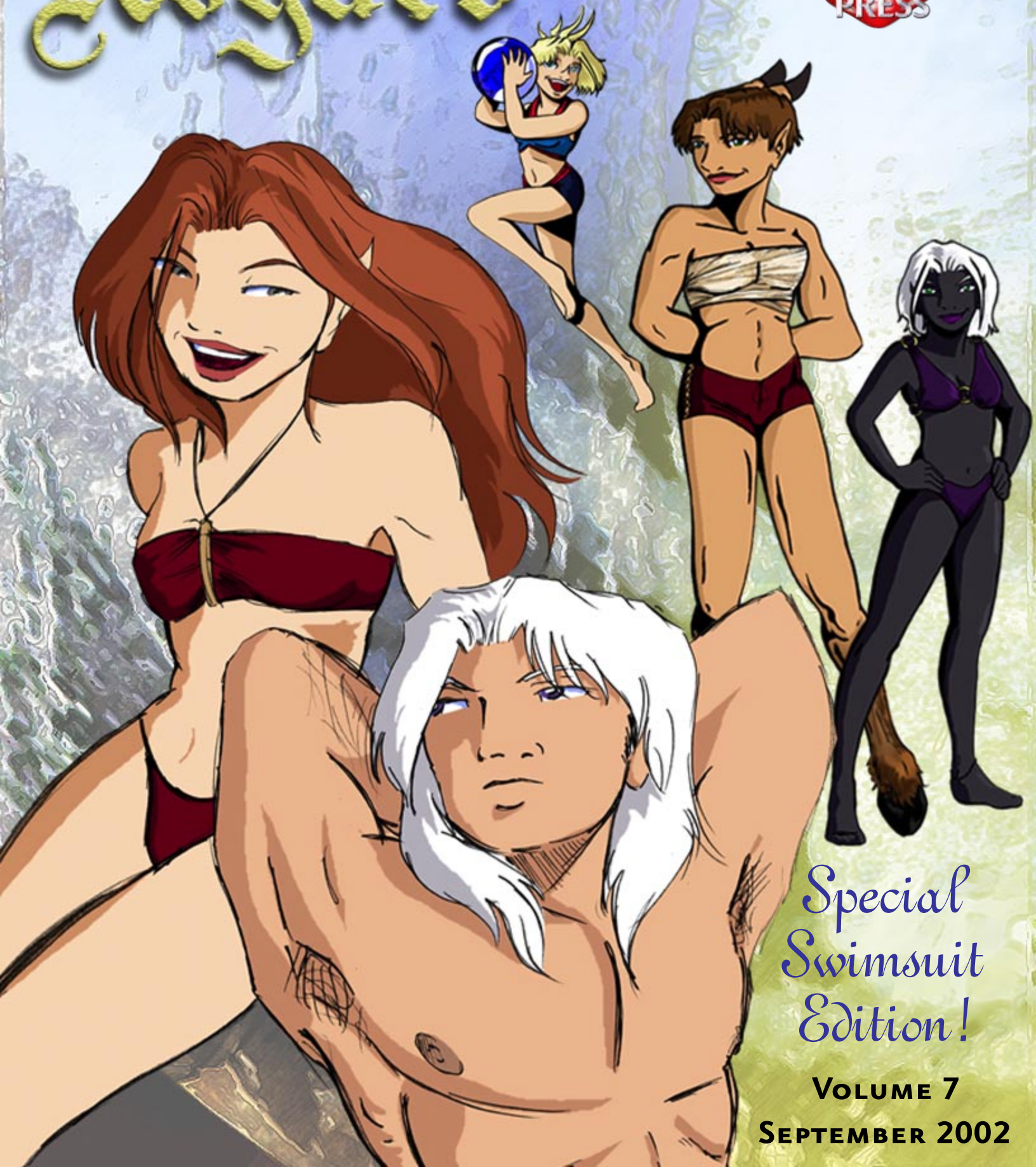


# Asgard

NATURAL  
20  
PRESS



*Special  
Swimsuit  
Edition!*

**VOLUME 7  
SEPTEMBER 2002**

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# Morrus Dancing

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For the first time ever, the ENnie Awards were held live at Gen Con Game Fair on Friday, 9 August 2002 at 8 pm. Quite a crowd attended the awards ceremony to help us recognize the products, game designers, companies, and artists who were nominated for their hard-earned awards.

**Best d20 Game:** *Call of Cthulhu* (Wizards of the Coast)

**Best Adventure:** *If Thoughts Could Kill* (Malhavoc Press)

**Best Campaign Setting:**

*Oriental Adventures* (Wizards of the Coast)

**Best Setting Supplement:** *Freeport: City of Adventure* (Green Ronin Publishing)

**Best Rules Supplement:** *Manual of the Planes* (Wizards of the Coast)

**Best Aid or Accessory:** *Dungeon/Polyhedron Magazine* (Wizards of the Coast)

**Best Cartography:** *Freeport: City of Adventure* (Green Ronin Publishing)

**Best Art (Interior):** *Deities & Demigods* (Wizards of the Coast)

**Best Art (Cover):** *Lord of the Iron Fortress* (Wizards of the Coast)

**Best Graphic Design and Layout:** *Call of Cthulhu* (Wizards of the Coast)

**Best Monster Supplement:** *Creature Collection II: Dark Menagerie* [Scarred Lands] (Sword & Sorcery Studios)

**Best Free Product or Web Enhancement:** *Portable Hole Full of Beer* (Ambient)

**Best Official Website:** *Wizards of the Coast*

**Best Fan Resource Site:** *SWRPGNetwork*

**Best Fan Campaign Site:** *Conan d20*

**Best Publisher:** *Wizards of the Coast*

**Special Award for**

**Contribution to Open Gaming:** *Ryan Dancey*



**Asgard Magazine Issue 7** is a combination of two products. The product to which any given page belongs is indicated in the corner of the page. 'd' indicates material released under the d20 STL and the OGL, and consists only of the following sections: *The Martial Artist*; *Swimsuits of the Multiverse*; *Underwater Swimming and Movement*; *Ell and the Dreamscape of Ava Dormo*; *The Paladin's Code*; *Gold*

*Elves*; *Gristle and Blood*; *Dwarf and Goblin*. 'd' designates Open Gaming Content in its entirety with the exception of artwork or advertisements, which are **not** designated Open Gaming Content. '†' material is not released under the d20 STL and OGL, and consists of news-based and review-based materials. The following sections comprise '†' material: *Morrus Dancing* (Editorial); *Reviews*; *Previews*

WELCOME

# Reviews

## *The Book of the Righteous*

By Aaron Loeb

For Green Ronin Publishing

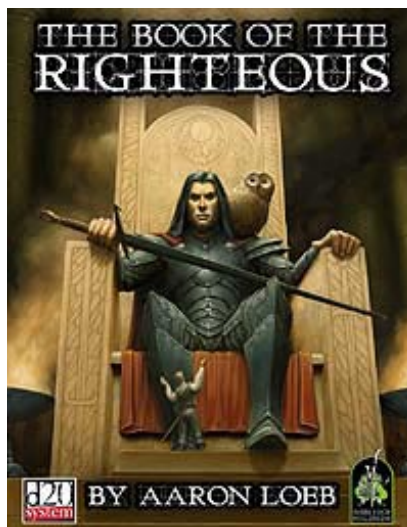
Score: Superb

\$\$\$\$\$

It's difficult to describe a book like this for a couple of reasons. Up to now, 3rd edition books on deities have had a bit of a focus on deities as beings of immense but stated powers. The Scarred Lands took care of this a little with the use of Avatars but they're still stated. Book of the Righteous on the other hand, more often reads like a collection of myths and lore from an ancient era.

This book contains the background information, including myths, history, and background needed to slate it into almost any campaign setting. It does this not by focusing heavily on the deeds of the gods in the mortal world, but on the gods themselves. It starts with a single creator in a nameless void, a being whose name is to this day unknown, the Nameless One. From him comes another, his second, Kador. During this time, the Nameless One leaves but Kador, now into his own power, helps create others who in turn create the great Tree, Eliwyn, and from this tree come more gods and after a death and rebirth of the tree, the five mortal races of human, elf, Halfling, dwarf, and gnomes. That in a nutshell is the basis of it.

Of course there's much more detail than that. For instance, Kador goes mad with power and has a war with the other gods and is cast into Hell where he eventually becomes Asmodeus. Yes, that's right, the book has numerous ties to other



Green Ronin products like Armies of the Abyss and Legions of Hell. I strongly suspect that the groundwork laid here will be vital in the third book in the fiendish series that's going to cover the Daemons next year.

The background as a whole is solid, thought provoking and definitely inspires the GM to form his own little myths and ideas to place a race here or a race there. The only drawback I see to this method of cosmology is that it means there are no racial gods. While this concept has become more popular in many campaigns like Scarred Lands and Kalamar, there are still elements within those settings and the elements, like a race having a preferred god, are still evident here. Actual racial gods themselves though? Nope.

The main body of this work is interested in providing grounding for GMs and players to work off from when using religion in a game. The churches include numerous pieces of information to help guide the GM in crafting tools that work for his world. Church descriptions start with a brief myth to give the reader an idea of what this religion is about. Often times these myths show how the gods created new races like the titans or merfolk but in doing so, they tie the world into the gods. Also included is what the god is associated with. What type

of animal does the god represent? What type of element? What type of symbol? The god's Alignment is laid out in a single sentence leading into Representations which details how the god is often drawn, sculpted or depicted in icons. Now that you know what the god is and what he looks like, the author provides you with the Purpose of the God and the Servants of the God.

The Church of the God also goes into much detail. For example, you get structure, doctrine, common prayers, holy days, saints, the god's view of the church, preferred weapon, holy orders, holy warriors, and prestige classes.

That's a lot of information. It's important to note though, that not all of the gods have the same amount of description. Now doesn't this go against all the advertising that talks about how no god will be left under detailed? Well, no. See even though the Nameless One has left the world, there are still those who contemplate him and these are the monks of a campaign setting and even though The Tree of Life, Eliwyn is listed as a god, its more a force worshipped and protected by, yup, Druids. I can easily see those using the Shaman's Handbook incorporating Shaman into the same faction as Druids. In both cases though, there are no prestige classes.

One of the easiest ways to use this book is through the Pantheon, a church organization where all of the gods are worshipped. This idea is rarely used, and I think outside of the Hunt: The Rise of Evil campaign setting, the idea of worshipping the Pantheon as a whole is often underused in fantasy FRPGs in general. Here, the Pantheon is a mighty body where Paladins work as knights and clerics work for the good of all. In many ways, it's very Christian like in its ideals. Be good to your fellow man, live a good live, you know do

the things you're supposed to do. Of course those who work for the Pantheon will note that its also a political body and those who are skilled at such games may chose to join the Prestige Class of the Deacon. This class gains numerous bonus feats to augment their abilities with various charisma-based skills. I'm actually in the process of rewriting the bonus feat selection since I'm either going to let the feat count as a Refined Skill Focus with a +3 bonus or a +2 bonus to two skills.

One of the great things about the book is it introduces a concept that I haven't seen put into core use in a long time. Back in the days when Mayfair was publishing the City State of the Invincible Overlord, there was a class called the Avantari. These were basically paladins for different faiths. I've seen different takes on paladins done through prestige classes in several books including the Librium Equitis II, but I haven't seen an attempt to customize them as a core class that I liked until now.

The book introduces the Holy Warrior as a core class. Unlike the Paladin who serves the forces of law and good and in this book, the Pantheon as a whole, the Holy Warrior is a core class that gains powers based on his god's spheres of influence and abilities. The book provides a ton of special abilities that the GM can use to customize his own game with if he's not using the gods of this book. Such abilities are labeled as domain abilities and the Holy Warrior starts off with four and gains two more at second level. The main customization of the Holy Warrior happens with the Gift of God where they gain special abilities based on the god they worship. Here I don't think Green Ronin went far enough because the Domain Abilities are fairly simple to understand and use but without providing more ground work on

what levels of spells the Holy Warrior should have access to, I can see campaigns where everyone is going to want to play a priest of X instead of Y because X gives "cool skillz" or something similar.

In addition to many prestige classes, there is a whole chapter to new rules including eleven new feats, one new skill, nine new domains, and numerous new spells, magic items and monsters. In the monsters section, I was glad to see the Phoenix return to D20 but more pleased by Metteron, a companion to Terak, the ruler of the gods. Metteron is a huge outsider and is "the lord of all animals in Heaven, the greatest of their number, and father to some of the world's most noble beasts." The inclusion of such a creature pleases me for a number of reasons. First, I can use it as a Beast Lord to tie in to the Shaman's Handbook. Next, I can use him to explain different races and creations. Third, he's a powerful creature and can showcase the strength of the gods without providing stats for the gods themselves. In a similar vein, I was glad to see Raguel's stats because this is an Archangel and its good to see how Green Ronin, known for their evil books, handles such a creature. Suffice it to say that he's powerful. It's also useful to have Raguel here because he has direct ties to Iblis from Legions of Hell.

For those who already have a campaign setting and aren't sure how to use this section, the lifesaver will be chapters nine and ten. Chapter nine provides the GM with ideas on how to set up adventurers with a focus on using this book and campaign ideas on how to integrate this book while chapter ten provides some ideas on how to use these as new gods, gods from another plane, and methods of changing the mythology behind the gods themselves. These two chapters provide most of the

tools that a GM needs to integrate this fully into Freeport or another world with light details and without coming out directly and saying it, Greyhawk. For example, the listing of gods in the mythology section has a simple list of gods like God of Dwarves: Korak, God of Death and Magic: Mormekar. Gee, a female god of death and magic? I wonder who that could be in the standard D&D pantheon?

One of the strengths of the book is the art and graphic design. There isn't a single piece of what I'd say is poorly draw or illustrated work. There aren't huge gaps of white space. The book is easy to read and very easy on the eyes. When the book boasts on the back cover that it's fit for the gods, they made sure to use a lot of great artists to insure that ranging from Drew Baker, Jennifer Meyer, Steve Lawton Mike Vilardi and others to make the book top notch.

Is the book perfect? It's just about perfect in its own universe. It ties together many things from Legions of Hell and Armies of the Abyss and is completely compatible with the Shaman's Handbook. When it has to be meshed with other settings, some problems start to creep in. For example, since the Pantheon is mainly a just and good organization of gods and those gods that are unjust are often unknown, it becomes a little problematic when one wishes to introduce gods like the gods of Chaos found in the Warhammer setting or some of the more vile gods of evil in the Forgotten Realms in a very open manner. It's one thing to have an orc horde worship some nameless god whose true purpose is disguised but its quite another when they're lead by a one eyed general who claims he is the reincarnation of their god. Its also a little thorny with issues like Freeport because as we all know and love the city of

pirates, there are often activities that point to 'Outsider' (read Cthulhu Mythos) creatures that have been spotted in the city and making sure everything meshes can get a little messy and requires some ground work.

In addition, while I agree with the idea that gods don't need stats, I also feel that since 3rd edition does support character play, to one extent or another, to the point where characters can challenge the gods, that providing some type of stats or baseline for them, even if its just their avatars ala Divine & Defeated, would've been a good thing. Of course said stats might show up in a web expansion or something but that future remains to be seen.

I was also a little disappointed that more prestige classes for all the gods weren't presented. In many instances, I could see why they wouldn't do this. It helps fit in the non-standard classes that may have religious ties like monks and druids, but at the same time, there are so many aspects to some of the gods that one can't help but wonder... where's the first web supplement?

*The Book of the Righteous* is perfect for those who are playing in a world with a sparsely detailed world with little religious background on both church and god, like the Necromancer modules or Fiery Dragon modules, or are looking for more detail in religion for various types of gods like say for Greyhawk.

Are there things I'm missing out on this review? Yes. I haven't really gone into the section on cosmology, which provides a very nice overview of the sphere in which this book is set. I haven't gone over the names of each god and the prestige classes that follow them. I haven't gone over the section on Putting Your Faith in Evil, as that's primarily a smaller section aimed squarely at the GM who needs to insure that his players

have some adversaries worthy of their mettle. For not including these things, I apologize but one must realize that it's a book over 300 pages long and I don't want the review to equal it in size.

If you're looking to add a new core class, numerous prestige classes, monsters, feats, and spells to your campaign, then the Book of the Righteous is for you. If you're looking to add a whole bunch of powerful monsters in the forms of gods to your campaign, then move on to Faiths and Pantheons and Deities & Demigods because the gods in Book of the Righteous do not have stats and indeed, from the text, are above and beyond such things.

*REVIEWER'S NOTE: The Green Ronin Website has a seperate section called the Tree of Life that allows players and GMs to post their ideas and methods of using the book. Excellent free resource.*

Joe. G. Kushner

***The Book of the Righteous***  
*Sourcebook by Green Ronin Publishing* \$39.95 – 320 pages; hardback; [www.greenronin.com](http://www.greenronin.com)

## ***Blight Magic***

*Arcane Mysteries*

*By Mystic Eye Games*

**Score:** Good

\$\$\$ \$

Blight Magic is an accessory from Mystic Eye Games detailing the use of an evil form of magic that drains energy from the land to fuel spellcasting.

Its \$11.95 for 56 pages, which is fairly average for this size and type of book. Use of space is fairly good, with little wasted space, tight margins and a compact typeface. The internal mono art is weak though the front cover showing a spell-

caster twisted by the blight magic is very atmospheric. The quality of writing is average, as is the editing with minor but regular mistakes.

Chapter 1: The Basics Of Blight Magic, gives advice on using the book – the author rails against those who claim roleplaying restrictions should not be used to balance rules advantages, but warns that the power of blight magic can be unbalanced if the GM does not strictly enforce the roleplaying penalties that come with the use of blight magic. Though intended primarily as a book for the GM to use for villainous NPCs, there is nothing stopping a player taking one of the prestige classes offered later in the book with permission from her GM (though her character must be of evil alignment). Blight Magic is a feat that allows a spellcaster to drain energy from the land, either through a lengthy ritual that drains temporary Constitution, or a quick incantation (requiring a Concentration and Knowledge (Arcana) check) with reduced magical energies available. Different land types modify the amount of energy available from the land. The energy gained can be used to cast spells from any selection of levels up to the number of Blight Levels gained (e.g. 10 Blight Levels would allow ten 1st-level spells, or two 3rd-level and two 2nd-level spells, or two 5th-level spells, etc., as long as the caster can cast that level of spell).

Chapter 2: Corruption, details the side effects of using blight magic, called generally Corruption, but including various increasing physical and mental debilitations as the caster progresses in levels. Some means of stopping these side effects is also given, which usually have another side effect, such as permanent Strength drain from a poisoned Brew. A nice touch here is that Charisma is often decreased by

these side effects, thus causing Sorcerers and Bards to become more and more reliant on gaining blight magic, as their standard means of spellcasting becomes corrupted. Addiction!

Chapter 3: The Blighted Familiar, discusses the summoning of a blighted familiar (usually done through sacrificing the current familiar), and the powers of the blighted familiar (including the wonderful 'Fetid Stool' ("yes, that is correct, a nasty load of crap"), 'Putrid Breath', and 'Contagious Infestation').

Chapter 4: Blight Magic And Standard Characters, discusses blight magic in regard to the core spellcasting classes, and core races.

Chapter 5: Prestige Classes, offers six blight magic-related prestige classes:

- The Blighted Druid – a good druid turned bad with the ability to awaken blighted animal companions. 5 level class.
- The Dirge Lord – a master of blight magic, who can feed off others' magic.
- The Disciples Of Fell – blight magic druids with the ability to cleanse the land after draining it. 5 level class.
- The Huntsmen – hunt blight magic users by using various mystical powers to track and combat them.
- The Lords Of Perdition – evil priests who use blight magic to serve their dark gods specialising in various curses.
- The Tears Of Terra – hunters of blight magic users who seek to cure rather than kill their prey.

Chapter 6: Blight Magic Feats And Spells, includes the basic Blight Magic feat that allows the use of blight magic, and various extensions of that feat for use with any of the prestige classes in Chapter 5. Also, 8 new spells related to blight magic.



Chapter 7: Blight Magic Monsters & Templates, offers one monster (a blighted treant called a Treavil) and three templates – Blight Zombies and Bone Blights (blighted skeletons) – both of which take on elemental aspects such as magma, sludge, dust and other more traditional elements – and the Stone Sentinel, a statue animated by an animal spirit, designed to track and kill blight magic users in a certain protected location.

Chapter 8: Integrating Blight Magic: Ideas & Locations, gives some imaginative adventure ideas focused on the prestige classes in Chapter 5, and some simple rules for creating off-the-cuff blight magic using villains.

#### **Conclusion:**

GMs should think very carefully before introducing blight magic

into their campaigns. With a weak or inexperienced GM, players with blight magic will get out of hand – GMs must strictly enforce the role-playing penalties (which are fairly serious) to make this playable for a PC. The book recommends using it for villains and this is a safer start if you're keen on the idea. Blight Magic explores its focus thoroughly and imaginatively, and could bring a very different feel to magic in a campaign setting. Reminded me very much of the Defiler in the Dark Sun setting – if you liked the Defiler, you'll probably like this concept too.

Simon Collins

#### **Blight Magic**

Rulebook by Mystic Eye Games  
\$11.95 – 56 pages; softback  
www.mysticeyegames.com

## *Fey Magic: Dreaming the Reverie*

By Mongoose Publishing.

**Score:** Average

\$\$\$

### *Fey Magic*

Fey Magic (subtitled Dreaming the Reverie) is the second of Mongoose's Encyclopaedia Divine books. The book seeks to add depth to the treatment of faerie creatures in d20 system fantasy games, and focuses heavily on the magic abilities a character can obtain from association with the fey.

### *A First Look*

Fey Magic is a 64 page perfect-bound softcover book priced at \$14.95. The price is very typical for 64 page d20 system books.

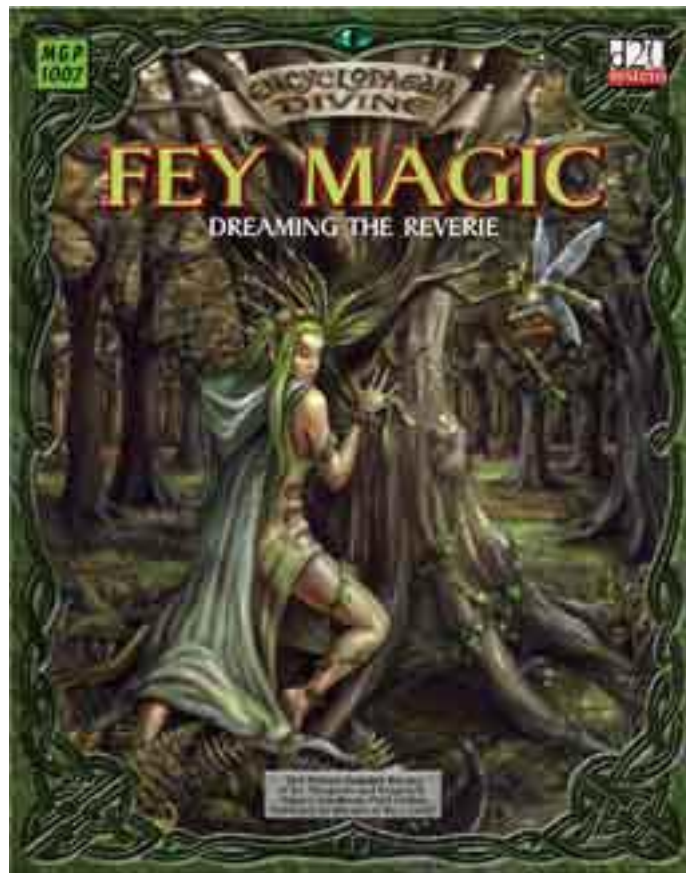
The cover depicts a green-haired woman (perhaps a dryad) embracing a tree in the midst of a sylvan wood, while some insect-winged faerie looks on.

The interior art is black-and-white, and varies in quality for mediocre to good. Given Mongoose Publishing's attitude towards nude artwork and the subject matter of the book, it might be unsurprising that there are many depictions of nude and scantily clad females within.

The interior text is modestly sized with large header fonts. The writing style is interesting, but in places it is hard to dig out the game text from the midst of descriptive text.

### *A Deeper Look*

The first part of Fey Magic deals with the acquisition of fey magic from fey creatures. The central mechanism for this is the knowl-



edge (reverie) skill. Unfortunately, here we run into the first problem: in some places, reverie is referred to as a knowledge skill, and in other places it is referred to as a stand alone skill, as if there were some debate on how to classify it and some references were not edited to reflect the final choice.

It appears that the final choice was supposed to be treating it as a knowledge skill, but one must debate the wisdom of that choice. The book implies that the reverie skill should best be accessed by druids and rangers, but as a knowledge skill, it appears that wizards and bards would be best at the reverie.

To utilize fey magic, a character must obtain the sponsorship of a faerie creature. This sponsorship can be obtained by tempting the fey creature with gifts, or by enticing them into (and besting them at) a challenge. The book provides all the game rules needed for this.

If the character succeeds in obtaining a fey patron, they may

learn about the reverie. A character may enter the reverie, a dreamlike state, instead of a normal sleep. While in this dreamlike state, the character can draw power from the faerie realm called Essence. Essence can be used to power personal gifts (essentially spell like abilities), create minor enchantments, or forge bonds with animals.

There is a catch. Non fey creatures retaining Essence may have disrupted sleep, and can even suffer wisdom damage if they hold the Essence for too long.

Some special rules are provided that give druids, rangers, and elves special

benefits with Essence. For example, Essence boosts the spell like abilities of druids and elves receive bonuses with reverie checks.

If you are truly interested in creating a character with a close connection to the fey, the book introduces four prestige classes to this end:

- Feydancer: A feydancer is a character who is in tune with the fey to the extent that they may eventually become one. Feydancers receive many bonuses when using Essence.
- Spellbinder: The spellbinder is a character specialized in trapping Essence in objects for practical use.
- Wylding: The wylding is a character who, through their connection with the fey, forge bonds with the plant world. The wylding continues to progress as a spellcaster and receives plant related special abilities.
- Chosen Protector: The chose protector is an ally of the fey sword to protect the fey and their lands.

Chosen protectors are good fighters, and receive abilities to assist them in their position.

Of these, the first two seem a little weak, but the wylding and chosen protector seem like competent, balanced choices for characters.

The book provides feats and spells for dealing with fey creatures. The fey domain is introduced for deities that have alliances with the fey. Fey feats improve the character's access and ability to use fey gifts, and the spells deal with, detect, or grant abilities of fey creatures.

At its pinnacle, Essence may be used to practice a variety of magical rituals called the Great Art. The great art can create powerful short term spell effects or long term enchantments without normal spellcasting requirements, but often with considerable risk to non-fey who are part of the ceremony.

The book rounds up with some DM advice, and a small selection of new faerie magic items and creatures for use in a game.

### Conclusion

Fey Magic takes a totally different approach to adding new magic methodologies to the game than you are probably used to. On one hand, the approach is very detailed and has a lot of roleplaying potential. On the other hand, this detail may be more than players or GMs will be willing to deal with. Overall, the power of fey magic is not extraordinary compared to typical d20 system magic.

The book's announced intention is to bring a heavier (and more faithful) focus on fey creatures in d20 system fantasy campaigns. However, the majority of the book is spent focusing on the magic of the fey while saying very little about the fey themselves. This book may be an insufficient resource if you don't already have a clear

conception of what the fey are in your campaign.

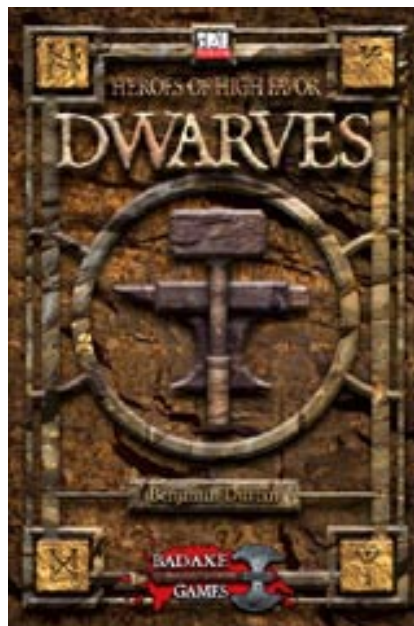
*Alan D. Kohler*

### **Fey Magic: Dreaming the Reverie**

*Accessory by Mongoose Publishing*

*\$14.95 – 64 pages; softback*

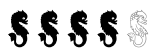
[www.mongoosepublishing.com](http://www.mongoosepublishing.com)



## *Heroes of High Favor: Dwarves*

*By Bad Axe Games*

**Score:** Good



Heroes of High Favor: Dwarves (HOHF:D), is Badaxe Games' first in a series of books exploring the core races.

The book itself is actually a slightly-larger-than-A5 booklet (actually 9 inches by 6 inches). Because of its unusual size its hard to compare with other products of its type. Its 62 pages probably comes in at something like 35 A4 pages, and this would make it fairly expensive for its content volume. Though font size is good and there are no chunks of white space, the space between paragraphs and headings seems quite large on the page, as do the margins – perhaps a

slight illusion due to the page size.

The external artwork is symbolic with a stone-effect hammer and anvil against a stone wall framed by a four-cornered runic pattern. The mono internal art ranges from poor to good, but uses a somewhat animated style which does not appeal to me personally. There are also a couple of useful drawings explaining combat issues by depicting counters on a combat grid. Writing style and editing are good.

HOHF:D begins with a brief introduction to the dwarven social situation, the benefits of the Fighter as favoured class, and the introduction of Bad Axe Games' prestige class concept. These prestige classes are based on PCs who have multiclassed fighter with another class and are designed to be suitable specifically for dwarves.

The next chapter, Feats and Skills, begins by offering 13 new feats including weapon mastery feats (extends weapon focus benefits to range of similar weapons), feats focusing on fighting with shields, and physically-related feats such as Short Stature (become Small) and Blood of Kings (bonus to range of influencing skills). Several of these mimic rules from 2nd Edition AD&D (such as from the Fighters Handbook).

This 2nd Edition influence is confirmed with the introduction of four weapon styles (single weapon, weapon and shield, two-handed and two-weapon). Each of these has prerequisite feats and skills which require a character to be minimum 9th level, but any PC who achieves these prerequisites can automatically benefit from the combat bonuses without having to spend an extra feat. A character must spend an extra feat if he wants to gain the additional benefits from Weapon Style Specialization, which



increase these combat bonuses.

Next up is a short section on Dwarven Runes, with rules for creation and activation, which gives the item the rune is carved upon a temporary enchantment. Various example runes are given, such as the Rune of Beauty which gives a +2 circumstance bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks, allowing a dwarven merchant to sell the item at a higher price. Runes can be visible or hidden (which sparked off some of my own adventure ideas involving hidden runes). It would have been nice to see some more of these.

The skills section discusses new uses for old skills – Appraise, Diplomacy, Forgery, Knowledge, and Craft. Nearly all 8 pages of this section are taken up with an expanded rules section for various dwarf-related Craft skills – Armorsmithing, Blacksmithing, Stonemasonry, and Weaponsmithing. This ruleset essentially involves increasing the effectiveness, durability, or ease of use of various items by adding masterwork components such as tempering, special metal alloys, unusual joins and the like, to give bonuses to the finished item or make unusual items. The section also discusses the benefits of using apprentices and has an example showing the creation of a masterwork breastplate using the expanded Craft rules.

Nearly the rest of the book (50 pages) is taken up with 'iconic multiclass combinations' (IMC's) (e.g. fighter-barbarian, fighter-bard, etc.) with additional related prestige classes. Similar to Archetypes presented in Star Wars Gamer, each IMC is introduced with advice on best procedures for multiclassing, but also contains discussion on the IMC's role in an adventuring party and in dwarven society.

Each IMC is followed by a 10-level prestige class. These are designed on the fighter-based multiclass combination idea and are suitable for dwarves. Despite these caveats, several of the prestige classes are accessible by classes not of either of the relevant multiclass combinations, and none of them are restricted by race to dwarves only (though they are most suitable for dwarves). Most require only a few minor text changes to make them suitable to other races. Each of the prestige classes makes good use of the multiclass concept – for instance, the battle rager (Fighter-Barbarian) continues to stack up his fighter bonus feats and the improving rages of the barbarian, whilst also gaining a Fearsome Visage (adding bonuses to Bluff, Diplomacy(?), and Intimidate) and a morale bonus to AC when fighting multiple opponents.

Other PrCs include the Dwarven Skald (who can curse and instill fear), the Rune-Priest (using the Rune rules from earlier in the book), Rock-Warden (an underground specialist), Stoneheart Ascetic (who communes with stone), Paragon (who can swap a paladin's special mount ability for the gaining of an ancestral weapon, and can repair weapons with the paladin-like lay on hands ability), Slayer (gains feats every level, but can only be applied to favored enemy), Tunnel-Fighter (sneaky fighting skills), Aceldamist (armored battle mage), and Artificer (master magical craftsman).

The last couple of pages take a brief look at dwarven roleplaying, using the concept of seven dwarven virtues (temperance, industry, tenacity, honour, loyalty, valour, and justice) to help players better roleplay their dwarven characters.

#### **Conclusion:**

As the book itself states, this is

probably of more benefit to a player than a GM, though there are certainly plenty of ideas for GMs within its pages. It's nice to see a set of prestige classes designed specifically for players, rather than those that stand on a blurred edge between PC and NPC PrC's.

The PrC's seem to have fairly balanced class features and prerequisites, with only a few minor anomalies (such as giving the Stoneheart Ascetic the redundant Still Mind ability (gained by a monk at 3rd level), when 1d8 unarmed damage is a prerequisite (requiring the PC to be a minimum 4th level monk) – hope I'm not forgetting anything here!!). I was a little concerned at the dwarven skald's loss of spellcasting ability – I was not completely convinced that the class features gained balanced this loss.

Despite the scantness of the roleplaying section at the end, the rules within the book provide many more ideas and hooks for designing interesting personality characteristics for your dwarven PC. What this book does not contain (nor did it probably set out to) is detailed information on dwarven lands, communities, religion, and other socio-political themes. However, information can be extrapolated from the ideas presented within to flesh out a GM's campaign world in relation to dwarves.

Despite its high price per page in terms of content volume, HOHF: D delivers in actual quality of content – there's more crunch than french toast and little in the way of fluff. Perfect for french toast fans, nearly so for those who like a bit of fluff on their toast.

*Simon Collins*

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# THE MARTIAL ARTIST

By Hong Ooi

## INTRODUCTION

“What is a martial artist?” The question has many possible answers. At the most basic level, a martial artist is simply a person who is trained in martial arts. In this sense, all fighters and warriors – regardless of origin and style – are martial artists, because they are trained in the ways of combat. Thus a knight in full plate riding a charger is a martial artist, and indeed, in many settings he would be the definitive martial artist of his time. Similarly, an axe-wielding berserker is also a martial artist, and a highly dangerous one at that. These, however, aren’t usually the archetypes that come to people’s minds when they hear the words “martial artist.” In the popular imagination, the term has come to refer specifically to Asian martial arts, and Asian martial artists. Such characters are the inspiration for the class presented here.

A martial artist, for the purposes of this article, is a warrior who emphasises finesse and precision over brute strength, and relies on speed, skill, and agility instead of heavy armor.

Within these boundaries, martial artists in real-life history and fiction are diverse, and the mar-

tial artist class is correspondingly flexible. For example, a kung fu master, a Zen archer, and a wuxia swordsman could all be portrayed using this class. While many martial artists are famous for their unarmed combat skills, not all of them have to be so.

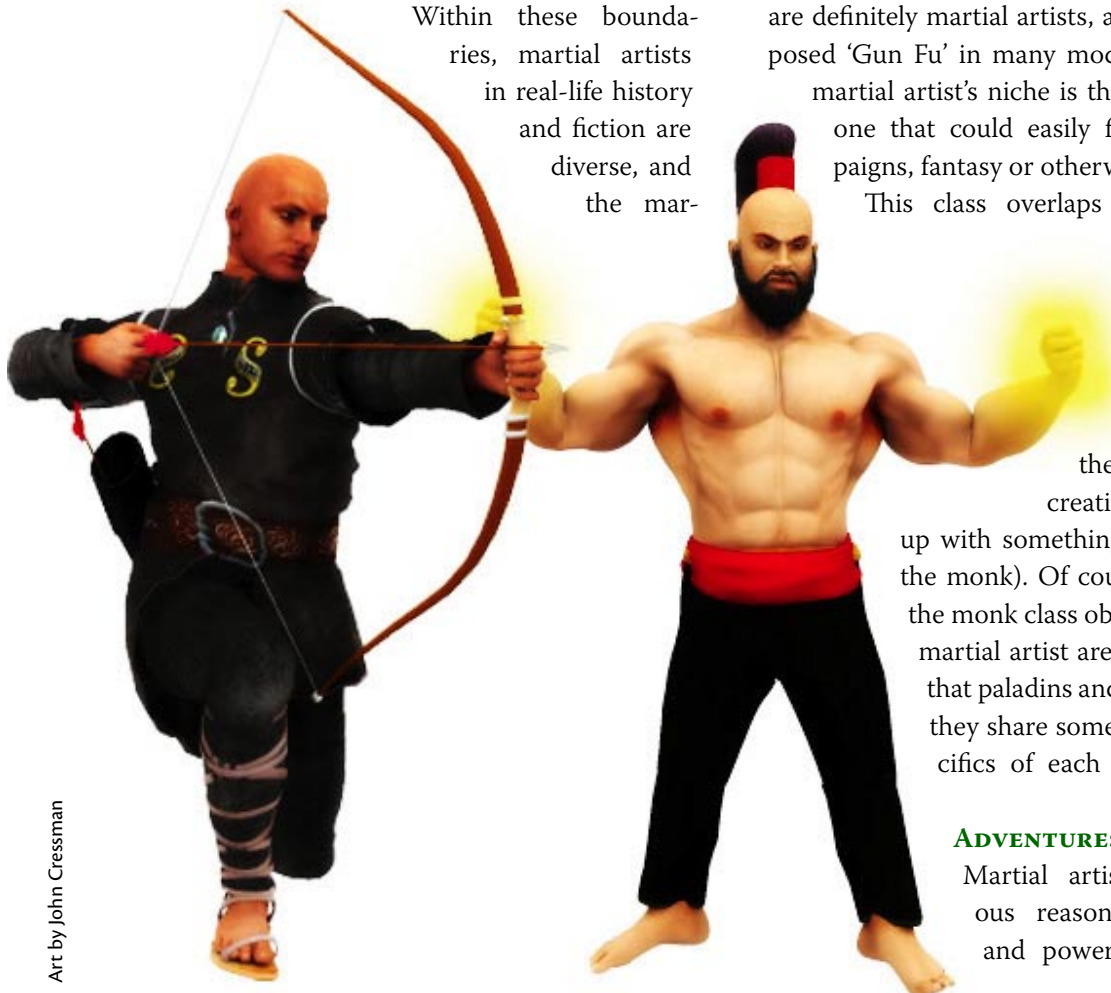
At the same time, not all combat-oriented characters from Asian backgrounds will be martial artists. Samurai, for instance, would be fighters (some games even have a special Samurai class), while a berserk tribesman with a machete could be a barbarian. Characters who wield truly spectacular magical powers would be spellcasters of various classes, although they could also have levels in the martial artist class.

Moreover, the archetype of the graceful, unarmored warrior is hardly limited to the Asian martial arts genre. There are fighters from many backgrounds that share the characteristics emphasised by this class: for instance, a rapier-armed swashbuckler can easily be thought of as a martial artist with a Western background. Further afield, the Jedi knights from *Star Wars* are definitely martial artists, as are the masters of supposed ‘Gun Fu’ in many modern action movies. The martial artist’s niche is thus very widespread, and one that could easily fit into many D20 campaigns, fantasy or otherwise.

This class overlaps considerably with the standard monk class in terms of character concepts and abilities, although the martial artist is more flexible (and indeed, one of the motivating factors in creating this class was to come up with something that wasn’t as rigid as the monk). Of course, this does not make the monk class obsolete; the monk and the martial artist are related in the same way that paladins and fighters are, and though they share some common traits, the specifics of each class are quite distinct.

## ADVENTURES

Martial artists adventure for various reasons. Some seek fortune and power, and as such become



Art by John Cressman

PRESTIGE

mercenaries, selling their skills to the highest bidder. Martial artists who take this path are typically hired for jobs requiring a combination of stealth and fighting skills; straight-up military or bodyguard assignments are best left to fighters, paladins, ronin, and samurai, while undercover and larcenous missions can be handled by rogues and assassins.

Other martial artists adventure to test themselves. They see life as a series of challenges, and how one meets and overcomes these challenges determines one's progress on the path to enlightenment. They may be found as wandering warriors seeking out and slaying foul monsters, or bringing evildoers to justice.

Still other martial artists adventure simply for the sake of adventuring. These chaotic, free-spirited characters are as likely to cause trouble for those around them as anyone else, although it's rare that they actually harbour evil intentions. Depending on how personable they are, their companions may view them as dashing (if foolhardy) comrades-in-arms, annoying buffoons, or possibly both.

### CHARACTERISTICS

Most classic warriors are brawny, use heavy armor and weapons, and rely on direct application of physical strength to defeat their opponents. As described above, martial artists eschew such brute-force tactics, preferring grace and precision over strength. They wear little or no armor, relying on their training, agility, and instincts to evade attacks. Because they're relatively unencumbered, they're fast and mobile, and with experience they can improve their speed and acrobatic prowess further.

While martial artists can rarely match fighters and barbarians in terms of brute strength and power, they're more flexible. The key is in feat selection, and with the right feats, they can be stealthy infiltrators, highly resistant to magic, or even as deadly in combat as the strongest fighters.

### BACKGROUND

Martial artists have diverse backgrounds. Some are ascetics, raised in monasteries and seeking to perfect their art, while others learned from lone masters.

Those martial artists with a monastic background tend to see their profession in mystical or spiritual terms, while others may view their skills as simply a means to an end.

Like fighters, martial artists share no special identity. Those raised in a particular monastery or who were taught the same martial arts style may feel a camaraderie toward each other. Conversely, martial artists from different schools tend to view each other as rivals – friendly or otherwise.

### RACES

Humans are the most commonly encountered martial artists, and have devised a seemingly endless variety of styles. Elves (and half-elves) sometimes take this path, and their styles take advantage of the elven skill with the longsword and bow, though there are some rare styles that mesh skills of sorcery and physical combat. Halflings and gnomes make surprisingly good martial artists, because their small size and agility make it hard for larger opponents to hit them.

The other races produce few martial artists. Dwarves are perfectly at home in heavy armor, while orcs (and half-orcs) prefer the direct approach, instead of elaborate maneuvering or stylistic niceties. The savage humanoids tend to have little patience for the extended training and practice requirements of this class.

### OTHER CLASSES

Being the varied lot that they are, it's hard to make any broad statements about martial artists. In general, they usually recognise that the other classes have a part to play and unique skills to contribute to an adventuring party, and so try not to cause problems. They may feel some rivalry with both fighters and rogues, but this rarely leads to serious conflicts.

### CLASS STATISTICS

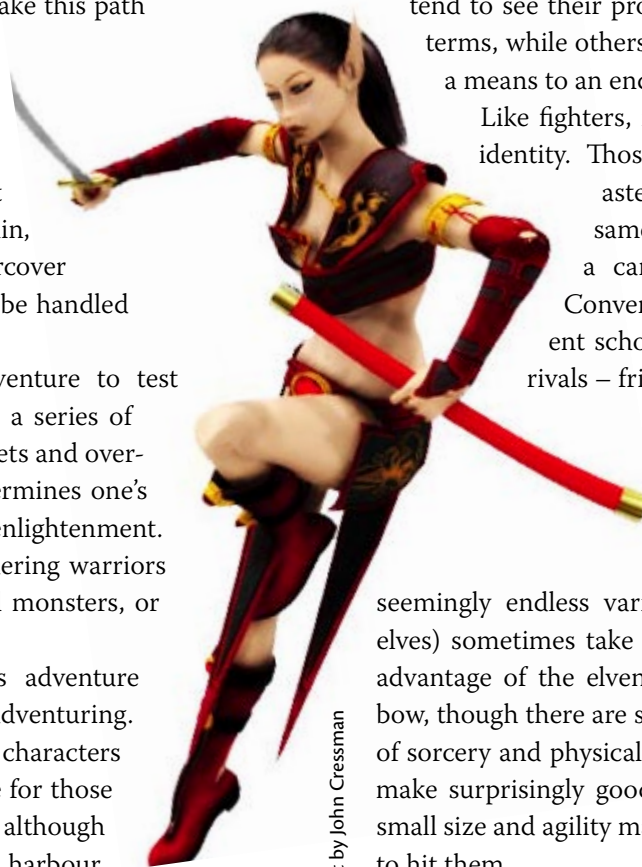
**Hit die:** d8

**Class Skills:** Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (religion), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex).

**Skill points/level:**

4 + Int modifier (x4 at 1st level)

**Alignment:** Any.



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**CLASS FEATURES**

The following are class features of the martial artist.

**Weapon and armor proficiency:** The martial artist is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and with exotic monk weapons (kama, nunchaku, and siangham, or the halfling versions of these for Small-sized characters). She is not proficient with any type of armor or shield.

**Defensive talent (Ex):** At 1st level, the martial artist's training allows her to dodge and parry blows almost without conscious effort. She adds her Wisdom bonus, if any, as a bonus to AC when not wearing armor or using a shield. The bonus is not lost even if the martial artist is flat-footed, stunned or loses her Dexterity bonus to AC (she does lose it if she is unconscious or immobilised).

**AC bonus (Ex):** As the martial artist gains levels, she also improves her knowledge of defensive fighting techniques. At 1st level she gains a +1 dodge bonus to AC when not wearing armor or using a shield, and this bonus increases by 1 every 6 levels thereafter (i.e., +2 at 6th level, +3 at 12th level, and so on). This bonus is lost whenever she loses her Dexterity bonus to AC.

**Uncanny Dodge (Ex):** Martial artists have the ability to react to danger with extraordinary speed. Starting at 2nd level, the martial artist retains her Dexterity bonus

to AC if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker (which means she also retains her level-based AC bonus in these situations). At 5th level she can no longer be flanked, except by a rogue or martial artist 4 levels higher than her. At 9th level she gains a +1 bonus to her Reflex saves and a +1 dodge bonus to her AC against traps. At 13th level these bonuses increase to +2, at 16th level they increase to +3, and at 19th level they increase to +4.

**Stunning Fist:** A martial artist of 3rd level or higher can take the Stunning Fist feat, provided she has Improved (or Enhanced) Unarmed Strike. She does not otherwise have to meet the prerequisites for this feat.

**Bonus feats:** At first level, and every two levels thereafter, the martial artist can choose a bonus martial arts feat; see the Martial Arts Feats section, below, for a list of what can be chosen. Alternatively, she can choose one of the following feats from the *Player's Handbook* as a bonus feat: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency, Expertise, Far Shot, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Quick-Draw, Shot on the Run, Spring Attack, Toughness, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	AC bonus	Special
1	+1	+2	+2	+0	+1	Defensive talent, bonus feat
2	+2	+3	+3	+0	+1	Uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), bonus feat
3	+3	+3	+3	+1	+1	
4	+4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Bonus feat
5	+5	+4	+4	+1	+1	Uncanny dodge (can't be flanked)
6	+6/+1	+5	+5	+2	+2	Bonus feat
7	+7/+2	+5	+5	+2	+2	
8	+8/+3	+6	+6	+2	+2	Bonus feat
9	+9/+4	+6	+6	+3	+2	Uncanny dodge (+1 vs traps)
10	+10/+5	+7	+7	+3	+2	Bonus feat
11	+11/+6/+1	+7	+7	+3	+2	
12	+12/+7/+2	+8	+8	+4	+3	Bonus feat
13	+13/+8/+3	+8	+8	+4	+3	Uncanny dodge (+2 vs traps)
14	+14/+9/+4	+9	+9	+4	+3	Bonus feat
15	+15/+10/+5	+9	+9	+5	+3	
16	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+10	+5	+3	Uncanny dodge (+3 vs traps), bonus feat
17	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+5	+3	
18	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+11	+6	+4	Bonus feat
19	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+11	+6	+4	Uncanny dodge (+4 vs traps)
20	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+12	+6	+4	Bonus feat

Focus, or Whirlwind Attack. She must still meet the usual prerequisites for these feats. At the game master's option, martial arts-related feats in other sourcebooks can also be taken as bonus feats.

The Flurry of Blows, Improved Flurry, Martial Finesse, and Instinctive Shot feats described below are also available as bonus feats to martial artists (and only to martial artists).

The martial artist's bonus feats only function when she is wearing light or no armour.

## MARTIAL ARTIST-SPECIFIC FEATS

### *Flurry of Blows*

You are trained in fast and furious unarmed combat techniques.

*Prerequisites:* Martial artist level 1st+, Improved (or Enhanced) Unarmed Strike.

*Benefit:* When taking the full attack action, you can make an extra unarmed attack with your normal attack bonus. The extra attack and all your other attacks for the round are made at a -2 penalty. You must use a full attack action to strike with a flurry of blows. You can only use flurry of blows while unarmed, while wielding an exotic monk weapon, or while wielding a weapon you have taken Weapon Finesse or Martial Finesse with.

A flurry of blows can be thought of as the martial artist's equivalent of fighting with two weapons, or with a double weapon. It does not stack with normal two-weapon fighting, and is usually preferable to fighting with two weapons anyway.

### *Improved Flurry*

Your flurry of blows is devastating in its effect.

*Prerequisites:* Martial artist level 6th+, Improved (or Enhanced) Unarmed Strike, Flurry of Blows, base attack bonus +9.

*Benefit:* In addition to the standard single extra attack you get with a flurry of blows, you get a second extra attack. All your attacks this round suffer a -5 penalty to hit.

### *Martial Finesse*

You wield weapons with extraordinary grace and fluency.

*Prerequisites:* Martial artist level 1st+, Weapon Focus with chosen weapon.

*Benefit:* You can choose a melee weapon with which to gain the benefits of Weapon Finesse. Unlike Weapon Finesse, Martial Finesse can be taken with any melee weapon you can wield, and is not limited to light weapons. Even with weapons that require two hands to use,

you can still make use of your agility to position yourself for effective attacks.

*Special:* This feat may be taken multiple times. Its effects do not stack; each time the feat is taken, it affects a different weapon.

### *Instinctive Shot*

You are one with your bow, enabling you to make difficult shots as if they were routine.

*Prerequisites:* Martial artist level 4th+, Point-Blank Shot, Weapon Focus with chosen bow.

*Benefit:* Choose a type of bow (not a crossbow). When using a bow of that type, you can apply double your Wisdom bonus (if any) to negate attack penalties due to range. You do not gain an actual bonus to hit; if the doubled Wisdom modifier is greater than the range penalty, the excess is discarded.

For example, if you have a +3 Wisdom bonus, you could ignore up to three range increments worth of penalties (-6 penalty) when firing your chosen bow.

*Special:* This feat may be taken multiple times. Its effects do not stack; each time the feat is taken, it affects a different type of bow.

## GENERAL FEATS

Many of these feats work by channeling the character's life force (known as *ki* in some circles). Such feats are supernatural, and can be suppressed by an *antimagic field* or similar effects. A character whose feats are suppressed still counts as having them, so any other feats and abilities that have the suppressed feats as prerequisites aren't affected. By default, there is nothing prohibiting any character from taking these feats if they meet the prerequisites. In particular, some of these feats (those marked with an asterisk before the feat name in the table below) are appropriate not just for martial artists, but also for fighters. At the game master's option, they may be taken by fighters as bonus feats.

### *Blindsight*

You do not need sight to be a master of combat.

*Prerequisites:* 6th level, base attack bonus +10, Base Will save bonus +5, Alertness, Blind-Fight, Soul Sight, Wis 19+.

*Benefit:* You gain the blindsight ability, as described in *Core Rulebook II*. Your blindsight has a range of 30 feet. This ability senses the life force of living creatures, as well as relying on the physical senses. If your hearing is impaired, your blindsight detects only living, sentient creatures (thus it will not work on constructs, undead, oozes, vermin, and other creatures that are either unliving or do not have an Intelligence score).

FEAT	PREREQUISITES
*Called Shot	Point-Blank Shot Precise Shot Weapon Focus (ranged weapon) Base attack bonus +4
Enhanced Unarmed Strike	Base attack bonus +1
Improved Arrow Deflection	Enhanced Unarmed Strike Deflect Arrows Base attack bonus +6
Ki Strike	Enhanced Unarmed Strike Wis 13+ Base attack bonus +4
Fast Movement	5th level Base Reflex save bonus +4
Great Leap	5th level Base Reflex save bonus +4
Light Step	8th level Great Leap Slow Fall Balance skill (10 ranks) Dex 19+ Wis 13+ Base Reflex save bonus +7
Fast Climb	5th level Great Leap Climb skill Base Reflex save bonus +5
*Improved Aimed Shot	Point-Blank Shot Base attack bonus +6
*Improved All-Out Attack	Base attack bonus +6
Improved Dodge	Dex 13+ Dodge Base attack bonus +5
Instinctive Strike	Weapon Focus with chosen weapon Wis 13+ Base attack bonus +8
Strike Without Thought	Iron Will Still Mind Str 13+ Power Attack Weapon Focus with chosen weapon Instinctive Strike Wis 15+ Base attack bonus +12

FEAT	PREREQUISITES
Iron Skin	Endurance Toughness Wis 15+ Base attack bonus +10 Base Fortitude save bonus +8
*Negate Critical	Dex 13+ Dodge Combat Reflexes Base attack bonus +15
Preternatural Reflexes	4th level Lightning Reflexes Wis 13+
Purify Body	Great Fortitude Concentration skill Con 13+
One Body, One Soul	Great Fortitude Concentration skill Purify Body Iron Will Still Mind Strength of Will 10th level
Resist Elements	Endurance Toughness Wis 13+ Base Fortitude save bonus +8
Slow Fall	Base Reflex save bonus +3
Soul Sight	6th level Alertness Wis 15+ Base Will save bonus +5
Blindsight	Blind-Fight Alertness 6th level Wis 19+ Base Will save bonus +5 Soul Sight Base attack bonus +10
Still Mind	Iron Will
Strength of Will	4th level Iron Will Still Mind Concentration skill Con 13+ Wis 13+
Strength of Many	Endurance



Art by John O'Connor

PRESTIGE

### **\*Called Shot**

Few can emulate your ability to put an arrow exactly where you want it.

*Prerequisites:* Base attack bonus +4, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (ranged weapon).

*Benefit:* Using this feat requires the full attack action. Choose a number not exceeding your base attack bonus. You give up all your regular attacks to make one ranged attack with a penalty to your attack roll equal to this number, and an equal bonus to your damage roll (if you hit). You can only make a called shot at a target within 30 feet.

*Special:* You may gain this feat multiple times. Each time you gain this feat, it applies to a new weapon.

It's possible to make an aimed, called shot with the one attack (see the Improved Aimed Shot feat, below).

### **Enhanced Unarmed Strike**

You do not need weapons, for your body itself is a lethal weapon.

*Prerequisites:* Base attack bonus +1.

*Benefit:* You gain the benefits of the Improved Unarmed Strike feat from the *Player's Handbook*. Your unarmed strikes do 1d6 points of damage (for Medium-sized characters; smaller or larger characters adjust damage dice as per the rules in *Core Rulebooks II* or *III*). You can also choose to deal your damage as either normal or subdual without penalty. This feat can be used to meet the requirements for feats that have Improved Unarmed Strike as a prerequisite.

*Special:* You can take this feat multiple times. Each time you take this feat, your unarmed damage dice increase by one step, as per the rules in *Core Rulebooks II* or *III*. You can take this feat a maximum of three times.

### **Fast Climb**

You can ascend and descend surfaces with uncanny speed.

*Prerequisites:* 5th level, base Reflex save bonus +5, Climb skill, Great Leap.

*Benefit:* Your climbing speeds are doubled compared to normal: you can climb at your normal movement rate without taking a penalty on your Climb skill check, or at double your movement rate with a -5 penalty.

While you are climbing, enemies don't get any special bonus to attack you, nor do you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC. You gain these benefits only if you are wearing no heavier than light armor, and carrying no more than a light load.

### **Fast Movement (Su+)**

You can move faster than the average person, and if you know how to channel your spirit, possibly *much* faster.

*Prerequisites:* 5th level, base Reflex save bonus +4.

*Benefit:* Your speed is increased by 50% compared to the base speed for your race. You gain this benefit only if you are wearing no heavier than light armor, and are carrying no more than a light load. The increased speed granted by this feat does not stack with the barbarian's increased speed.

*Special:* You may take this feat multiple times. Its effects stack, so that, for example, taking it twice doubles your speed.

†All benefits from taking this feat more than once are considered supernatural abilities. For example, if a human takes Fast Movement three times, she would gain a +45 ft increase in speed. However, in an antimagic field, she would only gain the benefits from the first time she took the feat, and thus would only gain a +15 ft bonus to speed.

### **Great Leap (Su†)**

Your acrobatic prowess is breathtaking.

*Prerequisites:* 5th level, base Reflex save bonus +4.

*Benefit:* You gain a +5 competence bonus to Jump and Tumble skill checks. In addition, you are not subject to the normal limits on vertical or horizontal jumping distances, and you can always choose to Take 10 on a Jump or Tumble check, even if circumstances would normally prevent you from doing so. You gain these benefits only if you are wearing no heavier than light armor, and are carrying no more than a light load.

*Special:* You can take this feat multiple times. The competence bonus increases by +5 each time, so that, for example, taking it twice grants a total +10 competence bonus to Jump and Tumble checks.

†All benefits from taking this feat more than once are considered supernatural abilities. For example, if a martial artist takes Great Leap three times, she would gain a +15 bonus to Jump and Tumble checks. However, in an antimagic field, she would only gain the benefits from the first time she took the feat, and thus would only gain a +5 bonus to these checks. She would still, however, retain the ability to jump without height-based limitations, and could still Take 10 even when pressured.

### **\*Improved Aimed Shot**

You can maximise your chances of hitting with a ranged weapon.

*Prerequisites:* Point-Blank Shot.

*Benefit:* As a full-round action, you can make a single ranged attack as an aimed shot. You gain a +2 insight bonus to your attack roll. You suffer a -4 dodge penalty to AC until the start of your next turn.

*Special:* It's possible to make an aimed, called shot with the one attack. See the Called Shot feat, above.

### **\*Improved All-Out Attack**

You are experienced at making daring, but powerful, attacks.

*Benefit:* As a full-round action, you can make a single melee attack, with a +2 bonus to your attack roll. You

suffer a -4 dodge penalty to AC until the start of your next turn.

A character who makes an all-out attack can't use the defensive fighting option, the Expertise feat, or any skill or ability that requires patience or concentration.

### **Improved Arrow Deflection**

You are adept at deflecting multiple incoming arrows, darts and crossbow bolts.

*Prerequisites:* Base attack bonus +6, Deflect Arrows, Improved (or Enhanced) Unarmed Strike.

*Benefit:* As Deflect Arrows, except you can attempt to deflect a total number of ranged attacks per round equal to one plus your Dexterity bonus (if any). Each deflection attempt after the first is subject to a cumulative -5 penalty to the Reflex save; thus the second attempt is at -5, the third at -10, *etc.* You cannot attempt to deflect the same attack more than once. Exceptional ranged attacks still can't be deflected.

### **Improved Dodge**

You are exceptionally adept at dodging blows.

*Prerequisites:* Base attack bonus +5, Dodge, Dex 13+

*Benefit:* You gain a +1 dodge bonus to AC. Unlike the Dodge feat, this bonus applies against all opponents. This benefit replaces (does not stack with) the dodge bonus to AC from the Dodge feat.

### **Instinctive Strike**

To the astute, brawn is unnecessary. You exemplify this.

*Prerequisites:* Base attack bonus +8, Weapon Focus, Wis 13+.

*Benefit:* When using a weapon with which you have Weapon Focus, you may add your Wisdom bonus to your damage rolls in place of your Strength modifier. Unlike your Strength modifier, this bonus to damage is not modified for two-handed melee weapons or off-hand weapons. You do not gain this benefit if the weapon you use does not allow a Strength bonus to damage.

*Special:* You may take this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack; each time you take this feat, it applies to a different weapon. You can choose composite bows or "unarmed strike" as your weapon for the purposes of this feat. A mighty bow's Strength limit doesn't apply to your Wisdom bonus.

### **Iron Skin (Su)**

Your body and soul are strong enough to withstand the heaviest blows.



*Prerequisites:* Base attack bonus +10, base Fortitude save bonus +8, Endurance, Toughness, Wis 15+.

*Benefit:* You gain damage reduction 5/+1. This is a supernatural ability.

### **Ki Strike (Su)**

When engaged in melee, your attacks are charged with supernatural power.

*Prerequisites:* Base attack bonus +4, Improved (or Enhanced) Unarmed Strike, Wis 13+.

*Benefit:* Your melee attacks are treated as if made with a weapon with a +1 enhancement bonus for the purposes of defeating damage reduction. This extends to any melee weapon you wield. Note that like the monk ability in the *Player's Handbook*, you do not gain an actual bonus to your attack and damage rolls. This is a supernatural ability.

*Special:* You can take this feat multiple times. The enhancement bonus increases by +1 each time; however you cannot take this feat more times than your base attack bonus divided by 4. If you wield a weapon that is itself enchanted, use either its own enhancement bonus or that provided by this feat, whichever is higher.

### **Light Step (Su)**

When you move, you do not disturb the tranquility of the world.

*Prerequisites:* 8th level, base Reflex save bonus +7, Balance skill (10 ranks), Great Leap, Slow Fall, Dex 19+, Wis 13+.

*Benefit:* You gain a +10 competence bonus on Balance and Move Silently skill checks, and a +5 bonus to Reflex saves to avoid pits and similar traps. You can also always Take 10 on Balance and Move Silently checks, even if circumstances would normally prevent you doing so. It's practically impossible to track you (-20 penalty), unless the tracker is using scent or some other nonvisual means of tracking. You can stop using Light Step and deliberately walk with normal steps if you so desire. You can only use this feat if you are wearing no heavier than light armor, and carrying no more than a light load.



Art by Vannio LoRiggio

### **\*Negate Critical**

A mortal blow to others is merely dangerous to you.

*Prerequisites:* Base attack bonus +15, Dodge, Combat Reflexes, Dex 13+.

*Benefit:* When struck by a critical hit or a sneak attack, you may attempt to negate the extra damage. Using the attacker's modified attack roll as the DC, make an attack roll of your own. If your result beats the DC, the critical hit or sneak attack becomes only a normal hit. You may use either your Strength or Dexterity bonus on this attack roll, whichever is better. You may only use this feat once per round.

If you have a shield or armor of fortification, as detailed in *Core Rulebook II*, you must choose whether or not to use this feat before applying the armor's enchantment. If you use this feat when armed with a ranged weapon, you make the attack roll as if you were unarmed.

### **One Body, One Soul**

You have tapped into the innermost depths of your being, where the mental and physical become one.

*Prerequisites:* 10th level, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Purify Body, Still Mind, Strength of Will, Concentration skill.

*Benefit:* You can use the higher of your Wisdom and Constitution modifiers for the purposes of calculating your hit points and Fortitude and Will saving throws. In the case of hit points, this benefit is retroactive.

### **Preternatural Reflexes**

You gain an almost precognitive insight into evading danger.

*Prerequisites:* 4th level, Lightning Reflexes, Wis 13+.

*Benefit:* Once per day, when you make a Reflex save, you can choose to gain a +10 insight bonus on your roll.

### **Purify Body**

By means of meditative techniques, you can purge your body of toxins and other ill-effects.

*Prerequisites:* Great Fortitude, Concentration skill.

*Benefit:* Once per day, as a full-round action you can enter a meditative trance, akin to sleep, which you can maintain for up to an hour. Any Fortitude saving

throws that you would have to make are delayed until the end of your meditation. If you meditate for at least ten minutes, you receive a +10 competence bonus to these saves. Ending your meditation requires another full-round action.

While meditating, you are effectively helpless but aware of your surroundings. You may not cast or maintain spells while in this state. If you are injured, you must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + damage dealt) or your meditation ends with no positive benefit.

### **Resist Elements**

Compared to the fire of your body and the coolness of your mind, physical heat and cold are insignificant.

*Prerequisites:* Base Fortitude save bonus +8, Endurance, Toughness, Wis 13+.

*Benefit:* You gain fire resistance +5 and cold resistance +5.

### **Slow Fall**

You can use nearby surfaces to slow your descent when falling.

*Prerequisites:* Base Reflex save bonus +3.

*Benefit:* When falling, if you are within arm's reach of a wall or similar hard surface, you take damage as if the fall is 20 feet shorter than it actually is. You can only use this feat if you are wearing no heavier than light armor, and carrying no more than a light load.

### **Soul Sight**

You can perceive the living spirits of creatures around you.

*Prerequisites:* 6th level, base Will save bonus +5, Alertness, Wis 15+.

*Benefit:* You are constantly aware of the auras of all living, sentient creatures within 60 feet. Your awareness extends into the ethereal plane, although it does not penetrate barriers. You cannot detect the auras of creatures without a life force, such as constructs and undead, nor creatures with an Intelligence score of less than 3. Likewise, you cannot detect creatures without an Intelligence score, such as oozes, vermin and certain types of plant. In some situations, this may give you a clue that a creature is not what it appears to be.

In combat, this feat means you do not have to guess the locations of invisible opponents whose auras you can detect. You are still subject to the concealment miss chance for attacking such targets, and they get the usual benefits of attacking while invisible, unless you have some other means of negating invisibility. However, you can always identify what square(s) the target is in.

### **Still Mind**

Your inner calm aids you in warding off attacks on your psyche.

*Prerequisites:* Iron Will.

*Benefit:* You gain a +2 insight bonus to saves against charm and compulsion effects.

### **Strength of Many (Su)**

By focusing your mind, you can perform feats of incredible strength.

*Prerequisites:* Endurance.

*Benefit:* Once per day, as a free action you can gain an enhancement bonus to your Strength equal to your character level. The extra strength lasts for 1 round. Strength of Many is a supernatural ability.

### **Strength of Will**

You can form a last-ditch defense against mental attacks.

*Prerequisites:* 4th level, Iron Will, Still Mind, Concentration skill, Con 13+, Wis 13+.

*Benefit:* If you fail a Will saving throw, you can make an immediate Concentration skill check against the same DC. Any luck, insight and competence bonuses that applied to the save also apply to the skill check, subject to the normal stacking rules. If the check is successful, you are treated as if you had made your save. This feat may be used once per day.

### **Strike Without Thought**

Uniting body and mind with a single purpose, you know where to strike.

*Prerequisites:* Base attack bonus +12, Instinctive Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Still Mind, Weapon Focus, Str 13+, Wis 15+.

*Benefit:* Pick a melee weapon with which you have Instinctive Strike. When using this weapon, your Wisdom bonus and Strength modifier to damage stack.

*Special:* You may take this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take this feat, it applies to a different weapon. You can choose "unarmed strike" as your weapon for the purposes of this feat.

## **MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOLS**

A martial arts "school" is a body of knowledge that, at the very least, defines a certain style of fighting. Some schools go further by seeing the martial arts as defining an approach to life in general. The constant practice rituals strengthen the body and the mind, while the quest to perfect one's art holds deeper philosophical truths. Of course, not all schools are like this; many are purely practical.

A place where a school is taught is known as an academy or a dojo. It is possible for an academy to teach many schools, if it is sufficiently large; and it is possible for a school to be taught at many academies, if it is sufficiently popular. In fact, the largest academies may churn out dozens if not hundreds of students each year from many different schools. Most will know only the basics of their art, but the best students will command knowledge far beyond their peers. At the other end of the scale, a school without an academy might have only a few wandering masters, who choose carefully the students to whom they impart their knowledge. Such a school could be even more famous (or infamous) than one that is taught at multiple academies.

### **Mastering a School**

A martial artist must be at least 6th character level before she can gain the benefits of mastering a school, even if she manages to meet the prerequisites beforehand. The benefits accrue once the character has satisfied all the prerequisites, and spends at least six months training under the guidance of a master. The training need not be continuous, but any significant break requires the character to start over at the beginning. As a rule, this should happen with any interruption longer than a month, or if more than 50% of the character's time is spent away from training; however, the game master has final say on what counts as a significant break.

"Mastery" of a school represents mastering the *basic* techniques taught by the school. These are techniques that potentially anyone can learn, if they complete the required training. At the game master's option, a school may also contain more advanced learning, reserved for the most exceptional individuals. Such knowledge would be represented by taking a martial arts prestige class that expands on the abilities given here, culminating in *grand mastery* of a school. You cannot become a grand master simply by accumulating more martial artist levels (or levels in any other base class) or by gaining feats. A prestige class is necessary because learning these secrets takes much more dedication than mastering the basics: if you are to finish the journey, you can't afford to stray off the path.

A martial artist doesn't *have* to have studied at an academy, or attained mastery of a pre-existing school. Many martial artists learn facets of different schools throughout their careers, mixing and matching techniques to come up with a style that's uniquely their own. In the right circumstances, such a character may be even more dangerous than someone who is technically a "master".

## **Sample Martial Arts Schools**

The following are examples of martial arts schools that can be inserted into a campaign.

### ***Crimson Blade Mastery***

A long time ago, the grand masters of the Crimson Blade ruled a faraway empire as tyrants. They were eventually overthrown after a terrible war, and it was thought that all of the students and masters of the school were killed. This was not so; a handful of masters survived, and kept alive the ancient lore of their school. Each master is extremely careful in whom they select as students: not only is raw talent necessary, but they must also display the qualities of absolute loyalty, discretion and ruthlessness that have allowed the school to survive thus far.

To the extent that the Crimson Blade school has a philosophy, it would be that the will to power is everything. A great man is one who refuses to be shackled by the limited vision of the sheep around him; he forges a path for himself, leaving others in his wake. Meekness and humility are crutches that only the weak rely on, and prevent the strong from realizing their full potential. If this means people hate a Crimson Blade master, or fear him, so be it. It isn't the master's problem, as long as they keep out of his way.

*Prerequisites:* Evil alignment, Dodge, Great Leap, Martial Finesse (sword), Mobility, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (sword), 10 ranks in Intimidate, 10 ranks in Jump, 10 ranks in Tumble. The Martial Finesse and Weapon Focus feats must be taken with the same weapon, chosen from the following: longsword, bastard sword, scimitar, rapier, two-bladed sword. Must be chosen by an existing Crimson Blade master; they find you, you don't find them.

*Training benefit:* Once per day, you can enter a frenzy that is terrifying and yet breathtaking to behold. You gain +2 to Strength and +2 to Dexterity, your speed increases by 10 feet, and you can make a flurry of blows with a full attack action with your sword, making one extra attack per round while suffering a -2 penalty on each attack. Frenzy does not stack with rage, if you have that class ability.

While in a frenzy, you cannot use skills or abilities that require patience or concentration. You can use any feat you have except for Expertise, item creation feats, metamagic feats, and Skill Focus (if it's tied to a skill requiring patience or concentration). Your frenzy lasts for up to three rounds plus your Constitution modifier, but you may end it prematurely. At the end of the

frenzy, you are fatigued for the duration of that encounter. Entering a frenzy takes no time in itself, but you can only do it on your action, not in response to somebody else's action.

*Social benefit:* None, since almost nobody knows that the Crimson Blade still exists.

*Author's Note:* *Crimson Blade Mastery is a prerequisite for taking the Dark Blademaster prestige class. If this article is well-received, the prestige class might appear in future issues.*

### **Intuitive Archery Mastery**

As its name implies, the martial arts school of Intuitive Archery teaches the use of the bow. It is an "internal" school, meaning that it concentrates on harnessing the flow of one's life force to achieve complete control over oneself – and since the bow is an extension of the self, this control enables masters of the school to perform remarkable feats of archery. But such feats are secondary to the purpose of the school, which is introspective in nature: its deepest teachings emphasise that perfecting one's skill is simply a metaphor for the journey towards enlightenment. A true master cannot be deceived, because she knows herself, and in so doing, knows her enemies.

Intuitive Archery is ancient, and yet the school is taught in no academy. Most of its masters are loners, who prefer to wander the land in quiet contemplation. Hence there are few students; it's hard to find a master, and harder still to convince him or her to impart the secrets of their art. The school is thus dying out, and it may not be too long before it becomes entirely extinct.

*Prerequisites:* Lawful alignment, Alertness, Called Shot (bow), Improved Aimed Shot, Instinctive Shot (bow), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (bow), 10 ranks in Concentration. The Weapon Focus and Intuitive Archery feats must be taken with the same bow type, either the longbow or composite longbow. Must convince an existing Intuitive Archery master to take you on as a student.

*Training benefit:* When you make an aimed shot with your bow (see the Improved Aimed Shot feat for a description of this action), you gain a +20 insight bonus to your attack roll, and you are not affected by the miss chance that applies to attacks against a concealed target. You may use this ability once per day.

*Social benefit:* Students of this school are on good terms with most contemplative orders. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy skill checks when dealing with monks and lawfully-aligned divine spellcasters.

Intuitive Archery mastery is a prerequisite for taking the Master of Intuitive Archery prestige class. If this article is well-received, the prestige class might appear in future issues.

### **Iron Hand Mastery**

This example shows how the core monk class might be recreated in terms of the material presented in this article.

The famed academy of the Iron Hand school is a monastery located deep in the mountainous wilderness. Many centuries ago, a great warrior came here to meditate, and found that the monks were beset by bandits, wild beasts and other perils. To help them defend themselves, the warrior devised a series of exercises and combat drills that he taught to the monks. Because the monks had no easy access to forges and weapon-smiths, these drills focused on unarmed attacks and fighting with improvised weapons. The monks took this knowledge to heart and combined it with their expertise in the ways of *ki*, and the result was the Iron Hand school.

In the years following the establishment of the school, the Iron Hand monks became famous not just for their combat prowess, but also for their championing the cause of the poor against the excesses of unjust rulers. This has seen the monastery come under attack many times throughout its history, from those who sought to remove this thorn in their side. Thus far, the monks' fighting abilities have seen them in good stead, although some of the grand masters wonder how long this can last.

*Prerequisites:* Non-chaotic alignment, Dodge, Fast Movement, Flurry of Blows, Great Leap, Improved (or Enhanced) Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Stunning Fist, 9 ranks in Tumble. Must gain admission to the monastery of the Iron Hand.

*Training benefit:* The base number of stunning attacks you can make per day becomes equal to your base attack bonus.

*Social benefit:* Monks of the Iron Hand are well-regarded as advocates and defenders of the common people. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy skill checks when dealing with anyone not of the upper classes, but also a -4 penalty on the same when dealing with evil nobles. If your long-term behaviour doesn't match this reputation (game master's call), you lose the bonus, but not the penalty.

Iron Hand mastery is a prerequisite for taking the Master of the Iron Hand prestige class. If this article is well-received, the prestige class might appear in future issues.

**SAMPLE MARTIAL ARTIST MASTERS**

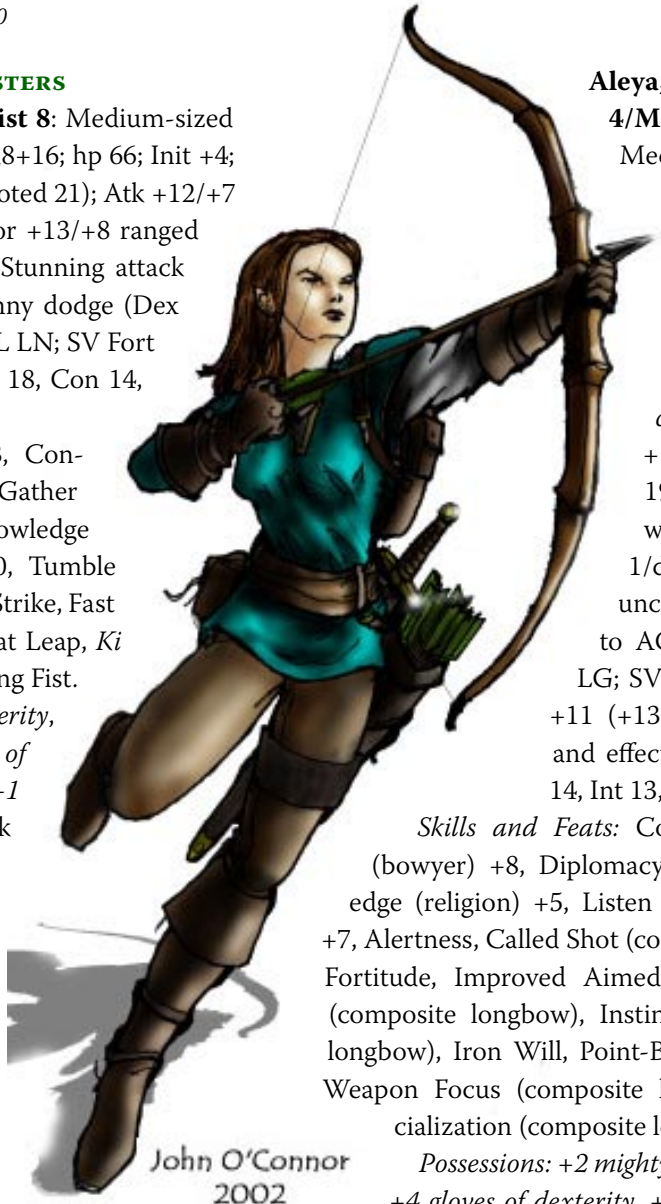
**Jiren, male human Martial Artist 8:** Medium-sized humanoid (human); CR 8; HD 8d8+16; hp 66; Init +4; Spd 45ft; AC 21 (touch 19, flat-footed 21); Atk +12/+7 melee (1d6+4, unarmed strike), or +13/+8 ranged (1d8, masterwork longbow); SA Stunning attack 8/day, flurry of blows; SQ Uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL LN; SV Fort +9, Ref +11, Will +9; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Balance +13, Concentration +9, Diplomacy +12, Gather Information +7, Jump +18, Knowledge (religion) +7, Sense Motive +10, Tumble +21, Dodge, Enhanced Unarmed Strike, Fast Movement, Flurry of Blows, Great Leap, Ki Strike, Mobility, Iron Will, Stunning Fist.

*Possessions:* +4 gloves of dexterity, +2 headband of wisdom, +2 belt of strength, +1 bracers of armor, +1 ring of resistance, masterwork longbow, 50 arrows.

Jiren is in some ways a classic product of the Iron Hand monastery. He's quiet and unassuming, and prefers to spend his free time practicing his martial arts skills rather than partying the night away. In other ways, he's idiosyncratic. He spent his entire childhood in the monastery, and because of this, he developed an intense curiosity about life outside its walls. This curiosity got him into strife with his superiors on more than a few occasions. Eventually they saw an opportunity where they only saw a troublemaker before, and decided to give him the task of gathering information about possible threats to the order. The day after his graduation as a master, the gates of the monastery were opened and he was summarily thrust into the outside world.

At first Jiren was completely lost in his new environment. He's since adapted to life outside, although he's still a bit naïve. He retains the inquisitive nature that got him into trouble as a youth, and combined with his naivety, this means he still often gets into trouble. Luckily, he's usually able to talk his way out of any scrapes that he gets into. Recently, he's heard rumours that the infamous Crimson Blade, an order of evil martial artists thought destroyed long ago, has resurfaced. He intends to find out more about this matter, regardless of where it leads him.



**Aleya, female half-elf Fighter**

**4/Martial Artist 6:** CR 10; Medium-sized humanoid (elf); HD 4d10+6d8 +20; HP 87; Init +5; Spd 30ft; AC 21 (touch 21, flat-footed 21); Atk +21/+16 ranged (1d8+10/x3, +2 mighty composite longbow), or +12/+7 melee (1d8+1/19–20, masterwork longsword); SA Mastery ability 1/day; SQ Half-elf qualities, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL LG; SV Fort +15, Ref +13, Will +11 (+13 vs Enchantment spells and effects); Str 12, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 11.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +12, Craft (bowyer) +8, Diplomacy +5, Jump +10, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +12, Spot +16, Tumble +7, Alertness, Called Shot (composite longbow), Great Fortitude, Improved Aimed Shot, Instinctive Shot (composite longbow), Instinctive Strike (composite longbow), Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (composite longbow), Weapon Specialization (composite longbow).

*Possessions:* +2 mighty composite longbow (+1), +4 gloves of dexterity, +4 periapt of wisdom, +2 cloak of resistance, bracers of archery, masterwork longsword, 50 masterwork arrows.

Aleya is an unusual character for two reasons: first, she's a master of Intuitive Archery; and second, she's a half-elven master of Intuitive Archery. Members of this school are rare enough that by definition they're unusual, but for one of them to be a demi-human is almost unprecedented.

Aleya came about her status as a result of a chance meeting five years ago. Already an accomplished archer, she was hunting in the woods when she came across an old man practicing his shooting at a target. Noticing several apparent defects in his style, she stopped to give him some tips. When she was finished, the man offered her the chance to test her skills against his, in an archery contest. She accepted, thinking to humour him; instead, the man – an Intuitive Archery master – thrashed her soundly. Dumbfounded, she begged to be taught the secrets of his art. At first he refused, but she persisted, and after three months of pleading and dogging his every step, he finally gave in.

PRESTIGE

Unlike most of the other masters of the school, Aleya doesn't accept that the decline and extinction of Intuitive Archery is inevitable, or that it's a good thing. She believes that the school still has much to offer, and its teachings remain relevant in a changing world. This has caused some friction with the other masters, although a few of them are starting to come around to her way of thinking.

**Karth, male human Rogue 3/Martial Artist 6:** CR 9; Medium-sized humanoid (human); HD 3d6+6d8+21; hp 71; Init +5; Spd 30ft; AC 21 (touch 21, flat-footed 21); Atk +16/+11 melee (1d10+6/17-20, +2 *bastard sword*), or +14 ranged (1d8, masterwork light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +2d6, frenzy 1/day; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked, +1 vs traps); AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +13, Will +8; Str 16, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +10, Climb +8, Hide +13, Intimidate +13, Jump +20, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Pick Pocket +10, Search +6, Sense Motive +9, Spot +8, Tumble +22, Dodge, Great Leap, Improved Critical (*bastard sword*), Iron Will, Martial Finesse (*bastard sword*), Mobility, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (*bastard sword*).

*Possessions:* +2 *bastard sword*, +1 *ring of protection*, +2 *gauntlets of strength*, +4 *bracers of dexterity*, +2 *periapt of wisdom*, masterwork light crossbow, 20 bolts.

Karth used to be a street kid in the slums of the Low Quarter. Life in the slums was brutal, and he fell in with a gang of young thugs at an early age. Karth was relatively small and lightweight, which meant that he was often viciously bullied by his supposed friends. Still, they *were* his friends, and being in a gang was better than the alternative.

One night, the gang decided to mug a stranger who'd wandered on to their turf. They thought he was an easy mark, but they were wrong. The stranger massacred the entire gang in a dazzling display of swordsmanship, leaving Karth for last. He thought he was dead, but at the last moment, the man stayed his hand. Instead, he offered to show the young gang member "the real meaning of power". Karth readily agreed – if only because the alternative was to join the rest of his gang.

For many years, Karth travelled at the side of his master, learning the secrets of the Crimson Blade school. At first his only thought was to escape, but slowly he came to appreciate the real value of what he was being taught. Eventually he too became a master, with powers that he never thought he'd have.



John O'Connor  
2002

On a recent visit to the Low Quarter to settle some old scores, Karth has learned that there's another stranger around: a monk of the Iron Hand, with an unusual interest in the Crimson Blade. While normally he wouldn't give the monk a second thought, he's aware that anyone who learns that the Crimson Blade still exists is a threat that must be dealt with immediately.

*Hong's ENWorld screen name is ... Hong. Be careful of saying suggestive things around him; he has a nasty habit of quoting people in his sig. Toward that end, all I can say is, 'I love chocolate.' Maybe he'll quote that.*



**D20 BEAUTY CONTESTS** by Ryan Nock  
*(with special thanks to John and Michelle Nephew)*

**S**lick, taut bodies, gleaming with sweat, dressed in a few bits of tantalizing cloth, posing pleasingly for onlookers. This is a beauty contest, where the most alluring bodies win the prize, but it's not your standard beauty pageant. You've stumbled into a modeling session for the cover of a brand-new sci-fi/fantasy novel or gaming product, and the prize is getting you to buy the book.

It seems like men and women (but usually women) on the covers of these books are some of the most gorgeous specimens of their race, as if one of the prerequisites for becoming an adventurer was to win a beauty contest. From peasants to queens, slender telepaths to beefy space scoundrels, few will you see that do not appeal to the eye. If it works for selling books (and, coincidentally, magazines), then, why would it not be used by nobles, kings, and businessmen, who wish to hire or sponsor heroes? After all, regardless of how skilled the adventurers are, they will be poorly received if they look as foul as common peasants. Additionally, sponsoring adventurers is just another way savvy nobles can compete for position and popularity, hoping to sponsor the best heroes possible.

Most of this article will focus on using beauty and beauty contests in fantasy roleplaying games, but with a little adjustment they could be used in any genre or setting.

**BEAUTY AND BEAUTY CONTESTS IN YOUR GAME**

In the course of a typical adventure, a beauty contest is not likely to occur, so it is up to the game master to design an adventure where a beauty contest might play

a role. So how might you fit a beauty contest or other aspects of these Beauty rules into your next game? The specifics will vary from genre to genre, but a few possibilities include:

- ◆ **A Thousand and One Nights:** A capricious king's wife has died, and in grief he has been seeking the most beautiful women in the kingdom to take as his brides for one night, after which he kills them. No one but the king's royal guards and his new brides are allowed into his castle, and the king's court wizard makes sure no one else can magically sneak in. The only way inside is for a female party member to catch the king's eye, and that still leaves the mystery of why the king is doing this. Might it have something to do with his court wizard's machinations, or is the ghost of the king's wife trying to make sure no new child can usurp her son's right to the throne?
- ◆ **Boy Toys:** The party has been taken prisoner by drow, and the only two routes out of the slave pits are death, or the House matron's male harem.
- ◆ **Secret Agents:** The PC's home town fears that the region's duke has something insidious planned for their small town, and the town leaders enlist the most beautiful people in town – regardless of their skill – to try to become the duke's new sponsored adventurers. The group of ragtag townsfolk must try to bluff their way through a beauty contest and impress the duke enough so that he will employ them, giving them access to his plans.
- ◆ **Vanity:** A large city hosts a fair for adventurers of the region to show off their skills and give bards stuff to sing about. Amid all the swordfights, spell duels, and adventure-tale swapping, the biggest topic of interest is the beauty pageant. All would go well,

except for the interference of a vain warrior, whose face was magically scarred in a recent adventure, such that healing could only bring back a shadow of his former beauty. Feeling he deserves the victory, the warrior begins to discreetly incapacitate or kill his competitors. Can the PCs find out the attacker's identity, or will they be targets themselves.

◆ **The Chalice of Beauty:** A rumored artifact is supposed to grant anyone who drinks from it majestic beauty (+20 Beauty). Now its bearer is dying, and she announces a competition to see to whom the item will pass on. Though she has taken great precautions to insure her own safety and the safety of the chalice, the same cannot be said for the competitors. Can the PCs somehow earn the chalice, which is also said to be the only way to destroy the cursed Rod of Dystopia? Even if they don't bother themselves, will they let a prideful friend risk his life by entering a competition full of desperate men and women?

◆ **Patsies:** The player characters discover that another, prettier group of adventurers have been claiming responsibility for all their exploits. After all, who'd you believe? When the copy-cat party commits several vicious crimes, the PCs' names are sullied. Will they try to expose the impostors and risk a bad reputation, or will they be content to give up all their popularity?

◆ **Twists and Turns:** Even in a standard beauty pageant, odd things may make the event more interesting. A small town might hold a contest every ten years, with the winner being petrified for posterity, or tossed into a volcano to appease a deity. A nymph environmentalist might enter the competition, hoping to use the prize money to help protect her home woodland. The prize might actually go to the worst loser, handing out a potion that makes the drinker Beautiful (base Bea 16). And of course, rogues might want to kidnap the winner, and a PC has to make sure he wins, so he can lead the rest of the party to the rogue's hideout.

### BEAUTIFUL CHARACTERS

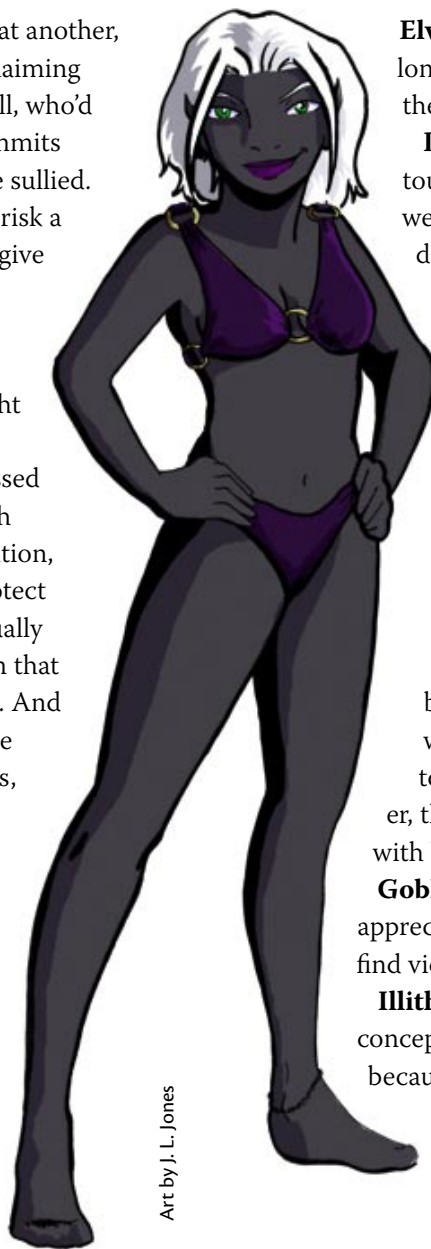
The traditional saying holds that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but a few general standards hold. Physical beauty is very much tied to physical health, though the more comfortable a society is, what is 'health' can vary. Especially among affluent individuals, health can be represented

by fat and luxury, rather than muscles and speed. Beyond those simple guidelines though, much of beauty is tied to culture, varying from place to place, changing by the decade.

Of course, beauty is more than skin deep, but usually such beauty can only be appreciated by those who have time to get to know a person. This is one of the differences between Charisma and physical beauty. Many public speakers can be incredibly witty and charming, but few of them could be described as beautiful (unless, of course, they're the kingdom's princess, publicly decrying the local evil badguys of the realm). In game terms, a high Charisma may help you better flaunt your physical beauty, but it is not the primary factor.

### RACIAL AND CULTURAL SPECIFICS

The exact things that make up beauty will vary from game to game and setting to setting, but here are a few things to consider:



**Elves:** Elves favor agility and grace, long and straight hair, slim bodies, and the ability to wield magic.

**Dwarves:** Dwarves prefer strength, tough skin, stout and meaty bodies, well-tended beards, the ability to drink, and skill with metalworking.

**Gnomes:** To a Gnome, a witty sense of humor is important, as is a large and smooth nose, nimble hands and feet, and a nice smell.

**Halflings:** Halflings of course find nimble people attractive, but they also appreciate big eyes, wide smiles, scruffy hair, and mild pot bellies.

**Orcs:** Orcs don't care much for beauty, since the males treat their women savagely, with little regard to long-term relationships. However, they do tend to favor strong women with big tusks, who are loud.

**Goblinoids:** Goblinoids don't really appreciate beauty in general, but they do find viciousness . . . appealing.

**Illithids:** Physical beauty is a foreign concept to most mind flayers, simply because they do not mate. They can appreciate the intellect of others, the same way people appreciate a nice, healthy cantalope.

Art by J. L. Jones



**Gray Aliens:** The common gray alien admires big eyes, small mouths, psionic powers, and, oddly, hair. Sadly, their genome doesn't contain the genes for hair, which explains their tendency to wear toupees.

**Humans:** Human preferences vary wildly. Your guess is as good as mine, especially when it comes to figuring out what makes men look good.

### NEW ABILITY SCORE: BEAUTY

How do you determine if your character really qualifies as beautiful? Since you're the player, the choice is mostly up to you. If you want to play someone beautiful or ugly, you can make that primary decision. However, being truly impressive requires work. Determining this requires a new ability score, Beauty (alternately called Comeliness). Beauty is a determination of your character's physical attractiveness, and is mostly independent of your actual Charisma.

Unlike normal ability scores, you don't have to roll for it. Though you're more likely to be Beautiful if you have high physical abilities (representing health), Beauty is mostly independent of your other stats. Your Beauty is generally dependant on your body structure and face, and your game master might decide that certain physi-

cal appearances don't match your chosen Beauty. For example, if you decide that your acid-scarred, obese, cross-eyed wizard is gorgeous, your game master might have to overrule you.

When you create your character, choose how beautiful they are, which can range from Ugly (Bea 2), to Unattractive (Bea 6), Average (Bea 10), Attractive (Bea 14), and Beautiful (Bea 18). You cannot choose a starting Beauty score higher than 18, and only those with severe scarring or malformities can have a starting Beauty score of less than 2. Also, bear in mind that this score is relative to your own race. Other races will perceive you differently.

Certain situational modifiers can affect your Beauty. See below for more details.

### SITUATIONAL MODIFIERS

You suffer a situational penalty to your Beauty if you are being viewed by a member of a different race. The penalty varies by how different the races look. For a slight difference (human to Elf, Halfling to Gnome), there is only a -1 circumstance penalty. For considerable differences (human to Dwarf, Elf to Orc), the circumstance penalty is -4. For races more different than this, Beauty

is usually pointless. At the game master's option, these penalties might be slightly greater, if the person is quite the opposite of a particular race's ideal of beauty.

Skilled use of make-up (Disguise check DC 10) grants a +1 bonus to your Beauty while you wear it. Masterwork clothes made for the sake of fashion provide a +2 bonus. An *alter self*, *change self*, or *polymorph self* spell, lets you choose your new level of Beauty, though usually you are only qualified to determine beauty for a race that is similar to your own. Likewise, very poor clothing, being covered in dirt, or having hair that is coated in slime tends to have a negative effect on your physical appearance, giving a penalty from -1 to -4.

Bathing in a Nymph's pool grants a +10 circumstance bonus to Beauty for a month. Other types of magic and charms can provide smaller bonuses, detailed below in the Sample Swimsuits section.

For example, Jenny (a beautiful human paladin, Bea 18) is trying to make a good impression at a court ceremony for an Elvish noble, taking care to put on ap-



Art by Tom Martin

appropriate make-up and a masterwork dress, granting a +3 bonus. However, Elves have slightly different beauty standards than humans, so she suffers a -1 penalty, for a total bonus of +2. With her 20 Beauty, she turns quite a few heads, even among the insular Elves.

On the other hand, Malek (an unattractive human rogue, Bea 6) has the unwelcome task of wooing a Dwarf princess (his party members put him up to it). He suffers an automatic -4 penalty because of the differences in species. The game master also rules that because Malek is particularly scrawny and beardless, he suffers an additional -1 penalty. With an effective Beauty of 1, the princess had better have low standards. If he used a simple *alter self* to turn himself into a Dwarf (of average Beauty, since he wouldn't know what Dwarves like), he would instead have a Beauty of 10.

### SOCIAL CLASS TEMPLATES

If you don't want to have to go into too much detail to determine the Beauty modifiers for your character or an NPC, you can simply apply a Social Class Template to that NPC. Just decide what their base Beauty score is, and what social class they are, and apply the modifier. If the character has a prominent ability score, also apply modifiers for it. Typically, richer, more affluent individuals can afford better care to make themselves beautiful, though if a certain noble family is renowned for its unattractiveness, or if a town was founded by a group of peasants selected for their appearance, feel free to alter these modifiers for special cases.

**Squallor:** Beauty -4.

**Lower Class:** Beauty -2.

**Middle/Merchant Class:** No modifier. This also applies to the average starting adventurer.

**Upper Class/Minor Nobility:** Beauty +2. This also applies to the typical adventurer of 5th level or higher.

**Greater Nobility:** Beauty +4. This also applies to the typical adventurer of 10th level or higher.

**Royalty:** Beauty +6. This also applies to the typical adventurer of 20th level or higher.

### 'BEAUTY CHECKS'

Since you cannot really take a risk to look prettier the same way you can try a difficult balancing technique, the term 'Beauty check' is a bit misleading, because you need not actually roll. Instead, a Beauty check basically means that you compare relative Beauty scores, *checking* to see how well you fare compared to others. It mostly comes down to game master adjudication, because beauty has little statistical effect in a game, and only in rare circumstances will your physical beauty be a matter of life and death.

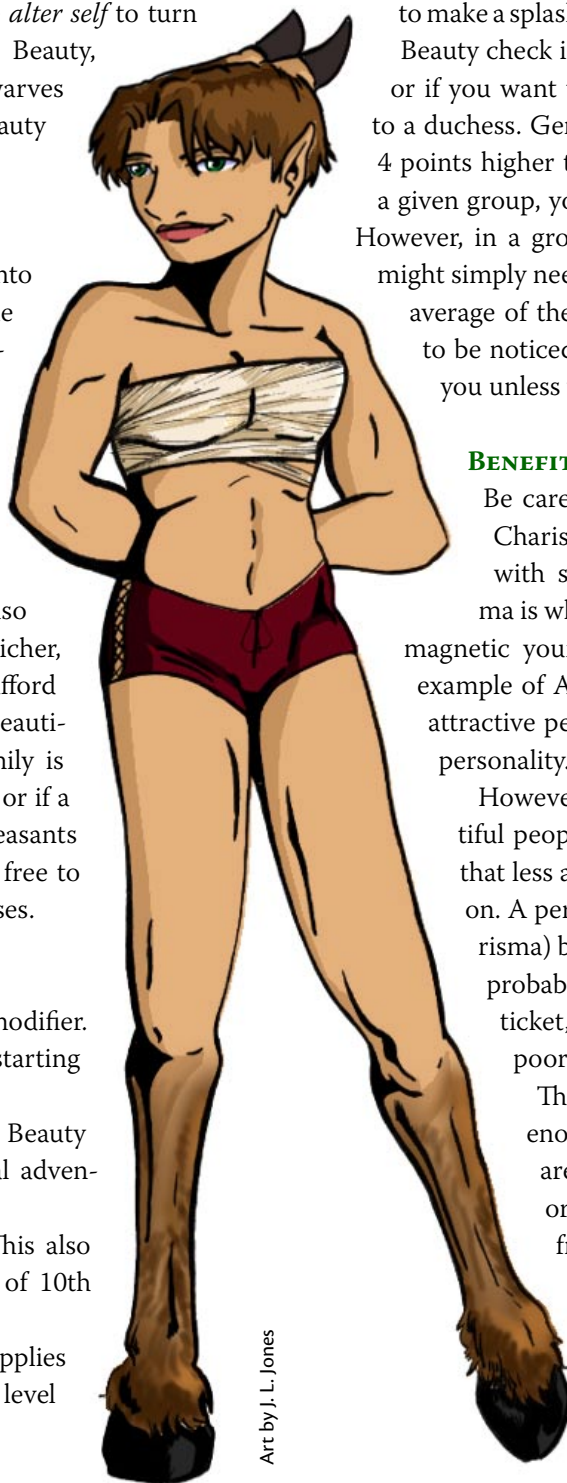
You can make a Beauty check to try to make people remember what you look like, such as if you want to make a splash at a public ball. You also make a Beauty check if you're in a beauty competition, or if you want to get yourself sold into slavery to a duchess. Generally, if your Beauty is at least 4 points higher than the nearest competition in a given group, you can be assumed to stand out. However, in a group of a hundred or more, you might simply need to be 4 points higher than the average of the group. Also, if you don't want to be noticed, your Beauty can work against you unless you hide yourself.

### BENEFITS OF BEAUTY

Be careful not to confuse Beauty with Charisma. Beauty really has little to do with social interaction, while Charisma is wholly related to how forceful and magnetic your personality is. The infamous example of Adolf Hitler shows that even unattractive people can have great strength of personality.

However, few would dispute that beautiful people tend to get breaks and perks that less attractive people would miss out on. A person who is obnoxious (low Charisma) but beautiful (high Beauty) could probably talk his way out of a parking ticket, or land a good job, despite his poor personality.

This benefit can be reflected easily enough. If the person or group you are interacting with is Unfriendly or Hostile, you gain no bonus from your appearance. However, if the person or group is Indifferent, Friendly, or Helpful to you, you gain a Beauty bonus to your Charisma-based checks. The amount



Art by J. L. Jones

of this bonus is determined the same way bonuses for other ability scores are determined (*i.e.*, a 10-11 provides no bonus, 12-13 provides +1, 14-15 provides +2, *etc.*).

Additionally, if you are at least Average appearance, and the person you are interacting with might be physically attracted to you, you gain an additional +1 bonus to Charisma-based checks.

Being beautiful won't help you negotiate a peace treaty with Orcs, or intimidate an Andromedan bounty hunter that you've captured, but it does make everyday life a little easier.

### ADVENTURING SWIMSUITS

Regardless of your natural beauty, though, what you wear and how you present yourself can have a strong impact on how people perceive your appearance. Though nobles can wear jewelry, fancy robes, and lavish dresses, for the conscientious adventurer, such costumes are too bulky to be effective for acts of heroism. It was the need for attractive, functional clothing that led to the development of the adventuring swimsuit.

First popularized by female hydromancers, the swimsuit is a revealing, easy to wear costume that handles the difficulties of aquatic adventuring well, and yet also helps adventures look good when their patrons are showing them off. Though most swimsuits worn by nobility lack the necessary pockets and pouches to hold spell components, magical daggers, and other adventuring staples, most adventuring swimsuits are designed for utility as well as appearance. Even in a pinch, it isn't too difficult to also carry a water-proof backpack or satchel to hold the other necessary gear.

It should be noted that adventuring swimsuits aren't the only fashionwear popular among heroes, they were merely the first to be so widely recognized. For less aquatic occasions, some adventurers go to great lengths to have armor, robes, and equipment that make them look impressive. Such types of clothing might be featured in future articles, but this issue will focus primarily on the swimsuit.

Well-funded professional adventurers often have personally tailored adventuring swimsuits, designed to make them look impressive when returning from their ventures. Their patrons, hoping to outdo other nobles and royalty, desire to have the most beautiful adventurers in their employ as possible. Though beauty contests are one main way for patrons to choose their employees, nice apparel – such as swimsuits – can make up for any failings in the adventurers' themselves. Some adventurers even prefer these outfits, especially since armor is rarely effective underwater anyway, so it is not much missed.

### Types of Swimsuits

Women adventurers usually wear swimsuits that provide the strong support necessary for vigorous hacking and slashing, though spellcasters can usually afford to be more revealing, since they have to do less running, jumping, and swinging. Shoulder or back straps provide ample locations for simple equipment like lockpicks or common spell components, without disrupting their curves with bulky pouches. Weapons can provide more of a hassle, but well-designed satchels can accommodate blades and axes up to Medium-size, and can be worn either with a shoulder strap, or tied around the belly to hang over the back of the hips. Larger weapons will generally have to be held anyway, on foot or underwater. Additionally, mild enchantments can usually be added to provide magical force foot protection, so that the adventurer can travel over rocky surfaces barefoot as casually as if she had on boots.

Full bodysuits, though very practical and comfortable, are seldom used unless requested, since they don't tantalize the way most noble patrons prefer. Bikini-style and one-piece swimsuits are the most common types, and though magical fabrics are the most common material for their construction, certain aquatic tribes have been known to craft swimsuits of shell armor. See the Crescent Island Spellsinger article in Asgard #5 for more information.



Art by Vannio LoRiggio

Male adventurers seldom look as good as their female counterparts if their swimsuits are skintight, so styles are quite different. Only sorcerers who simultaneously require few spell components and are also buff can realistically use speedos, but they are not unknown, and are gaining in popularity among monks. Partial

bodysuits, going from groin to neck, are the most common style, allowing for a weapon to be carried in the small of the back, and providing enough space for spell component pouches on the shoulders or hips. They also help hide the often-pitiful physiques of spellcasters, though female nobles always like an adventurer who fills out his swimsuit well.

More rare are simple swim trunks, the preferred garment for barbarian adventurers. Monks often enjoy a nice loincloth, sometimes with extra-dimensional pockets to hold kamas and such. Full bodysuits, as with women, as often the most practical though least visually impressive, but are quite often seen on male Dwarf or Orcblooded adventurers, for whom it is usually deemed a necessity.

### SAMPLE SWIMSUITS AND ACCESSORIES

Here are three examples of adventuring swimsuits that your character might use, plus two accessories that comes in handy for stylish adventurers. Feel free to adapt these as you desire to fit your character's personal style. For the sake of magical item space restrictions, swimsuits count as a suit of armor.

**Bikini of Doom:** This string bikini is simply a couple small skulls held together with straps, with a polka-dot bottom. Though that is frightening enough in its own

right, the wearer can also cast *eyebite* twice per day. Though characters can avert their eyes from an *eyebite* spell, depending on who is wearing the bikini and who is looking, the game master might warrant a Will save (DC 5) if the onlooker wants to avert his eyes. The effect of the *eyebite* can be resisted with a Will or Fortitude save (as appropriate), DC 19.

*Caster Level:* 13th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *eyebite*; *Market Price:* 62,400.

**Charm of Beauty:** Coming in various forms, charms of beauty make the wearer more physically appealing, using a variety of methods. Mild enchantments might make onlookers think you look better, or draw their eyes to your more appealing physical traits, and illusions might mask your imperfections. Transmutations might even achieve appearances that aren't possible naturally. However they achieve their goals, these charms enhance your Beauty score, providing an enhancement bonus ranging from +1 to +5. Note that these bonuses are in addition to your natural Beauty score, and shapechanging can alter your natural Beauty.

For example, an ugly witch could polymorph into a beautiful maiden, gaining Beauty 18, and then put on a Beauty charm to gain an even higher Beauty.

*Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, various spells; *Market Price:* 1,000gp (+1), 2,000gp (+2), 3,000gp (+3), 4,000gp (+4), 5,000gp (+5).

**Staff of Accessories:** An enchanted staff made of strengthened coral, this item is designed specifically for the aquatic adventuring spellcaster. The top of this staff sports a forward-facing gemstone that can cast *light* at will, to illuminate underwater passages. Once per day it can cast *daylight*.

Also on the top of the staff, but on the side opposite the gem, is a small pouch, about two inches square. However, this pouch is actually a small *bag of holding*, sufficient to hold 5 cubic feet of items, up to 50 pounds. The pouch is waterproof even when open, and enchants all items pulled from it to make them also waterproof for up to 1 minute, unless the bearer wills otherwise. The pouch cannot be removed from the staff without ruining its magic, but it is sufficient to hold most spell components, a dagger or two, or even a sword, though drawing any object larger than Small requires a full-round action.

Additionally, the staff grants the bearer +4 Charisma.

*Caster Level:* 9th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *Leomund's secret chest*, *charm monster*; *Market Price:* 18,500gp.

**The Ribbon Whirlwind:** This magical swimsuit is composed of seven enchanted ribbons that whirl around their wearer's body, constantly moving across



Art by John C. Johnston

her form at a distance of up to six inches. Though their movements always make it seem like the ribbons will reveal normally taboo areas, the enchantment of the garment ensures that, regardless of who is looking or how many people are present, the wearer will never show off any skin that she doesn't want to, aside from her arms, legs, and face. When the wearer is viewed by large crowds, the swimsuit will cling tightly to her body, covering her entire torso, but usually the ribbons float loosely.

There is absolutely no means, magical or otherwise, to overcome this concealing effect. No effort to change your viewing angle, scry, or use clairvoyance can defeat the ribbons. Even antimagic does not affect the costume. Though it's other abilities are suppressed in an antimagic field, any attempt to cancel or dispel the magic of the swimsuit simply causes it to cling to the wearer's body like a one-piece.

In addition to this minor magical effect, the wearer gains the ability to *fly* at a speed of 90 (good). Also, she can make an attack similar to the Whirlwind Attack feat. As a full attack action, the ribbons lash out at all targets within 5 feet of the wearer, making an attack roll with the wearer's base attack bonus, modified by Dexterity. Each strike deals 1d6 damage, and overcomes damage reduction as a +1 weapon.

Unfortunately, this garment lacks any pockets or pouches, so wearers often also carry a *Staff of Accessories*.

*Caster Level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *fly*, *nondetection*; *Market Price:* 15,000 gp.

**Tsunami Suit:** This enchanted, partial swimsuit (suitable for men or women, resizing as appropriate) grants the wearer the ability to Swim at a speed of 90, and to breath underwater. Once per day, the wearer can cast *control water*, but can only raise water – by up to 14 feet. This effect can create a small tidal wave 70ft across horizontally, that moves at a rate of 300 ft per round until it hits shore, dealing 1d6 points of damage to all creatures and ships on the surface, or on the shore where it strikes. The wave dies out after half a mile if it doesn't reach shore.

Additionally, the wearer can cast spells and act underwater without hindrance.

*Caster Level:* 8th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *control water*, *freedom of movement*, *water breathing*; *Market Price:* 27,250 gp.

## NEW WEAPONS

The following weapon and magical weapon enhancement can fit easily into a stylish, aquatic adventuring game.

**Volleyball:** The volleyball, and various permutations of, is a common accessory for aquatic adventurers. Common lore holds that the martial arts style for fighting with volleyballs was first created by a female halfling assassin, who, disguised as a simple volleyball player, was able to sneak up on her targets while they were on the beach. With the natural affinity halflings have with thrown objects, the assassin was able to turn an innocuous plaything into a deadly weapon.

Though anyone can proficiently wield a volleyball as a simple weapon, it is only effective if you take the Exotic Weapon Proficiency: Volleyball feat. When wielded as a simple weapon, a volleyball does subdual damage, and simply bounces off of whoever or whatever it hits. When a person with the appropriate

exotic weapon proficiency hurls a volleyball, however, it deals real damage.

Additionally, if you have the exotic weapon proficiency, after you make your attack, make another attack roll with the same bonus, against AC 10, modified by range and cover. If this second attack roll is successful (regardless of whether the first attack hit), then the volleyball rebounds off whatever it hit and returns to you. If your second attack roll misses, the ball lands nearby you, its final destination determined like a grenade-like missile.

For example, Zidi hurls her volleyball through a dense, foggy jungle at a troll that is 35 feet away, with an attack bonus of +10. Regardless of whether she actually hits or damages the troll, she then makes another attack roll, against AC 10. She suffers a -6 penalty from range, and a -4 penalty from the cover the jungle provides. Also, the light fog also gives a 20% miss chance. If her second attack is successful, the volleyball will rebound off whatever it hit and return to Zidi.

There are of course certain exceptions that will prevent a volleyball from returning to its thrower. If the ball lands in water or some other thick substance, it cannot return. Most other examples will be common sense restrictions.



Art by J. L. Jones

**Volleyball** – Small weapon. Cost: 1 gp. Damage: 1d8. Critical: ×2. Range Increment: 10ft. Weight: 3 lb. Type: B. I understand that this is an unrealistically high amount of damage for a volleyball, but it's for the sake of making it a worthwhile weapon. Realistically it should deal 1d3 damage.

**Aquatic (weapon enhancement):** This weapon enhancement modifies a weapon so that it can function as easily in water as it does in normal air. Thrown weapons suffer no penalties to range, and no weapons suffer penalties to attacks. This enhancement does not negate concealment that might arise from murky water. Additionally, if an aquatic weapon strikes a creature with the [fire] or [electricity] descriptor, it deals +1d6 bonus water damage. Finally, these weapons do not suffer damage from rust or pressure.

*Caster Level: 5th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms & Armor, freedom of movement; Market Price: +1 bonus.*

### OPTIONAL RULE: NAKED DEFENSE

One of the popular jokes in pulpy adventure stories is that the fewer clothes you wear, the more invulnerable you are. A good fight will end up tearing your clothes, leaving you wearing only the bare necessities at the end, when you need maximum protection.

To model this, use an alternative of the cover rules, giving a bonus that is the inverse of what equal cover would normally provide. Note that this defense is granted by some intangible, perhaps divine force, and so it doesn't matter whether your opponents find you attractive.

- ◆ If you are covering more than one-half your body, you gain no bonus to AC.
- ◆ One-half cover (a partial bodysuit, or pants and a torn shirt) provides a +2 nudity bonus to AC.
- ◆ One-quarter cover (anything from a tank top and a bikini bottom, to simple swim trunks and a light shirt) provides a +4 nudity bonus to AC.
- ◆ Anything less, such as a bikini and thong, up to and including being totally naked, provides a +6 nudity bonus to AC.
- ◆ If your clothes have been torn to achieve their current level of non-cover, increase the bonus by +1. For instance, if you were wearing a full ballroom dress, but it has been torn to rags that only cover a quarter of your body, you could gain a +5 bonus to AC, instead of +4.
- ◆ If you have decided that your character is Unattractive, then you gain half the above bonus. If you are Ugly, you gain no bonus.

### RULES FOR BEAUTY CONTESTS

Using rules gleaned from *Tournaments, Fairs, & Taverns* we now present simple rules for running a beauty contest. If the contest contains more than a few dozen individuals, or if there are several rounds (such as a local, regional, and then national competition), you should use the more detailed tournament rules in *Tournaments, Fairs, & Taverns*.

#### Beauty Contest

**Target Number/DS:** n/a./Direct

A beauty contest can range from a simple judgment of who is prettier in a line-up, to a detailed and convoluted examination of which competitor best exhibits a pleasant mixture of physical and mental beauty. It is rare for members of opposite sexes to compete in the same contest, at least intentionally. Prizes given to the winner are usually in the form of a title and a token position of mild power.

**Mechanics:** Each beauty contest consists of one or more rounds, each of which tests a different aspect of the contestant. In each category, contestants make different types of checks, against a DC set by the level of quality in the competition. After all the rounds are completed, the contestant with the highest DS is the winner. Alternately, after each round, only the top so-many competitors advance, so only one is left after the final round.

The DC to beat in each round varies by the standards of the judges. In villages and towns, the DC is 5. For larger cities, the DC is a more discerning 10. National competitions often are DC 15 in each round. World-wide or interplanar competitions can have DCs of 25 or higher. In each round, each contestant rolls, and if she beats the DC, she increases her Degree of Success (DS) by however much she exceeded the DC.

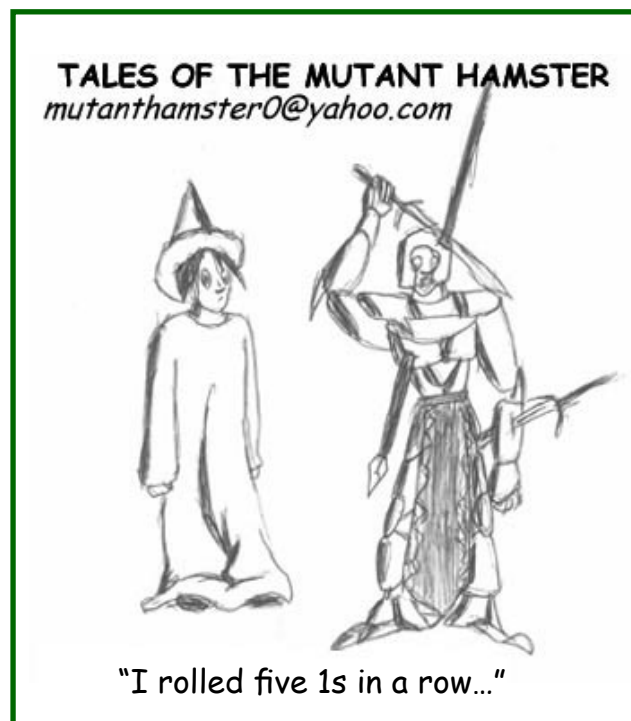
Common criteria include:

- ◆ Physical beauty. There may be several contests of this type, each allowing the contestant to wear different garments. Contestants compare their Beauty score to the DC of the competition, and add the difference to their Degree of Success. Contestants with 5 or more ranks of Perform (modeling) gain a +2 bonus to their Beauty for this round of the competition.
- ◆ Talent. Contestants make Perform checks.
- ◆ Personality. Contestants usually make a Diplomacy check. If they are required to answer topics related to some public matter (politics, science, current events), they gain a +2 bonus if they have 5 or more ranks in the appropriate Knowledge skill.

- ◆ Strength. Usually reserved for male competitions, contestants have to show how much they can lift, with each contestant making a simple Strength check.
- ◆ Martial skill. Common among Elves and Dwarves, this type of competition is usually reserved for later parts of the competition when there are fewer competitors. Either run a standard combat, (usually wrestling, or with mock weapons that deal subdual damage), with the winner gaining +10 DS, or have competitors make checks modified by their base attack bonus.
- ◆ Magical skill. As above, only any combat contests would be limited to magic only, and the simplified version would just require caster level checks.

This has all been a bit of light-hearted fun, and these rules may never come up in play, but still, it never hurts to have them, especially when you want to impress your party's next employer. I leave you with just one request. Please don't be *too* childish with these rules. There's been enough of that already in this article; you don't need to go around abusing these rules.

*Ryan Nock wrote this article when he definitely had more important things to do, but he's always felt that looks and style are some of the things most overlooked among adventurers. He hopes to some day win the Mr. ENWorld pageant, and is looking for a good swimsuit for an Ewok.*



by Michelle A. Brown Nephew

### SWIMMING

A successful Swim (or Strength) check allows a character to swim at 1/4 his normal speed as a move-equivalent action, or 1/2 speed as a full-round action. The Swim skill is rolled each round at DC 10 for calm water, DC 15 for rough water, and DC 20 for stormy water. A failure means the character makes no progress through the water, while missing by 5 or more means the character begins to drown (although drowning is irrelevant for characters affected by a water breathing spell).

Swimming underwater accrues a -1 penalty to the Swim check for each round underwater due to the strain of holding your breath (although this penalty is waived if the character is benefiting from water breathing). A penalty of -1 is also taken for each five pounds of gear, instead of an armor check penalty. Fatigue damage is calculated every hour that a character swims; make a Swim check against DC 20 and take 1d6 points of subdual damage on a failed roll.

Fast-moving water or currents deal 1d3 subdual damage per round on a successful Swim or Strength check (DC 15). Impacting with things such as rocks causes 1d6 normal damage. On a failed check, the character makes another check to keep from going under.

### DEEP WATER

Deep water also causes problems due to the increase in pressure. For every 33.9 feet of depth, one additional atmosphere of pressure (14.7 psi) is felt. This means that at a depth of 200 feet, the pressure would be 87 psi. Water pressure damage can be accounted for by applying 1d6 points of damage per minute for every 100 feet below the surface a character is swimming. A Fortitude save of DC 15, +1 for each previous check, staves off the damage.

Cold water brings the danger of hypothermia with it. When swimming in cold water, characters take 1d6 points of subdual damage per minute of exposure.

### HOLDING YOUR BREATH AND DROWNING

A character can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to twice his Constitution score in non-strenuous circumstances. Then the character starts making Constitution checks every round; the DC starts at 10 and increases by 1 each time. When the check is failed, he begins to drown: the character first falls unconscious (0 HP), next drops to -1 HP and is dying in the second round, and in the third round drowns. (Drowning naturally will be made irrelevant by water breathing.)

### PERCEPTIONS UNDER WATER

Deep water poses problems due to differences in visibility and in the speed of sound. Sunlight cannot penetrate water at all past a depth of 650 feet, and even at a depth of a twenty feet the world becomes very dim as particulates in the water diffuse the light. Non-burning lighting devices, such as sunrods or spells that create light, will come in handy, as even characters with low-light vision will have trouble seeing in the near complete darkness of deep water. Ranges relating to light or vision should be halved to compensate for this difference: for example, sunrods only penetrate to a 15-foot radius instead of their normal 30 feet; Spot checks experience a -1 penalty per five feet of distance rather than the typical ten feet; Search checks must also be within five feet of the object rather than the normal ten feet.

Sound travels four times as fast in water as in air; this makes it hard to tell the direction of noises, and makes underwater explosions especially dangerous due to hydrostatic shock from the concussion waves. At the GM's discretion, the sonic effect of explosions may be increased significantly; for example, a thunderstone might require a Fortitude save of DC 20 rather than its normal DC 15, and may cause physical damage of 1d4 or more.

#### TALES OF THE MUTANT HAMSTER *mutanthamster0@yahoo.com*



Also, Listen rolls should experience a +4 bonus to hear sounds, but a -4 penalty to locate their source due to directional ambiguities. Be sure to take this bonus into consideration when figuring Move Silently checks

## GM'S UNDERWATER CHECKLIST

The following streamlined checklist can be used when maneuvering underwater with water breathing, to make underwater combat possible.

### *Movement*

Allow characters to swim at 1/2 speed without making Swim or Strength checks during normal circumstances. Only require Swim rolls each round during stressful situations (*i.e.*, combat), when PCs can move at 1/4 their normal speed as a move-equivalent action, or 1/2 speed as a full-round action. However, if combat would likely cause turbulent water you may require a DC 15 roll. A failure means the PC makes no progress through the water.

### *Weapons*

Bludgeoning weapons can be given a -6 attack penalty to factor in the water's resistance; slashing weapons experience a -3 penalty, while Piercing weapons hit as normal. For ranged weapons such as bows and javelins, their effective range is halved when used underwater. Slings do not function underwater, and they and some other weapons may be damaged by prolonged exposure to the water.

### *Perceptions*

Ranges relating to light or vision should be halved (Spot checks experience a -1 penalty per five feet of distance rather than the typical ten feet; Search checks must also be within five feet of the object rather than the normal ten feet). The sonic effect of explosions may be increased significantly and cause physical damage. Listen rolls should experience a +4 bonus to hear sounds, but a -4 penalty to locate their source due to directional ambiguities.



# ELL

## and the DREAMSCAPE of AVA DORMO

Goddess of Night  
Keeper of Dreams

Queen of Sleep  
The Dark Shield

By Ryan Nock

with apologies to the players in "Sagiro's Story Hour"

Although many people fear Ell, and mistake her for a Goddess of Death, She is actually a protector of sleeping folk, and it is She who restores health during sleep. Guardian of the dream realm of Ava Dormo, Ell supports a unique and mysterious priesthood, based upon the power of dreams – and the knowledge, secrets, and darkness they contain.

Clerics of Ell must become completely nocturnal, and tend to avoid direct sunlight. Ellish priestesses will only offer succor to those who ask, and do not volunteer their aid. Churches of Ell are only open for services and visitors between sundown and sunrise; during the day, all windows are shuttered, and during the night they are flung wide.

### Dogma

Ell does not meddle much in the affairs of the material plane, only intervening if one of her priestesses or temples is threatened, and then only by providing guidance, or alerting other priestesses. To her, however, the dreamscape of Ava Dormo is a holy place, to be protected and kept safe for the casual dreamers of the world. Ell has no primary active goal or desire, but rather is more concerned with maintaining the current state of affairs in the dream realm. Ell encourages her worshippers to help those who ask for aid, just as she protects those who wander into the dreamscape.

### Clergy and Temples

Though there are many small temples devoted to Ell, the main church of Ell lies in Kallor, a city cloaked in perpetual twilight. There, the Church of Ell is always open to those who wish to pray or seek solace. In most cities, however, Ell is less well-liked, often perceived as a force of death. Though the belief is wholly false, the Ellish priests do not go to great lengths to dispel it. Their appearance might also be a contributing factor to the public's distaste for them. The average Ellish priestess is dark-haired, dressed in dark clothes, and given to avoid bright lights and daytime hours. Overall, the clergy is a grim sight to those who don't know better. There is supposedly one notable Ellish priestess that is white-haired – perhaps even an albino – but she is the exception.

Ellish priestesses are trained to dreamwalk, entering the dreamscape of Ava Dormo while they sleep. Though anyone can theoretically learn to enter Ava Dormo, the sisters of Ell are the only large group to practice it regularly. Distant, traveling priestesses can enter the dreamscape and speak with the main church relatively easily, helping followers of Ell find the guidance they need in their missions. Occasionally, a dreamwalking priestess may come across a mundane dreamer who has wandered into Ava Dormo, but,

ELL



**Alignment:**

*True Neutral*

**Worshippers:**

*Dreamwalkers, Late-risers*

**Domains:**

*Darkness, Dreamscape,  
Dreamwalking, Protection*

**Favored Weapon:**

*Morningstar*

**Portfolio:**

*Concealment, Dreams,  
Night, Peaceful sleep*

**Symbol:**

*A black inverted triangle.*

like in the physical world, they are only to offer help if asked. Otherwise, sisters of Ell consider it sacrilegious to intervene in their goddess's duty to protect dreamers. It would be practically heretical, though not unheard of – for an Ellish priestess to abuse her powers and give nightmares to normal dreamers, unless they are threats to the priesthood.

Though most priestesses of Ell are not trained to fight, there are some who train primarily for defending the clergy through combat. A priestess who is called to this task is known as a Shield of Ell, and though they are respected by their fellow priestesses, Shields are usually feel less a part of the rest of the priesthood, since their skills are rarely useful in Ell's main venue, Ava Dormo. However, in the rare instances where physical foes have threatened the dreamscape, Shields of Ell have more than proven their worth.

## Rites and Rituals

All Ellish rituals are performed in gloom or darkness, with less light implying a holier occasion. The main rites for an Ellish priestess are that of the first dreamwalking, the celebrations of eclipses, and last rites, when the spirit passes from the mortal body and thus overcomes the need for dreams. In keeping with Ell's triangular holy symbol, most rituals involve three priestesses, or have three stages. Unlike many religions, there is very little lighting of flames, and bringing light into one of these ceremonies is considered offensive. However, sunset prayers typically involve all praying priestesses bringing a candle, kneeling, and meditating. Once they complete their private prayers, they snuff the candle's flame, and whisper a standard prayer for peaceful sleep. It is common practice for none of the priestesses to leave the prayer until the last light has been extinguished.

## Mythography

The myth of the dreamscape affects daily life for the average person little, except for the occasional curse, hoping Ell gives another person bad dreams. Children are sometimes warned that nightmares are Ell's punishments for disobeying their parents, though this is more than likely false, since Ell cares little for how children grow up. Poets also commonly use Ava Dormo to represent a preordained meeting, since supposedly people can meet in the dreamscape long before they ever encounter each other in real life. Ellish priestesses know, however, that such tales are contrived, since it is rare for people to accidentally end up in the dreamscape.

In those places Ell is favored, night time is the favored time for activities. Farmers who adopt nocturnal habits can avoid the heat of the sun while working their fields, and be awake to fend off wild animals that threaten their herds. Shopkeepers and tavern owners often hire workers for shifts throughout the day, making some parts of the city available at any time of day or night. Most importantly, though, the night helps people protect their secrets. It is said that Ell blesses those that know when to protect others by withholding the truth, and that she sends nightmares to those who keep trifle secrets.

## Legends

According to legend, a demon of light once threatened a nation of people, burning them with its heat. When the people cried out for help, Ell cast out a cloak of darkness, protecting the people from the demon's heat, and blinding the monster so it could not pursue. Scooping the people up in her cloak, she carried them to a safe haven, a city of eternal twilight, where they would be protected if the demon regained his sight and ever sought them again.

However, the protection of Ell goes both ways. Several legendary villains have been thwarted by Ellish priestesses, and banished to wander bleak, sequestered sections of Ava Dormo, never able to return to their bodies. Ell keeps these tormented souls from wandering into the dreams of the innocent, and sets guardians to protect the hidden entrances to these demiplanes, to make sure they never escape.

The origins of Ava Dormo are unknown. Some believe that Ell is Ava Dormo, while those who distrust the sisters of Ell think that Ava Dormo is actually the realm of nightmares, and that people who wander there die of fright. The motif most commonly recalled, however, is that of an ancient, unnamed prophet, who wrote that everyone who dreams leaves a little of themselves in the world, and that eventually, this cast-off dreamstuff formed Ava Dormo. This, it is said, explains why so many people have similar dreams – in their sleep, they actually pass through pieces of the dreams of others.

A popular folk tale tells of an Ellish priestess named Gleam who was traveling through the dreaming to deliver urgent news to her temple, when she came upon a man, lost and crying for help, saying he was being pursued by a vicious monster. The priestess believed she recognized the man from a dream of her own, where she had fallen in love and eventually married the man. Hoping to protect this man from the monster pursuing him, Gleam tried to take him to her temple on

Ava Dormo. Three times the monster caught up with them, and Gleam fought it off, growing more and more wounded.

When they finally made it to the temple, she called for the priestesses to give them protection, but the priestesses refused to help, saying that they could not interfere in the dream of another. Just then, the monster again returned, and Gleam realized that the man she had rescued was in fact part of the dream of the monster – the monster was simply dreaming that it was hunting. Weakened and distraught that the man she loved was about to die, Gleam killed the monster, expending the last of her strength in the process. Dying, she turned to look upon the man she had saved, only to see him fading away. She cried out for Ell to help her, and in forgiveness, Ell turned her into a dream as well. Together, they would exist forever in Ava Dormo, guiding romantic hearts to find each other.

## Plot Hooks

The religion of Ell may not fit easily into every campaign, but you might use its themes (and the rules below) in short adventures, possibly elaborating more if the players enjoy the dreamscape.

\* **Guardians' Call:** While the party is sleeping, or perhaps if they are all somehow affected by a spell that puts them to sleep, they are all led by the image of an aged priestess, who guides them to Ava Dormo. There they see dark-robed women traveling in the distance, all headed in the same direction. If the party travels in the opposite direction, they encounter nightmare beasts that try to kill them. If they follow the priestesses, they arrive at a bleak shrine to Ell, where an aged priestess resides, eternally in the dreamscape. This woman, identical to the one that guided them into the dreaming, was injured in a recent attack by the nightmare monsters, who wish to stop her from revealing some revelation she has had, and while the priestesses attempt to revive the dying seer, the party must defend the temple from the nightmare horde.

\* **Night Terrors:** A rich insomniac hires the party to defend him in his dreams. With the help of an Ellish priestess, the party accompanies him into his dream, where they must fight off the terrible images that assault him. But then, in the middle of a fight, the Ellish priestess vanishes, leaving them with no guide back. Their panicked employer keeps trying to wake up, but if he does, will it strand the party without him?

\* **Sweet Dreams:** Several wealthy merchants dealing in magic items have been robbed recently, their houses burglarized while they slept. Mysteriously, all recall having wonderfully happy dreams the night they were robbed, so good that they don't really begrudge the loss of thousands of gold pieces worth of magic. How are the crimes connected, what is the pattern of the items stolen, and where will the thieves strike next? Even more confusing, rumor says that an Ellish priestess was recently banned from her church, but the party's cleric was approached by a mysterious woman the night of the second robbery, saying she could help them.

\* **Midnight Lotus:** Research tells the party that to create a magic item they need, they must acquire a midnight lotus, but the flower has been extinct for centuries. However, it was once the most-loved flower of an ancient empress, whose empire has since been abandoned. Though the flower might not exist in this world, perhaps it still thrives in the palace of the empress, a memory of which persists on Ava Dormo. When they ask for the help of the church of Ell, they are initially refused, on the grounds that the palace is forbidden. But that's not likely to stop the party from going after the flower.

# Ava Dormo

Ava Dormo is a reflection of the real world, covered by lonely buildings and landscapes nearly identical to the real world, but only populated by those trained in dreamwalking, and those few normal dreamers who find themselves on the Dreamscape. Ava Dormo is perpetually gloomy, as if lit by an invisible full moon.

A traveler in Ava Dormo will recognize most of what she sees, except in places where an older memory of a site is very powerful. Ancient ruins or magical places can still be found in Ava Dormo even centuries after they are destroyed in the real world. Some large plants are reflected into Ava Dormo (usually forests), and occasionally sleeping animals will dream themselves there, but few people ever enter by accident.

Time flows in Ava Dormo at the same rate that it does in the real world, and a sleeper dreamwalking in the realm of Ell will benefit as though she had slept normally. Experienced dreamwalkers often find themselves living more active lives in Ava Dormo while their bodies sleep.

## Ava Dormo and Normal Dreams

An average dreamer does not enter Ava Dormo. His dreams are primarily the purview of his own mind. Sometimes, however, bits of normal dreams spontaneously pass onto Ava Dormo. People in normal dreams cannot consciously enter Ava Dormo, but trained dreamwalkers on Ava Dormo can choose to enter a more passive dreaming state.

### Entering Ava Dormo

When a person enters Ava Dormo, either willingly or by accident, his dream self is identical to that of his physical body, complete with injuries and fatigue. He is dressed as he usually thinks of himself on casual occasions; the typical town guard will still enter Ava Dormo in normal clothes, not his uniform, while a member of a large army would appear in his normal battle armor. Cosmetic changes to the dreamwalker's physical body might not manifest in the dream self if he is not used to them. A recent change in hairstyle or a new scar will usually not appear on the dreamwalker's body unless the person himself is distinctly aware of the change.

One exception to this is magical items. Any items your dreamself possesses are devoid of magical ability unless you somehow enchant them while in the dreamscape. The primary exception to this is a True Dreamwalker using the Transubstantiation ability (see below).

The other exception is if you travel physically to Ava Dormo, such as with a spell like *plane shift*. Using such a spell, you would appear in your actual garb, with your actual equipment. Though you might be better equipped, this form of travel is not without its drawback. Any damage you take on the dreamscape would be real damage, since it is being dealt to your physical body instead of a dream form. See Combat in Ava Dormo, below, for more information.

### Travel through the Dreamscape

A dreamwalker can travel in two different ways through the dreamscape. The simplest way is to walk (fly, swim, burrow, etc.), covering ground at the same rate as in reality. Trained dreamwalkers, and occasionally wild dreamers, can travel much faster. By spending a full round concentrating and visualizing a destination, a dreamwalker can travel to anywhere on Ava Dormo,



Art by Nick Infanti

passing through a hazy imitation of the real landscape, compressed to a hundredth of its normal distance. Forests become small groves, inland seas become lakes, and a range of mountains become a few steep hills. Thus, a trained dreamwalker could travel a hundred miles of land, but only perceive one mile of actual terrain. Elish priests have established strongholds in the dreamscape that act as safe havens for travelers through Ava Dormo. These places can be easily reached by any members of the church.

## Waking Up

A lost dreamer who finds his way into Ava Dormo will always find his way out before he awakens, unless someone else in the dreamscape interferes with him. Followers of Ell claim that their goddess's blessing keeps safe those who find their way to her, believing that those dreamers arrive for a reason. They will not help unless the dreamer specifically asks.

Someone who is consciously capable of entering Ava Dormo can leave at any time by spending a full round concentrating. If her dreamself's concentration is disrupted, however, she will have to try again. For the purposes of a Concentration check, attempting to wake up is the equivalent of a 0th-level spell.

A dreamer can be awakened from Ava Dormo the same way she can be awakened normally, such as by injury, loud noises, or jostling. Otherwise, though, the dreamer has no perception of the outside world while she sleeps.

## Learning to Dreamwalk

All Elish priestesses have the ability to dreamwalk, having learned the art for years while in the temple. The uninitiated can learn the basics of dreamwalking over the course of one night, if they have the assistance of an Elish cleric or another trained dreamwalker. This modicum of training lets them consciously enter Ava Dormo when they sleep, if they are assisted by a trained dreamwalker. A single trained dreamwalker can assist up to one other dreamer per level, all of whom must be within 10 feet of her when they fall asleep and enter Ava Dormo.

Once on Ava Dormo, beginner dreamwalkers act just like they were untrained. However, if they are within 30 feet of a friendly trained dreamwalker, they can take advantage of the increased rate of movement on the dreamscape, and can exit the dreamscape at will. Without the aid of a dreamwalker, however, they simply have to wait to wake up naturally.

It takes at least a year of training – traveling to Ava Dormo at least once a week – to be considered a trained dreamwalker. This lets you gain the increased rates of movement and ability to awaken at will, and to assist dreamwalkers who are just learning.

Fully trained priestesses of Ell have a few more minor tricks they can perform. A dreamwalker with at least 9 years of experience can choose a single specific costume, that they can decide to wear when they enter the dreamscape. For Elish priestesses, this is usually their clerical robes, though some, devoted to defending the temples, choose their armor. A single dreamwalker can only have trained for one such costume, giving her the option of wearing either her casual clothes, or her chosen costume.

Additionally, an Elish priestess with at least 9 years of experience can, by touching a sleeping person and going to sleep herself, watch that person's dreams. She cannot directly interact with the person, and is perceived as any other part of the dream, but she can alter the person's dream somewhat. If the person is fighting and is disarmed, the priestess could toss one of her own weapons to her comrade, which he could use as if it were naturally part of his dream. Except in rare circumstances, any such exchanged items are not actually used up or damaged, unless a True Dreamwalker with the Scars of Sleep ability (detailed below) destroys it. Using this power on unwilling individuals, however, is considered a vile act by most Elish priestesses.

More devoted dreamwalkers can choose to take the True Dreamwalker prestige class to hone and master their powers on the dreamscape.

## Combat in Ava Dormo

Though trained dreamwalkers can travel at the equivalent of hundreds of miles of hour across the dreamscape, all space seems compressed to them, so foes can be seen from a great distance. Travel at such high speeds requires concentration, and combat – or threat of combat – disrupts such concentration. Once someone makes a threatening move against you, your speed slows to a normal rate, and the landscape around you comes into clearer focus. Regardless of your actual distance at high speeds, you and your foe maintain the same relative distance, allowing your interaction to continue without interruption. However, if hostilities stop for at least a minute, one member of the group may try to flee, or at least move to another, more beneficial position. Thus, in a hit-and-run chase, a fight on Ava Dormo might cross through many different types of terrain.

A person's dreamself is much like her real body, and thus can fight and be injured just as in reality. Any damage a person receives in Ava Dormo, however, has no effect on her real body. If a dreamwalker is reduced to 0 hit points in Ava Dormo, however, she immediately awakens and is stunned for 1d4 minutes. She receives no benefit for any sleep she might have had prior to the jolting awakening, and is unable to get to sleep again for at least 8 hours.

If you cast spells or use exceptional, spell-like, or supernatural abilities in Ava Dormo, they count against your normal daily limit when you wake up. Similarly, if you use charged magical items, the charges are actually expended, even when you wake up (remember, though, that normal dreamwalkers cannot bring magical items into the dreamscape). Any physical damage to objects occurs only in the dream realm, and does not carry over to the waking world. The exception to this is a True Dreamwalker with the Scars of Sleep ability (detailed below).

If you physically enter Ava Dormo, such as with a *plane shift* spell, you are present in your actual body, not your dream form. Thus, any damage dealt to you is always real. If you are reduced to 0 hit points, you pass out, just as you would normally. If you reach -10 hit points, you die, and your soul will usually turn into a monster unless your body is returned to the material plane.

## Elish Clerics

Elish clerics are all female, usually human. Most are dark-haired, and shun the light. Thus, when exposed to a sudden flash of bright light, they are blinded for one round. Thereafter, they suffer a -1 penalty to all ability checks, skill checks, attack and damage rolls while in bright light.

## Darkness Domain

**Granted Power:** Free Blind-fight feat.

**Domain Spells:**

- 1 Endure Elements
- 2 Chill Metal
- 3 Searing Light (Searing Darkness)\*
- 4 Fire Shield (Shield of Darkness)\*
- 5 Flame Strike (Shadowstrike)\*
- 6 Fire Seeds (Chill Seeds)\*
- 7 Sunbeam (Nightbeam)\*
- 8 Sunburst (Shadowburst)\*
- 9 Shield of Night\*\*

## Dreamscape Domain

**Granted Power:** Protective Sleep – 1/day, you can put a willing target into a deep slumber with your touch. While sleeping, no harm can come unto the target by physical or magical means. This effect lasts for 15 minutes, or until you dispel it as a standard action.

**Domain Spells:**

- 1 Thought Capture\*\*
- 2 Detect Thoughts
- 3 Memory Read\*\*
- 4 R's Telepathic Bond
- 5 Nightmare
- 6 Mind Fog
- 7 Greater Scrying
- 8 Vision
- 9 Weird

## Dreamwalking Domain

**Granted Power:** Cloak of Night – 1/day you can turn up to 1 willing creature/level invisible, lasting for 2 minutes/level. Affected creatures must stay within 15 feet of you or become invisible. If anyone in the group attacks, everyone becomes visible. This ability can only be used outdoors, in area no brighter than twilight.

**Domain Spells:**

- 1 Perpetual Gloom\*\*
- 2 Darkness
- 3 Deeper Darkness
- 4 Dimensional Anchor
- 5 Shadow Conjuration
- 6 Shadow Evocation
- 7 Shades
- 8 Shadow Walk
- 9 Tormented Dream\*\*

\* *These spells deal cold damage instead of fire damage, and visually appear as beams, lines, or flames made of shadow and darkness.*

\*\**These spells are detailed at the end of the article.*

**Memory Read**

Divination

**Level:** Dreamscape 3

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** One action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** Creatures touched

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell allows the caster to read the memory of a single subject. The caster experiences the memory with the same intensity of the subject. The time required to view a memory is much less than the time the actual event lasted. Thus, a caster can view the memory of an event that lasted for an hour in a single minute. The subject experiences the memory at the same time the caster reads it.

The subject must have an Intelligence score of 5 or more and must remain in contact with the caster throughout the time it takes to read the desired memory. This spell can be cast on unconscious, sleeping, *held*, or *paralyzed* creatures.

The subject receives a saving throw when the spell is cast (this saving throw is allowed even if the subject is asleep or otherwise unaware of the attempt). In addition, if the memory that the caster wants to view concerns something that the subject wants to keep secret, or is something the subject is trying to suppress, the subject receives a +5 bonus to the saving throw. If the memory the caster wishes to view is more than six months old, the subject receives a second saving throw, with bonuses depending on the age of the memory as follows:

*Age of Memory*

6-12 months: no bonus

1-4 years: +1 bonus

5+ years: +3 bonus

If the subject succeeds at either of these saving throws, the spell fails.

This spell creates a physical drain on the caster, causing her to take 1d3 points of temporary Constitution damage. The spell cannot be cast again until the caster's Constitution is restored.

*Nap*

Enchantment

**Level:** Clr 0

**Components:** S

**Casting Time:** Free action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** Creatures touched

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

Any willing creature you touch (up to 8 creatures with a single casting) falls asleep as though he had naturally drifted off. If this spell is used while the creature is still standing, the resulting fall to the floor will usually jar the person awake again. If the caster uses this spell on herself, and has the Dreamwalking feat, she can enter the Dreamscape in this manner.

Excessive use of this spell will cause the touched person to nap for a few moments before his body awakens him because it is not actually tired. Additionally, any creature affected by this spell can be awakened as normal.

*Perpetual Gloom*

Evocation

**Level:** Clr 1, Dreamwalking 1, Sor/Wiz 1

**Components:** V, M/DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** Object touched

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell causes the object touched to radiate mild gloom, like a *darkness* spell. This is more mundane darkness, equivalent to that on a moonless, overcast night, or in a cave. It suppresses natural sunlight, but magical or artificial light sources like torches or lanterns still provide illumination, though only at half their normal radius. Creatures with darkvision can see through this gloom easily.

*Perpetual gloom* counters and dispels *light*, and a normal *light* spell counters and dispels *perpetual gloom*, leaving the natural prevailing lighting conditions. *Ar cane Material Component:* A 3" strip of black fabric.

*Shield of Night*

Abjuration

**Level:** Darkness 9

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** 10 ft

**Effect:** 10-ft.-radius sphere centered on you

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Spell Resistance:** See text

Like an inky black *prismatic sphere*, the *shield of night* conjures an opaque globe that protects you from all forms of attack. To most observers, the shield appears to be a smooth black surface, wholly impenetrable to light, but those with the Dreamwalking feat, and the caster, can see through the barrier clearly, perceiving it merely as a translucent surface of dark clouds, crossed with faint flickering lines of triangular patterns. Even then, you gain one-half concealment (20% miss chance) against all attacks from those outside the shield.

Any creature with fewer than 8 HD that is within 20 feet of the sphere falls asleep for 2d4 x 10 minutes, as with the *sleep* spell.

Typically, only the upper hemisphere of the globe will exist, since you are at the center of the sphere, so the lower half is usually excluded by the floor surface you are standing on. The shield is immobile, but you may pass through and stand by it without harm. However, when you're inside it, the shield blocks any attempt to project something through the shield (including spells). Other creatures who attempt to attack you or pass through suffer the effects listed below, one at a time.

There are two layers of the shield, each of which contains three magical effects (the two layers are less than a foot apart, physically). The outer layer can be destroyed by negating all three of its magical effects. The table below states what spells are needed to negate each effect. Once the outer layer is destroyed, the inner layer can be destroyed in the same way, by negating all three of its magical components. The inner layer cannot be affected until the outer layer is destroyed.

The same effects that can destroy a *prismatic sphere* can destroy a *shield of night*, including a *rod of cancellation* or a *Mord's disjunction*. An *antimagic field* will not affect a *shield of night*. Spell resistance is effective against a *shield of night*, but the caster level check must be made against each magical effect.

**TABLE: *Shield of Night* effects**

Layer	Spell Effect	Negated by
Outer	Stops the crossing of inanimate objects. Deals 80 points of cold damage (Reflex half).	<i>detect thoughts</i>
Outer	Stops the crossing of living creatures. Puts creatures to sleep for 2d4x10 minutes (Will negates).	<i>nightmare</i>
Outer	Stops the crossing of undead creatures. Destroys undead (Fortitude partial, reduces this to 30 points of damage).	<i>dispel magic</i>
Inner	Stops all spells, spell-like effects, and supernatural abilities. Creatures driven insane, as insanity (Will negates).	<i>vision</i>
Inner	Stops all gasses, liquids, and breath weapons. Creatures destroyed, as destruction (Fortitude partial).	<i>healing circle</i>
Inner	Stops dimensional travel into the sphere's area on coexistent planes, such as the ethereal or Ava Dormo. Creatures and souls sent to a demiplane within Ava Dormo, inaccessible to normal dreamwalkers (Will negates).	<i>sunbeam</i>

### *Thought Capture*

Divination

**Level:** Dreamscape 1

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

The caster's thoughts mingle with those that have been absorbed by the local area. The cleric can sense strong thoughts and emotions and can sometimes even see momentary visions of creatures who died of suffered some powerful emotion in the immediate vicinity. While the thoughts picked up tend to be the more emotional ones left in a given location, there is some chance that any thought might be picked up instead.

A cleric can cast this spell multiple times in the same location, possibly picking up additional thoughts (and possibly picking up the same one repeatedly.) It is up to the game master's discretion to decide the nature of the thought that is sensed by this spell. As a guideline, the character may roll a caster level check against DC 15. If successful, she will usually pick up a more useful or emotional thought (if such a thought actually occurred in the location). The caster can glean the nature of the thought even if she does not share a language with the thinker. However, thoughts left by creatures that think in unusual ways might leave thoughts that are difficult to decipher.

The game master is encouraged to use this spell to provide players with important background information, or to add texture to a campaign world. The information provided might be a dream, an image, a wholly formed sentence, a feeling or emotion, or even a cryptic symbol or riddl.

### *Tormented Dream*

Necromancy

**Level:** Dreamwalking 9

**Components:** V, S, DF

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Close (25 ft + 5 ft/2 levels)

**Target:** One creature

**Duration:** See text

**Saving Throw:** Will partial

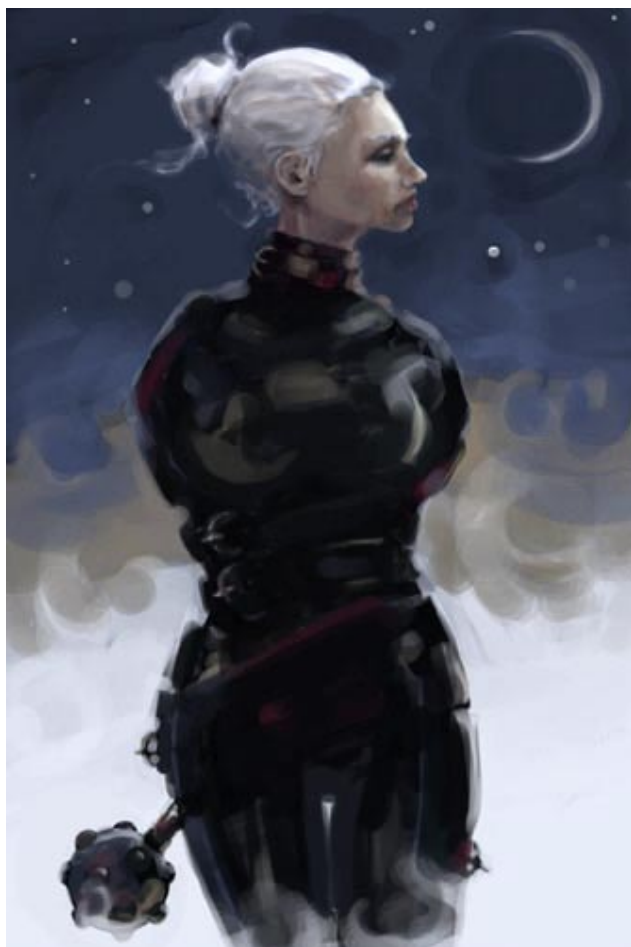
**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Drawing energy from the dreamscape, you send semi-tangible nightmare creatures that rend the target to pieces – even incorporeal creatures – killing it in a few agonizing seconds unless it succeeds a Will save. Additionally, you may choose to banish the target's soul (if it has one) to a demiplane in Ava Dormo, inaccessible to normal dreamwalkers. This prevents the target



from being *raised* or *resurrected*, unless the demiplane is located and the victim's soul retrieved. To locate the demiplane, searchers must travel to Ava Dormo, then cast *discern location*. There are almost always dreamscape guardians present near the entrances to these demi-planes, making sure that those banished can never be retrieved.

If the save is successful, the target takes only 4d8+15 damage, and you cannot banish its soul.



Art by Dave Hendee

## True Dreamwalker

The True Dreamwalker has become a mistress of dreams, attuning herself to be at home in Ell's realm of Ava Dormo. Though all Ellish priestesses are trained to enter, travel, and leave Ava Dormo, True Dreamwalkers have greater control, able to harness the dreamscape to protect lost dream travelers, or to attack those who threaten Ellish temples on Ava Dormo. The high church of Ell trains those priestesses who show the most mastery of the dreamscape to become True Dreamwalkers, most of whom adopt positions as guardians of dreamscape temples.

Not all True Dreamwalkers are Ellish devotees, however. In the past, a few rogue dreamwalkers began training students to travel Ava Dormo without the accompanying precepts of Ell. These rogue dreamwalkers seek to use the dreamscape to their advantage, rather than to protect the holiness that is dreaming. Other, older groups are also rumored to exist, though their goals are even more obscure than those of the rogues.

In general, though, True Dreamwalkers come from the ranks of Ell's priestesses. The few Shields of Ell that become True Dreamwalkers, though exceedingly rare, are the stuff that warrior's nightmares are made of.

**Hit Die:** d8.

### REQUIREMENTS

**Feat:** Blind-fight

**Diplomacy:** 3 ranks.

**Knowledge (religion):** 12 ranks.

**Spellcraft:** 3 ranks.

**Scry:** 8 ranks.

**Sense Motive:** 2 ranks.

**Special:** The ability to dreamwalk without assistance.

TABLE: *True Dreamwalker*

CLASS LEVEL	BAB	FORT. SAVE	REF. SAVE	WILL SAVE	SPECIAL	SPELLCASTING
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Dreamscape Combat (+1), Dreamstuff, Transubstantiate	
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Transubstantiate (companions)	+1 level of existing class
3	+2	+1	+1	+3	Dreamscape Combat (+2), Refreshing Dream	
4	+3	+1	+1	+4	Scars of Sleep (subdual)	+1 level of existing class
5	+3	+1	+1	+4	Dreamscape Combat (+3)	
6	+4	+2	+2	+5	Dreamer's Protection	+1 level of existing class
7	+5	+2	+2	+5	Dreamscape Combat (+4), Scars of Sleep (real)	
8	+6	+2	+2	+6	Dreamsight	+1 level of existing class
9	+6	+3	+3	+6	Dreamscape Combat (+5), Expel	
10	+7	+3	+3	+7	Ell's Grasp	+1 level of existing class

**CLASS SKILLS**

The True Dreamwalker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int). 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 True Dreamwalker prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** A True Dreamwalker gains no weapon or armor proficiencies.

**Spellcasting:** For the purposes of determining spells per day, caster level, and (for spontaneous spellcasters) spells known, whenever a level of True Dreamwalker grants the ability "+1 level of existing class," the character adds 1 effective level to one of her previous spellcasting classes.

If the Dreamwalker of Ell was not previously a member of a spellcasting class, she gains the ability to cast spells as a cleric, usually of Ell (though some other gods might sponsor a True Dreamwalker).

**Dreamscape Combat (Su):** A True Dreamwalker has learned how to use her control of the Dreamscape to help her protect herself and those she defends. When fighting in Ava Dormo, she adds a bonus to her armor class, Fortitude, and Reflex saves. The amount of the bonus is listed in the table above.

**Transubstantiate (Su):** Most dreamwalkers arrive with only mundane equipment that they normally perceive themselves in. Even trained Ellish priestesses cannot bring magical equipment with them into Ava Dormo. However, when a True Dreamwalker enters Ava Dormo, she may bring along any gear and clothing she is wearing in the real world, and any unattended object she is touching. She also may make any sort of slight cosmetic change she wishes to her appearance, such as clearing away grime from the road or changing the cut or color of her clothing somewhat. Note that the dreamwalker does not physically disappear, nor any of her gear.

At 2nd level the True Dreamwalker can use this ability on dreamwalkers that she assists into Ava Dormo. She can affect a maximum number of extra travelers equal to her class level. Thus, Morningstar, a Cleric 8/True Dreamwalker 2 could bring up to nine companions, two of which would be fully equipped.

**Dreamstuff (Sp):** At 2nd level, a True Dreamwalker gains the spell-like ability to spontaneously create objects in the dreamscape. This ability functions as *major crea-*

*tion* cast at the character's caster level, except that it can be used as a full-round action. This ability, which creates up to 1 cubic foot of material per caster level, can be used thrice per day, and can only be used to create objects the Dreamwalker has previously seen and touched. The created object persists for as long as the True Dreamwalker remains on Ava Dormo.

**Refreshing Dream (Su):** Normally when a character enters Ava Dormo, she arrives with all her stats and hit points in the same state as when she went to sleep. By 3rd level, however, a True Dreamwalker has learned that the dreamself is just a reflection of one's self image, an image that can be controlled. Thus, starting at 3rd level, whenever a Dreamwalker of Ell enters Ava Dormo she arrives at full hit points and with all ability score damage healed. This healing is not real; when she awakens she will have the same injuries as when she entered the dreamscape.

**Scars of Sleep (Su):** Whenever a True Dreamwalker deals damage to a creature in the dreamscape, in addition to injuring that creature's dream form, the creature's real body takes an equal amount of subdual damage. This is a supernatural ability. At 7th level, this ability strengthens, dealing real damage to the target's physical body.

**Dreamer's Protection (Su):** Starting at 6th level, a True Dreamwalker is able to keep at least passing awareness of her physical self while in Ava Dormo. While sleeping, if the Dreamwalker is in the dreamscape, she is aware of anyone touching her physical body or speaking to her, as can discern the person and what he or she is saying. Additionally, she can make Listen checks to notice anyone trying to sneak up on her.

If the True Dreamwalker wishes to awaken from the Dreamscape, such as if she hears someone ready to ambush her, or if a friend needs her aid, she can awaken and come to her feet as a free action. She will be perfectly awake and able to defend herself.

**Dream Sight (Su):** Once per day, a True Dreamwalker of 8th level or higher can see into the real world from her location in Ava Dormo. By concentrating, she can see the real world instead of the dreamscape of Ava Dormo. While using this ability, the Dreamwalker can see in the real world as though she had Darkvision 90, watching for as long as she concentrates.

**Expel (Su):** A 9th-level True Dreamwalker can expel opponents from Ava Dormo. If the Dreamwalker has the ability to channel positive or negative energy (such as to turn or rebuke undead), she can exchange one turning/rebuking attempt to try to expel one or more people from Ava Dormo. She adds her level as a True Dreamwalker to her cleric or paladin levels for the purpose of determining turning damage and how powerful a character she can expel.

If she cannot channel positive or negative energy from an existing class, the Dreamwalker can use this ability once per day, turning as would a 5th level Cleric.

This ability affects those closest to the Dreamwalker first, has a range of 60 feet, and does not affect those whom she doesn't wish to expel. If the turning damage is sufficient, and the target has few enough hit dice to be affected, its dreamform vanishes, and the target wakes up, suffering the same effects as if their dreamform had been reduced to 0 hit points (stunned, can't sleep, etc.).

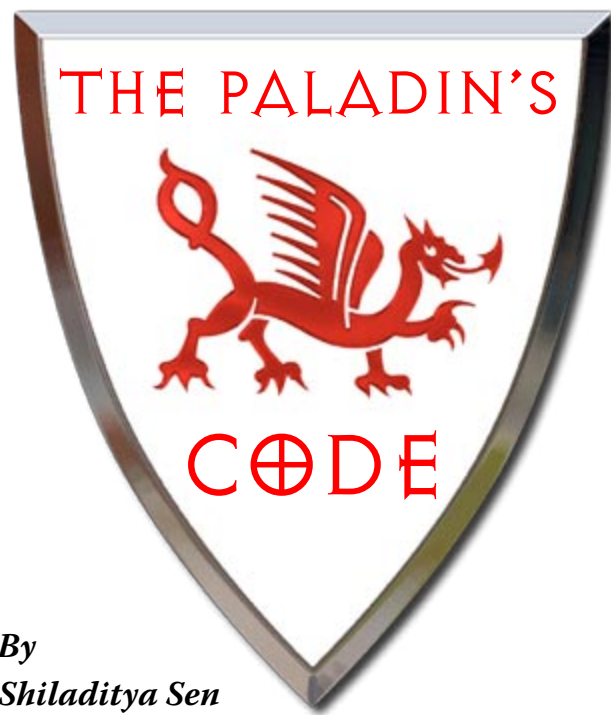
**Ell's Grasp (Su):** A 10th-level True Dreamwalker ability to draw opponents from the real world into Ava Dormo, where her power is greatest. If the Dreamwalker has the ability to channel positive or negative energy (such as to turn or rebuke undead), she can exchange one turning/rebuking attempt for the ability to draw one person or creature within 60 feet of her into Ava Dormo. If she cannot channel positive or negative energy from an existing class, the Dreamwalker can use this ability once per day.

Unless the target succeeds a saving throw (Will DC 15 + Charisma bonus), his physical body goes unconscious, and his dream self appears in Ava Dormo. The True Dreamwalker likewise goes unconscious and enters Ava Dormo at approximately the same distance from her opponent as she was in reality.

Even if the target is a trained dreamwalker, in order to awaken he must spend a full round and make another saving throw. If successful, he wakes up. If he fails, he can continue to attempt to awaken each round. Unless he wakes himself up, the target remains in the dreamscape either until the Dreamwalker wills him to return, or until the Dreamwalker leaves Ava Dormo. Jostling and loud noises will not awaken the target, though if his physical body takes any damage (other than damage that might be inflicted in Ava Dormo) he immediately awakens, without having to make a saving throw.

Unless the True Dreamwalker's allies are asleep when she uses this ability, she cannot bring them with her into Ava Dormo. Usually, though, the Dreamwalker alone is a capable match for her foes, while in the realm of Ell's dreams.

*Ryan Nock would like to thank Dorian for coming up with the wonderful setting that was the inspiration of this article, Dave for the great illustration of the not-so-iconic Ellish priestess, and Kamikaze Midget for inspiring the layout of this article. Ryan Nock would also like to apologize if anyone thinks he came up with anything in this article. Finally, Ryan Nock would like to point out that if you hate this article, it wasn't his idea in the first place, so don't blame him.*



*By*  
**Shiladitya Sen**

**T**he paladin is commonly regarded as the quintessential holy warrior, but there may be great variance between individual paladins. This variance is the result of differences in their individual codes. A paladin's code is the set of ethical beliefs around which he builds his life, and according to which he judges himself, and the world around him.

While many characters may have their own codes, a paladin's code is unique in two ways. One is the amount of dedication required. While a failure to live up to his own code may lead only to a loss of self-respect for the average character, a paladin who so fails may lose his powers, or even be stripped of his paladinhood. Secondly, the paladin's code is usually more complex than the average character's, involving layers of beliefs and guidelines, ranked and rated carefully according to importance and applicability.

While the layman sees the code as a hindrance, the paladin sees it as an integral part of what defines him. Since all actions (to him) have moral overtones, it is through his code that he understands and judges them. By living up to his code, he achieves his position as the exemplar of moral excellence. It is through his code that the paladin's existence takes meaning, and through it that he lives and dies.

**Roleplaying:** *The paladin's code differs from paladin to paladin, even within the same institution, but it has two specific components. Firstly, there is alignment, which is the overlying structure within which the code exists. And within the code there lie the specific virtues, which the individual paladin upholds. Provided below is a short description of the manner in which the code*

may be applied, and then a list and description of specific virtues. Lastly, there is a small list of paladin "types," which should serve to indicate exactly how varied the class can be from an roleplaying perspective. It is up to the player and DM to decide what a paladin in general and the PC's paladin in particular mean in their campaign. Hopefully, using these virtues, and others you create, you can create a paladin character which serves your purposes.

### APPLICATION OF THE CODE

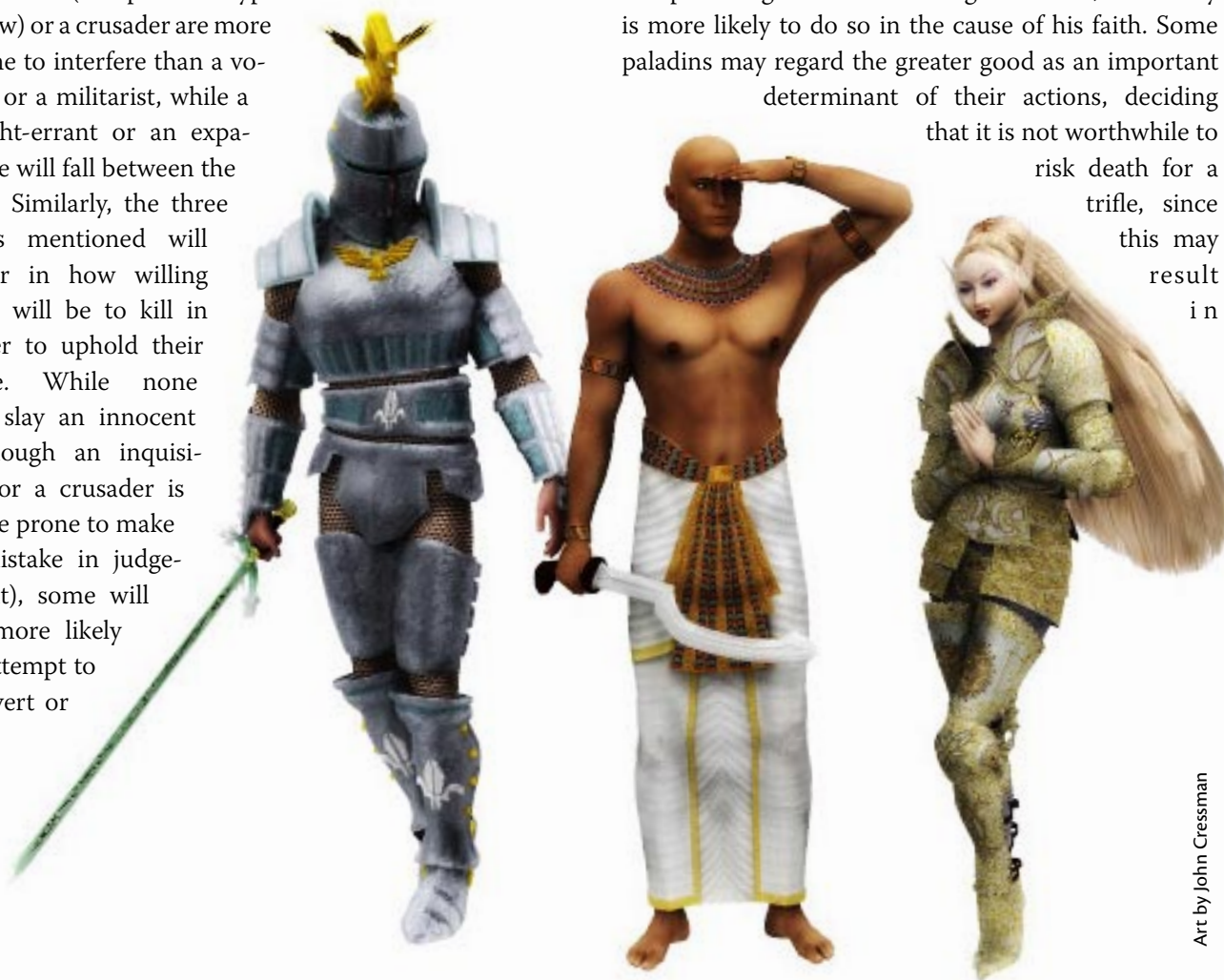
All paladins must be lawful good. This alignment involves a belief that the end does not justify the means, as well as an emphasis on achieving the greatest good of the greatest number. These two impulses are balanced in the paladin's code, and in the way he applies it to the world around him.

While the paladin's code may differ in specific areas from that of the society around him, he does not necessarily seek to impose his own value system on those around him. The paladin will act only when an accepted law is patently unjust and unfair to the majority of the innocents who must live under it. This action will differ depending upon the magnitude of the wrongdoing, and even more so, on the nature of the specific paladin. An inquisitor (see paladin "types" below) or a crusader are more prone to interfere than a votary or a militarist, while a knight-errant or an expatriate will fall between the two. Similarly, the three pairs mentioned will differ in how willing they will be to kill in order to uphold their code. While none will slay an innocent (although an inquisitor or a crusader is more prone to make a mistake in judgement), some will be more likely to attempt to convert or

persuade the guilty to change their ways.

Similarly, different paladins will regard the use of violence in different ways. While all paladins are warriors, their individual codes will determine how readily (or not) they turn to the sword as a solution. Most paladins will kill only when it is essential for the greater good, in self-defence (which includes defending companions and those a paladin has sworn to protect), or to save the innocent and the oppressed. Otherwise, they will usually avoid killing, if possible. They will not kill someone simply on suspicion, neither will he kill someone he regards as a threat without tangible evidence (which would hold up in an honest court, so detect evil spells do not count) or certain knowledge of evildoing. Paladins do not kill for treasure or for personal reasons. Some, such as the militarist, may kill to advance the just cause of their patron organization, while others (for example, the crusader) may do so to punish the wicked and to destroy evil. Others, like the courtier or the healer may be especially averse to killing, regarding it as only a last and disagreeable resort.

To the individual paladin, it is his code which determines the degree to which he risks his life, and more importantly, for what he risks it. Whereas a knight-errant may decide that protecting the honour of a peasant girl is worth risking his life for, the votary is more likely to do so in the cause of his faith. Some paladins may regard the greater good as an important determinant of their actions, deciding that it is not worthwhile to risk death for a trifle, since this may result in



Art by John Cressman

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a greater calamity which the paladin could otherwise prevent. Others believe that the smallest hint of evil must be dispatched at any cost.

In short, many paladins will react differently to a given situation. If a paladin's comrade has been captured by a giant which the paladin believes he might be unable to defeat in combat, he will react differently depending on his code. A courtier or a healer is likely to bargain with the giant. A votary might retire and pray to his god for guidance, while an expatriate may simply retreat and return shortly after when he is more prepared and likely to succeed. While a militarist, a knight-errant, and a crusader may all fight immediately, they would do so for different reasons. While the first would count on his military training to offset the giant's greater strength, the knight-errant would simply be driven by his confidence in the rightness of his cause, and the last might simply be too focussed on his crusade against evil to consider even a temporary retreat.

**Roleplaying:** *Paladins are not morons, despite the way they are often played in D&D. Being a paladin, however, is a very low-profit/high-risk career, or at least so it seems to anyone other than a paladin. To the paladin, the sense of self-fulfillment which comes from living purely by one's principles is such as cannot be exchanged under any conditions, especially not for simply pragmatic reasons. For an example from literature, see Howard Roark from Ayn Rand's The Fountainhead. Although his values are not those of a paladin, he lives as stringently by them as a paladin does by his own. Now place Howard Roark in a world where those who disagree with him might use a meteor swarm instead of an eviction order. That is the situation of the paladin, trying to promote the cause of good in an often uncaring and frequently malignant world.*

## VIR+UES

### **Charity**

The charitable paladin alleviates the suffering of the unfortunate, usually by aiding them with material goods and aid as he is able. This may be in the form of a special tithe which he pays to the organisation (see Fealty) he is part of, to be later distributed to the poor, or it may be delivered by the paladin himself. He may share his food with the hungry, his clothing with the ragged, and his indomitable spirit with the hopeless.

### **Chastity/Celibacy**

The chaste paladin is one who attempts to remain morally upright constantly, in thought, speech and action. While this is common to all paladins, the chaste

paladin is an exemplar of moral correctness, constantly concerned with achieving the highest levels of morality that are humanly possible. Some paladins even take a vow of celibacy, throwing off worldly distractions which may affect the performance of their higher duties. While the chaste paladin may be forever faithful to one woman, often in death as in life, the celibate paladin is involved with none. The latter ignores the fair sex no more than the chivalrous paladin does, but his involvement with them is always purely platonic. Some may even shun the company of women as much as possible, in order not to be thus tempted (see the Votary).

For female paladins, the gender roles are of course reversed, but at least in cultures with backgrounds similar to those of Judeo-Christianity, chastity would often be perceived as the woman's need to keep from giving in to her weak female will, and to avoid tempting men around her. Even outside Judeo-Christianity, however, almost all cultures have taboos and beliefs regarding the sanctity of the virgin, so the virtue of chastity can be common in nearly any setting.

### **Chivalry (Courtly Love)**

The true knight of romance and legend, the chivalrous paladin goes out of his way to aid and help women from all stations of society, and often all races. He usually has a beloved, often of higher station. Strangely, his love for her is usually completely platonic and hopeless of fulfillment. In fact, the unachievability of the beloved contributes to her lofty position in his eyes. It is this love which drives him to aid women of all kinds, as a reflection of his beloved. The chivalrous paladin will always aid a damsel in distress and will never slay a woman, turning from both of these paths only under the gravest of provocation and for the strongest of reasons.

The female version of this virtue is rare, usually existing only in female-dominant societies.

### **Courtesy**

The courteous paladin is a true gentleman in word and deed. He follows social customs to the best of his ability. He treats both friends and stranger with courtesy, whatever their response. He will fight a foul-mouthed braggart, without stooping to his opponent's level by speaking or behaving similarly. He considers the feelings of others and avoids offending them, always speaking tactfully. He behaves with dignity and is perfectly groomed at all times. The courteous paladin seeks to be an example of proper behaviour to those around him, making his way with unflappable dignity and excellent deportment, even in the middle of a crude and rude world.

### ***Faith***

The faithful paladin is an indefatigable worker in the cause of his faith and his god. Sometimes an itinerant preacher, he carries his deity's word to the masses. Whether preferring to verbally teach the ways of his god, or to exemplify his faith's tenets through his own actions, he never fails to hold his faith at the forefront of all his endeavours. He will always defend his faith, facing the direst of dangers to express his belief in the truth of his deity.

### ***Fealty***

Many loyal paladins swear fealty to a lawful good government, religion, philosophy, or even an individual. Regardless of who/what the patron is, this fealty gives the paladin a sense of community, of belonging to something more important than himself. Although he may receive material (and other) benefits from this patronage, this is never the reason behind the fealty. A patron may have specific edicts which the paladin must follow. As in the virtue of faith, the loyal paladin strives to uphold the cause of his patron, never swerving from or disavowing it.

### ***Honesty***

The honest paladin upholds the virtue of truth. He avoids duplicity of all kinds, in word or deed. He is open about his opinions, thoughts and beliefs, to all who care to listen and to many who may not care to. He always speaks the truth as he knows it. He may decline to speak or choose to withhold information, but will never overtly mislead anyone, even his enemies. He may not wish to answer a direct question, but if pressed, will tell the truth (although he may answer in such a way as to withhold vital information). The honest paladin does not make promises lightly, because once he gives his word, he always keeps it. He often openly wears a sign of his position and beliefs, so that all may know him for what he is.

### ***Honour***

The honourable paladin acts with integrity at all times, and in all situations. He eschews acts of dubious morality, whether they benefit him or not, such as the use of poison. To him, even more than to other paladins, the ends never justify the means. In combat, he is always willing to fight a foe face-to-face, and will not use ambushes and traps. The honourable paladin will usually choose to die before compromising his principles.

### ***Hope***

The optimistic paladin seeks to engender the same

emotion in those he encounters, especially those who are weak and powerless. He aids them against those who would oppress them unfairly, and teaches them that they will always be protected as long as their cause is just. Always effervescent, he believes strongly in the efficacy of his faith, and seeks to carry its message as far as possible. He uses his powers to destroy evil, always certain that he will succeed, and that this success will serve as an emblem of the power of the good and the right. Never flagging in his efforts or despairing in his cause, he often succeeds more due to the strength of his belief than anything else.

### ***Humility***

The humble paladin always remains modest in deportment and speech, avoiding drawing attention to himself while going about his duties. Usually introverted, he declines to speak or reveal much about himself. He is happier enacting his deeds than being praised for them, being more grateful for the opportunity to fulfill his moral obligations, than seeing them as praiseworthy. On the battlefield, he is likely to fight quietly and effectively, without fanfare and posturing of any kind.

### ***Industry***

The industrious paladin engages in productive activity at all times. He may even consider leisure activities to be a waste of time. Extremely self-reliant, he often works not only to support himself but takes time to help others. The industrious paladin believes that work is its own reward. Arriving at a town, he will stable and care for his horse himself, rather than leaving it to an ostler. If taking aid from others, he prefers to repay them by some form of industry, rather than accepting charity.

### ***Justice***

The just paladin seeks to bring fairness and equitable treatment to all he encounters. He strives to simultaneously uphold the letter of the law, as well as the spirit of justice, leaning towards the latter in cases where a conflict between the two arises. He prefers to be an instrument of justice, rather than its final arbiter, enacting the just decrees of a higher power or institution. He is not a supporter of vigilante justice. Only in the rarest of cases does he serve as judge, jury and executioner. He only does so in situations where the social system is unable or unwilling to act, and where the crime is too grievous to go unpunished. In most cases, he simply seeks to uphold the concepts of justice in his surrounding society through his own speech and actions.

### **Moderation**

Paladins rarely display excess in most areas, but some specifically uphold this virtue, seeking moderation in both speech and action. The moderate paladin always thinks before he acts or speaks. His measured speech and deliberate actions may make him seem somewhat too dispassionate, but this makes him an excellent and dependable ally. Although he always upholds the cause of good and battles the forces of evil, the paladin always makes sure that this is precisely what he is achieving before he is moved to act.

### **Poverty**

Many paladins take vows of poverty, but in their case, this means a level of wealth which is sufficient to achieve their role as protectors of the good. The paladin will not give away his warhorse and his armour, since these are essential tools in his quest to uphold the right, but he will neither hoard wealth nor seek it out. He will usually utilise whatever is necessary for his upkeep, and tithe away all other wealth to the institution he serves or to the unfortunates he meets in his travels.

### **Tolerance**

While this is not a virtue associated with paladins in general, the tolerant paladin is not unheard of. Although he does not compromise on his efforts against evil, the tolerant paladin recognises that it is the rare individual or institution which can live up to his own high standards. Although he deplores this fact, he believes that it is not his place to force others to emulate him, although he may seek to verbally persuade them, or use his actions as an example. The tolerant paladin does not seek to forcibly impose his own values on those he encounters, unless they are truly abhorrent and evil. He treads a careful path between laissez-faire and a too draconian enactment of his own beliefs on others.

### **Valour**

The valiant paladin is the ultimate warrior, facing and defeating evil with blade in hand. No physical danger is great enough to prevent him from upholding the ethos he holds dear. His courage is particularly evident on the battlefield. Seeing battle as a way to both defend and advance his faith, he fights fearlessly until the enemy is vanquished, often taking on the most powerful enemies himself. He generally prefers melee to missile combat, so he can engage his opponent face to face. He will rarely withdraw from a battle, only doing so if faced by insurmountable odds, and even then, never leaving fallen comrades and allies.

**Roleplaying:** *The average paladin usually upholds the virtues of Fealty, Courtesy, Honesty, Valour and Honour, but the relative importance given to each and to other virtues depends on the individual. The examples given below provide indications of how a specific paladin character may be constructed, using the virtues and specific character traits to create a unique individual. Note that the same virtues which are paramount to one paladin's code of conduct may be neglected, or even actively avoided, by another's.*

## **SOME TYPES OF PALADINS**

### **The Courtier**

The courtier is the gentleman paladin, living at the court rather than in the saddle. He is likely to be as skilled at diplomacy, dancing and writing poetry as wielding his sword, and may emphasise personal grooming, courtly etiquette and fine living as much as any other qualities. Often serving as the political advisor to a particular ruler, he strives to make his liege achieve a simultaneously moral and effective reign, where the populace is kept happy while being led in the right directions. In fact, he may believe that he can lead the battle against evil more effectively through words than through actions. Of course, when battle is necessary, he is as ready as any other paladin, although he will usually fight with an emphasis on finesse and style. The courtier is almost never an adventuring paladin, leaving the court only due to the most extreme reasons.

*Suggested Virtues:*

Fealty, Courtesy, Chivalry, Tolerance

*Neglected Virtues:*

Poverty, Chastity, Humility, Industry

### **The Crusader**

The crusader is a paladin who faces the world with his sword. He is usually at his best on the battlefield, leading the war of good against evil in the most direct way possible. The crusader fights evil without asking quarter and rarely gives any. Focussed and driven, he is often a loner (although he may also serve as part of a like-minded organisation), fighting a holy war against evil (in general), although he usually works against a specific group/individual/species, etc. Crusaders are commonly adventuring paladins, often having some tragic incident in their past which drives them onto their path, in which case a strong desire for revenge drives them. Ironically, they sometimes stumble off the paladin's path by enacting the very evils they seek to destroy, in a too reckless approach to their aims.

*Suggested Virtues:*

Valour, Honesty, Justice, Moderation

*Neglected Virtues:*

Chivalry, Courtesy, Tolerance, Humility

**The Expatriate**

The expatriate is always a solitary paladin, who has lost his patronage or parent organisation, either due to its dissolution or because he has forsaken it or been dismissed. This loss defines him, is the defining aspect of his character, although it is never his fault, since he would not then retain his divinely-granted abilities. Having lost a sense of belonging, the expatriate is often bitter and cynical. He remains devoted to his beliefs, perhaps especially so since he sees himself as the last one upholding them, but sees his own quest as ultimately in vain. The battle of good against evil appears as hopeless as it is worthwhile, and the world around him appears permeated by the negative aspects of existence. Of all paladins, the expatriate is perhaps most aware of his role as a seeker for perfection in a flawed world. He is commonly an adventuring paladin.

*Suggested Virtues:*

Honour, Moderation, Valour, Faith

*Neglected Virtues:*

Fealty, Hope, Chivalry

**The Healer**

The healer is a paladin who uses his divinely-granted abilities to aid the poor and the diseased. He often eschews the more martial aspects of the paladin's role, taking up arms only to protect his charges. Often working in conjunction with clerics of his (or an allied) faith, his primary goal is to care for others. Along with healing, he often provides both spiritual and material aid to those he meets. Self-aggrandisement and glory are even further from his thoughts than from those of the majority of other paladins. While the healer is often found far afield, he is rarely an adventurer. Usually he seeks out a rural community to aid with his healing abilities, before moving on to another which is more needful of his aid, and so on. In rare cases, he may



Art by Vannio LoRiggio

become a permanent part of a small community which is closer to his heart than the grandest of royal courts.

*Suggested Virtues:*

Charity, Humility, Moderation, Industry

*Neglected Virtues:*

Chivalry, Valour, Courtesy

**The Inquisitor**

The inquisitor is perhaps the paladin most feared by all evildoers, and strangely, by many who are good as well. Usually working as part of a larger organization, he relentlessly seeks out and destroys all that he sees as evil. For the inquisitor, there is no acceptable path except the straight and the narrow, and all who stumble off it are deserving of chastisement. Since much evil is concealed or existing under false pretences, the inquisitor's main role is to reveal it, and then destroy it. For the inquisitor, the end (the greater good) is always more important the means, although he strives to keep the latter lawful. This emphasis leads to the fact that the inquisitor, like the crusader, runs the risk of losing his powers through too rigorous and unthinking an approach.

*Suggested Virtues:*

Fealty, Valour, Honesty, Justice, Chastity

*Neglected Virtues:*

Honour, Moderation, Toleration, Courtesy

**The Knight-Errant**

The knight-errant is the quintessential adventuring paladin, travelling out into the world in order to find, battle and defeat evil. Often young, naïve and optimistic, the knight-errant does not seek out a specific foe, but wishes to combat evil in general. While possibly owing loyalty to a specific faith or ruler, he often works alone, sometimes in the company of a group of adventurers. Usually outgoing and amiable, his interest in the surrounding world knows no limits. As part of his apparent naïveté, he is constantly cheerful, confident of the correctness of his beliefs, and sees each day as another opportunity to further the cause of good. Reliable in combat, and a boon companion out of



it, the knight-errant is often the perfect member of an adventuring party.

*Suggested Virtues:*

Valour, Honour, Honesty, Hope, Chivalry

*Neglected Virtues:*

Celibacy, Poverty, Humility, Moderation

### **The Militarist**

The militarist paladin is a man of war, usually heading the military branch of a particular faith or serving in a high post in an army. His efforts are completely aimed at defeating evil on the battlefield, and all of his training is dedicated to that end. Inspirational and charismatic, he is a splendid leader of men, inspiring them to impossible feats by personal example. As a warrior par excellence, he is a symbol of the martial ability his followers must seek to achieve. Due to his paladin ethos, he ensures that his followers act and fight in accordance with the proper rules of warfare. While this emphasis on propriety and honour on the battlefield sometimes leads to disagreements with the more pragmatic of his superiors, the militarist's undoubted ability usually carries the day, just as it does on the field of battle.

*Suggested Virtues:* Valour, Honour, Fealty, Honesty

*Neglected Virtues:*

Courtesy, Humility, Poverty, Chastity

### **The Votary**

The votary is the purely religious paladin, who has dedicated his life and efforts to his faith. Whether a member of an established church (where his allegiance is always to his deity before the institution), or a lonely anchorite in a secluded cell in the wilderness, the votary concentrates body and soul on understanding his god's wishes and enacting his commands. Although he is as martially capable as any other paladin, he will usually fight only to protect his faith, rather than to aggressively carry it forth. Philosophical and introspective, the votary's life is spent in fruitful work, usually within the bounds of the establishment he calls home. Like the courtier, the votary is almost never an adventuring paladin, venturing forth from his home only for the most important of reasons.

*Suggested Virtues:*

Faith, Celibacy, Poverty, Industry, Humility

*Neglected Virtues:*

Chivalry, Valour, Courtesy, Fealty

*Shiladitya Sen is a 28-year-old Indian student at Temple University, doing a PhD in English Literature. He has only played D&D since he was 25, after arriving in the US.*

# GOLD ELVES

*By Peter M. Ball*

Elves have always sought ways to pass the endless expanse of years that makes up their lifetimes. The Light Elves found their diversions in art or magic, developing skills and items of such power and beauty they made members of other races weep. The Dark Elves filled their lives with intrigue, masochism, and black rites, dallying with the powers of darkness and learning fell magic that was better left forgotten. The Grey Elves developed great cities, engaging in games of politics and status to fill in the centuries.

For the Gold Elves, none of these were diversion enough. Perfecting the arts of magic came quickly to them, the allure of the dark arts wasn't as strong as with their Dark Elf cousins, and they saw little amusement in the Grey Elves games of politics. The Gold Elves saw the potential in all three, but they sought more, something that would truly capture their spirit and imagination for a century or longer.

They found their amusement in their early encounters with humanity, when they learned of trade and first saw the glimmer of gold coins. For the humans, trade was a means toward survival and subsistence, and money was a measure of food, shelter and security. To the Gold Elves, however, trade and commerce became something more. They practiced it as an artform, a type of performance art consisting of the complex system of supply and demand, with styles and high masters of the same caliber as humanity's painters and sculptors.

Though filled with an almost Dwarf-like lust for gold coins, it was not the lure of profit that entices a Gold Elf. Rather, to a Gold Elf, the skillful exchange of goods and services—but especially currency—is a measurement of the power and success of an individual. Coins are of course a thing of beauty, but more importantly they are a playing piece in the game all Gold Elves play throughout their entire lives

### **CULTURE**

The birth of the Gold Elf culture occurred when seven of their number first developed a rudimentary game that used trade as the rules, and money as the measure of success. Over the years, it became more complex, gaining more players and never actually ending, until after decades, the mercantile spirit became a way of life for the players, their families, and eventually their offspring. They had created an amusement that could hold the Gold Elves' attention – a complex game of

trickery and sleight of hand, where success and failure was measured by profit.

Over the generations, the great game has developed into the centerpiece of Gold Elvish lifestyle. Children are taught it from birth, and the rules are so complex and subtle that it would take practically an entire human lifestyle to learn them, and far longer to master them. The closest most humans can explain it is to liken it to a great game of chess, where players can exchange pieces, and every living, breathing, spending creature is a pawn.

The fortunes of the seven Elves that first started the game have grown, begetting great trade houses that operate around the world, their Elven members playing against each other in an endless cycle of one-upmanship and acquisition. Using their skills as warriors, wizards and craftsmen, the Gold Elves find a way to deal in everything from the most elementary of weapons to the most powerful of magic spells and items. They are common sights in the great marketplaces of the world, hawking their wares, and they often deal with adventurers, offering thousands of gold coins for ancient works of art or long-forgotten items of power that are uncovered in a forgotten tomb or a bandit-lords stronghold. Agents of the Gold Elf Houses have been known to create new markets where none have existed before, and rumors say that the mysterious Market of Shadows was their creation, an effort to open trade with the fey and creatures from beyond the barriers of the planes.

## PERSONALITY

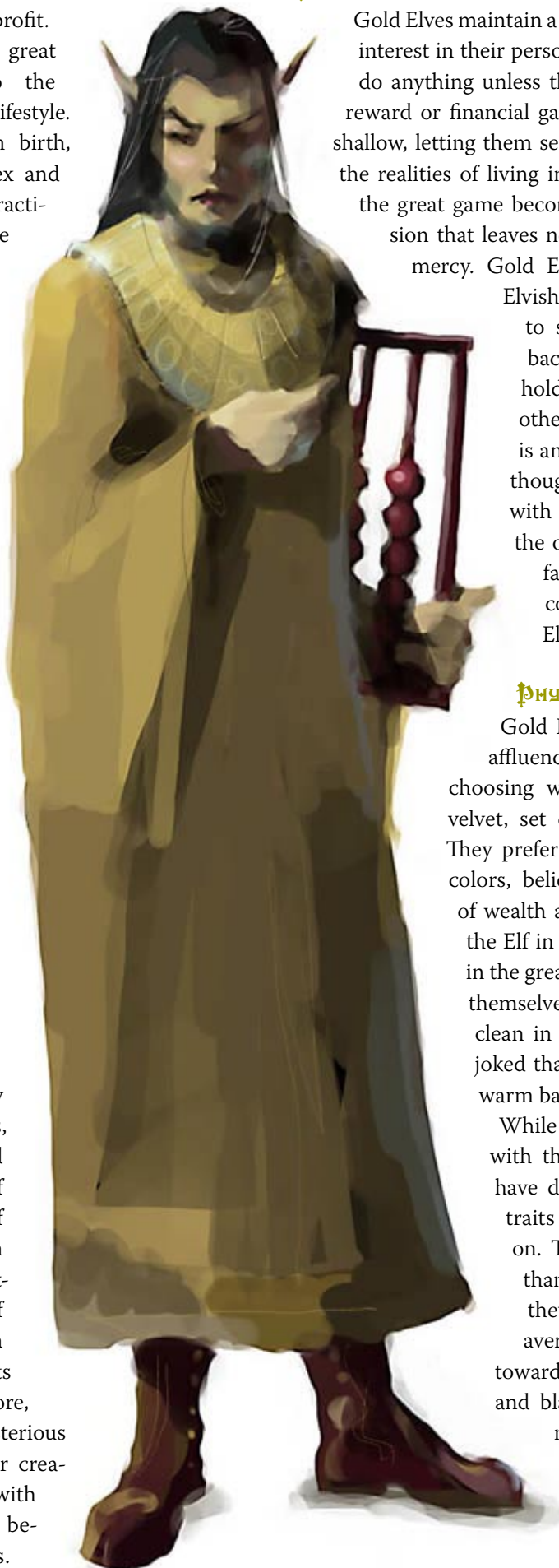
Gold Elves maintain a strong streak of mercenary interest in their personalities, often unwilling to do anything unless there is some possibility of reward or financial gain. For most this streak is shallow, letting them separate the great game and the realities of living in the world. But for some, the great game becomes an all-consuming passion that leaves no room for distractions or mercy. Gold Elves are friendly towards

Elvish strangers, always eager to see what benefit or drawback they may provide, but hold themselves separate from other races, unless the person is an opportunity for profit. Although they excel at interacting with others, Gold Elves realize the only true competition they face in their long lifespans comes from their fellow Elves.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Gold Elves are given to signs of affluence when dressing, often choosing well-cut clothes of silk or velvet, set off by a range of jewelry. They prefer tasteful dress to clashing colors, believing that garish displays of wealth are a desperate attempt by the Elf in question to fake his status in the great game of trade. They keep themselves extraordinarily neat and clean in appearance, and it's often joked that a Gold Elf that refuses a warm bath is a dwarf in disguise.

While they share an ancestry with the High Elves, Gold Elves have developed definite physical traits as the centuries have worn on. They average slightly taller than their kindred, although they remain as lithe as the average Elf. Their hair tends towards dark colors, with browns and blacks being the most common, and their skin is often as pale as the snow. The trait that most distinguishes them from their kindred, how-



Art by Dave Hendee

ever, is their eyes. The typical Gold Elf pupil changes color, seemingly shifting to match the luster of the most abundant type of coins the Elf owns. For many Gold Elves, who typically trade in silver, the pupil's adopt a silvery sheen. For those with more gold than, their eyes will shine with a yellow gleam. The only Gold Elves whose eyes don't follow this trend are those who break their agreements, cheating their partners in trade. For those who commit the most grievous of Gold Elf sins, their pupils become small disks of black or gray, marking them forever as outcasts.

### RELATIONS

Gold Elves are known for their ability to trade with anyone, regardless of how repulsive other races may find them. That being said, it is rare that a Gold Elf chooses to socialize with his or her trading partners after the deal is done, often retreating back into the company of his fellow Elves to count coins and gloat.

When far from the trading enclaves and their kin, Gold Elves often enjoy the company of Halflings and Gnomes. In Halflings they find a race with a wanderlust equal to their own, and similarly they admire that Gnomes appreciate the wonders of both nature and coin.

The relationship between Gold Elves and most other branches of the Elven family tree are good, but marked by a level of confusion of both sides. Most other Elves can't understand the fascination that the accumulation of wealth has for the Gold Elves, while Gold Elves can't understand how others miss the glory and intricacies of their great game. Like all Elves, Gold Elves hold a special hatred in their heart for the Drow. Dark Elves hold the distinction of being the only race the Gold Elves will refuse to trade with, the Gold Elves regarding their cousins as the lowest of the low.

### ALIGNMENT

Gold Elves dislike monopolies of any sort, including the dominance of good over evil. Their main concern is for trade, and the complex rules of achievement and failure they associate with it. While they revel in the prices that times of war or conflict may bring, they prefer the extended and elaborate trade-plans that can be maintained in times of peace and prosperity. While they always keep their word and honor their bargains once made, they are not above using every trick and lie they can think of to get the best for themselves before a deal or promise is made.

Gold Elves tend towards neutrality, with some leaning towards neutral good.

### HOMELANDS

If the Gold Elves had a homeland, it was abandoned centuries ago. They have settled down near hundreds of different societies, building trade-enclaves the size of small keeps inside the borders of human lands, atop Dwarvish mountains, and in forests abutting Gnomish and Halfling villages. Aside from these centers of population, there are many smaller Gold Elf trade-homes in the midst of minor towns and hamlets. The enclaves and trade-homes are rarely a permanent residence for any more than a few Elves, serving instead as a temporary residence and base for any traveling members of the House who pass through the city it's located in.

Despite their mobile lifestyle, the presence of a Gold Elf trade-enclave is a significant force in the economy that supports it. Clans and Houses often designate a diplomat to represent them, and even when they set up business inside foreign cities, their people are often treated as members of a separate nation in respect to a country's laws and politics.

### RELIGION

Gold Elves seldom venerate the more common Elven gods, and they have little interest in the clerical arts. When they choose to worship anything, it tends to be the memory and spirit of their Clan's founders, as well as those who have succeeded in the great game before passing into death. While those who draw power from these spirits are most commonly adepts, occasionally the collective power of these spirits is enough to grant clerical power to a few scattered members of the clan, typically granting access to the clerical domains of Magic, Protection, and Trickery.

### LANGUAGE

All Gold Elves speak Elven and common, and many go out of their way to speak as wide a variety of tongues as they can. Gold Elves make a special effort to learn the language of those they trade with regularly, and magic that enables them to understand any tongue is highly prized.

### NAMES

Gold Elves keep two names; the first selected for themselves upon reaching maturity and the last the name of their trade-clan or house. First names are often taken after the Gold Elf's entry to the great game, and often involve a reference to their first task or trade that earned them their entry. References to skills, trade-goods, magic, coins and precious stones are common. Clan names are taken from the seven Elves who first engaged in the great game.

**Male Names:**

Coramath ("Forgefire"), Elurian ("Copperluck"), Lorwenoth ("Quiverbloom"), Sellindai ("Florinheart"), Shelluria ("Silverthorne"), Terentain ("Mageblade").

**Female Names**

Mialandir ("Greywand"), Shieranol ("Ambersoul"), Shelsellai ("Silverpenny"), Tainiandel ("Swordsale"), Ullirain ("Manygold").

**Clan Names:**

Adremoth, Cellianar, Fiandellor, Kelamorn, Marrionar, Quellandiir, Uremanor.

**ADVENTURERS**

The life of the adventurer holds a curious appeal for a Gold Elf. Few choose to walk the adventurer's road, but the combination of wide-ranging travel with the potential to discover new forms of magic and large amounts of wealth ensures that most Gold Elves will consider the prospect at least once in their lives. Although adventuring is a legitimate part of the great game, it is rarely considered to be a fair one and treated as something of an advantageous loophole in the rules. Thus, few Gold Elves remain adventurers for an extended period of time. Most will join a band until they score a large amount of loot, then go back to the business of trading for a while.

Even the most determined of Gold Elf adventurers will duck away from his party for a month or two to invest in some good deals, or will take the gold his fellows gained after slaying the dragon and invest it in a particularly good deal that trebles its wealth. The risk and reward of the great game is an addiction that no Gold Elf can ever be truly free of, something his companions either embrace or let become a source of strain in their relationship.

**GOLD ELF CHARACTER TRAITS**

Gold Elves have the following character traits:

- # +2 to Dexterity and Charisma, -2 to Constitution.
- While as agile and frail as the ordinary Elf, Gold Elves have a personal charisma and charm that intrigues beings of all races.
- # Medium-size: As Medium-size creatures, Gold Elves have no special bonuses or penalties due to size.
- # Gold Elven base speed is 30 feet.
- # Immunity to magic *sleep* spells and effects, a +2 racial saving throw bonus against Enchantment spells or effects.
- # Low-light Vision.
- # +2 racial bonus on Diplomacy, Listen, Search, and Spot checks. Standard Elvish ability to locate secret or concealed doors.

- # Automatic Languages: Elven and Common. Bonus Languages: Any. Gold Elves learn the tongues of anyone they trade with, and their merchants are known for their wide range of customers. It isn't unknown for a particularly brave or foolhardy merchant to have dealings with creatures from other planes.
- # Favored Class: Sorcerer.
- # Restricted Classes: A Gold Elf who takes levels of Cleric suffers an experience point penalty of 20%, just as if they were a multi-class character with uneven levels. The arts of the cleric don't come naturally to the Gold Elves, and those who do manage to eke some benefit from their Clan's household spirits often struggle to gather more. Exceptions to this rule are those Gold Elves who forsake their houses and serve in the temples of other gods. Such Elves are rare, but gods of greed and trade are occasionally known to seduce an ambitious or impoverished Gold Elf into their clergy.

**USING GOLD ELVES  
IN YOUR CAMPAIGN**

- # The Gold Elves present an easy way to integrate the sale and trade of magic weapons and items into your campaign. While few mortal races can logically claim to have the wealth and interest to trade in the multitudes of magic items an average adventurer will find over his or her lifetime, the long lived Gold Elves are likely to regard such items as just another bauble that passes through their hands in the grand scheme of the great game. The cost of such items is negligible when compared to what an intelligent Elf can earn in even a century of clever trading, and the store-houses of the typical Elven trade-house are often overflowing with minor magic its members may be able to sell or trade.
- # If you haven't yet allowed you PC's the option of buying or selling items of such power, the first appearance of Gold Elves in their area offers a controlled method of experimenting with the idea. If only a single Elf finds his way to the local city, carrying only a small supply of items, he becomes a localized store, with only the goods he carried with him as he searched out this new market. Occasionally he may disappear, heading back to his home in the far reaches of the world to pick up fresh supplies, showing up a few years later with a fresh load of magical goods. Gold Elves jealously guard their trade routes from their competitors, so a particularly secretive Elf could be the only magic

item merchant in a city for decades before his fellows realize where he's selling his wares. The need to travel home and restock allows you the opportunity to remove access to the magic items should it prove problematic, and having the trader followed by his competitors slowly allows more traders in should it prove unproblematic to have such stores around.

- # Gold Elf Trade-enclaves are a tempting target for thieves, rife with magical loot and gold. They also tend to be well guarded, both by skilled guards and the best traps money can buy. A party of particularly larcenous PC's may try to raid an enclave with the intention of looting it. Those parties without a larcenous streak may find themselves braving the dangers of an enclave to rescue a rogue, either one of the party who found the option too tempting, or the misguided son of the local widow who sought to make a name for himself before attempting to join the local thieves guild.
- # A Gold Elf merchant may hire the party to guard the transport of a particularly dangerous item to an unknown buyer, magically binding them to the contract they sign. When they arrive at the caravan's destination, they find the item they've been guarding is a rod of rulership, and the customer is an evil fighter aspiring to the position of dictator. Although aching to stop the transaction, the bonds of the contract bind the PC's into doing nothing until the terms of the contract are fulfilled.
- # A local tribe of goblins is causing trouble, and they seem to have access to a surprising number of potions that boost their strength and agility. Investigations reveal that one of the Adremoth clan Gold Elves is making regular trips to the goblin encampment; trading the potions for the goods the goblins steal from raided trade-caravans.
- # An Elven PC, or a being of another race that has access to anti-aging magic, may become interested in the rules of the Gold Elves great game. Seeking a diversion from the endless parade of years, they move through the world seeking out the Elves wherever they can be found, hoping to develop a rudimentary understanding of the rules and make their first move.

*Peter Ball co-wrote Natural 20 Press's Tournaments, Fairs, & Taverns, and wrote the Fighter Schools article in Asgard issue 5.*

# Axiomatic Weapons

*By Derek "Biggus Geekus" Becker*

The weapons of heroes, sadly, come and go almost as often as the heroes themselves. While the occasional weapon of power will change hands and generate a legend about itself, it is in the end a material thing. A material thing wrought of magic, rare ores and the skill of the finest smiths, but a material thing nonetheless.

There are, however, other items. Weapons made not from labor but from ideas, hopes, prayers, dreams, and nightmares. These weapons are not so much made as they are born. They are the crystallization of a specific trait (or two traits in some very rare cases) and they will often hide from the world for hundreds of years, waiting for the right man or woman who embodies that trait as much as the weapon itself. Then, almost spontaneously, the weapon will insert itself into the fabric of reality, weaving its existence into the same tapestry that its chosen hero lives. Though the weapon may have been seen centuries before, it will have had no intervening history, and explanations for its new home might be impossible. The truth behind this mystery is that indeed the item did not even exist until a suitable wielder came into the world, and in the interim, these weapons faded into nothingness.

These are weapons not of steel but of axiom, and woe befall their enemies.

## Weapons of Axiom

This article presents a new type of magical weapon, the *axiomatic weapon*. It is practically impossible to create one of these weapons, but they still exist, spontaneously generating whenever a special person becomes the living embodiment of a certain belief, concept, or idea. The weapon exists only as long as its champion lives, and thereafter seemingly normal will somehow contrive to make the weapon vanish, until a new suitable champion arrives.

Axiomatic weapons are practically epic in power, and so should be used with the same care that is given to artifacts. However, since they usually vanish after their bearer's death, game masters should not be too concerned with giving a rival or villain one

of these weapons, since usually no player character will possess the appropriate moral fiber to use it. Remember, however, that these weapons should only be possessed by someone who idealizes a particular thought or emotion. Though this makes them difficult to add as random treasure, axiomatic weapons can greatly enhance the mythical, epic feel of your campaign.

### Creating an Axiomatic Weapon

Except in extremely rare circumstances where a spellcaster idealizes a particular idea or belief, it is impossible for a mortal to create an axiomatic weapon. However, game masters can easily design such weapons, mostly using the existing rules presented in *Core Rulebook II*. Simply develop a weapon with a certain motif in mind, and add the restriction that only someone who espouses appropriate morals or beliefs can use the weapon. These weapons usually have a history, having been wielded by like-minded heroes or scoundrels throughout the ages, but how the item travels between owners is usually a mystery.

All axiomatic weapons share some traits, and because of them, you may need to reprice the effective value of the axiomatic weapon during the course of the game, to make sure the PC has the appropriate amount of wealth. The abilities listed below are already equivalent to a +9 weapon (Value: 162,000 gp), and extra abilities only increase the cost from there.

- \* **Grow with Wielder:** Axiomatic weapons typically have a +5 bonus. However, should the game master feel that the user is of a level that a larger bonus would be more appropriate, the weapon's base bonus will spontaneously increase. The weapon has a symbiotic relationship with the primal motivations of the hero and is able to keep up with the hero's abilities. A good rule of thumb is that the weapon's base bonus should be (wielder's level/5) +1, rounded down.
- \* **Nigh Indestructible:** For purposes of damaging an axiomatic weapon, they are considered to have energy resistance 40 against acid, cold, fire, electricity, and sonic attacks. They have a hardness of 50 and 200 hit points. In the event that the weapon ever drop below 50 hit points it has the ability to *teleport* as a free action, traveling to a safe place. Note that none of these abilities are transferred to the user, and a *teleporting* axiomatic weapon travels without bringing its bearer with it.
- \* **True Owner:** All of these weapons can only be used at length by one person. Once the axiomatic weapon finds an owner that exhibits the traits of its platitude, it will 'bond' with that owner and never permit itself to be used by others. If it falls into the hands of someone who is not a paragon of that trait, it curses the wielder with some appropriate malady, and functions as a -5 weapon. However, if the weapon is wielded by someone who at least mildly espouses the appropriate trait, the weapon will grudgingly allow it self to be used as 'only' a +5 weapon. However, until it is returned to its appropriate wielder, this bonus will reduce by 1 each week, until it finally falls dormant after 5 weeks. Once it enters the hands of its proper wielder again, it immediately regains its full potential. Note that this also means that if the chosen wearer strays from the weapon's path, he will probably notice his weapon diminishing slowly in strength.
- \* **Quickdraw:** Drawing an axiomatic weapon is always a free action. The weapon will jump to the owner's hand as if it was being telekinetically manipulated. Additionally, if the weapon is out of reach, it will assist its owner by jumping up to 25 ft to the owner's hand if the owner calls out the axiomatic weapon's name, traveling the distance effectively instantly.
- \* **Semi-Intelligent:** Axiomatic weapons are dimly aware of their surroundings. They are considered to have a mentality akin to an animal (Intelligence 2, Wisdom 10, and Charisma 6) but only have a true understanding of the emotion they represent and their owner's intent. Unless they represent an alignment belief, their own alignment will usually be neutral, but either way, they lack the ability to comprehend how the owner really reflects their alignment. Axiomatic weapons do have a sort of semi-empathy which works to the extent that they are only able to feel when their owner is experiencing the feelings that caused the weapon to be created. Axiomatic weapons are not truly sentient, so they have no Ego score.
- \* **Unerring Blow:** In the hands of a suitable owner, all axiomatic weapons are treated as a magic weapon of four pluses greater than it's current value, for the purposes of overcoming a creature's damage reduction. In other words, a +5 axiomatic weapon is considered to be a +9 weapon for the purposes of overcoming Damage Reduction.

## Sample Axiomatic Weapons

There are five known axiomatic weapons. Note that while these weapons do have a gold piece value associated with them, they will never be for sale. These are weapons that are only discovered through lengthy trials and adventure. The 'cost' is merely given so that the game master has an idea of the power of the item and when to award in during the course of the campaign.

There are, of course, many other possible axioms. Some examples include time, forgiveness, nature, celerity, madness, and guilt. Additionally, most clerical domains can provide a good starting place for axioms.

### Aequitas, sword of justice

The first user of Aequitas was awarded the axiomatic weapon by a lesser-known deity of law. He used it to uncover the true motivations behind a hostile inquisition that was happening within his own church. The sword allowed him to ferret out the wrongdoers and swiftly bring them to their lawful end. He was eventually undone by a highly potent duo of a blackguard and assassin who worked in tandem. The sword resurfaced years later in the hands of a bard who used the art of parody and satire to spread the word of a king who sacrificed his own people to a lich in exchange for arcane power. When adventurers dealt with the king and

the lich, the bard wisely had a wizard of renown use a *wish* spell to rid himself of the blade before his sense of justice faded.

This sword appears as a glowing shaft of light in the rough shape of a longsword. The light shines in a 60' radius, as a *light* spell, but a *darkness* spell cast at least 20<sup>th</sup> level will reduce the range of the light to a 5' radius. Non-deific magic cannot fully extinguish its light. Aequitas is a +5 *longsword* that hums in a low register when it is drawn. When the sword strikes, it does an additional +5d6 of sonic damage per strike. Aequitas constant emanates a *Zone of Truth* as if cast by a 15<sup>th</sup> level cleric, and grants its bearer *Detect Thoughts* as if cast by a 15<sup>th</sup> level wizard. These levels of casting increase by 5 for every "+1" the weapon may gain beyond +5.

Note that the *Zone of Truth* does not apply to the wielder! Aequitas is after all, a sword of justice ... not a sword of truth.

Value: 344,000gp.

### Bak-Tozak, double axe of rage and hate

Bak-Tozak is a double axe that has the place in many an Orc legend. The twin blades fuel the anger that exists in the heart of practically every Orc chieftain. This is one axiomatic weapon that has no trouble finding those who are suited to its purpose! There is even one small tribe in the west of the Orclands that worship the item as a god. Heroes of virtue fear those who wield Bak-Tozak, and word of its return spreads faster than a summer brush fire.

Bak-Tozak almost never allows itself to be wielded by a warrior who does not have the rage class ability, or by any cleric with the Healing domain. The larger of the two axe heads, Bak, is the burning flame of rage, while the other, Tak is an ice-cold axe of hate. Both axe heads are +5 weapons.

Bak does +3d6 points of fire damage with each hit, and enhances the wielder's ability to rage: the user gains an additional +4 strength and constitution when raging (if the bearer cannot normally rage, Bak grants that ability once per day).

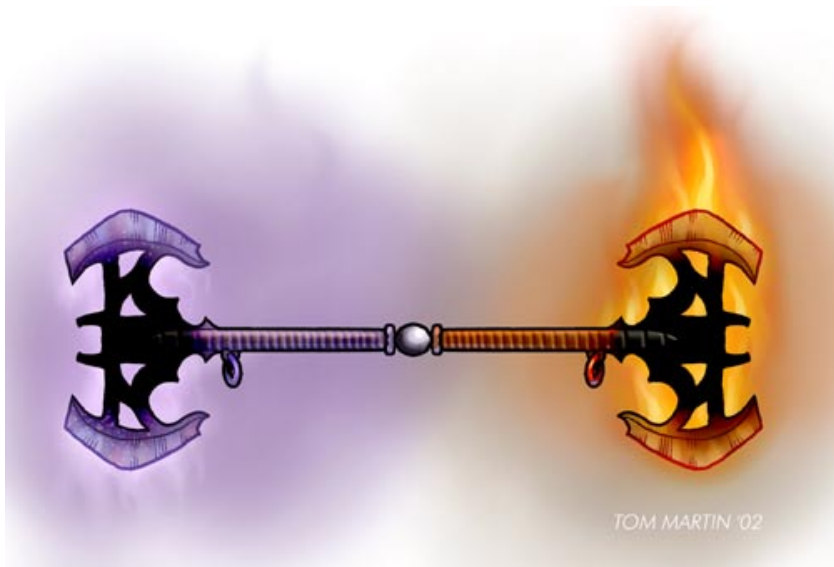
Tozak does +3d6 points of cold damage with each hit, and



Art by Ilya Astrakhan

inhibits the healing of those struck. If a creature has been hit by Tozak, any spellcaster or magic item attempting to cast a healing spell on the creature must succeed a caster level check (DC 25) to overcome the 'block' Tozak has placed. This DC increases by 5 for every "+1" the weapon may gain beyond +5.

Value: 432,000gp.



Art by Tom Martin

### Lograni, hammer of love

The Dwarven legend of Igli and Tromar brings a tear even to those with hearts of granite. Tromar was the son of a king, who was by tradition forbidden to marry anyone but a noblewoman. Igli was the daughter of a shoemaker who was forever denied to Tromar. They met at a festival and fell in love. Tromar would have given up his title, but the endless Kobold attacks meant that the kingdom needed him and he was honor bound to never let his kingdom fall. It would seem that all was lost. But Igli struck out in search of adventure and for a possible way to marry Tromar. Their love never wavered, even through years of separation. Then Igli found the hammer Lograni, and knew what she must do. She returned to the kingdom and with the hammer, and with Tromar at her side was able to defeat the kobolds. The Dwarf king, recognizing her heroic nature, awarded her a noble title. With her new rank, Igli and Tromar could marry and they truly did live happily ever after.

Lograni is a +5 *warhammer* that glows a soft red. Some of ill nature mistake it for a blood red – which

it can honestly be mistaken for – but in reality it is the glow of passion, desire, and respect. The hammer grants a +5 dodge bonus to its bearer's AC, automatically parrying attacks of its own accord, though this bonus is lost if the bearer is denied her Dexterity bonus to AC (such as if she is flat-footed or flanked). The hammer also acts as a powerful *ring of regeneration*, healing 5 points of damage every minute. The amount of healing increases by 1 hit point per minute for every "+1" the weapon may gain beyond +5.

The hero must be romantically in love with one other person\* in order to bear the hammer, and that person is always guarded under a *shield other* spell, with the weapon's bearer accepting physical damage on the loved person's behalf, regardless of range, as long as the bearer is aware of her loved one's danger. When the bearer is defending the person she loves, Lograni casts *haste* on the user, as if cast by a 15<sup>th</sup> level wizard.

Value: 325,000gp.

\*It is unknown if a person who loves more than one person could bear the hammer, but there have so far been no cases of this strange happening.

### Kaaogar, longbow of fury

This axiomatic weapon was first in the hands of the vile Gnoll ranger, Baaraoak the Stormcaller. Baaraoak hated Humans, Elves, Dwarves, and pretty much anything else that displeased him at a given moment. His fury was the destruction of many lands. A human eventually brought him down – coincidentally also a ranger who



Art by Nick Infanti



was also a slave to fury. The human was able to direct his wild emotion on the Gnolls alone, and spare most innocents, but he eventually disappeared, presumably a victim to the Gnolls, or to the bow Raaogar itself.

This longbow looks like an arcing blot of electricity. It acts as a +5 weapon and each hit does +5d6 points of electrical damage with each hit. The wielder does not have to provide arrows for this longbow as it generates what appear to be minor electrical arcs whenever the bearer draws the string. The longbow provides 10 points of electrical resistance to the hero which increases by 2 points of resistance for every "+1" the weapon may achieve above +5. The weapon does an additional +2d6 points of electrical damage per hit if used during a storm. Raaogar also grants the wielder the ability to *Control Weather* once per day as a 15<sup>th</sup> level druid, making this power quite dangerous.

Value 288,000gp.

### Xur, dagger of vengeance

The most feared weapon on two continents, Xur is the tool of ruthless killers. Wizards and Warlords alike have met their end to this foul blade, and there are several standing rewards for its destruction. While assassins have often prayed for this item, it was most famously used in the hands of Saloratus, a paladin from the distant south. The paladin had just lost his kingdom to an evil wizard and his desire for vengeance consumed him. Saloratus became a blackguard and struck out at the wizard and all of the wizard's allies. After a year, victory – such as the term can be applied – belonged to Saloratus. However, instead of falling prey to the dagger once again, Saloratus took his own life, possibly in an attempt at atonement.

Xur appears to be a dagger crafted of ordinary dull metal that somehow bleeds poison. This +5 *dagger* coats itself with injury poison constantly. This poison has an initial and secondary damage of 1 Constitution, which can be resisted with a Fortitude save (DC 25). This DC increases by 5 for each "+1" the weapon may gain beyond +5. Additionally, every minute after the initial strike, the victim takes another 1 point of Constitution damage. This ongoing damage continues until the victim succeeds at least one Fortitude save, or until the victim dies. Each separate strike by the dagger is considered a separate application of the poison, and must be saved against separately.

The dagger also allows the bearer to cloak himself with *improved invisibility* once per day, as if cast by a 15<sup>th</sup> level wizard, with the restriction that the invisibility only affects the target of the bearer's vengeance, and any of his associates. Innocent bystanders can see the bearer clearly, but allies and associates of the target cannot see the bearer, even if their allegiance is lax.

Once a day, if the wielder knows the name of one of his targets and focuses for two full, consecutive minutes, he may *scry* the person for one round, as if he had at least 20 ranks in the Scry skill. The dagger itself is used as the scrying device for the purposes of this ability. Note that in the event that all the people that are the subject of the wielder's vengeance should die, the wielder may choose another person or organization to exact retribution upon. However, the character must make this decision within two days or the dagger will turn on its owner, finding its ways into the hands of another, or simply slipping from its sheath and poisoning its former owner. The reasons for vengeance may be profound or trivial; Xur does not care.

Value: 271,000gp.

*Derek Becker did not provide a humorous anecdote to put here, which is mostly the submission coordinator's fault, since he didn't mention it to him. All future submitters are encouraged to have something funny at the end of their article. Like a bunny.*



Art by M. F.

# Gristle and Blood

## The Violent Life and Culture of Orcs

By Robert Sullivan

*This article contains subject matter that may be unsuitable for younger readers, including grisly violence and sexism. If you believe you will be offended by this article, please be forewarned and do not read it.*

*“Life is sacred. That is why one must kill.”*

Some times you can hear them wailing in the darkness far away. Other times you see what remains of those they have eaten. When not living in dread of one of their hordes of blood and death, “civilized” folk deal with their half-breed kin.

They are Orcs and half-Orcs and people are right to be afraid. They are a race of predators unconcerned by concepts of honor or justice. Cruel gods and a life-style that would kill members of a softer race sharpen their innate hardness. Read on to learn more about the savage folk and their kin.

### Birth

*“Damned if you were. Damned if you were not.”*

*Orc prayer over newly born whelps.*

Orcs are born after a 5-month gestation. Two or three Orcs whelps are born to a litter on average. The “extra” whelps usually die because their mother cannot nurse them if three or more are born. Occasionally, another female Orc who has lost her young will try and nurse them.

Orc females are required to become pregnant as often as they can. This is usually within a month of weaning their previous litter. Weaning usually occurs around the third to fourth month after birth. Most females birth 45 or more whelps in their life, out of which perhaps 10 reach adulthood. Very few of these live past the age of 16. This shocking mortality rate, and the waste of resources that go into raising so many children that

### Orcs Names

Whelps do not receive names at birth unless it is a rare and special occasion selected by a shaman. The high attrition rate for young Orcs makes naming whelps pointless for one thing. Another is the shame Orcs place on all kinds of emotional bonds. Most Orcs select a name for himself or herself after they are become an adult. They choose evocative names such as Grendles, Grishnaekh, Woundwart, Mongo, etc. Before that Orc whelps are identified as “hey you” or “that one.”

eventually die, is one of the key reasons that Orcs have never advanced beyond their primitive ways.

The whelps are hairless, deaf, cannot open their eyes and cannot regulate their own body temperature. They are completely dependent on their mothers when first born. It takes several weeks before they can hear or open their eyes.

Labor is always a difficult ordeal for the Orc mother. Orcs retain memories that stretch all the way back to their birth.

Most Orc whelps endure a cruel ritual that ostensibly severs the infants’ spiritual connection to the world around them. Afterwards they are not supposed to be able to possess any empathic connection with any living thing or to be capable of emotions – aside from hate and rage. It is a matter of debate if the ritual works as described or if it is a lifetime of hates, violence and abuse that renders adult Orcs incapable of empathy and joy.

### Adolescence Period

*“Be quick or your parents will eat you.”*

Orc whelps take their first halting steps before four months. The whelps start teething a month later. Very young whelps cannot chew or digest solid food of adult Orcs. Orcs females participate in a hunt and eat food for the next year or so. Then they return to the camp and regurgitate the food for the Orc whelps.

Adult male Orcs generally ignore whelps. This goes to the point that they seldom intervene to save the life of an Orc whelp – even when it is their own offspring – male shamans teach this is a shameful act. Female shamans are always very defensive when it comes to the whelps.

It is unusual for whelps to receive affection. It only occurs in secret given the stigma the shamans place on emotions. By comparison, wolves are kinder to their pups. It is more common for adults to hurt and torment whelps. This is an extension of the fact that shamans teach hate is the only emotion not associated with shame.

Whelps are not taught to hunt. They must take the initiative themselves to follow their elders and see how it is done. Adults usually kill whelps that spoil a hunt. Every day of their life teaches them how to fight. Those caught playing – on their own most young Orcs enjoy a friendly tussle – are savagely beaten and humiliated.

Shamans’ training occurs separately from – but in an environment similar to – the mainstream Orc community. The difference is the training these whelps receive to become shamans. The shamans in-training receive

a steady diet of rancor towards all living things even more so than other whelps.

Shamans and adults also teach – in word and deed – that the only reason to ever touch anyone is if you mean to kill them or rape them.

## Mating Behavior

“They are very flimsy.”

*Orc maxim about human females.*

Mating in Orc society – this is a lesson constantly reiterated by the male shamans – is only by forcible rape.

Most tribes are composed of a group of often-related female Orcs, their offspring and three or more nomadic males who have fought their way to dominance. Newly arrived dominant males generally kill all of the whelps belonging to the previous and now disposed males. This enhances the chances of survival for any whelps they sire. The female Orcs respond to the deaths of the whelps by coming into season and mating with the dominant males within a week.

One of the few times females fight back against the males is when new males attempt to kill the whelps. Many of the females’ band together in common defense while others try to hide the whelps or at least see them safely out of the tribes’ territory. Males often have favored mates – based on the temperament of the female, her appearance and the kind of whelps she produces – but Orcs rarely marry. Dominant males will own females and through brute force control who among the other males may mate, when and with whom.

## Adult Period

“Every day you survive is revenge.”

Adulthood for male Orcs starts when they kill someone for the first time. Adulthood for female Orcs starts when they first become pregnant.

Around puberty – or about six to eight years of age for both genders – how elder’s view young Orcs changes. Their mothers and the female shamans no longer protect them. Females are potential mothers of whelps while males are potential threats. Male shamans will command Orcs to have sexual intercourse with females to sire children.

A different fate awaits the young male Orcs. Older Orcs assault the young males in an attempt to beat them into submission, drive them away or kill them. Frequently, those who run away band together. These groups of all-male Orcs wander alone for a few years. They grow harder and crueler than before in the wilderness. Eventually they attempt to conquer another tribe

by deposing its males for leadership. The male Orcs that are able to withstand the beatings have to integrate themselves into the pecking order in order to stay with the tribe. The rest of their lives are spent fighting their way from being the Orc at the bottom to being the Orc at the top.

Adulthood consists of hunting parties, war bands, and endless hostility for males. For females adulthood

## Half-Orcs

A point to remember is that Orcs are as old a race as are Elves. There have been half-Orcs searching for some place in society for as long as their have been half-Elves searching for some place in society.

Some half-Orcs are born and reared in human society. Most often this occurs among barbarian humans. Other times, the half-Orc is born to a ‘civilized’ society – usually after that human society fought Orcs. How half-Orcs are raised in any given human society depends on the players who wish to run half-Orc characters and Games Master. Even those treated reasonably well have an innate wildness. They feel most comfortable in the wilderness but are unlikely to turn their backs on those who were good to them.

Half-Orcs have an odd position in Orc society. Half-Orcs are almost inevitably the products of rape. For them to be born in Orc society means their mothers’ were captives of the tribe – as a trophy for a warrior, at the whim of a shaman, or for any number of other reasons.

Unless the powerful Orcs are patient in addition to wanting to debase human males it is almost unheard of for them to be born to an Orc mother and a human father.

Half-Orcs are abused but no more so than full-blooded Orcs. They mature physically at half the rate of true Orcs.

Survival is just another accomplishment to Orcs. Half-Orcs receive the same minimal levels of respect, as do full-blooded Orcs if they survive. However, they are almost always treated as an outsider to full-blooded Orc society. Half-Orcs are rarely able to attain or hold a position of tribal leader.

Many half-Orcs receive impossible First-Kill Rituals. Or the elders simply exile them from a tribe. These half-Orcs often end up in a “civilized” society in one role or another. They will always be influenced – usually for the worse – by their time among traditional Orcs. Most go on to become adventurers, soldiers or criminals. Occasionally they leave the tribe and to master a disconcerting level of self-control – like wolves with exception table manners – they use when dealing with the “domesticated” races. These half-Orcs are marked by their ability to slide seamlessly back and forth between barbarism and civility.

It is extremely derogatory – and dangerous – to call a half-Orc a “half-pig.”

means tending the tribe and having whelps until death from exhaustion.

Although they often have things easier due to their magical abilities this is true for shamans as well.

Orcs are joyless creatures by the time they are adults. They find no reprieve in battle or hunting – just a vent for a lifetime of fury and hatred and a chance to take someone with them into death.

## Orc Rituals and Culture

“Actions speak; words whimper.”

Ranging from cannibalism, to trials of blood, to drinking contests, rituals are some of the few aspects of Orcish life that even resemble civilization. Additionally, a myriad of small behavioral traits define the life of Orcs

## Kaehg-uor Ritual

“They say they are good and we are evil because they have no claws and we do. Would we be drinking their blood from their skulls if they are as good as they say?”

*Famous Orc drinking toast.*

Orcs take their drinks – normally a fermented blood-broth – from the skulls of the foes that they have killed in one of their few formalized rituals. The ritual takes place shortly after a battle. The best drinking vessels are ed skulls. The ritual properly includes drinking over the dead bodies of foes killed and offering up praise for the chieftain, head shaman or whomever is in charge. The ritual is then no longer formal and the Orcs drink themselves unconscious.

## Orcblood Spells

Below are listed spells to which those with Orc blood may have access.

### Edible

Transmutation

**Level:** Adept 2, Cleric 3, Ranger 2

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** One action

**Range:** Touch

**Area:** One pound/level of caster

**Duration:** Permanent

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell allows the Orc shaman to make nearly anything – animal or vegetable – edible. Certain things that would normally be poisonous become non-poisonous with this spell. Other things that are simply non-edible – like moss – are now edible and provide nourishment.

### Consume Soul

Necromancy

**Level:** Adept 3, Cleric 4, Ranger 4

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** One round

**Range:** Touch

**Area:** One slain creature

**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell blesses the body of a slain creature, trapping a bit of the creature's soul in its heart, so it can be consumed.

The creature must have been slain within the past hour, and the shaman casting the spell must have been present at the creature's death, for this spell to have any effect. Any Orc-kin who eats at least a mouthful of the heart of the creature gains a +2 divine bonus to attack and damage rolls for the next 24 hours. A maximum of eight Orc-kin can benefit from a single casting of this spell, regardless of the size of the slain creature's heart.

Though this spell traps part of the victim's soul, it does not have any negative implications that hinder resurrection. In fact, a creature that has been raised after being subject to this spell can recognize on sight any Orc-kin that benefited from dining on his soul.

### Skull Fetter

Necromancy

**Level:** Adept 3, Cleric 4

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** One round

**Range:** Touch

**Area:** One slain creature

**Duration:** One year

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell allows an Orc shaman to bind the soul of a dead individual to its own skull. Only individuals' dead less than two days may be targets of this spell. The target gets a Will save as though they were alive, and if it succeeds it cannot

be subject to this spell again unless it is raised and dies again.

If the soul fails its save, it is partially bound to its own skull for one year. During this time, the shaman can ask up the soul up to three questions per week, regardless of how long the target has been dead. The soul is compelled to communicate, and must succeed another Will save if it wishes to withhold the whole truth, or to lie. The skull speaks in a rasping voice that is audible to all, and the shaman automatically understands the words regardless of language, though others listening must know the language themselves to comprehend the skull's answers.

Any form of magic that raises the dead creature automatically dispels *skull fetter*. This spell does not hinder the raising of the dead in any way. At the end of the spell's duration, the soul goes free unless the shaman again casts *skull fetter*. If the soul does go free, often it will become a vengeful spirit, desiring revenge against the shaman who imprisoned it. If the skull is shattered before the duration ends, however, the spirit is usually compelled to pass on.

Shamans typically have at least two dozen fettered skulls at any given time. The less important ones are often casually carried in duffle bags, while more important ones are lashed to the tops of staves and walking sticks.

## Ritual of the First Kill

*“This blood will guide the rest of your battles.”*

*Blessing before an Orc child's first hunt.*

Young male Orcs must kill an individual from one of the numerous races that are enemies of Orcs before they can be considered adults. The shaman who is in charge of the ritual decides of which race and whom the young Orc must kill. The shaman may decide to pick a very hard target if he does not like the young Orc, such as a noted Elf wizard or Dwarf warrior. The young Orc who has three options; kill the target and bring their head back to the shaman (so that it might be *skull fettered*), kill the shaman or run away.

## Territorial Marking

Orcs mark their territories largely by scent. They often do this by urinating or defecating near the edges of their territory and on stumps, rocks and logs that are within their territory. Such subtlety is lost on humans and demi-humans, who cannot tell the difference between the wastes of animals or Orcs. Orcs use more demonstrative methods to communicate territorial markings to the “domesticated” races in response. These more direct communications include piles of bones of humans or demi-humans, the piked heads of humans or demi-humans and piles of rocks or tree-trunks marked with the symbols of Orcish gods painted in the blood of humans or demi-humans. Ironically, such methods tend to provoke humans and demi-humans into entering Orc territory.

## Orc Wailing

One of the eeriest things for travelers to hear is Orcs wailing in the distance. Orcs wail in the same way wolves howl and lion's roar. The sound Orcs produce

## Cannibalism

*“People take spices well. Good thing too. Otherwise people are tasteless.”*

Cannibalism technically refers to eating the flesh of the same species – or in this case, Orcs eating Orcs. Orcs eat Orc flesh and the flesh of sentient creatures less than is generally thought by non-Orcs. The eating of sentient creatures that does occur is usually a ritualistic part of their violent religion. Only rarely is cannibalism purely for nourishment. Orcs are governed by a cruel practicality. If given a choice between eating a moose or a Dwarf, most Orcs choose the moose. The moose has a lot more meat on it than does the Dwarf and is a lot easier to take down.

is like an unsettling mix of the calls of those two predators. Sages suggest Orcs may do so before and after a hunt, to sound an alarm and to locate other members of the tribe when separated. Even before they have intellectually identified the sound it elicits emotionally a primal rancor in Elves and Dwarves.

## Minor Traditions

Some Orcs wear hats or hoods. These they soak in the blood of their victims whenever possible.

Orcs use body language as an active part of communication perhaps more than any other sentient race. Dominant Orcs will freely stare other individuals directly in the eye to declare and reinforce their superior rank. Various facial muscles, eyes and the ears are extremely important when Orcs are expressing their feelings. Bared teeth, open mouth, ears pointed forwards indicate a threat by a dominant Orc. A subordinate Orc will cringe towards the leader with head low, bent legs, ears back and down, in a submissive nature.

Orcs – unlike humans and demi-humans – can move their lupine ears like many other large animals. They may flick their ears to keep away biting flies, tilt them slightly forwards to indicate anticipation, or very far forwards to indicate anger or flatten them back to signal submission. Non-Orcs generally miss these body language clues, and suffer a -1 penalty to Sense Motive checks against Orcs or goblinoids.

Orcish superstition says that it is foolish to say what you want. The gods hear it and make certain one never gets what one desires. One must just take what one desires by force when a chance presents itself.

There is no Orc word for “forgive” because the concept is more alien to them than “honor” or “love.” An Orc will always try to revenge themselves for any slight they have ever suffered. As when hunting they prefer to strike from ambush and usually attempt to kill the other.

Orcs frequently kill anyone they catch in a lie. This includes dissembling, lies of omissions, or ridiculous statements about the future. This is not out of any sense of honor but out of contempt. Orcs believe lies are the province of weaklings unable to enforce their will by force. Non-Orcs consider this attitude towards lying to be one of the biggest impediments to Orcs becoming a “civilized” race.

Orcs have only a passing interest in gold. It is too soft to find use as a weapon. Non-Orcs shower them with arrows every time Orcs attempt trade with the gold. So gold is usually turned over to the females or shamans although the warriors sometimes make rings for their lips or ears.

There is no Orc sense of “justice.” Merely what the powerful Orcs are capable of forcing other Orcs to do. Orc tribes have a very wolf-like organization. There is an informal ranking of all members of a tribe. The maneuvering for greater personal position through kills, whelps sired or birthed and basic martial force within a tribe is intense and constant.

Orcs call their tendency to do whatever they are strong enough and brutal enough to do “freedom.” Conversely, anyone or anything that gets in the way of them fulfilling their immediate and impulsive appetites – notably Elves, Dwarves and humans – are “tyrants.”

## Orcish Artifice

“Dwarf-thing!”

*Orcish curse, used against objects they can't use.*

In addition to being a nocturnal species, Orcs are partly colorblind. That is why they favor harsh colors – those are only ones they can see. Softer tones and pastels appear as a wash out gray.

Orcs can do crafts. However, a fit of rage by another Orc invariably destroys the tools used to create technically sophisticated crafts. Further, an Orc who tries to study a craft always makes easy prey for another Orc who spent the same time learning to fight. Orc tools, weapons, garments, etc. more sophisticated than sharp rocks or leathers are usually the spoils of war.

The first exception to this rule is that Orcs are often adept skinners, tanners and leatherworkers. Orcs receive a +1 racial bonus to Craft (leatherworking) checks.

The other exception is Orc ritual scarification. They can create surprisingly decorative scaring patterns and designs that do not lower the Orcs charisma nor impair strength or freedom of movement. Orc scars denote status, accomplishments, males sired and if one is a shaman. Orcs receive a +1 racial bonus to Craft (scarification) skill rolls. A successful Craft (scarification) or Knowledge (Orcs) will allow an individual to interpret the scars of an Orc. See the article *Orc Scars*, in Asgard issue #4, for more information on ritual Orcish scarification.

The powerful members of Orc tribes take pride in their collections of fettered skulls. The shamans compete with warriors for the largest and most impressive collection.

## The Faith of Beasts

“Never look at the stars.”

*Shaman admonishment to whelps.*

Orcs are unique among the thinking races in that – except for the shamans – they typically hate their gods.

Most Orcs would be apathetic towards their gods on their own. However, the ever-present shamans always ensure public loyalty to the gods. When shamans – who as a group have a disproportionately strong influence over Orc culture – are not ranting and raving about hate in general, they are ranting and raving about hating Dwarves, humans, Gnomes, Halflings, animals and especially Elves.

One of the few exceptions to this are the female shamans and the young, among whom worship of the female Orc gods is mostly sincere. The other exception is chieftains, whose worship of the vicious and patriarchal gods is often sincere.

The ancestral spirits of Orcs are out to get their living counterparts. These spirits (Orc ancestor spirits are specters without the *energy drain* or *create spawn* abilities) appear to young Orcs. With honeyed words the spirits lead the young Orcs into danger and folly by deceiving them. Starved for affection and kind words young Orcs often fall pray to the seeming kindness of the ancestor spirits. Only later are the young Orcs betrayed in ways that are at best traumatizing and at worst potentially fatal. This always leaves deep emotional scars on the Orcs. The idea that other races have that the spirits of ancestors are wise and benevolent guides is incomprehensible to Orcs.

Male Orcs are usually deeply divided between shamans and those without magic. These feuds occasionally tear apart a tribe. Whoever ends up running the tribe – a warrior or a shaman – will often appoint a strong member of the opposition as an “advisor.” This keeps the other individual where the tribes’ leader can watch them and helps placate their group enough to be useful.

Ultimately, Orcs hate their gods, resent their spiritual leaders and fear their ancestors.

## Hunting and War Making

“Turn your skin into hate. Turn your blood into malice. Turn your tusks and claws into revenge. Always be hungry.”

*Orc war/hunting chant.*

Orcs see little deference between hunting and war making. The collapse of hunting grounds drives them to find new ones – this inevitably puts them into conflict with some other group. Equally, they always defend their hunting grounds with lethal force if they encounter any thinking creatures not of their tribe in their territory.

Orcs hunt within a specific territory in packs made up of males and occasionally females. The average tribes' territory is about 10 square miles for every adult tribe member. Orcs often travel as far as 50 miles in a day while hunting.

A group of males moves through a region with as much stealth as possible. Before launching a sudden attack they prefer to creep through the undergrowth to get as close to a target as possible. The only real difference between hunting parties and war parties is that war parties are larger than hunting parties.

Favored tactics include hiding near a watering hole or well, or along a game path or road, and waiting to ambush a target. The older and savvier hunters or fighters circle around behind the target while younger members create a distraction by charging. Targets will often try to flee, heading straight into the primary hunters.

Orcish diet ranges from big game, such as moose and giant insects, to earthworms, berries, and vermin. They also eat creatures like wyverns and manticors and even tree limbs, plants, moss, fungi and the like. Regions with large numbers of Orcs in a relatively small territory are frequently denuded of all plant and animal life. Farming and agriculture is considered an incomprehensible waste of time that reminds Orcs too much of the weak ways of Elves.

Orcs do not voluntarily choose to live in swamps, tundra's, badlands, deserts, ruins or the like, and they simply lack the organizational skills to hold anything more developed than a village or ruin. Although for short periods of time Orcs frequently take and possess better locations, such as towns, castles, or dungeon complexes, they rarely take the effort to keep their home in good condition, causing even the most beautiful locations to fall into ruin, at which point the tribe will begin eyeing new locations to seize.

These high-water times for Orcs result in more half-Orcs being sired than at any other time. Some are left behind in the form of pregnant mothers or abandoned whelps. As spoils of war or as a last bitter act of revenge others are birthed back in the tribe. Indeed, it is not unknown for princes or princesses to be kidnapped and later for some half-Orc – unaware of his theoretical birthright – to be heir to a throne.

Orcs eat their food very quickly – other races say Orcs gorge themselves – in part to keep other Orcs or animals from stealing it. Orcs are perfectly capable of eating raw or rancid food.

Orcs are not concerned with finding worthy foes, nor do they have lofty goals or desires. They do not have an inherent concept of "honor" or "hope," preferring to do only what is necessary to survive. The little free, safe

time they do have is spent in random pursuits, never toward long-term plans.

## Death

*"Take enough of the world with you into death and you will find oblivion."*

It is rare for them to live past 16 years. Orcs are "old" if they are 24 years of age. It is almost unheard of for them to reach 30. Those "raised in captivity" die of natural causes around 37 years of age.

Few Orcs receive a formal burial. Whoever defeated and killed the former tribal leaders usually eats them. Elder Orcs who flee from younger members of their tribe wander away into the wilderness and die alone. Those Orcs that die on a battlefield remain for the elements and animals.

The shamans are the only Orcs who receive formal burials. Other shamans cut down and prepare a tree when one of them dies. The tree has a space large enough to fit the corpse of the shaman hollowed out and a lid is prepared. The shaman's body goes inside the hollowed tree along with their personal treasure. Then a salt and tar mixture are poured in around the shaman's body, to act as preservatives. The shamans also carve the top of the log to resemble the head and face of the dead shaman. The work is unsophisticated but sufficient to convey a fierce or hostile expression. The log is then buried upright in the ground – well away from the tribes' regular living areas – so just the top few feet are exposed and the shamans' body is below ground.

The bodies of shamans will often reawaken as mummies if they are disturbed.

## The Search for Oblivion

*"May you be reborn."*

*Orc curse for the dead.*

The threat of death holds no sway for Orcs. Orcs are not much given to believing in fate, destiny or karma – although they do understand those concepts – with one exception: their own deaths.

Orcs are extraordinarily fatalistic about their own deaths. They believe that nothing is written about what will become of a person, except the time, location, and manner of their deaths. By the time of puberty Orcs believe they can sense their own death. They will start to describe it in terms of when, how, where, and why. Whether these are genuine precognitions, self-fulfilling prophecies, or something in between is unknown. Half-Orcs brought up in a traditionally Orcish community usually have these same beliefs about their own deaths.

Orcs are taught that if they serve their gods and their tribe well that they will be granted oblivion upon death. Orcs describe this as “locking eyes with oblivion.” This desire for oblivion is incomprehensible to other races. It – and their own violent death – calls to Orcs every bit as much as the Elven afterlife calls to the Fair Folk. The lives of Orcs are so joyless as to make oblivion desirable. Only those who have not served as well go to Orc gods’ fortress in the afterlife so they may later be reincarnated. The worst fate is to become an ancestor spirit.

## High Orcs, the Dopkaelfar

“Who told you we were domesticated?”

*Typical Dopkaelfar question to someone ‘civilized’.*

Orcs and half Orcs who receive that rare compassion – or who are brought-up outside of traditional Orc culture – are very different creatures from their Wild Folk cousins. These “Dopkaelfar” – as they are called – are capable of experiencing joy, happiness, pride, hope, justice, compassion, love, etc.

The difference between the Dopkaelfar and the traditional Orcs is philosophical rather than physiological. Sociologically the two groups are as distinct as the drow are from high Elves. In terms of game mechanics the difference is a tendency towards neutral alignments rather than chaotic evil.

This is not to say they are “civilized.” They have become even more like wolves and lions. They kill to eat and not out of hate. They play with their whelps. Females have roles in the hunt. They are also allowed to be formidable fighters.

It is not wise for even an accomplished ranger to just stroll into a wolf pack, even when the adult wolves are relaxing at their den and playing with their pups. Further, Elves, Dwarves and such, even if they not brought-up by their own kind will still be Elves, Dwarves and such and so have certain natural predispositions. The same is true of Orcs and half-Orcs.

### Orc Cenotaphs

In remote locations are great boulders carefully carved to resemble giant Orc heads. In appearance these “cenotaphs” resemble a cross the between the giant stone heads of Easter Island and the large stone heads carved by the Olmecs of Mesoamerica. These mysterious cenotaphs are terribly ancient. Who or what created these strange Orc-headed cenotaphs and why? The rare ones that remain show a considerable degree of skill on part of whoever created them. All of the existing cenotaphs have an expression of the utmost sadness. Certain scholars point to these cenotaphs as evidence to suggest that Orcs were once more than they are now. This is not safe argument to bring up near Elves or Dwarves.

These Orcs and half-Orcs find comfort in creating and being a part of their own communities. The alternative is to be trapped as they are between the contempt of the “civilized” races and the hate of traditional Orcs.

Such rare Dopkaelfar communities have inevitably broken away from Orcs traditions. They lack the traditional Orc shamans and religions – replacing them with primal interpretations of neutral deities of the moon, hunting, and nature – and thus lack the usual loathing of the divine that most Orcs possess.

They enjoy pointing out hypocrisy, catching people in lies and drawing attention to holes in logic or reasoning. A favorite pass time for two Dopkaelfar is to loudly talk, comparing “civilized” society, to that of wolves or even Orcs where a “civilized person” will hear them. Ideally, this results in a brawl and the Dopkaelfar are nearly always up for a “friendly” fight to unconsciousness.

They feel that the Orc cenotaphs are holy sites. Dopkaelfar no longer hunger for oblivion. However, they are just as fatalistic about their deaths as are traditional Orcs. Dopkaelfar do not propagate as quickly as normal Orcs, but this does not hinder their survival because they also do not kill nearly as many of their own children. Nor do they exhaust their hunting grounds as quickly. However, they do live in the same kinds of locations. The Dopkaelfar are proud of their ability to survive.

At the very least this means that a player character half-Orc does not have to be a sociopath given to hysterical violence if they were treated better along they way. Otherwise, they are harsh, joyless and unstable creatures not really suited to joining an adventuring party.

### Orc-kin Adventurers

Those Orcs and half-Orcs that have been exiled from a tribe for one reason or another make the best Orc and half-Orc adventurers. Adventuring Orcs and half-Orcs take classes other than barbarian – such as fighters, clerics, and rangers – much more often than normal Orcs. These wandering Orcs and half-Orcs usually approach these classes in a primal kind of way. For example, Orc-kin rangers have been known to literally live in a wolf pack before they return to their tribe or become adventurers, and it is common for Orc clerics to serve their deity only after having a near-death vision.

No matter how dangerous their life is as adventurers, it will still be the best life they have ever known, and so few Orc-kin willingly return to their roots. If they do, the visit alone will certainly be adventure enough for the Orc-kin’s companions.

*Robert Sullivan is a long-time gamer from Texas.*



# DWARF & GOBLIN

A TAVERN-STYLE CARD GAME  
FOR FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

*By Kristian Richards and  
Crooked Staff Productions*

*Dwarf & Goblin* is a simple card game for two players that is popular in many inns and taverns across the realms. The deck itself consists of only nine cards – three of which represent Dwarves (each one with a value of 3, 5, or 7) and six cards which represent Goblins (with values of 1 to 6). Therefore, in order to play this game you will require either the cards provided with this article, or a pack of playing cards (selecting the 3, 5, and 7 of diamonds to represent the Dwarf cards, and the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of clubs to represent the Goblin cards. In actual decks for the game, illustrations are often more lavish and diverse, with each number having its own traditional image, but for casual games, the cards presented should suffice. Since the game runs so quickly, people often play 5 games at a time, with the first to win 3 times winning the wager.

The rules of the game are simple. First, each player is required to place a wager (of the same value) before any cards are dealt. This usually ranges from 1 copper coin in a friendly tavern game, to pouches full of gold in games between wealthy nobles. Next, the cards are shuffled and dealt (face down)

into three separate piles, one for each player, and one set between them.

Each player then examines his cards, and has the choice of either keeping what he has been dealt, or discarding one card in order to pick up the top card of the middle deck. Traditionally, the player who did not shuffle goes first, and the dealer alternates between hands.

The aim of the game is to have a higher 'total' value of cards than your opponent. However, only cards of one suit count toward victory. You determine the total value of your hand by either counting the value of the Dwarf cards, or the value of the Goblin cards, but not both.

**Example:** If you have the '3 Goblins' card, the '5 Goblins' card, and the '7 Dwarves' card, you would have a total score of 8, because of the Goblin cards. The '7 Dwarves' card would not be counted, as it is of a different suit.

As you may have noticed (when deciding on whether to stick with the cards you have been dealt, or to swap out a card) to have as many cards of the same suit as possible.

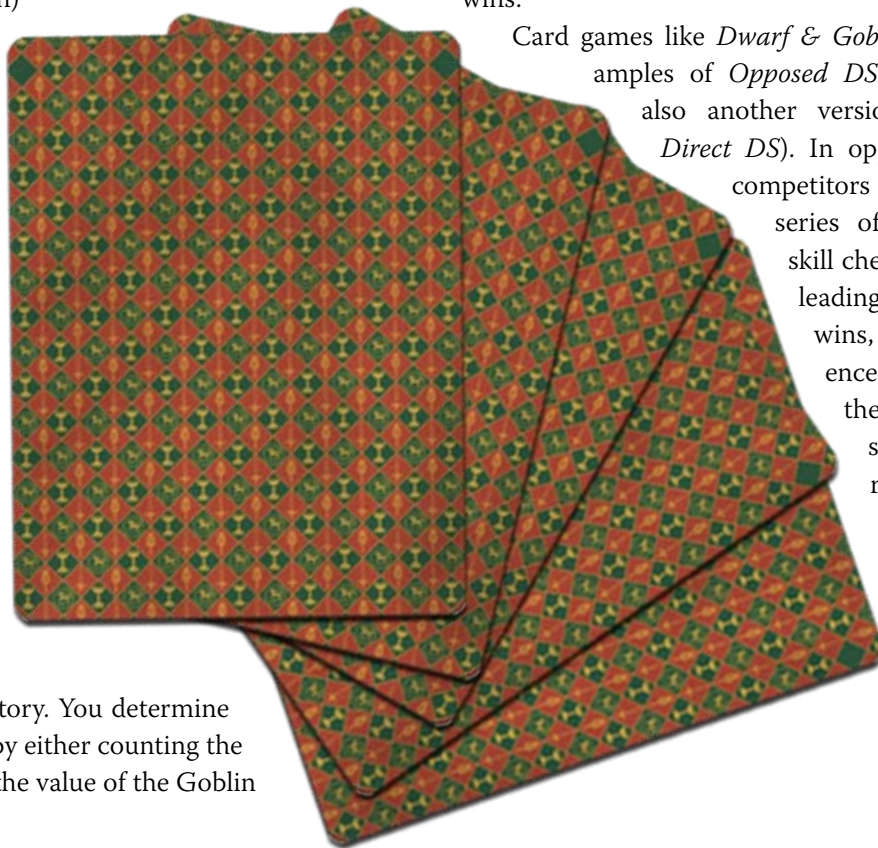
In the event of a tie (*i.e.*, both players have the same score) the player who plays Dwarves wins. However, if both players play Goblins, and there is a tie, the deck is shuffled and each player is dealt one card. Both players then turn over their cards simultaneously, and the player with the highest value card wins. Again, in the case of a tie, the Dwarf card wins.

## USING DEGREE OF SUCCESS

In *Tournaments, Fairs, & Taverns*, the Degree of Success rules help decide the winner in competitions, and to see how much they win by. Because of the relative simplicity of this game, the Degree of Success rules are little different from a normal opposed check, but for more complicated games, Degree of Success provides a much fairer picture of who wins in a competition.

In the Degree of Success rules, competitors make checks, with the winner adding to his DS (for Degree of Success). Each game has a target number, and the competitor whose DS first reaches the target number wins.

Card games like *Dwarf & Goblin* are examples of *Opposed DS* (there is also another version, called *Direct DS*). In opposed DS, competitors make a series of opposed skill checks. If the leading character wins, the difference between the winner's skill check result and the loser's is added



Art by Duncan Fielden

to the winner's DS. If the trailing character wins, the difference is subtracted from the leading character's DS (this can result in a DS below 0). In this type of competition, a lot of "to-ing and fro-ing" may take place.

Each game will also have a few specific rules of its own. Games with time limits impose a maximum number of opposed skill checks, while some contests might allow players to use different tactics for each 'round'. A more detailed version of the Degree of Success rules can be found at Natural 20 Press's website (<http://www.d20reviews.com/Natural20>), and a wide variety of games that use these rules can be found in *Tournaments, Fairs, & Taverns*, available from [RPGNow](http://www.rpgnow.com).

### DWARF & GOBLIN, DS VERSION

**Target Number/DS:** Varies/Opposed.

#### *Mechanics*

Since *Dwarf & Goblin* is fairly simple, success is usually based on luck, rather than skill. Usually you only need to use these rules if multiple games are being played (typically, *Dwarf & Goblin* is played to Best of Five).

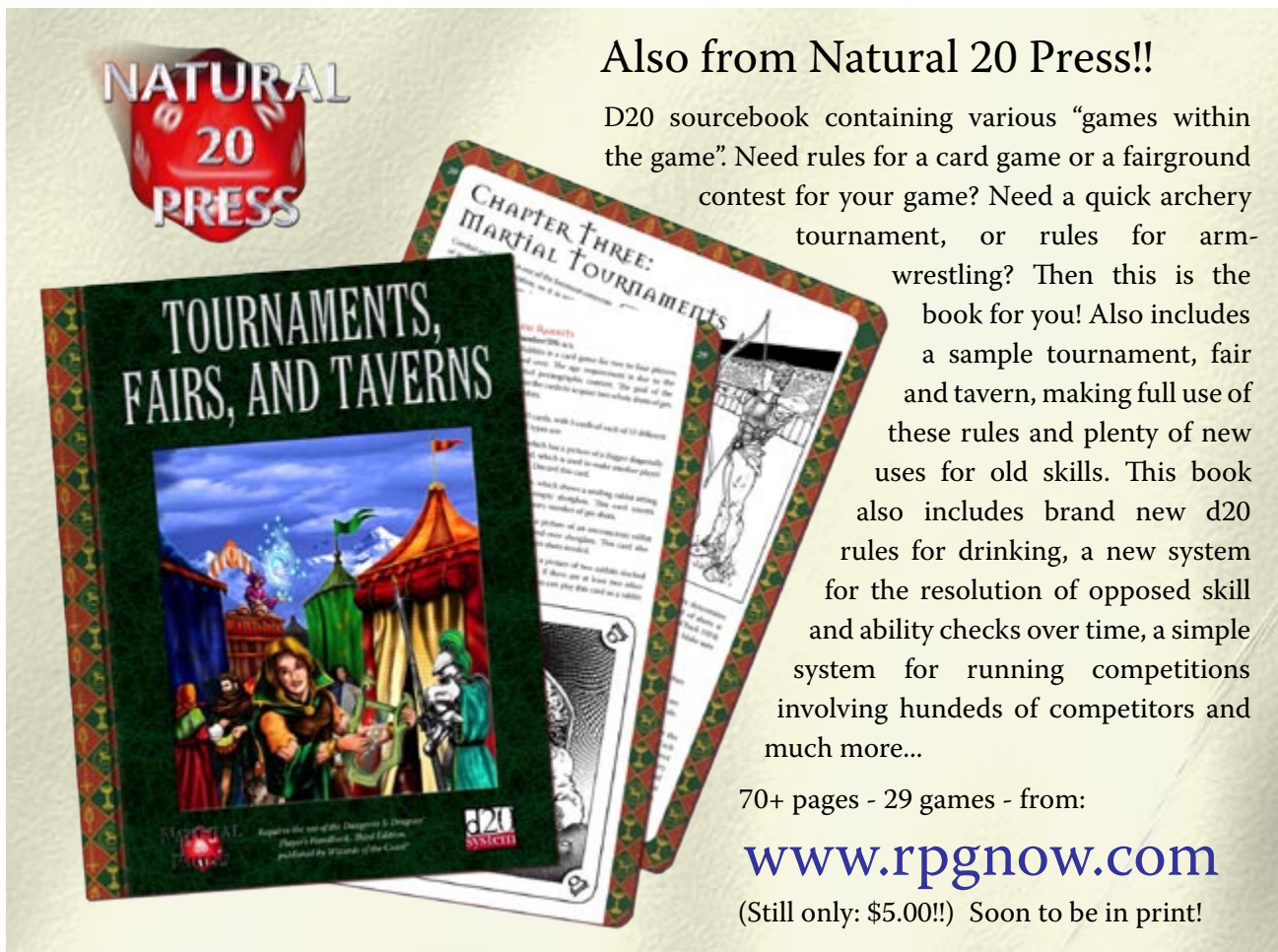
Make one opposed Knowledge (gaming and gambling) check for every set of 'Best of Five' games played. Because the game is so simple, characters may not gain a bonus greater than +8 to this check, regardless of

their skill level. Also, a character with 5 or more ranks of Pick Pocket may cheat and add a +2 synergy bonus to his check, for a total possible bonus of +10. One spell from Wild Spellcraft can grant an additional +20 bonus to this check, because it lets the player transmute the cards that he draws.

For every 4 points, or fraction thereof, that a player wins by, he is considered to be beaten his foe by 1 game. For instance, if Meece beats Bengar by 5 points, he will have won by a margin of one, 3 to 2. If Meece and Bengar played twenty games total, and Meece's DS was 31, he would have won by a margin of 8 games, 14 to 6. For obvious reasons, you cannot win by a margin greater than the total number of games played, regardless of your skill check.

*Kristian Richards is the point of contact for Crooked Staff Games, which is a site currently hosted by EN World at <http://www.d20reviews.com/csp/>*

*The 2 pages immediately following this article are designed for print. Running the same sheet of card through your printer twice should give you serviceable versions of these cards. They are, unfortunately still a little small, but we are reliably informed that this is authentic dwarven size.*



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Goblin



Goblins



Goblins



Goblins



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Goblins



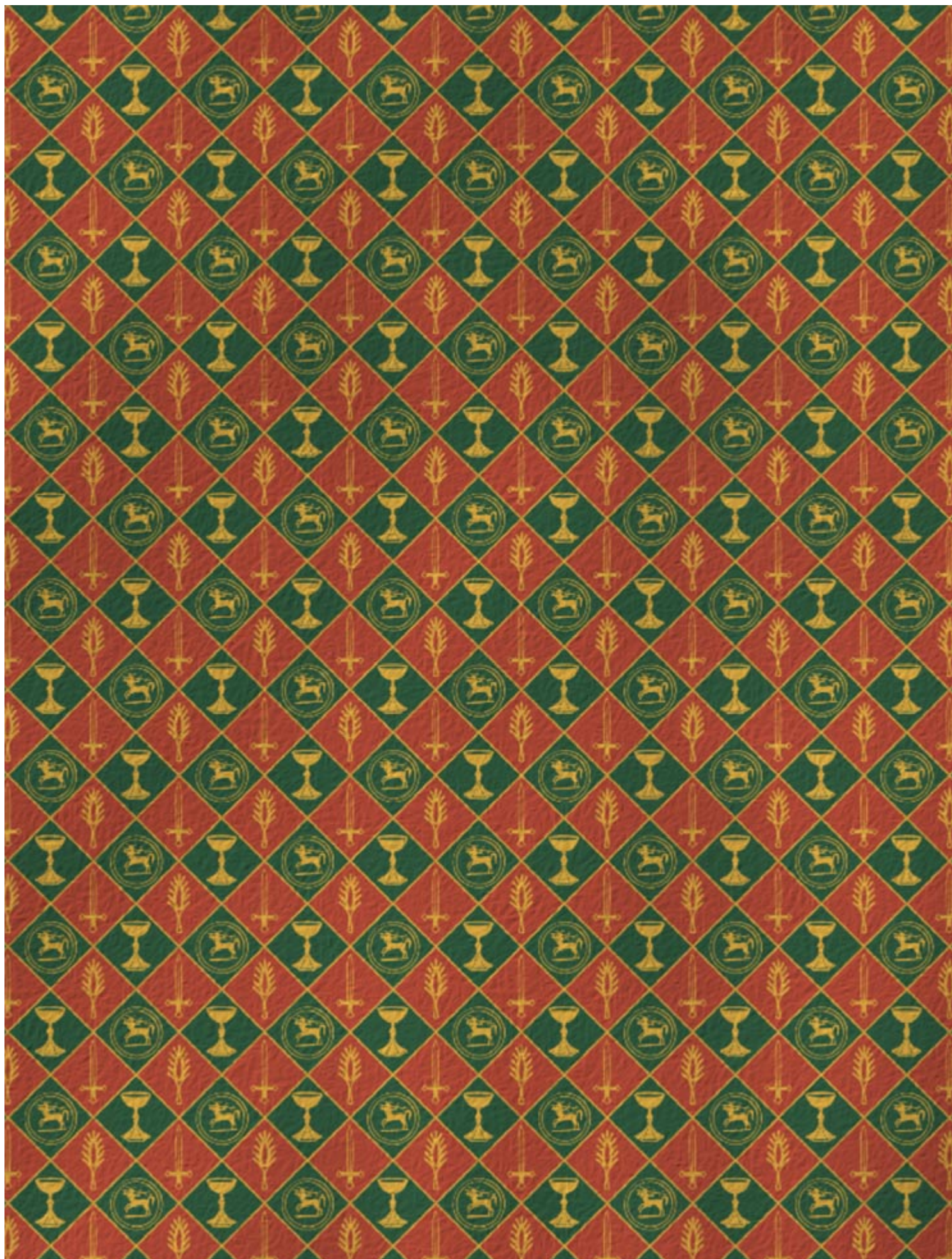
Dwarves



Dwarves



Dwarves



# The Quintessential Witch

from Mongoose Publishing

## Introduction

Witches, a word that invokes fear, confusion and superstition. These feelings are well grounded in culture; from folklore to fairytale to play, witches appear as shadowy figures with a malevolent intent, or as a noble and kind hearted individual who risk their all to save an innocent child. The witch can fit into either stereotype with ease. Some miles away an aged figure labours to birth a dying infant, sensing the baby's distress, he invokes the goddess and the deathly pallor is replaced by a vibrant pinkish hue. In the wilderness a strange figure appears at dusk to leave food for lost travellers.

A full moon stares down from a blanket of infinite gemstones and passing beyond its face is the silhouette of a robed woman, with pointed hat, riding upon a broomstick. All of these are examples of the witch as have been seen from a host of varied perspectives ranging from village elder to servant of dark forces. *The Quintessential Witch* is a sourcebook designed to add a new class to those presented in *Core Rulebook I*. Within this volume players and Games Masters alike will have at their fingertips the material needed to play a character that is on the one hand compelling and on the other despised.

The witch is more than a simple revision of one or more of the existing classes. Rather, he stands as the symbol of uncluttered beliefs, an intricate connection between mortal ingenuity and infinite divine power. The witch, as he is discussed here, blends arcane and divine magic into a vastly reconceived character that can be seamlessly integrated into any campaign.

The witch is not a wizard, nor cleric nor even a druid although he has qualities of each. He holds that all instances of divinity, be it from pantheistic to monotheistic perspectives, are mere reflections of the two forces keyed to the notions of the masculine and feminine. By elevating these forces into deific persona, the god and the goddess, the witch indeed observes the harmony at work within the world as balances between two diametrical opposed powers that must work in unity. It is from this realization that he can draw from the power of these forces to channel energy that is benevolent or malevolent depending on his larger goals and ethical beliefs. Hence, he is cleric, druid, wizard and more.

## The Quintessential Witch

In this book a player will have the necessary information to construct a character that will stand apart from other spell-slingers in his group. Character concepts, like those in previous books in this series, individualise the character by offering the tools to develop an interesting background and personality. Prestige classes are the goals of most witches, as each offers an enhanced or further specialised aspect of this exciting new class. Herbs, brooms, seeing stones and other tools are added to the mix to help the witch restore the fragile balance between the competing forces of the masculine and feminine powers. No witch is complete without a collection of spells to buttress his already formidable arsenal of magic. When these spells are not enough, he can work with



other witches to cast greater and more powerful spells called Ceremonies.

Furthermore, experienced witches enjoy heightened abilities when working in special places and at certain times of the year and phases of the moon. Seizing mastery over these places and times of power can mean the difference between life and death when facing the legions of inquisitors that thirst for witches' blood. These groups of witches often form more permanent associations such as secret societies, cults, and covens. The most potent witches can establish their own covens and orders, creating safe zones, magical glens, and other strongholds that will stave off the constant threat from those who lack the understanding of the true nature of the craft.

## The Witch

Somewhere between the druid and the wizard lurks the witch. A figure of mystery and romance, of bittersweet endings and of revenge inspired beginnings. From the hedge wizard to the crone, the healer to the hag, the woman in the tower to the beastly nightmare that exults in the terror of his enemies; the witch is a constant source of imagination as either an ally or an enemy. The witch class, however, is far more than a simple stereotype. He is a figure who recognises the powers within nature, but also believes in the governing forces behind it. Considering the witches' cosmological outlook, many individuals view witches as a threat to the core of their religious beliefs. These opponents tend to exaggerate the practices performed by these simple people. The competing ideologies typically divorce witches from societies that have a powerful religious hierarchy. Thus when the two belief systems meet, there is usually open conflict.

Contrary to his enemies' perceptions, he channels the energies of nature typically to help others who cannot help themselves. Only in the direst of situations will he lash out with his powers to destroy or harm. His somewhat mysterious nature, in regard to his allegiances, places him on the outside of civilisation. He becomes an enemy of authority, be it religious or secular, and because of this he is placed beyond the comforts offered by those whom he would help. At times he is a loner but usually he is a member of a group, a coven, formed to enhance the resources available to him and his kind. The witch is a misunderstood class, largely due to the misconceptions held by those in power. At times there are those who do indeed weave spells of limitless malice, plotting the ruin of the innocent. However, there are equally those who work quietly, doing their

best to heal and aid those in need. The witch, much like other spellcasters can hold to any moral outlook.

**Adventures:** An adventure for a witch is an opportunity to expand his powers and resources. In most cases civilisation is a poor partner for a witch as it is generally too restrictive and suffocating. While not overly concerned with material things, he does recognise the value of coin to further his goals and the accumulation of magical equipment can provide protection otherwise barred from him.

**Characteristics:** The witch is an amalgamation of the wizard, druid, and cleric. He is able to cast what are usually arcane spells as divine invocations from his two sources of power - the god and the goddess. He is a capable healer, having gained mastery of herbs to supplement his limited spell casting ability. When all else fails, he can toss around fireballs and lightning bolts just as well as any wizard. He can even bind a familiar like his arcane cousins.

In addition to his skills as a spellcaster, the witch shares several traits with the druid. He is able to identify plants and animals with unflinching accuracy, although he develops this ability later than his druidic brethren. He can also adopt the forms of animals through *wild shape*. He can even manipulate his appearance to assume the guise of any he meets. These abilities and his persistent youth are where the similarities to druids stop. The key aspect that differentiates the witch from the aforementioned classes is that he may extend his lifespan by four times from that which a normal member of his race is able to achieve. He draws his spells from the cleric, druid and wizard spell lists and casts them as divine spells. He is a unique class not to be mistaken for any other; doing so usually has dire consequences.

**Alignment:** Witches perceive nature as a servant to the will of the divine. Thus, they will rarely position themselves as bystanders in the world. Instead, they purposefully enter into the cycles that affect the world, recognising them as the order of the universe, and that if they do anything they must at least acknowledge the power of the system at work. Witches of any alignment can be found, but typically witches have little regard for chaos as it tends to undermine their philosophical and religious beliefs. However, when it comes to ethics, they tend to fall somewhere between good and evil.

**Religion:** Witches turn the religious spectrum upside down as they believe, almost universally, that the entire pantheon is nothing more than a collection of

assorted aspects of the male and female divinities. They believe the gods as they are worshiped are manifestations of the particular traits held by either power. Given this, witches can worship any god or goddess although they generally favour gods devoted to learning, magic, and nature.

**Background:** The prospective witch's first brush with the craft is usually through a family member's intervention. An aunt, uncle, mother or father usually sees the latent talent in the youth and begins the arduous task of instruction. After some time, the witch is introduced to a coven, a group of like minded individuals who share spells, ideologies, and goals. They have a lifelong connection to their coven, and only through rare circumstance will the witch be severed from the community.

Being a member of this group has benefits and drawbacks. Initially, it is a great opportunity to enhance one's spell casting abilities. They will often engage in ceremonial magic, where up to thirteen witches invoke the power of the divine for enhanced powers and effects. Unfortunately, the coven is restrictive in its outlook, unforgiving of those who cross them and entirely secretive. A free spirited witch will usually have a hard time adapting to the rigorous structure of the coven and will sometimes flee their influence.

Most covens, though, are flexible as to the frequency of gatherings. This provides the means for a witch to gather information, equipment and new spells to add to his brothers' or sisters' books of shadows. Like druids, the witch will sometimes have to perform duties for his organisation. These tasks can range from the simple to the nigh impossible depending on his proficiency and standing within the circle. In exchange, an initiate witch can usually bargain for fa-

vours from his elders, and procure cheaper healing and equipment for his friends.

Witches almost always live in small rural communities, aiding his fellows in day-to-day activities. If a witch dwells in a large city he usually practises in secret, as most cities are home to those who would destroy him. In any case, he will make spiritual journeys to sites sacred to nature, such as untouched wilderness, standing stones or still pools of water. Any place that he will inhabit must have access to these geographical features.

**Races:** Of all the possible races that find the witch appealing, humans, above all, are drawn to the power and mystique associated with the craft. Paradoxically, humans are the first to burn witches at the stake as they frequently misinterpret a witch's motives and purpose. Elves, on the other hand, find witchcraft a poor cousin to the wizard and have little use for their backwards charms, love potions, and other trinkets. Despite these

opinions, elves do make excellent witches, for they have an intimate familiarity with enchantment magic and thereby can become quite potent users. Elven witches, however, favour positive uses for the craft such as healing, protection and other beneficial spells.

Half-elves, naturally outcasts from both sides of their heritage, find witchcraft a potentially valuable career path for a number of reasons. First, their elven background grants a link to the natural world. Second, because they have difficulty finding acceptance in both human and elven cultures, so the community of the coven is usually to their liking, providing a family that they might otherwise not have known.

Dwarves and Gnomes have little use for witchcraft, as the former focuses on the rigors of warfare, while the latter enjoys the trickery inherent to illusion. Halflings, though, are natural witches as many features of the witch complement



the halfling deities. The idea of the goddess will often resemble the halfling goddesses as they are construed as the patrons of the hearth, protection, and the feminine.

Other races exploit the evil side of witchcraft. The most common practitioners among the non-traditional races would certainly be the Hags. Tieflings also typically exploit the powers of witchcraft given their familial connection to things originating from the lower planes. Finally, among the humanoid races, there are an almost infinite number of witch-doctors and magic workers, many of which are instances of this class.

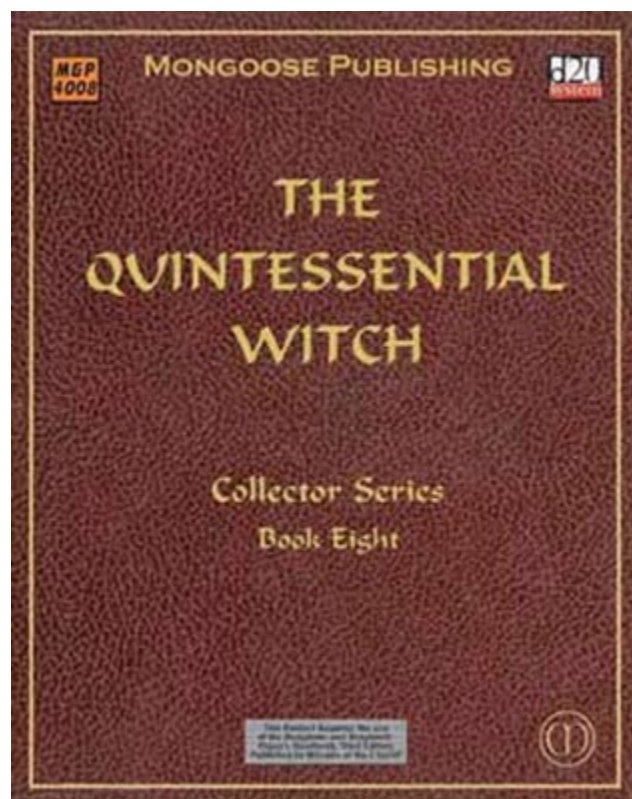
**Other Classes:** Witches require other classes for protection, for they do not have the raw offensive power that sorcerers control. So, they usually develop solid working relationships with rangers and barbarians, as many times their outlooks will mesh. Rogues hold a place of value for the witch, considering they have the capability of getting into places no others can. Their penchant for subterfuge is an asset they cannot refuse. Bards tend to manipulate similar magic, although they draw from different sources. On the other hand, clerics and paladins do not work well with members of the witch class, as oftentimes their alignments and values clash. Witches can be subversive, dabbling in the occult, and generally threaten the established order that underlies the structure to which the religious classes cling.

## The Witch in Society

The witch is many things to society, fulfilling a range of rolls, most of which are on the outs with the established order of things. Akin to a druid, the witch is usually positioned against his will on the outside of social norms. Only when he finds kindred spirits will he band in a group. Witches are often found in rural communities on the very fringes of civilisation free from the restrictions of the oppressive religious views of the larger populace. As already mentioned, if the witch works with others it is usually in the form of a coven, a band of witches operating as a group to achieve a collective goal over the interests of the individual. These relationships can be mere gatherings to celebrate the turning of a season, or to cast heightened magic due to a temporal event such as a solstice, equinox or some other important day. The kinship witches share with druids often leads them to the same places of worship such as standing stones, sacred pools, and groves. These locations are usually shared amicably, but at times open war can ensue if there is a misunderstanding as to who has rights over the location.

Regardless of organisations, the motives of a witch vary according to alignment. The typical rustic witch fulfils functions usually handled by a cleric. Low level witches provide love charms, simple healing and other tasks to aid commoners. High level witches oversee junior witches in training; they perform research, stay in communiqué with the god and goddess in an oracular function, and wage a silent war against the commonplace intolerance of the clergy and other antagonistic figures of authority.

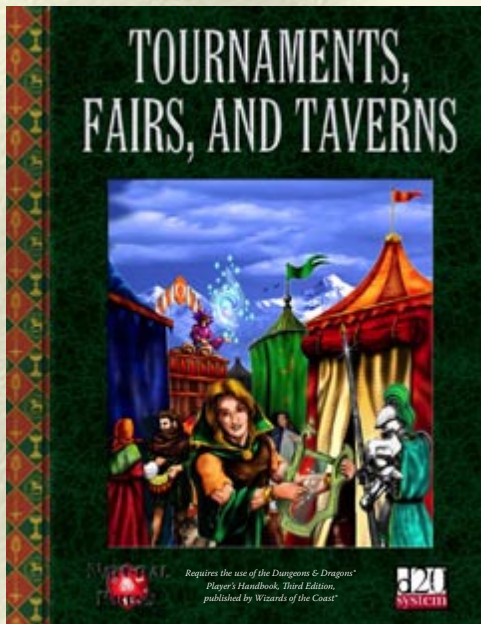
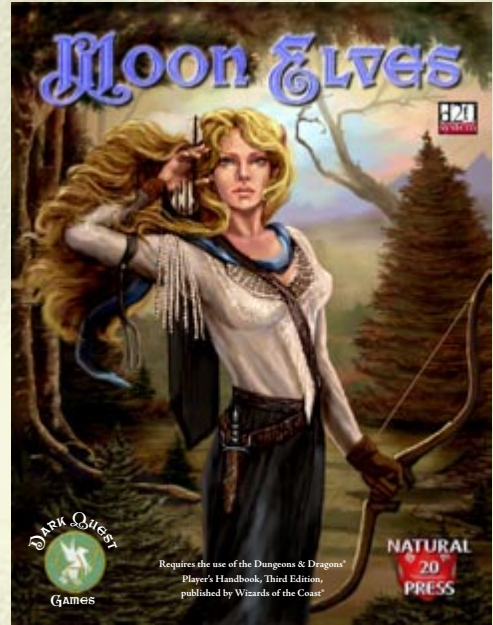
Rangers usually support witches if they have corresponding interests. A ranger dedicated to the slaughter of humanity, might very well associate with a misanthropic witch who desires the same outcomes. On the other hand, a witch who cares for his people might ally with a defender of the wilds, who is devoted to sparing the hamlet from certain destruction. Druids, too, can be close associates or direst enemies. Witches perceive nature as evidence of the god and goddess' work, where druids generally venerate nature directly. Motives can certainly correspond, but if the witch believes the forces of nature are a tool to be exploited, druids will generally balk. Wizards and witches are notorious rivals and sometimes enemies. They resent the associations placed between each erroneously by the laymen. Hence, they strive to mark the differences between them in subtle wars and conflicts. It is rare indeed when a wizard will ally with a practitioner of witchcraft.







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