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Editorial:

Serious Dragon Attitude



It's a given of the fantasy genre: Heroes slay dragons dead. Reptile slaughter is right there in the Adventurer's Bill of Rights, the white box, and every governing set of rules of every edition of the game.

And why not? Dragons are big and powerful and they breathe fire. They eat too much, they hoard all the gold they can find, and they kill off innocent peasants and princesses for sport. In fact, dragons are sort of assholes, the jerks of the fantasy playground; stereotypical Wall Street banker types, all arrogance and attitude and buckets of money. They are bullies and big shots, and they need to be taken down a peg. Possibly two pegs. Damn saurian fire-breathers think they own the world.

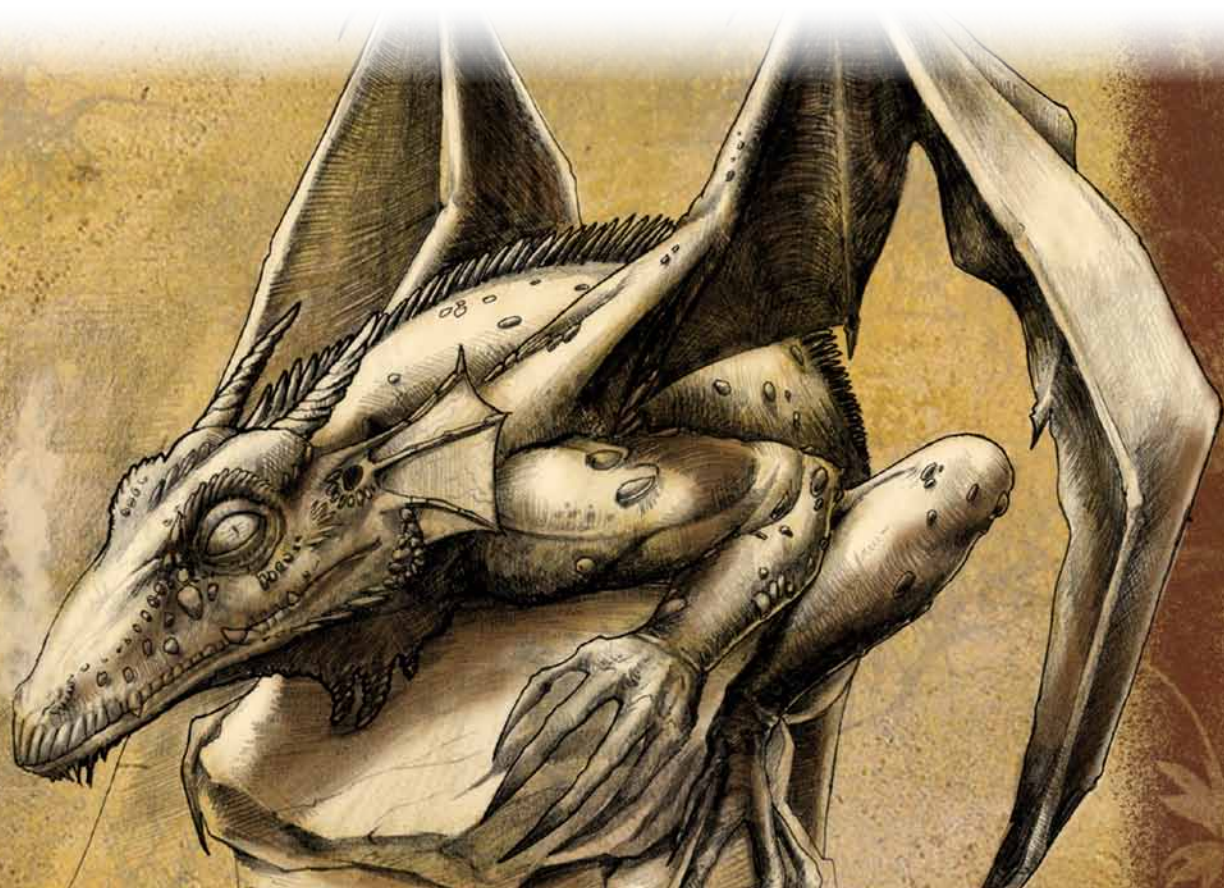
It's up to the heroes to keep down the numbers of arrogant, fat-cat dragons, to show them that mammals are in charge now, and that the day of the flying tank is over. And with a little teamwork and a little magic, whaddya know, even the greatest of great wyrms can be brought down. We are gonna bathe in your blood, Sigurd-style, you scaly monsters!

To my way of thinking, dragon slaying is righteous and proper. Bard of Lake Town should be an inspiration to gamers in every campaign. Slaying a dragon is a heroic act of the little guy against the big guy, and that sort of rebellion makes me very happy. **KOBOLD QUARTERLY** magazine has always championed the underdog, the little guy, the gamer who doesn't necessarily want to swear eternal allegiance to a particular company or to the guy who happens to wear a crown instead of a proper small helmet. Yeah, okay, kobolds have some reptilian roots, but that doesn't mean we like getting bossed around, either. So here we are this issue, celebrating dragons and dragon-slayers alike, one of the perfect gaming moments.

Send your favorite dragon-slaying moment to letters@koboldquarterly.com with the subject "Dragonslayers", and we'll see about a prize for the best submission. In the meantime, enjoy the grand-and-scaly Summer issue!

Wolfgang Baur

Kobold in Chief



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Kobold-in-Chief: Wolfgang Baur

Circulation Director: Pierce Watters

Cover Design: Richard Clark

Editorial Assistant: Christopher Bodan

Consulting Editor: Jeff Grubb

Web Editor: Scott Gable

Graphic Designer: Callie Winters

Ad Manager: Shelly Baur

Gearforged Copywriter/Marketer: Wade Rockett

Contributing Authors: Paul Baalham; William Banks; Wolfgang Baur; Eileen Connors; Tim Connors; Monte Cook; Ryan Costello, Jr.; Adam Daigle; Anthony W. Eichenlaub; Dave Gross; Matthew J. Hanson; Matt James; Russel Jones; Steve Kenson; Phillip Larwood; Philippe-Antoine Menard; Marc Radle; Jonathan Roberts; Adam W. Roy; David Schwartz; Pierce Watters; Mike Welham; Skip Williams

Cover Artist: Kieran Yanner

Contributing Artists: Aaron Acevedo; John Dickson Batten; Powel Dobosz; Kiss Márton Gyula; Liv Hathaway; Daniel Hernandez; Rick Hershey; Ben Hodson; Michael Jaecks; Mark Smylie; Hugo Solis; Julia Tarasenko; Eugène Viollet-le-Duc; Frank Walls; Maciej Zagorski

Cartographers: Jonathan Roberts

Court Calligrapher: Shelly Baur

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GIFTS OF THE GODS

Divine Talents for the Adventure Gaming Engine RPG

By Steve Kenson
 Art by Julia Tarasenko
 and Powel Dobosz



In many fantasy worlds, the gods make their influence felt through their followers, granting them miraculous abilities. In some settings, this may resemble the spellcasting rules from Green Ronin's *Dragon Age RPG*, with divine "mages" wielding power not from the Fade, or some similar arcane source, but from the gods themselves.

This article focuses on another option, the Divine Gift talent. This talent measures the blessings bestowed on a character by a divine power. Depending on your setting, a character with a Divine Gift may be a devout worshipper, a chosen prophet, or other champion of a divine power. The true source of the Gift may be the deity, the wielder's faith, or a combination of the two.

DIVINE GIFTS AND CLASS

Characters with a Divine Gift can belong to any class, since the gods bless anyone regardless of birth or background. The character's class may influence the type of champion or advocate of the gods the character represents.

Mage: A divinely gifted mage may be a scholar-priest, with both divine blessings and formidable spellcasting abilities. Depending on the setting, those spells could come through intense prayer and meditation, devoted study of the arcane arts, or some combination of the two.

Rogue: Although a divine rogue may seem like a contradiction, the class can combine neatly with a Divine Gift. Some blessed rogues emphasize Communication and serve as evangelists and wandering preachers who travel rough and often lawless frontiers. Others are sly and dangerous spies or assassins,

devoted to the cult of a death or war god. Some divinely gifted rogues serve the Dominion of Theft itself, giving them advantages no ordinary thief commands. Lastly, some rogues are holy (or unholy) soldiers who prefer guile and cunning to direct confrontation, such as religious orders of scouts, rangers, or woodsmen.

Warrior: The divine warrior is a true champion or crusader. Divine warriors may be templars or paladins, representing the militant arm of a church or religion. They can also be the savage killers of cults serving Dominions like Death and War, upholders of the Dominions of Law or Protection and empowered to act as police or judges. Some may serve as champions of Knowledge or Love who use skill at arms to safeguard such precious qualities.

DIVINE DOMINIONS

Divine Gifts are defined by Dominions, which are the areas of influence for the various divine powers. The following are some common Dominions. The GM chooses the available Dominions and should expand or modify these Dominions to suit her setting and the role of the divine in it.

CHAOS

You command the divine power of chaos and madness.

Novice: When you generate stunt points, you may choose to “wager” them double-or-nothing: Roll another test against the same TN as the one that generated the stunt points. If you succeed, and the dragon die is at least equal to your first roll, you gain an equal amount of stunt points to use on your next turn (provided your action next turn is successful)—that is, you can use this number of stunt points twice. If the second test fails or the dragon die is less than your first roll, you lose the original number of stunt points. If you gain additional stunt points on your next roll, add them to the wagered points.

Divine Gift

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.

Requirement: You must have the Willpower (Faith) focus. You must also continue to keep faith with the power(s) granting your Gift. Inappropriate or displeasing behavior—as judged by the GM—strips you of the benefits of this talent until you have properly atoned. Such atonement is at the discretion of your religious superiors or divine guidance (again, chosen by the GM) and may involve a quest or challenge.

You are favored by a god or other divine power(s). The Divine Gift talent has two main components: miraculous abilities granted by your Gift’s degree (novice, journeyman, or master) and the ability to perform divine stunts.

Choose a Dominion from the available list when you gain this talent. It determines the power you gain at each degree. If you take the Divine Gift talent more than once, choose a new Dominion each time.

Novice: You gain the novice benefit of your chosen Dominion and may perform divine stunts costing up to 2 SP.

Journeyman: You gain the journeyman benefit of your chosen Dominion and may perform divine stunts costing up to 4 SP.

Master: You gain the master benefit of your chosen Dominion and may perform divine stunts costing up to 6 SP.

Zeal

Characters with Divine Gifts have an additional trait, Zeal. This measures the force of their divine power, similar to a mage’s Spellpower. Zeal equals 12 + Willpower and is often the target number to resist the effects of Divine Gifts.

***Example:** Norber, devotee of Chaos, is feeling lucky: His TN 11 attack test rolls doubles and scores a 3 on the dragon die for 3 stunt points. He decides to wager them and rolls again immediately, looking to roll at least an 11 total and a 3 or higher on the dragon die. He rolls a 12, but only a 2 on the dragon die, so he loses his 3 stunt points. If he had rolled a 3 or higher on his second dragon die, he would have had 3 stunt points to spend this turn and another 3 on his following turn!*

Journeyman: Once per encounter, you can force a subject you can perceive to re-roll the dice for a test and use the result you prefer.

Master: Once per day you can invoke an aura of chaos around you as a major action. Foes within 6 yards of you must succeed on a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your Zeal to take any major action. If the test fails, they are distracted or behave erratically, doing nothing of significance. You can maintain the aura by spending your minor action each round to do so. The aura lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Willpower after you stop maintaining it.

CRAFT

You have divine insight into the arts and crafts of civilization.

Novice: You can restore damaged items to wholeness. This operates like the Heal action but the test uses Willpower (Faith) in place of Cunning (Healing). This ability only affects damage to constructed items, not entirely natural ones, so it can repair a stone wall, for example, but not a broken stalactite in a natural cave.

Journeyman: With a touch and a major action, you can strengthen a crafted object, increasing its Armor Rating by an amount equal to your Willpower (minimum of 1). This lasts for one minute, and you can do so once per encounter.

Master: You can produce an ordinary item of equipment with a major action in a single round. If you start with appropriate raw materials (costing half the price of the finished item), the item is real, permanent, and a fine example of craftsmanship. If you have inappropriate raw materials (e.g., a stalk of wheat for a blade, or a small

The Gods of Zobeck

The five major gods of the Free City of Zobeck in the Midgard campaign setting and several major evil gods of the setting are described here and given their respective Dominions

Rava, the Gear Goddess: Craft, Law, and Fate

Yarila & Porevit, the Green God/Goddess: Chaos and Nature

Lada, the Dawn/Golden Goddess: Love, Healing, and Protection

Volund the Smith: Craft and Knowledge

Perun the Thunderer: Protection and War

Mammon, the Lord of Greed: Theft and Trickery

Marena, the Red Goddess: Law, Death, and Magic

Chernovog, the Black God: Malice and War

Mordiggian/Vordesain: Death and Protection

The Goat of the Woods: Chaos and Nature

stone for a wagon) then the item lasts for a number of hours equal to your Willpower (minimum of 1) before reverting to the original material. Still, you can turn a leaf into a heavy shield or a handful of grass into a quiver of arrows. You may only have one temporary created item in existence at a time, although you can dismiss an existing one to create a new one after one hour. Arrows are an exception to the one-item rule; you may produce 12 arrows with a single major action.

DEATH

This Dominion grants you a portion of your god's power over death itself.

Novice: Your touch and a major action can speed the process of decay, like the decompose spell (see the Set 2 Player's Guide, page 66), whenever you wish.

Journeyman: You draw strength from death. Any creature you slay barehanded or with a melee weapon grants you Health equal to the

creature's Constitution (minimum of 1). This can restore lost Health or increase your Health above its normal amount, although not by more than your level. Health above your normal amount is not recovered when lost.

Master: You have a deadly touch. Simply by touching a living creature with a major action and a Dexterity (Brawling) attack test you can inflict 1d6 + Willpower penetrating damage.

FATE

You tug on the divine strands of fate, influencing them in your favor.

Novice: You can offer a blessing of good fortune with a major action and a TN 11 Willpower (Faith) test, giving one ally you can perceive a +2 bonus on their next test.

Journeyman: Once per encounter, you can re-roll the dice on one test and choose either of the two rolls as your result.

Master: Fickle fate sometimes smiles on you. As a special, variable-cost divine stunt of good fortune, you may apply the number of SPs spent as a bonus to any one test—by you or an ally—attempted in the next round.

For example, if you spend 4 SPs, you can apply them as a bonus to your next attack, an ally's next attack, a test to resist an effect, or any other test, so long as it occurs within the next round. You must designate the affected test before rolling dice, and this stunt cannot apply to re-rolls.

HEALING

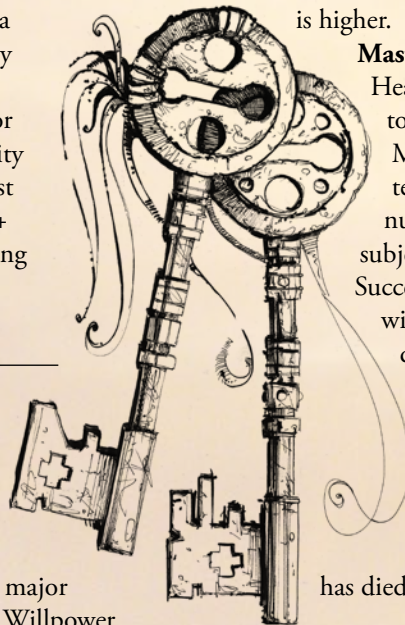
The Healing Dominion safeguards the health and lives of the faithful and those worthy of its mercy.

Novice: You have a healer's hands. You can perform the Heal action as a Willpower (Faith) test and the subject regains Health equal to your Willpower, plus twice the result of the

dragon die.

Journeyman: You can use the Heal action to cure a target of disease or poisoning. The TN for the Willpower (Faith) test is 13, or the TN of the test to resist the illness or toxin, whichever is higher.

Master: You can use the Heal action to restore life to the recently dead. Make a Willpower (Faith) test with TN (13 + the number of minutes the subject has been dead). Success revives the subject with Health equal to the dragon die, after which the subject may recover normally. Any diseases or poisons affecting the subject are removed. You cannot restore a subject who has died of old age.



KNOWLEDGE

You have a portion of your patron's vast divine knowledge.

Novice: You gain one lore focus (a Cunning focus with "Lore" in its name) of your choice. Additionally, you may receive occasional dreams or visions that provide knowledge about matters of importance to you. These are often clues to current mysteries or openings to new ones. The GM chooses when these occur.

Journeyman: Once per day, you may attempt to use a reflective or fluid surface (mirror, crystal, flame, smoke, etc.) to scry, giving you a vision of a distant place or person you know. This requires a TN 13 Willpower (Faith) test and the vision lasts minutes equal to your Willpower (minimum of 1). The GM may increase the TN of the test or require an opposed test for viewing certain subjects.

Master: Once per day you may go into a prayerful meditation and receive divine guidance. This allows you to ask your patron (the GM) for the answer to any one question. The answer may be couched in symbolism or limited in detail but will always be true.

LAW

This Dominion makes you a vessel of divine law.

Novice: You have true insight into others. With an opposed Perception (Sight or Empathy) test against Communication (Deception), you can see guilt written on a law-breaker's features and pierce disguises, deceptions, and illusions. You can track law-breakers as if using the Perception (Tracking) focus.

Journeyman: Once per encounter, you may choose to treat all die rolls you must make for a round as if the dice rolled an 11, with a dragon die result of 4 and no doubles (and therefore no stunt points). This means you can reliably succeed at any test where the TN minus your bonus is 11 or less, but you will also reliably fail more difficult tests.

Master: You have the power to rebuke law-breakers and betrayers by speaking a special Word of Law once per day as a major action. Your pronouncement inflicts 1d6 + Willpower penetrating damage on all criminals, law-breakers, and traitors who hear it. Those targets also suffer a -2 penalty on all tests against you for the remainder of the encounter.

In addition, you can pronounce a Word of Law at any time as a special stunt costing 3+ SPs. In this case, add the number of SPs you spend to the damage total. The damage of multiple uses in the same encounter is cumulative, but the test penalty is not.

MAGIC

Your patron has Dominion over the arcane arts and powers.

Novice: You have the gift of arcane sight. You can see magic or magically affected things in your line of sight as visible auras and can perceive their schools of magic and rough Spellpower.

Journeyman: Once per day as a major action, you can remove magic from a visible subject with an opposed test of

your Willpower (Faith) against the target's Spellpower, like the dispel magic spell (see the Set 2 Player's Guide, page 66).

Master: You are a powerful manipulator of mana. If you do not already have a Mana score, you gain 10 + (Magic x level) + (3d6) MP. You can perform a special Mana Shift stunt for 2 SP, which allows you to spend MP to restore those of an ally within yards equal to your Zeal on a 1:1 basis. You can also perform a special, variable-cost Mana Restoration stunt where each SP you spend restores 2 MP to yourself or another.

Lastly, as a minor action, you can protect yourself from magic as if you were under a spell shield (Set 1 Player's Guide, pg. 52) a number of times each day equal to your level. The effect lasts for a number of minutes equal to your Willpower.

LOVE

You are filled with the power to inspire and preserve love.

Novice: You gain the Communication (Persuasion or Seduction) focus. You can cause a subject with a potential romantic interest in you to become

briefly infatuated with a successful Willpower (Faith) test opposed by their Willpower (Self-Discipline). An infatuated subject is well disposed towards you and willing to do you favors or provide other assistance. The effect lasts for hours equal to your Communication (minimum of 1).

Journeyman: You can discern bonds of love and affection between others. Moreover, you may follow such connections as if you possessed the Perception (Tracking) focus. You can use these bonds to enable someone (including yourself) to aid a beloved who is injured or dying by transferring Health. The two characters must have an established, positive relationship. Every point of Health sacrificed by one restores one point of Health to the other.



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Option: Crisis of Faith

Faith can be a challenge to maintain, especially in the face of failure. To reflect this, when a character with a Divine Gift fails any test to use or activate that talent, they suffer a minor crisis of faith. During this time of doubt, they are unable to use any of the talent's abilities or perform divine stunts for a number of rounds equal to the result of the test's dragon die.

Example: *Brother Amox is a faithful servant of the Dominion of Protection. When his attempt to ward off the Wight of the Cold Barrows fails, he experiences a crisis of faith. He cannot invoke any of the abilities of his Divine Gift, or perform any divine stunts, for the next three rounds (the result of the dragon die on his failed test).*

If the faithful character generates stunt points during the crisis of faith, the player may spend 1 SP to cast off their doubts and restore their normal Divine Gift abilities, beginning next round.

Example: *Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with his companions, Brother Amox strikes the Wight, rolling doubles and generating 2 SPs. His player spends 1 SP to restore Amox's faith and the other on a Skirmish stunt; the mighty blow sends the Wight staggering back. "I said back, foul creature!" Brother Amox roars. He may resume using the benefits of his Divine Gift when his next turn begins.*

Master: By chanting, singing, or otherwise performing, you fill everyone within yards equal to your Zeal with such love they cannot take violent actions (including attack actions) without succeeding on a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your Zeal. This effect lasts a number of rounds equal to your Communication (minimum of 1), and you must perform to maintain it. Creatures without a heart (e.g. golems) or a soul (some undead or demons) are unaffected.

MALICE

Divine powers of hatred and cruelty are yours.

Novice: You can fan the flames of hatred and violence. By speaking briefly with someone and using a major action, you can stir them to violent action against any target they have reason to hate or mistrust. The victim must succeed on a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your Zeal or initiate combat with their enemy within four rounds.

Journeyman: You cause terrible pain simply by directing your hate at a target within 10 yards as a major action. The target must succeed on an opposed Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your Zeal to take any action other than writhe and cry out in agony.

You can maintain the effect by taking a minor action on each of your subsequent turns, but the target gets a new resistance test each round. Three successful tests ends the effect.

Master: Once per day, as a major action, you can speak a special Malignant Word. All foes within 6 yards must roll a Willpower (Courage) test against your Zeal. Those who fail suffer penetrating damage equal to 1d6 plus twice your Willpower from a blast of sheer malice. Those who succeed on the test only suffer penetrating damage equal to your Willpower.

You may speak additional Malignant Words each day as a special stunt costing 3 SP.

NATURE

Your connection with the powers of nature gives you influence over the wild.

Novice: You gain the Cunning (Natural Lore) focus, can move unimpeded by natural terrain, and are never attacked by wild animals unless you provoke them.

Journeyman: As a major action, you can give a wild animal a complex command (as with the Animal Training talent) and have it obeyed if you succeed on a TN 11 Willpower (Faith) test. The animal obeys for a number of hours

equal to your Willpower (minimum of 1) or until the command is fulfilled. Only one wild animal obeys you at a time. At the GM's discretion, a flock or swarm of small animals (insects, birds, mice, etc.) can be considered one animal for these purposes.

Master: You are immune to natural weather conditions, from desert heat to arctic chill, although not to spells and other effects that create such hazards. You can extend this benefit to a number of others equal to your Willpower (minimum of 1) so long as they remain within a number of yards of you equal to your Zeal. You can also create a shelter (like the Set 2 spell) once per day.

PROTECTION

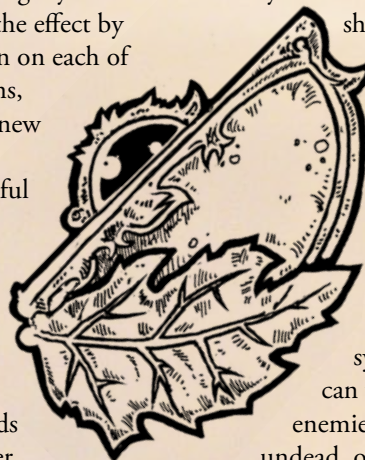
This Dominion is concerned with the protection of the faithful and those in need, particularly from supernatural enemies.

Novice: Wielding a symbol of your faith, you can ward off its supernatural enemies, such as demons, undead, or evil spirits. So long as you take a major action each turn, any such enemies must roll a Willpower (Courage) test against your Zeal to approach or attack you or anyone adjacent to you.

Journeyman: Once per day, you can consecrate a place as a sanctuary for 24 hours. The area must have designated boundaries you can close off (such as a building with doors and windows) and not be already consecrated to another Dominion (such as the temple of another divinity).

Only those you designate may enter or leave the sanctuary freely. All others must roll a Willpower (Courage) test against your Zeal. Even if they succeed, all hostile actions taken in the sanctuary suffer a -2 penalty.

Master: Once per day you can protect a single subject (including yourself) with a force field (as the Set 2 spell) for rounds equal to your Willpower (minimum of 1).





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THEFT

Divine powers of cunning and thievery are yours.

Novice: You can literally smell treasure. A successful TN 11 Perception (Smelling or Tracking) test points you toward the nearest source of precious metals, gems, or other valuables within a number of yards equal to your Zeal, and gives you a rough idea of the amount or value. For a large concentration, the GM may roll for you in secret and inform you when you come near a particular treasure.

Journeyman: You can bypass locks simply by touching the lock and making a successful Willpower (Faith) test in place of Dexterity (Lock Picking). If you also have the Thievery talent, you can re-roll this test once if it fails.

Master: Once per day you can become invisible for a number of minutes equal to your Willpower (minimum of 1). Any attack action immediately ends the effect.

TRICKERY

This Dominion concerns deception and trickery pleasing to your patron. You can maintain one of the following deceptions per degree in this talent.

Novice: You gain the Communication (Deception) focus. You can change the appearance of a small object (no more than your Willpower in pounds, minimum of 1) to something similar in size. For example, you can make a handful of pebbles look like jewels, or a dagger look like a comb.

Victims of your deception can test Perception (any applicable focus) against your Zeal. If successful, they see through your deception.

Journeyman: You can disguise your person (including your voice and even scent) behind a veil of illusion. Anyone with reason to suspect you are not as

you appear can make a Perception (any applicable focus) test against your Zeal, as in the previous degree.

Master: You can veil an area the size of a large room, changing its appearance (from an abandoned ruin to a splendid ballroom, for example) and concealing the presence of anyone there, making them either unseen or changing their appearance. For example, creatures might be veiled to resemble noble partygoers rather than hideous undead.

Any hostile action by the concealed subjects removes the illusion from them. Victims make Perception tests as in previous degrees.

WAR

You are filled with the power to triumph in battle.

Novice: You gain a weapon focus of your choice.

Journeyman: Once per day you may bless the melee weapons of all allies within 10 yards (including your own) as a major action. For the duration of the encounter, attacks with these weapons inflict an additional 1d6 damage.

Master: Once per day as a major action you may gain either an Armor Rating bonus or a Strength bonus equal to your Willpower (minimum of 1) for the duration of the encounter. If your Willpower is 2 or greater, you may split the bonus between the two benefits, so long as the total does not exceed your Willpower score.

DIVINE STUNTS

Those favored by the divine can occasionally perform minor miracles in the form of divine stunts. These stunts work just like other stunts, except that they require the Divine Gift talent, and the character's degree in that talent describes a cap on the stunts that can be chosen.

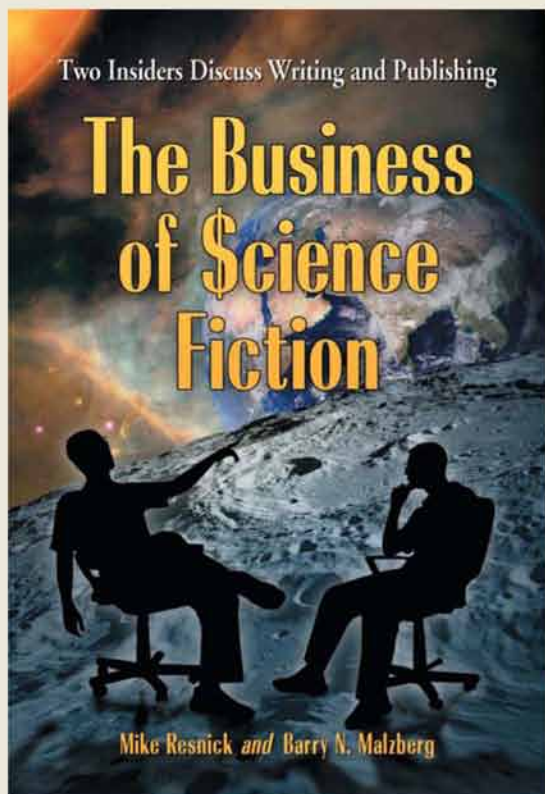
SP Divine Stunt

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1+ | Armor of Faith: Divine fortune turns aside harm. You gain an Armor Rating bonus equal to the SP spent until your next turn. |
| 1 | Divine Sacrifice: You may suffer up to 5 points of Health damage to grant an ally of your choice twice that amount in restored Health. |
| 2 | Divine Inspiration: You and all of your allies gain a +2 bonus on Willpower tests until the end of your next turn. |
| 2 | Overcome Resistance: You ignore a target's normal resistance to your attack. For example, you can miraculously strike a creature immune to physical weapons and inflict normal damage, or use a fire attack against a creature resistant or even immune to fire. |
| 3 | Divine Mercy: The effect of one malign spell or divine talent affecting you or an ally of your choice immediately ends. This only removes ongoing effects (such as those of walking bomb or weakness). It does not cure damage or other permanent conditions. |
| 3 | Shield of Faith: Your faith protects you as surely as any armor. You gain +2 Defense until the beginning of your next turn. |
| 4 | Divine Mantle: You are so clearly favored by the divine that one foe of your choice hesitates to oppose you, taking only a minor action on their next turn. |
| 4 | Divine Awe: You are so clearly favored by higher powers that all foes suffer a -2 penalty to all tests against you until the start of your next turn. |
| 6 | Miracle: The divine directly intervenes to aid you! You may ask the GM for any single favor within your patron's power and Dominion(s) to grant. The GM chooses the degree to which the divine fulfills your need, based on your character's faithfulness and the demands of the story. |

Ω



Congratulations and good luck to Hugo Award nominees *Mike Resnick and Barry N. Malzberg*



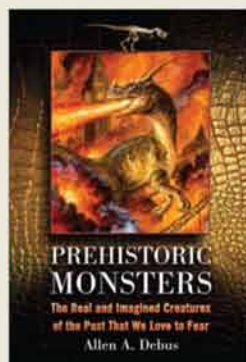
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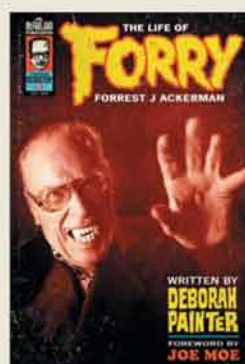
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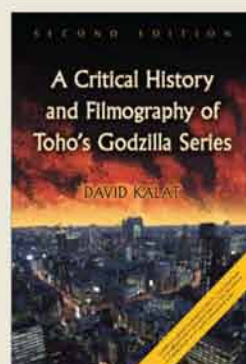
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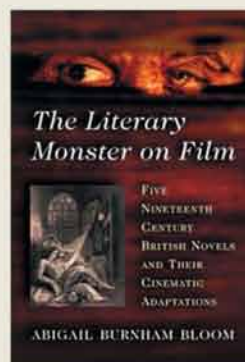
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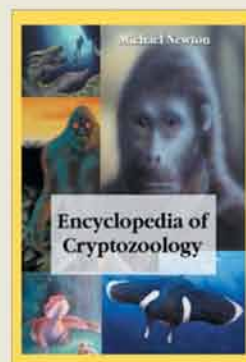
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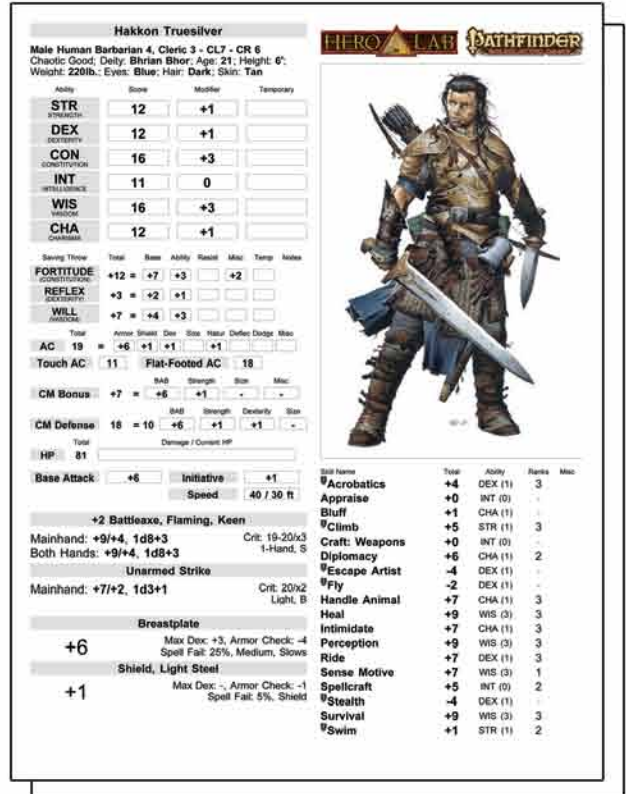


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The Savant

Master all Trades as a Universal Hero

By Ryan Costello, Jr.

Art by Liv Hathaway

Some players and GMs enjoy developing a few characters through a single campaign. Others want successive short-term characters to explore multiple builds and worlds. These preferences can lead to conflict when a GM wishes to explore a single storyline and a player wishes to play a variety of characters. The new savant base class gives players the mechanical variety they crave and GMs the consistent character they need to base plots around.

THE SAVANT

“With a sword in one hand,” a savant once said, “and a spell in the other.” No sooner had he spoken than he gained the grip of a master swordsman and fire dancing in his open palm. Talespinners and raconteurs, savants embody the legendary tales they tell and are jacks of a dozen trades. The story of a rampaging barbarian turns a savant into the wildest of warriors, while a few notes about a great wizard unlocks arcane secrets in the savant’s mind. His passion for knowledge and flare for the dramatic allow him to embody the power that makes legends legendary – at least temporarily.

Some believe a savant’s powers come as gifts from the gods of theatre and poetry. Others suggest they arise through esoteric insight into the nature of heroism, with heroic exemplars and personal flexibility standing in for arcane tomes. As the debate is mostly between savants, all passionate about the subject, the truth may remain forever buried beneath conjecture and

Table 1: Savant

Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Max Spell Level
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Knack 3, notebook, style	1
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Stubborn argument +1	1
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Greater trade 1/day	1
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Trade 4	1
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Share trade	2
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Avatar of legend	2
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Wild talent, stubborn argument +2	2
8th	+6/+1	+6	+2	+6	Trade 5	2
9th	+6/+1	+6	+3	+6	Greater trade 2/day	3
10th	+7/+2	+7	+3	+7	Calming words	3
11th	+8/+3	+7	+3	+7	Many talents	3
12th	+9/+4	+8	+4	+8	Trade 6, stubborn argument +3	3
13th	+9/+4	+8	+4	+8	Wild talent	4
14th	+10/+5	+9	+4	+9	Healing touch	4
15th	+11/+6/+1	+9	+5	+9	Greater trade 3/day	4
16th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+10	Trade 7	4
17th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+10	Stubborn argument +4	5
18th	+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+11	Free avatar	5
19th	+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+11	Wild talent	5
20th	+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+12	Trade 8, Greater trade 4/day	5

hyperbole. All anyone knows is that savants are born with the ability to embody dozens of skills or knacks.

Role: A savant is always one knack away from whatever role the party needs filled. The memory of a might warrior grants him the fighting skills to take the front line. A quip about a halfling rogue gives him the skill to open a locked vault. Even an anecdote about his life-long wizard friend reminds him of the verbal and somatic components required to cast a *fireball*.

Alignment: Any

Hit Die: d8

CLASS SKILLS

The savant's class skills are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (all, taken individually) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Perception (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Ranks per Level: 4 + Int modifier

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Savants are proficient with all simple

weapons. They are proficient with light armor but not with shields.

Notebook (Ex): Savants carry a book of tricks, stories, and shortcuts used to remember the best ways to assist their comrades and confound their enemies. A savant always keeps this notebook, a quill, and vial of ink on his person. Trusting fragile perfection to memory is a gamble, and any savant knows the dangers of gambling.

A savant starts at 1st level with a notebook containing notes on the ability, equipment, feat, skill, and spell knacks he knows. When expanding it, his notebook uses the same cost and statistics as a wizard's spellbook. A savant begins with knacks for all the equipment he owns, all his class skills and any cross-class skill he has ranks in, and a number of 0-level spells chosen from the cleric and sorcerer/wizard spell lists equal to his Intelligence or Charisma modifier, depending on his style.

Because the shortcuts and knacks of a trade take up fewer pages than the arcane iconography of true magic, and because of a savant's liberal use of page edges for footnotes and addendums, one notebook has enough space for

his entire career. A savant may add an ability, equipment (including natural weapons, such as a claw, but not weapon-like spells, such as a ray), a skill, or one spell to his notebook once per day within one hour of witnessing its use. Writing in his notebook takes 1 minute and provokes attacks of opportunity.

A savant whose notebook is lost or destroyed loses one level of experience until he reconstructs it. Rewriting a savant's notebook takes 1 game week per level, and costs the same as reconstructing a wizard's spellbook (see Pathfinder Core Rulebook).

Style: Savants follow one of two prominent styles. Each style is associated with a key ability score that determines trades known, the Difficulty Class of his class abilities, the number of times per day he can assume a trade, and the number of notes he begins with in his notebook.

The first popular style is the observer, reporter of the universe's truths in their smallest detail, although the details he focuses on depend on the effect he wishes to invoke. An observer uses his Intelligence modifier as his key ability score.

Knacks, Trades, and Roles

The terminology of the savant can be confusing; it's a complex class for advanced players. Here's the short summary:

Trades or Roles: These are the mythic archetypes of song and story that a savant embodies as a class ability. Each such trade or role grants the savant access to particular knacks or powers, starting with 3 powers at first level. The player should prepare several trades as starting combinations of knacks before a game session, noting both a name for the trade and the mechanical effects of that particular combination of knacks.

Knacks: These are the particular elements within a role or trade that a savant knows. A weapon knack would fit within the role of a legendary warrior, whereas the use of black magic would not. All a savant's knacks are associated with a particular trade or role. There are 21 knacks to choose from initially, and seven more after 5th level.

The second style is the narrator, a speaker who will not let truth ruin a good story. A narrator uses his Charisma modifier as his key ability score. A savant chooses a style at character creation. Once this choice is made, it cannot be changed.

STARTING TRADES

The defining characteristic of the savant is his or her ability to use all sorts of powers as part of a particular heroic persona. These personae are called *trades* or *roles*, and the powers they grant are called *knacks*.

A savant can usually drum up a memory, story, or trick that perfectly applies to the situation at hand. When a savant says "This reminds me of the time when..." he comes to briefly embody a particular trade or role. By taking on that role, he gains access to the tricks and powers—the knacks—associated with the role.

For instance, by taking on the trade of a holy man or healer, he could gain healing powers and a greater understanding of religious rituals.

By taking on the trade of a warrior, a savant could gain increased toughness, weapon mastery, and even a weapon to wield and a suit of armor to wear. His body doesn't change, but his abilities expand to suit the trade.

The only limit to the number of trades a savant can create by combining the appropriate number of knacks for his level is the player's ability to combine and prepare these trades ahead of time. Failure to prepare trades and their knacks in advance can bog down play.

All Trades (Su): Embodying a trade is a full round action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity. A savant may embody only one trade at a time. He can embody trades for a number of minutes per day equal to 3 + his style's key ability modifier. He may embody a trade for an additional minute every odd-numbered level. These minutes need not be consecutive, but they must be spent in 1-minute intervals. Ending a trade is a free action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

When he first embodies a particular trade, a savant can choose any 3 of the knacks below to assume as part of that trade. He can assume an additional knack as part of a trade at 4th level and every four levels thereafter (four at 4th, five at 8th, six at 12th, seven at 16th, eight at 20th). Some knacks can be chosen more than once, although knacks that grant a numeric bonus do not stack with themselves.

Some knacks are spell-like abilities. Although some are learned from divine casters, they are always subject to the arcane spell failure of the armor worn (or embodied) by the savant.

At 1st level, a savant knows all of the following knacks. However the extent to which he can embody them as part of a trade varies depending on his notebook.

Cantrips (Sp): The savant can spontaneously cast any cantrip on the sorcerer/wizard spell list that he has in

his notebook. He can cast a number of cantrips equal to his key ability modifier, including the same cantrip multiple times.

Dash of Metamagic: The savant chooses one metamagic feat noted in his notebook. He can add this metamagic feat to spells he casts, increasing their level normally. He can choose this knack multiple times when embodying a trade, choosing a different metamagic feat each time.

Exemplar of Charisma: The savant gains a temporary +4 enhancement bonus to Charisma. This bonus improves to +6 at 10th level and +8 at 20th level.

Exemplar of Constitution: The savant gains a temporary +4 enhancement bonus to Constitution. This bonus improves to +6 at 10th level and +8 at 20th level.

Exemplar of Dexterity: The savant gains a temporary +4 enhancement bonus to Dexterity. This bonus improves to +6 at 10th level and +8 at 20th level.

Exemplar of Intelligence: The savant gains a temporary +4 enhancement bonus to Intelligence. This bonus improves to +6 at 10th level and +8 at 20th level.

Exemplar of Strength: The savant gains a temporary +4 enhancement bonus to Strength. This bonus improves to +6 at 10th level and +8 at 20th level.

Exemplar of Wisdom: The savant gains a temporary +4 enhancement bonus to Wisdom. This bonus improves to +6 at 10th level and +8 at 20th level.

First Line of Defense: The savant gains proficiency with all shields noted in his notebook.

Invigoration: The savant gives himself a boost of confidence, fuel, and adrenaline and gains 3 temporary hp per Hit Die. This knack may not be combined with the Exemplar of Constitution knack.

Last Line of Defense: The savant gains proficiency with a type of medium armor noted in his notebook.

Legendary armor: The savant gains a suit of armor. He can choose from any armor he has detailed in his notebook.

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This armor functions in all ways as a real version of the chosen armor for as long as the savant assumes this role, except it is obviously a temporary conjuration and could not pass for a real suit of armor under any amount of scrutiny. If he is already wearing armor when he embodies this story element, a savant uses the better AC bonus and the worse armor check penalty and arcane spell failure chance.

Legendary shield: The savant gains a shield. He can choose from any shield he has detailed in his notebook. This shield functions as a real shield for as long as the savant assumes this trade, but it is obviously a temporary conjuration and cannot pass for a real shield under any scrutiny. A legendary shield does not grant the savant proficiency with the shield, and he must have a free hand to use this knack.

Legendary weapon: The savant gains a weapon. He can choose from any weapon detailed in his notebook. This weapon functions in all ways as

a real version of the chosen weapon for as long as the savant retains this trade, but it is obviously a temporary conjuration and cannot pass for a real weapon under any scrutiny. Wielding a legendary weapon does not grant the savant proficiency with the weapon. He can choose this knack multiple times when embodying a trade, and he must have a free hand to use this knack.

Orisons (Sp): The savant can spontaneously cast any orison on the cleric spell list recorded in his notebook. He can cast a number of orisons equal to his style's key ability modifier, including the same orison multiple times.

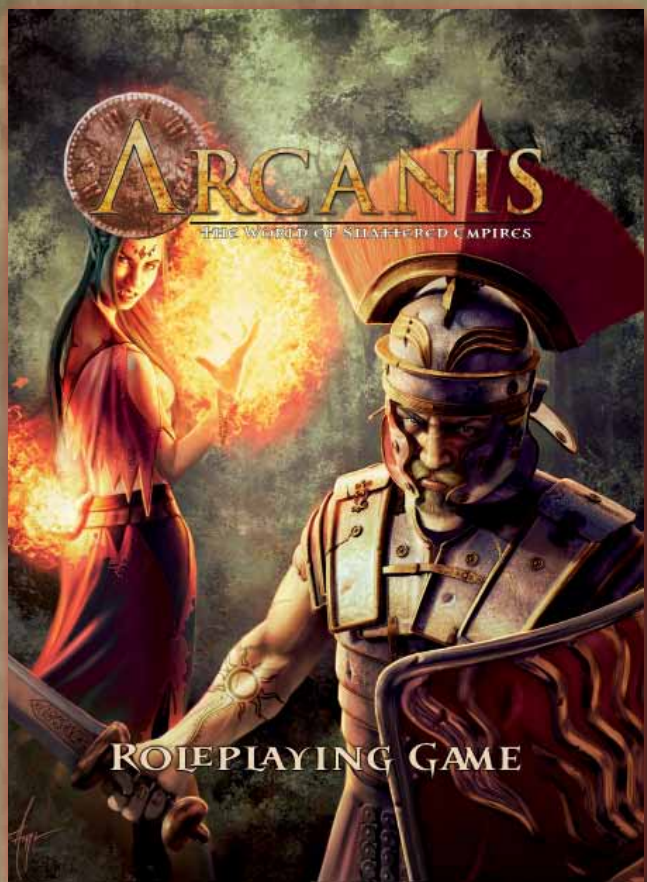
Pinch of Magic (Sp): The savant gains a spell detailed in his notebook as a spell-like ability. He can use this spell once each time he embodies this knack. This spell can be up to his maximum spell level (see Table 1: Savant). He must have an Intelligence or Charisma score equal to 10 + spell level to cast the spell.

In the case of spells with different levels depending on the class, use the highest-level version of the spell. A savant's caster level is equal to his class level. He can choose this knack multiple times when embodying a role, designating different spells each or time or the same spell multiple times.

Racial emulation: The savant gains a racial trait he has in his notebook.

Skill Familiarity: The savant gains a +2 bonus to a skill he has detailed in his notebook. This bonus increases by +2 at 5th level and every 5 levels thereafter. He can choose this knack multiple times when embodying a role, designating a different skill each time. This bonus explicitly stacks with the bonus provided by the skill of my master knack.

Skill of my Master: The savant treats a particular skill in his notebook as a class skill, gaining a +3 bonus if he has any ranks in that skill. The savant cannot choose a skill that is already a class skill. This bonus stacks with the bonus provided by the skill familiarity knack.



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Warrior's Swing: The savant's base attack bonus is equal to his savant level.

Weapon Recognition: The savant gains proficiency with a designated martial weapon detailed in his notebook. He can use this knack multiple times within a single trade, designating a different weapon each time.

ADVANCED KNACKS

At 5th level, a savant gains all of the following additional knacks. GMs should feel free to create flavorful trades and titles to cover these new combinations of knacks.

Bestial weapon: A learned man can relate to an animal as well as a humanoid. The savant gains a natural attack noted in his notebook, dealing damage appropriate for his size.

Enchantment: Armor worn by the savant or a shield or weapon he carries (including armor, shields, and weapons created by knacks) gains a +1 enhancement bonus. This bonus increases by +1 every three levels after 5th. These bonuses stack with existing weapon bonuses to a maximum of +5, or they can add armor, shield, or weapon properties.

Properties added with this knack do not replace existing item properties, but duplicate abilities do not stack. If the armor, shield, or weapon is not magical, a +1 enhancement bonus must be added before any other properties can be added. A savant can choose this knack multiple times when embodying a trade.

Exotic weapon recognition: The savant gains proficiency with a designated exotic weapon detailed in his notebook. He can choose this knack multiple times when embodying a trade, designating a different exotic weapon each time.

Extraordinary emulation: The savant gains an extraordinary ability he has noted in his notebook.

Stronger line of defense: The savant gains proficiency with a type of heavy armor noted in his notebook.

Tactical emulation: The savant can use one combat feat in his notebook as though he had the feat. He need not meet the prerequisites for this feat.

OTHER CLASS POWERS

Though the notebook, style, and trades define a savant's core powers, they are certainly not his only tools. Quick wit, persistence, and the legendary power of ancient heroes are all part of the savant's heroic character.

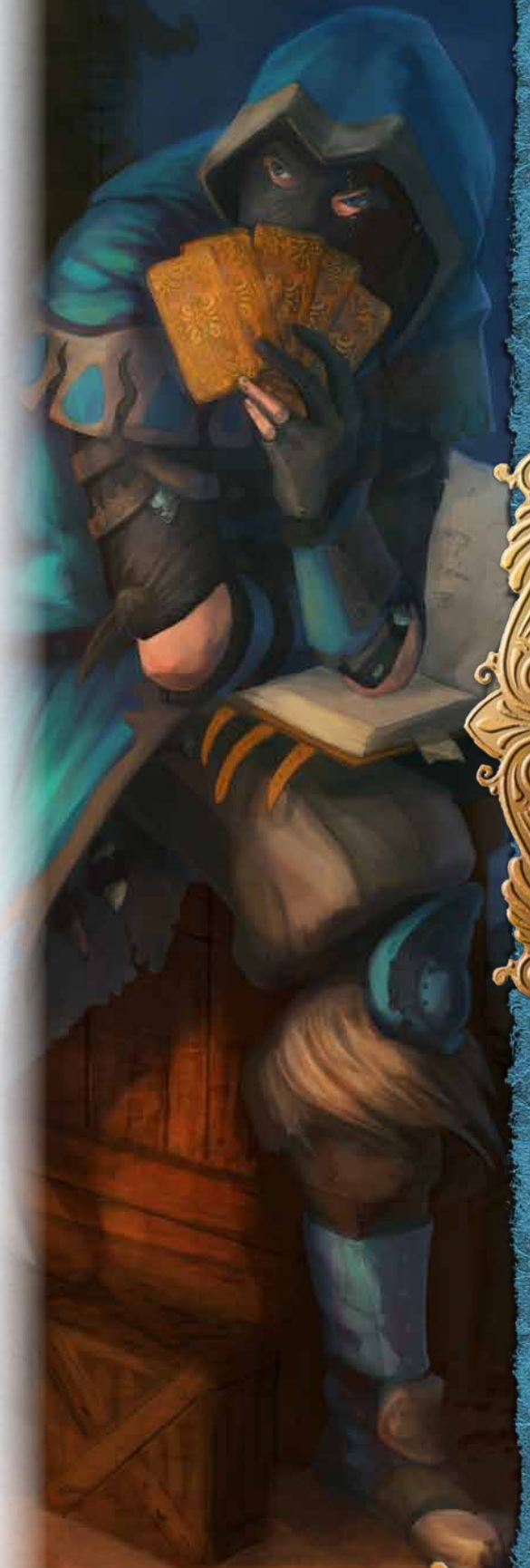
Stubborn Argument (Ex): A savant's ability to argue without concern for fact, logic, or hypocrisy is the stuff of legend. At 2nd level, he gains a +1 bonus to Charisma-based skill checks and to the DC of mind-affecting spells and abilities. Additionally, he gains a +1 morale bonus to Will saves against mind-affecting spells and abilities. These bonuses increase by +1 at 7th level and every 5 levels thereafter to a maximum +4 at 17th level.

Greater Trade (Su): The savant sometimes inhabits a particular trade or role more completely than a momentary flash. At 3rd level, once per day, a savant can assume a trade for 1 hour rather than its normal duration. He may use a greater trade an additional time per day at 9th level, 15th level, and 20th level.

Share Trade (Su): A savant is not the only one who benefits from his knowledge and heroic power. At 5th level, when the savant embodies a trade, he can share knacks with a number of allies up to his style's key ability modifier. The savant can share multiple knacks with a single ally, share knacks with multiple allies, or any combination.

Sharing knacks counts against the total number of knacks the savant can embody at a time and is subject to the normal limitations for the knacks. For example, if an observer savant with an 18 Intelligence (+4 modifier) shares a knack with each of his four allies, he has designated all the knacks he can embody at once and has no knacks for himself.

Avatar of Legend (Su): Experienced savants can conjure



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great legendary allies. At 6th level, once per day, a savant can summon an avatar of legend as a full round action. An avatar of legend appears within 100 ft. of the savant and within line of sight.

An avatar of legend is a separate character, created using the cohort rules of the Leadership feat. The savant's leadership score is his character level plus his style's key ability modifier. The avatar of legend enters play with any knacks the savant embodied at the time and remains for as long as the savant concentrates. The avatar vanishes immediately when the savant's concentration ends.

When using this ability, the savant chooses from a number of specific avatars of legend detailed in his notebook equal to his style's key ability modifier. Whenever a savant gains a level, he can choose to replace one avatar of legend. Avatars of legend do not gain experience on their own; instead, their level is always equal to the highest-level cohort the savant's Leadership score grants. An avatar of legend is summoned with non-magical equipment designated by the savant based on notes in his notebook. If the avatar of legend can cast spells, it knows the minimum number of spells its class allows and appears with its full suite of spells and abilities.

Wild Talent (Su): If exaggeration is an art, a savant is a virtuoso artist. At 7th level, a savant creates a new knack, called a wild talent, by combining the effects of two existing knacks.

For example, he could create a wild talent called Weapon Master out of the legendary weapon (falchion) and weapon recognition (falchion) knacks, or Spell Thief out of extraordinary emulation (trapfinding) and pinch of magic (*knock*) knacks. When embodying a role, a wild talent counts as a single knack within it. A wild talent can be embodied along with its component knacks, even if its component knacks cannot be embodied multiple times.

A wild talent can be shared like any other knack. A savant can create a second wild talent at 13th level and

a third at 19th level. A wild talent cannot be a component knack of another wild talent (you can't nest knacks within knacks).

Calming Words (Su): Nothing calms a restless heart after a dangerous battle like a good story and the right word to sooth a racing pulse. At 10th level, a savant can grant all allies within 30 ft., including herself, fast healing equal to her style's key ability modifier, for 3 rounds. Allies cannot engage in any activity during this time or they lose the benefits of the savant's calming words.

Many Talents (Su): Unpredictability is rare by definition. Once per day at 11th level, a savant can substitute one knack he embodies with another as an immediate action.

Healing Touch (Su): At 14th level, a savant can remove debilitating conditions from allies. With healing touch, a savant can designate one of the following conditions each round to immediately end: Blinded, Deafened, Diseased, Frightened, Nauseated, Paralyzed, Poisoned, or Sickened. The savant must make a successful unarmed touch attack on the target of healing touch. A healing touch can remove a condition caused by a curse, disease, or poison without curing the affliction.

Free Avatar (Su): Like a noble sidekick, the savant learns to fight alongside legendary heroes. At 18th level, a savant can create and concentrate on an avatar of legend as a move action.

SAVANT FEATS

The following feats are designed with the savant in mind.

ADVANCED AVATAR (GENERAL)

One of your avatars of legend is particularly capable.

Prerequisites: Avatar of legend class feature.

Benefit: Select one avatar of legend known. That avatar of legend's level is equal to the highest-level cohort your leadership score allows +1.

DUPLICATE KNACKS (GENERAL)

You can embody knacks multiple times.
Prerequisites: All Trades class feature.

Benefit: When you embody a trade, you can choose to embody a knack multiple times. For example, you could embody bestial weapon multiple times, selecting a different natural weapon from your notebook each time.

EXTRA AVATAR OF LEGEND (GENERAL)

You can call on an additional avatar of legend.

Prerequisites: Avatar of legend class feature.

Benefit: You gain an additional avatar of legend upon which you can call.

EXTRA EMBODIMENTS (GENERAL)

You can embody trades more often.

Prerequisites: Trade class feature.

Benefit: You may embody trades for an additional minute per level.

Normal: You may embody trades for an additional minute every odd-numbered level.

EXTRA WILD TALENT (GENERAL)

You gain an extra wild talent.

Prerequisites: Wild talent class feature

Benefit: You can create an additional talent. You can take this feat multiple times, adding a new wild talent each time.

EXTRA NOTES (GENERAL)

You gain extra notes in your notebook.

Prerequisites: Notebook class feature.

Benefit: Add 6 additional notes of your choice to your notebook.

FASTER NOTE TAKING (GENERAL)

You add notes to your notebook at a faster pace.

Prerequisites: Notebook class feature.

Benefit: You can add notes to your notebook twice per day.

Normal: You can add notes to your notebook once per day.

LINGERING KNACK (GENERAL)

Knacks remain after the trade you embody ends.

Prerequisites: Trade class feature.

Benefit: Even as all other traces of the trade you embodied dissipate, one knack lingers. When you end a trade, you may designate one of that trade's knacks to continue to affect you for 1 minute longer.

SUPERNATURAL KNACK (GENERAL)

You can learn supernatural knacks.

Prerequisites: Trade class feature.

Benefit: You are more in touch with your magical side than most

savants. When embodying a trade, you can gain one supernatural ability you have noted in your notebook as a knack.

TANDEM AVATARS (GENERAL)

You can summon avatars of a legendary pair.

Prerequisites: Avatar of legend class feature.

Benefit: Select one avatar of legend known. That avatar of legend is replaced by a pair of avatars of legend whose total character level is equal to the highest-level cohort your leadership score grants. Each avatar is summoned within 100 ft of you and is controlled through concentration in the same way as a single avatar of legend.

TWIN TRADES (GENERAL)

You can embody two trades at once.

Prerequisites: Trade class feature, Duplicate Knacks

Benefit: Once per day while embodying a trade, you can also embody a second trade. Embodying a second trade requires another full round action. Every round spent embodying a second trade counts as 1 minute of trade use for that day. Ω

Playing a Savant

The savant demands far greater levels of preparation than any other base class. The savant is a class built with certain players in mind, players who enjoy experimenting with a variety of different characters and combinations of game mechanics—the character is a shifting constellation of powers.

A savant allows such players to try being a roguish cleric or a bard-like fighter without having to commit to a potentially underpowered build for the long term or disrupting an ongoing story by switching out characters. There is nothing wrong with playing a straightforward savant who relies on a small suite of trades, but to get the most out of the class, a player should keep these tips in mind:

Keep a notebook: A savant can add a new note to his notebook each day. That quickly adds up to

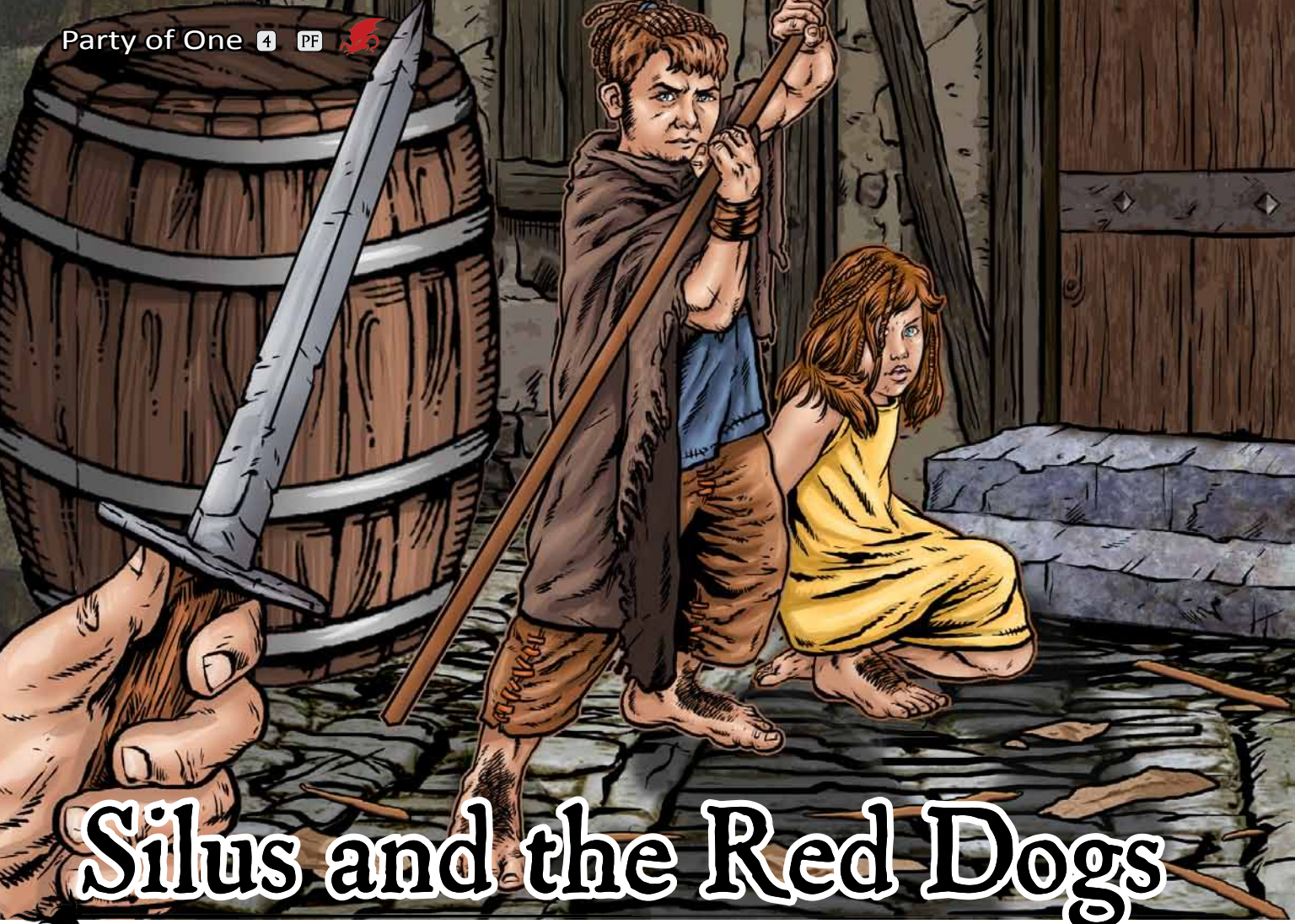
a lot of notes. Instead of finding space on an already busy character sheet, get a cheap notebook to write your notes in. It helps to categorize them to make embodying trades easier. Have sections dedicated to your feat, skill, spell, and equipment knacks with subsections to keep track of martial weapons, exotic weapons, armor, and shields.

A savant is many characters in one: A savant player will need separate character sheets for each avatar of legend, and they will gain levels to keep pace with the savant's Leadership score. On top of that, avatars of legend enter play modified by knacks. A savant player needs to know his avatars of legend as well as he knows his savant to modify the avatars when they enter play without slowing the game down. Fortunately summoning an avatar of legend is a full round action, giving the player time to work out any necessary modifications. To a lesser degree, the savant plays like multiple characters in

that the trades he embodies redefine how he plays. A player should note popular combinations of knacks to best serve common situations, especially those the rest of the party has trouble handling.

Plan Ahead: Yes, a savant may add notes to his notebook at regular intervals, but the notes he can take are based on abilities, equipment, skills, and spells he experiences. A player may have to choose between noting the orc double axe that he sundered or the *vampiric touch* spell the evil sorcerer cast. Knowing which direction the player wants to take the character makes these decisions easier.

Embellish: This class is ripe with roleplaying opportunities. Showing up with a list of over-the-top names and adjectives to define your trades and avatars of legend enhances the experience of playing a savant.



Silus and the Red Dogs

Solo Adventure for a Halfling Thief

By Matthew J. Hanson
Art by Rick Hershey

This stand-alone adventure is designed for a single player with no GM. All you need to play is a d20, a pencil, some paper, and this magazine. The rules are explained as you play. Begin at number 1, and proceed from there.

I They call you Silus. It might be your real name, though you're not sure. You grew up on the mean streets. Your sister's name is Nora. At least you always assumed she was your sister. She was the baby you took care of when you could barely take care of yourself, but she's grown up fast. You both have.

You found yourself a new family: the Red Dogs, a gang of street toughs that takes from folks too weak to defend themselves. For years you've depended on them, and they've always come through with a meal or shelter. But the price was high, and you've got blood on your hands.

Now you want a better life for yourself and Nora. You want out. You pocketed a sack of coin from the hideout, and you're on your way to pick up Nora from the dilapidated shack where you sleep. Then you'll leave the city and the Red Dogs behind.

But they say there's only one way to leave the Red Dogs: to die.
Now read section 16.

2 The Red Dog thug's blade flies wide. He is obviously a new recruit. You intend to show him how things are done.

Roll your d20.

If you roll a 7 or higher, read 25.

If you roll a 6 or lower, read 13.

3 While the smug smile still rests on Jerico's lips, you draw your dagger and slash at him. Nora huddles in the back of her cage.

Read 31.

4 The final rat makes a very satisfying squeal as you plunge your dagger into it. The way ahead looks clear.

Read 22.

5 The thug's dagger catches your left arm. It draws blood, but you have survived much worse. You lose one hit point (HP). You began with 12 hit points, so you now have 11 remaining (*make a note of this on your paper*).

You return the attack.

You make the same attack as before. You still need to roll a total of 8 (die roll +1) to hit.

If you hit, read 25.

If you miss, read 13.

6 You knew the Red Dogs would come after you if you tried to leave, but Nora never joined. You thought she'd be safe. You have to return to the Red Dog's Den to rescue her. Storming the main entrance would be suicide, but fortunately, you know another way. You know the sewers very well, including where a drainpipe for the Red Dog's Den connects.

Now read 15.

7 Even after what she's done, you cannot kill your own sister. "Nora, I came here to save you. I'm not about to give up."

"Enjoy that feeling of moral superiority while it lasts," Jerico says. "Because soon you won't feel anything." He draws a sword and attacks.

Read 31.

8 You quickly size up the two thugs and figure out that neither poses a serious threat.

The thugs' stats are:

RED DOG THUG

HP: 1

AC: 8

Attack: +0 to hit; 1 damage

To see your stat block, read 35.

For an explanation of stat blocks, read 34.

To review the rules for a combat round, read 33.

Time to fight the two new Red Dog Thugs!

Play this battle using the rules you have learned.

Once you have reduced both thugs to 0 HP, read 11.

If the thugs reduce you to 0 HP, read 36.

9 The Red Dog's prison is little more than a room in the basement with several metal animal cages. All the cages are empty save one. Inside, bound and gagged, lies your sister Nora. When she sees you, her eyes widen. She struggles to say something, but the gag prevents you from understanding.

You open the caged door and quickly remove her bindings.

Tears fill Nora's eyes. "No, Silus, it can't be!" she cries.

"Nora what have they done to you?"

"I wanted to be like you. I wanted to join. They said I had to pass a test first. Jerico said he'd send somebody, and if I killed him before he killed me..."

It's hard to believe her words. This was the life that you wanted to save Nora from. "I'm here to rescue you," you tell her. "Jerico didn't send me."

The wall slides as a secret door opens that even you didn't know about. "I'm afraid I did," says a gruff voice from within. A battle-scared half-orc steps through, followed by two Red Dog thugs. You recognize the half-orc as Jerico, leader of the Red Dogs.

"You want to leave. She wants to join," Jerico says. "I'm happy to grant either wish, for a price. With the Red Dogs, the price is always blood. If one of you doesn't kill the other, I'll kill you both."

If you try to reason with Nora, read 24.

If you attack Nora, read 28.

If you attack Jerico, read 3.

10 The thug moves faster than you expected, and your dagger just misses his face. He lunges at you again.

The thug attacks you. You make the roll for the thug. He has a +0 to attack, and your AC is 13, so he needs to roll a 13 or higher on the d20 to hit.

If he hits, read 5.

If he misses, read 2.

11 You plunge your dagger into the heart of the last thug.

You hear a voice from above you say, "Still the cold-hearted killer. Even

a leopard as clever as you, Silus, can't change his spots." An elf drops from one of the windows above and lands deftly on his feet. He also wears the crimson band of the Red Dogs. You know this elf: Alingri. When you first joined the Red Dogs, Alingri taught you everything about how to lie, steal, and kill.

"Word has it that you mean to leave our little family. But you know as well as I do there's only one way to leave the Dogs."

If you try to intimidate Alingri, read 12.

If you try to reason with Alingri, read 26.

If you attack Alingri, read 21.

12 You lock eyes with the elf and say, "You taught me everything I know, and then I learned a few more things you don't. Get out of my way, or you'll end up like them." You jerk your head to the three corpses on the street.

"No need to get your bloomers in a bunch," Alingri says, smirking. "Just wanted to pass on some news. Jerico won't let you leave, and he's taken your sister to keep you in line." Still smiling, Alingri turns and walks away.

Read 6.

13 You curse your luck as you miss again. The slender man laughs and mocks you. "They said you were a devil with the dagger, but you fight like a child."

You ignore his words. His tirade gave you the opening you need. You bring your dagger up for another strike.

Read 25.

14 As Alingri slumps to the ground, he hisses, "Killing me won't be enough. Jerico won't let you go. He has your sister at the Den." The elf coughs and then breathes no more.

If you search Alingri's body, read 30.

If you leave his body in peace, read 6.

15 You find a sewer entrance far enough away from the Red Dog's Den to avoid notice but close enough that you don't spend too much time wading through the muck.




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You easily navigate the maze of tunnels. As you near your destination, you see what looks like a fresh corpse. You passed a side tunnel not far back that could lead you to the Red Dog's Den, but that path takes longer.

If you search the body read, 32.

If you avoid the body and continue on your path, read 18.

If you avoid the body and take the longer route through the sewers, read 20.

16 As you pass through one of the city's many alleys, a thin man with a dagger steps in your path. He has a strip of red cloth on his arm, the sign of the Red Dogs, but you don't recognize his face.

The man lunges at you with his dagger, and before you can think, you drawing your own dagger and slash at him.

You attack the thug. You have an attack bonus of +1, so you roll your d20 and add 1 for your attack. The thug has an AC of 8, so your total attack roll must be an 8 or higher to hit.

If you hit, read 25.

If you miss, read 10.

17 You flick your wrist and a red streak appears on Nora's throat. For a moment she stares at you. The look in her eyes might be confusion or regret. Then her body falls to the floor.

"I didn't think you had it in you," Jerico says. "I'm hardly a man of my word, but I'll make an exception just this once. Go before I change my mind. And don't come back."

You leave the Red Dogs. You leave the city.

They say there's only one way to leave the Red Dogs, but it seems you found another. It only cost you your sister and your soul.

The end.

18 You continue down the tunnel, keeping vigilant for whatever killed the man you discovered. Your paranoia pays off when you dodge a mass of fur and teeth that leaps from the shadows. A giant rat the size of a pit bull rolls to its feet and hisses at

you. You hear a cacophony of squeaks and realize you are surrounded.

Four giant rats attack you.

GIANT RATS (4)

HP: 1 each

AC: 6

Attack: -1 to hit; 1 damage

If you reduce all four giant rats to 0 HP, read 4.

If the rats reduce you to 0 HP, read 36.

19 Jerico's lifeless body falls to your feet, and you turn to one of his guards. "It was nothing personal," he stammers. "Honest Silus. We always liked you."

You have seen enough blood for one day. You let him live, and the Red Dogs let you leave.

Read 23.

20 You return to the side tunnel you remember passing. You have to follow several more twisting branches, but eventually you are back on track.

Read 22.

21 Alingri is far more skilled than the raw recruits you battled earlier.

You must fight Alingri. His stats are:

ALINGRI

HP: 5

AC: 10

Attack: +1 to hit; 2 damage

Special: The first time Alingri misses during the battle, he can attack again.

If you reduce Alingri to 0 HP, read 14

If Alingri reduces you to 0 HP, read 36.

22 You finally come to the drainpipe that connects to the Red Dog's Den. It was meant to carry only waste, but your small frame allows you to shimmy up inside of it.

You exit the pipe in an abandoned room in the cellar of the Red Dog's Den. You know that the Red Dogs have converted another part of basement into a makeshift prison, and this is where they are likely holding Nora.

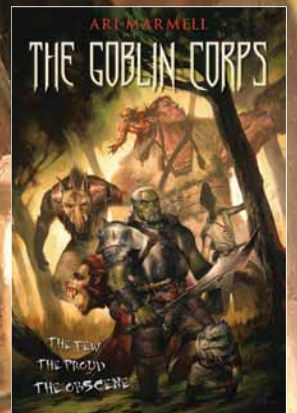
You head directly to the prison. Read 9.

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Character Folio

Characteristics		Health	
Name	Red Dog	HP	11
Class	Warrior	AC	11
Level	1	Max HP	11
Age	18	Current HP	11
Weight	150 lbs	Max AC	11
Height	5'8"	Current AC	11
Gender	Male	Max HP	11
Alignment	Neutral	Current HP	11

Abilities		Offense		Defense	
Strength	18	Club	1d6	AC	11
Dexterity	14	Unarmed	1d4	Armor Class	11
Constitution	14	Power Attack	1	Saves	11
Intelligence	8	Weapon Attack	1d6	Fortitude	11
Wisdom	10	Ranged Attack	1d4	Reflex	11
Charisma	10	F. of Attacks	1	Will	11

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Armor: Chainmail

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23 You return to your humble dwelling and collect your things. Then you and Nora leave the city behind to start anew. You hope to settle in a quiet village and begin an honest life, though you have a feeling that other dangers may await you.

They say there is only one way to leave the Red Dogs: to die. It seems you have found a second way: to kill.

The end.

24 “Nora,” you say, “I joined the Red Dog’s because it was the only way to survive, but I wanted something better for you. I saved money so we could get away from here and start a new life someplace else.”

“This is all my fault,” Nora says. “I’ll try to make things right. If I die today, I want to die by your side, not by your hand.”

Nora unsheathes a hidden dagger and turns to face Jerico.

“Then you both die,” says Jerico. He draws a sword and rushes you.

During the combat Nora fights by your side. Each turn during the hero phase, she deals 1 hp damage to a Red Dog bodyguard of your choice.

Read 31.

25 Your blade strikes true and slashes the man’s throat. He crumples to the ground at your feet, but you soon realize that he was not alone. Two more assailants emerge from the shadows and strike.

If you need to learn about turns order, read 33.

Otherwise read 8.

26 You say to Alingri, “It doesn’t have to be this way. We can choose another path, one not soaked in blood.”

“I’m afraid it’s too late for that,” Alingri says. “Too late for both of us.” He draws his rapier and attacks.

Read 21.

27 The remains of Jerico and his bodyguards lie scattered around you. Now nobody can stop you and Nora from leaving.

Read 23.

28 You have no choice. Though it breaks your heart, the only way to survive is to fight your sister.

Nora has the following stats:

NORA
HP: 5 AC: 8
Attack: +0 to hit; 1 damage

*If you reduce Nora to 1 or 2 HP, read 29.
If Nora reduces you to 0 HP, read 36.*

29 Nora is no match for your experience and training. You quickly land several wounding cuts. She realizes she cannot win and drops her dagger. “Silus,” she mummurs, “don’t hate me. I thought it was the only way.”

“Go on then,” Jerico says, “Finish her and be free.”

If you slay Nora, read 17.

If you allow her to live, read 7.

30 You find a vial of sparkling blue liquid in Alingri’s belt. You recognize it as a potion of healing.

Make a note that you found a potion of healing in 30.

Potion of Healing: When you use this potion, you regain 10 HP, but you cannot gain more hit points than your initial HP value. If you use this during the combat, you must use it during the hero phase and cannot attack that phase. Once you have used the potion, it is destroyed.

Read 6.

31 Jerico is skilled and strong, but you are quicker. If not for his bodyguards, you think you would have the advantage.

You must fight Jerico and two Red Dog bodyguards. They have the following stats:

JERICO

HP: 6 **AC:** 10

Attack: +0 to hit; 2 damage

Special: For each Red Dog bodyguard that remains, Jerico gains a +1 bonus to AC.

RED DOG BODYGUARD

HP: 3 **AC:** 8

Attack: +0 to hit; 1 damage

If you reduce Jerico to 0 hp while the bodyguards still live, read 19.

If you reduce all opponents to 0 HP, read 27.

If you are reduced to 0 HP, read 36.

32 **The corpse is a human male**, covered with puncture wounds that could be bite marks. As you rifle through his pockets you find a few coins and a vial that contains a powerful acid.

Make a note that you gained a flask of acid in 32.

Flask of Acid: You may throw the flask of acid instead of making your normal attack during the hero phase. You attack up to three targets with a +0 to attack (roll separately for each target). You deal 1 acid damage to each target you hit. Once you use the flask, it is destroyed.

If you continue on your path, read 18.

If you take the longer route through the sewers, read 20.

33 **Combat!** Every round of combat consists of two phases: the hero phase first and the villain phase second. During the hero phase, you attack any one enemy (unless a special power or item allows you to attack more). During the villain phase, each enemy attacks you.

Do not worry about movement or positioning; you can reach every opponent.

To continue the adventure, read 8.

34 **Your Stats.** Stat blocks describe what your character or an enemy can do in combat. All stat blocks have the following information:

Name: The first line gives the creature's name. Names are primarily

used for description. Some creatures might have a *special* entry that refers to other creatures by name.

HP (hit points): This represents how much punishment a character can take before going down. Every time somebody suffers damage, subtract that amount from the creature's HP. The creature dies when it reaches 0 HP.

AC (armor class): This represents a creature's defenses. When somebody attacks, their total attack roll (the d20 roll plus the attacker's attack bonus) must equal or exceed the AC to hit.

Attack: The attack line consists of the attack bonus and the damage. The attack bonus comes first. You add this bonus to d20 rolls whenever the creature attacks. The second part of the line is the damage. This is how many HP the target loses when the attacker hits.

Special: These are other rules that apply to the creature. Not all creatures have a special line.

To see your stats, read 35

To continue the adventure, return to 8.

35 **The Hero.** Your stats are:
SILUS, HALFLING THIEF

HP: 12 **AC:** 13

Attack: +1 to hit; 2 damage

Special: Backstab – You do +2 damage on your first attack in each combat.

Write these stats down so that you do not have to flip back and forth during the adventure.

For an explanation of stat blocks, read 34.

To continue the adventure, return to 8.

36 **You fought bravely**, but your wounds are too much. The world around you fades to black. They say there's only one way to leave the Red Dogs, and now you've learned they're right.

Your adventure is over. Return to 1 to try again. Ω

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ECOLOGY OF THE MINOTAUR

Children of the Moon

By Tracy Hurley

Art by Mark Smylie and Frank Walls

MIDGARD

CAMPAIGN SETTING

Two minotaurs sat beneath the golden oak. The older one, his horns engraved with the marks of a hundred mazes, smoothed his younger companion's red robes and tucked his hands back under his own simple white ones. "Close your eyes," he said. "Imagine a maze of narrow, twisting passages. Imagine one so intricate that even you might not find your way through."

"Yes, brother," replied the younger one after a moment. "I see it." His smooth horns glowed in the morning sun.

"Good. Now think of how you felt on the practice field yesterday, your fear, your rage, your bloodlust. Take all of that and place it in the maze. Imagine it wandering the passages, strong but not free."

"But—"

"See it. Feel it. And breathe."

A moment later, the younger one spoke, awe tingeing his voice. "My anger leaves me. Is that...is that supposed to happen?"

"Yes. Do this every morning when you wake and after every time you feel yourself overcome with rage. Build this maze in your mind, memorize its passages, and then place your anger inside. In this way, you will be free of that savagery. You can control it, but it cannot control you."

Civilization is order barely containing a world of chaos, and few races keep their bestial potential as close to the surface as the minotaurs. Stern control and constant effort are often all that separate them

from the feral, corrupt members of their race. Few others can imagine the careful balance between ridged discipline and wild abandon that is the paradox of the southern bull-men..

HISTORY

Minotaur history, like the creatures themselves, is complex and full of twists and turns. Contradictory origin stories abound. Some, focusing on the savagery, claim minotaurs are mortal children of Baphomet, and scores of groups do worship that horned demon. Others claim they are the gods' punishment for centuries of greed, lust, and incest in a long forgotten kingdom.

No firm records exist of the minotaurs before they had built their storied cities of Kadrallhu and Roshgazi. When those

cities fell, the majority sought refuge on the Isle of Kyprion and made it their new homeland. Here they built the Great Labyrinth in which stands the Palace of the Bull from whose halls rules Kitane, Queen of the Labyrinth.

MINOTAUR LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (nature) can learn more about minotaurs. When a character makes a successful skill check, reveal the following lore, including the information from the lower DCs.

TABLE 1: MINOTAUR LORE

DC	Result
10	Due to their size and large horns, minotaurs enjoy charging their enemies and seeing the fear in their target's eyes as they approach.
15	The minotaurs' traditional weapon is the great axe. Those weapons are second only to their own horns as their favorite way to kill an enemy.
20	Minotaur societies tend towards the brutal and violent. They commonly worship Mavros (the god of war), practice ritual combat, and perform human sacrifices as part of their festivals.
25	Minotaurs see the entire world as something that must be organized in their way. They plan their communities in mazes and often prefer to live in areas with natural twisted passages, such as caves and marshes. They eschew anything that disrupts their sense of order, such as drugs, and are difficult to corrupt.
30	Minotaurs share a mutual hatred with the dragonkin. When the two must work together, it's best to keep an eye open for trouble.

ANATOMY AND APPEARANCE

The bull-folk have many of the same characteristics as their namesake. Both sexes have horned heads covered with shaggy hair. Warriors often braid this hair with teeth or other tokens of fallen enemies. The thick hair covering their large bodies varies widely in

color, everything from bright white to medium red-browns to dark brown and black. Many shave or dye their fur in patterns signifying their allegiances and beliefs. Other methods of decoration include brands, ritual scars, and gilding or carving their horns.

Adult males often reach a height of 6 ½ - 7 feet with females averaging just 3 inches shorter. Both genders have a great deal of muscle mass even for their size, and physical prowess plays a large part in their social structure. inotaurs can live as long as humans but reach adulthood about 3 years earlier. Childhood ends around the age of 10 and adulthood is celebrated at 15. However, most minotaurs don't form their own families until at least 25. They spend those 10 years proving themselves to their elders.

inotaurs are omnivores and consume large quantities of both meat and vegetation. Great banquets mark important social and religious occasions and a successful feast is often a point of regional pride; competition between regional cuisines is fierce, sometimes violent, and eagerly anticipated. The minotaurs are particularly mindful of meals before great ceremonies or displays of skill, and the hosts of such events can earn nearly as much honor as the champions by providing memorable meals. To fail as a host brings deep shame.

HORNS

The most beloved trait of the minotaur is his horns. Grown by both sexes, horns display an individual's status and strength, and provide a ready weapon in battle. Those who lose part or all of a horn suffer some stigma and must constantly prove themselves; the term "brokehorn" is a fighting insult. Some temples will magically regrow a damaged horn for the minotaur who completes a quest or series of trials, though a few famous warriors have gone through life 'broken' as a mark of pride and resilience. Some individuals choose to keep a reminder of their failing, though, and these are the most driven among them.

Many minotaurs chronicle their victories with carving or etchings on their horns. Warriors often display representations of defeated foes, and craftsmen mark them with accolades their work has won. For instance, the killer of a cyclops might have a square rune with an eye in the middle, and the maker of the killer's weapon might have an axe rune with a crown above it. Others earn markings from the great mazes they have solved.

All who honor their heritage take great care of their horns, often polishing and shining them. Some even gild their horns with precious metals to draw attention to their achievements.

EQUIPMENT

Most minotaur equipment is similar to that of other races. Their axes and special armor are two notable exceptions.

Axes: Outside of their horns, axes are the traditional weapons of minotaurs, though the use of axes has fallen out of common practice in many places. Still, a great axe is as much a symbol of authority as a weapon, and every group keeps at least one for ceremonial occasions. Those who learn to use them in battle are widely admired; the corsairs of Triolo are notable for maintaining the tradition of boarding axes, used to pull galleys together in a naval fight.

For all their accomplishments, minotaurs are not known as metal workers, and wealthier communities keep at least one dwarven craftsman around to make and repair their blades. Some dwarf families have made a good living for generations by traveling a circuit between smaller minotaur communities to sharpen and repair their axes and other equipment. Many families present adolescents with a battle axe after their first ritual combat, sometimes importing the weapon from as far away as the Ironcrags.

Armor: Minotaurs wear leather or hide armor, relying on their native speed and resilience to avoid harm. Those who become soldiers invest in something a bit sturdier, however. Some find ways to enchant their First Armor. Others, especially sergeants

and officers of the Valeran minotaur legion, buy scale or elven chain. Triolan corsairs keep lighter armor that makes swimming easier.

SOCIETY AND THE AKYOS

Minotaur society is family based. Extended families, headed by the most experienced or talented male, often bind other families to them by oaths, marriage, and blood. In the ancient days of Kadralthu and Roshgazi, and in the dim past before, males represented this *akyos* (literally, 'greater family', derived from the oldest word for 'herd') to other groups, but females dominated the day-to-day family life. In the old system, these *akyos* were entirely autonomous units, meting out internal justice, presiding over weddings and other ceremonies, and representing its members. Even if they lived in the same town as other *akyos*, each of them was a separate community within the town.

This system had largely faded from the ancient cities themselves, but after their collapse and the subsequent diaspora many reverted to their oldest traditions. Minotaur society has become somewhat hidebound and reactionary. The idea that individuals could advance through great feats other than strength, that people could go their own way from their families, or that male and female stand as equals fell away in the disillusionment and struggle for survival. The founders of the first settlements on Kyprion, however, believed cultural regression was a road toward their race's darker impulses, and they chose to correct their path. Those who disliked these changes quickly joined their more traditional cousins in the Barony of Capleon, with most settling in Kaptaria.

In Kyprion, any male or female who demonstrates the skill to guide the group well and maintain a leader's position against regular challengers may guide the *akyos*; their title is *Akyosian*, such as the *Akyosian* of Roshmal. Though the martial disciplines still hold the highest esteem, honor, status, and accolades are

given more and more to those who excel in their chosen field, not simply warriors. In the greater openness, minotaur women have risen to many prominent positions, though giving birth to a champion still merits great honor (there is even a horn rune for it).

The old ways prevail in Kaptaria. Only men lead an *akyos*, and many males take multiple wives, though women continue to dominate the family. These communities take pride in the purity of their practices and population; no dragonkin or kobolds. Only the rarest women may participate in ritual combat, and never for any permanent political position.

For all the progress of the majority of minotaur society, the highest stations remain those earned through combat or other physical contests. Ritual combat is still accepted in many places as a legitimate alternative to courts for settling disputes or acquiring positions of authority, even something so minor as head archivist. All minotaurs learn the fighting arts from a young age, and most practice throughout their lives if only to maintain their positions.

By far the most favored individuals are warriors and maze masters. The warriors are dedicated to promoting and protecting the species, a straightforward and optimistic group. The more dour maze masters are mystics and teachers who lead their communities during religious and secular celebrations. Ambitious minotaurs who excel at neither combat nor mazes leave to find their fortunes abroad. While they might not be strong enough to challenge other minotaurs, they are more than a handful for the average human or dwarf, and many hire themselves out as fighters, gladiators, sailors, and bodyguards. Others seek esoteric or arcane knowledge, or take up less reputable professions they could not pursue at home.

The success and subsequent return of many of these wandering minotaurs has led to the most serious social disturbances since the fall of the southern ancestral cities. These obviously accomplished individuals have power, prestige, and no official

status in minotaur society, because they have not followed the traditional paths. Many have taken to forming their own families of chosen companions rather than blood relations and ultimately create an extended *akyos* (colloquially called *nev-akyos*). Minotaurs dislike things that disrupt their order, but none can argue with the returnees' accomplishments. Conflict between new ways and old ones drives the minotaurs to greater glory.

COMMON PROFESSIONS

Many minotaurs would rather find ways to harness their internal power than rely on magic weapons. They defer to expertise, and it is common for young minotaurs to seek training from the best members of their chosen professions.

SAILORS

The most famous minotaur sailors are the Triolan corsairs, seafaring raiders who hunt on the White Sea. Minotaurs at sea fight with the same tireless fervor their cousins display on land, often fueled by grudges such as the one against the Mharoti dragonkin and their fire mages. They are calm and steady influences among the rowdy human crew, with the patience to pass with long days surrounded by nothing but water and the endless horizon.

When it comes time for boarding actions, minotaurs often lead the way, hand axe or cutlass at the ready. Many sailors believe having a minotaur aboard brings good luck and some refuse to risk their lives without at least one among their numbers.

KEEP THE WATCH

LEVEL 3

MINOTAUR SAILOR BOON

The rocking waves lull others to sleep, but not you. You have trained your mind to be ever vigilant.

Property: You gain a +1 to initiative checks.

Power (Daily): No Action. *Trigger:* You roll initiative and beat the highest enemy's initiative check by 5 or more. *Effect:* You may either surprise the enemy, gaining a surprise round, or give an ally a +4 to their initiative check.

MONKS

Where some seek glory on the field of battle, others find it in the gift of enlightenment. Minotaur monks carry the principles of their people's disciplined control to its logical conclusion, their orders' mazes serving as metaphors for their minds and souls.

For instance, the minotaur monks of the Oaken Ring keep to their garden labyrinths and teach their brothers to work with their natural temperament instead of fighting it. Petitioners must navigate a large labyrinth of dense, conjured thickets, clearing their minds of all but the essential question of themselves. Each day they reach the ever-shifting maze's central fountain without conscious thought, the walls become thinner. When the petitioner knows how to walk the Path without any walls at all, he is ready to join the order.

SHIELD OF ENLIGHTENMENT LEVEL 5 MINOTAUR MAZE SEEKER BOON

Your years of studying the Path protect you against the common tricks of demons.

Property: You gain +2 item bonus to saving throws against fear or charm effects.

Power (Encounter): No Action.

Trigger: You are subject to a demon's aura. *Effect:* You gain resistance to effects of the aura until the end of your next turn.

Power (Daily): No Action. *Trigger:* You are subject to a fear or charm effect.

Effect: You make a saving throw against the triggering effect. On a save, the effect ends.

GLADIATORS

Minotaurs love gladiatorial events, and their physique and ferocity make them popular in many venues. An active slave trade and many a minotaur's desire for glory keeps other nations well stocked with minotaur combatants; the slavers of the Ruby Despotate are said to pay a gladiator's weight in gold for a fine catch. More commonly, some establishments or stables in the Seven Cities will loan out or trade their champions for exhibition matches or tours.

New recruits often serve as executioners. While crowds roar to see criminals charged and gored, the minotaurs find the work insulting. They do not consider these opponents worth the horns that kill them. Those who find favor with the crowds, however, earn the opportunity to compete in more worthwhile contests against ogres, trolls, giants, and dragonkin. Such individuals or teams can become legends.

Minotaur gladiators dream of—and many crowds clamber for—the rare spectacle an arena removes its floor coverings to reveal the maze-like hypogeum below, a pure maze normally hidden from the public. In their finest displays, minotaurs battle fearsome opponents in its twisting passages.

THE CROWD'S BLESSING LEVEL 3 MINOTAUR GLADIATOR BOON

Even away from the arena, you hear the crowd's cheers whenever you charge your foe. They provide you with strength and focus.

Property: You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls when charging.

Power (Daily): No action. *Trigger:*

You hit with an attack at the end of a charge. *Effect:* You gain 1d6 extra damage, 2d6 with combat advantage.

WARRIORS

Minotaurs love battle. Their imposing size and skill often instills fear in the hearts of their enemies and makes them excellent infantry. On the battlefield, a line of minotaurs creates a formidable wall against all but the strongest of opponents. Many officers and nobles use minotaurs as guards for their fearlessness, power, and intimidation value.



BODYGUARD'S CHARGE **LEVEL 3**
MINOTAUR BODYGUARD BOON

"Fear not, my lord. I will protect you even in the thick of battle."

Property: After a short or extended rest, you designate one creature within 5 squares of you as the subject of your protection. You gain a +1 bonus to Fortitude, Reflex, and Will while within 5 squares of the subject of your protection.

Power (Encounter): When you charge and attack a creature nearest to the subject of your protection, you gain a +4 to your attack and damage rolls, and you grant combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

LIBRARIANS

Libraries such as the Great Library of Friula and the Houses of Thoth seek out minotaurs to serve as librarians. Librarians of other races occasionally get lost in the winding stacks and chambers of the largest archives, leading them to specialize in one area. While this works well for the library, patrons often have to ask four or five different librarians to find the book they sought.

Minotaurs, on the other hand, learn the layout of multiple sections within a few days and entire libraries in a few months to a year. Their ability to memorize a collection of tens of thousands of scrolls, tablets, folios, and other holdings is remarkable. They can also work long hours without complaint and serve as sturdy protectors of the tomes.

SCHOLARLY WISDOM **LEVEL 1**
MINOTAUR LIBRARIAN BOON

"Oh, I came across just the right book on the third floor of Friula's Great Library. If I recall correctly, it says on page 78..."

Property: When making a history check, use your Wisdom modifier instead of your Intelligence modifier.

CULTS AND RELIGION

The major gods of the Kyprion minotaurs are Mavros, Ceres, Charun, Hecate, and Rava, though numerous smaller sub-sects and cults exist. While most minotaurs worship all of these at different times for different reasons, and many devote themselves to each

deity as priests, most venerate Mavros or Hecate above the others. The split is often along gender lines, with male minotaurs inclined toward Mavros and minotaur women inclined to Hecate, though the separation is not strict.

Those who fall to their darker impulses may worship a number of the evil gods, but the vast majority call Baphomet their lord.

MAVROS AND HECATE

Most male minotaurs follow Mavros, the god of war and chaos. They engage in ritual combat and human sacrifices to please their god. Whenever possible after a battle, they build great bonfires and offer up some weapons, booty, and captives. When they seek to trap their rage in the mazes of their minds, they turn to him for strength, and they scream his name when they release their rage.

Female minotaurs are often devoted to Mavros and Hecate as a bonded pair, seeing Hecate as the woman who holds the reins and prevents Mavros's excesses from growing too great. Hecate is seen as the giver of law, magic, and protection against dragons and raiders. The lore and powers of Hecate's role as goddess of the moon and its mysteries are closely held mysteries. Only initiates know these divine secrets in full.

BAPHOMET

Not all minotaurs believe they should tame the beast within, and the worship of the horned demon Baphomet suits this belief quite well. They see mazes, their cousins' tool of discipline, as a way of bringing their lord's domain to life. They build or shape labyrinths in subterranean or remote locations, dark mockeries of their fellows' sacred metaphors, and release their intend sacrifices into the twisting passages. Then they hunt them, slowly, laughing as their screams echo along the walls.

Open worshippers of Baphomet often dye their hair, skin, and horns a deep black and raid small communities or take lonely travellers by night. They take what they want when they want it, and any they cannot kill by brute force they slay by cunning. They mortify their flesh with

intricate, bloody mazes and drink a tea made from blood oak bark that turns their eyes a bright red. No desire goes unfilled.

Those living among unbelievers hide their affiliation and meet in secret, in those cities where there is no minotaur's quarter. They don black leather cloaks made from the skins of their victims as they perform the rites of their order on bloodstained altars. They commit both simple and intricate crimes, foment rebellion, and destroy all that is good and right in the world.

COMMON RITUALS

Minotaur culture varies from town to town and akyos to akyos, but three elements are common to all gatherings of the race: mazes and the rituals of first blood and first armor.

MAZES

For minotaurs, the maze symbolizes the constant struggle between their two natures and provides the tool to tame their wild emotions. Their priests have constructed public and secret mazes in many monasteries and isolated temples and walk them as spiritual and mental foci. Some dedicate their lives to visiting and learning as many of these sacred labyrinths as possible.

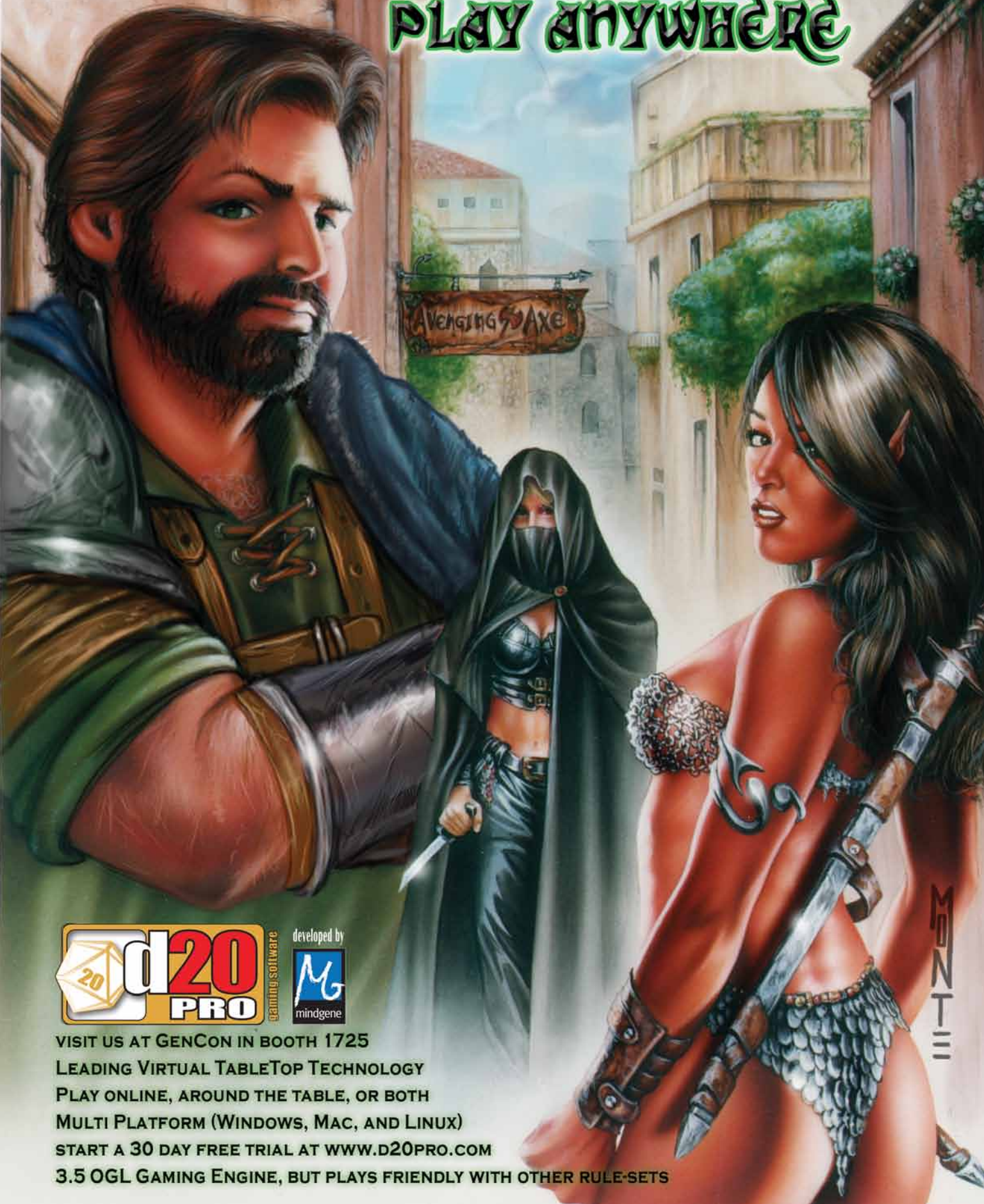
All minotaurs learn as children to construct mental mazes to contain their more savage aspects. With constant practice and meditation, they learn to access these violent emotions and let the beast free without ever letting go of the leash. In the heat of battle, they travel through the labyrinth in their mind and unleash those raw and violent emotions in great displays of martial ability.

FIRST BLOOD

Only physically crippled young minotaur do not mark the change from childhood to adolescence with their first ritual combat. Called First Blood, this celebrates both their race's inescapable inclination for war and their attempts to control that predilection.

The priests prepare a maze with tiles of Mavros red and Hecate gold. Each contender gets his own entrance and may only touch the red tiles. The last

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MENTAL III

one standing who has not touched a gold tile wins and earns their first horn marking. Many communities include a young adult in the maze to knock down the last competitor and keep anyone's ego from getting too big. Afterward, all contestants are declared adolescents. Their families often present the young adults with their first great axe.

FIRST ARMOR

In contrast to First Blood, the passage from adolescence to adulthood is a more personal, private affair. The minotaur's family holds a small ceremony and dinner after which the young adult is given a new set of clothes appropriate to his or her starting ambition (traveling clothes, vestments, scholar's robes, etc.) and a new set of leather armor, their First Armor. The minotaur then leaves his home to make his own way in the world, a process marked by assembling components for a new set of armor. Often, young warriors will hunt and slay a bear or a dire wolf or the occasional hippogryph or drake for their tough hides. Very rarely does a young minotaur succeed in felling a truly

magical beast, such as a mantichore.

While this tradition originates from the minotaurs' more savage past and applies primarily to fighters, all of these creatures consider themselves ready to take up weapons at need, and even priests and merchants spend time and effort assembling their armor. The wealthy hire the finest smiths, the scholarly introduce new styles, and the magically inclined lay powerful enchantments. Some replace their First Armor, and some improve it over and over, but the care lavished on this equipment is a way to mark a minotaur's progression through life.

TACTICS AND COMBAT

Minotaurs are trained to release their inner beast in combat, and many a young leader has learned the hard way that once let loose, that beast can be difficult to pull back. If you wish to capture specific individuals for ransom, or avoid soldiers of a leader expected to betray his cause, do not send in the minotaurs. That said, they often take on tasks others would find too gruesome.

Minotaurs see battlefields as ever-shifting mazes that they can use to advantage. They seek out broken terrain such as twisted mountain paths, gnarled forests, or cave systems and use this chaos against their enemies. A minotaur group with time to prepare will turn any battlefield into a confusing mess of narrow passages, often with plenty of places for them to charge from concealment. Their cities are among the most defensible street-to-street of any in the world.

Nearly every civilized race struggles to reconcile themselves to the beast within, and perhaps this is more than their bestial forms or the stories of cruel monsters in their cursed mazes drives others to misunderstand and mistrust the minotaurs. They find to bull-men too strong a subconscious reminder of their own hidden natures. The minotaurs care little. Guided by conscious, steered by discipline and will, they prove themselves more than beasts every day, and that is enough, for it is more than many others can say. Ω

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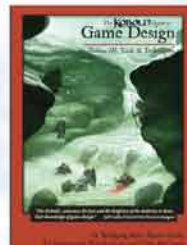


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THE EXORCISTS

An Adventure for Four 1st-level PCs

By Tim & Eileen Connors

Art by Michael Jaecks and Rick Hershey

A demon-possessed gold dragon besieges a monastery and slaughters all but a handful of defending priests. Trapped in the catacombs, near death, and exhausted of spells, the holy brothers take a clever chance. They slide open the sarcophagi of warrior saints and unfurl the *scrolls of resurrection* originally intended to restore their masters—who have been devoured. By flickering torchlight, the clerics' intone their spells, and new flesh stitches to old bone.

Unfortunately, the bones are false relics. Instead of resurrecting four legendary heroes, the brothers resurrect four guys from accounting. These are the PCs.

Play "The Exorcists" as a one-night stand or as an unforgettable campaign

starter. Use it to recover your campaign from a TPK. Introduce some Rip Van Winkle PCs into your current campaign, or launch your players a century into your campaign world's future, where the political landscape has changed and new creatures rule old haunts.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Shortly after the holy brothers realize the PCs are not who they should be, the foaming muzzle of the possessed dragon snakes into the chamber, snapping clerics in its jaws and chasing the PCs deeper into the catacombs.

Safe behind a steel door, the PCs discover this is no ordinary monastery. Here, in the Crucible of Dark Souls, experts research how to destroy evil artifacts. Some artifacts are on site. The

shadow demon possessing the dragon seeks the *possessor's necklace*, an artifact that will allow it to keep the dragon's body forever.

Will the PCs use evil magic items to kill a gold dragon and save themselves? Or will they exorcise the dragon if it means that one of them must host the demon instead?

THE HEROES

The PCs all died a century or so ago while still 1st level. The details of their life and death, whether they knew each other, and how their bones came to lie in saints' sarcophagi are left to the GM. The appendix presents sample backgrounds for a haunted abbot, gypsy blackmailer, ruined paladin, and relic thief.

If a player wants to play a paladin, consider asking him to start play as another class and explain that this adventure offers an opportunity to become a paladin during play.

A WORD OF WARNING

Consider warning your players that they cannot stand toe-to-toe with the dark horrors they are about to confront. Only rapier wit can even the odds.

INTRODUCTION

Your eyes flicker open...which seems impossible, because you remember dying. Your senses return slowly. Your fingers crawl up the cold stone sides of the sarcophagus you lie in. A fuzzy world focuses into a bald man in a monk's habit, leaning in close, inspecting your face with an outstretched torch. His troubled voice joins the muffled curses of others nearby. The first phrase you understand is, "We're all going to die."

This cubiculum (burial chamber) is 20 ft. square with 10 ft.-wide arched doorways on the north and south walls. The PCs' sarcophagi sit in the corners, in arched recesses decorated with painted scenes of heroic triumphs. Occasionally, the chamber shakes and dust falls from the ceiling as the dragon rampages in the nave above. Its roars echo down through the catacombs.

THE HEROES

The PCs wear tattered funerary clothes and have no equipment except for the following:

Hero #1 (preferably a non-paladin PC) grips the *holy avenger* that belonged to Warrior-Saint Janek of Bratislor.

Hero #2 wears a silk *vest of escape* and the *cursed ring of friend shield* that once plagued the Robber Lord Valik (a Robin Hood figure). The wearers of the cursed mated rings continuously *friend shield* each other. Only amputation, *remove curse*, or similar magic can

remove it. Exactly who is wearing this ring's mate, whether that wearer dies during this adventure, and any long-term consequences for this PC are left to the GM's imagination. The other wearer causes no harm to the PC in this adventure.

Hero #3 lies beside *soulsplitter*, a +2 *holy, ghost touch heavy mace* that belonged to Waldemar, Master Ranger and Ghost Hunter of the Mistwallows.

Hero #4 wears the same *armor of arrow attraction* that killed Danika, Patron Saint of Braidwood. He also wears a *holy symbol of delayed nightmares*, which when held out firmly, functions as a *wand of remove fear*, but each use results in one nightmare-plagued night of lost sleep for the affected target.

The Holy Brothers: The four clerics are visibly wounded. A leather belt cinches the bloody stump of one man's severed forearm. Each has 3 hit points and no spells.

Base the opening dialog on the clerics' individual attitudes after realizing they resurrected the wrong people:

Cleric #1, Sonyek: Angry—"Damn it! Malchievik said these were the right sarcophagi! By the gods, that one (pointing at a PC) was supposed to be Lord Valik, Defender of Twinforks. And that one was supposed to be Waldemar, Ghost Hunter of the Mistwallows. And you! How dare you touch Saint Janek's *holy avenger!*" Paces and curses.

Cleric #2, Cordemar: Doomed—"Just sit down. We're all going to die." Contemplates his severed forearm.

Cleric #3, Janik: Terrified—"It's coming! I...we...have to get out of here." Frequently checks northern hallway for danger.

Cleric #4, Tromas: Indefatigable—"There's still hope. Listen. I need to tell you what's happening and what you have to do. After all, you owe us your lives, no matter how brief they may be."

In the course of conversation, the PCs should learn that a shadow demon has possessed a paragon of good—a powerful gold dragon named

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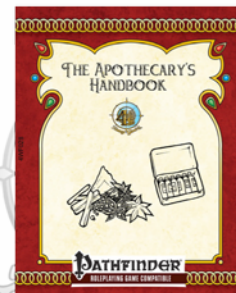


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Rasia. Rasia has slaughtered everyone else at the monastery. The clerics, without spells and near death, are all that stands between the dragon and a great evil artifact.

The Crucible of Dark Souls monastery researches how to destroy evil artifacts. Presently, the *possessor's necklace* and lesser cursed magic items lie in its vault. The necklace acts like a possession magnet, allowing a possessing force to permanently seize a host who wears it. The clerics also describe the powers of the PCs' magic items.

The Dragon: Before the PCs learn more, the wagon-sized head of a snarling gold dragon snakes through the northern doorway. Roll initiative.

Round 1: The dragon's frothing muzzle opens, and its sword-length teeth impale Janik, worry him, and throw his lifeless body against the wall. Sonyek tries to take the *holy avenger*.

Round 2: The dragon cannot fit its shoulders into the room, so it snaps the air with a 10 ft. reach. Its fiercely flashing eyes project a wave of *fear* (Will save DC 18) that washes over the room. The clerics make their Will saves. PCs who fail their saving throws drop everything, flee through the southern doorway, and wind up cowering at a large iron door that dead-ends the catacomb hall. The clerics proclaim they will delay the dragon while the PCs hide the *possessor's necklace*, and urge the party to go

Round 3: The dragon "breathes" a swarm of shadow spiders (*shadow conjuration* of *summon swarm*) into the room. Damage is 2d6 for all creatures still in the room (DC 16 Will negates).

Thereafter: The dragon breaks through the doorway and kills all the clerics in 10 rounds, just when the *fear* effect wears off affected PCs. Then the dragon thunders toward the iron door.

RASIA

CR 15

XP 51,200

CE Huge Wounded, Shadow Demon Possessed, Adult Gold Dragon

Init +4; Senses Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 8, flat-footed 30 (+22 natural, -2 size)

hp 125 of 225 (18d12+108)

Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +7

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 250 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

Melee bite +15 (2d8+15), 2 claws +15 (2d6+10), 2 wings +10 (1d8+5), tail +10 (2d6+15)

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

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)

At will—*deeper darkness*, *fear* (DC 18), *greater teleport* (self only) (*dimensional lock* inside entire monastery), *telekinesis* (DC 19)

3/day—*shadow conjuration* (DC 18) (1 used, see above), *shadow evocation* (DC 19)

1/day—*magic jar* (DC 19) (used), *summon* (level 3, 1 shadow demon 50%) (used)

STATISTICS

Str 31, Dex 10, Con 23, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 19

Base Atk +7; CMB +19; CMD 29 (33 vs. trip)

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +14, Fly +18, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (planes) +12, Perception +20, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +10

Languages Abyssal, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

THE IRON DOOR

A PC with 30 ft. speed runs the entire length of the 10 ft. wide, 120 ft.

long, torch-lit hallway in one round.

The hallway widens to 25 ft. before dead-ending at a 20 ft. high and wide, double door constructed of 10" thick iron. Moments before the lead PC arrives, he glimpses a man (the craven librarian Malchievik) closing the door.

The Gatekeeper: The coward Malchievik (expert 2, non-combatant) instructed the clerics which sarcophagi to open but dared not accompany them beyond the safety of the great door. The dragon's roars have scared him into closing the door, and the PCs must convince him to reopen it. Consider turning over a one-minute egg timer in front of the players and playing this scene in real time.

The Dragon Cometh: After 30 seconds, the PCs hear the dragon crash through the first pair of hallway pillars on its way toward them. Every five

seconds, a nearer set of pillars shatters, until finally the dragon appears in a billowing cloud of dust.

Open Up: Malchievik stutters, and fear makes it worse. He expects the PCs to be resurrected warrior saints and refuses to open the door if they cannot prove it with a convincing fact (e.g. a detail from 100 years ago, or the warrior saint's full name and birthplace—DC 15 Knowledge (local history) check to know or Intelligence check to remember from Sonyek's list) accompanied by a successful Bluff check (vs. Sense Motive +2). It takes 5 seconds for Malchievik to open the door enough for a medium PC to squeeze through, and another 5 seconds to close it.

A SHORT REPRIEVE

If Malchievik hasn't opened the door after 45 seconds, he grabs the *wand of protection from evil* (3 charges) used to protect handlers of the *possessor's necklace* and slips it under the door. He tells the PCs the wand's power and command word ("clarity"), and tells them to touch the dragon with it. It's a long-shot mercy. The PC must touch the dragon (touch AC 8) and the dragon must make her Will save +16 against the demon's *magic jar* (DC 19). If both succeed, the demon fails its Will save, *protection from evil* suppresses the possession for one minute, and the dragon Rasia awakes.

The Dragon Remembers: Rasia remembers fighting the shadow demon and knows she was possessed but that's all she remembers. She tells the PCs the *possessor's necklace* means the shadow demon can control her body forever. She prays the PCs will not to let her near it and adds that the iron door will not delay her long. After casting *aid* on the PC who spelled her, Rasia rushes off to be as far away as possible when the *protection from evil* ends and the demon regains control. This buys the PCs a few minutes—not enough time to escape the monastery before the dragon returns. Librarian Malchievik hears everything and opens the door.

Wounded, Possession-Suppressed Or Exorcised,
As adult gold dragon, but HP 125 of 225.

An hour ago, multiple *touch of idiocy* spells reduced Rasia's Int, Wis, and Cha to 12, which reduced her Will save, allowed the demon to possess her more easily, and now prevents her from casting any 3rd level spells.

THE CRUCIBLE OF DARK SOULS

The octagonal room behind the iron door is roughly 50' across. Half library and half laboratory, the well-lit chamber features desks with open tomes, inkwells, and jars filled with powdered metals and restless suspensions. In the center of the room, within a 10-foot-wide pentagram, lies a steaming, iron vat large enough to dunk a person. Across the room, a wooden door stands closed.

The holy brothers conduct research into the destruction of evil artifacts here. The door leads into the deeper, unlit, multilevel catacombs, which ultimately dead-end.

The Librarian: Malchievik wears a helm decorated with owl feathers (*helm of comprehend languages and read magic*) and a long leather jacket whose numerous pockets bristle with scrolls. Whenever the craven librarian runs, one of his 20 scrolls spills out (50% useless, 25% *cure light wounds*, 25% random 1st level spell).

He also has a leather-bound book containing a full catacombs map, indicating who was interred where and when and referencing other numbered scrolls detailing the grand achievements of the deceased. In particular, Malchievik has the numbered scrolls for the saints that the PCs were supposed to have been. Of interest:

Waldemar the Ghost Hunter's scroll includes the holy scripture (written in Celestial) that Waldemar spoke while conducting a contest-of-wills exorcism on restrained or unconscious hosts. If a PC recites it the demon lashes out mentally against the exorcist once per

round of reading as a free action, even if the host is unconscious.

Each lash requires the exorcist and the possessor to make opposed Will saves (Shadow Demon +7). When the exorcist wins (or ties), he deflects the possessor's mental lash back at the possessor, causing invisible claws to rake across the host's skin and deal 1 hp damage to both the possessor and its host. When the possessor wins, the exorcist takes 1 hp visible slashing damage. The exorcist expels the possessor when the exorcist wins (or ties) three times or the host dies.

Warrior-Saint Janek's scroll includes the vows Janek spoke the day he forsook his wizard class and became a paladin. Any PC willing to sacrifice his current class, change his alignment to lawful good (permanently), and dedicate his life to eradicating evil and protecting the innocent may swear the same vows. That character become a 1st level paladin with immediate access to its class features...and the full powers of the *holy avenger*.

The Possessor's Necklace: An (ineffective) experiment involving submerging the *possessor's necklace* in 100 gallons of holy water for seven nights is underway. Presently, the evil necklace causes the vat to boil. To extract the necklace, the heroes can topple the vat or use nearby tongs. See sidebar.

Tomes: An open tome details the full attributes of the *possessor's necklace*. Make sure the players understand that the demon will wisp out and attack once the host is killed or exorcised.

Other open tomes fully describe three other cursed items on site: a *necklace of strangulation*, a *periapt of foul rotting*, and a *scarab of death*. These three lie in ivory boxes, stored in separate, locked, lead-lined wall safes (hardness 5; 15 hp; DC 20 Break DC; DC 25 Disable Device to unlock). For fear of unleashing more evil, Malchievik refuses (unless intimidated with a DC 15 Intimidate check) to tell the PCs where the hidden key ring to the safes is, but the PCs can find it under a desk with a DC 18 Search check. Tricking the possessed dragon into

POSSESSOR'S NECKLACE (MINOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong necromancy; **CL** 13th
Slot neck; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

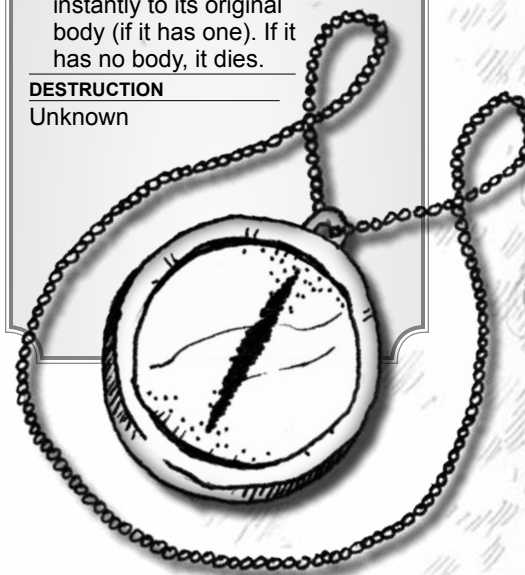
Ghosts and fiends prize this exquisite necklace, for a voluntary wearer automatically fails his Will save against possession. Moreover, when in range of a *magic jar*, a ghost's malevolence, or similar spell or effect, the necklace draws the nearest possessing force into the wearer. The necklace tethers the possessor to the host, extending the possession's duration indefinitely.

The possessor may remove the necklace, but cannot leave the host for another 6 hours. Clever fiends have worked their way up from paupers to kings by gifting the necklace up the social ladder and possessing ever more powerful hosts. Any spell or effect that would exorcise the possessor (including the death of its host) first sends the possessor's soul out as black smoke for 3d4+3 rounds.

During this time, treat the possessor as its normal self but with the incorporeal, grappled, and shaken conditions; incapable of extra dimensional travel (as if by *dimensional anchor*); and incapable of possessing another creature. If the possessor is still alive when this time elapses, it bypasses its original magic jar receptacle (if applicable) and returns instantly to its original body (if it has one). If it has no body, it dies.

DESTRUCTION

Unknown



accepting the *necklace of strangulation* or *scarab of death* requires a Bluff check (vs. Sense Motive +12).

Finally, scrolls describe various possessing forces. Malchievik brings the one about shadow demons to the PCs' attention. Allow the players to read the creature's stats. Be sure the PCs learn three key facts: shadow demons are incorporeal (and how that affects combat), they are damaged by magic weapons and holy water, and they cannot attack when in direct sunlight.

THE DRAGON RETURNS

It takes 10 rounds for the dragon to bash through the buckling iron door.

RUNNING LIKE HELL

The PCs may grab the necklace and attempt to hide in the lower catacombs. These catacomb halls are on three levels with identical floor plans (100' per side quadrangles) with a few feet of porous stone between them. Corner staircases connect the levels. The dragon must squeeze through the 8 ft.-wide halls, reducing its speed to 30 ft. The uneven terrain prevents the PCs and the dragon from running.

When pursuing the PCs, the dragon loses 5 ft. of distance for each corner rounded. The dragon can sense (Perception +20) the PCs' approximate position when in a hall below or above (treat PCs as hiding), and can break through with a Strength check (1d20+18) vs. DC 35 to push her foot, head, or tail through (causing 1d4-2

flying debris damage to creatures within 15 ft.).

Rasia must make a DC 25 Strength check to widen the hole enough to fully change halls with 15 ft. of vertical movement. Skeletons lie in stacked recesses along the hallway walls, which the dragon shears away as she passes, leaving bones and rubble in her wake. This widening and clears the hall so her next pass is at speed 45 ft.

If the PCs reach an area the dragon cannot fit, the shadow demon exits the dragon, possesses a PC, and seizes the necklace.

KILLING THE DRAGON

The *scarab of death* takes 2 rounds to kill the dragon. The *necklace of strangulation* takes 21 rounds. When the dragon dies, the shadow demon returns to its *magic jar* gem (which it made the dragon eat). It then attempts to possess a PC, seize the *possessor's necklace*, and kill everyone.

EXORCISING THE DRAGON

If a PC wears the *possessor's necklace* voluntarily, the necklace draws the shadow demon's black form out through the dragon's face and flies into the wearer's face with a hideous silent scream.

Newly liberated, Rasia stretches her neck toward the possessed PC and roars with anger. Heat waves distort the glowing furnace at the back of her throat. Determine whether the demon is affected by her frightening presence. *Daylight* springs from a rock at her fore

claw, bathing the chamber in bright light, and making the possessed PC hiss violently.

Rasia refuses to approach the *possessor's necklace*. She fears the demon could re-possess her and seize the artifact. A telepathic exchange occurs, during which the possessed PC smiles, and Rasia looks herself over and roars again. She announces she must leave the PCs to exorcise the shadow demon themselves, because *detect magic* revealed the

demon's magic jar in her belly. She tells the PCs she must take the magic jar out of range so that the demon will die when the PCs exorcise it.

Rasia answers one question. As she retreats, she *blesses* the PCs, leaves the *daylight* ensorcelled rock and says, "Do you believe you were truly resurrected in error? I pray you; become the heroes you were meant to be. Save your friend. Exorcise the shadow demon...but only in the light of the sun. Look to the past for the words to exorcise the fiend, and prepare your weapons to fight the creature when it erupts. Wield *soulsplitter*, and place the *holy avenger* in a paladin's hands." Rasia turns tail and flees.

The Possessed PC: Tell the player of the possessed PC to roleplay the controlling shadow demon. Adjust his stats as follows:

AL CE; **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 19; **BAB** +7, **Base Saves** Fort +2 Ref +5 Will +5; **CL** 10th

At will—*deeper darkness*, *fear* (DC 18), *greater teleport* (self only) (*dimensional lock* in monastery), *telekinesis* (DC 19)

3/day—*shadow conjuration* (DC 18) (1 used), *shadow evocation* (DC 19)

1/day—*magic jar* (DC 19) (used), *summon* (level 3, 1 shadow demon 50%) (used)

Replace Feats with: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Replace Skills with: Acrobatics +10+DexMod, Bluff +14, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (planes) +12, Perception +20, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +10+DexMod

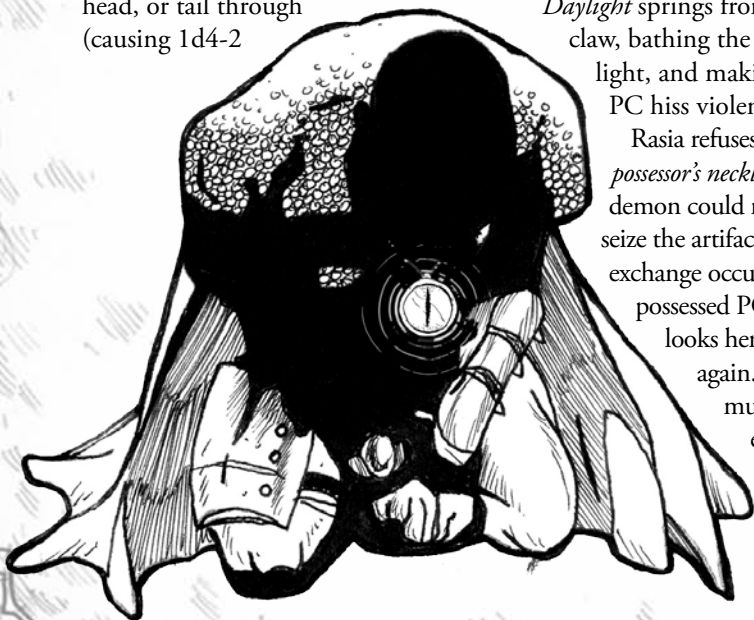
Replace Languages with: Abyssal, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

Cannot cast host's spells nor activate host's Ex, Sp, or Su abilities

HERO VERSUS HERO

At this point, let the players drive the action. Smart PCs will drag their foaming friend out of the catacombs and into the sunlight, while the possessed PC uses *deeper darkness*, *fear*, and *telekinesis* to stop them.

When the PCs ascend from the catacombs, they find sunlight streaming down through the nave's sundered ceiling and onto the altar. If Rasia lives, she circles high above, parting ominous storm clouds to admit the sun's rays.



KILLING THE POSSESSED PC

If the PCs murder their foaming friend, the shadow demon turns to smoke as per the *possessor's necklace* description.

EXORCISING THE POSSESSED PC

If the PCs exorcise the demon with the *holy avenger's greater dispel magic* or with the contest-of-wills exorcism detailed in Waldemar the Ghost Hunter's scroll, the shadow demon turns to smoke. On average, expect a PC with a +2 Will save to expel the shadow demon after 10 rounds.

FIGHTING THE SHADOW DEMON

During the 3d4+3 rounds the demon turns to smoke, it is considered grappled and shaken. Because of the demon's incorporeal form and DR, the PCs cannot destroy it without the *holy avenger* and *soulsplitter*. These melee weapons place their PC's wielders

at great risk...unless they fight the demon in bright light, where the fiend's *sunlight powerlessness* prevents it from counterattacking. Even so, the demon takes only half damage due to its incorporeal stats from everything but the ghost touch heavy mace.

CONCLUSION

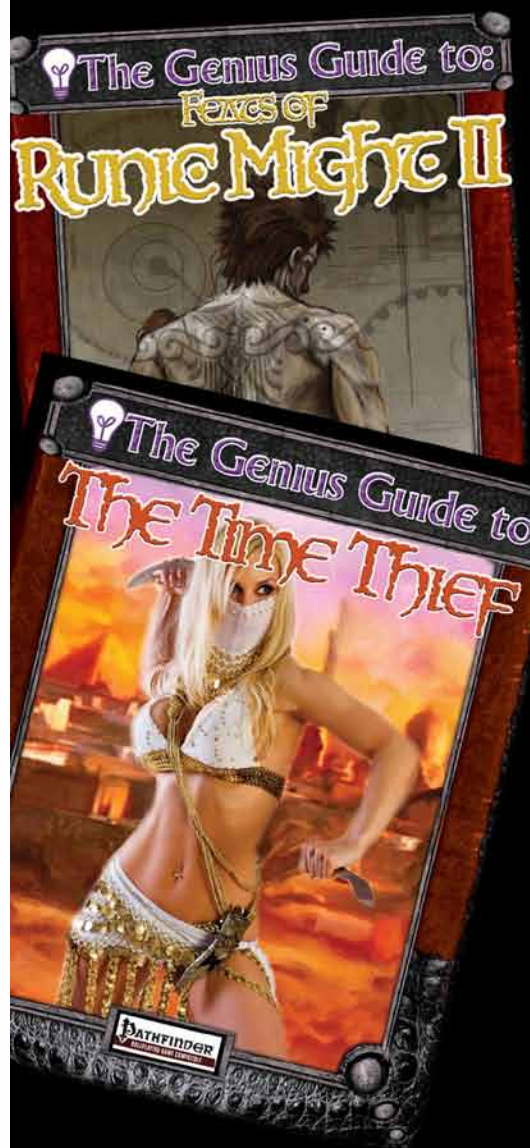
Once outside, the heroes discover they stand on a tidal island. If Rasia lives, she offers to fly them to the mainland.

Before parting, she requests the *holy avenger*, confiding that its true owner still lives. A paladin is honor bound to return it. Worth more than a small kingdom, the *holy avenger* and *soulsplitter* attract dangerous foes and thieves. Nevertheless, the PCs have destroyed a great evil, and may be able to call on a favor from an adult gold dragon. Truly a heroic start to any campaign! Ω

Sample PC Backgrounds

- **Kaluria Retki (Gypsy Blackmailer)** – When the monastery refused to give her starving family alms 160 years ago, Kaluria seduced the abbot and blackmailed him for food and coin. After the abbot's hired assassin killed her (and hid her body in the catacombs), Kaluria's ghost haunted the monastery and frequently possessed the abbot. Kaluria is familiar with a possessing spirit's powers.
- **Palatinus Wells (Haunted Abbot)** – Wells discontinued giving alms to devote all of the monastery's coin to destroying evil artifacts. When a gypsy girl seduced and blackmailed him, he hired local muscle to threaten her, but they botched the job and killed her. Though he tried to quiet her haunting spirit, even burying her bones in the monastery's hallowed catacombs, she never rested until he spent all the monastery's funds on charity.
- **Wells** knows an expired password ("Kaluria") for the iron door.
- **Surren Waverly (Ruined Paladin)** – When Surren made a spiritual pilgrimage to the monastery, Abbot Wells prophesized the young paladin would deny his vocation for the love of another. Surren did—and worse—for unrequited love. His "soulmate" literally stabbed him in the back. For forsaking his vows, the gods have returned Surren to life, stripped of his paladin powers. What must he do to regain their favor and his abilities?
- **Ducane Vetla (Relic Thief)** – A rival sect hired Ducane and his gypsy confederates to steal saints' bones from the monastery and replace them with those of commoners to hide the theft. Ducane made several successful runs, but ultimately fell into a trap in the catacombs.

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THE DRAGON HUNTER

Taking Down the Titans

By Mike Welham and Adam Daigle

Art by Hugo Solis

Imogene Havers stood, bloody and breathless, over the writhing, hissing, broken form of the white dragon Kalthaxis. The beast could yet kill her with a swipe of its claw, but she saw the telltale signs of its hurt and knew its wounds were mortal. She glanced back at her exhausted companions, who nodded. She had earned the right to the kill.

Her knowledge had brought them here, her cunning had saved them from the beast's traps, and her strategy had forced the dragon into a fight it could not win. Imogene raised her spear, willed her might into it, and sent it flying. The creature bellowed and howled most satisfyingly as it died.

"Soon Rimmnathraxus, this will be your fate," she thought to herself with a grim smile.

Throughout history, survivors of dragon attacks have taken up arms against the creatures with a focus bordering on the fanatical. Once they dispatch a local creature, many travel the world to destroy other wyrms. Other brave or foolish individuals hunt dragons for sport. Whatever their reasons,

dragon hunters develop skills and mystical abilities to allow them to combat dragons and their lesser kin most effectively.

Many dragon hunters are rangers who have already trained themselves to better fight their favored enemies. However, a rare paladin or inquisitor may narrow his focus to dragonkin. Sometimes a singular individual gifted with a dragonbane weapon will take on the mantle of dragon hunter.

Role: Dragon hunters have an array of abilities that truly shine against dragons but remain useful against other foes. While they prefer to stay on the hunt, they understand the need to occasionally confront other creatures, especially if this leads them closer to their quarry.

Alignment: Dragon hunters tend towards the extremes of good and evil, depending on their motivations. Due to the dedication involved in their task, lawful dragon hunters are far more common than their chaotic counterparts.

Hit Die: d10.

REQUIREMENTS

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

Base Attack Bonus: +6

Skills: Knowledge (arcana) 4 ranks.

Special: Must have favored enemy (dragons) as a class ability, or must have dealt the killing blow to a dragon while using smite evil, judgment, or a *bane (dragon)* weapon.



The Dragon Hunter

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+1	+0	Fearless, Draconic resistance 10
2nd	+2	+1	+1	+1	Avoidance (evasion)
3rd	+3	+2	+2	+1	Dragonsbane 1/day
4th	+4	+2	+2	+1	Penetrate defenses 5, Stealthy hunt +8
5th	+5	+3	+3	+2	Draconic resistance 20
6th	+6	+3	+3	+2	Backfire, Dragonsbane 2/day, Stealthy hunt (mobility)
7th	+7	+4	+4	+2	Avoidance (improved evasion), Penetrate defenses 10
8th	+8	+4	+4	+3	Stealthy hunt (invisibility), Sunder wing
9th	+9	+5	+5	+3	Avoidance (Imp Evasion to SLA/Su), Dragonsbane 3/day, Stealthy hunt (blindsense)
10th	+10	+5	+5	+3	Backfire (Will save to avoid damage), Draconic resistance 30, Penetrate defenses 15, Stealthy hunt (improved invisibility)

CLASS SKILLS

The dragon hunter's class skills are Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), and Stealth (Dex).

Skill Ranks at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

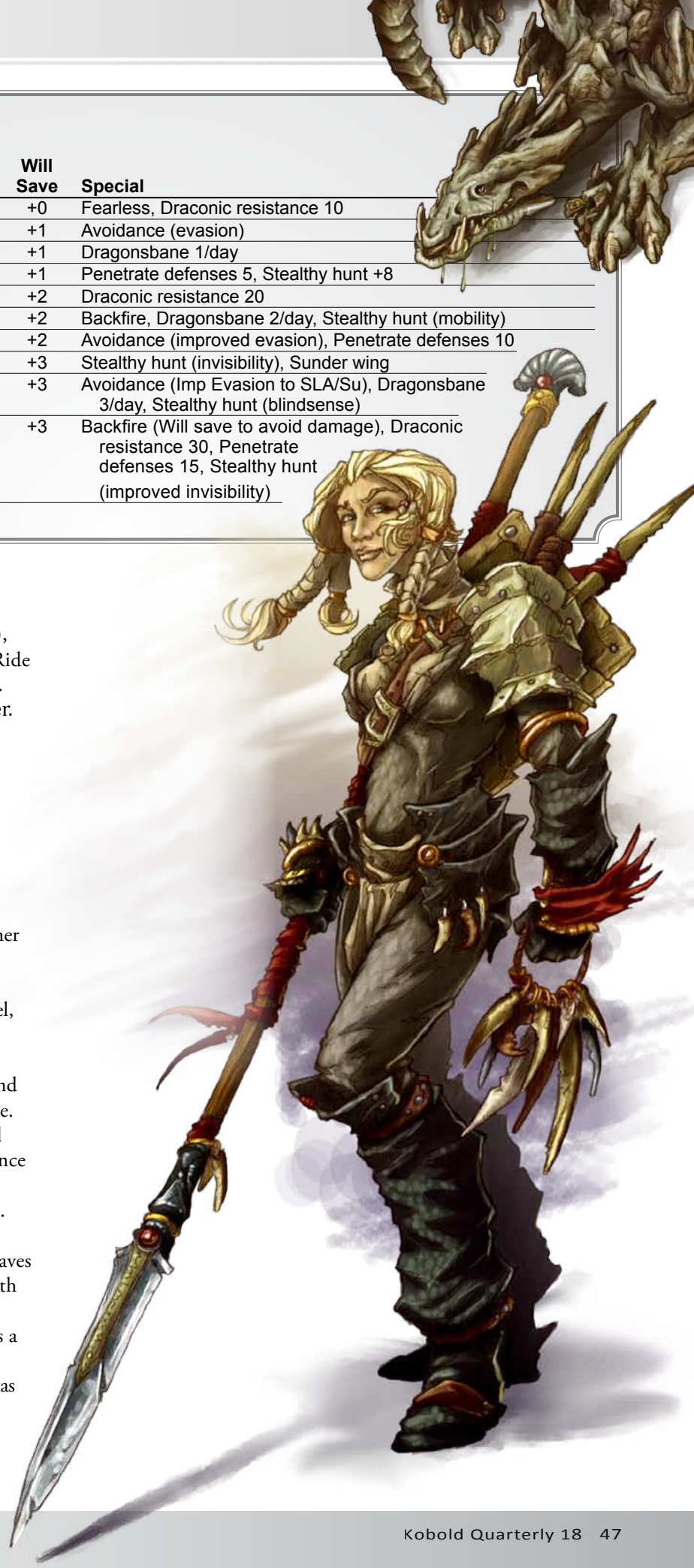
All of the following are features of the dragon hunter prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A dragon hunter gains martial weapon proficiency if she wasn't already proficient.

Draconic Resistance (Su): A dragon hunter is exposed to a myriad of elemental damage from her enemies during her career. At 1st level, she gains resistance 10 to one energy type. This resistance improves as the character progresses – at 5th level, the resistance increases to 20, and she gains gain resistance 10 to a second energy type. Finally, at 10th level, the both resistances increase by 10, and she gains gain resistance 10 to a third energy type.

Fearless (Ex): Resolute in her task, a 1st-level dragon hunter is immune to the frightful presence of all dragons. She also gains a +2 bonus to Will saves against all mind-affecting fear effects. Additionally, any ally within 30 feet of the character benefits from a +4 morale bonus on saves against frightful presence. This ability stacks with a paladin's aura of courage ability (providing a total morale bonus of +8), even if the paladin is a different character.

Avoidance (Ex): By 2nd level, a dragon hunter has gained enough insight to anticipate where a breath weapon will strike. She gains evasion for purposes of Reflex saves against breath weapon attacks by



creatures with the dragon type. At 5th level, the dragon hunter gains improved evasion against these attacks. Finally, at 8th level, the character benefits from improved evasion against all of a dragon's supernatural and spell-like abilities. Evasion provided by this ability functions in all light and medium armor types.

Dragonsbane (Su): At 3rd level, once per day per 3 class levels, a dragon hunter may imbue a weapon with the hatred she harbors for her quarry. As a swift action, the character gives a weapon of her choice the *bane (dragon)* special quality. If the weapon already has this quality, the bonus and extra damage stack. This quality lasts until the end of the dragon hunter's next round, and it cannot be

applied more than once to the same weapon. The weapon does not retain the quality when wielded by another character.

Penetrate Defenses (Su): The dragon hunter finds ways to penetrate a dragon's tough natural armor. At 4th level, she gains a bonus to hit equal to +3 or the dragon's natural armor value whichever is lower. At 7th and 10th levels, the maximum bonus improves by +3. This ability applies to a lesser extent against non-draconic creatures – a maximum of +1 at 4th level, +2 at 7th level, and +3 at 10th level.

Stealthy Hunt (Ex/Su): Dragon hunters develop tricks to fool a dragon's senses. At 4th level, the dragon hunter gains a +8 competence

bonus on Stealth checks against dragons. At 6th level, she gains Mobility against dragons, regardless of prerequisites. A character with the Mobility feat gains an additional +2 bonus. At 8th level, the dragon hunter may make a Stealth check to gain *invisibility* to dragons for the first 5 rounds of an encounter.

The normal rules for stealth and *invisibility* apply. A dragon must make a Will save (DC set by the hunter's Stealth check) to perceive the hunter through any other means, such as blindsense, *true seeing*, etc. At 10th level, the effect becomes *greater invisibility*, and the Will save DC increases by +4.

Surprising Attack (Ex): A 5th-level dragon hunter gains the ability to perform an attack of opportunity when her draconic opponent uses a supernatural ability. She must succeed on a Knowledge (arcana) check with a DC equal to the DC of the ability used. Additionally, she gains Strike Back as a bonus feat.

Backfire (Ex): By making a well-placed strike, a 6th-level or higher dragon hunter can prevent a dragon from using its breath weapon. After readying an attack action or using an attack of opportunity to successfully hit a dragon, the dragon hunter forces the creature to succeed at a Fortitude save equal to the damage dealt. If the creature fails, it cannot use its breath weapon but still counts as having used it and must wait for its next available breath weapon.

At 10th level, the affected dragon must make a Will save equal to the damage dealt. If the save fails, it must wait an additional round before using its breath weapon again.

Sunder Wing (Ex): At 8th level, a dragon hunter discovers how to disrupt her quarry's flight. As a full attack action, she can target a flying creature's wings with an attack at a -4 penalty. If her attack hits, she inflicts no damage, but she reduces her opponent's fly speed by half for 1 hour. If this reduces the creature's fly speed to 0, it falls. This ability does not apply to flying creatures without wings.

10'x10' Toon

by Stan!



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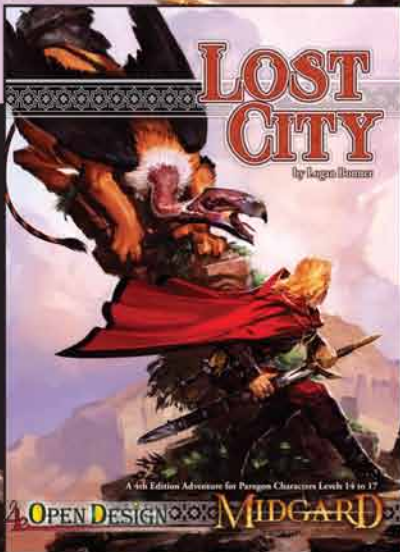
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The Lost City for 4th Edition D&D is here!



LOST CITY is designed by Logan Bonner, former Wizards of the Coast lead designer on **ARCANE POWER** and author of the fan-favorite adventures **THE SLAYING STONE** and **P1: KING OF THE TROLLHAUNT WARRENS**.

In this paragon-tier adventure, characters of levels 14 to 17 explore Kadralthu, a city beneath the sands. There they must contend with those who dwell within this place of legend, as well as a rival faction that wants to seize the city's ancient power for its own.

The fate of Kadralthu—and possibly the world—rests in the party's hands.

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Tools of War

Siege Weaponry

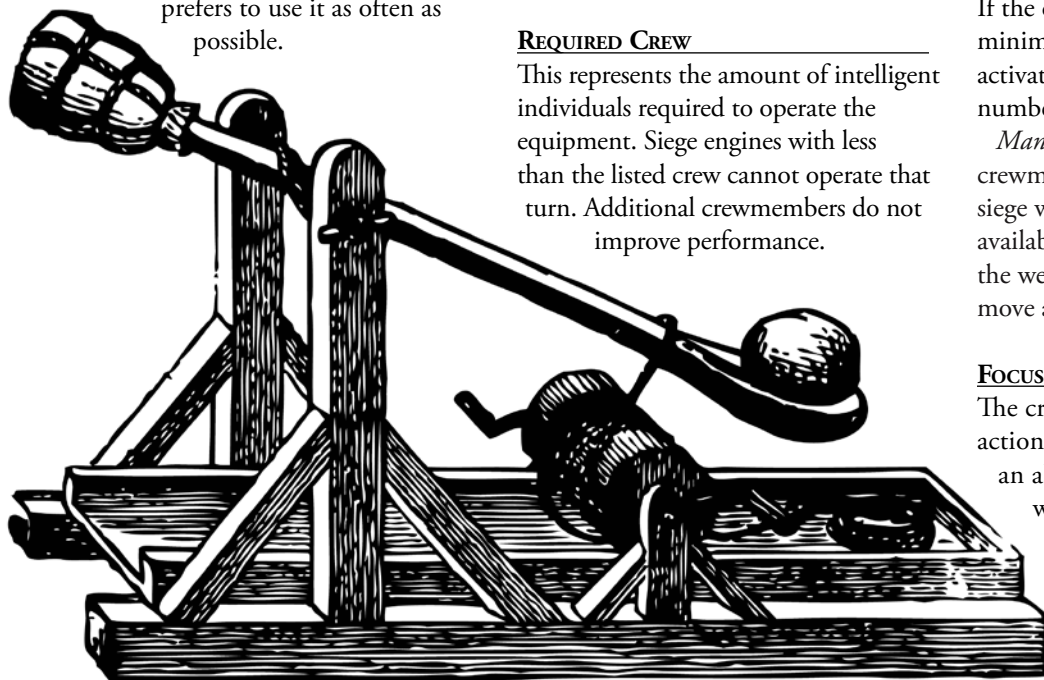
By Matt James

Art by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc

The *Soldiers of Fortune* sourcebook introduces a new alternate system to integrate siege weapons into your 4th Edition game. You can build on that to open a new and exciting element for your adventures.

Siege weaponry serves as an important force multiplier for the armies of Midgard. Their ability to destroy fortifications, raze cities, and demolish stalwart defenses has changed the fortunes of nations and secured a place for these devices in the armies of the world.

The beginning of siege weaponry in Midgard remains shrouded in myth and murky history. The major societies all use siege weaponry to varying degrees, yet some display more skill than others. For instance, the Republic of Valera—like its imperial predecessor—boasts some of the largest reserves of siege equipment and prefers to use it as often as possible.



What power the Grand Duchy of Dornig lacks in numbers it makes up for with extremely accurate ballistae. By contrast, the forces of Illyria have rarely used such weapons in recent conflicts; only in recapturing the Anaxi towers have they appeared in numbers. Whether one prefers the magnificent sounds of a trebuchet firing into an enemy palisade, or the precision of a quad-linked ballistae destroying entire lines of infantry, none can doubt the vital role siege weapons play for the discerning general.

SIEGE ENGINE RULES

The *Soldiers of Fortune* sourcebook first introduced the siege weapon rules (pg. 78) and provided a blueprint for integrating these large-scale weapons into your game. DMs and PCs must follow certain guidelines while operating this equipment.

REQUIRED CREW

This represents the amount of intelligent individuals required to operate the equipment. Siege engines with less than the listed crew cannot operate that turn. Additional crewmembers do not improve performance.

REQUIRED POWER

At least one member of the crew must have the *Siege Engine Operations At-Will* power.

SIEGE ENGINE OPERATIONS

At-Will * Siege Engine

Standard Action

Personal

Effect: You join the crew of a siege engine and may activate any of its abilities while it has at least the minimum crew. You may not use any other ability, spell, power, or item while operating a siege engine.

Special: Any character may take this at-will power. If they do, they replace one of their current at-will powers.

MAN THE EQUIPMENT

The crew must actively man the siege engine. If any of the crew becomes distracted or falls under an effect that would prevent them from acting (such as dazed, stunned, or similar effects) the device may not activate that turn. If the crew numbers more than the minimum required number, the device activates so long as that minimum number is still met.

Manning the equipment means the crewmember works to activate the siege weapon and has no other actions available. He must remain adjacent to the weapon at all times, though he may move around it.

FOCUS!

The crew cannot perform any personal actions (such as casting a spell, using an ability, or activating an item) while manning the engine. If they do so, they do not count as part of the engine's crew for that turn.

INANIMATE OBJECT

Attacks against a siege engine that target Reflex defense automatically hit, while those that target Will defense do not function at all.

ONE TEAM, ONE FIGHT

After a crew forms to operate a siege engine, they become one creature for purposes of managing actions during a turn, and they all operate on the same initiative count using the highest initiative rolled among the crew. HP and AC for crew members remain separate, and they can be targeted separately by foes.

Moving a siege engine requires a standard action.

TRIED AND TRUE

Siege engines cannot be knocked prone and are immune to forced movement. This rule does not apply if the attack originates from a creature larger than the siege engine.

STEADY AIM

A siege engine aims at a fixed square on the map within range. Once a player chooses the target square, the siege engine can continue to fire on that location without aiming. Choosing a new square requires a new aiming action (standard action).

TAKE COVER

If a ranged, area, or close attack targets a siege engine, the crew suffers half damage from the attack, while the engine takes full damage.

FINGER TO THE WIND

Siege engines use the range basic attack value of the engineer when making an attack.

BASTION WRECKERS

If a siege engine makes an area and/or burst attack, it primarily damages the static fortification. Medium creatures or smaller gain a +5 bonus to all defenses against attacks made by the siege engine.

NEW RULES

The statistics below have a new line that lists *load* and *aim*. This represents the action required for that operation. A number by the stat indicates how many of that particular action the operation requires.

Remember that a crew has actions as a single creature; for instance, a crew of three creatures does not have 3 standard actions.

For example, the Colossus Ballista has **Load 3**, meaning that it requires three standard crew actions to load. Only crew members can load the weapon. Spending action points can help shorten the time required, but nothing else helps unless you have the appropriate actions. Classes with powers that grant additional actions in a single turn can prove a tremendous boon to any siege engineer looking to quickly operate these beasts of the battlefield.

Note: You may be wondering how a massive inanimate object has an Armor Class value. The AC of these objects represents the crew actively defending it.

FEATS

A few feats are specific to operating engines of war. These are rare outside mercenary and military circles.

MASTER CREW LEADER

Prerequisite: Mercenary theme

Benefit: You can operate a siege engine with one crewmember less than normally required (minimum 1).

MATHEMATICAL TRAINING

Prerequisite: Intelligence 13

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to all attacks made while operating a siege weapon.

Special: This bonus increases to +2 at level 11 and +3 at level 21.

CONSTRUCTION MASTERY

Prerequisite: Master Crew Leader

Benefit: You can construct siege weapons when you have materials available.

Special: You can modify an existing siege weapon. Work with your Dungeon Master and come up with viable modifications.

Map Considerations

Most standard-size battles take place on a 21x30 grid map, which makes for very tight confines for siege warfare. To create a large-scale battle, you conduct such encounters on a double-size or larger battle map.

MASTER ENGINEER

Prerequisite: Construction Mastery

Benefit: You can lead a number of siege weapon crews equal to your Intelligence modifier.

Special: No siege weapon may be more than 2 squares away from any other, and you must have line of sight to all of them. If you would lose line of sight to any siege weapon, you may not operate that weapon during your next turn.

SIEGE ENGINES

Soldiers of Fortune provides several siege engines, such as the arcane ballista (fire), cannon, and trebuchet (small). Here are several more to sate your appetite for glorious mass combat!

BALLISTAE

Ballistae, plural for ballista, are large, more complex versions of the common crossbow with slightly different mechanics. A sturdy wooden frame carries two pieces of skein (coiled rope) vertically, with a massive dart resting in a groove in the horizontal stock of the weapon.

Two horizontal wooden arms, linked by a very strong bowstring, pass through each of the skeins. As the arms pull back, the rope twists into a powerful spring. Like a crossbow, a winch draws the bowstring, and a rotating trigger or *nut* holds it ready.

Ballistae come in many shapes and sizes depending on their intended use. Some are designed to pierce doors, others are used to launch ropes to the top of walls, while several are meant to kill enemy mounts or troops. No matter their use, their presence on the battlefield can give a general a massive advantage.

BALLISTA LEVEL 5 ARTILLERY
MEDIUM INANIMATE OBJECT
(SIEGE ENGINE) XP 200

HP 54; Bloodied 27 Initiative --
 AC 19, Fortitude 17, Reflex --, Will --
 Perception --

Speed 2
 Vulnerable 5 fire
 Crew 1
 Load 1 move; Aim minor

TRAITS

Siege Engine

See description on page 78 of *Soldiers of Fortune*.

STANDARD ACTIONS

Greater Dart (Siege Engine) • At-Will

Attack: Ranged 10, Engineer's ranged basic attack vs. AC

Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage.

Effect: If the target is medium sized or smaller, it is pushed 1 square and knocked prone

Skills --

Str 18 (+6) Dex -- Wis --
 Con 18 (+6) Int -- Cha --
 Alignment -- Languages --

QUAD-LINKED BALLISTA LEVEL 12 ELITE ARTILLERY
MEDIUM INANIMATE OBJECT
(SIEGE ENGINE) XP 1,400

HP 196; Bloodied 98 Initiative --
 AC 26, Fortitude 24, Reflex --, Will --
 Perception --

Speed 2
 Vulnerable 10 fire
 Crew 2
 Load 1 standard; Aim move

TRAITS

Siege Engine

See description on page 78 of *Soldiers of Fortune*.

STANDARD ACTIONS

r Rapid Fire (Siege Engine) • At-Will

Attack: Ranged 10, Engineer's ranged basic attack vs. AC (4 attacks)

Hit: 1d10 + 8 damage per hit.

Effect: If the target is medium sized or smaller, it is pushed 1 square and knocked prone

Skills --

Str 24 (+13) Dex -- Wis --
 Con 20 (+11) Int -- Cha --
 Alignment -- Languages --

COLOSSUS BALLISTA LEVEL 22 ELITE ARTILLERY

GARGANTUAN INANIMATE OBJECT
(SIEGE ENGINE) XP 8,300

HP 336; Bloodied 168 Initiative --
 AC 36, Fortitude 34, Reflex --, Will --
 Perception --

Speed 1

Vulnerable 15 fire, lightning.
 Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1
 Crew 10

Load 3 standard; Aim move

TRAITS

Siege Engine

See description on page 78 of *Soldiers of Fortune*.

STANDARD ACTIONS

Gigantic Dart (Siege Engine) • At-Will

Attack: Ranged 30, Engineer's ranged basic attack vs. AC

Hit: 10d10 + 25 damage.

Effect: If the target is large sized or smaller, it is pushed 2 square and knocked prone

Skills --

Str 30 (+21) Dex -- Wis --
 Con 30 (+21) Int -- Cha --
 Alignment -- Languages --

TREBUCHET

A trebuchet resembles a catapult but uses a counterweight, rather than tension, to hurl its ammunition. Each trebuchet has a sling—typically made of leather, hide, or some other durable material—with a pouch for the ammunition.

To fire the engine, an operator releases a lever, and the sling and the beam swing around toward a vertical position. This motion releases one end of the sling, opening the pouch and propelling the ammunition in a high arc toward its destination. Trebuchets are indirect fire weapons, able to loft a heavy stone or fiery shot over castle walls onto the buildings within a keep.

The preferred ammunition varies tremendously based upon culture and location. The dwarves of the Ironcrag like to use boulders, whereas the Valeran legions prefer smaller, jagged rocks. The Mharoti legions seem especially fond of firoshot and fragmenting stones.

TREBUCHET, SMALL LEVEL 7 ARTILLERY
LARGE INANIMATE OBJECT
(SIEGE ENGINE) XP 8,300

HP 66; Bloodied 33 Initiative --
 AC 21, Fortitude 19, Reflex --, Will --
 Perception --

Speed 1
 Vulnerable 10 fire, force.
 Crew 2
 Load 1 standard; Aim move



TRAITS

Siege Engine

See description on page 78 of *Soldiers of Fortune*.

STANDARD ACTIONS

r Fling (Siege Engine) • At-Will

Attack: Area burst 1 within 20, Engineer's ranged basic attack vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage.

Skills --

Str 14 (+5) **Dex** -- **Wis** --
Con 18 (+7) **Int** -- **Cha** --
Alignment -- **Languages** --

TREBUCHET, SIEGE **LEVEL 19 ELITE**
ARTILLERY

HUGE INANIMATE OBJECT
(SIEGE ENGINE) **XP 4,800**

HP 284; **Bloodied** 142 **Initiative** --

AC 33, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** --, **Will** --
Perception --

Speed 1

Vulnerable 15 fire, force.

Crew 4

Load 2 standard; **Aim** move

TRAITS

Siege Engine

See description on page 78 of *Soldiers of Fortune*.

STANDARD ACTIONS

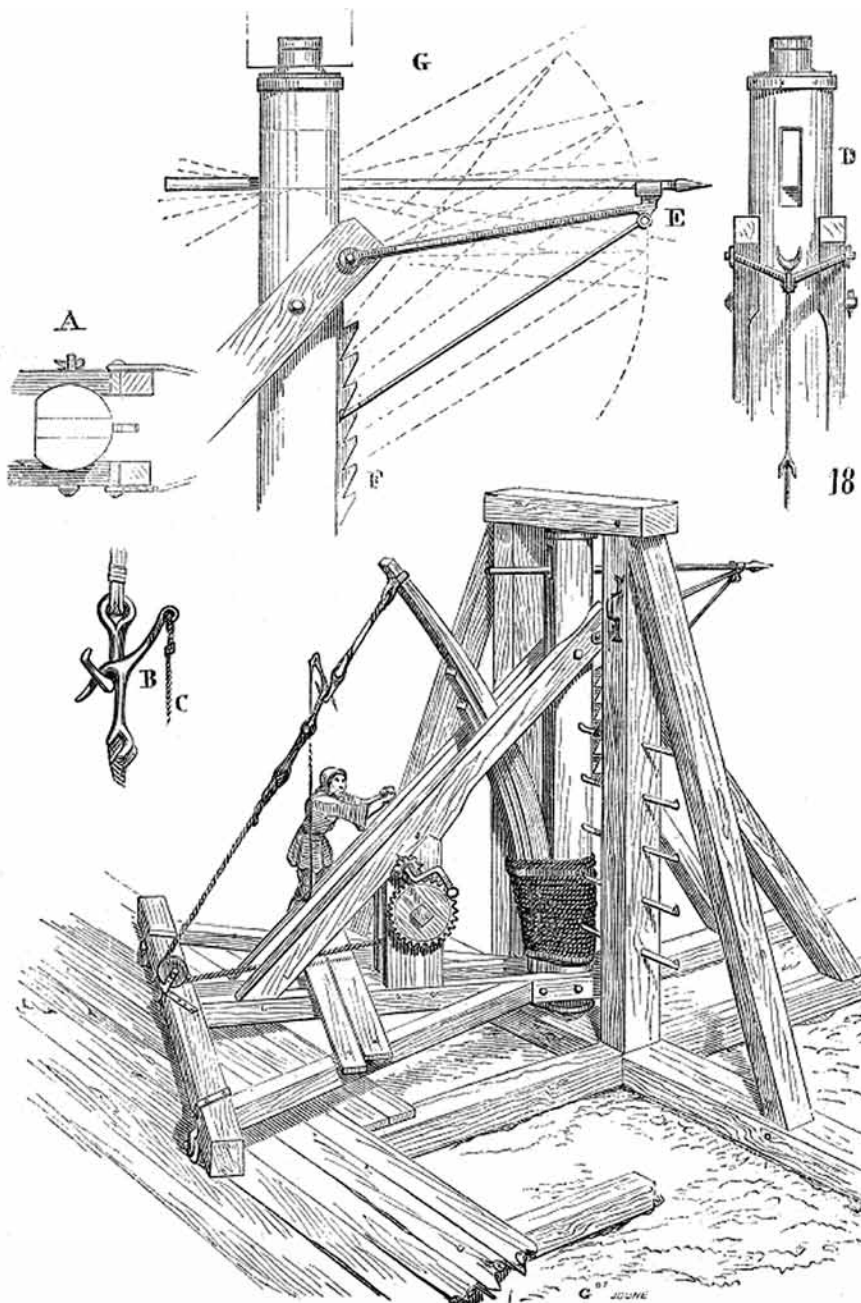
r Fling (Siege Engine) • At-Will

Attack: Area burst 2 within 30, Engineer's ranged basic attack vs. AC

Hit: 4d8 + 10 damage.

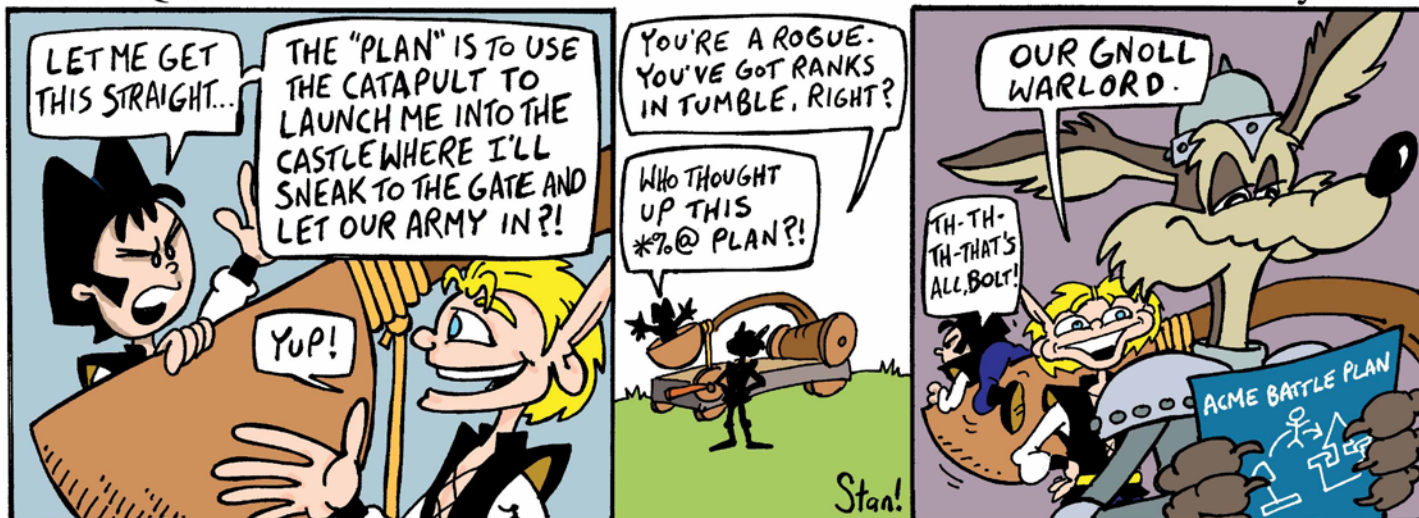
Skills --

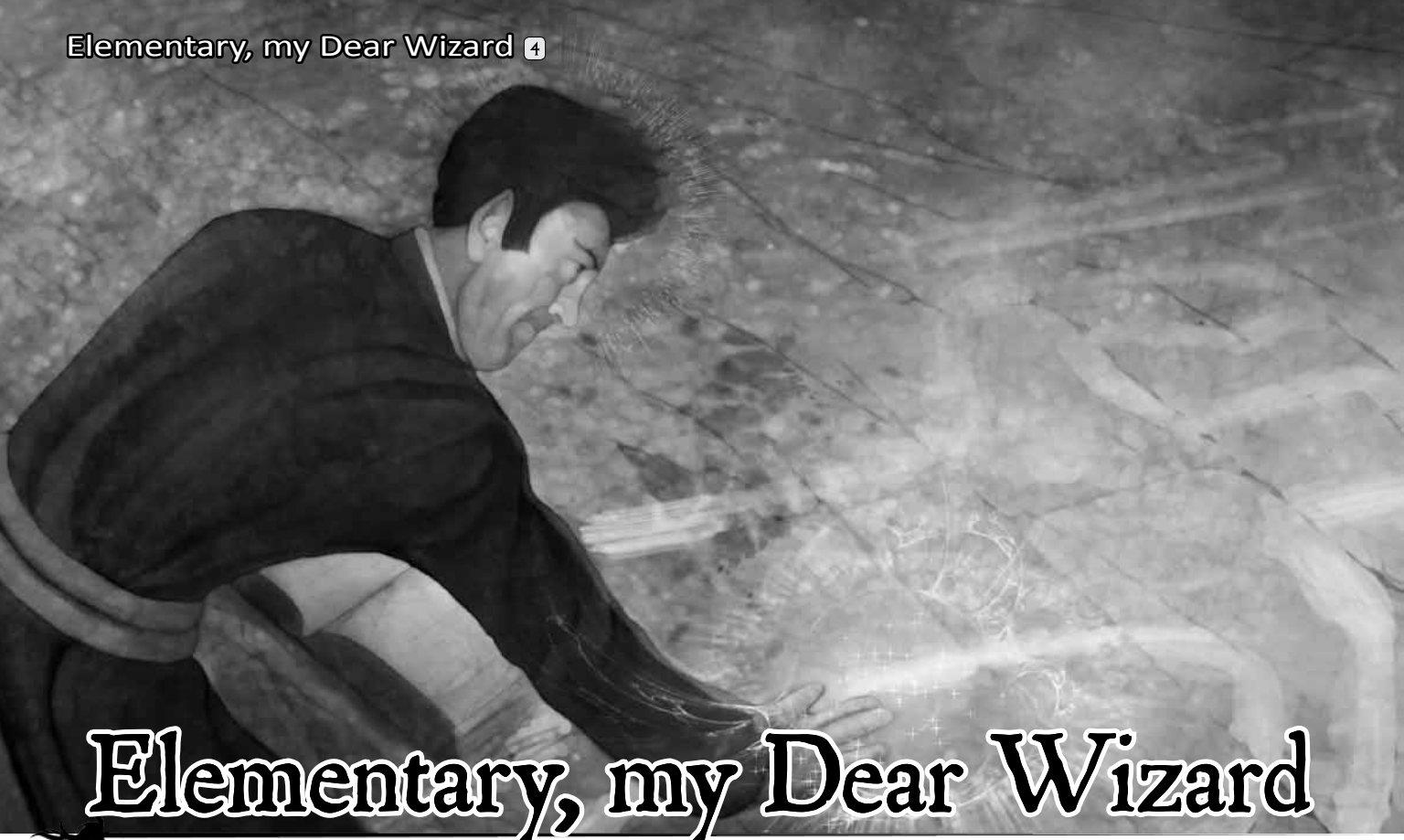
Str 18 (+13) **Dex** -- **Wis** --
Con 22 (+15) **Int** -- **Cha** --
Alignment -- **Languages** --



Bolt & Quiver

by Stan!





Elementary, my Dear Wizard

How to Build a Rock-Solid Mystery

By Paul Baalham
Art by Aaron Acevedo

The body lies lifeless; the heart cut out. The victim's wife—kneeling next to the body—looks up at you with tear-laden eyes and pleads "Please find my husband's killer." A crowd has gathered and started gossiping. Everyone speculates on the killer. Everyone has a theory of the crime. Everyone is perfectly willing to let you do the work. Best get to it.

If you want to test the PCs brains rather than their brawn, consider giving them the chance to investigate a murder. Investigation scenarios provide ample opportunity for roleplaying and make fun diversions from dungeon crawls. This article shows you how to structure a murder investigation adventure and how to design and run multiple skill challenges to create a mechanically satisfying resolution.

EXAMPLE MYSTERY

The **Victim:** Treffor Baylerm, owner of a general store

Location of murder: Treffor's shop

Manner of death: Heart cut out with a knife

5 ELEMENTS OF A MYSTERY

Murder investigations work best for Heroic and low-Paragon tier characters. By the time the PCs reach late Paragon or Epic tier, they are so powerful that the legwork needed to investigate a murder is beneath them. Even in Heroic tier, the characters have access to magic that allows the party to communicate with or raise the dead. The steps are straightforward:

- The players make a list of suspects
- Each suspect is the subject of a single skill challenge
- The players must discover which

suspects have motive, means, and opportunity – only the murderer will have all three

- Scene descriptions include some information about clues found at the scene
- No false leads

DMs must find reasons why the PCs cannot gain knowledge from the victim. A deadline to find the killer might leave no time for a ritual, for example. Perhaps magic is banned wherever the murder took place. The deceased may not have seen his killer or know any relevant details (the victim may have been poisoned or pushed from behind off of a cliff); or perhaps the soul cannot be found, or a magical block prevents contact. All of these could add to the mystery. As long as the DM knows what rituals/powers the PCs have access to and how they fit into the adventure's narrative, then he can incorporate them without cutting short the investigation.

STEP 1: THE MURDERER & THE VICTIM

As the DM, you have to know who the victim and the murderer are, how the victim died, and why it all happened. This helps you determine appropriate clues for the PCs to find and design actions and attitudes for NPCs. Motivating the PCs to carry out the investigation also needs to be considered.

STEP 2: THE SUSPECTS

The next step is to create a suspect list. As the DM, you'll have to know how these suspects connect to the victim, how they feel about the deceased and the killing, and how they'll react to questions. The list should include the murderer; if it doesn't, the murderer should be directly connected to one of the other suspects and quickly added to the list through the investigation. You can prepare this list as a player handout. See Table 1 for an example.

Use a complexity 1 skill challenge to determine the guilt or innocence of a single suspect by accessing and interpreting clues related to that suspect. The challenge should prove a suspect had a motive for the murder, the means with which to commit the murder, and the opportunity to carry out the crime.

Suspects other than the murderer can have motive, means, or opportunity, but only the murderer has all three. This ensures that, if successful, the PCs build up a stronger case against the murderer than against other suspects. If they fail in a challenge, they'll wind up pursuing a false trail or missing a key insight, but should be able to learn it in a later scene or when they confront the wrong suspect.

STEP 3: CLUES & SKILLS

During the investigation, the PCs visit different locations where they find clues to build a case against the suspects. When the PCs enter a location with clues, the area description should include information about the clues present (but not the information the clues reveal or the logic connecting them to others).

Player Handout: The Suspects

<i>Suspect</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Kris Bartle</i>	<i>An irritable human, well known that he did not like Treffor</i>
<i>Shen Quimur</i>	<i>A burly elf, he may owe money to Treffor</i>
<i>Tobias Booth</i>	<i>A cheerful halfling, his shop is a rival to Treffor's</i>
<i>Maritt Ironfist</i>	<i>A dwarf, seen near the shop just before the murder</i>

The success of the investigation does not depend on the PCs finding the clues, but rather on interpreting those clues correctly. The whole scenario should not fail just because someone failed a Perception test to spot one scrap of paper on a cluttered desk. To ensure each player character contributes during the investigation, make sure the clues require a wide variety of skills to find them and to interpret them.

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

PCs can use Knowledge skills at the scene of the crime to gain information from the body (Heal) or to discover evidence left behind by the killer (Dungeoneering and Nature). In other locations, Knowledge skills can uncover gossip about certain suspects (Streetwise), reveal religious or arcane sacrificial rituals (Arcana, History, and Religion), or provide elements of local history or folklore relevant to the investigation. Volumes of lore might well require time to decipher.

INTERROGATION SKILLS

Characters can use Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, and Intimidate to discover a suspect's motive or other relevant information. Insight is not a lie detector, so even a successful Insight check should not reveal the murderer just from interrogation.

PHYSICAL SKILLS

Some clues do not require skill checks to gain any information (a diary written in Common for example). To sustain the challenge, put these clues in places that require physical skill checks (Athletics, Acrobatics, Endurance, Stealth, or Thievery) to acquire the clue in the first place. Clues could be atop crumbling towers, within guarded cabinets, even in plain sight among a covey of cranky gargoyles.

PERCEPTION

Characters should discover the important clues without Perception checks, just so one or two bad rolls don't blow the whole thing. However, Perception could reveal one or two extra clues during the investigation. Do not overuse this. The investigation should hinge on interpreting the clues rather than just finding them in the first place.

MOTIVE, MEANS, AND OPPORTUNITY

Clues for each suspect should fall into the three categories of motive, means, and opportunity. The clues either allow multiple attempts to reveal the information, or there are multiple clues for each category for each suspect. This ensures enough opportunity for a complexity 1 skill challenge for each suspect.

Table 2 shows the skill challenges for each suspect in one table. Writing a table

like this makes it easier to keep track of the clues at the different locations that are part of the same skill challenge. Use a copy of the suspect list to keep track of success and failures for each suspect.

Some clues prove the guilt of a suspect in a particular category, whereas others rule out the suspect from that category. Below are suggestions for clues that rule out a suspect from a particular category. Table 2 shows several examples.

MOTIVE

Making it clear that the suspect has never openly had reason to kill the victim, while others do, should turn the spotlight away from the suspect.

Alternatively, the players learn the list of suspects together with a motive for each suspect (ie, the wife says, “These are all the people who hated my husband”), then clues can be used that contradict this.

MEANS

It is hard to claim that a suspect does not have the means to kill someone just because the appropriate items are not found. However, finding clues that prove suspect physically incapable of using the method that killed the victim should tell the players that the suspect does not have the means to commit the crime. A person with a

broken leg likely didn’t chase down the victim, for example.

OPPORTUNITY

By finding clues that likely belong to the murderer at the scene of the crime, the PCs can rule out certain suspects. Alternatively, demonstrating that the murder happened in a particular way, such as during the 12 chimes of the church bell so no one heard the screams, allows for other clues that place suspects well away or suspiciously near the scene of the crime.

In general, avoid red herrings. Unlike characters in a novel, you as the DM don’t have total control over your

DM's Notes: Clues to the Mystery

Location	Clue	Skill(s)	Result
Treffor's shop	Pair of footprints	Nature	The stride shows the person was more than 5 ft. tall, eliminating Marrit's opportunity
	Single footprint	Nature	The footprint was made by someone over 200 lbs., eliminating Tobias' opportunity
Tobias Booth's shop	Tobias Booth himself	Heal / Athletics	Tobias is too weak to carve out the heart from a body, eliminating his means
	Tobias may be interrogated		Tobias holds a grudge against Treffor, giving Tobias a motive
Kris Bartle's house (Kris is absent)	Book written in an old language	History/ Religion	The book describes a ritual sacrifice performed with a small ceremonial knife, giving Kris a motive
	Wall above the fireplace	Dungeoneering	A loose brick in the wall reveals a space with a blood soaked knife in it, giving Kris the means
	Kris Bartle's Clothes	Perception/Heal	Kris is over 200 lbs. and over 5 ft. tall, giving Kris Bartle the opportunity
Shen Quimur's House (Shen is absent)	Locked box	Athletics/ Thievery	Inside the box is a receipt from Treffor showing that Shen had paid off the debt, eliminating his motive
	Knife on desk	Heal	The knife is not the murder weapon (this does not eliminate Shen's means but still counts as a success)
Tavern	Marrit Ironfist is present so may be interrogated		Marrit does not hold a grudge against Treffor, eliminating her motive
	Knife on Marrit Ironfist's belt	Religion	The knife is often used in religious ceremonies, giving Marrit the means
The village	Village populace	Streetwise	Shen was seen near the shop around the time of murder, giving him the opportunity

players, and they will sometimes focus on insignificant details as the One True Clue. This often gets worse when they have been told that something actually is important. Misleading clues work best then they attempt to throw suspicion one way but clearly move it another way; a farmer claiming he was out of town on the day of the murder to buy two calves when simple investigation shows has no calves in his barn, for example.

STEP 4: OBSTACLES

To capture the mood of a classic villain, have the murderer stick around and place obstacles in the way of the investigators. The murderer should not run immediately after the killing; that's a different kind of adventure.

Obstacles can be either combat or non-combat encounters, depending on the tone and flavour you want for your game. For example, the murderer is the leader of a cult and his followers fight the PCs or trap them in a burning building. Alternatively, the

murderer might be a powerful minister who orders officials in town not to cooperate with the PCs. Use several obstacles to escalate the tension by increasing the threat each time.

STEP 5: RUNNING THE INVESTIGATION

When the DM wants the investigation to begin, give the players the suspect list. Ways they might obtain said list include:

- The captain of the Watch has more pressing concerns and asks the PCs to investigate the murder for him, giving them a list of suspects.
- A relative of the victim lists for the PCs all of the victim's enemies.
- The PCs communicate with the victim via a divination ritual. The victim did not see the murderer clearly, but what the victim saw narrows down the list of suspects.
- The PCs hear gossip from a crowd that have gathered near the body.

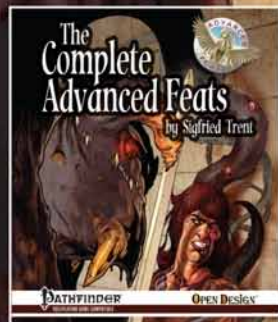
Once they have their list, the PCs are then free to investigate as they see fit. They can explore wherever they want, but only the locations determined by the DM will contain clues. The PCs need to access or interpret these clues using skill checks. Each clue contributes a success or failure to the skill challenge of the relevant suspect. Use the rules for constructing skill challenges in the *DMG*.

If the player characters have succeeded in the skill challenges they'll have just one suspect who they can prove had motive, means, and opportunity, meaning the PCs can prove that suspect is the murderer. If the players failed, then the PCs suffer the consequences, perhaps beyond simply allowing the guilty to escape. More people might die; the murderer may target the PCs, just to be safe; or they may condemn an innocent NPC. Ω

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SOUL BROKER

By Anthony W. Eichenlaub

Art by John Dickson Batten

“Behold, this spark which persists when you die. It lives within you, dormant and useless. You torture yourself in its name. You suffer for its sake. This ember glows quietly, awaiting the moment of your death when it might fly away and reap the rewards of your life of pain.”

“It need not be so.”

The man shifted uneasily, consulted a bit of paper in his palm, and then continued. “Of course, with proper valuation and a thorough assessment of true future value potential, I’m not saying sales are a bad idea. It just might not be the best way to get the most value out of that thing.”

“Yes, there are risks, but you take risks every day, right? How is this different?”

The soul broker is a strange sort of trader, and he doesn’t usually buy souls. Why would he? There are so many better ways to gain power and profit from leveraging a soul’s value. Following are a few of those techniques, from collateral backed loans, to bundled soul-backed junk bonds, and even the pyramid scheme which lies at the heart of becoming a broker.

Each approach has certain benefits. These benefits are realized only upon the signing of the contract, which the soul broker is happy to leave with the client.

Any character may choose to become a soul broker or to accept the offer of a soul broker, as shown below. Tieflings seem especially drawn to the profession.

THE LOANER

“The great thing about this deal is that you get everything back in the end. Nothing lost and moderate gains. This is the safest deal you’ll find.” An awkward pause follows. The broker is clearly not excited about this deal.

Maybe that’s a good thing.

CONTRACT OF THE LOANER

Power (Daily) - You sign the contract and gain one magic item of your level. This item disappears at the end of your next extended rest.

Effect: If you die before completing an extended rest, you cannot be raised by any means.

THE SHORT

“The wise investor knows how to game the system. The value of a pure soul can fluctuate wildly based on the acts of the individual. If you happen to be that individual, then it’s possible to, well, cheat.”

Short selling souls is a simple but effective way to generate wealth. You agree to both sell and buy your own soul in the same contract. The sale happens immediately, but the purchase only needs to be reconciled before the end of the day. So, if you expect something to happen that would greatly devalue your soul, you can end up buying at a significantly reduced price.

This contract is usually only offered to a glowing paragon of the community. There’s no percentage in shorting the soul of a largely worthless or villainous person.

CONTRACT OF THE SHORT SALE

Power (Consumable) - Minor - You sign the contract and immediately expend one healing surge and one daily power. You gain three common or uncommon items of your level plus two, or their equivalent value in gold.

Effect: At the end of your next extended rest you must reconcile the transaction. Subtract the number of significant good deeds from the number of evil deeds you performed since signing the contract. The result is the number of items you keep. If the number is negative, you must come up with the difference. If you are unable to pay, you cannot gain the benefits of an extended rest until you provide the items required.

You and your DM must determine what constitutes significant good and evil deeds before signing this contract.

Special: If you die before you complete an extended rest, you cannot be raised by any means.

BUNDLES OF GOODNESS

“The important thing to know is that these souls don’t really get used for anything right away. They just sit on a shelf for a couple hundred years.” Nervous sweat glistens on the man’s brow.

The broker leans in, lowering his voice and surveying the crowd. “I bundle souls into a package that can be easily

delivered and consumed in a fiery torment, but I never really deliver them. I sell them to another broker who does a quick resale to someone else. Each step along the way the bundle gains value, and eventually becomes virtually untraceable. I hope."

Collecting souls is often a good fit for an adventurer. Sentient enemies can be tortured or tricked into signing contracts, and non-sentient life forms can be gathered with the *forceful soul extractor* power.

CONTRACT OF THE COLLECTOR

Power (Daily) - Minor - You sign the contract and gain one common magic item of your level plus two. You gain the ability to create and seal the *contract of sales* or the *forceful soul extractor* six times at no cost.

Special: You cannot take an extended rest until you collect six souls.

Special: At the end of an extended rest, the magic item disappears.

CONTRACT OF THE GATHERER

Power (Daily) - Minor - You sign the contract and gain one uncommon magic item of your level plus two. You gain the ability to create and seal the *contract of sales* or *forceful soul extractor* 12 times at no cost.

Special: You cannot take an extended rest until you collect 12 souls.

Special: At the end of an extended rest, the magic item disappears.

CONTRACT OF THE SUPPLIER

Power (Daily) - Minor - You sign the contract and gain one rare magic item of your level plus two. You gain the ability to create and seal the *contract of sales* or *forceful soul extractor* 20 times at no cost.

Special: You cannot take an extended rest until you collect 20 souls.

Special: At the end of an extended rest, the magic item disappears.

FORCEFUL SOUL EXTRACTOR

Power (Consumable) - Minor - Use on any adjacent creature that died since your previous turn. Their soul

is trapped until they are raised. This soul can be used to fulfill contracts of the collector, gatherer, or supplier, but otherwise has no real value.

CONTRACT OF SALES

Power (Consumable) - Minor - You sign the contract and gain one rare item of your level plus three.

Special: If you die, you cannot be raised by any means.

Special: When you level up, you may exchange the item with another of your new level plus three.

SETTLING ACCOUNTS

"Just keep them coming, okay? We wouldn't want to, um, get noticed."

Getting caught cheating is not a good thing. If a bundle contains souls collected with the *forceful soul extractor*, roll a d6, d12, or d20, according to the size of the bundle, after the extended rest which collecting the bundle allowed.

If the number rolled is equal to or

less than the number of extracted souls, then roll a d20 and consult the following chart.

D20	Roll	Result
13-20	No problem!	Turns out these things really do just sit on a shelf.
10-12	Your contract is consumed in flames. You can neither make nor sign any further contracts for a year and a day.	
6-9	Your contract burns, a portal to the nine hells opens, and a devil emerges and offers to accept your soul as payment for the transgression. Combat likely ensues.	
2-5	Your contract burns, a portal to the eleven hells opens, and out spews a troop of 2d6 angry devils who attack immediately.	
1	Your contract burns, a portal opens to the nine hells, and disgorges a troop of 2d20 angry devils. The soul economy collapses, and souls become basically worthless for the next several years. All unsigned contracts you or your party possess burn immediately.	



Regardless of the result, you have gained the attention of some very powerful, very evil, and very unforgiving things. Hope you know some rituals of warding against other planar entities, because you'll likely see a lot of them.

THE MIGHTY PYRAMID

"You see, I get a percentage of the power from souls that you trade, but you get a percentage of the souls traded by people you recruit. Everybody wins!"

You've leveraged your own soul successfully; you've done a little freelance collection work. This has been a good business for you, and now you'd like to take it to the next level.

This is it.

CONTRACT OF THE PYRAMID

Power (Consumable): You sign the contract and are sponsored by the forger of this contract. You may

gain the Professional Training of the Pyramid of Souls feat.

NEW FEAT: PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF THE PYRAMID OF SOULS

(Requirement) You must be sponsored by a Soul Broker, and you must sign a Contract of the Pyramid.

You are now a Soul Broker. You gain the ability to create contracts. Roll 1d10 whenever one of your contracts is signed. On a roll of 1, your sponsor takes his cut, and you gain nothing. On a roll of 2-10, you gain a benefit based on which contract was signed:

- **Contract of the Loaner:** Increase the enhancement bonus on any magical item by +1 (up to a maximum of +6 on any one item), effective until your next extended rest. If the signer dies before his day is up, the bonus becomes permanent. The contract stipulates that the broker cannot directly attack the signer, though he can encourage others to do so.
- **Contract of the Short Sale:** You gain two healing surges to use before your next extended rest. You also gain one consumable magic item of your level.
- **Contract of the Collector:** Gain the use of one common magical item of your level. The item disappears at the end of your next extended rest, and you gain 20% of its value in gold.
- **Contract of the Gatherer:** Gain the use of one uncommon magical item of your level. The item disappears at the end of your next extended rest, and you gain 20% of its value in gold.
- **Contract of the Supplier:** Gain the use of one rare magical item of your level. The item disappears at the end of your next extended rest, and you gain

20% of its value in gold.

- **Contract of Sales:** Gain one uncommon magical item of the level of the signer.

Creating contracts is much like forging any other magical item. The creation costs of the contract are the same as a common item of the same level as the signer. Each contract is attuned to a single signer upon its creation. Creating a contract takes only one minute and the cost can be paid in gold, gems, or ritual components.

You may create your own contract of the pyramid to bind new brokers to yourself. Normally, this is limited to one per town or community but could be more in a large city.

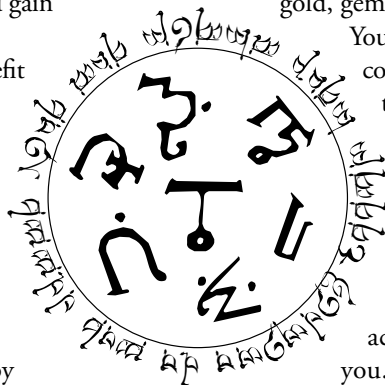
After an extended rest, roll 1d20 for each active broker bound to you. On a roll of 19 or 20, you gain the benefit of one random signed contract. On a 1, that broker stops producing, likely having died a horrible, horrible death. As his soul—a soul you helped corrupt—passes into the hellish torment of the afterlife, you gain a +1 to all defenses until your next extended rest.

As with many professions, being a soul broker entails certain hazards. If word of your transactions gets around, you will likely be feared, hated, or hunted. The most successful brokers work in secret, but they cannot help but draw the attention of greater beings. Good deities often notice the corruption of their followers, and they frequently send the faithful or powerful beings to stop the broker from ever working again. Paladins, lesser angels, and even divine avatars spend careers hunting and destroying soul brokers.

Evil beings often resent those helping their enemies. The wise broker learns to fear darkness and light in equal measure.

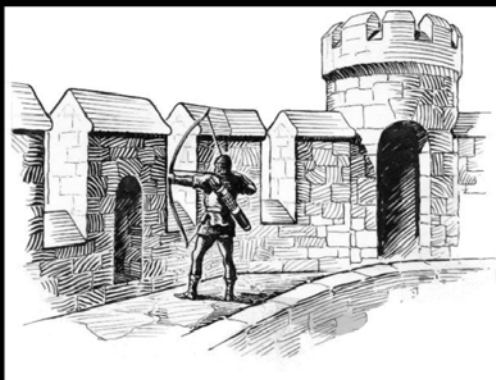
Such is the danger that the soul broker faces. Such is the cost of power—of greatness.

Is it worth it? Put the offer in front of your party, and see what they think. Ω



3:11

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Synergistic Magic

Combining Spells for Twice the Power

By Phillip Larwood

Art by Rick Hershey and Chris McFann

Varnel, battle-mage elect of Thaerakhan, watched the dreaded host of Kalambor breach the doors of his wirestone citadel. Few of his troops had survived the initial onslaught of the black templars or their bound demonspawn, and now only he stood between them and the Blood Orb of Valeinos.

Yet Varnel feared not, for the Witchmother of Stormbriar had taught him the greatest secrets of magic. A smile crept across his lips as the first of the templars became trapped in mazes of shredding claws and acid-drenched tentacles.

—From the biography of Varnel, Arch-Lord of Thaerakhan

Known only to a few skilled and knowledgeable spellcasters, synergistic magic combines existing spells to create new and potent magical effects. This process absorbs the less powerful (or secondary) spell into the more powerful (or primary) spell and enhances the primary spell in some useful fashion. With synergistic magic, spellcasters can create entirely new spell effects and greatly increase their versatility, making magic both more mysterious and more powerful.

Because of its highly specialized nature, synergistic magic can be as rare or common as needed. Perhaps it is a lost technique rediscovered only recently, or it may be an entirely new brand of magic.

Whatever its status, synergistic spellcasting makes wizards and their ilk more powerful, and GMs should think carefully about the implications of including this type of spellcasting in their campaigns. At the very least, it should be open to NPCs as well as PCs.

SYNERGISTIC FEATS

To use synergistic magic, the spellcaster must have access to one of the two following feats. The first is a metamagic feat, while the second is a teamwork feat (see the *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* for details on teamwork feats):



R. HERSHEY

COMBINED SPELL (METAMAGIC)

You can combine two spells to produce additional spell effects.

Prerequisite: 5 ranks in Spellcraft, ability to cast spells

Benefit: When you cast a spell, you can cast a second spell simultaneously to produce an additional spell effect. The second spell is subsumed into the primary spell as part of its casting and does not have its usual function (though it still uses a spell slot and material components). Instead, it produces an additional effect based on the two spells cast (see the **Synergistic Spell List** for details).

You can use Combined Spell with any spell that can be combined with another spell (called a primary spell) to create a new spell effect. A combined spell uses a spell slot one level higher than the second spell's standard level.

This feat cannot be used together with the Synergistic Casting feat but can be used with other metamagic feats normally.

Special: A spell with this feat can still be cast normally on its own but takes up a slot one level higher and has no additional game effects.

SYNERGISTIC CASTING (TEAMWORK)

You can work with another caster to create spell synergy.

Prerequisite: 5 ranks in Spellcraft, ability to cast spells

Benefit: You can work with another caster who has this feat to create new spell effects when casting synergistic spells from the appropriate list. As with the Combined Spell feat, the primary spell functions normally with a potent additional power while the second spell is subsumed into the first and does not take effect.

This feat cannot be used in conjunction with the Combined Spell feat, but can be used normally in conjunction with other metamagic and teamwork feats.

Special: Because the two spellcasters must cast their spells simultaneously for this feat to take effect, it takes careful planning to use. You may need to delay or ready an action depending on the circumstances.

SYNERGISTIC SPELL LIST

Characters may combine the spells on the following list to create additional spell effects. Most of these spells come from the sorcerer and wizard lists, as

they are most likely to use synergistic magic, but a few spells for clerics, bards, and druids are included. The list of spells below is not exhaustive, and players can create their own synergistic spell combinations with their GM's approval.

In general, the primary and secondary spells should come from the same school of magic and have a thematic connection, although you can make exceptions for interesting or evocative spell combinations (such as combining *cone of cold* with *sleet storm* to create a cone of clinging ice). The lower level spell of the pair is always the secondary spell. Ultimately, the number of spells used to create synergistic spell effects is limited only by your imagination.

ACID TENTACLES

Primary Spell: *black tentacles*

Secondary Spell: *acid arrow*

Synergistic Spell Effect: The *black tentacles* take on a faint greenish tinge and are coated with a strong acid that deals an additional 1d6 points of acid damage upon a successful grapple attack.

CLAW MAZE

Primary Spell: *maze*

Secondary Spell: *summon monster V*

Synergistic Spell Effect: Monstrous claws emerge from the walls of the extradimensional labyrinth and rake anyone trapped within. You can make a free attack against the subject of the spell once per round using your caster level as your base attack bonus and adding your relevant ability modifier (Intelligence or Charisma). This attack bypasses damage reduction and deals 3d6 slashing damage. You can continue making attacks until the subject escapes the maze or dies.

CONE OF CLINGING COLD

Primary Spell: *cone of cold*

Secondary Spell: *sleet storm*

Synergistic Spell Effect: Any creature that fails its Reflex save against the *cone of cold* is coated in a thick layer of ice. Coated creatures moves at half normal speed for 1 round per caster level or until they can break free of the ice with a DC 20 Strength check or by dealing 10 damage (5 fire damage) to the ice.

ENFEEBLING RAY

Primary Spell: *enervation*

Secondary Spell: *ray of enfeeblement*

Synergistic Spell Effect: Creatures struck by the enervation ray suffer -2 Strength for every negative level inflicted. An undead creature struck by the spell gains a +4 morale bonus to Strength checks for 1 hour instead (in addition to being healed).

CURVING FIREBALL

Primary Spell: *fireball*

Secondary Spell: *flaming sphere*

Synergistic Spell Effect: The flames from the resulting fireball burn exceptionally hot, dealing d8 damage instead of the regular d6. In addition, once along the spell's path, you can change the fireball's trajectory by up to 90 degrees, allowing you to target objects and creatures you can see or otherwise know the location of but do not have line of effect to.

PLAGUE OF SWARMS

Primary Spell: *insect plague*

Secondary Spell: *summon swarm*

Synergistic Spell Effect: The wasp swarms summoned with *insect plague* have maximum hit points. Alternatively, you can summon an army ant swarm for every wasp swarm you could normally summon (see the Pathfinder RPG Bestiary for details).

GREATER LIVEOAK

Primary Spell: *liveoak*

Secondary Spell: *plant growth*

Synergistic Spell Effect: The treant guardian created by the *liveoak* spell gains the advanced creature template from Pathfinder RPG Bestiary.

RUTHLESS BANISHMENT

Primary Spell: *banishment*

Secondary Spell: *dismissal*

Synergistic Spell Effect: You can banish up to 3 Hit Dice of creatures per caster level instead of the normal 2. In addition, you always count as presenting at least one object or substance the creature hates even if you do not have such an item or substance in your possession.

STAGGERING SWORD

Primary Spell: *mage's sword*

Secondary Spell: *resilient sphere*

Synergistic Spell Effect: Whenever the *mage's sword* damages a

creature, it surrounds the target in a lingering field of destructive force energy that staggers the creature for 1 round unless it succeeds on a Fortitude save (DC 10 + your ability modifier + spell level). In addition, the critical multiplier of the sword increases from $\times 2$ to $\times 3$.

MISLEADING INVISIBILITY

Primary Spell: *mass invisibility*

Secondary Spell: *mislead*

Synergistic Spell Effect: You create a major image of every creature rendered invisible as a result of the spell (including yourself). The invisible creatures can move about freely while their illusions appear engaged in whatever activity they were engaged in before the spells were cast. Neither you nor any other creatures affected by the *mass invisibility* can control these images.

SWIFT FLIGHT

Primary Spell: *overland flight*

Secondary Spell: *fly*

Synergistic Spell Effect: Your bonus

on Fly skill checks becomes equal to your total caster level (instead of half), and your overall fly speed increases by 10 feet. This allows you to cover an additional 16 miles in a single day of travel.

TITANIC TRANSFORMATION

Primary Spell: *polymorph any object*

Secondary Spell: *baleful polymorph*

Synergistic Spell Effect: When casting *polymorph any object*, increase the duration of the transformation by +2. If the *polymorph any object* spell replicates the effects of *baleful polymorph*, the affected creature receives a -4 penalty on all saving throws it makes because of the force of the transformation.

SONG OF RAGE

Primary Spell: *song of discord*

Secondary Spell: *rage*

Synergistic Spell Effect: Creatures affected by the *song of discord* have a 75% chance of attacking the nearest creature instead of the normal 50% chance. Additionally,

any creatures affected by the *song of discord* gain a +1 morale bonus on attack and damage rolls against the target of their fury.

SHIELD WALL OF FORCE

Primary Spell: *wall of force*

Secondary Spell: *shield*

Synergistic Spell Effect: The resulting *wall of force* has 25 hit points per caster level and a hardness of 35. A *wall of force* augmented in this fashion cannot be made permanent.

UNIVERSAL SLUMBER

Primary Spell: *deep slumber*

Secondary Spell: *sleep*

Synergistic Spell Effect: Living creatures normally immune to sleep effects (such as dragons and elves) can be affected by the *deep slumber* if they are within the Hit Dice limit. In addition, waking creatures affected by the *deep slumber* become more difficult to wake. The creature must suffer at least 3 hit points of non-lethal or lethal damage before awakening. Ω



Explaining the Inexplicable

by Monte Cook

Art By John Dickson Batten

I've written about "realism" and "believability" in roleplaying games in this column before, but it's such an integral part of the hobby that I think it's worth addressing in more detail. Talking to both novelists and game designers, I hear a single observation more than most others. A writer will say, "People complain about how I portrayed the minutiae concerning a specific dog breed in my story, and yet these same readers have no problem with the fact that disembodied aliens are controlling the dog's brain." A game designer will ask a playtester, "You're going to quibble about the realism of hit points when we're talking about a game where dragons the size of office buildings fly and breathe fire?"

There does seem to be a strange contradictory nature at play when it comes to the acceptance of science fiction and fantasy fans and the stories and games they love. I've heard many people, for example, complain about the movie *Independence Day* and the ability of the protagonists to upload a computer virus into the alien spaceship using a Mac, decrying this as unbelievable, and yet experience no such qualms about the fact that aliens in city-sized spaceships invade the Earth in the very same movie.

It can be confusing, but I think it's a concept that's possible to wrap one's head around. Let's break it down.

PEOPLE WANT TO BELIEVE

When people arrive at the GM's game table, they want to believe in whatever setting and story he or she has devised.

If it's about the zombie apocalypse, they'll show up ready to accept that there are undead creatures swarming the globe looking to chomp on some brains. In other words, whatever the GM puts forth as the premise, players will buy into it. That's why they've shown up.

You don't, for example, go to a movie like *Alien vs. Predator* and scoff at the existence of extraterrestrial life. The movie's title makes it self-selecting. You don't play *Dragon Age* or the *Pathfinder* RPG if you want to have nothing to do with spellcasting, weird monsters living in subterranean labyrinths, and pseudo-Medieval weapons and armor. Or rather, if you do, it's your own fault if you end up being dissatisfied with how your evening goes. No one forced you to sit down at that table and roll dice.

This grants a lot of leeway. No one's going to question the basic premise of a game, and the basic premise can be quite broad. If you're running a game of alternate-history urban-fantasy steampunk horror, your players will accept magic, vampires, cultural and political deviations, and all manner of clockwork, steam-powered contraptions. You've got the freedom to present them with almost anything.

Of course, the key word there is "almost."

PEOPLE WON'T BELIEVE WHAT THEY KNOW TO BE UNTRUE

Even in the middle of a plane-hopping fantasy game where the players all play half-angel wizards with psionic

powers stemming from the names of god tattooed on their foreheads, if you know your way around a horse you're not going to believe that one of these characters can make their horse run for three days straight. Or jump over a 30-foot wide river. Because while you and your fellow players can't know anything about being angels or wizards or what is true or isn't true about otherworldly planes, you can know something about horses. Horses are real creatures here in the real world, and in the real world we can quantify and understand the rules that govern our world. In the fantasy reality, the GM's word dictates the rules when it comes to psionic powers and angelic duties—but that's only because without that word, we've got no information. About less fantastical things, like horses or shoes or boats or trees, we've got our understanding of the real world to fall back on.

The real world is always, always, always the default. That seems an obvious point to make, and yet it's one many overlook. Sure, a GM can pull out the old "Well, in my world..." strategy, as in, "In my world, horses never tire when ridden by angels." And that's fine. But such a thing has to be stated, otherwise we go along with our understanding of real world horses.

In other words, when it comes to aliens, magic, and superpowered mutants, we look to the GM if we have some kind of question. If the matter involves something that exists in the real world, we don't. We look to reality.

Even if we accept that the GM trumps reality at his game table, we aren't likely to even consider that mundane, understandable concepts are different in the game world on our initial consideration. So by the time the GM pulls out "well, in my world," it's too late. Our verisimilitude is blown.

THE RANGE OF PLAYER KNOWLEDGE

A good GM quickly learns what the players in his group know. Some things everyone knows about: we all know how long a person can probably hold their breath, for example. We all know how long it takes a typical person to run three blocks. We all know that a normal guy is pretty unlikely to survive a fall out of a jet at 15,000 ft.

But sometimes people's specialized knowledge comes into play. A gamer at the table might know a lot about ancient warfare or fancy themselves an armchair historian. An IT specialist is going to know a lot about computers. A lawyer's going to know a great deal about the security measures in a modern courthouse. Someone who's been hunting a number of times will carry with them some knowledge about camouflage and moving quietly in the woods. And then, of course, there's the guy who knows all about guns, and is happy to tell you how the accurate range of a weapon changes when you equip it with a specific sort of silencer.

If no one in his science fiction game knows much about momentum in low-gravity environments and vector-based movement, a GM probably doesn't have to worry about them in the middle of a starship battle. But if someone does have that knowledge, then the game either ought to at least pay lip service to the way those things work or it needs to be made clear that the game is more science fantasy than hard science fiction.

Otherwise, that player is going to be thrust right out of the game. And she's likely to bring the rest of the group with her when she explains that the GM is doing it all wrong.

USING PLAYER KNOWLEDGE

While research is always a fine idea, a good GM doesn't try to outlearn the gun enthusiast or the astronomy buff. He uses them as a resource. He turns to them and calls on their knowledge when it's needed. Not only does this ensure that they don't lose their suspension of disbelief—or worse, call the GM's game into question because it violates what they know to be real—it makes them feel good about themselves. They are rewarded for being the local expert on the topic, and they're really contributing to the believability of the game setting.

So when the PCs plan to sneak into a hospital to question a patient who knows a dark secret, the GM turns to the registered nurse in the group and asks, "What kind of precautions

would a hospital have against such an intrusion?" Rather than "cheat" and say what's most beneficial to her character, she'll be happy to provide her knowledge. Both the GM and the other players can incorporate that knowledge into the game—the GM for how to accurately portray the hospital and the players for making a smart plan to get in.

Gamers immediately accept the most absurd things and nitpick the details of the most mundane. It's our nature. We like things to be wildly imaginative and yet as accurate as possible. It's a weird contradiction, but good GMs, like good novelists, know how to prepare for this dichotomy of expectations. Sometimes it involves a little extra research. Sometimes it involves preemptive explanations. Sometimes, a little hand-waving will do. But when everyone around the table believes in what's going on, it's a thing of beauty—an experience no other kind of game can match. Ω



BATTLE WIZARDS & SWORD MAIDENS

Essential Asian Movies for Gamers

By Dave Gross

One of my early introductions to Chinese fantasy movies came when I joined TSR. Legendary game designer Dave “Zeb” Cook hosted what he called Bad Movie Night, but which I insist should have been called Awesome Movie Night. There I encountered films that pitted heroes like Lucky Fruit and Peacock against the daughter of the Hell King.

Later my old *Dragon Magazine* colleague Tony Bryant showed me his VHS copy of *Mr. Vampire* with Chinese dialogue and Japanese subtitles. Fluent in Japanese, Tony translated as we watched, adding his hilarious interpretation of the ghost’s songs. By the time I moved to Seattle, with its gigantic film festival and the greatest video store on Earth, I was a big Asian fantasy and action movie geek.

For inspiration in writing *Master of Devils*, I revisited dozens of my favorite movies and sought out dozens more. These films defy genre. A “kung fu” movie might combine equal parts romance, comedy, horror, and tragedy, and the results might remind you of your own gaming sessions more than any Hollywood film.

Here are a few films I consider essential for players and GMs looking for inspiration for games set in Pathfinder’s Tian Xia or any Asian-inspired fantasy setting or game. I’ve omitted classics like *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin* because you’re going to find them the moment you start looking for more films. For the same reason, I’ve left off relatively recent hits like *Red Cliff* and the beautiful Zhang Yimou movies *Hero*, *House of Flying*



The Bride with White Hair

Daggers, and *Curse of the Golden Flower*. Rather than a best-of list, this survey offers a glimpse of the diverse fantasy and action films from China, Korea, and Japan.

Some of these titles might be difficult to find at a local store, but you can find many of them from online retailers. If you’re fortunate enough to live near a Chinatown, you might uncover a huge selection of inexpensive DVDs. Unless you have a region-free player, look for all-region discs or those that play in your region (1 for Canada and the US). And unless you understand the original language, make sure the movies you’re buying include English subtitles or dubs.

THE BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR (1993)

The foremost fantasy romance of the ‘90s, with the beautiful Brigitte Lin and Leslie Cheung as tragic lovers from opposing martial factions. When she discovers her lover’s seeming treachery, Lin’s peerless swordswoman transforms into a witch whose long white locks shoot out to kill her foes. Equally memorable is the film’s grotesque villain, a wicked brother and

sister joined at the spine.

See also: *Deadful Melody*, *Swordsman II*.

COME DRINK WITH ME (1966)

This film made a superstar of Cheng Pei-Pei, who appeared decades later as Jade Fox in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The heroine known as Golden Swallow seeks the release of her brother, a government official captured by vengeful bandits. One of the great heroic swordswoman movies, the film includes such iconic events as a teahouse brawl and the revelation that a drunken vagabond is more than he appears.

See also: *Golden Swallow*, *A Touch of Zen*.

EVIL CULT AKA KUNG FU CULT MASTER (1993)

One of Jet Li’s wackier films, full of magic and some absolutely insane ideas that are perfect game fodder. Imagine, for instance, a sorcerer bound to a giant boulder that failed to kill him years ago, which he can now send flying about to batter his foes while he remains stuck to

the side. The film includes many other adventure-inspiring elements: an oath of revenge, a trapped chamber, a poisoned hero, and a legendary sword.

See also: *Detective Dee and the Mystery of the Phantom Flame*, *Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain*.

THE FIVE DEADLY VENOMS (1978)

This 70's classic is one of many kung-fu movies with an "adventuring party" of specialists going up against a master villain. The dying master of the Venoms clan sends his last acolyte to kill his former disciples if they are misusing their powers. Each fighter has mastered a unique style: Centipede, Lizard, Snake, Scorpion, and Toad.

The intrigue is fun, but ultimately it exists to show off duels between the period's most talented and charismatic kung fu stars, who also appeared in various other movies around the same time and were forever after known as "the Venoms."

See also: *The Brothers Five*, *The Return of the Five Deadly Venoms* (aka *Crippled Avengers*).

LEGENDARY WEAPONS OF CHINA (1982)

A film with an angle, *Legendary Weapons* follows the effect of firearms on kung fu sects. When the leader of one clan leaves the martial arts world to live as an ordinary man rather than sacrifice the lives of his followers in a futile effort to teach them to become bulletproof, his rivals send assassins to make an example of him. While showcasing a wide variety of weapon and fighting styles, the combatants blend mysticism with martial arts, making this film a great inspiration for playing heroes who mix swords with sorcery.

See also: *Heroes of the East*, *One-Armed Swordsman*.

HOLY FLAME OF THE MARTIAL WORLD (1983)

This looks silly at first glance, with its buckets of paint-red blood and disco-colored costumes, but don't give up on it too soon. After rival clans murder his parents, a young boy trains for eighteen years before he can seek revenge. His adventures include rescuing helpless villagers from goblins, fighting undead

guardians, overcoming dungeon traps, and winning a powerful magical sword. Could it be his long-lost sister who wields its twin? Every big fantasy cliché comes together in a wacky but ultimately satisfying adventure that might as well have been written as a module.

See also: *The Battle Wizard*, *Buddha's Palm*.

MR. VAMPIRE (1985)

While set in the early 20th century, this film involves so much magic that you could transplant the story to virtually any period without making it seem out of place. A Taoist master takes on the job of re-burying the corrupt father of a wealthy businessman. He and his two apprentices (reminiscent of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis) fight off a powerful hopping vampire while dealing with a seductive ghost and the interference of a jealous suitor for the businessman's lovely daughter.

Equal parts comedy, horror, and kung-fu action, this film works on every level. Don't let the goofy title fool you.

See also: *Spooky Encounters*, *A Chinese Ghost Story*.

MUSA AKA THE WARRIOR (2001)

This is not a fantasy movie, but its epic action and indelible performances put it in a class with Kurosawa's samurai classics. A Korean embassy arrives in China to discover their government is out of favor with the current regime. Returning home in disgrace, they rescue an imprisoned Chinese princess to regain favor with the Chinese government. With the Mongol horde in pursuit, their race for redemption becomes a battle for survival at an abandoned fort. Standout performances and heroes from disparate social classes make this a great resource for players before character creation.

Also see: *The Emperor and the Assassin*, *Red Cliff*.

REIGN OF ASSASSINS (2010)

Reign is a return to form for superstar Michelle Yeoh. She plays an assassin who has retired after



helping her clan steal half of a mummy with healing powers. Despite changing her appearance, she soon reveals her skills while rescuing her husband from a robbery. Her old colleagues—a master of flying needles, a cruel seductive swordswoman, a fire wizard, and their enigmatic leader the Wheel King—confront her to finish the job she began years earlier. John Woo helped direct the action sequences.

Also see: *The Promise*, *The House of Flying Daggers*.

THE TWILIGHT SAMURAI (2002)

The Twilight Samurai follows Seibei, a low-status samurai who has let himself go since his wife's death. After his day's clerical work, he begs off drinking with his colleagues to build cricket cages to make ends meet for his daughters. When an old flame returns to town to escape an abusive husband, he demonstrates that he has lost none of his martial skill. Then the clan leaders call upon him to execute a deadly rebel the other samurai are afraid to fight. Director Yamada Yōji doles out the action sparingly, but what comes down in a few thrilling minutes is more exciting than two hours of mayhem in a lesser film.

Also see: *The Hidden Blade*, *Love & Honor*. Ω

10 Reasons Why Your Characters Should Be in Jail

By Russell Jones

Art by Daniel Hernandez

“All right sergeant, what do we have here? Looks like an elf in a nightdress, a dragon-blooded creature, and... What is THAT thing?”

“Not sure, captain. The night watchmen saw them leaving the Wardenly family crypt, but they’re too well armed for grave robbers. The elf’s a spellcaster, claims some sort of cult was holed up in the crypt. ‘Course, she only told us that after she did something to Jahrsen’s eyes. He’s still crying blood.”

“The other one looks like a minotaur that picked up bat wings and golem arms somewhere along the way. Definitely too dangerous to keep anywhere but a cage, in my opinion.”

“Well, keep double-guard posted on them at all times. They’ll have to answer to Magistrate Willingsly tomorrow, and I’m sure he’s going to have lots of questions about his ancestors’ rest being disturbed.”

Breaking the law comes with the territory in most RPGs, whether it’s trespassing, grave robbing, fraud, or even mass murder. Most gaming groups sidestep or ignore these laws so they can enjoy the escapism at the heart of fantasy roleplaying.

But what if those laws the heroes barrel right past were enforced? What if the authorities held the PCs accountable for the crimes

they commit daily without a second thought? Few things lend realism to your campaign world and help players stay immersed in quite the same way as forcing them to think about which laws their ‘heroes’ would follow and which they would break.

If you want to inject some law and order in your campaigns, or your players want their characters to enforce the law of the land, here’s how to add the force of the law to your game without ruining the fun.

10 CRIMES AND THEIR PUNISHMENTS

A code of law may cover hundreds or thousands of offenses, but these 10 are the most likely to be relevant to a roleplaying group.

ASSAULT, MURDER

“You saw it! That orphan clearly attacked me first!”

RPG characters attack and kill people and monsters constantly. Some of those deaths could lead to bigger consequences and more story hooks. At higher levels, the PCs’ actions may lead to tragedy on a grander scale, and the powers-that-be might target the heroes as mass murderers for those unforeseen consequences.

- Assault and murder adventure hooks Hooded bandits attack the heroes on the road. After killing and unmasking them,

they discover the bandits are the children of powerful local NPCs. This opens the characters to both legal consequences and private reprisals. The heroes could try to hide their crime, return to plead their case, or run and be pursued as outlaws.

THEFT

“What’s in my pockets? Certainly not the queen’s jewels. Can’t I just be glad to see you?”

Almost every RPG involves going somewhere and taking someone’s stuff. From a dragon’s hoard to a dwarf’s axe, at some point that loot belonged to someone, and they might just go to a higher authority in order to get it back.

Theft in your game – While looting a dragon’s hoard, the players find powerful, intelligent magic items. Shortly afterward they become the target of a higher power, such as a devil or fey being, who claims the souls powering the items were stolen from their realm by the dragon and demand the souls back.

WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY

“Turn you into a toad? No, incinerating you is MUCH easier.”

Performing magic is an accepted trade or skill in many fantasy games, but in certain places it can be considered unnatural or downright blasphemous.

Hope you prepared a spell that helps you float.

Witchcraft in your game – Player characters with certain magical or psionic powers travel to a society ravaged by aboleths or mind flayers in the distant past. The stigma of these powers remains, and if PCs reveal their powers, they are branded as heretics and sentenced to have their brains removed in a public execution or their powers permanently excised in a cleansing ceremony.

CARRYING A WEAPON

“I don’t care how old you are. I’m pretty sure that glowing shaft of starmetal that just insulted me isn’t a walking stick.”

Some oppressive medieval lords went to great lengths to make sure their local population didn’t have the tools necessary to revolt. Most commoners didn’t carry the kinds of swords and axes player characters do anyway, but weapons were often confiscated before joining crowds at festivals or executions. Good luck getting the nicer ones back.

Weapons in your game – The PCs are in town to prevent an assassination during a festival but are not allowed to enter or remain in the city while carrying weapons. Players could hire a porter or give them to a squire to carry with their other belongings, or they could try to conceal the weapons within other objects. When they find their enemies, they must take care to make sure their actions aren’t noticed, either by the guards who would arrest them or the citizens who could start a panic and scare off the assassin.

NOT CARRYING A WEAPON

“No sword, no shield, no service.”

Around the 13th century in England, all free men were required to have certain arms and armor if they were ever called to serve in the king’s army. Not having suitable and well-maintained weapons when called to muster might land you a fine, time in the stocks, or even execution for treason.

Lack of Weapons in your game – The PCs purchase a house in a city and thus must join the militia. This includes drilling once a month in regulation chainmail with a regulation buckler and regulation spear, or else they spend the day in the stocks. The player characters are in the middle of one such drill outside the city walls when attacked by a large (but lower-level) group of monsters. Leaving one’s officer to go recover non-regulation weapons and armor might be considered desertion...

LEASH LAWS

“I’ll let you muzzle me, but only if you follow me around with a shovel and a bucket. Deal?”

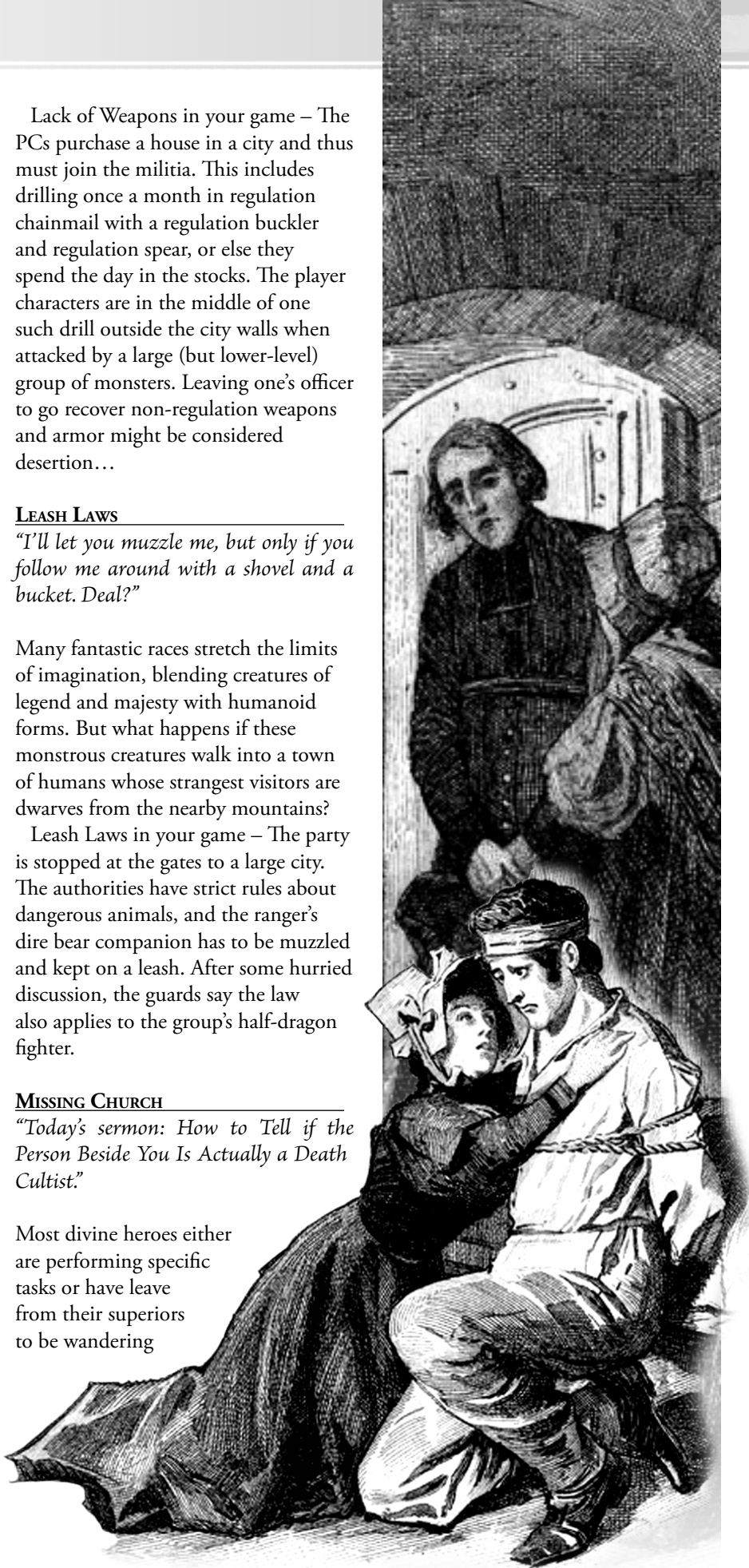
Many fantastic races stretch the limits of imagination, blending creatures of legend and majesty with humanoid forms. But what happens if these monstrous creatures walk into a town of humans whose strangest visitors are dwarves from the nearby mountains?

Leash Laws in your game – The party is stopped at the gates to a large city. The authorities have strict rules about dangerous animals, and the ranger’s dire bear companion has to be muzzled and kept on a leash. After some hurried discussion, the guards say the law also applies to the group’s half-dragon fighter.

MISSING CHURCH

“Today’s sermon: How to Tell if the Person Beside You Is Actually a Death Cultist.”

Most divine heroes either are performing specific tasks or have leave from their superiors to be wandering





Intent

In many places, historical medieval law was based largely on Roman law, and it broke down into three groups: natural law, divine law, and customary law. Natural laws governed the behavior of living things, such as the right to self-defense. Divine law covered how divinity played a role in the lives of humans and also governed the clergy and royalty separately from common people. Customary law was the local customs inherent to each nation, the “law of the land”. This covered how the rulers taxed their people and raised armies. For example, a starving person’s theft of bread is judged under natural law, because people have to eat. If that starving person is a priest, the church could judge their actions instead of secular authorities. If that starving man is in another country and steals bread, that country’s penalties could legally be enforced because of customary law, even if the man didn’t know it was a crime.

adventurers. However, some may find themselves facing sanctions for neglecting their duties to the church. In many theocracies those duties extend to the local populace, and lawful heroes may find themselves asked to perform some rather questionable acts to follow their ideals.

Crimes against the church in your game – A mid-level cleric is stopped by a superior while visiting a temple and told they have been neglecting their flock by constantly spending their time on the road and in dungeons. They can either stay and help lead a month-long celebration of their faith, undertake a quest for the church, or pay a significant indulgence to the temple to make up for the absence.

DEFAMATION

“Look, I didn’t mean to insult your lady friend. I didn’t even KNOW she was a lady!”

In many medieval societies (and some modern ones!), name-calling could be a capital offense. Those who felt their honor was slighted could challenge others to duels or demand payment for the crime, so long as they had the force to back up their claim. The threat of violence usually kept the rabble from spouting off at the nobility, and it encouraged nobles or knights to keep themselves in fighting shape. Losing such a fight could mean losing your possessions, titles, and holdings. Defamation of the church (blasphemy) may result in execution.

Defamation in your game – Heroes who make a snide quip or brash insult offend a nearby group of nobles, who demand satisfaction for their honor through mortal combat. One of the nobles belongs to a powerful house that could become a terrible enemy if the PCs kill their favored son.

TAX EVASION

“Sure, the bard may be a womanizing louse, but at least he keeps our books squeaky clean.”

In a feudal society, rulers give their vassals land to govern, and in turn the lords had to give the rulers tribute or other goods the land and its people produced. This often meant taxing the people a portion of their money or their goods. In a land filled with dungeons and ruins, this might include taxing adventurers who make their living exploring ruins that sit on a noble’s land, or even claiming a share of the treasure itself.

Tax Evasion in your game – The PCs find themselves in a region whose ruler collects a fair share from wandering adventurers—and the ruler determines what is fair. All adventurers must register with local tax collectors, and local authorities tax a portion of their loot.

Trying to evade the tax is tantamount to smuggling or “adventuring without a license”, and it could mean time in the stocks, fines,

or exile. DMs should consider adding additional treasure to compensate, unless you want to encourage your PCs to become smugglers.

DRAFT DODGING

“Serve at the king’s pleasure. Or suffer the consequences.”

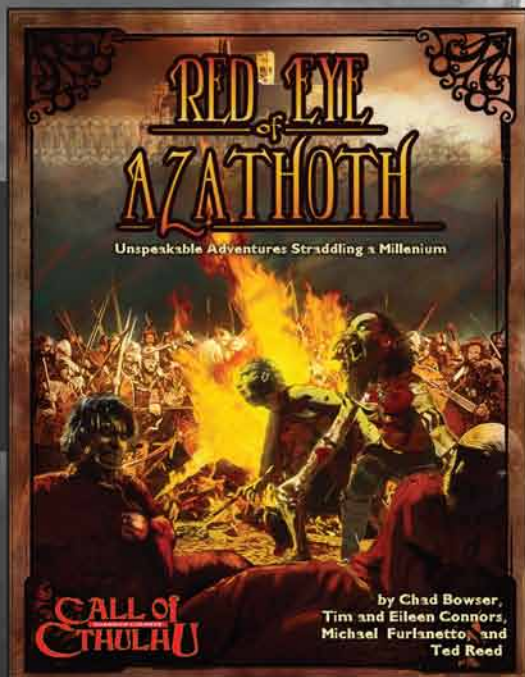
Many medieval laws permitted rulers to call on their vassals and their citizens in times of war to raise a well-trained and well-equipped fighting force. While most adventurers are either far from home or nation-less, that may not keep them from being pressed into service or even called back home.

Draft Dodging in your game – While in another country, the PCs learn their home nation is threatened by a horde of monsters. A courier arrives with a message for them from their parents or ruler, telling them to return home and serve in the army. If they don’t, they could face severe punishment, banishment, or even charges of treason.

CRIMINAL INTENT

Before enforcing these laws, DMs should be careful not to overly-stifle characters, or else the players will feel like they can’t be heroic (and have fun) without getting into serious trouble or paying hefty fines. Don’t use these options as stumbling blocks to rein in the players. Rather, use them to create compelling friction or drama and to flesh out the sense of a world where the PCs have tough choices to make. (See Kobold Quarterly issue #16 for Jeff Tidball’s take on how to create drama and dilemmas.)

Also be prepared for party conflict between “do-gooder” characters and those on the wrong side of the law. Remind everyone the laws exist to give the players a sense of realism, not to force other players to act the way you want them to. If the PCs run too far afoul of the law, there’s always room to take on a new identity or explore the ruins on the far side of the border – as good a reason for adventuring as any! Ω



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INTO THE DRAGON'S DEN

Lair Feats and Auras

By David Schwartz
Art by Kiss Márton Gyula

Dragons are solitary creatures and eschew the company of their kin, a comforting fact for the rest of the world. Yet those who seek out or suffer from dragons rarely encounter them alone; indeed the great beasts seem to attract other creatures, whether they desire company or not.

Animals and magical beasts feed off the dragon's scraps, and varied spirits find themselves drawn by awe or fear. Some dragons can even command the animals and plants of their native terrain. Intelligent creatures are also found in the company of dragons. Some cultists revere dragons for their ancient wisdom or awesome power. Others simply have the (mis)fortune of living in the area the dragon has claimed.

Dragons deal with their followers, desired or otherwise, according to temperament and personality. Generally, metallic dragons look kindly upon properly reverent acolytes, while chromatic dragons use enchantment and intimidation to dominate their servants. Many dragons have developed magic to manipulate or assist multiple creatures in their retinue. Commonly called lair auras, these magical effects encompass a specific location, though this need not include the dragon's abode, despite the name. These spell-like abilities require daily renewal, however, and thus most often protect the dragon's den or a narrow approach to its territory, such as a pass or tunnel.

The following feats grant a dragon the use of a lair aura spell-like ability. Though the specific effects vary, all lair auras have the following characteristics (unless otherwise stated): The dragon

can create the lair aura as a standard action 3/day. The lair aura has a radius of up to 10 ft. per age category from a point in space touched when the effect is activated.

The lair aura remains in place for 24 hours unless dismissed or dispelled. This ability is equivalent to a spell of the highest-level sorcerer spell the dragon can cast.

AMPHIBIOUS INSPIRATION [LAIR]

Coastal-dwelling bronze dragons often extend their lairs both above and below the waves. Their allies and attendants are as likely to be aquatic natives as air breathers. Though it provides no swimming movement, the bronze dragon's lair aura does prevent his guests from drowning in his lair. These lairs often serve as neutral ground for many coastal races.

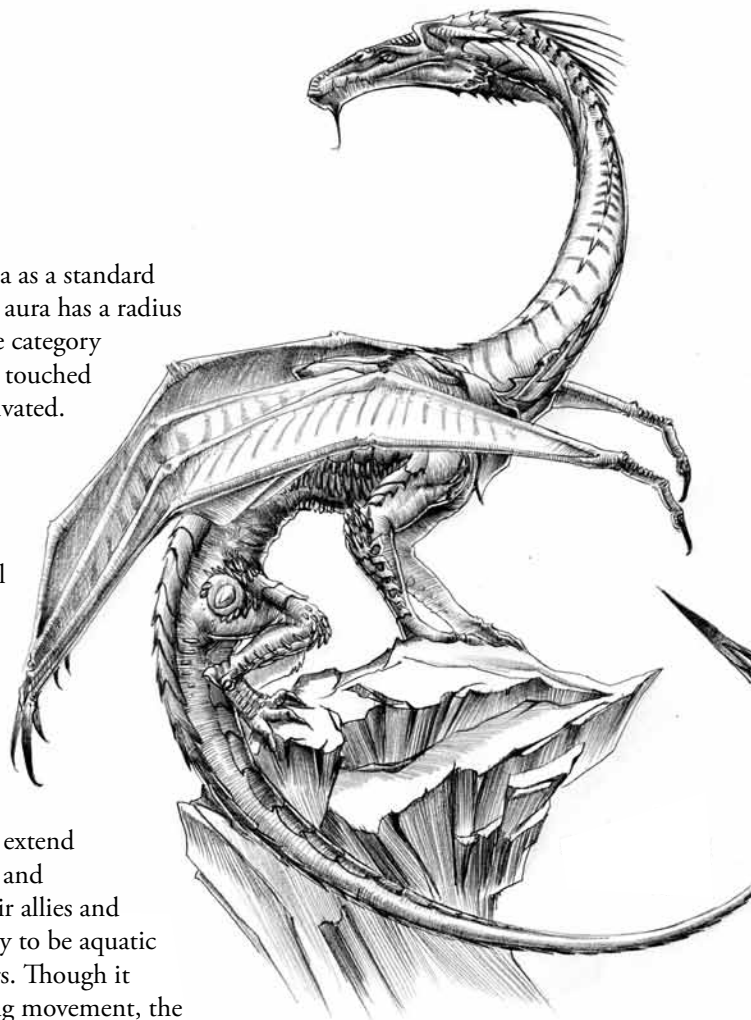
The dragon creates an area where any creature can breathe both air and water.

Prerequisites: Juvenile or older bronze dragon

Benefit: The dragon gains the lair aura spell-like ability *amphibious inspiration*. All living creatures within the area of *amphibious inspiration* can breathe both air and water.

ASCENDANT AIR [LAIR]

Of all true dragons, silver dragons are arguably the most at home in the air. Their lairs often reflect this love of flight by extending vertically rather than horizontally. Respecting



that others lack such mobility, a silver dragon's lair aura allows others to escape the bonds of earth.

The dragon suspends the force of gravity within an area.

Prerequisites: Juvenile or older silver dragon

Benefit: The dragon gains the lair aura spell-like ability *ascendant air*. All creatures within the area of *ascendant air* gain the benefits of the *air walk* spell.

DESERT'S RESPITE [LAIR]

Though they live in some of the most inhospitable places in the world, the friendly brass dragons make their lairs as comfortable as possible for their servants and guests by

moderating the effects of climate and weather. Known to the patrons of the Sand Dragon Inn, the caravanserai's owners turn this same magic to commercial ends.

The dragon creates an area of temperate atmosphere in all but the most inhospitable environments. See the "Sand Dragon Inn" in *KOBOLD QUARTERLY* issue #10.

Prerequisites: Juvenile or older brass dragon

Benefit: The dragon gains the lair aura spell-like ability *desert's respite*. All creatures within the area of *desert's respite* gain the benefits of the *endure elements* spell.

DISTORTING HEAT [LAIR]

The most feared of the true dragons, red dragons take lairs high in the peaks, the better to survey their domains.

Creatures of fire and fury, a red dragon's lair aura creates heat mirages: distances become hard to judge, and creatures and objects appear displaced.

The dragon causes distant things to appear to shift and warp as if seen through a haze of heat.

Prerequisites: Juvenile or older red dragon

Benefit: The dragon gains the lair aura spell-like ability *distorting heat*. All creatures within the area of *distorting heat* gain the benefits of the *entropic shield* spell.

FICKLE FLURRIES [LAIR]

Though the weakest of true dragons, white dragons take delight in bullying creatures that share their habitat.

Considering other flying creatures an affront to their dominance, white dragons developed this lair aura to ensure no winged creature can outmaneuver them in their own domains.

The dragon makes the wind shift in short, sharp gusts and sudden calms.

Prerequisites: Adult or older white dragon

Benefit: The dragon gains the lair aura spell-like ability *fickle flurries*. All non-dragon flying creatures within the area of *fickle flurries* have their maneuverability reduced by one step (minimum clumsy). Treat creatures without a listed maneuverability as having poor maneuverability within this area.

GOLDEN INNOCENCE [LAIR]

Arguably the most powerful of the true dragons, gold dragons are paradoxically the least dangerous (at least to goodly folk). Indeed they dwell closer to humankind than other dragons, favoring clement plains and tablelands. Though their adherents and supplicants are usually as high-minded as they are, gold dragons often find it necessary to temper the baser urges of these lesser beings.

The dragon creates an aura of peace that gives pause to creatures with violent thoughts.

Prerequisites: Juvenile or older gold dragon

Benefit: The dragon gains the lair aura spell-like ability *golden innocence*. All non-dragon creatures within the area of *golden innocence* gain the benefits of the *sanctuary* spell. A creature that attacks within the area of *golden innocence* loses the benefit of this ability for one week, even if it leaves the area and returns later.

GUMMOUS WATER [LAIR]

The bleak swamps claimed by black dragons are known for their unfriendly denizens: giant reptiles, bloodsucking insects, and carnivorous plants. Under the dragon's foul influence pools of stagnant water move to swallow those who stand too close—and destroy those who foolishly dive in.

The dragon turns still water in viscous, grasping slime.

Prerequisites: Adult or older black dragon

Benefit: The dragon gains the lair aura spell-like ability *gummous water*. The area of *gummous water* has a radius of up to 5 ft. per age category of the dragon from a point in space touched when the effect is activated. All non-reptilian creatures and waterborne vehicles within the area of *gummous water* treat still water as quicksand (*freedom of movement* overcomes this effect).

INTRUDER'S ILLUMINATION [LAIR]

The trees, epiphytes, and undergrowth found in the forests favored by green dragons provide abundant concealment

for both predators and prey. Even the immense dragons can disappear amid the foliage. Ever paranoid, however, green dragons can make all visitors plainly visible.

The dragon limns trespassers in its domain with a pale greenish light.

Prerequisites: Adult or older green dragon

Benefit: The dragon gains the lair aura spell-like ability *intruder's illumination*. All creatures—except animals, dragons, and plants—within the area of *intruder's illumination* are affected as if by the *faerie fire* spell.

LEVITY'S ARMOR [LAIR]

A copper dragon's personality is as colorful and unpredictable as the badlands he calls home. While other dragons may look down on them as foolish, copper dragon plays the archetypical trickster, teaching good behavior through practical jokes. Their infectious high-spirits encourage others to laugh in the face of fear.

The dragon's aura lightens hearts and quells fear.

Prerequisites: Juvenile or older copper dragon

Benefit: The dragon gains the lair aura spell-like ability *levity's armor*. All creatures within the area of *levity's armor* gain a +4 morale bonus against fear effects except the dragon's own frightful presence.

UNENDING THIRST [LAIR]

While within the blue dragon's lair aura, mortals continue to hunger and thirst without suffering the debilitating effects of deprivation. For the pragmatic blue dragon, reducing his servants' need for food and sleep means they can work longer. For their slaves, the only end to extended thirst in the dragon's lair is death in the desert beyond.

The dragon sustains other creatures on practically no food, water, or sleep.

Prerequisites: Adult or older blue dragon

Benefit: The dragon gains the lair aura spell-like ability *unending thirst*. All non-dragon creatures within the area of *unending thirst* gain the benefits of a *ring of sustenance*. Ω

The Heroic Flaw

By Philippe-Antoine Menard
Art by Frank Walls

Heroes are not defined by their deeds, powers and virtues alone. It is often their dark compulsions and inexorable duties that make heroes leap from unsung lives into the leather-bound chronicles and epic canticle of legendary bards.

Classic role playing games tend to reward gameplay that leads to the shortest, most efficient path to overcome a challenge. The 4th Edition is no exception. Many players, however, like to focus on playing out the inner drama of their characters, possibly more than vanquishing monsters and overcoming challenges.

Sadly, acting how a half-orc fighter can't be in the presence of orcs because of some psychological scarring buried deep in the character's backstory may not sit well with the average adventuring party. This is especially true if such scenes are played out without a tangible reward to offset any negative consequences of such theatrics.

As a GM, you can address this quite effectively by introducing two sets of simple mechanics that encourage role playing compulsions, obligations or character quirks and provide direct rewards for invoking them in play.

Each character gains one specific character trait. These traits are introduced as characterization guidelines for Player Characters. In order to encourage players to use such traits in play, the GM also introduces Trait Points, an alternative reward resource with several in-game uses when spent by players.

A TRAIT IN THE SAND

Each player picks one *character trait* upon creation. That trait represents a binding promise, a duty, an ingrained cultural tradition or just an omnipresent character quirk. It is chosen from the ones presented below, or from new ones created for the occasion with the GM's permission.

In essence, each one presented here are character compulsions or bits of personality that guide players when making significant choices. They inform the GM and all other players about what makes their character tick and which way they're likely to go in a given situation.

Once chosen, the GM works these traits in the adventures or campaign plotlines and creates situations that push characters to act in accordance or against those traits. In fact, if players create characters as a group, the chosen traits are very likely going to help the GM plan the campaign. For example, if one of your characters has taken a vow to bring down a demon lord and another character is fixated on seeking every possible shards of the dispersed Demonomicon, then you already have the main ingredients for a whole campaign arc.

During play, if a player finds a trait unsuitable or no longer relevant, they can be switched out, like powers and feats, upon leveling or by discussing with the GM. You can also experiment giving characters more than one trait. A good rule of thumb would be giving characters one trait per adventuring tier, based on how

they are invoked during play and how they motivate players.

The following are examples of traits that GMs can introduce as is or as inspiration for new ones:

THE OTHERWORLD PACT

It's so easy to focus on the power and overlook the price...

The character has brokered a pact with an entity far beyond mortal understanding, often in exchange for mastery of mystical powers or some other boon unavailable in the material world. The GM should work out, with the player's input, a high level plan the entity has laid out for the character. This plan should then be broken down in a series of short to medium term tasks the character is expected to pursue to hold the mortal end of the deal.

For example, the entity might require that a certain number of featureless seals be found and broken to release it from its prison in the Void and unleash its millennial dominion on the physical world.

While there is no game effect for ignoring the pact (or any other traits for that matter), the additional positive reinforcement coming from invoking the trait in play should push the player in playing both sides of the agreement.

This is a perfect example of a tailor-made trait for a warlock character, or any similar character dealing with extra-dimensional power sources. It can be adapted to represent binding supernatural agreements for nature and divinely inspired characters.

CODE OF HONOR

I have been divinely tasked to uphold life and order; stand aside or taste my blade fiend!

The character has sworn to uphold a code of conduct to a higher power, be it a liege lord, a divine patron or some form of ideal that transcends worldly existence. The GM and player work out a simple code: usually a set of three to five rules for the character to live by that will entice difficult and interesting choices at the game table. Things like “Never kill a surrendering foe” and “never ignore an insult to your deity” are interesting examples.

This is a trait to represent the classic Paladin’s code. While, it is not binding, spending trait points gained with invoking the code can represent divine influence or some sort of blessing effect on the character. It can be easily adapted to represent other codes of conduct like the thief code, pirate’s honor and various forms of swashbuckling dueling codes.

THE VOW

I swore on my father’s grave that I would not rest until I complete the quest the king gave him.

The character made a binding promise and openly professes that oath. The ultimate object of that promise should be some form of goal or state of virtue that can be attained through a chain of quests or personal achievements.

Avenging a death, chasing a family of dragons off ancestral lands, refrain from killing anyone for a whole year, or recovering all the long lost treasures of one’s clan are examples of such vows.

This trait serves an ideal model for all self-imposed obligations where a character feels compelled to achieve a goal or act in a certain way based on personal beliefs and motivations.

OBSESSION

We can’t return to the Inn now! I’m sure if we explore just a little deeper we’ll find that lost scroll!

The character is irrationally driven by a powerful need, goal or ideal. Every choice or action undertaken towards the object of that obsession, no matter how foolhardy or dangerous, will be rationalized as fundamental and necessary. The GM and player should define what the character will obsess about. The object of the obsession should be far reaching enough such that the character spends a significantly long period seeking it. Alternatively, it could be something impossible to ever achieve completely, making the character crave it forever more.

Examples of obsessions can cover things like collecting a certain number of artifacts to complete a ritual, a deep seated greed for sculpted gems and jewelry or an insatiable curiosity pushing the character to always want to check behind the next door.

The obsession trait serves as a model for a wide range of behaviors motivated by a source external to the character such as curses, Fey enchantments, fiendish possessions and many more.

PERSONALITY QUIRKS

Oh stop complaining. Yes, that lever I pulled DID send you plummeting in a pit filled with disgusting goop, but DID we not find the Crown of Sorrows at the bottom?

The character has a character flaw, superstition or habit that significantly impacts the way she interacts with others and the world around her without necessarily having a clear internal or external motivation. The quirk can be psychological, ritualistic, obsessive-compulsive, odious or just downright irritating.

For example, a character could be impulsive, overconfident, intolerant (culturally or socially), nosy, critical, argumentative, easily angered, gullible, oblivious, manic, mildly phobic, collect ears from evil humanoid, etc.

The challenge in having such a trait resides in making it interesting for other players, not just annoying to everyone. At the very least, it should be played for laughs, like a downtrodden bard constantly struggling to talk in epic rhymes and failing miserably, resorting to lame, horrible rhyming puns.



THE WHOLE POINT

During play, the GM awards a Trait Point whenever a player makes a choice, acts out a bit of role-playing or has a Player Character perform an action noteworthy of its chosen character trait. That point usually takes the form of a bead, poker chip, coin or some token that's easily differentiated from Action Points. Other players around the table can chime in to help identify a point-worthy moment.

Trait points are similar to Action Points. They can be spent to obtain certain advantages. They represent a character's fate, tenacity and single mindedness in achieving goals in the face of adversity and somewhat questionable character-driven choices.

A player spends a Trait Point to obtain a one-time situational bonus or advantage to help his character achieve a specific task. They are usually declared before dice are rolled and do not take any actions. The player describes to the GM what his character attempts to achieve with the help of the spent point and the GM choose or suggests a game effect.

Following are a few examples of effects:

- Obtain a +2 bonus to a key d20 roll in a scene (e.g. an attack, or a primary skill from a challenge)
- Obtain an automatic success as a helper or to secondary skill roll (ex: Stealth check, Athletics or Healing in combat)
- Perform a non-attack action one category faster (Standard to Move to Minor to Free)
- Increase speed by 2 for one move action without combat penalties
- Obtain a reroll for a skill check, an attack or damage roll.
- Add an extra d6 to damage

In essence, spending a Trait Point should give a something equivalent to spending a typical encounter utility power. Gaming groups are encouraged to tailor the effect of spending Trait Points on preferences.

A character can earn one point per encounter/scene where key decisions and actions are played out, such as combat encounters, skill challenges and roleplaying scenes that focus on significant choices in the adventure. In the same vein, players can spend at most, one such point per scene.

At the end of a game session, each remaining, unspent Trait Points is converted to a XP value equivalent

to a single monster of the party's level and distributed evenly between players. Thus while playing traits often leads everyone into trouble, there's always a form of a reward attached to it.

The rate at which Trait Points can be won and the range of game effects they can be spend on is ultimately in the hands of GMs. The rate should be set based on how dramatic or cinematic the overall gaming experience is expected to be and how many extra XPs the GM wants to hand down through playing traits. Being allowed to win and spend more points per game session will likely lead to a positive reinforcement cycle. Players should invoke traits more often to earn them more points to spend in dramatic situations for greater impact on the story.

Giving each character a defining trait and rewarding players who invoke such traits through specific bonuses and possible additional XPs adds a new set of incentives to the game. Such new mechanics can significantly influence gameplay to a point where dramatic choices, even when they momentarily lead a party away from an optical course of action, end up making a party's successes more focused on the story they create rather than the powers they yield. Ω

D20 MONKEY





LESSER DRAGONS = GREATER FUN!

Nothing brings excitement to a game table like a slithering, hissing, glowing-eyed reptile crouched atop a pile of treasure. But there's no way your PCs are high enough level to take on a dragon yet. Denied!

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Who Watches the Watch Fires?

A 4th Edition Adventure for 5 4th-level characters

By Jonathan Roberts

Art by Rick Hershey and Frank Walls

The watch fires of Friula warn against invaders. Friula's small army relies on the surrounding badlands to defend the city and its sparse farmland. Any attackers must cross treacherous hills and travel a road rife with blind gullies and steep canyons. A modest force can bleed any aggressors white long before they reach the city gates, but only with enough warning.

A line of watch fires stand along the southern road to Starlight Keep and the Sticks of Trombei. At the first sign of an invasion, the guards light the fires, the alerted city locks its gates, and the banners of Friula ride out to thwart the invading army.

The Black Vipers, a mercenary company from Trombei, have grown tired of the slim pickings in the lower swamps. They plan to raid the rich lands close to Friula and make off with their plunder

before the city responds. They compromised the first watchtower by bribing the master of hounds to open the gates. They killed the small garrison and threw the bodies in the stream at the bottom of the hill. A few reavers now hold the tower while the main force heads off to overwhelm the next tower. Years of peace have left the inner towers lax and reliant on the first tower's vigilance. The encroaching mercenaries will easily take the unprepared garrisons.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The party first spots the column of soldiers in the valley below. They wear foreign colors, but the watch fire remains unlit. Then the PCs discover the dead guards. The characters must storm the tower, overcome the mercenaries, and light the fire to raise the alarm.

Dusk draws in as you travel through the edge of the Friulan foothills. As you crest the last rise before the first watchtower, you notice movement on the ribbon of road in the valley below, a column of soldiers moving fast enough to raise some dust. You can barely discern a black viper on their shields. The watch fire remains unlit, however, and as you round a bend you see why. Soldiers' bodies in Friulan colors lie in the stream, staring at the sky.

If those are the guards, who is watching the watch fire?

The adventurers might approach the problem by force or by guile. They can avoid the front gate by attacking over the walkway walls or pass around the hill to the sharp cliffs to climb over a fieldstone wall to the unpatrolled south. If they try to talk their way in, use the 'A Honeyed Tongue' skill challenge. If

they try to sneak over the walls, use the 'Scaling the Heights' skill challenge.

Once inside the walls, they find that recent rains make lighting the watch fire all but impossible. They must break out the oil from the locked stores to start the signal. That's when the defenders attack.

TERRAIN

The watchtower is built on a naturally well-defended site, improved by some simple fortifications.

THICK WALLS WITH WALKWAYS

The 15-ft. tall walls and 20-ft. tall towers require a DC 19 Athletics check to climb. Their battlements provide superior cover against attackers on the ground and cover against opponents firing from another battlement or tower.

SOUTHERN WALL

Made of rougher stone, the southern wall is more lightly built but is also 15 ft. high.

ROCKY SLOPE

Squares on the steep slope up to the castle walls containing rocks are considered difficult terrain. The steps are not difficult terrain.

BUILDING ROOFS

The roofs are considered difficult terrain. Anyone subject to forced movement on a roof must make a DC 15 Acrobatics check or fall off the roof. See *Player's Handbook 1* pg. 284 for falling rules.

A HONEYED TONGUE LEVEL 6 Skill Challenge XP 500

The bored gate guards don't expect visitors, let alone armed invaders. They suspect anyone arriving at dusk and have clear orders not to open the gates. Tricky adventurers might try to talk their way past the guards. Award bonuses for planning as well as secondary skill use. Illusions, Bluff checks, and disguises might help them pass for fellow mercenaries or commanders. Flashy powers might provide Intimidate successes. Apply +2 modifiers for appropriate creativity.

Complexity 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate

Other Skills Insight, History, Streetwise

Victory After three successes the characters talk their way through the first gate. After a further three successes they talk their way past the second gate.

The guards at the second gate are more suspicious, so all DCs increase by 2.

Failure After the second failure, the guards send for Captain Thaliss. Extremely suspicious, he brings an extra sentry and a guard. The DCs of the checks increase by 2, stacking with the second gate's increase. After three failures, Thaliss shouts for the garrison to "Open fire!"

Bluff DC 17 (maximum 4 successes) Success indicates the characters convince the guards they are legitimate mercenaries. The characters receive a +2 to their next Intimidate check. A failure makes the guards suspicious, and the PCs have a -2 on the next Bluff or Intimidate check.

Diplomacy DC 17 (maximum 4 successes) On a successful check, the characters persuade the guards to start opening the doors for them.

Intimidate DC 21 (maximum 4 successes) On a success, the guards are cowed and begin to let the characters through. A successful Intimidate check scares the guards, and the first subsequent failure causes them to send for Thaliss, even if it is the first failure in the skill challenge.

Insight DC 17 (0 successes) The characters better understand the attitude of the guards, providing a +2 on the next Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check.

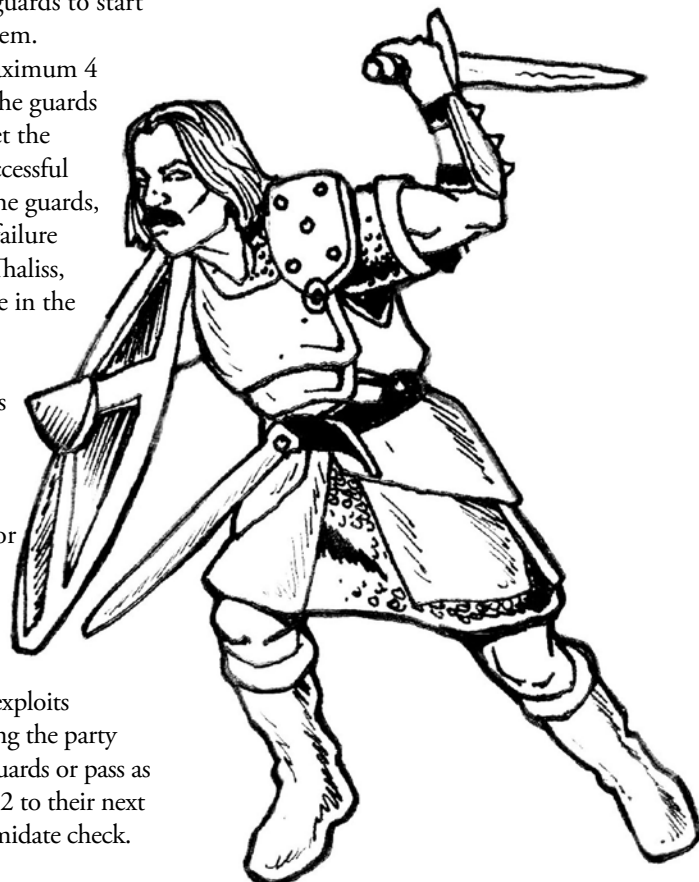
History DC 15 (0 successes, only 1 use allowed) The PC remembers details of the exploits of the Black Vipers, helping the party ingratiate itself with the guards or pass as members. The PCs gain +2 to their next Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check.

Adventure Hooks

Many reasons other than an invasion might cause the PCs to take the watchtower. Perhaps they support the Black Vipers, who asked them to remove the warning system. An enemy might have infiltrated Fruila, and they require the PCs to light the fire to draw the army out of the city.

Because the watch fires can serve as a long-distance messaging tool, they might be used to signal other plots as well. For instance, a merchant house could employ the PCs to light the blaze to signal their envoys and trigger their schemes to raid a rival or coordinate a mercantile scheme between cities.

Streetwise DC 19 (0 successes) The PCs intuit what motivates the mercenary guards, and smooth the way toward gaining their cooperation. Add +2 to the next Diplomacy or Bluff check. This costs the PCs 20 gp.



Adventure Map

The map for “Who Watches the Watchfires?” is printed on the inside back cover of this magazine. A higher-resolution version suitable for online gaming tools like Fantasy Grounds will be available at the KOBOLD QUARTERLY store and elsewhere.

SCALING THE HEIGHTS LEVEL 4

Skill Challenge

XP 700

The darkness allows the characters to sneak up and scale the walls between sentry rounds. The southern cliff is the most physically difficult approach, with a 30 ft. jagged face topped with a 15-ft. fieldstone wall, but the approach provides the most cover, and the guards observe it less. However, the wall is in disrepair and poses a danger of its own to those who scale it.

Complexity 3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills Acrobatics, Athletics, Stealth

Other Skills Nature, Perception, Thievery

Victory Each of the first four successes means one character reaches the wall unseen. After the final four successes, all the PCs are in the compound. For the last four successes, allow one character over the wall per success, with all remaining characters over the wall on the final success. These DCs are for the southern wall. For the other three walls, increase the Stealth DC by +4 and reduce the Athletics DC by -2.

Failure After three failures, the PCs cannot scale the walls and must find an alternate route into the fort.

A failure with 4 or fewer successes means the noise of the fall disturbs the hounds in the kennel. Their baying alerts the defenders, adding 2 to the DC of all skill challenges. A failure with more than 4 successes draws a

sentry to investigate the wall. The characters must make an immediate opposed Stealth check against his Perception (+7).

If they fail, he sees them and they must roll initiative. Killing him before his turn prevents him from raising the alarm. Use discretion regarding the method – a *fireball* will certainly raise the alarm and fail the skill challenge.

Acrobatics, Athletics DC 19 (maximum 6 successes) A character races to the wall or climbs up the rugged stone face. A failure by 5 or more means the character falls hard, losing a healing surge. At the southern wall, lose a healing surge and suffer an additional 1d10 damage.

Stealth DC 13 (maximum 4 successes) The PCs creep closer without arousing suspicion. Failure draws attention to their advance. (See above.)

Nature DC 15 (0 successes) A character discovers an easy route, providing +2 on the next Acrobatics, Athletics, or Stealth check.

Thievery, Perception DC 15 (0 successes) The adventurer spots good handholds for climbing, giving a +2 to the next Acrobatics or Athletics check.

Bluff DC 17 (0 successes, can only be used after the first failure, and only once per failure) The group causes a diversion, distracting the guards. This negates one -2 penalty from failed checks. A failed Bluff check immediately draws a sentry to investigate.

LOCATION

1. STEPS.

The steps rise easily to the front gate of the keep. Anyone on the steps is in full view of the sentries on the walls.

2. FIRST GATE.

A monstrous door of hardened oak reinforced with iron and barred from within blocks the front gate to the castle (break DC 20, requires 2 successes, AC 4, Fort 12, 60 hit points, move action to unbar from within).

The gate can be opened from the top of the wall via a mechanism. The

Foes in the Watchtower

6 SENTRIES (S) LEVEL 3 MINION
ARTILLERY

Medium natural humanoid XP 38
Initiative +6; Senses Perception +7
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 17; Fort 15, Reflex 16, Will 14
Speed 6

STANDARD ACTIONS

[Melee at-will icon] **Longsword**
(standard; at will) • **Weapon**
+6 vs AC; 5 damage.

[Ranged at-will icon] **Crossbow**
(standard; at will) • **Weapon**

Ranged 15/30; +10 vs AC; 5 damage.

[Close burst icon] **Boiling Oil**
(standard; encounter) • **Fire**

Close burst 2; +8 vs Reflex; 5 damage;
usable only when the sentry is on top
of a wall and the target is below.

TRAITS

Alignment Unaligned Languages Common
Skills Insight +2

Str 12 (+2) Dex 17 (+4) Wis 12 (+2)
Con 14 (+3) Int 9 (+0) Cha 11 (+1)

Equipment leather armor, crossbow,
longsword

6 HUMAN GUARDS (G) LEVEL 3
SOLDIER

MM pg. 162, +2 initiative from Thaliss' Battle Acumen ability.

KETHEK, MASTER OF HOUNDS (K) LEVEL 5
SKIRMISHER

Use half-orc Hunter, MM2 pg. 140, but increase Strength to 20 (+7) and adjust damages.

THALISS, HUMAN WARLORD (T) LEVEL 7 SOLDIER (L)

Use human Cavalier, MM2 pg. 144, but change longsword damage to 1d12+7 and replace the Lancer power with:

[Melee icon] **Lion's Roar** (standard; encounter) • **Healing, Weapon, Reliable**

+12 vs AC; 2d10 + 7 damage. Thaliss or one ally within 5 squares can spend a healing surge.

guards on the parapet have a direct line of fire on anyone trying to open the door. They shoot arrows and dump boiling oil.

If the adventurers try to bluff their way in, or scale the walls through stealth, refer to the skill challenges 'A Honeyed Tongue' and 'Scaling the Heights.'

3. WALKWAY WALLS.

Fifteen feet high, the walls afford a lofty view and provide a commanding position for the sentries while they patrol. One guard (shown at 2) walks atop the outer curtain wall, circling past the two gates and out to the southern end of the walkway and back. Each circuit takes him 10 rounds.

Three more guards and four sentries man the towers and guard the gates. The commander Thaliss stays inside the guards' quarters along with four other soldiers, emerging for visitors or disturbances.

4. SOUTH CLIFF.

The most lightly defended of the walls, the sheer cliff makes it impossible to build a stable walkway, and the cliff makes an attack unlikely.

5. INNER GATE.

A portcullis defends the inner gate (break DC 23) and provides cover. It opens from the inside with two move actions.

6. OIL HOUSE.

A low building stands in the corner of the yard, its dark slate roof and fieldstone walls hunched against the cold. A bright metal lock hangs from the latch, and a flicker of lamp light dances underneath the door.

This building stores a permanently lit oil lamp and the four barrels of oil for the watch fire. The door is locked, and the commander has the key (break DC 16; all guards in 5 squares make a Perception check versus the party's Stealth check). The quality lock is well maintained (DC 20 Thievery check to open).

Anyone carrying a barrel reduces their speed by half and cannot perform any actions that require the use of their hands. Breaking open a barrel is a standard action; afterwards, any fire in the same square lights the barrel into a spectacular conflagration

Barrel Fire: area burst 1, all creatures within blast, +11 vs. Reflex, 3d8+4 damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

7. GUARD HOUSE.

The guards rest here. Two guards, two sentries, and Thaliss are always relaxing here. They need 3 rounds to respond to a disturbance. This group is one of the more substantial threats in the adventure, so time their arrival to increase the tension and excitement in the combat.

The guardhouse contains the soldiers' belongings. Thaliss keeps most of the garrison's treasure: 280 gp and two small casks of finest Capleon Gold, a sweet, fortified golden white wine that will each fetch 50 gp. One of the soldiers also keeps a potion of *cure light wounds*. You could also place a magic item (parcel 1-4) appropriate to your party here.

8 DOG HOUSE

Kethek, master of hounds, snores in the kennel with his dogs. Characters can sneak past the dogs with Stealth checks exceeding the dogs' passive Perception (17). Kethek keeps the ill-gotten gains of his betrayal in the straw – four 100 gp azure sapphires and 70 gp.

4 ATTACK DOGS (D)

Use hyenas, *Monster Manual* pg. 166, but replace bite damage with 1d12+3.

9. THE WATCH FIRE.

The watch fire stands aloof on its pillar of rock, watching the horizon where its brothers stand – a line of silent sentinels across the Friulan

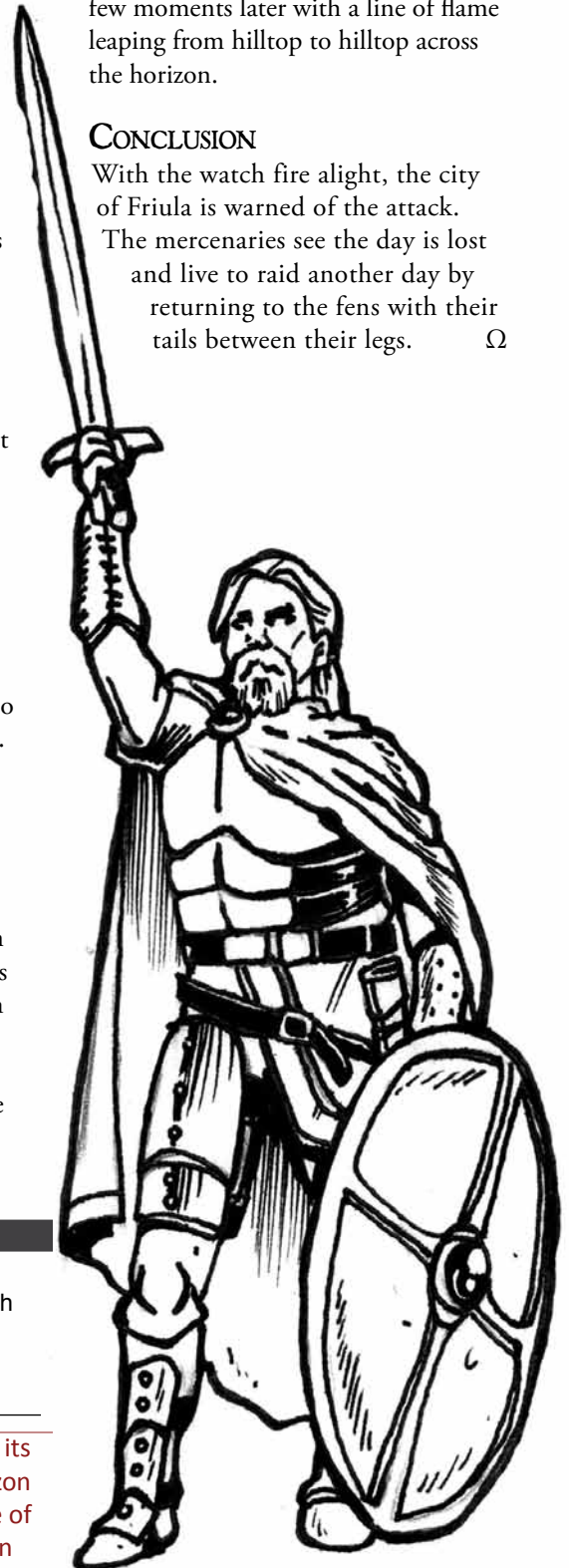
hills. It rained hard during the day, and the wood is clearly too wet to catch on its own.

Torches or fire spells don't ignite the wood. Characters need to douse it with oil then set it alight. Once lit, the wood burns fast, sending a bright lance into the sky. The next tower answers a few moments later with a line of flame leaping from hilltop to hilltop across the horizon.

CONCLUSION

With the watch fire alight, the city of Friula is warned of the attack.

The mercenaries see the day is lost and live to raid another day by returning to the fens with their tails between their legs. Ω



Beast Masters

Why Should Humanoids Have All the Fun?

By Marc Radle

Art by Ben Hodson and unknown



The Leadership feat enables you to attract a loyal cohort, typically an NPC with class levels and a few devoted lower-level subordinates. While this works fine for most characters, sometimes you may have something a little different in mind. Rangers, druids, and other beast mastersorts of characters can certainly benefit from standard cohorts, but sometimes it just doesn't quite fit.

A druid might aspire to control a stretch of wilderness with a pack of wolves guarding her forest and birds of prey scouting high overhead; or she may simply desire a second animal companion. A druid might find a normal fighter a hindrance as a cohort, especially when she could have a magical beast like a pegasus. Simply put, magical beasts and other animals often make much more fitting cohorts and followers for certain characters.

The Beast Leadership feat addresses this problem by allowing characters to enlist the creatures of the world in their cause. A list of appropriate magical beast cohorts is also provided, along with advice on magic items and a new magic item perfect for your animal companion or magical beast cohort.

BEAST LEADERSHIP

You attract either a magical beast or a second animal companion to join you on your adventures as well as a group of loyal animals.

Prerequisite: Character level 7th, 5 ranks in Handle Animal skill

Benefits: This feat enables you to attract a magical beast to serve as your cohort plus devoted animal followers who assist you to the best of their

ability. Animal followers are normal animals as detailed in the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*. See **Table 1: Beast Leadership** for the effective level of magical beast cohorts and how many animal followers you can recruit. If you have the animal companion class feature, you may attract an additional animal companion instead of a magical beast cohort.

Beast Leadership Modifiers: Several factors can change your Beast Leadership score from the base score (character level + Cha modifier). Your reputation among the magical beast cohort or animal followers you wish to attract raises or lowers your Beast Leadership score as follows:

Leader's Reputation	Modifier
Great renown within the animal kingdom	+2
Fairness and generosity	+1
General cruelty	-1
Failure	-1
Aloofness	-1
Cruelty to animals; wanton destruction of natural habitat	-2

Other modifiers may apply when you try to attract a magical beast cohort, as listed below:

The Leader...	Modifier
Has a familiar, special mount, or animal companion	+1
Recruits a cohort of a different alignment	-1
Caused the death of a cohort or animal companion	-2*

* Cumulative per cohort killed.

Animal followers have different priorities than magical beast cohorts. When you try to attract your animal followers, use the following modifiers.

The Leader...	Modifier
Has an appropriate natural base of operations.	+2
Has Animal Affinity feat, Wild Empathy class feature, or Animal cleric domain	+1
Has 10 or more ranks in Knowledge (nature)	+1
Has 10 or more ranks in Handle Animal	+1

Moves around a lot	-1
Caused the death of other animal followers	-1

Beast Leadership Score: Your base Beast Leadership score equals your level plus your Charisma modifier. This table allows for very low Beast Leadership scores, to account for negative Charisma modifiers, but you must still be 7th level or higher to gain the Beast Leadership feat. Outside factors can alter your Animal Leadership score, as detailed above.

Magical Beast Cohort Level: You can attract a magical beast as a cohort of up to this effective level. Refer to the Monster Cohorts section of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, for more information. This feat allows you to gain a cohort only with the magical beast type. Regardless of your Beast Leadership score, you can only recruit a magical beast cohort two or more levels lower than character level.

The magical beast cohort might have additional gear depending on the specific creature (see the appropriate magical beast's entry in the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*). The cohort's alignment may not be opposed to your alignment on either axis, and you suffer a -1 penalty to your Leadership score if you recruit a cohort of an alignment different from your own.

A magical beast cohort does not count as a party member when determining the party's XP awards. Instead, divide the magical beast cohort's effective level by your level. Multiply this result by the total XP awarded to you, and add that number of experience points to the magical beast cohort's total.

If a magical beast cohort gains enough XP to bring it to an effective level one lower than your level, the cohort does not gain the new level. Its XP total remains 1 less than the amount needed for the next level.

When the magical beast cohort actually can advance a level, it should generally gain a key class level (fighter is often the best choice). See the Monster Cohorts section of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* for more details.

Table 1: Beast Leadership

Animal Leadership Score	Magical Beast Cohort Level*	Number of Animal Followers by CR					
		1/8 – 1/2	1	2	3	4	5
1 or lower	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	1st	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	2nd	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	3rd	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	3rd	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	4th	—	—	—	—	—	—
7	5th	—	—	—	—	—	—
8	5th	—	—	—	—	—	—
9	6th	—	—	—	—	—	—
10	7th	5	—	—	—	—	—
11	7th	6	1	—	—	—	—
12	8th	8	1	—	—	—	—
13	9th	10	1	1	—	—	—
14	10th	15	3	1	—	—	—
15	10th	20	3	1	1	—	—
16	11th	25	3	3	1	—	—
17	12th	30	5	3	1	1	—
18	12th	35	5	3	3	1	—
19	13th	40	5	5	3	1	1
20	14th	50	7	5	3	3	1
21	15th	60	7	5	5	3	1
22	15th	70	10	7	5	3	3
23	16th	80	10	7	5	5	3
24	17th	90	15	7	7	5	3
25 or higher	17th	100	20	10	9	7	5

*Note: If you have the animal companion class feature and already have an animal companion, you may opt for a second animal companion in place of a magical beast cohort. See below for details.

Additional Animal Companion:

If you already have an animal companion, you may opt to gain a second animal companion instead of a magical beast cohort. This additional animal companion follows all of the animal companion rules. Your second animal companion may come from a species different from your current animal companion.

Number of Animal Followers by CR:

You can lead up to the indicated number of animals of each CR. Because these animals tend to be much less powerful than you are, they are rarely effective in combat. These animal followers provide you with aid in other ways (scouting, spying, guarding, hunting, etc.)

You gain a +4 circumstance bonus on all wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks made regarding these animal followers.



Table 2: Magical Beast Cohorts by Effective Level

Monster	Effective Level
Aranea (N) 2	8
Blink dog (LG) 2	4
Chimera (CE) 1	10
Dragon horse (NG) 2	16
Giant eagle (NG) 1	6
Griffon (N) 1	8
Leucrotta (CE) 2	9
Manticore (LE) 1	9
Pegasus (CG) 1	6
Sphinx, Gynosphinx (N) 1	14
Unicorn (CG) 1	8
Winter Wolf (NE) 1	9
Worg (NE) 1	5
Awakened animal *	HD + 2

1 Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 1

2 Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2

* See Awakened Animal Cohorts below.

You gain an additional +4 circumstance bonus on all wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks if you have a way of effectively communicating with your animal followers, such as *Speak with Animals*.

Animal followers must have the animal type and are in all ways typical

of their species. See the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* for specific details.

Animal followers don't earn experience and thus don't gain levels or a higher CR. When you gain a new level, consult **Table 1: Beast Leadership** to determine if you acquire more animal followers, perhaps of a higher CR than your existing animal followers. Don't consult the table for your cohort or additional animal companion, however. Magical beast cohorts advance as detailed above, and additional animal companions advance according to the Animal Companion rules detailed in the *Pathfinder RPG* Core rules on pg. 51.

AWAKENED ANIMAL COHORTS

The druid spell *awaken* opens up a wealth of options for interesting beast cohorts. *Awaken* transforms a normal animal into a magical beast (augmented animal), adds +2 HD, increases the newly awakened creature's Intelligence by +3d6, and its Charisma by +1d3. In addition, the new magical beast gains the ability to speak one or more languages. Such a creature makes a unique magical beast cohort indeed.

To calculate the awakened animal's effective cohort level, add an additional +2 to the awakened animal's total hit

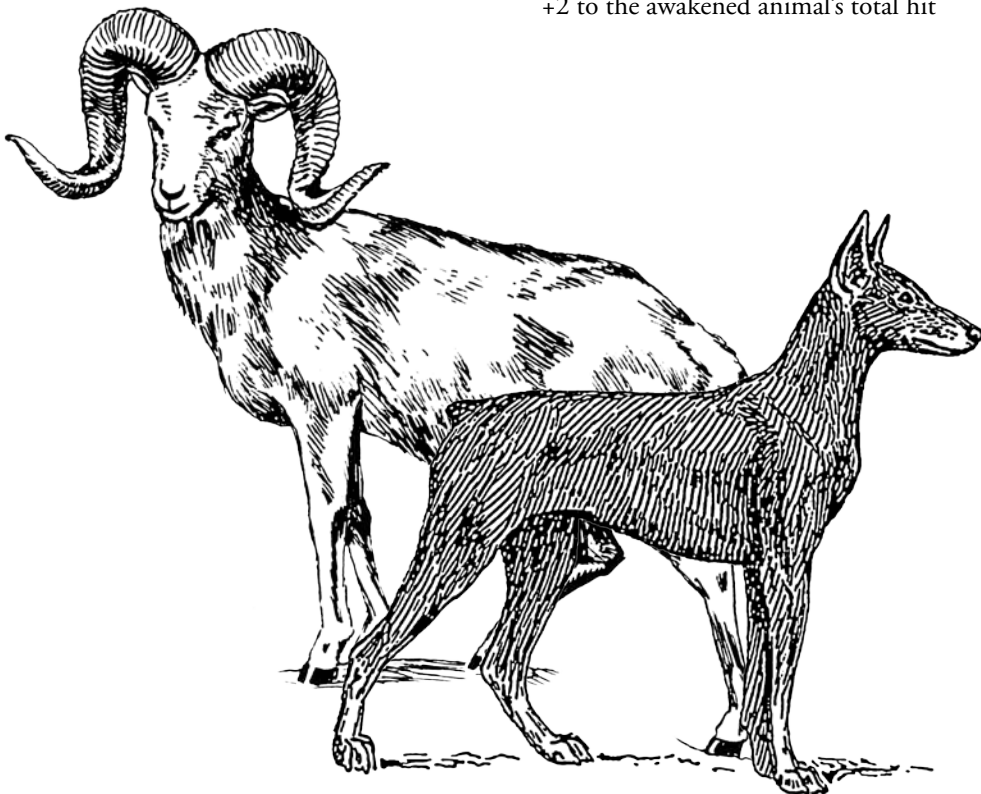
dice. Once it becomes a cohort, the awakened animal advances by adding class levels using the rules detailed in the Beast Leadership feat.

Although a druid is the most likely character to have an awakened cohort, other possibilities exist. A druid might offer to cast the spell in exchange for money or some service, perhaps spurring an entire adventure. A character with the Beast Leadership feat might encounter an *awakened* animal alone in the wilderness, perhaps one who recently lost its druid friend. An *awakened* bear, for example, who could not save his druid from a band of murderous orcs, might agree to follow someone new who swears to hunt down those orcs.

Characters should carefully consider which animals to target with an *awaken* spell. Awakening a hawk, for example, does not give the PC a particularly combat-oriented cohort. However, it would excel at scouting, spying, and surveillance duties. An awakened hawk— with an Intelligence score rivaling that of the average PC—can easily fly over enemy camps and understand every detail of what it sees, including troop numbers, commanders, defenses, and patrols. It can then return and communicate with that information with complete clarity. Awakening a lion, or even a dire lion, obviously produces a decidedly different kind of magical beast cohort. Players should decide the role they wish their character's cohort to play before taking this option.

MAGICAL BEAST COHORTS AND CLASS LEVELS

The *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* provides extensive information on advancing monster cohorts by adding class levels. These class levels provide a great way to further customize your beast cohort. Adding fighter levels is the most appropriate and straightforward option. A pegasus or awakened gorilla cohort with fighter levels makes a lot of sense. Depending on the creature's type, however, adding levels in other classes creates more interesting and versatile cohorts.



An *awakened* gorilla cohort might benefit more from a few barbarian levels. Imagine an awakened monkey cohort with rogue levels, a unicorn cohort with paladin levels, or even an awakened giant frilled lizard cohort with sorcerer levels (the draconic bloodline would be an interesting thematic choice).

Adding class levels to your magical beast cohort does add a level of complexity, especially when adding classes other than fighter. The results are well worth it.

MAGIC ITEMS

Many standard magic items can also benefit animal companions and magical beast cohorts. Magical barding made for a large warhorse should certainly fit a pegasus, or with some modifications, perhaps even a lion or a manticores. Most magical rings resize to fit the wearer, so a magic ring could also fit a monkey's finger, a hawk's talon, or even a worg's claw.

Characters with magical beast cohorts or animal companions might also consider taking feats like Craft Arms and Armor or Craft Wondrous Item to create custom magical items specifically for their animal companion or magical beast.

One magic item in particular, the *collar of beast armor*, is often created for animal companions and magical beast cohorts.

COLLAR OF BEAST ARMOR

Aura moderate conjuration; **CL** 7th
Slot neck; **Price** 1,000 gp (+1), 3,000 gp (+2), 6,000 gp (+3), 11,000 gp (+4), 18,000 gp (+5), 25,000 gp (+6), 34,000 gp (+7), 44,000 gp (+8);
Weight 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

This worked leather collar fits a medium or large animal or magical beast. The collar surrounds the wearer with an invisible but tangible magic field, granting it an armor bonus of +1 to +8.

Alternatively, *collars of beast armor* can offer armor special abilities. See **Table 15-4: Armor Special Abilities** (*Pathfinder RPG Core*

Rulebook) for a list of abilities. Special abilities usually count as additional bonuses for determining the market value of an item but do not improve AC. *Collars of beast armor* cannot have a modified bonus (armor bonus + armor special ability bonus equivalents) higher than +8. *Collars of beast armor* must have at least a +1 armor bonus to grant an armor special ability. They cannot have any armor special abilities that add a flat gp amount to their cost. *Collars of beast armor* and ordinary armor do not stack. If a creature receives a larger armor bonus from another source, the *collar of beast armor* does not grant its armor bonus or armor special abilities. If the *collar of beast armor* grants a larger armor bonus, the other source of armor ceases functioning.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *mage armor*, creator's caster level must be at least twice that of the bonus placed in the collar, plus any requirements of the armor special abilities; **Cost** 500 gp (+1), 1,500 gp (+2), 3,000 gp (+3), 5,500 gp (+4), 9,000 gp (+5), 12,500 gp (+6), 17,000 gp (+7), 22,000 gp (+8) Ω

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By Skip Williams

Art by Maciej Zagorski

A few issues ago, someone asked a question about the *major image* spell and its potential to deal lethal damage (you said it can't). What kinds of effects can a figment such as *major image* produce? Can it make creatures die of fright (or at least pass out)? Can it give an ally an illusory buff (such as an ability score boost or combat bonus)? How about creating an illusory bridge that your party can walk across?

You're right that a figment spell such as *major image* cannot deal lethal damage. It cannot deal nonlethal damage either, nor have any other "real" effects. A real effect has some quantifiable and physical consequence in the game world. A figment cannot induce unconsciousness (or impose any condition from the conditions list, such as fatigue), form a solid barrier, support weight, improve an ability score, impose a penalty (except as the result of the figment's purely sensory effects), or grant a bonus.

Any consequential effects a figment spell has must be strictly derived from the sensory elements the spell includes, and they cannot exceed the limits noted above. For *major image*, the sensory elements are vision, sound, smell, and thermal. A *major image* can be audible, but not so loud as to deal damage or deafen anyone. It can produce a feeling of heat or cold, but not enough to deal damage or to impose any effects from extreme heat or cold—such as heat

exhaustion or frostbite—or to negate such effects in the environment.

For example, if you use *major image* to create the illusion of a cheery, crackling fire on top of a glacier, it will look bright and feel warm; however, you're still subject to freezing to death if you huddle next to it without bundling up. Likewise, you can use *major image* to create an illusory garbage pile that really stinks, but not so stinky that creatures subjected to the stench will suffer nausea.)

A visual figment can create opaque images, such as banks of fog, or even apparently solid walls. Such images can block line of sight but not line of effect, and they can provide creatures within or behind them with concealment or total concealment with the appropriate miss chance.

Is there any way to reduce the experience point cost when casting a spell or making a magic item? Can the cost be shared?

The rules treat an XP component for a spell exactly like a material component for the spell. The XP is instantly and irrevocably consumed when the spell is cast (and before the spell's success, failure, or results are determined).

The spell caster must have the necessary XP on hand, meaning you cannot expend so much XP that you lose a level. You cannot gather the XP you need from another character just as you cannot use a material component in another character's possession. If you don't have the needed XP yourself, you cannot cast the spell.



Spending XP to create an item works just like spending XP to cast the spell. You expend the XP when you begin the item creation process.

Although the rules don't allow XP costs to be reduced or shared, GMs might want to play with those rules a little bit. See the sidebar for details.

XP COSTS

The game has always included some magical effects that can make the most vexing problems easy to conquer, including spells such as *atonement*, *commune*, *permanency*, and *wish*. The game's designers always have been faced with a dilemma where these effects are concerned: Eliminate or weaken such effects or look for a way to prevent or discourage players from abusing them.

Weakening some of these effects has never seemed a good alternative. It doesn't make much sense to give an effect a powerful name when that effect can't deliver on the expectations that name creates. For example, if the *permanency* spell really didn't make other spells permanent it would more properly be called *extension*. (In fact, before the advent of metamagic feats, there were a series of *extension* spells.) Keeping this powerful magic in the game, however, necessitated some way to control it.

Past versions of the game tried several different control methods,

some better than others. For example, one version of the *commune* spell could be cast only once a month. That worked fairly well for most campaigns, but not very well in games where the DM wasn't paying much attention to game time. Other spells aged the character or reduced the caster's Constitution score. That certainly made players think twice before casting such spells, but it also ate player characters alive. They literally turned spellcasters into consumable commodities.

When my fellow designers and I sat down to revise the game's magic, we looked for some form of game currency that was renewable but also at least psychologically precious to players. It didn't take long for us to settle on experience points. Players never think they have enough experience. Even if a player decides to spend hard-earned experience making magic, continuous expenditure eventually would strip the character's ability to work the most powerful magic. We decided to use experience costs for magic creation in addition to spellcasting, and we also placed a hard limit on how much XP a character can spend, so that characters could not burn themselves out making items more powerful than anyone in their group should own.

Sharing XP costs isn't allowed under the rules, but it could work as

a house rule, especially in campaigns where some players are pestering the spellcasters in the group to make magic items for them.

If you decide to go this route, I recommend that you still obey the limit on the amount of XP a character can spend on a single item or spell. The total expenditure cannot reduce the character's level if the character was the only one spending XP. I also recommend that all the contributing characters be touching at the time the XP is spent and that all contributions must be strictly voluntary. Characters cannot contribute XP if magically induced or compelled to do so or when under any kind of threat or coercion.

You might divide the cost evenly among all the contributors or allow each character to decide how much to contribute. In the latter case, a spell is not cast or an item is not started if the contributors cannot agree on what amount each will spend. In either case, the actual contribution from any character cannot reduce the character's level.

You might even want to increase the XP cost if the expenditure is shared, perhaps doubling the cost. This should make players think twice about sharing an XP cost, though each character still would spend less than a lone character would spend, so long as there were a sufficient number of contributors. Ω

Legend of Bill



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by David Reddick

LegendofBill.com

Cavaliers of Flame and Fury

By Adam W. Roy
Art by Ben Hodson and
Kiss Márton Gyula

The endless wars and diabolical intrigues of Midgard have produced many orders of powerful cavaliers, but two in particular stand out for the ferocity of their mounts and their own unholy fury: the Order of the Firedrake of the Dragon Empire, and the Order of the Wrathful Flames from the dark, deadly forests of Niemheim.

These warrior orders arose from the dark hearts of their insatiable deities and diabolical masters, and they represent both the best and the worst of the people who make up their ranks. Trained in devastating and unusual styles of mounted combat, both groups strike terror into the hearts of their enemies and laugh while they do it.

ORDER OF THE FIREDRAKE

With traditions and breeding programs that date back over 400 years to the founding of the empire, the Order of the Firedrake produces dragon- and drake-riding cavaliers. These fierce warriors swear a sacred oath of blood to give their lives for the empire without question or hesitation.

Riding out from their hidden hatchery fortresses, these servants of the Sultana rain death and fire down on their enemies. They obey all orders without compunction and seek to expand the reach and might of the empire at every opportunity. Their plunder serves to encourage the empire's dragons to offer ever more steeds to the order's ranks.



ABILITIES

Challenge: When a firedrake cavalier issues a challenge, she receives a +1 morale bonus to her damage rolls on attacks vs. the target of her challenge. This bonus increases by +1 for every four cavalier levels the character has.

Skills: An order of the firedrake cavalier adds Knowledge (local – Mharoti) and Knowledge (nobility) to her class skills. In addition, when the cavalier makes a Ride check, she adds her Wisdom bonus and her Dexterity bonus to the roll.

Dragon's Roar (Ex): At 2nd level, you gain the ability to rally troops. Once per combat, as a move action, you can issue a rallying cry that grants all allies within 60 ft. a morale bonus vs. fear effects and spells equal to the cavalier's Charisma modifier.

Allies also gain a +1 morale bonus to all damage rolls for a number of rounds equal to the cavalier's level. If any ally within the radius is frightened, shaken, or panicked, they can immediately make another saving throw to remove the effect.

Sultana's Command (Ex): At 8th level, you excel at inspiring troops. Once per combat, as a swift action, the cavalier can grant a morale bonus equal to her Charisma modifier to attack and damage rolls for all allies within 30 feet. This effect lasts for two rounds.

Dragon Strike (Ex): At 15th level, you can make a spectacular charge and bring allies with her. Once per combat, you can spend a standard action to make a full

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move and make a melee attack. All allies within 30 feet of the cavalier can make a full move and make a melee attack as an immediate action. The attack may be a charge attack if the movement qualifies. All attack and damage rolls receive a bonus equal to the cavalier's Charisma modifier (this stacks with any charge attack bonuses).

Mount (Ex): Firedrake cavaliers must choose mounts from the reptilian or draconic. At 4th level, they may choose a Large mount of this type, at 8th level they may choose a Huge reptilian/draconian mount, at 12th a Gargantuan mount, up to 16th level, where they may choose a Colossal-sized mount with no penalties, so long as it is still of the reptilian or draconic subtypes.

ORDER OF THE WRATHFUL FLAMES

The gnomes of the dark and forbidding Niemheim forests are a besieged and desperate race of diabolical fey. The Order of the Wrathful Flames arose to protect their dwindling borders. These cavaliers, though small in both numbers and stature, have a terrifying and well-deserved reputation: they are rumored to eat the hearts of their fallen opponents.

Known for their monstrous allies, such as dire boars, dire wolves, and giant spiders, these diabolical warriors deploy great skill in deception and ambush. Their monstrous henchmen distract opponents and the cavaliers ride in on their dire boars to surprise and savage their distracted victims.

ABILITIES

Challenge: Whenever a wrathful flame cavalier issues a challenge, he receives a +1 dodge bonus to his AC against attacks made by the target of his challenge. This bonus increases by +1 for every four cavalier levels the character possesses.

Skills: An endless fire cavalier adds Knowledge (local – Kharkov or Niemheim) and Stealth to his class skills. In addition, when the cavalier

makes a Stealth check, he adds his Wisdom bonus and his Dexterity bonus to the roll.

Infernal Insight (Ex): At 2nd level, the cavalier gains an insight bonus equal to his Charisma modifier to any one attack, roll ability roll, saving throw, or skill check. The cavalier uses a standard action to study his opponent or obstacle and adds the bonus to any **one** roll in the four categories above during the next 10 rounds of combat. The cavalier must announce he is using the bonus before rolling dice. The cavalier can use this ability a number of times per day equal to his Wisdom modifier.

Devilish Brutality (Ex): At 8th level, the cavalier can instill himself and his nearby allies with diabolical fury. Once per combat, as a free action, the cavalier can call upon his infernal lords and grant himself and all allies within 30 ft. a bonus to damage rolls equal to his Charisma modifier (this includes all non-humanoid allies, including mounts). This effect lasts for 2 rounds.

Diabolical Retribution (Ex): At 15th level, the cavalier gains the ability to make a surprise counter-blow to any enemy that strikes him. Any successful melee attack against the endless fire cavalier provokes an attack of opportunity from the cavalier. The cavalier receives a +2 insight bonus on the attack of opportunity. If the enemy is an agent or creature of Baba Yaga, the insight bonus doubles to +4, and all critical hits are automatically confirmed (no second roll required).

Mount (Ex): Endless fire cavaliers may choose a boar or wolf as their mount at 1st level with the DM's permission. At 4th level, they may choose a Large creature (such as a dire boar) as their mount with the DM's permission. At 8th level they may choose a Huge dire or magical beast mount, at 12th a Gargantuan mount, up to 16th level, where they may choose a Colossal-sized mount with no penalties, so long as it is still of the dire or magical beast (not aberration) subtype. Ω



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OPEN DESIGN
PRESENTS

MIDGARD

Seven Cities Aflame!

The Open Design community is building Midgard's Seven Cities.
Join today and create the rest of the world!

DESIGN A REALM OF PERPETUAL WAR

Patrons of Open Design's MIDGARD Campaign Setting have chosen the first of its seven regions to design. The Seven Cities of the South are legendary for their deep feuds, ancient hatreds, provincial strife, power-mongering, betrayal, and frequent murder. The land may be settled, but it's not especially peaceful. Claims and counterclaims, raids and robbery, exiles and murder are all common.

In this region of perpetual war, mercenaries march continually from siege to siege and raid to raid. The minotaur corsairs of Triolo protect the coasts and take the battle to the sultan of the Dragon Empire. The dwarven workshops of Melana provide the finest steel outside the Ironcrags. The god-slavers of Kammae Straboli draw power from their prophets of wind and wave—enough power to raise and lower the sea itself.

Become a patron of the MIDGARD worldbuilding project today and work with Wolfgang Baur, Jeff Grubb, Brandon Hodge, and the Open Design community to bring the other six regions of the world to life.

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

The Fall season brings the finest of the flavors! Yes, the harvest cycle begins, with the dancing and the moonlight and the sickles sharpened for the slaughter at the Olde Kobold Mines, and we hope to spread some harvest cheer with the following selection of delectables.

A Sneak Peek at the Devils of Tian Xia

Rumor has it that Richard Pett and James Jacobs fathered a child of pure darkness and evil with a succubus, or possibly a qliphoth or maybe it was a lemure after a three-day absinthe bender. They were fuzzy on the details, but we expect to be properly terrified when the manuscript arrives.

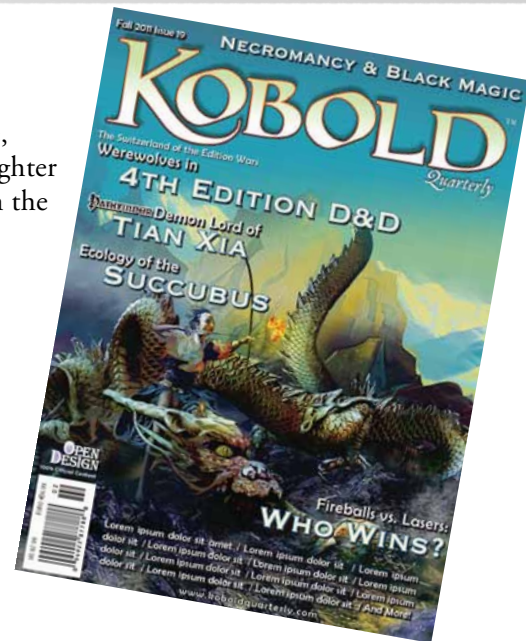
Magic Black & White

Both alchemists and necromancers are figures of fear and figures of transforming power: now, the kobolds reveal some of their secrets, including new gear, new spells, and tools for players and DMs alike! The Fall issue will be loaded with black magic, the white arts, and every shade of grey!

A Return to Zobeck

The original Zobeck gazetteer was published in the days of 3.5, and it is overdue for an update. Some of that update starts right in these pages next time. Don't miss it!

Yes, this is our issue of necromancy, black magic, demons, and the diabolical! The cover will be all-black, all hail the Prince of Darkness, and THE HORRIBLE STORIES ARE ALL TRUE—yes, RPGs are the spawn of a small publishing industry of devoted creators! What, you were expecting Satan? Give us a break here, we're working up a necromantic fervor!



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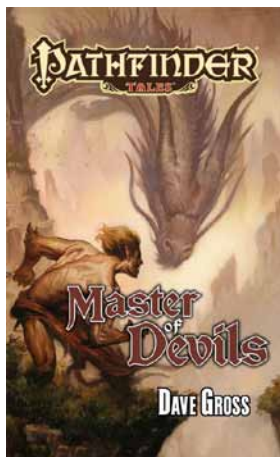
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Book Reviews

By William Banks, Wolfgang Baur, and Pierce Watters



PATHFINDER TALES: MASTER OF DEVILS

Dave Gross
Paizo Publishing
Trade paper: \$9.99
400 pages
ISBN: 978-1-60125-357-6
July 2011

Imagine the party wizard suddenly thrown into a kung fu academy to learn to kick ass. Now imagine a bodyguard of infernal blood serving a despotic kung fu master while harboring doubts. Yep, this is an awesome fish-out-of-water novel!

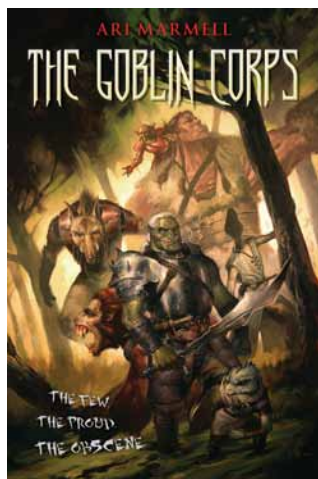
Two characters from Gross's prior novel *Prince of Wolves*, Count Varian Jeggare and the hellspawn Radovan return for a new adventure in the Asiatic realms of Golarion's new setting expansion, Tian Xia. The two are separated early on, and each believes the other dead. This gives us two entirely different views of the setting, as Radovan (detailed in *KOBOLD QUARTERLY* #14) falls in with a powerful master of magic and kung fu bent on unholy revenge, and Count Jeggare flees into the hands of a monkish brotherhood familiar to anyone who has ever watched a Shaw Brothers kung fu film.

The book unfolds with terrific pacing and magical and martial arts inventions, all loaded with flavorful names like Quivering Palm and Jade Tiger. As newcomers themselves, Radovan and Jeggare give readers the chance to see everything and experience a martial arts saga with fresh eyes.

Most of all, Gross provides a story that doesn't quit, with great—and often humorous—fight scenes, crackling dialogue, and some of the story told from an unusual point of view. The Pathfinder Tales series continues to go from strength to strength, and if you ever enjoyed an odd couple story, *Master of Devils* is sure to entertain and surprise you. A sword and sorcery romp any fan of Asian adventure will enjoy!

Recommended.

Review by William Banks



THE GOBLIN CORPS

Ari Marmell
Pyr Books
Trade paper: \$16.00, Kindle edition:
\$9.95
590 pages
ISBN: 978 1 61614 3770
July 2011

This is the story of Gork, kobold thief. Yes, other characters like Katim the troll or Craesch the orc are also members of the Demon Squad that serves the Charnel King Morthûl—and they try to horn in on Gork's glory—but none are more intelligent, sly, or amusing than this kobold champion, so we're going to stay focused on the important stuff here.

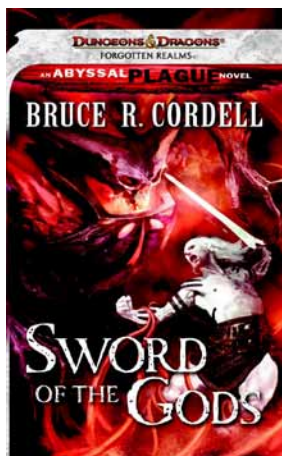
Gork and the Demon Squad are a motley band on a mission, a save-the-kingdom plot that takes a lot of detours into mountains, swamps, and surprisingly vile royal chambers. The humanoid POV material is done with style, reminding us why orcs, goblins, gremlins, bugbears, and their kobold overlords are so entertaining. They fight their battle dirty, and yet it's fun to watch hapless humans get their comeuppance.

This book details the campaign I imagined when I bought the *Complete Humanoids Handbook*. It's sloppy, smelly, creepy, funny, pulpy, loud, rambunctious fun with a side of humanoid racial stereotyping and heaps of amusing violence. King Morthûl of the Iron Citadel is a truly nasty bad guy—you can tell from the name, right?—and the characters are pretty much every WWII band-of-buddies movie cast in goblinoid form. There's high adventure against monsters that would make any GM happy. (Given that author Ari Marmell wrote "Arbeyach, the Lord of Swarms", for *KQ* # 3, perhaps this love of somewhat disturbing gaming tropes should not be surprising.)

The book is schlocky in the best way, rip-snorting fun, a ride through the sewers and up to the heights. Don't expect deep thoughts and you'll have a

good time. Reading *The Goblin Corps* is like reading the campaign notes for that monsters-as-PCs game you've always wanted to play. I eagerly await the next volume in the epic tale of Gork and commend Mr. Marmell for a job well done.

Review by Wolfgang Baur



SWORD OF THE GODS

By Bruce Cordell
Wizards of the Coast
Mass market paper: \$7.99
332 pages
ISBN: 978-0-7869-5739-2

Sword of the Gods is a stand-alone novel that ties in with the Abyssal Plague Trilogy. Set in the Forgotten Realms, *Sword of the Gods* follows the adventures of Demascus, perhaps the last of the forgotten heroes.

Demascus awakens on a stone slab amidst a multitude of dead bodies.

He is naked, unarmed, and no longer knows who he is or how he came to be where he awoke.

White-haired and white-skinned, with dark markings that might be tattoos or an intrinsic part of his body, Demascus loots the dead and sets out to rediscover his past. Clad in ill-fitting clothes but carrying a goodly amount of gold, Demascus makes his way to the nearest city.

As Demascus' memories slowly return, he seems not to like the self he once was. Using scant information from occasional flashbacks, Demascus recovers then loses a scarf, one of the weapons from his past, to the thief Riltana. Aided by a human pawnbroker named Chant Morven, Demascus works to find his missing scarf and his missing past.

The true fun of this character-driven novel comes from the interactions between the three major characters. Action is frequent with many minor skirmishes and several large ones, but Riltana and Chant, as well-developed characters, keep the reader moving forward along the storyline.

A short but necessary summation of Demascus's history occurs in the prologue, but his mystery reveals slowly. There is a slight echo of Elric in Demascus, and a little of Van Vogt, but this is author Cordell's story, with fast pacing and enjoyable characters.

Recommended.

Review by Pierce Watters

Ω



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Wing, Scale, and Claws

A Lost Child of the Midgard Serpent

By Wolfgang Baur

Art by unknown

The ring of its scales surrounds the world and holds in the seas. The whisper of its breath blows the bitterest winter storms. Its dreams disturb the gods. The World Serpent is the silent terror of all warmed-blooded, thinking creatures, the enormous beast that surrounds Midgard and will one day rise to devour all the world and then consume the sun and the gods and all that is. For most, this is a somewhat distant concern.

The World Serpent itself does not trouble most travelers and adventurers, but the Serpent's various deadly children do. The most famous of these are the dragons and linnorms, though myriad drakes and dragonettes are also common throughout Midgard. The Dragon Empire boasts dozens of greater and hundreds of lesser drakes among its legions, and most imposing peaks and forests supposedly house a dragon or two.

One of the strangest of these is the great grey dragon of the plains, a wind dragon unlike any other.

KHARALANG, THE GREAT DRAGON OF THE PLAINS

When travelers think of the Rothenian Steppes, they think of the various tribes of the region, of Baba Yaga's schemes,

and of the raiders who sometimes gather to burn out Magdar towns and villages. They also, invariably, think of Kharalang. Some believe its home lies on Demon Mountain, but no search has revealed its lair. Scudding clouds, a rising wind, and falling temperatures usually announce its presence; hail and even thunder are common heralds.

Meetings with the dragon follow a set pattern, or so report those who survive to tell the tale. The sky clouds and the wind chills. Thunder strikes in the midst of the travelers, stunning and deafening most of them. A screech echoes from the heavens, and Kraralang makes a flying pass overhead, often snatching a large animal into the air. Stripped bones fall from the sky a moment later, and the dragon lands just out of bowshot, shaking the earth.

Negotiations begin with an offer to let all the party live if they abandon all mounts and large animals. An amount of gold and jewels may substitute for each mount. Once the haggling ends, the enormous grey dragon summons a whirlwind that carries its fee into the heavens (sometimes neighing and howling).

Those who attack the dragon with spells and arrows have, as yet, not reported on the results of this approach.

TALES OF THE DRAGON'S HOARD

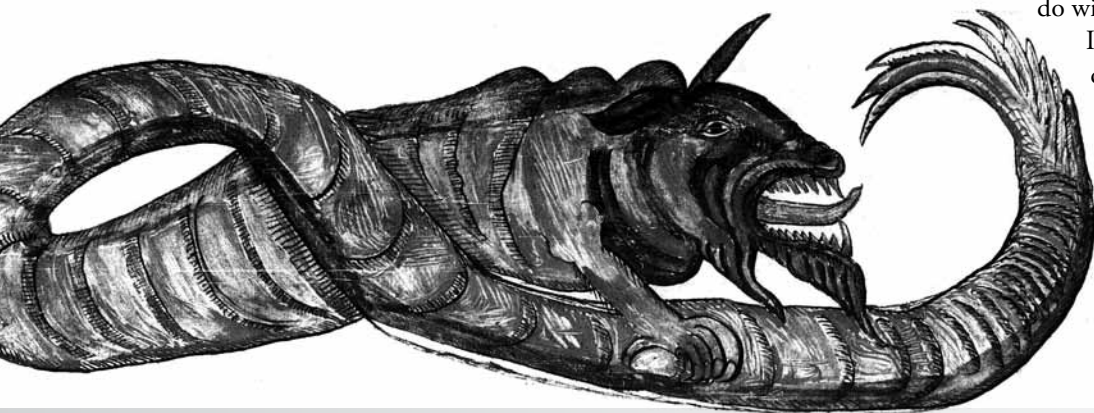
The stories Kharalang's hoard are themselves a form of humor and amusement to the people of the Steppes. It's a bit of an in-joke or initiation for them to mock visitors with a completely straight-faced account of the location of the dragon's hoard, often involving a long journey overland, diving into chill rivers, or digging up small hills in search of the gold.

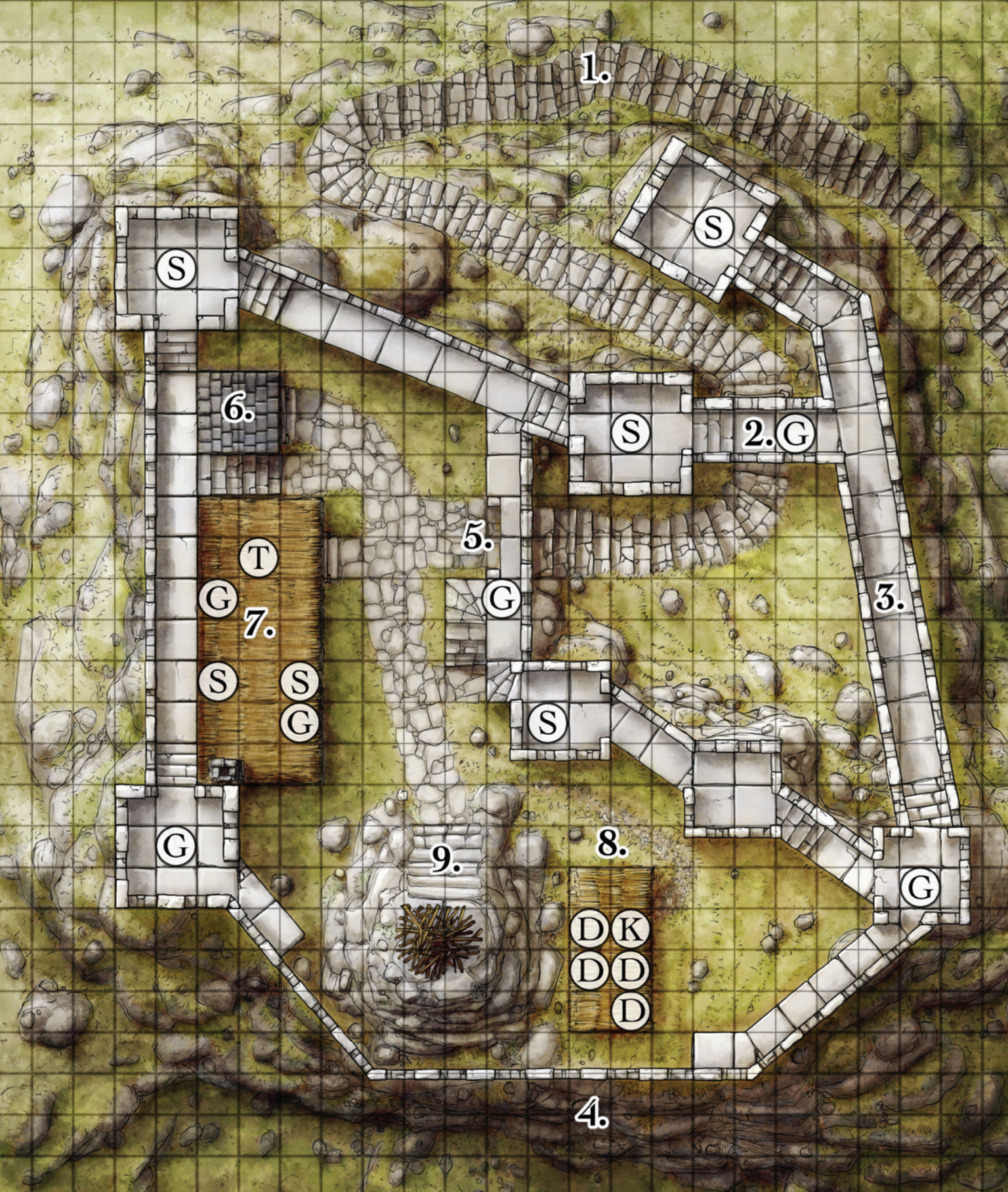
No one laughs until after the visitor has gone off to search for the fabulous wealth, which the tale-spinner always says is "beyond the reach of a coward like me; beware the dragon's wrath!" This tale always seems to encourage gold-seeking visitors to a speedy departure.

COUSINS IN THE EAST

Some believe that Kharalang is a dragon driven from a home in far Cathay by crueler cousins, golden and silvery dragons who could not bear to see a devolved and corrupted creature like Kharalang in their court. Centaur tall tales and the longest-lived elves make this claim. Certainly, the dragons of the sultana's empire want nothing to do with this northern creature.

Is Kharalang an eastern dragon driven west? Is he a golden dragon corrupted by the vampire princes of Morgau? Is he a winged child of the Midgard serpent grown strong through Caelmarath's sorcery? None know for sure, but surely someday, adventurers will ask and live to tell. Ω

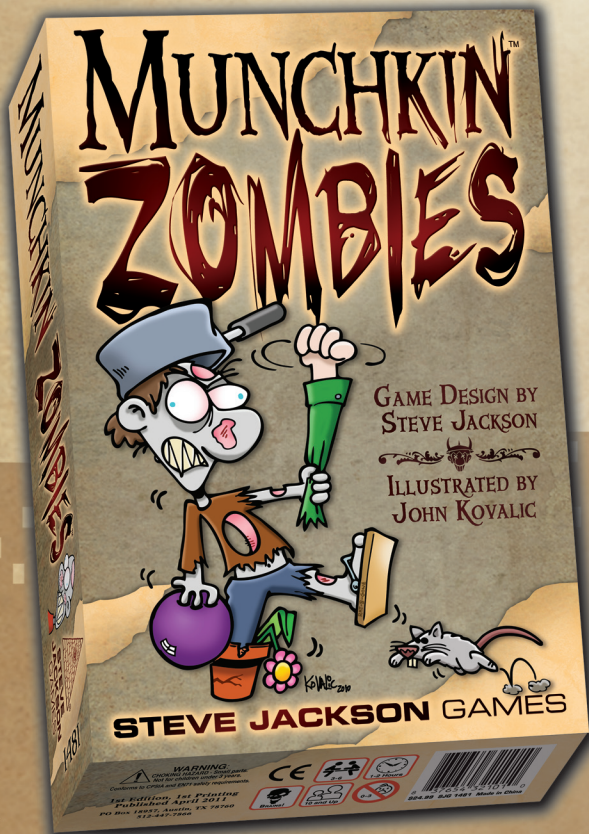




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