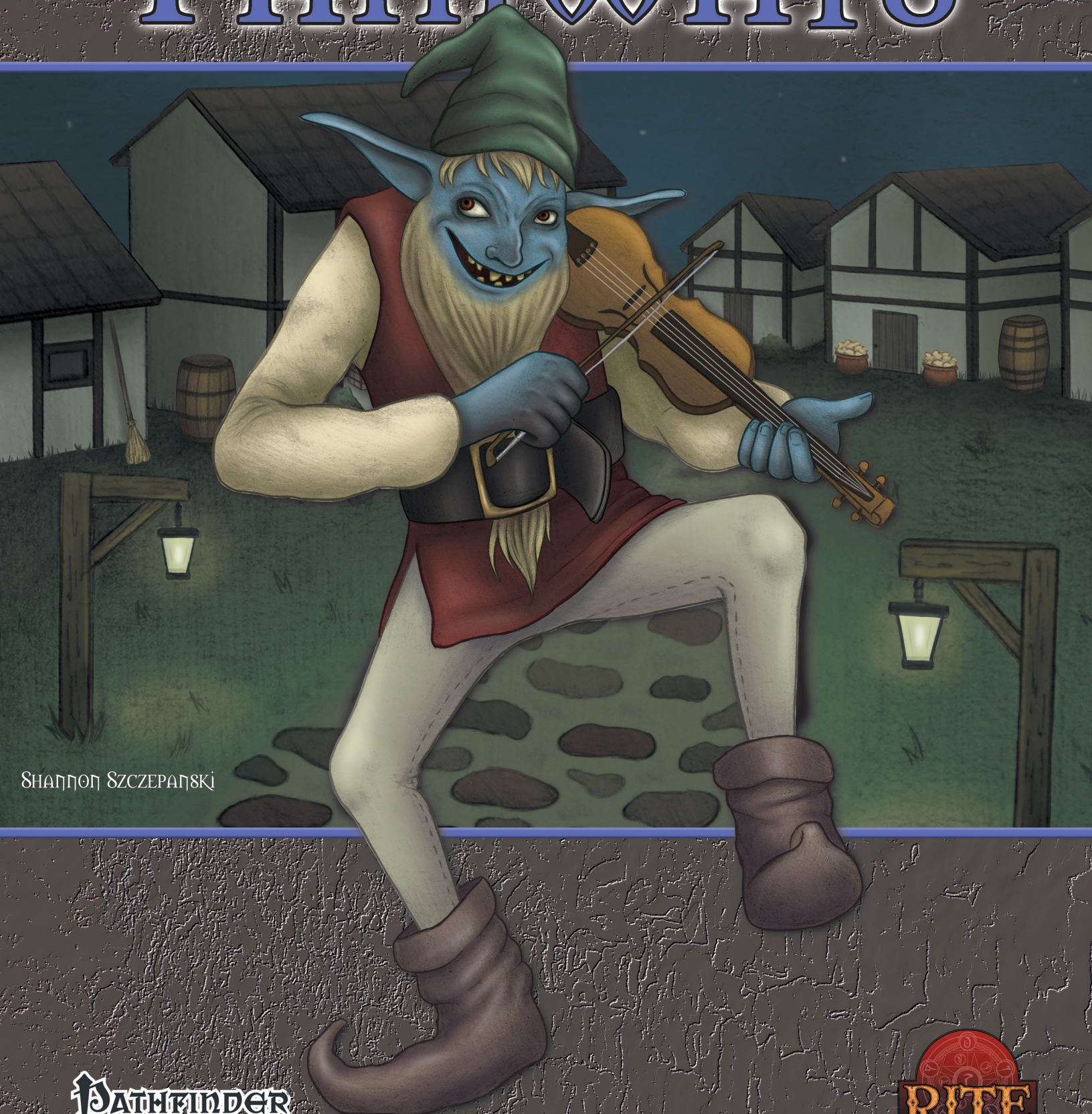


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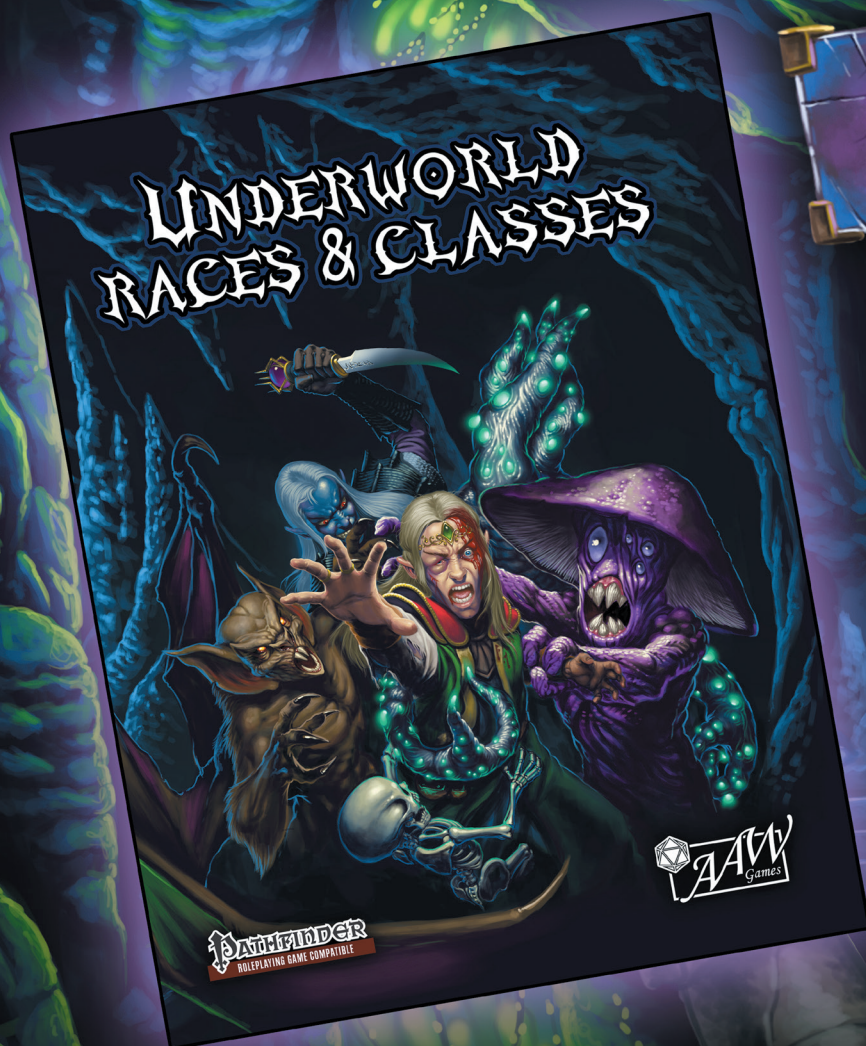
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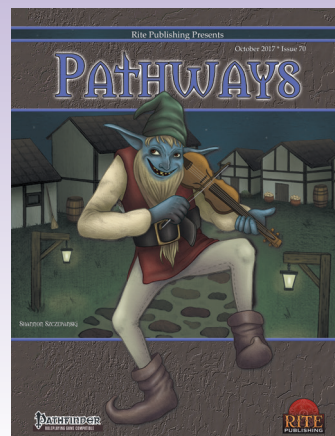
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Editorial

by Dave Paul

I didn't really enjoy the fairy tales I grew up with, but I came to understand later this was because they were the watered-down versions that, for some reason, American audiences had decided in the latter-quarter of the twentieth century, were better or more wholesome than their originals. At some point after I'd started playing games like D&D and started digging more deeply into the library's shelves, and talking to people who had read more than I had, I came to understand that most of the original versions of these and similar stories were both darker and more compelling.

As I explored more and began reading stories in many different religious and philosophical perspectives, and began to get good translations of some of the poems that had been shared in a wide variety of cultures over the centuries, I started to understand that many of these stories, in some cases probably going back far before the Golden Age of Greece, were ways that authors had explored deep themes in human existence, especially those tied to the mysteries of existence. In addition, I noted that many of these tales were looking into the hearts of people, exploring what tempted people, how people responded to moral challenges, and how people grappled with all of these kinds of things simultaneously.

Is there magic in the world? Are there gods? I suppose the answer depends upon what it is that we mean by these things. As far as I know, the explanations for why my keys go missing probably have much to do with how my brain works, both in terms of keeping track of things and in terms of generating explanations and stories to account for my own confusion or concern. It's unlikely that there are elves or gnomes or sprites (or ghosts or aliens) messing with me by moving my keys around when I'm not looking. However, we need an account of our experiences. Sometimes, the best account is a story. Sometimes it's the best account because that's all we have, or we are from a culture that expresses its understandings in these ways. Sometimes it's the best account because it allows us to deal with our own feelings (all across the

various spectra of feelings). Sometimes a story is best because it captivates, is delightful to retell, and helps us build community.

I'm aware when I tell my partner that "It's probably ghosts" when she asks by the lamp flickered, or that "Probably elves did it" when she wonders what happened to some piece of washed, dried, folded and now lost bit of laundry, that it probably wasn't a ghost or an elf. But, it's my way of saying "I don't know" and I know she knows it, and she knows I know it, and it's fun and weird, and she can say back to me "You're probably right." It's okay. And it can be fun.

It can also be harmful. I'm not a fan of the elf that some folks place on their shelves during certain times of year. Other people love it. So long as no children are feeling violated or unprotected, I'm okay with it. In this case, of course, it's not the faerie tales that's the problem. And it's easy enough for this mistake to happen. Players of these games who've been around long enough remember when games and gamers were blamed for all manner of social ills. But we overcame that, and we continue to overcome similar (and sometimes worse) errors that are made about games and gamers.

Frankly, I think these stories are part of what's best about us (collectively, as people). That we have the capacity to pretend, that we can take advantage of our own tendencies to rationalize and explain even the irrational and unexplainable, encourages rather than discourages me. Here is this human weakness: we have a tendency to believe things that are false. Even when confronted with overwhelming evidence that our beliefs are false, we find the false ones really hard to let go of sometimes. And what do we do with this weakness? We celebrate it. We turn this power into the ability to share stories, to imagine realities that don't exist, and to use this to come together and enjoy one another's company, and jointly push into the mysteries of what it means to be us, in a world that's confusing and sometimes scary, and make the whole thing better.

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The Rite Way Q&A

with Stephen Rowe

Q: On house rules — should one use them or not and if so what are the best, “rules for deciding house rules?”

A: Over the years, Pathfinder has become an extremely modular game. The rules themselves have evolved with an incredible array of options. A table running a straight *Core Rulebook* adventure could appear to be practically a different system than a table utilizing *Advanced Player's Guide* hero points, *Pathfinder Unchained* skills, and *Ultimate Campaign* kingdom building. This doesn't even take into account the thousands of third party publisher books with countless new subsystems and character options.

The point of all of this... is the game itself *demands* house rules. A GM's first consideration needs to be picking and choosing, from the infinite available options, which are going to work best.

Do you hate Vancian magic? Find an alternative.

Do you want to control minmaxing?

Limit the options.

Do you prefer story over combat, combat over story, or a varying balance between the two? Pick and choose whatever rules are going to suit your table best.

Pathfinder's true strength is that it can be whatever you want it to be. If you, as a GM, don't like some aspect of the rules... it is completely in the spirit of the game for you to change them. Heck, if you find that your tweak, alternative, or system works amazingly well, you can always get it published, and share it with the greater community.

Q: How can one handle a group of people where there is a conflict of gaming ideology? For instance, half the players like advanced and complex characters and the other half like the more basic core characters. In this case, the former feels like the core characters are useless and the latter feels like the more complex character are over-powered.

A: Conflicts of gaming ideology can be handled many different ways, largely depending on the maturity level the table. Let's first try to identify where the problem usually comes from.

Issues arise because of growing resentment. This is because personal preferences can be confused with some underlying flaw. A player of a less powerful character might be viewed as senseless and willfully ignorant. A player of a powerful character could be seen as patronizing and arrogant.

The players with the carefully optimized character likely believe the other players are either being lazy or simply don't know any better. Usually, the first reaction is to assume the latter, and try to present ways they could improve for the benefit of the team. If this ad vice is ignored, this causes growing frustration.

The contrasting player with the less complex character might simply not gain as much pleasure out of the careful search for the perfect class, archetype, and feat. They might find combat tactics to be a relatively boring aspect of the game, or actually *enjoy* having weak aspects to a character. Even well-meant advice can come off as condescending.

These problems occur less often if everyone is relatively mature, and has open lines of communication. Each person can express their side, and make it clear that it is a matter of personal preference rather than a problem to be solved. Then, all sides can agree to compromises, within the specific game, or for future games. This largely avoids resentment before it has a chance to build, and opens lines of dialogue to hopefully address concerns before issues arise.

The further away from this perfect expectation of mature communication a table gets, the more work is required by the GM to compensate. It is every GM's responsibility to know each player's gaming ideology and style. If the players are unfamiliar, a smart move is to simply ask a few questions up front to see what people's preferences are. Likewise, it is a GM's job to know what each PC's strengths and weaknesses are.

No character is optimized for every situation. By strategically varying the types of challenges a party faces, the GM can create situations where each player's character has a chance to individually shine. For example, a core rogue might be less capable in most combats than the optimized summoner, but they have skills the summoner does not. In a dungeon full of traps, locks, and social encounters, the rogue has more of a chance to shine. Likewise, individual encounters can be altered to be specifically harder for the optimized characters, or easier for the less optimized ones. For example, villains who can control or dismiss summoned pets, or who lack enough Perception to see the stealthy rogue. Additionally, the GM

can provide in-game resources specifically meant to give the weaker character a bit of a mechanical boost, or create situations temporarily hampering the optimized character. Maybe the rogue finds an intelligent magic item with a similar alignment and goals, or the adventure leads to an area where conjuration is difficult or impossible.

Making alterations like this without the players knowing about it is as much art as science. There is a balance to it. Unfortunately, if they figure out what the GM is doing, it can cause even greater resentment with accusations of favoritism. It takes time to develop the skills necessary to dance around the underlying lack of player empathy, communication, and compromise. Ideally, everyone should just take the time to understand one another, and appreciate what each of us brings to the table.

Q: As a player, how can we help our GM have a smoother running game session?

A: There are countless little ways players can help the GM. Here are just a few suggestions.

1. Show up on time and be ready to play. All bookkeeping should be done between games. Everyone's time is valuable, but the GM usually invests more in a game than all the players combined. It is disrespectful if you expect them to spend hours carefully crafting your entertainment, but can't find time to level your character or shop for items. Life happens, and mistakes are forgivable, but try to be appropriately apologetic.
2. Don't get distracted and don't be distracting. Try to keep out of character conversations that aren't relevant to the game at a minimum. If you find yourself telling some real life story, discussing the plot of a movie, or something similarly off-topic, pause yourself, and make a note to talk to your friends about it after the game is over. Likewise, minimize your personal distractions. This means not checking social media, wandering away from the table, or reading books, unless it is pertinent to the game. The GM has a hard enough time trying to create immersion even with everyone fully and completely engaged.
3. Use your time efficiently. If you are in combat and it isn't your turn, try to figure out what you

are going to do when it is. Look up and read spells ahead of time, count out the movement you need, and make certain you are paying attention to what is happening. If you are spending minutes of combat time checking things over, make sure you have all of your character's abilities more easily referenced on notecards or your sheet. For example, if you summon creatures, make notecards with the statistics of creatures you expect to summon ahead of time.

4. Don't argue too much. If it isn't a big deal, try not to argue at all. You may know the rules better than the GM does, and it is okay to politely offer advice. If you do so, be respectful about it, and non-confrontational. Use distancing language like, "I think..." instead of stating the rule like it is a fact. However, if the GM or another player firmly disagrees with you, let it go. If it is a matter of life and death, offer to look it up so the GM doesn't have to. If you find yourself wanting to look up a rule just to prove someone wrong, you are doing it for the wrong reasons.
5. Help the GM feel appreciated. Being a GM is difficult. It usually requires a larger sacrifice of time than all the players put together, and can sometimes be a thankless task. It also requires that your potential fun be sacrificed for the good of the group. A simple heartfelt thanks can make a world of difference. You can go out to a meal as a group before or after the game, and everyone pays for the GM. If you have an artistic inclination, you can draw or write about the adventure outside of the game, showing how much you enjoy it. Try to compliment them specifically on what you enjoy about their game, and try to not be too critical.
6. Finally, routinely ask your GM how you can help them personally. Try to do this privately, if possible, and offer some suggestions. Maybe you give them a break for week or two when the campaign gets to downtime by running a one-off. Perhaps there is some unexplored portion of the story they really wish one of the PCs would pursue. There could even be some frustrating aspect of your behavior you aren't aware of.

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Stiltzkin Creature Template

by Owen K.C. Stephens, Illustration by Shannon Szczepanski

A stiltzkin is a strange creature that tests villages, makes deals, and generally demands a price higher than people end up wanting to pay. But it also follows a set of fairytale rules that are binding to it as iron. Each stiltzkin is unique, a single creature with a name (such as Rumpol" which it then adds

to its race "Stiltzkin"). Encounters with stiltzkins are often as much about wise choices, diplomacy, and investigation as about combat.

Each stiltzkin has its own appearance, and even if a creature successfully identifies a stiltzkin's type and subtype, the exact species of a stiltzkin is never revealed.

Creating a Stiltzkin Creature

CR: +1 for creatures with 4 or less HD. +2 for creatures with 5 to 9 HD. +3 for creatures with 10 or more HD.

Type: The stiltzkin become a fey or outsider (t the GM's discretion). Do not recalculate any of its HD or skills.

HP: +10 per CR gained from this template.

Defenses: The stiltzkin gains a bonus to AC, CMD, and saving throws equal to the CR adjustment of this template. The template does not rant DR, but if the base creature has DR it becomes DR/cold iron.

Offense: The stiltzkin gains a bonus to attack rolls, damage, and CMD equal to the CR adjustment of this template.

Skills: The stiltzkin gains one form of Perform, as well as Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Sense Motive as bonus skill. It has ranks in these skills equal to its HD, and treats them as class skills.

CR 1<: *daze, ghost sound, lullaby*

CR 2-3: *animate rope, cause fear, lesser confusion, fumbletongue*

CR 4-5: *blur, grease, glue seal, hideous laughter, ventriloquism*

CR 6-8: *glitterdust, innocence, mirror image, vanish*

CR 9-12: *adjustable disguise, blink, curse of disgust*

CR 13-17: *displacement, jester's jaunt, phantom steed*

CR 18+: *malicious spite, maze*

Problem Solving (Su): When a stiltzkin first enters a settlement, it gains the power to solve one major problem (as defined by the GM) that either the community as a whole is having, or one of more notable citizens is having. For example, the stiltzkin might be able to make soup from nothing more than a cauldron of water, spin straw into gold, lure all the rats out of town, grant a couple the power to have a child, or stop the spread of a virulent disease. Whatever power to solve a problem it gains, the stiltzkin has that same power whenever it enters that settlement. It must be gone from the settlement for at least a year before its power rests, and it has no access to this power outside of a settlement.

This ability works as *wish* as a supernatural ability only to solve the attuned problem, but with significant limitations. First the level of spell the stiltzkin can emulate with this power has a maximum equal to half its adjusted CR (minimum 1st level spells). Second, it can only be used as part of a bargain with a creature other than a stiltzkin, fey, or outsider, and that bargain must include a price so great the bargainer will not wish to pay it (as determined by the GM). Typical bargains include a firstborn child, half the bargainer's remaining years of life, the bargainer's voice, and so on. Third, the stiltzkin must have a focus of some kind (often a musical instrument, but it could be a lucky charm, a wand, a hat, of even the stiltzkin's beard), which is subject to sunder and always had hardness equal to the stiltzkin's adjusted CR, and hp = to its adjusted CR x5. Destroying the focus does not void any previous bargain or use of this power, but it does

Special Powers

Troublesome Fey (Sp): Stiltzkin can be annoying creatures that focus on mockery, escape, and troublemaking when threatened in combat. A stiltzkin gets the following abilities, based on its final CR (gaining the abilities listed for its CR and all lower CRs), as spell-like abilities. The save DCs of these abilities are based on its Int, Wis, or Cha, whichever is higher, and are always treated as s spells with a spell level equal to half the stiltzkin's CR (including when calculating save DCs). It can use each ability an unlimited number of times per day, but no more often than once per minute.

While a stiltzkin can cast only one spell-like ability from this list each round, if it uses no other spells, or supernatural or spell-like abilities, it can cast a troublesome fey power as a swift action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

If a stiltzkin loses its focus (see problem solving), it can cast each of its troublesome fey spells only once each until it gets the focus back.



prevent the stiltzkin from making any new bargains in the nearest settlement to it when its focus breaks. The stiltzkin regains its focus within 24 hours, but cannot use it in the old location.

A character that makes a bargain to activate a stiltzkin's problem solving power is under the effects of a geas to obey the deal, or get out of it by using the stiltzkin's weakness. This geas cannot be removed or negated by anything short of a *miracle* or *wish*.

Stiltzkin Weaknesses (Su): Every stiltzkin has a weakness. This weakness is tied directly to its core essence, and it cannot be avoided or overcome by any means. It CAN be kept secret, though the nature of it can be divined normally. Additionally, anyone involved in discussions about trying to avoid paying the price required in a bargain to use the stiltzkin's problem solving power can make a Diplomacy check (DC 15 + stiltzkin's adjusted CR) to convince the stiltzkin to offer an alternative to fulfilling the bargain, which is always to invoke the stiltzkin's weakness.

If you invoke the stiltzkin's weakness, you can get the stiltzkin to abandon one bargain, or to leave an area forever, or you can kill it permanently. You can't use the threat of a weakness to get a stiltzkin to solve a problem without making a bargain, and if it knows you know its weakness it'll only make a bargain if it believes it can prevent you from taking advantage of the knowledge.

Here are sample weaknesses.

1. Learn and say its name.
2. Trick it into saying its own name, backwards.
3. Expose it to moonlight
4. Dowse it in ocean-water (if it is in a landlocked area), or get it to stand on land (if it is an aquatic creature), or get it to stand on a rug (for anything else).
5. Trick it into enter a personal abode without the permission of the owner or a resident.
6. Get it to eat a specific odd thing (GM's choice or roll 1d20:
 - 1 a piece of human hair
 - 2 dirt
 - 3 a thread from a priest's cassock
 - 4 grass
 - 5 a fingernail
 - 6 sawdust
 - 7 filings from a horseshoe
 - 8 pease porridge that is nine or more days old
 - 9 a moth wing
 - 10 wax from a burned-out candle
 - 11 ash from a burned holly wreath
 - 12 4th leaf of a 4-leaf clover

- 13 torn corner from a holy book
- 14 a fig stuffed with a mushroom stuffed with a bee
- 15 a wisp of spiderweb
- 16 yarn unraveled from a virgin's sock
- 17 eggshell
- 18 seven apple seeds
- 19 a mother's tear
- 20 tea leaves that have already made tea for 27 people

Sample Stiltzkin

Batty Stiltzkin

CR 4

(*Stiltzkin Goblin Ranger 3*)

XP 600

Male goblin ranger 3

CE Small fey (goblinoid)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 size, +1 template)

hp 37 (3d10+6+10)

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee spear +6 (1d6+2)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +10 (1d6+2/×3)

Special Attacks favored enemy (humans +2)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; [concentration](#) +4)

At will (1/minute)— *animate rope*, *blur*, *cause fear* (DC 13), *confusion (lesser)* (DC 13), *daze* (DC 13), *fumbletongue* (DC 13), *grease* (DC 13), *ghost sound*, *glue seal* (DC 13), *hideous laughter* (DC 13), *lullaby*, *ventriloquism*

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 18, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 19

Feats Dodge, Endurance, Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Shot


Skills Bluff +6, Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +5, Perception +7, Perform (wind) +6, Ride +13, Sense Motive +6, Stealth +17

Languages Goblin

SQ favored terrain (swamp +2), track +1, wild empathy +2

Combat Gear +1 animal bane arrows (5), *potions of cure light wounds* (2), *focus (flute)*; **Other Gear** masterwork chain shirt, masterwork composite longbow with 6 arrows, spear, 32 gp

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 long red hair, wearing a green hat and a green tunic, is shown in a dynamic pose, holding a spear. On the right, a character with short dark hair and blue eyes, wearing a blue and orange tunic, is also in a dynamic pose, holding a sword. They are standing in front of a large, cracked stone sphere. The background is filled with various skeletal remains, including a large skeleton on the left and a smaller one in the center, and stone carvings on the right. The overall tone is mysterious and adventurous.

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20 Minor Drawbacks for Magic Items

By Creighton Broadhurst

Magic items are great. Adventurers crave them and learned spellcasters charge exorbitant fees to craft them for their wealthy clients. Sometimes, though—for some reason or another—the magic item has some minor drawback. Such drawbacks are not normally life-threatening; rather they add a sense of uniqueness to the item in question. Alternatively, these drawbacks could serve as a subtle clues to otherwise hidden, unguessable powers. Use the table below to determine the item's minor drawback.

1. The item occasionally — and seemingly randomly — radiates light equal to that of a candle. The owner cannot control when this light appears or disappears.
 2. This item's crafter was a glutton. During the crafting process he transferred some of his cravings to the item. Thus, the owner almost always feels hungry. His appetite would put a starving halfling's to shame.
 3. Shadows cluster thickly about the item, creating an aura of gloom and a faint feeling of foreboding for the owner, whenever it is used. Superstitious or righteous folk might infer the item is cursed, or even evil, and react accordingly to its owner.
 4. The item is 50% heavier than normal, but otherwise appears normal.
 5. When in use, the item often glows with a random bright light. Roll 1d8: 1—red, 2—orange, 3—yellow, 4—green, 5—blue, 6—indigo, 7—violet, 8—no colour. This makes hiding or using the item surreptitiously difficult at best.
 6. The owner's finger and toe nails grow at a prodigious rate; necessitating their trimming on almost a daily basis.
 7. When the item is held or worn, bright light dazzles the owner and makes her eyes water in a similar way to how drow suffer in bright light.
 8. At some point in the past, the item was exposed to a smell anathema to dogs. Dogs and wolves will not willingly approach the owner. Indeed, they bark and bare their teeth if the item's owner approaches them.
 9. Whenever the item's owner uses its power, he hears a faint whispering coming from some indefinable source. The whispering is too quiet to make out any actual words and no one else can hear it.
 10. Owning the item proves disastrous for the possessor's hair. Over the first few weeks of ownership, the owner's hair turns progressively greyer. After a month, it begins to fall out.
- Getting rid of the item reverses this process over a similar amount of time.
11. Animals hate the item's smell. Domesticated animals—horses, cows and so on—avoid the owner whenever possible; other animals such as dogs react aggressively to the item's presence.
 12. Something strange happened during the item's creation. The crafter used some kind of esoteric grey-coloured oil in its creation. Occasionally, the item oozes this oil which makes it slippery and stains nearby items.
 13. When the item's power is called forth, the temperature plunges in the immediate surrounds. Frost forms on the object itself and the owner can see his breath in the air. The temperature returns to normal after a few minutes.
 14. When used, the item becomes tremendously hot. It scorches unprotected skin and takes ten minutes to cool down.
 15. The item draws some of its power from its possessor's life force. Whenever its power is called forth, the owner suffers a terrible headache and takes 1 point of damage.
 16. The smell of burning wood hangs in the air around the item. Creatures with a good sense of smell can detect the owner from twice the normal distance (unless other stronger smells fill the air).
 17. While possessing the item, the owner sleeps badly and often has bags under her eyes.
 18. Calling forth the item's powers causes the owner's ears to ring as if she had been exposed to repeated loud noise.
 19. The item is crafted from some kind of strange or repellant material. A scroll could be scribed on flayed skin, a wand could comprise a carved bone wand and so on.
 20. The item's previous owner was beset by misery and depression. In his last few minutes of life (before his violent death) his feelings of negativity imprinted themselves on the item. Now in times of high stress, the item psychically radiates the feelings onto its owner.

GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing

If you enjoy the table above, check out *GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing* from Raging Swan Press — Endzeitgeist's 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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Spells Showcase: Fairy Tales!

By Dave Paul, Illustration by Markus Art Design

Way back when I was working on *101 Swamp Spells* and my publisher pushed me to get started on *101 Forest Spells* I was delighted because I had some ideas for spells that would be great with games that have lots of fey creatures and I couldn't really justifiably get all that many into the Swamp book or into the Shadow book that I was secretly working on at the same time.

~~

The first two listed here are *fey bane* and the greater version of the same spell. I remember wanting to come up with a way for spellcasters to get a party away from malicious or evil fey who were on the prowl. Since cold iron is usually an effective way to deal with fey, and since fey are often more than willing to move quickly and maybe even thoughtlessly through forests, plains, or other areas thick with plants, I thought that combining these two features could be excellent for parties needing this kind of defense. The greater version of the spell offers some wonderful opportunities for even higher-level parties to deal with the kinds of damage reduction that can be peculiarly difficult to overcome, and does so in ways that are unusual and fun. If a GM is particularly sinister, there might be clever ways to use these spells against parties, depending upon how things have evolved in the campaign.

Fey Bane

School: Conjunction (creation); **Level:** Cleric/Oracle 3, Druid 3, Shaman 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 4, Witch 3

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, M/DF (a pinch of cold iron dust)

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Area: Plants in a 30-ft.-radius spread

Duration: 1 min./level (D)

Saving Throw: None or Reflex negates; see text;

Spell Resistance: No or Yes; see text

The external surfaces of the plants in the area are temporarily coated in iron equivalent to cold iron. This has no deleterious effects on the plants themselves (the weight of a leaf coated in iron does not cause it to break and fall, for instance). Any creature subjected to damage from cold iron (in particular, daemons, demons and fey) suffers damage from any plants in the area which are also otherwise able to cause damage (such as from

a thorny *entangle* or *wall of thorns*). The damage caused in this way is treated as cold iron and overcomes damage reduction accordingly.

Though the iron causes no damage to the plants themselves, creatures attempting to move through undergrowth or who otherwise might scrape against the iron may suffer damage. Light undergrowth costs 3 squares of movement to move into; heavy undergrowth costs 6. Damage caused by the plants (being pierced or scratched by a thorn, for instance) is doubled.

Plant creatures in the area avoid being coated with a successful Reflex save.

Fey Bane, Greater

School: Conjunction (creation) [see text]; **Level:** Cleric/Oracle 5, Druid 5, Shaman 5, Sorcerer/Wizard 6, Witch 5

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, M/DF (a pinch of cold iron dust)

Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Area: Plants in a 60-ft.-radius spread

Duration: 10 min./level (D)

Saving Throw: None or Reflex negates; see text;

Spell Resistance: No or Yes; see text

Except as otherwise noted, this spell duplicates *fey bane*. The cold iron coating takes on one alignment of the caster, at the caster's choosing (e.g. a lawful good cleric can imbue the coated plants with either the lawful or good alignment); a neutral druid may select any alignment. When cast in this way, *greater fey bane* is a chaotic, evil, good or lawful spell, respectively. The aligned cold iron coating overcomes damage reduction against both cold iron and the chosen alignment.

All damage caused by plants affected by *greater fey bane* is increased by 1 point per die of damage and the DCs of saving throws made against effects or damage caused by these plants is increased by +2.

~~

I have always enjoyed the weaknesses of some faerie creatures through various tales. There are many stories of certain kinds of faerie creatures being particularly drawn to or obsess over certain things. I wanted to exploit these ideas with some spells that could be excellent in campaigns that had fey as a focus. The *fey lure* spell is probably a little

less useful as a defensive spell than *fey's obsession*, but I think that both provide excellent flavor. The latter spell is effective against quite a few creatures but is powerful against fey. This could get an arcane caster out of bind rather quickly. While the others in a party might prefer a more combative approach, sometimes the bard or wizard just wants to get away from a creature or out of a situation, and *fey's obsession* is an excellent tool for offering this kind of control over an encounter.

Fey Lure

School: Enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level:** Bard 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 3
Casting Time: 1 minute
Components: V, S
Range: See text
Target: See text
Duration: 10 min./level; see text
Saving Throw: None or Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** No or Yes

You spend a minute carefully arranging the features of your lure. Generally, *fey lure* is cast on an object that is part of a natural setting. The

object itself must fit within a 5-cubic-foot volume (though it could be, for example, three-feet on a side and 10 feet high). This object receives no save unless it is a magic item.

When the lure has been set, fey within 30 ft. are particularly likely to notice it (+5 to any fey creature's Perception check to notice) though any fey capable of seeing (or noticing by any sense) the lure from any distance might be interested. The first fey to notice the lure must attempt a Will save. If this save is successful, that fey creature is immune to the lure's magic for 24 hours but the lure itself remains to tempt another fey creature.

The first fey creature to fail its save is fascinated by the lure and remains within 10 feet of the lure, exploring all of its many magnificent attributes, about which it will be eager to have discussions with anyone nearby.

Non-fey creatures are immune to this spell. If the fey lured by the spell is native to the terrain wherein the lure is set, the DC for the Will save is increased by +2.

Fey's Obsession

School: Enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level:** Bard 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 3, Witch 3
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Components: V, S, M (sugar or salt; see text)
Range: 30 ft.
Area: Cone-shaped burst
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will partial; **Spell Resistance:** Yes

You toss a small handful of salt or sugar in front of you and the grains are magically scattered throughout the area. Intelligent creatures in the area are compelled to stop what they're doing and count the grains. Any creature with an Intelligence score of 6 or greater failing its save against this effect is fascinated, attending to nothing other than attempting to count the grains. Even those who succeed are temporarily perplexed by an overwhelming desire to count the scattered grains and are dazed for 1 round.

Fey creatures are particularly vulnerable to *fey's obsession*; fey creatures suffer a -4 penalty on all saves associated with *fey's obsession* and the duration of the effect is doubled. Even if a fey creature makes its initial save, it is fascinated for 1 round.

If you've enjoyed these spells, there are plenty more in [101 Forest Spells](#) and in other spell books by Rite Publishing.



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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Fairy Tale Magic

By BJ Hensley

Items

Midsummer Wine

Aura strong abjuration; **CL** 15th;
Slot none; **Price** 6,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

This rich, red wine is rumored to have different tastes to different drinkers. To some, it bears the strong flavor of strawberries, to others it more resembles a raspberry vintage. Regardless of the perceived flavor, consuming a glass of *midsummer wine* makes the imbiber immune to the effects of all mind-affecting compulsions for a period of 24 hours. A full bottle contains enough wine to fill six glasses.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *mind blank*, 1 mushroom from a faerie circle per bottle enchanted; **Cost** 3,000 gp

Note: Up to 20 bottles can be enchanted in a single batch. Crafting time and cost is dependent upon the size of the batch being produced.

Inspiration: Midsummer Night's Dream

Beggar's Belt

Aura moderate transmutation; **CL** 5th;
Slot belt; **Price** 18,000 gp; **Weight** 2 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

The blue leather belt appears to be of moderate quality, and does not radiate magic to *detect magic*; though *arcane sight* or other more powerful spells can sense its magical aura normally. The wearer of the *beggar's belt* gains a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength. Additionally, all of the wearer's attacks prevent regeneration if the target is a trolls of any kind (treat the attack as if it were fire, acid or whatever appropriate type is called for in the troll's description).

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *bull's strength*, *mask dweaomer*^{APC}; **Cost** 9,000 gp

Inspiration: *The Blue Belt – a Norwegian Fairy Tale*

Serpentine Scarf

Aura strong transmutation; **CL** 9th;
Slot neck; **Price** 5,000 gp; **Weight** –

DESCRIPTION

This green scarf, dotted with emeralds, bears a variety of serpentine designs. Green scales blend with white fangs as the cloth wraps upon itself. Any person wearing the scarf gains fast healing 2 (as the universal monster ability). Once per month, an emerald valued at 2d4x100 gold pieces can be plucked from the scarf. The gem must be given away, or it becomes a valueless stone within 24 hours. It likewise becomes valueless if it is ever sold or traded. A single being can only possess one emerald from the scarf. All other emeralds from the scarf owned by that person become simple green glass, with only the most recent holding any value.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *major creation*;
Cost: 2,500 gp

Inspiration: Biancabella and the Snake

Lamp of Wonders (minor artifact)

Aura strong conjuration; **CL** 20th;
Slot none; **Weight** 0.5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

The *lamp of wonders* is an Arabian-style oil lamp of polished brass, appearing otherwise unremarkable. Rubbing the lamp creates a bond between the user and the djinni vizier within the bottle. Until the time that the djinni grants their third *wish*, the vizier can be summoned twice per day for up to 10 minutes. During this time the djinni serves as an ally to the owner of the lamp, fighting at his side or offering counsel on all things about which the djinni might have knowledge.

When making *wishes*, the vizier always attempts to grant the intent of the *wish* as well as the word. Upon granting the third *wish*, the *lamp* disappears to somewhere else in the cosmos.

DESTRUCTION

The *lamp* can only be destroyed by a possessor that has bonded with the vizier. The possessor must use all three *wishes* to *wish* for the vizier's freedom. If this is done, the djinni is released and the lamp becomes completely inert.

Inspiration: One Thousand and One Nights (Aladdin)

Bean Sprig

Aura strong transmutation; **CL** 5th;
Slot belt; **Price** 1,000 gp; **Weight** –

DESCRIPTION

Rumored to be sprigs of a once famous bean stalk, these small vines make for an incredible deterrent. By tossing one at the ground, it immediately grows to incredible proportions. Within a single round, the area within a 10-ft. radius becomes a mass of reaching and grasping vines. Anyone caught in the area is affected as if by an *entangle* spell while it continues to grow. After two rounds, the vines function with the reach and effect of a *black tentacles* spell. The newly formed stalk continues to grow for two more rounds (for a total of four), gaining an additional 5 feet of reach each round. One minute after it is fully grown, the stalk withers and dies.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *entangle*, *plant growth*; **Cost:** 500 gp

Inspiration: Jack and the Beanstalk

Spells

Feyrealm Mirage

School abjuration; **Level** druid 8

Casting Time 1 hour

Components V, S, M/DF (offering to the fey)

Range anywhere within the area to be warded

Area up to 200 sq. ft./level (S)

Duration see text

Saving Throw see text; **Spell Resistance** see text

This potent abjuration channels a small portion of the Feyrealm to the reality of the mortal world, transforming an area of up to 200 square feet per caster level. There is no height limit on the warded area, due to its tendency to be used primarily in outdoor areas, and it may be shaped as you desire. The spell creates a number of effects within the affected area:

Fog: A soft mist covers the area, obscuring all sight, including darkvision, beyond 5 feet. Any creature within five feet has concealment (20% miss chance), while those beyond have total concealment (50% miss chance). The caster, as well as creatures of the fey subtype can see through this mist without any adverse effects. **Saving Throw:** none. **Spell Resistance:** no.

Animate Trees: One tree per level, chosen at the time of casting, animates, gaining a 10-ft. movement speed. These trees fight as treants (possessing only one slam attack, and cannot throw rocks or animate further trees).

Entangle: One forty-foot square patch per 4 caster levels is treated as if under the effect of an *entangle* spell. This effect lasts the full duration of the *feyrealm mirage*, but the location of these patches can be shifted by up to 100

feet by spending a full-round action focusing on the shift. **Saving Throw:** Reflex partial. **Spell Resistance:** No.

Confusion: A minor confusion-type effect functions so as to make it 50% probable that intruders believe they are going the opposite direction from the one they actually chose. This is a mind-affecting effect. **Saving Throw:** Will negates. **Spell Resistance:** yes.

Fey Spring: A single body of water in the affected area becomes a fey spring and gains one of the following special qualities, determined at the time of casting:

Poison – **Save** Fortitude; **Onset** immediate; **Frequency** 1/minute until cured; **Effect** 1d2 Constitution damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

Sleep – **Save** Will; **Effect** as *sleep* except that the duration of the effect is 2d6 hours, and those affected can't be awoken without inflicting damage.

Mind Fog – **Save** Will; **Effect** Those affected suffer a -5 penalty to Wisdom checks and Will saves for 1d4 hours. During this time a spellcaster must make a concentration check any time they attempt to cast or maintain a spell. This check is likewise made at a -5 penalty.

If there is no existing body of water, the spell creates a small, shallow pool with the chosen effect somewhere within the spell's area.

Touch of the Fey

School transmutation; **Level** druid 3

Casting Time 1 action

Components V, S, M

Range Touch

Duration 1 minute/level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** none

The touched individual gains many abilities normally possessed by fey creatures, and their features become notably fey-like in nature. They gain DR 5/cold iron, a +4 enhancement bonus on saves against mind-affecting effects, and resist cold and electricity 5.

Faerie Sight

School transmutation; **Level** druid 2

Casting Time 1 action

Components V, S

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Duration 1 hour/level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** none

Colors become incredibly vivid for the target of this spell. The natural energies of the world become visible, flows of green and blue swirl through the trees and waters of the world. The recipient of the spell gains the ability to see any natural areas that are affected by druidic magic (i.e. *entangle*, *hallucinatory terrain*, etc.), as if under the influence of a *detect magic* spell. The more powerful the spell, the brighter the lines of energy appear. Additionally, they gain a +2 enhancement bonus on all saves to avoid the effects of such a spell.



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Ember Dryad

By Christian Haining

The sounds of fire nearly consumed all else. Onlookers could just barely hear the wind as it rushed past, or the sound of snapping trees that grew too weak to support their trunks, or even the wailing of a woman nearby. While peasants looked on in horror as the blaze crept towards homes and fields, the King simply smiled and watched his favored hunting grounds burn. He watched the wailing woman, strangely beautiful with her bark-like skin, as she walked to the fire. As she grew closer and the fire crept further, her wailing grew louder, angrier. She walked on, crossing the tree line, and soon her wailing seemed to resonate with the trees to become a piercing, furious scream.

She continued to scream in agony and rage through the night, only quieting as the fire calmed. When at last blessed silence rang out, the King's men scoured the forest. He was satisfied when, upon their return, he was presented with the diamond ring he had once given her.

This bald woman bears an eerie beauty. Her flesh is like blackened and charred wood, flecked with hot red embers that refuse to die out.

Ember Dryad CR 6

LN Medium fey (fire)

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 66 (12d6+24)

Fort +7, **Ref** +11, **Will** +11

DR 5/cold iron; **Immune** fire

Weaknesses tree dependent, vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 quarterstaff +10/+4 (1d6 + 1 plus 2d6 fire)

Ranged hurl fire +9 touch (7d6 fire)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

Constant—*speaking with plants*

At Will—*tree shape, wood shape, produce flame* (DC 15), *burning entanglement* (DC 17)

3/day—*charm person* (DC 15), *tree stride*

1/day—*suggestion* (DC 16)

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 17, **Con** 15, **Int** 19, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +6; **CMD** +19

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +19, Climb +13, Craft (sculpture) +13, Diplomacy +19, Escape Artist +18, Handle

Animal +15, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (nature) +17, Perception +18, Sense Motive +18, Stealth +22, Survival +16; **Racial Modifiers** +6 Craft (wood)

Languages Common, Elven, Draconic, Sylvan; *speaking with plants*

SQ hurl fire, tree meld, wild empathy, woodcraft

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests

Organization solitary, pair

Treasure standard (+1 quarterstaff, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hurl Fire (Su) As a standard action, the ember dryad can hurl a small glob of ignited tree sap to a range of 60 ft. (no range increment). By making a successful ranged touch attack, it deals 7d6 fire damage. A creature must make a successful DC 17 Reflex save to avoid catching on fire. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Tree Meld (Su) An ember dryad can meld with any tree, similar to how the spell *meld into stone* functions. She can remain melded with a tree as long as she wishes.

Tree Dependent (Su) An ember dryad is bonded to a single tree, and must never stray more than 300 yards from it. Like their dryad sisters, ember dryads are typically bonded to oak trees, however these are often charred and blackened. An ember dryad who moves 300 yards beyond her bonded tree immediately becomes sickened. Every hour thereafter, she must make a DC 15 Fortitude save to resist becoming nauseated for an hour. An ember dryad that is out of the range of her bonded tree for 24 hours takes 1d6 points of Constitution damage every day that follows—eventually, this separation kills the ember dryad. An ember dryad can forge a new bond with a new tree by performing a 24-hour ritual that involves charring it with her natural fire. At the end of the ritual, she must make a successful DC 20 Will save in order to complete the ritual, otherwise the ritual fails and the tree dies.

Wild Empathy (Su) This works like the druid's wild empathy class feature, except the dryad has a +6 racial bonus on the check. Ember dryads with druid levels add this racial modifier to their wild empathy checks.

Woodcraft (Ex) An ember dryad has a +6 racial bonus to Craft checks involving wood, and is always treated as if she had masterwork artisan's woodworking tools when making such checks.

Origins – Fey are inherently mutable creatures, and it's from this ever-changing nature that they earn their



capricious reputation. However, what few realize is that a fey can be just as subject to their environment as their own whims. Some, like the Sprite, ally with good men so as not to be changed by evil people. Others, like the Dryad, hide away, seeking safety in the trees. Thus, when something as volatile as a fey then gets pulled into mortal affairs, they often adapt without realizing. At its most benign, this simply leads to vicious tricks and angry fey. At its worst, however, they change into creatures such as the ember dryad.

These creatures come from the culmination of fury and vengeance, tempered by the heat of fire. It's said that the first ember dryad had been taken from her tree by a King to be his wife. When she refused, he released her to her forest, only to burn it to the ground. When her sisters died and her own tree was destroyed, it was fury and willpower that sustained her. Ember dryads all have some such traumatic experience, and it is the drive for vengeance that sustains them.

Society – Typically, an ember dryad holds little regard for other dryads, except as tools. Because ember dryads are still bound to a tree, they often subjugate dryads of their home forest—if any survived. If not, they typically move to a new forest nearest to their object of vengeance and begin plotting anew. Held by the threat of fire that an ember dryad wields, she will charm or seduce mortals to expand her reach and influence. Given enough time, an ember dryad can retain tribes of goblins and kobolds as well as humans to lure their target into a trap.

Should two ember dryads chance upon one another, they hold the other in no special regard. Unlikely to submit, the sisters would likely see the other as a

potential ally. Should they share a target, or should it be convenient, they may choose to unite their forces towards a shared goal. However, these are frail alliances that often dissolve when the question of who to target first is raised. In rare circumstances, two ember dryads are born from a single fire. Should this happen, they are entirely unified in their goals, sharing an empathic bond that spans the plane. Should one die, the other withers away as if cut off from her tree, eventually dying from the separation. However, killing either requires penetrating all the layers of deception and planning that two ember dryads can concoct.

Lair – Dryads and ember dryads are unique in their intrinsic connection to their environment. While this can be clearly demonstrated by the embers that changed them, the connection goes both ways. For typical dryads this is natural, and is often expressed by a healthier, more verdant forest. Ember dryads are different, however. Forests that might have recovered from their fire will continue to die, as if the ash was choking out new life. Those that find new forests must first bond with a tree, burning and charring it in the process. Over time, this charcoal-like surface seems to creep, spreading beyond the tree and touching nearby wildlife.

This in turn can taint and corrupt local fauna, making animals more irritable and local fey more dangerous. Sometimes the effect is so strong that it can physically change the wildlife. In such a circumstance, an affected animal deals an additional 2d6 fire damage with melee attacks. An ember dryad that has laired in her forest for at least a year can even change nearby dryads. Such dryads gain the fire subtype, an immunity to fire, and vulnerability to cold in addition to dealing an additional 3d6 fire damage on melee or ranged attacks.

Resolution – Ember dryads are irreversibly tainted by their past. Some can be denied their closure by naturally outliving their quarry, now doomed to live on in rage forever. An ember dryad who seeks revenge and finds it will lose the fury that animates her. Typically this means she will succumb to the old wounds of her first fire, dying a quick but painful death. However, some live on. As her fury fades, she shifts one step towards chaotic good, becoming either lawful good or true neutral. Left in the middle of a sprawling web of deceit, many simply wander off. Some will seek to create something better, turning once terrified minions towards good causes. It's said an ancient fey goddess was once an ember dryad who had sought vengeance on an empire. Once satisfied, she was left with empire of her own. She chose to bring it in its entirety into her own demiplane, where she ruled as a benevolent empress. In this way, she sought to right old wrongs.

Sample Quest

By her nature, the ember dryad can be complex. She retains a number of minions and subplots at any one time, and is a conflicted creature that struggles with dual natures. A sample quest is outlined here to help, with a set of plots, minions, and opponents herein.

Origin – The primary villain is the ember dryad, Meliae. She was once a dryad bonded to an ash tree, and part of a larger family of dryads in her forest. When civilization came with lumber needs, she and her sisters fought to protect their home. This drew the attention of the local lumberjack guild, Woodwind Logging. Woodwind Logging recently relocated nearby under contract with the local Baron Rodesk, and was tasked to deliver a high volume of wood for the construction of a new village. Worried for their deadline, their leader, Soli Downgem, hired a party of mercenaries to clear the dryads out. In the ensuing battle, Meliae's sisters were slain, and an errant flask of alchemist's fire started a blaze. Though disastrous, much of the forest still remains where its protectors perished. Reborn as an ember dryad, Meliae now seeks revenge on Woodwind Logging and the arriving settlers.

Minions – Meliae has bided her time, gathering resources with the kind of patience only a long-lived fey can have. She has invited a clan of black-scaled kobolds to live within the forest, and extracted a promise to defend woods in return. While they moved in, the new village of Suttervale has continued construction and settling. Builders continue to work, and Baron Rodesk has invited farmers and hunters to settle early rather than pay for caravans to ship food from better settled locales. One such hunter, Ranluin, has been charmed and seduced by Meliae, and now actively lures others into her traps to be seduced or killed. Finally, she has discovered a host of bandits in her forest that watch the village with opportunistic plans for its completion. They, too, are cutting down trees for their own camp, however she has held her minions at bay, instead seeking a means of productive collaboration.

Plot – Meliae sees the bandits as the necessary final piece before she can begin her plot in earnest. Up to now, Meliae has done little more than slow the loggers, often by sabotaging their food or inciting wild animals to attack. Once she can enlist their aid, Meliae intends to lay siege to the village. She plans for Ranluin to poison the food stores of the village,

while leaving the stores of Woodwind Logging safe to eat. With food scarce, she would allow the bandits to attack hunters and any incoming merchants. By starving the villagers she hopes to incite a riot at Woodwind Logging's headquarters, and ultimately burn the structure as it is packed with both groups.

Introduction – Left to her own devices, Meliae's plans will succeed. Due to the fire and her subsequent silence, locals think her dead, and simply interpret her actions as the frontier wildlands that to be tamed. The bandits are clever enough and cold-hearted enough to accept her plan, seeing the potential payday out of Woodwind Logging's coffers.

Players can be introduced at any time, potentially even as the party that slew Meliae's sisters. If you do so, prepare for months of waiting as she consolidates her plans. If players are introduced later, perhaps hearing rumors of a kobold clan that has become a local nuisance, they could possibly be caught in her siege. Players who are present for this must pay at least ten gold for each ration as food prices skyrocket. However, for this quest to work, players must be made to investigate the actions of the bandits. If players find and attack the bandit camp, Ranluin would come to their defense, and may be questioned by especially convincing players. By questioning Ranluin, or the bandits themselves, players will be led to Meliae's lair for a climactic battle.

Resolution – The aftermath depends on how successful the players are. Should Meliae succeed, the town is destroyed and abandoned, earning the forest a reputation as cursed. The violent death and anger attached to the place would cause many of the villagers to remain as ghosts, while evil fey would be drawn to settle as well. Meliae would live on, leaving the village to begin a new plot of revenge against the Baron. Should players prevent the destruction of Suttervale after the siege, Woodwind Logging would lose their contract. Forced to pay fines to Baron Rodesk outlined in their contract, they would dissolve, and Soli Downgem would be branded a debtor. Unless the players can convince a new group to invest in the town, the Baron would cut his losses, abandoning the project and allowing nature to reclaim the land. Only by destroying the bandits, and stopping Meliae before she can cause further damage, does the village succeed. It ultimately becomes a thriving frontier town, eventually expanding Baron Rodesk's influence and wealth.

Rite Publishing Presents

IN THE COMPANY OF VAMPIRES

by Steven T. Helt and Stephen Rowe



Twenty Questions with Christen N. Sowards

By Dave Paul

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

I learned to read from Dungeons and Dragons over the summer around the time I started kindergarten. The first hardcovers came out shortly thereafter (you can do that math if you want). So I have been gaming for well over 35 years and GMing for over three decades. I run a blog about Pathfinder that focuses on 3pp content and permissive gaming in general (www.lostspherespublishing.com). I also game a lot, like 2 to 4 times a week. I started designing my own content right away and have been publishing Pathfinder content for about five years.

I also am a big comic book nerd (More a Marvel Guy but some DC and indies) and have collected since I got my first issues of X-Men and LSH in the local malt shop (yup, that dates me). I grow heirloom tomatoes, herd cats and play lots of video games, mostly JRPGs (Final Fantasy and the Tales of...). I have headed up MMO guilds for a dozen games but thankfully I hung up my Guildmaster tabard.

2. What is your home game like?

As I stated above, I game a lot. I run 2 weekly games, several pickup games and play in two alternating bi-weekly games. Almost all of them are currently Pathfinder.

All of them are also: Permissive. Complex. Strange.

I have a meta-universe of connected worlds and stories that spans from OD&Ds origins to the current Pathfinder environment. It currently has over 50 homebrew worlds & settings in addition to accounting for all major "official settings" from Paizo and the ancestral system. These games currently focus on Hyraeatan, the *City of 7 Seraphs* and have a world-jumping, multiversal vibe.

I also allow original summoners, nearly any 3pp class, and pretty much ignore the ACG errata.

3. What is your favorite Paizo product?

I have soft spots for *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Occult Adventures* and *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Mythic Adventures* but I am going to have to say *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Advanced Players Guide*. The APG was, to me, the first time we started to see some really deep, new mechanical ideas advanced by the game's team.

One of the things I detest about the RPG (and General Game) industry is the "Edition Churn" where a company feels it is "time" for a re-release and trots out the same old classic base classes that



we have seen before and tries to freshen up concepts that are basically the ABCs of gaming. The APG was really the first time (given Pathfinder's minimal divergence from the 3.5 system reference document) we actually got a glimpse at what new (REAL NEW) ideas might be like. We got oracles, summoners, alchemists and more. We saw stuff we hadn't yet.

4. You are currently owner of Lost Spheres Publishing, how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

I was chatting with the late Steve Russell about his products and asked him when he'd be getting to some support material for a favorite 3pp class. He'd been doing some expansion feats for classes like *Rogue Genius Games* (then *Super Genius Games*) and I loved them and the interconnectivity between Rite Publishing and other 3pp. He explained that he wasn't sure the classes I wanted him to work on extra-material for would be worth it to pursue to him. He then paused and said, "You know with the OGL you could just do it yourself if you think I might be wrong."

That was all it took.

I felt a pang of loss for the worlds we lost to the IP of the ancestral system and so in honor of those settings I could never specifically reference or name I took on the

mantle of Lost Spheres and the company was born. We focus on material for connecting content and settings from Pathfinder's ancestral systems (without touching IP of course), linking OGL third-party classes and creating stories that facilitate expansive, connective and permissive gaming experiences.

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

That is hard. If you asked me next year it would be *City of 7 Seraphs* but since we are still finishing that one I will say *Mythic Paths of the Lost Spheres*. When the mythic system was introduced a lot of people recoiled in horror from it. It was a fairly extreme alteration of normal play balance and unfortunately, the vocal community sort of passed judgment on it before many of them really had a chance to play with it. I ran games with it and successfully delivered full campaigns to tier 10.

But something was wrong.

More and more it was clear that the product didn't support many 3pp classes in the core mythic paths. Then it became clear that it didn't even support most of the non-CRB classes from Paizo. Or multiclass characters. The negative reactions of the community had ceased its systemic development before it ever got there. And the permissive gaming groups that allowed 3pp classes also were the same that actually seemed to like the Mythic Adventures ruleset. So the people most likely to use something weren't able fully use it.

So we fixed that.

We added 10 new mythic paths, some of which strongly supported "villainous" styles of play and made sure the system could support more 3pp classes and create bad guys that could survive the "rocket tag" game styles of the higher level, higher tier games we wanted to see played. It really helped balance out

the play environment and the following year was joined by the Mythic Kickstarter from Legendary/Kobold/RGG/DSP to make a VERY robust mythic mechanical universe.

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

Strangely, it was AFTER release when another company I liked dropped a new class with radically different and new mechanics. We were near enough to release I reviewed *Mythic Paths of the Lost Spheres* to look for ways to support that other class via an update to the PDF... and saw that we'd designed it inclusively enough that no changes were needed! We designed well-enough to support a class that didn't even exist yet. I actually cackled with triumphant glee at that... for probably a while too long.

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

I would have to say it was that the product speaks to character concept as much as class. So if you want to play a shapechanger and used, say, druid to do it you might have ideas in your head that druid and wildshape don't cover. Even taking an archetype might not get you there. So we did paths like Master of Shapes to give some of those abilities to characters that players felt were missing. Additionally this mindset allowed us to support multiclass builds which pretty much required the Dual Path feat in the original release.

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

Probably sadly, our biggest challenge was combating the PFRPG community's ignorance and lack of training with the mythic ruleset. It is natural to resist things we don't understand and that spiraled into a lot of negativity that caused people to reject our company immediately as that before that we had stayed to relatively "safe" feat and spell expansions. So our first "big" PDF release was into a pool of negative reaction and a limited fanbase. Fortunately those fans are passionate and we have had great dialogues with them. They are amazing.

9. What did you learn while working on it?

That I am NOT in any way, shape, or form an editor. It has been a challenge from day 1 to keep up with my right-brain floodgate output, insomnia write-ins and minor information-processing disorder glitches to deliver a product that wasn't full of typos. Some still made it through in the past. This led me to get an even better editor (Robert N. Emerson) for our first print product this year with *City of 7 Seraphs*.



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

This question is rough because I love, LOVE PFRPG compatible stuff. A lot of what makes something the "best" is highly personal (see below) so I will dodge slightly and offer you some of my favorites:

Nostalgia Bomb – *Ultimate Psionics* – (Jeremy Smith and Andreas Rönnqvist & Dreamscarred Press) I grew up playing AD&D and psionics were there from its infancy. People hate them. People love them. Pathfinder didn't really feel complete to me until we got psionics rules for it. I do love the *Occult Adventures* classes and mechanics but they aren't psionics as I grew to love in the ancestral system. I use both in my games.

Thought Provoking – *Genius Guide to the Mosaic Mage* – (Ryan Costello & Rogue Genius Games): This book cut the "cake" of Vancian magic in a different direction. It is a new look at spellcasters based off of school access as opposed to spell lists and it creates some of the most fascinating characters I have seen. I have played or playing in games with dozens of them and they are all different.

New Frontiers – *Spheres of Power* – (Adam Meyers & Drop Dead Studios): This, just simply put, is an entirely new way to look at magic. Now that said I LIKE Vancian casters. But sometimes you can't get a magic system that mirrors a favorite movie, book or video game. This one offers a lot of ways to get to that. I will go one further and say that the Patreon and its Sphere expansions are worth their weight in gold.

Forgotten Child – *Akashic Mysteries* – (Micahel Sayre & Dreamscarred Press): The essence using classes of the 3.5 system were barely released when the shadow of the Edition that Shall Not Be Named was seen across the land. As so this innovative system was cut down in its infancy and we never really got to see what it was going to be. Again Dreamscarred Press stepped in and pumped life back into it with Michael Sayre's re-envisioning of the system in this book.

Teacher's Pet – *Secrets of the Taskshaper* – (Steve Russell & Rite Publishing): I love shapeshifters and mimics. This was really the first class that tried to tackle this outside of the Vancian-caster model. It does a pretty great job and its design suggests a lot of questions. Those questions led me to talk to Steve about it and ultimately lead me to create Lost Spheres Publishing.

Favorite No One Knows – *Adepts of the Inward Eye* – (Matt Daley & TPK): If you multiclass you MUST buy this book. 'Nuff said.



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

Again, I think this is a very personal question that varies highly from person to person. So what I will say here is a product that heightens a GM's or player's connection to the game is a good product. For some players that will be a boatload of new content and rules. For others it will be a small collection of tightly themed or carefully balanced feats. Others will want prose-laden campaign settings full of adventure ideas. And yet others will want a well-crafted module.

Personally, I am drawn to great art, innovative mechanics and boundary-pushing design.

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

Me? Not really. This industry is full of brilliant, talented folks. Owen KC Stephens has been an excellent mentor but he has so many hats it is hard to get a lot of new content from his Starfinder space-fueled journey right now (but DO check out his Patreon). I would say that most of my other favorites are on the *City of 7 Seraphs* team with me. Dozens of

talented folks on that with me. But I also buy most stuff from Stephen Rowe (and the rest of the Horsemen), Kevin Glusing, Alex Augunas, Jade Ripley, and I like spells from that one Dave Paul guy?

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

Be Polite—People remember rude forever.

Go to Cons—You will meet people faster and have a better chance at a lasting impression on them.

Know Your Market—Learn your publisher's design preferences before engaging them.

Now IS the Future—Publishers are already done with most things you know about, ask about what is next.

Ideate and Pitch—A lot of people don't even know what work they want until they hear it from you.

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

I have worked with a lot of great and talented artists. Vincent Coviello seems to be able to read my mind which probably is far more dangerous than people will give him credit. His work on *City of Seven Seraphs* is amazing. But all the artists have been a blast to work with.

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

Customer quote: "You managed to bring a sense of the mystical into a game filled with magic. Keep up the good work so I can keep on giving you my money."



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

City of 7 Seraphs is a huge project with lots of moving pieces so I am not sure how exclusive to go but how about these:

The mirrokin's racial traits alter in response to the company they keep.

The Steamwalker Parity has "math paladins." Discuss.

The Master of the Docks has a hostile teleportation eye-ray. Seriously, don't make him mad.

17. Do you have any goals for Lost Spheres Publishing that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

Plenty. Mostly there are a few orphaned pieces of intellectual property in the 3pp Pathfinder universe I would LOVE to give a good home to.

18. Can you tell us a little about *City of 7 Seraphs*?

Not a lot of people know that I ran a strange little mini-game with my backers to have them earn reveals and add-ons for the Kickstarter campaign. We had players from Europe and all over the US engaging the hidden riddles and other puzzles we secreted around the updates, blog posts, and Facebook press. It was a ton of fun.

The project itself will be a full-color hardcover with over 400 pages of planar content for the Pathfinder RPG. For more information I would checkout: <https://lostspherespublishing.wordpress.com/tag/city-of-seven-seraphs/> Oh and if you missed it we will have pre-Orders on BackerKit shortly.

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

My team is incredible. Nearly all of them have asked for more word count and the pages of the Outline are bulging to the limits of our budget. I nearly have enough cutting room floor material for another book. Spoiler alert: **I have enough material for another book.**

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

We are just getting started. We have plans for an Adventure Path, a fiction Anthology, *Worlds of the Lattice* mini-setting line and maybe... a follow-up Kickstarter for '19?

Other than that I would say support safe spaces in gaming, follow Wheaton's Law and keep an open mind.

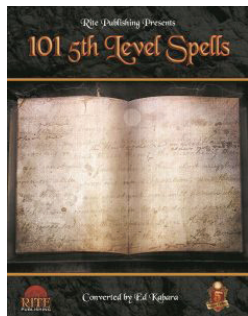
Rite Publishing Presents

101 Plains Spells

By David J. Paul



Reviews



101 5th-level Spells (5e)

Publisher: Rite Publishing

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 4 stars out of 5

This collection of spells clocks in at 37 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 34 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 did receive this pdf prior to public release in order to allow for a speedy release of the review.

We begin this supplement with massive lists of the respective spells by class, before moving on to the alphabetic presentation of spells. Now, obviously, I can't go through each and every spell contained here, but I'll try to give you a good idea of what to expect. Let's begin with the first spell, *alter metal*. This spell modifies the damage threshold of affected objects and is particularly potent when affecting armor etc. – the spell properly differentiates between attended and unattended, magical and nonmagical and even intelligent items. Kudos. Fans of Diablo and similar franchises will also enjoy a spell, which renders skeletons into ticking shrapnel bombs.

Now damage spells herein generally sport a valid alternative and contextualization compared to core spells. Take e.g. *arrow storm*. The spell inflicts 8d6 piercing damage to all creatures within 30 ft. of a point in range (150 ft.), potentially inflicting the restrained condition as well on a failed save, necessitating cover or a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) to end the condition. The affected area may be farther away than e.g. that of *cone of cold*, but the PHB's spell affects a larger area, has a slightly superior damage type and, with d8 damage-dice, a slightly higher average damage output. In another example, namely *force ram*, we have 12d4 damage and an unerring, automatic hit – but also the danger that *shield* completely negates the spell.

There also are utility type spells herein – or spells that you'd consider to be more relevant for the purpose of the more narrative aspects of the game: The *befoul spring* ritual can, for example, taint a water source. *Bitter vintage* can render wine into poison, with the caster gaining several different options regarding which poison to transform the vintage

into. And yes, the transformation may be detected by savvy PCs. On a minor complaint regarding the formatting: The "At Higher Levels." Has not been bolded and italicized properly here. There are spells like *blood to sap* – the spell deals poison damage on a failed Constitution saving throw and poisons the target for the duration, which reduced the target's speed and imposes disadvantage on Dex saves, but also provides an AC bonus. Regarding damaging spells that also impose negative conditions, it is nice to observe a lack of save-less spells and the fact that the conditions and their potency receive the respect they should have. The pdf does sport some evocative visuals in the damaging spells it has, e.g. in *brimstone cloud*.

Campfire lullaby is interesting, in that it allows a character to get the benefits of completing a long rest more than once per 24 hours – the long casting time and duration and the caveat that lets it affect a character only once in 5 days act as good balancing mechanisms for this potent spell, though. There are *carpets of fire* and options to *chastise* foes with psychic damage. There is a means to generate *circles of moonlight*, protection against shapechangers and the undead. The pdf also sports a *contingent healing* spell, which is neat – and yes, these cannot be stacked...and they can be used offensively versus the undead. There also is a long-range curing spell – which is pretty cool, aye, but considering the impact of long-range healing on the game, it deserves to be noted that it may not be for all groups. Speaking of which: *Eternal charm* is permanent. Whether or not you like the ramifications of this depends on the type of game you run.

Sifting through thoughts via *crystal probe*, cursing targets with narcissism...what about changing the look of terrain and hiding it from the prying eyes of enemy spellcasters? There is also a powerful spell to compel targets to deliver messages for you. You can conjure forth *earth barriers* that bludgeon those foolhardy enough to attack you. *Elfhome* attunes an area in forests to elves and creatures, providing climb speed and quicker movement. What about first conjuring a tree and then having it fall on enemies? Really cool: *Flatten* makes you two-dimensional. *Guard Dog* conjures forth a variant dire wolf with modified stats to guard an area and the *knave purge* ritual provides a type of magic protection against thieves. Minor complaint – spell-references in the text tend to lack the italicizations.

We can find one-way *pain circuits*, the ability to travel through stone, several phantasms (lichs, nymphs, swarms...) – there are a lot of spells, some of which provide significant changes to the engine:

Take *remove condition*, for example: The spell can even negate instantaneous effects like petrification via magic and may end the attunement to a magic item causing the condition, though curses are maintained. Now personally, I like this for the ability to make more controlled use of items with big drawbacks, but it does remain an aesthetic preference. Speaking of spells I like: *Scry reverse* does exactly what you'd think it does. I like the tactical option, but I can see some Gms not being as in love with it.

There also would be a powerful spell that requires the willing sacrifice of a mortal being to enhance your powers – suffice to say, that one is evil to the core. Potent songs that suppress spellcasting and magic item use make for amazing tools in the arsenal of bards – really cool. *Spell grounding* is a very potent defensive option: While within the range of a spell that does not have a range of touch, you may use your reaction to negate the spell, ending all effects and damage. No check, no differentiation between spell levels, no discharging of the spell – personally, I believe that this should have an “At Higher Levels”-scaling for maximum spell level affected and it should also have some wording regarding interaction of enspelled terrain into which you move – which imho should be exempt. While it is clear that this is supposed to work only for rays and chains, RAW, it is much more flexible, depending on your reading of the spell.

Conclusion

Editing and formatting are good, bordering on very good: I noticed a couple of missed italicizations and a few rules-language points that could be slightly clearer, but, as a whole, this is a well-made supplement. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column full-color standard and the pdf sports fitting full-color artwork, mostly stock. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

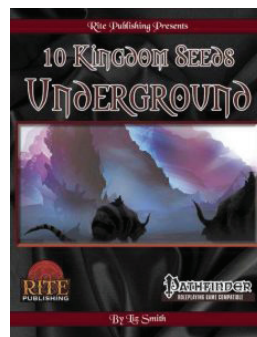
Ed Kabara's conversion of Steven D. Russell's classic spells does a valiant job at translating the vast plethora of spells to 5e. As a whole, the balancing of the material herein is pretty tight. The spells generally fit their respective levels. There are some spells that change how some aspects of the game work, which may be a matter of taste. Beyond the few hiccups herein, there is one aspect to be aware of: 5e sports less flexibility with the spells offered than PFRPG – spells have a higher value in direct comparison, often being entwined, availability-wise, with class features or feats as a kind of pay-off. This book does not provide the like or a means to contextualize the spells themselves – it literally only presents a ton of spells. Just putting them all

in the game will, by necessity, generate a power-increase, courtesy of the increased flexibility. This is not bad, mind you, but something 5e-GMs should nevertheless be aware of.

As a whole, I consider this collection of spells a good example of how Rite Publishing has stepped up its 5e-content's quality – of all the spell-collections I have read so far, this is by far the most refined. All in all a worthwhile collection of spells to grab and choose from – my final verdict will clock in at 4 stars.

You can get these spells [here on OBS!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.



10 Kingdom Seeds: Underground

Publisher: Rite Publishing

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This little pdf clocks in at 13 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 10 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.

Okay, if you're new to the concept – the Kingdom Seeds-pdfs are basically collections of 10 sample settlements, ranging usually from thorp to village, which are depicted complete with a settlement statblock and a brief summary of the village in question as well as notes on intriguing locales and a few rumors/adventure hooks for each – think of them as kind of akin to Raging Swan Press' backdrops, but instead of focusing in detail on one locale, we get a few of them in broader strokes. Thing is – this installment not only goes underground – it also changes the formula of these pdfs by splicing crunchy tidbits into the respective entries.

Take, for example, the first settlement, NE Coldwylde, carved into pink sandstone, it is the home of escaped aranea slaves that have managed to create a new magical rope – the *fanged rope of entanglement*, made from an aranea's last silk and fangs, it can entangle and poison those that try to escape them – really cool, magical item, with a somber note...and the means of construction have some serious roleplaying potential.

In CE Deepdell, gnomes are working on a mysterious vein of onyx...and it'll be just a matter of time before they can deduce the power-component-like properties of these gems.... On the other end of the alignment spectrum, Frepond represents an

idyllic academy of music and magic that would usually have no chance in the cutthroat underdark – but the singing stalactites and stalagmites in the cavern vastly enhance the options of bards, allowing them to maintain two bardic performances at once – and yes, the rules codifying that are concise and precise, though personally, I would have enjoyed to see a range here – I assume the default range of 30 ft. to tap into such a rock’s power, but I’m frankly not 100% sure.

A blaze of light in the dark is atop Griffonfort – the ceiling of this cavern is illuminated by a heatless flame. The place is haunted by frustrated ghosts of the first settlers, but the dwarven leaders try to make the dream of a perfect fort a reality, slowly releasing the vanquished ghosts under the glow of *continual flame, greater*, the new spell to supplement this one. Ironwynne was founded by the Ironfeet mercenaries as a supply and support center and as such, has a harsh, militaristic feel – even though the company was shattered. The reputation remains – and so do the mundane, iron boots that make for well-crafted marching utensils...or for percussion.

Joncrest is inhabited by Halflings that herd lizards. They harvest their tails, which regrow. Yeah, that’s pretty damn cool. But wait – Halflings can’t see in the dark! Well, these guys can: We get alternate Halfling racial traits – darkvision 60 ft. in exchange for keen senses and improved natural healing in exchange for Halfling luck, mirroring the hardy reptiles they herd. Amazing one! Narland occupies a huge cavern, which holds multiple towers, each focused on teaching a discipline of magic – cutting edge, these folks push the limits of magic, as represented by a new regional trait that lets you make a concentration check as a swift action to push a chosen school’s spell’s caster level...but at the risk of a magical mishap – which is accompanied by a percentile table with 7 different effects, just fyi. Really cool!

Pryness is situated next to a massive underground river, providing ferrying (and smuggling) services for those that require it; predominantly Halfling, the settlement also the home of, surprisingly non-evil river rat variant wererats that can only infect willing beings – cool! The problem is just...such societies are easy to infiltrate by the REAL wererats...

Silverflower looks like a place littered with dead stems in light; however, in the darkness, the flowers generate a soothing glow and wondrous scent – as a result, the place has a darkvision-only policy...which could make for a decidedly wondrous place to visit. Oh, and the perfume made there can help when navigating the more precarious social situations...though the effect

does change, based on lighting conditions. Damn cool! More of a deathtrap: Stonekeep. The CE hamlet inhabited by dwarves can carve tunnels ridiculously fast, using identical, vault-style hyper-secure doors (which evil folks may wish to get for their magic-hampering and great locks...)...but the nasty dwarves have this habit of unleashing a rock troll with adamantite false teeth (!!!), their secret weapon, on those who come calling – this is an adventure just waiting to happen!

Conclusion

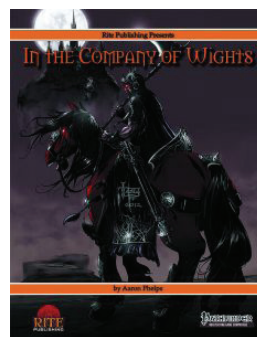
Editing and formatting are very good, I noticed no undue accumulation of hiccups. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing’s two-column full-color standard and the pdf sports some neat full-color pieces I haven’t seen before. The pdf comes fully bookmarked with detailed, nested bookmarks for your convenience.

Liz Smith stepped up to the next level. I don’t know if it’s the guiding hand of Rite Publishing’s new line developer Stephen Rowe, but this blows the old Kingdom Seeds out of the water. The settlements all feature some truly evocative, unique, magical angle that sets them apart, that makes them distinct in spite of their brevity. The added crunch-components for each village amps up the wonder further – even if they’re just small tweaks, they add a sense of the unique to everything. Heck, in some cases, I really, really liked what these humble pieces of crunch do – they help tell stories and furthermore differentiate the series more from Raging Swan Press’ more fluff-centric offerings. For the low asking price, you get some truly wondrous and amazing places to visit and cool supplemental material to boot. What’s not to like?

Easily worth 5 stars + seal of approval and a strong recommendation for the very fair price-point!

You can get this evocative, inexpensive pdf [here on OBS!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.



In the Company of Wights (revised edition)

Publisher: Rite Publishing

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This revised installment of Rite Publishing’s “In the Company of...”-series clocks in at 25 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial,

1 page of SRD, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back

cover, leaving us with 20 pages of content, so let's take a look!

This is the review of the revised edition with the cool horseman on the cover – if you have the old version, re-download this asap.

All right, we begin this pdf with a heart-warming dedication to the founder of Rite Publishing, Steven D. Russell, who has left us too soon. After this, though, it is similarly heart-warming to see that the traditions of master Russell live on – we begin with an in-character letter of a member of the race, sent to Qwilion of Questhaven, the scribe that is responsible for collecting these pieces of information in the context of the great meta-narratives that suffuse these books.

Thus, as has become the tradition, the flavor-text presented to us would be written from the point of view of the species “We are the hollowed” – indeed! Intelligent, sentient wights spawned from strong souls, these beings sport a glowing gaze and retain the previous race's racial characteristics like height and they, obviously, stop aging -as such, this time around, we actually don't need an age, height or weight table and the racial traits replace those of the base race, but more on that later. The pdf elaborates on society...or rather, about how to fit in with the living and dead...and there is the Urge – the wights herein do crave the essence of the living and there are those that have succumbed to the Urge, while others resist it – the scenario is, roleplay-wise, not unlike that of the World of Darkness.

Now, regarding racial traits, we begin by acknowledging the first issue -as quasi-undead, the wights depicted herein (who call themselves the hollowed) have no Constitution, which would render them OP via most character creation methods – hence, ways to use them in a balanced context with point-buy etc. are included. The hollowed get +2 to Cha, -2 to Int and retain their former humanoid race's speed and size, which means Small or Medium for the purpose of this race. Base speed is retained, though the hollowed lose, for example, slow and steady. As modified undead, the hollowed gain darkvision 60 ft., a +2 racial bonus to Intimidate.

Modified undead? Well, a sidebar properly defines this: Hollowed have no Constitution score, but have no immunity or resistance to mind-influencing effects. They are immune to bleed, disease and poison, as well as stunning or paralysis, with the caveat that effects that cause the latter two and are resisted by a Will-save still apply – interesting. The race is immune to death and sleep effects and neither subject to nonlethal damage, nor

ability drain or damage to physical ability scores. However, they are still subject to energy drain or damage/drain to mental ability scores as though they were living creatures. They are immune to exhaustion and fatigue, unless caused by The Urge or unless caused by a spell, SP or SU or class feature the hollowed possesses. A fatigued or exhausted hollowed must save versus the urge when damaged. Now this is interesting – however, there is a minor oddity here: RAW, learning a spell or SP makes the hollowed susceptible to fatigue/exhaustion gained from it. Some may complain about that, but I think one can justify that in game by being more attuned to the particular magics. Balance-wise, this is very much necessary to prevent a metric ton of cheesy exploits. Hollowed are NOT immune versus effects that require a Fort-save and use Charisma modifier instead of Constitution modifier for such saves. Big plus: They lose the annoying undead fragility and remain undead and kicking unless reduced to negative Charisma score hp. Resurrecting magic causes massive damage to them and they don't need to eat regular food or breathe, but require meditative rest akin to sleep.

Okay, that is already a VAST improvement right there. Death's Stigma makes starting attitude of creatures two steps worse, one step worse for those that have had interactions with friendly undead. Disguising as a mortal imposes a -5 penalty on the hollowed's Disguise check

Now, let's look at the urge and how it has been translated, shall we? The urge is the rage of the void and destruction – going for longer than 24 hours sans 8 hours rest fatigues the hollowed; 48 hours cause exhaustion. When a hollowed is fatigued and takes damage, she must succeed a Will save (DC 15 + ½ character level, DC 20 + ½ character level if exhausted) – on a failure, they succumb to the urge and are compelled to attack the nearest living creature with their slam and energy drain. While under the effects of the urge, the hollowed may not use Cha-, Dex- or Int-based skills (except Acrobatics, Fly, Intimidate and Ride) or any ability that requires concentration. Successfully imposing a negative level on a creature causes the hollowed to lose the fatigued/exhausted condition and allows the hollowed to re-attempt a Will-save (versus Dc 15 + ½ character level) to end the urge as an immediate action – on a failure, the hollowed must inflict another negative level before getting a chance to shake off the urge. Hollowed may choose to willingly succumb to the urge as a free action, but after doing so, it requires killing a humanoid (!!!) to get the chance to end the urge via a save – so

no, your bag of kitten will not cut it! Big, big kudos!

A hollowed that has succumbed to the urge gains a primary slam attack, (1d4 Medium, 1d3 Small) and energy drain, but the hollowed does not gain temporary hit points from the drain. Humanoids slain by them become wights (with penalties to atk, saves, etc.) – however, these spawns may be controlled freely by the hollow, provided he does not exceed his maximum or chooses to free them. Slightly weird: The spawn-notes refer to a Stealth bonus they do not get, one I could not find among the base traits of the race. Not a big issues, though – it does not impact gameplay.

It should be noted that character creation for 5 attributes and the process of becoming hollowed are concisely codified here.

Clung to life, the first of the alternate racial traits, eliminates the harsh death's stigma, but replaces your immunities to bleed, disease and poison with a +2 racial bonus on saves against them. Cure seekers are not harmed by resurrecting magic and have the built-in potential to become living once more – they lose the ability to beget spawn. Death sense nets deathwatch 3/day as a SP, replacing darkvision. With humanoid racial trait, which can be selected twice, you can choose to retain some abilities from your parent-race, balancing them on a helpful case by case basis that the pdf concisely codifies. Finally, cure seekers may also choose to have positive energy affinity, but loses energy drain for the easier healing. All in all, a VAST improvement that couldn't be bigger. I mean it. Every single aspect has been improved far beyond what I would have dared to hope for!

The favored class option-section has similarly been expanded and now covers all classes prior to the ACG and sports meaningful options – e.g. access to *cure* or *inflict* spells for bards. Big kudos.

The pdf also features 3 racial archetypes. The night strider rogue can fake being destroyed when at negative hit points, replacing trapfinding. 2nd level replaces evasion with the equivalent for Fort-saves. This can be upgraded to an improved evasion equivalent with an advanced talent. The debilitating strike rogue talent can cause sneak attacked humanoids to temporarily become sickened. An advanced talent can upgrade that to cause negative levels. Trap sense is replaced with scaling save-bonuses versus effects that traditionally affect undead. HUGE improvement.

Now, the pale rider cavalier gains an undead mount at 1st level (losing several of the mount's potent trick to make up for its undead defenses) Instead of the tactician ability tree, the pale rider

gets to choose from hollow boons – basically a talent engine in small, the first of which is gained at 1st level, with 9th and 17th level providing additional choices. These include gaining a burning mount (must be 9th level for that one), cold immunity, channel resistance, being diseased, skeletal mounts *air walk* options (locked behind minimum 9th level), stench, and much more – these are very strong, but are balanced by a hollow flaw, which must be taken whenever a boon is gained: Sunlight powerlessness, fire vulnerability, recoiling from mirrors (particularly fitting when going for a vampiric mount...) – very flavorful and damn cool. Starting at 5th level, nearby living foes are penalized for the mere presence of the undead mount and 14th level upgrades that to potentially causing the shaken condition – which may then be exploited by a display of standard rearing, potentially causing worse conditions. This re-design represents an upgrade from lame and useless to evocative and pure amazing. Two big thumbs up!

The final archetype would be the void singer bards, who replace inspire courage with a demoralizing dirge and they may instill a pale reflection of the urge, replacing *suggestion*. Instead of versatile performance, they gain the dirge bard's secrets of the grave. Solid engine-tweak.

The True Wight racial paragon class gets 3/4 BAB-progression, good Will-saves, d8 HD, 6 + Int skills per level and proficiency with simple weapons and light armor. At 1st level, they gain the ability to create spawn and add +1/2 class level to Stealth checks – at 10th level, spawn within 30 ft. also use their master's result. The racial paragon class nets the Slam feat at 1st level (the feat nets you the slam attack, even when not under the effects of the urge) and it is treated as both manufactured weapon and natural weapon for the purpose of spells and effects that enhance it. The slam attack of the racial paragon scales over the levels, with the table noting Small, Medium and Large damage progressions. Why Large? Well, there is a chance that your Gm lets your Large PC race turn wight one day – while RAW not supported by the race, I really appreciate this inclusiveness.

2nd level yields a +1 bonus to Will-saves to resist the urge that increases by a further +1 every 4 levels thereafter. 5th level yields telepathic communication with nearby spawns and 7th level yields DR 1/- that improves at 10th level and every 3 levels thereafter. This level also yields Multiattack when using weapons and slam attacks in conjunction. 11th level allows the true wight to enslave mindless undead within 30 ft. (with concisely defined limits). 17th

level lets the true wight always add his full Strength modifier to slam attacks, double Strength modifier when just using the slam. The capstone lets the true wight potentially enslave intelligent undead. 2nd level provides a death mastery, the talents of the class: More than 2 full pages of talents are provided and an additional talent is gained every 2 levels thereafter. These include a variety of demoralization effects that enhance these with a variety of tougher negative conditions. Better controlled surrendering to the urge, at-will *detect undead*, worsening fear-conditions via subsequent demoralize effects, quicker movement or even swim speed, granting nearby spawns draining, energy drain slams (as a full-round action) while not under the urge...pretty cool. Supplying temporary hit points a limited number of times per day, fast healing with a daily cap and the option to grant it to other undead, free-willed spawn, Leadership-style, talking to the dead, possessing spawn (AMAZING), a rage-based ability tree...all in all a cool, visceral array of talents.

The pdf also sports 12 feats: Beyond the aforementioned Slam, we have Undying, which lets you remain active when not reduced below 0 hp. Strong Spirit nets you +2 to saves versus death effects and versus abilities and effects that cause mental ability score damage/drain – also, while under the urge, you gain immunity to these! Ritual Spawn lets you create spawn sans succumbing to the urge via ritual murder (not useful in combat, but amazing storytelling tool). Recovery nets you a sort of natural healing and lets you and your spawn benefit from long-term care. Pass for Living helps you, bingo, pass for living. Consume Life provides temporary hit points when causing negative levels. Control lets you roll twice to avoid succumbing to the urge or when trying to recover from it. Dead Mind (minor typo: Prerequisite: hollowed) should capitalize the “H”) nets you +2 to saves versus mind-affecting effects, upgrading to immunity while under the urge. Extra Mastery nets you a death mastery. Greater Spawn improves the spawn (surprise!) and Pack Hunter nets you lifesense 30 ft. while within 30 ft. of a spawn or hollowed with this feat.

Conclusion

Editing and formatting of the revised version are very good, I noticed no serious issues in either formal or rules-language levels. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column full-color standard and the pdf comes with excellent, new pieces of full-color artwork. The pdf is fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Aaron Phelps' original version of this file took a severe beating from me. Deservedly so.

Instead of shrugging and moving on, Rite Publishing's Miranda Russell did the rite thing: She hired none other than Stephen Rowe of the Four Horsemen to fix the file.

If you've been following my reviews, you'll note that Stephen's name on ANYTHING is pretty much as close to a guarantee that it'll be amazing as you get. Well, he did not simply fix the copious errors in the file. He basically rewrote the whole damn file from the ground up: Previously lame or broken options suddenly not only cover MUCH more ground, they have been turned into versatile, amazing options. A race that struggled with horrid mechanics, balance-issues and a lack of a unique identity was transformed in a zero-to-hero success-story of design into one of the best takes on undead PC-races I have ever seen.

Let that sink in. The hollowed, as depicted herein, are decidedly undead – they feel and play like undead. But at the same time, you retain control at all costs: Want to play the reviled outcast? Possible. Want a lower impact of your undead nature? Possible. Want an undead sans the fragility? Possible. Positive energy? Possible. Do you want a stint of undead existence for your PC, perhaps spanning a few levels, with the goal of returning to life? Possible. Want to become the dread leader of an undead pack? The pdf obliges. More than all of that, I adore how the undead traits have been balanced here – as written, the wights herein provide meaningful benefits and immunities that set them apart, but not to the extent of flat-out immunities left and right -and the engine Stephen created allows you to customize precisely how your wight behaves. Are you playing in a pandemic campaign, where immunity to disease would trivialize the threat posed, making your GM concerned? You can get rid of that immunity if you want – or you could embrace it, but all decisions have consequences, all options are carefully structured to emphasize player agenda sans tipping the scales of balance.

In short, Stephen Rowe has rumpelstilskin'd this pdf thoroughly – he has spun gold not from wheat, but from chaff. His improvements not only pertain to mechanics, but also flavor, conjuring ex nihilo a compelling and amazing take on the undead rider trope that ranks as one of my favorites in this category. The expanded page-count is amazing. Heck, if you ever wanted a perfect example of what difference a great developer can make in a pdf, look at this and the horrible original back to back.

If you've been on the fence for this file, rest assured that this now represents a reference work par excellence regarding undead PCs – this is inspired in all the rite (haha!) ways. It also shows that Rite Publishing really cares about feedback and seeks to provide not something that's just good or okay- the goal is excellence. A lofty level that this pdf undoubtedly has reached. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval, given sans hesitation.

You can get this vastly improved and now rather awesome pdf [here on OBS!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.



In the Company of Aberrations

Publisher: Rite Publishing

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of Rite Publishing's "In the Company of..."-series of playable monsters clocks in at 55 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial,

1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with a MASSIVE 51 pages of content, so let's take a look!

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

We begin with a letter, framing the narrative that suffuses the pdf in the tradition of Rite Publishing supplements; the letter is one of resignation this time around, speaking of the horrors that were encountered, and indeed, the formula of the in-character description of the race that makes this series such a joy to read, has been modified here, as aberrations are a significantly less unified topic than previous races covered.

Instead, the content is framed as a report by the Voice of the Vigilant – who has basically possessed one of the unfortunates that encountered the aberrant threats, saving the company that encountered these creatures. This whole, strange channeling is a genius way of maintaining the enjoyable reading experience and blending it with a creeping sense of unease that fits the topic perfectly.

Anyway, since aberrations cover a wide field of different creatures, the report begins by roughly categorizing aberrant threats as cosmic interlopers (including noting the flumphs!), hadopelagic ancients, perversions of nature, reality-displaced entities and subterranean nightmares are discussed – as are warptouched creatures, making for not only a nice reading experience, but also serving as an interesting basic set-up to contemplate prior to making a character.

Now, a big problem for some aberrations would be a non-humanoid physiology – as such, it should come as no surprise that the magic item slot question arises in the context of playable aberrations. This is relevant from a mathematic point of view, considering how item-granted boosts are included in the calculations, particularly at higher levels. The imbued metabolism ability allows such aberrations to swallow magic items to gain their benefits. And yes, the rules-language manages to concisely codify this process and avoids cheesing and still features scaling regarding slot numbers, making the mechanic supremely elegant.

Okay, so let's go through the respective racial traits! Cosmic interlopers get +2 Int and Wis, -2 Dex, a base speed of 5 ft., a fly speed of 30 ft. (clumsy) (5 ft. base speed), darkvision 60 ft., all-around vision, two tentacle secondary natural attacks at 1d4 and interlopers with an Int of 11 or more gain alter winds and whispering wind 1/day as a SP. They also can expend actions to resist vacuum, which is pretty damn cool. While slightly lopsided regarding base ability score modifiers and studded with low-level flight, the bad maneuverability (hovering works sans check, just fyi) maintains balance here and in fact requires some interesting, potentially even hilarious, tactical scenes at the table. There are two alternate traits that provide alternate racial traits: +2 Int and Cha, -2 Str for domination orbs (beholders, minus the closed content IP) – these guys can fire, 1/day, a spell as a ray from their eye. Cool! The stellar ray would similarly cover the classic ixitxachitl (or flumph...) with a proper stinger that deals acid damage as well. And yep, Small size. Instead of air manipulation, you may choose natural armor or sonic resistance (+ save-bonuses versus certain conditions). The all-around vision may be replaced with better Stealth, constant detect magic or a +2 bonus to Spellcraft to identify spells and +1 to atk versus arcane spellcasters. Instead of the vacuum adaptation, you may 1/day choose to roll twice on Bluff/Diplomacy or better tech-use, including decreased glitch probability. Both the vacuum resistant ability and all-around vision can be exchanged for Wild Talent – yep, psionics compatible!

Hedopelagic ancients get +2 Con and Wis, -2 Dex, are medium and have a movement rate of 20 ft., swim speed of 30 ft. They are amphibious, have darkvision 60 ft. and +2 natural armor. They get two secondary tentacle attacks and add +1 to the Dc of their illusions and SPs with the pattern and figment descriptors. Those with a Cha of 11+ also gain 1/day hypnotic pattern as a SP. And yes, they

are balanced via the slots once again. There are two variants included: Deep spawn gain +2 Str and Con, -2 Int, gaining a primary bite and +4 to saves versus poison and diseases as well as a modified slot-list and the ability to make an angler-fish like dancing lights variant. Cool, if lopsided on the physical. The same holds true for reef menaces, who gain +2 Dex and Con, -2 Cha and is Small. They gain +4 to Stealth while underwater and get tangling tentacles as a natural attack, which do not cause damage, but may trip foes. Fully aquatic beings can be made with the Deep One alternate racial trait and you can replace darkvision with deepsight, doubling range for a total of 120 ft., but only underwater. Big kudos: There is a scaling fast healing alternate racial trait that's reliant on water and that cannot be cheesed – big kudos! Keen underwater scent, an alternative SP, adaptation to water pressure (and cold resistance 5) and an unnatural aura complement this one. This is as good a time as any to voice my utter delight regarding the bonus and natural attack codification here – the rules are exceedingly precise and well-crafted – kudos!

Next up are perversions of nature gain +2 Str and Wis, -2 Intelligence, are medium and have a base speed of 20 ft. that is not reduced by armor or encumbrance. They gain the ability to Hold Breath, +2 natural armor, a primary bite, +2 to saves versus diseases, ingested poisons and effects that apply the nauseated and sickened conditions and a +2 bonus to Perception and Appraise to find hidden objects and determine whether food is spoiled. They also always treat Stealth as a class skill. The first of the two variants provided would be the chitined terror, who gains +2 Str and Con, -2 Cha, is amphibious with a 20 ft. swim speed and two claws. Curse-fused yields +2 Con and Cha, -2 Str and gains 30 ft. movement, but is affected by encumbrance and armor. It also gains a climb speed, immunity to magic sleep and a bonus to saves versus enchantments. With Cha of 11+, these folks also gain darkness 1/day as a SP. And yes, these suites are suitably balanced via exchanged traits. The other alternate racial traits net bonuses of defensive casting, a better carapace, carrion sense, better saves versus divine spells, atk and AC-bonuses versus a subtype of humanoid (bred to exterminate them!) and Improved Grapple via tiny grapple-helping appendages, Extend Spell for transmutations 1/day or sewer camouflage complement this section.

Reality-displaced entities get +2 Int and Cha, -2 Str, may compress up to ¼ their size sans squeezing penalties, get darkvision 60 ft, +1 to saves versus mind-affecting effects, two secondary tentacles

and Dr 5/piercing. Alternate ability-suite-wise, we get the Small body snatcher, who gains 40 ft. movement and two weak claws. Minor example of a formatting hiccup here: The creature is affected by protection from evil as though summoned and the spell-reference is not italicized. The body-snatcher can crawl into corpses of vanquished humanoids that exceed its size, helping it offset its high non-existent item slots while wearing this meat-suit, which is btw concisely codified in the rules – damn cool. The untethered gains +2 Str and Int, -2 Dex and gain two pincers as well as +1 to DCs of possession, magic jar, etc., representing something closer to yithians. The other alternate racial traits encompass burrow speed, lesser telepathy the SP to 1/day detect thoughts, being naturally psionic or immediate action grapple escape attempts. Precognitive flashes and the ability to send itself or another creature into the future or the ability to sense effects that distort time complement, as a whole, a damn cool array of tricks.

The subterranean nightmares, per default, gain +2 Str and Wis, -2 Cha, are Medium with a speed of 20 ft. that's not modified by armor or encumbrance, darkvision 120 ft., light sensitivity, +3 natural armor, +4 Stealth while underground, stability, a bite attack and roper-like strands – while these inflict Strength damage, it's only 1 point, has a save to negate and is iconic; moreover, its limits serve to keep it in check even for conservative games. They also get a variant of woodland stride in subterranean regions, but only for natural terrain. The alternate ability-suites include +2 Str and Wis, -2 Int and fly speed 40 ft. (poor), a secondary tail attack and +1 natural armor bonus. Note that the maneuverability and the modified slot-list does help reign in flight, though some campaigns may still consider this to be potent...but then again, you're basically playing a cloaker-thing! Hungry worms would be the second ability-suite, +2 Dex and Wis, -2 Intelligence, base speed 30 ft., 20 ft. climb speed, +1 to natural AC, scent and secondary tentacle attacks. The alternate racial traits include burrow speed, Knowledge (dungeoneering) and Survival as class skills, better AC versus rays, SR penetration bonuses, hooks claws, -1 to Will saves in exchange to +1 to the DC of mental ability damage/drain-based abilities used, a Cha-variant of the strands or +1 to the DC of sonic effects – once again, neat!

Finally, we take a look at the most “normal” race – the warptouched, who gain +2 to an ability score of their choice, are Medium with 30 ft. movement, are treated as aberrations for the purpose of spells and effects, gain darkvision 60 ft., +1 to Bluff, Disguise, Knowledge

(local), +1 natural AC, two secondary tentacle attacks at 1d4 base damage, +2 to saves versus SPs and SUs of aberrations and they may, as a swift action, suppress their unnatural traits, helping them greatly disguising their nature. The alternate racial traits include unlocking class skills, constant detect aberrations, a 30 ft. swim speed, +1 to atk versus aberrations, two favored class options, Wild Talent, a maw, +2 to natural armor and Intimidate versus humanoids, technological aptitude or being treated as +1 level regarding the use of revelations from the Dark tapestry or Heavens mysteries. While age, height and weight vary wildly between all these aberrations, a sample reference table is still included – kudos! We also get a massive FCO-list that includes psionic classes as well as occult classes – no balance concerns or complaints there. Well done! Okay, so the basic racial traits as a whole are amazing – they are balanced in a rather ingenious way; the options will not break any game and provide meaningful options galore. While I am not the biggest fan of races that grant their ability score bonuses to only physical or mental scores, these make sense here and, more importantly, don't break any of the races. In short: It's been a long, long time since I was this impressed with a section of races.

Do the classes hold up? Well, we have a total of four archetypes and, as always, the racial paragon class to cover. Let us begin with the two briefer archetypes, the first of which would be the conduit of the forbidden psychic, who is locked into the dark half or dream psychic disciplines. Instead of detect thoughts, 2nd level causes anyone who seeks to tap into the mind of the conduit to take Wisdom damage and be dazed. 9th level nets 1/day confusion, with the additional option to expend spells to cast it, getting the complex possibility of metamagic feat use in conjunction right. The archetype loses telepathic bond for this. At 17th level, when a confused creature damages itself, the conduit may assume control over it as dominate monster, thankfully with limited daily uses. The second smaller archetype herein would be the Opener of Ways summoner, who gets a modified summon monster list specializing in calling forth void-called beings instead of celestial/infernal ones, with aberrations added to the summon list. The void-called template is btw. also presented here and is, power-wise, approximately on par with the more commonly-used ones. 6th level yields a thought eater familiar that requires being fed spell slots to keep it from roaming, making it an interesting addition that replaces maker's call and transposition.

A rather complex archetype for the hunter class would be the freak wrangler, who loses all summon nature's ally spells. Instead of the regular Animal

Focus, these guys gain an aberration focus: No less than 16 different foci are presented, basically rewriting the whole class engine with an aberration focus. This also extends to the pet gained: From akata to choker to rust monsters and snallygasters, the archetype features a total of 12 such aberration pets (and yes, rules-wise, they continue behaving like animal companions regarding tricks etc.) – all with their own stats, advancements, etc. big kudos here, this is actually a hunter I'd like to play! A minor complaint: The vampiric mist focus can allow the creature to be healed continuously via feeding it creatures to grapple and bleed dry. Since this is pretty limited and slow, it shouldn't break the game, though.

Now the racial paragon class would be "That Which Must Not Be", which, chassis-wise, receives good Will-saves, $\frac{3}{4}$ BAB-progression, d8 HD, 4 + Int skills per level and proficiency with simple weapons. The class, unsurprisingly, can gain natural weapons galore, but only may employ a maximum number governed by level, beginning at 3 and scaling up to 7. Now, ability-progression-wise, we have a massive amount of player agenda: At first level, you choose aberrant power – this acts as a kind of bloodline, which unlocks new abilities every 6 levels after 1st and provides the base ability-suite: Mental juggernaut, for example, nets you at-will instigate psychic duel and builds on that as an engine and also features size-increases. Scion of Madness focuses on causing Wisdom damage and confusion and servitors of the Old Ones gain SPs. So these are the basics.

At 2nd level and every even level thereafter, the class also gets to choose an abominable weirdness – basically one of the talents of the class, which, if applicable, has its saving throw DCs governed by Charisma. These include better aquatic adaption, acidic blood, gaining attach with certain natural weapons, reflexive negative energy damage, blood-draining feeding tubes, pulling filaments, extra heads or limbs, etc. Flight is suitably locked, minimum-level-wise, and from fortification-style anatomy to natural weapons and a bit of mesmerist poaching or even a phrenic amplification, we have a very wide and cool array of options here. Wanted to extract brains, illithid-style? Well, starting 12th level, you can. Oh, and yes, toxins etc. obviously can also be found. 5th level and every 5 levels thereafter increase natural armor by +1. 9th level eliminates age penalties and eliminates the threat of dying of old age – strange aeons indeed.

Beyond these, the class gains another option for players to customize it in a wide variety of ways, namely Alien Heritages. These are also chosen at

1st level and similarly act as a kind of linear ability progression – one ability is gained at first level, the second at 3rd and thereafter, every 4 levels unlock a new one. Once again, if applicable, Charisma acts as the governing attribute for save DCs for these. How many do we get? Well, more than 30 (!!!). That is in addition to the impressive talent array AND the 3 aberrant powers that maintain basic usefulness! The theme here are specific aberrations – there is a flumph heritage, one for beholders (minus IP, but you'll now what's meant!), Yithians, phrenic scourges, ropers, neh-thalggus (yep, with braincollecting...), mimics, moon beasts (which, at 11th level, heal when inflicting Wisdom drain, save to negate – not ideal, but limited in its cheesability), aberrations sans easily discernible heritage, intellect devourers (with 1st level psychic stab that is kept balanced by concise limitations), hyakume, heikegani, grindylows, froghearts, driders – basically, all the iconics are covered and the ability array also covers some of the under-appreciated aberrations for weirdos like yours truly. Particularly impressive would be, at least from a design-perspective, the fact that A LOT of the signature abilities you'd expect are gained rather soon and kept viable, but balanced via concise restrictions that prevent nasty cheeses.

At 20th level, the class gains a unique name and title – and when someone, somewhere mentions it...it KNOWS, making it possible to greater scry the hapless fool...oh, and the poor sod becomes more susceptible to the Thing's tricks. Worse for your foes, at this level, you are extremely hard to kill, lying dead but dreaming...amazing capstone.

"But endy, what if I don't want to commit to a full 20-level class?" – Well, the pdf has you covered: The final archetype, the aberrant champion, is basically a catch-all archetype that allows the character to dabble in aberrant power, abominable weakness and alien heritage! Oh, and the archetype can be applied to a metric TON of classes: Beyond psionic classes (including, but not limited to the often overlooked cryptic and dread), we also cover the core and APG-options, ACG- and Occult classes AND some 3pp-classics like the warmaster, the taskshaper and hellion. Big kudos!

The pdf closes with 6 racial feats, which include the option to knock foes prone with grapples, gain an extra weirdness, a bonus to atk and damage versus aberrations with a different alien heritage (slightly unfortunate wording there), an upgrade for tentacle attacks, swift, mind-affecting demoralize via telepathy and a more devastating rend, which thankfully is locked and reserved for the higher levels.

Conclusion

Editing and formatting are top-notch: Editor Robert N. Emerson has done a phenomenal job. It's been quite a while since I read a crunch-book this long that is this precise regarding formatting, types, etc. – big kudos! Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column full-color standard and the pdf sports nice full-color artworks, some of which may be known to avid readers of 3pp-material. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Wendall Roy's latest *In the Company* installment is a masterpiece, pure and simple. It excels in writing and rules-language, provides a ridiculous amount of bang for buck and does so with panache aplomb. The multi-attack monster is a hard trope to get right and the sheer breadth of aberrations this had to cover is daunting. The fact that this allows you to play a vast array of aberration concepts via both races and class options, tweak them and further enhance the options makes this absolutely amazing.

I am hard to impress at this point. I have seen A LOT. Add to that the fact that I *also* require races to feel unique and worthwhile enough to integrate them in the first place. Add to that the vast breadth Wendall had to cover. Insert a wide open archetype and a really rewarding racial paragon class with a ton of player agenda and moving parts. By all accounts, this pdf should have stumbled at some point. And I tried pretty hard to find hiccups, flaws in the engine. Apart from the very rare and mostly cosmetic minor glitch, I did not find what I was almost certain would be here. Instead, I found beauty. The options presented herein are potent and tick off a lot of the things I usually complain about, power-level-wise, but when they do, they do so with often subtle, really interesting balancing mechanics to keep them in line.

Beyond being an impressive feat as a writer, this represents an impressive feat as a designer and frankly outclasses even his amazing supplements on dragons and rakshasas, as far as I'm concerned. This is a phenomenal toolkit, which, courtesy of the breadth of options, could carry a whole aberration party. The array of races and wide open archetype, the clever paragon class – this is, in case you haven't noticed by now, a piece of excellence as far as I'm concerned. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars +seal of approval and I nominate this as a candidate for my Top ten of 2017. If you remotely like aberrations, then get this. (As an aside: GMs, this is also pretty much the ultimate aberration-cultist toolkit...)

You can get this amazing supplement [here on OBS!](#)
Endzeitgeist out.



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