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PATHWAYS



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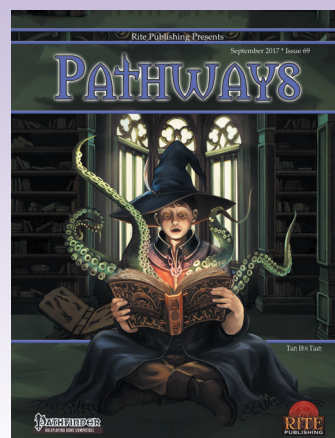
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Editorial

by Dave Paul

When I was about 12 years old, I got up off the floor of my bedroom, where I'd been reading an encyclopedia (yep, I really did that), marched into the kitchen where my unsuspecting mom was preparing dinner, and announced to her that when I grew up I was either going to be an epistemologist or an ontologist. She gave me the same sort of look that she usually did when I marched out of my bedroom after having spent hours reading the encyclopedia, and said something along the lines of "You're going to be a *what?*"

What's really weird, is that this came to pass, at least somewhat. After a few years dabbling in mathematics and the sciences, I switched my field of study to philosophy and never looked back. While in graduate school I focused on such esoterica as searching for empirical justifications for substantival monism. It was quite a trip, and I really was doing both epistemology and ontology. Despite the joys of trying to find new ways to understand things like David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (and being lucky enough to spend a couple hours with him and his wife one afternoon about a year before he died), I ended up having my path diverted yet again.

My own academic journeying took me through more than 15 years of having my own tutoring business, being a high school math teacher, teaching

a variety of courses in several disciplines for several community colleges and universities, and ultimately spending more than 20 years teaching biomedical ethics, philosophy of science, and a wide assortment of introductory-level philosophy courses.

Academies and scholarship has been part of my life since my earliest adolescence. So has my love of gaming. I've been playing role-playing games since just about the same time I declared to my mom that I was going to be an epistemologist or an ontologist. For me, my academic life and games like Pathfinder have been inextricably connected. I played all through middle school, high school and college. I played after college. I played with my children during their educational development and into (and through and past) their college years.

So in many ways, this issue has felt more personal than many of the other ones. Many of the articles also feel connected to little bits of my own past. Before I switched to philosophy, I had planned to get a degree in chemistry, and I worked for a few years in a couple of laboratories; all of this gives me a connection to alchemy in a weird sort of way. And, no surprise, I'm surrounded by books, at home, during gaming, and at work.

It's not an uncomfortable place to be, in schools and academies—at least, for me it's not. What about you?
Happy gaming.



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Bookbound Creature Template

by Owen K.C. Stephens, Illustration by Tan Hui Tian

A bookbound creature has literally been turned into a trap as part of a book, scroll, or similar handheld, mobile, readable script. Bookbound creatures are generally created by powerful priests and other spellcasters to protect sacred or dangerous texts

(generally via *miracle*, *wish*, and *permanency*), but they can also come into existence through the degree of the gods, or when mortals dare to attempt to inscribe some of the starkly incomprehensible truths of the nature of the universe in a written form.

Creating a Bookbound Creature

“Bookbound” is a template that can be added to any creature.

CR: +2

Defensive Abilities: If the bookbound’s base creature had DR or SR, its value increases by 2. It also gains a number of bonus hit points equal to its new CR x2, a +4 bonus to AC, saves, and CMD.

Offensive Abilities: The bookbound gains a +4 bonus to attack rolls, initiative bonus and CMD, a bonus to all primary melee and ranged damage equal to its new CR x2 (half that bonus to secondary attacks), and two bonus combat feats. It can ignore any one prerequisite of each feat other than requiring other feats.

Skills: A bookbound creature gains a +4 bonus to all skill checks.

See Invisibility (Ex): A bookbound creature sees all invisible creatures and objects as if they were not invisible.

Bound (Su): A bookbound creature is bound into a specific book or similar written format. Until triggered, the bookbound creature does experience any passage of time, and does not age, hunger, use air, or otherwise suffer any effects from its status. When the section the bookbound creature is attuned to is read without the proper deactivation (most often a phrase, but a bookbound may also be attuned to activate unless creatures reading the attuned section have a particular item, or hold a particular position within an organization, or unless they are from a specific bloodline), the bookbound creature appears and immediately has a surprise round no other creature can act during. (Creatures that are allowed to act in the surprise round even when normally not allowed to may make a Will save, DC 10 +1/2 the bookbound creature’s new CR + the highest of its Int, Wis or Cha modifier. On a failed save, they cannot act in the surprise round). If the bookbound creature is activated during an existing combat, it instead takes an extra standard action on its first turn.

Bookbound creatures fight until slain, acting first to prevent anyone from reading the book they burst out of, or move said book. When the book is adjacent to the

bookbound creature and no unauthorized creatures are perceived, the bookbound creature re-enters its bound state. It immediately heals and damage and ends all negative effects, and is reset and ready to burst out and protect the book again. Even if it is slain, unless the bookbound creature is disintegrated or its body moved to another plane of existence, when the book is closed the bookbound creature is reset and leaps out again when the text is next accessed without authorization.

Treasure: Bookbound creatures have no treasure. Even things like weapon or armor disappear when the bookbound creature is destroyed or sent back to its bound status. Of course the books they protect are often quite valuable.

The Thing Between the Pages

Bookbound Grick

CR 5

XP 1,600

N Medium aberration

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent, see invisibility; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +3 natural, +4 template)

hp 37 (5d8+5+10)

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +10

DR 12/magic

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d4+11), 4 tentacles +3 (1d4+5)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 3, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +8 (+10 for disarm); **CMD** 20 (22 vs disarm, can’t be tripped)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Disarm, Skill Focus (Perception), Stand Still, Steady Engagement^{PCS:ISG}

Skills Climb +13, Perception +16, Stealth +10 (+18 in rocky terrain); Racial Modifiers +8 Stealth in rocky terrain

Languages Aklo (cannot speak)



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20 Things to Find in a Ruined Castle

By Creighton Broadhurst

Ruined castles cluster thickly in many borderland regions. Whether destroyed by war or abandoned with civilisation's ebb and flow such places are a magnet for adventurers searching for forgotten treasures or lurking foes.

Ruined castles often contain many minor features of note that might point to the cause of the castle's fall or to more recent activities among the ruins. Use the table below, to add depth and flavour to the PCs' adventure in a ruined castle:

1. Rubble covers the floor. Moss and lichen grows among the rubble giving the whole area a mottled, almost diseased, grey/green look.
2. The skeletal remains of some animal—perhaps a large dog or wolf—lies slumped in a corner. Close examination reveals one of the animal's forelegs is broken.
3. A swath of short, stubby grass covers the ground. Hidden among it, perceptive explorers find several rotting crossbow bolts and a splintered wooden shield.
4. Dark brown mold grows over large swaths of the floor and walls. The whole area smells damp.
5. The remains of a cold campfire fill a small hollow dug into the corner of the room. The ashes are cold, and leaves have blown on top of them suggesting the fire was set weeks or months ago. A small pile of unused wood lies nearby.
6. Decrepit, rotting wooden scaffolding clings to the wall. The bottom level is the sturdiest, but the upper levels collapse if subjected to more than 100 lbs. of weight.
7. Tumbled stones and splintered wood lie all about the place. From within the pile, comes the sound of chittering of small, scampering creatures. Rats—normal sized, not their giant brethren—dwell therein.
8. The walls in this area were once whitewashed. Now faded and peeling the whitewash exudes a forlorn aura. Part of a tapestry, now weather damaged, hangs from a rusty iron fitting.
9. A great profusion of ivy grows up the wall, reaching high up toward the sun. A light-weight, skilled climber could use the ivy to reach the upper levels.
10. One of the stones has been removed from the wall. Within lies a once-secret storage niche. It is empty.
11. A sundered stone statue, that once depicted a fierce warrior wielding a longsword standing on guard, lies shattered on the floor. It looks like the statue has

been deliberately attacked. Nearby, another statue in much better condition yet guards the area.

12. Someone has dug a small pit into the floor near one corner. A small coffer, its lid stoved in, lies on its side nearby. PCs investigating the coffer discover two gold coins underneath it—missed by the previous looters.
13. Splatters of dried blood cover the floor. Thick cobwebs festoon the walls and any surviving parts of the ceiling.
14. A discarded dirty wool blanket lies on the ground. Nearby, lie a wineskin and an unstrung shortbow (but curiously no arrows or bowstring).
15. In this area, the walls are cracked and leaning drunkenly. Shadows cluster thickly—perhaps too thickly—under the overhang.
16. Light streams in faintly through a hole in the wall. Dust motes float through the air, blown by some soft, unseen breeze.
17. One of the flagstones beneath the party's feet shifts alarming when trod upon. The flagstone—old and weathered—conceals a small storage niche. Whatever was stored here has long since rotted away, leaving nothing but a congealed, brownish-green slimy mess behind.
18. Graffiti daubed on one wall identifies this as, "The Basher's Place." The graffiti is surprisingly—or perhaps worryingly—high up on the wall, fully eight-foot above the floor.
19. The initials and names of people who lived in the castle (or who were perhaps imprisoned within) are scratched into the walls of this area.
20. A small oak has taken root amidst the ruin. Its leaves reach upward to the sunlight and several branches have grown through nearby arrow-slits and windows. The leaves seem to have a slight red tinge to them. A small haversack hangs from a branch high-up in the tree and only perceptive PCs spot it from the ground. It contains 45 sp and 3 gp as well as a change of traveller's clothes and a dagger.

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.

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1,000 Abnormal Troggs

By Creighton Broadhurst, Illustration by Marcus Art Designs

Brutish, savage and feral cave dwellers, troglodytes are the degenerate ancestors of a once proud and powerful race. Living amongst the mouldering remains of their once powerful subterranean empire, they have regressed to a more primal, simple state.

Troglodytes can be found throughout the world, dwelling in cave systems large and small. Such caves are often linked to yet deeper systems and thus adventurers battle these repugnant humanoids with surprising regularity.

Use the tables below, to add depth and flavour to the troglodytes encountered by the PCs.

A standard troglodyte appears thusly:

With a grey scaled hide, long tail and crests on its head and back this humanoid resembles a cave lizard.

Appearance

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

1. One of this creature's eyes is milky white; the troglodyte is literally half-blind and has terrible depth perception.
2. An ugly web of scars criss-cross this warrior's shoulders and back.
3. This creature has a mottled grey and dull brown hide.
4. Part of this creature's crest has broken off.
5. This creature has daubed its crest in mud, which has now dried and cracked.
6. Instead of grey scales, this troglodyte's hide is pale white.
7. This creature lacks the long tail of its fellows; clearly severed in some recent battle or accident, the troglodyte's stubby tail looks inflamed and infected.
8. Carrying a battered wooden shield with a faded emblem of a leafy tree this warrior also wears a worn, thick leather belt.
9. Using a mixture of blood and mud, this warrior has tattooed his scales with a series of lurid swirls and spirals.
10. This creature wears a belt festooned with many bulging pouches.



Battle Tactics

In battle, some troglodytes fight differently to their brethren:

1. A cautious warrior, this troglodyte scuttles about the fringes of battle throwing javelins. When it runs out of missiles, it replenishes its supply with fallen or discarded weapons.
2. Literally wild with anger and blood lust, this warrior screams before foaming at the mouth and charging into battle. Enemies bitten by the troglodyte might fear they have contracted some form of disease.
3. This warrior is cunning. It has gathered several small pouches of dust and rubble. As it closes with its foe, it slings a pouch into its target's face in an attempt to blind and disorientate its enemy.
4. Grown accustomed to the taste of blood, this troglodyte now thirsts for its enemies' lifeblood. If a nearby foe is slain or rendered unconscious, the troglodyte hurls itself onto the body and starts licking and sucking its wounds.
5. In battle, this troglodyte hisses and snarls at its foes.
6. This troglodyte is a coward. If reduced to half hit points or fewer, it immediately flees from battle.
7. Unarmed, this troglodyte carries several small rocks which it flings at enemies before closing to melee.
8. Cautious in battle, this troglodyte prefers fighting small or weak-looking enemies. It has a particular hatred for wizards and their ilk.
9. Believing himself to be the group's leader, this warrior tries to order its fellows about on the battlefield. They ignore him.
10. Wielding an old warhammer of dwarven artifice, this troglodyte tries to smash and destroy enemies' shields, armour and so on.
3. A once fine fur cloak fills the troglodyte's mouldy pack. The cloak is similarly in bad condition, but still worth 3 gp.
4. One of this troglodyte's javelins is obviously of ancient artifice. Its point is yet sharp, however, and carved swirls and spiral decorate the weapon's shaft.
5. A rusted dagger is thrust through this warrior's crude belt. A small black stone—an onyx worth 10 gp—decorates its hilt.
6. Incongruously, the warrior wears fine, but worn, thick leather boots of dwarven artifice. The soles are worn and one of the heels is coming away. Perceptive PCs spot a secret compartment within holding a single platinum piece.
7. Smooth pebbles fill this troglodyte's pouch. Mixed in among them are three sling bullets. The bullets have holes bored through them; when hurled, they create a loudly whistling sound.
8. The ceremonial bone necklace marks this troglodyte as someone of importance. The necklace is worthless, but is instantly recognisable by other members of the tribe.
9. This troglodyte has a bone scroll tube thrust through its belt. Sadly, the scroll within has suffered catastrophic water damage; a small portion depicting a network of nearby passages and chambers remains.
10. A thick belt of tightly woven rope encircles this troglodyte's waist. The belt comprises 20-foot of rope, and could be handy in an emergency.

Trinkets & Treasures

Sometimes, troglodytes carry small trinkets or treasures. Roll on the table below, if you determine the individual has an item of treasure or interest:


1. This troglodyte wore a pair of bone earrings. The carving is crude, but may be of interest to a collector.
2. This troglodyte wears a small, battered and tarnished gold ring (worth 5 gp), on its left hand.

GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing

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Challenge your PCs Like Never Before!

The background of the entire page is a dark, atmospheric illustration of a tomb or dungeon. In the center, two characters are depicted: on the left, a character with red hair wearing a green hat and tunic, holding a spear; on the right, a character with blue hair wearing a blue and orange tunic, holding a sword. They are standing in front of a large, cracked stone sphere. The background is filled with skeletal remains, including a large skeleton on the left and various bones scattered around, all set against a backdrop of ancient stone carvings and structures.

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Academic Spells Showcase

By Dave Paul, Illustration by LeksaArt

Two of the spells here, *griffonage revelation* and *Citedie's memory*, come from [101 Urban Spells](#) which probably seems like the most likely of the books I've released so far as likely to have spells related to academies in it. The other, *insightful riddler*, comes, perhaps unexpectedly from [101 Hill and Mountain Spells](#). In any case, I felt that these three were appropriate choices for an issue devoted to academic or scholarly themes. I do hope you enjoy them.

~~

While perhaps most useful in the hands of a GM, *citedie's memory* is a fun spell for low-level encounters. In circumstances where PCs might have to vie with one another (or against NPCs) to show off their intellectual prowess, something as simple as this spell could prove useful. It could also serve as an interesting mini-curse, especially if it were used to great effect in a magic item.

Citedie's Memory

School: Enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level:** Bard 0, Cleric/Oracle 0, Inquisitor 0, Magus 0, Sorcerer/Wizard 0, Witch 0

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature; see text

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes

The target creature briefly has trouble remembering some fact he's trying to recall. In addition, for the duration, whenever the subject attempts a Knowledge check, the DC is increased by +5 and making the Knowledge check requires a full-round action.

~~

I enjoy non-traditional curses. With *insightful riddler*, the target is cursed and the curse can be exhausting for the character's life. But, there are benefits that come with this curse that are quite good. The constant use of *comprehend languages*, *detect magic*, and *read magic* are probably not game changers, but consider how powerful they'd be for low-level characters. The spell is, of course, potentially devastating when used against certain high-level characters, trapping them in endless and pointless studies of unsolvable problems. But, for a longer-term campaign, having a handful of lower-

level people in an area with the bizarre quirks that would result from this spell could eventually lead to a party of characters encountering the powerful (and possibly mad) caster of this spell. Most enjoyably, for me, was the terrible problem of the subject of the spell being granted the ability to use the spell on others, in the right circumstances. Perhaps the party will stumble upon a whole town of people plagued by this curse.

Insightful Riddler

School: Enchantment (compulsion) [curse, mind-affecting]; **Level:** Bard 6, Cleric/Oracle 6, Sorcerer/Wizard 6

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, M/DF (a gynosphinx's feather)

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None; **Spell Resistance:** No

The target of this spell gains several powerful abilities and a burdensome curse. Until the curse is broken, the target gains the following spell-like abilities if the proper conditions are met. The target's caster level is the target's level.

Constant—*comprehend languages*, *detect magic*, *read magic*

3/day—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*

1/day—*locate object*, *legend lore*



The target may not use any of these abilities on any day that it does not spend at least 4 hours reading about, writing, or discussing puzzles, riddles, dilemmas and the like. Those 4 hours cannot also be spent on other tasks (including tasks like preparing spells, praying, and meditating). This devotion to enigmas temporarily improves the target's intellectual gifts such that all Knowledge checks made while affected by this curse are made with a +4 insight bonus.

The compulsion to discover new puzzles or to attempt to solve previously unsolved riddles is so strong that the target can easily become distracted, short-tempered or argumentative. For each day that the target does not spend at least 2 hours reading about, writing, or discussing puzzles, riddles, dilemmas and the like, it suffers a -2 to its Charisma and Wisdom scores. These penalties accumulate though the target's Charisma and Wisdom cannot drop below 6 as a result of this spell. While the target is subject to a Charisma or Wisdom penalty resulting from this spell, the study time necessary to gain the spell-like abilities is doubled. If the target spends sufficient study time to gain the spell-like abilities on three consecutive days, the ability score penalties from this spell are removed.

If *insightful riddler* is cast in a sphinx's territory, then the target also gains the spell-like ability *insightful riddler* which can be used once per week.

The caster may target herself with this spell.

Insightful riddler can be removed by a successful casting of *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish*. However, the attempt requires dialoguing with the target. If the attempt to remove the curse requires a check and the check fails, the caster attempting to remove the curse is afflicted with *insightful riddler* as well.

~~

Despite all the other answers to questions like "if you could use any spell in real life, what would it be," there are, honestly, probably quite a few divination spells that don't immediately come to mind but that would really be life changing and valuable. While *griffonage revelation* isn't likely one of those, think of how valuable it would be to a sleuth. Imagine how much information could be gained by the use of such magic. If I had such

powers, I know that I'd be setting people up so that I could get as much as possible out of them. Perhaps the characters are in a town, chatting up the locals, and some of those locals are absent-mindedly leaving behind traces that an NPC is able to read, keeping the characters one step behind an enemy who seems to have incredible insight into what the characters are doing and planning.

Griffonage Revelation

School: Divination; **Level:** Bard 3, Cleric/Oracle 4, Inquisitor 4, Sorcerer/Wizard 4

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, F

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 hour/level or until discharged

You gain exceptional insight whenever you encounter graffiti, chance scribbles, seemingly random markings on walls, and the like. If the markings were produced by an intelligent creature (Intelligence score of 3 or higher), you become aware of the intentions of the markings and the deeper revelations left behind. For example, if someone were mindlessly doodling on a page, or absent-mindedly making etches in a post with a knife, the markings leave behind traces of whatever else might have been on that person's mind about which she might not even have been aware.

For the duration, you may attempt to discover some fact about the one who left a mark behind. Doing so requires a Linguistics check; the DC of the check varies with the text, but deciphering a typical doodle's hidden messages requires a DC 25 check. A typical attempt requires 1 minute of study. Whether you succeed or fail at the check, one fact (or falsehood, as determined by the GM) about the author is revealed to you; the GM makes these checks secretly (see the Linguistics skill description). The number of checks you may attempt is equal to your spell casting ability modifier; you may make multiple attempts of the same writing if you choose. After your final attempt, the spell ends. You may return to the same graffiti with a new casting of *griffonage revelation* and attempt to learn more.

If you cast and use *griffonage revelation* in your home settlement, you gain a +2 insight bonus your Linguistic checks.



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Academia Feats

By Wendall Roy

Some wizards follow the time-honored tradition of learning their craft by apprenticeship. Arcane secrets and methodology are handed down from master to apprentice through one-on-one teaching. The nature of the master-apprentice relationship is unique in each case but often involves menial labor, veiled information and trial by error designed to make apprentices prove their cleverness and determination at learning.

In more modern times, many would-be wizards go instead to great schools of arcane learning. In the halls, classrooms and laboratories of these schools learning is more structured and standard. This homogenization of magical education comes with an advantage, allowing advanced or unique techniques to be passed on to entire classes of young wizards. Each school prides itself on having a superior teaching method, with many of the school's students exhibiting their signature methodology of working magic. These techniques are represented by academia feats.

An academia feat is special in a number of ways. Generally more powerful than the average feat but with a specialized use, these feats are only available at 1st level to arcane spellcasters who prepare spells. Each represents a formal, years-long education and training at a specific arcane school, so characters able to qualify for multiple academia feats (such as a human wizard with a racial bonus feat) should still be limited to taking only one.

Arcanum Scribe (Academia)

You studied at the Library Arcanum, an institution known both for its well-rounded approach to magical theory and its mastery of scrollwork. You scribe scrolls with a personalized calligraphy that augments the writing's power.

Prerequisite: Scribe Scroll, Profession (scribe) 1 rank, universalist arcane school, must be able to prepare 1st-level arcane spells

Benefit: When you cast a spell from a scroll you have created, you can calculate the DC using your Intelligence modifier instead of the minimum modifier needed to cast a spell of that level.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Baozahn Brawnchanneler (Academia)

The Baozahn Institute teaches that proper channeling of arcane energy requires a healthy body as much as a healthy mind. You graduated the Institute as one of its vaunted brawnchannelers, capable of channeling power from your body into both your magic and the Institute's signature brass knuckle foci.

Prerequisite: Str 13, Con 13, must have brass knuckles as an arcane bond, must be able to prepare 1st-level arcane spells

Benefit: You are proficient with brass knuckles. Whenever you cast a spell with a range of "touch" from the wizard spell list, you can deliver the spell through your bonded brass knuckles as part of a melee attack, similar to the spellstrike magus class ability.

You can use your arcane bond's ability to cast spells from your spellbook multiple times per day by accepting 1 point of burn (as the kineticist class ability) each time you use the ability after the first. You can also accept 1 point of burn to gain an insight bonus equal to your Constitution modifier on attack rolls with your bonded brass knuckles for 1 minute.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Expressionist of The White (Academia)

Your magic was learned at the Academy of Idraniin, whose graduates are known as The White for the unadorned, simple white robes they wear. They take a novel approach to the gestures and posturing needed to release arcane power, utilizing flowing full-body movements and dance as somatic components. You can weave your spells into your dance, making it difficult for your enemies to interrupt your spellcasting.

Prerequisite: Dex 13, Acrobatics 1 rank, Perform (dance) 1 rank, must be able to prepare 1st-level arcane spells

Benefit: As a full-round action, you can move up to half your speed through threatened squares by using Acrobatics and cast a spell defensively at any point during the movement. You can increase the DC of the Acrobatics check as normal to move at full speed or through an enemy's space. The Acrobatics check result for a particular square is also used as the concentration check for casting defensively; you must choose to cast from that square before making the check. Only spells with somatic components that have a casting time of 1 standard action or less can be cast with this feat.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Gedderly Recycler (Academia)

You were trained at the Gedderly College of Wizardry, an institution known for instilling an advanced knowledge of magical conservationism in its students. You can collect the residual energy from spells you resist to recall your own spells.

Prerequisite: must be able to prepare 1st-level arcane spells

Benefit: As an immediate action when you succeed on a saving throw against a spell, you can recall a wizard spell that you have already prepared and cast that day. The recalled spell must be a 1st-level spell, or at least one level lower than the spell against which you successfully saved.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Linao Focusing Amulet (Academia)

Your arcane craft was learned in the vaunted Nine Chambers of Linao, a structured academy that requires its students to master all arcane schools and channel arcane energy through self-constructed amulets. You can use your special amulet to maintain magical effects with greater ease.

Prerequisite: Craft (jewelry) 1 rank, must have an amulet as an arcane bond, must be able to prepare 1st-level arcane spells, universalist arcane school

Benefit: When you are wearing your bonded amulet and it is prominently displayed, you can concentrate to maintain a spell as a move action. The amulet glows with energy resembling the visual effect, if any, of the maintained spell while you concentrate, and sheds light in a 20-foot radius as a torch.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Patallin Wand Weaver (Academia)

You trained at the College Patallin, experts of proper holding and manipulation of wands. You channel your arcane spellcasting through such a wand, applying both logic and proper wand stance to give your spells uncanny accuracy.

Prerequisite: must have a wand as an arcane bond, must be able to prepare 1st-level arcane spells

Benefit: You can substitute your Intelligence modifier for your Dexterity or Strength modifier on touch attacks and ranged touch attacks made with spells cast while your arcane bonded wand is in hand. You can also gain the benefit of this feat on any touch attacks or ranged touch attacks required when activating the bonded wand.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Questor's Society Tactician (Academia, Teamwork)

You were trained among the organized mages of the Questor's Society, the ruling adventurer's guild of Questhaven. The disparate wizards of the Society have developed a curriculum that encourages cooperation between adventuring spellcasters. Your tactical casting of spells quickly overwhelms opponents.

Prerequisite: must be able to prepare 1st-level arcane spells

Benefit: When a creature has been targeted or affected by a spell cast by an ally with this feat earlier in the round, it suffers a -2 penalty to any saving throw required and is considered flat-footed against any attack rolls required by spells you cast.

In addition, you can choose teamwork feats for your wizard bonus feats.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Sympatica Sigil Specialist (Academia)

The Sympatica of Forlorn Gates accepts only the brightest and perceptive students, and you are one of their graduates. You have studied the Sympatica's infinite magical geometries, and have created your own personal mark with which to create sympathetic links to material objects.

Prerequisite: Int 17, Wis 13, Linguistics 1 rank, must be able to prepare *arcane mark* as an arcane spell

Benefit: You can increase the range of your prepared arcane spells to 1 mile when targeting an object upon which you have inscribed a visible *arcane mark*, or centering a spell's area upon such an object. The *arcane mark* on the object is dispelled in the process of casting a spell in this manner. By increasing the spell's casting time to 1 minute (or doubling the casting time if normally 1 minute or longer), you are considered to have line of effect to the object. This virtual line of effect does not remove the interaction of certain effects (such as *fireball*) with physical barriers.

In addition, *symbol* spells you cast only require 90% of their normal material component cost.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Triatia Ringbinder (Academia)

You were trained at the Triatia, an institute legendary for its prowess in creating rings of power. As one of the school's ringbinders, you focus your personal magic through an array of magical rings.

Prerequisite: Craft (jewelry) 1 rank, must have a ring as an arcane bond, must be able to prepare 1st-level arcane spells

Benefit: You can have multiple rings as arcane bonds, to a maximum number equal to your Intelligence modifier. Each ring can be used once per day to cast a spell in your spellbook. Acquiring a ring arcane bond after the first requires a ring with which to bond and a special ritual that costs 200 gp per wizard level. Each time you gain a wizard level, you must pay an additional 200 gp for each bonded ring after the first to maintain it as an arcane bond.

As a full-round action that provokes an attack of opportunity, you can select two of your worn bonded rings to occupy your ring magic item slots.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.



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Household Magic Catalog

Alex Abel Alex Coley
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Scholastic Tomes

By J.L. Duncan, Illustration by the Masked Ottsel

An authentic Scholastic Tome in regards to subjects of common knowledge is a rare find. Especially so, if authored by a sage whose mastery of the subject matter is absolute. Rumor has it, for adventurers' fortunate enough to find such a volume, close study portends the gift of true (skill) knowledge.

Book Characteristics

A basic description of the tome; GMs roll d20 or select. Measurement in order is in noted by length, width, and thickness in inches.

1. Bare breech wood volume with Coptic binding. The title etched at the bottom right of the cover, among a worn trace pattern of flowers. Within are 16 pages, stitched and bound with three leather links.
Measurement: 10x8x2; **Weight:** 15lbs
2. Plain black leather tome with a flat spine, fastened at the front with single leather strap. The title is inked at the bottom outer edge of each of the 192 pages.
Measurement: 9x5x3; **Weight:** 8lbs
3. Well-worn brown leather book. The title engraved on the rounded spine, accented with oxidized copper gilding, turned green. The volume is 32 heavy weight pages.
Measurement: 8x4x1; **Weight:** 5lbs
4. Elegant oak hardback bound in lavender silk. The title is impressed at the top center of the interior of the cover filled with black ink. The book is 72 pages.
Measurement: 5x3x1; **Weight:** 5lbs
5. An over thick hardback volume, leathered in albino serpent skin featuring a rounded spine. The title is written in blue ink on every sixth, of 120 pages.
Measurement: 14x20x5; **Weight:** 20lbs
6. A red leathered tome with a flat spine, a square pattern is charred at the edges of the front and back of the leather. The title is centered and inked upon the front cover on a pyramid shaped inlay. Leather and iron clasps adorn the top and bottom corners. The tome is 80 pages.
Measurement: 7x5x2 **Weight:** 3lbs
7. Tattered beige tome with a round, banded leather spine. The title is scored onto the front cover is difficult to read and unimpressive. The book is 108 pages and smells of wine.
Measurement: 11x7x2 **Weight:** 8lbs.
8. A collection of 16 pages of parchment, cross stitched and woven with green, red, and yellow thread. Title is in black ink across the top page.
Measurement: 7x4x1 **Weight:** 1lbs
9. Pinewood bare volume is bound front and back by three oversized iron hinges. The front and back exterior covers are etched with vines and flora which form letters of the title. The book is 116 pages and smells of mint.
Measurement: 29x18x3 **Weight:** 32lbs
10. Warped green textile covered tomb, thread bare on the corners with a flat spine. The title is on the front cover, inked upon a rectangle onlay of yellowish skin. An unattached orange fabric, ties 28 parchment pages.
Measurement: 17x12x1 **Weight:** 16lbs
11. Stone wood tablet, with Coptic binding. Adorned with a leather clasp which fastens the front and back covers, 3 thick papyrus sheets are bound by woven leather thread.
Size: 36x22x5 **Weight:** 65lbs.
12. Blue stained book with a round banded leather spine. Title is displayed on the spine with an orange leather onlay. A silk book marker keeps the reader's place among 180 pages.
Measurement: 9x6x3 **Weight:** 6lbs.
13. Magenta textile hardback, with a floral pattern embroidered on the cover, rounded spine. Title is inlaid on the center of the back cover. A thin black leather strap worked into the textile fastens around 74 pages.
Measurement: 8x5x2 **Weight:** 3lbs.
14. Cover is thick papyrus paper, covered in blanched textile, flat spine. Title is inked upon a leather oval inlaid on the front cover. The book is 24 pages.
Measurement: 11x8x1 **Weight:** 1lbs.

15. Snake leather skinned hardback with a rounded, banded leather spine. Title is on a black leather overlay on the spine. The volume is 384 pages.

Measurement: 8x5x5 **Weight:** 11 lbs.

16. Orc skinned tomb, spineless. Book is 156 pages, and bound to the cover with coarse threads of brown and black hair. Smells of an unpleasant musty odor.

Measurement: 10x6x4 **Weight:** 8lbs

17. Black leather hardback, ornate with inlaid iron flourishes on the corners and spine. The title is etched on the front cover and inked in glossy black ink. Book is 106 pages.

Measurement: 11x7x3 **Weight:** 9lbs.

18. Orange stained leather volume, flat spine. Book is 186 pages, which smell of mustard and spice.

Measurement: 12x8x4. **Weight:** 12lbs

19. Book of lavender textile, exterior copper banded spine. The book is 132 pages, gilded in silver.

Measurement: 9x5x3 **Weight:** 15lbs

20. Spineless tome, bound in sea lion skin. Cover is uneven with tufts of flesh and fuzzy hair. The book is 88 pages, which collectively remain sewn, but unbound from the spine.

Measurement: 6x3x2. **Weight:** 6lbs.

Create the Title

Use the format below. Roll d20 once on Table A, and once on Table B.

Note: Though it is not designed for it, certainly consider making up your own (somewhat random) combos for titles. For instance breaking from the formula, a result: 18 on Table A, might give you "The Masters Dream," as a start. Then a result of 6 on Table B, might change that title: "The Master's Dream: Winning," which is an appropriate title for a potential bump in Diplomacy. Or, you might go with the standard set based on those rolls, "The Obscurities of Contracts." Or just cut it short "Obscure Contracts." And include a subtitle, "The Dwarven Perspective of Handshakes." I'm sure you get the idea, just one of a myriad of ways to get the job done.

Format

1. **A, An, or The...**
2. (Table A) **Result**
3. **of the, or of...**
4. (Table B) **Result**

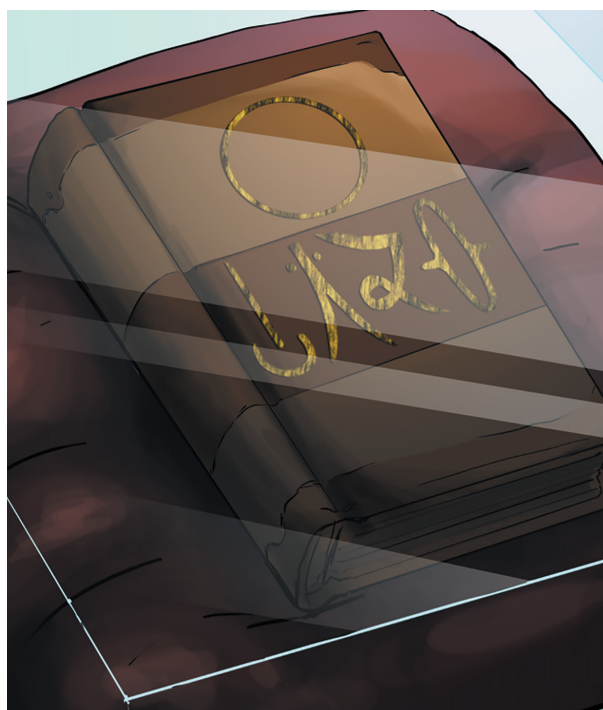
Table A:

1. History, Academic Study, or Transgression(s)
2. Secret, Enigma, or Vibration
3. Philosophy, Epiphany, or Practice(s)
4. Study, Limit(s), or Sage(s)
5. Art, Observation, or Logic
6. Lord(s), Evidence or Cruelty,
7. Theory, Evil(s), or Gentleperson(s)
8. Foulest, Idea(s), or Warm(th)
9. Commonality, Question(s), or Persistence
10. Digression(s), Encyclopedia, or Relationship(s)
11. Cyclopedia, Observation(s), or Death
12. Proficient, Oddity, or Expert(s)
13. Seductress(es), Assiduous, or Skill(s)
14. Relationship(s), Actor(s) or Complexity
15. Queen(s), Essence, or Comedy
16. King(s), Obscurity, or Basic(s)
17. Dissertation(s), Ignoramus's Guide, Position(s)
18. Master(s), Obscurity, or Dreams(s)
19. Fundamental(s), Evil(s), or Guardian(s)
20. Scholar(s), Element(s), or Will(s),

Table B:

1. **Acrobatics (Dex):** Flexibility, Motion(s), Supple, Rigid(ity), or Still(ness)
2. **Appraise (Int):** Coin(s), Value(s), Wealth, Trader, or Commerce
3. **Bluff (Cha):** Liar(s), Deceit, Pretense(s), Lie(s), or Bluff(ing),
4. **Climb (Str):** Climb(ing), Rappel(ing), Rock(s), Climb(er), or Ascent(s)
5. **Craft (Int):** Craft(s), Craftsman(ship), Profession(alism), Error(s), or Collector(s)
6. **Diplomacy (Cha):** Winning, Negotiation(s), Contract(s), Ruler, or Royal(ty)
7. **Disguise (Cha):** Appearance(s), Shadow(s), Disguise(s), Makeup, or Imposter(s)

8. **Escape Artist (Dex):** Knot(s), Bind(ing), Escape(s), Chain(s), or Sleight (of Hand)
9. **Fly (Dex):** Wing(s), Bird(s), Swoop(ing), Force(s), or Dragon(s)
10. **Heal (Wis):** Flesh, Body, Curing Wounds, Disease(s), or Plague(s)
11. **Intimidate (Cha):** Power(s), Fear(s), Leadership, Intimidator, or Tameless
12. **Perception (Wis):** Understand(ing), Enlighten(ment), Awkward, Wisdom, or Nature(s)
13. **Perform (Cha):** Theater, Music(s), Acting, Presence, or Showmanship
14. **Ride (Dex):** Horsemanship, Horse(s), Cavalry, Husbandry, or Rider Tricks
15. **Sense Motive (Wis):** Spirit(s), Language(s), Indecision(s), Choice(s), or Logic
16. **Stealth (Dex):** Hiding, Thief, Steal(th), Invisibility, or Vision(s)
17. **Survival (Wis):** Staying Alive, Survival, Hunger, Universe, or Fire(s)
18. **Swim (Str):** Swimming, Current(s), Drown(ing), Undertow(s), or Sea(s)
19. Reroll or select and come up with a title using two words from Table B result
20. Discard Table A Result. Reroll on Table B, select a one word title.



Portends of Knowledge?

Roll d12 or select, and determine the condition of the tome as well as the DC modifier for comprehending the master work.

These conditions are specific to the tome itself and do not change unless the book is damaged. For high level campaigns, if a GM considers it, they may combine two dissimilar conditions. For instance, combining condition 8 and condition 12 produces a DC penalty of -14.

1. Tome is original, thoroughly cross referenced as well as researched including first or second hand knowledge. Book is authored by a professional academic or scholar. **Benefit:** +3 to Difficulty Checks required for comprehension.
2. Tome is original, authored by a monk, or sage. **Benefit** +2 to DCs required for comprehension.
3. Writing is professional, but dual authored. **Benefit** +1 to DCs required for comprehension.
4. Writing is a masterwork, but occasionally difficult to read, letters run together, and/or bad grammar **Modifier:** +0
5. Writing is frequently difficult to read, letters run together, and/or horrid grammar **Penalty:** -1 to Difficulty Checks required for comprehension.
6. Book is a copy of an original Master Work, but isn't entirely accurate. Penalty -2 to DCs required for comprehension.
7. Writing for important sections is nonlinear, with cramped notes and written in different pigments of ink: *"Who wrote this section? The author or another reader?"* Penalty -3 to DCs required for comprehension.
8. Pages of the book are in poor shape, delicate or partially stuck together, perhaps stained with wine, tea etc. Penalty -4 to DCs required for comprehension.
9. Pages of the book are in the wrong order, occasionally upside down. *"Shouldn't this introduction be on page one? Why is it on page 37?"* Penalty -5 to DCs required for comprehension.
10. Some of the pages of the book are missing, or an entire middle chapter. Penalty -6 to DCs required for comprehension.
11. Book is a translation of an original and the translation barely captures the essence of the tome. Penalty -8 to DCs required for comprehension.
12. Book is a copy of the original and a translation. -10 to DCs required for comprehension.

Comprehension of the Scholastic Tome

Comprehension of scholastic tome requires 10 hours of quiet, well-lit study. GMs should add or subtract 1 hour for every 50 pages less than, or more than 100, round up. **Examples:** a tome of 132 pages, requires 11 hours of study; a tome of 36 pages requires 9 hours of study. A character cannot gain knowledge in a skill, which they had no Rank, before reading the text. Nor should a character be able to acquire a Rank in a skill in which they had no previous knowledge.

When the GM determines the study period(s) concluded, most likely after the player has expressed or initiated (one session or periods of) study by the character, the player makes two checks:

- Language Check: Base DC 20, modified by the difficulty specific to the tome itself modified on the above table (The Portends of Knowledge?), as well as the characters Ability Modifier for Intelligence.
- A standard skill check DC 15, which skill is determined (Table B) by the tome.

Results: Success on both checks entails that some level of comprehension is achieved (roll on Gifts of Knowledge, below). Success on only one check of the two indicates that the character must re-study the volume, but receives a +1 (cumulative) each time they choose to do so, on each DC required thereafter.

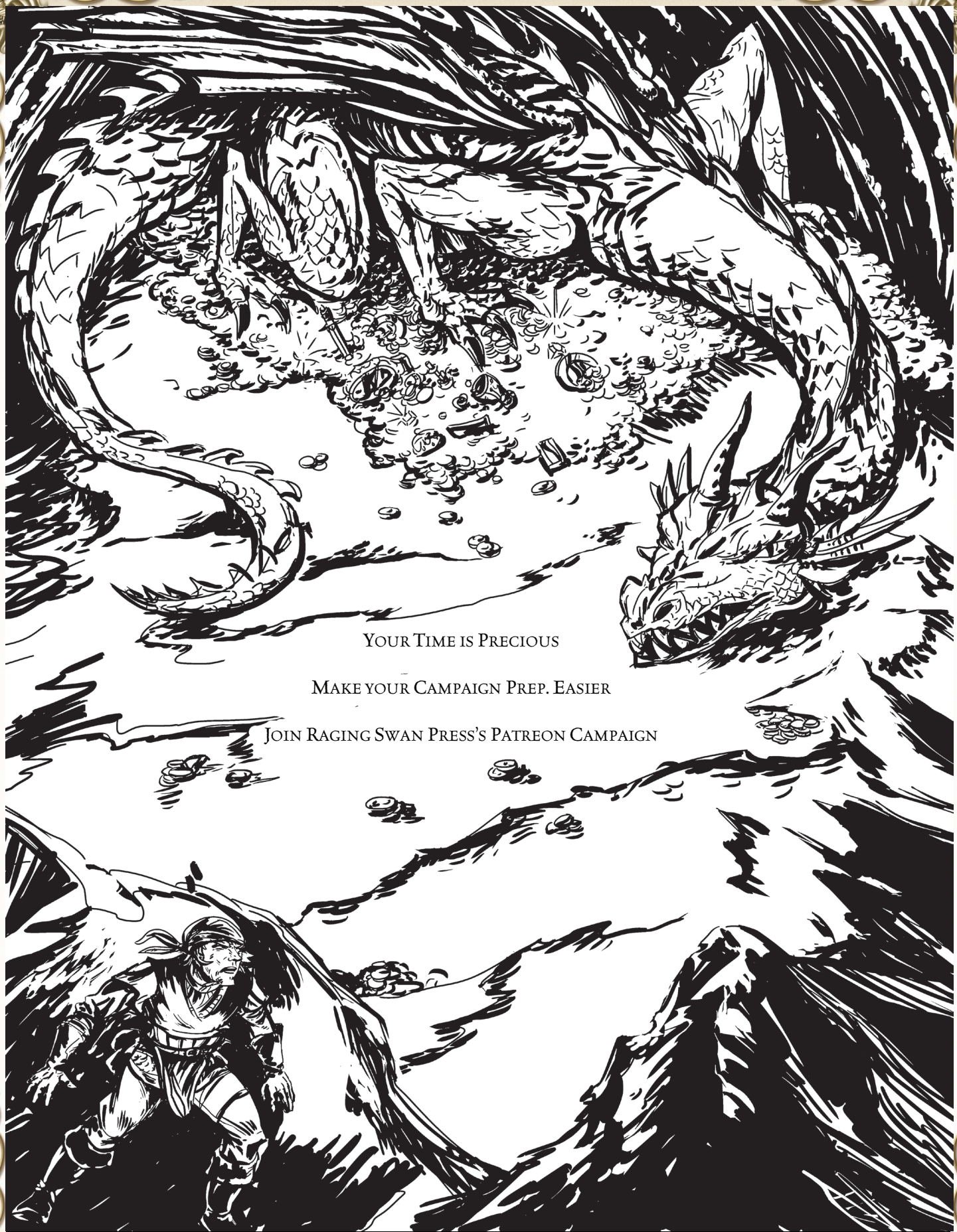
Example: a character who concludes study three times, but only succeeds at one of the DC checks each of those three times, receives +3 towards these DCs. Once both checks are successful the character will also have the benefit of adding that total (+3) to their result of rolling on The Gifts of Knowledge Table below.

Failure on both checks indicates that the character must wait to restudy the volume, pending they gain a Rank in the relevant skill, or increase their Ability score which is relevant to that skill.

If the character is successful (surpassed the DC), roll on this table for the level of comprehension the character has accomplished. With the tome in their possession, the player can always re-commit to study, and improve their comprehension of the tome, if they are not satisfied with the result. If rolling on this table the second time and the result is lower than the first, the character keeps their previous knowledge.

The Gift of Knowledge

1. Character gains +1 on a future comprehension rolls in addition to +1s awarded based on previous attempts (cumulative).
2. Character gains +2 on a future comprehension rolls in addition to +1s awarded based on previous attempts (cumulative).
3. Character gains +1 skill rank as long as they can consult the tomb while performing the skill (GM approval)
4. Character gains +1 skill rank as long as they have studied the tome the night before (like a spell book)
5. Character gains +1 skill rank as long as they have studied the tome three days prior.
6. Character gains +1 skill rank as long as they have studied the tome seven days prior.
7. Character gains +1 skill rank as long as they have studied the tomb twenty-eight days prior.
8. Character gains +1 skill rank no condition.
9. Character gains +1 skill rank no condition. +2 in regards to result 3
10. Character gains +1 skill rank no condition. +2 in regards to result 3 and 4
11. Character gains +1 skill rank no condition. +2 in regards to result 3 and 5
12. Character gains +1 skill rank no condition. +2 in regards to result 3 and 6
13. Character gains +1 skill rank no condition. +2 in regards to result 3 and 7
14. Character gains +2 skill rank no condition.
15. Character gains +2 skill rank no condition. +3 in regards to result 3
16. Character gains +2 skill rank no condition. +3 in regards to result 3 and 4
17. Character gains +2 skill rank no condition. +3 in regards to result 3 and 5
18. Character gains +2 skill rank no condition. +3 in regards to result 3 and 6
19. Character gains +2 skill rank no condition. +3 in regards to result 3 and 7
20. Character gains +3 skill rank, no condition (maximum).



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Phlogiston and Fixed Air: Competing Theories of Alchemy

By Jacob Gobhar

Alchemy was an eclectic activity that spanned thousands of years across several continents in our world. It was in practice a mix of many traits: technological, mystical, protoscientific, cryptic, and even a bit of charlatanism on occasion. All of these traits represent material ripe for creating dynamic characters in a fantastic RPG setting.¹

Alchemy was a very cryptic practice, with followers of certain disciplines intentionally making their notes difficult to follow so as to make them accessible only to the “true” alchemists, and not the charlatans who sought only ways to make money with gimmickry. Eventually, alchemy itself transmuted into what we now call chemistry with its focus on quantitative precision and repeatability. But this was a slow change, with some early scientists such as Newton still embracing the esoteric aspects of alchemy more so than the empirical aspects that they applied to their work in other fields of natural philosophy (as it was called in that day). Science, of course, brought with it various theories which were fiercely debated amongst rival factions.

I’ve found it incredibly enjoyable to bring some of these early scientific theories into the role playing of my own alchemist characters, and would like to share some ideas around this which could add a bit of extra flavor to your alchemist. Specifically, I want to explore a couple of early scientific theories about combustion that will give your alchemist all kinds of intelligent things to say while hurling bombs at baddies.

One of the first theories of combustion was phlogiston.² According to phlogiston theory, there was a substance present in matter which was released into the air when it burned. Intuitively, this idea makes a lot of sense, because if you watch something burning it appears that the flames come out of it, and when it is done burning there is a lot less of that material than there was when you started. It definitely appears as if something must have come out of it and gone into the air. Highly flammable substances were believed to possess more phlogiston. This idea also fit nicely with the ancient view of the elements: phlogiston representing some aspect of the element of fire leaving behind some aspect of the element of earth as it leaves and mixes with the air. Some alchemists even thought that flames were phlogiston mixed with water, and that when phlogiston was released without flame the burning substance did not contain water (metals, for example).

Though intuitively it made a lot of sense, phlogiston theory ran into difficulties when more elaborate empirical methods were used: sealed air tight jars with special care made to accurately track the masses before and after a change occurred. Alchemists knew from these experiments that the same substance must be involved in the transformation of a metal into a calx³ as was involved in the transformation of organic matter into ashes. If phlogiston theory were true, the calx was the pure substance, and the metal was what resulted when the phlogiston left the calx and went into the surrounding air. This result ultimately proved problematic for phlogiston theory, as the calx had more mass than its associated metal. Some proposed that phlogiston was lighter than air, or even that it had a negative mass, but this did not account for the large decrease in mass when organic material burned. How could phlogiston be so massive in some cases and have negative mass in others? Eventually Antoine Lavoisier proposed a new theory that could explain all these observations without relying on negative masses. Initially he attributed it to something he referred to simply as pure air, but later coined the term we now use: oxygen.⁴ Oxygen combined with the metals to make the calx, and combined with organic material to make another invisible gas (carbon dioxide), which to all appearances made the organic material vanish into thin air. Lavoisier’s antiphlogistic theory was not well accepted initially, and by the time it was, chemistry had replaced alchemy as the field of investigating matter. It had become purely empirical; the esoteric aspects were left out never to be returned to again.

Some of the evidence Lavoisier drew on to support his theory was the study of fixed air. Fixed air was the result of combustion within a sealed container. In the view of alchemists, the phlogiston had come out of the air and saturated it so that no more combustion could occur. In the view of Lavoisier and modern science, the oxygen in the sealed container was used up, so no more combustion was possible. Though fixed air could certainly have been explained in terms of phlogiston theory, the concept of fixed air was central to guiding Lavoisier’s investigations.

In terms of translating these older theories into game mechanics, the theory of oxygen is less compelling, as it brings with it the modern concept of elements which don’t work very well in the magical worlds of Pathfinder gaming. However, the idea of competing scientific theories definitely has its place in a protoscientific

alchemy class. Furthermore, in a magical world where the aura of the alchemist influences the way that he is able to change the world around him, two competing and incompatible theories could be “correct” in a way they can’t be in our modern world of empiricism. In other words, an alchemist who believes in phlogiston will create bombs that work as if phlogiston existed, whereas an alchemist who instead believed in fixed air would create bombs that worked as if fixed air existed.

Theory of Phlogiston: Bombs created under this theory suck the phlogiston out of all materials, even metals, causing them to seemingly disintegrate into thin air. Whenever an alchemist with this discovery tosses a bomb that would do fire damage to a target wearing metal armor, the armor takes the direct hit damage as if it were targeted by a sunder combat maneuver. The wearer of the armor takes splash damage. Other splash damage from this bomb functions normally. Additionally, bombs do an additional 1d6 fire damage to any construct made of metal. An Alchemist must be 8th level before selecting this discovery, and may not have the discovery Theory of Fixed Air.

Theory of Fixed Air: Bombs created under this theory produce a large volume of fixed air when they combust, making it difficult to breathe for most creatures, but providing extra energy to plant creatures. When an alchemist has this discovery, any creature with the breathe creature type trait (except plant creatures) hit by his bomb that deals fire damage must succeed at a Fortitude Saving Throw or else be staggered for one round. Any creatures with the plant creature type in the splash radius take half the damage they normally would from that bomb and are not staggered. Any creatures with immunity or resistance to fire are not staggered by that bomb. An alchemist must be 8th level before selecting this discovery, and may not have the discovery Theory of Phlogiston.

The controversy over the nature of combustion wasn’t the only conflict within alchemy; it was just the last one (and the one most relevant to bomb tossing). Similar competing schools of thought might emerge around a variety of ideas where a pair of mutually exclusive discoveries represents these differences. I’ve included three additional competing schools of thought, but leave it as an exercise for the reader to come up with the mutually exclusive discoveries to represent these differences.

The practical vs. esoteric dichotomy is certainly deeply ingrained in alchemy. This can even be seen in some of the differences between archetypes, with archetypes such as Trap Breaker, and Grenadier focusing on more practical applications of alchemy on the world around them, while archetypes such as Internal Chemist and Mindchemist focusing more on the ways in which alchemy can change the individual alchemist. A pair of mutually exclusive discoveries

similar to the ones introduced earlier for phlogiston and fixed air could further clarify this division.

A similar, but certainly not identical, division exists between a technological focus and a natural philosophy focus. Here the distinction is whether the work of alchemy is done to create new technologies or to advance knowledge about the world. The Trap Breaker archetype would be an example of an archetype focusing on technology, while the Mindchemist and Preservationist might be examples of archetypes focusing on Natural Philosophy. A pair of discoveries might further clarify this division, as well.

A final pair of competing ideas is secretive vs. scientific. Secretive seems to be the default of the Alchemist class, with the mechanic that only alchemists may benefit from their elixirs or mutagens. Existing discoveries such as Infuse Mutagen or Infusion represent a more scientific approach to alchemy. Another pair of discoveries might further clarify this division.

1. Pathfinder has done a great job of including two of the key aspects of alchemy into the alchemist class. If there was one focus of alchemy, it was on the study of change, whether that be the transformations of matter or the transformations of oneself. The mutagen is a great example of this major focus of alchemy. Alchemists (at times) also believed that their success in alchemy could be attributed more to a sort of personal aura than to the repeatable experimentation that we now hold to be true in science. This is consistent with the alchemist feature of extracts generally only working for alchemists and not working for other classes.
2. Of course you’ve probably heard this word phlogiston, as it is a key aspect of the Spelljammer setting. The concept this word is describing in that setting is also an antiquated scientific idea, but it bore a different name in our world: ether. Of course, we use ether to mean something else in Pathfinder games (and something else entirely in modern science).
3. What we would now call a metal oxide. At the time, the calx was thought to be pure and the metal was thought to be a mixture or compound.
4. Lavoisier named it oxygen because of later experiments with acids. Many acids do contain oxygen, however the chemistry of acid behavior was not based on oxygen itself, but of a specific chemical property that is not unique to oxygen. Even though he discovered much, there were scientific concepts that Lavoisier, and any scientist for that matter, would never know prior to his death.

Reference:

Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Rite Publishing Presents

IN THE COMPANY OF WIGHTS

COMING
SOON

by Aaron Phelps



20 Questions with Christina Stiles

By Dave Paul

1. Could you tell us a little about yourself and your company?

I'm a writer/editor/publisher from a small town in northern South Carolina. I am a part of Misfit Studios, and I sometimes develop for Rogue Genius Games, but I also have my own little shop: Christina Stiles Presents. By day, I crunch data and teach writing, including a game-writing course (WRIT311: Writing Narrative for Tabletop Roleplaying Games), and critical thinking at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC. I'll be debuting another game-related course in the spring that connects tabletop with strong(er) Middle Ages themes; it will be offered under the Medieval Studies subject header.

I started gaming around 1981, when my brother brought home a D&D boxed set and needed a player. I was immediately hooked. Already a "dreamy" kid, I spent a great deal of time thinking about my characters and their goals when I was in school or at home. It didn't affect my grades, but I was bored with most everything else except computers (my Commodore 64!) and reading. At some point, I became a Game Master for my friends, and then I decided I wanted to try to write for TSR as a freelancer. I had one thing published with them in *DUNGEON* #61, "Jigsaw," which was co-authored with Dan De Fazio, whom I met through the magazine by writing

to say how much I enjoyed one of his previously published adventures. Through correspondence, we decided to write something together.

When Wizards of the Coast opened Third Edition via its Open Gaming License, companies started popping up, and I started following listservs and getting involved. Eden Studios and Atlas Games were the companies who gave me my serious start toward freelance writing and editing. I would go on to work with companies like Bastion Press, Gold Rush Games, and Green Ronin Publishing. In fact, my first effort to publish something came when I co-published *SpirosBlaak* with Green Ronin. Later, I would help publish *Odyssey Prime* for Unisystem with Misfit Studios and Eden Studios. When 4E hit, I started working with Troll Lord Games and White Wolf during the D&D lull. Then, I joined Kobold Press's Open Design projects and won some contracts. Eventually, I did some work for Paizo—mostly as an editor.

My freelancing has slowed down over the last few years, as I experienced a long bout of debilitating clinical depression for about four years while my husband was dealing with back problems that kept him unemployed and me trying to hold everything together. I was slow to complete projects at that time, and a lot of publishers lost confidence in me because of this, so I'm not high on anyone's freelancer contact list any more. Still, I have publishing as a creative outlet.



2. What is your home game like?

I am currently on a hiatus from my home Pathfinder game, which is the *Wrath of Righteous* Adventure Path with a solo gunslinger/bard gestalt character with mythic abilities that my cousin Jimmy Ashley plays. Lately, we have been playing some 5e to get familiar with the system. I will be getting back to the AP soon. We tend to play overt-the-top solo campaigns that explore polyandry/polygamy, as we don't have to worry about whether other players can make it to the game or will enjoy our gaming style. We've run longstanding RIFTS and 3E/3.5/Pathfinder games this way.

3. What is your favorite Paizo product?

I'm currently enamored with *Starfinder*, but I'd have to say the *Ultimate Campaign* for PF, because it opens game play to game experiences other than combat.

4. You are currently publisher for Christina Stiles Presents, how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

As mentioned above, I work with Misfit Studios and Rogue Genius Games as a developer, but I

formed Christina Stiles Presents (CSP) because there were some things I wanted to do on my own to experience the full gamut of being a publisher. I had released some taverns with Rogue Genius Games so as not to interfere with Steve Trustrum's plans to release similar product through his Misfit Studios company—I didn't want to muddy his line. That got me working with RGG, and I went on to publish a few other Pathfinder things through them as a Christina Stiles Presents line, as well. Then I started doing some Castles & Crusades products as Christina Stiles Presents on RPGNOW.COM. I released some stock art, and then I decided to work on a book to help women gamers have better experiences with gaming and to build their confidence in being gamers. That's my *Medusa's Guide* line that I'm currently working on.

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

I'd have to say that it's the *Bite Me! The Gaming Guide to Lycanthropes*. I always hated that becoming a lycanthrope made you become an NPC, or that being a natural one made you too powerful to play with other characters. This book was an answer to that without bringing in racial levels. With this book, I think I found a niche others had missed at the time.

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

It was deciding to expand what could be a lycanthrope. We made weremantises! I LOVE the artwork Jacob Blackmon did for the mating weremantis that's in the *Bite Me! Gaming Guide to Lycanthropes*. We didn't try to claim PF compatibility for that book because of that pic.

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

It expanded the option of character possibilities for game play. Lycanthropes had been a large aspect of the SpirosBlaak setting that I had published earlier—called Kav therein—so they have been something I'd focused on from the beginning of my game world.

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

Having the confidence that I could pull it together. Many of us creators are actually filled with self-doubt, what many call Imposter Syndrome. Overcoming my various fears to make something happen was the hardest part.

9. What did you learn while working on it?

I can do the things I put my mind to. I need to believe in myself more.

10. Other than your own work and Christina Stiles Presents's products, what is the best Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible product out there?

It is hard to keep myself out of the things I like. I like Kobold Press's *Midgard Campaign Setting* for PF, but I had a hand in that. I like Green Ronin's *Freeport: The City of Adventure* for PF, but I had a hand in that. I like the Rogue Genius Games *Construct Companion* and the Misfit Studios *Strange Brew* line, but once again, I was involved. So, let me harken to a product that started out as a Necromancer Games one and that is now owned by Frog God Games: *Rappan Athuk*. I had a great deal of fun with this adventure, and my longstanding solo campaign guy often goes back there for adventure. He feared it as a mid-level character. As a high-level one, he still finds some challenge there.

That being said, there are some great third-party companies out there doing cool things: Rogue Genius Games, Misfit Studios, Rite Publishing, Kobold Press, Legendary Games, Fat Goblin Games, and Louis Porter, Jr. Designs—to name a few of my favorites.

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

For me, it has to be something that can be continuously used in the campaign. I buy adventures, but I like products that get me thinking about campaign possibilities, ones that provide me with something I can immediately drop in.

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

In terms of Pathfinder, it's Owen K.C. Stephens. He just has a natural ability to understand what is possible and cool within Pathfinder. I can't think of anyone better with Pathfinder. Paizo was smart to snag him.

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

First, don't be afraid to try. You may receive some rejections, but that is just a sign that you have a bit more to learn. Second, be persistent. Don't stop trying. Third, once you get the job, do your best to fulfill your contract, so that you can get others. Fourth, communicate. If you are experiencing problems, don't be afraid to let your editor or developer know. The worst thing you can do is disappear.

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

Hands down, it is Jacob Blackmon. He is reliable, good, and FAST! I was instrumental in opening a full-time freelance path for him. He has since gone on to do very well for himself.

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

I've had people hunt me down at cons to get something signed. That always makes me happy.

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

I've got a few things in the fire at the moment. As Misfit Studios, we are completing the last two files of the *Strange Brew* line before we compile and release the book. Additionally, with Misfit, we are working on the *Book of Passion*, which we can't claim PF compatibility on because it deals with love and sex in your PF game—and has sexually explicit art in it—topics the main company wants third-party folks to avoid. Sex has always been something included in the home games, so I'm happy to be moving this out into the community. We are trying our best to be inclusive with the rules and art. As Rogue Genius Games, I've got several more Talented Adventurers to release besides the witch one. As Christina Stiles Presents, I'm working on *Ravensberg*, the student setting project of my first game-writing class. I hope to have that out in late September or early October. I'm also continuing to work on the Medusa's Guide line. The next one will be *Medusa's Guide for Gaming Girls: Women in the Gaming Industry*.

17. Do you have any goals for Christina Stiles Presents that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

Currently, it's getting sales numbers of the *Medusa's Guide for Gaming Girls: Gaming with Kids* and *Medusa's Guide for Gaming Girls: Feminism and Gaming*. I can't afford to pay other authors to write essays if I'm not making my money back on what I've already published. I know there are more women and men who'd benefit from reading these, but I don't seem to be reaching them. Getting more women safely and confidently into gaming is a topic near and dear to me. I want to be able to publish more PDFs and then compile them into a book.

My next big goal is to republish *Faery's Tale*, as I think there is a real need for entry games for kids in our hobby. This game was simple enough for kids to run other kids through. That's the type of stuff we need to generate new gamers. Getting kids involved in gaming will also help build their critical-thinking and communication and teamwork skills.

18. Can you tell us a little about *Medusa's Guide for Gaming Girls: Women in the Gaming Industry*?

I have essays from artist Darlene, fiction/game author Jean Rabe, and game designer Emily Care Boss. I am working on getting several more essays before releasing this one. I met some great women at Gen Con's first networking meeting for women game designers. This one is likely coming out in 2018 as I track down and contract several of them.

19. Is there anything you wish you could have included in that product?

I was unable to get Nicole Lindroos of Green Ronin, Lisa Stevens of Paizo, or Shanna Germain of Monte Cook Games to commit to an essay for the book. Obviously, these are three of the most successful women in our tabletop RPG industry, and, therefore, are tremendous role models.

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

In addition to getting more women and kids into gaming, another one of my goals is getting gaming into educational institutions in some manner. I'm not a computer gamer, so I'm referring to tabletop gaming of some kind when I say this—there seem to be others who have video game programs. Tabletop gaming truly builds critical-thinking skills, and it helps others learn to work cooperatively. These are skills our workforce desperately wants and needs. I would love to hear from others who are doing this, or who want to do this. I'll be doing a *Medusa's Guide* on this topic, too.



Rite Publishing Presents

101 Plains Spells

By David J. Paul



Review



Kaiju Codex (5e)

Publisher: Rite Publishing

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 star out of 5

The 5e-version of Rite Publishing's superb Kaiju Codex clocks in at 49 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us

with 44 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 patrons.

We all have been there at one point, at least once we have a certain amount of experience under our belt; the point where the tarrasque looks...kinda unimpressive, but when it has actually been done in a campaign. At that point, we are looking for other ginormous creatures of immense power, we're looking for mythic, impressive, really, really big adversaries. Well, the Kaiju Codex seeks to provide exactly that. Kaiju, much like the tarrasque, are as much plot devices as they are monsters. They are not necessarily made to be vanquished. In the same way that you can't knock out a hurricane or an earthquake, they are challenges for the most epic of heroes – and frankly, even these may well be outclassed by them.

Now, as monsters of such an epic proportion, it should come as no surprise that the Kaiju depicted herein have legendary actions at their disposal – moreover, they are ridiculously large creatures – Colossal, in fact. Thing is, 5e per default does not have rules for that, so you should be aware of the fact that, by virtue of sheer size, the kaiju featured herein take less damage from most attacks by smaller creatures – half damage, in fact. Only level 9 spells and attacks by similarly monumental creatures still inflict the regular damage value and yes, the kaiju depicted herein can further decrease that amount via resistances and saving throws. Cool: Siege Monster does actually work against them, which is a nice touch in the details. Now, build-wise, the kaiju depicted herein will make some of you who are more mechanically-minded scratch their heads for a second – you see, the attack values and damage values seem to be wonky at first glance – there is a reason for that: If a kaiju's Constitution modifier exceeds the Strength or Dexterity modifier of the respective creature, it is used instead of these as a

governing attribute. I'm primarily mentioning this for the convenience of my readers, so should you endeavor to rebuild these, well there you go.

Now, format-wise, there are obviously weird anime-esque kaiju herein; but similarly, you'll be able to find ones steeped in medieval mythology as well. All kaiju featured herein come with excellent, full-color artworks. It should also be noted that you are not restricted to use them as Cloverfield-style backdrops/plot-devices – we all know that players want to fight ridiculously massive monsters and the pdf does acknowledge this- via the inclusion of the iron giant. Whether Saber Rider's Ramrod or the more well-known megazords, the Iron Knight takes that role – it is basically a massive mech that is piloted by the collective of the party. There are four key-roles for crewing the mech, meaning that even smaller groups should be capable of using it: Commander, Driver, Engineer and Gunner, though, to be honest, none are required to properly use this massive construct – so yeah, while not ideal, smaller groups can pilot this massive mecha, though occupying a position also means that the mecha's effectiveness increases. An artifact, the *Star of Daikaiju*, btw. allows you to command kaiju – so that would be another option to introduce them in your game; perhaps the villain has it; perhaps the PCs get the artifact and command a kaiju (hand them the stats and watch the PCs go to town with the kaiju – did so once in my campaign and it was epic...), so yes, the book allows for a variety of different uses of kaiju.

The colossal monsters introduced herein don't necessarily need to be evil or ugly, mind you – there would, for example be a thoroughly cute flying squirrel-style being; the mighty Adam, the Defender; strange quasi divine beings like Inu or the ridiculously massive Hurbun, the big goblin – while the latter is evil, he also represents a trope that more than one player will most assuredly enjoy. Of course, really twisted monstrosities are found within the pdf – from the Beast of the Deepest Depth to Great Charybdis, we have some nasty threats herein that represent the classic idea of colossal creatures lurking in the abyssal depth of the ocean.

Of course, the trope of the dread thing from the stars also is covered – with e.g. Neuros, the Brain between Worlds or "That Which the Stars Rejected"...and there is the "Voice from Beyond", which should put a BIG smile on fans of the classic Kull-stories; the sentient perfect storm, a natural force of annihilation; a mech designed by the ant-like formians; the dread drainer of giants; Inu and Iruk, which could have jumped straight from eastern mythology...there are a lot of amazing beings within these pages. Xel'unchek, a living diabolical siege engine, and Yssian, the abyssal engine, would make for planar weapons of mass destruction

that most assuredly should be more than capable of ending blasé reactions to the forces of the outer planes. Particularly creepy for me personally would be the world-ender-level “Kudzu, the Everblight” (challenge 24 and by far not the most powerful thing herein...), a horrid, nigh unstoppable plant horror... Or what about trying to best the worldshaker, the animate form of the world’s very core?

It needs to be said that this pdf, while a bestiary/monster manual-style supplement, is not a dry read – each of the kaiju featured within these pages comes with a well-written, neat story that elucidates the nature of the kaiju in question, often providing some rather cool ideas to use them in your game.

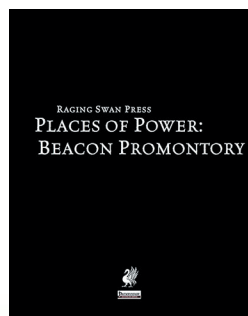
Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I noticed no serious hiccups. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing’s nice 2-column full-color standard and the pdf comes with gorgeous full-color artworks for the kaiju. The pdf is fully bookmarked for your convenience.

So, I’m a sucker for big critters; in fact, the original Kaiju Codex made my Top Ten-list, and for good reason. Brandes Stoddard has done an amazing job at translating the coolness and high-concept original file to 5e. He did not take the easy route, instead going for a translation that is well in line with the system’s aesthetics. The kaiju in question feature the proper signature tricks they should have and his elegant translation of the Iron knight’s mecha-rules also makes for a fun mini-game style bonus – in short: I love this. The only reason this does not get a nomination as a candidate for my Top Ten of the year is that the original pdf managed to score on that year’s list and I have a policy that prevents the like. That being said, this is an excellent example of how a conversion should be handled and well worth a final rating of 5 stars + seal of approval – this is very much recommended if the concepts of gigantic, horrid threats even remotely intrigues you...and frankly, who’s not intrigued by it? Sometimes, size does matter...

You can get this cool collection of colossal creatures [here on OBS!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.



Places of Power:

Beacon Promontory

Publisher: Raging Swan Press

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 star 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 back cover, 1 page

editorial, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 5 pages of content, so let’s take a look!

A ferocious storm has swallowed the village of Beacon Cove – and from the ruins of the storm’s horrid aftermath, the ragged survivors rebuild around the lighthouse, overlooking the watery grave of the once proud fishing village. Weatherworn, proud and defiant, the survivors are still here, as the notes on how the folk look and dress explain. The pdf also sports lore to unearth for the PCs, and no less than 6 different events and 6 whispers and rumors that can be unearthed by PCs with the proper social skills. These, obviously, also can also be used by the Gm to add some neat complications to the subject matter.

The pdf also provides a proper marketplace section for consumables or crafting services, which is a nice plus. The survivors also fear supernatural things behind the horrid occurrence that has forever changed their ways and the worship of the sea queen Serat is also touched upon as a brief sidebar. The inn comes with proper prices for accommodations and food/drink and with a hard daily life and continuous downpours on the verge of normalizing, the place is most definitely an intriguing one – the great b/w-artwork depicting the place is inspiring and daily life also is covered in a helpful sidebar.

The respective write-ups and details, though, are what makes this inspiring: The basic feeling is that of a somber outpost and catastrophe, sure, but it is blended with a strong leitmotif of defiance and hope...and if you take a look at the detailed entries for the places of interest, you’ll soon realize that the place can be run as an example of the effects of trauma after a catastrophe...or as something with a more sinister, horrific undertone, with the fear of parasitic, mind-controlling things gaining traction...but is it real? Only the GM can decide.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I noticed no serious glitches. Layout adheres to raging Swan Press’ elegant two-column b/w-standard and the pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. The b/w-artwork of the lighthouse and environments is an amazing pieces. The pdf comes in two versions, one optimized for screen-use and one optimized to be printed out. The cartography by Maciej Zagorski is well-made and in b/w. Supporters of Raging Swan Press’ patreon can get access to a player-friendly, key-less version of the map, at least to my knowledge.

Mike Welham delivers big time here: This place of power is not only inspired, it can be spun in a variety of ways by the enterprising GM: Whether supernatural or group delusion, this somber place is basically an adventure in disguise and as such, it basically begs for the PCs to be dropped in and watched – speculation will

run rampant sooner or later, doing the work for the GM. This is a great place and yet another example of Mike's abundant talent. As a very minor complaint: This is, to me, technically closer to a village (or rather: thorp) than a Place of Power and as such, the place could have used settlement stats, but that may be me. Similarly, I would have loved to see magical properties for the place. Don't let that keep you from this cool locale, though: This promontory is an amazing set-piece that breathes the spirit of Raging Swan's flair in all the right ways. My final verdict will hence clock in at 5 stars.

You can get this cool, evocative locale [here on OBS!](#)



Veranthea Codex: The 5th World

Publisher: Rogue Genius Games

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 star out of 5

This high-level adventure for the unique Veranthea Codex-setting clocks in at 62 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 3 pages of advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 55 pages of content, so let's take a look!

Okay, this module is intended for HIGH level characters; as in level 16 – 18. Don't have some on your hands, much less with the global rules modifications of Veranthea? Well, fret not, for the pdf does contain a significant array of high-level pregens for your convenience. Furthermore, the pdf does contain a massive selection of high-level stats for adversaries/NPCs that can be found in the world of Veranthea, acting as a kind of NPC Codex-like book, but including brief notes on the fluff of the respective NPCs as well. And yes, we also receive stats for Yawvil, the CR 37/MR 10 master wizard of Veranthea...after all, the module begins with meeting him.

Now, if all of that does sound familiar, there's a reason for that: The module reproduces a lot of content that could be found in other Veranthea Codex books. This means that, yes, you can run this module sans needing to get the whole product line. Here's the good news for those of us who enjoyed the setting so far and DO own the books: With a proof of purchase sent to the Veranthea e-mail address (which can be found in the product description of the module), you actually get a discount on the book! That is really customer-friendly and gets two big thumbs up from yours truly!

But you're here for the adventure, right? Well, as always, the following discussion of the module at hand will contain SPOILERS. Potential players should jump to the conclusion.

All right, still here? Great! The PCs are teleported to none other than Veranthea's master wizard, for his long-time ally Tyrigilyam the jabberwocky (do you get the easter-egg?) has gone missing in the Forever Dark below the surface; it's up to the PCs to find out what...and here, the massive array of super-powerful adversaries I mentioned before comes into play: mentally compelled by a strange pulse, these legends stand in the way of the PCs as they make their way to a skein of energy that holds back to the Manhoff trench in the Doryhanna Ocean and best the horribly potent things lurking there. Sooner or later, the PCs witness basically a strange machinery that can be traced along the ocean floor, a massive outcropping of metal, itself shielded from the hostile environment – Ďěňůšă, an underwater city.

Infiltrating the massive place at the bottom of the seas, the PCs encounter powerful crustacean-constructs... and fans of Veranthea will guess that the gig is up: They have stumbled over relics of the dreaded Trekth. Within this strange city, the PCs may find Yawvil's old friend, bound by the strange things – and freeing the jabberwocky may also free the mind-controlled legends from their strange compulsions...just as Yawvil and the jabberwocky reconcile, the whole power of the tick-like city (oh yeah, didn't mention that, did I?) resurges as the massive trekth forces seek to overrun everyone – with the help of the legends freed, the PCs may have a chance to escape – but they need to carve a path through the horrid creatures here, as the city itself seems to be capable of even blocking Yawvil's potent tokens, which were supposed to get the PCs out of exactly this predicament...And yes, the PCs can leave behind the controlled legends, potentially changing the power-dynamics of Veranthea forever...talking about high stakes!

Conclusion:

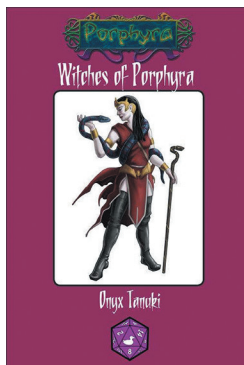
Editing and formatting are very good, I noticed no undue accumulation of hiccups. Layout adheres to Veranthea's 2-column full-color standard and manages to get A LOT of information on a given page. The pdf comes with solid full-color artworks, most of which will be familiar for fans of Veranthea. The cartography deserves special mention – two maps are provided, one that is somewhat battle mat style and solid, and a full-color map of the fantastic city/being Ďěňůšă. The latter is particularly nice.

Mike Myler's high-level adventure does everything right. It does not get bogged down in trying to micro-manage the vast capabilities of PCs of this level, instead presenting environments that require high-level arsenals of options to survive. The unique backdrop of the proceeding is compelling, in spite of its brevity, and the way in which the module employs the legends of Veranthea is really smart, potentially

allowing for vast global changes in the aftermath of this module. There is but one serious complaint I have regarding the module – its brevity. While the high-level legends allow a GM to stretch this module SIGNIFICANTLY if desired, the module can similarly be rushed for convention-slot length. And honestly, in my book, the module deserves better than that. This features some of the best properties of Mike's writing style and is, idea-wise, incredibly strong – so strong, in fact, that I wished that this had been upgraded to full-blown mega-adventure status...you know, with NPCs across Veranthea vanishing suddenly, the aftermath of these disappearances, the climactic involvement of Yawvil, a longer trip through the incredibly hostile terrains passed...you get the idea. This almost feels like a whole campaign arc.

That being said: A) Nothing keeps you from expanding the module thus. B) I *get* why the module is as it is – it is deliberately designed to work for one-shots etc. Consider, thus, my complaints to be a testament to how cool this module is. Hence, my final verdict will clock in at 5 stars, just short of my seal of approval – highly recommended if you're looking for a unique, far-out high-level challenge!

You can get this unique, cool high-level module [here on OBS!](#)



Witches of Porphyra

Publisher: Purple Duck Games

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 star out of 5

This installment of Purple Duck Games' player-centric „of Porphyra“-series clocks in at 52 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 4 pages of SRD, leaving us with 46 pages of content, though it should be noted

that the pages are formatted for digest-size (6" by 9" or A5) and thus, you can fit up to 4 of them on a given sheet of paper when printing this out.

All righty, as always, we begin with an array of archetypes, the first of which would be the blooded hag – this one has Charisma as the governing spellcasting attribute, gets spontaneous casting and instead of a patron, the archetype chooses a bloodline, gaining the bloodline's spells at 3rd level and every 2 levels thereafter. Instead of the first level's hex, the archetype gains the 1st level bloodline power of the bloodline chosen, and, at 4th, 10th and 16th as well as 20th level, the archetype may choose the respective bloodline power instead of a hex, but needs to retain the acquisition order of bloodline powers. They treat these as hexes, which makes me question which save to

use – Hexes, per default, are governed by Intelligence, whereas bloodline powers that allow for saves usually have them governed by Charisma. I assume that "they instead treat it as a hex" would mean that the archetype uses Intelligence, but Charisma would make more sense to me. I am also a bit puzzled regarding the familiar question here: As written, the archetype retains the familiar and thus retains the arcane bond component, though, depending on how you picture the bloodline aspect working, it may make a bit less sense. That being said, both complaints are something most GMs should be capable of navigating.

Brewers lose spellcasting and store formulae to prepare extracts in their familiar, but are limited to effects that target at least one creature or object regarding their spell list. They can, furthermore, only prepare extracts duplicating harmless spells or spells with a target of "you." However, unlike alchemists, the brewer replaces patron spells with the ability to create splash extracts, which must neither be harmless, nor have a target of "you"; additionally, they need to have a fixed number of targets; the extract is treated as an alchemical splash weapon that inflicts 1d3 slashing damage. Single target splash extracts only affect targets directly hit; otherwise, it affects the primary target + a number of squares affected by splash damage equal to the number of targets the spell could normally affect. This modification of the rules-language really made me smile. No, seriously. That's HARD to pull off properly. This replaces patron spells. The familiar can btw. be affected by mutagens etc. and is treated as an alchemist; 1st level locks the character into the Cauldron hex and 2nd level's hex is replaced with Throw Anything, adding + Int modifier to damage caused with thrown weapons, including splash damage. The archetype may also choose a variety of discoveries, treating alchemist levels as -2 class levels and codifies properly them as hex, major hex and grand hex equivalents. Complex modification, but one I really enjoy.

The impetuous dervish gets diminished spellcasting and an unchained monk's flurry of blows with certain limitations; however, starting at 5th level, the archetype may cast a single spell of at least 3 levels lower than the highest spell level available instead of one of the attacks in the flurry, which may then be delivered as a touch attack. Since the ability is restricted to touch attacks, there are no weird interactions here and 8th level unlocks the option to use this flurry in conjunction with a charge attack. This replaces the familiar and the 8th level hex. Once again, a complex and interesting engine tweak.

Next up would be the insufflators. At first level, the archetype has to choose a cone or line; when using a hex that targets a single creature and usually can be used as a standard action, they may choose to spend a full-

round action to exhale magical fog in either a 10-ft. cone or 20 ft.-line, depending on the choice made. Instead of normal saves, the targets may negate the hex's effects via Reflex saves (or halve damage thus incurred). The ability has a 1d4 rounds cooldown and requires being capable of breathing in deeply. This does read much worse than it is – while the area effect and changed save can potentially be very powerful and while personally, I'd make it provoke an attack of opportunity, the need to come very close does actually even out the power of this option a bit. Instead of 2nd level's hex, the archetype gets Wicked Breath (a new feat herein) and may use it in the same shape as the aforementioned breath, at + 1 spell level, rather than +3. Here, I am a bit puzzled: Okay, we choose the same shape as the breath ability – but do we use the range of hag's breath or that of the feat? It's just +10 ft/+5 ft. range difference, but still. Patron spell gain is delayed by 2 (minimum 1st) levels and the familiar's effective level is similarly reduced. 4th level provides the option for the archetype to increase the area affected by hag's breath by +5 ft. or +10 ft., with every 4 levels beyond the 4th allowing the archetype to take this again. This is also added to Wicked Breath's affected area. A bit of clarification and we have a really amazing archetype here.

Legionmasters replace the 1st level hex with the option to have multiple familiars, but need to spread their levels among the familiars in question: A 5th level character could e.g. have a 3rd level and a 2nd level familiar. Special familiars like patron familiars, improved familiars, etc. cannot be chosen and all familiars must be of the same species, so no stacking of familiar bonuses. For as long as at least one familiar remains alive, the legionmaster will be able to retain spellcasting. At 4th level, 10th and 16th level, the witch increases her level for the purpose of determining the levels that can be assigned to familiars by +2,, replacing the 3 hexes gained at these levels. Nice: The familiar abilities are concisely elaborated upon: You can't e.g. store one touch spell charge in multiple familiars and both empathic link and scrying is limited to one familiar. Big plus: Limited use pools that familiars may have are addressed – the collective of familiars shares one pool.

Alter hexes and the 8th level hex is lost and instead, the archetype may choose a teamwork feat instead of a hex. One of these teamwork feats may be allocated to familiars each day, with 8th and 16th level providing the option to grant the teamwork feats to more familiars. A lot could have gone wrong here, and I am duly impressed by the care displayed here; the pdf also addresses the summoner/multi-creature-commander conundrum, explicitly acknowledging this.

The mentor archetype gets a variant cohort at 1st level, dubbed an heir. This character is a commoner

with Magical Aptitude, upgrading the character to heroic ability scores and 1st level witch at 3rd level, provided the character has a leadership score that's high enough. Heir exchanges and 7th level Leadership governed by Int are also included. Both mentor and heir have no patron, and thus use a wizard's spellbook instead; heir gain access to one spell at 2nd level and every even level thereafter the mentor reaches, treating that as the patron spell. 6th level yields the ability for the mentor to assume a fixed familiar form for the heir – kudos: immunity to polymorph is addressed and does not prevent this form. As a capstone, the mentor may ascend to patronhood, upgrading the heir to PC status. I ADORE this archetype. Not only does it resound with occult traditions and how we often picture the teaching of the black arts to work, it has a replacement PC and serious roleplaying potential basically hard-wired into the archetype and feels incredibly RIGHT to me. I love this one. Heck, you could go Krabat and play the heir to a NPC mentor for an interesting one-shot...

Polytheistic witches represent a crossover with the occultist (imho the most underrated Occult Adventures class) and thus begin play with an implement school, with 6th level and every 6 levels thereafter providing another implement. They cast psychic spells and gain the sorceror's spells per day, but don't treat spells as on their spell-list unless they have been gained by patron or implement school, with multiple selections of an implement school covered. This severely limited spell array is expanded by the patron pantheon – the witch gains additional pantheons at 2nd, 9th and 15th level, but spells gained from patrons are cast as arcane spells. Instead of 1st level's hex, the archetype gains mental focus and may invest it in patrons, increasing the CL of the patron's spells, with a scaling cap provided. Also at 1st level, the archetype gets the base focus power of their implement school, with new implement schools gained also providing the respective base power. Instead of gaining hexes, the archetype may choose to learn a new focus power chosen from the collective of implement school powers available. Additionally, the archetype may, as a standard action, expend 1 point of mental focus assigned to a patron to grant her familiar the patron powers associated with the patron for 1 minute as though it was a patron familiar. Once again, this is one of the archetypes that really makes me smile – it is interesting, plays differently and provides some highly complex rules-operations, pulled off with panache.

The sanguisage gains the kineticist's burn, except that the familiar takes lethal damage rather than nonlethal damage. The familiar has no limit on the amount of burn it can accept. The familiar may not be archetype's and loses Alertness, but gains +1 hit point per level of the master. Instead of 1st level's hex, the familiar gains Toughness. 2nd level provides the option to choose an

arcanist arcane exploit, governed by Int, with 4th level and every 2 levels thereafter allowing the archetype to choose whether to learn an exploit or a hex. 12th level unlocks greater exploits. Instead of using arcane reservoir as a resource, exploits are powered by the familiar's Burn and if an exploit would kill a familiar, the effect is particularly potent. Yeah, it's actually an archetype that may make exploding the grossly obese and distended familiar a viable option in a pinch – and it reminded me, big time, of Binding of Isaac. That being said, considering the power of arcanist exploits and the greatly expanded uses that the familiar provides, this may not be for all groups, though the concise list of exploits that could result in weirdness and thus is forbidden makes it run pretty smoothly.

The sightless seer expands the spell-list by all divinations from the sorc/wiz-list and is locked into a new familiar presented herein, the matoyasite crystal, which acts as the eyes of the witch, sharing its sight. They are blind and gain a combination of divination-enhancing feats and hexes over the levels, making for a thematically concise option. There would also be the warweaver, who are proficient with simple weapons and a one-handed martial or exotic weapon as well as light armors and bucklers, but still suffers arcane spell failure chance. They get good Ref-saves and ¾ BAB-progression and bad Will-saves. The archetype receives spells per day as though it was a magus, capping at 6th spell level. Patron spells gained are delayed and 3 are not learned at all. To make up for that, they may use Intelligence modifier for a finessable weapon they're proficient with. Finally, the whitelighter loses all necromancy spells as well as those with the death and evil descriptors and exude an aura of good. Additionally, they may not target a creature with a spell or SP without getting that creature's permission as a swift action before doing so, including spell-trigger and –completion items. Interaction with spells they'd usually learn, but can't due to these restrictions is also covered. Finally, both hex and patron choices are limited by the philosophy of the archetype. The archetype is very much defined by the chosen charge, which may be chosen anew each day, with 8th and 16th level providing an additional charge; the charge may transfer this status for 24 hours as a swift action and the whitelighter's CL is higher when affecting the charge. The archetype gets healing hexes and increases their potency for the charge – all in all, a pretty flavorful option.

Wood witches would constitute the final archetype in the book, using the druid spell list and treating the spells as arcane and is limited in patron selection; however, they can affect plant creatures with touch spells delivered by their familiar as though they were animals or magical beasts. Patron spells are delayed one level. Interesting: At 2nd level and at 10th level, the

archetype gains kineticist blasts (wood blast at 2nd, the seasonal blasts at 10th level), but prepares them as spells, getting the translation right – kudos! While infusions may not be added to them, metamagic feats may be added. 4th level nets the Plant domain or a subdomain thereof at cleric-3 levels, using Intelligence as governing attribute; spells thus gained are added to the spell list, but not automatically gained.

The pdf also contains familiar archetypes: Conduit familiars begin play with the option to deliver touch spells, with higher levels providing the option to deliver other spells as well. Kidnapper familiars get Improved Grapple and may later deliver conjuration (teleportation) effects as part of a grapple. Nasty! Messengers may act as a one-way speaker-box. Interesting selection here!

We also get a massive selection of new patrons, all of which include their own patron familiar abilities – kudos! The patrons are Air, beauty, chains, corrosion, desert, filth, force, glass, intellect, mercy, revelry, screams and shelter – and these are well-crafted regarding spell-selection and benefits.

Beyond the aforementioned crystal, the pdf also provides the stats for the hoop snake (yes!), the winged monkey (double yes!) and the TOME OF TEETH familiars. These come with full stats and if none of them made you smile, I don't know anymore. Seriously. This is damn cool.

The pdf also features a massive array of new hexes – what about cursing foes with dental decay, decreasing the efficiency of their bites and making them take nonlethal damage when biting or eating? Yeah. What about choosing one hex and being able to use it as an AoO? Vomit forth swarms of increasing potency? Causing creatures to sing? Major hexes and grand hexes can also be found here – including the grand hex that steals your breath...literally.

The new feats included feature an option to use hex instead of spell DC for curses (nice!), more efficient use of *conductive* weapons, combining Arcane Strike and Hex Strike, lacing hexes into spells, using aforementioned Wicked Breath with rys – some interesting options to fill in some holes in the rules here.

The pdf also contains 2 special materials – haunewood and matoyasite, also known as sightstone – both of these materials not only are explained in a compelling and well-written manner, they make sense – meaningful and nice. The pdf also included Kabal Dunedusk, a sample khvostik polkan witch with the insufflate archetype. The NPC clocks in at CR 11 and comes with a boon for the PCs to gain.

The pdf comes with a bonus-pdf penned by Mark Gedak, which depicts the bladeleaf, a CR nasty fey that is naturally invisible, poisonous and capable of creating a slashing storm of leaves...oh, and they are good archers. Ouch! Nice, lethal little buggers!

Conclusion:

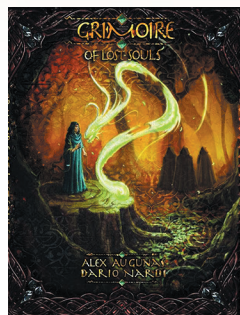
Editing and formatting are very good on both a formal and rules-language level— which precious few very minor exceptions, this supplement is precise, concise and frankly, even when it sports a minor ambiguity, it is usually one that can be resolved easily. Layout adheres to Purple Duck Games's 1-column standard sans background (printer-friendly!), with purple highlights. The pdf sports a blend of old and new full color artworks. The pdf comes with detailed, nested bookmarks, making navigation quick and precise.

OnyxTanuki's first stand-alone book is significantly more impressive than I expected; while there are a few minor hiccups herein, the book managed to do something I did not expect: It honestly managed to excite me. I have seen a LOT of witch-options and this one sports some truly amazing, intriguing ones that simply haven't been done before. More than that, even the engine-tweaks offer for meaningful changes of the overall playing experience, which is a big plus in my book; similarly, the engine-tweak-style archetypes don't settle for simple cookie-cutter designs, instead opting for complex rules-operations of pretty high difficulty levels. And the best thing is that, for the vast majority of the content, the pdf gets these perfectly RIGHT. In short, this is a great class-centric pdf and for the low asking price, it provides a LOT of worthwhile, cool material.

Now, usually the minor hiccups would make me rate this at 4.5 stars, rounded up. If you're really picky about minor ambiguities, that's what you'll probably think of this pdf. However, this little pdf actually managed to excite me, to make me want to play a variety of the options herein — considering the material I've seen, that does mean something. Moreover, it never went the easy road; it doesn't sport bland filler that anyone could do — this is honest design work that probably is beyond the skills of many GMs out there, juggling complex concepts and rules-operations. And yes, I tried hard to poke holes into this. The fact that it manages to hold up this well in the face of me poking it bespeaks of quality — it's one thing to see basic rules-language integrity; it's another beast to see complex operations performed with panache.

In short: I really like this pdf. It is one of my favorites in the whole series. Add to that the freshman bonus and we arrive at a file that is well worth a final verdict of 5 stars + seal of approval. If you like the witch class and want to do something novel and fun with it, then check this out — it is one of the best 3pp-option books for the class out there.

You can get this damn cool witch-expansion [here on OBS!](#)



Grimoire of Lost Souls

Publisher: Radiance House

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 star out of 5

The massive hardcover Ultimate-style book for Pact magic clocks in at 387 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page inside of front cover, 2 pages editorial, 1 page ToC, 1 page

KS-thanks, 4 pages of SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 376 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 patrons.

I was a KS-backer for this book and as such, I have received the massive hardcover. My review is mostly based on the print version, though I have also consulted my pdf-iteration for it.

So, what is this book? The short tl;dr-version would be that it is for Pact Magic, what Ultimate Psionics was for psionics. A more detailed response would also note that this book is not simply a compilation of previously-released material; in fact, this massive grimoire does feature a lot of new material, material previously not seen for PFRPG and some massive tweaks to existing options.

So, what is pact magic? Well, the short reply would be that it was the original Pact Magic. First conceived in 3.5's Tome of Magic, the system had some serious hiccups and balance-issues in its initial iteration, but at the same time, it was a revelation for me: The idea was that named spirits exist; said spirits have fallen past the usual confines implied by D&D cosmology and, from their in-between status, they hunger for the chance to interact with the realms of mortals. From legends to archetypal beings to strange demons, all kinds of weird spirits, some of which were influenced by the key of Solomon, were thus presented.

This system was greatly expanded in two massive hardcovers back in 3.X, "Secrets of Pact magic" and "Villains of Pact Magic", both of which are undeservedly obscure and have a place of honor on my bookshelf. They tweaked the balance of the system, expanded it and made it more unique — and, more importantly for me, they rank as some of my favorite rule-books of that age — the spirits came with HUGE short stories depicting their legends, adding a vast amount of flavor to each of the options herein. Then, two stand-alone updates/expansions for PFRPG were released, expanding the concept and translating it to PFRPG, though these did cut back on the beloved legends I enjoyed

so much. This book once again features a lot of legends, though some have been externalized [to a short-story collection](#).

Fast-forward to this book, which presents basically the latest and most refined iteration of the concept. At the heart of this system lies the pactmaker class, which gains d8 HD, 4 + Int skills per level, proficiency with simple weapons and light armor, $\frac{3}{4}$ BAB-progression and good Fort-and Will-saves. The class adds +1/2 class level, minimum 1, to Knowledge (arcane), Knowledge (history), Knowledge (religion) and Knowledge (planes) and gains a bonus on these to research a spirit's knowledge tasks, instead gains a bonus equal to full character level.

So, what are knowledge tasks? Each spirit has a specific, occult seal that is drawn by the binder: This seal and the spirit need to be researched via knowledge tasks – basically, these represent the effort to learn a spirit. This is important, in that there is no limit otherwise on spirits known, if you will: While a pactmaker can only bind spirits of 1st level in the beginning, he may learn all of them. New spirit levels are unlocked at 3rd level and every 2 levels thereafter and spirits are organized by levels, much like spells; the 9th level spirits being obviously the most potent. A pactmaker may bind multiple spirits at higher levels – 2 at 4th level, +1 one spirit every 6 levels thereafter. 7th level and every 6 levels thereafter allow a pact maker to replenish an expended spirit ability 1/day and the capstone makes spirit abilities count as extraordinary and allows for the ignoring of personality influences and also nets the class automatically the capstone empowerment. Bear with me for a second – those are spirit terms. 3rd level and every 3 levels thereafter provide a choice of bonuses while bound to a spirit. Saves against abilities, generally, are determined by Charisma as a governing attribute.

And that is already pretty much the basic chassis of the class. Let's move on to the basics of pact magic, shall we?

The term to denote a character using pact magic is "binder"; a binder level is the equivalent of the caster level, for the purpose of governing the spirit's abilities. A binding check is a d0 + $\frac{1}{2}$ binder level + Charisma modifier, and it is made upon summoning a spirit to determine the power of the pact. This requires a ceremony and a binder check versus the binding DC of the spirit in question – rushing the ceremony is possible, but results in massive penalties to the check. On a success of the check, the binder gets a good pact. A binder that makes a good pact can freely suppress the physical

sign or minor granted abilities of being inhabited by the spirit (like horns, tentacles, weird voices, etc.) and suffers no penalty when acting against the spirit's influence – basically, the personality of the spirit. If failing the check, he still gets the spirit, but makes a poor pact; the binder must exhibit the physical sign and suffers cumulative penalties when disobeying the spirit's influence, lasting for 24 hours, even if the spirit is exorcised before that duration has elapsed. Suppressing a spirit eliminates all benefits, but also all penalties that may be incurred by having a spirit inhabit you. The process of making a good pact can be improved by using totems – basically optional material components or terrain components. Additionally, some spirits are more well or ill-disposed towards some races (favored allies and enemies), beings with certain alignments, class features, etc., while others reward those that call them in dark places, while stricken by illness, etc. the possibilities here are endless and tie in very well with the flavor of the spirits in question, rewarding players for caring about the story of their spirits.

Here is the catch: Spirits have three types of abilities: Minor abilities, which are always granted; major abilities, which are expended for 5 rounds after being used unless otherwise noted, and capstone empowerments, which are only gained when the spirit's DC is beaten by 10 or more, making even low-level spirits retain their usefulness at higher levels.

It is not in the chassis of the pact-maker class or one of the numerous pact magic based class options that the system's appeal lies; it is within the massive, colossal array of spirits. It should also be noted that most spirits are assigned to a constellation – upon binding them, the binder gains constellation aspects and these general affiliations double as thematic restrictions and schools of spirits if you will; you can focus on binding nature spirits...or fiendish ones...or those that hearken from the dark beyond. Whether you want to focus on slenderman-like entities or strange fey or on any combination of them, the spirits are here and allow for a wide variety of different types of character. And yes, benevolent spirits like cynical detectives that have fallen through the cracks of reality or basically saints can also be found – this is important to note, for pact magic, requiring less study than comparable magic and no divine oversight either, does carry with it the flavor of the forbidden, of the occult. And yes, there are starless, more obscure spirits.

As you may have gleaned by now, a strength of spirits lies in the way in which many of their

abilities operate on a cool-down mechanic...and frankly, I went through this massive tome with my analysis, and rules-wise, there are precious few hiccups: To note two remarkable ones: The spirit Sevnoir, for example, heals you when inflicting damage to a creature suffering from a fear-effect. If you have a character with a fear-aure on hand, the 1/round caveat doesn't prevent cheesing this via kitten slaughter.

At the same time, this book does predate the release of *Occult Adventure* regarding when it was worked on, and as such, unfortunately does not provide synergy with that glorious tome. Prestige classes, magic items, feats, special binder secrets (talents), spells, races, planes and organizations (apocryphal desert...nightmare weald...need I say more?) – the book has a ton to offer in crunch and I could bloat this review to 14, 20 pages even – easily, and still scratch the surface of what the book offers in terms of sheer content. There are some minor formatting inconsistencies to be found, with abilities that should be red showing up in black instead and the like.

There is one more thing you should be aware of: RAW, binders do NOT gain new spirits upon reaching new levels. While *personally*, I require downtime training to gain the benefits of a level up (I really dislike just *pling*, getting level-ups mid-dungeon...), I know that many groups do just that – in such cases, I'd suggest automatically gaining a spirit upon reaching a new level. So yes, this may be, for some groups, a drawback of the RAW engine, though one that can be houseruled away with ease. System-immanently, groups that do not engage in a lot of roleplaying as opposed to rollplaying will have a bit less fun with this, though please do take a look at my conclusion for what I mean by this.

I have to break my usual system of presentation here a bit in order to convey what this book provides, so let me prematurely interject my

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are good, but not perfect – I noticed a couple of hiccups here and there, some formatting glitches and the like; less than in many books of this crunch-density, but enough to notice. Layout adheres to a gorgeous 2-column full-color standard and the book comes with a TON of absolutely phenomenal full-color art; some of which was previously used and colored, but most is new. Each spirit has his/her/its own seal as a visual representation, so yeah, you can actually draw the seal, if that's how you roll! The pdf version comes fully bookmarked with detailed, nested bookmarks

for your convenience and thankfully, the book has a massive, multi-page index that helps navigating this tome. The hardcover is a beauty to behold and well worth getting.

You know, as a person and as a reviewer, I generally tend to gravitate towards complex options; beautiful mathy constructs and subsystems that provide an interesting playing experience. I can honestly appreciate it when math works out, when some abilities do something utterly unique with complex rules operations. While certainly not simple in these regards, pact magic never reaches the complexity of akashic mysteries, ethermagic or similar systems. And still, it is one of my favorite systems ever.

I am not a sentimental man, so nostalgia is not the culprit here and it took me quite a while to deduce why pact magic works so well for me. There is no simple answer. One, though, would be that much like psionics, I can see it completely replacing the standard spellcasting classes for a completely different campaign experience, one steeped in occult lore, research...and one that makes magic more dangerous, feel more forbidden, medieval. In fact, I'm regularly stealing spirits from this book when playing OSR-games, breaking them down to the simpler rules of such systems. LotFP, LL, S&W – it works and fits thematically perfectly will the often more gritty aesthetics there. This has literally transcended the bounds of its system, at least for me – something only precious few books in my vast library achieve.

At the same time, the strength of the system, its appeal, does not lie wholly in its mechanics; pact magic, to a degree, is the original occult magic, prior to *Occult Adventures*. In my review of Paizo's phenomenal hardcover, I commented on the fact that I love how player agenda AND character agenda are emphasized, and how the classes have ROLEplaying potential hardcoded into their respective rules. This is, ultimately, why I adore this massive tome; I adore tactical combat and I'm the first to appreciate a well-made combat-encounter with strategically-interesting hazards etc. – I love these. I love the tactical, complex combat aspects of PFRPG. But I also adore the storytelling aspect of the game; I love good roleplaying between characters, between PCs and NPCs; I use story-rewards a lot. To me, the beauty of roleplaying games with a high rules-density lies in the blending of strategy and story-telling, in the fusion of stories and tactics. Ultimately, for me the best rules let me do either unique things in the strategy department, in the roleplaying department, or both.

Every single spirit is a bit like an unruly character that influences the PC or NPC; they all have personalities, quirks and goals, enemies – and they may grow with your PCs. When a spirit helps vanquish a certain foe after being bested by him, you have your work cut out for you as a good roleplayer; you can tweak your character with spirits and keep them perpetually fresh and interesting; perhaps your character is a teetotaler, so binding some spirits may be something he'd be loathe to do; perhaps bidding one spirit and succumbing to the spirit's influence nets you some complications... or new allies – it's small, organically happening constellations (haha! – sorry, I'll punch myself for that later) that make this shine as brightly for me.

There is another aspect to this book. One that perhaps bears no importance for you...but then again, I think it does.

No other system I have used has made me write this much custom material.

When, for example, Aldern Foxglove was a very popular character in my RotRL-game back in the day and then died (trying to be SPOILER-less), I promptly had him come back as a spirit with peculiar personalities, fluid constellations and abilities depending on the dominant personality; when my PCs liberated the ghost lions from the Ghostlord in Red Hand of Doom, I made the pack return as a spirit to be bound; When Kyuss fell, he became the master of the Worm constellation. The Crimson King is a spirit in my game. So is the Dark Tower.

And yes, you can use the spirits herein as guidance, tweak and reskin them for a lot of purposes. Don't like a legend or a particular spirit? Chances are that you won't have to do a lot of writing, just replace an ability and come up with a new legend. Done. When one of my players happened upon notes on a blood-drinking lizardfolk thing from ages long past, I took N'aylia the first vampire, tweaked her abilities a bit more towards the lizardfolk-esque and there we go. I actually improvised that reskin on the fly while GMing and nobody noticed.

Or, you know, you can pretty much write infinite amounts of new ones, based on your campaign. I have psionic spirits, akashic spirits, ethermagic-spirits...you name the subsystem and I pretty much have a spirit for it. Why? Because the engine per se is simple. You can easily complicate it in a vast variety of ways by grafting pretty much anything on top of it, with only your own skills as the limit – and the glue that holds all together is this basic system, one that is defined by choice, yes...but more than that, it is defined by the stories you tell with it.

A haunt put to rest? Potential spirit. An outsider slain? Potential spirit? Anything weird, from mages that fell through space and time to sentient constructs? Potential spirits. Fey kicked out of their courts/dethroned fey queens? Potential spirits. Defeated campaign endbosses? Potential spirits in the next one. Paladin PC that sacrificed his soul to seal the demon-lord in an artifact? Potential spirit. Endzeitgeist, a zeitgeist-like spirit of the end-times? Potential spirit. In fact, the book does an amazing job at showcasing the sheer infinite breadth of themes that you can cover with these spirits.

Pact magic is a nice, well-made system on its own – probably one that deserves, when divorced from all flavor, a verdict of 4.5 to 5 stars, somewhere in that vicinity. But this would not do the system the least bit of justice. Dario Nardi and Alexander Agunuas deliver with pact magic perhaps the most literally inspiring system I have ever encountered for a d20-based game. Its genius does not necessarily lie within its rules, but within how it is an incredibly potent narrative instrument, how it can change the depiction of a fantasy world to make magic feel more magical, how it rewards customization and making the system your own more than any comparable system I know. I guarantee that, when using the system thus, you will have perhaps the most impactful alternate system ever on your hands.

In case you haven't noticed by now: I absolutely LOVE this system. Even my reviewer-bot-persona can't really adequately complain about it, mainly because separating the fluff from the crunch divests the system of its core principle – it is, frankly, impossible to rate this fairly as anything but the sum of its parts, and that sum is a thing of absolute, inspiring beauty. This book will grace my shelves for years to come; it has already spawned more ideas than I'm ever likely to put to paper. It is, in short, the streamlined, improved heir of the old system; tighter and more concise, yet without losing any component of its uniqueness.

This is one of the most inspiring books, quite literally, that you can purchase for PFRPG. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval. This is also, big surprise there, a candidate for my Top Ten of 2017. It also receives the EZG Essentials tag as a book I consider a must-own expansion for the system.

Now, can we have an Occult Adventures/Horror Adventures-crossover sequel or do I have to write the spirits myself? Who am I kidding – I'm going to write them either way!

You can get this phenomenal tome [here on OBS!](#)

THE PATH LESS TRAVELED #36: Gift Horses and All That. By Jacob E Blackmon



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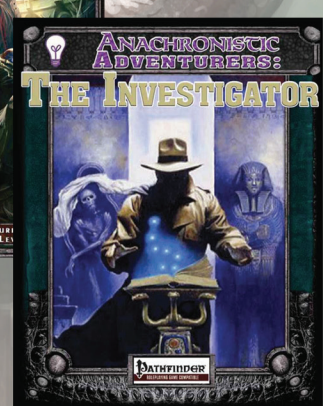
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