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EXCLUSIVE R.A. SALVATORE INTERVIEW

# Dragon®

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# Dragon

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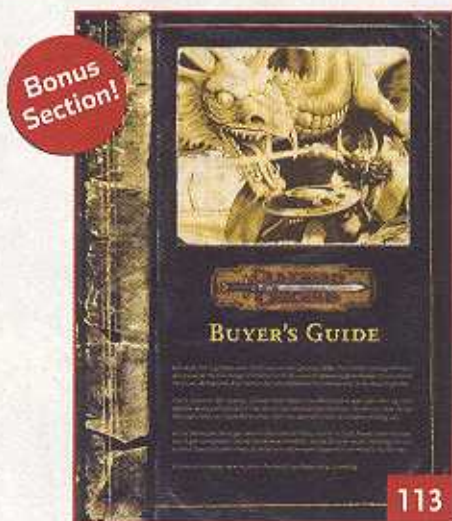
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# DRAGON UNLEASHED

This issue is different, and unless this is the first time you've picked up *DRAGON*, you probably noticed that fact. What you hold in your hands represents a new vision for the magazine, both in its appearance and function. This new vision came about because we want to make the best RPG magazine better. We want to make the D&D magazine that appeals to you, whether you're a first-time player or a gamer who has been rolling a d20 for 30 years.

When we set out to improve *DRAGON*, the first thing we considered was reader feedback, from letters, online message boards, and recent reader surveys. We also took how readers use the magazine into consideration. Many *DRAGON* readers pick up the magazine to be entertained; they like to read about D&D and are interested in the details of the fantasy of the game. Other readers use the magazine as a community gathering point, a way for them to touch base with what other fans of D&D are doing. Still more *DRAGON* readers want the magazine to be a monthly D&D sourcebook, filled to the brim with new rules. Most readers are some mix of the three. We struck upon this new version of *DRAGON* as a way to appeal to everyone.

In the new *DRAGON*, each issue presents articles of new feats, spells, and magic items. In addition, every issue contains a new monster playable as a PC race and a new prestige class. Not looking for new rules? Don't worry. *DRAGON* now offers an "Ecology" article in every issue, which presents more information about a D&D monster, both inspiration for how to use it and advice for players facing it. Each issue of the new *DRAGON* also presents roleplaying and play advice in a "Player Tips" article, adventuring tactics in an "Adventurer Tricks" article, and eleven "Class Acts" articles, providing new rules, insight, or inspiration for each of the core classes. Also, every new

issue includes "A Novel Approach," "Silicon Sorcery," and "Under Command," which take inspiration from a novel, an electronic game, or the D&D miniatures to provide new ideas for D&D roleplaying.

But wait, there's more!

*DRAGON* still presents great feature articles that give you innovative new rules, ideas for your game or character, advice and insight, and new fiction. We also wanted to take this opportunity to make *DRAGON* your go-to source for information about D&D and the RPG industry. That's why *DRAGON* now presents a "Coup de Grace" column written by one of the folks responsible for bringing you D&D, a "First Watch" section that gives you news about cool new releases, the "Scale Mail" letters column that gives you a place to speak out, and "Player Initiative," which lets you in on some of the things other players are doing and gives a glimpse of the wider world of gaming.

This issue also represents an opportunity for you to help make *DRAGON* what you want. Read through it, and let us know what you think. Tell us what you liked and what you didn't, what you want to see more of, and what you didn't see but want to see in the future. Then, check out our new Writers' Guidelines, available at [www.paizo.com/dragon](http://www.paizo.com/dragon), and send us some ideas for what you'd like to write. With so many articles in each new issue, you have an unprecedented opportunity to contribute something of yourself to the magazine and to the history of D&D.

We hope you enjoy this issue and those to come. It was a joy bringing it to you.

Good gaming!



Matthew Sernett  
Editor-in-Chief

## DRAGON NEXT MONTH

DRAGON #324



### The Shadow Over D&D

H. P. Lovecraft's creations have been creeping into D&D for decades. Find out which of your favorite monsters sprang from the mind of the master of supernatural horror.

### Living Nightmares

Keith Baker, creator of *EBERRON*, describes nightmarish monsters from *EBERRON*'s realm of dreams. Sleep tight.

### Exorcising Equipment

There's more to keeping the dead down than wooden stakes and holy water. Find out what you need to bring the next time you try tomb robbing.

### Building a Better Zombie

Learn what every necromancer knows by heart. Find out what monsters you should kill to get the best undead minions.

### A Chill in the Bones

Take comfort from fears of these chilling creatures by reading the secrets of these cold-based monsters.

### A Novel Approach: American Gods

Neil Gaiman's novel of modern myth provides inspiration for D&D games.

### Plus!

"The Ecology of the Nighthag," "Spellcraft: Illusion Spells," "The Magic Shop: Cursed Items," "Winning Races: Grippi," "Gaining Prestige: Sworn Slayer," "Player Tips," "Adventurer Tricks," "Class Acts," and more!

# PREVIEWS, NOTES, AND NEWS FOR GAMERS

## FROSTBURN

*Frostburn* nearly bursts with cool ideas for your D&D game. The first chapter is a treasure trove of concepts DMs can use to make the players'



next encounter with cold a fantastic experience. Along with advice and equipment to help PCs survive in frigid extremes, players might also find the unique feats, prestige classes, and spells useful for making interesting characters. Of course, the book wouldn't be complete without new monsters, including new modern and prehistoric animals like the seal, polar bear, glyptodon, and megaloceros.

When thumbing through the book, don't be thrown by many mentions of "the Frostfell" or Frostfell environments. It's not a particular place in any campaign world—that's just the book's shorthand for referring to places of extreme cold, whether that's at the top of the world or a single room in a dungeon.

*Frostburn* releases this month.

## MONSTER MANUAL III

A multitude of monsters await you between the covers of *Monster Manual III*. Inside, classics like the kenku and flind are joined by innovative new creatures like the death giant (giants that traded their souls for power and now suck the souls of the dying into wailing clouds of protective spirits that surround each member of the race) and grigol (a lich-built construct formed from spellbooks and depleted magic items that can drive the foolhardy mad even after the golem's destruction). The book also offers helpful tips to DMs of *EBERRON* and *FORGOTTEN REALMS* campaigns, giving information about certain monsters' activities in those worlds. Of course,

interesting player-oriented critters also lurk within. *Monster Manual III* presents many new creatures suitable for use as a PC races, mounts, animal companions, and cohorts. Be sure to check out the monsters adopted from the pages of *DRAGON*, such as *DUNGEON* Associate Editor James Jacobs's splinterwaif and frequent contributor Eric Cagle's alchemical, hangman, mud, and web golems.

Need miniatures for your favorite *Monster Manual III* monster? Check the "Under Command" articles in *DRAGON* for previews of the miniatures you'll see in future sets of the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* Miniatures line.

*Monster Manual III* releases this month.



## NOT ANY SHORTER ON CD

The first two books of Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* series are now available from Audio Renaissance ([www.audiorenaissance.com](http://www.audiorenaissance.com)) as audio CD sets. You can also purchase the prequel book, *New Spring*, in audio format. The third and fourth books should make their way to the audio section of bookstores sometime in November this year. Audio Renaissance produced the tenth book, *Crossroads of Twilight*, back in 2003, and the strong performance of that product apparently provoked the current production flurry of the older *Wheel of Time* books.

Did we mention the books are unabridged? The first book, *Eye of the World*, comes in a twenty-five-CD set with a total run-time of about 31 hours. It costs about \$60, while other books cost more or less depending on how many CDs are needed. If you're a fast reader, buying the printed books might be a better investment, but if you have a gamer friend who doesn't like to read or you need something to listen to as you drive across the country, \$2.50 per CD might look pretty good.



## FUN AND GAMES

Signed art from the famed painter Larry Elmore should now be available in your local game or comic store—if you open the right pack of cards. That's right, Elmore's art is gracing artist trading cards once again. Like his 1994 and 1995 sets, *The Art of Larry Elmore* and *Colossal*, the *New Beginnings* set features autographed cards hidden in certain packs, this time with the promise of one in each display box. Unlike earlier sets, the *New Beginnings* cards also give buyers a chance to download game stats for the characters and monsters depicted on the cards. Each of the 90 cards in the set has a unique website address that offers a PDF download that pres-



ents d20 statistics. In addition, one card per 300 packs is a card you can redeem to receive a signed lithograph of a Larry Elmore painting. Not a fan of Elmore's art? Consider picking up a pack for self-

defense. The thick, heavy cards make excellent but innocuous-looking thrown weapons. If you are a fan of Elmore's art, your self-defense options will probably be limited to doubles and your losing prize redemption cards (which have the Open Game License on the back). Just be careful where you throw them. It's all fun and games until someone gets hurt. Then it's just games—you know, because of the website with the stats.



## TACTFUL TILES

You may have seen these cool little boards advertised in previous issues of *DRAGON*. *Tact-Tiles*, by BC Products, are 10-inch squares of a tough polystyrene plastic with pre-printed 1-inch grids on one side. They're available from BC Products' website, [www.bc-products.net](http://www.bc-products.net). These stiff plastic boards come nine or twelve to a package, and retail for \$40 to \$50.

The high-gloss working side of the boards has the permanent 1-inch grid that doesn't come off when wiping away dry-erase ink. One of the cooler aspects of *Tact-Tiles* is that the grid also has darker lines spaced 2-inches apart. Since these 2-inch squares each represent 10-foot increments, finding range during combat is much easier. A longbow has a range of 10 darker squares, or 100 feet. It's simple!

The most useful aspect of *Tact-Tiles*, however, is their versatility. Each board is a square with puzzle-piece-like edges that allow them to link together for stability. The way the tabs and slots are structured, the *Tact-Tile* pieces only link together in one fashion, making placing new tiles easy and free of error or confusion. This ability to restructure can be vital in vast, sprawling caves and dungeons, where the traditional squares and rectangles of most battle mats get in the way. Once the PCs move off one edge of the map, simply move a now-unused tile from the already-explored areas, wipe it off with a dry rag, and draw.

The only downside to *Tact-Tiles* is that they are too easy to clean. That might sound odd until you try to draw a floor plan beforehand and realize with a cringe as you unpack your carefully-drawn maps that some of the ink has rubbed off in transit. Combats and frequent miniatures movements can wipe off the dry-erase ink, as can accidental brushing from clothes, snack bags, and other gamer paraphernalia. However, not having to use water and a drippy rag to clean off your battle map certainly has its advantages. !

## DUNGEON THIS MONTH

DUNGEON #114



### The Birth of a New Era!

This month kicks off a new era for *Dungeon*, with these exciting features!

### Mad God's Key

by Jason Bulmahn

A hunt for a missing key leads the heroes from the streets of the city of Greyhawk to the Tomb of Blood Everflowing in the treacherous Cairn Hills. A Living Greyhawk-compatible adventure for 1st-level characters.

### Torrents of Dread

by Greg Vaughan

A supernaturally powerful storm, mud slides, and agitated dinosaurs are the least of the worries in the tropical village of Mora. The village's spiritual leader, the Zombie Master, has gone missing, and now undead rise from sodden graves, and the village matriarch lies dead, murdered by her own son. What dire menace awaits in the flooded catacombs below? Find out in this adventure for 6th-level characters, set on the infamous Isle of Dread.

### Thirteen Cages

by Chris Thomasson

At last! The heroes track down the insidious Cagewrights for a final showdown in their lair deep beneath the volcano of Cauldron. But who secretly leads the Thirteen, and what will his final message mean for the PCs? A Shattered City Adventure Path scenario for 16th-level characters.

### Backdrop: The Isle of Dread

by Gary Holian

Detailed encounter charts, a poster map, adventure hooks, new monsters, and places of mystery complete this overview of a dinosaur-ridden jungle island that has spelled doom for thousands of D&D characters. Suitable for any campaign.

### Plus!

Monte Cook's "Dungeoncraft," Will Wheaton's "Will Save," the Campaign Workbook, and an all-new format!



# LETTERS

Tell us what you think of this issue. Send an email to [scale@paizo.com](mailto:scale@paizo.com). Please include your name, city, and state.

## A SALUTE TO D&D PLAYERS

I had quite a few memories return to me of my days in the U.S. Navy when I read last issue's letter from the young man who served in Afghanistan. I served from 1988 to 1998, and just like him, I played D&D most of the time I was in the Navy. Most of my true friends have been my gaming buddies. We had to fight the negativity of the times, and we were not so lucky as to have the support of our command... something about times past when some sailors used a ship in the Navy as a dungeon. (Crap!) Myself and the steadfast groups I led numbered from three to fifteen over the course of 10 years and three different ships. We had to dodge our supervisors until I became a supervisor. We played on the floor in storage spaces, troop spaces that were empty when our Marines were not attached, or just about anywhere else—including the Combat Information Center. During the first Gulf War, when we deployed for almost ten months, gaming was the only outlet many of us had to get out of the real world, even if for a few hours. I would say to all the players and DM's who are serving in the best military in the world: You deserve the times you share. You work so hard and endure a life most don't understand and never

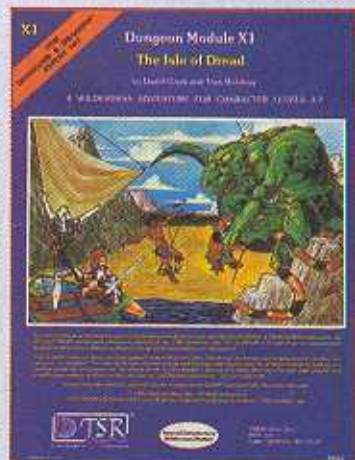
will. Keep rolling the bones and taking on the bad guys.

George Erickson  
Address withheld

## TRIGGER UNHAPPY

While I enjoyed your recent article, "The Way of the Gun," in *DRAGON* #321, I question your decision about the reloading time for the various firearms. I understand the need for rules simplicity and consistency, but your reloading times for these firearms are far too lenient. You state that reloading a gunpowder firearm is a standard action. Wow! That's one-third of even the best reload times of the American Civil War era, and that's under good circumstances with cap-and-ball rifles! All weapons you describe are of the flintlock, wheellock, or matchlock variety, which would have made reloading a near impossibility in melee and require reloading times of 4 to 5 rounds at least (24 to 30 seconds). If you recall the history of that era, anyone fighting toe-to-toe would generally throw down his pistol or commence using the butt of his rifle instead of reloading, which took entirely too long when there was someone coming at you armed and with bad

## BLAST FROM THE PAST



In 1981, TSR unveiled its first wilderness adventure for any version of the D&D game, *X1: The Isle of Dread*. As the first of the modules designed for D&D's *Expert Set* of rules, *The Isle of Dread* presented a challenge for characters of levels 3 to 7. It contained a little background information pertaining to the southern mainland of the Known World (later called *MYSTARA*), including a black-and-white map stretching from Glantri in the north to the Thanegioth Archipelago (which included the Isle of Dread) in the south. The module detailed the Isle and included several maps of key locations. In addition to dinosaurs and a number of other giant monsters scattered across its surface, *The Isle of Dread* introduced araneas, koprus, phanatons, and rakastas to the D&D universe.

*X1* almost worked better as a supplement than a true adventure. The module's somewhat simplistic plot focused on getting to the plateau standing near the center of the isle. The central plateau contained an exposed gold vein, a treant forest, the village of Mantru, and the pivotal center of the adventure: Taboo Island. Rumors spread at the beginning of the adventure suggested that a temple on the island held a massive black pearl. Of course, those rumors left out what dangers lurked within the temple...

This month, *DUNGEON* #114 celebrates the Lost World wonder of this iconic adventure by revisiting the Isle not only with a gazetteer of its features, but with the all-new adventure, "Torrents of Dread."

*DUNGEON* #114 also has a full-color poster map of the Isle of Dread, with both the original map locations and new labels reflecting the features described in "Torrents of Dread."

intent. I would think that not only would reloading provoke an attack of opportunity, but it should require you to "load defensively" and make a successful Concentration check in order not to botch the loading, much like casting a spell.

I love the magazine and the articles, but this is one rule you might want to rethink.

S. McKee  
Portland, Oregon

*That fact did occur to us, but if we required players to use more realistic reload times, we would have contradicted the DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide. The DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide gives guns such a short reload time because gunpowder weapons can't be as deadly as they are in real life. Firearms came to prominence because when they could be fired accurately, they penetrated all available armors. Besides, a single shot to the head or torso can easily kill someone, even if that someone is the size of an elephant. You can't make firearms that deadly in D&D without making the game less fun (or making guns so expensive it's unrealistic), so you have to make them deal damage like all D&D weapons. Having made that choice, the designers of the game gave guns a shorter load time. After all, why spend 3 to 5 rounds reloading a weapon that deals 1d8 points of damage when the game allows characters to fire a longbow a couple dozen times during the same period?*

## GREAT WYRMS

Well, I just got the 30th anniversary issue and I loved it! I find it fascinating to learn how the game was born and how all the big guns got into it. (I only started playing in about '92 or '93, so I had no idea about all the stuff that came before.) Also, the article on raising dragons helped me find a good direction for a campaign I'd been running that had hit a dead end. (What do I do with the PCs between 7th and 12th level when I can't start into the big plot? Have them raise a dragon!) I've been reading *DRAGON* for just over a year now,

and I've really come to the point where I think *DRAGON* is a much better buy than most sourcebooks out there. The material is always interesting and of the highest quality, and even if I don't use it, it's still interesting to read. Thanks for the quality work!

Bryan  
Oshawa, Ontario

## TURBULENCE ON THE PLANES

"Wyrm's Turn" in *DRAGON* #321 discussed the pros and cons of D&D's cosmology, and in the end decided that the whole system was showing its age, had never been given the kind of concentrated thought that could really make it make sense, and that, with the exception of a few sacred cows, it should become hamburger. I vehemently disagree and would like to answer some of the editor's criticisms and raise a few of my own in the process.

The infinite nature of the planes poses the problems of so much dirt and the lack of divine intercession. I would argue that the biggest problem with most of the planes is precisely that they aren't infinite. Take Mechanus for example. There are precisely so many cogs arranged just so, with precisely so many forests and mountains and cities. The infinite part is all empty void. How much more fun would it be if the plane itself stretched to infinity? Instead, we have a number of "infinite" planes where the playable part is actually fairly small, and the rest is just black void. It makes you wonder, really, how an infinite number of celestial and infernal beings can live in planes with a finite amount of real estate.

Why don't the celestials take a more active role in the Material Plane? Well, the infinite number of infernal creatures makes it pretty hard to commit troops to any cause save the big planar conflicts. It's the same with the gods. With all the wars between the various heavens and hells, it's no surprise that the gods are somewhat preoccupied most of the time.

## NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND



Being big geeks all around, the *DRAGON* staff just happens to love anime, and like any good geeks, we can be a bit snobbish about what we like. Yet *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* is one we can all agree on, even if we've only seen the ham-handed American cut of the film (known to many U.S. viewers as *Warriors of the Wind*). The original director's cut of the sci-fi/fantasy

## Dragon Talk

epic is scheduled to hit store shelves in a two-disc DVD version with Alison Lohman (*Matchstick Men*, *Big Fish*), Edward James Olmos, Patrick Stewart, and Uma Thurman lending voice talent to the English-dubbed soundtrack. If you haven't seen this film but you liked *Princess Mononoke* or *Spirited Away*, give *Nausicaä* a shot.

Why would characters not simply choose to live in heaven, rather than wait out their time on the Material Plane? Primarily, I would say that as they have not yet earned the right, it would simply be a matter of time until one of the celestials of the local gods came by to politely turn them out from the heaven in question. Another reason, I think, is that most adventuring sorts have a great deal of attachment to the goings on in their home plane: scores to settle, loved ones to protect, and nations to save. They would hardly be comfortable basking in lavish luxury with the gods until either their affairs were completely handled or their time was up.

There is a point to be made for wanting more consistency in the D&D Cosmology, however. I have often considered the matter either a case of great cleverness or infuriating apathy on the part of the designers that while each game setting (*GREYHAWK*, *DARK SUN*, *FORGOTTEN REALMS*, *DRAGONLANCE*, and so on) has its own unique cosmology, certain gods and infernal beings seem to overlap two or more of them (Lolth, Correllon Larethian,



Orcus, and many others). There are also a few "Easter eggs" in the various materials that seem to indicate something closer to a second edition macrocosmology (the *Spelljammer* on the Elemental Plane of Water, for example, or the great planar-nexus city, Union, mentioned in the *Epic Level Handbook*). What is really going on? Is there really some great metaplot that we just aren't hearing about for reasons of creative suspense, or is it just that the developers can't bear to decide whether or not the different cosmologies are part of one big metacosmology?

So do I approve of turning one of the best, most expansive, and truly fascinating metaplots in game history into hamburger? No! But it would be nice to be tantalized with an answer or two from the big guys in the near future.

**Robert Blank**  
Address withheld

*I'd like a metaplot that wrapped up everything. It would be a great step toward making the planes make sense. Unfortunately, there is no hidden story yet to be unveiled. The links and the lack of links in cosmologies between worlds are merely the result of design philosophies shifting over time and many different designers cherry picking ideas they like from one product and using them in other products.*

*What it boils down to is this: If D&D assumes a certain cosmology, I think that cosmology should be well defined. On the other hand, if the game leaves such things mysterious, it should do a better job of providing players and DMs with tools and options to help them define and create their own cosmologies in a fashion that suits their tastes.*

*You'll be happy to know that the Manual of the Planes does not describe Mechanus as finite. Each gear is finite, but how many gears exist is unknown, as no number of gears is provided besides a reference to the millions of gears inhabited by formians. Gehenna is a better example of what you mentioned. The description for Gehenna specifically states that although the plane is infinite, each volcanic mountain is finite.*

## BULGARIAN ADVENTURES

Greetings from far-off Bulgaria! Although still largely unknown over here, *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* is starting to gain an audience. Being a relatively new player to the game (three years) and even more new to your magazine (less than a year), I only recently understood about your birthday, but from all the Bulgarian D&D fans: Happy birthday. *DRAGON!* May you roar for years to come!

Now for a question: Being a fan of *Oriental Adventures*, I want to ask James Wyatt about my favorite world. What is he currently planning? I know he updated it in your April issue, but there was no new stuff, only revision. How often and how is he going to update and add new stuff (fluff, namely)? Should we wait for 4th edition for new *Oriental Adventures* material? I hope not. As a matter of fact, I even thought of mailing *DUNGEON* for the lack of Eastern adventures. I know you are excited with *DARK SUN*, *EBBERON*, and all, but we need some freshly forged katanas!

Also, I have an idea, based on the dispute over fluff vs. crunch: Why not make crunch based on fluff? For example, give us details about a place in a world or a monster and then give feats and other game mechanics based on those details. It would give a good balance and still keep the magazine dealing with its theme.

Best wishes to all of you at *DRAGON*. Keep up the good work.

**Vladislav Rashkovski**  
Sofia, Bulgaria

*Thanks for the compliments, Vladislav. We're glad you like the magazine.*

*James Wyatt tells us that he doesn't have any other *Oriental Adventures* products in the works, but you might want to check out the *Legend of the Five Rings* products produced by AEG. They're filled to the brim with material for *Oriental Adventures*.*

*Thanks for your ideas about how to balance the content of the magazine. Starting with this issue, readers should see a better balance between new rules and inspirational material. Readers are likely to see less world-specific articles in *DRAGON*, however. From time to time,*

## WITH GREAT POWER COMES HEAT VISION



## Dragon Talk

Supplement your collection of black, gaming-related T-shirts with the selection from [www.rocketninja.com](http://www.rocketninja.com). For far less than the standard 1,000 gp enchantment cost, you can own your very own — T-shirt or any of a variety of gamer-friendly tees. Also, check out their shirts from the popular 8-Bit Theater web comic, with slogans like, "The character sheet is mightier than the sword" and "Your GP or your HP."

*an article in support of a particular setting will see print, but labeling an article as FORGOTTEN REALMS or Oriental Adventures turns away some readers (regardless of how easily the articles can be adapted) without garnering a commensurately large new audience. Issue #315 is a key example of world-specific articles not drawing a new audience. Despite covering nearly every official campaign setting and its enormous popularity among readers, the Campaign Classics issue produced average sales numbers, and no particular setting received enough support from readers to warrant regular coverage in the magazine. The audience for D&D seems to be divided into a thousand pieces by the campaign worlds from TSR and Wizards of the Coast, the many d20 campaign settings that have been produced, and homebrew campaigns. DRAGON can best serve that diverse audience by presenting material that everyone can easily use.*



## KNOWLEDGE CHECK

**Question:** Conan, what is best in life?

## INVASION OF THE GIANT MICROBES!



### Dragon Talk

Last week, the DRAGON staff got Ebola. Fortunately it was of the big-eyed, stuffed variety available from [www.giantmicrobes.com](http://www.giantmicrobes.com). This cool little site offers diseases, maladies, calamities, and critters of microscopic size at x1,000,000 magnification and stuffed for your enjoyment.

So next time you need an out-there gift, show someone you care: Give them the plague.

### IT'S ELEMENTAL

Just a quick question: What happened to the article on half-elementals in that was supposed to be in DRAGON #321. It was advertised in DRAGON #320 and did not appear. Other than that gripe, I really enjoy the magazine. The infused prestige class in issue #321 was great, and I intend to try and convince my DM to let me incorporate it into my next character.

Riley Bull  
Address withheld

*We put together the preview of the next issue long before we finish it, and in the editing, development, and design process, articles sometimes expand beyond our best estimate. That was the case with issue #321, and the half-elemental monster-class article was the easiest to move to a future issue. Unfortunately, the issues in the near future are full. Keep an eye out for the article in DRAGON sometime early next year.*

### DARK SUN MOVIE

As I was reading through DRAGON #320, I was saddened to see that DUNGEONS & DRAGONS was not catching the eyes of younger people. I am 19, and I would not have started playing if not for the nudging of a 32-year-old co-worker. Many younger kids think roleplaying is not cool and should be stopped when you turn 16 and get a car. My friends ask me to explain the game

to them, and as soon as I say "dice" or "miniatures," they don't want to hear any more.

Vin Diesel is a great example of a "cool guy" who loves to roleplay. After your Dark Sun feature in DRAGON #319, I borrowed my friend's old books based on the setting. I fell in love with the character Rikkus. That mul had it all: Strength, friends, multiple lovers, and more. Then I looked at the cover. Rikkus just screamed Vin Diesel.

I can easily see a Dark Sun movie. That would be a winner. I can see the millions of people going to see it and finding out that—gasp—it's based on a D&D setting. The DVD could be filled with D&D info and interviews with the stars of D&D, maybe even some info on their D&D characters. I feel it would bring in countless new players to our hobby. Plus, we would have a sweet movie to brag about. Then it would be cool to be a nerd. Thank God I have a head start on it.

Brandon Thomas  
Address withheld

*Good idea, Brandon! I can see it too: hordes of thri-kreen and giant bugs charging over sand dunes like the aliens in Starship Troopers, Road Warrior-style battles between sand ships loaded with gith, and gory fights with terrifying monsters in gladiatorial arenas. A DARK SUN movie would rock.*

*Of course, this strategy has been tried once before, but the D&D movie... well, a lot of people think it could have been better. I'm set to see the sequel, but I doubt I'll be able to car-pool to the theatre.*

### ... AND A REAL MOVIE

I like to think I'm a patient man; I have been waiting for an *Aliens Vs. Predator* movie since I was 11. Yet I have been waiting for a D&D version of that battle for almost as long. Finally my patience for the movie has been rewarded with it coming out close to my birthday. Unfortu-

nately, there still isn't a D&D version. I think that that's a shame. The world created from the comics and the books for these two titans of movie-monster perfection is a world that would give EBERRON a run for it's money. Personally, I think that the aliens would be more of a template than an actual monster. Think of how cool (and perhaps cruel) it would be to have a high-level group hunt down a red dragon only to find the dragon already dead with a hole in its chest and a strange, gigantic, spider-like skeleton thing next to the head of the dead dragon. The predators could be a new race with their own special weapons and classes. I think that it would be a great thing if the great minds at your magazine could think of a way to bring these creatures in to hunt the drow and infest the dwarves of D&D.

Riley Harper  
Address withheld

*Happy birthday, Riley! I hope you like the movie. It looks pretty cool.*

*There are monsters in D&D that do the aliens' shtick. From the Monster Manual: Xill, spider eaters, and red slaad do the egg-implanting, burst-from-the-body thing. The kythons from the Book of Vile Darkness are good candidates for predators, as they come with several new weapons, but they could be aliens too.*

*These D&D "aliens" could come from implantation in other D&D races. Thus, the xill could be from any humanoid, and the red slaad could come from Large humanoids like ogres and minotaurs. Of course, you could always give the implantation ability to any D&D monster, such as giving it to a stirge or spider to represent the face huggers.*

*If you run with this idea, let us know how it goes—and if any of the PCs survive! #*



### Knowledge Check Answer

Answer: To crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentation of the women!

# THE SCOOP ON GAMER LIFE

## GEN CON INDY REPORT

Attendees at this year's Gen Con received a special treat in their convention bags: a free copy of this issue of *DRAGON* as well as a copy of the new *DUNGEON*, *UNDEFEATED*, and *AMAZING STORIES* magazines. *DRAGON*, *DUNGEON*, and *UNDEFEATED* offered free T-shirts with a subscription purchased at the convention. Folks who bought subscriptions to both *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON* received both shirts and a chance to win a copy of *The World's Largest Dungeon* by AEG. *DRAGON* Editor-in-Chief Matthew Sernett, *DUNGEON* Editor-in-Chief Erik Mona, and *DUNGEON* Associate Editor James Jacobs lead discussions about the new versions of the magazines and how to write for the them. If you were lucky, you could catch a glimpse of the elusive *DRAGON* Assistant Editor F. Wesley Schneider (who went to Gen Con to play rather than work) hovering near the Paizo booth. To top it all off, the D&D Timeline Exhibit featured both *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON* as an integral part of the game's illustrious history.

The magazine blitzkrieg went glitzkrieg for *UNDEFEATED* with multiclass cheerleader/models walking about the convention floor promoting *UNDEFEATED*. Editor-in-Chief Michael Mikaelian was on hand at the booth and at game tournaments to greet readers and answer questions about the magazine.

Of course, the celebration of the 30th anniversary of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* dominated the convention, particularly Wizard's of the Coast's Epic Level D&D Party in the square outside the convention hall. Free food and beverages were available at the party along with exclusive giveaways.

Reading this at the convention? Come by the Paizo booth and let us know what you think of the magazines.

Miss the fun this year? Check out pictures of the convention at [www.paizo.com](http://www.paizo.com), and start making plans for next year.

## DUNGEON CRAWLING AT GEN CON

Introduced at last year's Gen Con, True Dungeon returned with a vengeance this year, resulting in sold-out events that involved 1,500 players. Featuring the village of Hommlet along with a host of other familiar elements of D&D's long history, True Dungeon offered a loving homage to the game that started it all.

If you're unfamiliar with True Dungeon, think of it as being a little like a D&D game show. You and six other participants pick a D&D class and play through a live-action adventure game involving puzzles, riddles, and even

simulated combat by such means as playing shuffleboard. Ultimately, survivors of the dungeon have a chance to win Dwarven Forge products worth a total of \$1,000.

For folks reading this at Gen Con right now, Jeff Martin, president of Dwarven Forge and creator of True Dungeon, has this to say:

"Prepare yourselves to experience an old-fashion D&D module by digging out some old first edition D&D books and modules. If you are a veteran player, you should reminisce about the heady days of your gaming youth. If you are a newcomer, try to embrace this 'retro' version of a game you love. Both types should prepare for a challenging adventure that will test their wits, nerve, and coordination.

"You'll see some cool surprises in the event. I can't say what they are, but they will be fitting when you remember that Gen Con is celebrating



the 30th anniversary of D&D. There should be some 'Oh, cool!' moments.

"Finally, I want to make sure everyone knows about the tremendous amount of work that goes into presenting this event. Many people work on this project for months, and still more people work full-time during an entire week at Gen Con Indy to make it a success. True Dungeony only happens



because there are a lot of unselfish gamers out there whose idea of fun is to work very hard for the enjoyment of others. They are special people, and I ask the players to thank them when they get the chance."

## RPGA UPDATE

by Ian Richards, RPGA Program Manager

The RPGA (Roleplaying Gamers Association) exists to enhance your roleplaying experience, so you can play more, with more people, and receive rewards for playing the games you already love. We're also expanding your opportunities to meet people and duke-it-out with *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* skirmish leagues and tournaments.

Allowing for such a massive play experience requires us to make a lot of decisions about how games, events, and people work together while maintaining a fair and consistent experience worldwide. Sharing in this experience means there's stuff you need to know, so grab your pick and let's dig in.

### WHAT IS THE RPGA?

The RPGA is the roleplaying arm of organized play at Wizards of the Coast dedicated providing play opportunities and support for *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* and other d20 System games. We want to make it easier for people to enjoy the face-to-face roleplaying experience. Recognizing that sometimes it's hard finding a gaming group, and it's a lot of work for DMs to provide new material

week after week, we provide free adventures to members from our extensive adventure database and an events calendar featuring games all over the world. When you download adventures and set up game days or conventions, these events are automatically added to our website's event calendar.

### WHAT KINDS OF GAMES DO YOU PLAY?

The RPGA offers several styles of play for roleplaying games: campaigns, classics, and interactive events.

#### Campaigns

Campaigns follow large story arcs—often spanning years. To participate in these unfolding plots, members create campaign-specific characters using the instructions in the campaign sourcebook. Each campaign has its own campaign sourcebook. Characters grow in power (gaining gold, experience, equipment, and class features) as they complete adventures. We offer two campaign styles: Living campaigns and D&D campaigns.

While many of the Living campaigns are D&D games, they differ from D&D campaigns in several ways. Living campaigns use adventure records, log-sheets, and certifications to track your character's progress. D&D campaigns use online tracking to chart your character's interaction with the story encounters. Your character's interactions with the adventure encounters help determine the course of the plot in D&D campaigns. If the majority of parties playing an adventure kill a villain or foil some evil scheme, that villain or scheme is foiled campaign-wide. If the villain survives or completes his plans, these consequences are also reflected in the campaign. D&D campaigns are designed to retire after two years (taking characters from 1st to approximately 18th level). Living campaigns are open ended but might feature a retirement level for characters.

#### Classics

With classics, characters are prewritten as part of the adventure. Once each player chooses a character, the game begins. Classics are a great way

for both beginners and experienced players to jump into action without lots of preparation time. Once the adventure is over, you're done with the character. We have classics for everything across the board, from straight forward *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* to the *GHOSTWALK* campaign setting to *d20 Modern* and beyond.

#### Interactive Events

Interactive events typically feature an emphasis on intrigue over combat prowess. Adopt a persona, don a costume, and socialize in character with other members. Interactive events might feature pre-generated characters, or they might allow you to use your campaign character during the session if the interactive is keyed to a specific campaign.

#### Characters from Home Campaigns

Characters you play in home campaigns are not allowed in campaign or classic games. Since character creation rules for the campaign-style games are standardized to allow everyone an even footing, and classic events provide characters appropriate to the adventure, there's been no avenue for incorporating characters from home campaigns. Yet you can use your character from your home game to get involved in the RPGA. RPGA members may play select adventures from *DUNGEON* as sanctioned events, allowing them to earn rewards while playing a character from their home campaign.

In order to report your play for these *DUNGEON* events and add them to your play history, your DM requests the adventures from the RPGA website like any other adventure (so your DM needs to be a Herald DM member of the RPGA). Instead of receiving the adventure as a downloaded file, the DM uses the one published in the magazine. Requesting the adventure flags the DM's account so the adventure results can be reported once you've played. It's important to report your play so you can earn D&D rewards.

Next time, we'll let you know what rewards the RPGA provides and how you can earn them. Until then, visit [www.wizards.com/RPGA](http://www.wizards.com/RPGA) to learn more. #

by Mike Mearls  
 images provided by Wizards of the Coast

# COMMAND AND CONTROL

**W**hen playing the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* game, choosing your warband's commander is perhaps the most important decision you can make. Your commander not only gives you better control over your miniatures' actions, but also provides a Commander Effect that can tip a match in your favor. If you make a good choice, you can create a warband greater than the sum of its parts.

This article looks at the commanders from *Dragoneye* and provides some general advice for using your warband's leader. It also introduces some new feats and rules for using Commander Effects in the D&D roleplaying game.

## USING YOUR COMMANDER

Commanders are tricky miniatures to use properly. As some of the more expensive figures in the game, they usually represent a fair portion of your warband's total point value. Even the cheapest commander, the

Cleric of Yondalla, costs 14 points. Often a bit weaker than creatures of the same cost, commanders have the added benefit of their Commander rating and Commander Effect. If you have a few skirmishes under your belt, you might have noticed that the best warbands feature individual models that form a greater whole. Commanders represent the ultimate sum of that principle. Their Commander Effects augment your other figures, masking their weaknesses or amplifying their strengths.

Usually, you should go with a commander that improves upon your warband's best traits. A Commander Effect can't usually cover other miniatures' weaknesses. For example, the Sword of Heironceous grants +1 AC. While useful, a creature with a high AC gains a much larger benefit than one with a low one. In essence, the AC bonus reduces the chance of a creature getting hit by 5%. Reducing a 10% chance of getting hit to 5% cuts the risk in half, while drop-

ping a 50% chance of getting hit to 45% is only a one-tenth reduction.

During a game, keep an eye on your commander's position. Many players get too caught up in keeping their troops under command and within the area of a Commander Effect to notice open paths for fast creatures to swoop in for a quick kill. Spellcasting commanders become particularly vulnerable to this tendency, since they usually stay behind the rest of the warband to use their magic.

Finally, you should consider using two commanders. One commander can then go off on its own or lead a smaller group to outflank your opponent or attack from the rear. In addition, you spread out the risk of an unlucky roll. A single critical hit might slay one of your commanders, but the second commander can then step in and keep your assault going. Many beginners forget they can take as many commanders as they can afford.

## DRAGONEYE COMMANDERS

Each commander has specific strengths and weaknesses that make it suitable for particular types of warbands. While each faction has its distinct traits, enough variety exists so no single commander provides a perfect fit for every figure sharing its alignment.

The following examples offer tips for using a number of commanders. For ease of reference, each figure appears in order of its number within a set, and has its alignment and Commander rating listed in parenthesis next to its name.

**Dwarven Defender (LG, Commander 4):** This tough



bruiser provides a +4 AC bonus against opponents who move and attack. That doesn't seem too impressive until you look at his low movement.

Outside of monks and the Dire Lion, Lawful Good warbands have few speedy figures. That means your warband probably absorbs a fair number of charges. Furthermore, figures with multiple attacks, like the Halfling Veteran, can afford to let their opponents come to them and unleash their full attack actions on their turn. Figures that can attack more than once work well with the defender. Form a big, slow moving mob of heavily armored warriors and steam roll your opponent with a relentless assault.

**Purple Dragon Knight (LG, Commander 6):** This figure provides a good example of a



commander who wants to get into the thick of the action but whose Commander Effect works best from the rear. The knight allows rallying figures to take their actions as normal rather than lose a turn. You might find your

other creatures forced to flee beyond the knight's command, even with the Lawful Good figures' relatively poor speeds. The knight is a combat machine, and his fear ability makes it important to put him at the forefront of any attack unless you have Stalwart Paladins, a Sword of Heironeous, or other fearless troops in your warband. He works well with faster miniatures, like the Sun Soul Initiate, as long as you deploy them so they must rout past the knight. On the other hand, the knight's high Commander rating, powerful attacks, and high AC make him one of the better Lawful Good commanders. Just don't count on using his effect too often.

**Bladesinger (CG, Commander 3):**



With the +3 bonus she grants to figures that move and attack, the Bladesinger embodies the Chaotic Good warband's emphasis on mobility. Team her with figures capable of sidestepping, such as the Daring

Rogue, to form a deadly combo. A charging warband under her Commander Effect gains a +5 bonus on attack rolls. The Bladesinger's excellent AC and hit points allow her to wade into the middle of a fight and make the most of her abilities. Use *daze monster* to bog down your opponent's advance and charge him before he can attack. *Magic missile* can clear out screening units such as goblins and kobolds, leaving an open path for your Centaur or Dire Lion. The Axe Sister can move a square and still use Whirlwind Attack. Combined with the Bladesinger, she can chop through enemy figures as fast they can reach her threatened area. If you have an archer-heavy warband, you can shoot and move with a bonus, allowing you to keep one step ahead of the enemy as long as you have clear avenues to maneuver.

**Copper Samurai (CG, Commander 2):**



The Copper Samurai adds insult to injury, as your troops can follow up a critical hit with an additional attack. Best of all, this attack uses the highest base attack bonus. Creatures with multiple attacks gain the biggest benefit from this ability, since they can

follow up a critical with an additional devastating attack. Weaker creatures can't as easily take advantage of the additional strike. Intuitively, it might seem like having a lot of attackers would give you more chances to roll a 20, but if a figure needs an 20 to hit in the first place, the effect provides little benefit. Luckily, plenty of Chaotic Good creatures have more than one attack, from the Elf Archer to the Drunken Master. The Axe Sister can become a death machine when you use this ability with her Whirlwind Attack. Notice that the extra attack does not have a specified target and thus can affect any model within reach.

**Cleric of Nerull (LE, Commander 3):**



The Cleric of Nerull makes an excellent leader for a warband stuffed with heavy-hitting figures. Deathstrike allows a slain model one last attack

before it leaves the board. Your opponent might get the drop on you with a charge, but if he puts down a monster, he has to withstand an attack in turn. This allows cheap creatures to almost always get off at least one

strike, while your expensive beasts gain a parting blow that can tip the battle to your advantage. Combine the cleric with the Blood Rock terrain tile and your Skeletons and Zombies can take their enemies to the grave with them. The Human Executioner's attack bonus, heavy damage, and poor AC make him a good match for this ability. Combined with his good move, the executioner can gain one attack on a powerful opponent via a charge, and then a parting shot that could easily cause a morale check. With a little luck, a single executioner can send a high-cost figure running for safety.

**Urthok the Vicious (LE, Commander 5):** Perhaps the best choice for a warband filled with cheap creatures, Urthok's Commander Effect can turn bugbears, hobgoblins, and goblins into daunting opponents. Bugbears in particular

gain the most from the +4 bonus on attack rolls, as they have the hit points needed to sustain an attack or two before falling. On top of that, Urthok's high Commander rating makes it more likely that you can seize the initiative or rally your relatively cheap forces. Resist the temptation to throw Urthok into the fray, even though he has good hit points and a solid AC. Instead, use him as the hammer to your bugbears' anvil. Let your cheap troops wade in and wear down a big target, and then charge in with Urthok to finish it off. If you put him at the front and lose him early in the game, your entire warband could fall apart.



**Drow Wizard (CE, Commander 2):**

At first glance, the Drow Wizard might not seem like much. He has plenty of spells, but *Snilloc's snowball swarm* and *magic missile* have little chance of putting down an Ogre Ravager.

This figure needs time to go through his spells. A screening force of creatures immune or resistant to Cold damage can bog down an enemy's advance, allowing the wizard to unleash the full potency of his spells. The Abyssal Maw makes the perfect complement to the wizard. It never takes damage from his Cold spells, and he has a high enough Commander rating to control it. All skeletons, the Dretch, and the Small White Dragon are also immune to Cold, while the Tiefling Captain has Cold resistance 5. These figures can occupy the enemy while your wizard unleashes volley after volley of spells. The key to using the wizard effectively lies in protecting him. Keep an eye out for monks and other fast, mobile opponents. A single guard kept near the wizard should keep him safe.

**Eye of Gruumsh (CE, Commander 1):**

The Eye of Gruumsh might seem like the perfect figure to lead an assault, but its poor AC, vicious attack ability, and Commander Effect suggest otherwise. Surround this walking death machine with orcs, preferably a second commander and a horde of cheap warriors and spearfighters. If you have less than twelve figures in your warband, you might not have enough. The Orc Warrior and Orc Spearfighter have good attack bonuses, making the



+5 damage they gain from the Eye of Gruumsh invaluable.

**Orc Druid (CE, Commander 2):**



The Orc Druid presents limited options as a commander. He grants animals and magical beasts a +2 bonus on attack rolls, but he can only bring a few creatures under

command. Most of the powerful animals and magical beasts have too high of a Difficult rating for the druid to direct them, although they still gain his Commander Effect. The *poison* spell can wear down a creature, but since it has a range of touch, the druid must carry his AC 11 and 35 hit points adjacent to a potential target. The druid's primary weapon is its *snake's swiftness* spell. Granting a creature an immediate bonus attack can swing an entire skirmish in your favor. Since this spell has a short range, keeping creatures under control becomes even more important. Difficult creatures likely charge too far ahead. While the best targets for this spell, such creatures might fall before you can use it on them.

**COMMANDER EFFECT FEATS**

Commander Effects, one part of the D&D Miniatures game that doesn't appear in the D&D roleplaying game, can still work with your campaign's orc warlords, bandit kings, mercenary captains, and other war leaders. Villains who rely on others to do their dirty work find the following feats ideal for their purposes. The goblin king might be a weak combatant, but the warriors he commands make him a formidable opponent. Commander Effects also

**YOUR MINIS PLAYBOOK**

To bring your warbands fully under command, check out the *Miniatures Handbook* from Wizards of the Coast. With new strategies, tactics, and rules explanations to make the most of your commanders and warbands, the *Miniatures Handbook* expands on and goes far beyond the *D&D Miniatures* basic rules. While whole sections focus on using commanders to their greatest capacity, the new mass battle rules allow you to make war on an epic scale and offer your commanders a vast arsenal of new abilities and tactics. So whether you're looking for more ideas and strategies for commanders or something totally new, be sure to check out the *Miniatures Handbook*.

allow you to introduce relatively weak opponents into an encounter while still giving them the opportunity to have an impact on its outcome.

These feats represent a character's ability to lead others in combat. They represent a combination of tactical training, low

cunning, and raw charisma. A commander might exhort his followers to fight harder or merely inspire them to greater levels of heroism. Note that these feats allow you to incorporate some of the aspects of the *D&D Miniatures* game into your campaign with optional rules. Commander figures from *D&D Miniatures*, like the Half-Orc Fighter, do not use these feats. These feats don't benefit the character who takes them; they only help his allies.

**COMMANDER [GENERAL]**

You are a natural leader, capable of instilling bravery and tenacity in others. On the battlefield, your followers stand and fight while lesser warriors flee in terror.

**Prerequisite:** Cha 13.

**Benefit:** All allies within 30 feet of you gain a +1 morale bonus on all saves against fear effects.

**DEFENSE OF THE RIGHTEOUS [GENERAL]**

The gods look upon your efforts with great interest. Wherever you go, they are certain to defend you. Rather than hoard such power, your selflessness provides your friends and allies with this divine blessing.

**Prerequisites:** Cha 17, good alignment, Commander.

**Benefit:** All allies within 30 feet of you gain a +1 morale bonus to Fortitude saves.

**GANG TACTICS [GENERAL]**

Your allies seize every advantage, using dirty tricks to impress you and win your favor. However, they fight hard only when they have an opponent at a disadvantage.

**Prerequisites:** Cha 15, evil alignment, Commander.

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**Benefit:** All allies within 30 feet of you deal +1 point of additional damage when flanking.

**Special:** Your followers do not gain this benefit against opponents who cannot be flanked.

#### HALFLING'S CUNNING [GENERAL]

You share your experience in fighting larger opponents with your allies, making them more effective against tall foes.

**Prerequisites:** Cha 13, Commander, size Small or smaller.

**Benefit:** All allies within 30 feet of you gain a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls against creatures of a size category greater than theirs.

#### INSPIRE BLOODLETTING [GENERAL]

Your followers attack their enemies with a savage fury. Their wild, punishing blows are more likely to crush a joint, slice an artery, or batter through armor.

**Prerequisites:** Cha 13, Commander.

**Benefit:** All allies within 30 feet of you gain a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls to confirm critical hits.

#### INSPIRE BLOODTHIRST [GENERAL]

The dread you strike into your follower's hearts compels them to fight with a crazed fury, for fear that you might punish or kill them if they falter.

**Prerequisites:** Cha 15, evil alignment, Intimidate 5 ranks, Commander, Weapon Focus (any melee weapon).

**Benefit:** All allies within 30 feet of you gain a -1 morale bonus on all melee attacks.

#### ROUSE COURAGE [GENERAL]

When terror fills the hearts of your allies, your presence helps calm them. Rather than flee, they stay and fight.

**Prerequisites:** Cha 13, Commander.

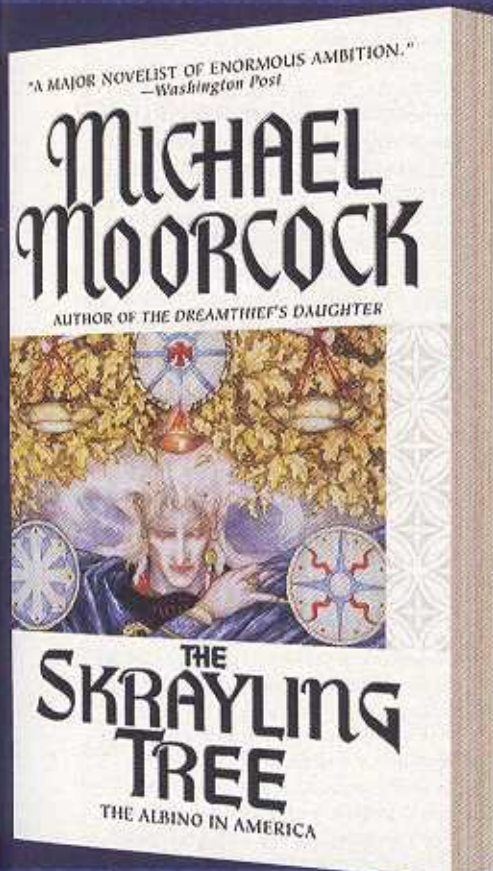
**Benefit:** All allies within 30 feet of you may reroll any failed saves made

against fear effects. They may roll again only once. An ally affected by a fear effect who moves within 30 feet of you can make one additional save to resist the effect.

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Still need more tactics for your commanders or ideas for D&D mini warbands? Check out the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* section of the Wizards of the Coast website at [www.wizards.com](http://www.wizards.com). Along with dozens of suggestions, options, and strategies to enhance your skirmishes, the site offers new rules, scenarios, encounters, previews, and more for your D&D miniatures game.

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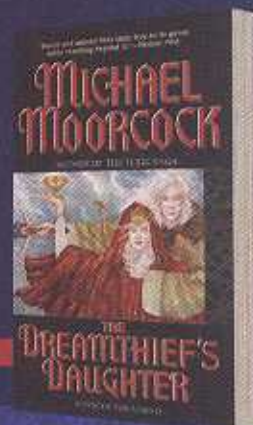
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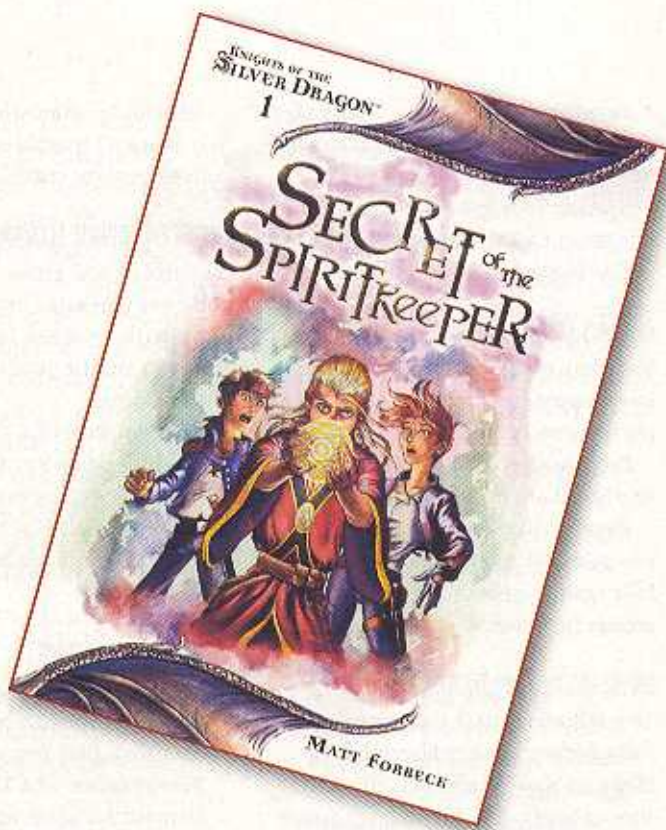


Where Imagination Knows No Bounds

Read an Excerpt Online at [www.twbookmark.com](http://www.twbookmark.com)

by Matt Forbeck  
art provided by Wizards of the Coast

# SECRET OF THE SPIRITKEEPER



**S**ecret of the Spiritkeeper is the first in the new "Knights of the Silver Dragon" series of young adult DUNGEONS & DRAGONS novels from Wizards of the Coast. They're part of the new Mirrorstone imprint of books designed for boys and girls ages 8 and up. Like the Harry Potter books, readers of all ages can enjoy them, but they feature young (teenage) heroes, and they emphasize dramatic tension rather than bashing monsters—although there's a bit of that too.

Secret of the Spiritkeeper presents a tale of both mystery and adventure. Kellach (an apprentice wizard) and Driskoll (his younger brother) find Kellach's mentor Zendric lying dead in his tower one morning, the victim of a robbery gone bad—or so it seems. Soon, the two boys and their friend Moyra discover that Zendric's soul was stolen with a magic item called a spiritkeeper.

The kids have only a day to find the spiritkeeper and return it to Zendric's body before the connection between them is broken forever. Their quest takes them from the bowels of the city prison to the depths of the Dungeon of Doom, miles outside of the city's embattled walls. In its course, they

encounter a tribe of goblins, a savage owlbear, a flaming-headed zombie, and an enemy far worse and much closer to home.

## KELLACH

Kellach fancies himself as not only an up-and-coming wizard but a great detective. To him, the two go hand in hand, as both professions involve figuring out how things really work. In truth, he has a lot of room for development in both pursuits, but he shows promise at both.

Kellach is tall for his age and has blond hair and blue eyes. His father, Torin, is the Captain of the Watch in Curston. His mother disappeared around the time of the Sundering of the Seal, an event that nearly destroyed all of Curston and still affects the city to this day. Today, he lives with his father and his younger brother Driskoll in a rebuilt part of town called the Phoenix Quarter.

At age 13, Kellach is learning to be a 1st-level wizard. He has yet to master his 1st-level spells or the abilities to summon a familiar or scribe a scroll, although he technically possesses such skills.

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Wizards of the Coast envisioned Secret of the Spiritkeeper and the rest of the Mirrorstone books as a means to introduce new readers to both fantasy fiction and the worlds of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. It might not be as sophisticated as traditional fantasy literature, but it makes for a great way to hook younger readers into the genre and the game. Those adults who enjoy tales of younger heroes should enjoy the story too.

With the explosion in popularity of fantasy with both Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings, there's never been a better time to get people interested in DUNGEON & DRAGONS. If you have younger friends or relatives you'd like to get started playing DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, then the Mirrorstone books present the perfect tool. Have your friends or relatives read the books and then pick up the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Basic Set due out this month. In no time, you should have them on their first adventure.

As a Dungeon Master, Secret of the Spiritkeeper can help you figure out the proper tone to set for younger players. The book features some combat but keeps it to a minimum. The heroes get by more on their wits than strength of arm or wand. With such low-level characters, even the weakest monsters can prove dangerous. Aim to thrill rather than threaten, and you might soon find yourself with a new group of lifelong converts to play with.

**Kellach, Male Human Wizard 1:** CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +0; Grp -1; Atk/Full Atk -1 melee (1d4-1/19-20, dagger) or +1 ranged (1d4-1/19-20, dagger); SA spells; SQ —; AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 10.

**Skills:** Concentration +8, Decipher Script +8, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (religion) +6, Search +5, Spellcraft +8, Spot +2.

**Feats:** Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Scribe Scroll.

**Languages:** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Halfling.

**Spells Prepared** (3 save DC 14 + spell level) 0—*daze, flare, prestidigitation*.

**Possessions:** Dagger, backpack, lantern, torch, flint and steel, spellbook, waterskin, quill, parchment (three sheets).

## DRISKOLL

Driskoll plays Watson to Kellach's Holmes. He collects stories of all sorts, but his favorites are the ones that tell of the adventures his brother Kellech and he have in Curston. He's more street smart than Kellach, who spends most of his days with his nose in books.

Driskoll looks up to his brother Kellach, although he'd never say so to Kellach's face. He thinks his brother is too full of himself as it is. Still, he looks to his older brother to protect him and to get them out of whatever trouble they get into. Driskoll can manage for himself, but sometimes he's more comfortable in his brother's shadow.

At age 10, Driskoll is just coming into his own as a 1st-level bard. Currently, he's just gaining the ability to cast spells, and he has yet to discover the full extent of his magic. He has the bardic knowledge and bardic music abilities, but he doesn't have enough ranks in Perform to use any of the latter's effects.

**Driskoll, Male Human Bard 1:** CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d6; hp 6; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11

(+1 Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Attack +0; Grp -1; Atk/Full Atk -1 melee (1d4-1/19-20, dagger) or +1 ranged (1d4-1/19-20, dagger); SA —; SQ bardic knowledge, bardic music; AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 18.

**Skills:** Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +7, Hide +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Listen +6, Perform (act) +6, Perform (oratory) +6, Perform (wind instrument) +6, Search +7, Sense Motive +7.

**Feats:** Investigator, Negotiator.

**Languages:** Common, Halfling.

**Spells Prepared** (2 save DC 14 + spell level) 0—*dancing lights, prestidigitation*.

**Possessions:** Dagger, backpack, lantern, torch, and flint and steel.

## MOYRA

Moyra's father Breddo is a notorious thief who has been in and out of jail her whole life. She first met Driskoll and Kellach when their mother Jourdain reached out to help Moyra's mother Royma while Breddo was in jail. Unfortunately, it was Torin, Jourdain's husband, who put him there.

If Driskoll thinks of himself as street smart, he has nothing on Moyra, who spent most of her life on the streets, often as a stooge in her father's scams. She often claims that all she cares about is earning some money so she can move her and her mother out of the hole in which they live. In truth, she's looking for something she can believe in, and maybe someone too.

Even at age 12, Moyra is a 1st-level rogue. The most experienced and least sheltered of her friends, Moyra has full access to all of her class abilities.

**Moyra, Female Human Rogue 1:** CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d6; hp 6; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +0; Grp -1; Atk/Full Atk -1 melee (1d4-1/19-20, dagger) or +4 ranged (1d4-1/19-20, dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ —; AL CG; SV Fort +0, Ref +8, Will +1; AL

CG; Str 9, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16.

**Skills:** Bluff +7, Climb +3, Disable Device +3, Hide +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (local) +5, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Search +5, Sense Motive +3, Sleight of Hand +6, Spot +5.

**Feats:** Dodge, Lightning Reflexes.  
**Languages:** Common, Elven.

**Possessions:** Dagger, backpack, lantern, torch, flint and steel, waterskin, 50 feet of rope.

## THE SPIRITKEEPER

This clear crystal sphere bears ornate golden runes that faintly shimmer beneath its surface. Despite its innocuous appearance, a *spiritkeeper* has the power to steal a person's soul and store it within. The crystal can hold one soul at a time for an indefinite period. If it is used on someone while it already holds a soul, the target must make a DC 17 Will save or have its soul switched with the one in the item, leaving the target's soul trapped within the *spiritkeeper* while the target's body is possessed by the soul now freed from the *spiritkeeper*. Those who make their save cannot be affected by the *spiritkeeper* again. These effects are permanent, but otherwise function the same as the spell *magic jar*. Using the *spiritkeeper* is a full-round action that requires a command word.

Moderate necromancy CL 9th  
Craft Wondrous Item, *magic jar* Price 112,000 gp Weight 1 lb.

by F. Wesley Schneider  
 images provided by Square Enix  
 and Final Fantasy Warcry  
 (ff.warcry.com)

# FINAL FANTASY

Despite their shared title, there is nothing "final" about the games in the long-running Final Fantasy series. With little in common from one to the next, what these games lack in cohesiveness they make up for in presenting unique worlds, each utilizing a refreshing variety of fantasy themes. From royal knights and monstrous servants to airships and magic, Final Fantasy eagerly twists familiar plots while skillfully weaving its own. Perhaps no one aspect better summarizes the skewed fantasy elements and imagination of the Final Fantasy series than the speedy and potent chocobo.

Part wild animal, part high-speed transport, chocobos are peerless mounts, powerful pack animals, speedy messengers, and true companions.

Wherever chocobos are found, they swiftly replace horses and other equines as the domesticated riding animals of choice. Cheaper to feed, easier to care for, generally more

friendly, and—their owners say—more intelligent, chocobos combine all the strength and speed of horses with less upkeep and stubbornness. Playful and curious at heart, these avians quickly accept other creatures they perceive as having good intentions, and they eagerly learn new skills. This has led to the rise of sports like chocobo racing, which seems as eagerly anticipated by the mounts as the jockeys and gambling fans. It has also made them the mount of choice for many warriors, as chocobos can often travel farther and faster than most horses. However, menial daily chores such as plowing or pulling carts often bore chocobos, who need wide open spaces to stretch their scaly legs and who are always eager to see what's over the next ridge.

In the wild, chocobos can be either unexpected boons or dangerous threats. Whether in flocks of ten to twenty-five racing the wind across the plains or in smaller families nesting in secluded for-

ests, wild chocobos are majestic sights to behold. Chocobos commonly range between areas of plains and forests, whole flocks running in a wide territory of several dozen square miles during the day and separating into smaller families at night, always returning to the same sheltered groves.

Creatures that approach with obviously hostile intentions rarely get close to a flock of chocobos, as their keen senses and swift reflexes are often more than enough to keep them well out of harm's reach. However, should a particularly daring poacher or wrangler attempt to steal up on a family of chocobos at night, the interloper must be prepared to face the creatures' sharp talons and powerful beaks as they defend their home. Also, should a thief successfully steal a chocobo egg or hatchling, distressed chocobo parents have been known to gather their entire flock to chase down the thief and ensure the safe return of their stolen young.



## WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

Each Final Fantasy game makes strong use of well-known fantasy themes, but as the series progresses, the games generally rely less on well-known ideas.

In the first several games, knights in armor, mysterious mages, and fearsome monsters are the rule. Players are exposed to familiar plots like redeeming a dark knight, saving towns from pillaging pirates, and even rescuing kidnapped princesses. Through numerous creative twists, a larger tale far greater than its parts ties these stories together. Besides merely playing along, an attentive DM can learn a great deal about how to make seemingly tired storylines new again. Ideas for new weapons, magic, hordes of bizarre monsters, and characterizations of all varieties of heroic archetypes make these early games a creative treasure trove for both DMs and players alike.

The more recent games in the Final Fantasy series make frequent departures from the themes of traditional fantasy games. Although knights, high magic, and terrible monsters remain, new elements like space travel, guns, mechs, and other advanced technologies often make appearances. Any game featuring both magic and science can make use of ideas for new characters, equipment, background ideas, and options spawned from this unique mix.

Whether you prefer your fantasy as traditional worlds of monsters and magic or cutting-edge combinations of science and sorcery, the Final Fantasy series is sure to bring you something you've never imagined.

## RIDING BIRD

### Large Animal

Hit Dice: 4d8+8 (26 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 60 ft. (12 squares)

AC: 14 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/ +10

Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d8+4)

Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d8+4) and claw +1 melee (1d6+2)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: —

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +4

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 16, Cha 8

Skills: Jump +18, Listen +8, Spot +9

Feats: Endurance, Run

Environment: Warm plains and forests

## SUMMONING RIDING BIRDS

Although they have no skills or magic powers that set them apart from other animals, riding birds are known to be particularly responsive to magical summons and calls for allies. Thus, at 5th level, when a paladin calls for a mount, it's entirely possible that a riding bird answers her call. Also, beginning at 4th level for a druid (or 8th level for a ranger), a riding bird can be summoned to serve as an animal companion. Riding birds also answer the call of *summon nature's ally II*.

**Organization:** Solitary, pair, or flock (8–20 adults plus 2–5 young)

**Challenge Rating:** 2

**Advancement:** 5–7 HD (Large), 8–9 HD (Huge)

**Level Adjustment:** —

*What looks to be an exceptionally athletic chicken the size of a draft horse and with golden-yellow feathers stands before you. With a pair of sharp talons, it scratches at the ground as its head darts about alertly. Upon noticing you, it tilts its long neck to one side and lets out a curious call, "Wark?"*

Riding birds are large animals that look like crosses between oversized chickens and ostriches. With long necks, golden feathers, and intelligent eyes, riding birds can often be found running freely in flocks across great plains or lazing in the cool shade of isolated forests. Natural runners, few creatures can sprint as fast as a riding bird without the aid of magic.

An average riding bird stands nearly 7 feet tall and, with its flared tail plumes, is almost equally long. Despite their size, riding birds are still avians and usually weigh only about 350 pounds.

### COMBAT

Riding birds are usually either shy or friendly, and thus don't often engage in combat. Most potential predators leave riding birds alone in favor of slower prey. However, when a riding bird's young or those its become attached to are in danger, it makes

effective use of its sharp beak and powerful talons.

**Skills:** Like most birds, riding birds have keen eyesight, giving them a +6 racial bonus on Spot checks.

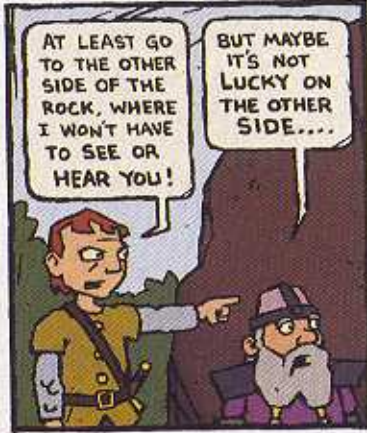
**Carrying Capacity:** A light load for a riding bird is up to 200 pounds; a medium load, 201–400 pounds; and a heavy load, 401–600 pounds. A riding bird can drag 3,000 pounds. Riding birds cost 400 gp.

### BLACK RIDING BIRDS

Far more rare than the standard yellow-feathered riding bird is the nearly mythical black riding bird. Said to lurk only in the most secluded mountain forests or born by chance from the controlled breeding of thoroughbreds, black riding birds are one of nature's most prized treasures.

Black riding birds have the exact same stats as standard riding birds, as well as a fly speed of 90 feet (good). Black riding birds usually sell for 2,000 gp on the open market.







HELLO, ALL YOU NICE AND GOODNESS-FILLED PEOPLE! TODAY, I'M HAPPY TO DEBUT NEW METHODS OF DETECTING NAUGHTINESS THAT GOES BEYOND WHAT MOST OF YOU ARE USED TO.

FIRST, A LITTLE HISTORY, AND WHEN WE'RE DONE, WE HAVE REFRESHMENTS...



"DETECT EVIL" IS A PRETTY USEFUL SPELL, BUT IT'S NOT TOO GOOD AT BEING SPECIFIC...

GOOD NEWS, GUYS! IT'S EVIL! YOU CAN SMUSH IT NOW.



...WHICH IS WHY I'M UNVEILING A SERIES OF SPELLS THAT CAN HELP THE MODERN CLERICAL-TYPE PERSON FETTER OUT OTHER TYPES OF MISBEHAVIOR...



DETECT POLITICAL HOOEY

AH! I'M A UNITER, NOT A DIVIDER.

DON'T MISUNDERESTIMATE ME...



DETECT BAD INVESTMENT

THIS SOUNDS GREAT! LISTEN:

"DEAR OCCUPANT, IF YOU SEND ME YOUR BANK ACCOUNT NUMBER, I WILL TRANSFER TWENTY MILLION GOLD INTO IT. IT WILL THEN GO TO A THIRD PARTY, AND YOU GET TO KEEP TWO MILLION..."



DETECT. MARKETING

...AND THIS SWORD DOES EVERYTHING! IT SLICES, DICES, WHIPS AND PUREES, AND THE BLADE IS DISHWASHER-SAFE! BUT WAIT, THAT'S NOT ALL!

ORDER NOW, AND A SET OF VORDAL KITCHEN KNIVES ARE YOURS, ALONG WITH A RING OF REGENERATION FOR ANY MISHAPS...

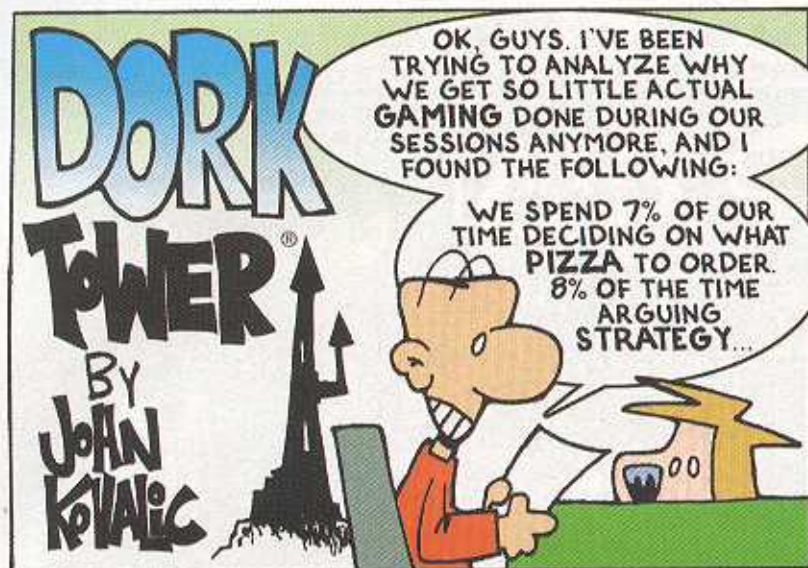


...AND LASTLY, "DETECT WHOEVER RAIDED THE COOKIES AND PUNCH YOU MADE FOR WHEN COMPANY COMES OVER."

SORRY, EVERYONE.

I TOLD YOU.

WAS... WORTH... IT...





# SAMURAI



Dan Scott



# VS. KNIGHT

WHO WOULD WIN?

*by John Clements • illustrated by Dan Scott*

**F**rom countless works of literature, films, and role-playing games, two heroic archetypes stand out as models of martial mastery: the heavily armed and armored European knight and the honorable and deadly Japanese samurai. Each possessing their own unique arsenal of weapons and characteristic fighting styles, these historic warriors have been depicted and idealized countless times as nearly invincible heroes of peerless ability and skill. Aside from these fantastical depictions, the questions of who these historical champions were, what equipment they used, and how they did battle remain. These queries also lead to an even greater question, one that can be answered only on the battlefield of imagination: In a fight between these two breeds of legendary warriors, who would win?

#### THE SCENARIO

First of all, where would these two lone warriors meet, and under what circumstances? Since the conditions of this imaginary fight could play a major factor, such an encounter would best take place on a flat, firm, open field with no cover and plenty of room to maneuver. Although each is an accomplished horseman, it is conducive to have the single-combat duel occur on foot and without use of missile weapons. Interestingly, both combatants are probably used to the same climate and weather, so this factor should not influence their battle.

There are many intangibles to consider. The ability of each combatant to read or size up his opponent and determine the threat the other posed is an important consideration. Is each briefed on the nature of his opponent and his armaments, or is the encounter a blind one in which neither knows anything about his adversary? Given these variables, let's assume

that each of our ideal combatants has been informed about the other and is therefore mentally prepared and composed.

Of course, if we are supposing a clash between two "typical warriors," we must also ask exactly what is considered typical? The knights of circa 1100 CE and the samurai of circa 1200 CE were roughly evenly matched in equipment, but the same comparative warriors during the 1400s were quite dissimilar. Each of the two historical warriors in question fought with equivalent technologies, under fairly similar climates and terrain, and for similar reasons, but it's difficult to think in terms of a "generic" medieval knight or a "standard" samurai warrior. With respect to a European knight, it's also difficult to choose which nationality and what type of

### Bushido is "the way of the horse and bow," not "the way of the sword."

warrior from which portion of the Middle Ages to use. With the samurai, though, we only deal with a single, homogenous culture.

As for the knight, are we assuming he will be a mail-clad Norman with sword and kite shield from the year 1066? Perhaps he could be an English or French chevalier of 1350 in partial plate with arming sword ready for a judicial duel in a closed ring? Will he be a Teutonic knight of circa 1500 in a head-to-toe suit of articulated Gothic plate-armor and wielding a bastard sword?

Will the samurai be wearing the older box-like Muromachi armor and armed with a tachi blade, or will he wear the later close-fitting Kamakura-period do-maru armor and use the more familiar katana? For that matter, would the samurai be allowed to use both his long katana and his wakizashi short sword together?

#### THE WARRIORS

We can reasonably assume that the personal attributes such as individual strength, speed, stamina, age, health, and courage are fairly consistent between such professional warriors. Assuming we can somehow control for these attributes, we can match combatants with some equality. It is not unrealistic to believe that neither was likely decisively stronger or faster than the other. However, we can't discount physiology as a factor, which might be an advantage for the European (16th-century samurai armor examples are sized for men around 5'3"-5'5", while European armor from the same period and earlier fit men ranging from just under 6' to about 6'5"), but other evidence suggests average European heights in the 16th century were just

above 5 feet. While the European concept of physical fitness among knights of the 15th century emphasized the classical

Greco-Roman youthful physique of a narrow waist and broad shoulders on a lean frame, the Japanese ideal was one of a more mature man having a wider base and broader middle—no doubt reflecting the natural ethnographic characteristics of each race, but also influencing the fighting techniques they employed.

We might also want to consider the forms of warfare in which each swordsman possessed experience. The early samurai engaged in a ritualized style of warfare where individual champions might fight separate battlefield duels following established protocols, as opposed to a later mounted archery style of combat amid pike formations of lesser foot soldiers. There were a few large scale (often disastrous) military expeditions to Korea and elsewhere, but most of a samurai's battles occurred in the environment of his home islands.

Knights emphasized mounted shock warfare with couched lances and—off the field—a concern for chivalric and judicial duels as well as tournaments of all kinds. The Western way of war was directed more at a traditional battle of annihilation as part of an overall campaign of conquest. Yet, individual challenges, whether to the death or not, were frequent. Knightly arms and armor were the result of a dynamic interaction of Latin, Celtic, and Germanic cultures as well as Turkish and Arabian influences. The environment knights fought in were extensive and diverse, ranging from the cold of Scandinavia to the deserts of the Middle East, from the plains of Western Europe to the deep forest of the East, and the swamps, fields, and mountains in between.

Culture might also play a role in this context. Samurai warriors existed in a hierarchical and conformist culture that rewarded obedience and loyalty over individuality. Knights existed in a more complex and fluid society that emphasized self-expression with a long tradition of reliance on individual initiative. Both cultures had experience fighting against outsiders and foreigners: the Europeans encountered the Turks, Mongols, Saracens, and others; the Japanese encountered the Koreans, Chinese, Mongols, and others. Thus, in considering the historical record on cross-cultural collisions in different locations, we might want to give the edge to the more socially diverse Europeans on this matter.

On an individual basis, we must consider what effect the quality of fatalism within the samurai code of bushido might play, or rather the resolute acceptance of death that motivated the fiercest samurai. We cannot overlook the quality of piety and faith that could motivate a noble knight to

great feats, or of the ideals of chivalry that he might uphold to the death. It's possible a medieval European knight would have a certain disdain and scorn for his foreign, "pagan" adversary. Of course, the Japanese warrior's well-known attitude of proud invincibility and readiness to die for his lord could equally make him vulnerable to an unfamiliar foe. Contempt for life and contempt for a dangerous, unknown opponent you might underestimate can be a disastrous combination. While courage is important, fighting spirit alone is insufficient. There are surely intangibles here we cannot measure with any reliability. These and other non-quantifiable, psychological factors aside, we are left with armor, weapons, and training to decide the victor.

**Without weapons designed to defeat plate armor, any fighter would have difficulty.**

#### THE ARMOR

Armor changes things in sword-play. If you've never trained in it, you can't imagine how it affects your movement and the execution of even simple actions. It has been said that while Europeans designed their armor to defeat swords, the Japanese designed their swords to defeat armor. There is a certain truth to this, but it's a simplistic view. The better Japanese armor was constructed of small overlapping lacquered metal scales or plates tied together with silk cords in order to specifically resist the slicing cut of the katana. It allowed significant freedom of movement while offering excellent protection. If it got wet, however, the silk cords soaked up water and it became terribly heavy. Although the earliest styles of samurai armor were designed

with large square plates as a defense against arrows, the later forms were intended primarily to be used by and against similarly equipped swordsmen and to lessen the tremendous cutting capacity of their blades. It was durable, effective, and provided for ample movement. How would it hold up to the stabs of a narrowly pointed knightly sword? This is an important question.

Medieval European armor was designed and shaped more to deflect strikes and absorb blunt force blows from lances and swords. A knight's armor varied from simple byrnie of fine-riveted mail, which could absorb slices and prevent cuts, to well-padded soft jackets and metal coats-of-plates, which were designed to protect equally from concus-

sion weapons as well as penetrating thrusts. A complete suit of fully articulated rigid plate armor required specialized weapons to effectively defeat it. Plate armor was constructed to be

invulnerable to sword cuts—even, it can be surmised, those of the exceptionally sharp katana. Some high-ranking 16th century samurai lords actually owned pieces of contemporary European armor, gifts and purchases which they even wore into battle. They did not prize them merely as exotic. For foot combat, this armor was well balanced, maneuverable, and sometimes even made of tempered steel. It was well suited for wear in combat, and is far from the awkward, lumbering cliché presented by Hollywood.

Without weapons designed to defeat plate armor, any fighter armed with a sword alone (katana or not) would have difficulty. Indeed, full European plate armor with mail might very well damage the keen edge on particularly fine katanas. After all, we should not forget that despite the katana's

vaunted cutting ability, the samurai were able to successfully rely on their armors as defense against it. There is every reason to imagine knightly armor would have been just as effective if not more so. If we therefore assume the armors to be more evenly matched, say mail and partial plate for the knight as used around 1250, things would get more interesting. However, the samurai did often carry a thick dagger, which would have been quite useful against plate. Interestingly, each warrior was highly skilled in using armor-piercing daggers and with close-in grappling (something not generally known about knightly fencing skills).

#### THE SHIELD

We must consider whether the knight in this hypothetical duel will be armed in the familiar shield and short sword style or will use only a single longsword? If armed with a shield, we must ask what kind? Will the knight employ a center-gripped type with front umbo or one worn by enarme straps? Will the shield be the highly effective "kite" shape with its superb defense or one of the smaller, more maneuverable convex "heater" styles? How about a thick steel buckler?

There's a reason virtually every culture developed the shield and why they were used for thousands of years: They were very effective. In 15th-century Europe, it was only the combination of the development of full plate armor and two-handed swords combined with heavy polearms and powerful missile weapons that finally reduced the long reigning value of the shield in warfare. The medieval style of sword and shield fighting is distinctly different from the two-hand grip and quick

full-arm slashing cuts of Kenjutsu. Medieval short swords are properly wielded with more of a throw of the arm and a twist of the hips while making passing steps forward or back. Both cuts and thrusts are thrown from behind the shield while it simultaneously guards, feints, deflects, or presses. A sword and shield is a great asset over a single sword alone. Fighting with sword and shield offers a well-rounded and strong defense that safely permits a wide range of both direct and combination attacks.

The shield was not used in the ways typically shown in movies, video games, stage-combat, or historical roleplaying organizations. Fighting against a medieval shield is

### As a sword, the Japanese katana is unmatched in its sharpness and cutting power.

not simply a matter of maneuvering around it or aiming blows elsewhere. A sword can cut quite well from almost all angles around or underneath a shield. Indeed, since the shield side is so well guarded, the opponent is the one limited to attacking to only one region—the non-shield side. As it comes out from behind the shield to strike, an attacker's weapon can be counter-timed and counter-cut, which is an effective tactic to employ against a shield user. Yet a shield user's attacks are not at all one sided. A shield can be used offensively in a number of ways and at very close range.

Katanas are powerful swords used with strong techniques, but thinking they could simply cleave through a stout medieval shield is absurd. A shield cannot simply be sliced through, even with a katana. Medieval shields were crafted of

fairly thick wood covered in leather and usually trimmed in metal, making them highly maneuverable and difficult to cut into. More likely, a blade would be momentarily stuck if it struck too forcefully. Unlike what is seen in the movies or described in heroic literature, chopping into a shield's edge can temporarily cause the sword blade to wedge into the shield for just an instant and thereby be delayed in recovering or renewing an attack (and exposing the attacker's arms to a counter-cut). Shields without metal rims were even favored for this reason.

Kenjutsu (Japanese swordsmanship), although consisting of very effective counter-cutting actions, also has no real indigenous provisions for fighting shields. A skilled warrior could certainly improvise some, but those unfamiliar with the formidable effectiveness and versatility of a sword and shield combination would have a hard time.

#### THE SAMURAI'S SWORD

In major battles fought by both types of warrior, both samurais and knights typically wielded a sword in one or two-hands. For the knight, the primary weapons had always been the long lance and the sword, and to a lesser degree the poleaxe, dagger, and mace. The sword was always the foundational weapon of a knight's fencing training. For the samurai, however, the sword was but one of three major weapons, along with the bow and the yari (thrusting spear) used from horseback. We should consider that, despite their later acquired reputation for swordsmanship, the samurai's primary weapon was, in fact, not the sword. The sword did not become

a premier weapon of samurai culture and reach its cult status until the mid-to late-17th century, when the civil warring period ended. It is something of a myth that every individual Japanese samurai was himself an expert swordsman (no more true than that every Wild West cowboy was an expert gun-fighter). After all, the expression so associated with bushido is "the way of the horse and bow," not "the way of the sword." Besides, unlike knightly chivalric tales and combat accounts, the majority of single combats between samurai described in feudal Japanese literature took place with daggers and not swords. For the sake of discussion, let us assume both fighters use swords in this imaginary case.

As a sword, the Japanese katana is unmatched in its sharpness and cutting power. Furthermore, it is particularly good at cutting against metal (but it only cuts through other swords in movies and video games). However, medieval plate armor is well known for its resistance to cutting, and cutting at a moving target hidden by a shield or a greatsword is not easy. While the edge of a katana is very strong, with a sharp cutting bevel, it is a thick wedge shape and still has to move aside material as it cuts. Although this is devastating on a draw slice against flesh and bone, it is much less effective against armors. Realizing this, several styles of Japanese swordsmanship devised specific techniques not to cut at armor, but to stab and thrust at the gaps and joints of it just as the Europeans did against their own plate armor. Except for major conflicts in Korea and encounters against the Mongols, the katana developed in comparative isolation and is not quite

the "ultimate sword" some of its ardent admirers occasionally build it up as. The katana's exceptionally hard edge was prone to chipping and needed frequent re-polishing, and its blade could break or bend the same as any other sword might. It was not designed to take a great deal of abuse, and is not as flexible nor intended to directly oppose soft or hard armors as some forms of medieval swords had to be.

The katana's design was not set in stone. It was changed and altered over the centuries like any other sword, being slowly improved or adapted to the different needs and tastes of its users in terms of cross-section, curvature, and length. In the 13th century, for instance, its point had to be redesigned because it was prone to snapping against the metal

## European swords were, in a sense, always specialized rather than generalized designs.

reinforced "studded" leather armor (essentially equivalent to European brigandine armor) of the Mongols and Chinese. By the 18th century its blade, no longer earnestly used against armors, tended to be made longer, lighter, and thinner for classroom practicing.

True, Japanese feudal warriors did have their own form of greatsword in the long no dachi blades. These, however, were employed specifically by lower ranking foot-soldiers against horses (and presumably, on occasion, against pikes). So, we cannot draw an equivalency between these and medieval greatswords used in knightly fencing arts or to the true two-handers of 16th-century European battlefields.

Overall, the katana was a very well-rounded design: excellent at cutting and slicing, yet good at thrusting and

suitable for armored or unarmored fighting on foot or horseback, either one or two-handed. It was a carefully crafted and beautiful weapon reflecting generations of artistry and fearsome necessity, but it was still only a sword—a man-made tool of well-tempered and expertly polished metal. Although the details of manufacture differed, they were made by the same fundamental scientific processes of heating and working ore by shaping and grinding as were other fine swords around the world throughout history.

### THE KNIGHT'S SWORD

Having equipped our samurai, we must turn to the sword to be used by our knightly combatant. It must be understood that there was a great diversity of knightly swords

and armor types. European swords were, in a sense, always specialized rather than generalized designs: There were swords for foot combat,

swords for horseback, single and double-handed swords, straight and curved swords, swords for armored and for unarmored fighting, swords for tournaments, swords for civilian dueling, swords ideal just for thrusting or just for cutting, and swords only for training.

A knight's sword was typically a one-handed weapon originally intended specifically for use with a shield. Their blades are wide and fairly thin, but rigid, with chisellike edges intentionally designed for cutting through mail armor and deep into flesh and bone with a quick, forceful blow. They were light, agile, and stiff, yet flexible enough to withstand the stress of use. They varied from the wider, flatter kinds to rigid, tapering, sharply pointed variations well suited for stabbing both plate and laminated armors.

The later wide-based and acutely pointed style of bastard sword was superb at thrusting. So, even though Japanese armor was made of the same quality steel as their weapons, nothing in its crafting made it superior to armors European blades were designed to penetrate.

Although the medieval sword and shield combination was fairly common, longer blades usable in two hands were in widespread use from about 1250 to roughly 1600 in Europe. When we talk about medieval European longswords or war-swords (or even greatswords), we are not dealing with a single uniform style. Some swords had wide, flat blades with parallel edges well suited to powerful cuts. Later, swords specifically designed for facing heavier armor, had narrower, much more rigid blades of diamond or hexagonal cross-sections that tapered to hard, sharp points. They were used to bash at armor before stabbing and thrusting into joints and gaps. They could also be employed to thrust like short spears or slam like warhammers, yet they were still capable of cutting at more lightly armored opponents.

The difference between these two European blades is significant and once more underscores the distinction between the manner of using a katana and a straight medieval European sword. The tapering blade form has a different center of balance and is often lighter. Its point of percussion is located farther down the blade, and its fine point is capable of making quick, accurate, and strong thrusts. The wider style can make a somewhat greater variety of strikes and delivers more effective cuts overall. The latter is more agile and easier to guard and parry with. It can also more easily employ its versatile hilt in binding, trapping, and striking. Its proper style of use (with its tighter movements, various thrusts, and infight-

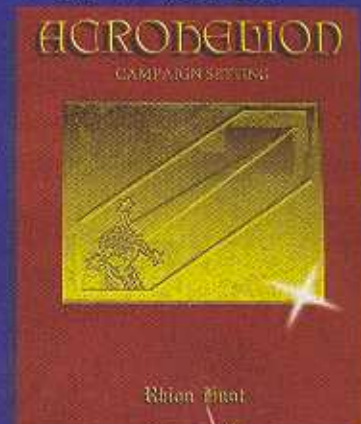
ing with the hilt) is rarely depicted with any accuracy in movies and staged performances.

The reach factor also cannot be overlooked. Although a skilled fighter can effectively use a short blade against a long blade or vice versa, and although neither longswords nor katanas had standardized lengths, overall the katana is significantly shorter than European two-handed swords and greatswords. A longer weapon with two-edges does have advantages—especially if used by a man taller than the wielder of a shorter, single-edged weapon.

Surprisingly, the longsword or greatsword is arguably a more complex weapon than the katana. It has two edges that can be used, as well as a versatile crossguard and pommel permitting a variety of specialized techniques. Another element to consider is that European swords could be used in “half-sword” techniques where the second hand grips the blade itself to wield the weapon in bashing, deflecting, binding, and trapping as a pole-axe or short spear can be used. This was especially effective in fighting against plate armor.

Knightly blades could be excellent swords, but they are often denigrated merely as crude hunks of iron while samurai swords are venerated and exalted sometimes to the point of absurdity by collectors, enthusiasts, and films. The bottom line is that medieval swords were indeed well-made, light, agile fighting weapons equally capable of delivering dismembering cuts or cleaving deep into body cavities. They were far from the clumsy, heavy things they’re often portrayed as in popular media and far, far more than a mere “club with edges.” Interestingly, the weight of katanas compared to longswords is very close, with each on average being less than 4 pounds.

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## THE SWORDSMANSHIP

If instead of a shield and sword we match a knight with a longsword or greatsword against the katana-armed samurai, this makes a significant difference in how we judge the fight. We must not fall into the trap of judging the medieval longsword in terms of what we know about classical Japanese fencing. It is a mistake to think the straight, double-edged medieval sword with cruciform-hilt is handled like a curved katana. While there are certainly similarities and universal commonalities between the two styles of swordsmanship (such as in stances and cuts), there are also significant and fundamental differences. They each make the same basic seven or eight cuts and thrusts. As a curved blade with an especially keen edge, the katana is superior in the potential use of quick, short slices. Yet, as a long, straight blade tapering to a keen point, the longsword is better at thrusting. Additionally, its dual edges, enabled by a graspable pommel, allow it to attack along more lines than the eight standard cuts. Having two edges to work with permits back-edge and reverse cuts. This allows a larger number of strikes from different angles.

The katana is wielded in a quick, flowing manner with a torque of the grip as well as a push of the hips. Pulling a curved blade in this way makes it slice as it shears. The footwork is more linear, with short, quick hopping (even shuffling) steps. In contrast to the slicing slash of a curved, single-edged, Japanese blade, medieval swords were made for hacking, shearing cuts delivered primarily from the elbow and shoulder and employing wide passing steps. The movements are larger, with more fast whirling actions as the two edges are employed, the pommel alone gripped, or the hands changed to different positions on the hilt. As a straight blade, it strikes

more with a point-of-percussion on the 6 to 8 inches of blade down from the point as opposed to the curved katana, which uses more of the first few inches. If we bring into the equation the medieval bastard sword with compound-hilt of side-rings and bar-guards as well as half-grip handle using various methods of holding, this could also be a significant factor. Such hilts allow for a variety of one or two-hand gripping options and gives superior tip control for thrusting or edge alignment.

When contrasting these two styles of sword we should also keep in mind a number of points. We classify each as longswords and both were designed for the same purpose: killing. Differences between them result from the particularities of their functions and the ways they accomplish their goals. We should also keep in mind that Japanese swords and sword-arts reflect a living tradition, and one with a long-standing interest group in the West promoting its study. In contrast, the medieval heritage has for decades had virtually nothing but Hollywood fantasy and roleplayers representing it.

From this, it can be seen that a direct comparison of a European sword to a Japanese one is not possible. They are "apples and oranges," so to speak.

## EDUCATED GUESSES

As our hypothetical fight ensues, any number of things might happen. In the course of striking at one another, a chance blow by either side could end the fight. The katana might or might not be able to make a lethal or incapacitating cut (something difficult to do against plate armor, let alone a mail coat with a shield). The knight, unfamiliar with the nature of his opponent, might throw out a strike that makes him vulnerable to a well-timed counter-attack. Of course, the samurai might



also underestimate the power of the medieval sword's cleaving blows and agile thrusts, even against his armor. The average European two-hand sword is as much as a foot longer than the average katana and is not at all slow or defensive. It has a versatile hilt used for binding, trapping, and parrying. The katana is also a fast weapon that cuts strongly and guards well.

There exist numerous techniques for infighting using the longsword's "half" guards, and there are also many techniques for striking with a shield, but then the katana excels at close-in slices. Of course, against good armor, such actions can be negligible, and fighting against shields was relatively unknown in Japan. So on one hand, the knight's fighting style—either of close-in sword and shield clashing, or large passing steps with long-reaching shearing cuts and plunging thrusts with a longsword or greatsword—might give him the advantage. On the other hand, the intense, focused, counter-cutting style of the samurai with his razor-keen blade and own experience in armored fighting might instead give him the advantage.

It could be argued that the samurai by nature would have a tactical advantage in attitude and fortitude as a result of the psychological elements of his training. He is well-known to have integrated unarmed techniques into his repertoire as well as having a keen sense of an opponent's strengths and weaknesses. Still, much of this is intangible and subjective. Besides, although not widely appreciated, it is now well-documented (particularly from medieval Italian and German fighting manuals) that European knights and men-at-arms fully integrated advanced grappling, wrestling, and disarming techniques into their fighting skills. There is no evidence to the myth that knightly martial culture was any less sophisticated

or highly developed than its Asian counterparts—its traditions and methods only fell out of use with the social and technological changes brought about by advances in fire-arms and cannons.

Those who think the medieval sword and shield were just brutish, artless armaments are as greatly misinformed as those who imagine the katana was handled in some mysterious and secret manner and can cut through anything. While it is known that the average samurai had a large inventory of unarmed fighting techniques at his disposal, these too would be unlikely to play a part against a shield-wielding warrior.

#### KEEPING OUR HYPOTHESIS BROAD

So, given the complexities of the question of what kind of knightly arms and armor from what period we could consider in a hypothetical knight-samurai encounter, it might be easier to just imagine an unarmored duel, sword against sword, without shields. Let's assume then that our cross-cultural gladiatorial fantasy would be fought by two respective 15th century warriors with single swords alone. In this way, we essentially have two fighting men experienced in using a long sword as well as fighting unarmored.

This solves a lot of questions, but even here the issue is problematic. We still need to ask what kind of katana and what kind of longsword? What length of blade and handle? There was no generic model for either weapon, after all. So, assuming that we choose two weapons of comparative dimensions, we could choose the knightly longsword of the cruciform-hilted, double-edged, slightly tapering variety.

Under this scenario, the katana would have a slight advantage. It's adept in unarmored, cut-and-thrust fighting where the slightest wound from its keen edge could perhaps

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Clements is one of America's leading instructors and practitioner-researchers of medieval and Renaissance fencing, having studied the subject for over twenty-four years and researched and taught in six countries. He teaches and writes on historical fencing full-time, is director of ARMA, the Association for Renaissance Martial Arts ([www.thearma.org](http://www.thearma.org)) and author of the books, *Renaissance Swordsmanship: The Illustrated Use of Rapiers and Cut & Thrust Swords* and *Medieval Swordsmanship: Illustrated Techniques and Methods*, both from Paladin Press. His forthcoming works are *Historical Training in Medieval Martial Arts*, *The Longsword Fencing Study Guide*, and *Renaissance Swords: From Battlefield to Dueling Field*.

sever a hand or disable an arm. It could also thrust well and might even threaten a pressing or slicing draw if close in. The half-swording techniques of the longsword would also not be nearly as viable here, although its hilt design might prove useful. While the longsword would be menacing in its quick and long-reaching thrust, its stabbing attacks would perhaps not be that unfamiliar to a samurai used to facing spears. On the other hand, the knight would not be unused to facing a curved single-edged blade, likely being skilled in or familiar with the falchion, badelaire, messer, long grossemesser, and even Turkish scimitars. So again, the outcome of the match would come down to intangibles of personal attitude and individual prowess.

Some would suggest that the samurai was simply a better swordsman and more tenacious warrior and would likely out-fight his European counterpart. Others argue a skilled, superbly conditioned knight using either a sword and shield combination or a longsword or greatsword in full mail or plate would be near invulnerable and brutally overpowering. Practitio-

ners who are experienced with one type of blade tend to favor whatever they're most familiar with.

In one sense, we are talking about very different approaches to armed personal defense, but it's all the same when reduced to two armed combatants facing one another. There are many universal commonalities and shared fundamentals between both European and Japanese feudal warriors, but there were also significant technical and stylistic differences in their respective approaches. If not, their martial histories and their arms and armors would not have been so distinct.

## SO WHAT CAN WE REALLY KNOW?

Overall, there are far too many variables and unknowns to decisively judge who would win in a battle

## The better fighter wins the fight.

between a knight and samurai. The fight cannot be reduced to any generalized statements about who had the historical advantage in skill or who had the superior array of arms and armor. All we can really do is give an opinion based on what we know about these warriors' means and manners of combat.

Before reflexively reacting with a strong opinion one way or another when thinking about this subject, we might want to stop to ponder the same imaginary contest as held between two samurai, such as a samurai of the Muromachi era versus a Kamakura one. We could do the same for the knight, posing the problem of who would defeat whom: an 11th-century Flemish knight or a 14th-century Burgundian one? By doing this simple mental exercise, we can see the inherent problems

of arguing one way or another over such imaginary fights.

While the techniques and principles of kenjutsu are highly effective, they might be direly pressed to combat the proven efficacy of a warrior using the sword and shield method—a technique that proves doubly effective against an opponent with a single sword. As well, the formidable utility and versatility of European longswords or greatswords cannot be ignored, especially when combined with European armor, although a fine katana can also be a truly awesome weapon.

There are many other factors that could be raised when speculating on a hypothetical combat between a knight and a samurai. In the end though, the question of who would win such a duel is really unanswerable. Being a great warrior is a matter of individual ability and technical factors that are

not exclusive to any one culture or time period. The better fighter wins the fight, and

whoever does win is therefore considered the better fighter—or at least the more fortunate. ▀



by F. Wesley Schneider  
images provided by Atari

## A SNEAK PEEK WITH EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES

FORGOTTEN REALMS:

# DEMON STONE™

In recent years, Atari has made an impressive mark on the console and computer game industries, publishing a host of popular games under the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS license, including such titles as *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Heroes*, *Neverwinter Nights*, and *The Temple of Elemental Evil*. Each of these games has delivered the feel and experience of the D&D roleplaying game in new and graphically exciting ways. Working with the designers at Stormfront Studios, best known for their games *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* and *Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor*, these

innovative companies have teamed up to redefine D&D in a wholly unique way. The result of this collaboration appears this month with *FORGOTTEN REALMS: Demon Stone*, an action adventure game for the Playstation 2 and Xbox set in one of the most popular roleplaying settings of all time.

Stormfront Studios' award-winning *Lord of the Rings* game engine blends the control of console game play with cinematic visuals, giving the player the feel of controlling a movie. This design is made all the more remarkable as actors Michael Clarke Duncan and Patrick Stewart lend their voices

to characters created by *New York Times*-bestselling author R.A. Salvatore. With elements taken directly from Salvatore's novel, *The Two Swords*, and other FORGOTTEN REALMS products, players get to see and hear their favorite heroes not only brought to life, but put under their control, including one of the Realms' most recognizable characters; Drizzt Do'Urden. These features, applied to a world filled with creatures, concepts, and rules straight from the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS roleplaying game, set the stage for a dynamic D&D experience.





## THE D&D EXPERIENCE

Besides the task of creating a unique fantasy story using the core DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rules, Stormfront Studios faced the challenge of presenting players with experiences and options unlike those in any other action game.

One of the most unique elements of *Demon Stone* is that even though the game operates in real time, the player controls an entire party of three characters. "To us, playing as a party of heroes with different skills, and the plethora of different choices that offers, is the core of D&D," says Stormfront Studios president, Don Daglow. "From this, we came to the idea that the player could switch on the fly between three different heroes." These three heroes, each key to *Demon Stone's* far-reaching story, would become Illius the sorcerer, Zhai the half-drow rogue, and Rannek the fighter, who made his first appearance in the R.A. Salvatore novel, *The Two Swords*.

With three separate characters and no time to take turns or program actions, most players might expect the unused party members to merely sit back and watch the action, or even inexplicably disappear when not in use. However, Stormfront has come up with a more creative solution, making the unused characters your active allies throughout every encounter. "The AI of the non-controlled heroes is really strong," Daglow explains. "They will kill enemies that have fallen on the ground, cast pro-

### BLUE SLAAD



D&D MONSTER



DEMON STONE CONCEPT

### TROLL



D&D MONSTER



DEMON STONE CONCEPT





tective spells when the party is low on hit points, cast *hold* spells when there are too many enemies, use darkness to launch sneak attacks, and so on." Thus, by following the active character's lead, the actions of a cohesive team of adventurers remain within the player's control through every step of the game. However, basic game control isn't the only way the characters work together.

*Demon Stone* promotes the use of a party over focus on an individual character, much the same way traditional D&D does. As such, the party relies on the unique strengths and skills of its members to aid them on their adventures. To do this, Atari and Stormfront had to translate a number of D&D rules and abilities into graphics that both make sense within the world of the game and allow the player to maintain control. "We always try to live within the spirit of the rules of D&D," says Daglow. "For example, we have used symbolic imagery to depict how hide in shadows and sneak attack work. Once Zhai, the rogue, enters shadow, she becomes translucent to show that she hid successfully. Once she leaves the shadow, she remains

translucent for a little while to show that enemies still haven't seen her—she continues to make her roll. She can then launch a sneak attack on enemies. This is an example of keeping the spirit of the rule alive while presenting it to our audience in a visually appealing way."

Besides drawing on familiar skills and abilities, *Demon Stone* has added a new concept to D&D's themes of team interaction and cooperation. "Each one of the three heroes has a special attack. The fighter's is the Whirlwind Attack feat that does massive damage in a 360-degree arc. The player also has the choice to fire off a team attack," Daglow explains. "During this attack, all three heroes unleash devastating attacks that inflict heavy damage to all enemies in the area around the heroes."

## THE MOVIE EXPERIENCE

Besides tightly holding to many of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS' core concepts, *Demon Stone* also breaks new ground

on several console gaming fronts. Utilizing and improving upon tools and techniques first used in the *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* action game, *Demon Stone*'s development was much the same as a major motion picture. "As the power of our development tools and the video game platforms grows, we can use more and more of the techniques of cinema to enhance the player experience—without losing track of the fact that this is a game, not a movie!" says Daglow. "From the beginning we have treated this game like an epic action-adventure film. R.A. Salvatore pushed hard to make sure the game play unfolded in a way that stayed focused around the story, while Bob Goodman, the Emmy Award-winning writer who created the game's dialogue, brought that same focus to the characters."

Perhaps owing to these cinematic techniques, *Demon Stone* offers players more than just control over stagnant action heroes, but a chance to interact with fully realized characters. "The characters in *Demon Stone* have personalities that play out as the story advances," Daglow explains. "For





example, Zhai is half-drow. At the beginning of the story, she and Rannek, a lawful good human, don't see eye to eye much. Not only do the characters grow in their respective fighting and magical abilities during the game, they also grow in their relationships."

Probably the most exciting and obviously movielike element of *Demon Stone* is its reliance on the acting talents of some of the best-known names in the fantasy and sci-fi movie industries, notably the participation of actors Michael Clarke Duncan and Patrick Stewart. Both award-winning and internationally acclaimed actors lend their distinctive voice talents to bring characters in *Demon Stone* to life. Michael Clarke Duncan (*Daredevil*, *The Green Mile*) provides the voice for Ygorl, a powerful slaad lord intent on leading the hordes of Limbo in laying bloody siege to the Realms. Patrick Stewart (*X-Men*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) lends his voice to one of the best-known heroes of the FORGOTTEN REALMS as Khelban "Blackstaff" Arunsun, working to defend the Realms against the evils encroaching upon it. They are merely two of the



## R.A. SALVATORE

In a rare move, Stormfront Studios did more than ask for suggestions about the world they had begun designing; they enlisted R.A. Salvatore's rich imagination and knowledge of Realmslore. From designing the story, participating in the inception of each character, and assuring that his most popular character was depicted as he intended, Salvatore had an important part in *Demon Stone*'s creation.

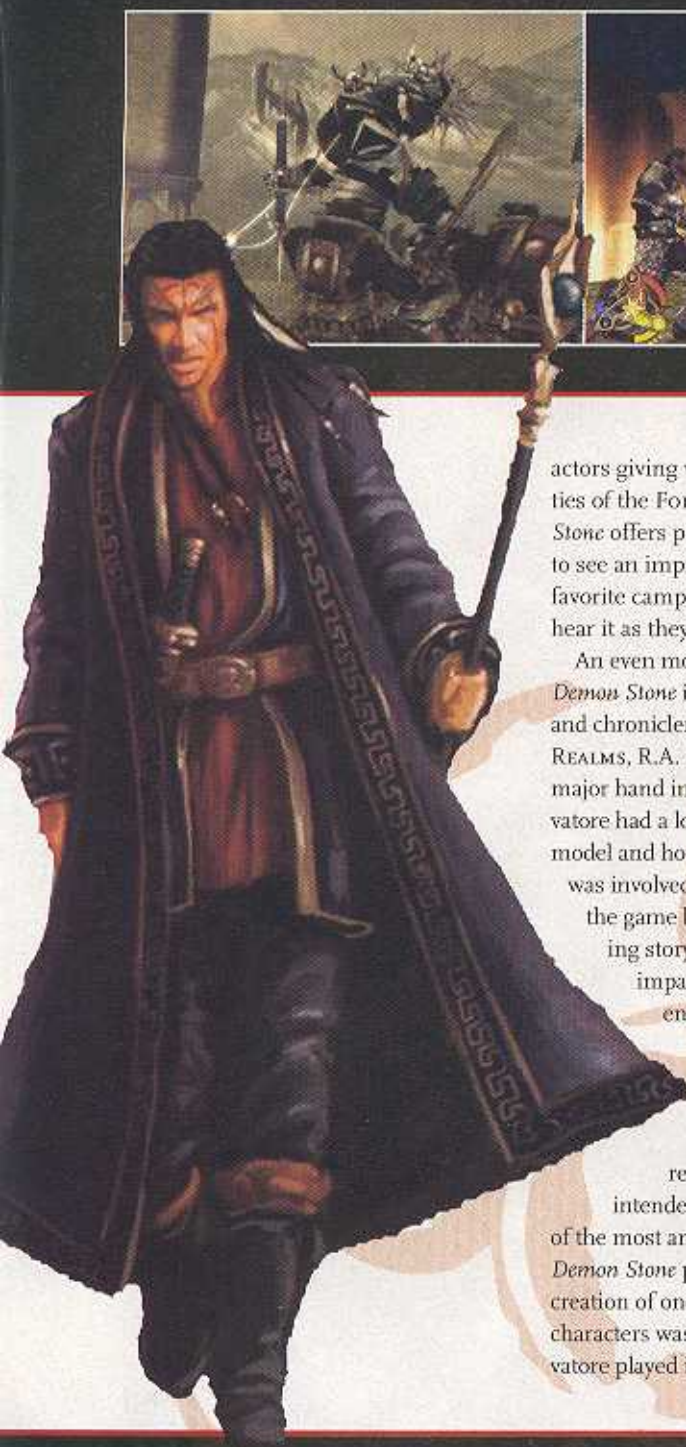
One of R.A. Salvatore's vital roles involved working with the game's designers to create a story that not only would lend itself to a video game format but would remain distinct to the FORGOTTEN REALMS. "The story centers on three adventurers who find themselves in the middle of a potentially devastating conflict between the githyanki and the slaadi," says Salvatore. "Without going into too much spoiler detail, events are underway that will lead to catastrophe unless our heroes can interrupt and defeat them. It's akin to being in the middle of a conflict between two superpowers and having a vested interest in making sure that neither side wins!"

With such an epic plot developing, Salvatore had to carefully work within the confines of a video game, forcing an exactness of dialogue and focus on player-motivated decisions that proved to be more inhibiting than writing a novel. Using a video game as a medium didn't mean the story couldn't be told well, only that the storytelling had to be done in a different way. "The story in this game goes forward and moves back, ducks around corners and goes off in unexpected directions—I hope!" Salvatore relates. "I have to say that none of that could have been possible without the amazing cooperation I received from the team at Atari and Stormfront. It really was a team effort to try to blend storytelling and game play. None of

us wanted the typical huge breaks in the playing action to run videos that told a story. We wanted to go to the next level and let the story unfold to the player *while playing*."

Salvatore also had a significant hand in developing the depiction of his best-known character, Drizzt Do'Urden. Midway through *Demon Stone*'s plot, players have the opportunity to gain Drizzt as a playable party member. The abilities and role of the scimitar-wielding drow hero have largely remained a secret, but Salvatore seemed hopeful about the way the game depicts him. "[This is] the first time I've been involved, intricately, in the inclusion of Drizzt into a game, so I hope that he's fairly consistent with my vision of him. The format is different, obviously, and so his dialogue has to serve a more concise and direct purpose than it likely would in a novel format. Also, just finding a voice to fit him is nothing I've ever thought of before. It's very strange, to tell the truth!"

Although it's unclear at the moment whether future Realmslore will incorporate events from the game or the role Drizzt plays in them, *Demon Stone* presents an adventure not to be missed, both due to its dynamic story and the uniqueness of its creation. "Video games are the wave of fantasy's future, without a doubt," predicts Salvatore. "Authors and designers have been struggling with this for years now. Where do each fit in, regarding the process? What blend of storytelling and game action will prove the most fun and fulfilling for everyone involved? I've been asking these questions for years, both with regards to paper gaming and computer gaming. Now I was given the chance to explore these important questions even further, and I certainly wasn't going to pass that up!"



actors giving voice to the personalities of the FORGOTTEN REALMS. *Demon Stone* offers players a chance not only to see an impressive vision of their favorite campaign setting, but also to hear it as they never have before.

An even more unique aspect of *Demon Stone* is that fan favorite author and chronicler of the FORGOTTEN REALMS, R.A. Salvatore, had such a major hand in this project. "R.A. Salvatore had a lot to do with the Drizzt model and how it looked. Because he was involved at the very beginning of the game by creating the underlying story, Salvatore had a massive impact on the locales and the enemies we chose," Daglow says. This opportunity to play one of the most celebrated heroes of the FORGOTTEN REALMS, realized as his creator intended him, is perhaps one of the most anticipated opportunities *Demon Stone* presents. However, the creation of one of its most noteworthy characters wasn't the only role R. A. Salvatore played in *Demon Stone's* creation.



## THE RULES IN PLAY

*Demon Stone's* designers at Stormfront Studios have made every attempt to incorporate the rules and feel of the pen-and-paper DUNGEONS & DRAGONS roleplaying game into a video game medium. "Many of us here at Stormfront have been playing D&D since the Blue Book—I have one on my desk—and so getting the feeling of D&D was really important to us," president Don Daglow says. The results of this passion for role-playing and the D&D rules is evident in the game's system of decision making and customization.

The most immediate, noticeably D&D elements of *Demon Stone* are central to the game's play and storyline: the characters. Drawing off iconic ideas straight from the *Player's Handbook* and themes from the FORGOTTEN REALMS, a skilled fighter, clever sorcerer, and sneaky rogue make up the party. With the





same abilities and options as the corresponding pen-and-paper versions of these classes, recognizable core D&D abilities as varied as sneak attacks and spellcasting remain at the player's fingertips throughout the game.

In many action games, character progression means finding bigger and more destructive weapons. In *Demon Stone*, character progression has the same meaning it does in *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*: players choosing which skills to advance and feats to possess as their characters' abilities become all the more spectacular. As the characters gain experience and levels, the player's decisions define what their heroes can do and how successful they are at using special abilities and making attacks. "Each of the three characters is totally customizable, having a large number of unique feats and skill upgrades they can purchase using their experience," notes Daglow. D&D players are sure to recognize and make considerable use of skills like Hide and Move Silently, while a number of feats, including the fighter's devastating

Whirlwind Attack, are given center stage with full animations.

Promising to be an action game, *Demon Stone* makes full use of D&D's combat system, although in a real-time style. "The thing that's different about the game is the pacing of the action, but 'under the hood' all the basics of D&D are there," Daglow notes. "When you play traditional D&D with friends, you picture the combat taking place in a fast and furious exchange, and it's that world of D&D imagination that we recreate."

As with any fantasy game in any medium, the presentation and use of magic in the game is one of the integral elements, especially in a world as rich in magic as the *FORGOTTEN REALMS*. *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* has a vast number of options and rules for casting spells, spell effects, and using magic items. In the past, attempts to convert the sheer number of options and rules regarding magic into video game terms have had varying degrees of success. However, *Demon Stone* meets this challenge head-on. "We took advantage of the sorcerer's quality

of knowing a few spells, but being able to cast them many times," explains Daglow. "D&D players will recognize spells such as *Melf's acid arrow*, *lightning bolt*, *power word kill*, *confusion*, *protection from evil*, *charm monster*, and so on. In the end, we feel strongly that the spell system in *Demon Stone* will feel like the D&D system, just geared for a faster experience."

Even more central to any roleplaying game than the rules is the story, a concept that *Demon Stone* adheres to even as an action-driven game. Although the characters' actions and the player's decisions remain the focus of the story, *Demon Stone* is filled with new ideas and situations just waiting to be explored by video gamers and pen-and-paper roleplayers alike. "We've added to the lore of the *FORGOTTEN REALMS*, as well as to the history of races like the slaad and the githyanki," says Daglow. "We'd really like to see what folks do with these new stories we've added." ■





by Hal Maclean  
illustrated by Rob Thomas

# SEVEN DEADLY DOMAINS

SPELLS  
FOR  
SINNERS



**A**varice, envy, gluttony, lust, sloth, wrath, and pride—they speak to the darkest parts of the mortal soul and can drive even the most pious to depravity. They gnaw upon the deepest shames and burrow into the most hidden fears. Such is the nature of the seven deadly sins.

From these darkest vices come untold power, available to any creature willing merely to submit. While obviously

appropriate for evil characters and villainous NPCs, the cleric domains described here are suitable for any alignment. The most saintly characters struggle with their base passions, and the gods they worship embrace or fall victim to mortal depravity in equal turn. Subject to these iniquities, those who serve the cause of good despite their flaws are heroes all the more.

## AVARICE

Avarice is the desire for wealth, whether it is material goods, knowledge, or any other conceivable item or concept that could have value. This kind of excessive, covetous greed causes creatures to take more than they could ever use, regardless of the needs of others.

Clerics of avarice covet all they can get; working for free is anathema for them. When the time comes to divide up party treasure, they are not afraid to explain why they deserve a greater share, but they are also willing to take tremendous risks to justify their claims.

**Granted Power:** Once per day, as a standard action, you may determine the most valuable item within 30 feet. An item's value is determined by its listed gold-piece value. If you cannot see the most valuable item within range, you become aware of its general location (within 5 feet), but you gain no insight into what the item is. This ability does not tell you the gold piece value of an item.

### Avarice Domain Spells

- 1 **Sticky Fingers\***: Grants you a +10 bonus on Sleight of Hand checks.
- 2 **Treasure Scent\***: Allows you to detect and follow valuable materials by scent.
- 3 **Locate Object**: Sense direction toward object (specific or type).
- 4 **Shrink Item**: Object shrinks to one-sixteenth size.
- 5 **Telekinesis**: Moves objects, attacks creature, or hurls object or creature.
- 6 **Leomund's Secret Chest<sup>f</sup>**: Hides expensive chest on Ethereal Plane; you retrieve it at will.
- 7 **Sequester**: Subject is invisible to sight and scrying; renders creature comatose.
- 8 **Discern Location**: Reveals exact location of creature or object.
- 9 **Antipathy**: Object or location affected by spell repels certain creatures.

\*New spell described in this article.



## ENVY

Envy is the desire for what others have. Whether it be material goods or personal traits, envious creatures covet what others possess.

Clerics of envy are jealous by nature. They long for what they do not have and resent the good fortune and talents of others. Their need to prove themselves sometimes puts them in risky situations. A cleric of envy might push a fighter aside so he can be the hero or rush to disarm a trap before the rogue.

**Granted Power:** Add Bluff to your list of cleric class skills. In addition, you cast spells that damage or drain ability scores or bestow negative levels at +1 caster level.

### Envy Domain Spells

- 1 **Disguise Self**: Changes your appearance.
- 2 **Ray of Enfeeblement**: Ray deals 1d6+1 per two levels Str damage.
- 3 **Touch of Idiocy**: Subject takes 1d6 points of Int, Wis, and Cha damage.
- 4 **Vampiric Touch**: Touch deals 1d6 per two levels damage; caster gains damage as hp.
- 5 **Crushing Despair**: Subjects take -2 on attack rolls, damage rolls, saves, and checks.
- 6 **Magic Jar<sup>f</sup>**: Enables possession of another creature.
- 7 **Limited Wish<sup>s</sup>**: Alters reality—within spell limits.
- 8 **Simulacrum<sup>m,s</sup>**: Creates partially real double of a creature.
- 9 **Wish<sup>s</sup>**: As *limited wish*, but with fewer limits.

## GLUTTONY

The gluttonous live to bring themselves pleasure. Unthinking or uncaring of the needs of others, they consume and



indulge in all they can for the mere pleasure of doing so, whether it be food and drink or revels and adventure.

Clerics of gluttony live to gratify their whims: Sensations must be sampled, temptations explored. Cultured and playful, they make ideal companions in many situations. Yet there is a certain shallowness to them. Their only real loyalty is to their quest to try everything at least once.

**Granted Power:** For a total time per day of 1 round per cleric level you possess, you can increase your size as if you were affected by the *enlarge person* spell. Activating the power or ending it is a free action.

### Gluttony Domain Spells

- 1 **Goodberry**: 2d4 berries each cure 1 hp (max 8 hit points/24 hours).
- 2 **Death Knell**: Kills dying creature; you gain 1d8 temporary hp, +2 to Str, and +1 caster level.
- 3 **Create Food and Water**: Feeds three humans (or one horse)/level.
- 4 **Vampiric Touch**: Touch deals 1d6 per two levels damage; caster gains damage as hp.
- 5 **Baleful Polymorph**: Transforms subject into harmless animal.
- 6 **Heroes' Feast**: Food for one creature/level cures and grants combat bonuses.
- 7 **Stone to Flesh**: Restores petrified creatures.
- 8 **Swallow\***: Traps victim in an extradimensional stomach.
- 9 **Trap the Soul<sup>m,e</sup>**: Imprisons subject within gem.

\*New spell described in this article.

## LUST

The lustful exist to satiate their own passions. Although this often means indulging in excesses of sensuality and eroticism, any unbounded desire for that which brings pleasure is also considered lustful. Thus, one might have a lust for



influence, status, power, or countless other desires.

Clerics of lust believe every person has a fatal flaw, a secret desire that they can use to control that person. Everyone is a potential diversion or source of pleasure to them, someone who will dance for their amusement if they can just find the right strings to pull.

**Granted Power:** You can perform a series of seductive motions and distracting gyrations augmented by the passion of your deity. This supernatural ability grants you an enhancement to Charisma equal to your cleric level. Activating this power is a free action, the power lasts 1 round, and it is usable once per day.

### Lust Domain Spells

- 1 **Charm Person:** Makes one person your friend.
- 2 **Invisibility:** Subject is invisible for 1 min./level or until it attacks.
- 3 **Clairaudience/Clairvoyance:** See or hear at a distance for 1 min./level.
- 4 **Planar Ally, Lesser<sup>x</sup>:** Exchange services with a 6 HD extraplanar creature.
- 5 **Scrying<sup>f</sup>:** Spies on subject from a distance.
- 6 **Symbol of Persuasion<sup>M</sup>:** Triggered rune charms nearby creatures.
- 7 **Refuge<sup>M</sup>:** Alters item to transport its possessor to you.
- 8 **Sympathy<sup>f</sup>:** Object or location attracts certain creatures.
- 9 **Trap the Soul<sup>M,f</sup>:** Imprisons subject within gem.

### PRIDE

Arrogance, conceit, hubris, vanity; pride is the root of all other sins and arguably the most deadly. While some degree of self-confidence is acceptable, pride in excess becomes egotism and is perhaps the easiest sin to commit.

Clerics of pride are supremely confident in their own self-worth, seeing themselves as destined for



greatness. They expect to be at the heart of any plan and are strangely indifferent to their own safety. Confident they can survive virtually any hazard they might volunteer to serve as hostages, lead assaults, and to distract monsters.

**Granted Power:** Whenever you roll a 1 on a saving throw you may immediately reroll the save. You must keep the result of the second roll, even if it results in the roll of another 1.

### Pride Domain Spells

- 1 **Hypnotism:** Fascinates 2d4 HD of creatures.
- 2 **Eagle's Splendor:** Subject gains +4 Cha for 1 min./level.
- 3 **Heroism:** Gives +2 bonus on attack rolls, saves, skill checks.
- 4 **Divine Power:** You gain attack bonus, +6 to Str, and 1 hp/level.
- 5 **Reduce Person, Mass:** Reduces several creatures.
- 6 **Forbiddance<sup>M</sup>:** Blocks planar travel, damages creatures of different alignment.
- 7 **Heroism, Greater:** Gives +4 bonus on attack rolls, saves, skill checks; immunity to fear; temporary hp.
- 8 **Spell Immunity, Greater:** As *spell immunity*, but up to 8th-level spells.
- 9 **Charm Monster, Mass:** As *charm monster*, but all within 30 feet.

### SLOTH

The slothful avoid work and exertion in all of its forms. Perhaps out of pride or merely out of laziness, those afflicted with sloth have nothing but distaste for labor, whether it be physical or of some other form, and they spend their time idly gratifying their own whims.

Clerics of sloth are lazy and resent those who want them to do more than the bare minimum. If they see an easy solution to a problem, they take it, even if it offends some of their companions.



**Granted Power:** You are closest to your god while lazing and relaxing. You suffer no penalty to Armor Class against melee attacks while prone.

### Sloth Domain Spells

- 1 **Touch of Fatigue:** Touch attack fatigues target.
- 2 **Unseen Servant:** Invisible force obeys your commands.
- 3 **Deep Slumber:** Puts 10 HD of creatures to sleep.
- 4 **Slow:** One subject/level takes only one action/round, -2 to AC, -2 on attack rolls.
- 5 **Symbol of Sleep<sup>M</sup>:** Triggered rune puts nearby creatures into catatonic slumber.
- 6 **Waves of Fatigue:** Several targets become fatigued.
- 7 **Shadow Walk:** Step into shadow to travel rapidly.
- 8 **Waves of Exhaustion:** Several targets become exhausted.
- 9 **Astral Projection<sup>M</sup>:** Projects you and companions onto the Astral Plane.

### WRATH

Although every creature feels angry at times, wrath stems from excesses of such feelings and unfounded righteousness.

The wrathful are quick to anger and often do not distinguish between accidental slights and true affronts. Thus, even the most minor offense can inspire their rage.

Clerics of anger are confrontational. They have explosive tempers and hoard grudges as if they were fine jewels. They might forget a slight, but they will never forgive it.

**Granted Power:** Once per day, you may subtract a number of points from your Wisdom score equal to or less than your cleric level. For every 2 points you subtract from your Wisdom score, add 1 point to your Strength score. You suffer all the effects of reduced Wisdom including access to spells and bonus spells, reduction of Will saves, and



penalties on Wisdom-based skills. This trade between ability scores lasts for 1 round per cleric level and cannot be ended prematurely.

## WRATH DOMAIN SPELLS

- 1 Rhino's Rush<sup>\*</sup>:** One charge deals increased damage.
- 2 Bull's Strength:** Subject gains +4 Str for 1 min./level.
- 3 Rage:** Subjects gains +2 to Str and Con, +1 on Will saves, -2 to AC.
- 4 Shout:** Deafens all within cone and deals 5d6 sonic damage.
- 5 Righteous Might:** Your size increases and you gain combat bonuses.
- 6 Song of Discord:** Forces targets to attack each other.
- 7 Tenser's Transformation<sup>M</sup>:** You gain combat bonuses.
- 8 Shout, Greater:** Devastating yell deals 10d6 sonic damage, stuns creatures, damages objects.
- 9 Storm of Vengeance:** Storm rains acid, lightning, and hail.

<sup>\*</sup>New spell described in this article.

## SINFUL SPELLS

A number of spells are uniquely tied to the seven deadly sins. Although they are not necessarily evil spells, clerics with at least one of the seven deadly domains most often make use of them. These spells might work well in tandem with the sinful spells presented in the *Book of Vile Darkness*.

## STICKY FINGERS

Transmutation

Level: Asn 1, Avarice 1, Brd 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 min./level (D)

Your fingers exude a slightly viscous secretion and become more nimble. This augmentation grants you a +10 bonus on your Sleight of Hand checks.

## RHINO'S RUSH

Evocation

Level: Clr 1, Drd 1, Rgr 1, Wrath 1

Components: V, S

## SINNING SAINTS

Besides deities already associated with vice and depredation, many gods from existing campaign worlds might offer their worshipers access to one or more of these seven deadly domains. Such a tie to a specific sin does not make a god evil or less righteous than other deities that do not, it merely reflects another aspect of its immortal personality. Following are suggestions for which *CORE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* (and the expanded pantheon presented in the *Complete Divine*), *EBERRON*, and *FORGOTTEN REALMS* deities might provide these domains to their clerics.

### Avarice

**Core D&D Pantheon:** Garl Glittergold, Moradin, Mouqol, Olidammara, Tharizdun, Xan Yae.

**Eberron:** The Keeper, Kol Korran.

**Forgotten Realms:** Abbathor, Brandobaris, Cyric, Dumathoin, Finder Wyvernspur, Gargauth, Geb, Hoar, Mask, Nephthys, Shargaas, Velsharoon, Vergadain, Vhaeraun, Waukeen.

### Envy

**Core D&D Pantheon:** Beltar, Garl Glittergold, Kurtulmak, Lolth, Nerull, Tharizdun.

**Eberron:** The Keeper, Kol Korran, the Mockery, Onatara.

**Forgotten Realms:** Bane, Beshaba, Cyric, Gargauth, Hoar, Kiaransalee, Mask, Set, Shar, Sharess, Shargaas, Talona, Umberlee, Urdlen, Velsharoon, Vhaeraun, Waukeen.

### Gluttony

**Core D&D Pantheon:** Erythnul, Yondalla.

**Eberron:** The Devourer, the Keeper, Olladra.

**Forgotten Realms:** Cyrollalee, Garagos, Malar, Sebek, Umberlee, Urdlen, Vergadain.

### Lust

**Core D&D Pantheon:** Gruumsh, Lolth, Olidammara.

**Eberron:** Olladra.

**Forgotten Realms:** Beshaba, Eilistraee, Hanali Celanil, Hathor, Isis, Lliira, Loviatar, Luthic, Sharess, Sharindlar, Sheela Peryroyl, Sune.

### Pride

**Core D&D Pantheon:** Bahamut, Beltar, Corellon Larethian, Heironeous, Hextor, Iuz, Lolth, Moradin, Pelor, Pholtus, Tiamat, Vecna, Wastri, Wee Jas.

**Eberron:** Dol Arrah, il-Yannah, the Mockery, Onatara.

**Forgotten Realms:** Bane, Cyric, Dumathoin, Finder Wyvernspur, Gargauth, Gond, Helm, Horus-Re, Kiaransalee, Nobarion, Oghma, Osiris, Set, Shar, Shevarash, Siamorphe, Sune, Tempus, Torm, Tyr, Ubtao, Umberlee, Velsharoon, Vhaeraun, Waukeen.

### Sloth

**Core D&D Pantheon:** Olidammara.

**Eberron:** Olladra.

**Forgotten Realms:** Brandobaris, Cyrollalee, Erevan Ilesere, Finder Wyvernspur, Gargauth, Hathor, Lliira, Luthic, Mask, Milil, Sharessm, Sharindlar, Sheela Peryroyl, Tymora, Vergadain, Waukeen.

### Wrath

**Core D&D Pantheon:** Beltar, Erythnul, Gruumsh, Heironeous, Hextor, Incubulos, Joramy, Kord, Llerg, Lolth, Moradin, Procan, Pyremius, St. Cuthbert, Tiamat.

**Eberron:** Balinor, the Fury.

**Forgotten Realms:** Anhur, Auril, Bahgtru, Bane, Beshaba, Clangeddin, Garagos, Hoar, Horus-Re, Kossuth, Loviatar, Malar, Selvetarm, Set, Shevarash, Talos, Tempus, Thard Harr, Umberlee, Uthgar, Valkur, Yurtrus.

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 round

A violent fury consumes you, allowing you to propel yourself in a single deadly charge. Any charge attack you make before the end of the next round inflicts double damage on a successful hit.

## TREASURE SCENT

Transmutation

Level: Avarice 2, Drd 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 hour/level

You gain the ability to smell gold and other precious materials. You can detect copper, silver, gold, platinum, and gems within 30 feet by sense of smell and differentiate between the scents of these five kinds of valuables. If such treasure is upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet. Strong scents, such as an open chest of treasure, can be detected at twice the ranges noted. Overpowering scents, such as a drag-

on's hoard, can be detected at triple normal range.

When you detect one of these types of valuables, the exact location of the source is not revealed—only its presence somewhere within range. You can take a move action to note the direction of the scent. Whenever you come within 5 feet of the source of the smell, you can pinpoint its exact location.

If you have the Track feat, you can follow the tracks of a moving creature with valuables by smell, making a Wisdom (or Survival) check to find or follow such tracks. The typical DC for a fresh trail is 10 (no matter what kind of surface holds the scent). This DC increases or decreases depending on the age of the trail. For each hour the trail is cold, the DC increases by 2. This ability otherwise follows the rules of the Track feat. Creatures tracking using this spell ignore the effects of surface conditions and poor visibility.

## SWALLOW

Conjuration (Teleportation)

Level: Gluttony 8, Sor/Wiz 8

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 round/level; see text

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

You can make a touch attack to trap an opponent in a deadly extradimensional space. Touching an enemy causes a horrific visual effect as your mouth grotesquely distends, swallowing the target and banishing it to a tight, swelteringly humid extradimensional chamber with constricting, pulpy walls.

Upon being teleported to this extradimensional gizzard, the victim is considered grappled and suffers 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage + 1 point/level as well as 6 points of acid damage every round for a number of rounds equal to the caster level. The victim may attempt to escape by using a light slashing or piercing weapon to deal 30 points of damage to the space's walls. The space has an AC equal to the caster's level. The target may also try to escape

by making a grapple or Escape Artist check opposed by the space, which has a grapple bonus equal to double the caster level. If the victim succeeds either at cutting or grappling its way free, it is expelled from the extradimensional gizzard and reappears where it had been when the swallow spell was

cast. If this location is filled with a solid object, the subject appears in the next nearest open space. Otherwise, the target remains trapped and takes damage every round until the spell ends. If the target is killed by the spell, its body is dissolved and possessions are expelled onto the Astral Plane. ☞

## PLAYING A SINNER

Choosing one of these domains is making a commitment to a worldview, which, while not necessarily evil, will certainly color many other aspects of your character's personality. Just like any other domain, these spell lists are merely reflections of a single aspect of your character's deity. Thus, although your deity might succumb to a specific vice, it's the entirety of your deity's dogma that defines his or her alignment.

Whether your character promotes or struggles against his deity's specific brand of sin, it is his actions and how he uses his abilities that define him as a heroic or villainous character. Following are some examples of how a character with one of these traits might behave, broadening their definitions from specifically evil vices to powers useful to flawed clerics of all alignments.

**Avarice:** Almost every character probably suffers from more than a little avarice. The desire for wealth is what leads most adventurers to loot ancient ruins and raid dens of evil creatures in the first place. It's when a character starts taking more than his fair share or hiding what he finds from his party members that he may need to confront his avarice.

**Envy:** An envious character wants what another has. Although this might be put to good use, such as seeking out the powerful sword of an evil warlord, it could also mean coveting the abilities, traits, or possessions of a fellow party member. Such feelings might occur when two members of the same class are in a party and one becomes jealous of the other's abilities. Although this could result in some well-intentioned competition, the envious character might perform stunts beyond her ability to show up her rival.

**Gluttony:** Gluttonous characters want to experience everything. Although this might seem inoffensive enough, the character who insists on seeing what's behind every door or sampling every potion in the necromancer's laboratory could swiftly become a liability to his party. Even in less extreme situations, such a character might take advantage of the hospitality of patrons, giving an entire party an unwelcome reputation.

**Lust:** A lustful character desires something or someone to the detriment of all other things. Although there are few nobler quests than those done out of love, those performed in lust are far more self-serving. The wizard who quests for ever greater magic or the monk who strives for martial mastery both might push aside the desires and needs of their allies to satisfy their passions.

**Pride:** Although it might be hard to be prideful at low level, characters who can shatter mountains and fell dragons with a sword swipe are rarely demure. A prideful character might push aside those better equipped to deal with a situation. The barbarian who breaks down a door before a rogue can disarm its trap or the fighter who insists on attacking the creature a wizard could dispatch with a word are both examples of prideful characters.

**Sloth:** Slothful characters always take the quickest or easiest routes, even against the wishes of their allies. Such a character might simply refuse to climb over a wall and go off in search of stairs. In extreme situations, she might ignore the advice of a guide and follow the shortest route on a map, even though it leads directly through a dragon's lair.

**Wrath:** While barbarians are almost innately wrathful, any character can show an excess of anger. The cleric who casts only destructive spells and who can no longer heal or the rogue who takes an excessive amount of time to perform a single sneak attack are both examples of excessively wrathful characters.





*by Michael Tresca  
illustrated by Tom Fowler*

# SEE NO EVIL

**ALTERNATIVES  
TO THE DETECT  
EVIL SPELL**

Divine spellcasters possess a multitude of powers, from turning undead and healing the wounded to taking on the form of animals. Deities and other primal forces grant these abilities both in the form of continuous powers and magical spells. Higher-level spells often manipulate life and death, but clerics all too often overlook one of their most useful low-level spells: *detect evil*.

The power to know a person's soul creates more questions and moral dilemmas than it solves, however. What does a spellcaster do when he detects evil in someone who's not performing an evil act, for example? Does the spellcaster draw a weapon and murder the person before she hurts someone else? A great burden and awesome power comes with peering into another person's soul.

Like a smudge of dirt, evil appears on people and things bearing its taint. Yet even non-evil people perform acts of questionable morality. Tracking down such a person proves difficult if you can only cast *detect evil*. A spellcaster must specialize in a particular form of detection in order to hunt down such individuals. This article provides spells to help in such hunts. Use them in addition to *detect evil* or pick one to replace that spell to play a more morally ambiguous game.

## DETECT ATTITUDE

Divination

Level: Brd 1, Clr 1, Pal 1

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

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

Target: One creature

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

You sense the target's attitude (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 72) toward you by seeing a faintly glowing colored aura surrounding it, vis-

## DETECTING SPELLS

### Bard Spell

1st-Level Bard Spell

*Detect Attitude:* Reveals target's attitude.

### Ranger Spells

1st-Level Ranger Spell

*Detect Violence:* Reveals violence done in area within recent past.

### Cleric Spells

1st-Level Cleric Spells

*Detect Attitude:* Reveals target's attitude.

*Detect Guilt:* Reveals how much guilt target feels.

*Detect Violence:* Reveals violence done in area within recent past.

3rd-Level Cleric Spell

*Detect Heresy:* Reveals heretical thoughts or actions in target's recent past.

### Paladin Spells

1st-Level Paladin Spells

*Detect Attitude:* Reveals target's attitude.

*Detect Guilt:* Reveals how much guilt target feels.

*Detect Violence:* Reveals violence done in area within recent past.

2nd-Level Paladin Spell

*Detect Heresy:* Reveals heretical thoughts or actions in target's recent past.

ible only to you. You can determine how the target's attitude changes over time, allowing you to know the effectiveness of attempts to change the target's attitude. If you cast this spell on someone who has not met you, that person's aura always appears blue (indifferent).

Attitude	Aura Color
Friendly	White
Indifferent	Blue
Unfriendly	Black
Hostile	Red

## DETECT GUILT

Divination

Level: Clr 1, Pal 1

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

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

Target: One creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You sense the presence of guilt in the target creature. This spell in no way reveals why the target feels guilty, only that it does. The level of guilt a creature feels has little to do with whatever act causes the creature's guilty feelings. A serial killer might feel no guilt for the brutal murders he commits, for example, while a maid might feel strong guilt about forgetting to mop the kitchen floor.

Good creatures typically feel greater amounts of guilt than neutral creatures, who in turn usually feel more guilt than evil creatures. These generalizations cannot guarantee how a creature reacts to its own actions, but they give a general guideline.

A creature must have at least a 3 Intelligence, 1 Wisdom, and 1 Charisma in order to feel guilt. The spell fails if cast on a creature without those minimum ability scores.

Severity of Guilt	Aura Power
Has occasional pangs of guilt	Faint
Stomach-churning guilt; worries about what happened	Moderate
Loses sleep over what happened; obsesses about it	Strong
Wants to take rash actions to avoid feeling the guilt	Overwhelming

## DETECT HERESY

Divination

Level: Clr 3, Pal 2

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

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

Target: One creature

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes





Prized by inquisitors and martial religious orders, this spell reveals past heretical actions and the current heretical thoughts of the target. You sense the target's heretical thoughts and past actions by seeing a faintly glowing aura surrounding it, visible only to you. The strength of the aura shows the level of heresy. You detect current heretical thoughts in the target as well as all consciously made acts of heresy performed within the past 1 day per caster level. The spell cannot detect heretical acts that occurred prior to the spell's time limit, regardless of their intensity. You define what constitutes heresy by your own belief structure, even if the majority of faithful disagree.

This spell only affects people of your own faith, those who say they follow your faith, and those who show aspects of your faith (wearing your deity's holy symbol, for example, or attending a religious service). Any action or thought that opposes your particular definition of your religion's dogma or teachings counts as heresy. A character of a different faith doesn't show as heretical when

you cast this spell, although a character pretending to be a member of your religion shows as committing apostasy/blasphemy.

The more heretical the thought or act, the stronger the aura of heresy the target displays. By concentrating, you can learn more details of the heretical acts or thoughts.

**1st Round:** Presence of heretical acts in the history of the subject or current heretical thoughts in subject.

**2nd Round:** Intensity of subject's current heretical thoughts.

**3rd Round:** Number and intensity of past heretical acts performed by subject.

Intensity of Heresy	Aura Strength
Tangential heresy	Faint
Contrarian heresy	Moderate
Fundamental heresy	Strong
Apostasy /blasphemy	Overwhelming

**Tangential Heresy:** This minor act of heresy allows the heretic to function normally within the faith with little indication of non-dogmatic thought. Such a belief must affect how the heretic interacts with those of his faith, but in such a way that only clerics or others trained in the religion's doctrines might notice. For example, a priest of Ehlonna who only thinks of the goddess as a gnome even though the religion defines her as an elf or human commits tangential heresy.

**Contrarian Heresy:** This form of heresy goes against a relatively minor but nonetheless important aspect of the religion's dogma. For example, a priest of Pelor who preaches and believes the sun is something besides the embodiment of Pelor (but who still faithfully believes in Pelor), practices contrarian heresy.

**Fundamental Heresy:** A fundamental heretic believes and teaches the opposite of a core tenet of the religion. For example, a priest of Vecna who insists on preaching that the God of Secrets got his moniker because he reveals what secrets he knows commits fundamental heresy.

## HERESY AND SIN

Despite vast differences between the dogmas and beliefs of various religions, heresy has a constant, unalterable definition shared by all. Any act, doctrine, or opinion that opposes the tenets of a religion's dogma or teachings is heresy. A character outside the faith cannot perform heresy against the religion; only followers become heretics. Those who follow another religion (or none at all) cannot perform heresy against a religion not their own. See the *detect heresy* spell description for examples of heresy.

On the other hand, anyone can commit a sin. Typically, only deliberate disobedience of a religion's known dogma counts as sin. Most religions (especially those of good deities) consider acts that unknowingly counter the belief's tenets as errors or the effects of ignorance. Non-evil faiths rarely consider such mistaken acts—most commonly performed among the recently converted—as sins. However, harsher religions (especially of evil deities) make no distinction between ignorance and deliberateness, and consider all transgressions as punishable sin. For example, an innkeeper and new convert to Fharlanghn who remains within the borders of his village commits a sin, particularly if he knew that such an action went against the God of Roads' dogma. On the other hand, a recent convert to the faith of Hextor who allows a follower of Heironneous to live inadvertently transgresses against his god, and he probably faces painful, torture-filled punishments.

All religions agree to the wrongness of heresy and sin. Which type of disobedience a religion considers more blasphemous depends on its dogma. Some belief systems declare sin as the more serious type of transgression, and they actively try to bring heretics back into the fold. Others punish those who practice heresy with torture and death, while forgiving sinners. Of course, most evil faiths tolerate neither and actively seek out transgressors of both.

By definition, the vast majority of heretics sin, but as most followers sin, sinners are not necessarily heretics.

**Apostasy/Blasphemy:** Those who commit apostasy completely turn against the faith, utterly rejecting its tenets. Such a person only marginally remains with the faith, if at all. An action considered apostasy generally means the person committing it consciously chooses to leave the religion and join an opposing religion. A blasphemous act is typically an affront to the faith, such as claiming to possess aspects of the religion's deity or claiming to live outside the laws of the deity. Acts of apostasy or blasphemy result in the character turning from the faith, either to create a new religion or to inadvertently embrace the religion of an opposing deity. For example, a priest of Heironeous who kills helpless prisoners, flees from every battle, bullies those weaker than himself, and gives no quarter in battle blasphemes against Heironeous and embraces the ideals of Hextor.

## DETECT VIOLENCE

Divination

Level: Clr 1, Pal 1, Rgr 1

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 60 ft.

Area: Cone-shaped emanation

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

When casting this spell, you perceive the residual aura caused by acts of violence committed in the area of effect. The spell detects violence committed within the past 1 month per caster level. The spell cannot detect violent acts that occurred prior to the spell's time limit, regardless of their intensity.

Violence does not necessarily end in death, but the more violent the act the stronger the psychic residue left behind. This spell does not detect the capacity to cause violence; it only

detects violence committed against a living creature. It also does not specify why the violence was committed, nor the alignment of the assailant or of the victim. By concentrating, you can learn more details of specific violent acts.

**1st Round:** Presence of violence in the area within the spell's time limit.

**2nd Round:** Number and location of violent acts performed in the area.

**3rd Round:** Strength of aura of violent acts performed.

**4th and Subsequent Rounds:** Number of days and hours since most recent violent act, then of earlier violent acts in chronological progression from second most recent backward, with one act indicated per round. \$

Residual Aura Power	Nonlethal Damage	Lethal Damage*	Non-Damaging Effects
Faint	10 hp or less	2 hp or less	Blinding, deafening, pinning, and stunning effects
Moderate	11-30 hp	3-10 hp	Ability damage, paralyzing effect
Strong	31-50 hp	11-30 hp	Ability drain, unsuccessful death effect
Overwhelming	51 or more hp	31 or more hp	Successful death effect

\*If the amount of damage dealt resulted in a creature's death, the residual aura power automatically shows the next most powerful level (up to a maximum of overwhelming).

## DISADVANTAGES

In campaigns that involve mysteries and subplots, the right divination spell can bring about a quick and unsatisfying resolution to an otherwise interesting adventure. Dungeon Masters who want to discourage the use of detection spells without removing the spells from their campaigns have access to a number of disadvantages meant to curb these spells' power. Disadvantages discourage these detection spells without causing too much trouble for the caster. Alternatively, the Dungeon Master can roll 1d6 to determine a random disadvantage whenever a character casts a detection spell, making detection an unpredictable process. Unless otherwise noted, a disadvantage lasts for the spell's duration and for an additional 1 round per spell level after the spell ends.

### Random Disadvantages

1. Beacon
2. Discomfort
3. Glowing eyes
4. Empathy
5. Trance
6. Whispering voice

**Beacon:** Evil outsiders and undead within 60 feet sense the presence of the caster, pinpointing his exact location (distance and direction) in relation to themselves. This effect penetrates barriers, but 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal, a thin sheet of lead, or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks it.

**Discomfort:** When the caster focuses on one creature, that creature becomes aware of the intrusion and knows that the magical probing comes from the caster. It gains a +1 bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks made to find the caster.

**Glowing Eyes:** The caster's eyes glow, and the caster suffers a -5 penalty on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Hide checks.

**Empathy:** Creatures subjected to the detection spell learn about the caster. Thus, if a cleric cast *discern lies* on a group of creatures, he would allow those creatures to know if he was lying for the duration of the spell, in addition to the spell's normal effect.

**Trance:** The caster enters a trance while concentrating, making the caster dazed (unable to act normally, can take no actions, but has no penalty to AC). This disadvantage ends when the concentration ends.

**Whispering Voice:** A whispering, disembodied voice that only the caster hears explains the results of the divination. The caster must make a DC 10 Listen check to understand the voice. In areas of loud noise the DM might increase the DC. This disadvantage ends when the spell ends.

by Eric Cagle  
illustrated by Peter Bergtig

# THE ECOLOGY OF CHOKERS

**I**nnumerable creatures claim the Underdark as home. Some, such as drow, duergar, and illithids, craft daunting cities carved from the subterranean stone, creating sprawling underground empires. However, the bulk of creatures that live in the eternal darkness consist of little more than mindless beasts or barely sentient savages prowling the gloom in hopes of finding their next meal.

One such creature, the vicious predator known as the choker, derives its name from the way in which it dispatches its victims. This small aberration, a ubiquitous and dangerous part of the Underdark ecology, strikes from the darkness without warning. While not particularly powerful, this stealthy opponent proves maddeningly difficult to locate when it wishes to remain hidden. This article examines the life and habits of chokers,



including their history, physiology, and mental outlook, as well as ways to defeat them.

## HISTORY OF CHOKERS

Chokers are relative newcomers to the pitch-black realms of the Underdark. Scholars and adventurers note that their numbers seem to increase with each passing year, although no one knows the reason why. One theory claims that a population of gnomes who descended into the darkness long ago evolved into chokers. Over time, these gnomes mutated into horrible aberrations, possibly due to a mixture of cannibalism and the weird magic of the Underdark. Gnomes vehemently deny this possibility and insist that any resemblances are purely superficial. The *svirfneblin* also dispute the possibility, although some seem to know more than they let on. Any attempts to pry more information from the *svirfneblin* on this topic results in stony

silence or worse. A variation of this theory involves halflings, who also find the prospect detestable.

A more likely theory involves chokers as the result of some experimentation that went horribly wrong. Many of their characteristics seem reminiscent of drow handiwork, but drow dismiss this accusation, pointing out that the creatures now pose as much of a nuisance and threat to them as to anyone else. Of course, the lofty pride of the drow might mask the truth in this matter. Some scholars note that chokers often congregate near drow settlements, either to remain close to a reliable food source or perhaps because of some lingering racial memory of their creators. Regardless, most drow despise chokers and frequently hunt them for no other reason than to kill as many as possible.

The chokers, barely sentient themselves, have no knowledge of their origin and show little interest in discovering the truth of their past. They seem

to care only about how to get their next meal and collecting shiny trinkets.

## PHYSIOLOGY OF CHOKERS

Although an aberration, the choker has a roughly humanoid form. From a distance, the choker vaguely resembles a long-limbed halfling, although close up the differences become readily apparent. As a Small creature, the choker stands around 3 to 4 feet tall, with smooth, dark gray skin mottled with patches of black, brown, and rust. It possesses a bony, slender frame with a jutting spine, hips, and rib cage. The choker's long, almost equine face ends in a vicious-looking mouth filled with jagged teeth. Two beady black eyes sit squarely in the front of its face, granting it excellent vision that also allows it to see through the utter darkness of its home. The relatively small ears of the choker, nestled within its skull, possibly indicate that the creature relies more on darkvision and other senses than hearing to locate prey.



## Choker Knowledge

The following table shows the results of Knowledge (dungeoneering) checks as it relates to the choker. Inhabitants of the Underdark and adventurers that make forays into its depths might know this information.

### Knowledge (dungeoneering)

DC	Result
10	Dangerous aberrations that lurk in the Underdark, chokers get their name from the way they choke victims to death.
15	Chokers move easily over almost any surface and usually attack from over doorways, arches, or from cave roofs. They sometimes hide in pools and underground streams.
20	Extremely nimble, chokers move in rapid bursts of speed that allow them to move faster than it appears they should be able.
25	Food and treasure can often be used to bribe chokers into answering questions or working as guides through their territory.

The flexible tentacle limbs of the choker allow it to reach creatures up to 10 feet away. Its arms and legs end in oversized flexible pads filled with serrated spines that allow it to grip almost any surface, including slippery cave walls. Because of its flexible, elongated limbs, the choker appears bowlegged, and it moves in a peculiar, fluid fashion, preferring to keep at least three of its limbs in contact with some surface at all times.

The choker speaks Undercommon in a hoarse, raspy voice, intermixing words with meaningless barks, coughs, and grunts. It peppers its crude vocabulary with banal epithets and baseless threats.

## PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY OF CHOKERS

Stealthy, solitary hunters, chokers survive on what they manage to kill and the carrion left by more dangerous predators. As befitting their name, they strangle their prey by ambushing creatures and quickly grabbing their necks. Fearless in their assaults despite their small size, chokers sometimes attack prey up to four times their size. Chokers attack through surprise and usually wait to ambush a solitary creature rather than confront a group. Particularly hungry or desperate chokers might go after a group of creatures, but only by picking off stragglers or those in the rear, where their attacks are more likely to go unnoticed.

Before a choker devours its prey, it uses its powerful grasping hands to squeeze the meat into a tenderized



pulp. The choker does this even with carrion it finds, fulfilling its instinctive desire to squeeze the life out of its meal. Although constantly hungry, chokers can survive for almost a month without meat, becoming increasingly irritable and likely to take risks in order to procure food. In a pinch, the choker subsists on lichens, moss, and fungi, scraping it off cave walls with its raspy tongue. The choker requires relatively little water for its size and seems to derive most of its hydration from the blood of its victims.

Greedy creatures, chokers covet bright, shiny objects, such as coins, gems, and jewelry. If a group of creatures comes across a choker and approaches cautiously, they might succeed at making it an offer for some sort of trade. Chokers lack any sense of diplomacy and have low Intelligence and Charisma scores,

causing the most elaborate choker bartering to consist of "I give this, you give that." A choker might offer its services as a guide through the tunnels and caves of the Underdark in exchange for coins, gems, and food. If negotiations go poorly in the first few minutes, however, the choker quickly retreats, and it refuses to reenter negotiations with the erstwhile bargainers.

Solitary beings, chokers do not tolerate other creatures—even other chokers—in their territory. Once every two years, though, females release a pungent scent that attracts male chokers. Mating is brief and violent, with males wrestling each other into submission for a female's favor. Gestation lasts for roughly six months, after which the female gives birth to a litter of two to four young. The mother raises her young for a year before abandoning them in a warren at the edge of her territory. Among the most aggressive and dangerous chokers around, these juveniles try to establish their own turf, battling with their own kind and the other foes that lurk in the darkness. Chokers generally live for about 20 years, although those in captivity occasionally reach the age of 40.

Most denizens of the Underdark consider chokers annoying menaces deserving only of eradication. The more intelligent races, such as drow, duergar, and illithids, actively hunt chokers, sending out teams of warriors and trackers to perform search-and-destroy missions. Some creatures occasionally capture chokers and attempt to train them to act as guardians and trackers. While these projects usually fail, those few who succeed produce highly loyal servants—as long as they provide the chokers with a suitable amount of live meat to hunt and eat. Because of their elastic bodies and their ability to worm through almost any crevice or enclosure, only solid-walled holding cells can hold choker slaves, adding to the difficulty and expense of such an endeavor.

## The Life and Times of the Choker

The choker originally appeared in the *Monstrous Compendium Mystara Appendix*. For third edition, the choker found its place among the iconic creatures in the *Monster Manual*. It can also now be found in the new *Absorptions* D&D miniatures set as a common figure.



### CHOKER LAIRS

A choker typically sets up a den in some twisting cave difficult for larger or less flexible creatures to navigate. Bones, bits of trophies from various victims, and indescribable chunks of meat squeezed to a pulp typically litter the filthy den. Chokers are intelligent enough to hide their stash of food in a place where the smell doesn't attract other predators. They also prowl close to the settlements of other races, picking through garbage and occasionally ambushing loners who stray too far from safety. Most chokers hide their treasure among the debris and bones of their lair, occasionally pulling out particularly shiny bits and baubles to admire when it's safe to do so.

Chokers establish their lairs near crossroads or other places with readily available prey. In an ideal situation, the entrance to a choker's lair is a difficult-to-spot narrow crevasse only accessible by climbing up a wall. Chokers dislike large spaces, so they often lair behind tiny apertures that Medium or larger creatures find uncomfortably cramped. A choker tries to find a space with at least one—and preferably two—escape routes that it can block with loose stones easily overlooked by a casual search.

### VS. CHOKERS

A stealthy, cunning foe, the choker relies on surprise to ambush its prey. Archways and stairwells provide chokers with ideal ambush locations, forcing prey to lift their heads in order to see (and thus, expose their necks more to the angle of attack). *Fly*, *levitate*, and *spider climb* allow you to fight wall-clinging chokers on more even terms. However, since chokers are CR 2 creatures, characters of a level high enough to cast those spells rarely consider a single choker much of a danger.

Despite the choker's Small size, it has the 10-foot reach of a Large creature. The choker always uses this to its advantage, attacking from ceilings, around corners, or from holes in the ground, gaining as



much cover as possible. In order to get around the reach issue, front-line fighters should use reach weapons to hold the choker at bay, while the rest of the party attacks with ranged weapons and spells. *Magic missile*, always a solid choice, ignores whatever partial cover the choker might find. Ray spells and area of effect spells, especially those that don't allow a Reflex save, also can be effective. The ranged touch attack of ray spells eliminates most of the choker's relatively high armor class, giving the average sorcerer or wizard a decent chance of hitting it. Other useful spells include those that hinder a choker's movement or keep it trapped, such as *hold monster*, *slow*, and *web*. The various wall spells, such as *wall of stone*, block its egress and force the choker to fight more on your terms. Other useful items include smokesticks (to flush it out of a hiding space), tanglefoot bags (to stick it in place), or nets.

The choker is very particular about which victims it attacks. Given a choice, it goes after creatures in the following order: a creature by itself, a creature of size Small or smaller, a creature with no obvious weapons, a creature more than 15 feet away from its comrades, and a Medium or larger creature. Thus, a halfling or gnome scouting ahead of the party needs to be exceptionally wary of chokers. Scouts need a high Spot modifier to overcome the choker's +10 Hide skill. A high Listen modifier helps, but once a choker finds its ambush site, it tends to stay still. The surest way to avoid choker ambushes is for the party to stay as close together as possible.

The choker's quickness ability allows it to take an extra standard action or move action during its turn each round. This means that a choker can move its base speed of 20 feet and make two tentacle attacks in the same round. However, because it lacks Mobility or Spring Attack, and its attack often requires several rounds to kill a victim, the choker prefers to attack from ambush, often gaining a surprise round. In addition, because of its ability to climb with ease, the choker often retreats by clambering up a wall, away from all but ranged weapons. To prevent this from happening, characters should move to block the choker's route of escape, so it provokes multiple attacks of opportunity whenever it moves.

Because of the choker's greed, it's possible to make an offer of treasure or food to a looming choker before it attacks. In most cases, this makes it pause while it ponders the offer. The choker knows little beyond what happens within its hunting territory, and questions of an abstract nature or about individuals tend to confuse it or result in it giving a random answer. It knows sources of fresh water, areas where food is plentiful, and the quickest passage (for the choker) through certain areas. When traveling in areas of known choker activity, always carry a few shiny trinkets and pieces of raw meat in order to bribe any chokers met. Of course, you need to see them first, which means you'll need darkvision, good Spot checks (or excellent Listen checks), or a little luck. ☐

by C. Wesley Clough  
illustrated by Mike May

# FORCE SPELLS

Once a student and later a professor at a little known wizard's college, Aeroth Blith felt the path to true power led through the mastery of magical force. To that end, he spent his lifetime studying and experimenting, developing new and unique spells based on force.

Aeroth led an active adventuring career in his years as a student at the college. During that time, his near obsession with force magic developed. While exploring a previously unknown tomb, Aeroth watched in horror as several of his companions met their fates at the hands of the wraiths that dwelled within. The group disbanded soon after it returned to the wizard's college, but Aeroth never forgot the lesson learned in the wraith-filled cairn. Knowing that the proper spells could have saved his friends, Aeroth decided to make force magic his field of study.

## CHAIN MISSILE

Evocation [Force]

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Target: One creature, plus another creature/2 levels (each of which must be within 30 ft. of the primary target)

## AEROTH'S NEW SPELLS

In his retirement, Aeroth compiled a tome of spells and theories he entitled *Invis Vis*, which contains many of his notes on the nature and application of magical force. The book contains, among other things, all of the following new spells.

### Druid Spell

#### 2nd-Level Druid Spell

*Force Ram*: Ram of force deals 1d6 damage, opens doors, and performs bull rushes.

### Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

#### 2nd-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

*Emerald Planes*: Creates up to five 5-foot squares that hold 100 lb./level.

*Force Ram*: Ram of force deals 1d6 damage, opens doors, and performs bull rushes.

#### 4th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

*Chain Missile*: 1d4+1/2 levels damage; 1d4+1 damage to 1 secondary target/2 levels.

*Tenser's Floating Disk, Greater*: As *Tenser's floating disk*, but can move independently of the caster.

#### 5th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spell

*Force Chest*: Creates 2-foot-cube box of force.

*Mage Armor, Mass*: As *mage armor*, but affects one creature/level.

*Shard Storm*: Creates a storm of shards.

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

As with *magic missile*, missiles of magical energy dart from your fingertip to unerr-



ingly strike a creature. Unlike *magic missile*, *chain missile* strikes one creature initially, then springs to other targets. Each missile deals 1d4+1 points of force damage. One missile strikes the primary target per two caster levels, to a maximum of 10 missiles (dealing 10d4+10 points of damage). After the missiles strike, they ricochet to a number of targets up to the number of missiles created by the spell. Each secondary target takes 1d4+1 points of damage, as if struck by a single *magic missile*. You choose secondary targets as you like, but they must all be within 30 feet of the primary target, and no secondary target can be struck more than once. You can choose to affect fewer secondary targets than the maximum (to avoid allies in the area, for example). Missiles without a secondary target do not ricochet off the primary target.

Spells, magic items, and abilities that protect against *magic missile* (such as the *shield* spell or a *brooch of shielding*) also protect against this spell. If the primary target has that sort of protection, the spell has no effect against it but still springs to all secondary targets (a *brooch of shielding* loses a number of charges equal to the number of missiles hitting the creature—up to 10 missiles). If spell resis-

tance causes the spell to fail to harm the primary target, the spell fails and missiles do not ricochet to additional targets.

The missiles strike unerringly, even if the targets are in melee or have anything less than total cover or concealment. You cannot single out specific parts of a creature to strike. This spell cannot target or damage inanimate objects.

### EMERALD PLANES

Evocation [Force]

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: One 5-foot square force plane/2 levels

Duration: 1 min./level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

When you cast this spell, you create one or more flat, translucent green 5-foot-square, 1-inch-thick fields of force. You can create one emerald plane per two caster levels. An emerald plane cannot move, it is immune to damage of all kinds, and it is unaffected by most spells. However, a *disintegrate* spell, a *rod of cancellation*, or a *sphere of annihilation* destroy whichever emerald plane they touch, while a *Mordenkainen's disjunction* or *dispel magic* dispels all of the planes created by a single casting of the spell. Breath weapons and spells cannot pass through an emerald plane in either direction, although *dimension door*, *teleport*, and similar effects can bypass the barrier. It blocks ethereal and incorporeal creatures as well as material ones. Hiding behind an emerald plane provides cover.

### FORCE EFFECTS

This article presents spells that use the force descriptor. Force effects have a number of rules you should keep in mind. Force is not an energy type. Spells with the force descriptor ignore a creature's damage reduction and an object's hardness, and they deal full damage to objects. Force effects reach into the Ethereal Plane and always affect incorporeal and ethereal creatures (force effects ignore the chance of not affecting such creatures, and spells such as *wall of force* block incorporeal and ethereal creatures). Nothing can damage a force effect, including other force effects.



An emerald plane cannot be con-  
sured so that it occupies the same  
space as a creature or another object.  
It must always be flat. Emerald planes  
require no anchors, and can float  
above ground wherever the caster  
desires. Emerald planes can be created  
vertically or horizontally. Only one  
edge of an emerald plane can touch  
another surface at the time of the cast-  
ing, but an emerald plane can touch  
more than one edge to a solid surface  
after casting. All emerald planes must  
be placed so no part of them is within  
5 feet of any other emerald plane. On  
the battle grid, a vertical emerald plane  
can only be placed along the border of  
a square, and must stretch from inter-  
section to intersection; a horizontal  
emerald plane must be placed over a  
square without extending over others.

All planes created by a particular  
casting of the *emerald planes* spell wink  
out of existence when the spell dura-  
tion ends. *Emerald planes* can be made  
permanent with a *permanency* spell.  
Doing so requires a minimum caster  
level of 10 and costs 1,000 xp.

**Material Component:** A pinch of pow-  
der made from a green gem.

### FORCE CHEST

Evocation [Force]

Level: Sor/Wiz 5

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 0 ft.

Effect: One 2-foot cube box of force

Duration: 1 day/level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell brings into being a lidded  
box of force. The box appears in the  
caster's hands, and the caster can  
choose to make it either invisible or  
merely translucent. The chest has no  
weight worth noting.

Solid walls of force form the chest's  
five sides and lid. The caster and  
other creatures cannot open the lid  
except by first speaking the password  
(determined by the caster at the time  
of casting). Both objects and Tiny or  
smaller creatures can fit in the box;

it holds enough air to allow one Tiny,  
two Diminutive, or four Fine crea-  
tures to breathe for 1 hour.

Like a *wall of force* spell, a *force chest*  
is immune to damage of all kinds and  
resists *dispel magic*, but it is vulnerable to  
*disintegrate* and *Mordenkainen's disjunc-  
tion*, and it can be destroyed by a *sphere of  
annihilation* or a *rod of cancellation*. The  
box is a spell effect, and Open Lock and  
Use Magic Device cannot open it.

**Material Component:** A 2-inch-square  
glass cube.

### FORCE RAM

Evocation [Force]

Level: Drd 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

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

Effect: Ray

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex partial (See text)

Spell Resistance: Yes

You create a field of rushing force  
vaguely discernable as a ram or goat.  
This force strikes a single target,  
dealing 1d6 points of damage. You  
must make a ranged touch attack to  
hit a target. The force of the blow is  
considerable, and a creature struck  
by the spell is subject to a bull rush.  
The ram has a Strength of 25, is  
considered Large, and always moves  
with the defender. The spell is use-  
ful for knocking opponents off para-  
pets or ledges, among other things.

In addition to its attack mode, *force  
ram* also has the power to open doors  
it strikes as if it were a character with a  
Strength of 25.

**Material Component:** A tuft of wool.

### mage armor, mass

Conjuration (Creation) [Force]

Level: Sor/Wiz 5

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

Targets: One creature/level, no two of  
which can be more than 30 ft. apart

This spell functions like *mage armor*,  
except that it affects multiple creatures.

### SHARD STORM

Evocation [Force]

Level: Sor/Wiz 5

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: One or more 20-foot radius  
bursts of force

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Spell Resistance: Yes

Immediately upon completion of this  
spell, and once per round thereafter,  
you may cause miniscule shards of  
magical force to explode out in a 20-  
foot radius burst from the chosen point  
of origin. The storm deals 3d6 points  
of damage due to force to all creatures  
within the radius. A successful Reflex  
save halves the damage.

Each round, you may use a free action  
to cause a force shard storm. You need  
not cause the storm of force shards  
immediately. You can only call one  
storm per round, and only on your turn.

The center point of the *shard storm*  
is fixed when the spell is cast and can-  
not be moved. There is no physical  
manifestation of the spell at the chosen  
point, although *detect magic* reveals a  
spell in effect at that location.

**Material Component:** A small shard of  
clear glass or crystal.

### Tenser's Floating Disk, Greater

Evocation [Force]

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

This spell functions just like *Tenser's float-  
ing disk*, except that the created disk does  
not need to stay within 3 feet of the sur-  
face beneath it. However, the disk must  
remain within 15 feet of the caster at all  
times. The caster can concentrate (as a  
standard action) on the disk to make it  
move with a fly speed of 20 feet (perfect).  
This allows the caster to sit on the disk  
and command it to carry him about.

**Material Component:** A drop  
of mercury. S

by Monte Lin

illustrated by David Wahlstrom

# THE SPIRIT SPEAKER

A realm exists outside the normal cosmology of the planes that few know of and fewer still can reach. In this hidden place exist myriad creatures known as spirits, guides and allies to those who can comprehend their inscrutable ways, and those few who can speak to them are called spirit speakers. Spirit speakers unlocked the secrets of breaking down the barriers between the spirit world and the natural world. They travel there without fear, entering trances that let their minds journey in both worlds simultaneously.

The spirit world echoes, in many ways, the natural world. Spirit speakers explain that a spirit exists not only for every individual creature, plant, river, or stone, but there also exist grandfather spirits that represent an entire race, species, or element. When a spirit speaker enters her first trance, she meets a spirit who bonds with her, as a familiar bonds with a sorcerer or wizard. The spirit speaker has no control over which spirit bonds with her, although the spirit typically has some connection to the spirit speaker's past, such as an ancestor's spirit or perhaps the spirit of the small stream that runs by her home village.

A spirit speaker has spellcasting abilities, but her true power lies in the special abilities granted to her by her spirit guide, both in and out of

trance. From her connection to the spirit world, she can gain a tremendous amount of knowledge. Unlike the loremaster, who diligently pores through countless tomes, the spirit speaker gleans information from her forays into the spirit world as well as from her own experiences in the natural world. In a party, a spirit speaker works well as a fifth character, one who augments her base class with the spirit speaker's unique abilities. Typically, a spirit speaker shifts her focus to a support role in the party, providing her group with some of the abilities of bards and clerics, as well as her unique spellcasting abilities and peerless spiritual knowledge.

Because a spirit speaker casts so few spells, this class appeals mostly to the non-spellcasting classes. Barbarians and monks make up the majority of spirit speakers, each exploring the spirit world for different reasons. Barbarian spirit speakers seek to serve their tribes as advisors and wise men, whereas monk spirit speakers see their communes with the spirit world as an indication of the power of their meditations. Fighters and rogues also take up this class in great numbers, to gain flexibility (skills, spells, and special abilities) and overall survivability (saving throws). Of the spellcasting classes, rangers and bards most often take up the spirit speaker way.

NPC spirit speakers rarely live alone and often work within a village or in league with a group of druids or rangers. A party might seek a spirit speaker for her unique knowledge or run across one while in the depths of the wilderness.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the spirit speaker prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Speakers gain no proficiency with any weapons or shields. They are proficient with light armor.

**Spells:** A spirit speaker has the ability to cast divine spells. To cast spells, a spirit speaker must have a Charisma score of at least 10 + the spell's level, so a spirit speaker with a Charisma of 10 or lower cannot cast spells. Spirit speaker bonus spells are based on Charisma, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the spirit speaker's Charisma modifier. The spirit speaker uses the ranger spell list. A spirit speaker has access to any spell on the ranger spell list and can freely choose which to prepare, just as a ranger. A spirit speaker prepares and casts spells just as a ranger does.

**Enter Trance (Su):** By making a DC 15 Concentration check, the spirit speaker can enter a trance that allows

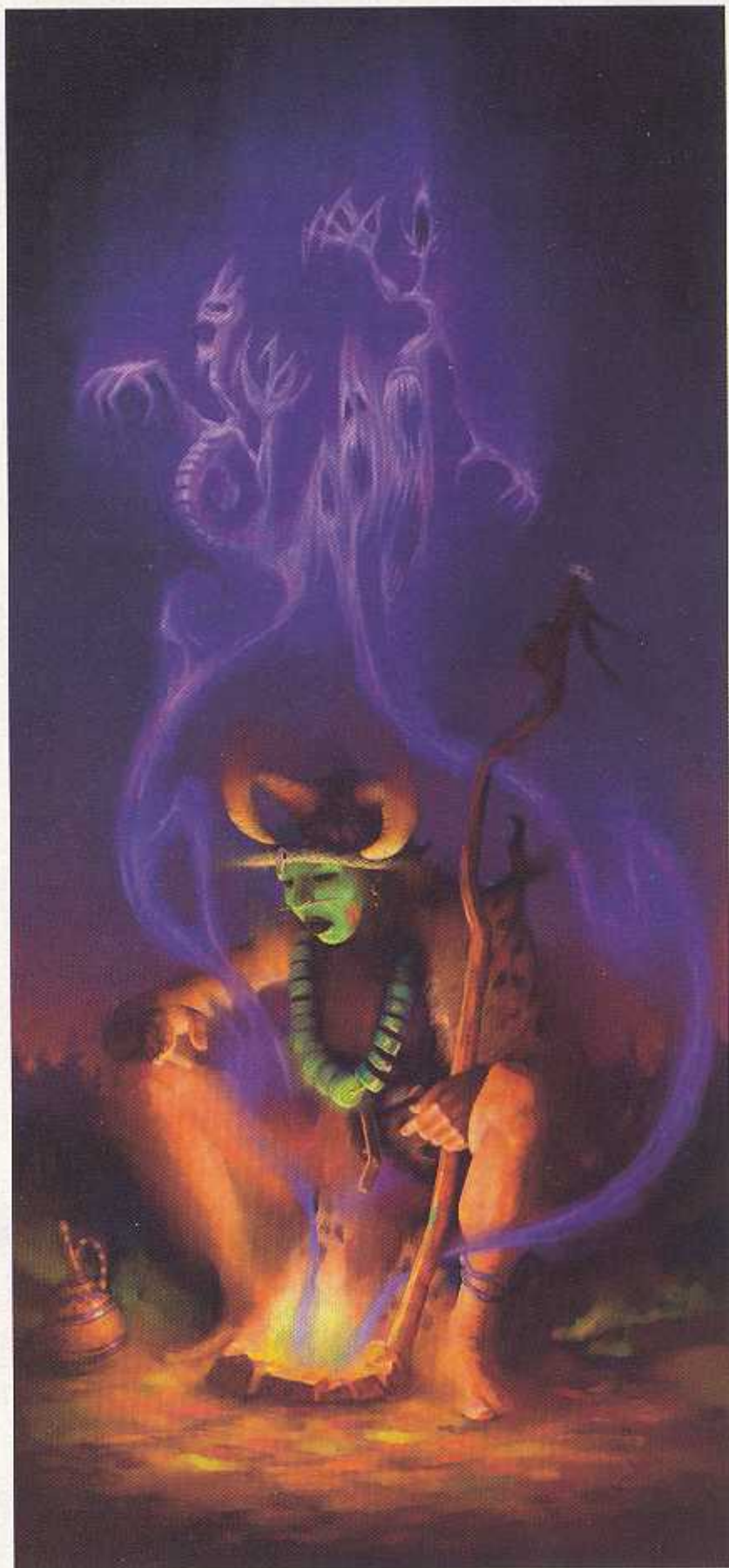
her to communicate with the spirit world. She may enter a trance once per day per spirit speaker level, which lasts a number of rounds equal to the spirit speaker's Charisma score. The spirit speaker can end the trance at any time before this by succeeding at a DC 10 Concentration check. She may not take 10 or take 20 for either of these checks, but she can retry a failed check after 1 round. Entering a trance is a full-round action that provokes attacks of opportunity. Once in a trance, the spirit speaker does not need to make Concentration checks to maintain it.

While in trance, the spirit speaker opens to the vast possibilities of the spirit world and makes herself somewhat removed from her surroundings. This duality splits her attention but heightens her magical senses. A spirit speaker in trance casts her spirit speaker spells at +1 caster level, and she gains access to her spirit guide. However, while in trance, the spirit speaker cannot run or charge, and she suffers a -2 penalty on all Wisdom- and Charisma-based skill checks.

A spirit speaker may remain in trance when her current trance's duration ends by making a DC 15 Concentration check and expending another of her daily trances. This prolonged trance counts as one trance for the purposes of abilities that work once per trance.

**Spirit Guide (Su):** When the spirit speaker enters a trance, her spirit guide appears. While the spirit speaker remains in this dual existence, the spirit guide manifests an *unseen servant* effect, as the spell cast by a spellcaster of the spirit speaker's class level, except that the servant has hit points equal to the spirit speaker.

While in trance, the spirit guide grants its spirit speaker special abilities depending on its master's levels in the spirit speaker class, as shown on the table below. The granted special abilities are cumulative, so a 10th-level spirit speaker gains all of the abilities on the table. However, the spirit speaker only gains access to these abilities while in trance.



Speaker Level	Special Ability
1st	Spirit sight
3rd	Deliver touch spells
5th	Remove curse
7th	Ability enhancement
9th	Scrying

**Spirit Sight (Su):** While in trance, the spirit speaker gains darkvision to 60 feet (if she did not already have it) and can see magical auras as if continually under the effect of a *detect magic* spell.

**Deliver Touch Spells (Su):** A 3rd-level spirit speaker's spirit guide allows a spirit speaker to deliver touch spells from afar. If the spirit speaker has line of effect to a creature within range of the *unseen servant* effect, the spirit speaker may deliver a touch spell to that creature as though it were within reach.

## REQUIREMENTS

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

**Base Attack Bonus:** +4.

**Base Will Save:** +2.

**Skills:** Diplomacy 3 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 1 rank, Knowledge (nature) 1 rank.

HIT  
DICE  
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## CLASS SKILLS

The spirit speaker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str).

**Skill Points per Level:** 6 + Int modifier.

**Remove Curse (Su):** At 5th level, the spirit speaker gains the ability to use her connection with her spirit guide to petition the spirit world to remove a curse. Once per trance, the spirit speaker may attempt a DC 20 Diplomacy check to convince the spirits to help her, having the effect of casting *remove curse* on a subject the spirit speaker designates. If she fails her Diplomacy check, she may not use this power for 24 hours.

**Ability Enhancement (Su):** At 7th level, the spirit speaker gains the ability to enhance one of her physical ability scores while in trance. Once she enters a trance, the spirit speaker gains a +4 enhancement bonus that she may apply to her Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution score. She must choose one at the beginning of the trance, and she cannot later change the ability score to which the bonus applies (although leaving the trance and entering a new one allows her to select a different ability score). A spirit speaker who prolongs a trance with additional daily trance uses cannot choose a new ability score to apply the bonus to (she is still considered in the same trance as when she began).

**Scrying (Sp):** Once she becomes a 9th-level spirit speaker, the spirit speaker can cast *scrying* once per trance as a 10th-level caster. Because of her connection to the spirit world, the spirit speaker can cast the spell without material components or a focus by using a full-round action and succeeding at a DC 25 Diplomacy check. If the spirit speaker fails her Diplomacy check, she may not use this power again for 24 hours. A spirit speaker who prolongs a

trance with additional daily trance uses cannot use this ability more than once in that trance (she is still considered in the same trance as when she began).

**Skill Insight (Su):** Beginning at 2nd level, the spirit speaker's spirit guide remains in contact with her at all times in a tangential way, even outside of trance. This grants the spirit speaker a +2 insight bonus on all skill checks for a skill, as listed in the Spirit Speaker Advancement table. At 2nd level, the spirit guide grants a bonus on Heal checks, and at 4th and later levels, the bonus applies to a different Knowledge check that the spirit speaker has at least 1 rank in.

**Sense Ailments (Su):** At 3rd level, the spirit speaker's spirit guide can help her tell if a creature suffers from the effects of a disease or a poison, even if that creature is unaware of it, by the spirit speaker succeeding at a DC 15 Heal check. The spirit speaker can only use this ability when not in trance.

**Sense Curse (Su):** At 5th level, the spirit speaker can listen to the whisperings of the spirit world to tell if someone suffers from a curse, such as from *bestow curse*, the evil eye ability of sea hags, and similar effects, even if that person is unaware of it, with a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check. The spirit speaker can only use this ability when not in trance.

**Legend Lore (Sp):** At 9th level, the spirit speaker's spirit guide grants her the ability to cast *legend lore* once per day at her caster level. The spirit speaker can only use this ability when not in trance. S

## THE SPIRIT SPEAKER

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day			
						1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+0	+2	+2	+2	Enter trance, spirit guide (spirit sight)	1	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+3	Skill insight (Heal)	2	—	—	—
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+3	Sense ailments, spirit guide (deliver touch spells)	2	1	—	—
4th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Skill insight (Knowledge [nature])	3	2	—	—
5th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Sense curse, spirit guide (remove curse)	3	2	1	—
6th	+4	+5	+5	+5	Skill insight (Knowledge [history])	3	3	2	—
7th	+5	+5	+5	+5	Spirit guide (ability enhancement)	4	3	2	1
8th	+6	+6	+6	+6	Skill insight (Knowledge [arcana])	4	3	3	2
9th	+6	+6	+6	+6	Legend lore, spirit guide (scrying)	4	4	3	2
10th	+7	+7	+7	+7	Skill insight (Knowledge [the planes])	4	4	3	3

by Richard Farrese  
illustrated by Arnie Swekel

# TREASURES OF THE DWARVEN HOLDS

**D**warves are renown for their skills with stone and metal. Their engineers, jewelers, and smiths masterfully craft goods considered far superior to those of other races. From the great subterranean halls of the legendary mountain kings to the colossal siege weapons built by their ingenious engineers, dwarves fashion countless wonders both above and below the earth.

Legends hold that the wonders of modern dwarven craftsmanship are but pale shadows of the miraculous creations of the past. Of peerless beauty and with strange and potent powers, fortune hunters risk life and limb traveling the globe to retrieve even the most minor of these ancient trinkets.

Cataloged here is a sample of some of the rarest and most desired masterpieces of the ancient dwarven masters.



### ARMOR OF THOR

These half-plate armors were commissioned by King Thror and fashioned by the smiths of his glorious forge. King Thror allegedly gave his commanders suits of these armors as rewards for their loyalty and valor during the Great Goblin Wars. Legends hold that those who wore these elegant suits inspired tremendous fear in their enemies, for the bravest among their foes learned of the armors' terrible power.

With the peace that followed these tumultuous times, the surviving commanders of Thror's army eventually died and the armors passed down from generation to generation. Today, an *armor of Thror* is undoubtedly one of the most cherished family heirlooms a dwarf can possess. With the passage of time, many such suits were either lost or interred with their last owners, but some still pass down through modern clans.

An *armor of Thror* is a set of beautifully crafted half-plate. Fashioned from solid gold with many intricate patterns etched into the metal, these suits hold Thror's heraldic symbol upon the breastplate: the face of a mighty boar holding a rose between its clenched teeth. Although most people do not recognize this ancient and prestigious symbol, many dwarves do.

An *armor of Thror* is a +2 *fortification (heavy)* half-plate. In addition, if an enemy makes a melee attack that would normally cause a critical hit or sneak attack, the armor strikes that foe with a bolt of energy that deals 8d6 points of electricity damage. An attacker who makes a DC 14 Reflex save suffers only half damage.

Strong abjuration; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *lightning bolt*; Price 60,750 gp; Weight 50 lb.

### BREASTPLATE OF HARDINESS

These rare suits of blood-red armor were fashioned by an unknown smith some two thousand years ago. No one knows for whom these garments were crafted, but a good number of them were found in the tomb of the legendary King Armas, one of the most honored monarchs in dwarven history.

With the uncovering of the kingly mausoleum and the ancient treasures buried within, many historians concluded that King Armas was interred with the members of his personal guard. Research holds that these scarlet armors were fabricated for the king's most loyal warriors, but others undoubtedly wore similar garments in the years that followed King Armas's demise.

A *breastplate of hardness* is a +3 *fire resistance* breastplate that grants its wearer a number of temporary hit points equal to his Constitution score. Whenever the wearer of a *breastplate of hardness* takes damage, subtract the armor's temporary hit points first. Once the amount of temporary hit points drops to 0, the wearer takes damage as normal. A *breastplate of hardness* regenerates lost temporary hit points at a rate of 1 per hour until all of its temporary hit points are available again. The armor grants a wearer temporary hit points as long as the armor is worn, and the hit points vanish if the armor is removed.

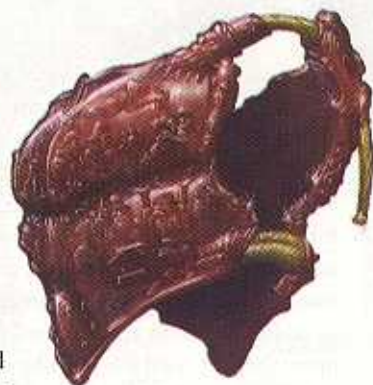
Strong abjuration; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bear's endurance*, *resist energy*; Price 43,350 gp; Weight 30 lb.

### GAUNTLETS OF BASHING

Each of these massive gauntlets is fashioned from layered plates of silvery iron covering the back of the hand and fingers of a thick glove of black leather.

The leather of this glove is rigid and its surface cracked and battered, as if by old age, but a close inspection confirms that it is still sound and supple enough to wear. The slightly curved metal plates—four wide ones covering the back of the hand and wrist, and six narrow ones upon each of the fingers—are riveted into the black glove. A multitude of tiny runes and dwarven designs cover the silvery surfaces of these plates.

These gauntlets are some of the most ancient dwarven magic items and no record exists of their original creator. The secret of their making, however, has been passed down from dwarven master smiths to their most promising apprentices when they in turn became masters. Because of



the marvelous power they bestow in battle, warriors of all races cherish these items.

Three times per day, the wearer of a pair of *gauntlets of bashing* can make unarmed attacks that strike with incredible force. As a free action, the wearer can invoke the gauntlets power, causing all his unarmed attacks made in the next round to deal 2d6 points of damage bludgeoning damage. In addition, also as a free action, the wear can slam back any opponent he's used the gauntlet's power to deal damage to. Creatures struck in this manner are bull rushed as if by a Large creature with a Strength of 25.

Moderate transmutation; CR 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *telekinesis*; Price 45,800 gp; Weight 4 lb.

### MUG OF CLEAR-HEADEDNESS

Long ago, the clergy of the dwarven god of war made these intricate and beautiful mugs in order to insure that the warriors of their armies—most especially its officers and heroes—had their heads clear and their spirits heartened as they waged war.

A *mug of clear-headedness* is cast from dark bronze. Its body is fashioned to resemble a finely cut gemstone. The mug's handle, however, is sculpted in the form of a dwarven warrior chopping with an axe into the gemlike surface of the item. The handle is so well detailed that anyone looking at the mug instantly recognizes its great artistic value.

A *mug of clear-headedness* has a variety of effects. All liquids poured into a *mug of clear-headedness* are affected as if by the spell *purify food and drink*. Once per day, drinking from the mug cures the drinker of poisons and other toxins in his body, as per the spell *neutralize poison*. Also, three times per day, a creature who drinks a full mug of liquid from this item gains the effects of the spell *owl's wisdom*.

Moderate transmutation; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *neutralize poison*, *owl's wisdom*, *purify food and drink*; Price 38,800 gp; Weight 1 lb.

### RING OF SPELUNKING

Like many dwarven rings, *rings of spelunking* are wide, thick bands that look heavier than they actually are. These perfectly round bands scintillate when held up to the light. The surface of a *ring of spelunking* is so well polished that, at first glance, it appears to have been cut from a single piece



of semi-precious stone. A closer look, however, reveals that it is composed of countless fragments taken from various types of stones and gems seamlessly melded together.

Invented at the onset of the rule of the great Mountain Kings, these items were used by dwarven exploring parties and mining expeditions to navigate the treacherous underground cavern complexes from which they eventually carved out their great cities. The majority of these rings remain lost, and those who know of their existence cherish these ancient items.

A *ring of spelunking* grants its wearer an intuitive familiarity with all things related to natural caverns and the creatures inhabiting them, giving a +10 competence bonus on Knowledge (dungeoneering) checks. If the wearer has darkvision, the ring improves this ability, doubling the range the wearer can see in total darkness. Wearers without darkvision gain no benefit from this power. Additionally, to cope with cramped spaces, the wearer of a *ring of spelunking* can, three times per day, shrink in size as per the spell *reduce person*.

Faint transmutation; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *darkvision*, *reduce person*; Price 37,000 gp; Weight —.

### STATUETTE OF THE ALL-FATHER

These small, finely detailed statuettes of Moradin are carved from precious stones. No one knows when these statuettes were created, but legends suggest that a priest and master stonemason originally crafted them to honor the dwarven All-Father. Whatever their origins, most large temples of the deity have one such statuette at hand, but they are usually hidden in secret alcoves and are well guarded. Incredibly well made, these

strange statuettes are nearly perfect replicas of stolid dwarven warriors, carved of whole pieces of precious stones

A *statuette of the All-Father* is a boon to clerics. Once per day, the statuette may be used by a cleric of lawful good, neutral good, or lawful neutral alignment while preparing spells for the day. This allows the cleric to prepare spells of the Strength domain as if they were domain spells. In addition, for that day, the cleric gains the granted power of the Strength domain.

Faint abjuration; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *bull's strength*; Price 2,000; Weight 5 lb. S



by Dean Poisso

# MASTERY OF THE SAND AND SEAS

The inhabitants of the desert and the sea have much in common, both living at the cruel whims of an unforgiving environment. Acclimated to areas that can easily kill unprepared visitors, the peoples of these regions rely upon a variety of unique abilities to cope with their brutal homes.

The following desert- and coast-themed feats are available to all characters. DMs with such regions in their campaigns might offer these as regional feats as presented in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*.

## DESERTBORN [GENERAL]

You were raised in the deep desert and understand its ways.

**Benefit:** You are comfortable in the blistering heat of the day and the bitter chill of the night. You treat heat conditions as if they were 20 degrees cooler (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 303). You also gain a +2 bonus on all Survival checks made while in the desert.

## NATURAL DOWSER [GENERAL]

You can locate water even in the most parched regions.

**Prerequisite:** Survival 4 ranks.

**Benefit:** You gain a +4 bonus on Survival checks to get along in the wild.

## PIRATE LUCK [GENERAL]

You are notorious for escaping from nasty predicaments.

**Prerequisite:** Cha 13.

**Benefit:** Once per day, you may reroll one saving throw that you have just made before the DM declares whether

the roll results in success or failure. You must take the result of the second roll, even if it is worse.

## POLYGLOT [GENERAL]

Traveling abroad has given you a knack for picking up languages.

**Benefit:** You learn a language of your choice as a bonus language. In addition, Speak Language is always considered a class skill for you.

## SANDSTEP [GENERAL]

Your footing is as sure on shifting sand as it is on solid ground.

**Benefit:** The DCs of your Balance, Move Silently, and Tumble checks are not increased by the light or dense rubble or light undergrowth of desert terrain. Light and dense rubble and undergrowth in other regions still hinders you, and heavy undergrowth hinders you normally.

In addition, when you enter a square of light undergrowth in desert terrain, you need only use 1 square of movement.

**Normal:** Light rubble and light undergrowth raises the DC of Balance and Tumble checks by +2. Dense rubble raises the DC of Balance and Tumble checks by +5 and Move Silently checks by +2.

You must use 2 squares of movement to enter a square with light undergrowth.

## SAYYY SWIMMER [GENERAL]

You have been trained to swim even in the heaviest armor.

**Prerequisite:** Swim 4 ranks.

**Benefit:** When proficient with the armor you wear, you suffer only half that armor's armor check penalty to Swim checks. Thus, if you are proficient with heavy armor and attempt to swim wearing banded mail, you suffer only a -3 penalty on Swim checks rather than the usual -12.

**Normal:** Double the normal armor check penalty is applied to Swim checks.

## SHIPBORN [GENERAL]

A ship beneath your feet feels as natural to you as the sand beneath a camel's hooves.

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on any skill check necessary to operate or maintain a ship, including Balance checks on a pitching deck, Climb checks made in rigging, Craft (shipbuilding) checks, and Profession (sailor) checks. You only gain the bonuses if aboard a ship or, in the case of Craft (shipbuilding) checks, when the ship is docked.

## SAILOR WILL [GENERAL]

Your unshakable beliefs sustain you against all outside influences.

**Prerequisite:** Base Will save +2.

**Benefit:** You receive a +4 bonus on all modified level checks made to oppose Intimidate checks meant to demoralize you (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 76) and a +1 bonus on all Will saves. \$



by Eric Cagle

illustrated by Joachim Barrum

# CYCLOPEANS

**L**egends speak of an enigmatic race of giants known as the cyclopes. Similar to hill giants in many ways, these brutes had one unique trait: single eyes situated in the middle of their foreheads. Cyclopes lived in an uneasy peace with other giants, with the one-eyed beings losing battles more often than winning. Over time, cyclopes lost the majority of their territory, forcing them to move

farther into the wilderness or closer to the settlements of humanoid races, particularly humans. In most of these collisions of cultures, the humanoids treated cyclopes with fear and suspicion, resulting in the slow decline of the cyclopes' population. Over the centuries, as the cyclopes died off, other races came to regard them as nothing more than a myth.



However, pockets of these giants survived in the wilderness and along the rocky crags of forbidding shores. Tales persisted of sailors running afoul of cyclopes living on isolated islands. Most of these stories ended poorly for the sailors, but some tell of a cyclops who would trade a glimpse into the future for goods or favors. In one story, a flood of refugees fled their city during a siege and sought out the ancient cyclops, Menta the Wizened. Menta foretold of great doom and despair for many of the refugees, but eventual revenge against their attackers. His prophecy came true, and the grateful survivors deified Menta and made his home a sacred place.

Worshippers and omen seekers often visited the island, and Menta took some as mates. His children, although smaller and weaker than the giant who begat them, slowly spread throughout the land and became a viable race in their own right. These first cyclopeans retained both their ancestor's ability to look into another person's future, as well as a deep passion for solitude and respect for nature. Most of these cyclopeans stayed close to the sea, doing their best to remain hidden from others. They made peaceful contact with gnomes, fey, and the rare dwarven clans who regarded cyclopeans with curiosity.

Although most cyclopeans consider Menta the father of their race, other myths persist that tell of tribes that descended from other cyclopes. Known as the feral-kind, these cyclopeans are violent and savage, like many other types of giants. While most cyclopeans descended from Menta wish only to live in peace, their brethren make life difficult for the race, attacking innocent travelers who roam too close to their caves and hovels.

Today, the two cyclopean branches form a minor, fragmented race, eking out an existence among more numerous humanoid. Rumors persist that some cyclopeans see visions of their race's ultimate fate—but none, even under pain of death, reveal what the future holds for their kind. Some sages speculate that the cyclopeans face a

slow, agonizing extinction as their bloodline runs dry, although hints abound of the race gaining greater glory and respect.

Optimistic—some say naïve—cyclopean adventurers dedicate themselves to increasing their race's beleaguered status. The boldest make quests to locate the few remaining cyclopes in hope of bringing power to their ailing race. The most fervent even believe Menta lives and waits for his children to return to him, and they scour the world seeking him.

**Personality:** Introspective and thoughtful, Menta cyclopeans often take a long-term view. Because of their ability to look into the future, cyclopeans often seem lost in thought, spending more time "looking forward" than paying attention to the world of the present. Even if not actively using their future sight, most cyclopeans spend their time mulling over other creatures' fates and what those creatures mean in the scheme of the universe. To others, a cyclopean might seem distracted and absent-minded, and often needs coaxing to pay attention to matters at hand. Otherwise, the relatively peaceful and withdrawn cyclopeans strive to live in harmony with their surroundings. Often witnesses to the folly in others, they maintain a fatalistic attitude toward life that makes them stoic and unemotional. They know of the future's eternal flux and that patience and calm help them survive turbulent times—they believe that if one waits long enough, new possibilities always emerge.

Their unique ability to see into the future creates two distinct personality types among the peaceful Menta cyclopeans. One type becomes deeply intrigued—almost obsessed—with the lives of other sentient beings, peering into the future and watching as their fates play out. Sometimes these cyclopeans befriend beings they see as having interesting fates, guiding those creatures with advice bestowed by their ability. The other type of Menta cyclopean, haunted and overwhelmed by seeing the fate of others, withdraws

from society and seeks solitude. They reveal their secrets only through bribes, coercion, or methods of convincing them of the importance of their information.

Either way, many beings seek out cyclopeans in hope of finding out what the future holds. Most Menta cyclopeans loathe revealing too much and become angry or morose if asked too often. Menta cyclopeans cherish those beings who learn to accept them for more than their ability to see into the future.

Bitter and savage, the feral-kind cyclopeans use their great strength and physical prowess to toy with victims before killing them out of spite. These evil loners typically live close to other humanoids in order to have plenty of "toys" to play with. Feral-kind cyclopeans possess a dark and twisted view of the world, seeing it as a place of hardship where only the strong survive. They see their more peaceful brethren as weak and soft, misusing their talents and heritage for pointless reasons. Smarter feral-kind cyclopeans might even adopt the ruse of acting like their more gentle brethren in order to lure the naïve and overly trusting.

**Physical Description:** Descended from the giant race of cyclopes, these extremely tall humanoids stand just shy of Large size at 7 to 8 feet. With wiry builds and ruddy, leathery skin, cyclopeans weigh between 250 and 350 pounds. Both types of cyclopean females generally wear their hair very long while the males shave their heads bald. Elder male cyclopeans commonly tattoo their smoothly shaved heads with intricate abstract patterns. The higher the male's status, the more complicated the tattoo.

Located immediately above the bridge of its nose, the cyclopean's single eye is slightly larger than normal for a humanoid of its size, and it requires far less blinking to keep it moist and safe. Its eye always has a brilliant color resembling a gemstone, with no two cyclopean irises sharing the same color. Because of their single eye, cyclopeans lack depth perception and few make use of ranged weapons, preferring to

hunt with spears and clubs, or to fish for their meal. This lack of depth perception often causes them to ignore personal space and move uncomfortably close to others, and it also makes them nervous when people try to talk to them from far away.

Menta cyclopeans prefer to wear simple garb, such as tunics, loincloths, or robes, which they often wear short in the dry, arid regions that they commonly inhabit. They dislike bold and gaudy adornment, although almost every Menta cyclopean wears a necklace or other bit of tasteful jewelry made from natural materials. Feral-kind cyclopeans wear animal skins and bits of jagged metal, often culled from discarded or stolen armor.

**Relations:** Cyclopeans live close to the land, and as a result, find themselves dealing most often with gnomes, dwarves, and sylvan beings. Menta cyclopeans respect the privacy and territory of other races and ask only the same in kind. However, due to their future sight, other beings often seek out cyclopeans in hopes of having their futures predicted. Some tribes see little problem with this, trading information from their visions for goods from other races. Other tribes dislike the requests and demands of seekers who ask too much or too often, and they turn their backs on anyone who gets too pushy.

Feral-kind cyclopeans, particularly those who live deep in the wilderness, often find themselves dwelling side-by-side with sylvan races, such as satyrs, pixies, and dryads. Occasionally, this close proximity leads to violence, but the feral-kind cyclopeans have lost enough warriors in the past that they rarely start fights anymore. Most cyclopeans treat giants with a neutral attitude, knowing that they share a common ancestry but one they often wish to leave in the past. In turn, giants, especially hill and stone giants, regard cyclopeans with superstition and begrudging respect. Most giants simply leave them alone, sensing the blood of the cyclopes running in their veins. The more enlightened and intelligent giants, such as cloud and storm giants, have a patronizing view

## CYCLOPEAN VITAL STATISTICS

The following tables will help you round out your cyclopean character. Use these tables by following the instructions for determining these random numbers on page 109 of the *Player's Handbook*.

### Random Starting Ages

	Barbarian	Bard	Cleric
	Rogue	Fighter	Druid
	Sorcerer	Paladin	Monk
Adulthood		Ranger	Wizard
20 years	+2d4	+3d6	+4d6

### Aging Effects

	Middle Age	Old	Venerable	Maximum Age
50 years	75 years	100 years	+5d20 years	

### Random Height and Weight

Gender	Base Height	Height Modifier	Base Weight	Weight Modifier
	Male	6' 10"	+2d6	210 lb.
Female	6' 5"	+2d6	190 lb.	× (2d6) lb.

of cyclopeans, seeing them as a failed and dying bloodline doomed to pass into obscurity.

The two cyclopean factions do not get along, their meetings often ending in bloodshed. However, because their race lacks numbers, few cyclopeans actively quarrel with their kin. At best, Menta and feral-kind cyclopeans simply ignore each other and strive to stay far away from each other's territory.

**Alignment:** The introspective Menta cyclopeans like to gather facts before passing judgment, making most of them neutral or lawful neutral. The far more savage and brutal feral-kind cyclopeans tend more toward chaotic and evil behavior, although the isolationists among them lean toward neutral evil.

**Religion:** Concerned with the natural rhythm of life and the ebb and flow of fate in the universe, cyclopeans pay little heed to most religions. Those who do pray to deities commonly worship Obad-Hai (representing balance in nature), or Boccob (the uncaring deity of magic). Cyclopeans with a violent bent (which occurs most commonly among the feral-kind, but occasionally among the Menta cyclopeans) worship Nerull or Erythnul. Overall, however, cyclopeans like to make their

own judgment on matters and dislike those who preach to them or make them targets of religious conversion. Regardless of their beliefs, all cyclopeans possess deep convictions pertaining to their heritage—the Menta cyclopeans believe Menta begat their species, while feral-kind see themselves as the wronged descendants of ancient cyclopes from long ago.

**Language:** Cyclopeans speak Giant as their natural tongue, although those who live close to other races learn to speak Common as well. Linguists note that cyclopeans speak a rather brutish version of Giant with a lyrical tone to their voices, a trait that most other beings find slightly hypnotic. Ocular imagery and numerous phrases discussing fate and the future fill the cyclopean dialect.

**Names:** As befitting their giant ancestry, cyclopeans have short, simple names. They eschew familial names in favor of titles, such as "the Dark Seer," "the Sullen," or "the Waywalker." Only other cyclopeans (or sometimes the tribe as a whole) grant such titles. Titles might change over time as cyclopeans experience life-changing events. A few adopt the naming conventions of other races, particularly dwarves



and gnomes, accepting this additional name as just another way to make themselves out as individuals.

**Male Names:** Brengar, Corvor, Gorr, Merr, Tuffor, Ulbur, Warror.

**Female Names:** Emara, Kelara, Lessi, Nallo, Oova, Tamri, Veshe.

**Adventurers:** Rare but active, cyclopean adventurers leave the safety of their rocky homes and succumb to wanderlust. Menta cyclopean adventurers typically become wizards—particularly diviners—spending their time studying magic to better unravel the tangled web of the future. Because of their tendency to hail from wild and untamed lands, feral-kind cyclopeans favor the barbarian class:

### MENTA CYCLOPEAN RACIAL TRAITS

- +2 Constitution, -2 Dexterity. Although quite sturdy, Menta cyclopeans lack grace or coordination.
- Medium: As Medium creatures, cyclopeans have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Cyclopean base land speed is 30 feet.
- Darkvision: Cyclopeans can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision

is black and white only, but it is otherwise like normal sight. Menta cyclopeans function fine with no light at all.

- Future Sight (Su): Three times per day, a Menta cyclopean may spend a full-round action to peer into the future of a creature. This functions as the *augury* spell, except it does not require any components and cannot predict the future of the cyclopean himself. The cyclopean must touch the target creature for the full round. The Menta cyclopean may only use this ability once per creature per day.
- Single Eye: Because they only have one eye, cyclopeans lack depth perception. Cyclopeans suffer a -2 penalty on all ranged attack rolls, Search checks, and Spot checks.
- Automatic Languages: Common and Giant. Bonus Languages: Dwarven, Gnome, Sylvan, and Ter-ran. Cyclopeans live close to the earth and often learn the languages of those attuned to it.
- Favored Class: Wizard. A multiclass Menta cyclopean's wizard class does not count when determining whether he takes an experience point penalty for multiclassing (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 60). Most cyclopean wizards become diviners, using spells to augment their ability to peer into the future.
- Level Adjustment: +0.

### FERAL-KIND CYCLOPEAN RACIAL TRAITS

- +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Dexterity, -2 Intelligence. Just as clumsy as their Menta kin, feral-kind cyclopeans make up for their lack of grace with considerable physical power. However, they lack the cunning of their kin.
- Medium: As Medium creatures, cyclopeans have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Cyclopean base land speed is 30 feet.
- Darkvision: Cyclopeans can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only, but it is otherwise like normal sight. Feral-kind cyclopeans function fine with no light at all.
- Glimpse the Future (Su): Feral-kind cyclopeans lack the full future sight ability of their Menta cyclopean kind. Instead, they can see brief snatches of the future that let them react to danger better. Feral-kind cyclopeans get a +1 insight bonus on Initiative checks and Reflex saves.
- Single Eye: Because they only have one eye, cyclopeans lack depth perception. Cyclopeans suffer a -2 penalty on all ranged attack rolls, Search checks, and Spot checks.
- Automatic Languages: Common and Giant. Bonus Languages: Dwarven, Gnome, Sylvan, and Ter-ran. Cyclopeans live close to the earth and often learn the languages of those attuned to it.
- Favored Class: Barbarian. A multiclass feral-kind cyclopean barbarian's class does not count when determining whether he takes an experience point penalty for multiclassing (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 60). Already crude and dangerous, feral-kind cyclopeans find it easy to enter berserker rage.
- Level Adjustment: +0. 🗡️



by Paul Leach



# THE THANE

**T**hanes are professional fighters sworn to protect a clan or tribal chieftain, serving as bodyguards, companions, and the commanders of their liege's warbands. Such devoted warriors usually come from the leading or noble families of a liege's country, clan, or tribe. Loyalty is the most important quality for them, and they are expected to die defending or avenging their liege. In return for a thane's faithful service, patrons feed, board, and give gifts to their protectors. Thanes from cultures that esteem mounted warriors often embrace the horseman ideal, while those of other societies adopt whatever form of battle is considered most honorable.

The thane is a specialist fighter, much like an evoker is a specialist wizard. Unless otherwise noted, a thane advances in the same manner as a fighter (same Hit Die, base attack bonus, saving throw bonuses, skill points, and so on). When a character elects to take a level of fighter or thane, he may not later take levels in the other class. This prevents the character from gaining the benefits of a 1st-level fighter twice.

## CLASS SKILLS

The thane's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), and Swim (Str).

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the thane.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** A thane is proficient with all simple and martial weapons and with all armor (heavy, medium, and light) and shields (including tower shields).

**Bonus Feats:** The thane gains bonus feats as normal fighters do. In addition to normal fighter bonus feats, the thane may also select any of the feats in the New Thane Feats sidebar in place of a fighter bonus feat.

**Thane's Vow:** At 1st level, a thane devotes himself to a single lord or master. This lord does not have to be an actual ruler, merely any other character the thane determines as being worthy to serve and who accepts the thane's service.

A thane cannot voluntarily change who his lord is for any reason once he has pledged himself to that lord. If the thane's lord is killed, the thane must exact revenge against his master's killers or die in the attempt, and should be treated as if under the effects of *geas/quest* until this mission is fulfilled (this quest cannot be ended prematurely by a *remove curse* spell). A lordless thane suffers a -4 penalty on all Charisma-based skill checks until he fulfills his vow. After a thane has avenged his previous lord's death, he is free to devote himself to a new lord and must do so to eliminate the penalty on Charisma-based skill checks. !

## NEW THANE FEATS

Thanes make frequent use of a variety of feats that allow them to better aid and defend their patron. Although used primarily by these dutiful defenders, any character might make use of the following feats. A normal fighter may not take these feats as fighter bonus feats.

### Aura of Bravery [General]

Your courage is so significant that even your allies benefit from it.

**Benefit:** All of your allies within 10 feet gain a +2 morale bonus on saves against fear effects so long as you do not suffer from a fear effect. You do not gain this bonus.

**Special:** A thane may select Aura of Bravery as one of his fighter bonus feats.

### Improved Aid Another [General]

You are skilled at aiding allies both on and off the battlefield.

**Benefit:** When successfully using the aid another action, you grant your ally a +4 bonus.

**Normal:** Without this feat, you only give your ally a +2 bonus when using the aid another action.

**Special:** A thane may select Improved Aid Another as one of his fighter bonus feats.

### Stalwart [General]

You are particularly sure-footed and resistant to attacks that would move you.

**Benefit:** You gain a -4 bonus on the opposed Strength check made to resist bull rush, overrun, and trip attacks.

**Special:** A thane may select Stalwart as one of his fighter bonus feats.



# HEED YOUR CALLING

**Y**ou know your cleric's god, her alignment, what spells she typically memorizes, and maybe what she looks like. Perhaps you've even concocted a bit of a backstory for her, to add a little flavor to the jumble of numbers on her character sheet. However, do you know what drew her to what she probably considers the most important aspect of her life? After all, the life of a cleric isn't necessarily an easy one. What follows are a number of different vignettes you can pick from to explain how your character found her faith. Each example is tied to a domain from the *Player's Handbook*, but many can be used for other domains as well.

**Animal:** "When I approached manhood, my father took me hunting in the large forest near our village. I was excited to finally get a chance to bring down a deer and provide for my family. We stayed in the forest for several days before I saw one. I crept forward and took aim at the docile creature. The deer stayed in one place, eating a plant as if I were not there. Intrigued by its calm, I stood for nearly an hour watching the deer, taken aback by its majestic beauty."

**Earth:** "I've always enjoyed the smell of fresh-tilled soil, of carving stone into recognizable shapes, and of collecting rocks of all kinds. My journeys among and beneath the mountains became legend, not only for the incredible luck I had in escaping danger, but also for the perceived lunacy of such jaunts. One day, as I walked at the bottom of a narrow gorge, a rock slide roared down upon me. Instinctively, I ducked, and when the deafening sound of falling rocks finally ceased, I realized I was both alive and unharmed. Somehow, the falling rocks had formed a pocket around me, and I was convinced from then on that stone was alive and had spared my life so I could spread my wonderful discovery."

**Healing:** "As I lay dying, afflicted with an incurable disease, I had a vision. At first, I thought it a mere product of the disease ravaging my body and mind, but as the vision lingered, I saw the face of my god. He bid me to rise from my bed and be whole again, and as I awoke and climbed from my deathbed (much to the surprise of my family), I knew that I was to play a part in my god's plans."

**Law:** "My brother stood trial for a crime my family felt he didn't commit. However, as the trial progressed, the evidence against him began to mount. My family and I watched the proceedings, but while they cursed the magistrate-priests for this embarrassment, I became less interested in the particulars of the trial and far more intrigued by how it was conducted. I knew I bore witness to a divine vision of absolute law, and to my mind the courtroom became a holy place. Before the conclusion of the trial, I went to the magistrate-priests, asking to join them in their holy quest for lawfulness, and much to the chagrin of my brother and family, they accepted me."

**Protection:** "As a child, my family was attacked one night by brigands as we rode back to our farm from a village festival. The screams of my family awoke me, and I watched as my father fought to protect us. Seven arrows protruded from his chest, but he continued to battle. When I made to scream, I was silenced by a vision: I saw my father as he was at that moment, struggling to protect his family, even as more arrows pierced his body. However, I also saw him limned in a holy glow, and I knew that someone or something watched over him, keeping him alive so that he could protect us. Having never forgotten my father's bravery, I vowed to protect those unable to protect themselves."

**Trickery:** "Watch out for the trickster god," the village elder had always told me. Above all others, the elder feared the god who promoted falsehood, lies, and deception. There are far worse gods, of course, those dedicated to slaughter and the like, but for most of my life, the elders had indoctrinated me to fear the god of trickery. Of course, as a rebellious youth I turned away from those teachings and worked hard to bring a little joy and levity to the life of the other villagers. Through pranks, practical jokes, and surprises, I tried to show them that not all trickery was a bad thing. That was right before they chased me out of the village. Well, the joke's on them, because the trickster god guides my life, and we're out to have a good time." !

CLERIC

by F. Wesley Schneider



# SPECIALIST FAMILIARS

For specialist wizards who devote their lives to the study of just one form of magic, equally specialized creatures can answer their calls for aid. Presented here are eight new familiars, each corresponding to one of the eight schools of magic. These familiars can be optional companions exclusively available to specialist wizards or additions to the list of familiars available to all sorcerers and wizards.

**Abjuration:** The abjurer is a master of magical protection and defense. To suit the spells of this arcane guardian, the best defended of all animals often serves as her familiar: the turtle. Characters who employ a turtle familiar gain a +1 bonus to their Armor Class when protected by cover or while prone.

**Conjuration:** Conjurers excel at summoning just the right creature or material for the task at hand. They do well, giving them a chance to magically produce whatever they need to defeat a foe before that foe can react. As such, they greatly benefit from the speed and agility of their specific familiar, the tiny hummingbird. A hummingbird confers something of this darting, shifting movement to its master, giving its master a +4 bonus on initiative checks.

**Divination:** Diviners specialize in magic made to reveal even the deepest, most ancient secrets and see through the best-crafted lies. Thus, it is no surprise their specialist familiars are quite literarily flies on the wall. Characters with a fly serving them gain a +3 bonus on Gather Information checks.

**Enchantment:** Enchanters have the power to control minds and ensnare the senses. Often the most foppish and grandiose of wizards, their specialist familiars, the sleek and elegant mink, embody the conniving temptations of enchantment. Any character with a mink familiar gains a +3 bonus on Diplomacy checks.

**Evocation:** Evokers are masters of creation, weaving strands of magical energy into webs of power, expressed as anything from blankets of darkness to explosions of fire. To convey their often-deadly manipulation of creation, the spider is the favored familiar of these specialist wizards, and they gain something of their ally's insidious deftness. Characters with a spider familiar gain a +3 bonus on Sleight of Hand checks.

**Illusion:** Illusionists are masters of trickery and deceit, wily magical craftsmen of false realities. Thus, it's no surprise that these specialist wizards feel a strong connection for the natural cunning and sneakiness of foxes. A fox familiar grants something of its innate slyness, giving its master a +2 bonus on Will saves.

**Necromancy:** Perhaps the most feared of all specialist wizards, necromancers are masters of death. Relying on bones and dead flesh to power many of their spells, necromancers often find a rapport with carrion-eating vultures. A character with a vulture familiar gains a +4 bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist disease.

**Transmutation:** Almost universally, those dedicated to transmutation find the natural transformations of caterpillars into moths or butterflies enthralling. A character with a caterpillar familiar gains a +3 bonus on Disguise checks.

Since caterpillars are creatures of change, a sorcerer or wizard of 5th level or higher has the option to cause his familiar to change into a butterfly or moth, without the penalties of losing a familiar or summoning a new one. The process of this change takes 2 weeks, during which the character gains no benefits for having a familiar. After this transformation, the butterfly or moth familiar emerges and grants its master a +3 bonus on Spellcraft checks instead of the +3 bonus on Disguise checks. ☐

## SPECIALIST FAMILIARS

Familiar	Equivalent Statistics*	Special
Butterfly/moth**	Thrush	Master gains a +3 bonus on Spellcraft checks
Caterpillar	Mouse	Master gains a +3 bonus on Disguise checks
Fly	Thrush, but Fine size	Master gains a +3 bonus on Gather Information checks
Fox	Cat†	Master gains a +2 bonus on Will saves
Hummingbird	Thrush	Master gains a +4 bonus on initiative checks
Mink	Ferret	Master gains a +3 bonus on Diplomacy checks
Spider	Mouse	Master gains a +3 bonus on Sleight of Hand checks
Turtle	Hedgehog††	Master gains a +1 bonus to Armor Class when prone or behind cover
Vulture	Hawk†	Master gains a +4 bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist disease.

\*Use the statistics presented for the listed alternative familiar on page 203 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*.

\*\*You must first take the caterpillar familiar and be at least a 5th level sorcerer or wizard.

† See *Monster Manual* for this familiar's statistics.

†† The turtle does not have the hedgehog's poison quills.



# WILDERNESS ROGUES

The barbarian, druid, and ranger classes consider the wilds their exclusive domain—and rightly so. Not surprisingly, most adventuring groups fear venturing into the wilderness without a member of at least one of these classes serving as a guide. Although most don't consider it, a fourth class fits in easily and excels at life in the wilds: the rogue.

With skill points to burn and a propensity for stealth, rogues easily adapt to the deft alertness and silent tracking of skilled hunters. The series of suggestions presented here take your rogue off the streets and into the wilds.

**Hunter:** A ranger's boosted skills and damage rolls against favored enemies undoubtedly help a great deal when hunting. However, when you know one false move might turn you into prey, a rogue's wider range of skills proves much more helpful. Hunting evil humanoids and animals is one thing, but when you've got a dinosaur, giant, dragon, or other huge terror to bring down, the additional damage of a sneak attack might seem more appealing than the relatively small bonus against a favored enemy. Also, once the hunter makes the initial attack, a rogue has a much better chance of darting back into brush to set another ambush, whittling down opponents' defenses until they finally fall.

The small game hunter works as an alternative to this idea. What defines huge prey depends on the relative size of the hunter and the hunted. Thus, a group of halflings, gnomes, or even savage pygmies might need to resort to these types of tactics to bring down even normal animals that far outsize them.

Roguish hunters of these varieties excel when working both in teams of other wilderness savvy characters or in groups with more diverse skills. While a band of hunting rogues could score several sneak attacks and possibly bring down their prey before it even realizes what's attacking it, a variety of allies serving as a shield or distraction for a single hunter provides him with means to finish his prey with just one attack.

**Trapper:** Often considered criminals to begin with, trappers and poachers make for perfect examples of wilderness-minded

rogues. With several ranks in Hide and Move Silently, a skilled rogue might sneak up on nearly any prey and bring down prime game with a single, well-aimed shot. Although they make skilled hunters, the trapper's greatest skill is, of course, making traps. A few ranks in Craft (trapmaking) creates a snare to catch most natural creatures, as a 10- to 30-foot-deep camouflaged pit trap or a basic arrow trap requires only a DC 20 check to create. As a trapper advances in level, his prey and the traps he uses to snare them also increase in potency (see page 76 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* for more information about making traps).

Often loners working on the fringe of civilization at lower levels, these rogues develop a greater need for allies as they advance. When hunting more powerful or intelligent prey, extra muscle and better bait (whether a swift runner or a tasty-looking illusion) becomes a necessity. They also make fine additions to any team of monster hunters, creating ingenious traps capable of leveling even the most unfair playing fields.

**Scout:** This kind of rogue, trained to spot the dark, hidden places of the wilds, makes every tree, chasm, and river a potential hiding place. With talents similar to both Robin Hood and guerilla warriors, the role of these rogues varies depending on their missions, but they most often rely on Hide, Move Silently, and Survival. Hiding in the trees outside an enemy encampment for days, these scouts relay integral information on troop movements back to their allies or lie in wait for enemy commanders to come within sniping range. Once they complete their mission, they merely need to withdraw into the leafy canopy or silently sprint through even the driest foliage, assured by nature that their pursuers never notice their passage.

Although these scouts often act as loners, they work most effectively as part of a larger group. When acting as advance information gatherers or guiding allies into or out of enemy territory, their stealth and expertise often assures them—and their teammates'—survival. ☐

ROGUE



by F. Wesley Schneider



# CIVILIZED BARBARIANS

Like the lockpicking rogue and the spell-slitting wizard, the uncontrollable barbarian exemplifies a tested and true D&D archetype. Thought of as savages from beyond the fringes of civilization and primitives who stalk the wild lands, barbarians prevail as the most uncivilized of the core classes. Their devastating rage ability and their inability to read reinforces this portrayal. Does this mountain of brutal implications mean that all barbarians are beastlike berserkers?

Most definitely not.

Although the stereotypical barbarian roams harsh lands and untamed wilds, perhaps the most unforgiving of any environment is that dirty, vermin-infested, claustrophobic wasteland known as the city. The suggestions here present a series of possible concepts for your barbarian character to take him out of the forests and into the urban jungle.

**The Baby:** The baby is just that, only bigger—much bigger. Mewling, selfish, ultimately cowardly creatures, these overgrown children concern themselves only with what they want and how to get it, regardless of the wellbeing of others. Simpleminded bullies, they embody the most grossly decadent of noble families, sybaritic heirs to vast fortunes, doted upon by parents or patrons who can't or won't see their brutish flaws. These pampered, spoiled princelings demand ponies and parties, and if it gets them what they want, they throw stormlike temper tantrums at a moment's notice. Quietly horrified guests and visitors dare not upset Mommy's little baby—as much out of fear of the parent as of the child.

**The Breaker:** The bouncer, the brute squad, the hit man, the tough—the breaker is the muscle. Externally an exemplar of placid control, but inside, his soul roils with pure emotional violence. These barbarians often tower as mountainous creatures in the service of someone who needs a bit of extra muscle or as urban mercenaries for hire. Their mere presence intimidates most people, an unspoken threat looming over a meeting or at the entrance to a private venue. Usually ominous background figures, it only takes a simple

cracking of knuckles or stretching of corded muscles to show that they mean lethal business. When things go wrong, the breaker gets called in to fix the problem.

**The Lifer:** There wasn't much of a trial. Everyone thought he was guilty—and they were right.

Convicted as killers or thugs, or just in the wrong place at the wrong time, these barbarians exemplify true urban barbarism. Their incarceration in the criminal training grounds of corrupt prisons served to sharpen their illicit skills and harden their depraved minds. Whether released or escaped, they're now back out on the streets. Years of breaking rocks, surviving prison politics, and dodging shivs honed them into efficient killers who know death solves any problem. Now these tested brutes look to settle old scores and make sure they don't get thrown back in the hole for doing so.

**The Lost:** The ultimate wanderer; for her, everything is new. Perhaps one night she awoke amid a storm, not knowing where—or even who—she was, only that within her seethes a directionless hatred and a frightening power she can barely control. Such a barbarian might attempt to do good, but as she tries to rediscover her past life and what happened to her, her confusion and frustration invariably drives her to uncontrolled fits of rage. Afterward, she's often remorseful, but regardless, the trail to her past grows ever colder and a potential clue or forgotten friend might now lie dead at her feet.

**The Urban Savage:** Penniless, homeless parents invariably lead to penniless, homeless children. All these natives of the city know comes from their lives on the streets. Like tribal barbarians, they rely on many of the same skills. An urban savage must know where to hunt, where to find shelter, and what "predators" to avoid. Although the sewers and alleys of the city serve as their wilderness, these savages embrace a fellowship as closely knit as any tribe. !

BARBARIAN



# TEACH YOUR OLD COMPANION NEW TRICKS

The *Player's Handbook* lists a number of tricks under the Handle Animal skill that anyone with that skill may teach an animal. While those basic tricks cover a vast array of situations that most characters feel are sufficient for their needs, druids sometimes teach their animal companions advanced tricks. Teaching any of the following advanced tricks requires two weeks and a successful Handle Animal check (DC 15, 20, 25, or 30). Many have prerequisites that the animal or trainer must meet.

**Avoid (DC 15):** The animal stays away from a specified creature. The animal's owner must indicate the creature to be avoided. Until given another order, the animal will not approach the creature or allow the creature to come near it.

**Circle (DC 15):** The animal keeps a specified person or creature in a confined area by circling around it. If the creature attempts to leave the circle, the animal attacks until the creature reenters the circle's boundaries. Predators and dire animals are particularly suited to this task, while riding and herd animals tend not to be intimidating enough to keep a person confined. *Prerequisite:* guard trick.

**Courage (DC 20):** The animal learns to trust its owner in the face of danger. Whenever the animal is within 20 feet of its owner, it gains a +2 bonus on its Will saves to resist fear effects. *Prerequisite:* Trainer must have the wild empathy ability.

**Find (DC 25):** The animal finds a specific person it knows. This trick is often used to transport messages or small items strapped to the animal between allies. An animal can know one person other than its owner per point of Intelligence. An animal automatically knows its owner. *Prerequisites:* Scent, seek trick, and track trick.

**Loyalty (DC 25):** The animal is especially loyal to its owner. Whenever the animal is within 20 feet of its owner, it gains a +2 morale bonus on its Will saves against enchantment spells and effects. This bonus stacks with the devotion ability of a druid's animal companion.

*Prerequisite:* Trainer must have the wild empathy ability.

**New Skill, Easy (DC 25):** The animal gains a new class skill that comes naturally to it. It does not earn any new skill points due to learning this trick, but may spend those it gets from gaining bonus HD. With this trick, the animal may gain any one of the following skills as a class skill: Balance, Climb, Hide, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Spot, or Swim. *Prerequisite:* Intelligence 2+, trainer must have at least 1 rank in the skill taught

**New Skill, Difficult (DC 30):** The animal gains a new class skill that it would not naturally learn. It does not earn any new skill points due to learning this trick, but may spend those it gets from gaining bonus HD. With this trick, the animal may gain any one of the following skills as a class skill: Bluff, Escape Artist, Intimidate, Search, Survival, or Tumble. *Prerequisite:* Intelligence 2+, trainer must have at least 1 rank in the skill taught.

**Recover (DC 20):** The animal pulls an indicated unconscious, paralyzed, or otherwise unmoving person toward an area it perceives as safe (or at least safer than where the person currently is). *Prerequisite:* seek trick.

**Throw (DC 25):** The animal throws an item it's holding in its hand, mouth, claws, or any other appendage capable of manipulating an item. In order to throw the item, the appendage must also be a natural weapon. All items thrown by an animal have a range increment of 5 feet (except for those thrown by gorillas, monkeys, and similar creatures, which can throw items at a range increment of 10 feet). Animals can throw items at a specific creature or square with a -4 penalty. Items that miss deviate as per splash weapons as described on page 158 of the *Player's Handbook*. This trick does not make an animal proficient in the use of any weapons, and animals cannot effectively use thrown weapons, although this trick does allow them to use thrown items (such as acid or holy water) with the noted penalty. ▣

DRUID

by F. Wesley Schneider



# BEYOND BLOOD

Some sorcerers claim ancestry from legendary monsters, various outsiders, or even the gods, while others attribute their powers to destiny or some otherworldly favor. With the innate ability to manipulate the strands of magic, one thing remains certain: The powers of sorcerers are not born from mere circumstance.

While the *Player's Handbook* suggests that sorcerous magic could derive from a draconic ancestor, it keeps its explanations intentionally vague so each player might decide where her sorcerer's powers came from. Presented here are a variety of explanations for your character's sorcerous abilities that go beyond having a dragon roosting in her family tree.

**Evolved:** Your character represents the next step in your race's evolution. With the power to manipulate reality from a young age, your abilities could easily invoke great fear in those around you. This explanation of your powers works especially well if you choose a theme for your spells. Taking all fire-based or illusion spells, or working with your DM so all of your spell effects have icy descriptions, helps make your character truly unique. In magic-rich worlds, most people might ignore your powers, but if wizards actively hunt this newly arising breed of evolved sorcerers, the adventure possibilities become endless.

You might encounter difficulty convincingly explaining how your character became an evolved member of his race mid-game. However, one must look no farther than recent movies or a local comic store for a nearly inexhaustible resource of explanations for mutant powers.

**Experiment:** Your character is the result of some kind of supernatural experiment, perhaps by a sinister brotherhood of unscrupulous wizards or by beings from beyond the stars. Whatever they've done to you left you changed forever. Besides now having strange sorcerous powers, a few marks or scars might serve as reminders of your unnatural experience.

If a character chooses to take levels in sorcerer midway through a campaign, this serves as a viable reason for why her powers developed late in life. Also, it serves as a built-in plot hook if your character wants to hunt down whatever caused her sorcerous augmentation or if the experimenters want their test subject back.

**Fated:** The gods chose you for a great task, and to fulfill it, they blessed you with certain powers. This possibility works best when thoroughly discussed with your DM. What task your character quests to accomplish and its epic nature remains entirely up to you and your DM. Of course, the possibility exists that you only think the gods speak to you, and another powerful creature actually manipulates you to fulfill its goals.

This possibility allows a player to easily create a divinely mandated character like Joan of Arc. It also opens the possibility for sorcerous powers to characters whenever they encounter a divine being or its emissary, or receive divine power or messages, regardless of level.

**Infantile Brush:** From conception to puberty, the humanoid body constantly changes. Especially in the earliest months and years of development, children are exceptionally vulnerable to outside influences that might affect them forever. Add this truth to magic-rich D&D worlds, and a strong background for sorcerous powers arises.

In many cultures, parents seek the blessing of their god for their child. The touch of a holy relic might represent a deity's blessing, but if that relic is also a powerful holy artifact, its touch could inspire more than mere religious approval.

A character's spellcasting mother could also have caused his sorcerous powers. If she continued to cast spells while pregnant, the rush of magical energies through the unborn child could make such power an inseparable part of its being.

Also, there exist many innately magical areas. If a child lives in or near a place of wild magic, dead magic, or even just a place with a magical history, the powers of the land could affect her after prolonged exposure.

Like the standard draconic blood option, these possibilities assure that something out of your control, even possibly before your birth, influenced your sorcerous powers. However, like some super heroes, continual exposure to some of these same magical effects could also explain taking a level of sorcerer midway through a campaign. ■

SORCERER



# GEAR FOR GREENERS

GREENER

**R**angers don't need a lot of equipment to survive in the wilderness, but over the years, many have developed items specifically useful to life in the wilds. Druids and rogues also find these specialty tools handy.

**Camouflage Clothes:** Made in three different color combinations, these clothes help to disguise the body's form and make the wearer harder to pick out of his surroundings. These full-body suits grant a +2 circumstance bonus on a wearer's Hide checks while he is in an area the camouflage blends with. The forest pattern has a mix of greens, browns, and blacks that provides its bonus in forest and marsh terrains. The desert pattern consists of dark and light tans with irregular black or blue shapes that provides its bonus in desert and plains terrains. The mountain pattern consists of a white background with black, gray, and green shapes and provides its bonus in hills, mountains, and underground terrains. The listed price for camouflage clothes is for one set suited to a specific terrain (see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, Chapter 3, for more information on terrain types).

**Compass, Magnetic:** This palm-sized device is made up of a wooden block with a metal needle mounted on a tiny metal post. The needle spins freely, and always points north unless obstructed or within 10 feet of 50 pounds or more of ferrous metal (such as iron and steel).

**Crookneck Lantern:** This leather-wrapped metal tube has a shorter glass-covered metal tube at one end. Small mirrors inside the lantern reflect and intensify the light shed by the candle held within the main body. Shrouded air holes line the top and bottom of both tubes. The crookneck lantern also has a weight at the bottom of the main tube so it can be set down and not fall over. The crookneck lantern clearly illuminates a 60-foot-long, 5-foot-wide line and provides shadowy illumination in a 100-foot cone (with the illuminating line in the center of the cone). A single candle burns for 1 hour.

**Duster Coat:** Made of heavy oiled canvas, the duster is a long coat that reaches to the wearer's ankles. Twin rows of buttons run the length of the front of the coat, and when all of them are fastened the wearer is wrapped in a nearly waterproof shell. A fully fastened duster provides a +2 circumstance bonus on Survival checks made to gain a bonus against the effects of severe weather and on saves against severe weather, but it also imposes a -1 armor check penalty.

**Finger Chain Saw:** A narrow-gauge steel chain covered with small teeth links a metal loop on either end of it. The user simply throws the chain over a branch and pulls back and forth on each end of the chain. It cuts through 2 inches of soft wood and 1 inch of hard wood in 1 round. A finger chain saw is ineffective as a weapon.

**Kayak, Inflatable:** Made of thick but pliant leather forming several air bladders, this vessel looks and acts like a normal kayak once inflated. One character can inflate the kayak in 20 minutes. There are two inflating tubes, so two characters can inflate it in 10 minutes. The inflatable kayak holds one Medium creature plus 100 pounds of gear. By pulling the plugs on the air bladders, the kayak deflates in 5 minutes and can then be folded and carried in a standard backpack.

The inflatable kayak comes with a short paddle that breaks down for easy storage.

**Vest, Tactical:** This light vest has a number of pouches and loops covering its front and back. A tactical vest is usually made of green or black canvas. It can hold up to 10 pounds of gear, no single item of which can weigh more than 2 pounds. Any item stored in a tactical vest can be retrieved without provoking an attack of opportunity.

**Waking Herbs:** When waved under the nose of someone unconscious or asleep (even through magical means), these herbs allow the unconscious or sleeping character another saving throw (made at the original DC) to wake up. After three uses, these herbs lose their effectiveness and must be replaced. ☐

## NEW RANGER EQUIPMENT

Item	Cost	Weight
Camouflage clothes	150 gp	6 lb.
Compass, magnetic	100 gp	1/2 lb.
Crookneck lantern	9 gp	1 lb.
Duster coat	25 gp	7 lb.
Finger chain saw	5 gp	—
Kayak, inflatable	150 gp	35 lb.
Vest, tactical	5 gp	2 lb.
Waking herbs	30 gp	—

by Mike McArtor



# NOT YOUR FATHER'S DO-GOODER

**T**he well-groomed knight in shining armor sits astride his massive white horse, his pearly teeth and azure eyes glinting in the bright sun.

Anyone can picture a paladin like that; it's the class's archetype after all. However, plenty of room exists in the lawful good alignment and the paladin class to allow for something else. Not every paladin comes from a land loosely based on Medieval Western Europe. Below are a number of short portraits you can use to fill out that pesky "description" line on your character sheet.

"He keeps his thinning hair cut short, but his well-groomed beard hangs down to his chest. Three earrings hang from each ear, and a thick chain is wrapped tightly around his neck. When not wearing armor, he prefers to dress in loose and comfortable clothes."

"Cruel looking spikes and jagged blades protrude at various angles from her blood-red armor. Her chestnut hair hangs down to just below her ears, which sparkle with the facets of diamond earrings. A thin scar runs across her face, starting just below her right eye and curving to her chin."

"A loose-fitting sarong wraps around his waist and hangs down to the knee-high laced sandals on his feet. He uses nothing else to cover his muscular, dark-skinned body. Gold earrings, beaded bangles, and a bone-white necklace adorn him, and their beauty shows in stark contrast to the multitude of scars on his chest, back, and arms. He carries an ornate falchion in his massive hands."

"She keeps her long hair in a bun, pinned up under her tall helmet. A thick leather jacket, studded-leather skirt, and tall riding boots cover her silk bodice and cotton leggings. From a distance, she appears to be wearing the clothes of a commoner woman, although a glance made up close reveals the martial nature of her dress."

"Multiple piercings cover her face, from her eyebrows to her lips. She wears numerous rings, bracelets, and anklets, and prefers to wear shirts that expose her pierced naval.

Tiny gems decorate the pommel of her sword, and intricate designs of silver cover the length of its sheath."

"Only a loincloth covers his lean but muscular frame. He carries a bow in one hand and wears a bundle of spears on his back with his quiver of arrows. Seashells, small bones, and colorful beads are entwined in his short, curly hair, and a number of small ceremonial scars cover his dark skin. His eyes seem to perpetually squint, even in a darkened area."

"Under her rather plain armor (or when unarmored) she wears bright, colorful saris. Multiple earrings hang from her lobes, and a single blue dot of paint rests in the center of her forehead. She often walks barefooted, but dons a pair of sandals or boots when appropriate. A green sash holds a scimitar at her side, and the folds of her sari conceals a kukri with just the pommel showing."

"Thick, heavy armor covers his narrow chest and gangly body. When not wearing a helmet, he often wears a cotton cap over his bright red hair. His bright green eyes shine with friendliness often equaled by his easy smile and frequent blush. He keeps a greataxe resting lightly on his narrow shoulder, with the haft held in place by one of his long, thin arms."

"Kept meticulously polished to a beautiful shine, her armor covers every inch of her body except her round and ruddy face. Brick-red hair flows out from underneath her open-face helmet. The neck-guard of her armor presses against the bottom of her chin, obscuring her small mouth."

"Small for her race, she nonetheless holds a bearing of regal nobility that causes larger folk to step aside when she approaches. The air of power around her is reflected in the bright holy symbol painted onto her shining armor. She keeps a buckler strapped to one arm and rests her hand on the hilt of the small sword at her side."!

PRELUDING



# SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

Constant training provides monks with the most integral aspects and abilities of their class. Most players assume that monks study for years at secluded monasteries, in schools of martial arts, or from a single learned master, which they then leave behind to begin adventuring. For something or someone that so completely influenced a character for so long, players all-too-often relegate these institutions to bland or undefined background notes.

Collected here are several options for your monk character to better define the specifics of his time in training or suggest a background other than life cloistered in a monastery. Page 204 of *Oriental Adventures* and page 96 of *Sword and Fist* both have maps of monasteries appropriate for monks.

**The Monastic:** The stereotypical monastery exemplifies a place of education, exercise, and oneness with the world. Players and DMs should work together to define what these ideals teach, how masters convey them, and what their specific monastery looks like.

Although the standard depiction of a pseudo-Buddhist temple where several wizened masters unobjectively teach students the path to spiritual wholeness is the norm, not all monks need to come from this type of monastery. In your campaign world, a city fortress might drill the most talented guardsmen to serve as the empress's imperial protectors, or a sadistic cult might force kidnapped children to become peerless assassins in the spires of an impenetrable iron tower. The only three things likely to remain similar from monastery to monastery are that they exist as places dedicated—at least in part—to martial learning, instructing masters live there, and students train under them.

**The Naturalist:** For some, nature serves as the most potent of any teacher. An outcast, hermit, or wanderer sees many things as she travels the land and learns of the unforgiving beauty of the wilds. To these monks, every animal has a lesson to teach and every storm presents a test. As they travel and meditate on what they see, they develop a mastery over themselves unlike any other.

This kind of wild monk develops her own form of martial arts, learned through discipline and survival. By emulating the way the leopard moves, the snake strikes, and the hawk flies, she becomes as potent a predator as all these creatures combined. These rare monks maintain no ties beyond an almost religious respect and empathy for the natural world and the creatures around them, and they adventure for many of the same reasons as druids or rangers.

**The Vessel:** Cursed, possessed, or embodying some prophecy or revelation. Something unnatural lurks within this monk's body and soul, and only a fierce regimen of meditation and prayer allows him to keep it under control. When driven beyond his ability to restrain himself, he exhibits powers beyond any mortal creature and a deadliness few survive.

This possibility requires a good deal of work and agreement between the monk's player and the DM. What gives the monk his power, how he restrains it, and his objectives regarding it (concealment, destruction, and so on), all present important questions that need answering. Although unwanted possession by a demon or evil spirit seems the most likely answer, a monk could serve as the vessel of an ancestor or partially reincarnated hero. Monks who gain their power in this way might undergo some noticeable physical change, speak in a different voice when they use their powers, or display multiple personalities.

**The Weapon:** Forged, trained, and given purpose, these creatures began their lives as mortals, but through magic and alchemy, they changed to become the deadliest of living weapons. Whether in the service of some government or secret organization or a cast-off experiment left for dead, someone or something created these monks and they now either move unstoppably toward a single goal or wander the world in search of meaning.

Characters who choose this monk path must decide how they became altered, who changed them, and for what purpose. However, even more interesting than these answers might be the questions left unanswered and pursued through the course of a campaign. !

MONK

by Mike McArtor



# INSTRUMENTS OF THE MASTERS

The bard's choice of musical instrument almost never has a bearing on game play, whether he's using a recorder or a pipe organ (although a pipe organ might limit his ability to delve into dungeons). Generally, it's a matter of taste that provides a little style for the character and nothing more. This doesn't have to be true. Instead of granting a general +2 bonus on Perform checks, the following optional rules for masterwork musical instruments reward the bard for his choice in a preferred Perform style.

Under this system, when using a masterwork musical instrument, the performing character receives a +1 bonus on Perform checks. When used on a particular bardic music check specific to the type of musical instrument, the bard instead receives a +3 bonus on his Perform check to make use of that bardic music ability. Only two bardic music abilities require a Perform check, giving bards a wide variety of choices as to the instruments they can play to gain a bonus in either one.

**Keyboard Instruments (Harpsichord, Piano, and Pipe Organ):** Unwieldy at best but all-too-often immobile, masterwork keyboards are most often used in areas where people willingly come to listen to them, such as performance halls or temples. These organizations typically survive on the donations of their patrons, and therefore even good or lawful temples sometimes are tempted to do what they can to draw out the largest donations possible. Under the control of a quick-fingered bard, keyboard instruments can lift the soul of the listener, making her forget for a time her troubles and opening her heart (and purse string) to the message the temple proffers. A bard playing a masterwork keyboard instrument receives a +3 bonus on Perform checks made while using the *fascination* bardic music ability.

**Percussion Instruments (Bells, Chimes, Drums, and Gong):** Well-suited to warfare or quiet meditation, armies often employ large drums and gongs to improve the morale of their soldiers while monasteries use quieter

percussion instruments to assist their students with their concentration. The steady rhythm of percussion instruments allow those who listen to focus their minds on their task at hand via the instrument's sound. Although sometimes a monastery might choose to use drums and gongs instead of their quieter cousins, armies cannot make the reverse true. The gentle sounds of bells and chimes are drowned out on the battlefield. A bard playing a masterwork percussion instrument receives a +3 bonus on Perform checks made while using the *countersong* bardic music ability.

**String Instruments (Fiddle, Harp, Lap Harp, Lute, and Mandolin):** These instruments are often played while standing, either with a strap allowing the instrument to hang off the bard's shoulder (in the case of harps, lutes, and mandolins) or as part of their design (as with the fiddle). Lap harps, of course, must be played while sitting down. Because most of these instruments sound especially good when played at a high tempo, these instruments are generally used to play uplifting tunes. The slower harps and lap harps might instead accompany a singer's recounting of an epic tale. In either case, a bard playing a masterwork string instrument receives a +3 bonus on Perform checks made while using the *countersong* bardic music ability.

**Wind Instruments (Bugle, Flute, Pan Pipes, Recorder, Shawm, and Trumpet):** These instruments can either produce gentle and relaxing tones (the woodwinds) or harsher, louder sounds armies and martial orders prefer. Skilled bards can illicit in their listeners passionate feelings that can remind them of happier times, or they can raise the spirits of those about to enter—or who have recently lost—a battle. Whether using a quiet woodwind or blazing brass, a bard playing a masterwork wind instrument receives a +3 bonus on Perform checks made while using the *fascination* bardic music ability. ■

BARD

by Paul Connolly

# GIVE YOUR CHARACTER CULTURE

Players often write up well-detailed backgrounds and personalities for their characters. After all, how and where a character was raised affects how she functions in her world and the game. Usually, though, players do little to tie all that hard work into the ongoing campaign. After a few months, both DM and player probably forget the extensive background, and the character's culture becomes little more than an obscure name on the back of her character sheet. There are ways around that, however. This article aims to help you make choices that reflect your character's culture both in the numbers on her character sheet and in your actions around the table.

**Ability Scores:** Your character's culture can easily affect her ability scores. A culture heavily influenced by magic produces different people than one where every member has to scratch a living from a harsh landscape. Members of the former might not be more intelligent, but characters from the latter probably have more earthy and less academic knowledge.

A character with a low Intelligence might feel out of place surrounded by wizards or find it too hard living in barren wilds. A character with high Strength (regardless of Intelligence) might stand out in a society valuing magic over physical development.

**Equipment:** When selecting equipment, determine which items reflect cultural norms and which ones natives might consider strange. Come up with reasons for selecting unusual equipment, whether or not your character's culture considers the gear unusual.

Don't let equipment be just a few lines on a character sheet. Identify

your character's outfit by color, style, or material. Even the style of common weapons, like the longsword, can vary from region to region.

**Feats:** Feats can also define a culture. If a culture beset with hit-and-run raiders values quick-handed soldiers, feats like Improved Initiative and Quick Draw might be common. Disciplined, professional soldiers trained in tactics choose different feats than community militia members made up of farmers. Consider which feats reflect where the character grew up, and those that make her stand out from the crowd. For example, a caravan guard praises another who stops a handful of goblins using the Combat Reflexes feat. She replies with, "Yeah, I guess my time in the royal guard wasn't totally wasted."

**Food:** What type of rations does your character eat? While other characters chew on beef jerky and hardtack, the gnome gulps down a few exotic mushrooms and a couple pickled skitfish. What are skitfish? The other players might ask too. When you know, your character becomes more interesting and more memorable.

Consider how your character approaches meals. Does she carry eating utensils because she feels too civilized to eat with her hands? Does your character's culture consider it impolite to belch or does such behavior indicate appreciation for a good meal?

**Greetings:** Greetings and valedictions easily distinguish where a character comes from. You might develop your PC's personal or cultural acknowledgements used in common situations. Actions can accompany words: A short bow, handshake, thumb's up, light kiss on each cheek, or simple wave all

reflect different cultural approaches to greeting others.

**Leisure:** Limitless ideas exist for other party members to "enjoy" some of the customs of your character's homeland. Telling stories and performing musical pieces should not just be the realm of bards, and even a character with low Charisma might take any opportunity to tell others of her exploits or the stories of her people.

Your character might carry a game to play with other PCs. This can be a classic, like chess or cards, or a unique game such as one using magically moved glass spheres. Characters from less civilized areas might challenge others to a wrestling match or other contests appropriate to their race or homeland.

**Skills:** A region's description might reveal skills important to its residents. Exports hint at certain trades, while swaths of wilderness indicate different skills from a city setting. Where you assign skill points can help determine how the character fits in to her culture. Although Craft and Profession skills reveal a character's background most directly, other skills, such as Climb, Move Silently, or Swim, can also speak volumes about a character's heritage.

These ideas only scratch the surface of ways a background culture can affect a character. Make a mark at the gaming table by including cultural quirks for your character. It's possible the DM will adopt your ideas for an interesting or entertaining culture. Imagine your joy when your character returns home and her family takes the party down to the creek to catch skitfish. ■



by Joshua Cole

# NO ROGUE? NO PROBLEM!

**D**ungeons present the ultimate hostile territory. Designed to maim and kill interlopers, it would seem that only the most crazed or prepared explorers would dare to venture into such death-traps. Although rogues have special training to contend with such dangers, any character with the right equipment, tactics, and will to survive can make it through his next dungeon unharmed.

## KNOW THY ENEMY

Nothing makes a dungeon crawl go smoother than knowing from the start what to expect. Although the "dungeon" might be a storm giant's castle in the clouds, a drow-garrisoned tunnel to the Underdark, or the royal dungeon after a particularly debauched victory revel, the PCs' chances of survival improve when they know what to expect.

Capturing one of a dungeon's inhabitants is probably the easiest way to get this kind of information about an area. Whether an orc scout, a wizard's apprentice, or even a more exotic captive like an owlbear guardian that the party druid or ranger can interrogate, any piece of information provided by a captive might greatly increase a party's chances of survival.

If captives refuse to talk (and the paladin discourages torture), merely letting a prisoner go might prove helpful. Following a fleeing enemy through the dungeon often reveals the safest paths and might reveal the way to deactivate many traps. However, risks often remain, as the lich lord's magical traps might target only living creatures and hidden guardians might confront only unfamiliar visitors.

Besides enemies, other dungeon inhabitants might have valuable information. Noncombatants, captives of

the enemy, or NPC adventurers might be willing to share what they know about the area if properly persuaded. Of course, some might charge a hefty price for such valuable information.

## ARMED AND OUT OF DANGER

Many traps, especially those of the mundane variety, can be foiled by equally mundane measures. Adventurers with a rogue in tow often carry such gear for convenience sake, and those without a designated trapfinder would be mad not to do the same.

Items that allow PCs to interact with potentially trapped items from a safe (or at least safer) distance are essential to parties without rogues. While a 10-foot pole might help, reach weapons function in the same way without further encumbering the party. They also have the added bonus of being in hand should the next threat come from a creature instead of a trap. Regularly tapping the floor ahead with a reach weapon or similar item protects the party from pit traps and some pressure-point traps.

Vials of alchemist's fire and acid might "clear" a suspicious room, as most mundane traps employ flammable materials like ropes or tripwires. A small explosion might even trigger magical traps in the area that would otherwise remain undetectable.

## DISABLED DISABLERS

When the PCs lose their rogue but decide to press on, some other character has to step up to fill the disarming role. Unfortunately, only rogues have Disable Device as a class skill. Thus, a substitute rogue benefits from any manner of extra help. Allies might

assist the disarming process with techniques like the aid another action, bardic music, or spells such as *fox's cunning* or *heroism*.

Alternatively, parties without rogues might choose to circumvent traps they find rather than risk setting them off when attempting to disable them. By preventing or avoiding the conditions that trigger them, PCs can often evade traps they've discovered. It's unlikely that a poison needle on the lock of a treasure chest can harm the fighter who stands behind it when he smashes the lid, while any adventurer can avoid a pit trap with a rope or carefully placed planks.

## ENDURANCE!

The easiest way to deal with most traps is merely to set them off and take the punishment! Barbarians, fighters, and paladins often have the hit points to merely charge through a dungeon, setting off traps and accepting the consequences. Monks might lack the toughness of those classes, but they have strong saving throws and evasion.

Using this tactic spares weaker characters damage from traps as surely as if a rogue had led the way. It also helps to have the toughest party member in front when the PCs stumble across a pack of monsters. This tactic becomes all the more effective, if not appealing, when combined with preparation and suitable resistance spells and items. However, relying on this straightforward approach exclusively might prove costly, in both healing expenses and lives. ☞

by Andy Collins

# OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

This month's column answers an assortment of questions that relate to fighting with multiple weapons, unarmed strikes, or both. Send your questions to [sageadvice@paizo.com](mailto:sageadvice@paizo.com).

**W**hen you normally get to make more than one attack a round, and you are wielding two weapons, do you get to add your full base attack bonus on one attack or both? Would a 6th-level fighter count the +6 base attack bonus for the first attack and the +1 for the second? Would you get +6 on both the first two attacks and a +1 on the third and fourth?

*Your full base attack bonus applies on the first attack you make with each hand. In the case of a 6th-level fighter wielding two weapons, he uses his full +6 base attack bonus on the first attack with his primary hand and on the first attack with his off hand. His second attack with his primary hand has a base attack bonus of +1, and if he has a second attack with his off hand (for example, if he has Improved Two-Weapon Fighting), it also has a base attack bonus of +1.*

I have a 14th-level fighter with a 16 Strength and 19 Dexterity who fights with two rapiers. He also has Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Greater Weapon

Focus (rapier), Weapon Finesse, Greater Weapon Specialization (rapier), and all the necessary prerequisite feats. His base attack bonus is +14/+9/+4, and with Weapon Finesse and Greater Weapon Focus, his attack bonuses jump to +20/+15/+10.

His off-hand attacks are made with his best attack bonus (+20). The first off-hand attack is +18 (off-hand weapon is light). His second off-hand attack, from Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, is at a -5 penalty, and his third attack from Greater Two-Weapon Fighting is at -10.

Are those two attacks at a +15 and +10? Are the penalties reduced by 2 because a rapier is a light weapon, making them +17 and -12? I'm not sure if the negatives are final in the feat descriptions or if light weapons still need to be taken into account when calculating these attacks. I suspect that my two remaining primary attacks suffer a -2 penalty, for a total of +13 and +8.

*First of all, a rapier is not a light weapon. It is a one-handed weapon, as*

*described on Table 7-5: Weapons, on page 116 of the Player's Handbook. A rapier is only treated as a light weapon to apply your Dexterity modifier on attack rolls when using the Weapon Finesse feat (see the Player's Handbook, page 102). Thus, a character wielding two rapiers is wielding two one-handed weapons, and suffers a -4 penalty on attack rolls with both his primary hand and his off hand (see Table 8-10: Two-Weapon Fighting Penalties, Player's Handbook, page 160).*

*Your character's total attack bonus (not including any enhancement bonuses from the weapons or other effects) is +16 (+14 [base attack bonus] +4 [Dex] +2 [Greater Weapon Focus] -4 [fighting with two weapons]). Both rapiers use this same attack modifier for the first attack made as part of a full attack. The second attack made with each rapier is at 5 less (+11), and the third attack made with each rapier is at 10 less (+6). To put it another way:*

*Primary hand's rapier: +16/+11/+6.  
Off hand's rapier: +16/+11/+6.*

Can I use Power Attack when fighting with two weapons? How does it work if my off-hand weapon is light?

You can use Power Attack or similar feats when fighting with two weapons. Whenever you choose to use Power Attack (or Combat Expertise, or any similar effect that applies a penalty on your attack rolls), the penalty applies on all attacks with both weapons made until the start of your next turn, even if the benefit doesn't apply to one of your weapons.

For example, a fighter wielding a longsword and short sword who chooses to take a -2 penalty on attack rolls from his Power Attack feat applies that penalty to all his longsword attacks and all his short sword attacks until the start of his next turn. However, the bonus on damage rolls only applies to his longsword attacks, since a light weapon can't benefit from Power Attack (see page 98 in the Player's Handbook). This can make Power Attack a poor choice for a fighter using two weapons.

My character has 18 Strength and wields a two-bladed sword. When I only make a single attack with it, how much of my Strength bonus can I add to the damage? Does it matter which end I swing with?

When you make only a single attack with a double weapon, the weapon is treated as a two-handed weapon. Thus, you'd add 1-1/2 times your Strength bonus (in this case, +6). If you used Power Attack on this attack, you'd add double the value of the penalty you applied to your attack roll (+2 damage per -1 on attack). It doesn't matter which end you swing with.

Can I throw weapons with both hands? What happens if I also use Rapid Shot?

The two-weapon fighting rules allow you to use thrown weapons in both hands. As described on page 160 in the Player's Handbook, a dart or a shuriken is treated as a light weapon for the purpose of two-weapon fighting, while bolas, javelins, nets, or slings are treated as one-handed weapons. For other thrown weapons, compare the weapon's weight to those listed here. Generally, a thrown weapon

that weighs less than 1 pound (at Medium size) is effectively a light weapon for this purpose. Weapons already defined as light weapons are also considered light.

As long as you can draw additional thrown weapons as a free action (such as from the Quick Draw feat), there's no reason you can't also use the Rapid Shot feat to get an extra throw with your primary hand. For example, if a 4th-level fighter has Quick Draw, Rapid Shot, and Two-Weapon Fighting, he can throw two daggers with his primary hand and a third with his off hand. His adjusted base attack bonus is +0 with each dagger (+4 base attack bonus, -2 for using a light weapon in his off hand, -2 for using Rapid Shot).

Can a monk fight with two weapons? Can she combine a two-weapon attack with a flurry of blows? What are her penalties on attack rolls?

A monk can fight with two weapons just like any other character, but she must accept the normal penalties on her attack rolls to do so. She can use an unarmed strike as an off-hand weapon. She can even combine two-weapon fighting with a flurry of blows in order to gain an extra attack with her off hand (but remember that she can only use unarmed strikes or special monk weapons as part of the flurry). The penalties for two-weapon fighting stack with the penalties for flurry of blows.

For example, at 6th level, the monk Ember can normally make one attack per round at a +4 bonus. When using flurry of blows, she may make two attacks (using unarmed strikes or any special monk weapons she holds), each at a +3 bonus. If she wants to make an extra attack with her off hand, she has to accept a -4 penalty on her primary hand attacks and a -8 penalty on her off-hand attacks (assuming she wields a light weapon in her off hand).

If Ember has Two-Weapon Fighting, she only has to accept a -2 penalty on all attacks to make an extra attack with her off hand. Thus, when wielding a light weapon in her off hand during a flurry of blows, she is able to make a total of three attacks, each at a total bonus of +1. At least

one of these attacks has to be with her off-hand weapon.

A 20th-level monk with Greater Two-Weapon Fighting can make eight attacks per round during a flurry of blows. Assuming she wields a light weapon in her off hand, her three off-hand weapon attacks are at +13/+8/+3, and she has five attacks (at +13/+13/+13/+8/+3) with unarmed strikes or any weapons she carries in her primary hand. If the same monk also has Rapid Shot and throws at least one shuriken as part of her flurry of blows (since Rapid Shot can only be used with ranged attacks), she can throw one additional shuriken with her primary hand, but all of her attacks (even melee attacks) suffer a -2 penalty. Thus, her full attack array looks like this: +11/+11/+11/+11/+6/+1 primary hand (two must be with shuriken) and +11/+6/+1 off hand.

I have a question about the unarmed damage of an enlarged 20th-level human monk who has Empty Hand Mastery (from Oriental Adventures). In my understanding, this monk deals the same damage as a Huge monk. My question is, how much damage does a Huge monk deal with her unarmed strike?

A monk's unarmed strike damage follows the normal rules for weapon damage when the wielder's size varies from the normal range, as described in Table 2-2 and Table 2-3 on page 28 of the DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide. A Huge 1st-level monk deals 2d6 points of damage with her unarmed strike, since her size category is increased two steps from Medium, the baseline for damage values.

A 20th-level monk with Empty Hand Mastery deals 4d8 points of damage with her unarmed strikes, and 6d8 points of damage when enlarged.

I wish to make a monk/soulknife, and I am wondering if the damage from the monk's unarmed strike stacks with the damage of the mind blade. If not, why not?

A soulknife's mind blade is not an unarmed strike. It is treated as a weapon and has its own game statistics (see page

27 of the Expanded Psionics Handbook). The monk's unarmed strike damage doesn't stack with a mind blade any more than it stacks with the damage from a quarterstaff or any other weapon wielded by the monk.

Can a monk who has natural weapon attacks (such as a centaur monk) attack unarmed and still use his natural weapons? For example, let's say he's an 8th-level monk. Can he use a flurry of blows and attack at +5/+5/+0 unarmed (plus other bonuses) and then at +0/+0 for 2 hooves?

*If the creature normally is allowed to make both weapon attacks and natural weapon attacks as part of the same full attack routine, the monk can do the same (making unarmed strikes in place of weapon attacks). Since a centaur can make two hoof attacks in addition to his longsword attack, a centaur monk can make two hoof attacks in addition to his unarmed strike attack (or attacks, depending on his base attack bonus). The monk can't use his natural weapon attacks as part of a flurry of blows, but he may make natural weapon attacks in addition to his flurry. Such attacks suffer the same -2 penalty as the monk's flurry attacks in addition to the normal -5 penalty for secondary natural attacks.*

*An 8th-level centaur monk has a base attack bonus of +10 (+4 from his 4 monstrous humanoid Hit Dice, and +6 from his 8 monk levels). If he performs a flurry of blows, he makes three unarmed strikes, at +8/+8/+3. He can add two hoof attacks at +1/+1 (-5 as secondary weapons, and -2 from the flurry).*

How do I know whether a monster gets multiple attacks for a high base attack bonus? Some of the monsters in the *Monster Manual* have multiple attacks, but others don't, even with the same base attack bonus. Why doesn't a great wyrm red dragon get eight bite attacks per round? After all, its base attack bonus is +40.

*The rules for multiple attacks are different for manufactured weapons (such as swords and bows) and for natural weapons (such as claws and bites). A creature wielding a weapon gets multiple attacks based on its base attack bonus, regardless of whether that creature is a goblin, a giant, or a pit fiend. Regardless of its base attack bonus, a creature never gets more than four attacks with any given weapon purely from its base attack bonus (see the sidebar on page 207 of the DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide)—thus, if a great wyrm red dragon could wield a manufactured weapon, it would still only be able to make four attacks with it as part of a full attack action (at +40/+35/+30/+25).*

*Creatures do not receive additional attacks from a high base attack bonus when using natural weapons. A young adult red dragon gets only one bite attack per round, even though a fighter with the same +19 base attack bonus attacks four times per round with a sword or other manufactured weapon.*

# Dragon

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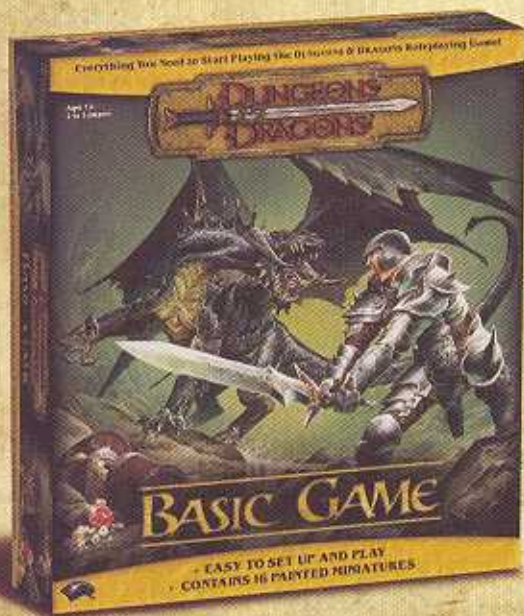
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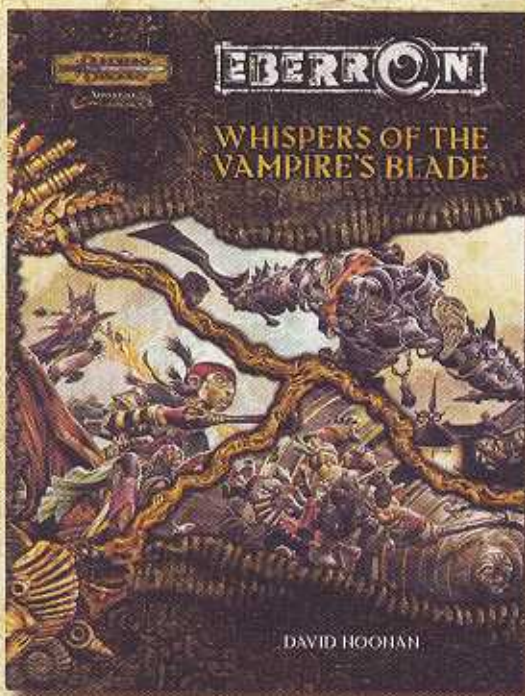
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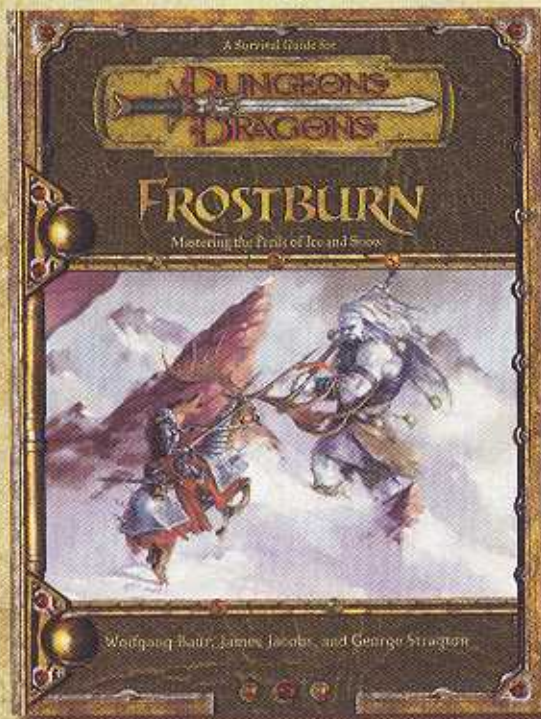
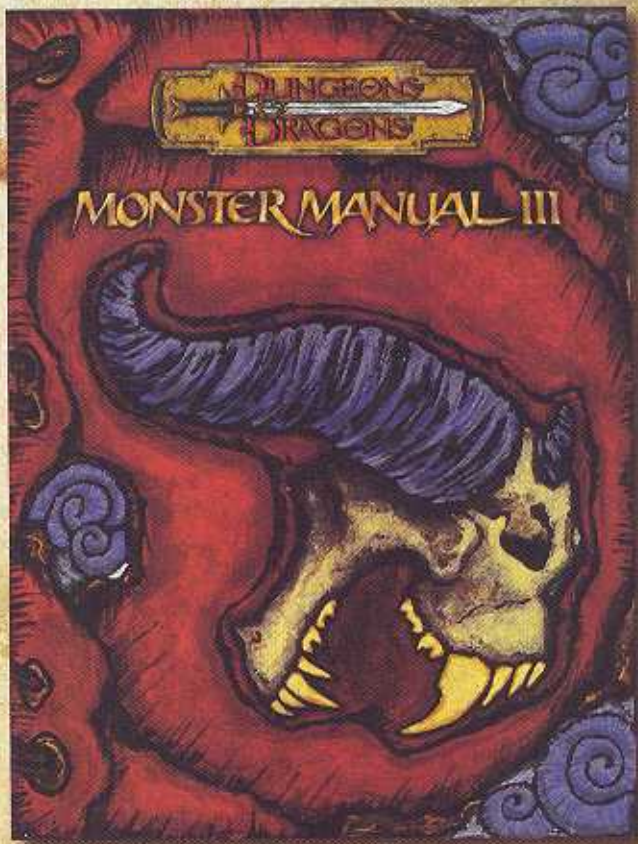
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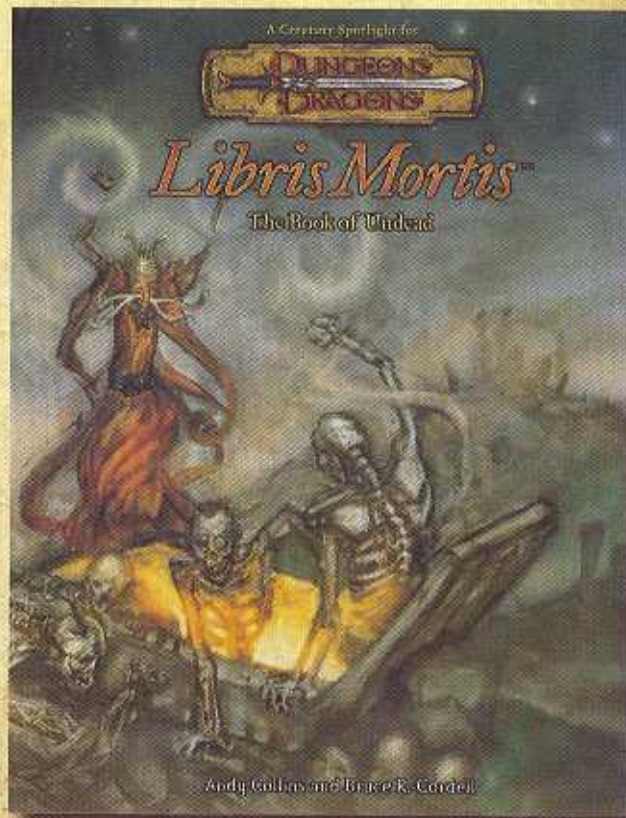
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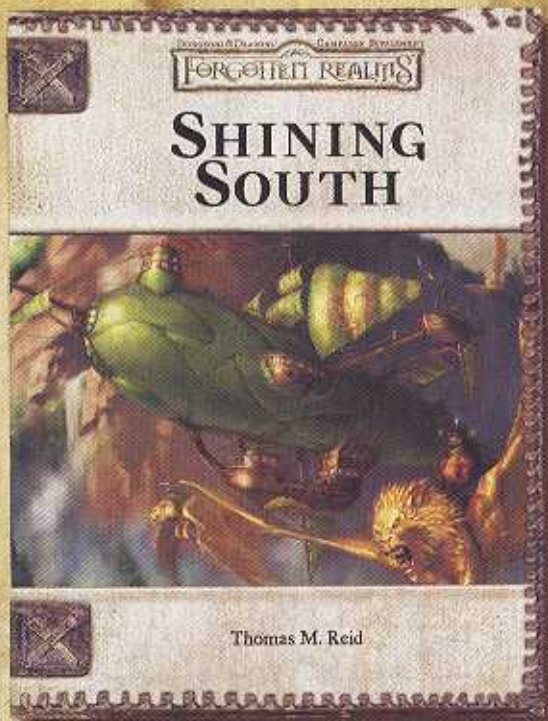
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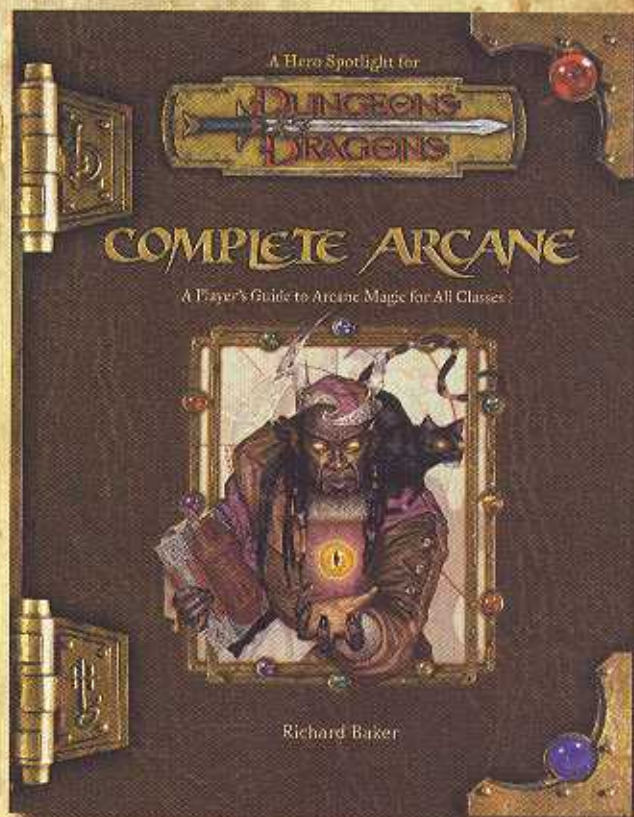
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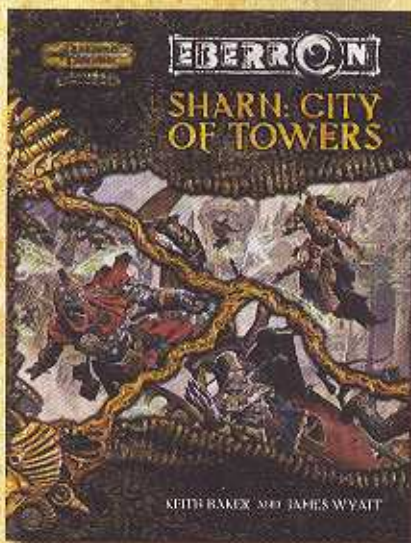
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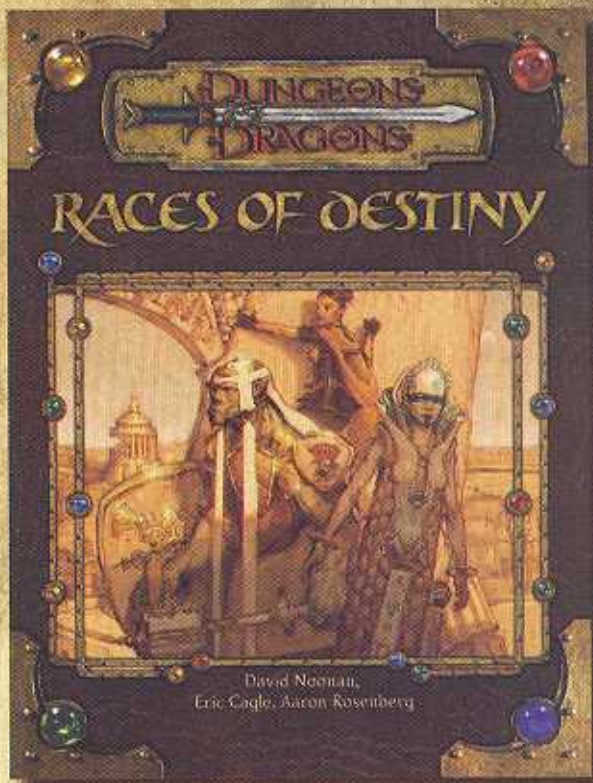
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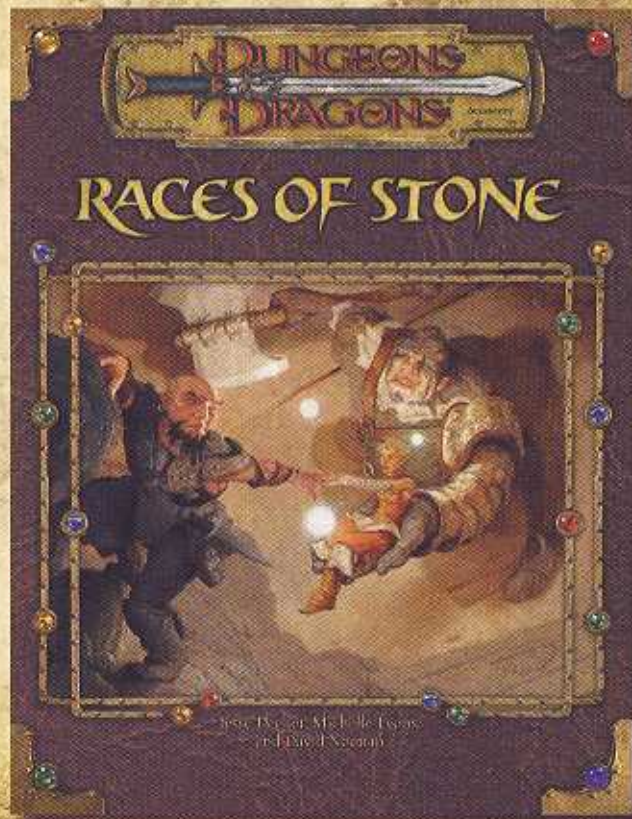
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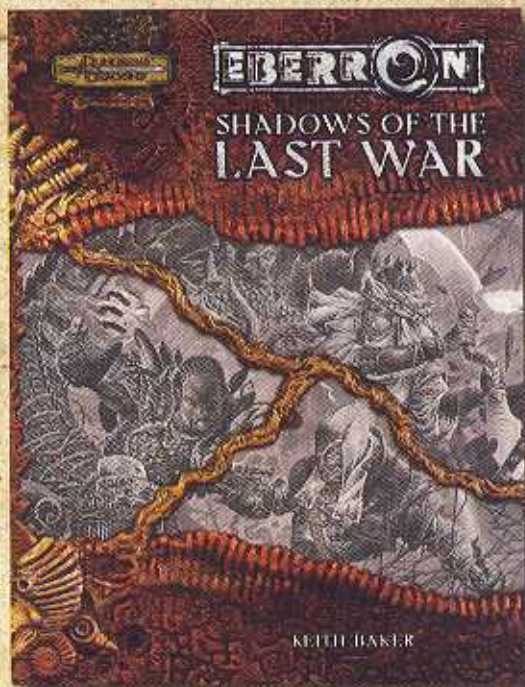
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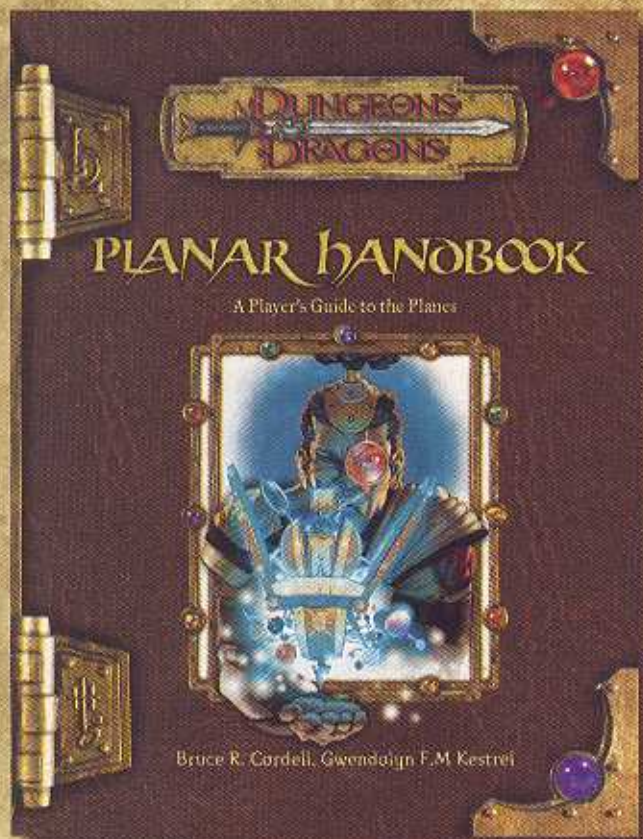
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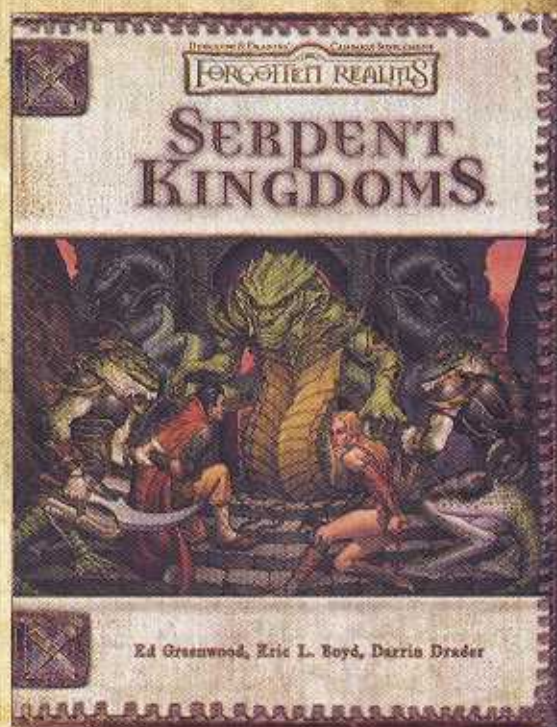
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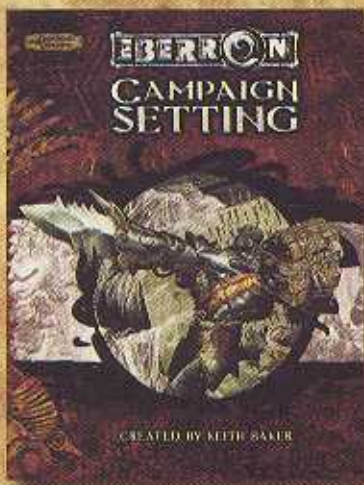
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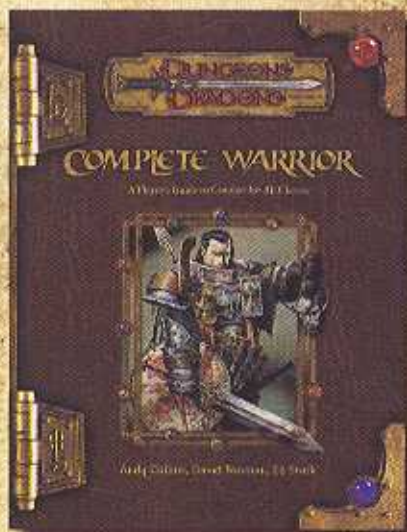
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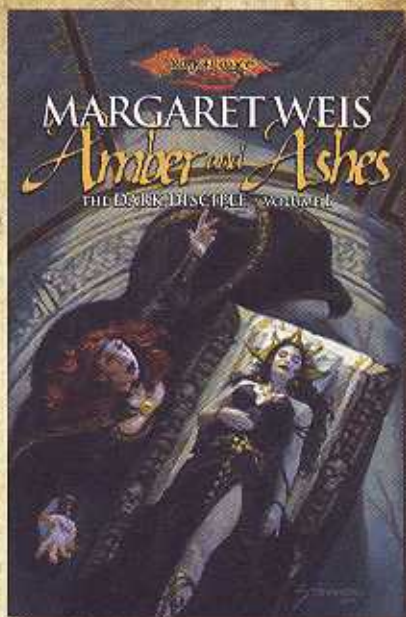
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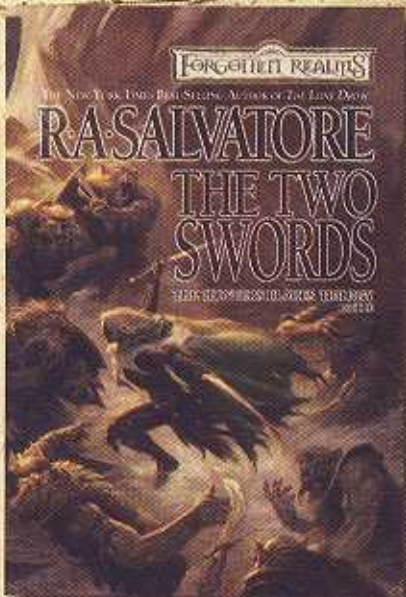
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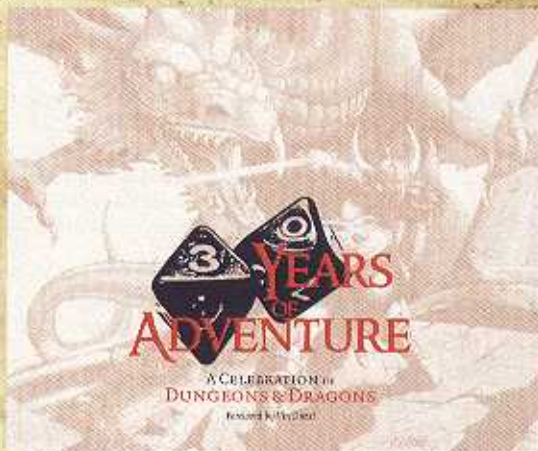
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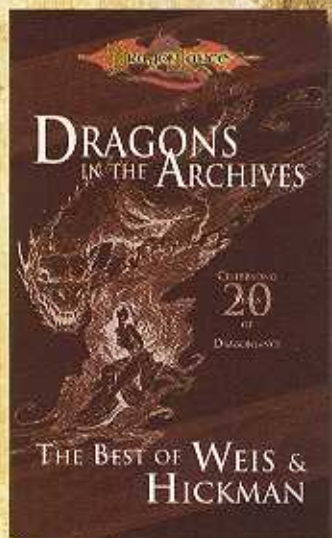
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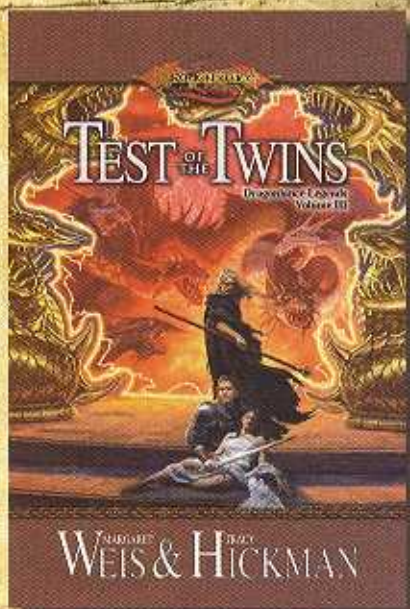
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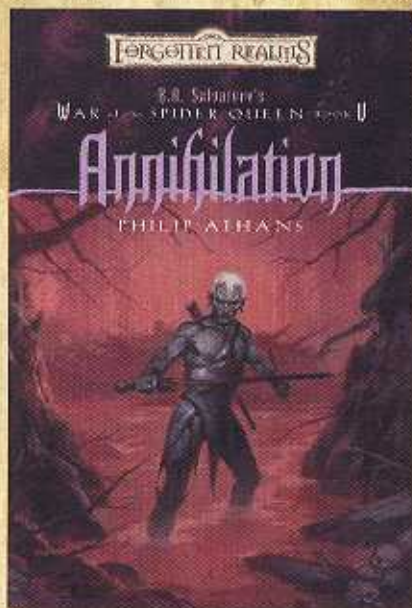
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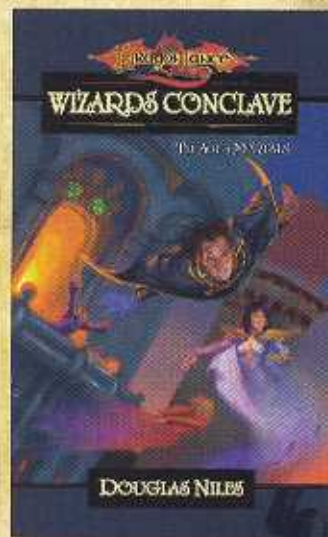
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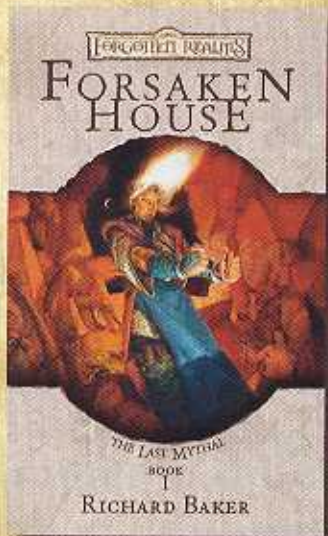
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by Ed Stark,  
special projects manager for RPG  
R&D at Wizards of the Coast

# BRINGING A D&D BOOK TO LIFE



It's been a while since anyone talked to about how Wizards of the Coast creates a *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* roleplaying product, so I thought what better place than the very first "Coup de Grace" column? *DRAGON* is a huge source of ideas and material for D&D products, and *DRAGON*'s readers are among the most passionate customers Wizards of the Coast has—best you know what we're doing behind the curtain!

## DESIGN

A lot goes into planning a project and deciding where it falls on the schedule—so much so that I'll have to address it in a later article if you're interested—but once Wizards decides on a project and a release month, the fun begins.

We start with the design manager for RPGs (Chris Perkins) and a lead designer (the current design team consists of Richard Baker, Bruce R. Cordell, David Noonan, and James Wyatt). They work together to create an outline. The team reviews the outline along with other interested parties, including Director of Roleplaying Games Bill Slavicek, the development team (see below), and me, the special projects manager for RPG R&D.

The lead designer and the design manager then put together a project design team. Usually, the team consists of the lead designer and a collection of experienced freelancers. (Want to become a freelancer for Wizards of the Coast? See the *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON*

writers' guidelines. Our regular freelancers were regular contributors to the magazines first, and it's no coincidence that folks in the list above had many articles published in the magazines before being hired as designers.)

The project design team divvies up the work and gets started. They turn over expanded outlines, milestones (chunks of the project in rough draft form), and drafts to the design manager and the rest of the team for review. They integrate changes and keep going until the final draft is complete—by deadline and to spec.

## DEVELOPMENT

At this point, the development team steps in. Jesse Decker (former editor-in-chief of *DRAGON*) is our development manager and his current team includes Andy Collins, Michael Donais, Rob Watkins, plus a designer not a member of the original project design team.

This team does a lot more than take the book out for a spin and kick the tires. They review the systems, run playtests (both in-house and out-of-house), and critique the book. A designer whose material goes through the development team's process often feels like he's played a full-contact scrimmage against the NFL's best, but like any scrimmage, the job is to improve the quality of the game. Sometimes, a particular "play" isn't good enough, and it gets cut out of the book or kicked back to the design team. Only the best makes it through to the other side.

## EDITING

After the development team has vetted the project, the editors take over. As with the design step, Wizards of the Coast uses an internal and external editing staff. Kim Mohan, our managing editor, usually assigns an in-house lead editor—either Michele Carter, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, or Chris Thomasson (one-time editor-in-chief of both *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON*)—and the lead editor works with freelance editorial talent. They set up reviews and milestones and kick back any questions or continuity issues to our development team and lead designers. Our editors aren't just proofreaders; they take rules matters seriously, too. Once a project has been through general editing, it goes to our managing editors, both Kim and Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel. It's their job to not only finish up the book for typesetting and layout, but to supervise its trip through the placement of art, text, maps, and all other elements. When the managing editors sign-off on the book, it goes out of RPG R&D and into the rest of the building—but that's another article.

So, there you go. That's a quick trip through RPG R&D and the beginning of a project. It's a brief description of a process that takes several months but, hey, this is a coup de grace, and not a whole battle. ■