

SPRING 2008 ISSUE 4

FIRE *and* SWORD

WOLFGANG BAUR PRESENTS

KOBOLD

Quarterly™

A TINY LITTLE MAGAZINE OF KOBOLDS & DRAGONS

Might and Mastery

Ecology
of the **Cloaker**

4th Edition Interview:
William O'Connor

Mithral Dragons

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On the Cover
William O'Connor's "Siege of Paris" shows full-on war under flags and fire, a fine complement to the fighters and angels we feature this issue.

Read more about Connor's work defining the look of 4th edition in our exclusive interview.

Cartoons by Stan!
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Bolt & Quiver

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Lucky Number 4

Editorial

Here we are at issue #4, and I'm not sure quite how the time has flown by so quickly. It's springtime, and an editor's fancy turns to thoughts of new editions, new authors, and new pagecount. There's a full-on feast of other gaming goodness in this issue, from the cover by William O'Connor to the "Ecology of the Cloaker" by Paul Leach, to the fantastic set of fighter feats by Phillip Larwood. Plus the medieval gangsters of Zobeck, the mighty mithral dragon by Mike McArtor, and the Angel of Hope by Tim and Eileen Connors, who brought us the evil of the Arch-Duke Belphegor back in issue #2.

To contain all this gaming goodness, you will also have noticed that the magazine keeps growing. We're now up to 76 pages, just four less than 80, which is, of course, 4 times 20.

Let's see, what other news from the mines? We've reached an important milestone, with more than 1,000 subscribers. Naturally, we had to celebrate. After we cleaned up the mess, we gave away a lifetime subscription, back issues, a copy of the OPEN DESIGN anthology *Six Arabian Nights*, and the first and only KOBOLD QUARTERLY t-shirt to the 1000th subscriber, Frank Gawryla. You'll see his smiling mug on page 11. Congratulations, Frank, and thank you to everyone who has subscribed.

Speaking of OPEN DESIGN projects, the release of *Blood of the Gorgon* is fast approaching. It's an urban adventure by Nicolas Logue, one of the top freelancers currently writing fantasy adventures. He has done design work for all the big companies, especially Paizo and Wizards, and so we're especially pleased that he decided to share his design secrets with the patrons of *Blood of the*

Gorgon. If you want a copy of the adventure and access to Logue's design essays online, please visit wolfgangbaur.com and support the project. After these limited edition projects ship, it is a lot harder and more expensive to get a copy. Act now, as they say, or regret your dubious dithering forevermore.

Why am I seemingly obsessed with the number four, or least, why is it in the title of this editorial? For no reason. Seriously, they say 3 is a magic number, so split the difference, call it 3.5.

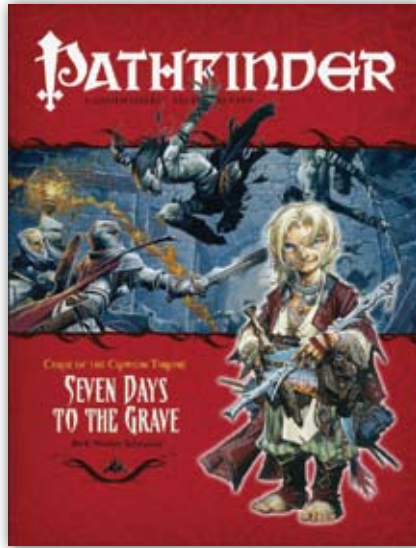
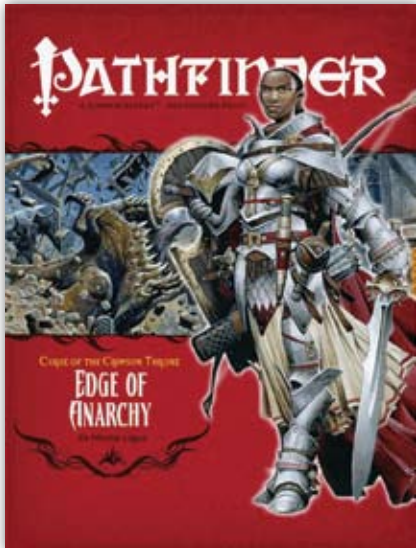
Honestly, I wish I knew what was in store for gamers everywhere, and could tell you exactly what the plans are for the Game System License, but as of this writing, the license is still not available from Wizards. So there's just no way to know how to jump. When the game is released in June, I'll ask readers to vote for their preferred edition in the forums at koboldquarterly.com. Until then, I'm looking for great gaming material that transcends rules, or at least that works well with any edition. Best I can do in the current circumstances.

If you have comments on this issue's articles, the state of the RPG field, or a solution for buttressing silver mines in a mildly acidic matrix of igneous rock, send your couriers, letters, and email at letters@koboldquarterly.com or to Kobold Letters, PO Box 2811, Kirkland, WA 98083.

Until then, from the mines, wishing you a happy April and a merry May,

Wolfgang Baur
Kobold in Chief

A NEW PATH BEGINS



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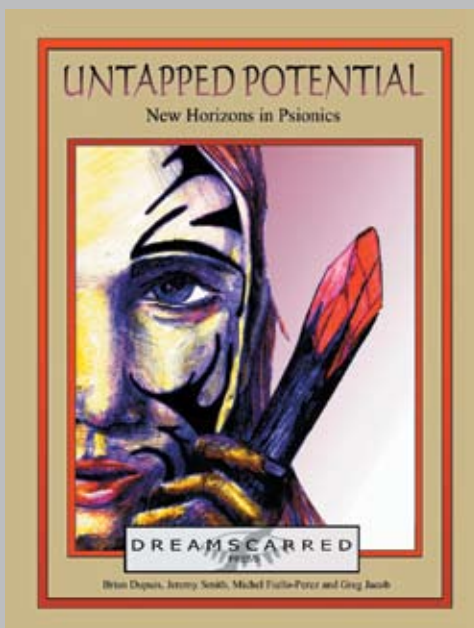
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From the Mines

Crunch, Contents, Starbolts, Color, Reprints



Deep Texts

I just wanted to let you know that received my first copy of KOBOLD QUARTERLY in the mail yesterday and let me tell you how amazing it truly is. This magazine truly takes me back to the days of DRAGON when there was more time spent on story and solid articles and less time on crunch.

Don't get me wrong, I love crunch, but you have to admit it doesn't make the game. The articles you are bringing us are deep, well-thought texts that truly do add to my game. I sincerely look forward to all of my future issues with much anticipation. You sir have made this gamer a very happy man.

Now if only I could get the postman to not bend my copies in half when he crams it into my spacious mailbox.

-Alfred Bonnabel

We tried to play nice with the postman last issue, stamping "Do Not Bend" on the envelopes as a gentle hint to the postal people. But this means war – war unending and everlasting! Release the dire weasels!

Ahem. Carried away in righteous fury. Happens all the time these days. Thank you for your kind words about the magazine, and we'll see what our kobold kneecappers can do about delivery of this and future issues.

Table Time

I've only bought the first issue of KOBOLD QUARTERLY and so far have only read your editorial (although

I've skimmed through the rest and admired the production values). I have a suggestion for your table of contents. [*Editor: a Very Clever Table of Contents suggestion follows*].

Thank you for continuing to offer a print resource for RPG players. I look forward to reading the Erik Mona interview and the rest of the issue, and hope my suggestion was helpful.

-Ryan. Costello, Jr.

Thanks for your suggestion. I'm not sure whether we'll update everything folks ask about, but I do appreciate all the offers to read slush, proofread, and do layout work. I'm tempted to take some of you up on it.

The main thing that a magazine like KOBOLD QUARTERLY needs now as much as ever is support at the local gaming stores and bookstores. Ask your retailer to carry it, if they don't already. Recommend us on your favorite blog or Web site. Spread the word, so that KOBOLD QUARTERLY can continue to grow.

And maybe we'll get an intern to help with the Table of Contents.

Starbolts Gone Astray

In issue #3, I noticed that on page 22, the spell *Starbolt* is a 2nd level spell. However, I also saw that it said that you 'can cast one such bolt at 1st level...', which makes no sense. In order to cast 2nd level spells, one must be at least 3rd level. Or is this a 4.0 edition change?

Also, I noticed that in the excellent-ly-done ecology "The Thing at the Soul of the Mire" is listed with druid

spells. However, the says that 'a druid who ceases to revere nature loses all spells and druid abilities'. If I know anything about druids, it's that they despise undead. So surely he would have lost his spells, and his animal companion?

-Nikolai Geier
Corvallis, Oregon

Oops! You're completely right about Starbolt; the reference to a 1st level caster is just wrong. We regret the error.

With regard to your druid lich question, author Richard Pett replies:

*Dear Nikolai,
You make a very good point that deserves consideration.*

The Monster Manual states: 'A lich is a spellcaster, usually a wizard or sorcerer but sometimes a cleric or other spellcaster.'

This gives us some leeway when looking at what can become a lich, and opens up the possibility of a druid lich. However, as you rightly point out, under ordinary circumstances druids despise undead as they do not follow any accepted natural form. The open statement above allows a little interpretation, though: suppose the creature regards itself as the protector of the land it lives in, and wishes to ensure that this land is guarded for all time.

The creature would then see prolonging its own life as a gift that nature allows to ensure that true order prevails – with the creature guarding the mire no living thing can ever harm it. It's

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followers have merely changed in order to better protect the land they live in, a land where disease is part of the natural form of life and unlife.

The Thing at the Soul of the Mire fulfils this observation – it sees itself as the guardian of the Grimward it rules, and its powers as an extension of that guardianship. Those outside the mire seek to pollute the land with their cultivation and roads and houses. Imagine the colossal evil ego necessary to maintain that what it does, it does out of love and a desire to protect, rather than malice.

Having said that, everyone is free to interpret the lich for their own campaigns, and if you don't like the idea of a druid lich then the soul can easily be accommodated as a wizard or other spellcaster seeking to protect the mire. As always, you know your players and campaign better than anyone, so steer your villains in the direction you choose.

A great question, thanks for asking.

*Richard Pett
Derbyshire Moors*

Reprint or We Riot!

I am just writing to tell you how much I am enjoying my first printed issue of KOBOLD QUARTERLY. I purchased the PDF's of the first two issues and think that they are great. I was impressed by the content and decided to subscribe starting with issue 3. The quality of the print magazine is a lot better than what I thought it would be, and I am very happy.

One thing that I wish you would do, is reprint the original two issues. It would be nice to have them in print. I was too slow getting on the KQ bandwagon to purchase them in any format other than PDF. I have seen several people with the same idea on various messageboards I frequent. I imagine that you would be able to sell out again pretty quickly.

Keep up the awesome work,

-James May

Yeah, we've gotten a few requests for this, but it's pretty impractical to re-

print issues for several reasons, time and money being the main ones. If we get a big thread on the forum demanding it, I suppose we might consider it, but really magazines are usually too busy thinking about the next issue to devote much time to the past. Sorry.

No Regrets

First off, this is a great magazine, and I don't regret subscribing at all.

When the last DRAGON came in the mail, I saw that they had included my letter. Truly, this was an amazing moment. But soon I realized that there was no real RPG magazine left, only the new 'online' DRAGON.

Except for KOBOLD QUARTERLY.

I can really relate to this magazine. I love kobolds, and the cover of the first KQ hooked me. And the contents were no less stunning. Ecology of the Derro? Titivillus? Amazing!

This is definitely the best replacement for DRAGON!

Great work, folks!

*-Nikolai Geier,
Corvallis, Oregon*

Thanks, Nikolai. Tell your friends. We hope to keep presenting great writers, great monsters and spells and more for your campaign for many years to come. And don't think we didn't notice that there are two letters from the same person. You've used up your quota for an issue or two.

Across the Color Line

The print issue of KQ #3 arrived yesterday. Thanks for this great magazine and to this outstanding issue in particular! Would it be possible to get future print issues in full color? Maybe this could be arranged via LuLu? I would even pay a higher price for such issues.

It is a pity that the interior of the print issue is black and white. Printing the PDF version in color is unfortunately not an option for me, because I have no cheap color printing device available. I would be very glad if you think about this.

-Constantin Terton

Constantin, I would love to print every issue in full color, but it requires either doubling the price for readers, or doubling circulation and charging more for advertisements. Still, I'm looking into adding a little color when the budget allows.

Takes Me Back

I'm telling you something, brother - I love this issue! Takes me waaaay back to the early 80's when I first began playing RPGs and reading DRAGON. I know you really want to go color, but I personally love the black and white, "underground" feel to KQ. I can get a color fix in the PDF, but the black and white of the mag is cool as can be.

-Gary Francisco

Gary, very happy you are enjoying it. I remember many old game magazines fondly, including the issues of White Dwarf that included new monsters for the world's most popular roleplaying game. But I never quite know how to react to compliments about the old-school feel of KOBOLD.

I'm not trying to reinvent the past, and if 4th Edition is good I'm sure the magazine will embrace that too. (If it sucks, we'll just keep doing 3E until 5th Edition, I guess). All I can say is thank you; we will keep on melding the old with the new. We have some young readers and writers who may craft their own take on the classics, and I think in a year or two, you may hear talk about the 'KOBOLD approach' to gaming.

Too Good?

Thank you for getting me the download link so quickly! Issue 3 is truly beautiful. In fact, it's too good. I have a nice 40-minute public transit commute to work every morning and afternoon. With most of my magazines, I take them with me and read them on the trip. This latest issue was in such high quality, that I didn't want to damage it. As a result, it is taking me longer to read it.

You've give the RPG community a fantastic new magazine. Keep up the outstanding work.

-Roy Sachleben
Louisville, KY

Roy, you and others had some difficulties with the PDF downloads for #3, but that problem is resolved and I do not expect it to recur.

As for solving the problem of being "too good"; well, it's not on our to-do list.

The Value of Paper

First, I have to say my piece about the decision to discontinue paper-publishing the two top-rated magazines for RPG'ing (I won't name them but you know what their titles are):

It was idiotic and asinine.

I had tried to consistently to read both magazines over the years I've been playing (since 1982 or so). Only recently, in the past couple years, was I able to pay for a subscription to both.

Ah, the thrill of getting mail actually addressed to me instead of to my wife or kids. Mail that wasn't a bill anyway. And then the serenity of reading the articles in the crapper. I'll admit it – both publications were my bathroom reading material and I thoroughly enjoyed reading them in there. I had a collection of back issues and a pad of paper I would take notes for campaigns. What can I say? I'm a mean multi-tasker.

So that is why the decision to stop paper-publishing both magazines was like a morning-star to the stomach for me. My reading and creative input was gone. Ya, it was online and still accessible, but no more would I feel the pages turn in my fingers nor smell the ink of the copy. All hope was lost, or so I thought.

Now I see, what Erik Mona has described as the spiritual successor to one of the mags, a new hope on the horizon. The new hope of the continued serenity and peace that comes with shutting the bathroom door

and opening a well edited magazine that has content close and dear to my heart. The opportunity that came along with the monthly mailing that gave me creative input for my campaigns, both played and imaginary.

At the top of my lungs, allow me to cry out "LONG LIVE KOBOLD QUARTERLY!"

And so with that, as the most famous writer I know that no one has ever heard of, I hereby pledge all of my editing and writing skills at your disposal as you see fit.

-Robert Elkins
New Carlisle, IN

Rest assured we are working our tiny little tails off to become worthy of your praise. And to avoid the whips of our kobold overseers, of course.

And with all this healthy enthusiasm, we have to admit to feeling an emotion that few kobolds actually experience in a lifetime of trap-setting: modesty. We think things are going really well, see, and I have lots in store for subscribers, starting with the free Havenmine Gauntlet adventure that all subscribers received with their subscription copy of this issue and yes, even more stuff coming in future issues.

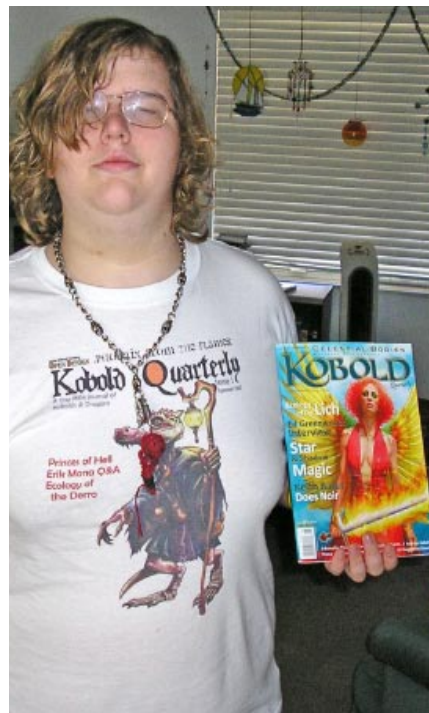
But, well, you make us blush (Few reptiles get that opportunity!). Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to proofread, suggested an article topic, and contributed to the magazine.

Available Worldwide

So I walk into the exchange here in Afghanistan to check for new DVDs, and glance at the magazine rack in passing. DUNGEON and DRAGON are gone, so HEAVY METAL is the only one I watch for anymore.

What do I find but a stack of KOBOLD QUARTERLY #3 hidden behind the Wizards? Even having the PDF, the smooth cover and weighty paper convinced me I needed to have it on my shelf. So congratulations on expanding, Wolfgang. I hope to go back and see an empty space where your magazine used to be.

-Steven



Frank Gawryla of Knoxville, Tennessee, is our 1000th subscriber and the winner of bragging rights, a lifetime subscription, a copy of *Six Arabian Nights*, a copy of *Kobold's Guide to Game Design*, and the KQ t-shirt pictured here.

Congratulations, Frank and happy gaming!

Afghanistan

Kobolds are, indeed, everywhere. We have invasion plans, that is, plans to visit every gamer-friendly country on earth. So far, the list of subscribers runs from Australia to New Zealand and from South Africa to Switzerland. So why not Afghanistan? Glad you found us; all the best on this tour and your next deployment.

Oh, and this reminds me: KOBOLD QUARTERLY is now offering an "Adopt a Soldier" subscription. Enlisted persons of any nation can sign up on our waiting list at koboldquarterly.com, and generous persons worldwide can sponsor a subscription for a soldier, in the order that they signed up. Check it out.

Gangs of Zobeck

The constant commerce of even a modest river-city like Zobeck is as irresistible as a siren's song to a certain breed of men. All manner of thieves, rogues, smugglers, and bandits prowl the shadows of the town, preying on barge traffic, robbing baggage trains, eying the fat purses of fatter merchants, and seeking ways to convert the ever-present hum of trade into the clacking of hard coin. A few even barter their souls.

The underworld of Zobeck is a shifting place of mysterious masters, dubious alliances, and hidden secrets. Major players range from the mystic to the mundane to the diabolic: little is as it appears and everything changes rapidly.

Until recently, the formally-recognized Spyglass Guild worked hand-in-paw with the more secretive, widespread forces of the ancient Mouse King. Yet control of the Spyglass Guild has been seized by a hidden rival, the sewer goblin Vralgor Szarn, who seeks to carve out an underground empire. A mysterious death has shaken the Cloven Nine, sending these dilettante diabolists running and breaking up their ring of thieves. And lurking behind it all is the mysterious smuggler named the Red Mask deals with anyone able to pay.

In addition to the major players, many smaller gangs, guilds, and freelancers operate in the gaps and go largely unnoticed. Each faction strives to seize control of the fluid situation in the town, and ensure that every coin that changes hands is

BY WOLFGANG BAUR AND JOSHUA STEVENS

Art by Pat Loboyko

clipped or shaved, ever so slightly.

Welcome to the thieves' world of Zobeck. May you survive the experience.

The Spyglass Guild

The men, gearforged, and dwarves of the Spyglass Guild are the city's spies and secret police. The city tolerates these quasi-legal operations because the guild reports everything to the city consuls, the Lord Mayor, and the Captain of the Night Watch. Still, they are a grey organization made up of individuals of dubious backgrounds and morals whose human members have a history of corruption from outside influences, from accepting bribes to acting as double agents for various cults and even the Arcane Collegium. They are the open secret of the city; their leader, the scarred and embittered Ersebet Cemilla struggles in a web of treachery that she no longer controls.

In recent years, the failings of the Spyglass Guild have allowed several embarrassing slips that caught the rulers of the city flat-footed including the changes in the court of the Moonlit King, the zealotry among the followers of the Red Goddess, and even the ghoulish stirrings within the subterranean fiefdoms loyal to Morgau & Doresh.

There have been two responses to these developments. The first has been to recruit more heavily among the best-connected informers and younger sons of merchant princes who easily gather information both within and without the city walls. Scouts and griffon riders watch the roads and rivers, continually reporting from the field, and the Spyglass Guild learns a great deal about smuggling and the indiscretions on the Praetorian Council.

The second response has been to assign the Steamworkers' Guild and the Arcane Collegium to build incorruptible servants—three gearforged servants. These mechanical spies might seem entirely too obvious to gather information, but in practice,

they blend in well with the city's other servants, such as the clockwork scullions and the Gate Watchers.

Their powerful hearing gives them perception beyond any human or dwarf; one of the apprentices who built them claims that they can hear a dozen conversations at once, both through walls and several streets away. If this is the case, it is a powerful form of eavesdropping within the city and at its gates. Even if it is not true, the story itself seems to have made plotters against Zobeck more cautious, and thieves have curtailed their most outrageous excesses. If it is just a wild tale, perhaps Ersebet is not so overwhelmed after all.

Secrets: Ersebet Cemilla, the woman at the helm during the Spyglass Guild's current troubles, is a veteran who has fought magic, steel, and treachery with equal daring and bravery. But recently, she has become magically dominated by the sewer goblin Vralgor, who has her complete trapped within her own body. Her harsh voice still carries the note of command, and her followers respect her, but they fear that something is terribly wrong.

Her break with the Mouse King is commonly known within her organization, and no one likes it much. But no one wants to challenge her about it just yet. Her scarred arms are the souvenirs of many knife fights in her youth, struggling among the lesser rings, and she is still a ruthless hand with a blade. She is known to use poison, which keeps her lieutenants nervous every time she asks them to drink a toast and proposes some new madness.

Ersebet's chief lieutenant and lover, Grigory Kaldozh, knows for certain that the woman sharing his bed is not herself, but he cannot figure out what is going on. He is desperate to discover the truth.

The Mouse King

The Mouse King has been in Zobeck as long as the city has stood; his servants are halflings, humans, and

various rats, mice, and more dangerous rodents. Supposedly, every rat and mouse in the city obeys him. Anyone refusing to give the Mouse King his due is said to die a death of ten thousand bites as the Mouse King's servants devour the fool.

It is unclear whether this is purely a gruesome story meant to scare newcomers to the city's thieves' dens, or whether there is truth to it. Certainly, the old-timers and most of the dockworkers swear to the truth of it. Of course, they drink a great deal as well and tell the story to those who slake their thirst by paying for a pint or three.

The Mouse King, they say, knows everything. His rats even know when a river barge is about to arrive, so they can come to the wharves to meet it. This may simply be rumors and rattish propaganda, but those who believe it take great precautions to avoid speaking in the presence of a rat.

Other than his servants, few have seen the Mouse King himself. Some claim he is a halfling wererat that rarely takes humanoid form. Some believe he is a ratwere, a rat who takes on human form as it suits him. Some believe he is the figurehead of a group mind resulting from the presence of so many escaped familiars near the Arcane Collegium.

Certainly, it is clear that the present Mouse King did run the city's underworld with Ersebet Cemilla as a partnership until quite recently. While his servants still take coin purses and snatch jewels, his main source of funds is smuggling and the gambling hall called Sixes and Sevens. However, the recent break with Ersebet's Spyglass Guild has reduced his influence, and his rodent minions now swarm everywhere, seeking to regain that power.

Secrets: The truth about the Mouse King is that he wants Zobeck itself to prosper, and he is almost as rich as the Red Mask. At the same time, he is very short-lived; rare indeed is the Mouse King who lives more than five

Gangs of Zobeck

The Mouse Kingdom

Leader: the Mouse King (human, rat, or wererat male, Fighter 10)

Lieutenant: Yiri Tepeck (human male, ranger 3/fighter 3/rogue 3)

Members: 32 humans, 15 wererats, 13 river halflings, countless rodents.

Suspected Headquarters: King's Head tavern, Sixes and Sevens gambling hell

Activities: River smuggling, gambling, burglary, snatch thievery

Symbol: A crown

Alignment: Neutral

The Spyglass Guild

Leader: Ersebet Cemilla (human female Rogue 12)

Lieutenant: Grigory Kaldozh (human male Cleric Gear Goddess 8)

Members: 21 human, 3 gearforged, 3 dwarves

Suspected Headquarters: The Cartographer's Guildhall, the Green Goat Tavern

Activities: Pickpocketing, blackmail, forgery, tax evasion, and spying

Symbol: A scroll case

Alignment: Neutral evil

The Redcloaks

Leader: the Red Mask (human male Wizard 8)

Lieutenant: Jhoram, the Money Changer (tiefling male)

Members: 22 humans, 88 kobolds

Suspected Headquarters: The Wheatsheaf tavern, the Greymark Warehouse

Activities: Diabolic cult, kidnapping for ransom, smuggling, drugs, counterfeiting, silver caravan ambushes

Symbol: Red feather

Alignment: Lawful evil

The Great Hunters

Leader: Vralgor Szarn (greater barghest)

Lieutenant: None (Vralgor will not tolerate one)

Members: 4 barghests, 11 kobolds, 3 humans

Suspected Headquarters: The Great Cistern, the Cartways Shed

Activities: Murder for pleasure and murder for hire, control of the Spyglass Guild

Symbol: None

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

The Cloven Nine

Leader: Izachar, or "Eyebite" (tiefling male)

Members: 9 tiefling warlocks, 27 human Kariv gypsies, urchins and minions

Suspected Headquarters: The Broken Seal, a brothel/tavern

Activities: Slave trade, summoning, secrets, enchantments, curses, prostitution, quiet killings

Symbol: Nine-pointed star

Alignment: All Evil

years (a venerable rat's lifespan). The post itself is immortal, though, and each succession to the throne comes from the Council of Rats, held after the death of a king and granting the successor with all the memories and many of the skills and powers of the previous king. For this reason, the king is essentially unkillable, and he operates to keep merchants fat and to keep the city free of control by its neighbors. No one loves him and only a few individuals of power swear him fealty, but the Mouse King is one of Zobeck's greatest allies.

The current Mouse King is Theodore XII, and he favors red puffed shirts and long whiskers, brown hair and moustache in human form, and light weapons such as rapiers and poniards. In mouse form, he is always perfectly groomed, two feet tall, with silver-streaked black fur. In humanoid form, he is short as a river halfling, though it is unclear if this is due to his youth or whether he is truly a member of that race. Rumor has it that the king has a brother who was enchanted by the Arcane Collegium and a sister who has taken service there as a familiar. Certainly, his litter was a lucky one.

When prepared for an audience, he is always dressed in a grey frock coat with golden buttons, his whiskers are long and white, and he wears a golden crown carved with images of nuts, grains, cheese, and a strange spiral symbol. On these occasions, he usually holds court in a tiny chamber that only Small creatures can move in without squeezing below the low ceiling. The King himself is generous and willing to hear petitioners out (though he prefers to be addressed as "Your Majesty" and he uses the royal "we"). His followers are less forgiving.

In fact, the Mouse King always has followers around, either grey or brown rats or (as humans) green-jacketed soldiers with exceptionally fine white or brown moustaches.

The Mouse King's current right hand man is Yiri Tepeck, a human horse thief who is known to toss

entire ale kegs during a brawl. He has already seen two kings come and go and understands rattish policies and magics well enough to know he would rather serve them than join them—he has rejected offers of The Moon Gift, as some wererats call their lycanthropy. He is honest as long as he is well-fed, and his rolls of fat conceal a lot of muscle.

One of the Mouse King's more dangerous followers is Tymon the wererat bard: a fellow with a sharp temper who is quick to take offense and even quicker to cast a disguised *suggestion* within his music. Others merely carry poisoned daggers and can enter any house or inn the city with relative ease.

Vralgor Szarn

Vralgor Szarn is a large and powerful barghest who has secretly and magically dominated Ersebet Cemilla, the leader of the city's recognized thieves' guild. Pure evil, Vralgor is far less interested in coin than he is in meat. He is just bright enough to see the value of an organized band of fellow predators with a larder of potential victims in easy striking distance.

Right now, Vralgor and his servants (other barghests and a few intimidated kobolds) are in hiding literally under everyone's feet. In particular, he runs through two sets of tunnels: the sewers (which barely contain his bulk) and the cartways, an old set of subterranean passages that connected the homes and estates of the city's nobles before the Revolt 70 years ago swept those nobles away. The Cartways are large enough for a narrow, hand-pulled or donkey-drawn cart to carry foodstuffs, barrels of wine, firewood and other supplies from the river to the estates without opening the gates to the street and without spoiling the view of the nobles living in the finest homes.

The Cartways were once considered perfect for assignments among the nobility, but with the Revolt and the establishment of a Free City without nobles, this function has long since

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fallen into disuse. Though the city watch guards many of the entrances, a few remain in use and are the province of smugglers and thugs. Vralgor hopes to usurp them all as well, killing and eating the servants of the Mouse King and the Red Mask who dare venture below the streets.

Secrets: For a full description of Vralgor, see *Kobold Quarterly* #2. Note that several of his new kobold followers are secretly agents of the Red Mask, seeking an opportunity to set Vralgor up for a big fall into a nasty ambush. Failing that, they seek to control the barghest's actions through misinformation and carefully planted rumors.

The Redcloaks

Perhaps the least-understood group of gangsters and thugs in Zobeck are the followers of the Red Mask; they are commonly called the Redcloaks. They work primarily by night, and everyone knows they include both humans and kobolds in their ranks.

Most members of the city watch assume the Redcloaks are a kobold gang from the Ghetto. Indeed, the Red Mask's lowest (and yet perverse-ly, most loyal) minions are kobolds, to whom the master has promised a much greater role in rulership someday.

Better still, he offers immediate wealth to his servants, enough gold and silver that his kobolds need no longer toil in the silver mines but can build their own mansions and rule over much more than a small city ghetto.

What is much less widely known is that the Redcloaks use the profits from smuggling and banditry to fuel their deeper purpose of expanding the cult of Mammon, the arch-devil of wealth and greed. This group of gangsters has a huge bankroll with enough money to hire all the mercenaries, assassins, alchemists, forgers, and other specialists needed.

Some even say that rakshasas, warlocks-for-hire, and priestesses of the Red Goddess are among the

servants of the cult, but this may be nothing more than bluster and rumormongering.

The Redcloak guards are cross-bow-wielding kobolds, gearcrafters, trapspringers, and trainers of the enormous owls beloved by kobold messengers and scouts. These kobolds work to scout out and organize likely ambushes of silver caravans from the mines in the Margreve Forest, to gather up human and centaur bandits to rob those caravans, and to deliver the plunder to the Red Mask's private storehouses. Other creatures like devils and dark priests sometimes take part in the ambushes. These creatures presumably take their orders from the Red Mask himself.

Secrets: The man behind the kobolds is Volstaff, Lord Greymark, who is the master of the Greymark trading house and the proud owner of an enormous manor on Crown Square. He is also a relentlessly greedy man, never satisfied with great wealth and willing to go to any length to gain more. This has led him to found the cult of Mammon in the city (or rather, to restore the long dead cult once the office of the City Lord for the Suppression of Vice had been abolished).

Volstaff believes in money and nothing else. He is a very confident and charismatic leader and controls the kobolds using a combination of promises and executions. Rumors claim the Greymark warehouses are a front for infernal ceremonies and contracts, but no one can prove it, and witnesses have a habit of disappearing.

Volstaff has a bastard son, Edmure Orillian, who is said to be the offspring of a succubus. This may simply be slander, but the young Edmure is a vile one who prefers the company of kobolds and nocturnal revels to any healthier pursuit. Despite the great fortune he stands to inherit, none of the city's eligible young women seem pleased to see Edmure at their door.

Edmure's reputation is too black for

any merchant's daughter to consider him a catch; indeed, the only person who wants to catch him is Horvart Edelstein, the Captain of the City Guard. Edelstein is certain Edmure runs the Redcloak drug smuggling ring, but the Greymark warehouses are too heavily defended with kobold traps, and Edmure's father is too powerful in the Council, for Edelstein to consider a raid with anything less than an army. Even Edelstein does not realize who really holds the leash of the Redcloaks.

The Cloven Nine

The Cloven Nine are a group of tiefling warlocks who lead a thuggish cabal of old and entrenched gangsters; most believed this small-but-powerful group to be untouchable. Long ago, the Cloven were outcasts in the city, shunned even by other underworld groups, but they grew powerful enough to flaunt their devilish heritage openly. The Cloven Nine deal in flesh, secrets, and pacts, serving those desperate enough to ignore the consequences.

To hire them, rumor claims that one must draw a drop of blood and call their name. They rarely name their price ahead of time and merely take it at some unnamed time. This could be permanent Constitution drain, the death of a loved one, a portion of the bargainer's soul (and taking several years off their life), information, servitude, etc. The Cloven Nine are worship Asmodeus and claim to be directly linked to him by blood, though many times removed.

As a coven of warlocks, the Nine can be hired to cast subtle and horrific curses. They know secrets about everyone of import in town, and their informants, enforcers, and mystique keep much of the city's petty gangs awed and respectful. They hold themselves apart from (and, they believe, well above) the other criminal guilds, and they rarely sully their hands with criminal activity directly. That is what lesser gangs are for, in their eyes.

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Swagger and Bluff

Not every encounter with a gang is a fight: the slightly wiser gang leaders try to intimidate visitors into giving them a few coppers as a toll. Some prefer talking their way into a meal, hinting at dark connections with the Cloven Nine or the secrets that the Mouse King has told them in exchange for a beer and a meal. Gather Information checks often result in meeting informers from among the street gangs.

For many, joining a gang is a matter of survival rather than a calling, and in the city's most famous case, the paladins of the Undying Sun took in a street urchin gang leader years ago, who became the celebrated Sir Ottracz Grivoly, one of the greatest paladins of his age. Though, it is said, he always carried a rat's poniard with him, as a reminder of where he came from, and a call to humility.

At the same time, the Cloven Nine founders reserve magical crimes for themselves, as well as the summoning of evil familiars and servant creatures such as dretch and yeth hounds. They have recently been hired to capture and bind the barghests of the Vralgor Szarn's Hunger pack.

Thus, the recent murder of Akad the Elder, one of the founding Cloven Nine has shaken the underpinnings of gang life. Where once the Cloven Nine maintained regular haunts and could usually be found quite easily, they have disappeared and are hiding somewhere, overly cautious of everything and everyone since the death. Everyone is a suspect, and certainly infernal magic is seeking to uncover the culprit.

The Cloven Nine's invincibility was always an illusion. They were simply street children who banded together against a hostile world; some took it more seriously than others did, but all are now re-evaluating their loyalty to a gang that is very much a target. The murder's shattering of their image means that the Nine may have to forfeit their souls to Asmodeus all too soon, and they are understandably enraged. They have waited years to reach this point; the various pacts each has made with Hell have

granted them abnormally long lives. They aren't giving it all up now.

Some of the Cloven Nine believe that they had grown soft and overly reliant on their "control" of the underworld and never expected anyone to walk in, unannounced, and kill one of them. They are suddenly very scared about this brash show of power. Many of their minions are little more than posers or bored merchant's sons with little taste for real violence but a yen to annoy their parents with tattoos, horned masks, and body paint. The founders are old, evil and dangerous when stirred up. The gang may shrink, but the core that remains is deadly.

Secrets: The most notable of the Cloven Nine is a tiefling named Izachar, nicknamed "Eyebite". Obese and covered in a fresh sheen of sweat, Izachar's corpulent frame is often found draped in a plush seat in a back room of the Broken Seal. Izachar has two small white stag horns growing from his forehead, which he keeps trimmed so they remain small.

Izachar's preferred garb is a velvet purple robe that accentuates his fleshy ebony skin, and his robe is often left open to reveal the many unnaturally grown eyes on his chest and stomach. Izachar's extra eyes are of all types—humanoid, lizard, cat, and others, and they blink at random intervals. The thick smell of opium hangs heavy about Izachar, and the tiefling can often be found taking long drags from his fluted pipe.

Izachar is a master of divination—the past, present, and future hold few secrets for this perpetually bored tiefling. Gossips whisper that his love of the poppy blossom is a result of viewing things best left unseen, and that he has even glimpsed the moment of his own death and serenely waits for it to come.

Izachar works his magic through bones, blood, and intestines by casting these things into a fire. If the questions are about a living person, the requirement is usually blood. For the dead, bones are asked. And for

the future, intestines are required. As payment, Izachar typically requires the client to gouge out one of their own eyes. Up front.

Izachar is the only one of the Nine still appearing in public; in private he furiously wards himself against magical detection and calls in every favor he has to avenge himself on Akad the Elder's killer. It may be bravado, but he is the public face of the gang now and he has reverted to fighting for survival, as it was long ago.

Lesser Gangs

These five are the major powers in the city and make up the most of the underworld, but freelance thieves, gamblers, whores, and thugs form their own cliques, alliances, and small-time gangs. One might even add some of the more unruly kobold mining gangs into this category.

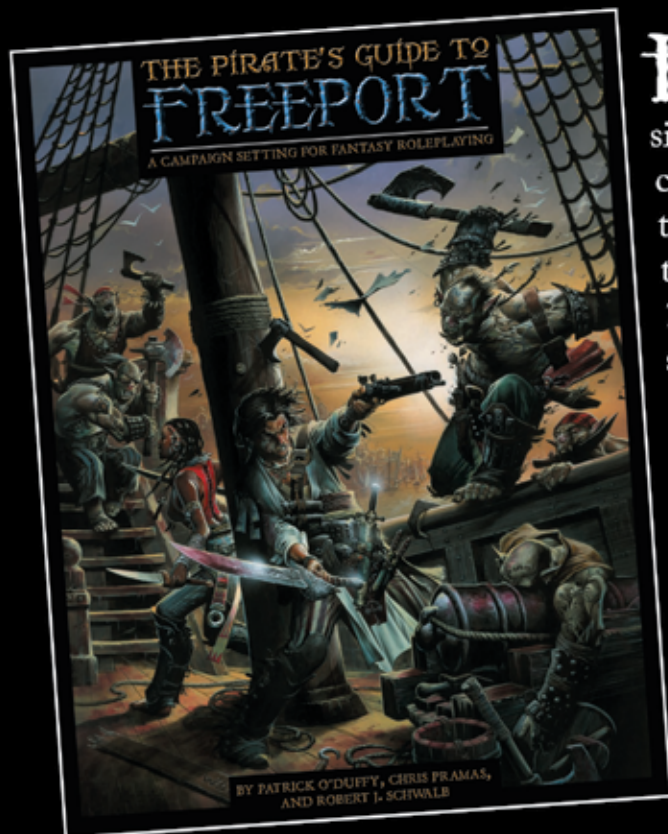
For most honest citizens, these lesser gangs are called "rings" or even "clubs," and they are to be avoided. A few claim to be affiliated with one of the larger gangs. Many just scrape by and refuse to learn an honest trade, believing that riches and fame are just one big score away. They would rather live bright, quick lives than grind it out in the fields with peasants or at the forge with the apprentices.

Their lives are certainly colorful, and only the most successful of these small rings are flashy enough to draw the eye of the larger gangs. Joining one of the bigs means that the small gang will live longer and better, and the ring's leader is likely to become an important lieutenant to the larger gang. The total number of gangs and those who support them is believed to be well over 300 people, though turnover is high. Such gangs currently include Jimyan's Men, Clockwork Boys, the Rivermen, the Argus Street Raiders, and the all female Laughing Ladies. Within two years, four of those five groups will be gone.

The Kariv

The Kariv people are dark-haired, dark-eyed gypsies who continually

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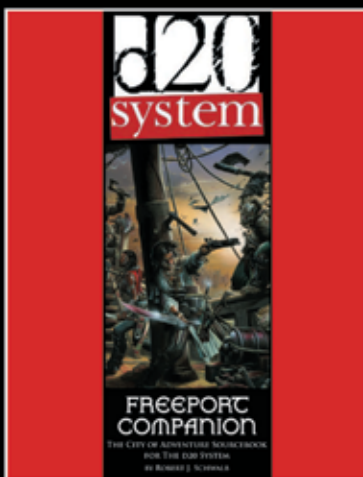
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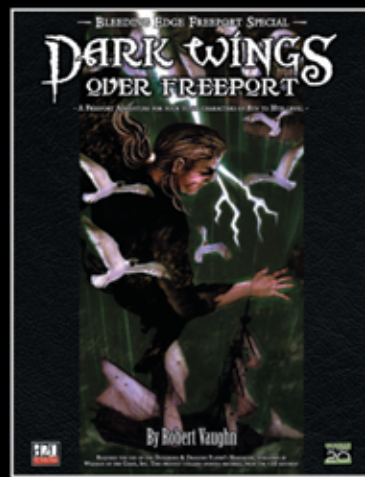
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TABLE: Gang Weapons

	Cost (gp)	Size/Damage (Size)	Critical	Type	Weight (pounds)	Hands
Switchpike, blade	120	1d6 (M), 1d8 (L)	19-20, x2	Slashing	10	One
Switchpike, telescoped*		1d8 (M), 1d12 (L)	x3	Piercing		Two
Kobold Pick	12	1d6 (S), 1d8 (M)	x4	Piercing	4	Two
Rat Poniard	4	1d2 (T), 1d3 (S)	18-20, x3	Piercing	1	One
Scorcher	1,250 +fuel	2d6+1d6 next round	x2	Fire	12	Two

* A fully extended switchpike is a reach weapon.

** The range increment for a scorcher is 10 feet.

seem to come and go from Zobeck in droves. Their mustachioed men have dangerous eyes while their women wear their hair in intricate braids and dance for coins in ways that make softer men blush. The Kariv value horseflesh and horsemanship above just about everything else.

Many of the Kariv serve the Cloven Nine as low-level thugs, informants, and enforcers. Not all Kariv are in league with the Cloven, but enough are that they have earned the entire race a black name in Zobeck. The Kariv are commonly referred to as “wagon trash,” referring to the colorful wagons that they live in and convert into makeshift ghettos in Zobeck’s wharf area.

The Kariv society is matriarchal, and when the Mothers of the clans issue orders, they are obeyed. Many of these honorific Mothers have made pacts with members of the Cloven to gain powers of divination or to retain their beauty, and their entire clans are now beholden to them. As a result, many Kariv bear a tattoo of a nine-pointed star on their hands, illustrating their loyalty to the Cloven.

Those Kariv who are not so sworn consider their brethren “fallen,” and much bad blood runs between the two factions. Fortunately for Zobeck, the Kariv prefer to keep their interne-cine warfare hidden from the eyes of strangers.

Gang Weapons

The various gangs and rings have access to fine weaponry in a city as filled with forges as Zobeck, and they have invented some odd weapons of their own.

Kariv Switchpikes: The Kariv are

notorious for developing and using a type of telescoping spear, roughly the size of rods when collapsed. Also called “spikes,” these metal rods can be used as large switchblades; one end unsheathes a spring-loaded blade with a simple twist, allowing the rod to be used as an unexpected and deadly blade in close quarters.

By twisting the opposite end, the rod fully telescopes and becomes an even deadlier weapon, somewhat like a longspear.

These switchpikes are easily concealed and are thus perfect for less than legal Kariv activities. “Got spiked” has become a common slang term in the poorer areas of Zobeck, referring to the Kariv tendency to stab first in any disagreement and ask questions later.

An especially large version of the pike is often used by young Kariv men (who like to show off). These are usually not terribly effective in tight city streets, but it is a matter of status and looks, so functionality rarely enters into it.

Kobold Picks: Kobold mining picks find a surprising amount of use outside the silver mines of the Margreve Forest, as they are small, sharp, rather quiet, and quite useful to tighten a garrote or noose.

While some consider them inferior weapons because of the unbalanced weight (an advantage while mining), they have compensating virtues. Their ubiquity means that killers who use them are untraceable; there are thousands of the things in every mining camp. Human and dwarven thugs sometimes leave a kobold pick at the scene of a murder, to throw the

Watch off the scent.

Rat Poniard: These parrying daggers are made for very small hands and are said to have first been made for the Mouse King’s court, though they have since become common eating utensils among kobolds as well. They are quick and a simple way to deliver poison; many have hollow handles for just this purpose and provide a +2 equipment bonus to poison checks for this reason.

Spyglass Scorcher: This odd weapon requires a large supply of alchemical fire, which is projected from a nozzle and hose that connects to a glass or ceramic jar. The Spyglass Guild has one as a gift from the Collegium’s alchemists, but few others even know what it does, and it is rarely used within the city walls except in urgent cases

Using it requires two hands, and it can be filled with up to 5 one-round bursts of a specially volatile alchemical fire. Unlike throwing a vial of alchemical fire, though, the nozzle makes it easier to direct the flames, and only a touch attack is required to hit.

A full charge costs 150 gp and consists of 5 bursts which are expended at 30 gp per round. Refilling the tank requires two full-round actions. Once expended, the weapon is treated as a club.

Note that the scorcher is a weapon that can itself be broken; the ceramic tank has hardness 2 and 4 hit points. If it is shattered, the wearer takes all damage from whatever alchemical fire remains within the tank in a single round.

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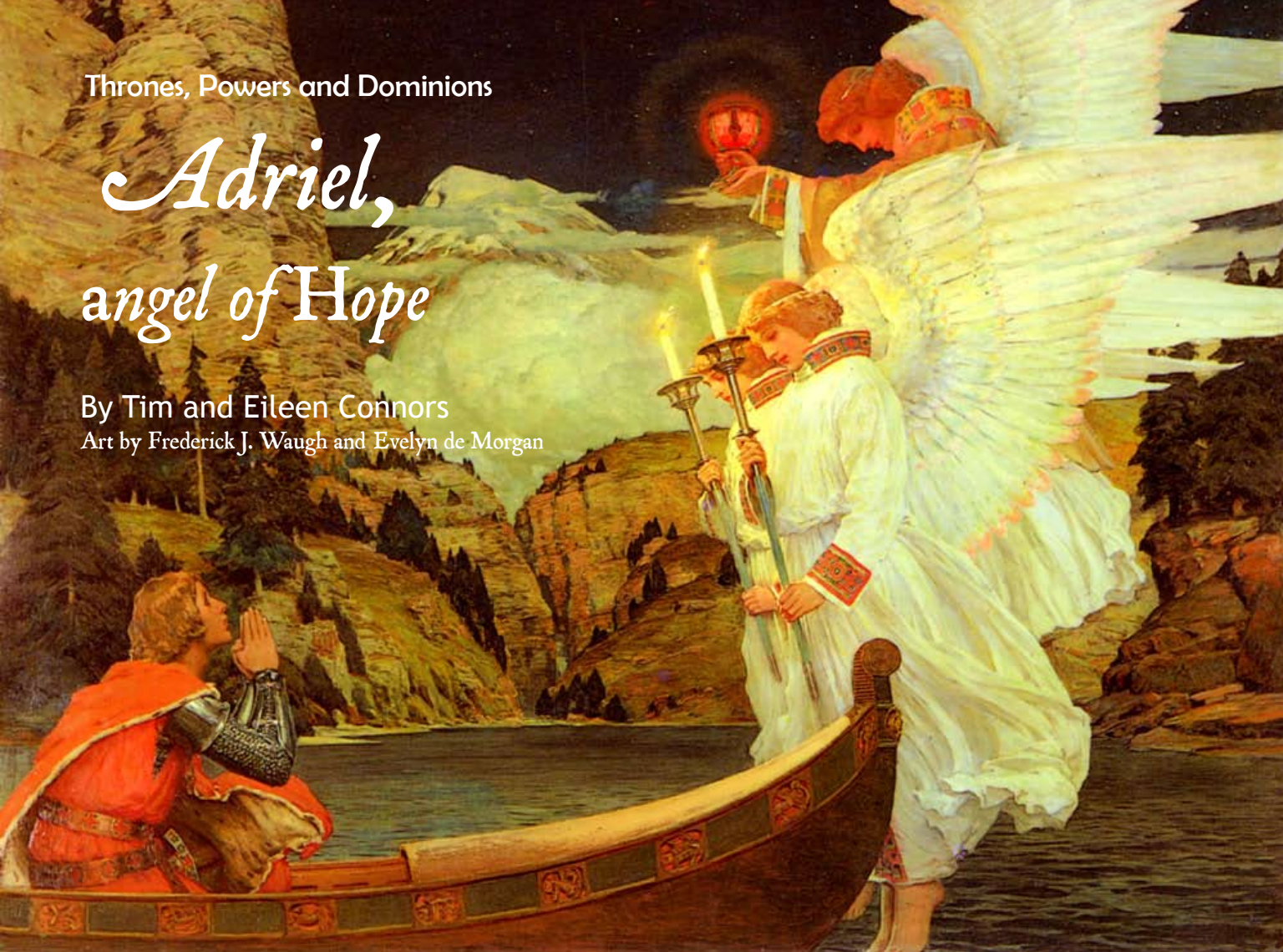


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Adriel, angel of Hope

By Tim and Eileen Connors

Art by Frederick J. Waugh and Evelyn de Morgan



*Hope, like the gleaming taper's
light,
Adorns and cheers our way;
And still, as darker grows the night,
Emits a brighter ray.*

—Oliver Goldsmith (1730-1774)

*Never despair, for I will come for
you. When all seems lost, I will pull
you from the darkness. I will deliver
you. I will give you hope, and I will
show you Heaven.*

—Adriel in Codex Adriel,
“Promises”

Adriel is more than a Dominion, Power, or Principality, one of the angelic powers of Heaven. She is Hope given wings.

Wherever Adriel alights, chins raise

and despondent spirits rally. In her presence, hope blossoms and fills the soul. The ruined get a second chance. The damned glimpse a ray of salvation.

In darkness-swallowed worlds, far from the choir of angels, Adriel alone carries a light that shines for all creatures. Alone, Adriel crusades for hope and deliverance. Common men follow her taper to Heaven. Heroes rise and join her campaign.

History of Adriel

Adriel began her life not as an Angel of Hope but as an Angel of Death. She was one of four Decrees—angels of death responsible for executing the terrible deeds sometimes required for the greater good. Adriel is not even the greatest of the four; that was Hutriel. The others were Kezek and

Makatiel, and all were deadly servants of Good and Law.

In Adriel's first millennium of life, she incinerated all those living within the walls of a wicked city. She unleashed plagues that condemned wayward families to starvation, and she slew the first-born innocents of a reprobate nation.

Born to face dire times, the Decrees' role distanced them from their less brutal kindred. They were dangerous and enigmatic and necessary. How could Adriel and the other Decrees commit these seemingly evil acts without falling from grace? That's exactly what Hell intended to find out.

Archduke Belphegor, the lord of inventiveness in Hell, captured the quartet during an assault upon Heaven's gates. This devil personally spirited them to the Nine Hells

where manipulative fiends tortured and lectured the angels on the hypocrisy of Heaven.

Time passed, but no clever devil's well-reasoned argument could shake the Angels of Death from their absolute faith in Heaven's design. Exasperated, the devils resolved to extinguish their prisoners' faith by force.

Sharp-clawed devils replaced those with sharp tongues. The tortures began. The devils set upon the angels with ungodly cruelty. Imps enthusiastically recorded every incision and catalogued every scream. Days passed. Centuries passed. Relentless assaults nipped away at the Decrees' spiritual fiber. Threads of their faith began to unravel and snap.

Infernal heralds announced the anticipated breaking of Hell's most famous prisoners. The event promised to be a spectacle unlike any that Infernals had ever seen. Highly ranked devils, efreeti, and other servants of evil gathered and waited, unwilling to miss such powerful angels abandon Heaven.

The tortures progressed as a great spectacle for the masses of Hell, and one by one, the Decrees cried out as the last shred of faith fled from their broken bodies. Guilt, despair, and the essence of Hell itself filled this new void and perverted their forms.

The head of Hutriel twisted into that of a diseased vulture. Tattered skin swung from Kezef's undead wings of bone. Writhing swarms crawled under Makatiel's skin and poured from his mouth. These three escaped into the bowels of Hell, howling in madness as they fled the cheering horde.

The crowd turned to Adriel, the last Decree left to fall.

But Adriel did not fall. One final virtue remained. Despite a millennium of her own terrible acts and centuries of unholy torture, hope held fast. As a stadium of expectant devils looked on, hope for her forgiveness and salvation blossomed and filled her being. Its roots touched a

wellspring of absolute goodness flowing through her soul, and a glimpse of Heaven burst from her chest like a star in the blackest void.

It struck the evil spectators. For a single moment, they saw Heaven, and they understood redemption. Most of the devils shattered. A few slipped safely back into Hell.

But hundreds remained, cowering and crying before Adriel's revolving magnificence. Her face fell calm. Her eyes closed. She raised her head, set her wings back, and rocketed skyward. In her wake, hundreds of prostrate hopefuls stretched and flew toward Heaven like a shooting star.

What followed was the single largest mass conversion of evil beings ever recorded. Adriel herself led the centuries in penance thereafter. In the end, she shed her role as a Decree and emerged as the Angel of Hope, the personification of Good's commitment to life, redemption, and salvation.

Adriel in the Real World

Adriel, Angel of Death, appears in Thomas Heywood's *The Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels*, published in 1635. Heywood claims that Adriel will "in the last days slay all souls then living."

In her role as Angel of Hope, Adriel is inspired by Spes, the Roman goddess of hope. In present-day Rome, under the titular church of St. Nicolas in Prison, lie the ruins of the Temple of Spes. Here, in what was once part of the Forum Holitorium, Romans came to buy fruits, vegetables, and oils and to pray to Ultima Dea for good harvests, for marriage, and for children.

Written around 700 B.C., Hesiod's famous poem "Works and Days" describes personified Hope as the last item in Pandora's jar.

Allies and Enemies

Adriel closely associates and relies on other Dominions, angels with a specific duty or charge to keep: Zadkiel,

the Angel of Mercy; Phanuel, the Angel of Repentance; Raphael, the Angel of Healing; and to a lesser extent, Barakiel, the Angel of Chance. These angels call Adriel "Ultima Dea," the last goddess, and the last virtue stripped away by adversity.

Other Angels with a specific Dominion interact with Adriel in a heavenly system of checks and balances. While Adriel holds dominion over Hope, she does not have free reign to grant hope to every creature that needs it. She feels for the rightfully condemned, but Tsadkiel, Angel of Justice, forbids her from granting them hope of escaping punishment.

Adriel is an enemy to all creatures that instill despair or bring about spiritual destruction. In a world where the souls of all creatures are guaranteed to pass on to the outer planes, hope is only truly lost for souls that are destroyed or abducted. Adriel's enemies, therefore, include creatures like barghests and devourers that consume souls utterly, magical effects and artifacts that annihilate absolutely, and extraplanar thieves who abduct souls from their journey to eternal rest.

Ironically, the three beings with greatest enmity for Adriel are her old companions, the Decrees that shared her torment. Once Angels of Death for Heaven, these hate-filled beings are now emissaries of Hell. Diametrically opposed to everything for which Adriel stands, the fallen angels now call themselves Despairs. They are individually less powerful than Adriel but frequently plot and act together to diminish her influence on the cosmos. Strips of gleaming silver skin are all that remain of their angelic heritage.

Appearance

In her natural form, Adriel has the dazzling topaz eyes and snow-white wings of a solar. Even the tiniest light dances, amplifies, and reflects from the curves of her silvery skin. Her body and voice are female, and she moves with supernatural grace.



Regardless of what winged form Adriel takes, one feather is always missing. This loss is a constant reminder of both her torture in Hell and the moment of her transcendence from Angel of Death to Angel of Hope. Adriel's original feather remains in the Pit of Hell where Arch-Duke Titivillus, Scribe of Hell, uses it as a quill to record soul pacts.

Adriel spends most of her time appearing as an adolescent, human girl of blossoming beauty. Long blond hair flows down around her perfectly symmetrical face and gathers in a plait over one shoulder. She wears a gown of pine green, symbolizing that all things flourish when directed by her. Snowdrop petals decorate her gown and create a honey fragrance around her. Head up, Adriel walks with grace, pride, and a smile. In statues, one hand raises the hem of her dress, the other holds a broken symbol of death—typically a sun-dered sickle.

When she claims a favored soul and takes them to Heaven, Adriel leaves behind a single cat's-eye gem. A golden pupil divides the polished,

black stone and represents light in the darkness. To grip it is to feel Adriel's unsinkable spirit.

Personality

Unlike most angels, Adriel was not created with a personality that perfectly befitted her duties. She yearned to give hope, but her duty as an Angel of Death demanded that she rip it away. This inner conflict sculpted her personality. She regretted her actions, questioned her heart, and questioned Heaven. Mortals meeting her topaz eyes sense a rare element of humanity in the angel.

Adriel's time in Hell taught her to trust Heaven's design and to endure. She preaches these lessons with evangelical passion and energy. Her words uplift. Her melodic voice inspires. At its crescendo, it sweeps away darkness and rallies the spirit.

Adriel has no mercy for those who sow despair or destroy souls. For them, she suppresses her hope aura, pulls a slaying arrow from her quiver, and fills her eyes with the frightening presence of the Angel of Death she once was.

Powers

Adriel is one of the most powerful angels in existence. In addition to all of a solar's abilities and items, including a +5 *dancing greatsword* and a +2 *composite longbow* that creates any sort of slaying arrow when drawn, Adriel draws on the unique powers of her domain.

For those close by, Adriel radiates an aura of hope and atonement. To those impossibly distant, she delivers good omens. Her mind is a library of forgotten cures, escape routes, and life-saving solutions. Adriel uses this knowledge to help petitioners and to throw off ongoing negative effects on her person.

Adriel is keenly aware of creatures in despair, even over vast distances. She feels sympathy and a natural inclination to intercede—whether or not those creatures deserve it. The emotional weight of this omniscience places a heavy burden on her psyche.

Adriel, Angel of Hope CR 24

Advanced solar

NG Large outsider (angel, extraplanar, good)

Adriel is a solar with the following additional abilities:

Heaven Sent (Su): Adriel is constantly aware of despair in others. She senses it in any individual creature within a 1-mile radius and any group of one thousand or more afflicted creatures on the same plane. Once per day, she can greater teleport to the location of these creatures as if she had been there before. Three times per day, she can send an innocuous, good omen to any such location.

Hope Aura (Su): Adriel can radiate a 25-foot-radius aura of hope as a free action. Good creatures in the area of effect are affected as if Adriel cast *good hope* (DC 28) upon them. The save DC is Charisma-based. Evil creatures are affected as if Adriel cast *atonement* upon them. Neutral creatures are unaffected by this aura.

Saving Grace (Ex): Every eight

hours, Adriel gains a new saving throw for any ongoing effect. A successful save ends that effect. While this does not retroactively undo lost hit points, it does allow her to overcome disease, *dominate monster*, *imprisonment*, and the like.

Vision of Hope (Su): Once per day, Adriel can experience a *vision* as the spell of the same name. This ability functions only if Adriel is seeking a cure, escape route, or other desperately needed solution.

Cults and Followers

Followers of Adriel include the beleaguered, the enslaved, the sick, and the hungry. When petitioning Adriel, families adorn their doors with pine boughs, which represent hope and pity in the flower language of Heaven. In troubled communities, the desperate go to great lengths to find a budding flower or snowdrop to lay on an altar and pray for Adriel's intercession. In worlds where entire races are enslaved, Adriel is sometimes worshipped as a deity, which concerns some of the gods who claim hope in their portfolio.

The Cult of Adriel Reborn has taken Adriel as their patron angel. These paladins, clerics, and exalted monks dedicate their lives to answering the prayers of the wretched and the forsaken. While any commoner can join their number in an ancillary capacity, the cult actively recruits selfless adventurers and missionaries through a network of affiliated churches.

Initiation into the cult is a serious affair, culminating in a ritual in which members bury the initiate alive and dig her up again before her air runs out—a harsh exercise in trust and faith, but one that those who fight for Good use to gather strength for greater battles to come.

More importantly, this cult ritual is meant to instill lasting empathy for the helpless, by teaching the initiate what it means to truly hope for deliverance. Some members of Good-aligned faiths view this ritual with

quite a bit of suspicion, as a form of unduly harsh mysticism, albeit for Good ends. The followers of Adriel refuse to see any harm in their rituals, and claim that excess in the service of Good is no vice.

Adriel's symbol is a lit taper on a black field. By the seashore, an anchor or a buoy represents her.

Accomplishments and Goals

Adriel exists to bring hope to the desperate. Through her influence and organization, roads to salvation exist on multiple planes.

The infamous inscription above Hell's gate, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here!" is partially Hellish propaganda. A frightening number of souls in the nine hells do not belong there. Evil outsiders abduct them during their ascent to Heaven. In both Hell and the Abyss, Adriel has established networks for the repatriation of these stolen souls. Angelic forces under Adriel's command secure entry points to the planes and marshal souls between secret footholds throughout the infernal realms.

In the mortal world, Adriel inspired the Way of the Taper, a pilgrimage of penance and redemption for converts hoping to see Heaven when they die. Every year thousands of penitents demonstrate their conviction by making the arduous walk of the Way of the Taper.

The Way of the Taper

There is no single Way of the Taper. Rather, there are many paths, each hundreds of miles long that merge like streams into rivers on their way to the Temple of the Cult of Adriel Reborn in the Abernathis Mountains. Each path passes through remote villages, ignores political and cultural borders, and crosses dangerous terrain.

Copies of an illuminated manuscript called the *Codex Adriel* provide pilgrims with descriptions of the most popular routes and include customs of the local peoples, the sites of reputed miracles, and the promises

of Heaven as uplifting sermons.

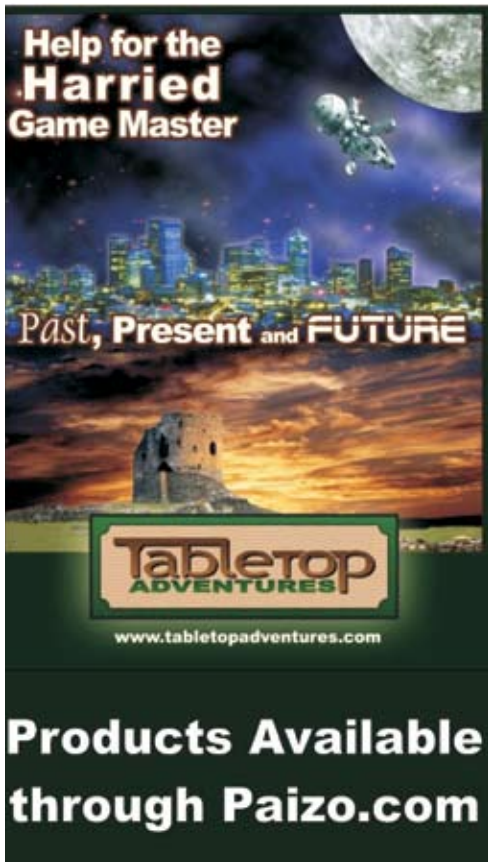
Adriel established the first Way of the Taper route five hundred years ago when she traveled it herself. Following her example, penitents hoping to expunge their sins walk only at night, carrying a single lit candle. Churches spaced 25 to 40 miles dot the primary routes and provide a single day's food, water, and shelter for the weary.

Ardent penitents who travel the Way frequently reward beggars with any assistance that is in their power to give. As a result, beggars arrive in droves—so many, in fact, that towns and churches along the Way now specialize in accommodating them. The Church of the Six Petals doubles as a hospital for the diseased and terminally ill seeking healing from penitent clerics and paladins. The town of Twinsmiths is a haven for those desperately seeking champions of causes both personal and public.

For true atonement, each penitent must volunteer, often for months, at hospitals, churches, and other key locations along the Way. At urban waypoints, the Cult of Adriel Reborn may ask a penitent with experience in organized crime to spy upon, infiltrate, and subvert a nefarious group or guild. As with the initiation rituals, some other Good-aligned groups view these methods with some suspicion. Adriel's followers counter that their agents work against Evil; many of these disruptive spies and saboteurs are part of a distinct group of Chaotic Good followers of Adriel who think any means are legitimate.

The Way of the Taper ends in a mountaintop forest of towering pines. At its center lies the famous Temple of Adriel Reborn. The matriarch here has the direct ear of Adriel, and an angel powerful enough to officiate the atonement of outsiders is always present. At midnight every night, clerics of celestial faiths celebrate a candlelit mass to pray for the souls of arriving penitents. The clerics announce each penitent's country of origin and drape a cat's-eye charm

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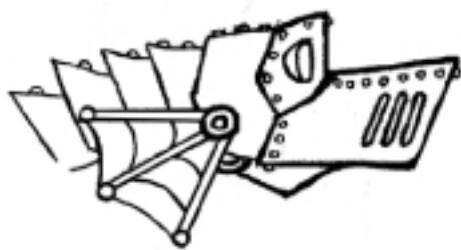
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around each neck as a token of their pilgrimage. Most pilgrims display this keepsake proudly and defend it with their lives.

In many countries of the Way, prisoners are freed each year so long as they walk the Way of the Taper with a heavy backpack and under guard. Particularly dangerous prisoners warrant a trusted party of guards.

Glimmers

Palti leaned into the boulder, but she was too weak to roll it. Under the massive stone, her pinned child labored for air. Time was running out. Palti cried, sweated, and heaved. It wasn't working. She prayed. She prayed like never before—with the force of a trumpet and all the love in her soul. The boulder lightened. She rolled it, and the child crawled free.

Nearby, a manifested glimmer concentrated on his telekinesis.

All Dominion angels have planetars and astral devas at their disposal, but none have quite the same relationship with non-angelic creatures as Adriel has with beings called glimmers.

Glimmers are the ghosts of individuals seeking redemption who died before completing their penance. By helping Adriel bring hope to the living, glimmers follow a path to complete atonement and a peaceful ascendance for their souls.

Glimmers are Adriel's soldiers in the mortal realms. Adriel is their petitioner in Heaven. Wherever communities have fallen into despair, glimmers invisibly nudge life toward a brighter future in the hopes of making one for themselves.

Glimmers are not angels. They were not born to advance Heaven's agenda. Each was once evil and has a personal history of regretted acts. Their personalities are as distinctive as those of living individuals, and their life experiences, temptations, and shortcomings subtly affect their methods.

Statistics

Glimmers are ghosts. Though the base creature is most often humanoid or giant, magical beast and dragon glimmers do exist. Of ghosts' special attacks, glimmers have only Draining Touch (Su), Manifestation (Su), and Telekinesis (Su). They are always of good alignment.

Strategies and Tactics

Glimmers float through the Ethereal Plane seeking desperate mortals on the Material Plane to assist. When they find an individual or community in dire straits, they intervene in subtle and often unseen ways.

When an innocent man was sentenced to hang, a glimmer weakened the rope and smiled from under the hangman's hood. When a leper sought a sign from Heaven, a glimmer rigged the omens that brought him hope. From behind the ethereal veil, glimmers deliver manna to the starving and set clues for the lost.

Many glimmers act as guardian angels to individuals or communities they wronged in life. Some shadow good-hearted adventuring parties, providing a mysterious source of healing when all seems lost.

Glimmers occasionally haunt old colleagues to scare them from their evil ways. In one famous instance, a glimmer and three ghosts frightened charity into a miser, giving him unsolicited hope for salvation.

Other glimmers appear and communicate only to wise men or small children. These trusted mediums gain reputations as oracles and share Adriel's motto: "If I cannot say all is well, I will say all shall be well."

The Trouble with Glimmers

Sometimes, bad things happen to good people. Sometimes, it's on purpose. There are forces at work in the universe beyond the vision and understanding of mortals. And at least one of these forces works for Adriel.

Glimmers frequently use others to bring hope to those in despair. By

doing so, glimmers put people in danger. They hobble wagons to keep adventurers in a town that will soon need them. In the wilderness, they abscond with party provisions, forcing adventurers to hunt for food and discover the desperate village encased in webs. Glimmers have even made the noise that gets sneaking adventurers caught and imprisoned, knowing that the heroes alone can free the starving prisoners too weak to escape on their own.

Angels, particularly those of lawful good alignment, are uncomfortable with glimmers' "dishonorable tactics" and with Adriel's relationship with glimmers in general. Arguments often arise over glimmers' relative independence of angelic command and the fairness of their second chance at redemption through undeath.

Adriel's Lieutenants

If lawful good angels are uncomfortable with glimmers, they are downright suspicious of the many redeemed evil creatures that Adriel employs as lieutenants. Ranging from mephits to black dragons, these redeemed beings have shed their evil alignments and gained Adriel's complete trust.

Adriel's most promising lieutenant is Tishri, a redeemed chain devil. Tishri was one of Adriel's torturers in Hell and one of the hundreds of hopeful converts that ascended with her to Heaven.

Tishri is a missionary and a fanatic. Like the evangelical paladin he aspires to be, Tishri delivers Adriel's message of repentance with limitless patience and smites those rejecting Heaven's offer of redemption with the blades and barbs of his whirling chains.

Each time Tishri successfully leads an evil creature to redemption, he gifts the creature with a token of encouragement—a single link from one of the many chains that wrap and hang from his body. He works tirelessly in the hopes of removing all of the links one day. Presently, over a

thousand links remain, and only his head is entirely free of them.

Tishri has the appearance of a tortured, undead human enshrouded in chains from the neck down. Sunken cheeks flank his grey face. Hundreds of scars criss-cross his skin from that day when his own animated barbs and blades fought his initial conversion to Good.

Celestials recognize Tishri by his unique cat's-eye pupils. Some angels level their gaze upon Tishri overlong, but as a redeemed devil in Adriel's service, Tishri may wander Heaven unchallenged and unashamed.

Tishri retains all of his devil-born abilities. In addition, Adriel's domain has granted him the power to deliver



messages of hope and perseverance to mortals. Tishri can project his face and voice through the flame of any candle or torch held by a mortal on the Material Plane. Because his natural appearance is terrifying, he uses his unnerving gaze ability to make his face appear to be that of one of the visited mortal's departed loved ones. Oftentimes, a silent, reassuring vision like this is enough to bolster a mortal's sinking spirit.

Tishri CR 7
Male advanced chain devil
LG Medium outsider (good, extraplanar, lawful)

Tishri is a chain devil with statistics identical to a standard chain devil except that any instance of "evil" is replaced with "good." Additionally, Tishri has the following additional

ability:

Fire Speak (Su): When on the Material Plane, Tishri can project his face and voice through any torch or candle flame on the same plane for a maximum of two rounds per flame per day. Though he can see and hear normally through this fire, he considers it a violation of Heaven's trust to use this ability for spying of any kind. His unnerving gaze ability is the only special ability useable through fire speak. Infrequently, fire speak rejects Tishri's target flame in favor of another flame mysteriously chosen by the Hope Domain itself.

Adventures in Adriel's Domain

Most low to mid-level adventurers experience Adriel through events on the Way of the Taper. Presently, many of the Cult of Adriel Reborn are on missionary work far afield, so cult leaders are engaging third parties to address issues at home.

•**Trailblazer:** The Cult seeks adventurers to blaze a new branch of the Way of the Taper through a primeval forest. Massive sinkholes have swallowed sections of the wood, and new holes threaten trespassers. The adventurers must find a path around and into these holes where isolated, strange creatures thrive.

•**Epidemic:** Dead foreigners conveyed to the Church of the Six Petals bring a virulent, magical disease called Break Bone Fever to the parish. Penitents and beggars retreat, spreading the disease backward along the divergent arteries of the Way. The Cult of Adriel Reborn seeks adventures willing to travel upstream, through quarantines acting as disease levees, and deep into the jungles of an unaffected country. Unfortunately, only someone who has Break Bone Fever can cure it in others.

•**Pixie Dust:** In Ginmakers' Hollow, enterprising pixies use their sleep and memory-loss arrows to kidnap evildoers and convince them that they have abandoned their evil ways and are traveling the Way. When a clever victim sees through the ruse,

they just hit him with another arrow. More than a few victims have gone on to convert with sincerity. Recently, the pixies “converted” a tribal chief and let him go. Leaderless, his warriors became a pillaging horde. The pixies now seek scouts and diplomats to find the chief and convince him to regain control of his old tribe and stay true to his newfound ideals.

•**The Cult City:** A misguided priest has set up a commune on a remote branch of the Way. Penitents who join his cult quickly realize that they are prisoners. Any disagreement with his methods or attempt to escape results in an “advisory meeting.” Cult teachers punish offenders severely, denounce them as hopelessly evil, and encourage them to commit suicide. The families of the cultists seek heroes to recover their deluded loved ones before it is too late.

Adriel and her angelic agents engage mid- to high-level adventurers directly.

•**Cornered:** A Baron of Hell has a

plan to capture Tishri, tempt him back to evil, and gain a spy with full access to Heaven. Presently, two fiendish rust monsters led by a bone devil have cornered Tishri in a chain-filled dwarven forge. In a desperate attempt to summon aid for his dwarven defenders and himself, Tishri fire speaks at random, and nearby the face of a departed loved one appears in the flame of an adventurer’s torch.

•**Derailed:** In the Nine Hells, a trio of devils has seized a key station of Adriel’s underground railroad for the liberation of stolen souls. The devils feed a few souls to Heaven to control suspicion and broker the rest to their own advantage. Adriel’s agents are wise to the ruse but know that the devils are prepared for angelic countermeasures. The angels seek non-celestials to intervene.

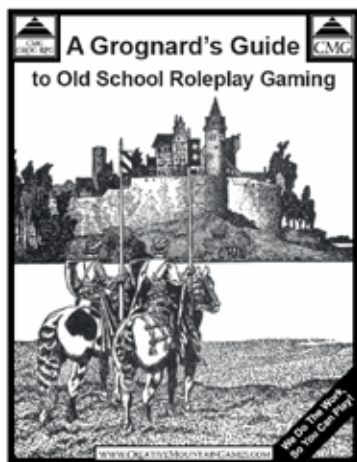
•**Hope and Horror:** In a nigh hopeless alternate dimension, undead have conquered and enslaved the living. Adriel seeks heroes to lead Tishri

and several glimmers on a mission to bring hope to people who are merely new shells for the undead. Magic is weak and weapons are outlawed in this world of survival horror.

•**Law Begets Chaos:** Silver-tongued devils contend that glimmers are unredeemed and thus lawfully belong in Hell. While Heaven’s lawmakers defend their precarious counterpoint, Heaven temporarily severs its relationship with glimmers. Glimmers cannot carry out their penance nor trade their ghostly forms for eternal peace. They become disheartened, desperate, and cynical. Most stop performing good deeds. Some return to evil and create havoc on earth.

While Adriel argues her case in the Heaven/Hell debate, she assigns a non-celestial party the task of rounding up and mollifying glimmers, and finding a way to resurrect these ghosts to complete their penance. Bands of fiends and marut inevitables are slaying glimmers and will harry any heroes who interfere.

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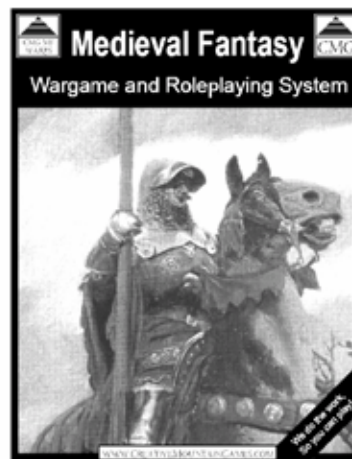
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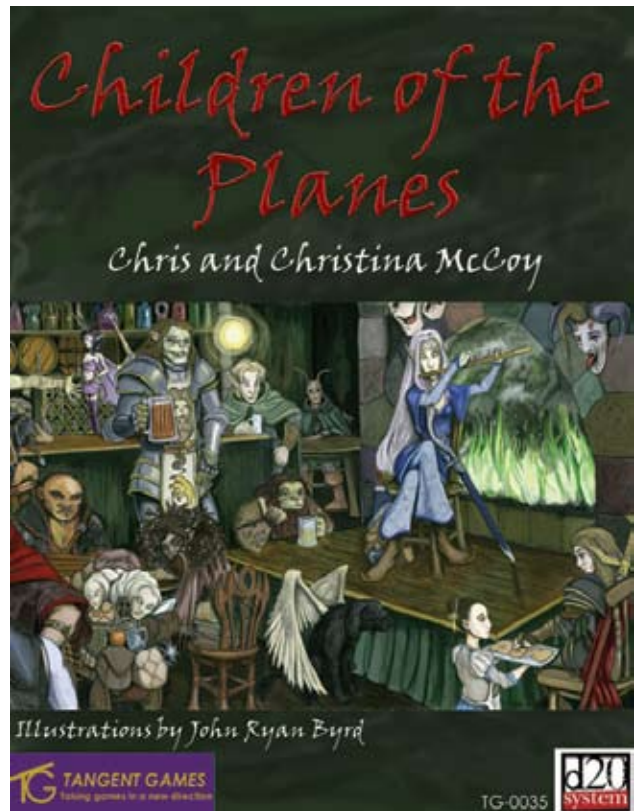
Chris & Christina McCoy

Art by John Ryan Byrd

*“The blood of the multiverse
flows through your veins...”*

The planes are infinite in their mysteries and their peoples, bringing a vast amount of diversity across the multiverse. Why shouldn't the same hold true for planetouched player races? The standard Aasimars and Tieflings are an excellent option for players who are seeking to create a character with an exotic flare or a touch of the planes within their blood but why stop there? The other core races, whether they are Elves, Gnomes, Halflings, Orcs, Humans, or Dwarves, have all made expeditions to other planes...surely their curiosity attracted the attention of planar denizens?

Welcome to Children of the Planes, a racial sourcebook that introduces new planetouched races to the d20 system. Utilizing the same, easy-to-follow format of the PHB, this sourcebook brings twelve new ECL +1 races to life with new feats and prestige classes. Unlike the Aasimars and Tieflings whose otherworldly influences are undefined, the new races found in this book have specific outsiders in their heritage. Whether it is a beautiful Korali seductress or a malicious Skinx prankster, Children of the Planes provides a variety of new racial options for GMs and players alike.



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Exology of the Cloaker

by Paul Leach

Art by Jon Hodgson

Diagram by Kathy Barker

An awful face stares from its thin sheet of a body, and its wings move with a slow, steady beat.

With its entire core vibrating from deep within, a powerful groaning disorients victims until the creature finally finishes them off with its whiplike, spiny tail and shallow maw.

The monster thinks nothing of the terror it inflicts on lesser beings, which it feels differ little from the vermin that infest the cavernous depths that the cloaker and the swarms of its brethren haunt.

Rarely venturing to the surface world, cloaker swarms haunt deep underground caverns and rifts. Though long associated with deep caverns, they trace their ancestry back to the Plane of Shadow and before that back to a lost plane filled with luminous clouds and plas-mic storms.

The cloakers express no desire to return to their ancestral home, for they enjoy a comfortable position among the weaker denizens of the “world below.” Besides, their centuries-spanning exodus gave this race of opportunistic and inquisitive flying monstrosities new powers that they are loathe to give up.

The Great Exodus

Long ago, in a time when extraplanar travelers commonly visited the Mate-

rial Plane and shaped its history, a cabal of wizards accidentally opened a gate in the midst of a gigantic cloaker swarm.

The powerful magi closed the portal as soon as they could, but this only delayed the arrival of the cloakers. As the portal dissolved, the cloakers slipped into the Plane of Shadow rather than directly into the material world, buying the magi time.

Embracing the Shadows

The Shadow changed the cloakers forever. They embraced the stygian darkness, and its taint gave them the power to manipulate shadowy illusions. The cloakers’ fibrous skin absorbed the plane’s twilight essence as readily as cloth absorbs pitch. The monsters soon learned to use ripples in their flexible bodies to weave shad-

ow shapes that took on brief lives of their own, creating effects similar to obscure vision, dancing images, and silent image. Strengthened by their new powers, small colonies of cloak-ers dominated isolated regions of the plane. They brutally interrogated any shadow creatures they could capture, but it was the humanoids, whose beliefs were entirely foreign to the curious invaders, that intrigued them the most. Experimentation proved useless, for the frail forms fell apart under sonic probing.

The persistent shadow flyers refused to surrender their dream of tasting the now-legendary solid world and its intelligent, limbed beings. To this end, they established an alliance of sorts with the twisted shadow fey, servants of a shapeless power of twilight and evil.

The pact forever marked the cloak-ers as one with the Shadow, allowing them to retain their illusory powers even if they left the eternally gray realm. From that time forward, all cloak-ers received the innate gift of shadow shifting. The dark fey led the cloak-ers to the “world below,” where the deepest crevasses end not in stone or steaming magma but simply pass into the Plane of Shadow.

Into the World

In the “world below,” drow, dwarves, and other humanoids provided the cloak-ers with unwholesome diversions. They found the humanoid concepts of divinity and mythology quite odd: why would such weak creatures believe themselves to be superior to animals and insects? Cloaker inquiries met with blank incomprehension from both drow and dwarves.

At last, the cloak-ers found the mysterious and lush world that their progenitors had briefly glimpsed so long ago, but they found their plans of conquest already thwarted. Failing to comprehend the semi-divine nature of the amorphous Shadow entity, the cloak-ers could not grasp the full extent of their bond with the being and its plane. The cloak-

ers discovered they could only make short ventures to the “world above,” for they found the moonlit nights repulsive and the sun-filled skies lethal. Given enough time on the surface, a cloaker withers away to a rubbery patch of shadowstuff. With no allies, the cloak-ers remain in the depths and tend to their own needs, and possibly those of the Shadow Goddess.

What of the eldritch gatekeepers who sought to protect the races of the sun and moon from the incredible flying terrors from the edge of the cosmos? None of the magi could agree on how to defend the world, and the cabal dissolved as each arcanist sought the best way to stop the cloaker invasion. All failed to create a spell or artifact able to defeat the nightmare creatures. However, one wizard—a shadow fey—returned to his home plane to tempt the enemy with their own hubris and ally them with his own dark goddess.

Physiology

Cloakers superficially resemble the manta rays found in the world’s oceans. However, a closer examination of the two species proves that they share no connection. Its outward appearance is simple, if not disturbingly alien; a black dorsal and palest white underbelly marred by

fiendish ruby eyes and a round maw filled with jagged teeth. Single claw appendages emerge from the body on either side of its face, giving the cloaker the ability to crawl when necessary. A flexible tail composed of bone, cartilage, and muscle completes the nightmare. The monster’s body, as thick as a sturdy woolen cloak, enables the cloaker to make the most impossible twists and turns, which allows it to make difficult maneuvers in mazelike tunnels, vents, and sinkholes.

The cloaker’s terrifying body, mouth, and tail are horrifying, but its victims most often succumb to the creature’s hateful moaning. It’s the reverbatrix, an internal organ that lies along the spinal axis, that creates an array of sonic effects that sicken, panic, or stupefy the cloaker’s prey.

This organ is composed of three distinct parts: a ribbed, cartilaginous fluting (part of the cloaker’s upper respiratory system, similar to a human’s bronchial tubes) which produces all normal and magical vocalizations; a bladder that controls air flow through the lower throat; and a bone-hard aperture, which controls the frequency and pitch of the creature’s sounds by vibrating some or all of the organ. The upper throat and digestive tract both feed into the bladder, providing

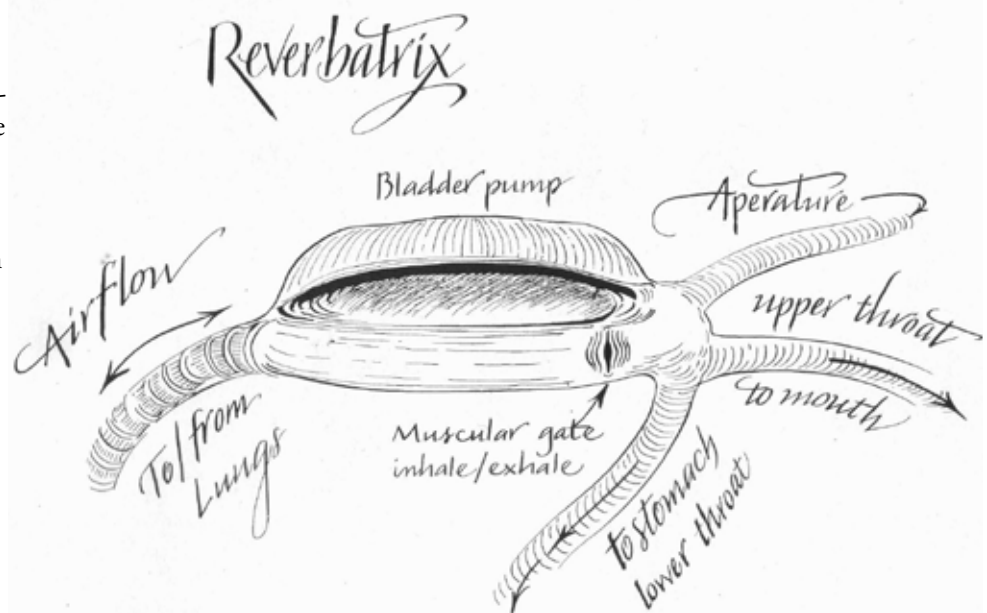


Table 1: Knowledge of the Cloaker

The following table shows the results of a Knowledge (dungeoneering) check as it relates to cloakers. Those who study cloakers or aberrations, as well as those who inhabit or make their living in the “world below”, are most likely to possess this information.

Knowledge (Dungeoneering)

DC Result

- 10 Cloakers are monstrous cloak-bodied creatures that inhabit underground caverns. They fly and sometimes attack enemies by using their tails or engulfing them within their folds and biting them.
- 15 Cloakers use their extraordinary moan to frighten and disable their victims. These sonic attacks may unnerve, cause fear, nauseate, or stupefy opponents. They also have illusory powers in regards to shadow magic. They speak Undercommon.
- 20 Cloakers migrated from the Plane of Shadow. Sub-species exist, and they utilize even more shadow-based powers.
- 25 Cloakers originated in some unknown plane, but they became trapped on the Plane of Shadow when they first attempted to reach the Material Plane.
- 30 Large groups of cloakers can gather in their cavernous hives, especially during the month-long mating season each year.

impose its will on the lesser creatures of the world. While not inherently evil, the cloaker thinks nothing of tormenting and killing any creature other than another cloaker. A victim's intelligence makes no impression on a cloaker's territorial morality. Cloakers view themselves as the supreme beings of the multiverse, and all other beings only qualify as beasts. Nevertheless, in addition to its own strange language of hollow moans, most cloakers find it useful to learn the Undercommon tongue of the dangerous drow, duergar, and svirfneblin.

While the cloakers display a great level of arrogance, they rarely underestimate their victims and always treat them cautiously. They subtly observe unfamiliar creatures whenever the opportunity arises, even going so far as infiltrating an enemy's nest in order to gather intelligence before they strike. Few foes watch their cavern ceilings as carefully as they should, where cloakers may lurk for days or weeks.

Cloakers show special interest in the members of the surface world (often represented by adventurers) that they encounter in natural caverns, mines, and dungeons. They respect aboleths and their unfathomable agendas but consider them nothing more than extremely dangerous monsters. When a cloaker bothers to parley with another being, it has paid that creature the greatest compliment.

The cloakers' sense of superiority clashes with the ideologies and religions of most humanoids. Whether or not they are brutal and savage or peaceful and enlightened, the god-worshipping mortals of the Material Plane contradict the cloakers' understanding of the multiverse.

A cloaker's mind innately rejects the notions of a divine creative spark or spiritual transcendence beyond the material world. While they understand powerful beings called gods exist, they do not believe in their inherent divinity. A god is not a god to a cloaker.

the reverbatrix multiple air and gas sources.

The reverbatrix does more than disable the monster's foes. The organ controls blood and airflow throughout the cloaker's body, enabling its sheets of muscle to suddenly take flight and make unexpected engulfing attacks. The reverbatrix provides essential support to all of the cloaker's bodily systems, and when a cloaker is wounded, its hum keeps the creature in a state of mild euphoric detachment. A cloaker suffers and dies if its reverbatrix is severely damaged, but it has an excellent chance at a full recovery of even the most serious wounds if its reverbatrix is intact.

Cloakers give birth to live young in small litters of half a dozen. No larger than rags, the newborns look like tiny versions of adult menaces and most take flight immediately after leaving the mother's womb. Many expectant cloakers birth their brood from the heights of great caverns, so they have plenty of time to catch any failed flyers. Mothers and fathers carry weak or sick offspring in their mouths if necessary.

A cloaker that shows no sign of mastering flight has little chance of survival, and its parents surrender it to the cavern depths.

A cloaker grows to maturity in 4 years, watched over in a creche of hundreds of other young by cloakers charged with teaching them the history and power of the race. Most live about 30 years, although specimens that attain Huge size may live twice as long or more. The greatest cloaker lords measure their lifespan in centuries.

Cloakers live on the bats and vermin that inhabit their cavernous homes, but they sometimes eat larger prey, such as humanoids. The monsters require little food in spite of their Large size. In times of food shortage, a cloaker's reverbatrix converts external vibrations into metabolic energy, much like a plant converts sunshine.

Psychology

During the cloaker's childhood, it learns of its race's origins and planar wanderings. It receives encouragement to master its own power and

Dread Cloaker CR 7

Usually CE Large aberration

Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot +17

Defense

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 16

(+4 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size)

hp 76 (9d8+36)

Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +9

Immune cold, electricity; polymorph and mind-affecting attacks

Offense

Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee tail slap +11 (1d6+6 plus poison) and

bite +6 (1d4+3 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (5 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks engulf, moan, poison

Tactics

Before Combat Dread cloakers typically wait to ambush passing prey. They prepare for combat by activating all of their shadow shift powers, if possible.

During Combat A single dread cloaker facing multiple opponents often initiates combat by using its moan ability to nauseate as many enemies as possible. Otherwise, it will use its moan fear effect to remove as many foes as it can before it weakens foes with poisonous tail slaps. If facing a lone opponent, the dread cloaker will open combat with a stupor effect. If the enemy resists stupor, the monster makes tail slap attacks followed by an engulf attempt.

In a group, two dread cloakers make sonic attacks to support their companions in melee.

Morale Dread cloakers are bloodthirsty and fight until they are at 1/3 hit points. They often return to a combat site a few rounds later to finish off any victims of their poison.

Special Abilities

Engulf (Ex): A dread cloaker can wrap a Medium or smaller creature in its body as a standard action. The dread cloaker attempts a grapple that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and bites the engulfed victim with a +4 bonus on its attack. It can still use its whiplike tail against other targets.

Attacks that hit an engulfing dread cloaker deal half their damage to the monster and half to the trapped victim.

Moan (Ex): A dread cloaker can emit a dangerous subsonic moan as a standard action. By changing the frequency, the cloaker can cause one of four effects. Dread cloakers and normal cloakers are immune to these sonic, mind-affecting attacks. Unless otherwise specified, a creature that successfully saves against one of these effects cannot be affected by the same moan effect from the same cloaker for 24 hours. All save DCs for moan effects are Charisma-based.

Unnerve: Anyone within a 60-foot spread automatically takes a -2 penalty on attack and damage rolls. Those forced to hear the moan for more than 6 consecutive rounds must succeed on a DC 17 Will save or enter a trance, unable to attack or defend themselves until the moaning stops.

Fear: Anyone within a 30-foot spread must succeed on a DC 17 Will save or become panicked for 2 rounds.

Nausea: Anyone in a 30-foot cone must succeed on a DC

17 Fortitude save or be overcome by nausea and weakness. Affected characters fall prone and become nauseated for 1d4+1 rounds.

Stupor: A single creature within 30 feet of the dread cloaker must succeed on a DC 17 Fortitude save or be affected as though by a hold monster spell for 5 rounds. Even after a successful save, the creature must repeat the save if the dread cloaker uses this effect again.

Poison (Ex): The dread cloaker's tail sting and bite are toxic, injecting shadow essence poison into the victim with each hit (Fort DC 18, initial damage 1 point of Strength drain, secondary damage 2d6 points of Strength damage). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Shadow Shift (Su): A dread cloaker can manipulate shadows. This ability is effective only in shadowy areas and has three possible effects.

Obscure Vision: The dread cloaker gains concealment (20% miss chance) for 1d4 rounds.

Dancing Images: This duplicates a *mirror image* spell (CL 9).

Silent Image: This effect duplicates a *silent image* spell (DC 16, CL 9). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Statistics

Str 23, Dex 18, Con 19, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 17

Base Atk +6; Grp +16

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Stealthy Skills Escape Artist +16, Hide +14, Listen +17, Move Silently +18, Spot +17

Languages Cloaker, Undercommon

SQ shadow shift

Ecology

Environment underground

Organization solitary or mob (3-6)

Treasure standard

Advancement 10-18 HD (Large), 19-27 (Huge)

Level Adjustment —

A black raylike creature glides and turns in the cavern, whipping its long, bony tail. Blood red eyes glow dully and a wide slit of a mouth reveals bone yellow fangs. An oily substance, dark as midnight, oozes from the monster's clicking teeth and quivering tail stinger.

The ancestors of dread cloakers delved long into the evil and forbidden mysteries of the Plane of Shadow, growing crueler and more dangerous than their normal cloaker kin. They love to kill and devour victims and particularly enjoy weakening them with their poisonous tail slaps.

Dread cloakers are not as numerous as the normal run of cloakers and most of them live solitary lives in small mobs of no more than half a dozen creatures. Every now and then, a dread cloaker dominates a hive of normal cloakers, urging the community to greater acts of terror and slaughter. These are sometimes referred to as a "Hive Queen" or "Cloaker King," though the cloakers themselves claim no such titles.

Much like their cloaker brethren, the minds of dread cloakers are inscrutable to most humanoid minds. They limit communication with lesser beings to sonic assaults and poisonous bites and stings.

A dread cloaker is slightly larger than a normal cloaker, with a wingspan of 9 feet. It weighs 120 pounds. Its black body assumes a reddish tone after it feeds.

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This unwillingness or inability to accept the core mysteries of humanoid religions, mythologies, and ideologies creates an impasse between cloakers and intelligent mortals. These elusive concepts fuel the cloakers' curiosity about the bestial humanoids they harass and destroy.

The Great Dissonance

Beyond its personal pursuits, a cloaker learns the importance of the Great Dissonance, the communal experience that transcends individual cloakers and binds them together into hives and swarms. A Great Dissonance occurs when at least a dozen cloakers drone and moan a number of bizarre chants collectively and purposely.

Cloakers find the simultaneous variations of sonic vibrations soothing and therapeutic, while most other creatures find the event nothing less than a mind-bending aural assault. A group of cloakers creates the Great Dissonance on no known schedule, although the strongest ones typically initiate such an event, and it is more frequent during the mating season.

The Great Dissonance notwithstanding, a cloaker has few social obligations to its community. It hunts, mates, and raises its young as it wills during mating season and migration. The elder cloakers exert a measure of authority, and they assign certain tasks as needed. Typical assignments include sentry and patrol duties, prisoner snatches, and foraging.

Treasure

Cloakers collect treasure because most humanoids value it, and they place rather less value on gold and gems themselves. Coins are used in those uncommon transactions with them.

Rings are especially prized, for they can be worn on a cloaker's tail. Cloakers rarely produce even the simplest magic items, so they must rely on thievery, purchases, and spellcasting slaves to acquire them.

Heroes Vs Cloakers

Cloakers use powerful sonic attacks that can unnerve, entrance, panic, nauseate, or stupefy opponents. Besides flight, the creature protects itself with several illusory shadow-shifting tricks that provide either concealment or the benefits of mirror image or silent image. A cloaker's saving throw bonuses (especially the +7 Will save bonus) give it a fair chance against most spells cast against it. As the average cloaker's ability scores are 15 or higher (especially Strength), enemies find it difficult to defeat the monster by inflicting ability damage that drops their scores to 0 or less.

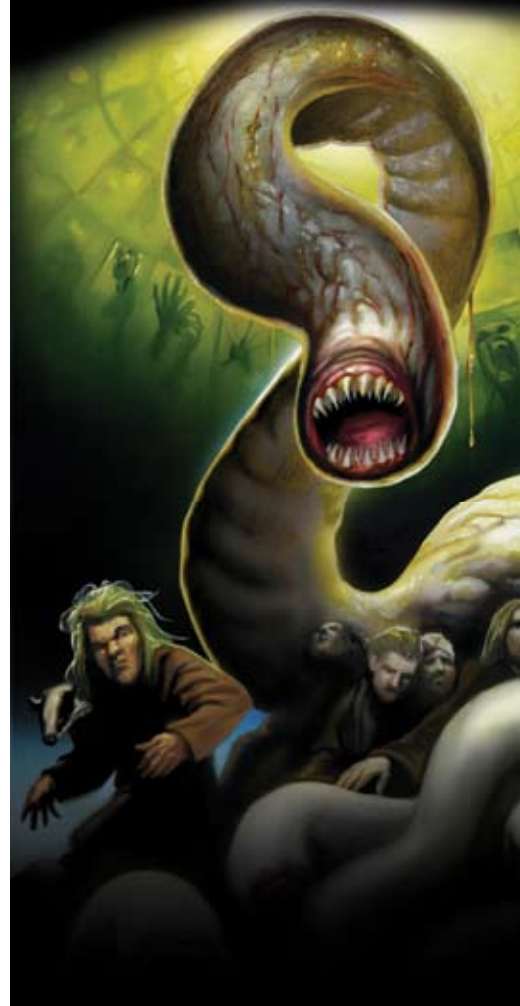
Touch Attacks: Considering the cloaker's aerial mobility, its low Touch AC 12 provides reason enough to prepare spells that rely on touch attacks. A ray of enfeeblement (or two) lowers the risk of a successful engulfing attack, and touch of idiocy reduces the effectiveness of the cloaker's moan attacks (the saves against those attacks are Charisma-based). Shocking grasp, acid arrow, and vampiric touch are effective damage spells, especially if delivered via spectral hand. Finally, alchemist's fire flasks allow easy touch attacks that anyone can make against this monster.

Enjoy The Silence: Cleverly applied, a silence spell suppresses the cloaker's moan attacks while allowing PCs to continue to cast spells at will. Considering its good saving throw bonuses, the spellcaster might be more successful by placing the spell on an area or on a willing recipient that is mobile enough to close with the cloaker and keep it within the spell's radius (or a flying summoned creature).

Sticky Situations: If the PCs need a delaying tactic to ready an assault or make a getaway, solid fog and web work well against flyers such as cloakers.



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Redefining Heroes

The 4th Edition Look
from William O'Connor
By Wolfgang Baur

Art by William O'Connor
All art used by permission.

William O'Connor has been a staple of RPG, card, and book art for at least 10 years, with credits with many major publishers. Now his hands have drawn the new iconic characters of 4th Edition. We check in with the brush that has launched a thousand campaigns.

KOBOLD QUARTERLY: You have done outstanding work with both pure fantasy and with real-world myth & legend, such as King Arthur and Orlando Furioso.

Tell us about how you approach legendary material, and how commissioned work comes together for new game

worlds. Any difference?

WOC: Historical and fantasy material are very similar in that you are creating images of things that have not been seen before. Historical myths usually have more familiar and recognizable styles to them, in clothing, architecture and settings. In creating new worlds an artist must create totally new designs.

KQ: Your work on L5R is among the fan favorites for that world. Which of your pieces do you like best from that line?

WOC: There are so many cards that I've done for L5R, I feel very fortunate to be a part of that game. Often

my favorite illustration is not for a particularly popular card, but in the case of Bayushi Atsuki, I think a great card and great illo came together.

KQ: You have a very strong design sense, and it seems that your paintings are all laid out carefully. When and how did you begin this approach? Was it something you learned from fine art school, or later in your career?

WOC: Composition is the fundamental principle of all art. Music, painting, literature, dance, etc, they are all the arrangement and design of their elements. In painting, composing the elements of a piece is the first

step. I learned this early on in my education, but as I've gotten older it becomes more important. When I start a new painting, I begin with nothing more than an abstract design sketch, like a framework. All of the details and figures are then overlaid on top of this frame.

KQ: How did you get your start in this crazy business?

WOC: I had always been interested in fantasy as a child. Star Wars, Robert Louis Stevenson, gaming, etc. I loved the imagery.

KQ: Tell me about your town, and what is your work space like?

WOC: I live in Northern New Jersey, about a half hour outside New York City. It's a nice town where I can walk to the shops and post office. My work space is fairly big, with lots of books. I love books; that's another major influence on why I went into

illustration.

KQ: KQ: What makes a good single figure painting?

WOC: Character. I like to create characters that are interesting. There's not much to fall back on in a single figure painting. No action, usually no background, so the figure has to be interesting, and the costumes have to help convey the narrative of the character.

KQ: Whose work do you admire right now? Whose work from long ago?

WOC: The digital work being done right now blows me away. The talent is staggering, and coming not just from America but from all over the world. Jason Chan, Adam Rex.

From previous generations I always loved Parkinson, Elmore and Whelan.

KQ: Your work for 4th edition is already in print with the Races & Player's guides and very soon with the *Player's Handbook*, *DMG*, and *Monster Manual*. Tell us about the concepting work behind the tiefling and the dwarves.

WOC: The tiefling were very interesting. A race of lost people, they carried with them a lot of pathos. I wanted them to be beautiful, echoing what they must have once been like, while making them distinctly alien.

The dwarves were a particular favorite as well, an ancient people who lived in the mountains. I looked to many other mountain cultures such as the Tibetans and Peruvians for influence.

KQ: What part of 4th edition did you enjoy most from an artistic





perspective?

WOC: The opportunity to work on a whole culture and world of diverse people from start to finish was very interesting. I wanted to get inside everything about each of the races, not only armor and weapons, but hair styles, clothes and personal effects. It was more of an anthropological exercise.

KQ: The “Siege of Paris” is on the cover this issue, a wraparound painting with dozens of characters. What’s the story behind it?

WOC: The Siege of Paris is the centerpiece of “Orlando Furioso” (Roland’s Fury). It is an old Italian fantasy epic that I’ve been working on illustrating.

The story is a monumental tale of the adventures of the Paladins of Charlemagne slaying sea monsters, giants, witches, demons, while seducing beautiful women, all set against the titanic battle to save Europe from the invading hordes of Saracens. It’s a great story.

The piece on the cover depicts the climactic siege of Paris. The Saracens have surrounded Charlemagne in Paris and the city about to fall. One of the paladins has been sent to retrieve the army of England as rein-

forcements. The paladin gets help from the archangel Michael and the spirit of Silence, who allow the English army to sneak up behind the Saracens and crush them, saving the city!

KQ: How do you paint differently for book covers and for, say, *Magic: the Gathering* cards? Do you use specific techniques, software, or materials for larger works?

WOC: The techniques are the same, but I design things differently because the function of each is different. A book cover needs to be legible on a book from across a bookstore on the shelf, and then up close when it is read. Its function is to sell the book and engage the reader.

A card illo is intended to be seen about the size of a postage stamp, sitting on a table top. Its function is to identify the card at a glance. Concept work by comparison is different yet again. The work is not intended as the final product for the most part. From the concept work other artists will derive more work, with separate functions. The concept artist is com-

municating to other artists.

KQ: Are there collections of your work coming up?

WOC: Not yet, but I am looking for a good offer.

KQ: What makes a project fun to work on? What makes a work difficult or frustrating?

WOC: The art director plays a huge roll. I will take work specifically based on whether I like the art director sometimes. A good art director makes me a better artist. I have had the pleasure of working with some of the finest art directors during my career.

KQ: Tell us about the sketches or images that accompany this article.

WOC: The opportunity to work on 4th Edition was a dream come true. I was a huge fan of D&D growing up. The work for this project was very exciting. I tried to bring my own style to this game, always aware of the wonderful work that had come before by some very talented people. I worked with the Wizards design team for over a year and produced more than three hundred sketches. Many of these designs will be used to create CGI online characters, and miniatures.



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DRAGONS WITHOUT BELLY BUTTONS

Spontaneous Generation in Fantasy Campaigns

By Derek Kagemann



Our fathers have told us men may be made by the forces of Nature . . . It is the warmth of things and moisture, and rottenness.

—H.G. Wells,
The Country of the Blind.

The theory of spontaneous generation claims that life arises from inanimate matter. For centuries and indeed until quite recently, this idea prevailed in the natural sciences. Aristotle once wrote about offspring generated “from decaying earth and excrements.” Giambattista della Porta’s *Magia Naturalis*, published in 1558, gave accounts of wasps brought forth from putrefied horse carcasses and serpents grown from menstrual women’s hair.

In many ways, spontaneous generation makes more sense in a fantasy campaign than trying to justify its absence. An adventurer’s career depends on a proliferation of monsters within nearby dungeons, sewers, and ruins. These microcosms teem with an array of bizarre creatures, but the question remains, *how exactly did they get there?* How do such diverse, and oftentimes

rare, species establish themselves within their lairs? Spontaneous generation provides an answer that fits the setting perfectly.

Enhanced Ecologies

A Recipe for Mice: Wrap some grain in a dirty shirt, and place it inside an open pot. Within twenty-one days, mice will appear.

In a fantasy campaign, spontaneous generation (also called abiogenesis) is neither magical nor divine in nature. Rather, it is an established part of the natural order, coexisting neatly alongside biogenesis, which is the development of life from preexisting life. It is a gradual process, and specific environmental conditions are essential for the generation of life to occur.

An appropriate base material, or combination of materials, must first be present. For example, the rich mud within a marsh gives birth to fully formed frogs—male and female—capable of standard sexual reproduction. They go on to spawn

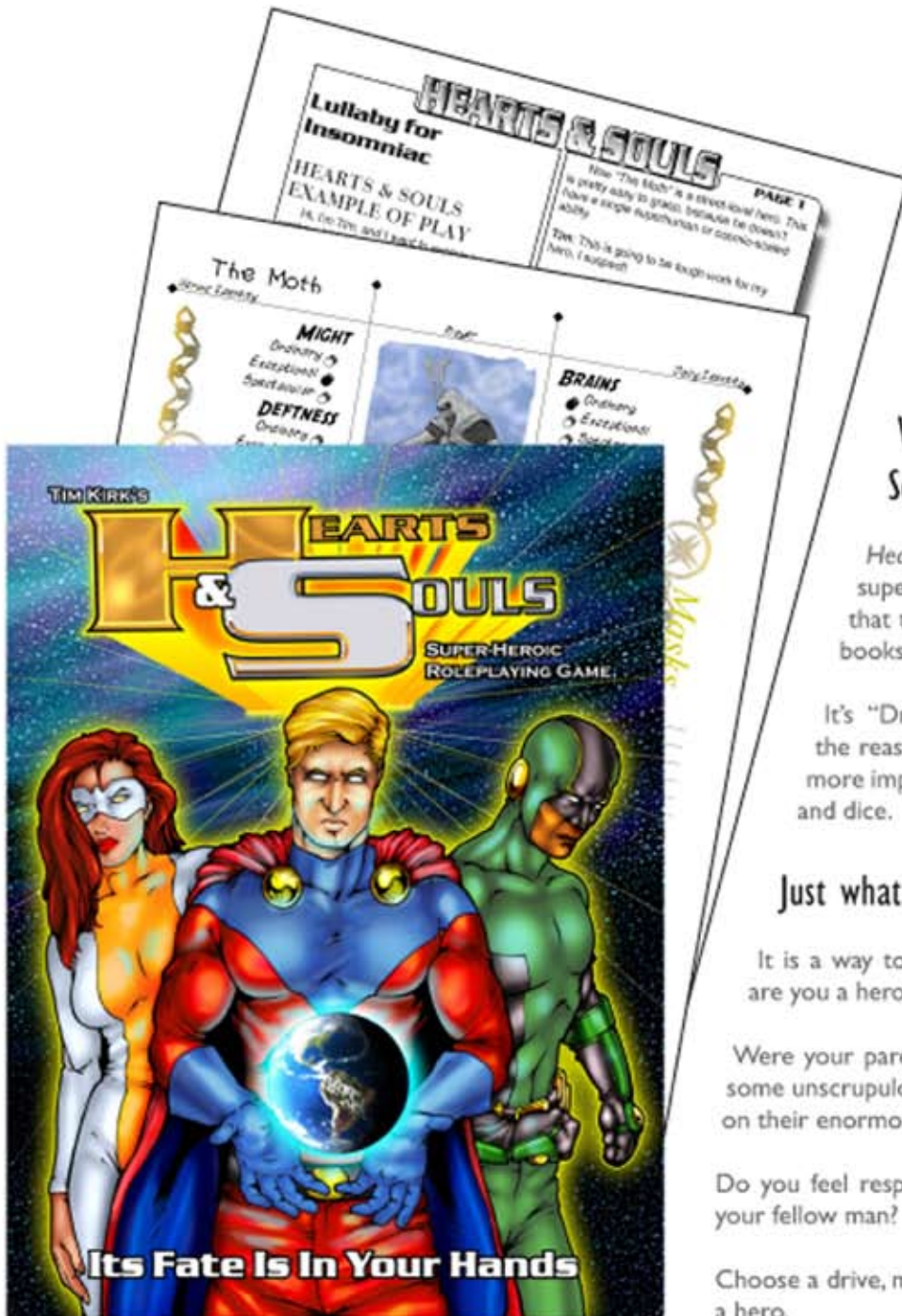
tadpoles, whose presence may actually impede the spontaneous generation of frogs within the area. Elsewhere in the marsh, venomous toads arise from the putrescent remains of a dead duck buried beneath a layer of decayed plant matter.

Rot and putrescence play a strong role in this process, because decay releases the required life force into the surrounding area. Light, temperature, and humidity also factor into the equation. Such nuances can prevent or facilitate abiogenesis and create variations between creatures of the same species. Some of the marsh frogs may have ruby-flecked skin due to their proximity to a vein of precious minerals—something that treasure hunters would know to watch for. A druid who knows what minerals to add to a marsh may change what creatures grow there.

Elemental connections provide conduits for life; for example, mud combines earth and water and supports life native to either element. Likewise, fire-scorched earth contains raw elemental essence. In a world where spontaneous generation exists, elemental creatures often spawn within a concentration of that element. These elemental creatures are native to the material plane (and are not subject to effects targeting extraplanar creatures). Positive and negative planar energies also factor into abiogenesis. Cemeteries and holy shrines generate life uncharacteristic of the surrounding environs.

The Truth about Spontaneous Generation

Francesco Redi presented the first solid evidence against the theory in 1668. His experiments showed that maggots did not arise spontaneously from rotten meat contained within a sealed flask. Even so, the existence of spontaneous generation remained a hotly debated issue, further complicated by Antonie van Leeuwenhoek’s invention of the microscope. Were microbes the cause of decay or a by-product? It wasn’t until 1864 that Louis Pasteur proved that not even bacteria could develop spontaneously. This disproved spontaneous generation and finally laid the matter to rest.



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Types of Abiogenesis

A Recipe for Gelatinous Cubes: Take the broth remaining from tannery and add the liquor derived from invisible stalker blood, and pour the whole into a cesspit. Wait for the dark of the moon to pass, then three weeks more.

Abiogenesis most commonly creates simple, unintelligent organisms. Within self-contained ecosystems such as dungeons, the spontaneous generation of plants, fungus, and small vermin forms the foundation of the food chain. These ready-made meals attract larger creatures, which in turn draw a higher class of predator. Sustainable food sources can be generated in areas far removed from their typical surroundings.

As the ecosystem grows, entities emerge that are more complex. A common cesspool, for example, will spawn rats. The conditions within a well-established metropolitan sewer system could generate dire rats, otyugh, and gelatinous cubes. City governments might contract workers to break up accumulations of trash and dispose of any exotic materials in the sewer system before more dangerous forms of life arise. Adventurers are inevitably called in when things get out of hand.

In certain locales (particularly dungeons), abiogenesis may occur at an accelerated pace or grander scale. Though spontaneous generation is independent of magic, a villain could certainly augment it through magical means. Aberrations and magical beasts, such as ropers and owlbears, could be the result of spontaneous generation within a magically-infused environment.

Rather than calling up creatures from other planes, summoning spells could work by spontaneously generating a creature, which then lives out the sum of its existence in a matter of minutes. When the spell expires, the spent creature collapses into a

pile of dust and brittle bones. The fearsome tarrasque is an example of spontaneous generation of millennial proportions.

Abiogenesis and Spawn Points

Abiogenesis shouldn't be confused with the spawning points or monster generators found in computer games. A mound of garbage doesn't spew out 1d6 dire rats every few combat rounds. Spontaneous generation is part of the story and justification behind an encounter, but not an encounter in and of itself. Uncovering a half-formed alligator beneath a submerged log is just as rare an occurrence as walking in on an ogre giving birth.

That's not to suggest that either is an impossible occurrence. An encounter's challenge rating decreases when it pits the adventurers against a half-formed, malformed, or freshly generated creature. Though this would resemble an adult version, it would be insensible and uncoordinated.

Dragon Eggs

In a world of abiogenesis, a dragon's treasure hoard has a very practical side. Warmed by body heat, the accumulated pile of gems and precious metals becomes a suitable environment for the generation of an egg.

The composition of the hoard is of the utmost importance. Metallic dragons require high concentrations of their namesake metals. Since chromatic dragons depend on the chromatic dispersion of light to form their young, they have a predilection for gemstones appropriate to the color of their scales. They carefully distribute these stones to maximize their effect within the other "filler" treasures.

A meager pile of treasure yields thin-shelled eggs and scrawny hatchlings. On the other hand, enchanted items improve the hatchling's intelligence and innate magical abilities. The dragon's body heat both incubates the egg and inhibits the growth

of parasitic or predatory creatures that might otherwise spawn within the great hoard. A dragon that loses its hoard has suffered a loss of tremendous significance as the dragon also loses its ability to reproduce.

All Creatures, Great and Small

A Recipe for Scorpions: Rub a handful of basil over a smooth stone and let it sit under the sun. If the days are warm then scorpions will crawl from its shadow within two weeks time.

In civilized lands, spontaneous generation is taken for granted. As a well-established feature of daily life, the common folk have their own recipes for generating beneficent creatures and techniques to inhibit the growth of pests. A beekeeper preparing a new hive might use a beehive recipe passed down to him by his father. He buries the corpse of a young bull so that it sits upright with the tips of its horns protruding aboveground and covers it in fresh-cut clover. After a month, the corpse splits open and releases a fresh swarm of bees.

To incorporate spontaneous generation into a campaign, the DM may maintain a book of tried-and-true recipes for generating life. Start with a few of your own that the realm considers common lore: recipes for rodents and vermin and a few more-extraordinary animals, like octopi and crocodiles. Player characters with sufficient Knowledge (nature) skill might be familiar with a few. Keep a running record as the campaign progresses. The PCs will encounter new and varied instances of spontaneous generation and may attempt a few creations of their own.

When designing a recipe, keep in mind the following factors:

1) **Environment:** Successful abiogenesis assumes that certain base materials foster life, but their placement and relationship to their surroundings is also important. These

circumstances can further complicate the generation of a life form. Some organisms may only spawn if the process is unobserved, while others may wither and die if a particular event does not immediately follow their formation. Examples of suitable substances include:

- Carcasses, hair, and body parts
- Bodily effluvium, including sweat and excrement
- The four elements in varying mixtures and states
- Wood and other vegetative matter
- Garbage or particular junk items
- Natural phenomenon, such as earthquakes, miasma, swamp gas, moonlight, wind, tides, and bioluminescence

2) **Time:** Abiogenesis is slow. A particular time may be called for, such as a full moon or the first light of morning. Most often, abiogenetic life will require weeks, if not months, to form.

3) **Life Force:** Creating abiogenetic life is similar to crafting a magic item. It requires time and materials and,

sometimes, an investment of experience points (for creatures with a CR greater than 1). Recipes that might unbalance gameplay should always have an experience point cost associated with them. This reflects the life energy invested into the process.

As a rule of thumb, complex organisms and "life-on-demand" creations require more intricate recipes than simple life forms. No matter what, abiogenetic life must fit within an economic framework. Useful animals, such as horses and dogs, require weeks or months and a bizarre amalgam of materials to generate. Even if players can make their own chickens, the imposition of doing so must outweigh the cost of simply buying one. In other words, adventurers starving in a desert cannot generate life in so timely a fashion as to save their lives.

SAMPLE RECIPES

- Anchovies are born of sea-foam, particularly during stormy weather.
- An assassin vine will grow wherever a rabbit dies while entangled by

a wild vine.

- Caterpillars grow during the early morning from the dew on cabbage leaves.

- A log sunk within a body of standing water will generate a crocodile within two months time.

- Flies emerge from wet wood and maggots from rotten meat.

- Ghouls will emerge from graveyard soil within weeks of a burial if the ground is not properly sanctified.

- Moths are made from wool, including the coats of sheep and the hair of the sloth.

- Serpents can be generated from spinal fluid or a menstruating woman's hair.

- Starfish bud from the shed skin flakes of scrag (aquatic trolls).

- A decomposed duck submerged beneath mud or decaying plant matter will generate a healthy toad.

- Legends tell that dwarves emerge full-grown from the stone walls of abandoned mountain strongholds and orcs rise from the mud of a battlefield at least 20 years old.



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NEOEXODUS: A HOUSE DIVIDED RPG GAMING SUPPLEMENT SPRING 08

ANNOUNCING SUB ROSA EXODUS

Louis Porter, Jr. Design announced the creation of the Sub Rosa Exodus for NeoExodus: A House Divided RPG for players and DMs. Sub Rosa Exodus will supply players and DMs from around the world with NeoExodus: A House Divided RPG information on what is new and upcoming in the setting.

In the near future we hope to publish a directory of all the players and DM around the world, so you can meet new players and DMs so drop up a e-mail at havengod@lpjdesign.com and let us know if you want to be part.

NEW FEAT: GODLESS-GENERAL

You are more resistant than normal to divine magic.

Prerequisite: No patron deity.

Benefit: You gain spell resistance equal to 5 + your character level against divine spells of any kind. If a divine spell penetrates your spell resistance, you gain a +2 bonus on any saving throws allowed against it. You may not voluntarily suppress your spell resistance to receive the benefit of any divine spell. In addition, you cannot be raised, resurrected, or otherwise restored to life via any divine magic once you die.

NEW WEAPON QUALITY: POLYMORPHIC

This weapon can alter itself and change shape at the users command into another weapon. When the weapon polymorphs it functions just like the new weapon normally would; if a club which does bludgeoning damage turned into a sword it would now do slashing damage. When the weapon polymorph all of its statistics change to the new weapon also. The weapon will retain it new weapon shape for as long as the user wishes it. A polymorphic weapon can change its shape from one weapon to another as a swift action.

For each +1 enhancement bonus a weapon has, is the amount of different weapon forms it can polymorph into; a weapon with +3 enhancement bonus can change into 3 different weapons. Weapons without an enhancement bonus cannot be polymorphic. Weapons that are polymorphic come in two basic categories: melee and ranged. Weapons that are melee can not be transformed into weapons that are ranged, and vice versa.

Specific Magic weapons like Frost Brand, Holy Avenger, Sword of Life Stealing and Trident of Warning still possess their special abilities even though the weapon may be in a different weapon form. Due to their unique nature, weapons that are polymorphic are considered to have a hardness of 12 and 20 hit points.

Aura: Moderate Transmutation; Caster Level: 11th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Polymorph; Market Price: +3 bonus



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Crystalline scholars of all things arcane, the Cyneans are as mighty in mind as in body. While the psionically-inclined might expect the Cyneans to share their tendencies, these beings of living crystal are masters of magic, not mentalism. On Exodus, which is both their home and their only known haunt, they can ever be found seeking some mystical secret or long-lost spell. This PDF is just the sort of thing needed for PCs add depth to the NeoExodus setting. Written by Joshua Cole.

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Dalreans are a race of sentient, mobile plants. If a treant is a thinking tree, a dalrean is a thinking flower, and indeed, the spellcasters of this race are noted for their astonishing floral 'spellbuds.' Dalreans, who live exceedingly long lives, are closely tied to the natural cycles of Exodus. This PDF is just the sort of thing needed for PCs add depth to the NeoExodus setting. Written by Joshua Cole.

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Ask the Kobold

Armor and Resistance Explained

by Skip Williams

Skip Williams is a co-author of 3rd Edition and the author of the world's longest-running rules advice column.

If you have a question for the kobold, send it to tsrsage@aol.com.

Could you explain why armor check penalties do not apply to the Ride and doesn't affect a character's initiative modifier?

You are correct, an armor check penalty does not affect Initiative or any skill check that doesn't specifically note that an armor check penalty applies (such as the Ride skill).

Armor doesn't slow your reactions, which is why armor check penalties don't affect initiative rolls or Reflex saves. Armor does make it more difficult for you to control your body in many situations, such as during Hide checks, Balance checks, and Climb checks. It also can interfere with very fine movements, such as those required for Open Locks checks and Sleight of Hand checks. See the sidebar for details.

Though the Ride skill is a Dexterity skill, it does not have an armor check penalty because it's really more about staying in sync with your mount than anything else and an armor check penalty doesn't apply.

All the foregoing assumes you're proficient with the armor you're wearing. If you're not proficient with the armor you're wearing (or shield you're using) the armor check penalty applies to your attack rolls and on all Strength-based and Dexterity-based ability and skill checks, including Ride. A proficient user can wear

armor more or less like a second skin (though the heavier armors still get in the way a little bit); armor tends to hang like a dead weight on a non-proficient user and causes a great deal more trouble.

Can you shed some light on the intentions behind *enlarge person*? The spell's text says equipment is "similarly enlarged" after saying that the size of a creature is doubled, and the creature's weight is multiplied by 8.

Does this mean that a human wearing full plate armor might fall over? The Strength bonus the spell provides doesn't cover enough to prevent this, nor does the increased carrying capacity for becoming size Large.

Let's run the numbers:

Full plate for a Medium humanoid weighs 50 pounds. Full plate for a Large humanoid weighs 100 pounds

Consider a modest Strength score of 10. That's a maximum load of 100 pounds at size Medium. That's plenty for 50 pounds of full plate. After receiving the *enlarge person* spell the character has Str 12 (+2 size modifier to Strength from the spell) and a maximum capacity of 260 pounds, thanks to the Strength score and the extra carrying capacity for being Large. That's still plenty for 100 pounds of full plate.

The key factor here is that I'm not multiplying equipment weights by 8. Gear for bigger creatures might be twice as high and wide, but not necessarily twice as thick.

To answer the bigger question,



enlarge person is supposed to turn you into a fairly big fighting machine, not knock you over. When the spell makes you bigger it makes your equipment proportionately bigger, and that's the correct proportion for your new size. Isn't magic wonderful?


Page 298 of the *DMG* describes resistance to energy as the ability to absorb a certain amount of energy damage per round. The version of the System Resource Document I'm using says the same thing. The text for the *resist energy* spell, however, describes resistance to energy as a reduction in damage per attack. Does the spell confer the ability of resistance to energy, or should the two effects be treated differently?

Resistance to energy currently is per attack, as noted in the *MM*, and in the monster section of the *System Resource Document*. The references in the *DMG* and the Abilities section of the *System Resource Document* are overlooked leftovers from an earlier version of the game.

Frankly, I prefer per-round resistance. This allows some energy attacks to slip past energy resistance in some circumstances. For example, if PCs creep into a volcano where a group of salamanders dwell, it's a sure bet the characters will use some form of fire resistance. It's nice for the DM if all the nifty fire magic noble salamanders can use can still work on the invaders, and it can if the PCs' fire resistance only protects against a

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set amount of fire damage each round.

If you go the way of per-round energy resistance, you'll want to set resistance numbers a bit higher in your campaign.

If a character's ability score is reduced in such a way as to affect the number of bonus spells the character gets, what happens to the spells? The general opinion where I play is that they disappear, and cannot be regained until the next resting period. I have one player who argues furtively against this position, wasting way too much time.

Use your current ability score to determine bonus spells you have available. If your score has gone up you might have too few bonus spells. If so, too bad for you unless the situation prevails when it's time for you to renew spells for the day. If your score has dropped, you might have too many bonus spells. If so, you lose the excess spells immediately.

A change in the ability score that governs your spellcasting is like pouring water from one pitcher to another. If the pitcher is too small it overflows and you lose the excess. If it larger that you need, you have extra space, but just pouring into a bigger pitcher doesn't give you more water.

Keep in mind that you still use your increased ability modifier to determine your spells' save DCs when your spellcasting ability increases. (And the lower ability modifier when you have a decrease.) You don't automatically get more bonus spells when your score increases, but a higher score makes the spells you cast a tad more powerful.

Can you use the *ghost sound* spell to mimic a recognizable voice? I don't think you can. The spell text, however, doesn't say one way or another.

You're right, you can't duplicate a voice—or even create intelligible speech—with *ghost sound*. The reason there's no reference to speech one way or another in the spell description is because of the general rule for illusion magic—no intelligible speech unless the spell description specifically says it can produce intelligible speech.

To generate intelligible speech with a spell, you need *permanent image* or *project image*, which are the only two illusion spells in *the Player's Handbook* and *System Resource Document* that allow such precise sounds.

If you can mimic the voice yourself, *ventriloquism* will do the trick.


As for how you'd mimic a voice with a skill check, I'd suggest a Disguise check. Odd, perhaps, but that's the skill that allows you to seem like someone (or something) else. I suppose Perform (oratory) would work, too. In either case, 5+ ranks of Bluff should give you a +2 on your check, and anyone trying to detect the deception would oppose your check with Sense Motive check.

Skip's Take on Armor and Dexterity

Several game systems make armor cumbersome indeed. Don armor and you can kiss your personal agility goodbye.

This idea didn't sit very well with my colleagues or me when we were designing the 3rd Edition game. We were aware that tests performed in England revealed that modern volunteers wearing vintage suits of plate armor found the gear fairly non-restrictive. We also were aware that nice, expensive armor was a badge of honor for both the medieval knight and the D&D fighter, and the last thing we wanted to do was drive martial characters away from armor.

On the other hand, we didn't want every character flocking to the local armorer whenever they collected a bit of spare change. So, we decided to limit the how well armor bonuses and Dexterity bonus to Armor Class could stack (the Dexterity cap) and we instituted armor check penalties for anything that required any significant degree of agility or sprightliness. We also took steps to limit some character's access to armor (through armor proficiencies and arcane spell failure chances).

Nevertheless, we also designed the armor rules so that two key aspects of Dexterity—Initiative bonus and Reflex saves—remained unaffected by armor. This allows martial characters that rely on armor for defense to retain their combat prowess when armored. 

10x10 Toon

by Stan!



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Lessons from Arabia

Language and Gaming

by Jaye Sonia

Naving lived abroad for some time, I have grown to understand the vital importance of language in role-playing games. How NPCs from a particular country, race, or culture speak is an important tool in storytelling and emphasizing their styles and differences helps you create distinct and believable characters. When these characters come to life, players light up with enthusiasm and are more likely to respond in character. If you're looking to create the feel of an exotic locale and to evoke a sense of wonder in your own game, consider how you use language at the gaming table.

Before I lived in Kuwait, my international travel was limited to a short, three-month stay in Japan and a day trip to Mexico. On both occasions, I struggled with translations. In Japan, I made do with a small tourist dictionary. In Mexico, I relied on my rudimentary Spanish. Unfortunately, I spoke with all the finesse of a typical vacationer, which is to say badly. Kuwait hammered the lesson home for me that I needed to speak more languages. As a gamer, I realized that I could use language to bring a sense of wonder to my gaming table. I also realized that the *comprehend languages* or *tongues* spells would be incredible for travel in real life.

The Corrosive Power of Common

At one point, I was standing in the bazaar in Fahaheel, Kuwait, while everyone around me chatted in his or her native tongue. I heard Tagalog, Hindi, and many regional variations of Arabic. What little I could understand of Tagalog came from some

training in Spanish. Everything else was broken English. I laughed a little to myself and thought, "Man, how many games have I carried out lengthy diplomatic encounters in Common? Here I am today and I can't even buy the right power adapter for my PlayStation 2."

At this point, I realized that, at least in many of my games, Common has made *comprehend languages*, *tongues*, and the Speak Language skill useless. Common ruined the magic of wonder. Likely, Common was designed to ensure game flow and simplicity. In a fantasy realm where every conceivable nation, culture, and race might have its own tongue, it was necessary. Yet, I still felt as if I could do more to incorporate a richer dialogue in the game.

How Language Defines People

Living in Kuwait has taught me three things about both people and language.

First, while people here speak English (which borrows heavily from the British), they generally prefer to speak their native languages. I see it so often that I've grown accustomed to having no idea what is being said around me and to patiently wait for translations. It's actually sort of funny as two to three minutes of dialogue gets simplified down to, "I telling her about my weekend" or "he thinks you are funny guy."

At first, I thought it was rude. Why didn't they speak English, to be more inclusive of all their listeners? They know how. I later realized, however, this isn't done to exclude others but because the speakers don't know enough (or feel uncomfortable with



their) English. Simply put, unless a non-native speaker has to speak English, he generally will not.

The second thing I noticed is that non-native speakers avoid difficult sentence structure. They aim for a single tense: the present. Instead of hearing about how Khalid "bought his new car on Tuesday," I might instead hear about how he "buy a new car last Tuesday." I suspect this is simply because most speakers have informal training.

The third thing about language in Kuwait is that people rely on a great deal of body language to convey meaning. When I visit the bazaar, for instance, vendors will grab either my wrist or elbow and guide me to their shop. At the same time, they are saying, "Welcome sir. You look here. I have DVD movies. Good copies." Merchants often learn a language for the most practical reason: to make a sale. However, they aren't necessarily fluent beyond that narrow realm or even within it.

A definite sense of alienation accompanies living in Kuwait. While not incapacitating, it does make things difficult at times. It should be no different for a human visiting his first dwarven settlement or a bugbear slave toiling for his dark elf masters. It should be no different for PCs.

If you want to evoke this feeling around your game table, try the following rules, which do not force anyone to roll dice or change game mechanics.

GMs: Common-Bonds Rule

Most adventuring parties contain a healthy mix of races. When the party encounters a dwarven vendor, someone in the party will probably share racial bonds. If they do, assume that the vendor speaks to that person first in his native tongue.

For instance, if the party is buying arrows from jungle elves, assume that the elves will speak to the elf in the party first. The DM can then speak his fake language to the player (who may or may not speak back in his own version of the fake language) and hand him a note. Let the player then translate for the rest of the table. Even if you drop the fake language, keep the “native speaker” PC in the spotlight.

GMs: the Foreign-First Rule

In general, conveying a sense of wonder and alienation means courting a great deal of confusion. Conveying this *without* frustrating your players is important.

An easy rule to incorporate into your game is to just remember “foreign first” whenever an NPC speaks to a PC. Just have most NPCs speak unintelligibly to the PCs as soon as they see them and pause for a reply, assuming they speak the local language. When PCs don’t respond, move to Common.

This might seem like an unnecessary step, but it’s a powerful reminder that the PCs are strangers in that locale. It also reinforces the value of language-based spells and skills.

GMs: The Fake-Language Rule

Game masters with a sense of drama can make up a fake language that they use whenever a NPC stops speaking Common and reverts to their native tongue. Using repetition and copying the new, fake language from an actual language will establish that it has an actual syntax and grammar. A thorough game master may even construct a language spreadsheet that he uses for distinct races.

Perhaps both genies and sand pirates speak a guttural, deep language; the game master jots down several words that he feels have that sound. He bases them on modern Arabic. When the desert elves of Ah Mu’Attir speak their light, quick language, he uses words based on French. When the ogres or dwarves speak, he uses words based on German. Eventually, the game master can offer the players exchanges like this:

As the orc vendor turns from the party, they hear him joke to a friend, “Wuh uhkk und munno koy wuh. Vek bitter wuh demmik rahh. Mo. Rah, Rah. Wuh uhk.”

Keep a small list of the languages that the player’s characters do speak handy. That way you can offer a quick translation for the player whose character does speak Orc.

Players: 6- Words-or-Less Rule

If you want to continue to use Common but don’t want to see it abused, rule that Common combines many tongues with a limited selection of universal words. In effect, you can limit all conversations in Common to sentences of six words or less. Insist that your players adhere to this rule. If you’re like me, you may need to bribe them with XP or with more DM attention for those who play along. Ensure that all of your NPCs adhere to this rule, as well.

Feel free to use liberal amounts of hand gestures (preferably of the non-offensive variety). Using the fake language example from above, we could get the following:

“Good days sirs. I have rations you asked for. Please pay three gold.” As the orc vendor turns from the party and toward his assistant, they hear him say, “Wuh uhkk und munno koy wuh! Vek wuh demmik rahh. Mo. Rah, Rah. Wuh uhk. Vek! Vek! Wuh Morah Khed rahh rok munno lahn wuh.”

Hopefully, these rules will help you to use language to suspend disbelief and carry your players off into the foreign lands that their characters live and adventure in weekly.

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BETTER GNOMES AND GARDENS

POWER TO THE LITTLE PEOPLE

BY DAVID SCHWARTZ

Art by Arthur Rackham

Gnomes are sometimes seen as an extraneous race, and many DMs marginalize or even exclude them from their campaign worlds. Part of this antipathy towards gnomes may be attributable to way the race is presented in the PHB.

The default gnome culture is schizophrenic, unable to decide between technologically-advanced urbanites and playful, fey rustics. Here are several alternative gnomes who require few or no mechanical alterations. Any of these more focused backgrounds can be inserted into most new or existing campaigns.

Gnomes as Changelings

A faerie cannot take something without leaving something else in trade. Thus, when a faerie steals an infant – whether as an act of revenge or mere fancy – they must leave behind a changeling. These faerie children, often called gnomes or cuckoos, appear (relatively) normal until they reach adolescence, at which point their fey nature becomes undeniable.

Personality: Gnomes are childlike in demeanor. They are playful and imaginative, inquisitive and reckless. A gnome makes friends quickly, but is just as easily offended. Like children and faeries, gnomes have difficulty empathizing with others.

Physical Description: As an infant, a gnome resembles other children of their “kind”, whether dwarf, elf,

or human. However, as the gnome grows his fey heritage becomes apparent. Their maturation rate is much slower than a human’s and much quicker than an elf’s, and their hair grows in white from the beginning. Though they can live for centuries, gnomes remain childish in appearance their entire lives.

Relations: Gnomes are rare enough that they can pass for youngsters of the common races, and are often treated as such. Those who know the truth about the changeling walk softly, for while gnomes bring good luck to those around them, this luck can swiftly turn sour if those same folk offend the gnome’s fey relations.

For their own part, gnomes get along well with all the common races, as well as animals and local fey. The races of kobolds and goblinoids have earned the enmity of all faeries, and gnomes feel an innate antipathy towards them.

Alignment: Fortunately, most gnomes tend toward good. They have no predisposition to law or chaos; some gnomes embrace the whimsy of the fey, others their strict, though inscrutable, honor. Evil gnomes are a terror to their adoptive parents.

Gnome Lands: Gnomes lack sufficient numbers to have lands of their own, instead dwelling among the common races in the manner of their adoptive race.

Religion: Gnomes view the gods as beings to be placated rather than



revered. Often gnomes espouse the religion of their “parents”, or else find solace in the worship of nature deities. The gnomes’ patron deity is the god of house and craft spirits.

Language: Gnomes speak common and the language of their “parents”. From their fey ancestors, they receive the ability to speak with burrowing animals.

Names: Gnomes take the name of the child they replaced, and thus their names might be typical of any culture.

Adventurers: Curious and impetuous, gnomes adapt readily to the adventuring lifestyle. Indeed gnomes are often “encouraged” to journey to far lands by their adoptive parents. They usually find adventurers more accepting of difference than rural peasants. Some adventuring gnomes seek to reconnect with their faerie kin; others simply wish to know all they can about the greater world.

Gnomes as Dwarves

When a dwarf and an elf have a child together, the result is a gnome or dwelf (although many consider the latter term offensive). Dwarven and elven characteristics combine to produce abilities that are uniquely gnomish.

Personality: Like their parent races, gnomes take the long view of things. Gnomes are slow to make friends

or enemies, but when they do it is with great fervor: to their kith and kin gnomes are loyal to a fault; to those who oppose them gnomes are implacable foes.

Gnomes are great collectors of history, from traditional songs to ancient relics. Though they have two great cultures to draw from, gnomes are renowned for their originality in the areas of crafting and magic. Some argue, however, that gnomes favor style over substance.

Physical Description: It is sometime quipped that gnomes combine the height of a dwarf with the physique of an elf. Yet gnomes are surprisingly sturdy, exhibiting both toughness and liveness. The combination of an elf's pointed ears and a dwarf's bulbous nose give the gnome's face an almost comical appearance. Gnome's mature and age at a similar rate to dwarves.

Relations: Gnomes get along well with all the common races. Dwarves and elves have no prejudice against gnomes, though they may chide them for quirks reminiscent of the other race. Gnomes share their parent races' hostility towards savage humanoids, particularly goblins.

Alignment: Gnomes are usually good. Those who favor their dwarven side tend towards lawful alignments, while those who favor their elven side tend towards chaotic. Evil gnomes often hold malice towards one or both of their parents' races.

Gnome Lands: Individual gnomes might be found wherever there are elves or dwarves. In places where these races regularly cohabitate – such as a wooded mountain or a cosmopolitan city – gnomes might be found in sufficient numbers to form their own neighborhoods.

Religion: Gnomes often revere deities from the dwarven and/or elven pantheons. Their patron deity is the god of glory-seekers and storytellers. Curiously, he is common to both pantheons.

Language: Gnome characters speak common and either Dwarven, Elven,

or Gnome (depending on their origin). Many will learn all of these languages. The Gnome language is a pidgin of Dwarven and Elven with a few words of Common thrown in for good measure. It is rarely written, but it can be rendered in Dwarven script.

Connected to both earth and nature, gnomes have the ability to converse with burrowing animals.

Names: Gnomes might be named in either the dwarven or elven fashion, or sometimes a combination of both.

Adventurers: Struck with elven wanderlust and dwarven pride (and/or greed), gnomes take easily to the adventuring lifestyle. Gnomes often adventure to learn more about history, and many become wandering minstrels or dungeon explorers. Others seek inspiration for their art, returning home after their adventures to craft new devices or scribe unusual spells.

Gnomes as Mustelids

Gnomes are quick-tempered, burrowing humanoids, more akin to weasels than primates. They have keen senses, inquisitive minds, and an affinity with the telluric spirits whom they can call upon for minor magical favors.

Personality: Gnomes are a spiritual and curious race. They are never satisfied with surface appearances, always looking for what lies underneath. They are intrigued by what's behind the curtain, why people do the things they do, how miracles work. They poke at things.

Gnomes are also renowned for their hot tempers. Gnomes, like other common races, might range in temperament from languid to twitchy. Yet when provoked, every gnome becomes a blur of motion, belying their awkward appearance. If unarmed, they can bite with their sharp teeth (this is otherwise a normal unarmed strike). This inborn fervor comes out as well when concluding a hunt and in the throws of religious ecstasy.

Physical Description: Gnomes

resemble bipedal, mostly hairless weasels. Roughly half the height of humans, gnomes have long, sinuous torsos and short, stocky limbs. Owing to their flat, elongated skulls, gnomes' faces are reminiscent of primitive humans. Gnomes have pale pink skin; their bristly hair is usually brown, black, or white, and may change seasonally. Gnomes spend their first few decades entirely underground. If not killed prematurely, a gnome can live for several centuries.

Relations: Gnomes enjoy the company of dwarves and halflings, and are intrigued by humans and elves. Gnomes distrust half-orcs and other savage humanoids. They are often in conflict with goblins and kobolds, as these evil humanoids share a similar niche.

Alignment: Gnomes as mustelids tend towards good. Gnomes dislike too many restrictions, but they also hate surprises (especially practical jokes), thus they eschew both the extremes of law and chaos. Evil gnomes are rare, but greatly feared for their murderous rages.

Gnome Lands: Gnomes live beneath rolling hills. Few, if any, buildings identify a gnome village. Beneath the surface, however, lies an extensive network of cramped tunnels which serve as roads and houses.

Religion: Gnomes are pantheists and seek to live in harmony with nature's spirits, whom they see as the source of all magic. Gnomes also revere their own unique pantheon of gods; their chief deity is a god of buried treasures (literal and metaphorical).

Language: Gnomes speak their own raspy, guttural language, though most also speak Common. They possess an uncanny rapport with weasels and other burrowing animals.

Names: Gnome names are polysyllabic and often include squeaks and barks. For the convenience of other races, they may adopt (or be given) names in Common, often a descriptive nickname.

Adventurers: Many gnome ad-

venturers are driven by insatiable curiosity. The desire to know what lies beneath drives them to explore ancient ruins or mingle in exotic courts. Some gnomes are filled with restless energy that cannot be satisfied by a normal occupation. These gnomes adventure as an outlet for the fire that burns within them, finding release through combat or magic.

Gnomes as Rebels

Not all who dwell in the echoing cities of the giants are servants of their titanic masters. Gnomes dwell like rats in the walls, surviving on the excess of wasteful giant kings and doing what they can to ease the burden of the giant's thralls. Over many years, the resourceful gnomes have developed skills both mundane and magical to elude the giants and their gnome-catchers.

Personality: Despite their squalid and dangerous lifestyle, gnomes are surprisingly upbeat. They take great pleasure in undermining the giant's efforts to expand their dominion. Gnomes are frugal folk, collecting whatever they can in case it might be useful later. Though trained from a young age in the ways of magic, a gnome would not think to use illusions for entertainment; gnomes recognize misdirection as their most valuable tool in fighting their oversized oppressors.

Physical Description: Gnomes are often mistaken for halflings, though gnomes are slightly taller and leaner. Their sensitive ears and noses have a habit of twitching when they detect a sound or scent. Young gnomes spend several decades learning the magical and martial traditions of their ancestors before they are declared an adult. Gnomes can live almost 500 years though few die of old age.

Relations: Though initially met with suspicion, gnomes are now accepted as an ally of the common races. They are especially friendly with the dwarves, and often aid their forays against the giants. Gnomes learn early how to evade giants, and also how to fight goblins and kobolds who make up the bulk of the gnome-catchers.

Alignment: As fighters against tyranny, gnomes tend towards good. Gnomes use whatever means they deem appropriate in their fight, favoring neither law nor chaos. Gnomes are rarely evil, but those who are often conspire with the giants in exchange for favors.

Gnome Lands: Gnomish lands were long ago annexed by the giants. Forced to live on the fringes of an evil society, gnomes survive by stealing what they can from the giants and their allies, though never from their unwilling thralls. Those few gnomes who have escaped live much more

tolerably among the common races, though most use these advantages to fight the giants and other evils.

Religion: There are scant few relics of gnomish religion before the invasion. What passes for religion now are mythic stories told in whispers. The protagonists of these legends are gnomish heroes who have been elevated to divine status by their kindred.

Language: Gnomes speak Common and Gnome, and most know at least a few words in Giant. The Gnome language is reminiscent of Dwarven, suggesting some ancient connection between the races.

Names: Gnome names tend to be short and sharp, with no differentiation between male and female names. Gnomes have little use for elaborate titles or epithets.

Adventurers: After years of living under siege, gnomes often have difficulty adjusting to the relatively safe life outside the giant kingdoms. Thus many free gnomes turn to adventuring. They might strike at the giant kingdoms from the outside, as their kin do from the inside, or they might seek adventure elsewhere with the hope to return to their people richer and more powerful. On occasion the gnomes send emissaries to the free lands, and it is not uncommon for these ambassadors to lend their aid to worthy causes.



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Cluracan: Bottom's Up!

“There once was an elf from Cape Ducket...”

—cluracan nursery rhyme.

by Scott Gable
Art by Darren Clavert

Storybooks endlessly tell the tales of those who journey for fortune and fame or god and country or the hand of another, but how many of those heroes would risk life and limb for the fleeting intoxication of a favored vintage?

What raiding party would dare impossible odds to retrieve a 1000-year aged cask of Angelweed whiskey? Who would barter their services for a year's supply of ale? Such motivation is commonplace for the cluracan, for they hold nothing in higher regard than strong drink.

Cluracan devote their lives to sensual pleasure and seek its excess in all forms. Of course, drunkenness is the favored excess by far, and in fact, they typically spend their waking hours naked and drunk in days-long revelries. With no concept of shame or regret, they steal what drink they can—from hamlet, city, or dragon hoard—and harass any bystanders along the way. They even promise blessings and protection to tavern owners and others in return for regular payments of their favorite drink; in truth, individuals that the cluracan target in this fashion are typically more than happy to guarantee the absence of the cluracan's special kind of mischief for an occasional cask. Cluracan do make

their own alcoholic concoctions, which are renowned for their complex flavors and surprising strength, but as the cluracan oft say, “the greatest drink is someone else's.”

Cluracan Elder CR 5

Cluracan paragon 5

Often CN Small fey
Init +9; Senses low-light vision; Listen +12, Spot +12
Aura drunken aura (15 ft.)

Defense

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 11 (+5 Dex, +1 size)
hp 45 (5d6+25); fast healing 2
Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5
DR 5/cold iron; Immune disease, poison

Offense

Spd 30 ft., (60 ft. when only moving due to stagger step)
Melee club +0 (1d4-4)
Ranged club +8 (1d4-4)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Special Attacks hiccup of fiery bile

Tactics

Before Combat Cluracan do not enter into combat lightly, but if trouble is imminent, they use their drunken mastery to become besotted.

During Combat Cluracan prefer to fight from a distance and bombard foes with fiery bile. Against those whom truly raise a cluracan's ire, revenge is slow and deliberate. They might strike with subterfuge and guile with a squad of drunken assassins, but more often, they

will utilize more subtle and convoluted schemes.

Morale Cluracan flee if reduced to fewer than half their hit points.

Base Statistics When cluracan aren't besotted, their stats change as follows:

Init +7

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 11

Ref +4 **Will** +3

Spd 20 ft., (40 ft. when only moving due to stagger step)

Ranged club +6 (1d4-3)

Str 5 **Dex** 16 **Wis** 15

Escape Artist +7, Hide +9, Jump -1, Listen +8, Move Silently +5, Spot +8, Tumble +5, Survival +4

Statistics

Str 3, **Dex** 20, **Con** 20, **Int** 8, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +2; **Grp** -6

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative

Skills Appraise +1, Bluff +3, Craft (alchemy) +7, Diplomacy +3, Escape Artist +9, Gather Information +3, Hide +11, Jump -2, Knowledge (local) +1, Knowledge (nature) +5, Listen +12, Move Silently +7, Perform +3, Spot +12, Tumble +7, Survival +6

Languages Common, Gnome, Sylvan

SQ alcohol dependency, down the hatch (typically jump, haste, and invisibility), drunken mastery (besotted 2/day, blurry vision 3/day, escapist 5/day), poisonous, scent, unarmored preference

Combat Gear jug of alcohol

Ecology

Environment forests

Organization solitary, riot (2-12), or tribe (20-45)

Treasure standard

Advancement by character class;

Favored Class rogue

Level Adjustment +1

Cluracan Paragon

Level BAB Fort Ref Will Special

1st +0 +2 +0 +0 Scent, Stagger Step

2nd +1 +3 +0 +0 Hiccup of Fiery Bile,

Poisonous

3rd +1 +3 +1 +1 DR 5/cold iron

4th +2 +4 +1 +1 Drunken Aura

5th +2 +4 +1 +1 fast healing 2, Down

the Hatch

Hit Dice and skill points as fey. Class skills are as above.

Scent (Ex)

At 1st level, a cluracan paragon gains the Scent ability.

Stagger Step (Su)

At 1st level, if a cluracan paragon only moves during their turn and is at a light load and unarmored, they can move twice their normal movement rate.

Hiccup of Fiery Bile (Su)

At 2nd level, a cluracan can take a standard action to belch forth fiery bile. A cluracan's bile ignites upon exposure to air, and this act is treated identically to throwing alchemist's fire. The cluracan can perform this action at will. With every 6 additional character levels, the damage increases (2d6 on initial hit, 2d6 secondary damage, 2 splash damage at 8th level; 3d6 on initial hit, 3d6 secondary damage, 3 splash damage at 14th level; and 4d6 on initial hit, 4d6 secondary damage, 4 splash damage at 20th level).

Poisonous (Ex)

At 2nd level, the body of a cluracan is toxic. Any creature that swallows either the liver or the whole body of a cluracan—alive or dead—must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 10 + ½ character level + Con modifier) or be nauseated for one round and vomit the cluracan out. With the poison now out of its system, the creature does not take secondary damage. Ironically, if the creature succeeds on its initial save, it must make an identical save or suffer 1d10 Con damage as the secondary damage. If the creature succeeds this second save, it is immune to that cluracan's poison. Not many creatures attempt to eat a cluracan a second time. Creatures immune to poison are immune to this ability.

Drunken Aura (Su)

At 4th level, a cluracan can establish a 15-ft. radius aura centered on themselves. Those caught within the

aura must make Fortitude saves (DC 10 + 1/2 character level + Con modifier) or be intoxicated. Once a creature saves against this effect, they are immune to the same cluracan's aura for 24 hours. Those affected remain intoxicated for the duration of the aura whether or not they stay within it.

The cluracan can maintain this aura for a number of rounds per day equal to their character level. These rounds can be broken up as desired, and once the aura ended, those affected immediately recover. This aura activates and deactivates as a free action. Cluracan are immune to this effect. Only living creatures susceptible to mind-affecting effects can become intoxicated.

Intoxicated characters should roll on the following table at the beginning of their turn to see how it affects them.

Down the Hatch

Cluracan can swallow and compartmentalize up to three potions in their stomachs for later use. As a move action, cluracan can release one of these potions to benefit from its effect.

TABLE: Drunken Aura

d%	Behavior
01-10	Attack nearest creature with wielded weapon or with whatever improvised weapon is available (most likely fists).
11-20	Behave normally.
21-50	Vomit uncontrollably (character is nauseated).
51-70	Drop everything, forget about current situation, and wander randomly.
71-100	Pass out. (Stop rolling for different behavior. Sleep extends beyond normal duration of effect.)

The potions stay potent and separated within the stomach indefinitely prior to use. Any potion can be stored this way.

Cluracan as Characters

Cluracan characters have the following racial traits.

- -4 Strength, +2 Dexterity, +4 Constitution, +2 Wisdom, -2 Intelligence
- Small size: +1 bonus to Armor Class, +1 bonus on attack rolls, +4 bonus on Hide checks, -4 penalty on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits ¾ those of Medium characters.
- A cluracan's base land speed is 20 feet.
- **Alcohol Dependency:** Cluracan depend on alcohol. They require no other food or drink as sustenance and will suffer from dehydration



and starvation without. They carry a provision of alcohol with them everywhere.

- **Unarmored Preference:** Cluracan spend most of their time naked, and while they will begrudgingly wear clothes when necessary, they have no desire or knack for the wearing of armor. They suffer a -1 AC penalty and their supernatural (Su) abilities do not function when they wear armor of any kind.
- +2 racial bonus on Spot and Listen.
- +4 racial bonus on Craft (alchemy) and Knowledge (nature) checks. A cluracan does not have to be a spellcaster to make items using Craft (alchemy).
- Low-light vision
- Immune to poison and disease
- **Drunken Mastery (Su):** A cluracan's drunkenness allows the cluracan to access various supernatural abilities as they advance in level. The benefits are cumulative. Caster level is equal to ½ Hit Dice and all DCs are based on Constitution.

1st 1/day/2 levels—"Besotted" (or "Bottoms Up")—Cluracan can temporarily overload their systems with alcohol by rapidly drinking an excess of alcohol. In this fashion, a cluracan achieves a greater level of drunkenness. In this state, the cluracan moves with rapid, erratic movements that appear to be out of the cluracan's control and are difficult to predict.

Unbelievably, the cluracan's senses actually become sharper. When in this besotted state, the cluracan gains a +4 bonus to Dexterity, a +4 bonus to

Wisdom, a -2 penalty to Strength, a +2 bonus to Reflex saves and Spot and Listen checks, and an increase of 10 feet to speed.

Additionally, the cluracan can neither use Strength- or Intelligence-based skills nor cast spells or use spell-like abilities or any magic item (the exception to this is use-activated items); extraordinary (Ex) and supernatural (Su) abilities are still usable in this state. The cluracan is always in motion—drunken staggering really—and, while in this state, will never stand still long enough to take a full-round action; the cluracan must always take at least one move action per round.

This besotted state lasts for a number of rounds (3 + Constitution modifier) or until the cluracan wills it to stop. Whenever the state ends, the cluracan is nauseated for 1d3 rounds. The cluracan can use this ability once per day at 1st level and gains an additional use per day at every third level thereafter (2 at 3rd, 3 at 6th, 4 at 9th, and so on). This ability requires a standard action in order for the cluracan to imbibe sufficient drink. Raging and being besotted negate each other.

2nd 3/day—“Blurry Vision”—This ability functions as *blur* and is activated as a standard action.

3rd 1/day/character level—“Escapist” (or “Slippery Eel”)—For one round per character level, the cluracan is treated as the target of *freedom of movement*. This ability activates as a free action, and its uses can be divided up as desired. At 20th level, the ability’s effects become permanent.

• **Automatic Languages:** Common, Sylvan. Bonus Languages: Dwarven, Gnome, Terran.

• **Favored Class:** rogue

• **Level Adjustment:** +1

Ecology

More than merely drunkards, cluracan are among the finest connoisseurs of strong drink, and a few bold or strong-stomached alchemists and brewers seek cluracan out for their skill and knowledge.

Digging deeper, the connection between the cluracan and alcohol is much more profound than merely spiritual or obsessive as most attribute it. It is truly the lifeblood of the cluracan, and they have mastered its secrets.

Typical Physical Characteristics

Cluracan resemble gnomes with olive skin. Unlike gnomes, however, they generally abhor clothing of all types and prefer to live their lives free of its burden and completely naked.

This is often the first shock for travelers but is quickly followed by the cluracan’s drunken sense of play, which tend to be amorous or crude or violent in nature—the dances of the drunk. It is never a question of whether they are drunk but of how drunk they are.

Elder cluracan tend to develop potbellies, and these plump, round badges of honor are the signs of lives well spent. However, rather than slow down in their twilight years, the elderly are often even more crude, foul-mouthed, and raucous than the young.

Alcohol literally runs through the veins of every cluracan and is their food and drink. They get their first taste at their mother’s breast and are eternally dependant upon it. Without it, they suffer and die, but with it, they thrive and perform amazing feats.

Environment

Cluracan typically make their homes in heavily forested areas. Their villages contain no permanent shelters but abound with fermentation vats and distillation equipment. Orchards and vineyards are rarely far away.

They prefer to stay far enough away from the settlements of humanoids to avoid constant conflict but close enough to liberate the humanoids of their strong drink.

Motivation

To the cluracan, life is about following one’s passions and always seeking pleasure. To this end, it helps that they are always drunk. They like to play but have a vulgar sense of humor and rarely think about the consequences of their actions. They enjoy the moment, and that is enough for them. Cluracan are difficult to anger, but passionate by nature, they can

unleash a terrible fury and vengeance when pushed too far.

All are welcome at their festivities—even humanoids—but they had better be able to take a joke, enjoy their drink, and learn quickly not to question where their trousers are.

Society

Many cultures accept unquestioningly that moral rightness or the acquisition of power and material wealth are the sole worthwhile ambitions of any thriving culture. These peoples may push sensual pleasure into hiding with the intention to control such desires, and look, instead, to the constructions and abstractions of their stalwart institutions.

Cluracan society, on the other hand, is communal in nature. The concepts of privacy and ownership are not well established. They share amenities, and even their relationships are fluid. These qualities apply across all cluracan villages: they accept those from other villages unquestioningly and treat them immediately as family. All cluracan have a natural tendency to care for one another.

A “good day” for a cluracan is one filled exclusively with food and drink and play and other excitements. They typically exert little effort unless it leads directly to fun, and most of the work done is that toward the preparation of alcohol.

Points of Interest

Cluracan sites of pilgrimage and the items they lust after are, as one might expect, centered on their lust for booze.

The Fermentation Vats of Diela

There are massive, natural fermentation chambers under the Diela Mountains. Millennia ago, an earthquake altered the basin of a large underground lake sufficiently to allow natural fermentation to occur. It currently produces thousands of barrels a year of a rather complex alcoholic beverage. This drink owes

TABLE 2: MISPLACED HOSTILITY

NEW ATTITUDE

INITIAL ATTITUDE	<i>Helpful</i>	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Indifferent</i>	<i>Unfriendly</i>	<i>Hostile</i>
Helpful	< 20	20	25	35	50
Friendly	< 5	5	15	25	40
Indifferent	--	< 1	1	15	30
Unfriendly	--	--	<1	1	20
Hostile	--	--	--	<1	1

its uniqueness to the fact that the fermentation agents are whatever fungi and microorganisms are naturally present and that the fuels for the fermentation are whatever fruits, grains, or animals end up—intentionally or accidentally—in the mix. A few cluracan help maintain the pits constantly, adding what is needed, but the vats seem self-perpetuating with an ecology all their own. The qualities of their “waters” change markedly from year to year.

This site is a pilgrimage destination for all cluracan and most will make an annual trek to drink from its “waters.” Not all return, because the natural drunkenness of cluracan and the rarified air around the pits’ edge can prove fatal. However, most cluracan would agree that merely drowning in the Great Vats is a worthy end and no sorrow.

Absolution

Absolution is a beautifully crafted, massive “super still.” It is a stunning and functional still made from glass and metal that stands nearly three stories tall. It is the masterwork of a single cluracan, Orvis Talfrast, to allow for large-scale distillations for the villages. Occasionally, Talfrast will take orders from non-cluracan.

Most are quite wary near the still, even other cluracan, for the cluracan have a reputation for having their stills explode. The size of Absolution and the ever-present stockpile of barreled spirits nearby present a potentially significant hazard to the local environs.

One More Round

Three lovely cluracan, the Marzan sisters, opened an inn nearly two decades ago called One More Round. Located in the deep wood, this inn has a steep nightly rate, but true to cluracan custom, no one goes to bed sober... or alone.

Broken Keg

This seedy tavern is just like any other big-city seedy tavern except that this one is owned and run by the Broken Keg. They are cluracan by birth and smugglers and racketeers by trade. They demand a piece of the action from all local merchants, and they brutally enforce their position of power.

Drunken Mastery Feats

Drunken Mastery is a style that demands a steady supply of alcohol. Below are a sampling of the feats in the drunken mastery tradition, and they assume that the character maintains a constant supply of alcohol to drink, even while on the road.

Without alcohol, these feats do not function. Note that drinking enough alcohol to enable use of these feats is a standardXXXXXX action, equivalent to drinking a potion.

Bottoms Up

[Drunken Mastery]

“How about one more for the road?”

Prerequisite: Con 16

Benefit: You gain abilities identical to that of the cluracan’s “Besotted” racial ability (detailed above). However, instead of gaining additional uses per day based on your character level, you gain a new use per day of

this ability for every Drunken Mastery feat you take.

Broach the Cask

[Drunken Mastery]

“Oh, that looked like it hurt.”

Prerequisite: Bottoms Up or cluracan

Benefit: You gain the ability to worsen an opponent’s wounds, for you know how to strike an opponent to cause a thinning of the blood. If you make a successful unarmed touch attack on a living creature, any subsequent critical hits made on this opponent within a number of rounds equal to your Con modifier are automatically successful and do not require a confirmation roll.

Under the Table

[Drunken Mastery]

“No one can ever out-drink you.”

Prerequisite: Bottoms Up or cluracan

Benefit: You gain some measure of control over your digestive tract and can manipulate your stomach so as to defer the effects of anything you swallow for a number of hours equal to your Con modifier. This includes drinking large amounts of alcohol, ingesting poisons, drinking potions, and the like.

In addition, you can swallow and temporarily store small items for later regurgitation, such as coins, keys, or gems. With training, you can swallow items as large as apples whole and spit them back up. The average stomach for a Medium-size creature can hold approximately four whole apples worth of material.

Clear the Room

[Drunken Mastery]

“I don’t feel very good...”

Prerequisite: Bottoms Up or cluracan, Under the Table

Benefit: You gain the ability to induce nausea in others. By appearing nauseous (standard action), all others that can witness you must succeed a Fortitude save (DC = 10 + ½ HD + Con modifier) or become nauseous



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for a number of rounds equal to your Con modifier. You can perform this feat once per day, and you gain one additional use for every Drunken Mastery feat you possess. This ability works only on humanoids, monstrous humanoids, and giants.

Fortified Nerves [Drunken Mastery]

"It's good for you!"

Prerequisite: Bottoms Up or cluracan, Under the Table

Benefit: You gain the ability to substitute any Will or Reflex save with a Fortitude save. You can perform this feat once per day, and you gain one additional use for every two Drunken Mastery feats you possess.

Misplaced Hostility [Drunken Mastery]

"Did you hear what he said about your mother?"

Prerequisite: Bottoms Up or cluracan, Cha 12

Benefit: You gain the ability to misdirect another's hostility. With a successful Diplomacy check, you can negatively affect the attitude of your target toward a victim. Using the Misplaced Hostility table, the "Initial Attitude" and the "New Attitude" represent the attitude of the target toward the victim before and after your meddling, respectively.

For every Drunken Mastery feat you possess, you may affect a target whose attitude toward yourself is an additional step farther from friendly: for example, with two Drunken Mastery feats, you can manipulate a target that is friendly toward you, but with five Drunken Mastery feats, you can manipulate a target that is hostile toward you. This feat does not otherwise alter the use of the Diplomacy skill.

Drunken Luck [Drunken Mastery]

"Did you see that?"

When you are drunk, things just seem to go the right way.

Prerequisite: Bottoms Up or cluracan

Benefit: Things just go right for you when you try grandiose things. The barstool's right there to give you that circumstance bonus when tripping your foe. As you swing on the chandelier, you leap through the, thankfully, open window. Your attempt to disarm your foe's belt worked beautifully, and his falling pants entangled him for a round.

This feat can give you a small circumstance modifier by making a small change to a non-story element (+2 bonus from a "well-placed" barstool, avoid disaster because the window was open), or you receive a bonus condition as the result of an especially impressive action if that action was made without the use of any circumstance bonus provided by this feat; you disarmed your foe's belt without any bonus, so your opponent was entangled for a round as a result. You can use this ability a number of times a day equal to your total number of Drunken Mastery feats.

Designer's Note: This feat is an intentionally rules-light feat designed to encourage flashy maneuvers with potentially entertaining results. A good sign that the action is appropriate for the bonus is that the other players agree that this is a "fun" action. This feat should be used only with the complete agreement of all players—especially the DM.

Real World Mythology

Cluracan originate in Irish folk tales and are typically portrayed as surly drunkards. Some tales claim that cluracan are related to leprechauns, and some claim they are literally two sides of the same coin—the latter switching to the former after the sun goes down.

Whether or not that is true, cluracan may protect households and wine cellars from theft or spoilage if treated kindly, but they will drink what they can and sour the rest if they are provoked, scolded, or asked to leave.



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Might and Mastery

Alternate Class Features and Feats for Fighters

By Phillip Larwood

Fighters come in all shapes and sizes, from paragons of the battlefield resplendent in shining mail and heraldic glory to bloodied pit brawlers in seedy gladiatorial arenas and effete dandies parrying elegantly with rapier and wit.

Too often, however, they are overlooked in favor of the ranger or paladin because of their lack of cool class features or interesting 'fighter-only' feats. Below is a selection of alternate class features and feats that redress this imbalance and give fighters more options.

The new alternate class features replace some of the bonus feats the fighter receives, and the bulk of the new feats specifically benefit fighters. Both give the fighter greater versatility and freedom to smash foes in style.

Alternate Class Features

These alternate class features are relatively simple to use but represent completely different ways of viewing combat. Both can have a major impact on the battlefield.

Master of Strategy

Some fighters are adept at exploiting the strengths and frailties of their foes to gain advantage and, given enough time, can pass this knowledge on to their allies. These fighters are often leaders, inspiring others on to greater acts of daring.

Benefit: You can exchange your bonus fighter feats at 1st, 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th, and 20th level for the ability to use the Master of Strategy class feature. Master of Strategy is an extraordinary ability.

At the start of an encounter, you

can make a special Master of Strategy check (or MoS) as a standard action (1d20 + class level). Allies must hear and understand your words to gain any benefit.

The DC for the MoS check is 10 + the Hit Dice of the opponent. If more than one creature is involved in the encounter, the MoS check is based on the creature with the highest Hit Dice. For example, a 9 HD bulette would require a DC 19 MoS check, while a group of three 1st-level goblin warriors, an ogre, and a dire wolf would require a DC 16 check (since the dire wolf has 6 HD).

If the check succeeds, you and your allies gain a +1 insight bonus on attack and damage rolls for the rest of the encounter. This insight bonus increases for every four class levels (4th, 8th, 12th, 16th and 20th), up to a maximum of +6 at 20th-level.

Surge of Adrenalin

Some fighters can push themselves past the point where others would give up. Driven by love, rage, or other extremes of emotion, they can accomplish deeds that others can only aspire to. They are often the first into battle and the last ones to fall.

Benefit: You can exchange your bonus fighter feats at 1st, 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th, and 20th level for the ability to use the Surge of Adrenalin class feature. Surge of Adrenalin is an extraordinary ability.

You can use Surge of Adrenalin to take an extra move action in a round or to gain a number of temporary hit points equal to twice your character level per use of the ability. The maximum number of temporary hit



points you can gain by using this ability can never exceed twice your character level and any temporary hit points left over at the end of the encounter automatically disappear.

At 1st level, you can use Surge of Adrenalin a number of times per day equal to 1 + half your Con modifier (minimum 1). At 4th-level and every four levels thereafter (8th, 12th, 16th and 20th) you gain an extra use of the ability, up to a total of six times per day + half your Con modifier at 20th-level. You can use this ability as a swift action.

New Feats

Most of the new feats presented below require that the character have the Weapon Specialization feat and, thus, are limited to fighters of at least 4th-level. One is a general feat, with particular appeal to fighters.

Bombarding Blows (Fighter)

You can unbalance your foes when using a two-handed weapon, making them easier to hit.

Prerequisites: Weapon Focus (any two-handed melee weapon), Weapon Specialization (any two-handed melee weapon), base attack bonus +6

Benefit: If you successfully hit your opponent with your first attack roll with a two-handed weapon, you gain a +2 bonus on all subsequent attack rolls against the

same opponent for the rest of the round.

Special: A fighter can select Bombarding Blows as one of his fighter bonus feats.

Cornered Attack (General)

When flanked by foes, you become especially dangerous, lashing out at anyone within reach.

Prerequisite: Combat Reflexes, base attack bonus +8

Benefit: You can make an attack of opportunity against an opponent who moves into a position to flank you. You can use this feat every time an opponent moves to flank you as long as you have the ability to do so by virtue of the Combat Reflexes feat.

Special: A fighter can select Cornered Attack as one of her fighter bonus feats.

Deadly Riposte (Fighter)

Master of the counterattack, you can block an opponent's blows before lunging forward to make a deadly strike.

Prerequisite: Combat Expertise, Weapon Focus (rapier or shortsword), Weapon Specialization (rapier or shortsword), base attack bonus +6

Benefit: When wielding a rapier or shortsword and using the Combat Expertise feat, you gain a +2 bonus on damage rolls.

Special: A fighter can select Deadly Riposte as one of his fighter bonus feats.

Impaling Strike (Fighter)

You can impale two foes on the end your lance, longspear, ranseur, or spear.

Prerequisite: Weapon Focus (lance, longspear, ranseur, or spear), Weapon Specialization (lance, longspear, ranseur, or spear), base attack bonus +8

Benefit: Whenever you hit with a lance, longspear, ranseur, or spear, you can make a second attack roll with a +4 modifier against a second opponent in a square adjacent to the

first. This opponent must be equidistant or further away from you than the first (he can't be closer to you).

Special: A fighter can select Impaling Strike as one of her fighter bonus feats.

Shake Down the Walls (Fighter)

You can cause the floor or ceiling to shake with the force of your blows.

Prerequisite: Improved Sunder, Weapon Focus (greatclub, heavy mace, maul, or warhammer), Weapon Specialization (greatclub, heavy mace, maul, or warhammer), base attack bonus +12

Benefit: When wielding a greatclub, heavy mace, maul, or warhammer, you can strike an adjacent section of the floor, wall, or ceiling with resounding force. This requires a standard melee attack and only functions if your damage roll exceeds the hardness of the material (earth, iron, wood, etc.).

Striking the floor creates a 5-foot patch of difficult terrain and forces anyone in the square to make a Reflex save equal to your damage roll or fall prone. Exceptionally stable creatures (such as dwarves) and creatures with four or more legs gain a +4 bonus to this save.

Striking the wall or ceiling creates a minor cave-in. This cave-in affects a single adjacent square below or next to the section of wall or ceiling struck, and causes 4d6 points of damage to any creature caught beneath it. Any Medium or smaller creature damaged by the cave-in is also pinned until it can free itself or is dug out. A pinned creature is not in any danger of suffocating and can make a DC 15 Strength check to free itself from the rubble. A creature can negate both the damage and pinning effects with a Reflex save equal to your damage roll.

Special: A fighter can select Shake Down the Walls as one of his fighter bonus feats.

Time Stands Still (Fighter)

You strike with such speed and accuracy that your opponent does not realize you hit him until he tries to take an action.

Prerequisite: Greater Weapon Focus (any slashing melee weapon), Weapon Focus (any slashing melee weapon), Weapon Specialization (any slashing melee weapon), base attack bonus +12.

Benefit: When you are wielding a slashing melee weapon and your attack roll exceeds your opponent's AC by 10 or more, you can delay the effects of your blow until your opponent's next action. If you choose to do so, the opponent takes double normal damage from the blow as soon as he attempts any action (including attacks of opportunity and move actions, but not swift, immediate or free actions). If your opponent takes no actions, the blow deals only normal damage.

Your opponent is not aware that you actually struck him until he tries to take an action. At this point, he must decide if he goes through with the action or not.

You can use this feat only once per round.

Special: A fighter can select Time Stands Still as one of his fighter bonus feats.





Mithral Dragon

Always N Dragon

Light glints off the dragon's mirror-glossy scales, shining silver-white. Its narrow head, with bare slits for its eyes and nostrils, ends in a slender neck. The dragon's sleek look continues into its body, which widens to slightly less than twice the width of its neck before tapering into a long tail.

Relatively small wings press almost flush against the dragon's body, but they spread quickly like a fan to expose paper-thin membranes. In whole, the dragon's impossibly thin frame makes it look extremely fragile.

The Mithral Dragon

by Mike McArtor

Art by Lucas Haley

Mithral: As beautiful as silver, but without tarnish. As strong as steel, but half the weight.

Long has the metal inspired dwarves to craft, and long has its acquisition bankrupted kings and heroes alike. Only recently, though, did a true dragon appear possessing the sheen and splendor of this fine metal, perhaps borne through abiogenesis (see "Dragons without Belly Buttons" on page 42).

Although the mithral dragon has scales of gleaming metal, make no mistake: the aloof and ever-neutral mithral dragon does not number among the true metallic dragons. It is unclear whether it is an exile among the metallic dragons, or simply a matter of its neutrality having led to its forging its own path apart from its kin.

Despite its fragile appearance, a mithral dragon is anything but. Rather, a mithral dragon is one of the most difficult true dragon breeds to kill, as it has many defensive abilities and a metabolism that heals wounds at an alarmingly fast rate.

Mithral dragons are diplomats and arbitrators by temperament (some dragons cynically call them referees). Among all dragons, their strict neutrality and ability to ignore most attacks make them particularly well suited to these often-unappreciated roles. A mithral dragon sells its services to conflicting parties and negotiates both for individual dragons and for groups or entire breeds of its draconic kin.

When dealing with non-dragons, mithrals are cold and aloof. They respond well to flattery, however, as they are quite aware of their own

natural beauty. On the other hand, mithrals do not respond well to insults—whether intended or merely perceived—and lash out violently against those who dare to offend them.

Combat

Mithral dragons do not quickly dispose of their opponents in overwhelming displays of destruction, as do most other dragons. Instead, mithral dragons wear down their foes, relying on their razor claws and breath weapon to deal damage over time even as they trust to their own defenses to keep them alive.

Mithral dragons possess an impressive array of defenses and healing abilities, making them frustratingly difficult to kill. Every mithral dragon is born with fast healing and impressive damage reduction, and those two abilities only improve as they age. Their spell-like abilities tend to improve their Armor Class, and most mithral dragons learn spells that further improve their defenses. Almost every mithral dragon takes the Improved Natural Armor feat at least once.

Breath Weapon (Su) A mithral dragon has one type of breath weapon, a line of mithral shards that deals slashing damage over time. A creature struck by the dragon's breath weapon takes half as much damage on each following round as it took the round before until the round after the creature takes 1 point of damage. The mithral dragon's breath shards overcome DR as if they were silver, adamantine, and cold-iron and melt away to nothingness shortly after the dragon breathes them.

This counts as continuous damage for the purpose of making Concentration checks <http://www.d20srd.org/srd/skills/concentration.htm>. Creatures immune to critical hits are immune to the continuous damage from a mithral dragon's breath weapon (but not from the initial damage). For example, a creature that takes 13 points of damage from a

mithral dragon's breath weapon takes 6 points of damage the following round, 3 points of damage the round after that, and 1 point of damage the next round, for a total of 23 points of damage over 4 rounds; a creature immune to critical hits only takes 13 points of damage in the first round.

Fortification (Su) Young adult or older mithral dragons have a 25% chance of negating critical hits or sneak attacks; negated attacks still deal normal damage. This chance increases to 50% for very old or older mithral dragons. Great wyrm mithral dragons are immune to critical hits and sneak attacks.

Metallic Attacks (Su) For the purpose of overcoming DR, a mithral dragon's natural attacks count as adamantine, cold iron, or silver (whichever is needed). The dragon's natural attacks automatically emulate the required metal whenever it attacks a creature, and the process takes no conscious effort.

The dragon's natural attacks can change metallic qualities multiple times in a round, affecting different creatures with different metallic attacks as appropriate. For example, a mithral dragon making a full attack against a dretch, an iron golem, and a werewolf would make cold iron attacks against the dretch, adamantine attacks against the iron golem, and silvered attacks against the werewolf.

Razor Claws (Ex) A mithral dragon's claws are exceptionally sharp. Whenever a mithral dragon strikes with its claws, its target begins to bleed. A bleeding creature takes an amount of damage each round until magically healed or treated with a successful Heal check (DC equals the dragon's breath weapon save DC).

The amount of damage a creature bleeds depends on the dragon's size, as listed on the following chart.

Size	Bleed per Round
Small	1
Medium	1d3
Large	1d4
Huge	1d6
Gargantuan	1d8
Colossal	2d6

Creatures immune to critical hits are immune to this bleeding damage.

Resistances (Ex) Mithral dragons have resistance to acid 20, cold 20, electricity 10, fire 20, and sonic 10.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp) At will—*bull's strength* (adult or older); 3/day—*mage armor* (wyrmling or older), *shield* (juvenile or older); 1/day—*iron body* (ancient or older). Caster level is equal to the dragon's Hit Dice.

Skills: Bluff, Jump, and Tumble are considered class skills for mithral dragons.

Environment: any warm

Organization: solitary (1 dragon, any age) or clutch (1d3+1 wyrmlings or very young).

Challenge Rating: wyrmling 3; very young 5; young 8; juvenile 11; young adult 14; adult 16; mature adult 18; old 20; very old 21; ancient 23; wyrm 24; great wyrm 25.

Treasure: Triple standard

Advancement: wyrmling 7–8 HD; very young 10–11 HD; young 13–14 HD; juvenile 16–17 HD; young adult 19–20 HD; adult 22–23 HD; mature adult 25–26 HD; old 28–29 HD; very old 31–32 HD; ancient 34–35 HD; wyrm 37–38 HD; great wyrm 40+ HD.

Level Adjustment: wyrmling +7; very young +7; others —.

Grazhdanyn

The mithral dragons are a rare breed, but some are eager to see more of the world and travel widely. One such young adult mithral dragon is Grazhdanyn, who has recently made the rounds of the southern dragons, and harassed a few sand ships in the desert.

GRAHZDANYN CR 14

Male young adult mithral dragon

N Huge dragon

Init +1; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses, low-light vision; **Listen** +25, **Spot** +25

Aura frightful presence (150 ft., DC 24)

Mithral DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/Grapple	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save (DC)	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence DC
Wyrmling	M	6d12+6 (45)	13	12	13	10	11	12	+6/+7 +7	+6	+6	+5	1d4 (14)	—
Very young	L	9d12+18 (76)	15	12	15	12	13	14	+9/+15 +10	+8	+7	+7	2d4 (16)	—
Young	L	12d12+36 (114)	17	12	17	12	15	16	+12/+19 +14	+11	+9	+10	3d4 (19)	—
Juvenile	L	15d12+60 (157)	19	12	19	14	17	18	+15/+23 +18	+13	+10	+12	4d4 (21)	—
Young adult	H	18d12+90 (207)	21	12	21	14	19	20	+18/+31 +21	+16	+12	+15	5d4 (24)	24
Adult	H	21d12+147 (283)	25	12	25	16	21	22	+21/+36 +26	+19	+13	+17	6d4 (27)	26
Mature adult	H	24d12+192 (348)	27	12	27	16	23	24	+24/+40 +30	+22	+15	+20	7d4 (30)	29
Old	G	27d12+243 (418)	29	12	29	18	25	26	+27/+48 +32	+24	+16	+22	8d4 (32)	31
Very old	G	30d12+300 (495)	31	12	31	18	27	28	+30/+52 +36	+27	+18	+25	9d4 (35)	34
Ancient	G	33d12+396 (610)	33	12	33	20	29	30	+33/+56 +40	+30	+19	+27	10d4 (38)	36
Wyrm	G	36d12+468 (702)	35	12	37	20	31	32	+36/+60 +44	+33	+21	+30	11d4 (41)	39
Great wyrm	C	39d12+546 (799)	37	12	39	22	33	34	+39/+68 +44	+35	+22	+32	12d4 (43)	41

Mithral DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Init AC	Special Abilities	CL	SR
Wyrmling	30 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 100 ft. (perfect)	+1 16 (+1 Dex, +5 natural) touch 11, flat-footed 15	DR 5/adamantine, fast healing 1, <i>mage armor</i> , resistances	—	14
Very young	40 ft., burrow 30 ft., fly 150 ft. (good)	+1 18 (+1 Dex, -1 size, +8 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 17		—	15
Young	40 ft., burrow 30 ft., fly 150 ft. (good)	+1 21 (+1 Dex, -1 size, +11 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 20	DR 10/adamantine and DR 5/—	—	17
Juvenile	40 ft., burrow 30 ft., fly 150 ft. (good)	+1 24 (+1 Dex, -1 size, +14 natural) touch 10, flat-footed 23	<i>Shield</i>	—	18
Young adult	60 ft., burrow 50 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+1 26 (+1 Dex, -2 size, +17 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 25	DR 10/—, fortification 25%	—	20
Adult	60 ft., burrow 50 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+1 29 (+1 Dex, -2 size, +20 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 28	<i>Bull's strength</i>	—	21
Mature adult	60 ft., burrow 50 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+1 32 (+1 Dex, -2 size, +23 natural) touch 9, flat-footed 31	DR 15/adamantine and DR 10/—	1st	23
Old	60 ft., burrow 50 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+1 33 (+1 Dex, -4 size, +26 natural) touch 7, flat-footed 32	Fast healing 5	3rd	24
Very old	60 ft., burrow 50 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)	+1 36 (+1 Dex, -4 size, +29 natural) touch 7, flat-footed 35	DR 15/—, fortification 50%	5th	26
Ancient	70 ft., burrow 60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)	+1 39 (+1 Dex, -4 size, +32 natural) touch 7, flat-footed 38	<i>Iron body</i>	7th	27
Wyrm	70 ft., burrow 60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)	+1 38 (+1 Dex, -8 size, +35 natural) touch 3, flat-footed 37	DR 20/adamantine and DR 15/—	9th	29
Great wyrm	90 ft., burrow 80 ft., fly 300 ft. (clumsy)	+1 41 (+1 Dex, -8 size, +38 natural) touch 3, flat-footed 40	Fast healing 10, fortification 100%	11th	30

*Can also cast spells from the Protection and Strength domains (but not other cleric spells) as arcane spells.

Defense

AC 29, touch 9, flat-footed 28

(+1 Dex, +20 natural, -2 size)

hp 207 (18d12+90); fast healing 1

Fort +16, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15

Defensive Abilities fortification 25%; **DR**

10/—; **Immune** paralysis, sleep; **Resist** acid

20, cold 20, electricity 10, fire 20, sonic 10;

SR 20

Offense

Spd 60 ft., burrow 50 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +21 (2d8+5) and

2 claws +16 (2d6+2 plus 1d6/round/wound from bleed) and

2 wings +16 (1d8+2) and

tail slap +16 (2d6+7)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks breath weapon (5d4; DC 24),

crush (2d8+7; Reflex DC 24)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th):

3/day—*mage armor*, *shield*

Tactics

Before Combat Grahzdanyin casts *mage armor* and *shield* on himself before entering combat, if able.

During Combat Grahzdanyin flies above the battlefield and uses his breath weapon to wear down his foes. He only willingly enters melee combat once a foe seems close to death, at which point he swoops in to use his razor claws to hasten the foe's demise.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, Grahzdanyin flees to his lair. If in his lair, Grahzdanyin fights to the death.

Statistics

Abilities Str 21, Dex 12, Con 21, Int 14, Wis 19, Cha 20

Base Atk +18; **Grp** +31

Feats Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Natural Armor (x3), Wingover

Skills Balance +3, Bluff +26, Diplomacy +32, Disguise +7, Intimidate +7, Jump +7, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +23, Listen +25, Sense Motive +25, Spot +25, Tumble +22

Languages Common, Draconic, Terran

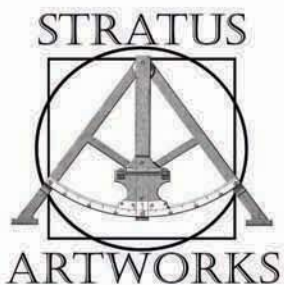
SQ metallic attacks

Special Abilities

Breath Weapon (Su) 100 ft. line, damage 5d4 slashing plus bleed, Reflex DC 24.

Crush (Ex) 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Small or smaller opponents take 2d8+7 points of bludgeoning damage and must succeed on a DC 24 save or be pinned; grapple bonus +27.





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Coming Next Issue

Our first anniversary blowout! KOBOLD QUARTERLY has survived for an entire year, despite the odds! It's time to celebrate with some great new departments and features, including the return of the Princes of Hell and possibly some crazy talk by a designer named Cook. Plus the cherry on top, a cover by Darren Calvert, the amazing artist responsible for the image of our mascot waaaaaay back on issue #1. Oh, yes!

A Princess of Hell

by James Jacobs

The master of the demon lords turns his attention to the Lawful side of Evil and gives us an evil beauty from the Pits of Hell. I could blather on, but really, don't miss this one.

It Came from Monster Island!

by Matthew Hanson

Movie monsters come in a million shapes and sizes, all of them adaptable to your game. This article takes a look at some of the most important monsters and puts a new spin on them for your gaming pleasure. After this, we're going to lay off the monsters for a while, we swear. We're not monsterholics, we can quit any time. Just one more variant, first, though.

Plus, if we're really lucky, some secret messages, military engineering, and a Summer Solstice twist. Hey, it's 90 days away, we can make outrageous promises. It's what we do.



Top Secret Adventure Naming Tables

To: ALL STAFF of Pretty Big Games
 Fr: Mgt, PBG
 RE: Naming Fantasy Adventures
****TOP SECRET****

*Wolfgang:
 I was cleaning out the basement
 the other day and came across
 this memo from another company,
 from at least 20 years back.
 Remember this?
 Jeff Grubb*

It has come to our attention that unnecessary creativity is being used in naming our current adventure modules. This additional time represents an opportunity cost which contributes negatively to our bottom line. From here on, all members of the marketing team (and their attendant creatives) will use the following system for naming new projects.

Please read and embrace the attached naming conventions.

I am sure you will agree that once we put these measures into place, we can create a common level of consistency, or a consistent level of commonality, or something like that.

Yours,

Randolph Muggabugga
 R&D Manager

Main Table – DETERMINING NAME OF PROJECT

%tile Roll	
01-20	X of the Z
21-30	X of the Y Z
31-60	Y X of the Z
61-80	Y X of A
81-90	A: The Y X
91-95	X and (a different) X
96-00	A and (a different) A

Refer to the appropriate table below for values of A, X, Y, and Z:

Sub-Table A – FANTASY PROPER NAME GENERATOR*

%tile Roll	
01-40	A = B+C
50-80	A= B+C+ D
81-00	A= B +C+ (a different) C+D

* When using this, always read the name aloud to figure out how it sounds. Move the emphasis from syllable to syllable. If completely unpronounceable, please forward it to our computer game division.

Sub-Sub-Table B –

INITIAL SYLLABLE

%tile Roll	
01-10	O-
11-20	En-
21-30	Lys-
31-40	Groo-
41-50	Ray-
51-60	Tor-
61-70	Gla-
71-80	T'san-
81-85	El-
86-90	Mar-
91-95	Zul-
96-00	Xag

41-50	-glok-
51-60	-morg-
61-70	-chee-
71-80	-min-
81-85	-glip-
86-90	-rau-
91-95	-ro-
96-00	-grim-

86-90	-mar
91-95	-tan
86-00	-deem

Sub-Sub-Table D –

FINAL SYLLABLE

%tile Roll	
01-10	-dar
11-20	-mo
21-30	-ster
31-40	-den
41-50	-oth
51-60	-deen
61-70	-tar
71-75	-las
76-80	-gus
81-85	-ro

Subtable X (INITIAL WORD)**

%tile Roll	
01-05	Lord(s)
06-10	Crypt
11-15	Raft
16-20	Champion(s)
21-25	Palace
26-30	Blade
31-35	Weasel(s)
36-40	Kobold(s)
41-45	Tomb
46-50	House
51-55	Raider(s)
56-60	Grave
61-65	Tower
66-75	Blood
76-80	Oasis
81-85	Secret

Sub-Sub-Table C –

MIDDLE SYLLABLE(S)

%tile Roll	
01-10	-dah-
11-20	-san-
21-30	-bah-
31-40	-mar-

86-90	Keep
91-95	Shrine
96-00	Roll Twice, then msh the results together (e.g. "Raidergrave", "Bloodweasels")

**Note that parenthetical letters can be added to have the title make sense. Get managerial approval (Form DU-456) before doing this.

Subtable Y (DESCRIPTIVE WORD)

%tile Roll	
01-10	Blood (y)
11-15	War
16-20	Mad
21-25	Vampire's
26-30	Verklempt
31-35	Bright
36-40	Lost
41-45	Dark
46-50	Savage
51-55	Ghost (ly)
56-60	Spirit
61-65	Silver
66-70	White
71-75	Grey
76-80	Red
81-85	Crimson
86-90	Flaming
91-95	Aquamarine
96-00	Undead (ly) (ish)

Subtable Z (FINAL WORD)

%tile Roll	
01-05	North
06-10	South
11-15	City
16-20	Lich
21-25	Blood
26-30	Warrior
31-35	Thorp
36-40	Wizard
41-42	Penguin
43-50	Village
51-55	Moon
56-60	Bear
61-65	Tree
66-70	Hill
71-75	Land
76-80	Mountain (s)
81-85	Desert
86-90	Oasis
91-95	Dungeon
96-00	Dragon



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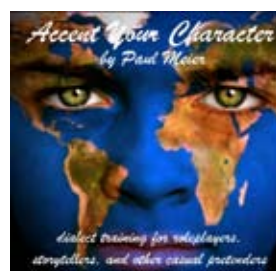
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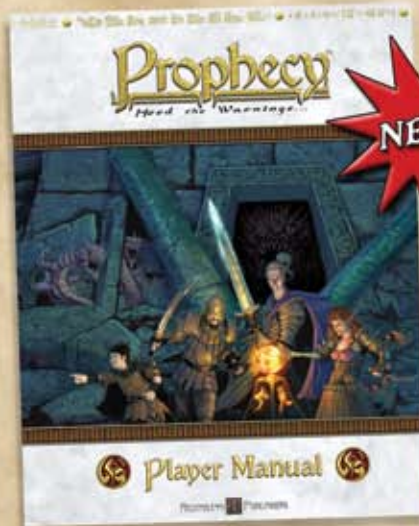
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