

FIRST ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

COMBAT ADVANTAGE

A Free Monthly Publication from Emerald Press

EPIC TALENTS

Take skills to the highest peaks with this third and final installment of Talents. Includes 17 new powers for epic characters.



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Preview:
RISEN
THE GUIDE TO RESURRECTED CHARACTERS
Coming October 2009

COMBAT ADVANTAGE

August 2009

#12

Welcome to the first anniversary of Combat Advantage. It dawned on me just a week ago that CA has been going for a solid year now, evolving from just one idea (Power Knowledge) to an ongoing monthly free supplement for the 4th edition of D&D. Throughout this past year, CA has become a flagship for Emerald Press and my work in these pages has helped shape the products yet to come. I want to personally thank each and every one of you taking the time to check us out and bringing even the smallest element we offer to the table.

As I started to reflect on CA and everything that's come before, I realized there's a loose end to tie up – talents. Those of you who have checked us out before will remember CA4-Heroic Talents and CA5-Paragon Talents and have been waiting for this moment... Epic Talents. These enhancements to the skills of 4E are now complete with a little twist I hope you'll appreciate.

Once again, thanks to everyone who's supported us over the past year and I hope we can live up to any expectations you may have for us.

Todd Crapper
Editor-in-Chief
Combat Advantage

Epic Talents

The completion of an epic! Seventeen new skill-based powers linked to your power source in combat.

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Take Two: Power Knowledge

A second look at our first article, Power Knowledge.

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Special Preview: Risen

A sneak peek at the upcoming Risen for Emerald Press. Includes the complete working fluff text for the firebird

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Combat Advantage #12

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www.ninojelaga.blogspot.com

EPIC TALENTS

by Todd Crapper

“I am the guardian of the Unholy Tome, agent of his Lordship Aakron from the divine kingdom of Heaven, and bane of all dragons. I think I can pick a simple padlock...”

- A typical epic character



When you stand before the vastness of the astral plane, hold your blade against the forces of pure damnation in the layers of demons, and venture into the chaotic mass of confusion and devastation in the Far Realm, you have become more than just a hero. You are a legend and legends should be able to perform skills unlike no other.

Epic talents are a continuation of heroic and paragon talents presented in earlier issues of CA. Substituting utility powers, they function exactly as any other class power but with a direct connection to your trained skills. Providing more than just a boost to your skill checks, talents allow you to accomplish feats of strength, agility, and knowledge far beyond those of your comrades – they are an extension of your training and dedication to your craft. Epic talents, however, offer a more precise use of your experience. Each epic talent is tied to a specific power source and can be used in combination with any other powers connected to that power source. For example, an epic talent in Acrobatics allows a martial character to safely leap out of or into range of his opponent without granting an opportunity attack; primal characters trained in Nature can pick up a weakness in their target through smell and use it against them with their first attack power in an encounter; and divine characters can use healing surges on the dead with an epic talent for their Heal skill. There are even two talents provided for the psionic power source. Connecting these power sources and their functioning abilities to talents allows your skills to endow your fighting skills in ways never possible before.

All talents presented below are available only to epic characters with access to class powers from the listed power source (martial epic talents are only for martial characters, divine talents for divine characters, etc.). For details on heroic and paragon talents, download a copy of **Combat Advantage: Volume One** from our website (www.emeraldpresspdf.com) or any OneBookStore locations.



ACROBATICS

Your body is taut, your muscles stretched to their peak. You can leap like a cat, dodge an arrow without thought, and somersault across a wooden plank set across a bottomless pit. Your exploits have tested your skill in Acrobatics to the maximum and there is rarely a fight in which you do not perform at least one acrobatic stunt. Agility has made you a deadly opponent never to be trifled with and may the gods help those who cannot hold you down.

Midair Strike

Acrobatics Talent (Epic)

Spinning endlessly, you strike your opponent across the face and land safely out of harm's way.

Daily • Martial

No Action Personal (special)

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Acrobatics.

Effect: You leap a number of squares equal to half your speed immediately before or after making an attack with a martial at-will power. You do not grant an opportunity attack and can only move the remaining half of your speed as your move action until the start of your next turn.

You may choose to forfeit your move action for one of the following benefits to your at-will attack power:

- Gain a +2 power bonus to your attack roll;
- The target is stunned until the start of his next turn.
- The target is pushed one square

ARCANA

There is more to the multiverse than passages from ancient tomes can ever divulge. You have seen all of existence with your own eyes, touched the elements, and manipulated reality with nothing save the power of thought. Your mind has expanded to create new concepts and understandings on the workings of magic and you can find incredible ways to harness your spells with renewed vigor.

Arcane Surge

Arcana Talent (Epic)

Not even a being of the Elemental Chaos can resist your magic!

Daily • Arcane

No Action Special

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Arcana.

Effect: You can inflict damage with an arcane at-will or encounter power against a target normally immune to your attack. This talent nullifies any resistances or immunities for a single attack.

ATHLETICS

There is strength in more than just physical prowess and you have learned to tap into the essence of primal spirits to boost your power. Whether it comes from the spirit world, a beast form, or raw anger, you have learned to explode in a frenzy of indisputable effort when others would stay down.

Never Stay Down

Athletics Talent (Epic)

Heaving yourself back to your feet, a bellowing scream is followed by a mighty swing of your weapon.

Daily • Primal

Standard Action

Melee 1

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Athletics and you must be prone.

Target: One creature

Effect: You leap to your feet on the same square and are no longer prone. You can attack the target with a primal at-will power.

Secondary Effect: You can push the target one square as a move action following your initial attack.

BLUFF

A quick glance to the left, a side step to the right and a twitch of the wrist are all you need to send your opponent in the wrong direction and leave the perfect opening for your next strike. With a well-placed spell, you can accomplish even more than that and enhance your training in deception to mimic the abilities of the most deceptive creatures.

Displacement Aura

Bluff Talent (Epic)

Your opponent cannot see the real you, only the twitching haze surrounding you.

Daily • Arcane, Illusion

Minor Action

Personal

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Bluff.

Effect: Choose a single target in your line of sight. You gain a +2 power bonus to your AC and Reflex defenses with this target. The first time the target misses, you can use an available at-will or encounter power as an immediate reaction.

DIPLOMACY

Negotiating with royalty might have been your strength on the Known World, but they won't cut it out on the planes. Genies, devils, and angels are far craftier than your average noble and they never deal with paltry mortals from the Known World. To barter with these creatures, you need a presence greater than your own to not only get your foot in the door, but to speak words of sense and reason suiting their status as immortals.



Divine Presence

Diplomacy Talent (Epic)

The power of your voice resonates for all to hear, spoken with they clarity and devotion of a sermon befitting your god.

Daily • Charm, Divine, Implement

Minor Action Close burst 10

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Diplomacy.

Target: All creatures in the burst.

Attack: Diplomacy vs Will

Hit: The target is stunned until the start of your next turn or the target is attacked by an ally. You gain a bonus equal to your Wisdom modifier to any Charisma-based divine power.

DUNGEONEERING

No dungeon is beyond your skills; you have mastered the art of the dungeon crawl and lived to bear witness to numerous amazing discoveries. With each danger you live through, a keen innate sense of your surroundings develop and become augmented by your grasp of the arcane through spontaneous visions of the future.

Flash of Danger

Dungeoneering Talent (Epic)

Rounding the corner, a flash of white light blinds your mind and you see the creature tucked in the shadows preparing a spell.

Daily • Arcane

Immediate Interrupt Close burst 10

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Dungeoneering.

Trigger: At least one undetected target takes a standard action in a surprise round.

Target: All enemies within the burst.

Effect: You are instantly aware of the target and make a melee or ranged basic attack against him and can take a single action in the surprise round.

ENDURANCE

Every battle has left a scar and you can count the number of times you have died or come close to death with two hands. Yet still you survive and carry on for at least one more adventure. When your body feels weak and your mind wishes for nothing more than the peaceful sleep of death, your faith carries you, coaxing you further than you might achieve on your own.

Higher Power

Endurance Talent (Epic)

Your god calls to you in words of power, granting you renewed strength and vigor.

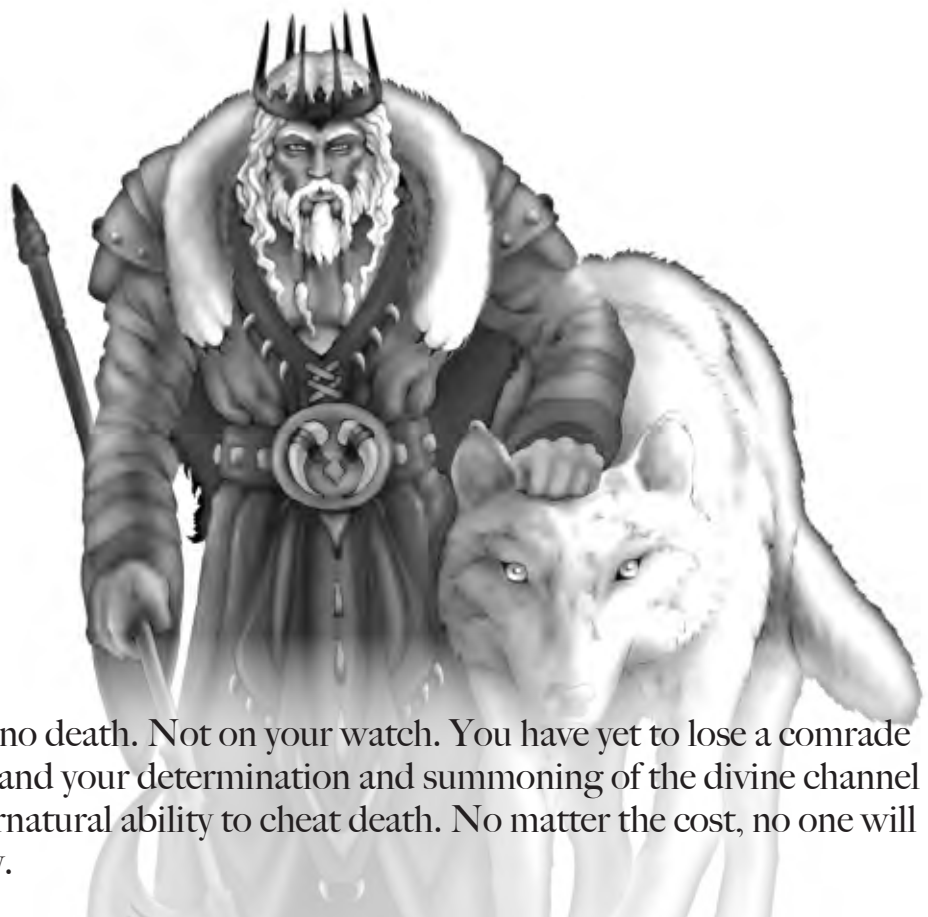
Daily • Divine

Immediate Reaction Personal

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Endurance.

Trigger: You are reduced to 10 hp or less.

Effect: You use a healing surge to recover hit points and regain the use of a spent divine encounter or daily power.



HEAL

There is no death. Not on your watch. You have yet to lose a comrade in battle and your determination and summoning of the divine channel the supernatural ability to cheat death. No matter the cost, no one will die today.

Reach Into The Brink

Heal Talent (Epic)

Raising your fist in the air, you slam it down on your ally's chest and restore life where there was once none.

Daily • Divine, Healing

No Action

Special

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Heal.

Effect: You can use any divine healing power on a deceased ally so long as the ally has not been dead longer than one round. The deceased ally is brought to 0 hp then given the benefits of the chosen healing power.

HISTORY

There is history to be read, history to be discovered, and history to be made. There is no source greater than the originators, those individuals behind the actions and the structure in which they took place. Through your wand, staff, orb, or other implements, you can tap into the mind of a resident or speak to the walls of an ancient keep to witness these events firsthand.

Bear Witness

History Talent (Epic)

Nothing tells you more than those who were there.

Daily • Arcane, Conjuration

Minor Action

Melee touch

Prerequisite: You must be trained in History.

Target: One creature or an occupied space.

Effect: You gain all knowledge from a single History check, regardless of its DC.



INSIGHT

Control of your mind grants control over the mind of others and psionics grants you such power. It allows you to “see” beyond the nervous gestures and fidgeting others must use to infer the intentions and desires. You know them.

Past the Veil

Insight Talent (Epic)

You can feel his brain throbbing and every thought is a beam of light across the frontal lobe.

Daily • Psionic

Move Action Ranged 10

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Insight.

Target: One creature

Attack: Charisma vs Will

Hit: You switch initiative with the target and make a melee basic attack. You can take all remaining actions as if you were on your original initiative result. You and the target now attack on your new initiative results.

INTIMIDATE

The snarl of a lion, the growl of a wild dog, and the roar of a dire bear are your inspiration. Their presence lies all around you, lured to reveal their essence by the thrill of battle and the hunt. You allow these essences into your body, filling you with a rush of adrenaline and bloodlust all too visible for your opponents.

Snarl of the Beast

Intimidate Talent (Epic)

You flash your teeth and growl with the roar of the beast, throwing off your target's aim.

Daily • Primal

Immediate Interrupt Ranged 5

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Intimidate.

Target: One creature

Attack: Intimidate vs Will

Hit: You can choose a single attack from the target and force the target to re-roll the attack.

NATURE

The forest speaks to you through the leaves blowing in the wind. The blowing sands of the desert hiss secrets in your ear. Waves lapping against the rocks cry out their stories. You are in touch with the natural world, your birthplace and kindred spirit. You can smell every creature who ever walked her domain and there are few who can mask their escape from you.



Scent of Prey

Nature Talent (Epic)

Picking up the trail of your quarry, you can smell his weakness and will use it against him.

Daily • Primal

Minor Action Personal

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Nature.

Requirement: You must be tracking the target.

Effect: You gain a +5 power bonus to your first attack against the target you are tracking.

PERCEPTION

The darkness is your ally and the mists hold no secrets. Your survival instinct kicks in as the danger approaches, leaving no stone unturned. There is no magic in your keen eyes or divine intervention as you rub your fingers along the walls – you have taught yourself through practise, experience, and more importantly, success. All you need is the slightest movement in the corner of your eye to alert your body and react.

Dangerous Impulse

Perception Talent (Epic)

Reflected in the mirror, you catch sight of a figure creeping up behind you.

Daily • Martial

Immediate Interrupt Personal

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Perception.

Trigger: At least one enemy attacks in a surprise round.

Effect: You can shift a number of squares equal to half your Dexterity modifier before the first standard action taken by an enemy in an encounter. You no longer grant combat advantage to a target attacking in a surprise round. If a target's attack misses, you gain a +5 power bonus to your next attack to that target.

RELIGION

You have dedicated your life to the word of your deity and fought hard to maintain the vision laid out before you. More importantly is your knowledge of the opposing beliefs; those sworn to burn all you have vowed to defend. Know your friends, study your enemies.

Clerical Damnation

Religion Talent (Epic)

Your faith is a sword aimed directly at the holy symbol suspended around his neck.

Daily • Divine, Implement

Immediate Reaction Special

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Religion.

Trigger: You hit with a divine at-will attack power against a target using a holy symbol as an implement.

Effect: You inflict maximum damage as if you rolled a critical hit. If you actually rolled a critical hit, you inflict an additional amount of damage equal to your critical bonus damage for your implement.

STEALTH

There is the ability to remain unseen and the power to make you invisible. Deception lies in more than shadows and silence, it also lies within the perception of the observer. Trick the mind into forgetting a misfired arrow ever happened and you'll be the envy of every assassin in the land.

Wipe Clean

Stealth Talent (Epic)

As the target turns to see the bolt fly past his face, you remove the image from his mind and make him never realize how close he came to dying at that moment.

Daily • Psionic

Immediate Interrupt

Area 2 within 15 squares

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Stealth.

Trigger: You must have missed a melee or ranged attack while the target granted combat advantage and was previously not alerted to your location.

Attack: Intelligence vs Will

Hit: The target remains unaware of your location or the missed attack but will react accordingly if the next attack misses again.

STREETWISE

You've made a name for yourself and can walk proudly among kings and ambassadors of all the planes. Countless lives remain today because of your actions and this infamy works to your favor. Sharing the table with a legend makes anyone with a secret eager to spill his guts just for the satisfaction of knowing they spoke to someone as grand as yourself. These secrets can give you the edge when you meet the one you've been looking for.

Achilles' Heal

Streetwise Talent (Epic)

You can see his weak point and it's unguarded.

Daily • Martial

No Action

Special

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Streetwise and made a successful Streetwise check against the target prior to combat.

Target: One creature

Effect: Choose one of your martial encounter powers. If you miss with that power when attacking the target, you inflict half damage.

Special: You can only use this talent against one creature at a time. If you select another target for this power, you cannot use it against your previous target.

THIEVERY

A weapon is not a weapon until someone holds it. Before that, it's an unprotected item and the ploy for a deceptive disarm or a strap across the wrist to stall them just long enough for you to make your next strike.

Slip Under Guard

Thievery Talent (Epic)

You cut the strap on his quiver, slip the dagger from her belt, or bind one hand behind their back.

Daily • Martial

Minor Action Melee 1

Prerequisite: You must be trained in Thievery.

Target: One creature

Attack: Thievery+2 vs Reflex

Hit: You can disarm the target, remove an unused weapon or item from the target's possession, or prevent the target from using an off-hand weapon until they make a saving throw.



Todd Crapper is the Editor-in-Chief for CA and Head Honcho (I can't come up with a title I like without going "President") for Emerald Press RPG Publishing. Epic Talents is the completion of an idea almost a year in the works as a supplement to the skill system in 4E. Now this beast can be laid to rest... and resurrected later.

Thanks to Shawn and Tim for having a look.

EPIC REWARDS

www.emeraldpresspdf.com/epic

Roleplaying is a community event; it requires multiple people working together to have a good time. Publishing roleplaying material is very much the same; it needs the input of the customers to make a better product. Our new EPIC Rewards program is designed specifically to give incentive and appreciation for more than just buying our books.

EPIC Rewards members earn experience points (XP) towards a level of customer service, each level offering more benefits, freebies, and discounts. You collect XP through a variety of ways, such as...

- Purchasing any Emerald Press product with the EPIC Rewards logo inside;
- Submitting an approved article for Combat Advantage;
- Contributing to our Not Suitable For Work (NSFW) exercises and more for having your submission selected for CA;
- and even for playtesting upcoming EP releases.

We have already started collecting XP from submissions, NSFW posts, and others over the past few months but now we need to get names to go with the rewards. Click on the coupon below and sign up for a chance to gain 100 XP to start.



Your purchase of this Emerald Press product gives you 100 XP towards your EPIC Rewards membership.

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TAKE 2: POWER KNOWLEDGE

It seems fitting to do this now as CA reaches one year...

Power Knowledge was the first article provided in Combat Advantage and there has been some discussion on alternate and improved version of this variant rule. Designed as a means to have more class powers available for selection, you are granted an additional number of powers based on your Intelligence modifier. These bonus powers work much as if the daily spells of a wizard's spellbook and you have to choose which powers to use for the day.

To encourage such discussions and demonstrate the wide variety of possibilities for your 4E game, we're starting up a new series in CA looking at previous editions to offer variant possibilities. Let's call it Take Two.

It all started with a post on EN World by **CapnZapp** back in the beginning of June...

Don't know what discussion/feedback you've gotten on this one, EP, but I must say there are several "thirdeditionisms" and design mistakes.

In no particular order:

** keying the mechanism on Int alone. In fourth edition, it's easy to create a character with Int 10. Not because you are power gaming or using Int as a dump stat, but because you have chosen a race-class-build combo that simply isn't designed to gain anything out of Intelligence. All these characters (that are balanced in the normal game) suddenly lose out of the pdf's rather significant advantages. Why? And why is the feature designed so that the class that already is the most flexible is the one that gains the most flexibility (Wizard)?*

In short, thinking "this feature depends on intellectual capacity and memory and therefore keys off Intelligence" is not good 4E design. Look at Forgotten Realms for a much better solution, and use "best mental ability" instead. Allowing a character to use Wisdom or Charisma is much more inclusive, and (I believe) there are no builds that actively discourage dumping all three mental stats.

The point isn't to ensure all characters are included, but all builds. Individual characters built with 10 Int, 10 Wis and 8 Cha still lose out; but that's a much smaller problem - because (again, AFAIK) that's the player's choice; not the build telling him so.

He had a very good point and there was likely reason why Power Knowledge had a little "thirdeditionism" to it: it was the first 4E thing I'd ever thought out. I was still in that phase of working my way from one edition to another after discussing it with a buddy in my group one night. With a better understanding of the game now than before, it was very true that all ability scores have a part to play in classes and PK was denying itself to those who truly needed it.

With a suggestion from **Stalker0** (who has quite a few good pieces for 4E – check out any of his threads on EN World), we present the second take of Power Knowledge.

POWER KNOWLEDGE (Revised)

Power knowledge refers to the number of powers a character knows compared to the number of powers used per day. Martial characters have trained themselves in more than what they can produce at any encounter but need to recite their lessons and practice maneuvers; arcane characters review their spellbooks or meditate on the astral energies around them; while divine characters fall deep into prayer with their deities to recollect their role in the universe.

Power Knowledge: You know an additional number of powers equal to their second-highest key ability modifier. For example, if you are a ranger with a Dexterity of 18 and a Wisdom of 16, you would use your Wisdom modifier for gaining power knowledge. These additional powers do not increase the number of powers used per day, simply the number of powers known to the character. As characters increase in level, they teach themselves to put aside previous powers, losing touch with their original lessons while taking on new ones.

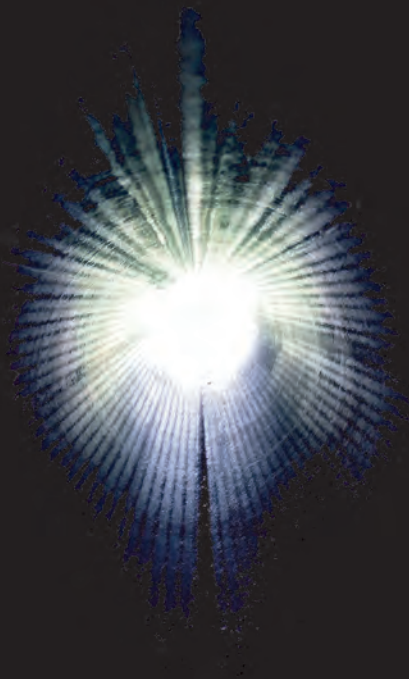
Beginning characters select their additional powers during character creation, but this can be put off until higher levels when a new power catches a player's attention. After an extended rest, the character must select which powers he will have active for the day. You can default to your previous day's selection until you choose to select new powers at the start of the day.

If you have issues or comments on any issue on CA, let us know. Nothing is ever perfect and there are always alternate uses for any rule ever developed - we want to provide as many options to our players and GMs as possible. Email them to us or post them on EN World to start a discussion and get the ball rolling.

Special Preview:

RISEN

THE GUIDE TO RESURRECTED CHARACTERS

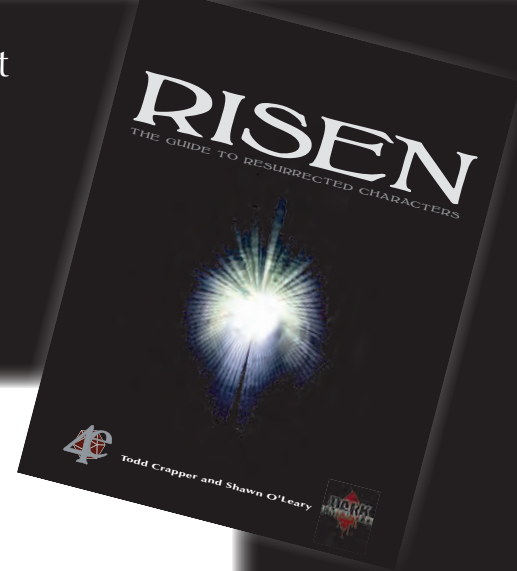


Todd Crapper and Shawn O'Leary



October 2009
PDF and POD

Risen: The Guide to Resurrected Characters is a 4E supplement for dead characters. Lost your paladin to a fall from the cliff? Was the rogue killed by the marshall? Has your wizard never made it through the portal with your party? Seven resurrection paths bring them back from the dead with new powers and unique roleplaying opportunities.



Preview: The Firebird

“Here.” Kanon slid his backpack off his shoulder and let it crash to the ground.

Farlane and Reynolds looked at each other then back at Kanon. Neither one of them so much as jiggled their packs.

“Uh, there’s nothing here,” Farlane spoke up after a short pause. “It’s just a wheat field.”

“Perhaps now, but it wasn’t always.” Kanon continued to prep himself for battle, removing all bulk and excess weight to set against the adjacent tree. “We should get ready.”

Reynolds took a turn now, his bardic charm still attempting to penetrate that unbreakable determination. “Are you sure about this, Kanon? This is all just a little sudden and it’s a little odd for you to know all about this... what is he called again?”

“Tyrentil’xaax, Destroyer of Worlds.” Kanon never turned back towards his comrades, never took his eye away from the swaying field of wheat before them.

“Well, impressive as it is that you can say that name without breaking a beat, maybe that fall from the bridge really... you know... did a number of your head.” Reynolds placed a gentle hand on Kanon’s shoulder and turned to Farlane for support.

“He’s right,” the paladin pitched in. “No sooner did you climb back up from that chasm did you start spouting on with this Tyrenkackil-creature and how he was going to rise shortly. And the only reason we’ve been humoring you this long is because all this just happens to be on the same path as Waterde...”

The ground shook. Leaves were tossed from the adjacent tree along with acorns and a giant cloud of dust rose from the centre of the wheat field. By the time the earth stopped shaking, Farlane and Reynolds stood dumbfounded behind Kanon, now fully armed and ready for battle.

“What in the nine layers of Hell was that?” Reynolds whispered.

“Tyrentil’xaax,” Kanon answered. “He knows I’m here.”

The paladin and the bard drew their weapons and quickly tossed aside their backpacks. As the earth erupted into a castle-high column of packed soil and flailing limbs of tree roots and stone, Kanon stepped forward and summoned wings of holy fire from his back.

Sprouting outwards, they protected his allies as the incredible force of the Destroyer of Worlds rose one final time...



Below is a working copy of the descriptive text for the firebird, a resurrection path from Risen. This is still in editing phase, but we put it here to let you have a taste of what the firebird can do.

Did anyone say “fly?”

FIREBIRD

“Fire is not the elemental form of death – it is the essence of renewal. With my flames, I shall restore peace and order.”

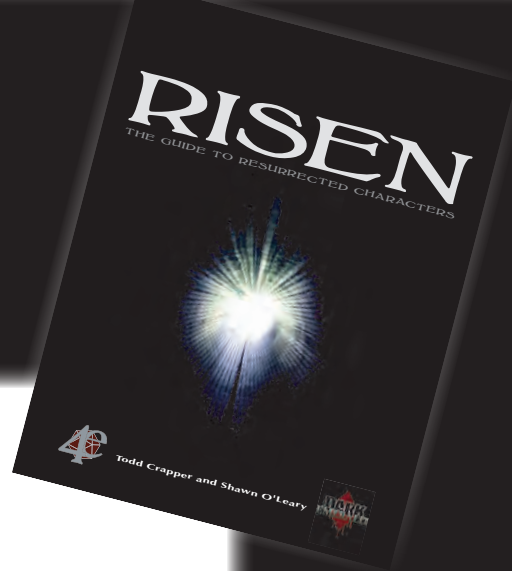
No greater symbol for rebirth and renewal exists than the phoenix. Scourge of the undead and protector of raw nature, the phoenix is drawn to the death of druids, wardens, and other mortal creatures killed protecting rare creatures and sacred groves. As the deceased hero stands before the Hall of the Dead to await his fate, the phoenix scoops him up from an uncontrolled destiny and grants him the power of primal fire.

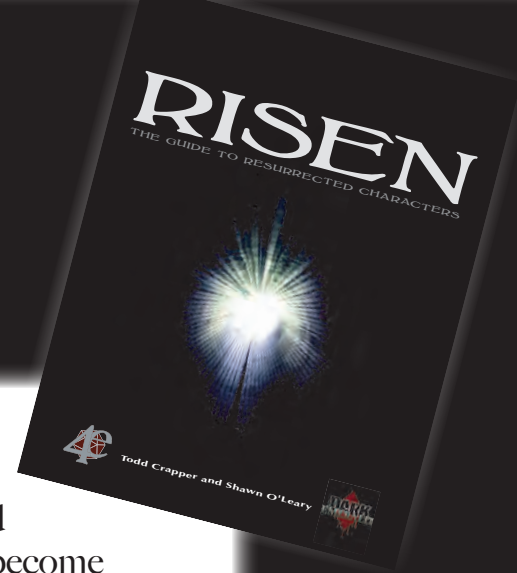
Firebirds act as avatars under the will of the phoenix. Sworn to protect pristine landscapes, lush forests, and repel primordials and their chaotic influences from the natural world, they are charged with a sacred duty as their life quest. They appear just as they did in life save for an incredible image of fiery wings across their shoulder and backs when their powers are unleashed. As they unleash their power in battle, these tattoos emit an orange glow and leave no doubt as to the origin of their newfound power.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

As the firebird rises from the ashes and reclaim his stake on life, he or she will eventually discover an arcane tattoo of fiery wings sprawling across their shoulder blades – the Mark of the Phoenix. As they increase in level, this tattoo will grow in size and can even wrap itself around the firebird’s shoulders towards their chest, morphing into wings of true fire when using their *glide* or *wings of the phoenix* powers. For every abomination they kill, a new marking appears on their body (player’s choice for appearance and location of the marking) declaring their victory over the primordial’s nihilistic minions.

There are otherwise few physical variations to the firebird from his previous life until he or she unleashes their newfound powers. As the battle rages on, their hair begins to rise and fall as licks of flame in a campfire and their bodies emanate an aura of increasing heat. Upon activating their path features and powers, their eyes glow white-hot. As combat closes, these alterations subside and the firebird returns to his or her normal appearance.





ROLEPLAYING A FIREBIRD

Merging with the essence of a phoenix endears the firebird with knowledge and understanding of the true power of primordials beyond the scope of an ordinary mortal. With such knowledge, a firebird may become distant and absent-minded at times. His dreams at night are filled with visions of deities and elemental beasts battling over the chaotic soup of the Void before it was formed into the Known World. During their waking hours, they are comforted by the presence of fire, even to wave their hands through it and feel the searing warmth of its embrace.

Becoming endowed with a phoenix grants the firebird an incredible appreciation for life and all living creatures. They tend to the sick, care for the wounded, and preach the meaning of the gods. Tales of the phoenix and its encounter with the gods, primordials, and its battles with the abomination are spoken like gospel with a deep appreciation for the will of the gods and their desire to give life to the creatures who dwell on the backs of the fallen primordials. They view anyone who would snuff out a creature's life for their own goals and pleasures as unfit to exist, unleashing their fiery wrath with full force.

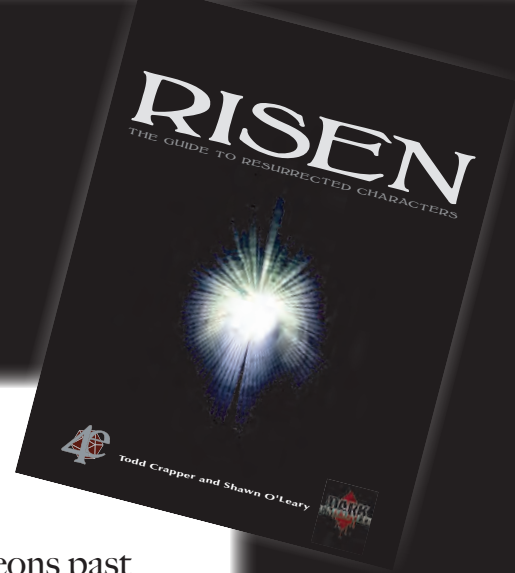
THE FIRES OF WAR

Returned to life by the healing powers of the phoenix, a firebird has been given a mission of utmost importance. As a direct result of the undertaken quest that claimed his or her life or chosen for their assets and ambitions in sync with the phoenix, the firebird has demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice all in the name of victory. This voluntary sacrifice is the beacon for the phoenix and the source of its selection in choosing the firebird. With its powers granted, the phoenix summons the firebird to complete various important tasks and quests.

Abominations: These servants of the defeated primordials are the bane of the firebird and the primary purpose of his or her return is to wipe them out. As the phoenix stood toe-to-toe and returned primordials to their prisons, so too is the firebird charged. As the firebird's infamy and deeds grow, it does not take long for the abominations to seek him or her out in the hopes of flailing their smoking corpse across the Known World as a premonition of their apocalyptic return to power.

Protection of Life: The reinvigorating powers of the phoenix flow through their blood and all firebirds are sensitive to the ebb of life in all creatures. While they are willing to kill in the name of their cause, they are particularly dedicated to the





protection of those unable to defend themselves from powerful forces. Oppression and destruction are the tools of the wicked and shall not be tolerated, no matter the cost.

They are also extremely loyal companions and many firebirds in the eons past have given their lives to complete the quests of another. Firebird adventurers may undertake a mission to prevent the rise of another abomination, yet they never venture alone and such loyalty is never forgotten. Allies are a crucial element to adventuring; friends are those worth dying for.

Scourge of the Undead: Only one force of evil abhors the firebird as much as abominations: undead. Not for the violation each undead creature brings to the world, but for the forced servitude inflicted on the deceased by the will of another. While life is precious, death is inevitable for all creatures not blessed with the ability of regeneration and subjugating another creature into an unlife is a crime against all living creatures. The firebird seeks to release the undead from their prison and allow them to continue on their journey into the afterlife.

Those who would seek the power of unlife willingly face the full wrath of a firebird's power. Unable to appreciate their own life, they are unfit to assume their new form in the eyes of the phoenix and must be reduced to cinders.

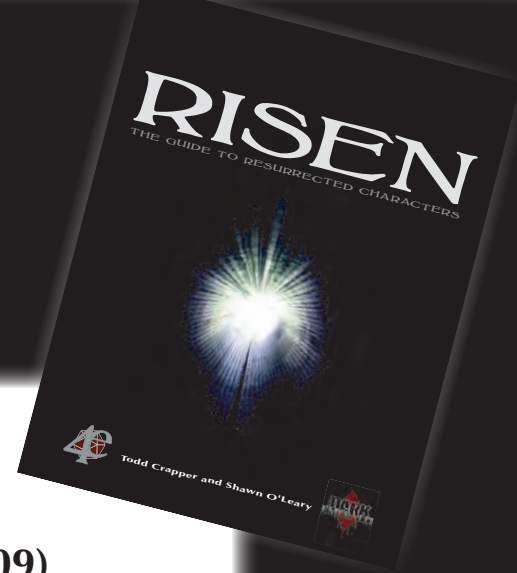
IN THE END...

There comes a time when the mortal vessel of the firebird can no longer be pushed any further and it becomes time for the firebird to return to their original destiny. The phoenix is an eternal creature, passing on from one form to assume another, and the powers of the firebird are no different. There can only be one firebird at a time, yet there have been and always will be countless others holding back the defensive line between the creation of the gods and the deviance of the primordials. When the firebird reaches 30th level, he or she is freed from their bond to pursue their immortality as before.

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COMING SOON...



Risen: The Guide to Resurrected Characters (October 2009)

A Dark Emerald character supplement for 4E

by Todd Crapper and Shawn O'Leary

Death is the final journey for all heroes... until now. Providing seven new paragon paths, or resurrection paths, bring your PC back to life with new powers and a new perspective. Each resurrection path includes a life quest to focus their abilities and provide dynamic new roleplaying opportunities for your character. Return as the undead haunt, redeem yourself as the sword of heaven, seek out your long-lost love as the cuardach, avenge your kinsmen as the harbinger, and more.

The Key of the Fey (December 2009)

A Dark Emerald heroic-tier adventure for 4E

by Todd Crapper

Not everyone needs a hero and not every quest saves the village. When darkness engulfs light, mercenaries heed the call and perform the deeds no one else has the stomach for. An introductory adventure for 4-6 characters of levels 1-3 from all alignments, *The Key of the Fey* sets out a new style of adventure for 4E. Hired by an orc "merchant" to steal a portal key from innocent cultists, nothing is what it seems. Recommended for mature players, this adventure provides unique subplots and PC interaction never allowed in most adventures. Remember that it's not about who wins or loses, it's about getting paid.

Break & Enter (March 2010)

A Dark Emerald rules supplement for 4E

by Todd Crapper

The art of burglary never dies and failure is not an option. Learn the tricks of the trade and take on new character options in the name of pickpocketing, deception, and infiltration. Plus a new series of stealth encounters for faster play – snap a guard's neck with one dice roll, new traps, wards, and more. Includes options for players and GMs.



Long Live Barsaive!

Back in my early college days, there were two games capturing my imagination: **Planescape** and **Earthdawn**. Originally released by FASA in 1993, it was given off to two publishers over the years who have done a fantastic job keeping this fierce game of magic, adventure, and STORY!! The mechanics for magic are absolutely brilliant and there's a purpose behind every mechanic involving a rich, vibrant setting.

Redbrick Limited has just released the **Third Edition of Earthdawn** through Mongoose and plans are in motion for **Age of Legend**, a 4E conversion. These guys put together some fantastic work and AoL is worth the wait. Check them out at www.redbrick.com.

SPECIAL NOTE:

We're taking a break for CA next month, but for a good reason. Better than good. A cool reason.

Our next issue is our 13th and October is coming up. We can't pass that up, so there will be no issue for September and we'll present a special horror edition of CA on October 6th. If you have something horrific with lots of undead, satanic rituals, or devilish stories, send them to us via email at submissions@emeraldpresspdf.com.

Combat Advantage is a series of free supplemental material for the Dungeon & Dragons 4E Roleplaying Game™ courtesy of

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 4th Edition PLAYER'S HANDBOOK, written by Rob Heinsoo, Andy Collins, and James Wyatt; DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE, written by James Wyatt; and MONSTER MANUAL, written by Mike Mearls, Stephen Schubert and James Wyatt; PLAYER'S HANDBOOK 2, written by Jeremy Crawford, Mike Mearls, and James Wyatt; MONSTER MANUAL 2, written by Rob Heinsoo, and Chris Sims; Adventurer's Vault, written by Logan Bonner, Eytan Bernstein, and Chris Sims. © 2008, 2009 Wizards of the Coast. All rights reserved.