

Spring 2012 Issue 21

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Quarterly

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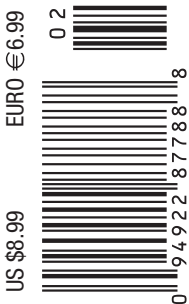
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*Spring 12*

# CONTENTS

## EDITORIAL

Women, With and Without Reasonable Armor. . . 4

## FEATURES

**The Shaman** . . . . . 8

by Marc Radle

Command the wild, commune with spirits, and run with the beasts with this ferocious new base class for the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*.

**Daughters of Lilith** . . . . . 18

by Sersa Victory

Both refined and bestial, beautiful and terrible, succubi weave ancient traditional and carnal appetites into a unique culture.

**It's a Mystery** . . . . . 30

by David "Zeb" Cook

Unearth holy mysteries with this tour of mysterious cults and secret societies and what they mean to your game.

## CHARACTERS

**Clerical Conflicts** . . . . . 38

by Tim & Eileen Connors

**Divine Archetypes** . . . . . 46

by Stefen Styrsky

**A Background in Magic** . . . . . 56

by Rodrigo Garcia Carmona

**Nine Treasures of Deep Midgard** . . . . . 64

by Nicholas Milasich

**Saints of Mavros** . . . . . 66

by Christina Stiles

## DESIGN AND DMING

**The Scriveners of Allain** . . . . . 60

by Brian A. Liberge

**White Tongue, Black Heart** . . . . . 68

by David Schwartz

**The Shadow Lodge Insurgency** . . . . . 72

by Nicholas Gray

## COLUMNS

**Why No Monotheism?** . . . . . 44

by Steve Winter

**Kobold Diplomacy:  
Fun Happens Here** . . . . . 50

by Jeremy L. C. Jones

**From the Mines** . . . . . 54

by Kobold Staff

**Ask the Kobold** . . . . . 58

by Skip Williams

**Coming Next Issue** . . . . . 79

by Kobold Staff

**Free City of Zobeck:  
Deadly Tolls and Honest Challenges** . . . . . 76

by Wolfgang Baur

## COMICS

**d20 Monkey** . . . . . 42

**10'x 10' Toon** . . . . . 49



### ON THE COVER

The Wood Nymph by Kieran Yanner is an intoxicating beauty with deadly intent—a siren of the forest! This is Yanner's third appearance on KQ's cover.



Editorial:

# Women, With and Without Reasonable Armor



Welcome to the “Divine Magic” issue of **KOBOLD QUARTERLY!** You can tell it’s the Divine Magic issue by the pinup on the cover, and the Ecology of the Succubus, and the sexy shaman. (Not the dwarf shaman, the other one. Unless Thorin Oakenshield is your idea of sexy, in which case more power to you.) So...huh? Why all the bare skin in this issue?

Well, the cover of issue #13 showed pretty clearly that *KQ* isn’t above showing some flesh now and then. And it just happened that my favorite art pieces I received for this issue contained some nakedness. I grew up with a European view of nudity in pop culture, which could be summed up as (with a German accent), “Naked is no big deal, but let’s not show quite so much ugly violence, eh?” Humans are sexual beings, and I would argue it’s not wrong to be male and to have a sexual view of women; as long as that’s not the only way you view – or treat – half the human race.

At the same time, as a publisher I know that the sight of bare flesh brings out all kinds of reader reactions, ranging from “Oh my God, I want that magazine!”

to “Oh my God, what pigs gamers are!” All those viewpoints should be part of the conversation, and magazine publishers have the freedom to print that view and to engage with others on the topic.

On the non-cheesecake end of the artistic spectrum, I highly recommend the Women Fighters in Reasonable Armor Tumblr, as well as a blog post titled “More Like This, Please” by *KQ* and Open Design author Tracy “Sarah Darkmagic” Hurley. It’s not like there’s only pinups or only harsh realism out there. Artists work in a range of styles, and not everything works for everyone. Sexuality in gaming art has everything to do with human wants and needs, and very little to do with gaming directly.

Yes, this issue serves up a big slice of cheesecake. The summer issue might bring some beefcake with it. I expect to get lots and lots of letters about this cover, so write in or leave a comment on [KoboldQuarterly.com](http://KoboldQuarterly.com) and let me know what you think, and what you’d like to see in future covers for *KQ* and Open Design.

## Wolfgang Baur

Kobold in Chief



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# The Shaman

## A Spirit-Based Class for the Pathfinder RPG

By Marc Radle

Art by Rick Hershey

*Maratas gutted the rabbit and spread out its entrails, while her companions watched the scene with disgust. Oblivious to the blood staining her hands, Maratas studied the remains for several minutes before finally nodding knowingly. With a quick word of thanks to the rabbit's spirit, she called out to Crawler, her snake animal guide, requesting he take the lead toward the party's goal: the orc-infested ruins lying just over the hill. She was ready for whatever they would face beyond.*

Shamans understand that everything in nature carries a living spirit—every animal, plant, rock, even the very sky and the earth itself. Shamans form deep connections with these spirits and draw strength and knowledge from them. Sometimes feared and misunderstood, the shaman's unparalleled understanding

of both the natural and spirit world grants him shape-shifting abilities, the guidance and aid of an animal spirit guide, and the ability to serve as intermediaries and messengers between mortals and spirits. The greatest shamans separate their spirits from their bodies to undertake vision quests. Shamans are also skilled healers, calling on other spirits to soothe the wounds of those around them.

**Role:** Shamans tend to be recluses, as they seek knowledge in a realm beyond the natural world. However, they are just as resourceful in the natural world as druids, and can serve a similar role in a group.

**Alignment:** Any neutral.

**Hit Die:** d8.

### CLASS SKILLS

The shaman's class skills are Climb

(Str), Craft (Int), Fly (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Knowledge (planes) (Int), Perception (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Spellcraft (Int), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str).

**Skill Ranks per Level:** 4 + Int modifier.

STARTING WEALTH	AVERAGE
2d6 × 10 gp	70 gp

### CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the shaman.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Shamans are proficient with all simple weapons and with all natural attacks (claw, bite, etc.) of any form they assume with wild shape (see below).

Shamans are proficient with light

**Table 1: Shaman**

Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day								
						1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Spirit bond, nature lore, orisons, totem secret, wild empathy	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Woodland step	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Shaman's touch, totem secret	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Wild shape	6	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4		6	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5		6	5	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Totem secret	6	6	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
8th	+6/+1	+6	+2	+6		6	6	5	3	—	—	—	—	—
9th	+6/+1	+6	+3	+6	Spirit dance	6	6	6	4	—	—	—	—	—
10th	+7/+2	+7	+3	+7		6	6	6	5	3	—	—	—	—
11th	+8/+3	+7	+3	+7	Totem secret	6	6	6	6	4	—	—	—	—
12th	+9/+4	+8	+4	+8		6	6	6	6	5	3	—	—	—
13th	+9/+4	+8	+4	+8	Spirit Step	6	6	6	6	6	4	—	—	—
14th	+10/+5	+9	+4	+9		6	6	6	6	6	5	3	—	—
15th	+11/+6/+1	+9	+5	+9	Totem secret	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	—	—
16th	+12/+6/+1	+10	+5	+10		6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3	—
17th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+10	Vision quest	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	—
18th	+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+11		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3
19th	+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+11	Totem secret	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4
20th	+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+12		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

and medium armor but are prohibited from wearing metal armor; thus, they may wear only padded, leather, or hide armor. A shaman may wear wooden armor altered by the *ironwood* spell to function like steel. Shamans are proficient with shields (except tower shields) but must use only those crafted from wood.

A shaman who wears prohibited armor or uses a prohibited shield cannot cast spells or use any of his supernatural or spell-like class abilities while doing so and for 24 hours thereafter.

**Spells:** A shaman casts divine spells drawn from the druid spell list. He can cast any spell he knows without preparing it ahead of time. A shaman's alignment may restrict him from casting certain spells opposed to his moral or ethical beliefs (see Chaotic, Evil, Good, and Lawful spells). To learn or cast a spell, a shaman must have a Charisma score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The saving throw DC against a shaman's spell is 10 + the spell's level + the shaman's Charisma modifier.

A shaman can cast only a few spells of each level per day. His base daily spell allotment appears on Table 1: Shaman. In addition, he receives bonus spells per

day if he has a high Charisma score. A shaman also receives a particular totem spell known from his spirit bond.

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

On reaching 4th level, and at every even-numbered shaman level thereafter, a shaman may learn a new spell to replace one he already knows, losing the old spell in exchange for the new one. The new spell must be of the same level as the spell being replaced. A shaman may swap only one spell at any given level, and he must choose to swap the spell when he gains new spells known for that level. He cannot swap the spell gained from his spirit bond.

Unlike a druid or cleric, a shaman need not prepare his spells in advance. He can cast any spell he knows at any time, assuming he has not yet cast all spells per day for that spell level.

Shamans need no divine focus to cast spells, even for ones with divine focus (DF) listed as a component.

**Chaotic, Evil, Good, and Lawful Spells:** A shaman cannot cast spells of an alignment opposed to his own or his deity's (if he has one). Spells associated with particular alignments are indicated by the Chaos, Evil, Good, and Law descriptors in their spell descriptions.

**Orisons:** Shamans can prepare orisons, or 0-level spells, each day as noted on Table 1: Shaman under "Spells per Day." They are cast like any other spell, but they are not expended when cast and may be used again.

**Bonus Languages:** A shaman's bonus language options include Sylvan, the language of woodland creatures. This choice is in addition to the bonus languages available to the character because of his race.

**Spirit Bond (Su):** At 1st level, a shaman forms a bond with an animal spirit—a nature spirit taking the physical form of an animal. A shaman begins play with a spirit bond to an animal listed in the Animal Spirit Guides table.

A spirit guide's Hit Dice, abilities, skills, and feats advance as the shaman

Table 2: Shaman 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	—

advances. If a shaman releases his spirit guide from its bond, he may gain a new one by performing a ceremony requiring 24 uninterrupted hours of fasting and solitary meditation in a natural environment; with materials and offerings costing 100 gp. This ceremony can also replace a spirit guide that has perished.

**Nature Lore (Ex):** A shaman gains a +2 bonus on Knowledge (nature) and Heal checks.

**Wild Empathy (Ex):** A shaman can improve the attitude of an animal. This ability functions just like a Diplomacy check made to improve the attitude of a person. The shaman rolls 1d20 and adds her shaman level and her Charisma modifier to determine the wild empathy check result. The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly.

To use wild empathy, the shaman and the animal must be within 30 ft. of each other under normal conditions. Influencing an animal this way takes 1 minute, but it might take more or less time. A shaman using wild empathy on a creature of the same type as his animal spirit may do so as a full-round

action with a +4 bonus

A shaman can also use this ability to influence a magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, but he takes a -4 penalty on the check.

**Totem Secret:** At 1st level, 3rd level, and every four levels thereafter (7th, 11th, and so on), a shaman unlocks a new secret about the natural or spirit world that grants him powers and abilities. The shaman must select a totem secret from the list below; some are not available until higher levels. If a totem secret is chosen at a later level, the shaman gains all of the abilities and bonuses granted by that totem secret based on his current level. Unless otherwise noted, activating a totem secret is a standard action.

**Blood Divination (Ex):** You can read the future in the entrails of a freshly killed animal or humanoid. If you spend 10 minutes studying the entrails of an animal or humanoid killed in the last hour, you gain an insight bonus equal to your Charisma modifier on one saving throw. At 10<sup>th</sup> level, you can study the entrails of any animal for the same effect. Alternatively, by observing and interpreting the flights of birds for 10 minutes, you may apply a +10

competence bonus to any one skill check.

Finally, by spending 10 minutes charting marks in dirt or stone or observing the patterns of sand thrown into the wind, you gain a +4 insight bonus on one initiative check. These bonuses must be used in the next 24 hours, and you must declare you are using the bonus before rolling the check or save. You may use blood divination (in any combination) 1/day plus 1/day for every four shaman levels.

**Invisibility (Su):** As a standard action, you become invisible (as the *invisibility* spell). You can remain invisible for 1 minute/day per shaman level. This ability must be used in 1-minute increments, but these minutes need not be consecutive. Starting at 9th level, this ability acts as the *greater invisibility* spell, though each round spent this way counts as 1 minute of your normal *invisibility* duration. You must be at least 3rd level to select this totem secret.

**Spirit of Nature (Su):** Whenever you drop to negative hit points while in a natural setting on your home plane, you automatically stabilize. At 5th level, you gain fast healing 3 for 1d4 rounds whenever you are reduced to negative hit points. At 10th level, this ability works everywhere, even in urban or wholly artificial realms. At 15th level, you gain fast healing 5 for 1d6 rounds when reduced to negative hit points.

**Protective Spirits (Su):** You can call spirits to form a shield around you that blocks attacks and grants you a +4 armor bonus. At 7th level, and every four levels thereafter, this bonus increases by +2. At 9th level, you may apply your armor, natural armor, and shield bonuses to your AC against incorporeal touch attacks. At 13th level, arrows, rays, and other ranged attacks requiring an attack roll gain a 50% miss chance when targeting you. You can use this ability for 1 hour/day per shaman level. This duration need not be consecutive, but it must be used in 1-hour increments.

**Speak with Animals (Ex):** You can speak with animals corresponding with your animal spirit guide's physical form, as if under the effects of *speak*

with animals. You can communicate with an additional kind of animal for every three shaman levels.

**Spirit's Warning (Ex):** The spirits constantly warn you of danger. You may add your Charisma modifier, instead of your Dexterity modifier, to your AC, Reflex saves, and CMD. Any condition that removes your Dexterity modifier to your Armor Class instead removes your Charisma modifier to your AC.

**Spirit Sight (Su):** Your vision extends into the spirit realm, allowing you to see astral, ethereal, or incorporeal creatures as a supernatural ability.

**Spirit Touch (Su):** With a touch, you can empower a weapon to affect incorporeal creatures. A normal weapon touched deals half damage to incorporeal creatures or full damage for a magic weapon (instead of the usual half). This benefit lasts for a number of rounds equal to your shaman level. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier.

**Summon Spirit (Sp):** You may call a spirit to perform simple tasks for you, as if you had cast *unseen servant*. At 8th level, this spirit may fight for you, as if you had cast *spiritual ally*. The spirit resembles the physical form of your animal spirit guide. The spirit attacks with natural weapons, has a threat range of 19-20, and critical modifier of x2. You may use this ability a number of times per day equal to your Charisma modifier.

**Tempest of Spirits (Su):** At 7th level, you can summon the spirits to attack in a ghostly barrage—their fury creates physical wounds on creatures in the area. The tempest has a range of 100 ft. and is a 20-ft.-radius burst. Objects and creatures in the area take 1d8 hp damage per shaman level. A successful Fortitude save halves the damage. You can use this ability 1/day, plus one additional time per day at 11th level and every four levels thereafter.

**Whispers of the Spirits (Su):** You are so attuned to spirits' voices you can use them to communicate with allies. You may communicate with your allies for a number of rounds per day equal to your shaman level as if using

*telepathic bond*. You may designate a number of creatures as allies equal to your Charisma modifier. Designating a creature is a standard action that requires a touch. At 10th level, you may use these spirit whispers to cast a touch spell on a designated ally once per day.

**Woodland Step (Ex):** Starting at 2nd level, a shaman may move through any sort of undergrowth (such as natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain) at his normal speed and without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. Thorns, briars, and overgrown areas magically manipulated to impede motion, however, still affect him.

In addition, a shaman leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked. He may still choose to leave a trail if desired.

**Shaman's Touch (Sp):** Beginning at 3rd level, a shaman may heal the wounds of those he touches. This acts as a *cure light wounds* spell. At 6th level, this increases to *cure moderate wounds*. At 9th level, this improves to *cure serious wounds*. At 12th level, this acts like *cure critical wounds*. All such cure spells use the shaman's caster level. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to the shaman's Charisma modifier. Alternately, the shaman can use this healing ability to deal damage to undead creatures. Using the ability in this way requires a successful melee touch attack.

**Wild Shape (Su):** At 4th level, a shaman gains the ability to turn himself into any Small or Medium-size animal and back again 1/day. His options for new forms include all creatures with the Animal type. This ability functions like the *beast shape I* spell, except as noted here. The effect lasts for 1 hour per shaman level, or until he changes back. Changing form is a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. The shaman

may take only the form of an animal he has seen.

A shaman loses his ability to speak while in animal form, because he is limited to the sounds that a normal, untrained animal can make, but he can communicate normally with other animals similar to his new form. (A wild parrot normally squawks, so this form does not permit speech.)

A shaman can use this ability an additional time per day at 6th level and every two levels thereafter, for a total of 8/day at 18th level. At 20th level, a shaman can use wild shape at will. As a shaman gains levels, the shaman can take on the form of larger and smaller animals, elementals, and plants. Each form expends one daily use of this ability, regardless of the form taken.

At 6th level, a shaman can also use wild shape to change into a Large or Tiny animal or a Small elemental.





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When taking animal form, a shaman's wild shape now functions as *beast shape II*. When taking an elemental form, the shaman's wild shape functions as *elemental body I*.

At 8th level, a shaman can use wild shape to become a Huge or Diminutive animal, a Medium elemental, or a Small or Medium-size plant creature. When taking animal form, a shaman's wild shape now functions as *beast shape III*. When taking an elemental form, the shaman's wild shape now functions as *elemental body II*. When taking the form of a plant creature, the shaman's wild shape functions as *plant shape I*.

At 10th level, a shaman can also use wild shape to become a Large elemental or a Large plant creature. When taking elemental form, the shaman's wild shape functions as *elemental body III*. When taking the form of a plant, the shaman's wild shape functions as *plant shape II*.

At 12th level, a shaman can also become a Huge elemental or a Huge plant creature. When taking the form of an elemental, the shaman's wild shape now functions as *elemental body IV*. When taking the form of a plant, the shaman's wild shape now functions as *plant shape III*.

**Spirit Dance (Su):** At 9th level, a shaman may perform a ritual dance 1/ day to persuade the spirits to augment his magic. Performing a spirit dance requires three full rounds of stylized movements, chanting, and the beating of a small drum or the shaking of a totem bead rattle. If anything interrupts the shaman during these three rounds, including damage from an attack, he must make a concentration check or have the spirit dance disrupted. If disrupted, the shaman may attempt the spirit dance again, requiring three new rounds. If a shaman has ranks in Perform (dance), he may add those ranks as a bonus to the concentration check. (See Magic in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*.)

On completion of the spirit dance, any spells cast by the shaman for rounds equal to half the shaman's level (round down) are augmented in the following ways. These effects stack.

At 9th level, treat the shaman as two caster levels higher when calculating all spell effects, spell durations, and spell DCs. At 11th level, the shaman may apply any one metamagic feat he knows to any spell he is about to cast. This does not alter the level of the spell or the casting time. The shaman cannot use this ability to cast a spell whose modified spell level would exceed the level of the highest-level spell that he can normally cast.

At 13th level, the shaman receives a +4 bonus on caster level checks made to overcome spell resistance. This bonus stacks with feats such as Spell Penetration and Greater Spell Penetration. At 15th level, the shaman may apply two metamagic feats to his spells. At 20th level, a shaman may perform a spirit dance as often as desired.

**Spirit Step (Su):** At 13th level, a shaman can become ethereal as a standard action, as if using *ethereal jaunt*. He can remain ethereal for a number of rounds per day equal to his shaman level. These rounds need not be consecutive.

**Vision Quest (Sp):** Once per day, a shaman of 17th level or higher may release his spirit from his body and embark on a spiritual quest for enlightenment and knowledge. After 24 uninterrupted hours of fasting and meditation, treat the shaman as under the effects of *astral projection*. If desired, the shaman also gains the effect of *legend lore* with a casting time of 24 hours, regardless of how much information is already known about the subject in question. He uses his shaman level as the caster level for both of these spell-like effects.

## EX-SHAMANS

A shaman who ceases to revere nature and the spirit world or changes to a prohibited alignment loses all spells and shaman abilities (including his animal spirit guide, but not including weapon, armor, and shield proficiencies). He cannot thereafter gain levels as a shaman until he atones (see the *atonement* spell description).

**Table 3: Spirit Guides**

Class Level	HD	BAB	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Skills	Feats	Natural Armor	Special
1st	2	+1	+3	+3	+0	2	1	+0	Empathic link*, share spells*, grant totem spell
2nd	3	+2	+3	+3	+1	3	2	+0	Improved Evasion
3rd	3	+2	+3	+3	+1	3	2	+2	Speak with shaman*
4th	4	+3	+4	+4	+1	4	2	+2	Deliver touch spells*
5th	5	+3	+4	+4	+1	5	3	+2	Commune with spirits*
6th	6	+4	+5	+5	+2	6	3	+4	Devotion
7th	6	+4	+5	+5	+2	6	3	+4	Spell summons*
8th	7	+5	+5	+5	+2	7	4	+4	Invisibility
9th	8	+6	+6	+6	+2	8	4	+6	—
10th	9	+6	+6	+6	+3	9	5	+6	Enter spirit world
11th	9	+6	+6	+6	+3	9	5	+6	—
12th	10	+7	+7	+7	+3	10	5	+8	Spell resistance
13th	11	+8	+7	+7	+3	11	6	+8	—
14th	12	+9	+8	+8	+4	12	6	+8	Scry on spirit guide*
15th	12	+9	+8	+8	+4	12	6	+10	—
16th	13	+9	+8	+8	+4	13	7	+10	Incorporeal
17th	14	+10	+9	+9	+4	14	7	+10	—
18th	15	+11	+9	+9	+5	15	8	+12	Fast healing
19th	15	+11	+9	+9	+5	15	8	+12	—
20th	16	+12	+10	+10	+5	16	8	+12	—

### SPIRIT BOND

An animal spirit guide is a nature spirit manifested physically as an animal. This spirit bonds with the shaman, providing guidance, protection, and aid. It is a magical beast for all effects that depend on its type. An animal spirit guide's abilities are determined by the shaman's level and its animal form racial traits. Table 3: Spirit Guides lists the base statistics of the animal spirit guide. An animal spirit guide cannot function as a familiar or animal companion.

As a full-round action, a shaman may summon his animal spirit guide from the spirit realm. This is a supernatural ability that causes the animal spirit guide to appear adjacent to the shaman. A shaman can use this ability 1/day at 1st level, and one additional time per day for every 4 levels thereafter, for a total of 5/day at 17th level. The shaman may return his animal spirit guide to the spirit realm as a swift action.

If an animal spirit guide is ever lost or dies, it can be replaced after a full day through a ritual involving 24 uninterrupted hours of fasting and solitary meditation in a non-urban environment.

Special abilities marked with an (\*) are available to the shaman only when his animal spirit guide is present and within 120 ft.

**Class Level:** The character's shaman level.

**HD:** The total number of d8 Hit Dice for the spirit guide.

**BAB:** The guide's base attack bonus. Bonded spirits do not gain iterative attacks using their natural weapons for a high base attack bonus.

**Fort/Ref/Will:** The spirit guide's base saving throw bonuses. A bonded spirit has good Fortitude and Reflex saves.

**Skills:** Total skill ranks. Bonded spirits can assign skill ranks to any skill and receive bonus skill ranks for a high Intelligence as normal. A spirit guide cannot have more ranks in a skill than it has Hit Dice. Any skill a spirit guide has ranks in is a class skill.

**Feats:** Total number of feats. Animal spirit guides are free to select any feat, although they cannot utilize some feats (such as Martial Weapon Proficiency).

**Natural Armor Bonus:** The spirit's improvement to the animal spirit guide's existing natural armor bonus.

**Special:** Animal spirit guides grant



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abilities as they increase in power. Each of these requires a standard action unless otherwise noted below.

**Empathic Link\* (Su):** The shaman has an empathic link with his animal spirit guide to 1 mile. The shaman can communicate emphatically with it but cannot see through its eyes. Because of the link's limited nature, only general emotions can be shared. The shaman has the same connection to an item or place that his animal spirit guide does.

**Share Spells\* (Ex):** The shaman may cast a spell with a target of "You" on his animal spirit guide (as a spell with a range of touch). A shaman may cast spells on his animal spirit guide even if the spells do not normally affect creatures of the magical beast type. This ability does not allow the spirit guide to share non-spell abilities, even if they function like spells.

**Improved Evasion (Ex):** If an animal spirit guide is subjected to an attack that normally allows a Reflex save for half damage, it takes no damage if it makes a successful saving throw and

half damage if the saving throw fails.

**Speak with Shaman\* (Ex):** At 3rd level or higher, the shaman and animal spirit guide can communicate with a secret language. Other creatures require magical help to understand them.

**Deliver Touch Spells\* (Su):** At 4th level or higher, an animal spirit guide can deliver touch spells for its shaman. If the pair is in contact when the shaman casts a touch spell, he can designate his animal spirit guide as the "toucher." The animal spirit guide can then deliver the touch spell just as the shaman would. As usual, if the shaman casts another spell before the touch is delivered, the touch spell dissipates.

**Commune with Spirits\* (Su):** If the shaman is 5th level or higher, his animal spirit guide can act as an intermediary between himself and the spirit realm a number of times equal to the shaman's Charisma modifier. The shaman must enter an uninterrupted trance for 1 minute and take no other actions. The shaman gains the benefits of an *augury* spell with 90% effectiveness. At 5th level, the shaman gains the benefits of a *divination* spell with 90% effectiveness. At 9th level, the knowledge gained is equivalent to a *commune* spell. None of these spell effects require material components.

**Devotion (Ex):** At 6th level or higher, a shaman's guide gains a +4 morale bonus on Will saves against enchantment spells and effects.

**Spell Summons\* (Sp):** The animal spirit guide acts as a direct conduit between a shaman of 7th level or higher and the spirit world, granting the shaman the ability to cast one additional spell per day. This can be any spell drawn from the full druid spell list—it need not be one of the shaman's spells known, though it must be of a level he can cast.

Drawing on the spell summons is a standard action in addition to the spellcasting action required to activate the spell. This spell has the standard casting time, duration, and other effects based on the shaman's level. This spell cannot be modified by metamagic feats or other abilities. The shaman

may choose a different spell each day, but never more than one.

**Invisibility (Sp):** For a shaman of 8th level or higher, his animal spirit guide can become *invisible* 3/day, as the spell.

**Enter Spirit World (Su):** At 10th level, the spirit guide can pull the shaman into the spirit world 1/day, making him incorporeal for a number of rounds equal to his shaman level. These rounds cannot be divided but must all be used together.

**Spell Resistance (Ex):** If the shaman is 12th level or higher, his animal spirit guide gains spell resistance equal to the shaman's level + 5. To affect the animal spirit guide with a spell, another spellcaster must make a caster level check against SR as usual.

**Scry on Animal Spirit Guide\* (Sp):** If the shaman is 14th level or higher, he may scry on his animal spirit guide (as if casting *scrying*) 1/day.

**Incorporeal (Ex):** If the shaman is 16th level or higher, the guide can become incorporeal as a standard action. The animal spirit guide must be corporeal to deliver a touch spell.

**Fast Healing (Ex):** If the shaman is 18th level or higher, the animal spirit guide gains fast healing 10.

### SPIRIT GUIDE CHOICES

Each spirit guide has different starting sizes, speed, attacks, ability scores, and SQ. All attacks are made using the creature's full base attack bonus unless otherwise noted. Spirit guide attacks add the animal's Strength modifier to the damage roll, unless it is its only attack, in which case it adds 1-1/2 its Strength modifier. As the shaman gains levels, his spirit guide improves as well, as noted on Table 3.

An animal spirit guide looks like a normal animal. However, it always has some exceptional quality such as unblinking eyes, pure white or black color, or a slight shimmer or glow to its body. In addition, its eyes reveal an unmistakable, otherworldly intelligence.

### TOTEM SPELL

A shaman receives an additional spell known from his animal spirit guide. This bonus spell is in addition to the



number of spells given on Table 2 and cannot be exchanged for a different spell at higher levels. It provides a single, defined spell per day, and the shaman must be of sufficient level to cast it to use the totem spell.

**BEAR**

Medium; Speed 40 ft.; AC +2 natural armor; Attack bite (1d6), 2 claws (1d4); Str 18, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 6; SQ low-light vision, scent.

**Totem Spell Granted:** *bear's endurance*

**BIRD OF PREY (EAGLE/FALCON/HAWK)**

Small; Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC +1 natural armor; Attack bite (1d6), 2 talons (1d4); Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10; SQ low-light vision.

**Totem Spell Granted:** *eagle's splendor* (eagle), *feather fall* (falcon or hawk)

**BUFFALO/BISON**

Large; Speed 40 ft.; AC +3 natural armor, Attack gore (1d8); Str 19, Dex 10,

Con 16, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 8; SQ low-light vision, scent, stampede, trample.

**Totem Spell Granted:** *bull's strength*

**CONDOR/VULTURE**

Small; Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC +1 natural armor; Attack bite (1d4), 2 talons (1d4); Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 10; SQ low-light vision, scent.

**Totem Spell Granted:** *remove disease*

**COUGAR/JAGUAR**

Medium; Speed 50 ft.; AC +1 natural armor; Attack bite (1d6), 2 claws (1d4); Str 13, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 12; Special Attacks rake (1d4); SQ low-light vision, scent.

**Totem Spell Granted:** *cat's grace*

**COYOTE/WOLF**

Medium; Speed 50 ft.; AC +2 natural armor; Attack bite (1d6 plus trip); Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10; SQ scent.

**Totem Spell Granted:** *bloodhound*

**FOX**

Small; Speed 40 ft.; AC +2 natural armor; Attack bite (1d4); Str 13, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10; SQ low-light vision, scent.

**Totem Spell Granted:** *fox's cunning*

**OWL**

Small; Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC +1 natural armor; Attack bite (1d4), 2 talons (1d4); Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 10; SQ low-light vision.

**Totem Spell Granted:** *owl's wisdom*

**SNAKE**

Small; Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC +2 natural armor; Attack bite (1d3 plus poison); Str 8, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 6; Special Attacks poison (Frequency 1 round (6), Effect 1 Con damage, Cure 1 save, Con-based DC); SQ low-light vision, scent.

**Totem Spell Granted:** *delay poison* Ω



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# DAUGHTERS OF LILITH

*An Ecology of the Succubus*

By Sersa Victory  
Art by Claudio Pozas

It is my sincerest hope that the Academy chooses to publish this manuscript, as the lengths to which the esteemed wizard Oziel went to recover its primary sources were considerable and costly. Chief among these sources are the first complete translation of the infamous *Crimson Codex*, six of the sought-after *Flesh Scrolls of the Horned Seer*, and—perhaps most revealing—the preserved carcass of a succubus discovered in a haunted place that even Oziel dares not recount.

This manuscript aims to illuminate the origin, physiology, psychology, social organization, and machinations of the succubus devil. While much has been written on this subject over the course of the century, the insights gleaned from such newly unearthed sources are invaluable and enjoy a credibility to which previous writings could not lay claim.

## DAUGHTERS OF LILITH

Two competing accounts describe the succubus' origin. The first is rather well-known and widely accepted, having been expertly articulated in tomes mythologist Benedict Cedany and demonologist Terryn Isolde penned, most recently (and comprehensively) *The Origin of Demons, Devils, and Other Vile Planar Creatures*.

In this telling, the first succubus was one of the six daughters of Lilith, the first human woman the gods created. For epochs, Lilith dwelled in the Exalted Domain, along with her husband and brother Alu, the first man. Alu and the gods expected Lilith to be subservient, but she refused, defying them both in a “fascinating and vulgar display of wordplay and exhibitionism.” After copulating with no less than a hundred angels, Lilith was banished from the Exalted Domain

and pursued into the Eternal Wastes. Servants of the Exalted Domain eventually apprehended her and put her to the spear, but not before she had borne six daughters whom the gods later cursed.

Cedany and Isolde's *Origin* posits the succubus Malcanthet as the second daughter born to Lilith—a hypothesis confirmed in the *Flesh Scrolls*. Malcanthet is said to count the lilitu, the lamia, the medusa, and the dreaded marilith among her siblings. Her sixth sister yet remains unknown.

In contrast to this tale of betrayal and condemnation, the *Crimson Codex* and *Flesh Scrolls* paint Lilith as a heroic figure spawned of Alu's repressed carnal desire. Lilith reveled in the upheaval she brought to the Exalted Domain, confounding divine plans and perverting the stilted morality the gods inflicted upon their subjects.

Whereas *Origin* casts Lilith as a scourge rightfully brought to justice, these astral texts commemorate her as a champion of liberty laid low by tyrannical, fearful, and prudish gods. This latter telling of the succubus' origin bears a striking similarity to the myth recounted by the recently uncovered Cult of Malcanthet described later in this manuscript.

### PERFECT BODY

Popular images accurately depict the succubus as a voluptuous, vivacious human woman with devil's horns and bat wings. The beauty and sensuality of a succubus are so profound that a mere glimpse has driven many a pious and celibate mortal to debauchery. Oziel's experiments on the creature's cadaver revealed that—despite the succubus's well-observed ability to shapeshift—this *human* form is, indeed, the being's natural state.

This being said, a succubus visiting the mortal realm typically alters its appearance to appeal to her victims' conception of beauty. For instance, archival research conducted by my assistants has divulged that, among the elves, succubi wear modest vestments and azure veils reminiscent of their goddess of magic, while the dwarves insist the succubus's true form is that of a stout woman loosened by stouter ale.

### AGING

According to the *Crimson Codex*, a succubus reaches maturity in 55 years, after which point, her body ceases to change, and she becomes immortal. Though the length of adolescence far exceeds earlier estimates, the immortality of the succubus should be uncontroversial; among alchemists, "succubus blood" has long been an alleged ingredient in the youth oils and libido tonics proffered at celebratory festivals throughout the empire.

### VISCERA

Succubi share many of the same organs as humans, though their lack of a stomach and bowels confirms they have no need to eat. Also, succubi do not

sleep, though the *Flesh Scrolls* speculate they often enter a self-imposed stasis (similar to hibernation) in the mortal realm for decades, biding their years until a suitable young victim (such as a newborn prince) comes of age.

Most significantly—and in a long-overdue refutation to G. Gladwyn's hysterical tract *The Coming Menace of the Devil-Children*—with few exceptions, succubi do not possess a womb and cannot reproduce. Instead, their pelvises conceal a hollow cavity which, according to the *Flesh Scrolls*, stores the semen of their mortal lovers. They return this seed to the Hells, where either an incubus (who produces no seed of its own) claims it, or the succubi deposit it into the Slough of Fertility, an endless river churning with the ejaculate of innumerable mortals, and where succubi bathe to preserve their eternal youth.

Additionally, although the infernal texts do not mention it, Oziel claims succubi secrete a lubricant allowing them to delay or sustain their victim's orgasm indefinitely. While this may seem titillating, Oziel insists that it is "far less appealing to the victim than it sounds."

### MIND & PERSONALITY

One may be surprised to learn that succubi are not inherently born creatures of lust and deceit. Rather, as the *Crimson Codex* details, succubi are born much like normal humans, but after a grueling and violent adolescence, they blossom into the creatures we mortals dread. I cover this in the section regarding their adolescence below.

### ARTICULATE, EMPATHETIC, AND ARTISTIC

The succubus is unmatched in her capacity for intuition, conversation, and learning. Among devils, the phrase "tongue of the succubus" refers to one who is particularly persuasive or seductive—and dangerous. This sentiment is mirrored in our own culture, which has a lamentable history of sending many well-spoken women to the gibbet on the merest suspicion of

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## Remarks on the Incubus

Though they are fully one-third of the children born to womb-mothers, incubi (the succubus' male counterpart) are notably under-represented in the mythology of our empire—and the infernal texts continue this tradition.

From what little could be gathered from the *Crimson Codex*, incubi are nearly identical to their succubi sisters, enduring the same adolescent trials and serving their lords in the same capacity. Unless he is the first born to a womb-mother, an incubus produces no sperm and must claim it from a succubus or within the Slough of Fertility.

Incubi are associated with the nocturnal seduction of women, and the evidence supports this. A succubus claims the seed of a mortal man and delivers it to an incubus, who in turn uses it to inseminate a mortal woman.

Despite being wholly similar to succubi, incubi rarely advance to positions of power in the Hells and play only minor roles in the worship of the Queen of Succubi. The reason for such is not clear, though it is implied that incubi share in the essence of ancient Alu, whom all succubi revile.

being a succubus. The charge is all too often entirely spurious.

Succubi harbor a deep appreciation for art and literature, particularly that which is grotesque or erotic. The den of a succubus is often appointed with banned tomes, scandalous paintings, and satirical sheet music from many lands. Unusual is the succubus who does not have some incredible artistic talent of her own, and many famous operas, plays, and works of fiction are said to spill from an infernal pen. Moving in these circles may provide ready access to high-born victims.

### PURPOSEFUL AND PROUD

In spite of their lusty demeanor, succubi are calculating, manipulative,

and rarely impulsive. They prefer subterfuge to overt violence, and most succubi flee from battle at the first reversal. They are also verbose, arrogant, and intolerant of suggestions or dissent from those serving them. The creatures never admit to being wrong, and their many grudges endure for centuries—even beyond the target of their ire's death.

### COMPETITIVE

As far as devils are concerned, succubi are somewhat rare and, as such, are highly competitive and fiercely independent. Some succubi to go their entire adult lives without meeting another of their species, and in those rare instances when they do, the succubi trade insults and threats.

When two succubi discover they are both infiltrating the same mortal culture, they do not confront one another directly. Rather, a protracted game of superiority unfolds (*comsellh toltorgi*, or “to encircle with her lovers”), with each succubus using her mortal thralls as bargaining chips and pawns. Of note, the *Crimson Codex* claims the empire's largest city-state was a clever invention of two succubi twins' vie for power.

While succubi view mortals as mere playthings for their own selfish ends, succubi do harbor an affection for and fascination with humans, who seem driven to copulate and procreate despite numerous disincentives. This may explain why succubi prefer the company of humans over all other races; but, it could just as easily be explained by the ease with which humans succumb to temptation.

### BIRTH, ADOLESCENCE & MATING

Succubi are born to womb-mothers, rare and powerful succubi capable of childbirth. Succubi siblings are born in sets of three to nine—giving birth to only one is an omen of a great devil's downfall.

On the first night of a succubus's life, she is swaddled in flesh and placed with her newborn brothers and sisters into the hollowed-out ribcage of a mummified pit

fiend in a ritual called *donasdogama*. The fiend's chest is then sealed, and the entire corpse is lowered onto a bed of coals. By the next night, the womb-mother reclaims those children surviving their mummy crucible.

As both the *Crimson Codex* and *Flesh Scrolls* explain, the first succubus born to a womb-mother has a functioning womb herself, and thus receives the most attention from her mother. Rivalry between sister succubi is fierce, but the *Crimson Codex* indicates the womb-mother severely punishes her children for such violence. Perhaps a succubus' aversion to direct conflict stems from such corrective behavior.

### CHILDHOOD

Despite the brutality and viciousness of any life in the Hells, the succubi's early life is sheltered and regal. For three decades, they receive schooling in the art, culture, history, and etiquette of every mortal society, even those long since expired to dust. The devil tutors steal many of the artifacts and texts used during this instruction from the Material Plane—the *Flesh Scrolls* claim devils have pilfered up half of all the lost art, books, and other cultural relics of the mortal realm in service to a womb-mother.

In addition to this formal education, succubi learn to socialize, and they must memorize hundreds of ceremonies, rituals, and dances. Young succubi are forced to eat and drink at mock banquets, an intolerably painful activity for them since they lack any means to digest food (most is regurgitated after the event). On reaching maturity, they overcome the pain caused by food consumption.

By contrast, succubi children greatly enjoy human dancing and theatre, so much so that succubi celebrate their birth night with a masquerade (they are the only devils known to commemorate their birth). Such occasions afford them permission to travel to the mortal world alone; in this case, to kidnap boys and girls as guests of the masque.

While they return these children at the end of the evening, the succubi

often grow attached to them, and frequently visit them on the Material Plane forever after. As one passage in the *Flesh Scrolls* remarks, succubi surely account for many of the imaginary friends and idyllic childhood romances human children experience.

### ADOLESCENCE

With the onset of adolescence, the succubi's lives become truly harrowing. Devil lords remove them without warning from their mothers, and have them brought to an iron stronghold, where the young succubi are subjected to a quarter-century of bondage, torture, and forced coitus with their lords, enslaved mortals, imprisoned devils, and even one another. The details are hideous and do not bear scholarly study.

The capstone of such trials is the *dlāsod*, a test in which a succubus is magically blinded and is then crucified on the outer walls of the City of Brass and left to the mercies of passersby. Learning to tolerate and command this public attention allows the succubus to marshal enough strength to free herself—or the wiles to manipulate strangers into granting her freedom.

During this development period, succubi manifest the characteristics normally thought to define them—malice, disobedience, and boundless lust. Since these attributes appear learned, it stands to reason that not all succubi embrace this destiny; however, neither the *Crimson Codex* nor the *Flesh Scrolls* record the fates of succubi failing these trials.

### MATING

As most succubi cannot bear children of their own (only womb-mothers), they do not mate in the common sense of the term. Despite this, they fornicate constantly, and in rare instances, they enter into an *obzapala* (“triad”) with two other devils or demons, usually kytons, molydei, or balors. The *obzapala* can be loosely described as a romantic arrangement marked by a fidelity that is peculiar for devils. Each member may initiate coitus with only

one other partner, a tradition that presumably maintains the stability of the triad. One supposes, the *obzapala* offers a protective or political benefit to its participants.

The womb-bearing succubus is the only creature in the metaverse capable of reproducing with any other being, male or female, mortal or otherwise. Succubi most often bear the children of their overlords; however, succubi delight in taking demons as paramours. The child of a succubus is always a succubus or incubus, with one exception: the children of succubi sired by mortals are invariably born tieflings.

Very few womb-mothers choose to mate with mortals. However, when they do so, they enslave or murder the mortal after fertilization. Also, a few rare succubi have chosen two human mates to complete their *obzapala*. The *Crimson Codex* warns that a succubus giving birth to a mortal child on the Material Plane could render the entire plane infertile—no evidence is offered for this assertion.

Succubi and incubi never procreate with one another.

### CHILDBIRTH

Succubus childbirth is a terrifying ordeal requiring the expenditure of many souls. When she goes into labor, a womb-mother travels with her mate to a birthing den, where a demilich doula awaits. The birthing process takes six weeks, and when completed the womb-mother generally kills her mate to nourish the infant devils with its carcass. Her servants seal the afterbirth in brass jars to be used as an aphrodisiac by the devils the womb-mother serves or those she finds worthy of the gift. Legends claim any mortal who so much as smells the afterbirth suffers a fatal seizure-like orgasm, and dies within seconds.

### SOCIETY & MACHINATIONS

Because succubi are quite rare

and do not reproduce in significant numbers, they have no proper society to speak of. They are contemptuous of infernal politics and seek to ignore or undermine them at every opportunity.

### RELIGION

Despite this, all succubi worship the Queen of Succubi, Daughter of Lilith, a succubus of deific stature who rules from a blighted paradise in the Hells known as Chorcana (“Black Eden”). There, she dwells with Red Shroud and Mistress Vivyka, her daughters and primary lovers.

The Queen of Succubi claims the title of the single most beautiful—and duplicitous—creature in the entire metaverse. Though common sense suggests this is exaggeration, the





## Five Succubus-Themed Adventure Hooks

- One of the emperor's advisers is a succubus. The PCs must reveal the succubus and banish her to the underworld. If they accuse the wrong adviser, however, they hang for treason.
- The PCs encounter an adolescent succubus who fled the Hells before she could be subjected to the *dlāsod*. She asks for their help in finding an artifact hidden in a catacomb that will spell the destruction of a mutual infernal enemy.
- The PCs must prevent a succubus queen from giving birth to a child in the mortal realm. If she is not stopped, the birth will render all living things sterile.
- A lackluster intimate life threatens to destroy a crucial arranged marriage between young nobles. Only the succubus dwelling in a nearby tower has the expertise to coach the newlyweds, and her services come at a staggering premium. Can the PCs convince her to assist? What will they have to do to procure her aid?
- A balor and his legion threaten to raze the empire unless the PCs find a suitable demilich doula for his succubus mate.

*Crimson Codex* describes her as being so preternaturally striking that her gaze enervates even the undead.

The Queen of Succubi fancies herself a goddess, and as such, she earns the ire of the greater devils who seek in vain to dominate her. She exalts sexual gratification and the needs of the self above all things, encouraging her followers to rid themselves of shame and exterminate those who would deny them pleasure or impose self-control.

Most succubi also revere Jezebel, Princess of Poison Winters (see KOBOLD

QUARTERLY #5), though invoking her name within Chorcana risks the jealous wrath of the Succubus Queen.

### CULT OF THE SUCCUBUS QUEEN

First described in the oral testimony of Captain Titus Melgan during the Winter Crusade, the Cult of the Succubus Queen is a scattered cabal of libertines and prostitutes who gather in the worship of Mother Lust. Her devotees, as one might expect, seek to undermine the chaste morality underlying civilization's integrity, and its members indulge in perversity and encourage the communities to partake.

Unfortunately, if Sir Melgan's witness is to be believed, a great many imperial men and women willingly avail themselves of the cult's so-called services, paying fortunes for masked orgies, incestuous marriages, and instruction in the act of self-gratification.

Before undertaking my research, I might have dismissed the cult as one of many corrupting institutions—bothersome, but ultimately mundane. However, given the startling accuracies between the cult's appalling scriptures and the lore detailed in the infernal texts, I am compelled to conclude they act in cooperation with succubi, if not personally led by them.

### WITCH GUARD AND ASHEN MIDWIVES

Confirming the regrettably unpublished hypothesis of my colleague Zoela Breslin, the *Crimson Codex* asserts the Court of the Succubus Queen is comprised of two harems of exceptional and unusual succubi.

The first such group is the witch guard, an elite legion of succubi blackguard who defend Shendilavri against the many immortals the Succubus Queen has betrayed. Unlike other succubi, witch knights revel in overt conflict, their cunning and intuition combining to make them master tacticians.

Second are the ashen midwives, a furtive harem of assassin-priestesses who burn free the wombs of pregnant succubi that the Succubus Queen

deems inferior or untrustworthy. Their wriggling uteruses are returned to The Plane of the Succubi and offered to the Queen as tribute. If the Succubus Queen feels particularly charitable, she may allow a selected midwife to carry the appropriated unborn to term.

### SOULTAKERS

While on the Material Plane, succubi have a single purpose: to seduce mortals into parting with their souls in exchange for wealth, power, and companionship.

Some succubi are content to keep a low profile, targeting only a few lonely and discontent individuals. Many, however, have grander aspirations, enacting long-term schemes to cull whole cities, states, and even empires in the name of the devil lord they serve. However, succubi are rebellious and independent by nature, and thus it is not uncommon for them to assassinate their masters and establish their own infernal citadels.

Bribery, deception, and temptation are the usual means by which succubi wield power over mortals. They shy away from the supreme heads of church and state, preferring instead to corrupt advisors, senators, chaplains, and others in a position to influence the rulers in whose shadow they toil. A succubus prefers indirect manipulation, and she measures her success in terms of how well her victims internalize her goals and desires, while maintaining the delusion of free will.

### SUCCUBI DUNGEONEERS

Recent rumor suggests some succubi have taken up the mantle of the dungeoneer. The motivation for such behavior is not understood, though one might presume they seek the thrill of danger inherent in such exploits, or they covet treasure and magical relics, both of which may aid a succubus in expanding her standing among mortals.

### DEMON SUCCUBI IN HELL

Succubi dwelling permanently in the Hells channel their progenitor Lilith, enabling insurrections and pitting overlords against one another with



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

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silent satisfaction. Succubi associate with demons frequently, and some scholars suggest the succubi are *not* truly devils, but rather demons with the aptitude to live among the cruel, hierarchal devils.

Perhaps this is the ultimate ruse. It may not be unreasonable to speculate that one day, after eons of conspiracy, the succubi will embrace their true origin and lead the seething hordes of the Abyss through the gates of Avernus. Swallowing their former masters in the maw of chaos, the succubi will cast off their infernal manacles and bring their Succubus Queen to rule over both Heaven and Hell as an unchallenged goddess.



### NEW FEAT

#### INFERNAL CONSPIRACY [DIVINITY]

Those devoted to the Succubus Queen are blessed with her beauty and the devotion of her daughters.

**Prerequisite:** Charisma 15, Channel Divinity class feature, must worship the Queen of Succubi

**Benefit:** You gain the power Succubus Seduction and the Infernal Conspiracy gambit.

### NEW POWERS

#### SUCCUBUS SEDUCTION

Feat Utility

*You gaze into the eyes of an oncoming enemy, and your supernatural beauty transforms malice into crippling desire.*

**Encounter \* Channel Divinity, Charm, Divine**

**Immediate Interrupt Close Blast 5**

**Trigger:** An enemy within 5 squares of you targets you with an attack.

**Target:** The triggering creature in the blast

**Effect:** The target is weakened and cannot attack you until the end of its next turn. This effect immediately ends if you attack the target.

**Special:** You can only use one channel divinity power per encounter.

#### INFERNAL CONSPIRACY

Feat Gambit

*When the king turns his back, his advisor smiles, blows you a kiss, and traces a*

*pentagram in the air with her finger.*

**Power:** No Action. Use this gambit when you encounter a humanoid NPC of your level or lower for the first time. You may not use this gambit in combat, and you must not have previously known of this NPC. The NPC just so happens to be a disguised succubus faithful to the Queen of Succubi. The succubus is loyal to you and your allies, and offers you information, safe passage, companionship, or any other boons appropriate to the situation.

**Special:** You may only use this gambit once per tier.

### NEW MONSTER POWERS

Apply the powers below to a succubus to make her a more flavorful and challenging enemy. Alternatively, you might add one or two of these powers to standard monsters serving as the succubus' handmaidens and bodyguards.

#### TRAITS

#### MESMERIZING BEAUTY (CHARM) \* AURA 2

While in the aura, enemies that can see this creature grant combat advantage and take a -2 penalty to Will.

#### STANDARD ACTIONS

❖ Cursed Embrace (charm, reliable) \* Encounter

**Effect:** This creature makes a melee basic attack. On a hit, the target gains the curse of uncontrollable lust (stage 1).

#### MOVE ACTIONS

☚ Come Hither (charm) \* Encounter

**Attack:** Close blast 10 (one creature in the blast); level + 3 vs. Will

**Hit:** The target is pulled up to 5 squares and dazed until the end of this creature's next turn.

**Miss:** This creature marks the target until the end of its next turn.

**Effect:** This creature shifts up to a number of squares equal to its speed.

#### TRIGGERED ACTIONS

#### Prolonged Infatuation (charm) \* Encounter

**Trigger:** An enemy within 5 squares makes a successful saving throw against being dominated.

**Effect:** The triggering enemy is

dominated until the end of its next turn.

**Curse of Uncontrollable Lust**

Variable Level Curse

*With a brush of her fingers and a slow kiss, the succubus awakens within you a carnal desire that the gods never meant mortals to know.*

When a creature first gains this curse, one of his or her allies (randomly determined) becomes the object of his affection. That ally becomes the recipient of the target's incessant fawning—even during battle—and thus grants combat advantage as long as the curse remains active.

**Stage 0:** The curse is dormant.

**Stage 1:** While affected by stage 1, when the target is more than 5 squares away from the object of his affection, he grants combat advantage.

**Stage 2:** While affected by stage 2, the target is affected by stage 1, and if the target does not end his turn adjacent to the object of his affection, he is dazed and weakened until the end of his next turn.

**Stage 3:** While affected by stage 3, the target is affected by stages 1 and 2. If the object of the target's affection falls unconscious, the target becomes helpless (save ends). If the object of the target's affection dies, the target immediately commits suicide.

**Check:** At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Arcana check.

*Lower than Easy DC:* The stage of the curse increases by one.

*Easy DC:* No change.

*Moderate DC:* The stage of the curse decreases by one (if at stage 0, there is no change).

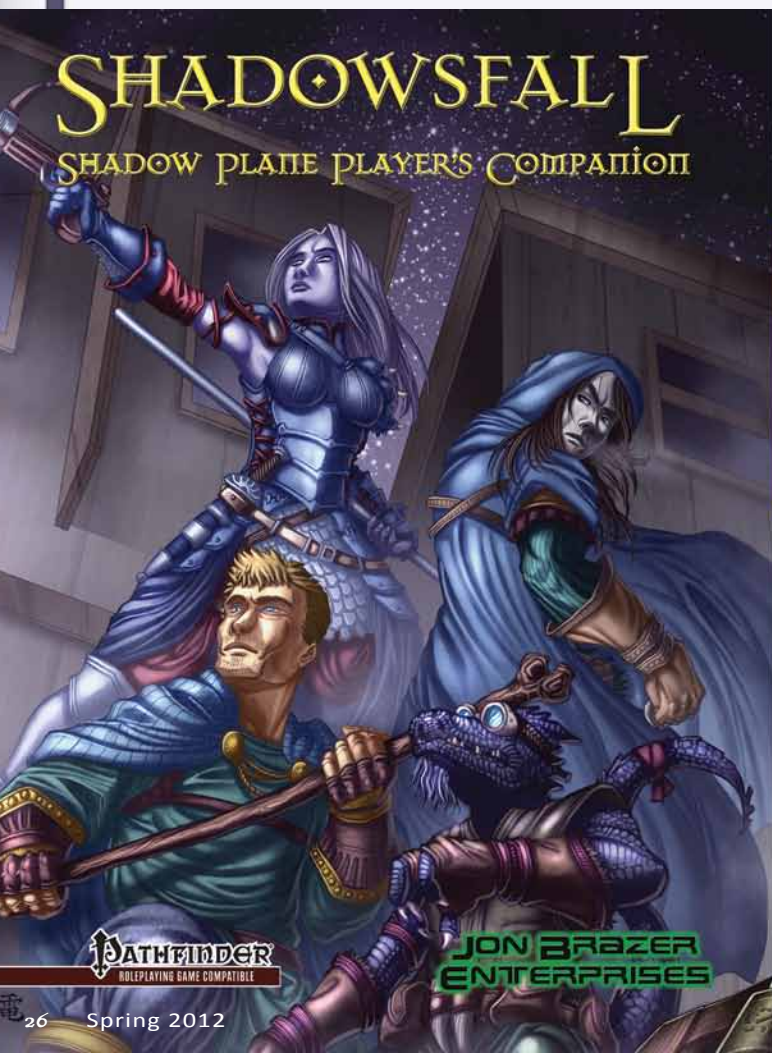
**Roleplaying the Curse:** At stage 1, the target's desire manifests itself as playful flirting and frequent compliments. During stages 2 and 3, however, the target becomes obsessive and dependent, constantly seeking approval from and making vulgar advances toward the object of his affection.

**Lifting the Curse:** Bathe for an hour in a tub of frigid holy water (heroic tier), eat blighted fruit from the Orchard of Adulterers and Widows (paragon tier), copulate with the Queen of Succubi (epic tier).

**SCHOLAR'S VERDICT AND CONCLUSION**

Despite my assurances that such creatures would not be difficult to control, the Oracular Circle has rejected my petition to commune with the lesser beings described in the *Flesh Scrolls*. Moreover, I am loath to send Oziel on another expedition, as I suspect the fiends he formerly observed have taken hold of his spirit more than he is willing to concede.

If this manuscript demonstrates anything with confidence, it is that the infernal menace has penetrated mortal society far more deeply than we have feared, corrupting even our sons and daughters with jubilant ease. We must not allow ourselves to remain blind to the succubus threat, and the knowledge unearthed in my research is only the first brick in the martial and moral redoubts we as an empire must erect. Ω



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# It's a Mystery!

By David "Zeb" Cook  
Art by Emile Denis and Jeremy Mohler



Do your players greet your religions with a yawn? Are your temples predictable? Do your powers of description fail whenever the party interrupts a temple's solemn service?

*"You've managed to slip in unnoticed while the priest is leading the ritual."*

*"What's happening?"*

*"Umm... A priest's standing in front of a statue on an altar, and he's chanting. The rest of the worshippers are watching him."*

*"Okay, it's another priest in funny robes waving his hands in front of a big statue. We've seen this before. Let's stop him... because we all know what happens next."*

You sigh and ponder: Whatever happened to the wonder of such scenes? Where did the majesty go? The thrill of the unexpected? The mystery?

Fortunately, there is a cure for this. It comes straight from myth and legend, and yet it's firmly grounded in the world's ancient history. It is both known and documented, but its details remain cloaked in superstition and guesswork. In other words, it's real enough to fit into a campaign setting, while still being fantastical enough to provide the catalyst for strange and wonderful adventures. What am I referring to? Why, the ancient tradition of mystery cults, of course.

On the surface, a mystery cult is quite simple. It is a group of believers who practice secret rituals to worship their god or goddess. The key word here is *secret*, thus the *mystery* of mystery cults. Now, that may sound like any given campaign's batch of evil cultists, whose clandestine cults are littered around most fantasy settings. So what's so wonderful about that, you rightfully ask? Here's the thing: You can get more mystery out of your mystery cult by digging into the whys and wherefores of them, and that means delving into some history and sociology. Fortunately, you just need a

little knowledge—no Ph.D.'s worth of studying is required!

## HISTORICAL MYSTERY CULTS

Historically, the best-known mystery cults have their roots in ancient Greece and Rome. Among the most well-recorded were the Greek Eleusinian, Dionysian, and Orphic mysteries and the Roman cults of various eastern gods – Isis, Mithras, and a few others. These weren't *secret* societies in that nobody knew about them. On the contrary, writers of the time provided most of the information we have about them, and archaeologists filled in the gaps. A quick Internet search will uncover several sites about them, ranging from scholarly PDFs to New Age sappiness... and worse. (Consider yourself warned).

So, although they are called mystery cults, it wasn't because their worshippers hid their membership. Instead, the *mystery* surrounded the specifics of the rituals they performed. Only those initiated into the cult learned and took part in the rites. So while a fair amount is known about the cult of Dionysus or the Eleusinian Mysteries, the nature of their ceremonial rites remains guesswork. For this reason, all the scholarly research about them becomes, at some point, pure conjecture.

In ancient times, the mystery cult was simply part of the community's everyday fabric. As a way to describe this, scholars divide religious worship of the time between public (or state) religion and personal religion. *Public* religion was the official stuff—big temples with organized priest hierarchies and the like—that everyone was expected to belong to. The holy festivals, sacrifices, and prayers of these temples involved everyone in the city or community.

The other stuff, the *personal* religion, is the meat of mystery cults. People could join whatever cult they wanted, and there was no *official* role for these organizations. Being a member was more like an extracurricular activity in today's terms, and a person could

join several different mystery cults – although this could prove tricky if their goals opposed or competed with one another.

In gaming terms, a game setting's public religions, the *official* ones, are the standard temples with their attending clerics—say a temple to Athena in a setting using Greek traditions. Such public religions include even the dark gods the orcs venerate, as well as the gods other non-humans worship. These public religions hold services for the good of the community or the health of the tribe. At the same time, the setting's mystery cults are more akin to joining a secretive club to gain certain benefits. For example, Kleitos the Grocer joins a mystery cult because he's looking for extra good luck, fortune, and influential friends. Adventuring types may be interested in pledging membership to gain divine favor, or, as outlined below, for more nefarious reasons.

## HOW TO DESIGN A MYSTERY CULT

Adding a mystery cult or two to a campaign is a good way to add variety to those anonymous high priests, blank temple facades, and stereotypical holy days. On top of that, they can be a great source for adventure. After all, nothing gets the pot boiling like a little mystery.

Creating a mystery cult doesn't have to be a difficult thing; all it takes is a little planning. Who (or what) is the object of the cult? Why does the cult exist? What do they do? How do player characters join – if they can at all? Creating the answers to these four simple questions should provide more than enough ideas for multiple adventures.

### 1. WHO-OR WHAT?

The first question is the easiest: What is the cult's object of worship? Most often this should be an existing deity in your campaign. While any god or goddess can have a mystery cult associated with them, they are most common for very

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old gods or very new ones. If worship has been long established, the mystery cult emerges from all the tradition, legends, customs, and quirks that time helps accumulate.

Alternatively, if the religion is new to the area, the *mystery* of the mystery cult can attract worshippers dissatisfied with their current choices. Decadent, dying, and minor religions are all other good choices. Decadent ones offer more interesting adventure possibilities, while dying religions work effectively because the mystery cult becomes a kind of a last-ditch attempt to keep the god's memory alive. Minor religions suit because they don't usually have all the obligations of an official religion, and, therefore, they can experiment with their ceremonies and do things a little differently.

A mystery cult doesn't have to be about a god; it can instead be about a philosophy or an ideal. A cult seeking enlightenment through stoicism (or debauchery!) might embrace several related deities as part of its rites. The Orphic Mysteries of Greece (which apparently involved purification of the soul through rebirth) called on Dionysus and Persephone, deities of fertility, wine, and rebirth as part of its rites. So a mystery cult might promise a "conquest" of death, offer the rules for leading a just life, provide a path to divine power, or allow a perfect communion with all nature rather than assure worshippers the grace of a particular god.

Clearly though, the choice of god (or philosophy) initially defines the cult. The cult of the Wolf Warriors of Wotan (as god of battle) isn't likely to be contemplating the wonders of nature as its purpose in life, after all. They're going to contemplate savage war.

## 2. WHAT'S THE GOAL?

With the who or what answered, it's time to choose a goal. Basically, why is the cult mysterious, and what are they trying to accomplish? This is where the cult's real adventure hooks take shape, as the choices you make here determine the challenges the PCs may face and the rewards they may gain.

### MYSTERY AS TEMPORAL POWER

The simplest goal is power—not in the next world, not through rewards in the afterlife, but simple power in the here and now. This is the easiest motive to use when building adventure hooks. While power can take many forms, its appeal is certainly easy to understand.

Because the mystery cult has goals in the real world, its members can often seem like a secret society of schemers. However, a mystery cult is not a group of Masons with a secret handshake and a funny password. They seek divine enlightenment to guide their actions and to give them the power to overcome their obstacles, whether those difficulties are mortal enemies or life's everyday difficulties.

**The Old Ways:** The nobles of the city support a mystery cult that seeks to maintain the "old ways" of a fading religion – the city's god now being eclipsed by new beliefs. The cult wants to keep the old traditions alive, as these traditions have, over the ages, ensured its followers positions of power. The new ways threaten the nobles' dominant grip in their community, and they pray for the divine power to crush their enemies and rivals.

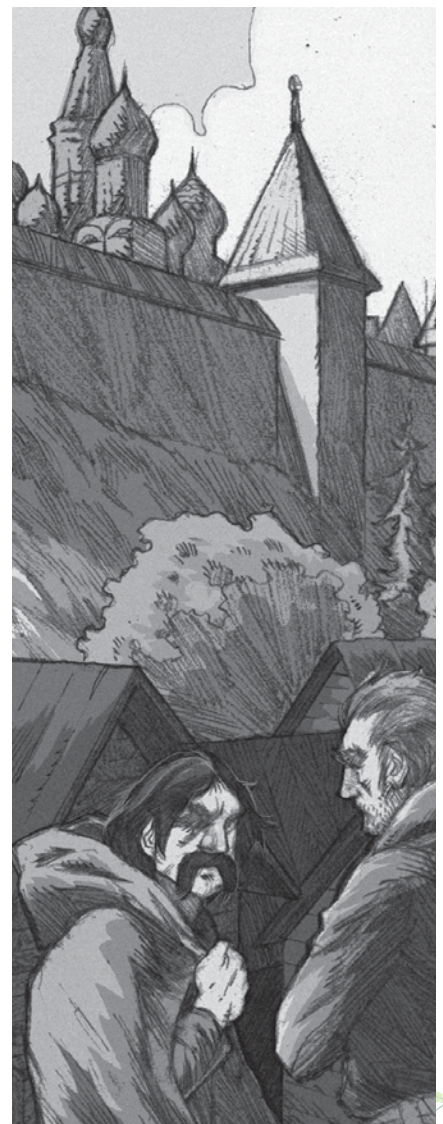
This kind of cult is grimly conservative, and is hostile to new ideas. Their secret rites reinforce the idea that worshippers are elite and special—and most of all—right in all things. Newcomers, outsiders, and upstarts are potential threats to their power. Such a group might include vigilantes and witch-hunters who seize heretics for secret trials and purification (i.e., torture) as part of their rituals. The mystery cult might provide the "old" families with the justification and tools needed to take down nouveau-riche threats to their status and influence. Not surprisingly, the cult has rigid restrictions on membership, especially for the true initiates.

**Cult of Commerce:** A mystery cult for the god of commerce might include aspiring merchants and tradesmen in the town who simply hope to be blessed with extra fortune, more business, and the opportunity to make

useful business connections.

Of course, there is always the chance for trouble when two business rivals strive for the same good fortune. Adventurers may suddenly be useful to the cult to ensure one of the competing businessmen fails to properly observe the secret rituals needed to gain the god's favor. To succeed in this task, the player characters must learn what those rituals are to know how to effectively sabotage them.

**The Slaves' Mystery:** In an oppressive society, slaves turn to the mystery cult of their homeland as a means to acquire freedom from their masters. Through the cult's practices, they seek freedom in this world or the next. Their secret rites inspire acts of rebellion and sabotage, as their god's divine power possesses them to perform



such feats. The masters want the cult crushed and the leaders revealed to them. Do the player characters join the rebellion, or do they hunt down the cult's ringleaders? And if they chose the latter, how do they fight the power of a god?

#### MYSTERY AS KNOWLEDGE

This type of mystery cult typically seeks forbidden knowledge, the "secrets man was not meant to know." Its members might do so for power (see above), enlightenment of the spirit, obtainment of a small portion of the god's power, or for internment of that god on earth. The



knowledge sought is not that simply found in books or unearthed in ancient crypts. It comes from esoteric practices requiring years of training and ritual to unlock, such as learning how to read the secrets of perfumed smokes; translating the flights of birds; or learning to write the divine alphabet, where vast knowledge is contained in the curves of a single letter. Not surprisingly, given the obsessive and demanding nature of the work, such cults tend to be small and favored by wizards, sages, and monks, as well as the deranged.

**Mystery of Magic:** The mystery cult of a deity of magic will naturally favor wizards of all sorts, though more rational-minded ones find the whole idea a foolish waste of time. Nonetheless, these "dreamers" may gather to intone secret chants on nights when the planets are aligned perfectly. Members may even practice in isolation as shut-ins in their studies or as hermits in the mountains, where they can fully devote themselves to their god and rarely, if ever, meet another follower of their cult.

Cult members may do all these things in search of pure truth, the grand understanding of everything, or even transfiguration into the divine. The path to such knowledge is difficult and hard, so there are always those looking for a shortcut to that same enlightenment. If only they knew what was done in those secret rituals, they would certainly learn the answer they seek!

**Secret Knowledge:** A lay cult for everyday citizens may seek to spread enlightenment through knowledge and instruction. The knowledge must be taught in secret – without proper instruction and guidance, the great insights are corrupt and useless. In other words, "If everyone knew what we know, they would simply misunderstand and abuse it."

Such mystery cults are usually harmless unless their need for secrecy causes them to take extreme measures against those who no longer follow their ways. And, of course, there are

always those—like avaricious wizards or suspicious priests—willing to pay for their secret knowledge.

**Mystery of Rebirth:** The mystery cult of a dead god's followers pursues the literal secrets man was not meant to know in order to resurrect their deity. This deity is naturally something awful, horrible, and elder, a god so alien that its return would threaten mankind's existence. The mystery cult is led, naturally, by a mad genius who has deceived his followers into believing they are bringing about a wondrous new age for mankind. If those outside the mystery cult knew what the cultists were up to, they would take great efforts to stop him. In this case, what the cult is up to is quite literally a mystery.

#### MYSTERY AS PROTECTORS

Just as there are mystery cults trying to bring about the end of the world, there are others just as determined to save the world. These mystery cults exist to make sure key rituals are observed to:

- A) Keep a terrible evil safely locked away forever.
- B) Keep a terrible evil appeased, so it leaves them alone.
- C) Strengthen a deity in its constant celestial battle against a terrible evil.
- D) Ensure terrible secrets man was not meant to know stay secret.
- E) All of the above and more.

The cult could keep its rituals secret for a variety of reasons, but it most likely does so because exposure would give its enemy (the terrible evil) the information needed to eradicate it. Cults of this nature also tend to be far more secretive about everything: Where they meet, why they meet, who goes to the meetings, and even who they revere are things they are not likely to discuss. After all, they are engaged in a covert war to protect the rest of mankind, and they can trust no one outside their inner circle.

- The mystery cult's secret rites invoke the power of a fertility goddess to keep the minions of death at bay. This means more

than ensuring a good harvest, for if the cult fails to keep the favor of the goddess, the barriers to the kingdom of death will fall, and nightmarish horrors will overrun the land. It's not just that crops will fail, it's that an eternal darkness of cold and gloom will settle over the land until everything living withers and dies. Because active agents of the death god stalk them, the cult must keep its rites mysterious and secret to avoid detection.

- The cult exists in a world that seems safe and secure. The gods have their proper places and are venerated by everyday folk. Everything seems as it should be. However, the truth is the gods are weaker than known and are under threat from elder forces even greater than they. Were this common knowledge, it could lead to despair and chaos among the people. The cult exists to ensure that select true believers can aid their god in times of weakness. Only the highest initiates of the mystery cult know this secret, and it is their purpose to aid their gods in fighting these enemies. Clearly, stout-hearted, pious adventurers seasoned at facing horror and death would be a great asset to such a cult. Just as true, corrupt individuals would be of great use to elder forces in bringing about the fall of the cult and its protectors.
- The mystery cult is a small local group charged with observing specific rituals in order to keep the wards strong on an ancient tomb. Inside rests a vampire lich, sealed away by a long-dead high priest. To guarantee the tomb remains sealed, the priest created the cult to serve his god and to keep the seals refreshed and intact. By faithfully discharging their duties, the initiates gain favor in the next life. The cult keeps its practices secret as a precaution against tomb robbers or foolish adventurers who hope

to earn fame and glory. Of course, the mystery cult is surrounded by rumors that they are hiding a fabulous treasure hoard or an artifact of fantastic power.

#### MYSTERY AS DIVINE POWER

By far, this is the most common reason a mystery cult exists: To offer a deity special veneration in return for divine favor, whether in this world or the next. The mystery of the cult is not the rites that are its path and practice (although these are secret). The true mystery is the nature of the divine itself – it cannot be explained in words or simply by watching a priest performing at the altar. Trying to reach the divine without observing the cult's rituals only leads to failure and misunderstanding, or possibly even to madness or death. Understanding the divine can only be done by experiencing it, and the only way to experience it is to take part in the cult's secret rites. In ancient Greece, the mystery cults of Dionysus involved wild dancing, wine, and sex to reach a divine passion and communion with their god. It also led to unfortunate results of madness, riot, and murder when the rites got out of control. Even the most basic dealings with gods are not without risk!

- The mystery cult is a classic “Orphic” group. The followers meet at a sacred grove and perform wild rituals to bring about the perfect state to allow their god to possess them. However, being possessed by a god has its drawbacks. Those possessed may go permanently mad or embark on a murderous rampage – after all, who can predict the whims of a god? However, followers who succeed (and survive) can be imbued thereafter with divine power and understanding, making the reward worth the risk. Of course, the local lord may have other ideas about the value of madmen, raving rioters, and divinely-powered peasants roaming the countryside. In fact,

he might really want to suppress such a group, if only he can find someone foolish enough to try.

- The mystery cult lives in an isolated monastery far from contact with civilization. Here the worshippers come to perform the rigorous purification mysteries to become one with their god. Those successfully preserving through the arduous task may venture into the world to lead others to the true glory, or they may remain in seclusion to contemplate their god. In any case, rumors abound about a trove of great wealth and great power within the monastery, just lying in wait for anyone arrogant enough to attempt to seize them.
- The mystery cult is well-known, not hidden or isolated in any way. Common citizens are members, and through secret rituals, they find a path to inner peace and harmony, making their everyday lives better. In this, the cult is very successful, and its prosperity threatens the established order of the other temples, priests, and gods in the region. Discrediting the cult or quashing it is all possible work for adventurers. Doing so does not come without risks from enraged worshippers and displeased gods, though.

### 3. JOINING

For any mystery cult, you have to join before you receive its benefits, and membership is not automatic. A character cannot just walk into the temple, say a prayer, and move on. If joining were that easy, there'd be less mystery! Joining has two requirements: You must be the “right type” of person and thus invited to join, and you must undergo an initiation.

**Invitation to Join:** The “right type” entails meeting whatever requirements the cult deems appropriate, leading to an offer to join. Some mystery cults are very forward thinking, allowing anyone



to join – men, women, slaves, elves, trolls, or whatever. Other cults may be extremely restrictive, allowing only wizards, males, females, full-blooded elves with blue eyes, or only left-handed redheads into their membership. Ultimately, the GM decides the requirements, but if the GM wants the PCs to join the cult, then the PCs must obviously meet them, or the GM must provide an option to trick or infiltrate the cult in some way. At any rate, the GM can use membership as a PC reward or challenge. The mystery cult of a god of battle such as Wotan might only accept warriors who have killed a man in battle. The mystery cult of a god of learning might allow only literate scholars with high IQs (although this creates an interesting question of how they would determine that). The cult of a goddess of sorcery might only accept females, regardless of all else. Obtaining membership alone can catalyze potential adventure hooks.

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**Initiations:** Meeting the cult's requirements is only half the battle in joining it, though. Undergoing an initiation is paramount to being fully accepted. Historically, the initiation proved the followers' worth, and it prepared them for the revelation of the mysteries to come. Initiation didn't necessarily happen immediately upon joining either. Often, time and training in more basic rituals to prove oneself might be involved before a follower was initiated into the secret mysteries.

For example, a follower might have to donate money or service to earn the rite of initiation. In a campaign, this depends on how long the PCs should be involved with the mystery cult and how difficult the process is supposed to be. As the focus of a single adventure, the initiation rite should take place fairly quickly. In a long-term campaign, the process can be drawn out to build additional adventure hooks and to ground the PCs in the world setting, meeting and impressing cult leaders and other members.

The initiation itself can range from a simple, harmless ritual to something dangerous and challenging for the PCs. Just what must be done is a secret, part of the cult's mystery. Those passing their initiation don't talk about it, or they tell imposing stories to increase the majesty of the cult. What the initiation requires depends on the cult and the GM's imagination. It should most certainly involve pomp and ritual appropriate to such an important occasion.

For example, a simple initiation may involve reciting specific charms or prayers, along with viewing sacred objects important to the cult. A more complicated one may require the PCs to undergo an examination of their faith. A truly hard initiation might demand the PCs provide a suitable sacrifice, killed by their own hands, or complete a dangerous physical challenge. The Wolf-Warrior cult of

Wotan may say that killing a man in battle is not enough; instead, they require the head of an opposing chieftain as proof the novice should learn the inner secrets. Again, the initiation process is another source of possible adventure.

## 4. THE SECRET PART

And what are those secrets only initiates know? That's the point: Nobody knows! For the GM, that means making them whatever he wants. "Congratulations! Now you know the secret handshake" might not be satisfying enough, but learning the prayers to call for a divine blessing, the rites to send oneself into a battle frenzy, or even how to shapechange into a wolf on certain holy days might be useful.

With secrets comes responsibility. Once initiated, there's no going back. The character is a member of that cult. Forever. Lapsed cultists are never popular with their fellows, and cultists who reveal a cult's secret rituals do so at a great peril. They may be shunned by others, driven from town, or even hunted by assassins seeking to silence betrayers.

This last part is an important adventure hook for characters who have to infiltrate a cult. Infiltration implies betrayal, since the characters are only pretending to join. Once they complete their treachery—revealing the mystery, stealing the magic widget, or turning over the cultist to the authorities—the PCs are going to have enemies, lots of enemies. They won't necessarily know who those enemies are—some prominent members might not be open about their affiliation. Potentially, their enemy list will include an offended god or two. And while a god might have better things to do than show up and blast the PCs for their crime, even a distracted god can make life very challenging for player characters.

And that just leads to a whole new set of possible adventures. Ω

# CLERICAL CONFLICTS

## Thy Will Be Done

By Tim & Eileen Connors

Art by Joe J. Calkins

A cleric's life is no bed of roses. At some point, he must wrestle with a difficult demand from his god, sometimes to the point of despair. Although he knows he should carry out heaven's orders without question, some commands prove difficult to follow. Commands directly opposing the cleric's personal desires challenge his commitment to his vows, fill him with deep inner conflict, and in some cases, imperil his very soul. Should he faithfully and humbly obey a command he does not agree with? Or dare he disobey, break his vows, and suffer the consequences? When darkness falls, clerics of all levels ponder these questions before drifting off to sleep.

Soul-ripping dilemmas build character, of course, and they can do the same for your PC cleric. Presenting the PC with a difficult demand of church or god can help sculpt (and resculpt) his personality. For boon, bane, or both, the PC must make a difficult decision whose consequences will irrevocably define his personality, his life, and his relationship with heaven. Overcoming (or succumbing to) the challenge adds depth to the character that bleeds into adventures, enriches the party dynamic, and deepens game immersion.

The trick is inventing a dilemma that interests the player and



challenges the PC. It must offer multiple solutions, with positive and negative consequences for each (see “Moral Choices That Matter” in *KQ* #14). It must be big enough to matter to the PC, but not so big that it undermines game balance or threatens to derail a campaign.

The following text uses a sample church’s mealtime musings to give the GM sample dilemmas meeting these requirements. Use them as-is, or as models for creating more such PC quandaries.

## THE CHOSEN ONE

Acolyte Reginald had not made eye contact with anyone since failing Cardinal Gerard’s mission to retrieve the skeletal hand of Saint Sebastian. Reginald’s brethren assumed his aversion expressed his pitiful combination of shame and humility, but they were wrong.

In the dark catacombs below the church, he indeed had captured his mission’s prize, and he had lifted the very skeletal hand from the fire, as legend said only the Chosen One could do. He’d touched Sebastian’s gold ring and felt the pulse of truth flare through his soul—that he, an unknown acolyte, was the one Sebastian prophesied about so long ago. He, Acolyte Reginald, was the Chosen One. Then his god’s command rippled through his being: “Redeem my church.” Saint Sebastian’s ominous warning followed: “Beware your superiors.” When the ecstasy faded, Sebastian whispered a final command, “Leave my hand. I give you my eyes instead.”

Reginald did as Sebastian bade him, dropping the skeletal hand back into the fire, where it crackled and disappeared. When he’d returned, Cardinal Gerard stood waiting. Where the cardinal should have been reflected bright and angelic in Reginald’s magical eyes, only a shadow wavered.

Supping on soup among his brethren, Reginald remained careful not to let the candlelight, Cardinal Gerard, or anyone else catch his eyes. Should he reveal his status as the Chosen One?

In an ideal world, the church would rejoice over his announcement. He would use his new eyes to reveal corrupt clergy at all levels. The church would expel the non-believers, and a grand reformation would begin. In such a world, the church would rally around the Chosen One, protect him, and attend his inspired words.

But Reginald knew the world was far from perfect. And his eyes could already see the corruption among the ranks. If he announced his station, he would certainly have to prove it. He imagined no-win tests contrived by those preferring him dead, including powerful cardinals who appeared as shadows in his “clearly bewitched” eyes. They would denounce Reginald as a heretic, condemn him, and hunt him down. Even honest clerics would forsake him for fear that Reginald bore a demon’s eyes.

At best, the church would splinter over the status of the Chosen One. Believers would expect him to live up to an impossible standard of virtue: incredible purity, bravery, selflessness, etc. His nosy and officious superiors would demand to know his whereabouts at all times, and his fame as the Chosen One would prevent any future privacy, as all his actions would become public knowledge. The bards who begged to accompany him on adventures would exaggerate his works toward piety or scandal to draw the most coin from an audience.

And other religions would view him as an unholy, demonic figure, and their followers would undertake holy vows to track and kill him. If they succeeded, they’d keep his eyes for the fascinating black shapes writhing within. Unscrupulous businessmen would sell his bones piecemeal, right down to his knuckles, knowing true believers would pay almost any sum for a holy relic.

No, the misery of this revelation would soon overwhelm the good. And yet...if he didn’t reveal himself, how could he carry out god’s command to redeem the church? What could he possibly accomplish as a gentle novice in the church?

His stomach turned. He saw himself dead, his eyes gouged out and nestled in the stone hands of a statue of St. Ivo, the judge of heretics.

## APPLYING THE CHOSEN ONE TO A PC

The Chosen One dilemma best suits a low-level cleric. The Chosen One gains the telling gaze special ability.

**Telling Gaze (Su):** Anyone within one foot of the Chosen One who stares into his eyes (or makes casual eye contact and succeeds on a DC 18 Perception check) notices his eyes do not reflect the world normally. Inanimate objects and living things with animal intelligence or less do not reflect at all. Beings with no relationship to the Chosen One’s deity reflect normally. Everything else reflects with a shape varying from the silhouette of a demon to the winged figure of an angel, depending on its current standing in the PC’s god’s eyes. The GM chooses the exact shape after taking into account the reflected being’s alignment, recent actions, and (in the case of a cleric) depth of faith and adherence to vows.

## FORSAKEN

Surveying the lesser clerics seated at the table, Cardinal Gerard squirmed in his seat and scowled. *How easy they have it! They should pray their god never abandons them*, he thought.

He knew the horror of being forsaken, for Cardinal Gerard could no longer feel his god’s presence, and even among these lesser clerics seated near him, Gerard felt disconnected, like a cold black spot in god’s warm house. All his attempts to commune with his deity and atone magically failed utterly, and Gerard wondered for the thousandth time what had severed his link. Did the shadow who’d raked him with an icy claw at a desecrated shrine break his connection? Did Gerard fail to live up to some unspoken expectation? Or was this a test of his commitment in preparation for some future mission of sustained separation? Gerard hoped for the latter, but a further mystery undermined that possibility.

Although Cardinal Gerard still received his domain spells and powers, he didn’t quite know where they were

coming from. They varied daily, as if stolen from another cleric altogether. Indeed, Cardinal Gerard believed that to be the case, and his theory seemed well founded. Wherever he went, rumors reached him of clerics of all religions losing spells, sometimes at critical moments. When Gerard prepared his spells, some felt tainted or corrupt in some ineffable way. And when he cast these domain spells, troubling effects warped them: corpses lied in response to his queries, summoned creatures remained overlong, and grievous wounds healed far more completely than they should at his level of experience.

This troubled Gerard, terribly, for tomorrow, he would embark on another adventure, and his party members' lives would depend on his magic. And though his domain spells often commanded greater power, he could not choose which arrived, inexplicably prepared, in his head. Should he dare cast these uncommon spells? What if they were the work of a devil? Did casting them truly steal the spell from another cleric in need? Did using them sell bits of Gerard's soul and carry him further from his god? If this was a divine test, would his god judge him by the spells he cast from an opposing domain? And would the church strip him of his title and demand a terrible atonement if it learned its god had forsaken him?

He shook his head at the unanswered questions. If only Reginald had secured the hand of Saint Sebastian and proven to be the Chosen One. Then the boy could have told Gerard what to do, but alas, the boy was not the one. Now Gerard was totally alone with his problem.

#### APPLYING "FORSAKEN" TO A PC

The Forsaken dilemma best suits a mid-level cleric. The cleric cannot prepare or cast *commune* or any other spell or effect to contact the cleric's deity or its agents. The cleric gains the steal domain special ability.

**Steal Domain (Su):** Each time the cleric prepares spells, he loses his

own domain spells and powers, and he steals the domain spells and powers from any divine caster of the GM's choosing within a mile radius. If no clerics are within that radius, no domain spells are gained. Once prepared, the cleric knows these domain spells and understands their effects, but he further classifies them as "clean" or "dirty" according to the difference between his own alignment and that of the spellcaster from which they were stolen. The cleric casts these spells with the effective alignment of the other spellcaster and at a caster level 1d4 levels above his own.

### THE RELUCTANT MARTYR

Bishop Lawton swirled his soup, spooned some to his lips, and poured it back into the bowl again. His appetite fled a fortnight ago, when an angel told him his god required his martyrdom.

A well-timed martyrdom could galvanize a nation, spike religious fervor, and change the world. As a devoted cleric of medium rank, Bishop Lawton knew he should feel honored to have been selected for this important duty. He should want to sacrifice himself publicly and proudly for his god. But he did not. Instead, he felt torn and bitter. He never expected his reward for pious living and unwavering devotion would be death, and frankly he was not done living—not now when he had finally earned the power to smite significant evils with might and magic. Why had heaven chosen this path for him?

Lawton absently spun the gold ring the angel had placed upon his hand. He again heard the angel's sweet voice: "Remove the ring only when your soul has resolved to accept martyrdom. Until then, I charge you to stay alive." Lawton smiled at the irony; last year he was charged with keeping an evil priestess alive to prevent her martyrdom and to preempt the violence that would have flared in her sect.

At least Lawton was familiar with the pattern of martyrdom, a pattern that had now begun for him. Already, rumors designed to taint his spotless public image floated through the marketplace. Temptations designed

to spoil his soul beckoned from dark corners. Enemies of the church had targeted him for death, and they sought to devalue his life before taking it. At the moment, they needn't have worried. He would not die so easily. "Saying yes" to this martyrdom request would be the single greatest challenge of his life.

For spiritual help, Bishop Lawton prayed to Saint Sebastian, the twice-martyred. Lawton imagined dying as Sebastian did, defending his friends in an epic battle against the forces of evil, sacrificing himself when all seemed lost, and exploding in a burst of holy fire that incinerated his foes and mushroomed into a roiling image of his god. Ah, if only such a dramatic and romantic end would greet Lawton, too!

Better still, if only he could return as Sebastian did. True, his god had forbidden Sebastian's resurrection, for that would have diminished the martyrdom. Sebastian's companions had successfully petitioned heaven to reincarnate him in a new body after Sebastian fought beside them as a ghost, helping them win the day. Sebastian served the church for many years thereafter, until finally his god called him to martyrdom once more.

Lawton wondered if an angel favored Saint Sebastian with a gold ring, too... and whether Sebastian could swallow his soup in the days after he donned it.

#### APPLYING "THE RELUCTANT MARTYR" TO A PC

The Reluctant Martyr dilemma best suits a mid-level cleric. When not wearing the (non-magical) gold ring gifted by an angel, the cleric gains the divine retribution special ability.

**Divine Retribution (Su):** When killed, the cleric explodes in a blinding flash of holy fire that mushrooms into the deity's image and deals 100 hp damage to all foes within 100 ft. (Reflex save for half damage, DC = 10 + 1/2 the cleric's level + Wisdom modifier). Only *reincarnation* can return the cleric from the dead.

### WERE-ANGEL

Brother Stillwell gulped the last of his soup, and wished he'd had more. He was

still ravenous. Knowing he could change at any moment, however, he scratched absently at the table and waited to be dismissed. He had to get away... soon. He didn't want to kill anyone when he metamorphosed—whether or not any of them deserved it. He already had too much blood on his hands.

Brother Stillwell's dilemma began two months ago. A six-winged angel visited him in a vision and offered him the power to serve heaven as an earthly angel of justice. The commission required a lifelong commitment and would frequently imperil his life, but it also promised an investiture of holy power, enough to smite the darkest creatures. After wrestling with the offer for a fortnight, Stillwell accepted. That regrettable decision placed him in a role unlike anything he ever imagined.

Nearly every day, he blacked out and awoke in strange places surrounded by mangled bodies. The corpses were not the demonic creatures of darkness he had envisioned battling; they were people. Some old, some young. Their screaming faces and the terrified cries of bystanders were his only recollections of the events. Was this really what his god wanted from him?

Occasionally, Stillwell killed friends and acquaintances. Less occasionally, he learned of some scandal explaining why they deserved it. He struggled to remain stoic and trust in his god, but his soul raged against his role as blind executioner. He was not an angel or an inevitable, nor could he remain a mindless tool of a vengeful god. With this commission, he had traded swathes of his free will. He awoke fatigued or exhausted, with wounds and lost spells that threatened not only his own life but the lives of those he protected, as well.

At night, nightmares of drowning in his victims' blood fractured his sleep. During the day, fresh news of the silver-eyed killer and his victims' mangled bodies nauseated him. He still didn't know exactly what he transformed into during his blackouts, but someone would surely identify him as the culprit eventually. He simply

could not do this anymore.

Brother Stillwell's prayers and pleas to escape this lifelong commitment continued to fall on deaf ears. He had no choice. If his god would not hear him, perhaps another one would.

If Stillwell renounced his vows and his allegiance, he would become an ex-cleric, stripped of his abilities and labeled a heretic. No one would trust him. As an oathbreaker, could he ever convince another god to accept him and reinstate his powers? He still wanted to dedicate his life to healing, protecting others, and fighting creatures of darkness. He just could not carry on as an angel of death.

Stillwell considered appealing to a budding church of a demigod, a rival church of similar alignment, or a church focused on a different domain altogether. Perhaps one of their gods would accept and reinstate him, if even on a trial basis. Undoubtedly, they would demand he brave holy quests to prove his new allegiance.

*Gah! What am I thinking? What would Saint Sebastian think of a worm like me?* Saint Sebastian accepted martyrdom for his church, and here Stillwell teetered on the brink of rejecting his god—all for the selfish comfort of an eased mind.

Brother Stillwell looked at his brethren sipping their soup and wondered if he would indeed kill one of them tonight.

#### APPLYING "WERE-ANGEL" TO A PC

The Were-Angel dilemma best suits a mid-level cleric. Once the cleric voluntarily accepts the angel of death commission, he blacks out at moments and periods of the GM's choosing, typically lasting between 1 hour and 3 days. During this time, the cleric gains the were-angel special ability and becomes a GM-controlled NPC.

**Were-Angel (Su):** The cleric becomes an NPC. He changes shape (within the limits of the *alter self* spell) into an angel with silver eyes and takes on some of his god's physical traits. The cleric gains the DR, immunities, resistances, SR, land speed, special qualities, feats, and spell-like abilities of a deva. The

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cleric moves quickly and purposely toward any target his god condemns to death. He attacks without warning and spends his spells and abilities without reserve. Throughout the encounter, his manner remains flat. He acts intelligently and accepts wounds stoically. When the GM terminates the were-angel special ability, the cleric returns to his normal form, loses all angelic traits, and remembers nothing except the faces and cries of his victims.

### THE DISILLUSIONED CRUSADER

Brother Kenric eyed the other priests supping at his table. Oh how he used to idolize these priests! Now, he eyed each man suspiciously, wondering how to categorize him: naïve, ambivalent, or complicit.

Kenric, himself, had been naïve until a month ago, when he discovered a curious book under a centuries-old skeleton. In the journal, the long-dead cleric confessed his part in church cover-ups, perpetrated during a formative period of the church's history. Take the tale of Saint Sebastian, for example. Infidels didn't martyr him. Not in the least. No, the church assassinated him when it became clear that Sebastian, their most charismatic evangelist, had resolved to switch fealty to another god.

After his murder, Sebastian rose as a revenant, bent on interfering with his old church and revealing his killers. When his comrades later reincarnated him, the church arranged a second—more permanent—death. To prevent *speak with dead* spells from revealing its perfidious act, the church boiled Sebastian's corpse and fed his powdered bones to the wind. Whose skeletal hand actually lay in the catacomb fires below was anyone's guess.

Kenric longed to scream the journal's many truths from the belfry, but who would believe him? How long would it take before the book went missing? Or, worse, before he did? No longer in the dark, he considered a new vow, either to reform the church or abandon it. The former risked a religious schism, loss of worshippers, and his personal safety. The latter risked his soul, for surely god had shown him this cancer so that he might excise it. It must be wrong for so many people to flock to an institution failing to emulate the god it professed to worship, but Kenric wondered whether he had the fortitude to root out its corruption and repoint its moral compass.

Brother Kenric gripped his spoon tightly in both hands, agonizing over his choice: bury the book, or reveal its contents? His heart pumped and his face reddened. He hated his predicament, and his indecision shamed him daily. He let out a deep breath and calmed. No, today he would not be a crusader. In time, perhaps. But not today.

Consider the internal conflicts presented for each of the clerics above and whether your PC cleric might enjoy roleplaying the same challenges, rewards, and consequences. If so, inject a minor relic, a forgotten journal, or an angelic visitation into an adventure to trigger a similar personal dilemma. Play out each dilemma over the course of a few adventures, or for as long as the player enjoys the experience. If the conflict proves fun, trigger a new dilemma for the character at every three or four cleric levels. Over the course of his career, a single PC cleric could actually confront all of the clerical conflicts presented here.

For just how many of these situations will he say to his god, "Thy will be done"? Ω

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# Howling Tower Why No Monotheism?

by Steve Winter

Art by Fred H. Ball

Writers who create campaign settings for roleplaying games seem to love describing the gods of their worlds, and I do mean “gods.” One seldom sees a fantasy setting where a monotheistic religion has taken hold the way Judaism, Catholicism, and Islam reigned in Europe, the Middle East, and northern Africa during the Middle Ages. This seems odd at first glance, because everything else about most RPG settings borrows heavily from late Roman and medieval European cultures. One type of character, the cleric, has its roots deep in Christianity, but the class has evolved well away from that idea. I’d like to look at why that is and what the implications would be for an RPG that adopted a widespread monotheism.

## THEOLOGY 101

First, let’s recognize that religion can be tricky to talk about and let’s clarify some terms.

*Monotheism* is the belief or doctrine that only one god exists, so *monotheistic* religions, like Islam and Christianity, recognize a single entity as the one and only deity in existence. That deity can exhibit more than one aspect, like the Trinity of Catholicism, but the being is, by definition, the one and only god.

In contrast, *polytheism* posits many gods, and *polytheistic* religions recognize more than one deity. They might be equals, or they might be ranked in a hierarchy. Each deity typically has its own portfolio of interests: harvests, love, war, prosperity, industry, fertility, death, birth, creation, sunrise, sunset,

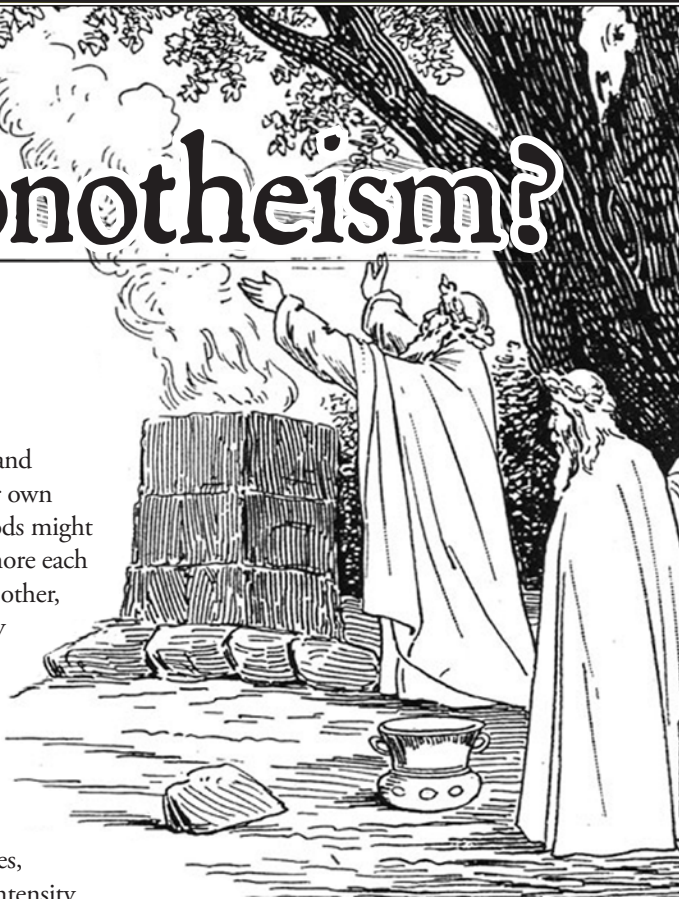
storms, etc. Individual cities and families sometimes have their own unique patron deities. The gods might get along with each other, ignore each other, try to undermine each other, or fight openly (in their godly realm, of course). They are frequently anthropomorphic (humanlike in appearance or characteristics), but not always. When a pantheon’s gods are anthropomorphic, they take our ideals and foibles, and magnify them to godly intensity.

## TWO KINDS OF POLYTHEISM

It’s worth distinguishing between two different types of polytheism. The first is *henotheism*, in which worshipers choose one god from a pantheon and focus their worship on him or her. This is how most RPG worlds tend to work. The god of nature and the goddess of war might be brother and sister, but Rildar the Devout wears the holy symbol of just one and never the other.

Contrast that with *kathenotheism*, in which people worship all of the gods at different times as the situation demands. A farmer might pray to the lord of sun and rain when his crop is growing and to the harvest mother when the crop is ready, but he’s not an exclusive disciple of either one. This brand of polytheism is less common in RPGs, even though it has been more prevalent in history.

*Animism* doesn’t necessarily recognize any particular deity. Instead, animists believe that many parts of the natural world have spiritual lives or are inhabited by distinct spirits such as dryads and nymphs. In RPGs,



druids are the most common animists, even though very little is known about the beliefs and practices of the historical druids—or maybe that’s their appeal.

Dozens of variations exist: *pantheism* (the universe is a deity), *syncretic monotheism* or *syncretic polytheism* (the melding of different, sometimes contradictory religions into one), *paganism* (not modern paganism but a generic term, usually for someone else’s religion).

Why don’t we see more monotheistic religions in RPG worlds? I attribute it to six reasons.

### 1. IN THE BEGINNING ...

Those familiar words come from the Old Testament, but I’m stretching them back to an earlier age. Polytheism is much older than the big three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We associate godly pantheons with ancient civilizations such as Sumeria, Persia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome—the Nordic pantheon is a popular exception, since

it flourished well into the Middle Ages (and continues to this day). Monotheism is a more recent arrival.

Most fantasy settings try to evoke a sense of great antiquity, of a world predating history. Conan's Hyborean Age isn't medieval Europe and Asia, however much it might look the part. It is a time "before the oceans drank Atlantis" that bears a superficial resemblance to the Middle Ages but greatly predates Moses, Abraham, and the rise of Christianity. In such ancient realms, fierce gods still rule in pagan splendor and sometimes demand unwholesome rituals from their followers.

Contrast that with modern, monotheistic religions that preach compassion, peace, and love for your fellow man, and consider which offers more avenues for wild, heroic adventure.

## **2. MYTHOLOGY**

In games, we care about what the gods do for us, not their doctrine or how they're worshiped. We're really interested in mythology rather than religion. Mythology is where we read about gods fighting monsters, scheming against their rivals, traveling the world incognito, and handing out favors (and magical weapons) to mortals.

Put simply, player characters want their gods to reward them in this life, not the next. It's in the mythology of the great pantheons of Greece, Rome, and Scandinavia where that happens most often.

## **3. I SERVE THE GOD OF WAR**

Roleplayers look for ways to make their characters unique. By necessity, the deity of a monotheistic religion must be all-encompassing. That means my cleric is a lot like your cleric, and they're both in league with Bob's cleric, and no one likes Bob's cleric. If there are multiple deities to choose from, a player's choice can say a lot about the character's personality. A character who worships the god of war is likely to have different goals and take a different approach to things than a character who worships the spirit of the meadow.

## **4. OPTIONS, OPTIONS, OPTIONS**

Gamers love options that make a difference. Characters worshipping dissimilar gods can receive unique abilities and benefits from the rules. Priests of the god of thunder and the god of luck can operate very differently on the battlefield or in a city bazaar. That sort of specialization makes a lot of people happy.

## **5. THE GREAT ESCAPE**

We tend to roleplay as a means of escaping from the mundane world that surrounds us 24 hours a day. Monotheism is a familiar part of that world for most of us. Why extend it into our fantasy settings when there are so many other, more exotic choices?

## **6. I'M A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THIS**

Finally, there's social pressure. Religion is a serious issue for a lot of people—the most serious, in many cases. Anything that impugns a religion's dignity, treats it flippantly, questions its tenets, or trespasses its sacred ground can generate unwanted heat. If you prefer to avoid offending people, or treat everyone's beliefs with respect, or share those beliefs yourself, then why invite unnecessary trouble? A purely fictitious pantheon of gods evades problems before they begin.

Those are all reasonable reasons for fantasy worlds to have a multitude of gods, but do they exclude monotheistic religions? You can argue, for example, that *henotheism* (a pantheon of gods where most people worship one and ignore the others) isn't much different from several competing monotheistic churches. That would be one workable model.

That model doesn't, however, represent true monotheism. It allows something like monotheism, but then it undermines the whole concept by not allowing the monotheists to be right.

That is, after all, the foundation of monotheism—that our god is the only one. If any other religion can demonstrate that it has an actual

deity—by, say, performing miracles (spells) in his or her name—then a theology denying the existence of all other gods topples like a house of cards.

## **DESIGNING FOR MONOTHEISM**

Happily, as problems in fantasy world design go, this one is not as insurmountable as it sounds. The solution is twofold.

First, even the one true faith can be split into sects. All we need to do is look around the modern world for examples of what happens when people who worship the same god disagree over the finer points of canon. You might love the sinner and lament the apostate, but there is neither forgiveness nor salvation for the heretic.

Second, a religion can be false and still have power. In other words, not all gods need to be gods. Fantasy stories are filled with beings who masquerade as gods but aren't. Demons, dragons, ancient sorcerers, monstrosities from beyond the stars, and other entities can have power dwarfing that of men while still falling far short of omnipotence. Many things can be supernatural without being divine, and such entities make excellent foes for adherents of the one, true faith.

This, then, can be the shape of a thrilling campaign: a world that is the domain of a single, enigmatic, omnipotent (or near-omnipotent) deity whose followers agree on the big picture but split into factions over the details. Some churches coexist more-or-less peacefully despite their differences, while others scheme against opposing sects, persecute heretics, and wage war against nonbelievers. Around the periphery and hidden in the shadows are the secretive demon worshipers, beast cults, and pagan temples where powerful, supernatural, but mortal, entities pose as gods to manipulate mortals, feed their egos, and fuel their dark agendas. Religious conflict could easily take front and center in such a campaign, rather than being a background element.

Ω



# DIVINE ARCHETYPES

## Angelic Heroes, Holy Traps, and Celestial Fists of Fury

By Stefen Styrsky

Art by Frank Heßefort

And there was suddenly a fear in the land that the Dark Horde would prevail despite the people's faith. A young warrior from the king's guard spent a fortnight fervently praying for aid. He was not a paladin or priest, but the empyreal realm heard his prayer. From then on, an angelic warrior accompanied him in battle against the Dark Horde, turning aside blades, slaying enemies with holy fire, and eventually saving the nation from everlasting darkness.

—from the *Life of Wogelod Thorvald*, Vol. 1

The divine flows through everyone, not just clerics, paladins, and inquisitors. The following archetypes reflect different ways a character might find himself infused with celestial energy, either from an angelic ancestor or via an unusually pious attitude. Such archetypes flourish in particularly devout societies. These archetypes are also suited to areas where evil or the undead pose a constant threat, such as on the borders of Morgau.

### ANGEL SCION (SORCERER)

Your powers come from an angelic ancestor.

**Associated Bloodline:** Celestial  
**Bloodline Arcana:** Whenever you cast a bloodline spell, you gain a deflection bonus to AC equal to ½ the spell's level (minimum 1) for 1 round.

**Bloodline Powers:** The angel is a warrior as well as a healer.

**Smiting Weapon (Sp):** At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, you can touch a weapon or up to 50

pieces of ammunition as a standard action, giving it the *lesser holy* property for a number of rounds equal to ½ your sorcerer level (minimum 1). At 9<sup>th</sup> level, you can confer the *holy* property instead, but the duration of the power is halved. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier.

### PEACEMAKER (GUNSLINGER)

Peacemakers are charged with upholding a faith's laws along borders or in lawless areas. They seek to demonstrate the futility of violence, and they subdue opponents and lawbreakers by non-violent means. This doesn't imply peacemakers won't cross that line if needed. Sometimes the death of another is the best or only means of bringing peace to a land.

**Alignment:** The peacemaker must have a lawful alignment. Lawful evil peacemakers are rare but not unknown.

**Grit (Ex):** A peacemaker receives his inner resolve from divine inspiration. Instead of using his Wisdom to determine how many grit points he gains per day, he uses Charisma. This ability works in all other ways like the gunslinger's grit class feature.

**Deeds:** A peacemaker swaps a pair of deeds for the following.

**Pacifying Glance (Ex):** The peacemaker can use the threat of violence and his official position to subdue opponents. At 1<sup>st</sup> level, as long as a peacemaker has at least 1 grit point, he can make an Intimidate check against a target as a move action simply by gesturing towards his firearm. The peacemaker must

have a visible firearm on his person to Intimidate a target.

**Freeze! (Sp):** At 11<sup>th</sup> level, the peacemaker can expend 1 grit point to affect all creatures in a 30 ft. cone as if with *hold monster*. Starting this ability is a standard action, but maintaining the effect requires a swift action every round thereafter. The peacemaker can maintain the effect for a number of rounds per day equal to his gunslinger level. He must brandish his firearm, and creatures in the cone must be able to see or hear him to be affected. A successful Will save negates the effect. This is a mind-affecting effect.

**Defender (Ex):** Starting at 2<sup>nd</sup> level, a peacemaker gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls against creatures that have attacked him in the previous three rounds. This bonus increases by +1 for every four levels beyond 2<sup>nd</sup> (to a maximum of +5 at 20<sup>th</sup> level). The peacemaker can only use this ability with a firearm. This ability replaces nimble.

### SERAPHIC COHORT (FIGHTER)

Some warriors are so pious a deity sends a heavenly emissary to aid and protect the favored individual. These men and women are called seraphic cohorts, and they form a bond with a celestial outsider.

**Alignment:** A seraphic cohort must have a good alignment.

**Angelic Protector:** At 1<sup>st</sup> level, the seraphic cohort gains an angelic protector. The seraphic cohort can summon an eidolon as if he were a summoner equal to his fighter level. Variables, such as caster level and

evolution points, are determined using the seraphic cohort's fighter level.

The seraphic cohort also gains, at the appropriate level, all summoner abilities related to the eidolon except bond senses, aspect, and greater aspect. The eidolon must take the angel form described in *Ultimate Magic* and must select all available primary and secondary evolutions listed under the angel model (or the new evolutions below) before selecting additional evolutions. This replaces all fighter bonus feats for this character.

**Rejuvenate Eidolon (Sp):** Three times per day at 3<sup>rd</sup> level, the seraphic cohort may cast *lesser rejuvenate eidolon* on his angelic protector as a spell-like ability. This becomes *rejuvenate eidolon* at 8<sup>th</sup> level, and *greater rejuvenate eidolon* at

13<sup>th</sup> level. At 10<sup>th</sup> level, the seraphic cohort may sacrifice all his uses of this spell-like ability to instead cast *purified calling*. This replaces armor training 1, 2, and 3.

**Code of Behavior:** A seraphic cohort earns the loyalty of a good outsider through his adherence to a strict code of moral behavior. A seraphic cohort who does not champion the cause of good and righteousness in all his actions or who willingly or who knowingly performs an evil act instantly loses the ability to summon his angelic protector. The GM decides how and if this occurs and what the seraphic cohort must do to regain his outsider companion's loyalty. Gray areas are few: the code of the seraphic consort is strict.

## NEW EVOLUTIONS

The seraphic cohort may also add the following evolutions to his eidolon. Summoners may choose these evolutions with the GM's approval.

### 1-POINT EVOLUTIONS

**Weapon Training (Ex):** An eidolon of a seraphic cohort treats weapon training as

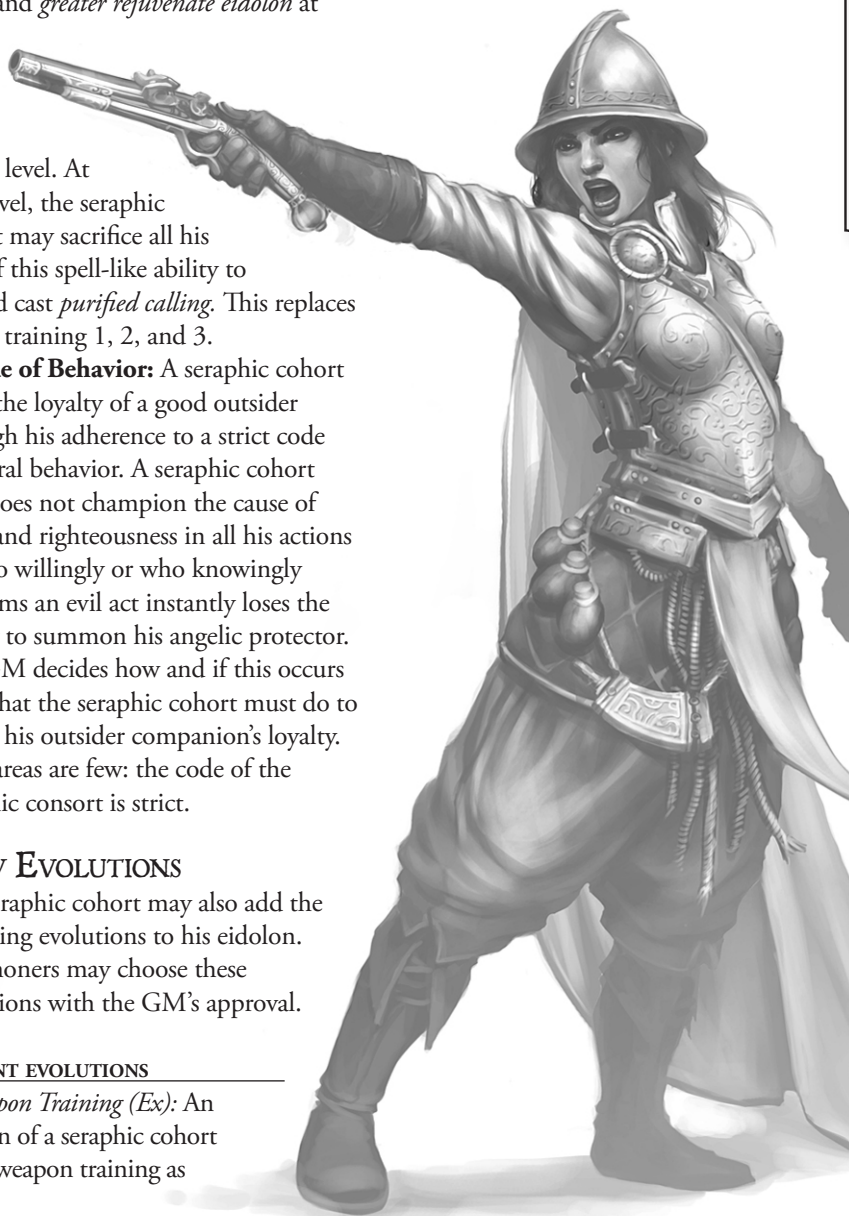
a 1-point evolution and can upgrade it for 1 evolution point.

### 3-POINT EVOLUTIONS

**Aura of Menace (Su):** A righteous aura surrounds the eidolon. Any hostile creature within a 20-ft. radius of the eidolon must succeed on a Will (DC 10 + ½ HD + Cha modifier) or take a –2 penalty on attacks, AC, and saves for 24 hours, or until they successfully hit the eidolon. A creature successfully resisting or breaking the effect cannot be affected again by the same eidolon's aura for 24 hours.

The seraphic cohort must be at least 7<sup>th</sup> level before selecting this evolution.

**Smite Evil (Su):** The eidolon can smite evil once per day as a swift



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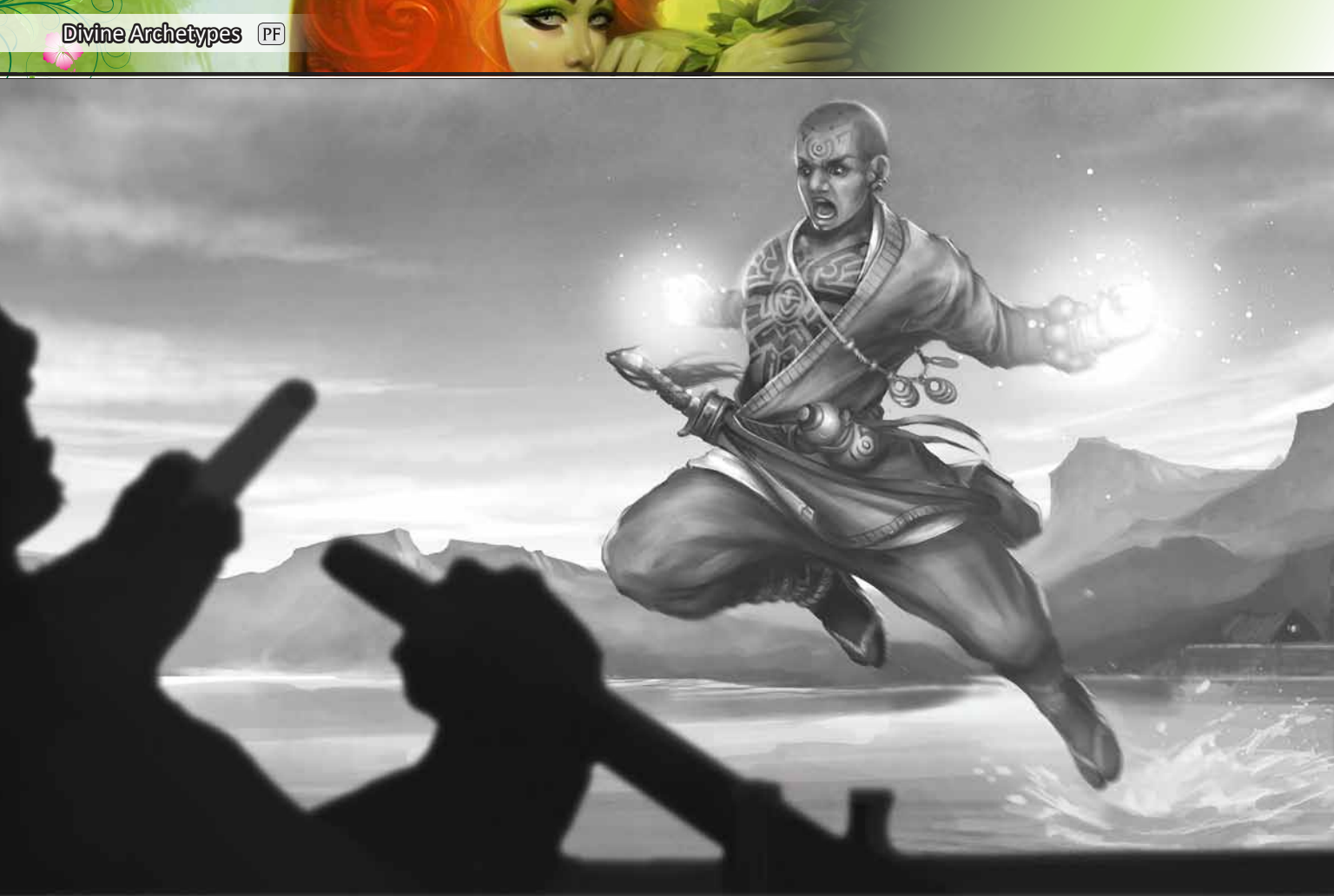
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action. It adds its Cha bonus to hit and adds a bonus to damage equal to its HD against the target of the smite. The smite evil effect persists until the target is dead or the eidolon rests. This evolution may be selected more than once. Each time it is selected, the eidolon gains another daily smite evil. The seraphic cohort must be at least 5<sup>th</sup> level before selecting this evolution.

#### 4-POINT EVOLUTIONS

**Truespeech (Su):** The eidolon can speak with any creature that has a language as though using a *tongues* spell. This ability is always active. The seraphic cohort must be at least 11<sup>th</sup> level before selecting this evolution.

### SPIRIT HUNTER (RANGER)

The spirit hunter focuses on capturing and destroying undead and incorporeal spirits plaguing the living. The spirit hunter learns special runes and symbols that affect even incorporeal creatures.

**Class Skills:** A spirit hunter adds Knowledge (religion) to her list of class

skills in addition to the normal ranger class skills.

**Detect Undead (Sp):** A spirit hunter can use *detect undead* as an at-will spell-like ability.

**Spirit Trap (Su):** At 5<sup>th</sup> level, a spirit hunter learns to create a snare trap and one other ranger trap of her choice. At 7<sup>th</sup> level and every two levels thereafter, she learns another trap. The spirit hunter can use these traps a total number of times per day equal to ½ her ranger level + her Wisdom modifier.

Once a trap is learned, it can't be unlearned and replaced with a different type of trap. The spirit hunter cannot select an individual trap more than once.

These traps affect all undead creatures, and they also affect incorporeal creatures (living or undead) as if they were corporeal. This means a spirit hunter can employ and affect a creature such as a shadow with a snare trap. These creatures still possess their immunities and are not harmed by poison or freezing traps.

This ability replaces the ranger's spells class feature. Spirit hunters do not gain any spells or spellcasting ability, do not have a caster level, and cannot use spell trigger and spell completion magic items.

**Launch Trap:** At 10<sup>th</sup> level, a spirit hunter can affix a magical ranger trap to an arrow, crossbow bolt, or thrown weapon, allowing her to set the trap remotely or use it as a direct attack. Attaching the trap to the projectile is part of the full-round action of creating a new trap. The trapped projectile is fired or thrown in the normal manner.

If fired at a square, the trap is treated as if the ranger had set the trap in that square, except the DC is 5 lower than normal.

If fired at a creature, the target takes damage from the ranged weapon and is treated as if it had triggered the trap (saving throw applies, if any). The attack has a maximum range of 60 feet, and range increments apply to the attack roll. The projectile's duration starts at its creation, not from when it is triggered or used.

## NEW TRAPS

The following traps are available to the spirit hunter. Other characters may choose these traps with the GM's approval.

### POSITIVE ENERGY TRAP (SU)

#### EFFECT

The trap erupts with positive energy, dealing positive energy damage equal to  $1d6 + \frac{1}{2}$  the ranger's level to the triggering creature (Will halves). This trap only affects undead creatures.

### EXPLODING POSITIVE ENERGY TRAP (SU)

#### EFFECT

A ranger can only add this to a positive energy trap. The trap explodes in positive energy, filling all squares adjacent to the trap and dealing positive energy damage to undead creatures equal to  $1d6 + \frac{1}{2}$  the ranger's level (Will halves).

### DISRUPTING TRAP (SU)

#### EFFECT

The trap destroys an undead creature as with disrupting weapon, with the caster level equal to the trap setter's total character level. A disrupting trap does not affect creatures other than undead, and incorporeal undead can successfully pass through the trap unless a spirit hunter constructed it. A character must at least 10th level before selecting this trap.

## NEW FEATS

The following feats follow the rules of Style Feats described in *Ultimate Combat*. A monk employing the angel style is often called a celestial fist.

**Angel Style:** Legends say a solar who recruited monks into his war against evil handed down the angel style. Other students of the divine—clerics, paladins, and inquisitors—also study the angel style of combat. Practitioners of the angel style can evade attacks and imbue their bodies with heavenly power to destroy foes.

*Feat Path:* Angel Style, Angel Step, Angel Fist

### ANGEL STYLE (COMBAT, STYLE)

You move with the dexterity of a celestial being, and your body becomes a weapon against evil.

**Prerequisites:** Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Knowledge (religion) 3 ranks, good alignment

**Benefit:** You gain one additional stunning fist attempt per day. While using this style, you gain a +1 dodge bonus to AC. You may expend two stunning fist attempts to gain a limited version of smite evil against an evil target in sight. This grants your unarmed attacks against that target a bonus to hit equal to your Charisma modifier (if positive) and a bonus on damage equal to your character level. The smite lasts until the target is dead, until you rest, or when you leave Angel Style stance, whichever comes first.

### ANGEL STEP (COMBAT, STYLE)

You hover above the earth just like your heavenly precursors.

**Prerequisites:** Angel Style, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Knowledge (religion) 6 ranks, good alignment.

**Benefit:** While using this style, you ignore difficult terrain. You also gain the ability to *water walk* for a number of rounds per day equal to your character level. These rounds do not need to be consecutive but must be used while you are in Angel Style stance.

### ANGEL FIST (COMBAT, STYLE)

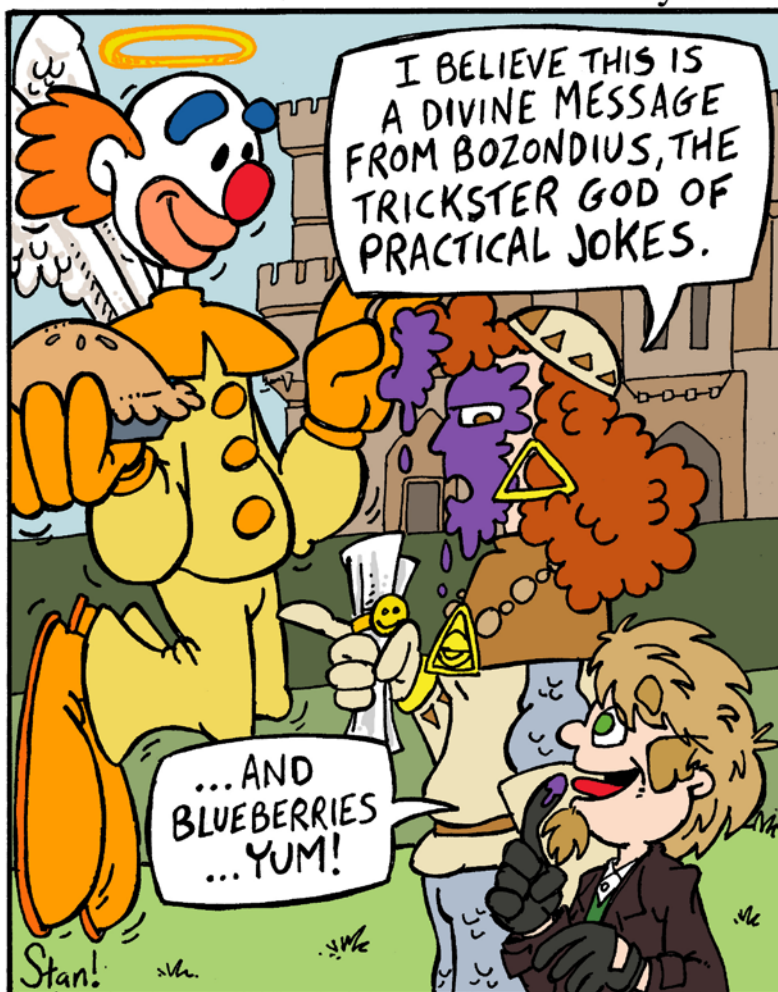
Your limbs become glowing weapons filled with divine energy.

**Prerequisites:** Angel Step, Angel Style, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Knowledge (religion) 9 ranks, good alignment

**Benefit:** You gain one additional stunning fist attempt per day. You may expend two stunning fist attempts to imbue your next unarmed attack with one of the following weapon special abilities: *axiomatic*, *brilliant energy*, *disruption*, *flaming*, or *holy*. You must declare that you are using this feat before you make your attack roll. Ω

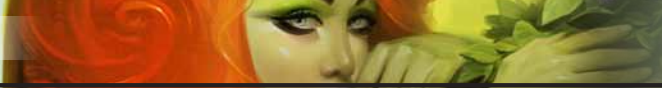
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# FUN HAPPENS HERE

## *A Conversation with Bill Slavicsek*

By Jeremy L. C. Jones

For 14 years, Bill Slavicsek lived the dream. He got to “shepherd” the game he loved through many expansions and changes. When he announced that he was stepping down as the Director of R&D for *Dungeons & Dragons*, he did so by reminding us how and why he got into the industry in the first place.

“My professional time with *D&D* may be coming to an end,” said Slavicsek in his June 23, 2011, Ampersand post on the Wizards of the Coast (WotC) website, “but the game and its worlds will always be near and dear to my heart. I am a gamer, first and foremost, and it’s the game I always go back to for inspiration and fun.”

Slavicsek started at TSR in 1993 after seven years of freelancing and of writing for West End Games where he worked on the *Star Wars RPG* and *Torg* (with Greg Gorden). In his time at TSR and WotC, he oversaw the development and/or return of such settings as *Dark Sun*, *Ravenloft*, *Planescape*, *Eberron*, and the *D&D* core world. (He even wrote a novel, *The Mark of Nerath*, set in the *D&D* core world.) He worked on multiple editions of *D&D*, *d20 Modern*, *d20 Star Wars*, and *Alternity Science Fiction RPG* (with Richard Baker and Kim Mohan).

And always his love for gaming and his desire to produce fun products shined through.

“I once kicked Bill under the table,” said fellow designer Richard Baker. “It was back when we were working on *Alternity*, and we were meeting with the bigwigs for the first executive look at the

game’s progress. The game’s art director at the time (not the guy who appears in the credits) was trying to throw Bill under the bus and blame Bill for the terrible art they had acquired, after the art director had done everything possible to prevent us from even seeing what he was doing. Bill rightfully got about as mad as I’d ever seen him, while the head of the company sat back and watched us R&D guys going at it with the idiots in charge of the art. (I reiterate, these were not the guys who actually did the work that was published later.) I kicked Bill’s shin to remind him that the Eye of Sauron was upon us, but he kept going, so I wound up and really let him have it with the next one. That seemed to do the trick. I think Bill might have said something like “Will you stop?” at that point, but the Eye of Sauron called for a brief recess, and we retreated to plot new strategy. It all worked out in the end.”

Slavicsek’s friend and co-worker, designer Steven Winter, presents yet another facet of Slavicsek’s personality.

“Recently, Bill was the DM for a *D&D* 4E campaign that ran from first level all the way up to 27<sup>th</sup>, said Winter. “The players were Bill’s wife Michele Carter, Chris Perkins, James Wyatt, Bart Carroll, Beth Dupke, Jeff Grubb, and me. Bill had the patience of a saint trying to keep that group on track. We seldom managed more than five minutes at a stretch without breaking into a musical number, a political debate, a movie routine, rude jokes about an NPC’s promiscuity with every player character except the one who was

romantically inclined toward her, or an ill-advised attempt to persuade the majestic leader of a lost race of superbeings to let my halfling ride around on his back like a monkey on a greyhound. Bill somehow managed to hold it together through 27 levels. I can’t vouch for him, but we all had a great time.”

New strategies, growing pains, and multiple editions of an iconic game... the Eye of Sauron and monkeys on a greyhound... Slavicsek’s years at WotC were certainly exciting ones.

And it all came down to that simple statement: “I am a gamer, first and foremost, and it’s the game I always go back to for inspiration and fun.”

Below, Slavicsek and I talk about collaboration, campaign settings, and multiple editions of the game he’s loved for almost 40 years.

### **What do you miss the most about your old gig at TSR/WotC?**

**Bill Slavicsek:** I miss a lot about working at Wizards of the Coast, but the two things I miss most are the people and the properties.

At one point, we had assembled the greatest team of RPG designers, developers, and editors in the world. (Not to mention art people, production people, brand people—the whole team!) Going into work every day was energizing, because the creativity and collaboration was on a scale that was unheard of. It was exciting and amazing, and I miss that environment where we could decide to create whatever we wanted, whenever we wanted. That freedom led to a

lot of great products over the years. Now, the staff is smaller, and I miss them and wish them well. I'm looking forward to seeing what they do next!

The second thing I miss is *Dungeons & Dragons* itself. There wasn't a better property to work on in the analog space. Period. It's the property that started it all, and it's still going strong almost 40 years after it launched an industry. I'm proud that I was able to shepherd the creative aspects of the game for 14 years. Working on all kinds of products under the *D&D* umbrella was a dream come true, and I miss it. Who wouldn't? I never imagined that when I first picked up the game and decided to try my hand at Dungeon Mastering that one day I'd be working with the property and creating the same kinds of products that I couldn't wait to find at the hobby store. Getting to work on my favorite pastime? Priceless.

### Can you briefly outline your earliest experiences with RPGs?

**Bill Slavicsek:** I discovered *Dungeons & Dragons* in the mid-70s. My gaming group at the time played board games on a regular basis. *Monopoly*, *Risk*, *Broadsides and Battleships*, things like that. I tended to be the one who read the rules and figured out how to play the games. One day while checking out a hobby store in Manhattan, looking for something new to play with the group, I found a copy of *D&D*. The Red Box was our gateway, but we quickly moved on to the hardcover books as they appeared. I ran every adventure available, and started making my own pretty quickly.

### What was it that hooked you about the Red Box and those early hardbacks? How was *D&D* a different experience than the board games you'd been playing?

**Bill Slavicsek:** I was an avid reader growing up. Comic books and novels of all sorts—science fiction, fantasy, horror, mysteries—I

devoured them all. To me, *D&D* represented a unique combination of game and story. It really spoke to the creative side of my personality, and I'm sure that's why I gravitated toward being the Dungeon Master. It was a way to craft stories and share them with my friends in an immediate and interactive way.

I'm not sure what the rest of my game group got out of it, but for me, there was an excitement to seeing how the story developed as the group participated in the game. It was thrilling, and it hooked me forever.

### And what sort of DM are you? Do you have advice for all the DMs out there?

**Bill Slavicsek:** As a DM, I like to do a little preparation and then wing the details. I like the immediacy of the moment, and seeing what the players bring to the story and then working off of that to see how it turns out. I like to keep the action moving, so I rarely stop to look up a rule or consult a rulebook. The best advice I can give to other DMs is to take a deep breath, relax, and go with it. Better to keep the action moving and the story progressing than getting every game rule perfectly right.

And the amazing thing about *D&D* and other RPGs is that the DM has the right to make the game his or her own. Use that, embrace that, and remember that it's all about having fun. The other side of that to keep in mind is that the players have a stake in the story as well. That's what group storytelling is all about. The DM brings the plot and the antagonists, the players bring the protagonists. If a player does something unexpected, go with it and let it happen! Don't get so attached to your preparations that you can't deviate from the script when the PCs go left instead of right. That's the fun of an RPG, and something that no computer game can match (yet!),





so make sure you make the most of those moments when they occur.

When I'm not performing the function of the Dungeon Master, I kind of combine role-playing with some sort of combat-oriented character. I've never sweated over the charts or the stats, at least not for fun. In *D&D*, my favorite characters to play have been paladins and fighter/thieves.

### How'd you go from player to professional designer?

**Bill Slavicsek:** As the Dungeon Master, I started fiddling with the game rules and creating adventures almost immediately. Before that, I always tinkered with the rules of the board games we played, creating house rules of all kinds. When we couldn't find a new game to play, I even created a WWII war game for the group. It required everyone to pick a country and then outfit an army using Airfix soldiers and tanks and anything else that was in scale. So, I guess I was an amateur game designer almost from the beginning.

I became a professional when I was hired by West End Games as a game editor. My first projects

were editing and developing board games, including *RAF, Kings & Things*, and WEG's version of *Cosmic Encounters*. Then I started working on roleplaying game products, including editing projects for *Ghostbusters* and *Paranoia*. A few months in, they let me co-design a *Ghostbusters* RPG adventure called *Scared Stiffs*.

This was where I learned to combine story and game mechanics into a satisfying adventure. I also learned that an adventure is only a framework. It's not a short story or a novel. It doesn't have protagonists. They don't show up until the game group comes together to play. The West End Games style was to make each adventure fun to read as well as fun to play, and I've tried to maintain that style over the years on all the projects I've worked on.

After *Scared Stiffs*, I did whatever was needed—editing, development, and game design. My first major project as a designer was *The Star Wars Sourcebook*, which began my long association with Lucasfilm, Ltd. and the *Star Wars* universe.

**Is it just me or does fantasy and horror seem to work better than**

**science fiction when it comes to RPGs?**

**Bill Slavicsek:** I think any RPG that's built on the familiar and understandable makes a great game to play and run. Fantasy is so ingrained within our culture that it doesn't require a ton of imagination on either the players' or DMs' parts, which makes it easier to understand and get into.

The same is true of horror, especially horror that's set in either a traditional fantasy setting or in the current or near-current real world. The fewer things you have to invent or explain, the more immersive the experience.

*Star Wars*, as a science fiction/space fantasy game works—in my opinion—because thanks to the movies and expanded universe content, the *Star Wars* world became real for multiple generations of players. The same can't be said of other SF settings.

**Why did Planescape seem to inspire such great material from the writers and designers who worked on it?**

**Bill Slavicsek:** *Planescape*, originally designed by Zeb Cook, is an amazing setting. The level of detail

and the attitude the material projects just seemed to hit everyone who worked on it the right way. I've always been a fan of the *D&D* settings that had attitude and were more than just another version of traditional fantasy. *Planescape*, *Ravenloft*, *Dark Sun*, and *Eberron* have always been my favorites--both to play and to work on.

As far as *Planescape* is concerned, I think that the combination of philosophers-with-clubs and roaming around where the gods live makes the setting both surreal and extremely thought-provoking. It inspired maybe the most consistent run of material of any *D&D* setting.

### **You were there from the start with *Eberron*, right?**

**Bill Slavicsek:** The creation of the *Eberron* Campaign Setting was a grand experiment. We had an open call for submissions, and the fans responded. We received tens of thousands of one-page write-ups, covering almost every type of fantasy you can imagine. I was on the committee that selected the write-ups for consideration, including the three that we bought, and the final setting that got the full development treatment.

I was looking for one of two things: either a perfect entry that shouted "this is it!" or a neat idea that I could help develop into a viable campaign setting. I didn't see anything that fit into the first category, but I found a few that satisfied the second. In fact, once I discovered Keith Baker's one-pager, I knew that that was the one I wanted to work with. It was the perfect seed that I felt I could help grow into a full-fledged campaign setting worthy of publication.

Once we selected the three entries, we flew the designers to our offices and worked with them to help them create their story bibles. We eventually settled on *Eberron* because it was the setting that used all of the existing rules, including the *Player's Handbook*, *DM's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. Yes, it had unique

elements, but they were additive, not replacements for the current rules set. In the end, James Wyatt and I helped Keith Baker fully develop the campaign setting and write the published product. I'm very proud of that original tome, and Keith was a great partner throughout the process.

### **What's the secret to effective collaboration? Pros, cons, common pitfalls? And what role do you usually play in a collaboration?**

**Bill Slavicsek:** The big secret--Don't be a jerk. That's it. Treat the other people you're collaborating with the way you want to be treated, and things will work out fine.

You also need to establish your goals right up front. When things go wrong during a collaborative effort, it's usually because the various team members have different visions or different expectations. I've been a team member and a team lead numerous times during my career. In recent years, my role in a collaborative effort was usually to clarify and communicate the vision, to keep the team on track, and to help make course corrections as needed along the way.

Some of my favorite collaborations over the years led to the products I'm most proud of. Working with Greg Gorden to bring the multiple worlds of *Torg* to life. Working with Jeff Grubb and a great team to develop *d20 Modern*. Collaborating with Keith Baker and James Wyatt to create *Eberron*. And perhaps the designer I worked with most often over the years, Rich Baker, who co-created *Alternity* with me and also co-wrote the *D&D For Dummies* books with me. There are many more examples, but these stand out in my memory among all the others.

### **Where's the sweet spot in *D&D*?**

**Bill Slavicsek:** I've played and worked on every edition. As a game designer, I believe that we learn and get better as time goes on. So, for me, 4th Edition was the most fun. It's fun

for me as a DM, and has provided the most fun I've had as a *D&D* DM. As a designer, it's the easiest *D&D* system to work on, as the mechanics are straightforward and intuitive, and everything hangs together.

### **Any thoughts on *D&D* Next?**

**Bill Slavicsek:** I wish the team well and look forward to seeing what they come up with. I was excited by what we were doing at the start, but I've been out of the process for more than six months. I'll certainly check it out when it hits the shelves.

### **What's next for you?**

**Bill Slavicsek:** I'm putting aside the analog game world for a while as I venture into the digital arena. I recently took a position with ZeniMax Online Studios as a Writer/Content Designer. I'm helping them with an as-yet-unannounced MMO, and I'm really excited to be part of the team. I'm working with people I use to work with in analog games, including Zeb Cook, Lawrence Schick, and Ed Stark. In some ways, the job is very different from what I'm used to, and in those respects I'm learning a lot. But in other ways, it's a writing job, and I've been doing that for my entire career.

In the future, I'd like to create another boardgame, as I had a lot of fun working on *Castle Ravenloft*. And I'd love to tackle another novel. And I'm sure there's another campaign setting, sourcebook, or RPG rules set somewhere in my future. But for now, I'm exploring digital games and having a blast. I've been involved in these kinds of projects in the past, but never fully integrated as part of the team. It's kind of invigorating learning new techniques while also applying my experience to the project.

### **If you could tape a sign over every gaming table in the world, what would it say?**

**Bill Slavicsek:** "Imagination zone. Fun and friendship happens here." Ω



# From the Mines...

Art by Chris McFann

## OVERJOYED WITH KQ #20!

Dear Wolfgang & Crew,

I never write to publishers, product makers, etc., but I have to do so this time.

*Kobold Quarterly* #20 was phenomenal!

As a recent subscriber, I've read through 2 or 3 other *KQ* issues, and have enjoyed them, but *KQ* #20 was on a totally different level!

Normally, I hope for one or two really good articles and a couple of other interesting supporting articles, and I'm happy. With *KQ* #20 you have FOUR (!) awesome features:

1. Elven Archer—I love to see well-thought-out, non-munchkin, useful 20-level classes for *Pathfinder* RPG.
2. AGE Specializations—MORE, MORE, MORE! Backgrounds are nice and all, but new specializations and talents are a *great* resource for AGE lovers like me.
3. Servants from Beyond—This was such a fun, cool article. I would never have thought this up or sought out an extraplanar-based article like this, but it was so well done. Loved it! Interesting and fun out of the box.
4. Fey Hunters—I love the fey/shadow material. Figuring out how to properly portray and use the mercurial fey can be a challenge. The fey tactics were great! The old *Birthright* setting - my all-time favorite - also had a bunch of shadow/fey stuff, and there are lots of ideas here to swipe for a BR campaign too)

I also loved:

Captured in the Cartways—A new *Pathfinder* RPG adventure? Yes, please!

Bardic Arts—I despise 4e, but I love bards, and the ideas contained in this were fun and convertible.

Make Haste—Very cool. Very practical. Great idea for DMs.

So my hat is off to you all. *KQ* #20 was a great issue. Almost worth the subscription price by itself!

I will leave you with two suggestions for future issues: 1) More AGE! 2) Less 4e!

Thanks for your hard work and a great product.



Joe Donlon  
Via email

*Thank you. It's great to hear that we've hit the target (ahem, especially with an archery issue!). Sometimes an issue really does just come together, though I think some of the credit also goes to our new editor, Christina Stiles, who is helping out the kobolds.*

*From your list, it's probably worth pointing out that the shadow fey get a lot of play in the Midgard Campaign Setting. You'll see them in the Midgard Bestiary for the Pathfinder RPG (available now).*

*As to more AGE and less 4E, that depends on submissions. We got two excellent 4E submissions this issue, and that seems to be about the pace of them. I'd love to have more AGE material to choose from, but perhaps not surprisingly, the number of AGE designers is smaller than the number for the world's oldest RPG. We'll keep an eye out.*

## MORE CARTWAYS, PLEASE

Love the detail and possibilities embedded in the Free City of Zobeck. I don't really understand where the Cartways are found in Zobeck. These are the resources I own: *KQ* 14 thru 20, poster map of Zobeck, *Alleys of Zobeck* and *Streets of Zobeck*.

Where should I look to get a better grip on how the Cartways fit into the city?

Again, kudos. Brilliant.

Eddy Morrow  
Northfield, Minnesota

*Christina Stiles responds: "They are the abandoned kobold mining tunnels beneath the city. Nobles once used them for secret travel, rendezvous, and parties. The Watch closed the entrances, but gangs, seedy denizens, and black markets have made their way in. (See *KQ* #15 and the Zobeck Gazetteer for the Pathfinder RPG, released in January).*

## KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE

My Dear Kobold Magazine,

I left the game early in 2006, just after my college graduation, and a few months before my wedding. Recently, two of my wife's students came to her, asking if she knew about a game that is played with dice, and has something to do with elves and dwarfs, so she asked me to prepare a one-shot, that now we play every Saturday. When I came back to the old sites I haven't visited in years, I found some bitter surprises, but also, a few good ones.

Currently, I'm waiting for my *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*, but since I live in México, it may take a few more weeks to get here. I already bought the PDF, but I need to have the book at my gaming table. Also, I'm reading the first issue of your magazine, and it is rapidly becoming my favorite.

I guess all I want to say with this brief email is thank you for keeping the

flame alive—for keeping alive what we love about this game.

Know that you have some very grateful friends in México.

Manuel J. Solis J.  
Mexico

### PLEASE STOP BEING SO DARN ENTERTAINING!

I like to visit the messageboards at work when I'm on break, but we're not allowed to go to "Entertainment" sites. Because koboldquarterly.com's URL Category includes "Entertainment," I can no longer do this. Ironically, Paizo.com and Wrecabbages.com are not "Entertainment," and I can still go there.

Isn't there something you can do?

James Thomas  
Via email

*Our tech guru Robert says, "I imagine they are using some of the meta keywords from the site, like 'magazine' or the like to categorize it. Anything the editors do to even attempt to bypass the problem would probably make the site much less likely to show up in search engine results." So, we're sort of stuck with it.*

*For what it's worth, the KQ site and blog can be read on a smartphone browser...*

### KQ IS A TURN ON?

You guys have a GREAT magazine with superlative writing and interesting articles. Thank you for publishing it. I'm going to turn on more of my friends to it.

Very best regards,  
Tony DuLac

*Thanks, Tony! We appreciate the good word out there, and please tell your friendly local game store that you'd like them to carry KQ as well. Every bit helps keep KQ going.*

### I NEED AN ASSASSIN

Hello. You seemed like the best person to bring this up with.

One of my players wants to play an Assassin's Creed character in a Pathfinder RPG adventure, and I was introduced to your magazine, which published a base assassin class. It was built around 3.5 back then. If I wanted to give it the power of a Pathfinder RPG base class,

how would I go about balancing this? I already know from the conversion guide that it'll need d8 HD, and I'll have to merge the skills together like the rogue's, but what about class abilities? The original 3.5 assassin had magic, which you mention in the article as a specialized assassin you could still keep around, but the Pathfinder RPG version lost those spells and became a faster and more efficient killing machine.

Key missing class abilities in the old version that the new Pathfinder RPG assassin prestige class has are True Death, Quiet Death, Swift Death, Hidden Weapons, and Angel of Death. Where would you put them on a revamped assassin? I was thinking beside each of the +Xd6 sneak attack options. I don't know if it'd be a good idea to give Hidden Weapons at 2nd level though, especially when you haven't gained your first level of Tools of the Trade. Maybe beside Uncanny Dodge at 6th?

Please let me know when you can.

Derek  
Via email

*Derek, the Pathfinder RPG prestige class would be available to 6th-level characters at 5 ranks of Stealth, so we suggest adding in the missing abilities you like at from the prestige class's listed level + 5 on the base assassin. So, hidden weapons appears at 9th, quiet death at 11th, etc. Also, check out Green Ronin's Freeport Companion for Pathfinder RPG for a base assassin class.*

### AN OLDE SCHOOLE SUGGESTION

I see that WoTC is planning on printing an AD&D set of books for 1st edition. Does that mean someone out there might be planning to also create, print, make up, something for 1st edition, or be still my heart, perhaps even 2nd edition? Yes, this would be a very large and broad hint about something like that.

Darren Cooke

*It's interesting that the Wizards are reprinting the books from back in the day, but Kobold Quarterly tends to look to the future more than the past. Worse, the editors have never gotten a query for an article based on the 1E or 2E rules. Ever.*

## No Book Reviews?!

Don't worry, loyal KQ readers, we haven't traded our love of reading for barbarian levels. Our reviewer simply failed a few Fort saves this winter season. Book reviews will be back and better than ever next issue!

## Correction

In KQ #19, our book reviewer referred to the *Mountains of the Moon* novel by Mark Hodder (twice!). Of course, the correct title is *Expedition to the Mountains of the Moon* by Mark Hodder. KQ regrets the error, and editorial floggings have been delivered.

*If that changes, the article would be considered depending on its appeal and usefulness for all fantasy gamers. Fortunately, most articles in KQ are readily adaptable (and there's a small-but-growing volume of Old School Renaissance material out there). Also, the KQ crew will be considering some Castles & Crusades monsters for the Summer issue. Since C&C has a 2e, retro feel to it, perhaps it might suit your request perfectly.*

### ABOUT THOSE CASTLES

Occasionally, I pick up a copy of your magazine and wish there was a *Castles & Crusades* article—or, indeed, anything about the SIEGE Engine (the core rules of C&C as well as a few other games). This is about all that's kept me from subscribing, since not every issue has something for me.

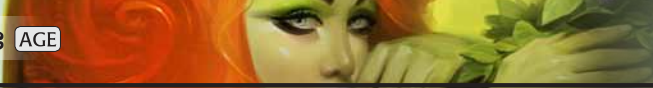
Might we see some C&C in the future?  
\*jeep! and God Bless

Grandpa Chet  
Via email

*Christina says, "Oh, boy! Glad you wrote in, Chet! C&C is coming in the summer issue (see above note). I'm a big fan, and I have a few C&C credits to my name (mostly as editor), so I'm hoping to convince the Kobold-in-Chief that fans want to see the game in KQ. Long live the Crusade!"*

*Wolfgang says, "We'll see. Check out the summer issue."*

Ω



# A Background in Magic

*Alchemists, Druids, Illusions, and Seers for the AGE System*

By Rodrigo Garcia Carmona

Art by Rick Hershey

**M**agic is the heart of fantasy, and a game's magic system goes a long way to defining its world. And of course, the more options players have for magic-using characters, the happier they are. Currently, the AGE system has only two backgrounds for spellcasting characters, Apostate and Circle Mage. This article presents four new mage-only backgrounds for the AGE system, each built to seamlessly fit into most fantasy settings. For example, languages are listed as Common and Ancient, but they could just as easily be Trade Tongue and Ankeshelian if these characters are played in the MIDGARD setting, or they could be languages for your homebrew setting.

## ALCHEMIST

All magic users must dedicate some time to study and research, but the alchemists truly excel at these tasks. They see the arcane more as a science than an art, and they devote themselves to experimentation to surpass the craft of their rivals.

Many alchemists belong to secret organizations of like-minded individuals with whom they share opinions and compare notes. These secret societies pool resources and trade ideas, making membership both materially beneficial and socially advantageous. Young alchemists often spend years seeking out such societies and then striving to gain admittance.

Although famous for their wondrous concoctions, deadly poisons, and healing elixirs, alchemists work in many disparate fields. Almost anything

that combines magic and craft draws their attention: from arcane smiths hammering enchantments into metal, to those seeking the fabled philosopher's stone, to the flesh-shapers that create impossible creatures, and everything in between.

All alchemists seek new materials, components, recipes, and catalysts. This is one of the few motivations strong enough to make them leave their stinking laboratories and dusty libraries.

### PLAYING AN ALCHEMIST

If you choose to play an alchemist, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Magic ability. Long hours spent unraveling the mysteries of magic have given you a keen insight into the arcane arts.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Cunning (Poison Lore) or Magic (Creation).
- You can speak and read Common.
- 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 Perception
3-4	Focus: Perception (Smelling)
5	Focus: Cunning (Research)
6	Focus: Dexterity (Crafting)



7-8 +1 Cunning

9 Focus: Cunning (Arcane Lore)

10-11 Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)

12 +1 Willpower

## DRUID

At the fringes of civilization, where the strength of mortals gives way to untamed nature and the mysterious and cruel whims of wild powers, the smallest of rural communities struggle to survive. They do not struggle alone. Druids, wise in the ways of mortals and hardened against the strength of the wild, protect humans from indifferent nature and protect nature from encroaching civilization.

Though born of a mortal mother, druids live between two worlds, not completely at home in either of them. They feel comfortable in the thick forest, with the grass touching their bare feet and the wind blowing against their skin. In their hearts, though, all druids know that somewhere a community needs them. Thus, druids are not only masters of nature but also leaders of their rural communities.

Druids heal the sick, bless the crops, care for the cattle, and pacify the spirits of the wild. Just as nature is both generous and merciless, however, a druid's anger is a sight to behold. Capable of tracking their prey until the end of the world, and armed with a vast knowledge of venoms, druids have no pity or mercy for any enemy of nature.

### PLAYING A DRUID

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

- Add 1 to your Constitution ability. Living in the wilderness strengthens both body and spirit.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Cunning (Healing) or Constitution (Stamina).
- You can speak and read Common.
- 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 Perception
3-4	Focus: Perception (Tracking)
5	Focus: Communication (Animal Handling)
6	Focus: Constitution (Stamina)
7-8	+1 Magic
9	Focus: Cunning (Poison Lore)
10-11	Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
12	+1 Willpower

### ILLUSIONIST

Many mages live undisturbed in their towers, oblivious to the concerns of the common folk, working in silence. Many enjoy their solitude, but not all. Some mages, by choice or circumstance, take their abilities to amaze and confound directly to the people and weave magic into beautiful displays of color, sound, and emotion. Some seek fame or an ever-growing crowd of followers, while others merely hope the audience's generosity will allow them to eat that day. If the viewers don't part with their money voluntarily, sometimes a friendly hand can take advantage of the distractions the beautiful illusions provide.

Some illusionists put their efforts into going unnoticed. Smuggling can

be a lucrative way to earn a living, and some mages truly enjoy the thrill and adventure of such endeavors. Many people value the skill and experience of making things look like something completely different, and they prize the skill in magical deception.

### PLAYING AN ILLUSIONIST

If you choose to play an illusionist, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Magic ability. Practice, practice, practice makes a master.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Dexterity (Legerdemain) or Communication (Performance).
- You can speak and read Common.
- 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 Dexterity
3-4	Focus: Dexterity (Stealth)
5	Focus: Communication (Deception)
6	Focus: Perception (Seeing)
7-8	+1 Communication
9	Focus: Communication (Bargaining)
10-11	Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
12	+1 Willpower

### SEER

Knowledge is power, and some mages dedicate themselves wholly to discovering all that they can. When most people think of a seer, they picture an old crone hunched over a crystal ball or reading someone's palm, but these mages appear in many places and guises. Everyone needs to know something, and the ability to look further and deeper—both in time and

space—is extremely valuable to high and low alike.

The most talented or charismatic seers whisper in the ears of generals, guild masters, and kings. A carefully chosen word can topple an empire, and the interpretation of a dream can change the fate of a world. Prophecies tend to be fulfilled in precisely this way.

Every seer is a force to be reckoned with, but not all seers are concerned with such weighty affairs. Some simply travel the world looking to learn something new. Others have seen their own destiny and struggle to fulfill it.

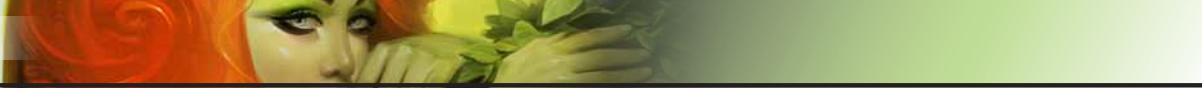
### PLAYING A SEER

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

- Add 1 to your Perception ability. Opening the eye of the mind also enables one to see what others don't.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Communication (Investigation) or Perception (Empathy).
- You can speak and read Common and Ancient.
- 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 (Persuasion)
5	Focus: Cunning (Historical Lore)
6	Focus: Perception (Searching)
7-8	+1 Magic
9	Focus: Cunning (Cryptography)
10-11	Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
12	+1 Willpower



# Ask the Kobold

## *Flat-Footed in Heavy Armor*

By Skip Williams  
Art by Chris McFann

**What Dexterity penalties does a character suffer when wearing armor? Does heavy armor (say, plate) hurt your initiative rolls, Reflex saves, and Dexterity checks? It seems that the heaviest armor could hurt your Armor Class—how is that possible?**

Armor limits what you can do with your Dexterity, but only as noted under Armor Qualities. Here's a summary, along with some comments:

### MAXIMUM DEXTERITY BONUS

The heaviest and thickest suits of armor restrict your movements just enough to make truly fancy and dramatic defensive moves impossible (carrying too much weight can do the same thing to a character). This restriction limits how much Dexterity you can use during combat.

The Armor and Shields table shows the maximum Dexterity Bonus you can apply to your Armor Class when you wear the listed armor. This applies to both your regular and your touch Armor Class. So, wearing some kinds of armor can literally make your Armor Class worse. That is more likely to happen with your touch Armor Class than with your regular Armor Class, but if you have an extremely high Dexterity score, you might be better off wearing light or no armor—provided you're not too worried about being caught flat-footed (see next question).

Maximum Dexterity bonus from armor (or a load) does not apply to

Reflex saving throws, initiative checks, or any other kind of Dexterity or Dexterity-related checks (but read on for notes about wearing armor when you're not proficient).

### ARMOR CHECK PENALTY

A suit of armor's armor check penalty affects a character's ability to use Dexterity- and Strength-based skills, as the armor limits a character's movement. An asterisk beside the key ability under the Ability column of the Skills table indicates which skills this penalty affects. Double the check penalty for armor (or a load) applies to the Swim skill in 3.5 games, but not in *Pathfinder* RPG.

An armor check penalty does not apply to Reflex saving throws.

An armor check penalty does not apply to Dexterity checks unless the character's not proficient with the armor worn. In such cases, the character suffers the armor's (and/or shield's) armor check penalty on all Dexterity- and Strength-based ability and skill checks. The penalty also applies to the character's attack rolls.

Initiative is a Dexterity-based check, so an armor check penalty applies to the character's initiative rolls when non-proficient with the armor.

A Reflex saving throw is not a check, and it is not subject to an armor check



penalty, even when non-proficient with any worn armor.

A shield's armor check penalty stacks with any armor check penalty from worn armor.

**I'm struggling with the logic behind the rules for losing your Dexterity bonus in combat. The average person with a Dexterity of 10 has an Armor Class of 10 when unarmored. This represents the average ability to move around, right? And a Dexterity of 10 is better than 8 (below average mobility). So by what logic is an average person who is caught flat-footed, or a victim of a successful feint, or in a situation where an attack can't really be avoided (such as climbing a rope), no easier to hit than a person trying to avoid the attack? And yet, a person with 12 Dexterity becomes easier to hit in all those same situations. How**

## does this make sense? How can a 10 always be better than 8, and 12 not always be better than 10?

It's worth reminding everyone here that a character's denied a Dexterity bonus when caught flat-footed, not his Dexterity modifier; if the character has a Dexterity penalty to this modifier, he remains klutzy enough to be easier to attack even when he's unable to actively resist the attack.

The logic behind the rule here is that in some situations having a Dexterity score that's better than average is eroded, such as when wearing some of the heavier armor. In other situations the benefits of a good Dexterity score are negated altogether, such as when a character is caught flat-footed or is otherwise unable to move his buns out of the way of an oncoming attack.

In such cases, the character is not entirely helpless (helpless characters are very easy to attack and are subject to an instant kill via the coup de grace rule), but his ability to anticipate an attack and react to it is strictly limited. These situations are equalizers—at least when in comes to Dexterity.

## WHY CHARACTERS GET FLAT FEET

Player characters regularly face the perils of battle. At the best of times, they enter combat fully prepared to give as good as they get. Player characters also have an amazing talent for getting into fights where they have grave disadvantages: They squeeze themselves into narrow spaces, blunder into ambushes, and sometimes they're literally caught napping.

The design team quickly realized there's a world of difference between fighting when you're prepared, alert, and free to do whatever you can to emerge at the top of the heap; and fighting when you're slow and stupid.

When a character's aware of an attack and is free to do something about it, he can try some fancy footwork, parry with a weapon, or make some other action (either dramatic or subtle) to foil an attack; that's when his Dexterity comes into play. There are times, however,

when the character cannot (or just plain does not) attempt any such maneuvers.

The classic situation of this kind is when someone attacks a sleeping character—we're talking normal sleep here. When a character is snoozing, he's only vaguely aware of what's going on around him, and he can't see an attack coming. He might wake up in the instant before an attack hits, but not in time to mitigate the attack. In this situation, it really doesn't matter how well the character can parry, duck, or dodge—those options aren't available to him.

The rules could impose a flat Armor Class penalty to cover such situations, or grant an attack bonus, but the design team decided not to do so. Eliminating the Dexterity bonus instead better reflects what's happening in the game world (the situation doesn't make using your Dexterity harder, it makes Dexterity largely irrelevant). We briefly considered eliminating a character's Dexterity modifier. We quickly rejected that idea, however, because we did not want characters with very low Dexterity scores becoming harder to attack when they were unaware or nearly immobile. If you're a lummoX, you're always a lummoX.

## PATHFINDER POISONS

In issue #20, "Ask the Kobold" explained how poison and disease work. The Kobold explained the rules for poison from the OGL system, with an initial saving throw and a second saving throw one minute later.

The *Pathfinder* RPG handles toxins a bit differently than what the Kobold described in issue #20. These rules introduce an onset time for some poisons, and poisons also generally have a duration during which further effects can occur. When exposed to a toxin, you either attempt a save immediately (if there isn't an onset time), or you count down the onset time and attempt the save when the onset occurs. In any case, you're subject to effects from the toxin at intervals (as noted in the poison's description) until

## Reader Emails

Email is a great way to submit questions or comments to Ask the Kobold, so keep them coming. Often, readers request a personal reply and the Kobold is happy to do so. If you'd like a reply, please send from a valid email address and adjust your spam filters to allow a reply; often, adding the Kobold (tsrsage@aol.com) to your address book is all you need to do.

the duration expires or until you meet the poison's cure condition (also as noted in the poison's description).

All the Kobold's other observations about toxins apply equally to the OGL and *Pathfinder* RPG rules.

In the future, the Kobold will take more care to indicate differences between the two rule sets. In general, however, the Kobold's advice applies to both sets of rules. Ω



XII

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4<sup>E</sup>, SYSTEM-NEUTRAL, and PATHFINDER  
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# The Scriveners of Allain

By Brian A. Liberge

Art by Rick Hershey

**N**early a century ago the wizard Hakren slowly grew in power in the shadows of his tower. His obsessions led him to delve deeper into ancient summoning rituals, calling on beings from other planes to answer his queries and do his bidding. His five personal scribes worked madly to copy and refresh the protective wards needed to keep him safe and keep his targets under control. Not everyone appreciated his work, and soon Hakren found himself in harm's way. The glyphs of his five scribes had been twisted against their original purpose and the servants watched as their master was torn apart by infernal claws. It was this day the scriveners were formed.

- Excelor Theresbin,  
Historian Scribe or Friula

## THE CULT NOW

The original five were discovered and killed for their plotting and devotion to the dark arts (see *KOBOLD QUARTERLY* #8). Glyph magic was banned in the magocracy Allain; a land where unfettered alchemy and consorting with creatures of the Far Beyond is still acceptable practice. The students of the five continued their practice of glyph magic in secret, expanding their knowledge of the word as written, and the power hidden within those words.

The scriveners still operate today. Their society includes spurned scribes, obsessed scholars, and devious arcanists. Each member sees the power of bending word to one's will, and their candlelight devotion often burns from night into day. To protect the society as a whole, few members understand the scope of the scriveners' numbers. New

members are recruited individually, often at moments of desperation. A skilled mage takes them in, shows them the power of the glyphs and then helps the initiate take revenge on whomever crossed them. This retribution is often all it takes to secure a new member's devotion to the scriveners—though sometimes, the initiation fails, and the local scriveners are rooted out with fire and magical inquisitions.

## INK MAGIC

The scriveners' magic springs from the written word. Much of this power is passive or slow acting: the subtle changes to the wording in a document so it favors them, the twisting of a ritual scroll so that its caster finds unexpected results, or simply the ability to absorb a tome much faster than one could ever read. When pressed into combat, their devotion to ink often is reflected in their abilities. Their arcane missiles blot out one's vision, and glyphs of protection are written into the air.

More experienced mages often summon living glyphs, though at some risk. The glyphs will follow up to three commands of whomever summons them, but actively work against being dismissed. The caster must phrase commands carefully to ensure the creature departs once a task is complete otherwise, once they are free of commands, the glyphs develop their own schemes.

## OPERATIONS

Once initiates have the basic skills needed for study, they are left to train on their own. Members pursue their own goals, and those with the power

to do so rarely want others around to get in their way. Finding the mage who originally recruited you can be nearly impossible task, as those mages remember their time as an initiate and purposefully make themselves scarce. An initiate has no choice but to wait, in growing frustration, jealousy, and rage. When a full glyph mage does require assistance, they easily find lesser mages eager for the chance to learn a new spell or ritual in exchange for their temporary obedience. All scriveners may advance in power and knowledge but always serve their own needs.

## THE VERSES

The most influential mages within the scriveners call themselves the Verses, after the original five scribes of Hakren. Fully devoted to glyph magic, they have survived through their own scheming and the schemes of others, and they know all the scriveners within their area. These great wizards scheme endlessly against the archmages of Allain and even each other. To secure their power against such great foes they often turn to otherworldly patrons.

The most common patron is the devil Titivillus, archdevil of the written word (see *KOBOLD QUARTERLY* issue #1). No other being knows more about the power of ink taken form, and his own cult has grown strong within the scriveners' ranks. The Verses know well that summoning the devil's aspect is a tricky affair and only do so with great caution. Lesser initiates also may learn of Titivillus in their studies, and those impatient souls sometimes lack the wariness of the wise.

## SUMMONING THE GREAT SCRIBE

The Aspect of Titivillus keeps a very misleading appearance. At first glance he appears as a man of slight build, dark skin and thinning hair. A closer look reveals small horns on his forehead and text scrawled across his robes in ancient tongues. Still, compared to the mages of Allain, he rarely stands out.

When summoned to the mortal plane the Aspect of Titivillus always takes its time completing its task. He gathers information, pleasantly conversing with others in the guise of a scholar, wizard, or minor noble. When any appearance would be noticed, he makes full use of his invisibility, though only if he must.

His innate powers to alter the written word are the primary reason to risk summoning so powerful a devil. Perhaps a new series of laws is being drawn up and a powerful noble wants things changed subtly in her favor. A rebellious organization may want to hide runes of power in a dedication to a new bridge so that when they are read, they explode with arcane might. Perhaps, like the historic Hakren, a powerful mage has been unkind to his lowly scribes, and one of them calls for assistance with a grisly revenge.

**DESTRUCTIVE GLYPH** **LEVEL 14**  
**SOLDIER**  
Small natural construct (ink) **XP 1000 or 0 XP if Summoned**

**HP 140; Bloodied 70 Initiative +15**  
**AC 30; Fortitude 26, Reflex 27, Will 24**  
**Perception +8**

**Speed 6, climb 4**  
**STANDARD ACTIONS**

**X or O Jolt (force) \* At-Will**

*Attack:* Melee 1 or Ranged 5 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex

*Hit:* 3d6 + 12 force damage, and the target falls prone.

**TRIGGERED ACTIONS**

**Illusory Reflex \*** **Recharge**  
when bloodied

*Trigger:* The destructive glyph is missed by a melee attack.

*Effect (Immediate Reaction):* The destructive glyph turns invisible until the end of its next turn.

**Skills** Athletics +17, Acrobatics +18, Stealth +18

**Str 20 (+12) Dex 23 (+13) Wis 12 (+8)**  
**Con 20 (+12) Int 10 (+7) Cha 10 (+7)**

**Alignment** unaligned  
**Languages** Common, Supernal

**SCRIVENER** **LEVEL 15 MINION**  
**INITIATE** **ARTILLERY**  
Medium natural humanoid **XP 300**

**HP 1; Initiative +11**  
a missed attack never damages a minion  
**AC 27; Fortitude 26, Reflex 28, Will 27**  
**Perception +16**

**Speed 6**

**STANDARD ACTIONS**

**X Dagger (weapon) \* At-Will**

*Attack:* Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC  
*Hit:* 11 damage.

**O Ink Blot Bolt (acid) \* At-Will**

*Attack:* Ranged 15 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex

*Hit:* 16 acid damage, and the target is blinded until the end of its next turn.

**TRIGGERED ACTIONS**

**Ward of Protection \* Encounter**

*Trigger:* The scrivener initiate is hit with a ranged or area attack.

*Effect (Immediate Interrupt):* The scrivener initiate gains +4 bonus to all defenses against the triggering attack.

**Skills** Arcana +18, Bluff +13, Insight +16, Stealth +16

**Str 12 (+8) Dex 18 (+11) Wis 18 (+11)**  
**Con 16 (+10) Int 22 (+13) Cha 13 (+8)**

**Alignment** unaligned  
**Languages** Common

**SCRIVENER GLYPH** **LEVEL 16**  
**MAGE** **CONTROLLER**

Medium natural humanoid **XP 1,400**  
**HP 154; Bloodied 77 Initiative +12**  
**AC 31; Fortitude 28, Reflex 30, Will 29**  
**Perception +18**

**Speed 6**

**STANDARD ACTIONS**

**X Staff (weapon) \* At-Will**

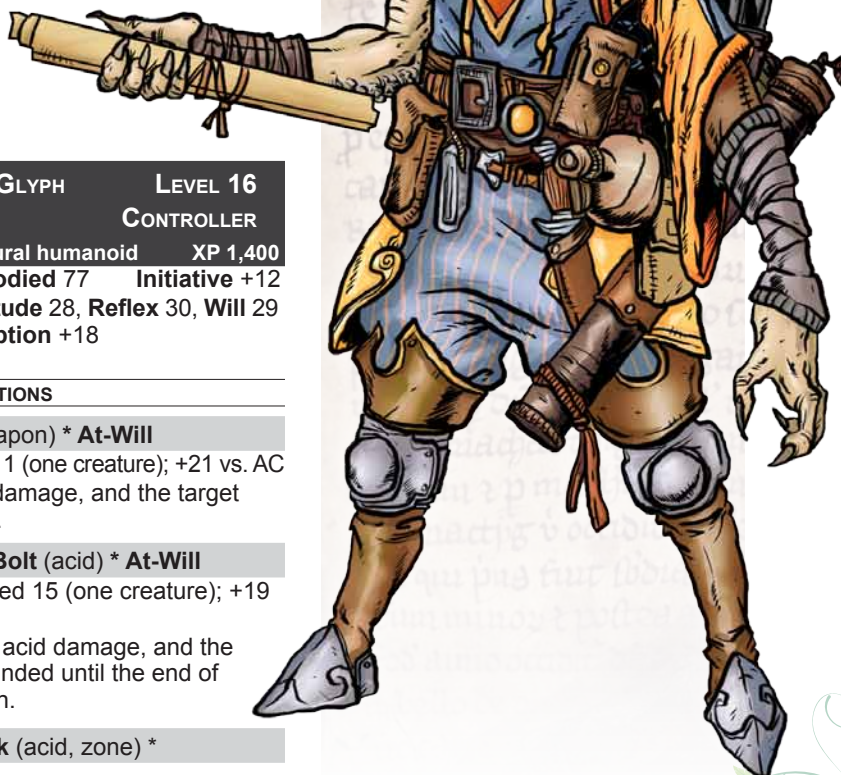
*Attack:* Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC  
*Hit:* 3d6 + 8 damage, and the target falls prone.

**O Ink Blot Bolt (acid) \* At-Will**

*Attack:* Ranged 15 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex

*Hit:* 3d8 + 11 acid damage, and the target is blinded until the end of its next turn.

**Sea of Ink (acid, zone) \* Encounter**





**Attack:** Close burst 2 (enemies in the burst); +19 vs. Fortitude  
**Hit:** 3d6 + 8 acid damage.

**Effect:** The burst creates a zone of swirling ink, centered on the glyph mage, that lasts until the end of its next turn. Each square in the burst is lightly obscured and enemies treat each square as difficult terrain. The zone moves with glyph mage.

**Sustain Minor:** The zone persists until the end of the glyph mage's next turn.

**MINOR ACTIONS**

**Summon Glyph \* Recharge 6**  
(conjunction)

**Effect:** The glyph mage conjures a destructive glyph to an unoccupied square within 4 squares of it. The destructive glyph acts immediately after the glyph mage. The glyph mage can dismiss the destructive glyph as a standard action.

**Skills** Arcana +20, Bluff +18, Insight +18, Stealth +17

**Str** 12 (+9) **Dex** 18 (+12) **Wis** 21 (+13)

**Con** 18 (+12) **Int** 25 (+15) **Cha** 20 (+13)

**Alignment** unaligned

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven

**ASPECT OF** **LEVEL 18**  
**TITIVILLUS** **ELITE LURKER**  
**Medium immortal** **XP 4,000**  
**humanoid (devil)**

**HP 272; Bloodied 136 Initiative +16**  
**AC 32; Fortitude 30, Reflex 32, Will 33**  
**Perception +19**

**Speed 8, fly 6, teleport 6 Darkvision**  
**Immune** disease, sleep; **Resist 10**  
 acid, 10 cold, 15 fire, 10 poison

**Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1**

**TRAITS**

**Fear Aura (charm, fear) \* Aura 3**

While in the aura, creatures take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and saving throws.

**STANDARD ACTIONS**

**X Ink-Stained Claw \* At-Will**

**Attack:** Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. AC

**Hit:** 3d8 + 13 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of its next turn.

**Hellfire Bolt (fire, force) \* At-Will**

**Attack:** Ranged 15 (one creature); +21 vs. Reflex

**Hit:** 3d8 + 20 fire and force damage, and the target is pushed up to 2 squares.

**Veil of Trust \* Encounter**  
(charm, psychic)

**Attack:** Close burst 5 (enemies in the burst); +21 vs. Will

**Hit:** 3d6 + 9 psychic damage. The target cannot attack the Aspect of Titivillus or his allies until the Aspect of Titivillus or one of his allies makes an attack against the target (save ends).

**MINOR ACTIONS**

**Greater Devil's Mark \* Recharge 5, 6**

**Attack:** Close burst 5 (one creature in the burst); +21 vs. Will

**Hit:** The target suffers from greater devil's mark (save ends). While under the effect of greater devil's mark the target grants combat advantage to all creatures with the devil keyword within line of sight.

**First Failed Saving Throw:** While under the effect of greater devil's mark, the target is also dominated.

**Unseen Enemy \* At-Will**

**Effect:** The Aspect of Titivillus becomes invisible until it attacks or until the end of its next turn.

**Skills** Arcana +20, Bluff +21, Diplomacy +21, History +20, Insight +19, Religion +20, Stealth +21

**Str** 16 (+12) **Dex** 24 (+16) **Wis** 20 (+14)

**Con** 22 (+15) **Int** 23 (+15) **Cha** 25 (+16)

**Alignment** evil

**Languages** Supernal (understands all written languages), telepathy 10 Ω

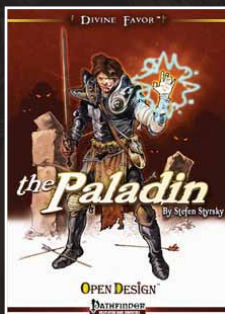
OPEN DESIGN  
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# PACK SOME EXTRA PUNCH

Designed by Stefen Styrsky and developed by Sigfried Trent and Wolfgang Baur, **DIVINE FAVOR: THE PALADIN** gives an in-depth exploration of the paladin class and useful advice on making the most of it.

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# NINE TREASURES OF DEEP MIDGARD

By Nicholas Milasich

Art by Rick Hershey

The underdark is a place of strange creatures and strange goods, things found nowhere else and rarely brought to the surface. To inspire that weird underworld vibe, use some of these treasures for underdark adventuring, or provide them as available goods brought up from the depths by enterprising svirfneblin, dwarves, darakhul, or kobolds.

Note that these treasures are so foreign to the surface world, an Appraise check is required to both identify and gauge their value. Other skills useful for identifying each item are listed in parentheses. The listed value and weight of the items are for the combined set.

## TINNED HEADS

*A set of seven firmly bound tin canisters, 8 inches in diameter and 1 foot and a half tall, marked with odd script.*

**Appraisal DC 25; Value 700 gp; Weight 14 lbs.**

Each tin contains an animated, severed head of a human, dwarf, or derro on a gilded wooden stand. Crafted in the Ghoul Imperium, each head acts as a sage in regard to the subject matter indicated on its pedestal in ghoul script. If convinced to assist (Diplomacy DC 25), the heads add a +2 competency bonus to any Knowledge check on their subject, acting like a library for research purposes in regard to their area of expertise. The areas include: Appraisal, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (local [Zobeck]), Knowledge (nobility [Ghoul Imperium]), Profession (brewer), and, Survival (underdark).



## BLUE JADE

*A set of 50 bars of faintly glowing blue jade.*

**Appraisal DC 15; Value 2,500 or 250 gp; Weight 25 lbs.**

These are the currency of several dark elven trading groups. They are worth 50 gp each to a dark elf or svirfneblin, or 5 gp on the surface to a jeweler.

## DERRO MESSAGE GEARBOX

*A bizarre collection of gears that should not mesh but do, made from all manner of metals and bits of bone. The gearbox is about the size of a small brick and roughly box-shaped.*

**Appraisal DC 30 (Craft (clockwork) DC 20); Value 250 gp; Weight 1 lb.**

This is a set of derro clockworks, an item that is both trap and container. Once appraised, it requires either a Disable Device or Craft (clockwork) check to open, with a DC 10 +2d6. If the check fails by more than 5 points, brass claws and chewing gears spring forth, inflicting 1d6 slashing damage to the would-be

opener, and 1 hp bleed damage. Within the box is a small slip of paper, with this message in Aklo (the language of derro): "446: When the moone in her flyte is ceased, than the childryne of madnesse shall be released."

## HUMANOID TROPHY HIDES

*21 small tanned hides, with hideous faces peering out of their centers.*

**Appraisal DC 18; Value 105 gp; Weight 42 lbs.**

These human, dwarf, kobold, and derro hides serve as status symbols to various monsters and inhabitants of the underdark. They are valuable only to evil or bestial races.

## DROW BRANDY

*Two twisted glass bottles filled with a pale blue liquid.*

**Appraisal DC 20; Value 100 gp; Weight 4 lbs.** These bottles of drow brandy smell sweet, and their liquor acts as a powerful intoxicant with euphoric properties.

## DROW BRANDY

**Type** ingested; **Addiction** major, Fortitude DC 20

**Price** 50 gp

**Effects** 1 hour; Immunity to fear effects for 1d4 minutes, -2 penalty to all attack and skill rolls, euphoria (-2 penalty on saves against illusions and mind-affecting effects)

**Damage** 1d4 Wis damage

## WARPWEED

*Seven packets of patterned silk, each with 5-inch-long threads of dried plant material.*

**Appraisal** DC 20 (Profession (herbalist) DC 15); **Value:** 700 gp.  
**Weight** –.

These rhizomes of warpweed, a hallucinogenic fungus that can be either smoked or burnt as incense. Warpweed makes the user's wildest fantasies seem real, with enticing delusions of power and ability. Furthermore, the fantasies reshape the warped smoke, so those nearby can see their outward shape (without sound, of course).

## WARPWEED

**Type** inhaled; **Addiction** moderate, Fortitude DC 16

**Price** 100 gp

**Effects** 1 hour; -1d4 penalty to Wisdom, -2 penalty on saves against illusions and mind-affecting effects

**Effect** after 1 hour; pleasant hallucinations (target is staggered for 1d4 minutes and suffers -4 penalty to all attack and skill rolls for 1d20 minutes)

**Damage** 1d2 Wis damage

## ANIMATED EYEBALLS

*33 jellied eyeballs, each floating in gelatin in a tiny glass jar. The eyes swivel to follow nearby movement.*

**Appraisal** DC 23; **Value:** 165 gp; **Weight** 16.5 lbs. These are collect-ables in the ghoul kingdoms, said to improve lifesense and perception for the undead. They are worth 5 gp each to a denizen of the deepearth.

## FORGEPRISM

*7 small ingots of strange metals, glittering blue, green, and purple.*

**Appraisal** DC 17 (Profession (blacksmith) 17); **Value** 500 gp; **Weight** 14 lbs.

These bars are trace metals required for the forging of mithral and adamantine. They can be sold to smith workers or gear workers.

## CARVED DRAGON FANGS

*A set of 4 scrimshawed fangs in a velvet-line wooden case. The scrimshawing is incredibly delicate and shows several scenes of underdark industry: Mining, fungus harvesting, herding, and gem cutting.*

**Appraisal** DC 15; **Value** 1000 gp; **Weight** 2 lbs.

These teeth are from a young cave dragon or deep dragon, carved by the reclusive dwarves of the deep underdark. Ω

**“Whenever I’m not playing a roleplaying game, I’m thinking one thing ...**

**Why am I not playing a roleplaying game?”**

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**Spring 2012**

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Written by **Matthew J. Hanson**  
Edited by **Spike Y Jones**  
Art by **Hugo Solis**  
Layout by **Rick Hershey**  
Published by **Wolfgang Baur**

This stand-alone adventure is designed for a single player with no GM. All you need to play is some dice (d6, d8, and 20), a piece of paper, and this book.

The rules are explained as you play. Begin with paragraph 1 and proceed from there, taking notes (including the paragraph path) as you already follow.

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# Saints of Mavros

By Christina Stiles  
Art by Russ Nicholson

The clerics of Mavros number his saints at 20, and the 25 *Martial Books* of Mavros, the god's holy texts, are replete with tales of their deeds. Among these 20 saints, St. Brigantia of Valera and Saint Whiteskull of Bratislor, have attained godhood in their own right, the former being highly respected throughout Midgard, and the latter only being known among the populace of Morgau and Doresh and among the ghouls and darakhul of the Ghoulish Imperium.

## ST. BRIGANTIA

*Lady of a Thousand Victories, the War Queen, the Steadfast Defender, the Great Archer, the Fist of Battle*

**Domains:** Glory, Protection, Strength, War

**Subdomains:** Defense, Honor, Resolve, Tactics

**Alignment:** Lawful Neutral

**Favored Weapon:** Long spear (longbow in Perunalia)

St. Brigantia is the goddess of staunch defenders and professional sellswords. Those honoring her have a deep regard for their profession, and never betray their duty or betray their employer (in the case of mercenaries) once they accept an assignment. Brigantia's followers study war in all its aspects, and mercenaries dedicated to her alternately select employment as defenders or attackers to improve their tactical skills at each. Her more fanatical followers always choose the position of the underdog, taking on the greatest odds so they might enjoy the greatest rewards in heaven, including being selected as an einherjar in the Northlands.

**Worshippers:** Although shrines to Brigantia exist in many of Mavros' temples, mercenaries praying to Brigantia need not visit them to seek her blessing. Brigantia, in fact, prefers prayers to her be delivered on the field in the heat of battle. Mercenaries seeking her favor dedicate first blood and first kills to her, and offering one's own blood with a drawn dagger across the palm before a fray shows deep respect for her, and is believed to draw her attention to a battle.

In Perunalia, Brigantia is seen as the Steadfast Defender and the Great Archer. Perunalia has long held their walls against invaders, and they call Brigantia to aid their stand against Mahroti aggressors and advances from Magdaran war parties. Just like the mercenaries, the Daughters also show their reverence to St. Brigantia by drawing blood with their arrowheads before a contest to show their respect to the Great Archer and beseech her attention to their displays of mastery. This goddess holds the affection of all Perunalian, and their households and archery schools always display some representation of her with her magical longbow, *True Strike*, whether it be a painting, sculpture, piece of pottery, or some other artistic depiction.

**Symbols and Books:** St. Brigantia's most common symbols are the spear and the longbow. Cults worshipping her for her strength regard her as the Fist of Battle, and wear a symbol of a silver-fisted, gauntleted hand upon a black disc. Brigantia has no holy texts of her own. Her followers revere Mavros' holy books: the 25 *Martial Books* and the mystical *Soldier's Journey*.



## Famous Shrines and Priests:

Because Brigantia's priests seek their goddess on the battlefield, few true shrines exist to her in Midgard. Those existing few are mere altars residing in Mavros' temple. In Perunalia, however, where the Daughters are forced to defend their homeland almost daily, and where the Great Archer is greatly revered, they host dedicated shrines to her within each of their five great archery schools in Sephaya. At these schools, a cadre of priestesses resides within each, though only women may consult with them.

**Masks:** In Perunalia, where Perun/Mavros is viewed more as the God of Thunder, Brigantia is sometimes

considered his feminine Mask; she is his war aspect and the sensible tactician. In other lands, she's viewed as a Mask of Sif, leader of the Valkyries.

**Other Faiths:** Saint Brigantia holds no faith as her greatest enemy or ally, as her soldiers and mercenaries are called upon to fight on various sides of any given conflict. Her followers view other faiths as pawns in the Great Battle, and they utilize them as such. Saint Brigantia has never married or born children. Her love of battle keeps her attention focused elsewhere. In this regard, she and the demigoddess of Perunalia, Duchess Vasilka Soulay, have much in common, though the object of their interest differs. Saint Brigantia does counsel the demigoddess, and if she truly calls anyone an ally, it would be Duchess Soulay.

**What the Brigantia Demands:**

Brigantia demands professionalism, a devotion to perfecting one's martial skills and tactical knowledge, and honor to one's employer and employment contracts.

**ST. WHITESKULL OF BRATISLOR**  
*Legion Lord, Dwarf Slayer, He Who Chooses War over Hunger, the Skull of Bratislor, the Sword of the Imperium, the Warring Ghoul*

**Domains:** Death, Glory, Nobility, War  
**Subdomains:** Heroism, Leadership, Tactics, Undead

**Alignment:** Neutral Evil

**Favored Weapon:** Greatsword

The subterranean-dwelling ghouls and darakhul of the Ghoul Imperium worship St. Whiteskull as a masterful god of war, one who, as a mortal ghoul, brought about the decimation of many of the Imperium's enemies, including dwarves, svirfneblin, and dark creepers. His leadership and tactics against larger forces brought him fame and fast promotion, for he excelled at using his enemies' own troops to destroy them—few ghouls could overcome their hunger to convert the dead to legions, and yet he had managed to control both his and his army's hunger to meet the greater goal of victory.

The Skull of Bratislor's tremendous exploits for the Imperium gained Morgau's attention above, and soon the shroud-eaters recruited Whiteskull and his ghoul followers to aid their wars against their neighbors, particularly the Ironcrag dwarves. With his assistance, they captured the Grisal Marches, which now belong to Morgau.

He led several more successful campaigns against the dwarves before his luck failed.

The dwarves called upon their Ravan connections and sent forth an army of clockwork soldiers immune to the army of ghouls' paralyzing attacks to destroy them. Furthermore, Whiteskull's army could not raise any destroyed soldiers against the Cantons, nor could they or the other undead among their ranks subsist upon the metal men. Soon the undead were starving and their ranks in disarray. This troop solution proved very wise for the dwarves, and it was the one tactic the savvy Whiteskull had not counted upon. He fell to his death in battle, and the clockwork soldiers routed his army.

**Worshippers:** Darakhul, ghouls, shroud-eaters, and the human followers in the Ghoul Imperium and Morgau and Doresh. Soldiers, nobles, and mercenaries turn to St. Whiteskull to beseech his wisdom in battle.

**Symbols and Books:** St. Whiteskull's symbol is a greatsword embedded in a white skull with glowing eyes upon an obsidian disc. His copious journals and maps have been copied prolifically, and his followers compiled them into one vast tome. His servants call this compilation the 26<sup>th</sup> *Martial Book* of Mavros, but the priests of the God of War and Thunder so far have refused to accept the text as holy canon.

**Famous Shrines and Priests:** The most famous Temple of St. Whiteskull lies in Bratislor in Morgau, and it is a small-but-growing temple, for the shroud-eaters and the nobles among their lands still find Whiteskull's tactics admirable and worth revisiting in their continued goals to expand. Another temple lies in the

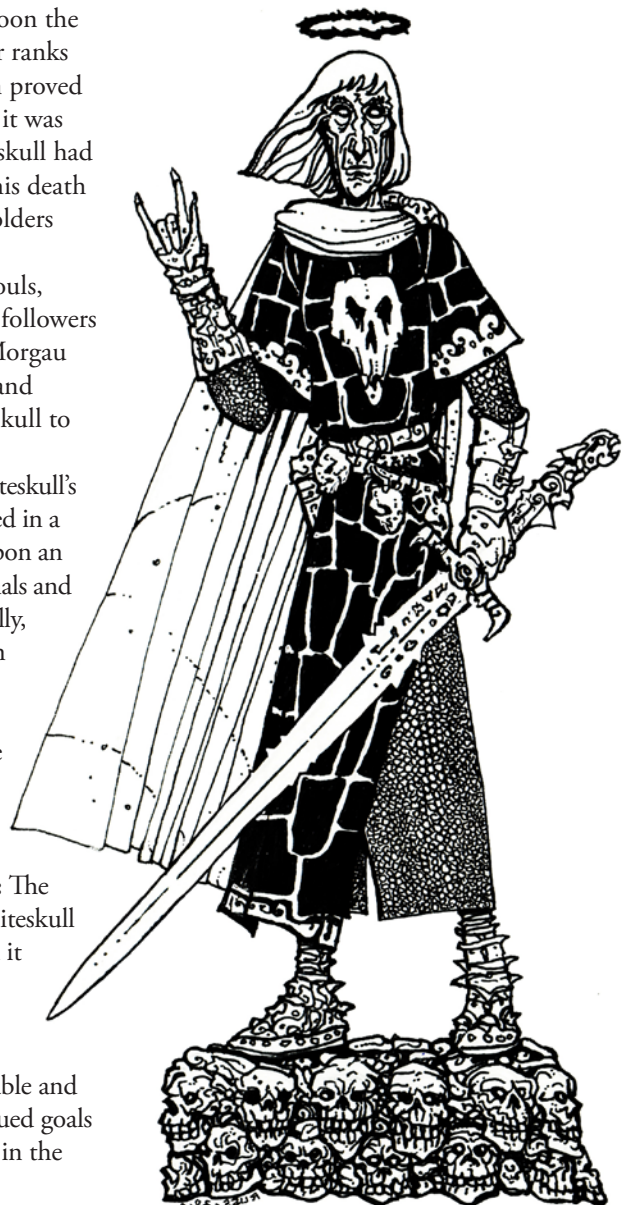
White City of the Ghoul Imperium, St. Whiteskull's former home.

**Masks:** St. Whiteskull is considered a Mask of Mavros as he would appear in undeath. No other known Masks are associated with him.

**Other Faiths:** The deity is on good terms with the church of Mordiggian, the Hunger God, as well as Marena, the Blood Goddess. His worshippers often work in conjunction with these other faiths to bring battles to victory.

**What the Whiteskull Demands:**

The ability and perseverance to overcome one's weaknesses to ensure glory and victory, heroism in the face of vast numbers, and nobility in one's leadership. Ω



# White Tongue, Black Heart

By David Schwartz  
Art by Cory Trego-Erdner

With her body paralyzed by Kergart's magic, Rafiyya's eyes turned to the wizard's mouth. A glistening pale tongue slid from between Kergart's lips—no, not slid. It crawled on a dozen insectile legs. The tip split into a pair of wicked mandibles that clacked with anticipation.

Many kinds of spellcasters may gain magical puissance by binding their souls to otherworldly spirits. Master and familiar form a symbiotic relationship that benefits both. Some arcanists take this relationship a step further, however, and allow their familiar to bind with their flesh.

## WITCH LOUSE

The creature resembles an enlarged white woodlouse—but a hand's width long. It hisses, extending mandibles sharp enough to cut flesh.

### WITCH LOUSE

**CR 2**
**XP 600**

NE Diminutive aberration (aquatic)

**Init** +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect magic*; Perception +6

**DEFENSE**
**AC** 17, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +4 size)

**hp** 13 (3d8)

**Fort** +1, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3

**Immune** mind-affecting effect

**OFFENSE**
**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +4 (1d2–2 plus poison)

**Space** 1 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

**Special Attacks** replace tongue

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 6th)

 Constant—*detect magic*

 3/day—*dominate animal* (DC 15), *lesser confusion* (DC 13)

 1/day—*suggestion* (DC 15), *water breathing*

 1/week—*commune* (6 questions, CL 12th)

**STATISTICS**
**Str** 6, **Dex** 17, **Con** 10, **Int** 13, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** -4; **CMD** 9 (19 attached; can't be tripped)

**Feats** Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Bluff)

**Skills** Acrobatics +9 (+5 to jump), Bluff +8, Climb +11, Escape Artist +9, Perception +6, Spellcraft +7, Stealth +15, Swim +11

**Languages** Aklo, Aquan, Common

**SQ** amphibious

**ECOLOGY**
**Environment** any water (coastal)

**Organization** solitary or infestation (2–12)

**Treasure** standard

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**
**Poison (Ex)** Bite—injury; save Fort DC 13; *frequency* 1/minute for 10 minutes; *effect* sleep for 1 minute; *cure* 1 save. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

**Replace Tongue (Ex)** A witch louse can enter the mouth of a willing or helpless living creature of Small or Medium size and suck the fluid from its victim's tongue; this does not wake a sleeping creature. Each minute the witch louse remains within its mouth, the target must make a DC 13 Fortitude save. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus. A creature that fails its save has its tongue desiccated. The witch louse may then attach itself to the nub of the host's tongue. Once attached, the witch louse acts as the host's tongue for all functions; the host


suffers no impairment, except the loss of its sense of taste.

If the host is willing or pinned, a creature can remove the witch louse with a successful CMB check to grapple, though an attached witch louse gains a +10 bonus to CMD to resist this attempt. If the witch louse is removed, a creature with a desiccated tongue can no longer produce intelligible speech (including command words and verbal components). A *heal* or *regenerate* spell is required to restore the target's tongue.

## A WEE AND SUBTLE BEASTIE

To all outward appearances, the witch louse is nothing more than a particularly large variety of aquatic louse. However, its innocuous appearance belies its malevolent intelligence. No mere parasites, these aberrations are drawn to arcane magic. Witch lice use insidious whispers to manipulate spellcasters for their own inscrutable purposes. Every witch louse seeks to replace the tongue of an arcanist so it may utter words of power, after a fashion.

The witch louse's oval body is roughly the size of a human tongue, though covered in pale, segmented chitin. The witch louse is surprisingly strong and flexible but not particularly sensitive. Its front mandibles produce a soporific poison. The witch louse has a second set of mandibles at its rear, but this pseudo-mouth serves only to attach the louse to its host.

Witch lice are intelligent and often speak several languages but never above a whisper. These seductive whispers can influence minds and drive listeners to distraction or impel them to perform evil acts. Witch lice also seem to commune with a wider intelligence. Although they do not exhibit full telepathy, they are often aware of incidents seen by others of their kind. Some describe it as an incipient hive mind. Others fear the witch lice are in contact with an aquatic entity of great power and malevolent aims.

Although native to salt water, witch lice can survive in fresh water and on land; indeed, these insidious

creatures might appear anywhere but the driest environments. Witch lice prefer to travel on or within other creatures, especially when leaving the water, because the host protects the relatively weak witch louse from physical dangers. With its spell-like abilities, the witch louse subtly directs its host toward the aberration's goal. Witch lice care little for hosts without magical talent; an incautious witch louse might be tracked by its tongueless victims.

Witch lice are not the product of natural evolution, and most sages believe they were given sapience by a magically adept aquatic race. A few speculate that the witch lice originate on another world. It may be that witch lice foreshadow an invasion from the sea or the sky.

A 7th-level spellcaster, if he has the Improved Familiar feat, can gain a witch louse as a familiar. While a witch louse familiar can operate independently of its master, it is rarely satisfied until its master is also its host.

## THE WHITE TONGUE

In their unscrupulous quest for greater power, some arcanists willingly allow a witch louse to replace their tongue. The witch louse promises the spellcaster new avenues of aberrant magic for the incidental cost of his sense of taste. These co-called bearers of the white tongue include magi, sorcerers, and witches, but mostly wizards. In addition to the benefits of an improved familiar, these casters gain access to the following feats:

### FAMILIAR FOCUS

Your familiar can maintain a spell you have cast.

**Prerequisites:** Combat Casting, familiar class feature

**Benefit:** As a swift action, your familiar takes over the responsibility of maintaining concentration for any single spell you have cast and are concentrating on. You can cast spells while your familiar concentrates on a spell. Your familiar must use a standard action each round to maintain concentration.

If necessary, your familiar makes concentration checks using your concentration modifier.

### WHITE TONGUE BITE

Your witch louse familiar can attack from within your mouth.

**Prerequisites:** Improved Familiar (witch louse), witch louse host

**Benefit:** You can strike with your tongue as a primary natural attack. Although you use your own abilities to make this attack, the damage and additional effects are those of your witch louse familiar's bite. The witch louse's poison DC is 12 + half your character level + its Constitution modifier.

### WHITE TONGUE DISPLAY

You use your witch louse familiar to disgust your opponents.

**Prerequisites:** Improved Familiar (witch louse), witch louse host

**Benefit:** When you demoralize an opponent with an Intimidation check you may choose to sicken the target rather than leave them shaken. If you beat the DC by 5 or more, you may choose to make the target nauseated as well. If you do, reduce the duration by half.

### WHITE TONGUE DOUBLETALK

Your witch louse familiar underscores your lies and coercions with whispered revelations of dark truths.

**Prerequisites:** Improved Familiar (witch louse), witch louse host

**Benefit:** Whenever a creature makes a Sense Motive check against your Bluff check, or a saving throw against an enchantment (compulsion) spell or effect you use, it must roll twice and take the worse result.

### WHITE TONGUE ENVOY

Aberrations recognize you as one of their own.

**Prerequisites:** Improved Familiar (witch louse), witch louse host

**Benefit:** If you do not conceal your witch louse familiar, the initial attitude of any aberration with an Intelligence score of 3 or greater you encounter is improved by one step (hostile becomes unfriendly, unfriendly becomes indifferent, etc.).

You can influence the attitude of an aberration of animal intelligence. This resembles a druid's wild empathy, but it affects only aberrations with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2. Use your character level in place of druid levels.

**KERGART****CR 10****XP 9,600**

Human enchanter 9/rogue 2

NE Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +1; **Senses** Perception +5 (+6 vs. traps)**DEFENSE****AC** 17, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex)**hp** 87 (9d6+2d8+42)**Fort** +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8**Defensive Abilities** evasion**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +1 *dagger* +7 (1d4), tongue +1 (see witch louse)**Ranged** ranged touch +6 touch (by spell)**Special Attacks** aura of despair (9 rounds/day), sneak attack +1d6**Arcane Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th; concentration +13)

7/day—dazing touch

**Wizard Spells Prepared** (CL 9th; concentration +13)5th—*dominate person*<sup>c</sup> (DC 19),*feblemind*<sup>c</sup> (DC 19), *hold monster*<sup>c</sup> (DC 19)4th—*arcane eye*, *confusion*<sup>c</sup> (DC 18),*dimension door*, *phantasmal killer* (DC 18)3rd—*dispel magic*, *hold person*<sup>c</sup> (DC 17), *slow* (DC 17), *suggestion*<sup>c</sup> (DC 17), *tongues*2nd—*acid arrow* (x2), *cat's grace*, *glitterdust* (DC 16), *hideous laughter*<sup>c</sup> (DC 15), *knock*1st—*mage armor* (cast), *magic aura*, *mount*, *sleep*<sup>c</sup> (DC 15), *shield*, *unseen servant*0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *daze*<sup>c</sup> (DC 14), *detect magic*, *read magic*<sup>c</sup> = enchantment (compulsion) spell works with White Tongue Doubletalk feat**Prohibited Schools** evocation, necromancy**STATISTICS****Str** 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 16, **Int** 19, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +4;**CMD** 21**Feats** Alertness, Defensive Combat Training, Great Fortitude, Improved Familiar, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Still Spell, Weapon Finesse, White Tongue Bite, White Tongue Doubletalk**Skills** Bluff +19, Diplomacy +19, Disguise +15, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (nobility) +18, Linguistics +8, Perception +5 (+6 vs. traps), Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft +18, Stealth

+15

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven**SQ** arcane bond (familiar), enchanting smile, rogue talents (finesse rogue), trapfinding, witch louse host**Combat Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds* (x2); **Other Gear** +1 *dagger*, *ring of protection* +2, *headband of vast intelligence* (*Knowledge [nobility]*), disguise kit plus various outfits and jewelry (worth 500 gp), spellbook, spell component pouch**CYMOTH****CR —**

NE witch louse familiar

**hp** 43**Melee** bite +4 (1d2–2 plus poison)**White Louse Poison (Ex)** Bite—injury; save Fort DC 17; *frequency* 1/minute for 10 minutes; *effect* sleep for 1 minute; *cure* 1 save. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

The enchanter Kergart is commonly called “the man with the silver tongue,” both for his flattering speech and for the silvery-sheen of his tongue. Though he variously claims his tongue is a sign

of magical puissance or otherworldly ancestry, in fact he has no tongue. The pale organ is the body of his witch louse familiar.

Kergart's face is otherwise average—expressive, but bearing no distinguishing features, save what Kergart adds by way of disguise. His dress varies with the role he assumes, but it tends toward the exotic: capes lined with ermine or satin, vests with puffed and slashed sleeves of spider silk, or magically rippling robes. He often uses *magic aura* to create the illusion that he carries more or fewer magical items than he really does.

As much a parasite as his familiar, Kergart poses as a sage or seer to bend the ear of a powerful individual. Once he gains the confidence of a merchant or noble, he drains their wealth with bad advice and false promises. When his victim is ruined—or his cover is blown—Kergart slips away.

Kergart prefers subtle magic. His specialty is enchantment, though his desire to command others leads Kergart to favor compulsion and eschew charm. If mental manipulation fails, Kergart conjures acid to burn his foes. In dangerous situations, the wizard often uses humanoid bodyguards or predatory animals. If he can't buy loyalty, he will magically compel it.

Kergart's familiar Cymoth is also his partner in crime. The enchanter believes he first encountered the witch louse not long after his original viper familiar died—he has no idea Cymoth engineered the viper's death. At that time, Kergart was a minor grifter, but the witch louse saw potential. Now Cymoth encourages Kergart to ever-more-daring scams and helps him develop the skills to pull them off.

Kergart is certainly an ideal host for the witch louse, providing Cymoth with the opportunity to announce magic and share in the spoils. Cymoth, however, has grander goals. By bringing ruin to the wealthy and powerful, it hopes to topple the kingdoms of the continent. Does Cymoth merely revel in destruction, or is it softening up the humanoids for another, greater power? Ω



# THE SHADOW LODGE INSURGENCY

*As recounted in the Pathfinder Chronicles by Marius Scipio*

By Nicholas Gray

Art by Ryan Portillo

From the years of 4710–4711 AR, the Shadow Lodge Insurgency saw the Pathfinder Society face one of its greatest threats: loyal agents of the Pathfinder Society and the rogue separatists of the Shadow Lodge battled to take control of the organization. The desired to transform the Society, and use the its resources to push dangerous new horizons, expand the Society's influence, and increase the personal power and wealth of these cabalists once they eliminated the Decemvirate—the traditional leaders of the Society—and their loyal agents. The Shadow Lodge Insurgency involved numerous clashes between small teams of agents of each side, attempted assassinations of important leaders and allies, races to retrieve invaluable artifacts, and political maneuverings across the Inner Sea region.

## ORIGINS OF THE INSURGENCY

The Shadow Lodge was a mysterious organization to the majority of Pathfinders at the start of the conflict. The Absalomian called Grandmaster Torch created of the secretive group. A former Pathfinder himself, Torch was cursed with permanent burns during an expedition into an Osirian ruin. Hoping to avoid incurring the wrath of Osirian officials over the failed and illegal delve, the Decemvirate disavowed and abandoned Torch. Not wanting other Pathfinders to suffer a similar fate, he spent years building up the Shadow Lodge as an organization designed to promote the safety and interests of individual Pathfinders in the face of the callous abuse by the Society's leadership.



In time Torch's vision was challenged by the enigmatic Spider—Andoren criminal mastermind and Peoples' Council representative Dorianna Ouidda—whose cabal grew in power within the Shadow Lodge. This circle of Pathfinder dissidents and outsiders sought to use the Shadow Lodge to take over the Pathfinder Society to achieve their own personal goals. They actively worked to cause a dangerous schism within the Society, manipulating those unhappy with the long-standing policies, and courting outsiders to help with their plans. Grandmaster Torch and other Shadow Lodge agents loyal to the Society discovered the Spider's plot too late to prevent a civil war within the Pathfinder Society.

## THE KAER MAGA LODGE

To prepare for their showdown with the Grand Lodge, the leaders of the separatist Shadow Lodge created own lodges in the cities of Almas, Kaer Maga, Oppara, Sothis, and Whitethrone. The lodge established in Kaer Maga immediately fell afoul of the plurality of factions within the city when it threatened their delicate balance of power. At first the Society received confusing a petition from the various leaders of the City of Strangers to close this lodge, but it immediately

sent a team of agents to investigate the situation in Kaer Maga. The Pathfinders discovered the rebel Shadow agents and defeated them to close the rogue lodge. Though the team found clues of a larger conspiracy against the Society, the Decemvirate maintained its traditional policy of dismissing rumors of any factions within the Society. This allowed the Spider's cabal to continue to gather strength in secrecy and it left most Pathfinders unaware of the greater danger they faced.

## THE SHADOW STRIKES

Once their forces were secretly in place, the Spider's followers moved to cripple the Pathfinder Society outright. The Shadow Lodge encouraged Charvion Eater-of-Bones to launch a surprise attack. During the height of an Absalomian holiday, Charvion sent a full flight of dragons, hundreds of goblins, and dozens of Shadow Lodge agents to wipe out the gathered Pathfinders and assail the Grand Lodge itself. Despite the odds, the Pathfinders rallied against the attack. Charvion's forces were crushed, and Charvion himself was defeated. While the Pathfinder Society fought off the first major attack made by the rebel Shadow Lodge, it discovered an enemy it knew almost nothing about, an enemy that seriously threatened the Society itself.

## SUSPICION AND BETRAYAL

After the blatant attack against the Grand Lodge, the Decemvirate was forced to publicly acknowledge the Shadow Lodge threat. In this time of uncertainty, no one knew who might be a member of the Shadow Lodge. Suspicion grew in the Society when several of the Pathfinder Society's highly respected members revealing themselves as rogue Shadow Lodge members. One of these was Nordris Kalm. Taking advantage of the confusion caused by Charvion's attack, Kalm and his followers kidnapped Venture-Captain Drandle Dreng, hoping the venerable venture-captain would help them penetrate the Grand Lodge's vaults and access its fabled treasures. His plan was foiled when a team of Pathfinders discovered the rogue agent's scheme, rescued Dreng, and stopped the traitorous Pathfinder from looting the vaults. By preventing the Spider's cabal from stealing artifacts for the Shadow Lodge, they preserved the reputation and sanctity of the Grand Lodge's vaults.

Many Pathfinder's were shocked when Amenopheus, a longtime ally of the league of explorers, seemed to reveal himself as a Shadow Lodge agent. He compromised a clandestine mission to smuggle a Sarenite cleric into the staunchly atheistic nation of Rahadoum. In fact, the Sapphire Sage acted as a double agent for the Decemvirate, raising awareness of the threat the Shadow Lodge posed to the Society, learning more about the still largely unknown organization. The team whose mission he compromised was nearly captured and killed as a result of Amenopheus's plot, but evaded the Pure Legion and completed its mission. A later expedition nearly cornered Amenopheus in the Jistkan ruin of the Citadel of the Weary Sky, but the wily Sapphire Sage escaped the Pathfinders to continue with his own plans.

## SHADOWS IN THE ICE

The Shadow Lodge Insurgency quickly expanded to cover the Inner Sea region. Northern Avistan became a

center of rogue Shadow Lodge activity, thanks to the support of the Shadow Lodge in Whitethrone. Shadow Lodge cells in this region initiated their own plans to secure the Shadow Lodge's power base, destroy the Pathfinder Society, and gather important artifacts and weapons. But the tide began to turn when a Pathfinder team in the Land of the Linnorm Kings discovered the full scope of the Shadow Lodge's plots, which encompassed the entire frozen north. Under arduous conditions, these Pathfinders stopped a rogue Shadow Lodge plan to frame the Society for an attack on the Trollheim armory, defeated the Whitethrone Lodge, and stopped a group of rogue Shadow agents from collecting a potent magical axe in the Realm of the Mammoth Lords. This band of Pathfinders devastated the Shadow Lodge in northern Avistan.

Although the Whitethrone Lodge had been dismantled, its leader and his elite rogue Shadow agents evaded capture. They traveled to the Worldwound to recover the foreboding *Sarkorian Prophecy*. Loyal Pathfinders sent to retrieve the prophecy overcame the supernatural dangers and demons of the Worldwound, and the two teams clashed in the Abyss-torn wasteland. The Pathfinder team defeated the Shadow agents and secured the prophecy for study.

## CRISIS IN OSIRION AND TALDOR

While the Shadow Lodge Insurgency was fought from the frozen northern nation of Irrisen to the forbidden jungles of the Mwangi Expanse, many of the most politically important clashes of the conflict took place within cities bordering the Inner Sea itself. In Osirion, rogue Shadow agents stole a collection of cursed objects directly from the Sothis Lodge. The rebel agents maimed or killed half a dozen members of the Society and its allies



with the cursed objects. The Shadow Lodge plot to scare the Society out of Sothis ended only when a team of Pathfinders discovered the rogue agent's headquarters, defeated the Sothis Shadow Lodge, and reclaimed the cursed objects for the Society.

In Oppara, a rejected Pathfinder initiate, Chalfon Dalsine, launched a plot to banish the Pathfinder Society from Taldor and dangerously fracture the organization. Chalfon's plot nearly succeeded when he had Oppara Venture-Captain Muesello arrested on charges of smuggling and harboring an illegal Sarenite cult. He then manipulated Pasha Muhlia Al-Jakri, Qadir's liaison to the Pathfinders, into killing Baron Jacquo Dalsine, her Taldan counterpart, in a duel. Only a Pathfinder team sent to deal with the growing crisis prevented an outright disaster for the Society, discovering the full depth of Chalfon's plan, and foiling his attempts to irrevocably damage the Society.

## GRANDMASTER TORCH'S REVELATION

After the Shadow Lodge's defeats in Absalom, Kaer Maga, Whitethrone, Sothis, and Oppara, the Spider was having trouble controlling her faction within the Shadow Lodge. To reinforce her position within the

Shadow Lodge, she hired Red Mantis assassins to eliminate Grandmaster Torch, her main rival for control of the Shadow Lodge. While trying to regain control of the Shadow Lodge himself, Torch learned of the Spider's plot to have him killed, and he decided to call in the many favors the Decemvirate owed him for years of assistance as an information broker in Absalom. Torch informed the Decemvirate of his own position within the Shadow Lodge and its current situation. Seizing the opportunity to end the Shadow Lodge Insurgency, the Ten agreed to an amnesty for Shadow Lodge agents who expressed their loyalty to Torch and the Society. The Ten then promptly dispatched Pathfinder agents who successfully protected Torch from the Red Mantis assassins. With the Shadow Lodge faction reincorporated into the Pathfinder Society under Torch's leadership, the Spider and her allies were further isolated in their increasingly desperate struggle for dominance.

### THE SPIDER CRUSHED

The Pathfinder Society had successfully dismantled the rogue Shadow Lodge across the Inner Sea region. But though the Decemvirate and the loyal Pathfinders had made significant progress, the Spider's identity continued to elude them. That changed when Amenopheus, acting on information gained as a double-agent, revealed to Venture-Captain Brackett of Almas that the Spider was none other than Dorianna Ouidda. Discovering Amenopheus's betrayal, Ouidda immediately invaded the Almas Lodge, and took Brackett and Amenopheus hostage. Ouidda then used her position as a Peoples' Councilor to ban the Pathfinder Society from Andoran.

Seeing a major crisis unfolding in the nation, the Society sent in a team of Pathfinders to resolve the situation. After a series of battles against Ouidda's allies, the Pathfinders were successful in liberating the Almas Lodge, freeing

Brackett and Amenopheus, and revealing Ouidda to be the Spider before the Peoples' Council. Ouidda's power structure collapsed as a result, and the Spider was finally eliminated as a threat to the Society. Without the direction of its enigmatic leader, the rebel Shadow Lodge quickly fractured into independent cells across the Inner Sea. Lacking centralized leadership, the remaining rogue agents lost all cohesion and their ability to effectively continue fighting the Grand Lodge and its faithful defenders.

### ANALYSIS

The Shadow Lodge Insurgency ended in a victory for the Pathfinder Society for a number of reasons. One of the key reasons for the rogue Shadow Lodge's defeat was the fact that its leaders never fully coordinated their efforts to defeat the Pathfinder Society. Charvion's attack on the Grand Lodge left the Society unbalanced and confused, but there was no effective follow-up to the attack. Instead each rebel Shadow cell leader used up the Shadow Lodge's limited resources on pursuing his or her own motivations and goals. Even the Spider's original purpose in starting an open insurgency within the Society remains unclear, despite the benefit of hindsight. Some theorize that she was a failed Pathfinder agent out for either revenge or power, that she was secretly a member of the Aspis Consortium, or that she was simply a power-hungry and greedy individual who finally committed herself to too many elaborate schemes when she tried to take over the Pathfinder Society. Another obstacle for the Shadow Lodge was that many Shadow Lodge agents remained loyal to Grandmaster Torch and the Decemvirate. This resulted in the Spider's branch of the Shadow Lodge having a very limited pool of recruits to work with.

The Pathfinder Society, on the other hand, was able to organize its efforts and work efficiently toward the goal of defeating the Shadow Lodge. While the Society was initially hampered due

to being poorly informed regarding the Shadow Lodge, in no small part due to the willful ignorance of the Decemvirate, which ended only after the attack on the Grand Lodge itself, the Society did have considerably better centralized control and access to a large pool of talented agents. The Society's ability to send the right Pathfinders to the right place at the right time played a significant role in the Pathfinder Society's ultimate victory.

While mopping up the remaining rogue Shadow Lodge cells may occupy the Society for years to come, the Shadow Lodge Insurgency ended in a decisive victory for the Pathfinder Society. The rogue elements of the Shadow Lodge and the cabal surrounding the Spider were defeated, and the original mission and goals of the Society remain the same as they were before the conflict. There have, however, been a number of significant consequences for the Society. First is that the Decemvirate was forced to acknowledge the existence of factions within the Society's membership, including some that directly oppose its will. As always, the Decemvirate strongly pushes for the spirit of cooperation between agents, but the conflict accentuated the fact that each Pathfinder has her own motivations and allegiances beyond a dedication to the Society.

Perhaps most notably, however, is the Decemvirate's acquiescence to Grandmaster Torch's demands to acknowledge the sacrifices of the agents who put their lives in danger for the Society's gain. Torch assured them he would bring the Shadow Lodge agents loyal to him back into the fold, but it remains a tenuous peace, and a sizable number of agents hold their breath for the next time the Society's own feel slighted and rise against them. On the other hand, optimists are confident that the unified efforts of the Society to attain victory in the Ruby Phoenix Tournament will cement solidarity between all Pathfinders and quickly brush the conflict of last year under the proverbial rug. Ω

# COMING NEXT ISSUE!

The blistering heat of summer is nothing compared to the burning power of our Kobold Summer Issue! This one is fully loaded with things to loot, and treasures for villains and heroes alike.

## Dwarfcraft and Dwarfmade Treasures

Sure, dwarves are the world's greatest smiths and makers, but what does that *mean*? It means cool and original items like these! More than hammers and axes, these items will make dwarven crafting a thing of awe and envy in your game.

## Rogue Archetypes

Can the madman who brought us the White Tongue Wizard this issue top that article? Find out as David Schwartz presents a new double threat of rogue archetypes: the Blood Brothers!

## Midgard Preview

This is the big one: a sneak preview of the upcoming Midgard campaign setting! Will we reveal the secrets of ley line magic? Unmask Midgard's dark gods? Blast your eyes out of their sockets with art of the Walkers in the Wastes? Maaaaybe. It's a big world, and we're itching to share some of its most fantastic corners with you!

There's much more to come in the great Summer extravaganza, including new spells for the Elven Archer class, new treasures of knowledge, an AGE System mini-adventure, another official installment from the Pathfinder Society and the latest word on D&D Next--all in one issue. Don't miss it!



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# Deadly Tolls and Honest Challenges

By Wolfgang Baur  
Art by Nicolaes Berchem

Bandits are a fact of life in and around any great trade city, and Zobeck's trade is frequent and valuable, from the Triolan spices brought up from the south to the ermine and mink pelts delivered from the Northlands: everything that moves on the roads is fair game for the gentlemanly Robber Knights of the Argent, the darakhul bandits of the Margreve, or the dwarf-bandits along the southern routes.

## ROBBER KNIGHTS:

### THE KNIGHTS OF THE RIVER

The River Argent flows steadily on from the north and west in the Ironcrags, through Zobeck, and down to the Ruby Sea. The River Road leads up to those dwarven peaks, and few human merchants travel that route often. Dwarven mule trains and wagons dominate the road, and the tolls the Gunnacksen and black dwarves of Grisal levy are steep for anyone not native to their canton. Even other dwarves grumble about the fees. Still, while the tolls are a real annoyance, the greatest dangers along this route are the Robber Knights.

The tradition of Robber Knights is a bit strange, but probably began with younger sons of House Stross, who sought to prove their mettle whenever possible—or perhaps even longer ago, with fey knights seeking to challenge upstart humans and kobolds shipping goods up and down “their” river. Currently, the knights saddle up and ride with their leader, the elfmarked lancer called the Red Knight, Sir Olos of the Donnermark. Choosing their spot,

they await the arrival of a barge being towed up the river by a few mules or oxen, and then demand their fee or a joust. Since most barges do not carry fully-armed knights, warhorses, and lances, most barge captains surrender the fee. Those bargemen choosing to fight back against the “knights of the towpath” ultimately lose their barge—if not their lives—and the knights seize the vessel for sale, making a tidy profit for their trouble.

The dwarves of Grisal and Gunnacks both seem to approve the occasional Robber Knight in the cantons, so long as the knights do not disturb the dwarven barges. Most Robber Knights seem wise enough to make this distinction, and thus dwarven barges dominate the trade west of Zobeck as a result. River nymphs (lorelei) and raiding ogres remain a hazard in the area, however.

## DARAKHUL OF THE MARGREVE

The roads outside the cantons are not any safer; if anything, they are even more dangerous, for the ghoulish darakhul take their share of horseflesh or feed upon incautious human guards taking the Great Northern Road to Morgau and the lands of the vampire princes. Most merchants avoid the woods entirely, but sometimes the profits are too tempting—and yet the dangers so often prove not worth the risk.

The darakhul's approach is quite different than the Robber Knights': the difficulty in keeping metal weapons in the Margreve makes the ghouls even more powerful than usual. These bandits operate

only by night, always sending one of their number to approach a guard to request their toll, often measured in mules and horseflesh as well as coin. If refused, they kill and devour all who oppose them, and then appropriate the trade goods, leaving behind anything not easily carried. The aftermath of one of these “lost wagons” is often disaster for a merchant house, though sometimes friendly travelers recover the stolen goods.

## DWARF-BANDITS OF THE LOWLAND ROAD

Finally, it might seem that the southern routes are less dangerous than the northern and western ones, but this is not the case. Dwarven free companies often turn to banditry after the season of war ends, absconding with entire mule trains, which they sell off in the nearest city. Those who resist may find themselves taken as thralls for the dwarven mines. Those who acquiesce are left alive and free but penniless and stripped of all weapons and wealth.

## ARRIVAL

Surviving the dwarven banditry, tolls, the ghoul raiders, and the lorelei means a merchant or mule train arrives safely in the Free City at the edge of the Grand Duchy of Dornig, or over the Morgau plateau to Krakova. Wealth and some small measure of fame go to anyone successfully facing the bandits of the Crossroads—and then, of course, such heroes can earn double the fame and coin on the journey home! Ω