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Pathways Magazine

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Editorial

by David Paul, Illustrated by Bruno Baxilia

It's entirely appropriate that my area of the country got its first heavy snowfall of the year and I spent some of the day writing and editing content for a winter-snow-cold themed issue of Pathways. Unfortunately, two people spun out of control near my house and their vehicles ended up in the ditch. Fortunately, no one was hurt. There are many perils to surviving winter, cold and snow. Most of the real-life risks are ones we've learned how to do something about. Alas, even those can prove worse than merely troublesome.

In this issue, we give you a nice range of stuff to worry about. On the simpler side, there are some rather innocuous magical snow globes mixed in with the rather amazing ones. Mike Welham takes us to an unexpected place with this piece but despite what might give you pause ("Magic snow globes? Really?"), the items are thoughtful and enticing. It's nice, I think, that the game permits so much variety that we can devote pages to items that have lots of flavor and make for really interesting gaming worlds. On the other hand, there are some magical snow globes in that article that I really hope my own characters might get their hands on because of how useful they are for combat purposes. Who knew? Snow globes for combat!

Probably the most fearsome matter in this issue is the templated creature. Not that this is news to our regular readers. A great many of the covers reveal adversaries that would make most characters flee. This one is really no exception though it operates in a way that you might never know it's an adversary until it's too late. I'm always eager to hear from our readers—in this case, I'd really love to hear how this template came to good use in your campaigns and how players had their characters deal with the situations they've found themselves in. The templates and the templated creatures are fun to read and consider. It's just as much fun to hear stories of how this stuff gets used at home. GMs and players are terrifically creative and often dream up both problems and solutions that I never would have thought of myself. Please do share.

If you are playing in a winter-themed setting or in a campaign where there are ample adventures in arctic-like regions, I recommend a good look at Andrew Marlowe's article on winter-themed feats and tricks. Feat chains are fun for play and allow customization and balance. It's good to give players choices and there are some great choices here.

If you happen to be playing characters who face a charda, be sure to hang on to the body and get your local alchemists or wizards to harvest its bile. It turns out there's a new spell showing up and those who've learned it claim they've secured the material components from friends or contacts in the northlands. The best use for the stuff is in underground environments against opponents who are vulnerable to cold. Apparently, just casting the spell is risky and not everyone can stomach it.

Like usual, we have an ample collection of fun dressing for your games from Creighton Broadhurst and a great big pile of reviews for your consideration. Also, don't forget to check out our monthly interview; Adam Meyers (Drop Dead Studios) has plenty to say about his own work and the industry generally.

Happy gaming.
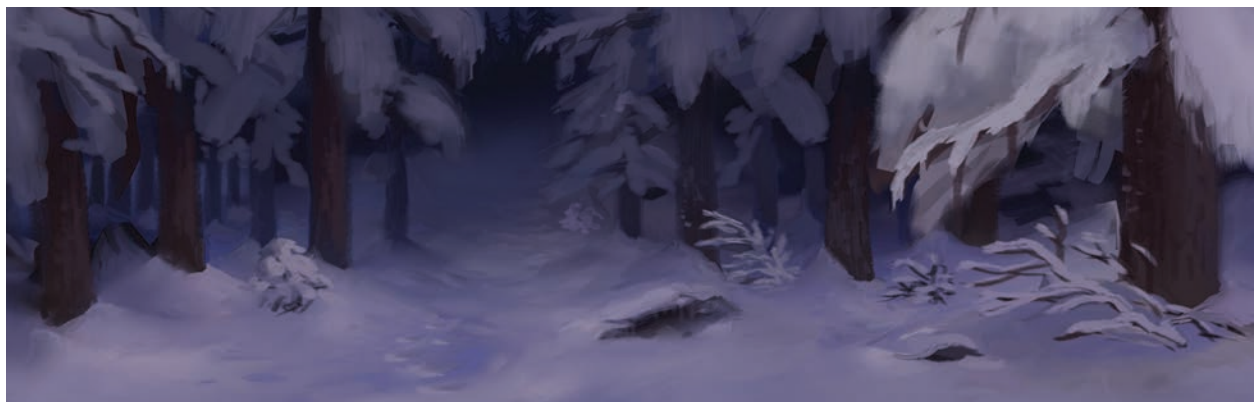
Dread Phantom Armor Creature Template

By Steven D. Russell; Illustrations by Lee Pfenninger

Dread Phantom Armor arises only from the corpse of a trusted ally who murders his comrades in a sudden betrayal; the armor also must have been a gift from his former allies. Dread phantom armors appear as suits of animate armor,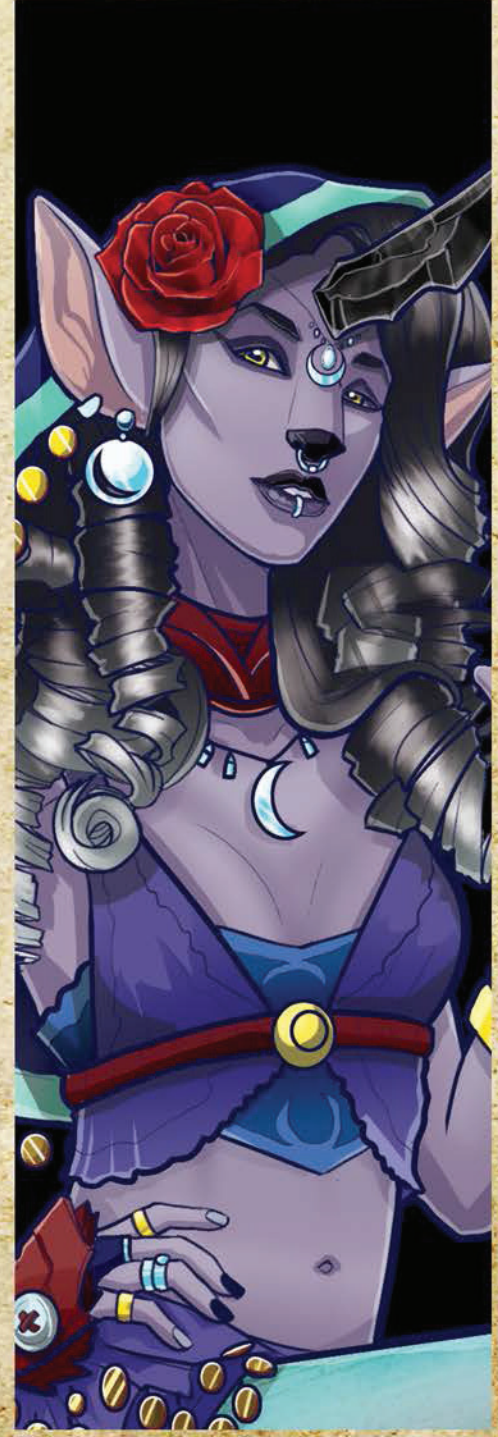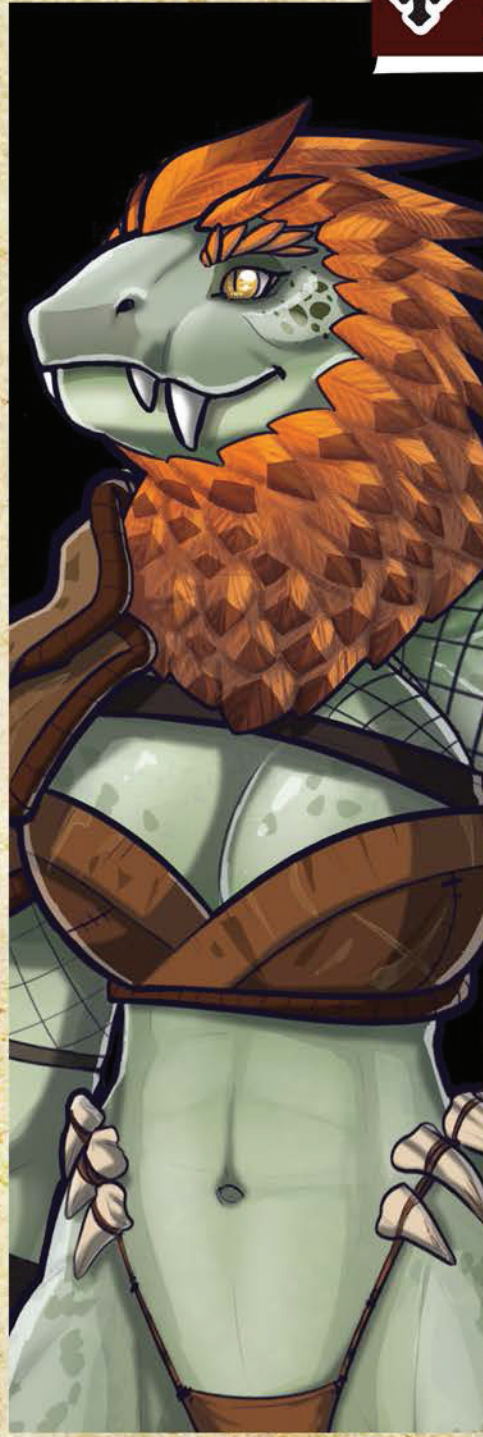 walking or floating of their own accord. Most dread phantom armors seek to fool, betray, or slaughter those foolish enough to don them or trust them, oftentimes disguising themselves as intelligent magical armor.

Creating a Dread Phantom Armor Creature

"Dread Phantom Armor" is an acquired template that can be added to any creature that can wear armor (including barding). This usually means it is corporeal and has a humanoid or equine figure of some kind, though this is not always the case.

A dread phantom armor creature uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: +2

Alignment: Any Evil.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead with the appropriate augmented subtype. Do not recalculate HD, base attack bonuses, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

AC: The subject's armor bonus becomes +9, it loses its natural armor bonus,

Defensive Abilities: channel resistance +6, Immune undead traits

Attacks: A dread phantom armor's natural attacks all become slam attacks.

Special Abilities: A dread phantom armor creature retains all the special abilities of the base creature, plus the special abilities as described below:

Armored Cage (Ex): Dread phantom armor sometimes pretends to be normal armor (it will even detect as magical armor, see dread armor), letting a creature wear it before revealing its deadly nature. Creatures that purposefully don dread phantom armor are automatically grappled and blinded. This blindness lasts until the grapple is broken. A dread phantom can perform a grapple check on an opponent as a free action once per round (it can still perform another as its standard action). If it pins a wearer, the dread phantom armor can act as normal. If a dread phantom armor is damaged, the creature wearing it takes an equal amount of damage. A freedom of movement spell removes the wearer from inside a dread phantom armor, but it otherwise cannot be removed because the armor will not cooperate. This grants a +4 bonus to grapple checks and grapple CMD against a wearer.

Command Phantom Armors (Su): As a free action, a dread phantom armor can automatically command all normal phantom armors within 30 feet (as the command undead spell). Normal phantom armors never attack a dread phantom armor unless compelled.

Dread Armor (Su): At 2 HD, the dread phantom armor grants its armor a +1 enhancement bonus. For every two additional HD, the armor gains another +1 enhancement bonus, to a maximum of +10 at 20 HD. These bonuses can be added to the armor, stacking with existing armor bonuses to a maximum of a +5 enhancement bonus, or they can be used to add any of the following armor properties: defian UE, fortification (heavy, light or moderate), invulnerability, spell resistance, titanic UE

Adding these properties consumes an amount of bonus equal to its cost. These bonuses are added to any properties the armor already has, but duplicate abilities do not stack and the total bonus cannot exceed +10. If the armor is not magical, at least a +1 enhancement bonus must be added before any other properties can be added. The bonus and properties granted by this ability are determined when the dread phantom armor is created and cannot be changed.

Freeze (Ex): A dread phantom armor can appear to be a normal suit of armor. A dread phantom armor that uses freeze can take 20 on its Stealth check to hide in plain sight, disguised as normal armor, and it suffers no armor check penalty or size penalty when doing so.

Naked Strike (Su): Once per round, a dread phantom armor inflicts a curse on a subject it hits with a melee attack. A successful Will save (DC 10 +1/2 the dread phantom armor's HD + its Cha modifier) negates. The curse causes the subject to lose all equipment-based bonuses and protections (armor, shield, magic rings, magic cloaks, etc.), except for those acquired from artifacts. The subject is, for all intents and purposes, naked.

A subject that makes its saving throw is immune to this dread phantom armor's naked strike for 24 hours.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4 (+2 to attack and damage, +2 to Climb and Swim checks, +2 to Strength and CMB checks, +2 to CMD), +4 Cha (+2 to Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Perform, and Use Magic Device checks; attempts to influence others, and Channel Energy DCs, +2 to any of the base creature's Charisma-based

DCs). Being undead, a dread phantom armor has no Constitution score.

Skills: Gain Stealth as a class skill, plus a number of bonus ranks equal to the base creature's HD, and a+8 racial bonus when hiding in plain sight as armor.

Hollow of the Hallow   CR 13
XP 25,600
CE Large undead (augmented [humanoid], cold, giant)
Init −1; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +10

Defense
AC 21, touch 8, flat-footed 21 (+13 armor, −1 Dex, −1 size)
hp 133 (14d8+70)
Fort +14, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6
Defensive Abilities channel resistance +6, dread armor (+4 enhancement and titanic), freeze, rock catching; Immune cold
Weaknesses vulnerability to fir

Offensive
Speed 40 ft.
Melee 2 slams +20 (1d8+11 plus naked strike)
Ranged rock +9 (1d8+16)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Special Attacks armored cage (CMB +26, CMD 35), command phantom armors, naked strike (DC 19), rock throwing (120 ft.)

Tactics
Before Combat Hollow is often found next to a snow-covered trail, being worn by a Medium sized corpse (it has the titanic property), that was apparently beaten to death, or died from exposure. It makes use of its freeze ability granting it a Stealth DC of 50 to appear as a magical suit of intelligent +4 titanic armor. Hollow will not attack until someone has donned it, and may even wait until it is alone or the rest of the group is asleep or resting.
Combat Once it springs its trap, it will attempt to pin the person inside it and use it as a hostage while it attempts to kill all those around it, attacking with its slam attacks, each round attempting to inflict a new target with its naked strike curse.
Morale Hollow has no fear of its own destruction so long as the person inside it is alive, if that being is killed, it will flee, hoping folks will lose sight of it long enough for it to make use of its stealth in the snow.

Statistics
Str 33, **Dex** 9, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 15
Base Atk +10; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 31
Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Martial Weapon Profi iency (greataxe), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth)
Skills Climb +15, Craft (any one) +7, Intimidate +7, Perception +10, Stealth +14 (+26 in snow, +30 as armor);
Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth in snow, +8 as armor.
Languages Common, Giant
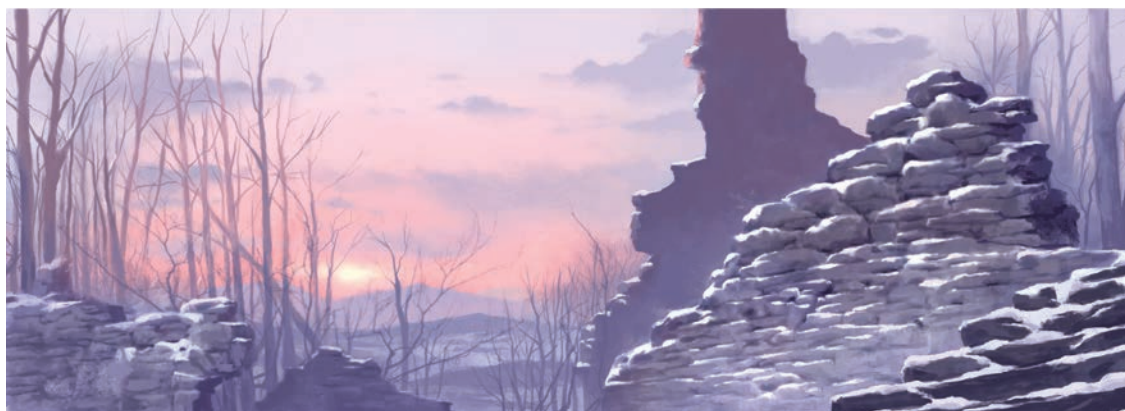
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Flaming Crab

Magic Snow Globes and Snow Domes

By Mike Welham

Illustration by Elton Robb and David Freidrich

During my inquiries into the northern lands, the adventurers who made journeys and reported their findings also returned with stories of enchanted snow globes and domes. As an avid collector of snow globes, I was intensely curious and delved further.

—Melnor, Sage (second class) of Questhaven

Known primarily for their decorative natures, snow globes and snow domes receive little consideration as magical devices. This article presents a number of items useful for the obvious purpose of manipulating snow and ice along with more unusual items.

Abhorrent Snow Dome

Aura moderate conjuration and illusion; **CL** 7th
Slot none; **Price** 10,800 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.
Description

A jolly looking snowman with button eyes and a carrot nose sits in the middle of this dome's floor. A closer look reveals that the snowman has a jagged mouth and its eyes gleam with malice. Once per day, the dome can create a Large facsimile of the snowman within 60 feet of the device. As a move action, the dome's bearer can command the snowman move up to 30 feet and engulf a victim (as per the universal monster rule, Reflex save DC 17, 2d6 acid damage). The snowman has AC 17 (touch 11), 60 hp, hardness 5, vulnerability to fire, and CMD 19. The snowman also melts away 8 rounds after creation.

The holder of an abhorrent snow dome can use it as a standard action to create a phantasmal killer, as per the spell (Will DC 16 negates, Fort DC 16 partial), by throwing it on the ground and destroying it.
Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, acid pit, phantasmal killer; **Cost** 5,400 gp

Avalanche Globe

Aura strong evocation; **CL** 15th
Slot none; **Price** 5,400 gp; **Weight** 2 lbs.
Description

This globe's interior features a chalet at the top of a snowcapped mountain. When the holder shakes the globe, the snow slides to the bottom and carries the chalet with it. By speaking a command word and specifying an amount of time (no more than 10 minutes), the globe shakes violently. If placed on the ground in a mountainous location, the globe causes an avalanche after the specified time expires with the avalanche's bury zone centering on the globe. The globe can only be used this way once per month and requires digging out between uses.

Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, earthquake; **Cost** 2,700 gp

Crystalline Snow Globe

Aura moderate evocation; **CL** 11th
Slot none; **Price** 23,600 gp; **Weight** 3 lbs.
Description

Dozens of interlocking crystal lenses make up this sphere, giving it a multifaceted appearance. A tiny dome, untouched by the snow in the globe's solution, sits at the bottom and moves as the bearer rotates the globe. With a command word, the holder can create a hemispherical wall of ice as per the spell for 11 minutes per day. The duration need not be consecutive but must be taken in 1-minute increments. The bearer may dismiss the wall as a free action.

The user can also throw the globe as a standard action, destroying the globe and creating a freezing sphere anywhere within 800 feet.
Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, freezing sphere, wall of ice; **Cost** 11,800 gp

Engulfing Snow Globe

Aura faint conjuration; **CL** 5th
Slot none; **Price** 18,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.
Description

This sphere is three-quarters filled with water and contains nothing else. The water sticks to the sides if the globe rotates. If the bearer places the globe on the ground and speaks a command word, it grows to a 3-foot-diameter sphere of water. Each additional round, the sphere increases in diameter by 3 feet, until it reaches 15 feet in diameter. As a move action, the

globe's controller can move it up to 30 feet per round, and it will engulf a Small or smaller creature in its path (Reflex DC 14 negates). As the sphere increases in size, it can engulf creatures of the next size category larger (maximum Huge). An engulfed creature takes 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage and must hold its breath as if it were drowning (creatures capable of breathing water are unaffected by this). Escaping the sphere requires a DC 14 Reflex save as a standard action, and a successful save allows a creature to move into an adjacent space. A sphere can hold 1 creature of the size category it can engulf, or an equivalent number of smaller creatures. The globe returns to its glass form, but containing no water, after 10 rounds, at which point it violently expels its occupants, dealing 4d6 points of damage and knocking them prone (Reflex DC 14 halves the damage and negates the prone condition). Water refills the globe after an hour, at which time its bearer can use it again.

Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *aqueous orb*; **Cost 9,000 gp**

Exploding Snow Globe

Aura moderate evocation; **CL** 7th
Slot none; **Price** 8,060 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.
Description
Tiny cracks riddle this globe's surface, as if something were attempting to push its way out. In fact, the globe is just as dangerous to its possessor as it is to potential victims. If it takes at least 1 point of bludgeoning or falling damage, it shatters in a spray of glass and ice shards, dealing 4d8 points of piercing and slashing damage and 4d8 points of cold damage to all creatures in a 15-foot radius (Reflex DC 17 half). The globe immediately reforms after self-destructing, but it cannot explode again for 24 hours.

Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, detonate, shatter; **Cost** 4,030 gp

Iceglobe

Aura faint abjuration; **CL** 3rd
Slot none; **Price** 6,000 gp; **Weight** 2 lbs.
Description
This globe portrays a frozen lake with animals trapped on the surface. Icicles hang inside the half-filled globe, which is extremely cold to the touch (dealing no damage). While held, the globe provides protection from extreme heat in a 30-foot radius. The bearer can also intensify extreme cold in a 300-foot radius by one step with a command word. Any spell with the cold descriptor cast by the bearer is treated as if the bearer's caster level is 1 higher. Finally, if the bearer has at least one metamagic feat, she can apply up to 6 levels worth of metamagic feats she possesses per day to spells with the cold descriptor without increasing the spell level or casting time. She cannot apply more than one metamagic feat at the same time to a spell.

Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, communal endure elements, creator must possess at least one metamagic feat; **Cost** 3,000 gp

Mesmeric Snow Globe (cursed item)

Aura strong evocation; **CL** 15th
Slot none; **Weight** 2 lbs.
Description
This cursed snow globe appears to be another magic snow globe through magical detection. It also operates as the item. However, each time the bearer activates the item, he must succeed at a DC 18 Will save or become fascinated for an hour as he does nothing other than examine the item. A threat or damage dealt to the bearer causes him to become confused for 1 minute, after which he resumes looking at the item. At the beginning of each day and after a stressful situation, the bearer must succeed at a DC 18 Will save to avoid looking at the globe and becoming fascinated again for 1 hour.

Construction
Magic Item any magic snow globe

Musical Snow Globe

Aura faint illusion; **CL** 10th
Slot none; **Price** 13,500 gp; **Weight** 3 lbs.
Description
This globe features a stage holding intricately carved depictions of a ten-piece orchestra. The globe sits in a holder that has a windup key. By winding the key as a standard action, the globe plays a melody that sounds incredible on its own or perfectly complements music from its bearer regardless of the tune she plays. The melody plays for 10 rounds before the globe runs down, during which time it extends the length of a bardic performance without the bearer using any rounds of bardic performance. Alternatively, it can accompany an ongoing bardic performance to increase save DCs by 2 or increase the bonus provided by 1.

The bearer can use the globe more than once per day, but each additional use incurs a cumulative 20% chance of the globe becoming nonfunctional until it is repaired.

Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, exquisite accompaniment; **Cost** 6,750 gp

Sand Globe

Aura faint transmutation; **CL** 5th
Slot none; **Price** 29,700 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.
Description
Rather than snow, this globe holds sand in solution. The globe's bearer can change cold damage from a spell or effect to acid damage or split the damage such that half is cold and half is acid. As a standard action, the bearer can shake the globe to cause an earthen or sandy area in a 20-foot radius around him to become difficul terrain. His movement remains unaffected

Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, shifting sand, creator must possess the Elemental Spell metamagic feat; **Cost** 14,850 gp

Sheltering Snow Globe

Aura strong conjuration and divination; **CL** 13th
Slot none; **Price** 64,800 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.
Description

A grandiose ski lodge sits at the top of a mountain in this globe. Lights turn on and off as if the lodge has inhabitants. When the bearer speaks a command word, all creatures touching the globe disappear into the globe's lodge, which provides them food and shelter for up to 24 hours. With another command word, the globe expels all current inhabitants. A matching device in the lodge allows inhabitants to see and hear anything in the area outside the globe. The globe cannot provide shelter again for a period equal to the amount of time it served as lodging.

While primarily used as accommodation for a night's rest, a sheltering snow globe with a waiting thief, or group of thieves, can wind up as a "gift" for an unsuspecting mark.
Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *mage's magnificent mansion*; **Cost** 32,400 gp

Snow Dome of Hurling

Aura moderate transmutation; CL 9th
Slot none; Price 10,300 gp; Weight 0.5 lbs.
Description

Despite its light weight, this snow dome seems to have considerable heft when it falls or someone tosses it. The dome acts as an improvised weapon with a +1 enhancement bonus that deals 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage. After 24 hours of attunement, the snow dome's wielder gains the Throw Anything and Point-Blank Shot feats with respect to the dome, gains a +2 dodge bonus against attacks of opportunity when throwing it, and deals 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage. A wielder who already has the Throw Anything feat deals 1d8 points of bludgeoning damage with the dome, and its critical threat range improves to 19-20. Snow globes of hurling with greater enchantments exist; treat the base item as a +2 weapon for purposes of increasing the price.
Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *telekinesis*, **creator must possess the Throw Anything feat; Cost 5,300 gp**

Snow Globe of Creeping Encasement

(cursed item)
Aura strong evocation; CL 15th
Slot none; Weight 3 lbs.
Description

This cursed device appears to be a crystalline snow globe and functions as that globe, with the exception that the freezing sphere effect centers on the bearer and does not destroy the globe. Once the owner uses the globe, he must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save at the beginning of each day or take 1d4 points of Dex drain and have a layer of ice coat his entire body. The ice grants a +2 natural armor bonus, but it reduces the owner's base speed by 5 feet. If the ice takes at least 10 points of fire damage, it melts away, removing the natural armor bonus and the speed reduction. If the owner does not remove the ice, each additional failed save adds another layer of ice, increasing the natural armor bonus by 2 and reducing his base speed by an additional 5 feet (he takes 1d4 points of Dex drain on a failed save regardless of the amount of ice present). The ice requires an additional 10 points of fire damage to melt away. If the owner's Dex drops to 0, he becomes a solid block of ice, requiring stone to flesh or more powerful magic to restore him.
Construction
Magic Item *crystalline snow globe*

Snow Globe of the Arctic Wastes

Aura strong conjuration, evocation, and transmutation; CL 13th
Slot none; Price 77,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.
Description

This globe depicts a snow-shrouded coniferous forest. The globe emits a chill that deals 1d6 points of nonlethal damage each time a creature grasps it (but not while the creature continues to hold it). After 24 hours of attunement, the owner no longer takes this damage.

Three times per day, the globe's owner can call forth a freezing fog that acts as a fog cloud, but it also deals 3d6 points of cold damage per round to creatures within the fog (the owner takes no damage). As a move action, the owner can move the cloud 30 feet.

Once per day, the owner can change the weather as per control weather, but she can only manifest cold effects (sleet storm in spring, hailstorm in summer, etc.). The change in weather lasts for 48 hours and affects a 3-mile radius.

Finally, once per day, as a standard action, the owner can summon a Large ice elemental or 2 fiendish yetis, which remain for 13 rounds or until destroyed or dismissed. The creatures follow the owner's commands.

As a side effect of possessing the snow globe, the owner gains vulnerability to fire
Construction
Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *control weather*, *ice storm*, *summon monster V*; **Cost 38,500 gp**

Hey, you! Yeah, you with the swords!

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"Are you sure that's going to work? I mean, it seems really dangerous." Chandus looked rather suspiciously at the small vial of black liquid in Arianna's hand.

"I'll be fine Chandus, but thank you for your concern. This stuff is particularly dangerous for normal folks, but, people like us, people who've fought dragons and demons, people who've traveled all over the planet, we're made of tougher stuff than everyday people. It's not just hardy, sword-swinging champions such as yourself who can handle small doses of poison. Even frail spellcasters like me can handle it." She smiled when she referred to herself as frail and her eyes sparkled a wink.

"If you say so. I don't think I'd drink it."

"I wouldn't think you would. But then, you solve problems with your swords and I solve mine with magic. And, given that we're going to run into a considerable number of really angry ogres in a few minutes, I want to be ready so that I can cut their numbers down quickly and allow you to get through to the chieftain without having to actually hack your way through all 30 or so of his underlings."

"I don't have a problem killing 30 ogres by myself."

"I know you don't. And it's not that I think you couldn't, or that you don't deserve the entertainment. But, once things get started, things will go to hell pretty quickly and the sooner we get to the chieftain and find the key so that we can release the others, the better. The longer the fight takes, the better the odds someone else will get hurt."

Chandus nodded. And then he added "I wouldn't have to make it take a long time you know. I usually do that because it's more fun."

Arianna rolled her eyes. The sounds of the coming horde indicated that they were quite near. She removed the seal from the vial and choked down the horrid, thick, dark fluid

~~

Chardic Chill
School: Transmutation [cold]; Level: Alchemist 5, Magus 5, Sorcerer/Wizard 5
Casting Time: 1 round
Components: V, S, M (a vial of charda bile)
Range: Personal; see text
Target: You; see text

Duration: 1 round/level; see text
Saving Throw: See text; **Spell Resistance:** Yes

You ingest the vial of charda bile while casting the spell; you must succeed on a DC 10 Fortitude save to consume the contents of the vial, if you fail the save, the spell fails and is lost. If you succeed, you gain resist cold 20 for the duration of the spell. Furthermore, each time you succeed on a melee attack (including spells delivered by touch), your attack deals an extra 1d6 cold damage.

On your turn you may, as a standard action, end the spell early by converting the spell into a 60-ft. line of cold. Creatures in the area of the line suffer 1d6 cold damage for each round remaining in the spell's duration; a successful Reflex save halves the cold damage

If you cast *chardic chill* underground or in a cold environment, the save DC to consume the vial is 5, the additional cold damage you cause is 1d8 instead of 1d6, and the save DC against the line of cold is increased by +2.

~~

I rather like spells that have the sorts of multiple-option choices offered by spells like *chardic chill*. While the caster benefits from resist cold 20 and the ability to deliver an extra 1d6 cold damage with each melee attack, those benefits are certainly better for some casters than others. The magus probably is perfectly happy with it, and, in the right circumstances (such as being in a fight with something that relies heavily upon cold attacks when there aren't better resistance options available), a typical sorcerer or wizard might be happy for a while as well. Frankly, a multiclassed caster who relishes in melee combat is probably a little better off with it than a single-classed caster. But, the spell offers a wonderful alternative for all the caster types. Because the spell can be cashed in for a 60-ft. line of cold, it can pack quite a punch, especially against a small pile of critters vulnerable to cold. But, the trick for the player is to figure out when to do this. After all, the longer the caster waits, the less powerful the line of cold damage is. If the caster is really high level, this is a powerful spell (a 20th level caster can, on its next turn, use this as a 19d6 attack), but, then again, a 20th level caster's 5th level spell is going to be easier to save against than higher-level spells. Either way, what I like most about the spell is that it requires the player to make a choice. The spell is powerful because of the options it offers (especially if cast underground), and this is offset, a little, by having rare material components and by requiring the caster to put herself at risk while casting the spell. Again, even before the spell is cast, the player has to make choices that entail risks. And, because the component is as rare as it is, the players should

find themselves in the position of having to send their characters on a trek to acquire the components for the spell. Ironically, of course, having access to this spell first would have been nice when it comes time to make that trek.
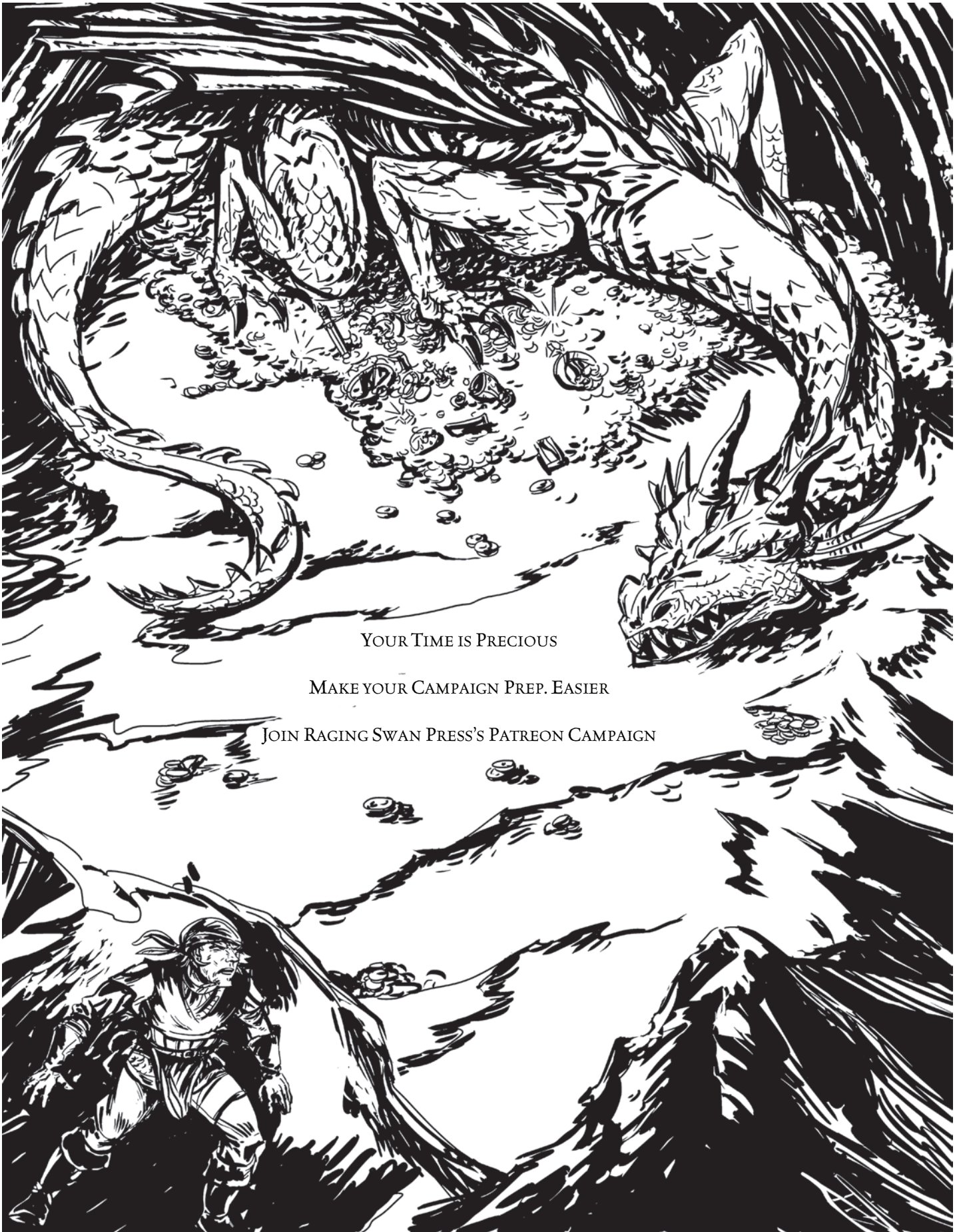
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160,000 Potions to Discover in an Alchemist's Laboratory

By Creighton Broadhurst, Illustrations by Rick Hershey, Fadwa M. Solomon, and Bega

Alchemists toil in their laboratories over new concoctions almost as much as wizards lurk in their libraries researching new spells. Adventurers exploring (or looting) an alchemist's laboratory are bound to find many strange potions, oils, unguents and other odd materials.

Use the four tables below to determine the characteristics of any potion found in an alchemist's laboratory.

Potion Vial

Use this table to determine the characteristic of the potion vial:

1. An iron vial with a bone stopper.

2. A clay vial painted bright blue. The paint is worn and chipped.

3. This small brass vial is dented and worn. It has a cork stopper.

4. This iron vial is stoppered with sealing wax. Once opened, it cannot be re-stoppered.

5. This plain glass vial has a similarly delicate glass stopper. The glass is cloudy—or perhaps just dirty.

6. Esoteric runes decorate this pewter vial.

7. Thin iron mesh encases this glass vial.

8. This iron vial is particularly thin and elongated, making it easily concealable in a boot or similar locale.

9. Chipped and faded paint covers this iron vial. So little paint remains, it is impossible to say what the picture once depicted.

10. This vial is part of a cheap-looking set of earrings.

11. This copper-beaten vial is one of a set of three and hangs from a bronze necklace. Only perceptive observers notice the necklace's secret.

12. This vial is cunningly hidden in the stopper of a wine flask

13. This plain bronze vial is unadorned but for a single rune stamped into its surface. The rune could be a deity's symbol, the heraldic device of a noble house and so on.

14. This small, exquisite vial is of pure silver. A tiny golden chain attaches its stopper.

15. A crude painting of a cloud-filled sky decorates this clay vial.

16. This iron vial is dented in several places, and the stopper is hard to remove.

17. This highly polished glass vial is wrapped in a small piece of red silk, tied with yellow string.

18. White paint covers this crudely crafted clay vial.

19. Red and white bands of paint cover this iron potion vial.

20. Crafted of supple leather, this vial has a bone stopper.

Potion Appearance

Use this table to determine the potion's appearance:

1. Oily, transparent bright red potion.

2. Bubbling, translucent amber potion.

3. Cloudy ivory potion with ebon wisps within.

4. This light blue potion has flecks of gold floating within.

5. This mottled brown and black potion gives off a faint smoke when opened.

6. This bright blue potion is phosphorescent.

7. This potion of golden hue is luminous.

8. Bright green vaporous potion.

9. This potion is lilac in hue.

10. Transparent yellow potion with small red flecks floating within

11. This viscous coppery potion bubbles slightly.

12. This transparent bright turquoise potion is thick and syrupy.

13. Syrupy indigo liquid.

14. This oily purple-coloured potion has a thick green scum floating on its surface

15. This transparent potion has an almost undetectable yellow hue.

16. This cloudy potion comprises a cream-coloured liquid marred by wisps of a heavier brown liquid that settles at the bottom of the vial.

17. Gray effervescent liquid with suspended black flecks

18. This opaline maroon liquid gives off wisps of fumes when the vial is opened.

19. This watery potion has yellow, red and blue layers that refuse to intermix no matter how violently the vial is shaken.

20. This translucent potion has all the colours of the rainbow.

Potion Taste (& Smell)

Use this table, to determine the potion's taste:

1. Acidic
2. Bitter
3. Citrusy
4. Earthy
5. Fishy
6. Greasy
7. Honeyed
8. Meaty
9. Metallic
10. Milky
11. Peppery
12. Salty
13. Sugary
14. Sour
15. Spicy
16. Sweet
17. Tart
18. Vinegary
19. Watery
20. Potion has two tastes (roll again twice, rerolling 20s); one is a distinct aftertaste that lingers for several minutes

Potion Side Effect

Sometimes potions have minor side eff cts. Use this table to determine such effects

1. After drinking the potion, the character's eyes glow with the radiance of a candle for two hours.

2. After drinking the potion, the character sweats uncontrollably for 20 minutes.

3. After drinking the potion, the character experiences sporadic, but uncontrollable, burping for the rest of the day.

4. The character heals 1d4 points of damage.

5. After drinking the potion, the character's hands and feet tingle until the potion's main effect wears off

6. After drinking the potion, the character's sense of smell is heightened until he next eats or drinks.

7. After drinking the potion, the character feels sick until he drinks something else.

8. After drinking the potion, the character emits an odour repugnant to cats and dogs. The odour lasts until he bathes.

9. After drinking the potion, the character's skin seems to positively glow with health and vitality.

10. After drinking the potion, the character's tongue turns blue—and remains blue for 2d6 hours.

11. After drinking the potion, the character's hair turns white—and remains white until he drinks another potion.

12. After drinking the potion, the character is refreshed as if he had just consumed a large, nutritious meal.

13. After drinking the potion, the character's eyebrows suddenly become particularly bushy. This growth is permanent (unless plucked).

14. After drinking the potion, the character becomes slightly tipsy—apparently the potion contained a concentrated dose of pure alcohol.

15. After drinking the potion, the character

experiences sporadic, but uncontrollable, flatulence for the rest of the day

16. After drinking the potion, the character feels like he is choking. The effect passes after two rounds

17. After drinking the potion, the character's eyes begin to sting and water as if he had passed through a smoke cloud.

18. After drinking the potion, the character's nose starts to run uncontrollably.

19. After drinking the potion, the character has a horrible, bitter taste in his mouth until he drinks something else.

20. The potion is particularly well crafted. Its effects are doubled. Roll again to determine its side effect, ignoring a result of 20

GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing

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

Raging Swan Press
GM's Miscellany: Dungeon Dressing

20 Things to Loot from the Wizard's Body

By Creighton Broadhurst
Illustration by Fadly Romdhani

During the course of their adventures, our heroes are likely to slay many evil wizards (and loot their bodies).

Sadly, most such individuals seem to never carry anything beyond a spell component pouch, a few magic items and some loose coins. Not only is this boring, it's also utterly lacking in verisimilitude—after all, everyone carries odds and ends in their pockets. Use the table below to generate such items of minor interest and make looting the body of a slain wizard much more interesting!

1. An amulet comprising a single, yellowed dragon's tooth suspended from a leather thong. A rune for protection is carved into the tooth.

2. A small flask of powered silver (worth 50 gp). The leather flask itself has a small strap allowing it to be carried over the shoulder.

3. A silver dagger is concealed in one of the wizard's boots. The dagger is clearly unused—its blade is sharp and polished to a high sheen.

4. A silver bracelet from which hang a number of charms. Each is decorated with a single rune— fire, water, air, earth, dragon, devil, demon— among them. The whole thing is worth 75 gp.

5. A leather scroll tube crudely painted bright blue. It is stoppered with a leather bung that clips into the place. The bung has been painted red.

6. These fine leather boots have a number of small, unobtrusive pockets hidden inside. Most of the pockets hold commonly available spell components, but two hold a single platinum coin.

7. This plain scroll tube contains several pieces of parchment the wizard used to make observations of the stars. These comprise several complicated diagrams of various constellations and cryptic notes regarding "the wanderer."

8. The torn and scorched cover of "Agananzar's Workbook" is wrapped in cloth and hidden in the wizard's pack. Sadly nothing else of the book's contents remains.

9. A pouch contains a variety of small bones— probably finger bones—clearly "harvested" from a variety of differ nt creatures. Each is in pristine condition—all the skin apparently having been boiled away.

10. Three empty potion vials; one is marked "invisibility" while the other two smell slightly of cinnamon.

11. A locket holding a lock of coarse black hair. It is evident from the hair's texture—and the slight smell of rotten eggs—the hair is not from a natural source.

12. A dozen, small semi-circular stones worn perfectly smooth. An esoteric rune—depicting various types of magic—adorns each stone.

13. A slender belt pouch specially treated to be waterproof. Inside the pouch, the wizard stored a variety of dried herbs. Each bunch is tied together with twine.

14. The shattered stub of a wooden stake. Black blood covers the stake's tip. Barely visible under the blood is some kind of rune, but its meaning is impossible to determine as part of it is missing.

15. Three quills wrapped in an ink-stained cloth and two small vials of ink—red and black—all carried in a small pouch along with several scraps of crumpled parchment.

16. A bent iron spike, the head of a hammer and a shard of incredibly tough stone.

17. A black velvet cloth inlaid with golden thread wrapped around a dried and perfectly preserved red rose. The rose's thorns are still sharp and its flower emits a particular heady scent

18. A small treatise depicting the various protective circles—against good, evil and so on—along with notes on how to quickly create such protective barriers. A perceptive reader skilled in Spellcraft spots several of the diagrams are fatally flawed

19. A flask of holy water and a flask of unholy water— both clearly labelled in Elven—along with a fine painter's brush, two owlbear feathers and one gigantic feather (perhaps from a roc or other huge bird).

20. A small red velvet pouch. The pouch is all but empty—however a determined examination reveals a few flecks of diamond dust stuck to the pouch's lining.

I Loot the Body

Are your PCs always looting the bodies of the fallen? Want more of these cool little details? Fear not—Raging Swan Press has got you covered! *I Loot the Body*, by Josh Vogt, is a virtually system neutral supplement designed to provide hundreds of small knickknacks to "populate" your NPC's pouches and pockets.

Happy Hollidays to our Readers!

Our Patreon campaign is like a monthly Kickstarter project with special rewards and updates every month for our patreon backers. Based on your contribution you can help us select who we will be interviewing, what monster we will chose to apply our monster template to, help us chose monthly themes, and our Patreon backer mail to us will appear in the magazine.

I hope you will consider joining us so we can bring you a better and more adventurous Pathways e-zine.
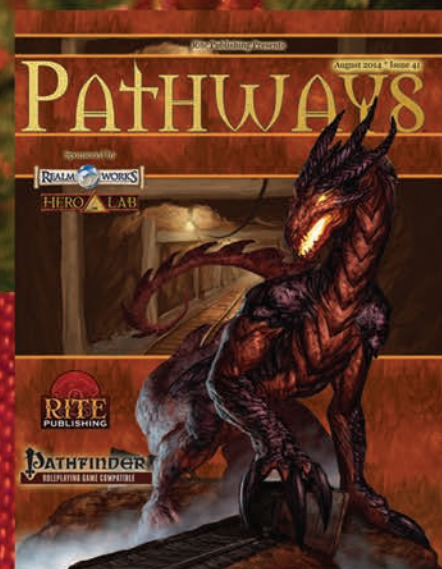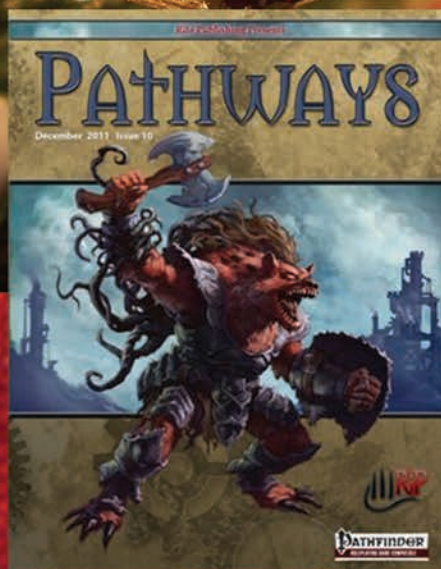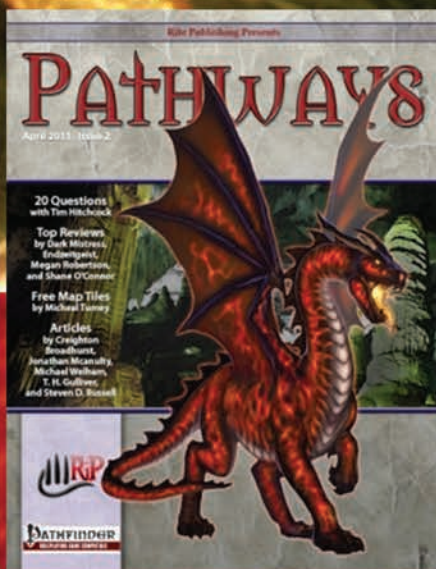
WINTER'S CHOSEN

Winter-Themed Magical Feats and Tricks

By Andrew Marlowe, Illustrations by Bruno Balixa and Elena Ringo

From myths to movies, popular fiction to gaming adventures, ice queens rule winter. Those primal powers usually limited to cursed princesses and evil Turkish-delight-bearing villainesses are now available to rangers of the north or the mortal knights of fairy winter. The following options are for any character chosen to be a Winter Scion.

Winter's Scion

You possess a bond with the coldest season of the year. You may have the blood of ice fey, a mysterious birthmark in the shape of a winter sigil, or perhaps you were once left in the snow to die but due to the mercy of the gods you didn't. Whatever the reason, you are forever connected to the primal magic of winter.

Benefit: You are protected from cold as though under the effects of an *endure elements* spell, additionally you gain cold resistance 2.

This feat overlaps (and does not stack with) *protection from energy*.

Additional Feats

Blizzard Strike (Combat)

You unleash the power of your *frost* weapons in a howling cone of sleet and hail when you strike a foe.

Prerequisites: Str 13, Power Attack, Winter's Scion, base attack bonus +3, 4 ranks in Use Magic Device

Benefit: When you use the attack action while wielding a melee weapon with the *frost* (or *icy burst*) special ability, you can make one attack at your highest base attack bonus. If you hit, you deal damage normally and cause a storm of cold to erupt from your weapon. All creatures in a 15-foot cone, beginning in the target's square, take 3d6 points of cold damage. A Reflex save (DC 10 + your base attack bonus) halves this damage.

The *frost* weapon loses its frost ability for 1d3+1 rounds after this power is used.

Chill of the Darkest Night (Metamagic)

You infuse magical darkness with wintry frost enhancing cold spells cast in the area of effect

Prerequisites: Winter's Scion

Benefit: You can modify an evocation (darkness) spell so that the temperature in the area of effect drops by 20 degrees while the darkness persists. Spells with the cold descriptor cast in this area of effect have their caster level increased by 1. A chilled spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

The effects of this feat do not stack with other spells modified by this feat

Feat	Prerequisites	Benefits
Winter's Scion		Resistance to cold
Blizzard Strike*	Str 13, Power Attack, Winter's Scion, base attack bonus +3, 4 ranks in Use Magic Device	Inflict cold damage in a cone-shaped area with an attack from a frost weapon
Chill of the Darkest Night	Winter's Scion	You infuse darkness spells with the chill of a winter night
Fangs of the Winter Wolf	Winter's Scion, base attack +3, natural bite attack	Bite attack inflicts 1d3 cold
White Worg's Breath	Fangs of the Winter Wolf, Winter's Scion, base attack +6, natural bite attack	You have a breath weapon that inflicts 3d6 points of cold damage
Freezing Strike*	Str 13, Power Attack, Winter's Scion, base attack bonus +3, 4 ranks in Use Magic Device	Creature you hit with a frost weapon is staggered by bitter cold
Frozen Heart	Wis 16, Iron Will, Winter's Scion	Roll twice on any Will save to resist effects that target your emotions
Ice Picks	Int 12, Winter's Scion, 1 rank in Disable Device, Minor Magic rogue talent	You create icy thieves' tools
Rime Ward	Wis 13, Winter's Scion, lay on hands or channel energy 2d6	Your healing powers can protect an ally from fire

*This is a combat feat and can be selected as a fighter bonus feat

Fangs of the Winter Wolf

Your bite harbors a glacial cold.

Prerequisites: Winter's Scion, base attack +3, natural bite attack

Benefit: Your bite attack does an additional 1d3 points of cold damage when dealing damage.

Special: A barbarian with the Animal Fury rage power may take this feat but only gains its benefits while raging.

Freezing Strike (Combat)

A creature struck by your *frost* weapon is encased in a layer of numbing frost.

Prerequisites: Str 13, Power Attack, Winter's Scion, base attack bonus +3, 4 ranks in Use Magic Device

Benefit: When you use the attack action while wielding a melee weapon with the *frost* (or *icy burst*) special ability, you can make one attack at your highest base attack bonus. If you hit, you deal damage normally and encase the target in a thin layer of numbing ice. The affected creature takes an additional 1d6 points of cold damage and must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 10 + your base attack bonus) or be staggered. Creatures immune to cold are not affected

The *frost* weapon loses its frost ability for 1d3+1 rounds after this power is used.

Frozen Heart

Winter's chill has settled into your heart making you resistant to magical influences on your emotions

Prerequisites: Wis 16, Iron Will, Winter's Scion

Benefit: When targeted by mind-affecting spells and powers that affect your emotions, you may make two Will saves and take either result. This decision is made before results are revealed.

Ice Picks

Winter's chill creeps in through the tiniest gaps around doors and windows, you also bypass such obstacles with ease. You may create a set of thieves' tools from your own frosty breath.

Prerequisites: Int 12, Winter's Scion, Minor Magic rogue talent

Benefit: As a standard action you may expend a use of your minor magic ability or major magic ability to create a set of masterwork thieves tools made entirely of ice. If you expend a use of your major magic ability they confer a +2 enhancement bonus. These tools persist for a number of minutes equal to your effective caster level

Additionally, in cold or wintry environments you gain a competence bonus equal to your Intelligence modifier to any Disable Device checks you make with these tools.

Rime Ward

With a touch you shroud an ally in a protective rime of frost shielding them from fire effect

Prerequisites: Wis 16, Winter's Scion, lay on hands or channel energy 2d6

Benefit: Instead of the normal healing effects of lay on hands or channel energy you may instead grant an ally you touch a limited immunity to fire. The ward grants 5 points of protection for every two dice of healing you would normally roll. This otherwise functions like the spell *protection from energy*.

White Worg's Breath

Like a winter wolf, inside you resides the fury of a winter's gale which you can unleash with a breath of deadly cold.

Prerequisites: Fangs of the Winter Wolf, Winter's Scion, base attack +6, natural bite attack

Benefit: You may breathe a 15-foot cone of cold once every 1d6 rounds. This breath weapon inflicts 3d6 points of cold damage. Targets may make a Reflex save for half damage (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Con modifier)

Special: A barbarian with the Animal Fury rage power may take this feat but only gains its benefits while raging.

Equipment Tricks

Winter Scions often possess surprising uses for their wondrous items.

Equipment Trick (Combat)

Choose a piece of equipment, such as boots, a cloak, rope, a shield, or even wondrous items. You understand how to use that item in combat.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: You can use any equipment trick relating to the chosen item as long as you meet the trick's prerequisites. If the item would normally be considered an improvised weapon, you can treat it as either a normal weapon or an improvised weapon, depending on which is more beneficial for you

Special: You can gain Equipment Trick multiple times. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new type of equipment.

Wondrous Item Tricks

Biting Wind (Winter's Scion, Use Magic Device 8 ranks): When wielding a wind fan you may infuse the wind created by the fan with winter's fury. In addition to the effe ts of the gust of wind, the extreme cold and sleet deal 4d6 points of damage to any creatures caught in the area of effect who fail the gust of wind's Fortitude save. Wielding the fan in this manner is risky, each use counts as two uses of the fan for that day, increasing the risk that the fan breaks.

Ice Arsenal (Winter's Scion, Use Magic Device 3 ranks): When using a decanter of endless water, instead of producing a flow of liquid water you may once per day create a deadly shaft of ice of varying lengths. You may wield this shaft of ice as either a +1 frost dagger, a +1 frost mace, or a +1 frost shortspear. This weapon remains for 10 rounds or until damaged by fire

Pernicious Ice (Winter's Scion, Use Magic Device 5 ranks): When activating the icing power of rime-stride boots (Pathfinder Player Companion: Dirty Tactics Toolbox) the layer of ice you create sprouts clusters of sharp, jagged protrusions. This functions as if the area were covered in keen caltrops. Anyone wearing rime-stride boots or boots of the winterlands is unhindered by this effect

Twenty Questions with Adam Meyers

By Steven D. Russell

1. Could you tell us a little about yourself?

I'm Adam Meyers, the president of Drop Dead Studios, fine makers of Pathfinder supplements like Spheres of Power, the upcoming Skybourne campaign setting, and other stuff like that. In my off-time I teach ballroom dance at Central Washington University, and take care of three boys all under the age of 7. At this current time we're doing far more books than we should, including a line of Spheres of Power expansion books funded via Patreon, an update to our first book, and four Skybourne books, so I'm fairly busy all of the time.

2. What is your home game like?

Despite being in a college town, most of the games I get to run are done online, which is fun but I miss seeing actual people. Mostly I run Pathfinder for obvious professional reasons, but I've got a stack of RPG books several feet tall that I'm still hoping to try out with people sometime.

3. What is your favorite Paizo product?

Ultimate Campaign. I love story and storytelling, and I think that book gave metaphorical permission to a lot of people to stop worrying about DPR and instead start focusing on what they were doing as characters. I think I've probably read that book more than any other when preparing my own books.

4. You are currently the president of Drop Dead Studios, how did that start and how would you characterize the company today?

Drop Dead Studios grew out of a series of events, including but not limited to: moving to New York to pursue a career as a professional actor, having two kids, moving back to Utah from New York, becoming a stay-at-home Dad while my wife got her master's, and attending college writing classes taught by novelist Brandon Sanderson. More or less I found myself in desperate need of a creative outlet and most of my past involved writing, acting, and gaming, so starting Drop Dead Studios seemed like a good fit. We did one book titled Rogue Glory and I realized I enjoyed writing gaming material more than anything else I'd previously done, and we've been publishing ever since.

Drop Dead Studios is still primarily a two-person operation, with me serving as head writer and president, and my wondrous wife doing book layout and design, as well as business management. However, we've also crossed the point where we're working with more freelancers than ever before, and have started to expand what we expect of ourselves professionally.

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

Spheres of Power, the book that put us on the map, as it were. It started as a conversation with a friend about using powers instead of spells, and grew into the most ambitious thing we've ever done; throwing the entirety of the Vancian magic system out and rebuilding the very concept of magic from the ground up.

The book is over 200 pages long, and rather than just providing just another magic system, it's a series of rules going from basic to incredibly complex to let players and GMs build characters and worlds around a concept, rather than forcing them to fit their concept to the way magic usually works in Pathfinder

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

There was a Kickstarter tier we used for that book where the backer could decide a class that we would include in the book. One person asked for a favorite character done as a concept, one person asked for a shapeshifting-focused character, but there was one guy who simply asked: 'make me Ezra from the anime Fairy Tail'. This led directly to the creation of the armorist class, and was one of the most interesting things I designed for that book.

7. What do you feel was the most ingenious part of that product?
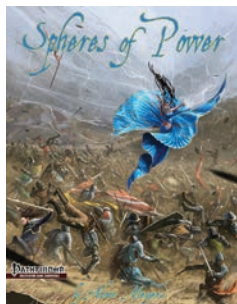
The casting tradition system. One of the inciting incidents that led to the development of Spheres of Power was playing in a game run by a friend of mine based on the world for a book he was writing. He talked to me afterward about how hard it had been to adapt the world to the Pathfinder system, which looked nothing like the world, races, and magic systems present in the book. When I asked why he hadn't just thrown out everything that didn't fit with his world, he told me he was afraid people wouldn't like it if it didn't feel like Pathfinder anymore

The casting tradition system isn't just a set of rules designed to let you adapt the how's and why's of magic to fit your needs, but we tried our hardest to set up the language to implicitly give GMs permission to make those changes. If you want to use the Pathfinder framework but play in a world where all magic is elemental affinit bestowed upon various tribes controlled through martial arts movements with a single exceptional individual born every generation who can control all of the elements, who are we as designers to make you feel like you're playing it wrong?

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

When you throw out the entire magic tradition of Pathfinder and all of the earlier versions of the game that came before it, you're throwing out a LOT. You start unraveling the generational changes as magic was altered with each edition, yet invoking of what came before it. You start seeing how much of the game hinges on this one system. Building all of that again from scratch in a way that's catch-phrase is 'play however you want to play', it gets incredibly difficult and you end up doing balancing math that previous designers spent decades and multiple editions getting right.

9. Did you learn anything while working on it?

Rogue Glory was my baptism by fire into the world of game design. Spheres of Power was my skydiving without a parachute into the lakes of Hades.

10. Other than your own work and Drop Dead Studios products, what is the best Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible product out there?

Rogue Genius Games Dragonrider/Dracomancer. If ever there was a concept that I wish I'd done first, it's that one.

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

By its very nature, 3pp products are for people looking to expand beyond the standard gaming experience. Sure, some people do adventure paths to help GMs prepare in a hurry, but for the most part our entire industry is based upon seeing what the game does, thinking up what it could be, and then making that a reality. My favorite products, as well as those I see the most praise for, are those that take a concept not normally seen in Pathfinder, and make it come to life so vividly that you WANT to write it into your home world, just so you'd have an excuse to play with it.

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

That's hard. There are three big-wig designers that I've worked with over the years, all of whom deserve a shout-out with a question like this. Owen Stephens, of course, is the grand-uncle of the modern 3pp world, and everything he writes is worthy of study. Mike Myler is a fun designer who takes concepts I never would have even imagined and somehow makes them not only work, but be awesome. David Silver is a designer who doesn't just own his niche, but expands it, ever-revealing his world to a degree I doubt I could even attempt.

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

Every career based on writing is mostly self-taught. Even professional writing teachers can do little for their students beyond sharing anecdotes and advice, then sending you off to write something. This means if you want to be a freelancer, every day you're not writing, you're not improving. If this is something you want to do, you need to be constantly working on something, be it a custom class, a new setting, or just an elaborate adventure for your adventure crew. You're going to design bad things to begin with; you're just learning, after all, but if you're not writing, you're not improving, you're not selling anything, and you won't be ready if you do find someone who wants to send a contract your way.

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

Jacob Blackmon. Never before have I met an artist who was as quick, good, and easy to work with. (Technically that's not completely true; Ben Wooten was great to work with, but so far I've only commissioned one picture from him, while I go to Jacob probably every month when I

realize I need something done quickly by someone I can trust.)

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

Endzeitgeist, the rather-influential reviewer, gave my first book, Rogue Glory, 5 stars and his personal seal of approval. That was the moment when I realized this was something I could do for a living, and I've been grateful to him ever since.

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

At this point in time, there's a lot on my plate: We're writing the Skybourne series, a 4-book campaign setting series that mixes Spelljammer, Dark Sun, and Firefly to interesting effe t. We're also doing something I never thought I'd get to do (at least not for a while): revisit our first book, Rogue Glory, to update it to reflect the changes in the game since it was first written, as well as to update its layout and artwork to be more in line with our other modern products.

After those are done, I'm planning to do to martial combat what we did to magic with Spheres of Power, throwing out and redoing the entire martial feat system and rebuilding it from the ground up to see if we can't make it more fun for everyone.

17. Do you have any goals for Drop Dead Studios that you have yet to obtain or overcome?

Getting an office I don't know why, it can just be a shack build behind a house we someday own, but I've always wanted to have a dedicated space for my design.

18. Can you tell us a little about Skybourne?

Skybourne is an adventure campaign setting built around the exploits of ship crews as they traverse the skies, and eventually the planes. Magical disaster destroyed the usual connections between the planes, and awakened something primal within the world that unleashed prehistoric creatures and a world-eating forest upon the surface.

Skybourne is built to take the idea of adventurers-as-plucky-ship-crew to an extreme, with all of the implications therein. Rather than doing a single campaign hardcover, we're doing a run of four books: the player's guide, a vehicle guide, a GM's guide, and a setting book for Andrus, the world's most populous remaining city.

19. You include story sections in every book. Is there some sort of over-story you're telling through your supplements?

Yes and no. Originally it started as a way to add flavor, but it quickly evolved as we hinted at a whole cohesive story behind Rogue Glory, then did the same thing with Spheres of Power, and we're using a similar approach in the Skybourne Player's Guide to give each race the chance to tell its history in its own words. While each book's story is complete in and of itself, so far there are no plans to do 'cross-over events' or anything like that. At the same time, though, I know myself, and if I find a way to flesh these stories out into a complete line of Skybourne books or something, I will definitely take that chance

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

We love getting feedback. We're a small organization engaging in big rules changes, and we always love the chance to hear how it's all working at different people's tables. The more we know, the better we get when it comes time to expand those rules, or handle our next big project.

Reviews

101 Shadow and Darkness Spells

Publisher: Rite Publishing
Reviewer: Thilo Graf
Rating: 5 stars out 5

The fourth installment of Dave Paul's thematic spell collections clocks in at 47 pages: 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 2 pages of advertisement, leaving us with 42 pages of content; so let's take a look!

This PDF was moved forward in my review queue as a prioritized review at the request of my patreons.

We begin this supplement with a piece of information that makes you appreciate the things to come; namely, a list of diverse lighting conditions. Eight, to be precise. Does this terminology seem overly complicated to you? It's actually not; it simply codifies what's already out there in proper terms. The darkness you can only see through with magical aid? Yep, that one has no concise terminology on its own. Spells affecting the shadows of targets also offers issues: Where is the shadow? How long is it? An easy default ruling plus GM empowerment statement result in a basic framework that is more solid than what I expected going into this book.

After the massive array of spell lists (including, obviously, the Advanced Character Guide classes), we dive into the respective spells; fret not, there are quite a few spells and effects herein that deal with light as welll. For example, better sight in good light conditions that can be expended for a bonus to saves vs. blindness, etc. Taking a cue from the Dark Souls game series, *Cloud of Fire and Shadow* (erroneously called *Cloud of Shadow and Flame* below the gorgeous artwork depicting it) provides a nasty, powerful terrain control that not only sets up shadowy terrain, it also can deal negative levels and fire damage, and can even move the cloud around. OUCH. Absolutely awesome: *contrast orbs* that allow you to modify lightning condition, move it around, and utilize the orb to generate contrasts to the lightning conditions caused. It also provides a significant array of terminology for all kind of movement and cases that would have generated gaping rules holes in the hands of a less capable designer.

It should be noted that this attention to detail, which ultimately renders the spells very precise and versatile, also extends to the spells utilized to creating light and shadows. Want your own shadow plane pocket dimension? The spell is in this book. Want to go nova and blast foes with dazzling rays emitting from your body? There's a spell for that—one that may be chosen as a sun domain spell. Want to condemn a target to emit supernatural darkness, which not even darkvision can penetrate? Yes, the spell is in this PDF. Speaking of curses: *Cursed to Walk in Shadow* is narrative platinum,

nay, mithril. You curse a target and whenever the creature walks in bright light for too long, there is a chance the creature slips into an eerie duplicate of the surroundings, shifting to the Shadow Plane. If you need any guidance as to why that's creepy, may I point towards the Silent Hill games...only the duration is shorter for each trip. Still, this spell is incredibly awesome and could carry a whole campaign. Absolutely glorious and perhaps one of the most intriguing spells from a narrative point of view.

Of course, more combat-relevant spells for quicker movement in shadows (can I get a "Nice!" from the Dishonored fans out there?) to magic-impeding darkness, these spells offer a vast array of tactical and narrative options.

What about the long overdue darkness-based mirror of daylight powerlessness? Indeed, the spell is in this book and the quality it bestows should be scavenged for monster-creation rules...and it should have been part of the base rules from the get-go. Granted, though, not all spells reach this abject level of awesomeness; there are

some variants like shadow-centric *dispels* I consider to be slightly less compelling and more like variants. Immediate action-steps into the shadow plane for 1 round can also be considered rather intriguing, opening a new array of tactical options for the characters employing these spells. Want to glamer your shadow or assume the form of a darkmantle? There are spells for this around here...

Among the most powerful spells herein, what about making a target carry—literally—a piece of the night sky with him alongside the darkness, which makes this both a curse and a blessing (the latter primarily for the undead). Supernaturally clear sight is powerful, but at higher level it gets awesome: what about a spell that conceivably allows you to grant such a power to vast amounts of allies, allowing armies to combat invisible foes? Communal spells and shadow-based blinking effects (with unique rules), shadow- or light-based force explosions or stripping a target of its shadow provide unique benefits that resonate well with the tropes we all know and love. What about gazing to the stars to detect creatures, as the lines between stars, silvery and shining, guide your intuition? Fantastic visuals.

Speaking of which: if your shadow touches a creature, you can switch places with it via *shadow transposition*... and if you can't see the vast tactical potential here, I can't help you. Speaking of which: there is a high-level spell to pit a vast area into perpetual darkness...which is an apt and awesome final spell for this book

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch; I noticed no glitches of significance. Layout adheres to Rite Publishing's classic full-color 2-column standard with a purple-ish tint and the book comes fully bookmarked for your convenience. The book sports numerous gorgeous full-color artworks.

This book is more than a return to form for author Dave Paul...though that may be the wrong way to put

it. Basically, the first two books are pretty much my reference level of what an awesome spellbook should be. The third fell slightly short of this echelon level of awesomeness. This one, quite frankly, surpasses them. Yes, there are some minor hiccups here. Yes, some of the variants are not that awesome.

But I am not engaging in hyperbole when I'm saying that no other spellbook has inspired me to the extent this PDF managed. There are spells herein that not only will be a vast boon to each light/darkness themed character, the book also sports concise terminology and several spells that conspire to allow you to create effects for campaigns: whether you want a vampiric domain of eternal dark, a narrative of Silent Hill-style cursed characters, Plane of Shadows-related awesomeness—this PDF delivers.

It delivers to an extent where I actually think it transcends the limitations of its own focus, of its genre. This book can conceivably be read not only as a cool expansion to such as the arsenal of Ascension Games' "Path of Shadows" or as a mechanical scavenging ground to get inspiration for more material for Interjection Games' Antipodism designs; this book actually could conceivably be considered a selection of spells that allow you to depict creatures of shadow—whether they be shadow fey, dark creepers, or shadar-kain—as thoroughly unique. Beyond even that, I maintain that the spells herein can carry whole modules, perhaps even whole campaigns. This is one of the few spellbooks out there that can be considered to be so inspired it may be worth the effort to change modules and perhaps even plotlines to utilize it—it's that good. This is the most inspiring spellbook I've laid my eyes on in quite a while, and well worth a final verdict of 5 stars + seal of approval. It is also a candidate for my Top Ten of 2015. If you like the theme in any shape, way or form, then this is a must-have, inspired book.

Endzeitgeist out.

The Baleful Sorcerer of Tsathag'kha (OSR)

Publisher: Kort'thalis Publishing
Reviewer: Thilo Graf
Rating: 5 stars out of 5

This free supplement clocks in at 6 pages: 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial; so let's take a look!

We begin this PDF with a one-page introduction of the origin of the class. The baleful sorcerer gets d6, may not wear armor, and are proficient with daggers, short swords, sickles and scimitars. They may also use poison as would a thief of the same level and may rebuke, command, or destroy undead as would a cleric of the same level. This sorcerer learns one spell of a higher level every level, though more power can be gained via traffickin with dreaded Tsathag'Kha, putting that control in the GM's hands. The sorcerer may also try to cast more potent magic than his levels allow, which requires a save.

If he fails, he takes the Constitution drain of the magic himself and is whisked away by Tsathag'kha's servants to be looted and/or forced to sign a pact in blood.

This power obviously needs some balancing: Baleful Sorcerers of Tsathag'kha can never acquire a familiar, multi-class, or be lawful/good. Upon death, his soul is forfeit and there is a 7% chance that the sorcerer rises as a lich after dying. These guys do not require spellbooks. Aforementioned Constitution drain either is equal to the spell level or as noted in the spell's description, but these may be relegated to willing and unwilling targets—provided blood was drawn by the sorcerer—and no more than 1 hour prior to the casting. Constitution recharges at 2 points per hour of uninterrupted rest, but characters below Con 3 must save to avoid systemic shock and subsequent death from the recovery.

The spell list runs the gamut from magic detection (rolling a bunch of spells into one) to infernal conducts, blackish-purple tentacles, green, ichorous infernos, and insta-kill at level 9. I wish the spells had more detailed casting/duration infomation, but ultimately can live with what's here.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch; I noticed no significant glitc es. Layout adheres to a nice two-column b/w-standard; while the PDF has no bookmarks, it needs none at this length. The PDF has a damn cool b/w-artwork in addition to the full color cover.

Venger As'Nas Satanis provides a solid, nice character kit here; by virtue of the rules being designed to work with several iterations of OSR-rules, the crunchy parts are a bit less precise than what I personally enjoy, but ultimately the class works with a minimum wok required—and that is pretty impressive. Oh, and it is FREE. FREE is hard to beat indeed and hence, I will award full 5 stars + seal of approval in spite of this minor nitpick for this PDF; well worth the download!

Endzeitgeist out.

A24: Return to the Crypt of the Sun Lord

Publisher: AAW Games
Reviewer: Thilo Graf
Rating: 5 stars out of 5

This module clocks in at 41 pages: 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial/ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 37 pages of content; so let's take a look!

It feels like yesterday when I first reviewed a module that was flawed, but had promise: *A01: The Crypt of the Sun Lord*. The short Level 1 dungeon crawl introduced PCs to a nice little complex and provided some pretty easy challenges...but it also introduced us to the fascinating frontier village Rybalka and provided some improvement; more than that, though, it already exhibited what I consider the most crucial strength of

Adventure-A-Week Games' modules: a mix of action and brain teasers and, more importantly, an admirable ability to depict cultures that feel "real"; yes, they feel alien and fantastic, but a sense of realism and detail suffuses the best of AAW Games' works that can't help but draw one into the diverse world of Aventyr....though, back then, the world had no official name yet

Since then, the company has grown by leaps and bounds, so let's revisit the crypt of the sun lord and see what now can be found in the place where the PCs first lay hands on the mystical blade of the sun lord. It should be noted that the blade of the sun lord—even when you have not played A01—will be found and gets full stats. Before you ask: yes, this module works even better with groups that have run through A01 that now return there, though this is no requirement. But you may have already guessed that...

This being an adventure-review, the following contains SPOILERS. Potential players should jump to the conclusion.

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All right, still here? Great! The previously explored upper floor (with a graphically enhanced map) has seen better days: beyond bandits, a sense of dilapidation haunts these halls. Thus, the PCs venture forth—and may find that a stair is not what it is supposed to be: the wards that keep a mimic in stair form suspended in time are about to fall, thus adding a level of danger and "eureka effect" to the exploration of groups that braved A01 back in the day. In Ka'Teek's final resting place, the PCs can now unearth a secret door that leads from the muck-filled, crumbling tomb to the halls below. Here, you'll be blown away. No, really. The lower level not only sports one glorious full-color map, it also has a lavishly-detailed isometric version of the already beautiful map. And yes, the isometric map is full color and drop-dead gorgeous. I'm talking about as detailed as back in Ravenloft, only in color! A keyless version of this one is provided as well, though I'd only hand out the respective rooms after the PCs have explored them: traps and the like can still be found on the isometric version's keyless one. Still, this map is gorgeous and greatly enhances the sense of immersion, not that the module required that, mind you.

What do I mean by this? Well, fi st of all, bulettes have dug into the depths of the temple of the sun; the temple also has an ingenious intrusion-countermeasure: the very doors of the complex. You see, the exploration itself is an interesting puzzle, with certain doors preventing the opening of others while open; in other words, some doors can only be opened while others are open and some can only be opened when others are closed. While the puzzle can potentially be brute-forced by capable PCs willing to spend time and resources, exploration with it intact proved to be much more rewarding. I mentioned, in the beginning, the strength of AAW as a company to create a blending of the fantastic and realistic and indeed, from paralytic fleas to spikes of searing light, this attribute is well-represented by the hazards of this complex. On a cultural note, there's a fountain of balance that provides boons, but also dishes out pain to the dishonest; yes, there is a clear and interesting logic to this test of a creature's honesty, one that can be gleaned from experience and one that constitutes a great example of unobtrusive storytelling.

The temple also houses iron pyrite-clad guardian warriors and indeed, the interest of PCs and players and the understanding of the dynamics of the temple may prove to be helpful: the challenges faced inside are nothing to scoff at. The respective combat encounters are interesting and dangerous with not a single boring one among them. PCs will thus be motivated to actually unearth the methodology of the temple's beliefs; if they understand it, they are rewarded.

Things become, at least in my opinion, even more interesting once the PCs manage to bypass the crysmals and breach the sanctuary—for here, the runes of the ancient people are provided as inscriptions that the players can decipher. I really liked this section, particularly since I can fluently read runes and since we have a pretty simple letter substitution, so no, your players won't be flustered for a long time, even if they have no experience with the meaning of runes. Within the depths of the complex, a secret altar awaits, providing not only a glimpse into ages long past, but also offering perhaps one of the coolest boss fights I've read in a while: the blade of the sun lord can be used to conjure forth the spirit of Ka'Teek. When have you last fought an honorable LG spirit of an ancient priest-king with a blinding aura that also may yield you a better blade? Oh, and this is NOT the end. The temple also hides Ka'Teek's suit, which is the only way to handle the true treasure: the Sliver of the Sun. Unprotected exposure to this artifact can lead to many very dangerous effects; the table for these effects also constitutes a great scavenging ground for more lethal exposure to radiation and the like.

What does the Sliver do? Well, it friggin' CHANGES THE CLIMATE. This may break a particularly nasty winter or make a summer truly devastating...and its weaponized use can carry whole campaigns on its own; the potential outcomes presented certainly suggest different ones and can be used by any GM worth his craft to make plenty of follow-up modules. In fact, this could easily be the story for a whole campaign, should you wish to go that route. And yes, if you don't want such a game-changer in your campaign, you can easily destroy the item in a cataclysmic blast, which coincidentally (with minor modification) would make for a compelling adventure in the Plane of Shadows...

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are top-notch; I noticed no problematic segments. Layout adheres to a beautiful two-column full-color standard and the PDF comes fully bookmarked with nested bookmarks for your

convenience. The book offers a significant amount of gorgeous artwork and the cartography by Tommi Salama and Justin Andrew Mason deserve special mention: the maps are GORGEOUS. The inclusion of an isometric map (including a keyless version of it) render the map material of this book, at least in my opinion, absolute top tier.

But, know what? All of that wouldn't be enough, were it not for the crucial part: the writing. Jonathan G. Nelson & Stephen Yeardley have surpassed themselves here. The core authors of AAW Games deliver a perfect culmination of the development of the company in this module. With formal quality turned up to eleven, the duo has retained the unique feeling or realism blended with the fantastic; the fascination for these cultures that makes the module feel like exciting, fantastic, and strange archeology. The inclusion of material to occupy one's mind via several unobtrusive puzzles also improves the module's feeling of diversity beyond the varied encounters and hazards. However, the true accomplishment here is, much like in Stephen Yeardley's superb *C07: The Sussurus Tomb:* the fact that the players are rewarded for engaging in the indirect storytelling the complex offers

If all the above was not ample clue: I *LOVE* this module! It feels like a great culmination—at least up until now—of the development process of AAW Games as a company and the authors. While retaining the key strengths of the captivating cultures depicted, the diverse challenges herein are much more streamlined than in previous modules. Better yet, rewarding players who engage the indirect storytelling as well as the inspiring end of the module render this one an xceedingly well-rounded dungeon, perhaps one of the best in this size out there. My final verdict will clock in at 5 stars + seal of approval *and* a nomination as a candidate for my Top Ten of 2015: a wonderful tribute to Cliff "CJ" Jones, to whom this module is dedicated.

Endzeitgeist out.

Chronicle of the Gatekeepers Sidetrek: Speaking the Same Language

Publisher: LPJ Design
Reviewer: Thilo Graf
Rating: 5 stars out of 5

This installment of the chronicle of the gatekeepers campaign serial clocks in at 10 pages: 1 page front cover, 1 page editorial, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, 1/2 page advertisement, leaving us with 5.5 pages of content; so let's take a look!

This being an adventure-review, the following contains SPOILERS. Potential players should jump to the conclusion.

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Okay, only GMs around? There is something odd, about similarities between worlds when you think about it: from dominant races to linguistic similarities, there are parallels in spite of vastly diverging cultures. I mean, oddly, PCs did not have acclimation issues on NeoExodus, right? Well, Large-Biter needs the PCs to verify something; namely, whether the activation of the Nexus Gateway that brought them here was a fluke. Hey, if they're stranded on the other side, at least they're home, right? Pretty neat: If the PCs have played *In His Bad Books,* they'll have an easier time activating the portal, which turns out to be a Stargate-esque task of activating different dials to properly calibrate the portal.

Calibration is a tricky business and actually a fun, old-school-ish puzzle that rewards PCs for thinking about how the device works...and yes, they may, for a brief second, open a gate to a sun and be slightly toasted by the experience (they should thank the creators of these gates for the failsafes). Other failures like the void or other worlds may pit the PCs versus proteans or vespans, but at home, they will meet a local monk and prymidian bards. These beings from NeoExodus are exceedingly gifted polyglots and have determined that, on the PC's home planet, the similarities in languages and cultures are highly unlikely—so much so, in fact, that a common influence has to be assumed. Just as they're about to discuss this further, something emerges from the gateway: a creature that *WILL* require the assistance of the NPCs...or a quick escape. A Hound of Tindalos has tracked the PCs here, and even with their allies the PCs will be hard-pressed defeating this creature. That being said, escape back to NeoExodus is an option, though it might waste the portal, requiring another way home at some point.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good. Layout adheres to LPJ Design's elegant 2-column full-color standard for the series and the module comes fully bookmarked and in a second, slightly more printer- and mobile phone-friendly version.

Michael McCarthy and Louis Porter Jr.'s *Speaking the Same Language* is an inspiring sidetrek. Much like the previous installment, it has a unique and creative central premise: the activation of the gateway. In my opinion, this premise of gate activation alone is worth the asking price and can easily be scavenged for similar planar portals and gateways. The emphasis on intelligence gathering and some truly intriguing repercussions from the knowledge gained also render this brief module more fun that one would expect from its brevity. Finally, the extremely challenging final encounter is a nice reminder of the things that lurk out there and the fact that sometimes, escape may be the smartest move. All in all, a damn cool sidetrek and well worth 5 stars + seal of approval.

Endzeitgeist out.

Tomb Raiders

Publisher: Legendary Games
Reviewer: Thilo Graf
Rating: 5 stars out of 5

The second of Legendary Games' *Mummy's Mask* plug-ins clocks in at 34 pages: 1 page front cover, 2 pages editorial, 1 page hot-to-use, 1 page ToC, 1 page SRD, 1 page back cover, leaving us with 27 pages of content detailing the exploits of Lara Cro—wait, I'm just kidding!

The most interesting component of the *Mummy's Mask* Adventure Path—at least to me—beyond the focus on a kind of archeology-like theme, is the competition between teams of explorers. Alas, rival NPC groups take a lot of space to properly portray; this is where this book comes in. What we have here is an array of competing adventurer groups, ready to really sour the day of the PCs. The first is Eskelpian Acquisitions (Unltd.), led by the the alchemist Alermo Eskelpian. Including a rogue, a brawler, and a sorceror, this group is interesting in that it works like a slightly more professional murder-hobo group: they try to get the material and then get the hell out—preferably sans bloodshed, but if it can't be helped... Beyond that, their reliance on combat drugs adds an interesting exploitable twist to the team. One thing you'll note right from the get-go here is that the team has its character dynamics and methodology explained in lavish detail, a courtesy that not only makes the group more memorable, but also helps the GM properly portray them and their methods. Yes, this level of detail is provided for all groups.

The second group would be the Nazir family, united by their blood-ties. With several means of getting dupes... ahem, I mean "allies" to do their dirty work, a cultivated semblance of wealth, rogue, barbarian, sorcerer, and tracker make for a group tailor-made to fool others and get out. The barbarian has a new, unique rage power. One note to mention here about the sometimes rather hilarious quotes also provided for the respective characters: when Jaul Nazir begins a tirade on how the desert is alive...only to nonchalantly exclude the guy they just killed from the diatribe, you'll be smirking.

The third group, the Twilight Four, also have an intriguing angle: their relationship is, first of all, strictly professional and not based on sentimental concepts such as friendship. Instead, the daemon-spawn tiefling witch, brawler, skald, and bladebound magus are mostly driven by the agenda of the magus' blade, Nightshard, which sports a hunger for esoteric lore of all kinds. Ranging from CR 5–8, they are also some of the more competent competitors after the previous low level groups. The skald's statblock does have a very minor hiccup in the formatting of his hyperlinks, but nothing to truly fuss about.

As you may note, there's a trend going on here, from shady down the alignment axis; if the name was not ample clue, guess what? The Court of Slaughter is *not* a nice group. They are pretty much the opposite, consisting of a vampire cleric separatist, a mummified sniper stygian slayer, a skeletal champion bloodrager, and a good bard archivist. These undead menaces are exactly as deadly as you'd think and pitting their combined force against the PCs will make the players loathe these CR 12–9 villains even more.

Conclusion:

Editing and formatting are very good; I noticed no significant glitches. Layout adheres to the gorgeous, beautiful 2-column full-color standard of *Mummy's Mask* plug-ins; the PDF comes fully bookmarked for your convenience and with the well-made, unobtrusive hyperlinks that actually work and help. Beyond what may be one of the most beautiful layouts among the diverse array Legendary Games uses, the aesthetics department has done a great job here: each of the adventurer groups gets their own 1-page full-color depiction, all of which adhere to the high level of quality you see on the cover. This is a beautiful book indeed.

It is also a pretty long book: Not only are the 4 teams of tomb raiders distinct in methodology, flavor, and challenge, each of the characters has roleplaying potential galore and is memorable in some way—there is literally no filler NPC in here. Better yet, the mechanics supplement the characters well; from the combat-performance enhancing drugs to unique fighting styles, combo- and class archetypes used, the level of care and love that went into these NPCs is readily apparent. Jim Groves, Jonathan H. Keith, Benjamin Bruck, and Mike Shel deliver a truly inspired supplement I wouldn't want to miss from *Mummy's Mask* games; indeed, more so than in many Adventure Path plug-ins, these characters can be used in just about every circumstance, thus rendering this book extremely useful even in contexts beyond the Adventure Path. My final verdict will hence clock in at unsurprising 5 stars + seal of approval.

Endzeitgeist out.

THE PATH LESS TRAVELED #20: She's Got It! Yeah, Baby, She's Got It!
By Jacob E. Blackmon