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PATHWAYS



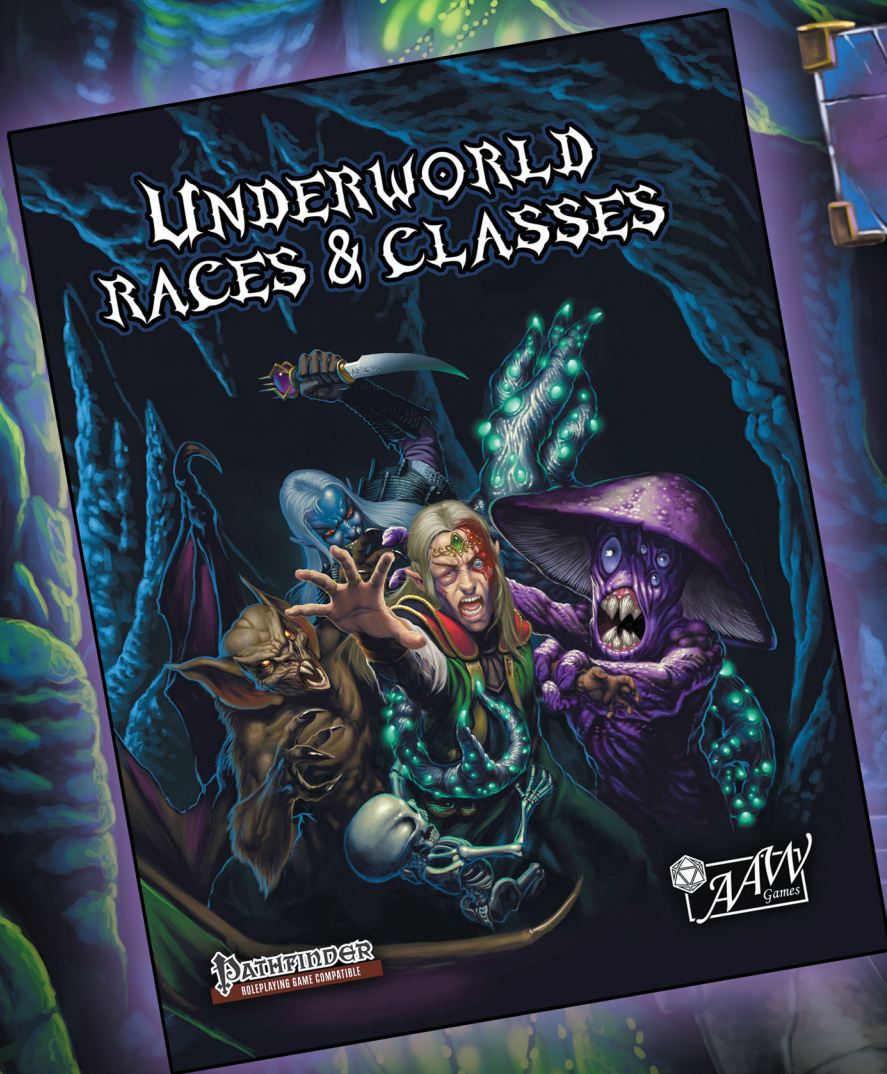
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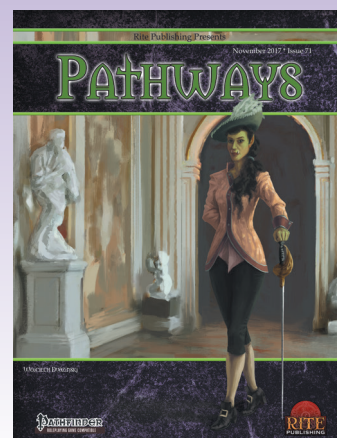
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Editorial

by Dave Paul

There are quite a few reasons I'm uncomfortable writing about anything with the term "half-breed" in the description or title. Nevertheless, that's the theme of this issue and I'm the editor, so here goes...

So first, my discomfort. Thanks to the Harry Potter series, I don't have to get into why calling someone a half-blood is a problem. A more skilled writer than me has already tackled this and given the world an example of how to treat the issue. Of course, there's plenty behind all of this, including the beliefs that some people have about ethnicities. For example, there is a long, horrible history in the United States of classifying people in terms of proportions of their "blood" or "race" and people have had their status as citizens, indeed as human beings, legally compromised as a result of these beliefs. When I teach these subjects, I point out the damage caused in the *Ozawa* and *Thind* cases in 1922 and 1923. In neither of those cases was there any hint of "half" anything, but a consequence of those cases, and a consequence of the racist policies in the United States regarding people of African or Native American ancestry, meant that there have been far too many cases where "half-breed" or anything like it have been used to cause harm, to deprive people of autonomy, and, in the most terrible cases, to attempt to rationalize mass murder.

Okay, with that out of the way, Pathfinder is a game, we play the game, and, for as long as it and its predecessors have been around, there have been half-races. A friend of mine wanted to play a character that was half-halfling and half-elf. I allowed it. Another friend in another campaign is playing a character that is half-dwarf and half-ogre. For about as long as I've known the game, there

have been half-orcs and half-elves. I remember when friends first speculated about half-drow (after all, if there were half-elves, why not?). And then the questions arouse: what about a character who has a drow parent and, say, a wild elf parent? What is that character?

And of course, we have half-giants, half-dragons, and all kinds of critters that amount to half-demons, half-devils, and more. This is good. This is fun. One of the things I've noticed about gamers is that they're willing to step into ambiguity. They're willing to entertain contests where all the members of the opposing sides are all good-aligned (just because two groups are good doesn't mean they have to get along). They're willing to explore an adventure where the "bad guy" turns out to be a paladin (not an antipaladin mind you). They're willing to participate in scenarios where the only way to accomplish an objective is to ally with enemies.

Half-breeds, I suppose, make sense in a game where we are constantly exploring what everything means. When is something not what we thought? How can a spell be both arcane and divine? What happens when a creature is neither alive nor dead? What happens when a creature is both alive and dead? Within this sort of messy context, we create as a means to cope. And so, here in this issue, we get just another tiny glimpse into this big mess. We can do this wrong, of course. Anyone can. Hopefully, in this issue of *Pathways*, we've done it well. With any luck, we've managed to get content into your hands that is fun, that asks us to consider new ways of doing things (and seeing things), and that doesn't harm or restrict anyone.

Happy gaming.





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The Rite Way Q&A

with Stephen Rowe, Illustration by Purple Prose

Q: How do I keep from being a railroading GM? I want to say yes to my players more, but how do I prepare?

A: There is no one way to avoid being a railroader. Instead, there are strategies and skills that any GM can develop over time which makes railroading less necessary, makes the rails invisible, or aids in preparation for when things inevitably go off track.

The first technique to avoid railroading is to make the players and their characters *want* to push things forward on the path you choose. Think of yourself as a trickster god or the hand of destiny, subtly manipulating reality in order to make the silly mortals conform to your desires. They might have “many options”, but the *best* path is the one you want. If you do your job well, you can make them seek out the rails instead of tying them to the front of a train. There are lots of ways to do this, but the best in my experience is creating individual emotional investment. Figure out what your end goal is for the PCs or even the campaign, and work backwards to get them caring about it. Work it into their backstories from the first session, introduce valuable and interesting NPCs wrapped up in the situation, and foreshadow the crap out of it. Practice enough restraint to feed them bits and pieces at a time, and before you know it, they’ll be laying down the rails for you.

The second strategy is to employ *discrete* forms of railroading. There are many ways to go about this too. One is to prepare a great deal, but keep the details flexible or interchangeable. This allows for the illusion of choice. As a rough example, maybe there are three different areas/regions the PCs can potentially explore. You can’t predict which they are going to go to next. You don’t really *need* to though. You can figure out all sorts of things, like plot elements, statblocks, and NPCs that can work in any of the three locations. No matter where they choose to go, they end up where you need them to be (because it didn’t really matter). Another way is to “lure” them forward. This is sometimes difficult to pull off depending on how savvy the players are... because there are dozens of different tropes revolving around this core principle. Kidnapped people, MacGuffins, and revenge are all lazy examples of lures you can use to keep the PCs on track. However, you need to make them novel or the players end up rolling their eyes. Learning to do old tricks in new ways takes practice.

Finally, it is important to accept that things inevitably go sideways sooner or later. There are some players who get a kick out of trying to figure out what the plot is, so they can obstinately wander away from it. There are others who get bored no matter what you try, and seek to stir things up. Also, on a more positive note, sometimes the PCs simply come up with some brilliant idea you’ve never even imagined which flabbergasts and alarms you.

The hardest GM skill to learn, giving a subtle little smile while letting it happen.

Just because things aren’t going to play out according to schedule, doesn’t mean your preparations all go to waste. Let them do the thing they want, but think up realistic and justifiable consequences to ignoring the plot. The evil lich isn’t waiting on the PCs to show up to begin her plot for world domination, so if they ignore her, maybe she blows up a city which includes a bunch of people they know. If your villains are fleshed out, they have motivations and are usually smart enough to compensate for curve balls. Likewise, if a dungeon remains unexplored for too long, just boost the difficulty considerably as monsters breed, prepare defenses, and grow in power.

If they continue to ignore things, employ the other strategies above to get them back on track, or move the tracks so they find that their inane random, wanderings were on the rails the entire time. Finally, embrace the times when your players truly Win, because they are awesome. These are the memorable moments that immortalize a game in our minds for a lifetime, and it can be worth it to burn a bunch of now-useless notes.

Q: I game with a group of people that are very good at maxing out their characters, while I do good just understanding the basic 3.5 rules. What resources can I use or how can I become better at character building?

A: There is a wide-range of rules comprehension, and Pathfinder is such a mature (and dense) game, that it can be intimidating to try and create novel challenges for experienced players. I actually wrote a whole book addressing this very issue for low- to mid-experience level GMs, and it took that much space to really give the issue the necessary attention. It’s called *Four Horsemen Present: Minmaxed Monsters*, and can be purchased at DriveThruRPG. I’ll give a brief and quick overview.

It helps a lot to employ a series of simple GM tactics that make things more difficult and drain resources. As examples, you can employ interesting terrains and interrupt rests with encounters. It additionally gives a lot of cool and unique minmaxing monster tricks (and statblocks) you as a GM can employ that your players probably haven't seen before... and are ill prepared to handle. Like, what happens when a dragon actually fights intelligently... getting a trained fighter patsy to ride around on them with Mounted Combat feats, while decking themselves out with *useful* magic items, and employing guerrilla tactics (attack, flee, heal, and then attack)? How about evocative but strategic template use? It turns out a nymph vampire is a lot scarier than most creatures with the template. Finally, you can get a lot of bang for your buck by simply giving a few class levels to certain monsters. For example, any monster with a really high Wisdom ability score becomes significantly scarier with a single level in monk.

Q: How do I bring levity to a serious game without derailing the adventure?

A: Comedic relief is definitely a dual-edged blade. It is impossible for things to be 100% serious, no matter how much you might want it to be so, and every dark story needs at least some moments of levity. However, it can be distressingly easy for a bit of a laugh to completely break immersion.

I've found that this is most likely to happen when the GM gets surprised by something they thought was cool ending up unintentionally funny. This is most often some plot element or name that tickles

a player's funny bone, or prompts juvenile humor. The best way to deal with these shenanigans is to not get upset, and slide into the skid. Embrace the opportunity for comedy in the moment, laugh along with everyone else. Maybe even alter the situation to be a tad more ridiculous so everyone can get it out of their system. If you provide a moment for everyone to just have fun at the expense of the plot (and you by extension), it can paradoxically become easier to demand attention when you need it. If you let yourself get surly or defensive, it often invites more teasing, and lessens your control by undermining respect.

As a personal example, I once wrote up a mutating necromantic plague. Trying to think up a cool and ominous name for it, I unwisely chose to call it the Taint. When the obvious was pointed out to me (by a group of friends laughing at me for a solid five minutes), I had to laugh right along with them. Needless to say, it became a recurring joke at my expense, but I don't regret the mistake. It taught me a valuable lesson, and makes for a really funny inside-joke.

Designing funny moments is a little more difficult. Manufacturing comedy is a really underappreciated creative skill. This can act as a pressure-release though, and allows for the avoidance of the accidental funny stuff derailing entire adventures. Try to overact a goofy NPC, specifically insert a ridiculous name (that is actually an in-setting joke), or take advantage of the mistakes when they present themselves. Like above, if you remain in control, it allows everyone a brief moment to have fun, which can then make it significantly easier to get serious when its done.



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Crossbreed Creature Template

by Owen K.C. Stephens, Illustration by Wojciech Dudziński

A crossbreed is an individual who has the strong influence of an ancestor of a different race than the crossbreed's official species. While creatures such as half-dragons or half-outsiders can be of nearly any species, crossbreeds are specifically humanoids who have an unusual progenitor (also humanoid) in the woodpile. These combinations often include genetic mixes not normally possible, such as elf-dwarves and goblin-strix. A crossbreed is often the product of some

unique (and possibly unreproducible) circumstances. The elf who become the high priest of the god of dwarves, and has a blessed child uniting the best of both races. The children of the human wizard who spend much, much too much time polymorphed into hobgoblins. The poor soul who suffered the rarest effect of an ancient *rod of wonder*. This template is designed for the GM to use to create unique and unusual NPCs, not to give new options to player characters.

Creating a Crossbreed Creature

"Crossbreed" is a template that can be added to any humanoid creature, which becomes the base creature. Select a second humanoid race that does not grant racial hit dice. This is the donor creature. Add any subtypes of the donor creature to the base creature.

CR: +1

Racial Abilities: The base creature receives some of the donor creature's racial abilities. For common donor races, the abilities in question are given below. For uncommon or rare races, select no less than 4 and no more than 5 RP worth of racial abilities the from *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Race Guide* that the donor creature normally receives, and add them to the base creature.

Dwarf: Hardy, hatred, stonemasonry

Gnome: Gnome magic, illusion resistance, skill bonus (one Craft or Profession)

Elf: Elven immunities, elven magic

Half-Elf: Linguist, multitalented, skill bonus (Perception)

Half-Orc: Orc ferocity, skill bonus (Intimidate)

Halfling: Fearless, lucky (lesser), skill bonus (Climb)

Human: Skilled

HP: A crossbreed creature gains bonus hit points equal to 150% of the base creature's original CR.

Defensive Abilities: Due to the general hardiness of a crossbreed's mix of genetic qualities, a crossbreed gains a +1 untyped bonus to AC, CMB, CMD, and all saving throws. If the avatar of love's base creature had DR or SR, its value increases by 1. If it had energy resistances, they all increase by 15. If it had a resistance of 30, that becomes an immunity.

Variant Multiclassing: A crossbreed creature's connection to her donor species ancestor is so strong, she gains additional class features as part of the natural talents that develop from her donor

bloodline. Select one class for which the donor race grants alternate favored class bonus options. The crossbreed creature gains the abilities for that class's variant multiclassing rules (from *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Pathfinder Unchained*). It gains these variant abilities based on its total hit dice (rather than just class levels), and unlike normal variant multiclassing recipients it does not give up any of its normal feat progression. For additional variant multiclass rules beyond those presented in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Pathfinder Unchained*, check out [The Genius Guide to Variant Multiclassing Rules](#).

Sample Crossbreed Creature

Aislyn Bloodfury Aillethen,
Duchess of Greenrill

CR 8

XP 4,800

Elf (Crossbreed Orc) Bard 8 (variant multiclass barbarian)

N Medium humanoid (elf, orc)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +13

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +1 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 template)

hp 53 (8d8+4+10)(orc ferocity)

Fort +4, **Ref** +11, **Will** +8; +2 vs. enchantments, +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge; **Immune** sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 rapier +11/+6 (1d6+2/18–20)

Ranged longbow +9/+4 (1d8×3)

Special Attacks bardic performance 21 rounds/day (move action; countersong, dirge of doom, distraction, fascinate, inspire competence +3, inspire courage +2, suggestion), rage 8 rounds/day

Bard Spells Known (CL 8th; concentration +11)

3rd (3/day)—*haste* (DC 18), *major image* (DC 18), *sepia snake sigil* (DC 18)

2nd (5/day)—*invisibility*, *mirror image*, *shatter*, *sound burst* (DC 16)

1st (5/day)—*animate rope*, *disguise self*, *grease*, *lesser confusion* (DC 14), *silent image* (DC 16)

0th (at will)—*daze* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

BASE STATISTICS

Without eagle's splendor, the bard's statistics are Bard Spells Known reduce spell DCs by 2; Cha 17; Skills Bluff +10, Perform (dance) +14.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 16, **Con** 10, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 23

Feats Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Acrobatics +7, Bluff +12, Climb +10, Escape Artist +14, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (arcane, local, nature) +8, Perception +13, Perform (dance) +16, Sleight of Hand +11, Stealth +14

Languages Common, Elven

SQ bardic knowledge +4, elven magic, lore master 1/day, orc ferocity, versatile performance (dance, comedy), weapon familiarity

Combat Gear *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of eagle's splendor*, *potion of invisibility*; **Other Gear** +1 leather armor, +1 rapier, longbow with 20 arrows, cloak of resistance +1, ring of protection +1, 45 gp



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1000 Abnormal Kobolds

By Creighton Broadhurst

Creatures of the dark and physically unassuming, kobolds proclaim themselves scions of the dragons and, as such, destined to rule the earth. Tribal creatures, they hate gnomes and bright light. They attack the former on sight, and shy away from the latter when possible. Kobolds are often derided as no threat and given little or no design time by GMs. They can be so much more!

Use the tables below to add depth and flavour to the kobolds in your game.

Appearance

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

1. This kobold's scales are a deep rusty black, making it hard to spot when it lurks among the shadows.
2. While this kobold's scales are mainly a dark, rusty brown, a swath of scales on its back has a deep, crimson hue.
3. A crude, dirty bandage encrusted with dried blood is wrapped around this kobold's right upper arm.
4. Both this kobold's ears have multiple piercings, with tiny bones—perhaps kobold finger bones—threaded through them.
5. Scars criss-cross this kobold's chest. Around each scar, its scales are discoloured and sickly-looking.
6. This kobold wears an over-sized patchwork poncho made up of small pieces of many different garments. Red, orange and yellow colours predominate.
7. With baleful, pale yellow eyes this kobold has the faint whiff of the demonic about it.
8. While its fellow all have long tails, this kobold's tail has been hacked off. Only a ragged stump remains.
9. This warrior has previously suffered a head wound. A dirty, bloody bandage is wrapped around its head. Blood oozes down its forehead and onto its left cheek.
10. Carrying a comically oversized axe, this kobold grunts and strains under the weight of its weapon. The battle axe is of dwarven manufacture, and the kobold struggles to wield it effectively in battle.

Battle Tactics

In battle, some kobolds fight differently to their brethren (although none of them fight fair):

1. Even more cowardly than normal, this kobold is terrified of the sight of blood. As soon as one of its fellows is injured, it flees.
2. This kobold knows how dangerous spellcasters can be; he targets them with missile weapons.
3. A bloodthirsty maniac, and a wanna-be hero, this kobold seeks out the largest enemy...and tries to stab him in the back.

4. Striking from hiding, this kobold is silent while he fights. Even when injured, he doesn't utter a sound—he has learnt that noise often brings death.
5. This warrior hangs back from battle. He waits for an enemy to fall before rushing in for a coup de grace.
6. A thief at heart, this kobold stops fighting to loot the bodies of the fallen, as soon as it is safe to do so.
7. Wearing a bandolier festooned with throwing daggers, this warrior hangs back from combat and hurls his weapons at isolated targets.
8. Confident of his own skills, this warrior attempts to goad enemies into making foolish attacks by yipping insults at them in his high-pitched voice.
9. Partly mad, this kobold can't stop laughing in battle—even when injured. He is fearless and fights to the death, even if the situation is hopeless.
10. This kobold bears a grudge against one of this fellows. If he gets the chance, he surreptitiously stabs his enemy in the back.

Trinkets & Treasures


Sometimes, kobolds carry small trinkets or treasures. Sadly, for the PCs, such “special treasures” are often nothing more than junk. Roll on the table below:

1. A few rat bones, pieces of fluff and three short lengths of frayed rope.
2. A small blunt knife, a set of partially carved bone dice and 3 cp.
3. A partially eaten, mouldering rat corpse and a thin, broken gold ring (worth 5 gp if repaired).
4. This bloodstained pouch contains a bent iron spike and a dirty steel mirror.
5. Several small mushrooms wrapped in fungus along with 6 cp.
6. Four sling bullets of dwarven craft, flint and steel, and a shredded water flask.
7. The rusted hilt of a dagger, three sharp rock shards, and the mouldering remains of a rat corpse.
8. A necklace of rat skulls decorated with flakes of rock.
9. A heavy iron key, the stub of a small candle, and 1 sp.
10. Four pieces of chalk, three fishhooks, and a length of twine

GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing

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

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 adventurers are running towards the viewer. On the left is a female elf with long red hair, wearing a green tunic and a green hat with a feather. She is holding a spear. On the right is a male elf with short blue hair, wearing a blue tunic and brown armor. He is holding a sword. They are running through a large, circular opening in a stone wall. In the background, there are skeletal remains, including a full skeleton on the left and some bones on the floor. The overall tone is mysterious and adventurous.

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Spells Showcase: Half-Breeds!

By Dave Paul, Illustration by Matt Morrow

I wasn't sure that I'd find anything from the Rite Publishing spell books that fit this month's theme, but, *amphisbaenic caster*, from [101 Hill and Mountain Spells](#) comes close, as does *unholy projection* from [101 Urban Spells](#). Neither is a perfect fit; still, the goal is to have fun and provide great content. I hope, at least, these meet that objective.

~~

Two heads are better than one. My aim with *amphisbaenic caster* was to give the player of a high-level caster the opportunity to gain the benefits of acting twice each round. However, that is incredibly powerful, and so I wanted to come up with a way to prevent that power from being abused. I think I've managed this across multiple different fronts, the combined weight of which makes this spell fair.

Amphisbaenic Caster

School: Illusion (shadow); **Level:** Sorcerer/Wizard 7, Witch 7

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, M (an amphisbaena egg)

Range: 5 ft.

Effect: One shadow duplicate

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

You split in two (the copy, which is slightly more shadowy than and easily distinguished from you, occupies an adjacent square when the split occurs). Each copy has half your current hit points (and half your maximum hit points). If you are a sorcerer, each copy has half your current available spell slots (divided as evenly as possible in terms of both spell level and number of spells). If you are a wizard or witch, each copy has half your current prepared spells (divided as evenly as possible in terms of both spell level and number of spells). If you have special abilities that have a limited number of uses, the uses are split as evenly as possible between the two copies. In all such cases, if an odd number of spells, abilities, uses, etc. are to be split, the larger number remain with the real copy and the smaller number transfer to the shadow copy.

If you have a familiar, pet, or similar ally, it recognizes both of you but prefers the real to the shadow copy. Your shadow copy has shadowy versions of all your gear and otherwise appears nearly indistinguishable from you except for its being shadowy. Its items are made of shadow

material but your magic items are not shared or split (if you have a +2 *dagger* then you retain it, the copy has a dagger that appears to be a +2 *dagger* but is not in fact a magical weapon—though it is a masterwork weapon).

Each round on your turn, both you and your copy may act, effectively doubling your actions. Treat this as the universal monster rule dual initiative; you have the higher initiative count and the shadowy duplicate has the lower initiative count. Damage dealt by your duplicate, including damage-dealing spells cast by your duplicate, causes 50% less damage (if your duplicate casts a 10d6 *fireball* resolve the damage normally and reduce the total by 50%). Spells that do not deal damage have their save DCs reduced by -2. Your duplicate cannot cast spells that target itself (though it can cast spells that target you).

If you are an illusionist, a sorcerer of the shadow bloodline, or a witch with a shadow patron, damage-dealing spells cast by your duplicate deal 20% less damage instead of 50% less damage, and your duplicate's non-damage-dealing spells do not have their save DCs reduced.

At any time on your turn or on the duplicate's turn, if you and your duplicate are adjacent and on the same plane (if one is ethereal or on the Shadow Plane and the other is not, they are not considered to be on the same plane even if they would otherwise be described as adjacent), you can merge as a standard action. When you merge, all the remaining hit points, spells, etc., are available to you. When the spell ends, regardless of whether you and the duplicate are adjacent, you and the duplicate merge. If you and the duplicate are not on the same plane when the spell ends, treat the duplicate as though it had died.

If your shadowy duplicate dies, you lose all its remaining spells, unused abilities, etc. If you die, you lose all your remaining spells, unused abilities, etc., however, your soul immediately transfers to your shadowy duplicate (unless it is magically prevented from doing so) and you are dazed for 1 round as your shadowy form becomes fully real (at which point you have access to whatever remaining spells, abilities, etc., it still retained).

The duplicate is magical; if it makes contact with an *antimagic field*, if it is successfully dispelled or disjoined, the spell ends and you and the duplicate merge as if

the spell's duration had expired (but do not treat the duplicate as though it had died unless you and it were not on the same plane when this occurs).

~~

Despite minor similarities of these two spells, my goals in creating them were quite different. With this second offering, I wanted to allow something akin to the kind of popular culture astral projection (not necessarily the spell of the same name) but to restrict it to particularly nefarious and wicked casters. The *berbalang* was the perfect choice, for a number of reasons, and it allowed me to craft a spell that gives power to those casters who are willing to explore the necromantic energies associated with spirits. The great power of *unholy projection* is that the caster can travel to places it normally could not and affect creatures in those places. The great weakness of the spell is that the physical body is helpless while the caster is able to roam about the world in a new incorporeal form.

Unholy Projection

School: Necromancy [evil]; **Level:** Cleric/Oracle 5, Sorcerer/Wizard 5, Witch 5

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Components: V, S, M/DF (a *berbalang*'s wings)

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 hour/level (D)

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

You enter a trance that separates your spirit body from your physical body. Your current hit points split in half between your physical body and your spirit body. Your spirit body gains the incorporeal subtype and special ability; otherwise, it retains the same statistics as your physical body with the following changes: its AC is 10 + your Dexterity modifier, deflection and dodge bonuses, and you gain a single incorporeal touch attack that deals 1d4 Constitution damage on a hit as your sole attack. Your projected spirit can travel no more than 1/4 mile/level away from your physical body. Because your actual physical body is only partially in existence when in this state, it gains *displacement* as the spell. When separated in this way, your physical body is unconscious and helpless. If your physical body is injured while in this state, your separated projection immediately returns to its body, and the body loses *displacement*. If your physical body is slain, your spirit body immediately dies as well. If your spirit

body is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, it returns to the physical body immediately. While in spirit form you can end the effect as a standard action, at which point your spirit immediately returns to your body. When your spirit form returns to your body, add both your spirit body's hit points and your physical body's hit points back together to determine your current hit point total.

Magic items on your physical body or spells previously cast that have sufficiently long duration that produce a deflection or dodge bonus, or that affect you mentally, maintain their effectiveness over your spirit body so long as your physical body remains alive. Other items (magical armor, rings that modify spells, etc.) have no effect on your spirit body and you cannot use them while in your spirit body form (though the armor still protects your otherwise helpless physical body).

If you cast *unholy projection* within two miles of a settlement with which you are very familiar, then the distance your spirit body can travel is doubled.





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Headless Mule

By J.L. Duncan, Illustration by Markus Art Design

The road is long, and the light grows scarce with the setting sun. A sudden change of breeze spreads the distinct odor of rotting flesh. The unpleasant smell seemingly comes from a shady grove of trees, just off the road.

Following the odor of rotting flesh, at the center of the grove is a lone gravesite. The severed head of a mule is fixed upon a wood marker, but there is little blood and no sign of a body. PCs investigating the area can discover the following.

- **Head:** The mule's head appears severed by an amazingly sharp weapon with a single blow. Removing the heavy and slippery skull from the spike is difficult (Strength DC 10), but reveals the name of Mara Sorales carved into the post beneath. A DC 15 Heal check reveals that the mule was dead prior to decapitation. A DC 20 Heal check (Knowledge [religion] DC 25) reveals it died due to its life force being removed in a manner commonly associated with undead.
- **Tracks:** Close examination of the ground (Survival DC 10 [Perception DC 15]) reveals the imprint of an oddly arranged, four-toed Medium-sized creature. The big toes of the feet and curve of the arches seem to be on the outside edge of each foot. The imprints of inverted feet (along with scattered drops of blood) can be backtracked (Survival DC 13) to the currently undiscovered headless corpse of a slain mule outside of a nearby town. The strange inverted footprints can also then be followed to the town directly.
- **Grave:** The ground beneath the stake has been disturbed within the last few months (Survival DC 10 [Perception DC 15]). The mostly rotten remains of an older, dwarven woman are buried a few feet down. A DC 15 Heal check reveals she perished from strangulation due to a rope. It appears that before she died she swallowed a magical silver coin (see *hex coin* sidebar for details).

Once followed back to the town, the tracks become indiscernible due to the frequent traffic of the townspeople and their animals. A DC 20 Diplomacy check made to gather information from the insular folk reveals the following information about Mara Sorales. A failed check means the PC's questions are met with curses or superstitious gestures to ward off evil when the name is mentioned.

HEX COIN

Aura; faint divination; **CL** 1st

Slot —; **Price** 2,000 gp; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

The bearer of the *hex coin* can sense whenever they are the target of a witch hex or spell with the curse descriptor. With a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft check, they can tell the exact nature of the hex or spell. As a standard action, the bearer can touch the coin to a creature and tell if it is currently affected by a witch hex or spell with the curse descriptor, and the nature of it with a successful skill check. When the bearer attempts to identify cursed magic items, they must only exceed the DC by 5 or more to detect the curse. If the bearer knows the item is cursed, they gain no bonus when identifying the item.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *identify*, creator must be a witch; **Cost** 1,000 gp

Mara Sorales is dead, and it is universally believed her dark fate was a harsh necessity. Reports of her crimes are varied, lurid, and difficult to believe... including congress with devils, stealing life from sleeping innocents, and hexing the locals. When the townspeople's livestock and pack animals took ill and began dying, she was blamed, and hung until dead. They buried her body outside the town, and hoped the curse would end. It has not, and if anything, it has only worsened. Many believe it is high time they dig up the witch's corpse to burn it, fearing her restless spirit continues to plague them.

Creature: The cause of the "plague" and murdered livestock is Mara's enraged and fiendish son, Aven Sorales.

AVEN SORALES

This ashen, malformed dwarf has solid black eyes and walks with an obvious hitch in his step.

Cambis

CR 9

XP 6,400

LN Medium outsider (native)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +18



DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 19 (+3 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural)

hp 114 (12d10+48)

Fort +12, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11

DR 5/magic; **Immune** fire, poison, mind affecting effects; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10, cold 10

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee spectral whip +17/+12/+7 (1d6+5) and slam +12 (1d4+2 plus energy drain) or slam +21 (1d4+5 plus energy drain)

Special Attacks energy drain (1 level, DC 19)

Spells Known (CL 9th; concentration +16)

4th (4/day)—*bestow curse* (DC 17), *contagion* (DC 17)
3rd (7/day)—*fireball* (DC 16), *nondetection*, *suggestion* (DC 16)

2nd (7/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 15), *invisibility*, *scare* (DC 15), *rope trick*

1st (7/day)—*animate rope*, *chill touch*, *disguise self*, *silent image* (DC 14), *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *bleed* (DC 13), *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *mage hand*, *message*, *read magic*

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 17, **Con** 19, **Int** 18, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 31

Feats Dodge, Eschew Materials, Silent Spell, Still Spell, Quicken Spell

Skills Bluff +18, Disguise +18, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (local) +16, Perception +18, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +17, Use Magic Device +17

Languages Common, Dwarven, Draconic, Infernal

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure standard (studded leather armor)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Consume Soul (Su) When the cambis kills a living creature, it can choose to consume a portion the creature's soul as an immediate action. This otherwise functions as the *death knell* spell (DC 23 Will save negates), except the benefits persist for 1 day per Hit Die of the target, the cambis becomes immune to hunger for the duration, and gains fast

TRUTH The townspeople are a superstitious lot, but Mara Sorales was most certainly a witch... though no longer one of any great power. That was not always so, and in her youth she fell in with an infernal cult. At first, this was simply a chance to rebel, and explore newfound magic, but her better nature won out when the rites and rituals grew too dark. She severed her ties, renounced her patron, and fled to a nowhere town to hide. She discovered she was pregnant... but not with a mortal child. Raising Aven in seclusion, she taught him to defy his nature, and to pity the ignorant who blamed her for their own misfortunes. However, as he matured, his hunger for life and souls grew. He could sustain himself on animals, but eventually the townspeople confused his feeding for a plague.

When they finally came for Mara, she begged Aven to hide, and to not seek revenge. Rather than become the monster the townspeople believed her to be, she chose death, believing it penance for her past sins. Unfortunately, without Mara, Aven's morality loses ground each day to his infernal patronage. He has begun to murder the livestock, and it is only a matter of time before he devours a townspeople's soul, and completes his tragic corruption.

healing equal to the creature's HD for 1 round per HD. The benefits from devouring more than one soul do not stack. Devouring the soul of an intelligent living creature (Intelligence score of 4 or higher) is an evil action that causes the cambis' alignment to permanently become lawful evil. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Hunger (Ex) A cambis that goes more than 1 day without dealing a negative level to a living creature gains the fatigued condition. This becomes the exhausted condition after an additional day, and deals 2 points of Constitution damage each day thereafter. The fatigued or exhausted condition and ability damage cannot be removed until the cambis consumes a soul or deals a negative level.

Spells The cambis casts spells as a 9th-level sorcerer.

Spectral Whip (Su) The spectral whip is a manifestation of the cambis' infernal power. The whip deals slashing damage and functions as a *ghost touch* and *brilliant energy* weapon. It has a reach of 20 ft., cannot be disarmed or sundered, and can be used to attack through physical barriers or creatures (ignoring any cover bonuses to AC).

Soul Explosion (Su) If the cambis possesses the benefits of the consume soul ability when they are killed, the residual soul energy explodes violently outward. Every creature within 20 feet must succeed on a DC 21 Reflex save or take 10d6 force damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

While half-fiends are the ordinary result of infernal and mortal unions, a cambis represents a purposeful pact between evil spellcasters and a mighty devil. These progeny are immaculately conceived, born to one of the cultists, and fated to rule over the group in their patron's name. The devil child possesses a hunger for living souls, this need only heightening as they mature. While a cambis is not inherently evil, their desire for life energy often leads to corruption. A cambis that succumbs to this temptation becomes an avatar for their infernal parent, claiming their rightful place at the head of the cult that spawned them.

A cambis appears to be a deformed version of their humanoid parent. Their eyes are always featureless and solid black. They also often possess ashen skin and malformed limbs.

Developments

If the PCs do not intercede, Aven begins truly tormenting the townsfolk in earnest. He consumes their livestock's souls, leaving the dismembered corpses in horrifying places. Glorifying in his anger and chance to make his hated enemies pay, he attacks them both subtly and overtly. Hiding amongst them, he drives them to ever greater degrees of superstitious madness by using *suggestion* to create fears of possession, *silent image* and *unseen servant* to support ghostly preconceptions, and *message* or *ghost touch* to send misleading whispers. He then uses *bestow curse*, *contagion*, and *blindness/deafness* to curse specific hated individuals, before burning fields with *fireball*.

Eventually, the townspeople turn on each other (or outsiders), with more accusations of witchcraft or possession. Many more innocent people die to unfounded charges, and Aven kills the purge's survivors. His corruption complete, he then leaves to seek out the cult his mother fled, to rule in his infernal parent's name.

If the PCs can discover the true source of the mysterious plague and mutilations, then they can kill or confront Aven before he has a chance to be fully corrupted. It is even possible they might give him hope, and remind him of the promises he made to his mother.

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Giant Crossbreeds

By Mike Welham

It seems many wizards enjoy mixing and matching creatures together and then putting their creations in the wild to see how they perform before committing to an army of such creatures. Oftentimes, the monsters are less than viable, but sometimes, they work out quite well and carve their own niches. Giants are very closely related in an evolutionary sense, so giant crossbreeds are often successful, as in the case of the better-known slag giant. The giants presented below are, through circumstance or location, less often encountered, but their hidden existences are no match for a committed researcher.*

**Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 4*

—Melnor, Sage (second class) of Questhaven

Glacier Giant

A thick layer of ice acts as an outer shell for this albino giant. The ice cracks resoundingly when the giant moves.

Glacier Giant

CR 15

XP 51,200

LN Huge humanoid (giant)

Init -2; **Senses** low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +20

Aura bitter cold (10 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 6, flat-footed 30 (-2 Dex, +24 natural, -2 size)

hp 231 (22d8+132)

Fort +15, **Ref** +5, **Will** +18

Defensive Abilities inexorable, rock catching, stability; **DR** 10/—; **Resist** cold 30, fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.; ice walk

Melee mwk greatclub +27/+22/+17/+12 (3d8+18/19–20 plus 1d4 bleed) or 3 slams +27 (3d6+12 plus 2d4 cold)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 22nd; concentration +26)

At will—*wall of ice* (DC 18)

3/day—*ice storm*, *icy prison*^[UM] quickened *wall of ice* (DC 18)

1/day—*earthquake*, *polar midnight*^[UM] (DC 23)

STATISTICS

Str 35, **Dex** 6, **Con** 23, **Int** 15, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +30 (+32 bull rush); **CMD** 38 (44 vs. bull rush, 42 vs. trip)

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Critical Focus, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greatclub), Martial Weapon Proficiency (greatclub), Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*wall of ice*), Staggering Critical, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Climb +20, Craft (weapons) +20, Handle Animal +20, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (geography) +17, Knowledge (nature) +17, Perception +20

Languages Aquan, Common, Giant, Terran

ECOLOGY

Environment cold mountains or plains

Organization solitary, pair, band (3–10), tribe (11–20 plus 1 cleric or sorcerer of 9th–10th level, 1 monk of 11th–12th level, and 7–12 dire polar bears)

Treasure standard (masterwork greatclub and other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Bitter Cold (Ex) A glacier giant is surrounded by a 10-foot radius of polar cold. Any creatures within this area at the beginning of the giant's turn take 2d6 points of cold damage. A creature taking this cold damage must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude save or become staggered for 1 round. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Damage Reduction (Ex) If a glacier giant takes fire damage, her DR becomes 5/— for 1 round. If it rolls a 1 on a saving throw against a spell or effect that deals fire damage, she loses her DR.

Ice Walk (Ex) A glacier giant moves across icy surfaces without penalty and does not need to make Acrobatics checks to run or charge on ice. On snow and ice, the giant is sure-footed and gains a +4 bonus to CMD.

Inexorable (Su) A glacier giant is immune to spells or effects that cause her to become entangled. Additionally, spells or effects that render her motionless or staggered instead reduce her base speed to 10 feet; the giant can still take a full round's worth of actions.

Stability (Ex) A glacier giant has a +4 racial bonus to CMD against bull rush and trip combat maneuvers while standing on ground.

Crossbred from frost and stone giants, glacier giants are the self-appointed protectors of polar expanses. They are massive compared to

their forebears; they stand 22 feet tall and weigh 9,000 pounds. The giants have white or blue skin color and their hair typically matches their skin color. They have unnaturally long lifespans, living up to 2 millennia.

Glacier giants take the extremely long view on events around them and are slow to react to attacks, often spending the initial moments of combat attempting to talk aggressors into coming to a peaceful solution. However, once they become engaged in battle, they are relentless and make a point of informing their foes about the initial opportunity to stand down. The extreme conditions of their homes make it unlikely that they will come into contact with many intelligent creatures, which makes it easier for them to contemplate their existences. Frost giants and less powerful white dragons offer fealty to glacier giants, who in turn offer protection and tempering guidance to the otherwise volatile creatures.

Glacier giant settlements are simple and nearly impossible to spot from a distance. While the giants are perfectly comfortable sleeping in the open, they build igloos to keep the arctic wind out. Tame dire polar bears roam a wide swath around these settlements and warn the giants when danger approaches.

Rimefire Giant

Fire wreathes the right side of this giant, while icicles hang from the extremities on the left side. A rivulet of water pours down the center of this angry humanoid's body and creates a puddle where it stands.

Rimefire Giant

CR 13

XP 25,600

NE Large humanoid (giant)

Init -1; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 8, flat-footed 28 (-1 Dex, +20 natural, -1 size)

hp 199 (19d8+114)

Fort +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities rock catching, slippery mind;

Immune cold, fire

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee slam +25 (2d6+11/19-20 plus 1d8 cold), slam +25 (2d6+11/19-20 plus 1d8 fire)

Ranged 2 rocks +13 (2d6+16 plus 1d8 cold or 1d8 fire)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks rock throwing (180 ft.), rimefire curse

STATISTICS

Str 33, **Dex** 8, **Con** 23, **Int** 10, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +26 (+30 sunder); **CMD** 35 (37 vs. sunder)

Feats Dazzling Display, Great Fortitude, Greater Sunder, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Sunder, Improved Vital Strike, Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Climb +16, Intimidate +35, Perception +18, Survival +15

Languages Common, Giant

ECOLOGY

Environment any mountains

Organization solitary, pair, warband (3-8 plus 1 sorcerer of 7th-8th level, 1 barbarian or fighter of 9th-10th level, and 10-20 frost giants or fire giants)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Rimefire Curse (Su) If a rimefire giant strikes an unattended object or creature of the construct type with both of his slam attacks, he deals an additional 6d6 points of damage as the object is subject to simultaneously intense heat and cold. Against living creatures, the giant instead inflicts a devastating curse.

Rimefire Curse: Slam—injury; *save* Will DC 21, *onset* immediate, *frequency* 1 day, *effect* 1d6 Con plus, for 1 day, victim loses resistances and immunities to cold and fire, nor can it benefit from spells or effects that grant it resistance or immunity to cold or fire.

Slippery Mind (Ex) In addition to receiving a +4 racial bonus on saves against mind-affecting spells and effects, a rimefire giant benefits from the slippery mind advanced rogue talent, allowing him to attempt a saving throw against an enchantment spell or effect 1 round after failing his initial saving throw.

Rimefire giants are examples of a failed crossbreed that nonetheless went on to surprising success. Possessing a combination of fire and frost giant blood, rimefire giants harbor incredible self-loathing, but they turn that anger out toward their foes. They generally regard any other living creature as foes. They possess features of both giant species running a mixture of reds, oranges, yellows, blues, and whites, with a fire-related color dominant on one side, and a cold-related color dominant on the other. Adult specimens stand 16 feet tall and weigh 4,000 pounds. Their lives are

brutally short compared to other giants; they only live 70 years but often die well before their natural lifespan ends.

Rimefire giants don't possess the crafting prowess of their progenitors, and instead thrive on annihilation. In combat, they enjoy breaking the armor and weapons of their foes and typically target such objects to render their opponents helpless before striking killing blows. Their minds are in a constant state of internal conflict, which causes them to hesitate for the slightest moments at the outset of battle, before their inherent hatred drives them onward. This mental dichotomy protects them from mental influence, as the unaffected portion of their mind attempts to reassert control over the compromised portion.

Rimefire giants have no permanent settlements of their own, and instead wander from habitation to habitation wreaking destruction. On rare occasions, a group of fire giants or frost giants entices a rimefire giant to join their number and bolster its strength, but this often proves disastrous when the rimefire giant turns on the others. Frost or fire giants who procreate with rimefire giants have a 50% chance of producing rimefire giant offspring, and these offspring prove to be more stable rulers of the giants who raise them. Such rimefire giants have an unswerving enmity toward the "other" species of giant and take leadership of their tribes upon adulthood to eradicate their hated foes.

Scree Giant

This granite-colored giant sloughs off small rocks from its body. Its pupils are horizontal, similar to a goat's.

Scree Giant

CR 6

XP 2,400

CN Large humanoid (giant)

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, tremorsense 30 ft.; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 76 (9d8+36)

Fort +9, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities rock catching

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee greatclub +13/+8 (2d8+10) or 2 slams +12 (2d6+7)

Ranged rock +8 (2d6+10 plus explosion of rubble)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 14, **Con** 19, **Int** 7, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +14 (+16 bull rush); **CMD** 26 (28 vs. bull rush)

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Intimidating Prowess, Martial Weapon Proficiency (greatclub), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub)

Skills Climb +15, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +13, Perception +7, Stealth +2 (+10 among rubble), Survival +7; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth among rubble

Languages Common, Giant

SQ surefooted, wild empathy +0

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or warm hills and mountains

Organization solitary, pair, family (3–7 plus 1 druid of 5th–6th level, and 3–8 advanced goats or rams)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Explosion of Rubble (Ex) When a scree giant throws a rock, it explodes in a shower of debris where it strikes. A 10-foot-radius area around the rock's impact becomes difficult terrain, and any creatures within 10 feet of the impact are blinded for 1 round due to the stinging dirt and rocks (DC 16 Reflex negates). The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Surefooted (Ex) A scree giant can move through rubble without penalty.

Wild Empathy (Ex) A scree giant has a +4 racial bonus on wild empathy checks involving goats, sheep, and other surefooted ungulates.

Scree giants are the result of crossbreeding stone giants with hill giants, and the resulting species turned out to be physically weaker than both. They are hairless like their stone giant forebears, but they have the crude appearance of their hill giant progenitors, especially as their bodies seem to constantly erode. They never lose significant mass despite this constant degradation, helped in part by supplementing their diets with loose stone. Adult scree giants stand 9 feet tall and weigh 1,000 pounds. They live up to 400 years, outstripping hill giants in age, but far short of stone giants.

Perhaps due to their relative lack of physical prowess, scree giants prefer to stay out of sight when other humanoids approach. They rely on the

treacherous nature of their homes to protect them and induce landslides to discourage unwanted guests. However, they have been known to help those who have gotten stuck in fissures or caught in a landslide. The giants treat the wounds of their inadvertent visitors and send them away with warnings about the surrounding area. When they must fight, they take advantage of the loose rocks peppering the landscape to maneuver around or away from opponents.

Scree giants are agrarian giants and spend their time raising sheep and goats, mostly as a source of food and other goods, but also as battle companions. Their affinity for goats and other mountainous livestock is reflected in the strange horizontal pupils they possess, an unintended side effect of the hybridizing experiments. Scree giant clans travel across mountain ranges to find robust grasses for the animals they raise and often must relocate as the goats and sheep overgraze the land. Scree giant druid chiefs use their spells to ensure the health and growth of these plants to ensure their families can remain in an advantageous location.

Tundra Giant

Snow drifts from the frosty body of this giant, which also has bright blue veins crisscrossing it.

Tundra Giant CR 8

XP 4,800

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +11

Aura cold (5 ft., 1d6 cold)

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +6 natural, -1 size)

hp 114 (12d8+60); fast healing 2

Fort +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities rock catching; **Resist** cold 30

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft. (30 ft. in armor); ice walk

Melee warhammer +16/+11 (2d6+8/x3) or 2 slams +16 (2d6+8 plus freeze blood)

Ranged rock +10 (2d6+12)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks knockback strike

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 12, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +18 (+20 bull rush); **CMD** 29 (31 vs. bull rush)

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Martial Weapon Proficiency (warhammer), Power Attack

Skills Craft (armor or weapons) +7, Intimidate +13, Perception +11, Stealth -5 (+12 in snow), Survival +11; **Racial Modifiers** +12 Stealth in snow

Languages Common, Giant

ECOLOGY

Environment cold plains

Organization solitary, pair, gang (3-6), raiding party (7-12 plus 1-2 winter wolves), or tribe (13-40 plus 1 barbarian chief of 7th-8th level, and 3-8 winter wolves)

Treasure standard (masterwork hide armor, warhammer, and other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fast Healing (Ex) A tundra giant's fast healing only works in areas where the temperature is below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. If the giant takes fire damage, her fast healing is also suppressed.

Freeze Blood (Ex) A creature that takes damage from a tundra giant's slam attack must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of cold damage. If the creature takes cold damage, it must succeed on another Fortitude save to avoid becoming staggered for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Ice Walk (Ex) A tundra giant moves across icy surfaces without penalty and does not need to make Acrobatics checks to run or charge on ice. On snow and ice, the giant is sure-footed and gains a +4 bonus to CMD.

Knockback Strike (Ex) If a tundra giant confirms a critical hit with a thrown rock, she gains a free awesome blow maneuver against opponent, using her CMB.

Tundra giants, combinations of hill and frost giants, strike a balance between the two. They stand 12 feet tall and weigh 1,900 pounds. Typical tundra giants live 250 years. Their complexions range from the ruddy and tan possessed by hill giants to the blues and whites of frost giants, but they make no distinction between skin coloration among their species. Occasionally a tundra giant is born with grey skin, which the other giants take as a portent from the deities or demons they worship.

Tundra giants are hunters and range over hundreds of miles of territory to find game. They stock up on meat, preserving it in underground areas covered in permafrost, to survive through

the long winters that drive their typical prey to hibernate or away from the frozen plains. The giants are adept at crafting armor and weapons, using animals and stone as their mediums. Perhaps to purposely differentiate themselves from their ancestors, they overwhelmingly favor warhammers for combat.

Tundra giants all but abandon their settlements during the warmer months, during which their primary concern is hunting. When the weather begins to cool, they return to their homes to rebuild wooden lodges and repair or recraft armor and weapons. During the deepest part of the winter, the giants enter a sort of hibernation, leaving their youngest warriors to stand guard over the settlement. In lean times, tundra giants venture into warmer lands to raid other habitations for food and shelter.

Wildfire Giant

A shimmering haze envelops this jittery giant, as fire dances its dark brown skin.

Wildfire Giant

CR 9

XP 6,400

LE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 19 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural, -1 size)

hp 119 (14d8+56)

Fort +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities evasion, rock catching; **Resist** fire 30

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.; sprint

Melee 2 slams +18 (1d8+9 plus 1d4 fire and burn)

Ranged rock +13 (1d8+13 plus 1d4 fire and burn)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks fatiguing strike

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +15)

1/day—*wall of fire* (surrounding self only)

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 17, **Con** 19, **Int** 9, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 34

Feats Dodge, Improved Lightning Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Nimble Moves, Spring Attack, Wind Stance

Skills Intimidate +13, Perception +10

Languages Common, Giant, Infernal

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or warm plains

Organization solitary, pair, gang (3–6), blaze (7–12 plus 1–4 hell hounds), or conflagration (13–30 plus 1 warpriest of 10th–11th level, and 3–12 hell hounds [or 1–4 hellcats])

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fatiguing Strike (Ex) A creature that takes fire damage from a wildfire giant's slam or rock attack must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or become fatigued. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Sprint (Ex) Once per minute, a wildfire giant can double his land speed for 1 round.

Wizards infused hill giants with fire giant blood to create wildfire giants, and the results of the wizards' creations live up to their name, as they constantly move about. Despite their seeming chaotic sense of motion, they retained the lawfulness of their fire giant forebears and have forged greater ties to the infernal realms. Relatively small and wiry, wildfire giants stand 7–1/2 feet tall and weigh 600 pounds. Their combustive blood begets a shorter lifespan than most giants, and they live for 150 years.

Wildfire giants prefer skirmishing tactics in combat and engage in hit and run attacks to wear down their foes. When forced to remain in a single location, they surround themselves with a wall of flames to roast those foolish enough to stand and fight them. If a particularly powerful foe opposes them, they concentrate all their efforts to bring down that foe before moving on to the next one.

The giants have no permanent settlements and travel where opportunity takes them. They make quick raids of other settlements and move on, incidentally allowing a raided location to recover before their wanderings bring them back. Fire giants enslave or hire wildfire giants, but the lesser giants refuse to adapt to the fire giants' regimented approach to battle, forcing the fire giants to employ wildfire giants to act as scouts or shock troops. In turn, wildfire giants bully hill giants to help in their raids, forcing the hill giants to the front where they can absorb casualties and soften up resistance before they sweep in. Wildfire giants also sacrifice hill giants to the devils they worship, often receiving a hell hound or hellcat in return for the offering.



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Twenty Questions with Daniel Marshall

By Dave Paul

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

I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago and picked up tabletop gaming and writing at a very early age. My brother introduced me to the game as his little fighter friend who would be sent in everywhere he wasn't certain about. I would proudly stride in, sword in hand, and promptly get squished by whatever hazard or creature lurked within. Thankfully, they gave me a respawn ability.

He and I often played D&D long into the night. My favorite Halloween activity became adventuring in Ravenloft, which evolved as years went by and we added more complexities to the event. One year we added props, the next actors, then sound effects. By the time I graduated high school it was a full-on production. Those experiences are what really inspired me to get into the industry in the first place. Bringing adventures to life, seeing a player almost fall out of his chair as the howls of wolves erupted from nearby, the awe in their faces when the puzzle comes together... those are the moments that inspire me to continue creating.

As far as getting into the industry itself, I began by trying to create a campaign setting called Realms of Twilight. In hindsight, I didn't execute it remotely right, but I learned a tremendous amount about the creative process, the things I did right, and the things I didn't. Most of all, I learned that I didn't want to stop. My dream was to have a hardcover book with my name on the cover. I accomplished that, then caught the bug that many who love this industry have been bitten by, leading me onward and upward.

Playground Adventures is a company that has two foci. We specialize in both family-friendly gaming and education through gaming. To that end we have a variety of adventures and mini-scenarios intended to weave learning into the very fabric of the game. We also have a number of family-friendly products that are good for gamers of any age ranging through several game systems, from the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*, to 5e *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Ponyfinder* and *Hero Kids*. Everything we create and publish is appropriate for a family setting.



2. What is your home game like?

I currently run two home games, both set in the Realms of Twilight setting. The first is a family game where the party has taken over an ancient ruined city built into a cliff face. They've repopulated it to a certain extent, but much of the city is still wild, inhabited by creatures the likes of which they have yet to imagine. This campaign has included trade deals, establishing embassies, and building an army as well as a working city far from civilization.

The second is with a blend of family and friends that takes place in the arctic. This is a campaign based more in the ancient, unknown history and lore of the world. It's filled with puzzles and riddles for the party to unravel, and time never ceases. When subplots or side quests occur, their timeline continues whether the PCs interact with them or not. More than one seemingly simple job has become much more important, affecting ever greater areas of the realm. The most difficult part is keeping track of all of the interweaving threads of the storytelling tapestry, but I think they are enjoying the game so far, and that makes it worth the trouble.

3. What is your favorite Paizo product?

There are several of the *Pathfinder Companion* series I really enjoy. *Blood of the Moon* and *Blood of the Shadows* are near the top of my list. But if I had to choose one, I think I'd have to go with *Kobolds*

of Golarion. I've always been a fan of the ingenuity of kobolds. They're small creatures that use tactics and traps to whittle down the numbers of their foes since they simply don't stand a chance in single combat against most creatures. The creative intellect and tactical mastery is something I think is underplayed in many campaigns.

4. You are currently Co-Owner and Director of Design for Playground Adventures, how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

The company started in the dreams of my amazing wife, BJ Hensley. While I had already taught myself a great deal about InDesign, she helped me fine tune my skills to rise to the Director of Design for the company. As for the company itself, it wouldn't be anywhere without the passion and drive of everyone involved, but BJ has been the driving force and mastermind behind it all to be sure.

Today, I'd categorize us as the bridge to the next generation of gamers. We work very hard to ensure that our products are not only of outstanding quality over all, but that younger audiences can enjoy them without a whole lot of tinkering on the part of the GM as well. Hopefully those very children will grow up to enjoy the same hobbies that we all have in decades past.

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

My favorite product has got to be *Creature Components Volume 1*, published by none other than Playground Adventures. It's the first book in our 12+ line, and details rules for harnessing the innate power of defeated magical creatures for the purposes of augmenting spells and magical items. Ever wondered what happens to the immense magical power possessed by a dragon after it is slain? This book allows a spellcaster to harness a portion of that power by making use of some part of the creature, a vial of its blood, for example. They might then toss the vial into a horde of enemies as part of casting a *fireball* spell, causing it to erupt into a larger radius, inflict greater damage, or even scorch those normally resistant to fire! Over a hundred creatures from the first *Pathfinder Bestiary* are included, widening the possibilities for magic users significantly.

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



For this product, I had the privilege of playing the role of both author and layout designer. That means I got to see the manuscript at the beginning, and watch it unfold, becoming the polished offering it is today. While it wouldn't have been what it is without the development of our Master of the Mechanical Stuff, Stephen Rowe, and the editing of our founder BJ Hensley, it was amazing to see the original manuscript polymorph into a finished product. Page by page the book became more than just a document in Word, but a creation born from the minds of an amazing team of people. So, to be honest, my best moment was picking up the print proof copy and paging through it.

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

Creature Components makes a magical creature valuable to a spellcaster, even beyond their defeat. It can urge players to pursue entire campaign arcs seeking out components for the crafting of magic items, or enhancement of spells. The book is written to set the groundwork and inspire players to think beyond the boundaries of the previous limitations of magic, rather than just set new restrictions. In short, it expands the possibilities of magic exponentially.

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

That's an easy question to answer. Coming up with relatively unique effects granted by over 100 creatures based on each of their individual traits and abilities is no small order. I'll admit to spending over an hour on some of them just trying to find a good spell and augmentation that fit the theme of the monster!

9. What did you learn while working on it?

The project reaffirmed that the work of a team far outstrips the work of an individual. I honestly think that's what has made *Creature Components* so successful. Beyond that though, getting the opportunity to look at the writing I did in the beginning, and compare it to the post development, and post edit revisions helped me recognize a few weaknesses in my writing, and showed me how to shore them up. Ultimately, I think the project has made me a better writer overall because of that.

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

Ultimate Psionics by Dreamscarred Press. I've been a fan of psionics since second edition, particularly the way it is described in the Prism Pentad (Dark Sun novels). In those books, a battle between psionics takes place in their minds, and they shape reality with their powers to create incredible effects. Dreamscarred has done a great job in keeping the landscape of the mind intact, while creating classes and abilities that are well-balanced, and can stand toe to toe with the other *Pathfinder* classes in the physical world. They've introduced classes, races, and a variety of other supporting mechanics to make it possible to have an entire party of psionic-based characters that are as effective, if not more so, than more conventional adventurers.

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

When I pick up a product, the first thing I look for is good cover art or a unique title. If neither grabs my attention, I'm less likely to crack open the book. Once I get inside the book I ask myself a few questions: 1) Does the writing flow well, make sense, and is it relatively free of errors? (Even the best editor is going to miss one or two things in a book of 40,000 words.) 2) Is the layout appealing to my eyes? 3) Are the mechanics relatively balanced compared to the current books that are out there? If the answer to all three of those questions is yes, then I believe I've got a good Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible product in my hands.

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

That's a tough question, as there are so many great designers in the industry today. To be honest, I'd have to say that my two favorite designers are J Gray and Stephen Rowe. Both are critical to the success of Playground Adventures, and do a good deal of work for other companies as well. Their work is amazing. If you give them a raw concept with a few guidelines, either one of them will come back to you with a masterpiece in the making.

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

As I'm sure many have heard at panels and on forums about this very question, find a company that has products you'd like to be a part of and that has a theme that mirrors your own interests. Playground, for instance, has no interest in horror gaming, while that might be very appropriate for another publisher. If you can find a type of content

you enjoy writing, your passion and talent are that much more likely to shine through.

Once you've done that, look at their submission guidelines. Remember, they aren't just suggestions. Most publishers are taking that opportunity to see if you can follow directions, as much as we are examining the quality of your writing and ideas.

Don't be afraid to introduce yourself at public events, but have business cards if you do. Most publishers meet hundreds of people over the course of a convention, for instance, and may have a hard time picking you out of the crowd if they don't have a business card to refresh their memory. Be respectful. There is a time and a place for everything. Most publishers are accepting of a brief introduction and a business card exchange, but if they are conversing with other people, it is considered rude to try to take over or turn the conversation towards you. Rudeness and disrespect tend to leave a bad impression on people you are hoping to work for.

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

Unfortunately, my favorite illustrator seldom works in the industry anymore. When I began my first project I stumbled upon Jocelyn Sarvida. She had this uncanny ability to pull images right out of my head with only a few sentences of description, and the quality of her work was amazing. She did both the cover and the interior pieces for *Creature Components*, and did an incredible job. I hope to have the opportunity to work with her more in the future.

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

Honestly, I think anytime someone asks me to sign their book. It's great to see the sales numbers and know that a book you wrote is doing well. But it's another thing entirely for someone to ask you to sign your name in it. For them to feel that my signature increases the value or importance of that book is, to me, one of the greatest compliments they could offer me.

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

Well, given that the first volume of *Creature Components* has been so successful, I've been hard at work continuing the series. Volume two is already in development, with creatures from *Pathfinder Bestiary 2*, as well as some new mechanics

that build on what we've done in the first volume to make harvesting certain components hazardous, with similarities to naturally occurring traps. Next in line is an herbalism volume, then to work on the remaining bestiaries.

17. Do you have any goals for Playground Adventures that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

I mentioned earlier that one of *Playground Adventures'* focus points was education through gaming. To that end, we are working to get our products, particularly our Fun and Facts line, in the hands of schools and libraries across the country. We've had some level of success in this endeavor, but we haven't fully realized that goal as well as we would like yet.

18. Can you tell us a little about Creature Components: Herbalism?

Like the volumes that come before, *Creature Components: Herbalism* will have scores of creatures included in its catalogue. Currently the plan is to shoot for the first three bestiaries, but it really depends on how many creatures fit the bill to determine the final count. Additionally, we intend to include natural and fantasy herbs in the catalogue, with a focus on druidic and ranger magic. This book will provide us with a great opportunity to expose players who favor those classes to a similar variety of spellcasting possibilities that arcane and divine casters have been provided with *Creature Components Volumes 1 & 2*.

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

There's always more I'd like to include, but the herbalism volume isn't completed yet, so there's still time to add in a bit more!

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

I am inspired by minds like Nicola Tesla, Galileo Galilei, and Leonardo Da Vinci. I am inspired by people like Ed Greenwood, Margaret Weis, my amazing wife, and many, many more. But success is only one part inspiration, and two parts perspiration. I'm still working on that second part, constantly trying to learn to use new tools, and refining my writing. More than anything else, I'm a dreamer. I see possibilities everywhere. I'm easily found on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and contacted through www.playgroundadventures.net.

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Reviews



In the Company of Vampires

Publisher:

Rite Publishing

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of Rite Publishing's massive "In the Company..." -series clocks in at a massive 51 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 46 pages of content, so let's take a look, shall we?

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

After a brief foreword, we begin with a letter by Sovereign Evelyn Arlstead – the vampire correspondent and narrator that penned the in-character prose – a lady obviously at least slightly infatuated with Qwilion, which provides a rather amusing subtext throughout the flavorful prose that suffuses the pdf. She is rather adept at trying to "sell" undeath to Qwilion with honeyed words, interlaced with some flirtatious comments. Of course, as such, she does have some serious words for vampire-hunters, zealots, etc. Moroi, just fyi, would be the polite term for the vampiric race depicted herein. Physical description and poise, a predator's confidence and danger's subtle allure – the romantic notions associated with vampires have been duplicated in a rather compelling manner here. Fans of e.g. "The Originals" won't be capable of suppressing a smile when the good lady comments on being "a bit melodramatic when it comes to family." Similarly amusing: As the lady goes through the respective noble families, her own view color the descriptions. There are also the vampiric middle classes – the respective descriptions are briefer, but the descriptions nonetheless are intriguing. As in Vampire: The Masquerade, those with thin blood constitute the lowest rungs of the social ladder.

Moroi are only created from the willingly embraced, but there are some moroi that can indeed generate slaves, a practice obviously condemned by the narrator – though the question of sincerity springing forth from her agenda makes this interesting. As with the revised installment on wights, we do have the modified ability score

generation array for undead, Constitution-less races. Vampires retain speed and size of the former humanoid's subtype, but none of the other traits. As such, they are Small or Medium, have slow or normal speed and ability-score-wise, gain +2 Cha, -2 Wis. Vampires gain darkvision and a natural bite attack (properly codified in type and size) that can also cause Constitution damage versus helpless and/or part of establishing a pin.

Which brings me to blood drinking: The vampire uses up 2 points of Constitution drained worth of blood per 8 hours of activity; blood and how to preserve it is concisely codified. Better yet, the math checks out – I happen to have done the math for the blood of humanoids the other day and the formula scales properly. Failure to satiate the thirst can result in fatigue, exhaustion, etc. – and vampires with a Cruor Pool can use that pool's points to sate their hunger (more on that later). The way in which blood thirst is codified here is simulation-level precise, interesting and very concise. Excellent job here – frankly the best engine for this type of issue I have seen. As you can glean, this makes travelling potentially a challenging endeavor, though the pdf does provide considerations here. Big plus: At higher levels, the significant magic at the disposal of PCs can make the vampiric condition a trifle – however, there is an optional rule provided, elder's thirst makes the draining ever more potent and dangerous – and thus harder to manage. Big plus, as far as I'm concerned, and nice way to remedy the trivializing options at higher levels. Now, everyone who played VtM with a serious level of detail will note how hunting can take up a lot of time: This pdf acknowledges that and provides means for vampires to hunt via a skill-check: The smaller the settlement, the more difficult it gets – though expenditure of gold, magic, current hunts, etc. can complicate the matter or make it easier. On a significant failure, the vampire may suffer from one of 10 consequences in a table, which may provide further adventuring potential. This system is not a lame add-on – it works smoothly and 3 different feats interact with it. Kudos for the extra support accounting for Blood Pack teamwork hunting, Thralls and Territory (the latter makes hunting MUCH faster and reliable). In a nutshell, this represents the most detailed and elegant vampiric hunting/blood thirst engine I have seen for any d20-based game.

But I digress, back to the race, shall we? Vampires have families: The inspired gain channel resistance +2; Nightcallers gain scent; Nosferatu can demoralize adjacent foes as a move action; Shades

increase their darkvision to 120 ft.; Sovereigns gain +2 Bluff and Diplomacy; Vanguard's gain a weapon proficiency; Warlocks with Charisma of 11+ gain *Bleed* and *Stabilize* 1/day as a SP, governed by character level and Charisma. However, much like in VtM, each of these bloodlines comes with a curse: The Inspired are innately superstitious and have a taboo à la garlic, not entering holy ground, etc. Nightcallers can only rest while touching at least 1 cubic foot of their homeland's soil; the Nosferatu, surprise, are disfigured and decrease starting attitudes of the living while undisguised. Shades can be blinded by abrupt exposure to light; Sovereigns cast no shadow or reflection and have a hard time approaching reflective surfaces. Vanguard's can be paralyzed by wooden piercing weapons (deliberately kept vague) and warlocks can't act during surprise rounds during the day and is flat-footed for the first round of combat while the sun is up. As with wights, the modified undead traits are listed for your convenience. Similarly, becoming a vampire later in the adventuring career is covered – kudos!

Regarding alternate racial traits, we have options to retain humanoid base racial traits – in two steps. The first renders susceptible to any source of fatigue or exhaustion, the second costs the racial immunity to death effects conveyed by the modified undead traits. Vampires with the elder trait can make Knowledge and Profession skill checks untrained and gain +2 to them, but must drink more blood to sustain them. Mingled lineages yield more than one lineage, but also the corresponding drawbacks and penalties to Charisma-based skill checks when dealing with other vampires. Survivalist nightcallers can sustain themselves via animals – but these must be killed and a HD-caveat prevents the vampire from just subsisting on a diet of kittens. Some vampires can discern information from tasting blood, losing the family's racial ability benefit(s). Vampires with weak blood, finally, have no benefit or curse and require less blood to sustain themselves. Favored class options for alchemist, barbarian (which lacks a "ft." after the +1 in a minor hiccup), bard, cavalier, cleric, druid, fighter, gunslinger, inquisitor, monk, oracle, paladin, ranger, rogue, sorcerer, summoner, witch and wizard are covered – alas, no support for the Occult classes, which is somewhat puzzling for me, considering e.g. the mesmerist. Oh well, perhaps in an expansion.

Pretty cool: There is a lite-version of the racial paragon class as a general archetype that can be applied to other classes, with the benefits balanced

by the worsening curse. The other archetype included would be the cambion sorcerer. This guy can choose the Knowledge (religion) skill instead of the Bloodline skill. The archetype gains a unique list of bonus spells and may choose vampire bonus feats. The cambion may choose to gain the skills, feats and powers of the chosen family or bloodline, but at the cost of vulnerability to a material or energy type. The archetype gains a cruor pool as an additional bloodline arcana.

Which brings me to the racial feats: 8 feats are included; The cruor pool is $\frac{1}{2}$ character level + Charisma modifier and can be used to store basically blood, with each point equal to 1 point of Constitution drained – this also can be used to power abilities. Extra Cruor increases the pool by 2. Fast Drinker lets you choose to deal 1d4 Constitution damage instead. Merciful Drinker decreases the blood you need to survive and can eliminate the pain caused by the bite. Recovery lets you help the living recover faster from blood loss. Stolen Life lets you expend cruor to heal/gain temporary hit points, the latter with a limit. Unfortunately, this ability fails to specify the activation action. Undead Mind lets you use cruor to turn a failed Will-save versus mind-affecting effects into a success, while Undead Resilience provides the analogue for Fort-saves versus diseases, poisons and energy drains – these btw, properly codify the activation action.

The pdf also contains 5 racial spells: *Blood supply* temporarily increases the cruor pool; *rain of blood* can nauseate and frighten the living exposed to it; *suppress curse* is pretty self-explanatory regarding the context of the race, as is *greater vampiric touch*; *villain's feast* can sustain the undead and vampires and otherwise is basically the undead version of *heroes' feast*.

The pdf also includes, obviously, a massive racial paragon class, the blood noble, including favored class options for the dhampir, elf/half-elf, dwarf, gnome, half-orc, halfling and human races. The blood noble gains $\frac{3}{4}$ BAB-progression, good Fort-, Ref- and Will-saves, d8 HD, 4 + Int skills per level and proficiency with simple weapons and light armor, but not with shields. The class gains the Cruor Pool feat as a bonus feat at 1st level. Also at first level, the noble family chosen upon character creation, with mingled lineage's effects accounted for properly. Benefits-wise, this provides a number of class skills based on the respective family.

The class also begins play with undead evolution: +2 to saves against diseases, poison and mind-affecting effects. This bonus increases by +2 at 4th and 7th level, culminating in immunity at

10th level. 13th level yield energy drain immunity, 16th immunity to ability score damage and 19th, immunity to ability score drain – however, in a nice caveat, self-inflicted drain is not covered by this immunity. The class gains a bonus feat from a custom list at 3rd level and every 3 levels thereafter.

The development of vampiric abilities is handled via blood talents: The first is gained at 2nd level, with every 3 levels thereafter yielding another talent. And yes, talents based on secondary families are not at full strength. At 6th level and every 6 levels thereafter, the blood noble can choose to get an additional blood talent – but if the noble does gain one of these, the blood noble also worsens the effects of the respective family curse. Each of the curse-progressions further develops what we'd associate with the families – flavorful and sensible. Nice! The capstone makes permanent destruction contingent on a special set of circumstances, once again defined the family of the blood noble. Really cool!

The blood talents come in two big categories: General talents that may be chosen by any blood noble, and those that are exclusives for the respective family. The general talents are reminiscent of the classic vampire tricks – ability-score boosts via cruor, channel resistance, spawn creation, energy drain, fast healing that's contingent on cruor and sports (thankfully!) a daily cap, DR, supernatural movement forms based on family (thankfully without unlocking flight too soon), natural armor, slam attacks, skill boosts or some energy resistances. All in all, solid selection.

The inspired can gain cultists, channel negative energy via cruor, quench the thirst of other vampires...and from blood oaths t gaining cultists, a domain, etc., the talents are somewhat resembling the Assamites/Setites from VtM, just with a broader, more generally divine focus. The Nightcallers would be the Gangrel equivalents – with animal calling feeding from animals, *gaseous form*, melding into stone, locating foes – basically the wilderness hunter/survivalist. Nosferatu are the Max Schreck-style, inhuman and ghoulish vampires – like their namesakes in VtM, though less disfigured. They can drink the blood of the fallen, carry diseases and learn to temporarily suppress their unsettling appearance...or exhibit stench. Strigoi nets a tentacle-like, fanged tongue and there is the option to animate the dead or detach body parts to act autonomously – a nice option if you're looking for a monstrous vampire.

Shades would be the equivalent of the Lassombra – the shadow magic/illusion specialists. Nitpick: The Veil ability lacks its type. Sovereigns would be

the representation of the aristocratic Ventrue and as such, are the vampiric leaders, with charming, deathly allure, soothing demeanor, telepathy – basically the option for the potent face/enchanter. Vanguard are the vampiric fighters and as such, are closest to the Brujah clan in VtM, with cruor-based blood memory, granting proficiencies, better CMB/CMD, armor training, weapons that are treated as magical, self-hasteing...you get the idea. Finally, the warlock family would be the representation of the Tremere: These vampires can gain progressively better wizard-list based SP – additional uses beyond the basics are unlocked later and contingent on cruor. Beyond that, blood-based metamagic and homunculi can be found here.

While the vampire families are VERY CLEARLY inspired by VtM's clans, it should be noted that the blood lineage is a significantly more fluid concept herein.

The pdf also contains a vampire template for the GM to make use of the material herein – kudos! Speaking of which: Lady Evelyn's post scriptum made for a fun way to end the pdf.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good on both a formal and rules-language level – I only noticed cosmetic glitches and those are pretty few and far in between and don't compromise the rules. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column full-color standard and the pdf sports nice full-color artworks, all of which I haven't seen before. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

If you're one of the unfortunates who didn't have the chance to check them out back in the day: In the 90s, I consumed World of Darkness books, both roleplaying supplements and novels, religiously. I adored Vampire: The Masquerade. Yes, the rules sucked and yes, it was a nightmare to GM, but I adored the game. Big surprise there, right? Well, that ended when Vampire: The Requiem's lore-reboot hit (just didn't click with me, lore-wise) and there was another book that pretty much ended, at least for a time, all desire I had to see vampires in game: That would be the d20-version of the World Of Darkness back in the 3.X days. I love Monte Cook as a designer, I really do, but oh BOY did I LOATHE this book with every fiber of my being.

Where am I going with this tangent? Well, this pdf constitutes, at least in my opinion, the "Play a VtM-story in d20"-toolkit I expected the d20 WoD-book to provide. The rules are deliberate, precise and interesting; balance is retained...in short, Steven T. Helt and Stephen Rowe provide THE single best "Play a Vampire"-option currently available for PFRPG. I love the prose, the clans, ah,

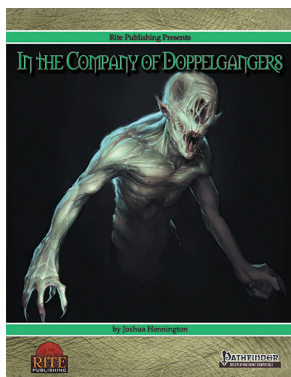
pardon “families” – they strike a chord with me and work without needless complexity – If you know how to play PFRPG, you will be capable of using this – the design is very smooth. If there is one thing that could be considered to be a weakness of this book, then that would be the fact that the respective families and their unique ability-arrays and options could have carried a book of easily 4 times the size – the topic of vampires, particularly of vampires indebted to VtM’s aesthetics, can cover at least 200 pages. So yeah, this is a good candidate for an expansion/hardcover with more lore, family traditions, etc. – or, you know, you can dig up your old VtM-books and start adapting their flavor, add more blood talents...

My second, minor complaint, the second reason I’m asking for an expansion, would be the curious absence of occult adventure or horror adventure support: Vampires and madness (the weight of years), occultists and mesmerists...these books seem to be natural fits and the pdf doesn’t offer anything in that regard. Now, let it be known: The bang for buck ratio is excellent here. Similarly, vampires depicted herein will not unbalance campaigns wherein not all PCs are vampires, which is a HUGE plus, as far as I’m concerned – this is very easily usable. Still, this book did leave me wanting more, probably courtesy to my own long-term attachment to VtM’s lore. In the end, my final verdict will hence clock in at 5 stars for this book – and since I am a vampire fanboy, I will also add my seal of approval to this book, in spite of my nagging feeling that there ought to be more. If you do not share my love for VtM, you should mentally take away the seal.

You can get this great “Play actually balanced VtM-style vampires”-toolkit [here on OBS!](#)

You can get this supplement as part of a bundle with aberrations, wights and doppelgängers [here on OBS!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.



In the Company of Doppelgängers

Publisher:

Rite Publishing

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 3.5 stars out of 5

This installment of Rite Publishing’s “In the Company”-series clocks in at 41 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1

page advertisement, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 36 pages of content, so let’s take a look!

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

After a brief introduction of how this book came to be, we dive headfirst into the great in-character prose that is a hallmark of the series – with a threatening undertone, as the account provided for Qwilion of Questhaven did also allow the doppelgänger sufficient knowledge of the sage’s body... Anyways, we receive well-written notes on the background and myths of the race, including notes on the potentially problematic childhoods and adolescences of doppelgängers – by the way, the race refers to itself as immickers. This whole section, including the way in which the infiltration of societies are covered, carry a surprisingly threatening undertone, as the narrator tries to justify the influence of immickers – it’s all for the best for communities, obviously. The purchase of identities, even temporarily, is a thoroughly creepy concept as described here – the prose is impressive in how it makes a seemingly compelling, yet thoroughly disquieting case for the race. Similarly, the race is contextualized within the races and monsters via a tie to Limbo, providing an interesting angle there as well.

Unusual about immickers: They only lead a very brief life, and as such, their starting ages are modified. As shapechangers, they sport different builds and guidelines for these are presented – well done. Racial trait-wise, immickers gain +2 Str and Cha, -2 Con, are Medium shapechangers with a normal speed, darkvision, +4 to saves versus charm and sleep effects, +1 natural armor bonus. They gain at-will *alter self* to assume Small or Medium sizes, without adjusting ability scores – in order to assume specific sizes, immickers with a Charisma score of 12+ gain mental intrusion: They can employ *detect thoughts*, using Charisma as governing attribute, as per the psychic monster rules. The use costs 2 PE and an immicker’s PE-pool is equal to 4 PE per day. The immicker may assume the form of those that failed the save against the ability, but the ability thus gained only lasts for 24 hours. The adjustment process to such a specific shape takes 10 minutes and it remains in effect as long as desired, until changed. This is a really smart set-up: It provides full shapechanging at level 1, while still retaining balancing limits. Very elegant solution here!

There are two alternate ability score arrays: Brutes get +2 Wis and Con, -2 Cha, while guilekin gain +2 Dex and Int, -2 Wis. The other alternate racial traits allow for the replacement of the save bonuses in

lieue of save bonuses against transmutations. This may also be replaced with properly codified (Nice!) claw attacks. Darkvision can be replaced with low-light vision. There is also the option to replace the natural armor and save bonuses for skill bonuses against a specific race. My favorites here, though, would be the alternative intrusions: The book makes excellent use of the occult rules, allowing for intrusions via *detect desires* or *detect anxieties* as a basis for assuming precise shapes – this allows you to customize the race in a rather interesting manner. The save-bonuses may btw. also be exchanged in favor of gaining two such intrusion options. Big kudos for these!

We also gain favored class options – beyond the paragon class, alchemist, barbarian, bard, cleric, fighter, investigator, medium, mesmerist, oracle, psychic, ranger, rogue, slayer and vigilante. I have no complaints regarding their power level. Now, as befitting of the flexibility of the class, we actually get variant multiclassing options for the doppelgänger paragon class – nice! The pdf also provides archetypes: Mental grafter psychics gain Disguise as a class skill and does not gain a psychic discipline. Phrenic pool is based on Charisma. At 1st level and every 4 levels thereafter, the psychic gains +2 points of PE to use for the intrusion abilities. Successfully using mental intrusion also allows the character to regain phrenic points, and yes, there thankfully is a hard cap of regained points, preventing abuse. This replaces the *detect thoughts* SP. At 3rd level, the archetype gains the mindtouch phrenic amplification, but only for the purpose of using the spell or spells gained via the intrusions. 5th level unlocks all types of mental intrusion and 9th level provides two forms to fluidly change into, with additional forms unlocked every 4 levels thereafter.

The morphic petitioner cleric loses proficiency with the deity's favored weapon and gains Bluff and Disguise as class skills, losing Knowledge (arcane) and Knowledge (history). Here's the cool thing: Each day, the morphic petitioner swears loyalty to a deity, preparing cleric spells thus. The deity's alignment must be within one step of the cleric, but this temporary allegiance influences the alignment aura and neutral petitioners can choose whether to use positive or negative energy anew, while good and evil petitioners are locked into their respective correlating energy. The petitioner only gains one domain, but may choose these anew with each new temporary allegiance.

Versatile armsmaster fighters begin play with the doppelgänger's paragon's appraising gaze, but may only retain combat feats thus gained. This replaces

the 2nd level's bonus feat. Also pretty cool: The archetype also gains a wildcard feat and at 6th level and every +4 levels thereafter, the bonus combat feats may be changed similarly. The ability codifies the prerequisite caveats correctly and the activation action improves, but retains a 1/round maximum. If this sounds like ridiculous flexibility, you'd be correct – however, an Int-based maximum keeps that somewhat in line. Weapon mastery may be changed, btw. Flexible and thankfully, more interesting than the base fighter, yet still sufficiently contained.

Druids may become natural mimics, who gain Natural Spell and treats the shapechanging as wild shape for the purpose of feats etc. The key ability of this archetype would be that it blends wild shape with the intrusion of the base race, but unlocks progressively better SP-equivalents, including *monstrous physique*, *giant forms*, *form of the dragon*, etc. They also, obviously, may assume animal forms and may memorize a progressively growing amount of forms.

Now, as always, the key component of this pdf would be the racial paragon class. The class gains d8 HD, 4 + Int skills per level, NO base proficiencies, ¾ BAB-progression, good Ref- and Will-saves and 5 PE at first level, scaling up to 15 at 20th level. The key base ability of the class would be appraising gaze, a more potent form of the base race intrusion. When succeeding at an intrusion, the class may make a special check to learn to mimic one particular trait of the target. This check is a d20 + Intelligence modifier + level (should probably be class level – in a later explanation, this is correctly depicted). The doppelgänger can retain knowledge of up to “twice their Intelligence score modifier” – that should be either “twice their Intelligence score” or “twice their Intelligence modifier” – I assume the latter to be correct; the former would be too much. The doppelgänger can choose to forget information at any time as a free action. This ability taps into baseline mimicry: The doppelgänger paragon gains the weapon and armor proficiencies of the current mimicked form and also a caster level in spellcasting classes, but this does not grant spellcasting prowess, only the option to activate spell-completion or spell-trigger items. At 1st level, 2nd and every 2 levels thereafter, the class gains mimicked traits – these are retained in the dominant disguise and must correspond to the dominant disguise.

At 3rd level, the class gains morphic memory: At 3rd level when preparing a dominant disguise, they can choose two shapes they retain memory of via Appraising Gaze; these can assumed via change

shape at-will. What is the by now often mentioned dominant disguise? At 3rd level, one of the disguises is designated as dominant; this must be one chosen via morphic memory. The doppelgänger may only manifest mimicked traits while in the dominant disguise. Wait, what? Yes, this is somewhat confusing. At level 1, we gain 1 mimicked trait, another at 2nd...these only work in dominant disguises...but dominant disguise is only gained at 3rd level... I am, alas, not sure how this is supposed to work, meaning that this constitutes a serious flaw in the base engine of the class.

At 2nd level, the doppelgänger paragon chooses a specialization: Martial, skillful, or magical. The latter specialization gains access to the mesmerist's spells per day, using the medium's table of spells known. Charisma is the governing attribute – and yes, this means that mimicked traits will be used to gain more spells known. At 5th level and every 3 levels thereafter, the class gains an additional spell known. Magical specialists can only take general and magical mimicked traits. Martial specialization changes the BAB to full, but are locked into martial and general mimicked traits. Skillful doppelgangers gain +2 x their class level as bonus skill ranks, which may be reassigned upon gaining a level. Bingo: They may only take skillful/general mimicked traits.

At 5th level, the doppelgänger can mimic racial features in all disguises. 5th level nets an expansion for the detections available – slightly odd: one spell noted here is *detect fears* – which should imho be *detect desires*, as the other detection options mimic those available to the base race. At 9th level, the class gains a second dominant disguise, with its separate amount of traits – i.e. the full array, making the character exhibit two modes. 10th level nets the ability to count as both humanoid and monstrous humanoid and may be treated as either for a given effect. This does not grant inherent awareness of the effect. 13th level provides 1 mimicked trait for all forms retained in the morphic memory – these must not be dominant disguises. 17th level yields a second specialty and the capstone, the original form's level no longer is capped by the level of the mimicked target, but instead use the doppelgänger's level.

The check to learn traits, just fyi, categorizes them in three DCs – 5, 10 and 15...which means that the check becomes redundant rather quickly. Personally, I'd have preferred finer scaling here. Such mimicked tricks btw. use the level of the doppelgänger or that of the original, whichever is lower. Kudos: Interaction with e.g. psychic energy is covered, though, as an aside, we can find cosmetic

hiccups here. Like "Craft: Alchemy" – not the correct formatting. In the skillset mimicking "equal to the appropriate HD amount in that skill" did confuse me. On the plus-side: The codification of alchemy is pretty solid. Beyond mimicking talents, the book then goes into the massive, impressive breakdown of Paizo-classes – including antipalas, ACG-classes, Occult Adventures-classes, vigilante, and even versions for the unchained versions of rogue, monk and summoner are included – which is neat and, detail-wise, impressive as all hell. Weird: The talents associated with the witch seem to have been cut from the book. I'd like to comment on their balance – as a whole, they seem to be solid, but due to the glitch in the base engine of the class, I have a hard time analyzing this properly.

The pdf concludes with 4 feats: One for +3 on gazes (wasted feat, considering the low DC), +1 mimicked trait (must be general), using your level as CL for item-activation if it's higher and gaining more of the mind-reading options – here, the *detect fear*-glitch can be found once more.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are still good on a formal level – while I noticed more hiccups than in most Rite publishing books, as a whole, this can be read in a fluid manner. Regarding rules-language, I am thoroughly impressed by the high-complexity difficulty attempted here – for the most part better than I expected from the first big solo-effort of the author. However, unfortunately, some rules-hiccups compromise the integrity of pretty central components herein – development-wise, this could have used a stricter hand to iron out the minor hiccups. The pdf sports nice full-color artworks, though fans of Rite Publishing may know some of them from other supplements. The pdf is fully bookmarked for your convenience.

This is Joshua Hennington's first stand-alone book, at least to my knowledge. Good news first: It is significantly better and more skillful than a ton of books by more established designers. The author manages to create a truly evocative race that gains all the cool shapeshifting without compromising even more conservative campaigns. The basic set-up is glorious. The prose and the ideas of the race similarly are inspired and make for a great reading. This book was on the fast-lane track to the 5 stars + seal verdict...but then, the paragon class came. And suddenly, the previously impressively precise rules-language starts to fray a bit; the class buckles under the weight of its high-difficult theme/concept. You can see the intent between the carefully connected abilities and how the engine is supposed to work...

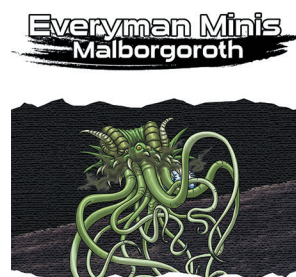
you can have the idea...but, of all the abilities, it's unfortunately the core ability-cluster of the class that sports problems that compromise its entirety. From a didactic point of view, I read the system a couple of times and while I get the breakdown by class, even if it worked, it may be a bit needlessly complicated – codifying class features as tricks, with class and specializations as subtypes and minimum levels may have been a slightly more easy to implement solution.

I know. This sounds bad. It really isn't that bad. The first half of this book is inspired, but the second half, at least to me, seems a bit rushed – the rules-language becomes less precise, we have references to non-existent spells, slight deviations from rules-language... With slightly more polish, this becomes a really interesting book, but I can't rate that. I have to rate what's here. My final verdict will clock in at 3.5 stars, but unfortunately, I can't round up, in spite of the freshman bonus: The flaw at the heart of the class keeps me from rounding up, in spite of the freshman bonus. That being said, I sincerely hope to be able to read more of Joshua Hennington's writing – this book does show a ton of promise and when/if it's revised, it may easily become a fine gem. Until then, consider the race depicted herein to be one of the best-balanced, most interesting shapechanger-races I know. It may be worth getting for the race alone.

You can get this inspiring, if not perfect book [here on OBS!](#)

You can get a massive Halloween-themed "Play the Monster"-bundle containing this one [here on OBS!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.



advertisement, leaving us with 3 pages of content, so let's take a look!

So, what is a malborgeoth? Something really cool. You know how the cult-critter flumph is a representation of the weird good guys, the foes of the Dark Tapestry. Okay, now combine these with one of Final Fantasy's most notorious foes – the

Marlboro/Morbol! Add a dash of lovecraftiana et voilà – we have the critter in question!

The creature clocks in at CR 13. Its stingers inject acid for continuous damage, which is nasty; they can bury their tentacles into the ground to duplicate *black tentacles* and remain stationary. They are poisonous and have starflight, can emit entangling, acidic belches and are capable of starflight. The critter has impressive defensive capabilities, ensuring that it won't be killed right off by potent PCs...and even better, the creature gets the FF-monster's gloriously vile super-debuff/condition-heaping breath. Epic!

Even better, we don't just get stats – the pdf weaves a tale of the creature's origin in detail, providing ample inspiration – oh, and we get 2 CR+0 variants – a cold-based variant and a fire-based one.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good, I noticed no hiccups on either formal or rules-language level. Layout adheres to Everyman Gaming's nice 2-column full-color standard for the series. The pdf has no bookmarks, but needs none at this length. The artwork provided for the creature is cool as well.

Alexander Augunas once again proves that he can craft thoroughly amazing monsters – from the inspiration to the execution, this critter is inspired and worth the asking price. Highly recommended! 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this inspired critter [here on OBS!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.

Everyman Minis: Unchained Kangaroos



SRD, 1 page advertisement, leaving us with 3 pages of content, so let's take a look!

So, why unchain the kangaroo? Well, they don't trap foes like e.g. wolves and analogue creatures: They actually have claws. And even the front paws aren't as harmless as they look. Hence, we get cool alternate stats for unchained kangaroo animal companion stats on the first page – no complaints regarding them in comparison to other animal companion stats. (They advance at 4th level, just fyi.)

Everyman Minis: Unchained Kangaroos

Publisher: Rogue

Genius Games/

Everyman Games

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This everyman mini clocks in at 10 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 4 pages of

The regular kangaroo presented herein would be a CR ½ creature, whose kick causes bludgeoning and piercing damage (which can be a bit odd in DR-interaction) and a threat-range of 19-20. They can't kick as part of a full attack unless their BAB is equal to or exceeds +6. Crits with kicks can disembowel you, causing bleeding wounds and Con-damage – OUCH!

Things get cooler, though – there's a second statblock in here. Jack. Jack isn't like other kangaroos. He is actually an awakened unarmed fighter 5 that uses Everyman gaming's cool [Unchained Fighter-rules](#). He is quick, deadly, and damn cool!

Oh, and folks observing him have reverse engineered his fighting tricks – represented by a Style-feat chain: Kangaroo Style decreases the penalty to feint non-humanoids to -2, -4 against animal intelligence foes. Additionally, high ranks in Acrobatics increase the bonuses gained from fighting defensively or using the total defense action. The feat also doubles as both Acrobatic and Combat Expertise for the purpose of prerequisites. The follow-up feat is Kangaroo Gait, who allows you to feint as a swift action when moving more than 10 ft. When using Spring Attack, you can instead feint the target as a free action. Kangaroo Roundhouse, the third feat in the chain, lets you add Acrobatic ranks to the damage roll on all successful attacks versus a target you feinted successfully via Kangaroo gait, replacing Strength modifier. Kudos: Feat takes the Vital Strike chain into account.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are excellent, I noticed no hiccups. Layout adheres to a two-column standard with a printer-friendly, white background. The full-color artwork is nice. The pdf has no bookmarks, but needs none at its length.

Alexander Augunas' unchained kangaroos are amazing. The critter is cool. The companion stats are nice. The awakened character? Glorious. The feats are interesting as well – what's not to like? My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get these deadly, kickass (haha!) kangaroos [here on OBS!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.

[Letters from the Flaming Crab:](#)
[Puppet Show](#)

Publisher: Flaming Crab Games

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of the unique „Letters from the

Flaming Crab“-series clocks in at 22 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 2 pages of SRD, leaving us with 18 pages of content, so let's take a look!

We begin this pdf with, as always, a nice, letter from the eponymous planes-hopping vessel, before diving right into the crunchy bits – which, this time around, would be a new hybrid class – the marionetteer, whose parents would be both summoners and vigilantes. Interesting combination, right? Well, chassis-wise, the marionetteer gets d8 HD, 6 + Int skills per level, proficiency with simple weapons and light armor, ¾ BAB-progression and good Will-saves.

The marionetteer can conceal the animated nature of a puppet – checks to Disguise marionettes as regular, inert puppets receive a +20 bonus; dual identity pertains the puppets. The marionetteer begins play with a Tiny puppet, the marionette. This puppet has hardness 3, 5 hp, 3lbs. weight and is bonded to an entity who brings it to life at the marionetteer's command. In effect, the marionette is two things at once: The inanimate puppet receptacle and the animating spirit – these are referred to as the inert and animate forms. Calling the spirit into a puppet requires 1 minute. At 14th level, the marionette may be animated as a full-round action and the marionetteer doesn't have to touch it – it just has to be within 100 ft.

Unless chosen otherwise, the puppet is inconspicuous and attempts to scry on the puppet work only when the puppet's form is what's searched for. The marionette is not a summoned creature, but may be forced into the inert state by being subjected to dismissing effects à la *banishment* etc. It acts on the same initiative as the marionetteer. It requires commanding, which is a move action that provokes AoOs. The commanding process, however, is pretty subtle, requiring a challenging Sense Motive DC and observation of both marionetteer and puppet – the DC scales with class levels and Cha-mod of the marionetteer. Marionetteers can only command marionettes up to 100 ft. away and they require line of sight; a marionette sans commands doesn't act, but is not helpless – pretty important, there. Replacing an inert marionette takes 12 hours and class level times 10 gp and replenishes ½ maximum hit points. The marionetteer may only have one active marionette at any given time.

Since marionettes and eidolons work similarly, the rules for eidolons, including table, have been reprinted here for your convenience, which is nice. Now, where marionettes and eidolons differ in how they work would be the base form available – there are two base-form chassis types available for the marionette, the Arsenal and the Proxy. Both get a different set of accessible evolutions, allowing for different playing experiences – the Arsenal is Medium, the proxy is



Small – both get claws, arms and legs, but the proxy also gets precise strike (basically a 1d4-sneak analogue that may be taken multiple times); the proxy is basically more subtle; they do not gain share spells. Arsentials get good Fort and Ref-saves, Proxies get good Will-saves. Arsentials have a base speed of 20 ft., proxies have a base speed of 30 ft. The claws inflict appropriate damage (1d4 for Arsenal, 1d3 for Proxies). Evolution points are reassigned at a newly gained level or when the marionette is replaced. Starting at 8th level, the marionetteer no longer needs line of sight to control marionettes within 100 ft.

At 1st level, 4th and every 3 levels thereafter, the marionetteer gains a social talent, using his class level as vigilante levels for the purpose of prerequisites. Marionetteers are always considered to be in their social identity. At 1st level, they add ½ class level as a bonus to Perform when using the inert marionette – I assume minimum 1 here, a minor oversight. Starting at 2nd level, they gain +1/2 class level to either Perform or Bluff. At 7th level, 1/day a marionetteer can cause those watching his performance cause *suggestions* for those watching the performance.

Starting at 3rd level, the marionetteer can repair damage done to the marionette 3 + Charisma modifier times per day as a standard action. This restores 1d8 hp. At 6th level and every 3 levels thereafter, the healing increases by +1d8. The ability can only used while the marionette is in inert form. Returning a marionette into inert form, just fyi, takes a standard action.

Starting at 5th level, a marionetteer can, as a standard action, animate Tiny, non-magical, unattended objects within 100 ft., as if using *animate objects*. The animation period spans 3 + class level rounds and at 7th level and every odd level thereafter, the number of puppets or their sizes increase. Multiple objects thus animated may be commanded with the same move action. At 6th level and every 6 levels thereafter, the marionetteer can maintain an additional marionette – only one may be active, but the marionetteer may basically switch through them, which is surprisingly cool!

At 12th level, as a standard action, the marionetteer can cause a humanoid target within 100 ft. within line of sight to make a Reflex save (DC governed by Cha-modifier); on a failure, the creature is dominated by Charisma modifier rounds; the dominated creature can be commanded as a move action that provokes AoOs. Creatures thus ensnared by the commanding strings of the marionetteer can attempt to escape the mystic bondage via Strength or Escape Artist checks. Nice one and, due to the lack of limitations apart from duration, a powerful tool.

As a capstone, the class gains either the option to split the animating force into 2 marionettes at once (both

of which suffer -3 to all d20-rolls while the animating force is split thus) and may command them at once, or the marionetteer may share senses with the marionette and command them as a swift action.

Evolution-wise, we get full movement while using Acrobatics and Stealth and the option to make startling attacks when unaware of the marionette, rendering the target flat-footed versus the marionette (gets uncanny dodge interaction right); we also get increased speed. Scaling DR to represent the constructed body, firearm training, a second life (banishment to a home plane) – all in all, a nice array. The class gets archetypes: The performer replaces social talent with bardic performance and social grace with +1/2 class level to Diplomacy – basically, an archetype for less social-heavy games.

There is more, but, unlike what you might have expected, we go one step beyond: The pdf now proceeds to contextualize different, interesting puppeteering traditions; these are represented in more than one associated archetype; take Bunraku, one of the traditional Japanese traditions: We get the Phantom Puppeteers bardic masterpiece, which creates buffing *mirror image*-like shadow assistants – pretty cool! The marionetteer archetype here would be the Joruri: The puppet they use to animate needs to be bigger and as such, is more conspicuous: The puppet is as tall as the animated marionette (remember: The puppet for the regular marionette is Tiny!) – the archetype loses the animate objects-ability tree in favor of 3 + Cha-mod *make whole*, the ability to have the animated, sentient marionette guard them while sleeping and allow the puppet to heal them when dropped to 0 hp or below via Heal. At higher levels, we have a puppet that heals class level hit points per night. At 13th level, the marionetteer may accept the damage taken by the puppet and he may, 1/round, take a condition inflicted upon the marionette. 15th level nets the ability to share senses and commanding the puppet no longer requires hand movements. 17th level allows the puppet to drain spell-completion objects held to gain fast healing temporarily; at 19th level, the puppet gains temporary hit points and a buff against the caster upon succeeding a save against a single-target spell. Additionally, reduced effects on a success are completely negated.

Amazing: We dive into Afghan Buz-Baz, puppetry accompanied by music, next: The bardic masterpiece associated here would be the Bolero of Obedience, which allows you to issue *commands* or *murderous commands*, but lets the target retain mental and verbal command of his actions...now here's a creepy visual for you... The archetype provides would be the Markhor Maestro, an archetype for the druid, which gains a modified class skill list and modifies

the skill bonuses gained by nature sense to apply to perform (string) instead. They use Charisma as governing spellcasting attribute and are locked into a ram companion. They also gain inspire courage as a bard of their level, but only apply the benefits to the companion and summoned creatures. Flavorful one.

Giant puppetry comes with the Manipulation of the Massive masterpiece, which allows you to penalize the saves of bigger creatures or buffs allies to ignore size modifiers or restrictions based on size against creatures taller than you – this one can, depending on your campaign, be potentially be really overpowered – in e.g. an anti-dragon/giant campaign, I'd ban this masterpiece. The archetype presented for the marionetteer replaces the ability to have multiple marionettes at the ready with a single marionette that grows in size – space/reach, modifiers etc. are provided.

Chinese/Taiwanese glove puppetry (Du Dai Xi/Po Te Hi) is represented by the Battle of Sheng Mountain, Final Act masterpiece nets 1-hour per class level inspire courage sans performing, and targets may, as a swift action, end the effect with *moment of greatness* –cool. There also is the *puppet partnership* spell, which ties a puppet with an ally, allowing you to buff the ally while concentrating on the spell – per se a standard buff made cool by the visuals, which render the spell unique. The *puppet protector* is basically a figurine type that animates as a puppet fighter – three variants are included.

Indonesian Ondel-ondel comes with the Invocation of the Guardian masterpiece, that calls forth a protective ancestral spirit. The *ondel-ondel sentinel* would be basically a costume/puppet that you enter – you can sense evil inside and may merge with the puppet – think of it as a non-scifi-ish paladin-y power armor. Really cool! Punch and Judy are represented by Slapstick Reaction can cause targets to attack allies on failed saves; the Punchman bard archetype replaces well-versed with increased demoralize durations; lore master's 5th level use is replaced with an immediate action option to grant allies rerolls versus enchantments/compulsions by expending bardic performances. They replace *suggestion* with *dispel magic*. Shadowgraphy is represented by The Nightmare Revue masterpiece – which can be brutal. AoE *phantasmal killer*...OUCH! And yes, minimum level etc. make that okay...and yes, I can picture that being one cool story angle... The archetype associated with this tradition would be the umbral puppeteer summoner: The eidolon gets the shadow creature template, but the creature can only be called in darkness. Summon monster is replaced with *shadow conjuration*, which expands to *greater shadow conjuration* at higher levels.

Ventriloquism comes with the Phantom Voice masterpiece allows you to hijack the utterances of other

creaturesm which can be used for all kinds of cool shenanigans. The focused arcane school associated with necromancy that is presented here, gastromancy, lets you listen to the stomachs of the dead, listening to their wishes. (Yes, that's a thing!) The final tradition of puppetry depicted herein would be Mua Roi Nuoc – Vietnamese water puppetry. The masterpiece we get here would be The Crocodile and the Farmer's Daughter combines *communal water walk* with the option to gain, as a swift action, *expeditious retreat* for 1 round while still on the water. We also get a spell here – *water dancer* – basically the significantly improved and amazing version of *water walk*: You can walk up steep inclines, and even up waterfalls! Water elementals don't get water mastery against you, etc. – cool!

Now those of you who, like myself, tend to enjoy researching other cultures may be aware that quite a few of the puppetry traditions here are associated with rituals/festivals – well, guess what? There actually are kingdom-edicts for kingdom-building rules herein: Glove puppetry, ondel-ondel and flood festival all come with their own edicts that helps the respective kingdom. Really cool!

Conclusion:

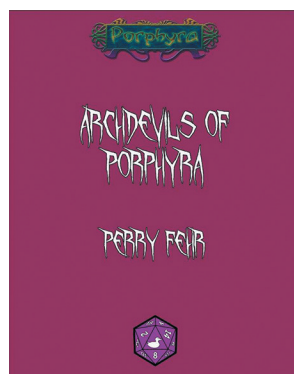
Editing and formatting are very good, though not perfect – there are a couple of minor hiccups (like "arionette"), but those don't influence the integrity of the rules. Layout adheres to Flaming Crab Games' two-column full-color standard and the pdf features several really nice public domain artworks and photographs that do a better job at conveying atmosphere than bad stock art could. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

J Gray, Jeff Lee, Neal Litherland, Michael McCarthy and Anthony Toretti are all experienced designers – and it shows here. Siobhan Bjorknas and J Gray in development certainly did a good job unifying narrative voices. For one, while this is most certainly a very, very crunchy book, its crunch is constantly grounded in cool ideas, flavorful descriptions, etc. – even in engine-tweak-style archetypes, there is some soul, some unique identity and cultural context, which does a lot to endear these concepts to me. The marionetteer class is GLORIOUS – it is not necessarily a great class for mega-dungeon exploration, but for e.g. Ravenloft-esque adventures, intrigue/social/city-campaigns or those focusing on the occult (or on explorations of different cultures!), this is GOLD. The hybrid class manages to retain the influence of both parent classes without being just a collection of recombined parts and ranks as one of the most flavorful examples for hybrid classes I know – it has a distinct and unique identity I enjoy.

The grounding of class options in the diverse puppetry traditions covered is a great idea and opened my eyes to some cultural traditions I wasn't aware of – in a manner, this pdf actually ended up educating me, which is something I love. The diverse options for the traditions kept me glued to the screen, and frankly, in spite of this review having been more work than the average letter, I was honestly bummed when I reached the end of the pdf – the concept of puppetry and the notions explored herein, these cool traditions, they inspired me more than I expected and I'd frankly love to see more. What more can you ask of a short pdf like this? Excellent job, 5 stars + seal of approval, in spite of minor blemishes here and there – the totality of concept, flavor and crunch is too cool to rate it any lower.

You can get this inspiring, cool supplement [here on OBS!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.



Archdevils of Porphyra

Publisher: Purple Duck Games

Reviewer: Endzeitgeist

Stars: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of the Porphyran books on potent entities clocks in at 18 pages, 1 page front cover, 2 pages of SRD, leaving us with 15

pages of content, so let's take a look!

All righty, this pdf should come as no surprise to anyone who read the Caster Prestige Archetype series – much like the installment on Demon Lords, there is a class in that series that ties directly into the portrayals herein. The archdevils within this pdf come with full Inner Sea Gods-level of support – this means that we get a reprint of the Deific Obedience feat as well as 3 boons per archdevils to add some customization options to the respective worshiper.

The respective archdevil entries mention not only favored weapon, but also favored instrument and favored animal. Domain-wise, the Big chief Sathax gains 4 (as well as 4 sub-domains), with the other archdevils gaining 3 domains and subdomains, respectively. There is one exception to this rule, but I'll get to that later. It should also be noted that each of the respective archdevils comes with a spell-preparation ritual and, obviously, an obedience. But yeah, Sathax – this fellow, the Grand Archdevil, the *snake in a robe* is elitist – and in the grand tradition of archdevils, his cult and worshipers emphasize quality over quantity

– no wonder, the 3rd boon lets you 1/month, on full moon nights, beseech the archdevil for a *wish* – not a big fan of making this a Diplomacy check with just a single DC – a more modular DC would have been more elegant here, but that is just a design-aesthetic complaint – since the boon is restricted, I have no issues with its massive power.

The Chained Queen, born from a tryst between Sathax's deceased wife and the god Kamus, the divine child has become ruler of her own empire, courtesy of Sathax' grace in the face of pristine logic. Subversion, self-flagellation and "just following orders" are leitmotifs for the lady. Nice dressing: A rosary-type linked chain that acts as a means to depict rank in the church.

Duke Melektus is all about seeming; about appearances over substance; the fellow is the tarnished child of light, twisted to lead the mortals astray – from blood-letting to other quak-remedies, he is also the patron of healing – though of healing that is tainted; the boons reflect that really well, with e.g. parasitic powers. Truly unique and flavorful write-up!

Duke Mastema, *Khan of the Asherake*, is the second son of Sathax – bold where, Melektus is subservient. He chose to rise through the ranks of devilkind and sports only contempt for mankind, preferring more powerful races – he is the concept of merit blended with elitism on a racial basis. Nice!

Duchess Hadriel is the firstborn of Sathax, mistress of domination. Her mere presence enslaves mortal minds and she prefers females to males, causing some consternation in hell's hierarchies. Ambitious beyond belief, she hopes to claim proper demi-goddess-status...and she is slowly getting there, with calculations and a focus on myth/planning serving as a backdrop to her boundless ambition. Ibolis is Sathax' ally – at least as far as that is possible for a being of pure darkness, the master of singularity. Mysterious, intriguing and shrouded in a veil of secrecy, the arch-devil is not part of the family of Sathax, but he is sufficiently strange to act as an intriguing wildcard. Now, I did mention the offspring of the grand lord of hell's wife before – this demigod and archdevil would be Kram-Hotep. He is really interesting, embodying the fear of dying, of being lost in the fabric of history. Mortality, to be remembered – his Twilight-Pyramid and unique flavor most assuredly make him stand out – he seeks not souls, but slaves. Courtesy of his status, he does gain 4 different domains, not just 3. All in all, I enjoyed all of the archdevils presented herein.

The pdf then proceeds to depict a variety of infernal magic items – framed by some prose, we get

8 different items: *Books of Infernal Extortion* contain names – monsters and beings identified can then be commanded, even at range via e.g. *whispering wind* – on a failed save, we have a curse on their hands... nasty! At 8K, pretty inexpensive, but the evil nature should keep it out of PC hands. Hopefully. *Cloaks of fiendish recovery* allow the wearer to crouch down, becoming *invisible*. They can reveal themselves in a puff of smoke and provide limited spell recovery. While only usable once per day, I wished that the activation action was more precise than “crouching down” – not a big issue, since you can research that, but yeah. *Coins of corruption* are lucky for LE beings and hamper the healing received by others. Really cool!! The *Cube of Kram* is a twist on the Hellraiser-cube, tied to Kram-Hotep’s domain – it can be cheesed...by intention! You see, that’s part of the fun here and actually comes fully codified in rules regarding responses taken. Cool!

Flails of humiliation cause nonlethal bonus damage versus foes with resistance and immunity to electricity – nice one. I can see devils enjoying this. *Rod of cynical duality* heals targets, but also shatters objects – and it MUST alternate. There’s a price to be paid, I guess... *The Sceptre of Seven Circles* is an artifact – the rod of the king of devilkind and allows the wielder to command legions of devils. Finally, *superior’s rings* are really creative: You designate a target in sight before initiative is rolled; Your initiative is set at +1 higher than the target. Amazing! While very potent in mythic contexts, it can actually help NPCs defeat the rocket launcher tag-strategy. In regular contexts, it most assuredly can be a puzzling, fun item to stick on foes. All in all, a really cool magic item section.

The pdf also contains new spells: The *Blessing of Sathax* fortifies your d20-rolls with Charisma-modifier 1/round. *Commision Pergensia Bodyguard* nets you a powerful bodyguard – not to fight for you, but to keep you from harm. Well. Devils. You’ll better shore up on your logic skills. *Enforce fate* can only target a foe once per 24 hours: The caster rolls 5 d20s and the target has to use the results in the order determined by the caster. NASTY! *Hard darkness* is basically a *darkness* and *solid fog* crossover. *Hotep’s Inexorable Pyramid* is a REALLY creative variant of *forcecage*. Love it. *Odious betrayal* is also really creative: It penalizes teamwork sharing and similar support with damage and negative conditions – powerful, but requires the set-up of a creature under a compulsion. Really cool. *Summon petitioner slave* is self-explanatory. The spells cover the occult and ACG-classes as well, just fyi.

Next up are two new subdomains: Betrayal is a subdomain of Evil – it allows you to steal the AC of allies. Nice idea. The blackmail subdomain of the knowledge domain ties in with lorekeeper and allows you to penalize foes. Caps for the subdomain abilities prevent abuse. Nice. There also is the cold domain, with a numbing touch and later, an aura of cold. Nice. Next up is a whole page of traits. These include 1/day causing a target to lose 1 point of initiative. Bonus types are, with one exception, concisely codified and the traits are meaningful without being overpowered.

The final page of this pdf is devoted to the Suppligong devil, a CR 8 goat-thing with 5 flaming eyes in pentacle-form. Yeah, damn creepy! The stats are solid as well – huge kudos!

The pdf also comes with a bonus-pdf, also penned by Perry Fehr, which depicts the Rancor Daemon (CR 14): Warlords with huge, mantis-like claws, whip-like tongues and massive swords, they look incredibly badass, are commanders that get better when supported by nearby daemons– and sport neat, solid stats – big kudos for a really neat bonus critter!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch on both a formal and rules-language, I noticed no true glitches herein. Layout adheres to a printer-friendly 2-column standard with purple highlights. The pdf sports a ton of artworks: Full-color symbols for all archdevils and the monsters also get amazing, full-color artworks – all original and damn cool! The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

When Perry Fehr takes his time to properly craft his material (or when his glorious ideas are properly streamlined by a good developer), something beautiful happens. This is a prime example of such a case. This pdf is refined, professional and amazing – the archdevils all sport at least one unique angle; they breathe the proper flavor. The obediences are creative.

Creativity. That’s something you can find in pretty much all of Perry’s pdfs, but here, the creativity is paired with proper, careful execution, marrying the art and craftsmanship aspects of design. In short: This is an inspired, amazing pdf I wholeheartedly recommend. Oh, it’s also, much like all of PDG’s books, open content. In short: This deserves being supported. If you enjoy the infernal and need some great tools, then check this out. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval.

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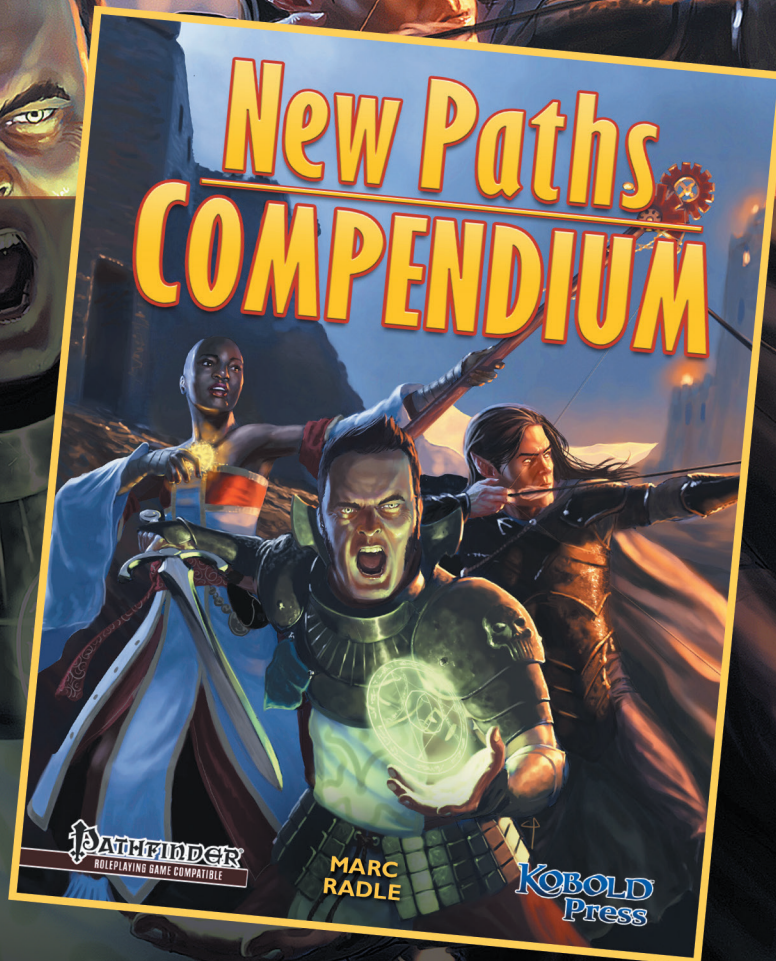
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