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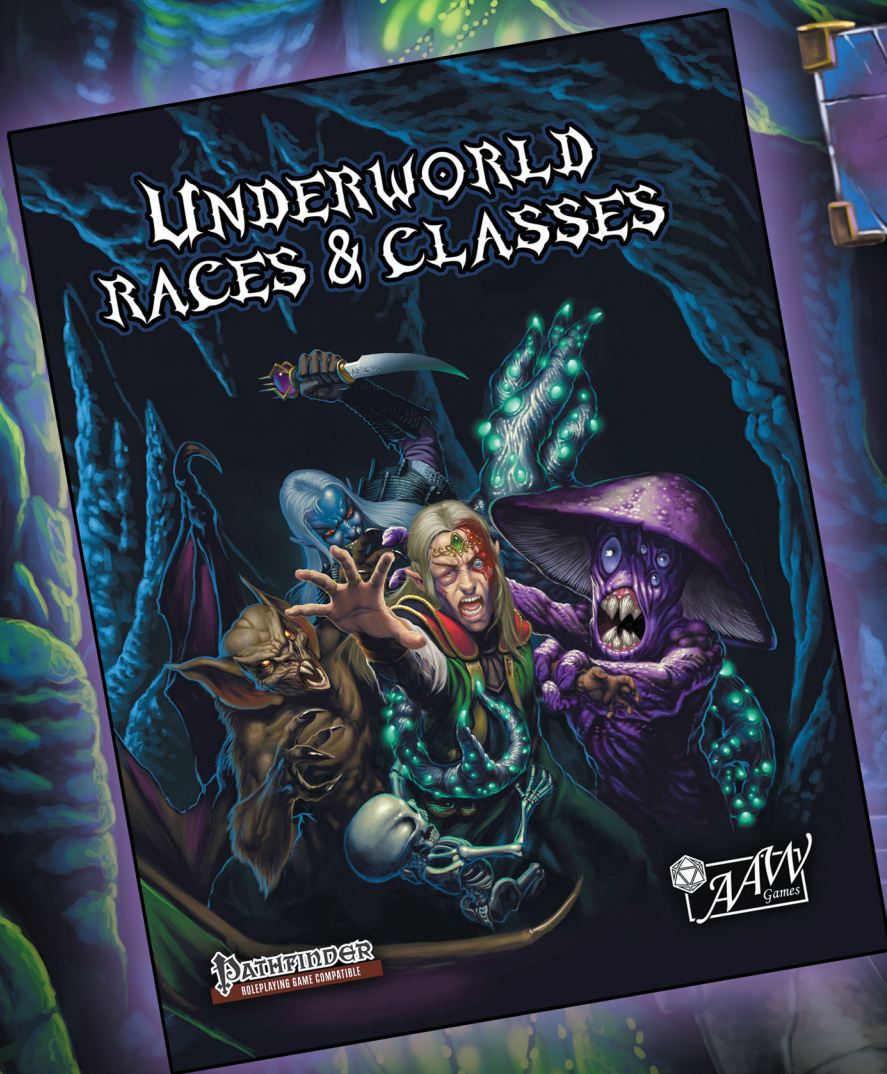
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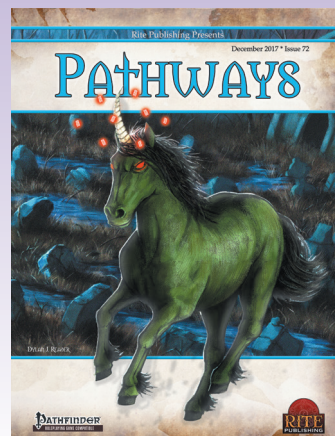
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Editorial

by Dave Paul

Witches and hexes and curses are some of the most fun things I've encountered in RPGs. Sure, the axe-wielding dwarf who wades through orcs is a joy, and the barbarian half-orc who charges down the mountainside screaming and destroying things is fun, and the elven ranger who picks off targets from afar has its appeal. Of course. And, sometimes it's just fun (perhaps as the GM, maybe as a player) to be the unexpected, otherworldly force who curses the dwarf to be terrified of orcs, or hexes the barbarian with the misfortune of inaccurate attacks.

Part of my fascination with the game itself, but also with things like curses in particular (but magic more generally), is my own fascination with how different all of this is with the world the players inhabit and those players themselves. Players can be a superstitious lot (which perhaps makes sense), with their bizarre dice rituals and the occasional exclamation that someone *knew* the next roll was going to be a natural 20. Some of the players I know personally have strong religious beliefs; others are agnostic; some are atheists. Some of the players I know have described themselves as "spiritual but not religious" (I myself find this rather puzzling, as if what some who say this are really saying is "I want to believe in things like what some religious systems offer, but I don't want to believe in some of the other things those systems offer," but I'm sure others mean something else). Some of the players I know wonder whether there really are ghosts, whether maybe magic is real, whether some people really can communicate with the dead. You'll

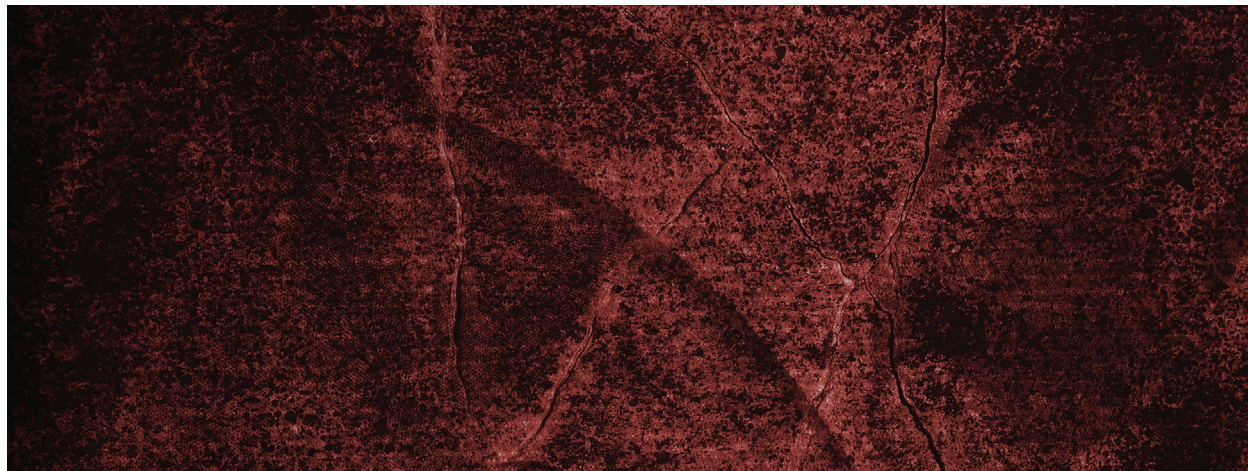
pardon my own skepticism about all these things. It seems to me that if there have been billions of people who've already died, that if ghosts were real, we'd see a lot more of them (and what about ghosts of dogs, and cats, and the trillions of other animals—do all the fish in the sea, all the insects in the fields, sometimes have ghosts).

But, regardless of all of that, we human beings really do have intentions, we really do mean to do some things and sometimes do other things and we don't know why. So, even if there aren't ghosts or supernatural agents, there's still plenty of mystery (my own sense is that the universe is inexhaustible in its ability to supply us with surprises), and we really are the kinds of things that understand and use symbols, and we really are sometimes moved to do things by forces that aren't conscious or are outside our control. So, there's all kinds of room, even for the skeptic, to embrace a game that takes all this stuff rather seriously. And, because the game is a helluva lot of fun, there's no reason not to just jump in and embrace the whole thing: spells, gods, planes of existence, wishes, etc. We all get a chance to sort of play out the old "if you could have any power, what would it be?" Maybe you'd want invisibility, or super strength.

Maybe you'd want to be a witch, or be able to place hexes on your enemies, or to live in a world where others really do have the power to curse people but you are immune to curses.

Whatever it is you'd want, these kinds of games give you a chance to play out the "what ifs" and that's a wonderful thing.

Happy gaming.





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Hexen Creature Template

by Owen K.C. Stephens, Illustration by Dylan J. Reader

Though witches gain much of their power from mysterious patrons, who grant the vast abilities of a witch for their own mysterious purposes, witches are far from the only creatures to be so touched by the gifts of these shadowy patrons. Hexen creatures, also known sometimes as hag beasts, are monsters that have also been given a boost of eldritch ability by a patron. Like witches the hexen creatures do not have any specific guidance from their supernatural patron as to why they are chosen to be bearers of such powers, but their patrons goals

are inevitably advanced by the hexen creatures actions. Many hexen creatures are clearly marked as different at birth, their coloration and features altered and twisted in much the same way hags appearance is different from humans. While good and neutral hexen creatures exist, it is far more common for them to turn toward evil, especially among those hexen creatures born to groups that are traditionally protectors or guardians of some region, concept, or nationality.

Creating a Hexen Creature

Any creature that is not mindless and has an Intelligence of 4 or greater can be a hexen creature.

Challenge Rating: If base creature CR is 4 or less, +1 CR. If base creature CR is 5-9 or less, +2 CR. If base creature CR is 10 or more, +3 CR.

Alignment: A hexen creature may retain its alignment, but it is most common from them to have an evil alignment, and often have an alignment that directly opposes the typical alignment for the base creature. If it has an alignment-based subtype or magic abilities tied to alignment they change to be appropriate to its new alignment (*protection from evil* becoming *protection from good* for an evil hexen creature, for example).

Hit Dice: The hexen creature's hit die do not change, but it does gain bonus hit points equal to its new CR total x3.

Attacks: The hexen creature gains a bonus on all attack rolls (and CMB) equal to the CR adjustment of the template.

Saves: The hexen creature gains a bonus to all its saving throws equal to the CR adjustment of the template.

Defensive Abilities: The hexen creature gains a deflection bonus to AC equal to the CR adjustment of the template (and double that to CMD). (If it already has a deflection bonus to AC, it instead increases that bonus by the same amount).

Save DCs The hexen creature gains a bonus to the save DC of any spell or ability it has equal to the CR adjustment of the template.

Ability Scores: Bonus to wisdom equal to double

the CR adjustment of the template.

Skills: The hexen creature gains a +2 bonus to all skill checks.

Special Abilities: A hexen creature gains the following abilities:

Hexenclaw (Su) Whenever a hexen creature with a natural attack makes only a single attack in a round, and uses its natural weapon, if the attack is successful it can both deal the natural weapon's normal damage and deliver any one single-target hex to the creature attacked.

Hexes (Su): The hexen beast gains hexes, as the witch class feature. It has a total of 1 hex, plus a number of hexes equal to half its adjusted CR. It treats its Hit Dice as its witch level for all calculations regarding these hexes. If its CR is 10 or higher, it can have one major hex plus one for every 2 its CR is above 10.

A hexen creature that gains witch levels adds its HD to its witch level for purposes of determining witch caster level and the effectiveness of hexes.

Patron Spells (Sp) Each hexen creature gains a single witch patron. It can cast each spell granted by that patron that has a spell level no greater than half the hexen creature's adjusted CR, each once per day.

Hexicorn

This horrific beast looks like a moss-green horse, but with black hooves and a wicked curved horn sprouting forth from its brow.



Hexen Creature Unicorn (Entropy Patron) CR 4

XP 1,200

LE Large magical beast

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +12

Aura *magic circle against good*

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; (+3 Dex, +3 natural, -1 size; +1 deflection, +3 deflection vs. good)

hp 46 (4d10+12+12)

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8; +2 resistance vs. good

Immune charm, compulsion, poison

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft.

Melee gore +9 (1d8+4), 2 hooves +6 (1d3+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks hexes (evil eye [DC 19], misfortune [DC 19]) hexenclaw, powerful charge (gore, 2d8+8)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th)

At will—*detect good* (as free action), *light*

3/day—*cure light wounds*

1/day—*cure moderate wounds*, *greater teleport* (within its swamp territory), *lesser confusion* (DC 19), *plague carrier* (DC 20), *neutralize poison* (DC 22)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 17, **Con** 16, **Int** 11, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 24 (28 vs. trip)

Feats Multiattack, Weapon Focus (horn)

Skills Acrobatics +10, Perception +12, Stealth +10, Survival +9 (+20 in forests); Racial Modifiers +3 Survival in forests, +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Sylvan

SQ magical strike, wild empathy +17

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Magic Circle against Good (Su): This ability continually duplicates the effect of the spell. The hexicorn cannot suppress this ability.

Magical Strike (Ex): A hexicorn's gore attack is treated as a magic evil weapon for the purposes of damage reduction.

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

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate bogs and swamps

Organization solitary

Treasure none



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10 Men-at-Arms with Personality

By Creighton Broadhurst

Borderland forts are dangerous places, and the wise noble strongly garrisons it with redoubtable men-at-arms. Such soldiers should not be merely carbon copies. Among any garrison, exceptional—or interesting—individuals will always emerge.

Use the table below to generate the details of particularly interesting or exceptional men-at-arms.

1. **Aevar** (LG male human fighter 1) Overly burly, and bald, Aevar cuts a menacing image. His dangerous mien is further enhanced by a badly done tattoo of a skull covering his entire head except for his face. For all that, Aevar is loyal to his lord, if not a little bit too enthusiastic in combat.
2. **Turkka Hirvonen** (N male human fighter 1) Turkka doesn't want to be soldier; he only became one to escape a life of crushing poverty and constant hunger. He is loyal—to an extent—to his lord, but is always on the lookout to turn a profit. Turkka is always hungry, and rarely encountered without food in his hand (or hidden in his pouch).
3. **Aila Leino** (NG female human fighter 3) Aila's slender frame belies a strength far greater than most men. Friendly and gregarious, Aila is popular with her fellows, although secretly she hates their coarse, unsubtle humour. She is a skilled warrior and braver than most veterans. With dark grey eyes and short-cropped red hair, Aila stands out from her drab fellows. If she can escape this backwater fort, a great destiny lies in her future, for Aila is not entirely human...
4. **Gar Blood-Eye** (CN male half-orc fighter 2) A renegade from an orcish tribe lurking in the nearby wilderland, Gar is not completely trusted by his fellows. Half of them see the tall and broad-shouldered, green-skinned warrior as little more than a savage while most of the rest believe him to be a spy. Consequently, Gar has few friends and has become used to expecting the worst from those he meets.
5. **Myev Widow-maker** (NG female half-orc fighter 2) A terror on the battlefield, Myev has a way of looking at people that suggests she is plotting their brutal and swift evisceration. She uses a large double-blade axe—her “Widow-maker”—in lieu of any other weapon. For all that, she is popular with her fellows who have got over her strange ways. She—in turn—is incredibly protective of them.
6. **Arnallae Uthliavar** (CG female half-elf fighter 3) Arnallae is a restless soul who has served here for a decade or so because she wants to experience the borderland and its perils. She is erratic, but brave. While Arnallae would never put the lives of her fellows in jeopardy, she is easily distracted.
7. **Eohric Llitwin** (CN old male human fighter 2) Stocky and grey-haired, Eohric is clearly older than his fellows—who jokingly refer to him as “grandfather.” Eohric is immensely experienced, but tires easily. He dreams of retiring and living out his days in a tavern, but Eohric is an inveterate gambler. Disastrously, he is also gullible and heavily in debt to certain individuals who want access to his lord's private chambers. Thus far, Eohric has resisted their advances but as his debts mount he is becoming increasingly desperate.
8. **Valto Sianio** (N male human fighter 1) Valto suffers from chronic toothache. With a perpetual grimace, he is miserable much of the time. Valto's woes began with a punch to the face during a training bout. The blow shattered his front teeth and infection soon set in leaving blackened stumps.
9. **Gerold Corbie** (NE male human thief 3) Ostensibly Gerold is a new recruit to the garrison, but he has a secret. In reality, he is a spy for a rival lord (or perhaps a band of humanoids planning to attack the fort). Unfortunately for Gerold, one of the PCs fits the description of his contact (who he has never met before) and he tries to make contact one night in the tavern. Confusion ensues and if he can talk his way out of his encounter with the PCs, he abandons his mission and flees.
10. **Frida Gall** (NG female human fighter 1) Constantly on the edge of exhaustion, Frida has deep bags under her eyes. Bedevilled by nightmares, she rarely sleeps a whole night through and often wakes up screaming. She is not a popular bunk mate, consequently. Desperate for sleep, she has tried all manner of herbal remedies and the faint smell of such often hang in the air around her.

GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing

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

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Spells Showcase: Witches, Curses, and Hexes!

By Dave Paul

There are dozens of curses scattered throughout the *101 Spells* books and I've found that I really like working on them. Frankly, I might be happy just working on books full of curses for a while. I also have enjoyed the Pathfinder witch class and have poked around with spells that I think work well with that class. And, though I haven't delved deeply into hexes, I'm rather enamored of them and kinda wish I had the time to work on a book or two about them. I've decided to dive into some of my favorite witch-themed spells for this issue, including one of my several spells that is designed to let a PC play as a hag. I hope you enjoy!

~~

Hag form from [101 Swamp Spells](#) remains one of my favorite spells. There are many variants on the spell, and there are ample opportunities to find nice synergy spells, but it remains a fun little gem all on its own. I have made every effort to make some spells that would otherwise be potentially game-breaking or even just a little too powerful to come back in line by forcing complicated components into the spell. In this case, getting a fingernail or hair from a green hag could either be a complicated quest or could be the kind of thing a party seems to accidentally stumble across as it makes its way through a bog and stumbles on a hut...

("Before you see the smoke rising from the earthen chimney tucked into the moist, thatched roof, you smell whatever weird odors it carries to you. And, among the many things you notice in the nearby brambles is what appears to be some coarse—almost wiry—gray hairs that might (or might not) be human.")

Sure, not everyone will want to turn into a green hag. Probably, most players won't want this for their characters; but some might, and this spell also offers GMs an opportunity to mess with players by having a hag turn out to be something quite different from what they expected. While the alchemist and magus might feel like unlikely candidates, I wanted to open this up to a variety of casters. Perhaps the most likely casters for this spell are the witch and maybe an evil druid who gain access at 11th level. I liked the idea of a kind of hag that is weirdly connected to nature, but in a corrupt sort of way, hence the druid; and I also liked the idea of the hag being fundamentally corrupted, maybe by something not quite of this world, but

also someone who is embedded in the world, hence the witch. I suppose there are several Pathfinder classes that could manifest in a game as witch-like in some traditional, fairy-tale sort of way, and there does seem to be something that connects that sort of witch concept to the concept of the hag.

Hag Form

School: Transmutation (polymorph);

Level: Alchemist 5, Druid 6, Magus 5, Sorcerer/Wizard 7, Witch 6

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S, M (a fingernail or hair of a green hag)

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

Saving Throw: See text; **Spell Resistance:** No

You become a green hag. You gain a +2 size bonus to Strength, a +4 natural armor bonus, swim 30 ft., darkvision 90 ft., Spell Resistance (10 + 1/2 your level), mimicry, and two claw attacks (1d4 + Str plus weakness). In addition, you gain the constant use of *tongues*. You also gain these spell-like abilities:

At will—*alter self*, *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *pyrotechnics*, *whispering wind*

Weakness (Su) A green hag's claws sap strength from those she strikes. Each time a green hag hits a foe with her claw attack, the victim takes 2 points of Strength damage unless he resists the weakness with a DC (10 + 1/2 your level + Cha modifier) Fortitude save. Alternatively, a green hag can attempt to inflict even greater weakness on a foe by making a touch attack—this variant requires a standard action, and cannot be attempted in the same round the hag makes claw attacks. The opponent touched must succeed on a DC (10 + 1/2 your level + Cha modifier) Fortitude save or take 2d4 points of Strength damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Mimicry (Ex) A green hag can imitate the sounds of almost any animal found near its lair.

While in the form of a green hag, you have a powerful drive to attract and seduce others (principally, but not necessarily, those of the opposite sex). Should you wish to pursue those drives, you gain a +4 on Bluff, Disguise, Perception and Stealth checks

when you are using them toward those ends. You do not receive these bonuses simply because you are in the form of a green hag; if you are engaging in other pursuits while in the form of a green hag, those skill checks do not gain the +4 bonus.

If the terrain from which you cast this spell could be considered a swamp, you gain the constant use of *water breathing* and both *invisibility* and *tree shape* as at will spell-like abilities.

What might you do with the spell? For the next 10 to 15 minutes (based on your caster level), you can use the *alter self*, *tongues* and *mimicry* features to do some impressive impersonations. And, with *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* and *whispering wind*, you can keep local inquirers busy while you provide information to your allies who are otherwise nowhere near. This is an impressive package of stuff for one spell. And, to pull at you, the GM can mess with you by offering you NPCs worthy of your seduction efforts, which should open up opportunities to you to get yourself in trouble.

~~

And, why else would you want to be a hag, unless you could join with some other hags in their coven and gain the weird and possibly dangerous advantages? I don't know about anyone else, but for as long as I've played RPGs, I've thought it would be a great twist for the plot to be set up so that one of the best ways for the players to get what they need is for one or more of them to have to join a witch's coven.

Join Coven

School: Enchantment (charm); **Level:** Druid 7, Sorcerer/Wizard 8, Witch 7

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Components: V, S

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)

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

You must have the ability to assume the form of a hag (or be a changeling) to use this spell. While in the form of a hag, you join with two others to participate in the foul gathering of a coven. While a participant, you gain all the benefits of being in the coven. In addition, while under the effect of *join coven*, if you are also under the effect of any variant of *hag form*, the duration of that spell extends until *join coven* ends.

If the hags with whom you wish to join refuse you, you may attempt to charm them into accepting you. In this case, each hag receives a Will save to resist your request and you must overcome their spell resistance.

Whenever all three hags of a particular coven are within 10 feet of one another, all three of them can work together to use any of the following spell-like abilities: *animate dead*, *baleful polymorph*, *blight*, *bestow curse*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *charm monster*, *commune*, *control weather*, *dream*, *forcecage*, *mind blank*, *mirage arcana*, *reincarnate*, *speak with dead*, *veil*, *vision*.


All three hags must take a full-round action to take part in this form of cooperative magic. All coven spell-like abilities function at CL 9th (or at the highest CL available to the most powerful hag in the coven). The save DCs are Charisma-based, and function as if with a Charisma score of 16 unless one of the hags has a higher Charisma score, in which case the spell-like ability DCs are adjusted by that hag's Charisma modifier.

This is much more complex, and leaves the magus and alchemist out. But, the higher-level and more powerful casters might find, after several uses of *hag form* that hanging out with other hags and gaining the benefits of a coven might prove useful. It's entirely possible the GM has set things up in a campaign so that the most reliable way to learn something about an enemy is to join with some other hags in a coven and get to the bottom of things. Of course, there very well may be other prices to pay for such a choice. However, the cooperative magic options are considerable, and if all three of the hags all happen to be PCs (or trusted NPCs) then there are some very fun options. Sure, the witch class has easier access to this through a hex, and this might not be a savory alternative to all players, but, a witch without that hex still now has the option, and, more importantly, so too does the druid, the sorcerer, and the wizard (though it seems an unlikely choice, I admit, for a sorcerer).

Consider a campaign that normally doesn't permit things like *speak with dead* or *baleful polymorph* or *bestow curse* but would allow them through this spell. The GM can provide tantalizing choices to players by offering them power that they otherwise wouldn't have access to—again, perhaps at a terrible price.

There are some fun curses already in the game (both core and otherwise), and, if you look around this issue, you'll find some more.

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, a large, cracked stone sphere sits on the floor. To the left, a skeleton is partially visible, and to the right, another skeleton is seen in the background. Two characters are in the foreground: on the left, a character with red hair and a green hat, holding a spear; on the right, a character with blue hair and a blue and orange tunic, holding a sword. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the center of the image.

If you're looking for immersive, fun ways to challenge your players outside of combat, the **Skill Challenge Handbook** provides immersive, unique guidelines for creating skill-based challenges perfect for any and all adventures!

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Bayou Hexes & Curses

By George "Loki" Williams; Illustration by Jeremy Hart

As a child of New Orleans I grew up with Spanish moss draping from the branches of gigantic oak trees and bloodcurdling tales of horror like the legends of Madame Delphine LaLaurie or the Axeman. I have the good fortune to be native to an area that is both breathtakingly beautiful and thick with folklore, especially if you get out of its environs and into the surrounding bayous.

It is said that horrific things occur in the depths of

the bayou, things that can bend or break the mind of even the strongest of adventurers. Since this issue's theme is witches, curses, and hexes I thought I'd let myself be inspired by the lands and legends of my home. I've tried to provide a little of everything, from cursed lands to new hexes, all with a "down the bayou" influence. This one is dedicated to my dear friend Desiree Plaisance, who just began her new life in Prague. Cheers!

Hexes

Minor Hexes

Tenderfoot (Sp)

Effect: On a failed Will save, the subject considers all terrain to be difficult terrain. Difficult terrain reduces speed to one quarter normal. This effect lasts 1 minute. At 8th level, this effect lasts for 10 minutes instead. Whether or not the creature succeeds at the saving throw, it can't be the target of this hex again for 1 day.

Major Hexes

Creeping Paralysis (Su)

Effect: The target is wracked by pain and then numbness, taking 1 point of Dexterity damage per minute until it is incapable of movement, saves (once per minute), or is cured. *Break enchantment*, *dispel magic*, *remove curse*, and similar spells end the effect. If the target saves, it is immune to this hex for 1 day. This is a cold effect.

Swamp Leech (Su)

Effect: A witch can curse any target standing in water at least six inches deep that is also within line of sight. The target is affected as if by the spell *bestow curse* using the witch's caster level, except that the witch can decrease only Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom. Whether or not the save is successful, a creature cannot be targeted by this hex more than once in 24 hours.

At 15th level, this hex acts as a *major curse* spell.

Treacherous Footing (Su)

Effect: The target of this hex becomes entangled for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the witch's Intelligence modifier.

Vitality Backlash (Su)

Effect: A witch can place a vitality drain hex on a creature within 60 feet, causing the target's flesh to waste away whenever it deals damage to another creature in melee. Immediately after the hexed creature deals damage in melee, it takes one point of Constitution damage. This damage bypasses any resistances or immunities the creature possesses. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the witch's Intelligence modifier. A Will save negates this effect.

Witch Patrons

Bayou

The murky eldritch depths of the bayou hold secrets to break the minds of mere mortals if you delve deeply enough.

Patron Spells

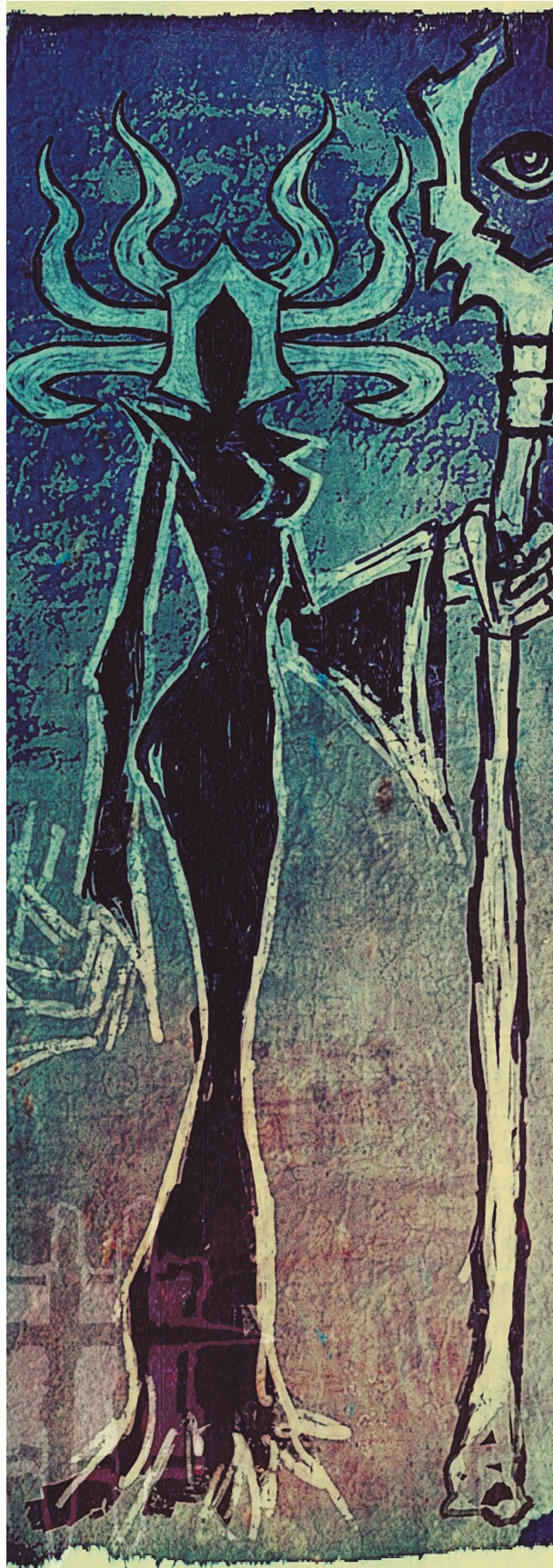
2nd - *entangle*, 4th - *warp wood*, 6th - *contagion*, 8th - *hallucinatory terrain*, 10th - *tree stride*, 12th - *chain lightning*, 14th - *animate plants*, 16th - *symbol of insanity*, 18th - *storm of vengeance*

Curses

Pestilent Vapors

Violet-grey mists rise from the ground, blurring the vision and confounding the senses. The constant focus required to function becomes harder by the day, as the personality erodes and the senses dull. If allowed to run its course it leaves the victim a wild-eyed, drool-spattered corpse.

Type curse, disease; save Fortitude DC 20; onset 1 minute; frequency 1/day; effect 1d6 Cha; cure Pestilent vapors is both a curse and disease and can only be cured if the curse is first removed, at which point



the disease can be magically removed. Even after the curse element of the withering is lifted, a creature suffering from it cannot recover the ability damage normally over time, instead recovering at one half the normal rate. Anyone casting a spell, such as *restoration*, on the afflicted creature must succeed on a DC 24 caster level check, or the spell is wasted and has no effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Bleak Bayou

Type regional curse; **Area** 20-mile-radius emanation; **Save** Will DC 24 negates

EFFECTS

The entire area becomes watery swamp terrain. Treat climate and rainfall as though it is a tropical climate.

The following hazards imperil creatures in the area. Flash Flood (CR 3), Green slime (CR 4), Mundane Insect Swarms (CR 2), Poison Oak (CR 3), Russet Mold (CR 6), Ravenous Mold (CR 4), Rot Grubs (CR 4), Spider Vines (CR 3). Any of the hazards that are rendered safe reset themselves and become dangerous again at each midnight.

Once per day all creatures must succeed at a Will save or take 1d3 points of Wisdom damage (or 1d6 points of sanity damage if using the sanity system).

CURE

A bleak bayou can be put to rest only by a casting of *remove curse* followed by a casting of *hallow* at the effect's center, and then casting *disintegrate* on each of the hazards before the next nightfall or midnight.

Cursed Ship

Type regional curse; **Area** 1 ship or airship; **Save** Will DC 19 negates effects

EFFECTS

A ship can take on a life of its own if enough memories, fears, or strong emotions become bound up in it. Such a ship seeks to force residents to stay and either keep it company, serve it, protect it, or feed its unearthly hungers. The cursed ship is similar to a building-sized intelligent magic item of any evil alignment with Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores of 16, fast healing 5, and the ability to use the following spell-like abilities at CL 11th a minimum of the number of times per day listed below: 3/day—*animate objects*, *heightened fear* (DC 19), *heightened telekinesis* (unattended objects only; DC 19); 1/day—*guards and wards* (DC 19 or as applicable; see text of spell).

CURE

A cursed ship can be put to rest only by a casting of *remove curse* followed by a casting of *hallow* over the entire vehicle.



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Fortune Weaver Archetype

By Stephen Rowe; Illustration by Yunaxd

In the Company of Valkyries

The following witch archetype appears in the upcoming *In the Company of Valkyries* supplement from Rite Publishing by Kendra Leigh Speedling and Mara Lynn Butler.

Fortune Weaver (Witch)

A fortune weaver uses arcane power to bend destiny itself to her will, pulling on the strands of fate to benefit herself and her companions.

Patron: Though a fortune weaver can have any patron, some common choices are Ancestors, Death, Portents, and Wisdom.

Familiar: A fortune weaver's familiar is always a raven or an eagle (for eagle, use the statistics and familiar bonus of a hawk). Whichever is chosen, the familiar is able to speak and understand all languages known by the witch as a supernatural ability. This ability alters the witch familiar class feature.

Speak Fate (Su): At 5th level, a fortune weaver is able to announce a target's fate, cursing those who refuse to heed her words. Once per day as a standard action, she can affect a single opponent within 30 feet with a *suggestion* (as the spell) using her class level as her caster level. The fortune weaver and the target must be able to see and hear one another. The target can attempt a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 the witch's level + her Intelligence modifier) to negate the effect. On a failed save, the target can choose to either obey the *suggestion* or be affected by a *bestow curse* spell effect (no save). The subject is likewise cursed if they choose to disobey the *suggestion* or do not meet the specified conditions before the spell expires.

The details of the curse are determined by the fortune weaver when the subject refuses or fails to obey the *suggestion*. On a successful saving throw, the target is shaken for 1 round. Whether or not the save is successful, a creature cannot be the target of this ability again for 1 day. This is a mind-affecting, language-dependent curse effect. She can use this ability more than once per day by sacrificing any prepared witch spell of 3rd level or higher per additional use of the ability. The fortune weaver gains one fewer 3rd level spell per day than normal for a witch of her level.

Fateweaver (Su): At 9th level, a fortune weaver can twist the threads of her companions' fates. Once

per day as an immediate action, when an ally fails a saving throw against a curse effect, death effect, fear effect, energy drain, or negative energy damage, she can allow them to reroll the saving throw, with a bonus on the reroll equal to the fortune weaver's Intelligence modifier. She can use this ability more than once per day by sacrificing any prepared witch spell of 5th level or higher per additional use of the ability. The fortune weaver gains one fewer 5th level spell per day than normal for a witch of her level.

Unravel Destiny (Su): At 11th level, a fortune weaver gains the ability to remove or redirect manipulations of a creature's destiny. Once per day as a standard action, she can attempt to dispel any ongoing charm, curse, compulsion, or mind-affecting effect affecting a creature within 60 feet. This otherwise functions as the *greater dispel magic* spell, with a caster level equal to her class level. If she successfully dispels the spell, she can choose to target another applicable creature within 60 feet. The new target can make a saving throw to resist (if the effect allows a save) with a DC equal to the original spell or effect's saving throw DC. A creature can only be affected by this ability (either as the target of the dispel or redirected effect) once per day. She can use this ability more than once per day by sacrificing any prepared witch spell of 6th level or higher per additional use of the ability. The fortune weaver gains one fewer 6th level spell per day than normal for a witch of her level.

Major Hex: A fortune weaver witch can select the following major hexes.

Fate's Favor (Su): The witch is able to manipulate fate to gift good fortune to those around her. As a standard action, the witch can grant herself and all allies within 30 feet of her a +1 luck bonus on all attack rolls, weapon damage, and saving throws for 1 round. At 8th level and at 16th level, the duration of this hex is extended by 1 round and the bonus increases by +1 (to a maximum of +3). Once a creature has benefited from fate's favor, it cannot benefit from it again for 24 hours. A witch must have the fortune hex to select this hex.

Destiny's Mark (Su): The witch marks those who act outside their foretold fate. The witch can mark a touched creature with a runic tattoo, scar, or brand declaring its destiny, and prohibiting it from engaging in a certain behavior or action. This functions as *mark of justice*, but with a casting

time of 1 full round instead of 10 minutes. The target can attempt a Will save to negate this effect. The witch can have a number of marks active at any one time equal to half her witch level. A creature can only be affected by one mark at a time. As a standard action, the witch can dismiss an active destiny's mark, but she must be able to see a creature's mark to dismiss it. An affected creature attempting to dispel or *erase* a destiny's mark always causes it to activate immediately.

Grand Hex: A fortune weaver witch can select the following grand hexes.

Destined Soul (Su): The witch's grasp of her own fate is so strong that she resists all attempts to alter it. The witch gains immunity to mind-affecting effects and curses. As a swift action, she may grant this immunity to a touched willing creature for a number of minutes equal to her caster level. If she does so, the witch loses her own immunity for this duration. Once a touched creature has benefited from destined soul, it cannot benefit from it again for 24 hours.

Oathkeeper (Su): The witch gains the ability to oversee oaths and ensure they are kept. She may carry out a ritual between two or more participants (which can include the witch) to oversee a formal agreement or contract. This takes 10 minutes, and all participants involved in the ritual must be entering into the agreement of their own free will, without magical compulsion or other coercion.

Once the ritual is complete, all participants in the ritual are bound to the agreement made and receive a mark (as the destiny's mark hex). Breaking the oath activates the mark's *bestow curse* effect (no save). Additionally, the witch can choose to immediately teleport (even across planar boundaries) to the oathbreaker's side or summon a valkyrie (see *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Bestiary 3*) to their location. The summoned valkyrie is tasked with capturing the oathbreaker and bringing them to the witch for judgment (by any available means). The witch can have a number of oaths active at any one time equal to half her witch level. A creature can only be affected by one oath or one destiny's mark at a time. An affected creature attempting to dispel or *erase* an oath always causes it to activate immediately. A witch must have the destiny's mark major hex to select this grand hex.

Hexes: The following hexes complement the fortune weaver archetype: beast of ill-omen^{UM}, evil eye^{APG}, fortune^{APG}, and misfortune^{APG}.

Major Hexes: The following major hexes complement the fortune weaver archetype: retribution^{APG} and vision^{APG}.

Grand Hexes: The following grand hexes complement the fortune weaver archetype: death curse^{APG}, dire prophecy^{UM}, forced reincarnation^{APG}, and life giver^{APG}.



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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Valhalla Demiplanes

By Ken Marable and Stephen Rowe

The following is a preview of the upcoming *10 Valhalla Demiplanes* book, a new series by Rite Publishing introducing GM and player options in the Outer Planes.

Valhalla

With the various Outer Planes, it is best to condense them down to a single word and then explore all the variations and implications of the word. With Valhalla, it is *heroism*.

Valhalla is the realm of heroes, and heroes seldom rest easy.

The plane's concept originated with a great feast hall, where the spirits of mighty Norse warriors fought and drank for eternity, after dying in battle. However, this was a realm suitable only for heroes from a single real-world culture. If Valhalla exists as an Outer Plane, it would be vastly different and constantly evolving, shaped by the philosophies, nations, and races within the setting.

When creating Valhalla for a given world, it is best to move beyond the traditional hall of Odin. How do cultures and races shape the plane? Dwarfven heroes can be an easy fit within traditional Norse stylings, but what about gnomish heroes more akin to Loki than Thor? What would a heroic realm look like for pacifist elves, or magic-focused ratfolk?

Outer Planes are like miniature thematic universes, and there is plenty of room within infinity. Start by imagining the ideal hero of the culture, and then extrapolate that concept into an entire world. One nation's Valhalla might have statues of impossible height, with towns set at their feet, or built on the literal shoulders of giants. A coastal civilization could believe the spirits of heroes become storms, providing comforting rain or hurricane-winds when invaders from the Lower Planes try to steal away souls.

What shape might a *draconic* Valhalla take? Metallic dragons are powerful forces for good, and many take on the mantle of hero. Would each gain a realm of their own, or do the golds and coppers each seek a common eternity? Perhaps their place within Valhalla is a series of unending mountains where they can fly and hunt forever... resting upon great hoards when wings grow tired. Maybe it is a domain much like Hell, except each

can conquer the seemingly impossible challenges with sufficient effort. The souls of these legendary figures survive here, holding unparalleled perspective and lost knowledge. What challenges might they demand of mortals? How difficult might it be to even survive a place reserved for draconic heroes?

Valhalla is a purposed place, and tales told within its bounds do not need to conform to ordinary expectations or rules. In most stories, the strongest enemy to overcome is often internal to the hero. This can be a difficult exercise for adventures based within an apathetic reality, but Valhalla is not so hampered by stoic objectivity. It might usually seem contrived if the hero's emotional flaws constantly manifest to challenge them, but such is expected in a place like Valhalla. GMs can draw upon each individual character's background to create personalized trials, and overcoming these situations can be exceptionally rewarding.

In roleplaying games, heroism isn't about powerful attacks dealing absurd damage. It is the choice made before the roll. It is in knowing success is unlikely, and risking everything, because failure isn't an option. We hold our breath, lean in, and hope for a natural 20. We cheer when it happens, and suffer losses because they make the successes more real.

Heroism exists in the moments we always remember.

10 Valhalla Demiplanes Overview

The following demiplanes associated with Valhalla are detailed in *10 Valhalla Demiplanes*.

Champion's Arena: The heroes of Valhalla test their mettle against one another or fantastic monsters within a great arena, shifting in shape and traits to take any form for any contest. From deep-sea, kraken-fraught battles royal to volcanic jousts on the backs of remorhazes, there is no challenge unseen within. From bets and bar fights at the surrounding tent-metropolis, to the endless caverns containing legendary and unique monsters, the demiplane is filled with dangerous opportunities.

Cliff of Renewal: Escaping damnation carries no promise of eternal peace. Many of the greatest heroes dwelling in Valhalla carry never-ending guilt, desiring a fresh start or redemption. These individuals eventually find their way to a sheer cliff, overlooking the entire world. If they leap, they are reborn, and given a chance to atone.

Eternal Tavern: The most exclusive tavern in the multiverse is barred to emperors, angels, and gods. Each is turned away by the one who guards the door — often with a laugh, sometimes with a smile, and rarely with a whispered word of advice. The requirement for entry is simple, but both subjective and maddening. In order to make it in, all someone has to do... is save the world.

Forge of Destiny: Fate is a combination of opportunity and choice, with mortals all possessing the freedom to decide their future. Nothing is certain, and even gods only prophecy over a grand scope or for immediate events. However, a mortal can choose to give up free will at the Forge of Destiny in exchange for powerful items or artifacts bound to a fate of their choosing.

Garden of Memoriam: In the Garden, every deceased hero's sacrifice is remembered, and so it shall be until there is no one left to care. Obelisks, statues, and other monuments haphazardly fill the Garden like a forest. Some are so large they tower into the sky like a mountain, while most are humble markers no larger than a gravestone. Individuals visiting the Garden are haunted by visions of these hero's final moments, and could discover there is a plot awaiting their future sacrifice.

Hall of Unseen Fates: Every day carries the potential for tragedy, but it takes more than an ordinary unpleasantness to alter the course of history. The ripples from potential events yet to occur are called prophecy, and even when avoided, they leave a cosmic stain. If allowed to accumulate, the unseen timelines could pose a threat to reality itself. Thus, within each of the infinite rooms of the Hall, manifestations of Fate trap dark echoes of averted futures. Kept safe and contained within magic tapestries, these strange mindscapes can be visited for invaluable information, or serve as traps for the unwary.

Tavern of Unsung Songs: Valhalla is a place where legends walk beside myths, but heroism isn't the sole domain of the mighty. The parent sacrificing everything for a child, the merchant exposing corruption, or the doctor treating the victims

of plague, are all heroic. These are seldom acts remembered far beyond the individual's death, but each earns a rightful place in Valhalla. Within this unique demiplane, they also gain a taste of the greatness they deserve, each becoming godlike for a single day.

Training Grounds: Great acts often require equally great preparation. Fools rush in without thought, and often serve as an example to those who follow. The wise take every advantage they can get, knowing that if they understand their foe, they've already half-won the battle. The Training Grounds is set aside for individuals wishing to practice ahead of a dire conflict, gaining greater insight into some terrible threat. However, the demiplane becomes shaped by expectations rather than truth, and can become a detriment to those who abuse its gift.

Unknown Expanse: Within the Expanse exists every realm of myth, but also untold imaginary places drawn from the dreams of every explorer. Here, heroes can relive legends, discover civilizations which never truly existed, or even fashion their own domain. Within the unknown expanse, one can live and wander for a true eternity, and never see the same place twice.

Well of Sacrifice: At the foot of the World Tree is a simple stone well with depths lost to darkness. It contains no water, and nothing cast within ever returns. The well accepts sacrifices, both physical and abstract, but those who give unto it might find more lost than they expect. However, it never takes without giving, and those willing to risk could find power or enlightenment commensurate with the price they pay.

10 Planar Origins: Valhalla

The following short story appears as an introduction for *10 Planar Origins: Valhalla*, an upcoming player option companion book to *10 Valhalla Demiplanes* by Rite Publishing.

Hero's Journey

The faded sign declared *Gwynelda Waycrafter* in large writing, with *Purveyor of Portals and Planar Paraphernalia*, in smaller etching beneath. It swung back and forth with a creak, and caused the hairs on the back of Ara's neck to stand up when she realized there was no wind.

No one could tell her precisely what to expect, and all the stories conflicted. Would there be stuffed and mounted demons? Arcane lore in languages dead before the world was formed? Mystical energies warping reality?

With a deep breath, she summoned her courage and boldly reached out to knock... as the door swung open ahead of her hand.

It revealed a rather quaint sitting room. Cautiously, she stepped in, keeping a wary eye on the ordinary-seeming furniture, lest it attack and eat her. However, it all seemed harmless, and strangely reminiscent of her grandmother's cottage. She could almost smell the sugar cookies made when she'd show up with a black eye or broken nose.

The reverie ended with Gwynelda's entrance. Even without her three horns and red skin speckled with black, her eight-foot stature was terribly imposing. With a flashing smile and a cheerful, "Hello! Welcome to my shop!" Ara couldn't help but feel disarmingly at ease. The witch's demeanor seemed more appropriate for a chatty aunt than a fiendish tiefling. Yet the disconnect and suspicious familiarity kept Ara cautious.

"How can I help you, my dear?" Gwynelda added politely, seeming to be accustomed to stranger's momentary shock.

"I need to go to Valhalla," Ara said, after a further troubling moment spent failing to find the words.

"Oh? I don't know if you are altogether ready, my dear. Why don't you add some meat to your bones, live out the extent of your youth, and *then* die," Gwynelda replied, with the tone of a concerned parent.

"I'm sorry, but that isn't what I meant... I want to go while I'm alive," Ara paused, preempting the 'no' she saw forming on the large woman's purple lips, "... and I agree to pay your price."

"Well, that changes things!" Gwynelda smiled broadly, and offered a seat. "Wanting to know about an afterlife before the life becomes after is not unheard of. I can certainly tell you all about Valhalla, and even send you there," she held up a hand, "Alive, of course. Although, to be honest, those Outer Planes can be busy places, full of newly arrived souls, troublesome adventuring tourists, blah, blah, blah." She leaned in conspiratorially, "If you want to sightsee, I recommend avoiding the crowds and clichés of the planes themselves. Go to some demiplanes, instead."

"Demi-planes?"

Gwynelda wiggled her iron-tipped claws, "Little or large dimensions, dangling off the plane proper. Sort of like cute little bubbles of reality."

Ara couldn't help picturing a reality bursting when touched by those razor-sharp fingers. "Are they... safe?" she asked, with uncertainty.

"Safe?!" Gwynelda let loose with a loud laugh both boisterous and slightly disconcerting in volume. When she eventually gained control over herself, wiping the tears from her eyes, she continued, "Oh, my sweet... the air might not burn you alive, and the average fellow walking down the street probably won't be internally debating the preferred order to kill and eat you, but nowhere is ever safe," she said, with a smile too-full of sharp, dark teeth.

"I am no coward, but Valhalla is the plane of *heroes*," Ara caught herself saying a touch defensively, "I am likewise no expert, but it is supposed to be a *good* place."

"Not quite. *Heroism*, not heroes. It is not just legendary warriors heroically putting on their pants, before heroically eating their porridge. Even in the **Eternal Tavern**, the saviors of our world might relax for a time, but no one is far from some extraordinary revelation sending them off on a grand quest. Safe, is boring. They wouldn't be who they are if they sought safety, now would they?"

"What, do they get kicked out if they don't meet their hero-quota?" Ara asked with a touch of sarcasm. The laughter was aggravating. It was too much like the jeers during her mother's slow descent into madness.

"Not really, no, but you don't grow gills because you find yourself underwater. Valhalla's brand of heroism is like trees growing up, dropped stones falling down, or dream parasites devouring memories. It is the air of Valhalla, and if you can't breathe, you choke. We could take you to the **Champion's Arena** for example. Let you shape the ground to lava flows and fight some fantastic beast. Or, you know, die."

"Dream para — nevermind," Ara said, catching a small twinkle in the tiefling's eyes. "I hear you. I think I..." she caught herself, and then spoke with greater confidence, "I know I belong there. I've always known."

"Actually, you sound unsure, and I warn heroism scars both body and soul. Mightier than you become broken by their valor, and my price is piddling by comparison. I have watched some cast everything they love into the **Well of Sacrifice** with

talk of heroic need. What would you be willing to lose, child?"

Gwynelda's sympathetic tone continued to wear at Ara's confidence, becoming worse than the laughter. She'd been so sure a minute ago, but perhaps the villagers were right, and she was just as mad as her mother. "You make even success sound awful."

Gwynelda slid a tray of cookies forward, though Ara hadn't noticed her carrying or holding them. The treats seemed just like her grandmother's, and her heart felt briefly heavy. She missed those moments of solace in that far away cottage. Ara's hand reached out in fond reflex, before she snapped it back in alarm.

The cookie had moved away from her touch.

"There, there, little one," the tiefling said, without seeming to note her reaction, "I am counseling caution, which few heroes have so early on their journey. The **Garden of Memoriam** is not filled with the echoes of happy people who lived easy lives. Heroism exacts a terrible price to be sure, but the cost of its lack is greater still. The world would be a terrible place if every burgeoning hero heard my advice. Perhaps we could go to the **Hall of Unseen Fates**, and see the dark results firsthand. Likewise, if it all sounds too daunting, you could visit the **Tavern of Unsung Songs** to learn heroes don't need to fight dragons. I mean... why do you even *want* to be a hero?" she asked, as if confused why anyone would.

Ara paused, knowing Gwynelda, like all the rest, would think her a fool for speaking aloud what she always felt. She steeled herself for further laughter, and spoke softly, "It's my destiny."

"Ah. I see. Poor dear," Gwynelda said, with a tinge of bitterness, reaching for one of the squirming sugar cookies... despite its vain attempt to avoid her claws. It stilled only as she took a bite, and Ara could have sworn she heard a tiny scream. "Though, to be frank, actual, honest to gods Fate, is what you make of it, child. Even if you speak truly, it can't stop you from living a happy, quiet life... unless you let it."

Ara considered sharing her foreboding dreams, the frenzied, confusing warnings of her mother, and the way she saw meaning all around her that others seemed to miss. She watched as the fiendish woman took a second bite of the cookie, and the

rest on the plate appeared to huddle together for safety. No. Probably best to keep some secrets. "I can't explain. I only know I don't have a choice," she said instead, with carefully chosen words.

"Your kind never do. I don't know why I even bother," Gwynelda said with a melodramatic sigh, "I should just take my payment, toss you through a portal, and enjoy a nice brunch. You *always* have a choice, dear, right up until you throw it away. Well, maybe it is the **Forge of Destiny** for you. Let you give up the options you think you lack for some mystic talking sword," she rolled her red eyes. "Then afterward, on to the **Training Grounds**. You're too scrawny, and look like you've lost more battles than you've won."

"I can fight," Ara replied with only slightly exaggerated confidence, "I just need to prove myself."

Gwynelda leaned in close and her voice deepened, making her truly seem a fiend, "No one, and nothing, can decide your worth but you, but... yes the planes of Valhalla might reveal it," she reached out to press an iron nail to Ara's forehead. "*This* is always going to be your greatest foe. It has destroyed more heroes than any tyrant or god. Valhalla knows this, too, and it has no mercy. Countless spend eternity wandering the **Unknown Expanse**, fleeing their own thoughts, or else toss themselves from the **Cliffs of Renewal** in hope of regaining the peace you refuse."

Ara felt a drop of blood trickle down her face, and almost nodded in answer, before realizing it would only tear the skin further. "I understand and pay your price," she hesitated for a moment before quickly adding, "... though I appreciate you trying to talk me out of it."

Gwynelda's cheery smile returned and her voice softened again, "Payment accepted, and you are welcome. It was worth a shot, yes?" she said as she withdrew her finger and lifted it to her lips to taste, "So then, now that the formalities are done with, where would you like to go to first. Oh, and are you *sure* you don't want a cookie?"

Ara reached out with a surprisingly steady hand to take one from the plate, feeling only a strange sense of unease. "Thank you," she said, while struggling to recall why she'd been so reluctant to try one before. Regardless, they looked delicious now, and she'd never had anything like it before.

"So, where does your journey start, my dear?"



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Twenty Questions with Brian Suskind

By Dave Paul

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

I believe I was introduced to *Dungeons and Dragons* in the 4th grade which was about 1982. Of course, being a bunch of 4th graders, we cheated....I mean we cheated a lot. I think we were all gods by the second game session. This ludicrously fast advancement might also have had something to do with the fact that we were playing during lunch, so we really only had about 40 minutes for each game. Okay, fine. It was more to do with rampant cheating. I dabbled with RPGs all the way through college but didn't really take part in a "serious" campaign until I moved to Los Angeles. While learning to be a professional screenwriter I was invited by a friend to join his Planescape game where I took on the role of Thogar, the Alaghi (think Bigfoot) fighter with an Intelligence of 6. Big, stupid, wonderful roleplaying experiences. Oh, yes. I drank the gaming Kool-Aid and I was hooked.

Jump ahead a few years. I cut my design teeth on Wolfgang Baur's Open Design projects, and became a freelance game designer, penning titles for Kobold

Press and Storm Bunny Studios among many others. Oh, and I also write and act in a You Tube series called Heroes with Issues about Superheroes in therapy.

2. What is your home game like?

At the moment I'm running three home games. Now, I should mention that I usually end up as the GM because I have a game room behind a secret door with monster heads on the walls. That's a word of warning to anyone thinking of putting in a game room in the house. If you do, you'll end up running all the games. Mark my words!

My main home game is called the Shattered Seas Campaign and is a dark fantasy Pathfinder homebrew that can be summed up as Conan meets Fallout. We typically meet once or twice a month. The players are only 2nd level so they are still finding their feet but already they are running afoul of demon-thralls hoping to bring back an Age of Darkness. For the first few adventures of this campaign I've adapted the Runelords material from Paizo's first adventure path.

The alternate game, which plays once or twice a month, is called the Lucky Sevens and is a Bloodlines and Black Magic campaign. This is a Pathfinder compatible modern setting produced by Storm Bunny Studios. I'm a designer on this project so the Lucky Sevens is also a playtest group. The players here decided that they are a bowling team who secretly battles evil.

Finally, I've just started running my kids and one of their friends through a heavily edited 5e Tomb of Annihilation campaign. The kids are 9 and 12 so I'm going to have to railroad the heck out of the adventure. So far, they are jazzed about dinosaurs and jungle exploration.

3. What is your favorite Paizo product?

Hmmmm....That's tricky, but I'd have to say that my current favorite is the NPC Codex. While I can whip up monsters on the fly (most of the time), having a collection of NPC stats ready to go has been so useful not only in the games I run at home but also while designing for Pathfinder.

4. You are currently the co-founder for RPG Design Camp, how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

In 2016, Ben McFarland, Jaye Sonia and I were waxing nostalgically about the Open Design days. Wolfgang taught all three of us how to design, pitch and critique adventures and settings. Of course, once Kobold Press was born, Open Game fell by the



wayside. Ben and I have both worked extensively for Wolfgang since then but you never forget how you first plunged into the wild world of RPG design.

Anyway, the three of us were talking and, while I won't swear there wasn't drinking involved, we decided to launch a homage project to Open Design so that a new generation of gamers could have the same invaluable learning experiences that we did. That was how RPG Design Camp came to be. We are currently in our second year and we're having a blast guiding a new bunch of folks through the twisting world of adventure design, rules conversion and freelancing 101.

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

I think my favorite project must be the Southlands for Kobold Press. This is an expansion on Wolfgang Baur's Midgard setting. For those not in the know, Midgard is an Earth-analogue in that the continents, countries and people are akin to what we'd find on Earth but liberally and carefully transmogrified into a medieval/fantasy setting. The Southlands is the largest expansion of the original setting and opens up the cultures and people of Egypt, Africa (called the Southlands... hence the title), and a bit of Arabia.

The Southlands actually began as a pitch for a much smaller project that Ben McFarland and I offered up to Wolfgang. We had noticed that in

the most Southwestern corner of the Midgard map was a place called the Stone Desert (present day Morocco and Algeria) and there was almost nothing written about it. So we pitched a small setting book detailing that one area. Wolfgang said he'd look it over and then we heard nothing for about a year. In the meantime, of course, we were designing other things for Kobold Press. Then, out of the blue it seemed, he came back to us with the offer to write not just that one area but all of Africa. After two more years of research, writing, revising, and kickstarting, the Southlands was published.

For me, the amazing thing about working on the Southlands was not only teaming up with my partner-in-crime, Ben McFarland, but also the research and adaptation. We examined African cultures, their customs, mythology, weapons, diets, and language, and transformed them into the inhabitants of the Southlands. There is nothing like weaving the history, cultures and current politics of whole nations into a cohesive and living world that feels real.

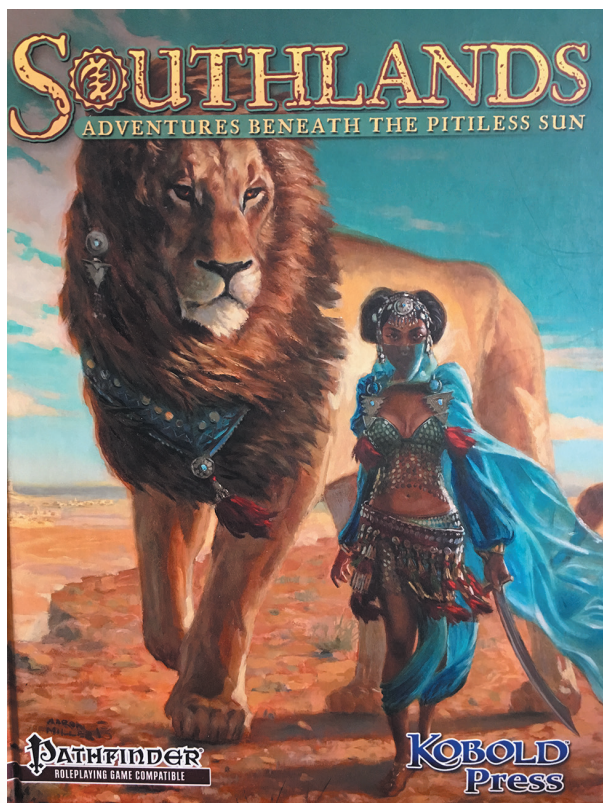
6. What was your best moment working on that product?

Winning the 2016 Silver ENnie for best setting was amazing, but I think, for me, the best moments while working on the Southlands were the responses from other designers that we brought onto the project. Hearing the enthusiasm and excitement from people like Adam Daigle, Dan Dillon, Amanda Hamon Kunz, Richard Pett, Owen K.C. Stephens, C.A. Suleiman, Steven Helt and the rest was both humbling and jaw-dropping. Then I got to work with them as well!

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

For my money, the most original part of the Southlands is Combat Divination. One of the nations we created for the project is a place called Morreg, a land of seers, oracles and ancestor spirits. During the design process, I was trying to think of ways to make the place really come alive. Here was a land where they use divination and omens in their everyday lives and even used such spells to hold off their more combative neighbors. After all, it is hard to invade when the Morreg know you are coming. So how could I make this sink home to the readers as well as be useful to players? As I was mulling about divinations and rituals and spells it hit me.

Could I design a spell system to use divination in combat? I mean, giving the players advanced warning of a foe's actions is not exactly written into the rule set. I knew I didn't want to have a spell that told GMs to inform players about upcoming enemy actions. That would be a pain at the game table. Would this crazy idea work at all?



Indeed it does. I created Combat Divination to make use of immediate and swift actions to give players the sense that they are reacting to a foe before that foe attempts an action. For example, there is a spell called Anticipate Attack that allows the caster to take a 5-foot step as an immediate action. This would grant a PC the ability to have "foreknowledge" of an attack and to step away from it.

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

Interestingly, Ben and I were a bit daunted by the racial implications of the Southlands project. Here we were, two white guys writing about Africa. But Wolfgang gave us some of the best advice I've ever heard on the issue.

He said, "Look, treat the material with respect but don't hold back. It isn't your job to worry about offending people. It's your job to make the most fantastic, amazing material that you can. Just go for it."

This gave us a huge boost in our confidence and allowed us the free hand we needed to create the Southlands. And I guess people liked it since it went on to win an ENnie.

9. What did you learn while working on it?

I think the most important lesson I got from writing the Southlands was the importance of continuity and interconnection while creating setting material. The links between areas in a setting gives the world life and acts to draw in the reader. Continuity is equally important, especially when you have more than one writer working on a project. There have been too many times that I have seen critiques or questions online from players pointing out how Lord Darkness is an elf in one chapter/book but is described as a human in another. Continuity mistakes are often small and seemingly unimportant but they are the speed bumps that jolt players out of their immersion into a setting.

10. Other than your own work and RPG Design Camp products, what is the best Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible product out there?

I very much enjoy the Complete Tome of Horrors by Frog God Games, but I'm a sucker for new monsters. This massive book does not always break new ground but monsters are solid and come at a variety of CR levels. Also by having a third party monster book in my arsenal I can surprise my more Paizo-savvy players from time to time. Also you can't go wrong with Richard Pett's Whispering Homunculus.

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

I am going to say something that may contradict my answer in the previous question but...For me, a good Pathfinder compatible product should succeed at the challenging task of both blazing new ground in terms of design AND fit into the scope of the existing rule set. The books that present new aspects of the game are fascinating, but everything needs to be rooted in the Pathfinder rules. It doesn't work if you write something that goes against the rules so much that it is impossible to use it with other Pathfinder books!

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

Richard Pett and Nicolas Logue both strike that wonderful balance between the weird and the wild. Their books and adventures are ones that I go back to over and over again.

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

Know your craft and know who is in the craft. It isn't enough to have good ideas or to be able to run a good adventure. You need to know how settings are constructed, how adventures are built. Then you need to be able to describe your ideas in such a way that the reader understands them. I have a hard time tolerating flowery language in an adventure – many young writers will try to describe important GM information with metaphysical metaphors when they just need to be clear and concise. The Kobold Press Guide series of book contain loads of great information that every new designer needs. I also mentioned "know who is in the craft." Like many industries, the RPG design world is a small one. Get to know the other designers. Strike up friendships or correspondences. These are the people who you will probably be working with or for in the future.

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

I have to give a shout out to Anna Meyer. Okay, fine. She isn't an illustrator. She's a cartographer. But her work is so amazing that it might as well be illustration. Anna is also a joy to work with as she sees her own maps as a collaborative process between herself and the designer. Do yourself a favor and check out her Forgotten Realms or Midgard maps. They are simply phenomenal.

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

Endzeitgeist's review of the Southlands will forever stick in my memory. He is one of the titans of the fan review world and his response to the Southlands was very positive. But the line that makes me smile to this

day is when he said that the sourcebooks may be the best one ever released by Kobold Press and perhaps even one of the best he's ever read. That can't help but make you feel accomplished.

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

Exclusive hint, huh? Let's see....What can I say without getting myself into trouble? Well, I am eagerly looking forward to teaming up with Ben McFarland again for the next big Midgard setting expansion for Kobold Press. This will happen in 2018 and will probably feature material focusing around China, India and Asia. I'm already diving into the research.

I'm also writing a new adventure for BJ Hensley and Playground Adventures. Aimed at younger players, this will take the heroes into a warped and twisted toy factory.

17. Do you have any goals for RPG Design Camp that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

I would like to see Design Camp expand to bring in more new designers and to tackle larger projects. One of the things that made Wolfgang's Open Design so amazing was the sheer scope of some of the books – Halls of the Mountain King was a jumbo-sized adventure, for example. I'd like to see Design Camp get big enough to launch something like that, or even an adventure path! That would be great to work on.

18. Can you tell us a little about the current Design Camp Project, the Silver Box?

In this season's Design Camp we took an old Iron Kingdoms module that Jaye Sonia wrote called the

Silver Box, converted it to Pathfinder, and updated the adventure. The backers are currently learning adventure design while creating new adventures for the Silver Box. When we finish the project in early 2018, it should be a fun, rollicking adventure for any game table.

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

Well, we are still in process so, technically, I can still add whatever I like to the project, but... I think I would have liked to have included a more robust bestiary to go along with the adventure. We have one, to be sure, but more monsters would have been sweet!

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

The design tent-poles that guide my RPG design work are story and collaboration. I really feel that if you have those elements, you will have a good project. My work as a screenwriter has certainly influenced my knowledge of story construction as well as taught me how to work with others during the creation process. All too often I hear writers be hesitant about sharing their work or secretive about their projects and I can only shake my head at them. No designer should work in a vacuum. Partially this is because you cannot breathe and will die, but, less specifically, every project can be made stronger and better by collaboration, even if it is just getting feedback from peers.

Just as gaming is a process of group storytelling, so too is design a group process. We can and should be there for each other to continue making amazing stories.



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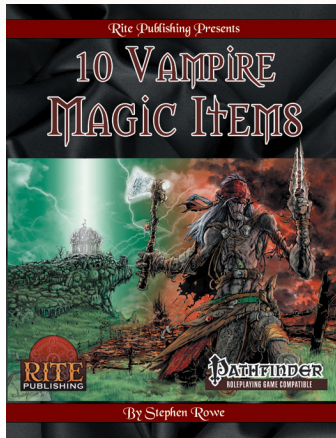
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10 Vampire Magic Items

Publisher:

Rite Publishing

Reviewer:

Endzeitgeist

Stars:

5 stars out of 5

This expansion-pdf for Rite Publishing's phenomenal "Play VTM-style vampires in PFRPG"-toolkit "[In the Company of](#)

[Vampires](#)" clocks in at 12 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page advertisement, leaving us with 8 pages of content, so let's take a look!

This review was moved up in my reviewing queue at the request of my patrons.

Okay, we begin not with the first item, but with an optional rule – the pdf introduces Blood Crafting. Warlock blood nobles (aka, the Tremere-stand-ins) have, RAW, a bit of a problem with crafting; this issue is addressed by the blood crafting rules. The vampire requires a blood magic blood talent equal to or greater than the level of the spell required; blood magic VI would, for example, act as a substitute for spells of level 6 and below. To make up for this increased flexibility, the crafting vampire employing blood crafting must expend the spell level of the emulated spell in cruor points on every day engaged in blood crafting. Cost in cruor is cumulative, which means that complex items will require a LOT of blood...blood that the vampire must somehow provide... However, there is a flavorful risk to using blood crafting – if the vampire fails the Spellcraft check by 5 or more, he can still finish the crafting process successfully, but the item may become thirsty, requiring blood to work properly. But hey, at least the materials aren't wasted! (Plus: Love the general concept!)

Okay, so this was already pretty cool...now let's take a look at the items! The first would be the *blood doll* – these effigies come in 5 variants and act as a painless means to donate blood...and temporarily store it. While the stored blood slowly dissipates, these dolls should provide a colossal boon for vampires embarking into lifeless environments. Big plus! *Blood staves* come in 6 variants – these staves can be used by vampires employing blood magic to 1/day per spell level, reduce the cruor cost of blood magic employed. Nice. *Elixirs of lineage* are really cool: Basically, this liquid acts as a vampire Litmus

test – drop a blood inside and you'll see color-changes depending on lineage. I love this item. It feels incredibly right for vampiric nobles obsessed with the purity of their bloodline...and can make for some really cool infiltration complications.

But we move even further past simple items, as the pdf introduces the item category *raiment of the ancients* – it should be noted that this entry contains discrepancies between the truths of moroi myth and what was elaborated upon in the account given by sovereign Evelyn Arlstead in ItC: Vampires – this is intentional and should be considered to be a mild potential SPOILER-warning. These items are rare, valuable and can only be properly crafted by vampires; they require components taken from vanquished elders; it takes a vanquished elder or ancient vampire to provide sufficiently powerful components. The astute reader will realize at this point that the respective raiments are basically the proof and in-game justification that is analogue to the defeat of the antediluvians in VtM, though, taking the system's peculiarities into account, the narrative takes on a different turn beyond the impending doom of their return, setting the moroi more clearly apart. It should also be noted that these items have different benefits for vampires and other beings that are not of the respective, associated bloodline. It should also be noted that partial mitigation of the respective curse is part of the items, further enforcing their special place within the context of the moroi. In case you haven't noticed – these are basically the most sought-after items of the race and could be defined as almost-artifacts...depending on the power-level of your campaign and considering the genesis of the items, they may well be considered to be such, though crafting costs etc. are provided, should your PCs manage to defeat such an elder vampire. As a huge fan of making items out of vanquished foes in RPGs, I applaud this notion. It just makes magic feel more magical.

Grisly Fetish bracelets of the nosferatu allow vampires to suppress their curse and better conceal themselves. *Heart's blood* is a special magic weapon property (+2 or +4) that allows for particularly potent attack-deflection – the ancient one is borderline insane and allows for Reflex saves to deflect any attack (not an action), with only enhancement bonus modifying the roll. Usually, I'd be screaming hellfire and brimstone right now, but considering the requirements, that the item will not be for sale (unless you're playing a WEIRD campaign) and its implications, I consider it frankly to be closer to an artifact than to a regular weapon

and will let it stand. If you dish out these items like candy, you probably expected a brutal power-surge. Well, obliged. *Memorial tomes* of the warlock bloodline enhance blood magic and also act as a kind of spellbook of sorts for the blood magic engine (which is a more complex rules-operation than you'd expect!) – kudos! The inspired's *relic of betrayal* allows the vampires employing them to mitigate the superstition and also fortifies them versus channeling. Minor hiccup: The item is an amulet, but the elder version calls it a ring in a cut-copy-paste remnant.

The shade's *secret urn* is worn in the belt slot and helps versus sunlight exposure and light, while the sovereign's *shattered crown* helps versus the mirror problem...which would be as well a place as any to note that the tales of how the elders were slain make SENSE. They tie into the lore, curses, etc. and add a layer of depth to the items. The nightcaller's stolen fur allows for indefinite hibernation in the ancient versus and mitigates the homesoil restriction.

Now beyond these, the pdf explains some subtleties of the vampire condition and the potent curse that sparked the condition, which make, frankly, for a fantastic backdrop for a whole vampiric campaign. Speaking of which...Raiments actually echo the true, original sin that gave rise to the moroi – and thus, moroi gaining access to multiple raiments can enjoy synergy effects beyond the already potent item effects...the layers of lore woven with a scant few lines are inspiring.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good; I noticed no serious issues apart from the somewhat uncharacteristic ring-snafu. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column full-color standard. Artworks are nice full-color stock pieces. The pdf comes fully bookmarked, in spite of its brevity. KUDOS!

I challenge you to find better wrought crunch and lore for a single buck. Stephen Rowe is not content with just writing some items; instead, he has crafted a glorious, must-have expansion for "In the Company of Vampires." The rules for blood crafting alone warrant getting this book; the non-raiment items are great and the raiments OOOZE flavor; they can arguably inspire adventures on their own...perhaps even campaigns. The thread of lore is intricately woven through the crunch presented herein, adding a further dimension to the humble pdf.

...

This costs a paltry \$0.99. For 8 pages of fantastic, vampiric goodness. Seriously, if you own In the Company of Vampires, then this is pretty much the DEFINITION of "Must-have". Heck, even if you're not interested in ItC: Vampires (Why? Beyond the player option, it makes for a rather nifty GM-toolkit, even if you don't want playable vampires!), the raiments may very well constitute an excellent reason to get this pdf and its parent-file...the anti-arch-vampire story practically writes itself. Heck, blood crafting has very creepy implications when you ponder the consequences... So yeah.

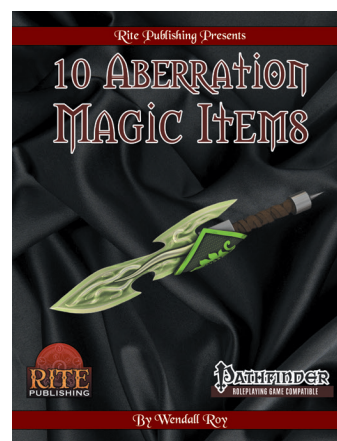
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Forgot the rating? Obviously, this is 5 stars + seal of approval.

You can get this pdf for a single buck [here on OBS!](#)

Haven't yet picked up In the Company of Vampires? You can find that book [here on OBS!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.



10 Aberration Magic Items

Publisher:

Rite Publishing

Reviewer:

Endzeitgeist

Stars:

5 stars out of 5

This collection of magic items, tying in with the fantastic "In the Company of Aberrations", clocks in at 7 pages, 1 page

front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, leaving us with 4 pages of content, so let's take a look!

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

All right, we begin with an item that actually has a nice visual representation – the *calamitous tentacle*. Before you start yawning – the tentacle is NOT yet another tentacle whip – it's actually a ranged splash weapon that detonates in icky bits AND that may attempt to grapple foes! Really cool! *Encapsulated weirdness* is delightfully disturbing: This item is a magical tumor that contains an extraordinary abominable weirdness, conferring its benefits to the "wearer" – oh, and if you don't meet the prerequisites, it demands a steep price! See, this is how "gain feature x"-items can be amazing! The *eye of undoing* is basically a *dispel magic* and *disintegrate* spell in a can. Okay, I guess. The *flute of mad enlightenment*, Z-shaped and weird, is easier to play if you have tentacles (AMAZING!) and causes confusion...oh, and it can absorb *magic missiles*. Cool!

Glasses of puresight clock in at 20K and automatically pierce mundane or magical disguises of aberrations. I really dislike this item, as it can wreck a plethora of plots. *Harness of the Favored Pet* is amazing – aberrations slap these harnesses on pets, allowing the enslaved humanoids to be handled easier...including command words to silence and pin them. Can you see the scenario where the PCs lead an uprising against chthonic masters? I sure as hell can! *Mindkiller's vise* takes a painful toll upon donning, but does enhance the mental powers of the wielder with mind-affecting spells and SPS as well as the offensive capabilities in psychic duels. Nice. *Synthetic skin suits* are basically a combination of Disguise-enhancing stolen skins and *bracers of armor*, and thus come in 8 variants – solid per se, though personally, I am partial to Everyman Gaming's [Skinsuit Ritual](#) for that particular concept. *Voidcaller's serum* is unique: it makes being adjacent to the user very dangerous (untyped damage, no breath, fatigued...) and allows the user to call forth void-called beings. Basically a magic drug sans drug drawbacks...which, come to think, is something that could carry a book of its own.

Now, as in most of these small item-pdfs by Rite Publishing, the final item herein would be a legacy item, namely *Rift*. This mighty dagger of crystal comes in 6 stages of improvement (legacy

items improve as you gain levels and unlock new abilities); the dagger is nothing short of the stain on reality left by the first touch of Nyarlathotep. As such, it should not surprise you that the dagger can confuse targets, cuts rifts into space to conjure creatures, etc. – a flavorful item! I am particularly partial to the high level ability that, whenever you roll a natural 1, lets you force another creature to take a natural 1 on its next round!

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch, I noticed no glitches in either rules-language or formal criteria. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's two-column full-color standard and the pdf sports 2 solid full-color artworks. The pdf comes fully bookmarked, in spite of its brevity – kudos!

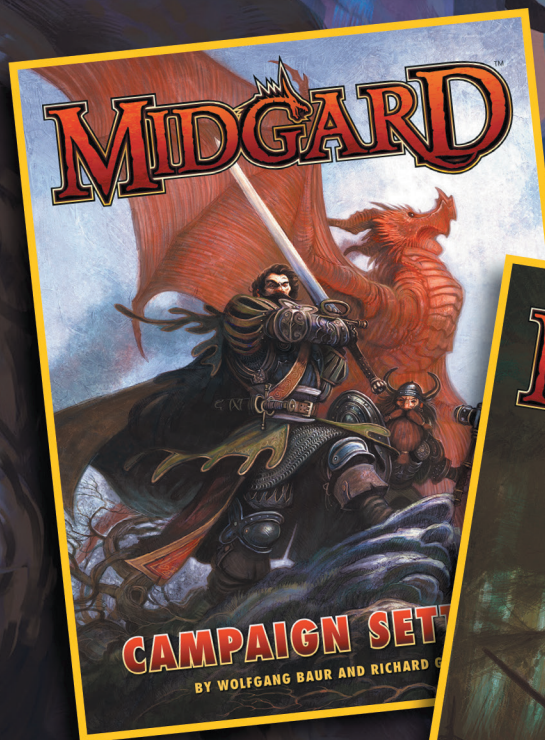
Wendall Roy is one of the best-kept secrets, designer-wise – he constantly delivers intriguing, high-concept material with really cool, creative tricks and tweaks. This pdf is no exception – we get some really cool items herein. While personally, I loathe the flat-out auto-detection conferred by the *glasses*, that is mostly a matter of taste. Hence, my final verdict will clock in at 5 stars.

You can get these cool items [here!](#)

Missed the fantastic “In the Company of Aberrations”? You can get it [here!](#)

Endzeitgeist out.

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