



a DOZEN WARRIORS FOR HIRE

BY PHILIP REED

“If henchmen are defined as the associates, companions, and loyal (to some degree) followers of a player character, hirelings are the servitors, mercenaries, and employees of such player characters . . .”

– Gary Gygax,

Dungeon Masters Guide

As the player characters grow in experience and power, there may come a point in the campaign when they decided that it is time to hire others to assist them in tasks within the game world. While there are almost no limits to the professions of those the PCs may hire, it should not come as a surprise when the party wishes to hire mercenaries – swords for hire – to aid them in a particularly challenging dungeon adventure.

It is for those moments that I have created the twelve characters described within the pages of this PDF. As with other releases in the **A Dozen . . .** series, all of the content is systemless, meaning that none of the characters include game statistics. Fortunately, most games include stats for a number of classes at different

levels of power, which means that all you need to add to those stats are names and some backstory to make instant hirelings. And that, as you have already guessed, is where **A Dozen Warriors for Hire** enters the picture.

As NPCs within the campaign, these warriors may also serve as allies or enemies of the party . . . the exact relationship might depend on how each was treated when serving as a hireling.

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ANATOMY OF a WARRIOR

1. The warrior's name.
2. A bit of information about the character, including some possible history as well as any limits that they may have on who they will serve in exchange for gold.
3. Each of the described characters include a single illustration.
4. If the character has any special magic items or valuable treasures, they will be detailed here so that you know what tools the hired warrior may possess.

ALEX RIBEIRO

You wouldn't know it just by looking at him, but Alex Ribeiro is far, far older than the forty winters many place his age at when meeting him. Ribeiro is centuries old and, unknown to many, was not always human. In his earlier days, Ribeiro was a silver dragon, a force for good that fought against darkness in all its forms. An encounter with evil forever changed him, trapping him in human form.

Human (once dragon) Warrior (Master)

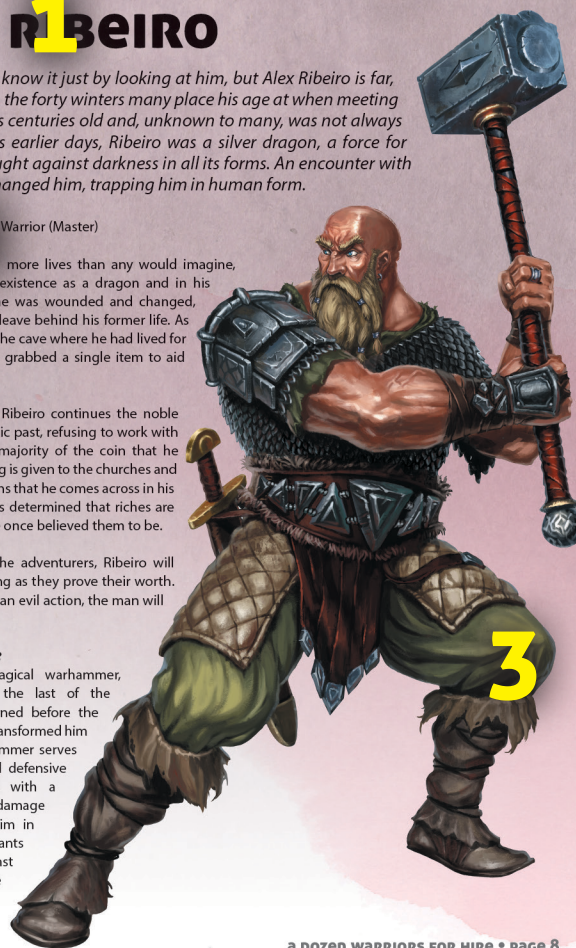
Alex Ribeiro has lived more lives than any would imagine, both in his previous existence as a dragon and in his human form. When he was wounded and changed, Ribeiro was forced to leave behind his former life. As he fled his sanctuary, the cave where he had lived for hundreds of years, he grabbed a single item to aid him in his new life.

As a warrior for hire, Ribeiro continues the noble tradition of his draconic past, refusing to work with any evil beings. The majority of the coin that he earns from adventuring is given to the churches and charitable organizations that he comes across in his travels; the warrior has determined that riches are not as important as he once believed them to be.

If he signs on with the adventurers, Ribeiro will serve them well so long as they prove their worth. If the party ever takes an evil action, the man will turn against them.

Notable Treasure

Ribeiro carries a magical warhammer, Silvermight, that is the last of the treasures that he owned before the incident that forever transformed him into a human. The hammer serves as both offensive and defensive gear, providing him with a bonus to attack and damage rolls and shielding him in an arcane aura that grants 15% resistance against all magical attacks. He wears a belt of giant strength.



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USING THE WARRIORS

The characters that follow may be used as random NPCs that the adventurers meet somewhere in the campaign world, as soldiers-for-hire who wish only to earn gold and fame, or as long-time friends of the party who will aid them at times or serve as sources of information and supplies.

Warriors are divided into three levels of experience:

- **Novice.** An inexperienced non-player character who is often just starting out in the world. Novice rivals aren't all that challenging, even for beginning player characters, but they can be trigger characters who lead the party to an encounter or adventure. Think of novice rivals as plot points and you'll be all set to use them in your game.

- **Experienced.** These are true rivals to the PCs and should often be of an equal power level to the party. Experienced rivals are those NPCs most likely to be the friendly competition, always looking to clear out the next dungeon and find the treasures before the player characters can get all of the good stuff.
- **Master.** These are NPCs who may be significantly more powerful than the player characters. As with the novice rivals, a master rival may be more useful as a MacGuffin, something that is important to your story but is mostly set dressing and not directly involved in the campaign's action.

Regardless of how you use these characters, I hope that they make your campaign a little more fun for everyone.

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GILLI RAGISSON

A fierce, murderous combatant, the barbarian Ragisson grew up in the frozen north where he was left to fend for himself at a young age. As a child, Ragisson joined with a band of adventurers who treated him poorly and it was only stubbornness and determination that allowed him to grow into the warrior that he is today.

Human Warrior (Experienced)

Gilli Ragisson has dedicated his life to war, choosing the thrill of battle over quieter, more peaceful pursuits. As a warrior for hire, he sells his strength and mastery of the axe to the highest bidder, though he refuses to sign on with murderers and those who would threaten the innocent people of the land.

Ragisson wishes to one day settle down and run a tavern of his own, so he saves as much of his pay as he can for the day when he puts aside his axe. If he grows close to his companions and trusts them, he'll share his dreams and promise that they will be welcome when he owns an inn.

Notable Treasure

Ragisson's helm is an arcane object that grants him the ability to see in the darkest of nights and in the shadowed lands of the underworld. Regardless of how pitch black it may be, the warrior can see as clearly as in daylight when wearing the helmet.

His boots are also magical, allowing him to march for hours without suffering from exhaustion. The aura of the boots extends outward by several feet, granting the warrior's companions the benefit of the item's power.





NIGUL KALDA

In his younger years, Kalda was in training to become a paladin, a holy warrior in the service of justice and the gods of good. Unfortunately, Kalda was less than pure and a dark, sadistic streak consumed his soul and he was cast out and forgotten by those who originally trained him in the art of war.

Human Warrior (Experienced)

When on his way to becoming a recognized paladin, Kalda came into possession of magical gauntlets that forever changed his life (see *Notable Treasure*, below). Those who knew him before the transition were shocked when the warrior abandoned his pursuit to do good and none who knew him then would recognize the warrior if they met him today.

Selling his sword and allegiance to the one with the most gold, Kalda will work for anyone regardless of their alignment or motivations. He often falls in with evil companies, working to further the cause of wickedness as the soul that was once pure turns more warped and twisted as the years pass. If the adventurers go in search of hirelings, Kalda will meet with them and insist that he is the man for the job. *"Nothing escapes my blade,"* the man tells them with a snarl on his lips.

If he is rejected, likely because they sense his evil, he will grow angry and promise they will pay for their refusal to accept him as an ally. Kalda will follow the group when they leave the city, hiring a few thugs to aid him in attacking the adventurers and trying to kill the PCs.

They may also meet him when exploring a dungeon. Maybe he was part of a group that failed, and he is now looking to escape with whatever treasures the others found before they died.

Notable Treasure

Kalda wears gauntlets of suffering, cursed magic items that were the cause of his failing in his earlier life. The warrior has no idea that the gauntlets, which do grant a bonus to attack rolls, are responsible for his evil change of heart. Perhaps the adventurers learn of the man's cursed gauntlets and seek to save him from the evil that has destroyed his life?

SONJA SCHNELL

Sonja and her twin sister, Erica (see p. 6), will kill anyone for the right number of gold coins. The bloodthirsty warrior is far more dangerous than her sister, though neither one should be underestimated when it comes to a fight. Sonja is wanted for the murder of a merchant by the people of Grottotown and she does all she can to avoid returning to that miserable little town.

Human Fighter (Experienced)

Sonja and her sister stay close together, refusing any job that won't take on both women at the same time. Unlike her sister, Sonja feels less of a need to stand with her employer and will – if given the chance – turn on almost any employer if there is money in doing so.

When engaged in combat, Sonja uses a magical axe (see below) and shield, striking whatever target presents itself. She works closely with her sister at all times, and the pair are a dangerous combination you must not underestimate.

Sonja feels most at home on the battlefield and is uncomfortable when forced to talk with others. At the inns where the sisters search for work, Sonja often waits outside and allows her sister to handle the negotiations.

Notable Treasure

Sonja's preferred weapon is the magical axe that she has carried for several years. The axe, balanced perfectly for throwing, was a gift from her aunt when she first set off on the life of adventuring and it has served her well in countless fights. When thrown, the axe can strike opponents up to 20-feet away and instantly returns to her hand once it has hit the target; the axe's magical power of teleportation guaranteeing that it always returns once thrown.

Sonja's most-prized treasure is a magical amulet that she stole from her recent employer. Her sister has hidden the magical amulet (see p. 6) and the two plan to retrieve the item once it is safe to do so.



ERICA SCHNELL

Erica and her sister Sonja (see p. 5) travel together. Rarely apart from one another for more than a few hours, the pair are deadly and have spent years working as mercs, bodyguards, and dungeoneers. Of the two, Erica is the one most likely to think things through before acting.

Human Sellsword (Experienced)

Erica Schnell only signs on with those who will also hire her sister, the two refusing to be separated. Once she agrees to an assignment, Erica does her best to prevent her sister from getting into too much trouble.

In battle, the sisters stick close together, working as a team to wear down and slaughter those opponents who make the mistake of allowing the women to flank them. The women have only ever fought as a pair, and it is certain that their effectiveness in battle would be greatly diminished if they were ever separated and forced to fight on their own.

On their off hours, Erica enjoys sharing stories and songs with others at the taverns and inns of the land, often telling embellished tales of her and her sister's adventures.

Notable Treasure

Secreted in the floorboards of one of the city's boarding houses, Erica has hidden the Eye of Salamar, a jeweled amulet that she stole from her previous employer, Adan Ovalle. The amulet grants the ability to cast detect magic once per hour at will and provides a +2 bonus to defense. Erica plans to return to the boarding house and claim the item in a month or two, once Ovalle has moved on and is no longer in the city.



ORRI HROKSSON



Taller than many humans, Hroksson is surprisingly gentle to those who befriend him and very protective of any under his careful watch. The warrior is always the first into the fight, his sword swinging masterfully as he throws himself into the battle. Those foolish enough to challenge Hroksson are likely to regret their decision when they witness the man's skill.

Human Warrior (Experienced)

For the right amount of gold, Orri Hroksson will join any good-aligned party of adventurers on their quest for gold and glory. The man is known for his kind, friendly manner and those in the city who have met him say that he is a gentle giant who is not to be crossed.

Orri spends most of his days on the road, serving with his current employer as dungeoneer, guard, soldier, or whatever task has been offered. When not on assignment, he lives in a boarding house in the merchant district and entertains the children with tales of his battles, his father's battles, and his grandfather's battles. Orri comes from a long line of storytellers, and many are surprised that he never became a bard.

Notable Treasure

Orri carries the sword and shield of Magnar Hroksson, his grandfather who served in the army of King Rjoldson. Magnar, as Orri has been told since he was young, was one of the King's bravest warriors and died at the Battle of Glaciers where the trolls of the elemental plane of ice were defeated.

It was during the battle, with his dying words, that Magnar miraculously summoned the strength of the Gods of Old and infused his sword and shield with their power. The items are now a set; when separated, they provide no magical bonuses. When together, though, each grants a +3 to all attack, damage, defense, and saving throws.

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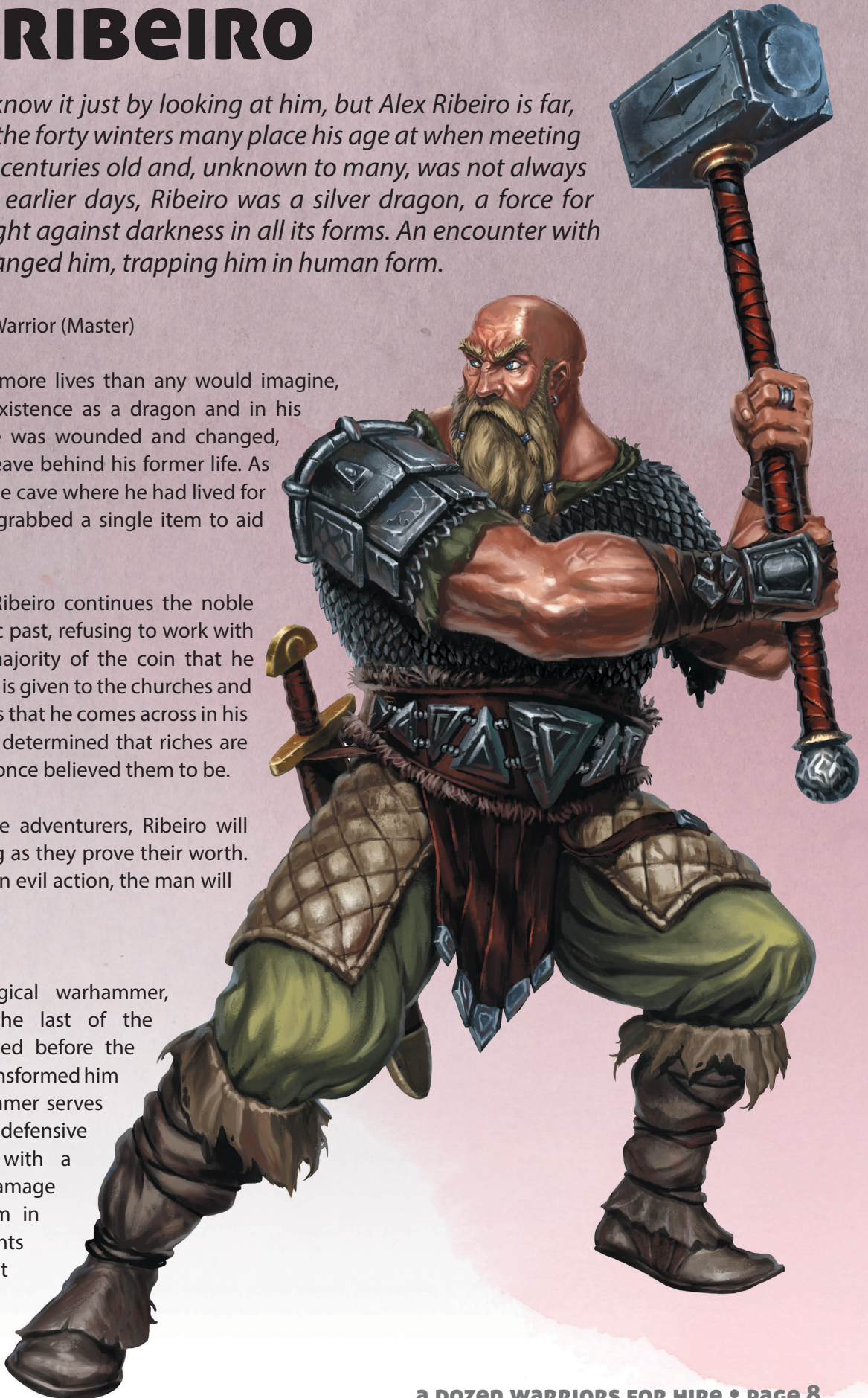
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ALICJA MORRIS

Trained since her earliest years, Alicja Morris is an experienced ranger who has decided to leave the security of her home in search of adventure. She is new to the wider world and still learning that there is more danger beyond the woods around her childhood home than she had ever imagined.

Human Ranger (Experienced)

Alicja specializes in ranged attacks, throwing javelins at her enemies and doing her best to keep 20-feet between herself and her opponents at all times. When forced to engage in hand-to-hand combat, she uses a sword to lash out at enemies and her primary goal when in melee combat is to put distance between her and her opponent.

Alicja Morris is trustworthy, proud of her sense of duty and honor and refuses to take any action that would soil her reputation. If she determines that her employer is being less than honest, she will voice her concerns and she will suggest that she and her employer renegotiate the terms of her position with the group. She will serve for the agreed upon term, but if her employer isn't treating her well, then she will not put her heart into her work.

If her employer asks her to commit evil or dishonorable actions, she quits immediately and – if she feels it necessary – turns on her employer and attempts to stop the wicked actions.

Notable Treasure

Alicja wears a quiver of infinite javelins that provides her with a limitless supply of missile weapons to throw in battle. The javelins are generally mundane weapons – with no bonuses to attack or damage – and the only magical property of the quiver is that there are always 1d4+1 javelins ready for her to use. Once a javelin is thrown, it vanishes an instant after it strikes the opponent. If the attack misses, the javelin disappears immediately.





KUNAS ember

The dragonfolk are uncommon across much of the known lands, the creatures preferring a solitary existence and rarely found in groups. Kunas Ember, dragonfolk warrior with decades of experience behind him, is one of the few members of his people who chooses to mingle with humans, elves, dwarves, and other races. Ember is a mercenary through and through and willing to work for almost anyone with the coin.

Dragonfolk Warrior (Experienced)

As a dragonfolk, Ember never quite feels accepted in the cities and towns of the humans, though he recognizes that those are the best places to find new jobs so he visits them frequently. The warrior is fast and agile, far more dextrous than many would ever expect of one of his race. He often fights two-handed, choosing the ability to strike often over a defensive posture. He is loyal only to his employer, and will only work for so long as he is paid.

If he feels his employer has lied to him or treated him unfairly, he will keep the gold and turn against the scoundrel who wronged him. It is unwise to double-cross or abuse a dragonfolk, and Ember will meet such perceived injustice with his sword and mace.

Notable Treasure

Ember's preferred weapon is the Mace of Skulls. The mace glows a bright blue when in the presence of evil, and grants a +2 bonus to all attack and damage rolls (+4 when the weapon is used against the undead).

TANJA ODDEN

Trained as a ranger, Tanja Odden soon found that she preferred the violence of battle to life as a protector of the woods and the creatures within it. After a year defending the Hollow Forest, Odden abandoned her post and set off in search of life as a warrior for hire.

Human Ranger (Experienced)

Odden's skills as a ranger are often what get her hired, which frustrates her since she would like to get away from the world's forests. Still, she has to eat and knows that her skills as a warrior are not yet advanced enough that she can turn her back completely on the experiences and skills she gained as a ranger.

Odden is athletic and agile, preferring to use her dexterity and speed to her advantage in battle and keeping her distance from powerful opponents. She carries three or four throwing axes at a time and keeps a few throwing daggers at her side in case they are needed.

Those who hire Odden are often disappointed in her services. They pay for her skills as a ranger, but the woman is reluctant to perform the most basic of rangerly duties – such as tracking, keeping an eye open for possible sources of food and water, and sharing knowledge of the local terrain – and it is not uncommon for her employers to discharge her the next time they enter a town or city. Odden is a confused woman and unsure of what she wants out of life.

Notable Treasure

Odden wears a magical cloak of protection that grants a +2 bonus to defense. In battle, she uses throwing axes and whatever weapons she happens to take from those she defeats. She spends her coins as fast as she earns them and is always in search of work.



JO DAG NORDBERG

Nordberg puts his strength to the test every time he lifts his powerful warhammer, a weapon so heavy that only the strongest of warriors may wield it in battle. The man stands 6'6" tall, is a solid mass of muscle and brutality, and his thirst for drink and hunger for the richest of foods keeps him forever in search of his next job. Nordberg isn't afraid to get out there and wade into the bloodiest of battles.

Human Barbarian (Experienced)

The heroes are most likely to meet Nordberg at an inn or tavern where he is spending the last of his coin on as much food and drink as he can afford. He keeps an eye open for adventurers, always looking to ask a party if they would like to sign his hammer to aid them on their next delve. He's friendly, loud, and has a tough time accepting "no" for an answer. If the party turns him down, he continues to be friendly, hoping that they will soon change their minds and hire him.

On the road, Nordberg works as hard as he can to impress his employers. If the heroes do find riches, he'll hint not-so-subtly that a bonus may be in order, especially if he saved any of them from a certain death.

Notable Treasure

Nordberg most-prized possessions are the Bracers of Otherworlds that he found in a dungeon a few years ago. These magical bracers give the man the ability to step between worlds – for an instant – which he uses in battle to outmaneuver his opponents. Once per day, requiring only a thought, Nordberg may activate the bracers and move from his current position to any one place within 10-feet. To others, it looks as if the man teleported, but he has actually stepped through a planar gate to enter another world and then instantly return. There is a 1% chance each time the bracers are used that he will become trapped in the other world.

The warhammer he carries is a minor magic item that grants a +2 bonus to attacks.



WETRATIN STONEHIDE

In his younger years, the dwarven warrior Wetratin Stonehide spent his time as a crafter of fine jewelry. Studying beneath the finest of dwarven gemcutters and jewelry-makers, Stonehide showed innate talent as a creator of beautiful jewels with an eye unlike many of his peers. Stonehide abandoned his life as a craftsman when the thirst for blood and adventure grew too strong to resist.

Dwarf Fighter (Experienced)

Stonehide wades into battle with his jeweled pickaxe, a heavy weapon that he crafted long ago when he was working as a craftsman. The dwarf will agree to work with any good-aligned adventuring company and charges less than other fighters of an experience level similar to his own. The dwarf adventures for one reason alone: he enjoys the excitement of exploring new dungeons and craves the sounds, sights, and smells of battle.

The dwarf is an expert at appraising gemstones and jewelry and sometimes earns extra coin working as an appraiser.

Notable Treasure

Stonehide wears jeweled beard lacers of his own design, one larger piece of jewelry and two smaller items. The lacers provide no magical benefit, but they are quite valuable and each would fetch between 500 and 750 gold if Stonehide ever attempted to sell them.

The dwarf also wears rings on each hand, one of which is a stoneshell ring that grants him a +2 to defense and, once per day when he speaks "Tweldarkan," releases a magic shield that protects him and any companions within 10-feet from all attacks. The impenetrable magic shield lasts for four rounds, during which time nothing can enter the shielded area (though missile attacks from within the shield can strike targets outside of the shield).



SOFIE VESTER

Often overlooked, many who meet Sofie Vester mentally tag her as a wizard or thief and treat her accordingly. In reality, Vester is an inexperienced woman who is seeking to continue her training as a fighter. She prefers speed and mobility over brute force.

Human Fighter (Novice)

Still in her first year since leaving home, Sofie Vester realizes that her choice of clothing and weapon makes many think she is a wizard, and the woman feels this gives her an edge in battle since few expect her to possess any knowledge of melee warfare. Unfortunately, even though others have tried to explain it to her, all the appearance does is make her opponents target her first in an attempt to stop the “wizard” before she unleashes spells.

Vester wears the robes for a second reason that she does not reveal: the woman was beaten mercilessly by her elders when she was a child, the abuse so violent and lasting that much of her body is covered in marks that will not heal. The robes conceal the scars – from others and her own sight – and she resists explaining what happened to her if someone happens to catch a look at her battered body.

Vester wishes to become a skilled warrior both to protect herself and to make those who beat her pay for their actions. She has dreams of one day returning to the village where she grew up, even though the men who beat her – slavers who bought her at a young age – died a few months after she escaped and started her life as an adventurer. If Vester ever does return to her old home, she will find she has missed her chance at revenge.

Notable Treasure

Her magic staff grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. Vester’s robes, which look much like those a wizard would wear, are lined with straps of leather that provide limited protection in battle without slowing her greatly. Treat the robes as leather armor for all purposes.

