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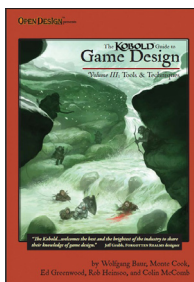
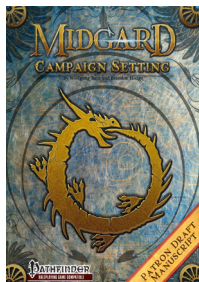
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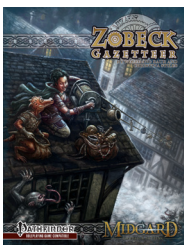
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A Bigger Kobold

KOBOLD QUARTERLY is a small press magazine, but if you've been with us for the past several years you've seen it get bigger with every issue. Bigger ambitions. Bigger page counts. Bigger art, bigger name designers. Bigger XP totals and bigger treasures, certainly.

In all that time, we've never had a reader ask us to reverse course, and to please scale the magazine back to become smaller and lower-quality. If you follow Monte Cook on Facebook, you might have seen his recent post where he talked about how reading KQ made him realize how great it is to have a print magazine dedicated to roleplaying games out there. So we're pretty confident that we're going in the right direction.

To keep making KQ bigger and better, we're going to introduce a small increase to the cover price of the print edition, beginning with this issue. An additional \$1 per issue will keep us on top of rising printing costs, as well as continuing to pay our amazing freelance writers, artists and designers for their work. The content is unchanged, the PDF price is unchanged, and the subscription price is unchanged.

(Okay, the subscription price is unchanged for now. Postage costs have gone up sharply as well, so we'll need to adjust subscription prices before December 1. But not yet.)

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For my part, I promise that I will continue to do everything in my power to make each issue of KQ worth every penny.

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: Wolfgang Baur, Monte Cook, Simon English, Rick Hudson, James Jacobs, Josh Jarman, Jeremy L.C. Jones, Spike Y. Jones, Phillip Larwood, Brian A Liberge, Ben McFarland, Britian Oates, Richard Pett, Mario Podeschi, Marc Radle, Christina Stiles, Jerall Toi, and Pierce Watters

Cover Artist: Kieran Yanner

Contributing Artists: Jost Ammon, Hablot K. Browne, Storn Cook, Rick Hershey, Michael Jaecks, Chris McFann, Aaron Miller, Brian Patterson, Jason Rainville, Mark Smylie, Hugo Solis, Stan!, Otto Wilhelm Thomé, Steven Wood, N.C. Wyeth, and Maciej Zagorski

Cartographers: Rob Lazaretti

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The White Necromancer

To Understand Life One Must Also Understand Death

By Marc Radle

Art by Jason Rainville and Mark Smylie

Most necromancers are foul, twisted individuals obsessed with corruption and death. A few, however, embrace the knowledge that true necromancy involves tapping the powers of life as well as death and unlife. These enlightened few are known as white necromancers.

White necromancers are arcane spellcasters who study the mysterious connection between life and death. They do not walk the same evil paths as traditional necromancers (or dark necromancers, as they are known among white necromancers). Instead, white necromancers honor the dead and seek to aid the living. They have gained a deep and profound understanding of life's eternal cycle, which makes them potent healers as well as powerful spellcasters.

Alignment: any non-evil
Hit Die: d6.

CLASS SKILLS

The white necromancer's class skills are Appraise (Int), Craft (Int), Fly (Dex), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Ranks per Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Starting Wealth: 2d6 × 10 gp (70 gp average)

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the white necromancer.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency:

White necromancers are proficient

with all simple weapons. They are not proficient with any type of armor or shield. Armor interferes with a white necromancer's gestures, which can cause his spells with somatic components to fail (see Arcane Spells and Armor).

Spells: A white necromancer casts arcane spells drawn from the white necromancer spell list. He can cast any spell he knows without preparing it ahead of time. To learn or cast a spell, a white necromancer must have a Charisma score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a white necromancer's spell is 10 + the spell level + the white necromancer's Charisma modifier.

Like other spellcasters, a white necromancer can cast only a certain

number of spells of each spell level per day. His base daily spell allotment is given on Table 1: White Necromancer. In addition, he receives bonus spells per day if he has a high Charisma score (see Table 3-1: Ability Modifiers and Bonus Spells, *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, pg. 17).

A white necromancer's selection of spells is extremely limited. A white necromancer begins play knowing four 0-level spells and two 1st-level spells of his choice. At each new white necromancer level, he gains one or more new spells, as indicated on Table 2: White Necromancer Spells Known. (Unlike spells per day, the number of spells a white necromancer knows is not affected by his Charisma score; the numbers on Table 2: White Necromancer Spells Known are fixed.)

Upon reaching 4th level, and at every even-numbered white necromancer level after that (6th, 8th, and so on), a white necromancer can choose to learn a new spell in place of one he already knows. In effect, the white necromancer loses the old spell in exchange for the new one. The new spell's level must be the same as that of the spell being exchanged. A white necromancer may swap only a single spell at any given level and must choose whether or not to swap the spell at the same time that he gains new spells known for the level.

Unlike a wizard or a cleric, a white necromancer need not prepare his spells in advance. He can cast any spell he knows at any time, assuming he has not yet used up his spells per day for that spell level.

Cantrips: White necromancers learn a number of cantrips, or 0-level spells, as noted on Table 2: White Necromancer Spells Known under "Spells Known." These spells are cast like any other spell, but they do not consume any slots and may be used again.

Evil Necromancy Spells: White necromancers, particularly those of good alignment, are *extremely* reluctant to cast evil necromancy spells (spells of the necromancy school with the evil descriptor). They are

not strictly forbidden from doing so, however, and may occasionally cast such spells if the need is sufficiently great. When a white necromancer casts an evil necromancy spell, he uses up two spell slots of that level.

Eschew Materials: A white necromancer gains Eschew Materials as a bonus feat at 1st level.

Lore of Life and Death (Ex): A white necromancer adds his Wisdom modifier in addition to his Intelligence modifier when making Knowledge (religion) skill checks pertaining to subjects like death, burial practices, undead, or the afterlife. In addition, a white necromancer adds a bonus equal to 1/2 his white necromancer level (minimum +1) to all Heal skill checks.

Rebuke Death (Sp): As a standard action, a white necromancer can touch a living creature to heal it for 1d4 hp plus 1 for every two white necromancer levels he possesses. He can use this ability only on a creature below 0 hit points. He can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Charisma modifier.

Power Over Undead (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, a white necromancer receives Turn Undead as a bonus feat. He can channel energy a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Charisma modifier, but only to use the Turn Undead feat. He can take other feats to add to this ability, such as Extra Channel and Improved Channel, but not feats that alter this ability, such as Elemental Channel and Alignment Channel. The DC to save against this feat is 10 + 1/2 his white necromancer level + his Charisma modifier. At 20th level, undead cannot add their channel resistance to the save against this ability.

White Necromancy (Su): Beginning at 4th level, any necromancy spell that creates undead loses the Evil descriptor when cast by a white necromancer. Such spells no longer cost two spell slots of that level (as noted under Evil Necromancy Spells). Mindless undead resulting from white necromancy are of neutral alignment, while intelligent undead exactly match the white

New Feat

Necrotic Spell (Metamagic)

Your spells are more effective against corporeal undead.

Benefit: You treat corporeal undead that were once humanoids as humanoids for the purposes of determining which of your spells affect them. In addition, you may affect any corporeal undead creature with mind-affecting spells, regardless of its Intelligence score. A necrotic spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

necromancer's alignment.

The white necromancer gains no specific control over undead created using white necromancy, although he may ask the undead to provide some service or otherwise assist him. To make such a request, the white necromancer must make a special Diplomacy check, rolling 1d20 + white necromancer level + Charisma modifier. Mindless undead created through white necromancy have DC 15 and a starting attitude of indifferent. Intelligent undead have DC 15 + its Charisma modifier and a starting attitude of friendly. The white necromancer must treat the undead with honor and respect at all times, in many cases agreeing to release the undead once the service or task has been completed.

Intelligent undead created through white necromancy might agree to follow the white necromancer for a prolonged period of time, although it will certainly expect to be treated as an honored and respected companion, perhaps even making occasional requests of its own.

Life Bond (Su): At 5th level, a white necromancer may create a bond between himself and another living creature within 90 ft. as a standard action. He may have one bond active per white necromancer level. Each round at the start of the white necromancer's turn, if the bonded creature is wounded for 5 or more hp below its maximum hit points, the

Table 1: White Necromancer

Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day									
						1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Cantrips, eschew materials, lore of life and death, rebuke death	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3		4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Power over undead	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	White Necromancy	6	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Life link	6	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5		6	5	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Necrotic transfer, voice of the grave	6	6	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6		6	6	5	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Life sight	6	6	6	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7		6	6	6	5	3	—	—	—	—	—
11th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Grasp of the dead	6	6	6	6	4	—	—	—	—	—
12th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8		6	6	6	6	5	3	—	—	—	—
13th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Ghost walk	6	6	6	6	6	4	—	—	—	—
14th	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9		6	6	6	6	6	5	3	—	—	—
15th	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9	Death ward	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	—	—	—
16th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10		6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3	—	—
17th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Protective Aura	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	—	—
18th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3	—
19th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	—
20th	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Master of Life and Death	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

bonded creature heals 5 hp and the white necromancer takes 5 hp damage.

This bond continues until the bonded creature dies, the white necromancer dies, the distance between them exceeds 90 ft., or the white necromancer ends it as an immediate action. If he has multiple bonds active, he may end as many as he wants as part of the same immediate action.

Necrotic Transfer (Su): At 7th level, a white necromancer can transfer some of his life essence to another living creature. As a standard action, when a white necromancer touches a subject, he can sacrifice hp equal to 10 + his Constitution score + his white necromancer level and transfer those hp to the creature touched. These hp heal the subject but cannot raise the subject's hp higher than its normal hp total.

Voice of the Grave (Su): At 7th level, a white necromancer can *speak with dead*, as the spell, for a number of rounds per day equal to his white necromancer level. These rounds need not be consecutive. At 9th level, and every two levels thereafter, the dead creature takes a cumulative -2 penalty on its Will save to resist this effect.

Life Sight (Su): At 9th level, a white necromancer gains blindsight to a range of 10 ft. for a number of rounds per day equal to his white necromancer level. This ability only allows him to detect living creatures and undead creatures. This sight also tells him whether a creature is living or undead. Constructs and other creatures neither living nor undead cannot be seen with this ability. The range of this ability increases by 10 ft. at 13th level, and by an additional 10 ft. for every four levels beyond 13th. These rounds need not be consecutive.

Grasp of the Dead (Sp): At 11th level, a white necromancer can summon a swarm of skeletal arms to burst from the ground to rip and tear at his foes. The skeletal arms erupt from the ground in a 20-ft.-radius burst and must appear from a solid surface. Any enemy in this area takes 1d6 hp slashing damage per white necromancer level.

Those caught in the area receive a Reflex save for half damage (DC 10 + 1/2 white necromancer level + Charisma modifier). Those who fail the save are unable to move for 1 round. The skeletal arms disappear

after 1 round. At 11th level, the white necromancer can use this ability once per day. This increases to 2/day at 15th level, and 3/day at 19th level. This power has a range of 60 ft.

Ghost Walk (Su): Beginning at 13th level, a white necromancer can become incorporeal and invisible as a standard action. He can use this ability once per day at 13th level and 1/ day at 17th level. While in this form, the white necromancer can move in any direction and through any object (except for those made of force). He can take no action other than to move while in this form. He remains in this form for a number of rounds equal to his white necromancer level, but he can end this effect prematurely with a standard action.

Death Ward (Su): At 15th level, a white necromancer receives a morale bonus equal to half his white necromancer level on all saves against death spells and death effects. He is granted a save to negate such effects even if one is not normally allowed.

Protective Aura (Su): At 17th level, the white necromancer can emit a 30-foot aura that wards against death for a number of rounds per day equal

to his white necromancer level. Living creatures within this area are immune to all death spells, death effects, energy drain, and effects that cause negative levels. This protective aura does not remove negative levels that a creature has already gained, but the negative levels have no effect while the creature is inside the protected area. These rounds need not be consecutive.

Table 2: White Necromancer Spells Known

Spells Known Level	0	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1st	4	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	5	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3rd	5	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4th	6	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5th	6	4	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6th	7	4	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
7th	7	5	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
8th	8	5	3	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
9th	8	5	4	3	2	—	—	—	—	—
10th	9	5	4	3	2	1	—	—	—	—
11th	9	5	5	4	3	2	—	—	—	—
12th	9	5	5	4	3	2	1	—	—	—
13th	9	5	5	4	4	3	2	—	—	—
14th	9	5	5	4	4	3	2	1	—	—
15th	9	5	5	4	4	4	3	2	—	—
16th	9	5	5	4	4	4	3	2	1	—
17th	9	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	2	—
18th	9	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	2	1
19th	9	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	2
20th	9	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	3



Master of Life and Death (Su):

At 20th level, a white necromancer becomes a true master of life and death. Once per round, he can cast *bleed* or *stabilize* as a free action.

If he is brought to below 0 hp, he automatically stabilizes. He becomes immune to all death spells and magical death attacks. Ability damage and drain cannot reduce him below 1 in any ability score. Once per day, he can cast *power word kill*, but the spell can target only a creature with 150 hp or less.

WHITE NECROMANCER SPELL LIST

White necromancers gain access to the following spells. While most of these spells are found in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, those marked with an asterisk (*) appear in the *Advanced Players Guide*, those with a double asterisk (**) appear in *Ultimate Magic*, and those with a dagger (†) are new spells.

0-Level Spells — *arcane mark*, *bleed*, *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *disrupt undead*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*, *message*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *ray of*

frost, *stabilize*, *touch of fatigue*

1st-Level Spells — *cause fear*, *cure light wounds*, *chill touch*, *deathwatch*, *decompose corpse***, *detect undead*, *detect evil*, *doom*, *hide from undead*, *identify*, *inflict light wounds*, *protection from evil*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *ray of sickening***, *remove fear*, *restore corpse***, *sanctify corpse***, *sculpt corpse**, *sleep*, *mage armor*, *unseen servant*

2nd-Level Spells — *blindness/deafness*, *bone swarm†*, *command undead*, *cure moderate wounds*, *darkness*, *darkvision*, *deathknell*, *delay poison*, *detect thoughts*, *false life*, *fog cloud*, *ghoul touch*, *inflict moderate wounds*, *invisibility*, *lesser animate dead***, *levitate*, *pernicious poison***, *scare*, *silence*, *see invisibility*, *spectral hand*, *steal voice***, *toxic gift***, *unshakable chill***

3rd-Level Spells — *blood biography**, *cure serious wounds*, *dance of the dead†*, *daylight*, *deep slumber*, *eldritch fever***, *fester**, *gaseous form*, *gentle repose*, *halt undead*, *howling agony***, *inflict serious wounds*, *marionette possession***, *nap stack**, *phantom steed*, *ray of exhaustion*, *sands of*

time**, slow, speak with dead, undead anatomy I**, vampiric touch

4th -Level Spells — animate dead, aura of doom**, bestow curse, contagion, crushing despair, cure critical wounds, death ward, enervation, fear, greater false life**, greater invisibility, haunting choir**, ice storm, inflict critical wounds, neutralize poison, plague carrier**, poison, shadow projection*, wall of ice

5th -Level Spells — breath of life, cone of cold, greater contagion**, lesser astral projection**, magic jar, permanency, possess object**, raise dead, rest eternal*, slay living, suffocation*, symbol of pain, symbol of sleep, undead anatomy II**, wall of bones†, waves of fatigue

6th -Level Spells — antilife shell, circle of death, create undead, disintegrate, eyebite, fester, mass*, freezing sphere, harm, major curse**, symbol of fear, true seeing, undead

anatomy III**, undeath to death, unwilling shield*

7th -Level Spells — control undead, destruction, epidemic**, ethereal jaunt, finger of death, heal, plague storm**, power word blind, resurrection, symbol of weakness, temporary resurrection**, waves of exhaustion

8th -Level Spells — clone, create greater undead, horrid wilting, mind blank, orb of the void**, polar ray, symbol of death, temporal status, trap the soul, undead anatomy IV**

9th -Level Spells — astral projection, energy drain, power word kill, soul bind, suffocation, mass*, true resurrection, wail of the banshee

NEW SPELLS

The white necromancer commands a few elements of the arcane that other necromancers rarely use. These spells can be found in spells books and missals devoted to burial customs.

BONE SWARM

School evocation [force]; Level sor/wiz 2, wnc 2

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect 5-ft.-cubic mass of animated bones

Duration 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw Reflex half; **Spell Resistance** yes

A 5-ft.-cubic mass of animated bones appears and attacks foes as directed.

These bones strike the opponent you designate, dealing 2d6 hp bludgeoning damage plus an additional 1d6 points per four additional caster levels (2d6 at 4th level, 3d6 at 8th, 4d6 at 12th, etc). A successful Reflex save halves this damage.

Each round after the first, you can use a move action to redirect the bones to a new target. The bones move 60 ft. per round. As part of this movement, they can climb up to 60 ft. or built a tower of bones up to 60 ft. high. If not directed

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to a new target, the bones continue to attack the previous round's target.

Spellcasting or concentrating on spells while within the area of a *bone swarm* requires a caster level check (DC 20 + spell level). Using skills that involve patience and concentration requires a DC 20 Will save.

The bones vanish when the spell ends or if they exceed the spell's range.

DANCE OF THE DEAD

School necromancy; **Level** sor/wiz 4, wnc 3

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Targets one Medium skeleton or zombie per caster level; see text

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw no; **Spell Resistance** no

You imbue normal humanoid remains with temporary mobility and a bit of your life essence. On casting the spell, you lose 2d4 hp that return when the spell ends. Each animated skeleton or corpse then immediately attacks any target you designate or performs simple tasks as directed.

These animated creatures must be created from existing skeletons or corpses. You may animate one Medium skeleton or zombie per caster level. These skeletons or zombies immediately revert to their previous, inanimate state when the spell ends or they move out of the spell's radius.

If used to attack enemies, treat as standard human skeletons or zombies (alignment neutral). You can change the designated target or targets as a move

action, as if directing an active spell.

If used to perform basic tasks, treat the skeletons or zombies as having capabilities similar to an *unseen servant*.

WALL OF BONES

School conjuration (creation); **Level** sor/wiz 5, wnc 5

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect wall of inter-locking bones, up to one 10-ft. cube/level (S)

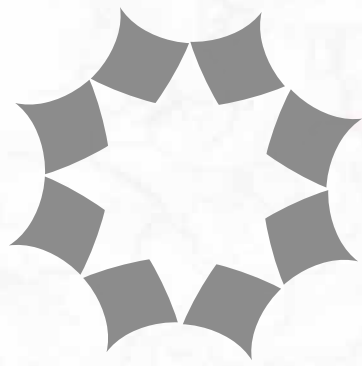
Duration 10 min./level (D)

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

This spell creates a solid wall of very strong, inter-locking bones. A wall of bones is 1 inch thick per caster level. It covers up to a 10-foot-square area per caster level (so a 10th-level white necromancer can create a wall of bones 100 ft. long and 10 ft. high, a wall 50 ft. long and 20 ft. high, or any other combination of length and height that does not exceed 1,000 square ft.).

The wall can be oriented in any fashion as long as it is anchored. A vertical wall need only be anchored on the floor, while a horizontal or slanting wall must be anchored on two opposite sides. The wall cannot be conjured to occupy the same space as a creature or another object.

A wall of bones can be destroyed by a disintegrate spell or by normal means such as breaking and chipping. Each 5-ft. square of the wall has hardness 6 and 10 hp per inch of thickness. A section of is breached when its hp drop to 0. If a creature tries to smash through the wall with a single attack, the DC for the Strength check is 20 + 2 per inch of thickness. Ω



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BOTTLED HUBRIS

New Discoveries and Archetypes for Alchemists

By Jerall Toi

Art by Steven Wood

No class embodies the hubris of mortals better than the alchemist, be it the self-transformative monster, the gold-seeking miser, or the dangerous pyromaniac. They pursue dangerous knowledge to manipulate flesh, defy nature, cheat death, and even scorn the gods. The three new alchemist archetypes presented here each focus on a different course of study: the calligraphist employs magical inks to conjure forth semi-real creatures; the evolutionist experiments on his animal companions, rather than himself; and the specialist surrenders some flexibility for more focused power.

This article also introduces new discoveries. Discoveries marked with an asterisk (*) appear in the *Advanced Player's Guide*, and those marked with two asterisks (**) appear in *Ultimate Magic*.

NEW DISCOVERIES

Discoveries that modify bombs and that are marked with a dagger (†) do not stack. Alchemists may apply only one such discovery to each bomb.

An alchemist cannot select discoveries from more than one group of specialist discoveries. For example, an alchemist might select an alien specialist discovery but then may not later select a plant specialist discovery.

Alien Specialist (Ex): The alchemist hardens his mind against the harmful effects of others. Through alchemically and surgically introduced controls and careful training, the alchemist gains a +2 bonus to all saving throws against mind-affecting effects and an additional +2 bonus to all saving throws against confusion. An alchemist must be at least 6th level and must have the lesser alien

specialist discovery before selecting this discovery.

Alien Specialist, Greater (Su)†: The alchemist learns to create a dismissal bomb that can force an extraplanar creature back to its proper plane instead of dealing damage. Creatures directly hit by a dismissal bomb are subject to a *dismissal* spell. An alchemist must be at least 10th level and must have the alien specialist discovery to select this discovery.

Alien Specialist, Lesser (Ex): The alchemist gains Knowledge (planes) as a class skill. In addition, the alchemist adds *protection from chaos* to his formula book as a 1st level extract.

Anchoring Bomb (Su)†: When an alchemist creates a bomb, he can choose to have it impede extradimensional travel. Creatures directly hit by an anchoring bomb

are subject to a *dimensional anchor* spell for 1 round per alchemist level. The amount of damage dealt by an anchoring bomb is reduced by 2d6 (so a bomb that would normally deal 6d6+4 damage deals 4d6+4 damage instead). An alchemist must be at least 8th level before selecting this discovery.

Enhance Companion (Ex): When he selects this discovery, the alchemist must select another discovery that affects his familiar or animal companion's physical form (discoveries for bombs, extracts, or mutagens cannot be selected). The animal companion then gains the chosen discovery's benefits. The animal companion uses the alchemist's level to determine the eligibility of a discovery but must otherwise meet all other prerequisites. If the alchemist ever replaces the familiar or animal companion, he may apply the benefits of this discovery to the replacement. This discovery may be selected multiple times.

Frighteningly Intelligent (Ex): The alchemist adds Intimidate to his list of class skills. He may add his Intelligence modifier to Intimidate checks instead of his Charisma modifier.

Metalwork Specialist (Ex): The alchemist gains proficiency with medium armor. The alchemist may move at his normal speed while under the effects of a mutagen and wearing medium armor made from metal. An alchemist must be at least 6th level and must have the lesser metal specialist discovery to select this discovery.

Metalwork Specialist, Greater (Su): While affected by a mutagen, the alchemist becomes immune to death effects and cannot die from massive damage. In addition, his melee attacks with metal weapons, unarmed attacks, and natural attacks are considered adamantine for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. An alchemist must be at least 10th level and must have the metal specialist discovery to select this discovery. This discovery cannot be taken in conjunction with the mummification** discovery.

Metalwork Specialist, Lesser (Su): When the alchemist imbibes a mutagen,

his flesh hardens and takes on the appearance of metal. At lower levels, the alchemist appears dull and gray in his metal form but develops a golden sheen as he gains power and experience. While under the influence of a mutagen, the alchemist gains DR 1/adamantine. This DR increases by 2 for every additional metalwork specialist discovery selected by the alchemist.

Plant Specialist (Su): The alchemist gains the druid's woodland stride ability and can move through any sort of natural undergrowth (briars, overgrown areas, etc.) at his normal speed and without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. He suffers the usual penalties in undergrowth magically manipulated to impede motion. An alchemist must be at least 6th level and must have the lesser plant specialist discovery to select this discovery.

Plant Specialist, Greater (Ex): The alchemist's devotion to the plant world modifies his own body. After learning this discovery, the alchemist performs a rigorous 30-day ritual, involving a strict diet and gradual exposure to carefully prepared plant toxins, which transforms him into a hybridized plant creature. The alchemist's type does not change, but he becomes immune to sleep and paralysis effects and gains the ability to photosynthesize. Photosynthesis reduces the alchemist's need to eat and sleep as if he wore a *ring of sustenance*. An alchemist must be at least 10th level and must have the plant specialist discovery to select this discovery. This discovery cannot be taken in conjunction with the mummification** discovery.

Plant Specialist, Lesser (Su): Using his knowledge of pollens, spores, and scents, the alchemist learns to create extracts to improve the attitude of animals and humanoids. The alchemist adds *charm animal* and *charm person* to his formula book as 1st level extracts. When the alchemist consumes one of these extracts, his body chemistry alters and his skin exudes a pleasing mixture of plant pollens. This grants the alchemist a +2 alchemical bonus



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Evolutionist and Vivisectionist

Experimenting on and augmenting an animal companion suits the vivisectionist archetype perfectly. However, the two archetypes are not compatible as they both replace the bomb ability with sneak attack and animal companion, respectively. To combine the two archetypes, remove the mutagen and persistent mutagen abilities. Additionally, disallow the mutagen** and cognatogen** discoveries.

to Charisma-based skill checks, for 1 hour per level, when interacting with animals or humanoids, depending on the extract. The alchemist may have only one of these extracts active in his system at any time.

As a standard action, the alchemist may deliver a concentrated dose of pollens as a melee touch attack to charm another creature as per the spell.

This ends the extract's effect on the alchemist, and the targeted creature remains charmed for the remainder of the extract's duration.

Reinforced Skeleton (Ex): The alchemist can augment and improve his skeletal structure, promoting additional growth and strengthening the rib cage and skull. This discovery grants the alchemist a +1 natural armor bonus.

Shrapnel Bomb (Su)†: The alchemist can create shrapnel bombs that release jagged shards of metal. Shrapnel bombs deal slashing damage. The damage dealt by a shrapnel bomb is reduced by 2d6. Creatures directly hit by a shrapnel bomb take damage from the bomb plus 1 bleed damage per damage die (so a bomb that normally deals 6d6+4 damage instead deals 4d6+4 damage and 4 bleed damage). An alchemist must be at least 6th level and must have the lesser blood specialist discovery to select this discovery.

Spiked Skeleton (Ex): The alchemist enhances his skeleton by growing bone spikes through his flesh, offering a measure of protection against melee attacks. Anybody striking

the alchemist with a melee weapon, unarmed strike, or natural weapon takes 1d6 hp piercing damage. Melee weapons with reach do not endanger their users in this way. An alchemist must be at least 6th level and must have the reinforced skeleton discovery to select this discovery.

NEW ARCHETYPES

CALLIGRAPHIST

Renowned for creating magically imbued alchemical inks, calligraphists can animate their drawings and writings to conjure forth creatures and weapons of ink. Though many calligraphists prefer to use brushes, pens, or needles when applying ink, a hand, finger, or tentacle works just as well.

Class Skills: The calligraphist adds Linguistics to his list of class skills.

Bomb (Su): A calligraphist's bombs deal damage one die step lower than normal (regular bombs deal d4s, concussive bombs deal d3s, and so on). This ability otherwise functions as, and replaces, the standard alchemist bomb class feature.

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Undo Text: At 2nd level, the calligraphist adds *erase* to his formula book as a 1st level extract. This extract is not cast when consumed. Instead, the calligraphist prepares the extract as ink to apply to the target text. Only the calligraphist may use only extracts he prepared. This extract cannot benefit from the infusion discovery.

Inked Conjunction: At 7th level, the calligraphist adds *shadow conjunction* to his formula book as a 3rd level extract. When using this extract, rather than drinking it, the calligraphist prepares the extract as ink. As a standard action, the calligraphist may use the ink to draw the object, creature, or force he wishes the extract to create. The calligraphist requires a surface for the drawing, such as parchment, a shield, or even his own body. The material does not matter. Only the calligraphist that prepared the extract may use it.

On completion, the drawing peels away from the surface and expands to produce the desired spell effect. This extract cannot benefit from the combine extracts or infusion discoveries.

This ability replaces the increase to bomb damage at this level.

Greater Inked Conjunction: At 13th level, the calligraphist adds *greater shadow conjunction* to his formula book as a 5th level extract.

Perfect Inked Conjunction: At 17th level, the calligraphist adds *shades* to his formula book as a 6th level extract.

Discoveries: Many of the calligraphist's discoveries (and extracts) take on ink-like qualities. Discoveries that alter the calligraphist's body often take the form of living tattoos. For example, the tumor familiar** discovery would be better represented as a living tattoo of the selected familiar, rather a thing of flesh. The following discoveries complement the calligraphist archetype: cognatogen**, madness bomb*, and tumor familiar**.

EVOLUTIONIST

Many alchemists tend to experiment on themselves, augmenting and twisting their own bodies. The evolutionist, however, conducts his work on a



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subservient animal companion.

Class skills: The evolutionist adds Handle Animal to his list of class skills.

Animal Companion (Ex): The evolutionist begins play with an animal companion chosen from the list of companions available to druids. The animal is a loyal companion and accompanies the evolutionist on his adventures, and it also serves as the primary test subject for his experimentation. Though the bond between evolutionist and companion may be based on care, training, and respect, it is more often a product of experimentation and alchemically induced controls. This ability functions as the druid's animal companion, using the evolutionist's level as his effective druid level, except as follows: the evolutionist's extracts and mutagens are considered spells for abilities such as share spells.

Further, the companion may select the Extra Discovery feat, as if it had the discovery class ability, to select and gain the benefits of any discovery that affects the physical form (discoveries that affect bombs, extracts, or mutagens cannot be selected). The companion uses the evolutionist's level to determine its eligibility for a discovery and must otherwise meet all other prerequisites.

If the evolutionist releases an animal companion from his

service, he can gain a new one by performing the necessary surgeries and alchemical procedures on a replacement companion. Doing so takes 8 hours per day for a week. The evolutionist must capture or purchase any replacement companion before he may begin the surgeries.

This ability replaces bomb.

Magic Fang: At 1st level, the evolutionist adds *magic fang* to his formula book as a 1st level extract. At 7th level, he adds *greater magic fang* to his formula book as a 3rd level extract.

Discoveries: The evolutionist focuses on discoveries that augment his animal companion. The following discoveries complement the evolutionist archetype: enhance companion, frighteningly intelligent, reinforced skeleton, spiked skeleton, tentacle**, vestigial arm**, and wings**.

SPECIALIST ALCHEMIST

Many alchemists focus their studies and experimentation in one particular direction. Specialists are defined by their narrower selection of discoveries, forsaking some measure of flexibility in exchange for mastery of their chosen field.

Alien Specialist: Some alchemists dedicate themselves to the study of the stars, the multitude of planes of existence, and the mysteries—and

dangers—that lie beyond. Often working with inquisitors and paladins, these so-called alienists seek out and eliminate extraplanar threats. In addition to the specialist discoveries, the following discoveries complement the alien specialist archetype: anchoring bomb, cognatogen**, and dispelling bomb*.

Plant Specialist: The botanist focuses his studies on the plant world. As he gains in experience, he may find himself identifying with plants more than other creatures of his own type. The botanist's discoveries often take on plant-like qualities. For example, a botanist's tentacle** discovery would be better represented as a vine growth. In addition to the specialist discoveries, the following discoveries complement the plant specialist archetype: madness bomb*, spontaneous healing**, tanglefoot bomb**, and tentacle**.

Metalwork Specialist: Gold is viewed as matter in its perfect state. Many alchemists believe that all matter seeks to become gold. These alchemists believe that it is their duty to accelerate this natural process and are not afraid to transmute their own flesh into the precious substance. In addition to the specialist discoveries, the following discoveries complement the metalwork specialist archetype: feral mutagen*, grand mutagen*, greater mutagen*, and shrapnel bomb. Ω



Magic Shops: What's In Store?

How to Turn a DM Nightmare into a Tool for Better Games

By Christina Stiles and Spike Y Jones
Art by Rick Hershey and Maciej Zagorski

The best place for an adventurer to acquire magic items is, of course, on an adventure, but that doesn't always provide the right item at the right time. He may need some specific magic item to complete a quest, or he might have used all the *+1 arrows* he found in the high priest's tomb. He might also find himself with extra items; what does a fighter do with his trusty *+1 longsword* once he gains a *+2 mighty cleaving longsword*?

The *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*, like its 3.5 predecessor, assumes characters will buy and sell magical items in settlements throughout the campaign world, and the size of the community dictates an item's availability. Many GMs, however, feel that magic shops detract from the sense of achievement and wonder that should come with magic.

Nixing the local magic shop is certainly possible, but there are ways to handle such shops without ruffling GM sensibilities, depriving the players of a way to spend their gold, or eliminating a necessary campaign convenience.

1) First Impressions: The adventure should be the *first* place that heroes acquire magic items, but they need not be the *only* place. For most players there's little excitement in running a finger down a price list, altering a gp total on a character sheet, and walking away from a store with a magic weapon. On the other hand, after a PC has acquired an enchanted sword, bow, ring, suit of armor, and ring, and a couple of potions in a series of thrilling adventures, it's not much of a letdown if he makes a quick trip to the magic shop for a *+1 dagger* to complete the ensemble.

2) Second Helping: Even GMs who hand out relatively little magical treasure will frequently give the heroes potions, scrolls, and magic ammunition, because they know all those things are useful but *temporary*. Once the players PCs have shot those magic arrows, though, they're going to want more, and it'll look highly suspect if every tenth dungeon encounter is a monster carrying *+1 arrows* that it doesn't use. Replenishing expendable magic weapons is a role for magic shops most GMs won't object to.

3) Third Rate: If an adventurer finds a fantastic weapon in a dungeon, he's probably not going to sell it to buy some lesser item; he's going to keep it. If a wizard needs a specific spell on a scroll, he's not going to scavenge through the stacks of dusty wares in the magic shop hoping to get lucky this

one time; he'll either write it himself or hire someone to write it for him.

By definition, then, the items in magic shops are mostly unwanted or easy-to-make items made to provide quick cash for their crafters. They can include basic magic weapons, scrolls with low-level or nonessential spells, wands with hardly any charges left, and so on. In general, all but the best magic stores sell items with maximum market prices 3 or 4 Average Party Levels (APL) below those on the Treasure Values Per Encounter Table of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*.

That doesn't mean PCs cannot find anything of value in magic shops. The GM can include the occasional standout item: a *mace of smiting* bought but returned three times when each new owner apparently succumbed to the mace's rumored curse, or an enchanted staff that's resisted all attempt to *identify* its workings. Even these should be 1 or 2 Average Party Levels below those won in the dungeon.

4) For Laughs: Some GMs like to lighten the mood of a game with warped magical items featuring punny names (for example, the croaking *horn of frog* and the hugely impractical *mall of the titans*), odd curses (e.g., *armor of street-corner preacher attraction*), or off-color humor (let's not talk about the *rod of love*). Players, on the other hand, can get quite indignant if these gags come at the expense of the treasure they expected to find at the end of the adventure.

A magic shop is the perfect place for such a GM to express his sense of humor without incurring the players' wrath. Even so, it's wise to offer at least some regular magic items among the shop's wares.

5) Five & Dime: For some GMs it's not the fact that the PCs can buy magic items that turns them against magic shops, it's the all-in-one-magic-shop-on-the-corner that turns any possibility of wonderment into nothing but a mundane commercial transaction. Buying a *ring of invisibility* sucks all the joy out of magic.

But a "magic shop" doesn't have to

Buying vs. Selling

GMs and players often forget that magic shops don't *buy* magic items for the same amount they *sell* them for; if they did, there wouldn't be a profit margin. The market prices listed in the *Core Rulebook* for magic items are what a store owner or item creator charges a purchasing hero. The cost in the item's Construction section is what a store owner will pay a hero for such an item found in a dungeon.

be a shop. It could be a street hawker selling charms and trinkets he swears are magical. A temple may offer items to protect the faithful and confound the enemies of the church, asking only a consideration to cover costs. If the local Adventurer Outfitters carries darkwood shields and everburning torches along with their rope, climbing spikes, and iron rations, then a few potions or *+1 sling bullets* isn't out of the question. Not all magic is intended for dungeon delvers. The best place to find a *repel vermin* charm or a *scythe of speed* might be at a farm supply store. And buying a keg of beer and a diluted *potion of neutralize poison* (as a hangover cure) from the same merchant is very convenient.

4 SAMPLE SHOPS

Below are four ready-to-use magic stores to add to your campaign in communities of the appropriate size.

HRENSEN'S SUPPLY WAGON

It's hard to imagine how many miles Serra Hrensen, his guard dog, and his team of oxen have covered over the decades, plodding in their endless circuit through a dozen villages and twice that many smaller thorps, hamlets, or isolated houses. It's also a bit puzzling that he never seems a copper richer than the year before, despite consistently good sales. It's a genuine mystery how he always seems to either have exactly the right item in his wagon or be able to procure it before his next pass through a village.

It's a bit spooky when he doesn't have what you *want*, but what he sells you instead turns out to be exactly what you *need*. And it's uncanny—even a bit troubling—how often he just happens to be on just the right stretch of otherwise deserted road in the wilderness to cross paths with parties of adventurers on their way to or from danger.

Strangeness aside, Hrensen's Supply Wagon provides literally an essential service to the communities he visits. It's packed nearly solid (including on its walls and rounded wooden roof, inside and out) with household necessities, food, tools, cloth (although rarely clothing), and the like. Tucked between the barrels of salt fish and baskets of fresh eggs are knives, arrows, and other tools shared by farmers, hunters, and adventuring heroes.

DON'T INTERRUPT THE GAME!

CHARACTER FOLIO

www.darktheatre.net

Dantès Faria	
Game:	Avalon
Gender:	M
Alignment:	Lawful Neutral
Hair Color:	Black
Health	
Max HP:	21
Current HP:	21
Non-Lethal:	0
Ki Pool:	
Rest	
Total Level:	3
Offense	
CMB:	+2
Initiative:	+2
Base Attack:	+1
Melee Attack:	+2
Range Attack:	+3
# of Attacks:	1
Defense	
CMD:	14
Armour Class:	13
Saves	
Fortitude:	+3
Reflex:	+3
Will:	+7
Armour	
Padded	
AC: +1 Dex: 8 Fail: 5%	

Available Bargain Bin Magic Items

D20	Item	Market Price
1	<i>phylactery of negative channel surfing</i>	best offer
2	diluted potion (50% chance of any specific one being available)	70% of normal value
3	<i>wand of 0-level spell</i> (1 charge remaining, 10% chance of any particular 0-level spell being in stock)	10 gp
4	<i>scroll of fecal storm</i> (like <i>ice storm</i> , but, well...)	70 gp
5	<i>horn of shouting real loud</i>	100 gp
6	<i>not particularly intelligent sword</i> (+1 <i>talking shortsword</i> , Int 4, Wis 4, Cha 4, recognition of its limitations 0, Ego 10)	200 gp
7	+1 <i>longsword</i> , broken asunder (theoretically repairable)	200 gp
8	<i>ever-sparkling cloak of Charisma +1</i> (cursed) (-20 to Stealth checks to hide, requires <i>remove curse</i> to remove)	200 gp
9	<i>ring of clumsiness</i> (cursed)	220 gp
10	<i>ever-sharp dagger</i> (no bonuses, never dulls, immune to rust monster attack)	252 gp
11	<i>lyre of shoddy construction</i> (once/week can be used to create substandard or unsafe buildings, tunnels, etc.)	650 gp
12	<i>rod of koboldly might</i>	700 gp
13	<i>cursed backbiter spear</i> (cursed)	800 gp
14	+1 <i>returning sling bullets</i> (10) (cursed) (returns normally after a hit, but returns to attack the user on a missed attack roll)	860 gp
15	<i>armor of arrow attraction</i> (cursed)	900 gp
16	<i>ring of protection +1/2</i>	1,000 gp
17	<i>belt of physical imperfection</i> (cursed) (grants +2 bonus to one physical ability score and -2 penalty to another, changing on a daily basis)	1,600 gp
18	<i>net of snaring</i> (cursed)	1,800 gp
19	uncharged staff of a spell not known to any living mage	2,000 gp
20	dangerously threadbare <i>carpet of flying</i> , 5 ft. by 5 ft.	2,000 gp

Occasionally he brings forth from the shadowy recesses of the wagon unusual items, such as potions, masterwork weapons, and odds and ends he claims to have picked up in his travels.

Customers are never allowed to enter his wagon, a precaution against strong-arm tactics or pilferage; although you can see much of what he has from the outside, so it's usually easier to just ask for something and let him tell you (without a moment's hesitation) whether he has it or when he can get it.

The peddler's wagon is treated as a thorp, hamlet, or village on the **Available Items** tables, because, while it only has a population of 1, the wagon mainly serves communities of those sizes, and therefore has those sorts of magic wares. In addition, for

any particular item, the GM has to roll on the **Delay Table** to determine *when* Hrensen will have the item.

Delay Table

D20 Roll	Delay
1-3	in wagon
4-7	tomorrow
8-12	next week
13-20	some vague number of months from now

If an item is particularly large in crowded-wagon terms (e.g., a polearm or full suit of armor), valuable (anything 500 gp or over; Hrensen never sells items costing more than 1,000 gp), or not listed on the appropriate **Available Items** table (but available as a minor item per the rules in the *Core Rulebook*), move it up one Delay class.

THE BARGAIN BIN

If a city can support a magic shop where medium- and high-level heroes can easily buy high-priced magic items, it also likely has at least a few cut-rate establishments where lesser items go for more affordable prices to townsfolk and beginning adventurers.

For example, the huge magically glowing "Alumere's Emporium of Fantastical Devices and Magical Creations" sign overwhelms the tiny entrance to the shabby store the locals call Dan's Bargain Bin. Daniyah the Thrifty, the store's halfling owner, never even met the original sign's Alumere, but he says the used sign was too good a bargain to pass up.

The store contains similarly questionable bargains. *Ioun stones* for only a few silver pieces? Certainly, but so far no one's come up with a use for burned-out gray husks. Charms against a variety of monsters and vicious animals? Yes, but none of the beasts protected against are naturally found locally or even known to the region outside of old stories (including those Dan repeats to hesitant customers). *Amulets of reasonable business success*, *elixirs of moderate affection*, *plasters of somewhat improved health*, and many other nostrums whose slow and hard-to-measure effects could as easily be attributed to the belief and confidence of the user, rather than as to any enchantment. However, they are available at prices that make them affordable to average non-adventuring city-dwellers, and that makes confirming *detect magic* spells a ridiculous added expense.

Not all of the magic items Daniyah sells are questionable. He usually has a good selection of diluted potions in stock (see the Diluted Brewing feat in *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 7), and he occasionally has a few powerful items for sale; all, unfortunately, cursed. At least these are properly identified curses, so the prices are fair for anyone willing to put up with the item's drawbacks in exchange for its benefits.

Daniyah usually has an extensive selection of spell material components,



including affordable substitutes for some of the more expensive ones that should work almost exactly the same as the standard ones. If pressed, of course, Daniyah admits he hasn't actually tested any of the substitutes himself.

The curses theoretically leveled at potential shoplifters (as advertised on large, legible, multilingual signs throughout the store) are probably imaginary and also probably unnecessary. Any thief runs the risk of wasting his time or taking his life in his hands depending on what he furtively pockets. When someone steals something of real value from the Bargain Bin, hiring item retrieval experts willing to work for store credit (like the PCs) is Daniyah's most effective anti-theft system.

Instead of the standard item availability tables, use the **Available Bargain Bin Magic Items** table for items beyond the staples mentioned in the shop description.

KIERAN'S/THE COMBAT ZONES

The simple sign advertising Kieran's doesn't bother to say that the establishment is the most successful magic shop in town; if you're shopping there, you're either a satisfied returning customer or you were sent there by one. And the secondary sign saying "Try It Before You Buy It" is either redundant or mystifying.

First-timers in the store are confused by its spartan interior: no shields or weapons hanging on the walls, no racks of musty scrolls, no tables haphazardly piled with potions, bits of armor, unidentified spell components, and the remains of decades of melted candle stubs. Along the clean white walls a few numbered doors leading to a dozen side rooms. In the center of the room tables display cards depicting magic items currently in stock. A curious customer simply takes an item card to the clerk behind the counter, who directs him to one of the side doors.

Once a customer steps inside the empty room and closes the door behind him, he is apparently transported immediately into a forest clearing, a dungeon room, or some other place where he faces some challenge (usually a monster attack or similar), and the held card is somehow replaced with the magic item it depicts. A disembodied voice (that some insist is that of the never-seen Kieran) tells the wielder how to use the item to overcome the challenge, but otherwise he's on his own. Still, the customer never fails to overcome the challenge, usually quite handily.

The successful customer is then transported back to the small room completely unharmed (and 1 XP richer), and the door automatically opens. If he approves of the item's performance in the *programmed image*, he can buy it. The clerk procures the real item from the secure storeroom behind the counter.

Your Characters.

While the Combat Zones (as the small trial rooms are nicknamed) are meant for customers making buying decisions, many use them just for fun. To prevent adolescents and deadbeat adventurers from monopolizing the booths, clerks sometimes ask to see the gold necessary to purchase the item before granting access to a room.

If a customer wants something that's not in stock (i.e., not on the **Available Items** tables), Kieran's always promises to find one (at a 10% premium) but the store can't guarantee a Combat Zone test for the item.

Kieran's can be set in a large town or any size city.

MELYSIUM'S MARVELOUS MAGICKS

Situated in the most upscale quarter of the city, this two-story white marble building is easily recognized by the massive columns topped with intricate friezes of legendary wizards standing above its magic sigil-protected bronze double doors.

Comfortable couches are scattered around the posh first floor and graceful statues of sword-carrying warriors (that can animate to protect the store) line the walls. Illustrated order inventory books rest on beautiful tables in front of the couches, and servants carry wine, bread, and cheese to reclining customers while they wait for the clerks to take down and fetch their selections.

Customers preferring to browse may directly search the display tables and racks of items secured under a transparent *wall of force*. Melysium's carries several higher-end magical items, including some costing over 100,000 gp, and stocks all minor items worth mentioning. The most powerful items, though, are stored in well-protected basement vaults. If Melysium doesn't have something in stock, she can often acquire it, although "special order shipping" or rush charges (usually 1,000 gp or more) apply for rush orders or major items.

The store's upper level houses a large laboratory. Here, six contracted spellcasters create potions and other

Magic Shops in Zobeck

Zobeck has no true magic shops to speak of. For the most part, the Arcane Collegium frowns on such establishments, viewing access to magic as its exclusive purview. What magic an adventurer finds in the course of his travels, however, is none of their concern—unless they want to acquire it. That said, a few faculty members might be convinced to create items on commission. PCs could wine and dine them in an attempt to gain this service. Most faculty members are too busy with personal projects and classes to give the idea much consideration, but they do enjoy being asked over a free meal or two.

Still, there is one place the PCs can find some minor magic items in Zobeck: the Book Fetish in the College District, which is really the front for a cult of Marena whose Temple of Painful Pleasures resides below the shop (see *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 78). The priestesses acquire certain items in trade for their temple services, and they sometimes sell excess items in the store. The priestesses also make their own potions and wands for sale. As their clients run the magical gamut, they offer other, non-clerical items as well.

Blond temple muscle men (Northlands barbarians) guard the door leading to the store's glyph- and trap-protected vault, but they're rarely needed. Everyone knows anyone caught stealing from the Book Fetish is guaranteed a free, prolonged, and life-ending torture session with the high priestess of Marena.

For items available at the Book Fetish, roll as a Large City. The temple concentrates on divine and sex-related magic, but the temple's high priestess acquires many items in trade or through confiscation. For an additional cost, she can talk many of her Arcane Collegium patrons into creating for her items they normally wouldn't create for others.



Anywhere.



cordax.net/anywhere

items for sale below. The spellcasters choose to work for Melysium for the free access to information and discounted rare items she offers as employee benefits.

Melysium's clientele is as diverse as the item selection, and customers may encounter aasimars, serpentfolk, rakshasa, and tengu, as well as otherwise normal people from the exotic far corners of the

world. Melysium, a charismatic tiefling wizard of great renown, has cultivated planar connections to make her magnificent store a revered inter-dimensional marketplace: *the* place to buy or sell anything magical. Planar gates are thought to terminate in a secret basement below the store's vaults. Some of Melysium's contacts prefer to deal in trades, which provides GMs

with opportunities to send PCs seeking specific powerful items on adventures throughout the planes.

Melysium's Marvelous Magicks best suits a magic-heavy large city or metropolis. Ω

What's In Stock?

The following time saving tables produce a selection of pre-generated items that a magic shop could stock, taking into account the earlier guidelines for the role of magic shops in the campaign. Thus, to a great extent, they feature low-powered and supplemental magic.

The magic shop's community size determines which tables the GM uses:

Thorp: roll 1d4 items on Minor Items table

Hamlet: roll 1d6 items on Minor Items table

Village: roll 2d4 items on Minor Items, 1d4 on Medium Items tables

Small Town: roll 3d4 on Minor Items, 1d6 on Medium Items tables

Large Town: roll 3d4 on Minor Items, 2d4 on Medium Items, 1d4 on Major Item tables

Small City: roll 4d4 on Minor Items, 3d4 on Medium Items, 1d6 on Major Items tables

Large City: roll 4d4 on Minor Items, 3d4 on Medium Items, 2d4 on Major Items tables

Metropolis: roll 4d4 on Medium Items, 3d4 on Major Items tables; all minor items are available

If there's only one magic shop in town, all the items rolled can be found there. If there is more than one, the items rolled are split between them.

If an uncommon item (a +2 *holy bastard sword*, as opposed to a bunch of +1 *arrows*) is sold, cross it off the list, and replace it with another item of the appropriate level.

Available Minor Items

D20	Item	Market Price (gp)
1	scroll of purify food and drink	25
2	potion of virtue	50
3	scroll of summon monster I	50
4	feather token (anchor)	50
5	potion of cure light wounds	100
6	sleep arrow (1)	132
7	elixir of love	150
8	darkwood shield	257
9	scroll of arcane lock	300
10	+1 arrows (10)	460
11	feather token (whip)	500
12	potion of invisibility	600
13	potion of make whole	600
14	potion of delay poison	600
15	scroll of prayer	750
16	wand of create water	750
17	wand of mending	750
18	wand of endure elements	1,500
19	+1 dagger	2,302
20	+1 long sword	2,315

Available Medium Items

D20	Item	Market Price(gp)
1	feather token (whip)	500
2	scroll of remove curse	750
3	potion of tongues	800
4	pipes of the sewers	1,150
5	wand of enlarge person	1,500
6	potion of water walk	1,500
7	potion of gaseous form	1,500
8	potion of water breathing	1,500
9	javelin of lightning	1,500
10	scroll of break enchantment	2,000
11	potion of good hope	2,100
12	bag of tricks, gray	3,000
13	marvelous pigments	4,000
14	+2 shield, light steel	4,159
15	+2 leather armor	4,175
16	+2 chain shirt	4,250
17	ring of protection +2	8,000
18	+2 rapier	8,320
19	wand of cure moderate wounds	9,000
20	+1 trident of warning	10,115

Available Major Items

D20	Item	Market Price (gp)
1	scroll of wall of force	2,500
2	ring of counterspells	4,000
3	scroll of control undead	4,550
4	bag of holding type II	5,000
5	boots of striding and springing	5,500
6	arrows +4 (10)	6,460
7	cloak of the manta ray	7,200
8	harp of charming	7,500
9	ring of protection +2	8,000
10	wand of spider climb	9,000
11	rod of metamagic, empower, lesser	9,000
12	+3 chainmail	9,300
13	rod of wonder	12,000
14	ring of water walking	15,000
15	+3 battleaxe	18,310
16	+2 holy bastard sword	18,335
17	ioun stone, pale lavender ellipsoid	20,000
18	wand of cure serious wounds	22,500
19	figurine of wondrous power, obsidian steed	28,500
20	ioun stone, lavender and green ellipsoid	40,000

WELCOME TO THE

DRAGON EMPIRES

By James Jacobs

Art by Eva Widerman, Map by Rob Lazzaretti

Whether one travels across the eternal ice of the Crown of the World or sails around the Vudran horn, the lands known as the Dragon Empires are a distant curiosity to many of the people of the Inner Sea. Yet the Dragon Empires span a region much larger than Avistan and northern Garund combined—some of the nations and regions in Tian Xia dwarf realms like Cheliox or the River Kingdoms. And as in size, the people of the Dragon Empires tend to be larger than life. Here is a land where honor is as binding as law; where animal, plant, or stone might hide a powerful spirit; and where imperial dragons mix with humanity to shape the very flow of fate.

The Dragon Empires themselves are featured in the second half of Paizo Publishing's latest **Pathfinder** RPG Adventure Path, *Jade Regent*. Beyond that, they provide an entire new realm to adventure in. More details on these exotic lands will be presented in the upcoming *Dragon Empires Gazetteer* and the *Dragon Empires Primer* (*Editor's Note: Nice name! So nice, the Midgard campaign setting has contained a Dragon Empire for the last 5 years. Ah, well.*).

But you don't have to wait to get a glimpse of these strange new lands—**KOBOLD QUARTERLY** magazine has a preview of what's to come!

RACES OF THE DRAGON EMPIRES

As in the Inner Sea region, humanity is the dominant race of the Dragon Empires. The people known collectively as Tians comprise seven different ethnicities, each with their own culture, traditions, and realms. Yet humans are not the only PC race options in Tian Xia. Five new choices are available as well:

Kitsune: The kitsune are a curious but devious race of forest-dwelling shapechangers, capable of shifting between a human form and that of an anthropomorphic fox.

Nagaji: Nagajis are reptilian humanoids who have the blood of nagas in their veins, a people once created as a slave caste by the nagas of Nagajor. They have since risen to power in their own right.

Samsaran: The samsarans are a race of humanoids who have been reborn into their current bodies as part of a constant cycle of reincarnation

beyond death. Spiritual and wise, the samsarans dwell in remote monastery cities.

Tengu: The crafty tengu are avian humanoids—master swordfighters and talented linguists, they excel in the role of spy and swashbuckler alike (*see "Ecology of the Tengu" in KQ #14 for additional details on the Golarion tengu by James Jacobs—Ed.*).

Wayang: The island-hopping wayangs are a small race of mysterious humanoids, as if spindly shadow puppets somehow came to life. Like gnomes, they are visitors from another



reality, although the realm the wayangs hail from is an altogether darker place.

REGIONS OF THE DRAGON EMPIRES

Just as strife and shock seized the Inner Sea a century ago with Aroden's death, so too did great change come to the Dragon Empires with the collapse of the massive empire of Lung Wa. Today, 28 regions comprise Tian Xia, and many of these are new or recently independent realms rising from the ashes of the Lung Wa's collapse. Space prohibits a fully detailed accounting, but a quick rundown of the realms is presented below.

Amanandar: Founded by a woman from Taldor who tried to launch a new Army of Expansion into the East, Amanandar is an out-of-place Inner Sea kingdom hidden in the heart of the Dragon Empires.

Bachuan: Caught between the heavenly nation of Tianjing to the north and their traditional competitors of Hwanggot to the south, communistic Bachuan tenaciously guards the way to the largest inland sea of the Dragon Empires.

Chu Ye: Once a rugged realm of honest work and rural pride, the broken realm of Chu Ye is now ruled by powerful oni and their savage giant minions.

Darklands: The Darklands extend below all of Golarion's continents—but under Tian Xia, stranger denizens than drow or duergar wait and plot.

Dtang Ma: This tropical nation, once oppressed by Lung Wa, is returning to its ancient glory—but can they survive against growing aggression from the serpent realm of Nagajor?

Forest of Spirits: A large, sub-arctic woodland that separates the vast peninsula of Minkai from mainland Tian Xia. Here, the woods are protected by kami and haunted by oni.

Goka: Where the indomitable mountains of the Wall of Heaven fall away along the central western coast, the immense city of Goka stands as the primary gateway into the Dragon Empires from the west.

Hongal: This large region of tundra and broken hills is ruled by nomadic horse riders—it is also the northern gateway into Tian Xia from the Crown of the World.

Hwanggot: Already indebted to the empire of Xa-Hoi for protection against Lung Wa's aggressive expansions many centuries ago, Hwanggot struggles to maintain its independence during a long-lasting cold war with neighboring Bachuan.

Jinin: When the elves fled Golarion on the eve of Earthfall, some fled down into the Darklands. Of those, a small contingent broke off from the main group, traveled halfway across the world through the tunnels of Sekamina, and emerged in Tian Xia to found the nation of Jinin.

Kaoling: The badlands and broken hills of Kaoling are ruled by hobgoblins—slaving hordes led by brutish warlords eager to expand their territory.

Kwanlai: This hilly and forested realm is the homeland of the tengu—a nation that, like so many others, is now emerging from the shadow of rule under fallen Lung Wa.

Lingshan: One of the largest regions in Tian Xia, Lingshan may be the greatest successor to Lung Wa. The armies of Lingshan are vast indeed, but their martial arts and spiritual power pale when compared to their neighbors Quain and Po Li.

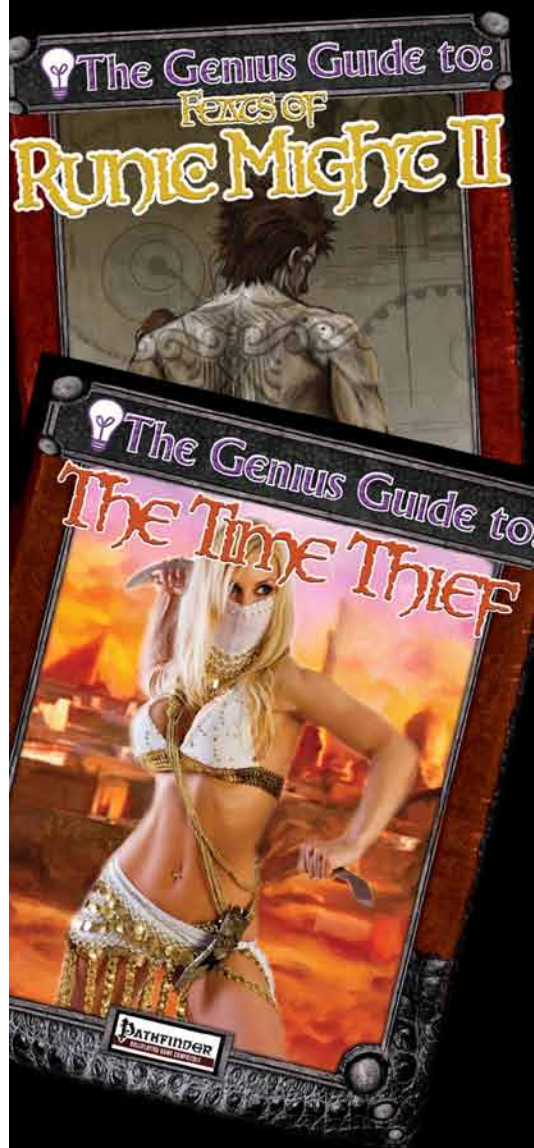
Minata: Known also as the Wandering Isles, the realm of Minata is an enormous archipelago housing fleets of bickering pirates, wayang colonies, independent island nations, and mysterious secrets of all sorts.

Minkai: One of the largest empires in Tian Xia, Minkai is on the cusp of a civil war as its people are caught in a struggle against a new and increasingly tyrannical leader, the Jade Regent.

Nagajor: Much of this large realm is a savage wilderness of jungles, swamps, and volcanoes. The civilized portions of Nagajor are ruled by the reptilian nagaji and their naga overlords.

Po Li: As one of three Successor States (along with Quain and

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Tian Xia

Lingshan), Po Li carries on the traditions of fallen Lung Wa. Po Li is the smallest of these three, but this monotheistic land holds the old capital of Lung Wa within its borders, and thus controls the lost empire's powerful legacy.

Quain: Quain is one of the three main successors to Lung Wa, along with Po Li and Linshan. Quain's great strength lies in its people, for they are among the most skilled martial artists in all of Tian Xia.

Shaguang: A vast desert in the rain shadow of the Wall of Heaven, Shaguang is a realm of hardy desert folk, strange monsters, and the eerie Sky Spirits who rule the heavens above from their legendary flying city.

Shenmen: This drizzly haunted land always seems shrouded with fog, yet neither ghosts nor evil spirits frighten Shenmen's people much. They fear the western hills, where the spiders grow unnaturally large, cruel, and clever.

Shokuro: When a powerful samurai was exiled from Minkai, he chose not to end his life. Instead, he abandoned old honor in favor of a new code, and took his people to the Tian Xia mainland to found Shokuro—a nation of "true soldiers."

Tianjing: This realm of beauty and wonder is a place aasimar can call home. Stories of sacred Tianjing have spread far and draw aasimar from across Golarion. This is a peaceful land where the people worship empyreal lords, and every city is a city of temples.

Valashmai Jungle: The largest realm in all of Tian Xia is completely wild. Valashmai is where the monsters live—a vast jungle land filled with the ruins of lost kingdoms and mysteries from a time long past.

Wall of Heaven: The highest mountains in all Golarion, the Wall forms a natural border that runs along the western coast of Tian Xia. The Wall of Heaven at once isolates and protects the Dragon Empires from the barbaric west, yet they also hide

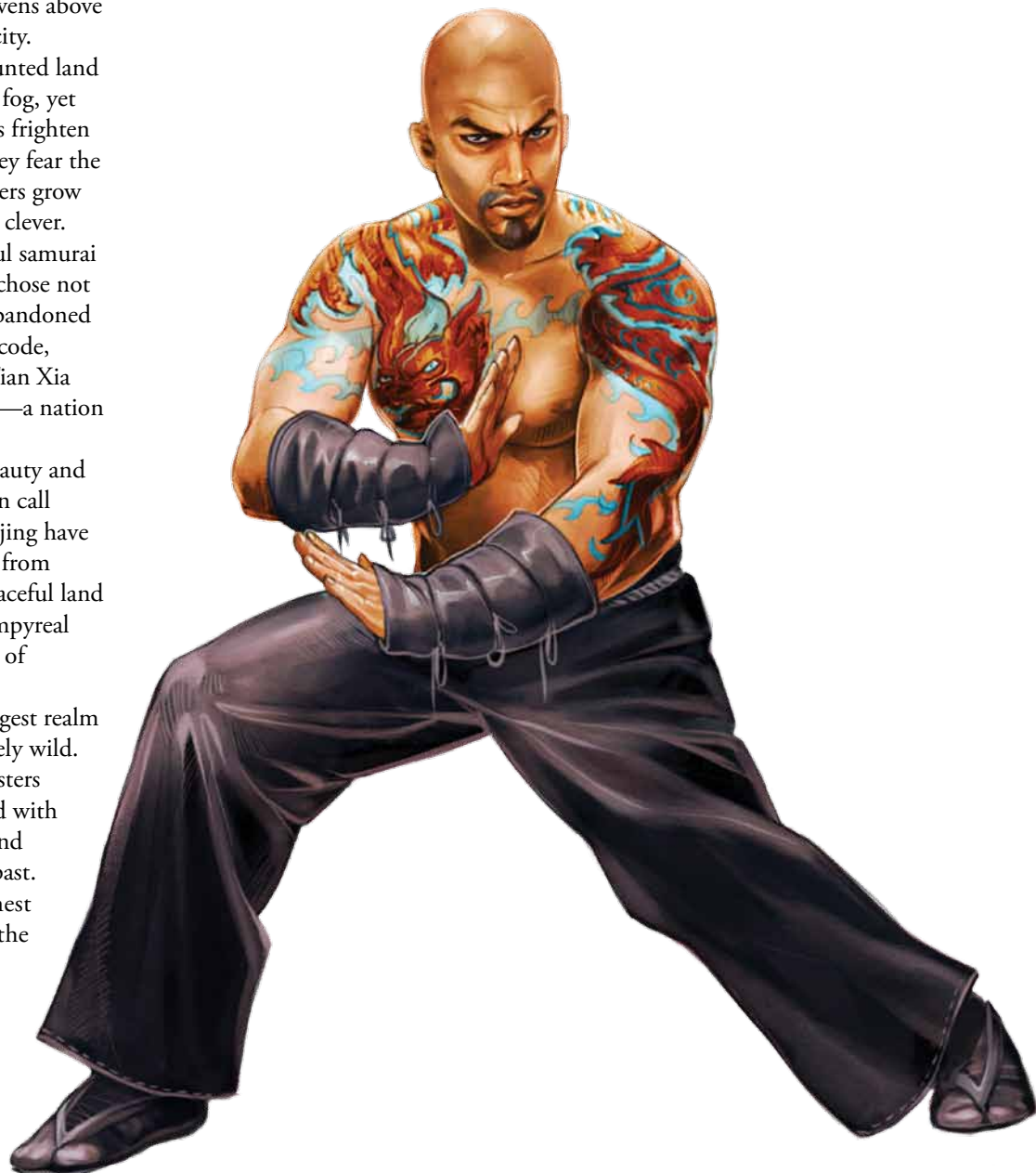
some of the greatest dangers of the realm, be they hungry dragons, warmongering yeti lords, or portals to the dread plateau of Leng.

Wanshou: When Lung Wa fell, the people of Wanshou turned increasingly to strange gods for protection against the rise of giants to the north. But in turning to the dark gods, they invited a terror into their midst—a powerful kraken from the depths of Xidao. Today, that kraken rules Wanshou from a vast bog at the land's heart, served by kappa minions and other swampy monsters.

Xa Hoi: Long one of the most powerful nations in southeastern Tian Xia, Xa Hoi is a realm where dragons rule and citizens proudly proclaim their draconic legacies.

Xidao: The shallow sea of Xidao hides a deep aquatic rift—and the struggling locathah nations that rule the shallow waters above are the only defense against a hidden peril from below.

Zi Ha: The ancestral home of the samsarans, Zi Ha purports to be a land of enlightenment—yet the samsarans share these mountains with cannibals, giants, and worse. Ω





LAU KIRITSU

Golarion's Lord Of Absolute Obedience

By Richard Pett
Art by Michael Jaecks

I HAVE SEEN THE WORLD, AND IT IS CHAOS. OUT OF CHAOS CAN COME ORDER—MUST COME ORDER. GIVE ME A BOW TO BEND, AND I WILL BEND IT AND GIVE IT PURPOSE. GIVE ME A MAN AND I WILL DO THE SAME, GIVING HIM PURPOSE BEYOND HIS MERE FLESH. ORDER IS ALL. WITHOUT IT, WE ARE DESTINED TO FALL INTO CHAOS. I WILL NOT LET THAT OCCUR.

TEACHING 1408, VERSE 32 OF THE
1,900 TEACHINGS AND VERSES OF ABSOLUTE LAW OF LAU KIRITSU

The arch-devils of Golarion are exemplified by the various horrors from Cheliax in the west, but that unfortunate realm is not the only one where their hideous strength appears. The archdevils of Tian Xia and the eastern realms are

just as terrible, though their plots and machinations sometimes follow a different style.

The greatest of the eastern devils may be Làu Kiritsu, the Lord of Absolute Obedience, whose strictures are almost impossible to obey.

LAU KIRITSU

LE male infernal duke of discipline, submissive duty, and seppuku

Unholy Symbol An honor kukri

Areas of Concern Self sacrifice, punishment objects, law

Domains Evil, Law, Strength, War

Favored Weapon Kukri

Temple Fortifications, dungeons, pagodas

Worshippers Samurai, hobgoblins, ja noi oni, sahaugin, usually male

Minions Oni, ogre mage, minor devils

Honor is all, and absolute order can be achieved only through the harshest discipline; the smallest spark of self-will leads to rebellion and anarchy. Such is the doctrine of Làu Kiritsu, Lord of Absolute Obedience. Làu Kiritsu has forged his own path into absolute obedience in all things.

Control is all.

Làu Kiritsu appears as a colossus of seething anger dragging a huge burning ball and chain behind him. The ball is twice his height, and every step is toil. The god of absolute obedience has two faces. The first he uses to teach his followers. When he is angry, however, Làu Kiritsu turns his second face upon his followers—the face of discipline. Kiritsu’s second face is tantalizingly hidden in all artworks and representations of the arch-devil, for to glimpse it is to see the futility of oneself and burn. Many who catch the merest sight of the second face are driven to madness and death.

The *1,900 Teachings and Verses of Absolute Law*, written on the sacred scroll of the Edicts of the Law, make up the Lord of Absolute Obedience’s teachings. They describe how a follower must behave from dawn to dusk, for every hour of every day of their lives. His worshippers and followers seek to prove their obedience even in sleep by imbibing powerful drugs that wipe away dreams. Some followers quickly fall into madness, but this is merely a sign of their unsuitability. Their failure must, of course, be punished.

INDOCTRINATION INTO KIRITSU’S WAY

Disciples of Làu Kiritsu enter one of his temples (all monasteries, as the presence of women is considered extremely unsettling) at the age of five and immediately taught the first five laws: silence, obedience, punishment, submission, and self-worthlessness. A rigorous cycle of instruction follows to ensure each supplicant behaves exactly as he should at all times. At the age of 12, followers are assigned a path within the doctrine where their class is chosen; usually samurai, but some clerics, monks, and fighters are Kiritsu’s faithful. Arcane magic is considered too unpredictable and is forbidden to his worshippers. Those who show latent arcane talent have it taken out of them in a series of escalating disciplines. These result in their death if they cannot be cleansed of the impure magic.

Those who persistently digress from

Làu Kiritsu’s laws are not released but dubbed abominators and punished. As transgressions continue, these punishments increase in severity. The most recalcitrant and intractable are taken to the deepest parts of the monasteries for the rite called the “cleansing of the soul,” a day-long ritual that always ends in their deaths.

At 18 years of age, followers take the Test of Faith, a month-long ceremony of obedience that sometimes requires the follower to take his own life. Making a single mistake in the meticulously observed ritual is punishable by death. Often such deaths are excruciating, as those who have come this far and failed may draw the personal ire of Làu Kiritsu. Worse, in his diabolical wisdom the god of discipline sometimes punishes everyone associated with the failing candidate. After all, they failed to identify weakness so close by.

THE FIRST STEP

Those who succeed in the Test of Faith join the lowest ranks of worshippers, the First Step. Progress beyond the First Step is possible only through perfect compliance over time. The highest rank is the 19th step, the Step of Enlightenment. Many who achieve this goal immediately take their own lives and join their god in his palace of righteous justice, while Làu Kiritsu instructs others to remain and guide the others.

Each follower has absolute power over every lower rank. More than this, each follower has a religious obligation to punish any transgression he observes among those below him.

Worshippers spend their day in devotions, often walking a set route through the temple at an exact pace, in prayer or in learning. Interrupting these devotions is an act of heresy. If the heretic creates a large enough disruption, the whole temple rises to attack (using very set tactics). If a temple is destroyed, other temples follow an exact procedure for sending forces to seek vengeance.

The Wisdom of Làu Kiritsu

Worshippers repeat the words of wisdom attributed to their deity every day. A few of the more frequently quoted lines include:

*A rat who gnaws at a cat’s tail
invites destruction
Each generation will reap what the
former generation has sown
Enlightenment comes from following
the enlightenment of those who have
achieved it
He who is ordered makes order
He who is drowned is not troubled
by the rain
If you bow at all, bow low
Only by knowing ones’ place can one
know ones’ meaning
Order is all
Pain cleanses
Pain is the best teacher
Self is nothing
Those who obey know why
To know the road ahead, ask those
coming back.*

Some rulers have spent their whole lives fighting off devotees of Làu Kiritsu.

APOLOGY AND SEPPUKU

The final word in the worship of Làu Kiritsu is the Apology, the act of seppuku. When a follower who has mastered the First Step fails in a way that has no other defined punishment, he is expected to ritually disembowel himself with his honor kukri (or any other object available). To commit seppuku is to honor Làu Kiritsu, and whole monasteries have been found filled with devoted followers who gave their lord their final act of obedience. A believer who cannot commit seppuku and later dies is condemned to wander the spirit world for eternity, wracked in endless agony. Such failed followers are often ghosts, haunts, or banshees of various tormented kinds.

Làu Kiritsu’s word is spreading, and increasing numbers of ogre mages and ja noi oni (hobgoblin oni) devote their whole lives to bringing his words to the corners of the world. The ogre mages

Seppuku

All those who worship Làu Kiritsu know they must always be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for their diabolical god. The honor kukri is their favored weapon for committing seppuku.

Honor kukri vary enormously, but all are kept razor sharp and decorated with the words of control of Làu Kiritsu—often in gold or set in valuable gems on the hilt of scabbard. The act of seppuku is a self-inflicted coup-de-grace with the weapon. Where the honor kukri is not available, followers often commit seppuku by falls, other weapons, or any other method at hand.

make extremely fine guard captains and figures of fear, and they are much sought after by organizations that rely on the harshest sort of obedience. These oni use their prowess to corrupt the institutions they allegedly serve and remake them to serve Kiritsu's purposes.

THE SHACKLES OF LAU KIRITSU

Followers of Làu Kiritsu have created countless magical objects of constraint and harsh teaching. Some of these have made their way into the hands of others. A small selection of such magic items is listed here.

THE FETTERS OF KIRITSU

Aura strong evocation; **CL** 11th
Slot none; **Price** 11,550 gp; **Weight** 6 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

These steel leg irons are embellished with images of human suffering; a typical set of such irons might show prisoners starving to death or being left alone in dark places to rot.

Three times per day, when cast at an enemy within 30 ft., the fetters attach themselves to that enemy's feet and then expand like a snake made of hefty iron chains to envelop the character. The effect is identical to a *grasping hand* spell; CMB+22; CMD 32; duration 11 rounds.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *grasping hand*
Cost 5,775 gp

THE BRASS PEAR

Aura moderate conjuration and transmutation; **CL** 3rd
Slot none; **Price** 12,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

This brass pear of anguish is made up of four spoon-like endings bound around a single metal stud. If cast at an enemy within 30 feet, the brass pear attempts to enter the target's mouth (as a range touch attack). If it hits, the pear latches onto the character's head with grasping iron tendrils, and the spoons enter the character's mouth and open. This effectively gags the target, making it impossible for him to speak. The pear can be removed only by speaking the command word, which returns it to its closed form.

Gagged characters cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components. Creatures with no mouths, or more than one mouth, are immune to the effects of this item.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *silence*
Cost 6,000 gp

THE ROD OF LIPS

Aura moderate transmutation; **CL** 7th
Slot none; **Price** 9,925 gp; **Weight** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This rod is covered in the sewn lips of its past victims. The rod is valued by anyone who must punish and command. As the rod is used, the lips whimper and whisper. With the command word, the rod has the following functions, all of which can be used once per day:

Crushing despair on the target creature by command (DC 16). The range of this effect is a 30 ft. cone.

Geas, lesser upon the target creature within 40 ft. (DC 15)

Suggestion upon the target creature (DC 15) (range 40 ft.)

The rod functions as +1 *vicious club* when used as a melee weapon.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Rod, *crushing despair, geas, lesser, suggestion*
Cost 4,963 gp

THE IRON PUZZLE BOX

Aura strong conjuration (teleportation); **CL** 15th

Slot none; **Price** 3,000 gp; **Weight** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

Only the owner of the iron puzzle box can solve it (a move-equivalent action that is automatically understood whenever the previous

owner is slain and the next person takes the object). The puzzle box is a squat cylinder and covered in dozens of images of smiling Tian devils.

When solved, the box opens and the next person who sees the item (not including the owner) is subject to a *maze* spell (DC 21). The item works 1/day.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Create Wondrous Item, *maze*
Cost 1,500 gp

THE PILLARS OF LAU KIRITSU

The greatest achievements of the followers of absolute obedience rest in creation. Like ants they work towards a common goal without distraction and can focus upon and build the greatest monuments to their god. The older buildings stand in more remote regions where the monks and followers can continue their lives of order in absolute peace, and as necessary strike out at their neighbors.

The greatest of these temples is the Tall Tower of Days, a vast pagoda that lies high in a valley in southern Nagajoron, near the Valashmai Jungle border. The followers of Kiritsu have let the jungle fester with creatures to provide a barrier to their vile activities. A (purportedly) endless dungeon complex in the Darklands has an exit in Xa Hoi, where an army of nagaji follow a sisterhood devoted to the god of absolute obedience, slaying anything male that enters their darkened temple.

Those who raid Làu Kiritsu's temples can claim vast troves of incredibly beautiful and complex works created by his monks. Sadly few characters have the time to spend such ill-gotten gains before others who worship Làu Kiritsu come seeking vengeance.

THE DEVILS OF LAU KIRITSU

The worship of Làu Kiritsu extends beyond Tian humans and humanoids, as many other creatures worship at the altar of discipline. Most prevalent among these are the oni ogre mage and the ja noi oni, or hobgoblin oni. As twisted brute outsiders themselves, they find much to admire in Làu Kiritsu's teachings, and in administering their

punishments. Used in many established temples as disciplinarians, these vile pilgrims of the god wander many lands teaching his faith.

Hobgoblins, with their innate distrust of arcane magic and natural affinity for discipline, make excellent followers of Làu Kiritsu. They are his monstrous foot soldiers and make up the armies of the god. Barghests, dark naga, rakshasa, and even some blue chromatic dragons have all been encountered in Làu Kiritsu's temples and monasteries. Travelers' stories mention liches, mummies, and wraiths of Làu Kiritsu.

Occasionally, sahaugin temples to Làu Kiritsu have been seen, especially in the seas southeast of Minkai, where a vile cabal of kraken who worship Làu Kiritsu have been spoken of in hushed tones for centuries. The thought of a cabal of kraken, teaching and speaking the word of order and discipline, is something that gives many fishermen in the region restless nights.

Osluth most often command the elite forces, temples, and monasteries of Làu Kiritsu. The bone devils instruction hones their talent for sadism into an art form. The *Strictures of 10,000 Ways of Discipline*, a handbook for those who deliver Làu Kiritsu's merciless justice, was allegedly written by a human scribe serving a powerful osyluth samurai called Wái Chō, who had spent an eternity perfecting the art of pain. The strictures, almost always bound in human tendons, stretch over a 150 yards when unfurled and stand three feet high when rolled up. Both evil and good powers search for these accursed texts, and they can command incredible prizes. Occasionally, versions end up in foreign lands where their true background is likely to remain unknown and undiscovered until the true owner(s) return.

Cornugons form the rank and file of Làu Kiritsu's devil followers and lieutenants. The horned devil warriors of discipline frequently spread into the lands of men to make devout pilgrimages and empower would-be

followers. Barbed devils often work as jailors and punishers for the cornugon.

USING LAU KIRITSU IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

For GMs running adventures in Tian Xia or other oriental settings, Làu Kiritsu merely adds another dimension to the pantheon of evil deities. His demented worshippers can appear at any time, either as single villains or pilgrims devoted in body and soul to their master. They may form a broader cult of warrior monks whose every moment is ordered by their worship, or they serve as the basis for an adventure path with the living god's worshippers enslaving whole kingdoms and slaughtering those whose will they cannot break.

For those who run more conventional campaigns, followers of Làu Kiritsu can make an unexpected change of pace in any setting. The outline below gives a few ideas of how to utilize the dark god in an encounter, an adventure, or an adventure path. You can also give hints to the worship of the god and his followers through items and artifacts such as the *Strictures of 10,000 Ways of Discipline* and the magic items listed above.

ECHOES OF AN UNKNOWN GOD

Do opium-inspired Làu-Kiritsu-worshipping foreigners lurk in dens beneath overcrowded streets and plot to control local merchants or petty guildsmen and leaders? Does the cult have a greater following among the local populace? Perhaps some are swayed by the exotic order and yet

unaware that devotion is all. When the body of a young tanner is found in the docks, having brutally taken his own life with a kukri, the local authorities are at a loss to explain it.

Can the PCs unmask the cult of Làu Kiritsu among the dispirited poor in the city? Surely masked, silent Tian villains use intermediary devils to leech blood and honor from peasants and the poor. Who but true heroes cares to investigate?

CALLS OF AN UNKNOWN GOD

A gang of opium smugglers is bribing high-ranking city officials to turn a blind eye in exchange for warrior monk bodyguards who give their life at an order. What wealth or power drives the inscrutable Tian monks to the city? What might convince them to leave?

SCREAMS OF AN UNKNOWN GOD

The opium smugglers want their followers in key positions so that—when the time is right—they can break those in power on the wheel of obedience. One at a time, very slowly, a subtle change comes over a handful of city leaders. They begin to speak of discipline and of order, partly in reverence and partly as though on the edge of a terrifying madness.

A new temple is being constructed on an island or peak near the city. From the outside, it seems a benevolent new Tian god has come with a philosophy of peace and order. Yet rumors persist that those young people who go into the temple do not come out. Can the PCs thwart the combined power of local officials and the temple's nagaji creators to bring the temple crashing down? Ω



Archetypes of Death

For a More Badass Barbarian, Druid, Monk, or Summoner

By Phillip Larwood

Art by Storn Cook

“When the dragon Voulrevex brought us low by trickery, only our savage companion Garrok stood tall in the face of the creature’s acidic breath. He fought even after death had claimed him, and his flesh hung in tatters from his mighty frame. Only when he had buried bright Beastquencher deep between Voulrevex’s twitching eyes did he succumb. Only then did his soul return in glory to his ancestors.”

—From the *Tales of the Terrible Three*,
by Kaspofen the bard

The following four class archetypes each involve a different facet of death, and they fit perfectly in any game that heavily features necromancy or the undead. While some suit evil characters best—particularly the grave druid and zombie master—others work well for anti-heroes or those who mean well but use morally questionable methods. These archetypes fit easily in societies that revere death or tolerate undead creatures, such as Morgau or the ghoulish imperium of the MIDGARD campaign setting.

DEATHRAGER (BARBARIAN ARCHETYPE)

Deathragers make fearsome and terrifying opponents whose power increases the closer they approach the grave. Few can match the strength of their link to the spirit world, a bond that can sustain them past the edge of life. Indeed, the most powerful deathragers can return from the brink

of oblivion to wreak bloody vengeance on their would-be slayers.

A deathrager has the following class features.

Toughened Body (Ex): At 1st level, a deathrager gains Toughness as a bonus feat. This ability replaces fast movement.

Toughened Soul (Ex): At 3rd level, a deathrager gains a +1 bonus on saves against death attacks and to prevent level loss as a result of energy drain. These bonuses increase by +1 every three barbarian levels thereafter (6th, 9th, 12th, 15th, and 18th). This ability replaces trap sense.

Spurn Death (Su): At 5th level, a deathrager gains Diehard as a bonus feat. Additionally, once per day, the deathrager automatically succeeds on a saving throw against a single effect that would kill him outright (whether from a trap, spell, or attack). This ability replaces improved uncanny dodge.

Indomitable Soul (Su): At 17th level, if the deathrager is slain while raging, he can continue to rage for as long as he has rounds of rage left and has at least one opponent in sight. The deathrager ignores all ability damage, physical damage, and death effects as long as his rage continues, but he gains no benefit from healing effects or attempts to return him to life. When the deathrager’s rage ends, he dies immediately and can be raised or resurrected as normal. Any time spent raging while using this ability is ignored for the purposes of spells such as *breath of life* or *raise dead*.

This ability replaces tireless rage.

Rage Powers: The following rage powers complement the deathrager archetype: flesh wound *, greater spirit totem *, guarded life *, increased damage reduction, lesser spirit totem *, renewed vigor, and spirit totem *. Powers marked with an asterisk (*) are from the *Advanced Player’s Guide*

GRAVE DRUID (DRUID ARCHETYPE)

The grave druid is a strange individual who protects ancient gravesites and their inhabitants. While some grave druids tend to urban graveyards, others watch over dragon graveyards, ruined cairns, or the mass graves of bloody battles. Though their powers are associated with burial sites, grave druids can operate almost anywhere and sometimes undertake missions to retrieve important relics or bones stolen from their original resting places. The grave druid has the following class features.

Grave Bond (Su): A grave druid may not bond with an animal companion, but she may command a human skeleton to serve as a guardian. The skeleton is a typical representative of its kind and follows the grave druid’s commands to the best of its abilities. If the skeleton is destroyed while in the grave druid’s service, she can summon another with a ceremony requiring 24 uninterrupted hours of prayer.

At 5th level, the grave druid can call up a skeleton champion instead of a regular skeleton. At 10th level, she can call up a cairn wight instead of a skeleton champion. Finally, at 15th level, the grave druid can call a

mummy with the advanced simple template instead of cairn wight. All the undead the grave druid calls follow her directions to the best of their abilities.

If the grave druid selects a domain instead of an undead companion, she can select from the Death and Repose domains in addition to those normally available, but she cannot select either the Animal or Plant domains.

Wild Empathy (Ex): A grave druid can influence the reactions of undead, rather than magical beasts, with a -4 penalty on her wild empathy check. In addition, her wild empathy ability only works properly on scavengers or animals associated with gravesites (such as crows or hyenas). Against all other animals, she suffers a -4 penalty to her wild empathy checks.

Grave Sense (Ex): A grave druid gains a +2 bonus on Knowledge (religion) checks instead of Knowledge (nature) checks. The grave druid retains the +2 bonus to Survival checks.

Grave Stride (Su): At 3rd level, a grave druid gains a +4 bonus on Stealth checks against undead. In addition, when she is within a mile of a gravesite or some other location where bodies are ceremonially interred, she is warded by a *hide from undead* spell.

This ability does not affect any of the grave druid's companions and replaces both woodland stride and trackless step.

Resist the Grave (Ex): At 4th level, a grave druid gains a +2 bonus on saving throws against the exceptional, supernatural, and spell-like abilities of undead creatures. This ability replaces resist nature's lure.

Wild Shape (Su): A grave druid gains this ability at 6th level, and her effective druid level for this ability is equal to her druid level -2.

Deny the Grave (Su): At 9th level, the grave druid becomes immune to death effects, level loss, and the accumulation of negative levels (except for those gained for being brought back from the dead). This ability replaces venom immunity.

Gravelord (Su): At 13th level, a grave druid can cast *animate dead* and *create*

undead each once per day as spell-like abilities. Treat any undead created by these spell-like abilities as if created inside the area of a *desecrate* spell. This ability replaces thousand faces.

MASTER OF WORMS (MONK ARCHETYPE)

Some rare monks learn specific methods for combating undead and model their combat styles on various spirits and shades. The master of worms learns what he can from ghouls, devourers, and other undead horrors to better defeat them in battle. This makes the master of worms a morbid companion but also makes him indispensable when fighting terrors from beyond the grave.

The master of worms has the following class features.

Punishing Kick (Ex): At 1st level, a master of worms gains Punishing Kick as a bonus feat (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*) even if he does not meet the prerequisites. At 10th level, and every five levels thereafter, the master of worms can push the target of his punishing kick an additional 5 ft. (10 ft. at 10th level, 15 ft. at 15th level, and 20 ft. at 20th level). At 15th level, he can instead choose to push the target 5 ft. and knock the target prone with the same attack. The target Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 the master of worms's



character level + his Wisdom modifier) to avoid being knocked prone. This ability replaces stunning fist.

Break the Worm (Ex): At 5th level, a master of worms uses his monk level in place of his base attack bonus (BAB) when making unarmed strikes or using monk weapons against undead opponents. BAB granted from other classes are unaffected and are added normally. This ability replaces maneuver training.

Flow like the Water (Su): At 11th level, a master of worms gains immunity to paralysis and slow effects. This ability replaces diamond body.

Ki Pool (Su): At 10th level, treat all of the master of worms's attacks as if they had the *ghost touch* special weapon quality. This use of the *ki* pool replaces the lawful *ki* strike a monk normally gains at 10th level.

Spirit Form (Su): At 13th level, as swift action, a master of worms can turn himself incorporeal for one round at the cost of 4 *ki* points. He can remain incorporeal at the cost of 2 *ki* points per round. A master of worms can use this ability in conjunction with his normal melee attacks thanks to his *ghost touch ki* pool ability.

This ability replaces diamond soul.

Burn like the Sun (Su): At 15th level, once per day, a master of worms can release a massive burst of sunlight from the core of his soul to destroy his foes. This ability functions as a *sunburst* spell, as if cast by a druid of equal level to the master of worms, and consumes 6 *ki* points.

This ability replaces quivering palm.

ZOMBIE MASTER

(SUMMONER ARCHETYPE)

A mysterious and often dangerous type of summoner, the zombie master summons an eidolon that resembles a rotting corpse or skeleton. Zombie masters are outlawed in many communities, and so they often wind up mingling with necromancers, death priests, and other unsavory characters who tolerate their strange arts.

The zombie master has the following class features.

Command the Unliving (Su): At 1st level, the zombie master receives

Command Undead as a bonus feat and can channel energy a number of times per day equal to 3 + Charisma modifier, but only to use this feat. The zombie master may take feats that add to this ability, such as Extra Channeling and Improved Channeling, but not feats that alter this ability, such as Elemental Channeling or Outsider

Channeling. The save DC against these feats is 10 + ½ the zombie master level + Charisma modifier.

This ability replaces the *summon monster* ability of a standard summoner.

Additional Spells: The zombie master gains access to *animate dead* as a 2nd level spell, *command undead* as a 1st level spell, and *control undead* as a 6th level spell.

Zombie Master's Eidolon (Su): The zombie master's eidolon gains the undead appearance* evolution as a free evolution and automatically gains the evolution's upgrades without spending evolution points (though the zombie master must still be of the appropriate level). In addition, the zombie master's eidolon gains access to the following additional evolutions, bought in the usual way.

1-Point Evolutions

The following evolutions cost 1 point from the eidolon's evolution pool.

Channel Resistance (Su):* An eidolon owned by a zombie master treats the channel resistance evolution as a 1-point evolution and can upgrade it for the cost of only 1 evolution point.

3-Point Evolutions

The following evolutions cost 3 points from the eidolon's evolution pool.

Damage Reduction (Su): The zombie master can choose to have his eidolon's damage reduction become DR 5/bludgeoning or DR 5/slashing rather

than alignment based. This change costs the same number of evolution points but the appearance of the eidolon must reflect the damage reduction chosen. Therefore, a zombie master with a skeletal-looking eidolon would have to select damage reduction slashing, while a zombie master with a fleshier eidolon would have to select damage reduction bludgeoning.

*Stench (Ex)**:* The eidolon exudes a sickening stench in a 10-ft. radius. Any creatures entering or beginning their turn in this area must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + ½ the undead eidolon's HD + the eidolon's Constitution modifier) or be sickened while they remain within the aura and for 1d4 rounds afterwards.

For an additional 3 evolution points, all creatures that fail their saving throw against the stench are nauseated instead, and those who succeed are sickened. The zombie master must be at least 7th level before selecting this evolution and must be at least 11th level before she can upgrade it.

4-Point Evolutions

The following evolutions cost 4 points from the eidolon's evolution pool.

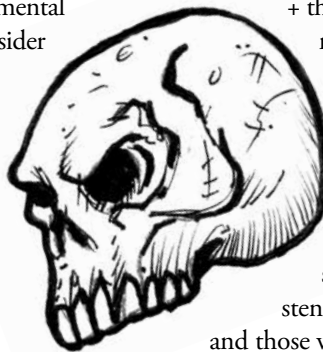
*Paralysis (Ex)**:* Pick one of the eidolon's natural attacks. Any creature struck by this attack is paralyzed for 1d4 rounds; a Fortitude save (DC 10 + ½ the undead eidolon's HD + the eidolon's Constitution modifier) negates.

For an additional 4 evolution points, the paralysis lasts for 1d4 minutes instead. This evolution can be taken multiple times, but applied to a different natural attack each time.

The zombie master must be at least 9th level before selecting this evolution and must be at least 13th level before she can upgrade it.

* The undead appearance evolution and the channel resistance evolution are both from *Ultimate Magic*.

** At the discretion of the GM, other summoners may access these evolutions, at the cost of an additional evolution point.



Courting Adventure

Bringing the Royal Court to Life in Your Games

By Rick Hudson

Art by N. C. Wyeth

The term “courtier” often conjures images of overdressed fops and simpering sycophants. While entertaining and comic to have an RPG ruler surrounded by such asinine fools, a look at historical courts and courtiers reveals great possibilities for adding interesting NPCs, political intrigue, double dealing, and conspiracies to a campaign. Many great adventure novels—such as Alexander Dumas’ *Three Musketeers*—use such conniving and scheming characters to great effect. Games can do the same.

“Courtier” literally means someone who attends the royal court. Historically, these powerful people were often intelligent, influential, wealthy, and ambitious and included senior clergymen, soldiers, administrators, and political ministers in addition to nobility. Many courtiers held government positions such as High Chancellor, Lord Chamberlain, Seneschal, and so on. These people are the gatekeepers of privilege and social or political advancement that PCs must deal with. Here follows a summary of some of these positions and how to include them in your game.

LANDED NOBILITY

The largest single group of courtiers are the landed nobles (often called counts, earls, or barons). These nobles govern individual districts of a kingdom, such as counties, provinces, and states with varying degrees of autonomy depending on the strength of the monarch and the laws of the land. The nobles swear to uphold the king’s

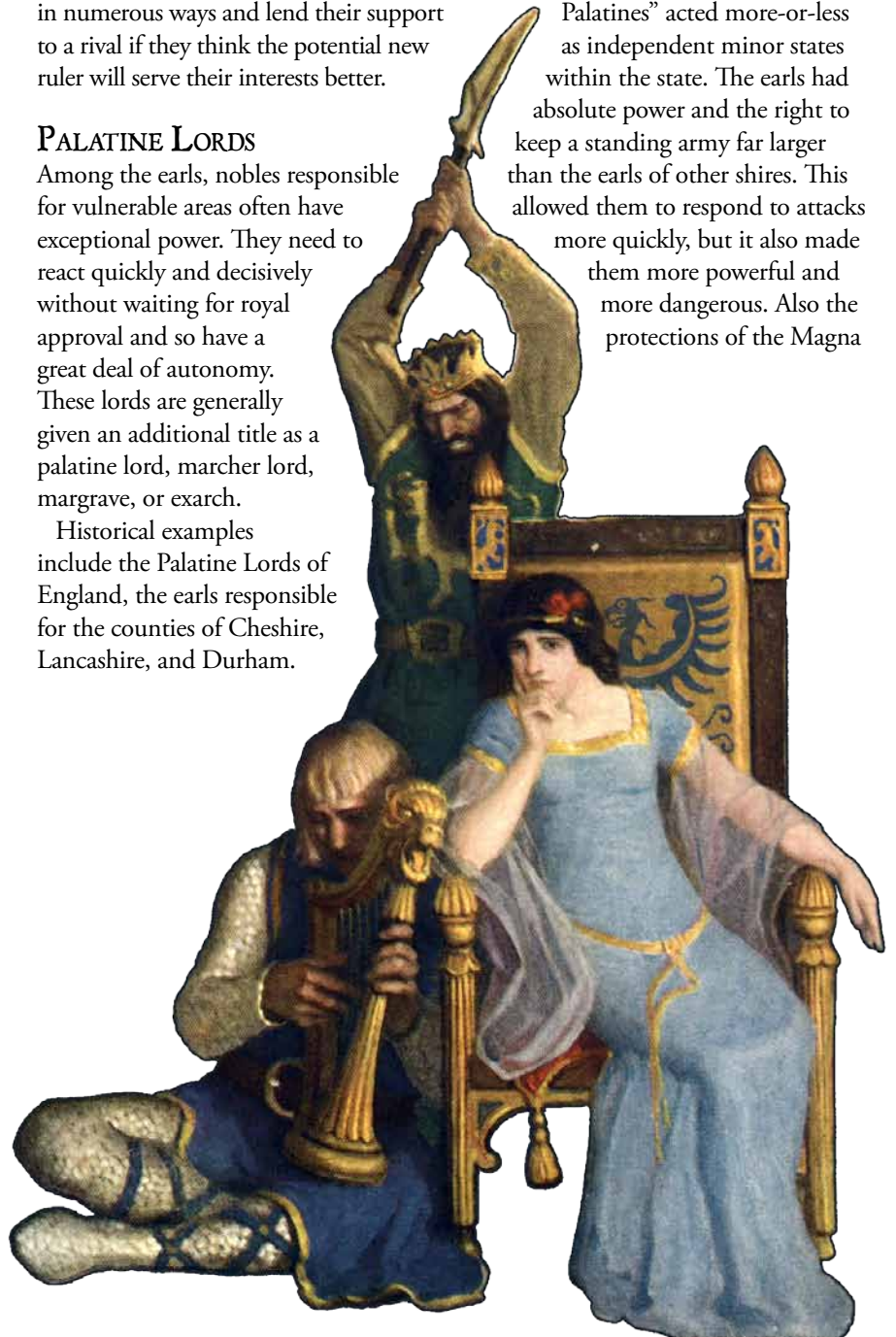
law in their domain, but the king also owes them reciprocal support. Unhappy landed noble can easily thwart the crown in numerous ways and lend their support to a rival if they think the potential new ruler will serve their interests better.

PALATINE LORDS

Among the earls, nobles responsible for vulnerable areas often have exceptional power. They need to react quickly and decisively without waiting for royal approval and so have a great deal of autonomy. These lords are generally given an additional title as a palatine lord, marcher lord, margrave, or exarch.

Historical examples include the Palatine Lords of England, the earls responsible for the counties of Cheshire, Lancashire, and Durham.

Cheshire bordered on Wales, and Lancashire and Durham bordered Scotland. These “County Palatines” acted more-or-less as independent minor states within the state. The earls had absolute power and the right to keep a standing army far larger than the earls of other shires. This allowed them to respond to attacks more quickly, but it also made them more powerful and more dangerous. Also the protections of the Magna



Carta were revoked in these counties to expedite the capture and execution of spies and traitors. The power of Palatine Lords often leads others to suspect—and possibly accuse—they of challenging the king's authority.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

The most senior official, the Lord Chamberlain organizes and administers the royal court. Not surprisingly, the Lord Chamberlain is the monarch's closest and most trusted advisor and will often represent the king or queen when they cannot personally attend in some matter. The Lord Chamberlain also often handles censorship and grants or withholds theatre and printing licences, or other matters that the king or queen wishes to avoid.

LORD CHANCELLOR

The Lord Chancellor is the most senior political minister at court. While the Lord Chamberlain oversees the administration of the court, the Lord Chancellor organises the political activity: choosing which issues to debate, directing the discussion, and overseeing voting among the nobility, if any.

In practice, the distinctions between the Lord Chamberlain and Lord Chancellor often blur, and the two almost invariably come into conflict. To make the distinction easier, think of the Lord Chancellor taking the role of the Vice-President in the Senate (or the Prime Minister in Parliament) and the Lord Chamberlain as more like the head of the civil service.

BISHOPS

The senior clergymen in historical European medieval states often had considerable political power. Indeed, the head of the local church was often the king's relative; after the Norman conquest, Bishop Odo—the brother of William I—ruled England in William's name.

With its great temporal power and wealth, the church was just as prone to intrigue and subterfuge as the secular world. Including powerful religious organizations in your game opens up great possibilities for intrigue quite

apart from the (very real, in a fantasy setting) chances for divine displeasure. Add to that the use of accusations of heresy between churchman arising as much from political as theological disagreement, and you can see room for adventure. Stamp out heresy...and claim that rich monastery for your bishop, o naïve paladin!

Medieval fiction, from Chaucer to the legends of Robin Hood, is crammed with corrupt bishops, dissolute friars, and debauched monks for inspiration. To inject a *really* devious churchman into your game, Cardinal Richelieu in *The Three Musketeers* is the model to imitate. Too many corrupt clergy become a cliché, however. Consider that the historical church was also responsible for education and often acted as the guardian of knowledge and learning, and many clergymen campaigned for political and social change. Lest you think this means a devout clergy is boring, what is more dangerous than a true believer bent on crusade or intent on purifying the sins of a dissolute nobleman?

SENESCHAL

Perhaps the hardest position for modern minds to grasp, the seneschal is both a steward responsible for hospitality and catering at court (from day-to-day meals for all to banquets and entertainment) while also serving as the head of the legal system. Despite this odd combination of responsibilities, seneschal was a highly prestigious position given only to the highest-ranking nobles. Imagine a White House chief of staff or First Lady crossed with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and you have some idea of the influence a seneschal holds.

TREASURER

More than just an accountant, the treasurer oversees tax collection (by force if necessary) and has a big say in its distribution. Even the king or queen must justify their financial plans to the treasurer—though refusing requests for royal funds too often carries other consequences. Controlling the purse strings obviously puts this courtier in a

position of great power and influence, but being responsible for collecting those funds is also a great responsibility and can easily make a treasurer reviled.

SECRETARY

Every political minister, senior clergyman, and administrator has a secretary to manage his or her affairs. More than a flunky or receptionist, the secretary's power lies in his control over who sees the person he represents and what information he decides to pass on. Furthermore, the secretary can prejudice his employer's opinion of a person, situation, or document with a simple comment or two. Secretary's are not only scribes and assistants, but also gatekeepers to the powerful.

LORDS EQUERRY AND LADIES IN WAITING

Princes and kings have equeries, and princesses and queens have ladies in waiting. These personal attendants assist the royal personage in their day-to-day business: everything from dressing and doing their hair and wigs to sending messages and fetching meals—and much more besides. While junior attendants act as glorified butlers or “gofers”, the more senior and trusted equeries and ladies in waiting hold greater responsibilities and were often entrusted with secrets of royal private life, and invited to social occasions from balls to hunting.

The bond between monarch and attendant can be very strong and often constitutes a real friendship. The equerry of a prince or king may be their immediate subordinate officer during military service or the son of a loyal noble. Such trust can lead to vulnerability, however, and a treacherous equerry can be highly dangerous. The power of the equerry is similar to that of the secretary. A trusted equerry has the ear of a powerful person who gives their opinions, views, recommendations weight, and is often a social peer as well.

NAVAL ATTACHÉ

Nominally a minister with special

responsibility for naval affairs, naval attachés do everything from overseeing ship building to hunting down smugglers. Since they must locate criminals and spies who arrive by sea, many attachés employ a network of informers to provide intelligence on the movements of suspicious characters. Consequently “naval attaché” is something of a synonym for “head of the secret police”.

ADVISORS

A court includes numerous individuals with specialized knowledge who advise the ruler in specific areas. Historically, these individuals tended to be natural scientists, military strategists, or political scientists (Leonardo de Vinci and Niccolo Machiavelli both advised Cesare Borgia, for example), though other specialists existed. John Dee claimed to be a sorcerer and advised Elizabeth I. Her successor James I regularly consulted witch finders and those with “occult knowledge”.

When building a royal court, remember that historical monarchs rarely had absolute power. Tradition, protocols, and laws define correct and legal governance, regulate the powers of rulers and nobles, and guard the rights of the high and low. Even a particularly autocratic monarch would have their powers curbed by pragmatic forces. The king was powerless without the financial, political, and military

support of his lords; European history is littered with examples of monarch’s having to cut deals with their supposed subjects. The medieval world’s political structures were just as complex and rife with scheming and manoeuvring as the Washington and Westminster of our age.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A rival earl, supported by the treasurer, questions a Palatine Lord’s special privileges and budget. The lord is too busy defending the kingdom’s borders to defend himself at court. Will the players make his case for him?
- One of the PCs distinguishes herself and wins the king’s favor and friendship. The PC may suspect that the king’s trusted equerry is a spy for a treacherous earl—but what will they do about it?
- A playwright friend of the PCs has had one of his plays censored by the Lord Chamberlain. Can the PCs persuade the Seneschal to have their friend’s work performed at the royal court before the king at a large banquet next month? If they succeed, the bill of censorship will be revoked, but the PCs will have embarrassed the Lord Chamberlain and made a powerful enemy.
- The PCs must get an urgent

document to the Lord Chancellor, but Chancellor’s Secretary is an officious and a stickler for procedure. What can the PCs do to ensure that the secretary not only passes the document on but also does so quickly?

INSPIRATION

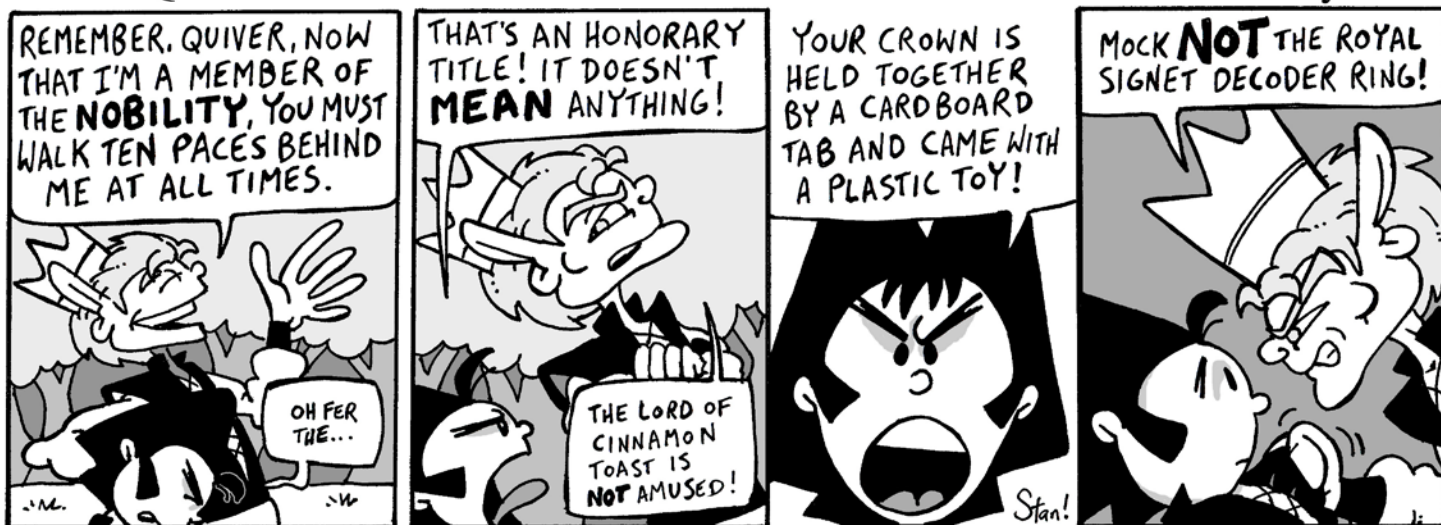
The following sources give a flavor of courtly life; some are out of period but still are useful for this purpose.

Anything by Alexander Dumas gives detailed insight into a royal court demonstrates how political machinations can become adventure plots. The best film adaptations of his novels are Richard Lester’s *The Three Musketeers* (1973) and *Four Musketeers* (1974). These are worth watching for Charlton Heston’s portrayal of the politicking Cardinal Richelieu alone. Patrice Chéreau’s 1994 film version of *Reine Margot* is worth a watch too.

Michael Hirst and Shekhar Kapur’s films *Elizabeth* (1998) and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007) are truly excellent examples of political adventure (if not paragons of historical accuracy). Geoffrey Rush’s and Christopher Eccleston’s portrayals of Francis Walsingham and the Duke of Norfolk, respectively, are brilliant representations of powerful courtiers. Also, Hirt’s TV drama *The Tudors* (2007-2010) is a fantastic depiction of late the soap opera that was late medieval and early Renaissance politics. Ω

Bolt & Quiver

by Stan!



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Land of Horse and Bow

6 Midgard Campaign Setting Backgrounds for AGE

By Simon English
Art by Mark Smylie



The vast sweep of the Rothenian Plain is home to gypsies, centaurs, slavers, and the crone who conspires to keep them in chaos, Baba Yaga. It is the home of nomadic elves and settled human populations. Most of all, it is the home of its own traditions of magic and war, paths for true heroes in many forms.

KARIV WANDERER

Dispossessed wanderers, human clans of Kariv travel endlessly across Midgard. The greatest numbers of their caravans gather on the Rothenian Plain, the so-called “Wandering Realm” of the Kariv. Although the clans who dwell here suffer fewer of the prejudices encountered by their kin elsewhere, they must nonetheless contend with Cazzaki and centaur raiders, the slavers of the Ruby Despotate, and the hostility of the Vidim Boyars. Even in the land where they are most free, the Kariv remain despised and mistrusted, rootless, and relying on their wits and guile to survive. Here, as elsewhere, they are traders, entertainers, and—to many—criminals. This last is not unfounded. Faced with exploitation and prejudice, many Kariv happily take as much as they can from every outsider they meet.

PLAYING A KARIV WANDERER

If you choose to play a Kariv Wanderer, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Communication ability. The Kariv depend on glib tongues and their talent for

deception to make their way in the world.

- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Communication (Performance) or Dexterity (Acrobatics).
- Choose a class. You can play a rogue or warrior.

Roll twice on the following table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Perception
3-4	Focus: Communication (Deception)
5	Focus: Communication (Animal Handling)
6	Focus: Strength (Driving)
7-8	+1 Dexterity
9	Focus: Cunning (Navigation)
10-11	Focus: Dexterity (Legerdemain)
12	+1 Constitution

CAZZAKI NOMAD

The Cazzaki are human nomads who travel the steppes east of the Tanais River in family-based clans led by a khan. A fiercely independent people skilled with horse and bow, the Cazzaki have no concept of land ownership. They can pack up their circular tents and relocate whole communities within days. Each clan moves their vast herds of goats and sheep two or three times each year.

Toughened by the extreme conditions of the steppes, the hardy and keen-eyed Cazzaki have earned a reputation as unparalleled archers. Their far vision and recurved bows lets them fell distant targets while galloping *away* from them. Many rightly fear the Cazzaki for their speed and skill. If they ever unified under one great khan, they could sweep west with thunderous speed and force and subjugate all they encountered. The machinations of Baba Yaga and the Princes of the Vidim ensure, for now, that the Cazzaki clans continue to feud and that their dreams of conquest remain just dreams.

PLAYING A CAZZAKI NOMAD

If you choose to play a Cazzaki Nomad, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Constitution ability. The Cazzaki are hardened by their life on the steppes.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Dexterity (Riding) or Perception (Tracking).
- Choose a class. You can play a rogue or warrior.

Roll twice on the following table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Perception
3-4	Focus: Communication (Animal Handling)
5	Focus: Perception (Seeing)

6	Focus: Dexterity (Bows)
7-8	+1 Dexterity
9	Focus: Constitution (Stamina)
10-11	Focus: Dexterity (Brawling)
12	+1 Strength

FREE TRIBES CENTAUR

The infamous free centaur tribes of the Rothenian plain resist all attempts to subjugate them. These infamous bandits and raiders take full advantage of their unique combination of speed, endurance, and intelligence. Even the best Cazzaki horsemen struggle to match a centaur in all these attributes.

Centaurians guard their independence fiercely and have little mercy for slavers who target their kin. They have an uneasy peace with the Kariv, with whom they most often trade. They are sometimes rivals and sometimes enemies of the Cazzaki and Windrunner elves, but the enmity between the Boyars and the centaurs runs old and deep. The towns and caravans of Vidim have long suffered the depredations of centaur raids.

Centaurians are slow to mature physically, and most often the younger tribe members are found away from their home, seeking challenges, adventures, and riches to bring back to their tribes.

PLAYING A FREE TRIBES CENTAUR

If you choose to play a Free Tribes Centaur, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Constitution ability and 1 to your Strength. The physiology of the centaurs grants them strength and endurance.
- Subtract 1 from your Communication. Centaurs are clannish and close-mouthed.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Constitution (Running) or Strength (Might).
- Choose a class. You can play a rogue or warrior.

- Your speed is (15 + Dexterity) - Armor Penalty (if applicable)
- You gain a 1d6 kick attack (part of the Brawling Weapon group)
- Armor costs double for centaurs; armor purchased at the normal cost only provides half the usual protection (round down).

Roll twice on the following table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Dexterity
3-4	Focus: Strength (Jumping)
5	Focus: Cunning (Healing)
6	Focus: Cunning (Navigation)
7-8	+1 Willpower
9	Focus: Strength (Smithing)*
10-11	Focus: Constitution (Stamina)
12	+1 Perception

STEPPE SHAMAN

Part mystic, part priest, and part advisor, shamans serve both the clans of the Cazzaki and the Windrunner elf tribes. The shamans are intermediaries between their peoples and the god-like spirits, interpreting their guidance, calling on them for aid, and propitiating them where necessary. Shamans make no distinction between magic and religion and find their separation foolish. Conversely, of course, shamans often seem primitive, superstitious, and even heretical to more civilized folk.

Shamans usually hold positions of authority but rarely rule a tribe or clan. Some few, however, do leave these familiar structures in search of wisdom or at the guidance of the spirits. Shamans often spend several years travelling to gain wisdom and power before they return to their kin.

PLAYING A STEPPE SHAMAN

If you choose to play a Steppes Shaman, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Willpower ability. Shamans require great strength of mind to treat with the spirits.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Cunning (Religious Lore) or Willpower (Self-Discipline).
- Take the Mage class.

Roll twice on the following table



for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Roll Human Benefit

2	+1 Perception
3-4	Focus: Cunning (Arcane Lore)
5	Focus: Communication (Performance)
6	Focus: Cunning (Healing)

7-8	+1 Magic
9	Focus: Dexterity (Riding)
10-11	+1 Dexterity
12	Weapon Group: Bows

Roll Elf Benefit

2	+1 Perception
3-4	Focus: Cunning (Arcane Lore)
5	Focus: Cunning (Navigation)
6	Cunning (Natural Lore)
7-8	+1 Magic
9	Focus: Constitution (Running)
10-11	+1 Dexterity
12	Weapon Group: Bows

VIDIM BOYAR

The nobles of the Kingdom of Vidim are collectively known as the Boyar. The most powerful of these—the tsar, his princes, and the various merchant-princes who rule Vidim—keep many other boyar in their courts as advisors, companions, or military assets. The Boyar have a complex system of titles and hierarchies that often mystifies outsiders. Their intricate arrangement of favors, intrigues, and enmities means that fortunes may rise or fall quickly, so they keep both friends and enemies close.

Boyars often travel beyond Vidim's borders to seek their fortunes through trade or military adventure. Some eschew these paths and instead pursue magic, and most Boyar families count at least one sorcerer in each generation.

PLAYING A VIDIM BOYAR

If you choose to play a Vidim Boyar, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Cunning ability. Boyar must keep their wits about them to survive the machinations of their fellows.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Communication

(Leadership) or Cunning (Arcane Lore).

- Choose a class. You can play a warrior or a mage.

Roll twice on the following table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Roll Benefit

2	+1 Perception
3-4	Focus: Communication (Etiquette)
5	Focus: Cunning (Cultural Lore)
6	Focus: Perception (Empathy)
7-8	+1 Strength
9	Focus: Communication (Bargaining)
10-11	Focus: Cunning (Heraldry)
12	+1 Magic

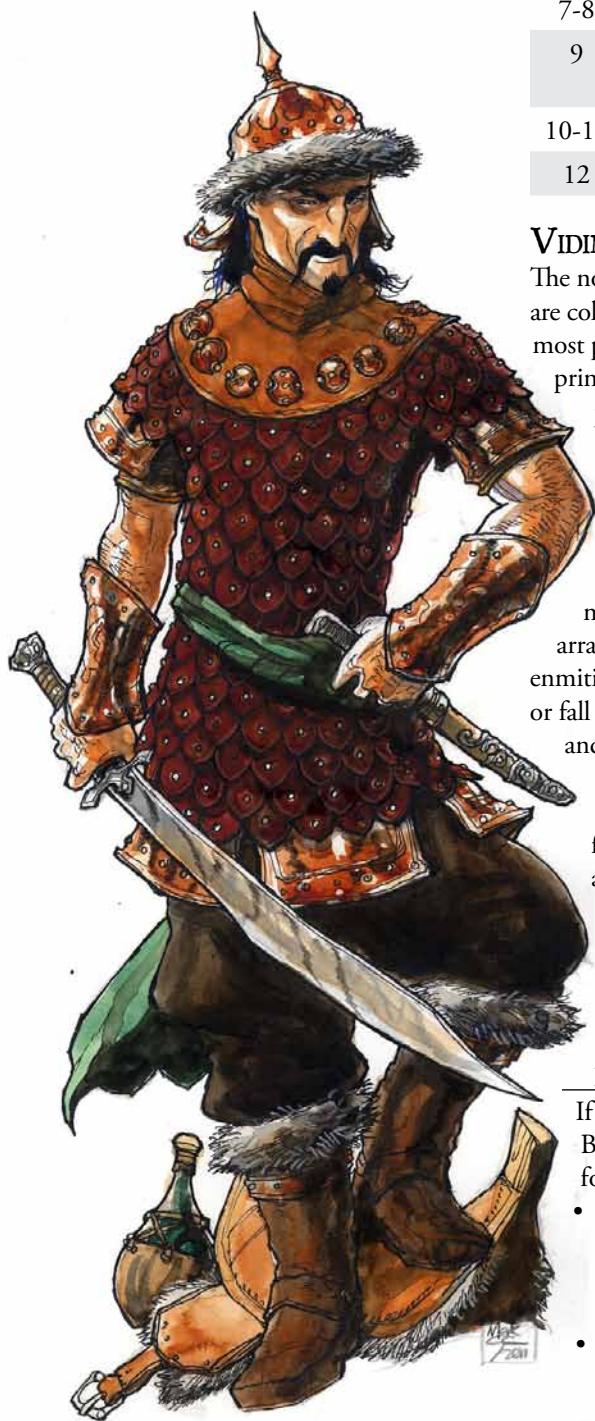
WINDRUNNER ELF

The Windrunner elves of the Dry Steppes, though few in number, defend their grazing lands and herds of aurochs and antelopes from a unique vantage point. Using pale blue scout kites, they launch themselves high in the air to gain advance warning of any threat. This remarkable feat, coupled with their keen senses and skill with bows, often means that raiders are caught off-guard. Those seeking to raid a Windrunner camp may first learn they have been observed when a warning arrow flies out of the clear sky—if they are lucky enough to get a warning.

PLAYING A WINDRUNNER ELF

If you choose to play a Windrunner Elf, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Perception ability. The elves of the Dry Steppes have keen senses.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Perception (Seeing) or Constitution (Running).
- Choose a class. You can play a warrior or a rogue.



Arcane Lance Variants

The Arcane Lance power of the mage class represents the mage's ability to smite enemies with a bolt of eldritch power. These rules for variant lances types use the same basic rules for Arcane Lances as described in the Mage class but allow the mage different choices when using stunt points.

The Shamans of the steppes and the Vidim sorcerers both work with the forces of nature, and they may choose to set their Arcane Lance to one of these variants. This choice is made at level one and cannot be changed later.

ARCANE LANCE VARIANT: FLAME

Your Arcane Lance manifests itself as bolts of flame.

- **Disarm:** You can use this stunt with your Arcane Lance. When you use this stunt, your opponent flings their weapon 1d6 + Strength yards away (using their Strength score). This stunt can be used on shields as well as weapons.
- **Knock Prone:** You cannot use this stunt.
- **Lethal Blow:** When you use this stunt, you inflict 2d6+3 extra damage.

- **Lightning Attack:** You can perform this stunt for 2 SP instead of 3.
- **Mighty Blow:** When you use this stunt, you inflict 1d6+2 extra damage.
- **Skirmish:** You cannot move others with this stunt.

ARCANE LANCE VARIANT: LIGHTNING

You summon a bolt of lightning to injure your foes. This is particularly effective against enemies wearing metal armor but less so against those in other types of armor.

- **Pierce Armor:** Against enemies wearing Mail or Plate armor or creatures predominantly made of metal, you can perform this stunt for 1 SP. You must spend 3 SP to use this stunt against foes wearing Leather armor or creatures with natural armor.

ARCANE LANCE VARIANT: WIND

Your Arcane Lance manifests itself as a howling supernatural gale, striking your foes with tremendous force. As a result, you must set your feet firmly on the ground to use this power.

- **Skirmish:** You cannot move yourself using this stunt, but you can move your opponent 4 yards *away* from you (or 2 yards in any other direction) for each 1 SP you spend.
- **Knock Prone:** You may perform this stunt for 1 SP instead of the normal 2.
- **Pierce Armor:** You cannot use this stunt with this variant.

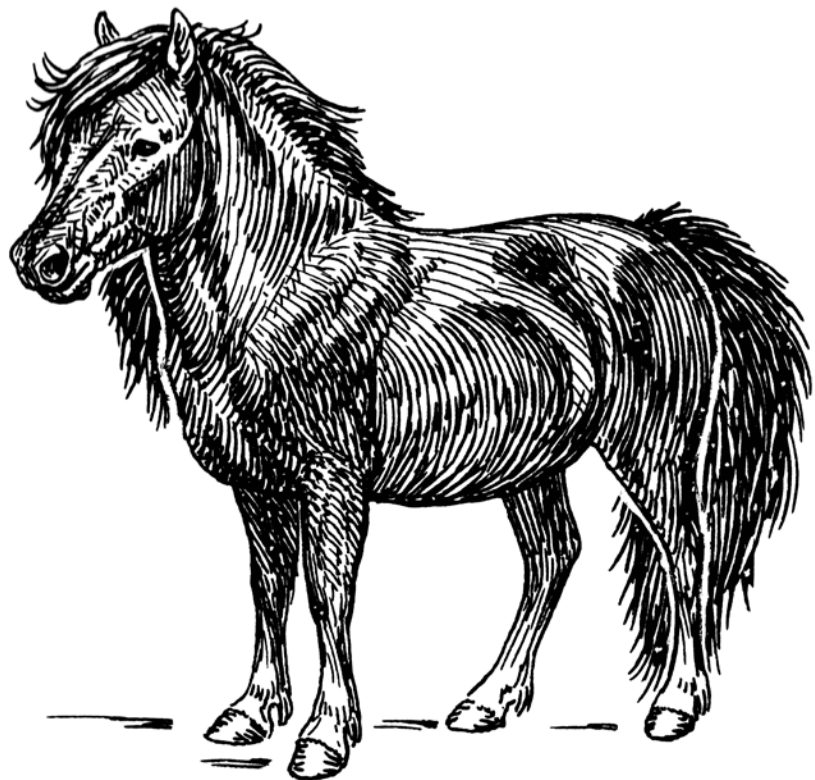
ARCANE LANCE VARIANT: WINTER

Your Arcane Lance manifests itself as a blast of supernatural cold.

- **Disarm:** You can use this stunt with your Arcane Lance. This stunt costs 1 SP instead of the normal 2, and the weapon will fall at the target's feet.
- **Lethal Blow:** This stunt costs 6 SP instead of the usual 5.
- **Mighty Blow:** This stunt costs 3 SP instead of the usual 2.
- **Skirmish:** You cannot use this stunt to move others. Instead, you can reduce their speed by 2 yards per SP spent.
- **Pierce Armor:** This stunt costs 1 SP instead of the normal 2.

Roll twice on the following table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Constitution
3-4	Focus: Dexterity (Acrobatics)
5	Focus: Dexterity (Bows)
6	Focus: Perception (Hearing)
7-8	+1 Dexterity
9	Focus: Cunning (Animal Handling)
10-11	Focus: Perception (Tracking)
12	+1 Cunning



Balance-Free Bonuses

(Or, Making the Elf More Elvish)

by Monte Cook

Game designers are always busy coming up with abilities and powers that directly affect the game. But not everything a character can do adds +1 to their attack rolls or Armor Class. In fact, it's interesting to think about things to give a PC that provide real benefits but that don't unbalance anyone's game.

One of fun parts doing this is that it applies equally to any edition of the game, or really, any game. Although I'm going to be talking mainly about classic fantasy tropes here—elves and dwarves and so on—the general principle can be applied to science fiction games or any other genre.

FANTASY RACES

Fantasy roleplaying games are almost 40 years old. And in that time, many gamers have latched onto one classic fantasy race or another as being their favorite. In other words, elf lovers really, really like elves. We all know the guy who always plays dwarves. And so on.

What I might suggest is that there are ways to make elves more elvish, dwarves more dwarvish, and halflings more... halflingish? And we can do it without adding to combat or other balancing factors of the game system. These "rules" don't interface with the other rules of the game, but they do affect gameplay. What I'm really getting at is that they don't affect combat. They don't make a character more *powerful*. They make him more *flavorful*.

Let me give you some examples. You wouldn't have to use all of these. You could pick and choose as you desire. It's not a game balance issue, really. It's

about adding flavor and distinction between the races.

DWARVES

Dwarves start the game with a masterwork item of their choice or a dwarf-crafted heirloom worth 100 gp. This is an item important to their clan that they would never sell.

It takes twice as much alcohol to get a dwarf drunk.

Dwarves can go twice as long as humans without food or water if they have to.

ELVES

Elves have mystical empathy/intuition. Whenever the DM feels like it, he can give an elf a flash of insight. "Blood was shed this night." "There was once great evil in this place." (The key here is that it's triggered by the DM, not the player. The DM gets to impart information or flavor *when she wants to*, and the player gets to feel cool because it is his character that is the conduit. But it's not a free divination or something.)

Elves never get dirty.

Elves can see half again as far as humans.

HALFLINGS

Humans find halflings charming and give them a 10% discount on mundane goods and services.

Halflings normally eat as much as a human, despite the size difference, but can go twice as long without food if necessary.

Halflings count as half when determining number of targets for

beneficial spells allowing multiple targets. So if you can teleport with one human, you can take two halflings.

HALF-ORCS

Half-orcs can safely digest any organic substance that is not specifically poisoned or disease-ridden.

Half-orcs can march twice as long as a human without becoming fatigued.

GNOMES

Gnomes can identify stone and minerals without needing to make any kind of check.

Once per day, a gnome can produce a tiny illusion in the palm of their hand. This illusion can be the face of a beloved family member or their childhood home.

Gnomes have a sense of smell and taste three times as powerful and accurate as a human's.

The point here is to not only get across the right flavor, but to zero in on the mindset that people who really like that race have, and then emphasize that mindset. In other words, people want to play dwarves because they're craftsmen and their tough, so let's emphasize that. People who like elves like the idea that they know things that others don't, so let's actually give them that.

Having a half-orc eat something disgusting doesn't make the character more powerful, but it does make him more interesting in a way that's true to type. Allowing a gnome to create the illusion of a loved one from their past facilitates the elaboration of the character's backstory through racial flavor.

FANTASY CLASSES

Similarly, you can have class-based bonuses that are flavorful, and affect play but not balance. Some of these might be the kind of thing you don't give a class until they are higher level, but that's still a matter of flavor rather than game balance.

FIGHTER

Fighters can determine the level of another fighter by observing them fight for at least two rounds. This observation does not require a special action on the fighter's part.

Fighters can determine the general quality of any weapon or armor they examine for one minute. They can determine whether a weapon will break, armor will fail, or compare the relative value of two different items. They cannot determine magical qualities or properties, of course. (Although perhaps high level fighters could even do that.)

CLERIC

Clerics get a 10% discount on mundane goods and services in places where their religion has any respect.

Clerics can perform small services and ceremonies in a community that can garner them a certain amount of respect and possibly donations for their religion.

Clerics get flashes of insight from their deity, when the DM feels like it, suggesting actions the deity would like or would not like them to take. Like with elven intuition, this is entirely motivated by the DM. Unlike with elves, it comes from the deity and might be biased.

ROGUE

Rogues can determine the rough value of mundane goods by examining them for a minute.

Rogues can determine the difficulty or quality of a lock or similar mechanism by examining it for a minute.

Rogues can get an idea of the layout of a structure by looking at it from every vantage and spending an hour (or longer, depending on what the DM thinks is appropriate). Basically, they're "casing the joint."

WIZARD

Wizards can make themselves heard when they whisper as though they're

shouting (although they can't be discretionary about who hears, just as with shouting).

Wizards can make their eyes glow with magical power.

High level wizards can sometimes (which is to say, when the DM feels like it) know when their name is spoken by someone far away.

As with racial abilities, these benefits play up concept of the class without actually allowing them to overcome challenges more efficiently, inflict more damage, and so on. Players like them because it further defines their role or place in the world. Classes stop being just a collection of stats and abilities and help to both define the world in which they live and establish their place in it.

Overall, these particular abilities based on race and class are not the point. You can make your own to fit your personal campaign or play style. The point is that the game could use some design focus that spent a little less attention on how much damage a character can inflict and what kinds of things the character does when he's not battling orcs. Ω



Morningstar, Monkey Marrow, & Ice Cream for Dinner

An Interview with Indie Wild Man and Two-Time Diana Jones Award Winner Jason Morningstar

By Jeremy L. C. Jones

A game,” says Jason Morningstar, “should be exactly what it is supposed to be and nothing more.” From a design standpoint, that is easier said than done.

An advocate of independent games with decentralized power and a high time-to-fun ratio, Jason Morningstar tends to get it right more often than not.

Morningstar is a partner at Bully Pulpit Games, an independent publisher of RPGs and game-related products. He has also designed such games as *The Shab-al-Hiri Roach*, which asks players (and professors) that age-old question: how far would you go to get tenure? Would you “swallow a soul-eating telepathic insect bent on destroying human civilization”? Well, *would* you?

Grey Ranks, another Morningstar brain-melting good time, is a three-session RPG about child soldiers set in 1944 Warsaw. *Danger Mountain!* pits a small band of survivalists against mega-disasters.

And let’s not forget *Bodymore Murdaland*. Prep and play are easy:

You need to play in two rooms with a door that closes between them, and a paper bag. Everybody should bring \$1.50 in quarters, which are divided into two piles - one goes to the Detective and the other to the suspects. The game will take less than an hour.



Of all these games, though, Morningstar’s most recent is perhaps his best. Right now that’s *Fiasco*, which is a GM-less RPG that lets you “engineer and play out stupid, disastrous situations, usually at the intersection of greed, fear, and lust.”

Below, Morningstar and I talk about how he got into game design, *Fiasco*, and how he’d survive a locked room with some dice and a monkey.

How did you get into playing RPGs? What were some of the milestones along the way?

Jason Morningstar: I started playing with white box D&D. Ultimately, I think everyone is a designer, so my impulses in that direction started earlier than this—I made a version of Tic-Tac-Toe in kindergarten (and realized it was unplayable, so that’s a milestone).

I hacked Metagaming’s *Melee* into a game about death sport between infants in elementary school. Our family had no money, and I spent a lot of time making analog versions of

digital games like *Wumpus Hunt* that I’d played once on somebody’s Kaypro. I made elaborate visual choose-your-own-adventures that simulated games like *Defender*. I was weird.

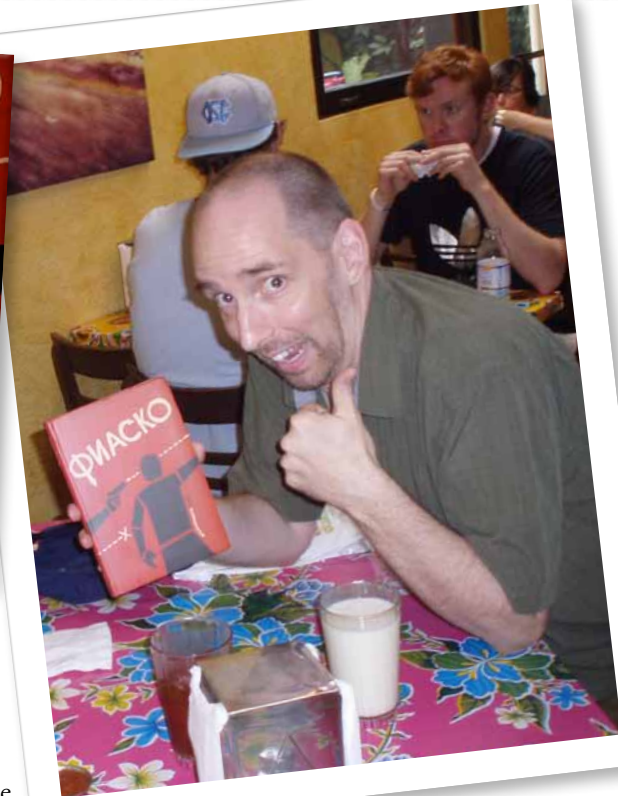
How have things changed since you started out as a designer?

JM: Fewer Kaypros. My mom no longer dates a drug dealer with his own upright *Defender* machine.

In what ways does *Fiasco* embody your core beliefs about what a game should and shouldn’t be?

JM: I don’t have any core beliefs about what a game should or shouldn’t be. Scratch that—a game should be exactly what it is supposed to be and nothing more. Does it deliver a particular experience reliably? Is that experience what you intended? Cool! Does it do anything else? Not as cool, most likely, although maybe there is emergent stuff going on you didn’t anticipate.

So I consider *Fiasco* a success because I started with some very hard



parameters and it meets or exceeds them, and there is some interesting unanticipated bleed that I like as well. I do not like that it essentially fails to address the universal “first session GM-less game wacky-town” problem, even though that wasn’t a design goal.

What were the “hard parameters” for *FIASCO*?

JM: *Fiasco*’s hard parameters: Two hours, no prep, complete story, engaging, and extensible with user-generated content.

And the “wacky-town” problem?

JM: We talk about this in the *Fiasco Companion*. Distributed authority means there’s no central gatekeeper for creative contributions or tone. The first time people play a GM-less game, they often discover that no boundaries really means no boundaries, and go totally gonzo. This can be fun, but it is like eating ice cream for dinner. In future games, more restraint leads to better sessions in many cases. It’s a known thing. There’s a paragraph about it in *Universalis* (2004).

Do you have “powerful ambition and poor impulse control”?

JM: I don’t. I have a little arrogance I suppose, because it requires a lot of

confidence to share your creative work in the first place. But ambition? If I had a ton of ambition, I would be working for Luke Crane. I think I’m a pretty careful, thoughtful person on the whole.

One semi-disaster I learned from was deciding that we could collate and fulfill our initial orders of the *Shab Al-Hiri Roach*. Nobody told us different, and it was “Yay, DIY!”, so we sorted 100 decks of 40 cards, packaged them, put them in envelopes with the book and some...other surprises, addressed 100 envelopes, and shipped them. It was a long night. We vowed never again!

What sort of results are you seeing and hearing about from folks who are using *FIASCO* in the classroom?

JM: Teens seem to dig *Fiasco*, and have a great instinct for mayhem and personal disaster. As a tool for teaching how stories are structured, it’s pretty boss. As a way to structure mature interaction in an engaging way, also boss.

What are some of the common pitfalls with *FIASCO*?

JM: It’s pretty bulletproof, to be honest. Not listening. Switching act one and act two die handling procedures is common, or not

switching and giving dice away the whole game. Playing with seven people instead of splitting into two groups. Making a setup no one likes and then playing it anyway. Not editing scenes briskly and playing for six hours.

FIASCO COMPANION gets into hacking the rules. What was wrong the rules in the first place?

JM: *Fiasco*’s rules are fine. They are rock solid and dependable. They are also very straightforward, and injecting a little complexity into them leads to interesting emergent properties that you might enjoy. Gamers are hackers anyway, and it is an impulse I’d rather encourage than discourage.

What should you be working on now? And what are you actually working on?

JM: Good question! I sometimes dream game ideas, and I recently had a good one that has consumed my time. I should not be messing with it. I should be fixing the cover for the fourth printing of *Fiasco* to mention the Diana Jones Award, and finishing my Game Chef game *Durance*, and

finishing two other small games, and putting together *Fiasco* play packets to send to PAX.

From what you've been saying online, *DURANCE* sounds pretty darn cool.

JM: I'm still working on *Durance*. It's a game about the founding of Australia but in space. It's in space so that people will actually play it. I'm *this close* to external play testing. The coolest thing about it is the structured freeform resolution mechanic, the awesomely named "Triangle of Uncertainty". Whenever you don't know what is going to happen, you roll some dice and they set a tone for the scene's outcome. The tones are savagery, servility, and a third you collectively choose (fear, compassion, stuff like that).

Because it doesn't tell you who is savage to whom, it leads to a really interesting and horrible dynamic at the table. Very penal-colony-rific.



You got quite a lineup of folks contributing to the *FIASCO COMPANION*. What's it like having such great folks working on your game?

JM: It is like eating ice cream for dinner every night! I love my friends.

You've got the time, the money, and the space...who would be on the team for designing *MORNINGSTAR'S ULTIMATE RPG?*

JM: I'm doing this right now! I can't tell you much about it, but it is an international effort involving some of

the smartest people I know on three continents. It is going to incorporate everything I've learned as a game designer and educator along with stuff I don't even know, because my collaborators are pretty brilliant and subversive. How's that for a tease?

If you were locked in a shrinking room with a drunken MacGyver, a full set of polyhedral dice, a ball of twine, and a Capuchin monkey, how would you escape?

JM: By an odd coincidence (look it up) the nervous systems of New World monkeys are loaded with dimethyltryptamine, so I would garrote the monkey, crack it open, and suck the DMT-rich marrow out of its spine.

Once I was "under the dome" and tripping balls, I would communicate with the self-replicating machine elves that live in that realm using the Platonic solids, and they would fold space to save me and the drunk guy in the vest. Ω

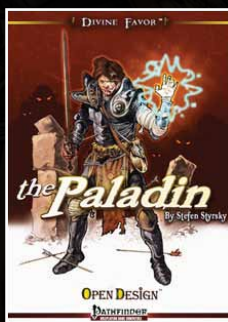
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10 Ways to Turn Dull Traps into High-Stakes Encounters

By Britian Oates

Art by Hablot Knight Browne

Traps show just how much a dungeon's build or owner cares; every gelatinous-cube-filled pit and burning, poison-tipped dart is an expression of genuine interest. For GMs, traps force players to consider problems that don't have hit points and lets them use their non-damaging skills, equipment, and critical thinking. Players in a properly trapped dungeon should feel under attack by the very walls.

Sadly, traps become boring when they are reduced to a Perception check followed by a Disable Device check. Players resolve and forget the effects of traps relatively quickly. It boils all the careful work down to three questions: "Did we see it?" "Do we disable/break it?" "Can we fix its effect?"

For GMs to reclaim the classic trap encounter, we need to make traps more interactive and their effects more interesting. It's time to reinvent the trap encounter.

1. Hide the disarming mechanism.

Placing the disarming mechanism behind the trap or behind another obstacle keeps the adventurers from immediately disabling the trap and forces them to think through the encounter. The concealing obstacles can range from simple—such as a locked door or a pit—to complicated, such as a puzzle, illusion, mimic, or triple-locked strongbox full of poison gas. Mostly, they allow for tremendous

trap variety. If the trap is the obstacle, then forcing one adventurer to brave the trap before disabling it requires the party to plan their way through the encounter.

- Example: The balance beam spear trap. A 20-ft. long hallway contains a series of pressure-plate triggered spear traps. A series of switches and gearboxes on the far wall to disables the spear mechanisms. A careful check reveals that the trap's pressure plates don't include a 3-inch wide line in the middle of the hallway, which a PC could balance on to get across.

2. Delayed triggers make the

players sweat. When one PC hears a click and feels the stone beneath his foot sink just slightly, everyone becomes more engaged. Some traps have a delay of several seconds or even minutes, sometimes a random amount. Others might activate differently based on what the PCs do after the trigger. Use this to build tension, especially if the PCs have no way to know how long the delay lasts. •Example: The pressure plate fireball trap. A pressure plate trigger activates when a weight is removed. The plates are big enough to allow swapping heavy objects for an unlucky PC, but finding useful heavy objects and getting the right weight

is almost a whole adventure in itself. The nearest heavy object might be in a monster's lair nearby—or might be the monster itself!

3. Inflict effects that harm adventurers indirectly.

Not all traps need to do damage. Resetting a puzzle, closing and locking doors, or raising a commotion are all problems that the PCs might want to avoid. A simple wire attached to an alarm bell may be more troubling than a whirling blade in the right circumstances. Tripping a trap within a maze that shifts the walls can run the gamut from frustrating annoyance to lethal mistake.

- Example: the greedy trap. A chest stuffed with gems sits in a tall tower room, on a stone table by the wall. Lifting the chest drops the table and the would-be thief through the floor and into the swamp outside the tower, while the chest remains securely chained to the wall. The splash alerts nearby crocodiles.

4. Require several checks to disable a complex trap.

This is great during combat or under other time pressure. Three rolls usually suffice to make players worry about failure. Multiple checks—especially if made in different locations of a complex mechanism—also let several adventurers work together on disabling the trap.

- Example: the poisonous gas trap: Barriers fall and trap the whole party a small space slowly filling with poisonous gas. The adventurers must make survive until the trap's trigger is disabled, gas flow is turned off, and vents are opened.

5. Don't allow simple checks to remove a trap. Using one skill or a single check to defeat all traps quickly becomes boring. Some traps require solving a puzzle, answering a few questions, using an item, or saying a password. You could allow the basic check to reduce the difficulty of a puzzle, receive a hint, or reduce an effect, but it should not always simply end a trap encounter.

- Example: the test of knowledge trap. The players must answer a series of multiple-choice questions to continue on. Each question has four possible answers, and the PCs suffer some affliction (not necessarily damaging) after each incorrect response. This could range from being drenched in water to suffering a harm spell. A successful check reveals two of the answers as wrong, though knowledge and lore skills may prove more useful.

6. Repeat the trap's effects until the adventurers escape. One-shot traps that only affect one party member often do their nastiness and then become scenery. Repeating traps can target the whole party at different times, and repeating traps that cannot be disarmed are downright scary. Even if the party gets everyone through safely, they still must deal with the trap on the way back.

- Example: the hallway of scything blades: A 5' x 5' x 60' hallway filled multiple, repeating scything blade traps is the only way forward. One scything blade trap isn't so scary,

especially to nimble characters, but a long hall filled with them is the stuff of nightmares. Ideally, the whole party should contribute skills and abilities to find ways to get each other through this abattoir.

7. Deliver a non-fatal affliction.

Delayed-action poisons or magical effects, magical diseases, parasites, or other twisted unpleasantness can cause your PCs to suffer from a trap long after they've left it behind. Curses, weakness, nausea, or

hallucinations are all great examples. Make sure that the affliction is difficult to remove; for example, a curse when the party has no ability to remove a curse.

- Example: the goo trap: Otherwise harmless creepers hanging from a ruined arch secretly mark all party members that touch them. As long as the characters are marked, the dungeon's owners to know the location of each marked adventurer as a scrying effect.



"Oh, just take 10 on the Perception check, Annabelle!"

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The mark disappears after 24 hours, but requires magic to remove sooner.

8. Include most of the party in disarming the trap. Members of all professions design traps, and do so to meet their specific needs. This allows you to customize traps to include all of your PCs in the disarming process. Use this as an opportunity to add personality to your dungeon as well; traps that recreate a saint's six harrowing injuries make exploring a ruined temple complex more memorable than just another hail of heavy crossbow bolts.

- Example: The hallway of stories: A hallway 5 ft. wide with an archway every 5 ft., each inscribed with a piece of a different story. A character who steps through an active archway remember the whole story as if he had lived it and confuse his identity with the story's main character. Speaking the story's name disables the archway for a short period of time. The right skills or recollection of earlier clues can reveal the names of each story, using history or oratory skills.

9. Require an impressive display of skill. Give characters the chance to pull off trick shots, great feats of coordination, or demonstrate clever insights that they may not usually get the chance to do. Traps that require unusual skills or talents, and push them to an extreme, let the players grit their teeth as they attempt amazing stunts and have amazing stories afterward.

- Example: the horizontal chute: A 10-ft.-wide and tall hallway continues straight ahead for at least 100 ft. and contains

a magically altered gravity. Gravity pulls toward the end the heroes start on, and several effects along the way target and suppress any spells or magical effects allowing flight, magical climbing, etc. Characters must climb the hallway like a mountain to reach the trap's disable mechanism at the far end's ceiling—at which point they may fall a short distance to the hallway floor.

10. Give traps some puzzle elements.

Drawing a map of the room with multiple areas of interest related to the trap gives your players places to explore, questions to ask, and cooperative tasks to perform. Perhaps the party must assemble the key to a vault from four out of 10 potential components using clues related to the party's various professions or backgrounds. Every time they put the wrong combination into the keyhole, someone gets zapped. This gives the whole party the opportunity to help solve the puzzle and disarm the trap.

- Example: the sliding tile puzzle trap: A large square of sliding tiles covers the floor, and the PCs must place them in the correct order to disable a force wall blocking their way. Every time a tile moves, a weak force effect passes through the room dealing a small amount of damage to everyone in the room. A successful check might reduce the damage slightly for the next minute. The tiles are large enough that they require a complete action to move.

Traps can be one of the most memorable and creative parts of a dungeon. Use different combinations of these ideas to make traps that your players will never forget. Ω



The Gordian Knot

By Mario Podeschi

Art by Chris McFann

The Relics of Power contest was a fine one, held on the KQ website in July and with the winner crowned by popular acclaim. We're happy to announce that the Artificer's Crown goes to Mario Podeschi, whose articles have graced these pages many times. Well done, sir!

THE GORDIAN KNOT

Minor Artifact

Aura strong (divination); **CL** 20th
Slot belt or –; **Weight** 10 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This hopeless tangle of knots piled upon knots can be displayed as a 30 ft. x 10 ft. tapestry or wound around the waist and shoulders as a belt. At a distance, it resembles woven white

silk, but closer inspection reveals it is made of the same shimmering material used in the silver tether of an *astral projection* spell.

The Gordian Knot is a stolen piece of the great extraplanar tapestry that powers all divination magic. A treasure sacred to the gods of destiny, the tapestry is threatened with theft from—and, on occasion, successfully

RELIQS OF POWER

stolen by—an alliance of seven pit fiends who desire its protection from the near-omniscience of the gods.

The pit fiends crafted the Gordian Knot during one such theft, its tangles snarling the great tapestry even as the solars came to reclaim the priceless treasure. With the tapestry returned to its rightful place, this small shard provides a conduit to the threads

of divination magic and shields its user—and its eventual destroyer—from magical probes.

POWERS

If the Knot-wielder wears this artifact as a belt, he benefits from a continual *detect scrying* effect. This constant power has an effective caster level of 20 for counter-scrying efforts.

The greater powers of the Knot require the Spellcraft and Sleight of Hand skills and may be used as often as desired. A character must touch the Knot to activate these powers. If multiple people are touching the Knot, only the first character to touch it may use its powers.

Other than this restriction, this item does not recognize a designated user. Wearing the item as a belt, however, guarantees that only the wearer has access to its powers.

SPELLCRAFT

Whenever the Knot-wielder uses Spellcraft to identify a divination spell, he not only learns the spell's identity but also its caster level, source (cleric, wand, etc.), and the exact parameters set at the time of casting. This information appears as a faintly glowing tangle in the Gordian Knot.

Additionally, a Knot-wielder can spend one hour to make a Spellcraft check to identify a random divination that includes him as a subject as though the spell had just been cast. This power extends to such open-

ended spells as *augury* and *find the path* provided that they involve the Knot-wielder in some way. A Knot-wielder cannot specify a specific divination—it is always random.

If (and only if) a divination spell is identified by using the Spellcraft skill, it can be “untied” in the next 24 hours with a special use of the Sleight of Hand skill.

SLEIGHT OF HAND

While Spellcraft allows for the identification of a divination spell, Sleight of Hand dispels it. This functions as a magically undetectable *mage's disjunction* with a CL check equal to the Knot-wielder's Sleight of Hand roll.

Attempting to untie a spell is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity. Untangling a section of the Knot requires at least one free hand, and the Knot-wielder gains an additional +2 to the Sleight of Hand check for every additional hand or hand-like appendage that he assigns to the task.

DESTRUCTION

The Gordian Knot has 50 hit points and only suffers damage from slashing weapons. It instantly regenerates all lost hit points, however. Thus, only an attack dealing 50 slashing damage with a single strike can destroy the Knot.

A creature that successfully destroys the Knot becomes utterly invisible

and unaccountable to all divination effects. This effect is permanent and extends to all of his personal equipment. Divination spells that include him in their area of effect simply fail to recognize him, while targeted divinations fail as though he did not exist. Open-ended divinations like *augury* do not account for his presence when calculating the outcome of a proposed course of action. This protection from open-ended divinations extends to anyone whose actions are the direct result of the Knot destroyer's commands.

Only a *miracle* cast by a high priest of a god of destiny while the destroyer is touching the original divination tapestry can dispel these effects. Even if the destroyer is killed, the powers of the Gordian Knot shield his corpse from spells like *speak with dead*, *locate object*, and *find the path*. Open-ended divinations do not consider the possibility of the destroyer's resurrection, reincarnation, or undeath. Ω



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Scions of Terror

4 New AGE Character Backgrounds for the Midgard campaign setting

By Josh Jarman
Art by Aaron Miller



Vinyane pulled the cowl of his robe lower to blot out the piercing sunlight. He coughed from the grey dust that blew in his face and covered his clothing. Years of arcane study in Bemmea had scarcely prepared him to scour the blasted landscape of the Goblin Wastes for forgotten treasures. He cursed silently to keep the dust from his mouth. His master's word was law, and if he commanded Vinyane to search, then he searched. Perhaps this time his prize would earn him the rank of first apprentice and a spot in the coveted research halls of the academy.

His traveling companion plodded next to him with her worn and pitted blade resting lightly on one shoulder. Grim and silent as always, she could almost be beautiful but for her reddish skin and curving horns. A common sellsword when he'd first hired her two years ago, their shared trials had changed his perceptions of her and her infernal heritage. Perhaps tonight would be a good time to— A stabbing pain in his knee snapped him out of the looming daydream. Vinyane recognized the black-shafted arrow protruding from his leg just as the first cries of the goblin scavengers rang out across the dunes.

The cruel hunters who gave this wasteland its name surrounded them, trilling their war cries and advancing with bows bent and hooked scimitars raised. Vinyane cursed as he prepared a spell that could be his last. He had disregarded the one unbending rule of the wastes—be ever wary—and it might cost him his life.

The Western Wastes were once a lush region where nine competing magocracies vied for control of powerful ley lines. This power made great magical wonders possible, and for a time these warring states threatened to rival even the ancient elven empire for arcane learning and wealth.

The increasing greed and violence over the ley lines, however, brought on an escalating war that destroyed all but one of the magocracies. Today the region is a vast and barren wasteland where the unspeakable horrors called forth in the war's last stages still sleepwalk across the sand, worshipped by the savage goblin tribes who call it home. The shattered ruins of nations peek out of the dust, and forgotten ruins hold treasurers of arcane power.

Civilizations still exist here, however. The people of the Western Wastes exult in their survival, living as they do so close to such terrors. Inheritors of eldritch monstrosities that still haunt the lands around them, these men and women are tenacious survivors. They stare unflinchingly into the wasteland and plumb its depths for the secrets it conceals. These hardened warriors and crafty mages are also marked by a touch of avarice and grandiose visions of a future: a time when they will be the center of a new empire.

BEMMEAN ARCANIST

Arcanists are the lowest-ranking products of Bemmea's arcane

academies. Often released from the schools when their families can no longer pay the exorbitant tuitions, many arcanists return to their noble lives with just enough magical knowledge to be dangerous but not quite enough to be truly useful. Some, however, seek new knowledge that cannot be found within the walls of a wizards' college: lost technology and ancient secrets buried in the stark wastelands surrounding their magical city.

Those that persevere, and succeed, can earn re-admittance as full apprentices to the arcane masters who rule these schools and the chance to learn at the feet of the last living mages who created the wastes. These dark masters care only for their own power, however, and are quick to kill or cast out apprentices who show too much promise or could threaten their absolute authority over the arcane schools they lead.

PLAYING A BEMMEAN ARCANIST

If you choose to play a Bemmean Arcanist, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Willpower ability. While only the most cunning of the many applicants to Bemmea's wizardry schools are accepted, only those with the strongest willpower and discipline survive their training.
- Pick one of the following focuses: Willpower (Self Discipline) or Cunning (Arcane Lore)

- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue.
- Take the mage class.

Roll twice on the following table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Communication
3-4	Focus: Communication (Investigation)
5	Focus: Cunning (Cryptography)
6	Focus: Willpower (Courage)
7-8	+1 Magic
9	Focus: Magic (Arcane Lance)
10-11	Focus: Cunning (Research)
12	+1 Cunning

BOURGUNDESSE NOBLE

The petty lords of Bourgund are legion. As their glories fade, however, these families mask their steadily declining fortunes beneath the pomp and ritual of courtly life. The rules are strict in Bourgund, and no sign of decay or poverty may mar the city's gleaming image. Once-wealthy families are often forced underground or exiled to preserve the city's reputation as a clean and well-ordered paradise on the edge of a terrifying wilderness.

These deposed nobles have few hopes of regaining their station. Favor can come through sons and daughters who gain rank with the fabled White Knights. These knights protect the city from external horrors and perhaps also police their fellow citizens. Other families send their offspring beyond the wastes in search of new wealth and new opportunities. Few return.

PLAYING A BOURGUNDESSE NOBLE

If you choose to play a Bourgundesse Noble, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Communication ability. Whether as born

leaders or crafty merchants, the nobles of Bourgund are known for passionate oratory and courtly repartee.

- Pick one of the following focuses: Communication (Etiquette) or Dexterity (Riding)
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play a rogue or warrior.

Roll twice on the following table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Cunning
3-4	Focus: Cunning (Military Lore)
5	Focus: Communication (Leadership)
6	Focus: Perception (Empathy)
7-8	+1 Strength
9	Focus: Strength (Heavy Blades)*
10-11	Focus: Willpower (Morale)
12	+1 Constitution

*If a rogue, take Dexterity (Light Blades) instead.



DUST GOBLIN DUNE TRADER

Only the mad or foolhardy make the blasted Western Wastes their home. Dust goblins just happen to be both. These loosely organized tribes of scavengers scratch out a living among the stark wasteland and hunt for lost artifacts in the ruins.

Dust goblins survive and even thrive in the wastes because they understand the dangers like few others. Their roving bands live in the shadows of the great abominations sleepwalking across the dust, and they trade lost technology to outsiders at outrageous prices.

Dust goblins stand anywhere from three to five feet tall, and their skin tones range from grey and black through the tans and burnt oranges of their wasteland home. Dune Traders have forsaken the tribal life of their more savage cousins to fearlessly risk life and limb exploring the wastes for treasure. They care little for the artifacts' historical value. Only how many silver coins one of the strange wizards of Bemmea or the foolish knights of Bourgund will part with to buy it concerns them.

PLAYING A DUST GOBLIN DUNE TRADER

If you choose to play a Dust Goblin Dune Trader, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Cunning ability. The craftiness of dust goblins is legendary, and they survive through their unmatched knowledge of the wastes.
- Pick one of the following focuses: Constitution (Stamina) or Dexterity (Stealth)
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play a mage, rogue or warrior.

Roll twice on the following table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Magic
3-4	Focus: Perception (Searching)
5	Focus: Communication (Bargaining)
6	Focus: Cunning (Poison Lore)
7-8	+1 Dexterity
9	Focus: Constitution (Running)
10-11	Focus: Willpower (Courage)
12	+1 Strength

TINTAGERIAN HELLBORN

For those born of the unholy union of human and devil, the grim city of Tintager offers a welcome refuge from prejudice and rebuke. A city of drifting smoke and black iron, Tintager stands ever-vigilant against the return of the legions of Arbonesse. Tieflings are known here as the hellborn, and instead of a curse, their unholy blood is considered a source of strength and a guarantee against elven influence.

In the backrooms of Tintager, however, the hellborn tell a darker story about their ancestors who once ruled the lost

empire of Caermalrath. They recount how they taught humans the arcane secrets that helped build the magocracies on the empire's fallen bones. They speak of a strange compulsion that brings them to the iron city on the edge of the elven homeland. And they describe a curious relief when they pass through the walls, like coming home.

Perhaps owing to their human side, individual hellborn vary greatly in appearance. Their infernal heritage can manifest itself as overtly as reddish skin, cloven feet, and a tail, or as subtly as red eyes and small horn-like protrusions on the forehead of an otherwise human-looking individual.

PLAYING A TINTAGERIAN HELLBORN

If you choose to play a Tintagerian Hellborn, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Constitution ability. Hellborns' infernal ancestry helps protect them from the weaknesses of their human parent.
- Pick one of the following focuses: Constitution (Stamina) or Dexterity (Initiative)
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play a rogue or warrior.

Roll twice on the following table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Dexterity
3-4	Focus: Dexterity (Acrobatics)
5	Focus: Communication (Deception)
6	Focus: Cunning (Religious Lore)
7-8	+1 Strength
9	Focus: Strength (Intimidation)
10-11	Focus: Perception (Seeing)
12	+1 Perception



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Aneela, Human Cleric

Party of One

By Matthew J. Hanson

Art by Hugo Solis

This stand-alone adventure is designed for a single player with no GM. All you need is a twenty-sided die (d20), a pencil, some paper, and this magazine. The rules are explained as you play. Begin at paragraph one and proceed from there.

I **The Sisters of Light**, the only family you've ever known, named you Aneela, after a saint of their faith. They raised you to honor the Path of Light, taught you how to channel divine magic, and—when need be—how to fight.

You had a happy childhood in the monastery, but now you are grown. When you were ordained as a Sister, the Holy Mother charged you to act as healer, defender, and spiritual leader to the small village of Welow.

After nearly two day's walk, you feel you must be close to your new home, and a good thing too. The sun is about to set, and you would not like to spend the night these woods.

Further along the path, you hear the sounds of combat.

Read 14.

2 **You may visit** more locations in the village, or you may leave to explore the world nearby.

To visit Stinky Pete's Tavern, read 22.

To visit Harper's Store, read 44.

To explore the forest, read 41.

To explore the caves, read 30.

To explore the ruins, read 16.

3 There are no doors leading out of this room other than the one you entered through. Your only option

is to return to the intersection and take the other path.

Read 36.

4 **Kalin shrugs.** "No, it's just that times have been dangerous lately." Then he quickly changes the subject. "We better get back to the village before dark."

Kalin turns and walks down the path toward Welow.

Read 6.

5 **The zombie** is right next to you, and you cannot cast *holy light* again. You raise your morningstar and bring it down toward the zombie.

Make an attack against the zombie by rolling your d20. The zombie is much easier to hit than you are. You only need to roll 7 or higher to hit.

If you roll 7 or higher, read 43.

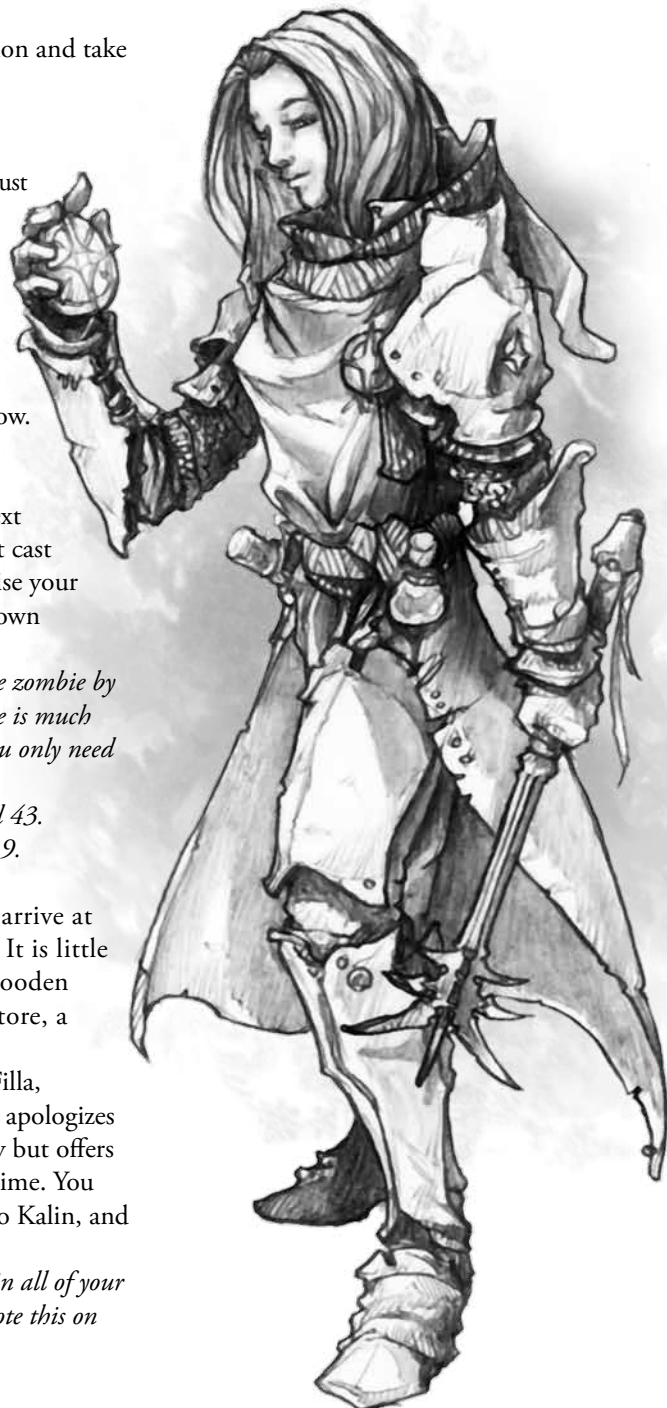
If you roll 6 or lower, read 9.

6 **You and Kalin** soon arrive at the village of Welow. It is little more than a dozen wooden buildings: a watermill, a store, a tavern, and a few houses.

Kalin introduces you to Filla, one of the town elders. She apologizes that your home is not ready but offers to put you up in the meantime. You thank her, say good night to Kalin, and go to sleep.

During the night you regain all of your hit points and your spells. Note this on your paper.

Read 19.



7 You take the hallway to the right. After a couple of turns, you see a silvery glow up ahead. As you draw near, you smell the unmistakable stench of rotting flesh. You cover your lantern and creep forward.

The passage opens into a room filled with the sources of both the silver glow and the putrid stench. The glow comes from a holy altar adorned with angels. The stench comes from a ghoul, a creature similar to a zombie, but stronger, tougher, and with enough brains to think for itself. Fortunately the ghoul has not noticed you.

If you attack the ghoul, read 33.

If you go back to the intersection and follow the other passage, read 36.

8 You mutter a few sacred words, and a flash of blinding light flares from your holy symbol. The skeletons crumble to dust. Your spell injures the zombies but does not destroy them. One still battles the young man in armor.

The other zombie lurches toward you and swings its rotting fist.

Roll your d20 for the zombie's attack.

To hit, the roll must be equal to or higher than your Armor Class (AC), which is 15.

If you roll 14 or lower, read 21.

If you roll 15 or higher, read 23.

9 You narrowly miss the zombie. It lunges back at you, but it is too slow. You ready your weapon and prepare to strike again.

Make another attack roll against the zombie by rolling your d20.

If you roll 6 or higher, read 43.

If you roll 5 or lower, continue the battle. Alternate rolling for the zombie to attack and then rolling for your attack. Each time the zombie hits, subtract 1 from your HP. When you hit the zombie, read 43.

11 The young man turns to you and smiles. "Thanks, stranger. My name's Kalin. I..." he trails off as he clutches a bloody wound in his abdomen. "Let me tend to that," you say.

You approach Kalin and again channel the powers of Light.

You cast your second spell, *cure light wounds*, to heal Kalin.

For a description of cure light wounds, read 49.

To continue the adventure, read 12.

12 Kalin's wounds magically knit themselves together. "Thank you again," he says, "I didn't get your name."

"I am Aneela. I've come from the Sisters of Light to aid Welow. What were you doing in these woods so late?"

"Oh, just scouting the forest." From the way he turns his eyes away, you can tell there's something more.

"Undead seldom rise without cause," you say. "Perhaps a brave warrior like yourself sought to end that cause? I may be able to help."

You are trying to use the Persuade skill on Kalin, so you need to make a skill check. Skill checks are similar to attack rolls, because you roll your d20 and try to beat a certain number. Because you are trained in Persuade you add +5 to your roll.

If the total of the die roll +5 is 13 or higher, read 15.

If the total is 12 or lower, read 4.

13 You examine the spot where the magic dart pierced Kalin's flesh. From the discoloration of the wound, you suspect it's poisoned, and alas your magic is not powerful enough to purge the venom.

The only thing you can do now is provide him comfort.

Read 27.

14 You move forward toward the sounds of battle. You see a young man wearing chainmail and swinging a longsword. Undead monsters, two zombies and three skeletons, surround the warrior. The man fights bravely, but he is already injured, and you doubt he can last.

Fortunately, the Sisters of Light prepared you for this. You ready your morningstar, but before using that, you decide to cast a spell with great power to destroy undead: *holy light*.

To learn more about casting spells, read 47.

To see the details of holy light, read 50.

To continue the adventure, read 8.

15 Kalin blushes. "There's been rumors of a man named Galbron, a necromancer who creates horrible monsters from corpses. These look like his handiwork. People think they've seen Galbron around these parts searching for something. I came here to find him and stop whatever he's up to."

"A noble cause," you say. "Let's go to the village for the night, and tomorrow we can hunt this Galbron together."

Kalin agrees, and the two of you walk down the path toward Welow.

Read 6.

16 On your journey, you pass through miles of farmland, but as you approach a cluster of stone buildings, the soil turns bad. Nothing more than a few scraggly weeds grow here.

If you have already visited the forest or the goblin caves, read 40.

If you have NOT visited the forest or caves, read 39.

17 Tanger glances up at you and then goes back to washing the glasses. "Sorry ma'am. Kalin's big enough to take care of himself. His business is his own."

Return to 2.

18 A few seconds after you place your holy symbol on the altar, the silver glow fades to darkness. When you pick the symbol up, it feels warm with divine energy. You think that it has increased your spellcasting abilities for the day.

You can use one additional spell today. Choose either holy light or cure light wounds. You can use that spell a second time. Make a note of this on your paper.

Read 3.

19 The sun is already high when you wake up the next morning, and Filla has prepared breakfast. When you ask her about Kalin, she says, "He's a little thick-headed, but he's got a good heart. He's appointed himself protector of the village, and the gods know we can use some protection. He was up at the crack of dawn to go on

some kind of quest.”

You get a sinking feeling in your stomach, as you remember how close Kalin came to being ripped apart by zombies last night. “Did he say where he was going?” you ask.

“I’m not rightfully sure,” Filla replies. “He’s been scouting the forest a lot recently, but there’s always goblins in the hills, and I heard some rumors of strange happenings in the ruins north of town. You might ask around at Stinky Pete’s Tavern or Harper’s Store to see if they know more.”

“Thank you,” you reply. “I’ll look into it.”

Read 2.

20 You cast your spell, but it has no effect. You fear that the necromancer’s spell poisoned Kalin, and your magic cannot help.

Kalin manages to raise his voice enough for you to hear his words. “Stop... Galbron,” and then he speaks no more.

Make a note on your paper that you have cast cure light wounds.

Read 24.

21 The zombie swings at you, but you step aside before it connects.

Because the zombie missed you, you take no damage. If it had hit you, you would subtract the damage from your hit points (HP). Make a note on your paper that you still have 12 HP (your maximum).

Read 5.

22 The tavern is quiet, not strange given the hour. A single ragged man sits at one table nursing an amber-colored drink. A bald, rotund man cleans glasses behind the bar.

“Are you Pete?” you ask the man at the bar.

He laughs, “No, stranger. The name’s Tanger. That’s Pete.” He gestures to a calico cat sunning himself on the windowsill. “Stinky Pete the Third. Now what can I do for you?”

“My name is Aneela. I’m a Sister of Light. I’ve come to Welow to help how I can. I’m looking for a man named Kalin. Can you help me find him?”

“A lot goes on in my tavern,” Tanger

replies. “I don’t make a practice of gossiping about it.”

“Please,” you say, “I’m trying to help. I’m worried that Kalin may face greater danger than he knows.

Make a Persuade check (d20 +5).

If the total is 15 or higher, read 28.

If the total is 14 or less, read 17.

23 You try to step away from the zombie, but its powerful fist crashes into you. Fortunately, it causes little more than a bruise.

You have taken 1 point of damage from the zombie. Each time you or an enemy takes damage, you subtract that damage from the target’s hit points (HP). You began with 12 HP. Since you suffered 1 point of damage, you only have 11 HP remaining. Make a note on your paper that you have 11 HP left.

Read 5.

24 Kalin’s dying wish was that you stop the necromancer Galbron. You worry you cannot stop him alone, but time is pressing. You decide to push on into the temple ruins.

If you search Kalin’s body, read 35.

If you leave him in peace and enter the ruins, read 29.

25 You place your morningstar on the altar, and the silvery light flows into it. The light fades from around the altar, but when you pick up the morningstar, it feels light in your hands. You think that, for a while at least, a holy force propels your weapon.

For the rest of the adventure, when you hit an enemy, you deal 3 damage instead of 2. Make a note on your paper.

Read 3.

26 As he falls, Galbron cries, “This cannot be! I was to live forever!” Obviously, he was mistaken.

After defeating Galbron and his zombies, you destroy any hint of the ritual he was about to perform. Then you return to Kalin.

You bring Kalin’s body back to Welow for a hero’s funeral. You tell the people of

Welow that he died protecting all of them. His friends shed tears of grief, as do you.

But this tragedy has only solidified your determination. Welow needs protection, and you are its new protector.

This concludes your adventure. If you would like to explore different options you may start again from the beginning.

27 You bring your ear close to Kalin’s lips to hear his words. “Galbron...” he says, and you know he speaks of the man in robes. “Unleash evil with... must stop... before it’s to late... you... first the angels... promise...”

And then he speaks no more.

Read 24.

28 Tanger puts down his rag for the first time and takes stock of you. “You seem all right,” he says. “A Sister of Light, huh? Well, all I know is last night I saw Kalin talking with some farmers who live north of town, out by the old ruins. I overheard them tell him something weird was going on.”

“Thank you,” you say. “I’ll be back tonight for a drink.”

Return to 2.

29 You light your lantern and venture into the dark ruins of the temple. You see the walls are covered with ancient carvings. You soon come to a T-intersection.

If you go left, read 36.

If you go right, read 7.

If you examine the wall carvings near the intersection, read 31.

30 You explore the caves west of town. While you see signs of goblins, you see nothing of Kalin or what he is searching for. You are about to give up and look elsewhere, when you hear the chittering of high-pitched voices. Three goblins round the bend. They stare at you for a heartbeat and then charge with their wooden spears.

You must fight three goblins. Their stats are:

GOBLIN (GOBLINOID)

HP: 2

AC: 8

Attack: +0 to hit; 1 damage

If you reduce TWO goblins to 0 hp, read 42.

If the goblins reduce you to 0 hp, read 51.

31 The wall carvings show an intense battle between two armies. On the left, demons command a legion of skeletons, while on the right, an angelic host rushes out to destroy them. From what you can tell, the forces are locked in a stalemate.

If you go to the left, read 36.

If you go to the right, read 7.

32 The final skeleton crumbles before you. The way is clear, and you rush to Kalin. He is still alive and desperately trying to tell you something, but he has lost his strength and cannot manage more than a whisper.

If you try to hear Kalin, read 27.

If you cast cure light wounds on Kalin, read 20.

If you examine his wounds, read 13.

33 You dash forward catching the ghoul by surprise.

You must now fight the ghoul.

Because you surprised it, you get a +2 bonus to your attack roll during your first hero phase.

The ghoul's stats are:

GHOUL (UNDEAD)

HP: 5 AC: 9

Attack: +1 to hit; 2 damage

If you reduce the ghoul to 0 hp, read 34.

If it reduces you to 0 hp, read 51.

34 You have rid the world of another cursed undead.

You examine the glowing altar. The silver light seems to be the last vestiges of divine energy. Perhaps if you place an item on the altar it might gain a bit of holy power.

If you place your holy symbol on the altar, read 18.

If you place your morningstar on the altar, read 25.

If you leave the altar alone, read 3.

35 You check Kalin's belt pouch and discover a clear vial filled with sparkling water. You

recognize it as a vial of holy water.

Make a note on your paper that you have a vial of holy water.

HOLY WATER:

Instead of attacking during your hero phase, you can throw this vial of holy water at an undead creature (holy water does not affect the living). Make an attack roll with a +1 bonus. If you hit, you deal 3 damage to the target.

If you miss, you still deal 1 point of damage, as some of the water splashes onto the target.

Once you use the vial, it is destroyed.

Read 29.

36 After a few twists and turn, you see candlelight up ahead.

The robed figure of Galbron is drawing intricate symbols on the floor. He must be preparing an arcane ritual. Three animated corpses stand nearby. As you ready to attack, he lifts his head and looks at you.

"Fool! You cannot stop me. Soon I shall have life eternal, and with it, I shall rule the world. You and your foolish friend will serve me as foot soldiers in my undead legion."

You must fight Galbron and his three zombies. On the first villain phase, Galbron casts ray of enfeeblement (37) at you. After you have destroyed one of his zombies, he cast reanimate (38).

Galbron's stats are:

GALBRON (HUMAN, NECROMANCER)

HP: 8

AC: 10

Attack: +1 to hit; 1 damage

Spells: ray of enfeeblement (37), reanimate (38)

The zombies' stats are:

ZOMBIE (UNDEAD)

HP: 3

AC: 7

Attack: +0 to hit; 1 damage

If you reduce all the enemies to 0 hp, read 26.

If they reduce you to 0 hp, read 51.

37 Ray of Enfeeblement

Make an attack with a +1 bonus. A hit causes no damage, but instead the target suffers a -2 penalty to all attack rolls until the end of the battle.

Return to 36.

38 Reanimate
One zombie that was destroyed this battle returns with full hit points. It does not attack in the phase when it was restored.

Return to 36.

39 You hear a bustle of activity in one of the buildings. You hustle forward and see Kalin, again facing a row of undead. This time four skeletons stand between Kalin and a man wearing dark robes.

The man looks at you and sneers.

"Another pest. I don't have time for this. I have an appointment with destiny." He gestures and mutters some words, which seem to be an arcane spell. A black dart appears from thin air and flies toward you.

Before it strikes, Kalin jumps in front of the dart. It pierces his shoulder. He grunts, then collapses to the ground.

"Finish them," the robed man shouts to the skeletons. With a swirl of his robes, he enters a ruined building.

Kalin writhes on the ground, but before you can help, the skeletons attack.

You must fight four skeletons. The skeleton's stats are:

SKELETON (UNDEAD)

HP: 1

AC: 8

Attack: +0 to hit; 1 damage

Use the rules that you have learned to run this battle.

If you reduce all the skeletons to 0 hp, read 32.

If they reduce you to 0 hp, read 51.

40 You pass several ancient stone buildings before you see Kalin lying face down with bones scattered around him. You rush over to him, but it is too late. Kalin is dead. You guess that the bones nearby are remains of skeletal warriors. From the looks of the battle, you think they were guarding the temple before you.

Then you see two words that Kalin wrote on the stones with his own blood: "Stop Galbron."

Read 24.

41 **You soon** reach the forest, but after several hours of searching, you find neither Kalin nor any clue of what he hunts. You think it best to look elsewhere.
If you go to the caves, read 30.
If you go to the ruins, read 16.

42 **After** quickly dispatching two of his friends, the final goblin drops his spear and raises his hands.

“Sorry,” he says. “No hurt.”
“I’m looking for a friend,” you reply. “A human like me, with sword and armor. Tell me where he is, and I’ll let you live.”

“Yes, we all scared of sword-man. Scouts say he go to old place. Scouts say bone-man go there too. All we know. Promise.”

“Then get, and think twice before you attack another traveler.”

The goblin dashes off and vanishes in seconds. He was scared, but you think he told the truth. It is best that you look elsewhere.

If you search the forest, read 41.

If you search the ruins, read 16.

43 **You crash** your weapon into the zombie’s skull, cracking it like an eggshell. It collapses in a festering heap at your feet. At the same time, the man with the sword cuts the other zombie in two.

You have finished this battle. For the rest of the adventure, instead of going through battles step-by-step, you will run the battles yourself based on your stat block and the monster’s stat block.

To see rules for combat phases, read 45.

To understand how to read a stat block, read 46.

To see your stat block, read 48.

To continue the adventure, read 11.

44 **You arrive** at the store and ask the woman behind the counter about Kalin. “Yeah, he was in this morning. He didn’t say where he was heading, but he bought some torches, so I figure it must be someplace dark. Anything I can get for you?”

Sadly you do not have coin to spare,

so you thank the woman and head on your way.

Return to 2.

45 **Every round of combat** consists of two phases: first the hero phase and then the villain phase. During the hero phase, you attack any one enemy (or cast a spell or use certain items). During the villain phase, each enemy attacks the hero. (You do not need to worry about movement or positioning. You are able to reach any opponent).

Return to 43.

46 **Stat blocks** describe what your character or an enemy can do in combat. Stat blocks have the following information.

Name (keywords): The first line of the creature gives its name, followed by its keywords. Names simply describe the creature. Keywords have no effect on their own, but some spells or abilities may work differently against creatures with certain keywords.

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

AC (armor class): This represents a creature’s defenses. To hit a target, an attacker must have a total attack roll (the d20 roll plus the attack bonus) equal to or higher than the target’s AC.

Attack: The attack line consists of two parts: 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.

Spells: This lists the names of the spells that the creature has prepared and also lists where you can find more detailed descriptions of the spells. Only a few creatures can cast spells.

Skills: These are things the character is good at doing outside of combat. Normally only the hero has skills.

Return to 43.

47 **As a cleric** you can cast a certain number of divine spells each day. For this adventure, you have the spells *holy light* and *cure light wounds* prepared. If you use a spell in combat, you do not make an attack during your hero phase (more on that later). Once you cast the spell, you cannot use it again until you rest for at least 6 hours. Make a note on your paper when you cast a spell.

Return to 14.

48 **Your stats are:**

ANEELA (HUMAN, CLERIC)

HP: 12

AC: 15

Attack: +0 to hit; 2 damage

Skills: Persuade +5

Spells: *cure light wounds* (49), *holy light* (50)

You may want to write these stats down so that you do not have to flip back and forth during the adventure.

Return to 43.

49 **Cure Light Wounds**

When you cast the spell, you or an ally heals 8 hit points. You cannot increase your hit points beyond your maximum. This spell has no effect on poisons, disease, or other debilitating conditions.

Return to 11.

50 **Holy Light**

You automatically deal 1 point of damage to each undead creature in the combat. (A creature will have the undead keyword after its name in case there is any doubt).

Return to 14.

51 **Your wounds** are too much to bear, and you collapse to the ground. A soft white light envelops you, and you are free of the mortal world.

The people of Welow are not so lucky.

This concludes your adventure. If you want to try for a different outcome, start again at the beginning.

Ω

BARK AT THE MOON

Werewolf Themes for Your Character

By Brian A Liberge
Art by Otto Wilhelm Thomé



Tormented men and women wander the land, cursed. Marked only by disheveled hair and a wild temper in daylight hours, they fade away from villages and towns when the moon shines its brightest, replaced by distant howls and screams. They know the dark beast that lurks within better than any other. They are werewolves.

Found in legends dating back to ancient Greece, werewolves are a standard of modern fantasy. While the basic premise of a human changing into a beast remains the same, the details change among regions, stories, and centuries. Most include increased strength, agility, and a greater hunger for mankind's baser urges. Sometimes the creatures are ferocious man-wolf hybrids, sometimes simply a natural wolf, and some tales even describe werewolves paralyzing victims with only a stare.

There is no reason why werewolves with differing abilities cannot exist in your game world. Different methods of contracting lycanthropy may express themselves differently, or the condition might simply manifest itself in various ways among victims. This provides some intriguing variety—and it keeps players on their toes.

WEREWOLF ORIGINS

Ancient stories describe lycanthropy as a curse, inflicted by the gods as punishment for a transgression. In your game, it could easily be a consequence of other PC actions as well. For instance, it might be the legacy of a powerful arch mage or the dying curse of a wronged shaman, or a character might sign their soul away to gain the power of the werewolf and revel in dark bloodlust. Others

may have been tricked into such deals or accepted them as a personal sacrifice to protect others. Their changed blood is a testament of their actions, and they are often haunted by guilt. Some few may suffer the condition through no fault of their own, perhaps cursed by the deeds of their ancestors.

Lycanthropy may also an untapped and primal form of human potential. People born as werewolves may not discover it until later in life. Those who often move from place to place, like gypsies, migrant workers, and merchants, may secretly harbor the bloodline. These individuals refuse to settle in one place for long, both because of how people treat them and through fear of their own lack of control. Other werewolves might embrace such a path and feel born to rule over others.

Today we often think of lycanthropy coming through the bite of another werewolf. This adds a deeper threat to any lycanthropic encounter, but make sure that players understand what this threat really means. With a Nature check they should know whether they can avoid the condition and whether they have any chance of a cure once infected.

A world with no cure has a certain delightful bitterness, but it's not the sort of thing to spring on your regular game without a heads-up. Make sure your players understand lycanthropy is permanent going into the game. That said, the option of a cure adds some real elements of drama, especially if it is exceptionally difficult to obtain. Cures could be as easy as a Remove Disease ritual or as difficult as a quest to find certain herbs growing in distant parts of the world. Depending on your game and the party's level, characters might need the blessing of a god, atonement for the sins committed by prior generations, recovery of a long-lost artifact, or even tracking and slaying the very first werewolf, now a god in his own right. Make it epic.

Tooth and Claw

Lycanthropy brings with it the natural weapons of the applied beast. Werewolves make use of the wolves' bite and claws when they enter their beast forms.

Weapon	Prof.	Damage	Range	Price	Wt.	Group	Properties
Bite	+2	d8	-	-	-	Light blade	Off hand
Claw	+3	d6	-	-	-	Light blade	Off hand

HEROIC WEREWOLVES

This theme allows PCs to become werewolves. Players can choose the theme at 1st level or apply it to their character later on (in which case, the character's previous theme is replaced by the werewolf theme). PCs should be able to retrain powers chosen during the heroic tier, either by selecting werewolf abilities or by choosing new class powers where the werewolf theme ability may not fit the character.

Contracting lycanthropy may pressure the player to dramatically alter the way they play an existing character. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Much of who that character was has suddenly changed. Dealing with new urges, emotions, and issues of personal identity is part of the fun. Players should not feel obligated to play their character as a bad guy, however. PCs are heroes. They may make tough choices, struggle internally, and be rightly feared, but they should have the power to fight their condition somehow. It can also be fun to play the character who gives into evil, but it is not required.

Good or evil, players have four main choices to make as their werewolf characters progress. Will they try to hide their forms? Will they accept their life as a werewolf or attempt to become free of the curse? Will they taste the blood of other intelligent creatures or hunt animals for food? And finally, how much will they rely on their bite and claws in combat compared to man-made weapons?

These questions may seem minor, but they will help define the character. Any alignment changes will likely arise naturally while playing.

WEREWOLF THEME

"Some blame the moon, but I say let the lady be in the sky. A werewolf of any consideration has enough man as beast to fight. Those that give into savagery deserve steel. Those who are brave enough to direct towards proper ends may live another day when we meet."

— Henrik Scrape, Dread Hunter

The werewolf is an afflicted creature that excels at melee combat. Melee-based characters will find that the werewolf adds powerful options for regular use. Characters who excel at ranged combat may find the werewolf the perfect tool to surprise opponents who get in close.

Classes that benefit from having a hand free gain a great advantage from the werewolf's claws, which stay free when empty and can be used to attack. Classes able to use a ki focus can greatly improve their attack and damage with the werewolf's natural weapons. Finally, the druid gains a special benefit, as many of the werewolf's powers contain the beast form keyword, so they can be used while in the druid's wild shape. The reverse is also true, granting the werewolf use of the druid's beast powers while in the theme's forms.

Secondary Role: Striker

Source: Racial (shapechanger)

Granted Power: You gain the form of the werewolf power.

FORM OF THE WEREWOLF

WEREWOLF FEATURE

Your body shifts and changes quickly, taking on your feral aspect. Hair sprouts thickly over your body as bones extend and reshape, leaving something not quite man, not quite beast.

Encounter * Polymorph

Minor Action

Personal

Effect: You take on the beast form of a

Races as a Theme

Themes are an extension of class, as each has a provided role and power source. This article uses the theme as a mechanic for a racial template. It adds features and flavor to the race without removing any racial abilities. PCs who take Werewolf as a theme gain the shapechanger keyword and are considered a shapechanger for all purposes, just like a PC with the Mercenary theme (see *Soldiers of Fortune*) is considered to be martial even if their class has a different power source.

hybrid wolf man. You gain the bite and claw weapons and are considered proficient with them. Whenever you are not holding anything in one of your hands, your hand is considered both free and wielding a claw weapon. You gain vulnerable 5 against silvered weapons while in this form and your human form. You add your Strength bonus in additional damage to bloodied targets." Right after the sentence "You gain the bite and claw weapons and are considered proficient with them. You can attempt to end this form as a minor action. Make a save to change back, modified by your Wisdom ability modifier.

ANIMAL INSTINCTS WEREWOLF UTILITY POWER 2

With a difficult task at hand, you let your base instincts take over to give you an edge.

Encounter

Minor Action Personal

Effect: You gain +5 on your next Athletics, Nature, Perception, or Stealth check.

BERSERKER LUNGE WEREWOLF ATTACK POWER 3

Extending your arm with primal force, you cut the enemy deeply.

Encounter * Beast Form, Weapon Standard Action Melee

Target: One creature

Attack: Primary ability modifier vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Primary ability modifier damage and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Special: This power can be used in place of a melee basic attack during a charge.

DEATH'S HOWL WEREWOLF ATTACK POWER 5

An eerie howl escapes your lips and echoes all around, shaking your enemies resolve and leaving them open to attack.

Daily * Beast Form, Fear, Implement, Psychic

Standard Action Close burst 3

Target: Each enemy in the burst

Attack: Primary ability modifier vs. Will

Hit: 3d8 + Primary ability modifier psychic damage, and the target grants combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Miss: Half damage.

FORM OF THE WOLF WEREWOLF UTILITY POWER 6

The power of the moon calls out to you. You feel it burn your blood and twist your shape into that of the wolf.

Daily * Polymorph

Minor Action Personal

Effect: You take on the beast form of a wolf. While in this form you gain +2 to speed and gain +10 to Bluff checks to appear as a normal wolf. You gain the bite weapon and are considered proficient with it. You cannot use any weapon or implement powers that lack the beast form keyword. You gain vulnerable 5 against silvered weapons while in this form.

Your equipment becomes part of this new form, and you retain your equipment's benefits, properties, and powers, except for weapons and wondrous items. None of your equipment can be removed in this form, and it is not considered accessible.

You can end this form as a minor action.

PARALYZING GAZE WEREWOLF ATTACK POWER 7

You focus your gaze on those before you, and for a moment your curse extends, forcing their bodies to work against themselves.

Encounter * Beast Form, Implement Standard Action Close blast 3

Target: Each enemy in blast

Attack: Primary ability modifier vs. Fortitude

Hit: 1d8 + Primary ability modifier damage and the target is immobilized (save ends).

BLOOD FRENZY WEREWOLF ATTACK POWER 9

Fueled by the scent of blood, you strike powerfully at one foe and then lash out quickly at all those around you.

Daily * Beast Form, Weapon

Standard Action Melee

Target: One creature

Attack: Primary ability modifier vs. AC

Hit: 3[W] + Primary ability modifier damage. If the target is bloodied you make a secondary attack.

Secondary Attack

Standard Action Close burst 1

Target: Each creature in burst

Attack: Primary ability modifier vs. AC

Hit: Primary ability modifier damage and the target is slowed (save ends).

ADVANCED HEALING WEREWOLF UTILITY POWER 10

Cursed blood suddenly flows faster in your veins, not giving you the luxury of an easy death.

Daily * Beast Form, Healing

Minor Action Personal

Effect: You gain regeneration equal to your primary ability modifier until the end of the encounter or until you reach 0 hp.

You do not regenerate at 0 hp or less. Ω

COMING NEXT ISSUE!

The Winter issue of KQ is always a delight, filled with cunningly-wrought deathtraps... er, excellent articles on gaming of every stripe. Here's what to expect in 90 days or less!

Servants from Beyond

Lesser planar allies—from the honor mount to the efreeti harem slave—with details for negotiating with and controlling the otherworldly and the bizarre. Expand your PC's planar summoning power to its full potential!

Archers and Rangers

The bow is mightier than the sword! Or something like that. A full-on feast of feathered feats and flying bodkin-point arrows! Pointy airborne death! Fear it! (Yeah, we have no idea if the freelancers are coming through on this topic. We sure hope so.)

Potent Specializations

We've talked stunts and backgrounds, so of course specializations are coming up next! We bring you more AGE system coverage, because it's the fastest game on the tabletop.

Racial Utility Powers

Gnomes, tieflings, and minotaurs get some love. I know—*spit*—gnomes! In these hallowed pages. I tell you, sometimes the Chief is a little nutty. Gnomes! *Mumble murble grumble*.

What else, you ask? What ELSE? Good lord, people, we're kobolds, not seers.

But fine. Our smoky, mystic crystal flame reveals these hints: 100 ways to return from the dead, astonishing magical fish, ticking creatures, an ecology you won't want to miss, and perhaps some rather surprising new spell components. See you in the New Year, dear readers!!



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Book Reviews

By Wolfgang Baur, Ben McFarland, and Pierce Watters



HEAVEN'S NEEDLE

By Liane Merciel

Pocket Star Books

ISBN 978-1-4391-5916-3

Mass Market Paperback, \$7.99

480 pages

Liane Merciel hit the ground running with her first novel of Ithelas, *The River King's Road*. *Heaven's Needle*, her second novel, takes place in the same setting, but is a far different story. *River Kings Road* is classic high fantasy. *Heaven's Needle* is a dark and brooding horror novel.

The River King's Road ended with Kelland, The Sun Knight, a captive of the Spider. In *Heaven's Needle*, Kelland, his partner Bitharn, and the Thornlord Malentir, form a strange alliance as they travel to the cursed stronghold of Durahdh Mal. Sun Knight and Thornlord, enemies at any other time, band together to battle the scourge of the Mad God Maol and his twisted creations, the Maelgoth.

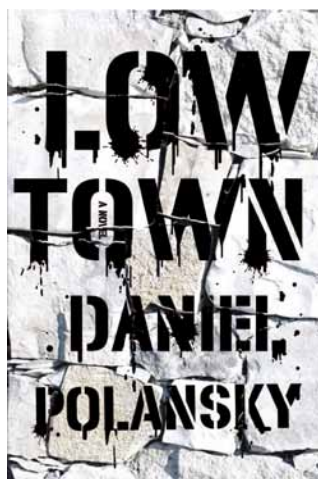
At the same time Asharre, a mighty woman warrior from the North, journeys with two young Illuminers of the sun god to bring healing to the village of Carden Vale, which lies in the shadow of Durahdh Mal. Unbeknownst to this group, Carden

Vale has been struck by the Mad God's curse. Asharre has failed to protect her own sister Oralia and begins a bitter fight against Maol's evil.

Although some of the characters in *Heaven's Needle* appeared in *The River King's Road*, this is a vastly different novel. There is an overriding horror in the plague of Maol the Mad God that keeps the reader on edge. This is an evil so malevolent it drives two hated foes together.

Merciel is a splendid writer who gets better with each book. This may be read separately or after reading *The River King's Road*. It does not matter which way you choose...just read it. Highly recommended.

Review by Pierce Watters



LOW TOWN

By Daniel Polansky

Doubleday

ISBN 978-0-3855-3446-8

Hardcover, \$25.95

352 pages

It's Chinatown with sorcery. It's Thieves' World with more drugs and whores. It's Lankhmar without the refinement, or the Black Company

without the mercenary pay. Welcome to Low Town.

Make no mistake, Daniel Polansky's first novel is dark and full of horrors, and the man can definitely turn a phrase that churns your guts. The main character is Warden, a former agent of the crown turned drug dealer. He has nasty habits, a long history of sin and regrets, and some truly interesting friends, both high and low.

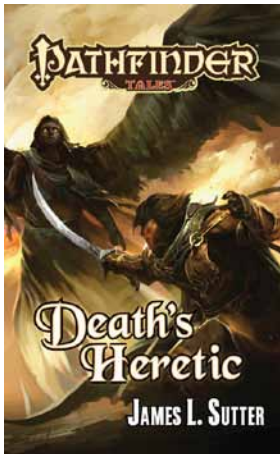
The tale itself builds on Warden's past and introduces his acquaintances in careful sequence. Missing children drag him out of his world of small-time dealing and into trouble with former friends both with the crown and with other gangs, a dying mentor and a new apprentice, and old flames.

Low Town is a stiff dose of pure noir fantasy, a punch right between the eyes, and written in a brutal, spare prose. Think of writers like Scott Lynch (but darker) or Glen Cook, and you'll realize that the good guys don't necessarily win. Hell, it's not entirely clear that there are any good guys.

There are some issues with the book, mostly a tendency to lean heavily on modern tropes and word choices that sometimes threw me out of the book's sense of another world. That's maybe more a reviewer's pet peeve than a real flaw. It certainly didn't stop me from staying up late to finish the book.

If you love your fantasy dark and bitter and rich in street life, *Low Town* is recommended.

Review by Wolfgang Baur



DEATH'S HERETIC

By James L. Sutter
 Paizo Publishing
 ISBN 978-1-6012-5369-9
 Paperback
 400 pages

Death's Heretic, James L. Sutter's freshman foray into novel fiction, is anything but naïve. This novel begins with Salim, an irreverent undead hunter and obviously reluctant protagonist, sent to recover the soul of a rich merchant. Apparently murdered for the magical elixir he recently acquired, the merchant's soul is snatched before reaching the afterlife. As this story progresses, the mystery of who killed the merchant becomes almost secondary to the casual animosity Salim possesses for the church and deity that command him. Sutter does excellent work making this formative aspect of the investigator's background feel as compelling and interesting as the search for the killer. It is a clever choice which creates excellent reader investment—discovering the identity of the murderer might become less important than learning the source of Salim's hatred. Some of the dialogue favors a more modern or colloquial tone, but this is easily dismissed given the story's initial setting of Golarion. The story's tempo remains engaging, complemented by an entertaining array of supporting characters with very genuine personalities and conversation. Even when the tale detours to otherworldly

Liane Merciel on Horror

The first horror novel I read was Stephen King's *It*. My dad was reading it, and I knew he thought it was scary, so in a burst of eight-year-old bravado I decided to peek at the Forbidden Book myself.

I didn't get it. I skipped straight to all the death scenes and, while they were satisfyingly gory, my eight-year-old self was befuddled about what my dad found so frightening.

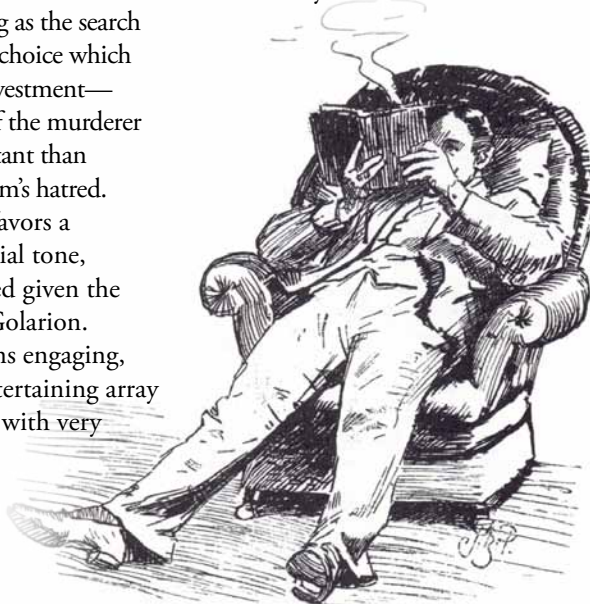
Many years later I went back to *It*...and this time, as an adult, I understood how it worked.

Horror's not about deaths. It's not about gore. It's about the spaces in between—the tension and the uncertainty and the creeping sense that something is irrevocably, incomprehensibly wrong. That's where the real power is, and that's what I learned from Stephen King.

alternate dimensions, Sutter keeps his description clean and concise, allowing the strange realities to accentuate the character interaction rather than allowing the setting to dominate.

At its core, this is a novel about choices and consequences, about free will and the gift of death, about love and heroism. It only happens to be clothed in a well-fashioned fantasy. Regardless, *Death's Heretic* is most certainly a killer worth catching.

Review by Ben McFarland



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The Order of the Undying Sun

By Wolfgang Baur
Art by Jost Amman

The commandery of the Order of the Undying Sun in Zobeck is a faded place, its knights somewhat bitter at their “exile” to this backwater. And it is true that they no longer enjoy the privileges that the Order once had, when they were the officers and generals of House Stross’s private army. Today, most of their duties involve guarding trade caravans on the Great Northern Road, or riding down ghoulish infestations along the foothills of the Ironcrags, or chasing bandits. Honorable work, surely, though not exactly suffused with glory.

Still, their primary service is to Khors, the Sun God, and so long as he is worshipped in Zobeck, the knights will maintain a presence, though privately they may dream of more active service in the South against the dragonkin.

THE ORDER IN THE CROSSROADS

The Order of the Undying Sun is much stronger in the Magdar Kingdom and south in Illyria than in Zobeck; hundreds of knights serve in dozens of major commanderies from the White Mountain Marches to the Ruby Sea and the borders of the Mharoti Empire. The Order is widely respected, and the King of the Magdar Kingdom would never think of excluding its Grand Marshall from his deliberations when the season of war approaches. Its scarred and devoted men each fight harder than half-a-dozen mercenaries, and their unwavering devotion to high ideals makes them the elite backbone of Magdar’s army.

Though known for its outstanding heavy cavalry, the Order also raises most other sorts of troops, though rarely

archers. These include companies of warrior-priests of Khors in war wagons (see *KOBOLD QUARTERLY* #12), swift White Riders who primarily act as scouts and skirmishers, and even companies of devout pikemen who serve a season for pay and honor (the “Sunset Regiments”, so-called because their service sees an end).

These troops obey the Grand Marshall Ödon Vencelsohn, called the Protector, and though they are not knights, they vastly increase the Order’s martial power. With weapons and basic armor provided by the Order’s armorers, these soldiers are uniformly of a higher quality than most levied troops. Some claim that the Order’s infantry and horse are even of higher quality than some of the feudal vassals of the Magdar Kingdom.

ENTERING KNIGHTHOOD

Joining the knights is a simple matter: swear allegiance to the local Commander (in Zobeck, this is Commander Janush Hermass), swear to obey the priests of Khors and uphold the creed of the Sun God, show your proficiency in mounted combat with lance and sword, and you’re pretty much in. New recruits receive armor and weapons of simple quality (trained warhorses are not provided). Most recruits are fighters, cavaliers, and clerics—a few are paladins or inquisitors.

The first rank is as a squire to a senior or veteran knight, fetching, carrying, and polishing armor. This may last a month or a year, depending on the age and skill of the new applicant. Once



the senior knight considers him fit, the candidate receives spurs, a sword, and the title of knight-novice. While he now answers to the Order’s captains and commanders rather than the senior knight, he remains quite a junior figure.

PALADINS OF KHORS

The elite of the Order (and most of its officers) are paladins of Khors, especially those of the Divine Aspect—Sun archetype (see *Divine Favor: the Paladin*). Their white- and yellow-plumed helmets are striking and distinctive, as are their blue cloaks and the white or dappled grey horses they favor. Most speak the Magdar dialect or the Trade tongue (with a Magdar accent), and they are both generous to their friends and implacable against their foes. Their light truly does shine brighter than most, and their white swords do cut through the darkness.

Zobeck’s council gives them little respect because of the Order’s support for the wrong side during the Revolt, but everywhere else, the white plumes of Khors are a sign of righteous might and outstanding skill. Ride, sons of Khors! Ω