

Asgard



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Illustration by Tom Martin

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Morrus Dancing

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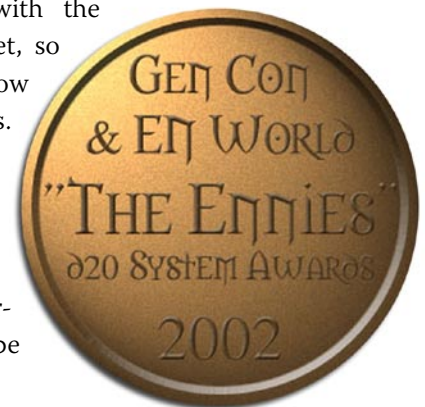
Asgard Magazine is an EN World publication.

As you may have noticed, the ENnies this year have undergone something of a change. What was originally an internet-based award ceremony is now a fully-fledged awards program co-sponsored by GenCon. I must say, I was surprised and delighted when I first received an email from Peter Adkison asking if I'd be interested in such a partnership – who wouldn't be? Of course, I said "Yes!" and a tentative partnership was formed.

Since then, we've been hammering out our respective responsibilities, while waiting for Peter's purchase of GenCon to go through so that we could announce our plans to everyone!

Well, that time has come and gone. The GenCon ENnies have been announced, and the entries have started flooding in. The level of participation from publishers this year is incredible – unlike last year, we have entries from the biggest companies in the industry, including Wizards of the Coast and Alderac Entertainment Group. The competition this year will be stiff indeed – and this is surely a good thing, for it ensures that the winners truly are the cream of the crop. Of course, this makes life harder for the judges, who have to plough through piles of products in order to pick the five nominees for each category, but it's a task which they are only too pleased to undertake, and a responsibility which they all take very seriously.

The ENnies award ceremony will be live at GenCon this year, and everyone is invited to attend (and laugh at me attempting to speak publicly!) For those who can't make GenCon, we're arranging a live internet radio "shoutcast" with the folks at Mortality.net, so you'll be able to follow it all as it happens. And, of course, we'll provide transcripts, photographs and other details after the event. It all certainly promises to be huge this year!



Asgard Magazine Issue 6 is a combination of two products. The product to which any given page belongs is indicated in the corner of the page. '©' indicates material released under the d20 STL and the OGL, and consists only of the following sections: *The Edgemaster*; *Acolyte of the Calm Waters*; *The Harvester*; *The Psychic*; *Heritage Feats*; *Challenging Challenge Ratings*; *The Professionals*; *D20 Supers Teaser*.

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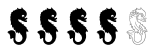
Reviews

Broadsides!

Naval Adventuring

By Living Imagination

Score: Good

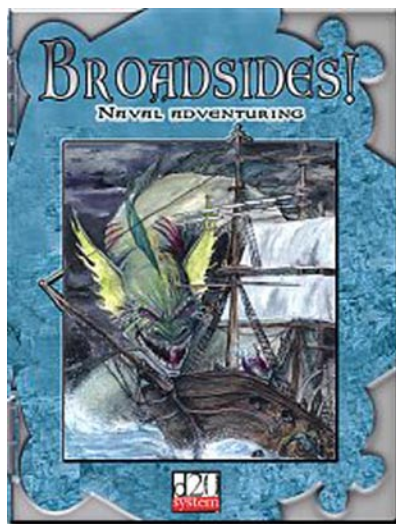


Broadsides! is another set of naval adventuring rules and subject matter in the recent glut of product of this type. It is compatible with Living Imagination's *Twin Crowns campaign setting* and is an expansion of the rules found there.

At \$19.95 for 128 pages, and with good use of the space available, this is fairly average in pricing for a product of this size. Art is generally good – the front cover is particularly good and is indicative for once of the quality of the art inside. Though most of the text is rules-orientated, it is well-written, and editing is generally good.

Chapter 1: Navigation & Piloting, reproduces the skills introduced in *Twin Crowns*, and discusses the use of the Profession (Navigation), and Profession (Piloting) skill rules in a little more detail. It also gives explanations of some nautical instruments, such as sextant and compass, and briefly covers maps and charts. It moves on to cover the shipping environment – underwater hazards, ice, weather (including a random weather chart), wind direction, and prevailing winds and currents. After some brief rules and discussion of seasickness, there is a larger section on flying ships and the effects and dangers of altitude.

Chapter 2: Ships, gives general statistics and definitions for each part of a standard ship and some rules for such things as manoeuvrability, acceleration



and aerodynamics. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to about 40 different examples of ships including long ships, galleys, galleons and fantastic ships (such as elven assault ship and sky chariot). There is also a final section on ship construction and design.

Chapter 3: The Voyage, gives a step-by-step guide to the GM for running a voyage, including advice on determining weather and navigation.

Chapter 4: Naval Combat, expands the combat rules given in *Twin Crowns* and includes detailed rules for initiative, movement, attacking, boarding, damage (to both the ship and the crew) and weapons (such as catapults, ballista, cannon, rams, firoshooters (*i.e.* flamethrowers) and spells), and some further information on repairing ships.

Chapter 5: Underwater Adventuring, begins with rules for surviving, moving and fighting underwater as well as perception restrictions. The remainder of the chapter deals with underwater vessels, giving some examples and a couple of underwater weapons (bow harpoon and dorsal ram).

Chapter 6: Nautical Equipment, covers gunpowder before going on to general equipment (e.g. anchor, bilge pumps, and diving grease), surgical supplies (e.g. emetic,

ether, and tincture of opium), and weapons (e.g. cannon, bomb, and muskets).

Chapter 7: Feats, offers 21 new ship-orientated feats including deep diving, naval expertise, quickload (for muskets) and water combat.

Chapter 8: Prestige Classes, offers 7 new prestige classes: Harpooner; Marine; Oceanic Sentinel (Sea Wizard); Privateer; Surgeon; Sea Captain; and Sea Scout.

Chapter 9: Spells And Rituals, offers about 40 new spells related to the subject matter including such dweomers as determine location, enlarge reef, founder ship, mend ship, repel ice and underwater communication. There are also 12 new rituals to be used with the Ritual System explained in the *Twin Crowns sourcebook* (e.g. Air Ship, Raise Atoll, and Skeleton Crew).

Chapter 10: Nautical Magical Items, includes such items as armor of swimming, harpoon of piercing, ring of protection from sharks, and cloak of storms as well as a couple of minor artifacts.

Chapter 11: Sea Creatures, includes five new monsters including Siren and Orctopus, as well as the 'Jonah' template, a type of fey that inhabits the bodies of the drowned. This seemed to me to be more appropriate as an undead as they are described as spirits created by fear and mourning.

Chapter 12: Nautical Organizations, offer four short descriptions of organisations such as smugglers, pirates and insurance brokers.

Chapter 13: Adventuring, offers 9 short adventure ideas (complete with ELs), a short (3-page) adventure, three famous pirates, and four famous pirate vessels.

There is also a ship's log, nautical glossary and index.

CONCLUSION: This is a detailed and well-written book, and is

recommended for those of you who wish to bring greater depth to your campaign setting in terms of ships, ocean travel and underwater adventuring. It has a particularly detailed naval combat system. It is not recommended for those who do not wish to take their games to this much detail. Although it has some interesting information in general regarding nautical equipment, there is not enough on offer here to appeal to those who do not wish to bring this fairly specialized area into their games. Therefore, it is limited in its usefulness, dependent on this factor.

Simon Collins

Broadsides! Naval Adventuring Rulebook by Living Imagination
\$19.95 – 128 pages;
softback, perfect-bound
www.livingimagination.com



Shadowforce Archer

Official Spycraft Campaign Setting

By Alderac Entertainment Group

Score: Good

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Spycraft is AEG's d20 system based espionage roleplaying game. As presented, the *Spycraft Espionage Handbook* contains primarily rules versus setting material. *Shadowforce Archer* is AEG's setting book for the *Spycraft* game.

A First Look

Shadowforce Archer is a 256-page hardcover book priced at \$34.95. This is still a fairly good value, though not as good as the *Spycraft Espionage Handbook* which packs an additional 32 pages for the same price.

The cover of the book is black. The front depicts an ink line-art drawing of a woman in combat gear in a style similar to the man on the front of the *Spycraft Espionage Handbook*.

The interior is mostly black and white, though there are some color plates. Like the *Spycraft Espionage Handbook*, a silver ink is used for some headers, sidebars, as well as the page numbers. The interior art is about average quality, with few pieces that stand out as being especially good or poor.

A Deeper Look

The centerpiece of the *Shadowforce Archer* setting is the Archer Conspiracy. The Archer conspiracy is a covert organization that has its hand in multiple intelligence agencies throughout the world. And it is also the PCs patron and employer.

The Archer Conspiracy exists to counter the threats posed by any

of a number of other villainous conspiracies in the world. The conspiracy was set in motion by a man by the name of Raymond Archer, who formed a sort of pact with prominent members of the world's intelligence agencies. This occurred at the close of World War II, but has a history dating back much further.

The world of *Shadowforce Archer* is, on the surface, the Earth that we live in. However, befitting the covert nature of the genre, what is going on behind the scenes is entirely different. In truth, the secret history is somewhat complex, but here is the upshot:

- A secret city from an ancient civilization contains the seed for a set of formulae that are the basis for psionic soldiers.
 - An old British intelligence cell called Room 39 has control of this formulæ. They provided the serum on a limited basis to a number of countries to provide for a secret bargaining chip to help preserve peace after World War I.
 - A woman by the name of Evelyn Shillingfield is possessed by some ancient eldritch creature. She is responsible for a number of plots that she hope will culminate in returning the Earth to the ice age that she is familiar with. She is responsible for the rise of Third Reich and making of Hitler into a mind-dominating psionic. She has several run ins with Room 39 over the years.
 - After World War II, a man named Conrad Archer, who was associated with Room 39, began the Archer conspiracy in an effort to counter the threat posed by a number of world shaking conspiracies and evils.
- Of course, this is just the tip of the iceberg. There are a number of villainous organizations that the

Archer Conspiracy is poised to stop. It operates by infiltrating and using resources of dozens of intelligence agencies throughout the world. The Conspiracy is divided into chambers, each chamber operating in a different region of the world. Within the game each chamber has its own competencies. From a metagame standpoint, each chamber is made to emulate a certain style of play. The chambers of the Archer Conspiracy are:

- **The Archer Foundation:** operates in Australia, New Zealand, and the surrounding regions and is focused on information collection and analysis. The genre 'feel' of the Archer Foundation is said to be that of the classic Cold-war spy thriller.
- **The African Alliance:** operates primarily in Africa. The chamber is specialized in research and development. The genre feel of the African Alliance is said to be the over-the-top superspy action books and movies, such as those of the *James Bond* franchise.
- **The Company:** operates in the Americas and primarily draws upon US intelligence assets. It is somewhat militaristic in nature and relies on commando and similar military tactics. The Company genre is that of the high octane military and spy movies such as *True Lies*, *Predator*, and *Rambo*.
- **The European Commonwealth:** operates in all of Europe excepting the UK, Ireland, and Russia. The European Commonwealth focuses on industrial and economic espionage. The genre of the European Commonwealth seems to be centered around paranoid thrillers such as the first *Mission Impossible* movie, *The Pelican Brief*, and *The Usual Suspects*.

- **The Guardians of the Whispering Knife:** this Archer chamber operates primarily in the middle east, and has mysticism and assassination as their chief methods. The Guardians are pretty well inspired by the medjai of the *Mummy* movies. The genre feel likewise is inspired by the mystical action genre, including such movies as the *Mummy* movies, the *Indiana Jones* movies, and shows like *Buffy: the Vampire Slayer* and *Relic Hunter*.
- **The Pan Asian Collective:** operates primarily in East Asia and India. The genre is built around the over the top martial arts thrillers such as exemplified by various Jackie Chan and Bruce Li movies, as well as other Asian action sources such as *Akira* and *Bubblegum Crisis*.
- **Room 39:** operates primarily in the British isles and operates in large part by computer hacking and other technical means. The Room 39 genre is inspired by various technothrillers, and movies in the genre like *Hackers* and *Sneakers*.
- **The Russian Confederacy:** operates in the former republics of the USSR. The chamber operates by illicit research in psionic, chemical, and biological methods, as well as black marketeering. The genre feel seems to be pervaded by dirty dealing and psychological manipulation. Recommended references include *Crimson Tide*, the *Godfather* Movies, and *The Maltese Falcon*.

In truth, though the book tries to carve out a different genre for each chamber, this only goes so far. Really, the entire setting is a bit fantastical and over-the-top, and thus all chambers likewise. But a few of the chambers to seem rather

distinctive, such as the Pan Asian Collective and the Guardians of the Whispering Knife.

Each chamber has an introductory page in the beginning (along with a full color plate). Each also has a considerable detailed section in the second chapter detailing the way that the chamber operates, its relationships and problems, as well as villainous groups they have to face, typical mission types, same plotlines, and a few NPCs. Each NPC is portrayed at three different levels to accommodate different level PCs.

Of course, every altruistic spy organization needs villainous organizations to oppose. The ones detailed herein include:

- **The Eyes of Argus:** In as much as the Archer Conspiracy is a conspiracy, the Eyes of Argus are conspiracy theorists that hope to expose them. Though some of its members may be well meaning, it is lead by a former Archer member out for revenge.
- **The Hand of Glory:** is an arcane organization led by Evelyn Shillingsfield, a woman possessed by an ancient entity out to return the world to the ice age. Oddly, the mastermind writeup of Evelyn Shillingsfield doesn't seem to jive with the mystical rules presented later in the book. The stat blocks for her list an arcane attack, but she isn't listed as having any of the feats required to utilize it.
- **The Shop:** is a renegade unit that was once part of the company. The shop was specialized in PsiTech devices, and is known for its brilliant mentalists. They are also a thorn in the side of the Company, and the very real possibility exists that the Company is infiltrated by Shop moles.

A few villainous organizations are covered in lesser detail in other segments of the book. One of these is PERIL (the Project for Expansion, Retribution, Iniquity, and Lies.) PERIL is a deeply-entrenched criminal organization in Russia with its roots in Stalinist times. The self-deprecating name does seem a little silly to me, but is something of a homage to the villainous organization SPECTRE in James Bond films. However, even if the title doesn't throw you, the fact that a Russian organization operates under an English name seems even more difficult to believe.

In addition to the setting material, *Shadowforce Archer* presents new character options that can be used as part of the setting, or which you may pull out to use in your own *Spycraft* game.

There are four new prestige classes which are in no way unique to the *Shadowforce Archer* setting: cat-burglar, counter-terrorist, hacker, and sniper.

A relatively new mechanic is introduced called chemical monsters. Chemical monsters are characters who receive chem treatments which grant certain benefits, primarily physical. However, the chem treatments must continue for the rest of the agent's life, or the agent receives some fairly severe drawbacks. For example, the endure chemical treatment give the character damage reduction 2/- and causes rapid recovery of vitality and wound points. However, the character loses 2 constitution points permanently and can no longer use action dice if a treatment is ever missed.

The book introduces three new 'psion' base classes for the *Spycraft* game. A character with a psion class can select Psion feats corresponding to the class. Much as with the basic force feats in the *Star Wars* RPG, these feats

allow the character access to psion skills which are the basis of the psion character's powers. Other psion feats enhance the characters capabilities in certain ways instead of granting access to skills.

The three psion classes are:

- **Mentalist:** Mentalists are psions whose capabilities enhance their own minds. The three types of mentalist psion skills are psycho-inventive (which primarily boosts the psion's mental faculties and makes them into extremely intelligent inventors), psychokinetic (allows the psion to manipulate heat and light), and telekinetic (which allows the psion to control matter and motion.)
- **Physical Adept:** Where physical adepts enhance their own mind, mental adepts enhance their physical capabilities. Physical adept psion skills are divided into categories of adrenal (allows the psion to alter the body or perform amazing feats), metabolic (controls pain and healing), and sensory.
- **Telepath:** The telepath is a psion with the ability to peer into the minds of others. Telepath psion skills are split into categories of ESP (allows clairvoyance, empathy, and psychometry), imprint (allows the character to project thoughts and dominate others), and intuitive (allows the character to aid other psions, see the links between events, and to see into the future.)

Also much like force skills in *Star Wars*, many psion skills take vitality points to use. However, the psion skill system is less dependant upon different tables for every power. Some psion skills still have their own tables, but for general purposes, there is one 'master table' that most psion skills use.

In addition to the classes, a variety of new gadgets called PsiTech gadgets are introduced, many of which were originally designed by mentalists in the Shop. This makes the use of some of the gadgets somewhat suspect, as the Shop has been known to leave 'booby trapped' devices for the Archer conspiracy members when they seceded.

In addition to psionic powers, *Shadowforce Archer* introduces mystic powers, primarily for use with the Guardians of the Whispering Knife and the Hand of Glory.

The mysticism rules are primarily feat based, but also relies on the knowledge (occult) skill and the presence of followers. If you have the appropriate feats, you may attempt a number of ceremonies called rites or rituals. Each ceremony has a knowledge (occult) DC to learn it and has a requirement in terms of bonded followers. If you meet the requirements and perform the ceremony, the ceremony brings forth a spell like effect such as a bolt of mystical energy or controlling an animal.

The most powerful ceremonies are called rituals, and tend to corrupt the person using it. Every time a ritual is performed, a will save must be made or the character receives a level of 'thirst'. Each level brings some benefits and drawbacks as the character becomes drawn into the mystic world. After eight levels of thirst, the character goes mad. It is possible to reduce one's level of thirst, however.

In addition to the mysticism rules, there is a mystical prestige class for the Guardians of the Whispering Knife called the Shadespeaker. Shadespeakers gain abilities to speak with dead as well as gaining mystical and melee combat abilities as they raise levels.

The mysticism chapter also contains a number of mystic relics that can be used as objects of adventures.

The final chapter contains a number of 'threats', pre-made villains with plot hooks and back-grounds. Some of the listed threats are related to villainous organizations described earlier in the book such as the hand of glory. Others are fresh and apparently designed to be used as temporary foes. As with the threats in the Spycraft rulebook, the villains are sorted into a number of 'serials' or adventures, and each is designed for a specific level of PCs.

Conclusion

Shadowforce Archer takes an interesting approach to crafting an espionage setting by trying to subdivide the genre and divide it into different pieces. However, no matter which way you slice it, it still comes off as a pretty fantastical setting. It's like a strange mix of *James Bond*, *The Mummy*, and *The X-files*.

The only real problem I had with the setting itself is that in some places, I just didn't buy the explanations that were set up to explain the conspiracy and how it operates. For example, it mentions the possibility that some characters might be trained in a different chamber than they operate in. In some cases that seems like it would work. In other cases, I have difficulty seeing very sensitive government agencies that are supposedly part of the conspiracy (like the CIA and NSA) overlooking the influx of foreigners in their departments. Sharp GMs may be able to make explanations for some less believable aspects of the conspiracy, but I would have been more comfortable if as written I could believe that the conspiracy really could happen as described

(of course, making allowances for psionic and mystical powers.)

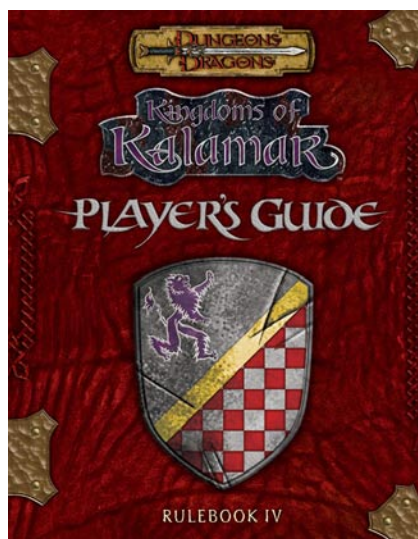
The new rules material should be a boon for any Spycraft GM who wants to add more fantastic elements to their game. Parts of the setting could even be borrowed and used for other campaigns as well.

Alan D. Kohler

Shadowforce Archer

Campaign Setting by Alderac Entertainment Group

\$34.95 – 256 pages; hardback
www.alderac.com



Kingdoms of Kalamar: Player's Guide

By Kenzer and Co.

Score: Superb

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For those that are unaware, this 'Rulebook IV' – as they've rather sneakily called it (having been forbidden to call it a 'Core' Rulebook, presumably) is the 'missing half' of the *Kingdoms of Kalamar Campaign Setting Sourcebook*, which, at least in its 3E version, has been available since March 2001. This earlier volume sets out one of the most detailed and thorough cam-

paign settings of a traditional D&D world that I've encountered, but its primary focus (to some critical disapprobation) was almost entirely on the human races. Fine, that is certainly a vital part of what makes adventuring on 'Tellene' (the actual name of the world, not 'Kalamar') so interesting. But this new *Player's Guide* does a great deal to correct that perceived imbalance, and for all those who were put off the Setting by its concentration on history, politics, religion and intrigue in the human lands – this is the part you've been waiting for. New Variant classes, New Prestige classes, New Feats, New Skills, New Spells, lots and lots of lovely, lovely tables... the list is almost endless.

The book is hard-bound, 272 pages long, with the 'typical' faux leather and metals clasps ancient tome look on the cover. The inside covers have a double-page spread of the map of Tellene, and for those slightly frustrated by the unclear, hard-to-read, sepia-tinted version in the Campaign Setting, this is a particular relief. (After a year, I still haven't got around to unfolding and pinning up the massive rug-sized colour map that shipped with the Campaign Setting, so I refer to these inside covers a lot!).

However, those expecting full colour illustrations throughout (like the Wizards Core Rulebooks), or even the occasional colour plate of the *Kingdoms of Kalamar Campaign Setting Sourcebook* (henceforth, KoKCSS) will be disappointed. The book is B&W throughout, and also on less-expensive, uncoated paper – a slight disappointment, but no more. The print quality and the accompanying illustrations, however, are perfectly acceptable, many extremely good, and besides, this volume is a little cheaper than the KoKCSS anyway, so one can't grumble.

Chapter 1 details the races of Tellene that are most suitable for PCs. Humans get much shorter shrift here than they did in the KoKCSS, but there are still brief descriptions of the six main races: Brandobians (think small, seafaring colony-building European explorers); Dejoy (spiritual, nomadic, tribespeople for the most part); Fhokki (Viking-like warrior race, largely oral culture); Kalamaran (Roman-like, educated empire builders); Reanaarian (important trading/seafaring nation); and Svimohz (cradle of humanity, African-type cultures). Unlike the KoKCSS, the KokPG makes room for the demi-humans, and what a mouth-watering list they make, all with different ability modifiers of one type or another:

- Hill Dwarves; Mountain Dwarves; Stone Dwarves
- Dark Elves; Grey Elves; High Elves; Wild Elves; Wood Elves; Half-Elves
- Deep Gnomes; Forest Gnomes; Rock Gnomes
- Hobgoblin; Half-Hobgoblin (Kargi); Half-Hobgoblin (Krang)
- Half-orcs
- Golden Halflings; Lightfoot Halflings

And the information is just like a massively expanded version of the D&D Player's Guide, each race in turn being given details of their lands, their relations, their religion, languages, physical descriptions, and typical personalities, much like the *Forgotten Realms* did, and naturally enough, quite a large debt is owed to that revered institution. (But see later).

Chapter 2 starts work on the various classes, and the geographical regions whence they are most likely to hail. Although there is

the well-publicized oversight of forgetting the Monk, they do have the courtesy to include Psions and Psychic Warriors, in addition to all the usual standards. The concept of New Variant Classes (notice the absence of the word 'Prestige' there) has met with some resistance, but personally I love the thought of expanding initial classes so that your character can be a little more special even at Level 1. It means, of course, that he doesn't need to reach the required Knowledge (____)+8 rating required by many of the Prestige classes. And why should every adventurer start in the same class, anyway? It's not as if the local Jobcentre has aisles marked 'Fighter, Cleric, Wizard'!

The additional starting classes we're provided with here include 'Basiran Dancer', basically a take on the Bard class, whose primary focus will be immense fitness and Weapon Finesse – adding the dexterity bonus to Melee attack rolls rather than Strength – I can't help thinking of Zorro here, or an Arabic houri from 1001 Nights. 'The Brigand' is ultimately a cross between a fighter and a rogue, an excellent addition with plenty of role-playing potential without the need for multiclassing, but the 'Gladiator', I feel, is a bit weak and limited to be included here as a Variant class. Perhaps a Prestige class would have been better for him, but that's a minor niggle.

'Infiltrators' are, as you might surmise, a variant rogue class who specialize more in learning and wisdom than sheer thuggery/thievery – an ideal occupation for a gnome. 'The Shaman' is very much the druidic priestess that you might expect from the name, although at higher levels she will gain the ability to polymorph herself into her totem spirit. 'The Spellsinger' is a sorcerous bard, the magic comes

directly from her, but only through the power of song – an old concept, but nicely done. All these classes have their own tables and spell lists (where applicable), but I'm sorry to report that you should check on the errata list at Kenzer & Co. to double check them, because some unfortunate errors have cropped up here, and the quick reference chart and the class specific charts don't quite match up as they should. Naughty Kenzer, but hardly unusual in this respect. Wouldn't it be nice to have a d20 product that comes out without an errata list following a couple of weeks later?

Chapter 3 details additional Prestige classes, including Alliance Merchant; Bounty Hunter; Mariner; Golem Master; Muse; Order of the Slayer (thinking *Buff*? I did...); Restorer; Sentinels of Providence; Slaver; Vessels of Man and Warlord. To detail them all would take too long, and besides you should buy this book. (Have I said that yet? No, I don't think I have...)

Chapter 4 is the Skills Chapter, where some possibly less than exciting information ('Craft: Basketweaving – includes the ability to make many items out of woven reeds or strips of thin wood, including (most commonly), baskets...') coo, well, bugger me, who'd've thought?) is presented alongside some exciting takes on the original skills:

'Pickpocket: *Normal Use*: Use the Pick Pocket skill to lift a carried item without its owner noticing or to perform sleight-of-hand tricks. *New Use*: You can conceal somatic gestures when casting a spell. If an observer's Spot check exceeds your Pick Pocket check, the person realizes that you are casting a spell...'
Wahey!

Chapter 5 is my favourite chapter of all. The Feats. Nearly one hundred new ones, and nearly

all extremely good and useful, and well thought out. The great bonus is that some of these are regional feats, which if you are thinking of setting a game in the Kingdoms, are absolutely indispensable. Naturally, many of them will transfer lock, stock and barrel to home-grown or indeed other campaign settings, but they fit superbly the world they were crafted for.

A few examples: 'Born to the Saddle': Your people are practically born on horseback, spending more time mounted than on foot. *Prerequisite:* Born and raised in Drhokker or Dodera. *Benefit:* You gain a +1 bonus on all Ride checks and +1 dodge bonus to AC while mounted. *Special:* You may only take this feat as a 1st-level character. Tremendous! Not all are region-specific though: 'Inheritance': You inherit a tidy sum of money from a wealthy family member or a patron. *Benefit:* You gain an additional 200 gp (or the equivalent in gems or jewelry) at character creation. Anyone fancy going shopping with Daddy's Little Rich Girl? – I can hear the screams resulting from that first scratch on that new set of armour even now! A great idea, but also terribly simple.

Chapter 6, Religion, will probably only be of interest to those planning on running or taking part in a campaign set on Tellene. It lists this particular campaign setting's pantheon in great detail (in addition to the exhaustive information in the KoKCSS), including their sacred religious texts, the name of the gods for the demihuman races, the tenets of the faith, and some potentially useful conversion tables of Forgotten Realms Gods to the appropriate Kalamar version.

Chapter 7, Equipment, details some specific roots, poisons, salves and potions native to Tellene, and rather fascinatingly some details

about slaves. You initially wonder at the inclusion of that here, because it seems so out of place, but then suddenly you think of the idea of 'possession', and of course, it makes perfect sense. Many new weapons such as leaf blade, bear claw, ball arrow, *etc.*, are also detailed here, as well as details of Kalamar's region specific armours: the cord armour of Svimohz Shamans, the lamellar armour of the world's tropical regions.

Chapter 8, Combat, I can't help feeling has been included because there is a chapter called this in the original Player's Guide, and they seem to have been using that's layout as a template. Some details of Fighting Schools, and career path progressions within them will be very useful for DMs, but I can't help but wonder in their inclusion in a 'Player's Guide.' There are four new combat options tacked on the end, Kick, Shield Disarm, Throw and Unbalance, but clearly these would not have warranted a chapter of their own, but it's good to have them.

Chapter 9, Adventuring, ah yes, definitely following the pattern of the original PG. However, this chapter has much more right to be here. Diseases, Perils of the Road, Nobility, Temple advancement, Punishments... all the stuff you wouldn't know where else to look for is here.

Chapter 10, Magic. I just know some of you have come straight down to this bit. Shock, horror. Kalamar is a 'low magic world', how can they have a chapter about spells and magic and stuff. Well, basically, this quoted statement is rubbish, nevermind how often you'll hear it. Yes, there aren't Level 45 wizards stalking the countryside in Kalamar, but then Kalamar's big attraction is the 'reality' of the setting. A contradiction in terms,

naturally, for a fantasy world, but yes, the culture, history, politics, intrigue, and nature of the world give you plenty of other things to concentrate on, and not just the hack and slash, spell 'kaboom' of other products – notably, of course, Hackmaster, that other staple of the Kenzer world!

Pretending that there is no or limited magic in the world of Tellene is completely wrong, however. There are 43 deities, for starters. There's going to be a great many clerics out there as a result of that. And coupled with the new feat of 'Channel Positive Energy' in Chapter 5, there's a better reason than ever to be one. The energy that make would use to Turn or Rebuke undead can be channelled now for a different purpose, depending on which god/goddess you worship.

For example, clerics of the Guardian can knock open manacles and doors in a 30ft radius around you (Irrepressible Freedom). Clerics of Rotlord can infect people with the *fen waste* disease in a 60ft cone (Plague). Worshipers of the Church of Endless Night (The Dark One) can cast a Blanket of Darkness. Gorgeous...

The chapter finishes with some details about 'Divine Right' – a concept that allows the nobility to have benefits from the gods, just because of their position in life (Baron, +2 on Saves against charm effects, uncanny dodge, Noble Bearing [a feat]). Naturally, were the Royal personage to offend in some way, then the protection might be removed, and then, well, who knows...

Chapter 11, Spells. Far too much here to list in detail. Scalable spells, new domains, and new spells are all there for the taking. But, oh, it's so much more than that. This is an encyclopædic knowledge of everything that's come before in the D&D world. Nearly all the domains

of the *Forgotten Realms* are included, as well as those from the original *PG* and, indeed, *Defenders of the Faith*. In alphabetical order. I'm amazed it's legal, but apparently they've done it, and it certainly is useful! This one book contains just about everything you would ever need in addition to the original *PG*.

But it's not all about clerics. Plenty of brand new spells for wizards, sorcerors, and, of course, the new variant classes introduced earlier in the book. All nicely detailed, and plenty of fine illustrations to liven things up. Too many to go into here, but quite a few are combat-oriented, which should please many.

Chapter 12 adds new magic items for inclusion into your world, a few favourite examples would include:

Chain Shirt of Sinking: When immersed in water, this suit of armour gives its wearer a -20 circumstance modifier to her Swim checks. The chain shirt provides a +2 enhancement bonus to AC when the wearer is on land. When fully submerged in water, however, the bonus becomes -2. A remove curse spell allows the wearer to remove the item. Bwahahahahhaah! Why has this idiotic, evil DM smile about providing a 'free' Chainmail +2 suit of armour just before the room with the water trap in it, spread across my face...?

Fey Robe: This sheer garment is both comfortable and attractive. The wearer gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks made in woodland settings. He can also use locate creature and speak with plants, each once per day.

Well we're only up to page 205, and it's still miles until the end of the book. What's left? Well, in a sense, one of the most useful features of the book:

- 7-page glossary -- you're confused by all the gods' names? Don't be.
- The Kenzer-invented d10,000 table of origins (the same system that they use for random encounter tables in the adventures). Why do you need so many numbers? Well, let's try. I rolled a 6, a 4, a 7 and a 5. 6475: In the Young Kingdoms that would give me a Human from a Rural Thorp in the Korak region, or a Halfling from the Imomena Hills, in the Ozhvinmish region of the Svimohzish Isle. No need to roll on subsidiary tables – all the detail is there to start with.
- Quick reference list of every feat (including those from the *PG*, *Kalamar PG*, *Songs and Silence*, *Forgotten Realms*, *Oriental Adventures*, *Tome and Blood*, *Defenders of the Faiths*, *Masters of the Wild*, *Magic of Faerun*, *Dragon Magazine*, *Sword and Fist*, *Psionics Handbook*... are you getting the idea? Priceless. 13 pages of the stuff in about the smallest typeface they could get away with, without resorting to giving away free magnifying glasses!
- 2-page Character Sheet for the Kingdoms, which is also available as a download from the forums of their website.
- 28 pages of Spell Planner: Unbelievable. Exactly what they did with the feats above. Every spell from every KoK and WotC book, I shan't repeat the list, but you'll've got the idea by now.

That only leaves the index, but what a hoard! Fed up travelling to conventions with everybook you possess – take this one, and you'll have a reference to just about every spell and feat you could wish for! This (as long as you have the original *Player's Guide* as well (and, who, reading this, does not?)

contains just about everything a player (and many DMs!) could actually wish for in a single reference book.

I'm not saying that it's worth buying for this composite chart alone, but you know what? It nearly is. Coupled with the fact that the material prior to this glossary part is so exceptionally excellent, well written, laid out and accessible, I cannot see my way to giving it any less than the full five, even though I did have one or two minor niggles (*see above*).

Even if you're the sort of person that staves off buying anything from outside the WotC stable, you should pick up this volume. It's far classier than many of the original supplements, and contains much of that information anyway.

If you're already playing a game in the Kingdoms of Kalamar, then I can't believe you haven't got a copy of this book already! Your characters will be grateful to you for the rest of eternity!

In short, I can't praise this book highly enough. Value for money is about the best you could hope for, to boot! If you are mostly a player, then you could get away with only purchasing this book, but if you happen to have the funds and fortune to possess both the *Kalamar Player's Guide* and the *Campaign Setting Sourcebook*, you are fortunate indeed. Not even when human lifespans are extended to the length of elves will you run out of material for your campaigns! Thumbs up for this one, Kenzer. Great job!!

Duncan Fielden

Kingdoms of Kalamar: Player's Guide

'Rulebook IV' by Kenzer & Co.
\$29.95 – 272 pages; hardback
www.kenzerco.com

Stronghold Builder's Guidebook

By Wizards of the Coast

Score: Good

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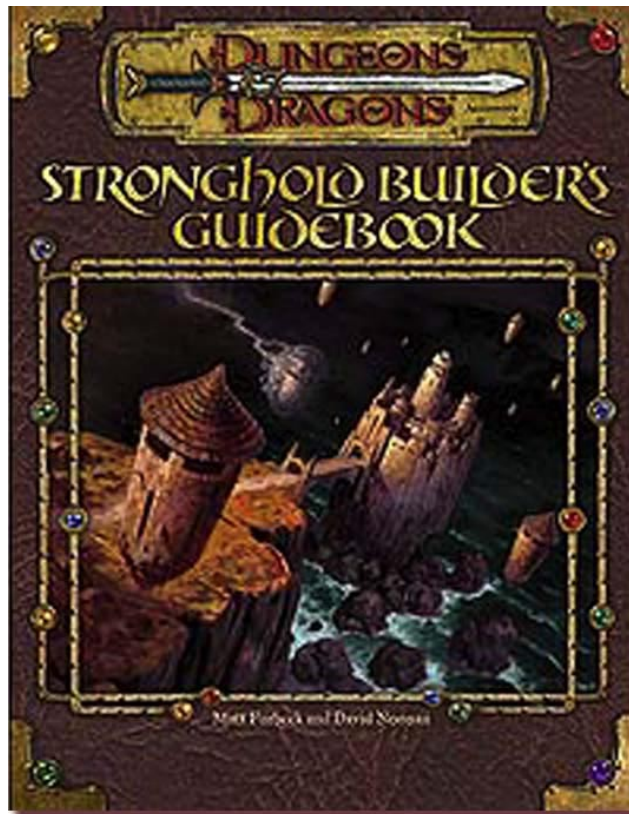
As promised, here is a quick review of the Stronghold Builders' Guidebook which I purchased yesterday from my local WotC store...

Price: \$21.95 for a 128-page softcover – I am not thrilled with the constant upward creep in the price of RPG products, but this is consistent with things like *Bluffsides: City on the Edge* (144 pages at \$22.95) so I guess I shouldn't do too much complaining.

Percent of OGC: 0%. This is admittedly a sticking point with me on WotC stuff – I understand that they don't have to follow the OGL/d20STL when releasing their material, but it sure would make it easier to have consistency across the d20 landscape if they would release a few of the mechanical terms (such as planar stat blocks, divine abilities, and stronghold statistics) as OGC rather than forcing every publisher to generate their own system from scratch. If you want everyone else to play by the rules, you should be playing by the rules yourself (they HAVE given us the SRD, including psionics, but I would like to see them add the 'mechanics' from at least the major expansions – *Deities and Demigods*, *Manual of the Planes*, and *Stronghold Builder's Guidebook* – to the SRD).

First Impressions

There are a lot of good ideas in here; rather than giving strict rules for what a room's dimensions are,



who is building the sample stronghold is sometimes referred to as 'he' and sometimes as 'she' – with the change sometimes coming mid-paragraph. While I don't mind seeing 'she' in things and having female iconic characters, having an iconic character's sex changing from sentence to sentence gets very annoying. IOW, the desire to be 'inclusive' with both 'he' and 'she' sometimes leads to horrific editing jobs, and this book is no exception.

Breakdown by Chapter

Chapter 1: Building A Stronghold:

This chapter walks you through the 'bare bones' of the stronghold-building process. It contains rules on how to modify the cost of a stronghold based on proximity to towns/cities/other supply centers and contains a sidebar walking you through the construction of a sample stronghold. What it does NOT contain are lists of components and costs... these are handled in later chapters. Chapter One is basically 'here's how you use the rest of the book to create your stronghold.' The sample stronghold was relevant and clear (except for the afore-mentioned androgynous character). A quick sidebar also notes that realism is not a good aim – because in real life, castles took about a century to build – use of magic in D&D speeds the process greatly, 'because characters want to get a chance to actually enjoy their castle.' Seems fair to me... I don't want my PC plunking down enormous sums of cash for a structure he will never use.

we are told that a 'standard' unit is about 4,000 cubic feet (20×20×10). We are also told not to sweat the specifics... if a PC wants to build a room with an arched (15') ceiling, let him. It's a very good approach to make things even more modular than usual. The sidebars are well-used (one set takes you through the creation of an example stronghold step by step, for instance). There are also a lot of ideas for incorporating magic into a stronghold – this incorporation comes in three 'flavors' – Wondrous Architecture (think 'Really Big Wondrous Items', Wall Augmentations (if you think a stone castle wall is bad to have to breach, imagine a stone wall that throws spell effects at you), and a section on using 'normal' magic items (from the DMG) in your stronghold.

Initial Annoyances

The Number One annoyance for me is Wizards' continual push for Political Correctness getting in the way of good editing. The character

Chapter 2: Stronghold Components:

This is the meat of the book, taking up about half of the book. Here you will find lists of materials with Hardness, Hit Points, and Break DCs (Break DC is based on thickness). Here you find the various types of rooms you can install in your stronghold - from an *Alchemist's Laboratory* to a *Bedroom* to a *Theatre* to a *Torture Chamber*. (Also included is a sidebar encouraging the downplay of torture - basically 'just roll the Intimidate Check and get on with it.' This section also contains clusters - 'groups' of rooms that frequently come together (e.g., a *Tower* and *Guard Barracks*) to save you the trouble of purchasing them separately (though you can if you want).

This chapter also discusses hiring Staff members (like the cook, the resident Alchemical assistant, blacksmith, and so forth); Walls (and the possible magical enhancements); use of magic items; and Wondrous Architecture. In other words, this is the chapter where all the 'building' happens and where you will find costs for everything you could possibly want for your stronghold. Of course, this was my favorite section, as it presents a lot of ideas for use of magic items - suggestions such as 'since you can move up and down as well as side to side when ethereal, you might consider building a room 50 feet down in the ground with no windows and no doors if you have a means of going ethereal.'

The selection of enhancements for walls is not all-encompassing, but a great variety is given. The same goes for Wondrous Architecture; creative players will always be able to think up more things, but there is a great deal here to start from. In my mind, this is the best section in the book.

Chapter 3: Strongholds In Your Campaign:

This section is more for the Dungeon Master than the PCs. It discusses placement of strongholds, how to attack them (and how to defend them), and gives lots of suggestions (though few hard and fast rules) for making strongholds feel 'realistic.' The comment that 'a well-designed fortress can be just as memorable as the enemies within' is a very good reminder to DMs... players remember the Keep of Bone as much as they remember the Necromancer King.

Most veteran DMs will find this section a little tired and simplistic (gee, you mean that a Teleport spell and Decanters of Endless Water make sieges almost impossible? Really?), but it is utilitarian and useful for newer DMs, so I don't begrudge its inclusion. I myself don't have a ton of need for it because I learned a lot about stronghold sieges many years ago in TSR products such as the Boxed Sets, but if I hadn't received that instruction then, I would be grateful to have it now.

Chapter 4: Sample Strongholds:

Just what it says - this runs the gauntlet from mundane ('the Cheap Keep', a very basic structure given over to the most spartan of needs) to the fantastic ('The Citadel of the Planes', a luxurious structure that uses portals to span multiple planes of existence). These are good templates and starting points, and serve an oft-neglected purpose - showing us 'how to do it' several different ways... think about it, wouldn't it have been nice for the *Players' Handbook* to show us six different fighters at 10th level with different sets of Feats and Skills (the archer, the tank, the swashbuckler, the master-of-all-weapons, the knight-on-horseback, and the samurai, for example)?

Conclusion

This is a book made up of a great mix of 'crunchy bits' and 'idea seeds.' You aren't just given ideas without the rules to implement them as sometimes happens in other supplements. On the other hand, you aren't just handed rules without suggestions on how to use them. There are numerous examples and explanations, and the suggestions should help anyone from the greenest newbie to the most experience veteran (and let's face it, anytime we get new rules, we are all newbies... we may know a lot of theory about role-playing and campaign management, but it always takes time to learn the mechanical ins-and-outs of a new ruleset and that's what this is - a new set of rules for building strongholds). Of course I would have liked them to stuff more in here, but that would have upped the page count and I have to keep in mind the fact that you can fit only so much material into a given amount of space. Given the page count, I really didn't see a lot of room for improvement. The editing problems mentioned above and the pricetag dampened my enthusiasm a bit, so I can't give it a 5.

It gets 4/5 due to the lack of OGC and pricetag. If only the 'stat block ideas' had been made OGC (allowing later publishers to use them), it would have gotten a 5. As it is, this makes this book incompatible with other professional publications not done by WotC, and therefore places limits on its utility. When I buy a sourcebook at this price, I would prefer to see it compatible with lots of future products.

The Sigil

Stronghold Builder's Guidebook
by *Wizards of the Coast*, \$21.95 -
128 pages; softback; perfect bound

by Ryan Nock

The Edgemaster



"You and your kind have killed too many of my friends," the human snarled, parrying the Orcish warlord's slashes. "I thought myself above the bloodlust you revel in, but now, as my blade bears down upon your throat, I give myself this one time of pure cruel delight."

The Orc grunted in confusion, glancing briefly over his shoulder as he continued to duel with the human warrior. "You talkin't me? You ain't gonna be touchin' my neck with that sword o' yers."

"So true, swine," the human laughed. "You have bought yourself but a moment's reprieve."

To the Orc's shock, his opponent lashed out sideways at one of the warlord's nearby troops, beheading him in midstride. Before the poor Orc soldier's body could hit the ground, the human had dropped his own sword and pulled the dead Orc's axe from his hands. With a flourish, the human twirled the axe's haft around his forearm, then clutched it tightly.

Growling at the death of one of his troops, the Orc warlord chopped downward with his own axe, but the human parried it easily, chuckling mockingly. Confidently, the human began his own attack array.

"I must thank you, you bloodthirsty savage. I'll defeat you on even footing, axe to axe, to prove my superiority."

The Orc warlord bent over in agony as his opponent's axe drove into his gut, and he spat out blood. The human shoved him to the ground, then flashed him a smile as he raised the axe for a killing blow.

As he finished off the Orc, the human again drew his rapier and shouted at another distant Orc. "You, fiend! You and your kind have killed too many of my friends..."

Some warriors care more about looks than skill, more about heroism and drama than victory. It is far more satisfying for them to defeat their foe impressively than it is to simply win. A famous warrior of this vein, known only as the Edgemaster, trained his disciples to always be prepared for different types of combat. Highly adaptive and canny warriors, devotees to the Edgemaster may not truly be masters by merit of the depth of their training, but the breadth of their knowledge of wielding weaponry – and looking good while doing so – is awe-inspiring.

Many students of the school of the Edgemaster are bards, who favor the flashy style of combat. Surprisingly few are actual fighters, barbarians, rangers, or paladins, if for no other reason than that most prefer direct combat to showmanship.

Hit Die: d8.



Illustration by David Hendee

PRESTIGE

The Edgemaster (continued)

REQUIREMENTS

Base Attack Bonus: +4.

Intimidate: 4 ranks.

Perform: 8 ranks.

Sense Motive: 4 ranks.

Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike, plus another feat from the fighter bonus feat list other than a weapon proficiency.

Special: Proficiency in at least one martial or exotic weapon each of slashing, piercing, and bludgeoning.

CLASS SKILLS

The Edgemaster's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Tumble (Dex). See Chapter 4: Skills in the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Edgemaster prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: An Edgemaster gains proficiency in all simple and martial weapons, in light armor, and in shields.

Edgemastery (Ex): The Edgemaster's suffers no nonproficiency penalty for weapons he does not know. This does not apply to mechanical or technological

weapons unless the Edgemaster has seen such a weapon used before. He would know how to use a kama, double-axe, or whip, but would not know how to use a repeating crossbow, lightsaber, or pistol unless he had seen someone else use such a weapon before. For weapons of this type, the nonproficiency penalty is the standard -4. Note that he is not considered proficient with these weapons, so he could not take Weapon Focus in any of these weapons.

Bladeflourish: An Edgemaster is not just a warrior but a lover of the art of fighting. Often he improvises techniques in the middle of battle as need demands, or uses his combined skills of showmanship and swordmanship to instill fear in his enemies and courage in his allies.

Once per level per day, an Edgemaster can use his Bladeflourish ability. Depending on his level, he has access to a greater variety of powers with the Bladeflourish.

Usage of the Bladeflourish ability is normally a standard action. However, if the Edgemaster is taking an attack action, he can use his Bladeflourish ability as a free action, but suffers a -4 penalty to his attack rolls for that round. The Bladeflourish ability can be used only once each round, even as a free action.

For example, if Hagerrd (Brd 6/Edg 2) wanted to use his Bladeflourish ability to Inspire Courage, he could do so as a standard action, whirling his weapon in a confident, impressive manner. Alternately, if he were engaged in combat, he could both fight and Inspire Courage, but if he does so he will have a -4 penalty to his attack rolls for that round.

TABLE 1: PRESTIGE CLASS – THE EDMASTER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Edgemastery, Bladeflourish (Fascinate, Inspire Courage), Improvised Weapons
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Bladeflourish (Improvise Style), Uncanny Dodge
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Magnificent Defense
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Bladeflourish (Cowing Flurry), Trick Strike
5	+4	+1	+4	+1	Bladeflourish (Recover Poise)
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Greater Edgemastery
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Bladeflourish (Blind and Buffet)
8	+6	+2	+6	+2	Bladeflourish (Dramatic Dispatch)
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Assorted Blows
10	+7	+3	+7	+3	Bladeflourish (Puissant Strike), Masterful Dispatch

The Edgemaster

(continued)

Illustration by Karim Shehadeh

If the Edgemaster has usages of the Bardic Music ability, he may exchange Bardic Music usages for a Bladeflourish usages. He *cannot*, however, utilize his Bladeflourish usages to use normal Bardic Music abilities. Whenever a Bladeflourish ability's power is based on the Edgemaster's level, add in whatever levels he may have of classes that grant Bardic Music abilities.

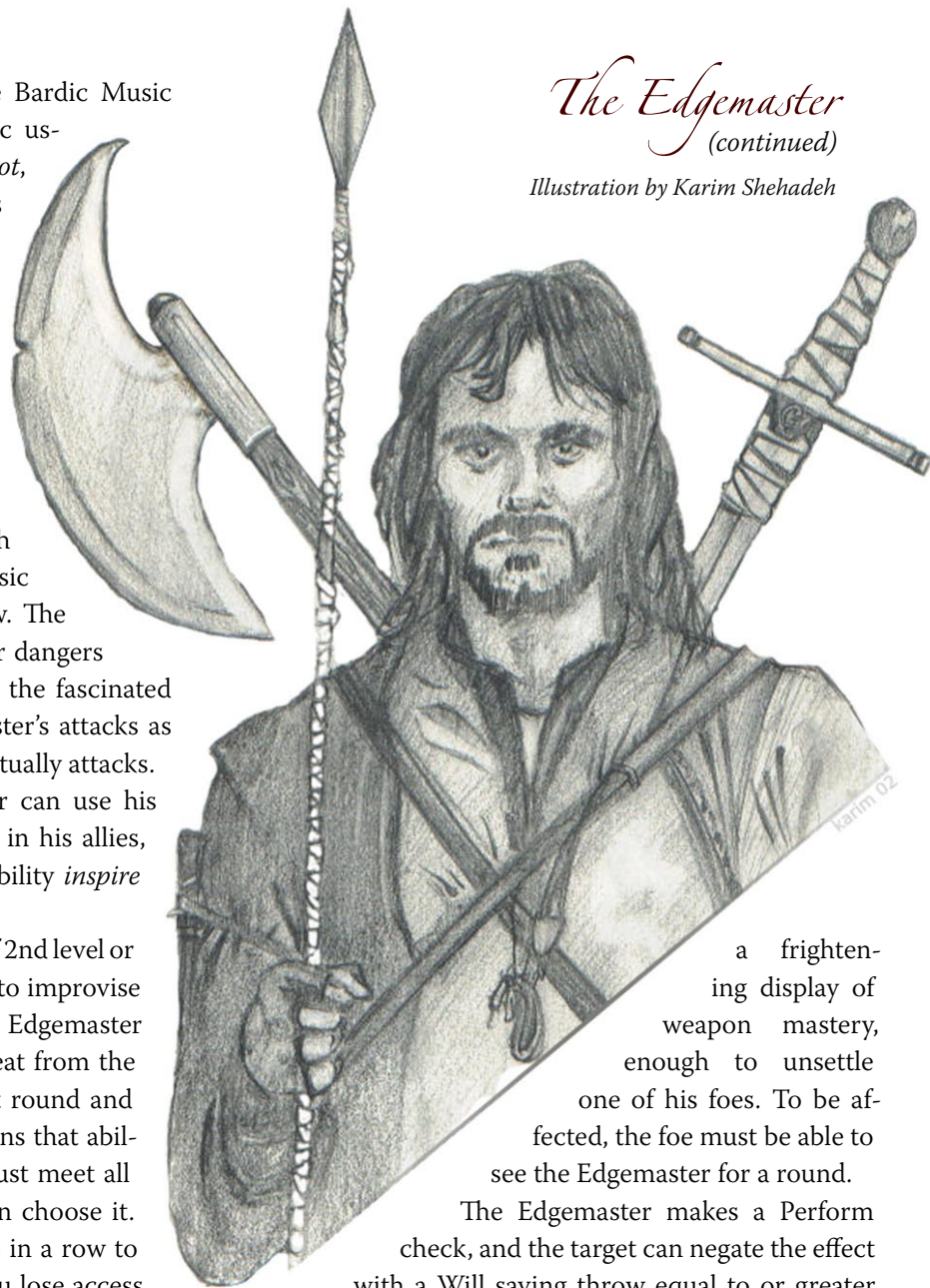
Fascinate (Sp): An Edgemaster can use his Bladeflourish ability to cause a single creature to become fascinated with him, which functions as the Bardic Music ability *fascinate*, except as noted below. The distraction of a nearby combat or other dangers prevents the ability from working, but the fascinated creature will not perceive the Edgemaster's attacks as hostile to him unless the Edgemaster actually attacks.

Inspire Courage (Su): An Edgemaster can use his Bladeflourish ability to inspire courage in his allies, which functions as the Bardic Music ability *inspire courage*.

Improvise Style (Ex): An Edgemaster of 2nd level or higher can use his Bladeflourish ability to improvise a new tactic for combat. The round the Edgemaster uses *Improvise Style*, he chooses any feat from the Fighter list of bonus feats, and for that round and for 1 minute thereafter per level, he gains that ability as a virtual feat. The Edgemaster must meet all prerequisites for that feat before he can choose it. This ability may be used several rounds in a row to develop a complete chain of feats. If you lose access to a virtual feat, you likewise lose access to all feats that have that feat as a prerequisite.

For example, Hagerrd (Brd 6/Edg 2) is disarmed of his greatsword, but manages to pluck a rapier from the dead hands of a warrior he has just slain. Though he has not trained much with a rapier (he is, however, proficient in rapier), he quickly switches to a style more suited for fencing. In the first round, he uses his Bladeflourish ability to gain weapon focus (rapier), suffering a -4 penalty to his attack rolls because his attention is partially diverted toward improvising his fighting style. For the next three minutes (30 rounds) he will fight as if he had weapon focus (rapier). The second round he gains weapon finesse (rapier), then in the third round use one of his Bardic Music usages to gain expertise. He could potentially gain the Whirlwind Attack virtual feat after improvising for several rounds.

Cowing Flurry (Sp): An Edgemaster of 4th level or higher can use one of his bladeflourish usages to go into



a frightening display of weapon mastery, enough to unsettle one of his foes. To be affected, the foe must be able to see the Edgemaster for a round.

The Edgemaster makes a Perform check, and the target can negate the effect with a Will saving throw equal to or greater than the Edgemaster's check result. If the saving throw succeeds, the Edgemaster cannot attempt to fascinate that creature again for 24 hours. If the saving throw fails, the foe is shaken, suffering a -2 morale penalty on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws. This effect lasts for as long as the Edgemaster continues the flurry, and for 5 rounds thereafter (or 5 rounds after the foe can no longer see the Edgemaster). *Cowing flurry* is a spell-like, mind-affecting, fear ability.

Recover Poise (Ex): A 5th-level or higher Edgemaster can, as a free action, expend one of his bladeflourish usages to treat any attack roll that is a natural 1 to instead be a natural 2. Since natural 1's always miss, a natural 2 might hit instead. Using this ability does *not* inflict the normal -4 penalty for using Bladeflourish in the same round as attacking.

Edgemasters are skilled enough to make even mistakes look impressive.

Blind and Buffed (Ex): Starting at 7th level, an Edgemaster can beat his opponent around the face, eyes, and ears to blind and deafen him. By using one of his bladeflourish usages for the day, the Edgemaster's whirling swipes obscure vision and fill his foe's ears with enough noise to drown out normal sounds.

The Edgemaster must make a successful melee touch attack against his opponent. If the attack hits, the Edgemaster then makes a Perform check, and the target can negate the effect with a Fortitude saving throw equal to or greater than the Edgemaster's check result. If the saving throw fails, the target is blinded and deafened for 1 round. The target receives a +4 bonus to this Fortitude save for each size category larger than medium that he is. If the target's eyes and/or ears are out of reach, or if it does not rely on sight or sound to navigate, it may be immune to either part or all of this effect, at the GM's option.

In addition to the obvious effects, a blinded creature has a 50% chance to miss in combat, loses his positive Dexterity bonus to AC (if any), and grants a +2 bonus on attack rolls to enemies who attack him, just as if all his enemies were invisible. He moves at half speed and suffers a -4 penalty on most Strength and Dexterity-based skills. Deafened creatures suffer a -4 penalty to initiative checks and have a 20% chance of spell failure when casting spells with verbal components.

Dramatic Dispatch (Ex): If an Edgemaster of 8th level or higher drops an opponent in combat with a melee attack (reduces him to 0 hit points or otherwise renders him helpless), he may immediately use of his bladeflourish usages to make a coup de grace against that opponent as a free action. He still automatically hits and gets a critical hit, as per any normal coup de grace. This counts as an attack of opportunity for the purposes of determining how many times he may use this ability each round. Using this ability does *not* inflict the normal -4 penalty for using Bladeflourish in the same round as attacking.

Puissant Strike (Sp): A 10th-level Edgemaster can use one of his bladeflourish usages to grant a +20 insight bonus to his next attack. If the Edgemaster chooses to activate this bladeflourish ability as a free action, he still suffers the normal -4 penalty to his attack.

For example, Hagerrd (Brd 6/Edg10) aims for a killing blow against a Dragon. He simultaneously uses his *puissant strike* ability while attacking, getting a -4 penalty from using bladeflourish as a free action, but adding a bonus of +20 (twice his Edgemaster class level), for a net +16 bonus to his attack roll. *Puissant strike* is a spell-like ability.

Improvised Weapons (Ex): An Edgemaster can use almost any solid object of at least tiny size as if it were a weapon. Tiny and small items do 1d4 points of damage, medium items do 1d6, and large do 1d8. All items are considered bludgeoning, and have a critical threat range of 20/x2. Some weapons (such as vases or sheets of glass) might only be useful for one or two attacks before breaking, whereas flimsy items like paper or cloth are wholly useless as weapons. At the GM's option, certain objects might be considered slashing or piercing, but this does not alter its damage or threat range.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): At 2nd level, an Edgemaster gains the Uncanny Dodge ability, as the rogue ability of the same name. The additional bonuses of this ability progress as listed in the rogue class.

If the Edgemaster has another class that grants the uncanny dodge ability, add together all class levels of classes that grant the ability and determine the character's uncanny doge ability on that basis.

Magnificent Defense (Ex): An Edgemaster is highly confident in his own dramatic fighting style, and is bolstered by his own prowess. This confidence allows him to calmly face combat and determine the tactics he needs to defend himself. After reaching 3rd level, while wearing either light armor or no armor, the Edgemaster applies his Charisma bonus, if positive, to his armor class.

Trick Strike (Ex): Edgemasters are adept at unorthodox tactics, and sometimes find it easier to distract an opponent than to actually hit him. Cutting down chandeliers, severing rope-bridges, or breaking oil lamps can provide useful momentary distractions, and sometimes they use the environment to actually damage an opponent. Beginning at 4th level, an Edgemaster can make one attack each round to strike an object as a bonus free action. All damage dealt by this free attack is reduced by half, to a minimum of 1 point of damage.

See Strike an Object (in the section "Attack an Object" in Chapter Eight: Combat, in the Player's Handbook) for more details. Note that this ability cannot be used to strike a weapon or shield; the rules for the two types of attacks are different.

Greater Edgemastery (Ex): At 6th level, the Edgemaster becomes fully proficient in every form of non-technological weapon, and can thus gain feats such as Weapon Focus that have proficiency as a prerequisite. As with the normal Edgemastery ability, this does not apply to mechanical or technological weapons unless the Edgemaster has seen such a weapon used before.


Assorted Blows (Ex): An Edgemaster of 8th level or higher can easily switch the type of damage his blows

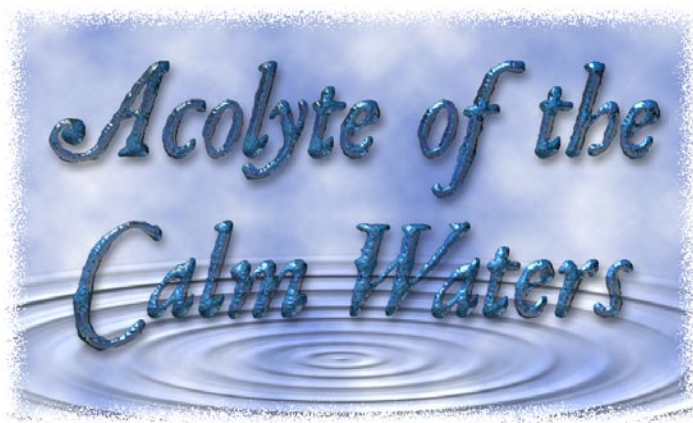
deal, perhaps for style's sake, to damage resistant creatures (like skeletons), or simply not deal lasting harm. For each attack he makes, the Edgemaster chooses whether he wants to deal normal or subdual damage, and whether he wants to deal slashing, bludgeoning, or piercing damage. He suffers no penalties to his attacks, even if he wants to use, for instance, a greatclub to deal subdual piercing damage.

Masterful Dispatch (Ex): A 10th-level Edgemaster has so mastered the art of fighting that common warriors are beneath him, and can no longer stand in his way. Whenever a creature whose maximum hit points are less (10+the Edgemaster's Charisma bonus) attempts to make a melee attack against the Edgemaster, the Edgemaster may immediately make a free attack against that target, even if it is not his turn in the initiative order. If the attack hits, it deals an amount of damage equal to 10+the Edgemaster's Charisma bonus (usually enough to reduce the target to 0 hit points, barring magic or damage reduction).

Creatures simply moving past the Edgemaster and not attacking him are not vulnerable to this ability, nor are creatures that *could* make an attack of opportunity against the Edgemaster, but choose not to. The Edgemaster cannot use this ability when flat-footed or denied his Dexterity bonus to AC.

Note that this ability only applies to creatures whose total maximum hit points are less than (10+the Edgemaster's level). The creatures' current hit point total does not matter, since it is the maximum hp total that gauges how worthy a foe the creature is. Dropping a creature in this way does not grant any bonuses, such as from the Cleave feat or the Bladeflourish (*Dramatic Dispatch*).

For example, Hagerrd (Brd 6/Edg 10, with a 20 Charisma) is ambushed at an opera by his rival swordsman, Siegfried. The audience, nearly all hired warriors working for Siegfried, leap to attack Hagerrd while his foe tries to abduct the main actress for ransom. Hagerrd rips an arm off his seat for a club and begins rushing toward the stage to rescue the actress. Since all the hired warriors have fewer than 15 hit points (10+Hagerrd's Charisma bonus), Hagerrd gets a free attack against any warrior who attempts to attack him. Their skills are so meager compared to his that he can easily find an opening if they try to attack. Because of his Uncanny Dodge, even surrounding him is futile, so after the first two rounds, the thugs give up, warily opening a path to let Hagerrd pass. Smugly, Hagerrd leaps on the stage, flourishes a sword he took from a fallen ruffian, and glares a challenge at Siegfried. 



By Danny Tauber

The world is awash in war. Across every continent, races feud and countries battle. Everywhere, adventurers fight for power, glory, and treasure. But in this war-torn place, there are also those who will not use violence. The priests of the Goddess of Peace seek to bring good to the world while promoting the ideal of pacifism. Through their skill, intelligence, and wisdom, they manage to live peacefully in a land where peace in any form is very rare. While some remain in prayer and meditation, there are also those who are dedicated to spreading their peaceful way of life to others. The Acolytes of the Calm Waters go out into the world and demonstrate through their actions that treasure and glory can be better achieved through nonviolent means.

Often the Goddess chooses new Acolytes herself. She will sense a soul that grows weary of the mindless hacking and slashing through an adventuring life and test their spirits through three nights of dreams. These dreams are magical, so even Elves have been known to have them. The exact details vary from instance to instance, but often they involve being taunted by one's enemies and friends. The taunts get progressively more personal over the course of the three nights. If by the end of the third night of dreams the subject has not given in to the course of violence, the Goddess appears personally and invites them to the nearest monastery dedicated to her tradition.

Some students simply seek out the Order on their own, and request the teachings of the Goddess. These students are allowed to stay one night in the temple. If they are worthy, they will have a similar dream to the ones above, but will also have their enemies and relatives attack them physically and magically. If they resist violence, the Goddess will appear in their dream and congratulate them. In the morning, their name will appear in the Temple's Roster and the clerics will then begin the new student's instruction.

The training of the Order of the Calm Waters takes one week. This time is mostly spent reading and medi-

Code of Conduct

Prime Dictum:

I shall never use violence as a means of settling a dispute.

Secondary Dictum:

I shall not rely on the tools of man to do the work of my body.

tating, although one hour a day is spent learning how to avoid blows and projectiles. After this week, the Acolytes are thrust back into the world where they will receive all further training from the blessings of the Goddess herself.

The most common adventurers in the order are former bards, clerics, druids, monks, and psions. Martial characters such as rangers, fighters and barbarians are occasionally interested in a life of non-violence, but lack the willpower to fully reject their previous teachings. Wizards and sorcerers rarely consider non-violence an option.

Hit Die: d12.

REQUIREMENTS

Alignment: Any non-Chaotic, non-Evil

Base Will Save: +5.

Concentration: 8 ranks.

Sense Motive: 4 ranks.

Special: Must be contacted by the Goddess of Peace, and agree to obey the Acolyte of the Calm Waters code of conduct.

CLASS SKILLS

The Acolyte of the Calm Waters's Class Skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen (Wis), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex).

See Chapter 4: Skills in the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

TEMPLE'S ROSTER: This small book resides in the sanctuary of every temple of the Goddess of Peace. The pages are resistant to all damage, harm, and ink (magical or non-magical). Writing appears on the pages only through the will of the Goddess. It is mostly used to assure clerics that new arrivals really do have Her blessing for training. Occasionally if a message must be discreetly sent to a distant temple, a short prayer will cause the intended words to materialize in the book.
Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Commune or Sending; **Market Price:** Impossible to buy; **Cost to Create:** 6,000 gp +3,000 XP; **Weight:** 2 lb.

CLASS FEATURES

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: Acolytes gain no additional Weapon or Armor proficiencies.

Acolyte Training: At levels 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9, the Acolyte gains one ability from the following list.

Bonus Feat: The Acolyte gains one of the following feats for free: Brew Potion, Endurance, Expertise, Extra Turning, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Run, Toughness (may be taken multiple times), Great Sunder, Hide Power, Improved Psicrystal, Inertial Armor, Mental Leap, Psionic Dodge, Psychoanalyst, Speed of Thought, Talented, Up the Walls. The Acolyte must fulfill the prerequisites of any feat she chooses.

Natural Musician: The Acolyte gains the Bardic Music ability, which she can use once per day. If she already has the Bardic Music ability, she can use it 3 additional times per day.

Wisdom of the Goddess (Ex): The Acolyte may now add her Acolyte level to her Bardic Knowledge checks. The Acolyte must have the Bardic Knowledge ability, or the equivalent, to choose this power.

Slow Fall (Ex): The Acolyte takes damage from falls as if they were 20 feet shorter than they actually are, as long as there is some solid surface within arm's reach. If the Acolyte already has the Slow Fall ability, increase the distance slowed by 10 feet.

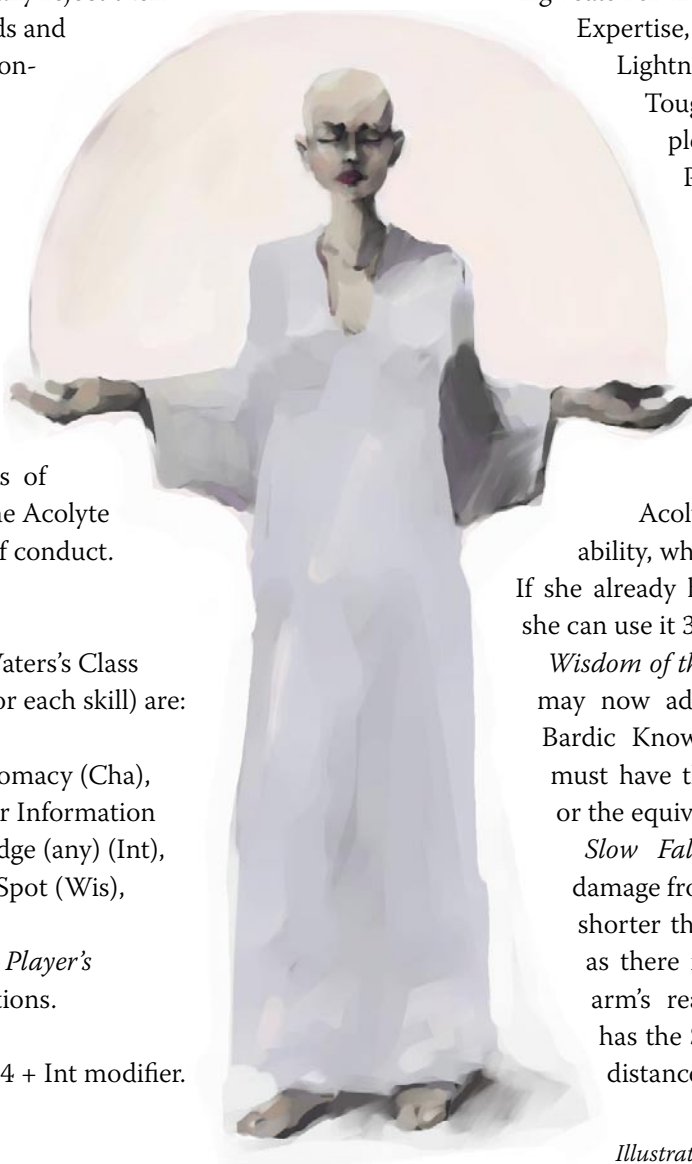


Illustration by David Hendee

Purity of Body (Ex): The Acolyte gains immunity to all diseases except for magical diseases.

Calm Water Stance (Ex): As a free action at the beginning of her round, the Acolyte can adopt a defensive posture, called the Calm Water Stance. While in this gently-swaying posture, the Acolyte adds a +5 dodge bonus to her AC, but must a move-equivalent action each round to maintain the stance. The Acolyte can end the stance at will, but the stance ends immediately if she makes any form of attack other than to target non-harmful spells or abilities.

Merciful (Ex): Whenever one of the Acolyte's attacks – physical, magical, psionic, or otherwise – would reduce a creature to fewer than 0 hit points, that creature is instead reduced to 0 hit points and is stunned for 1 round. This includes effects that normally cause instant death, such as high-level turning or a coup de grace.

Calm Emotions (Sp): At 2nd level an Acolyte learns to spread her inner peace to those around her. Three times per day she may use *calm emotions* as a spell-like ability. This affects all creatures within 30

The Prime Dictum should raise the question, 'So what is allowed?' Some examples include: Attacking non-sentient objects or creatures (such as a door, weapon, or construct). Spells that have no destructive result, such as Web, Sleep or Charm. Touch attacks that do not cause physical or mental harm to the target, such as Cat's Grace, Darkness or Fly. Turning or rebuking undead without destroying them. Trip attacks and Grapple attacks that do not cause damage.

The Secondary Dictum is present to deter or prevent acolytes from using weaponry aside from their body, and is subject to a greater deal of interpretation than the Prime Dictum. Many acolytes follow it strictly and travel with nothing but food, coin and the clothes on their backs. Some merely carry no weaponry yet walk about in full-plate armor with any number of protective rings and cloaks on. Most find a balance somewhere in the middle. The Goddess has not yet shown enough favor to any of the groups for there to be an official interpretation.

feet of the Acolyte, and lasts for as long as the Acolyte concentrates, up to 2 minutes. The Will save DC to resist this ability is equal to 12 + the Acolyte's Wisdom bonus. A character who resists this effect cannot be affected by the same Acolyte's *calm emotions* power for one day.

At 8th level, the Acolyte can use *calm emotions* an unlimited number of times per day.

Inner Peace (Ex): Beginning at 4th level, the Acolyte adds her class level to all Will saves to resist Mind-Affecting and Charm spells and abilities.

Energy Resistance (Ex): Each time this ability is gained, the Acolyte gains Resistance 5 for one type of element – acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic. Each element may only be chosen once.

Healing Hands (Ex): An Acolyte learns new and powerful methods of binding wounds upon reaching 5th level. The Acolyte may make a Heal check to mend the wounds of the injured, healing 1 point of damage for each point the result of the Heal check beats DC 20. This healing requires a full-round action, and can only be used on any given creature once per day.

TABLE 2: PRESTIGE CLASS – THE ACOLYTE OF CALM WATERS

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting/Psionic/ Monk Advancement
1	+0	+2	+2	+2	Acolyte Training, Calm Water Stance, Merciful	
2	+1	+3	+3	+3	<i>Calm Emotions</i> (3/day)	+1 Level in Existing Class
3	+1	+3	+3	+3	Acolyte Training, Energy Resistance	
4	+2	+4	+4	+4	Inner Peace	+1 Level in Existing Class
5	+2	+4	+4	+4	Healing Hands, Acolyte Training	
6	+3	+5	+5	+5	Energy Resistance	+1 Level in Existing Class
7	+3	+5	+5	+5	Acolyte Training	
8	+4	+6	+6	+6	<i>Calm Emotions</i> (unlimited)	+1 Level in Existing Class
9	+4	+6	+6	+6	Acolyte Training, Energy Resistance	
10	+5	+7	+7	+7	Enlightenment	+1 Level in Existing Class



Illustration by Joshua Cayne

Enlightenment:

The ultimate goal of every follower of the Goddess, the Acolyte reaches true enlightenment at 10th level. Her type changes to Outsider, rendering her immune to spells and abilities that target humanoids, such as Charm Person. She is not considered extraplanar, and may still be resurrected. Additionally, she gains a +4 enhancement bonus

to Charisma, Intelligence, and Wisdom.

Spellcasting/Psionic/Monk: Acolytes

continue advancing in some of their previous abilities. Each time she gains the ability “+1 level in existing class,” she chooses a class she already has levels in from the following groups.

Spellcasting: Advancement levels stack with a previous spellcasting class’s levels for the purpose of determining caster level, spells known and spells per day. Other benefits, such as a greater ability to rebuke/turn undead, are not granted.

Manifester: Advancement levels stack with a previous manifestor class’s levels to determine manifestor level, power points per day, and powers discovered. Other benefits, such as new combat modes, are not granted.

Monk: Advancement levels stack with previous monk levels to determine unarmored speed, AC bonus, and unarmed damage.

Ex-Acolytes: Acolytes that become chaotic or evil, or that lose the favor of the Goddess can not gain levels in this class. They retain their base attack bonus, saving throw bonuses, skills, hit points, Acolyte Training, Healing Hands, and the Calm Water Stance, as well as the Advancement levels, but lose access to all other abilities gained through this class. The Acolyte may atone for their misdeeds (see the *atonement* spell in the player’s handbook) at which point all abilities are restored.

Lawful Acolytes may freely multiclass in and out of Monk, ignoring the normal restriction.

THE GODDESS OF PEACE

Alignment: True Neutral, but her followers are all non-chaotic, non-evil.

Domains: Knowledge, Luck, Trickery

Favored Weapon: Sentient minds.

Typical Worshippers: Halflings, Elves

The Goddess of Peace is a non-combatant in the wars of the gods. She tries desperately to remain uninvolved, but secretly supports those who are Good. She keeps her true name hidden so that none may use its power over her.

She has few followers in the mortal lands compared to other gods, but she keeps in close contact with almost all of them. Her most devout clerics and monks spend their days praying and meditating for peace among men and gods. A small branch of her followers called *The Order of the Calm Waters* actually goes out adventuring in an effort to promote non-violence through example.

Clerics devoted to the Goddess may still use any spell they choose, those who misuse violent or destructive spells will soon find that their spells aren’t always coming when called upon.

PRESTIGE

The HARVESTER

by Joshua Gervais

Harvesters focus on capturing people or creatures without harming them. Their identities range from officers of the law to kidnappers to hunter of exotic animals. They run a gambit of morals and beliefs having only the hunt in common. Their skills are quite valuable to an equally diverse group of potential employers. This fact keep most harvesters free from want allowing them to concentrate on the hunt.

Their skill at tracking and proficient in combat make rangers ideal harvesters. The monk's stunning first ability makes them is also useful to perspective harvesters.

The only unifying factor among the harvesters is the hunt. The hunt is of paramount importance in each harvester's life and often passes aside other concerns if they conflict. Harvester have difficult with each other due to the difference in their personal beliefs. Those few who see eye to eye are often forced to compete for the same prey.

Hit Die: d10.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a harvester, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike.;
Stunning Fist; Track.

TABLE 3: PRESTIGE CLASS – THE HARVESTER

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Hunter +2
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Gentle Touch
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Hunter +3
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Stunning Blow
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Hunter +4
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	Improved Grapple
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Hunter +5
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Improved Disarm
9	+9	+6	+3	+3	Hunter +6
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Shocking Blow

CLASS SKILLS

The harvester's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Hide (Dex), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Use Rope (Dex), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int Modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the harvester prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The harvester is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all types of armor and shields.

Target: A target is the object of the hunt and accordingly the target must not be harmed. The harvester may only use their class features on a target. If the harvester deals normal damage to a target they are no longer a target. After a day has passed target status can be regained.

Hunter (Ex): The harvester is adept at tracking down and detaining his foe. Add a +2 bonus to Wilderness Lore, Hide, Move Silently, Spot, and Use Rope checks against a target. This bonus also applies to the DC to resist the harvester's stunning fist attacks. At 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th level this bonus increase to +3, +4, +5, and +6.


Gentle Touch (Ex): At 2nd level, a harvester may use a melee weapon to deal subdual damage without penalty.

Stunning Blow (Ex): At 4th level, a harvester may use the Stunning Fist feat with a melee weapon. This is not a new ability, but a enhancement of the feat.

Improved Grapple (Ex): At 6th level, a harvester no longer provokes an attack of opportunity when trying to grapple.

Improved Disarm (Ex): At 8th level, a harvester gains the Improved Disarm feat, even if they don't meet the prerequisites.

Shocking Blow (Su): At 10th level, a harvester's stunning fist attacks become more potent. Opponents that fail their Fortitude saves are stunned for a number of rounds equal to the harvester's Wisdom modifier, or a minimum of 1 round.

If a shocking blow is used against a creature normally immune to stunning (such as a golem), if the creature fails its saving throw, it is stunned for 1 round. The Shocking Blow is potent enough to briefly disable even creatures normally immune to stunning. 

THE PSYCHIC

A Psionic NPC class by Korey MacVittie

Some less developed communities, humanoid or otherwise, may have a talent for psionics. However, due to a lack of civility or mentors knowledgeable in the field, one with a psionic talent would have to develop their power on their own, without any sophisticated training or past examples to guide them in the use of their newly discovered powers. Those that learn to control their powers and make use of their abilities, come to be known as psychics.

In this situation, there may or may not be evidence of psionics prior to the coming of psychics. Perhaps the psionically-endowed could not learn from past experiences with psionics, because there were none. The psychic, then, would be a forerunner of psions and psychic warriors, one who expands the bounds of psionics and comes to realize the true power of the mind.

The psychic class is one that can be used in many scenarios, though two are prominent: an adept-like class, appearing in tribal, barbaric communities with little or no training available for the psionically-endowed; and a class which introduces psionics into a region, continent, or world, a psionic which has only his own experiences to draw from when exploring her psionic abilities. This class builds off of information in the *Psionics Handbook*, and that book is required to make the most out of this article.

Adventures: Psychics adventure to learn more about themselves and their powers. A lower-level psychic is new to their abilities, whether or not the world they live is aware of psionics. A psychic's adventures tend to be centered around self-discovery and

enlightenment. He can feel the power that lies within his mind, but cannot channel it as well as psions. She wants to learn as much as possible, and this drives the psychic to find new experiences that may lead to the discovery of previously latent powers or the mastery of known powers.

Characteristics: Psychics have limited psionic potential. This potential could be limited by any number of things – underdeveloped minds, the wrong environment, lesser intellect, or a lack of true understanding of the power. These limitations are all possible, but will more than likely be directly related to the origin of psionics.

Psychics tend to be focused completely on the mind, having no care for other matters. They know that they have latent talent, and want to bring it out fully. Psychics tend to shun purely physical confrontation when possible, but will accept any challenge that would allow them to prove their mental prowess.

Alignment: Psychics tend to be neutral in nature – not by any conscious choice, but simply because they do not really care. All they want to do is develop the powers within their mind, and care not of worldly matters. This is not to say that there are no non-neutral psychics, merely that many psychics may not have yet examined their position on ethics or morals due to their extensive research into their mind.

Religion: Most often from a primitive background, psychics are more than likely to be more religious than other manifesters.

They often feel a connection with spiritual leaders, as their abilities appear to be similar – psychics are able to create effects that appear

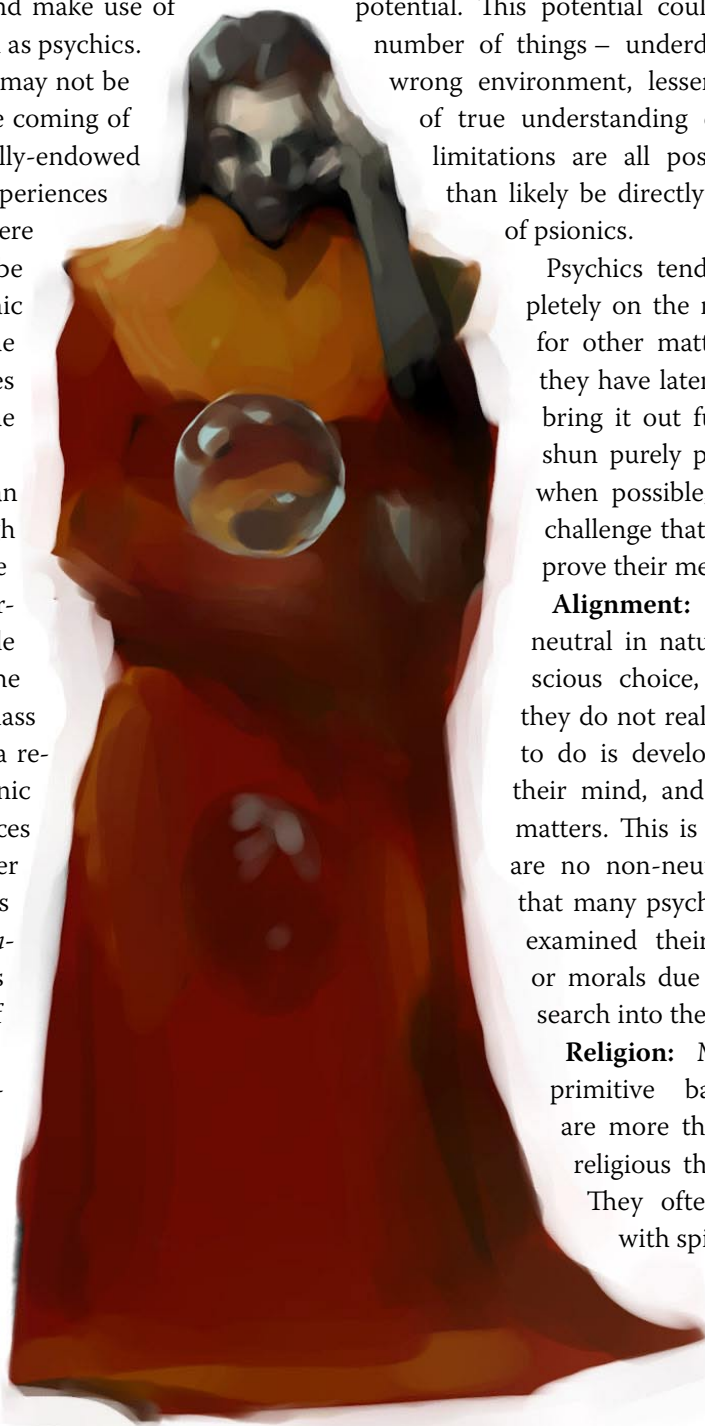


Illustration by David Hendee

similar to those produced by adepts and shamans. They may also feel connected with “sacred” animals that are regarded as being intelligent with great powers, such as phoenixes or thunderbirds. In some cases, a psychic may even be trained to take the position of shaman in a tribal community, despite the unusual source of their powers, and in this case they may believe that their gift is from the deities.

Psychics from a society that is and has been aware of psionics prior to the psychic may share the views of psions and psychic warriors, for many of the same reasons.

Background: The backgrounds of psychics will vary with how the class is used. In a world where psionics are not new, psychics may be treated similar to psions and psychic warriors, depending upon the civility of their community. If they are the first students of psionics in a nonpsionic world, then their abilities may be regarded as divine, and the psychic may be

treated as such. Their powers may also be treated as arcane in nature. Depending upon their community’s attitude towards such things, the life of a psychic can vary wildly.

Races: Any intelligent being could, purposefully or accidentally, develop psionic talent. Races that are naturally attuned to psionics, such as illithids and yuan-ti, may never develop psychics, and be born with the inborn abilities of a psion or psychic warrior. Other races that are not naturally psionic in nature may develop psionic talent, and the ability could be linked to anything, be it divine or genetic in nature.

Other Classes: Psychics tend to envy divine spellcasters, if they believe that their gifts are from deities. They may also envy psions and psychic warriors, if they exist, because the psychic may feel that their own abilities are inferior to that of the psion, or even the psychic warrior. Psychics may also feel envious of sorcerers, who also have inborn talent, but of another

sort. Psychics may clash with urban characters, as they are often from tribal communities. Psychics may feel most comfortable when around barbarians, druids, and rangers – classes in which some of the people in their home communities became and made legends about.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Psychics have the following game rule information.

Abilities: Because young psionic talent often revolves more around the mind, rather than the body or spirit, psychics value intelligence, wisdom, and charisma over the other abilities. They often specialize in areas dealing with mental communication or viewing of the future, and so charisma and wisdom are chief stats.

Alignment: Any. Psychics, more often than not, do not care about the world or others, but this view is not shared by all psychics, and some have a deep faith in law or chaos, good or evil.

TABLE 3: NPC CLASS – THE PSYCHIC

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	PPs/Day	0	1	2	3	4	5
1	+0	+0	+0	+2		0	2					
2	+1	+0	+0	+3		1	3					
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Psicrystal	2	3	1				
4	+2	+1	+1	+4		3	3	1				
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Psionic Combat	6	3	1				
6	+3	+2	+2	+5		9	3	2	1			
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Psionic Combat Mode	12	3	2	1			
8	+4	+2	+2	+6		15	3	2	1			
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Psionic Combat Mode	20	3	2	2	1		
10	+5	+3	+3	+7		25	3	2	2	1		
11	+5	+3	+3	+7	Psionic Combat Mode	30	3	3	2	1		
12	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8		35	3	3	2	2	1	
13	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Psionic Combat Mode	42	3	3	2	2	1	
14	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9		49	3	3	3	2	1	
15	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9	Psionic Combat Mode	56	3	3	3	2	2	1
16	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10		63	3	3	3	2	2	1
17	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Psionic Combat Mode	72	3	3	3	3	2	1
18	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11		81	3	3	3	3	2	2
19	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11		90	3	3	3	3	2	2
20	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12		99	3	3	3	3	3	2

Hit Die: d6. A psychic is not physically active, but requires good health to live through dangers that their powers may not be able to handle.

Starting Gold: 2d4 × 10.

CLASS SKILLS

The psychic's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Autohypnosis (Wis), Concentration (Con), Handle Animal (Cha), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Psicraft (Int), Remote View (Int, exclusive skill), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (2+Int modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2+Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the psychic NPC class.

Weapon and Armor

Proficiency: Psychics are skilled with all simple weapons. Psychics are not proficient with any type of armor, nor with shields. Because the psychic focuses on developing their limited psionic potential, they have almost no time to learn even the most rudimentary of combat skills.

Powers: A psychic manifests psionic powers. Psychics follow all the rules for psionic powers that psions and psychic warriors do, as well as a few other rules, detailed below.

The DC for a saving throw against a psychic's power is d20+power level+the psychic's ability modifier for the appropriate power (thus, Strength for a Psychometabolism power, Charisma for a Telepathy power, *etc.*).

The powers of a psychic are not as reliable as the powers of other, better trained classes. Their powers are erratic, and come and go randomly. Thus, each time

the psychic attempts to manifest a power, he or she must make a manifester check (1d20+manifester level) against a DC of 10+level of the power. Failure indicates that the power is not manifested successfully, but the psychic still loses the power points or the free manifestation slot. In addition, that power is then "dormant," meaning that the psychic cannot attempt to manifest that power again for another 1d4 hours. Success indicates that the psychic manifests the power with no problems.

Psychics gain powers that are focused on the mind, and that deal with the mind. They have limited access to powers that manipulate objects in reality. However, this means that they gain access to powers that deal with the mental aspect of life faster than psions – but they gain almost no metacreativity, psychokinesis, psychometabolism, or psychoporation powers.

Power Points: A psychic can manifest a certain number of 1st-level and higher powers per day based on his or her available power points.

A psychic gains bonus power points based on their Charisma score, as though they were a psion two levels lower with a Charisma score two points lower than it is. Thus, psychics are eligible for bonus power points once they reach third level.

0-Level Powers: A psychic follows all the rules for 0-level powers, or talents, that psions and psychic warriors do. A psychic can manifest any talent he or she knows for a free for a number of times per day equal to his or her level+3. After exhausting this daily allotment, the psychic must pay 1 power point per manifestation of a 0th-level power for the rest of the day.

Psicrystal: A psychic can construct a psicrystal at 3rd level. Treat the psychic as a psion with 2 fewer levels when identifying the abilities of the psicrystal. The amount of psionic energy required to create a psicrystal is not present in younger psychics, but the power comes easily enough with experience, although psychics rarely learn to use the abilities of their psicrystals to the fullest extent.

Psionic Combat: At 5th level, the psychic gains the ability to participate in psionic combat, and can learn 2 combat modes of his or her choice. At each odd level thereafter, until 17th, the psychic may choose to learn a new psionic combat mode. Psychics follow all the same rules for psionic combat as psions and psychic warriors do.

Psychics do not gain the ability to participate in psionic combat until fifth level mainly because their minds are then able to open up the pathways necessary to facilitate mental combat. Psychics prior to fifth level have limited knowledge in gaining access to others' neuronic pathways and twisting them to cause damage, but those that survive to fifth level find that they have the ability to reach out and hit others mentally with their abilities. Even then, psychics can get only limited knowledge of how others' minds work, and their psionic combat repertoire grows slower than that of a psion, and is usually less extensive.

PSYCHIC POWER LIST

Psychics choose their powers from the following list. As stated earlier, psychics have limited access to metacreativity, psychokinesis, psychometabolism, and psychoporation powers. Psychics do, however, gain early access to the more powerful clairsentience and telepathy disciplines, these being more easily

developed in a young mind than the other disciplines.

0 Level: *burst, catfall, control shadow, daze, distract, detect psionics, far hand, inkling, know direction, know location, lesser natural armor, missive, telempathic projection, trinket, verve.*

1st Level: *attraction, charm person, conceal thoughts, control light, combat precognition, create sound, demoralize, destiny dissonance, disable, elfsight, empathy, expanded vision, far hand, float, lesser mindlink, my light, object reading, psycholuminescence, sense link, steadfast gaze, talons.*

2nd Level: *astral construct I, augury, aversion, biocurrent, brain lock, clairaudience/clairvoyance, combat prescience, darkvision, detect thoughts, grease, inflict pain, intrusive sense link, lesser concussion, recall pain, see invisibility, sensitivity to psychic impressions, suggestion.*

3rd Level: *anchored navigation, aura sight, body adjustment, body equilibrium, detect remote viewing, charm monster, control flames, crisis of breath, danger sense, divination, false sensory input, fate link, fate of one, invisibility purge, lesser domination, mindlink, nondetection, poison sense, remote viewing, ubiquitous vision, undead sense.*

4th Level: *astral construct II, catapsi, control sound, domination, fatal attraction, forced mindlink, metaconcert, mindwipe, negate psionics, power resistance, sense psionics, tailor memory, true seeing.*

5th Level: *greater domination, mass suggestion, mind probe, mind switch, natural armor, precognition, recall agony, remote view trap, shield of prudence.*



fine tuning your campaign

By Bret Boyd

Music. It is a part of our everyday lives. Radio, television, cinema, and all other forms of mass entertainment utilize music in one way or another to supplement their mediums.

Why should roleplaying games be any different?

The answer is that they should not.

When used properly, music can be as vital a module component as the plot itself. It can inspire, terrify, sadden, and exhilarate. The trouble some GMs might have is finding the right type of music to use during game play. While some GMs may not use any at all, most will agree that this is definitely not the way to go.

There are many varieties of music in the world. The kinds that roleplayers have access to, in a nutshell, include rock/pop, country, rap, reggae, new age, and classical. As much as players and the GM may enjoy a 'top 40' song, it is probably not a good idea to play it during one's module. In fact, no music with singing should be used unless it is a 'feature' piece (discussed below). Simply put, it is easier for a GM to talk over instrumental music than someone singing.

That narrows the choices to new age and classical. Regrettably, many new age pieces are just too strange or futuristic sounding to be used effectively during a medieval roleplaying game. Classical music, on the other hand, hits a little closer to the mark. The instruments and even the choral pieces (excluding opera) heard are more reminiscent of a generic medieval time period. However, when players hear only classical music during a module, they may feel something, but probably 'see' nothing. No

images instantly spring to mind. Not even for recognizable works like Beethoven's Fifth or Ninth symphonies. Although classical may be useful for 'mood' music (discussed below), it is not the emotionally-packed soundtracks that campaigns need. [For more information on using classical music, see the 'Mood Music' entry on pages 21-22 of the 2nd Edition *Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide*.]

This brings us to the category of movie soundtracks. Familiar movie music raises not only images in players' minds but also the emotions of the moment that it is taken from. Roleplayers will find that aptly chosen soundtracks complement modules as well as jelly to peanut butter. The D&D game has an advantage in that it brings together players with much the same interests. When it comes to movies, what one roleplayer enjoys, the next will undoubtedly like or at least have seen. Because of this, soundtracks favored by the GM have a good chance of going over well with the rest of the group.

The next step is to determine exactly which soundtracks work best and why. Out of the many movie soundtracks available, the real cream of the crop comes from the past 25 years, during which science fiction and fantasy (both normally filled with action and adventure) have really taken off.

continued overleaf

The three major composers of these genres could be referred to as the three 'J's'—John Williams, Jerry Goldsmith, and James Horner. These men have contributed more to the movies than can possibly be put into words. By using their music, the GM turns his campaign into something more than it could achieve on its own merits. Here is a list of some of the 'J's' prominent scores that can easily fit into any campaign:

Williams: The *Star Wars* Trilogy (as well as *The Phantom Menace*); The *Indiana Jones* Trilogy; *Jurassic Park*

Goldsmith: *King Solomon's Mines*; *The Mummy* (1999); *Air Force One*; *Star Trek: The Motion Picture, V: The Final Frontier, First Contact*, and *Insurrection*; *First Knight*; *Congo*; *The Edge*; *The Omen*

Horner: *Titanic*; *Braveheart*; *Willow*; *Aliens*; *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* and *III: The Search for Spock*; *Glory*

Now, for this music to really prove its worth to a GM, he must recognize that there are two categories of music for any given module to use them in – 'mood' and 'feature.' Mood music is just what it sounds like. This would be used when the PCs are doing something that is not critical to the overall plot, including general roleplaying, equipment shopping, and so on. The music here is generally quieter and reflects the emotions of the characters at the given time.

The second and more important category, feature music, is used for many different occasions. Each important plot point, creature, NPC, *etc.* that the GM feels is worthy of its own theme is when a specific piece should be chosen from one of the soundtracks. The following are situations in which feature music could be used as well as one or more examples.

The one sure gaming feature for every module is melee combat. General melees are accompanied well by 'Futile Escape' from *Aliens* and 'The Hijacking' from *Air Force One*. The furious tempo of each piece provides the perfect adrenaline rush for any combat. But when the GM creates a massive final battle against a major foe, he might want something even more glorious sounding. These epic battles are complemented best by choral pieces, which help to reflect the grandeur of the GM's creative efforts. Such works include 'Charging Fort Wagner' from *Glory*, 'Arthur's Farewell' from *First Knight*, 'Duel of the Fates' from *Star Wars: Episode I*, and the classical piece 'O Fortuna' from *Carmina Burana* (by Carl Orff).

When PCs are exploring dusty crypts or cursed mansions, the GM will undoubtedly want some suspense music as he unveils dark corridor after dark corridor. An excellent soundtrack for this feature lies in *The*

Mummy's 'The Crypt' and 'Discoveries' tracks. The sporadically screeching trumpet and low string chords foretell of possible evil lurking behind every corner.

Perhaps the GM is planning on killing off a beloved NPC. Or maybe a PC gets killed in the line of duty. Any subsequent funeral could also be turned into a musical feature. Besides Orff's 'O Fortuna,' there is one other classical work that fits well as a feature and it is Gabriel Fauré's 'Agnus Dei.' This movement from the composer's *Requiem* is ripe with sorrow. Particularly, the central one minute and 40 seconds of the movement climaxes with a soul wrenching horn solo that would make any player snuffle for the fallen.

When both new and old NPCs show up in a module, the GM may want to make an impression upon the players. For example, the PCs new foe enters the room. Resplendent in his magical plate armor and flanked by a fully armed entourage, the PCs may begin to doubt their skills. Now, replay the same scene with 'The Emperor Arrives' from *Return of the Jedi* blaring in the players' ears. At this point, the PCs don't just doubt their skills; they're wetting their breeches.

Fortunately for the PCs, this arrival feature doesn't always have to mean impending doom. They will certainly be more at ease when a noble NPC strides up to them to the tune of 'Arthur's Fanfare' from *First Knight*. GM's planning to use recurring NPCs that have a theme might consider bringing back that theme when the NPC does show up again. This is for continuity's sake as much as it is to establish an intimate feel between the players and that NPC.

Although there are numerous possibilities for melee tracks, what about when the melee turns sour, for either side? If the enemies break and retreat (especially with something the PCs want), you have a chase feature. If the PCs are overwhelmed, it is their turn to make a hasty departure. This chase/escape feature, like all of the features, works best when the GM has already planned for it. The music in each case is generally interchangeable, whether it is the PCs or their foes that are fleeing. Such rapidly paced tracks include 'Escape from the Tavern' from *Willow* and 'Desert Chase' from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

When a module, even a campaign, comes to a climactic end, the GM absolutely needs some kind of celebration music. This celebration feature is under the assumption that the PC's have accomplished deeds worthy of public praise and receive such at some kind of ceremony. As the surviving PC's are honored, there is one track that stands head and shoulders above the rest: 'The Throne Room/End Titles' from *Star Wars: A New Hope*.

HERITAGE FEATS

By Shane Garvey

This collection of feats is designed to flesh out a character slightly. It allows some odd racial combinations, such as an Elf with a Dwarf heritage, or a Halfling with an Orc heritage. Characters should not be allowed to take a heritage feat for their own race, and the game master should discourage absurd combinations of parenting without a good explanation from the player.

Heritage feats can only be chosen at 1st level. The appearance of a character with a heritage feat would of course be somewhat altered from his base race.

Celestial Heritage [Heritage]

You have a Celestial ancestor. You have inherited some of his or her Celestial traits.

Benefits: As a racial ability, you can cast *light* once per day, as the spell, as if cast by a 1st level sorcerer. Additionally, you gain a +2 racial bonus to Spot and Listen checks.

Special: In addition to your normal race, you are considered to have Celestial blood for the purposes of magic items that only work for certain races.

Draconic Heritage [Heritage]

You have a Dragon ancestor. You have inherited some of his or her Draconic traits.

Benefits: Choose one type of elemental damage – acid, cold, electricity, fire, sonic. This must be a type of damage that your Draconic ancestor could deal with his or her breath weapon. You gain energy resistance 2 against that element, and a +4 racial bonus to saving throws to resist spells and effects of that element.

Special: In addition to your normal race, you are considered to have Draconic blood for the purposes of magic items that only work for certain races.

Dwarven Heritage [Heritage]

You have a Dwarven ancestor. You have inherited some of his or her Dwarven traits.

Benefits: As racial abilities, you gain 30-ft. Darkvision and a +1 bonus to saving throws against poisons.

Special: If you already have Darkvision, then it is increased by 15 ft. If you have low-light vision, the Darkvision does not replace it, but functions independently.

In addition to your normal race, you are considered to have Dwarven blood for the purposes of magic items that only work for certain races.

Elven Heritage [Heritage]

You have an Elven ancestor. You have inherited some of his or her Elven traits.

Benefits: As racial abilities, you gain the Elvish ability to receive an automatic Search check when passing within 5 ft of a concealed door, and a +1 racial bonus to Listen, Search and Spot checks.

Special: In addition to your normal race, you are considered to have Elven blood for the purposes of magic items that only work for certain races.

Infernal Heritage [Heritage]

You have an Infernal ancestor, such as a demon or devil. You have inherited some of his or her Fiendish traits.

Benefits: As a racial ability, you can cast *darkness* once per day, as the spell, as if cast by a 1st-level sorcerer. Additionally, you gain a +2 racial bonus to Bluff and Hide checks.

Special: In addition to your normal race, you are considered to have Infernal blood for the purposes of magic items that only work for certain races.

Gnomish Heritage [Heritage]

You have a Gnomish ancestor. You have inherited some of his or her traits.

Benefits: As racial abilities, you gain a +2 saving throw bonus to disbelieve illusions and can *speak with burrowing animals* once per day, as a *speak with animals* spell cast by a 1st-level sorcerer.

Special: In addition to your normal race, you are considered to have Gnomish blood for the purposes of magic items that only work for certain races.

Halfling Heritage [Heritage]

You have a Halfling ancestor. You have inherited some of his or her traits.

Benefits: As racial abilities, you gain a +1 morale bonus on saving throws against fear effects and a +1 racial bonus to Climb, Jump and Move Silently checks.

Special: In addition to your normal race, you are considered to have Halfling blood for the purposes of magic items that only work for certain races.

Human Heritage [Heritage]

You have a Human ancestor. You have inherited some of his or her traits.

Benefit: As a racial ability, you may pick an additional class as a favoured class.

Special: In addition to your normal race, you are considered to have Human blood for the purposes of magic items that only work for certain races.

Orcish Heritage [Heritage]

You have an Orcish ancestor. You have inherited some of his or her traits.

Benefits: As a racial ability, you gain +2 Strength.

Special: In addition to your normal race, you are considered to have Orcish blood for the purposes of magic items that only work for certain races.



Challenging Challenge Ratings

by Craig Cochrane

The following rules were written by Upper Krust as a short preview of his "Worshipper Points System". We have not seen the system itself, and reserve any judgement on it, but have agreed to distribute this preview for those who may be interested.

The following work is a modified extract from the forthcoming *Immortals Handbook*. For more information on the *Immortals Handbook*, contact 'Upper Krust' on the [ENWorld](#) messageboards.

This article is designed to determine the Effective Class Levels (ECL) of characters, deities, and monsters. It also presents rules for modifying high ECL to produce balanced Challenge Ratings (CR), regardless of the measure of power on display.

DETERMINING EFFECTIVE CLASS LEVELS

The ECL for characters is easily determined:

- +1 ECL per Class Level
- +1 ECL per +1 CR increase of a Template
e.g. Lich 25 (25th-level Sorcerer) +2 (Template: Lich)= 27 ECL

Divinity can also be equated as per templates:

- +8 ECL/Hero-deity or Quasi-deity
- +12 to +28 ECL/Demigod
- +32 to +48 ECL/Lesser God
- +52 to +68 ECL/Intermediate God
- +72 to +88 ECL/Greater God
e.g. Solar 20 (20th-level Cleric) +1 (2 Outsider HD above integrated class levels) +8 (Effectively a Hero-deity) +1 (counting vorpal and slaying weaponry)= 30 ECL. 30 ECL = CR 25

Determining Monster ECL is more ambiguous, but as a general guideline:

- +3 ECL/4 Hit Dice (Aberrations; Constructs; Dragons; Outsiders; Plants; Undead*)
- +1 ECL/2 Hit Dice (Animal; Beast; Elemental; Fey; Giant; Humanoid; Magical Beast; Monstrous Humanoid; Ooze)
- +1 ECL/3 Hit Dice (Vermin)
- +1 ECL/4 Hit Dice (Animated Objects; Skeletons*; Zombies*)
- +1 ECL/2 Special Attacks or Qualities (each additional arm or head counts as a Special Quality)
e.g. Great Wurm Red Dragon 19 (19th-level Sorcerer) +15 (21 Dragon HD above integrated class levels) +4 (8 Special Abilities)= 38 ECL. 38 ECL = CR 29
e.g. Tarrasque 24 (48 HD: Magical Beast) +5 (11 Special Abilities)=29 ECL 29 ECL=CR 24

CHALLENGE RATINGS OVER 20

As characters and monsters approach and surpass 20 Effective Class Levels (ECL) the current rules for determining Challenge Ratings (CR) (+1 CR/ECL) become more and more unstable. In effect the higher you ascend, the less ECL becomes a factor. Primarily this is because power is bestowed in proportional blocks (in the form of levels or effective levels).

i.e. A 2nd-level character approximately represents a +100% power increase over a 1st-level character. However a 21st-level character only represents a +5% increase over a 20th-level character, and a 101st-level character is a mere jump of +1% over a 100th-level character.

Supposedly a single character of 'x'+4 CR is roughly equivalent to four characters of CR 'x'.

i.e. A creature of CR24 is roughly equal to 4 beings of CR20; or a creature of CR28 is roughly equal to 16 beings of CR20. *etc.* However, clearly the higher we ascend in ECL the less impact is made on CR.

i.e. A single 38th-level character is not the equivalent of 16 30th-level characters.

MODIFYING CHALLENGE RATINGS

Once ECL has been determined, apply the results to the following table. The methodology behind these rules is given after the table.

APPENDIX TABLE 1-1
CHALLENGE RATINGS BY EFFECTIVE CLASS LEVELS

CR	ECL	CR	ECL	CR	ECL
21	22-23	31	44-47	41	88-95
22	24-25	32	48-51	42	96-103
23	26-27	33	52-55	43	104-111
24	28-29	34	56-59	44	112-119
25	30-31	35	60-63	45	120-127
26	32-33	36	64-67	46	128-135
27	34-35	37	68-71	47	136-143
28	36-37	38	72-75	48	144-151
29	38-39	39	76-79	49	152-159
30	40-43	40	80-87	50	160-175

e.g. 71st-level character is 71 ECL.
71 ECL = CR 37

ECL	CR	EXAMPLE
1-20	+1/1 Level	15th-level character = CR15
21-40	+1/2 Levels	30th-level character = CR25
41-80	+1/4 Levels	60th-level character = CR35
81-160	+1/8 Levels	120th-level character = CR45
161-320	+1/16 Levels	240th-level character = CR55

e.g. A 29th-level Sorcerer Lich is the equivalent of 31 ECL. 29 (levels) +2 (Lich Template) = 31.
 First 20 ECL is +1/1 CR = 20
 Each ECL between 21-40 (in this case 11) is +1/2 CR=+5. Its CR is therefore 25 (20 +5).

CALCULATING EXPERIENCE POINTS

If, say, the parties average effective level is 40 (page 166 of Core Rulebook II shows that XP for an equal CR is a multiple of 300).

So $40 \times 300 = 12,000$

Therefore a 40th-level party fighting an equal CR encounter will gain 12,000 XP. Remember that under this method a 40th-level character only equals CR30. So a character party that averages 40th-level will also average CR30.

Since encounters are only recommended at between 8 below or 8 above the party average CR, use this following table to modify XP:

APPENDIX TABLE 1-2: EXPERIENCE POINTS BY CHALLENGE RATING DIFFERENCE

CR +/-0 = Party Average Level x 300 EXP	
CR -1 = ÷1.5 EXP	CR +1 = x1.5 EXP
CR -2 = ÷2 EXP	CR +2 = x2 EXP
CR -3 = ÷3 EXP	CR +3 = x3 EXP
CR -4 = ÷4 EXP	CR +4 = x4 EXP
CR -5 = ÷6 EXP	CR +5 = x6 EXP
CR -6 = ÷8 EXP	CR +6 = x8 EXP
CR -7 = ÷12 EXP	CR +7 = x12 EXP
CR -8 = ÷16 EXP	CR +8 = x16 EXP

e.g. a 60th-level party (CR35) fighting an 80th-level character (CR40)

$60 \times 300 = 18,000$

CR40 is 5 above the parties average CR (35) which means x6 XP.

$18,000 \times 6 = 108,000$ XP

e.g. a 40th-level party (CR30) fighting a 22nd-level Lich (CR22)

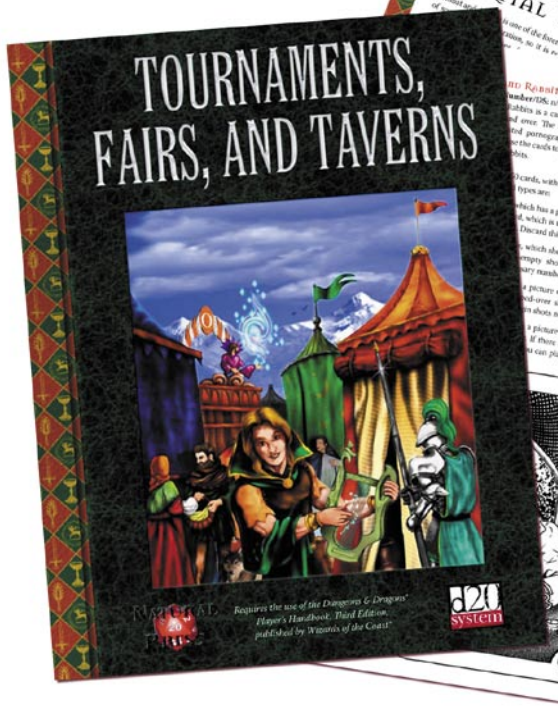
$40 \times 300 = 12,000$

CR22 is 8 below the parties average CR which means ÷16 XP.

$12,000 \div 16 = 750$ XP



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THE

PROFESSIONALS

By Faisal Abdullah

While watching players make characters (both player-characters and non-player-characters) I can't help but notice how often the Profession skill is not even considered. Perhaps it is the lack of obvious tangible benefit to characters that now call themselves adventurers. Perhaps it is because the focus of their group (or Game Master) is always a dungeon crawl that keeps the characters cut off from any concept of a regular society. Or perhaps their game-style is always hack-and-slash where any concept of interaction with an encountered society is always for the purpose of slaying them. For whatever the reason, I see many people overlooking the Profession skill by name alone.

As a result of this observation, I invite players and game masters to give the Profession skill a second look.

Earnings: Initially, a character gains the benefit of being able to make some money when exercising his skills in the chosen profession. As mentioned in *The Player's Handbook*, you earn gold pieces based on your skill check result per week attempt. Sometimes a character is having downtime in a city and having the extra coins come in during this period could help. Maybe it's not a dragon's hoard, but in campaigns where the characters don't carry around a king's ransom in their packs, some extra coins could always be helpful.

Knowledge: There is another initial benefit mentioned in *The Player's Handbook*. Having ranks in a Profession equates to having knowledge about the profession and about the tools of the trade. Such knowledge can sometimes prove useful when interacting within a society itself. Imagine having ranks in Profession (Sailor) and then being able to apply that skill when speaking with a tavern full of off-duty sailors. In such cases, you are more likely to get the information that you need from these sailors by having something (the knowledge of the profession) about with which to relate to them.

Character: Third, there are obvious role-playing and character development possibilities with defining a profession, even if it is a minimal number of ranks. By choosing a profession and assigning at least one rank to the skill, you are shaping yet another aspect of the character. Maybe the character has always had aspirations and skill but something else (the need to quest on

a specific adventure) has kept him from attaining his dream. Or perhaps his family wanted him to be in a particular profession and started him in an apprenticeship but he never seemed to be able to get more than a single rank of skill within the Profession. The possibilities are varied but can add rich detail to a character.

Logistics: Fourth, the logistics of it all states that more people should have at least some ranks in Profession than those without any ranks in the skill. Experts (some of which need the Profession so that they can be in expert in it) and Commoners (who need a Profession to increase their chances of bringing home bread and butter to their respective families) need these skills. Player characters, as well, could also have Profession skills. Not all (if any) grew up from birth stating that they were going to be adventurers or noblemen. In most medieval-based fantasy settings many children would probably raised in an apprenticeship of some sort, especially if they lived in a city. It is because of this factor for characters to have some number of ranks invested into a Profession. Before circumstances swept them into adventure, most would have been planning to support themselves for the rest of their life with these skills.

Prestige Classes: If there are Prestige Classes in the campaign, it is conceivable that a couple of them require some number of ranks in one of various Profession skills. By taking ranks in these Profession skills, a character is one step closer to achieving a desired Prestige Class. In the real world, many organizations only invite people to join if they share some common skill, and so in a fantasy setting, the Knights of Goodness do not seem nearly as interesting as the Knights of St. Bath's Shelter, who are all former innkeepers.

Synergy: As an optional rule, you can get synergy galore! After all, what are professions but a combination of other skills applied toward a particular goal. If you are trained as a professional scribe, for instance, you will be simultaneously increasing your steady hand thus leading to a potential synergy bonus in Forgery skill checks. At the game master's discretion, 5 or more ranks in a Profession skill can grant a +2 synergy bonus to related other skills.

Perhaps from a meta-gaming standpoint it could be argued that none of these benefits alone is reason

enough to merit investing the skill points. Maybe synergy bonuses don't mean much if you can invest the skill points directly into the other skill. And it is entirely feasible that you can find other things to relate to professionals about other than a profession itself. Or perhaps your game group *does* carry around a king's ransom and therefore doesn't need the extra few coins. However, when considering the combined value from each of the aforementioned points, perhaps having your character learn a few tricks of a trade the next time he levels up won't be that bad of an idea. Not all benefits in roleplaying games come directly from dice and numbers.

THE MENU

Some possible profession choices (for player and non-player characters alike) are listed below along with a brief description of the job, any skills to which the profession can grant synergy bonuses, and any other miscellaneous notes.

Profession (actor)

You are skilled in the dramatic arts (comedy, tragedy, etc). You may use your Charisma modifier for this skill instead of your Wisdom modifier – whichever is higher. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Bluff checks and Disguise checks. If you have 5 or more ranks in a Perform skill, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (actor) skill checks.

In addition to just the process of acting, this skill also covers details of registering at playhouses, finding directors to employ you or actors to work for you, acquiring and setting up props and setpieces, and the appropriate courtesies at various venues, ranging from brothel to throne room.

Profession (announcer)

You can earn a living as a speaker or announcer for events (formal or informal such as or announcing decrees of the local nobility or sporting events). If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks if they involve deceiving or convincing the audience to believe your stated opinion. If you have 5 or more ranks in a Perform skill related to vocalization (song, ballad, etc), you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (announcer) skill checks.

Profession (apothecary)

You are experienced in creating pharmaceuticals and other concoctions. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Alchemy

checks, and to Knowledge (nature) checks involve the medicinal properties of plants and animal parts. If you have the Brew Potion feat, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (apothecary) checks.

Profession (barrister)

You are knowledgeable in local laws and skilled in providing council in the court of law. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Diplomacy checks when they are used to persuade or convince and a +2 synergy bonus to Knowledge checks relating to local laws or history of your home region.

Profession (cartographer)

You are skilled in the art of maps and map making. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Forgery checks involving maps. If you have 5 or more ranks in Intuit Direction, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (cartographer) skill checks while attempting to make original maps from field work.

The time required to create an any particular specific map depends on the size of the map and the scale. You must first travel through the entire area, collecting data, which usually requires one day for every 25 square miles, to a minimum of one hour for a anything smaller than a square mile. Once you have the necessary information, compiling and drawing a map typically requires between one and eight hours, depending on the precision relative to total size. A dungeon map that only shows the general location of rooms would probably take an hour or less to draw, while one that detailed the exact dimensions of floor, wall, and ceiling could take eight hours or more.

Creating an accurate map is DC 10. For every 5 points you beat this by, people using your map get a +1 circumstance bonus to Intuit Direction or Search checks that involve information provided on the map.

Profession (cook)

You are quite knowledgeable in the culinary arts. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Knowledge (nature) checks that are used in relation to plants (herbs and spices) or animals that are commonly eaten. And, as any chef can tell you, presentation is key, therefore if you have 5 or more ranks in this profession you gain a +2 synergy bonus to the reaction checks of people who eat your cooking. If you have 5 or more ranks in Alchemy, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (Cook) checks.

Profession (farmer)

You are skilled in the ways of agriculture. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to any Knowledge (nature) checks in cultivated terrain. If you have 5 or more ranks in Wilderness Lore or Handle Animal, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (farmer) checks.

Profession (fisher)

You can earn a living by fishing. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Spot checks against submerged creatures, and a gain a +2 synergy bonus to Knowledge (nature) checks in relation to fish, fish life, and the natural life on or near coastal areas. If you have 10 or more ranks in this profession, you gain free proficiency in any one spear, or in the net. If you have 5 or more ranks in Wilderness Lore, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (Fisher) skill checks.

Profession (groom)

You are capable of maintaining a small stable and the animals within it. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Handle Animal checks. If you have 5 or more ranks in Animal Empathy, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (groom) checks.

Profession (guide)

When you pick this skill, choose one area that you are skilled as a guide for. The size can be anything from a single historical mansion to a vast mountain range. You are knowledgeable enough with this location that you can make a living giving direction and information about the local area of choice. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Intuit Direction checks in this area, and +2 synergy bonus to Knowledge checks relating to the history or society of the locality. If the area to which you are a guide is a natural setting, then having 5 or more ranks in Wilderness Lore grant a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (guide) checks. If the area to which you are a guide is an urban setting, then having 5 or more ranks in Gather Information grants a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (guide) checks.

Profession (healer)

You are skilled in the practice of applying the healing arts to patients in their time of need, including acting as a midwife or barber. Since those who work in this field rely heavily on empathy with the patient, if you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2

synergy bonus to Sense Motive checks. Since you also know what hurts a man and can mention it in your threats, if you have 5 or more ranks you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Intimidate checks if you can actually inflict bodily harm on a person. If you have 5 or more ranks in Alchemy or Heal, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (healer) checks.

Profession (herbalist)

You are capable of preparing herbs for remedies and other applications.

Herbal mixtures are not always made of the same ingredients – the herbs in one type of climate are different from the herbs in another – but the different herbs can still often be mixed in different quantities to produce similar effects. They also come in a variety of forms: pastes, powders, ointments, teas, etc. Their effects are non-magical in nature and therefore can not be dispelled or subject to spell resistance.

These abilities assume that the character collects the necessary herbal ingredients on a semi-regular basis while traveling or stopping. It also assumes that plant life does exist in the areas therefore traveling or residing in an area devoid of plant life nullifies the chances of using this skill at that time.

To impart the herbal benefit to the target, the herbalist must be able to touch the target and applying the application is a full round action that draws an attack of opportunity since the herbalist's guard is down to apply the mixture to the other person.

Some possible herbal mixtures are listed below.

Name: This is the generic name of the effect that the type of herbal mixture imparts on the target. Depending on the ingredients used and the form of the mixture (tea, paste, powder, etc) more common names may be used for the specific alternative recipes.

Minimum Ranks: This is the number of minimum ranks in Profession (Herbalist) that the herbalist must have before he can even attempt this type of mixture. It is reflective of the fact that some herbal mixtures are more complex or requires more knowledge about the hidden properties of herbs then others and therefore require more knowledge.

Potency: This shows how strong the herbal mixture is or can be. Some mixtures increase in strength in direct proportion to the more skilled the herbalist is as is noted on the chart.

Frequency of attempts: This is the number of attempts that can be made in a given time frame. This is reflective of the expenditure of the herbal resources either locally found or carried on person. The more difficult and time consuming it is to gather enough

materials for one application, the more time must pass in-between each application. Furthermore, you can not save herbs from one week to the next because they begin to spoil or lose their natural properties.

Duration: Represents how long the bonus will last on the target.

Effect: Description of the effect that the particular herbal mixture has on the target.

ANTI-TOXIN

Minimum Ranks: 6

Potency: +1/3 ranks (max +5)

Frequency of Attempts: 1 per week

Duration: 12 hours

Effect: Grants the target a resistance bonus to his saves against poisons

APHRODISIAC

Minimum Ranks: 12

Potency: +1/4 ranks (max +5)

Frequency of Attempts: 1 per week

Duration: 12 hours

Effect: Grant the target an enhancement bonus to Charisma checks and on skill checks that use Charisma as their key ability. However, these bonuses only apply when these checks are used against (or otherwise in relation to) members of the opposite gender.

BALM

Minimum Ranks: 6

Potency: +1/3 ranks (max +5)

Frequency of Attempts: 1 per 2 weeks

Duration: 24 hours

Effect: Grants the target a resistance bonus to saves versus non-supernatural diseases. In addition to this, at the end of the duration, an additional 1d4 hit points are healed.

COGNITIVE AND MEMORY ENHANCER

Minimum Ranks: 9

Potency: +2

Frequency of Attempts: 1 per 2 weeks

Duration: 24 hours

Effect: Grants the target an enhancement bonus to Intelligence checks and for any skill checks that use Intelligence as their key ability.

PANACEA

Minimum Ranks: 5

Potency: +2

Frequency of Attempts: N/A

Duration: Permanent

Effect: Grants the Herbalist a synergy bonus to Heal checks (as is standard in *The Player's Handbook*, see Heal skill description)

SKIN REJUVENATOR

Minimum Ranks: 9

Potency: +1/3 ranks (max +5)

Frequency of Attempts: 1 per week

Duration: 12 hours

Effect: Grants the target a resistance bonus to acid, cold, and fire damage effects.

STAMINA-ENHANCER

Minimum Ranks: 9

Potency: +1

Frequency of Attempts: 1 per week

Duration: 6 hours

Effect: Grants the target an enhancement bonus to Constitution checks, to skill checks that use Constitution as their key ability, and to Fortitude save throws. For the duration, the target may act as though he has the Endurance feat even if he does not already have it.

STEROIDS

Minimum Ranks: 12

Potency: +2

Frequency of Attempts: 1 per week

Duration: 6 hours

Effect: Grants the target an enhancement bonus to Strength

Profession (innkeeper)

You are able to maintain an inn or guesthouse. Through the dealings with many people and travelers, if you have 5 or more ranks in this profession you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Gather Information checks. If you have 5 or more ranks in Sense Motive, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (innkeeper) checks.

Profession (merchant)

You can earn a living by selling crafts or other items. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks as they involve deceiving or convincing the audience (buyer) to believe your stated opinion. If you have 5 or more ranks in Sense Motive then you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (merchant) skill checks. Also, if you have 5 or more ranks in a Craft or Knowledge skill relating specifically to the wares being sold at the time, then you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (merchant) skill checks.

Profession (prostitute)

You have the talent and skill to sell your own body and make a living in doing so. You may use your Charisma modifier for this skill instead of your Wisdom modifier – whichever is higher. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks when they are used to seduce, deceive, convince, or persuade people who might be sexually attracted to you (obviously it is rarely useful for a human to try to seduce a Beholder, or a very old and celibate priest). If you have 5 or more ranks in Sense Motive or Gather Information, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (prostitute) checks. Additionally, a myriad of enchantments, illusions, and transmutation magics can be useful in aiding a prostitute's occupation. A magic-user with access to appropriate spells gains a +2 synergy bonus to her checks.

Profession (sailor)

You are skilled as a boater and have the ability to steer and upkeep a ship. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Use Rope checks and a +2 synergy bonus to Balance checks when on uneven terrain. If you have 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (nature), you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (sailor) checks.

Profession (scribe)

You are skilled at penning parchments, either duplicating texts or listing notes. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Forgery checks and to Decipher Script checks. If a character has the Scribe Scroll feat, he gains a +2 synergy bonus

to Profession (scribe) checks. If you are illiterate, you may still take ranks in this profession, but you are limited simply to copying text image by image, since you don't understand what the words mean.

Profession (spelunker)

You earn a living by exploring and studying caves. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Climb, Intuit Direction, Knowledge (nature), and Wilderness Lore checks that are done in relation to caves, geology, and cave-life. If you have 10 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks that are done within caves or other subterranean settings.

Profession (teacher)

You are well schooled and are skilled at imparting that knowledge to others. You may use your Intelligence modifier for this skill instead of your Wisdom modifier – whichever is higher. For every 5 ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to checks for any one chosen Knowledge skill.

Profession (teamster)

You are skilled at driving a team of animals to haul cargo, cart, wagon or carriage. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Handle Animal checks. If you have 5 or more ranks in the Ride skill or in Animal Empathy, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (teamster) checks.

Profession (woodcutter)

You are skilled with the axe and knowledgeable about plant life in a manner such that you can chop and sell the best timber while allowing the rest to grow. If you have 5 or more ranks in this profession, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Knowledge (nature) checks that are used in relation to knowledge about trees. If you have 10 or more ranks in this profession, you gain proficiency in handaxes if you do not already have it. If you have 5 or more ranks in Wilderness Lore, you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Profession (woodcutter) checks.

Again, synergy bonuses from ranks in Profession are an optional rule at the DM's discretion. Other professions and relevant synergy bonuses are possible; the above list merely represents only a sample of the wide variety of potential professions. While not every character should have the Profession skill, this skill should not be passed over on the basis of its name alone. Characters cannot exist alone, unconnected to the world, and the various Profession skills provide a simple, and potentially beneficial, way to create important connections between a hero, and the world he lives in.

Wisdom from the Boards

Dramatic Dungeoncrawling

By Matt T. Reynolds

There are a lot of ways to keep dungeon crawling from becoming stale and the three most important are setting, setting, and setting.

Any dungeon, no matter how varied, is going to become boring to an experienced player unless he or she is given more than just monsters to fight and traps to find.

Before drawing up a dungeon, you need to ask yourself a lot of questions. Who built the dungeon? When? For what purpose? Is it still serving that purpose? How have latter occupants altered the dungeon? What features of its older use does it retain? What is its current purpose in the society? What secret does it hide that will help advance the larger story you want to tell? Have adventurers been here before? If so, how have they altered the dungeon? If it is an eyesore or source of trouble, why haven't figures more powerful than the PC's leveled the place a long time ago? If it is rumored to contain treasure, why hasn't that treasure been looted by figures more powerful than the PC's a long time ago? Asking these questions repeatedly will give you fresh ideas.

Each room in the dungeon should address and help answer the questions raised in the overall vision of the dungeon. Rooms should contain clues to their older functions (if any) and show signs of how they are and were used. Always dress every room. Rooms have odors, degrees of cleanliness, trash, furnishings, decorations, floors, ceilings, often inhabitants (if only normal rats, spiders, earthworms, snails, millipedes, ants, cockroaches, lice, flies, *etc.*), light (or its absence), sometimes palpable auras, sometimes weather (temperature, drafts, humidity, haze), different construction materials, and so forth. Rooms and buildings are subject to wear, and so weather appropriate to their age and usage. Mosaics, frescos, and carvings should reveal history when appropriate. Consult or construct lists of dungeon furnishings when you are stuck for ideas.

Every room should have at least one hidden feature of some size, though it need not be treasure. Even if the secret that the room guards is largely unimportant, it should be informative and help keep the players engaged. An accumulation of small bits of information can also become clues to coping with the environment or some puzzle that you have placed.

Make the most of the D20 system. There should be at least one or two things in every room that require some skill check (to find things, understand what is seen, reveal information, negotiate an obstacle, *etc.*). There should also be at least 1-4 dressings with no real significance except to provide atmosphere.

"Keep truly empty rooms to a minimum."

How many rooms are originally designed to be featureless, still used for that purpose, and regularly cleaned to keep features from accumulating? Reserve featureless rooms for disintegrate traps, areas swept by gelatinous cubes, *etc.* Otherwise, why waste your time putting an uninteresting place on the map?

Once you get the hang of it, you can elaborate on features in the middle of play, but it is better to over write a room than to under write it and be stuttering to try to come up with something on the spur of the moment. Nothing will tip off players that the room is unimportant (i.e. doesn't contain treasure or information) than hasty descriptions and a paucity of interesting features. Never describe anything in game terms unless you must for the sake of perfect clarity. Work to make your descriptions lively. Write down a few sentences of description ahead of time and read it (or work up from it) if you must. Steadily build the desired atmosphere. Keep your players imagining their

surroundings. Encourage your players to interact with the surroundings.

Keep dungeons small. Six to fifteen rooms is ideal for most dungeons. More important areas should have as many as twenty-five. In no circumstance should a dungeon have more than about seventy areas. If it does or should (many real buildings have 100s of rooms), break it down into a series of connected dungeons and cordon off areas with obvious divisions. These need not (and probably should rarely) be staircases to lower levels. Don't be afraid to make dungeons with four or fewer rooms where brief expeditions can be made. Often spending time making rooms interesting is better than spending time making more rooms.

You should never design a dungeon without at least one room which is sufficiently architecturally complex as to be hard to describe without showing the players a map. Otherwise you are going to be stuck in 20'x30' rectangular room syndrome. The average apartment is not so simple. Think about the 'L' or 'T' shaped rooms, double rectangles, split level rooms, rooms with direct access to corridors, rooms with partial walls between them, landings with staircases leading off and onto them, balconies, and so forth that you encounter on a daily basis. Keep an eye out for architecturally interesting rooms in public buildings like libraries, schools, universities, and museums.

Always keep in mind that any sequence of areas which can be bound in either space or time (or both) can be used as a dungeon. One room (the common room of a tavern, the basement of a haunted house, or a hut under siege) can suffice for a dungeon if over the course of a limited time a series of encounters take place there. Dungeons do not have to be isolated subterranean ruined dwelling places of evil. They can be palaces in which only some of the inhabitants are nefarious, churches with haunted crypts, tenement buildings which are on fire, opera houses, theaters, and libraries after dark, taverns, castles under siege, mansions in which the characters are guests, hollow trees, gardens, asylums, bath houses having plumbing problems, sewers, graveyards, lairs carved out by giant moles, copses and hollows surrounding evil shrines in public places, boats, and so on and so forth.

When using ruins, don't focus solely on the standard dwarf mines, old castles, wizard's towers, ancient temples of evil, or trap filled tombs. Ideally, those old standby's ought to be present as interesting changes from the usual, and be reserved for your more important challenges when you can make the most of the difficulty and breadth that the setting traditionally provides. For more normal exploration, give players a

diet of aqueducts, arenas, mansions, mills, lighthouses, hospitals, monasteries, covered bridges, barns, hermit's retreats, farm houses, dry docks, quarry's, wells, monuments, gnomish clockworks, hobbit holes, *etc., etc., etc.*

Frequently reference books on architecture to get inspiration for floor plans, new types of buildings, *etc.* No matter how imaginative you are, you are going to have a hard time mapping out better buildings than those made by full time architects with brilliant imaginations of their own. History is filled with great buildings.

Traps tend to be overused and poorly used dungeon features. Don't get me wrong; I love traps and consider them essential to any large well rounded dungeon. But, place your traps only with great thought. Someone built those traps, paid for those traps, and lives with the effects of having all those traps about. Traps should only be placed in well traveled areas in very limited numbers (probably no more than one per dungeon) – and in general these traps should be of the non-lethal variety (snares, alarms, nets, small pits, lassos, bear traps and similar, chutes, *etc.*) Place the other traps only in places that are infrequently visited, preferably in places that no one is supposed to visit (false leads, corridors that go no where, doors that don't open) or that can be bypassed by those in the know (broad corridors flanked by untrapped but guarded side corridors, short cuts not meant to be used, *etc.*) There must be some logic to the traps or your players will get the feeling that they are just toys being arbitrarily used for your amusement.

When you place a trap, make sure it inspires the appropriate degree of respect.

Finally, make sure that the players know why they are going (or going back) to the dungeon. Try as hard as you can to make it some reason other than the desire to loot it. Strive to reach a point where play is story driven not dungeon driven. Many of the best dungeons are not introduced as dungeons. Instead, the players begin by treating them as a non-dungeon environment, only to discover some (or many) sessions later, that there is some reason to explore them more closely and not all of the inhabitants where as friendly as they appeared. In this fashion, the dungeon begins to have a character that the players know and can interact with.”



D20 SUPERS

This isn't a sneak peak at a Robin Hood campaign setting (though we'll file that one away for future reference). Rather, this is a teaser of some of the material you'll see in the upcoming superhero product *D20 Supers* by Russell Morrissey *et alia*, published by [Natural 20 Press](#). Rather than a wholly new game or setting unto itself, *D20 Supers* is a rules expansion which can be used for any D20 system game. With *D20 Supers*, all you need is the *Player's Handbook* to have heroic adventures in nearly any setting, from medieval fantasy, to pulp '30s detective dramas, to desperate clashes between super-powered heroes and villains in the not-too-distant future.

ADAMANTIUM RULES SKELETON:

If you want to play in a fantasy superheroic setting, you can just use the *Player's Handbook*, but since most superheroic settings are in the modern day, we recommend using the *Spycraft* setting. A free downloadable 'lite' version of the rules is available at the [AEG site](#). Though the rules presented in *D20 Supers* might not be quite as durable as the skeletal structure of our favourite badger-like mutant, they are sturdy enough and flexible enough to handle everything from 1st level on up. Plus they're 100% less likely to be ripped from your body by a magnetically-powered supervillain.

The primary rules of *D20 Supers* focus on a new core class, the Hero. The Hero class functions as something of a bridge between classes and races, allowing you to either start with preset levels to represent natural, perhaps mutant powers, or to advance in abilities as you gain experience, by perfecting your control of your powers. Using the rules as a skeleton, you can decide on your preferred style of play, mixing and matching levels of Hero with levels from other classes to create whatever type of character you and your group are able to imagine.*

D20 Supers allows you to portray your character in a number of different ways; in this way you can simulate any type of superhero you wish, from those who steadily advance in power over time, to those who

Men in Tights

frequently gain new superpowers, to the most common comic-book hero type whose powers are fairly static. The rules make use of templates, classes and variant advancement mechanisms to ensure that you have a full range of methods with which to portray your Hero and his superpowers. However, this preview article will only touch on the base Hero class.

TEASER MATERIAL:

The majority of *D20 Supers* is devoted to the Hero class and the rules for super powers, but we're going to want you to pay to see those. To whet your appetite, however, here we present some of the more modular aspects of the book, which should be easy to incorporate into any D20 game.

Hero Class: see above.

Hero Points: Super powers are paid for with Hero Points, an ability granted by the Hero class.

Hero Points instead of Magic Items: If you find the idea of having adventurers each carry 30 different magic items distasteful, these rules provide guidelines for handing out a few Hero Points to spend on super powers, instead of another *potion of cure light wounds*.

Sample Powers: See four sample super powers.

Blitz Jagger, "The Shade": A sample hero from the pulp '30s setting.

HERO CLASS

The Hero class is similar to a very flexible template, adding powers to your character without necessarily reflecting actual experience. When you use the Hero class, you and your game master should decide whether you want characters super powers to be static

**Godlings need not apply. Sadly, we know almost as little about the soon-to-be-published epic level rules as you do, so though D20 Supers presents rules for characters of 50th level and beyond, we're ready to revise the epic-level rules in the book if there is enough interest.*

or improvable. The rules can handle either style of play, but it will help establish the tone of your game if you choose one.

If you want to emulate standard comic heroes, each character should start with a number of levels of the Hero class, which he can then never improve. This is effectively the same as playing a race that has a high Equivalent Character Level, allowing you to start with super powers without worrying about whether your character can later improve them.

Alternately, if you and your game master agree, you can let characters take levels of Hero as they gain experience points. As they gain levels in the Hero class, the new powers they acquire can be explained as superior training like Batman, developing and honing their existing powers like mutants training at Xavier Academy, or a myriad of other potential sources.

HERO POINTS

Levels of the Hero class provide you with Hero Points (HrPs). These function somewhat like skill points, allowing you to not only acquire super powers, but measure how valuable each power is. For example, a super power with a total cost of 5 HrPs is generally better than one with a total cost of 4 HrPs. It's up to you whether your super powers are natural in origin, the result of intense training, the function of a complex gadget, or any other explanation.

Bear in mind that many of the most powerful characters in comics would be the equivalent of 20th-level characters or higher, at least if you want to accurately portray their powers. The Hero class is useable at all levels of play, but you should be aware that a 1st level character is just on a different scale of power from most comic heroes. For this reason, the players and game master should decide if they'd prefer to start with characters above 1st level, to more consistently portray the tone and power level of most superhero comics. Similarly, the rules for super powers can be used to represent powerful alien races, mystical powers of characters in wuxia, or the diverse array of abilities seen in manga and anime.

To maintain balance between different classes, you cannot spend more Hero Points on a single super power than your total character level +3. Though a 1st level Hero has enough HrPs to afford the ability to shoot the equivalent of a minor lightning bolt at will, he is not allowed to dump all of his HrPs into one power. Rather, he can have up to 4 Hero Points on any single power, which, while powerful, is not enough to overshadow other 1st level characters. Note that this limit is based on total character level, not just Hero

class levels. Once you're 10th level, the ability to fire small energy blasts is no longer as decisively powerful as it was at 1st level.

RANKS, RESTRICTIONS, and HERO POINTS:

While Hero Points are used to pay for super powers, your actual power level is measured in ranks. Normally, ranks and Hero Points are synonymous. However, restrictions can reduce a power's total cost in HrPs, which might allow you to have more ranks in a power than your level +3. For example, if you have 10 ranks of Super Strength, normally this would cost 10 HrPs, so you could not have this power unless you were at least 7th level. However, if you have a restriction that your Strength is gadget-based (a gadget is a device that provides your power, but which can be damaged or destroyed), the restriction would reduce the cost to 8 HrPs, which you could have as early as 5th level.

Thus, remember that *ranks* determine how strong your super power is, *restrictions* reduce your power's overall effectiveness, and *Hero Points* represent the net value of the power. To determine how many Hero Points a power costs, choose the number of ranks you want, then subtract any HrP-reductions from restrictions.

Base Rank: Each super power has a base rank, which is the minimum number of ranks you must have in a power for it to have any effect. Many super powers scale in power the more ranks you put into them, from 1 rank up to 20 or more, but some powers simply have no weak form, so their base rank is high.

Saving Throws: If a super power allows a saving throw, unless otherwise noted, the DC is 10 + half the power's cost in Hero Points, rounded down.

HERO POINTS *instead of* MAGIC ITEMS:

The core D20 rules assume that character of a given level will have a certain amount of magical gear. Of course, if you are playing in a non-fantasy setting, this is not an issue, and you should feel free to ignore these rules. However, in a fantasy setting, possession of magical gear is assumed for purposes of balancing the difficulty of encounters, and without it, characters can be overwhelmed by challenges they should have little trouble with. For instance, without magic weapons, many creatures with damage reduction can be nearly invincible against even high-level characters. However, many game masters prefer not to provide magic items to the player characters simply because the rules assume their presence, and though this might contribute to a coherent story for the game, it makes it harder to balance encounters and provide suitable challenges.

Note that this does not mean that a character should be able to walk to a store, plunk down a bag of coins, and purchase a super power. Rather, this is a game master's tool to help keep the balance inherent to the D20 system rules design, without having to compromise her vision of her own world. Hero Points not only give characters access to necessary abilities without requiring the world to be teeming with magic, but also help foster a sense of heroism in the game. It is usually more emotionally gratifying if your character's great powers come from himself, and not from some magic rock he looted from a dungeon.

To be eligible to acquire Hero Points in this fashion, a character must first take the Heroic Powers feat, detailed below. The ability to gain one's own powers is quite similar to many magic item creation feats, except that any character can acquire these powers if the player wants, and that super powers are not magical. Of course, the game master should tell her players if she does not plan to allow them to gain Hero Points in this fashion, so they won't waste a feat.

HEROIC POWERS

You are able to develop superheroinic abilities and powers.

Prerequisite: Character level 2+.

Benefit: Using the guidelines for player character wealth presented in Core Rulebook II, you and your game master should determine how much you are short of the expected wealth. Then consult the following table, and find the highest entry that is less than how much your 'deficit' is. Reading along that line of the table, you gain the listed amount of Hero Points, which can be spent on super powers, just as if you had the Hero class. For the purposes of determining level-dependent effects, use either your Hero levels, or half your total character levels, whichever is higher.

Whenever your level increases, recalculate your wealth 'deficit.' You may choose to gain additional Hero Points to make up the difference, or wait for your game master to provide wealth in-game. The game master is encouraged to be forthright if no magical wealth will be provided, to help players make this decision.

Whenever you gain more Hero Points, you can choose to improve existing powers, or gain new ones, as long as you do not go over the limit of max powers.

Special Note: Discuss the application of this feat with your game master before taking it. Make sure to determine whether she will allow you to have the powers you desire. Note that this is often contingent on how well you can explain why the powers you desire would be consistent for your character.

At the game master's option, if there will be little or none of the expected magical gear during a campaign, all characters might be allowed to gain this feat for free at 2nd level.

Note that this will not produce exact matches between Hero Point costs and magic item costs since, indeed, rarely do magic items and super powers work exactly the same way. Compared to super powers, magic items are vulnerable to being negated by antimagic, but can be exchanged among party members with relative ease and are slightly cheaper. The two genres that spawned them are different, but the barriers can be crossed if you prefer to not have ever fantasy hero weighted down with dozens of magic items.

GP DEFICIT	HERO POINTS	MAX POWERS
500	1	1
1,500	2	2
3,000	3	3
5,000	4	4
7,500	5	5
10,500	6	6
14,000	7	6
18,500	8	7
22,500	9	7
27,500	10	8
33,000	11	8
39,000	12	9
45,500	13	9
52,500	14	10
60,000	15	10
68,000	16	11
76,500	17	11
85,500	18	11
95,000	19	12
105,000	20	12
+10,000	+1	+1/4

EXAMPLE ONE:

Edena is a 15th-level Wizard, but after comparing the equipment she has to the suggested amount of gear for a character of her level, the game master determines that she is 55,000 gold pieces short. She talks with Edena's player, and they decide that it will be fair to give Edena 14 Hero Points to make up the difference, if Edena takes the Heroic Powers feat, which she does. With the game master's permission, Edena's player decides that Edena's magical powers have manifested with permanent abilities beyond her normal spellcasting, and she begins to pick a few powers, under her game master's guidance.

Edena's player's first impulse is to try to increase her Intelligence as much as possible to help her spellcasting. Though she could get a benefit as high as +14, this would use up all her HrPs, and she would like a greater variety of abilities. Instead, Edena's player decides to gain a +6 bonus to Intelligence (6 HrPs), plus a Minor Energy Blast (fire) (6 HrPs), and immunity to aging (2 HrPs).

EXAMPLE TWO:

Cai is an 8th-level Fighter, and his player has occasionally complained that his character has almost no magic items, which makes it hard for him to fight various magical monsters. The game master wants to play in a relatively low-magic world where magic items are rare, but she's willing to let Cai acquire a few 'super powers,' because he is far more heroic than average people. Since she doesn't intend to hand out many magic items throughout the course of the campaign, she decides to give all the PCs the Heroic Powers feat for free.

Cai has 25,000 fewer gold pieces than is suggested for a character of his level, so the game master gives him 9 HrPs. Cai's player wants to be able to harm damage resistant creatures, so he gets Super Strike, which lets him harm creatures as if he had a +2 weapon (3 HrPs). He also gets a +4 bonus to Constitution (4 HrPs), and a super-powered +1 deflection bonus to AC (2 HrPs), which takes up the rest of his HrPs.

SAMPLE SUPER POWERS

The following is the format in which powers are presented when describing them in full. After that is the short format for listing super powers on a character sheet, followed by four sample super powers.

POWER NAME

Prerequisite: A very small number of super powers require some other ability before you can take them.

Base rank: This is the minimum number of ranks you must have in the power before it has any effect. Any ranks beyond the base rank gain extra abilities for that power.

Effect: This is what the power does. Unless the description states otherwise, the power is persistent.

Extra ranks: This entry states what happens when you have spent more Hero Points than the base rank.

Restrictions: If the power has some common types of restrictions, they are listed here, along with how

much they reduce the cost of the power.

Special Notes: Any special information regarding the power is presented here.

POWER SHORT FORMAT

When listing your Hero's powers, use the following format. It is especially useful since extra ranks can grant abilities beyond those of the base power. Omit entries that are inapplicable.

Power Name (total HrPs): Source of power (gadget, mystic, genetic, etc.). Activated or Persistent. Effect. Details and sensory specifics. Saving throw to resist. Base rank. Bonus abilities (ranks required). Restrictions (HrPs discounted). Special notes.

ENERGY BLAST

Base rank: 1.

Effect: Choose one type of energy attack—acid, cold, electricity, fire, force, or sonic. As a standard action, you can emit a blast of energy, dealing 1d6 points of damage, striking one target with a ranged touch attack, with a range of 10 feet. This is an activated power.

Extra ranks: Lesser Energy Blasts cost 8 ranks, and deal 1d6 damage/2 levels (max 5d6) to Close range, in a ray.

Moderate Energy Blasts cost 15 ranks, and fire a 5-foot wide line that deals 1d6 damage/level (max 10d6) to Medium range. Reflex save for half.

Greater Energy Blasts cost 23 ranks, and fire a cone of energy, dealing 1d6 damage/level (max 20d6) to Long range. Reflex save for half.

Special Notes: You can take this power multiple times, each time applying to a different type of energy. Each Energy Blast power has separate ranks. This is a much briefer form than the actual power listed in the book.

FLIGHT

Base rank: 8.

Effect: You can fly at your base speed, with a manoeuvrability of poor. Note that this ability also functions for almost any powers that allows free movement in all three dimensions, such as webswinging.

Extra ranks: Extra ranks can improve your maneuverability. Each 1 extra rank improves your maneuverability by one step, from poor to average to good to perfect. If you want to be able to fly faster, choose Super Speed.

Restrictions: If you require wings to fly, you can take Space Restriction to reduce the total cost of this power. You'll require at least a few feet of space around you in which to flap your wings, preventing you from flying through narrow spaces. This is worth a 1 HrP reduction.

This power can be used to emulate web-swinging and other forms of aerial movement that rely on swinging on long lines attached to overhead objects. This limits 'flight' in the following ways. You can only swing/fly as long as there is some solid object no more than 90 feet away to the side or above, and cannot hover or move upward unless there is a solid object above you. This is worth a 3 rank reduction.

INVULNERABILITY

Base rank: 2.

Effect: You gain damage reduction 1/item of your choice. When you pick this ability, choose some type of material that can overcome your damage reduction. This substance must be very common (see Item Rarities, in Chapter Two).

Extra ranks: Extra ranks can improve either the amount of your damage reduction, or the type of item to which you're vulnerable. For every 1 extra rank spent toward increasing amount, increase the amount of damage reduction by 1.

For every 2 extra ranks, change the item to which you are vulnerable to the next higher category, progressing through +1 (common), +2 (uncommon), +3 (rare), +4 (very rare), and +5 (extremely rare) items. Usually, this damage reduction will simply be listed with “/+1”, or “/+2,” but if magic items do not exist in your setting, use an appropriately rare type of item.

For example, with 10 ranks, you could have DR 5/+2, or DR 9/iron, or DR 7/gold.

Special Notes: An item of equal or higher ranking than the item you are vulnerable to can still hurt you. For instance, a +1 weapon can hurt a Hero with DR 5/gold, since gold is the equivalent of a +1 item. A +5 weapon can hurt a Hero with DR 10/‘wooden weapons carved by a deity’s avatar,’ since wooden weapons carved by a deity’s avatar are extremely rare. Note that the cost is determined by how rare an item you are vulnerable to; it does not mean that these items function as magical materials for the purposes of hurting other characters with damage reduction.

Blitz Jagger: “The Shade”

The Shade is a crime-fighter in a setting reminiscent of pulp ‘20s comics. His powers include intangibility, canny perception, and a strange separation of body and spirit that protects him from harm. Though normally dressed as an average private investigator, when he adopts his Shade persona, his clothing takes on a more ominous, wispy appearance, and his facial features become pale, his touch cold.

Blitz Jagger: 5th/3rd/2nd level Human Hero/Specialist (Investigator)/Fighter: Male human; CR 10; Medium-size humanoid (human); hp 23; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 12 (+2 Dex), or 17 while incorporeal (+2 Dex, +5 Dodge); Atk +3/+3 melee (1d6, unarmed), +7 ranged (1d10, masterwork pistol, crit x3); SA Super powers; SQ Collected Knowledge, Superior Disable Device; AL CG; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 21, Cha 21.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +3, Disable Device +6, Escape Artist +4, Gather Information +10, Hide +4, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (religion) +5, Move Silently +10, Profession (private investigator) +10,

Sense Motive +15, Spot +8; Ambidexterity, Improved Unarmed Strike, Quickdraw, Toughness, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (pistol), Weapon Focus (unarmed), Weapon Proficiency (pistol).

Possessions: Standard for a private investigator.

Hero Points: 40 (42 ranks, with 2 bonus Hero Points from restrictions).

Super powers: The Shade first acquired his powers after crash-landing in Tibet during World War I. He nearly died, and felt himself wandering the snowy Himalayas outside his body for several hours before some of the local mountain monks came across him and took him to their temple for healing. The monks helped him recuperate, and while he recovered he learned to meditate with the monks, unlocking great energies within himself. Since part of him had died on the mountainside, he found himself able to move about like a ghost, as he had for those few hours after the crash, and he has great insight into human souls.

Ghost Touch (8 HrPs): Persistent. Blitz’s attacks can affect incorporeal creatures as if they were tangible. Base rank 7. Armed attacks can also affect incorporeal creatures (1 rank). Because he also has the Intangibility power, he can affect both

tangible and intangible targets equally, regardless of whether he is presently tangible or intangible.

Heightened Charisma (6 HrPs): Persistent. +6 bonus to Charisma. Base rank 2. Increased effect x2 (4 ranks).

Heightened Wisdom (2 HrPs): Persistent. +2 bonus to Wisdom. Base rank 2.

Immune to Aging (2 HrPs): Persistent. Blitz will never die of old age, nor will his ability scores diminish from aging.

Immune to Mental Attacks (11 HrPs): Persistent. Blitz is immune to all forms of mental attacks and efforts to detect, influence, or read his emotions or thoughts. This protects against all forms of mind-affecting spells and effects. Base rank 11.

Intangibility (13 HrPs): Activated. As a standard action, Blitz can assume a visible, incorporeal form similar to that of a ghost while manifesting. While in this form, he gains no AC bonus from tangible armor, but gains a deflection bonus equal to his Charisma bonus (+5). Base rank 13.

Turnable (2 bonus Hero Points): Personal restriction. Though Blitz is not truly undead, he still is strongly connected to the spirit world, and can be turned like a ghost. In the pulp 30’s setting, this is a very rare, fatal occurrence (2 bonus HrP).

This power grants natural damage reduction, which allows your unarmed attacks to function as magical weapons of whatever type of material you’re vulnerable to. Thus, the unarmed attacks of someone with DR 5/+1 would count as +1 weapons for the purposes of overcoming the damage reduction of others.

SUPER STRENGTH

Base rank: 2.

Effect: You gain a +1 bonus to melee weapon and hurled weapon damage rolls, and a +1 bonus to Strength checks and Strength-based skill checks. Additionally, you gain an effective +2 strength for the purposes of determining how much you can lift and carry. Note that this is not actually an increase to your Strength score, so you do not gain a bonus to your melee attack rolls.

Extra ranks: For every 1 extra rank, increase the bonuses by an additional +1 to rolls and +2 effective strength for lifting.

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