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special preview::

RISEN

THE GUIDE TO RESURRECTED CHARACTERS

COMBAT ADVANTAGE

October 2009

#13



Ah, Hallowe'en. If it wasn't for the whole gift giving in December, this would be my favorite time of year. I probably spend as much money on costumes, props, candy, and whatnot now as I do for Christmas. If you're big into using props and gimmicks for your games, this is the next best thing to GM's Day.

So it only made sense to combine the best "holiday" with EP. More specifically, our line of Dark Emerald products. This month is a HUGE month for us and we're making a big thing about it. CA13 is just the starts and you can check out our website for more details on what's to come (including the release of *Risen* on October 26th.)

To mark these events, we're calling this "Dark October" and we're going to do it every October until we go extinct. You can find deals on our previous Dark Emerald products and we'll be pumping out as many previews, glances, and blogs about this 4E guide to bringing your characters back from the dead until it hits the virtual shelves. Including a full preview of the chaotician on page 17.

Todd Crapper
Editor-in-Chief
Combat Advantage

EMERALD
PRESS

Ghosts of Tieflings Past

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Why can't the dead mind their own business? Torment your players with this variable encounter and step up a typical combat encounter.
by Tim Rose

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Cast your physical shell aside, inhabit the bodies of the dead and use them for your own. A new PC race in the spirit of *Dark October*.
by Todd Crapper

An Interview with Andrew Wilson

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Fresh off Silent 7 Games' latest release, *Huxtropy*, we find out the basis and inspiration in a card-game application to 4E.

PREVIEW: The Chaostician

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Releasing October 26th, check out a complete glance at the first resurrection path from *Risen: The Guide to Resurrected Characters*. What happens when you die in the realm of Chaos? The Chaostician has seen the madness and lived to bring a message: the end is coming!

Combat Advantage #13

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Cover:

This is an actual X-ray of my head when I was 16 - the result of a concussion when a buddy of mine put me in the sleeper hold and I passed out, banging my head on the floor. Boys will be boys. - TC



A Haunted Encounter for
Various Levels

by Tim Rose

GHOSTS of TIEFLINGS past

**Read the following aloud to
the players:**

*The forested glade, cloaked
in eerie silence, stretches 150 feet
before you from left to right. You
can sense that it is equally deep.
The foliage is still, despite the slight
breeze. As you move closer you can
hear the wailing of ghosts, for that
is what they certainly are.*

*At the edge and near the center
you can also make out the fleeting
shapes of soldiers, fighting in
phalanx, defending the place against
an even larger ghostly foe. As you
move deeper into the glade your
body and soul are assaulted by the
stench of waiting death.*

*And as you move to attack the
ghost before you, you are set upon
by necromantic forces bent on your
destruction and assimilation into
their pain.*

Our worlds are inhabited by ancient kingdom, lost ruins, and crypts of the walking dead - emblems of a forgotten past still seeping into our present campaigns. We never forget the paths of the dead and those who remain behind to guard these entrances, these wards connecting the shadowy realm of Death to the vibrant land of the Living. While some do so willingly, others cannot break themselves from the bonds of the past and remain as haunting spirits eternally locked in our world.

Ghosts of Tieflings Past is a unique hazard designed for multiple party levels in a variety of locations. Spicing up an existing encounter with these undead spirits, this hazard makes use of the gloom and dread of a haunted battlefield awakened by the spilling of fresh blood.

This hazard can be especially useful in the final battle of an adventure as the spectral remains of these tiefling warriors take their wrath out on both sides of the conflict or ally themselves with a powerful necromancer summoning them into service.

Ghosts of Tieflings Past

Hazard

Level 5+ Obstacle

XP 250

A long valley of eerie silence, this is an ancient battlefield where the fallen never rest. Any living creature in their restless domain incites their anger.

Hazard: This ancient battlefield covers an area generally in a 30 by 30 square (the exact shape is left to GM) inside of which each square must touch at least one side of an adjacent square. Ideally it is situated on a valley floor with at least two of its sides touching the base of a cliff or between two parallel mountain walls, effectively cutting off a “straight through” passage, so that the party must venture through the battlefield to get to an ultimate destination.

The hazard is occupied by various ghosts (all minions), as determined by the GM. These ghosts are the creatures referred to when an attack by the hazard refers to a “creature associated with the hazard.” In addition to additional qualities (mentioned below in Triggers), the number and level of ghost minions can be used to increase the level of the hazard.

Where appropriate the mechanics demonstrate how to increase the level of the hazard.

Perception

- **DC 0:** Your skin prickles and the hairs on your neck and arms seems to stand as you approach. This is a place of grave danger, best avoided.

Additional Skills: Religion, Arcana, History

- **Religion:** DC 7; The area pulses with necromantic energy. If the hero makes an active check and is a follower of the Raven Queen, the presence of her exarchs flavor the energy. The necromantic energy is not necessarily evil, but is warped into believing it must fight to be released. Increase the DC to 10 at 10th level, 11 at 15th level, 14 at 20th level, and 17 at 25th level.

- **Arcana:** DC 7; There is definitely a portal to the Shadowfell that does not seem to be working. It seems to be in stasis, holding back portions of the energy required of the Shadowfell from those that seem to have fallen in battle here. Increase the DC to 10 at 10th level, 11 at 15th level, 14 at 20th level, and 17 at 25th level.

- **History:** DC 17; 2,500 years ago a great battle took place here between a tiefling army and a massive beast from the Elemental Chaos. Tradition and epic poetic sagas tell of a rift that opened into the world from there and unleashed a powerful behemoth, larger and stronger than any dragon. The beast was defeated, but destroyed not just the entire tiefling army, but the nation that sent them to defeat it. Increase the DC to 21 at 10th level, 23 at 15th level, 27 at 20th level, and 31 at 25th level.

**Success on any of these checks allows the PC to know the required skills (not necessarily the specific actions) that can be used as countermeasures.*

Triggers

The hazard has a stench of resonant decay that acts as soon as any creature enters into it. The hazard also uses *behave in my sanctuary* as an opportunity attack that activates when a character makes an attack against any creature associated with the hazard. The hazard has additional qualities that can be added to increase its level.



Attacks

• *Stench of Resonant Decay*

Immediate Reaction **Aura 5**

Trigger: The hazard attacks any character that starts its turn in the aura.

Target: Each creature in aura.

Attack: + 7 vs. Fortitude (+11 at 10th Level; +15 at 15th Level; +19 at 20th Level; +23 at 25th Level)

Hit: Ongoing 3 necrotic and the target is slowed (save ends). Increase ongoing damage to 5 at 15th Level and 7 at 25th Level.

Special: The aura is not limited only to the area around the hazard but extends throughout the entire area.

• *Behave In My Sanctuary*

Opportunity Attack **Melee 1**

Trigger: Any creature that makes an attack against any creature associated with the hazard.

Target: Each creature in the area of effect

Attack: + 7 vs. Fortitude (+11 at 10th Level; +15 at 15th Level; +19 at 20th Level; +23 at 25th Level)

Hit: 1d6+4 necrotic damage, the target is dazed (save ends), and the target loses a healing surge. Increase damage to 1d6+5 at 10th Level, 2d6+6 at 15th Level, 2d6+7 at 20th Level, and 3d6+8 at 25th Level.

Miss: The target is dazed (save ends).

Countermeasures

• **Religion:** DC 7; As a move action, with a successful check the PC is able to negate the ongoing damage from the stench of resonant decay until the end of her next turn. Increase the DC to 10 at 10th level, 11 at 15th level, 14 at 20th level, and 17 at 25th level.

• **Arcana:** DC 17; As a standard action, with a successful check the PC is able to open a portion of the portal. A number of random squares equal to the check result divided by 5 are no longer under the effect of the stench of resonant decay. Increase the DC to 21 at 10th level, 23 at 15th level, 27 at 20th level, and 31 at 25th level.

• **Dungeoneering:** DC 17; As a standard action, with a successful check the PC is able to “stabilize” the squares in a close burst 1 (with the square in which the PC does the action as the target square). Any creature that starts its turn in a stabilized square automatically saves against the stench of resonant decay. Increase the DC to 21 at 10th level, 23 at 15th level, 27 at 20th level, and 31 at 25th level.

• **Nature:** DC 12; As a standard action, with a successful check the PC is able to remove the condition applied by the stench of resonant decay for the rest of the encounter. The PC can apply this success to himself or to an ally. He can attempt this check only one time during the encounter. Increase the DC to 16 at 10th level, 18 at 15th level, 22 at 20th level, and 26 at 25th level.

• **Thievery:** DC 7; As a standard action, with a successful check the PC is able to find a number of ancient coins worth the value in gold pieces equivalent to the check. This check can only be done twice by any PC. Increase the value of gold pieces to five times at 11th level and ten times as 21st level. Increase the DC to 10 at 10th level, 11 at 15th level, 14 at 20th level, and 17 at 25th level.

**The minions of the battlefield are unaffected by squares that become stabilized by successful arcana and dungeoneering countermeasure checks.*



Special

• *Discordant Calling*

The hazard applies bonuses or penalties to specific races, as noted below.

Tiefling: +5 bonus on one attack or check during the encounter (player's choice).

Human: +2 bonus on one attack or check during the encounter (player's choice).

Deva: +5 to two different skill or ability checks during the encounter (player's choice).

Fey Origin: -5 penalty to first attack or check during the encounter. -2 penalty to second attack or check during the encounter.

Shadow Origin: +1 bonus to all attacks and checks during the encounter.

Upgrade to Higher Level

By adding the features below, the GM can increase the level of the hazard to more appropriately fit the needs of his adventure or the party.

Upgrade to Level 10 (500 XP)

• *You Are Not Allowed Here*

Immediate Interrupt **Melee 1**

Trigger: Creature makes a divine attack

Attack: + 11 vs Reflex

Hit: The triggering attack misses.

Miss: The triggering attack is considered a critical hit.

Increase the attack bonus to +15 at 15th level, +19 at 20th level, and +23 at 25th level.

Upgrade to Level 15 (1,200 XP)

• *Death Rears Its Ugly Horned Head*

At-Will **Special**

Initiative: + 7 (+10 at 20th; +12 at 25th)

Target: Any creature within the hazard.

Attack: + 20 vs AC (+25 at 20th; +30 at 25th)

Hit: 2d8+7 necrotic damage.

Miss: The target can spend a healing surge or gains +2 to all defenses until the start of its next turn (player's choice).

Increase damage to 2d8+8 necrotic at 20th and 3d8+9 necrotic at 25th.

• *Demon Owns Your Soul*

Immediate Reaction **Melee 1**

Trigger: Creature makes an arcane attack.

Target: The creature that made the arcane attack.

Attack: + 15 vs Will (+19 at 20th; +23 at 25th)

Hit: Target is dominated (save ends).

Miss: Target gains temporary hit points equal to one-half of its level.

Special: If the target creature is not a follower of a deity of death, it takes a -2 penalty on the saving throw against the domination. The target is only subject to move actions.



Upgrade to Level 20 (2,800 XP)

• *Death's Icy Grasp*

At-Will **Melee 1**

Initiative: +10 (+12 at 25th)

Target: Any non-undead creature within the hazard.

Attack: + 19 vs Reflex (+23 at 25th)

Hit: 2d8+8 cold and necrotic damage and the target is grabbed. (Treat the DC to escape the grab as 10+one-half the character's level.)

Miss: Half damage.

Upgrade to Level 25 (7,000 XP)

• *Behemoth's Smash*

Immediate Reaction **Close burst 3**

Trigger: Creature makes a divine attack and the creature is not a follower of a deity of death.

Target: The target square is the square occupied by the creature that made the divine attack.

Attack: + 23 vs Fortitude

Hit: 4d10+7 force damage, and the target is knocked prone and grabbed. (Treat the DC to escape the grab as 10+one-half the character's level.)

Miss: Half damage and the target is knocked prone.

Tiefling Revenant

Level 5 Minion

Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

XP 50

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +8; darkvision

HP 1; a miss never damages a minion

AC 18, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16

Speed 6, fly 6 (hover); phasing

⊕ **Phasing Yatagan** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic, Weapon**

+10 vs. AC; 5 necrotic damage

Unaligned **Languages:** -

Str 10 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)

Con 12 (+3) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+4)

Revenant Tiefling Sergeant

Level 8 Minion

Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

XP 88

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +10; darkvision

HP 1; a miss never damages a minion

AC 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18

Speed 6, fly 6 (hover); phasing

⊕ **Phasing Spatha** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic, Weapon**

+13 vs. AC; 5 necrotic damage

Unaligned **Languages:** -

Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 12 (+5)

Con 12 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+6)

Revenant Tiefling Officer

Level 12 Minion

Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

XP 175

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision

HP 1; a miss never damages a minion

AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22

Speed 6, fly 6 (hover); phasing

⚡ **Phasing Tulwar** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic, Weapon**

+17 vs. AC; 6 necrotic damage

Haunting Scare (standard; encounter) • **Fear, Necrotic**

Close burst 1; +11 vs. Will; target is dazed (save ends)

Unaligned **Languages:** -

Str 14 (+8) **Dex** 15 (+8) **Wis** 13 (+7)

Con 13 (+7) **Int** 11 (+6) **Cha** 19 (+10)

Revenant Tiefling Commander

Level 18 Minion

Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

XP 500

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision

HP 1; a miss never damages a minion

AC 28, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 26

Speed 6, fly 6 (hover); phasing

⚡ **Phasing Voulge** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic, Weapon**

Reach 2; +23 vs. AC; 8 necrotic damage

Haunting Scare (standard; encounter) • **Fear, Necrotic**

Close burst 2; +17 vs. Will; target is dazed (save ends)

Unaligned **Languages:** -

Str 15 (+11) **Dex** 15 (+11) **Wis** 13 (+10)

Con 13 (+10) **Int** 11 (+9) **Cha** 20 (+14)

Tiefling Shadow Revenant

Level 23 Minion

Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

XP 1275

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +18; darkvision

HP 1; a miss never damages a minion

AC 32, **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30

Speed 6, fly 6 (hover); phasing

⚡ **Phasing Rapier** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic, Weapon**

+25 vs. AC; 9 necrotic damage

Haunting Scare (standard; encounter) • **Fear, Necrotic**

Close burst 1; +21 vs. Will; target is dazed (save ends)

Phasing Arcus (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic**

Range 20/40; +28 vs. AC; 9 necrotic damage

Unaligned **Languages:** -

Str 17 (+14) **Dex** 22 (+19) **Wis** 14 (+13)

Con 14 (+13) **Int** 12 (+12) **Cha** 18 (+15)



Revenant Tiefling Warlord
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

Level 24 Minion
XP 1513

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +18; darkvision

HP 1; a miss never damages a minion

AC 33, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 31

Speed 6, fly 6 (hover); phasing

Ⓢ **Phasing Kampilan** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic, Weapon**
+29 vs. AC; 10 necrotic damage

Haunting Scare (standard; encounter) • **Fear, Necrotic**
Close burst 1; +22 vs. Will; target is dazed (save ends)

Cull the Fallen (standard; recharge ☞/☞☞) • **Healing, Necrotic**
Close burst 5; the revenant warlord raises all ghosts fallen in the current encounter within the burst. These culled fallen do not subject a character to the hazard's *behave in my sanctuary* power. Once they are slain a second time, the character that does so regains a number of hit points equal to the minion's level and can immediately make a saving throw against any condition that can be ended with a saving throw. The character gains a +2 bonus on the saving throw.

Unaligned **Languages:** -

Str 17 (+14) **Dex** 22 (+19) **Wis** 14 (+13)

Con 14 (+13) **Int** 12 (+12) **Cha** 18 (+15)



Morue

Immortality comes at a price.

A New PC Race by Todd Crapper

Some creatures have the fortune of regarding death as a legend; a myth passed down from one generation to the next as an unfortunate mistake of the gods to the rest of the Known World. For the morue, they are the blessed few laughing all the way to immortality. Not because they were born with the ability to cheat death, but because they have mastered the long lost art of slipping.

Morue (singular and plural) are a race of ethereal creatures able to inhabit the bodies of the deceased and reanimate them as their own vessels. Initially encountered as a spectral figure without detail or individuality, they can “slip” into a dead body and use it as their own. Masters of disguise and infiltration, the morue defile the basic standards of many cultures and find themselves on the dangerous end of a spear, not in the glory and praise they feel is deserved.

RACIAL TRAITS

Average Height: Varies (always Medium or Small)

Average Weight: Varies

Ability Scores: +2 Wisdom (see *body slip*)

Size: Medium or Small (see *body slip*)

Speed: 6 squares (see *body slip*)

Vision: Normal

Languages: Common plus two more

Skill Bonuses: +2 Bluff, +2 Thievery

Shadow Origin: You have the shadow origin.

Essential Form: When not inhabiting a body with your *body slip* power, you are a vague, incorporeal humanoid figure. You cannot manipulate physical objects but have concealment at all times and can phase through solid objects as a move action. You cannot use any powers or make ability and skill checks except those linked to your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma ability scores. This form is known as your essence.

Mimicry: You may use the racial power of your inhabited body. When you no longer inhabit that body, you can no longer use this power.

Body Slip: You can use *body slip* as a daily power.

Body Slip

As easy as putting on clothes, your ethereal form slips inside the deceased and renews the vigor of life for your benefit.

Morue Racial Power

Daily

Standard Action

Personal (special)

Prerequisite: You must stand adjacent to a preserved deceased body of a Medium or Small humanoid. This power will not work on a decapitated or otherwise mutilated corpse. You cannot inhabit a body more than once.

Effect: You inhabit a dead body and reanimate it as your own. At the end of your turn, the body remains completely in control so long as your essence remains inside. The inhabited body is restored to appear healthy and all wounds are removed. Your hit points remain exactly as they were when you last inhabited a body minus 2 hp (see below).

Your size, speed, and vision are determined by the body you inhabit.

You may select one of the physical ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution) and gain an increase of 2 points to that score for as long as you inhabit this body. You can select the highest attribute of an average member of the race you inhabit, or any physical ability score you choose.

When you reach 0 hp while inhabiting your body, your essence is instantly rejected and shifts adjacent to the now useless body. Your hit point total is reduced by 2 every time you are ejected from a body. You may also depart an inhabited body as a minor action but you still suffer the loss of total hit points.

Special: You cannot inhabit another body prior to using this power. You must have departed your previous body (willingly or by force) at least one round prior to using this power.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

There are two forms of the morue: their natural ethereal essence and the inhabited body. A morue essence is nothing more than a translucent humanoid shape barely hovering over the ground; this essence has no visible features or characteristics and appears as a typical ghost or spectre to the eyes of the unsuspecting. A morue essence cannot manipulate physical objects or communicate verbally with other creatures, but has the phase ability and has concealment at all times.

Once a morue slips into a dead body, they can manipulate its features just as any other mortal creature with their own natural body. The morue's essence repairs a significant amount of damage and harm inflicted on the inhabited body upon their initial slip and assumes all characteristics of the original character (physical features, voice, etc.). In addition, they are able to access one racial power belonging to the inhabited body (see below).

ROLEPLAYING A MORUE

Life is a simple game to the morue and their natural ability to occupy the dead leaves them with a bizarre emotional combination of zest and fear. Without any reason to permanently suffer the consequences inflicted on the mortal body, they view danger and risk as a penalty for the fleshbound. Living multiple lives gives them a lust for experimentation, luring them

Selecting Racial Powers

One of the main benefits to playing a morue is versatility, all the way down to racial powers. Their mimicry power allows them to alter their available racial power to suit the inhabited body. This can easily get out of hand without limitations between the GM and the player.

As a general rule, any selected racial power cannot inflict damage unless as a minor action (such as the dragonborn's *dragon breath* racial power).

See the example morue provided on page 13 (Tasha the Red). Rather than grant her the succubus' *corrupting touch*, she is limited to *change self*.

into places most never tread and trying out any number of experiences they can get their hands on. Yet they remain hollow and empty without the ability to complete these tasks themselves – morue will only reveal their essence willingly to anyone deeply bonded or connected to the morue.

Curiosity and eagerness aside, the morue are not considered heavy thinkers and philosophers. Impulsive, headstrong, and determined, they never have to worry about failure as an option, at least at first. As the morue continually slip from one body to another, they begin to lose their grasp on their soul and their essence becomes weaker until they fade out of existence.

Morue shy away from personal attachments save for those like-minded individuals who share a penchant for exploration, experience, and danger. Restricting their powers to secrecy, they reveal their true nature only to those worthy of their approval (or anyone within line of sight if the morue loses the use of his inhabited body in combat) with a minimal amount of control over the amount of information shared around the campfire. They regale comrades with tales of intrigue experienced hundreds of years ago, yet never share stories of love and compassion. This is not to say they are beyond or careless towards such emotions, but it takes a truly touching moment to wrench such thoughts from a morue.

Morue have no culture – they are nomadic wanderers with very little knowledge of their kind or any linked history between them. As far as they are concerned, they are but a small humanoid breed able to transcend physical form. When a morue inhabiting a body impregnates or becomes pregnant, the child is never told of their origin and will likely be deserted by the morue parent.

NEW FEATS

Burrowing Memories

Requirement: Morue

Benefit: You can re-roll a History check up to a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier per day.

Burst of Fortitude

Requirement: Morue, inhabiting the body with a Constitution score of 18+

Benefit: When you take your second wind, you gain +1d6 hit points.

Burst of Speed

Requirement: Morue, inhabiting the body with a Dexterity score of 16+

Benefit: Once per encounter, you can shift an additional square as part of your move action.

Burst of Strength

Requirement: Morue, inhabiting the body with a Strength score of 18+

Benefit: When you roll a critical hit, you gain a +2 feat bonus to damage, charge attacks, and bull rushes until the end of your next turn.

Morue Ancestry

Prerequisite: You have never died prior to selecting this feat.

Benefits: You are descended from a morue parent and are yet unaware of your heritage. The first time you are reduced to 0 hp and fail your third save throw, you become a morue essence and leave your body. From this point on, you are a morue and can slip into a new body as per the body slip racial power above.

Special: You cannot slip into your previous body as your essence already occupied it.

Tasha the Red

Level 19 Solo Skirmisher

Medium shadow humanoid, morue

XP 12,000

Inhabiting the body of a gorgeous succubus, the sly grin and sparkle in those hazel eyes reveals the slightest hint of deception.

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +15

HP 725; **Bloodied** 362 (see *body slip*)

AC 30, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 28

Saving Throws +5

Speed 6

Action Points 2

⚔ **Flurry of Rapiers** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+24 vs AC; 2d8+6 damage plus 5 ongoing damage (save ends)

Secondary Attack: +18 vs AC; 1d10+6

↩ **Blinding Escape** (move; encounter) • **Weapon**

Close blast 5; +19 vs Reflex; 3d8+3 damage and target is blind (save ends)

✈ **Unleash the Wings** (standard; encounter) • **Polymorph**

Close burst 1; +19 vs Fortitude; 3d8+6 damage and target is pushed 2 squares;

Tasha uses *flurry of rapiers* on a critical hit

👤 **Body Slip** (immediate reaction, when reduced to 0 hp; recharge ☞,☞☞)

Tasha's essence leaves the inhabited body. She cannot manipulate physical objects, gains concealment, and can phase.

👤 **Change Shape** (minor; at-will) • **Polymorph**

Tasha can alter her physical form to take on the appearance of any Medium humanoid, including a unique individual. Just as the succubus power (see the 4E Monster Manual).

Unaligned **Languages:** Common, Supernal

Skills Athletics +12, Bluff +15, Stealth +15, Thievery +13

Str 12 (+9) **Dex** 21 (+14) **Wis** 16 (+12)

Con 15 (+12) **Int** 14 (+11) **Cha** 18 (+13)

Equipment black studded leather armor, 2 *rapiers* +2, cloak, thieves' picks

AKA: The Red Myst
Known in the underworld as "the Red Myst," Tasha's true identity remains hidden from all but her most trusted advisors. Preferring to remain within the body of a succubus (whom she proudly hunted down in her previous body), she uses the devil's change shape ability to instantly disappear in a crowd. Leader of the Fallen Shadow assassin's guild, many opponents have fallen under her rapiers +2, even months after they thought her dead. Tasha finds herself at wit's end with many heroes over her years of intrigue, deception, and murder. The perfect archvillain, her body slip racial power grants her the opportunity to re-emerge in a party's life, openingly thwarting them, masquerading as a trusted ally, or subtly plotting against them over the course of a campaign.

An Interview with...

Andrew Wilson

While some look to the past for reminiscence and a refresh of past editions, there are a lot of fresh ideas for the 4th edition of D&D.

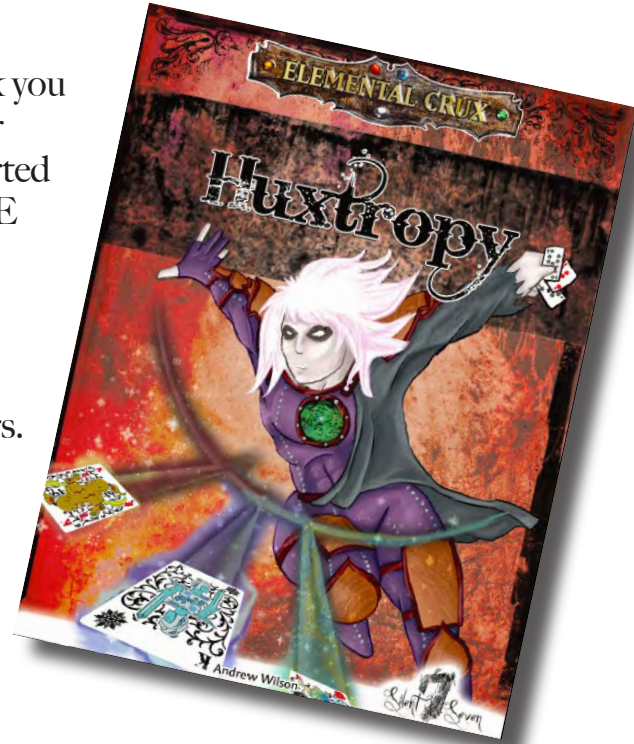
Silent 7 Games is one of them, producing a steady flow of new products, including *Advanced Classes* and the *Lunar Scrolls*.

Their latest product is *Huxtropy*, a sourcebook with multiple means to introduce playing cards to the game (even as a weapon - picture your favorite character shooting cards like *Gamit*, people). I had a chat with Andrew Wilson, *Huxtropy*'s author, to talk about his work and what made him want to give his ranger the Ace of Spades.

Combat Advantage: Thanks for the time, Andrew. Much appreciated.
Andrew Wilson: No problem!

CA: The first thing I wanted to ask you about was your inspiration for your latest release, *Huxtropy*. What started your concept for using cards at a 4E game?

AW: *Deadlands Reloaded*. I was listening to the Gamer's Haven actual play podcast of *Deadlands Reloaded* (www.canadiancrusaders.com) and one of the players is a huckster. He wields cards, though differently than the deckslinger or other huxtropy-wielding D&D characters, but it was my first inspiration. Using a deck of cards just seemed like something that could work in 4E.



CA: The first thing that caught my attention about it was the reference to gypsies using cards to tell the future - it reminded me about *Ravenloft* and the *Vistani*. You cover a few options for huxtropy in the game - what concepts can *Huxtropy* present to a campaign?

AW: I'm actually pretty unfamiliar with specifics of *Ravenloft*, so that's an interesting coincidence. As for huxtropy-oriented campaigns . . . well, there're obviously the elemental gamblers. I can imagine a cultish group (gypsies or otherwise) dedicated to unleashing the elemental gamblers, and the players may have to eventually fight *Malifeign*, *Saif-al-dayh*, *Ambaniel* and *Thjok* themselves. Of course, there could be a gypsy group of gamblers, a single huxtropy-wielding thief NPC villain, or the huxtropy-wielding PC could see more and more unluck seeded into his life throughout the campaign—keeping the huxtropy storyline in the background of the normal campaign.

CA: The system of damage using a magic deck was a nice touch. Your website talks a lot of about offering unique changes to 4E, even ranks them on a scale. Is this a very active consideration for you when you design or something that just seems to happen?

AW: My ideas just tend to be pretty weird. It became clear within the first couple of our releases that this weirdness wasn't attractive to everyone. To help out, I created the 7scale to rate the 'novelty and complexity' of our products, along with a short description, to help skeptical buyers. We don't want anyone to buy our product and then be freaked out or find it way too 'out there' for them to use—so the 7scale essential offers a warning label. We don't try to make strange stuff with high 7scale values; we just make what we want then figure out the rating.

Huxtropy got a five out of a possible seven. The general description for that value is, "The mechanics and/or assumptions of this product go far enough beyond the core game to challenge your 4E comfort zone." Apart from the deck mechanic, the product is pretty straightforward, but I felt that the added complexity and novelty of using a deck instead of dice (and therefore bringing along with it all the associated rules) was enough to bring the value up to 5.

CA: So if Huxtropy is a 5, what kind of ideas are going on over there for 7scale?

AW: Well higher 7scale values aren't always good. As I said, it's kind of a warning label for people not interested in crazy stuff. The more novel and complex products get, the number of people interested grows fewer and fewer. That said, our site currently indicates that we've got a class called 'the enchanter' in the works that would rank as seven. Player-based material isn't really as popular, though, because of the character builder, so the enchanter may never see the light of day. I only had a few notes on it, anyway . . .

CA: That's something I'm hearing from a lot from other publishers - they really feel DDI has taken out some of the punch and opportunity for 3pp stuff. So much so that One Bad Egg just called it quits. How do you feel about the impact of DDI as a third party?

AW: They've given me the GSL and they don't owe me anything, so I can't complain. I'm even a DDI subscriber myself, and I get a lot of value out of the magazines (I don't really use the software tools as much, though the compendium comes in handy every once in a while). However, I think it would be spectacular if the character builder opened up to allow third party publishers and homebrew DMs to program in their own content. Imagine building a ranger and having the CB ask if you wanted to choose the deckslinger's Cards Fighting Style option!

CA: Let's go with your DM-oriented projects then - what do you have in mind for DMs?

AW: The product I'm working on right now is called Rugged Adventures, which offers an alternative rest system. For DMs who aren't running their campaigns in dungeons, it answers the question, "What if I don't want to run more than one encounter each day, or even every several days?" Beyond that point, I have a couple ideas for advice about what D&D levels mean in the game world and something else (I know I had a second idea, but I can't remember it now . . .) Then of course, there are obvious things like new monster supplements, adventures, story-based items, and NPC and villain groups. A lot of stuff from that latter list may well end up under the Elemental Crux title.

CA: How did Silent 7 get started? When did you first start putting these ideas to paper, so to speak.

AW: Well, I've always been interested in game design, but I never really thought about writing for D&D too much until 4E was announced. The 3.5 scene seemed too big and crowded for me to enter in, but with a new edition came new chances and new beginnings. When I knew the GSL was coming, I started work on the first idea I had, which ended up The Lunar Scrolls, and things just went from there.

CA: What other systems do you play and how much of an impact do they have on your 4E designs? How much of your designs come from your own campaigns?

AW: I like to read about new game systems, but I hardly get to play any. In fact, various players' scheduling makes it hard for me to keep my two current 4E games going consistently. Most recently, I've read Savage Worlds and Alpha Omega RPG. For the most part, though, my ideas come from within the 4E system itself and from random inspiration. As for my home games, I haven't really had any ideas yet that I thought would work both in my campaign and as a published product.

CA: What are you working on right now? What's the next release for Silent 7?

AW: Well we're always working on the rune soldier (the heroic tier of which is available as a free playtest). But as I said, my current primary project is Rugged Adventures, and David Sirois is working on the tomeborn: a race of constructs born from books who were created to seek knowledge.



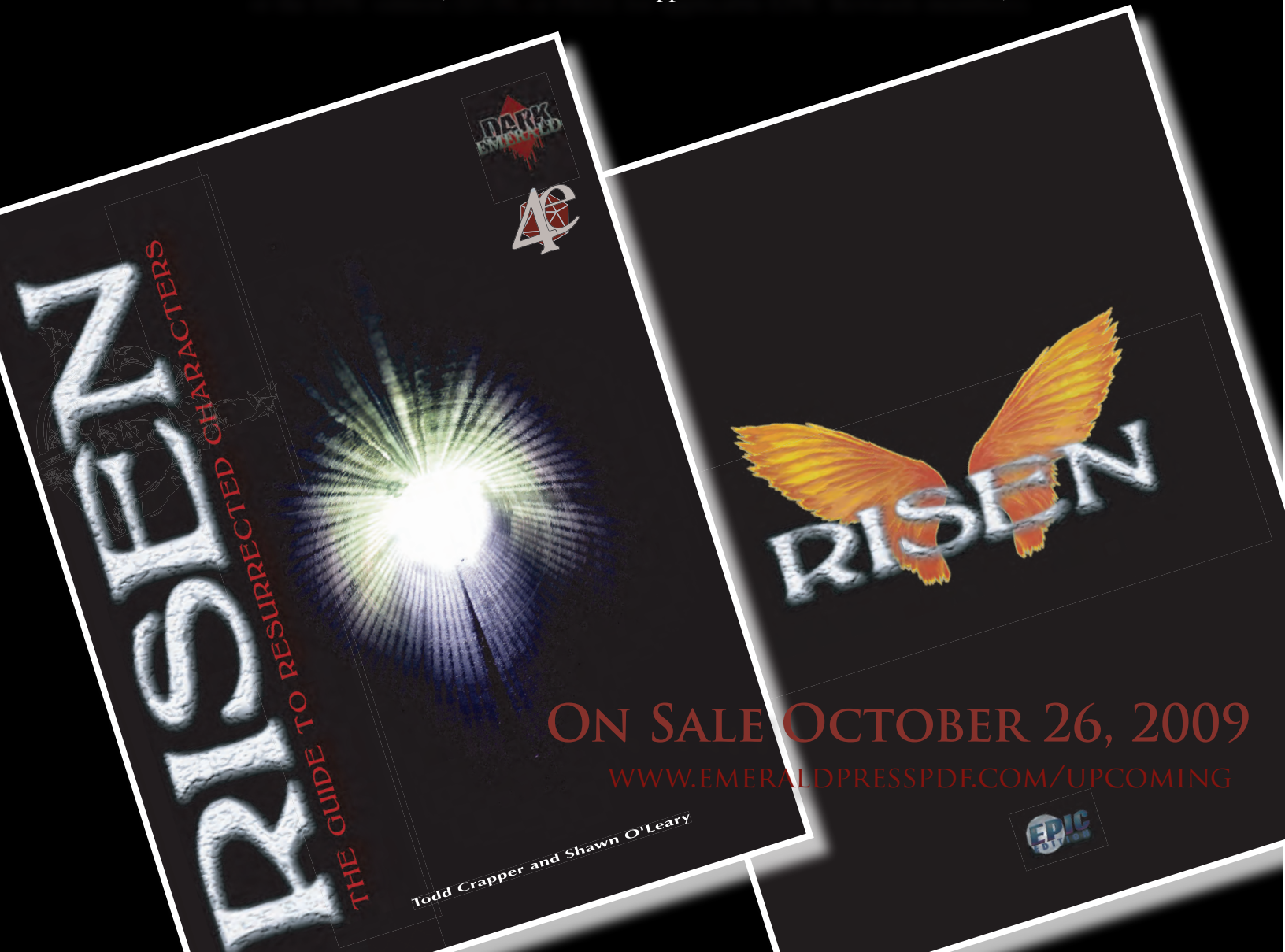
PREVIEW:

THE CHAOSTICIAN

Those who pass through ancient portals speak of a universe where the laws of reality no longer exist and the mind is an engine of magnificent power.

Heroes lost to this realm are never heard from again but sometimes - just sometimes - one finds the power, tapping into the chaotic energies of the plane and converting them to a new form. Crawling their way back home, they defend the Known World from the ravages of these abominations.

Enjoy the complete entry for the chaostician from **Risen: The Guide to Resurrected Characters** from Emerald Press. You can pick up the standard edition (\$4.99) or the EPIC edition (\$5.99, or FREE for applicable EPIC Rewards members).



ON SALE OCTOBER 26, 2009

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Todd Crapper and Shawn O'Leary

EPIC

They think you're crazy. They all think you're nuts... and they're probably right.

Dammit. That may be but I don't have time for this right now. Just stick with the plan, get into the shop, pick up the supplies, and get the Nine Hells out of there before someone recognizes you. That's it, nothing more, no surprises. And yeah, I'm probably nuts. I'm talking to myself, aren't I?

Snapping back to reality, I find I've wandered just a little too far past the shop. Hub, look at that, I've headed to the brothel. No time for that today, promised the paladin this would just be a simple in-and-out procedure. Everyone else is too banged up and the squidheads think I'm dead – no one sits around watching for a dead guy to walk into the shop of the town they control. Not even squidheads. So I turn around and make like I'm a stupid lost tourist. I find the shop, right where it always was.

Hmm, there was never a guard there before. He looks human, but I can tell he's more than that. He's a squidhead slave, his mind's wiped clean and they're using him as a puppet. Whatever he sees, they see. And he's standing right next to the door. I can smell their stench on him, that hollowed out cavity where his brain once was. If you've ever caught a whiff of a dead body wrapped in seaweed at the bottom of a river, then you've smelled squidheads. So what do I do? Screw it and walk right past him, step inside the shop.

"Good day, sir." Oooh, and such a nice smile too. Typical hollow-brained answer, just a nod and a blank look on his face.

I must be crazy.

Horace, the old shopkeep, he's still around. Doesn't smell like squidhead either, but he's been near them. And he recognizes me the second I walk into his deserted store.

"Artos?" he whispers. "Is that you?"

I place my finger to my lips and nod. Damn fool's deaf and speaks louder than he needs to. This whole idea is turning into a really bad pun right now. "Morning, Horace. Any chance for some healing salves, rations, and whatever else you can spare a group of heroes?"

"Sakes alive, I heard you were dead," the shopkeep replies. He didn't hear me and he's getting louder by the second. "Heard those bastards got you."

I silence him again and he gets it this time. "They did. What do you have for us? We need whatever you can give us." And I slip the purse of coins on the counter.

No sooner does the old man grab the purse and start leafing through his remaining inventory then the door opens behind me and the smell of squids run over by a wagon cart of snow peas waft over my nose again. Looks like they've sent in the guard to check things out.

"Artos Neverhouse?" the guard says, his voice droned like any slave who's had his brain scooped out like iced cream.

Looks like we'll have to do this the hard way.

"Not anymore," I reply back. I'm trying to be loud enough for Horace to hear me with his back turned to us and give him the bloody clue to get the hell down. All the while, I'm reaching for my sword and letting my arms relax a little bit. "Now they call me Artos the Mad." Then I turn my head just enough to face the drone guard with a glare of insanity, that one the thief says I give him almost every time he gets creeped out at me.

Just as the drone guard unsheathes his blade, I whip out my sword and stretch out my arms, reaching across the floor of the shop to chop his head off. It's the most humane thing to do to those that don't have a brain anymore...

I turn back and look at Horace, standing there with his mouth agape, staring at my sword arm. Like he's never seen a human who's been tainted by the absolute Chaos and become physically altered by the insanity it brews and developed the ability to grow his arms twice as long.

Guess they do think I'm insane.

CHAOSTICIAN

"I have seen beyond the Veil. It is not darkness - it is chaos.
And I will stop it."

Prerequisites: Wis 15. Your character must have died prior to gaining this path.

Ventures into the Aberrant Realm are discouraged for many good reasons, the first of which is the absolute insanity adventurers are subjected to as soon as they arrive on this chaotic plane. Those who perish there become fodder for the whims of bizarre creatures, their bodies fusing with the plane to feed its insatiable appetite. But not all of these lost souls remain there. They stay just long enough to absorb the energies of the Realm and fuel their own rebirth, stepping back into the mortal world with unearthly powers and a drive to prevent others from falling into the same trap they did.

Chaosticians are corrupted souls brought back from the dead by the energies of the Aberrant Realm. Seemingly normal, they never reveal their warped abilities until the heat of combat strikes and their bodies unveil unnatural benefits. They have seen the horrors of the plane of true chaos and stake their new lives on a near impossible mission to remove all traces of the Aberrant Realm from existence.

CHAOSTICIAN PATH FEATURES

Immutable Form (11th level): Choose one of the following physical forms.

Inhuman Reach: Your arms stretch to inhuman lengths giving you reach with any basic melee attack or power with the Weapon keyword. Unlike standard reach, you cannot be adjacent to a target with your inhuman reach feature. You lose this feature as soon as you use a healing surge and cannot use it again until after an extended rest.

Amorphous: Once per day until the start of your next turn, your body polymorphs into an amorphous blob as an immediate interrupt and avoids a single attack of your choice. You can also move into tight spaces without any speed restriction. While in this form, you only move half your speed.

Incorporeal: Once per encounter, you can phase through solid objects as a move action until the start of your next turn. Once you become corporeal again, you must stand on an unoccupied square. If you start your next turn in an unavailable square (such as a wall), you are automatically moved to the closest available square and take enough damage to be bloodied, or suffer 2d6 damage if already bloodied.

Aberrant Knowledge (11th level): You are trained in Dungeoneering or gain an additional bonus equal to your Wisdom modifier if you are already trained.

Chaotic Advantage (11th level): When you spend an action point against any aberration, you can push, pull, or slide the target one square before or after your action. The aberration grants you combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Unstable Form (16th level): You can alter your physical appearance slightly to assume the form of another person with a +5 power bonus to Disguise checks. This feature allows you to impersonate voices as well as skin tones and other important features. If you attempt to mimic another person known to the target, you must make a Disguise +2 vs Will check as a minor action at the start of every round that you are within line of sight of the target.



CHAOSTICIAN POWERS

Mark of the Turned

Chaostician Attack 11

Reality warps under your control, centered on one soul in particular...

Encounter • Psionic, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs AC

Hit: 2[W] + Intelligence/Wisdom/Charisma modifier damage.

Secondary Attack: Wisdom vs Will

Secondary Effect: The target is marked and grabbed by tentacles rising from the floor. As a minor action, you can push or pull the target one square. The tentacles disappear into the floor when the target breaks the grab.

Special: You may choose between using your Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma modifier for this attack. Once your selection has been made, it remains for the life of your character.

Chaotic Instinct

Chaostician Utility 12

You can sense their presence. That lingering smell of chaos reeks from their pores.

At-Will • Psionic, Zone

Minor Action **Close** burst 5

Target: Any creature in the burst.

Effect: You can detect the presence of aberrations within the zone. If the target uses cover, concealment, or any other method of stealth, you can make a Perception check as per the standard rules to detect the aberration's presence without the need for line of sight. You are never surprised by aberrations detected with this power.

Sustain: Minor. Using a standard action to sustain provides the name, races, and power keywords of the most powerful aberration within the zone as if you had successfully made the appropriate knowledge check.

Special: You can detect the exact location and number of aberrations present even if hidden or obscured by illusions such as invisibility.

Whirlwind of Chaos

Chaostician Attack 20

Slamming your fist on the ground, a swirling mass of tentacles burst out from a black vortex.

Daily • Psionic, Teleportation, Zone

Standard Action **Area** 2 within 10 squares

Target: Any creature within the area.

Attack: Intelligence vs Reflex

Hit: 3d8 + Intelligence modifier damage and target is pushed 3 squares.

Special: On a critical hit, the target is teleported to the Aberrant Realm until the end of its next turn and returns to the same square from which it was teleported. If the square is occupied, the target reappears on any adjacent square.

THE ABERRANT REALM

Birthplace of aberrations and other undiscovered horrors, this plane exists as a chaotic opponent to the others in the multiverse. Heavily influenced by the psionic power source, this plane is perhaps one of the most dangerous locations in the campaign.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The true power of chaosticians is their ability to appear perfectly normal as they did prior to their death, with only minor cosmetic differences. First, they generally have a streak of pure white running through their hair. These streaks have been known to appear as a pattern or even chaotic symbols known only to the wisest of warlocks and sorcerers, and mark the chaostician as clearly as if he had announced his name. To the common villager, however, these streaks are nothing more than a unique hair style.

Chaosticians also have a tendency to develop an odd twitch or obsessive habit upon their return from the Aberrant Realm. Sorting food rations by size, facial twitches, folding the arms of the dead over their chest, and obsessing over the cleanliness of their weapon, are example of this odd form of behavior. Most of these compulsions begin as soon as the chaostician assumes his new form and have no conceptual origin – they simply start as soon as the chaostician is reborn.

ROLEPLAYING A CHAOSTICIAN

Insanity is a harsh word for the actions of a chaostician and they take great offense to it. Preferring not to be insane, they consider themselves passionate, quick-tempered, and aware of the deeper meaning behind simple events. They have seen things in the multiverse that would make most adventurers weep for death and yet they have pushed on. Their behavior is certainly more eccentric and bizarre, but quite healthy under the circumstances.

Chaosticians display bursts of spontaneous mood swings and long rants of nonsensical translations. They tend to lock their focus on obscure topics and wander off easily. They are creatures of sudden thought, and exhibit a childlike forgetfulness at times. For example, those with the ability to phase through walls often forget to unlock the door from the other side as they explore the room for themselves. Only when the schemes of aberrations confront them do they shift into an incredible dedication to removing that threat. At times, they fall into a blind rage from which they never recall their actions. They are brutal opponents against aberrations and show them no quarter in combat.

Above all else, chaosticians are constantly at war with their own minds, and forever feel the pull of the Aberrant Realm calling them home. To keep their minds calm, some have taken to caring for small living things such as flowers or tiny pets. While such devotion allows them to retain their humanity a while longer, it remains a frightening sight to see a chaostician tending to a potted plant one minute and sliding into a frenzy of elongated arms the next.

WINNING THE WAR ON CHAOS

Chaosticians exist to fight off the oncoming approach of the Aberrant Realm using the gifts granted by the mists of insanity from which all aberrations are born. Since destroying an entire plane of existence would be impossible (only by the sheer difficulty of such actions, as many a chaostician has weighed the options of destroying the Aberrant Realm completely), they seek out their own way to bring the war to a close.



Pseudocreasures: All manner of beasts and humanoid creatures stalk the surreal wilderness of this bizarre plane, feasting on the conscious thoughts of mortals like fine dining. Chaosticians seek out these creatures like a hunter tracks a deer and show them no mercy in battle. Decapitation is a common finishing move and a good first step to making sure they never get back up again.

Salvation: Dipped in a vat of chaos, chaosticians feel they have been given this curse for a reason. They have chosen to accept this fate so that others may be protected and saved from the Aberrant Realm. This grants the chaostician purpose and guidance as they forever battle with their own psyche, pushing back the madness waging war against their own sanity. For them it is all about sacrifice, and chaosticians will gladly lay down their life to protect the sanity of others, including party members.

Closing the Gap: Portals are the simplest and most common form of travel to the Aberrant Realm and they tend not to require portal keys. Sealing off these gateways is a high priority for chaosticians, along with the destruction of any other means for accessing the plane. Those who would willingly open such doorways fall prey to the wrath of the chaostician, and ignorance is never an excuse forestalling obliteration.

IN THE END...

No one is entirely sure what happens to a chaostician when their quest is complete. Some theorize their minds return to the Aberrant Realm to assume a purely psionic form, merging with the plane itself or carrying on the fight from the inside. Others suggest the chaostician simply fades into the background, assumes another physical form, and seeks out other approaches that aberrations take to enter the Known World. Whatever it is, the answer is as mysterious as their very existence.

CHAOSTICIAN RESURRECTION FEATS

They say time passes in its own unique way on the Aberrant Realm and chaosticians can attest to this. A mere moment of death can be a lifetime for these poor souls subjected to the maddening mists. Ingesting stronger doses of chaos can lead to dramatic alterations and some chaosticians learn to tune themselves to their new bodies to create ghastly and incredible powers.

DETECT THOUGHTS

Prerequisite: Chaostician

Benefit: When you kill a target, you can use a standard action on your next turn to attune your mind and pick up a psychic frequency of any other creature of the target's origin and type until you take a short rest. For example, if you kill a goblin and use this feat, you can use it on any other natural humanoid until your next short rest.

You gain a feat bonus equal to your Wisdom modifier on all Insight and Perception checks.

FLAT TO THE WALL

Prerequisite: Chaostician, Immutable Form (Amorphous) path feature

Benefit: You can use your amorphous form to gain a feat bonus equal to your Wisdom modifier on Stealth checks.

INHUMAN BURST

Prerequisite: Chaostician, Immutable Form (Inhuman Reach) path feature

Benefit: You use one of your at-will powers as a daily power with a close burst 1.

INNER SHEATH

Prerequisite: Chaostician, Immutable Form (Amorphous) path feature

Benefit: You can store a single one-handed weapon inside your body and draw it as a free action once per day. Your speed decreases by one square until the weapon is drawn.

SPECTRAL GLIDE

Prerequisite: Chaostician, Immutable Form (Incorporeal) path feature

Benefit: You can move twice your speed while phasing as a move action. This does not count as a double move or a run.

STENCH OF CHAOS

Prerequisite: Chaostician 21st level

Benefit: You increase the burst of your chaotic instinct power by a number of squares equal to your Wisdom modifier.

SUCTION

Prerequisite: Chaostician, Immutable Form (Inhuman Reach) path feature

Benefit: When using your inhuman reach, you gain a +5 feat bonus to grab a target and a +2 bonus to your Fortitude or Reflex defense when the target attempts an escape.

TURN ABERRATIONS

Prerequisite: Chaostician, Channel Divinity class feature

Benefit: You can turn aberrations just as you would undead with your *channel divinity: turn undead* encounter power.

UNSEEN

Prerequisite: Chaostician, Immutable Form (Incorporeal) path feature

Benefit: As a standard action, you can become invisible while phasing (sustain standard). When you have phased through a solid object, you will become visible at the start of your next turn or immediately upon making an attack roll against a target.



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A yellow, faceted gemstone icon containing the text "EPIC REWARDS" in a bold, green, sans-serif font. The word "EPIC" is larger and more prominent than "REWARDS".

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