCs makes them suspicious to the mead-addled minds of the revelers!.

Beyond the social tasks that have to be roleplayed for true success, the PCs will have to e.g. pass Geri and Freki. No, I am not kidding you. And yes, they are brutal. And, once again, yes, killing them is a bad, bad idea. Have I mentioned the hall that has been infiltrated by draugr? Or the chance to interact with none other than Mímir and trade riddles? The encounters, in spite of the identical nature of the festhalls per se, are what makes this module in conjunction with its unique rules for mortals in Valhalla – this is very much a roleplayer's module and each combat herein, to some serious extent, has a tactical angle, feels like a little, unobtrusive puzzle. I love that! Ultimately, the PCs will find agents of Hel, Ganglati and ganglöt, shielded from the eyes of deities and if they manage to best these powerful foes, they may in fact leave this module with a powerful favor of the valkyries!!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed no significant glitches. Layout adheres to a nice two-column b/w-standard and the softcover I have has the glossy cover and high production values I expect from Frog God Games. The interior b/w-artwork is phenomenal, original and deserves the highest praise. Really cool: We not only get a b/w-map, we actually also get player-friendly version!! Big plus there!

Ed Greenwood is a legend for a reason. There. I said it. I am torn on quite a few old-school

adventures, but this encapsulates perfectly what makes them work: Surprising amount of detail and a bit tongue-in-cheek, this module highlights aspects of Norse myths that usually are buried beneath hero's pathos. The unique spirit rules reward the PCs at once for their bravery AND emphasize the brains over brawn aspect, which renders the plaiyng of this module a rather unforgettable experience. Now yes, I would have very much preferred different maps for the different feasthalls, but that, ultimately remains a minor hiccup. It's uncanny once you stop and think about it: This module features linear rooms of the same size and general layout; it *should* be boring and unrewarding.

It's quite the opposite. This is incredibly entertaining, challenging and not for the faint of heart: Sure, PC lives are not at stake, but oh boy does the teleport makes things TOUGH. Unless your players are good at non-conventional problem-solving (read: Not bashing everything's brains in), they'll be in for a world of pain. As they should be. This is funny, challenging, awe-inspiring and epic in the right ways. Well worth 5 stars + seal of approval and one of the modules from the series that I consider a must-have, alongside "Winter's Teeth" and "Oath of the Predator".

You can get this amazing module here on OBS!

Prefer old-school? The OSR (S&W)-version can be found here!

Endzeitgeist out.
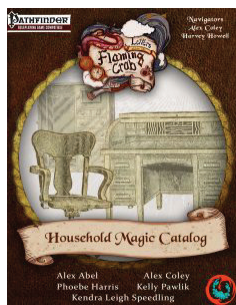
Letters from the Flaming Crab: The Household Magic Catalog

Publisher: Flaming Crab
Reviewer: Endzeitgeist
Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This letter from the planes-hopping vessel UCS Flaming Crab, faithfully transcribed by J Gray, clocks in at 39 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 2 pages of SRD, leaving us with…35 pages of content? Woa, that is A LOT for the low asking price…so let's take a closer look at this pdf…

…and once we do, we'll realize that the title was not kidding: In the tradition of Aurora's (At this point, if you get this reference, you're part of the old guard…) or, more fittingly, the Sears catalog – for those of you not in the know (and my German readers), picture this like a Quelle or Neckermann catalog that peddles wares that can help in the

household. However, here, this concept is framed by the alternate-earth "Ladies Paradise and Company of New York" company.

And from the get-go, you notice something that immediately sets this apart: J Gray's layout for this humble pdf sets it apart as one of the most concise and mighty layouts I have seen in ages; his passion for Castle Falkenstein and extensive historical knowledge immediately show upon opening this pdf: From art déco-style fonts to the artworks, which blend historic pictures with a knight-style variant of the classic "I want you" Uncle Sam poster, the aesthetic integrity of the pdf transcends the text itself. Speaking of the latter: Yes, this picture is on a page encouraging the purchase of war stamps!

In fact, the items presented actually go one step beyond: We have visual representations, a sales-pitch-like summary of the item's benefits and the proper rules-material required for the respective item, creating a thoroughly holistic illusion of a magical catalog. Furthermore, the choice of these items does help render this pdf a thoroughly unique experience, from the first to the last of them.

(As an aside, in case you're wondering – this review is based on V. 2.0 of the pdf.)

The *armoire of elegance*, for example, auto-*prestidigitates* and *mends* clothing put inside it! I'd *SO* get this one! Tired of bad food while adventuring? The *breadboard of instant breakfast* will conjure up new and exciting dishes each day and may even help cancel poisons! Alchemical tonics that increase Int and Wis when imbibed before sleeping, mirroring the often cocaine- or laudanum-laden potions of the age, can also be found! What about a magical alarm clock? Extending ladders? Or a wagon that faithfully follows the user to the destination in question? (And yes, its movement is affected by difficult terrain.) Perhaps your lawn is just not fancy – with the right and proper fluid, you can return vibrancy and life to your green (and plant creatures can benefit from a bit of healing). Similarly, quicker plant-growth! What about *self-completing mowers*, automatic brooms or the like?

Notice something? Yep, these items, just like in a catalog, are organized by area of application – and fret not, an extensive index has also been included, with prices intact for your convenience. Regarding kitchen-appliances, magic scent-negating candles, cloths that negate allergens (I'd so need those IRL…) poisons and diseases can also be found… and the allergen-angle actually provides some rather interesting narrative tricks an enterprising GM can use! The *freshen* spell can restore spoiled food to proper shape, while *scales of recipes* can

destroy food…but also net you the ingredient list, which, once again, just begs to be used for an investigative game!

A *lazing lounger* can help with power naps and fortification versus fear and emotion aspects and the *mantle of pride* can be used to make sure that your guests appreciate your trophies…and you. Need music? The *spirit ministrel* may take care of that need while entertaining. *Throwing pillows* inflict no damage, but can render the target asleep on a failed save and the spell *update decor* makes sure you'll never again be left behind by a trend in the fancy salon-culture!

This, as you may have noticed, is incredibly concise and includes sweeteners to help end the nauseated condition, ever-warm bottles for the offspring (or those enjoying Glühwein/mulled wine with spices) – an automated puppet show, an enchanted *nanny's latch*, a toy chest that expels living creatures and allows for instant and precise access, toy soldiers (as a nitpick: The set is once called "Spielmann" and once "Spilemann" – the former is correct), pain-relieving *ice that's hot* provides relief from arthritis and pain-based effects. Jefferson-style desk chairs increase the Int of those sitting inside and helps keep one's privacy by making others leave the working mind alone. Quick-retrieving desks, spell-organization, *cleansing feather tokens*, conjuring forth birds to fetch objects, *sun-sensitive curtains* open automatically…and the *whammy rug* lets you generate static electricity you can fire in short-range jolts…and it's kid-proof to boot!

In a perfect consequence of the style of the pdf, we actually also get a fully detailed order blank as an amazing hand-out! As mentioned before, the index with items by category is really helpful: Spells list classes, alchemical items weight, Craft DC and price and magical items list their prices and auras, adding this perfect final flourish to the pdf.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good on both formal and rules-language levels – I noticed no serious hiccups. Layout is, as mentioned, absolutely inspired, creating a perfect illusion of a fantastic catalog. The artworks chosen, both classic and original, seamlessly fit in with this aesthetic, making the vision represented in this pdf absolutely inspirational. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience with detailed, nested bookmarks to the individual items and spells.

Alex Shanks-Abel, J Gray, Phoebe Harris, Kelly Pawlik and Kendra Leigh Speedling have created an inspiring tome here, but beyond the deserved praise for the authors and the layout herein, the editors/playtesters Alex Shanks-Abel, J Gray (who also acted as the dev), Jeffrey Swank and Lucus Palosaari deserve special acknowledgement. Why? Because, in spite of the different authors with varying levels of experience, the book actually has a unified narrative voice – it does not read or feel like a book written by x different folks – it reads like a delightfully fantastic catalog and has this distinct and hard to achieve aesthetic unity of visuals, text, tone and theme. In short, this is a perfect example of how to create a holistic, thoroughly inspired book that can act as a colossal hand-out if you want it to! Beyond the confines of Pathfinder-rules, allotopias of alternate earths, whether they be Castle Falkenstein or similar settings, can also benefit vastly from getting this book. The logic behind the objects, behind what you'd be able to make in a magical world, is impeccable, the illusion practically perfect. Oh, and you get A LOT of material for the more than fair price-point.

If utility magic and everyday magic, a magical society or the like are even remotely close to what you want, then this is a no-brainer. Granted, you won't find mind-blowing items here, but oh boy, they are COOL. They feel like actual magic to me. However, I maintain that this book also serves as excellent material for low or rare magic games! It makes sense that e.g. some wizards studying all day in their towers, some decadent civilization, would have such objects; in fact, if you've completely abolished vanilla magic in favor of a more fairy-tale-esque aesthetic, then these objects, focusing on utility, would work perfectly as well. Finally, if you need furnishing for the realms of fey or magical schools/academies, then this delivers in spades, bringing a sense of heart-warming wonder to the game, one that transcends what you'd usually expect. This pdf made me happy while reviewing it – because its execution is on par with the fantastic concept, because it has a vast array of uses and because its content will show up in other games of mine as well, regardless of rules-systems. Abuse-proof, hilarious, nigh-perfect, this is a prime example of a pdf that deserves 5 stars + seal of approval as well as being considered as a candidate for my Top Ten of 2016.

This shows passion, dedication and soul – it's a pdf where the creators obviously poured their heart's blood in it. Get this pdf. I guarantee you will not regret it!

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