

Rite Publishing Presents

April 2018 \* Issue 76

# PATHWAYS



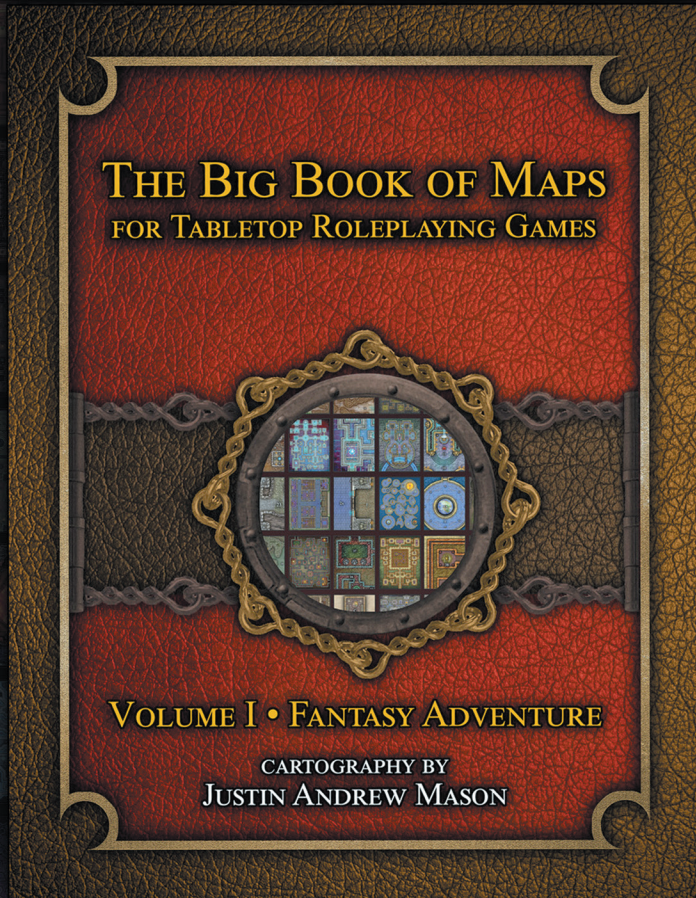
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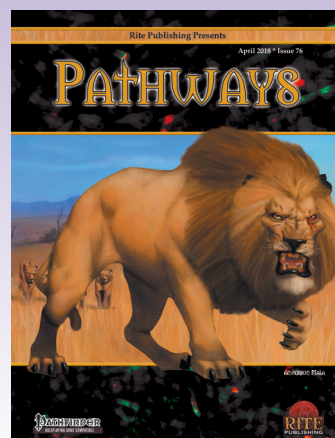
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## Editorial

by Dave Paul

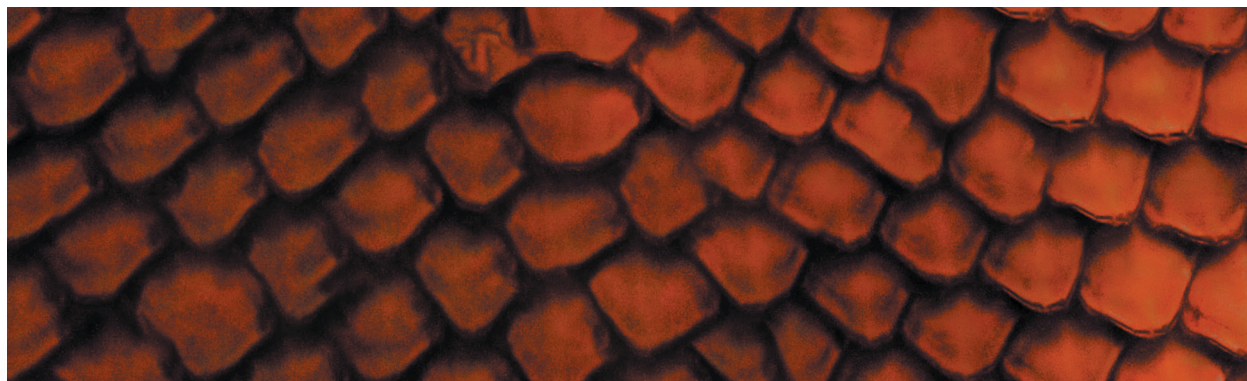
Fortunately this is a game of imagination. While much of the scaffolding of the game, behind the scenes, is driven by numbers, the front of the game is driven by images, symbols, and visions. So, if I can't give you a definition of "beast" that's okay. But, if the word didn't conjure up images for me, that would be a problem. And, the word has multiple uses, after all, it is the root for things like "beastly" and "bestial" and the word might hint at madness, cruelty, nefariousness as well as serving as it does for me as a noun indicating a creature somewhere between animal and monster. From the game's perspective, I suppose, just about anything could be a monster and so a beast is just a certain kind of type of monster. But in popular usage, the word "beast" can often serve as a substitute for the word "animal" but most especially in the sense that animal also means "not human."

In the Pathfinder game, of course, the terms "animal" and "magical beast" are creature types and there is nothing defined as a "beast." Animals and magical beasts have a lot in common: similar saves, skills, proficient with natural weapons, a need to eat, sleep and breathe, and low-light vision. As a rule, magical beasts are tougher than animals as they also typically have darkvision, better hit points, and a faster attack progression. But, there are some weird other issues with the game. For instance, the "monstrous humanoid" is a bit like a humanoid, a bit like an animal, and a bit like a magical beast. With this then, whatever a beast is, it might include animals, possibly some humanoids (but maybe not), probably not giants (but maybe), most assuredly magical beasts, and probably some monstrous humanoids. What a mess!

And into that fun mess we plunge with this issue of *Pathways*. In this month's pages we offer you a nice variety of beast-like articles including a useful tool for GMs from Creighton Broadhurst (your party stumbles upon a campsite—what already lives in the area?), a trip to the stars for our Starfinder readers from Matt Banach (phasing, and viruses and diseases!), a wonderful variety of new options for spellcasters from Kendra Leigh Speedling (new spells, new bloodlines and more), and a fresh new look at ways to use animals in dangerous ways from Christina Stiles (stampedes, swarms and worse!).

Frankly, I think we could have included quite a few other things as well. After all, from a certain point of view, things like fiends and dragons appear throughout fiction and literature as beasts, and there are many instances of humans and human-like creatures appearing as beasts as well (consider just about any collection of stories from ancient civilizations). A beast-themed issue, like many other themes I suppose, could reoccur, even somewhat frequently, and we'd never run out of content. Speaking of which, if there are themes you'd like to see (whether more narrow, such as another beasts issue but with a more limited focus, or more generally, such as a theme you haven't seen us produce), please do let us know. We have a great team with a wide variety of perspectives and creative impulses. But we have even more readers with an even greater variety of perspectives and creative impulses. I'm delighted to get to work with a team to produce content for the gaming community; I'm even more delighted when I get to work with a team to produce content *with* the gaming community.

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## Eye of Insolence Creature Template

by Owen K.C. Stephens, Illustration by Anderson Maia

While it is accepted by most humanoid cultures—given the right to treat animals as beasts of burden, pets, and trained guard animals—that dominion is not always accepted by the creatures of the animal kingdom. Be it a divine curse brought about by not respecting the fey realm, or defying the gods of animal and steed, or the power of nature itself, animals in a region where animals are abused, over-hunted, or slaughtered without regard to their value and sustainable population sometimes develop the eye of insolence. This mark, a glowing light and dark runic markings around one eye of the animal, is a sign of defiance to the domain of humanoids, and the first warning that the animal kingdom has declared war. While sometimes only

a small number of animals gain the eye of insolence (such as a pair of lions that then hunt for sport those humanoids who once hunted them, or a shark that takes claim to an area of water and drives out all other hunters and predators), normally once the eye of insolence appears on a beast within a region it is a sign that the region is about to have such marks appear on much, if not all, of its animal life.

A GM can use the eye of insolence to create a single, mythical animal far more cunning and dangerous than others of its kind, or use it as a spreading plague turning every dog, cat, chicken, and horse against its master until the root cause of the curse is found and made right... or all humanoids in the region are slain by those they thought they mastered.

## Creating an Eye of Insolence Creature

Only animals can take the eye of insolence template. They are treated as animals that have been subject to the *awaken* spell, and change their type to magical beast (augmented animal).

**Challenge Rating:** If base creature CR is 4 or less, +2 CR. If base creature CR is 5 or more, +1 CR.

**Alignment:** A eye of insolence creature is neutral evil. In its behavior it acts as a neutral good creature in its relationships with animals, fey, magical beasts, plants, and vermin, but as chaotic evil in its relationships with humanoids and monstrous humanoids.

**Hit Dice:** The eye of insolence creature's hit die do not change, but it does gain bonus hit points equal to its new CR total x5.

**Attacks:** The eye of insolence creature gains a +3 bonus on all attack rolls (and CMB), and a +6 bonus to all damage rolls (and CMD).

**Saves:** The eye of insolence creature gains a +2 bonus to all its saving throws.

**Defensive Abilities:** The eye of insolence creature gains a +3 enhancement bonus to its natural armor bonus to AC, and SR equal to 15 + its CR against spells cast by humanoids and monstrous humanoids. It also gains fast healing 2 (which increases by +1 for every 5 full HD the eye of insolence creature has).

**Save DCs:** The eye of insolence creature gains a +2 bonus to the save DC of any spell or ability it has.

**Ability Scores:** +10 Int, +4 Wis, +4 Cha. Do not recalculate its skill points.

**Skills:** The eye of insolence creature gains 5 new skills each as class skills with ranks equal to its HD, and a +2 bonus to all skill checks. It cannot speak any language, but understands common and one additional language per point of Intelligence bonus it has, if any.

**Special Abilities:** A eye of insolence creature gains the following abilities:

**Pack Master (Ex):** The eye of insolence creature gains one bonus teamwork feat, +1 additional bonus teamwork feat per 3 HD it possesses. All animals and magical beasts are treated as if they possessed the same teamwork feats as the eye of insolence creature for the purpose of determining whether the eye of insolence creature receives a bonus from its teamwork feats. Other animals and magical beasts do not receive any bonuses from these feats unless they actually possess the feats themselves. Any animals' and magical beasts' positioning and actions must still meet the prerequisites listed in the teamwork feat for the eye of insolence creature to receive the listed bonus.

**Smite Humanoid (Su):** A number of times per day equal to 1, +1 per 3 full HD, the eye of insolence creature can smite a humanoid or monstrous humanoid, granting it a bonus equal to its Wisdom bonus to its attack rolls and equal to its HD on damage rolls. If the target of smite humanoid is a character

with an animal companion, familiar, or trained or domesticated animal, the bonus to damage on the first successful attack increases to 2 points of damage per HD the eye of insolence creature possesses. Regardless of the target, smite attacks automatically bypass any DR the creature might possess.

In addition, while smite humanoid is in effect, the eye of insolence creature gains a deflection bonus equal to its Wisdom bonus (if any) to its AC against attacks made by the target of the smite. If the eye of insolence creature targets a creature that is not a humanoid or monstrous humanoid, the smite is wasted with no effect.

The smite effect remains until the target of the smite is dead or the next time the eye of insolence creature rests and regains its uses of this ability.

**Spell Like Abilities** (Caster level = HD; DCs are Wisdom-based)

**At Will**—*charm animal, speak with animals*

## Eye of Insolence Lion

*One eye of this lean, muscle's lion glows with an inner red light, and a rune drawn around it gives it the appearance of great cunning.*

**Lion Eye of Insolence Creature** CR 5

XP 1,600

NE Large Magical Beast (augmented animal)

**Init** +7; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +13

### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 12, flat-footed 15  
(+3 Dex, +6 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 57 (5d8+10+25)

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4

**SR** 20 (vs humanoids and monstrous humanoid), fast healing 3

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +10 (1d8+11 plus grab), 2 claws +10 (1d4+11)

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

**Special Attacks** pack master, pounce, rake (2 claws +10, 1d4+1), smite humanoid (2/day, +2/+5)

**Spell Like Abilities** (Caster Level 5th)

**At Will**—*charm animal* (DC 13), *speak with animals*

### STATISTICS

**Str** 21, **Dex** 17, **Con** 15, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

**Languages** Common, Elven (can't speak)

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +12 (+15 grapple); **CMD** 28 (32 vs. trip)

**Feats** Coordinated Distraction<sup>B</sup>, Escape Route<sup>B</sup>, Improved Initiative, Run, Skill Focus (Perception)

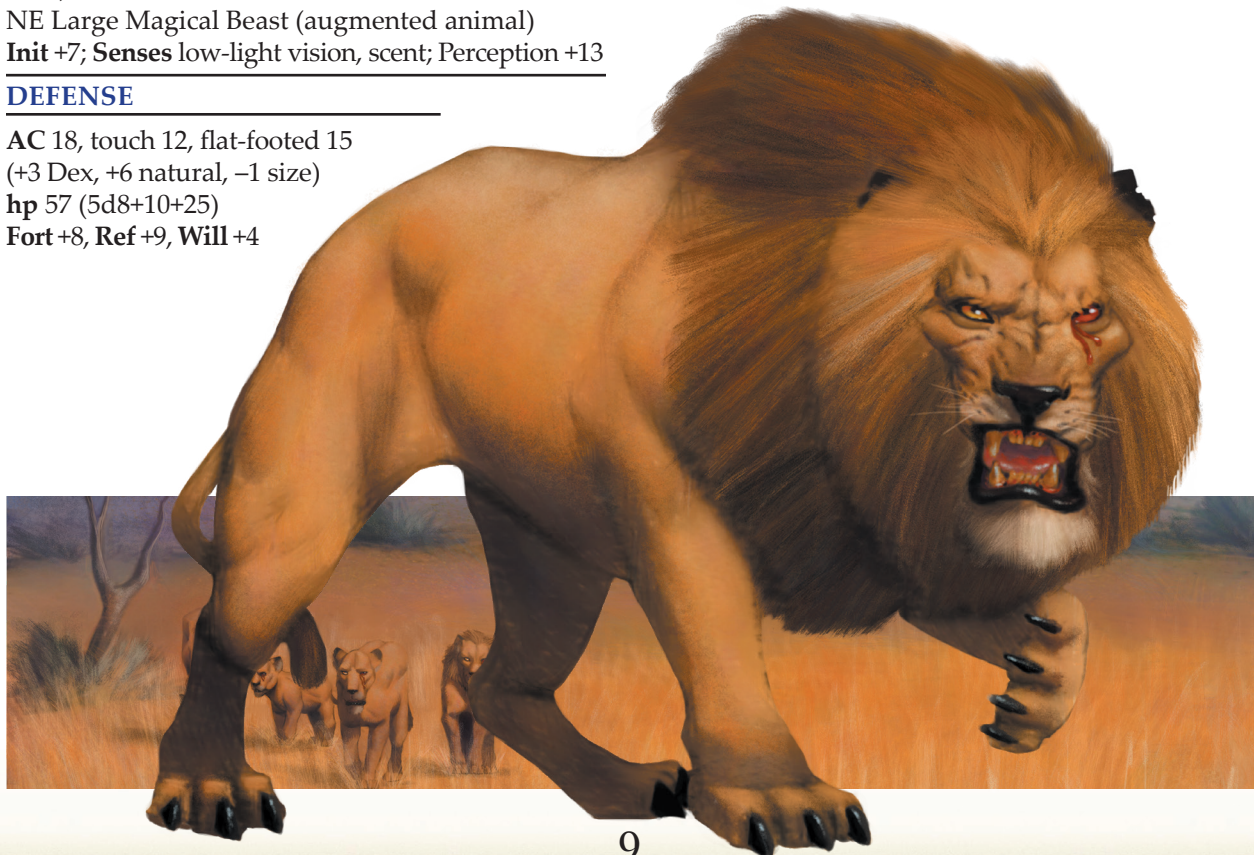
**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Bluff +10, Climb +15, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (local) +9, Perception +13, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +10 (+14 in undergrowth); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics, +4 Stealth (+8 in undergrowth)

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** warm plains

**Organization** solitary, pair, plus lion pride (3–10)

**Treasure** none



# Creature Components

## Volume 1



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## 10 Things Already Living at the Campsite

By Creighton Broadhurst; Illustration by Jacob E. Blackmon

Many creatures live in the wilderness, and the adventurers are likely not the first to discover the campsite. Beyond the threats posed by wandering owlbears, wolves and other dangerous predators, sometimes the PCs find something else already living in the area. Use the table below to determine what already lives in the campsite.

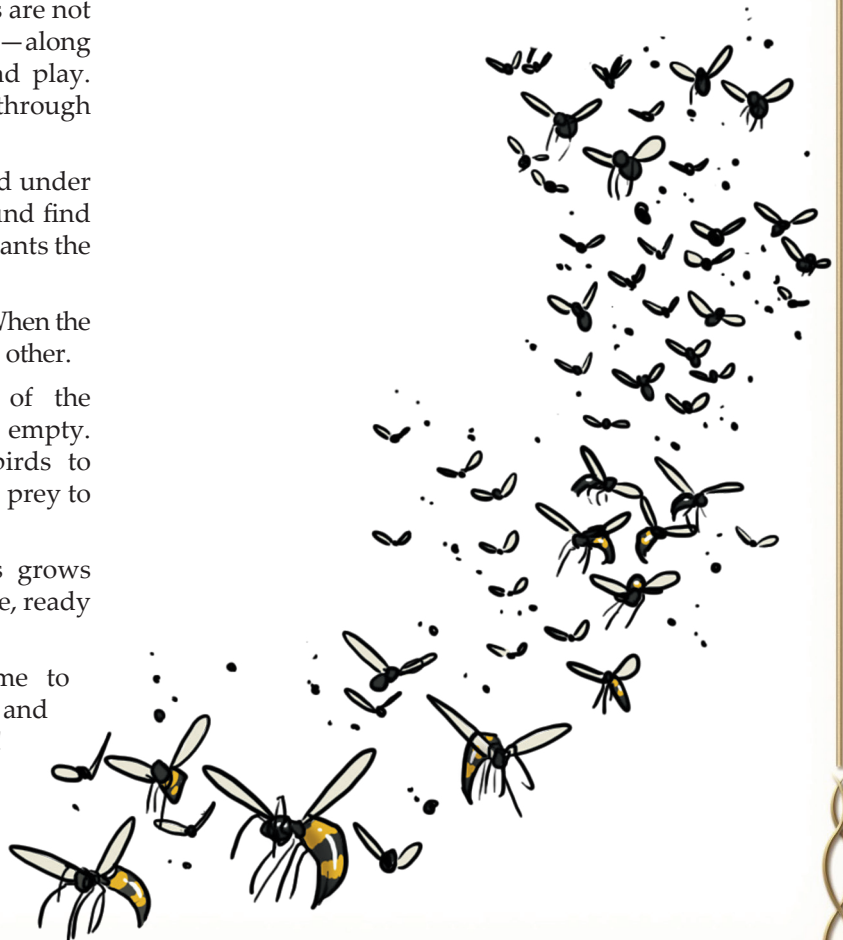
1. Wasps have built a nest high up in a nearby tree. Depending on the time of year, they could be docile or aggressive.
2. A badger set pierces the sheltered slope of a small rise. The badgers emerge at night to feed. They are only aggressive if attacked or cornered.
3. An owl lurks in a nearby tree. It emerges at dusk to hunt. When it returns, clutching a dead mouse it sits in the tree devouring its prey and watching the PCs. It is so silent the PCs might not even be aware of its presence.
4. A fox den lies near the camp. If the PCs are not making a lot of noise, the mated pair—along with their young—emerge to hunt and play. The young are fearless and scavenge through the camp for food scraps.
5. A vast ant nest honeycombs the ground under the campsite. PCs sleeping on the ground find themselves (and their kit) infested with ants the next morning.
6. Two rival male squirrels claim the area. When the PCs arrive, the two are chattering at each other.
7. Nests festoon the upper branches of the surrounding trees, but all appear to be empty. What could have forced so many birds to leave? Did they migrate or did they fall prey to a predator?
8. A dense patch of wild berry bushes grows throughout the area. The berries are ripe, ready for picking and delicious.
9. A shaded, reed-fringed pool is home to several dozen carp, and one old and grumpy pike. Here, the fishing is good!
10. A small stream winds its way through the campsite. Among the reeds clustering thickly along its steep banks live a female duck and her four young. Initially unseen, the young's high-pitched peeping quickly betrays their presence.

### GM's Miscellany: Wilderness Dressing


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### GM's Miscellany: Wilderness Dressing

presents loads of great features and details to enliven your PCs' travel both overland and by sea. Designed to be used both during preparation or actual play, *GM's Miscellany: Wilderness Dressing* is an invaluable addition to any GM's armoury!



# 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, wearing a green tunic and red-and-gold striped leggings, holding a spear; on the right, a character with dark hair and a blue streak, wearing a blue tunic and brown armor, holding a sword. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the center of the image.

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## Spells Showcase: Beasts

By Dave Paul; Illustration by Balint Radu

All the following spells are in Rite Publishing's recently-released [101 Desert Spells](#), the newest offering in the 101 Spells series.

—

Maybe you don't think of a rabbit as a beast (though there are enough film references to change my mind about this), but even so, this issue of *Pathways* considers beasts both in the sense that the word is a synonym for animal and in the sense that the word is a synonym for a certain kind of non-animal monster. With that in mind, sometimes a low-level spell that relies upon a material component from a beast is just what you need.

### Arctic Pelt

**School:** Transmutation; **Level:** Alchemist 1, Bloodrager 1, Cleric/Oracle 0, Druid 0, Inquisitor 1, Ranger 1, Shaman 0, Sorcerer/Wizard 1, Summoner 1, Witch 1

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Components:** V, S, M/DF (a pinch of rabbit's fur)

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** Creature touched

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates (harmless); **Spell**

**Resistance:** Yes (harmless)

The skin of the creature you touch becomes covered in fine fur which raises and bristles in response to exposure to cold. For the duration, it is protected as if by a weakened version of *resist energy* and it has resist cold 2. In addition, the touched creature gains a +2 bonus whenever it must attempt a Fortitude save to resist taking damage from exposure to cold dangers in the environment.

If *arctic pelt* is cast in any cold terrain, the resistance is resist 5 cold, the bonus to Fortitude saves is +4, and the duration is 10 minutes/level.

—

There are many spells like *caravan of camels* in the 101 Spells series. From other products you'll find spells that turn everyone in a party into bears, hares, wyverns and more. This offering continues that line of options. The aim of spells like this, clearly, isn't to wipe out orcs or control the battlefield. If you're playing a wizard in a campaign where every session is about large-scale combat, this might not seem like a good choice. But if you're playing in a campaign where traversing a desert is important and you're looking for a way to do that without arousing suspicion, maybe without leaving a trace with traders for those trying to track you, this might be just what you need. Perhaps you're the GM and



a wealthy NPC hires a wizard to keep an eye on the party as they carry out her plans. In order to get the party to the edge of the settlement they have to explore, or to the site of the dungeon they must examine, the least conspicuous way to do this is to have the wizard turn everyone into camels and guide them to the site.

### Caravan of Camels

**School:** Transmutation (polymorph); **Level:** Druid 3, Shaman 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 4

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Components:** V, S, M (hair from 1 camel/target)

**Range:** 20 ft.

**Target:** You and up to 1 ally/level

**Duration:** 1 minute/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance:** Yes (harmless)

You and up to 1 ally/level (maximum of 8 allies) are transformed into camels. Your sizes are Large, and you all gain a +2 size bonus to Strength, Constitution and Dexterity. Everyone gains low-light vision and scent.

If *caravan of camels* is cast in warm desert terrain, you all also gain Endurance, a +2 competence bonus to Perception checks, and the duration is 1 hour/level.

Or perhaps you do enjoy offering the others in your party a chance to do something new and fun. You offer the rest of the team *goring gang* and a chance to run around the battlefield plowing into enemies, and giving great benefit to a group that can coordinate its attacks for maximum effect against a single threat. And, if done right, this spell can dramatically alter the outcome of a fight against demons, fey and similarly difficult-to-damage creatures.

### Goring Gang

**School:** Transmutation (polymorph); **Level:** Bloodrager 3, Magus 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 3

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Components:** V, S, M/DF (a powdered horn from a creature with powerful charge)

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

**Targets:** You and up to 1 willing ally/level, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

**Duration:** 1 round/level

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

You and your allies gain a small but sturdy and sharp horn on your foreheads. Each of you gains a gore attack with this horn; it is treated as a natural, primary attack and causes appropriate

piercing damage for the target's size (1d6 for a Medium target, 1d8 for a Large target) plus the target's full Strength bonus. In addition, each target gains the powerful charge ability per the universal monster rules; if a target chooses to make a charge attack, that attack causes double damage (i.e. 2d8 for Large targets) including double the target's Strength bonus.

In addition, each time a target of this spell succeeds with its gore attack against a creature which has been successfully damaged by any gore attack that round, the damage is increased by +1 for each such successful previous attack against that creature that round.

If the material component is karkadann horn and this spell is cast in warm desert terrain, then all the horns created by this spell are treated as magic cold iron weapons for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction, and each horn is treated as a +1 weapon.

Admittedly, sometimes players just need do-it-yourself spells like *sha's steps* that allow a single mixed-combat type the chance to shine. Regardless of the kind of sword-and-spells character you're playing, a spell like this gives you tactical advantages that can be quite fun. There are a couple concerns with such a spell: first, there's the "don't duplicate feats with spells" rule that this spell clearly violates; second, there's the "don't give players spells that overwhelm their other options" rule, which this spell could violate. The built-in way around these is the material component. Finding a sha's foot should be remarkably difficult, so this spell should be rarely available. It's the kind of thing that might really shine as a spell in an item that a player has access to during part of a campaign, and that must be returned later, after the successful completion of some quest (after which there will, of course, be an ample reward for having to return such a fun item).

### Sha's Steps

**School:** Transmutation; **Level:** Bloodrager 3, Magus 3, Ranger 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 3

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Components:** V, S, M/DF (a sha's foot)

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 round/level

You gain the Following Step and the Step Up feats for the duration of the spell.

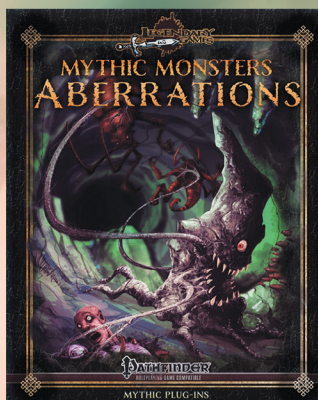
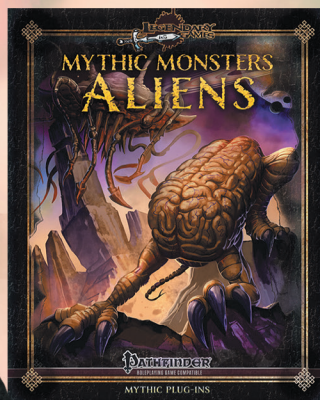
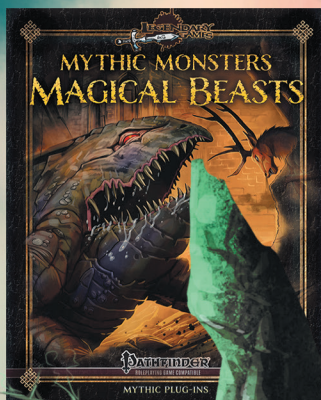
If you cast *sha's steps* in warm desert terrain, the duration is 1 minute/level and you gain a +2 size bonus to Dexterity.



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# Taking Mundane Monsters to Eleven

By Christina Stiles; Illustration by MarkusArtDesign and Tacosauceninja

Let's face it, GMs shy away from using animals, magical beasts, and vermin as foes for adventurers to defeat, opting instead for the flashier creatures: aberrations, demons, devils, and even oozes. In fact, humanoids and their monstrous kin find their way into more adventures and side treks than animals and beasts. Yet GMs can effectively plant a heap of fear in the player characters with the world's more mundane creatures or their magical counterparts. While these creatures may not have supernatural or extraordinary abilities, they can still be fear-inspiring and severely damaging. This article intends to show GMs how to take creatures up a notch! Your players shouldn't think, "Oh, it's just an animal" ever again after you use some of these scenarios!

## Ant Hills from Hell (AKA the Great Bug Hunt)

Giant fire ants, dirt dawbers (wasps), or something that forms mound-hives (not formians, unless you really want to use monstrous humanoids instead—which defeats the purpose of this article) have begun encroaching on populated territory. Their numbers are in the thousands, and their hills are expanding at a tremendous rate. Locals are being killed and carried off to feed the growing hive.

The creatures have already been left unchecked for decades, and getting rid of them all is going to be one hell of a lengthy bug hunt! Get out your *repel vermin* spell and your spelunking gear, and bring along the anti-poison to counteract those stingers!

## Birds! What the Flock!

*The Birds* has always been considered one of Alfred Hitchcock's scariest movies, and with good reason. A massive wave of beaked, clawed, murderous creatures attacking from the sky would be a frightening event for anyone to behold or experience. How could one ever feel safe to walk outside again after such an experience? The mere darkening of the sky due to a storm afterwards would trigger severe anxiety along with the thought of their return. People, indeed, would be less concerned about an oncoming storm than the return of the flying horrors!

This idea even works well with non-prey birds never expected to be a threat, such as cardinals and humming birds. Of course, a wave of hawks could be devastating—especially to the psyche. GMs should consider using the sanity rules from the *Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game: GameMastery Guide™* when instituting this scenario. Roll randomly for the type of birds below, and treat as 2d4 swarms:

### Murderous Flocks

| Type of Bird  | d100  |
|---|-------|
| Hummingbirds  | 01    |
| Cardinals   | 02    |
| Seagulls/Pigeons  | 03-08 |
| Parrots   | 09-11 |
| Hawks   | 12-20 |
| Owls  | 21-30 |
| Dire Bats   | 31-40 |
| Ravens  | 41-50 |
| Crows   | 51-75 |
| Giant Falcons   | 76-85 |
| Vultures  | 86-95 |
| Eagles  | 96-98 |
| Giant Eagles  | 99    |
| Rocs or Griffons*   | 00    |
| *for high-level campaigns only, 4 rocs; otherwise replace with griffons |       |

## Death Swarms!

A plague of creatures of the GM's choice attacks nearby settlements. The creatures are bent on death and destruction, and will not move out of an area until they or their targets are completely destroyed. The GM must decide what sent them. Did they escape upon the opening of a lich's tomb? Did something evil drive them out to exert random chaos? Did something fall from the sky, igniting a madness in the creatures? No matter their cause, the death swarms must be tracked down and destroyed before they massacre the local populations and their domesticated animals.

## Infestations

Infestations are another possible scenario. What happens when vermin get in the grain supply? Or when locusts ascend upon the crops? What happens when rats infest the walls of the local homes, keeping people awake most of the night, and creeping out in the wee hours to feed upon the extremities of the sleeping individuals? This scenario could be about loss of sanity—something evil is sending the creatures into the homes to frighten the inhabitants, keeping them awake to their breaking point—or it could be simply about the need to eat. Some possible creatures include rats, roaches, beetles, spiders, bats, snakes. The GM should get creative here. Some of the infesting creatures could even be ejecting their larvae into humanoid hosts, using them as breeding cows. The PCs might run into a village in which many of the people have large bulges on their necks or faces that appear like bulbous growths. These are, in fact, breeding cavities. The locals have no cleric or healer to treat the growths, and none of the cavities have yet burst to reveal their true purpose. At first, the people thought they were experiencing some form of plague, but they have not felt poorly in any way. When the creatures (spiders, worms, insects of some kind) eventually emerge, they will feed upon the host's outer shell, which should sustain them for several days.

## Migrations

In this scenario, hardy creatures from a pack, hive, or the like had sent out scouts to investigate new hunting territories or a new home. The scouts deemed a certain area valuable, and they have started to move their group into the region. As the forward scouts trekked further into the territory ahead of their group, they were attacked. Because of this aggressive welcome, they have now deemed all things appearing like their attackers (humanoids) the enemy, and they fight to kill. They won't relent in their attacks until their nemesis has been removed. Thus, someone needs to take care of this migration problem before many people are massacred.

Giant bees, giant beetles, and giant mantises—giant insects of any kind, really—make great creatures to use for this scenario, but animals and magical beasts could work just as well. The GM should decide upon something that doesn't seem too scary until the PCs realize the magnitude of what's migrating their way.

A counter idea to migrating animals would be humanoids encroaching on territory already claimed by one or two creatures. Perhaps the local royalty has put out an order to claim more land for expansion. They send out explorative teams to the south to investigate what lies in the plains and hills beyond their realm. The teams quickly meet their demise, and never report back. Or the teams claimed some territory and deemed it safe to settle.



They then set up a small hamlet, but when others go to resupply the settlers, the place lies empty. What might have happened to them? In this scenario, something has attacked and eaten the explorers or settlers. One by one, they've been carried off and fed upon at another location, leaving no signs of blood or a struggle for the PCs to investigate. There are no weird tracks to follow. The player characters will have to wait it out in the hamlet to learn what has taken the others. The culprits could be flying animals who have carried them off, or it could be some form of giant spider or a climbing creature.

### Something Unusual this Way Comes

Here is where watching a *Jurassic Park* movie might provide inspiration. Let loose the dinosaurs...or megafauna...where they truly do not belong! Or send in magical beasts like the bulette, chimera, cockatrice, mantichore, or so on. Or, take an ordinary animal and infuse it with some special abilities that the PCs are never likely to suspect: wolves with red eyes that discharge rays of enfeeblement to ensnare their prey, ravens with fiery or acidic breath weapons, or frogs with tongues that latch on to suck blood from a target. Let the imagination run wild, and wait until the last minute to reveal these strange abilities.

### Stalked as Prey

This scenario can best be joined with a curse of some sort. A prey animal—make it an invisible one with an unusual intelligence for kicks—has been summoned to exact revenge on a community for

some slight. The most egregious individuals suffer death first. After a while, the summoned being breaks its master's control and begins randomly stalking people. At some point, one of those being stalked becomes a player character. The creature most often attempts to attack the PC when he or she separates from the group. Some type of big cat likely makes the best stalker.

### Stampede!

Suppose something spooks the local cattle, moose, horses, deer, bison, or other herd animals (including elephants and rhinos) and they come charging through the village or small town on a rampage spurred by fear? How many people will likely be killed if the PCs can't stop them? How do they stop the creatures? If the stampeding cattle belong to the local farmers, killing the creatures outright, such as with a *fireball* spell, will cause serious repercussions down the line for the locals, who count on the meat or milk from the creatures. While the people may be initially grateful for being saved, eventually they will come to treat the player characters with disgust when food is hard to come by. Of course, a skill check—or several—would be in order if the PCs attempt to stop the herd without magic: DC 25 Animal Handling.

To make this different, however, consider using non-herd animals. What if a group of bears, wolves, or boars stampeded through the village? Tigers, panthers, lions? This would be highly unusual, and what would be the cause of it? What's disturbing these animals, and why hasn't it affected the local herd animals?



**GM Note:** People exhibit the same herd-animal stampeding nature when crammed together during a calamity like a fire—or at store sale, in some cases. Some of the worst disasters in history, in fact, have been due to human stampedes. For instance, a quick Google search shows the Brooklyn Theatre fire of 1878 killed over 270 people as they rushed to get away from the blazes. A similar theatre fire at the Iroquois Theatre in 1903 killed over 600, as they crushed each other to flee.

## Thieving Animals!

A prime example of this effective scenario tactic comes from the recent *Starfinder™* Adventure Path. In John Compton's *Temple of the Twelve*, the PCs are warned of the local fauna, which include a species of monkeys. The monkeys like to track travelers and steal their things. They get very aggressive about it, as well, going so far as to attack, if necessary. (On a side note, the adventure also deals with the possibility of the PCs being trampled by large creatures as one of the dangers of traveling on the continent about which they seek information. In fact, this adventure is one of the most effective in using fauna—and flora—in a module for sheer annoyance and peril that I've encountered in quite some time. I highly recommend it for fitting ideas for creatures.)

In this scenario, the thieves don't necessarily have to be monkeys. They could be offshoots of crows, rats, frogs, raccoons, or cats. Below is a rat variant called pack rat for use with your campaign. They especially like inhabiting (and may be considered an infestation and a thieving animal) castles and manors, where many interesting things—and PCs—often reside. They are somewhat intelligent, have a crude language of their own, and can be negotiated with, for they could exist symbiotically instead of being pure irritants.

## Conclusion

Chances are you can find a movie that takes an animal from nature, past or present, and gives it a horrific edge in a what-if manner. Seek out films like *Jurassic Park* and its sequels, *Snakes on a Plane*, *Tremors*, *Jaws*, *Cujo*, *Arachnophobia* and watch them for inspiration. Replace the protagonists with your player characters and a group of innocents they need to protect, and then limit their resources and stir to see what forms. Often, the overwhelming odds alone will make the encounter something memorable.

## Rat, Pack

*At first glance, pack rats appear as normal dire rats of various fur colors, but their coats are clean and they move much faster; they also have a glint of intelligence in their eyes.*

**Pack Rat** **CR 1/3**

XP 135

N Small animal

**Init** +5; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +6

### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, touch 17, flat-footed 12 (+5 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 6 (1d8+2)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

**Melee** bite +1 (1d4)

**Ranged** sling +6

### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 20, **Con** 14, **Int** 7, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +0; **CMB** -1; **CMD** 14 (18 Vs. trip)

**Feats** Run<sup>B</sup>, Stealthy

**Skills** Climb +13, Escape Artist +15, Perception, Stealth +7, Swim +13; **Racial Modifiers** uses Dex to modify Climb and Swim, Escape Artist +8

**Languages** pack-talk (a combination of noises and body movements)

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any urban

**Organization** pack (5-50)

**Treasure** standard

**P**ack rats grow to be over 2 feet long and weigh up to 30 pounds. They commonly seek out manors and castles to infest, as they enjoy collecting interesting trinkets for their nests, and they often steal foodstuffs from pantries and backpacks. They are very effective at fleeing from danger.

## Pack Rat Companion

**Starting Statistics:** **Size** Small; **Speed** 50 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.; **Attack** bite (1d4); **Ability Scores** Str 10, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 8; **Special Qualities** low-light vision, scent.

**4th-Level Advancement:** **Attack** (1d4+1); **Ability Scores** Str +2, Con +2.



The paint on what first appears to be a piece of wood atop an innocuous mound of bricks and twine, changes from garbled words, into a smiling face

# Kami, Neak Ta

*The paint on what first appears to be a piece of wood atop an innocuous mound of bricks and twine, changes from garbled words, into a smiling face.*

## NEAK TA CR 8

XP 4,800

NG Small outsider (kami, native)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +17

### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, touch 15, flat-footed 18 (+4 Dex, +7 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 114 (12d10+48); fast healing 4

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10

**Immune** bleed, mind-affecting effects, petrification, polymorph; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10, fire 10

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** improvised weapon +14 (2d8+5/19–20/x3)

**Ranged** 2 improvised thrown weapons +17 (2d8+4/19–20/x3)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 12th; concentration +16)

At will  $\frac{3}{4}$  calm emotions, make whole, status, telekinesis  
 $\frac{3}{\text{day}}$   $\frac{3}{4}$  create food and water, cure serious wounds, nap stack<sup>APG</sup>

$\frac{1}{\text{day}}$   $\frac{3}{4}$  heroes' feast

**Special Attacks** cyclonic fury

### STATISTICS

**Str** 13, **Dex** 19, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 19

**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Catch Off-Guard, Improved Precise Shot, Improved Weapon Mastery, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Throw Anything

**Skills** Acrobatics +16, Diplomacy +16, Knowledge (engineering) +13, Knowledge (local) +13, Perception +17, Sense Motive +17, Stealth +23

**Languages** Telepathy 100 ft.

**SQ** merge with ward, ward (community halls, inns, or taverns)

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any land

**Organization** solitary, pair, or party (3–6)

**Treasure** standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Cyclonic Fury (Su)** Up to three times per day, while within 100 feet of its ward, a neak ta can summon forth a cyclone of debris and loose materials from its ward. This debris encircles the neak ta, giving it a 20 foot aura. Creatures entering the aura, or ending their movement within it, suffer 6d6 points of damage (DC 20 Reflex negates). The aura lasts for 12 rounds, but the neak ta can dismiss it as an immediate action. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Telekinetic Mastery (Su)** A neak ta can activate its telekinesis as a swift action three times per day, as if using a quickened spell. It usually uses innate telekinetic abilities to wield or throw improvised weapons. It adds its Charisma modifier (in addition to its Strength modifier) to damage done with any improvised weapon. A neak ta can throw up to two improvised weapons per round, against any target within 100 ft. If a neak ta critically hits an opponent with an improvised weapon, it deals x3 damage.

Neak ta are a type of kami that dwell in urban areas, particularly smaller settlements based around one particular common building. They make such sites their wards, preferring the jovial nature of an inn or tavern. Multiple neak ta can inhabit a larger edifice, sometimes taking over individual floors of a structure. These larger conglomerations of kami happily refer to themselves as 'parties' and do their best to entice visitors to their particular ward. Such contests are fun affairs between the neak ta, who enjoy the competition of enticing villagers to their respective wards for social events.

Communities typically develop around the ward of a neak ta, the kami becoming something of an anchor for the development of a settlement. Neak ta do this unintentionally, simply finding a communal location that appeals to them, and settling into it as a ward, not considering the long-term ramifications for a growing village. The success of a neak ta's presence is actually a detriment to the creature's social nature, as many neak ta opt to leave their ward and return to the spirit world if their community becomes 'too noisy'. The most common example of this, is a neak ta inhabiting a simple roadside inn, only for decades later when a large city springs up around it. Boring of the newfound hustle and bustle of the community, and lacking its former simple social groups, the neak ta departs.

The presence of notable oni or other evil outsiders is enough to keep a neak ta guarding its ward indefinitely. The tiny creature's love of the people it protects ensure that it will not leave them if such evils are nearby. Conversely, oni see the ward of neak ta's as sites of powerful significance, to be defiled as a means of proving their superiority. Yeren oni are the natural enemies of small community (village sized or smaller) dwelling neak ta.

Neak ta speak telepathically, but can't make any audible noises, as they lack a mouth. They display their emotions on the billboard-like sign that makes up their face; their emotion appearing as cartoon-like images on the sign. A neak ta is stands 3 feet tall, and weighs around 60 pounds.

# Bestial Magic

By Kendra Leigh Speedling

Magic related to nature is often understood as principally druidic or similarly divine, but arcane casters can have just as deep a connection to creatures of the natural world. Whether through a familiar, summoning animals and magical beasts, or transforming oneself into an animal, arcane magic offers many possibilities for those who like their magic a bit more beastly.

## Beastheart Bloodline (Sorcerer)

Your bloodline carries the power of beasts, both magical and mundane. One of your ancestors may have been a powerful druid, or perhaps you carry a trace of lycanthropy in your family line. Whatever the cause, you have a deep connection to animals and magical beasts which manifests in your magic.

**Class Skill:** Knowledge (nature).

**Bonus Spells:** *Speak with animals* (3rd), *Commune with birds*<sup>ARG</sup> (5th), *Alpha Instinct*<sup>UW</sup> (7th), *Animal Ambassador*<sup>UI</sup> (9th), *Magical Beast Aspect\** (11th), *Primal Regression*<sup>OA</sup> (13th), *Magical Beast Shape*<sup>UW</sup> (15th), *Animal Shapes* (17th), *Mass Baleful Polymorph\** (19th).

**Bonus Feats:** Alertness, Animal Affinity, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Fleet, Nimble Moves, Self-Sufficient, Toughness.

**Bloodline Arcana:** Whenever you target an animal or magical beast with a spell, you gain a dodge bonus equal to the spell's level to your AC for 1 round.

**Bloodline Powers:** Your strong affinity with beasts enhances your magic and wins you unusual allies.

*Wildspeech (Su):* At 1st level, you gain the ability to communicate with animals in a limited fashion. You can use wild empathy, as the druid class feature, to improve the attitudes of animals and magical beasts. You do not take a -4 penalty on the check to influence magical beasts. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier.

*Beastskin (Su):* At 3rd level, you gain low-light vision and a +1 natural armor bonus. If you already have low-light vision, you instead gain darkvision 60 ft. At 9th level, you gain scent and your natural armor bonus increases to +2. At 15th level, your natural armor bonus increases to +3 and you gain one of the following: climb 30 feet, fly 30 feet (average maneuverability) or swim 30 feet. Once made, this choice cannot be changed.

*Animal Aid (Ex):* At 9th level, you can call animals in the surrounding area to assist you. Doing so is a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity. You may call specific types of animals, though certain animals may not be present in particular terrains, at the GM's discretion. You can call any number of animals this way, though their total HD cannot exceed your sorcerer level + your Charisma modifier.

These animals arrive beside you on your next turn. They have an attitude of helpful and obey your basic commands to the best of their ability as if you had trained them with Handle Animal. The animals called this way are standard examples of their kind. This ability lasts for 1 minute per sorcerer level, after which the animals will depart. At 9th level, you can use this ability once per day. At 17th level, you can use this ability twice per day. At 20th level, you can use this ability three times per day.

*Beast Summon (Su):* At 15th level, you gain the ability to summon a magical beast. Doing so is a full-round action (as a *summon* spell), but does not provoke attacks of opportunity. You may summon any magical beast, but its HD cannot exceed your sorcerer level + your Charisma modifier. This summoned magical beast lasts for a number of minutes equal to your caster level.

*Wild Soul (Su):* At 20th level, your kinship with beasts protects you from their hostility. Wild animals and magical beasts with an Intelligence of 1 or 2 will never attack you unless you attack them first. Anyone directing an animal (such as an animal companion) to attack you must succeed at a Handle Animal check (DC = 10 + 1/2 your level + your Charisma modifier) to convince it to do so. Any magical beast with an Intelligence of 3 or higher must make a Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 your level + your Charisma modifier) to take a hostile action against you.

## Beastly Spells

The following spells are meant for characters hoping to add some beast-related themes to their spellcasting. With both arcane and divine options, they provide the opportunity for PCs to deepen their connection with the world of beasts.

## Animal Instincts

**School:** Divination; **Level** Druid 1, Hunter 1, Ranger 1, Psychic 2, Shaman 1, Sorcerer/Wizard 2

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Components:** V, S, M (a piece of animal fur)

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 minute/level (D)

**Saving Throw** none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

You call on the instincts that a prey animal has to sense danger, improving your skills in telling friend from foe. While this spell is in effect, you gain a +5 bonus on Sense Motive checks to determine whether someone intends hostility toward you and a +2 bonus on initiative. During the spell's duration, you can dismiss it as an immediate action if you would be caught flat-footed. Doing so prevents you from being flat-footed for that round, but immediately ends the spell.

*This spell is intended to provide a short-term boost to keep a character from being caught by surprise when combat starts, much like a rabbit has the instincts to quickly hop away from danger. It's best used in a situation when a PC has reason to be suspicious that those around them may mean them harm, such as when negotiating with a potential rival or enemy.*

## Baleful Polymorph, Mass

**School:** Transmutation (polymorph); **Level** Arcanist 9, Druid 9, Shaman 9, Sorcerer/Wizard 9, Witch 9

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Components:** V, S

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

**Target:** One or more creatures, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

**Duration:** Permanent

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates, Will partial; see text; **Spell Resistance** yes

As *baleful polymorph*, except that *mass baleful polymorph* affects a number of creatures whose combined Hit Dice don't exceed twice your level. If there are more potential targets than you can affect, you choose them one at a time until you reach the limit of HD you can affect.

*If you ever wanted to turn several aggravating enemies into small woodland creatures at once, this is the spell for you. You'll have to wait awhile to get it, but once you're capable of casting 9th level spells, you can create your very own menagerie of your defeated foes! By the time a character knows magic this powerful, they're downright*

*terrifying, and I believe 9th level spells should reflect that. There is nothing more demoralizing to an opposing army than to see their top three commanders suddenly transformed into geese!*

## Magical Beast Aspect

**School:** Transmutation; **Level** Bloodrager 5, Druid 4, Hunter 4, Magus 4, Ranger 5, Sorcerer/Wizard 4

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Components:** V, S, M (a piece of the magical beast)

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 minute/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

You gain some aspects of a magical beast. Your base form is largely unchanged and your size is unaltered, but some of your body parts are altered. Armor or gear you are wearing adjusts to your new shape for the duration of the spell. When you cast *magical beast aspect*, choose one of the following magical beasts to gain the associated benefits. You can only have one *magical beast aspect* spell active on you at a time.

**Amphisbaena:** You gain immunity to petrification and a bite attack that deals 1d4 damage, with poison as an amphisbaena (DC = 10 + 1/2 your level + your Constitution modifier). If you are dealt a critical hit with a slashing weapon while this aspect is active, a faint shadow of yourself appears next to the creature that struck you. This shadow cannot attack, nor can it be dealt damage or targeted with spells, but it can provide flanking for you and your allies. The shadow lasts for 1d4 rounds. This ability can be activated once per casting of *magical beast aspect*.

**Chupacabra:** You grow claws, gaining two claw attacks that each deal 1d4 damage. As a free action, if you pin an opponent or maintain a pin, you can suck blood from that opponent once per round, dealing 1 Constitution damage. Upon successfully draining blood, you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to the opponent's Hit Dice + your level. You can only gain these temporary hit points once per opponent, though you may continue to drain blood.

**Disenchanter:** You gain the ability to make a melee touch attack against a target's worn, held, or carried magical item. If the attack hits, you may make a caster level check opposed by the target's Fortitude save. If the check succeeds, you temporarily drain the item's magic, rendering it nonmagical for 1d6 rounds. This ability only works against items you can touch directly and does not work against artifacts.

**Kirin:** You gain resistance to electricity 10. You also gain a breath weapon, usable once every 1d4 rounds (15-foot cone, 5d6 fire damage). Opponents within the area can attempt a Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2 your level + your Charisma modifier) for half damage.

**Manticore:** You gain a fly speed of 60 feet (average) and grow a spiked tail that you can use to launch four spikes as a standard action. You must make a ranged attack roll for each spike. This attack has a range of 80 feet with no range increment. All targets must be within 30 feet of each other. You can launch 24 spikes per casting of *magical beast aspect*.

**Sha:** You gain darkvision 60 feet and the ability to see through natural or magically created sandstorms. Once per casting of *magical beast aspect*, you may create a sandstorm as a full-round action. This has a radius of 50 feet centered on you, and lasts for 1 round per caster level. This sandstorm deals 1d6 + 1d6 per 3 caster levels per round to creatures within. You are immune to this damage, but your allies are not. Only nongood characters can take this aspect.

**Unicorn:** You gain the benefit of a *protection from evil* spell and immunity to poison. You may cast *neutralize poison* and *cure moderate wounds* once each during the duration of this aspect. Only nonevil characters can take this aspect.

—  
*This spell is based on animal aspect<sup>UC</sup>, but with magical beast aspects rather than animal ones. I tried to go for a range of different beasts and abilities. I initially had a winter wolf instead of a sha, but wanted to go for a nongood only option to balance out the nonevil only option of the unicorn, and while winter wolves do tend towards evil, there was nothing terribly questionable about the abilities I could think of for the aspect...so the winter wolf was out and the sha was in.*

### Possess Beast

**School:** Necromancy; **Level** Medium 2, Mesmerist 4, Occultist 3, Psychic 4, Sorcerer/Wizard 4, Spiritualist 3, Summoner 4, Witch 4

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Components:** V, S, M (an animal claw)

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

**Target:** One animal or magical beast

**Duration:** 1 hour/level or 1 minute/level; see text

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

You attempt to possess an animal or magical beast by projecting your soul into its body. The target creature must be within spell range and within line of sight. When you transfer your soul upon casting, your own body becomes helpless and unaware. Failure to take over a host ends the spell. If the creature is willing (such as an allied or charmed creature), the spell automatically succeeds.

If you are successful, you occupy the host's body for the duration of the spell. You can communicate telepathically with the host as if you shared a common language. You keep your Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, level, class, base attack bonus, alignment, and mental abilities. The body retains its Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, hit points, natural abilities, and automatic abilities. A body with extra limbs doesn't allow you to make more attacks than normal. You can use the creature's extraordinary and supernatural abilities, but cannot cast its spells or spell-like abilities. You cannot speak unless the creature has the ability to speak a language. You cannot cast spells with somatic components if the creature does not have anthropomorphic limbs that can perform the appropriate motions.

You can travel any distance from your body, so long as you remain on the same plane, and you can return to your body as a swift action. If the host's body is killed, you return to your own body. Returning in this way is traumatic and deals 1d4 Wisdom damage to you. If your body is slain while you possess the host, then, when either the spell expires or the host's body is killed, you are slain.

Returning to your body ends the spell. The spell lasts 1 hour per level if you are possessing an animal, or 1 minute per level if you are possessing a magical beast.

—  
*Similar to possession, this version of the spell allows you to sneak around inside the body of a beast, which can be very useful for spying or information gathering. Most people don't pay attention to a mouse in the corner, after all. The spell can also be used for combat, though you should be careful not to get your host body killed!*

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# STRANGE AEONS

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ADVENTURE PATH PART I



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# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

## XANATHAR'S

### GUIDE TO

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**DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**

## Magic Items for the Whole Team (5e)

By Brandes Stoddard; Illustration by Tanya Bosyk and 3DJewelry

By this point, your players are used to the whole dynamic of magic items and attunement. In general, only one person can be attuned to an item at a time, or at least there's no point in exceeding that. There are some fantastic possibilities, in story as well as mechanics, for magic items that are more than that.

### Phial of Elder Starlight

Potion/Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

While you have this phial attuned and stoppered, it grants a +2 bonus to all saving throws and sheds pale blue light. This provides bright light to a radius of 30 feet, and dim light 30 feet beyond that. Up to ten creatures can simultaneously attune to the phial, but it does not grant a saving throw bonus if more than one creature is attuned to it. When you open the stopper as a reaction, the elder starlight pours forth and fills a 60-foot radius centered on the phial. When a creature that is not attuned to the phial starts its turn in the area of elder starlight, it must succeed a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or suffer 3d10 radiant damage. On a successful saving throw, the creature takes half damage. This area fades after one minute.

### Archangel's Glaive

Weapon (glaive), legendary (requires attunement)

Up to eight characters can attune this gleaming silver glaive at any one time. The glaive holds up to 8 charges, and any attuned creature can use a bonus action to expend a charge and teleport to an empty space adjacent to any other attuned creature. The first time they deal damage before the end of that turn, they deal an additional 1d6 radiant damage.

The glaive sheds bright light in a 40-foot radius and dim light for an additional 40 feet.

An attuned creature wielding the glaive gains a +3 bonus to attack rolls, adds 1d6+3 radiant damage to damage rolls made with this magic weapon, and gains a fly speed of 50 feet from silver-white feathered wings that sprout from the shoulderblades. When this glaive deals damage that reduces any celestial, fiend, or undead to 0 hit points, it regains 1 charge.

### Crimson Bull Skull

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

Up to eight characters can attune this horned skull at any one time. Attuned creatures gain a +3 bonus on all Strength and Constitution saving throws, and gain one virtual hit die, a d12, that does not increase their maximum hit points, but that they can spend to regain hit points as part of a short rest.

An attuned creature carrying or wearing this skull, which fits very large orcs, ogres, and trolls as a helmet, regains 3d10 hit points when any other attuned creature fails a death saving throw or dies. The creature carrying or wearing the skull can impose disadvantage on the death saving throws of other attuned creatures at will. As a reaction, the creature can spend a hit die and add the result to any attuned ally's death saving throw result.

### Fulminata Legion Banner

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

Up to eighty characters can attune to this elaborately decorated legionary banner at any one time. A creature who becomes charmed, or who deliberately deals damage to another creature attuned to this banner, loses attunement. All creatures attuned to this banner receive an *aid* spell, as if cast with a 2nd-level spell slot, that is constantly active. If this effect is dispelled, it is renewed on the following dawn.

An attuned creature carrying this banner (which is large enough to require both hands) can expend a charge to cast *call lightning* as a 3rd-level spell without expending a spell slot. Creatures attuned to the banner automatically pass saving throws against this spell, and take no damage. The banner holds up to three charges, and regains all charges when exposed to a natural thunderstorm for at least one hour.



## Paladin King's Crown

*Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)*

A number of characters equal to the wearer's Charisma modifier can attune to this crown, in addition to the wearer. All creatures lose attunement to the Paladin King's Crown when it is removed for more than three rounds. Attuning to the crown requires only a bonus action, in which the wearer makes certain sacred gestures, or non-wearers genuflect in the direction of the wearer. The wearer can prevent individual creatures from attuning to the crown if they wish.

All attuned characters gain advantage on saving throws against the charmed condition. A creature that already has this benefit from some other feature or effect instead adds 1d6 to the saving throw result. Any attuned creature with the Lay on Hands class feature can use it to heal other attuned creatures at a range of 30 feet, rather than touch.

The crown has 7 charges and regains 1d6+1 charges at dawn. As a bonus action, the wearer can spend a charge to end the frightened condition on one creature within 30 feet that is attuned to the crown, and the creature regains 2d6 hit points.

## Tentacled Statuette

*Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)*

Any number of sentient creatures can attune to this statuette, which is made of no earthly stone nor metal, at the same time. All attuned creatures with Intelligence scores of 3 or higher can communicate telepathically with one another, regardless of distance, as long as they are on the same plane of existence. They do not need to share a common language. Further, they gain resistance to psychic damage, unless the effect's source is attuned to the tentacled statuette.

An attuned creature carrying or touching the tentacled statuette can treat any attuned creature's location as very familiar, for purposes of scrying, teleportation, or other spell effects. As a bonus action, a creature carrying or touching the statuette can inflict 2d6 psychic damage on any attuned creature to heal itself for an equal amount of damage. It can't inflict this damage to the same creature again until the target creature completes a long rest.

A group of up to three attuned creatures can cause a helpless or charmed creature to become attuned to this item in one minute. Ending attunement to this item requires physical contact with the statuette and a *remove curse* spell. This item almost certainly has other effects. You *might* sleep better at night if you just say to yourself, "I'm sure it's fine."





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GameMaster Syndicate hopes GMs find this excerpt from our forthcoming Newspoint series useful. Print this page and cut the bottom part off for a player handout. See our full product for helpful adventure ideas and more information.

## Phaser Beasts (Starfinder)

By Matt Banach; Background by Publisher's Choice

*The sensor readings were all over the place – first static, then nothing, then a storm of readings that didn't make any sense. The bulkhead was sealed tight, but it didn't matter. They came, screaming, through the walls.*

Spacefarers speak of phaser beasts as if they were swraiths – haunting, unreal things that defy the laws of nature as they rip entire crews to shreds. Phaser beasts' bodies constantly shift in and out of phase with the Material Plane, giving them a ghostly, vaporous appearance that is highly confusing to the naked eye. This unpredictable shifting also wildly distorts the electromagnetic field in their immediate area, making the beasts notoriously difficult to detect with conventional sensors. In a technological age, phaser beasts are rightly feared as voracious monsters who can slip through the most carefully laid fortifications, killing and feasting at will.

**PHASER** – Far more than merely a single breed of monstrous foe, phaser beasts are phenomena brought upon by outbreaks of PHASER, a techno-magical nano-virus that mutates otherwise normal creatures into rampaging phaser beasts. Many believe that the first strain of PHASER arose from some reckless technomancer's botched experiment, but the nano-virus has already mutated so many times and spread so far across the galaxy that its origin is irrelevant. Humanoids infected with PHASER suffer a non-lethal mental disease known as the "phaser shakes," and only animals and magical beasts have thus far been reported as transforming into phaser beasts... but it is perhaps only a matter of time before some strain of PHASER mutates even further. As a virus, PHASER is highly infectious, capable of going airborne, surviving

### What do I know: Phaser Beasts

Here's what a Life Science, Medicine, or Mysticism check to recall knowledge reveals about phaser beasts:

| Result | Information  |
|--------|--|
| 10+    | Phaser beasts are creatures (typically animals or magical beasts) which have been infected by the techno-magical nano-virus known as PHASER, making them stronger, more aggressive, and giving them strange powers. Phaser beasts' bodies shift and blur wildly, making them difficult to perceive accurately.   |
| 15+    | Phaser beasts' abilities play with the vibrational frequencies of matter and energy, often emitting a painful sonic shriek in addition to their natural attacks. They can phase-shift their bodies in order to become incorporeal for brief moments, enabling them to bypass solid physical obstacles.   |
| 20+    | The PHASER virus is always mutating, constantly altering its characteristics and jumping between species. Humanoids infected with PHASER do not transform into phaser beasts, but rather experience the "PHASER shakes" as a mental disease and become carriers for the nano-virus. Medicinal cures for particular strains of PHASER have been developed in the past, but do not remain effective once the virus mutates further. An infected creature injected with the cure might revert back to normal. |
| 25+    | You gain a +2 insight bonus to rolls to craft (or assist in crafting) a medicinal to treat this particular strain of PHASER; you know the process will require fresh samples of infected flesh from no fewer than three phaser beasts, and detailed sensor readings of their energy signatures while alive and active.   |

outside a host for extended periods, and even phasing intangibly through physical containment efforts to continue its insidious spread. Most spacefaring civilizations classify PHASER as the highest-level ultra-hazardous contagion, and even the smallest PHASER outbreak can be enough for a military armada to establish a lethal-force quarantine around an entire planet.

## PHASER SHAKES

(mutation variant PW-217-b)

**Type** disease (contact, inhaled, or injury); **Save** Fortitude DC (10 + CR of infecting creature)

**Track** mental (special); **Frequency** 1/day

**Effect** progression track is Healthy – Latent – Weakened – Impaired – Befuddled – Disassociated; disassociated is the end state

**Cure** 2 consecutive saves

**Special** An animal or magical beast infected with this strain of the PHASER virus does not follow the usual frequency or progression track and instead transforms into a phaser beast within 3d4 rounds; at GM's discretion an animal or magical beast NPC may follow the usual progression track with a frequency of 1/hour, with transformation into a phaser beast occurring as the end state, after disassociated.

**For GMs creating phaser beasts** – “Phaser beast” is not a strict template or graft, due to the highly mutable nature of PHASER and the wide-open possibilities for future mutations. However, the general recipe is: using a base animal or magical beast as a starting point, design a new stat block with a CR that is one-to-three CR higher than the base creature; creature type becomes magical beast and apply that graft; add a secondary sonic attack; add disease, phasing step, and uncertainty skew as special abilities; remove or omit the base creature's usual special abilities as possible to keep the creature from having way too many abilities. Tinker as desired.

Phaser beasts are excellent monsters to bring chaotic bestial danger to your spacefaring adventures!

## Phaser Beast (infected velociraptor) CR 3

**XP** 800

**CN** Small magical beast

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +8

### DEFENSE

**EAC** 14, **KAC** 16

**HP** 40

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

**Defensive Abilities** phasing step, uncertainty skew

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +12 (1d6+7 P plus disease)

**Offensive Abilities** disease, sonic scream (15-ft. cone, 1d4+3 So, Fortitude DC 12 half, usable every 1d4 rounds)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Phaser beasts use their phasing step ability to infiltrate supposedly secure areas and approach their prey from surprising angles.

**During Combat** Phaser beasts stay mobile during combat, constantly circling and darting back and forth between cover and obstacles. While they prefer to use their more powerful natural attacks (bite), they will not hesitate to sporadically use their sonic scream to harry readied opponents or targets just beyond their melee reach. When hunting in packs, phaser beasts aggressively mob and flank a single target.

**Morale** Phaser beasts attack aggressively until reduced to 5 HP or less, at which point they flee.

### STATISTICS

**Str** +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** -3, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0

**Skills** Athletics +13, Stealth +8, Survival +8

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Disease (Su)** Phaser beasts carry the PHASER virus, and can infect creatures they injure or touch.

**Phasing Step (Su)** Once per minute as a standard action, a phaser beast can put itself out of phase with the Material Plane and become incorporeal until the beginning of its next turn.

**Uncertainty Skew (Su)** Phaser beasts' bodies phase and shift unpredictably, blurring their outline and making them difficult to perceive or detect accurately. Phaser beasts constantly have concealment (20% miss chance), and this concealment is not negated by non-visual means of detection. Also, any use of technological sensors to detect phaser beasts has a 20% chance of reporting inaccurate information, such as giving seemingly impossible readings, a false location, an incorrect number of phaser beasts, or failing to detect the phaser beasts altogether. If the technological sensing is continuous, reroll this chance for inaccuracy every 1d4 rounds.

## Phaser Beast (infected great cat) CR 6

XP 2,400

CN Large magical beast

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +13

### DEFENSE

EAC 18, KAC 20

HP 90

**Fort** +10, **Ref** +10, **Will** +5

**Defensive Abilities** phasing step, uncertainty skew

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +16 (1d8+11 P plus disease) or claw +16 (1d8+11 plus disease)

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

**Offensive Abilities** disease, sonic scream (15-ft. cone, 1d10+6 So, Fortitude DC 14 half, usable every 1d4 rounds)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** (as above)

**During Combat** (as above)

**Morale** Phaser beasts attack aggressively until reduced to 15 HP or less, at which point they flee.

### STATISTICS

**Str** +5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** -3, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0

**Skills** Athletics +18, Stealth +13, Survival +13

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Disease (Su)** (as above)

**Phasing Step (Su)** (as above)

**Uncertainty Skew (Su)** (as above)

## Phaser Beast (infected allosaurus) CR 9

XP 6,400

CN Huge magical beast

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +17

### DEFENSE

EAC 22, KAC 24

HP 145

**Fort** +13, **Ref** +13, **Will** +8

**Defensive Abilities** phasing step, uncertainty skew

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft.

**Melee** bite +21 (2d10+15 P plus disease)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

**Offensive Abilities** disease, intimidating roar, sonic roar (30-ft. radius, 3d6+9 So, Fortitude DC 16 half, usable every 1d4 rounds)

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** (as above)

**During Combat** This phaser beast usually begins combat with its sonic roar, attempting to demoralize its opponents. It stays mobile during combat, evading opponents that try to flank it.

**Morale** The phaser beast attacks aggressively until reduced to 25 HP or less, at which point it flees.

### STATISTICS

**Str** +6, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** -3, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0

**Skills** Athletics +22, Intimidate +17, Stealth +17, Survival +17

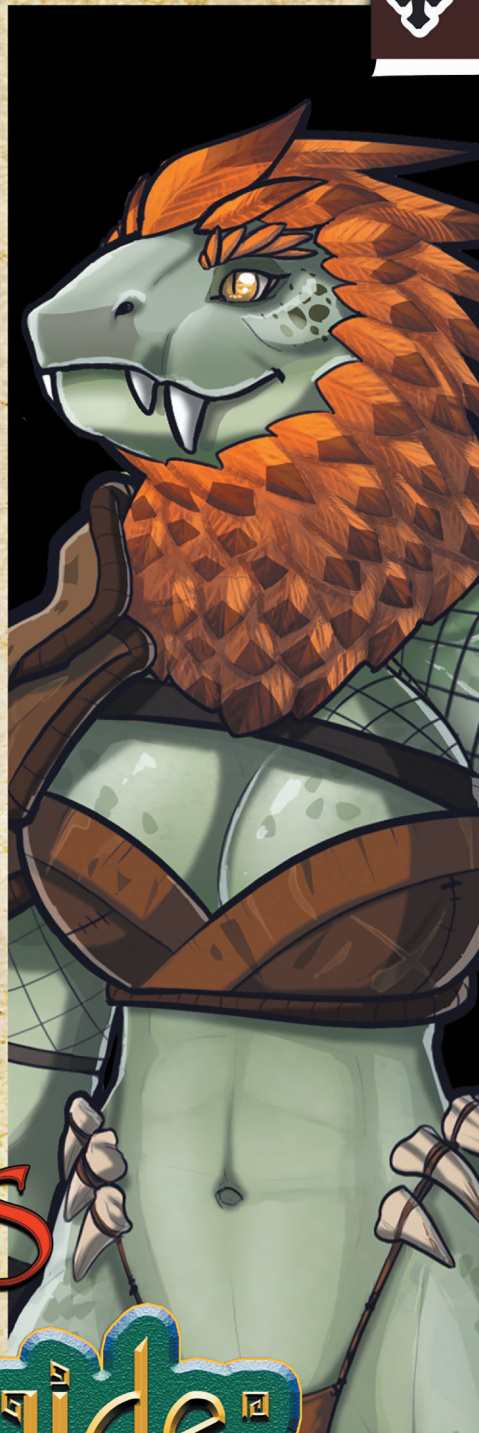
### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Disease (Su)** (as above)

**Intimidating Roar (Ex)** Whenever a creature fails its Fortitude save to resist the phaser beast's sonic roar, the phaser beast may make an Intimidate check to demoralize that creature as an immediate reaction.

**Phasing Step (Su)** (as above)

**Uncertainty Skew (Su)** (as above)



# ROGUE'S Field Guide RARE RACES



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# RITE PUBLISHING PRODUCT SAMPLERS

## In the Company of Fiends

### Ring of the Truest Speech

**Aura** moderate transmutation; **CL** 7th  
**Slot** ring; **Price** 30,000 gp; **Weight** —

#### DESCRIPTION

This simple, unadorned golden band has a heft and precise tooling that belies its humble design. If a magical effect is used against the wearer that would detect their lies or force them to speak the truth, the user of the effect must succeed on a DC 30 caster level check to succeed. Failure means the effect appears to function, though the wearer is not affected.

In addition, the wearer can control language around them in either a subtle or overt manner. As a free action, the wearer can grant up to a +2 circumstance bonus or inflict up to a -5 circumstance

penalty to a Charisma-based skill check to any other creature within 30 feet. The wearer must be able to see and hear the creature, and the effect lasts as long as the creature remains within 30 feet.

On command, the wearer can allow all creatures within 30 feet to understand the languages of all other creatures within 30 feet as if they were affected by a *tongues* spell effect. With a different command word, the wearer can make the speech of all creatures unintelligible to all other creatures within 30 feet. Either effect lasts until it is ended as a free action, or the creatures are further than 30 feet from the wearer.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Forge Ring, *glibness*, *sculpt sound*, *tongues*, creator must be a devil; **Cost** 15,000 gp



Rite Publishing Presents

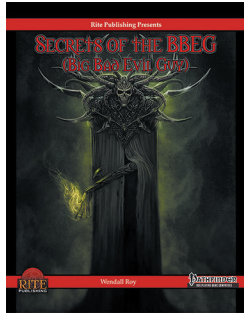
# IN THE COMPANY OF FIENDS



Wendall Roy



## Reviews



### The Secrets of the BBEG (Big Bad Evil Guy)

**Publisher:** Rite Publishing

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This April Fool's release clocks in at 12 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page advertisement, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover,

leaving us with 7 pages of content, so let's take a look!

\*CRASH\*

Oh boy. What was that?? Sounded like a bad crash. Sirens blaring. Focus, man.

Ähem.

*This review was requested as a prioritized review by one of my patrons.*

\*Door splinters in a loud explosion\*

*"Move aside, you reviewer-git, I need to talk to my amazing fans out there! DID YOU MISS ME?? Don't answer. That was a rhetoric question! Of course you did, it's me, your favorite metadventurer, helping to make this bland snore-fest of a review suck less!"*

Wait a second, man...I wasn't done! Isn't it enough that your unqualified dithering suffuse this whole supplement, commenting on the crisp mechanics and delicious rules?

*"Nope, because that's BOOORING!! Buckle up, folks, as we all established in the review of my amazing book, I have won Pathfinder. Everything released since and before that was just rules-bloat and utterly irrelevant, regardless of system."*

Yeah, right. Sounds like a hardcore-grognard speaking about anything past 0ed...

*"Shut it, endy, or I'll move back in. Behind your couch. With my bags of chips. ALL of them."*

Okay, okay...may I cover the basics at least? Talk a bit about the rules and stuff?

*"All right, all right! Man, do you have something in your fridge, or do you still subsist primarily on coffee for your reviewer-robot-shtick? Seriously, folks, the amount of coffee he drinks is insane. I still have this theory that he's the first German, coffee-powered replicant..."*

Okay, while the metadventurer's pillaging my meager supplies, let's talk. We have to be quick. He's uncannily fast at gobbling down anything with a nutritional value...

Ähem. So, know how a well-optimized team can make BBEGs just suck? I'm sure that, if you're a

moderately experienced GM, you've encountered it at least once. That time when your players started curbstomping all bosses from published modules. Well, there is an issue here: After all, we all know plenty of media, wherein a team of heroes faces down a super-powerful villain. Here's the problem: In the games we play, that does not translate too well, courtesy of the restrictions of action economy.

*"I'll bum a smoke or 30, all right endy?"*

*"Yeah, yeah, sure, whatever!"* Anyways, in Pathfinder, my go-to-solution is to use Legendary Games' mythic rules and Mythic Monsters/Path of Villains/Dragons to upgrade builds and make boss fights more interesting. But perhaps you don't want to learn mythic rules. That's pretty much where this becomes your one-stop-shop. Since the CR-system, wonky as it is, doesn't properly measure up here, we work with threat levels, which range from 1 to 5; CR-adjustments of the template are based on threat level. The pdf urges caution here, with the metadventurer cheering for a TPK and the fact that the first three letters of "funeral" are F-U-N. You get the idea.

Anyhow, the template nets +1 hp per HD, +1 deflection bonus to AC and +1 to SR per threat level, and +5 to existing DR and energy resistance per threat level. Also, +1 to initiative, damage per threat level, +1 to atk per two threat levels. +1 to all ability scores per threat level. That, however, is not the main meat of the massive templates: That would be the colossal amount of BBEG abilities that make up the majority of the pdf. Saves versus these are governed by Constitution, just fyi. (As an aside – it should probably specify that Charisma is substituted for undead.) One such potent ability is gained per threat level, and they are brutal: Aggro, for example, allows the BBEG to move up to their speed and execute a full attack as a swift action.

*"Endy, I've called my relatives from China while you're writing this! Oh, and you really shouldn't let your credit cards lie around openly... Ni hao!"*

Urgh. Anyways, there are adaptive resistances, devastating, potentially *disintegrating* waves of energy governed by HD, summoned creatures that detonate, the option to generate hazardous terrain that detonates, siphoning off life of meat shields... have I mentioned super-strikes at +20 to atk, which ignore concealment and auto-threaten a crit, increasing crit multiplier by threat level?? Yeah, these guys will WRECK even veterans when build smartly! Doubled hit points, a ton of additional AoOs...the focus here is truly to make a single being capable of standing up to a well-oiled group of adventurers. Really nice would be btw....

*"So, endy, I've just talked to this nice gentleman from Nigeria and gave him your social security number and banking IDs. Oh, and when I arrived...that crash? I kinda may have totaled your car. Which I've hijacked. Also: You're now all out of food."*

Damn, I need to finish this review, stat! So yeah, the abilities of the BBEG are amazing and deadly, and we actually even get two cool puzzle-abilities that require that the players use their brain to defeat the BBEG. And fret not if you're new to the concept, or the pdf provides an extensive section to guide you in how to use these without being unfair.

This is not all, though, the pdf also...

*\*WHACK; sound of head crashing to desk\**

*"Dude, this pretentious git is really slow for his supposed IQ. Man, I even have a Goatee, dammit! So yeah, you probably realized it by now, right? I'm frickin' evil! I am the \*drumroll\* BBEM! The Big Bad Evil Metadventurer! \*DUNH-DUNH-DUNH\* Don't believe what this dumb pdf says, though – I'm not an archetype of the Metadventurer. He's a wimpy, half-baked archetype of ME! Got that? Great!"*

*So, like all cool things, you can only play me if you're a GM, because screw players, amirite? We all wanna bask in their despair, bathe in their tears, as pages upon pages of lame background-story are invalidated by me being too awesome. So, I can use the GM's OOC knowledge on PCs. I get BBEG abilities. I can treat allies and enemies as abettors with betrayal feats at 7<sup>th</sup> level. At 14<sup>th</sup> level, I treat my threat level as +5 for BBEG abilities. At 15<sup>th</sup> level, I get +5 to AC and saves from 3pp-supplements, because I'm cool and amazing and know the authors. Oh, and at 20<sup>th</sup> level, when you save versus my abilities and roll a 1, you obviously don't deserve to live. Rocks fall, you die. No save, because that's how I roll. Also, obviously, when I crit. Because I'm too awesome. Suck it!!*

...

*What? That's all? Okay, so you need to bask in my glory a bit more, as I..."*

*\*whack, thunk\**

I gestalted vigilante, bastard!

Okay, I need to get rid of this bastard...before the \*real\* Metadventurer comes back to deal with his evil twin. I can't deal with two of the sort.

## So, in all brevity, my conclusion:

Editing and formatting re very good on formal and rules-language level. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's old, two-column full-color standard. Artworks are full-color and amazing and the pdf comes fully bookmarked, in spite of its brevity.

Wendall Roy's template and associated archetype are super-deadly tools for the beleaguered GM.

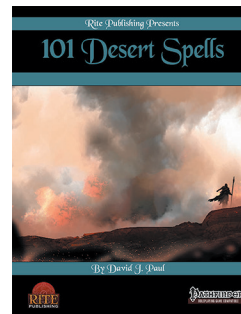
While the writing is hilarious in the details and commentary, it should be noted that this pdf is very much intended for table-use. This is not a useless file that just plays it for the laughs. The template provided can amp up even the most pitiful of final bosses, and while it requires a responsible GM, I love it for what it offers. Indeed, it is my contention that this concept could carry a book of thrice the size on its own. Considering the low asking price, I can wholeheartedly recommend this pdf, rating it 5 stars + seal of approval.

Damn. He's twitching. Gotta run, see you on the flipside, folks...that is, if the BBEM doesn't retaliate...

You can get this amazing little booklet [here for just \\$1.50!](#)

Missed the Metadventurer? You can find that fellow [here on OBS!](#)

**Endzeitgeist out.**



## 101 Desert Spells

**Publisher:** Rite Publishing

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 4.5 stars out of 5

This massive compilation of desert-themed spells clocks in at 57 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 3 pages of SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with a

rather massive 51 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.

Now, as always, we begin this pdf with a massive array of spell lists by class and level, covering the classes up to and including the ACG classes, but not the occult classes.

From there, we move right into this massive compilation of spells, beginning with *Aghasura's bluff*, a 3<sup>rd</sup> level spell that allows you to beckon targets towards you. They just move closer on their next round, perceiving others entranced as allies, as they move closer. The spell, alas, does not state that this compulsion cannot make targets walk into obvious danger/offers rerolls for them, which is a rather important caveat for such compulsions. Cool, though: You get a bonus to one attack (since dropping it is a move action) versus targets thus entranced. As a limit to the spell, moving ends the spell as well, but sans this bonus. Now, this being a supplement on desert spells, we get more than the rattlesnake rattle component to represent the leitmotif – you see, casting the spell in a warm desert environment makes it harder to resist.

Why did I specify that this is relevant regarding \*warm\* deserts? The pdf is smart and also covers the cold wastelands. The first spell that ties into this would be *Amamrok's aspect*, which is obviously a transmutation that nets +4 to all physical attributes as well as +4 natural AC, as well as low-light and darkvision and scent...and a bite attack that is not codified requiring defaulting. This bite is also what makes up the main bulk of the spell. The caster can execute a bite attack against the air, focusing on any creature he can see, provided it has a soul. The bite targets a harmless, shadowy duplicate of the creature that is intended to allow for at-range tripping/grappling and "If you hit, you can attempt to trip and grab the target..." Okay, this is problematic. Those are two different maneuvers, so do we get two CMB-checks? If one of them gets a bonus, does it apply to both rolls? If it's only one CMB-check, do bonuses to either apply? The wording here is also needlessly opaque – it would have been simple to state that bite attacks executed against such a shadowy double benefit from the grab and trip universal monster qualities, but the verbiage stumbles over grab vs. grappling. It is also a bit puzzling whether the creation of the shadowy duplicate "wastes" an attack or whether the creation is part of it. While this spell feels uncharacteristically rushed in its benefits, I did enjoy some design decisions: In cold desert terrains, the duration is expanded and at higher levels, additional spell effects are added. The rare material component is btw. required to grant these, even if you have Eschew Materials or similar substitution options – as a box clearly indicates, the spell would otherwise be too potent.

There also would be *Amphiptere's flight*, which is an interesting 2<sup>nd</sup> level flight spell that is limited in height and thus retains the covert cap of unassisted personal flight. *Arctic pelt* is a cantrip for shaman and druid, level 1 spell for the other classes. It grants "resist cold 2" – that should be cold resistance 2. The creature also gets +2 to saves to resist damage from exposure to cold. Casting the spell in the proper environment increases the bonus, resistance and duration. *Asleep unaware* also has a rough edge of sorts – as a bard 3, sorc/wiz 4 spell, it targets a living creature, which is then rendered prone and falls asleep. On a successful save, the target falls asleep, but believes to be awake, which can be an interesting scenario to describe at the table – it is a mind-game I very much enjoy. That being said, the fact that you fall prone and are asleep for at least 1 round, even on a successful save, is utterly OP – at least the sleeping component should be negated. And yes, the focus is rare, but still – not going to happen RAW in my game.

On the hilarious side, *aspect of the great roadrunner* boosts your Dex and nets you Run in the proper terrain. Meep-meep! *Benevolent commands* is also interesting, in that it is a good variant of *command* that nets you the ability to use it at-will; you can discharge the spell to duplicate either *cure moderate wounds* or *lesser restoration* for targets that have heeded your command. It also can't be used to command others to harm beings. The component, a lammasu's eyelash, is pretty cool and the desert specific effects are interesting here as well. *Biting winds* is damn cool – at 6<sup>th</sup> level, it produces a 30 ft.-emanation that causes severe winds, a drop in temperature and cold damage – but it also sports a frustburn-ish engine of sorts, with cumulative failed saves increasing the severity of the additional conditions incurred. While we have 7 saves that lead to death as opposed to 6 levels, I was still pleasantly reminded of 5e's exhaustion-mechanics. While these effects can only affect warmblooded creatures with a skeletal structure, it still feels a bit weird. Why does cold immunity, RAW, not prevent these effects? The Fort-save should be contingent on actually taking cold damage from the spell, which it does not – the per se nice wind chill mechanic is RAW completely decoupled from the damaging component. (As a nitpick: Range should be "Personal".) Calling forth shadows with the dustman template added.

On the evocative side of battle spells, *burning beams* let you generate lances of light, intangible ones, that are lodged in the targets hit, burning them, with fire damage increasing in bright light, decreasing in *darkness*. Neat visuals and cool effects. *Bursts of frost and flame* would be another definite winner: For one, it converts cold to fire and vice versa for you; it also allows you to voluntarily fail your save against such an effect (if any), taking half damage, and emit a burst of the other energy, the damage output of which is contingent on the damage you suffered. Now, if you think that this could result in some really weird combos, you'd be partially right, but spell and sidebar explain sequence of events and make sure that the spell is not misread and uses cleverly the fine nuances of the free action. Particularly from a design-perspective, a rather interesting offering!

Conjuring forth a *cactus* and various *efreeti*-calling tricks, transformation into camels... some solid utility options can be found here. The nonlethal *century in the sun* represents a neat spell to simulate prolonged exposure to the sun, and is one of the spells herein that casters with the correct domain, for example (here: Sun) can substitute,

which adds to the usefulness of the pdf in that regard. Ghul claws that are correctly codified and count as cold iron and magic and come with temporary hyena-shapechanging also make for an interesting variant on the buff. *Concentrate condensate* is a nice low-level spell to make air dry and condense in a square, which is one of the spells that sounds less useful at first...and once you start thinking about it, you'll see its benefits. There also is a spell that makes darkvision color. Which is cool. Alas, I think that the target should specify that it can only modify pre-existing darkvision. The spell's text implies it, yes, and so does the spell level, but it could theoretically be misread.

Slashing foes with *cones of salt* or dissolving creatures into puddles of acid via corrosive mists (via *corrosive liquefaction*) represent nice tricks. I am also partial to *create ghost town* and its lesser brother – the spell allows btw. for synergy when maintaining more than one casting, providing bonus “bridging buildings” of sorts. Swarm-conjurations also can be found here, with stats provided for a CR 4 scorpion swarm. The supplement includes a variety of desert-themed spells that e.g. allow for better movement, and potential discharge to treat poisons; ones that instill panic, curses that make the target think that they have been deserted. I am somewhat concerned about *drake's surge*. A third level spell, this one allows you to convert your swift action into a move action. While this is less potent than the other way round, I am extremely weary of tweaks regarding action economy, particularly when said tweaks explicitly stack with *haste*. Why am I not screaming OP right there? Simple: The spell explicitly prevents you from using the action to cast spells or attack, limiting you to trail-like effects and preventing the otherwise inevitable issues.

*Dusty shroud* would be another winner – in dusty environments, you get fast healing 2 and are *blurred*, but you also are sickened in non-dusty ones. Oh, and you can harden the dust and generate a burst of slashing damage, ending the spell. This feels magical and using a dust mephit's dwelling's dust increases the potency of the hardened dust burst discharge. Cool! Using a sand stalker's front leg to fascinate targets also is rather cool and gets how magic is supposed to feel. *Endless sands/snow* is an illusion that is so classic in its visuals, it should have existed before. I also love the imagery of the high-level *flames of Phlegethon*, generating hellish heat that can truly wreck objects and structures. Straight out of fighting videogames would be the 4<sup>th</sup> level *flying grappler*, which nets you flight while you're grappling targets. The high-level, potent *freezing shatter* is nice and assuming, either willingly or via

a curse, a *ghostly form*, similarly represents a classic and cool concept. A healing-spell with a cold-theme that can be used to damage targets is smart and we get two spells, including *mass* variants, which allow for better desert/arctic explorations.

There also would be a 5<sup>th</sup> level Wis-damage spell that penalizes Will-saves, a *lightning aura* that uses a rare focus as balance...there are some neat ones here. I am also partial to the spell that fire lightning in dust/sand, making it glass, and then blasts the glass to shards with a sonic boom, combining damage and soft terrain control. (As an aside, I think the glass should behave as caltrops, but that may be me.) Poisonous lines, a spell to protect versus sandstorms, summoning a dire bat that can be ridden, making a target believe that you and your allies don't exist, a 9<sup>th</sup> level *shadow conjuration* to call a black scorpion...some cool stuff. If you're like me and gravitate towards some realism and grit in your games, *stave off loneliness* may be very smart, as it draws upon the subconscious to prevent mental breakdowns and the like – this spell is one that focuses on the narrative, rather than the mechanics, and it does so very well. Calling forth an impressive, fully statted CR 13 crimson worm, *sunburn/screen*... cool. Also rather nice: *Superchromatic vision*, which allows you to perceive more colors than we usually do – somewhat akin to e.g. a mantis shrimp and the like. While this allows for navigation in desolations (and it can make for a really cool storytelling tool), the spell also renders you potentially more susceptible to sight-based effects. *Thermal inversion line* generates a line that is cold on one end, fire on the other, and manages to get the rules regarding the damage etc. right. A low-level curse that adds vertigo to falling prone is also a winner in my book.

## Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are per se very good as a whole, in both formal and rules-components, but there also are a few uncharacteristic hiccups in some of the rules-components here. Not enough to sink the respective spells, but in this series, it did show. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience and employs some nice full color artworks.

David J. Paul's latest collection of terrain-based spells has a very, very high level of expectations to live up to. His spell collections represent my absolute favorite series of spells available for PFRPG. It is this series I'd take along to my lonely island, if I had to choose a single series of Spell-pdfs. These are my reference-books for what I expect from a good spell book. And honestly, the desert-installment holds up, as a whole – the

spells herein often dare to juggle complex concepts that are hard to get right. Problematic effects are generally evaded and the spells feel MAGICAL. Foci and components act as smart balancing tools; annotations in sidebars help; the spells have relevant, terrain-based modifications and sport thoroughly fun effects. I love a lot about this pdf. That being said, it is a bit less refined than the last couple of installments. The glitches I found mostly pertained minor aspects of the rules-language, but in a series that is pretty much the bar by which I measure awesomeness in spells, this does show.

So, to make this abundantly clear: This still represents one of the best spell-collections out there. It is an inspired, interesting offering. At the same time, it features more "variant summoning"-spells than the others in the series, feels slightly less refined in the details, sometimes forgetting obviously intended components that would have catapulted spells from cool to amazing – glass acting as caltrops, connections between two effects...Now, mind you, the spells herein are still inspiring! They are interesting and the mechanics of the vast majority of them are great! However, when looked at back to back with the phenomenal installments of the series, I couldn't help but feel a pang of disappointment at a very high level. Where are the glass shards that make lenses that can make light-spells more brutal, for example? I am a huge fan of deserts, and some of my fondest memories pertain driving through the Mojave, visiting White Sands or marveling at the Petrified Forest; of walking through Iceland's black, sandy beaches and the desolation there. I do not object to the dual cold/warm desert focus, but I maintain that either could have yielded a bit more.

But I am rambling. As a whole, I really enjoyed this pdf, but I do have to penalize it somewhat regarding its rough patches. My final verdict clocks in at 4.5 stars, rounded down for the purpose of this platform. I still very much recommend getting this, but it doesn't reach the dazzling heights of exceptionalism of its predecessors.

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

**Endzeitgeist out.**



### Deep Magic: Elemental Magic (5e)

**Publisher:** Kobold Press

**Reviewer:** Endzeitgeist

**Stars:** 5 stars out of 5

This installment of the Deep Magic-series clocks in at 16 pages, 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 2/3

of a page SRD, 1 page advertisement, leaving us with 12 1/3 pages of content, so let's take a look!

We begin this pdf with a discussion on the dangers of elementals existing in the material plane and elementalism in general, including a nice little section on the role of these magic traditions in Midgard. Traditions? Plural?

Yep, we get a sorcerous origin, a warlock otherworldly patron and a wizard arcane tradition on the class option side of things. We also receive two new feats: Negotiator increases Charisma by 1 to the maximum of 20 and lets you retry a failed Charisma (Persuasion) check at disadvantage. It also lets you haggle for a 10 % discount with a contest (and a 1-week cooldown per person to prevent abuse) as well as halved living expenses. The second feat, Survivor, increases Constitution by 1 and makes you require only half the food and drink. Additionally, it makes you automatically pass the save versus extreme cold or heat for Constitution or Wisdom modifier days, whichever is lower. This resets after 2 hours in a comfortable environment. Nice feats!

Let's begin with the elemental essence sorcerous origin, shall we? We choose an elemental heritage at 1<sup>st</sup> level, which not only governs the elemental bonus language you get, it also determines the type of energy associated with your latter class features: Earth corresponds to bludgeoning and air gets to choose between lightning and thunder, just fyi. Also at first level, you can use your bonus action to manifest an elemental aura for 1 minute, which lets you use your reaction to being attacked to impose disadvantage on the attack roll before it is stated whether it hits or misses. Casting a spell while the aura is active makes your immediate vicinity laced with your chosen element's damage type, causing minor damage to those within 5 ft. (or that enter the square). The damage increases to 2d6 at 7<sup>th</sup> level. The aura lasts for a minute and can be used twice per long rest interval.

At 6<sup>th</sup> level, whenever you damage a creature with a spell, you can spend a sorcery point to lace the spell with your elemental energy, adding a no-save debuff to it: For air, this would be an inability to take reactions, for earth partial and short-lived, restraining, for fire it's the frightened condition and for water, the poisoned condition. Potent, but interesting array. At 14<sup>th</sup> level, the sorcerer can, as a bonus action, teleport up to 60 ft. to an unoccupied square that he can see, reappearing with elemental energies suffusing them. There are additional effects, depending on the heritage element. Here, we get cyclonic, potentially briefly blinding bursts

of wind, bludgeoning damage + prone, damage + ignition or potential choking. All of them, however, require a presence of the associated element in the vicinity, adding tactical depth here. The feature may be used twice, regaining all uses on a finished rest interval. At 18<sup>th</sup> level, we get elemental scout, which nets immunity to the associated heritage element and potent moving options: Burrow, swimming, flying...you get the idea. Each of the elemental options also sports an active component powered by sorcery points, which range from buffs versus physical attacks to igniting folks in the vicinity to becoming as unsubstantial as a breeze. One of my favorite sorcerous origins. Well done!

The warlock patron mentioned before would btw. be the genie lord, whose expanded spells range from *chromatic orb* and *thunderwave* over *sleet storm* to *creation* and *wall of stone*. Of course, *conjure minor elemental* is also part of the deal. First level yields Genie Lord's Favor, which nets Primordial – the language from which the elemental tongues developed and which can be understood by all of them, making you basically an elemental polyglot. The patron also nets a token, which doubles as an arcane focus. The gem also can absorb fire, lightning, thunder, acid or cold damage, holding up to twice your warlock level + Charisma modifier (Charisma should be capitalized in the text). This is RAW not an action, but considering the limited threshold, I'm good with that. While the gem holds energy, you can use your action to cause it to shed light and losing/replacing it is covered. Minor complaint here: The gem, RAW, does not divest itself of stored energy. Once stored, the energy's there. I'm pretty sure that the gem should replenish its reservoir after a short or long rest.

At 6<sup>th</sup> level, energy stored in the token may be spent to add up to Charisma bonus (min 1) damage to attacks or spells, choosing the type from the elemental damage list, including thunder. This extra damage only applies to a single target, but you may spend additional points to damage targets beyond the first. The gem's protection may now be extended to allies within 30 ft. of you as your reaction. The 10<sup>th</sup> level feature lets you reroll after making an attack roll, save or ability check or damage roll, taking the higher result. This may only be used once per rest interval. The 14<sup>th</sup> level feature lets you assume, as a bonus action, a djinn-like form that nets flying speed, advantage on saves versus magic spells and effects, immunity to one damage type and +3d6 energy damage with a spell/attack once per turn. There are 4 expanded pact boons as well. Mephit form for the pact of the chain

familiar; changed damage type for the pact of the blade; immunity to the elements for the pact of the tome, and we get a new 9<sup>th</sup> level eldritch invocation that nets *planar binding* once per long rest interval.

The third option would be the Elementalism arcane tradition for the wizard. 2<sup>nd</sup> level nets an Elemental Focus table that lists the four classic elements, with associated languages and damage types, with earth corresponding to acid and air allowing for the choice of lightning or thunder as damage type. Spells that inflict the associated damage type may resonate with the focus – the GM remains the final arbiter. Such spells can be copied into the spellbook at ½ time or gold. One of the new spells gained on a level up can be such an elemental spell, even if you haven't encountered them before. Additionally, 2<sup>nd</sup> level and every 4 levels thereafter allow you to choose from a mastery and when you learn a mastery, you may replace one that you have with another one. DCs, if applicable, use the spell save DC. More on masteries later. 6<sup>th</sup> level allows you to change the damage type of damage dealing spells to that chosen for the elemental focus. 10<sup>th</sup> level allows you to use your reaction to take no damage when subjected to damage from the energy associated with the elemental focus, regaining hit points equal to half the damage you would have taken. It may be used Intelligence modifier times before requiring a long rest to recharge. 14<sup>th</sup> level lets you ignore immunity to the energy type associated with your elemental focus. This may be used Intelligence modifier times before requiring a long rest to recharge.

The masteries mentioned before include adaptation to other planes, a form of specialized *planar binding*, resistance to the associated element's energy and advantage on Con-saves to maintain concentration regarding maintenance of such spells, a n elemental-charm, making targets temporarily vulnerable to energy.... etc. We also get a few element-themed masteries, like igniting targets with fire spells, adding a temporary slab of stone that nets cover – cool! I would have actually loved to see more of these!

The spells include two cantrips, the first of which would be *wind lash*, which inflicts slashing damage and move the target 5 ft. away. *Pummelstone* deals bludgeoning damage and imposes a -1d4 debuff to the target's next attack roll or ability check. Both cantrips are balanced and interesting.

At 1<sup>st</sup> level, we get *wind tunnel*, which is a cool support spell for ranged weapons and movement/debuff – it's obviously harder to move against the wind. This spell is amazing, incredibly useful and

a perfect example of a versatile and fun 1<sup>st</sup> level spells. *Tidal barrier* is a means to render terrain around you difficult and move creatures away from you. Nice one. The second level spells include *spire of stone*, which can be used to knock targets prone...or lower/raise you, which is incredibly iconic. *Rolling thunder* deafens targets and wraps them in thunder energy and halves the speed of the target, until they succeed a save. The 3<sup>rd</sup> level spells include *riptide*, which can restrain targets and generate either riptides or undertows, making it basically a two-in-one spell. Pretty cool! *Frozen razors* is a damage spell that causes a combo of slashing and cold damage, which also can help by reducing the speed of targets.

*Flame wave* causes damage in a 40 ft. cone and can push targets away. *Earthskimmer* makes earth move you, ignoring difficult terrain and enhancing your Dash by allowing you to basically crash into targets. Cool! At 5<sup>th</sup> spell level, *frostbite* is a Concentration, up to 1 minute, constant cold damage + debuff spell for one target, while *acid rain* generates a cylinder of...well, acid rain. *Blizzard* causes cold damage that also carries a disadvantage to Con-saves to maintain Concentration for those that suffer damage from it. 8<sup>th</sup> level's *caustic torrent* generates a devastating line of acid, which can insta-kill foes reduced to 0 hp. Oh, and its fumes are poisonous. Finally, 9<sup>th</sup> level's *pyroclasm* has a massive 500 ft.-range and causes a lava-eruption, which then will proceed to expand. Oh, and the lava sticks to targets, hardening and encasing targets. Amazing!

On the SRD-page, we also get a new magic item: The rare *magma mantle* requires attunement and nets resistance to cold damage. The mantle can be transformed via command word to a mantle of flowing magma that renders you immune to its own intense heat (but not other fire-sources) and foes that strike you with melee attacks while within 5 ft. take fire damage. For the duration, you take no damage from lava and may burrow through it at half your walking speed.

### Conclusion:

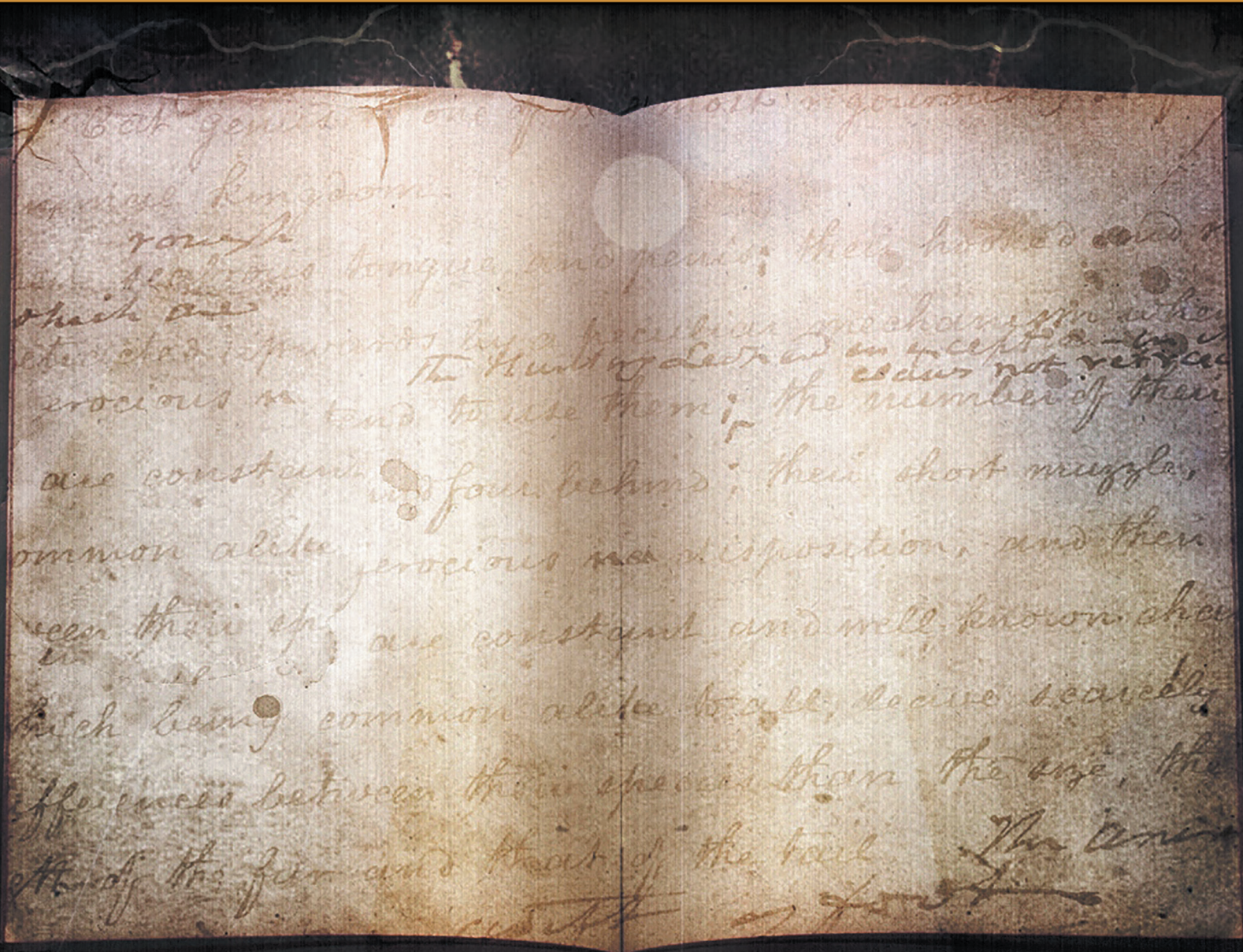
Editing and formatting are top-notch on a formal and rules-language level. Layout adheres to a 2-column full-color standard and the pdf sports neat full-color artworks, some of which will be familiar to fans of Kobold Press. The pdf comes fully bookmarked for your convenience.

Dan Dillon did not have an easy task. Most elemental magic spells released for any iteration of (A)D&D/d20, are frickin' BORING. They are damage-dealers with different coats and shapes and that's it. This one is different. Sure, there are plenty of damaging spells herein, but each of them has some sort of utterly unique component that adds a utility or tactical depth to them. The class options are cool as well. Dan Dillon provides an immaculately-balanced, creative supplement here, one that left me bereft of any serious complaints. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval. Here's to hoping that maestro Dillon gets to write more such amazing pdfs!

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Rite Publishing Presents

# 101 5th Level Spells



# ON A ROLL

WRITTEN BY OWEN K.C. STEPHENS

ILLUSTRATED BY LJ STEPHENS

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WELP. MY PLAYER HAS SWITCHED TO ELECTRONIC CHARACTER SHEETS. NOTHING ELSE TO DO. GUESS I'LL WATCH SOME MOVIES.

WHAT ARE SOME OF Y'ALL'S FAVORITE MOVIES?

DIE HARD

CUBE

12 ANGRY MEN

UH ... SURE. DO YOU LIKE ANY MOVIES THAT ARE LESS ... NUMBER-CENTRIC?

DIE HARDER

CUBE 2: HYPERCUBE

SAW, PURGE, HOSTEL

PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING WHERE HUMANS ARE SLAUGHTERED IN BLOODY AND TERRIBLE WAYS

I HAVE ANGER ISSUES

DIE ANOTHER DAY

APPARENTLY!

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