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# DRAGON

ISSUE 326 • DECEMBER 2004



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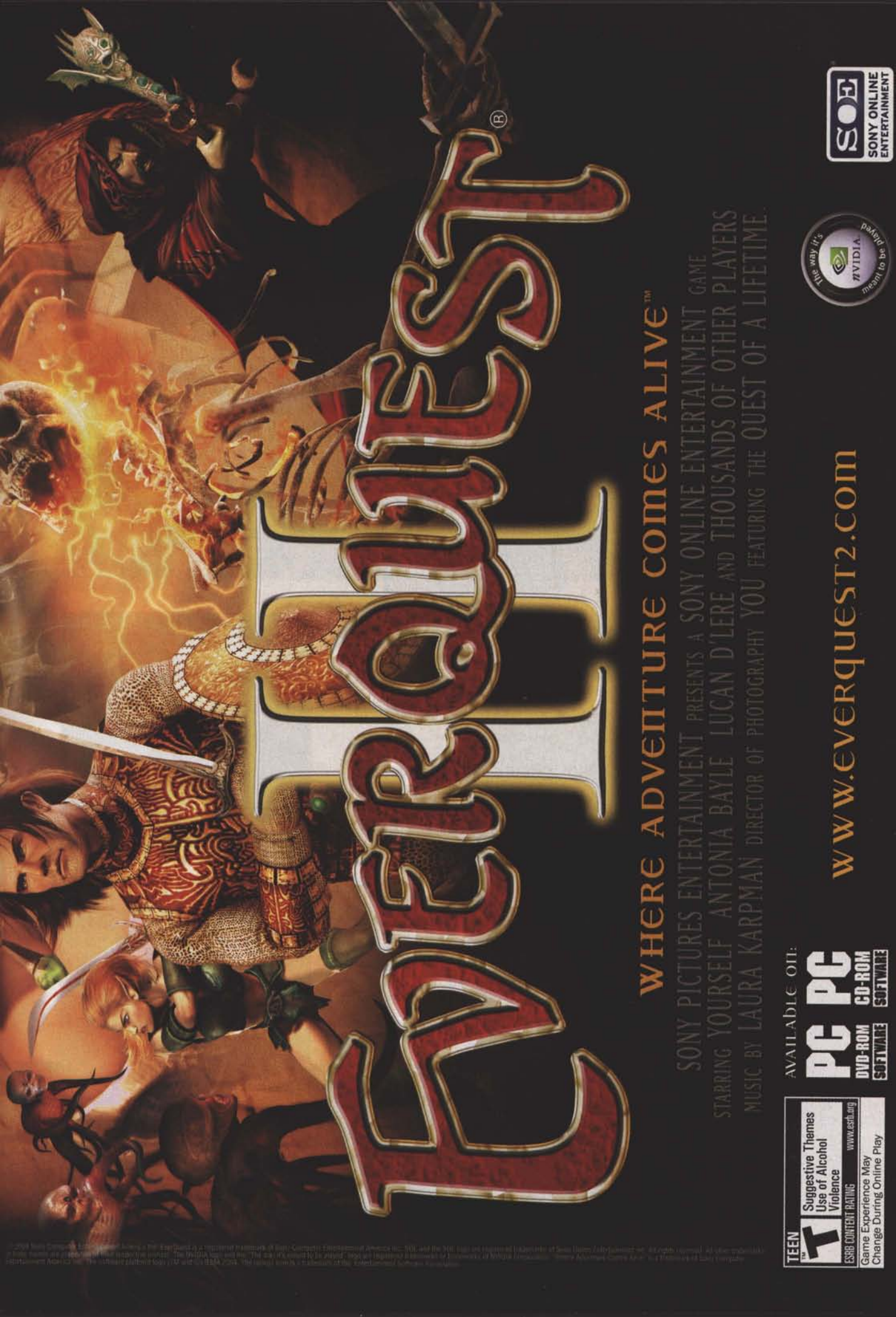
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# Dragon

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Publisher: Keith Strohm  
Editor-in-Chief: Matthew Smett  
Senior Art Director: Sean Glenn  
Assistant Editors: Mike McArtor and F. Wesley Schneider  
Graphic Design: Sarah Robinson

Advertising Director: Rob Stewart  
Director of Operations: Jeff Alvarez  
Prepress Manager: Kelly O'Brien  
Circulation Manager: Pierce Watters

### CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Peter Bergting, Jason Engle, Howard Lyon, John Kavolic, Mike May, Cara Mitten, Tony Moseley, Ramon Perez, Marc Sasso, David Wahlstrom, Aaron Williams

### CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Richard Lee Byers, Eric Cagle, Christopher Campbell, Joshua Cole, Andy Collins, Chris DeKalb, Jonathan Drain, Robert J. Hahn, Mark A. Hart, James Jacobs, Hal Maclean, Mike Mearls, Julian Neale, Richard Pocklington, Jayce K. Purvis, F. Wesley Schneider, David Schwartz, Jacob Steimanni, Nicholas J. Thalamos, Kieran Turley, Kyla Ward

### PAIZO PUBLISHING, LLC

2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200

Chief Executive Officer Lisa Stevens	Chief Operating Officer Keith Strohm
Technical Director Vic Wertz	Director of Marketing Jenny Bendel
Corporate Accountant Dave Erickson	Director of Operations Jeff Alvarez

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Letters to the Editor: scalemail@paizo.com

Submissions: dragon@paizo.com

Subscriptions: paizo.com/dragon

Back Issues: paizo.com/dragon

Customer Service:

customer.service@paizo.com

Sage Advice: sageadvice@paizo.com

Advertising: rob.stewart@paizo.com



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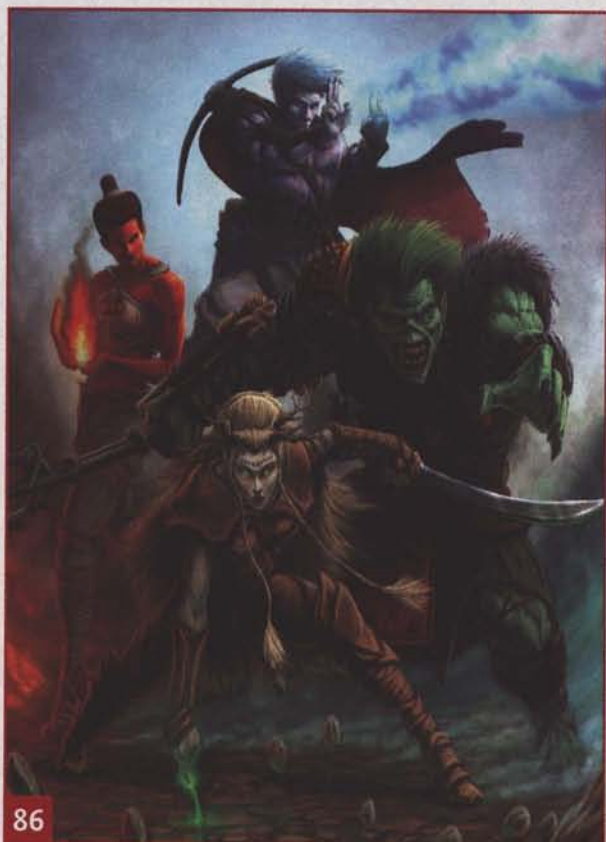
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# WORLD OF WARCRAFT

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# THE NAME OF THE GAME

Nothing so encapsulates the D&D experience as a dungeon crawl. The concept has its roots in the genesis of D&D with Gary Gygax's first sewer scenario for *Chainmail*, and its pervasive influence is reinforced every time someone uses the name of the game. Even people who have never played D&D have the idea that a dungeon can be something more than the prison under a keep. You can now see D&D's concept of the dungeon in a multitude of electronic games, books, tabletop games, and movies. Remember when in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* Harry Potter and his friends entered a chessboard chamber beneath their school and needed to make the right moves to pass? How about when the Goonies needed to dodge falling stone blocks and later play the right notes on a trapped organ made of bones? Those are just a few D&D-dungeon moments of countless others that appear in popular culture.

So why does the dungeon make such a difference?

It's adventure with every step. At the entrance to the dungeon, you don't know what creatures lie in wait within, the lay of the land, the traps you might face, or even if you'll be able to get out the same way you got in. Once inside, you never know what dire peril or wondrous treasure lies in the next room or down the hall. Certainly overland adventures are fun, and city adventures make for an interesting change of pace, but dungeons offer fear and excitement with each door opened and corner turned. The deeper you go, the more interesting it gets. Even after you've explored every room, doubts linger: Did you miss any secret doors? What treasure did you leave behind?

There's nothing more D&D than the party of adventurers searching for

secret passages, testing for traps with a 10-foot pole, or bursting through the door to surprise its foes. There's nothing more thrilling for me, as a DM or player, as when the PCs flee pell-mell through a dungeon, heedless of traps, monsters, or treasure. The PCs are terrified for their lives, and the players are roleplaying it to the hilt because they're terrified for their PCs' lives too. That's DUNGEONS & DRAGONS in overdrive, and it's a feeling only a dungeon can give you.

Some players dislike the kick-in-the-door style of dungeon adventures. They complain that dungeons are too combat-oriented and lack the roleplaying and intrigue of adventures in more civilized regions. Weary of hack-and-slash play, those players forget that truly great dungeon adventures use roleplaying and intrigue to encourage players to delve deeper into their labyrinthine plots. The *Temple of Elemental Evil* and *Queen of the Spiders* did that, and those adventures are still being played today, almost twenty years later.

When you're experiencing the best part of D&D, you should be at your best. That's why this issue of *DRAGON* is devoted to the dungeon. For players, this issue offers tips and tools for dungeon survival, and for DMs, it presents great inspiration and advice for creating your own deathtrap-laden tunnels. So fill your wineskin, gather your iron rations, bundle your torches, cinch on your pack, and turn the page—it's time to delve into dungeons.



Matthew Sernett  
Editor-in-Chief

## NEXT MONTH IN DRAGON



### DRAGON #327

*DRAGON* gives you the best in gaming, presenting new official rules, original game content, great advice, and the perfect inspiration for your D&D game. In each issue, you'll also see cool products on the horizon, find out what other players are up to, and get an insider's look at the industry. Get more from your game! Get *DRAGON*!

### The Plunderer's Handbook

by Hal Maclean

Find out how to scrape every copper out of a dungeon, haul out all the loot, and keep it safe until you can spend it.

### Tomb Raider

by Kyla Ward

"Grave robbing" is such a dirty term. Think of it as wealth recycling. Learn about tombs—their locations, traps, and treasures—from real-world examples. Design better tomb dungeons and keep them from becoming your PCs' graveyard using the advice in this article.

### With Friends Like These

by Joshua Cole

The goodie-two-shoes paladin, the ne'er-do-well rogue—they're fun characters to play, but as anyone who's played with them knows, they can cause a lot of trouble in an adventuring party. Yet after reading this article, you'll know how to play any kind of cleft-chinned character or antihero PC without causing your friends grief.

### The Silverfish

by Richard Lee Byers

Richard Lee Byers, author of several *FORGOTTEN REALMS* novels, presents a stirring short story involving characters from *The Rite*, second book in the Year of the Rogue Dragons series.

### Plus!

The Ecology of Grimlocks, Class Acts, First Watch, Gaining Prestige, Heroic Feats, The Magic Shop, Sage Advice, Spellcraft, comics, and more!



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# LETTERS

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

## LONG LIVE THE KING

I am a longtime subscriber to *DRAGON*. I've never written before, but that isn't because I don't care. Over the years, *DRAGON* has changed and evolved substantially, and I've weathered the storms and golden years with you loyally.

I beseech you to continue one of my favorite monthly articles. Gary Gygax's "Up On a Soapbox" is one of the most creative, enjoyable, and informative pieces that I look forward to every month. I've heard enough criticism about it in "Scale Mail" that I've become concerned that its acceptance and popularity will diminish enough to see it withdrawn.

Its loss would seriously wound me. Gary Gygax is a master DM and storyteller. His wonderful reminiscences about his past adventures provide insight into the fledgling steps of D&D and they always give me ideas and inspire me to be a better DM. Please continue "Up On a Soapbox" within your hallowed pages. It's only one page in the entire magazine, and old loyalists like me appreciate his words and candor.

**Phillip Rust  
Comfort, TX**

Thanks for sticking with *DRAGON*, Phillip.

Unfortunately, "Up On a Soapbox" isn't appearing in *DRAGON* anymore because Gary informed us he no longer has the time to devote to a monthly column. Of course, we want to see Gary continue to contribute to the magazine, particularly with "Coup de Grace" articles, and we'll be talking with him about such future opportunities.

## FR NOT FORGOTTEN

First off, I just want to say hi and thanks to all of the Paizo staff. You guys did a great job with the relaunch! I love

everything: all the new articles, the way you put everything together (Table Talk, Features, and Familiars), and especially the "Buyers' Guide." Yet you took out one of my favorite articles: "Elminster's Guide to the Realms." I don't know if you just didn't have enough room for it because there was too much other stuff, but I know this much: I look forward to that article each issue. I'm a FORGOTTEN REALMS fanatic and it makes me happy to delve into my favorite campaign world every time an article appears. Please tell me that there will be more Elminster, or must I stop my monthly visits to Faerûn?

**Crystal  
Address withheld**

*Thanks for the praise, Crystal.*

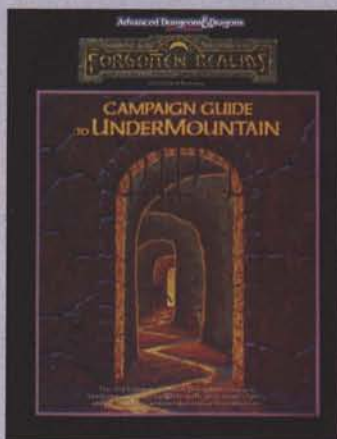
*DRAGON no longer features monthly setting-based articles because no single setting is popular enough to warrant page space in every issue. It was a tough decision to make. The staff members of DRAGON are huge fans of many settings. Ultimately though, it's better for the magazine to have its regular articles appeal to all D&D players rather than a portion of the D&D audience.*

*That said, special setting-based articles will appear in the Features section from time to time, and some of the regular articles, such as "Winning Races" and "Ecology," are bound to feature elements from various campaign worlds as elements for everyone to use. Check out last issue's "Winning Races: Lupins" for an example. Also, we're looking to have Ed Greenwood write some Realms-based feature articles for future issues.*

## HONOR AMONG THIEVES

It seems I owe you folks an apology. This goes for all of you at *DRAGON*, TSR, Wizards of the Coast, and so on. For a long time now, I've refused to even touch any-

## BLAST FROM THE PAST



### The Ruins of Undermountain

"The most famous battlefield in which to earn a reputation as a veteran adventurer—and the largest known grave of heroes in Faerûn." That's how Elminster described Undermountain, the sprawling, labyrinthine, multi-level, and seemingly endless dungeon beneath Waterdeep, the most famous city in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. *The Ruins of Undermountain*, first printed thirteen years ago, was a boxed set that gave sparse detail to just the first three levels. The third level, the largest of the three, received descriptions for just ten dungeon rooms. Of course, there was still enough to fill the box. With enormous dungeon maps, fantastic traps, unique rooms, and a limitless cast of foes, *The Ruins of Undermountain* presented awesome opportunities for a DM to create great dungeon-based adventures. Perhaps that's why, despite it lacking a plot of any sort, *The Ruins of Undermountain* places seventeenth in the top thirty adventures presented by *DUNGEON* #116 (on store shelves this month). Later products detailed more of Undermountain, but most failed to capture the first boxed set's kick-in-the-door, dungeon-crawl feel, and none were as ambitiously expansive.

thing "3.5" related. I picked up the third edition core rulebooks back when they were first released and immediately fell in love. Sure the ranger needed work, and attacks of opportunity were a little vague, but I thought it was great. Then came the news that 3.5 was being published: three new core rulebooks to buy, and only a couple short years since the last edition was put out! I cursed your names to the four winds as robber barons, scoundrels, and blackguards, thinking that this was



the most shameless cash-grab in history. I figured all the changes that were made could probably fit in one \$20 supplement about the size of *Sword and Fist*. So, I went about my life, still running my third edition campaign (using the updated ranger as published in *DRAGON* #308, but that's it), until one of my players picked up the revised *Player's Handbook* and loaned it to me. How wrong I had been! All of the classes benefited, becoming more flexible and interesting. Spells previously unbalanced or of questionable usefulness were fixed. Best of all: The battle-grid maps cleared up all the vagueness and confusion surrounding attacks of opportunity. (It turns out I was right, and my players were wrong. Heh heh heh.) So here's my apology, and to prove I'm sincere, I just ordered the core rulebook gift set online. Just promise me that 4th edition is at least ten years off.

**Tim McCloskey**  
Windsor, Ontario, Canada

### I READ IT FOR THE ARTICLES

I have just renewed my *DRAGON* subscription another three years. Mind you, I was going to let it expire, but the September issue totally changed my mind. I am one of those readers who you classified in your editorial as those who read *DRAGON* to be entertained. I have never played tabletop D&D. It's not because I don't want to; none of my friends are even remotely interested in this fantastic universe. So I plow along and satisfy my urges by playing awesome computer games like *Neverwinter Nights* and *Icewind Dale*, which brings me to my request: I read *DRAGON* mainly to be entertained, so please keep up the great art, the book and game articles, and most importantly, the fantastic short stories you include in almost every issue of *DRAGON*.

**Jose Orozco**  
Miami, FL

*Never fear, Jose. Some folks have taken the lack of a short story in issue #323 to mean that DRAGON won't be featuring fiction anymore. Nothing could be further from the truth. DRAGON will continue to feature great fantasy fiction, but its inclusion will be irregular. As I mentioned in the editorial, we made the changes to the magazine*

## HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO



## Dragon Talk

Just in time for the holidays, Zhang Yimou's, *Ying Xiong*, or *Hero*, is now available on DVD. If

you haven't seen the movie yet, Jet Li stars as a martial arts master in this utterly breathtaking, fantastical interpretation of the birth of China as a unified country. Brought to the U.S. by infamous director-screenwriter Quentin Tarantino, *Hero* holds dozens of awards and nominations from some of the most prestigious film academies and festivals around the globe. Besides being one of the most enthralling action movies in recent memory, the direction, cinematography, choreography, visual effects, and music make *Hero* a movie that you don't watch, but rather experience. So get your copy of *Oriental Adventures* handy and pick up *Hero* today!

to appeal to everyone interested in D&D, and every issue of *DRAGON* should have something to interest readers like you.

*I'm sorry to hear that you can't find someone to play with. Check out the RPGA at [rpga.com](http://rpga.com), and you should find some ways to get in contact with D&D players in your area. You can also try posting a message at your local game store or hobby shop, or asking if the store participates in RPGA events. D&D-related messageboards might also be a good way to find players in your area. It might be a little odd to jump in a game with folks you don't know, but playing D&D is a great way to get to know people, and you might swiftly find yourself with a regular gaming crew and a bunch of new friends.*

*Also, you might try getting your friends to play DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures. It's not as complicated as D&D or as strange as D&D can be to people unfamiliar with roleplaying games, so it could be a good introduction to the basic concepts of D&D play.*

### NOT YOUR ORDINARY MAGAZINE

I've enjoyed *DRAGON* for about five years now—some issues more than others—but there is always something interesting in every issue. When third edition came out, I was very pleased with *DRAGON*'s new layout (logos,

articles, page backgrounds, and so on). My enjoyment continued when 3.5 came out. Issue #323, however, put me off a bit.

The new logo lacked the style of the previous one, and the cover was kind of bland. Unfortunately, the interior followed suit. I did not want to read the magazine. It looked like a newspaper—and not even a good newspaper. Almost all of it was black print on plain white backgrounds, as opposed to the various colored print and backgrounds used in the past.

I did finally finish the issue after about two weeks. Usually, I tear through it the same day it arrives. Now, I admit that the content of issue #323 was up to par. It's just that nothing jumped out and grabbed my attention. Nothing said, "Read me first. I'm wondrous and exciting stuff."

I have read letters from other people complaining that some of the articles were a little difficult to read due to some of the different backgrounds and text colors used. Sometimes particular issues or articles weren't to that person's taste. Up until now, I have simply read their letters, had a good chuckle, and continued reading and enjoying my copy. I don't understand why some



## RANDOM ENCOUNTER



## We Owe You an Apology

In issue #321, *DRAGON* predicted that *King Arthur* would be a better movie than *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*. No one on the *DRAGON* staff saw *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*, but we did see *King Arthur*, and we now know how wrong we were. Please forgive us.

That said, we can't help but be intrigued by the impending release of the *King Arthur* DVDs. Apparently, there will be two versions: the PG-13 version we all know and love to mock, and the (ahem) "hard" version. At the time of writing, it's unclear what the so-called hard version will entail (More sex? More violence? More hard-to-watch scenes?), but both versions will contain commentary by the director, video commentary by the cast and filmmakers, a subtitle fact track, a making-of documentary, deleted scenes, photo gallery, and trailers. Best of all, both versions of the DVD will also present an alternate ending as an extra. Will Lancelot live? Will Arthur die? Will Keira Knightley wear an even skimpier costume? Will the percentage of men with beards in the film increase beyond its already astounding 90%?

We'll find out when the DVD releases next month.



## KNOWLEDGE CHECK

**Question:** No more rhymes now, I mean it!

people believe that the *DRAGON* staff can read their minds and produce a magazine to their exact taste and needs every time. You can't please all of the people all of the time, but I believe you folks do a pretty good job of mixing things up and covering a wide range of subjects. For the most part, I would say that you please most of your readers most of the time. I do understand that you are trying to reach and please as wide a distribution as possible. My only complaint is that *DRAGON* is supposed to represent and support a fantasy roleplaying game. It should not look or feel ordinary.

Michael Burke  
Collingswood, NJ

## IT'S A KEEPER

I'm a longtime *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* player and subscriber to *DRAGON*. I just got the new issue today, and all I can say is WOW! I've always enjoyed the magazine, but you guys really raised the bar on this one. I read the thing cover to cover, devouring the pages. I have a wealth of ideas for my game. Keep up the great work!

Ruben Smith-Zempel  
Address withheld

## WHERE'S THE BELOVED?

Although I love your magazine, I have a few concerns about *DRAGON*'s new format. One thing I've always loved about *DRAGON* is the fact that each issue had it's own theme. This made ordering the right back issue for the information you need very simple. Also, it allows a DM to incorporate much more into his campaign revolving around a central concept rather than what can be contained in just one article.

Another thing that bothers me is the total lack of backgrounds and borders in your regular articles. Everything is so bland. It makes reading your magazine very unappealing to the eyes.

My final complaint is about the choice of articles you decided to include in *DRAGON*. Some of your best and most beloved articles seem to be completely removed. These great articles include "Up on a Soapbox," "DM's Toolbox," "Dun-

geoncraft," and your magnificent fiction. Also, some of the articles you decided to keep or add aren't exactly the greatest decisions, such as "Silicon Sorcery" (which adds too much focus to video games), "Ecology," and "Heroic Feats."

Yet, as I said earlier, I love *DRAGON*, and none of these downfalls can deter me from reading your great magazine. In the end, your artists and writers are very talented and can always weave together a magazine worthy of the best of praise.

Peter Lapp  
Address withheld

## HIP DEEP IN DRAGON

Hooray! The new format is sure as heck a lot easier to read without the oddly colored pages and lighter-colored type. The single-page articles are a disappointment, though. There's no meat in the issue. I hope that this doesn't signal a change to articles lacking depth.

Bill Hoyer  
Address withheld

## PREVIEW LETTER

As a long-time reader (since the mid-80s) and faithful subscriber for the past few years, I wanted to send you a quick note regarding the new format of *DRAGON*. In short: Yes! Every page was phenomenal. When I finish the magazine, I will send a letter detailing what I specifically enjoyed and why, but it will take some time as I am literally savoring each and every article.

Thanks so much for your continued devotion to *DRAGON* and its readers, and for your willingness to try new things.

Jo Ann Henry  
Address withheld

## HOW MANY ADS DOES THAT TAKE?

I would like to say that in my twenty years of playing D&D and being a fan of the magazines, this is my first letter. I have been with everyone through the ups and downs. I have stood through all of the changes and tried to be positive. When I heard of the recent changes that were to befall the magazines, I was optimistic and hopeful.







## RETURN OF THE RETURN OF THE KING

Dragon  
Talk

For those of you who aren't already standing in line, the *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* extended platinum edition releases

December 14. With

more than 45 minutes of additional footage, this already titanic film now clocks in at 250 minutes long, just over four hours! Along with several documentaries, art galleries, abandoned concepts, and interviews, this four-disk set includes a finely detailed painted sculpture of Minas Tirith. But perhaps the most widely awaited features are the new scenes themselves. Rumors currently hold that, among others, the most exciting of the new scenes include an encounter with Saruman at Isengard, a confrontation with the Mouth of Sauron at the gates of Mordor, and the battle between Gandalf and the Witch King! Of course, to make sure that these are more than just rumors, you'll have to check out the extended *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* DVD set yourself!



I have just received issue #323, and I have to say it: What is this supposed to be? I subscribe to your magazine for its information and its advice, not to be bombarded by so many ads for miniatures that my eyes began to water. Are these the changes your staff has divined from the many letters and responses of your fans? If it is, I believe you have missed the mark. Is this the new format for *DRAGON* or some cruel jest at the expense of its readers?

I hope for the sake of all who read *DRAGON* that this issue will not be the norm. Please stop messing with a winning combination. A change is supposed to be for the better. It is tiring to wait for a magazine you hope will be entertaining and helpful. I might be in the minority on this issue, but I could not sit back and keep accepting this lack of real content any longer. I want to remain a loyal reader, but issues like this one makes me question my loyalties. I apologize for my rant, but now you know my mind.

Tim Wilkinson  
Portland, TN

## THEY GROW 'EM BIG IN TEXAS

I have to give you a big thumbs up on the new magazine layout. It's much easier to approach than the old version, much easier to find what I'm looking for, and the content seems better if the latest issue is any indicator. I found the "Class Acts"

article particularly helpful for ideas on characters that break the typical mold of a class. Grouping the comics together was also brilliant, as they are always the first thing I read. (Let's hear it for "Dork Tower!") The Buyer's Guide was also a big help; I hope it will be a regular feature.

John Schweers  
Paris, TX

*Thanks for the compliments, John. We're glad you liked the issue.*

*The Buyers' Guide should appear once every three issues. We didn't clearly label it as such inside the magazine, but the Buyers' Guide is an extra sixteen pages added to the magazine and filled with content by Wizards of the Coast. Some readers have bemoaned the loss of articles that those pages could have contained, but those pages simply wouldn't have existed without the Buyer's Guide.* ☐

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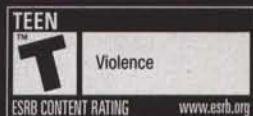


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# PREVIEWS, NOTES, AND NEWS FOR GAMERS

## GET BENT

Need a last-minute gift for your favorite D&D player? Check out [steelswire.com](http://steelswire.com). There you'll find some innovative game aids for D&D, including steel wires bent to outline the shapes of 10-foot-radius, 20-foot-radius, and 40-foot-radius effects on 1-inch grids. Sturdily made and with open centers, the wire outlines can easily be placed over miniatures or on the battle mat to see what creatures are affected. The website also offers a 2-inch square of metal not much thicker than a sheet of paper. What's it for? It could be used for a 5-foot-radius effect, but it's intended to be a cheat sheet for the *enlarge person* spell. When your half-orc fighter has *enlarge person* cast on him, simply slide the piece of metal under him to represent his new 10-foot space. The square also has info about the effects of the spell on any creature, but it works best for creatures that go from Medium to Large size.



## CALLED SHOT TO THE WALLET

This month brings the release of the print version of *The Book of Iron Might* from Sword & Sorcery and Malhavoc Press. Its cover touts it as a combat sourcebook, and its contents fulfill that promise in spades. Author Mike Mearls (see "Coup de Grace" and his other articles in this issue) has designed a simple and fair system for combat stunts. The rules harken back to the "called shots" of second edition D&D while using the balanced approach to game mechanics of revised D&D. Plus, if you don't like the stunts presented, *The Book of Iron Might* presents an easy-to-use system for creating your own. Of course, there's more to the book than the stunts; it also presents new feats for all types of characters, new uses for skills, and other fun elements for your d20 gaming.



## FUZZY DICE

[Toyvault.com](http://Toyvault.com) has added more cool stuff to their site! In addition to toys and stuffed animals of creatures and characters from *Farscape*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Godzilla*, and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, the website now features more stuffed terrors in their Here Be Monsters line and plush d20 dice. That's right, not only can you cuddle up with a hydra at night, now you can drive around town with red fuzzy d20s swinging from the mirror.



## GETS OUR STAMP OF APPROVAL



Why did it take thirty years for someone to think of this product? Dungeon Stamps are rubber stamps that you can use to imprint common dungeon features on a battle mat. Initially being sold in a boxed set that includes ten stamps, an ink-pad, and bottle of wet-erase ink, the stamps are perfect for use on vinyl mats. Simply draw the outline of the room, stamp in doors, stairs, and other features, and you're ready to play. When you're finished with that room, use a damp paper towel to wipe the mat clean and then stamp on the features of the new room. The first box set comes with stamps for a door, double doors, stairs, torch, ladder, tree, window, crates, and arrow loop. Check them out at [greendragonstudio.com](http://greendragonstudio.com).

## AMAZING STORIES #606



Issue #606 of *AMAZING STORIES* features a cover story on the much-anticipated Pixar movie *The Incredibles*, with a closeup look at director Brad Bird. It also offers interviews with David Goyer, writer-director of *Blade Trinity* and with novelist Laurell K. Hamilton, author of *Incubus Dreams*. This month's holiday gift guide directs you toward the coolest new toys, and their reviews section will help you pick the best new books, DVDs, comics, and movies. This issue also features original short stories by *AMAZING STORIES* fiction favorites Larry Tritten and Patrick Weekes, as well as Paul Di Filippo, Steve Carper, and Aaron Allston.



## SUPER FREAK

When we heard about *Über Goober*, a documentary about gamers, our thoughts leapt to *Trekkies*, a bruising and uproariously funny documentary about *Star Trek* fans. Unfortunately (and fortunately), *Über Goober* does not represent gamers as caustically or as humorously as *Trekkies* dealt with trekkers—um, trekkies. In interviews with players and professionals, *Über Goober* presents the hobbies of miniature wargaming, roleplaying, and live-action roleplaying. The documentary doesn't tell you anything you're unlikely to know unless you're new to the hobbies in question, and it would be a good primer to give non-gamers to inform them about your interests except that several aspects of the film ruin that use: some paranoid gamers participate only on condition of anonymity and in silhouette to "protect their reputations," the documentary features man-on-the-street interviews with bar-hopping singles of a junior-high mindset who holler profanity, and a creepy former-roleplayer-turned-priest.

Yet the DVD does have a few excellent features. In an extra video, the documentary crew rides around Lake Geneva with Gary Gyax as a tour guide. Gary points out sites of importance to the beginnings of D&D, TSR, and Gen Con, revealing nice tidbits of history. In addition, the DVD features music by The Great Luke Ski (see "Player Initiative" in this issue), and it presents an Easter egg feature in the form of a 45-second cartoon.

Take a look for yourself by checking out the trailer at [ubergoobermovie.com](http://ubergoobermovie.com).



## DUNGEON THIS MONTH

DUNGEON #117



### Fallen Angel

by Keith Baker

On Olarune 9th in the 918th year since the founding of the Kingdom, one of the city of Sharn's floating towers fell from the sky, leaving much of the Godsgate District a ruin of crushed buildings and shattered glass. Years later, this slum is home to the ravers, bestial scavengers barely clinging to the shreds of humanity. Now, a band of ravers searches Godsgate for remnants of a broken statue, pulling the PCs into a plot that could destroy Sharn itself. A D&D EBERRON adventure for 4th-level characters.

### Istivin: City of Shadows

by Greg A. Vaughan

In the shadows of the great western mountains lies a tragic kingdom wracked by the desolation of war and poisoned by the opportunistic crush of would-be nobles holding false claims on ravaged lands. At the heart of this kingdom is star-crossed Istivin, a city haunted by demonic pacts, devious dark elves, and worse. A complete Backdrop of urban dark fantasy for all D&D campaigns.

### Touch of the Abyss (Part 1)

by Greg A. Vaughan

A decade ago, the drow goddess Lolth captured the city of Istivin in her world-spanning Demonweb. Adventurers eventually won the day, but the affair left a dark stain on the city's soul that now spatters to terrible life. A D&D adventure for 11th-level characters.

### The Winding Way

by Nicholas Logue

The Temple of the Winding Way stands watch over the twisting passes of the northern mountains, but who stands watch over the temple's terrible secret? An army of undead from a distant age lurks in the darkened catacombs, awaiting their time to march on the civilized kingdoms of man. A D&D adventure for 14th-level characters.

## THE KING IN YELLOW

In issue #324, *DRAGON* highlighted H.P. Lovecraft's influence on D&D, and just in time for the holiday season, we discovered yuletide Cthulhuism and Yogsothery perfect for any fan of Lovecraft. The H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society created a CD of Cthulhu filk songs, sung to the tunes of Holiday carols, called *A Very Scary Solstice*. The Great Old Ones work in mysterious ways.

Unfamiliar with filk? Filk is a genre of music in which song lyrics are written about *Star Trek*, *Highlander*, *Star Wars*, and other geeky subculture topics. They're usually sung to the tune of pop songs or other familiar music. If you're a longtime reader of *DRAGON*, recall the much beloved and reviled "Bard on the Run" articles that used to appear in April issues; those are filk songs.

Of course, like all the victims in mythos stories, the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society couldn't leave well enough alone, and they've made another CD. *A Shoggoth on the Roof* parodies the popular Broadway musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, with songs such as "If I Were a Deep One" and "Very Far from the Home I Love." They've even created a humorous documentary about the supposed failed production of the musical that you can view online.

Check out the music, songbooks for the CDs, documentary, game aids for Cthulhu-based roleplaying, and more at [cthulhulives.org](http://cthulhulives.org).





# THE SCOOP ON GAMER LIFE

## WANTED: POSTERS

*DRAGON's* new messageboards made a big splash with readers in September and are generating a lot of discussion about D&D and the magazine. If you haven't checked them out yet, go to [paizo.com/dragon](http://paizo.com/dragon) to read, register, and post. Here are some quotes from the discussions you might have missed:

"Times are tough and our methods are going have to be extreme to get the people of today talking about D&D again. I think we need a sequel to the 1982 classic, *Mazes and Monsters*. This movie-of-the-week helped put some serious fear into those unfamiliar with roleplaying games. We need that kind of press again. We'll become that hip forbidden fruit that people only whisper about."

—Brad Hardman

"Safe design is almost always better than unsuccessful design. When my first issue of *DRAGON* came out, it featured all kinds of junky textures. It looked like Janis Joplin's tie-dyed blouse after a heavy night of drinking. It wasn't very legible, but it sure was fun to create! Readers from all over felt compelled to let us know how much they hated it and how fired I should become. We toned it down and found other opportunities for innovation.

"Innovation takes time and meditation; two luxuries magazine teams rarely have. The only way that we could find time

to explore fun things like the exploded-view-map Table of Contents (or my personal favorite, the Caves of Contents in issue #287) was by neglecting other important aspects of the magazine. The idea came after illustration commissions were long past and I drew it myself—like the shields in the Heraldry article of issue #275 and the isometric views of so many 'Sage Advice' and 'Dungeoncraft' articles. My motto is, 'If you want something done half-assed, do it yourself.' The only bonus to this approach is blasting Slayer in the office at three in the morning."

—Pete Whitley, former art director of *DRAGON*

Paizo's website has been entirely updated to offer greater ease of use and a more fun experience all around. If you have a subscription, you have an account with the website. You can check how many issues you have left on your subscription, buy back issues, purchase products, download freebies, and more with just a few clicks of your mouse. Of course, you don't need to be a subscriber to use the Paizo website; everyone is welcome to join messageboard discussions and shop the site. As time goes on, you should get even more use from [paizo.com](http://paizo.com), so check it regularly for updates and new features. We hope to make the website your one-stop shop for gaming needs and a great community gathering place for gamers.

## WHAT DO YOU BRING TO THE TABLE?

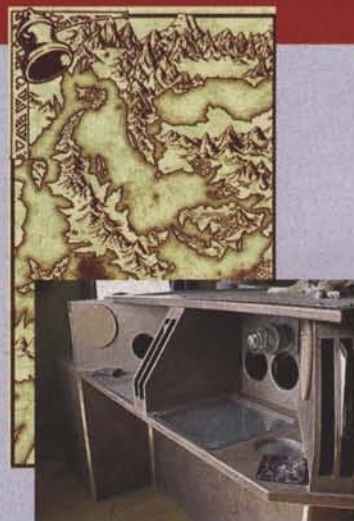
This website has been around for a while, and readers of Internet RPG messageboards have likely encountered it before now, but [agyris.net](http://agyris.net) deserves more than one look.

The website initially gained notice because of the ultimate gaming table. Custom made by and for their gaming crew, the table features an elevated play surface; inset player stations with lights, slots for books, dice-rolling area, corkboard for posting notes, and a compartment for dice; a larger inset area for the DM to place his gaming tools, including the features of the player areas, shelving for miniatures, and a computer station; and a tube system for secret messages between players and the DM. The website features multiple

photos of the gaming table, and you can even get plans of the table so that you can make your own.

Yet the ultimate gaming table is little more than a footnote on [agyris.net](http://agyris.net). The real meat of the website is the setting these players use for their games. In addition to excellent maps, illustrations, and game aids, [agyris.net](http://agyris.net) presents an astounding amount of information about the characters, magic items, gods, races, locations, and history of Agyris. Of course, that's not all the website has to say about the world—to tell the truth, the extent of detail is a little overwhelming.

Check out [agyris.net](http://agyris.net) to see the table or find out more about Agyris, and if you or someone in your gaming crew has done some-



thing cool like the folks at [agyris.net](http://agyris.net), email [salemail@paizo.com](mailto:salemail@paizo.com). Tell us about the fun things you're doing and you might find yourself in the next "Player Initiative."



## SKI PASSES

Genius asserts itself in strange and wondrous ways. Take Luke Ski for example. In addition to making an appearance in *Uber Goober* (see "First Watch" in this issue) and having his songs featured in that film, comedian Luke Ski has written and recorded more than one hundred filk songs about everything from Transformers to Space Ghost. Five of Luke Ski's songs have made it to five of Dr. Demento's annual Funny Five lists. You might be surprised to learn you already know of some of his songs. A demented Renaissance man, Luke Ski also works as a stand-up comedian and caricature artist.

Most of Luke's songs are about geeky subjects (some of which you can hear in *Uber Goober*), and several reference roleplaying. You can check out some of his work on [lukeski.com](http://lukeski.com). Listen to the sample entitled "Luke Ski Mega Mix" to get a feel for his work.



## RPGA UPDATE

by Ian Richards

RPGA Program Manager



**RPGA**  
NETWORK

When Wizards of the Coast launched the new line of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* it was another trip down memory lane for myself. Having played various historical miniatures games and converted several sets of rules for use as warband and full army rules sets for fantasy battles, this new line brought me back to those good times. Sure I flirted, like many, with Warhammer and various other rules sets but we always came back to using those hordes of figures I'd collected for my D&D games and strived to do something else with them.

With the advent of the official painted D&D miniatures that came full circle. Here was a set of miniatures designed to be completely compatible with my favorite roleplaying game. No longer did I have to await my four to six friends before we could play. I just had to have my wife sit down and show me how bad my dice rolling could be. All this without having to spend hours designing that evening's play!

This led to where we are today. The RPGA now develops and runs casual and competitive play for D&D miniatures. Not as a secondary thing to the great D&D roleplaying game but a growing and thriving game all on its own.

### COMPETITIVE PLAY

At the vanguard is the sanctioned tournament structure, where players have

their games tracked and results posted, gaining a global tournament rankings and rating via differing formats. Every one of your results that is in a sanctioned tournament gets reported to the DCI. They appear on your tournament record where Wizards track your overall ranking in three categories. Those are:

**Constructed:** You bring your own previously constructed warband following the tournament's construction guidelines. These are either 100- or 200-point builds.

**Extreme:** For those who like to battle with the giants. This is the category that tracks the largest of our formats with 500-point warband builds.

**Limited:** There is nothing like opening a new box of miniatures and seeing what you get. Some enjoy the random luck so much we created a completely separate category for them. With limited, the product is supplied at the tournament and you build your warband to 100- and 200-point limits.

### CASUAL PLAY

For players who like to just pitch their latest diabolic warband against others or love the random luck of limited, Wizards of the Coast offer support for League play within local game stores. These aren't sanctioned and don't count toward any official ranking or rating but they are a great way to hone skills and test warband combinations against a variety of opponents.

This support is available to stores via league kits and is purchasable from the Wizards of the Coast Direct Sales department.

### RANKINGS AND RATINGS

What are these actually worth? Is it all just bragging rights? Well, this year's US National Championship finals at Gen Con Indianapolis included the top US players. This meant those lucky players didn't have to qualify to compete in an event that had regional qualifiers for several months previous. So all their playing at the local level paid off, plus it's still great bragging rights. Who wouldn't like to be number one in their country?

Will Wizards be running such events in the future outside of the USA? Great question. Essentially those events and even the formation of a World Championship are all about people playing. As numbers grow within other countries then Wizards will look at how to incorporate events for them and yes that would include National and possibly a World Championship for the top ranked players.

Space is running short so for those wanting to find out more about Miniature support and where their nearest venue is for League play they should visit our tournament pages off the D&D Miniatures pages of [wizards.com](http://wizards.com).



# HOW WILL YOU FIGHT THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH?



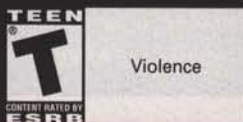
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THE LORD OF THE RINGS  
THE BATTLE FOR  
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Challenge Everything™



by Mike Mearls

images provided by Wizards of the Coast

# GLADIATOR PITS OF THE MAD OVERLORD



Aspect of Demogorgon

The cheer of the crowd, the shriek of a raging orc berserker, the guttural roar of a dire ape, the clatter of gold paid and earned in the betting pool—these are the sights and sounds of the gladiator pits of the Mad Overlord. For as long as anyone remembers, this mysterious tyrant and adherent of Hextor has commanded his huntsmen to travel far and wide in search of strange and powerful creatures to cast into the pits. Drawn by promises of gold and glory, brave, greedy, and desperate warriors travel from across the world to prove their skills on the pit's blood-soaked stone floor. Even monsters from across the planes fight within the battle arena, called and bound by the Mad Overlord's wizards or appearing at the behest of their infernal masters.

## OVERVIEW

Gladiator Pits of the Mad Overlord is a variant form of the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* skirmish game and offers a change of pace from your regular duels. The game casts each player as the master of a gladiator stable. You recruit warriors, organize them into teams, and pit them against your rivals' stables in a battle for gold and glory. Betting plays a major role in the Mad Overlord's tournaments, allowing you to wager on your team—or another player's—before each match.

One player in your group takes on the role of the Mad Overlord, although this position can change between matches to give everyone a chance to develop their stable of fighters. The Mad Overlord picks out terrain for the fight, adds environmental variables, and accepts bribes from stable owners to give their warriors preferential treatment. He also commands any monsters or creatures that appear in the arena.

## D&D CAMPAIGNS

You might adapt these rules with relative ease to a D&D campaign, with the players taking the roles of different gladiator masters or perhaps the entire party pooling their money

to start a stable of warriors. In this case, perhaps combat is always nonlethal, as forcing others to fight to the death for mere entertainment is a greedy, malevolent act. The characters might serve as gladiators, with the money they earn going toward their training and any other expenses they might incur. Throughout these rules, notes are included to help you adapt the action to the D&D roleplaying game. *DRAGON* #303 and *DUNGEON* #96 also include additional information about playing in or running a gladiator campaign.

## GETTING STARTED

To start, every player should construct a 100-point warband with the following rules:

- You must have at least 5 figures.
- You cannot spend more than 70 points on one miniature.
- You can freely mix factions. For example, you could create a warband with miniatures from the lawful good, chaotic evil, and chaotic good faction.

This warband represents your initial group of warriors. Since all of the standard skirmish rules apply, you probably want to take a commander. You should also consider taking several mid-range figures instead of one expensive one and many cheap ones.

Your fighters must survive from one match to the next. If your one big gladiator falls in battle and fails to recover, you might be stuck far behind the other stable owners.

In addition, each stable owner starts with a treasury of 100 gold. You can use gold to recruit new gladiators, heal warriors, and bribe the Mad Overlord.

For a roleplaying campaign, you might use the point values along with a miniature's D&D stats on the back of its card, or balance gladiator teams by comparing their total ELs. Neither method is perfect, but it gives you a rough level of balance.

## THE MAD OVERLORD

The role of Mad Overlord changes from player to player on a rotating basis. Thus, everyone has the opportunity to design matches and collect gold from fees and bribes, as well as



Orc Warrior



build a stable of gladiators. Although the player does not use her usual stable of gladiators to participate in battle, she has vast control over the arrangement and type of arena battles are conducted in.

Taking on the role of the Mad Overlord also affords players a chance to significantly increase their wealth. While serving as the Mad Overlord, a player should keep track of the amount of gold the other characters spend, whether on healing or other services, and on bribes to affect upcoming battles. When the Mad Overlord passes her role onto the next player, she should total the gold she's received for services and from bribes. A quarter of this amount is added to her personal gold total when she again becomes a normal player. As such, the Mad Overlord should take particular interest in encouraging other players to bribe her, while the players should be mindful that any gold they spend eventually goes to serve one of their opponents.

### BRIBERY

Although the Mad Overlord ultimately controls the vast majority of a battle's specifics, players might influence her by making bribes. At several points before a match begins, players have the opportunity to bribe the Mad Overlord. Whether bribing to rearrange the map or alter the point limit of a battle, the players may use their wealth to affect the Mad Overlord's decisions.

When noted, each player may secretly make an offer to the Mad Overlord to change the specifics of a match in some way. Bribing usually takes the form of slipping the Mad Overlord notes with requested changes and the offer of a certain amount of gold. Once all players who wish to make bribes have done so, the Mad Overlord may choose to accept one (usually the one offering the most



Abyssal Eviscerator



Cleric of Lathander



Sage



Young Minotaur

gold, but not necessarily), and make the requested change to the match. Players most often bribe to change the point value of whole warbands, single models, or the placement of terrain before a match.

### LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

Fighting a gladiator match uses most of the standard rules for D&D miniatures and some new options to represent the vagaries of the gladiator arena and the Mad Overlord's capricious dictates.

The battle grid represents a large pit encased in a magical shield similar to a *wall of force* and surrounded by row upon row of spectators. The Mad Overlord sits in his royal balcony above the action. From there, he dictates the challenges that gladiators face.

Before a match starts, the stable owners put together their teams, and the Overlord selects the match's parameters. The Mad Overlord can wait until the players choose their rosters to announce the match, or he can do so before assembling teams.

Although the value of miniatures in starting warbands should total no more than 100 points, you can increase this limit as the gladiator campaign progresses and you recruit more warriors. You also might bribe the Mad Overlord

to change the limit, either increasing or decreasing the total. Players might bribe to influence the point limit of single figures at the same time.

### SETTING UP TERRAIN

The overlord places one entry tile in each corner of the map. He may then place as many, or as few, terrain tiles as he wishes on the grid. He must obey the standard rules for placing tiles, and he cannot place a particular tile on the map more than once.

### PICK ARENA SPECIAL EFFECTS

Before or after setting up the arena and allowing players to make bribes to change it, the Mad Overlord may choose some of the special effects from the following list to further influence the battle. These effects represent unique challenges that gladiators must overcome in battling their foes. A particularly cruel maneuver would be to set up an empty arena, lure the stable owners to load their warbands with ranged attacks, and then use the howling wind effect. The Mad Overlord can pick more than one special effect, but three should be the normal maximum you use.

When adapting these effects to a D&D roleplaying campaign, simply use the relevant rules from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

**Flood:** The arena is flooded with a few feet of water, but the terrain tiles are placed on elevated islands that keep them dry. All flooded squares count as difficult terrain. The water provides Conceal 10 to Small figures, Conceal 6 to Medium ones, and no benefit to larger creatures.

Those using a flooded arena in their roleplaying campaign should consider the area filled with 4 feet of water. Creatures that can't fly must wade or swim through the water to move from island to island. Medium and larger creatures wade through these areas at half their





**Bladesinger**

speed and cannot make charge attacks. Creatures of Small size or smaller must Swim as usual.

**Howling Winds:** A group of air elementals swirls above the arena, creating powerful winds that can knock over gladiators and disrupt ranged attacks. All ranged attacks (not including spells) suffer

a -4 penalty. Any creature smaller than Medium must make a DC 15 save at the start of its action. Small or smaller creatures that fail this save cannot move this round, while Medium creatures that fail move at half speed.

In roleplaying terms, this is considered a severe wind.

**Wandering Monsters:** The Mad Overlord places one miniature worth no more than 50 points on each terrain tile. He controls these creatures as if they were a single warband, although all of his figures are treated as being out of command. You score points for defeating these monsters as per the scenario's rules. The total point cost of these miniatures should not exceed twice the point limit for gladiator teams.

For roleplaying battles, the DM should have a monster or numerous creatures lurking in ambush throughout the arena. These creatures should have roughly the same EL as the parties doing battle and attack any combatants that come close. Stealthy or ethereal creatures like Chokers, Large Monstrous Spiders, and ethereal marauders make especially threatening opponents for such combats.

### VICTORY CONDITIONS

You can use any of the scenarios listed in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Miniatures* rules, installments of this column, or the *Miniatures Handbook*, although they might require some modifications. If you play every match to the destruction of one band, it becomes difficult for the loser to keep his gladiator stable fully stocked. For such battles, play until one player obtains half the scenario's listed victory point total.

### INJURIES AND SURVIVAL

In many cases, a figure defeated in a gladiator match is merely knocked unconscious or too injured to continue fighting. When a creature is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, there is a chance that it actually survives the battle and can fight in the next match.

Keep track of how far below 0 the creature's hit points dropped. For example, an Orc Warrior that suffers 10 damage is dropped to -5 hit points.

After the battle, each creature reduced to 0 or fewer hit points can attempt a save with a DC equaling 10 + the number of negative hit points it ended the match with. If the save succeeds, the creature is fine. However, if it fails, the creature is dead and removed from its master's roster of active fighters. If you want to spend the money, you can buy healing from a cleric to remove injuries or return a creature to life. See *Actions Between Bouts*.

Figures that end a battle with more than 0 hit points regain their total amount of hit points between matches.

### REWARDS AND BETTING

The winner of a bout gains gold equal to the points the players were allowed to spend on their warbands. The losing teams receive half that total. For example, if everyone spent 100 points on their teams then the winner gains 100 gold and the losers earn 50 gold.

Bets can be placed between players on almost anything, from the warband that's going to win to the first miniature to score a kill or fall in combat. Players cannot make bets they cannot cover. Players might also wager with the Mad Overlord. The player taking the role of the Mad Overlord may only bet using gold he's accumulated since becoming the Mad Overlord and not his normal pool.

### ACTIONS BETWEEN BOUTS

The key difference between a gladiator match and a standard miniatures campaign lies in the options to hire trainers, heal warriors, recruit new gladiators, and purchase magical assistance. You can purchase the following options right up until a match begins and any time

after your last one ends. Once the battle begins, it's too late to hire assistance.

**Healing:** You can pay a cleric to revive slain gladiators. You can spend gold equal to a model's point cost to bring it back to life. In some cases, bringing a gladiator back to life requires summoning a new one, reanimating a replacement, or other measures. For simplicity, these methods all count as resurrection.

**Magic Item Bazaar:** You can purchase random magic items for your gladiators using the rules on pages 113 to 116 of the *Miniatures Handbook*. By paying the gold cost listed on the following chart, you can roll once on the relevant table to see the magic item that your servants were able to track down and buy for you.

Magic Item	Cost in Gold
Magic Armor	5
Magic Shields	5
Magic Weapons	5
Potions	1
Rings	3
Wondrous Items	5

**Recruitment:** You can hire on new fighters, monsters, and spellcasters. You must pay gold equal to double the new recruit's point cost. Your new hire becomes part of your stable and is eligible to fight in your next match.

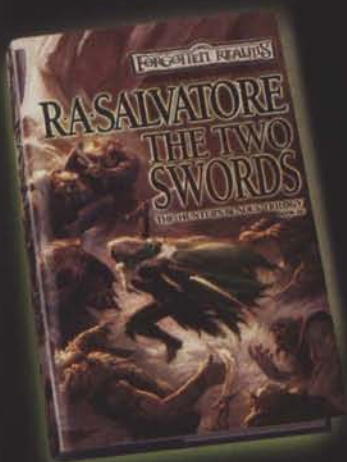
### THE CAMPAIGN

Using these rules you can slowly build your stable of warriors while competing against your opponents for fame, glory, and wealth. You might play a series of bouts until someone earns a set total of gold, such as 500 or 1,000, or arrange a tournament with several rounds of fights. This makes for an interesting balance between bribes, recruitment, and winning matches. If you spend gold faster than you earn it you might lose out to a stable that wins less often but uses wiser budgeting.

Don't be afraid to roleplay your stable owner. Shout words of encouragement to your warriors, place bets during the game, and try to convince the other players to attack your rivals. Much of the fun in this variant lies in the betting and competition. 🗡️



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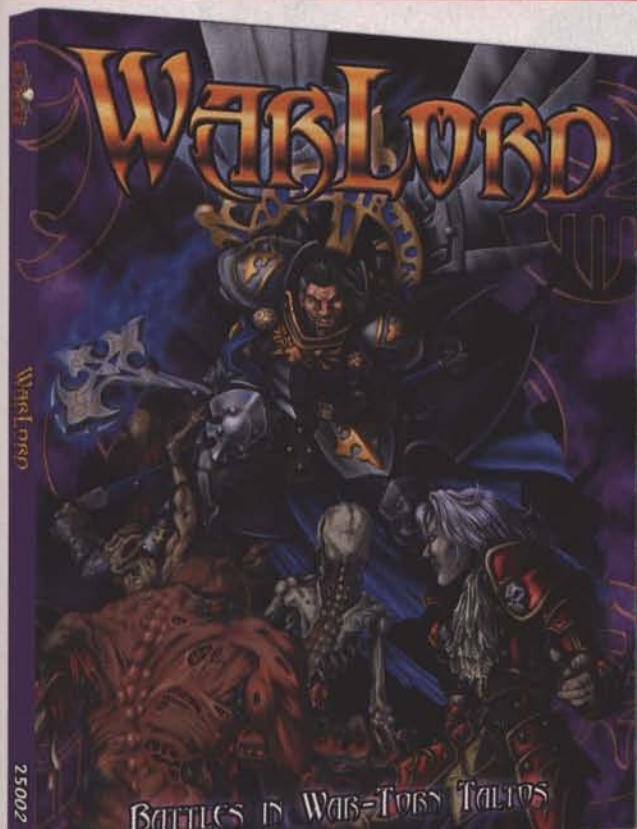
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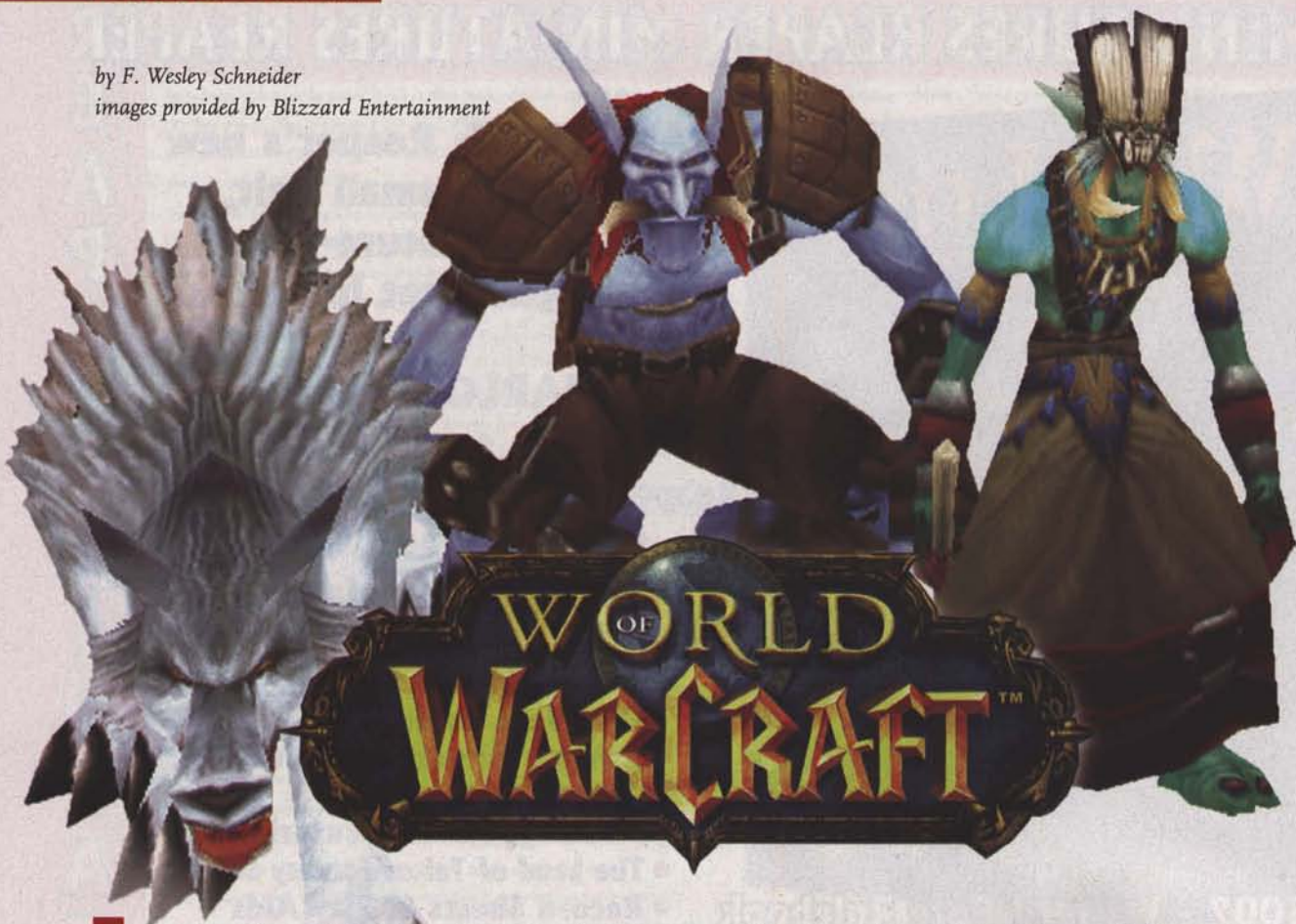
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This winter, Blizzard Entertainment unlocks a daring new realm of conflict and adventure with the release of *World of Warcraft*. Based off *Warcraft*, the highest-grossing computer game series of all time, this unique roleplaying experience allows players to enter the world of Azeroth and take part in reshaping this war-torn land. Being a massive online multiplayer roleplaying game, the vast number of characters you meet on your travels are other players like you, but whether they're members of the noble Alliance or brutal Horde is for them to decide.

Although *World of Warcraft* presents a fantasy world that initially seems as familiar as any other, *Warcraft's* compelling storyline shapes the world into one far from commonplace. In the lands you explore, amid noble human paladins and cunning undead warlocks wander honor-bound tauren shamans, wild troll priests, ancient night-elf druids, and a diverse host of other unique individuals. From this refreshing view of so many fantasy archetypes, *World of Warcraft* provides a range of unique new options and abilities that could fit well into any D&D game. Following are several new feats inspired primarily by the innovative druid, hunter, and warrior classes of *World of Warcraft*.



At the time of this article's writing, *World of Warcraft* is slated for release in December 2004 or January 2005.

### MONSTROUS ANIMAL COMPANION [GENERAL]

You gain a monstrous creature as an animal companion.

**Prerequisite:** Ability to gain an animal companion, Savage Empathy.

**Benefit:** Add celestial owl, darkmantle, fiendish raven, giant fire beetle, and stirge to the list of creatures from which you may select your animal companion.

As with normal animal companions, you may gain more powerful companions as you progress in level. However, you cannot simply summon these more powerful creatures as druids and rangers normally do. Rather, to gain such a monstrous companion you must first encounter such a creature and change its attitude to friendly or helpful. Changing the creature's attitude is most likely an effect of using either the Savage Empathy feat or the spell *charm monster*.

If your monstrous companion's attitude ever changes to indifferent or worse, such as when a *charm monster* spell ends, the monster ceases to be your companion and may either leave or attack, as its nature dictates. The following lists serve the same purpose as those presented in the Alternative Animal Companions section of The Druid's Animal Companion sidebar on page 36 of the *Player's Handbook*.



## MONSTER ANIMAL COMPANIONS

*World of Warcraft* manages to refresh and reinvent a traditional fantasy setting with countless innovative and unique ideas. While concepts like massive wars between orcs and humans, magic users trafficking with demons, and masterful blade-swinging fighters are as old as fantasy itself, *World of Warcraft* adds a fresh new spin to such tested ideas that should appeal to any D&D fan—player or DM.

D&D players who pick up *World of Warcraft* are sure to give the +0 level adjustment races of the *Monster Manual* and monstrous races of *Savage Species* another look. Presented with tribes of orcs and trolls, an ancient night elf civilization, a fledgling society of the undead, and the savagely noble minotaurlike tauren, players should gain innumerable ideas for their next character. In addition to racial ideas, unique new spins on fighting styles, spellcasting, and barbarian, druid, and ranger abilities could easily be applied to any D&D character class.

*World of Warcraft* also offers plenty of inspiration for DMs. Numerous unique takes on familiar races provides each with a vibrant culture. How these very different societies interact becomes one of the most intriguing and lifelike aspects of the game. While orcs and undead serve as traditional fantasy villains, *World of Warcraft* refuses to offer such a two-dimensional interpretation, and shows how such races struggle to survive in a world that hates them. Concepts of pure good or irredeemable evil seem rare in *World of Warcraft*, allowing each character to make decisions of his own and chose his own path. This not only parallels D&D, but should offer DMs limitless ideas for unique NPCs who refuse to accept their race's status quo. In addition, *World of Warcraft* also provides innumerable ideas for new spells, magic items, races, monsters, animal companions, vehicles, and essentially any other fantastic concept possible, ready for adoption into your D&D game.



## MONSTER ANIMAL COMPANIONS

### 4th level or Higher (level 3)

Grick  
Krenshar  
Pseudodragon  
Shocker lizard  
Worg

### 7th level or Higher (level 6)

Displacer beast  
Griffon  
Owlbear  
Pegasus  
Sea cat

### 10th level or Higher (level 9)

Arrowhawk, juvenile  
Hell hound  
Manticore  
Shadow mastiff  
Tojanida, adult

### 13th level or Higher (level 12)

Digester  
Dragonne  
Girallon  
Wyvern  
Xorn, average

### 16th level or Higher (level 15)

Arrowhawk, elder  
Behir  
Gray render  
Hydra, eight-headed  
Roc

## RETRIBUTION [GENERAL]

Taking damage drives you to greater heights of combat prowess.

**Prerequisite:** Power Attack.

**Benefit:** For every 5 points of damage you take from a single creature in one round, you gain a cumulative +1 bonus on damage rolls against that target on your next attack. For example, a monster deals 13 points of damage to a fighter with this feat in one round; in the next round the fighter successfully hits the monster and deals +2 additional points of damage against that monster. If the fighter gets multiple attacks in a round, the bonus damage only counts for the first attack (and only if that attack hits).

Bonus damage provided by this feat does not stack from round to round and only applies to your next attack. If you gain bonus damage from Retribution but you miss your target, you also lose the bonus damage provided by this feat. This feat's bonus damage only applies against the creature that dealt you damage, whether from melee or ranged attacks, spells, special attacks, or any other form. The bonus damage cannot be used to deal extra damage to creatures other than your attacker. In the case of attacks where you cannot conclusively discern from whom or what the attack came, you gain no bonus damage.

## SAVAGE EMPATHY [GENERAL]

You are able to tame monstrous creatures like you would normal animals.

**Prerequisite:** Wild empathy ability.

**Benefit:** Choose a creature type other than animal, construct, humanoid, or undead. You can use your wild empathy ability to influence creatures of that type with an Intelligence of 3 or less. In addition, you no longer suffer a -4 penalty on your wild empathy checks to influence magical beasts.

Most monsters have a starting attitude of hostile.


**Normal:** A character with wild empathy can usually only influence animals, or magical beasts at a -4 penalty.

**Special:** You can gain this feat multiple times. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new creature type.

## SAVAGE MOBILITY [GENERAL]

Your wild shape form moves faster than normal.

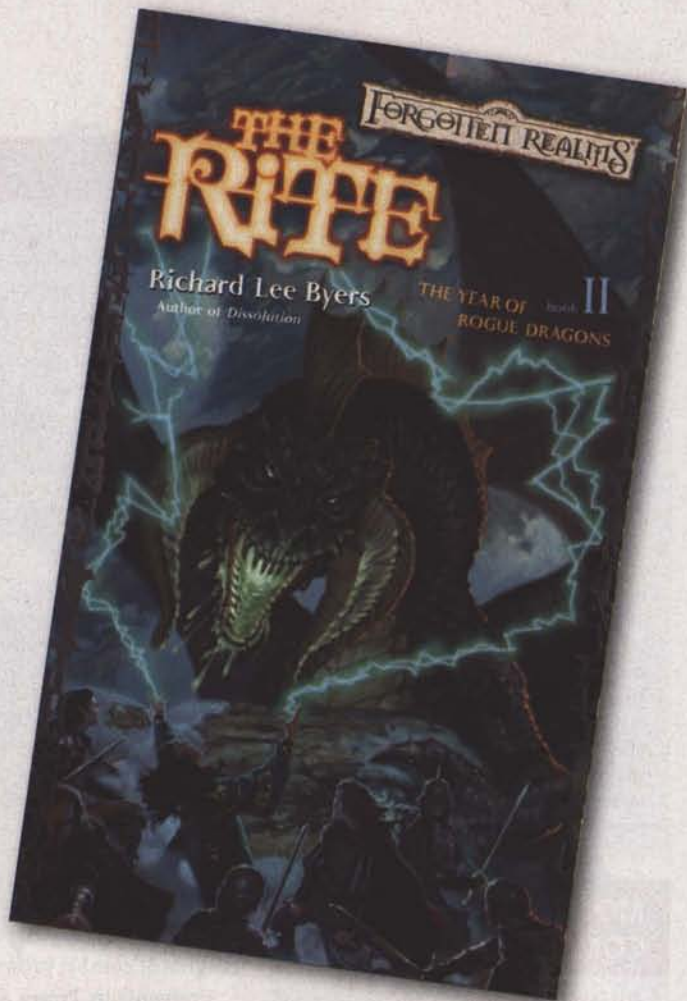
**Prerequisite:** Dex 13, wild shape ability.

**Benefit:** While using wild shape your speed increases by 10 feet. This feat applies to your base land speed as well as your burrow, climb, fly, and swim speeds. 



by Richard Lee Byers  
art provided by Wizards of the Coast

# THE RITE



The Year of Rogue Dragons trilogy (*The Rage*, *The Rite*, and the forthcoming *The Ruin*) tells of a dire threat to all of the FORGOTTEN REALMS. The Rage—a magical affliction that throws dragons into an uncontrollable bloodlust—has returned, more virulent than ever before. Driven mad by this recurring affliction, dragons rampage across the land, killing everyone in their path and leaving devastation in their wake.

Across Faerûn, villains scheme to turn the resulting chaos to their own advantage. Most sinister and dangerous of all are the followers of the Cult of the Dragon. Ensnared in their secret strongholds, these madmen and diabolists labor to create a conquering host of dracoliches as, reckoning undeath as the only defense against insanity, chromatic wyrms seek the transformation in unprecedented numbers.

In this bleak hour, civilization's only hope lies with the so-called "rogue dragons" and their comrades. Two of the central figures in this alliance are Karasendrieth and Dorn Graybrook.

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

The Year of Rogue Dragons trilogy sets into motion an epic plotline that promises to leave a long-lasting mark on Faerûn.

For Dungeon Masters, this series presents loads of cool ideas, characters, and locales you can adopt and adapt for your campaign. Naturally, the events portrayed in the Year of Rogue Dragons trilogy might have a devastating effect on your campaign if you play in the FORGOTTEN REALMS. Faerûn needs heroes to protect the common folk from flights of wyrms in frenzy; to foil the machinations of tyrants, outlaws, and monsters attempting to profit from the crisis; and to locate and destroy the Cult of the Dragon's hidden enclaves before their conspiracy can create an invincible army of dracoliches. Even if your campaign doesn't closely follow the story arcs set up by the novels, you can still glean certain details specific to Faerûn from the trilogy and use those in your own game. If your game takes place in a different world, you might use ideas presented in the trilogy in the form of NPCs, ideas for adventures, new magic items, and new locales.

For players, the Rage motivates an epic quest their characters should have a vested interest in joining. Their characters could also join Kara's search for the cause and cure of the Rage, as the answer, if it truly exists, resides in fragments of ancient elven lore buried in haunted crypts and monster-infested catacombs across the North. Kara and the other rogue dragons desperately need adventurers to help retrieve the pieces of the puzzle before time runs out and madness overwhelms their minds as well.

## KARASENDRIETH THE DRAGON BARD

Born in the great forest of Cormanthor a century ago, Karasendrieth (Kara) spent her first hundred years wandering the North, spreading joy with her songs and stories, and when circumstances warranted, gallantly defending the innocent. When the

Rage threatened, she alone sensed that this time the madness would never abate of its own accord and dared to hope someone could discover a remedy. Accordingly, she organized a fellowship of like-minded comrades to seek it.

**Karasendrieth, Female Adult Song Dragon:** CR 13; Large dragon (elec-



tricity); HD 20d12+60; hp 190; Init +2; Spd 50 ft., fly 170 ft. (good); AC 30, touch 11, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +23; Grp +31; Atk +26 melee (2d6+4, bite); Full Atk +26 melee (2d6+4, bite) and +21 melee (1d8+2, 2 claws) and +21 melee (1d6+2, 2 wings) and +18 melee (1d8+6, tail slap); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with bite); SA breath weapon (40-ft. cone, 12d6 electrically charged vapor, Reflex DC 23 half), frightful presence (180-ft. radius, HD 19 or fewer, Will DC 28 negates), spell-like abilities, spells; SQ alternate form, blindsense 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 120 ft., immunity to electricity, poison, sleep, and paralysis, low-light vision, spell resistance 23, tongues, true seeing 15 feet; AL CG; SV Fort +18, Ref +14, Will +23; Str 19, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 22, Wis 23, Cha 26.

**Skills:** Bluff +19, Concentration +26, Diplomacy +31, Gather Information +13, Knowledge (local) +29, Listen +29, Perform (comedy) +19, Perform (oratory) +19, Perform (sing) +19, Perform (stringed instruments) +19, Search +29, Sense Motive +18, Spot +29.

**Feats:** Adroit Flyby Attack\*, Flyby Attack, Improved Maneuverability\*, Improved Speed\*, Power Climb\*, Wingover.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** 1/hour—darkness, light; 2/day—blink, feather fall. Caster level 6th; Save DC 18 + spell level. As Kara is actually on the cusp between young adulthood and full maturity, her ability to *teleport* has not yet manifested.

**Spells:** As 5th-level sorcerer (8/7/5/4/2; Save DC 18 + spell level). (Note: Kara's mystical abilities have developed somewhat differently than those of the average song dragon. In general, she's an unusually accomplished sorceress, but has yet to learn to cast spells from the Healing, Travel, and Trickery domains.)

**Languages:** Aragrakh, Chessantian, Chondathan, Common, Damaran, Draconic, Elven, and Sylvan.

**Possessions:** *Bag of holding* (Type I). Like most dragons, Kara possesses a lair and a treasure hoard, which the DM can stock as desired.

\*See the Draconomicon Feats sidebar.

## DORN THE DRAGON SLAYER

Dorn Graybrook is a man shaped, both inwardly and outwardly, by violence, cruelty, and sorrow. The son of a pair of indentured servants, a red dragon orphaned him when it slaughtered his parents, tore off his left arm and leg, and left him for dead.

Dorn certainly would have perished had not his parents' master, a wizard of Hillsfar, rescued him and fitted him with enchanted iron prostheses. Throughout his life Dorn has hated dragons and delighted in killing them. Thus, it was irony indeed when fate led him and his comrades into Kara's employ and the quest to end the Rage.

**Dorn Graybrook, Male Human/Iron Half-Golem Fighter 10/Ranger 3:** CR 15<sup>1</sup>; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d10+50 plus 3d8+30; hp 148; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 28, touch 12, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +13; Grp +20; Atk +24 melee (1d4+10/19-20, +3 claws), or +24 melee (1d10+10/19-20, +3 *bastard sword*), or +17 ranged (1d8+4/x3, +2 *composite longbow*); Full Atk +24/+19/+14 melee (1d4+10/19-20, +3 claws), or +24/+19/+14 melee (1d10+10/19-20, +3 *bastard sword*), or +22/+17 melee (1d10+10/19-20, +3 *bastard sword*) and +22 melee (1d4+10/19-20, +3 claws), or +17/+12/+7 ranged (1d8+4/x3, +2 *composite longbow*), or +15/+15/+10/+5 ranged (1d8+4/x3, +2 *composite longbow*); SA<sup>1</sup> favored enemy (dragon); AL CN; SV Fort +15<sup>1</sup>, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 25, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 7.

**Skills:** Climb +17 Handle Animal +9, Hide +8, Intimidate +8, Jump +12, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +7, Move Silently +8, Search +7, Survival +7.

**Feats:** Dragon Hunter<sup>2</sup>, Dragon Hunter Bravery<sup>2</sup>, Dragon Hunter Defense<sup>2</sup>, Dragonbane<sup>2</sup>, Dragondoom<sup>2</sup>, Dragonfoe<sup>2</sup>, Endurance<sup>B</sup>, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot<sup>B</sup>, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Track<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Focus (claws).

**Languages Known:** Chessantian, Chondathan, Common, Damaran.

**Possessions:** +3 *bastard sword*, +3 *claws*<sup>3</sup>, +2 *composite longbow* (strength +4), +2 *arrows* (50), +4 *dragon bane arrows* (2), +3 *studded leather armor*, *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of protection from energy (acid)*, *potion of protection from energy (fire)*, backpack, bedroll, and routine supplies.

<sup>B</sup>Ranger feats.

<sup>1</sup>The wizard who created Dorn's enchanted prostheses didn't use the standard formulae, and therefore, he doesn't possess the advantages or weaknesses of a typical iron half-golem except as noted.

<sup>2</sup>See the Draconomicon Feats sidebar.

<sup>3</sup>Dorn's +3 *claws* are a part of his prosthetic arm, making them always ready and impervious to disarm and sunder attempts. ❧

## DRACONOMICON FEATS

The Draconomicon not only gives detailed physiological and psychological information pertaining to dragons, but it also provides feats for both dragons and dragon hunters.

Many of the feats Karasendrieth possesses come from the *Draconomicon*. Adroit Flyby Attack allows Kara to make a flyby attack without provoking an attack of opportunity for her movement. Improved Maneuverability gives her good maneuverability instead of average. Improved Speed increases her fly speed by 20 feet and all her other speeds by 10 feet each. Power Climb allows Kara to gain altitude and still move her full speed, provided she flies in a straight line.

Dorn also has feats from the *Draconomicon*. Dragon Hunter grants a +2 competence bonus on Dorn's saving throws and opposed checks made to counter effects created by a dragon and a +2 dodge bonus to his Armor Class when facing a dragon. Dorn and his allies resist the frightful presences of dragons as if 4 HD higher thanks to his Dragon Hunter Bravery feat. Dragon Hunter Defense gives Dorn the evasion ability against dragon breath weapons. Dorn gains a +4 bonus on attacks against dragons from Dragonbane, which also lets him deal an extra 2d6 points of damage to dragons. Dragondoom increases the critical multipliers of Dorn's weapons against dragons. Finally, Dragon Foe grants Dorn a +2 bonus on attack rolls against dragons.

For more information on these feats and for more than forty more new feats, check out the *Draconomicon*.





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WHO YOU WILL BECOME.

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# Nodwick

by Aaron Williams  
www.nodwick.com

Que sera, silo:  
What will be, is in storage.



THIS IS IT!

WHAT IS IT?

ARE WE ALMOST DONE? WE'VE BEEN DOWN HERE FOR WEEKS.

AND I THINK WE HAVE ENOUGH STUFF TO MAKE THE MOUSE PAYMENT THIS MONTH.



YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. THROUGH THAT DOOR AND DOWN SOME STAIRS IS THE LOWEST DUNGEON LEVEL IN THE WORLD!

REALLY? WE MADE IT?

WE GET TO DE-NAUGHTIFY THE LOWEST MONSTERS ANYWHERE?



YES! IN ALL THE UNDERGROUND COMPLEXES ON THE GLOBE, THIS IS THE FURTHEST DOWN ANYONE HAS EVER ADVENTURED! ARE YOU READY TO PRESS ON?

LET'S DO IT!

BADNESS CAN'T HIDE NO MATTER HOW DEEP IT GOES!



AND WE FIND... UH?

OLD HOLIDAY DECORATIONS?

HERE'S SOME KIDS' CLOTHES.

MAGAZINES?

OH, YOU'RE NOT MOVING ME AGAIN, ARE YOU?



THERE'S NOWHERE ELSE LEFT TO GO! I TOLD MISTER GYGAX— OH, YOU'RE NOT FROM THE DUNGEON PLANNING COMMITTEE, ARE YOU?

ER, NO. WHAT IS ALL THIS STUFF?

STORAGE.

COME AGAIN?



ALL THE DEMONS, MONSTERS AND DUNGEON WHAT-NOTS HAVE STUFF THEY DON'T WANT TO GET RID OF, JUST LIKE SURFACE-FOLK. SO, THEY STORE IT IN THE LOWEST AREA THEY CAN FIND. AND THAT'S THIS PLACE.

YEP. FROM LOLTH'S UNDERWEAR TO RAISTLIN'S GRADE SCHOOL PHOTOS. IT'S ALL HERE.

SO THIS IS LIKE THE BASEMENT FOR EVERY DUNGEON EVERYWHERE?



ARE YOU SURE THIS IS THE DEEPEST POINT? WHAT'S THROUGH THIS TRAP DOOR?

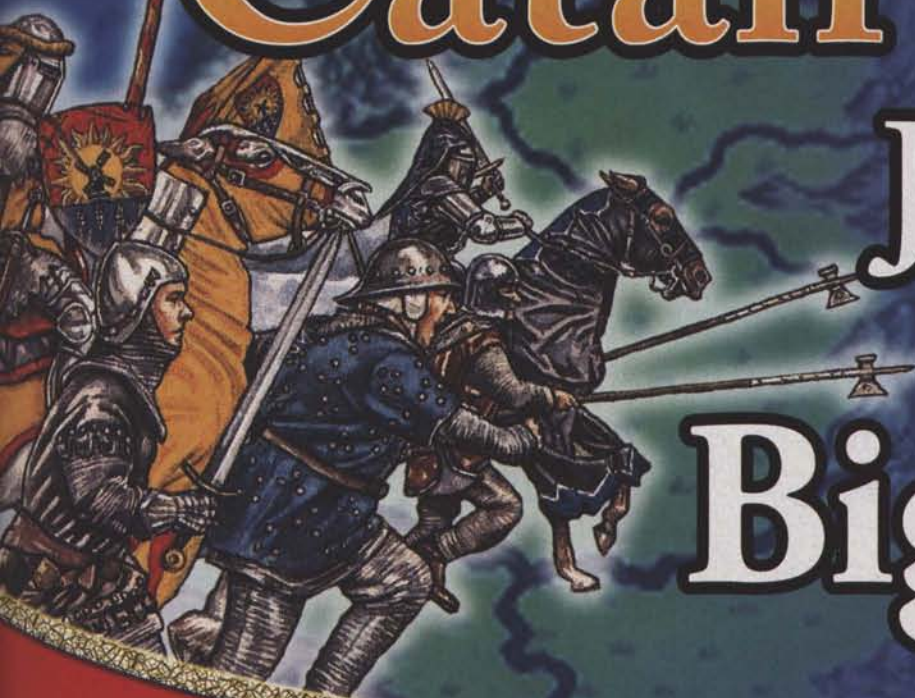
A LONG DROP INTO THE EARTH'S CORE, PRETTY MUCH. I USE IT AS A GARBAGE DISPOSAL.

FIND ANYTHING WORTH KEEPING YET?

NOT REALLY.



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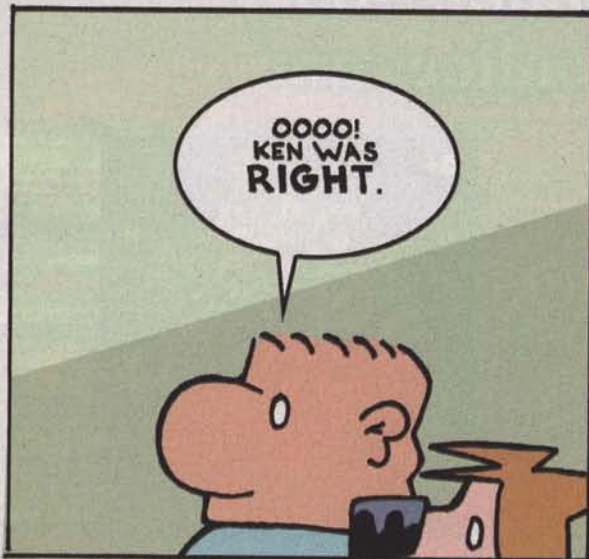
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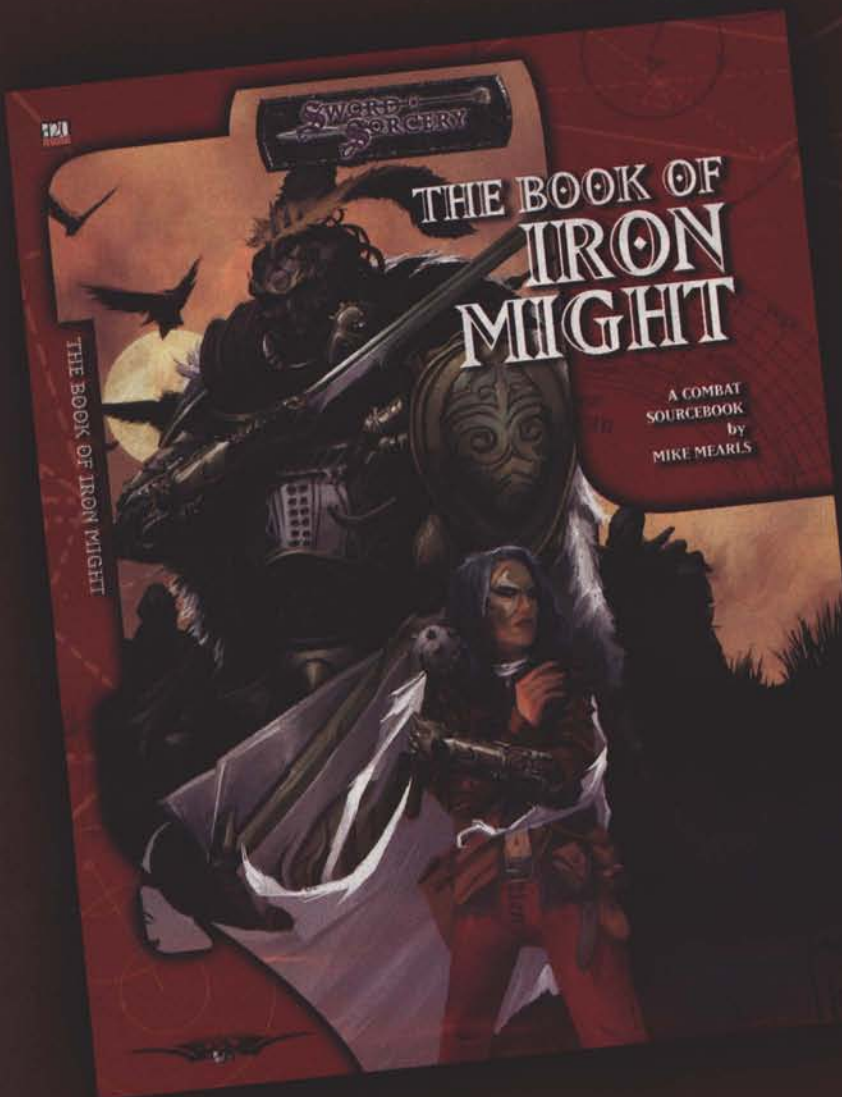
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THEY SAY A  
GOOD  
SWORD  
ARM

IS WORTH  
A THOUSAND SPELLS

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by Mark A. Hart and Jayce K. Purvis  
illustrated by Ramón Pérez

# THE DUNGEON DELVER'S GUIDE

Braving Traps and Treachery for Fortune and Fame





**D**ungeon delves hold innumerable ways to meet death for adventuring parties of any level. Many brave adventurers lose their lives falling victim to carefully placed traps, forgotten evils, and sometimes even their own companions gone mad with greed. With finite spells and hit points, adventurers should always put careful thought into preparing for every dungeon expedition. This article presents numerous hints and tips to aid you and your party with that preparation and, with luck, will significantly raise your character's chances of surviving his next delve. From which skills prove most helpful to suggestions on necessary equipment, this advice might make all the difference between wealth and glory and an obscure, messy end.

## The Party

A good dungeon-delving party should possess a well-balanced variety of skills and abilities. One party member's strengths should compensate for another party member's weaknesses. For example, consider the barbarian and the wizard: one is a physical juggernaut with little intelligence whereas the other is highly intelligent and physically weak. If either of these characters attempted to survive a dungeon delve alone, his weaknesses would likely prove his downfall. However, with the abilities of one to bolster the other, it's much more likely they'll both survive.

When gathering a group intended to survive a dungeon delve, consider the following key roles. These roles by no means embody the only talents helpful to a dungeon delving party, but they do provide some of the most useful skills.

**The Face:** Charismatic and glib, the face provides the party's voice and serves as a diplomat. This character should be able to turn potential enemies into allies and gather aid despite all odds. Bards and paladins, with their often considerable Charisma and diplomatic skills, most often fill this role best, although clerics and rogues might serve just as well. Even a barbarian's stereotypical "smash first, ask questions later" attitude might garner respect among more primitive dungeon dwellers.

**The Muscle:** This character removes threats and hindrances, whatever their form. Whether an iron gate or a black dragon, the muscle acts as the front line of the effort to remove it. Although barbarians, fighters, monks, paladins, and rangers seem best for this role, other classes cannot be overlooked. The

rogue who focuses on his sneak attack ability; the cleric with access to the Death, Destruction, Strength, or War domains; or the wizard or sorcerer who excels at evocation and other destructive spells might also effectively fill this role.

**The Brains:** Whether the party needs to know some esoteric bit of trivia or decipher what the glowing Draconic runes say, this character should readily know the answer. Focusing on a range of knowledge and information gathering skills, or with other abilities to gain insight, this character is a treasure trove of useful facts. While bards, clerics, druids, sorcerers, and wizards (with their high Intelligence and Wisdom scores and Knowledge class skills) most commonly fill this role,

other classes might also excel in certain situations. Rogues, with their vast number of skills, could easily develop a wide range of Knowledge skills, while paladins and rangers might specialize in information about holy and natural matters respectively. Also, when all else fails, characters who don't know the answers to questions but use magic or other abilities to reveal them serve just as well.

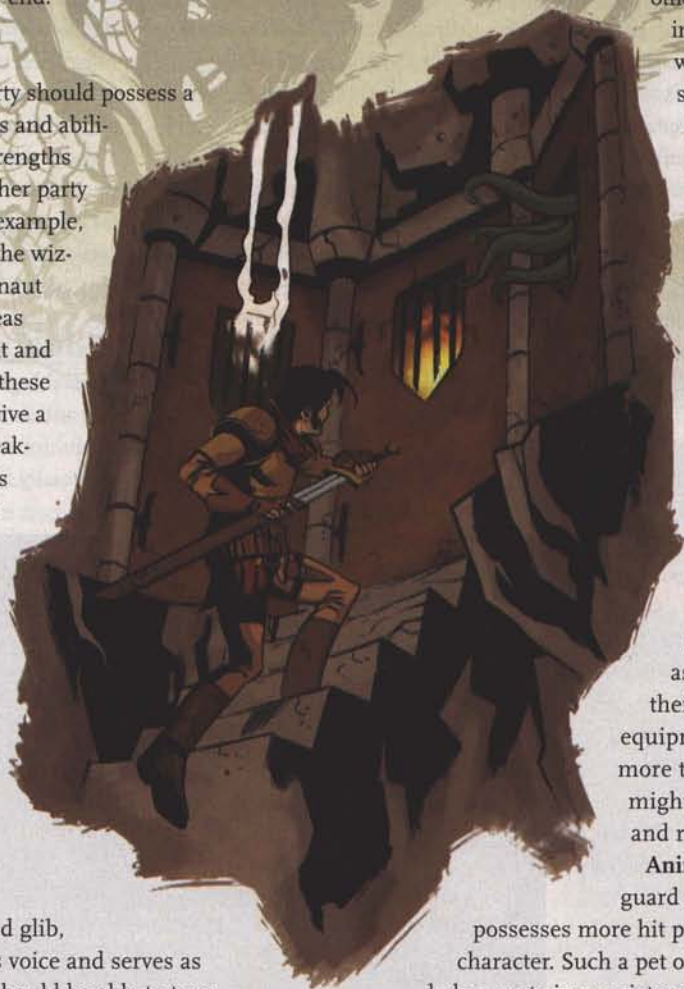
## Equipment

The equipment section of the *Player's Handbook* offers hundreds of goods, services, and weapons, as well as suggestions for their use. Many pieces of equipment potentially serve more than one purpose and might save the lives of clever and resourceful adventurers.

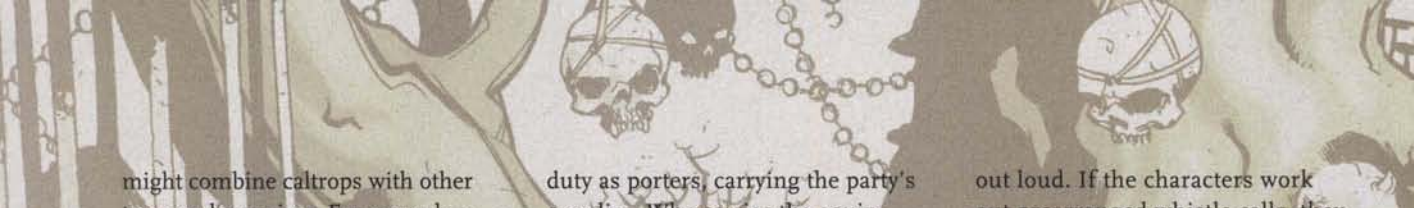
**Animal Companions:** A trained guard dog costs 25 gp and often possesses more hit points than a low-level character. Such a pet obeys commands and might help a party in a variety of ways, from watching over the PCs while they rest to using its good sense of smell to warn the party of impending attack.

A character with ranks in the Handle Animal skill could teach a guard dog tricks and specific tasks. A properly trained dog might even help its master by attacking enemies on command. Thus, with proper training, a guard dog could become a dungeon delver's best friend.

**Caltrops:** Useful in both ambush and defense, 2 pounds of caltrops cover a 5-foot square with sharp metal barbs. Littering caltrops around the party's campsite can delay attackers and might either reveal an enemy's approach or force them along a certain path. Given preparation, PCs







might combine caltrops with other traps and surprises. For example, a *grease* spell in the right location could send enemies sliding into a caltrop field, while *obscuring mist* might hide a floor littered with caltrops. On the downside, several bags of caltrops are usually required to be useful, which means additional weight for characters to carry.

**Flammables:** Adventurers seem to love setting things on fire, whether monsters or buildings. Those casting *fireball* might be surprised when the swiftness of its spread effect fails to ignite anything, forcing casters to rely on *produce flame* and *flaming sphere* to sate their arsonist tendencies. Besides these magical options, the two best ways to start a blaze include alchemist's fire and oil. Also, when all other tactics fail and ammunition is low, PCs might hurl burning liquids at monsters.

Of the two flammable liquids commonly available, alchemist's fire inflicts the most damage and causes minor splash damage to creatures nearby. Unfortunately, alchemist's fire proves expensive at 20 gp per vial. In addition, because alchemist's fire ignites upon contact with air, it cannot be poured and set to flame later.

Burning oil causes less damage than alchemist's fire and doesn't deal splash damage to surrounding targets. Inexpensive at 1 sp per flask, oil can be poured on the ground and lit later, making it useful in preparing burning ambushes.

**Reach Weapons:** Although all reach weapons are helpful, the versatile long-spear excels among them. Not only is it inexpensive, but nearly any character class can use it proficiently in combat. A character at the rear of the party might use the weapon's reach against enemies and, on the defense, can set it against a charge to deliver double damage. A long-spear might also double as a 10-foot pole.

**Share the Load:** Requisitioning supplies often presents little problem, but deciding as a group who carries the equipment might cause more difficulty. Most often, fighters or other characters with characteristically high Strength scores perform double

duty as porters, carrying the party's supplies. Who carries the equipment rarely matters, but it should never jeopardize the success of an adventure, such as by loading down one character to the point that he can barely move or make use of his skills because of encumbrance. Thus, dispersing equipment throughout the party provides the easiest way of dealing with such problems, with strong characters carrying more but weaker characters still taking on some of the load. This method also assures that should one character become separated from the party, the group doesn't also lose all of its supplies and equipment.

**Signal Whistle:** Communication, vital to winning a battle, is often one of the first casualties of combat. In the midst of a fight, PCs often find themselves separated from one another and unable to communicate. A PC might need help or support from another character, but he dares not draw additional opportunistic attacks by announcing his need

out loud. If the characters work out prearranged whistle calls, they might communicate without words or giving away information. Also, spellcasters could prearrange whistle calls to warn allies to fall back while they cast area-affecting spells such as *fireball* or *web*. At 8 sp a piece, the party can probably afford a whistle for each party member.

**Thrown Items:** Spellcaster often deplete their spell slots quickly in dungeons. To provide them a combat role once they run out of spells, magic users should always have a few thunderstones, tanglefoot bags, and similar items on hand. Although a spellcaster's attack bonus is likely poor, these types of thrown items target a square or merely require ranged touch attacks, making them considerably more likely to hit.

## Magic

Several highly versatile cantrips and 1st- and 2nd-level spells are particularly useful for dungeon exploration. Especially for low-level spellcasters with

## BASIC ADVENTURING GEAR

Surviving an adventure often means relying on a variety of mundane but infinitely useful pieces of equipment. Any party that ventures into a dungeon should, under the best circumstances, have the following integral equipment:

**Healing Supplies:** Adventurers are renowned for facing incredible dangers and coming to similarly spectacular harm. As such, parties should always carry a considerable supply of healing equipment with them, including a healer's kit and antivenom.

**Light Sources:** Although torches are staples of dungeon delving adventures, sunrods or lanterns are often far better choices. These items offer comparable or better illumination, are more difficult to extinguish than an exposed torch, and might be covered more easily than an open flame. For a more thorough discussion of light sources and dealing with darkness, see "Who's Afraid of the Dark" in *DRAGON* #322.

**Pole, 10-Foot:** A useful tool that helps keep its user out of danger, a 10-foot pole is a versatile item that should be carried by every party of adventurers. Whether used to test for trapped floors or lift the lid of a suspicious chest, creative users will always appreciate these cheap, simple tools.

**Rations:** Even when exploring, adventures must eat and drink. Although such mundane necessities are often overlooked, the reality of traveling days from civilization without food is often a deadly one. Parties that attempt to scavenge for food in dungeons not only face particularly unappealing meal options but often the threat of contracting diseases from tainted food and water. As such, a party should always carry enough water and rations for the duration of their trip, plus enough for three or more extra days.

**Rope:** Whether to scale down a sheer wall or tie up an enemy, a rope has numerous uses in a dungeon. Even if a party doesn't expect to do any climbing on an adventure, they should always pack at least on 50-foot length of rope. Attached to a grappling hook or weight, a single length of sturdy rope might see as much use on a dungeon crawl as a party's weapons.

**Tindertwigs:** Especially in the dark darkness of most dungeons, fire can be exceptionally difficult to make through mundane means. Although they cost a gold piece each, a tindertwig's usefulness and reliability in creating flame and providing light makes having numerous such items well worth the cost.



few spells available, such flexible spells are often more useful than those that perform only one specific function.

**Escape Trick:** Sometimes adventurers must hide or rest for a few hours. Even as just a 2nd-level spell, *rope trick* provides an excellent extradimensional hideout. Not only is this hideout invisible to other creatures, but it also provides a window for the characters to watch the area for intruders. *Rope trick* might also serve as a launching point for ambushes from overhead. In a pinch, this spell can even just anchor a rope in places where no other anchor exists.

**Hands Off:** If the party's rogue is wary of a trapped chest, door, or object, *mage hand* and *open/close* are useful arcane cantrips. *Open/close* opens unlocked chest lids or pulls open other suspicious portals, while *mage hand* easily picks up objects or pulls mysterious levers without putting party members at risk.

**Illusory Bait:** The 1st-level spell *silent image* creates illusions of impressive size at a significant range and lasts as long as the caster maintains concentration. Such an illusion, even without sounds or smells, might be enough to bait monsters or trigger a suspected ambush. When combined with the cantrip *ghost sound*, the spellcaster can create relatively convincing illusions. At times, the best possible illusion is the simplest one. The illusion of a stone wall or a pile of debris might fool any creature that doesn't directly interact with it.

**Raise the Alarm:** Eventually, circumstances force adventurers to sleep the night in the dungeon. The PCs, weak and exhausted from a long day of dungeon crawling, need to heal, sleep, and regain spells. Unfortunately, sleeping in a dungeon means spending the night in a hostile, monster-infested area. If enemies attack, the party's spellcasters are probably without spells and fighters most likely are not wearing their armor.

Predictably, the best spell to guard a camp is *alarm*. This 1st-level spell lasts for 2 hours per caster level and signals with either a mental or audible alarm at the caster's choosing. If the dungeon layout permits, a spellcaster might

ward an area or room near the party's camp with *alarm* to warn of intruders before they reach the camp.

**Summon Monster:** *Summon monster I* and *summon nature's ally I* both conjure relatively weak monsters useful for a variety of tasks. Although such creatures are of only minor use in battle, they can perform countless mundane tasks, from carrying messages to creating distractions. Spellcasters might order their summoned creatures to investigate potential trap areas or reveal (by choking, gagging, or dying) the presence of traps, noxious gases, or poisons. Also remember that creatures conjured by *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* appear where the caster chooses. Regardless of the creature's strength, summoning monsters to flank an enemy in melee often proves especially helpful.

## Skills & Feats

Various skills and feats provide their greatest value in the dungeon. The feats noted here, for example, provide combat bonuses or opportunities in almost every battle while the skills help assure that your party survives its exploration.

**Combat Casting:** Although spellcasters should avoid melee combat, they often end up in it no matter how hard they try. This becomes especially true in a dungeon's cramped confines. Because casting a spell in melee provokes an attack of opportunity, this feat's +4 bonus on Concentration checks is worthwhile.

**Combat Reflexes:** Barbarians, fighters, paladins, and rangers should consider the Combat Reflexes feat. Just as enemies use a dungeon's tight spaces to get close to weak party members, the party's melee combatants should capitalize on such limited maneuverability to make attacks of opportunity. Since an attack of opportunity against an enemy is a free attack, characters should work together to gain multiple such attacks as often as possible.

**Heal:** Low-level PCs rarely possess the ability to cast *neutralize poison* or

*remove disease*. Fortunately, the Heal skill can treat a character affected by such misfortunes. When another saving throw against the affliction is allowed, the recipient of the Heal check uses the best result of either his own saving throw or his caregiver's Heal check. At least two characters in a party should take ranks in Heal in case one of the healers ever requires care.

**Knowledge:** Once the characters enter the dungeon, the Knowledge (dungeoneering) skill becomes especially useful. At least one character should take ranks in this skill, as it saves a lot of trouble in identifying and dealing with dungeon hazards (such as oozes) and dungeon creatures (such as aberrations).





In addition to information about specific creatures, Knowledge skills provide some of the most useful, flexible, and creative ways to stay alive not only in dungeons, but in any setting. Skills like Knowledge (architecture and engineering) might turn the tide in a battle against any enemy as the party sets up traps or uses terrain against its foes.

**Precise Shot:** The dungeon environment limits opportunities for ranged combat. A character armed with a ranged weapon often finds himself forced to fire into melee, incurring a -4 penalty. The Precise Shot feat removes this penalty, making it an excellent choice for any dungeon crawling archer.

**Search:** Revealing a dungeon's secrets often helps adventurers survive a dungeon crawl. Concealed or secret doors might provide escape routes or access to hidden rooms, while identifying a trap before triggering it saves hit points. The Search skill is most useful for coaxing secrets from the dungeon, and at least one character in the party should take ranks in it whenever possible. During a dungeon crawl, PCs should never hesitate to use Search to learn everything possible about their surroundings. Racial benefits like the dwarven stonecunning ability also aid characters in searching.

## In the Dungeon

A party should always take the time to work out some basic dungeon delving strategies. In a dungeon crawl, adventurers are usually outnumbered and in hostile, unfamiliar territory. Haphazard exploration often leads a group to stumble through traps, ambushes, and lairs packed with monsters. These strategies might help a party better organize and prepare for its dungeon excursions.

**A Bonus is a Bonus:** In the overall scheme of an adventure, a +1 bonus might not seem like much. In combat, however, a +1 bonus might turn the battle. If a single character, or better still the entire party, gains a +1 bonus on attack rolls, saving throws, or damage for a battle, the bonus quickly adds up and could become a decisive ben-

efit. How many times has a character missed confirming a critical hit by one? How often do characters fail saving throws by a point? By the end of a fight, the humble +1 bonus often affects several attack rolls and saving throws.

When possible, characters should scrounge for combat bonuses. For example, many spells provide minor but useful bonuses, including *aid*, *bless*, *divine favor*, *guidance*, *protection from evil*, *resistance*, and numerous others. A bard might also inspire courage with his music, while a druid might augment his animal companion with *magic fang*. Strategically minded characters also often gain bonuses through tactics such as flanking an opponent.

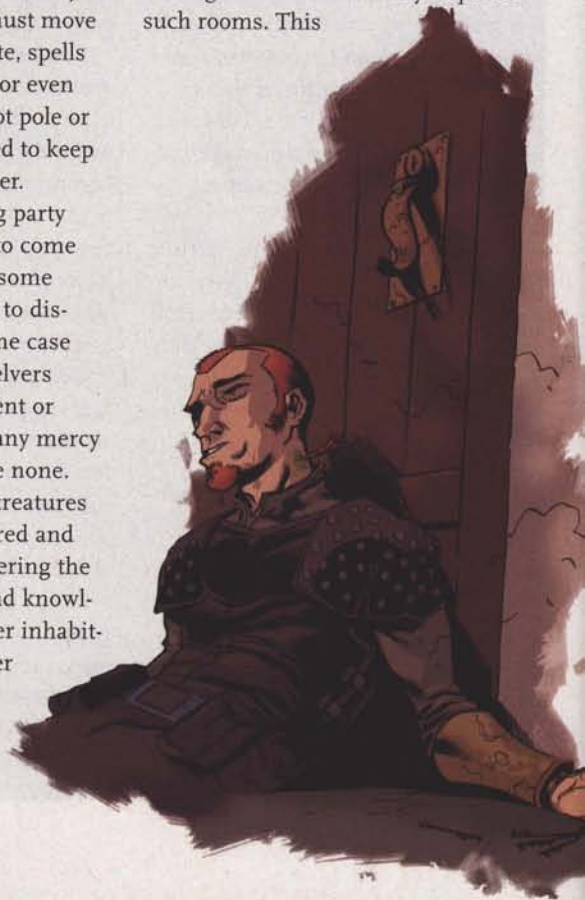
**Don't Touch Anything:** Dungeons brim with deadly traps, disguised monsters, and countless other dangers that exist for no other reason than to kill interlopers. Thus, until even the most inoffensive item comes under thorough mundane and magical consideration, a party should never wantonly take an object at face value. Dangers like contact poisons, mimics, golems, and traps of all kinds could make the simplest item or perceived treasure the trigger for some deadly side effect. Even if a party must move something with relative haste, spells like *mage hand* or *telekinesis* or even mundane items like a 10-foot pole or reach weapon should be used to keep group members out of danger.

**Fight On:** An adventuring party should never allow threats to come back to haunt them. While some traps might be too complex to disable, this should rarely be the case with monsters. Dungeon delvers should not show unintelligent or unrepentantly evil enemies any mercy and should expect to receive none. However, some intelligent creatures might provide help if captured and interrogated, potentially offering the party the benefit of first-hand knowledge about a dungeon's other inhabitants, traps, and layout. Other creatures that threaten to repay a group's mercy with nothing but death should not be allowed to

survive. Leaving such threats in the party's wake promises only to end with a confrontation from both in front and behind.

**Information is Vital:** Ignorance often proves fatal during a dungeon crawl. The average adventuring party invades a dungeon with little information about what monsters they will encounter or the dungeon's layout. Many adventurers charge through the dungeon without planning, information, or preparation. Often, this lack of forethought and knowledge jeopardizes the party or halts the dungeon crawl while they recover.

Before adventurers enter a dungeon, they should learn as much as possible about it. The party should attempt to learn who built the dungeon and its original purpose. For example, an underground fortress is likely to contain traps, dead ends, and easily defensible rooms. A tomb or crypt designed around the builders' religious beliefs likely has a far different arrangement. If the party knows the dungeon's original intent, it has a general idea of what layout to expect. A crypt rarely contains a mess hall or barracks, while an underground fortress likely requires such rooms. This







same knowledge might give clues as to what monsters lurk within the dungeon. For example, intelligent, subterranean humanoids probably built the underground fortress while undead most likely inhabit a tomb.

Most low-level parties possess limited resources for gaining information and thus skills become even more important. Skill checks such as Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (local) often present the easiest ways to uncover information about a dungeon. Likewise, characters might use Gather Information in local towns or villages to learn rumors and local lore. Bards become invaluable in this kind of research as they commonly take several ranks in these skills and augment their findings with bardic knowledge.

However, dungeons always hold secrets and mysteries. Despite their best efforts, even the best-prepared party might not learn anything substantive about their dungeon destination. Worse, the characters might acquire false or misleading information. Either way, a party should enter the dungeon as prepared as possible based on their information. At the same time, the party should be prepared for its information to turn out wrong.

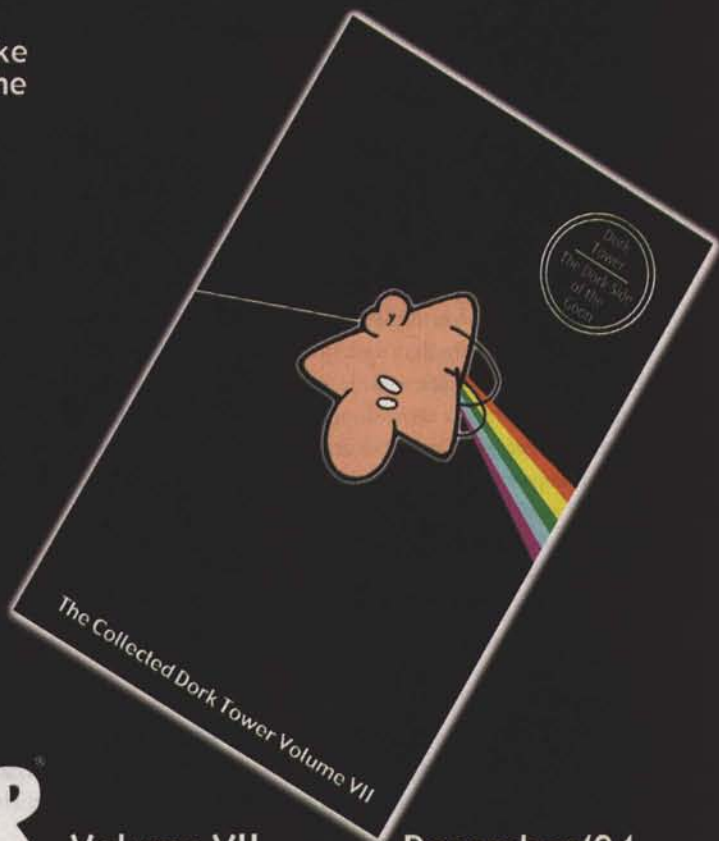
Once inside the dungeon, the PCs should continue using information-gathering skills, such as Appraise, Decipher Script, Listen, Search, Spot, and Survival to collect information about their surroundings. Monsters often leave clues as to their nature and lairs. Most creatures also require food

and sources of water, and commonly lair near such necessities. Monsters might also leave behind stores of supplies, waste, and tracks, as well as probably making considerable noise. Adventurers should remain alert for signs of nearby lairs or the creatures that dwell in them. The closer the party is to a monster lair, the more evidence they'll likely find.

**Marching Order:** One of the most significant decisions a group of adventurers makes is the order in which they explore the dungeon. Such a decision essentially decides each member's vulnerability to traps, ambushes, and any of the innumerable threats a dungeon might present. There are essentially three positions within a group's marching order: front, middle, and back. Before determining marching order, party members should consider the various positions and what threats they uniquely face.

The party member in front presents threats and enemies with both the first target to attack and the group's face. Depending on the party's abilities, a watchful or durable character often functions best in this

If you don't kill the MEAT GOLEM, you can't take on the black pudding! HOW can you take on the BLACK PUDDING if you don't KILL THE MEAT?







position. If the party seeks to avoid danger, a bard or rogue might reveal and skirt threats with little effort. On the other hand, barbarians, fighters, paladins, and rangers are best suited to confront and deal with threats while their high hit point totals make them likely to survive any traps they spring.

Unsurprisingly, group members in the middle of a marching order face the least threat, and as such weak characters like spellcasters most commonly fill this position. However, by no means does this mean that such characters are safe or unable to help their allies. Party members in the middle should make use of aid another actions to assist those around them or cast spells to augment their allies and detect nearby traps.

Perhaps the most dangerous position to occupy in a party's marching order is the rear. While not exposed to every trap and danger the party approaches, this member must watch his companions' backs against threats from behind. Cunning monsters often wait for enemies to pass to attack by surprise. As such, like in the lead position, particularly alert and strong characters fill this place well. If a party benefits from a second rogue or warrior type, they might excel by filling this position. Clerics also function well as rear guards, as their high Wisdom might allow them to notice threats others missed. In addition, a cleric's fighting abilities and hit points should allow him to survive an attack from behind long enough to warn and gain aid from his allies.

**Penalize Them:** If a +1 bonus helps the party, then a -1 penalty hurts the enemy. When possible, adventurers

should use combat positioning, tactics, and magic to inflict penalties on their opponents. Spells such as *bane*, *blur*, *doom*, *entropic shield*, and *flare* hinder enemies and thus help the party. Characters should take advantage of opportunities in combat to put their enemies at a disadvantage. For example, a successful trip attack knocks a foe prone, causing its attacks and AC to suffer a -4 penalty. Over the course of a combat, enemy penalties often pay off significantly with more failed saving throws and missed attacks.

**Prepare for Resistance:** Keep in mind that most dungeons exist to keep people out. Therefore, all dungeon-crawling parties benefit from a member talented at getting into places. This most often means a rogue or bard, and indeed their high number of skill points and class abilities make them naturals for such roles. However, should these optimum members be unavailable, any character with ranks in Disable Device, Open Locks, or Search might become a skilled dungeon invader. Spells like *find traps* and *knock* make spellcasters fine replacement rogues.

Adventuring parties should check each door, chest, and corridor thoroughly before opening or progressing through them. This includes but is not limited to using *detect magic* spells, methodical searching, or even (for less subtle parties) throwing big things at doors and chests from far away.

In addition to the resistance provided by doors and traps, adventurers should prepare for a wide variety of hindrances. Remaining alert for dangers and communicating allows characters to avoid or at least prepare for the vast majority of dangers. Thus, every party

member should take some ranks in the skills Listen and Spot whenever possible. By telling his friends what he plans on doing and what he sees and hears, one character's keen senses or chance discovery might benefit the entire party.

**Take Away the Advantage:** Dungeon dwellers often know their surroundings well. As a result, intelligent monsters prepare traps, establish sentries, and plan escape routes from lairs. When adventurers explore a dungeon, they invade the homes of such creatures. Thus, the party is forced to operate in unfamiliar surroundings against prepared and probably unknown enemies.

Whenever possible, PCs should attempt to remove this home-field advantage. The goal becomes to lure monsters out of their environment and force them to fight on a battleground of the party's choosing. Many monsters, once threatened, pursue intruders and thus surrender their home-field advantage. The party might prepare their own traps and ambushes rather than stumble through those set by monsters. For example, if the characters stumble into an orc lair, they should retreat to their own prepared ambush zone.

As an example of a prepared battlefield, the characters could litter sections of the ground with caltrops, douse it in oil, and prepare other nasty surprises. The entire party, but archers and spellcasters especially, should also be able to take up more defensible positions under such conditions.

**Take Cover:** Anything a character does to improve his Armor Class or reduce an opponent's chance of hitting helps him considerably. Characters who take advantage of cover improve their AC in perhaps the easiest way. Cover between a character and an



enemy provides the character a +4 bonus to his AC and prevents the opponent from making attacks of opportunity. Cover also provides a +2 bonus on Reflex saves against certain types of attacks and spells. If a character stands with an enemy between him and other enemy attackers, he also gains cover.

Cover presents one problem, however—it works both ways. If a character has cover against a monster, that monster likely has cover against the character.

**Teamwork:** Parties that encounter a threat in a dungeon should consider the danger closely, note the surrounding area and clues it might reveal, and decide how best to approach the threat. In a dungeon, adventurers cannot afford to act without thinking, so whenever possible they should take the time to plan amongst themselves. Many parties tear apart because their members attack blindly or without bothering to coordinate their actions. Thus, an effective party of dungeon delvers should always work as a team.

**Traps Kill Monsters Too:** If the party narrowly avoided a trap, unintelligent monsters probably won't survive the same threat unscathed. Adventurers should remember where traps lie and make an effort to circumvent them rather than disarm them, as they might prove useful tools in creating an ambush later. An adventuring party planning on coming back to and making use of a trap should exercise caution, however, as it might be slowed down at a critical moment when trying to flee as it navigates around a trap a second time. Even worse and perhaps more likely, retreating dungeon delvers might completely forget about an active trap in their flight, setting it off to dire effect.

**Use Terrain:** Adventuring parties should always mind their surroundings. Oft-overlooked features like furniture, dangling tapestries, or even sharp stalactites might aide in just about any battle.

Whether the feature provides cover, a quick escape route, or just makes for a useful impromptu trap, dungeon delvers should take full advantage of any benefit, especially since the creatures that lair in the dungeon are likely to do the same themselves.



**Watch your Backs:** No matter how well a group of characters knows one another, they should always be watchful of each other's actions. Spells like *charm person* and shapechanging monsters like doppelgangers might turn a party member against his allies or outright replace him after even only a moment's separation. However, parties should never let distrust tear them apart. One piece of evidence is rarely enough to condemn a group member of treachery and suspicions should not be given time to fester. Thus, having a spellcaster examine the party with *detect evil* or similar divination spells on a nightly basis might prove a life saving precaution—as long as the other characters can verify that the spellcaster's loyalties remain to the group.

## Wrapping Up

One of the most important parts of any adventure is deciding when to leave. Sometimes accomplishing a

clear goal makes this decision simple, although such isn't always the case. These suggestions should help your party determine when it's best for them to make a hasty exit.

**Cut Your Losses:** Sometimes, especially when burdened with one or several wounded members, adventuring parties should remember that retreat offers a viable tactical option. Although there's little heroism in fleeing, leaving a dungeon while the majority of the party's members can walk allows them to return better prepared. After all, what good is treasure to a corpse?

**Know Your Limits:** After a few fights, many characters find their spells and hit points nearly exhausted. Such groups should know and respect their limits. After every combat, adventurers should appraise their status and decide, as a team, whether to continue forward or to fall back to heal and rest. If the group pushes past its limits, the characters become vulnerable to unexpected attacks. Whenever possible, the PCs should maintain a reserve of hit points, healing, and supplies to deal with the unexpected. If the characters believe they can handle one more fight before needing to rest, they should instead take the time to withdraw and regroup rather than needlessly overtaxing themselves.

**Loot and Leave:** After a party fills its packs to the brim with treasure it should leave the dungeon immediately. Not only might unburdening the dungeon of its riches offend its occupants, but it might also trigger some hitherto unknown danger. Adventurers encumbered by wealth perform far less effectively than they might otherwise and should avoid new challenges while so burdened. In addition to threatening the group, taking a new trove of wealth into unexplored areas only serves to jeopardize that wealth, which in some cases might prove harder to replace than a fallen group member. ■







by Chris DeKalb and Jacob Steinmann  
illustrated by David Wahlstrom

# DOWN THE DRAIN

## SEWERS IN A FANTASY CAMPAIGN

Every day, thousands of people go about their daily lives oblivious to another world that lies beneath their feet. Lost treasures, vile monsters, and strange cults fill this man-made labyrinth, although only a few ever think of it. This is the world of the city sewer, and those who venture into its depths unprepared rarely return alive. This article explores sewers both in our own world's history as well as how they might appear in a fantasy setting. It also offers a few tips and tricks for those stuck with descending into the disgusting depths.

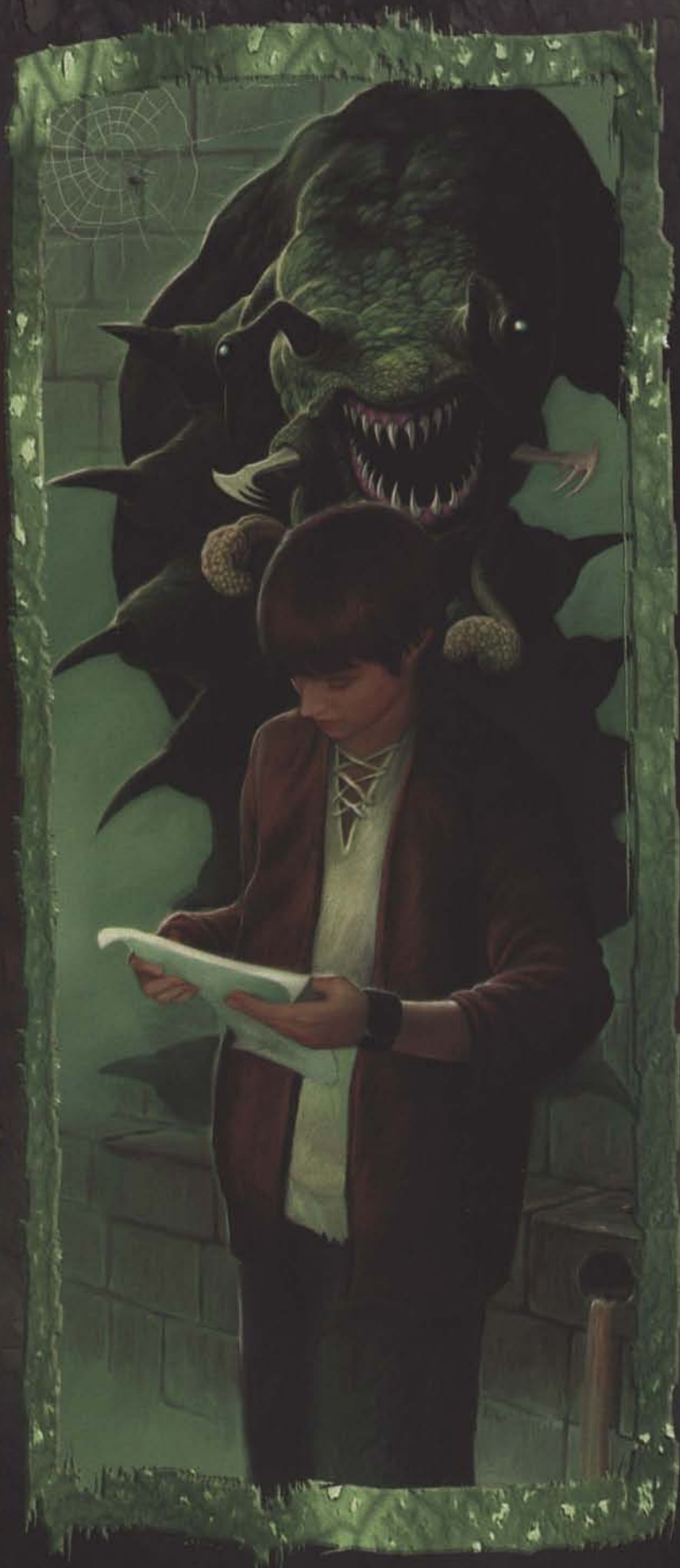
### A SHORT HISTORY OF SEWERS

The earliest sewers began as storm drains designed to allow excess water to flow off the streets. The ancient Babylonians connected some of their homes to these drains, transforming them into the first sanitation systems.

The Minoans expanded these drainage pipes to handle waste water from public baths and lavatories. They built







their pipes large enough to allow a man passage, which made the sewers much easier to maintain and repair. Some scholars speculate that the Minoans might have even constructed one of the first flushable toilets!

Sanitation reached its developmental peak under the Roman Empire. The Romans constructed their first sewers between 800 and 735 B.C.E. as an evolution of the systems used to drain marshes and rainwater. Street cleaning programs ensured that the refuse many citizens deposited into the street eventually found its way into the sewers. The Romans connected most of the public baths to the sewers, and by 100 B.C.E. Rome required all houses in the city to be connected to the sewer system. Due to poor ventilation, however, foul odors from the many pipes and tunnels frequently became a problem.

The collapse of the Roman Empire led to the loss of a great deal of sanitation knowledge. Managed sanitation programs disappeared, and most common people went back to throwing their waste onto the streets. In addition to creating a horrific stench, these conditions promoted the spread of disease and vermin.

While England made efforts at sanitation as early as 1500 C.E., serious attempts at sewer construction in many Western European nations did not begin until the late 1700s. Major developments in sanitation technology did not begin until the 1840s, and some areas took much longer to receive the benefits. Even in America, some cities did not have finished sewers until nearly the 20th century.

### SEWERS IN DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Most DUNGEONS & DRAGONS games assume a technology and mindset similar to that of medieval Europe. Historically, sewers in this period were essentially non-existent. Why, then, would a D&D setting have sewers?

A number of possible explanations exist. Historically, the lack of sewers resulted from the collapse of the Roman Empire. In many campaign settings, that sort of societal collapse might never have occurred, allowing



the nations of the world to retain their knowledge. Cities often build on the ruins of older cities, and the people in your campaign might just continue using the ancient sewers, even if they do not understand how to build or maintain them. Maybe no one knows why the sewers exist. They just do, and people use them, but no one really knows who first built them. Players and the DM might think the mystery worth investigating—or not. Perhaps the answer is not worth knowing, although when something causes the sewers to stop working, everyone becomes interested.

## PLACES IN THE SEWERS

A sewer is a vast maze of tunnels that runs underneath the city streets. These tunnels must have a large enough diameter to allow access by maintenance crews, although only the most diminutive creatures can squeeze into some of the pipes and drains that tie into them. As a city grows and evolves, its sewers evolve with it. More populated areas develop, while the local authorities might ignore or abandon other sections. These abandoned tunnels and chambers often become havens for a variety of creatures and groups.

The truly destitute sometimes make their homes in tunnels, occasionally establishing substantial communities. Disease and poverty run rampant here, and many of the inhabitants turn to crime to survive. Criminal groups throughout the city also often make use of the sewers. The average person generally ignores them, but the tunnels allow access to almost any part of a city, even normally restricted areas. This makes sewer tunnels perfect travel routes, and they also provide excellent hiding places. In some cities, members of the watch patrol the sewers, but rarely do they stay long enough to secure an area. On occasion, the watch makes a serious effort to root out the criminal presence below a city, resulting in small-scale warfare throughout the sewers.

Deep within the tunnels, priests and cultists hide temples to their outlaw gods in long-forgotten chambers. These temples keep the presence of their god

alive in the city but out of sight of the local constabulary. In evil cities, shrines and temples to the gods of good might find themselves using the sewers for a similar purpose.

## NAVIGATING THE SEWERS

The very nature of sewers makes them unpleasant places to travel through. A party must march single-file through most of the confined tunnels. Smaller tunnels require squeezing in order to pass through (see page 148 of the *Player's Handbook*). Tunnels, with their twists, turns, and countless branches, also significantly distort sound and light. Reflections in the water and echoing off walls can create the illusion of movement; DMs might decide to impose a -2 penalty on all Listen, Search, and Spot checks made within a sewer tunnel. Characters with 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (architecture & engineering) would ignore such a penalty due to their familiarity with such effects.

While these tunnels distort sight and sound, the stench of the sewers ruins the sense of smell entirely. Only the strongest odors can overcome the stench of sewers, and having an improved sense of smell can often be more of a curse than a blessing. Creatures that don't normally live within sewers commonly suffer a -10 penalty on Wisdom or Survival checks made to track by sense of smell alone. Rats and other creatures native to the sewer can use their scent ability without penalties.

A sewer's foul conditions affect other skills as well. Balance, Climb, and Tumble skill checks often suffer a -2 penalty due to the moisture and water that coats most surfaces. Tracking also becomes extremely difficult in sewers, as water generally covers much of the stone flooring.

## SEWER DENIZENS

Sewers provide a plentiful supply of food, water, and hiding places for many creatures. Rats and other vermin commonly inhabit sewer tunnels, and veteran sewer delvers know that an area devoid of rats means some kind of dangerous threat lives nearby. In large sewer systems, one can often find rats

## ASSAULTING A SEWER

Much of this article assumes that the party has gone into the sewers for reconnaissance or to rid a particular part of the sewers from infestation. Adventurers enter sewers for other reasons as well. Parties wishing to gain access to dangerous areas of a city or to enter a place in which they're unwelcome might wish to sneak in through the local sewer system. Some cities also avoid sending their local constabulary into monster-filled sewers by hiring adventurers to clear out the tunnels.

Assaulting a sewer presents some difficulties that other adventures might not. The party might need to stay in the tunnels for multiple days, requiring them to camp out amid the muck and making spells like *purify food and drink* a necessity. Characters might require special equipment to get through the sewer, as well as the tools necessary to deal with whatever awaits them once they exit. Thus, *bags of holding* and similar items help the party transport the extra equipment they require.

## ABANDONED SEWERS

Abandoned sewers present their own unique dangers. Tunnels, access ways, and drains often clog up or collapse without proper maintenance.

Dangerous pockets of methane gas might form in areas with poor ventilation. Treat these pockets as an inhaled poison (Inhaled DC 17; initial damage 1d6 Con; secondary damage 1d6 Con). Any spark or open flame (including any spell with the fire descriptor) ignites these extremely flammable pockets, causing them to explode in a fireball that deals 5d6 points of damage to anyone within 20 feet of the methane pocket (Reflex save DC 15 half). Because methane has no odor, many veterans of sewer exploration carry canaries in small cages with them into tunnels. The sudden death of the canary indicates that its owners should leave immediately.

Vermin, oozes, and slimes often breed in the stagnant waters of abandoned sewers. Green slimes and brown puddings are the most common, although other, more dangerous creatures might live there as well.

Many of the creatures normally found in actively maintained sewers remain in abandoned or unmaintained tunnels. Lacking a constant food source, they become considerably more aggressive to maintain their fewer numbers. Organized groups within abandoned tunnels might also fortify their positions without interference, and often set traps and snares for unwanted visitors.



the size of small dogs. Some isolated tunnels might be the havens of dire rats.

Other scavengers make their homes in sewers as well. Carrion crawlers, the classic D&D tunnel monster, frequently find their way into sewers. Otyughs, whose willingness to consume anything provides them with a strong survival trait, also often lair within a sewer's foulest tunnels. Some cities even purposefully import otyughs into their sewers, using them for pest control and waste removal. The otyugh's lack of discrimination can become a problem, however, and sometimes the city watch (or mercenary adventurers) must delve into a sewer in order to deal with an otyugh performing its job a little too well.

The moist environment of the sewers also makes an excellent breeding ground for exotic plants and fungi. Shriekers, violet fungi, phantom fungi, and the occasional shambling mound might also call a sewer tunnel home. Druids or wizards, who sometimes use the sewers as a breeding ground for experiments, might control or tend these strange plants. These strange experimenters tend to react poorly to adventurers harming their pets.

Murderers, thugs, and armed robbers often use sewers as convenient places to deposit their victims. Left unknown and unburied in the tunnels, the vengeful spirits of these victims sometimes rise up as ghosts, wraiths, or more powerful forms of undead. Groups of ghouls use the sewers as hunting grounds, competing with carrion crawlers and rats for scraps of dead meat.

Other creatures use the tunnels as a way into the city. Goblins and kobolds can slip through most drainpipes, and they often don't mind the darkness or the smell. Their physical weakness and cowardly natures often limit them to minor raids and thefts, so they rarely pose serious danger to the city above.

Wererats who manage to get a foothold in a city pose a far greater threat. Cunning, organized, and powerful enough to protect themselves from most local threats, wererats often establish multiple nests before



anyone discovers them. Worse, wererats rarely feel satisfied dominating the sewer alone, and thus they often seek to expand their power to the city above. Left unchecked, they might threaten the established order within a city. Their shapeshifting abilities make them difficult to detect, allowing them to infiltrate the world above with little difficulty.

Finally, evil priests of foul deities and demon-worshiping cults commonly hide within the sewers and often summon extraplanar creatures to guard their strongholds or wreak havoc on the surface above. Alternatively, they might simply corrupt animals that already live there, sending plagues of fiendish rats and other vermin into the city.

## EQUIPMENT

Venturing into the sewers can be a dangerous proposition, especially for

the unprepared. If your group plans to explore any local sewers, make sure you have the right tools for the job.

Unless the entire party has darkvision, you will need a light source of some kind. Magical light sources provide the best solution, since water cannot douse them and they don't set off methane pockets that might have collected (see the Abandoned Sewer sidebar for rules regarding methane explosions). A hooded lantern, the next best option, protects the burning oil from moisture and also allows you to conceal the light quickly if needed. *Goggles of night* give those who lack darkvision an equal footing with those who have it—if you can afford or find them. The goggles shed no light, denying monsters an easy indication of your presence.

The close quarters of the sewer provides little room for bulky equipment. Make sure the equipment you carry fits through cramped tunnels and tight manholes. Since you must travel in or near water constantly, make sure your encumbrance remains low enough that you can swim with all your gear.

In addition, every party member must wear gloves and boots to avoid contracting the diseases that run rampant in sewers. Pieces of chalk make marking your path easy, which is especially useful in labyrinthine tunnels. Climbing equipment, such as ropes and grappling hooks, might help your party negotiate sudden drop-offs or in returning to the surface. The party should also have access to a 10-foot-pole for testing the depth of water and a pry bar to get past any stubborn grates or manhole covers. See "The Dungeon Delver's Guide" in this issue for more advice on equipment to bring underground with you.

## FIGHTING IN THE SEWERS

The restricted space of sewer tunnels presents a variety of combat difficulties. The confined space makes certain tactics and weapons useless—or at



least less than ideal. Even with a light source, the twisting nature of the tunnels makes it difficult to notice enemies until you're right on top of them. Reach and ranged weapons become useless in these sorts of encounters, and characters who rely on them might wish to find an alternative weapon while in the sewers.

These conditions make unarmed attacks, natural attacks, and light weapons ideal. Grappling frequently occurs in such tight areas, and light weapons useable while grappling offer a great advantage. One-handed weapons leave you with a free hand to hold onto light sources, as well as ledges, pipes, or ladders. Experienced sewer hunters also often carry silver weapons to deal with wererats.

Combatants frequently find themselves immersed in the water, either from accidental slippage or from the machinations of others. Some creatures deliberately knock victims into the water or pull them under in order to finish them more quickly. This constant threat of drowning makes heavy armor a disadvantage, as it heavily penalizes Swim checks. Thus, the circumstantial advantages of foregoing heavy armor for lighter padded or leather armor more than makes up for any loss of Armor Class.

## MAGIC UNDER THE CITY

Spellcasters must carefully weigh the merits and disadvantages of their spells when preparing them before (or during) a sewer adventure. The environmental hazards of the sewer make certain spells extremely useful, while others become useless or even dangerous to cast.

Divine spellcasters become even more integral, as many of their restorative spells, particularly *neutralize poison* and *remove disease*, find greater demand. These spells can obviously cure affected party members, but the party can also use them as bargaining chips with the people and creatures who make their homes in the tunnels. *Control water*, *water breathing*, and *water walk* make navigating the sewer easier. However, breathing sewer water is extremely unpleasant. *Repel vermin* spares the party from unnecessary fights

## MAGIC ITEMS OF THE SEWERS

Those who infrequently travel to sewers have found ways of protecting their senses from the onslaught of sewer stench.

### Balclava of Clean Air

A black cloth head covering with an opening for the eyes, a *balclava of clean air* takes up the headband magic item slot. Only pure, magically cleansed air passes through the balclava's cloth, rendering its wearer immune to all inhaled and scent-based effects. The balclava negates the wearer's scent ability and any other special ability based on his sense of smell. It also blocks all unpleasant mundane and magical smells.

Strong transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Wondrous Item; Price 5,000 gp; Weight —.

### Veil of Perfume

Made of a small white silk veil, those who must routinely travel into the sewers often seek out these items. A *veil of perfume* works by tying it around the wearer's head to cover his mouth and nose. It takes up no magic item slot. The veil continually exudes the scent of roses, covering all other scents. The veil negates the wearer's scent ability and any other special ability based on his sense of smell. The veil also blocks all unpleasant mundane smells and helps defend against magical ones. The wearer is immune to any nonmagical nauseating or scent-based attack. Against spells and supernatural effects that cause nausea or that affect a character through smell, such as *stinking cloud* or a ghost's stench ability, the wearer gains a +2 bonus on his saving throw.

Faint transmutation; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item; Price 2,000 gp; Weight —.

while *giant vermin* provides an extra ally. *Augury*, *divination*, and *locate object* might also save the party from wandering aimlessly through the sewers (see the article "Get Lost" in this issue for limitations to using these sorts of spells in tunnels). Sewer-delving clerics often leave a pre-determined token at the sewer entrance they use, then they later cast *locate object* to find their way back to it if they become lost.

Arcane spellcasters also know a number of divination and transmutation spells useful when exploring sewers. *Arcane eye* and *clairaudience/clairvoyance* allow a wizard to scout ahead for unexpected dangers, while a seek-and-destroy mission virtually requires *locate creature*. *Gaseous form*, *knock*, and *passwall* might also help the party get into sealed off or caved in areas.

Some popular combat spells carry considerably greater risk when cast within a sewer system. Wizards and sorcerers should be wary when casting offensive spells, as area-of-effect spells can expand to fill the tunnel, creating a greater possibility that the spell envelopes nearby party members. Spells with the fire descriptor might also ignite pockets of trapped methane, resulting in secondary explosions that could damage friend and foe alike. Direct attack

## SEWER FEATS

Those who live in or near sewers develop resistances to survive more easily in such a foul environment.

### Strong Stomach

You don't mind the smell of even the worst stench.

**Benefit:** You gain a +4 bonus on all saving throws made against any extraordinary, supernatural, or spell-like nauseating or scent-based attack, such as the ghost's stench ability or *stinking cloud*.

### Tunnel Rat

You can squeeze through tight spaces more easily than normal.

**Prerequisite:** Escape Artist 4 ranks  
**Benefit:** When squeezing (see *Player's Handbook*, page 148) each space counts as 1 square of movement and you only suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls.

**Normal:** Squeezing causes spaces to count as 2 squares and the squeezing character suffers a -4 penalty on attack rolls.

spells with little or no chance of missing, such as *magic missile*, are far safer alternatives. Non-fire-based spells, such as *cone of cold*, *lightning bolt*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *phantasmal killer*, and *shout* can't as easily backfire on the sewer-exploring arcane casters. ☞



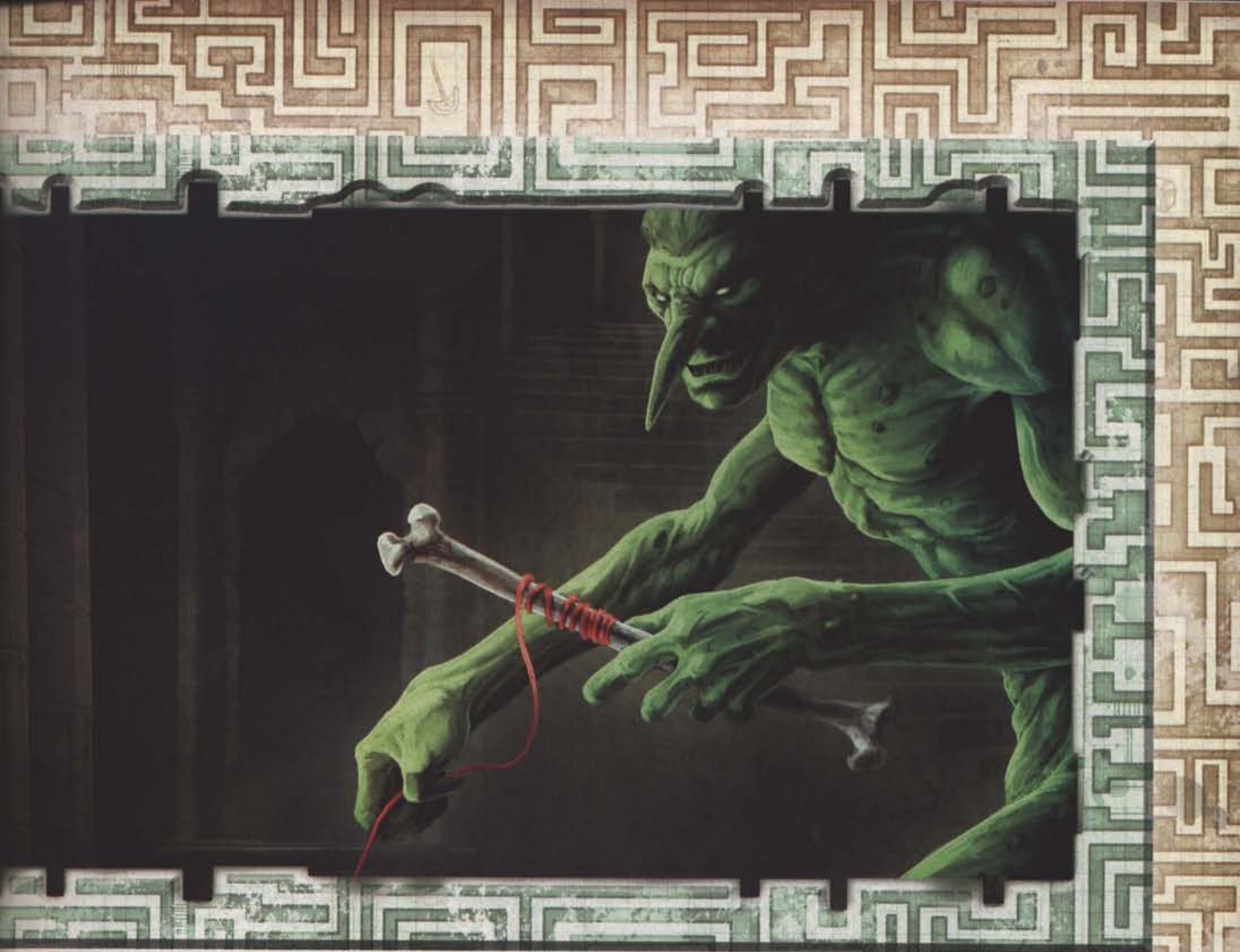


# GET LOST

## REAL-WORLD LABYRINTHS AND SURVIVING MAZES IN D&D

*by Kyla Ward • illustrated by Jason Engle*





**T**hroughout history, people of many cultures have considered the construction of a labyrinth a great achievement. Solving a labyrinth—besting its twists and turns and the ingenuity of its designer—was the feat of a hero. Theseus, prince of Athens, penetrated the Cretan labyrinth and slew the Minotaur, while only those who demonstrated sufficient courage could pass through the maze of the Nekromanteion to consult the oracle. Maybe this heroism explains in part why labyrinths, even when restricted to paper or a computer screen, remain so popular to this day.

### Purposes of Labyrinths

Different cultures constructed labyrinths for many different purposes. These purposes include defense, confinement, and even entertainment. A defensive labyrinth allows intruders into an area but in a way that places them at a disadvantage. A confining labyrinth acts as a prison, keeping a

creature trapped within its intricate passages. Entertaining labyrinths often have simple mazes, occasionally with walls low enough for some who enter to see over.

The labyrinthine gate of the fortress of Shuneh near Abydos in Egypt presents a very basic example of a defensive labyrinth. Built around 3,500 B.C.E., the gate's excavated remains survive to this day. The labyrinthine gate had two rings of walls surrounding a central keep pierced by a roofless passage that turned at sharp angles. Any enemies who broke through the initial gate found themselves running through the twisting passage, exposed the whole time to the defenders' missiles.

In Greek legend a renowned sage named Daedalus designed a confining labyrinth to imprison the Minotaur, a monstrous half-human and half-bull creature born to the Cretan queen. In order to feed it, the Cretan king ordered the cities he conquered

to send tribute in the form of human beings, whom he forced to wander in the labyrinth until the Minotaur found them. While Crete held considerable power in the Mediterranean around 1,500 B.C.E., it is possible, though unknown, whether the Cretans imprisoned slaves or prisoners of war in the caverns of Gortyna—or perhaps even sacrificed them as part of a bull-worshipping cult. Others have suggested that the legend of the labyrinth originated in the elaborate palace of the Cretan kings at Knossos, where archaeologists uncovered stairways and winding passages on numerous levels.

The maze at Hampton Court Palace in England, perhaps the most famous hedge maze, was planted in 1690 and is now a popular tourist attraction. At Hampton Court, tourists wander between green hedges in broad daylight and still get lost. At closing time, the attendants must pass through the maze to collect stragglers and lead them out.



This example illustrates the other thing that all labyrinths have in common: To anyone who knows them well enough, they present no challenge at all. This means that another possible use for a labyrinth is as an escape route. If threatened, the owners can quickly lose their pursuers among the turns and either hide or make for the exit.

## Types of Labyrinths

In addition to their functions, the structure of mazes further define them.

A labyrinthine gate is a very simple structure that requires guards to make it effective. A real labyrinth works all on its own, trapping intruders in seemingly endless passages, unable to make their way further in or back out. In Italy in the 6th century B.C.E., the Etruscan warlord Lars Porsenna ordered such a labyrinth built below the city of Clusium (modern Chiusi) to guard his tomb. Writing in the 1st century C.E., the Roman author Pliny the Elder described it in his *Natural History* as a work so complex that if a man entered without leaving behind him a trail of thread, he would never regain the surface. Archaeologists have not identified Porsenna's tomb, but they have found Etruscan tombs with many branching passageways carved into solid rock.

Pliny also described the Labyrinth of Moeris in Egypt, which acted both as an elaborate maze and a functioning temple. He wrote of labyrinths there "roofed with vaults of polished stone."

Hedge mazes were a fashion of a much later time. European aristocrats of the 17th and 18th centuries grew labyrinths of dense, clipped cypress or yew on the grounds of their estates. They cultivated these "follies" to impress visitors with their wealth and taste, for the pleasure of walking in their shade and, of course, to delight in watching their visitors getting hopelessly lost. Few owners of such mazes seriously considered them as defensive structures or as hiding-places, but a literary tradition exists of people using the mazes for

clandestine political discussions and love affairs.

## Labyrinthine Construction

No matter what their purpose or scale, all labyrinths or mazes share some basic traits. Their design usually centers around some kind of goal. The goal of a labyrinth might be to find the exit, some central chamber, or both.

Mazes come in three basic types. A "unicursal," or single-path maze, contains no branches and no dead ends, and the path from the entrance inevitably leads to the goal. A "multicursal," or many-path maze, contains multiple paths that lead from the beginning to the end. Multicursal mazes might be further distinguished into simply and multiply connected mazes.

As well as trailing a string behind them, most people have some idea that they can solve a labyrinth by keeping their left hand on the left wall as they walk. This method, although tedious, always works for unicursal and simply connected mazes, where every wall is connected together.

A multiply connected maze has walls or whole portions of the maze not connected to the outer walls of the labyrinth. In these cases, with nothing intervening, intruders can walk through the maze and return to the starting point having missed part of the labyrinth entirely. Maze builders call that part of the maze unreachable by following the left wall "the island." Of course, the island almost always contains the goal.

Regardless of its type and to maximize its effect, either a roof should cover the labyrinth, as Pliny suggested, or at least it should have difficult-to-climb walls taller than the average person. The entire labyrinth should be constructed of the same material throughout, and it should avoid anything that would distinguish one part of it from any other, like carvings or fountains.

## Historical Labyrinths

Three of history's most impressive mazes, the caverns of Gortyna, the labyrinth of Moeris, and the Nekroman-

tion, serve as excellent examples of historic labyrinth construction and use.

## Caverns of Gortyna

*The windings bewildered us at once, and my compass being broken, I was quite ignorant as to where I was. The clearly intentional intricacy and apparently endless number of galleries impressed me with a sense of horror and fascination I cannot describe. At every ten steps one was arrested and had to turn right or left, sometimes to choose one of three or four roads. What if one should lose the clue?*

—*Travels in Southern Europe and the Levant, 1810–1817* by Charles Robert Cockerell

This is how English traveler Charles Cockerell remembered his excursion into the caverns of Gortyna in Crete, a natural cave system augmented by human hands over the centuries to form a true maze. The clue he mentions consists of a long string he and his companions fastened to the entrance of the caves and unwound behind them—the traditional method of navigating a labyrinth.

In the labyrinth of Gortyna, subterranean passages wind through solid rock. Even as late as the 18th century, explorers were restricted to torches and ropes to try to make sense of tunnels that branched and then doubled back and forth, opening suddenly into roughly-worked chambers. For many years, people believed Gortyna to be the lair of the mythological Minotaur.

## The Labyrinth of Moeris

*The situation of that work and the individual parts, it is not possible to narrate, since it is divided into regions and prefectures, which they call nomes, with the forty names of them allotted to just so many vast halls, and contains, besides, temples of all the gods of Egypt . . .*

*Already weary in their bones do they reach that bewildering maze of passages, and moreover there are upper rooms lofty with their inclines, and there descend porches with ninety stairs downward. Within there are columns of porphyry,*



images of gods, statues of kings, monstrous figures. Such is the situation of some of the halls that when they open the doors, a thunder springs up terrible within, and throughout the greater part of it, they must pass through in shades of darkness . . . Then there are other subterranean halls with underground galleries dug through.

—*The Natural History*, Book XXXVI  
by Pliny the Elder

The Greek adventurer Herodotus visited Egypt in the 4th century B.C.E. In his *History*, he wrote that of all the wonders he saw there, the greatest was surely the labyrinth that stood by Lake Moeris in the district of Heracleopolites. Priests who lived and worked there showed him through its upper levels, but they refused to show him the underground levels, saying the kings who built the labyrinth were buried there.

Five-hundred years later, Pliny the Elder also visited Egypt and heard the labyrinth was 3,600 years old. As well as describing it in *Natural History*, he reported that the native inhabitants of the area detested the labyrinth, finding it “a wondrously invidious work,” but he did not say why.

The labyrinth described in both books was a mighty edifice. It consisted of twelve roofed courts, six to the north and six to the south, encompassed by an external wall abutted by six pyramids. Beside it, and linked to the Nile by a gated canal, sat an artificial sacred lake. The crocodiles living in the lake were sacred and partially tame—their regular feeding times being an attraction for guests.

Within the courts were (reputedly) a total of 3,000 chambers above and below ground, linked intricately by stairs and passages. Pliny emphasized that no straight path existed anywhere, and that visitors had to double back and forth to reach their goal. Nonetheless, the labyrinth also acted as a functioning Egyptian temple. As such, it contained the whole apparatus of administration of the temple lands, as well as sacred areas such as the catacombs. There



were storerooms and granaries, libraries and workshops, judicial courts and hospitals, all in such a tangle that only the adept could find their way through—the perfect expression of a bureaucracy! Likely, the knowledge of the labyrinth linked to a priest's rank, with acolytes knowing only the mundane areas and with certain paths perhaps known only to the high priest.

In many ways, this was also an adaptation of the defensive labyrinth. The priests knew their way around, but any intruders would have a great deal of trouble locating any particular chamber, such as the treasury. They would lose track of their surroundings (and therefore their escape

route) long before reaching their goal. Because of the double-backs and priestly guards, trailing a string through the halls would not work.

In 1888, the British archaeologist Professor Flinders Petrie discovered the fragmentary remains of a gigantic building to the east of Lake Moeris in modern-day Fayûm. This stands near the pyramid of the Pharaoh Amenemhat III, who lived in the 19th century B.C.E. and is considered to have constructed the labyrinth as a temple of unparalleled complexity and grandeur. The professor theorized that the labyrinth decayed from its original glory after Egypt fell under foreign rule and was eventually considered nothing more





Multicursal, simple

The oracle was rediscovered in 1958 in modern-day Epirus. It stood over the actual river Acheron and another stream, which, due to mineral deposits, displayed phosphorescence at night—Phlegethon, the River of Flaming Fire. When Doctor Sotoris Dakaris identified and excavated the temple compound and subterranean chambers in 1958, he discovered the foundations of a Christian monastery had hidden them for at least a thousand years.

The massively walled compound contained a succession of courtyards. The accommodations of the priests lay at the rear. Upon arriving, the supplicants used the first courtyard to make preparations to consult the oracle, a process that could take days. A supplicant meditated and prayed and ate only special foods, such as pork, oysters, and a variety of beans containing hallucinogenic alkaloids. When judged to be in a suitable state, the priests led the supplicant into the next courtyard, where he sacrificed a sheep in front of the iron gate to the labyrinth.

Although only a simple unicursal figure, supplicants had to pass through the labyrinth in pitch darkness and while on hallucinogens. At the end of the labyrinth lay the hall of the oracle, where metal braziers lit statues of the goddesses of the underworld. Beneath the hall lay another subterranean chamber, connected to it by a shaft in the floor. What originally occupied this chamber is unknown.

The labyrinth of the Nekromanteion was literally a model of the journey of souls to the Greek underworld. The foods partaken of by the supplicants, for instance, were the traditional Greek offerings to the dead at funerals. The iron gate represented the gate of Hades and the hall of the oracle acted as the hall of judgment.

Chambers to either side of the hall of the oracle held the offerings of the supplicants. Passing through the labyrinth provided the only way to reach them. If the priests, during a final attack, retreated into the sanctum, the kinks and bends of the labyrinth would have provided cover and made the enemy pay for every foot of ground.

than a source of convenient building materials by nearby towns.

### The Nekromanteion

In Homer's *Odyssey*, when Odysseus was repeatedly thwarted in his attempts to return home from Troy, he sought out the Nekromanteion—the oracle of the dead. The oracle's compound stood on a rocky pinnacle overlooking the river Acheron in the land of Cimmeria. Odysseus offered a sacrifice to the spirits of the dead and prayed they would reveal to him the reason for his misfortunes. The gate of Hades opened for him, and he entered and returned alive.

The fame of the Nekromanteion endured from the time the writings that comprise the *Odyssey* were codi-

fied, around the 8th century B.C.E, to the classical Greek era. A story from the fourth century B.C.E. told how Periander, the tyrant of Corinth, sent a messenger asking an oracle to raise the shade of his recently deceased wife, Melissa. She had died without revealing the location of a treasure she knew of and that Periander considered his by right. The messenger returned with directions to the treasure and a riddle. When Melissa's father and sons solved the riddle they realized that Periander had murdered his wife and rose up in rebellion.

Gradually, the popularity of oracles waned, and they deserted the compound, possibly after an attack by raiders. Thus, the location of the Nekromanteion was lost.



## The Fantastic Labyrinth

A well-designed labyrinth is a challenge in itself, without adding a minotaur, magical protections, or traps. However, a well-designed labyrinth with monsters, magic, and traps can easily overwhelm a weakened or unprepared party. Whether the party aims to penetrate the labyrinth to retrieve some treasure or merely to escape it—having arrived there as prisoners or via some teleporting trap—they are more likely to succeed if they can keep their heads and an accurate map.

### Know What You're Up Against:

Useful skills to have in a labyrinth include Knowledge (architecture & engineering), Knowledge (dungeoneering), Search, and Survival. A successful Knowledge (architecture & engineering) check in a constructed labyrinth or Knowledge (dungeoneering) check in a natural labyrinth could reveal an error in the party's map or give that character an insight into the likely dimensions of the labyrinth and the direction of the goal. At the DM's discretion, a successful Survival check might confirm that the party has re-entered a previously explored area. A character with Track should always attempt to find tracks, even if the labyrinth is made of polished stone. If nothing else, this might provide evidence of the nature of the labyrinth's inhabitants.

**Ask the Locals:** In a D&D world, imprisoning a minotaur in a labyrinth doesn't work. The race of monsters named after the original mythological creature possess natural cunning, a special quality that allows them to navigate in any maze. However, any creature intelligent enough to familiarize itself with a maze can gain the same kind of tactical advantage over intruders; a behir or an otyugh, for instance, might choose to lair in a labyrinth for this reason. An unintelligent creature, on the other hand, might wander into a maze and become lost, leaving it half-starved and angry.

A monster found in a labyrinth might also have been put there as an additional security measure. A gelatinous cube grown big enough to completely block a passage cleans



Multicursal, multiply connected

away all tracks and other residues of use as it moves, and it proves a terrible hazard.

If the guardian creature is intelligent enough to memorize the maze, it could actually prove a weak point in the defenses. The right combination of *charm monster* or *speak with animals* and *charm animal* could turn a guardian into a guide.

**Beware Misleading Magic:** A labyrinth actually reduces the effectiveness of most divination spells. The recurring thickness of walls blocks most detect spells, such as *detect evil* or *detect magic*. *Locate object* indicates the direction in which the desired object lies, if within range, but it doesn't alleviate the problem of how

to reach the desired object from the party's present position. *Passwall* and *dimension door* also lose a great deal of effectiveness in a labyrinth, particularly if all of the hallways or rooms look similar and are made of the same material.

**Trapped:** A constructed labyrinth most likely contains self-resetting traps that leave no visible trace. Wise parties watch for such dangers as pit traps with pivoting lids and are aware that secret doors might lead to kill-zones instead of shortcuts. They also watch for *glyph* and *symbol* spells, as these are particularly effective against those searching for clues to solve a maze.



**Mark Your Territory:** When cast on a nonliving object, *arcane mark* leaves a permanent image. Marking your passage allows you to navigate in a labyrinth more easily, and shows you if you've begun walking in circles. If you make the mark visible you make it possible for other party members to spot it. On the other hand, you make it possible for everything else to spot it as well. An invisible *arcane mark* lets you retain a certain amount of stealth, but unless you have *detect magic* permanently activated, you might walk by your mark and never see it.

**Watch for Unexpected Mazes:** Labyrinths can appear in some far-from-obvious places. If the doors in the castle cellar just keep opening into chambers with more doors, or the shelves in a wizard's library start making sharp twists and turns, the party might have just entered a labyrinth. A conspiratorial nobleman or a thieves' guild guildmaster with a respectable façade might find it very handy to have a labyrinthine cellar with an exit into the main sewers.

**Look for Themes:** The reason people such as mad wizards and tyrant kings build labyrinths has nothing to do with practicality. They build their labyrinths as little, private universes where the only constant is their own twisted logic—or sense of humor. Only the most incredible kind of megalomania or paranoia can justify the expenditure of resources such grand mazes represent, and such a person might create a labyrinth specifically to dispose of his enemies. Such labyrinths are among the most dreadful challenges any party can face. Those who conquer these obstacles can call themselves successful adventurers indeed.

## Running Labyrinths

When designing a labyrinth, it is very easy to overlook the necessities of running it as a DM; that is, effectively conveying it to a group of players.

**Keep it Simple:** Although the use of certain skills can help the characters during the game, keeping your mazes simple preempts many problems

that might otherwise bog down the session. The maze might look ridiculously easy to solve on paper, but when described as a journey through a set of eerily similar corridors, it will prove more than sufficient challenge—and as for circular mazes: Don't. Just don't.

**Provide Maps:** If your players do their own mapping, when they enter the labyrinth it is a good idea to provide them with grid paper on the same scale that you used, to keep distances accurate. Some DMs draw out maps for their players as they go along in any dungeon, on the grounds that if the party were actually there they would automatically see what he means by "a door in the west wall." For an excursion into a labyrinth, this technique might be worth adopting. Players are still responsible for their own exploration and mapping their way back out, but they don't get bogged down with measurements and can concentrate on possible secret doors and peculiar discrepancies. Certainly, when a trap teleports an individual character, *cause fear* forces him to run off alone, or he is otherwise separated from the rest of the party, drawing an individual map for that player is a good way to handle the situation.

**Always Keep Them Wanting More:** You need to strike a balance between the intrigue of the labyrinth and the frustration level of your players. A good way to reduce player fatigue is for a partial map of the labyrinth to have fallen into the characters' hands. This gives them something to go on that they can extrapolate across the missing pieces or suspicious stains—at their peril, of course.

**The Magical Maze:** Mention should also be made of the *maze* spell itself. This handy spell temporarily creates an extra-dimensional labyrinth of force planes for a cost far less than a similarly sized maze built of actual stone. If made permanent, a fireplace or wardrobe can potentially hold an entire labyrinth; again, to the great advantage of the owner.

**Divide and Conquer:** The impact of spells causing fear and confusion

becomes far greater when the victim flees blindly into a labyrinth. Likewise, traps that teleport only individual characters to other points in the labyrinth can devastate a party by splintering it. Those teleport traps that move the entire group can also cause the deaths of most characters. Even with a map, identifying the party's new location can prove extremely difficult and laboriously time consuming—time during which wandering monsters might appear.

**Defend the Path:** A vicious and powerful beastie is one of the few possible counters to the *find the path* spell. When a bard, cleric, or druid casts *find the path*, he knows the shortest and most direct route to the desired destination, which can be as vague as "the center of the labyrinth." The spell specifically does not take into consideration the actions of creatures that lurk between the caster and his desired destination. Thus, wandering patrols or guard stations might waylay a group relying solely on *find the path* to reach their destination. ▣

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# THE ECOLOGY OF THE RAKSHASA

Considered by some the very embodiment of evil, rakshasas dominate all they encounter as masterful manipulators, powerful sorcerers, and terrible foes. Greedy, treacherous, immortal beings, rakshasas delight in plotting the downfall of others while raising their own status, making them consummate arch-villains in a sufficiently high-level campaign. In addition to their own abilities, rakshasas are charismatic individuals who draw large numbers of minions into their service, surrounding themselves with cadres of deadly and varied servitors. Clever and deceitful by nature, rakshasas are the bane of righteous creatures, as they prefer hiding in the shadows and using layers of lies, corruption, and double-crosses to keep themselves safe.

This article examines the rakshasas' history, physiology, and psychology, as well as ways in which player characters can combat such deadly adversaries.

## HISTORY OF THE RAKSHASA

A cloud of uncertainty conceals the rakshasas' origins. Numerous tales and legends say that they came from "a distant land,"

slowly corrupting the societies they encountered before moving on to richer grounds. Rakshasas possess all the earmarks of having the same lineage as devils, although they dwell primarily on the Material Plane. Even if they know their actual background, no rakshasa willingly parts with such information, and they often spin intricate webs of lies to further confuse the issue. The most popular theories include a race of fiendish animals somewhere in the rakshasas' distant past, intermingled with some unknown breed of devils. However, even this possibility seems unlikely considering rakshasas' uniquely insidious natures.

There exist countless documented cases of the rakshasas' sinister impact upon the world, even if some only suggest the fiends' claws manipulating major political players. Although vain and egotistical, rakshasas favor staying behind the scenes, pulling political strings with aplomb. They are linked to the toppling of untold organizations, merchant houses, churches, and even entire governments. Scholars who go through the effort of untangling the skeins of history discover rakshasas lurking behind some of the most deplorable crimes and tragedies imaginable. Those who delve too





deeply, however, risk drawing the attention of one or more rakshasas, who might briefly band together in order to quash an investigation before it uncovers too much.

## PHYSIOLOGY OF RAKSHASAS

A rakshasa possesses the same size and build as an average human, but with the head of some savage animal, most commonly that of a Bengal tiger, although those of carnivorous apes, mantises, and crocodiles are only slightly less common. Rakshasas' eyes vary vastly, from the gold and black slits of tigers to the multifaceted protruding orbs of insects, depending on the individual's specific animalistic visage. Regardless of their shape, rakshasas' eyes burn with a slight infernal light, filled with a deep cunning and intellect that most mortals find extremely disturbing.

A rakshasa's hands is easily its most unnerving feature. The joints on both hands are reversed, causing the creature to bend its fingers to grasp objects in the opposite direction to how most humanoid hands grasp. The rakshasa suffers no difficulty doing this and grips things in the same way as other humanoids, although it enjoys horrifying others with this unnatural feature.

## VARIANT BREEDS

Originating in the legends and lore of India, rakshasas initially appeared in D&D among the creatures of the first edition *Monster Manual*. Several recent products present new variations on these popular villains, each with deadly new abilities and sinister motivations all their own.

### Rakshasas in Eberron

The *EBERRON Campaign Setting* unleashes a new rakshasa variant, known as the zakya. While still capable of casting spells, this breed of vicious fighters wades into hand-to-hand combat with relish. Zakyas once ruled the continents of Khorvaire and Sarolona, serving under powerful rajahs who commanded massive armies. Brought to heel by the combined might of the dragons of Argonneseen and the couatls of Xen'drik, the zakyas are a broken race, driven beneath the earth to plot and scheme. Their rulers, the Lords of Dust, fulfill many of the same roles as rakshasas in other settings—highly intelligent and vile schemers who use subterfuge, moral decay, and lies to further their plans. However, the zakyas are much more openly violent and bloodthirsty than their cousins and spoil for the chance to end lives on their blades and spears in combat.

### Rakshasas in Monster Manual III

*Monster Manual III* introduces two new breeds of rakshasa, the ak'chazar and the naztharune. The ak'chazar seem most like the traditional rakshasa, deadly and manipulative schemers with powerful magical abilities and the heads of white tigers. Unlike their kin, however, ak'chazars hold dominion over the undead with a vast array of potent necromantic abilities and a cunning that even their fellow rakshasas begrudgingly respect. Besides these natural necromancers, *Monster Manual III* also presents the naztharune. These night-black rakshasas are master predators, applying their malicious racial ingenuity to the assassin's arts. With unnatural power over shadows, the naztharune strike from the darkness and vanish back into it without a trace. Along with their round-by-round tactics, *Monster Manual III* also provides suggestions for undead ak'chazar entourages, using naztharune as characters, and suggestions for both of these races' schemes in *EBERRON* and the *FORGOTTEN REALMS*.





Rakshasas prefer their food in the form of raw meat, preferably while the animal still lives, and flavor such meals with rare spices, exotic side dishes, and other expensive delicacies disgusting to the eyes of mortals. Many of their movements and behaviors straddle the line between that of a human and a large feline, as they enjoy long rests and prowling about unseen like a cat but also savor the finer things in life, such as music, works of art, and literature. They relish fancy, expensive clothing, jewelry, and the finest weapons and armor. Similar to cats, rakshasas enjoy long naps and lazy moments surrounded by comfort and luxury.

### PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY OF RAKSHASAS

Greedy than most devils, rakshasas insatiably desire wealth and power. However, more than just taking what they can, rakshasas prefer stealing and looting from those who would suffer most from such actions—the destitute, the desperate, and those who rely on specific items. Rakshasas take great pride in ruining the lives of mortals, stealing everything from them, killing their families, and spreading horrible lies and rumors.

When a rakshasa first enters a territory, it does its best to maintain a low profile, seeking out weak-willed individuals that it uses as pawns and lackeys. It finds a base to host its insidious dealings, often fronted by an innocuous business or even a temple to some neutral deity. Over time, however, the rakshasa tightens the reins on both his victims and his lackeys, demanding larger and larger portions of their freedom, wealth, and power.

Rakshasa society could be described as a malevolent meritocracy, where only the fittest survive. Rakshasas constantly rank each other based on the power they accumulate, their cunning and subtlety, and their willingness to show a complete lack of morals. Female rakshasas raise their young alone, punctuating their children's lives with dotting praise, constant tests, harsh discipline, and ruthless training. As a young rakshasa matures, it learns the meanings of both loss and power—that which is gained

## RAVANNA

### Lesser God (Lawful Evil)

Ravanna is the ten-headed lord of all rakshasas and embodies the ideals of that race. Decadent and egomaniacal, he possesses a cruel intellect, diabolical cunning, and patient subtlety that all of his minions aspire to.

**Portfolio:** Deception, intrigue, lies, rakshasas, tyranny

**Domains:** Destruction, Evil, Trickery

**Favored Weapon:** Javelin ("Yamafang")

**Clerical Training:** Few creatures willingly choose to serve Ravanna. Rather, the cunning god chooses his clerics based on their potential to serve him or advance his existing clergy's ambitions. Few who know of Ravanna refuse a summons into his service, as his fury is great and such commands commonly come from a group of powerful existing priests.

**Quests:** Ravanna demands that his servants constantly expand their power and influence while remaining unseen. This in effect makes his clergy more like a powerful and far-reaching criminal network than most priesthoods.

**Prayers:** Prayers to Ravanna are lengthy and self-deprecating affairs that extol his wonders while accentuating the unworthiness of his followers.

**Temples:** Ravanna demands few actual temples, but those that do exist tower as grand complexes made nearly entirely of precious materials and rife with terrible artistry. More common are the personal shrines Ravanna requires all his servants to maintain. These shrines are often ornate but portable affairs, both so his worshippers can conceal them at a moment's notice and transport them to their meal tables to commit his gory worship.

**Rites:** Ravanna demands daily sacrifices of both wealth and blood. Devotees of Ravanna make these sacrifices without any specific weapon or tool, but rather their own teeth and claws, regardless of race.

**Herald and Allies:** Ravanna's herald is a powerful rakshasa maharajah named Loliadac. With five heads—those of an ape, crocodile, mantis, tiger, and human—he commands an army of servants that travel Acheron, the Plane of Shadow, and the Material Plane at their god's command, acting as Ravanna's vengeful claw. Ravanna's allies and those he most commonly sends to fulfill *planar ally* spells are bone devils, hellcats, and of course rakshasas.

might easily be taken away, often by those who gave it in the first place.

Once a rakshasa reaches maturity, it's already well on its way to carving out an empire of crime and evil. Newly independent rakshasas commonly head out for unknown territories, far from its parents'—or any other rakshasa's—reach. Using a variety of disguises, the rakshasa spends years investigating a new area. A rakshasa instinctively seeks out a safe house from which to operate, decorating its interior in ostentatious displays of its wealth. It then begins creating a network of spies, informants, and easily bribed officials from which to establish its domain, as well as creating a small cadre of loyal, easily influenced lackeys. The rakshasa then creates or takes over local thieves guilds, mercenary units, and other undesirables, often doing so under one disguise or another. It rarely reveals its true nature to anyone but utterly dedicated lieutenants whose loyalty the rakshasa constantly monitors both via spies and its own ability to read thoughts.

Should a rakshasa encounter another of its kind, a shadowy war of intrigue and misinformation often begins. This

battle of criminal politics culminates in one rakshasa dominating the other and subjugating its network or in the death of the weaker rival. As a rakshasa grows in power and dominates more and more of its kin, it takes on more and more prestigious titles, rising to *ruhk*, *rajah*, and all the way to maharajah after subjugating all other rakshasas in a region.

Notoriously cruel slavers, rakshasas collect slaves with the same relish they do exotic and rare art. A rakshasa surrounds itself with dozens of slaves who cater to its every whim. This serves to stroke the rakshasa's enormous ego as well as to show a level of status among others of its kind—the more slaves at its beck and call, the more powerful the rakshasa.

Using its detect thoughts ability, as well as information provided by spies and informants, a rakshasa searches out every weakness, sin, and secret about its enemies as possible. It then uses bribes and offers of power to attempt to bring its target into its web. If this fails, the rakshasa extorts, blackmails, or slanders its target to bring about his destruction. It loves nothing more than to see an otherwise good and upstanding citizen

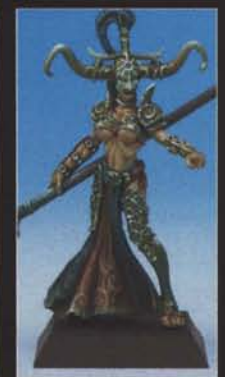


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brought down by others of its kind due to some dark secret.

Rakshasas are natural spellcasters with a deep lust for the acquisition of arcane lore and magic items. They spend a great deal of time researching lost tomes and following up bits of rumors and legend to find powerful spells, especially those of an evil nature. Rakshasas sometimes sponsor adventuring groups to delve into forgotten tombs and forbidding lands in the quest for such items, often portraying themselves as kindly patrons of arcane organizations or ambitious merchants.

### VERSUS THE RAKSHASA

Although they rarely engage in physical battle, rakshasas are powerful and deadly opponents. Once adventurers tear away the myriad veils of magic and lies a rakshasa hides behind, only preparation and skill will assure survival against one of these evil masterminds.

**Beware of Deception:** The most difficult part of fighting a rakshasa is realizing that you are opposing one in the first place. Rakshasas excel at deception, lies, and deceit. They use their change shape ability to keep opponents guessing, while also adopting a range of favorite particular disguises. Adventurers hoping to ferret out a shape-changing rakshasa should make frequent use of divination spells like *detect evil*, *detect thoughts*, and especially *true seeing*.

**Turn Enemies into Allies:** The hordes of lackeys and bodyguards rakshasas employ often present just as great a threat as rakshasas themselves. Because they can read the thought of others, rakshasas allow only the most loyal beings to get close to them. As such, characters attempting to shift the loyalty of a rakshasa's lieutenants through trickery or charm almost always fail. However, enchantment spells such as *charm monster*, *charm person*, and *geas/quest* prove far more successful. Magically turning a rakshasa's allies against it weakens its defenses while bolstering those of the characters.

### RAKSHASA KNOWLEDGE

The following table shows the results of a Knowledge (the planes) check as it relates to the rakshasa. Those who hunt these beings or work under their control might possess this information.

**Knowledge  
(The Planes)**

DC	Result
10	Rakshasas are hideously evil, animal-headed creatures whose malevolence is on par with most devils.
15	Rakshasas can take the form of almost any humanoid and use this ability to hide among unsuspecting groups in order to sow lies and corruption. They bully or bribe weak-willed individuals to do their bidding.
20	Rakshasas have the ability to read the thoughts of others, which allows them to discover a person's deepest fears and desires. They are resistant to most forms of attacks.
25	Rakshasas are extremely fractious beings that spend as much time fighting among themselves as they do plotting against other creatures.
30	Rakshasas are vulnerable to good-aligned piercing weapons, such as crossbow bolts benefiting from the spell <i>bless weapon</i> .

**Guard Your Thoughts:** A rakshasa's detect thoughts ability is often its most useful tool and weapon. Its constant awareness of the presence of thinking minds within the area forces its enemies to use spells such as *mind blank* (or, less powerfully, *nondetection*) and magic items such as *amulets of proof against detection and location*. As its detect thoughts ability requires at least three rounds of concentration for the rakshasa to read the surface thoughts of a creature, it does its best to stay within range for at least that long to reveal a person's intentions (but only if it is safe to do so). Those hunting rakshasas should remain mindful of the ability's 60-foot cone-shaped area. As a rakshasa must focus this ability in a specific area each round, a stealthy group of adventurers might keep their opponent's attention diverted long enough to get close enough to attack. As this ability also requires concentration to maintain, a rakshasa involved in combat often forgoes this ability in order to cast spells or attack. As fitting such an intelligent creature, a rakshasa often employs hit and run tactics, pulling back to someplace safe in order to read the thoughts of its enemies and change its tactics accordingly.

**Destroy Magical Defenses:** Rather cowardly by nature, rakshasas commonly cast spells that bolster themselves, such as *bear's endurance* and *haste*, or improves their defensive

abilities, such as *mage armor*. Rakshasas also make judicious use of *charm person* or *suggestion* to change the attitude of anyone with ill intentions toward them. They reserve their offensive spells, such as *Melf's acid arrow*, as a last resort. Rakshasas that take character levels almost always take several levels in sorcerer. Spells like *dispel magic* are necessary to negate a rakshasa's defensive magic and perform counterspells, while several castings of *protection from evil* should defend an entire party against enchantment spells.

**Beware of Resistances:** Spellcasters should remember that rakshasas possess impressive spell resistance, which foils many magical attacks against them. Also, the rakshasa's damage reduction (15 good and piercing) seriously reduces any damage not dealt by a weapon that is both piercing and good aligned. A rakshasa uses these facts to its advantage, often attacking spellcasters first (who must overcome its spell resistance and are unlikely to deal physical damage that gets past the rakshasa's DR). Blessed bows and crossbows prove the most effective weapons when employed against rakshasas, allowing the attacker to fire from a safe distance while negating the rakshasa's formidable damage reduction. The spell *bless weapon* is also integral, as it gives any weapon the good quality, although it must be cast on a piercing weapon to totally overcome a rakshasa's damage reduction. ☐



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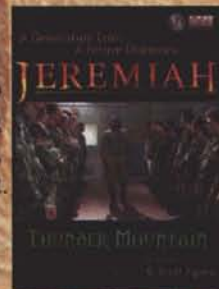
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# CANTRIPS AND ORISONS OF THE ACADEMY OF APPRENTICES

Often overlooked as mere parlor tricks with no practical application, cantrips and orisons offer as much range and versatility as spells of any other levels. Only a foolish spellcaster underestimates the usefulness of these minor yet versatile spells. With the power to light dark corridors, fetch unreachable items, and perform countless other tasks, few adventurers could hope to succeed without these expendable wonders.

Decades ago, the research and distribution of such simple and functional spells motivated some young magic users to form the Academy of Apprentices. While not an actual school or even a structured organization, the so-called academy is little more than an ongoing correspondence between novices. Passionate but untested spellcasters, the group's members pass their notes and theories between one another, cobbling together more advanced magical secrets from the lessons of their peers. Often, such amalgamated studies provide nothing of actual worth, while on rare occasions they unlock powers far beyond the students'—and sometimes even their masters'—ability to control. What all members of the academy hope for is the right flash of inspiration and the proper tidbit of actual magical knowledge to align, creating a minor yet unique and recordable new spell.





Presented here are several of the cantrips and orisons most frequently circulated by the Academy of Apprentices, many created by members of the group with lore provided by their peers. Although wizards make the most frequent use of the knowledge and spells provided by this correspondence, these spells have found their way into the repertoires of many bards, sorcerers, and even clerics and druids. While apprentices might make clever use of cantrips, even higher-level spellcasters might employ these spells to perform mundane tasks quickly without wasting greater magic.

To avoid placing too much emphasis on minor spells, DMs should consider replacing existing rarely used 0-level spells with these alternatives.

### FLEETING FAME

Illusion (Glamer)

Level: Brd 0, Clr 0, Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/level

The infamous wizard-spy Geldersi created this spell during her apprenticeship. The nobles of her city enjoyed throwing lavish parties and Geldersi often breezed her way past wary door-men using this spell.

Upon casting this spell your clothing, armor, weapons, equipment, and physical countenance take on a well-kept and stylish appearance. Those around you get the impression that you are wealthy, well known, and powerful, granting you a +2 bonus on your next single Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidation skill made during the spell's duration.

### GROUNDSMOKE

Transmutation

Level: Drd 0, Rng 1, Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Target: One fire no larger than 5 square feet.

Duration: 8 hours

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

## NEW SPELLS FROM THE ACADEMY OF APPRENTICES



The Academy of Apprentices shares the majority of the 0-level spells from the *Player's Handbook* among its members, along with a host of signature spells. Although these spells hold little real power, the apprentices who scribe and share them are as fanatical about—and as dedicated to—their work as the greatest archmages. The following spells represent some of the Academy of Apprentices's most widespread and useful spells.

### Bard Spells

0-Level Bard Spells

*Fleeting Fame:* Gives you a +2 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks.

*Seeker's Chant:* Gives you a +2 bonus on Search checks, but a -2 penalty on Move Silently checks.

An apprentice wizard who traveled with his adventuring master created this spell as part of his lessons while traveling. Not only providing the student with a unique educational experience, the spell allowed the pair to enjoy the benefits of a fire without worrying about the smoke being spotted by hostile creatures.

This spell prevents natural smoke from rising into the air. The smoke instead rolls out from the fire and dissipates into the ground about six inches from its source.

### NECROSURGERY

Necromancy [Death]

Level: Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

### Cleric Spells

0-Level Cleric Spells

*Fleeting Fame:* Gives you a +2 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks.

### Druid Spells

0-Level Druid Spells

*Ground Smoke:* Prevents smoke from rising from a small fire.

*Vengeful Mount:* Makes an animal more difficult to ride or handle.

### Ranger Spells

1st-Level Ranger Spells

*Ground Smoke:* Prevents smoke from rising from a small fire.

*Vengeful Mount:* Makes an animal more difficult to ride or handle.

### Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

0-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

*Fleeting Fame:* Gives you a +2 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks.

*Ground Smoke:* Prevents smoke from rising from a small fire.

*Necrosurgery:* Grants +2 bonus to resist disease by dealing 1d4 damage.

*Nosy Neighbor:* Provides you with a +2 bonus on Listen checks.

*Seeker's Chant:* Gives you a +2 bonus on Search checks, but a -2 penalty on Move Silently checks.

*Shadowplay:* Manipulates the shape and movement of an existing shadow.

*Vengeful Mount:* Makes an animal more difficult to ride or handle.

Target: Creature touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

Like most necromancers, the wizard Titus found himself constantly surrounded by festering zombies and foul materials. Fearing the diseases that come with prolonged exposure to filth, Titus developed this spell as a meager defense. During a dire plague in one city, the local ruler commanded this spell carved upon stones in the city square to allow any mage capable to learn it.

This spell helps contain disease in a subject by killing off infected flesh. The spell grants the subject a +2 bonus on his next saving throw



to resist any disease he's already contracted. This spell has no effect on an uninfected subject, nonliving creature, or creature immune to the disease it carries.

*Material Components:* A sharp razor or blade.

### **NOSY NEIGHBOR**

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 minute

Sertis was a nosy child and his apprenticeship made him no less so. Sertis used this spell to spy upon his fellow apprentices, allowing him to discover—quite by accident—and prevent a plot to kill his master. During his long career Sertis developed dozens of spells to intrude upon others but none held as much of a place in his heart as this one. Upon his death Sertis's house burnt to the ground, supposedly in an act of arson committed by rivals terrified of what secrets he might have kept. However, this spell survived in the spellbooks of Sertis's apprentices.

This spell improves your sense of hearing for its duration, giving you a +1 bonus on Listen skill checks.

*Material Components:* A small cup.

### **SEEKER'S CHANT**

Divination

Level: Brd 0, Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 minute

An absentminded apprentice authored this spell to make up for his habit of misplacing things, helping him locate lost spellbooks, notes, and even his familiar. Sadly, the young wizard's later more advanced magical accomplishments were always eclipsed by the usefulness of this first creation.



You gain a +1 bonus on Search checks while you utter this chant. However, you also incur a -2 penalty on Move Silently checks as you must constantly intone the words of the chant while concentrating. The chant itself sounds rather like a children's rhyme and is spoken in a firm voice.

### **SHADOWPLAY**

Illusion (Glamer)

Level: Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Shadow of one Huge or smaller object or creature

Duration: Concentration

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

Irinix, a young sorcerer and son of a traveling showman created this spell to complement his storytelling abilities. Irinix became a famous playwright later in life and offered this spell willingly to anyone who would use it to entertain. For that reason, *shadowplay* is more common among street performers than adventuring wizards.

This spell alters an existing shadow into any shape you desire. The shadow of any Huge or smaller creature or object can be affected, but not the shadows of larger forms and not actual creatures like shadows, shadow hounds, or shadow dragons. While you concentrate upon a shadow its shape changes and moves as many times or however you wish. You can

alter the shape of the shadow, diminish it, and split it into numerous smaller shadows, but you cannot increase the shadow's actual size. In addition, a shadow affected by this spell always remains affixed to the surface it's cast upon and cannot move outside of the area it would normally fall. If the source of the shadow is removed the spell ends.

If you cast this spell upon a shadow caused by a specific creature, that creature may make a Will save to resist having its shadow altered. This spell is also affected by spell resistance when cast upon a specific creature's shadow.

### **VENGEFUL MOUNT**

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Drd 0, Rgr 1, Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

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

Target: One animal


Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

The two apprentices of the wizard Nuru spent their entire education at loggerheads; unable to ever make peace. One of the apprentices owned a particularly fine horse and lorded it over the other one by riding the horse about their master's lands at every opportunity. The other apprentice created this spell and used it so frequently that her rival could not mount his horse within sight of their master's tower.

This spell causes a creature of the animal type to shy away from riders or those attempting to use the Handle Animal skill on it. The target animal can attempt a Will save to negate this effect. If the animal fails this save, any creature riding the animal must immediately make a Ride check to remain mounted, usually requiring DC 10 Ride check.

*Material Components:* A riding crop or willow switch. 



The Art of Magic

# Ars Magica

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by Kieran Turley  
illustrated by Cara Mitten

# NATURE UNLEASHED

In a world of demons and eldritch sorcery it is sometimes easy to forget the awesome power of nature. Earthquakes, lightning, floods, tidal waves, and hurricanes rank among the most powerful forces in any world. Presented here are nine items that embody these most primal of natural powers. The wielder of one of these magical wonders can call upon nature's might to strike down his enemies, travel great distances, and even heal his wounds. While many characters might find these items useful, they should appeal especially to druids and rangers, who might view them as status symbols or relics of their nature-oriented faith.

## ACORN OF ACUITY

These simply carved acorns are powerful tools originally created by druids to help their companions understand the glory of nature. Many travelers find these items indispensable for long journeys in the wild. Rangers tend to favor *acorns of acuity* as they enhance their nature-oriented skills.

An *acorn of acuity* is a fist-sized wooden carving of an acorn made from oak and polished smooth as if from years of use. The first time a character holds an *acorn of acuity* he feels a sudden rush of consciousness as the item attunes to him.

A character who holds the acorn in one hand gains a +5 competence bonus on all Survival skill checks. The *acorn of acuity's* owner can also *speak with animals*, as the spell, once per day.

Faint divination; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *speak with animals*; Price 4,120 gp; Weight —.



## ARBOREAL ARMOR

Druids created *arboreal armor* for their ranger allies so they might better defend the wilds against despoilers.

*Arboreal armor* appears as plates of bark held together by vines and covered with patches of moss. The armor has an earthy smell, and it is favored by wood elves, who find it especially suited to their naturalistic taste.

*Arboreal armor* functions as a set of +2 *leather armor*. Its appearance gives the wearer a +4 bonus on Hide checks made in forested settings. The armor automatically regenerates damage dealt to it at the rate of 1 hit point per hour. The wearer can cast *entangle* three times per day, and the armor itself casts *goodberry* every morning at dawn, growing five berries from its own form.

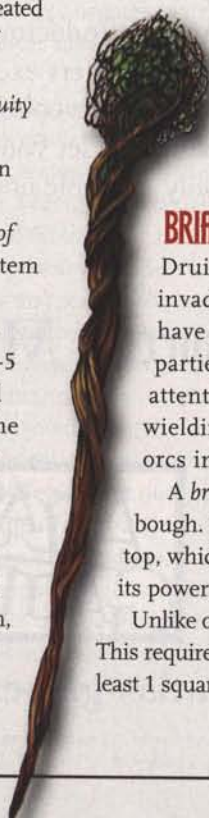
Faint abjuration; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *entangle*, *goodberry*; Price 16,000 gp; Weight 15 lb.

## BRIAR STAFF

Druids working to rid their home of humanoid invaders created the first *briar staffs*. These staffs have seen extensive use against orc raiding parties and as a result have drawn the vengeful attention of at least one orc deity. Anyone wielding a *briar staff* should expect trouble from orcs in his future.

A *briar staff* is created from a single gnarled oak bough. The staff bears a cluster of twisted twigs at its top, which bud to life whenever its wielder uses one of its powers.

Unlike other staffs, a *briar staff* can regain spent charges. This requires burying the staff 1 foot deep within a forest at least 1 square mile in size. For every 7 days it remains buried





and undisturbed, the staff regains 1 charge. The *briar staff* allows the use of the following spells:

- *Entangle* (1 charge)
- *Spike growth* (1 charge)
- *Wall of thorns* (3 charges)

Strong transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Staff, *entangle*, *spike growth*, *wall of thorns*; Price 139,500 gp; Weight 4 lb.

## DELUGE ROD

An insane ocean-dwelling druid calling himself the Brine Lord created the first *deluge rods*. After pirates slew the druid, they discovered a number of these rods hidden in his island home. *Deluge rods* have a dark reputation among arcane spellcasters and the rods' side-effects have made them unpopular with all but the most power hungry.

*Deluge rods* appear as scepters of solid water suspended in time, sometimes with tiny sea creatures swimming within. The rods are undecorated, but a cascade of miniature rainbows appears around them when they are exposed to strong sunlight. During quiet moments, these rods emit echoes of crashing waves upon a rocky coast.

A *deluge rod* has a number of formidable powers, but it extols a price from its user. The bearer of a *deluge rod* can never truly feel warm or dry, even in the hottest desert. As a result, the wielder suffers a -8 penalty on Fortitude saves made to resist the effects of a cold environment and on Constitution checks to resist drowning, but he gains a +4 circumstance bonus on Fortitude saves to resist the effects of heat and on Constitution checks to stave off thirst. Sea elves and other aquatic races consider this curse a boon when traveling on land.

A *deluge rod* has the properties of a +1 *frost club* with the following powers.

*Touch of the Brine Lord*: As a free action, the rod's wielder can activate this ability, causing the rod to deal an additional 2d6 points of cold damage when used as a melee weapon. This effect lasts for 10 rounds once activated, and can be used three times per day.

*Breath of the Brine Lord*: The rod sprays forth a cloud of acidic mist, as the spell *acid fog*. This power can be used once per day.

*Will of the Brine Lord*: The rod summons 1d4+1 Huge fiendish sharks or 1 Huge water elemental, as the spell *summon monster VII*, once per day.

Strong conjuration; CL 13th; Create Rod, *acid fog*, *summon monster VII*; Price 93,180 gp; Weight 2 lb.

## EAGLES' CRY BOW

Powerful creations of Corellon Larethian and sacred relics of the elven people, *eagles' cry bows* are potent weapons. Their power as a symbol to elves exceeds their worth on the battlefield. Elves dutifully protect the secrets of creating *eagles' cry bows*, and they ruthlessly hunt down any non-elf who steals one. If a non-elf comes into possession of one through honorable means, the hunters deal with the erstwhile owner in a more diplomatic manner. Elves grimly but earnestly spread the rumor that a thief might find a quicker and less painful death at the claws of an angry dragon than from elves hunting for a stolen *eagles' cry bow*.

A work of art, an *eagles' cry bow* is covered in beautiful woodcarvings depicting scenes from elven history. A mithral bowtip caps each arm of the bow, while rich leather covers its grip, and two eagle feathers are interwoven with the string and tied in place with fine mithril wire.

An *eagles' cry bow* is a +5 *composite longbow* (+4 Strength bonus) with double the range increment of a normal *composite longbow* (220 feet) and a maximum range of twenty

range increments (each range increment beyond the first still incurs the normal -2 penalty). Whenever a user fires an *eagles' cry bow* it lets out a cry similar to that of an eagle, thus giving the bow its name. All elves within 30 feet of the bow who can hear it are affected as if by a 15th-level bard's inspire courage ability (granting a +3 morale bonus on saving throws against charm and fear effects and on attack and weapon damage rolls) for that round and for the following 5 rounds.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms & Armor, Far Shot, *true strike*, creator must be an elf; Price 73,800 gp; Weight 3 lb.

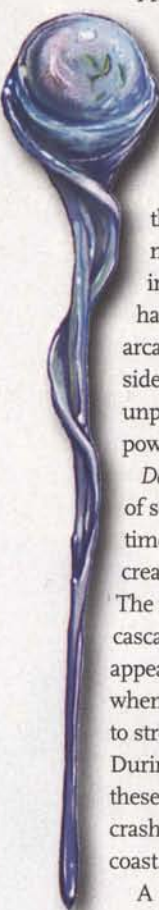
## ROD OF THE WILD

Primitive human barbarians and some wood elf tribes favor these stout cudgels and actively pursue rumors of their locations. A *rod of the wild* provides great prestige to a member of such a tribe who possesses it, and occasionally one finds its way into the tomb of a particularly powerful or respected warrior or chieftain.

*Rods of the wild* appear as 3-foot-long oak cudgels intricately carved with stylized representations of the four animal aspects they bestow. As a rod ages, the grain of its wood darkens until it achieves the appearance of bog oak.

A *rod of the wild* functions as a +2 *club* that grants special abilities based on four animal totems. Once per day, the *rod of the wild's* wielder can choose to take on certain aspects of one of these four animals. The rod continues to grant the special abilities of the chosen animal totem as long as its wielder holds it. A *rod of the wild* only grants its wielder the abilities of one totem animal at a time.

*Bear*: The wielder gains a +3 natural armor bonus and a +4 enhancement bonus to his Strength. While using this







Moderate transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Rod, *bull's strength*, *feather fall*, *reduce person*, *water breathing*; Price 35,145 gp; Weight 3 lb.

### SYLVAN CLOAK

Originally created by a dryad sorcerer, many sylvan races fighting to preserve their woodland homes favor these cloaks. Elves and their allies possess the majority of these magic garments.

A *sylvan cloak* is mottled green in color with oak leaf designs in brown and gold running along its length. Heavy fabrics, such as burlap and wool, make up the cloak and a number of magical enhancements ensure both that it never catches on branches or underbrush and that it faintly smells like a forest after a heavy rainfall. A copper brooch in the shape of an acorn gathers the cloak at the neck.

Anyone who wears a *sylvan cloak* gains a +4 bonus on Escape Artist checks and a +4 bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist the effects of extremely hot or cold environments. Creatures tracking a character

wearing a sylvan cloak by scent suffer a –10 penalty on their Wisdom or Survival checks while tracking him through heavily wooded areas. This effect of the cloak does not inhibit trackers in any nonforested environment.

Faint transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *pass without trace*; Price 11,500; Weight 1 lb.

### SYLVAN CLOAK, GREATER

Gifted to the staunchest of nature's defenders by members of fey and elven royalty, these heavy garments conceal far greater powers than their worn, simple appearances belie. Superficially appearing as *sylvan cloaks*, these magic items grant all of a *sylvan cloak's* abilities, as well as the ability for their wearers to *tree stride*, as the spell, once

per hour. Additionally, a wearer can also animate a tree as per the *liveoak* spell once per day.


Moderate transmutation; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *liveoak*, *tree stride*; Price 153,360 gp; Weight 1 lb.

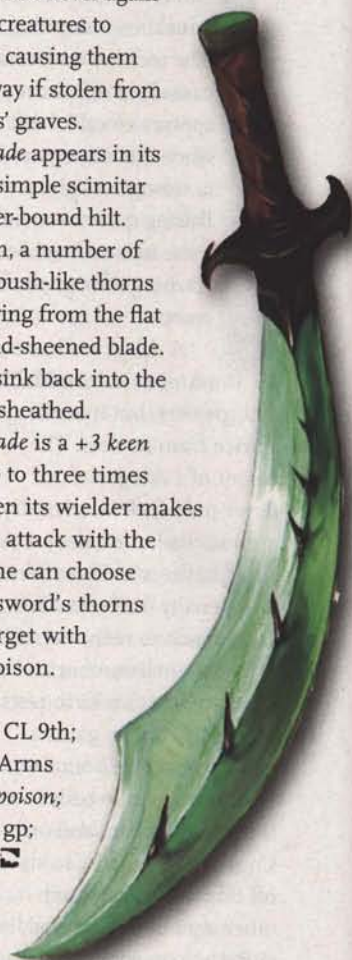
### THORNBLADE

Nature deities and powerful sylvan creatures grant these potent weapons to great protectors of nature. Many good and neutral fey view the possession of a *thornblade* as evidence of skill and trustworthiness. A *thornblade* bonds with its owner, and should its owner not touch the weapon for 30 days, it withers away to nothing, effectively destroying itself. A *thornblade's* owner can grant the sword as a gift to another creature, making that creature the weapon's new owner. Most owners of a *thornblade* are careful to announce an heir for the sword while they yet live. Those who don't make their wishes known are usually buried with their weapons, which never again allow other creatures to claim them, causing them to wither away if stolen from their owners' graves.

A *thornblade* appears in its sheath as a simple scimitar with a leather-bound hilt. When drawn, a number of barbed rosebush-like thorns instantly spring from the flat of its emerald-sheened blade. The thorns sink back into the blade when sheathed.

A *thornblade* is a +3 *keen scimitar*. Up to three times per day, when its wielder makes a successful attack with the *thornblade*, he can choose to have the sword's thorns affect the target with bloodroot poison.

Moderate conjuration; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *poison*; Price 56,450 gp; Weight 4 lb. 



aspect the wielder adds 20 pounds to his weight from increased bulk.

*Hawk*: The wielder gains a +2 competence bonus on Search and Spot checks and can *feather fall* at will as a spell-like ability. In this aspect, the wielder's eyes take on a golden hue.

*Mouse*: The wielder gains a +4 competence bonus on all Hide checks and can use *reduce person* on himself at will. While in this aspect the wielder gains an uncontrollable nose twitch. This twitch has no effect other than for roleplaying purposes.

*Salmon*: The wielder gains a +4 competence bonus on all Swim checks, and can use *water breathing* once per day. While in this form, the wielder's skin takes on a slight silvery sheen.



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by Julian Neale

# CHAOS FEATS

Whether a scion of anarchy, a character driven mad by witnessed horrors, or simply someone who enjoys his freedom, chaos takes many forms among the living. Powerful beings who actively promote chaos—or those who embody it, heart and soul—sometimes grant mortals a beneficial taste of elemental chaos. This boon often comes in the form of an anarchic feat.

This article introduces anarchic feats, which are the chaotic equivalent of vile feats from the *Book of Vile Darkness* and exalted feats from the *Book of Exalted Deeds*. Only intelligent characters of chaotic alignment who wholeheartedly embrace a chaotic lifestyle can gain anarchic feats, and only as a gift from powerful agents of chaos—deities, demons, eladrin, slaadi, or similar creatures. These feats are thus supernatural in nature rather than extraordinary abilities. In some cases, a ritual must be performed; often this simply requires the character to perform an act against his best interests simply for the sake of causing chaos, but your DM may require a more campaign-specific requirement.

A character must have the DM's permission to take an anarchic feat.

**Aura of Chaos:** A character with at least one anarchic feat radiates an aura of chaos with a power equal to his character level (see the *detect chaos* spell), as if he were a cleric of a chaotic deity.

## CHAOS MUSIC [ANARCHIC]

The power of chaos improves your bardic music ability. Your performance becomes frenetic and completely discordant. Something about it speaks to some forgotten aspect of your primal consciousness.

**Prerequisites:** Perform 4 ranks, bardic music ability.

**Benefit:** Your effective bard level increases by +4 for the purposes of determining which bardic music abilities you can use. This feat can't increase your effective bard level beyond your Hit Dice. However, if you can't benefit from the full bonus immediately, but you later gain nonbard Hit Dice, you may apply the rest of the bonus.

For example, a human 5th-level bard/3rd-level fighter who selects this feat would increase his effective bard level from 5th to 8th (since he has 8 HD), allowing him to use the *suggestion* ability and increasing his inspire courage bonus to +2. If he later gained another nonbard level, he would gain the remainder of the bonus and his effective bard level for bardic music abilities would become 9th (since he now has 9 HD).

This does not affect your spells per day or spells known. It only increases your effective bard level in regards to using your bardic music ability.

## CHAOS RAGE [ANARCHIC]

The power of chaos improves your rage ability. While raging, your muscles shudder with uncontrolled energy as the spirit of chaos pushes you past your natural physical extremes.

**Prerequisite:** Intimidate 4 ranks, ability to enter a rage.

**Benefit:** Your effective barbarian level increases by +4 for the purposes of your rage ability. This feat can't increase your effective barbarian level beyond your Hit Dice. However, if you can't benefit from the full bonus immediately, but you later gain nonbarbarian Hit Dice, you may apply the rest of the bonus.

For example, a human 8th-level barbarian/3rd-level fighter who selects this feat would increase his effective

barbarian level from 8th to 11th (since he has 11 HD), allowing him access to greater rage. If he later gained another nonbard level, he would gain the remainder of the bonus and his effective barbarian level would become 12th (since he now has 12 HD), granting him the ability to rage four times per day.

This does not affect your trap sense, uncanny dodge, or any other barbarian class feature. It only increases your effective barbarian level in regards to using your rage ability.

## FLEXIBLE MIND [ANARCHIC]

You have a special knack for particular skills.

**Benefit:** Choose two skills you have ranks in. The chosen skills are always considered class skills for you. In addition, you receive a +1 bonus on all checks involving these skills.

## WILD TOUCH [ANARCHIC]

You gain limited control over magic items that grant random effects.

**Prerequisite:** Use Magic Device 8 ranks.

**Benefit:** When determining the effect produced by a magic item that requires a random roll, you may roll twice and choose the result you prefer. When determining the effect produced by a magic deck of cards that requires a random draw, you may draw two cards at a time and choose the card you prefer (the other card is shuffled back into the deck as if it were not drawn). If you cause a mishap when attempting to read a scroll, you can choose which of two possible mishaps actually occurs. In all three cases, the DM should explain the choices to the player.

You may only use the effects of this feat once per day. ☐



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by Monte Cook  
illustrated by Peter Bergting

# THE SHAPER OF FORM

**B**ards sometimes tell tales, late at night, of primal beings from the very heart of existence that magically kidnap those who delve into the secrets of certain types of spellcasting. These spirits of form test their captives like alchemists test the purity of a sample of gold. If the spirits find the tested individual wanting, they return her to where she originated with the memories of the experience wiped from her mind. If the spellcaster passes these mysterious tests, however, the cryptic spirits of form tutor the spellcaster in a rare and special form of magic only they know how to teach—form shaping.

The shapers of form are rare but proud of their abilities. Unable to pass along the art of shaping magic (only the spirits of form can do that), they rarely work in guilds or with other organized groups of spellcasters. Instead, they find appropriate uses for their special talents as befits their needs and personality, whether as craftsmen, adventurers, performers, thieves, or anything else.

Any character with a spellcasting class can become a shaper of form. However, the specific type of magical knowledge required determines the spirits of form's decision more than the individual's raw power. Regardless of where their magical power originates—whether from dusty tomes or the blessing of nature—shapers of form are universally competent at using spells or abilities that alter things or themselves. Thus, most are usually quite good at a strange variety of skills—disabling devices by changing a gear or lever's shape slightly, escaping bonds by temporarily dislocating a joint, or even healing others by expertly staunching the flow of blood. Most shapers of form know how to alter their surroundings without the aid of magic.

Transmuters make up the majority of shapers of form, although clerics, druids, sorcerers, and unspecialized wizards are common in their ranks.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are features of the shaper of form prestige class.

## REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a shaper of form, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Skills:** Craft (alchemy) 5 ranks, Craft (any other craft skill) 8 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 5 ranks.

**Feats:** Great Fortitude, Spell Focus (transmutation).

**Spells:** Ability to cast six spells from the school of transmutation.

**Special:** Spirits of form, mysterious beings from beyond the normal ken of mortals, must have contacted the character. A character who wishes to join this class does well to study both magical and mundane means of altering the world around her in order to attract the attention of these beings.

## CLASS SKILLS

The shaper of form's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Disable Device (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Profession (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int).

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

HIT  
DICE  
D6





**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:**

Shapers of form gain no proficiency with any weapon or armor.

**Spells:** When a shaper of form gains her 1st level, and every odd level after that (plus 10th level), the character gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in whatever spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, metamagic or item creation feats, and so on). This essentially means that she adds the new level of shaper of form to the level of whatever other spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly. For example, if an 8th-level cleric gains a level in shaper of form, she gains new spells as if she had risen to 9th level in cleric but uses the other shaper of form aspects of level progression such as attack bonus and save bonus. If she next gains a level of cleric, making her a 9th-level cleric/1st-level shaper of form, she gains spells as if she had risen to become a 10th-level cleric.

If a character had more than one spellcasting class before she became a shaper of form, she must decide to which class she adds the spellcasting ability granted by levels of shaper of form.

**Like Begets Like (Su):** Once per day per three class levels, the shaper of form can change one nonmagic object of her size or smaller into a similar object of the same size. Similar items have the same or nearly the same shape and weight within 50% of each other. Similar items must also share a material in their construction that constitutes at least half of their form. For example, the shaper of form can transform a scimitar into a longsword, since both are swords that weight the same. He cannot change a dagger into a short sword, for example, because a short sword weighs twice as much as a dagger. The shaper of form could also change a set of leather armor into a set of studded leather but not a chain shirt (because the chain shirt is made of steel and not leather).

Sometimes, overall improvements can be made, but the value of the item cannot



increase by more than double its original worth. This change is permanent and cannot be dispelled or otherwise removed by any means short of a *wish* or *miracle*.

This effect requires a full-round action to use, and the shaper of form must touch the item in question in order to affect it. The shaper of form can attempt to change an item in another creature's possession, but the item gets a Fortitude save (DC 10 + shaper of form level) to resist the effect.

At 5th level, the shaper of form can use this ability on magic items. The magical qualities do not change. If used on a +1 *flaming longsword* to make it into a warhammer, it becomes a +1 *flaming warhammer*. The value of the finished item cannot exceed the value of the original, and the change lasts for only 24 hours.

At 8th level, the shaper of form can use this ability on any object up to three sizes larger than herself.

**Modify Self (Ex):** At 1st level and every three levels thereafter (at 4th, 7th, and 10th level), the shaper of form can gain one effect from the following list, achieved through applying shaping magic to her own body. The effect is permanent. The shaper of form can choose the same ability more than once—the effects of each ability stack with themselves. For example, a shaper of form who takes the resilience ability three times has a permanent +3 natural armor bonus to her Armor Class. These effects cannot be removed by any means short of a *wish* or *miracle*, and each use of one of those spells removes only a single effect of this ability (thus, multiple *wishes* must be used to eliminate multiple benefits).

**Prowess:** The shaper of form gains a +1 inherent bonus to a physical ability score (Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity).

**Quickness:** The shaper of form adds +10 feet to her base land speed.

**Renaissance:** The shaper of form changes race, gender, or general physical appearance. She cannot change type and



no ability score adjustments occur as a result of the change. So if the character is weak and becomes an orc, she becomes a weak orc. The shaper of form cannot choose to become a member of a race with a level adjustment.

**Resilience:** The shaper of form gains +1 natural armor bonus.

**Toughness:** The shaper of form gains +10 hit points.

**Fortify Item (Su):** Also at 2nd level, a shaper of form can increase the hardness of a single object her size or smaller by 1 with a touch. She can do this once per day. The change is permanent, and an object can receive the benefit of this ability only once. This effect cannot be removed by any means short of a *wish* or *miracle*.

**Polymorph (Sp):** At 2nd level, the shaper of form can cast *polymorph* once per day as a spell-like ability. At 3rd level, the shaper of form can cast *polymorph* twice per day.

**Resist Shaping (Ex):** At 4th level, the shaper of form gains a +2 inherent bonus on saves against transmutation magic.

**As Above, So Below (Su):** Once per day at 6th level the shaper of form can temporarily alter any non-living object of her size or smaller, changing it into another object of her size or smaller that the shaper can touch once per day. For example, if the shaper sees an orc charging at her with a greatsword, she can transform a rock at her feet into a greatsword. The finished item can have a value no greater than 1,000 gp per level of the shaper of form. Magic qualities can be duplicated as well, as long as the shaper of form can identify them with a successful Spellcraft check. Thus, if the shaper of form can see someone else with *boots of striding and springing*, she can transform her boots (or anything else she can touch) into *boots of striding and springing*. The change lasts for 1 round per class level of the shaper of form. This effect cannot be removed before its duration expires by any means short of a *wish* or *miracle*.

This effect requires a full-round action to use, and the shaper of form must touch the item to be changed in order to affect it.

**Polymorph Any Object (Sp):** At 9th level, the shaper of form can cast *polymorph any object* once per day as a spell-like ability.

**Disable (Sp):** At 10th level, the shaper of form gains the ability to ruin an item once every other day. This ability allows the shaper of form to create a *Mordenkainen's disjunction* effect to completely remove all magical abilities from a single item or to *disintegrate* (as the spell) any nonmagical, nonliving object. Neither use of this ability allows a saving throw, although artifacts can only be affected as described under *Mordenkainen's disjunction*. ☞

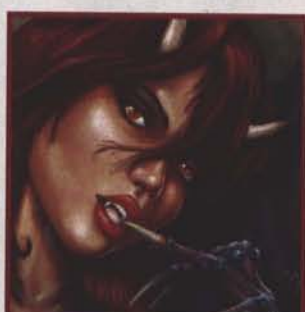
## THE SHAPER OF FORM

Level	Base				Special	Spells
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Save		
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Like begets like, modify self	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Fortify item, <i>polymorph</i> (1/day)	—
3rd	+1	+3	+1	+3	<i>Polymorph</i> (2/day)	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Modify self, resist shaping	—
5th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Like begets like (magic)	+1 level of existing class
6th	+3	+5	+2	+5	As above, so below	—
7th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Modify self	+1 level of existing class
8th	+4	+6	+2	+6	Like begets like (larger)	—
9th	+4	+6	+3	+6	<i>Polymorph any object</i>	+1 level of existing class
10th	+5	+7	+3	+7	Disable, modify self	+1 level of existing class



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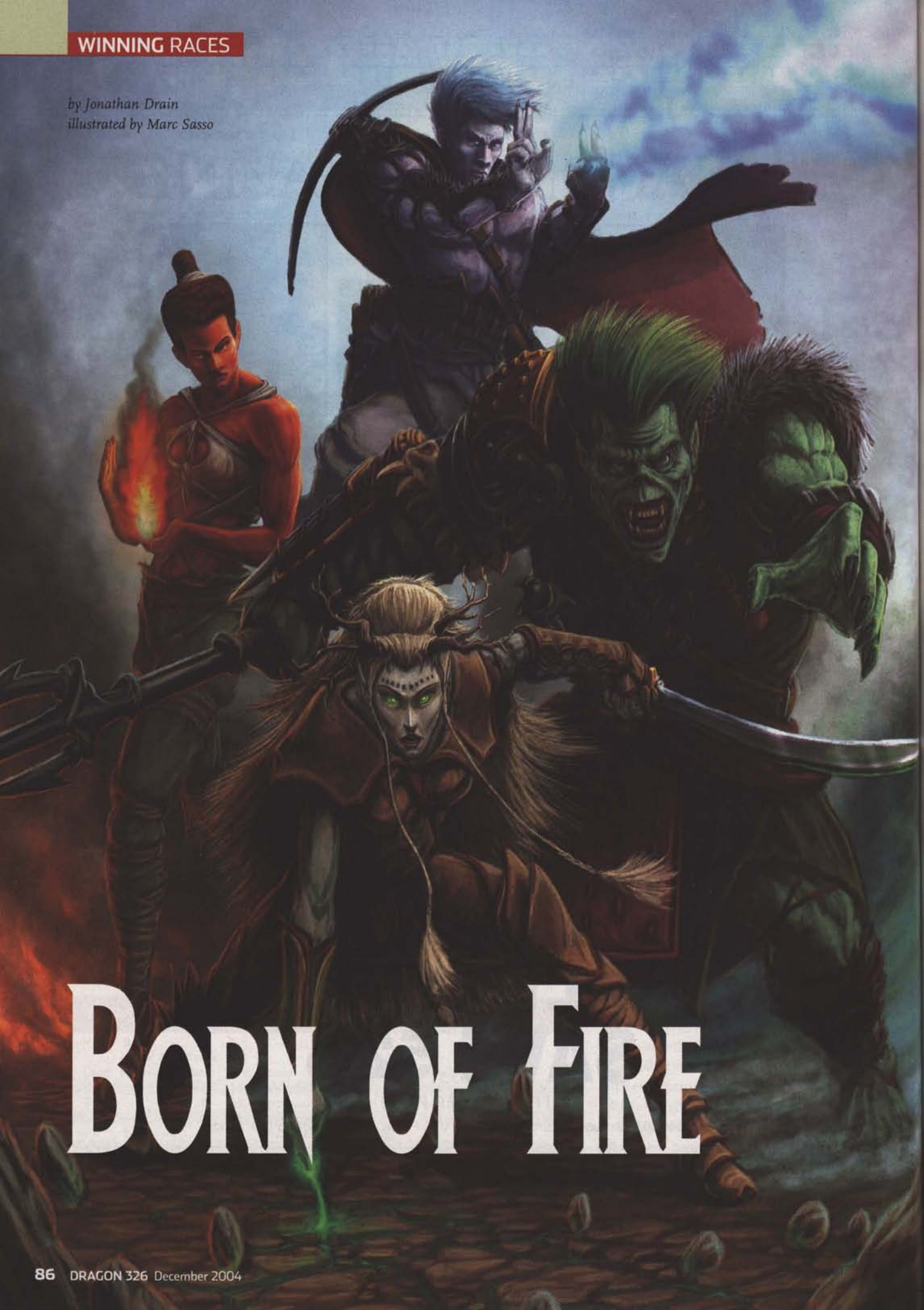
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by Jonathan Drain  
illustrated by Marc Sasso



# BORN OF FIRE



In D&D, gaining immense power can be a matter of being bitten by a vampire, infected by a lycanthrope, or undertaking the unspeakable rites of lichdom. Encountering powerful creatures, rituals, artifacts, and a multitude of other methods can all lead to a source of great and varied strengths: templates.

However, the immediate jump in power that comes from gaining a template can often significantly unbalance a game. Few players enjoy this kind of sudden level adjustment, as it takes their characters' advancement out of their hands and sets them apart from their fellow adventurers. As for the other members of the group, they're unlikely to be pleased if one party member gains a bonus that significantly raises the average party level.

An easy solution to this situation is to allow characters to take templates one level at a time, much like the "monster class" system first introduced in *Savage Species*. This way, the character gradually gains the abilities of the template, with each level granting one level adjustment's worth of abilities.

Presented here are four templates from the *Manual of the Planes* using this system, giving players access to the forces of nature in a mere three levels. With the right magic, characters can now tap into vast power

## ECL AND LA

A creature's effective character level (ECL) is the sum of its racial Hit Dice, level adjustment, and class levels. Use character level for most game functions except awarding experience, determining starting equipment, and determining how much experience the character needs to gain a new level. For all three of those functions, use effective character level instead. Level adjustment (LA) is a measure of how much more powerful a creature is than other creatures of its Hit Dice. A level adjustment provides a numeric comparison with the seven standard races from the *Player's Handbook*, showing how much more powerful that creature is than one of the standard races, in terms of levels.

For more information on ECL and LA, see the *Monster Manual* glossary and Monsters as Races on page 172 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*. *Savage Species* explains ECL, LA, and monster classes in chapter 3.

## HALF-ELEMENTALS 3.5 UPDATE

The half-elemental template originally appeared in the *Manual of the Planes* but has been updated with the following changes. Half-elementals gain skills and feats as the base creature. They gain the relevant elemental subtype (Earth, Air, Fire, Water), but no other special qualities. They have a level adjustment of +3.

This information is available from the D&D 3.5 Accessory Update, which can be downloaded from the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS page of the Wizards of the Coast website, [wizards.com](http://wizards.com).

as close as the breath in their lungs, the torches in their hands, the drink in their mugs, and the stones under their feet.

## HALF-ELEMENTAL CLASSES

Half-elementals are the rare offspring of a native of one of the Elemental Planes and a creature from another plane. Four types of half-elemental are known to exist: flighty half-air elementals, stolid half-earth elementals, explosive half-fire elementals, and mercurial half-water elementals.

Depending on the combination of parentage and chance, half-elementals might be born with their abilities fully manifested or they might not develop them until later in life. Still others are artificially created through magical rituals, infusing one's mundane blood with the power of the planes. These options give players and DMs a great deal of leeway to introduce half-elemental characters into a game.

Any corporeal character with an Intelligence score of 4 or more can taken levels in a half-elemental monster class. Each level is taken much like a prestige class, except that the character does not gain increased Hit Dice, base attack bonus, base saving throw bonuses, or skill points for taking those levels, nor does the character gain feats or ability score increases as described on Table 3-2 in the *Player's Handbook*. Each level taken increases the base creature's ECL by +1. Half-elemental levels do not count as class levels for the purpose of determining character level (the sum of racial Hit Dice and class levels).

## HALF-AIR ELEMENTAL



The extraplanar heritage of half-air elementals is clear in both their personality and appearance. They are quick of both body and mind and

prefer to live life by their wits—a trait that makes most half-air elementals natural adventurers. Often having airy voices, windswept hair, and a blue-white tint to their skin, half-air elementals resemble creatures of wind and cloud.

## HALF-AIR ELEMENTAL

Level	CR	Special
1	+0	Dex +2, outsider type, spell-like abilities
2	+1	Int +2, Cha +2, natural armor +1, spell-like abilities
3	+2	Con +2, Wis +2, air subtype, spell-like abilities

## HALF-AIR ELEMENTAL CLASS FEATURES

All the following are class features of the half-air elemental monster class.

**Ability Score Increases:** These changes are applied as racial bonuses to the character's ability scores that stack with existing racial bonuses, including those gained from previous half-elemental levels.

**Outsider Type (Ex):** At 1st level, the character's type changes to outsider (native). Half-elemental creatures are not extraplanar and can be raised and resurrected normally. Creatures that were already outsiders or elementals do not have their types changed when taking levels in this class.

**Natural Armor:** The natural armor bonus granted stacks with any existing natural armor, but not with spells or magic items that provide a natural armor bonus.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** A half-air elemental gains the use of the following spell-like abilities, each usable once per day using the character's Hit Dice as the caster level. The character must have the prerequisite half-elemental level and character level to use each spell-like ability, as listed in the table.



Minimum Half-Elemental Level	Required Character Level	Spell-Like Ability
1	1	<i>Obscuring mist</i>
1	3	<i>Wind wall</i>
1	5	<i>Gaseous form</i>
2	7	<i>Air walk</i>
2	9	<i>Control winds</i>
2	11	<i>Chain lightning</i>
3	13	<i>Control weather</i>
3	15	<i>Whirlwind</i>
3	17	<i>Elemental swarm*</i>
3	19	<i>Plane shift</i>

\*Cast as an air spell only.

Save DCs are Charisma based (10 + spell level + Charisma modifier).

**Air Subtype (Ex):** At 3rd level the character fully transforms into a half-air elemental. He gains the Air subtype, granting him the ability to fly at his base land speed with perfect maneuverability.

## HALF-EARTH ELEMENTAL



Half-earth elementals are tough, burly individuals who are slow to anger but nearly unstoppable once enraged. While not renowned for their agility, they

make up for their slow speed in sheer strength and resilience. Their personalities are typically described as stern and reserved, not unlike dwarves, and they have noticeably rocky skin.

## HALF-EARTH ELEMENTAL

Level	CR	Special
1	+0	Str +2, natural armor +1, outsider type, spell-like abilities
2	+1	Con +2, natural armor +3, spell-like abilities
3	+2	Str +2, Con +2, Dex -2, earth subtype, spell-like abilities

## HALF-EARTH ELEMENTAL

### CLASS FEATURES

All the following are class features of the half-earth elemental monster class.

**Ability Score Changes:** These changes are applied as racial bonuses to the character's ability scores that stack with any existing racial bonuses. Bonuses granted at different levels stack. Where a penalty to an ability score is applied, this is a permanent change and cannot be removed by any spell or effect.

### Natural Armor Improvements:

The natural armor bonuses granted stack with any existing natural armor (including that granted by previous half-earth elemental levels), but not with spells or magic items that provide a natural armor bonus.

**Outsider Type (Ex):** At 1st level, the character's type changes to outsider (native). Half-elemental creatures are not extraplanar and can be raised and resurrected normally. Creatures that were already outsiders or elementals do not have their types changed when taking levels in this class.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** A half-earth elemental with either an Intelligence or Wisdom score of at least 8 gains the use of the following spell-like abilities, each usable once per day using the character's Hit Dice as the caster level. The character must have the prerequisite half-earth elemental level and character level to use each spell-like ability, as listed in the table. Save DCs are Charisma based (10 + spell level + Charisma modifier).

Minimum Half-Elemental Level	Required Character Level	Spell-Like Ability
1	1	<i>Magic stone</i>
1	3	<i>Soften earth and stone</i>
1	5	<i>Stone shape</i>
2	7	<i>Spike stones</i>
2	9	<i>Wall of stone</i>
2	11	<i>Stoneskin</i>
3	13	<i>Earthquake</i>
3	15	<i>Iron body</i>
3	17	<i>Elemental swarm*</i>
3	19	<i>Plane shift</i>

\*Cast as an Earth spell only.

**Earth Subtype (Ex):** At 3rd level the character fully transforms into a half-earth elemental. She gains the Earth subtype.

## HALF-FIRE ELEMENTAL



Passionate and extreme, half-fire elementals are powerful and unpredictable creatures. Some half-fire elementals are warm, friendly

individuals, while others are arrogant and temperamental. Many have wild, fiery hair, smoldering eyes, and a warm glow to their skin, making





the flames that run through their veins immediately apparent.

## HALF-FIRE ELEMENTAL

Level	CR	Special
1	+0	Dex +2, fire resistance 10, outsider type, spell-like abilities
2	+1	Int +2, natural armor +1, fire resistance 15, spell-like abilities
3	+2	Dex +2, Cha +2, fire subtypes, spell-like abilities

### HALF-FIRE ELEMENTAL CLASS FEATURES

All the following are class features of the half-fire elemental monster class.

**Ability Score Increases:** These changes are applied as racial bonuses to the character's ability scores. These bonuses stack with any existing racial bonuses, including those gained from previous half-elemental levels.

**Outsider Type (Ex):** At 1st level, the character's type changes to outsider (native). Half-elemental creatures are not extraplanar and can be raised and resurrected normally. Creatures that were already outsiders or elementals do not have their types changed when taking levels in this class.

**Fire resistance (Ex):** At 1st level, the half-fire elemental gains fire resistance 10, increasing to fire resistance 15 at 2nd level.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** A half-fire elemental with either an Intelligence or Wisdom score of at least 8 gains the use of the following spell-like abilities, each usable once per day using the character level as the caster level. The character must have the prerequisite half-elemental level and character level to use each spell-like ability, as listed in the table. Save DCs are Charisma based (10 + spell level + Charisma modifier).

Minimum Half-Elemental Level	Required Character Level	Spell-Like Ability
1	1	Burning hands
1	3	Produce flame
1	5	Flaming sphere
2	7	Wall of fire
2	9	Fire shield
2	11	Fire seeds
3	13	Firestorm
3	15	Incendiary cloud
3	17	Elemental swarm*
3	19	Plane shift

\*Cast as a Fire spell only.

**Natural Armor Improvement:** The natural armor bonus granted stacks

with any existing natural armor, but not with spells or magic items that provide a natural armor bonus.

**Fire Subtype (Ex):** At 3rd level, the character fully transforms into a half-fire elemental. He gains the fire subtype, granting him immunity to fire, but he takes half-again as much (+50%) damage from cold.

## HALF-WATER ELEMENTAL



Half-water elementals are flexible, graceful beings, fluid of both thought and form. Although usually calm and balanced, these creatures can

be as unpredictable and dangerous as a stormy sea. Half-water elementals often have a bluish-green tinge to their skin and hair, and faintly visible scales that mark them as creatures of the depths.

### HALF-WATER ELEMENTAL CLASS FEATURES

Level	CR	Special
1	+0	Wis +2, Cha +2, outsider type, spell-like abilities
2	+1	Str +2, natural armor +1, spell-like abilities
3	+2	Con +2, Int +2, water subtype, spell-like abilities

### HALF-WATER ELEMENTAL CLASS FEATURES

All the following are class features of the half-water elemental monster class.

**Ability Score Increases:** These changes are applied as racial bonuses to the character's ability scores. These bonuses stack with any existing racial bonuses, including those gained from previous half-elemental levels.

**Outsider Type (Ex):** At 1st level, the character's type changes to outsider (native). Half-elemental creatures are not extraplanar, and can be raised and resurrected normally. Creatures that were already outsiders or elementals do not have their types changed when taking levels in this class.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** A half-water elemental with either an Intelligence or Wisdom score of at least 8 gains the use of the following spell-like abilities, each once per day using the



character's Hit Dice as the caster level. The character must have the prerequisite half-air elemental level and character level to use each spell-like ability, as listed in the table. Save DCs are Charisma based (10 + spell level + Charisma modifier).

Minimum Half-Elemental Level	Required Character Level	Spell-Like Ability
1	1	Obscuring mist
1	3	Fog cloud
1	5	Water breathing
2	7	Control water
2	9	Ice storm
2	11	Cone of cold
3	13	Acid fog
3	15	Horrid wilting
3	17	Elemental swarm*
3	19	Plane shift

\*Cast as a Water spell only.

**Natural Armor Improvement:** The natural armor bonus granted stacks with any existing natural armor, but not with spells or magic items that provide a natural armor bonus.

**Water Subtype (Ex):** At 3rd level the character fully transforms into a half-water elemental. She gains the water subtype, a swim speed equal to her base land speed, and can breathe normally underwater. ☞



by Joshua Cole



# TWO SWORDS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

The archetypal fighter is a shield bearing, plate armor-wearing master of the longsword—at a glance, indistinguishable from an undersized iron golem.

This stereotype might be the most commonly encountered fighter, but with so many bonus feats available, it's hardly the sole possibility.

## DOUBLE DARE

Fighters can actually fight more effectively using two weapons than rangers. Weapon Specialization, normally a small bonus, becomes essentially twice as powerful when a fighter wields two specialized weapons or a double weapon. While a ranger probably deals more damage to his favored enemies, a two-weapon-focused fighter deals more damage overall because of his specialization and more numerous combat feats.

Consider a fighter and a ranger, each at the peak of his abilities (20th level), and each wielding two weapons. The ranger received his Two-Weapon Fighting feats as bonuses, but then, so did the fighter. Because a fighter gains so many feats over the course of his career, he might decide to pursue Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization for both a light weapon and a one-handed weapon. Most other characters, even with only Weapon Focus available, cannot afford to expend their feats on two different weapons, and thus they either deal less damage with their primary weapon by wielding two light weapons, or they take greater penalties by wielding two one-handed weapons.

So the fighter obviously has the advantage in number of feats, but what does that really do for him? A 20th-level fighter wielding two weapons and using the Greater Two-Weapon Fighting feat can make seven attacks with a full attack action, but so can the ranger. Yet if each of his attacks hit (which Weapon Focus should help with) the fighter deals 14 points of damage just from Weapon Specialization alone (28 points of damage with Greater Weapon Specialization). The ranger could best that against one of his favored enemies—a ranger who allocates all of his bonus increases

against one enemy deals 70 points of damage against that favored enemy just from his favored enemy damage—but against varied foes he can't hope to keep up with the fighter.

## WALL OF BLADES

A fighter with the Two-Weapon Fighting feat need not sacrifice his Armor Class. Although he can't bear a shield, he can still wear full plate armor. If you have access to the *Complete Warrior*, your fighter can use a buckler and still fight two-handed or pursue the Two-Weapon Defense tree presented in that tome. If he masters such esoteric arts, he can easily become a more adept defender than a fighter who favors a shield over an extra sword.

## CHOICE WEAPONS

Perhaps the most important consideration for a fighter who decides to focus on the Two-Weapon Fighting tree is which two weapons (or which double weapon) to employ.

The classic rapier and short sword combination works perfectly for a lightly armored, fighter with high Dexterity who wants the best return for Weapon Finesse. Since many fighters who specialize in Two-Weapon Fighting do so because of a relatively low Strength score, finessing often proves very valuable.

Wielding two short swords, two handaxes, or two similar light weapons saves a fighter as many as four feats, as he no longer needs to take Greater Weapon Focus, Greater Weapon Specialization, and their prerequisites in more than one weapon. Two rapiers, two scimitars, or two longswords increase the fighter's damage, but at the cost of accuracy.

Finally, a double weapon, particularly an exotic double weapon, offers the best of both worlds. A fighter who wields an orc double-axe deals as much damage as if he employed two battleaxes, yet he still counts the off-handed attacks as light weapons for the purpose of the Two-Weapon Fighting feat. A two-bladed sword likewise works well to replace twin longswords. ■

FIGHTER



by Joshua Cole



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FIGHTER





# FLAWS FOR CLERICS

While almost every party member welcomes a cleric or two in the party, many clerics follow restrictive, intolerant, or unaccepting dogmas. Provided here are several flaws that might help define your cleric's particular beliefs, although they could lose your cleric his place as your companions' favorite party member.

Flaws penalize a character in a specific way. Most of these flaws have obvious role-playing consequences, but they also have game mechanics penalties. The concept of flaws first appeared in *Unearthed Arcana*, but you don't need that book to use the flaws presented here. A character may only take up to two flaws, and they must be selected at 1st level. For each flaw you take, your character may select an additional feat. Thus, a 1st-level human character with two flaws may take four feats.

Although designed specifically with clerics in mind, other characters may select from these flaws if they meet the appropriate prerequisites.

## ALIGNED DEVOTION [FLAW]

Your healing powers are only effective for those whose alignment closely matches yours.

**Prerequisite:** Ability to spontaneously cast *cure* spells.

**Effect:** Your spells of the healing subschool have reduced effect on those who do not share your alignment. Those that have exactly the same alignment as you gain full benefit from your healing. Those with an alignment within one step of yours are cured half the normal amount of hit points from your healing spells. Characters with alignments more than one step different from yours gain no benefit from your healing at all. Your *cure* spells still deal full damage to undead.

## DIVINE GESTURES [FLAW]

Your religious rites require elaborate gestures that cause you difficulty when casting divine spells while wearing armor or using a shield.

**Prerequisite:** Ability to cast divine spells.

**Effect:** You suffer a spell failure chance (due to armor, shields, or anything else

which causes arcane spell failure) when casting divine spells, just as if they were arcane spells.

## DOMAIN DEVOTION [FLAW]

You are limited to accessing only one of your deity's domains.

**Prerequisite:** Access to domains.

**Effect:** You choose and have access to only one of your deity's domains. You may gain prestige domains from a prestige class as usual.

## LIVING FAITH [FLAW]

Your religious practices give you no special powers over the dead.

**Prerequisite:** Ability to turn or rebuke undead.

**Effect:** You lose the ability to turn or rebuke undead. This does not extend to any other creatures a domain might grant you the ability to turn or rebuke, such as earth elementals for a cleric with the Air domain.

## MATERIAL DEVOTION [FLAW]

You are restricted to using magical objects created with your deity's domains in mind.

**Prerequisite:** Access to domains.

**Effect:** You may only use spell-trigger items (wands and staves) that cast spells on your domain spell lists. Other spell-trigger items fail in your hands.

## PONDEROUS SPELLCASTER [FLAW]

Your spells take additional time to cast.

**Prerequisite:** Ability to cast spells.

**Effect:** The casting time of all your spells are doubled. Spells that normally require a single action to cast require a full-round action to cast instead. Spells that normally require a free action to cast now require a standard action to cast instead.

## WEAPON BOUND [FLAW]

You are attuned to your deity's weapon and no other.

**Prerequisite:** Devotion to a specific deity.

**Effect:** You lose proficiency with all weapons except the favored weapon of your deity. This flaw does not grant you proficiency with that weapon.

CLERIC



by Mark A. Hart



# THE NECROMANCER'S PRIMER

**A** low-level necromancer presents perhaps the most challenging roleplaying experience in D&D. At lower levels, the necromancer's spell selection is among the smallest of any specialist wizard. Although filled with useful and potent spells, many involve "all or nothing" effects or only affect a single target. To survive in a dangerous world, low-level necromancers must select and prepare spells with care. This article discusses the best necromancy spells available in the *Player's Handbook*, from 1st to 3rd-level spells, including an explanation of which spells to include in your necromancer's arsenal.

## NECROMANTIC SPELL TIPS

When choosing spells, it helps to understand that many Necromancy spells work best in combination with one another, such as *chill touch* and *spectral hand*. Although spell combinations require time to cast, they often produce impressive and effective results by enhancing each other. In addition, necromancy spells often possess all-or-nothing saving throws, working or failing outright depending on the target's abilities and a chance roll of the die. As such, you should consider focusing on spells that require a touch or ranged touch attack, as many of these spells don't offer their targets saving throws. You also might improve your necromancer's attack bonuses with spells such as *spectral hand* or *true strike*. Also, never underestimate the uses of cantrips like *disrupt undead* and *touch of fatigue*.

## 1ST LEVEL

**Cause Fear:** An excellent spell, *cause fear* forces a frightened target with fewer than 6 HD to flee from you, potentially removing it from combat. Even if the subject succeeds at its Will save, it is shaken for one round.

**Chill Touch:** This spell requires a touch attack, so you should combine it with *spectral hand* as soon as it's available. A successful saving throw prevents the target from taking abil-

ity damage from this spell. *Chill touch* even affects undead creatures, forcing them to flee if they fail their Will saves, making this spell incredibly versatile.

**Ray of Enfeeblement:** This spell requires a ranged touch attack but permits no saving throw and lasts for several minutes. Useful at weakening strong foes, as most monsters suffer from decreased strength.

## 2ND LEVEL

**Command Undead:** The equivalent of *charm person* for undead, unintelligent undead receive no saving throws against this spell. The spell's duration is excellent at a day per caster level, and it can be recast daily to keep the target under your control.

**Ghoul Touch:** With the potential to both paralyze a target and sicken creatures nearby, this spell is especially effective against enemy spellcasters and other opponents with poor Fortitude saves.

**Spectral Hand:** Because many necromancy spells require a touch attack, *spectral hand* is among the best spells your necromancer can select. With a duration measured in minutes, you can cast *spectral hand* before most battles and use it multiple times before it expires. Besides conveying spells to enemies, *spectral hand* might also provide allies with beneficial touch spells like *mage armor* and *bull's strength* from a distance.

## 3RD LEVEL

**Ray of Exhaustion:** This spell leaves the target fatigued with a successful saving throw or exhausted with a failed saving throw, making it beneficial regardless of the target's save.

**Vampiric Touch:** Especially useful in combination with *spectral hand*, as it permits no saving throw, *vampiric touch* not only damages a target but grants the necromancer a temporary boost in hit points. Wait to cast this spell until your necromancer takes damage to allow your clerics to focus their healing on other allies. ☐

WIZARD





# OPTIONAL SPECIAL ABILITIES FOR ROGUES

**A**s rogues hone their skills they sometimes discover new, almost supernatural ways to manifest their talents. Presented here are several new options for rogue special abilities. Rogues have the option to choose their special abilities at higher levels, and the options in this article are similar to those already outlined in the rogue's description on page 51 of the *Players Handbook*.

**Façade (Ex):** When the rogue disguises himself, he delves so deeply into character that he fools even divination magic. Whenever a creature casts a divination spell (or uses an ability that reproduces the effect of such a spell) that affects the rogue while he's disguised, the creature must make a Spot check opposed by the rogue's Disguise check. If the Spot check fails, the divination spell perceives the rogue as radiating the aura and thoughts that the rogue wishes the effect to detect. For instance, a rogue disguised as a zombie might radiate a neutral evil aura, detect as undead, and would have no discernible thoughts for a *detect thoughts* spell to pick up. Such a rogue would not suffer any ill effects from such a perfect disguise, such as extra harm from a holy or bane weapons.

**Face in the Crowd (Ex):** The rogue develops an uncanny ability to blend in while among large numbers of people. When within a crowd, the rogue may use the Hide skill even while being observed. For the purposes of this effect, a crowd consists of at least ten creatures at least half the rogue's size within a 10-foot radius of the rogue.

**Handwriting Analysis (Ex):** Trained to scrutinize the whorls and loops of a person's writing along with choices of words and imagery, the rogue may make startlingly accurate deductions about a person from handwriting alone. Upon making a successful Decipher Script check, the rogue may attempt to learn further information about the writer. The result of this Decipher Script check reveals specific traits and all facts of a lesser DC as noted in the following table. For example, a rogue who makes a Decipher Script check and

exceeds the DC by 5 reveals the relative age, race, and gender of the writer.


When attempting to use this ability to sniff out a forgery (for instance, to see if a love letter purportedly written by a princess was actually composed by a female of her age, race, and gender) use the Forgery skill check of the forger in lieu of a Decipher Script DC. By succeeding at a Decipher Script check opposed by the forger's Forgery check, the rogue may attempt to reveal information about the forger as normal.

Fact	Decipher Script
Gender	Meets DC
Race	Exceeds the DC by 2
Relative age*	Exceeds the DC by 5
Highest level class	Exceeds the DC by 10
Law vs. chaos alignment axis	Exceeds the DC by 15
Good vs. evil alignment axis	Exceeds the DC by 20

\*Child, adult, middle aged, old, or venerable

**Light Sleeper (Ex):** The rogue's sensitivity to the slightest sound becomes so acute that it is almost impossible for him to fail to react to danger. The rogue no longer suffers a -10 penalty to Listen checks while asleep.

**Saboteur (Ex):** The rogue's perception becomes so honed that he instantly notices even the most minute flaws in objects, enabling him to strike at their vulnerable points. When attacking objects or making a sunder attack action, the rogue may ignore an amount of hardness up to half his rogue class level. Further, constructs are no longer immune to the rogue's sneak attacks.

**Swift Kick (Ex):** Effortlessly examining mechanical devices, the rogue may affect them with a vigorous jolt. The rogue no longer needs tools to use the Disable Device skill (although he still gains the +2 circumstance bonus when using masterwork thieves' tools). In addition, the time it takes the rogue to use the Disable Device skill is reduced by one step. Difficult and wicked devices now require 1d4 rounds to disable, tricky devices require 1 round, and a simple device can be disabled as a free action. 

ROGUE



by Christopher Campbell



# STRONG STRATEGIES

**W**hen making a barbarian, keep in mind the class's strengths and avoid wasting resources on abilities and skills better used by other classes. The three main strengths of a barbarian are power, maneuverability, and endurance. Focusing on feats, skills, and magic items that highlight one of these abilities provides the best way to maximize your character's potential, making him a valued member of an adventuring party.

A barbarian's job is to fight, pure and simple. You should discuss tactics with your party that make the most of your strengths and downplay your specific weaknesses. Regardless of the aspect you decide to focus on, keep in mind your barbarian's vulnerabilities. Area-affecting and mind-affecting spells are always a barbarian's bane, as Reflex and Will saves are poor for these powerhouses (although raging gives their Will saves a slight boost). Turn to your party's spellcasters and spells like *cat's grace* and *owl's wisdom* for help if you plan to face such threats.

## POWER

When focusing on power, make Strength your highest ability score. Strength affects attack and damage rolls and improves when raging. Races that add their own bonuses to Strength, such as half-orcs or monstrous races, often make the best barbarians. With benefits to attack rolls, your character hits more often and deals more damage with each strike. Such an increase in damage means shorter battles and better chances for you and your allies to survive.

Barbarians usually shouldn't waste feats on exotic weapons, as two-handed martial weapons deal more damage and offer equivalent threat ranges. Coupled with Power Attack, a barbarian can deal massive amounts of damage with a two-handed weapon. Add Cleave and Great Cleave, and you have a decent chance of taking out two or three weak opponents every round at lower levels. Magic items like a *belt of giant strength* and *gauntlets of ogre strength* also serve to make you all the more formidable in combat.

## MANEUVERABILITY

When focusing on maneuverability, avoid heavy armor and slow races. Skills such as Climb, Jump, Move Silently, and Swim compliment your barbarian's fast movement ability. Thus, maxing out ranks in such skills helps ensure that, at a critical moment, a barbarian can successfully traverse the required distance regardless of any hurdle. The Run feat also lets a barbarian shine when time and distance are important factors.

In regards to combat, taking the Improved Initiative feat moves your barbarian's actions toward the beginning of each round, ideally before opponents. Thanks to the fast movement ability, your barbarian can engage in combat sooner than the rest of the party and rounds raging aren't wasted closing with enemies. Spring Attack also provides a great benefit, allowing a barbarian to move, attack an enemy, and move on to another opponent, setting up for a full-round assault. Even though it's a cross-class skill, Tumble lets a barbarian move past weaker foes and head straight for tougher opponents, ideally without provoking attacks of opportunity. *Boots of striding and springing* and *boots of speed* both make such tactics even more effective.

## ENDURANCE

As the character class with the largest Hit Die, barbarians are well equipped to take more damage than any other class. If you're focusing on your barbarian's endurance, dwarves provide a useful bonus to Constitution. Such a high Constitution score provides an extra edge in surviving melee combats as well as improving Fortitude saves against instant-kill spells. A good Dexterity score also often proves helpful, as it improves your Armor Class and Reflex saves, preventing your vast pool of hit points from going down as quickly. However, this doesn't make Armor Proficiency (heavy) a useful choice, as you end up sacrificing your fast movement ability. Instead, shore up your AC by obtaining an *amulet of natural armor* and *bracers of armor*. ■

# BARBARIAN





# THE WILD SIDE

In the hands of a canny druid, the wild shape ability can produce a mighty warrior, a swift-moving scout, or a stealthy fly on the wall—although only an epic level druid can literally become a fly. Indeed, mastering wild shape allows a druid to fill virtually any party role, which small parties might find especially valuable.

## BATTLE BEAST

The dire tiger offers one of the most powerful animal forms available to a druid, and transforming into a dire tiger goes a long way toward making up for the druid's d8 Hit Dice and average base attack progression. At 16th level, when a druid can assume dire tiger form, she might also transform herself into a Huge plant. Whether she becomes a shambling mound, a treant, or some more esoteric form, a wild-shaped druid in the form of a plant gains immunity to critical hits, sneak attacks, and mind-affecting spells. Elemental wild shape also grants new powers that greatly expand a druid's combat abilities.

If your DM allows, your druid can use manufactured weapons when wild shaped into certain animals—especially apes and dire apes. Although the rules don't specifically mention this, common sense says that a druid in the form of an animal that can stand on two legs and hold items with its other appendages should be allowed to wield weapons. Naturally, the druid can't use an item she's wearing when she wild shapes, as all her gear melds into her animal form.

A fighting druid who can't or doesn't use weapons while utilizing her wild shape ability must invest heavily in magic items that work while wild shaped, in single-use items with effects that have long or permanent durations, or in items that improve her animal companion's combat prowess.

Magic armor with the wild special ability continues to provide its benefits to a druid in animal form. Since armor, natural armor, and some druid defensive spells stack, a high-level druid can obtain a very high AC. Indeed, the mightiest druids can match dragons in their defensive capacities, at least against physical attacks. Unfortunately, the wild special ability

costs the same as a +3 enhancement bonus, making the better druid armors expensive.

## STEALTHY AS A CAT

A battle-focused druid can compete with the warrior classes in terms of combative prowess, but a stealthy druid can put her rogue companion to shame in matters of sneaking and skullduggery.

Even a low-level druid can transform herself into a dog. This form allows her to slip unnoticed through most humanoid settlements as even savage humanoids keep animals, either for use as mounts or guards.

Once a druid obtains the ability to wild shape into a Tiny creature at 11th level, her options for stealth become even more varied. Dogs often must stay outdoors or at least out of bedchambers and offices, but cats usually have a free reign to allow them to chase mice. Rats are also Tiny animals, and few guards willingly waste their time chasing rats.

By assuming a form that can climb, burrow, or fly, a druid further expands her stealth and reconnaissance capabilities, and she gains abilities that help her evade traps. A dire hawk can ignore pit traps, a monkey can climb over tripwires, and only hard materials like stone can impede a badger's path. Even the most dedicated sentries aren't likely to notice or give a second thought to a pigeon landing on the roof of the building they guard, and they're equally unlikely to notice that when the pigeon leaves, it goes inside rather than flying away.

Wild shape can also solve a perennial druid problem—standing out in a city. Many people who live in cities are suspicious of druids, and why not? Most druids only enter a city for a specific reason, and that reason doesn't usually coincide with the desires of those who live in the urban area. Cities fear evil druids, who rank among their most dangerous and dedicated destroyers. Animals, on the other hand, are not an unusual sight within city walls. City leaders and residents undoubtedly welcome a cat draped over a plate-armored fighter's shoulders, whereas that same cat walking beside the fighter in her race's shape often finds a far less friendly response. ■

DRUID



by Mike Mearls



# THE WELL-EQUIPPED SORCERER

A sorcerer's arsenal consists of his spells, his magic items, and his indomitable presence. Yet sometimes a stout shield or a handy weapon might prove more useful than any of those things. This article examines the mundane equipment that every sorcerer should carry on an adventure.

As a sorcerer, you face a few problems when it comes to equipment. You probably have a relatively poor Strength score, making it difficult to carry a lot of gear. Thus, you should focus on having a few tools that prove useful in many situations rather than carrying a broad range of equipment. Speed is also important for a sorcerer, since your low Armor Class and poor hit points make avoiding melee your best strategy. Flight is almost always a better option than melee combat.

**Backpack:** While others might sling a pack, try to keep yours in your hands and fill it with your heavy equipment. That way, you can quickly drop gear that slows you down. Dropping an item is a free action, allowing you to also move and cast a spell. If you have to run, the increased speed might spell the difference between life and death.

**Caltrops:** If the opportunity presents itself, drop these in the spaces around you to cover yourself against attackers. If a foe should draw near, the caltrops might injure him, cut his speed in half, and allow you to make a hasty retreat without fear of viable pursuit. If you tend to stick near the back of the party in battle, caltrops also shut down paths or corridors that monsters could use to flank or surround you.

**Shields:** While a shield confers an arcane failure chance, you don't need to worry about that when you carry it slung over your shoulder. If you have a wand, use it with your shield to mow down opponents while gaining an AC bonus. A tower shield proves a tremendous boon if you have the Strength to carry one, as you gain total cover from the shield at the cost of your attacks even without the Tower Shield Proficiency feat. Since you have a poor base attack bonus, that's a good trade if you need to escape a tight spot

or take cover against attacks of opportunity. Tower shields are particularly useful in combination with a *wand of summon monster* or a *bag of tricks*, since you can call servants to fight without losing the shield's benefits.

**Smokesticks:** These underrated items are a sorcerer's best friend. Use them to lay down an impenetrable cloud of smoke, granting you concealment against attacks or masking your escape. If you face many archers or enemy spellcasters, use a smokestick to ruin their attacks. Since the smoke also blocks your sight, use this tactic to escape a dangerous situation or to buy the time you need to cast *mage armor* and similar spells.

**Torches:** Many parties like to nominate the sorcerer as the official torchbearer, but this can prove troublesome. If your DM rigidly enforces the rules for illumination, the monsters might tend to focus on the PC carrying the light. If you carry a few torches and tindertwigs, you might light a torch and throw it toward the monsters or wherever the main fighting takes place. In this case, you can clearly see your targets while ideally gaining the benefits of concealment at the edge of the torch's radius. Parties using this tactic should be wary though, as creatures with darkvision ignore concealment penalties associated with illumination.

**Weapons:** Many low-level sorcerers opt for a crossbow because it deals reasonable damage and ignores Strength penalties to damage. At higher levels, you are better off with a bow or another ranged weapon that gives you multiple attacks without the Rapid Reload feat.

If you're in melee, something probably went terribly wrong. An affordable weapon with reach, a longspear is probably your most useful melee option as you can keep a step away from an opponent and drop the weapon to cast spells. The non-proficiency penalties are also worth the ability to keep a step away from an opponent. If you do have to fight, use total defense or fight defensively while using aid another. Hopefully, one of your allies can step in to finish off the monster. ☛

SORCERER





# OPTIONAL RANGER COMBAT STYLES

The *Player's Handbook* features two combat styles for rangers: archery and two-weapon fighting. History and fantasy abound with stories of hunters and woodsmen who master such weapons as the longbow, the quarterstaff, or the twin blades. However, rangers use many other weapons as well. This article presents five new combat styles for rangers to choose from. The ranger gains the listed feats for the chosen combat style at the appropriate levels, as described on page 48 of the *Player's Handbook*.

## BEAST-WRESTLING STYLE

Some rangers eschew weapons and fight with their bare hands. Unlike the graceful style of the monk, the beast wrestler relies on his brute strength to subdue his foes. Originally practiced by rangers living in marshy areas to capture and move dangerous animals (such as crocodiles) without harming them, some adventurous rangers apply these techniques to more exotic foes. Most beast wrestlers choose animal or magical beast as their first favored enemy.

**Combat Style (2nd):** Improved Unarmed Strike

**Improved Combat Style (6th):** Improved Grapple

**Combat Style Mastery (11th):** Stunning Fist

## MOUNTED-COMBAT STYLE

With their special rapport with animals, rangers readily take to riding. A mounted ranger can use her mount in combat, especially when she utilizes the mounted combat style. Such rangers often choose a horse, riding dog, or some exotic mount as an animal companion, and augment their style with feats from the Mounted Combat feat tree.

**Combat Style (2nd):** Ride-By Attack

**Improved Combat Style (6th):** Spirited Charge

**Combat Style Mastery (11th):** Trample

## PISCATOR STYLE

Wielding a net in one hand and a melee weapon (typically a trident) in the other, a

ranger trained in the piscator style attempts to entangle or trip his foes before striking in melee. Many masters of this style take Power Attack to deal more damage after successfully tripping a foe. Although originated by the sahuagin, rangers of other aquatic races, as well as coastal fishers and even some gladiators, have adopted this style.

**Combat Style (2nd):** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (net)

**Improved Combat Style (6th):** Improved Trip  
**Combat Style Mastery (11th):** Improved Critical

## STRONG-ARM STYLE

The ranger using the strong-arm style wades into battle wielding the largest weapon she can. She relies on strength and the weight of steel to break through her opponent's defenses. Feats such as Great Fortitude, Toughness, and those from the Power Attack feat tree augment this combat style. Many rangers who utilize this style come from nomadic tribal cultures.

**Combat Style (2nd):** Power Attack

**Improved Combat Style (6th):** Improved Sunder

**Combat Style Mastery (11th):** Great Cleave

## THROWING STYLE

The bow isn't the only ranged weapon favored by rangers; halflings have developed their own ranged combat style that employs their favorite ranged weapons—those they can throw. This style has found favor with some nomadic humans and barbaric humanoids. Like the archery style, practitioners of the throwing style try to maintain distance from opponents. Most take additional feats from the Point Blank Shot feat tree. Clever rangers also use this style to toss holy water vials at undead, acid vials and alchemist's fire at trolls, and tanglefoot bags at those they wish to capture.

**Combat Style (2nd):** Quick Draw

**Improved Combat Style (6th):** Point Blank Shot

**Combat Style Mastery (11th):** Far Shot

RANGER



by F. Wesley Schneider



# THE HISTORICAL HOLY KNIGHT

**D**UNGEONS & DRAGONS boasts a long and infamous history of drawing upon seeds of historical truth to craft its fantastic creations. These imaginative reinventions often retain only the barest resemblance to their inspirations, while retaining the sound and impression of pseudo-history. Many of these pseudo-historical interpretations form the core of the D&D experience. Although D&D never claims historical accuracy, insight into the real-world legends that inspire such iconic fantasy ideals enriches the experience of playing such characters. In this case, the historical place of the paladin takes center stage.

## CHARLEMAGNE'S PEERS

The word paladin first referred to any of the twelve peers of Charlemagne's court. Derived from the word "palatine," meaning in part "belonging to the palace," the name refers to these knights acting as dutiful servants of royalty and intimates of the king. Although historical and literary records both attest to the existence of Charlemagne's peers, tales of them blur the lines of truth to the point that today even their names are a matter of debate.

Besides being Charlemagne's closest friends and protectors, the twelve peers were each notable heroes or villains in their own rights and, legends say, performed countless impossibly heroic feats. To further entrench their legendary reputations, literary works such as the epic poem *The Song of Roland* and Dante's *Inferno* relate the works of these early knights. Stories of Charlemagne and his twelve peers once circulated in the same manner as those of Arthur and his knights, and the word paladin is often used interchangeably to note either Charlemagne's or Arthur's knights.

## THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

Paladins in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS have always held a strong connection to the gods and specific religions. Although most of Charlemagne's peers were devout and pious

heroes, the Knights Templar perhaps best represented the connection between knights and religion. Formed at the end of the First Crusade to protect pilgrims en route to the holy lands, these knights dedicated themselves to their duty by swearing monastic vows. With the strength of warriors and the devotion of monks, these knights fought along side such figures as Richard the Lion Hearted throughout the Crusades.

Gaining vast influence through the wealth and lands they obtained in their homelands and conquered abroad, the Knights Templar became one of the most powerful forces in Europe. Unexpectedly, this wealth and their management and distribution of it essentially led to the invention of modern banking. In addition, the knights held practically limitless power, as they were immune to any authority save papal decrees. Thus, although the Knights Templar worked to further the goals of the Church, many outsiders harbored deep suspicions about the order's true ambitions.

Finally, due to their growing power and widespread financial influence, the decrees of Pope Clement and King Philip IV of France officially disbanded the Knights Templar in the early 1300s. This disarmament came after a long series of accusations of heresy and treason and tortured confessions that allowed the seizure of the order's assets. In 1314, the leader of the Knights Templar was burned at the stake. With his dying words he cursed those who had conspired to undermine the order to join him in death within a year. One month later, Pope Clement died, as did King Philip IV of France six months after that.

Regardless of their official dissolution, orders claiming connections to the Knights Templar and their wealth and power have endured to modern days. As their history is fraught with both nobility and secrecy, the name of the Knights Templar has become synonymous with militaristic religion, widespread power, and mysterious magical rituals. ■

PALADIN





# A MATTER OF STYLE

**T**he silat master crouches low, his legs curled and ready to unleash a debilitating sweep, while the capoeira practitioner twirls and twists in a rhythmic series of dancing steps. Both monks possess the same skill, but they use techniques and styles worlds apart, a difference determined and demonstrated by the equally deadly but distinct martial arts they practice.

Most of the seemingly countless styles of martial arts exhibit specific traits that define them as art forms. Whether the deliberate attacks of a jujitsu fighter or the meditative wheeling of a yoga practitioner, the martial art one chooses to master speaks volumes about one's goals and one's self. Presented here are a variety of different elements that define many styles of martial arts. By using these details, you should be able to learn more about the fighting technique your monk uses or even create your own unique style.

## LONG VS. SHORT

Range defines many martial arts, and most commonly work at either long or short distances.

Long-range styles keep combatants at a distance, providing the martial artist time to read and react to his opponent's maneuvers. Many long-distance forms focus on countering power with equal or greater power. Karate and northern kung fu are both long-range styles.

Short-range styles emphasize speed, reflexes, and intricate maneuvers as the martial artist engages opponents at a close range. These styles concentrate on overcoming powerful attacks with speed and deft movements. Kempo and southern kung fu are two well-known short-range styles.

Grappling styles make up a third form, bringing opponents closer together than even short-range methods. These styles most commonly focus on using technique and honed maneuvers to overcome powerful attacks. However, a martial artist must possess great skill in such a style to defend against a stronger fighter and to put an opponent in more danger than himself. Aikido and jujitsu are two of the best-known grappling styles.

## HARD VS. SOFT

Most martial arts are defined as being either hard or soft styles depending on what manner of blocks they teach.

Hard martial arts focus on directness and force, stopping attacks with direct counters. These styles often require great strength and speed, and they threaten to injure those who practice them. Although just as refined as any other schools of fighting, hard styles tend to look fierce, even random, to the untrained eye. Taekwondo and many karate styles are hard martial arts.

Soft martial arts rely on redirecting force with circular blocks, pushes, and sweeps. Such styles deflect attacks without bringing either the user or attacker to significant harm, but they require a great deal of skill to master. Often passive and peaceful in appearance, soft martial arts seem effortless but require great patience and a steady mind. Tai-chi and aikido are examples of soft martial arts.

## LINEAR VS. CIRCULAR

This aspect of most martial arts relates to the lines created by the style's motions. While linear styles create direct, straight motions and use hard straight blocks, circular styles emphasize circular swings, bows, and deflections. Many styles also mix aspects of both linear and circular styles, creating combination methods that focus on linear attacks and circular blocks or vice versa.

## INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL

This distinction focuses on what part of the artist the art emphasizes, whether the internal spirit or the external body. Internal methods focus on the use of the *ki*, mind, soul, or some supernatural or transcended quality buried within the user. Such martial arts stress and draw upon meditative, body control, or focusing techniques.

External methods concentrate on the use of force, leverage, and body mechanics, attacking an opponent and defending with an almost mathematical precision. By directing weight, position, and movement, these techniques use observation and physical laws to defeat an enemy. ☐

MONK



by Mark A. Hart



# MAGIC & MUSIC

The bard class possesses many abilities connected to music as well as arcane magic.

For the bard, music is a form of magic. The bard's talents and abilities (such as bardic music) enable her to improve the effectiveness of her allies, making life easier for her friends. Because the bard often provides a support role in her adventuring party, roleplaying the class can prove challenging. This article describes five strategies for using the bard's musical and magical abilities to become indispensable to her party and have fun doing it.

## BE A PERFORMER

A bard acquires increasingly powerful bardic music abilities as she gains levels and sufficient ranks in a Perform skill. Thus, it makes good sense to spend a few skill points on your bard's Perform skills every level.

One of the first benefits of bardic music is the ability to inspire courage in allies. Your bard can aid her allies with this ability in combat, and even after she stops performing, the benefit lasts an additional 5 rounds. If the party also has a cleric, the bard and the cleric can decide ahead of time whether to use inspire courage or a *bless* spell. Because both provide a morale bonus, some of their effects do not stack.

Other bardic music abilities are helpful in different situations. At 3rd level, inspire competence grants a party member a +2 competence bonus on eligible skill checks. The fascinate ability is excellent for distracting enemies or giving them a *suggestion*.

## DISTRACT AND DIVERT

Many of the bard's skills and spells revolve around deception or distraction. Whenever possible, the bard should use her talents to confuse enemies and keep them off balance. For example, the cantrip combination of *ghost sound* and *dancing lights* can mislead a group of enemies away from the party or into an ambush. If the party is fighting a band of goblins or other skittish creatures, *ghost sound* and *dancing lights* (or *silent image*) can trick the goblins into believing you have reinforcements on the way.

In terms of skills, you can use Perform and Sleight of Hand to mislead enemies or keep guards distracted. A bard with a high Charisma

score should be able to talk his way out of many problems with Bluff or Diplomacy.

## USE MAGIC ITEMS

Use Magic Device proves exceptionally useful to bards. Throughout the course of a campaign, a typical party collects a variety of magic items, some of which perhaps only one—or no—party member can use. If your bard possesses ranks in Use Magic Device, she gains a chance to use those items. For example, if the party owns a spare wand of *magic missiles*, the bard can use it in emergencies. Because the check DC to use a wand is high (DC 20), your bard should keep her Use Magic Device at the highest rank possible.

## DIVINATION IS YOUR FRIEND

Although the bard can use many different magic items, her own magical abilities are often quite useful. Her spell list includes an array of divination magic ranging from *detect magic* to *greater scrying*. Your bard should always include several divinations in her list of spells known. She can aid her party with divination to gather information and uncover secrets—two of the tenets of the class. As a side benefit, the bard's divinations ease the spellcasting burden on the party's clerics and wizards. Because the bard utilizes spontaneous casting, she need not worry about preparing the wrong spells for the day.

## BREAK THE CHARM

The bard's countersong ability can save the party's collective life. Although sonic attacks are rare, several spells have the language-dependent descriptor. Countersong can provide party members new saving throws against sonic or language-dependent magical effects. For example, if an evil sorcerer has charmed the party's barbarian, a countersong grants him a new saving throw to resist the spell each round the bard plays. As an added bonus, your bard's Perform check (the basis for the new saving throw) is likely better than the barbarian's Will save. A few other sonic-based or language-dependent spells vulnerable to countersong include *charm monster*, *charm person*, *command*, *enthrall*, and *suggestion*. ☞

# BARD



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by Andy Collins

illustrated by Niklas Janssen

# OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

**H**ow many Hit Dice does my 1st-level pixie rogue have? What would his effective character level be?

*Unless noted otherwise, all creatures (other than 1-HD humanoids) retain their racial HD when they gain class levels. Thus, your pixie would have 2 Hit Dice: one from his race, and one from his class level.*

*His effective character level (ECL) would be 6 (2 for his HD, plus 4 for his level adjustment), unless he also possessed the Otto's irresistible dance spell-like ability, in which case his ECL would be 8 (2 HD +6 level adjustment). This value shows how powerful a creature a pixie is in campaign play (and is used to determine how many XP he needs to gain levels, as well as the pixie PC's starting wealth), but it has no bearing on most in-game effects (see next question).*

If a spectre strikes my 1st-level pixie rogue, does he gain 2 negative levels (because his effective character level is 6) or does he die (because he has only 2 HD)?

*Technically, both effects occur, but only the latter really matters to your character. A high level adjustment (such as the pixie's +4 LA) means that the character is particularly vulnerable to effects based on his Hit Dice (including spells such as sleep or effects such as energy drain). A 2-HD pixie who gains two or more negative levels dies immediately (just as any 2-HD character would).*

How should a character afflicted with a template (such as a PC who becomes a werewolf) deal with his newly acquired level adjustment? What if he later gets rid of the lycanthropy?

This month, the sage untangles the mysterious web of Hit Dice, effective character level, and level adjustment. You can email the Sage with your questions at [sageadvice@paizo.com](mailto:sageadvice@paizo.com).

*The simplest method to adjudicate this is to use the character's new ECL to determine the point at which he gains his next level. A 4th-level barbarian who contracts lycanthropy from a werewolf (and thus gains 2 Hit Dice and a +2 level adjustment) becomes an ECL 8 character, and thus wouldn't gain another class level until his XP total would advance him to 9th level. In the short term, this means the character has an advantage over his comrades (since he hasn't yet "paid" for his level adjustment), but this is a self-correcting problem.*

*If the curse of lycanthropy is later lifted, the character loses the level adjustment. Technically speaking, he should then gain any class levels "due" to him according to his XP total. At the DM's option, these levels could be applied gradually rather than all at once. One option might be to give the character one level immediately and then two class levels every time he would gain a single level until his character level is appropriate for his XP total. This makes the change less abrupt, but also represents a significant penalty to the character, so this option should only be used if everyone is comfortable with it.*

**Do creatures with special attacks increase the DC for those attacks when they gain class levels? Are they calculated based on the creature's new ECL or its new CR?**

*Unless specifically noted in a monster description, the DC of a creature's innate special attacks depend only on its racial HD, and not from HD gained from class levels. A horned devil who gained levels of fighter, for instance, would not use its fighter HD to calculate the DC of its fear aura or stun supernatural special attacks.*



A creature's ECL or CR has no effect whatsoever on the save DCs for its special attacks or any other ability.

However, if the creature's ability scores change—such as from the increase at every 4-HD interval—that might well affect the DCs of its special attacks. If that horned devil, for instance, improved its Strength from 31 to 32 when it gained its first class level (giving it 16 HD total), its stun save DC would improve by 1. Each special attack lists the ability score upon which it is based (such as Strength for the horned devil's stun).

**When my sorcerer shapechanges into the form of a creature with special attacks, what Hit Dice do I use to calculate the DC of those abilities—the creature's normal HD, my caster level, or something else?**

When you use shapechange (or related magic) to assume another creature's form, your Hit Dice are considered to be the HD of the new form, but only for the purpose of adjudicating effects directly related to your HD, such as determining the DC of any special attacks possessed by the new form or for determining whether you are vulnerable to the sleep or blasphemy spells.

For example, an 18th-level human sorcerer shapechanged into a dire bear would be treated as a 12-HD creature (and not an 18-HD creature) for the purpose of determining what effect an evil cleric's blasphemy spell might have upon him. A 17th-level elf wizard shapechanged into a horned devil would use the horned devil's 15 HD (rather than his own 17 HD) to determine the save DC of his fear aura, stun, and infernal wound supernatural attacks.

This has no effect on your hit points or any other statistics derived from your HD, such as base attack bonus, base save bonuses, and so on.

**One of my players plays a half-celestial sorcerer and he wants to take the dragon disciple prestige class. What happens to his character's creature type when he reaches 10th level of dragon disciple? Is he still an outsider (from his template), is he a dragon, is he both, or is he something else? Should he gain a level adjustment from becoming a half-dragon?**

A creature can only have one type (although some templates retain a creature's original type as an "augmented" subtype).

The dragon disciple prestige class has no limitations on the character's type other than "can't be dragon," so it's perfectly acceptable for a half-celestial character (or any other outsider who qualifies) to take levels in the class. At 10th level, the character's type would normally change to dragon. According to page 143 of *Savage Species*, the outsider type applied by the half-celestial template overrides the dragon type applied by the prestige class, so the character's type would remain outsider. The character still gains all the class features of the dragon disciple prestige class though, so this is mostly just an issue of nomenclature.

A dragon disciple ignores the normal level adjustment applied from the half-dragon template; in effect, he's already "paid" for the template through the 10 levels of his prestige class. This is true of any prestige class that applies a template or otherwise changes the character's type or subtype.

**Why do some creatures have effective character levels higher than their challenge rating? If a hound archon is only CR 4, how can it possibly be as good as an 11th-level character? After all, an 11th-level NPC is CR 11, not CR 4.**

Effective character level (ECL) and challenge rating (CR) appear similar—after all, they're both numbers that rate a creature's toughness—but they actually measure two very different things. A monster's CR measures how tough that monster is in a typical combat encounter against player characters, while its ECL measures how powerful a PC it would make.

Take the hound archon as an example of why this is true. In a typical fight, it likely only gets a chance to use its aid spell-like ability once. However, in a party of adventurers, it can use this ability on itself and every member of the party an unlimited number of times. This means that a smart group of PCs has aid in effect for every battle they fight—even a high-level cleric can't guarantee that. Similarly, while a hound archon may only use its greater teleport ability a few times at most in a fight, a PC with the ability to use greater teleport at will has an enormous advantage, both in and out of combat.

The hound archon's damage reduction is also much more useful when used by a PC than by a monster. Most PC groups have

the ability to deal with a creature's damage reduction, either overcoming it with the necessary weapons or ignoring it altogether by damaging the monster with spells or other effects. However, most monsters don't have this option. The vast majority of foes faced by a hound archon have no recourse but to use their normal attack forms, meaning the hound archon can ignore the first 10 points of damage from each and every attack made against it.

In the end, a hound archon's special powers don't make it tougher than any other CR 4 monster (such as a gargoyle or vampire spawn), but they make it much more potent than a standard PC of a similar level.

**Can you clarify how Challenge Ratings for traps work? Is the CR of a trap intended to be equivalent to the CR of a monster? If so, does the party (or the party's rogue) gain experience for overcoming a trap of a given CR? Are traps limited to a maximum CR of 10 or is that just the toughest level for which sample traps are listed in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*?**

A trap's CR means the same thing that a monster's CR does—it rates the relative threat of the trap, and indicates the XP award granted to the party for overcoming it. A trap is overcome either by disarming it—which gives XP to the whole group, not just the character responsible for disarming it—or simply for setting it off and suffering its effects, for which no XP is awarded.

Traps above CR 10 aren't included in the rules because the XP award for such traps wouldn't necessarily be appropriate to the trap's challenge. At a certain point, it becomes nearly impossible to adequately rate a trap's challenge for high-level PCs. Not only are Search and Disable Device skill modifiers extremely high, but it's difficult for a trap's effect (typically a one-shot effect) to be balanced to challenge but not wipe out characters. Challenge Rating 10 traps already include instant-death effects, and it's tough to get more dangerous than that.

**How much XP is an EL 5 encounter worth? The *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* doesn't have information on giving out XP by Encounter Level.**



Encounter Level (EL) is purely a rough measurement of how much challenge a particular encounter presents. It has no mechanical function in the game—it's just a numerical value that lets the DM know whether a particular collection of monsters makes an appropriate encounter for the party. In general, an encounter with an EL that equals the party's average level is expected to use up about 20% of the party's resources. Encounter Level helps the DMs using published adventures—as it lets them evaluate at a glance if a particular room's inhabitants are appropriately tough for their PCs—as well as DMs writing their own adventures, who can build encounters targeting a particular EL by assembling a group of varied monsters.

There's no set XP award for each EL. Rather, XP is awarded based on the CRs of the monsters that make up the encounter. A single monster of CR 5 is an EL 5 encounter, but so is a pair of CR 3 monsters, or a CR 4 monster and two CR 1 monsters, and so forth. Each variation probably awards a different total of XP, though the totals are likely to be in a similar range.

See "Challenge Ratings and Encounter Levels" in Chapter 3 of the DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide for more details on how to use these two terms in your game.

#### If I give a monster a powerful magic item, should I increase its CR?

Yes, but only if the item has a dramatic effect on the monster's statistics. Remember that increasing a monster's CR by even a single point can increase the XP award by 50%, so it shouldn't happen very often.

There's no hard-and-fast rule for adjudicating this, but a general rule of thumb might be this: To increase a monster's CR by +1, the added equipment should make it function as if it were at least a level or two tougher than normal (including hp, attack modifier, damage, saves, and so on). Changes smaller than that aren't enough to merit a CR change but might still merit an ad hoc XP adjustment (such as +10% or so). In the long run, it's probably not worth the DM's time to adjust XP awards too much.

Giving a CR 3 ogre a masterwork greatclub makes it marginally tougher, but certainly not as tough as a CR 4 monster. Giving it full plate armor, an amulet of health +2, and a +1 flaming greatclub increases its AC by 4 points, its hp by 4, its Fortitude save by +1, its attack by +1, and its damage by 4 or 5 points per swing, which might well merit an increased CR. (Of course, it still has poor Reflex and Will saves, making it just as vulnerable to many effects, so it's arguable that this ogre isn't truly a CR 4 monster.) The right two or three extra potions might well change a 1st-level warrior from CR 1/2 to CR 1 if the potions have a great effect on his AC, attack modifier, hp, and damage rolls, but the same potions probably wouldn't alter the CR of a frost giant (since they reflect a smaller change, relative to the giant's original statistics).

Remember also that many monsters, including all NPCs, are assumed to have equipment already. Don't adjust the ogre barbarian's CR for the gear he gets from his class levels, or the dragon's CR for the magic items it's using out of its horde. A dragon wielding a staff of the magi or sphere of annihilation might merit a CR adjustment, but one wearing a ring of protection and carrying a few potions certainly wouldn't. ☐

# Dragon

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by Mike Mearls,  
Freelance Game Designer

# HOW TO WRITE D&D STUFF FOR A LIVING

**H**i there. I'm Mike Mearls and I've written more than fifty RPG books, most under the d20 license, and a few dozen articles for *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON*. I write D&D material for a living.

There are times when I have to pinch myself and repeat that last sentence aloud. Every day, from about 10 AM to 6 PM, I sit down with my laptop and create stuff for my D&D campaigns. Unlike 99% of the DMs out there, I then email my work to an editor who, after a few revisions and playtests, sends me a paycheck. I create stuff in the same manner as the hundreds of thousands of DMs who make D&D go, but I get paid for it.

At this point some of you might be thinking, "How do I get in on this scam?"

That's a great question—so great that I'm going to spend this entire column answering it. Now, you might expect there's a secret handshake, a special codeword, or a hidden trapdoor at Gen Con that you need to find to get this job. When I speak at gaming conventions, I always sense that the people in the audience suspect that, with just the right question, I'll spill the beans and lead them to the magic leprechaun who hands out jobs at Wizards of the Coast. Sadly, things aren't that easy. Don't despair: There are only three things you need to do to become a game designer.

**Step 1:** Get used to hard work.

Professional game design requires a combination of brute willpower and a cockroach's tenacity. I write between

2,000 and 4,000 words every weekday. That's the equivalent of a six- to ten-page paper each day. Luckily, you don't have to write that much if you want to design RPG material as a part-time job, but the basic lesson remains. A writer writes, preferably each and every day.

You also need to find someone who can offer constructive criticism of your writing. You can write all you want, but if you never improve, you're just running in circles. More importantly, there's a tremendous gulf between creating stuff for your own game and balancing, designing, and writing material for other people to use.

Read your work out loud to see if it has a nice flow. Ask a fellow DM to judge if it's balanced and easy to understand. One of the most important tasks a writer faces is learning to separate good criticism from useless comments. You need to improve if you want to write professionally. Nobody's perfect when they start out.

I suggest writing 500 words each weekday to start out with. Try designing feats, prestige classes, and spells. If you feel ambitious, write an entire adventure as if you were going to submit it to *DUNGEON*.

**Step 2:** This is the fun step. Play D&D every week. Running or playing in a campaign is the best way to learn the rules. Don't just memorize them. Try to find patterns in how D&D handles things, and learn to recognize how you can extend those to new material you



design. For example, character races always have even-numbered ability modifiers. When you build your own, you need to follow that precedent. If you know why, you've taken your first step to becoming a professional designer.

**Step 3:** Get your work out there. Find the *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON* submission guidelines at [paizo.com](http://paizo.com) and follow them to the letter. Visit the websites of your favorite d20 companies and hunt down their guidelines. Companies use their submission process to screen out bad writers. If you follow the guidelines, you demonstrate that you can read instructions and have the consideration to obey them.

Don't be shy about poking around for work. Companies tend to go through cycles of hiring new freelance writers. You'll never know if a company wants to look at your proposal or needs someone to design a few spells or feats for an upcoming book until you ask.

That's it. I followed those three steps and managed to land a job with Malhavoc Press, a d20 company founded by *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* designer Monte Cook. It was a lot of hard work, and I don't recommend quitting your day job to design RPGs. I started small, built up relationships with several companies, and slowly eased myself into writing freelance full-time. The best things in life are often the hardest to attain. You won't know if you can earn them until you try. ■



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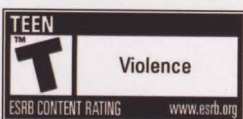
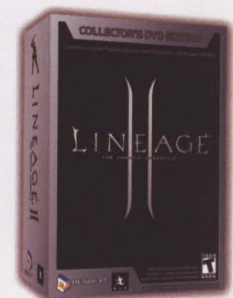
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