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•	SagaBorn Basic Roleplaying Edition	Page 4
•	Interview with Tyler Vance	Page 5
•	Expanded Legacy Items	Page 13
•	Into the World: Elmhearth	Page 24



A SagaBorn Roleplaying Game Compatible Product

# SAGABORN BRP EDITION?

So it has been a busy month. I decided on May 1st that I was going to join in on the Chaosium Basic Roleplaying Universal Game Engine contest. They were looking for people to build a game with their core system. Chaosium released the BRP under the ORC license, so I was interested, but the thickness of the rulebook had turned me away last year. When someone brought the contest to my awareness in late April, I looked at the book again and realzied I had misunderstood what it was. The book is filled with a basic rule system and a ton of optional rules. For a variety of settings and eras. Basically, it is a massive book of "plug and play" rules for any tabletop game you can imagine. And I realized that I could easily port the story elements of SagaBorn into their system.

Well, 28 days later, I have turned in a rough draft and pitch for the contest, and I am worn out but excited. This doesn't mean an end to the d20 system (well, unless WoTC and HasBro pulls anymore OGL shenanigans). Even then, I could easily put out adventures in a very generic d20 system that would not touch their OGL.

What I did with BRP is pretty exciting, and I can see it growing and allowing a much deeper experience, with easier rules, than D&D d20 ever allowed.

If you want to follow along, you can find the Alpha PDF and latest Google Docs at www.sagaborn.com/sagabornbrp/

I also plan on starting a West Marches style living campaign to test the rules for my patrons over at www.patreon.com/sagaborn

I am always looking for the best way for people to have fun at the table, even when it means I spend a whole month in a dark room typing away to design an Alpha in 28 days!

-Mike



An interview with Tyler Vance

# BEYOND THE VOID WITH TYLER VANCE

Tyler Vance is an artist I connected with through the Vintage RPG Podcast community. I was stunned and in love with his artwork at first viewing. He is working on a new card game that incorporates this stunning work, so I asked if we could chat about it.

#### Mike:

Hey Tyler, thanks for joining me. I heard the game goes out for funding soon, so give me a pitch for what it is!

#### **Tyler:**

"VOID: The Frontier" is a set-collecting card game that features more than 50 of my original paintings and drawings.

My goal was to create a simple, accessible game that presented my artwork in a fun, new way and to new audiences. The deck is made up of 130 tarot-sized cards, 72 of which feature my paintings on almost the entire card face; in this way they are like small collectible prints.

I used the set-collecting mechanic of Monopoly Deal as a reference point for the rules, but added a few steps that makes it a bit more dynamic, such as a competition-based dealing of new cards. It's very accessible for the entry-level player, and it's variation in run time and outcome give it a real replayable value.

For those who just like the artwork, the aesthetics and the gameplay mechanics are enough to make for a fun experience. But for those who are into lore, the deck and instruction booklet are peppered with flavor text to reveal the world and story behind the game and images.

#### Mike:

It is such a good idea. I love collecting art artifacts, but my bookshelves are overlowing and my walls filled. This is such a great way to get an art collectable and it also be usable. Looking at your art style, and its deviation from the standard fantasy we often see in the industry, who were the artists that stood out to you in your youth? I am presupposing that you got pulled into the games by the art, and then found your artistic voice, which was sort of fantasy/sci fi adjacent.

#### **Tyler:**

Fantasy/sci-fi adjacent is a good way of putting it. Technically art came first - my serious attempts at drawing started when I was 5 or 6, and it was all about dinosaurs. I still have a drawing in storage



of a triceratops I did in the first grade, and if I do say so myself, it's pretty dang good.

But I started playing D&D not long after, not because I was attracted by the art, but because my older brother started DMing a group of us. But soon I became fans of artists like Jeff Easley and Keith Parkinson. There was a time I had the desire to become an illustrator for TSR, and I even wrote Easley and he wrote back a letter of encouragement.

But when I got into high school, my tastes

changed a bit and I thought about heading in a more fine art direction, and I eventually got a BFA and an MFA in fine art. When I finally started producing the kind of pieces I was happy with though, the imaginative and fictional aspects of my formative years became an integral part of my work.

#### Mike:

It's always so amazing to hear how people follow their creative hearts. I can see in your work how that path led you here. I did sort of the opposite. I loved drawing (instead of a triceratops, it



was Michael Jackson), but I saw other worlds in my head. I was an intense reader and was always attracted to Sci-Fi and fantasy. I wanted to write in those worlds and then illustrate them. I failed out of art classes in High School, while at the same time running an indie comic book company that cobbled together books at Kinkos. I went to college when I was 25 to get a BFA, and found a lot of resistance to my art there. But I had a few amazing teachers who pushed me to do whatever I wanted, which is why my portfolio looks like a madman, filled with an assortment of stuff that could be 10 different artists. But

that has led to happiness, so I know it's the right path.

So you mentioned Parkinson and Easley; did any other artists really influence your style? I could see some Chesley Bonestell in your textures. I am not sure if you are familiar with Lee Bontecou,

she was a big influence on my flying machine paintings, but I could see her design sense as someone you would be interested in.

#### **Tyler:**

Well I'll be damned, I just looked up both of those artists, and I wasn't familiar with either one, which is changing today. One of the things I love is discovering artists I never knew about, but should have. It's amazing that after all my schooling and being involved in the arts for so long, in my mid-40's I still discover artists that knock my socks off.

And it's interesting hearing about your journey and your academic experience. I didn't feel quite satisfied with my schooling, and most of the time it was frustrating for me. But it's hard to say in retrospect how much of all that was necessary to eventually lead to happiness, as it did for you - the broken road and all that.

As for artists that influence me now... I find the difference between who I would say is an influence and who other people see in my work interesting. If I were to just mention some all-time faves off the top of my head, I'd say Käthe Kollwitz, Walter Murch, Hyman Bloom, Goya, Jose de Ribera, Zdzisław Beksinski, and Odd Nerdrum.

But some current artists I've been dipping into are Allen Williams, Zoe Frank, John Jude Palencar, and Wayne Barlowe.

The artist that people tell me they see in my work the most is H.R. Giger. I don't mind the comment - I take it as a compliment - but it's interesting to me because I'm not a huge fan of his paintings. They're fine, I appreciate them, but they don't do much for me. (One exception to Giger's non-influence on me is the Space Jockey set piece from Alien, which was hugely formative for me). I also get people seeing Beksinksi in my work - again a huge compliment - but unlike Giger, I'm a big fan of his work.

#### Mike:

So what is your working process? Are you constantly snapping

pictures of cool rocks? Do they come to you in your dreams? These all feel very specific, like strange artifacts, and I would love to learn how they come into existence.

#### Tyler:

It's funny you should mention - I just got back from a trip to southern Utah where I gathered a few hundred reference photos!

My process has evolved over the years from just sketches. Lately I've been making mash-ups of various references, including photos from places I've been, my own collection of bones, skulls, odds & ends, art or natural history books I own, online images I can find, crude maquettes from cardboard and clay, and a healthy dose of imaginative improvisation - all to end up as a mock-up on Procreate which I then use to paint from. But even during the painting phase of the process, I rarely just rely on the mock-up and improvise a lot.

The actual painting process is mostly oil painting, though I don't always feel like I'm painting - many times it feels more like a combination of drawing and sculpture, carving and beating the hell out of the surface until it gets where I want it. Since I'm going for an artifact feel, I like to have a visual history of marks and layers.

#### Mike:

It's been a while since I used paint to discover things. These days, I am much more comfortable knowing exactly what I want to paint.

OK, let's jump back to the game. How did the art let you know it needed to be a game? Or was it more a drive to make a game that then made you look at your art and say, what could these do?

#### **Tyler:**

The paintings are first and foremost; I like them to speak on their own terms. In that sense, I consider myself more of a fine artist rather than an illustrator.

However, the Covid lockdown really got me to consider new avenues (as it did to all of us). I've never been one for the gallery scene, so I brainstormed on what I would call different "delivery systems" for what I do. How can I present my work to the audience in a more engaging way, rather than just hanging on a wall somewhere?

World-building has always been a passion of mine, and since I was young, I knew it would always be a part of what I do. But it's been on and off the backburner in my work, never materializing into something, well, material. That changed in 2020 when I started a series of art and lit booklets called "VOID: Records from the Frontier" that shed some light on a world that my work suggests. Almost from the beginning of that endeavor, I knew a card game would be another great fit, and in 2021 began playtesting on what now has become "VOID: The Frontier."

#### Mike:

So where can people follow or support you in this new venture?

#### **Tyler:**

The Kickstarter is live now and runs until June 27th here:

www.kickstarter.com/projects/2059246366/void-the-frontier

My website (which has a page about tue game): www.tylervanceart.com/

And I'm on Instagram at @trvart

#### Mike:

Thanks so much, Tyler! And I have already backed to get my copy :)

FUNDED

In less than 2 hours!

THE FRONTIER





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## EXPANDED EGACY AND MAGIC TEMS

# WRITTEN BY MICHAEL BIELACZYC, DANE CLARK COLLINS

The idea of legacy items came from the lack of story behind magic items in many tabletop games. I wanted to bring the story back to why an item has power. Would Arthur throw away Excalibur if he found a +2 long sword? Legacy items are meant to be a part of the character's story, to be a part of their saga, and to add to the legend.

#### TERMS:

Magic Item - An item imbued with independent magic. In Atheles, most magic items have charges.

Legacy Item - An item that gains power through its wielder. Artifact - A powerful relic, often a legacy item that has gained such fame it comes into a power of its own.

#### LEGACY ITEMS

Certain items gain power as the adventurer levels. These items are

a part of the adventurer's story. The famed sword, the lockpicks of luck, or the rope their mother gave them before they left home.

There are four types of Legacy items:

- Attack (up to 3)
- Defense (only 1 item allowed)
- Magical foci (only 1 item allowed)
- Wonderous item (up to 3)

Legacy items, while having magical abilities, do not detect as magic to spells or scrying.

Legacy items play three roles within the game. First, they add to the character's story. Just as the heroes level and gain powers, their items become more powerful and a part of their Saga. Second, it allows the characters to customize and build their characters the way they want to. Third, it expands the gameplay allowing characters to face bigger challenges from the StoryGuide.

Legacy item abilities match the total level of the character and are not based on when the item becomes a legacy item. For example, a longsword that becomes a Legacy item when the character reaches 4th level is a 4th level Legacy item. This means it gains both the Crit 19-20 range as well as the +1 and cold iron/magic bonus.

Legacy items do not retain their powers when they are separated from their owner. So a city guard does not get a DR 1, +2 sword when they take a weapon from a character. A Legacy item may become an artifact at some point, meaning it retains some or all of its powers independent of its owner. This is up to the StoryGuide.

Below are basic guidelines\* for Legacy items.

\*Some of the example items may have slight changes from the charts, and you should feel free to empower your player's items to make your game more fun.

### Standard Legacy Weapon Charts

Level	Advancement for Melee Weapons
1st	
2nd	Critical hit range: 19-20.
3rd	
4th	+1 to one Legacy weapon. Weapon damages as if made of cold iron/
	magic.
5th	
6th	Critical hit range: 18-20.
7th	
8th	+2 to one legacy weapon. Weapon damages as if made of Tritium.

Level	Advancement for Ranged Weapons
1st	
2nd	Critical hit range: 19-20.
3rd	
4th	+1 to one Legacy weapon, Ammo damages as if made of cold iron/magic.
5th	
6th	Critical hit range: 18-20.
7th	
8th	+2 to one legacy weapon. Ammo damages as if made of Tritium.

Level	Advancement for Armor
1st	
2nd	+1 to armor
3rd	
4th	1 Damage Reduction (DR)
5th	
6th	Imbued with a tier 2 ability (see below)
7th	
8th	+2 to armor

Level	Advancement for Magic Focus Items (Usable Only by Mages)
1st	
2nd	Imbued with a 1 mana spell. (Buff spells self target only. No spells with dice pools.)
3rd	
4th	Imbued with a 3 mana spell. (Buff spells self target only. No spells with dice pools.)
5th	
6th	Item can be called to its owner at any time. Imbued with a tier 2 ability (see below).
7th	
8th	Imbued with a 5 mana spell. (Buff spells self target only. No spells with dice pools.)

Level	Advancement for Wonderous items
1st	
2nd	Imbued with a 0 mana spell. Tier 1 ability or +1 to 1 skill.
3rd	
4th	Imbued with a 1 mana utility spell or tier 2 ability (see below)
5th	
6th	Imbued with a Tier 3 ability (see below)
7th	
8th	Imbued with a 3 mana utility spell or tier 4 ability (see below)

### TIERED LEGACY ITEM ABILITIES

Legacy items acquire abilities. You cannot stack the same ability, so be sure to choose multiple abilities as new Legacy items are acquired.

Example: Toryn's Boots of Agility give him +1 to Initiative. When he gets another Legacy item, he cannot choose an Initiative bonus again because they will not stack. At later levels, he may give it +2 to Initiative, but that will override the +1 rather than adding to it. Beneficial changes in Legacy items should be worked out between player and SG.

### 1ST TIER ABILITIES

- +1 to Initiative
- +1 to one of the following saves: Earth, Fire, Water, Ice, or Electricity
- +2 to Heroic Actions for a specific Ability

### 2ND TIER ABILITIES

+2 to Initiative

+1 to a specific Skill expertise. Examples: sneak/hide, pick locks, swim, jump, climb.

+2 to one of the following saves: Earth, Fire, Water, Ice, or Electricity Climb speed of half base speed Swim speed of half base speed

### 3RD TIER ABILITIES

+3 to Initiative

+3 to a specific Skill use. Examples: sneak/hide, pick locks, swim, jump, climb

+10 ft. to movement speed Climb speed equal to base speed Swim speed equal to base speed Warns of a specific danger, ex: ambushes or traps

### 4TH TIER ABILITIES

+1 to an Ability

+4 to Initiative

Half damage from: (Choose one) Earth, Fire, Water, Ice, or Electricity +1 AC

Regeneration: 1 HP per round unless damaged by fire or acid

**Other Legacy Items** - Other items can be legacy items; the GM and player should work together to define the powers of these items.



## **EXAMPLES**:

Items using variable mana spells denote the mana level of the spell in parenthesis.

#### MAGIC FOCUS ITEMS (ONLY USABLE BY A MAGE)

#### Battlemage's Bracer

Level 2 - Shield

Level 4 - Xavian's Warding Armor

Level 6 - Fear (mana 5)

Level 8 - Haste

#### Beastmaster's Stave

Level 2 - Resistance

Level 4 - Summon Creature (mana 1)

Level 6 - Hold Creature

Level 8 - Dominate

#### **Druid's Battlestaff**

Level 2 - Shield

Level 4 - Cat's Grace (Mana 3)

Level 6 - Bull's Strength (Mana 5)

Level 8 - Haste

#### Wondrous Items

#### Cloak of Terror

Level 2 - Daze

Level 4 - Fear (mana 3)

Level 6 - +1 AC

Level 8 - +1 Dex

#### **Circlet of the Protected**

Level 2 - Resistance

Level 4 - Detect Navirites

Level 6 - +3 to Knowledge: Planar

Level 8 - Protection from the Never

#### Lantern of the Dungeon Delver

Level 2 - Light

Level 4 - Invisible Minion

Level 6 - +3 to Awareness in mortal-made dungeons

Level 8 - Knock

#### Survivalist's Hat

Level 2 - Mystic Compass

Level 4 - Endure Elements

Level 6 - +3 to Survival while in the wilderness

Level 8 - Protection from Elements

#### **Ring of Protection**

Level 2 - Resistance

Level 4 - Shield

Level 6 - +10' movement

Level 8 - +1 AC

#### Cloak of the Hunter

Level 2 - Detect Poison

Level 4 - Expeditious Retreat

Level 6 - +3 to Thievery when sneaking and hiding

Level 8 - Protection from Arrows

#### **Detection Googles**

Level 2 - Detect Magic

Level 4 - Detect Secret Doors

Level 6 - +3 to Awareness if hero spends 5 minutes looking.

Level 8 - See Invisibility

#### Staff of the Wild

Level 2- Gain the Wild Empathy Talent

Level 4- Snare

Level 6- +3 to Persuasion checks with animals

Level 8- Speak with Animals (allows rudimentary communication with animals)

#### **Mask of Horror**

Level 2- Daze

Level 4- Cause Fear (mana 1)

Level 6-+1 AC

Level 8- Hold Creature

#### General's Helm

Level 2-+1 Initiative

Level 4- +2 Persuasion (to get point across)

(useful to get both allies and enemies to act as needed)

Level 6- Command (mana 1)

Level 8- Detect Thoughts

#### **Hunter's Boots**

Level 2-+1 to Initiative

Level 4- +2 to sneaking/hiding

Level 6- Cat's Grace (mana 1)

Level 8- Haste

#### **Ring of Elemental Protection**

Choose an element - Fire, Water, Air, Electricity, Earth

Level 2- Resistance

Level 4- Endure Elements

Level 6- Disperse Magic Talent (only to chosen element effects)

Level 8- Protection from the Elements only to chosen element effects)

#### **Dungeoneer's Charms**

Level 2- Detect Poison (bottle)

Level 4- Invisible Minion (hand)

Level 6- Detect Hidden (eye, mana 1)

Level 8- Knock (key)

#### Gloves of the Backstabber

Level 2-+1 Thievery

Level 4- Polymorph (mana 1)

Level 6-+1d6 Sneak Attack

Level 8- Invisibility

#### Giant's Girdle

Level 2- Resistance

Level 4- +2 to Str based Heroic Actions

Level 6- Enlarge (2x a day, 1 minute; wearer becomes double-

sized, +2 to Str, -1 to AC)

Level 8-+1 AC

#### **Amulet of the Changeling**

Level 2-+1 to Thievery: Disguise

Level 4- mimicry (Can change voice to sound like any known animal or person)

Level 6- Reduce (2x a day, 1 minute; wearer becomes half-sized,

-2 to Str, +1 to AC)

Level 8- Polymorph (mana 3)

#### **Ring of Shielding**

Level 2- Resistance

Level 4- Shield

Level 6-+3 Save vs. Magic

Level 8- Protection from Arrows

#### **Boots of Speed**

Level 2- Sprint Talent

Level 4- Expeditious Retreat

Level 6- Pass Without Trace

Level 8- Remove Paralysis

#### **Sneaky Boots**

Level 2- Run Talent

Level 4-+1 to Thievery checks involving sneaking and hiding.

Level 6- Climb speed equal to base speed.

Level 8-+1 to DEX

These dark red boots are worn by Elia, a elfling thief.

#### **Necklace of Planar Protection**

Level 2- Resistance (+1 to all saves)

Level 4- Detect Navirites

Level 6- +4 save vs fear and sanity effects generated by Navirites

Level 8- Protection from Navirites



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# **ELMHEARTH**

Statistics: Crime 1; Danger 4; Economy 2; Law 3; Knowledge 6;

Magic 6

Highest Stat is 10, lowest 1

Size: Hamlet Level: 1

Government: Democratic Co-op Economic System: Co-op Capitalist

Population: 30 (Diversity: 90% Teran, 4% Dwarf, 4% Faun)

Elmhearth was once an old Uthgard keep, but now the Wanderers use it as a base outside of the city.

It is run by Helfen, a veteran Wanderer.

#### **CURRENT DATE: 5709**

Refugees continue to come to Elmhearth, though the supplies and shelter are sparse. Most of this who come are those who would be unwelcome in Uthgard; heretic mages, dissidents, and ronin warriors.

Helfen and Martyn have decided on two things. The Wanderers need a stronghold out of reach of the city and a road to the west. They have assigned Garric to supervise expeditions to find both in the untamed Swordspyne Mountains to the west.

#### HISTORY Novro 21st, 5704: The Red Night

After the city fell to martial law by the Red Guard, many fled the city. The Wanderers became wanted criminals, so they and many others headed to Elmhearth. There, a small sanctuary was established, a camp for those displaced by the tyranny of the Red Guard.

#### NOTABLE LOCATIONS

- The Tower
- Iaross' Shoppe
- The Firelight Tavern
- The Cauldron
- Mother and Son Steelworks

# PEOPLE OF ELMHEARTH

Wanderers Helfen Iaross (Mage) Garric Loshuul (foreman)

# SUPPLIES AND TRADESMEN

Ferric Watoss (Trader) Gylas (Alchemist) Feena and Foel (Smiths)

#### **CITIZENS**

Gerey Soray
Tane
Tholas
Aegert
Wine Verras (Faun)
Here Verras (Faun)
Nichye Verras (Faun)
Eved
Wychtleue

Frictieue

Maly Teray

Joyce

Eanswild

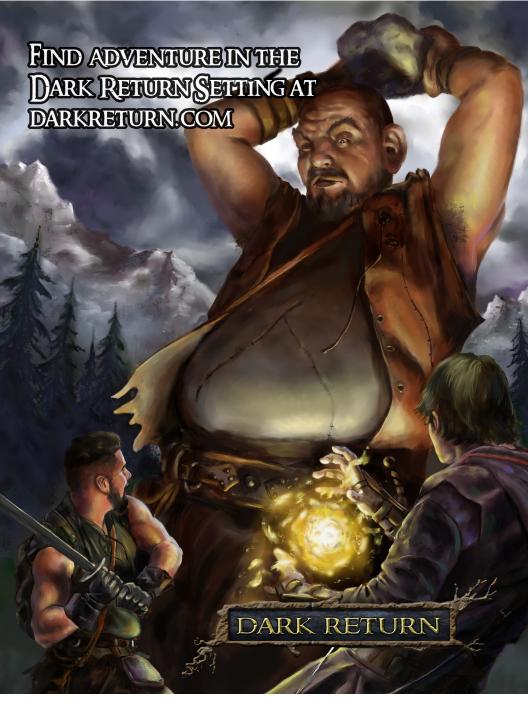
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Adventure in a world where magic has reawakened and demons lurk in every shadow. The Dark Return is a retro style fantasy setting for the SagaBorn RPG and all other TTRPGs.

# Is SagaBorn at your table?



It should be.

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