

Fall 2009 Issue 11

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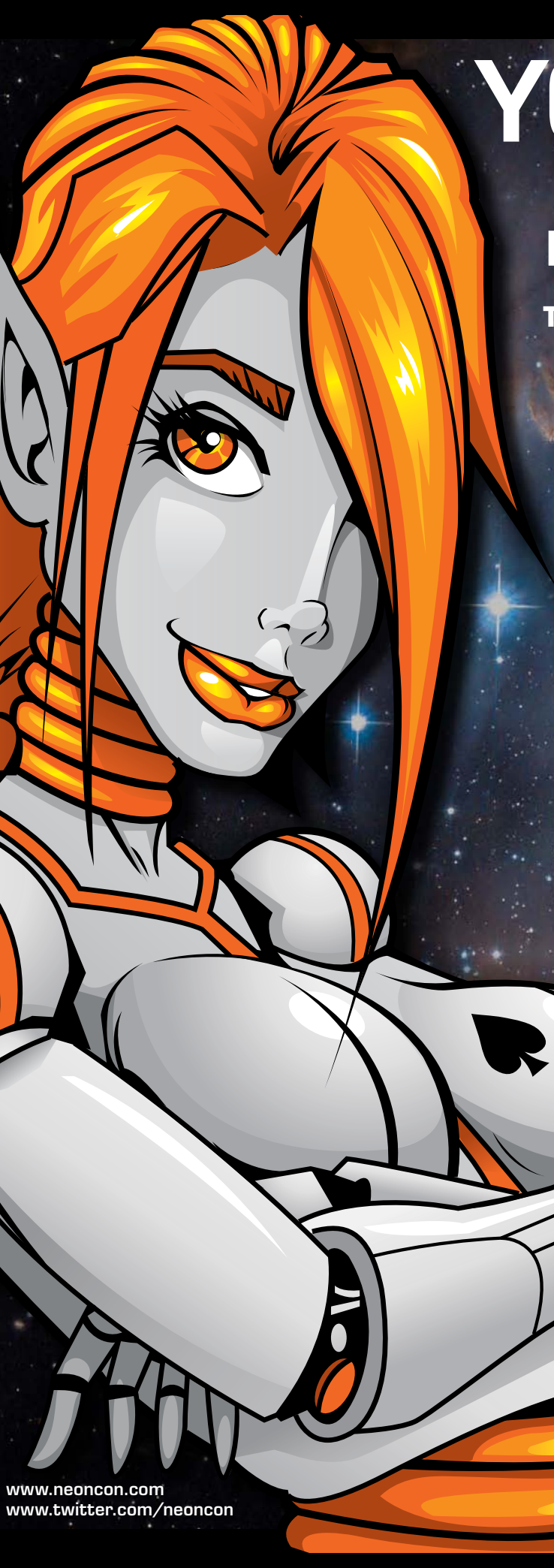
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It's Good to Win



There are a whole lot of **Kobold Quarterly** writers who should be very proud of themselves; this magazine won the prestigious “Best Writing” ENnie award this year at GenCon. And not just any ENnie; we won the Gold!

That felt pretty good, so let's say it again:

Kobold Quarterly won the 2008 Gold ENnie Award for “Best Writing!”

We also won the Silver ENnie for “Best Web Site” and another Silver ENnie for “Best Aid or Accessory.” That's great news, and makes it clear that the work invested in this magazine by our writers and editors has really paid off in the last year. I hope you agree.

On top of that, *Tales of Zobeck*, the limited-edition patron adventure from Open Design, won the Silver ENnie for “Best Electronic Book.” It seemed a shame not to share that project with the wider gaming public, so we have opened up the limited edition and made *Tales of Zobeck* available to everyone and anyone who wants to see what all the fuss is about and has a little cheddar to keep your friendly kobolds' mousetraps in working order. If you are interested in seeing it, it's available from the *Kobold Quarterly* store.

Thank you to every one of our writers, patrons, artists, and subscribers in 2008 who made those awards possible. We are pleased and deeply honored by your support.

Proud as I am of all that KQ and Open Design have achieved in the last year, there are even bigger goals for the year to come, and I just want to share a bit of it with you.

- Open Design has just launched its next three patron projects. Fastest off the blocks is our first official *Pathfinder* project, *From Shore to Sea*, with Brandon Hodge at the helm. He's busily writing up the glories of Golarion and the secrets of Azlant, and this one will be published by Paizo next year. All patrons get a copy of the print edition as part of their patronage.

- Hot on that project's heels are the 4th Edition *Courts of the Shadow Fey* and our very first *Call of Cthulhu* project, *Red Eye of Azathoth*.

- Right about now, you'll be seeing the *Imperial Gazetteer*, a new standalone sourcebook describing Morgau & Doresh, the undead realms to the north of Zobeck for 4th Edition.

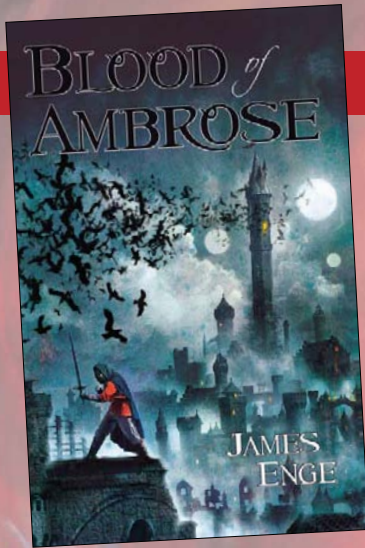
- Early next year, we'll continue our *Pathfinder* support with the *Sunken Empires* sourcebook.

There's so much to celebrate, and yes, it's more than a little crazy around here. Please join us in our glorious madness this month—this issue is packed with werewolves, vampires, and the ruins of broken minds. Bring on the san checks, we're ready to run amok!

And now—if you'll excuse me—I'm going back to try to earn your vote for next year's awards.

Wolfgang Baur
Kobold in Chief

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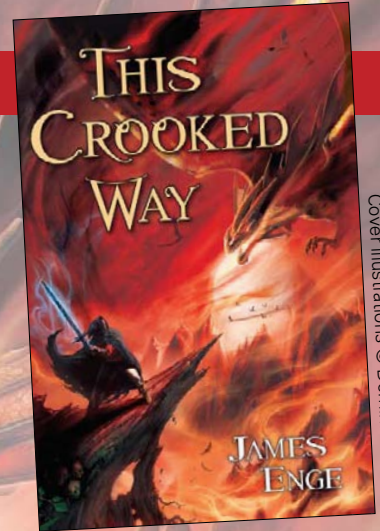
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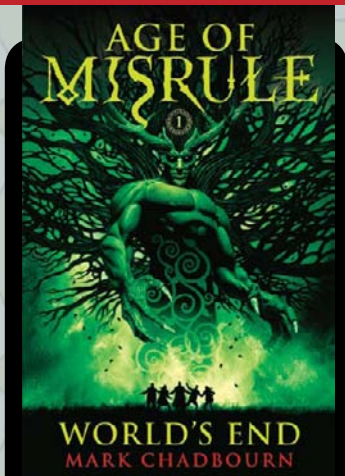
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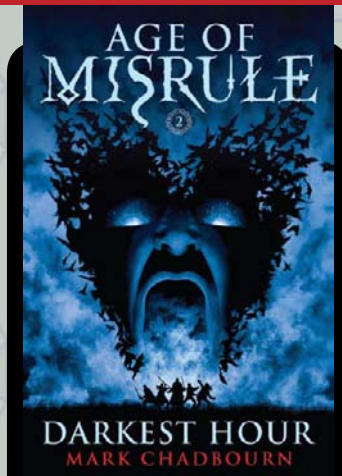


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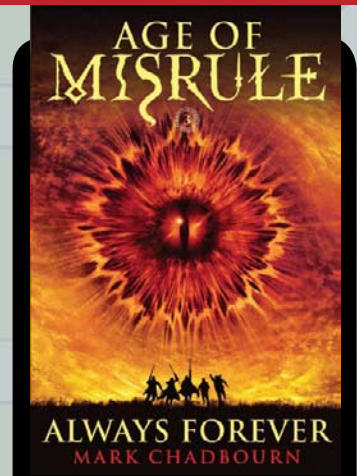
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From the Mines

Dispatches and Complaints

Playing the field

First of all, thank you for providing icons indicating the appropriate edition at the top of your articles.

I wanted to touch briefly on the subject of editions without warring about it. When 4E was first announced and the early previews were trickling out, I was giddy with anticipation. Not because I didn't like 3.5E—I had been playing it solidly since its release, after all—but because it would allow my players and I a tabula rasa, a fresh start with fewer preconceptions about how this or that worked.

Now, about a year later, we have been playing a 4E campaign every week, have bought most of the books, and have greatly enjoyed it. Change didn't come without its hiccups, but we found plenty of nuggets of gold in the new edition. I proclaimed loudly that I would forsake publications not supporting the de facto edition of my most popular game and slammed my virtual fist down.

But I did secretly continue to buy 3.5E books and PDFs: soecifically *Pathfinder* and other third-party publications specifically. I told myself that I was buying them for the graphic design (true), the art (yes), the stories (absolutely), and that I could always convert the material (somehow forgetting how lazy I was).

Now that the *Pathfinder* RPG is out, I am once again giddy with anticipation. Why this sudden change of heart?

In my defense, I would say that now, having played 4E avidly for over a year, the cracks have started to show: not in the new rules but in what we told

ourselves we wanted out of a ruleset, and to an extent, its implied setting. We found ourselves yearning for the flexibility of yore, balance be damned!

We are now readying our first foray into the *Pathfinder* RPG rules, and we're extremely glad to see it represented in this magazine, along with the other editions that have brought us a wealth of memorable, enjoyable, and sometimes downright hilarious situations over the years. Keep up the good work!

—Frank Reding
Norwich, England

Every game system has its flaws. Those of 4E are more visible now than when it was shiny and new. Those of the Pathfinder RPG will become apparent in time as well. What we like to see is the enthusiasm and joy that new rules systems bring to gamers. I'm personally quite excited by my new copy of Reign, and am also considering giving Burning Wheel a run.

Looking over at the kobold bookshelf, I see a growing collection of 3E, 4E, and Pathfinder... and Call of Cthulhu, Delta Green, L5R, The Mountain Witch, Mutants & Masterminds, Nobilis, Paranoia, Unhallowed Metropolis, Unknown Armies, and many more. The point being, there's no reason we can't just enjoy games for the sake of enjoying games.

So no worries, we'll have Pathfinder content for you AND we'll have 4E articles for those who are sticking with that edition. (And we promise not to tell anyone if you read a 4E article!)

Remember when...

I'm a subscriber, and like many, I've been forced to think about whether or



not to continue my subscription as KQ integrates more 4E content. I have no interest in 4E and, likely, never will, and I have empathy for those who are concerned that this valuable resource for 3E will change over completely.

However, I am bothered by the letters that announce they are ending their subscriptions if there is any 4E content in the magazine. Many of these folks seem to be old timers like me who subscribed when the print versions of *Dragon* magazine went away.

Pulling out one of my issues of *Dragon* at random, I happened to grab #73. It has about 96 pages, much of that taken up by ads (which I actually like in my gaming magazines). More importantly, I find that on page 26 there is an article on nobility in *Traveller*, followed immediately by a two-page article on photographing miniatures. Pages 66-68 are on developing your character for *Champions*, then some fiction, an article expanding a Tom Wham board/card game that appeared in the last issue, a review of two science fiction games, and the proud announcement of the "Gamer's Guide," basically an expanded block of adverts.

I loved this magazine back then and bought it eagerly, knowing that a large block of the material in it would have not only no bearing on my own 1E campaign but no links to D&D whatsoever. In later years,

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Dragon became a bit more “pure,” but the magazine was still worth it back in the days when you’d never know how much *Gamma World* or *Top Secret* content would be in any issue. Throughout later issues, you’d find *Alternity*, FASA’s *Star Trek* games, etc.

There is likely a point at which there is so much 4E and so little 3E in KQ that it will no longer be worth it to me, but to completely cancel when a single article is not aligned with 3E is, in my opinion, expressing nostalgia for a past that never actually existed.

—Jim Todd
Coloma, MI

Thanks for reminding us that “edition purity” has always been a myth, and thanks for the short trip down memory lane. We do hope that KQ isn’t just a voice for edition partisans and that it speaks to all lovers of sword-and-sorcery, steampunk, and even horror gaming (especially in October!).

If it’s about better gaming, we’ll cover it. And given the success of Pathfinder, I think that the 3E coverage will continue for quite some time to come. Or at least, it has inspired a wave of Pathfinder articles, if the query pile is any way to judge.

Bad email. Bad!

I just received an email saying my subscription to KQ was canceled. I thought I had already prepaid for another year. Is my subscription still good, and if so, for how long?

Thanks, and by the way, we really love KQ!

—Matt and Holli Lawrence
Columbus, Ohio

Thanks for writing, and glad you like KQ! The cancellation didn’t come from us but rather from PayPal. KQ used to offer

Dan Cole Photographer’s Credit

A photographer’s credit was left off the Jeff Grubb interview in issue #10; the first photograph was by Dan Cole of ArenaNet. *Kobold Quarterly* regrets the error.

an auto-renewal service with PayPal, but it wasn’t a great service, so we dropped it.

However, rather than drop subscribers from it en masse, we figured it was better to give people the option to stay on. Occasionally, though, PayPal just randomly cancels them, usually when a credit card expires.

No Stopping Me

I have read a few issues of KQ, and I really love your magazine. I like it so much that I would love to write some articles for it. I read the guidelines on your site.

Before I send you anything, I need to ask you a few questions. First, is the one cent per word that you list on your site the most that you pay for an article, or are you willing to pay someone more after he’s “proven” himself? What are your deadlines? Also, what are your policies with copyright? Would I have to sign over all rights to my submissions to you? Is there a contract involved? I don’t mind, I just want to know before I write anything. Sorry for all the questions, but these are things I’d feel more comfortable knowing before I start writing.

Thanks for your time. I look forward to possibly writing for you soon!

—Jarrod Pratt

Thanks for writing, and I’m glad you like the magazine! In response to your questions:

The 1 cent/word rate is a minimum, not the only rate.

We only offer deadlines to approved queries.

Rights vary; for Zobeck material, we buy all rights. We pay less for first rights than for all rights, of course.

There is a contract if an article is accepted. First step is getting a query approved.

We look forward to seeing a query from you soon.

Keep on rocking

I picked up your last two issues of KQ at the PX on Camp Taji, Iraq. Good job getting your publication on the shelves here. In the last one, I saw the

letter from a soldier in Kuwait that mentioned the Adopt-a-Soldier Program. I wanted to give you props for that. Thank you for helping out some of our young soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines feel just a little more connected to the world back home. Many are on their first deployment and are scared and lonely and even a small thing like that can help a great deal.

I’ve been playing D&D since 1980-ish, but I’ve been out of the gaming hobby since I returned to the National Guard a few years ago. I hope to return to it once I finish my tour and get back to normal life. I am glad to see that someone has stepped in to fill the void for a magazine dedicated to D&D. I find it a little disheartening to see some people saying they will cancel their subscriptions just because you are not writing material solely for their particular version of the game. Pen & paper gamers have always been a small community. A quality magazine that is dedicated to only one third of an already small community will not be quality for very long, I’m afraid. We’re usually creative people and just because an article isn’t for your particular version of the game doesn’t mean you can’t modify it a little or steal a few ideas for yourself (or even just enjoy reading a well written article about your favorite pastime).

Anyway... keep up the good work. I’ll probably buy my son a subscription once I get back to the world (soon... very very soon!) and start to pass on the hobby.

—SGT Rob Jacobs
Camp Taji, Iraq

Kobold Quarterly is very proud to offer the Adopt-A-Soldier program. Any readers interested in sponsoring a soldier’s subscription should check out the KoboldQuarterly.com web site.



A BROKEN MIND

SANITY AND MENTAL DISORDERS



By Scott Gable

Art by Cory Trego-Erdner

Using sanity in a fantasy game can be tricky. It's not the real world, so where do you draw the line between the mundane and the hysterical?

Adventurers in D&D are supposed to bravely go forth and kill monsters. That's a bit more difficult if every creature you see makes you turn tail and run, so a line has to be drawn. Certain creatures need to be assumed common enough that sanity doesn't come into the question at a mere glance.

For these rules, that line is the "natural world" as defined by the cosmology of 4th edition. That means that some really creepy monsters won't affect your characters the way they might you or I in real life; they are part and parcel of the natural environs of this fantasy world. Those monsters—such as the bulette, the dragon, and the otyugh—will just have to resort to old-fashioned techniques of brutalizing adventurers.

That line I drew? Wonderfully, it's movable. Whenever you need to ramp the craziness up or down, it's easy to adjust which monsters are just part of the "landscape" and which ones simply melt the sanity from your head.

Starting Mind & Sanity

You start adventuring with a Mind ability score and a pool of Sanity.

Your Mind is treated as a seventh ability, receiving its own modifier as appropriate. Because it is derived from other ability scores, you need not put points into it; determine your standard six-ability array first using whatever method you typically use. Its value is decided at character creation by choosing the highest of your Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma.

After character creation, your Mind is no longer linked directly to this other ability score. You may increase your Mind as you gain levels just as with other ability scores (such as at 4th level, 8th level, etc).

Your starting Sanity—the primary currency of madness—is equal to five times your Mind score (or $5 \times \text{Mind}$).

Skills. Perhaps counterintuitively, it is knowledge that limits your sanity. As you understand more about the multiverse around you, you are potentially less capable of coping within it. Your starting Mind is permanently decreased by 1 point for each of the following skills you are trained in: Arcana, Dungeoneering and Religion. If you become trained in one or more of these skills later in your adventures, you take the penalty to Mind at that time.

Example: *A deva avenger with an 18 Wisdom (the character's highest score of Charisma, Intelligence, and Wisdom) would have an 18 Mind and a 90 Sanity. With training in Arcana*

Expand Your Game 4

and Religion, the avenger's Mind drops to 16 and Sanity to 80.

Forbidden Tomes. Reading forbidden tomes can also directly affect your Mind (see Forbidden Knowledge below).

Strength of Mind Feats

Deep Wisdom

Your Wisdom shores you against what threatens to break your mind.

Benefit: Your Mind is permanently increased by your Wisdom modifier. (Your maximum Sanity will need to be recalculated since it is $5 \times \text{Mind}$.)

Dark Thoughts

Though it's knowledge that likely got you into this mess to begin with, you perversely have greater access to the secrets of the multiverse.

Benefit: When you are suffering from temporary or indefinite insanity, you can use your Intelligence modifier in place of other ability modifiers when making skill checks. For skills that already use your Intelligence modifier, it is doubled.

Mental Armor

Your Charisma provides your last, best defense against the coming madness.

Benefit: Treat your Charisma modifier as temporary Sanity points. Temporary Sanity points function for Sanity just as temporary hit points function for hit points, except that they last until you take an extended rest (not just a short rest). In other words, you gain your Charisma modifier in temporary Sanity points for each day.

Maximum Sanity

The highest Sanity you can ever have is five times your current Mind (or $5 \times \text{Mind}$), barring a feat such as Deep Wisdom that increases your sanity beyond its normal limit. If your Mind increases or decreases, your maximum Sanity is adjusted accordingly.

Your Sanity (and to a lesser degree your Mind) will likely fluctuate constantly as you adventure. It is primarily decreased by failing Sanity checks and increased by various rewards and healing.

Making a Sanity Check

When your Sanity is threatened, you must make a saving throw (called a Sanity check). A success means you take no or minimal Sanity loss; a failure means you automatically suffer some Sanity loss.

You gain a bonus to Sanity checks equal to your Mind modifier. (You do not add half your level to this.)

Your Sanity check is often more difficult than a standard save; penalties abound. You suffer a -1 penalty to Sanity checks for every 5 points of Sanity you are below your maximum Sanity. For example, if you have 90 maximum and are currently at 70 Sanity, you suffer a -4 penalty ($90 - 70 = 20$, divided by 5 is 4). In addition, you suffer a -2 penalty to Sanity checks if you are currently afflicted by a temporary disorder and a -5 penalty to Sanity checks if you are currently afflicted by an indefinite disorder. If you have 0 Sanity remaining, you automatically fail all Sanity checks.

Regaining Sanity

There are a handful of ways to regain lost sanity, and each has its own level of risk and reward.

Mind. If your Mind increases during adventuring, your maximum Sanity increases accordingly (but not your current Sanity). All creatures benefit equally from Mind increases.

Victory Rewards. You regain Sanity when you defeat creatures that you're not injured to: 1d4 Sanity regained for defeating elemental, immortal and undead creatures and 1d6 Sanity regained for defeating aberrant creatures.

Healing. Call it what you will—convalescence, spirit healing, witchcraft, exorcism, or (more modernly) therapy—you occasionally need a bit of assistance in recovering your faculties. Once per week, you can try to regain your lost sanity in this way. The entire week must be a respite from adventure, in convalescence with another character who is trained in Heal. That character makes a single Heal check opposed by your highest

skill of Arcana, Dungeoneering, or Religion. If the Heal check is successful, you regain 1d3 Sanity. If the Heal check fails, you gain no Sanity. If the Heal fails by 10 or more, you permanently lose 1 point of Mind as the memories resurge; your maximum Sanity will need to be adjusted accordingly.

Despite the resiliency of the mind and its capacity for growth and repair—or at least blocking out the awful bits of memory—not all creatures are equally good at it. Natural creatures, though most fragile, have the most flexible of minds and regain Sanity normally as detailed above. Those with other origins, however, have minds slower to both break and mend: fey and shadow creatures regain 1 point less per die (regaining a minimum of 1 point) from drugs, healing and victory rewards, and elemental and immortal creatures regain 2 points less per die (regaining a minimum of 1 point).

Losing Sanity

As you perform or witness certain acts, encounter certain creatures or learn certain knowledge, you risk losing your mind.

Atrocities

Any sufficiently horrible, disgusting, gruesome or disturbing act can trigger a Sanity check. These acts can be performed by any kind of creature—even natural ones. There is no Sanity loss for succeeding these saving throws, but a

Current Sanity

It is possible that I am mad now, at those times when the gulfwardsliding tide of memory sweeps me away; those times when I am lost anew in the tracts of dreadful light and unknown entity that were opened before me by the last phase of my experience. But I was sane at the outset, and I am still sane enough to write down a sober and lucid account of all that occurred.

—Clark Ashton Smith,
"A Light from Beyond"

second saving throw may be required if encountering a creature engaged in an atrocity. Further, PCs do not become inured to sufficiently horrific experiences. A few examples:

- ☞ Witnessing a murder (1d4)
- ☞ Discovering a river of blood (1d6)
- ☞ Being compelled to attack a friend (1d6)
- ☞ Witnessing a friend's or loved one's murder (1d8)
- ☞ Being forced to commit an evil deed (1d10)
- ☞ Failing a death saving throw (1d10)
- ☞ Undergoing torture (1d10)
- ☞ Being buried alive (1d12)
- ☞ Discovering a cavern of flesh (1d12)
- ☞ Witnessing a friend or loved one rising from the grave (1d12) (You do not need to make a follow-up Sanity check for seeing an undead creature as detailed below. Also, the sanity loss should be halved if the PC is responsible for bringing the creature back to life through ritual or otherwise, but in a true horror-styled game, it is recommended that some sanity always be lost for witnessing the dead rise.)
- ☞ Witnessing someone being eaten alive (1d20)

Creatures

Two key factors determine which creatures trigger Sanity loss and how much Sanity is lost: their origin and their tier.

Generally, creatures of increasingly alien composition and disposition strain your faculties and, possibly, force you to make Sanity checks when you encounter them.

Sanity Loss. If you fail a Sanity check, you take the Sanity loss listed after the creature type below.

If you succeed a Sanity check, you may still take some minimum Sanity loss: you take 1 point of Sanity loss for each tier the creature is greater than you are and you take 1 point of Sanity loss if the creature is aberrant.

Inured. You can become inured to

creatures with successful Sanity checks: sometimes one, sometimes two, sometimes three. Once inured, you no longer need to make a Sanity check simply on encountering that creature.

Once inured to a creature, you may also be inured to others of its type, providing they're of the same tier and origin. For instance, if you become inured to one skeleton, you would likely also be inured to another skeleton of the same origin and tier, but you would have to make additional Sanity checks against skeletons of a different origin or a different tier. This is not a hard rule, however, for you would certainly not be inured to all demons or all abominations, for example, just for inuring to one specimen because these groups are so broad and divergent.

By Origin

Natural Creatures. The creatures of the natural world do not intrinsically trigger Sanity loss: they are automatically inured to their own kind. Natural creatures define the normal warp and weft of reality.

Fey and Shadow Creatures. The fey and shadow worlds are inextricably linked to our world and share many similarities in landscape and peoples. While they are still quite different, they do not intrinsically trigger Sanity loss in natural creatures.

Natural creatures are automatically inured to fey and shadow creatures. Fey and shadow creatures are automatically inured to natural creatures and to other fey and shadow creatures.

Elemental and Immortal Creatures (1d8). The elemental and immortal worlds are extremely different from the natural world. Simply encountering an elemental or immortal creature triggers a Sanity check.

Natural creatures can become inured to elemental and immortal creatures, but it requires two successful Sanity checks. Fey and shadow creatures can become inured to elemental and immortal creatures with only one successful Sanity check.

Elemental and immortal creatures

are automatically inured to natural, fey and shadow creatures. They are also automatically inured to others of their own origin but only those of their own tier or lower: the elemental and immortal planes are much too diverse for anything more. Elemental and immortal creatures can inure to other elemental and immortal creatures with one successful Sanity check.

(Note: Devas are immortal creatures and so are inured to other immortals of their tier or lower.)

Undead Creatures (1d8). The undead are a breed apart. No normal living creature is completely comfortable around them. No matter the origin, there's just too many disturbing thoughts and emotions that arise from one's proximity to death. Encountering undead—of any origin—triggers a Sanity check.

Only shadow and aberrant creatures are automatically inured to undead creatures. Other creatures inure to undead with three successful Sanity checks.

Undead creatures are inured to everything. This means that intelligent ghouls, revenants, and other possible undead PC races are never affected by Sanity losses other than atrocities.

Aberrant undead are treated as aberrant creatures.

Aberrant Creatures (1d12). Aberrant creatures define madness. They are nightmare made whole. Aberrant creatures trigger Sanity checks in all other creatures (other than aberrant and undead creatures). Even on a successful Sanity check involving an aberrant creature, you take at least 1 point of Sanity loss.

Other than aberrant and undead creatures, no creature can become inured to aberrant creatures.

Aberrant creatures are inured to everything.

By Tier

The Sanity loss a creature can cause you is multiplied by every tier it is higher than you are. For this purpose, creatures higher than level 30 are considered a fourth tier.

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Therefore, creatures of your own tier and lower gain no Sanity loss multiplier; creatures one tier higher than you multiply any Sanity loss caused by two; creatures two tiers higher than you multiply any Sanity loss caused by three; and creatures three tiers higher than you multiply any Sanity loss caused by four.

Minions

Minions are never that threatening to Sanity; a single Sanity check covers all minions of the same origin in an encounter. For instance, a group of 16 zombie minions generates only one Sanity check. If a single vampire accompanies them, two Sanity checks are required.

Forbidden Knowledge

Magic. A little knowledge can be seriously detrimental to your well-being. Generally, though, standard magic—whether through powers, rituals, or items—should not trigger Sanity checks. Simply stated, it's too abundant in the game. However, there are always exceptions.

As example, rituals that have you contact or witness other creatures or events should be treated as if you actually encountered the creature or witnessed the action.

Forbidden Tomes. The truly horrible and best-left forgotten knowledge that is typically reserved for dusty tomes is most appropriate to artifacts, eating your sanity as you indulge in every last page. Typically, these tomes will grant you bonuses to knowledge and, perhaps, access to new powers and rituals, but it's always at a cost. These artifacts most commonly reduce your Mind directly—by either a set or a variable number—instead of simply reducing your Sanity.

Mental Disorders

Of course, losing Sanity has consequences. If you lose 5 or more points of Sanity from a single roll, you go temporarily insane. If you lose a fifth (1/5) or more of your current Sanity in 1 game hour, you go indefinitely insane. If you lose all your Sanity, you

go permanently insane, and you are bound for retirement to a nice, padded cell. Choose a disorder randomly or as appropriate from the incomplete lists below or create a new disorder.

Temporary insanity lasts 2d8 days.

Indefinite insanity has no defined timeframe. It is not something you can just slough off. You will have to try to live with it or take great effort to find a cure. A cure might be a forgotten ritual buried in a forbidden tome, years of therapy and meditation to come to terms and control the underlying problem, or addiction to a dangerous drug or artifact laden with unwanted side effects but capable of suppressing the disorder for as long as you're willing to indulge. A cure could come in many forms, but it is always at a steep cost.

While you are temporarily or indefinitely insane, you are not immune to additional sanity loss, but you can have only one temporary disorder and one indefinite disorder at a time. If you have one of each and a conflict arises between the two, follow the indefinite disorder; if necessary, the GM should couple disorders that work well together. If you lose enough sanity to develop a second temporary disorder, instead add an extra 1d8 days duration to the existing one.

The Remove Affliction ritual can be used to remove temporary insanity but not indefinite insanity. For this purpose, the disorder is considered the same level as the character afflicted. The ritual does not restore lost Mind or Sanity.

Temporary Insanity During Combat

When you go temporarily insane, you develop temporary disorders as conditions. While so afflicted, you begin any encounter suffering its effects. However, with a successful Madness saving throw, you can temporarily suppress the condition's effects until the end of the encounter. That is, the madness affects you for a few rounds at the start of the encounter, then the PC masters it and

can act normally again.

Unfortunately, the effects return during the next encounter. Once the 2d8 day duration is over, however, you no longer suffer from the disorder.

These disorders continue to affect characters outside of combat and most certainly guide character decisions, but this must be guided by roleplaying.

Design Note. Madness saves are standard saving throws (not Sanity checks), so do not add your Mind modifier. The temporary disorders function identically to conditions, except that a save suppresses instead of ends.

Afraid Temporary Disorder
The fear takes you, as well as the urge to flee.

☞ You must try to move at least 5 squares away from enemies.

☞ You can only move while within 5 squares of any enemy; you cannot attack until you are more than 5 squares away.

Berserk Temporary Disorder
Die! Die, die, die!!!

☞ You use up all of your daily powers as quickly as possible before moving on to encounter powers and finally at-will powers.

☞ You cannot spend healing surges during an encounter.

Bloodthirsty Temporary Disorder
Does that hurt? How much does it hurt? Ha ha ha!

☞ You must attack every round if possible.

☞ You must perform a coup de grace on any helpless enemy.

☞ You ignore bloodied foes.

Compelled Temporary Disorder
That monstrosity must die, and soon!

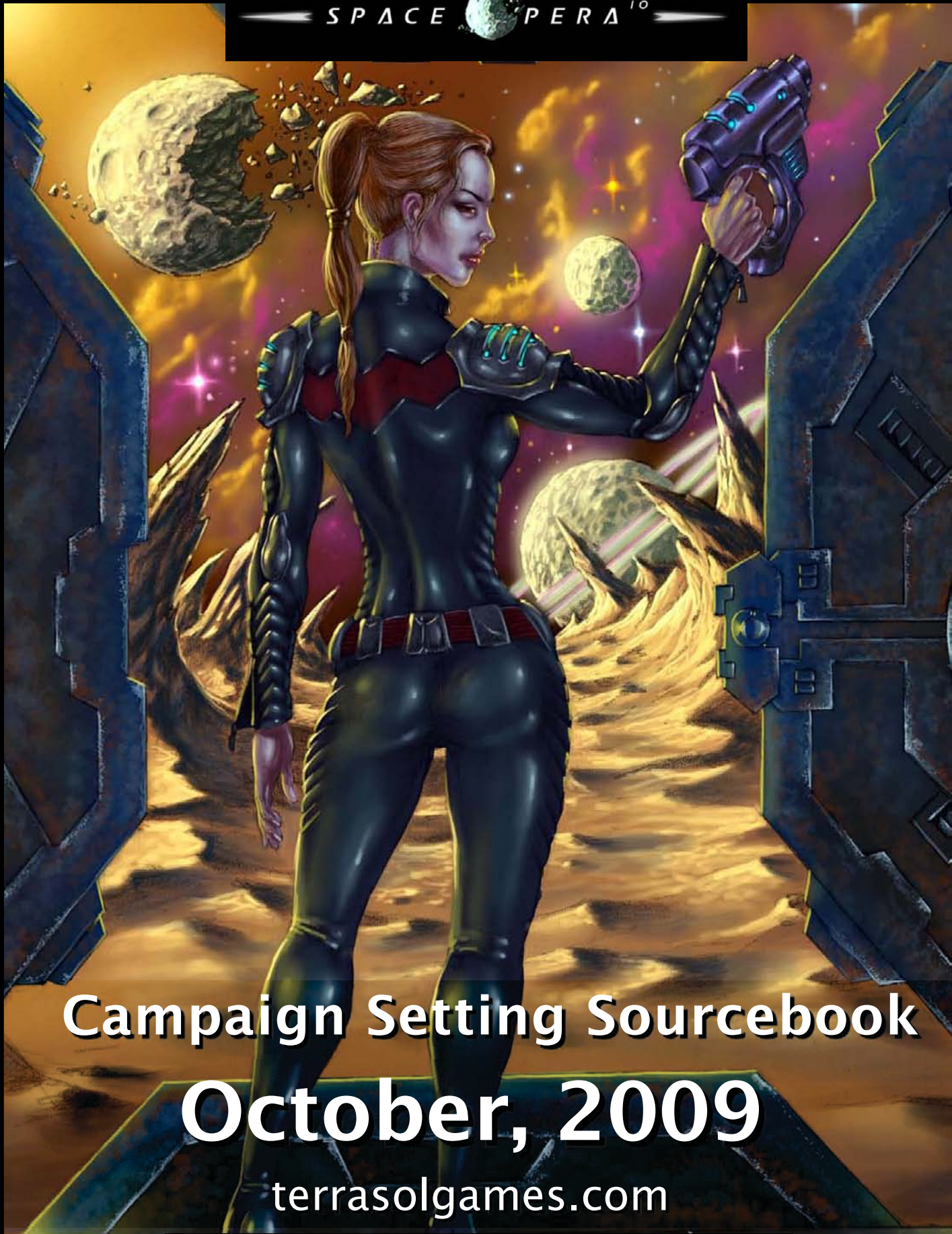
☞ You focus on the closest enemy to you and can make no attack that doesn't include that target.

☞ You take a -10 penalty to Perception checks, except against your focused target.

☞ You grant combat advantage, except to your focused target.

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Reckless Temporary Disorder

I am invincible! I dare you to strike!

- You must enter melee at any opportunity, charging directly in the fray
- You grant combat advantage.
- You take a -2 penalty to all defenses.

Indefinite Insanity

When you go indefinitely insane, you develop an indefinite disorder. There is no clear-cut cure for it, and you can't simply suppress it with a saving throw.

Design Note. These disorders are intended to roughly be a wash for their total penalty and benefit, providing primarily a fun mechanic to help flavor a character. For more gritty and grim adventuring, it is easy to ramp up the penalties or ramp down the benefits.

Compulsion Indefinite Disorder

You cannot help repeating yourself with some difficult or frequent behavior.

Choose a small set of behaviors; you must perform these at least daily; failure to perform the behaviors regularly leaves you incredibly distracted until you perform them, suffering a -4 penalty to all rolls

Fear Indefinite Disorder

You are irrationally and intensely afraid of something.

Effect When in the presence of your trigger, you gain an extra move action, but you take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and a -5 penalty to Perception checks made for any reason not associated with your trigger; you always take a -5 penalty to saving throws against fear effects

(Trigger) You have a specific trigger that sets you off; if you successfully contend with your fear in an encounter or skill challenge, you gain 1d12 Sanity and an extra milestone

Hallucinations Indefinite Disorder

Your mind is a jumble of disorganized thought, and those ideas are frequently intractable with what's real.

Effect You gain a +10 bonus to defenses against charm effects and a -10 penalty to defenses against illusion effects.

Melancholic Mania Indefinite Disorder

You careen back and forth between the dizzying heights of mania and times of dismal loneliness and self-loathing.

Effect You cycle between mania and depression; roll 1d2 each day to determine (1 is depression, 2 is mania).

(Depression) You gain immunity to psychic damage; you are slowed; you only receive two death saving throws instead of three

(Mania) You can perform move actions as minor actions; you require half the sleep, but you can only recover half your healing surges; each consecutive day of mania adds a cumulative -1 penalty to saving throws (including death saving throws)

Memory Loss Indefinite Disorder

You just can't seem to remember certain things.

Effect You gain a +5 bonus on all Charisma-based skills and a +5 bonus to saving throws against fear effects; each encounter, you randomly "forget" one of your powers and can't use it (even an at-will power, if picked, can't be used for the entire encounter; a daily power lost in this fashion is usable in another encounter during the same day—assuming you don't keep forgetting it)

Obsession Indefinite Disorder

Your mind is filled with anxious and intrusive thoughts, triggering your compulsive behaviors.

Effect Casting times on rituals are doubled but so are durations; you take a -10 penalty on passive Perception checks, but you gain a +5 bonus on active Perception checks and on Thievery checks (actively using these skills takes twice as long as usual); you take a -5 penalty on initiative checks

Paranoia Indefinite Disorder

You are convinced that certain individuals are coming for you.

Effect You gain a +5 bonus on Insight and Perception checks and a +10 bonus on initiative checks; you are automatically hit by all fear effects and fail associated saves



Uvandir: The Pride of Craftsmen

By John Wick and Jesse Heinig

Art by James Keegan

Never call them “dwarves.” That’s one sure way to get yourself killed. Maimed, at least. That’s a human word and dwarves—I mean, “oo-van-deer”—do not like that word. I’ve worked with many oo-van-dir, and I can tell you what they would say. “Pride is a tiny, little fragile human word and too small to describe van-dir-too-val-din.”

Yeah, I had to learn that word the hard way. Had a dwarf hold me down and slap me across the face every time I said it wrong until I finally said it right. And let me tell you: they’ve got damn hard hands.

—Luca Adrente, human street thief

One word in the uvandir tongue is key to understanding the relationship between them and us. “Oo-man” is the uvandir word for “pig.” Soft, fat, pink, and stupid.

—Adrotus Valus, human scholar

Why did the haffuns go to meet humanity first? To sweeten us up for the uvandir.

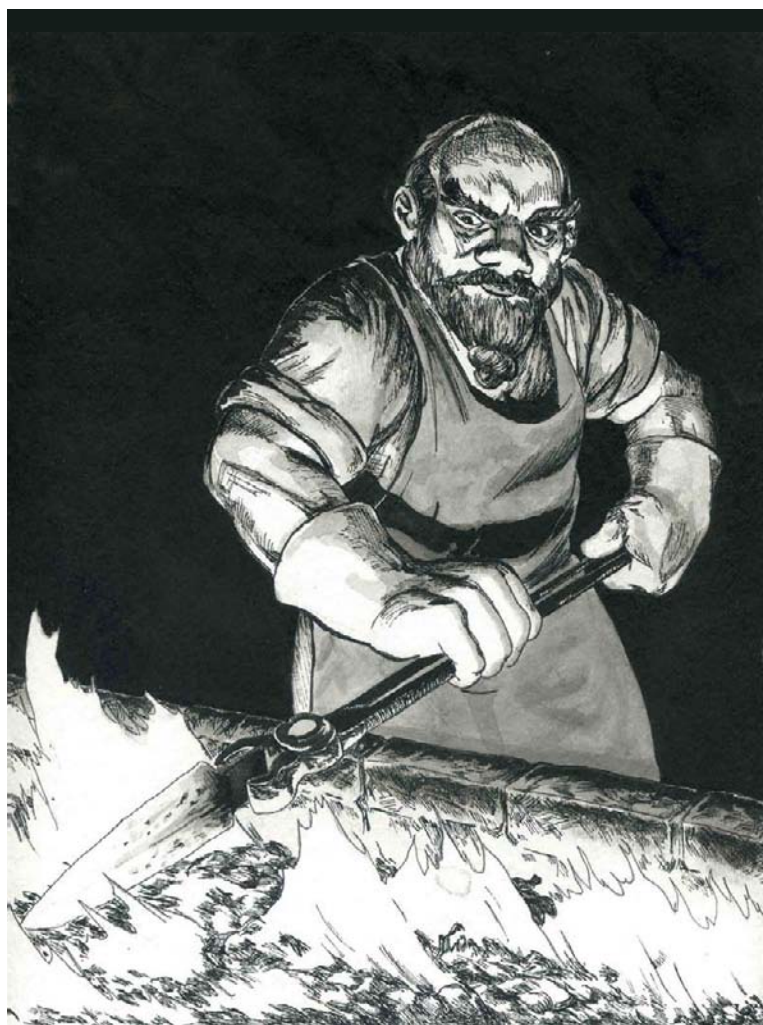
—unknown

If you’ve seen one, you’ve seen them all. They have big, thick beards and eyes as wide as saucers. They’re almost as wide as they are tall. And their hands... those hands are big enough to hold your head. Hands that can squeeze stone until it shatters. Just one of them is strong enough to lift three men on his shoulders and carry them 10 miles before breaking a sweat.

But they always smell like work. No matter how much you wash them, no matter how you perfume them, no matter what oils and soaps you use, an uvandir always smells like work.

Like their haffun cousins, the uvandir have found a place in human society. A curmudgeonly place. The haffuns brought service, the gnomes brought their gardens and the dwarves brought invention and innovation. Their skill at mechanics and mathematics amazed human scholars, advancing human knowledge by generations. Of course, the dwarves did not give up such knowledge easily. While there are human clockmakers in the cities, none can deny the craftsmanship and artistry of a dwarven—ahem, uvandir—masterpiece.

It was this innovation that brought the underfolk to humanity in the first place and without the uvandir, they



would have never escaped. The cunning of dwarven mining opened up veins of iron, gold, and other metals that humanity never dreamed existed. Metalworking unknown to humans. Craftsmanship unseen by humans. Skills undreamed of by humans.

The uvandir never miss an opportunity to remind humans of this.

Ever.

Vandirtuvaldin

This word has many meanings and cannot be completely translated into the human tongue. The best attempt was

made by the scholar Adrotus Valus: “We do not rest.” (Apparently, this got him kicked in the knee; the slightest injury a human has ever received from a dwarf while attempting to translate their language.)

The uvandir do not sleep. They do not eat. They do not drink. They work. They always work. Always making, always crafting, always always always. Uvandir do not get bored. In fact, it has been noted that uvandir who are kept from keeping their hands busy complain even more than usual. Almost as if a secret pain inflicts their blood.

But vandirtuvaldin means more than just a need for work. It is, for lack of a better word, a kind of racial pride. The uvandir know they are better than men. They know they are better than haffuns. They know they are better than any of the races. This, they know. They are stronger. They are cleverer. They are masters of art and craftsmanship. They are better. And they don’t tolerate being told otherwise.

Let a man make a better clock. Let him try.

Let a man tell a better story. Let him try.

Let a man dig as we have dug. Let him try.

Let a man walk until he drops. Let us see how far he goes.

It isn’t a matter of belief. For the

uvandir, it is a matter of plain fact.

Uvandir do not rest because they need no rest. Let that be said of men.

Vandra

At the same time, uvandir recognize virtue in others—even other races. While no other race is equal to the uvandir, sometimes a *fratha* (non-uvandir) earns the right to be called “friend.”

The uvandir word is vandra.

A vandra is not only someone who demonstrates remarkable virtue but also shows a respect for uvandir superiority. Uvandir show vandra a modicum of respect, even going as far as protecting him if necessary.

You are not uvandir, but you are also no longer *fratha*.

The Last of Their Kind

One thing humans noticed after a few months with the uvandir was a curious fact: there were no women. Not one. Of course, no human would dare to ask an uvandir about it—for fear of getting his hair ripped out and shoved down his throat—but no female uvandir has ever been seen by human eyes.

This is because there is no such thing as a female uvandir.

The uvandir are what they are. They are not male, they are not female. They are uvandir. They are androgynous. They have no sexual reproductive ability whatsoever. The very idea of “male” and “female” confuses them. They are uvandir. That is what they are.

Unfortunately, this also means the uvandir cannot reproduce. All the uvandir are all the uvandir. There will never be another. This means each uvandir that dies brings them closer to extinction.

Also, uvandir do not seem to age. The only distinction a human can make about an uvandir’s age is his beard. The longer the beard, the older the uvandir. It could be that uvandir never die of old age... but no human could ever confirm that.

Digging for Their God

The uvandir love to tell stories. They will go on and on and on about any given topic, throwing in seemingly irrelevant details... until the story ends and all of it makes a kind of strange sense. But one story the uvandir tell, they only tell to themselves. Themselves and those who are found worthy to hear it, that is.

Back when the world was very young, you see, Sky and Earth were brother and sister. (Adrotus Valus has pointed out that the “brother and sister” relationship is odd for an uvandir story, considering their complete lack of gender.) They loved each other more than any brother and sister in all the world. At night, Sister Sky danced for him with all her children: the many, many lights of the night sky.

But Father Sun did not approve of their love and he separated Sister Sky and Brother Earth from each other. He put her high above the clouds and the blue curtain of the world where she could not see her brother. He banished Brother Earth deep within the soil where he could not see his sister.

And then, to further punish Sister Sky, he set her to dance forever. For if she ever ceased dancing, all her children—the Lights of the Sky—would fall to their deaths to the world below. Sister Sky started dancing. She danced and danced and danced. But soon, her legs grew weak and she fell. And when she fell, her children began falling from the Heavens. And she wept to see it: all her beautiful children plummeting to their doom.

When Brother Earth heard her weeping and saw her children falling, he went to his great forge. He took a jewel of each color and created an arc to hold across his shoulders. And then, he lifted the Arc on his shoulders—his Arc of Lights—and held up the heavens so they would not fall down upon the world.

And that is why when Sister Sky weeps, Brother Earth puts up his great

The Uvandir and Beer

And about that drinking part... well, let’s just say they didn’t drink until they encountered humanity. For some reason or another, it seems the uvandir have an overwhelmingly powerful aching in their bellies for beer.

They love beer. They drink it and drink it and drink it. Unfortunately, their anatomy has no means of disposing of it, so often, it comes back up the way it went down. Not a very pretty sight, but most tavern owners and innkeepers have converted large spittoons and other vessels for “uvandir drinking binges.”

Arc of Lights. He holds up the heavens so she may rest for a little while before she must begin her dance again.

And once in a great while, Sister Sky sends one of her children down to the world. It smashes into the soil and seeks out Brother Earth. And he takes the child into his hands—still hot from the heavens, but nothing may burn his hands—and he puts it upon his forge. And there, he hammers out a child of his own. Forged from the sky and earth. Uvandir.

The uvandir dig. They create great mines the likes of which the world has never seen. And they dig for a purpose. Not for gold or jewels or gemstones.

They are digging to find lost brothers. They are digging to find their god.

Uvandir Racial Traits

+2 to Wisdom and Constitution, -2

Charisma: Uvandir are extraordinarily resilient in both mind and body, like the rock from which they are carved. They are extremely forthright and prone to irritability, though, and have a strong sense of personal superiority to other races.

Medium in size

20 ft. movement (Uvandir can move at this speed even when wearing medium or heavy armor or when carrying a medium or heavy load.)

Darkvision 60 ft.

Sleepless: uvandir do not require sleep (Magical sleep effects do not function on uvandir. An uvandir still requires rest to prepare spells or replenish special abilities, as usual, but such time is usually spent working on small personal projects or knick-knacks, sharpening weapons, repairing armor, or reading about esoteric engineering technologies.)

Stonecunning: +2 racial bonus on Search checks to notice unusual stonework (Examples include sliding walls, stonework traps, new construction—even when built to match the old—unsafe stone surfaces, shaky stone ceilings, and the like. Something that isn't stone but that

is disguised as stone also counts as unusual stonework. An uvandir who merely comes within 10 ft. of unusual stonework can make a Search check as if he were actively searching, and a dwarf can use the Search skill to find stonework traps as a rogue can. A dwarf can also intuit depth, sensing his approximate depth underground as naturally as a human can sense which way is up.)

Tireless: Unaffected by any effect that would normally cause fatigue; an effect that would cause exhaustion causes fatigue instead (For instance, uvandir never suffer from fatigue due to barbarian rage or forced marching.)

DR 5/lethal: nonlethal damage—whether from a sap, an unarmed strike, or hunger or thirst—has almost no effect whatsoever on dwarves; to stop

an uvandir, you must kill it
+2 racial bonus on Appraise checks related to stone or metal items
+2 racial bonus on Craft checks related to stone or metal

Automatic Languages: Common and Dwarven; **Bonus Languages:** Phutuula (“Haffun”), Undercommon (Like gnomes and haffuns, many dwarves know the strange “Undercommon” tongue that seems to be ubiquitous in the lands of the Enemy.)

Favored Class: Fighter

Vandirtuvaldin Feats

As befits a race of tireless stone hewers, some uvandir display extreme devotion to particular crafts or a level of dedication beyond even that of other dwarves. A dwarf who can muster the greatest levels of personal



fortitude garners respect and even reverence from others of his race, who seek to emulate his example. The idealized dwarf, to the uvandir, is always in motion, always considering new possibilities, always in pursuit of a task.

Clever Fingers [Vandirtuvaldin]

Your understanding of clockwork and engineering is second to none, and your crafty fingers and clever hands can manipulate nearly any device.

Prerequisite: uvandir; Craft (any) 4 ranks, Disable Device 2 ranks

Benefit: You gain a competence bonus equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum +1) to all Craft checks, Disable Device checks, and Open Locks checks. You may take 10 on these skill checks even when under stress or distraction.

Deep Digger [Vandirtuvaldin]

You are accustomed to digging deep beneath the earth, and you can find many valuable things far below the sunlit world.

Prerequisites: uvandir; Profession (miner) 4 ranks, Clever Fingers

Benefit: You gain additional intuition about earth and stone beyond the

usual stonemasonry racial ability. You automatically sense natural mineral deposits within 60 ft. (but not already worked metals or cut gemstones); you can tell from the surrounding stone what sorts of deposits might be found in the area. You can also sense the presence of other uvandir within 60 ft. Earth and stone do not block this sensory ability. This detection is intuitive and automatic; it does not require concentration or the use of an action.

Earthen Flesh [Vandirtuvaldin]

Your hardened stony skin deflects all manner of attacks.

Prerequisite: uvandir; Constitution 15, base Fort save +4, Stone Brother

Benefit: You gain a natural armor bonus of +1 for each Vandirtuvaldin feat you possess. This is a base natural armor bonus, not an enhancement bonus, so it stacks with magical items or spells that grant an enhancement bonus to natural armor.

Stone Brother [Vandirtuvaldin]

Like the very rock from which you were hewn, you are timeless and unmalleable.

Prerequisite: Uvandir; Constitution 13, base Fort save +2

Benefit: You gain light fortification, which grants you a 25% chance to negate the extra damage from critical hits and sneak attacks. Additionally, you are immune to any effect or attack that severs limbs (including the head) unless it is performed with an adamantite weapon (or equivalent attack by a creature with special attacks). You still suffer damage normally from such attacks, but you do not lose limbs or become decapitated when attacked with a vorpal weapon, a trap that maims limbs, and so on. You are affected normally by attacks that disintegrate parts of your body, such as a sphere of annihilation trap.

Vandra

Your dedication has earned the grudging recognition of the uvandir, who may actually refrain from berating or beating you when you try to learn their ways and use their language. As one of the vandra, you are actually worthy of consideration to the uvandir.

Prerequisite: non-uvandir; Craft (any) or Profession (any) 6 ranks, speak uvandir (dwarven)

Benefit: You gain a +4 competence bonus to all Charisma checks and Charisma-based skill checks to interact with uvandir and a +4 competence bonus to all ability checks or saving throws to resist any effect that would cause fatigue. You may learn vandirtuvaldin feats as if you were uvandir.



The Long Marches of the Uvandir

Given a destination, you will reach it and you will never stop unless you are somehow totally destroyed.

A few of the uvandir, those with a Constitution of 17 and the Stone Brother and Earthen Flesh feats, are tireless when they set their mind on a journey.

Such uvandir may choose a specific destination—a location that they have visited before, or one seen on a map, through scrying, or described in great detail. Once they set out to that destination, they may not stop until they arrive, and they must take the most expeditious route to that destination without any delays (although they may defend themselves or adjust their route if a local hazard makes the path no longer viable). While traveling to the destination, they automatically move at forced march overland speed with no penalties.

Furthermore, they do not become staggered if reduced to 0 hit points, do not become disabled when below 0 hit points, and do not die if reduced to -10 hit points or less. They suffer the effects of lost hit points when they finally arrive at their destination. They can also be killed by ability damage or drain, level drain, death effects, and effects that totally destroy the body, such as a disintegrate spell, unless other protections or immunities defend them.

Once an uvandir has completed a Long March, they cannot undertake a new one for at least one month. That span of time is traditionally spent resting and composing a “March Song”, which is sung on the anniversary of the day.



Wicked Fantasy is a re-invention of the core fantasy races by unorthodox designer John Wick. Put some wicked spin on your next character or campaign.

Uvandir in 4E

By Scott Gable

Racial Traits

Average Height 4 ft. 3 in.—4 ft. 9 in.

Average Weight 160—220 lb.

Ability Scores +2 Constitution, +2 Wisdom

Size Medium

Speed 5 squares

Vision darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven

Skill Bonus +2 Endurance, +2 Perception

Earth Child You do not need to drink, eat, or sleep. You never make Endurance checks to resist the effects of starvation or thirst. All other conditions and effects affect you normally.

Indomitable You gain one saving throw at the beginning of your turn, before suffering any effects. You retain your normal ability to make saving throws at the end of your turn.

Sleepless You do not sleep. Instead, you enter a state of inactivity for 4 hours, gaining the benefits of an extended rest. You are fully aware of your surroundings while in this state.

Unstoppable You move at your normal speed even when encumbered by armor or a heavy load. In addition, you gain a +2 racial bonus to saving throws to avoid being slowed.

Vandirtuvaldin Feats

Heroic Feats

Clever Fingers [Vandirtuvaldin]

Prerequisite: uvandir, trained in Thievery

Benefit: You can attempt Thievery checks that normally require standard actions (i.e. disable traps, open locks, pick pockets, sleights of hand) as minor actions.

Deep Digger [Vandirtuvaldin]

Prerequisite: uvandir

Benefit: You automatically sense the presence and location of other uvandir within 10 squares.

Additionally, you can sense natural mineral deposits but not already worked metals or cut gemstones. This ability is not blocked by any material.

Earthen Flesh [Vandirtuvaldin]

Prerequisite: uvandir

Benefit: You can shift your defenses around by subtracting from one or more defenses what you add to another. For each Vandirtuvaldin feat you possess, you can shift by 1 point. For example, if you possess 4 Vandirtuvaldin feats, you could reduce your Will by 3 points and your Fortitude by 1 point while increasing your AC by 4 points. You may shift your defenses once per day outside of combat; an extended rest resets your defenses.

Stone Brother [Vandirtuvaldin]

Prerequisite: uvandir

Benefit: You are immune to any effect that severs head or limb. Though you still take suffer any associated damage or condition, you retain your body parts. Additionally, you can use *stone brother*.

Stone Brother [Vandirtuvaldin] Feat Power

Daily Immediate Interrupt Personal

Trigger An enemy scores a critical hit on you

Effect Until the end of the encounter, all critical hits against you are turned into normal hits

Special You must take the Stone Brother feat to use this power.

Vandra [Vandirtuvaldin]

Prerequisite: non-uvandir (non-dwarf), speak dwarf

Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to all Charisma-based skill checks when interacting with uvandir (dwarves), and you gain a +2 feat bonus to saving throws against being slowed. In addition, you now qualify for Vandirtuvaldin feats.

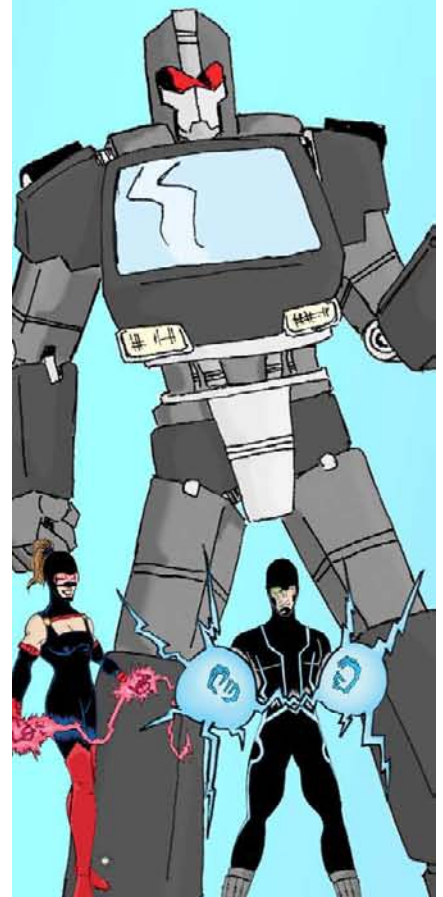


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Howling Werebeasts

How to Play Lycanthropes as PCs

By John E. Ling, Jr.

Art by Kraig Horigan

Even a man who is pure in heart and says his prayers by night, may become a wolf when the wolfbane blooms and the autumn moon is bright.

—Jenny Williams in *The Wolf Man*

Lycanthropes have bedeviled player characters since its earliest incarnation. It wasn't until the advent of 3E, however, that this terrible curse could be a boon to characters.

No longer is the curse of lycanthropy a death sentence. Instead, this terrible supernatural illness has become a benefit to the point that some intrepid characters actively seek the affliction. There's no arguing with the power gained from infection: increased ability scores, damage reduction, and improved natural armor are just the beginning. The costs for such powers are equally varied: loss of control, racial hatred, and a steep level adjustment work to counterbalance the benefits.

A Brief History

The oldest werewolf tale dates back to Greek myth. Lycaon, the first king of Arcadia, was a depraved tyrant not the least bit concerned about slaughtering people for gain. Zeus looked down from Mount Olympus with great concern until Lycaon sacrificed a child in his name on Mount Lycæus. The deity then had enough. For this gruesome crime, Zeus transformed Lycaon into a wolf.

The Romans, too, had tales similar to modern werewolf legends. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* tells of men transformed into wolves roaming the woods of Arcadia. Pliny the Elder also related two tales of lycanthropy in his various works, quoting stories told by Euanthes and Agriopas.

Werewolves appearing in fiction go back at least as far as the year 61 CE, when Gaius Petronius penned the *Satyricon*. Various other tales appeared throughout the middle ages, including Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485). The genre finally came into its own in the Victorian era and has flourished since with the subject matter being taken up by such authors as Alexandre Dumas, Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, and Ambrose Bierce.

Over time, werewolf tales evolved from the ability to shapeshift—often a gift from the devil—into the curse of lycanthropy. The lycanthrope's weakness to silver, too, is



something that developed over time, not gaining solid footing until the Lon Chaney movie *The Wolf Man* in 1941. In that movie, the werewolf is defeated by a silver-tipped cane. In 1944's *House of Frankenstein*, in which Chaney reprises his famous role, the first instance of the werewolf being discharged with silver bullets appears.

Modern tales, including the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling and the film *An American Werewolf in London*, continue this rich tradition.

The Player's Perspective on Lycanthropy

In that climactic battle, you were bitten by the lycanthrope before you could skewer it with your rapier. Now what? The clock is ticking. If you're lucky, your party's healer has a sprig of belladonna. If you're real lucky, the poisonous plant cures you without killing you. If you don't have belladonna—or don't want to risk the poison—your next chance is to find a cleric capable of casting *remove disease* or *heal* as a 12th level caster. For this remedy, you have 3 days. Those are the easy cures; otherwise, you're stuck with your infection until the full moon.

During the full moon, a healer can attempt a *remove curse* or *break enchantment* spell to remove your affliction. The spell grants you a Will save (DC 20) to remove the curse. Be forewarned, though—if you reach this stage of the affliction, expect your friends to tie you down to prevent you from causing any harm. Hey, don't blame them; you're the one who let the lycanthrope bite you in the first place.

But what if you don't want to be cured? What if you *like* the idea of being a lycanthrope? You wouldn't be the first to make that decision, and you certainly won't be the last.

Before you decide to head down that path, though, there are a few things you need to know

Pain. Let's face it, changing from a human into a wolf isn't comfortable. Bones reshape, ligaments and tendons twist and contort, muscles grow suddenly, organs shift. Changing shape is stressful on your body. Your GM might enforce rules to account for this, causing you some damage whenever you change shape.

The Hunted. Lycanthropes are primal hunters, seeking prey simply for the thrill of the hunt. But they're also the hunted. Many a skilled hunter dedicates his life to finding and eradicating lycanthropes. These hunters have various reasons, but whatever they are, the moment you become infected you're a target.

I Hate You. Don't be surprised if people stop associating with you. Innkeepers who know your dirty little secret probably won't rent you a room; they simply can't risk their clients becoming your next meal. Merchants, vendors, farmers—all of them will despise you. Sure, you might be able to hide your curse from *some* of them, but word of your disease will undoubtedly spread. That's the price you have to pay for such great power.

I'm Not Me. Perhaps the worst thing about lycanthropy is the lack of control you have over your body. The worst moment is the first full moon. On that night, you become an animal. You lose all sense of identity. You lose access to most of your abilities. And you're stuck this way until the morning. After that, things get worse. Not only does the light of the full moon cause you to transform, but any damage you suffer also triggers your transformation. You better hope you don't stub your toe on the corner of the bed or cut yourself while sharpening your sword. The absolute worst part? It's extremely difficult to learn to master this transformation. You need a powerful mind and supreme self-control. And you probably don't have either—at least not yet. So I hope you like becoming a dirty, thoughtless animal every time you stub your toe.

Alignment Shift. As if the lack of control over your body isn't bad enough, you also have to contend with losing control of your mind. When you lose control and become an animal, your alignment shifts to that listed on the template. If you value your good alignment, you've got problems. You're likely to become a mass murderer during these moments. What's worse, your subconscious, fueled by the curse, *enjoys* it. Even if you have a semblance of control over your shapeshifting, every moment you spend in animal form shifts you closer to that alignment. Can you really risk a permanent shift to chaotic evil if you're a wererat or werewolf? Will your party members abandon you? Will an order of paladins feel obligated to destroy you before you spread your evil? Can you risk it?

Bookkeeping. From a metagame perspective, playing a lycanthrope requires more paperwork than a standard character. While most players have only one character to fret over, you have three—your “normal” character, your

animal form, and your hybrid form. Increasing in level alters all three character sheets. Even something as seemingly trivial as an increase in your ability scores has a ripple effect throughout all your character sheets.

Guilty by Association. Even if you're not infected, just associating with somebody who is makes you guilty in the eyes of many. You made a conscious decision to associate with a monster, so you have to accept the consequences. Hunters on the prowl for your friend probably don't mind taking you down, too. After all, how can they be sure you aren't infected? Better to just kill you now rather than wait to find out.

Is it worth it? Only you can answer that question. Some people accept power at any cost. No friends? So what. Everybody hates you? Big deal. That painful transformation? Yeah, it hurts, but nothing's free, right?

Or maybe, after thinking it over, you'll eat the belladonna and risk the poison's effects, even if you don't know if that wererat's bite actually infected you. Hope you have a friend who's a cleric. You're going to need it.

The GM's Perspective on Lycanthropy

Lycanthropes make wonderful villains, especially when they have control of their shape. Just when the PCs think the gang leader is a two-bit thug, he shifts into hybrid form and becomes a deadly foe. PCs afraid of lycanthropy back away, wary of getting too close for fear this perceived common thug will bite them. Of course, if one of your players *wants* her character to become inflicted, you might become the wary one.

As GM, you always have the ability to say no. Sometimes, though, it's better to grant the desire. Players should be careful what they wish for. You can arm yourself with tools to make players reconsider ever wanting the curse and send them scrambling to find a cleric.

Infection. The rules are silent on what it feels like to

Roleplay It!

There's no doubt that the lycanthrope template gives your character awesome power. But don't discount the roleplay potential as well. Whether you're actively seeking infection, desperately searching for a cure or just learning to deal with your new abilities, you have some wonderful opportunities at the gaming table. A werewolf might, for example, intersperse growls into his speech. A wererat might nervously look around, always scanning the immediate area. A werehyena might have a habit of sniffing everybody who comes near her.

If your GM uses the alternate rules in this article, you can roleplay the painful transformation process. You can yelp in pain or grimace in anguish as yet another uncontrolled transformation overtakes your body.

Whatever the mindset your character has, you'll have opportunities to create roleplaying moments your friends will talk about for years to come.

become afflicted. No symptoms appear until the first full moon, but that doesn't mean the bite isn't more painful. There's nothing wrong with treating the wound a bit different than other wounds. Make it clear that the character is uncomfortable, even if that discomfort has no actual mechanical effect.

Alternatively, you might treat it like any other wound. Once healing has been applied (whether by rest or magic), it slips from the player's mind completely. No outward symptoms mean you have an opportunity to spring the curse on the player unexpectedly.

Adjudicating Control. How should you handle that first fateful night? The player should have no say at all as to what takes place—even if the infection was intentional. Instead, you should determine the character's actions based on the animal's alignment. You have two basic paths to follow: play out the evening or hand wave through it.

If you opt to play out the evening, the player who controls the infected character might be bored with nothing to do. That may not be a bad thing, if you keep the evening short. A player who doesn't want infection can have the horror of the situation driven home by hearing about all the ghastly things her character did in animal form throughout the evening. Other players, too, may face a tough dilemma: do they attack their friend to bring an end to the reign of terror or do they try to subdue her instead?

Alternatively, you can simply hand wave the evening. There's little doubt that a werewolf, for example, could kill the bartender, four barmaids, and the bevy of farmers drinking in the tavern. Rather than describing the scene as it happens, your group awakens the following morning to the carnage. The afflicted PC, of course, should have clear evidence of what happened. Tattered clothes and bloodstains are good indications that something is terribly wrong. Certainly, don't hesitate to slaughter an NPC the player was close to. Little drives home the point more than seeing a dead lover or mentor.

Alternate Rules

As discussed in the player's section, the transformation process is painful, and normal people refuse to associate with the infected. If you'd like to add some mechanics to those effects, here are some rules you can try out.

Pain. Whenever you undergo a transformation, you must make a DC 18 Will save. If you fail, you suffer 1d6 damage as well as 1 point of Constitution damage. For every 5 ranks in Control Shape, you gain a +1 circumstance bonus on your saving throw.

Hatred. Townsfolk who are afraid of lycanthropes are unlikely to want to do business with you. You suffer a -5 circumstance penalty on all Charisma-based checks, except for Intimidate, for which you receive a +3 circumstance bonus instead. Remember, this rule only applies when targets are aware of your condition.

Whichever way you handle the moment, the real key is to take control away the player. It's an oft-overlooked detail, but it's truly one of the steepest costs associated with lycanthropy. You can leverage that cost to illustrate the true horror to all your players.

Slow, Simmering Hatred. Word of a monster on the loose has a way of spreading quickly. Before long, everybody in town learns about whatever rampage the PC experienced the prior evening. If evidence points to the PC, a lynching mentality may take hold. Sure, the PCs can take on a couple of townsfolk pretty easily. Can they take on a dozen? Two dozen? If the PCs are in a large enough town, they might find themselves running away from dozens of angry villagers with pitchforks and torches.

But that's not the end of it. In a world steeped in magic, it's not at all unreasonable for word to spread beyond the immediate area quickly. PCs might be able to subdue—or murder—the entire hamlet of Nowhere. But word of the slaughter will spread to larger population centers. It's even possible, in some circumstances, for word to reach the next community before the PCs. What happens in that case? Maybe the lord wishes to speak to them, to ascertain what happened. Maybe the constable forbids them entry, fearful there's some connection. Before long, the PCs' names should, effectively, be mud.

Lycanthropic Progressions

One of the mechanical problems with the lycanthrope template is that you gain a lot of power in a very short period of time, with extra HD and a level adjustment of +2 for afflicted lycanthropes (or +3 for natural). If you take the entire bonus, a GM has to deal with a player who's significantly more powerful than the rest of the party. On the flip side, you have to go several levels—ranging from 3 for a wererat up to 8 for weretiger or werebear—without gaining any further benefits. You gain a large power increase up front and then sit by watching your teammates gain levels.

There is an alternative, though. The animal HD and the template's benefits can be split into a level progression—a series of levels that treat the benefits as a class. Once you begin taking levels in the lycanthrope progression, you must

Control Shape

To a lycanthrope, this skill may be more important than even gold. While the skill can be attempted untrained, a lycanthrope who wants complete control of the situation quickly pumps up this skill, often foregoing other skills in the process.

If you're using these progressions, the Control Shape skill does not become available to the character until after the final level of the progression (or at the DM's option, after two levels). From that point onward, the character always has access to Control Shape as a class skill, and can begin the process of taming the beast within. The Control Shape skill is described in the MM, in the Lycanthrope entry.

proceed to the end, foregoing any other class levels in the meantime. Lycanthrope levels never incur a multiclass penalty, and only levels which grant an increase in HD affect your number of feats and ability score increases.

Here are three different progressions: wererat, werewolf, and werebear. These progressions use the level adjustment of afflicted lycanthropes.

The Wererat

Class Skills Your class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Hide (Dex), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Swim (Str).

Ability Scores At 1st level, you gain a +2 racial bonus to Wisdom.

Bonus Feats At 1st level, you gain Iron Will as a bonus feat. At 2nd level, you gain Weapon Finesse.

Scent (Ex) Shortly after being bit, your senses improve. You gain the scent ability.

Low-Light Vision (Ex) If you did not already have low-light vision, you gain it at 1st level.

Natural Armor (Ex) At 2nd level, your skin toughens slightly. You gain a +2 bonus to your natural armor.

Damage Reduction Starting at 2nd level, your metabolism alters such that normal weapons inflict less damage. You gain DR 5/silver.

Alternate Form (Su) At 3rd level, your transformation is complete. You gain the alternate form class feature. You can shift into animal form as though using the *polymorph* spell, though your gear is not affected, you do not regain hp for changing form, and only a dire rat form can be assumed. You do not assume the ability scores of the animal but, instead, add the animal's physical ability score modifiers (+6 Dex, +2 Con) to your own ability scores. You also can assume a bipedal hybrid form with prehensile hands and

animalistic features.

Changing to or from animal or hybrid form is a standard action.

If slain, you revert to humanoid form. Separated body parts retain their animal form, however.

Skills You may use either your Strength or Dexterity for Climb and Swim checks.

The Werewolf

Class Skills Your class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Hide (Dex), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Survival (Str).

Ability Scores At first level, you gain a +2 racial bonus to Wisdom.

Bonus Feats At first level, you gain Iron Will as a bonus feat. At 2nd level, you gain Track.

Scent (Ex) Your senses improve shortly after being bitten. You gain the scent ability.

Low-Light Vision (Ex) If you did not already have low-light vision, you gain it at 1st level.

Natural Armor (Ex) At second level, your skin toughens slightly. You gain a +1 bonus to your natural armor. At 4th level, the bonus increases to +2.

Damage Reduction Starting at 3rd level, your metabolism alters such that normal weapons inflict less damage. You gain DR 5/silver.

Alternate Form (Su) At 3rd level, your transformation is almost complete. You gain a limited form of the alternate form ability. You can shift into animal form as though using the *polymorph* spell, though your gear is not affected, you do not regain hp for changing form and only a wolf form can be assumed. You do not assume the ability scores of the animal but, instead, add the animal's physical ability score modifiers (+2 Str, +4 Dex, +4 Con) to your own ability scores. At 3rd level, you can only change shape into a wolf

The Wererat

Level	Hit Dice	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Skill Points	Special
1st	—	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2 Wis, Iron Will, low-light vision, scent
2nd	1d8	+0	+2	+2	+0	2 + Int mod	+2 natural armor, DR 5/silver, Weapon Finesse
3rd	1d8	+0	+2	+2	+0	+0	Alternate form, racial skills

The Werewolf

Level	Hit Dice	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Skill Points	Special
1st	—	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2 Wis, Iron Will, low-light vision, scent
2nd	1d8	+0	+2	+2	+0	2 + Int mod	+1 natural armor, racial skills, track
3rd	1d8	+1	+3	+3	+0	2 + Int mod	Alternate form, DR 5/silver
4th	2d8	+1	+3	+3	+0	+0	+2 natural armor, Improved alternate form

or back to your normal form. Starting at 4th level, you can also assume a bipedal hybrid form with prehensile hands and animalistic features.

Changing to or from animal or hybrid form is a standard action.

If slain, you revert to humanoid form. Separated body parts retain their animal form, however.

Skills You receive a +4 racial bonus to Survival checks when following a scent.

The Werebear

Class Skills Your class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Hide (Dex), Listen (Wis), Spot (Wis), and Swim (Str).

Low-Light Vision (Ex) At 1st level, you gain low-light vision if you don't already have it.

Scent (Ex) At 2nd level, you gain the scent ability.

Ability Scores At 3rd level, you gain a +2 racial bonus to your Wisdom score.

Skills At 4th level, you gain a +4 racial bonus to Swim checks.

Feats At 5th level, you gain the Iron Will feat as a bonus feat.

Natural Armor (Ex) At 6th level, you gain a +2 bonus to your natural armor.

Damage Reduction (Ex) At 7th level, you gain DR 5/silver.

Alternate Form (Su) At 6th level, your transformation is complete. You gain the alternate form class feature. You can shift into animal form as though using the *polymorph* spell, though your gear is not affected, you do not regain hp for changing form, and only a brown bear form can be assumed. You do not assume the ability scores of the animal but, instead, add the animal's physical ability score modifiers (+16 Str, +2 Dex, +8 Con) to your own ability scores. You also can assume a bipedal hybrid form with prehensile hands and animalistic features.

Changing to or from animal or hybrid form is a standard action.

If slain, you revert to humanoid form. Separated body parts retain their animal form.



The Werebear

Level	Hit Dice	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Skill Points	Special
1st	1d8	+0	+2	+2	+0	2 + Int mod	Low-light vision
2nd	2d8	+1	+3	+3	+0	2 + Int mod	Scent
3rd	2d8	+1	+3	+3	+0	0	+2 Wis
4th	3d8	+2	+3	+3	+1	2 + Int mod	Racial skills
5th	4d8	+3	+4	+4	+1	2 + Int mod	Iron Will
6th	5d8	+3	+4	+4	+1	2 + Int mod	+2 natural armor
7th	5d8	+3	+4	+4	+1	0	DR 5/silver
8th	6d8	+4	+5	+5	+2	2 + Int mod	Alternate form

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Ecology of the Vampire



By Tim and Eileen Connors
Art by Pat Loboyko and Marc Radle

On the dark side of a mountain, a small shack hides in a forest of evergreens. The sweet smoke of boiling sap rises from its chimney and joins the night. Inside the cabin, a woman licks blood from her fangs and rises from a dying man on the floor. Blood trickles from the twin puncture wounds at his neck. Somewhere outside, wolves announce a midnight hunt. And solitary birches, thin and pale, bleed their sap into buckets.

The woman smiles. A perfect night.

When darkness falls, vampires rise from their graves to gorge themselves on the blood of the living. Their fountain of youth flows through the veins of men, and their immortality comes with the curse of a doomed soul. These are creatures from the Old World. They took our ancestors by the throat. And tonight, they eye our children from the mist.

Becoming a Vampire

When a humanoid or monstrous humanoid dies from a vampire's bite, the curse of vampirism quickly corrupts the corpse. The silver cord that ties the victim's soul to its body does not snap as it should, and the soul remains tethered to the dead vessel, slowly filling with blood lust. The soul struggles against the cord and reaches for the afterlife, but its silent screams are in vain. The gates of heaven and hell

diminish as blood lust slowly reels the cord-strangled soul back into its corpse.

One to four days after the victim's death, a new vampire or vampire spawn rises as a mist around its grave. A victim with less than 5 HD rises as a vampire spawn. A victim of 5 HD or more rises as a vampire.

Vampires may also be born. A pregnant woman who survives a vampire bite has a 25% chance of birthing a dhampir—a free-willed half-vampire child. Because dhampirs have a penchant and ability to kill vampires, most vampires are careful to shun pregnant victims. For this reason, vampires find the scent of a menstruating woman particularly attractive.

Male vampires who are fully fed may mate and sire children with a living female. This happens infrequently because the female must not only conceive willingly but must also survive a difficult and bloody labor and supplement the babe's milk with her own blood. Vampires who sire in this fashion are often new vampires who, within days of their own "birth," return to their homes and mate with their living wives. Babies are invariably dhampir. These half-vampire children grow into their powers over time. While young, most do not realize the significance of the bats that nest in their attics or the wolves that shadow them in the forest.

Physiology

Before a vampire rises for the first time, any maggots or bacteria infesting the corpse erupt through the skin, shrivel, and die. Wounds close and heal. When the “newborn” vampire emerges from its grave, it easily passes for the living creature it once was. Indeed, it appears at least as healthy as it did the day it died. This allows many new vampires to masquerade as living humanoids and move unnoticed among the populace. The act of feeding reveals the charade, however; the creature grows its fangs and snarls like a predatory wolf.

With the exception of their hair and nails, vampires never grow, gain weight, or age. A boy turned into a vampire at age 6 appears remarkably unchanged four centuries later. Nevertheless, vampires are not timeless. Decay devours them with patience. In another four centuries, the child vampire’s skin tightens over a bony frame, his eyes shrink to opals, and his nose blackens and sloughs off. He stands supernaturally still, and a chill precedes him when he moves. At this stage in his unlife, no creature would mistake him for anything other than the undead predator he has become.

The powerhouse of every vampire is a heart that never beats. Capillary action carries consumed blood along constricted veins to the heart. Here, tongues of negative energy lap it up and vomit raw power through the vampire’s arteries to its muscles. Well-fed vampires enjoy prodigious strength, lightning fast reflexes, keen intellect, sharp senses, and irresistible charm.

To keep its negative energy at peak levels, a vampire must feed daily or succeed on a Failure to Feed roll. This DC 15 Fortitude save must be made every day the vampire goes without blood (cumulative +1 DC/day). Once fatigued, the Failure to Feed DC increases to DC 20 and the check is made once per week to avoid exhaustion (cumulative +1

DC/week). The first successful blood drain attack reduces exhaustion to fatigue. The second removes fatigue.

Not just any blood will strengthen a vampire. Dried blood, bottled blood, and the blood of a dead creature do not sustain a vampire. These sources no longer carry the necessary component—vitality. Vital blood is adrenaline-rich blood that the victim’s heart pumps directly into the vampire’s mouth.

Taste derives from the strength, passion, and emotional state of the victim. Some vampires swear that blood suffused with love is liquid ecstasy. Others prefer to terrorize their victims—sometimes for days—before digging their fangs into a vein coursing with adrenaline and flavored with fear. Vampires can survive on live animal blood, but it lacks the sweetness that the blood of an intelligent creature, capable of deep emotion. On the other hand, the blood of a raging lion far exceeds the vitality of that of an infirm human. This is why vampires hunt rather than farm bedridden humans. It is, also, why vampires do not prey on the same victim repeatedly. The blood sours as the victim’s strength ebbs.

Psychology

A new vampire reflects on its living memories as through the blackest of moods. Vampirism connects the creature to a gestalt evil, perverts the creature’s personality, and crushes its moral compass. Every character flaw, weakness to temptation, and evil proclivity heightens and fills the void left by virtue. The vampire lives unchecked by conscience and driven by its lusts. The noble, romantic vampire of bardic song may exist, but far more common are hateful creatures willing to tear the heart out of any maiden they meet.

Vampire personalities vary from bestial to aristocratic, and many vampires can operate at both ends of the spectrum. Every vampire considers itself superior to living creatures. Those of the bestial persuasion become apex predators. Those with aristocratic backgrounds revel in finery and debauchery under the guise of charismatic nobility. Occasionally, haughtiness leads a vampire to underestimate the living, but most often, its sense of superiority is entirely justified.

Blood lust gnaws into every aspect of a vampire’s psychology. A vampire can never conquer or quell its need to feed, and the constant urge for blood distracts the vampire and forces him to live in the moment. Only well-fed vampires can contrive and execute plans that do not involve feeding or protecting or expanding their blood territory. Centuries of blood addiction eats at their minds the same way decay ultimately consumes their bodies. Even the most successful vampire eventually goes mad from blood lust.

Vampires have no fondness for change, and they endure the passage of time as a necessary evil. Venerable vampires have little patience for novelties such as automatons or clockwork magic, and the vampire hunter can exploit such ignorance. Old World vampires dress in outdated garb and follow the old ways. To look in their thirsty eyes is to see ancient cities long blown to dust.



Society

A new vampire lives under the command of the vampire who sired it and remains enslaved until the sire's destruction. Each enslaved vampire can sire and enslave vampires of its own, creating a pyramid of control called the Tree of Chains.

A free-willed master vampire commands his entire Tree of Chains with as little or as much direction as he pleases. His tree's growth is limited only by the fact that no vampire can enslave more than twice its own HD worth of "children" at any one time. Any child that would exceed this limit rises as a free-willed vampire or vampire spawn. A vampire can voluntarily free an enslaved child to make room for a promising new child, but more frequently, the ruling vampire kills the existing child and all of that child's progeny to reduce territorial competition. This pruning temporarily reduces the tree's strength but promises stronger future growth.

The Tree of Chains and blood territory play key roles in vampire society. The lowest vampire caste includes new free-willed vampires with no Tree and no territorial claims. Such vampires typically grow their Trees on the fringes of vampire society or in uncommon territorial niches. A coffin among the boxes of a gypsy caravan might quickly grow into a Tree of Chains composed of the entire gypsy band, or a group of outlaws might find they hunt for blood rather than coin.

Such a tree represents the next lower caste in vampire society—a master vampire whose territory cannot support his tree. To secure fresh blood, the master vampire must branch into a populated area, and that means challenging another master vampire for territory. These challenges rarely succeed, because most populated areas are controlled by the next and highest-level caste—master vampires with Trees of Chains large enough to defend their territory but lean enough and disciplined enough not to outgrow it.

The highest-level caste includes the ancient vampire clans, who have long-

established traditions and territories. Like crime families, each clan claims one or more of the world's major cities as its blood territory. The clans ally, challenge, and avenge each other frequently, and vampire wars unfold in the shadows of urban centers.

Clan-Specific Powers and Weaknesses

Vampire clans often enrich their lines by passing traits to their spawn. Just before the potential child loses consciousness from blood loss, the vampire opens one of his own veins—usually on his chest—and forces the victim to drink. Days later, the risen child enjoys one of his sire's at-will abilities (equivalent to the power of a 3rd level spell or less for unwilling victims and a 4th level spell or less for willing victims).

Through this ritual, the Blackcloak Clan has granted countless generations with the ability to fly. Woes betide the manor that discovers a swarm of Blackcloaks wheeling about its towers. The Northwinds Clan moves inside icy clouds of fog that freeze and shatter foliage as they pass. And once a Shadowlicker has tasted a person's shadow, it can enter the person's residence without the normally required invitation.

Detecting a Vampire

Vampires rise from their graves and travel in mist form, neither disturbing their gravesites nor leaving tracks. Vampire hunters must rely on secondary clues. A cemetery with its holy symbols thrown down, laden with ground-hugging fog, or devoid of birds may harbor a vampire. But which grave holds the vampire? To find out, different villages follow their own folk traditions with varying degrees of success. In the Margreve, a naked virgin male rides a white stallion over the gravesites. Wherever the horse bucks wildly, a vampire is sure to lie.

Coffins. Not all vampires rest in coffins or sleep buried in graveyards. Any box that blocks sunlight, keeps out running water, and lies atop the vampire's native soil suffices. Urban vampires lair in sewers, abandoned warehouses, attics, and any other dark, infrequently visited nook. Vampires who live in perpetually dark areas and who do not prepare spells have no need to retire to their coffins daily. Some vampires carry their coffin in a soil-lined bag of holding. A vampire hunter has little hope of finding the resting place of such a vampire directly.

Magic. The Silverblood Dhampirs, a society of vampire-hunting clerics, lo-

Living under Vampire Rule

North of the Margreve, in the Imperial Principality of Morgau and Doresh, vampires roam openly and rule proudly. Depravity, decadence, and the worship of dark gods abound. Here, the living are little more than property, drained and dispatched as the vampires see fit.

Many living slaves long for their masters to drain them of blood, so they can escape the "tortures of the living" and gain social status as vampires. Vampire masters occasionally grant such rewards. If the slave is clever, he makes some plans before he receives the death-bite, such as hiring assassins (or do-good heroes) to kill his sire after the planned death-bite. This frees the slave-turned-vampire from mental enslavement on the master's Tree of Chains.

The Imperial Principality frequently hosts hunts in its hills and forests and stages gladiatorial fights in its cities. In these spectacles, living combatants clash, and vampires cheer and salivate at the blood that sprays into the stands. This foreplay lasts for hours before culminating in a vampire's blood drain of the winner and the lucky winner's rise into the ruling class.

Once a year, tradition demands that a vampire elder free the winner rather than kill him. An arcane tattoo forever marks the champion and grants him perpetual freedom from all vampire predation. One of these lucky souls recently emigrated to the Free City of Zobeck where he runs a gladiatorial pit under the kobold ghetto.

cate vampires by starting at the graveyards. If the Silverbloods are lucky enough to find a vampire spawn, they kill it and then cast *Speak with Dead* to find out who the spawn's sire was. In this way, they slowly climb the Tree of Chains until ultimately confronting the master vampire.

Reflection and shadow. Like heaven and hell, light refuses to recognize the vampire's cursed soul and does not honor the vampire's presence with reflection or shadow. To avoid detection and the bitter reminder of their cursed existence, vampires shun environments with mirrors, pools, or sources of bright light.

Odd conditions and traits. Other vampire traits include wearing of foreign or old-fashioned garb, never eating or drinking, walking with su-

pernaturally quiet footfalls and having terrible halitosis. A watchful hunter can notice these signs with a successful Spot of DC 15 + the CR of the vampire. Even under overcast skies, vampires infrequently appear during daylight hours.

Repelling a Vampire

For all their power, vampires have significant, exploitable weaknesses.

Alchemy. Vampires cannot tolerate the smell of garlic, wild roses, or rowan berries and will not enter an area laced with them. In vampire-plagued villages, wreaths of garlic bulbs hang on doors, and villagers perfume themselves with concentrated rose oils for the fortnight following a funeral. These protections encourage a browsing vampire to go to the next house,

but they do not thwart a vampire who is determined to take a particular victim. Such a vampire need merely make a Will saving throw with DC 20 for garlic, DC 24 for rose oil, or DC 19 for rowan berries to bypass the barrier; even with a successful save, the vampire takes 2d8 damage for passing such a barrier.

Conviction. More powerful apotropaic objects include mirrors, holy symbols, and religious relics. When someone presents these objects with conviction as a standard action (with a successful Knowledge (religion) check of DC 15 + the CR of the vampire), the vampire recoils with a hiss of disdain. The vampire may not touch, engage in melee, or come within 5 ft. of someone brandishing such an object. Vampires in this situation use their domination ability to crush the will of the presenter. If successful, the vampire forces the presenter to throw the object aside and attack his comrades instead.

Authority. Vampires cannot enter a home or other building without first being invited by someone with the authority to do so. Once invited, future visits require no further invitation unless the owner sells or otherwise relinquishes the property to another party.

Consecrated land. Despite popular folklore, vampires may enter consecrated areas. For instance, in what later became known as the Blood of the Empty Mass, villagers in Godfrey's Hollow slew their parish priest after they discovered him retiring to a coffin beneath the rectory.

Running water. Vampires cannot cross running water unless carried across in their coffin or conveyed by ship. Folk magic descended from elvish vampire lore suggests that this is because running water is pure and incapable of holding magic or curse. The desert preachers of the Golden Goddess teach that baptism through running water is the door to Heaven—a door forever closed to the vampire. Communities have long exploited this vampire weakness to great effect, banishing vampires to islands when

Vampires in the Real World

Dr. John Polidori's *The Vampyre* published in 1819 introduced and popularized the charismatic, sophisticated vampire that continues to dominate contemporary fiction. The historical vampire that had entire nations staking and beheading corpses was quite a different beast.

Prior to the acceptance of germ theory, many people blamed vampires for the sudden deaths of multiple family members. The first to die must have become a vampire, for why else would the family be chosen to suffer a similar fate? Hard-hitting diseases such as tuberculosis that plagued victims with pallor, fatigue, and night sweats—sure signs of a vampire's work—fanned the flames of vampire hysteria.

In 1190, William of Newburgh wrote in *Historia rerum Anglicarum* that "one would not easily believe that corpses come out of their graves and wander around, animated by some evil spirit, to terrorize or harm the living, unless there were many cases in our times, supported by ample testimony." Indeed, the idea of vampirism was so powerful, widespread, and enduring that it survived the Enlightenment, when the West discounted so many other creatures and folktales.

In Eastern Europe, communities took time-honored steps to prevent or thwart vampirism. Corpses were buried upside down so that they would dig down instead of up. Pottery emblazoned with "Jesus Christ conquers" was placed on the corpse's chest. Gypsies drove iron needles into the corpse's heart. As recently as the 19th century, Romanians placed garlic in the deceased's mouth and shot bullets through the coffin. For resistant cases, they dismembered and burned the body, mixed the ashes with water, and administered the concoction to family members as a cure-all.

After Austria gained control of northern Serbia in 1718, officials noted the locals' practice of exhuming bodies and testing them for vampirism. If the cadaver appeared well-fed (plump with decomposition gases), displayed lengthened nails or teeth (receding cuticles and gums), or showed signs of blood drinking (bled from the mouth), the corpse deserved a vampire's death. Someone, often a relative of the deceased, took up a mallet and drove a stake through the corpse's heart, puncturing its bloated chest and releasing a violent burst of foul gas and blood. To be absolutely certain of the vampire's destruction, they severed the knee tendons, beheaded the corpse, and spiked the body to the earth.

they cannot be killed. In the Northern Wastes, meltwaters flowing around ice caves form effective vampire prisons. And until the recent quake, the Vaults of al-Kupa were lined with shelves of glass globes, each composed of a mantle of holy water everflowing around an imprisoned ancient vampire in gaseous form.

Saving Souls

When someone dies from a vampire bite, friends and family have little time to save their loved one's soul. If they destroy the sire before the deceased rises as a vampire in 1-4 days, vampirism never settles on the corpse and the deceased's soul remains free. However, if their loved one rises as a vampire, no mortal magic can break the curse of vampirism. The family has only one choice. To save their loved one's soul, they must first destroy him.

Slaying a Vampire

When a vampire is destroyed, the silver cord binding the soul to the undead body unravels and snaps. The curse of vampirism dissipates, and the freed soul passes on. Thereafter, resurrection and true resurrection can recall the soul to life if the soul is willing.

Immersion. Immersing a vampire in running water reduces its hp by one third of its normal total per round. Once immersion reduces the vampire to 0 hp, the vampire is destroyed.

Sunlight. A vampire exposed to direct sunlight teeters on the agonizing cusp of destruction. It may take a single move or standard action. If the vampire does not escape the sun's rays in the next round, it is destroyed. The Grisol dwarves, who defend the Ironcrag's northern border from vampires, harness the sun's power in another way. Their Sun Axes, empowered daily with the dawn's first rays, are said to slice through vampires like razors through butter.

Damage. When a vampire is reduced to 0 hp, it automatically assumes gaseous form and attempts to escape. If it does not reach its coffin home within 2 hours (or 9 miles), the vampire is

destroyed. Once at rest in its coffin, the gaseous vampire lies helpless for 1 hour, after which it gains 1 hp, reactivates its fast healing, and is no longer helpless.

Staking the heart. Pounding an ashwood, hawthorn, or rowan stake through a vampire's heart instantly slays the creature. The late vampire hunter Frangorn Nith gained fame for using a unicorn horn with equal success. Vampires are well aware of the danger that staking poses and many wear breastplates or employ *stone-skin* to protect themselves. Advanced gargoyle vampires and others with significant natural armor are particularly difficult to stake.

Staking a vampire slays it but does not destroy it. The vampire returns to life if the stake is removed, even after the body has long reduced to dust and blown away. More than one adventurer has regretted removing a curious stake from its wedge between the flagstones. To prevent the vampire from returning, wise vampire slayers decapitate the creature and fill its mouth with garlic or holy wafers.

Vampires of Legend

Twelve clans descend directly from the ur-Vampire Lucien Twice-Fallen,

and at the top of each of their Trees of Chains sits a Vampire of Legend. These vampire lords were ancient when half the world's religions were new. Holy relics melt against their foul skin, and running water stagnates and blackens before they ever step foot in it. Skies darken in their presence, and every light source grants them a shadow that moves, detaches, and attacks as they command. Stakes splinter against their chests.

Like major artifacts, each Vampire of Legend has a specific means of destruction. With a bit of creativity, enterprising GMs can develop entire adventures or even campaigns based around the destruction of but one of these Vampires of Legend. enterprising GMs can develop entire adventures or even campaigns based around the destruction of but one of these Vampires of Legend.



Vampire Lore

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

Table: Vampire Lore

DC Result

- 10 Vampires are cursed undead creatures with an insatiable thirst for blood. They avoid mirrors, garlic, rowan berries, and wild roses.
- 15 A vampire can be destroyed by sunlight, decapitation, or a stake through the heart.
- 20 When reduced to 0 hp, a vampire becomes a mist that floats back to its coffin. Here, it reforms into its physical body and lies helpless for 1 hour.
- 25 Vampires infrequently travel more than 9 miles from their coffin, because this is the maximum distance they can travel as mist.
- 30 Many vampires have clan-specific powers, weaknesses, or traditions.
- 35 The PC learns a clan-specific trait for the clan being researched.
- 40 Vampire society is organized into a "Tree of Chains," in which the greater and elder vampires dominate a succession of spawn down to the newly spawned. To follow this chain to its head, clerics use *speak with dead* on destroyed newer vampires.

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Running Across the Screen

A GM Roundtable

By Christopher L. Dinkins

and Jeremy L. C. Jones

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“The Dungeon Master has many hats to wear in the course of a game session,” writes James Wyatt in the Fourth Edition Dungeon Master’s Guide. “The DM is the rules moderator, the narrator, a player of many different characters, and the primary creator of the game’s world, the campaign, and the adventure.”

Maybe he’s the only one standing at the table. He paces a little, rolls a few dice behind a shiny new screen. He points to the map drawn on the board behind him and shifts a few NPC minis on the mat in front of him. He’s word-painting a picture so vivid you can feel it on your skin. Nervous energy comes off him in pulses, as though he really were summoning Cthulhu.

Or maybe he is a *she*, sitting behind the screen and shuffling papers. This is the fourth encounter of the night, and the party of PCs is pretty beat up. It’s the climactic moment. Life or death for either the PCs or the necromancer she’s been channeling for the last 30 minutes. She’s about to say something but a cell phone goes off. Again! It’s nothing big and loud. It’s on vibrate, but still...

“Look,” she says, “either you turn that damn thing off *right now*, or I’m taking it away from you.”

She tosses the dice. She’s not giving anything away. There’s no telling what she rolled... until she peers over the screen with an evil grin.

Game Masters (GMs) aren’t like the rest of us. They’re different. They *know* things. They seem to sit closer to the source of RPG magic. No matter how collaborative the game may be, the GM holds a special place at the table.

If the GM isn’t committed to the game—if he’s grumpy, disorganized, flippant, ego-maniacal or lazy—if the GM isn’t fully, one hundred percent *into* it, then the whole gaming session just might fall apart.

“A good GM looks like an idiot to anyone not participating in the game, because he is making faces, speaking in character, and snarling like a monster,” write Will Hindmarch and Jeff Tidball in *Things We Think about Games*. “A good GM is not afraid to look like an idiot.”

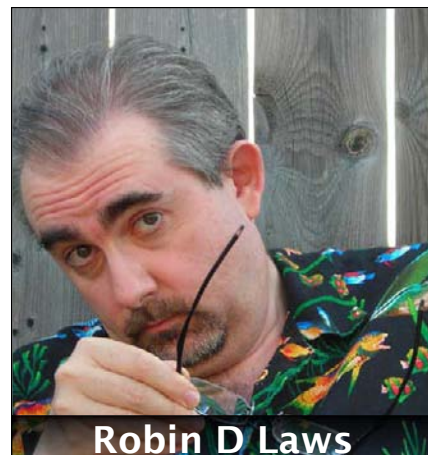
Below we talk to 16 game-masters, all of whom are also professional game designers and writers.

They also are not afraid to look like idiots for the sake of a good time at the table.

The Game Masters

Cam Banks works as a managing editor at Margaret Weis Productions and writes novels, such as the recent *The Sellword*. He was also a designer on the *Dragonlance Dungeon Master’s Screen*.

Jason Bulmahn is the Lead Designer on the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* for Paizo Publishing. Bulmahn was the



coordinator of *Living Greyhawk*, the world's largest organized D&D campaign, before he joined the Paizo team.

Monte Cook wrote the Third edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* while at Wizards of the Coast. He and his wife currently run Malhavoc Press.

Will Hindmarch worked as the developer of White Wolf Game Studio's *World of Darkness* Storytelling Game before founding Gameplaywright Press with Jeff Tidball.

Jim C. Hines' novels and short stories are often flavored by a life-long love of gaming, especially his *Goblin Quest* trilogy.

Kenneth Hite is a game designer and regular contributor to *Weird Tales* magazine. His recent setting for Savage Worlds and the Hero System, *The Day after Ragnarok* is a blades-and-bullets romp through post-apocalyptic 1948.

James Jacobs is the Editor-in-chief of the Pathfinder line at Paizo Publishing. Jacobs also worked on the team that developed the Third Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide II*.

Robin D. Laws is a novelist and game-designer known for his work on such games as *Feng Shui* and *HeroQuest*. He was also a designer on the Third Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide II* and is the author of *Robin Law's of Good Game Mastering*.

Mike Mearls was a lead developer on the 4th Edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* at Wizards of the Coast. Mearls wrote *Mastering Iron Heroes*, the gamemaster's guide to Malhavoc

Press' variant rules for heroic combat.

Chris Perkins is a designer at Wizards of the Coast who got his start freelancing for *Dungeon magazine*. Today, he works on the *Star Wars* roleplaying game line and *Dungeons & Dragons* 4th Edition.

Chris Pramas left Wizards of the Coast to start Green Ronin Publishing, the company responsible for the True20 system and *Mutants & Masterminds*. Pramas has also worked extensively on material for *Warhammer RPG*.

Matthew Sprange is a novelist and game-designer, as well as the co-founder of Mongoose Publishing, the United Kingdom's largest role-playing game publisher.

Greg Stafford is the founder of Chaosium and Issaries, Inc. He is the designer of *Pendragon* and the co-designer of *RuneQuest*, for which he created the world of Glorantha.

Greg Stolze is the designer responsible for such games as *Unknown Armies* and *Reign*. He has worked for such companies as White Wolf and Atlas, though these days he uses the Ransom Method.

Harley Stroh is the *Dungeon Crawl Classics* line editor at Goodman Games and writes for a variety of lines and companies.

James Wyatt is a novelist and game designer at Wizards of the Coast. He wrote the 4th Edition *Dungeons Master's Guide*.

The Questions & the Answers

All right, let's start basic and broad:

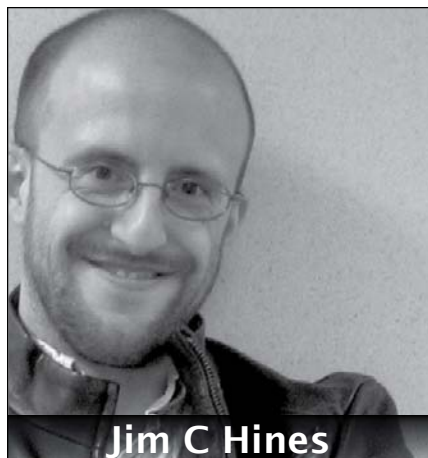
what does being a Game Master mean to you?

Bulmahn: Being a GM means that you are a player with the responsibility to ensure that the game is fun and runs smoothly. It's a lot more than just preparing a fun adventure, though. It involves figuring out your group dynamic and tailoring the game to fit their style. It means being generous and relaxed, and stingy and tough, when the situation calls. Above all though, it means that you are responsible for the entertainment of both yourself and a group of friends. That can take many forms, but I think that is what it really boils down to.

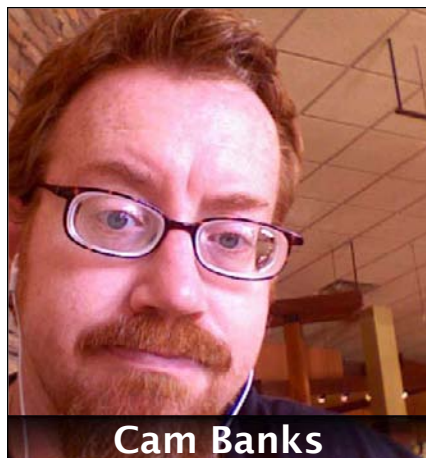
Hines: When I first started running games 20 or so years ago, being a GM meant *power!* I was finally the one pulling the strings, setting the traps, cackling gleefully to myself behind my makeshift screen . . . and if my little brother copped an attitude, I could drop a dragon on his head.

Needless to say, I wasn't a very good GM back then.

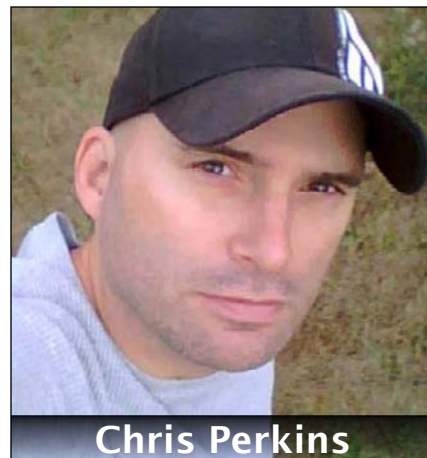
These days, I tend to think of the GM as the storyteller. In a lot of ways, it's trickier than being an author, because the game is a *collaborative* story. I provide the framework and the antagonists, but I try to give the players room to create their own plot. Like the storyteller, I think the GM's job is ultimately to entertain. (Sure, sometimes one of my traps is more entertaining to me than to the poor dwarf who finds himself plunging into an underground river in full plate mail, but as long as one of us is entertained, right?)



Jim C Hines



Cam Banks



Chris Perkins

Stafford: It is the chance to be an *entertainer*. A lead entertainer, really, in an on-going “radio drama.” An on-going radio drama with many players, of which I am only one, and though Director as well, my games now are pretty much impromptu *group* efforts. I get to show off my skill at narration and dialogue and my knowledge of King Arthur or Glorantha.

Stroh: When I step into the role of GM, five players are offering me eight hours of their finite lives, and that’s a heavy responsibility. It doesn’t matter how great the adventure is, how well I’ve crafted the NPCs and their backgrounds, or how much the players “ought” to be enjoying the game—if at some point players start stacking dice or reading comic books, I’ve failed in my role.

I’m the sort of GM that is exhausted by the end of the session. If I’ve done my job right I’ve poured my every ounce of energy and imagination into the game, keeping the players engaged at every turn.

If I’m spent, and the players are begging for more, I’ve done my job.

Laws: A GM is a *traffic cop on the road to fun*, armed with funny voices, illusory authority and a ragbag of possible plot twists.

What is the most important thing for the GM to know about designing or running an encounter?

Cook: He needs to know the PCs. This is the one thing that the GM can always do better than a professional game designer. When I’m writing an adventure for publication, I can’t write

it for *your* PCs. Only you can do that. Tailoring an encounter to the PCs and their idiosyncrasies, their capabilities, and their limitations is often what makes the difference between a moderately fun encounter and a really memorable one.

Hindmarch: Since the GMing experience involves doing a lot of things at once — juggling the big picture and the small picture, adjudicating the individual situation while respecting the overall needs of the group’s good time, and so on — it’s tricky to pull out any one trick or skill to put on top of the toolbox. For designing an encounter, it’s vital to remember that you’re devising something like an attention-keeping bit of playground equipment; a *situation*, not an outcome.

When running an encounter, it’s essential to remind yourself that you’re there to *serve* the specific instance of that encounter that best delights or challenges the players who are actually present; don’t worry about things that matter to people you’re not playing with at the moment. Your job isn’t to attain the platonic ideal of the encounter but *to maximize the actual play experience* for the people in attendance.

Laws: On the design front, know what happened in your previous encounters. Remember what was awesome, and strive to replicate that. Recall which bits became flat or draggy, and find ways to rectify them. If you have trouble taking mental notes after a session, take actual ones.

Pay attention to the mood of the group during play. The responses players articulate afterwards are often very much at odds with how they behaved during play. As members of the geek tribe we have a tendency to overthink, so the unconsciously revealed response in the moment is much more telling than the verbalized one after the fact.

When running a combat encounter, *speed* is of the essence. It’s the equivalent of picking up your cues when delivering lines as an actor. Tiny pauses between moments add up to a lot of dead air over the course of a session. Look for the spots that break down and find ways to zoom through them. Find your best initiative tracking system to know who goes next. Don’t be afraid to be a bit of a traffic cop. Keep the overall energy up. When a rules question arises, it’s better to be *fast* than right—you can always discuss it afterwards and choose to rule otherwise when the situation arises in future.

Pramas: You have to be flexible. There are many things that are not under your control, from the number of players that shows up on a particular night to the way the players respond to the encounter. You can plan for what you think *might* happen, but you must be prepared to think on your feet when things go in an unexpected direction.

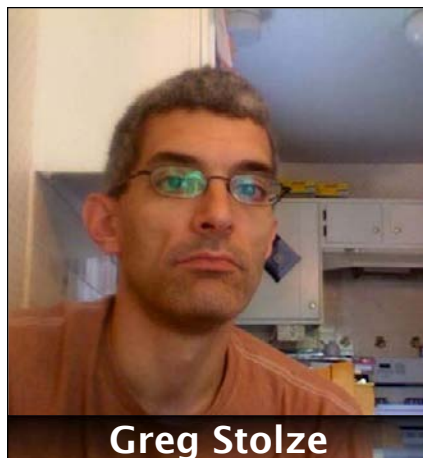
Sprange: Remember the players are supposed to be the heroes—make them feel heroic!

What’s the hardest (or most challenging) part of GMing?

Mearls: One of the hardest parts



Mike Mearls



Greg Stolze



Kenneth Hite

is keeping focused. It's easy to let some weird new idea intrude on the campaign, or to pine for a plot or adversary that doesn't fit the campaign's current spot. I ran a disastrous campaign in college, the only one I tried to run back then, where the story seemed to shift week after week, I barely paid attention to what the players wanted, and I kept trying to force the PCs on to the "right" path. I forgot that the best stories run across the GM's screen. They don't rest solely on one side or the other.

I get around this by keeping a notebook of ideas, and letting myself chase down ideas as far as they want to go. For instance, I had a real urge to stock the classic D&D module *In Search of the Unknown* using 4e, even though it didn't fit into my campaign. I just went ahead and did it in my free time, rather than look for ways to use it in my campaign. The nice thing is that I have two or three adventures like that, adaptations of older adventures or exercises in design purely for fun, that I can pull out when I want to run a one shot.

Hite: The hardest part is changing up my game. The downside of giving your players what they want is that they get pretty familiar with the menu. Some of my current group have been gaming with me off and on for 20 years, so they know my reflexes cold. It's hard for me to abandon something that is proven to work, just because the players can all see it coming a mile away.

Hindmarch: For me it's simple stage fright, which comes from not practicing what I preach. I routinely worry about things like players having good things to say about the story after the session, or about staying true to the vision of the game designer, or about demonstrating some special insight, and those things all get between me and the simple thrill of putting on a good show. I GM best when I stop worrying and focus on the players who are in front of me.

Stolze: The most challenging part is staying abreast of the game once

it's in play. I do a pretty good job of preparing for stuff, piling up the big slabs of backstory and the handouts and the ideas before the first session, but once we're two or three sessions in and events are moving in new directions, I find it hard to prepare as much every week. And sometimes that works out just fine. Keeps my "winging it" skills sharp and my BS production abilities intact.

Wyatt: I've seen some great examples of DMs who manage to keep the story going even in the thick of combat. I'm playing in a game that Jeremy Crawford is running right now, and he'll pause the initiative order for minutes at a time to give historical background to the fight or narrate some weird event going on. I love his DMing style, and I try to keep reminding myself to lift my head out of the back and forth of combat to keep narration going. That's my big challenge to myself right now.

How do you balance the needs of the adventure with the free will of the players and their characters? In other words, how do you get the players to stick to the script without railroad-ing the characters? And as a possible follow-up: how do you plan an arc?

Banks: Sandboxing is almost an essential element of most non-published campaigns. You should always know more or less what's going on *around* the PCs so that even if they go off the path, the world doesn't screech to a halt. There are times when the PCs don't want to head toward one scene or another, or simply miss the point altogether. When that happens, a swift redirection of the plot in their direction is usually a good thing.

In fact, if the players start offering their own understanding of what's going on and it sounds better than yours, there's no shame in simply throwing out your version and rewarding them for being "smart."

Bulmahn: It's all about choices. I prefer to present problems and let the players decide how best to overcome them. This suits my GM style rather well as I prefer to *ad lib* portions of

my game and mix them with premade parts. I will admit that sometimes it is also about the *illusion* of choice. This comes back to knowing your group. If you know what motivates them, you can often present the problems in such a way that the choice that suits their needs and desires is the one that you can plan for. It does not always work, but as a group comes together, it becomes easier and easier to predict their likely course.

Jacobs: My philosophy is that if the adventure's interesting enough, the players will *want* to go on the adventure. If you can present things so that the players are making the exact choices you want them to make, but in a way that the PCs think *they're* driving the plot, that's perfect. I generally find that it's only when the GM either gives the PCs no input or *too much* input that the players tend to go off the rails. Present one compelling plot to them and they'll usually take it. If they don't, a good trick is to turn it back to them and let them decide what they want to do, but once they decide, just run the same adventure you were going to run, only describe things differently. If, for example, you had a raid on a cave full of bandits and goblins planned, and the PCs instead decide they want to board a ship and go to the crazy hermit's island to buy a magic weapon from him, just have the hermit be kidnapped by a group of bandits and goblins when the PCs get there. Or just use those bandit stats to represent a group of pirates that attack the PCs' ship on the way to the hermit's island. It all goes back to being *adaptable*.

As for planning a story arc: I generally do so in vague outlines, with the roles of the key villains (along with names and often their stats) mapped out, along with key types of lairs. Then, I'll sift through my huge collection of adventures and piece them together in a way that makes sense for those villains and their needs; the plots of the adventures supply themselves, and often the way those plots work together helps to build an overall campaign plot. It's a little different building an adventure path

completely by scratch, of course—in that case I’ve found it easiest to come up with the first idea for the basic plot and write it down. Then you just start building on that plot, hanging more and more details on it until you have a whole campaign mapped out, at which point you go in and write each part of the specific adventures.

Cook: Well, that’s an easy one, as I don’t require the script. I’ve had PCs in the middle of an adventure just decide to leave to go do something else, and I’m OK with that. Sometimes, if an adventure’s too tough or too easy, that’s the *right* thing to do anyway. In most campaigns I run, I’ve got so many plot threads that it’s not just okay that the PCs don’t follow up on all of them, it would be almost impossible to do so. I’d rather have the players really feel the freedom to do what they want than to make sure all my carefully laid plans come to fruition.

To put it another way, I’d rather the players developed a plan and followed it rather than followed mine.

Perkins: The adventure has no “needs” other than to entertain the players, and if the players feel like they’re on a railroad or if they’re bored silly, then the adventure isn’t worth the trouble. The important thing is to know what motivates the players and their characters, or, conversely, the extent to which the players will allow their characters to be nudged in a specific direction. As long as the *adventure goals align with the group’s motivations*, things should go fairly smoothly.

An adventure should be flexible enough to allow the PCs to meander a bit, and if the players veer off in a completely unexpected direction, my job as the GM is to say, “OK, what can I introduce into the adventure that might steer them in another direction?” or “What can I add to the adventure that makes this new direction an exciting experience for the players?”

At the start of a new campaign, I try to come up with three (and no more than three) big campaign arcs to keep in the back of my mind while designing encounters and adventures. (Not that every adventure ties to a campaign arc, but many of them have at least a tenuous connection.) In my current 4th Edition campaign, one of the campaign arcs involves an empire that splits into two opposed factions. At some late point in the campaign, the characters might come face-to-face with the secret force of evil responsible for the divide, but I don’t expect that will come to light for quite some time. Instead, I focus my thoughts on ways for the arc to insinuate itself into the PCs’ lives: rumors of a war brewing, interactions with NPCs who support one side or the other, opportunities to thwart villains on one side or the other (knowingly and unknowingly), and so on.

Other arcs arise as a consequence of the players’ actions or decisions, once I get a feel for what drives the various characters. If the characters want to be embroiled in politics, then I try to create some political arc to entertain

them. If they throw themselves into conflict with a powerful thieves’ guild, the ripples of that battle might be felt later in the campaign when the heroes are approached by former allies and enemies of the destroyed guild.

In addition to campaign arcs, there are *character* arcs. These are usually inspired by the players as a means to involve their characters in more personal stories. These arcs can be small (ending after one or two adventures) or quite broad.

One of the smaller arcs in my current D&D campaign involves a PC fighter named Garrot, played by Mat Smith, who stole a magic ring from a sea captain. Mat included the idea as part of his character’s backstory at the start of the campaign, which led me to create an arc involving the sea captain catching up with Garrot at some point and demanding the ring’s return. I waited until the start of paragon tier for the arc to surface, mostly because I’d pegged the sea captain as a paragon-tier threat and wanted Mat to forget about it for a while, thus increasing the surprise and drama when the sea captain finally showed up.

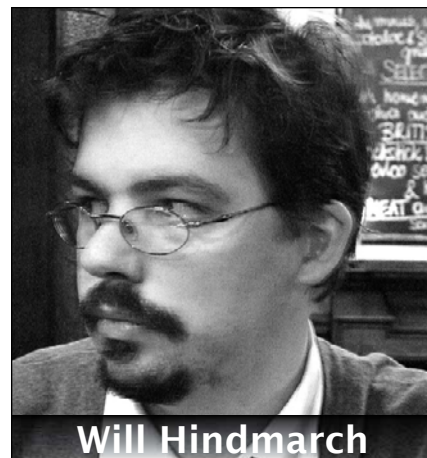
Wyatt: Ultimately, the adventure doesn’t have needs to balance. The game has needs, but those are primarily the needs of the players—they’re there to have fun. The easiest way to keep the players on track is to make sure that the adventure is fun!



Greg Stafford



James Wyatt



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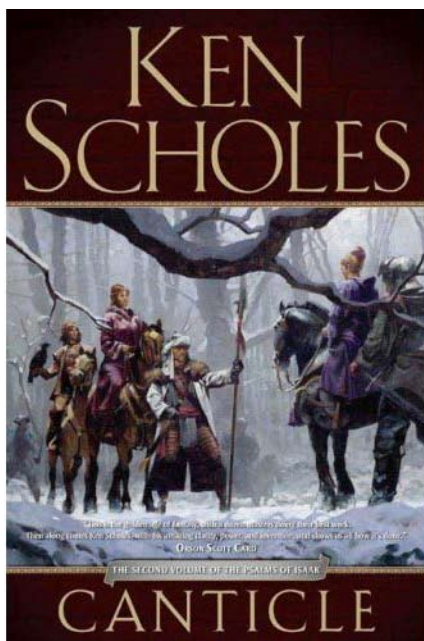
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BOOK REVIEWS

ALL TOMES READ BY CANDLELIGHT

by Cynthia Ward and Pierce Watters



Canticle (The Psalms of Isaak)

Ken Scholes

Tor Books, October 2009
Hardcover, \$25.99, 384 pages
Review by Pierce Watters

Ken Scholes began his 5-book “Song of Isaak” series by hitting the ground at a dead run. The first in the series, *Lamentation*, was a critical and popular success, and he continues in a similar fashion with this second novel in the series.

Canticle begins at a fever pitch and the suspense rises and falls in all the right ways as Scholes plays the reader like a fine musical instrument. An ancient robot appears out of the Churned Wastes with a warning. Following this, at the childbirth feast for King Rudolfo’s first child, invisible scouts burst in past the formidable Gypsy scouts of Rudolfo’s army. These assailants overpower everyone and murder two kings at the feast, mysteriously sparing Rudolfo. The earth magick of Rudolfo’s scouts was overcome by

the older, forbidden, and lost blood magick from the time before Xhum Y’Zir destroyed the world with the seven spells of Cacophonous Death and created the Churning Wastes.

Canticle takes us into the Churning Wastes to find a lost library, over the seas to an island where blood magick is indeed still practiced, and into the hearts and minds of the main characters: Petronus, last Pope of the now-defunct Androfrancine Order; the aforementioned King Rudolfo; Winteria, the too-young Queen of the perfidious Marshfolk, the beautiful Jin Li Tam, wife of Rudolfo, mother of his heir, and daughter of the self-exiled Vlad Li Tam; Vlad Li Tam, himself, master manipulator and father to a vast and powerful clan; and Neb, Homeseeker and beloved of Winteria. And, of course, there is the sad robot, Isaak, who wept at the destruction of Windwir, the greatest city in The Named Lands.

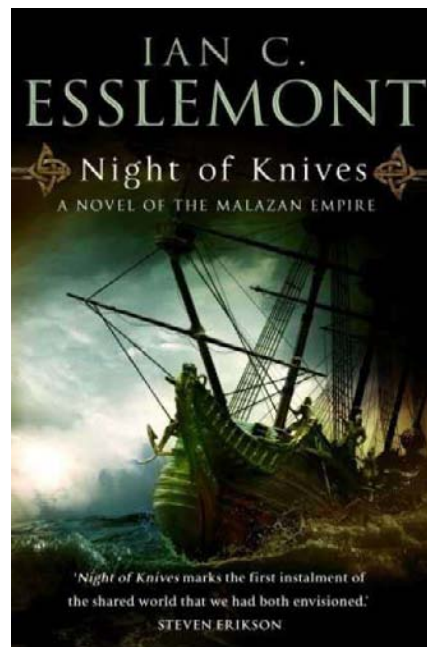
In this series, there is much mention of Whymer Mazes and the Queen’s Game. The intrigue and suspense in *Canticle* is masterful. The answer to each question, when it comes, is often the beginning of another question. Well done and recommended.

Night of Knives: A Novel of the Malazan Empire

Ian C. Esslemont

Tor Books, May 2009
Trade Paperback, \$14.95, 282 pages
Review by Pierce Watters

In 1982, Ian C. Esslemont and Steven Erikson created the Malazan Empire as a GURPS campaign. Then, the co-creators decided to write fiction set in their fictional empire. To date, Erikson has written eight novels using this setting with two more planned. After a long wait, Esslemont has now jumped into the fray with *Night of Knives*. He



has four more books planned.

Erikson writes, “*Night of Knives* marks the first installment of the shared world that we had both envisioned.”

So, *Night of Knives* is a prequel of sorts. It is set on the island of Malaz for which the Malazan Empire was named. As the novel begins, Malaz has been relegated to the backwaters of the Empire. Soon, things will no longer be quiet.

Excepting the very beginning and the very end, all of the action in *Night of Knives* takes place in a single night. It is the night of the Shadow Moon. This only occurs once every 50 years or so. It is a time when the worlds of the Warrens, “Other realms/worlds from which mages draw their power,” intermingle with the mundane. And it is happening on Malaz, this very night. Powerful characters from all over the Empire gather, seeking to use the Shadow to Moon to their advantage.

Night of Knives is richly populated with interesting and fully drawn characters. Most of the action is seen

Where did the idea for your novel come from?" is a question that writers traditionally dread. Simple answers are dull and trite, serious answers interminable. But *The Red Wolf Conspiracy* is an exception. Its genesis was too strange to forget.

The year was 1993, and the place was Argentina. More specifically, Peninsula Valdés, a huge, largely uninhabited almost-island midway down the Patagonian coast. I'd come as part of a research trip looking at park ranger training, before going on to the Andes and the subtropical jungles of the northeast.

Valdés is a nature lover's Elysium. Penguins and sea lions and elephant seals by the thousands calve on its beaches, and whales give birth in the coves. You can literally walk along the cliffs and watch the southern right whales rolling and playing at your feet.

One morning I set out to do just that and encountered heavy fog. This made for a ghostly seascape, with snatches of rocks and surf appearing for instants in the mist, and everywhere the sound of invisible breakers. And it was while trying to pierce this billowing fog that I suddenly imagined a gigantic and ancient sailing ship careening towards shore, and smashing with terrible violence against the rocks.

Who crewed that monster, and how had they come to such a pass? It would be years before I'd find answers to such questions—I spent eight years on a novel set in Argentina first—but the image never left me, and my curiosity about it only grew.

Those years in Latin America didn't take me down the career path I once envisioned. But they did flood me with stories—fantastic and otherwise—that I've only begun to explore.

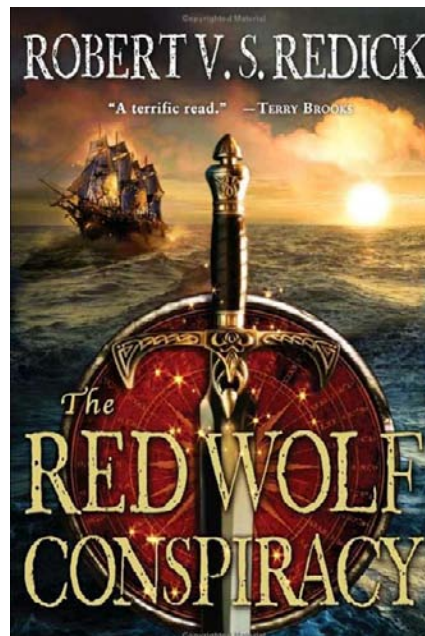
—Robert V.S. Redick,
Del Rey Online

through the eyes of Temper and Kiska. Temper is a soldier in hiding, running from the Claw: sorcerer-assassins loyal to Surly, would-be Empress of Malazan. Kiska is a young woman who aspires to join the Claw or do anything else that will get her off of the boring island of her birth. The various characters are fascinating and too numerous to describe, but my favorite is the Edgewalker, a creature doomed to walk the shadow realm forever.

If you like sword and sorcery fiction and love gaming, this is an incredibly enjoyable novel. It can be a little confusing in spots, as if the reader will naturally know the world as well as the author. Newcomers to this world should at least glance at the glossary before beginning. Recommended.

The Red Wolf Conspiracy

Robert V.S. Redick



Del Rey, April 2009

Hard Cover, \$26.00, 450 pages

Review by Pierce Watters

Chathrand, a merchant ship of the Empire of Arqual, is the last of her kind. She is enormous, dwarfing all other ships. In *The Red Wolf Conspiracy*, Chathrand sets sail on a secret mission for the Emperor. On board is an amazing assortment of characters, including Thasha and Pazel. Thasha,

daughter of the Arquali ambassador, is the intended bride who will bring peace between Arqual and its dread enemy, the Mzithrin Empire. But Thasha is not going quietly, and peace is not the real reason for this voyage. Instead, it may result in the release of an ancient evil. Pazel Pathkendle, one of the Chathrand's tarboys, has an unusual gift of language. He joins with Thasha and her protectors in the fight.

Author Robert V.S. Redick has been likened by Terry Brooks to Phillip Pullman. You might find hints and sniffs and tastes of Jack Vance and Mervyn Peake as well. The myriad characters populating the Chathrand are mostly quirky, odd, and unique. This includes a tribe of pixie-sized folk; a sentient rat, brave and resourceful; a witch and her cat; the cruel ship's captain, Nilus Rose; assorted assassins, magicians, and madmen; and my favorite, Ramachni, sorcerer from another plane who appears as a jet-black mink.

Chathrand, in her immensity, has many hidden nooks and crannies, and hiding places reminiscent of Gormenghast. And while the fey characters may remind one of Jack Vance, make no mistake, Redick is his own man and a fine writer.

This is the first book of a trilogy. It is hoped book two will be arriving soon, for the adventure has just begun. Recommended.

The Strain: Book One of the Strain Trilogy

Guillermo Del Toro and
Chuck Hogan

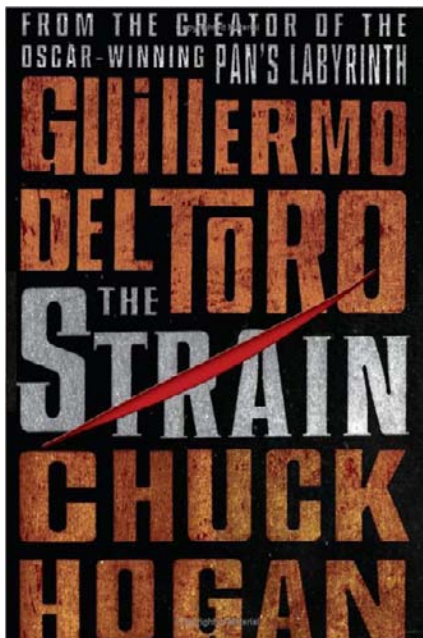
William Morrow, June 2009

Hardcover, \$26.99, 401 pages

Review by Cynthia Ward

It's a routine flight, until Regis Airlines Flight 753 touches down at John F. Kennedy International Airport. Then it goes dark and sits, immobile and nonresponding, on the runway. The passengers and crew are dead. How could more than two hundred people die peacefully in moments?

Dr. Ephraim Goodweather finds a handful of survivors. They don't remember what happened, they just know they're thirsty and their necks



ache. They check themselves out of the hospital, thereby becoming vectors of an incurable, deadly disease.

They're not the only vectors. The two-hundred-odd bodies rise up and escape from the morgues of New York. As the mysterious virus mutates them, the undead attack the living. And every time one drinks blood, the victim becomes a new vampire....

The Strain is the first volume in a new dark fantasy trilogy by Academy

I wanted the magic of the Dresden Files to be simply a part of the story universe, a source of energy just like heat or electricity, and one that obeyed certain universal laws that governed its interaction with reality. I didn't want Dresden to be a mystic, shamanistic wizard. I wanted him to be a plumber, a carpenter, an engineer. Only instead of working with water, wood, or physics, he was working with magic.

It all comes in somewhere, though it's hard for me to point out exactly what has gone where. I had the whole thing formed in my head when I started writing, and it just kind of started breathing on its own as the first story got rolling.

—Jim Butcher, interview with BittenByBooks.com, April 2009

Award winning director Guillermo (Pan's Labyrinth) Del Toro and Hammett Award winning author Chuck (Prince of Thieves) Hogan. *The Strain* is a genuine collaboration between its authors, and not a double-byline, single-author novel outlined by the Big Hollywood Name. It's also a genuinely exciting thriller, melding the horror and medical genres to present a scary, believable (and sometimes repulsive) new twist on the vampire. And, as they deploy their large cast with its numerous viewpoint characters, Del Toro and Hogan keep the prose smooth and hit every beat.

The Strain isn't flawless. The vampire ecology doesn't make sense (shouldn't humans be long extinct? perhaps a sequel will clarify). The love interest is dispensable while the other females exist to be victimized. Dr. Goodweather isn't entirely convincing as either a divorcing father or a recovering alcoholic. And the presence of a character named Palmer Eldritch will catapult a lot of SF fans right out of the book.

Still, you'll stay up all night to finish *The Strain*...even though you're terrified that day is gone.

Turn Coat The Dresden Files, Book 11

Jim Butcher

Roc, April 2009

Hardcover, \$25.95, 420 pages

Review by Cynthia Ward

Life's been looking up for Chicago wizard Harry Dresden. Once under a death threat from the White Council, he's become one of their Wardens. He's found a smart and beautiful lover. He's teaching a powerful and talented young apprentice. And he's discovered he has a half-brother.

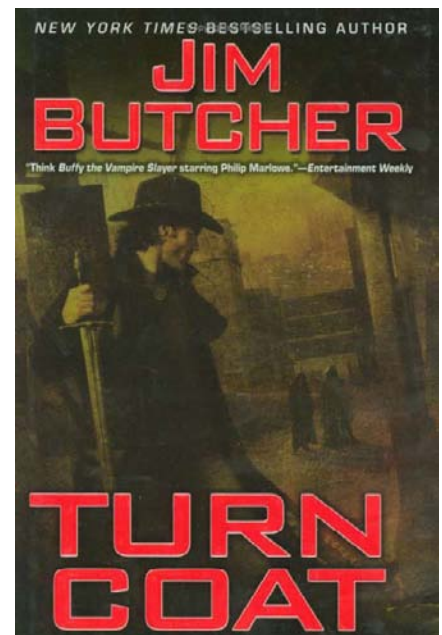
Things start going downhill, however, when the Warden Morgan, Dresden's old enemy, turns up at his door. Though Morgan was found at a murder scene with the weapon in his hand, he claims he's being framed for the assassination of a White Council member. It's a claim that Dresden, with his relentless drive for justice, cannot ignore.

And Morgan has a second prob-

lem, which is now also Dresden's: he's being stalked by a vicious and virtually omnipotent shapeshifter. If all that isn't enough, the vampires appear to be involved in the assassination. Everything points to the unthinkable, a turncoat in the White Council—in the group that secretly governs the wizards of the world and protects the unknowing public from black magic. If Dresden can't uncover the traitor, not only will he and Morgan be executed by the White Council, but the world will erupt in supernatural war.

In his genre-bending series, the Dresden Files, Jim Butcher artfully blends urban fantasy, horror, action-adventure, and hardboiled detective fiction. He tops them with a fast pace, high tension, and sympathetic characters, then spices it all with humor, romance, sharp dialogue, and unpredictable plot turns. In short, he's created an irresistible recipe for reading pleasure. No surprise, his Dresden novels consistently hit the New York Times bestseller list.

In *Turn Coat*, the latest Dresden novel, Butcher ratchets the excitement to new levels, even as he finds new depths in his hotheaded yet loyal young wizard. The shapeshifter, a Native skinwalker, is a fantastically dangerous and scary foe. And Dresden's dilemma of saving another hated enemy from a grave injustice makes



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the novel even more compelling.

That being said, the “whodunit” won’t long remain a mystery for the astute reader. However, the novel has so many bad guys, plot twists, and extreme threats, most readers won’t mind. In fact, they’ll enjoy *Turn Coat* thoroughly.

Who Fears the Devil?— The Complete Silver John

Manly Wade Wellman

Introduction by Mike Resnick

Planet Stories/Paizo, November 2009

Trade Paperback, \$15.99, 340 pages

Review by Cynthia Ward

A modern minstrel wanders Appalachia with only the clothes on his back and his silver-strung guitar. The land is wild, its people poor. But the minstrel gets by, singing for his supper, collecting and composing songs, and facing both the supernatural evils of the ancient mountains and the evil in the hearts of some men and women. The minstrel calls himself simply John, but others know him as John the Balladeer or Silver John.

John roves across the years and decades of the Twentieth Century, learning the strange, dangerous secrets of the hill country. Starving in “Sin’s Doorway,” he takes on the awful burden of the sin-eater’s existence. Magic lures him nearly to his own destruction in “Call Me from the Valley” and “Nine Yards of Other Cloth.” Sometimes, he travels to answer an old friend’s summons, as in “Old Devlins Was A-Waiting.” Other times, as in “The Desrick on Yandro,” John accompanies someone else drawn to a dreadful doom. Occasionally, as in “The Little Black Train,” he derails the deadly fate bearing down on another soul, though that soul earned the curse upon it.

The protagonist of Manly Wade Wellman’s collection *Who Fears the Devil?* isn’t just a minstrel. Silver John is a knight in shining armor, though his suit is worn working-man’s clothes and his sword and shield are a guitar. He’s a type not often seen in recent fiction: he’s a genuinely decent person, who does the right thing



because it’s the right thing to do. He’s old-fashioned, you could say, and his first-person narrative voice is a lyrical old Appalachian dialect. But he’s as important to modern fantasy as his literary son, the urban wizard Harry Dresden, and he’s just as deserving of your acquaintance. The best place to meet him is in the new Planet Stories release of *Who Fears the Devil? — The Complete Silver John*, which, at 21 tales, is the first genuinely complete edition. It includes, for the first time, the first two Silver John stories.



Manly Wade Wellman got his start in the quarter-of-a-cent-a-word pulps, and you could be forgiven, seeing some of his stuff from the 1930s and early 1940s, for thinking he was just another hack pulpster, perhaps a little more talented than most. But then came the Silver John stories, and the field realized there was a true literary artist inside Manly, one that had just been waiting for the right market (the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction) to come along. Am I exaggerating? He remains to this day the only science fiction writer ever to be nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in any field of literary endeavor.

—Mike Resnick

Haunted by the Spirit of the Rules

By Monte Cook

I remember running a game at a convention once. I had just started at TSR, and it was my first time running the world's most popular roleplaying game at a convention. This would have been around 1994, so it was 2nd edition—not that it really matters. One troublesome player seemed to have adopted as his goal to prove that he knew the game better than I did. Frankly, he probably did, for I hadn't played much 2nd Edition since about 1988.

Anyway, we got to the climactic encounter that I designed with a big red dragon. He announced with a look of snide pride that he casts *water breathing* on the dragon, that it gets no saving throw, and that it dies of suffocation. End of scenario. I told him to look up the spell and show me where it said that the dragon couldn't also breathe air while under the effects of the spell, knowing full well that it didn't say that. But then I told him that even if it did say that, I still wouldn't allow it because it wouldn't be in keeping with the spirit of the rules. Water breathing wasn't meant to be an offensive spell.

He looked at me like I was insane.

There will always be someone out there who looks at a roleplaying game as something to win and who thinks that the GM is an opponent to beat. Over time, when both of these goals grow old and likely seem a little silly, the rules themselves become the opponent to beat. Find a loophole that you can exploit within the rules—find

a combination of race/class/feat/item/whatever that no one has ever seen—and you win.

After more than 30 years of gaming, and more than 20 years of professional game design, I've got to say, I find that approach ultimately pointless. I mean, you can play however you want, but I'm a little bewildered by any appeal it offers. The rules are just guidelines to help you have a better game. They're not there to oppose you, they're there to help you have fun. If you break the game, you don't win. You lose.

What's more, it's not even an interesting challenge. No rules system can cover every situation and no game designer can conceive of every combination. You can't expect a game writer to outthink the entirety of his audience. Finding exploits in virtually any game isn't hard. The rare exception is usually a game so abstract or so imprecise that you can't pin it down which is one reason why some designers and gamers tend to lean toward such games later on in their careers.

I suppose it's like going to a special effects-laden movie to look for the wires, or reading historical fiction just to find the anachronisms. It's a strangely cynical and negative pursuit. It's also entirely missing the point.

The Point is to Have Fun

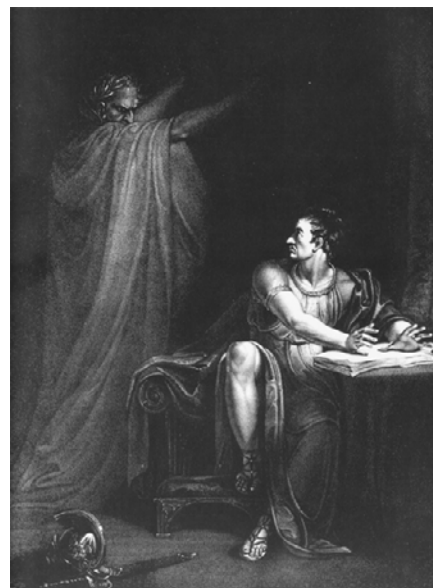
The spirit of the rules is far more important than the letter of the rules. The intent of the rules – whether to provide a believable simulation of

something or to provide a fun game experience (or, most likely, a bit of both) – is the gamer's friend, not foe. Looking for the shortcomings ruins the fun. Or, at the very least, allowing the shortcomings to actually affect the game ruins the fun.

Imagine if I'd allowed the *water breathing* guy to take out the dragon. Everyone at the table including me would have walked away thinking, "Well, that was kind of lame." The point of the game is to have fun. In effect, we all would have lost that particular round. Perhaps worse, we all would have gone home and played in our local campaigns and told everyone, "This game is kind of stupid. There's a 3rd level no-save death spell." That's the kind of thing that just gets people to stop playing altogether.

When you sit down at a table to play a roleplaying game—as opposed to some other kind of game—with your friends, you're engaging in a kind of social contract that extends beyond the rules. If you're playing *Scrabble*, you use the rules of the game and the chosen dictionary to define how you're going to play, but a roleplaying game is bigger than that because it uses your imagination as well as the game's rules.

With a roleplaying game, you're working together to build something: an adventure, a story, or just a series of challenges. The rules facilitate this endeavor. They're a starting point, a framework, and a shared reference, but that's all they are. From there, the group (usually, primarily the GM)



does what it needs to do to get the experience that they all want. If this means ignoring bad rules, glossing over complicated rules, or changing the rules as needed, so be it.

I'm neither denying that some RPG rules systems are better or worse than others nor contending that no one should criticize poorly done RPG rules. It's certainly not an excuse for RPG designers to ignore exploitable loopholes or rules problems; the less often the GM has to make a house rule or a judgment call that overrules a game-breaking predicament, the better.

Designers should worry about the letter of the rules, but gamers should worry about the spirit of the rules. They should focus on intention behind what's on the page and, more importantly, the intention of the people sitting around the table. Look at it this way: if an RPG is a play, the letter of the rules is the rigging, the lights, the stage, the curtains, and the sound system. This is all extraordinarily important, but it is all the stuff you're really not supposed to pay attention to. The spirit of the rules is woven into the story, the acting, the costumes, and all the other things that you're supposed to pay attention to—the reasons you came to the performance in the first place.

Consistency

Hopefully, at the very least, the rules are good enough that the group can develop some kind of consistency. Constant rules changes work against all the reasons for having them in the first place. The GM's role is that of final arbiter, but the arbiter should be anything but arbitrary.

Players need to make intelligent decisions over the course of play, and the only metric upon which they can weigh their options is with the rules. If a PC climbed a steep cliff two sessions ago and it wasn't too difficult, he has to be able to use that information when deciding whether or not to climb a steep cliff again somewhere else. The rules for those two similar situations need to be the same or there

needs to be a clear reason why not. If the GM makes an ad hoc ruling that climbing a cliff is harder now than it was before, not only does the game lose believability, it removes the player's ability to make meaningful choices. Without either of those things—particularly the latter—what's the point of playing an RPG at all?

But the issue here is not really just a rules issue. It's a rules-as-channeled-through-the-rulings-of-the-GM issue. There's a reason why the title is *Game Master* and not *Game Read-Out-Louder*. There's more to it than just reading the rules out loud. The GM's duties involve interpreting the rules, managing the game, and keeping things fun and playable. The rules are a good tool for this, but so are things like a good sense of fair play and the ability to make things enjoyable for all concerned. Someone with those qualities isn't going to allow a simple goof in a rulebook to ruin the game.

More than just the GM

However, the responsibility of keeping things enjoyable shouldn't fall only on the shoulders of the GM. Everyone sitting around the table should focus on the spirit of the rules and the real point of the game. When a player comes to the table with a character that doesn't fit, either because of theme or because the rules-as-written make the character unbalanced with everyone else, no one—not that player nor anyone else in the group—should complain if the GM requests some changes be made. A good player should want to fit in with the rest of the group, with the setting at hand, and with a set of mutually-agreed upon rules that everyone can enjoy.

Getting one over on the GM, on the rest of the players, or on the game itself, is a pointless and rather immature goal. It's not a formula for long-term play. Everyone in the group should not only avoid this kind of behavior but should discourage it in others. That attitude comes from, and is appropriate to, competitive gameplay. It's great for *Magic: the*

Gathering, chess, or whatever. It's antithetical to roleplaying games.

It should hardly need to be said, but sometimes, I think a reminder is in order for some players (and GMs): no one wins an RPG. There's simply no upside to finding a way to "win" an unwinnable game. The game has no victory conditions and offers no reward for winning. Roleplaying games reward fun, story, simulation, believability, cooperation, interaction, overcoming challenges, and character development (all to varying degrees, depending on the game).

Whether you've sat down to play this game because you wanted 1) a shared storytelling experience or 2) a tactical simulation of combat with monsters and other challenges (or a bit of both), it's the spirit of the rules that will get you what you want. If someone were to ask you, "Why do you play this game?" your answer lies the heart of the spirit of the rules. It can vary from game to game, but whatever it is—that's what's important. Don't let the letter of the rules distract you from that.

Thus, interpreting the spirit of the rules is far more important than keeping to the letter of the rules. If some quirk of the game allows weaker characters an equal or better chance to break open a locked box than strong characters, for example, the players and the GM should all find a way around that situation. It's clearly not what was intended (unless there's something purposefully odd going on), and everyone should either simply ignore the problem or come up with a solution. The solution might be an ad hoc ruling from the GM or a house rule everyone agrees on. The best rule of thumb is, if it's likely to be a one-time, corner-case situation, ignore it. If it's clearly going to be a problem later too, work something out.

If you then feel the need to go to the internet and point out how foolish the designer is, that's fine. The important thing is, it doesn't ruin your *game*.

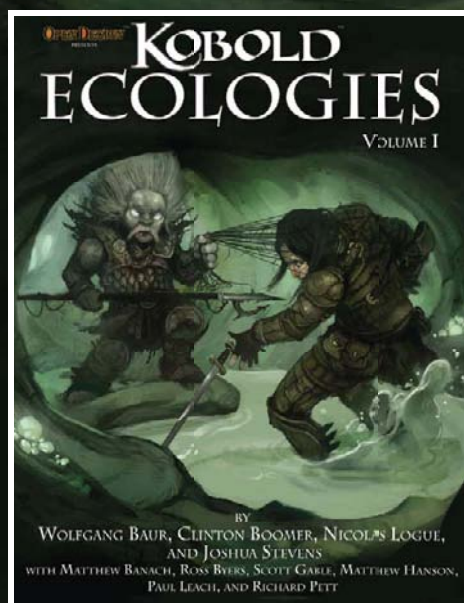


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Wishing Well

By Garrett Baumgartner

Art by Olaus Magnus



Words have undeniable power. So ingrained are concepts like the power inherent in a name or the authority vested in a command, it is only natural that the first thing most people think of when magic comes to mind is elaborate ritual speech. To speak and have reality conform to your words is the very essence of magic. That is the power of the wish.

Wishes have a long tradition in fantasy, and with the right tools, they can play a vital role in your game. After all, what would an Arabian Nights campaign be without wish-granting genies?

Awarding Wishes

For each of the three tiers—heroic, paragon, and epic—there is a corresponding tier of wishes. The first and least powerful is Limited Wish (at heroic tier), usually referred to in character as a *boon*. It is joined by Greater Wish (at paragon tier), or *marvel*, and True Wish (at epic tier), or *miracle*. Collectively, however, they are all referred to simply as wishes.

Though wishes are powerful and versatile, mitigating their impact on your campaign is easy. They are equivalent to treasure and can be awarded as such, taking the place of money or magical items when you prepare treasure parcels. When no restrictions on their use are in effect, a *boon* is equivalent to a 10th level permanent item (5,000 gp), a *marvel* is equivalent to a 20th level item (125,000 gp), and a *miracle* is equivalent to a 30th level item (3,125,000 gp). However, many if not most wishes do come with some kind of strings attached.

Some wishes are less useful. Any wish that must be used immediately, such as one granted by a fey lord to the mortals whom save him, is less flexible than one that can be reserved for a desperate moment.

Some wishes are dangerous. Any wish that always has the worst possible effect, twisting the exact words used to invoke it against the wisher, is a double-edged sword and therefore hard to use.

Some wishes are costly. Any wish that you must expend an action point to invoke or must sacrifice a magic item of at least the same tier to empower is expensive to use.

Major restrictions like the examples above impact the

value of a wish, reducing its effective level by 1 each for the purpose of pricing it. Minor restrictions, like wishes usable only while bloodied or by moonlight, don't merit reductions because it's too easy to meet the requirements. Multiple minor restrictions are still minor and don't merit a reduction together, unless their demands conflict or otherwise become onerous.

No amount of restrictions can reduce a wish's effective level by more than 2.

Adjudicating Wishes

Using a wish is a minor action. When invoking a wish, the player should describe what is desired, and you as the GM should fulfill that request to the extent that it lies within the wish's power. Wishes made “in character” and free of metagame language should be encouraged and favorably interpreted, despite being inherently less precise. Where applicable, a wish has a range of 20 squares as a *boon*, 10 miles as a *marvel*, or anywhere in the multiverse as a *miracle*. Line of sight and line of effect do not apply—you need only accurately describe the intended target(s).

Many things a wish can accomplish are detailed below. Rather than separate lists for *boons*, *marvels*, and *miracles*, this list contains the kinds of effects a wish might enable. Differences between tiers are listed in each section.

Ability and Skill Checks

A *boon* can grant a result of 40 on a single ability check or skill check. Alternatively, it can grant a 30 on up to 5 separate checks needed to advance or resolve a skill challenge or similar situation.

A *marvel* grants as above with a +10 bonus, and a *miracle* grants as above with a +20 bonus.

Extra Power

A *boon* can permanently grant access to an extra encounter attack power, daily attack power, or utility power of 10th level or less that you have access to and are high enough in level to use but do not presently know. This functions like a wizard's spellbook. After an extended rest, you choose what powers to have available in your available “power slots” of that type and of that level or higher. For example, at 7th

level you could know three 3rd-level encounter attack powers and prepare any two—one in your 3rd-level slot and another in your 7th-level slot.

A *marvel* grants a power of 20th level or less, as specified above. Alternatively, you can learn an extra 1st-level at-will attack power, which you must prepare to use as noted above.

A *miracle* grants any power of 30th level or less as noted above, even if does not come from your own race, class, paragon path, or epic destiny.

Unlike a wish made for personal change, as described later in the article, the power gained in this way is not immediately available. You must take an extended rest and contemplate your expanded abilities before you can prepare the new power.

Generating Wealth

A *boon* can create up to 1,000 gp in any combination of money, objects, construction, residuum, and other property, including mounts and magic items of up to 5th level. If more is wished for, the wisher becomes aware of the direction to the nearest treasure of that type.

A *marvel* can produce up to 25,000 gp, including mounts and items up to 15th level. Wishing for more informs the wisher exactly where to find the nearest treasure of that type and, at the wisher's option, opens a Linked Portal to its nearest teleportation circle for 5 rounds; this decision must be made immediately or the opportunity is lost. A *marvel* can also transform existing wealth or items of any value into other desired objects of equal or lesser value.

A *miracle* can produce up to 625,000 gp, including mounts and items up to 25th level. Wishing for more gives complete information about the nearest qualifying treasure, including knowledge about its owners and guardians and can, if desired, open a True Portal directly to its location for 5 rounds.

Innate Magic

A *marvel* can give you the powers and properties of a non-consumable heroic-tier magic item without taking

up a body slot, while a *miracle* can do the same for paragon-tier items. You can hold one item per tier in this way. Remember that enhancement and other named bonuses don't stack.

Weapons and implements so invested are treated as being held in additional hands generated for this purpose, and when you attack, you can treat the weapon or implement you attack with as having the powers and properties of one of these invested items in place of its own, regardless of item type.

Luck

If you wish for luck before making an attack roll or a single saving throw, ability check, or skill check, you get a +5 bonus from a *boon*, +10 from a *marvel*, or +15 from a *miracle*. You retroactively take 10 on the roll if it is less than 10.

You can wish for luck on a skill challenge as well. In this case, the bonus is +0 for a *boon*, +5 for a *marvel*, or +10 for a *miracle*, but the bonus applies for up to 5 related checks, as does the ability to retroactively take 10 on those checks.

More Wishes

A *marvel* can grant up to 5 *boons* which are held in reserve to be used whenever desired. A *miracle* can be used similarly to gain 5 *marvels*, which at the wisher's option can be distributed among up to 5 beneficiaries anywhere in the multiverse.

More generally, a *marvel* can produce the same effects as up to 5 *boons* simultaneously to resolve a complex wish, while a *miracle* can emulate 5 *marvels* at once.

Personal Change

A *boon* grants one instantaneous revision of any sort that you can legally make when your player character gains a level. Expended powers changed in this way are recharged.

A *marvel* can change a major aspect of your character. You can change your paragon path or epic destiny, replacing all dependent powers and features. You can change your race, losing the features of your birth race and gaining

the abilities of the new race in their stead, while also exchanging any feats, paragon paths, or other features based on the old race. With one wish, you can swap two ability scores, exchange one class feature for another (such as dragon sorcery in place of storm sorcery), and change up to 5 powers or feats as a *boon* could. Other changes are per GM discretion.

A *miracle* can rewrite any or all of your character sheet on the spot, granting the benefits of an extended rest in the process. The GM is encouraged to restrict this use to between sessions unless the player has already made the new character sheet in advance. The new character must still be legal, with some exceptions. Up to 5 feats and powers per *miracle* may be taken from any class with the same power source (such as arcane) or role (such as leader) without regard to racial prerequisites, if all other prerequisites are met. Up to 1 class, paragon path, or epic destiny feature per *miracle* can be exchanged with the same strictures, but a “feature” with multiple named “sub-features”—such as a sorcerer's dragon magic—is actually treated as multiple separate features.

Ritual Casting

A *boon* can duplicate any ritual of 10th level or lower other than Enchant Magic Item, assuming the combined cost in gold to both purchase and cast the ritual doesn't exceed 1,800 gp. Healing surge costs must still be paid by the wisher. The wish costs a daily item power use if the emulated ritual usually takes an hour or longer to cast. The ritual's effects are enacted instantly with a result of 30 on any required skill checks.

A *marvel* is as above but emulates up to 20th level rituals with a check result of 40 and costs limited to 45,000 gp; a *miracle* emulates up to 30th level rituals with a check result of 50 and costs limited to 1,125,000 gp.

Simulated Powers

A *boon* can duplicate the effect of any character, item, or monster power of 10th level or lower or simultaneously

unleash two 1st-level at-will attack powers. It gets a result of 30 with each attack roll. It never gets a critical hit. It has all ability modifiers at +5 to resolve damage and other effects. Your wish takes the same action (usually standard) as the powers emulated.

To copy a daily power or a solo monster's encounter or recharge powers, the affected PC must expend a daily item power use. You can copy a sustainable power but must use your own actions to sustain it. A monster's aura can be wished for as a minor action and lasts until the end of your next turn unless sustained as a minor action.

A *marvel* can emulate up to 20th-level powers, or make 1st-level at-will attacks as if it was 21st level, or create a heroic-tier aura or sustained power and freely sustain it for 5 minutes. It gets attack totals of 40 and has all ability modifiers at +7.

A *miracle* copies up to 30th-level powers, emulates up to four 1st-level at-will attack powers at once, or sustains up to 20th level powers. It gets attack totals of 50 and has all ability modifiers at +10.

Other Effects

At the GM's discretion, any other effect might be granted that is in line with the above.

Symbols of Power

Rare though they are, objects exist which can grant to a mortal will the power over pure possibility. Following is only a small representation of the relics that a character might stumble across. In most campaigns, creating such items is the province of creatures beyond mortal ken, and PCs cannot make them.

Charm of Favor Level 10+

Wrought of sacred materials, some whisper that these relics are crafted by the hands of the gods themselves.

Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp
Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Implement (Holy Symbol)

Enhancement Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical +1d6 damage per plus

Power (Consumable, Daily) Minor action. Break the charm, destroying it, and make a wish granted by the deity it represents. If you have been a faithful servant of that god and the wish advances the interests of that god, the wish is granted as a *boon*. Even a non-worshipper's wish may be granted if aligned with the god's goals, such as keeping its followers alive. If you are an enemy of that god or your wish is offensive to it, you are struck with a 10th-level curse bestowing a -2 penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, and checks (which lasts until Remove Affliction is cast). Otherwise, there is no effect.

Level 20 Wish is a *marvel*, curse is 20th level and -3 penalty

Level 30 Wish is a *miracle*, curse is 30th level and -4 penalty

Elixir of Omnipotence Level 28

Distilled from the commingled blood of a god and a primordial, this incandescent red philter grants a measure of supreme power to even the lowliest mortal.

Potion 2,125,000 gp

Power (Consumable) Minor action.

Imbibe this potion to fall into a deep trance from which you cannot be roused by any means; even mortal injury will not suffice to wake you.

A powerful vision comes upon you, which you must describe to the GM. If still alive 24 hours later, you wake with the benefits of an extended rest, and your vision is fulfilled to the best capabilities of a *miracle* at the GM's discretion.

If you do not wish to fall asleep, you can attempt a saving throw with a +5 bonus. On a success, you remain awake but receive only a *marvel*, which must be used immediately as a free action.

Ring of Three Wishes Level 23

This ring of mithral and celestial gold is set with three chaos rubies, which

glow according to the number of wishes remaining within it.

Item Slot Ring 425,000 gp

Power (Daily) Minor or greater action.

Make a wish, which is granted as a *marvel*, and deduct 125,000 gp from the value of the ring. When you reach a milestone, this power recharges. Once all three wishes have been expended, the ring is a nonmagical art object worth 50,000 gp.

Wishmaster

The legends and lore of many cultures feature beings granting wishes to mortals. Sometimes they do this because they have been bound to do so, and sometimes they do it in the service of their own inscrutable desires and goals. One common thread, however, is that the mortal who would bargain with such a being must be careful indeed, especially if the creature was yoked to its task unwillingly. Such entities are renowned for twisting poorly worded wishes into curses their erstwhile masters quickly come to regret.

Wishmaster is a template you can apply to any non-minion creature of non-natural origin and at least 5th level that can understand language. Most, but certainly not all, are genies, devils, angels, and fey. As no wishmaster can grant their own wishes, they are typically found with allies who can benefit from their power in battle.

You should plan ahead as to whether any requests for magic items will be made by the creature's allies. These become loot when the party triumphs, and should be accounted for in your assignment of treasure parcels. Don't worry about consumable items, since they are weaker than permanent items and will mostly be used against the party anyway.

Wishmaster Elite Any (Leader)

Any non-natural XP Elite

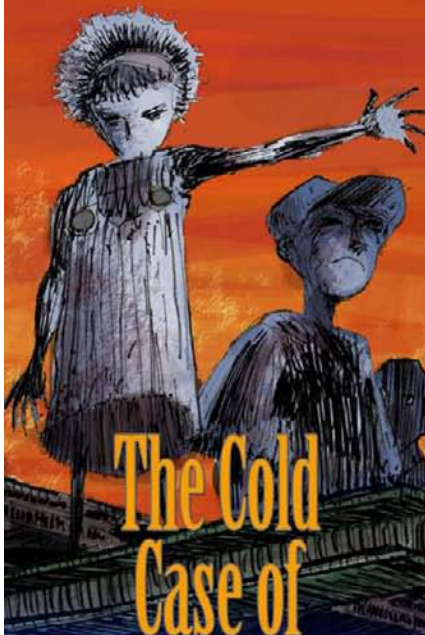
Saving Throws +2

Action Points 1

Hit Points None additional

Wish Granting (free action, once per round when a creature within 20 squares makes a wish as a minor or

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other action appropriate to the wish; at will)

The wish is fulfilled in any way the wishmaster desires within the limits of its power, but it must obey the exact wording of the wish. The wishmaster is not obligated to fulfill the spirit of the wish; even one who willingly grants an ally's wish may interpret it differently than was intended, if it chooses. A wishmaster of 5th to 14th level can grant *boons*, one of 15th to 24th level can grant *marvels*, and one of 25th level or above can grant *miracles*.

A wishmaster cannot maintain more created treasure in existence than the price of a magic item of its level. When a wishmaster creates treasure past this limit, earlier items disappear. If not enough treasure can be unmade to

pay for the new treasure—perhaps the beneficiaries cleverly wished for it to be irrevocable—the old treasure must be found and destroyed the hard way.

No single creature can ever have more than three wishes granted by the same wishmaster. Any attempt by that wishmaster to grant a would-be beneficiary's fourth wish results in the immediate termination of all ongoing effects of that creature's wishes.

The wishmaster elite power cannot be granted as a simulated power by a boon, marvel, or miracle.



10x10 Toon

by Stan!



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Whack Jacks and Harpy Nets

New Weapons for Old Monsters

By Adam Daigle, Stefan Happ,
Tim Hitchcock, and Michael Kortés
Art by Tim Hitchcock

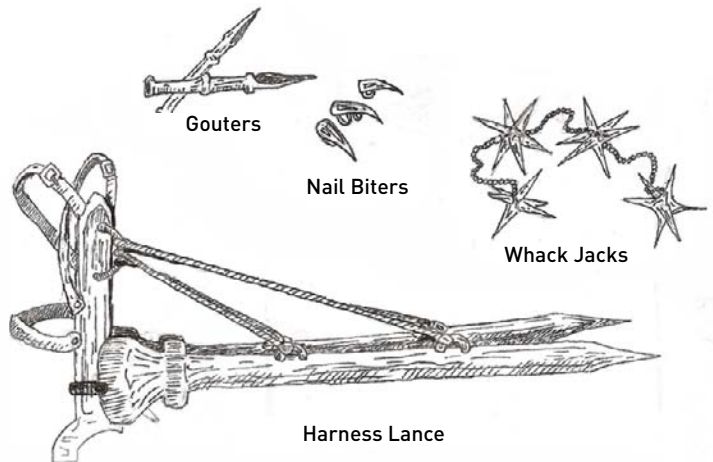
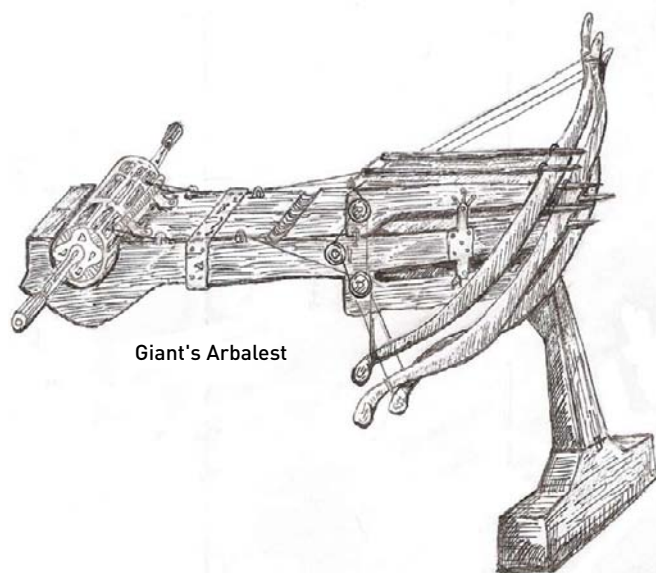
Though monsters have vastly different attributes and even appendages, they frequently arm themselves with the same weapons brought to the field of war by humans, elves, and dwarves. Often, a monster wields a variation of a classic weapon. Perhaps the blade is larger or the spear is made from bone, but the weapon itself is still essentially the same. Over time, however, monsters develop unique weapons that better match their individual combat attributes and reflect the monsters' alien cultures.

These 10 weapons are specifically designed for use by monstrous opponents. With new weapons to inspire new tactics, even the most classic of monsters may soon provide new combat challenges.

Giant's Arbalest (martial, ranged, two-handed)

Taking advantage of the giant's size and strength, this six-stringed mega-crossbow fires 6-ft. barbed bolts either six at a time or one at a time. Monstrous bowyers cut down young yew trees and bend them to an incredible draw strength. They then stack them up next to each other, vertically aligned, and connect the whole bow with strong oak and fine steel windlasses.

With their long fingers, the giants may engage all six triggers at once or selectively fire the individual bows one at a



time. Each extra shot adds a cumulative +2 volley bonus to the giant's attack roll (up to a total of a +10 bonus when the giant lets loose with the entire supply). A full-round action is required to re-load each shot individually.

Cost 175 gp; **Weight** 100 lb.; **Damage** 2d10+2 per shot (maximum +12) (L); **Critical** x3; **Range Increment** 200 ft. **Type** piercing; **Special** creature must be Large or greater with a minimum 25 Strength

Suggested Wielders fire giant, frost giant

Gouters (martial, as base weapon)

Made from sharpened hollow reeds, wood, or even metal, these 1-ft. spikes can be fitted into a club, the end of a spear shaft, or a similar device. The attacker then attempts to pound them into the opponent's flesh.

On a critical hit, the device detaches, becoming stuck in the target's flesh and forcing the wound open. The target bleeds like a sapped maple tree. The victim takes 2 points of damage per round until the gouter is removed with a successful DC 20 Heal check. Removing the device otherwise deals an additional 1d8 points of damage.

Cost 5 gp; **Weight** 1/2 lb.; **Damage** same as base weapon; **Critical** same as base weapon plus 1d2 per round until removed; **Type** piercing

Suggested Wielders bugbear, gnoll, grimlock, ogre, orc, troglodyte

Harness Lance (exotic, melee, no hands required)

Rather than wield lances in their arms, centaurs and other equine creatures may don this steel and leather harness and load it with a pair of war lances so that they spear out in front of his body. When using the charge action, a centaur may make a free attack against a single opponent with one of the war lances in the harness and still make a regular

melee attack against either the same or an adjacent opponent without penalty. Unlike a true lance, the harness lance does not have reach, though an equine creature using the harness treats itself as “mounted” and inflicts double damage on a successful charge.

Cost 175 gp; **Weight** 25 lb.;

Damage 1d8 (M); **Critical** x3; **Type** piercing; **Special** creature must have four legs and a torso to wield

Suggested Wielders centaur, lamia, lammasu, manticores

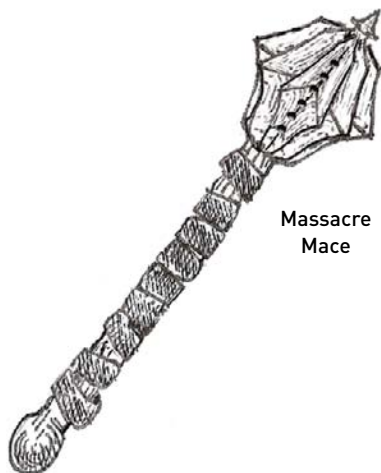
Massacre Mace (exotic, melee, one-handed)

This club has a hollow core filled with magnesium shavings. Small pores enable the powder to escape when smashed with force. Whenever the mace successfully strikes an armored opponent or a metal shield there is a 10% chance that the shavings will spark, igniting a brilliant flash (treat as a burst from a *shield of blinding*).

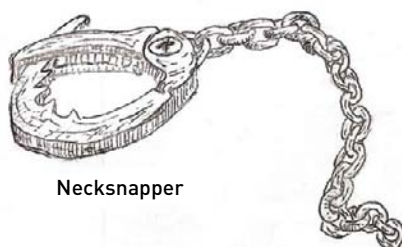
Once spent, the mace cannot flash again until it is reloaded, requiring a full-round action. Because the blinding flash affects friend and foe alike (including the wielder), the massacre mace has only found favor among blind warriors such as grimlocks and other creatures not dependent on sight.

Cost 36 gp (+50 gp for each load of magnesium); **Weight** 35 lb.; **Damage** 1d6 (S) 1d8 (M); **Critical** x2; **Type** bludgeoning

Suggested Wielders grimlock



Massacre Mace



Necksnapper

Necksnappers (exotic, melee, two-handed)

These insidious devices resemble a single giant wooden manacle attached to a short metal chain. Favored by large, brutish creatures, the attacker wields the cuff as a bludgeoning weapon, striking at the neck of a creature at least one size smaller. If the attacker beats the smaller defender’s armor class by 5 or more, the wooden cuff deals damage and then slams shut, locking around the victim’s neck.

The following round, with a solid tug of the chain (a successful trip attack), the wielder throws the victim to the ground causing a second plate within the cuff to slam down, potentially snapping the victim’s neck. The victim must succeed at a Fortitude save equal to the damage dealt. If the victim fails the save, the damage is tripled and the attacker knocks the victim prone, trapping him in the manacle.

Anyone trapped in a necksnapper manacle is entangled and cannot stand until they first escape (DC 25 Break, DC 20 Escape Artist, or DC 15 Open Lock). If the victim succeeds at their Fortitude save, the attacker still knocks the defender prone and traps them in the manacle, though the attacker only inflicts normal damage. On successive rounds, until the victim escapes the necksnapper, the attacker inflicts regular damage with an opposed grapple check. Once the wielder triggers the cuff’s plate, the wielder must use a full-round action to reset the necksnapper for use against another opponent.

Cost 85 gp; **Weight** 8 lb.; **Damage** 1d10 (L) 2d8 (H); **Critical** 19-20/see text; **Type** bludgeoning

Suggested Wielders athach, ettin, hill giant, ogre, troll

Nailbiters (simple, melee, light)

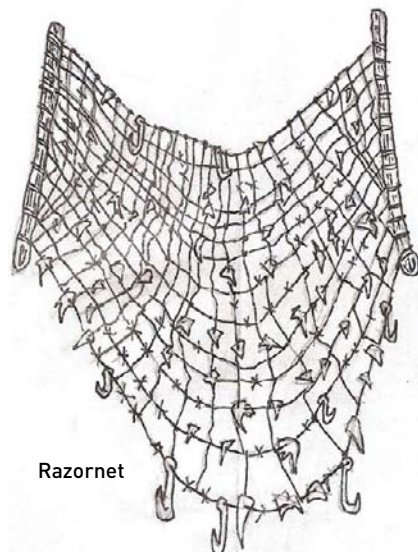
Similar to the specialized spurs used in cockfighting, sometimes villains provide their guardian beasts with distinctive form fitting weapons as well. These weapons sheathe a creature’s natural weapons with exotic materials such as adamantite or alchemical silver allowing those attacks to bypass appropriate types of damage reduction. Nailbiters are only fashioned for claw, talon, and bite attacks. Nailbiters, like any other weapon, may be enchanted. While using these, a creature may not benefit from any spell or effect that enhances their natural weapons such as *magic fang*.

Cost 15 gp plus special material; **Weight** 2 lb.; **Damage** as natural weapon damage; **Critical** x2; **Type** as natural attack

Suggested Wielders chimera, giant praying mantis, girallon, gray render

Razornets (martial, melee, two-handed)

Harpies and other intelligent flying creatures occasionally weave slender nets with long strands of sharpened metal and stone. These devices are used by suspending them between two individuals during flight. As a flyby attack, they swoop down and, like a fishing-trawler, scoop up creatures on the ground, entangling and lacerating them while lifting them back into the



Razornet

air. Of the two attackers, use the one with the highest base attack bonus to determine the success of the attack.

If the net hits, the attackers entangle their opponent and can lift the victim into the air delivering 2 points of damage per round. While entangled, the victim suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls and a -4 penalty to Dexterity. The victim can attempt to free himself from the net with a DC 15 Strength check; however, the victim may take falling damage.

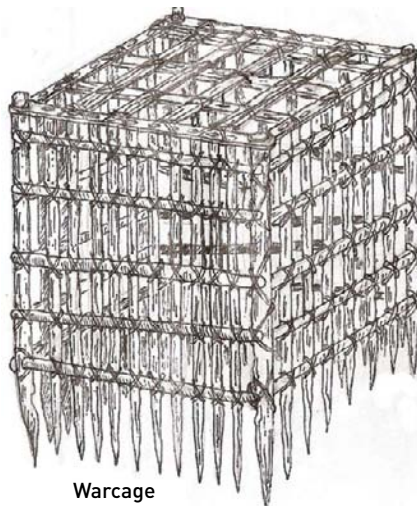
Cost 20 gp; **Weight** 10 lb.; **Damage** see description; **Critical** —; **Type** piercing and slashing; **Special** requires two flying attackers

Suggested Wielders avorial, erinyes, gargoyle, harpy, vrock

Warcage (martial, melee, two-handed)

Frustrated by particularly mobile opponents, some giants will carry this massive barred cube into battle for their opening assault. The cage has a single open side. This enables the giant to slam the cage over top of a Medium or smaller opponent, trapping his victim inside as the bladed poles of the cage spear into the dirt. The giant can either leave an imprisoned opponent for a future meal or step on the cage and pound it into the ground, crushing the victim into a pulp.

To trap an opponent, an attacker needs to make a successful attack against the target's square (AC 5). If successful, the target must make a Reflex save equal or greater than the attacker's attack roll. If the target succeeds, the target escapes, moving to the nearest space of choice outside of the cube. This movement does not draw an attack of opportunity. If the attacker traps the target, the cage covers the target's square, making it impossible for the target to exit without first succeeding on an opposed grapple check against the attacker (or a DC 30 Escape Artist check to squeeze out between the warcage's bars). By squishing the cage down on top of the target further, the attacker can inflict 1d10 points of damage plus the



Warcage

attacker's Strength bonus each round by succeeding on an opposed grapple check. The attacker itself, however, is not considered to be in a grapple and suffers no associated penalties.

Cost 450 gp; **Weight** 300 lb.; **Damage** see description; **Critical** x2; **Type** bludgeoning; **Special** creature must be Huge to wield; this weapon is ineffective indoors or against targets on stone surfaces

Suggested Wielders athach, cloud giant, titan

Whack Jacks (simple, melee, light)

These deviously barbed implements resemble deranged children's toys or caltrops chained together in a strand or web. Masters of crypts, dungeons, temples, and ruins keeping guardian oozes and aberrations outfit their often-mindless minions with these weapons. Some intelligent creatures found ways to employ these weapons by securing them to their tentacles. Whack jacks deal damage one die larger than the creature's normal slam or tentacle attack.

In addition, the attacks deal piercing, slashing, and bludgeoning damage, allowing the creature to bypass specific types of damage reduction. Craftsmen occasionally construct whack jacks from special materials and even enchant them to enhance the creature's attacks.

Cost 35 gp; **Weight** 15 lb.; **Damage** see text; **Critical** x3; **Type**

bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing
Suggested Wielders aboleth, grey ooze, ochre jelly, otyugh

Wrapping Chain (martial, melee, two-handed)

This 5-ft. staff is topped with a 10-ft. length of chain. The stick provides extra leverage to whip the chain, enabling an attacker to make trip attacks up to 10 ft. away. Wrapping chains are popular with pack hunters: if two wielders both flank a single target of a size equal to or smaller than themselves, and they both manage to strike the target in the same round, in addition to taking the listed damage, the target also gains the entangled condition. If three or more attackers each successfully flank and strike the same target, the victim is trapped between their interposing chains, reducing the victim's speed to 0 ft. To move again, the trapped victim must succeed in an opposed Strength check against the strongest attacker (as a move action). Once the attackers have trapped their victim, they can choose to either voluntarily retract their wrapping chains, ending the trap as they strike again, or maintain the trap, automatically inflicting half damage each round as they slowly pull their victim apart.

Cost 15 gp; **Weight** 12 lb.; **Damage** 1d4 (S) 1d6 (M); **Critical** x2; **Type** bludgeoning

Suggested Wielders gnoll, hobgoblin, kobold, lizardfolk



Wrapping Chain

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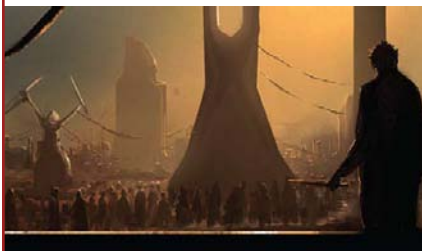
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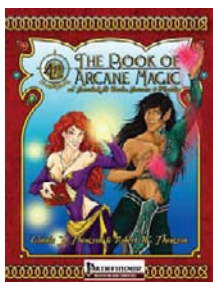
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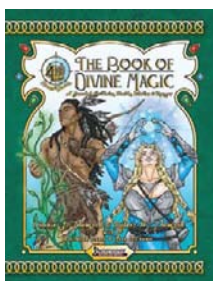
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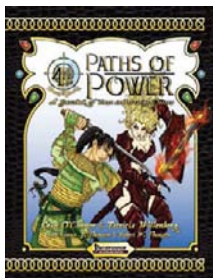
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Torture and Fear on the Tabletop

By Hank Woon

Art by Martin Disteli and Marc Radle



Game Master: *With an ominous chuckle, the tiefling throws back the soiled cloth, revealing an array of savage instruments with reddish-brown stains that coat the sharp, jagged steel and betray their sinister purpose. You squirm against your bindings as she lifts a pincer-like instrument with a measured slowness, grinning widely at your reaction.*

“Now my stubborn friend, you will tell me everything I want to know,” she purrs softly while approaching, snapping the pincers open and shut with a menacing cadence.

Player: *Whatever, I have 80 hp left. Bring it!*

There are many great dramatic moments throughout cinema and literature where a hero is faced with the unspeakable evils of torture, pitting willpower, conviction, and resolve against the antagonist’s cruel imagination. Recreating such moments in an RPG, however, often proves to be far less exciting. Typically, a GM finds himself suddenly playing the role of a director attempting to deal with a stubborn character actor:

Game Master: *No, no, no! You’re in a lot of pain! That would hurt so much you wouldn’t be able to think straight!*

Player: *But I still have 40 hp! What’s my motivation? Pfft, this is ridiculous. I’ll be in my trailer, calling my agent!*

Roleplaying mechanics are often at odds with the recreation of such grim simulation. The rules presented here, compatible with the **PATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME**, are designed to give GMs a tool to facilitate the sense of fear and anticipation between the moments of the torturer’s demand and the actual torture.

The first step when subjecting a character to torture is deciding on its severity: mild, moderate, or severe. The exact methods are left purposely abstract, allowing the use of any technique. For example, you may deem flogging as merely mild torture and the rack as moderate while some insidious form of magical torture is severe.

Once the method of torture is revealed to the character, place the torture table before the player. The message is simple: talk or roll.

Each table presents a number of various consequences; among them, some that are relatively innocuous, indicating the character’s chance of resisting the torture effectively. This

slim margin is what a player must decide against: talk or take a chance and roll?

In the above situation, let’s assume the tiefling is applying moderate torture to the obstinate character:

Game Master: *With an ominous chuckle, the tiefling throws back the soiled cloth, revealing an array of savage instruments. (Tosses the moderate torture chart down before the player.)*

Player: *Ummm.... (sizing up the chart)*

Game Master: *“Now my stubborn friend, you will tell me everything I want to know,” she purrs softly while approaching, snapping the pincers open and shut with a menacing cadence. (GM holds out a d12 for the player to roll, should he choose not to talk.)*

Player: *Ummm.... (Listens as the other players in the group frantically toss out their advice) I’ll... I’ll roll! (Snags the die and rolls a 4.)*

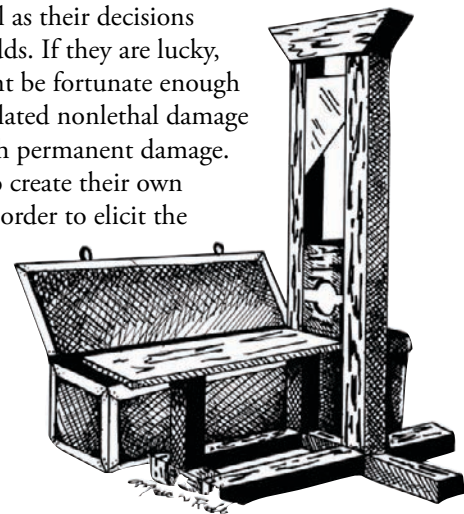
Game Master: *Ouch! You suffer 2 points of ability drain to your Charisma. The tiefling brutally yanks out your two front teeth with her cruel pliers!*

Player: *Aaagh!!!*

Game Master: *“Are you ready to talk, my darling?” she asks sweetly. (GM holds out another die.)*

While the ultimate goal of the NPC is to get the player to crack, this method allows players to participate in torture through their rolls as well as their decisions to heroically brave the odds. If they are lucky, obstinate characters might be fortunate enough to pass out from accumulated nonlethal damage before suffering too much permanent damage.

GMs are encouraged to create their own torture tables, though in order to elicit the desired psychological reaction from players, it should be noted that the tables must not seem impossible to beat—there should always be the sense, no matter how minor, of hope.



Mild Torture	
Roll 1d10	Effect
1	2 points of Strength drain ¹
2	1d10 points of nonlethal damage
3	1 point of Constitution damage
4	1 point of Dexterity damage
5	1d10 points of nonlethal damage
6	Deafened or blinded (GM's choice) for 1d3 days ²
7	1d10 points of damage
8	1 point of Strength damage
9	1 point of Dexterity drain ¹
10	1d10 points of nonlethal damage
Moderate Torture	
Roll 1d12	Effect
1	1d12 points of nonlethal damage
2	1d12 points of damage
3	2 points of Intelligence damage
4	2 points of Charisma drain ¹
5	Permanently blinded ²
6	2 points of Strength drain ¹
7	1 point of Constitution damage
8	1d12 points of nonlethal damage
9	2 points of Dexterity drain ¹
10	2 points of Wisdom damage
11	1 point of Charisma damage
12	1d12 points of nonlethal damage
Severe Torture	
Roll 1d20	Effect
1	4 points of Dexterity and Strength drain ^{1,3}
2	2 points of Constitution damage
3	2 points of Wisdom drain ¹
4	4 points of Strength drain ^{1,3}
5	3d4 points of nonlethal damage
6	Right or left hand permanently destroyed ^{2,3}
7	3d4 points of damage
8	1 point of Intelligence drain ¹
9	2 points of Strength drain ¹
10	2 points of Charisma drain ¹
11	Permanently blinded ²
12	1 point of Constitution drain ¹
13	4 points of Charisma damage ³
14	Permanently paralyzed from the waist down ^{2,3}
15	4 points of Dexterity damage ³
16	Permanently mute (tongue or voice box destroyed) ²
17	2 points of Constitution drain ¹
18	Permanently deafened ²
19	2 points of Intelligence drain ¹
20	3d4 points of nonlethal damage

¹Drain can be healed with spells such as *restoration* (Pathfinder RPG p.555) ²Roll if already rolled

³The player must succeed at a DC 19 Fortitude save or pass out for 1d6 hours.




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Same Rules, Different Treasure

By Ken Marable

Art by George Roux

With a game that has been played for decades, sometimes that classic magic wand or potion can suddenly seem ordinary, losing the awe and wonder hoped for in a fantasy game. To breathe new excitement into your magic items, you can create items that function the same but have drastically different looks and style.

Looks Matter

One way of changing things a bit is to describe the items as obviously race-specific. Magic weapons, for instance, are more memorable when the longbow is covered in elven script or the warhammer is made of a blessed stone from the wall of the fallen dwarven Hammerfist Hold—“By these stones true, let us never forget.” Or perhaps the flail is embedded with the bone shards of the gnolls’ victims and the daggers cobbled from the goblins’ filth-covered scrap metal.

Adding a little character can go a long way to making those *bracers of armor* more interesting than a simple bonus number. Players might even be encouraged to seek out (or avoid) items that fit a theme: a barbarian might only wear orcish items to use her enemy’s magic against them or an eladrin noble might never lower himself to use dwarven-crafted items. It can also lead to interesting clues and backstory. When the kobolds wield gnomish wands and staves, there is potentially more happening than what appears. Are they stolen? Does an evil gnome lead them? Did several kobolds witness gnomish crafting as captives?

Reinventing the Item Completely

You can also take it a step beyond just cosmetic changes. It’s possible to completely change what the item fundamentally is while leaving most, if not all, rule mechanics unchanged. As an example, look no further than psionic items. Changes can appear dramatic but actually be quite superficial. Crystal dorjes are nothing more than wands under a new name and shape. Although no longer doubling as a weapon, psicrowns are reworked staves, and even the bizarre living tattoos are mechanically identical to potions.

Below are three new examples of changing the flavor of magic items but leaving the mechanics largely unchanged. Any mechanical differences are noted and are relatively minor. Listed with each is the item slot it occupies. So from the *scyphoza of power* (staff of power) to the *giant eagle skull* (helm of the eagle), you can apply these general themes to



specific magic items based upon the slot.

Items of Smoke and Shadow (Umbral Legion)

The Umbral Legion operates in secret throughout the world, guided not by any hierarchy but by secrets hidden within darkness and flame. Divining their missions from seemingly meaningless patterns of smoke, they are difficult to predict and oppose. Even the members of the Umbral Legion themselves do not understand what force guides them and to what purpose. Still, they operate in the dark corners of society, harnessing the power of shadow and flame to explore the secret meaning behind these signs.

Obsidian Orb (orb/wand)—A fiery image of eye, hand, face, or other frightening visage flares up within this obsidian orb when active. If it has limited charges, it develops cracks as charges are expended, until crumbling to dust when fully discharged.

Silk Gloves (staff)—These black silk gloves have subtle patterns woven into them, signifying their magical power. Despite their delicate appearance, they also function as spiked gauntlets.

Shadow Tube (tome)—A series of stacked rings creates a hollow tube that light can shine through. Each ring has several spikes of various sizes and angles, so as the rings are turned and light shines through, the shadows form magical sigils revealing hidden knowledge.

Smolderstones (boots/gloves)—These small smoldering stones are warm to the touch and can be strapped onto your hands or feet. When activated, a stone flares up and produces a semi-solid smoke that encircles and trails behind the limb.

Monocle (ring)—This smoky glass monocle glows bright red when activated.

Ash stick (potion)—This rune-covered piece of burnt wood can be crumbled into fine ash and inhaled to gain its magical benefit.

Brazier (scroll/ritual)—When the proper incantation is spoken, this powder ignites, releasing the magic contained within.

Organic Items (Kraelcean Order)

The ancient and secretive Order of Kraelcea explores the forbidden magic of biomancy—the growing and shaping of lifeforms for magical purposes. Kraelceans have kept this form of magic alive in which simple symbiotic organisms are bred to act as magic items. Although disturbing to many,

biomancy is not inherently evil, and these items function identically to other magic items.

Giant's Eye (orb)—Gazing into this massive preserved eye grants visions beyond normal sight.

Tentacle (rod)—This sickly grey-green appendage covers your hand, writhing and pulsing when in use.

Scyphoza (staff)—This dully glowing jellyfish attaches itself to your arm, allowing you to channel the magic bred within it. Its tentacles wrap around your hand and twist into a thick mass that can be used as a club.

Palm Beetle (wand)—This 6-inch rainbow-hued beetle latches onto your palm.

Crab Shell (bracers)—Whether large enough to be a shield or merely bracers, these crab shells are bred to be extraordinarily strong.

Spare Eye (eye)—Often reptilian, this eye fuses itself into your skull, allowing improved sight.

Second Heart (necklace/amulet)—This disturbingly human-like heart is covered in small tentacles that burrow into your flesh to hold it in place and transfer its power.

Fingerbugs (ring)—This multicolored millipede wraps itself around a finger interlocking its legs securely. Different color patterns reveal its power.

Health Worm (belt)—This long pale worm wraps around your torso and draws out blood while secreting chemicals into your flesh that grant you extra health and strength.

Runic Ooze (scroll/ritual)—When stretched, magical runes appear within this leathery ooze.

Stinger (potion)—This palm-sized bladder injects its foul-smelling contents through a large stinger.

Primitive Items (Lost Tribes of the Moltec)

After the fall of the Moltec Empire, the survivors became xenophobic and isolated. They have carried on their traditions and avoided technological advancements such as blacksmithing. Therefore, their magic items are cruder and far more primitive yet still powerfully enchanted.

Bone Fetish (rod)—This large thighbone is covered in feathers.

Tepoztopilli (staff)—The head of this wooden spear has frighteningly sharp pieces of obsidian embedded along the edges. It functions as a spear when used as a weapon.

Clay Disk (wand)—This series of small clay disks dangle on a rope. When broken and the proper words spoken, the spell contained within each disk is released.

Skull (head)—The skulls of various giant animals are painted with sigils allowing it to be enchanted as a helm.

Piercing (ring)—From small splinters of bone to iron spikes, these are worn pierced through the ears, nose, lip, and various other body parts.

Eggshell (potion)—This shell is hollowed out and filled with a magical powder. Breaking it open casts the spell.

Knot (scroll/ritual)—These lengths of rope are knotted in intricate patterns that carry meaning only to those trained in the magical arts.

The possibilities are endless. To create your own, simply keep these guidelines in mind:

Staffs best double as some sort of weapon. This should be kept to simple weapons unless you extend proficiency with them to wizards and other classes that are frequent staff users.

Depending on the edition of the game you are playing, wands are either a utility for all of a character's magic, or have limited charges. Therefore, an item that gets used up over time can convey this idea well.

Body slots are best left as wearable items, although the physical location does not need to be as important as the theme. For example, neck items do not necessarily have to go around the characters' necks, but should somehow exemplify the theme of boosting defenses. Alternative waist slot items should fit a theme of boosting strength and healing regardless of where it is worn. Whether you explain it as chakras or arcane interference, two items of the same body slot do not function together even if they are physically worn in different places.

Rings should have some explanation

for the maximum of two. Whether it is hands, ears, eyes, arms, or even left/right sides, determine some reason for the two-ring maximum. This limitation may not be physical but, instead, could represent a "power overload" or some other explanation; however, physical limitations are typically the simplest and easiest to grasp.

Potions and scrolls are consumables. Potions should be usable by anyone, and scrolls should have some obscurity to their function. Therefore, make them both something that is destroyed or used up when activated: incense, candles, snapping a carved bone, for example. Potions should be clear in how they are activated.

Furthermore, each magic item slot need not have a unique style. You can pick a single theme for all items. For example, the monks of the Platinum Lion order tie ribbons inscribed with celestial words of power to their arms, legs, and forehead. In addition, some duergar clans enchant gemstones that attach to their skin; the kind of gem determines its item slot.

When developing a new style of magic items, you can take an existing exotic culture within your campaign setting and explore how they might use an entirely different style of magic item. Alternatively, you can work in the opposite direction and develop a unique version of magic items and then figure out what sort of culture would create such items. Why did they devise such items? Are they still around? What do other cultures think of these items?

As long as the magic items function the same, you can let your imagination run free to all sorts of possibilities. From clockwork items where interlocking gears are adjusted to release spells, to draconic taxidermy where the magical nature of the dragons is carried on in their scales, talons, teeth, wing skin, and internal organs. Even something as extreme as miniature 3-inch tall semi-intelligent demons that cling to you and cast their magic on your behalf can function as magic items. Anything is possible.



Monstrous Paragons

By Phillip Larwood

Art by Ben Hodson

While most paragon paths are exemplars of a particular class, some are specifically designed for a particular race. Most of the standard races have existing racial paragon paths, the more exotic or unsavory races, such as the bugbear and minotaur, do not.

So shine as a member of your race. Not only are you unusual because you are an adventurer, but you also represent the very peak of what your race can achieve, making you an exemplar of monsterkind. Many of your race will not understand your heroic behavior, but some might be inspired by your efforts.

Blood of Asterion

I am no mere dumb beast or demon's slave, human. I have the blood of Asterion flowing through my veins.

Prerequisite

Minotaur

Before the minotaurs turned to the demons of the Abyss for worship when their race was still young, they were led by an ancient and noble king named Asterion. Asterion was one of the first minotaur kings and dwelt within a huge labyrinth with his followers. However, Asterion's kingdom was lost to the annals of history when the bull-king was slain by a treacherous human prince. Though nothing remains of Asterion but ashes and memory, some minotaurs still carry his noble blood in their veins, and these rise above the evil deeds of their fellows.

You carry Asterion's ancient legacy in your blood, and others can see it in both your bearing and countenance. As you travel the path of the blood of Asterion you develop a furious bellow that can knock over your enemies, a drastic increase in size, and a range of mystical powers associated with labyrinths and mazes.

Blood of Asterion Path Features

Cunning Charge (11th level) Whenever you use your *goring charge* racial power in combat, you can shift a number of squares equal to your Wisdom modifier after the attack. In addition, any target struck by your *goring charge* racial power is also pushed a number of squares equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Mazewalker (11th level) Whenever you spend an action point to take an extra action, you also gain the phasing ability until the end of your next turn.

Scion of Asterion (16th level) Your size increases to Large and gain Reach. In addition, you also gain a +10 bonus to skill checks to determine direction, follow tracks or navigate while within a labyrinth, maze, or similar location.



Blood of Asterion Powers

Furious Bellow

Blood of Asterion Attack 11

You let loose a terrible rumbling cry that knocks your enemies off their feet and empowers you at the same time.

Encounter ✦ Thunder

Standard Action

Blast Close blast 3

Target All creatures in blast

Attack Constitution vs. AC

Hit 2d6 + Constitution modifier damage, and the target is knocked prone

Effect You gain one additional use of your *goring charge* racial power until the end of the encounter.

Asterion's Blessing

Blood of Asterion Utility 12

Asterion's spirit momentarily invests your body with the power to shrug off an injury and to cancel any condition that would slow your charge.

Daily ✦ Healing

Minor Action

Personal

Effect You can spend a healing surge to end any condition that specifically impedes your movement (such as slowed, immobilized, or restrained); this power does not allow you to end a grab, and it does not stop you from being pushed, pulled, or slid.

Blood Maze Curse

Blood of Asterion Attack 20

You carve a bloody swathe across your enemy's flesh, slicing a maze-like rune onto its body that forces it to move about as if navigating through an invisible labyrinth.

Daily ✦ Weapon

Standard Action

Melee Weapon

Target One creature

Attack Strength vs. AC

Hit 3[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you carve a mystical rune into the target's flesh (save ends); while so afflicted, you can choose to cancel any movement made by the target, and as an immediate interrupt, you can slide the target a number of squares equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Miss Half damage, and the rune lasts until the end of your next turn.

Dragonseeker

"My tribe weeps, bereft of its dragon, so I pursue a new one."

Prerequisite Kobold

Kobolds revere and serve dragons, treating them as if they were living gods. Indeed, many tribes of kobolds go out of their way to acquire a dragon overlord, not only for protection and better lodgings but, also, for prestige. And not all kobold tribes favor chromatic dragons—tales of unaligned or good kobold tribes worshipping copper or silver dragons is not unheard of.

Sometimes a tribe of kobolds loses its dragon due to unforeseen circumstances and sends out one or more of its members to acquire a new one. This search can often take a long time, and those kobolds that face the trials of the search for an appropriate dragon often earn the title dragonseeker.

You are a dragonseeker, a kobold champion whose powers lie in locating and bringing back a dragon for your tribe. As a dragonseeker, you possess the ability to sniff out dragons, create magical traps and snares, and protect yourself from dragons that may take your intentions the wrong way. Of course, you may also turn your skills toward destroying dragons for profit or vengeance, but this is likely to gain the enmity of any other kobolds you meet.

Dragonseeker Path Features

Dragonseeker Defense (11th level) When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you gain a +4 bonus to all of your defenses against blast and burst attacks, and you become immune to powers with the fear keyword until the end of your next turn.

Egg Hunter (11th level) You gain a +2 bonus to Diplomacy, Knowledge and Perception skill checks when dealing with dragons or reptiles. In addition, you gain a +2 bonus to saves against fear effects and a +1 bonus to your defenses against blast and burst attacks originating from a dragon or reptile.

Worm Taker (16th level) Your skill bonus from egg hunter increases to +6. In addition, any dragon or reptile struck by one of your encounter or daily powers is also immobilized until the end of your next turn.

Dragonseeker Powers

Dragonmaw Glyph

Dragonseeker Attack 11

You point at the floor and create an invisible glyph. As soon as an enemy walks upon the glyph, it flares to life, and a draconic maw of elemental energy appears to deliver a fearsome bite.

Encounter ⚔ **Varies, Zone**

Standard Action

Ranged 10

Effect You create a zone with an invisible glyph of elemental energy in an unoccupied square of your choice within 10 squares; the glyph lasts for a number of rounds equal to 1 + your Constitution or Dexterity modifier (if the glyph is not triggered before the duration expires, it dissipates without effect); against the first enemy that enters the zone, you can make the following attack

Attack Constitution or Dexterity +4 vs. Reflex

Hit 1d8 + Constitution or Dexterity modifier acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison damage

Level 21—Constitution or Dexterity +6 vs. Reflex

Sustain Minor You can slide the glyph 1 square.

Special When you gain this power, choose Constitution or Dexterity as the ability you use for attack and damage rolls with this power and for determining the power's duration. Each time you use this power you must choose whether it deals acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison damage.

Shelter of Scales

Dragonseeker Utility 12

Just as you are about to be struck by a blast of energy, a dome composed of translucent magical scales forms over your body to protect you from harm.

Encounter

Immediate Interrupt

Personal

Trigger You are targeted by an attack that uses the acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison keywords.



Effect You gain resist 5 + your Dexterity modifier against the incoming attack. If the attack originates from a dragon or reptile, you instead gain resist 10 + your Dexterity modifier against the incoming attack.

Net of Radiant Bonds Dragonseeker Attack 20

You fling a net of shimmering force and radiant light at your foe, hoping to entangle and subdue it. If you fail to hit the target, the net withdraws back into your hands, so you can fling it once again.

Daily ✦ **Force, Radiant, Reliable**

Standard Action **Ranged 5**

Target One enemy

Attack Constitution or Dexterity vs. Will

Hit 4d6 + Constitution or Dexterity modifier force and radiant damage, and the target is restrained (save ends)

Aftersave—The target is slowed (save ends)

Sustain Move While the target is restrained, you can pull it a number of squares equal to your Constitution or Dexterity modifier

Special When you gain this power, choose Constitution or Dexterity as the ability you use when making attack and damage rolls with this power and for determining how many squares you can drag the target.

Minister of Wrath

War is the greatest trial of the spirit. It is the forge which makes or breaks the soul, and I offer it my prayers.

Prerequisite Hobgoblin

Hobgoblins are bred for war; their entire lives revolve



around conflict. If anything, hobgoblins are happiest when they have a battle to fight or a war to wage, and some even worship the art of combat as a cleric might his god.

As a minister of wrath you are dedicated to the principles of combat and warfare, worshipping them with deep religious fervor. You treat every combat as a religious rite, and you proselytize to your companions and enemies in the midst of combat, granting your allies various benefits or filling your foes with supernatural dread. Often these powers will turn the tide of battle in your favor, and certainly, war is always sweetest for the victors.

Minister of Wrath Path Features

Wrathful Readiness (11th level) Your racial bonus to initiative checks increases to +6. In addition, you never grant combat advantage to enemies in the first round of combat or during a surprise round.

Wrathful Act (11th level) Whenever you spend an action point to take an extra action, you also grant a bonus to your allies' damage rolls equal to your Charisma modifier until the end of your next turn.

Battle Saint (16th level) Whenever you score a critical hit, a single adjacent ally can make a melee basic attack against the same target as an opportunity action. Your ally gains a bonus to this attack roll equal to your Charisma modifier.

Minister of Wrath Powers

Hymn of Wrath Minister of Wrath Attack 11

Your words ring with power, filling your enemies with despair as you point out all their flaws and failings.

Encounter ✦ **Fear**

Standard Action **Close burst 3**

Target Each enemy in burst

Attack Charisma vs. Will

Hit The target is dazed and takes a penalty to its attack rolls equal to 1 + your Charisma modifier until the end of your next turn

Prayer to Arms Minister of Wrath Utility 12

You say a prayer over your companions, rallying them to your side and briefly boosting their combat prowess.

Daily

Minor Action **Close burst 5**

Target Each ally in burst

Effect You pull target 2 squares, and target gains a +2 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Castigating Eulogy Minister of Wrath Attack 20

As one of your enemies falls in battle, you deliver a shocking eulogy which lays the blame for its death squarely on its allies' shoulders and fills them with such shame they cannot bear to face you in battle.

Daily ✦ Fear

Immediate Reaction Close burst 5

Trigger An enemy is reduced to 0 hp within 5 squares of one of its allies.

Target Each enemy in burst

Attack Charisma vs. Will

Hit The target is pushed 5 squares and immobilized until the end of its next turn.

Effect Until the end of the encounter, if an enemy is reduced to 0 hp, you can push the target 2 squares, and the target is immobilized until the end of its next turn

Shadowfur Hunter

I am the hunter, and you are the prey. What more is there to know?

Prerequisite Bugbear

Like your fellow bugbears, you are a hunter, but while they are fit only to hunt lesser animals, prancing elves and human rabble, you have a greater calling. You are a hunter unlike any other—a hunter of giant monsters, deadly wizards and fearsome fiends, a hunter as silent and deadly as the most fearsome apparition. You are the hunter that other bugbears can only dream of becoming.

As a shadowfur hunter, you develop supernatural powers of stealth, becoming almost translucent in areas of dim light or darkness, and you can vanish from your enemies' sight altogether. Like a rogue, you rely on powerful and deadly strikes to take down your enemies, and relish the opportunity to attack someone when they least expect it.

Shadowfur Hunter Path Features

Hunter's Vigor (11th level) You use d8's instead of d6's when determining the extra damage for your *predatory eye* racial power, and you gain a +4 racial bonus on Stealth checks.

Predation (11th level) Whenever you spend an action point to take an extra action, you also gain combat advantage against all enemies within 10 squares until the end of your next turn.

One with the Shadows (16th level) You can make Stealth checks while moving your full speed without penalty. In addition, when you end your movement in an area of dim light or darkness, you become insubstantial until the end of your next turn.

Shadowfur Hunter Powers

Fading Shadow Strike Shadowfur Hunter Attack 11

You strike out at your enemy then disappear into the shadows, leaving your enemy unable to determine your exact location.

Encounter ✦ Weapon

Standard Action Melee or Ranged Weapon

Target One creature

Attack Strength or Dexterity vs. AC

Hit 3[W] + Strength or Dexterity modifier damage, and you can shift 1 square and become invisible to the target until the end of your next turn.

Special When you gain this power, choose Strength or Dexterity as the ability you use when making attack and damage rolls with this power.

Hunter's Vision Shadowfur Hunter Utility 12

Your senses sharpen to match those of the finest predator.

Daily ✦ Stance

Minor Action

Personal

Effect Until the stance ends, you gain darkvision and blindsight 5.

Stalking Shadow Strike Shadowfur Hunter Attack 20

You strike a telling blow. From then on, whenever your enemy finds itself in darkness, you can approach to strike it once more.

Daily ✦ Weapon

Standard Action

Melee Weapon

Target One creature

Attack Strength or Dexterity vs. AC

Hit 4[W] + Strength or Dexterity modifier damage

Miss Half damage

Effect If the target begins its turn in an area of dim light or darkness, you can shift a number of squares equal to your Dexterity modifier toward it as an immediate reaction (this movement must always move you closer to the target). If you end your movement adjacent to the target, you make a melee basic attack against it as a free action.

Special: When you gain this power, choose Strength or Dexterity as the ability you use when making attack and damage rolls with this power.



Mysteries of the Philosopher's Stone

By Mario Podeschi

Art by David Teniers

The Great Arcanum has made him master of gold and light, which fundamentally are one thing; he has solved the quadrature of the circle; he directs perpetual motion; and he possesses the philosophical stone. Those who are adepts will understand me.

—Eliphas Levi, *The History of Magic*

The *philosopher's stone* has fascinated alchemists since the 16th Century. This fabled reagent, they said, could transmute lead into gold or conquer death. For many, the stone became an unhealthy obsession, as enigmatic a mystery as squaring the circle. Dozens of texts addressed the creation of the stone, and they contained not only formulae but also meditations on the nature of science, alchemy, and religion.

Tales of the *philosopher's stone* rarely focus on the stone itself; rather, it is the quest to create the stone that makes up the story. Yes, the stone is an interesting and powerful item, but it lacks the permanence that artifacts do. To destroy the stone, one needs only to expend it. In this way, it lacks the fictional weight of iconic fantasy artifacts.

The *Hermetic Arcanum* is the solution to this fault. This artifact focuses on the quest to create the *philosopher's stone* rather than the stone itself. The magical tome grants alchemical insights along the way, tempting its owner with a dangerous, counterintuitive shortcut to power. Eventually, its owner can attempt to construct the Stone, gaining an epic level reagent, the *philosopher's stone*.

While detailed for 4E rules, this artifact should prove inspirational for many other settings as well (see sidebar).

The Hermetic Arcanum (Artifact)

The *Hermetic Arcanum* is appropriate for paragon-level characters.

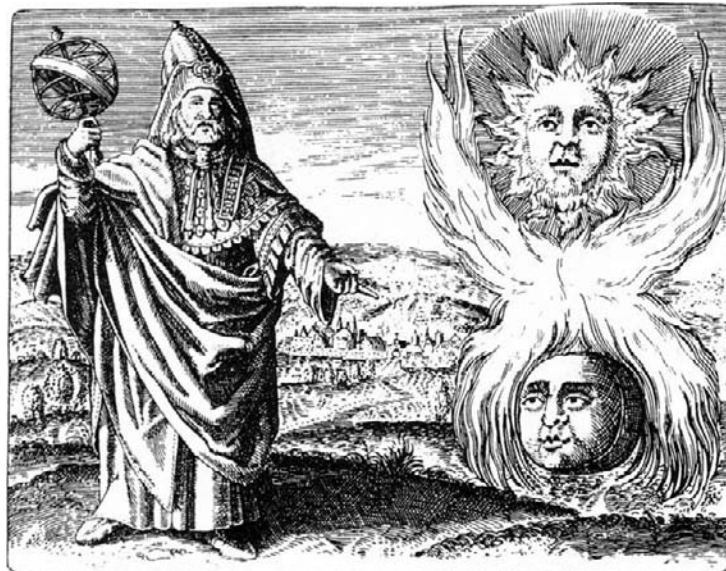
The Hermetic Arcanum

Paragon Level

Wizards are warned from an early age that the philosopher's stone is a dangerous myth. The formulae used in its construction are fundamentally flawed, defying some of the most basic principles of magic. This leather-bound collection of essays and research notes provides a serious yet incomplete description of its creation; its numerous authors offer profound commentary on the stone, alchemy, and the nature of magic itself.

The *Hermetic Arcanum* is a +4 tome.

Enhancement Attack and damage rolls



Critical +4d6 damage

Property You gain a +5 item bonus to identify potions and alchemical items.

Property You are considered 3 levels higher when creating items with the consumable keyword

Power (Daily ✦ Arcane) Standard Action

You perform a ritual to create an item with the consumable keyword, but you must still provide the necessary reagents

Goals of the Hermetic Arcanum

- ✦ Empower the mortal races to choose science over the gods
- ✦ Encourage its owner to master the arts of alchemy
- ✦ Create the *philosopher's stone*

Roleplaying the Hermetic Arcanum

The *Hermetic Arcanum* goes unheard by all but its current owner. Within its dizzying array of footnotes and commentaries is a voice both terrifying and brilliant, mad yet coldly rational. It is incomprehensible to the outside observer, and any attempt to explain its secrets are invariably discarded as gibberish.

Despite being a paragon-level item, the *Hermetic Arcanum* is essentially an incomplete epic ritual. Truly epic creatures—gods, archmages, and the like—quickly dismiss it as nonsense, a circuitous route to a power already within their grasp and a dangerous shortcut to a destination they have already reached.

Only paragon-tier arcanists have the appropriate mix of naïveté and expertise to be drawn to the *Hermetic Arcanum*. Its owners have been many, and each has added to it in some way through their recorded mathematical calculations, epiphanies, and dangerous experiments.

The ultimate goal of the *Hermetic Arcanum* is the creation of the *philosopher's stone*, an epic reagent. Many authors have contributed to this task, recording their meditations and experiments in margins and appendices. Collectively, these alchemists are known as the philosophers—partly

spiritual, partly scientific researchers who have also tasted the obsession that the stone represents.

Not only a collection of formulae and trials, the *Hermetic Arcanum* is also a philosophical treatise that dismisses the gods as beings whose superior power does not make them worthy of worship. “If we praise the gods for making the world,” one alchemist writes, “then why not build worlds ourselves?” The stressing of human ingenuity over divine power makes it a strictly agnostic document, and priests of most religions view it as a work of blasphemy. Even normally sympathetic faiths, such as those of the gods of secrecy and of knowledge, are strangely silent on whether the *Hermetic Arcanum* should be allowed to exist.

Concordance

Starting Score	5
Owner gains a level	+1d4
Owner publicly ridiculed for his belief in the <i>philosopher's stone</i> while refusing to recant	+2
Owner creates a consumable item of his level or higher (maximum 1/day)	+2
Owner has the Alchemist feat	+1
Owner has the Ritual Casting feat	+1
Owner rationally discusses the <i>Hermetic Arcanum</i> with an epic level creature trained in Arcana	-1
Owner uses a power from a divine power source (maximum 1/day)	-1
Owner successfully casts a divination ritual regarding the Arcanum	-2

Pleased (16–20)

“I have discovered the deepest secrets of the philosophers.”

At this point, the formulae have been all but mastered with many corrections and new insights added by you. The final experiment has taken shape in your mind, as well as the risks involved.

Property The *Hermetic Arcanum* is also considered a Craft Philosopher’s Stone ritual scroll. You cannot make scrolls of this ritual nor can you attempt to teach it to others by any means other than giving the *Hermetic Arcanum* to another person. The ritual can be attempted only once, at which point the artifact moves on (see below).

Property You are considered 30th level when creating items with the consumable keyword.

Satisfied (12–15)

“The secrets are at last becoming clear. My mastery of alchemy is unmatched in the mortal realm, yet still, I feel unready for the final challenge.”

The ritual for creating the *philosopher's stone* has taken a tangible shape in your mind, and you have begun recording your experiments and commentaries. You sense that the work is an unfinished masterpiece and suspect that you may

be the one to unleash its perfection.

Property The *Hermetic Arcanum's* enhancement bonus increases to +5.

Property You can create alchemical and magical items as if you have the Alchemist and Ritual Caster feats. If you already have these feats, you instead gain a +2 item bonus to your Arcana skill.

Property You are considered 5 levels higher when creating items with the consumable keyword.

Normal (5–11)

“This text is either a work of madness or genius. Perhaps it is both.”

When first discovered, the *Hermetic Arcanum* is fascinating but obtuse. You understand that the text is dangerous even though it promises great power.

Unsatisfied (1–4)

“Though this is a fascinating text on alchemical processes, its central argument seems like a childish dream. The stone itself is likely a hoax.”

You approach the *Hermetic Arcanum* with a healthy dose of skepticism, keenly aware of how it dismisses magic’s most fundamental rules.

Property You must spend an action point to use the *Hermetic Arcanum's* daily power.

Property You are considered 1 level higher when creating items with the consumable keyword.

Angered (0 or lower)

“The sages were right: these formulae are utter nonsense.”

Reading the *Hermetic Arcanum* is a painstaking task, and you consider the *philosopher's stone* to be a myth and nothing more.

Property You must have passed at least one milestone to use the *Hermetic Arcanum's* daily power.

Property You no longer gain any level bonus when creating items with the consumable keyword.

Moving On

“I have mastered the secrets of the philosophers, and it is time for greater truths.”

If the *Hermetic Arcanum* is perfected, it becomes a Craft Philosopher’s Stone ritual scroll. The process is specific to you, however, and each owner must create their own version of the ritual. The ritual can be conducted only once, and any attempt to replicate the process quickly prove fruitless. Once the ritual is cast (successfully or unsuccessfully), the text’s concordance score is permanently set to 0 with regard to you, but you can still use it as an implement until a better one comes along. At this point, it is a valued part of your library, a reminder of your successes along the path to more traditional arcane practices.

“I have burned the Hermetic Arcanum, and its madness has died with it.”

The *Hermetic Arcanum* is a contagious idea that the minds of mortals refuse to part with. It can be burned, ripped to

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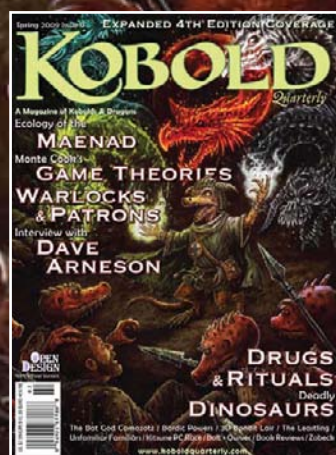
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shreds, or even disenchanting as a 16th level magic item. Indeed, several similar works have suffered such a fate in the past. However, a new treatise inevitably surfaces, found by yet another arcanist seduced by its mysteries. If the item is destroyed, a new text of different name but identical properties will surface somewhere in the world. The *Hermetic Arcanum* has thus far avoided such a fate.

Craft Philosopher's Stone (Ritual)

You distill the elements into their most pure form, creating a reagent of tremendous power: the philosopher's stone.

Level 30	Component Cost 125,000 gp (see text)
Category Creation	Market Price None
Time 1 hour	Key Skill Arcana
Duration Permanent until consumed	

You attempt to create one *philosopher's stone*. Your Arcana check determines your degree of success or failure.

Arcana Check Result	Effect
9 or lower	You die, and no item is created
10–24	You take damage equal to your maximum hp, and no item is created
25–39	You take damage equal to your bloodied value, and you create a <i>flawed philosopher's stone</i>
40 or higher	You take damage equal to your healing surge value, and you create a <i>philosopher's stone</i>

Instead of paying the component cost, you can substitute five consumable items, one each with the following keywords: acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder.

You can cast this ritual only once and only from a ritual scroll. It can be neither mastered nor reproduced in any way.

Philosopher's Stone Level 30

Crafted only by mad alchemists, the philosopher's stone is perhaps the most powerful reagent in existence.

Lvl 30 125,000 gp

Reagent

Power (Consumable) Free Action

Expend this reagent when you conduct a ritual. You can ignore the component cost of that ritual and treat all checks needed for the ritual as a natural 20.

Power (Consumable) Free Action

Expend this reagent when you use an attack power from an arcane power source up to 27th level, and treat your attack roll as a natural 20. You may spend a healing surge and you immediately gain an action point.

Flawed Philosopher's Stone Level 20

A poor imitation of the ultimate reagent, this is, nonetheless, a

useful tool to any arcanist.

Lvl 20 5,000 gp

Reagent

Power (Consumable) Free Action

Expend this reagent when you conduct a ritual of up to 17th level. You can ignore the component cost of this ritual.

Power (Consumable) Free Action

Expend this reagent when you use an attack power with the arcane keyword of up to 17th level, and make two attack rolls, using the better result.

Quest Ideas

- A speaker at a wizard's gathering is publically ridiculed for his belief in the *philosopher's stone*. He confides his secrets with a PC shortly before his death.
- The owner of an alchemist's shop starts stocking his shelf with drastically more powerful magical items, going hungry to pay for his overhead.
- A PC wizard assembles the *Hermetic Arcanum* as part of a skill challenge in a ruin of ancient wizards.
- An aging alchemist seeks undeath to continue his study of the *Hermetic Arcanum*.
- A servant of the goddess of knowledge and magic finds the *Hermetic Arcanum* in an evil mage's library. Though she knows her faith's policy on the text, the idea of burning any book is abhorrent to her.
- A genie hosts an auction to sell a *flawed philosopher's stone* created by his deva confidante.



Hermetic Arcanum in World of Darkness

The Philosopher's Stone, as an archaic real-world obsession, fits well into present day settings. For White Wolf's *New World of Darkness*, it fits very well as a unique artifact. The following are several recommendations for adapting the *Hermetic Arcanum* into a *Mage: The Ascension* campaign.

- The *Hermetic Arcanum* represents the Invisible Truth of Mastigos' enlightenment.
- The Philosopher's Stone is an alchemically created Tass, the physical form of quintessence.
- Unlike most magic that deals with raw quintessence, the Stone is created using Forces, not Prime. For most Mages, this is considered heresy, foolishness, or both.
- The Hermetic Arcanum grants +1 die to any Forces magic that attempts to change one energy type into another.
- To magnify the ramifications of the Stone's hubris, the quintessence itself could be polluted, causing great strain on those who absorb and manipulate its magic.
- The sacraments necessary for the extended spellcasting are Tass that take the form of the four elements.
- The ritual to craft the Stone uses Intelligence + Occult + Forces vs. a complex TN.
- Casting the ritual requires a roll of 5 paradox dice with paradox effects from Bedlam to Branding.

The Spell-less Ranger

A PATHFINDER Roleplaying Game

Base Class

By Marc Radle

Art by Ben Hodson and Marc Radel



“Aragorn Didn’t Cast Spells”

The Pathfinder ranger is an excellent take on this popular class. There remains, however, one element of the class which some feel just never quite fit: Spells.

The following variant class has no spell casting ability. To compensate for this, the class gains specialized ranger talents (similar to Rogue talents) and a stealth attack which can be used only in a favored terrain or against a favored enemy. A few additional class abilities are also included, most notably nature’s healing, which allows the ranger to use his Heal skill with better results when in a favored environment.

Finally, new ranger feats and a Ranger Tracking Sheet are also included. While these are obviously designed for use with this alternate ranger class, both the feats and the Tracking sheet also work well with the standard Pathfinder ranger or 3.5 ranger. As an added bonus, thanks to the new Pathfinder unified animal companion rules, the animal companion side of the ranger tracking sheet could just as easily be used for a druid’s animal companion, a paladin’s mount or even a wizard’s or sorcerer’s familiar.

Alignment any

Hit Die d10

Class Skills

The ranger’s class skills are Acrobatics (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Perception (Wis), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Stealth (Dex), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str).

Skill Ranks per Level 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the ranger.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency A ranger is proficient with all simple and martial weapons and with light armor and shields (except tower shields).

Favored Enemy (Ex) See the “Ranger” section in Chapter 3 of the *PATHFINDER Roleplaying Game*.

Track (Ex) See the “Ranger” section in Chapter 3 of the *PATHFINDER Roleplaying Game*.

Wild Empathy (Ex) See the “Ranger” section in Chapter 3

of the *PATHFINDER Roleplaying Game*.

Stealth Attack If a ranger can catch an opponent when he is unable to defend himself effectively from his attack, he can strike a vital spot for extra damage. The ranger’s attack deals extra damage any time his target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when the ranger flanks his target. This extra damage is 1d6 at 2nd level, and it increases by 1d6 every four ranger levels thereafter. Should the ranger score a critical hit with a stealth attack, this extra damage is not multiplied. Ranged attacks can count as stealth attacks only if the target is within 30 ft. Stealth attacks are possible only when the ranger wears light or no armor. A ranger may only use this ability while in a favored terrain or against a favored enemy.

Combat Style Feat (Ex) See the “Ranger” section in Chapter 3 of the *PATHFINDER Roleplaying Game*.

Endurance See the “Ranger” section in Chapter 3 of the *PATHFINDER Roleplaying Game*.

Nature’s Healing (Ex) Beginning at 3rd level, the ranger gains a +2 bonus to Heal skill checks. If he can beat the appropriate Heal DC check, the ranger heals an additional 1d6 hit points of damage plus 1 for every three ranger levels. Nature’s healing can only be used when a ranger is in one of his favored terrains. A ranger does not need a Healer’s Kit in order to use this ability.

Favored Terrain (Ex) See the “Ranger” section in Chapter 3 of the *PATHFINDER Roleplaying Game*.

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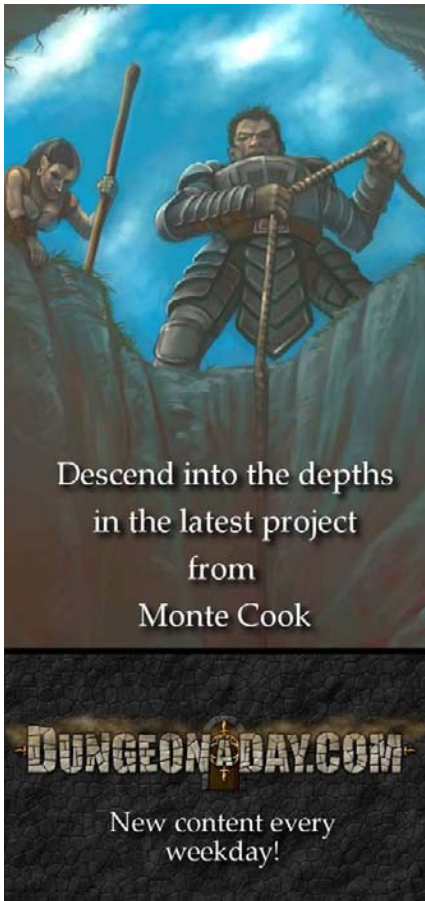
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Hunter's Bond (Ex) See the "Ranger" section in Chapter 3 of the *PATHFINDER Roleplaying Game*.

Ranger Talent As a ranger gains experience, he learns a number of talents that aid him in combat and help him survive in the wilds.

At 4th level, a ranger gains one ranger talent. He gains additional ranger talents as he increases in level. A ranger cannot select an individual talent more than once.

Additional Animal Companion (Ex) A ranger with this ability may select an additional animal companion. In addition, the ranger's effective druid level when selecting this companion is equal to his ranger level.

Low-Light Vision (Ex) A ranger with this ability gains low-light vision. If he already has low-light vision, this ability has no additional effect.

Favored Enemy Critical (Ex) When scoring a critical threat on one of your favored enemies, gain +4 bonus to the roll made to confirm the critical.

Trap Finding (Ex) When in a favored

terrain, a ranger with this ability can use the Perception skill to locate traps (see rogue).

Trackless Step (Ex) When desired, a ranger with this ability leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked. A ranger can also track others possessing the Trackless Step ability when in one of his Favored Terrains, but suffers a -10 to the check.

Improved Nature's Healing (Ex) A ranger with this ability uses his total ranger levels to calculate additional hit points healed, instead of the standard one hit point per three ranger levels.

Improved Tracking (Ex) A ranger with this ability adds his ranger level to Survival skill checks made to follow or identify tracks. If he exceeds the DC by 10 or more, he can learn additional information about his prey (including number and type of creatures tracked etc.)

Ranger Feat Instead of a talent, the ranger may choose a feat that he qualifies for from his chosen combat style or from the following list : Additional Favored Terrain*, Additional Favored

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Enemy*, Animal Affinity, Athletic, Dodge, Diehard, Favored Terrain Expert*, Nimble Moves, Run, Self-Sufficient, Stealthy, Toughness (an asterisk * indicates a new feat outlined below).

Fast Movement (Ex) When in a Favored Terrain, a ranger's base speed increases by +10 ft. at 5th level. At 12th level, this bonus increases to +20 ft. These bonuses apply only when the ranger wears light or no armor.

Woodland Stride (Ex) Ω

Swift Tracker (Ex) Ω

Evasion (Ex) Ω

Quarry (Ex) Ω

Camouflage (Ex) Ω

Improved Evasion (Ex) Ω

Hide in Plain Sight (Ex) Ω

Improved Quarry (Ex) Ω

Master Hunter (Ex) Ω

New Ranger Feats

Additional Favored Terrain

You have additional favored terrains.

Prerequisite favored terrain class ability

Benefit You may choose one additional favored terrain. All bonuses are at base amounts but may be increased following the favored terrain ability rules.

Additional Favored Enemy

You have additional favored enemies.

Prerequisite favored enemy class ability

Benefit You may choose one additional favored enemy. All bonuses are at base amounts but may be increased following the favored enemy ability rules.

Favored Terrain Expert

You are especially at home in a specific favored terrain.

Prerequisite favored terrain class ability

Benefit You may specify one of your favored terrains. While in that terrain, you gain an additional +2 bonus to initiative and to Knowledge (geography), Perception, Stealth, and Survival skill checks.

Ω: See the "Ranger" section in Chapter 3 of the *PATHFINDER Roleplaying Game*.



The Spell-less Ranger

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	1st favored enemy, track, wild empathy
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Combat style feat, stealth attack 1d6
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	1st favored terrain, endurance, nature's healing
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Hunter's bond, ranger talent
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	2nd favored enemy, fast movement +10 ft.
6th	+6/+1	+5	+5	+2	Combat style feat, stealth attack 2d6
7th	+7/+2	+5	+5	+2	Ranger talent, woodland stride
8th	+8/+3	+6	+6	+2	2nd favored terrain, swift tracker
9th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+3	Evasion, ranger talent
10th	+10/+5	+7	+7	+3	3rd favored enemy, combat style feat, stealth attack 3d6
11th	+11/+6/+1	+7	+7	+3	Quarry, ranger talent
12th	+12/+7/+2	+8	+8	+4	Camouflage, fast movement +20 ft.
13th	+13/+8/+3	+8	+8	+4	3rd favored terrain, ranger talent
14th	+14/+9/+4	+9	+9	+4	Combat style feat, stealth attack 4d6
15th	+15/+10/+5	+9	+9	+5	4th favored enemy
16th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+10	+5	Improved evasion, ranger talent
17th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+5	Hide in plain sight
18th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+11	+6	4th favored terrain, combat style feat, stealth attack 5d6
19th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+11	+6	Improved quarry, ranger talent
20th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+12	+6	5th favored enemy, master hunter

Farragum, the Howling City

By Dan Voyce
 Art by Sean Macdonald

I yearned mightily to enter this fascinating yet repellent city, and besought the bearded man to land me at the stone pier by the huge carved gate...; but he gently denied my wish, saying, "... Therein walk only daemons and mad things that are no longer men, and the streets are white with the unburied bones..."

—H.P. Lovecraft, "The White Ship"

Among the tenebrous tunnels of the lands below lies a cave whose very air seems to wail and scream. Winds drawn down from distant skies are funneled through hairline cracks, producing a demonic keening that drives both man and beast insane. Here the derro make their home in a riot of frantic madness and deafening cacophony that they call Farragum, the howling city. They claim their abode is the jewel of the underworld, a metropolis of transcendent wonders still echoing with their victory cry when they conquered the world... but then, derro have always seen things differently.

Half-flooded with stagnant water that ripples in uncanny patterns, Farragum huddles on several stalagmite islands and in maze-like warrens in the pitted walls. Howler packs splash through its puddle-filled alleys, cloaklers flutter above, and aboleth roam the surrounding waters; most other races avoid the place except for brief trade excursions. Set into the walls, trumpets harness the eternal wind and stone faces gibber—the lost souls of derro, entombed in rock.

Despite all this, the city teems with life. Its arena echoes with bloodthirsty cheers, its shrines with babbled prayers to hundreds of dark and terrible spirits. Traders jostle in its markets, selling booty from a dozen subterranean races and meat of unknown origin. Between

the throngs of derro, mad-eyed war beasts are provoked to berserk rages, caged savants are nursed by crooning cloaklers, and enchanted anvils cry out in shame at the blasphemous artifacts being hammered into shape. Demons lurk in shadowed corners hoping to be the next fad god, while ghouls and worse things trade secrets of forbidden lore.

Getting There

Derro travel to and from Farragum by the Black Road—an extradimensional tunnel of shrieking darkness (see *Kobold Ecologies*); however, this method is not recommended for travelers who want to stay sane. The alternative is squeezing through a claustrophobic labyrinth of cracks and crevices or braving the icy waters of the Bleak Angor, a subterranean river that laps sluggishly at the city before converging with the baleful waters of the Styx somewhere below. Infiltrating the city itself means braving the Road of Bones or a stealthy creep through the city's fungus fields and fetid, silt-clogged lake.

Adventuring in Farragum

Danger awaits all who brave the howling city but it's possible to survive

there, at least for a while. The cavern's chill air, stagnant water, and infestations of rabid bats, rats, and plague scorpions all foster disease. By far the most dangerous threat is the preternatural wind, which roars ceaselessly throughout the cave.

The Wailing Wind

3.5E—All sane characters become shaken if they spend more than 1 hour exposed to the wailing wind and must make a Will save each subsequent hour of exposure (DC 15 + number of hours exposed) or suffer 1d4 wisdom damage. If you use the Knowledge (forbidden lore) skill in your game, then every 6 Wisdom points lost grants the character 1 rank.

4E—The Wailing Wind is treated like a disease. It makes an attack roll every hour that a PC spends exposed to the wind and can spread via psychic damage dealt by infected creatures.

It's difficult but not impossible to make a life among the derro. Though they are violent and megalomaniacal, enough of them understand the need for trade and diplomatic relations, and most derro glimpse so many strange and unreal things in their lives that they often ignore visitors who keep a

Madness of the Wailing Wind		Level 16 Disease	
The insidious wind whistles in your ears, whispering blasphemous secrets impossible to ignore.		Attack: +18 vs. Will Endurance improve DC 31 maintain DC 26 worsen DC 25 or lower	
The target is cured.	Initial Effect The target is deafened.	The target is distracted by hallucinatory enemies, taking a -2 penalty to attack rolls and becoming vulnerable 5 psychic.	Final State The target is driven mad.

low profile. Curious cave dragons, ghouls from the Empire, aboleth sages, and even stranger creatures venture here from time to time. Most are at least half-mad from the wailing wind but all have suffered at the hands of their hosts. Shrewd adventurers might find help or a bolthole among these unlikely allies.

1. The Road of Bones

The quay is a crudely carved spur of rock bedecked with animated skulls that chatter and moan. A causeway of packed mud and bones leads to the nearest stalagmite island, though the path leads between the splayed ribs of some gigantic beast. Flags of purple worm hide decorate the ivory columns, snapping and fluttering in the endless breeze.

Rafts and barges moor here but the docks also cater to aquatic visitors. There is no gate or wall to bar entrance to the city, but dozens of derro mob any approaching party not large or tough enough to frighten them off.

2. Fungus Fields

Clumps of luminescent mold grow in unwholesome runic shapes, sharing the spongy ground with a forest of giant mushrooms. The air is full of spores: some fine as dust, others large enough to choke on.

A wide crescent of silt-encrusted rock rises out of the brackish water, dotted with large fungi—variously poisonous, hallucinogenic, or edible (and some all three). The air is laced with spores that conjure up phantasmal killers from the dark recesses of the mind. The derro send masked slaves to harvest the fungi and dispose of bodies in the nutrient mulch. There, they also cultivate ropers, otyughs, and phantom fungi as a defense against intrusion, and the cave wall is honeycombed with passages leading off into the underworld.

3. Lake Angor

The lake is like a mirror of obsidian reflecting the ceiling above. Tiny luminescent shapes can be glimpsed in its black depths, obscured from time to time by larger silhouettes.

Aboleth sometimes visit the stagnant waters, but they aren't the primary danger. Swarms of electric eels call Lake Angor home, drawn to the foodstuffs that derro scatter on the water daily. Eel flesh graces many a dinner-plate and the derro harness their lightning charge in countless rituals and strange inventions. Occasional aquatic oozes also haunt the water. Even the largest derro rafts are sometimes dragged below.

4. Stalagmite Islands

With most of Farragum flooded, its inhabitants must cram onto whatever dry land is available, and the derro live in packed squalor. Shacks and lean-tos cover each island, many hiding tunnels into the rock. There are no streets or roads—in many cases derro simply clamber across the roofs. Mud and filth is everywhere.

Crumbling bridges link the stalagmites, so many travel-

ers prefer to travel by ferry. The trouble is not the bridges' rickety planks, but rather the gangs that extort bridge tolls from all who pass.

5. Floating Shanties

Pontoons cut from tar-coated mushroom stalks cluster at the base of each stalagmite island. They form a maze of floating bars, brothels, and bazaars chaotic even by the standards of the howling city. Here, visitors can find all manner of wild promises and bloodstained booty: Demonic servants, abhorrent weapons, necromantic compounds, and other goods forbidden in sane and civilized lands are all sold openly in Farragum.

Thugs threaten and beat any non-derro visitors who try to make their home on the stalagmite isles, so most stay in the floating shanties. Skum merchants serve masters in the waters below, rubbing shoulders with ghoulish traders, troglodyte slavers, kobold merchants, and drow epicures with an interest in the perverted and extreme.

6. Methor's Galleon

The skeletal wreck of a majestic surface galleon is listing half-sunk in the lake, most of its valuable timber stripped off long ago. Panels of fluttering leather provide privacy to its current occupants.

No one knows exactly how or when this ship arrived (it is far too big to sail the subterranean river), but for as long as anyone remembers, it has been home to Methor, an aboleth sage and merchant from their enclave of Idoret. The broken hull allows him easy access from the depths of the lake while providing land-bound visitors with relatively comfortable surrounds. Slime-dripping servitors guard the wreck from further pillaging, but desperate derro try to steal wood daily.

Methor trades in primeval lore and claims to care nothing for the Prophet-Consort's orders. For the right price, he helps visitors (and escapees) travel safely through the city. Those who cannot pay his fees find themselves bound to the aboleth's service. His usual tasks include recovering treasures from the deep recesses of the earth or striking at his main rival in the city, a glabrezu known as Abbas of the Violet Eyes.

7. Arena

At the summit of Farragum's central isle stands a coliseum where baying crowds slaver over gladiatorial events. These events are often extremely one-sided, little more than public exhibitions of torture and murder. Devotees of Bandegreb—the derro torture god—hold sway, pitting beasts and prisoners against each other and elaborate death-dealing devices.

The arena's outer slopes are home to the city's most colorfully eccentric derro. Many work as entertainers and they create a grotesque and violent atmosphere when major games are held.

8. Raider Bivouacs

The cry of tortured beasts rises over the wind, issuing from corals scattered throughout this assemblage of tents and campsites. Sullen derro rove the area, their hands never straying far from

their weapons.

Derro with a love of battle muster here in preparation for their next raid. Duels and challenges are common but otherwise the camps are surprisingly disciplined and organized. The scattered corrals hold semi-domesticated howlers, otyughs, giant carrion beetles, and other animals in training as arena champions and living war machines; their roaring and snarling forms a constant backdrop. Occasionally beasts manage to escape and run amok.

9. Blasphemous Forges

The hot crimson glow of forges warms the forge quarter, and the ringing of hammer on anvil and the hiss of quenching steel almost drowns out the wailing wind. The streets seem comparatively peaceful, but paranoid artisans glare out from every doorway.

Derro smiths combine dwarven skill with insane mysticism and spells stolen from the drow to craft horrific and bizarre weapons: poisoned iron and gibbering steel, ghoulish muzzles, enslaving chains, and fearsome alchemical bombardments. The artisans guard their secrets carefully, always ready to test their weapons on those who pry into their affairs. (See Dwarves of the Ironcrag for details of derro technology.)

10. The Prophet's Pillar

Brute strength and madness are the city's only laws, but Farragum is not quite in anarchy. The lunatic masses are ruled by the derro chosen as Prophet-Consort, sacred representative of Addrikah, Mother of Madness. The Consort steers the populace using crude but effective demagoguery and bribes of food and weapons, but his reign is typically brief. If madness or mischance doesn't do a Prophet-Consort in then some charismatic rabble-rouser inevitably usurps the throne.

Farragum's leader lives in a hollow stalagmite devoid of the usual mass of housing but crawls instead with savants, supplicants, and pretenders to the throne. The "palace" is little more than a series of interconnected torture chambers, where horrors both real and imaginary are called up from the dark.

At the heart of this maze, the Mother's Stair spirals down into lightless depths. Each Prophet-Consort must descend these steps learn the mysteries of Addrikah's cult, emerging even more deranged yet always with the fiery charisma necessary to direct the derro horde.

11. Screeching Engine

Crowning the stalagmite is a massive engine that looks like the crossbreed of a pipe organ, giant bagpipes, and the darkest of dreams of Limbo. Its carved trumpets resemble howling demonic faces, each emitting a different discordant note that sets your teeth on edge.

The Prophet-Consort wields the Screeching Engine as a whip to drive his people. Perched on the summit of the Prophet-Consort's palace, its pipes jutting out in all directions like the bent points of a giant crown. All Prophet-

Consorts claim that its notes harness not just the cavern's wind but the deranged ululations of Addrikah herself.

The engine's tones can deafen and disorient, fascinate and instill hypnotic suggestions, or focus into a destructive blast to keep rebellious districts in line. They also regulate the city with a roughly 24-hour day and night cycle. The engine regularly emits such awful sounds that even the maddest derro is driven to ground for a few hours. During this curfew howler packs roam the streets, adding their croon to the clamor and tearing apart anyone they find. The relative quiet once they slink away marks the beginning of each derro day.

12. Cloaker Aerie

Dark shapes flit around a cluster of stalactites dotted with dark openings. Immature derro dangle in brass cages set beneath these holes. Every now and again one of the dark shapes alights on a cage to croon at its resident.

The cloaker race seems to find the wailing wind as comforting as others find it torturous, and a considerable number make their home in the cavern's ceiling. Derro children dangle in cages near the aerie, exposed to cloaker moaning since the day they were born. Most die or descend into catatonia, but the survivors become feral mystics whose potent mental powers burn out their shriveled bodies all too quickly.

In exchange for the creation of these caged savants, the cloakers are permitted to carry off derro for their own purposes. Indeed, the creatures swoop down to snatch victims off the streets without attracting much attention.



Farragum and the Halls of the Mountain King

Farragum lies beneath Mount Rygar, far below both citadel and mines in the Ironcrag Cantons. It's here that the forsaken muster for assaults on the upper halls, watching the struggling dwarven visitors with hungry eyes. Adventurers reach the howling city via an offshoot of the poisoned passage (see Halls of the Mountain King) or one of the thoroughfares leading from the Trochil Gate. If they do not feel up to exploratory spelunking, NPCs like the Watcher can guide them to the city (see *Dwarves of the Ironcrag*).

Other events can send the PCs to Farragum in several ways. Perhaps derro raiders snatch vital provisions and a daring expedition could steal them back, or the pipes around the Hearthforges start to echo with diabolical music from the screeching engine. If a fight in the halls goes badly, the PCs may be brought to Farragum as slaves. Many enemies in the halls are greedy enough to sell captive heroes to Farragum's arena, sparing their lives. Of course, this is no mercy; the party is condemned to a messy death before cheering crowds – unless they escape.

THE HOWLING CITY



1. The Road of Bones
2. Fungus Fields
3. Lake Angor
4. Stalagmite Islands
5. Floating Shanties
6. Methor's Galleon
7. Arena
8. Raider Bivouacs
9. Blasphemous Forges
10. The Prophet's Pillar
11. Screeching Engine
12. Cloaker Aerie (above city)

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Dwarves of the Ironcrags

by Wolfgang Baur

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Road and River

By Wolfgang Baur

Art by Olaus Magnus

The commerce of a trade city sounds glamorous: silks and spices, mithral and magic, relics and lore, all the things changing hands between locals, visitors, and sharp-eyed wanderers. Everything seems sweeter when minstrels sing about it—largely because they go easy on the sweat and donkey shit. But the Crown square merchants know the truth of it: “There’s no such thing as easy money.”

Mercenaries and House Guards

The traders and stevedores make their coin because someone has to actually move all the iron, wheat, silver, ale, wool, and timber that Zobeck deals in. The traders take a whip hand to kobolds or humans who load and unload the city’s barges, oxcarts, mule trains, and haywagons. Once the trip begins, the costs rise in time, toil, fodder, and (all too often) blood—someone has to defend the cargo against the robber knights, the ravaging ogres, and the grasping petty lordlings who close their bridges until tolls are paid.

Rava may command the hearts of priests and dwarves, but to the rest of Zobeck commerce is king. The Free City spurns no opportunity to increase its coffers by even copers; many are the merchants who most prize the most uneventful and short trade routes, often to Cronstadt or Hammerfall. There are always specialists, though, rare and spectacular: the Templeforge airships down from the Ironcrag; the Flying Cities of Sikkim, charging the air with their alluring spice; even the Shadow Road of the Ban Sidhe, connecting the Free City to the courts of the Shadow. As all good traders must learn, everyone wants something and everything wants someone—meaning that you must always be ready to adjust with the market and read its vagaries.

River Traffic

The “easy money” is getting on a barge and floating down the river to Srevresta and the Duchy of Perun’s Daughter. Certainly, pulling an oar is easier than marching up a mountain, but the work’s not so easy that guards are tripping over one another volunteering for it. The river gods are fickle, especially in spring, and a pack of river trolls can capsize a barge no matter how heavily it is laden. Worse, the songs of the lorelei can distract a pilot, and hill giant bandits can sink a cargo and loot the wreck with a few well-placed boulders.

And, of course, if the cargo doesn’t go through, the guards don’t get paid. Say what you want about the stink of a mule train, at least you won’t drown in your armor.

If the barge arrives at the Duchy, the tough customers will find plenty more work going back upriver. Guards are



expected to pull at the oars. Forests crowd the riverbank for long miles, hiding elven bandits and worse. And the river itself is often filled with snags, shifting sandbars, and other bargemen whose cargo may have been stolen. Some bargemen turn to banditry in their despair; they pretend friendship and then turn pirate.

The Road South

The Magdar Kingdom is a fine and reasonably stable kingdom of insanely ambitious and scheming barons, dukes, and bastard princes. They all spend their time vying for the Eagle Crown of the kingdom, though there have at times been as many as 12 Immortal Kings of the Magdar within 18 months. Despite their politicking and scheming and poisonings, they do appreciate the trade goods that flow through their kingdom, for they pay for the rarest poisons and the priciest assassins.

These goods themselves are carried in oxcarts, and that means they travel very slowly indeed. Twelve miles is a good day. There are at least two good reasons for this: Oxen are cheap and pull well; and ox carts can be drawn into a circle like a small fortress each night. The latter’s importance cannot be understated—the White Mountain Marches are nothing but a nest of robbers, and the raiders from the Mahroti Empire take whatever they can.

Travel south is always full of opportunities for advancement: half your guard company will be dead by the time you reach Harkesh.

Magic of the Crossroads

So why do so many trade houses put their trust in Zobeck and her guardsmen? Why pay more to ship it through Zobeck when the passage through the Goblin Wastes is shorter? Perhaps Mammon smiles on the city. Perhaps, the people of the Free City take less for granted and work a little harder than those of Doresh, Magdar, or Mahroti. Perhaps a little magic happens where the river crosses the Great Northern Road.

Fair weather or foul, rich cargo or poor man’s clay, there’s always something shipping in Zobeck. Where you headed, muleskinner? Oh sure, I know that road. Take me with you; I’m sure you’ll need another sword.





MORGAU & DORESH



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- △ TEMPLE/ABBEY
- CITY

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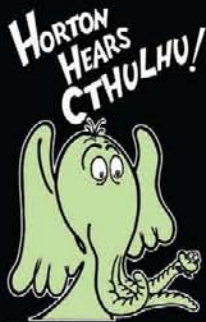
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Favored Enemies

FIRST FAVORED ENEMY	
Type (Sub type): _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Attack/Damage Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Bluff _____	
Knowledge _____	
Perception _____	
Sense Motive _____	
Survival _____	

SECOND FAVORED ENEMY	
Type (Sub type): _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Attack/Damage Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Bluff _____	
Knowledge _____	
Perception _____	
Sense Motive _____	
Survival _____	

THIRD FAVORED ENEMY	
Type (Sub type): _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Attack/Damage Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Bluff _____	
Knowledge _____	
Perception _____	
Sense Motive _____	
Survival _____	

FOURTH FAVORED ENEMY	
Type (Sub type): _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Attack/Damage Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Bluff _____	
Knowledge _____	
Perception _____	
Sense Motive _____	
Survival _____	

FIFTH FAVORED ENEMY	
Type (Sub type): _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Attack/Damage Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Bluff _____	
Knowledge _____	
Perception _____	
Sense Motive _____	
Survival _____	

SIXTH FAVORED ENEMY	
Type (Sub type): _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Attack/Damage Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Bluff _____	
Knowledge _____	
Perception _____	
Sense Motive _____	
Survival _____	

Favored Terrains

FIRST FAVORED TERRAIN	
Terrain: _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Initiative Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Know. (Geog) _____	
Perception _____	
Stealth _____	
Survival _____	

SECOND FAVORED TERRAIN	
Terrain: _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Initiative Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Know. (Geog) _____	
Perception _____	
Stealth _____	
Survival _____	

THIRD FAVORED TERRAIN	
Terrain: _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Initiative Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Know. (Geog) _____	
Perception _____	
Stealth _____	
Survival _____	

FOURTH FAVORED TERRAIN	
Terrain: _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Initiative Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Know. (Geog) _____	
Perception _____	
Stealth _____	
Survival _____	

FIFTH FAVORED TERRAIN	
Terrain: _____	
Skill Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>	Initiative Bonus <input type="checkbox"/>
Total Skill Bonus	Notes:
Know. (Geog) _____	
Perception _____	
Stealth _____	
Survival _____	

STEALTH ATTACK *

NATURE'S HEALING **	
Heal Skill Bonus	Additional Damage Healed

MOVEMENT BONUS **

* When against a Favored Enemy or in a Favored Terrain
 ** When in a Favored Terrain

Animal Companion

COMPANION NAME _____

Animal Type _____ Age _____

Alignment _____ Size _____

Hit Dice (d8) _____

Hit Points _____

Character Class Level _____

STR / DEX Bonus _____

WOUNDS / CURRENT HP

Space _____ Reach _____

SPEED

BASE SPEED	SWIM
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FLY	MANEUVERABILITY	CLIMB
		BURROW

ATTRIBUTES

	SCORE	MOD.	MISC.		Score	MOD.	MISC.
STR	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	INT	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
DEX	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	WIS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
CON	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	CHA	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

SAVING THROWS

	TOTAL	=	BASE SAVE	+	ABILITY MOD.	+	MAGIC MOD.	+	MISC. MOD.	+	TEMP. MOD.
Fortitude	<input type="text"/>	=	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>
Reflex	<input type="text"/>	=	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>
Will	<input type="text"/>	=	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>

COMBAT

Initiative

TOTAL	=	DEX MOD.	+	MISC. MOD.	+	MISC. MOD.	MISC.
<input type="text"/>	=	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

ARMOR CLASS

TOTAL

TOTAL	=	10	+	ARMOR BONUS	+	DEX MOD.	+	SIZE MOD.	+	NATURAL ARMOR	+	MISC. MOD.	+	MISC. MOD.
<input type="text"/>	=	10	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>

Touch Flat-Footed MISC.

BASE ATTACK BONUS

DAMAGE, SPELL, ENERGY RESISTANCE

CMB

TOTAL	=	BAB	+	STR MOD.	+	SIZE MOD.	+	MISC. MOD.
<input type="text"/>	=	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>

CMD

TOTAL	=	BAB	+	STR MOD.	+	DEX MOD.	+	SIZE MOD.	+10
<input type="text"/>	=	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text"/>	+10

ATTACKS / DAMAGE _____

TRICKS

Bonus Tricks _____ Total Tricks _____

SKILLS

SKILLNAME	TOTAL BONUS	ABILITY MOD.	RANKS	MISC MOD.
<input type="checkbox"/> Acrobatics (Dex)	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Climb (Str)	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Escape Artist (Dex)	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fly (Dex)	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Intimidate (Cha)	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Perception (Wis)	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Stealth (Dex)	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Survival (Wis)	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Swim (Str)	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	=	_____	+ _____ + _____

SPECIAL QUALITIES & ABILITIES

FEATS

NOTES
