

Fall 2012 #23

Demons & Devils

# KOBOLD

Quarterly™

## MIDGARD

### The World Serpent Awaits

Pages from Asmodeus  
Cannibal Demon-Apes  
How to Terrify Your Players  
Gauntlet Witch Class



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Selling Your Soul • Lamia PC Race • Earthdawn Expansion • The Devil's Food  
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# Editorial: The World Serpent Awaits

**T**he Midgard Campaign Setting is here! The lore and canon of the world grew steadily over years, through articles in this magazine and adventures and sourcebook from Open Design; but things really took off in January 2011, when patrons pledged support for the development of a worldbook by me, Jeff Grubb, and Brandon Hodge. Now, the World Serpent has awoken, and the world is here for your exploration and enjoyment.

So what is Midgard, exactly?

If you've been following Kobold Press for a while, you know it is a world of secrets, high magic, and dark fantasy in the European tradition. It is ley lines, shadow roads, the Cult of the World Serpent, and the master alchemists of swampy Maillon.

Midgard is the first campaign setting created as a shared world by a collaborative design process of this scale. Literally hundreds of gamers have provided feedback and playtest and review. The result is not a formless kitchen sink, but a setting of seven distinct regions: from the Wasted West where elder gods walk the earth, to the Crossroads where trade

and commerce rule, to the Mharoti Dragon Empire where the Sultana commands armies of dragonkin—and the elder dragons command the Sultana.

Midgard is the land of Baba Yaga, the land of the gnomes from hell, the land of dark gods from the fertility cult of Freyr and Freya to the horrors of bloody-handed Marena. It has artifacts, new spells, and new PC races like the kobolds and gearforged that

players may enjoy just as well as dwarves and elves.

It's a setting that has grown from real play and careful crafting, with a balance of focus and depth to support your preferred style of play.

Midgard is a setting built with attention to craft and culture, and a world of villainous and heroic nations struggling to survive against a tide of rising darkness that threatens to swallow all.

Midgard is a world of doom-ridden heroes and shining exemplars of virtue. As a reader of *KOBOLD QUARTERLY*, I urge you to take a look and discover its secrets for yourself. You'll find much that's worthy of your attention.

## Wolfgang Baur

Kobold in Chief



# KOBOLD Quarterly™

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**Open Game Content:** The "Mechuiti" statistics and monster abilities, the archetype in the "Monk of the Glorious Endeavor", the class tables and abilities in "Gauntlet Witch" archetype, the variant class of "The Devil Smiter," and the spells described in "Pages from Asmodeus" are all Open Content. All other material is Product Identity. No other portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without permission.

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# DISPATER

## *Aristocrat-Tyrant of Golarion's Hells*

By Wes Schneider

Art by Pat Loboyko

FROM A THRONE OF IRON THE FIRST KING REIGNS. EMPERORS NUMBER AMONG HIS SUBJECTS, AND PAUPERS SEEK HIS RULE, FOR THE FATHER OF DIS IS LORD OVER ALL.

—FROM THE BOOK OF THE DAMNED

For many, Hell is burning, for others pain; for more still, Hell is betrayal, loneliness, or loss. But in Dis, the Infernal City, the capital of the Pit, Hell is most assuredly other people. As one of the multiverse's primeval metropolises, there are few places one might find more inhabitants—damned souls, of course, but traders from across the planes, mortals in search of extraplanar treasures, and immortals sifting for power amid the throngs.

Above the markets of flesh-and-bone-cobbled avenues, the palaces of merchant

tyrants and the embassies of twisted realms, a singular iron spire impales the rust-polluted skies. From here, an ancient overlord holds court, a splendid tyrant with claim to innumerable titles across countless worlds, the ultimate patron of dooms and dark artists, the closest advisor of Asmodeus himself, Dispater, the First King.

### DISPATER

LE male archdevil

**Unholy Symbol** iron spike transfixing a golden ring and a crimson crown

**Areas of Concern** cities, prisons, rulership

**Domains** Evil, Law, Nobility, Trickery

**Favored Weapon** heavy mace

#### CULT

**Temple** great halls, noble estates, ruined castles, theaters

**Worshippers** ambitious lowborn, desperate nobles, evil knights, tyrants

**Minions** cerberai, erinyes, fallen angels, graveknights, tieflings

Dispater is the Father of Dis. His iron spire was the first to break the Styx's bleeding shores, and from there, over eons, his tower and city have grown unabated. A lord of many titles, he is known as the First King, the Iron Lord, Asmodeus' Eye, Master of the Tower, and Lord of the Second. But for all his grim names, Dispater holds a reputation as Hell's most reasonable, rational, and honorable overlord. His city's gates never close, and the unfettered are welcome to come and depart as they please. Yet, he stands as one of the eldest and most insidious rulers of Hell, for he knows

that within all creatures' hearts sleeps the promise of damnation—a truth he knows personally, being a fallen angel himself.

Few would suspect Dispater's angelic origins, as countless millennia as a soldier and ruler of Hell have had their effects. In his natural form—often hidden by illusions—Dispater is a 7-foot-tall picture of masculine health, his rust-colored skin bearing the weight of dozens of piercings, thorny studs, embedded jewels, and anchored chains, each a medal of a past conquest or a wound transformed into a mark of victory. His black lips rarely show any emotion, and only the oft-gazed horizon of Dis reflects in his crimson eyes. Two pairs of bull-like horns surmount his brow and between them hovers a burning crown, the symbol of his lordship and favored place in Hell's hierarchy. As a former angel, Dispater retains his wings, but he rarely displays his void-black feathers, keeping them locked within his own body, beneath charred scars running the length of his back. Aside from his imposing figure, Dispater's most feared feature is his bladed staff, the Eclipsing Eye, through which Asmodeus himself can see all.

The Lord of the Second presents himself as the picture of imperial poise: polite, gracious, calm, but entitled, assured of his own superiority, and quite unforgiving of failure. He places great importance on manners and formality, going so far as to banish or punish the uncouth. Yet such decorum evaporates in the face of his wrath, or it may serve as a way to win the trust of those he seeks to cajole into some plot. More than once, Dispater has convinced various pawns of his boredom with Hell's hierarchies, or his honest desire to regain his angelic station. Those so duped often find an eternity of torment in which to regret their assumptions of the Iron Lord's true intentions.

Dispater rules over the second layer of Hell, a vast expanse of chalky gray hills, crumbling canyons, and stump forests, all of it drained of life to fuel the endless expansion of Dis, the layer's

massive heart. Known as the throne-city of Hell, Dis expands endlessly, its half-mile-thick walls of squirming souls ever increasing to accommodate the constant construction of its residents. So Dis marches like an army of blind titans, one ponderously monstrous step after another, promising to overwhelm all that lies beyond. Within the walls, endless iron-paved avenues, cavernous alleys, canals of fire and enervating Styx waters, swamp-like slums, and mountainous palaces create a world of dark metal, golden monuments, and throngs channeled like enslaved oceans. Dis rises as the aspiration and nightmare of every city, boundless bounty contrasted by a realm seemingly populated more by colossuses of iron and dark marble than by living residents. From the heart of Dis, the Iron Scepter—Dispater's own impossible tower, a spearhead to impale whole worlds—rises over all. Anyone gazing up at that blasphemous monument's smoke-veiled spires and blood-rusted steeples, stands convinced the Iron Lord stares back from some unseen balcony.

### DISPATER'S CORRUPTIONS

Dispater is a generous father. He offers much and forbids nothing, promising a measure, yet not denying the whole. His hand holds out the reins of a wild horse, willing to guide, but not preventing the rider from bolting across the precipice. Better than perhaps any other arch-devil, Dispater understands the ease with which even the purest might corrupt himself, and that a disease—small, subtle, and slow—might wreak even greater devastation than a legion.

When Dispater does act, it is as an emperor amid his court. With a word to the proper advisor, general, or agent, his will is the breath that grows into a gale and eventually to a hurricane. He surrounds himself with experts and luminaries, and many of Hell's most cunning minds and promising tyrants

make their home in Dis or even within the Iron Scepter—serving, plotting, and being watched in turn. The Iron Lord believes in the order of process and hierarchies, especially those that surely crush under the demand to excel, conform, or compete. Every few centuries, one among Dispater's court deludes himself into believing the Lord of the Second is weak, complacent, and tired, and so seeks to undermine him—sometimes unwittingly at Dispater's own urging. The Father of Dis's reprisal is always swift and dramatic. Only in the face of personal wrongs—and the exceedingly rare disappointment—does Dispater unleash his fury, his smoking black wings, and his genius for torture, making any one usurper's foolheartiness a warning to his entire realm.

Aside from his subtle rage, the Lord of the Second bears a reputation for being



## CHARACTER FOLIO

| Characteristics |     | Health      |       | Movement |  |
|-----------------|-----|-------------|-------|----------|--|
| Max HP:         | 126 | Speed (ft): | 30    |          |  |
| Current HP:     | 126 | With Armor: | 30    |          |  |
| Non-Lethal:     |     | Swim:       |       |          |  |
| KG Pool:        |     | Climb:      |       |          |  |
| Rest:           |     | Fly:        |       |          |  |
| Class:          |     | Load:       | Light |          |  |
| Total Level:    | 11  | Defense:    |       |          |  |

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## Queens of Dis

Although a staunch chauvinist like the majority of Hell's rulers, Dispater stands apart from his fellow arch-devils in one remarkable regard: a thrice-proven capacity for love. Dispater's vision of romance leans towards the ideals of courtly love, devoted but detached. Over the millennia, three have won Dispater's affections, claiming the vaunted and terrible place at the Iron Lord's side.

**Erecura:** The current Queen of Dis, Erecura was a mortal seer some claimed could read the mind of any woman—even goddesses. True or not, tales have it she somehow gleaned the secret of divine life from Pharama herself, though she was cast into Hell for doing so. There, she was welcomed into Dispater's court, first as a valuable tool, later as a cunning advisor, and finally as the respectful arch-devil's unflappable bride.

Erecura holds the power of a minor divinity, whose worship is known only among soothsayers and parallel's Dispater's faith in many ways.

*Alignment:* LN; *Portfolio:* deduction, mind reading, subtlety; *Domains:* Knowledge, Law, Nobility, Trickery; *Favored Weapon:* light mace.

**Feronia:** A demigoddess of the Elemental Plane of Fire, Feronia travelled to Dis personally pursuing a thief who stole her cloak of incense and ashes. Her radiant form attracted Dispater's attention, and the smitten arch-devil convinced the fire goddess to stay in Dis as his honored guest, and later as his wife. While full of romantic passion and devastating arguments, the royalty of Dis split soon after the birth of their son, the burning babe who would become the Empyrean Lord Ragathiel. Feronia and Dispater maintain warm yearly correspondence, but never meet out of respect for the arch-devil's current wife.

*Alignment:* N; *Portfolio:* fertility, sacred fires, wildfire; *Domains:* Destruction, Fire, Liberation, Protection; *Favored Weapon:* bastard sword.

**Unknown:** Legends say when Heaven cast out Dispater, he fell clutching another. None, not even the arch-devil himself, can recall anything about his mysterious first lover, though. In all the multiverse, no record or memory exists of this being's identity. Only an incomplete, shattered statue in Dispater's throne room and the arch-devil's nagging memory hold any clue of this universally forgotten individual.

a noble patron of art, crusades, quests, and great deeds. He is generous with his time and wealth, but discerning and easily bored. Old even by the standards of many immortals, Dispater has seen countless cycles of genius and avant-garde philosophies, finding it ever more difficult to find that which is truly unique. When his worlds-spanning spy networks bring him word of something singularly daring, though, he is quick to encourage and influence, coaxing the artist or genius to blossom to the heights of fullest wonder. Yet Dispater is no philanthropist. His support results from a desire to possess, be it an unrivaled masterpiece, the artist herself, or the souls of those duped into reverence for an infernally inspired masterwork.

## ALLIES AND ENEMIES

As the arch-devil most concerned with the trappings of nobility, Dispater might balk at calling any other being lord. But in the single instance that he must, it seems no trouble at all. For millennia untold, Dispater has served Asmodeus, and that loyalty led directly to the Iron Lord's fall from grace. Never in all that time has he sought to betray Asmodeus, and if the Prince of Darkness is capable of trusting any creature, especially one of his arch-devil lieutenants, his faith would lie with Dispater. Yet Asmodeus's greatest symbol of faith, Dispater's staff, the Eclipsing Eye, might also be considered an emblem of suspicion, for all the Lord of the Second does, his master perceives. Thus, as is often the case in Hell, blessings bear the weight of blasphemies,

and the border between ally and enemy is no more than a razor's width.

Among Hell's other nobles, Dispater maintains cordial relations with the arch-devil lords of bordering realms, mysterious Barbatos and greedy Mammon. He often finds himself aligned with mighty Moloch, whose commanding and divine nature unobtrusively echoes Dispater's own values, and with Mephistopheles, who shares his unwavering devotion to Asmodeus. The First King dismisses Belial, Lord of the Fourth, as a lecherous wastrel and as a less-than-worthy ruler of Hell. He also resents Baalzebul, begrudging his former commander's righteous arrogance, even as he delights in the rebellious angel's transformation. Out of both respect and a desire to maintain the Peace of Dis—the infernal city's strict proscription against unsanctioned public violence—Dispater grants the Whore Queen Eiseth—the violent mistress of erinyes who makes her home within Dis's walls—a measure of leniency and a wide berth.

Outside of Hell, Dispater cultivates several relationships. He and the god Abadar maintain an affable rivalry along with highly lucrative trade pacts for their subject cities, Dis and Axis, respectively. Dispater also sends regular invitations to Charon, Horseman of Death, to enjoy the hospitality of Dis, but the daemon never responds—this is ultimately fine by Dispater, as his only interest is in keeping the Horseman's thanadaemon servants ferrying new souls along the Styx to the wharves of Dis. Also, although he maintains a warm-but-distant relationship with his ex-wife, Feronia, he never seeks to contact his son, the Empyrean Lord Ragathiel.

## SOULS & SERVANTS

Beyond Dis's grim walls, all the diabolical denizens of that barren hellscape pay homage to Dispater as their uncontested sovereign. Amid the city's slums and spires, however, things become more complicated, as the arch-devil's servitors and slaves mingle with unfettered souls, reckless

planar travelers, and dignitaries from distant immortal realms. More free-willed individuals and agents of other masters tread the avenues of Dis than in any other layer of Hell. Yet Dispater has always deemed his city's cosmopolitan nature and open invitation to traders of all races and philosophies a boon, and a potential for subtle corruptions. To encourage such and to maintain the Peace of Dis, the arch-devil's eyes and peacekeepers are everywhere, predominantly in the form of imp spies and erinyes wardens. But beyond the children of Hell, Dispater's most insidious servants are his city's ambitious visitors, mercantile caravaners, axiomite scholars, kyton sensation merchants, daemon soul traders, brazen mortal wizards, night hags, liches, denizens of Leng, and others, all who travel to Dis out of desperation or depravity and who leave with tales of wonders and dark opportunity. But Dis is not for the undisciplined or weak

willed, who enter as traders but all too late find themselves ensnared in the temptations and machinations of the city's scheming residents.

On the Material Plane, the First King employs a variety of agents aside from his cultists. With the ease with which they might infiltrate human societies and their preference for urban settings, devil-spawn tieflings—especially beautiful members of the race—find Dispater a gracious lord. Mortals who live by the harsh rule of law and who view privacy and personal freedoms as an excuse for lawlessness often idealize the order of Dis. To such end, many rigid groups, like the Hellknights of Chelixa, acknowledge Dispater's wisdom even if they don't directly worship him. Similar harsh knights, like undead graveknights, also gravitate to the Iron Lord's service; after all, the arch-devil respects soldiers who refuse to let even death stand between them and their quests.

More than spies and bastards serve Dispater. Not all who fell from Heaven alighted in Hell on wings unsinged. While many of the most beautiful fallen took to the Pit's smoldering skies as erinyes, many plummeted like heretic meteors, never to soar again. These fallen are the *ascensoriel*, or crusader devils. Dispater gathered the crippled, seared remains of once-angels and returned them to splendor, encasing their surviving tatters of divinity in bodies of iron and gold, recasting them as his personal cavaliers and the law bringers of Dis. Ever since, the ascensoriel have enforced Dispater's will, serving with the cavalry of Hell's legions, scouring the taint of chaos from the streets of Dis, and questing in the name of the First King's faithful.

**ASCENSORIEL****CR 8****XP 4,800**

LE Large outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; Perception +16**Aura** judgment (30 ft., DC 18)**DEFENSE****AC** 22, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+4 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)**hp** 103 (9d10+54)**Fort** +12, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7**DR** 10/good; **Immune** fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 19**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft.**Melee** +2 *heavy flail* +17/+12 (2d8+12 plus infernal wound/19–20), *gore* +15 (1d8+7), 2 *hooves* +10 (1d6+3)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 12th)At will—*greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *order's wrath* (DC 18), *spider climb*1/day—*summon* (level 3, 1 bearded devil, 75%)**STATISTICS****Str** 24, **Dex** 18, **Con** 22, **Int** 13, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 19**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 31 (35 vs. trip)**Feats** Blind-Fight, Greater Overrun, Improved Overrun, Power Attack, Run**Skills** Bluff +16, Diplomacy +16, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (planes) +13, Perception +16, Sense Motive +16, Stealth +12**Languages** Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.



## ECOLOGY

**Environment** any (Hell)**Organization** solitary, pair, patrol (3–6), cavalry (7–14)**Treasure** triple (+2 *heavy flail*)

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Infernal Wound (Su)** The damage an ascensoriel deals with its +2 *heavy flail* inflicts persistent wounds that cause 2 points of bleed damage. Bleed caused from an infernal wound is particularly difficult to stanch—a DC 20 Heal check stops the damage, and any attempt to heal a creature suffering from an infernal wound must succeed on a DC 20 caster level check, or the spell does not function. Success indicates the healing works normally and stops all bleed effects on the victim. The infernal wounds caused by an ascensoriel are a supernatural ability of the devil, not of the weapon.

**Judgment Aura (Su)** An ascensoriel constantly benefits from the spell *discern lies* and is treated as though every round it is concentrating on all creatures within 30 feet. If it detects a creature lying, it can castigate it as a free action, forcing it to succeed at a DC 18 Will saving throw or take 4d6 points of fire damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

## THE CULT OF DISPATER

Dispater's followers all believe in their own superiority. Whether they come by their elitism by regal birth, position, guile, or delusion means little—though conquerors and those who claim dominance through physical strength more likely gravitate toward Mammon's patronage. Such faithful value their influence above all things and dismiss the desires of their inferiors. Dispater's cultists eschew the dark cloaks and midnight rituals of many sinister faiths. Each worshiper's confidence in her own unparalleled quality makes her resistant to cooperation and open displays of fealty, even to a deity. As a result, Dispater's worship is either a private affair by a single devotee in private—usually before a personal shrine—or an elaborate ritual forced upon a reluctant congregation by a superior turned high priest.

Aside from the case of subjects forced into Dispater's worship, the Iron Lord's faith typically spreads slowly, focusing on influential individual converts. After all, most who pursue Dispater's faith do so to increase their own potency, and would-be lords do not seek out more would-be lords with whom to share their secrets. In the case of Dispater's most power-hungry followers, new adherents arrive through the influence of family members—an elder passing on the dark secret of his success to an heir—or when servants forced into their lord's worship find their own ambitions grow.

Without reliable evangelicals, though, Dispater's congregations are vulnerable. The Lord of the Second commits many tiefling servants to roles as advisors to mortals, seeking out worthy lords, ingratiating themselves into their good graces, and gradually revealing the secrets of Dispater's faith. Alternatively, numerous sinister tracts or amended versions of other religions' scriptures urge their readers toward the worship of Emyreal Lords, and counting Dispater as the Emyreal bringer of deserving gifts. Although

Dispater's worship spreads slowly among the higher echelons of power and requires the greatest cultivation, most of his servants consider such efforts worthwhile. After all, a single tyrant brought under Dispater's thrall can lead to the damnation of countless souls.

Less coveted than the souls of rulers, many desperate artists and philosophers of all walks seek Dispater's patronage. Among these circles, rumors of the generous Father of Dis spread through dark drug dens and roach-infested flophouses. While the untalented run no risk of attracting the arch-devil's attention, those with truly remarkable skills and a willingness to do anything for success might find doors flung open for them by invisible hands and dark new influences arising at every turn. Such turned artistes often receive edicts from Dispater's direct diabolical servants, and they must become true cultists for their inspirations and good fortunes to persist. Typically, the First King's wishes are mild ones—a sonnet honoring his city, a footnote on a treasure found in Dis, a lyric honoring his wife; notes to capture the attention of other sympathetic mortals—but occasionally they take more depraved or elaborate form.

Gatherings of Dispater's servants occur only to punish a betrayer or as a reception for one of the arch-devil's otherworldly servants. The wealthiest and most potent cultists go out of their ways to mask their identities during such gatherings, lest other ambitious cultists use their faith against them. The cult rarely meets in the same place twice and always gathers in a place of opulence—slinking in sewers and ruins is for worms and savages. Assemblages might occur in a rented hall or private theater, an abandoned palace, or—best of all—the estate of some absent lord who can be framed as a cultist afterward. The finest food, spirits, music, and entertainments feature at such gatherings. Dispater's servants

## Dispater in the Real World

Real world characterizations aside, Dispater's very name makes for a fascinating and millennia-old topic. The Romans who worshiped this ancient deity knew him as Dis Pater, meaning "Rich Father" in Latin. Eventually his dominion over the wealth beneath the earth was conflated with other chthonic deities—including the Roman Orcus and the Greek deities Hades and Ploutos—into the Roman deity Pluto (Latin for "Rich One"). Reaching farther back, from Sanskrit and hypotheses of a Proto-Indo-European religion, comes the older name Dyaus Pitr (meaning "Shining Father"), which bears an intriguing entomological relationship to such deities as Greek Zeus Pater, Roman Jupiter, Hindu Dyaus Pita, Norse Tyr, and others.

are expected to indulge, but such events are not meant to be bacchanals, and boorish servants face their lord's scorn and punishment. Meetings begin under the red sky of dusk and end an hour before dawn, with the half hour before and after midnight dedicated to sacrifice, should one be demanded.

Dispater rarely calls for sacrifices, and then only from those who disappoint him. The price of failure is a restitution of souls: that of a servant for lesser failures, those of numerous servants for true disappointments, or even an heir in the case of major transgressions. Dispater disdains the messy and noisy rituals of other diabolical cults; his sacrifices are treated with overtures of respect before meeting their dooms in the Ascendancy rite. Those condemned in Dispater's name are bound to a chair of iron and their tongues are removed with hot iron tongs. They are then placed somewhere—typically in a high tower or behind the grate of a sewer—where they can view the passage of time

and a community's residents in their daily business. The silent victim wastes away untended, impotent and silent, mere steps from hundreds who could provide aid if the victim could speak a word. At their death, their unworthy souls are immediately used as brick and mortar in the eternally growing walls of Dis.

### MANIFESTATIONS OF DISPATER

When his cultists and other proud mortals garner his attention, Dispater expresses his will upon the Material Plane in certain signature ways. These diabolical manifestations are treated as haunts, but require a mortal to perform some simple rite to invoke. If the divinity called upon chooses to recognize the mortal's ritual, the area or object is invested with otherworldly power.

A diabolical manifestation can be detected by *detect evil* or *detect law* before it activates, can be neutralized by positive energy, and resets only if the devil called upon wills it. These manifestations can be destroyed either as listed, or by the spell *hallow*. Otherwise, they function just as haunts (see the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: GameMastery Guide* for more details).

#### CROWN OF FIRE

**CR 6**
**XP 3,200**

LE manifestation of Dispater (5 ft. by 5 ft. mirror)

**Caster Level 6th**

**Notice** Perception DC 28 (DC 10 with *see invisibility*; to see a burning diadem crowning the affected creature)

**hp 14; Weakness** damaged by weapons; **Trigger** touch (perform ritual); **Reset** 1 day

**Invocation** To first summon this manifestation, a lawful evil creature must spend an hour preparing a full-length mirror, smearing the area near where his head is reflected with a ring of noble blood while praying to Dispater. Once prepared, the mirror can invoke Dispater's manifestation 1/ day (without again preparing the glass). Any lawful creature can invoke the manifestation by spending

10 minutes gazing into the glass, enumerating the reasons why he is worthy of greatness.

**Effect** At the completion of the invocation, the mirror's user must make a DC 16 Charisma check. If he fails, he takes 2d6 hp fire damage amid a chorus of disdainful laughing—if this damage kills the user, he is affected by the spell *malediction* (see *Book of the Damned: Princes of Darkness*). If he succeeds, he gains fire resistance 10 and the effects of *glibness* for the next 24 hours. The mirror shows his reflection with a crown of flames; this crown is also visible to any creature capable of seeing invisibility.

**Destruction** The mirror can be shattered as normal, and this immediately ends the manifestation's benefits.

#### MOLTEN THRONE

**CR 8**
**XP 4,800**

LE manifestation of Dispater (15 ft. by 15 ft. square)

**Caster Level 8th**

**Notice** Perception DC 24 (to notice fiery cracks upon the ground)

**hp 16; Trigger** proximity (seated individual's will); **Reset** 1 minute

**Invocation** A lawful evil creature must kill a good-aligned member of a noble family in the chair used as the focus of this manifestation, and then etch the seat with Dispater's symbol. Once this is done, the killer or a servant must cast *make whole* upon the seat, which transforms it into an impressive throne of rich silk and dark iron.

**Effect** At any time, a LE creature seated on the throne serving as the focus of this manifestation may fill every space within 15 ft. with invisible *walls of fire*. These *walls of fire* shed no heat beyond the squares they occupy, burning those passing through or occupying them as normal. The invisible flames last for 8 rounds and deal 4d6+8 hp fire damage every time a creature passes through an affected square.

The flames do not affect the throne-seated creature seated, and the manifestation ends if the creature vacates the throne.

**Destruction** The manifestation is destroyed if a LE creature is killed on the throne and *make whole* or *magic circle against law* is cast upon the throne, reducing it to a charred version of the furnishing it once was.



# SLITHERING IN MOONLIGHT

## *The Lamia as a Player Character Race*

By Marc Radle

Art by Claudio Pozas

*Tonight the females indulge in the great ecstasy of the Revelry, basking in the moon's mystical light. Yet, for the first time I will not participate, though as a lamia female, the Revelry is my birthright.*

*As a youth, I was convinced something was wrong with me: I found none of the same pleasure in lust, debauchery, or wanton cruelty as did my sister lamias. I questioned why I was cursed to be one of them, yet share none of the vile proclivities others gleefully pursued.*

*Recently, my sisters caught a beautiful elf maiden and brought her to the ruined castle we call home. My heart sank as the matriarchs slithered around her, licking their lips with delight before taking the girl to their private chambers...*

*Later, as I moved through the old castle's courtyard, gazing at the many broken sculptures my people had placed there,*

*I found no solace. I could think only of that innocent, terrified girl. I knew what was in store for her during the coming weeks and months, depending on the matriarchs' whims. With only the moon to watch over me, I wept for her, and I finally realized there was nothing wrong with me—it was they who were deeply, disturbingly wrong!*

*Tonight I leave my people, never to return. During the Revelry, I will slither quietly into the matriarchs' chambers and free the beautiful elf maiden. With the full moon to guide and protect us, I will take her away from this crumbling castle and return her to her people. Once she is safe, I will retreat into the wilderness, where I will live alone, communing with the moon and knowing that, for the first time in my life, I did what was right.*

- Svesh'Les, Lamia moon oracle

### LAMIAS (LAMIA COMMONERS)

**M**uch like their lamia matriarch queens, bitterness utterly consumes lamia commoners, who are often referred to simply as lamias. They have a predatory instinct and are prone to a wide range of plots, perversion, and debauchery. Although few lamia commoners obsess over the strange, bestial curse afflicting their race (unlike the lamia matriarchs), it never strays far from their minds.

Quick to embrace lust and overindulgence, lamia commoners crave luxury, gory feasts, violent trysts, and bloody entertainments.

#### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

From the waist up, lamia commoners resemble trim, attractive humans (PC lamias may be male or female—though most lamias are female). From the waist down, however, they have the body and

tail of an immense snake. Although similar in appearance to their lamia matriarch queens, lamia commoners are not as large or as terrifying to behold; being Medium creatures, they are smaller than the standard lamias in the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 1*, as well. Their hair is dark, often tinged with green or blue-green. Tattooing is common in lamian society, and many lamia commoners have one or more mystical symbols tattooed on their bodies, most often on their chest and/or forearms. Lamia commoners' eyes are typically narrow and snake-like in appearance.

### SOCIETY

Lamia commoners, much like the lamia matriarchs ruling them, are sadistic, unpredictable, and self-indulgent. They are self-serving, pleasure-seeking hedonists with little regard for the feelings or welfare of other races. Most lamias see other races as existing solely for their own twisted amusement. Concepts such as remorse and compassion are alien to most lamias.

Darkness, bitterness, and hatred consume lamias, who are prone to covet what they do not have, enslave others to satiate their own desires, and overindulge in every conceivable way. The lamian psyche fully embodies evil and chaos: They can be silken-tongued and seductive one moment, and then crazed and vicious killers the next.

Lamias love art and surround themselves with whatever artistic expression they can acquire, the more elaborate and grandiose the better. In a cruel twist of fate, their race has virtually no measure of artistic talent themselves—lamias, therefore, go to great lengths to steal, connive, or otherwise acquire the art they crave. Lamian lairs are filled with ancient paintings with lavish frames, broken sculptures and other statuary, and gold and silver plates and goblets. Their tastes tend toward the lewd and grotesque, however, and their collections of art always appear more garish than beautiful.

Mating among lamias occurs for pleasure or for power, never for love. The

very idea of love is particularly revolting to most lamias. Although both male and female lamia commoners exist, the ratio of female to male is more than three to one. Combined with an already highly matriarchal culture, this means couplings between female lamias are as common as those between male and female.

Concepts like monogamy and family are largely unknown to most lamias. Pairings producing offspring have no special significance to the parents. Mothers leave their young lamias to fend for themselves soon after they are born, believing a strong child will survive, while a weak one will die. In either case, the lamian parents care little what happens to their progeny, unless one happens to be a newborn lamia matriarch.

A lamia commoner mother giving birth to a baby lamia matriarch immediately gains a great deal of power and influence within the tribe, even though the lamia matriarchs immediately remove such children from her to raise themselves. A lamia matriarch rarely has any idea who her parents are, and she harbors little interest in finding out—such familial connections are meaningless. Even if a lamia matriarch somehow learned the identities of one or both parents, she would afford them no special privileges, and she might even show them a disproportionate amount of disdain and cruelty.

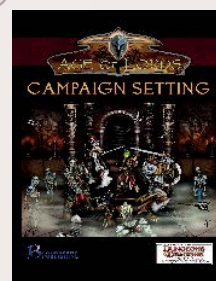
Lamias show no outward signs of aging. A lamia nearing the end of her life looks little different than one many decades younger. Lamias shed the skin of their lower snake half a dozen times over the course of their lives; several times as a child, with the first adult shedding occurring around age 45.

Lamias accept death as a natural part of a great cycle. Because death is such a frequent part of a lamia commoner's life, most attach little meaning to it. To a lamia, death simply means a cessation of life—no more, no less. If something specific happens to a lamia after death, few lamias give it any thought; they are much more interested in the pleasures of this life than what may or may not happen in the afterlife.

Lamian culture is strictly matriarchal, with lamia matriarch queens ruling each tribe with an undisputed iron fist. Normally, small groups of lamia matriarchs, known as a cult, control a larger tribe of lamia commoners, usually numbering fewer than 50. The most powerful lamia matriarch rules the cult. Backstabbing, secret deals, and covert power plays among the matriarchs are, of course, commonplace. Lamian society has no codified laws: the matriarchs' words and whims are accepted without question. Male commoners inhabit a distinctly second-class place within lamian society. Often the best a male lamia can hope for is to prove himself as a powerful warrior and become a favorite of one of the matriarchs.

Lamias prefer to inhabit abandoned buildings, cities, temples, or other races' ruins. Normally, a cult of lamia matriarchs leads their followers to such an abandoned location and then creates a bizarre community within it.

Much of lamian history and lore revolves around the strange curse

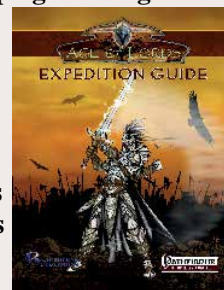


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afflicting their race. Little is known about the origins of the lamias or the ancient curse, although many lamia matriarchs and lore keepers speculate it originally involved some forgotten demon or god. Various demi-gods and demons sometimes promise to reveal this secret, the better to urge a cult of lamias to serve their own ends.

Lamias have a strong affinity for snakes of all types, especially venomous snakes.

#### RELATIONS

As might be expected, lamias have poor relations with most every race, who understandably view them with fear and revulsion. Lamias, in turn, see other races as little more than playthings. Occasionally, they might work with nagas, lizardfolk, or another serpent race for short periods of time, but even then, there is little love lost between these races. Simply put, the lamias' fundamentally evil and utterly unpredictable nature makes lasting alliances with other races all but impossible.

The one race which drives all lamias, matriarchs and commoners alike, into an uncontrollable blood frenzy are those creatures they refer to as the *gesh'vek* ("false lamias"). These creatures typically have the upper torso of a comely woman with cat's eyes and the lower body of a lion, although "false lamias" bearing serpentine, avian, and even more perverse forms are also said to exist. For reasons entirely unknown even to the most learned sages, members of

this "pretender race" also calls themselves lamia, a fact infuriating "true" lamias to the point of fury, madness, and rage. A lamia goes to any length to destroy a member of the *gesh'vek*.

#### ALIGNMENT AND RELIGION

Almost all lamia commoners are chaotic evil, as befits a race ruled by the vile lamia matriarchs. Occasionally, however, a lamia commoner is born with a moral outlook not matching its race's. These lamias tend toward chaotic neutral, although a rare few might even be chaotic good. At best, the tribe mercilessly ridicules and shuns the odd lamia.

In the case of a rare lamia tending toward chaotic good, unless she flees the tribe, the others inevitably kill her, slowly and cruelly. If she does escape the tribe, her flight also likely leads to her death at the hands of another race, since most fear the lamias. Finding a place where she can at least survive as an outcast proves difficult indeed.

Lamias have little use for religion or gods. Magic and mysticism, however,

### Lamia Commoner Racial Traits

Lamia commoners are defined by their class levels—they do not possess racial Hit Dice. A lamia's challenge rating is equal to her class level. All lamia commoners have the following racial traits.

**+2 Strength, +2 Charisma, -2 Intelligence:** Lamia commoners are physically strong and manipulative.

**Medium:** Lamia commoners are Medium creatures, and have no bonuses or penalties due to their size.

**Normal Speed:** Lamia commoners have a base speed of 30 ft. They have a climb speed of 20 ft and a swim speed of 20 ft.

**Darkvision:** Lamias can see in the dark up to 60 ft.

**Low-Light Vision:** Lamias can see twice as far as humans in dim light.

**Intimidating:** Lamias receive a +2 racial bonus on Intimidate skill checks due to their frightening nature and appearance.

**Lamian Immunities:** Lamias get a +2 racial bonus to saves against mind-affecting spells and effects.

**Snake Body:** Lamia commoners have neither feet nor legs and thus cannot be tripped. They may not use magic items requiring the feet slot.

**Skilled:** Lamias receive a +2 racial bonus on Bluff and Use Magic Device checks.

**Spell Resistance:** Lamias possess spell resistance equal to 5 plus their class levels.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** A lamia can cast *charm person* and *ventriloquism* each 1/day, using her total character level as her caster level.

**Weapon Familiarity:** Lamia commoners are proficient with the scimitar.

**Languages:** Lamias begin play speaking Common and Draconic. Lamias with high Intelligence can choose any additional bonus languages, with Abyssal being the most typical.



are deeply ingrained aspects of lamian culture. All lamias share a strange, almost spiritual, reverence for the moon, believing it to be the source of all magic, whether arcane or divine. This rarely translates into any specific attachment to lunar deities, though—the lamias' mystical connection is somehow thought to be with the very moon itself and transcends worship or deities. This deep veneration for the moon is perhaps best demonstrated by the mysterious ceremony known as the *Revelry*.

#### ADVENTURES

Avarice for material goods, magic items, knowledge, or slaves drives most lamia commoners to adventure. Some pursue it for the thrill and danger. The rare few outcast lamias adventure as a means to better the lot of others—or because adventuring proves the only legitimate work they can acquire outside the confines of their own society.

**Names:** Lamian names do not differentiate between male and female. Because family bonds and ancestral lineage hold little importance in lamian society, lamias have only a single name, chosen personally once the lamia is old enough to care about such things.

Typical examples of lamian names include Vesha, N'vek, Shalesh, Ka'Reesh, Val'vek and Losh'vesh.

#### NEW ORACLE MYSTERY: MOON

**Class Skills:** An oracle with the moon mystery adds Fly, Knowledge (arcana), and Knowledge (nature) to her list of class skills.

**Bonus Spells:** *darkness* (2nd), *confusion* (4th), *owl's wisdom* (6th), *moonstruck* (8th), *mass daze* (10th), *control water* (12th), *lunar veil* (14th), *insanity* (16th), *meteor swarm* (18th).

**Revelations:** An oracle with the moon mystery can choose from any of the following revelations. For additional Moon revelations, see *Divine Favor: the Oracle*.

**Cloak of Moonlight (Su):** You conjure a cloak of shimmering moonlight, which coalesces around you, granting

### Random Lamia Commoner Starting Ages

#### Adulthood

20 years +3d6 (regardless of class)

### Lamia Commoner Aging Effects

| Middle Age | Old      | Venerable | Maximum Age      |
|------------|----------|-----------|------------------|
| 50 years   | 75 years | 100 years | 100 + 5d20 years |

### Random Lamia Commoner Height and Weight

|               | Base Height | Base Weight | Modifier | Weight Multiplier |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------------|
| Lamia, male   | 5 ft. 4 in. | 110 lbs.    | 2d8      | ×5 lbs.           |
| Lamia, female | 5 ft. 2 in. | 90 lbs.     | 2d8      | ×5 lbs.           |

a +4 armor bonus. At 7th level, and every four levels thereafter, this bonus increases by +2. At 13th level, this armor grants you DR 5/slashing. You can use this cloak for 1 hour per day per oracle level. The duration does not need to be consecutive; it can be used in 1-hour increments.

**Dazing Spells (Ex):** Any time you score a critical hit against an opponent with an attack spell, a split-second burst of shimmering moonlight also envelopes your target, dazing him for 1 round.

**Eyes of the Moon (Su):** You gain low-light vision.

**Guiding Moon (Su):** Whenever you can see the moon, you can determine your precise location. When the moon is visible to you, you may also add your Charisma modifier to your Wisdom modifier on all Wisdom-based checks. In addition, 1/night while under moonlight, you can cast one spell with the Empower Spell, Extend Spell, Silent Spell, or Still spell feat without increasing the spell's casting time or level slot.

**Mantle of Moonlight (Su):** Your innate understanding of the moon renders you immune to lycanthropy. Additionally, you may disrupt a lycanthrope's connection to the moon with a successful touch attack. This action automatically forces the lycanthrope into its humanoid form, which it must remain in for a number of rounds equal to your oracle level. Upon reaching 5th level, you can use this ability to force

others into a *rage*, as per the spell. Using this ability is a melee touch attack. You can use this ability once per day at 5th level plus one additional time per day for every 5 levels above 5th.

**Moonlight Bridge (Su):** You summon a bridge of shimmering moonlight. The 10-foot-wide span touches the ground at a point adjacent to your position. From this point, it can extend in any direction for 10 feet per oracle level. The path persists until you have crossed over the bridge or for 24 hours, whichever is shorter. You may summon a moonlight bridge a number of times per day equal to your Charisma bonus. Should the bridge be attacked, treat it as a *wall of force*.

**Moonfire (Su):** You can fire a blast of blazing moonlight at a single target within 30 feet as a standard action. Moonfire deals 1d8 points of damage per caster level, and the target is dazzled for 1 round per two oracle caster levels. A successful Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 your oracle level + your Charisma modifier) reduces the damage by half and negates the dazzle effect. You can use this ability once per day at 8th level, and one additional time per day for every four levels beyond 8th. You must be 8th level to select this revelation.

**Moon's Favor (Sp):** Once per day, you can spend 10 minutes reveling in the moonlight and contemplating its mysteries, granting you the effects of *divination*. You must be 8th level to select this revelation.

## The Revelry

The *Revelry* occurs on nights of the full moon. Part sacred ceremony and part frenzied celebration, only females can participate in the Revelry. Those partaking in these secretive mysteries believe the moon's mystical power possesses and empowers them.

Outsiders typically do not know what transpires during these moonlit ceremonies. While it is true that no two Revelries are exactly identical, certain elements in the ceremonies never change. For instance, the nude celebrants always participate in chaotic dancing, hypnotic swaying, and frenzied distortions of their bodies, as if seized with madness. Large quantities

of strong wine, a vital component of the Revelry, flows freely and often.

The ceremonies generally involve snakes; participants often wear them around their bodies, or otherwise handle in various symbolic and proscribed manners.

Eventually, the rite climaxes in an ecstatic and frenzied orgy of drunkenness, mystical fervor, and extreme disinhibition called *Shiv'Ash* (literally, "the madness and ecstasy of the moon"). In this state, the lamias lose all self-control; they begin shouting excitedly, shrieking out prophecies, and engaging in all manner of debauchery with one another.

**Moonlight (Ex):** You may illuminate an area with sparkling, silver moonlight, causing creatures to become blinded and visibly outlining hidden things. This acts as the spell *glitterdust*, and it may be used a number of times equal to the moon oracle's Charisma modifier. You must be 8th level to select this revelation.

**Moon's Pull (Su):** Your connection to the moon is so strong that your feet barely touch the ground. At 1st level, you no longer leave tracks. At 5th level, you can hover up to 6 inches above the ground or even above liquid surfaces, as if *levitating*. At 10th level, you gain the ability to *fly*, as per the spell, for a number of minutes per day equal to your oracle level. This duration does not need to be consecutive, but it must be spent in 1-minute increments.

**Final Revelation:** Upon achieving 20th level, your mysterious connection with the moon is so complete that you are literally infused with the moon's mystical power. You receive a bonus on all saving throws equal to your Charisma modifier. Once per day, you can bathe yourself in pure, mystical moonlight as a full-round action, granting you SR 21, DR 5/silver and Fast Healing 5 for a number of rounds equal to your oracle level. These rounds do not need to be consecutive. In addition, whenever you are reduced to negative hit points while in sight of the moon, you automatically stabilize. Should you die, you are reborn on the next full moon in the form of a moon child (as *reincarnate*).

## LAMIAN RACIAL FEATS

### SERPENT'S TONGUE

The blood of snakes runs particularly thick in your veins, granting you their senses.

**Prerequisite:** Lamia.

**Benefit:** You can flick out your forked tongue to smell the air, effectively giving you the Scent ability.

### SERPENT'S CHARM

Your inherent ability to cast *charm person* is more powerful than normal.

**Prerequisite:** Lamia.

**Benefit:** You may use your *charm person* racial spell-like ability two additional times per day. In addition, you receive a +2 bonus to the spell's saving throw DC and a +2 bonus on caster level checks to overcome a creature's spell resistance. These bonuses stack with feats like Spell Focus and Spell Penetration.

### SNAKE'S EYES

Your eyes are even more snake-like than normal for your race, giving you a frightening and unsettling appearance.

**Prerequisites:** Lamia.

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks made to demoralize. If the Intimidate check is successful, the subject is shaken for 1 additional round.

### HIGHBORN LAMIA

You have somehow learned to tap into a bit of the advanced magical abilities normally found only in lamia matriarchs.

**Prerequisites:** Lamia, base Will save +4.

**Benefit:** You may use *deep slumber* and *suggestion* each once per day as spell-like abilities, with a caster level equal to your character level.

### SPEAK WITH SNAKES

You are able to speak with and understand snakes.

**Prerequisites:** Lamia.

**Benefit:** You can communicate with snakes (only) as if under the effects of a continuous *speak with animals* spell.

### SNAKE SUMMONER

Your nature makes you adept at summoning snakes to do your bidding.

**Prerequisites:** Lamia, ability to cast *summon nature's ally* or *summon monster*.

**Benefit:** You may cast *summon nature's ally* or *summon monster* as a standard action when summoning snakes. These snakes gain temporary hit points equal to your caster level. You can also increase the level of summoning required by one in order to apply either the advanced or the giant template, or increase it by two to apply both the advanced and giant templates.





# Pages From ASMODEUS

## *The Vile Book of Doom and Deviltry*

By Ed Greenwood  
Art by Stephen Wood

**T**he brilliant, accomplished wizard Thoroun Dragoncowl has recently fallen afoul of what mages' tales have long called the *Caelmarathic Compendium of Devils and the Art of Retaining their Services*, or rather more simply, the *Vile Black Book*. Writings found in Dragoncowl's riven, blood-drenched tower have identified the fell tome as being the work of—or having been created at the behest of—the dread Prince of Darkness, himself: the Arch-Devil Asmodeus.

### THE VILE BLACK BOOK

Though many grimoires of evil nature or reputation have been compiled over the centuries, few closely resemble the one that doomed Dragoncowl and—if even half the legends are true—a score of wizards before him.

Envision a tome exuding a faint whiff of brimstone from a distance; a subtle harbinger of the

book's proximity that vanishes up close. The book also brings with it a constantly shifting dimness, with shadows appearing and disappearing out of the corner of the eye, but which elude a hard, determined stare or any investigation under bright light.

The *Caelmarathic Compendium* is much taller than it is wide, being perhaps half the height of an average man, but only as wide as a slender woman's ribcage. The book is bound in black hide, with tiny scraps of leather sewn together in a patchwork; some say the leather cover is comprised of the hides of devil-slain humans—or the hides of the dead whose damned souls the devils claimed. It is slender, with its sheets of bright-burnished copper etched with words and symbols written in the blood of the corrupted.

Copper rings bind the tome, piercing holes in each page; the

rings encompass a gnarled black bone said in some tales to be wrenched from the smoking corpse of Mahabrahaglor, the Last Dragon of Hell, itself. This bony spine fuses the covers by unknown magical means.

Those having slept near the tome report sly, wet whispers emanating from scores of small human tongues rising from the book's covers troubled their dreams. But then, folks say many strange things about anything deemed evil.

### WINGS AND CLAWS AND WORSE: THE BOOK AS A CREATURE

Dragoncowl's recovered writings describe physical properties of the *Vile Black Book*, which were also set down in such ancient records as *Reldaerankho's Red Book* and *The Tome of Eld*. To wit, the tome can transform itself into a flying cloak (a large, rippling black cloak with



amorphous “wings” and a “tail,” a thing that somewhat resembles a slow-flying giant manta ray, whether in the air or water).

The mobile book has AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16 (+6 natural)/hp 666/ Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft. (good).

Curiously, no witness has ever written of this “manta ray” bodily attacking anyone, though Dragoncowl and many earlier writers attest the book, as a tome, can grow black talons from its covers, and these talons allow it to crawl or spring at creatures, savaging them with its raking claws. The book can leap up to 20 ft. Its claw attacks provide Melee 4 claws +13 (1d6+3 plus grab), Tail stab 1d8, no tail attack if prehensile tail is carrying something. The tail cannot wield weapons except items that harm by touch rather than being vigorously swung or thrust.

Many chroniclers note heat and fire do not affect or harm the book in any way. The book absorbs these, and it even *moves into* or seeks out, fire, lightning, and blood, without visible harm. (Stories tell that wizards have “hidden” the book within the heart of raging hearth fires and or within burning barns and cottages—later recovering it from the ashes, unharmed.)

### THERE AND GONE AGAIN

The *Vile Black Book* habitually teleports away without warning (despite magical or non-magical defenses or confines to prevent it from doing so), leaving a succubus in its place to entreat and entrap the unwary. The succubus will be *very* interested in the soul of any encountered spellcaster (see “Soul-takers” in the *Ecology of the Succubus*, KOBOLD QUARTERLY #21).

Some tales claim such succubi know spells from the book, and they can impart them directly into the mind of a spellcaster by a kiss. The caster can remember such a succubus-granted spell until feeling

the subsequent need to cast it, by will and word alone rather than needing any material components, and the caster carries this magic in addition to their normal limits of memorized, known spells. Dragoncowl describes catching fleeting glimpses of a smiling succubus watching him from a nearby room in his tower. When he sought her out to confront her, though, he could not find her—she had somehow bypassed his tower’s warded and shielded upper rooms, which deeply troubled him.

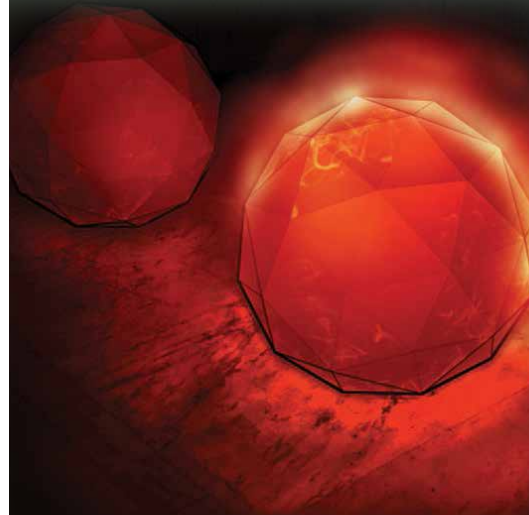
Some ancient and fragmentary texts in the collection of Keldaeraun Ithmynd name the succubi Amaere, Calaiyra, Janthess, and Lalri as “being sent in place of the book that moves on,” which may be the same tome known as the *Vile Black Book*.

The long-dead sage Enthaero of Velavan is not the only chronicler to mention that, trailing succubi or not, the book often revisits individuals who once held it, arriving unforeseen to gather information and capture their souls.

Handathur writes of this, as do Ogglud of the Smouldering Tower and several of the Yethreth texts. According to these sources, some of the book’s visits are brief, and others last for months. Active magical experimentation or spell-duels on the possessor’s part seem associated with the book remaining longer, but this is an attractive theory advanced by several writers who support it with personal observations, yet admit no wider study to confirm or deny any such pattern.

Several writers’ accounts speak of the book arriving out of thin air, floating at chest-height, surrounded by a blood-red glowing aura, immediately after the performance of evil rituals involving sacrifices or undead, or after a caster’s spell has killed another. Ogglud and Enthaero both recount older tales of the book appearing above the remains of an evil, magic-slain mage. The mage’s name has been lost to history, however.

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## WHAT'S WITHIN?

Almost every account of the *Vile Black Book's* spell contents differs, and each record details a different order of the book's overall contents. For years, such conflicting documentation caused much controversy, but a belief is emerging (championed by the sages Argorl the Unregarded and Yaktra the Branded and Bareshouldered, among others) that the book's pages can rearrange themselves. It seems likely that the book's pages can even change their contents, in an ongoing but random manner.

However, all versions agree the book *does* contain at least 9 spells, magics that can be studied or cast from it as from any wizard's spellbook. Most records describe spells of unusual incantations and casting, but whose effects often echo popular spells, differing only in duration, damage dealt, and manifestation.

Here follows Dragoncowl's recorded roster of the book's nine spells:

- *Devil's Ear*, a spell to send a direct message to an individual devil the caster names. (As *message*, with unlimited range and targeting only LE outsiders.)
- *Hellish Wings*, a spell enabling the caster or a single touched recipient to gain large bat-wings (and the ability to fly) for a short time. (As *fly*, with the addition of wings.)
- A spell to summon and command devils (accounts sharply disagree as to the sort of devils and the limits of the power granted over them).
- A spell allowing the caster to take the shape of a devil (retaining one's own mind and intellect, but courting an ever-increasing danger of being trapped in devil shape the longer one continues in it and the more injuries one sustains while in its form).
- *Banish devils*, a spell to banish devils from the caster's plane. (As *banish*.)
  - *Devil's lesson*, a spell to temporarily keep all devils at bay from anyone reading
- *Protection from evil*, with a duration of Concentration; this spell doesn't need casting, beyond being read aloud by anyone—including non-wizards lacking any magical aptitude.
- *Boiling torment*, a spell to torment a devil, as if it is being boiled from within with acid (this has been observed to do severe, long-lasting, agonizing harm that makes devils spasm wildly and lose precise control over their natural and magical powers and bodies).
- *Trammel hell's gate*, a spell to "trammel" a devil (prevents the devil from departing a spot, *teleporting*, or contacting or summoning other devils) for a short time. (As *dimensional anchor* and prevents summoning.)
- A spell to temporarily "ensnare" a devil (places a magical "hook" on a devil, ensuring all spells and physical attacks, whether missile or melee, directed at it harm it—even attacks normally unable to affect it).

Several earlier writers claim the book contained a spell enabling the caster to temporarily take the shape of "a black-hued red dragon of the largest size," but Dragoncowl's account specifically mentions he could find no trace of such a magic.

The most comprehensive record of the *Vile Black Book's* contents comes to us from Vulprinous "Koboldmaster," who mentions five named spells he discovered in the book: *Asmodeus's baleful eye* (very briefly empowers the caster with a gaze attack that boils creatures' blood and can ignite parchment or other "readily flammable materials"); *diabolical temper*, *witch's escape*, *inquisitor's bane* (enables "free lying" on the part of the caster or a single touched recipient by thwarting Sense



Motive skill checks); *devil's charm*, and *soul drinking*.

The most trustworthy accounts all agree a trap is hidden partway through the *Vile Black Book* that sucks the unwary, unprepared, or unfortunate into the tome. These trapped souls try to gain their freedom by possessing later readers of the book, invading their minds, and seeking to wrest control over their bodies by defeating those minds. The librarian-sage Arkathus notes more than 17 sources mention multiple souls trapped within the tome, with each being aware of each other but unable to attack one another, ally, or even converse. He cites the account of the ill-fated Mrestrel the Magnificent in saying the *magic jar* assault of the first trapped soul to lash out at someone touching the trapped page blots out the assaults of all other trapped souls—and that targets need only

touch the trapped page for a fleeting instant to become eligible targets.

However, the trapped souls apparently can't attack just anyone touching the trapped page. Enthæro states they are bound by the magics of the trap; it only allows the trapped souls to seize the bodies of individuals who attempt to destroy the book, who seek to remove a page from it, or who otherwise want to harm it. Argorl the Unregarded agrees, claiming to have questioned "a devil of some standing" on this point, who told him this was so, and the chroniclers who haven't mentioned this trap are those who never courted its effects by seeking to damage the book or remove pages from it.

Harlivar of the Seven Curses, acknowledged by some as an expert on "traps of the tome," believes this trap (and those caught within it) can only affect individuals touching the book, and further asserts his study of

earlier accounts suggests to him that the trapped page masquerades as a spell, and moves about within the tome just as the spells do.

Neither Harlivar nor the devil Argorl questioned explicitly say the book's trapped souls can watch and listen to anyone close enough to touch it—but they both imply this to be the case, and Harlivar even warns wizards to guard their speech at all times when "in the presence" of the book.

#### MAGIC JAR TRAP

CR 10

Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** touch (from an individual who intends to harm the book); **Duration** instantaneous; **Reset** automatic

**Effect** spell effect (*magic jar*, DC 22 Will save negates); multiple targets (up to 12 creatures, one per soul present in book)

Yaklra the Branded and Bareshouldered warns the book's

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inside covers contain words written in Infernal that should be intoned aloud when viewing or turning pages for the first time—the right utterance for the right page. If this is not done, Yaktra added, the reader will progressively become diabolical, page by viewed page, as follows:

**First page:** The reader gains glowing red eyes (with low-light and darkvision).

**Second page:** The readers grow a pair of small horns from on the brow or forehead.

**Third page:** The reader grows a short forked tail.

**Fourth page:** The tail lengthens, grows prehensile, and reddens; and the reader's tongue lengthens into a long, slender, forked tongue.

**Fifth page:** The reader shifts in alignment, becoming one step closer to evil (if evil, one step closer to lawful; if already lawful evil, his teeth become fangs and his skin turns reddish and scaly or glistening).

**Sixth page:** The reader gains the ability to understand and speak Infernal. If he has already mastered it, he gains the meanings of all hand-signs and other non-verbal signals used among devils.

**Seventh page:** A devil comes looking for the reader, to enslave or slay him.

Yaktra is or was a much respected sage, who vanished mysteriously. Some say she became a slave of Hell; others say she was a succubus to begin with, masquerading as a sage to spread words Lord Asmodeus desired be dispersed among mortals to lure them into the clutches of Hell.

Argorl the Unregarded, who was known to be fond of Yaktra despite their public feuding, was attacked by devils and “many horrid slithering, glistening things” after he attempted, with the aid of hired wizards, to learn of the missing Yaktra's whereabouts.

## GLIMMERS OF HOPE

Argorl, Yaktra, and (according to the long-dead sage Lorvandrar) the skull-headed devil “Elorlhaeryt” all claim an individual who subjects himself to all of the book's evils, casting every spell within it, and suffering all of its effects, can be reborn as the race, gender, and alignment of his choice—but his new body will have its own abilities, with all character statistics being determined anew—that may hamper the vocations, skills, and talents he exhibited or developed in the past.

Argorl goes so far as to claim to know the names of a score-and-six “weary heroes” who have done just that, beginning new lives under new names—in one case to escape a manhunt, and in another, to escape an unwanted throne.

## FELL AND MYSTERIOUS ORIGINS

Asmodeus himself is reputed to have created the *Vile Black Book*, but no truths about its crafting are known. It is said to bear a fell



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curse, but tales and sages cannot agree on what that curse is. Some mention dark rotting diseases that break out where the book has been, but others dismiss such claims, saying instead that the book somehow “marks” locales where it rests, making them attractive to devils to visit. Almost all sages who have studied the *Vile Black Book* (rather than merely denouncing it or warning against it) agree Asmodeus knows of the tome and approves of it—or at least suffers it to remain in existence, using it to reap new human souls for Hell.

The chronicler Draethan Ornarr set down the most vivid of such tales, which he gleaned from a much earlier oral telling; in it, he describes Asmodeus as gloating to a mortal in his clutches that the book “has reaped a rich harvest already, and shall do so for much time to come.”



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## SPELLS OF THE VILE BOOK

### DEVIL'S CHARM

**School** transmutation; **Level** bard 2, cleric 2/shaman 2, sorcerer/wizard 2, witch 2

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, M/DF (a devil's sweat)

**Range** personal

**Target** you

**Duration** 6 rounds

**Saving Throw** Will negates

(harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes

Glib and full of guile, the caster suddenly becomes a paragon of stunning personality—though quite briefly. The caster gains a +6 bonus to Charisma the round after casting the spell, and this bonus declines by 1 point at the start of each following round. That is, the bonus is +5 in the next round, +4 the round after that, and so on, ending in the seventh round after casting.

### DIABOLICAL TEMPER

**School** enchantment/charm (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 4, cleric/druid/shaman 5, sorcerer/wizard 5, witch 5

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

**Range** close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target** one humanoid creature

**Duration** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw** Will negates; **Spell**

**Resistance** yes

Your spell awakens seething rage in a targeted creature, temporarily rendering it incoherent and unable to cast even the simplest magic or use any verbal skills or abilities. It splutters, gesticulates, and hops about in a fit of pure temper for the spell's duration. Each round on its turn, the subject may attempt a new saving throw to end the effect.

Non-spellcasting targets gain a +2 bonus to melee attacks and damage rolls they make while under this spell's influence. Affected creatures cannot take any action other than combat attacks while the spell continues.

### WITCH'S ESCAPE

**School** transmutation; **Level** shaman 3, sorcerer/wizard 2, witch 2

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, F (a small broom)

**Range** touch

**Target** creature touched

**Duration** 3 rounds

**Saving Throw** Will negates (harmless);

**Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

The caster or recipient rises straight up into the air up, to 10 feet, and then can move as a *fly* spell in a straight horizontal line for 3 rounds. The subject can fly at a speed of 60 feet (or 40 feet if the subject wears medium or heavy armor, or if it carries a medium or heavy load). It cannot ascend, descend, turn, or maneuver.

### INQUISITOR'S BANE

**School** illusion (glamer); **Level** bard 2, sorcerer/wizard 2, witch 2

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

**Range** Touch

**Target** One creature

**Duration** 1 hour/level

**Saving Throw** none or Will negates; see text; **Spell Resistance** no

By means of this spell the caster obscures and hedges the truth magically, cancelling the effect of *discern lies*, *zone of truth*, and also providing a +5 bonus to the DC of opposed Sense Motive checks. In this way, a devilish cultist or a rogue with a spellcasting friend can confound inquisitors, devil smiters, and witch hunters. This spell has no effect on other divinations, such as *augury*, *detect thoughts*, or *clairaudience*. A *detect magic* plainly shows the use of an illusion on the subject of the spell.

### SOUL DRINKING

**School** necromancy; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 7

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

**Range** close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Effect** ray of chill winds and ice

**Duration** instantaneous

**Saving Throw** spell Fortitude, see below; **Spell Resistance** yes

A howling wind blows between you and the target (an evil spell that rapidly ages a nearby target; the target must make two DC 25 Fortitude saves). If both saves succeed, the target is unaffected, and the spell is wasted; if only one succeeds, the target ages by one category, and it permanently loses -1 Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution point. If both saving throws fail, the target both ages and suffers the above-listed ability damage; additionally, the caster gains 20 temporary hit points and permanently gains 1 of the 3 of the target's lost ability points (randomly chosen).

If this spell is cast on an undead creature, the caster loses 1 point of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution permanently, and the undead gains 20 hp.

# Mechuiti

*Demon Lord of Cannibals, King of the Behtu*

JOURNEYS  
TO THE WEST

By Adam Roy  
Art by Chris McFann

*Hunger. Hunger that is never sated. Hunger that never sleeps. Anger. Anger that knows no reason or remorse. Sadism. Sadism that knows no bounds or limitations. This is Mechuiti.*

– Excerpt from the  
*Diamond Tablets of Cassadega*

Every culture has its boogeyman. He is the monstrous creature that comes to you in the night and devours you, body and soul. In Midgard, this is Mechuiti (meh-CHOO-ee-tee), a demon lord so powerful, savage, and fearsome that the Hell of Cannibals bodily expelled him, spitting him out like a noxious poison and into the mortal world.

Cast out from the sweltering jungles and deadly swamps of the Hell of Cannibals, Mechuiti was coughed out of a black caldera into Midgard's cold, cruel milieu. Here, he is bound to the volcanic portal that also serves as his prison, and he gathers his rabid followers and plots to devour all life in Midgard. This goal, while vile enough, is only a stepping-stone to his ultimate goal: devouring the Gods of the Seven Heavens and

the Devils of the Eleven Hells, gaining ultimate power while destroying heaven and hell in the process.

## HISTORY

Little is known of Mechuiti before he came to Midgard, though some divinations hint at a dark, terrible empire he once ruled with tooth and claw in the Hell of Cannibals. After being ejected from the Eleven Hells, Mechuiti first entered Midgard via the volcanic caldera of **Ibu Perape** (“Mother of Demons”) in the Western Ocean on **Palau Kelaparan** (the “Island of Hungers”). (Palau Kelaparan appears in *Pirates of the Western Ocean*.) He now schemes and plots his revenge on this remote island lair, and breeds his demonic minions: tieflings, fiendish beasts, and most especially, the cannibalistic behtu pygmies.

Though he was cast out of the Hells in the Age of Legends, early in the history of Ankeshel, Mechuiti has remained a terror through the ages, destroying whole cities with a blow and devouring whole populations out of cruel amusement and insatiable hunger. Only by gathering the most powerful of their magics and technologies did the Ankeshelians drive him back to his volcanic island home. Unable to destroy him, they managed—barely—to contain Mechuiti and bind him within the volcano with their most puissant magical technology. Here he remains bound, if loosely, to the present day.

For 1,000 years, the most loyal and skilled of the Ankeshelian warriors and arcanists guarded and warded his prison, but after the sudden fall of their own island kingdom, the guardians vanished. With their disappearance, Mechuiti once again began to exert his influence over his island and the Western Ocean from within his fiery den. Through dreams, visions, and nightmares, he summoned evil-minded minions to his side. Now they labor ceaselessly to secure his release so he can begin his final vengeance against god and demon alike and fulfill his quest to conquer and consume all of Midgard.

## ALLIES AND ENEMIES

Given his goals of complete destruction and ultimate power, Mechuiti has few willing allies except among followers of the Dark Gods. Most deities and their followers attack Mechuiti’s servants and destroy his artifacts on sight. Veles, the World Serpent, in particular, seeks to destroy Mechuiti, knowing the Cannibal Lord, if freed, would attempt to devour him first. The serpent also seethes over Mechuiti’s corruption of some of his draconic grandchildren and other great lizards, Mechuiti having infused them with his own chthonic blood and demonic ire.

Some sages think Mechuiti may be a mask of Mordiggian or Vardesain, because they all share the Hunger domain with their priests (*Midgard Campaign Setting*). These deities are certainly occasional allies, and they likewise desire death and destruction to feed their unnatural urges.

Other sages think Mechuiti may be a servant of Loki-Utgard, as both grant the Fire domain to their priests, and both are betrayers and eternal enemies of the gods. If not, the pair may be allies of convenience, as they both know the suffering of imprisonment by the gods and their servants.

The rest of the northern gods oppose Mechuiti at every turn, believing his release may bring about the *Ragnarok*, the final apocalypse, where the World Serpent and all of Midgard are devoured, ending their dominion over the world. The servants and followers of the Northern gods (save Loki) slay Mechuiti’s minions on sight.

The sun god Aten of the Southlands is also Mechuiti’s dire foe, opposing the demon lord’s machinations in any form. Mechuiti has sent some behtu to the Southlands to breed demonic versions of the great creatures found there, such as rocs and oliphants. If the followers of Aten find this fiendish nest, they will surely purge it with holy fire and godly ire.

Because Mechuiti’s island is so far from the normal trade lanes and rarely sends anyone to the mainland, he has been able to simmer and plot. Those few sages

and adventurers aware of his existence and his island prison consider him safely bound. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. His magical bonds are weakening, and if he escapes them, it would take an unlikely alliance of Midgard’s gods and their servants to have any hope of containing him again.

## CULTS AND FOLLOWERS

Mechuiti first enthralled a small band of pygmies, known as the behtu, who dwelt in the island’s trees. They had served as laborers for the Ankeshelian overlords and were struggling to survive after the Ankeshelians’ sudden departure.

Mechuiti visited the behtu’s leaders and priestesses in dreams and visions and brought them under his power. First, he crossbred them with the carnivorous apes also dwelling on the isle; then, he infected them with his ichorous blood, which weeps from his monolithic idols in his fane. These idols are part of the ancient magic binding him to the island, but his power flows out into those tears

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## New Alchemical Gear

**Ichorous Infusions** Behtu troops and war parties carry 1d6 vials of ichorous infusions. They may ingest an infusion as a standard action; they do this often in preparation for ambush. For 2d6 rounds, the behtu gain a +4 sorcerous bonus to their Strength and Constitution scores, as well as doubling their base speed (including their climb speed) and gain an extra move action each round. Behtu also take a -4 penalty to their Intelligence and Wisdom scores for the duration.

If a non-behtu PC ingests the infusion, treat as if the PC had been poisoned with *black adder venom* (see afflictions and poisons in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*).

of blood. Next, he taught them tattoo magic to give the behtu additional fiendish power and strength. Finally, he bid them to repopulate, rebuild, and defend his temple-prison in the volcano of **Ibu Perape**. To this day, the behtu have not found the key to secure their master's full release, but they still search diligently via divinations, and they torture and enchant all the unlucky explorers stumbling upon their abode, the better to extract information.

Mechuiti has also commanded the behtu to breed many fiendish beasts and lizards with his demonic blood: dire apes, fiendish giant lizards, and even demonic spiders. He has raised several generations of fiendish lava (red) dragons lairing in the volcano's caldera who now guard his temple-fane; they also deal with any threats beyond the behtu's reach. The current fiendish dragon residing on the island is **Ibu Kebrikan**, (the "Mother of Flames"), an adult red dragon with fiendish powers.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND GOALS

Mechuiti has built up quite a power base on **Palau Kelaparan** ("Island of Hungers"), breeding all sorts of fiendish creatures, most especially the behtu (see below), but also fiendish drakes, fiendish dire iguanas, fiendish dire apes, and many

other demon-blooded beasts and lizards.

His ultimate goal is release from his prison. To that end, Mechuiti sends dreams, visions, and nightmares far and abroad across Midgard, seeking weak minds he can turn to his ends and lure to his island. Each unwary explorer brings new magic and knowledge to the island, which may eventually bring Mechuiti one step closer to freedom—and one step closer to consuming the known world and all the life energies and magical powers contained within it.

## APPEARANCE AND POWERS

If somehow freed, Mechuiti resembles a 25-foot-tall, fiendish mandrill, with massive slaving fangs and boar-like tusks curling almost back to his blue cheeks. An enormous yellow-green flame blazes eternally atop his head. He uses this fire to set flammable objects alight (such as thatch huts and other wooden structures), and if he head butts or bull rushes an opponent, he can set them on fire with these acidic flames.

Mechuiti has gigantic ape-like arms ending in huge, bloody, rending claws. He can stand erect like a humanoid, or knuckle walk, as he chooses; it does not affect his speed.

## DEMON LORD, MECHUITI

**(DEMON LORD OF APES AND CANNIBALS)**  
*A yellow-green fire burns atop this towering mandrill's head. He has massive arms ending in razor-sharp claws.*

### MECHUITI

CR 25

### XP 1,640,000

CE Huge outsider [chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar]

**Init** +11 **Senses** darkvision 120ft., *detect thoughts*, low-light vision, *true seeing*; Perception +38

**Aura** fiery aura (10 ft. radius, Fort DC 37 for half, 2d6 fire damage+8 acid damage), unholy aura (DC 26 )

### DEFENSE

**AC** 31, touch 15, flat-footed 24 (+7 Dex, +16 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 528 (30d10+360+3)

**Fort** +31, **Ref** +17, **Will** +24

**DR** 25/cold iron and good; **Immune** electricity, fire, poison; **Resist** acid 20;

**SR** 36

**Weakness** vulnerability to cold

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +40 (4d12+12 plus rend), bite +40 (2d10+12 plus grab)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

**SA** breath weapon (50-ft. cone, 6d10 damage, half fire, half acid, Reflex DC 37 for half, 6/day), rend (2 claws, 4d12 +18), spell-like abilities

**Spell-like Abilities:** (CL 20th)

Constant – *detect thoughts* (DC 20), *mind blank*, *true seeing*

At will – *detect magic*, *charm monster* (DC 22), *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *pyrotechnics*, *unholy blight* (DC 22), *wall of fire*

3/day – *dominate monster* (DC 27), *finger of death* (DC 25), *fire storm* (DC 26), *mage's disjunction* (DC 27), *power word stun*, *repulsion* (DC 24), *summon* (level 6, 3d10 ape demons\* 100%), *telekinesis* (DC 23)

1/day – *black tentacles*, *blasphemy* (DC 25), *power word kill*, *summon* (level 9, any 2 CR 19 or lower demons 100%), *temporal stasis* (DC 26)

\*new creature (see below)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 35, **Dex** 25, **Con** 35, **Int** 20, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 27

**Base Atk** +30, **CMB** +44 (+48 grapple), **CMD** 61

**Feats** Awesome Blow, Blinding Critical, Cleave, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Staggering Critical, Stunning Critical, Toughness

**Skills** Acrobatics +25, Bluff +26, Diplomacy +33, Intimidate +41, Knowledge (arcana) +35, Knowledge (history) +35, Knowledge (nature) +35, Knowledge (religion) +35, Knowledge (the planes) +38, Perception +38, Sense Motive +38, Stealth +22, Use Magic Device +26

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal, Undercommon; telepathy 120 ft.

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** Palau Kelaparan (island prison)

**Organization** solitary or troop (Mechuiti plus 3d10 ape demons)

**Treasure** triple standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Breath Weapon (Su):** As a standard action, six times per day, Mechuiti can spit acidic fire from his mouth in a 50-ft. cone, dealing 6d10 damage (half fire, half acid), Reflex DC 37 half. The DC is Constitution-based.



## BEHTU

*With a face like a mandrill and tusks like a great boar, these ferocious half-ape, half-human pygmies have demon blood flowing in their veins. One does not travel to the volcanic temple-islands of the behtu unless desperate or suicidal.*

### BEHTU

CR 4

#### XP 1,200

CE Small Humanoid

**Init** +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +2

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 20, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 18; (+1 armor, +2 Dex, +6 natural, +1 size)

**HP** 32 (4d8+12)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

**Resist** cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

**Melee** bite +7 (1d4+3), shortspear +8 (1d4+3)

**Ranged** shortspear +7 (1d4+3)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 4th)

1/day—*burning hands*

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 17, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 7

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 18

**Feats** Iron Will, Weapon Focus (shortspear)

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Climb +15, Perception +2, Stealth +12, Survival +7;

**Racial** +2 Stealth, +2 Survival

**Languages** Abyssal, Ape

**SQ** demonic resistance, demonic sorcery

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** warm and temperate forests

**Organization** troop (3–6) or war party (6–12, including 1 “witch doctor” [druid, sorcerer, or witch])

**Treasure** NPC gear (rattan [hide] armor, ichorous infusions, small shortspear, other treasure)

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Demonic Resistance (Su)** Behtu have cold resistance 5, electricity resistance 5, and fire resistance 5

**Demonic Sorcery (Su)** Behtu sorcerers treat their Charisma score as 2 points higher for all sorcerer bloodline abilities. All behtu sorcerers have the Abyssal bloodline.

**Languages** Behtu begin play speaking Abyssal and Ape. Behtu with high Intelligence scores can choose from any of the following languages: Common, Draconic, Goblin, and Orc.

**Skilled** Behtu have a +2 racial bonus to Stealth and Survival checks.

Mechuiti, the demon lord of apes, cannibalism, and torture, combines the cruelty of a demon with the cunning of a human and the ferocity of an ape. He has bred the same qualities into his people, the behtu (bAY-too—singular and plural are the same). In his volcanic temples, his idols weep with his ichorous demon blood, which the Behtu use to create infusions to give them inhuman strength and speed. The behtu also use the infusions to etch demonic glyph-tattoos on their skin to grant them infernal powers and protections. The behtu are known to breed demonic dire iguanas as war mounts. The most



powerful behtu sorcerers and druids have been known to ride large lava drakes and small volcano dragons as personal mounts.

**BEHTU LORE**

**Knowledge (arcana, nature, planes) check**

- DC 25 Mechuiti, the demon lord of apes, cannibalism, and torture, combines the cruelty of a demon with the cunning of a human and the ferocity of an ape.
- DC30 He has bred the same qualities into his people, the behtu (BAY-too—singular and plural are the same). In his volcanic temple, his idols weep with his ichorous demon blood, which the behtu use to create infusions to give them inhuman strength and speed.
- DC 35 The behtu also use the ichorous infusions to etch demonic glyph-tattoos on their skin, granting them infernal powers and protections. The behtu breed fiendish lizards as war mounts.
- DC 40 Mechuiti is imprisoned within a volcanic island far off the Western Ocean's sea lanes and he constantly seeks the key to his freedom, so he can arise once again and consume the entire world.

**ADVENTURE HOOKS**

- **Dark Research** – A Bemmean mage sends the adventurers to Palau Kelaparan (“Island of Hungers”) to retrieve samples of Mechuiti’s ichorous blood to further the mage’s mysterious research.
- **Island Safari** – The adventurers are sent to the island to capture behtu or other fiendish creatures of the island for use in gladiatorial

games on the mainland, or perhaps a Barsellan scion fancies a unique (and potentially deadly) hunting trip to the island.

- **Dragon Hunt** – Ibu Keprikan, the red dragon, has been ranging farther abroad and has begun raiding other islands for food and treasure, devastating the local populations. The survivors prevail upon the adventurers to stop the fiendish dragon before she entirely destroys their villages.

**DEMON, APAU PERAPE (APE DEMON)**

*Sharp teeth fill this large, demonic ape’s mouth. Its fur is a midnight black, and its eyes glow a deep, disturbing red. The ape’s long, muscular arms stretch to the ground, ending in wickedly curved claws.*

**APE DEMON (APAU PERAPE) CR 7**

**XP 3,200**

CE Large outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar)

**Init** +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +12

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 23, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 19; (+4 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

**HP** 66 (7d10+28)

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

**DR** 10/cold iron or good; **Immune** cold, electricity, poison; **Resist** acid 10, fire 10; **SR** 18

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

**Melee** bite +12 (2d6+6), 2 claws +12 (2d6+6 plus rend)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

**Special Attacks** rend (2 claws, 2d6+9)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 1st)

At will—*detect good, detect magic*  
1/day—*cause fear* (30-ft. radius, DC 11),  
summon (level 4, 1 demon 1 35%)

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 22, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 28

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Improved

**New Spell**

**STUNNING BOLT**

**School** evocation [electricity]

**Level** magus 3, sorcerer/wizard 3, witch 3

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, M (two pieces of wool or fur)

**Range** 30 ft.

**Area** 60-ft. cone

**Duration** instantaneous

**Saving Throw** Special – see text; **Spell Resistance** yes

You release a powerful stroke of static electricity from your hands that deals 1d6 points of non-lethal electrical damage per caster level (maximum 8d6) to each creature within its area of effect. The *stunning bolt* causes each creature failing its Reflex save becomes *stunned* for 1d4 rounds.

Behtu sorcerers often combine this spell with a *contingency* spell on their net-traps so that each character trapped by the net makes a Fortitude check instead of a Reflex check to avoid half damage and the *stunning* effect.

Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception)

**Skills** Acrobatics +14, Bluff +10, Climb +24, Perception +12, Stealth +10, Survival +10

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic

**ECOLOGY**

**Environment** warm forests (Abyss)

**Organization** troop (3–6) or warband (3d10)

**Treasure** standard

These black-furred gorilla-like demons serve only Mechuiti. They are fearless and savage, living for battle. Once in combat, their morale never breaks. Like their master, they have an insatiable hunger, and do not leave any dead behind, consuming even their bones.

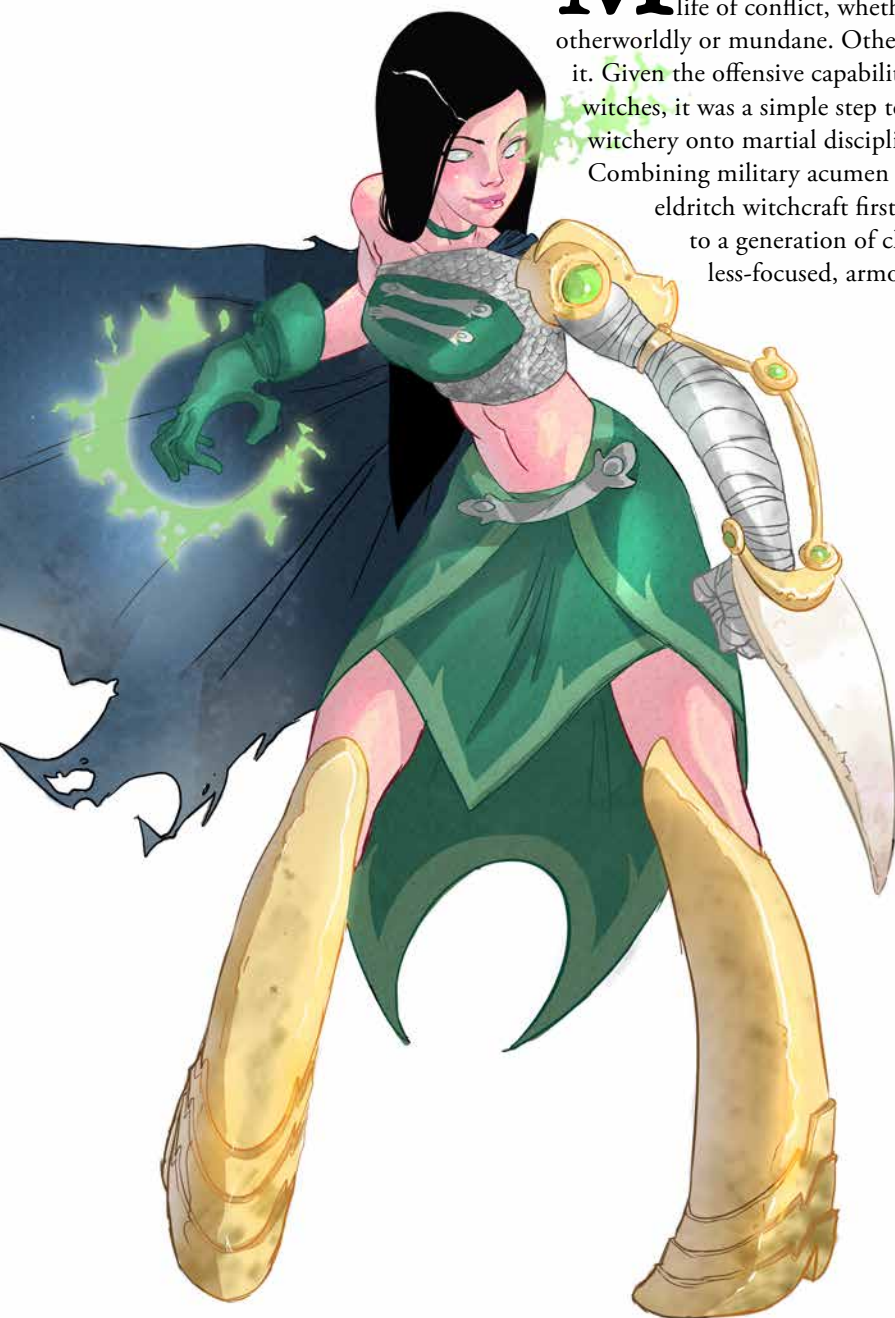


# The GAUNTLET WITCH

*A New and Iron Archetype, Dabbling in Dark Design*

By Morgan Boehringer and Jim Wettstein

Art by Flaviano Armentaro



**M**any witches are resigned, if not well suited to, a life of conflict, whether otherworldly or mundane. Others seek it. Given the offensive capabilities of witches, it was a simple step to graft witchery onto martial discipline. Combining military acumen with eldritch witchcraft first led to a generation of clumsy, less-focused, armored

casters. The two forms of skill were not a natural pairing.

In time, however, proponents of the armored-witch style honed their skills and their craft, fashioning finely wrought arcane gauntlet-sleeves—the famed *eldritch gauntlet*. These are well articulated, sentient, intelligent, and spell-empowering items, with which gauntlet witches pool their magic. Worn as a second skin, the *eldritch gauntlet* effectively created a conduit to the witches' otherworldly patron, no longer requiring them to bond with familiars to gain their spells.

## GAUNTLET WITCH (ARCHETYPE)

Some gauntlet witches are wanderers, ascetic autodidacts who take pride in their prowess and legerdemain. Others are bound by service, utilizing their eldritch skills to ferret out conspiracies and traitors. These dedicated and merciless hunters are chosen and instructed with loyalty to coin or devotion to their ruling masters.

Finally, a few are born into dedicated coven societies, never knowing a life beyond duty. These witches employ their *eldritch gauntlet* judiciously in their various roles as infiltrators, hunters, enforcers, and interceptors, their covens serving dark nation-states or operating as mercenary organizations. Fear and intimidation are important tools in their efforts to uncover conspirators, stalk traitorous turncoats, or avenge themselves against the order's oathbreakers.

Whether self-taught wanderers or cadres formed through years of secretive

training within hidden schools, gauntlet witches hone their martial skills and master the techniques of their eldritch gauntlet. These distinctive tools serve them equally as the source of eldritch power, a formidable defensive item, and as an arcane weapon.

### Weapon and Armor Proficiency:

A gauntlet witch is proficient with all simple weapons and the spiked gauntlet. A gauntlet witch is also proficient with light armor. She can cast witch spells while wearing light armor without incurring the normal arcane spell failure chance. Like any other arcane spellcaster, a gauntlet witch wearing medium armor, heavy armor, or a shield incurs a chance of arcane spell failure if the spell in question has a somatic component. A multiclass gauntlet witch incurs the normal arcane spell failure chance for arcane spells received from other classes.

A gauntlet witch's proficiency with the spiked gauntlet and light armor proficiency replaces the witch's 1<sup>st</sup>-level hex.

**Spells:** A gauntlet witch learns, prepares, and casts spells like a witch of equal level, except that she must commune with her *eldritch gauntlet* instead of with a familiar.

**Patron:** Gauntlet witches derive their arcane spells and power from the *eldritch gauntlet's* link with a patron, much as a normal witch does from an animal familiar. The following patrons complement the gauntlet witch: agility, archery, blood, deception, dragon, endurance, glory, ink, plague, portents, protection, shadow, spirits, storms, strength, time, vengeance, war, wind, and winter.

**Eldritch Gauntlet (Su):** At 1st level, the gauntlet witch gains a powerful sentient weapon called an *eldritch gauntlet* that teaches her magic, provides guidance, stores her spells, and grants her additional abilities (see the Witch's Familiar in the *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* and the Eldritch Gauntlet abilities below). The gauntlet witch must commune with her *eldritch gauntlet* each day to prepare her spells,

much like a standard witch must do with her familiar.

An *eldritch gauntlet* stores all of the witch's known spells, and a gauntlet witch can only prepare a spell stored within the *eldritch gauntlet*. A gauntlet witch can also add new spells to her *eldritch gauntlet*, in the same way a witch can add spells to her familiar (see the 'Adding Spells to a Witch's Familiar' sidebar of the *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*).

A witch with this class feature does not gain the witch's familiar, and cannot have a familiar of any kind, even from another class. A witch's *eldritch gauntlet* otherwise functions as and replaces the witch's familiar and 4<sup>th</sup>-level hex.

**Hex:** This is exactly like the witch's ability of the same name, except any hex requiring or affecting her familiar is used with her *eldritch gauntlet* instead.

**Armor Training:** Starting at 8th level, a gauntlet witch can gain the following armor training at the expense of her hex ability. Each additional level of armor training allows the gauntlet witch to cast spells in heavier armor. An *eldritch gauntlet* becomes incorporated as part of any medium or heavy armor the gauntlet witch wears. Therefore, the non-magical armor statistics of the medium or heavy armor supersedes that of the *eldritch gauntlet*.

**Medium Armor (Ex):** A gauntlet witch gains proficiency with medium armor. This is exactly like the magus' class feature of the same name. A gauntlet witch must be at least 8th level before selecting this armor training. This ability replaces a witch's hex at 8th level or higher.

**Heavy Armor (Ex):** A gauntlet witch gains proficiency with heavy armor. This is exactly like the magus' class feature of the same name. A gauntlet witch must select medium armor and be at least 14th level before selecting this armor training. This ability replaces a witch's hex at 14th level or higher.

**Hexes:** The following hexes complement the gauntlet witch: blight<sup>APG</sup>, coven<sup>APG</sup>, disguise<sup>APG</sup>, evil eye<sup>APG</sup>, prehensile hair<sup>UM</sup>, sear<sup>UM</sup>,

slumber<sup>APG</sup>, tongues<sup>APG</sup>.

**Major Hexes:** The following major hexes complement the gauntlet witch: agony<sup>APG</sup>, beast eye<sup>UM</sup>, hag's eye<sup>APG</sup>, hoarfrost<sup>UM</sup>, infected wounds<sup>UM</sup>, retribution<sup>APG</sup>.

**Grand Hexes:** The following grand hex complements the gauntlet witch: death curse<sup>APG</sup>, natural disaster<sup>APG</sup>, summon spirit<sup>UM</sup>, witch's hut<sup>UM</sup>.

(<sup>APG</sup>*Advanced Player's Guide*, <sup>UM</sup>*Ultimate Magic*)

### NEW PATRON THEMES

**Archery:** 2<sup>nd</sup>—*conjure energy arrow*<sup>KQ22</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>—*ghostly arrow*<sup>KQ22</sup>; 6<sup>th</sup>—*flame arrow*, 8<sup>th</sup>—*mercurial arrow*<sup>KQ22</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>—*fly true*<sup>KQ22</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>—*freezing sphere*, 14<sup>th</sup>—*prismatic spray*, 16<sup>th</sup>—*orb of the void*<sup>UM</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>—*prismatic sphere*.

**Blood:** 2<sup>nd</sup>—*weapon of blood*<sup>KQ6</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>—*blood lure*<sup>KQ6</sup>; 6<sup>th</sup>—*blood biography*<sup>APG</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>—*bloody claws*<sup>APG</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>—*exsanguinating cloud*<sup>KQ6</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>—*bloodsworn retribution*, 14<sup>th</sup>—*quell the tide*<sup>KQ6</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>—*blood mist*<sup>UM</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>—*transmute blood to acid*<sup>UM</sup>.

**Dragon:** 2<sup>nd</sup>—*shocking grasp*, 4<sup>th</sup>—*resist energy*; 6<sup>th</sup>—*fireball*, 8<sup>th</sup>—*air walk*, 10<sup>th</sup>—*call lightning storm*, 12<sup>th</sup>—*freezing sphere*, 14<sup>th</sup>—*form of the dragon I*, 16<sup>th</sup>—*form of the dragon II*, 18<sup>th</sup>—*form of the dragon III*.

**Glory:** 2<sup>nd</sup>—*shield of faith*, 4<sup>th</sup>—*bless weapon*; 6<sup>th</sup>—*searing light*, 8<sup>th</sup>—*holy smite*, 10<sup>th</sup>—*righteous might*, 12<sup>th</sup>—*undeath to death*, 14<sup>th</sup>—*holy sword*, 16<sup>th</sup>—*holy aura*, 18<sup>th</sup>—*gate*.

**Ink:** 2<sup>nd</sup>—*harrying glyph*<sup>KQ8</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>—*glyph aura*<sup>KQ8</sup>; 6<sup>th</sup>—*maurading glyph*<sup>KQ8</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>—*inkblot*<sup>KQ8</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>—*memory echo*<sup>KQ8</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>—*aegis*<sup>KQ8</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>—*firebrand*<sup>APG</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>—*scintillating pattern*, 18<sup>th</sup>—*weird*.

**Protection:** 2<sup>nd</sup>—*sanctuary*, 4<sup>th</sup>—*shield other*, 6<sup>th</sup>—*protection from energy*, 8<sup>th</sup>—*spell immunity*, 10<sup>th</sup>—*communal protection from energy*<sup>UC</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>—*antimagic field*, 14<sup>th</sup>—*repulsion*, 16<sup>th</sup>—*moment of prescience*, 18<sup>th</sup>—*greater communal spell immunity*<sup>UC</sup>.

## Gauntlet Witches In Midgard

In the *Midgard Campaign Setting*, gauntlet witches are rare. However, a sizable number complement the Sekban and Edjet in the Mharoti Empire. Dragonkin and (not surprisingly) dragon-blooded gauntlet witches form their own mercenary coven-schools—nominally loyal to the Sultana, but more often swayed by coin and reward. Officially sanctioned Dragon's Talons find work as bodyguards for Mharoti envoys, thus spreading the armored-witch concept throughout the Southlands and the Northlands. Mharoti gauntlet witches have the dragon patron theme.

In the Principalities of Morgau and Doresh, undead gauntlet witches strike fear into all as agents of state and policy, excelling as hunters of runaways and executioners of wayward nobles. A cadre of gauntlet-witch wights and imperial ghouls form the mercenary Broken Company. These witches' patron theme is death<sup>UM</sup> or plague<sup>APG</sup>.

In the Wasted West lie the ruins of the Great Mage War, which gauntlet

witches seeking the lore of their forebears scour, hoping to glean new power and renown. Tiefling and infernal-blooded gauntlet witches haunt Bemmea and Barsella, poring over ancient treatises and journals, eager to rediscover the lost dark arts of Caelmarath. Gauntlet witches on the Isle of Morphoi protect the Grottoes of Past, Present, and Future; their patron theme is portents or time.

Gauntlet witches also exist in Perunalia, the Magdar Kingdom, and Krakova, though they are few in number and do not operate as openly as in the Wastes or Morgau. Those in the Duchy of Perun's Daughter work alongside the duchy's expert archers to protect its cities, and they have agility<sup>APG</sup>, archery, protection, or wisdom<sup>APG</sup> as their patron theme. In the Magdar Kingdom, gauntlet witches serve glory, strength<sup>APG</sup>, vengeance<sup>UM</sup>, or war; and in Krakova, their patrons include animals<sup>APG</sup>, enchantment<sup>UM</sup>, or wind.

**Storms:** 2<sup>nd</sup>—alter winds<sup>APG</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>—gust of wind; 6<sup>th</sup>—call lightning, 8<sup>th</sup>—ball lightning<sup>APG</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>—call lightning storm, 12<sup>th</sup>—freezing sphere, 14<sup>th</sup>—vortex 16<sup>th</sup>—whirlwind, 18<sup>th</sup>—storm of vengeance.

**War:** 2<sup>nd</sup>—abundant ammunition<sup>UC</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>—magic siege engine<sup>UC</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>—deadly juggernaut<sup>UC</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>—greater magic siege engine<sup>UC</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>—energy siege shot<sup>UC</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>—greater energy siege shot, 14<sup>th</sup>—siege of trees<sup>UC</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>—frightful aspect<sup>UC</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>—greater siege of trees<sup>UC</sup>.

**Wind:** 2<sup>nd</sup>—feather fall, 4<sup>th</sup>—wind walk; 6<sup>th</sup>—gaseous form, 8<sup>th</sup>—air walk, 10<sup>th</sup>—control winds, 12<sup>th</sup>—communal air walk<sup>UC</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>—elemental body IV (air only), 16<sup>th</sup>—whirlwind, 18<sup>th</sup>—storm of vengeance.

(<sup>APG</sup> *Advanced Player's Guide*, <sup>UM</sup> *Ultimate Magic*, <sup>KQ22</sup> "Arrow Magic" from *Kobold Quarterly* #22, <sup>UC</sup> *Ultimate*

*Combat*, <sup>KQ6</sup> "Blood Magic" from *Kobold Quarterly* #6, <sup>KQ8</sup> "Glyph Magic" from *Kobold Quarterly* #8)

### CREATING AN ELDRITCH GAUNTLET

An *eldritch gauntlet* is a particular form of intelligent armor given to a gauntlet witch. A witch might gain this dual-purpose item several ways. Covens-Militant present most *eldritch gauntlets* to initiates as equal parts contract and reward to help the new witches fulfill their missions. Sometimes, however, the item just appears among a witch's possessions, its origins being a mystery. Sometimes elders within a coven pass them down to their children or grandchildren in an ongoing search for a witch who can unlock such antique gauntlets' true potential.

An *eldritch gauntlet* is both masterwork armor and a masterwork weapon.

Although an *eldritch gauntlet* superficially resembles a gladiator's *lorica manica*, or a samurai's *kote*, it is much more. Its sleeve of mail envelops one side of the witch's upper chest and the witch's arm from the shoulder to the wrist. Metal plates cover this, similar to the shoulder-to-wrist protection on a suit of full plate, ending in a single spiked gauntlet. An *eldritch gauntlet* has both the weapon statistics of a normal spiked gauntlet and the armor statistics of studded leather, but it weighs only 15 lbs. An *eldritch gauntlet* uses one of the witch's hand and wrist item slots and her chest slot. As a gauntlet witch increases in level, her *eldritch gauntlet* gains power.

An *eldritch gauntlet* is independently conscious, but it features some personality traits reflecting its wielder. The *eldritch gauntlet* always shares its wielder's alignment and even changes its alignment if its wielder does. The gauntlet typically works toward its wielder's goals, though not always without argument or backlash. Each *eldritch gauntlet* has a mission, and while sometimes two or more *eldritch gauntlets* will work in concert, each mission is independent. The GM decides the *eldritch gauntlet's* mission and the needs of the campaign, coven, or the adventure; or a GM can roll randomly for the weapon's purpose, using the Intelligent Item Purpose table in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*.

#### ELDRITCH GAUNTLET BASICS:

An *eldritch gauntlet* bonds to a particular gauntlet witch, much like a familiar, but in more of a partnership than a master-servant relationship.

**Intelligence:** A gauntlet starts with a 10 Intelligence, and its Intelligence increases by 1 point for every two levels of the gauntlet witch (at 3rd level, 5th level, and so on).

**Wisdom and Charisma:** As the gauntlet witch advances in level, so do the *eldritch gauntlet's* Wisdom and Charisma ability scores. These abilities start at 6, and each increases by 1 for every two levels of the gauntlet witch.

## Eldritch Gauntlet Progression

| Witch Class Level | Enhancement Bonus | Int | Wis/Cha | Ego | Special                                 |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----|---------|-----|---|
| 1st-2nd           | +1                | 10  | 6       | 3   | Alertness, lore, telepathy, unbreakable |
| 3rd-4th           | +1                | 11  | 7       | 5   | Aegis strike, pain clasp                |
| 5th -6th          | +2                | 12  | 8       | 8   | Toughness                               |
| 7th-8th           | +2                | 13  | 9       | 10  |   |
| 9th-10th          | +3                | 14  | 10      | 12  | Improved pain clasp, teleport gauntlet  |
| 11th-12th         | +3                | 15  | 11      | 14  |   |
| 13th-14th         | +4                | 16  | 12      | 16  |   |
| 15th-16th         | +4                | 17  | 13      | 18  | Legend lore                             |
| 17th-18th         | +5                | 18  | 14      | 22  |   |
| 19th-20th         | +5                | 19  | 15      | 24  | Drain husk                              |

*Ego:* An *eldritch gauntlet* starts with an ego of 3, and its ego increases as the gauntlet becomes more powerful, as per the Eldritch Gauntlet Progression Table below. If the wearer and the *eldritch gauntlet* come into conflict, an *eldritch gauntlet* can attempt to exert its dominance, using the rules per the Items against Characters rules in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*. Due to its specialized nature, an *eldritch gauntlet* has a nonstandard ego progression.

*Languages and Skills:* An *eldritch gauntlet* starts with Common as a language. As the *eldritch gauntlet* increases in Intelligence, it gains knowledge of additional languages and arcane lore. When it reaches an Intelligence of 12, it gains a bonus language of the GM's choice, and it gains 1 rank in a Knowledge skill (either arcane lore, dungeoneering, engineering, geography, nature, nobility, or religion). Each time the gauntlet gains an Intelligence modifier bonus, it gains another language and another rank in a Knowledge skill.

*Senses:* An *eldritch gauntlet* is aware of everything around it like a creature that can see and hear. It can be blinded and deafened as if it were a creature. It uses its wearer's saving throws.

*Gauntlet Grip:* Due to the specialized martial training she receives with the *eldritch gauntlet*, a gauntlet witch gains a +2 bonus on any CMB or CMD checks during a grapple. This bonus improves to +4 at 12<sup>th</sup> level. Additionally, at 4<sup>th</sup> level or above, she may select the Improved Disarm feat as one of her normal feats, even if she does not have the normal prerequisites for

it. At 8<sup>th</sup> level or above, she may likewise select the Greater Disarm feat.

### ELDRITCH GAUNTLET SPECIAL ABILITIES

An *eldritch gauntlet* has special abilities (or imparts abilities to its wearer), depending on the wearer's witch level. The abilities (but not bonuses) are cumulative. An *eldritch gauntlet* becomes inert when not worn by its attuned wearer.

*Alertness (Ex):* While a witch wears her *eldritch gauntlet*, she gains the Alertness feat.

*Lore (Su):* Starting at 1st level, the witch may ask the gauntlet a knowledge-related question 1/day for every 3 gauntlet witch levels. Treat the gauntlet as if it has the bardic lore ability, adding half its ego (rounded down) to all Knowledge skill checks; it makes all Knowledge skill checks untrained.

*Telepathy (Su):* A gauntlet witch communicates with her *eldritch gauntlet* telepathically in a language they share.

*Unbreakable (Su):* While linked to its wearer, the *eldritch gauntlet* is immune to the broken condition. If removed and broken, the gauntlet is unconscious and powerless until repaired. If destroyed, the *eldritch gauntlet* can be remade 1 week later through a special ritual costing 200 gp per witch level. The ritual takes 24 hrs to complete.

*Aegis Strike (Sp):* Starting at 3rd level, a gauntlet witch can enhance her gauntlet as a standard action by sacrificing a 1<sup>st</sup>-level spell's energy. This sacrificed energy grants the *eldritch gauntlet* a +1 enhancement bonus on attack and

damage rolls. At 7th level and every four levels thereafter, the gauntlet witch can sacrifice the next higher level spell to grant the *eldritch gauntlet* another +1 on damage rolls (2nd-level spells at 7th level, 3rd-level spells at 11th level, and so on), up to 5th-level spells at 19th level for a +5 bonus.

Also, the gauntlet witch can transfer, as a free action, some or all of this enhancement bonus to her AC as a bonus that stacks with all others. The gauntlet witch chooses how to allocate



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the *eldritch gauntlet's* enhancement bonus at the start of her turn before using it. This is similar to the *defending* weapon ability. This bonus to damage or AC lasts for a number of rounds per day equal to the gauntlet witch's level + the gauntlet witch's Intelligence modifier. These rounds do not need to be consecutive.

*Pain Clasp (Sp)*: At 3rd level, the gauntlet witch can make a melee touch attack with the *eldritch gauntlet* against a single target. If the attack is successful, she can make a CMB check against the target's CMD. If the check succeeds, the gauntlet witch deals 1d6 hp crushing damage to one of the target's limbs. Also, the target must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 the *eldritch gauntlet's* ego score, rounded down) or become *staggered* for 1d3 rounds and the limb *paralyzed* for 1d3 rounds. If the save is successful, the target is *staggered* for 1 round and the limb *paralyzed* for 2 rounds.

*Toughness (Ex)*: At 5th level, wearing the *eldritch gauntlet* grants the gauntlet witch the Toughness feat.

*Improved Pain Clasp (Sp)*: At 9th level, the target of a painful clasp becomes *staggered* and *paralyzed* for 1d6 rounds if the Fortitude save fails. If the save is successful, the target is *staggered* for 2 rounds and the limb *paralyzed* for 4 rounds. In addition, the gauntlet witch may make a pain clasp attack as a ranged touch attack with a range of 30 ft.

*Teleport Gauntlet (Sp)*: As a standard action, a gauntlet witch of 9th level or higher can call her *eldritch gauntlet* from as far as 1 mile away, teleporting it instantaneously to her hand. The witch can use this ability 1/ day, and an additional time per day every four levels after 9th.

*Legend Lore (Sp)*: At 15<sup>th</sup> level, the gauntlet's increasing intelligence grants it the use of a *legend lore* spell 1/day and with the usual long casting time. No material component is required.

*Drain Husk (Su)*: At 19th level, each time the gauntlet witch kills a living creature (whether through the use of hexes, spells, or painful clasp) while wielding the *eldritch gauntlet*, she gains temporary hp equal to the *eldritch gauntlet's* ego (these temporary hp last for 1 minute). The creature killed must have a number of Hit Dice equal to half the witch's character level for this to occur.

### ELDRITCH POWER, COVENS-MILITANT, AND EX-GAUNTLET WITCHES

Owning an *eldritch gauntlet* precludes the usual witch-bond with a familiar; instead, the gauntlet replaces the familiar in the patron-witch relationship. Without the *eldritch gauntlet*, the gauntlet witch is weaker than a normal witch.

As a useful hook and to add flavor for gauntlet witches in general, the

GM may wish to introduce Covens-Militant, rare covens that, either through mercenary or officially sanctioned auspices, organize along military lines. Nations with totalitarian, evil, or arcane governments employ Covens-Militant as mechanisms of state, relying on gauntlet witches to preserve order and impart fear in the populace, while mercenary Covens-Militant provide arcane muscle and hex-derived terror for their paymasters. Drawing their magic and craft collectively from various patrons, these covens imbue *eldritch gauntlets* with esoteric power, gifting them to their servants.

The power a Coven-Militant grants is not given lightly, and the penalties for misusing or stealing an *eldritch gauntlet* are severe. Gauntlet-witch PCs might find their aims and means at odds with their coven leaders, or the strictures of their mission too tight—acting outside the caveats of the gauntlet witch's mission alerts and alarms the *eldritch gauntlet*. In these cases the *eldritch gauntlet* may attempt to control its wearer, bringing her into line with the coven or mission, or it allies and assists the rogue gauntlet witch if it believes its wearer acts in accordance with a greater plan—or if it comes to view the gauntlet witch as superior to the coven's wishes.

Rogue gauntlet witches and *eldritch gauntlets* exist precariously, hunted by their own kind, and feared by all they encounter. When captured, gauntlet witches face summary execution; in rare cases, the covens do sometimes exercise leniency, making the offending gauntlet witch little more than a servant to their whims, stripping her of her gauntlet. A gauntlet witch relieved of her *eldritch gauntlet* suffers a permanent point of Charisma damage, and she may not bond again with an *eldritch gauntlet* (subject to GM's discretion). She becomes a normal witch and must choose a patron and summon a familiar as normal.

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# Howling Tower

## Real Scares

### II *Techniques for Creating a Strong Horror Atmosphere at the Table*

by Steve Winter

Art by Arthur Rackham

**H**orror is a tough genre for RPGs to emulate. When roleplayers embark on a horror game, they all too often run aground in melodrama and low comedy before reaching their destination. If they navigate past those obstacles, they find that most of the fear in RPGs is forced on characters through failed saving throws, sanity rolls, and keyword effects. The actual players are seldom scared by anything other than the thought that the pizza might arrive cold.

The point of horror is to get scared, not to pretend to be scared. The question, then, is how can a GM actually frighten the players?

#### IN-GAME FEAR IS LIKE HYPNOSIS

Fear won't work on players without their cooperation. No matter how perfectly a GM implements every bit of advice offered here, players who aren't interested in being frightened, won't be. They will talk out of character, fiddle with their phones, or worst of all, crack jokes about the monsters while performing their *Shaun of the Dead* routines.

A masterful showman and storyteller might be able to drag that group of comedians back into the mood, but such GM-maestros are rare. The best solution to that problem is a frank, out-of-game conversation in which the GM explains to the players that they can look forward to a few real chills if they play along and participate in the mood, or at least don't go out of their way to break it.

Gabbing, joking, singing, and acting out at the game table are hard habits to

set aside, so don't expect perfect results, even if players promise to do their best. Instead of getting angry or giving up when they backslide, try this trick instead: During your pre-game conversation, set up a signal for you to indicate when someone steps out of line mood-wise. Two knocks on the table are good; knocking gets attention without being intrusive and is noticeable even when the talker isn't looking at the GM. A signal like this lets the GM refocus the players without breaking the mood even further.

#### FORGET ABOUT THE MOVIES

Movies are the primary medium for horror stories these days, but they are poor examples for roleplayers. Movies are chiefly visual with elaborate audio cues; a film producer manipulates light, shadow, focus, music, sound effects, and special effects. By contrast, RPGs are an oral medium; a GM's voice is his or her chief tool. So think like a storyteller, not a film director. Let movies inspire your stories but not your storytelling.

#### SET THE AMBIENCE

Do you remember listening to ghost stories as a kid around a campfire, in a tent in the back yard, or in your friend's basement during a sleepover or slumber party? The stories themselves don't matter, but the ambience does. The room or the woods were dark and quiet. Listeners concentrated on the storyteller's voice and didn't hear much else.

Emulate that environment around the game table. Candles and black curtains might be taking things too far, but



dimming the lights is good. Players need to read their character sheets, after all. More light than that is unnecessary.

Spooky music helps, too. It should be instrumental, though, so the lyrics don't cause distraction. Horror movie scores are hard to beat. Keep the volume low, and set the stereo on endless random play.

#### PLAYERS NEED TO CARE ABOUT THEIR CHARACTERS

How often have you watched a horror movie and rooted for the characters to get strung up on meat hooks? Horror is effective when someone is threatened. For a threat to be effective, someone must care about the intended victim. Players with no attachment to the characters have nothing at risk. Introduce horror elements slowly, if possible, so players have time to develop those emotional ties.

Sometimes things must hurry along, as in a one-shot game or a four-hour convention event. Some quick



attachment can be engineered by orchestrating an early crisis the characters narrowly win or escape from. Shared adversity helps cement a relationship between player and character.

#### **WHAT THE PLAYERS DON'T KNOW CAN AND WILL HURT THEM.**

This is the Big Bang of horror GMing. Every other tenet springs from this one, draws from it, expands on it, or feeds it.

Never let players gauge the full picture; never let them see the full monster before the climax; never let them really know what they're up against.

Misdirection, however, is not the point. Having the players think they know what's going on, even if they're wrong, is no good. Players must know they're in the dark, and they must believe everything hinges on what they don't know.

Perception is everything. Players gain security from believing they have the answer. It doesn't matter if they're wrong if only the GM knows it. When players feel confident about the situation, rightly or wrongly, they can't be scared. Fright grows from doubt. For the purpose of sowing dread, it's better if players believe they're wrong when they're right, than if they believe they're right when they're wrong.

In other words, "fear of the unknown" is more than just a catchy phrase.

Be sure that the players always have at least a few questions they can't answer. Knowing they face unanswerable questions is key. Missing puzzle pieces mean nothing if the players don't know the pieces are missing.

Uncertainty should surround monsters as well. Most players know what a banshee does in their game of choice. They know its strengths and weaknesses, and they might even know its exact hit points, armor class, and attack bonuses. Nothing forces the GM to use a monster exactly as it's printed. Players who think they know everything about a banshee might be concerned that it will kill them in a fair fight, but they don't fear the unknown. When the banshee unleashes a capability no one suspected it had, uncertainty strikes, bringing fear

along with it.

At the same time, suspense and dread depend on players having key pieces of information. If a werewolf attacks out of nowhere, the only payoff is a moment of shock as it leaps on its victim. If everyone knows a werewolf is on the loose but can't do anything to save people from it, they have an hour of dread before it kills someone. If everyone hangs wolfsbane on their doors and windows but doesn't know whether those precautions will work, they have an hour of suspense while the beast prowls and howls in the night.

In everyday terms, this is no different from an older brother threatening you with a water balloon. If you don't know he has a balloon, you're not afraid of getting wet. Once he throws the balloon, the game is over. But while you know he has the balloon, he controls you. You will spend the next hour looking over your shoulder and jumping at every noise. When GMing for horror, you need to be the bully with the water balloon.

#### **HORROR MOVES IN SHADOWS**

Vulnerability and helplessness feed fear, and a great way to make players feel vulnerable is remove their senses. Individuals rely on sight and sound, so eliminating them or making characters doubt them works wonders for prompting feelings of powerlessness.

Smell (and hearing to a lesser extent) feeds us information we often don't understand without sight to give it context. A horrid smell or alien sound from an unseen source seeds anxiety.

It is best to deprive characters of their senses at a critical moment. Just as players expect an attack, throw the characters into darkness, blinding rain, thick fog, a thunderous storm, or a cloud of shrieking bats. Then don't attack immediately. Ratchet up the confusion and helplessness one notch at a time. When someone expects to be hit at any moment, actually hitting them releases the tension (remember the water balloon?). Tighten the vise, leaving the characters more vulnerable with each turn of the screw. The more you can raise

the players' sense of helplessness and dread, the more their terror will grow.

As a corollary, a player should not know when his or her character is teetering between reality and insanity. Instead, have the characters begin seeing the world differently from each other. Indicate those differences in your descriptions you offer to each character; as characters lose their grip, the descriptions of reality become different from one player to the next. When two characters out of five see a ghost, who can say with certainty which vision is reality? This principle is the highest expression of keeping players in the dark and making them distrust their senses. The question the players must answer but can't is, whose senses are trustworthy?

#### **THEY'RE ON THEIR OWN**

Horror RPGs often set up characters as members of an occult or monster-fighting organization. That's a useful roleplaying device, but it works against one of the basic tenets of horror: protagonists have no help to call on. Isolation increases their sense of despondency.

Characters don't need to be physically isolated, as they would be in a drifting ship or a remote cabin in the woods, but it is important they have no outside help they can rely on. If the ranger station can't be too far away and the radio can't be broken, their story can always be so fantastic that no one believes them—or that anyone hearing it concludes the characters are dangerously deranged.

#### **LEAVE NO WAY OUT**

Another form of helplessness comes from backing characters into a corner and taking away their options—or their good ones anyway. Players will know they must do something, but they're afraid to act because every path is either obstructed by known danger or clouded with even more threatening unknowns. This cornering should be strategic, not physical. The characters have been outplayed, and checkmate is near. To borrow a phrase from TSR's *Ravenloft Campaign Setting*, there's a reason why the villain is called "master."

This needs to be handled with care in an RPG. Roleplayers tend to leap into action in dangerous situations and attack reflexively when they're threatened. A clumsy attempt to corner characters can lead to them storming their way out of the trap before a promising situation fully develops.

#### PUT AWAY THE DICE

A big monster fight can be exciting, but it works against fear. Every combat round the characters survive, even if they're losing, adds to their knowledge about the foe and gives them confidence they can beat it. Confidence is the last thing you should allow them to have.

When violence erupts, make it inexorable. A creature might attack suddenly and overwhelmingly, strike someone down, then disappear again before anyone can retaliate. Or it might stalk the characters with monstrous endurance and cunning, slowly sapping their courage and strength, always just out of sight or beyond weapon range. In either case, the characters can't strike back effectively, adding to their vulnerability.

Combat scenes are useful for varying the intensity of play. Lean toward fights against human opponents or foes that are already known. Such opponents get everyone's blood pumping without revealing any secrets or bolstering the characters' confidence about their ability to defeat the ultimate foe.

This goes equally for chases. A phantom that can be chased is a phantom that's not in control of the scene. A phantom that steps through walls and floors can appear anywhere, and vanish when it wishes.

#### "ALL MEN DREAM, BUT NOT EQUALLY"

Dreams are intensely personal. It always rings false when someone narrates your dream to you. It's the epitome of telling, not showing.

Besides the dramatic weakness of dreams, players tend to treat those moments when the GM calls one player aside as group property. Players view dreams as free information: "There must

be a clue in it somewhere." Individual dreams are most effective if they reveal information the player is reluctant to share with the group. If PCs or NPCs disappeared in the night, a player might not be eager to share his dream about killing and eating those individuals, especially if he dreams it more than once.

Then again, he might. Dreams are tricky. Use them sparingly and mysteriously.

#### "HAPPILY EVER AFTER" IS FOR CHILDREN

All of this work—hemming in the characters, making them distrust their senses, fueling hopelessness—is for naught if players expect a happy ending. That's not to say the heroes can't triumph and evil can't be vanquished. The story can have a happy ending, but *only if the players force it*. Tragedy is horror's default ending. Unless the characters avert it, tragedy is what they'll get.

For players accustomed to heroic fantasy, this is a big shift. Victory is the default ending for heroic fantasy. Heroes expect things to turn out well in the end. It's essential players understand they're operating under a different paradigm.

Nothing hammers that point home like death. Nothing sharpens the players' focus like the sudden, jarring realization that the GM will kill their characters if given any opportunity. The GM must be prepared and 100% willing to kill, in cold blood, unapologetically. The worst mistake to make in the moment of crisis is letting players think that destroying a character will make the GM feel bad.

This is horror. Mercy does not live here.

But here's an interesting fact. There are ways to make this point without actually killing any characters.

Don't distribute damage "fairly." Never roll dice to see which of several characters a monster attacks. Choose the weakest character, look that player squarely in the eyes, and say with all the menace you can muster, "It picks you."

Always strike at the weakest link. That character might die, but it's more likely

the other characters will rally to the victim's rescue. When they do, strike one more blow that clearly would have killed the intended victim—ideally, it *nearly* kills the uninjured character—and then spirit the villain, monster, or creature away. If staged well, in confusion and poor visibility, this scene gives the players very little information beyond the fact they are up against something very nasty indeed. Repeat this scene as often as necessary to drive the point home.

Finally, the thing most roleplayers dread more than character death is losing. Many players would rather see their characters fail and die than fail and live. For that reason, the ever-present risk of failure is even more important than the ever-present risk of death. As the climax of the adventure approaches, every action should feel desperate. Players should be convinced the odds are stacked against them, that victory is all but out of reach, that their best still won't be good enough. Their foe holds the initiative, and the characters are so overwhelmed with fending off its attacks and reacting to its moves they can't make any of their own.

#### RUNNING IN A HORROR STYLE

Running an effective horror game is very different from running a thrilling fantasy or pulp-action adventure. Until it becomes second nature, it can help to list the most important, immediate tenets and pin them to your GM screen for quick reference.

- Threaten what the characters care about.
- Reveal no more than necessary.
- Bedevil players with what they don't know.
- Deprive characters of their senses when they need them most.
- Fence characters off from good options. Cut them off from help.
- Chip away the players' confidence.
- Never allow the foe to appear weak.
- Never allow the players to feel safe.

Those things will *really* scare them!

## Game Theories

# Different Kinds of World Building

by Monte Cook

**W**orld building is something that novelists, game designers, and Game Masters all talk about but when they do, they actually mean something slightly different. Or perhaps more accurately, they mean the same thing, but they approach the topic very differently.

## WORLD BUILDING FOR NOVELISTS

Novelists, in particular fantasy and science fiction novelists, work on world building as a backdrop for their stories. But that's all it is—a backdrop. While they might create a fully-fleshed out, living, breathing world, what ends up on the page is only just enough for the reader to understand and appreciate the story. (At least, if the novelist is any good.) In a way, any world building a novelist does that doesn't focus on the story they're telling is a waste. Fun, and perhaps rewarding as it gives them a better sense of place and scale, but still kind of a waste.

Even a world-building-focused writer is better off creating a world where there is one story to tell, with only the briefest suggestion of other stories. For example, take 3rd Age Middle Earth as related by Tolkien in the *Lord of the Rings*. The appendices, *The Silmarillion*, and other sources tell us that the author created a much larger world, but we only get a hint of this. The world building that we see is only what's going on around the main characters—only what they see.

## WORLD BUILDING FOR A GAME

World building from a game designer's point of view is very, very different. A

game designer needs to build a world not for one story, but for a thousand. Or more. A setting built for an rpg needs to be huge, with a lot going on. Fantasy GMs who want evil wizards for a foe need to have not one, but many to choose from. Another GM might want pirates. And another might want a jungle for his PCs to explore, with dinosaurs. Another will want all three. And each one of these needs to cover a wide scope—from something that poses a small but interesting threat to something really big and important. Maybe even world-threatening.

So to keep with our Middle Earth example, for an RPG, Middle Earth doesn't need Sauron, it needs five or six, all in different locales with different motives and goals. And a cult trying to resurrect Morgoth. About 20 Shelobs, and I don't even know how many Saurumans. And a few dozen petty warlords, pirate kings, orc tribes, marauding trolls, and plenty of dragons. (Of course I am exaggerating. But you see my point, I think.) This doesn't mean, of course, that any one campaign will use them all. And that's the point. GMs need a lot to choose from to offer their players, and the players need to have a lot of choices themselves. The world needs to be dynamic and broad.

The game designer's world needs a lot more broader detail than the novelist's as well. The novelist can mention the ruined city of Karmesh in the Bleak Desert as a bit of flavor, but the game designer needs to describe what's there. The novelist knows his characters aren't

going to Karmesh, ever. It's just a part of one of the characters' backstory. But the PCs in an rpg might go there, and they're going to want to know what they find. The GM needs details. Facts. Maps. And he needs them now.

I'm currently working on a world-building project called *The Ninth World*, which is the setting for my new game, *Numenera*. My approach to world building is twofold. I want to present a bunch of great setting details and adventure ideas, but I also want to steep GMs in the flavor and concepts underpinning the world, to help them create their own details. Sort of the "give a man a fish and he eats for a day, teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime" approach to setting design.

This, of course, is a different kind of world building still. I'm giving lots of detail, but then empowering GMs to create it on their own as well, by giving them an idea of what kind of things they could create. And what would and wouldn't be appropriate for the setting. Or rather, what the implications of different kinds of material will have on the setting. This allows each GM to make his own Ninth World, which is the best of all possible worlds (pun not intended—no, really).

## WORLD BUILDING AND THE GM

The GM's world building sort of falls in between. Ideally, the GM who builds his own world has more than one story in the offing, so that the players have some real choice as to what their characters do in the world (one story = railroad

campaign). But the GM doesn't need to create as many opportunities as the game designer, because he's only got his own group to work with. Again, ideally, the GM knows his group and knows, for example, that they aren't going to be interested in pirates but will be particularly eager to go after the undead lord and his zombie horde.

The GM also has the ability to build his world as he goes. Like the novelist, he only needs to present the players with world information as they require it--only as it is needed for the story at hand. If the PCs are in a tiny village in Kingdom A, they don't need to know any of the details of the political machinations of the nobles in the kingdom, and they need know nothing at all of Kingdom B and Kingdom C. The GM is free to wait to add those kind of details. He doesn't need to pre-build the entire world.

This, of course, can lead to a tricky bit of juggling. The GM has to stay at least one step ahead of the PCs. It's helpful to have chunks of the world that he can toss in when needed. For example, the PCs are on a ship sailing toward an adventure locale. The GM isn't ready for that location, so he has the PCs spot a mysterious island in the distance. He pulls out his old *Isle of Dread* module from way back when and uses that, not so much for the adventure, but for the setting.

Or the PCs are about to cross the border into a new kingdom that they've only heard of by name. Unfortunately, that's all the GM knows about it as well, and the game is in a day and a half. He pulls out a few of his Steven Erikson books (*The Book of Mazalan the Fallen* series), changes some of the names of the Seven Cities, and inserts that region into his game world. A GM, then, has the unique opportunity to incorporate other people's world building into his own world building process.

That's not cheating. That's being a Game Master.

One huge advantage to on-the-fly world building is that it allows the campaign to be reactive. If the GM creates it all ahead of time, and lays it all out before

the players, it is set in stone. But if he later decides he wants to have a magical realm with floating mountains high in the sky, and dragonriding knights, but he hasn't created such a place, he's out of luck. But if the world is being built as the campaign goes along, he can add this land in anywhere it suits him, and—more importantly—suits the campaign.

## PLAYERS AND WORLD BUILDING

But perhaps--just perhaps--there's yet another way to build a world: Collaboratively.

Consider the idea that the players actually contribute to the creation of the GM's world. For example, the GM could mandate ahead of time that each PC hails from a different kingdom, land, or region. Each player, then, is responsible not only for creating his or her character, but also for the place the character comes from. The player would develop the rulers, the communities, and the geography. This could involve developing the traits for the PC's race as well. The GM, in turn, takes these player "submissions" and incorporates them into the world he's already built.

Some GMs will want to have the ability to take liberties with the players' creations to make them all work within the larger context. Others will decide to work alongside the players as they develop their homeland to ensure they have the cohesiveness needed for a usable campaign setting.

Once it's in the GM's hands, of course, it's his world to shape. He shouldn't undo what a player has created, but instead he should utilize it. This is important, because the whole point is each PC knows a lot about his or her homeland. If the GM changes it all, there's no background knowledge. But the GM can still make use of the material and create surprises.

For example, say a player with an elf character creates a wasteland that she comes from. In her creation, this was once a beautiful wooded realm, but evil priests of dark gods destroyed the vegetation and almost wiped out the elves. The character's people destroyed the priests

long ago, but the realm is still a barren desert. The player, as she creates, names a number of the various important elves in the land, and even creates a relationship with one of them, stating that the queen of the surviving elves is her aunt.

Eventually, at some point after the campaign begins, the PC needs the help of her aunt, the queen of the wasteland elves. She leads her friends (the other PCs) to her ancestral land. She knows her way around—she knows the dangers of the polluted river, and where it is possible to still find game. She even knows you have to pay the trolls guarding the only pass through the mountains to get to the queen's hidden palace. That's all well and good.

But the GM has decided the evil priests were not wiped out long ago. Instead, their agents are still active in the land and they now control the queen with mind-altering drugs, making her their secret thrall. When the PCs arrive, the elf character senses something is amiss—she knows this place, and these people, remember—so now the player's knowledge of the realm becomes a hook for an adventure. What's going on with the queen? When the PCs discover she's being drugged, they need to figure out who's doing it, and why.

The important thing to take away is that allowing the player to create the wasteland didn't remove power from the GM. On the contrary, it saved him some work, it gave him new opportunities for adventures, and it made the elf player feel more invested in the campaign as a whole. When she senses something is amiss, it's really going to worry her. When she learns that something has happened to the queen, and that the evil priests—that the player herself created—are still around, it's going to be far more meaningful to her than if the GM had created it all himself.

And perhaps that's the most important part of world building, no matter who does the work. To create a place that feels real enough to develop an emotional connection to it.

Who wants to save a world that no one cares about?

# The Devil's Food

## *A Diabolical Tale among the Gnomes of Niemheim*

By Michael Lane

Art by Jason Banditt Adams, Cartography by Sean Macdonald

**T**he Devil's Food" is an urban fantasy adventure suitable for four PCs of 6<sup>th</sup> level. The adventure takes the PCs to the gnomish city of Königsheim during the fall Kirsch Festival to rescue sacrifices while serving as bodyguards for a merchant allying with some of the city's famous chocolatiers. In a twist, the adventurers must rescue *him* from the chocolatiers—a diabolist and devil in disguise.

This adventure uses one monster from the *Midgard Bestiary for Pathfinder RPG*, which is reprinted here.

### ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Of all the diabolical inventions the alliance of the gnomes of Niemheim and the devils of the Eleven Hells have wrought, few have proven as insidious as chocolate. One hundred years ago, the devils introduced the gnomes to the seeds of cocoa trees growing in the steamy jungles along the River Lethe. Shortly thereafter, the gnomes brought chocolate to the Crossroads.

Today, the gnomish chocolatiers of Königsheim are renowned throughout the Crossroads for their exquisite creations, a secret they hold closely indeed. Although confectioners from Zobeck, Krakova, and other major cities have failed to secure the gnomes' secret, a handful of merchants have struck deals with them. Still, their greatest creations are only available in Niemheim—and few realize the true danger of their lure.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

Deception and misdirection are themes in this adventure. Worshippers of Lada, having heard of the PCs' good deeds,

approach them, asking them to help rescue captives bound for blood sacrifice within the gnomish city of Königsheim. They give the PCs a merchant contact, Stefon Zajac, who seeks bodyguards for his trip to the same city; the merchant will pay them handsomely, so the Ladites hope the PCs might accept their mission out of the goodness of their hearts (or for a *wand of cure light wounds* at the very most).

The Ladites just want the PCs to make contact with a cherry brandy vendor named Torius at the Kirsch Festival to see if he has any "barrels" for Krakova. The barrels will contain the individuals the PCs need to smuggle out of the city via their ship.

The adventure begins when the PCs meet Stefon Zajac, a wealthy merchant with his own goals in Königsheim.

### INTRODUCTION

Use the following background information to play Stefon Zajac and to negotiate the job offer. The PCs can meet him at his confectioner's shop in Krakova.

Stefon Zajac's shop, *Sweet Delights*, has had a great year importing lesser chocolates from Königsheim, but he hopes to top off his success with a coup, making him the toast of Krakova's Winter Ball: He intends to secure a contract with a renowned gnomish chocolatier.

This idea is not as outlandish as it might first appear. Stefon recently received a letter from Bliss, the most notable chocolatier in the gnomish city, suggesting Bliss would be open to a mutually beneficial arrangement. After a furious correspondence, Stefon arranged a meeting for the negotiations

during Königsheim's Kirsch Festival. It's important he travel there now, before the fall season ends, making travel in the Nieder Strait difficult until spring. All that remains is to sail to the city, complete negotiations with the chocolatier, and to return with his spoils.

But, Stefon is no fool. Every year a handful of visitors disappear from Königsheim during the festival, doubtlessly ending as blood sacrifices. Stefon has no intent of joining them. He shares all of this information with the PCs, offering them 2,000 gp to accompany him to the city and another 2,000 gp upon his safe return to Krakova.

Stefon is a young businessman who is very eager to make an impression in Krakova. He should be played as likeable, but somewhat immature and materialistic—but not so unlikeable the PCs won't protect him or rescue him later.

### KÖNIGSHEIM

After the meeting, the trip to the city is uneventful. Read the following aloud.

The journey from Krakova passed smoothly, and hours ago your ship entered the River Brocken in late afternoon. Gnome river pilots guided your ship expertly to a dock on the west shore, as the setting sun fell behind Königsheim's infamous towering Black Spire, a temple to the dark god Chernovog.

The city is a tidy conclave of businesses and dwellings perched on the western bank. From the river, it is clear the city consists of multiple levels above and below the steep river bank. A cacophony of celebratory voices, singing, music, laughter, and more

spills from the crowded streets, as the festival reaches its peak.

Meanwhile, you've spent several hours stuck on the ship, while gnomish bureaucrats questioned you about your intentions in their city. Finally, night fell, and they cleared you to enter the city. You're starved, and the smells of sausages and pretzels waft from the streets. Stefon guides you to the Dancing Dryad, an inn near the waterfront catering to humans and other "larger" visitors to the city.

Due to the festivities, the Dancing Dryad is full for the night, but Stefon had the wisdom to make prior arrangements for two rooms. Each room sleeps up to four, so the PCs and the merchant need to split up between the rooms. Stefon insists on at least one PC sharing his room. PCs may wish to use Diplomacy to gather information about Bliss or their place of contact to acquire the barrels.

**DC 15** Reveals locations of the chocolatier and the cherry brandy stall.

**DC 20** Reveals general background information on the NPCs, such as their names, personalities, and descriptions.

**Development:** Stefon enthusiastically suggests checking out the Kirsch Festival before turning in for the night, a plan also giving the PCs an opportunity to reach their contact, Torius. Cautious PCs may attempt to dissuade him, and they succeed with a DC 22 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check. If the PCs proceed to the festival, go to **The Kirsch Festival**. Otherwise go to **Sacrifices**.

## THE KIRSCH FESTIVAL

The streets of Königsheim teem with noise and gnomes, but among the small humanoids, you occasionally catch sight of a few towering humans or a stout dwarf. Hundreds of stalls selling crafts and a wide variety of food and drink line the streets. The atmosphere brims with laughter, music, and dancing—the gnomes' festive nature is certainly not what you imagined based on the Krakovan tales of their diabolical deeds.

**Development:** While finding the specific stall associated with their mission is not difficult (DC 15 Diplomacy), Stefon is eager to indulge along the way, and (assuming he's with them), encourages the PCs to do the same. At the stall, the cherry brandy vendor, Torius, tells the PCs he has no barrels for them tonight, but to check back tomorrow afternoon.

By this time, Stefon is clearly intoxicated, and if the PCs do not quickly get him back to the inn, he vomits on their boots to hurry them along. PCs similarly imbibing during the festivities suffer a -4 penalty on Perception checks when the kidnappers arrive at the inn later in the night.

### SACRIFICES (CR 6, XP 2,400)

At three in the morning, two gnome kidnappers attempt to break into Stefon's room and make off with him and at least one other individual who may be sharing the room. The gnomish toughs carry them off one at a time.

### GNOME KIDNAPPERS (2) CR 4

Male gnome rogue 5  
LE small humanoid (gnome)  
**Init** +4; **Senses** low-light vision;  
Perception +10

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 16, flat-footed 13 (+2 armor, +4 Dex, +1 size, +1 dodge)

**hp** 29 (5d8+5)

**Fort** +2, **Ref** +8, **Will** +1

**Defensive Abilities** defensive training, evasion, trap sense, uncanny dodge

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** Sap +9 (1d4/20/x2) or  
Dagger +8 (1d3/19-20/x2) and

**Special Attacks** sneak attack  
+3d6

#### Spell-Like Abilities

1 day—*dancing lights*, *ghost sound*,  
*prestidigitation*, *speak with animals*

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, Wis 10,  
Cha 12

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 16

**Feats** Dodge, Skill Focus (Climb),  
Stealthy, Weapon Finesse, Weapon  
Focus (sap)

**Skills** Acrobatics +12, Appraise +5,  
Bluff +5, Climb +12, Craft (traps) +3,  
Diplomacy +6, Disable Device  
+16, Escape Artist +14, Fly +6,

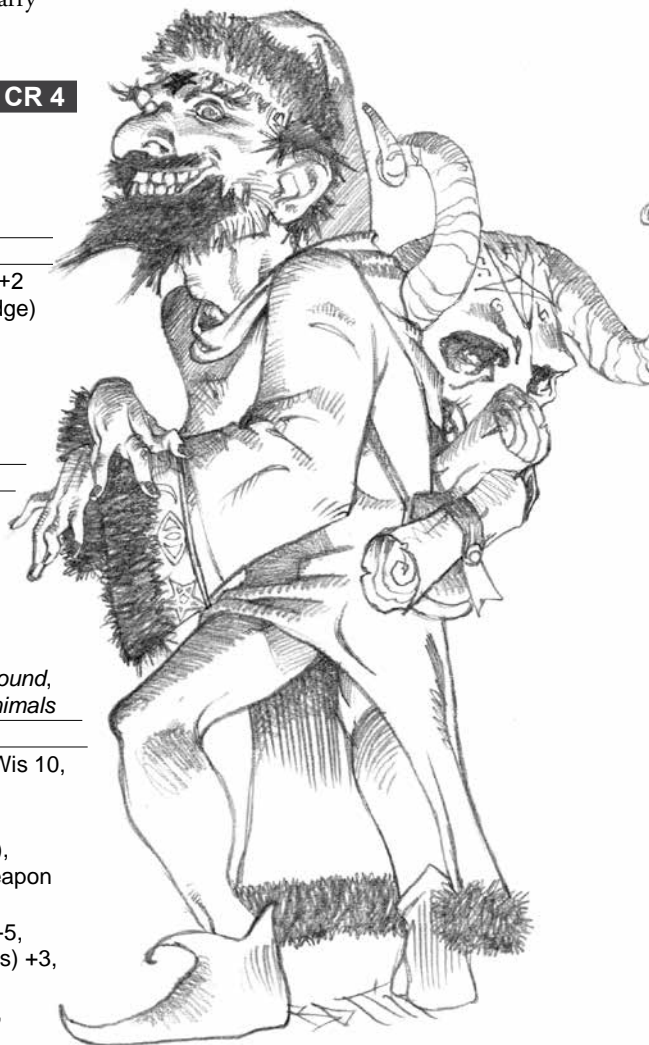
Knowledge (local) +9, Perception +10,  
Sense Motive +4, Sleight of Hand +12,  
Stealth +18, Use Magic Device +9

**Languages** Common, Gnome, Infernal,  
Sylvan

**SQ** Hatred +1, illusion resistance,  
trapfinding +2

**Combat Gear** Dagger, leather sap  
**Other Gear** Artisan's trap-crafting tools,  
climber's kit, *potion of cure light  
wounds*, masterwork thieves' tools,  
*wand of hold person* (12 charges)

**Tactics:** The gnomes hope to catch their victims sleeping, and while one breaks in the window, the other prepares to use a *wand of hold person* to take out anyone awakening. They use their saps to knock out the room's occupants; they then lower the bodies to the street with ropes, where two other gnomes wait with a cart. The kidnappers are not used to resistance, so they flee back out the window if faced with more than two foes. The assisting gnomes run away if they see the others fleeing.



**Development:** Assuming the PCs defeat the gnomes, Stefon is extremely grateful, praising the PCs for saving him from certain doom. If they fail, the GM might consider rearranging events to have Torius, the cherry brandy vendor, deliver Stefon and any captured PCs back to the rest of the group, but insisting they check back again later. Or the remaining PCs can follow the cart's tracks to where they are being held—a warehouse that five gnomes patrol—whatever suits the GM's story.

## BLISS

This morning's streets are far less chaotic than last night, and a cool, crisp autumn day greets you. Most of the stalls are closed, but the crowds are already beginning to grow as lunchtime approaches. It is clear the festival will build to a new crescendo by evening.

Your patron Stefon leads you to Bliss, a tidy, quaint shop neatly tucked into a quiet street lined with expensive-looking taverns and several expert craftsmen's shops. Inside Bliss, you find exquisitely

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worked cabinets displaying hundreds of little chocolates under glass. The aroma is heavenly. A pair of gnomes welcomes you, introducing themselves as Orik and Karin, husband and wife proprietors of the business.

**Creatures:** Orik and Karin are actually a gnome diabolist and a gilded devil, respectively, who use Bliss as a lure to attract recruits and sacrifices for Mammon. The devil (Karin) uses her polymorph ability to appear as an extremely wealthy, bejeweled gnome matron, while Orik (the diabolist) is dressed in understated but exceptionally fine clothes. Both are using the gilded devil's *misdirection* ability to appear as Neutral, having anticipated Stefon's wariness, if not his plans for bodyguards.

**Development:** Orik and Karin weren't expecting the large group accompanying Stefon, but they quickly adapt. After providing a sample of mundane chocolates for Stefon and each of the PCs, Karin busies herself preparing several small boxes of chocolates for their unexpected guests, presenting one to each PC—a gift, if accepted, triggers her Liar's Largesse special ability.

While very friendly, Orik does not allow the PCs to participate in or listen to the business discussions, and if Stefon does not ensure the PCs comply with Orik's wishes, Orik refuses to talk further. Orik, does indeed, intend to talk business with Stefon, so any Sense Motive checks reveal he is honest in this regard; he also does not intend to harm Stefon (he needs the merchant for his plans, after all).

Stefon is eager to complete the negotiations, so he insists the PCs depart and return within two hours. This gives the PCs time to go find their contact and move the barrels. Over the course of the day, the devil/Karin uses her *greater scrying* ability to learn more about the PCs' capabilities, anticipating their return.

## BARRELS

When the PCs return to the cherry brandy vendor in the afternoon, he has a small cart with four barrels ready for them, two of which contain a rescued sacrificial victim (or more if the PCs failed earlier).

The PCs must get the barrels to their ship, navigating their way past gnome officials. Allow the PCs to solve the challenge creatively, but generally a DC 20 Diplomacy check or similar suffices.

## GILDED CARNAGE (CR 8, XP 4,800)

When the PCs return to Bliss, the devil (Karin) intends to eliminate the group, ensuring Orik's plans to turn Stefon to the service of Mammon may continue uninterrupted. She greets the PCs warmly, telling them she believes the men are just wrapping up. She busies herself waiting on any customers, cleaning, and replenishing sold chocolates for a few rounds.

When they least expect it, she attacks (see her Tactics below).

## GILDED DEVIL CR 8

### XP 4,800

LE Medium outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; Perception +15

### DEFENSE

**AC** 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+6 armor, +2 Dex, +6 natural)

**hp** 95 (10d10+40)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +9

**Immune** fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** +2 *heavy flail* +17/+12 (1d10+8/17–20 plus 1 Wis), or slam +14 (1d4+6)

**Special Attacks** betrayal of riches, scourge of avarice, voracious greed

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 11th; concentration +17)

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 18), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. of objects only), *major image* (DC 19), *misdirection*, *polymorph* (humanoid form only), *suggestion* (DC 18)  
3/day—*dominate person* (DC 21), *greater scrying* (DC 23)

### STATISTICS

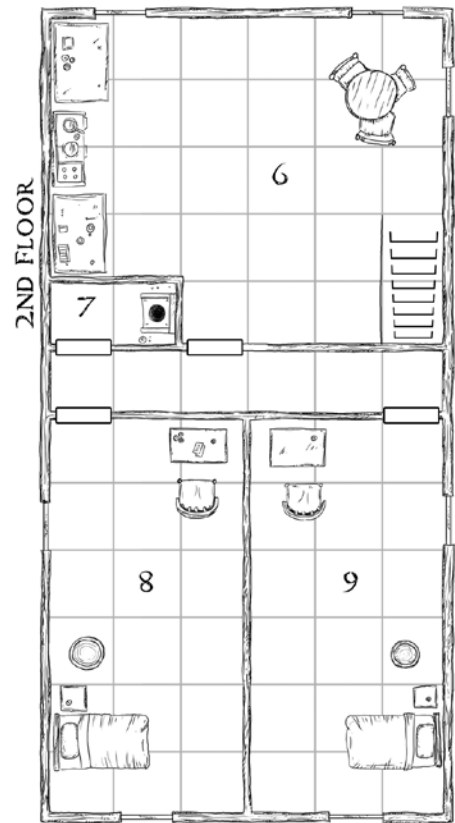
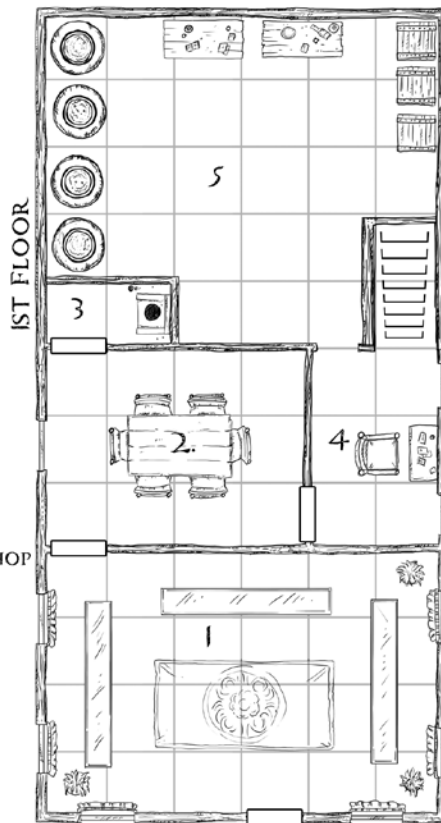
**Str** 18, **Dex** 15, **Con** 19, **Int** 17, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 22

**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Deceitful, Improved Critical (heavy flail), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Bluff), Weapon Focus (heavy flail)

**Skills** Appraise +14, Bluff +29, Diplomacy +17, Disguise +8, Knowledge (planes) +16, Perception +15, Sense Motive +15, Sleight of Hand +11, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +10, Use Magic Device +19

# BLISS



1. ENTRANCE
2. MEETING ROOM
3. PRIVY
4. OFFICE
5. THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP
6. KITCHEN
7. PRIVY
8. BEDROOM
9. BEDROOM

1 SQUARE = 5 FT.

**Languages** Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy

**SQ** liar's largess, scorn base metals

**Other Gear** chainmail made of tainted coins

## ECOLOGY

**Environment** any, Hell

**Organization** solitary, pair, or band (3–10)

**Treasure** double

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Betrayal of Riches (Su)** A gilded devil can turn rings, necklaces, and other jewelry against their wearer as a standard action. The devil can affect any visible item of jewelry within 200 ft., twisting and constricting it into cruel barbs and spikes. The item receives a DC 21 Will save (Cha-based) to avoid this effect. The victim takes 3d6 damage and a possible additional effect based on the item slot targeted.

| SLOT        | SAVE   | EFFECT                                 |
|-------------|--------|--|
| Arms/wrists | Fort   | 1d4 Strength dmg                       |
| Hand        | Fort   | 1d4 Dexterity dmg                      |
| Eyes        | Reflex | Permanently blinded                    |
| Head        | Fort   | 1d4 Charisma dmg                       |
| Feet        | Reflex | Speed halved for 24 hours              |
| Neck        | Fort   | Stunned, unable to breathe for 1 round |
| Other       |        | No additional effect                   |

An item is treated as jewelry if it is made of a precious material (such as silver, gold, ivory, and adamantine),

adorned with gems, or both, and is worth at least 100 gp. All save DCs are Cha-based.

**Liar's Largess (Su)** A gilded devil has influence over the recipient of a gift for as long as that creature retains the gift. The recipient receives a –2 penalty on saving throws against the gilded devil's abilities and a further –10 penalty against scrying attempts made by the gilded devil. A successful *remove curse* or *break enchantment* against CL 11th removes this effect.

**Scorn Base Metals (Su)** A gilded devil's attacks ignore any armor or shield bonus provided by armor made of bronze, iron, steel, or similar metals. Armor and shield bonuses provided by valuable metals such as adamantine, mithral, and gold apply, as do bonuses provided by non-metallic objects or cold iron.

**Scourge of Avarice (Su)** As a free action, a gilded devil wearing jewelry worth at least 1,000 gp can reshape it into a +2 heavy flail. A creature struck by this jeweled flail takes 1 point of Wisdom damage, in addition to normal weapon damage. The flail reverts to its base components 1 minute after it leaves the devil's grasp, or upon the gilded devil's death.

**Voracious Greed (Ex)** As a standard action, a gilded devil can consume precious metals or gems worth up to 1,000 gp. For each 200 gp consumed, it heals 5 hp of damage. A gilded devil can

use this ability against the worn items of an opponent by pinning a foe and succeeding at an opposed grapple check. Magical or attended items receive a DC 19 Reflex save (Con-based) to avoid being consumed.

**Tactics:** The devil used *dominate person* once today on Stefon (he failed his save), and she begins combat by attempting to turn one of the party's fighters against the rest of the group. If possible, she uses a second casting to dominate a second melee character. Karin then uses her *Betrayal of Riches* ability on characters (with a priority on spellcasters) who are wearing visible jewelry. Finally she transforms her own jewelry into her magical flail, attacking until teleporting away when reduced to less than 20 hp.

**Treasure:** Karin wears 4,000 gp worth of gems and jewelry. A hidden trapdoor (DC 25 Perception) behind the counter holds a locked chest (DC 25 Disable Device) containing 650 gp in various coins.

## THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP (CR 6, XP 3,000)

Orik expects Karin to eliminate the group, so he remains in his chocolate-



making workshop in the back of the shop with Stefon. He anticipates trouble if he doesn't hear from her once the sounds of combat subside.

**ORIK CR 6**

Male gnome cleric (Mammon) 5 diabolist 2 LE small humanoid (gnome)  
**Init** +0; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +5

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 14, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +1 size)  
**hp** 37 (5d8+2d6+7)  
**Fort** +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +8

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 20 ft.  
**Melee** greataxe +4 (1d10-1/20/x3)  
**Special Attacks** dazing touch (6/day)  
**Spell-Like Abilities**  
 6/day—bit of luck, dazing touch  
 1/day—*dancing Lights*, *ghost sound*, *prestidigitation*, *speak with animals*

**Cleric Spells Known** (CL 7, 4 melee touch, 5 ranged touch):  
 4 (1/day)—*summon monster IV*, *heroism* (DC 19)  
 3 (3/day)—*dispel magic*, *summon monster III*, *blindness/deafness* (DC 16), *suggestion* (DC 18)  
 2 (4/day)—*calm emotions* (DC 17), *spiritual weapon*, *hold person* (x3) (DC 17)  
 1 (5/day)—*murderous command* (DC 16), *bane* (DC 16), *protection from good* (DC 14), *obscuring mist*, *sanctuary* (DC 14), *charm person* (DC 16)  
 0 (at will) *read magic* (DC 13), *create*

*water*, *detect magic*, *enhanced diplomacy*

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 8, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 17

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 12  
**Feats** Deceitful, Greater Spell Focus (Enchantment), Selective Channeling, Spell Focus (Enchantment)

**Skills** Acrobatics -1, Bluff +12, Climb -2, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +5, Escape Artist -1, Fly +1, Knowledge (Planes) +8, Knowledge (Religion) +8, Linguistics +4, Perception +5, Ride -1, Spellcraft +8, Stealth +3, Swim -2

**Languages** Common, Gnome, Infernal, Sylvan

**SQ** aura (Ex), channel hellfire (3/day), cleric channel negative energy 3d6 (6/day) (DC 15) (Su), cleric domain (charm), Cleric Domain (Luck), damned, empathic link with Familiar (Su), hatred +1, illusion resistance, infernal bargain, infernal charisma +2 (Ex), share spells with familiar, spontaneous casting

**Combat Gear** greataxe, studded leather

**IMP FAMILIAR CR 2**

**AC** 17, **hp** 16 (see *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*)

**SUMMONED HELL HOUND CR 3**

**AC** 16, **hp** 30 (see *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*)  
**Melee** +5 bite (1d8+1 plus 1d6 fire), **Breath Weapon** 10 ft cone for 2d6 fire damage (Reflex DC 14 for half)

**Tactics:** As soon as Orik anticipates

trouble, he prepares for a fight. Time permitting, he casts *protection from good* (not included in his stats), and then *obscuring mist* to blanket the workshop's entrance. Once the PCs enter the room, he uses *summon monster* to summon a hell hound to attack with his imp familiar. Orik is a crafty foe; he stays out of melee combat, using his spellcasting and channeling against foes. He casts *sanctuary* and attempts to flee if reduced to less than 15 hp.

**Development:** PCs searching the workshop (DC 25 Perception) find records describing the manufacture of chocolate from cocoa beans and the tantalizing origin of the beans in the Eleven Hells, as described in the Adventure Background. In spite of the difficulties involved in acting on it, this information is worth 2,000 gp to Stefon or a confectioner in Krakova.

**CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE**

Once the PCs defeat both the devil and Orik, they may escape to the ship with the bewildered Stefon and as much chocolate as they can carry. If the PCs have been successful, they may even escape with the secret of gnomish chocolate. Of course, a journey to the fetid jungles of the River Lethe to secure a cocoa tree may prove to be a challenging adventure in its own right.

**d20 MONKEY**



# Crossroads Crowned

*The Winners of the 2012 Zobeck Tin Crown and Art Contests*

By Terry Maranda & Eric Hindley

Art by Terry Maranda and Michael Jaecks

A little kobold and a powerful clockwork stalker were the winners of our most recent contests on the KQ blog. Congratulations to Terry Maranda and Eric Hindley for making them great!

## KRIK THE KNIFER

Krik started out like any other downtrodden kobold, toiling away in the Margreve's dimly lit depths and dreaming about fist-sized, sparkling gems. One day, while alone in a new mine shaft, he slipped and fell into a deep crack in the wall. He rolled and tumbled down a steep incline for some time, eventually landing, painfully, in an immensely vaulted room. He smiled at his luck.

The runic carvings covering the vault's every surface marked the place as an ancient dwarven hall, and Krik's eyes glittered with the prospects of untold riches. Many fruitless hours later, he slumped his small shoulders in defeat. The entire hall held only a stone table, a plate, a desiccated steak, and a carving knife. Examining the knife more closely, Krik noted its elaborate etchings and then felt the thrum of ancient power along its edge. This knife, he felt sure, would bring him riches—and infamy to boot!

Krik returned to his warren hours later, happily displaying his new weapon and new outlook on life—neither of which his tribesmen exactly appreciated. Taking a special interest in the knife, the kobold chieftain challenged Krik to a fight: the winner would keep the spoils (the knife), and the loser would return to work in the mines. Accepting the challenge with typical kobold overconfidence, Krik took a combat stance; his many kobold

kinsmen cheered on the spectacle. After taunting and posturing, the chieftain rushed forward, swinging his hand axe. Krik yelped, closed his eyes, and raised his knife to ward off the blow...that never came. When the cheering stopped abruptly, he opened his eyes.

His knife flared bright silver on the bit of blade he could see; to his astonishment, most of the knife's blade lay embedded in the chieftain's chest. The chieftain's axe now lay asunder at

the chieftain's feet. As Krik gaped at the broken weapon, his former leader's body slipped to the ground, the knife ripping through his body. With quick jerk, Krik freed it, and turned his gaze to his tribesmen. Their wide-eyed faces quickly turned to anger. No one had expected a fight to the death—especially not to the chieftain's death. Technically, Krik held his chieftain's title...but, judging by his kinsmen's furious faces, he wouldn't hold it for long. Krik fled.





That day, Krik ran for the bright, unforgiving surface, and he has lived there ever since. Although he escaped the caverns below, his reputation for heartless murder and the title Krik the Knifer have followed him ever since. Krik still seeks a life of riches and fame, but the passing years have not improved his courage. Still, his surprising luck and quick-footed cowardice have kept him alive—as has his lethal carving knife, when all else has failed.

Lately, Krik's gotten himself into bigger trouble than even he realizes. Krik's been drifting around Zobeck for over a year, trying his hand at this and that, and keeping his ears and eyes open for any hint of treasure to plunder. About five months ago, he ran afoul of a few kobolds who made a fool of him in a tavern in the Kobold Ghetto. When he later followed them to exact some revenge, he found them meeting with a few dwarves in a dark alley near the Water Gate. While sneaking about to eavesdrop on them better, Krik slipped, giving himself away. The dwarves gave chase, but the quick-footed Krik evaded them and fled with the rising sun.

Krik's been looking over his shoulder ever since, and rightly so. Four months ago, he started frequenting the Rampant Roach near Crown Square (See *Alleys of Zobeck*, pg. 13) simply for the familiar faces, but it is the only place he feels safe. He haunts it from opening to closing. Even so, he spotted strangers following him a few weeks ago, and has so far survived three ambushes. His dwarven carving knife has served him well on those occasions, but he feels as if he's pushing his luck just to keep breathing. He sleeps where he can and makes a few coins from petty theft and dirty jobs for non-kobolds (mostly humans, an Arbonnesse exile named Galatherion, and—once—for someone he swore was a shadow fey; but he *never* works for dwarves). The strain is starting to unravel his nerves.

Krik has no idea what he interrupted or who he saw, but that hardly matters. Whoever they are, and whatever they were doing, they clearly believe Krik

needs to die. They want him dead so badly, they have acquired a clockwork stalker to see the job done. Krik's avoided the construct for the past three nights, hiding away in the daytime and remaining in the Rampant Roach at all other hours. It is only a matter of time before its masters grow impatient, and a tavern full of innocent bystanders could all soon suffer when the stalker comes to dine.

#### ADVENTURE HOOKS

Skirtal, the proprietor of the Rampant Roach, worries about haggard, distracted Krik, who recently has shown up injured. Krik seems more adrift in Zobeck than most kobolds, and the owner of the Roach has put the word out that he's seeking individuals to investigate Krik's troubles. Skirtal has little coin to offer, but his positive outlook makes him hopeful that someone will accept some other form of payment. As a kobold based outside the Ghetto who nevertheless deals extensively with the kobold community, Skirtal is in a nearly unique position to provide PCs with information and connections. He can acquire and move goods (though he won't handle anything clearly illegal or dangerous) from or to other kobolds, and he's a friendly face unlikely to attract much notice from the city's human rulers. Skirtal won't do anything to endanger his business, friends, or person. Skirtal always try to improve any offer with discounted meals and drinks at the Roach. Any non-kobolds taking the job should think very carefully before accepting. *Very* carefully.

Taking the job to help Krik is a great way for the GM to introduce clockwork stalkers and their shadowy controllers. If the PCs must find one of the constructs for examination, trapping the stalker hunting Krik will make for an interesting challenge. Alternately, you could just play this as a creepy, *Terminator*-esque adventure arc.

Krik has acquired dozens of intriguing contacts since leaving the Ghetto, possibly including the PCs or a friend of theirs. The party may find it convenient to go

through Krik if they're investigating some of the kobold's other occasional employers. Perhaps a job Krik took goes awry, and the PCs must uncover who hired him, and why, before things turn very bloody. This also works well for the people Krik fled from, who clearly still want to see his head on a wall.

Once the PCs get involved, Krik could quickly fall by the wayside if the people running the clockwork stalker decide they have bigger fish to fry. Especially if the party members are experienced or (in)famous, the stalker could switch targets for a hunters-hunted scenario. Alternately, the PCs could have the task of monitoring the stalker and cleaning up any mess it makes. Then the question is, why do their employers care so much about one little kobold?

#### KRIK THE KNIFER

**CR 4**

Male Kobold rogue 5

CN Small humanoid (reptilian)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision (60 feet); Perception +8

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+3 armor, +4 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural)

**hp** 27 (5d8+5)

**Fort** +2, **Ref** +8, **Will** +1

**Defensive Abilities** Evasion, Trap Sense +1, Uncanny Dodge

**Weakness** Light Sensitivity

#### OFFENSE

**Spd** 30 ft.

**Melee** Krik's knife +9 (1d4/19-20)

**Ranged** light crossbow +7 (1d6/19-20)

**Special Attacks** Sneak Attack +3d6

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 15

**Feats** Hero's Fortune\*, Luck of Heroes\*, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Appraise +7, Bluff +7, Climb +5, Craft (trapmaking) +6, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +12, Linguistics +6, Perception +10, Profession (Miner) +6, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +10, Stealth +16, Survival +4, Use Magic Device +3; **racial bonus** +2 to Craft (trapmaking), Perception, and Profession (miner)

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Gnome

**SQ** Crafty, Hero Points\* (3), Trapfinding

**Combat Gear** magic dwarven carving knife, studded leather armor, shortsword, light crossbow & 10 bolts;

**Other Gear** backpack (3 @ 3 lbs), 1 piece chalk, thieves' tools, waterskin

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Crafty (Ex)** Craft (trapmaking) and Stealth are always class skills for a kobold.

\* Detailed in the *Advanced Player's Guide*

#### KRIK'S KNIFE

The exact magical nature of Krik's dwarven carving knife is unknown, but Krik has discovered that, once per day, it ignores a target's hardness and Damage Reduction. It is certainly masterwork, but what other powers it might possess are unknown.

*The glint of red lenses in the darkness, the ominous clicking of a set of giant, metal mandibles: these are the only warnings that precede this clockwork creature. Its hulking body resembles that of a giant ant, with six legs and a smooth, iron-colored carapace.*

### CLOCKWORK STALKER CR 7

**XP 3,200**

N Medium Construct (clockwork)

**Init** +7; **Senses** Darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision; Perception +0

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 21, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +2 dodge, +6 natural)

**hp** 69 (9d10+20);

**Fort** +3, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

**DR** 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to electricity

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft., climb 20 ft.

**Melee** bite +12 (1d6+3 plus sneak attack)

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

**Special Attacks** high gear, sneak attack +3d6

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 24 (32 vs. trip)

**Feats** Improved Initiative(b), Lightning Reflexes(b)

**Skills** Climb +15, Stealth +11; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Climb, +8 Stealth

**SQ** swift reactions, winding

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** none

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**High Gear (Ex)** As a swift action, the clockwork stalker can switch itself into high gear. Using this ability shifts its operation from near silent to a deafening

cacophony of noise as its mechanisms speed up. Any creature within 30 feet must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be *stunned* for 1 round. Any creature that fails this save is also sickened as long as the noise persists. The clockwork stalker can maintain high gear as a swift action each round. While high gear is active, the clockwork stalker gains an additional attack with its bite and loses its racial bonus to Stealth.

A clockwork stalker is a terrifying mechanical assassin that obeys the every whim of its master. It stalks the streets and alleys with deadly quiet, pursuing its prey, choosing the perfect moment to strike, its whirring gears leaving its victim nearly defenseless as it tears him or her apart with razor sharp mandibles.

The clockwork stalker uses a newly invented mechanism to help muffle any sound the cogs and gears would normally generate during operation, allowing the creature to move in near silence while still conserving most of its energy. When the stalker is ready to engage, it can switch to a higher gear, trading its silence for alacrity in combat. The major side effect of this higher speed is the tremendous sound created by the higher gear, which often renders opponents nearly helpless.

A typical clockwork stalker is about 6 feet long and weighs 400 pounds.

## CLOCKWORK STALKERS IN ZOBECK

Clockwork stalkers are a recent addition to the terrors that plague the darker corners of Zobeck. Most people assume the creatures are being built by the Arcane Collegium, the Geargrinders' Guild, or some combination of the two, but it is the mystery of who controls these dangerous constructs which is of much more immediate concern. Most speculation points to the obvious suspects: the Keeper in White, prominent members of the Free City Council, or any of the major Guildmasters, but there are darker murmurs of a connection to the Honorable Order of Weavers. The resemblance these creatures bear to the clockwork weaving spiders is simply too uncanny to be ignored, but the Weavers stand firm behind their claim that these beasts are simply the product of some malicious malcontent trying to besmirch their good name.

### CONSTRUCTION

The creator must have crafted clockwork pieces worth 1,500 gp.

#### CLOCKWORK STALKER

**CL** 12th; **Price** 45,000 gp

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Construct, *cat's grace* and *geas/quest*, creator must be at least caster level 12th; **Skill** Craft (clockwork) DC 20; **Cost** 22,500 gp





# Selling your Soul

By Rodrigo García Carmona  
Art by Frank Heßefort

Everybody craves something—openly or not. Be it power, riches, vengeance, or just the warm touch of a lost lover, no soul is free from the tyranny of desire. And no matter the thirst, there's always a demon available and willing to quench it, or to at least offer aid in obtaining the object of affection. For the right price, of course...

Enter the pact. Although sometimes confused with binding, establishing a pact is a completely different affair: here, the demon acts of its own volition and is not coerced by a mage's powers. Anyone willing to pay the price can strike a deal with a demon. However, bartering with such creatures is risky. After all, demons are immortal beings who prey upon the weak, and a character entering such an

accord may just find the price agreed isn't exactly what he bargained for—the devil is in the details, as they say.

This article uncovers the secrets of demonic pacts, detailing how an ambitious individual can research, summon, negotiate with, and, if necessary, banish a denizen of the netherworld.

## DEALING WITH DEMONS

Dealing with demons is a tricky affair, and this long, challenging process tests the wits and drive of even the most dogged aspirant. Those knowing the proper summoning rituals guard their secrets zealously. Their reasons are both selfish and practical: not only do they want to be the sole scholars of such knowledge, but they'd also like to keep their head on their shoulders, for many

civilized lands severely punish those trucking with demons. This is especially true with regard to wizard-initiated contact; mages, above all, should understand the dangers these malevolent beings present.

In addition to hiding their summoning secrets, mages propagate the rumor that only arcane wielders can speak with demons. This could not be further from the truth, however. In fact, non-magic-wielding fools have secured some of the most infamous pacts in recorded history.

To strike a deal with a demon, a character must complete the following steps:

- Research
- Summon
- Negotiate

Each step is detailed below.

**NEW CUNNING FOCUS**

**Demonic Lore:** Knowledge about the true nature of demons, their powers, their demeanor, and proper summoning rituals is a very useful skill for the aspiring demonologist. This focus covers any test related to obtaining or understanding information about demons or their realm, summoning them, and negotiating with them.

**RESEARCH**

Desire for something always sparks demonic interaction. Whatever a mortal *wants*, the demon can provide it. Simply coveting an object, however badly, is not sufficient to summon a demon. These entities require proper execution of a complex ritual to enter the mortal world. Discovering and accurately performing this ritual entails careful research: an exhausting and convoluted study among dusty tomes and forbidden places. Successful researchers uncover a means to summon the demon, and, hopefully, some insight into the creature's true motivations and weaknesses.

Thus to summon a demon, a character must first research its nature. Stronger desires, of course, require the invocation of a more powerful demon. A player

**Table 1-2: Sacrifices in Summoning**

| SACRIFICE   | TN REDUCTION |
|---|--------------|
| A pound of the summoner's flesh   | -1           |
| The sacrifice of an animal  | -2           |
| The sacrifice of an intelligent being   | -3           |
| The sacrifice of a virgin or a newborn  | -4           |
| A mass sacrifice (at least 20 intelligent beings)   | -5           |
| The sacrifice of an individual with a special, unfulfilled destiny, like a king, savior or hero | -6           |

should check Table 1-1: The Price for Desire to discover which demon type equates to his character's goal and thus should be researched and summoned. Obviously, the more powerful the summoned creature, the more potent the test—and the desire's ultimate cost.

Researching a minor demon requires a TN 13 (TN 15 for major demons; TN 17 for greater demons) **advanced Cunning (Demonic Lore Required) test** with a success threshold of 15. Each roll necessitates a **new source** (an old volume, a mystic revelation, or the teachings of a crazy hermit), and takes a day of study. A failed roll means the character obtains false information, and

this failure increases the TN for the negotiation's test phase by 1.

In rare cases, ambitious and reckless postulants might unearth seriously dangerous knowledge, the most coveted prize being a demon's *true name*. This happens if the advanced test succeeds in just three rolls, and this decreases the TN for the negotiation's test phase by 2. However, demons summoned with their true names forever hold a grudge against their summoner, and they always arrive angered.

Clues hinting at the whereabouts of useful sources for this research can be excellent adventure hooks, and an entire campaign might focus on finding such dangerous items.

**Table 1-1: The Price for Desire**

| DESIRE  | DEMON   | PRICE   |
|---|---------|---|
| An army of demons                                   | Greater | A visible mark and the demon gains power over all your descendants, your followers, and your followers' descendants       |
| Bring back the dead                                 | Greater | A visible mark and demon gains power over all your descendants  |
| Force the will of many                              | Greater | A future favor that cannot be denied when called due  |
| The death of many                                   | Major   | Your first born when he or she comes of age   |
| Force the will of an individual                     | Major   | The life of a loved one   |
| Supernatural qualities or capabilities (magic-like) | Major   | Your immortal soul  |
| A great material gain                               | Major   | The happiness of a loved one  |
| A forbidden piece of knowledge or sensation         | Major   | An important feeling you have for someone or something, or an important secret that a demon might exploit against another |
| The death of an individual                          | Minor   | An important feeling someone has for you  |
| Natural qualities or capabilities (like beauty)     | Minor   | A treasured memory  |
| A common material gain                              | Minor   | The summoner's blood  |
| A common piece of knowledge or sensation            | Minor   | Nothing   |

## The Devils of Neimheim

The Infernal Gnomes of Neimheim in the *Midgard Campaign Setting* provide a clear example of a deal gone wrong. For protection against Baba Yaga's evils, King Redbeard paid to the Eleven Hells the ultimate price: power over all his subjects.

### SUMMONING

Once a character has the necessary information, that character can execute the ritual and summon the demon itself. At its core, a summoning is just a transfer of life force (or, more precisely, life potential) to the demon, who uses it to manifest itself or sustain its manifestation in the mortal world. Because of this, summonings benefit greatly from some kind of sacrifice, the exact nature of which depends on the summoner's skills. More experienced practitioners make more efficient use of the resources at hand, while novices usually waste a lot of life energy.

A character wanting to summon a previously researched demon must make a **Cunning (Demonic Lore) test**. The TN of this test depends on the power of the summoned demon: TN 15 for minor, TN 17 for major, and TN 19 for greater demons. Each point over the TN increases the demon's abilities, so make note of any additions. A failure in this test indicates the demon could not be summoned, and the same character can't make the test again until he has leveled up. By offering a sacrifice, the summoner reduces the test's TN, as shown in table 1-2.

Summonings almost always require special circumstances or materials unique to each ritual. For example, a particular ritual might need the stars to be aligned a certain way, while another might require performance in a massacre-touched field while wearing a widow's wedding ring. The Game Master should devise appropriate conditions and materials.

Also, rituals are complex and stressful affairs, requiring the performer to take certain actions related to the summoned demon. For instance, the summoner

may have to partake in carnal pleasure if he summons a lust devil, or he may have to revel in violence and carnage if summoning a creature of rage.

No summoning ever takes less than an hour, and the most complicated ones last for a day or more. Failing a summoning test results in failure of the entire process (including research), and the character must begin anew.

### NEGOTIATION

Pact seekers summon demons inside a circle of protection, drawn or otherwise outlined in the ground. The demon cannot leave this circle until it strikes a deal or a week passes, at which time, the creature returns to the netherworld.

To begin a negotiation, the player must indicate (in writing, preferably, so the player and Game Master can refer to it later) what *exactly* his character wants. The character follows this request with a **Communication (Bargaining) test**. The test's TN depends on the demon's power: TN 13 for minor demons, TN 15 for major demons, and TN 17 for greater demons. Remember to increase this TN by 1 for each failure accumulated during the

### Minor Demon

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

|    |                            |
|----|----------------------------|
| 3  | Communication (Deception)  |
| -1 | Constitution               |
| 3  | Cunning (Demonic Lore)     |
| 3  | Dexterity (Demonic Weapon) |
| 4  | Magic                      |
| 3  | Perception                 |
| -1 | Strength                   |
| 2  | Willpower                  |

#### COMBAT RATINGS

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|-------|--------|---------|--------------|
| 15    | 25     | 15      | 0            |

#### ATTACKS

**DEMONIC WEAPON:** To Hit +5, 1D6+5 Damage.

#### MAGIC

| SPELLPOWER | MANA | SPELLS  |
|------------|------|---------|
| 14         | 25   | Any two |

#### POWERS

**DEMONIC POWER:** Select one

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Knock Prone and Lightning Attack

### Major Demon

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 5 | Communication (Deception) |
| 2 | Constitution              |
| 5 | Cunning (Demonic Lore)    |
| 2 | Dexterity                 |
| 6 | Magic                     |
| 3 | Perception                |
| 5 | Strength (Demonic Weapon) |
| 4 | Willpower                 |

#### COMBAT RATINGS

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|-------|--------|---------|--------------|
| 12    | 50     | 12      | 4            |

#### ATTACKS

**DEMONIC WEAPON:** To Hit +7, 2D6+7 Damage.

#### MAGIC

| SPELLPOWER | MANA | SPELLS    |
|------------|------|-----------|
| 18         | 45   | Any three |

#### POWERS

**DEMONIC POWER:** Select two

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Dual Strike and Knock Prone

research phase, and decrease it by 2 if the summoner uses the demon's true name.

The test's results determine the price the summoner pays. Consult Table 1-1 for a price corresponding to the character's specific desire. If the summoner succeeds at exactly the TN, he pays precisely the listed price. If not, move up one row for each 2 points the roll is below the TN, or slide down one row for each 2 points over it. For instance, a summoner desiring "the death of many" who exceeds the Communication (Bargaining) test by 4 points pays with "his immortal soul."

Table 1-1 is not all-inclusive, so the Game Master must select the most similar desire when adjudicating a desire's price.

Table 1-1 also shows how powerful a demon must be to grant a particular wish. Only the greatest arch-demons can command the forces of the Eleven Hells, while every imp can produce money out of thin air.

When a negotiation test has been rolled, its result **must be accepted**, even if the player controlling the character does not want to. In this case, assume the demon has tricked the character into accepting the deal, and both parties must abide by it. However, both demon and summoner must obey the contract to the letter, not its spirit. For this reason, it is crucial to record the exact words of the deal for future reference. Keep in mind that most demons, once finished with their tasks, don't just patiently wait for their reward. Why wait 50 years to savor the soul of a man when you could accelerate the process by killing him?

After a deal has been struck, a demon must do everything within its power to fulfill the requested desire, and it can't harm the summoner until it has completed its part of the bargain.

## BANISHMENT

A demon can maintain its form for up to a week after it completes its job or until the summoner dies—whichever happens first. However, a summoner

can immediately attempt to banish the demon once the deal is concluded.

To banish the demon, the character must succeed at a **Cunning (Demonic Lore Required) test**, whose TN depends on the demon's power: minor (TN 13), major (TN 15) or greater (TN 17). Only the summoner can take this test.

## DEMONS

Normally, you won't need the summoned demon's game statistics: the creature fulfills its part of the deal with haste and then returns later to claim its reward. However, if more detailed information is required, here are general guidelines for these summoned creatures:

### DEMONIC POWERS

Every demon has one or more special powers from the following list. For each 2 points over the TN in the summoning test, the summoned demon has one extra power of the Game Master's choice.

### ADDITIONAL SPELLS

The demon has one additional spell. This power can be taken several times.

### DISGUISE

The demon can take the appearance of another humanoid it has already seen.

### DRAINING AURA

The demon can perform the special Draining Aura stunt for 4 SP. All enemies within 4 yards take 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage as the demon absorbs their life essence.

### FLIGHT

The demon can fly at double its speed, using its wings or simply levitating.

### INCORPOREAL

The demon can turn incorporeal at will. While doing so, it ignores the effects of terrain. Normally, only magical attacks (spells or hits from magical weapons) can harm it; other attacks pass through its form without effect. A character attacking an incorporeal demon can perform a special stunt called Spirit Bane for 3 SP. The character then inflicts normal weapon damage but substitutes Magic for Strength.

### INVISIBILITY

The demon can turn invisible at will. This invisibility ends the moment the demon initiates any offensive action.

### TELEPATHY

The demon can read minds at will.

## Greater Demon

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 9 | Communication (Deception) |
| 5 | Constitution              |
| 7 | Cunning (Demonic Lore)    |
| 0 | Dexterity                 |
| 8 | Magic                     |
| 3 | Perception                |
| 7 | Strength (Demonic Weapon) |
| 6 | Willpower                 |

### COMBAT RATINGS

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|-------|--------|---------|--------------|
| 9     | 80     | 12      | 6            |

### ATTACKS

**DEMONIC WEAPON:** To Hit +9, 3D6+9 Damage.

### MAGIC

| SPELLPOWER | MANA | SPELLS   |
|------------|------|----------|
| 22         | 90   | Any four |

### POWERS

**DEMONIC POWER:** Select three

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Knock Prone and Mighty Blow



# Ask the Kobold

## *Trips and Traps: An Eye on Perception, Disarm, and Tripping*

By Skip Williams  
Art by Darren Calvert

**T**his has always been more than a little unclear to me: what is the benefit you gain for using a weapon with the trip (or disarm) special quality? Does the weapon grant you a bonus to your maneuver roll? Does the weapon prevent attacks of opportunity when you attempt the maneuver? Do you need a trip or disarm weapon to make those combat maneuvers with a weapon?

So far as I can tell, the only benefit the rules explicitly spell out is that you can drop your weapon to prevent yourself from being tripped or disarmed when you botch a maneuver roll.

The answer depends on whether you're disarming or tripping.

Let's examine disarming first.

You can attempt a disarm maneuver with or without a weapon. If you attempt to disarm when you're unarmed yourself, you take a -4 penalty on your maneuver roll.

If you attempt to disarm with a weapon having the disarm special quality, you gain a +2 bonus on Combat Maneuver Checks to disarm an enemy. But you may make a disarm check with any weapon; you are not limited to

those with the disarm special quality.

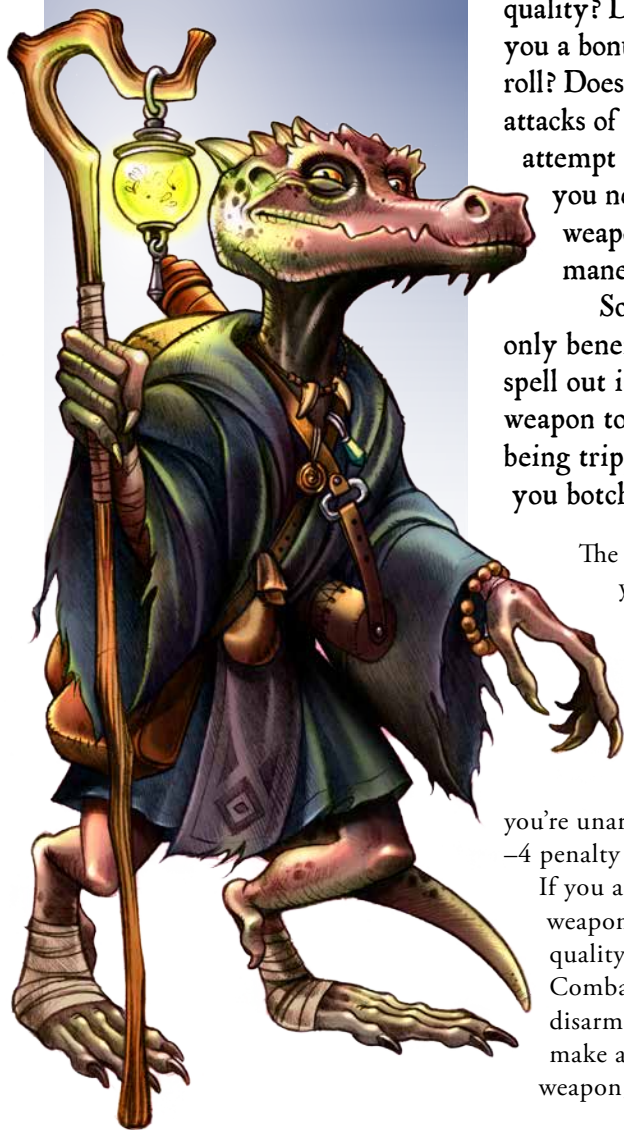
If your maneuver roll fails by 10 or more, you drop the weapon you used in the maneuver (if you used a weapon), even if the weapon has the disarm special quality.

In any case, you provoke an attack of opportunity when you attempt a disarm maneuver, no matter how you are armed (or unarmed), unless you possess the Improved Disarm feat.

Now, let's look at trip attacks. Although the rules aren't clear on the point, a trip attack is generally an unarmed attack. You grab your foe and yank; sweep their legs, or possibly deliver a blow that's sufficiently forceful or well aimed to disrupt your foe's equilibrium.

You may use weapons to trip, however, and they need not have the trip special quality to do so—any weapon will do, and any enhancement bonuses or Weapon Focus bonuses apply (according to a blog clarification from Paizo Publishing). Unlike the disarm special quality, you do not receive a +2 bonus to Combat Maneuver Checks when using a weapon with the trip special quality. Using a trip weapon allows you to use the weapon's bonuses when using drag and reposition combat maneuvers with the weapon, though.

Another advantage to having the trip special quality is that you may opt to drop the weapon instead of being knocked prone when you fail your trip maneuver roll by 10 or more.



The *Pathfinder RPG* rules say you provoke an attack of opportunity when you attempt a trip maneuver, unless you have the Improved Trip feat. I suggest GMs consider altering this automatic AoO if you attempt to trip with a trip weapon. Instead, require weapons without the trip quality to trigger attacks of opportunity as normal, but disallow the option to drop the weapon to avoid being tripped on a failed attempt when the roll fails by 10 or more. Further, you could feasibly subject such "improvised trip weapons" a -4 to-hit penalty, if you so desired.

The rules don't say so, but it's reasonable to assume attempting a special combat maneuver using a weapon with the appropriate special quality is just like making a regular attack with that weapon. Additionally, I suggest applying a weapon's magical enhancement bonus and any other combat bonuses (or penalties) you gain from using the weapon to your Combat Maneuver Check.

**How is the Perception skill supposed to work in relation to traps? The section on traps in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* says a successful Perception check detects a trap before its triggered. The Perception skill description says most Perception checks are reactive, made in response to observable stimulus, and the core rules also say intentionally searching for stimulus is a move action.**

**So, does a character who is about to step on a trap receive a free reactive Perception check to notice the trap?**

As far as I'm concerned, it depends on the trap. Most traps are designed and built to avoid producing an "observable stimulus"; nevertheless, you can search for a trap using a move action and a Perception check. Even though the trap is effectively

## Matters of Perception in 3.0/3.5

When my colleagues and I set out to revise the *D&D* game, we eventually created three perception skills to cover three kinds of challenges heroic characters often face: Search, for ferreting out static things that are well hidden (either by design or by circumstance); Spot, for noticing visual things when on the move; and Listen, which is pretty much the auidial version of Spot.

This approach brought several good things to the game. First, it gave the design team tools for simulating what characters do in the game world: Characters trying to locate secret doors or traps made Search checks, and the designers made Search an Intelligence-based skill because a successful search generally requires methodical action and the ability to assess a series of often-subtle clues. Using the Search skill usually takes a significant amount of game time, especially when a character examines a fairly big area.

Characters trying to locate skulking foes made Spot checks to notice them. Spot checks usually don't take any time at all, because Spot just provides a way to decide who happens to notice what and when. Spot is a Wisdom-based skill because Wisdom measures a character's general level of awareness.

When characters might hear important sounds in the game world, they made Listen checks. Listen checks might take no time at all, such as when deciding if a sentry could hear a footpad sneaking up on an encampment, or they might take at least a little bit of time, such as when a character puts an ear to a

door in an attempt to overhear what might be happening on the other side. Listen also is a Wisdom-based skill.

Second, it gave us plenty of opportunities to give GMs meaty advice on how to handle fairly common occurrences in their games.

Third, it gave designers and GMs several options for challenging players with perception-related situations.

The *Pathfinder RPG* has only one perception skill, aptly named Perception. This is great for characters, because one single skill can cover a wide range of activities characters might attempt and a wide range of situations they might face. It's less good for designers and GMs because the rules spend less time dealing with perception in general.

When you're deciding how and when to use the *Pathfinder RPG* Perception skill, you can apply some of the principles discussed here. Use a reactive check (no action required) when deciding if a character might perceive something that's also interacting with the game world, or is in a state of continuing change (moving, fighting, talking, hiding, flowing, falling, using a skill, and so on).

Use an active check (at least a move action required) when a character is faced with something that isn't doing anything producing a sensory stimulus (such as a trap, secret door, or some stationary object or mark). Also use an active check when a character must first do something to make a sensory stimulus noticeable (such as putting an ear to a door or scanning the scenery for hidden foes).

imperceptible when it's just lying there waiting to spring, an adventurer can subtly prod, poke, and test an area to check it for traps.

Some very crude traps (or their triggers), such as simple trip wires, pits with crude covers, simple deadfalls, and the like might be

obvious enough to be perceivable without a move action. In such cases, allow a free, reactive Perception check as the character approaches the area where the trigger is or just before the character would trigger the trap—the GM decides when to grant the reactive check.

# A Few Suggestions

## 8 Ways to Influence Weak Minds

By James Thomas

A long line of visitors lined up before the main gate of Valera, finest of the Seven Cities. Terse guards, bored with their duties, scrutinized applicants for admission and kept a lookout for wanted outlaws. A small party of cloaked dwarves approached unobtrusively.

"Hey Dard, here come some dwarves. Remember the briefing about those confidence tricksters..."

"Yeah, better let me question them, Slim." He strode forward. "Stop there! Declare your business."

A small dwarf drew near and pulled back her cloak, revealing her face. "We come to do business. We are tailors and belt makers. Would you care to see a sample of our wares?"

"No," Dard replied brusquely. "Line up in front of me and show me your faces!"

The dwarf girl looked deeply into the man's eyes and spoke: "We aren't the dwarves you're looking for. Let us go about our business in the city."

The man paused thoughtfully for a moment, and then spoke: "These aren't the dwarves we're looking for. You can go about your business. Move along. Move along!"

The oft-overlooked *suggestion* spell has been around a long time—and for good reason. Used correctly, it can change unfavorable



circumstances or combats radically. It can be an effective replacement for lack of diplomatic skills, as well. Getting others to do what you want while thinking it's their idea is the ultimate in subterfuge.

Since the spell lasts an hour per level, a *suggestion* can have very long-term effects. For example, a local street tough suggested to act as your bodyguard can remain at your side all night. If he is dismissed before the duration expires, he may be none the wiser (except for a lingering curiosity as to why he, a half-orc and muscle for the local protection racket, was so eager to protect a group of dwarf belt makers travelling through his neighborhood).

*Suggestion* has its limits. It can only be used against a single individual (unless *mass suggestion* is cast), and the target must understand the language spoken. Creatures immune to enchantment magic (constructs, oozes, plants, undead, and vermin) are likewise immune to *suggestion*. Finally, elves receive a +2 bonus on saves vs. enchantment.

Note that bards can use *suggestion* effects after 6<sup>th</sup> level as part of their bardic performance, and can take the *spell-song* feat from the *Pathfinder RPG*

*Ultimate Magic* to hide spellcasting as part of their performance. This combination makes the *suggestion* spell more powerful indeed.

I can't tell you how many times I've witnessed gamers (myself included) stumbling to properly word a *suggestion* spell. But it doesn't have to be that way. Just remember this simple mechanic:

1. Declare a circumstance or a new reality.
2. Suggest a course of action.

Let's look at some ways we can apply this rule during play:

### 1) Bothersome combats can be brought to a swift end:

**Circumstance:** "You're surrounded!"

**Suggested Action:** "Surrender now!"

---

For the duration of the spell the target acts as your prisoner.

---

### 2) In some cases the suggested course of action is implied or obvious:

A bouncer at the door to an exclusive nightclub sees a well-dressed man approach. "Excuse me, sir, but this club is for members only."

**Circumstance:** "Don't you know me? I'm the Duke of Canard!"

**Suggested Action:** "Don't you know I'm expected?"

**This implies, "let me in."**

**3) It's also handy for getting OUT of places:**

"Where to do you think you're going?" asked the gaoler.

**New Reality:** "Didn't you know? The governor said I'm innocent,"

**Suggested Action:** "...and I could just go free and live on an island somewhere."

**This implies, "let me go free."**

**4) Suggestion can grease the wheels of bureaucracy:**

"I'm sorry, sir, but you'll have to wait in the ante chamber with the others seeking an audience with the King."

**Circumstance:** "Oh yeah? See this? That's the Lord Chancellor's ring,"

**Suggested Action:** "...and it gives me top priority for an audience. If you admit me next... the King will probably reward you. If you don't, well... I feel sorry for you."

**5) It doesn't have to be used for chicanery either. Sometimes it's just the thing to balance the scales of justice:**

**Circumstance:** "That was rude of you knocking that old woman down just so you could get a better view of the hanging."

**Suggested Action:** "The right thing to do is to chop all that firewood for her back at the cottage."

**6) A strategically used suggestion can turn the tide of battle!**

Addressing the guard captain and his squad of halberdeers thusly can change things quickly:

**New Reality:** "I'm the real Duke! The man who summoned you is an imposter disguised to look like me!"

**Suggested Action:** "Seize him!"

**7) If faced with a major henchman, a well-worded suggestion can turn him to your side for the balance of the day's sortie:**

"Intruders! None shall pass this bridge to enter my master's castle without facing me, his stalwart defender!"

**Circumstance:** "We are the Black Hills Company, and we have never been defeated! Your master has betrayed the Free Council of Zobeck."

**Suggested Action:** "But, if you join us in bringing him to justice, you'll be spared his dishonor and be rewarded!"

**Now you have an ally who knows the terrain ahead and can take you exactly where you want to go. After his former master is killed or captured, the spell will expire; but by then, he'll have a new reality to deal with—and may still be friendly.**

**8) According to the spell, you can also "...specify conditions that will trigger a special activity during the duration."** A courtesan assassin can suggest to a bodyguard:

**Circumstance:** "I am your master's entertainment for the night."

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**Suggested Action:** "If you hear any alarming sounds during your watch, just ignore it. Sometimes, I get a little rough..."

**Circumstance:** *Suggestion* is one of the most effective spells you can use!

**Suggested Action:** Don't go out your door without one!

## Bolt & Quiver

by Stan!



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# The Devil Smiter

*Nex ut Diabolus – Death to Devils*

By Peter von Bleichert  
Art by Storn Cook

Paladins are mortal angels of repentance, righteousness, mercy, and sanctification. Divine beings protect them and grant them their powers. Accepting destiny, paladins answer the call of the way. As paladins quest, they encounter darkness and the evil that is frighteningly all too real, and they soon realize there are no greater enemies of the light than the dwellers of the Eleven Hells: devils.

Barbed, bearded, winged, and horned, these dark ones stain the land and make

dastardly deals to acquire power in Hell and souls of the blessed. Devils plot and scheme; they promote their own advance at any cost, and few individuals can defeat them—except those few who train specifically to do so.

## THE CALLING

A paladin can be called to the path of the smiter, either via an internal voice or through an outer force, such as an organization. Their lawful good brethren, especially clerics and other paladins, assist them in their battles against infernal darkness.

Devil smiters do work with non-evil allies while on quests to destroy devils, but otherwise avoid those not aligned with them.

Devil smiters learn their preferred enemies' languages and seek to understand their ways to better defeat the fiends and their legions. The smiters use magic to shatter the devils' illusions and

the invisibility the creatures employ to confuse and distract and, of course, their deep faith allows them to resist the devils' aura of fear.

Devil smiters often collect imp wings and devil barbs or chains, using them as trophies to adorn helmets or armor. This specialized paladin considers the smiting of a horned devil or pit fiend as the highpoint of life spent destroying devils.

## VARIANTS

The following variant class features focus the paladin's abilities to counter devils. PCs (new or old) may choose to replace existing or new level abilities with one or more of the following:

### DEVIL HUNTER

You actively seek out devils to slay. Devils are your favored enemy, and your skills and feats help you track them.

**Level:** 1<sup>st</sup>

**Replaces:** When you choose this ability, you entirely lose the ability to smite evil, and you forfeit Knowledge (royalty and nobility) as a class skill.

**Benefit:** You gain outsider (lawful evil) as a favored enemy, as the ranger ability, except the bonus you gain equals half your paladin level (minimum +1). You gain no additional favored enemies at later levels. In addition you gain Track as a bonus feat and Knowledge (the planes) as a class skill.

### DEVIL SLAYER

Your name is cursed among bearded and chain devils. Their minions seek you out. You receive the spell-like ability to *hold devil*.



## New Weapon

The following new weapon can help round out the devil smiter's repertoire:

**Devil Spike [short sword]:** The Shining Crusade smiths craft these blessed short swords using their own secret techniques. The devil spike is made of iron and silver; it has an elongated four-sided blade and a leather-bound pommel.

The weapon allows a paladin to spike devil parts to the ground (or wall or ceiling). This temporarily renders foes grappled and, if a wing is successfully spiked, unable to fly.

**Exotic Weapon;** 360 gp; **Dmg (S)** 1d4/1d4; **Dmg (M)** 1d6/1d6; **Critical** 19-20/x2/x3; **Weight** 1 lb; **Type** Piercing

A GM may rule that on a successful attack, in addition to normal damage, the spike successfully penetrates the ground (use hardness) below the targeted body part and has spiked the body part through. The attacking PC may take a free action to drop the item without provoking an attack of opportunity.

A spiked devil is considered grappled (without the need for a grapple check) and suffers a -2 penalty to any action (including skill checks) taken with the spiked area.

To free itself (escape the grapple), the devil must make a restricted activity standard action to remove the spike.

**Level:** 5th

**Replaces:** When you choose this ability, you lose your *special mount* spell-like ability.

**Benefit:** You gain the ability to *hold devil*.

**Hold Devil (Sp):** Once per day, a 5th-level devil smiter can attempt to hold a lawful evil outsider, as similar to the *hold person* spell, once per day. The spell-like ability automatically overcomes the devil's spell resistance, though the creature may make a Will saving throw as normal (DC 12 + devil smiter's Cha modifier).

### DEVIL DESTROYER

Erinyes and bone devils hiss your name. Their apostles hunt you day and night. You receive the *dominate devil* spell-like ability.

**Level:** 9th

**Replaces:** When you choose this ability, you lose the ability to *remove disease 2/week* (you may only do so 1/week at this level). **Benefit:** You gain the spell-like ability to *dominate devil* once per week.

**Dominate Devil (Sp):** A 9th-level devil smiter can attempt to dominate a lawful evil outsider, as described

in the *dominate person* spell, once per day. The ability automatically overcomes the devil's spell resistance, though the devil can make a Will saving throw as normal (DC 15 + devil smiter's Cha modifier).

### LIGHT-BRINGER

You can summon a warrior of the light. You are considered a worthy adversary, and ice and horned devils spit upon your name. Pit fiends have taken notice of you. You receive the spell-like ability to *summon astral deva*.

**Level:** 18th

**Replaces:** When you choose this ability, you lose the *remove disease* gained for this level, so you may only *remove disease 4/week*—or *3/week* if you also selected *devil destroyer*.

**Benefit:** You gain the ability to *summon astral deva*.

**Summon Astral Deva (Sp):** An 18th-level devil smiter can attempt to summon an astral deva, as described in the *summon monster* spell, once per day. One 80-hp angel arrives, but it remains only if a devil is present and even then only for the spell's duration.

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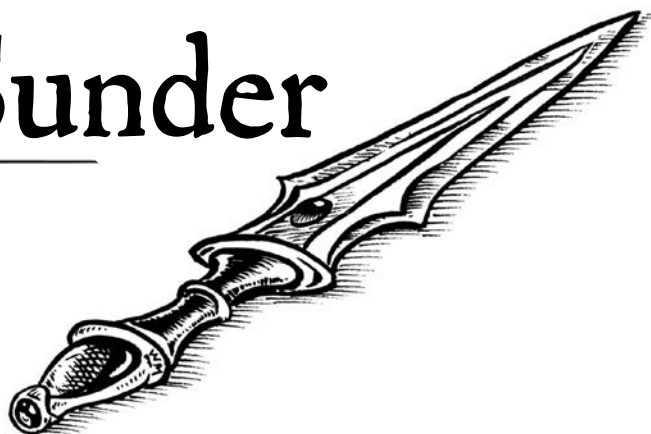


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# Simplifying Sunder

By R.C. Higgins  
Art by William McAusland



**A**lthough an iconic ability, the rules for sunder have never sat well with me. Who doesn't remember Sauron smashing Narsil? Attempting to emulate that in the *Pathfinder* RPG, however, is cumbersome. How many hp does Narsil have? What's its Hardness Value? Did Sauron exceed Elendil's CMD? Sauron rolled all 1's for damage. Those rules slow the game, add to the bookkeeping, and lessen the fun.

The rules presented below utilize mechanics already in the game, detail improved conditions for items that can be calculated in seconds, and scale with characters as they improve. To balance the new rules—which now overlook an item's hardness—sunder becomes a standard action rather than part of a melee attack.

## SIMPLIFIED SUNDER

You can attempt to sunder an item wielded or worn by your opponent as a standard action. If you do not have the Improved Sunder Feat or a similar ability, attempting to sunder an item provokes an attack of opportunity from the target of your maneuver.

To sunder, roll your modified CMB (see the new **Sunder Modifiers**) versus the item wielder's modified CMD. If you are successful, the item gains the Weakened condition. If the check's total is 5 greater than the wielder of the item's CMD, the item gains the Cracked condition. If the check's total is 10 greater than the CMD, it gains the Useless condition. Weapons already having one of these conditions

move to the next highest condition on another successful sunder attack, so two minimally successful attacks on an item make it Cracked rather than just Weakened.

Natural weapons can be sundered, but not natural armor. Sundering scrolls and potions destroys them, but successfully sundering items with charges requires double the number of charges to activate them.

### EXAMPLE:

#### A GIANT SUNDERING A GREATAXE

A 10<sup>th</sup>-level fighter with Strength 16, Dexterity 10, the Improved Sunder feat, and a +1 *greataxe* has a regular CMD of 27, but his two-handed +1 *greataxe* modifies it to 30. His CMB is 20. The following formulas include the Combat Maneuver Modifiers listed in the sidebar below.

**CMD (against the greataxe):** 10 + 10 base attack bonus +3 Strength modifier + 2 Improved Sunder feat +2 Weapon Training + 1 weapon enhancement bonus, +2 two-handed weapon = 30

**CMB (to Sunder with the greataxe):** 10 base attack bonus +3 Strength modifier +2 Improved Sunder feat +2 Weapon Training +1 weapon enhancement bonus +2 two-handed weapon = 20

The player notes these values beside the +1 *greataxe* (Sunder: CMB: +20, CMD: 30).

A frost giant with the Improved Sunder feat attempts to sunder the fighter's +1 *greataxe*. On his attack, the giant rolls a 34 on his Combat Maneuver attack, which successfully applies the Weakened condition to the *greataxe* (being just 4 above the fighter's CMD with the *greataxe*); this

attack is not high enough to give the *greataxe* the Cracked condition.

On his next attack opportunity, the giant makes another sunder attempt, rolling a 30. The Weakened *greataxe* now has a CMD of 29 (-1 from being Weakened), so the giant succeeds, upping the weapon to the next highest condition: Cracked. If the giant had rolled a 34 (5 above the fighter's CMD), the +1 *greataxe* would instead have become Useless rather than Cracked.

If the giant successfully sunders the item a third time, he renders it Useless on a roll of 28 or higher.

## ITEM CONDITIONS

**Weakened:** This item is Weakened. A Weakened weapon suffers a -1 to hit and damage penalty, and Weakened armor and shields have their AC bonus reduced by 1. Weakened items also suffer a -1 penalty to CMD against further sunder attempts. Armors and shields receiving a penalty equal to or greater than their total armor or shield bonus (like Weakened padded armor, for instance) gain the Useless condition.

**Cracked:** This item is Cracked. A Cracked weapon suffers a -2 to hit and damage penalty; Cracked armor and shields have their AC bonus reduced by 2. Cracked items also suffer a -2 to CMD against further sunder attempts.

**Useless:** This item has taken considerable damage and is barely effective in combat. A useless weapon has a -10 penalty to hit and damage. Useless armor and shields lose all benefit to AC but maintain their

Armor Check Penalty. Useless items cannot be targeted by further sunder attempts. Useless items are not necessarily destroyed, though a GM may decide an attack is so powerful it truly breaks the weapon.

## NEW FEATS

### QUICK FIX

Your skill with crafting armor or weapons allows you to quickly make damaged items of that type workable for the short term.

**Prerequisite:** Craft (armor) or Craft (weapon) 5 ranks.

As a move action, you can use this feat to repair one sundered item (requires a Craft (armor) or Craft (weapon) DC 15 check) to the next-best condition for the remainder of the combat. As soon as combat ends, the item regains its former damaged condition.

### POWER SUNDER

Your sunder attempts reverberate through your opponent's items, dealing damage.

**Prerequisite:** Power Attack, Greater Sunder, Base Attack Bonus +12

When you succeed at a sunder attempt, your opponent suffers damage equal to your Strength modifier.

## SUNDER MODIFIERS

GMs should add the following new miscellaneous modifiers to the appropriate Combat Maneuvers.

**Adamantine:** Adamantine items gain a +2 to their CMD and CMB during sunder attempts.

**Armor and Shields:** These items add their armor or shield bonus to their CMD versus sunder attempts. If armor or a shield is magical (see below), it provides any magical bonuses, as well.

**Greater Sunder:** You gain a +2 bonus to sunder as normal, but if you reduce an item to Useless, you do damage to your foe as if he were struck by a normal attack.

**Magical:** Magical weapons, armors, and shields provide their magical equivalence bonus to the attacker's CMB and CMD.

**Natural Weapons:** Creatures with DR apply their weapon magic equivalencies to their CMB and CMD during sunder attempts.

**Two-Handed Weapon:** Two-handed weapons gain a +2 to their CMB and CMD to sunder attempts.

**Weapon Training:** As per the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, this ability adds to the CMB and CMD for applicable weapons during sunder attempts.

### Other Changes:

The *mending* spell gains the ability to repair Weakened items to normal, removing all penalties.

The *make whole* spell gains the ability to repair Cracked items to normal, removing all penalties. It can also be used to repair a Useless item if your caster level is at least twice the level of the item's caster level.

For natural weapons the *cure light wounds* spell acts as *mending*, and *cure moderate wounds* acts as *make whole*.

## New Spell

### AEGIS

**School** abjuration [force]; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 3, cleric 3

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

**Range** Personal; **Target** You

**Duration** 1 round/level (D)

When you cast this spell, you surround yourself with a globe of invisible force, much like the *shield* spell. The first successful melee attack against you each round is subject to an immediate sunder attempt before damage is rolled. Roll a CMB check, using your caster level as your base attack bonus. Add your primary casting modifier and a +2 enhancement bonus per every 6 caster levels (maximum +6). Compare this roll to the item's CMD, and determine the result using the simplified sunder rules.

10'x10' Toon

by Stan!



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# The Fruits of Friula

## 14 Inks and Poisons from the Seven Cities

By Christina Stiles

Art by William McAusland and Jonathan Roberts



The majestic, spire-filled city of Friula lies on the northwestern side of the Septime peninsula. Famous for both its protective and dangerous Ghostlight Reef and for the wealth of knowledge housed within its Great Library, Friula attracts arcanists and adventurers alike. The city's main exports include vellum, ink, smoked meat, gemstones (amber, corals, garnets, lapis lazuli, and pearls), poisons, and scarlet dye, but many trade goods are sought or sold in the city's rich markets. For a small city, it wields an outsized influence in both scholarship and the arts.

### SECRETS AND KNOWLEDGE

Known throughout Midgard as the City of Secrets, almost any hidden scrap of knowledge can be discovered or bought within Friula's confines. The city's Great Library houses the largest collection of tomes and scrolls gathered in the known lands. Its wealth of knowledge attracts scholars, bards, and arcanists to its great vaults. What cannot be found through time and money at the Great Library can likely be purchased at great expense from the knowledge-hoarding cabalists called the Bibliotori, twelve of whom openly serve as the city's rulers.

The Bibliotori's insights into deeper mysteries come at a great price. Minor secrets command prices beginning at no less than several thousand gold pieces, while greater secrets range from 15,000 gp to 100,000 gp or more, depending on their nature. In the case of the most valuable secrets, however, the Bibliotori rarely part with such powerful information for mere money. Instead,

they require favors of exploration or the recovery of rare items, or the knowledge of similar secrets—all in addition to gold.

Among the Friulans, bargaining is not only allowed but encouraged—however, those dealing with the masters of secrets should know the Bibliotori consider lore brokering to be a serious and *dangerous* business. Friulan bards describe dealing with the Bibliotori as akin to making a deal with the Infernal: not only do you sometimes lose your life, but you also forfeit your soul. Still, the few who have trucked with them and lived to tell the tale often earn great wealth serving the mysterious secret seekers.

### LOST TREASURES

Ruined monasteries and fortifications dot much of the landscape surrounding Friula, like the citadel of the Vinitrovenza Order, Carozzi Keep, and Castle Mastifori. Many fell or were abandoned after the cataclysm which destroyed Caelmarath and seven other Magocracies, and forever submerged the ancient red hag city of Talitheos (See the *Beyond the Ghostlight Reef* adventure) with all its treasures.

Only Friula remained intact after nature's wrath struck, and the refugees who swelled the city's numbers later looted many of these castles and keeps.

It was a time of plunder, but that time was short. Monstrosities of all kind took up residence in these ruins, and so many structures remain unexplored or largely forgotten, and their treasures are still hidden. Occasionally, intrepid

adventurers uncover lost levels in already-explored ruins, gaining wealth beyond measure from the Bibliotori for the items they recover, the more ancient the better.

For many decades, treasure hunters have braved the Ghostlight Reef in search of the submerged marble city of Talitheos itself, and its lost library and artifacts. The Bibliotori pay extremely well for Talithen magic and tomes. More than once, they have financed expeditions into the wilderness or beneath the waves in search of such long-lost trinkets.

### FRIULAN MAPS

Fueled by its citizens' eternal thirst for knowledge and adventure, the mapmaking business thrives in Friula. Cartographers keep extremely busy and receive excellent pay, and the good ones maintain the highest of reputations, and are treated with many of the niceties of nobles and royalty. In many parts of the city, old maps are bought, sold, and traded in secret, much like narcotics—discovery and adventure are the *real* drugs of trade in Friula, after all. Simple mind-altering substances are just amusements for children and wastrels, while treasure and secrets are kingly pursuits. Expeditions based on these maps to the South, to the Wasted West, and to various ruins in the Haunted Lands of the Giants are fairly regular occurrences and Friula contends with Barsella for the title of City of Explorers.

Of course, as in all such cases of ancient maps, the buyer should beware, as not

all maps are genuine. Skilled artists with fanciful imaginations make a good living posing as cartographers in Friula. Still, while unscrupulous map dealers peddle their forgeries in both the high and low parts of the city, some maps are authentic, and these can lead those brave enough to follow them to unclaimed caches and wealth unimaginable, to vril weapons, or minotaur treasures, or the lost secrets of the giants.

Likewise, the vengeance of a customer sent on a fool's errand because of a false map is terrible to behold, and the charge of map forgery carries a strict penalty: the removal of both hands at the wrist.

## ARTS AND MAGIC

All facets of the fine arts are practiced in Friula, most especially painting, sculpting, and acting. The city's illusorarcane artists seamlessly integrate magic into their creations, crafting paintings and sculptures which shift in appearance or pose. Such items can be attuned to reflect their purchaser's moods. Galio Scoloris is currently the most sought-after artist of this movement; he works in both magic and paint, and his works cannot be purchased for less than the princely sums one might spend on the Bibliotori's greatest secrets.

The Teltorocci Playhouse seats over 1,500 and is generally packed. Alta and Digori Teltorocci are Friula's most famous playwrights and owners of the playhouse. They are currently running "The Fish and the Rose," a play detailing the unusual deaths and torrid lives of several of the famous painting's prior owners (See "The Fish and the Rose" in *Streets of Zobeck* for information on the painting). The playwright pair tracked down 20 such tragedies during their research, and these different versions rotate on a monthly basis, making their play one of the longest running in Friula.

On occasion, Ulsavus Mentis—called the Golden Voice and Friula's most famous bard—has graced patrons with his appearance in the plays, showing the crowd his acting skills equal his singing and oratory skills.

## POISONS & NARCOTICS

Friula is infamous for its poisons, most of which come from the sea. Friula's unusual red-skinned reef tenders, the red hags, harvest the natural poisons inherent in some of the Ghostlight Reef's most dangerous inhabitants. These poisons' listed prices reflect the difficult acquisition of these natural poisons. Powdered dream coral is Friula's best-known narcotic.

### BOXED DEATH POISON

A sickly blue-gray powder made from the tentacles of box jellyfish.

**Type** poison, injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 20  
**Onset** 1 minute; **Frequency** 1/minute for 6 minutes

**Initial Effect** death; **Secondary Effect** 1d4 Con damage and paralyzed for 1d6 rounds; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

### CORAL DRAKE VENOM

The reef tenders have a pact with a local coral drake, who allows them to milk his poison to sell.

**Type** poison, injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 19  
**Frequency** 1/round for 4 rounds

**Effect** 1d4 Str and 1d4 Wis damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

### CROWN-OF-THORNS STARFISH PASTE

A red-brown, gritty mixture made from the venomous skin and sharp spines of the crown-of-thorn starfish.

**Type** poison, injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 16

**Frequency** 1/round for 2 rounds  
**Effect** 1d2 Con damage; **Cure** 1 save

### DREAM CORAL (POWDERED)

Dream coral only exists in the Ghostlight Reef. Its tiny colonial organisms shimmer with an incandescent glow, giving the reef its name. Land versions of these creatures have been found in coral-like growths growing on trees in the Ghostlight Forest in the Western Wastes. Users light crushed pieces of the aromatic, hallucinogenic coral to capture the desired dream (and, indeed, coral incense is a strong seller in Friula).

Dream coral allows the inhaler to

## Table: Friula's Goods

### Drugs and Poisons

|                           |          |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Boxed Death               | 2,000 gp |
| Coral Drake Venom         | 2,300 gp |
| Crown-of-Thorns           | 125 gp   |
| Dream Coral (1 oz)        | 50 gp    |
| Ebonsrib                  | 500 gp   |
| Stinging Fire Coral Paste | 225 gp   |

### Dyes and Inks

|                     |        |
|---------------------|--------|
| Ebonsrib Ink (1 oz) | 200 gp |
| Scarlet Dye (pound) | 100 gp |

### Magic Inks

|                  |          |
|------------------|----------|
| Ink of Imbuing   | 3,600 gp |
| Ink of Mapping   | 5,600 gp |
| Ink of Portals   | 5,700 gp |
| Ink of Secrets   | 2,700 gp |
| Ink of Summoning | 3,600 gp |
| Memory Ink       | 5,700 gp |
| Necromantic Ink  | 4,000 gp |

travel to the Plane of Dreams, much like astral travel. On the plane, the user most often experiences daydreams-turned-reality (99% of the time) for 1d4 hours. However, continued use can gain the attention of the plane's dream-feeding predators, thereby decreasing the chance of pleasurable dream experiences (-1% for every 5 uses). The drug temporarily addles its users.

**Type** poison, inhaled (drug); **Save** Fortitude DC 15

**Onset** 1 minute; **Frequency** 1d4 hours  
**Effect** 1d2 Int damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

### EBONSTRIB POISON

Cultivated from the ebonsrib squid, this dark liquid is used to coat piercing weapons.

**Type** poison, contact; **Save** Fortitude DC 18

**Onset** 1 minute; **Frequency** 1/round for 6 rounds

**Initial Effect** death; **Secondary Effect** 1d6 Con damage and 2 Str damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

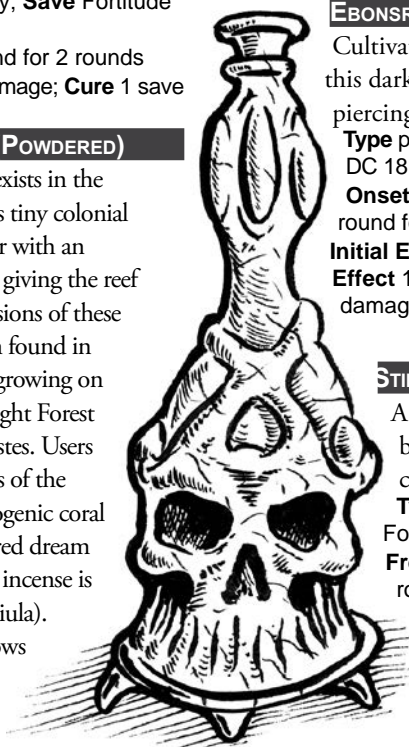
### STINGING FIRE CORAL PASTE

A scarlet paste made from the branches of stinging fire coral colonies.

**Type** poison, injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 14

**Frequency** 1/round for 2 rounds

**Effect** 1d6 hit point damage and 1d2 Con damage; **Cure** 1 save



## RARE INKS & DYES

**Ebonsrib Ink:** Obtained from the highly poisonous ebonsrib squid, this ink, when enchanted, produces a deep black, indelible ink most often used in glyphs, ink magic, and magic inks. Evocation spells inscribed with such inks add an additional +1 point of damage per caster level to the held spell. The ink must be handled with care, however, for, even in this diluted form, it remains a strong contact poison (+4 to saves in this form). Accidental pen pricks while inscribing with this ink have killed many a careless arcanist. It is best to use magical protections versus poisons while inscribing spells or glyphs with this ink.

**Dyes:** While Friula produces many dyes, many of which are exported throughout Midgard, the city is best known for its scarlet dye. The rare dye is cultivated from the Ghostlight Reef's crimson, coral-hugging algae. The reef hags both sell the plants to dyers and produce it themselves. A great deal of it is sold to the priests of Mavros, who use it to dye their distinctive red cloaks.

## MAGICAL INKS

Various members of Friula's Bibliotori and the area's ancient red hags have uncovered the works of the *Allain Verses*, smuggled out of Allain ages ago. The Magocracy burned its authors, the Ink Mages, to death for their assassinations of members of the Council of Mages. Using the texts' secrets and ebonsrib ink as a key ingredient, enlightened Friulan scholars have concocted the following magical inks.

### INK OF IMBUING

**Aura** faint evocation; **CL** 7  
**Slot** –; **Price** 3,600 gp; **Weight** –  
**DESCRIPTION**

This one-application ink can inscribe a glyph on the user's skin, creating a single-use tattoo, which fades away after releasing the ink's imbedded 1<sup>st</sup>-level spell (see *imbue with spell ability* for spell limitations). The jars are generally marked with the spell they imbue.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, 2 ounces of ebonsrib ink, *imbue spell ability*; **Cost** 1,800 gp

### INK OF MAPPING

**Aura** moderate divination; **CL** 10<sup>th</sup>  
**Slot** –; **Price** 5,600 gp; **Weight** –  
**DESCRIPTION**

This ink's user places up to 3 ounces of the jar's contents in a large glob onto parchment, vellum, or cloth. The user may then fold the material (the ink does not seep through) and place it anywhere on his person. For 10 minutes thereafter, the ink captures its user's footsteps and surroundings, mapping out his travels with great precision. The jar contains three applications.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, 9 ounces of ebonsrib ink, *mind's eye map*\*; **Cost** 2,800 gp  
\*From "Glyph Magic" in KQ 8

### INK OF PORTALS

**Aura** moderate transmutation; **CL** 9<sup>th</sup>  
**Slot** –; **Price** 5,700 gp; **Weight** –  
**DESCRIPTION**

This ink may be used to draw the outlines of a portal onto a wooden, plaster, or stone surface (not through metal or harder materials). Once the outline is complete, the surface between the outline disappears. The user may



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create a 5-ft. by 8-ft opening up to 10 ft. deep. This portal exists for 9 hours.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, 3 ounces of ebonsrib ink, *passwall*; **Cost** 2,850 gp

### INK OF SECRETS

**Aura** moderate transmutation; **CL** 5<sup>th</sup>

**Slot** –; **Price** 2,700 gp; **Weight**

#### DESCRIPTION

When used in writing, the writer inscribes his original message as desired, but then speaks a binding word upon completion. This word alters the text's contents, making it something entirely different and innocuous. The user may speak the word again to reveal the original text (See *secret page* for more details). The jar contains enough ink for 3 *secret pages*.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, 3 ounces of ebonsrib ink, *secret page*; **Cost** 1,350 gp

### INK OF SUMMONING

**Aura** moderate conjuration; **CL** 7<sup>th</sup>

**Slot** –; **Price** 3,600 gp; **Weight** –

#### DESCRIPTION

This ink creates conjuration glyphs on paper, in the shape of the monster

the caster desires to conjure. When the paper is burned, the monster is released, appearing within 5 ft. of the paper's ashes. The jar contains 2 applications.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, 2 ounces of ebonsrib ink, *summon monster IV*; **Cost** 1,800 gp

### MEMORY INK

**Aura** moderate evocation (glyph); **CL** 9<sup>th</sup>

**Slot** –; **Price** 5,700 gp; **Weight**

#### DESCRIPTION

A writer may use this ink to remove a memory from his own mind, capturing it into a glyph on parchment or cloth. The writer may then forward this information to another. When read, the memory triggers, conferring information (which may include imparting spell knowledge to another or casting a spell upon the reader, if so desired) to the reader and returning the memory to the writer, as well.

A harmful spell cast in this way allows the user to make a Will save against the included spell. When used to convey harmful spells, this ink is often used in conjunction with the *ink of secrets*, *secret page*, or *illusory script*, which increase the Will save's DC.

The jar contains three applications.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, 3 ounces of ebonsrib ink, *memory echo*\*; **Cost** 2,850 gp

\*From "Glyph Magic: The Ecstasy of Ink" in KQ 8

### NECROMANTIC INK

**Aura** moderate necromancy; **CL** 7<sup>th</sup>

**Slot** –; **Price** 4,000 gp; **Weight** –

#### DESCRIPTION

The user inscribes a glyph of the dead upon a deceased individual's head before interring him. Whenever anyone disturbs that individual's coffin, the dead animates as a zombie within 1d4 rounds, enabling him to take revenge upon would-be grave robbers. The zombie remains until destroyed. The ink does not provide the inscriber with any natural control over the created zombies. This jar contains three applications.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, 3 ounces of ebonsrib ink, *animate dead*; **Cost** 2,000 gp

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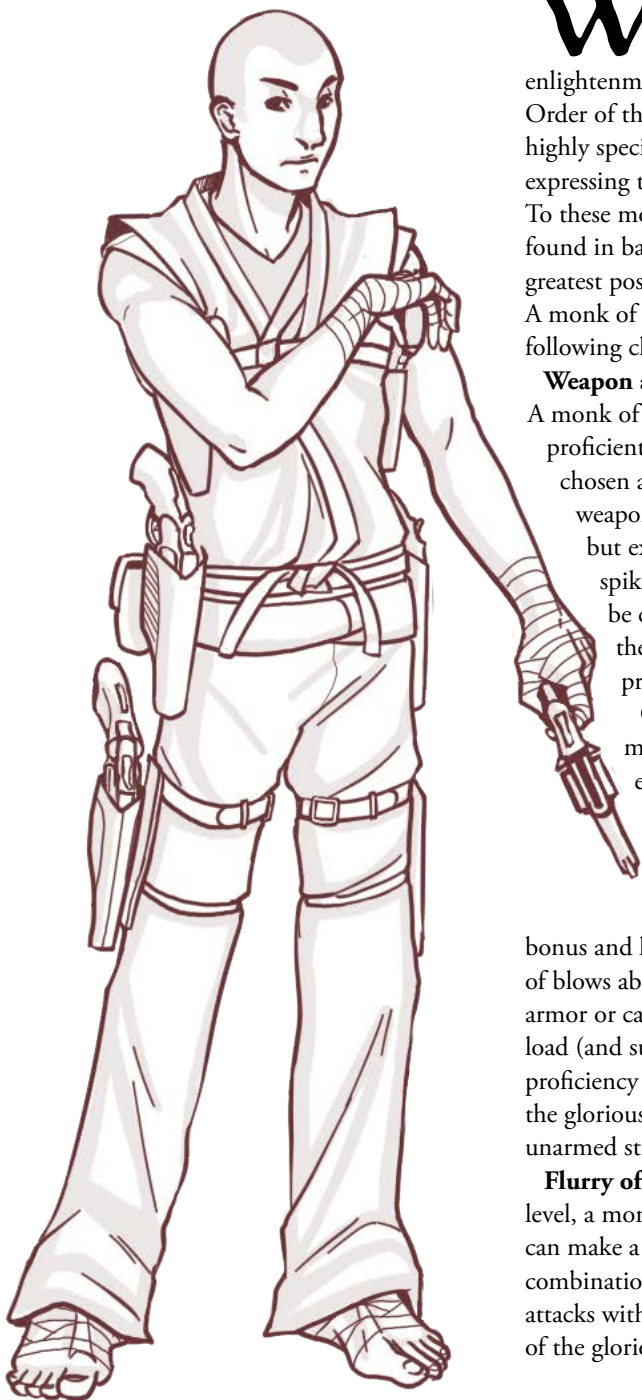
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# Monk of the Glorious Endeavor

By Matt Blackie

Art by Ashley Lindsey



While all monks strive in some way to achieve physical and spiritual enlightenment, the monks of the Order of the Glorious Endeavor pursue highly specialized tasks as a means of expressing their spiritual achievements. To these monks, perfection is not found in balance, but in reaching the greatest possible heights of a single art. A monk of the glorious endeavor has the following class features.

#### **Weapon and Armor Proficiency:**

A monk of the glorious endeavor is proficient with a single weapon only, chosen at 1st level. This may be any weapon, including exotic weapons, but excluding shields or armor spikes. Once selected, this cannot be changed. This replaces the normal monk weapon proficiencies.

#### **Chosen Weapon (Ex):**

A monk of the glorious endeavor emphasizes unity with his chosen weapon. Whenever a monk wields a weapon other than his chosen weapon, he loses his AC bonus and his fast movement and flurry of blows abilities, as if he were wearing armor or carrying a medium or heavy load (and suffers normal non-weapon proficiency penalties). A monk of the glorious endeavor may still make unarmed strikes without penalty.

**Flurry of Blows (Ex):** Starting at 1st level, a monk of the glorious endeavor can make a flurry of blows using any combination of unarmed strikes or attacks with his chosen weapon. A monk of the glorious endeavor's flurry of blows

otherwise functions as normal for a monk of his level.

**Unarmed Strike:** A monk of the glorious endeavor places emphasis on striking with his chosen weapon, rather than his fists or feet. His damage die increases for unarmed strikes, therefore, occur more slowly: 1d8 at 8th level, 1d10 at 12th level, and 2d6 at 16th level. A monk of the glorious endeavor's unarmed strikes otherwise function as normal for a monk of his level.

**Focused Training (Ex):** At 1st level, monks of the glorious endeavor receive the Weapon Focus feat. At 5th level, they receive the Weapon Specialization feat. At 10th level, they receive the Greater Weapon Focus feat. These feats must apply to the monk's chosen weapon.

**Style Specialization (Ex):** Starting at 2nd level, and every 4 levels thereafter, a monk of the glorious endeavor selects a bonus feat dependent on his chosen weapon's type: light, one-handed, two-handed, or ranged. All monks of the glorious endeavor add Dazzling Display to the list of feats at 2nd level, Shatter Defenses at 6th level, and Improved Critical and Deadly Stroke at 10th level.

All other bonus feats must be selected from the appropriate list below. This ability replaces the monk's normal bonus feats. A monk need not have any of the prerequisites normally required for these feats to select them, but he loses all benefits of these feats when using a weapon other than his chosen weapon.

*Light:* Agile Maneuvers, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, and Weapon Finesse. At 6th level, add Mobility and Sidestep. At 10th level, add Spring Attack and Teleport Tactician.

**One-Handed:** Blind-Fight, Improved Disarm, and Improved Trip. At 6th level, add Greater Disarm and Greater Trip. At 10th level, add Disarming Strike and Tripping Strike.

**Two-Handed:** Cleave, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, and Shield of Swings. At 6th level, add Furious Focus and Greater Sunder. At 10th level, add Cleaving Finish and Sundering Strike.

**Ranged:** Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, and Rapid Reload. At 6th level, add Improved Precise Shot and Snap Shot. At 10th level, add Improved Snap Shot and Shot on the Run.

**Distant Grasp (Su):** At 5th level, a monk of the glorious endeavor may spend 1 *ki* point as a move action to call his chosen weapon into his hand. This ability has a range of 30 ft., and it must target a weapon the monk has carried for at least 24 hours. If another creature holds the weapon, the monk may instead make a disarm combat maneuver check at a -5 penalty to tear it free of the creature's grasp, without provoking

an attack of opportunity. This ability replaces purity of body.

**Unyielding and Unchanging (Su):** At 7th level, a monk of the glorious endeavor may spend 1 *ki* point as an immediate action to gain a +4 bonus on saving throws against effects targeting his chosen weapon (such as *warp wood* or *heat metal*) and a +4 to CMD against disarm or sunder attempts until the beginning of the monk's next turn. This bonus increases to +5 at 12th level, and +6 at 17th level. This ability replaces wholeness of body.

**Extension of the Self (Ex):** At 9th level, a monk of the glorious endeavor may use any unarmed strike feat with his chosen weapon. This ability replaces improved evasion.

**Unstoppable Strike (Su):** At 11th level, a monk of the glorious endeavor may spend 1 *ki* point as a swift action to ignore up to five points of DR when attacking with his chosen weapon. At 16th level, he may spend 2 *ki* points as a swift action to ignore up to 10 points of

DR. This ability lasts until the beginning of the monk's next turn. This ability replaces diamond body.

**Ascendant Strike (Ex):** At 15th level, once per day, the monk of the glorious endeavor chooses one target and adds his Wisdom bonus (if any) to his attack rolls and adds his monk level to all damage rolls made against the selected target for one round. Regardless of the target, ascendant strike attacks bypass any DR the creature might possess.

At 16th and every level thereafter, the monk may do this for one additional time per day. This ability replaces quivering palm.

**Unity of Form (Su):** At 19th level, a monk of the glorious endeavor's chosen weapon shares in his spiritual nature. The monk may spend 3 *ki* points to turn his weapon into an instrument of law for one hour. This functions as the spell *holy sword*, but the weapon becomes a +5 *axiomatic weapon* instead, and emanates a *magic circle against chaos*. This ability replaces empty body.

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# PATHFINDER SOCIETY QUEST

# THE URGE TO EVOLVE

By Adam Daigle  
Art by Bruno Balixa  
Cartography by Jason Engle

Everyone wants to grow, improve, and expand his or her horizons. Pathfinders do this by venturing into the wider world, seeking adventure and lost lore. The barghest Silvgadwer does this by devouring the corpses of non-evil humanoids in the metropolis of Magnimar in southwestern Varisia. He hopes to evolve into a greater barghest, and he doesn't want to stop there—his ambitions drive his quest to eventually rival the goblin hero gods in power and influence. Unable to effectively stalk the city's streets in his true (or even disguised) form, and untrusting of meager goblins, Silvgadwer gathered a small group of stealthy bugbears to assist him in kidnapping unsuspecting Magnimarians to feed upon.

A little over a month ago, Silvgadwer feasted on his first victim—a junk merchant selling rickety antiques—and shortly thereafter took over the Varisian peddler's small warehouse in the Ordellia district of the city, a stone's throw from the banks of the Yondabakari River. In this isolated district, populated by outcast ethnic Varisians and other "foreigners," Silvgadwer believes his ongoing efforts to capture, kill, and devour victims will go unnoticed in Magnimar at large. And he's mostly right.

Unfortunately for Silvgadwer, his minions followed up their first kidnapping with the capture of a young bard named **Estani Sulemi** (NG male

human bard 2), a renowned sage of Thassilonian lore and a longtime friend of the Pathfinder Society. Venture-Captain Sheila Heidmarch knows he's missing, and isn't about to stand idly by when a valuable ally of her fledgling Pathfinder Lodge could be in danger.

In one week (when Silvgadwer can feed again), Estani will be the next meal to further the barghest's evolution. But Silvgadwer's bugbear kidnappers have been careless at times during the last three weeks, failing to pay close attention while they fed Estani (or while they allowed him to relieve himself). With his hands unbound, the clever bard cast a few *whispering wind* spells entirely unnoticed. Estani sent his messages to friends, family, and even the Pathfinder Lodge during his extended captivity, pleading for rescue each time and giving the best details of his location he could provide.

Despite the frequency of his attempts, only a handful of his messages have been received. Some recipients heard his whispers, but were easily frightened. They thought their homes were haunted or they were being pranked. Some received only frantic, half-completed messages. Eventually, however, Sheila Heidmarch and her Pathfinders pieced together enough information to muster a search party.

## SUMMARY

Venture-Captain Sheila Heidmarch asks the PCs to find a friend of the Pathfinder Society, the sage Estani Sulemi. They

track down the location where the kidnapped bard is being held and must break in and rescue him from his captors. There, they engage a group of bugbears led by a sinister barghest intent on growing stronger through consuming the corpses of non-evil humanoids.

## GETTING STARTED

Read the following to get the adventure underway:

In the opulent gardens surrounding the manor house serving as the Magnimar Pathfinder Lodge, Venture-Captain Sheila Heidmarch addresses the assembled group.

"I am faced with a dire situation and require your assistance. This lodge has been receiving strange messages sent from a friend of the Pathfinder Society. These communications have come in the form of a *whispering wind* spell, and those who've received the messages are certain they are sent by the Thassilonian scholar Estani Sulemi, who has been missing for three weeks. Many of the messages are cryptic and frantic, but we believe he's being held in a warehouse in Ordellia. This sage is a specialist in Thassilonian lore; he is an asset to the society and needs to be rescued."

The venture-captain draws a sheet of paper from a leather folder and passes it around. "These are the messages the lodge received." Her

I'm in Ordellia, in a warehouse off Rivermark Street at the docks. It's dark inside and the windows are greased to restrict the view.

I hope this message isn't for nothing. They plan to sacrifice me to a... No! I was just... please, no! Not again! Let me get my...

They speak of me being consumed, and soon. Please, if you're hearing this, you have to help me! Time is running out!

## Pathfinder Society Quests

Pathfinder Society Quests are short adventures consisting of one or two encounters and are designed for use in Paizo Publishing's Pathfinder Society Organized Play campaign. Legal Pathfinder Society PCs may receive a Chronicle sheet for completing a Quest as many times as they complete it, and GMs may likewise apply a Chronicle sheet to any of their level-appropriate characters when running a Quest session. You can find the Chronicle sheet for "The Urge to Evolve" on [paizo.com](http://paizo.com) or [koboldquarterly.com](http://koboldquarterly.com).

This adventure is set in Magnimar, a great city poised on the edge of the frontier nation of Varisia, a region described in *Kobold Quarterly* #22. Readers can find more information about the city in *Magnimar, City of Monuments* or in the *Shattered Star Adventure Path*, based in the Pathfinder Lodge in Heidmarch Manor.

tone urgent, she asks, "Will you please bring Estani back?"

Because this Quest is intended to be played in 1 hour or less, proceed quickly through the introduction and get the players started. If time is particularly tight, consider starting the PCs at the door to the warehouse instead of at Heidmarch Manor.

### ORDELLIA WAREHOUSE

The Ordellia district of Magnimar is home to ethnic Varisians and ostracized Shoanti, whom Magnimar's primarily Chelish population and the governing Council of Ushers treat as second-class citizens. The buildings sit close together and often in disrepair. However, the warehouses spreading out from the docks on the Yondabakari River are generally secure, for they hold cargo and valuables that traders and merchants hope to keep from the hands of the Sczarni populating the district.

#### 1. WAREHOUSE EXTERIOR

Peeling blue paint covers this old dockside warehouse, and patches of green moss cling to its warped boards. Rusty padlocks dangle from thick chains looped through the doors' handles.

All three sets of doors (on the building's north, east, and west sides) are chained

and locked with good—albeit old—locks, requiring successful DC 30 Disable Device checks to open them without keys. The chains have a hardness of 10 and 5 hp, and a DC 26 Strength check is required to break them. Silvgadwer carries the keys to the locks, and he uses *blink* to pass through the warehouse wall to lock and unlock the chains for his bugbear minions. He often does this at night in his goblin form to avoid notice as his stealthy kidnappers come and go.

In addition to the chains fastening them, the eastern and western doors are barred from the inside (Break DC 25). This leaves the northern door as the most accessible for the PCs.

#### 2. INSIDE THE WAREHOUSE (CR 6 OR CR 9)

Specks of dust float visibly in the air where light pierces this dark warehouse. Clusters of stacked crates lie across the floor, and a musky smell mingles with odors of mildew and spoiled meat. A loft stretches all along the southern wall at a height of 15 feet; the ceiling rises an additional 10 feet above that.

Silvgadwer and his bugbear minions have made their home here for the past month. Most of the crates in the warehouse are empty, and shoddy goods

fill the others. A loft spans the entire southern side of the building, rising 15 ft. above the floor. Among the few stacks of small crates is a pile of shredded blankets in the southeastern corner of the loft. The ceiling throughout the building is 25 ft. above the ground (10 ft. above the loft).

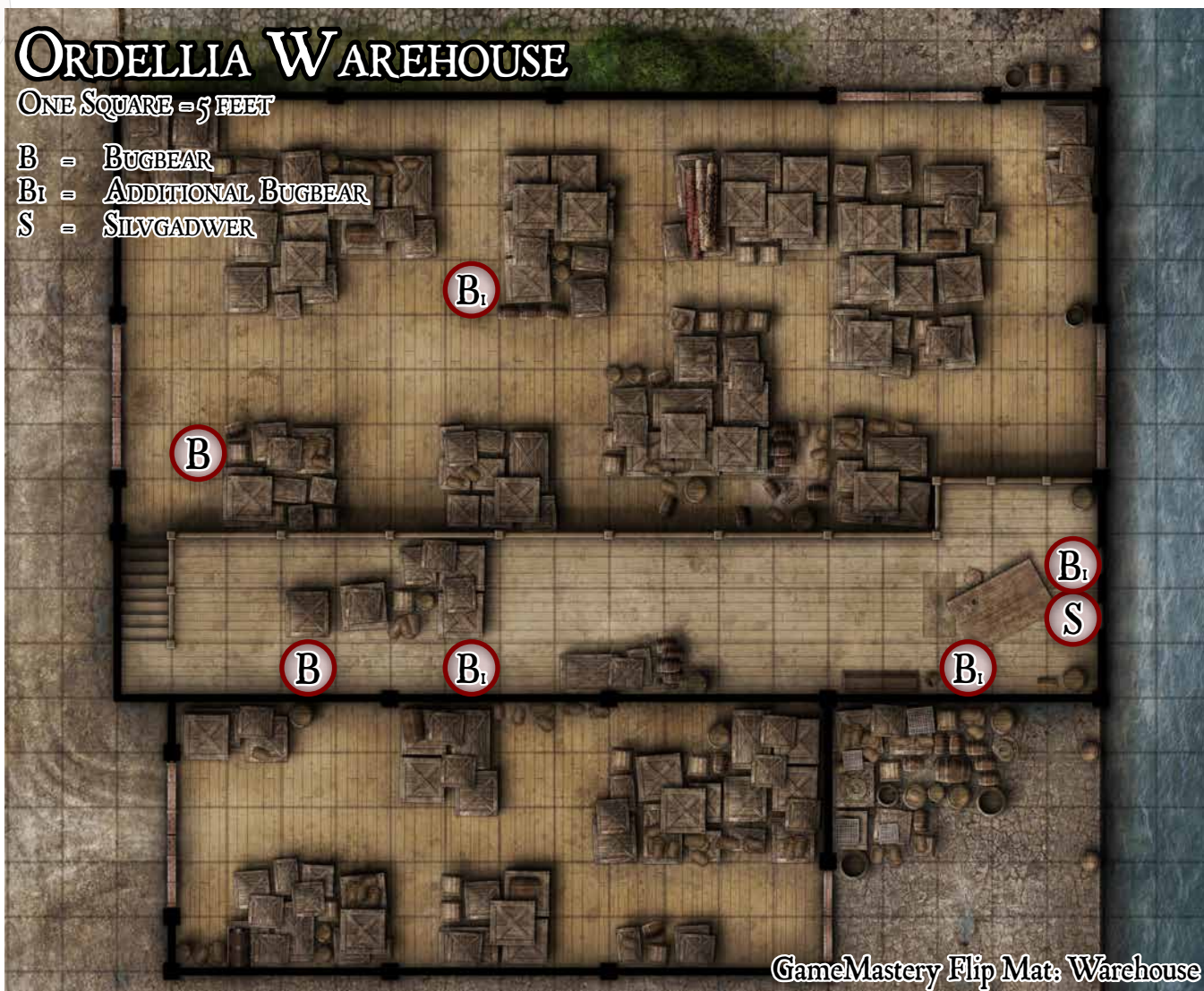
**Creatures:** The bugbears are accustomed to the bustle of the city by now; their paranoia has diminished, and only the clink of the chained doors or an intentional knock on the doors or walls alerts them. Characters displaying adequate stealth have the chance to surprise Silvgadwer and the bugbears. If they do, Silvgadwer is lounging in his den of shredded blankets, talking to the bound and gagged Estani, telling the frightened man how much he will savor consuming him. The bugbears are sitting under the loft playing dice (the two in the loft keep watch on the floor below).



# ORDELLIA WAREHOUSE

ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET

B = BUGBEAR  
 B<sub>i</sub> = ADDITIONAL BUGBEAR  
 S = SILVGADWER



GameMastery Flip Mat: Warehouse

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## SUBTIER 3-4 (CR 6)

### BUGBEAR KIDNAPPERS (2) CR 2

hp 16 each

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** If aware of the invasion, the bugbears ready themselves for murder.

**During Combat** The bugbears wait to engage the PCs once the Pathfinders move into the building. One takes a position in the loft and readies her javelins while the other hides at the foot of the stairs.

**Morale** Fanatically dedicated to Silvgadwer, the bugbear kidnappers fight to the death. If the barghest is killed, they flee the building.

### SILVGADWER CR 4

Male barghest

LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful, shapechanger)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +12

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+2 Dex, +5 natural)

**hp** 50 (6d10+17)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

**DR** 5/magic

Offense

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** bite +11 (1d6+4), 2 claws +11 (1d4+4)

**Special Attacks** feed

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

At will—*blink*, *levitate*, *misdirection*

1/day—*charm monster* (DC 16), *crushing despair* (DC 16), *dimension door*

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** If alerted, Silvgadwer hides against the wall atop the loft in his goblin form, out of sight, until the PCs get near.

**During Combat** When the PCs reach

the stairs (or the loft), Silvgadwer casts *blink*. As the PCs come closer, he uses *crushing despair*, then *charm monster* on the most powerful-looking character. As he engages the PCs in melee, Silvgadwer shifts into his true form and employs his natural attacks.

**Morale** If reduced to 15 or fewer hp, Silvgadwer uses *dimension door* to flee the warehouse.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 19, **Dex** 15, **Con** 15, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 22 (24 vs. trip)

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Great Fortitude

**Skills** Acrobatics +12, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Intimidate +12, Perception +12, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +12, Survival +12

**Language** Common, Goblin, Infernal  
**SQ** change shape (goblin or wolf, *polymorph*), growth points (1, already reflected in statistics)

## SUBTIER 6–7 (CR 9)

### BUGBEAR KIDNAPPERS (6) CR 2

Bugbear  
hp 16 each

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** If alerted, the bugbears ready themselves for murder. The two in the loft move to protect Silvgadwer.

**During Combat** The bugbears attack intruders from hidden positions. Two of them enter the loft to attack with javelins, replacing the two that moved to guard Silvgadwer, while the others hide at the foot of the stairs. The bugbears constantly move to find the best position, falling back as the PCs venture further into the warehouse and setting up choke points and areas where they can make flanking attacks. They attack with their javelins before drawing their melee weapons.

**Morale** Fanatically dedicated to Silvgadwer, the bugbear kidnappers fight to the death.

### SILVGADWER CR 7

Male greater barghest  
hp 85

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** If alerted, Silvgadwer hides against the wall in goblin form, and remains out of sight until the PCs approach.

**During Combat** As the PCs engage the bugbears below, Silvgadwer uses *charm monster* on the most obviously powerful character. He then casts *blink* and *invisibility sphere* on himself and the two bugbears in the loft, using following rounds to cast *mass bull's strength* and *mass enlarge person* on his minions within range at the time. When engaged in melee, Silvgadwer attacks past his bugbear minions until they fall, when he throws himself into combat with tooth and claw.

**Morale** If reduced to 25 hp or fewer, Silvgadwer uses *dimension door* to escape the situation, leaving his minions to fend for themselves.

**Development:** The Pathfinders locate the captive Estani bound and gagged in the northeast corner of the loft, next to Silvgadwer's nest. He thanks the PCs for rescuing him, and gladly recounts his understanding of the barghest's plans to consume him in the hopes of evolving to a higher state of being.

If the PCs capture any of the bugbears and attempt to interrogate them, the creatures can be convinced to reveal Silvgadwer's ultimate plan of evolving and ascending to godhood with the promise of being set free to go about their business outside the city or with a successful Intimidate check. Silvgadwer attempts to flee if captured, and if successful in escaping the PCs' grasp, leaves Magnimar behind to attempt his apotheosis elsewhere.

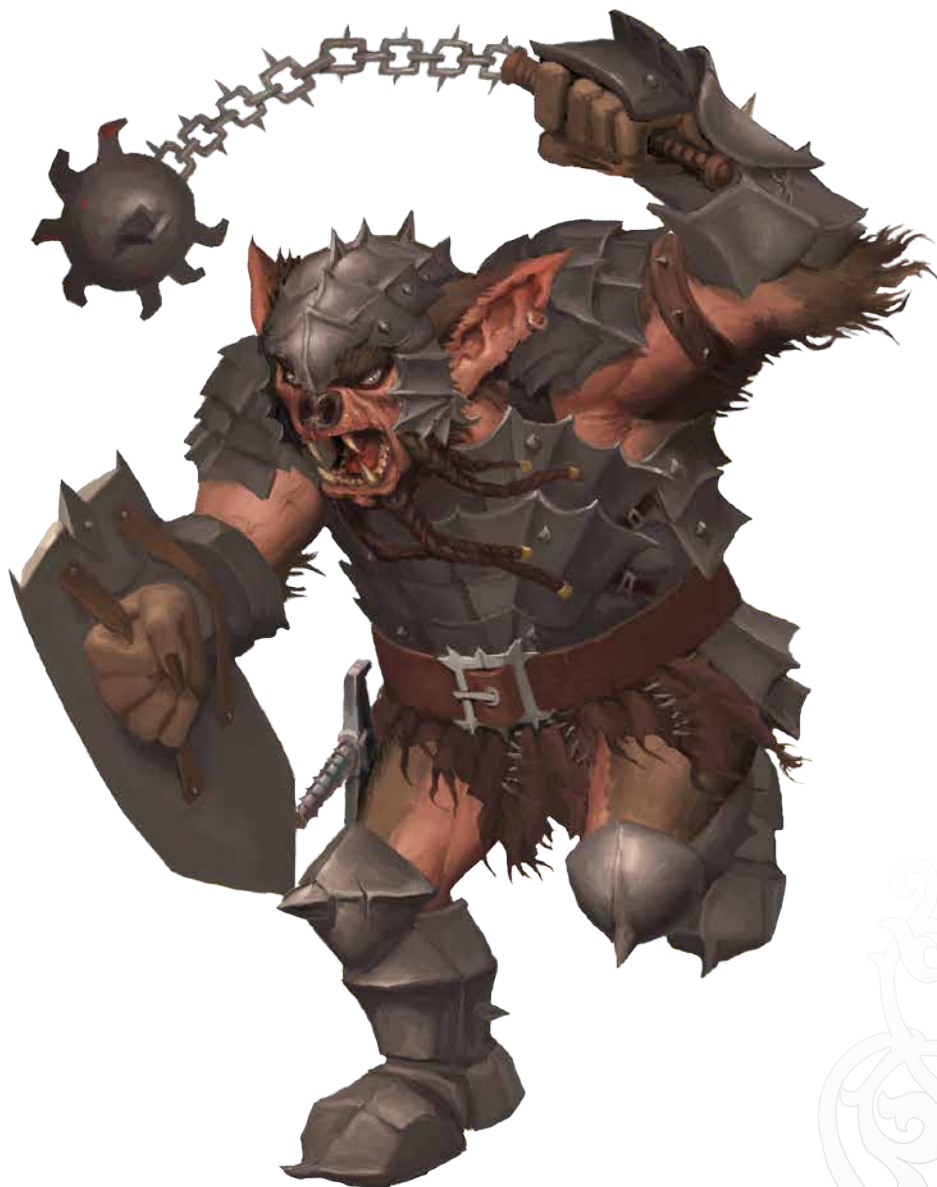
#### CONCLUSION

While his kidnapping and near brush with death have shaken and traumatized Estani, he is grateful to the PCs—and to the Pathfinder Society in general—for saving him. Likewise,

#### Scaling the Encounter

This encounter is intended for a party of 6 PCs, but can easily be scaled down in difficulty for a party of 4. In Subtier 3–4, eliminate one bugbear and use the base barghest statistics from the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* (without the benefits of 1 growth point). In Subtier 6–7, reduce the number of bugbears by two.

Sheila Heidmarch is ecstatic that the PCs have brought back such a valuable Pathfinder asset, and promises the PCs they will personally benefit from his vast knowledge of ancient Thassilon.



# Living Gods

# for 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE™

By Ash Law

Art by Joe J. Calkins

I'm very excited about *13<sup>th</sup> Age*, and you should be too. Here's just one reason why.

*13<sup>th</sup> Age* replaces traditional alignment found in d20 games with relationships with people. You are "aligned" with part of the plans and desires of the great powers of the world, not with nebulous cosmic principles. You might be a loyal servant of The Dragon Emperor, a paladin marching under the banner of The Crusader, a subject of The Elf Queen... or you might have a relationship with The Priestess.

In the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* default setting, the only one who hears the distant gods is The Priestess, ensconced in her mighty cathedral in the city of Santa Cora. Through her, flows all of the world's divine power.

Rob Heinsoo and Jonathan Tweet have developed a great game, something truly lifting d20-based games to the next level. As part of their design philosophy, they give players and GMs the ability to change the game: They reveal all the game's under-the-hood details, discuss how it works, and then suggest how you can change the rules to suit your group's tastes.

Because many fantasy campaigns include large pantheons, let's talk about a world with no divine intercessor, a world in which there is no one called The Priestess.

## A WORLD WITHOUT THE PRIESTESS

To run a game without this intermediary to the gods, use the following suggestions. This might apply, for instance, if you want to keep an existing campaign intact and move to the *13<sup>th</sup>*

*Age* system. Of course, keeping The Priestess and having your PCs seek to overthrow her by killing or banishing her—the only bridge between the mortal world and the kingdom of the gods—might catalyze an interesting game arc by itself. Succeeding could either have dire consequences, or it could just allow the gods to return to the world and communicate with their followers. The Priestess might be their jailer, not their servant—that could certainly shake things up!

So, whether you are starting a new *13<sup>th</sup> Age* game or just prefer an active pantheon, read on.

### ACTIVE GODS

First, flip the concept of distant gods upside down. Instead of the gods being distant and clerical power being just an echo of past glories, the gods are present and active. Achieving the feel of active gods requires no rules changes to the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* mechanics. In fantasy settings, temples are common in both cities and towns (for characters to be resurrected in) and in far-off places (as sources of evil or as monasteries for the study of the fighting arts).

If the gods are active and real in your world, then their influence permeates the setting. As a GM you can incorporate gods' names into place names, have the PCs see holy places daily (small roadside shrines, standing stones, alters in forest clearings, small chapels in city alleyways), and have NPCs use regular colorful phrases relating to the gods.

### ICON RELATIONSHIP

Second, each worshiper's relationship is not to "The Priestess" but rather to his fellow

worshippers and to the god each chooses to venerate. Again, there are no mechanical changes needed. Instead of "The Priestess," the player has a relationship with "The Gods," and nothing else needs changing. Rolling a 6 on an icon relationship roll gives direct divine intercession, while rolling a 5 means a fellow worshiper helps you out, but wants something in return. If the player character has a negative relationship with "The Gods," the help he receives on a 6 might be more infernal than divine...

### BONDS, BOONS, AND BANES

Third, everybody wishing to worship a god or to pledge himself to a deity's service can do so. Access to the gods' power is not a cleric-only role in such a world; the power exists for all to obtain. Worshiping active, "living" gods isn't for everybody though—the gods demand their followers obey them without fail.

THIS bit is where at least one mechanical change really pays big dividends. A character with a positive or conflicted icon relationship with "The Gods" can pledge himself to the service of a single god; doing so allows the character to accrue Bond points. The higher the Bond score, the more likely the character gains a Boon, a supernatural benefit. A character with



0 or fewer Bond points gains a Bane, a supernatural compulsion or curse.

To build a “living” god, answer these six questions:

1. What does the god want? The deity’s desire determines a lot about him and his followers. If you are building a goddess of magic for your 13thAge game, does she want people to practice magic, or does she want them to hoard it? Does your sea god want people to sail and fish under blue skies, or does he guard secrets from the inky abyss?
2. What pleases your god? If your goddess of magic wants people to practice arcane arts, does teaching others magic please her? Is she happy with worshippers uncovering secrets? Does your dark sea god demand cliff-top sacrifice to secure safe passage across the waters over which he rules? Answering this question determines what actions award characters Bond points.
3. What displeases your god? If your goddess of magic wants people to practice magic, does solving problems through mundane means displease her, or is she angered by frivolous displays of arcane power? If the sea god hates trespassers in his domain, does swimming anger him, and does mapping his ocean incense him? Answering this question determines what actions cause characters to lose Bond points.
4. How does your god reward or help his followers? What Boon can they expect? The goddess of magic might grant her followers the use of an extra cantrip each day, even if they are not wizards themselves. The sea god might grant his worshippers the ability to breathe salt water.

5. How does your god encourage worshipers back onto the right path? That is, what Bane does the deity inflict upon those enraging him? The goddess of magic might send magical tormentors that only arcane power can defeat. The sea god might send storms that only elaborate sacrifices can quell.
6. Does your god require constant fearful worship, or are his requirements more lenient? The response determines the characters’ starting Bond score at each level.

The following two examples were built using this question-and-answer system:

### DARK HARVEST GOD

Many people think of harvest gods as cheerful earth-mothers or the like, but here is a much darker version of such a deity.

**Wants:** Regular blood sacrifice.

**Bond:** You start each level with a Bond score of 0.

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#### GAIN +1 BOND WHEN:

- You sacrifice a large animal on a stone altar to the harvest god.
- You burn food on an altar to the harvest god.
- You daub yourself with blood before battle.
- Gain +2 Bond when:
- You spill an enemy’s blood in the name of the harvest god.
- Gain +5 Bond when:
- You kill a person on an altar stone dedicated to the harvest god.

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#### LOSE D6 BOND WHEN:

- You fail to sacrifice a prisoner to the harvest god.

---

#### BOON AND BANE

**Boon:** At +10 Bond or higher, you bring good fortune to nearby farmland, and you gain +1 hp every time you heal.

**Bane:** At 0 Bond or lower, your impiety visits pestilence on nearby farmland, and monsters and wild beasts trouble local settlements. Omens point to you as the doombringer.

### GOD OF CELEBRATION

This is a generic good-times god, with a touch of chaos.

**Wants:** Music, parties, wildness.

**Bond:** You start each level with a Bond score of 1d4-2.

---

#### GAIN 1D4-2 BOND POINTS WHEN:

- You gamble and lose cheerfully.
- You act with wild abandon and suffer for it.
- You drink enough to give you a penalty to combat.
- You play a musical instrument or sing for a large crowd.
- You encourage wild revelry in others.

---

#### BOON AND BANE

**Boon:** At +5 Bond or higher, the god grants you good fortune: you gain a +1d6 boost to any skill roll 1/day.

**Bane:** At 0 Bond or lower, you must make a save (16+) to avoid carousing when presented with any chance to do so.

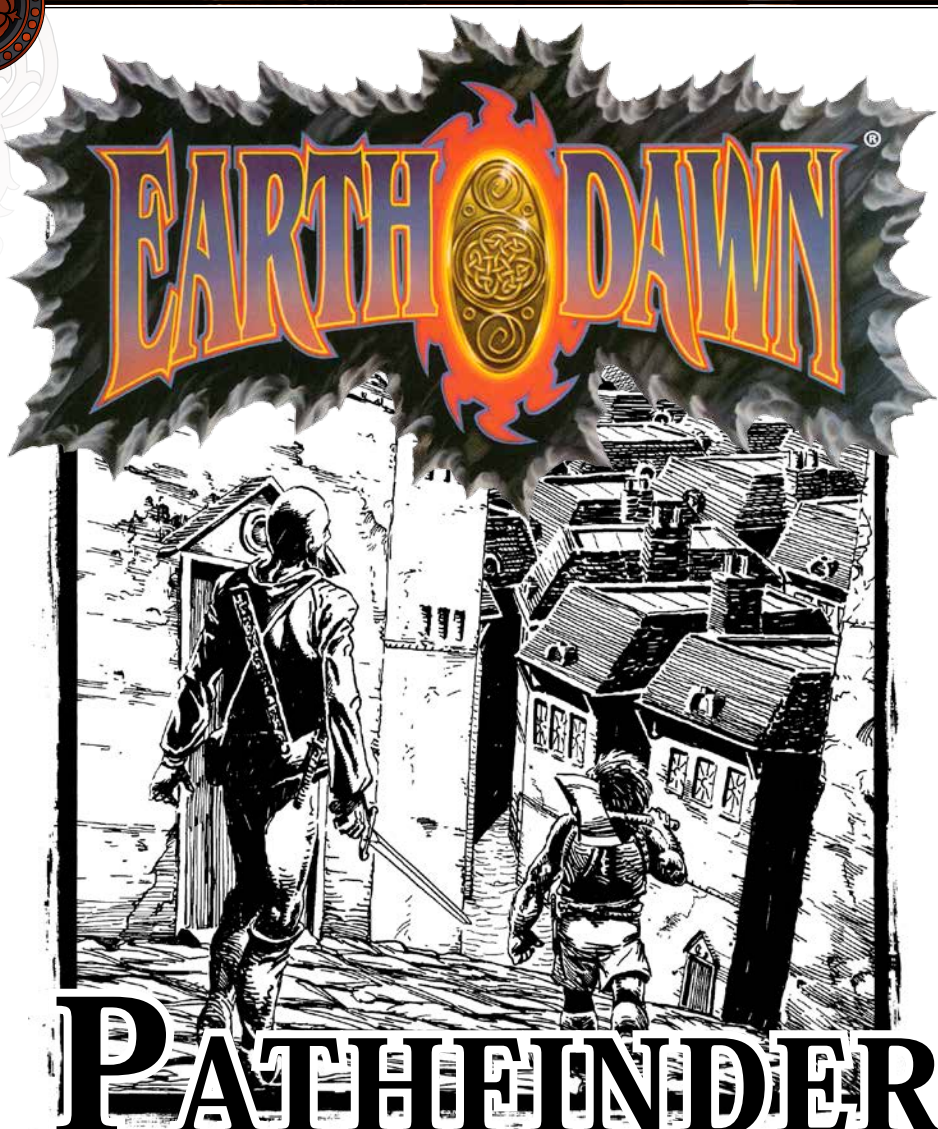
### CLERICS AND GODS

In a world with living and active gods, it would be strange to have a cleric with no relationship to the gods at all. As a GM, you should insist clerics maintain a positive relationship with The Gods and make them pledge service to one particular god, using the Bond/Boon/Bane system in addition to the usual choices a cleric makes.

Then again, a disreputable wandering priest for hire who knows just enough about the pantheon to hack together rituals to gain the favor of any passing god might be a fun concept—a conflicted relationship if ever there was one.

### USING BOONS AND BANES IN OTHER D20 GAMES

The Bond/Boon/Bane system is just one of many mechanics you might adopt from *13<sup>th</sup> Age*, and you can use the system for gods in any d20-style game. Why should clerics have all the fun, after all?



By Hank Woon, Craig Guarisco, Katherine Fang, and Ira Mertes  
 Art by Jeff Laubenstein, John Dollar, and Karl Waller  
 Cartography by Simon Powell

**W**hile the six-part *Parlainth Adventure Campaign* takes your PCs all throughout the Forgotten City and beyond, plenty of downtime still exists between all the danger and excitement. The additional material presented here can enrich any campaign: a powerful Named Horror, the Mindtrap, that haunts the region of Parlainth known as the Twists, ensnaring its victims in terrible nightmare dreamscapes from which they never awaken; a Legendary threaded magical item known as *Nightscur*, a powerful sword used to combat the Horrors during the Scourge; an in-depth look

at Haven's Gilt Ship Casino, as well as a closer look at Pepperpots, the inn of refuge in the Smalls.

**THE MINDTRAP**

*Sickening wounds weep across the wrecked, twisted flesh of this foul creature. Its many small mouths suck eagerly at the air, salivating in a silent, perverse pleasure.*

**THE MINDTRAP** CR 6  
 2,200 xp  
 CE Small outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, Horror)

**Init** +5; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9

---

**DEFENSE**  
**AC** 17, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +5 natural, +1 size)  
**hp** 68 (6d10+30+3)  
**Fort** +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +5  
**Immune** poison, sleep effects; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10  
**Defensive Abilities** improved uncanny dodge, Horror qualities

---

**OFFENSE**  
**Speed** 10 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor)  
**Melee** 2 claws +11 (1d4+4 plus soul trap)  
**Special Attacks** corrupt Karma, damage shift, Horror mark, soul trap  
**Spell-Like Abilities**<sup>1</sup> (CL 6th)  
 At will—*mind dagger* (DC 12)  
 3/day—*counterspell* (DC 13)  
 1/day—*blood boil* (DC 14), *razor orb* (DC 14)

---

**STATISTICS**  
**Str** 18, **Dex** 13, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10  
**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 20  
**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Toughness  
**Skills** Bluff +9, Fly +8, Intimidate +9, Perception +9, Sense Motive +9, Stealth +14  
**SQ** Karma points (19)  
**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy.

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**ECOLOGY**  
**Environment** Urban (Parlainth)  
**Organization** solitary  
**Treasure** standard

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**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Corrupt Karma (Su)** This power allows the Horror to alter another being's use of Karma (see *Earthdawn Player's Guide*). A targeted character must succeed at a DC 16 Will save to use any Karma against the Horror for 1d4 rounds. Though normally this power works only through line of sight, the power can work against a Horror-marked character who is several hundred miles away. The Mindtrap uses corrupt Karma as a swift action.

**Damage Shift (Su)** This power allows the Mindtrap to shift damage it has taken onto a target character. Though the Horror spends a Karma Point to accomplish this, it rolls no Karma dice. Using damage shift is an immediate action. When the Mindtrap uses this power, it must select a target that has just damaged it, immediately following the damage roll. The target must make a successful DC 16 Fortitude save. If it fails, all of the damage it just dealt to the Horror is transferred to the target. The Horror can target any creature within line of sight.

**Horror Mark (Su)** This terrible ability allows the Mindtrap to mark victims, thereby linking the Horror and the target character. To use Horror mark, the target character must be in the Mindtrap's line of sight. The intended target must succeed at a DC 16 Will save or become marked. The Horror mark links the Horror to the target over vast distances, allowing the Horror to use any of its abilities against the target character when the character is within 10 miles of the Horror. For a range up to 100 miles, the Horror mark power allows the Horror to take actions against the character that do not directly cause damage, and communication between the Horror and the target extends for 5,000 miles. Horror marks last a year and a day. The Horror may renew the Horror mark whenever the target character is within 100 miles of the Horror.

**Karma Points (Su)** The Mindtrap may use Karma Points on any roll, gaining a Karma die for the roll, though it may spend only 1 Karma Point per roll. The Mindtrap regains Karma Points at a rate of 1d6 points a day, until it reaches its maximum of 19. The Mindtrap's Karma die is 1d12.

**Soul Trap (Su)** For the Mindtrap to use this power, the Horror's victim must first come into contact with a spoon-sized drop or larger of the Horror's blood. Once the blood touches the victim, the victim must succeed at a DC 18 Will save or the Horror traps the victim's spiritual and intellectual essence within its own mind. Characters making unarmed attacks or attacks with natural weapons must also make the saving throw. When this occurs, the victim's body falls into a coma, and the Horror can begin feeding off the trapped mind in its grasp. The Mindtrap feeds by forcing the victim into an endless cycle of surreal nightmares. In these nightmare dreamscapes, various dream monsters attack and mutilate the victim. These mental phantoms do no actual physical damage, but can cause his physical self to die by shattering his mind. As extensions of the Horror's mind, the mind creatures have the same attack abilities as the Horror's physical form. All damage done to a victim in the Horror's mind disappears if the Mindtrap is killed before the victim's soul dies. If the victim receives enough mental damage to kill him, however, his innermost self dies of terror. On occasion the bodies live on for up to a month, but the victim remains catatonic even if the Horror is killed before the victim's body dies. The essence of the victim's mind is ripped into and no known methods of healing can cure such wounds short of a *miracle* or *wish*.

### Horror subtype notes:

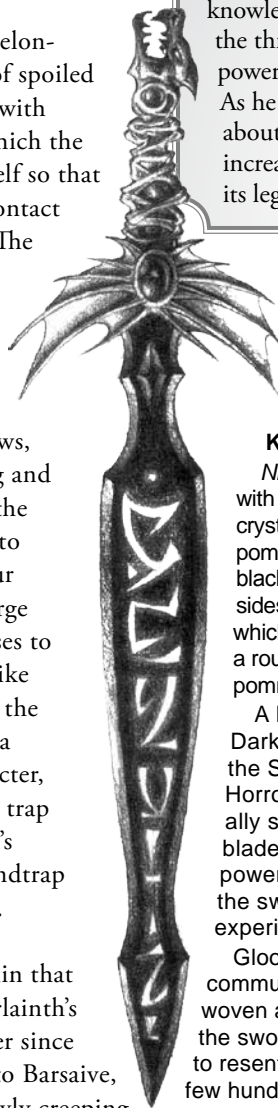
- Cannot summon others of their type
- Immunity to poison and sleep effects.
- Resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10.
- Telepathy.
- Except where otherwise noted, Horrors speak Abyssal, Celestial, and Draconic.

The Mindtrap is a large, melon-shaped creature the color of spoiled cream. Its body is covered with open wounds and sores, which the Horror has inflicted on itself so that anyone attacking it risks contact with its dangerous blood. The Horror has many eyes and several mouths placed at random around its body; it can see in all directions and can speak through any one of its bleeding maws, though the blood bubbling and frothing on its lips makes the Mindtrap's words difficult to understand. Each of its four powerful arms ends in a large spike, which the Horror uses to attack. Before making a spike attack, the Mindtrap coats the spikes in its own blood. If a bloodied spike hits a character, the Horror can use its soul trap ability to engulf the victim's mind. In addition, the Mindtrap can use a few wizard spells.

The Mindtrap nesting in Parlainth was trapped within that city for the duration of Parlainth's retreat from the world. Ever since Parlainth's magical return to Barsaive, the Mindtrap has been slowly creeping closer to Haven, anticipating a glorious feast on the great number of minds ripe for the harvesting that it senses in the town. It has fed on many adventurers in the past 10 years or so, but it constantly desires more minds to toy with and destroy.

### Threads

The magical energy flowing through the Earthdawn world can be separated into strands called threads. These threads can then be "woven" and used to better perform specific tasks. For example, Adepts use threads to activate magical items' special powers and capabilities. In this case, knowledge of an item's history is key to the actual weaving of the threads. Without that knowledge, an Adept cannot weave the thread that will give the item power, and the item remains inert. As he learns more knowledge about the item, the thread increases in rank, and he unlocks its legend and thus its powers.



## THE NIGHTSCAR

### NIGHTSCAR

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Key Knowledge DC:** 23

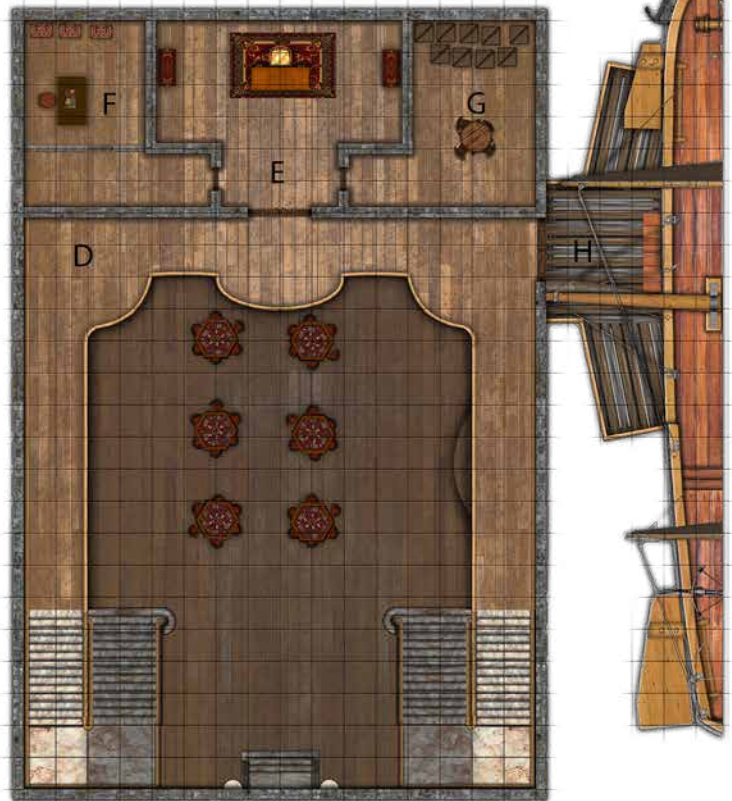
*Nightscar* is a magical broadsword with a blade carved from black crystal, set in a silver hilt and pommel. The hilt and pommel are blackened with age. The blade's flat sides are etched with magical runes, which are also filled with silver, and a rounded black crystal rests in its pommel.

A Nethermancer named Noir Darkwind created *Nightscar* during the Scourge as a weapon against Horrors. Darkwind imprisoned an ally spirit named Gloom within the blade to give the wielder additional powers to call upon and to give the sword its own intelligence and experience.

Gloom can telepathically communicate with anyone who has woven a Rank 2 or higher thread to the sword, but the spirit has come to resent its imprisonment after a few hundred years and wants only to be free from *Nightscar*. Unfortunately, Gloom's freedom would mean the destruction of the sword, and so far no wielder has been willing to destroy *Nightscar* to release an ally spirit that might very well be insane after centuries of imprisonment. With no threads attached, *Nightscar* is the equivalent of a standard masterwork broadsword (for broadsword stats, refer to the *Earthdawn Player's Guide*).

# THE GILT SHIP CASINO

ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET



## THREAD RANKS

### RANK 1

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the sword: *Nightscar*.

**Effect:** *Nightscar's* base damage is 1d10 and becomes a +1 broadsword.

### RANK 2

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the spirit trapped in the sword: Gloom. The character must engage the spirit in a contest of wills by making opposed Wisdom checks (Gloom's Wisdom modifier is +5). If the character fails, he may not try again for 1 month.

**Effect:** The wielder can communicate with Gloom telepathically while touching the sword. Additionally, the wielder can call on the spirit's various powers. The character can cast the following spells as if he were a spellcaster of a level equal to the sword's rank: *aid*, *arcane sight*, *daze monster*, *detect magic*, and *detect thoughts*. *Nightscar* is CN, has an Ego of 20, a Charisma of 14, Intelligence of 18, Wisdom of 20, and telepathy with any creature who has threads attached to it at rank 2 or higher.

### RANK 3

**Effect:** The sword gains a +2 enchantment bonus.

### RANK 4

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the history of *Nightscar* and the Name of the Nethermancer who created it: Noir Darkwind.

**Effect:** The wielder can cast *deeper darkness* a number of times per day equal to 1 + his Charisma modifier. The wielder's caster level is equal to the sword's rank.

### RANK 5

**Deed:** The wielder of *Nightscar* must defeat a Horror in combat. This Deed is worth one-tenth of the Horror's experience point value, in addition to any experience points gained if the wielder slays the Horror.

**Effect:** For the cost of 1 Karma Point and a swift action, *Nightscar's* wielder can call on the sword's Chillblade power. This power makes the sword freezing cold, granting it the *frost* ability until the end of the round. In addition, if the character deals a confirmed critical hit, the target must make an immediate Fortitude save or become frozen in place for 5 rounds. The DC for this save equals 10 + the amount of damage inflicted.

## THE GILT SHIP CASINO

The town of Haven, carved out of a corner of the ruined city of Parlainth,

is a true adventurer's town: founded by the troll adventurer Torgak, it is now a base for the myriad explorers who come in search of Parlainth's treasures. Torgak and his friends still maintain a monopoly over business in Haven, but he allows one troll, Pagmor Gilt-Throat, carte blanche over local gaming and gamblers. A former sky raider, Gilt-Throat made his name in Haven by running betting on the ongoing falsemen battles in Parlainth's War Zone, but always aspired to more. Now he's taken advantage of his one avenue to influence the opening of the Gilt Ship Casino.

The Gilt Ship Casino may not be the grandest building in Haven—that honor goes to Torgak's own Goods and Supplies store—but it's as close as Gilt-Throat can manage. With a three-story facade on a two-story former warehouse and all the gaudy statues, columns, friezes, and draperies that Gilt-Throat tragically believes constitute the classic Parlainth style, there's no grander gaming parlor for hundreds of miles around.

The casino's apparent namesake, Gilt-Throat's airship *The Unyielding*, is docked on a platform next to the casino. Despite the grandeur next door, *The Unyielding* has a hole in its prow and not a lick of gilt paint, though strategically hung decorative pennants help hide its shortcomings.

Through the gold-leafed double doors of the casino's entrance lies the main casino floor, crowded with gaming tables. Games lean towards troll and ork tastes, with the dice game dra'dolbos (dragon knuckles) and the roulette-style patrukkha (fortune wheel) said to originate in sky raider pastimes, but card games such as fainai (five knives) are also on offer to appeal to a wider crowd. Gilt-Throat employs trusted former street operators as dealers; fortunately, in a place like Haven, the prevalence of scars and minor amputations among the staff is less cause for comment than their gaudy uniforms.

At the back of the casino rests the casino's showpiece, the lavishly-decorated falsemen betting parlor. From the War Zone mural on the back wall to the elaborate "gaming table" used to track current falsemen positions and brass plaques displaying the current odds, this is the place to get the up-to-the-minute odds on the falsemen wagers and place bets. The parlor is the core of Gilt-Throat's gambling operations; sheer luck can make anyone a winner at the patrukkha wheel, but Gilt-Throat and his sky-raider crew have much tighter control over falsemen betting. From *The Unyielding*, they survey the War Zone from above to assess the current odds, and they know those numbers better than anyone.

The casino also features a small stage for live entertainment and a bar to keep patrons well-plied with drink. Gilt-Throat hires the best-looking performers he can find, but as a troll destined for high propriety, he makes sure his crew of stone-faced, uniformed troll bouncers keep a suitable damper on excessive audience enthusiasm. And while Gilt-Throat understands the similar appeal of the lightly-clad

servers found in some of Haven's other entertainment establishments, he will have none of it. After an ill-considered experiment in having his troll enforcers serve drinks to tables, however, he now employs good-looking, uniformed "young fellows" for the job. What still disconcerts some patrons is that Pagmor Gilt-Throat also hires for height, the better to scan the crowd and signal drink orders to the barkeep from across the room. When the casino is crowded, windling, dwarf, and human guests often recognize the ork or troll waiting on them only by the look of their midriff.

The mezzanine is off-limits to regular patrons, and it provides casino staff with a good vantage point to monitor the activity below. At the back of the mezzanine lies Pagmor's office; when he's at his desk, he leaves the door open to eavesdrop on the buzz from the casino floor. His office is also the only access to the cashier's office, where a floor-to-ceiling grill of iron bars provides extra security for the cashier's counting desk and safe. A side room serves as a lounge for off-duty staff, and, when necessary, a secure area where Gilt-Throat's crew deals with suspected cheats.

#### GILT SHIP LOCATIONS

The numbered areas on the map represent locations where Gilt-Throat regularly displays his various artifacts, art, and magical items. He is constantly rotating through his ever-changing collection. GMs can populate these with various items of their choice.

#### SAMPLE ADVENTURE SEED

Cheaters and sharps are brutally dealt with at the Gilt Ship—or anywhere else in town Gilt-Throat's crew finds them—but they're not the only trouble adventurers might encounter at the casino.

**Bad Chip:** A Horror concealed in a glittering gaming token circulates throughout the casino, amplifying and feeding on the despondency of losing

betters. When unlucky casino patrons turn up in a string of unusual suicides, something must be up. Even after the PCs track the trouble back to the casino, Gilt-Throat won't just let the PCs rifle through his goods—the only way to get their hands on the Horror could be to play for it and win.





# COMING NEXT ISSUE!

Our theme next issue is Technology in Fantasy, and the regular writers and some newcomers have great goodies on every tech level:

## Super-Science in Fantasy

A guide to high technology in Pathfinder RPG gives us a complete rundown on feats, systems, and lots of new equipment that blows right off the high end of the tech scale! Will there be Vril tech? Possibly. Ray guns? Almost certainly!

## The Cult of Charun

Guardians and guides to the Underworld, the priests and devotees of Charun are secretive and much-sought-after by adventurers, for they know much about the hidden world beneath, and even more about the afterlife and how to return. The secretive cult is revealed in this stellar summation of Charun the Boatman!

## Dwarcraft Items

Quality workmanship, and beauty in the making, this is what gives the dwarves such a commanding reputation for smithcraft. We explore their wares, their techniques, and the value of engraving, encrusting with jewels, and enspelling things the dwarvish way!

All this plus possibly some great ideas like special combat feats, new shadow magic, alchemy, a few more poisons, a Pathfinder Society quest, special notes from Midgard, new vehicles, and a magical miscellany for AGE players. Don't miss the Winter issue that kicks off 2013!



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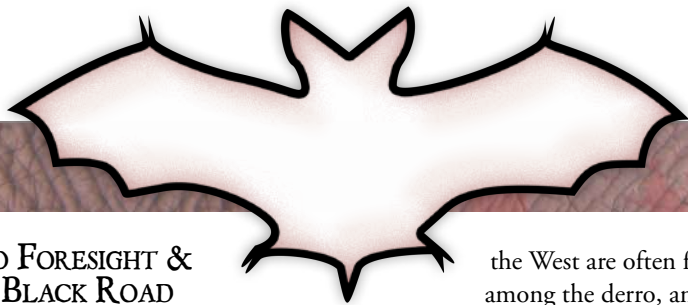
**Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat.** © 2011, Paizo Publishing, LLC; Authors: Dennis Baker, Jesse Benner, Benjamin Bruck, Jason Bulmahn, Brian J. Cortijo, Jim Groves, Tim Hitchcock, Richard A. Hunt, Colin McComb, Jason Nelson, Tom Phillips, Patrick Renie, Sean K Reynolds, and Russ Taylor.

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# Sign of the White Bat

## *Derro Cults and Prophets*

By Wolfgang Baur



The white-nosed bat was the first sign of movement, hours after the prophet entered her trance. It fluttered into the home-cavern, circled once, then came to the tattered sleeve of the priestess Shenye, daughter of Addrikah; her beloved madwoman, she who knew how to open the Black Road.

*“Bring me the blood of dwarf children,” said Shenye to her son, the chieftain. “My little messenger tells me that the great serpent awakes. The world’s roads are opening and shifting.”*

*“Yes, mother-of-us-all,” said her son. “The dwarf-slaves shall be yours within a day. What shall we bring you right now?”*

*“Addrikah has provided. I shall feast on her gifts,” said the crone, her spiked hair caked with bat guano. She twisted the head of the messenger bat off cleanly, and drank.*

The oracles of Midgard are proud women, esteemed by their friends and colleagues, able to see into the future with eyes as clear as a summer sky. And yet, not every prophecy comes from the balanced wisdom of Rava’s daughters, or with the bitter wisdom of Hecate’s eternal moon. Some of the prophecies are granted by the Goat of the Woods, or the Dragon God Baal’s raging fires, or the bloodstained visions of Addrikah, the derro goddess.

### DERRO FORESIGHT & THE BLACK ROAD

The Mother of Madness, Addrikah, is the patron goddess of the derro. Her role is to show them the horrors of the world, the true soul-blasting carnage of murder and misery. She has little patience for the weak or the elderly, and she teaches that each derro must stand strong in her defense. All heroes should be grateful for her insistence on soul-shredding baptisms and harsh punishments among her followers—otherwise there would surely be more of the vile creatures. Many of these rituals leave their participants blind, lame, insane, or catatonic.

Even as she undermines any sense of derro unity, she grants them gifts of knowledge and trickery, the secrets of the World Serpent, the hidden paths that lead them safely through the dangers of the ghoul empire and the Wasted West.

Of these gifts, the most important is that the derro have access to what they call the Black Roads—what the rest of Midgard refers to as the shadow roads. They can travel swiftly from the underworld to the surface and back. When threatened by the ghouls or other horrors of the underworld, they can melt away quickly, entire tribes vanishing overnight.

### VRIL AND SERPENTS

The other great gift of Addrikah to her insane derro followers is the ability to find, repair, and use many items thought lost to the ages. The keys of Veles seem to fall into their hands frequently. The lightning lances and the Vrill rifles of

the West are often found among the derro, and so are

the fiery trumps of the dragonkin and alchemical weapons of St. Mischau. Any item of obscure manufacture has a good chance of ending up in the possession of the derro. Some scholars believe that the derro are searching for something, some particular combination of tools and elements that will give them power or freedom they currently lack.

Addrikah’s third gift to the derro is their relationship with Veles, the world serpent. Most observers are too polite to speak of it, but one of the blasphemies of Addrikah is her role as a lover of the serpent. This may explain the fondness of derro for serpents: lamia, sewer drakes, and cave dragons often serve them as clan mascots and war beasts.

The derro know as much about the great dragons and their deep magic as the elemental priests of Veles, Baal, and Khespotan do. Possibly they know far more, for they do not fear to enter hells and horrors that others will not dare. This is a mystery the fullness of which the derro keep to themselves, but certainly the Dark Gods and the World Serpent are acquainted. Adventurers who enquire too closely into such matters are rarely rewarded with anything but bile and a touch of dizzying terror.

*“Mother-dragon mistress?” said the small voice.*

*“Yesssssss. The time is now. The road is open. The serpent awaits me. We go.” Her last breath rattled forth, and the dark world was born anew.*