

COMBAT ADVANTAGE

#9

There's a lot of talk about how 4e doesn't make room for characterization, story, and thematic elements in character design. It's all about combat, combat, combat, and I disagree. It may be presented that way, but there is room for races who can demonstrate their plight against the forces of evil through their powers; or a class dedicated to freeing innocent people from slavery can grant bonuses for attacks against slave traders; and feats can be assembled to show a softer side to the burly fighter, his armor covered in dried blood holding a wounded bird in those massive hands. That was my motivation for this latest presentation – a playtest preview of the revenant paragon path.

All characters will die. Some of them well before they have a chance to make their mark. This is never the end. There is so much magic – arcane, divine, primal, and otherwise – that nothing can keep a good character down. But what affect does resurrection have on that character? Does he not continue to feel the cold touch of death well after he has reclaimed his body? How much of the horror of his own demise remains with him and haunts his visions? Or does he pursue his resurrection with more vigor and dedication than ever before, pushed by the knowledge of the emptiness waiting on the other side? This is what I wanted to present with this first resurrection paragon path and we're looking to see what you can come up with too.

Enjoy the revenant and let us know what works and what doesn't. Many of these path features and powers focus on specific targets related to the revenant's death or life quest and we need to know how well they work. Then we want to see what you can come up with – check out page 6 for details on our Open Call for **Risen: The Guide to Resurrected Characters**.

Todd Crapper

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Revenant Resurrection Paragon Path

Some heroes never get to make a choice on where they go in life. Some strive to rise to the ranks of a supreme knight and one day find themselves standing atop the podium, knelt before the king with his sword tapping both shoulders. Others find themselves in the ditch of a kobold's cave, their hands soaked in their own blood, wondering where it all went wrong. Death changes things.

Resurrection paragon paths – or resurrection paths, for short – are a specific type of paragon path by which your character must die in order to qualify. By allowing your character to take on this path, your character is resurrected in a new form (always appearing as an altered version of your former self) with new powers to take on your new purpose – revenge. Resurrection paths function exactly as a regular paragon path save for their requirements. All resurrection paths include a price: you must take on a life quest and dedicate your energies to completing that quest.

Life quests are connected to your death in many cases or they can launch from a previous adventure completed well before your demise. Because of your actions in life, forces beyond the mortal sway have chosen you to rise up and press on. Visions and signs, subtle or overt, provide clues which bring you closer to fulfilling your destiny. Once your life quest has been completed, you return to the ash from which you were pulled from and resume your afterlife as previously planned. These life quests are key to the success of a resurrection path and you should discuss such matters with your GM before taking on this new path. In many cases, the GM may already have a life quest in mind and provide you with this path without explanation – you'll just have to play to find out.

Timing a Resurrection Path

Resurrection paths are available to characters at 11th level but that does not mean you must die at that exact level. Setting the timing of a new resurrection path can be tricky at best and there should be plenty of discussion and agreement within the party for such things to happen. Ideally, your character was 9th or 10th level when he died and your GM can simply bump him up to 11th or wait until the next session where the remainder of your party makes the jump to 11th level themselves.

Higher level characters may simply assume this path at the level they died and continue on (from a technical point of view) as though nothing has happened. Since no character can have two paragon paths, the resurrection path must take the place of any initial paragon path.

DARK EMERALD

The revenant is a preview for our upcoming *Dark Emerald* PDF, *Risen: The Guide to Resurrected Characters*. Due to release in October 2009, we have provided the revenant as a playtest and sample for our Open Call (see page 6).

One of the unique aspects of the revenant is its ability to manipulate those specifically linked to its life quest, thereby rewarding the player's choices and roleplaying with in-game benefits. Investigating the warehouse and finding thugs from the guild that ordered your death not only moves the story forward but grants you bonus damage against every one of those thugs. Try it out and let us know how well it works.

Please send all comments to playtest@emeraldpresspdf.com.

REVENANT

"My death shall not be in vain!! My hands will soon wrap around their necks and choke vengeance into them."

Prerequisite: Con 13. Your character must have died prior to gaining this path.

There are forces in the universe with powerful agendas in mind. What was once failure shall now be their swift hand of retribution. Your death shall not interfere with that and shall empower you on your quest. Yours is an unlife of revenge – there is a horrible wrong to correct and it can only be achieved with vengeance.

Revenant Path Features

Undeath (11th level): You gain the undead keyword and so are considered an undead creature for the purpose of effects that relate to creature keywords. You are immune to poison but have vulnerable 5 radiant and resist 5 necrotic.

You are eligible for *resurrection feats* (see page 4). Until you select any resurrection feat, you continue to function as you did while living (such as eating and breathing).

Horrible Memories (11th level): Choose a symbol or have the GM choose one for you related to your life quest. Upon discovering this symbol, or any connection with it, it radiates an aura up to 5 squares alerting you to its presence. The strength of the aura may be modified by the GM according to the target's involvement. All you know is that the target projecting the aura is connected to your life quest. By spending an action point, you witness a vision of the target's involvement as a minor action.

If the symbol is connected to a living creature, that target is marked and takes +1d6 damage per round from a single attack of your choosing. This damage increases to +2d6 at 21st level.

You are eligible for *vengeance feats* (see page 5).

Curse of Agony (11th level): Once per day as a move action, you can place the Curse of Agony on a bloodied target marked by your Horrible Memories path feature. You must have complete line of sight on the target. Once activated, you are aware of the general direction of the target at all times anywhere on the same plane. If the target teleports to another plane, you can detect the location from where he teleported. You do not know distance, only direction.

Call of Undeath (16th level): You can use the *speak with dead* ritual without the Ritual Caster feat or spending any component costs once per day. You gain a +2 bonus to your Religion check and any Diplomacy checks a part of a skill challenge while using this path feature. If you use Call of Undeath on any triggering target of your Horrible Memories path feature, you gain an additional two questions.

Why A Paragon Path?

The idea behind resurrection paths is salvation. In my early years of roleplaying, my characters died. A lot. I had one guy in particular that I spent hours putting together, meticulously going over every single stat and selecting weapons, armor, and spells to make him stand out and take charge of the party.

He died in the first encounter. I wanted so badly for him to come back and get a second shot, but our GM was pretty thorough and said it was hard to bring back a character who eaten by a pack of hungry dire wolves.

While I was first conceiving the idea of resurrected characters, it seemed to make more sense for these paths to be epic destinies from a mechanical standpoint. When a resurrected character completes his life quest, he returns to death, thereby concluding his adventuring career as many epic destinies would. But an epic destiny always seems like the final step, whereas paragon paths are a new beginning and that's the feeling I want to invoke here. Resurrection paths are a means for saving those precious characters fallen in battle but oh so fun to play.

Todd Crapper

Revenant Powers

Sinner's Mark

Revenant Attack 11

Grasping the target around his neck, your rage leaks into his mind so he can see where it all went wrong... and why he must pay.

Encounter • Divine, Illusion, Psychic, Weapon

Standard Action

Melee weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs Reflex

Hit: 2d8 + Constitution psychic damage and target is stunned until the start of his next turn

Horrible Memories: If the target triggered your Horrible Memories path feature, you make the following secondary attack.

Secondary Attack: Constitution vs Will

Secondary Effect: The target witnesses a vision or your selection explaining your purpose with the target and his involvement in your quest. The target is instead dazed until the end of the encounter.

Brooding Aura

Revenant Utility 12

The power of your wrath seeps into their minds, imposing a sense of dread and realization as to why you have come.

Daily • Charm, Divine, Fear, Zone

Minor Action

Close burst 3

Target: All creatures within the burst.

Effect: All targets must make a Constitution vs Will attack against you as a minor action before they can perform any other action against you. Once a target has made this roll, he does not have to repeat it for the rest of the encounter.

Horrible Memories: All targets grant you combat advantage until the start of your next turn so long as at least one target in the burst has triggered your Horrible Memories path feature.

Deadly Frenzy

Revenant Attack 20

As one lifeforce fades away by your hands, its energy transfers to you and alters your fingers to claws swathing in all directions.

Daily • Divine, Polymorph, Weapon

Immediate Reaction

Melee weapon

Trigger: When you kill one creature.

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs AC

Hit: 2d8 + Strength modifier and 2 ongoing necrotic damage (save ends)

Secondary Effect: You can shift up to 2 squares before the attack.

Resurrection Feats

As time continues and your quest lurks across the horizon, your body will begin to decay further. While it becomes harder to conceal your undead nature, there are other benefits that come with living past your prime.

Many resurrection feats cost the permanent use of a healing surge in exchange for extraordinary undead abilities and benefits. Once you select a resurrection feat, you forever lose the use of a healing surge. Should you fall under circumstances where your resurrection feat is useless, you do not regain the lost healing surge.

Breathless (Resurrection)

Prerequisite: Con 15, undead, the permanent loss of one healing surge
Benefit: You no longer have to breathe air and do not suffer any effects from suffocation or drowning.

Rotter's Spoil (Resurrection)

Prerequisite: Str 15, undead, the permanent loss of one healing surge
Benefit: You spread the disease, *rotter's juice*, with any unarmed attack as a free action (see below).

Corpse Command (Resurrection)

Prerequisite: Cha 15, undead
Benefit: All undead take a -2 penalty to attacks made against you. As a minor action once per day, you can command an undead minion not to attack you until the end of its next turn. The minion's defenses are not penalized.

Useless Organs (Resurrection)

Prerequisite: Dex 15, undead
Benefit: Once per day, you can force a target to re-roll its damage against you from a single attack. You must accept the second roll, regardless of its outcome.

Necrotic Bliss (Resurrection)

Prerequisite: Wis 15, undead
Benefit: You can absorb necrotic damage and convert it to hit points so long as you suffer 5 points of necrotic damage or less for the round. All hit points are gained at the end of the round.

Un-Vitality (Resurrection)

Prerequisite: Int 15, undead, the permanent loss of one healing surge
Benefit: You no longer eat or sleep. When you take an extended rest, you only need to remain seated and stationary for 4 hours. You are alert and aware of your surroundings during this rest.

Rotter's Spoil

Your seeping gashes ooze within the wounds of your opponents and slowly cause their skin to rot.

Level 11+ Disease

Attack: +6 plus 1 per one-half your level vs Fortitude

Endurance: improve DC 20 + one-half your level, maintain DC 16 + one-half your level, worsen DC 15 + one-half your level or lower

The target is cured.



Initial Effect

The target loses one healing surge that it cannot regain until cured.



The target emits a foul stench. It grants combat advantage and takes a -2 penalty to all skill checks.



Final State

The target is slowed and suffers 2 points of ongoing necrotic damage every round.

Vengeance Feats

While your past is dreadful, it fuels your power and drive to push on. Your visions flash before your eyes as the target stands before you and there is more than one way to draw your rage from them.

Vengeance feats grant additional powers available through your Horrible Memories path feature. Locking onto those who are connected to your life quest, you can paralyze them in fear, track them down across great distances, or psyche them out with terrifying visions.

Deep Slash (Vengeance)

Prerequisite: Revenant, Horrible Memories path feature

Benefit: The triggering target is slowed and grants a +2 feat bonus to all Perception checks used for tracking.

Grip of Terror (Vengeance)

Prerequisite: Revenant, Horrible Memories path feature

Benefit: You can cause the triggering target of your Horrible Memories path feature to be restrained (save ends) rather than suffering bonus damage.

Beyond Pain (Vengeance)

Prerequisite: Revenant, Horrible Memories path feature

Benefit: You can ignore the damage and other effects of a single attack as an immediate interrupt. You are considered bloodied for the remainder of the encounter. This can only be used once per day.

Stench of Fear (Vengeance)

Prerequisite: Revenant, Horrible Memories path feature

Benefit: You can track the triggering target of your Horrible Memories path feature by scent in an aura of 5 squares around you. If the target falls within your aura, you are instantly aware of his location, even if he were invisible or obscured.

Witness the Final Moment (Vengeance)

Prerequisite: Revenant, Horrible Memories path feature

Benefit: The target must spend a minor action at the beginning of each turn or suffer a -2 penalty to its AC and Reflex defenses.

An Open Call for Risen

Now that you have a taste for resurrection paths, we'd like to see what you can do with them.

Risen is an upcoming PDF supplement for 4e from Emerald Press PDF Publishing detailing resurrection paths. Included will be the revenant, but we're looking for at least five more to include under the following conditions:

- Your resurrection path does not need to focus on undead creatures. You can convert resurrected characters into elementals, fey, shadows, demons, or anything else suitable to the story you have conceived for their resurrection.
- Resurrection paths will break from the mold and offer a second power source, if required. For example, your wizard (arcane power source) can become a revenant (divine power source) or be resurrected by powerful forces of nature (primal) to gain his newfound abilities. Be sure to choose an appropriate power source for your resurrection path.
- Your final submission must include at least six resurrection feats connected to your resurrection path. Resurrection feats allow a player to move closer to becoming a full version of their new type or origin and may include a permanent healing surge cost.
- You must provide one action point use for the resurrection path and it **MUST** be story related. See the Horrible Memories path feature for the revenant above as an example.

If you're interested in submitting your own resurrection path for **Risen**, please send an email to submissions@emeraldpresspdf.com with the tagline "Risen Open Call: (resurrection path name)" (insert your own resurrection path name in the brackets). Your initial proposal should be no more than two paragraphs describing the purpose behind your submission (e.g. power source, means of resurrection, etc.) and one fully detailed 11th level path feature. This will demonstrate your creative and mechanical design for the path. All initial submissions are due before June 30, 2009 and we will make decisions from there and notify all respondents promptly. Multiple proposals are welcome and appreciated, but please send them individually for organizational purposes on our end. You may even link your resurrection paths together should you wish and can find a practical means to do so.

If your submission is accepted, you will have 30 days from notification to submit your first draft and then 15 days from that if a revision is required. The final due date for final submissions will be August 15, 2009. All final submissions will be given an initial payment equal to \$0.01/word from the final submission and a commission of \$0.25 per copy sold for the life of the product. Payments will be made

Coming Up...

Our next edition of CA focuses on playing hooky... in a manner of speaking. Everything presented in our tenth edition has all been conceived at work/school/ whenever you're not supposed to think about gaming.

The feature presentation is a new PC race: the rawl. Savage warriors driven to the mountains by the expansion of the human kingdoms, these brutish humanoids were made for combat. Their coarse hair can render flesh and tear through some armors and lash out with a savagry unseen by civilized adventurers. And we present the first batch of submissions from our first Not Suitable For Work exercise.

So remember, kids: you can show up to work but you never have to actually "be" at work. ;)

through Paypal. Once initial payment has been made, your submission becomes the property of Todd Crapper and Emerald Press PDF Publishing with full design credit to the designer for the individual resurrection path(s) given.

Adding Unique Concepts

The style and format for resurrection paths are still up in the air and there is room for some unique concepts should you have some that can apply to your submission. For example, a new type of feat is allowed, but be prepared to have such concepts blended into those already in existence or submitted by another participant. If you have a unique concept for new rules or an expansion on what already exists, please include it in your proposal under a section called "Unique Concepts" in your email.

*Combat Advantage is a series of free supplemental material for the
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