

Spring 2009 Issue 9

EXPANDED 4TH EDITION COVERAGE

KOBOLD

Quarterly

A Magazine of Kobolds & Dragons

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Monte Cook's

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contents

Editorial

4 A Season of New Things

Letters

7 From the Mines

Remarkable Magic

11 The Bardic Road

by Stefen Styrsky

Potent new powers for the chatty class.

God of the Underdark

16 Camazotz: the Bat God

by Andrew Hind

The god of the underdark brings terror by night.

Arcane Servants

22 Unfamiliar Familiars

By Adam Daigle

More than cats, rats, and bats.

Ecology

25 Ecology of the Maenar

by Matthew Hanson

The rage within turns into power without.

Kobold Diplomacy

31 A Conversation with Dave Arneson

The man who invented the game we love.

Flashing Blades

35 Living with Dinosaurs

by John E. Ling

Game Theories

40 Brief Glimpses

by Monte Cook

42 Kitsune: the 4c Fox Folk

by Scott Gable

47 The Leastling

by Richard Pett

49 Never to be Broken: Magical Oaths

by Michael Kortez

Ritual Magic

56 Chasing the Grave

by Joshua Stevens



On the Cover

Pat Loboyko brings us a vision of a queen of many-colored dragons, and the kobolds who love her.

Reviews

Book Reviews **53**

by Neal Hebert, Cynthia Ward, and
Pierce Watters

Rules Advice

Ask the Kobold **58**

Cartoons by Stan!

10' by 10' Toon **50**

Bolt & Quiver **46**

Maps of Fantasy

The Bandit Fortress **61**

by Wolfgang Baur

The Free City

Courtiers of Zobeck **65**

by Jeff Grubb

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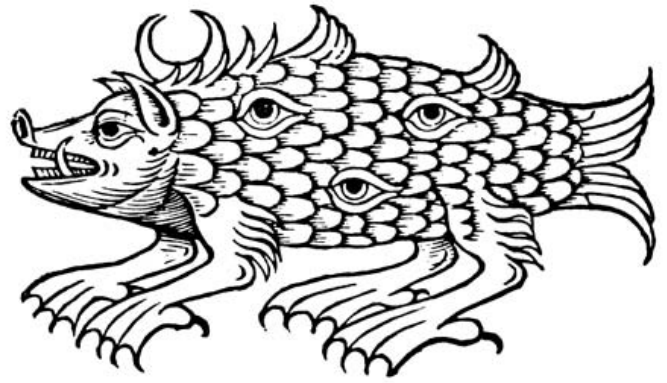
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A Season of New Things



We're almost done with the design portion of *Halls of the Mountain King*. Hard to believe it, but that tale of greed, corruption, goldlust, and betrayal has come together in record time. And now we're preparing to do something different with the design: we're planning to make it the first Open Design adventure that ships for two systems, offered both for OGL/3rd Edition and later for 4th Edition.

It's a huge first for the Open Design patrons and its central designers, many of whom also contribute to these pages. And I think it's a sign that perhaps the edition wars are finally winding down; both groups of patrons for that mega-adventure are getting the adventure they want to play, designed the way they want it, and all my early fears of 3E and 4E gang war were completely overblown. At least, once I promised that the mega-dwarven adventure would appear in both formats.

Which is all a long-winded way of saying, we're moving to support a little more 4th Edition this issue than last. There's five articles here that offer something explicitly for fans of that edition, and twice that many articles for the OGL fans. It's a precarious balance, but we want to continue to cover all the realms of gaming, and that means the new edition too. We hope to provide a neutral ground, rather than becoming, oh, the city that is sacked by partisans of both armies in the Edition Wars. So far, I am pleased to report, gamers seem to be continuing to play their game of choice with collateral damage being limited to online flame wars.

I expect to get a few angry emails asking for refunds (and I'll be happy to provide them), but the magazine

does have to serve both sides of the gaming house, and we will.

To go back to the first edition for a moment. I'm very happy to present the interview with Dave Arneson, the co-inventor of the hobby we all love, with his insights in game design and RPG history. Frankly, that's an interview we've been chasing since the 'zine was just a glimmer in the old editorial eye, and we're very proud to feature Mr. Arneson in these pages.

There's also first of what I hope will be many more of Monte Cook's columns, titled "Game Theories." In addition, 3rd Edition designer Skip Williams, whose Ask the Kobold column has proven so popular on the KOBOLD QUARTERLY Web site returns to the print pages with a "Fey Library" and his Ask the Kobold column as well. Literacy drives for wild elves cannot be far behind.

Finally, I'm happy to announce that the Kobold Ecologies book is at the press and should be available for purchase in the KQ store by the time this hits print. It is a collection of all the Ecology articles from these pages plus three new ecologies by Clinton Boomer, Joshua Stevens, and yours truly, to create a hybridized beast of editions and mayhem that will get any DM's creative sparks flying. Check it out.

As always, direct your protests, goons, goblins, treasure fleets, couriers, courtesans, *message* spells, sealed letters, *explosive runes*, songbirds, and email to letters@koboldquarterly.com or to Kobold Letters, PO Box 2811, Kirkland, WA 98083.

Wolfgang Baur
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Consulting Editor: Jeff Grubb
Assistant Editor: Scott Gable
Editorial Assistant: Neal Hebert
Graphic Design: Matt Widmann
Ad Manager: EP Healy

Contributing Authors: Wolfgang Baur, Monte Cook, Adam Daigle, Scott Gable, Jeff Grubb, Matthew Hanson, Neal Hebert, John E. Ling, Joshua Stevens, Richard Pett, Joshua Stevens, Cynthia Ward, Pierce Watters, Skip Williams

Cover Artist: Pat Loboyko

Contributing Artists: Leon Bakst, Darren Calvert, Lucas Haley, Hans Holbein, Michael Jaecks, Pat Loboyko, Hugo Solis, and Stan!

Cartographer: Jonathan Roberts
Court Calligrapher: Shelly Baur

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From the Mines

Dispatches and Complaints

Hooked on Brawling

Since DRAGON went kaput, I've been refusing to look at, think about, or play D&D out of some strange kind of protest. Foolish? Probably. But thanks to KOBOLD QUARTERLY issue #8, I'm hooked again.

The Salvatore interview was first-rate, but the piece that really got me was "Tossing Kegs and Smashing Chairs." Since I often play barbarian characters, I enjoy a good brawl perhaps more than most.

Thanks for reminding me how much fun RPGs are, and thanks for the tips on how to create a little mayhem, too. I'll be looking for more advice, interviews, and fun in future issues for sure.

-Ryan G. Van Cleave

Smash a keg for us! We're always glad to pull someone back into gaming.

Most Impressive (Obi-Wan Has Taught You Well, Young Kobolds)

I just wanted to let you know that I recently picked up my first issue of KOBOLD QUARTERLY, issue #7, at my local game store. A very impressive issue, and I intend to continue with KQ!

The primary reason I picked this one up was the 4E article on Centaurs, although there was plenty of non-system specific content that made it worthwhile.

So long as KQ continues to provide engaging content and 4E material, you have a new reader!

-Mr. Tori Bergquist

We strive to live up to your exacting standards, Lord Bergquist! We promise right here and now that there will be some 4E and lots of engaging content in all future issues.

And if you are interested in additional 4E Ecology articles, we will just mention the new Kobold Ecologies book, available for preorder now from the KQ Store.

Rules for a Fluid Environment

I agree with last issue's letters that what makes D&D great is the ability to generate a strong storyline, character development, and the DM's ability to weave it all together and improvise when appropriate. But I think that adhering to a strong mechanic and most, if not all, of the rules is just as important.

The rules represent the boundaries of your world and it is the challenge of the DM to make the world come alive with action, adventure, and intrigue, to make being a character fun and interesting within those boundaries. The closer your group follows the mechanics of the game, the more firm a foundation the characters have within the world. Not using the complete mechanics of the game by saying you focus on storytelling and roleplaying is not doing the game justice. Rules and roleplaying are not inversely proportional. You can do both completely.

By winging it or improvising too much, you make the game arbitrary and subjective. In a group where the DM doesn't know the rules very well or isn't using them; when a character dies, how much of that death was decided by the DM? In the player's mind was he killed fair and square or did the DM calculate that this would be an appropriate time for a heroic death. When the PCs finish the big fight at the end of a great adventure, how much of that victory belonged to the DM's opinions?



When all the rules are followed, they come together in a beautiful matrix of possibilities from which every character imaginable can roleplay, story-tell, develop, and interact in an endless stream of heroic and memorable deeds. All you need is a DM who knows the rules and sets a solid foundation for the players.

To me, a great DM knows the entire mechanic and lets the players do the improvising. The players tell the story. Like the timbers of a great theater, the rules need to be clear and firm to set the stage where the players will act. Weak rules equal blurred walls and subjective storytelling by the DM. The stronger the mechanic, the less blurred your world is, and the more freedom and fun the players will have as their actions will determine objective and true successes and failures.

If done correctly, a solid mechanic creates a fluid environment that allows players to think less about the rules and more about the things that makes playing their character so much fun; each player's idea of fun being different and all of them possible with a solid foundation as a springboard for their imaginations.

-Matt Lawrence

Open Design and KQ

I saw a review of *Wrath of the River King* a step or two removed from EN-world and am trying to find a location to order it from. I am working on a campaign world with close ties to the

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Feywild and thought it would be interesting. The description page said that it could be ordered through the KOBOLD QUARTERLY Web store, but I do not see it there.

Is it the product still available for ordering and how does one do so?

-Bill

Thanks for asking! The Open Design adventures that have done so well with ENnie nominations and reviews are offered as limited editions. For a copy of the current project, you simply sign up with the current Open Design project (that's Halls of the Mountain King, available for 3E and 4E this summer) and participate in the design process as much or as little as you like. That one is available in the KQ store right now.

As a supporter of the current project, you get the option to pick up Wrath or Tales of Zobeck. It's a way to keep the Open Design projects small-scale.

The Mystery of Renewals

Does my KQ subscription automatically renew or do I have to renew it?

I ask because I realized that I purchased a 4-issue subscription starting with issue #4 last May. While it has not been a year, with the extra (much appreciated) issue in the summer, my subscription was fulfilled with issue 7. That being said I've been given access to the PDF for issue 8.

The bottom line is I want to continue my subscription and wanted to ensure it is renewed. I also wanted to confirm that there wasn't some sort of glitch with my getting issue 8, if there is no automatic renewal. While I love free-bees as much as the next guy, I appreciate KQ and wouldn't want to screw you folks out of well-earned money.

-Brian Dunnell

Yeah, we sent a free issue to a handful of subscribers; our mistake, and yours to keep.

We're not as good about renewal notices as we could be, but we do send out a reminder with the last print copy for print subscribers, and we send occasional bleatings to PDF subscribers by email reminding them when a subscription expires.

We promise to nag more often and more politely in future. And thanks for renewing!

Emerald Knights

Last month friends and I opened up a comic and gaming store in Burbank, California - Emerald Knights Comics and Games. We proudly display KOBOLD QUARTERLY and always encourage gamers to pick it up and have been very successful in getting your great magazine into their hands.

I think KOBOLD QUARTERLY is truly a great replacement for the long-dead Dungeon & Dragon magazines and I hope that you will surpass them in many ways. Thank you for printing a wonderful gaming magazine - we old time gamers (have been playing for more than 25 years) need something to hold and read and KOBOLD QUARTERLY has filled that missing niche.

I wanted to let you know that newbies and experienced gamers alike are huge fans of KOBOLD QUARTERLY. Keep up the excellent work and know your labors do not go unappreciated!

-J. Rodriguez.

We kobolds love our friendly local game shops, and I'm happy to hear that KQ is hitting the spot for you. Readers near Burbank, it couldn't hurt to check out Emerald Knights.

Deep Disappointment

I am writing to express my deep disappointment with the latest issue (2008 Winter) of KOBOLD QUARTERLY. While I understand the difficulty in working with an unknown licensing structure (especially one that is still being worked on), the edition exclusivity to 3rd Edition makes KQ virtually worthless to me.

The Centaur article in issue #6 was one of the best 4th Edition articles I have seen, even over some of the recent DRAGON material.

I hope you reconsider this stance, as I have enjoyed previous issues and I would like to support the magazine. However, if there is no content for 4th Edition, I am in exactly that position.

-Katie L. Berger

Thanks for your kind words about the Centaur article, and yes, flattery will get you everywhere.

We can only print articles that we actually receive, and we saw a long dry spell for 4th Edition content. No one was querying it until after the Centaur article appeared.

That's changed. You'll notice that this issue contains 3 articles that are purely 4th Edition focused, plus others (like the Ecology article) that feature both PATHFINDER and 4th Edition mechanics. We'll continue to try to strike a balance. Speaking of which...

Overjoyed by Dual Track

Firstly, I just want to say that I love your magazine. I'm a subscriber to DDI, and at present it's seriously underwhelming, so it's great to know there is something else out there that is packed with original ideas, and articles with plenty of crunch that I can scavenge from. Anyway, I run both 3.5 and 4e games, and find both to be fantastic fun and intend to continue doing so (I have stats for much of my home-grown stuff in both editions now, and actually, find conversion between them both pretty easy). Neither is better or worse than the other, they are just different, and support different styles of storytelling.

Anyway, that said, I would be overjoyed if you continued to print 4E stuff as well as Pathfinder / 3.5, as it's always good to get something to use that you don't have to convert over. I must add here, that I am very much a crunch lover, as I have a long established game world with its own fluff. In an ideal world you could stat things out for both main editions of the game, but I appreciate you are probably restricted for time and space.

-Sefton Redshaw

We're starting to see more and more of this reasonable attitude toward gaming with your system of choice. Gamers are being edition-tolerant. We're going to miss the fire and pitchfork days, but perhaps it is for the best that we just rattle along and enjoy the game.



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Bard Life:

New Options for the Social Class

by Stefen Styrsky
Art by Cris Griffin



After the dungeon, it's time for wine, women, and song - and who better to provide them than the bard?

But of course, many parties have their own silver-tongued devil in their ranks. And there's a lot of new territory to explore for bards, both with respect to the musical instruments that weave their magic and also as pure performers relying not on instruments and song, but on charm and humor and the ability to enchant with words.

Here KQ presents expanded instrument-related feats, new spells, and alternate class abilities to create bards in a wider range of roles as jesters, charmers, and storytellers.

Hoist a tankard to the chatty, tricky, and most musical bard!

Feats

An instrument, the constant companion of many a bard, can be dead weight when not in use. Some bards, however, have learned to make the most of these companions.

Bard's Gambit [General]

You swirl and spin your instrument, distracting enemies and opening them up to attack.

Prerequisite: Dex 13, 5 ranks in Perform (instrument)

Benefit: While holding any instrument for which you have at least 5 ranks in Perform, you may use its associated Perform skill rather than Bluff to feint in combat. In addition, you may make an offhand attack with the instrument as if it were a light weapon, dealing lethal damage equal to your unarmed attack.

Hands Off! [Bard]

When foes grab for your precious instrument, they had better be prepared for the consequences.

Prerequisite: 6 ranks in Perform (instrument), bardic music ability

Benefit: While holding any instrument for which you have at least 6 ranks in Perform, you gain a +4 morale bonus to resist disarm attempts and may make an attack of opportunity against the attacker even if they have a feat or ability that would prevent such an attack (such as the Improved Disarm feat). If you are ever magically compelled to release or drop your instrument, you gain a saving throw against the effect with a +2 morale bonus (or a second saving throw to break the effect if already under a spell's influence.)

My Shield and My Strength [Bard]

Your instrument is not only a tool but also a source of physical and psychic

Bardic Quickdraw

Bards who take the Quick Draw feat gain the ability to ready their bardic instrument as a free action instead of a move action. This allows them to go from empty-handed directly to using one of their bardic music abilities, so long as the instrument is not entirely hidden from view. That is, a bardic instrument in a rucksack, bag of holding, or locked case can not be readied with Quick Draw. However, one tucked into a belt, slung over a shoulder, or kept in a pouch but with the neck sticking out can be subject to a quick draw.

defense.

Prerequisite: 8 ranks in Perform (instrument), bardic music ability

Benefit: While holding any instrument for which you have at least 8 ranks in Perform, you gain a +2 shield bonus to AC and a +2 morale bonus to saves against fear and mind-affecting effects.

Slip the Hold [General]

You know how to use an instrument to ward off enemies who get too close, and you can use its leverage to escape holds.

Prerequisite: 3 ranks in Perform (instrument)

Benefit: While holding any instrument for which you have at least 3 ranks in Perform, you gain a +4 circumstance bonus on checks to resist a grapple, and you may use its associated Perform skill instead of Escape Artist to slip out of a grapple or pin.

New Bard Spells

In the right hands, a musical instrument creates much more than just beautiful music. It creates magical song.

Greater Countersong

Transmutation

Level: Bard 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Instrument touched

Duration: 1 min./level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

With a perfect pitch and an amplified sound, a bard uses the affected instrument to enhance the *countersong* ability, granting a +2 bonus to the bard's Perform check. The enhancement stacks with a masterwork instrument's bonus on Perform checks. Additionally, the spell increases the range of any bardic music ability by 5 ft. per three caster levels (to a maximum increase of 30 ft.).

Song of Orpheus

Necromancy

Level: Bard 3

Components: V, S, M (miniature bone

harp)

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: touch

Target: Instrument touched

Duration: 1 min./level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

The instrument's music has an eerie, unsettling quality and discordance weaves in and out of the notes. The performer can affect undead creatures with bardic music class abilities.

Sustain

Evocation

Level: Bard 3

Components: V, S, M (tuning fork)

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Instrument touched

Duration: 1 min./level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: yes (harmless, object)

The notes linger and hang in the air, echoing even after the bard has stopped playing the instrument. The duration of any bardic music played on the targeted instrument increases one round per five caster levels.

Thieves' Bane

Evocation

Level: Bard 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: One instrument

Duration: until discharged (D)

Saving Throw: Fort half

Spell Resistance: No (object), Yes (see text)

This spell protects valuable instruments. If anyone other than the caster touches the instrument, the assailant is dealt 1d6 points of damage and an additional +1 point per caster level of fire, cold, sonic, or electricity damage (caster's choice at time of casting). Spell resistance applies. Triggering the trap discharges the spell.

Alternate Abilities

Although it's called bardic music, there's nothing in the rules that says a bard must strum a lute or pound

a drum to use his class abilities. A bard in touch with his soul needs no instrument.

These three variant bards rely on the spoken word rather than carrying a tune to manifest their powers. To avoid repetition, they have the following in common: each requires the same number of ranks in a Perform skill as the one it replaces; the Will save DC against an ability equals the bard's Perform check; and a successful save means the target cannot be affected by the same bard's ability for 24 hours.

Jester

Also known as fools and clowns, the bard who tells jokes and amusing stories develops the power hidden in laughter. A jester must have the requisite number of ranks in a comedic performance skill to use the abilities described below. He retains *fascinate*, *countersong*, *suggestion*, *song of freedom* and *mass suggestion*, but gains the following new class abilities:

1st—Joke (Sp) The bard can use a performance to affect one creature that fails a Will save with *hideous laughter* (as the spell). The effect lasts for as long as the bard concentrates and tells jokes (up to a maximum of one round per bard level). Each round requires the bard to make a new Perform check and allows the target a new saving throw.



Success means the bard cannot use the joke ability on that creature for 24 hours.

For every three levels a bard attains beyond 1st level, he can target one additional creature with a single use of this ability. Joke replaces inspire courage and is an enchantment (compulsion), language-dependent, mind-affecting ability.

3rd—Lift the Spirits (Su) The bard can eliminate all fatigue and exhaustion from allies (including himself) with a single use of this ability. Those affected must be within 30 ft. of the bard and able to hear and understand him as he tells jokes. Using this ability requires a full round of uninterrupted concentration. Lift the spirits replaces the inspire competence ability and is a language-dependent, mind-affecting ability.

9th—Satire (Sp) Humor reveals the contradictions of existence. A jester can use this ability on all enemies within 30 ft. who are able to hear and understand him. Any target failing a Will save acts as if affected by a *confusion* spell for a number of rounds equal to 1 + the bard's Charisma modifier. This replaces the inspire greatness ability and is an enchantment (compulsion), language-dependent, mind-affecting ability.

15th—Truth in Laughter (Su) Because all comedy is based on truth, a bard's remarks cut to the bone of life. He can use a performance to affect a single enemy within 30 ft. who can hear and understand him. If the target fails a Will save he is stunned for a number of rounds equal to 1 + the bard's Charisma modifier. This replaces the inspire heroics ability and is an enchantment (compulsion), language-dependent, mind-affecting ability.

Silver Tongue

Some bards possess the gift of gab. Words are colors with which they paint fascinating scenarios and strange tales, or use to convince, cajole, and lie.

A bard known as a silver tongue must possess ranks in Perform (oratory) to use the bardic music abilities described below. The silver tongue retains *countersong*, *fascinate*, *suggestion*, and *mass*

suggestion, but replaces the bard's other class abilities with the following:

1st—Think on Your Feet (Su) The bard can use a performance to alter an unfriendly or hostile creature's attitude. The affected creature must be within 30 ft. of the bard and able to hear and understand him. If the target fails a Will save, its attitude becomes indifferent towards the bard and his allies. If the bard or his allies threaten the creature, its attitude returns to hostile. For every three levels a bard attains beyond 1st level, he can target one additional creature with a single use of this ability. This replaces the inspire courage ability and is an enchantment (compulsion), mind-affecting, language-dependent ability.

3rd—Lovable Rogue (Sp) The bard can really talk himself up. At 3rd level, he can use *charm person* (as the spell) on a single creature. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 1 + the bard's Charisma modifier if the target fails a Will save. This replaces the inspire competence ability and is an enchantment (mind-affecting), language-dependent ability.

9th—Save Me! (Su) When threatened with harm, the bard can request aid from a single creature (including an enemy) within 30 ft. that can hear and understand him. If the targeted creature fails a Will save, it defends the bard for a number of rounds equal to 1 + the bard's Charisma modifier. This replaces the inspire greatness ability and is an enchantment (compulsion), mind-affecting, language-dependent ability.

12th—Insult (Su) With a single performance, the bard can set one other creature's ears burning with a well-placed verbal jab. The target must be within 30 ft. of the bard and be able to hear and understand him. If the target fails a Will save, he becomes so enraged that he cannot adequately defend himself. He is considered flat-footed for a number of rounds equal to 1 + the bard's Charisma modifier. On any round the target is attacked, the effect ends immediately afterwards. This replaces the song of freedom ability

and is an enchantment (compulsion), mind-affecting, language-dependent ability.

15th—Betrayal (Su) With a performance, the bard can convince a single creature that a friend has become an enemy. If the target fails a Will save, he attacks a creature of the bard's choice for a number of rounds equal to 1 + the bard's Charisma modifier. The affected target must be within 30 ft. of the bard and able to hear and understand him. This replaces the inspire heroics ability and is an enchantment (compulsion), mind-affecting, language-dependent ability.

Storyteller

The storyteller uses the power contained in the ancient sagas to strengthen himself and his allies. A bard with the requisite number of ranks in Perform (storytelling) retains *countersong*, *inspire heroics*, *inspire greatness*, and *song of freedom*, but he replaces his other class abilities with the following:

1st—Champion's Weapon (Su) The bard can bestow the abilities ascribed to weapons carried by legendary warriors on a weapon. At 1st level, he can add an enhancement bonus of +1 to any weapon. If the weapon possesses an enhancement bonus, the bard may instead choose to add a special ability to the weapon equivalent to a +1 enhancement. These enhancements and special abilities can never cause a weapon to exceed the magic weapons maximums in the core rules.

Enhancing a weapon is a standard action, and the bard must touch the item to be enhanced. At 8th level, and every six bard levels thereafter, the enhancement increases by 1. (+2 at 8th, +3 at



14th, +4 at 20th). If he chooses, the bard may split the total between enhancement and special abilities. For example, at 8th level he may grant a weapon a +1 enhancement and the *keen* special ability. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 1 + the bard's Charisma modifier. This replaces the fascinate ability and is a language-dependent ability.

3rd—Hero's Surge (Su) The bard can imbue himself or one ally with the power of a legendary hero. As long as the bard recites the appropriate stanzas (to a maximum of 2 minutes), either he or one ally gain a +8 morale bonus to Strength for the purposes of skill checks, breaking objects, escaping a grapple, or lifting, carrying, and dragging items. This replaces the inspire competence ability and is a language-dependent, mind-affecting ability.

6th—Brothers in Arms (Su) The bard uses his knowledge of the sagas to improve his own fighting tactics. With this ability, one ally adjacent to the bard who witnesses the performance gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC and cannot be flanked; the bard must also be able to see his ally. The effect lasts for as long as the bard concentrates and five rounds thereafter. For every three levels the bard attains beyond 6th, he can target one additional ally with a single use of this ability. This replaces the suggestion ability and is a language-dependent ability.

18th—Glory of the Ages (Su) The bard can boost an ally's defining characteristic, much the same way a legendary hero is identified with a distinctive trait. With a single performance, all allies within 30 ft. who can hear and understand the bard gain a +4 inspiration bonus to their highest ability score (bard's choice in case of a tie). The effect lasts for as long as the bard concentrates and five rounds thereafter. This replaces the mass suggestion ability and is a language-dependent, mind-affecting ability.



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Camazotz, Bat God of the Underworld

By Andrew Hind

Art by Hugo Solis

When night casts the jungle floor into stygian darkness, death emerges from the underworld. On silent wings it hunts, leaving only a string of twisted husks, completely drained of life. Entire villages can perish before its thirst is finally sated. Only then, with the crowing of the cockerel at dawn, does it reluctantly retreat to the depths from which it emerged. With the rising of the sun, the world can breathe a sigh of relief, as Camazotz, the bat-god, sleeps fitfully in the darkness below.

While many stories of lurking monsters and night terrors are simply designed to frighten children, Camazotz is all-too real. A being of pure savagery and hatred, he is a vile demon that holds sway over bats, vampires, and the underworld. From the deep recesses of the earth and the caves connecting to the surface, he waits restlessly until the slow creep of night begins to engulf the land, and he may once again emerge to feed and spread terror.

Camazotz

Lesser god of bats, vampires, and the underworld

Alignment CE

Domains Chaos, Evil, Travel

Typical Worshipers assassins, vampires



Favored Weapon maquahuitl (a heavy wooden club edged down two sides with razor-like obsidian blades)

History

At first, there was only darkness, absolute and unyielding. Tezcatlipoca—the god of chaos and evil, who was as dark as shadow—and Quetzalcoatl—the god of order and goodness—agreed to put aside their animosity in order to create the world and the sun, which would enlighten it. However, their mutual loathing could only be contained

for so long, and in time, they had a falling out over who would lay claim to dominion over the sun.

Tezcatlipoca, true to form, would not negotiate in good faith and instead stole the sun, tying it to his waist. In an unforeseen twist, his inherent darkness partially blocked out the, thus illuminating only half the day. Quetzalcoatl, angered, knocked his rival out of the sky with a stick, claiming the sun for himself.

Tezcatlipoca, now earthbound, was determined to steal the sun back

though he could not reach it; he needed another to do the deed for him. Who better than his own son? Because Tezcatlipoca was so vile, however, no woman would willingly bed with him and he had no child. Desperate, Tezcatlipoca turned to his sister, Tlazoteotl—the goddess of filth—to bear his child. Their offspring, Camazotz, was predictably malformed and debased; an unhealthy boy with rotting wings and a sinister temperament, skulking and plotting.

By the time Camazotz had grown into a man and could serve his father, Quetzalcoatl had abdicated his role as the sun, leaving it to the rain god, Tlacoc. But that is not to say he no longer had a stake in the sun, which served as the very foundation of life upon the world he had helped create. When Camazotz finally made his play and was within reach of success, Quetzalcoatl sent a firestorm to burn the earth, so Camazotz would inherit nothing but a blasted wasteland. The flames raged to such heights that even the sun was enveloped. Few survived the devastation.

Camazotz was very nearly among the countless dead. He tried to fly above the flames, but they licked at his heels and denied him escape. Camazotz then tried to outrun the inferno, but it was fast and tireless. Just as the fire was about to consume him, Camazotz spotted a gaping cave in the hills below. He flew into it, crawling ever deeper into its darkness, traveling so far that the flames gave up their pursuit. Camazotz traveled so far and so long that he eventually emerged in the Abyss.

He hid for decades while the firestorm above slowly burned itself out. Camazotz found kindred spirits among the denizens of this realm, beings crafted from sin and hungry for mortal souls. The Abyss warped and twisted his form, leaving Camazotz more beast than man, with bat-like wings and face and with savage claws. He also gained an affinity for the nocturnal creatures his form emulated. Where many demons scorned the creatures of the night as filth, Cama-

zotz lifted them up and made them his own.

For Camazotz, these nocturnal brethren relayed information, helped to attract mortal followers, and sought out opportunities for advancement. Camazotz's power grew rapidly, particularly among certain jungle tribes where he was worshipped as a true god. While Camazotz has his own goals and motivations, he allows his network of agents, mortal and bat alike, to perform tasks for other demon lords for the right price.

Recently, Camazotz stole the fire aspect of the decrepit deity Huhue-teotl, lord of the hearth and the fire of life. This increased the bat-god's power and prestige: attracting new followers, serving notice to the gods of his ascendancy, and solidifying his place in the Abyss as a power to be reckoned with. Camazotz is eager to study the response to his theft. A decisive retaliation by the gods is expected but not certain. If they waffle and prove hesitant, perhaps the time rapidly approaches when Camazotz can fulfill his destiny and claim the sun for his father...or himself.

Cults

Camazotz is a brutal and violent deity, and his followers are blindly destructive and rapacious. His priests spread pain and horror wherever they go, feed upon the still-beating hearts of their victims, and slaughter innocents in his name. Clerics of Camazotz are granted the instincts and appetites of a predator. They appear on the battlefield in armor made from the flayed skin of captives, wearing masks carved to resemble a bat's face. They wield maquahuatl, heavy wooden clubs edged with razor-sharp obsidian blades, as favored weapons, ensuring combat is bloody and dismemberment common. More rarely, a morningstar fitted with a hedge of sharp obsidian stone teeth may be wielded.

Large drums of carved wood with heads of dire bat skin play an important role in rituals. Worshippers beat on them with human femur bones, creating a deep, ominous thrum that builds to a wild crescendo as the sacrifices are made in an orgy of blood and gore. All the while, bat-masked men and women dance in frenzy.

Victims of these rituals are typically dismembered in death. Organs are removed from the corpse for ritual feasting, while particularly noteworthy victims are skinned to make body suits or cloaks for high-ranking priests. Finally, the corpse is thrown into an abyssal pit where it is believed Camazotz will claim the soul as his prize.

Only in the most remote areas do followers of Camazotz practice their faith in the open. Instead, most rituals take place in deep labyrinths or caverns, their entrances marked with bat carvings and numerous niches for offerings. Shrines are usually high-vaulted chambers: ceilings are roiling masses of roosting bats and floors are covered in guano. Though usually small, a large, established cult is a blight on the surrounding land; their savage, nighttime assaults wipe out entire villages.

Since Camazotz assumed Huhue-teotl's fire aspect, he has taken to frightening villages into submission by causing nearby volcanoes to flash with plumes of fire and smoke, or by unleashing tremors that shake the earth and hint at an impending eruption. Desperate and superstitious villagers light the night-fires and dance the dance of frenzy around soot-stained bat steles. Villages may choose the weakest for sacrifice, hoping blood will avert his gaze.

Allies and Enemies

Camazotz is paranoid and insular and has as little to do with gods and demons as possible. That said, he can't completely ignore them; to do so

Macahuatl

One-Handed Melee Weapon

| Weapon | Cost | Dmg (s) | Dmg (m) | Critical | Weight | Type |
|-----------|-------|---------|---------|----------|--------|----------|
| Macahuatl | 15 gp | 1d4 | 1d6 | 19-20/x2 | 4 lbs. | Slashing |



would leave him open to their machinations. He counts his parents among his allies. Tlazoteotl is by far the more closely aligned of the two, a result of motherly pride and convergence of interests. Camazotz's bats serve as ideal vessels for delivering disease and pestilence to the unsuspecting world, and Tlazoteotl is pleased to devise new plagues with which her son may bedevil the world of mortals.

Texcatlipoca is a bit cooler towards his offspring. Though Camazotz has been useful in the past and may prove so again, Texcatlipoca doubts his loyalty. He wonders whether his son will deliver him the sun, as he has long promised, should he ever be successful in claiming it. And with so many interests overlapping—the night, vampires, the underworld, and the dead—Texcatlipoca has cause to worry whether Camazotz might make a play for sole control over these domains.

Huhueteotl despises Camazotz for stealing his fire aspect. While greatly reduced in power now, the aging god schemes to restore his power and destroy the fiend that humiliated him.

Camazotz

CR 24

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

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., see in darkness; Listen +29, Spot +29

Aura fear

DEFENSE

AC 43, touch 15, flat-footed 37

(+6 Dex, +28 natural, -1 size)

hp 322 (28d8+196)

Fort +23, **Ref** +22, **Will** +22

DR 20/cold iron and good; **Immune** fire, paralysis, poison, sonic; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10; **SR** 37

Weakness cold

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average)

Melee bite +37 (1d8+15 plus 2d6 plus 2d6 Strength drain)

2 claws +35 (1d6+10 plus 2d6 fire plus 2d6 Strength drain)

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

Special Attack fire breath, gift of vampirism, strength drain, summon bats, summon demon

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 23rd)

At will—*astral projection*, *blasphemy*, *deeper darkness*, *desecrate*, *detect good*, *detect law*, *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport*, *nightmare*, *planeshift*, *shapechange*, *telekinesis*, *unhallow*, *unholy aura*, *unholy blight*
3/day—*banishment*, *haste*, *symbol of pain*
1/day—*earthquake*, *shades*

TACTICS

Before Combat Camazotz prefers to let followers and summoned creatures do his bidding.

During Combat If directly confronted, Camazotz attempts to remain airborne while making darting attacks on its enemies, breathing fire and turning enemies into vampiric thralls.

Morale If confronted with overwhelming force, Camazotz flees, using *greater teleport* or *planeshift*.

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 22, **Con** 25, **Int** 12,

Wis 22, **Cha** 25

Base Atk +28; **Grp** +42

Feats Alertness, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Exceptional Deflection, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Stealthy, Wingover

Skills Balance +29, Bluff +30, Climb +33, Hide +32, Intimidate +33, Jump +33, Knowledge (the planes) +24, Listen +31, Move Silently +32, Search +24, Spot +31, Survival +29

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal, Olmec (Mixe-Zoque); speak with bats, telepathy 300 ft.

SQ heat mantle

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fire Breath (Su) Camazotz can breathe a 30-ft. cone of unholy fire once every 1d4 rounds: damage 10d8 (half fire, half unholy), Reflex DC 30. A character that fails to save against this attack has his flesh scoured away by the unholy fire and takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The save DC is Constitution based.

Gift of Vampirism (Su) Camazotz may, at his discretion, raise those characters slain by means of his strength drain ability as vampires. The character rises after 1d4 days and is completely under Camazotz's control until such time as he sees fit to grant it free will. At any given time, Camazotz may have enslaved vampires totaling no more than twice his own Hit Dice.

Heat Mantle (Su) Camazotz is infused with the heart of volcanoes and inflicts 2d6 points of fire damage when he strikes a foe with bite or claw. A foe that strikes Camazotz with a natural weapon or unarmed strike also takes 2d6 points of fire damage.

Having recently taken on the fire aspect of Huhueteotl, Camazotz has developed several abilities that were heretofore alien to him (notably his fire breath, heat mantle, and immunity to fire). If Huhueteotl ever reclaims his domain over fire and volcanoes, Camazotz will lose these abilities.

See in Darkness (Ex) Camazotz can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, even that created by *deeper darkness*.

Speak with Bats (Ex) Camazotz can speak with all bats and bat-like creatures.

Strength Drain (Su) Any creature damaged by Camazotz's bite or claws suffers 2d6 points of Strength damage (DC 30 Fortitude halves).

Summon Bats (Sp) Camazotz can summon 4d6 dire bats or 2d6 bat swarms with 100% chance of success once per day. The bats appear immediately and serve the demon for up to 1

hour. This ability is the equivalent of an 8th level spell.

Summon Demon (Sp) Once per day, Camazotz can summon 4d10 dretches of a variety native to his cavernous realm (pathetic, squat, and blubbery creatures with clawed batwings for arms) as a standard action with 100% chance of success.

Telepathy (Su) Camazotz can communicate telepathically with any creature with a language to a range of 300 ft.

Appearance and Portrayal

Camazotz may take on several forms, including that of a monstrous gore-caked bat or a simple peddler who looks normal enough until one notices his pointed, bat nose and clawed feet. His real form is that of a lean man with short-black fur, large membranous wings the color of coal growing from his back, and a chilling bat head. His lips are perpetually pulled back in a sinister smile, revealing a mouth lined with crooked, needle teeth, and his eyes glow red like burning embers of hate. Long arms end in cruel claws while his entire body radiates waves of intense heat. Merely looking upon Camazotz strikes fear in all but the boldest mortal enemies.

Quick to anger, he often dispatches aspects of his divine might to his shrines, as much to display his wrath and power as for any other cause. Rarely does he come to the Material Plane himself; killing a mortal means nothing to him. There is no remorse, but neither is there satisfaction. Only in mass slaying is there any sense of accomplishment and even that is fleeting.

Camazotz is a master schemer. He believes everything is interlinked; a spark here could become a conflagration there, if you know how to fan it properly. As in a complex chess game, small moves can add up to larger ones, and Camazotz considers himself a master at the game. It's how he came about humiliating Huhuetotl, after all, and how he plans to one day steal the sun.

Realm

Camazotz's realm is a sprawling labyrinth of twisted, lightless caves. Although the subterranean tunnels are

said to open up into countless caves on numerous worlds across the Material Plane, they do have a core that serves as the seat of the bat-deity's realm.

Here, the tunnels open up into a massive underground cavern, possibly hundreds of miles across and containing a teeming tropical jungle. The thick foliage masks a complete eco-system, from screaming monkeys whose bite drives men to madness, to lurking panthers that step through shadows and constrictor snakes large enough to effortlessly crush an ox. The only animals absent from this realm are birds. Instead, Camazotz has ensured, these dark skies are the sole domain of his beloved bats.

At the center of this jungle lies a series of step pyramids: home and crypt alike to powerful vampire mages and the Bloodied Wand, a group of oracles. After millennia of service, their bodies have become as twisted and degenerate as their souls. They are aged and withered things, infested with disease and crippled by mutation both frightening and pitiable. They perform obscene blood rituals atop their pyramids with the screams of the dying fuelling the Bloodied Wand's dark auguries.

Camazotz's palace looms over the domain, hanging from the ceiling

In D&D Lore

Camazotz had been a part of D&D lore for 30 years and is a principle figure in the pantheon of Greyhawk. He is occasionally called Zotz and Zotzilaha. The bat-god made his first appearance in the 1980 module, the *Lost Shrine of Tamoachan*, later playing a role in *Dungeon Magazine's* "Savage Tide" adventure path.

There is some debate surrounding whether Camazotz and Zotzilaha are regional names of the same entity or different deities. The editors of *Dungeon* magazine took the former stand, claiming the vile bat-fiend was known as Camazotz in Hephmonaland and Zotzilaha among the natives of the Amedio Jungle. *Dungeon* #143 noted Camazotz had taken on the fire aspect of Huhuetotl, which is in keeping with Maya myth that associates the bat god with Chamalcan, the god of fire.

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high above like a constantly expanding mass of stalactites built of humanoid skulls. The only entrances are balconies set in the spires' sides, ensuring the sanctum is inaccessible to those that do not fly. A corpse drained of blood, face twisted into a grimace of unspeakable terror, occasionally drops from these dark portals to the ground below. Camazotz has created flesh vats within these inverted spires that transform the flayed remnants of sacrifices into undead abominations built of skin. These skin bats haunt the nighttime skies on membranous wings.

Skin Bat

A repulsive, bat-like creature darts from the stygian darkness, appearing to be composed entirely from rotting sheets of stolen skin. Though its large eyes are

In The Real World

A cult dedicated to an anthropomorphic deity with the body of a human and the head of a bat emerged around 100 BCE with the Zapotec Indians of south-west Mexico. This god was associated with night, death, and sacrifice. In time, the veneration of Camazotz, or Cama Zotz (translated as "death bat" or "snatch bat"), found its way into Maya lore.

In Central American lore, there was no debate as to whether Zotzilaha was another name for the bat god. The Popol Vuh, a sacred Maya text, clearly identifies Zotzilaha as the cavernous "house of bats" where Camazotz resides, not an entity.

The Camazotz myth may have sprung from a real creature. Fossil records found in Central and South America dating back approximately 2,000 years reveal the existence of an abnormally large bat with a wingspan of as much as 10 ft. This super-bat, called *Desmodus draculae*, may have co-existed with the early Zapotecs and been the source of their Camazotz legends.

Belief in bat demons is widespread throughout Mesoamerica: Hik'al, or "neck-slitter," of Chiapas; Socouyant of Trinidad; and Tin Tin of Ecuador. Cryptozoologists believe that those monstrous may still be alive today, as reports of giant bat-like creatures occasionally surface throughout Latin America, from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas to Brazil, from Puerto Rico to Mexico.

glassy and lifeless, an unmistakable evil intent glimmers within them as a toothless mouth spreads wide in hunger.

Skin bats are undead creatures created from the skin flayed from the victims of sacrificial rites. They are given a measure of unlife by a vile rituals involving immersion in the Abyssal flesh vats. They feed on the skin of living beings, replenishing their own constantly rotting skin.

Skin Bat

CR 3

NE Medium undead

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10

(+3 Dex)

hp 19 (3d12)

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

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor)

Melee touch +4 (1d3+1)

bite -1 (paralysis)

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

Special Attacks attach, paralysis, skin feeding, steal face, summon bats

TACTICS

Before Combat A skin bat prefers to drop from the ceiling and attack with surprise.

During Combat They land on victims, paralyzing them, and proceed to feed upon the flesh. They leave once sated.

Morale If confronted with a real threat, skin bats retreat in search of easier prey.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +12

Feats Alertness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or flock (4-8)

Treasure 1/10 magic (rings only), 1/10 items (rings only)

Advancement 4-6 HD (Medium), 7-9 HD (Large)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Attach (Ex) If a skin bat hits with a melee touch attack, it latches onto the victim, pulling its body tight against the victim and wrapping itself around it in an effective grapple. While attached, the

skin bat loses its Dex bonus to AC.

The skin bat is hard to remove; it has a +10 racial bonus to grapple, and to remove it an opponent must succeed at pinning it. Even then, the creature is peeled off reluctantly, taking considerable skin with it (the victim suffers 1d4 hp damage and must make a DC 10 Fortitude save or suffer a 1 Cha damage due to scarring).

Paralysis (Ex) The saliva of a skin bat causes paralysis. Victims of a successful bite attack must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.

Skin Feeding (Ex) An attached skin bat hungrily feeds on its victim's skin. Acid secreted from its own skin dissolves the epidermis into a paste that is devoured by tiny feeding tubes on the creature's underside. The target takes 1d3 points of Charisma damage each round. When it has drained 10 points of Charisma it releases its victim and retreats to digest the meal.

Steal Face (Ex) When a skin bat reduces a victim to 0 Charisma (helpless), it peels the victim's face off and places it over its own head and becomes even more terrifying. Creatures within 30 ft. must make a DC 15 Will save to avoid being frightened; friends of the fallen suffer a -4 penalty on this save. The face rots away within 2d6 days.

Summon Bats (Ex) The excited, high frequency cries of a skin bat attract nearby bats of the mundane variety. Whenever a skin bat enters combat or faces danger, there is a 50% chance that 1d3 bat swarms will arrive in 2d6 rounds. These bats are not under the skin bat's command.

Environment

Skin bats can live almost anywhere. In cool climates they tend to take long breaks between feedings, since the cold preserves their forms and negates the need to regularly replenish skin. This helps explain why they are so frequently attracted to the dark depths of ageless dungeons. In hot, wet, tropical climates where their skin decomposes more rapidly, they are voracious feeders by necessity.

Typical Physical Characteristics

Skin bats vaguely resemble normal bats, with thin bodies, long trailing tails, and large wings of flapping skin. The typical wingspan is 8 ft. Its eyes are large, lifeless and glassy. The color of their skin matches that of their prey,

and as a result, a skin bat's coloration can change over time. They typically weigh about 15 lb.

Alignment

Skin bats are always neutral evil. They are products of foul necromantic magic and exist to prey on the unwary but they do not develop sinister plots of their own.

Society

Largely unintelligent, skin bats lack a defined society. They gather in flocks of six or more individuals, but cooperation is rudimentary at best. In fact, where prey is scarce they compete or even turn on flock members.

When a skin bat spots prey, it emits a high-frequency scream that attracts the attention of others. The sound also attracts mundane bats, putting them to flight in a frenzied swarm that may create the impression that the undead creatures command them. Flocks usually live in isolated, hard-to-reach areas accessible only by flight or climbing up treacherous cliffs.

Typical Treasure

Skin bats have no need of magic items and no concept how to use them. Occasionally, one may find a ring or other small piece of jewelry embedded in their fleshy folds, an unintended trophy from a past victim that was sucked into its mass along with the skin beneath it.

Camazotz in PATHFINDER

Known in the world of Golarion as Master of Black Wings and Lord of Stolen Blood, the bat god Camazotz

flies among the winged predators of the underworld, reminding the living why they fear the night and leading in the feast upon the weak. The cult of Camazotz is rare in the Inner Sea region on the continents of Avistan and Garund, where it is generally limited to tiny isolated pockets in the Darklands, deep underground. Across the ocean, though, on the distant continent of Arcadia, Camazotz's faith is much more widespread.

Camazotz rules a tripartite realm, spanning the cavernous ceiling over the Abyssal pit of Argahoz, the vast Arcadian Darklands wilderness known as the Land of the Eleven Deaths: this serves as a Material Plane "retreat" where he can physically manifest at times to interact directly with his followers. His palace, the House of the Bat, exists both in his Abyssal realm of Argahoz and in a strange and distant realm of death known as Xibalba, a place that some believe to be a distant world on the Material Plane and others a hidden and isolated Outer Plane that exists beyond the known reaches of the Outer Sphere.

Domains Animal, Chaos, Darkness, Evil, Trickery

Favored Weapon javelin, maquahuatl



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NEW RACES, CHARACTER OPTIONS AND MORE!

The first Campaign Cutout introduces you to the infamous city of Scarrport, a seedy trade port on the banks of the mighty Torberyn River where it converges with the Wellspring River. Unholy hell spawn roam the rugged mountain range, preying on unwary travelers and adventurers who seek to make their fortunes exploring the countless ruins dotting the land. Dangerous cults who worship dark gods riddle Scarrport's four boroughs, using the city as a base of operations from which they spread their influence to other kingdoms. No place for the naïve, the thieves and grifters of Scarrport lurk around every corner of this bustling city, preying on newcomers like a school of night fang eels on deep water trout.

SCARRPORT: CITY OF SECRETS! COMING SOON

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Skin Bat Lore

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (dungeoneering) may know about skin bats. Characters making a successful skill check know all the following information up to and including the DC number.

| DC | Result |
|----|---|
| 15 | This is a skin bat, an undead creature that eats the skin of its victims. |
| 20 | Skin bats envelop victims, incapacitating them with paralytic secretions that reduce victims' flesh to easily digestible fluids. They were born in the fleshwarp cauldrons of Camazotz, the dark bat-god. |
| 25 | A skin bat will sometimes "steal" the face of a victim, but this is accidental rather than a conscious act of malice. |

Unfamiliar Familiars

By Adam Daigle

Art by Arthur Phillip

Whether channeling eldritch magics or simply turning pages in tomes, a familiar never strays far from its master. Early superstitions identified familiars as servants, spies, companions, and more.

Throughout history, familiars have been vital accessories for supposed magic users, from a witch's black cat to Agrippa's black dog (put down using a silver bullet after its master's death). While they span the spectrum from helpful muses to fiendish conduits, familiars always assist their masters, regardless of their inclinations. A familiars' companionship sparks great creativity in their masters, and many tomes of magical theory and arcane lore have acknowledged their contributions.

Calling a familiar is a very personal ritual and spellcasters take these ceremonies very seriously. Some perform the rites with no specific creature in mind, trusting to the chaotic underpinnings of the universe to provide a suitable companion. Others acquire the appropriate animal to serve as the spiritual vessel beforehand. The subsequent connection forged between familiar and

Gaining a Familiar

Calling any of these creatures causes them to undergo the same changes that other familiars experience and requires the Improved Familiar feat.

Re-Acquiring a Familiar

The trauma of losing a familiar is something no arcanist wishes to experience, as a portion of their own essence lies intermingled with the creature. Many casters are so shocked by this event that it renders them unable to perform as they did before. Such is life when losing a portion of one's soul. For the caster, having grown accustomed to the constant companionship, grieving for a familiar can be an empty, hollow time. The mages in faraway Allain developed a ritual to ease this period. Any caster wishing to bond a new familiar outside of the requisite one-year period must pay not only in wealth, but also in soul.

To summon a new familiar, the caster must spend the normal 100 gp for the calling ritual plus 100 gp for each month the ritual occurs before the one-year mark. In addition to the gold, the caster must sacrifice 25 XP per month as well. For example, Nellus (8th level sorcerer) loses his Small air elemental, Rabastri. To summon a new familiar just three months after losing his trusted companion, he must spend 100 gp for the calling ritual plus 900 gp and 225 XP for the 9 months it would have taken to wait.



master is so strong, these creatures serve as proxies for their masters in posthumous trials. They were the closest thing to their master in life and carry a spark of their master's essence even after his death.

The following creatures are new choices for any class that can call a familiar and that selects the Improved Familiar feat. While these selections are stronger than your normal cat, rat, or bat, they are not quite as powerful as an imp, quasit, or elemental, and their level requirements reflect this. Choosing these creatures brings the use of Improved Familiar into play a bit earlier than usual.

New Improved Familiar Options

| Familiar | Alignment | Arcane Spellcaster Level |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Arcane Servant | Any | 3 rd |
| Blink Dog Pup | LG | 5 th |
| Bookmouse | Any Chaotic | 4 th |
| Clockwork Beetle | Any Lawful | 5 th |
| Gliding Possum | N | 3 rd |
| Myna Bird | Any Lawful | 4 th |
| Skitterling | Any Chaotic | 3 rd |
| Symbiotic Temporum | Any | 6 th |

Arcane Servant

An arcane servant is the result of an unseen servant spell made permanent. Experimenting mages from the Arcane Collegium brought these beings into existence. They will create one for a caster hoping to take one as a familiar, though the price may be steep. These creatures provide little in the way of offense, but their stealth and aid in spellcasting, as well as assistance in day-to-day chores, can make them very valuable.

Arcane Servant

CR ½

LN Small construct

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14

(+3 Dex, +3 natural, +1 size)

hp 15 (1d10+10)

Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0

Immune construct traits

OFFENSE

Spd 15 ft., fly 15 ft. (perfect)

Melee slam +4 (1d4-4)

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

Statistics

Str 2, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 1, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +0; **Grp** -8

Feats Stealthy, Weapon Finesse

Skills Hide +9, Listen +2, Move Silently +5, Spot +2

Languages understands Common

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure none

Advancement —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Enhance Spellcasting (Su) By guiding its master's arcane energies, an arcane servant can bestow the ability to use one of the following feats once per day without expending the necessary requirements: Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Heighten Spell (up to one level). The arcane servant must be within arm's reach of its master to enable this ability.

Naturally Invisible (Ex) An arcane servant is essentially force given life. It is naturally invisible and cannot even will itself visible. This effect is thwarted by spells such as *see invisibility*, *invisibility purge*, and *true seeing*. With the aid of these spells, the arcane servant appears as a vaguely humanoid outline.

Blink Dog Pup

Benevolent woodland sorcerers and hermit mages sometimes seek the companionship of mystic creatures and the rugged yet orderly blink dogs fit this role nicely. Many times, a blink dog pack chooses a champion of good to raise one of their pups. This individual typically uses magic and holds honorable ambitions in life. A blink dog raised as a familiar in the company of one of these arcanists has a high station in life and usually goes on to lead its own pack.

Blink dog pups often sever their bonds as familiars when they reach maturity, and those who take on blink dog pups as familiars know of this. Some blink dog pups, freed from the bond of the familiar but still missing the companionship, ally themselves with like-minded individuals on quests. Here they fulfill the role of a cohort or trusted companion.

Blink Dog Pup

CR 2

LG Small magical beast

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +4, **Spot** +4

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14

(+3 Dex, +3 natural, +1 size)

hp 11 (2d10)

Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1d4)

Statistics

Str 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** 10, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +2; **Grp** -2

Feats Track

Skills Hide +7, Listen +4, Sense Motive +3, Spot +4, Survival +3

Languages understands Common

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate plains

Organization solitary, pair, or litter (3-5)

Treasure none

Advancement 4-7 HD (Medium, as normal blink dog); 8-12 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment +2 (cohort)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

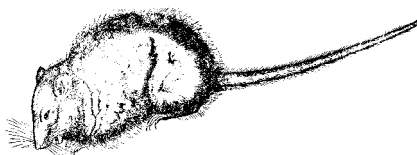
Blink (Su) A blink dog pup can use *blink* as the spell (CL 8th) and can begin or end the effect as a free action.

Dimension Door (Su) A blink dog pup can teleport, as *dimension door* (CL 8th), once per minute as a free action. The ability affects only the blink dog pup, which never appears within a solid object and can act immediately after teleporting.

Bookmouse

A bookmouse is a magical creature resembling a common field mouse, but these particular rodents normally send sages and wizards into frenzies when discovered in a study or library. Infamous for devouring entire volumes in a night, bookmice feed not off the ink and paper but off the words themselves.

Mages who choose to keep and train a bookmouse often send these creatures against their rivals. Such arcanists know that bookmice prefer arcane writings, and the power they consume transfers to the master when the creature is bonded as a familiar. A daily scribing of a poem, fable, or brief tale sates a trained bookmouse, assuming the prose is acceptable—a trait that makes these fickle creatures a true risk to keep around unbonded. A bookmouse can survive indefinitely while inside a book.



Use the statistics for a rat but add the following ability.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Script Transferal (Su) Once per day, a bookmouse can devour magical text and transfer its power to its master. When the bookmouse consumes a scroll, the master can use this stored power to cast a spell as if they had the Heighten Spell feat without expending any of the usual requirements, using the stored energy in the bookmouse to fuel the increased spell power. The bookmouse must consume enough spell levels to power the heightened effect.

Clockwork Beetle

Forged in the Gearworks of Zobeck and sold to aspiring and established gearmages throughout the city, these creatures act as construct familiars. Though normally sold and encountered in the form of 1 ½ ft. long metal beetles, their appearance can vary; they typically follow an insect theme.

Clockwork Beetle

CR 2

LN Tiny construct

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +4, **Spot** +5

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +4 natural, +2 size)

hp 22 (4d10)

Fort +1, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

DR 5/slashing; **Immune** construct traits; **SR** 14

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)

Melee bite +4 (1d4-1 plus poison)

Space 2 ½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks poison

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 4, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +3; **Grp** -6

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative

Skills Hide +8, Listen +4, Spot +5

Languages understands Common; telepathy 500 ft. with creator

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or scuttle (3-12)

Treasure none

Advancement —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) A clockwork beetle's bite is poisonous: injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial damage sleep for 1 minute, secondary damage sleep for another 5d6

minutes. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +3 racial bonus.

Gliding Possum

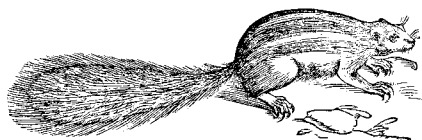
These nimble marsupials are a boon to adventuring arcanists. They are stealthy, nocturnal creatures with soft grey fur and large eyes. They have a spacious pouch and can leap and glide for astounding distances. When called as a familiar, they benefit mages with their mobility and ability to carry an astounding amount of spell components.

Use the statistics for a cat with the following additions.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Component Storage (Su) In its pouch, a gliding possum can store its master's material components for a total number of spell levels equal to its master's Hit Dice. Due to their shared familiar bond, the master is considered to have the components on their person if the gliding possum is within 30 ft. In addition, once per day, no matter the distance between the two, a master can cast a spell as if they had the Eschew Materials feat.

Glide (Ex) A gliding possum can take to the air. This creature can fly through the air with poor maneuverability for 50 ft., providing it launches from a high position. A gliding possum must land at the end of its movement or fall to the ground.



Myna Bird

A myna bird is a lustrous black bird with a band of yellow circling the back of its head from eye to eye. This mimicking bird, when bonded as a familiar aids its master in spellcasting. Perched on a shoulder, the myna bird squawks out the verbal elements of a spell in sync with the master.

Use the same statistics as a raven with the following special ability.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Mimic Spell (Su) Being a consummate mimic, a myna bird can aid a spellcaster that has called it as a familiar. Once per day as a standard action a myna bird

familiar can repeat a spell previously cast by its master. The spell must have verbal components and must have been cast by the master during the current encounter or the opportunity is lost. Somatic and inexpensive material components are ignored, but expensive components, foci, and XP expenditures cannot be mimicked. This repeated spell cannot be higher than 4th level.

Skitterling

These small, hairless creatures' fused features resemble a mix of a monkey and a cat. Though normally crouched, they stand 1 ½ ft. tall and weigh less than 12 lb. Befriended and trained by scoundrels in Siwal for their natural tendency toward thieving, skitterlings roam the alleys and bazaars hoping for something shiny to catch their eye.

Spellcasters calling these creatures to their service as familiars find the odd creatures useful in pilfering prized possessions from their competitors and retrieving needed components and coin from open-air stalls and street merchants. The types of arcanists normally choosing these creatures as familiars come from cutthroat backgrounds and gravitate towards the shadier places in the world. Sorcerous rogues, back-alley alchemists, and black market "sultans" all pair well with a deceptive skitterling.

Use the statistics for a monkey with the following changes. A skitterling receives a +8 racial bonus on Sleight of Hand checks used to pick pockets. In addition, a skitterling has opposable thumbs and can manipulate items and wield weapons. However, they have no weapon proficiencies and suffer a -4 penalty to all attacks made with a manufactured weapon.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Tricky Spellcasting (Su) The master of a skitterling receives a +3 bonus to Sleight of Hand checks. In addition, the skitterling can aid its master in spellcasting, allowing them to cast a spell as if they had the Silent Spell or Still Spell feat. The skitterling can grant this benefit once per day as long as the creature is within arm's reach of its master.

Symbiotic Temporum

A truly bizarre creation bred in the flesh vats of Allain, a symbiotic tempo-

rum binds to the brainstem of arcane casters. The master must hold the four-inch long, worm-like creature in his mouth, whereupon it crawls to the back of the throat and painfully pierces the esophagus, crawling up the spinal chord to rest in the lower reaches of the brain. It feeds off the arcane energies within its master, enhancing the caster's prowess.

Symbiotic Temporum CR 1

Always N Fine magical beast
Init +1; **Senses** blindsense 10 ft., dark-vision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 21, flat-footed 22 (+3 Dex, +4 natural, +8 size)

hp 3 (1d3+1)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Spd 5 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1d2-9 plus stem pinch)

Space ½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks stem pinch

STATISTICS

Str 1, **Dex** 13, **Con** 12, **Int** 5, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +0; **Grp** -21

Feats Iron Will

Skills Concentration +11, Hide +17, Spellcraft +7; **Racial** +8 bonus to Concentration and Spellcraft

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

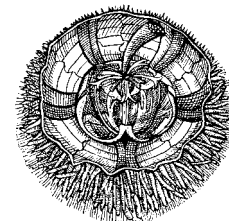
Treasure none

Advancement —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Quicken Arcana (Su) An attached symbiotic temporum enhances the spells cast by its host. Once per day as a free action, a symbiotic temporum can enhance one of the spells cast by the host to duplicate the effects of the Quicken Spell feat without expending any of the normal requirements.

Stem Pinch (Ex) Having partial control of the host's brain, a symbiotic temporum can render its host inert. With a bite, this creature can pinch the brainstem, duplicating the effect of a hold person spell if the victim (the host) fails a DC 13 Fortitude save. This effect is equivalent to a 2nd level spell and is Constitution based.



ECOLOGY OF THE MAENAD

Calm Above the Storm

By Matthew Hanson

Art by Leon Bakst

“Is there some kind of problem?” Lokesh asked.

A huddle of guards whispered around Lokesh’s papers. “You’re not from around here, are ye?”

OF COURSE NOT, YOU MORON. *The voice within Lokesh seethed.* DO I LOOK LIKE I’M FROM AROUND HERE? YOU WASTE MY TIME. I SHOULD BASH IN YOUR SKULL AND WALTZE THROUGH THIS FLIMSY EXCUSE FOR A GATE. I SHOULD SACK THIS TOWN. SLAUGHTER YOU ALL.

Breathe. Rise Above. “No. Not from around here.”

Finally, the guards returned Lokesh’s papers. “Well... everything seems to be in order. We don’t want any trouble in town.”

TROUBLE? FIRE, DESTRUCTION, BLOOD, I BRING YOU DEATH. THE SCREAMS OF YOUR WOMEN, THE CRIES OF YOUR CHILDREN.

Breathe. Ride the wave. “No trouble. Good day.”

Lokesh strode into town. A bite to eat, a glass of water, and a good night’s sleep. Tomorrow he would be on his way. Rise above. Ride the wave. Just another small town.

Maenads are a people of contradictions. Rumors and legends describe them as raving lunatics, but most who meet maenads find them stoic and reserved. In reality, they unite these extremes. Maenads must maintain constant discipline to contain the wild rage that brews within. Some maenads have learned to channel this rage, and they are terrible to behold.

In the Beginning

The origin of the maenads is shrouded in myth. Many philosophers hypothesize that they were once humans, altered by exposure to powerful mystical energies.

The maenads tell a different story. Long ago, a crazed god of drink and revelry created the maenads as his favored children. Those ancient maenads

lived in a state of constant mania, intoxication, fear, and lust. Only when the god slept, one day each year, did the maenads’ minds clear.

On one such morning, a maenad named Evaga awoke with blood on her hands. While in a mad frenzy the night before, she had torn her own son limb from limb. In grief, Evaga threw herself from a cliff and crashed into the sea below. She did not die, though; instead, Evaga awoke in a far off realm, sheltered from the influence of her mad god. Here, her thoughts turned to revenge. For one year, she honed her mind and learned to control the rage within. She spent the next year compiling her techniques into a text for other maenads to study. In the third year, she traveled the strange land, finding allies to aid her.

Three years to the day after throwing

herself from the cliffs, Evaga returned home, and while her god slept, she led armies of maenads and foreigners against those loyal to the deity. In the end, Evaga forced her way into the chambers of the mad god. She took up a flail and bashed in the god’s skull.

With her people liberated from their madness, Evaga got into a small fishing vessel and departed into the waves. She was never seen again, but she left behind her text, which her followers called *The Way Above*.

While many maenads believe this myth is the literal truth, scholars and theologians debate its accuracy, especially the claim that a mortal could slay a god so easily. Some see it as a metaphor of how the maenads turned away from their god, while others consider it nothing but a fairy tale.

Overthrowing their creator god re-



New Feat

Lucid Moment (Psionic)

You experience a flash of clarity during your rage.

Prerequisite: rage class ability

Benefit: By expending your psionic focus, you may take one action normally prohibited while raging, such as manifesting a psionic power or using an Intelligence-based skill.

moved the worst of the maenads' rage, but turmoil is permanently ingrained into their soul. They cannot completely quell the rage, so the maenads seek to rise above it. Their rage is a powerful tsunami, impossible to contain. However, as a boat on the ocean, the maenads train to ride above their emotions.

Maenad Physiology

Physically, maenads are largely similar to humans (lending some credence to the view that they are an offshoot of humanity). Strikingly different, however, are the flecks of living crystal covering their skin. The crystals can be any color of the rainbow, from red to violet, and the pattern and size of the crystals differ from maenad to maenad—a unique fingerprint for each. The crystals form just below the skin and slowly rise to the surface and slough off just as normal skin does. Many natural philosophers believe these crystals help the maenad focus their psychic energy.

The differences between males and females are less pronounced in maenads than in humans. Both genders are of similar height and weight, and neither have any body hair. Combined with the maenads' utilitarian dress, this often leads humans to perceive maenads as androgynous.

Though it rarely happens for social reasons, a maenad and human can mate and produce young. These children are essentially human but they are more likely to manifest psionic powers.

Maenad Society

Most maenad settlements are small coastal villages. Here they subsist

primarily as fisher folk and farmers, favoring orchards of olives and figs. Maenads rarely have their own nations, but instead, they try to live peacefully within the kingdoms of other races. A significant minority of maenads live among other races, particularly among humans. Even here, maenads often live in secluded enclaves within cities.

Maenads typically incorporate and blend the styles and customs of their neighbors but with an austere sensibility. They may take on typical fabrics, colors, and cuts used in the clothes of the more populous races living nearby, but they eliminate ornamentation, embroidery, frills, and ruffles. They seldom wear jewelry, and men and women often dress the same.

In times of peace, most maenad villages are directed by a council of elders. There are generally no set rules for membership in these councils, and each council selects its own new members, inviting the wisest and most experienced.

Maenad settlements also typically have a war leader, who may or may not be a member of the elder council. These individuals have almost unquestioned power in times of war, though particularly incompetent or power-hungry war leaders are quickly disposed of.

Early Life & the Way Above

As children, maenads show only a glimmer of the emotional turmoil that haunts the rest of their lives; they soon must learn to tame the emerging fury that will consume their adulthood. This training is referred to as the Way Above, an allusion to Evaga's teachings.

The first stage of the Way Above is often indirect and disguised as games. In one favorite game, called wave standing, each player stands on a wooden barrel floating in a large body of water, trying to be the last one standing. Nearly anything is allowed as long as a player does not touch his opponent.

The true test of a maenad's training begins at puberty, as the floodgates within their souls open and a torrent of emotions bursts through. Though

most maenads control their anger most of the time, some maenads lose their focus during adolescence. They might run screaming through the streets, only to recover hours later feeling intense shame.

Toward the end of adolescence, a young maenad's training becomes more stringent and resembles a rigorous military regimen, including training in the maenads' signature weapon, the flail. After completing this training, maenads become adults.

The Way Above teaches maenads to control their rage. Maenads understand that the rage is more than a mere curse; when properly channeled, it can serve as a powerful weapon. Those who learn to channel their rage must follow one of two primary paths—the Churning Mind or the Storming Fist.

The path of the Churning Mind channels the emotional turmoil into pure psychic energy that psionic manifesters use to augment their psychic abilities. The path of the Storming Fist teaches maenads to enter a state of heightened physical power, similar to berserkers in less advanced cultures. Though rare, a few maenads, called masters of storms, have learned to combine the paths of the Churning Mind and the Storming Fist.

The Churning Mind and the Storming Fist are both fraught with danger. More than once, those trained to harness their rage have turned to the Nameless King, returning to the madness that plagued the early maenads. Thus, only the most disciplined maenads train to use their rage in this fashion.

People of the Sea

For as long as they can remember, maenads have lived on islands and in coastal villages. Thus, it is natural that they have become adept at seafaring. For centuries, the maenads lived primarily as subsistence fishers. As contact with other races increased, many maenads became sailors on trading vessels. Their maritime skills also spawned crews of mercenaries, and a few maenads have hoisted the black flag and terrorized the seas as pirates.

Because they are so involved with the sea, water motifs find their way into many other parts of maenad life. Maenad art often features the ocean, and wave patterns are a common motif in decorations. Many of the most popular maenad songs began as sea shanties.

Sea imagery is also an integral part of the training that maenads undergo to control their emotions. Life as a maenad is like being caught at sea in a perpetual storm. Only through discipline can the maenads learn to ride the waves of their rage and prevent themselves from drowning in their own emotions.

People of War

Because the Way Above includes military-style training, a martial attitude permeates many aspects of maenad daily life.

All adult maenads are trained to use the flail, and the flail serves as a symbol as well as a tool. The flail takes skill to wield, and an untrained wielder is just as like to hurt himself as his enemy. In the hands of a master, the flail is used not only to crush skulls, but also to control the battle by stripping a foe of weapons and footing alike. Advancing their military craft, maenads have further developed a specialized longflail and a martial art to go with it. In the right hands, this style looks more like a dance than a form of combat.

While maenad communities are frequently small, nearly every adult serves in the militia. This, combined with the strange rumors surrounding the race, mean that bandits and conquerors usually leave maenad villages alone.

Despite their training and innate powers, very few maenad settlements hold aspirations of conquest. However, individual maenads living within a kingdom often join the military, and small mercenary companies comprised of maenads frequently hire themselves out to nations at war.

People of Music

Maenads have long musical tradition and, much of their oral history is contained in song. Group singing is

seldom in unison. Maenad music often features tight harmonies and layers of counter melodies. Maenads favor an eclectic range of instruments, including drums, woodwinds, crystal singing bowls, and song staffs.

Unique to maenads, the song staff is a wooden tube attached to a short length of rope. When a maenad holds the rope and spins the tube, air is forced through the tube to create an eerie tone. By spinning the tube at different speeds, singing tubes produce a range of notes (similar to those made by bugles).

The song staff's similarity to the flail is no coincidence. Maenad elders use the instrument to train young maenads to use the flail without the children realizing it. The two have even been unified, in the form of the singing flail, a flail whose head has been modified to produce a tone as it spins. The singing flail is a favorite of many adventuring maenad bards.

Religion

Many who hear the maenad's story

of destroying their creator god expect them to eschew religion completely, but this is not the case. Indeed, many maenads adopt benevolent deities as another tool to rise above their anger and thwart the will of their creator.

Maenads follow whatever gods are prominent in their region. If a diverse pantheon exists, they gravitate to gods of the sea, lawful gods, and those that focus on discipline or self improvement. Many revere the god-slayer Evaga in a form of hero worship, though only a few fringe cults claim that she has ascended to godhood.

The Great Taboo

Traditional maenad culture holds a powerful taboo against drinking alcohol. Many believe this is purely because of the way that intoxication impairs a maenad's rigid emotional discipline. However, others believe that the Nameless King was also a patron of drunkenness and that this taboo is a further act of rebellion.

Maenad Flails

Martial Melee

| Weapon | Cost | Dmg (s) | Dmg (m) | Critical | Weight | Type |
|--------------|------|---------|---------|----------|--------|-------------|
| Flail, Light | 6 gp | 1d4 | 1d6 | x2 | 4 lbs. | bludgeoning |

Exotic Melee Weapon

| | | | | | | |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----|----|--------|-------------|
| Maenad Longflail | 25 gp | 1d6 | 1d8 | x2 | 8 lbs. | bludgeoning |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----|----|--------|-------------|

Flail, Light: With a light flail, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an enemy (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attempt fails).

You can also use this weapon to make trip attacks. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the flail to avoid being tripped.

Maenad Longflail: With a maenad longflail, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an enemy (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attempt fails).

You can also use this weapon to make trip attacks. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the flail to avoid being tripped.

A maenad longflail is a reach weapon. If you wield a maenad longflail in one hand and nothing in the other, you can threaten adjacent enemies as well as those 10 ft. away.

Flail, Maenad Singing: This specialized flail head can be built into any kind of masterwork quality flail. Singing flails can be used as musical instruments, even as the wielder attacks with it in battle.

Singing flails adds 150 gp to the price of the flail.

The Nameless King

The true name of the maenads' creator god is lost at the dawn of time. He is known by many epithets, such as the Lord of Madness and He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, but most commonly, he is called the Nameless King. According to legend, the Nameless King was killed by his own children. After the god-slaying, the maenad leaders destroyed all holy books dedicated to him, purged references to him from all written texts, and even forbade any maenad from uttering his true name, under penalty of having their tongue cut out.

Despite all their efforts to destroy their lord, some shred of the Nameless King's essence survived, and over the millennia, he has secretly gained strength. Originally, the Nameless King was a less malevolent god as a patron of wine, decadence, and madness. In the ages that he drifted in darkness, the Nameless King evolved into something far more terrible. Once the patron of madness, he became mad himself, and his portfolio took on chaos and destruction.

The Revelry

As the Nameless King's power rises, a small but growing segment of the maenad population has embraced a cult called the Revelry. The Revelry teaches maenads to embrace their inner rage as a gift from the Nameless King. They may kiss you one moment and feast on your still-beating heart the next.

Except for a few maenads living in the wild lands, most Revelers cannot follow all these teachings in daily life. Instead they meet in seclusion once each month to engage in an orgy of alcohol, lust, and violence. Frequently, enemies of the Revelry are captured alive only to be executed at the next gathering, and any who stumble upon a meeting suffer a similar fate.

Maenads in the Real World

In Greek mythology, the maenads were the frenzied female followers of Dionysus (called Bacchus by the Romans), the god of wine and madness. The maenads were wild, intoxicated, violent, and promiscuous. After Orpheus refused their advances, a group of maenads tore the legendary poet to pieces.

Maenads were known to the Romans as bacchae and were the subject of Euripides' play of the same name. In *The Bacchae*, King Pentheus forbids worshipping Bacchus, and as punishment, raving women, including his own mother, rip him apart.

The maenads of mythology bear the most resemblance to fantasy maenads before destroying the Nameless King. If your campaign world bears a connection to earth mythologies, Dionysus may be the true identity of the Nameless King.

Maenad Adventurers

Despite their small population, maenads produce a surprisingly large number of adventurers. Maenads who have completed the Way Above commonly go on a journey of exploration. After spending several years adventuring, most return to their native home or another maenad village to settle down and raise a family.

The adventuring life is popular because it provides an outlet for maenads to channel their racial anger. In the heat of battle against orcs and trolls, their rage can be a powerful asset, and praised by their allies.

Though most maenads return after their period of wandering, not all are so fortunate. A handful perish or simply disappear, and some maenads acquire what is called the "thirst of war." While the danger of combat first serves as a release for the maenad, over time it becomes a necessity. They lose their ability to rise above their rage, and only through battle can they tame it. These unfortunate maenads are doomed to fight at every opportunity. Like any addict, these maenads build up a tolerance, so they seek greater and

greater battles to give them the feeling of control they desperately need. Inevitably, these maenads find foes too great, and their rage is ended by the sword.

Worse, some turn to evil on their adventures. They succumb to the darkness in their heart. Those with the thirst of war still pick their battles, but those who have turned to darkness, however, are wild and impulsive. They take what they want, and woe to those who get in their way. Many take up worship of the Nameless King—in spirit and in name.

Maenads in Golarion

In the *PATHFINDER* RPG world of Golarion, maenads live primarily on the continent of Casmaron, particularly on the coast of Vudra and the archipelagos off its shore. Because of their natural talent as sailors, maenads often serve on the sailing vessels of Vudra, including those that travel to the colony of Jalmeray. Nearly 1,000 maenads live on the island of Jalmeray, and some of them have ventured off the island to explore the rest of the inner sea region.

PATHFINDER Beta Maenad

The following variant maenad is compatible with the *PATHFINDER Roleplaying Game* Beta Edition.

+2 to one ability score: Maenads gain a +2 bonus to one ability score chosen at creation, to represent their varied nature.

Medium: Maenads are Medium creatures and have no bonuses or penalties due to their size.

Normal Speed: Maenads have a base speed of 30 ft.

Energy Ray: Maenads know the power *energy ray* but may only deal sonic damage with this power. It is accompanied by a tremendous scream of rage. Maenads use their character level as the manifester level for this power.

Naturally Psionic: Maenads begin with 2 bonus power points at 1st level and gain an additional power point at every odd level. They can use these power points to fuel their *energy ray* or any powers gained through a psionic class.

Sonic Affinity: Maenads add a +1 to

the DC of any spell or power with the sonic descriptor.

Outburst: Maenads can dampen their mental processes for an increase in raw power called an outburst. As a result, they take a -2 penalty to Intelligence and Wisdom but gain a +2 bonus to Strength. The character must spend one power point at the beginning of each round during an outburst and may stop an outburst at any time.

Inner Rage: Maenads begin play with one rage point and gain an additional point at every even level. In addition to using these points for barbarian abilities, characters may use them to fuel their outburst ability, instead of using power points.

Ordered Rage: Maenads may take levels in the barbarian class even if they are of the lawful alignment.

Natural Sailors: Maenads have a +2 bonus to Swim and Profession (sailor) checks. In addition, they gain a +2 bonus to Acrobatics and Climb checks made on sailing ships.

Weapon Familiarity: Maenads are proficient with flails. Maenads treat any weapon with the word “maenad” in the name as a martial weapon rather than an exotic one.

Languages: Maenads begin play speaking Common and Maenad. Maenads with high Intelligence scores can choose any of the following: Aquan, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, and Goblin.

Favored Class: The favored class of a maenad is either barbarian or the wilder psionic class. This choice must be made at 1st level and cannot be changed.

Energy Ray

If you do not use psionics in your campaign, replace the maenad's energy ray with the following spell-like ability, useable once per day. The maenad's character level equals the caster level.

Energy Ray (Sp) You create a ray of sonic energy that shoots forth from your mouth and strikes a target within close range (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels). If you succeed on a ranged touch attack

with the ray, it deals 1d6-1 points of sonic damage per level. The ray ignores an object's hardness.

4E Maenad Racial Traits

Average Height 6 ft. 3 in.

Average Weight 220 lb.

Ability Scores +2 Constitution, +2 Charisma

Size Medium

Speed 6 squares

Vision Normal

Languages Common, Maenad

Skill Bonus +2 Athletics, +2 Intimidate

Maenad Weapon Proficiency You gain proficiency with the flail.

Unleash Fury Once per day you can unleash the emotional rage within you. Each time you use this ability, you may choose to release this fury either as a primal scream or an outburst.

Racial Powers

While 4th Edition does not have complete psionics rules, these powers create the desired effects for maenads.

Unleash Fury: Primal Scream

Maenad Racial Power

You release a scream that shatters the bones of your enemies.

Daily • Sonic

Minor Action

Close blast 3 (6 at 11th level, 9 at 21st level)

Targets all creatures in area

Attack Charisma vs. Fortitude

Hit 2d6 + Charisma modifier thunder damage, and targets are dazed and deafened (save ends both) Increase damage to 4d6 at 11th level, and 6d6 at 21st level.

Miss half damage, targets are deafened until the end of your next turn



Unleash Fury: Outburst

Maenad Racial Power

You channel the anger inside you to deliver a powerful strike. The rage remains within your blood as you fight on.

Daily

Standard Action Melee weapon

Targets one creature

Attack Strength vs. AC

Hit 2[W] + Strength modifier damage Increase to 3[W] + Strength modifier damage at 11th level, and 4[W] + Strength modifier damage at 21st level.

Effect You gain a +2 power bonus equal to melee attack and damage rolls for the rest of the encounter. Increase power bonus to +3 at 11th level, and +4 at 21st level.



4E Maenad Monsters

To see the maenad as a monster visit koboldquarterly.com. New monsters posted every Monday!

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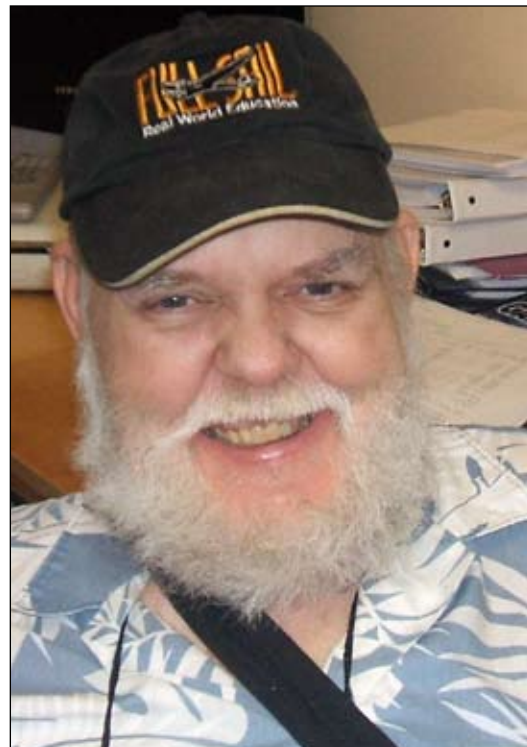
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If Their Hearts Are Pure: A Conversation with Dave Arneson

Interview by Jeremy L. C. Jones



“Dave Arneson’s impact on the concept and identity of the role-playing game is profound. His interest in story, setting, and character development helped RPGs offer players much more than endless serial combat, something far more satisfying than a tallying of dice rolls and stacked skill modifiers.”

—James Lowder, editor of the *ENnie and Origins Award-winning Hobby Games: The 100 Best*

Before Greyhawk, there was Blackmoor. Before the Dungeon Master, there was the Judge. Before d20s, there were d6s, and a lot of them.

The seed for what we now know as role-playing games (RPGs) was planted in the mind of Dave Arneson during a college class when the professor asked Arneson and his classmates to role-play historical figures. But it would take many years—and many collaborations—for that seed to grow into the earliest RPGs.

An avid wargamer since he received Avalon Hill’s *Gettysburg* as a child, Arneson was heavily involved with Napoleonic miniature campaigns when he was struck with a bout of his characteristic mischievousness. What if, he wondered, instead of moving armies around, we move smaller commando forces? What if we deviate from historical events and make up our own stories? What if, instead of just combat, we add “other objectives”?

The next time he got together with his gaming group, he had a surprise for them in the form of a whole new world.

And Blackmoor, Arneson’s signature setting, was born.

.....

Where did you start with Blackmoor?

Arneson: See, I had this neat German plastic kit and I just imagined what sort of fantasy setting it would make. Oddly enough, even though it was actually a German kit, years

later I learned that it was actually a model of a castle in Sicily. But when I started, I was thinking German.

After that it just grew and shortly it was too small for the scale I wanted.

But it was a neat kit and I didn’t want to abandon it, so the only way to go was *down* [into the dungeons]. All this happened a few weeks before the first adventurers caught sight of it.

We were doing a historical campaign in Holland so my map ended up with a lot of water. All that water also helped keep the players from wandering everywhere. (Not that that lasted very long.)

Maps. I love maps. I love to write the stories. The other paperwork is essential, but a drag. I usually start with the maps and then do the story.

What were some of your favorite times in the Blackmoor basement?

Arneson: One player wanted to be a Vampire. To the point of desperation. The other players went out of their way to kill the vampires. Finally, they were put in a situation where a “wish” spell was cast. (Generally, I discourage those kinds of spells.) The spell was cast and the player wished to be a vampire. They were passing through a garden in the depths of Blackmoor castle at the time. So he turned into a vampire rose bush. He couldn’t move very fast but often a new player character would stop to check out the bush and prick his finger.

What was it like in the early days at TSR?

Arneson: It started out being fun. But, as the money increased the fun decreased...

Pretty much my direct involvement with D&D ended with 3rd Edition. But even before then I have used the

Blackmoor books by Zeitgeist Games and Code Monkey to present my ideas. Mostly, I have tried to push character development complimented by the story line.

.....

Arneson made up the rules “as [they] went along,” drawing heavily on the wargames and history he loved. In those early years in his basement, he introduced many of the formative mechanics of what would eventually become DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: armor class, hit points, experience points and levels.

By going downward instead of across the map, he gave us the dungeon crawl.

And they were no longer campaigns restrained by the events of history.

No longer was a player forced to stand back and control large groups of men from afar. Nor were players encouraged to focus mostly on personal combat.

Now, the character could move in closer to the action, take on the role of an individual character, and, along with his companion characters, tell his or her own story.

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What is at the heart of a good game?

Arneson: As far as I am concerned it is the story. It can make or break a game quite easily.

What do you enjoy most about designing games? About playing them?

Arneson: Watching the players interact and do things that were not planned by the poor referee

What do games mean to you?

Arneson: The mental challenges, not just rolling the dice.

Rules... strict or loose?

Arneson: I like loose so you can change things that are not working. I dislike “Rules Lawyers” intensely. I regard *them* as the enemy.

What role does improvisation play in game design in general?

Arneson: Lots. The rules cannot cover every possibility. And frankly speaking, they shouldn't. The referee needs the freedom to keep making the game fun.

What makes for a really great encounter?

Arneson: That the players overcame the obstacle by wit and not muscles.

What's more fun: a horde of weaker monsters or a pair of powerful monsters?

Arneson: Either. But generally one well-played monster is the most fun. Just combat alone is boring a lot of the time. But I usually prefer story and plot over a lot of combat anyways.

What makes for a balanced game?

Arneson: Challenges. Both mental (for the players) and physical (for the character).

.....

At the second annual GenCon in 1969, Arneson met E. Gary Gygax, the co-creator with Jeff Perren of *Chain-mail*, a medieval miniatures game.

Arneson would eventually invite Gygax into Blackmoor. Gygax and Arneson shared ideas, experimented with ideas, and even wrote a nautical game together called *Don't Give Up the Ship!* The pair shared an occasionally contentious collaborative relationship resulting, ultimately, in the co-creation of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS (D&D).

The original D&D was sold through Tactical Studies Research (TSR) in 1973. The company and the game evolved over time. Arneson drifted away from the company by the end of the 1970s.

But his personality remains indelibly stamped on the role-playing games in general and D&D in particular. The emphasis, he says, should always be on character development, story, and fun.

.....

Has your understanding of game design changed over the years?

Arneson: Yes. “All people will play games. You just have to find the games that they like.

For every rock superstar showing off at the front of the stage, there's at least one guy playing bass quietly in the background, and managing the band, and making sure the amps don't get left behind. For years, Dave Arneson has been one of those quiet guys.

You can learn a lot from quiet guys.

At crowded conventions, it's easy for gamers—particularly younger gamers, who may have no idea about the history of the hobby and who may be hotly eager for a particular product release or a shiny new game—to overlook older, quieter gamers with white hair and beards.

“Old guys” who those younger gamers see as grognards who smoke pipes and game by moving miniatures around a sand-table with measuring tapes.

So they might make a terrible mistake.

The fault of overlooking Dave Arneson, sitting quietly at his booth, selling “old school” roleplaying scenarios that just might be better fun to play through than the latest flashy monster race you can play as a character class.

And they might miss out on the stories. The why and how of some of the classic games, adventures, and sourcebooks, D&D and otherwise. From a man who's worked as a security guard and a rabbit farmer—and, oh, yes, given us the ongoing campaign setting for fantasy roleplaying games, the element that makes D&D different from the DUNGEON boardgame.

For many a GenCon, now, it has been my pleasure to briefly stop and chat with Dave. Not just out of respect (though “respect” is something many, many of us should practice a bit more often, these days), but because I can learn so much from this man. Not the “right” way to design something or some secret road to gaming success, but about life, and about balancing things in context, and about how you make games for love and not money.

Years back, I sat for more than an hour talking with Dave. And by “talking” I do not mean telling him about my characters and my great in-game victories. I mean asking him things, and then sitting back to really listen to the answers.

We've lost Gary Gygax, and many more, too. With every person, their memories, what they've learned in life, is lost to everyone when they pass on. And those of us whose turn hasn't come up yet—and it does, for every last one of us—miss the chance to learn.

And to say thanks.

Every roleplaying gamer has a lot to thank Dave Arneson for.

And a lot of fun ahead if they buy his stuff and play it.

Don't miss out on one of life's best chances.

—Ed Greenwood



What has been your favorite character to play over the years?

Arneson: A lawful paladin. It is one of the toughest characters to play since you have to stay within the restrictions to do it right.

What is your DMing style?

Arneson: The players are there to keep the referee amused. If they don't, he will find a way to make it entertaining. But seriously it should be fun for everyone.

But still, I do like to keep the game moving along.

.....

Since splitting with TSR, Arneson has continued to design games, write adventures, and play the games he loves. Since the early 1980s he has taught and spoken in schools, promoting the use of RPGs in the classroom. Until the summer of 2008, he taught game design at Full Sail University, an arts and design school in Florida.

.....

Are teaching and DMing similar?

Arneson: He-he! That would be telling. I give all my students a 20-sided die when they pass my class. Rubbed, by me, in my hair for luck if their hearts are pure. Otherwise, it's just a plain old die.

What are some of the best uses for RPGs in the classroom? Or, put differently, if you were trying to sell a curriculum committee on the use of RPGs, what would you say?

Arneson: Generally, an RPG should be structured to account for a number of classes.

In California, a Japanese RPG began as part of the students' Japanese language class. All commands

and directions had to be in Japanese. (Fortunately, they gave me a translator to use.)

Then we included writing and spelling (in English) and later math.

You have to always figure out encumbrances. The student/players had to co-operate to overcome obstacles since I gave them all different skills.

So we did language, spelling, grammar, math and social skills.

And this was in a non-competitive atmosphere and the students did quite well.

.....

For 40 years, Dave Arneson has been teaching us about games and about ourselves. From the early days in the Blackmoor basement, to afternoons signing books at conventions, to his many hours in the classroom, Arneson has set the standards in game design, game play, and creative collaboration.

Most importantly, he has emphasized story, character, and the importance of responsiveness. Designers should respond to players. DMs should respond to players and to situations. Games and their rules evolve. Things change. The goal is to still have fun.

"In the early days of playing Blackmoor," said Greg Svenson, a long time friend of Arneson's, "when Dave wanted to see how the players would react to a situation he would set it up so that it would seem like we were in that situation and then see how we react.

"For example, on my first dungeon adventure, Dave wanted to see what we would do when we first encountered "the blob", so he took us (there were six of us) into the laundry area of the basement and turned out the lights saying a gust of wind had blown out

Anyone who has had the good fortune to talk with Dave for even a few minutes can't help but recognize his passion for good games. He can enthuse with equal gusto about *Carcassonne* and *Zombies!!!*, *Empire of the Petal Throne* and *HeroClix*. And despite the hard knocks he's endured, the shameful lack of proper recognition, at heart he still loves the hobby and thrills to see people gather around a table and simply have fun.

—James Lowder, editor of the ENnie and Origins Award-winning *Hobby Games: The 100 Best* and author of *Prince of Lies*.

our torches. Then he screamed as if a person was dying. He then turned the light back on to see what we had done."

Today, Arneson continues to develop Blackmoor and, in association with Dustin Clingman, to run Zeitgeist Games, the developers of Dave Arneson's Blackmoor the Massively Multi-Player Role Playing Game (MMRPG). In keeping with Arneson's design philosophy, the Blackmoor MMRPG has, according to the promotional materials, "always been of and for the players! In that very tradition, the ongoing action of players worldwide is tracked and has significant impact on the ongoing plotline of the world. Your Actions count! Your decision may restore the very fate of Blackmoor from one of destruction to that of peace!"

Arneson is also working on *Dragons in the Basement*, a film about the first ten years of RPGs.

"The hardest part is," he said, "to stay focused and not get distracted by the nostalgia."



Dave's one of the all-time great game designers. His contributions to Dungeons & Dragons defined roleplaying games as we know them, all the way up from the original boxed set to *World of Warcraft* and beyond.

It's a damn shame that TSR tried to shut him out of the industry for so many years, and I know Dave bore some justified bitterness about this for a while. These days, though, it's fantastic to see Dave get his due and the acknowledgement he truly deserves.

I've never had the pleasure of working with Dave, but I have sat on a number of panels with him. I always approach such events wondering what I've done that would put me on the same stage with the man, but he's always as gracious and self-effacing about sharing the spotlight as you would expect from such a class act.

—Matt Forbeck

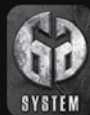
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Living with Dinosaurs

By John E. Ling Jr.
Art by LeCire

In our world, dinosaurs went extinct millions of years ago, long before humans inhabited the planet. The only evidence of their existence is fossil records, leaving scientists to make their best guess to fill in all manner of details—everything from whether or not winged dinosaurs could generate lift or just glided, all the way down to determining the ecology of the creature such as what they ate and how.

Of course, in a fantasy world there's no reason at all why dinosaurs can't exist alongside humanoids and other creatures. The core rules describe five dinosaurs, and dozens of other sources have detailed others. Presented here are statistics for four more dinosaurs. Each also includes a sidebar examining how humanoids might domesticate the animal and use its unique talents.

Archaeopteryx

This avian ancestor lived during the late Jurassic period. Researchers debate whether archaeopteryx ("first bird" from the Greek *archaios* meaning ancient and *pteryx* meaning feather or wing) could produce lift to generate flight or if it simply glided. Most agree, though, that archaeopteryx serves as an evolutionary link from dinosaurs to modern birds.

Archaeopteryx

N Tiny animal

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 15, flat-footed 13

(+3 Dex, +1 natural, +2 size)

hp 7 (1d8+3)

Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee bite +5 (1d4–3) and

claws +0 (1d3–3)

Space 2 ½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

TACTICS

Before Combat An archaeopteryx takes cover for an ambush.

During Combat When attacking foes smaller than it, an archaeopteryx uses its dangerous teeth; against slightly larger foes, it opts to attack with its razor-sharp claws.

Morale An archaeopteryx doesn't hesitate to run away if it finds itself in a combat it cannot handle.

STATISTICS

Str 5, **Dex** 17, **Con** 10, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 4

Base Atk +0; **Grp** –11

Feats Toughness, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Hide +15, Listen +3, Spot +3



ECOLOGY

Environment temperate plains and marshes

Organization solitary, pair, or flight (4–7)

Treasure none

Advancement 2 HD (Tiny)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Skills (Ex) An archaeopteryx receives a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks.

Ecology

Archaeopteryx is similar in size and shape to a magpie, growing to a total of about 1 ½ ft. in length. Despite its advanced flight feathers, it shares more traits with dinosaurs than modern birds. Many experts consider archaeopteryx an example of a "transition" animal—a link between dinosaurs and birds.

Archaeopteryx has small, sharp teeth and feeds on small prey such as tiny lizards and insects. In addition to its sharp teeth, archaeopteryx uses its sharp talons when hunting larger prey.

In the Real World

Archaeopteryx lived in what is now modern day Bavaria, 150–145 million years ago. During this period, that region of Europe had a latitude similar to Florida, though much drier. Fossil evidence suggests the region had few trees at the time, indicating archaeopteryx lived either on the ground or in low scrub bushes.

Domesticated Archaeopteryx: Familiars

Arcane spellcasters in areas to which archaeopteryx is native may adopt this dinosaur as a familiar. An archaeopteryx grants its master +3 hit points. An arcane caster with this creature serving as a familiar often finds himself the target of skepticism in more culturally advanced regions.

Compsognathus

Compsognathus (from the Greek *kompsus* meaning elegant or dainty and *gnathos* meaning jaw) is generally well known because researchers once thought it to be the smallest dinosaur. It had large eyes, relative to the size of its skull, indicating it was likely a skilled hunter.

Compsognathus

CR 3

N Small animal

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +7, Spot +12

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14

(+4 Dex, +3 natural, +1 size)

hp 22 (4d8+4)

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d6–1)

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

Special Attacks pack hunter

TACTICS

Before Combat Compsognathus typically hunt in packs.

They circle their prey and prepare to attack in unison.

During Combat A compsognathus' pack hunting skills allow it to bring down larger foes. They attack ferociously, running down prey to the point of exhaustion.

Morale Compsognathus are fierce predators, and rarely will a pack back off from a fight.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 19, **Con** 13, **Int** 2, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 4

Base Atk +3; **Grp** –2

Feats Alertness, Run, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Balance +12, Listen +7, Spot +12

ECOLOGY

Environment tropical plains

Organization pair or pack (5-10)

Treasure none

Advancement 5–8 HD (Small)

Level Adjustment —



SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pack Hunter (Ex) Compsognathus hunt prey in packs. Whenever three or more are attacking the same creature, they gain a +1 circumstance bonus to attacks and damage and a +1 dodge bonus to AC.

Skills (Ex) Compsognathus gain a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks and a +4 racial bonus on Spot checks.

Ecology

A compsognathus is about 3 ft. in length and weighs about 6 ½ pounds. It is bipedal with long hind legs and a tail, which it uses for balance while running. Its shorter forelimbs have three sharp claws, likely used for grasping prey. It dines mostly on small vertebrates and insects.

In the Real World

During the late Jurassic period, Europe was a tropical archipelago. Compsognathus thrived in the lagoons common in the area. Fossil records indicate compsognathus may have been the top land predator in its region, likely due to its strong sense of sight and other hunting characteristics.

Euoplocephalus

Euoplocephalus (from the Greek *eu* meaning well, *hoplo* meaning armed and *kephale* meaning head) lived during the late Cretaceous period, roughly 85–65 million years ago. The creature was discovered in 1902 and first named “stereocephalus.” However, that name was already assigned to an insect.

Euoplocephalus

CR 6

N Huge animal

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +9, Spot +9

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 8, flat-footed 23

(+0 Dex, +15 natural, –2 size)

hp 67 (9d8+27)

Fort +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Domesticated Compsognathus: A Hunter's Friend

Hunters value compsognathus' ability to work together to bring down prey. Several have taken the time necessary to domesticate these beasts and teach them to serve as hunting animals. Much like nobles from Europe use hounds to hunt, so too do hunters use these animals when they're available.

Training a wild compsognathus is difficult, though certainly possible. Domesticating the beast requires one month and 200 gp, spent evenly over the four-week period. At the end of each week, the trainer must make a DC 25 Handle Animal check; if the check fails, the effort—and gold—spent during that week is wasted. At the end of the fourth week, the animal is domesticated enough for the trainer to begin to teach it tricks as normal.

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee bite +11 (2d6+7) and tail +7 (1d8+3)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks devastating blow

TACTICS

Before Combat A euoplocephalus prefers to avoid combat and, if given the chance, will flee before combat begins.

During Combat A euoplocephalus uses its clubbed tail in self-defense, swinging it at larger predators.

Morale It prefers to flee rather than fight, and does so as soon as possible.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 11, **Con** 17, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 4

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +21

Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (tail)

Skills Listen +9, Spot +9

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate plains

Organization solitary, pair, or herd (3-30)

Treasure none

Advancement 10–15 HD (Huge); 16–25 HD (Gargantuan)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Devastating Blow (Ex) A euoplocephalus' tail is a devastating weapon, especially against objects. It ignores the first 10 hp hardness when attacking an object.

Ecology

Roughly the size of an elephant, a euoplocephalus measures 20 ft. long by 8 ft. wide and weighs approximately 2 tons. The creature is low-slung with rear legs slightly longer than its forelimbs. The creature is covered in bands of armor, instead of overlapping plates, which makes it surprisingly dexterous for its size. Most interestingly, it possesses armored "shutters" that slide down to cover its eyelids.

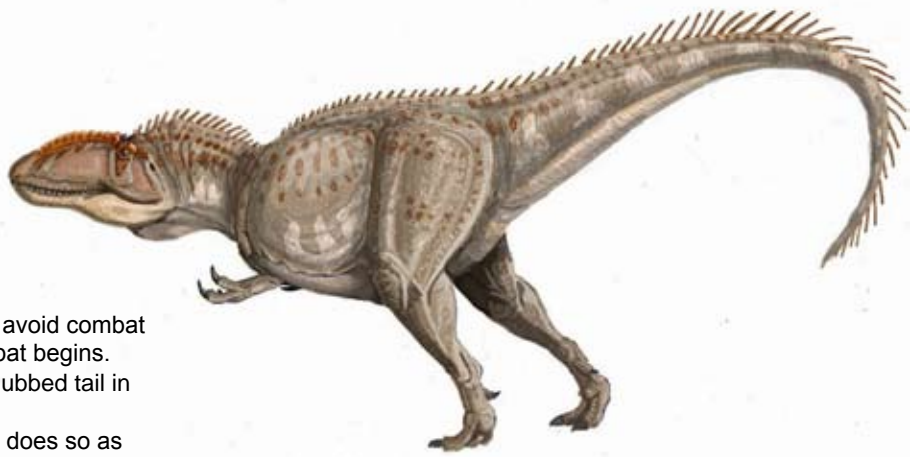
Euoplocephalus is a herbivore and has a well-developed sense of smell. Its limbs end in hoof-like claws, which it uses to dig up tubers. It also dines on fleshy vegetation.

In the Real World

It lived in what is currently the central plains of Canada and the United States. Originally, researchers believed euoplocephalus were solitary creatures, but the discovery in 1988 of a herd of 22 of the young of a related species has led scientists to rethink that.

Giganotosaurus

Giganotosaurus ("giant southern lizard" from the Greek *gigas* meaning giant, *notos* meaning south wind, and *saurus* meaning lizard) is one of the largest carnivores to ever walk the planet. It lived during the late Cretaceous period, roughly 93 to 89 million years ago.



Giganotosaurus

CR 14

N Gargantuan animal

Init –2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +9, Spot +9

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 4, flat-footed 24

(–2 Dex, +20 natural, –4 size)

hp 250 (20d8+160)

Fort +20, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +24 (4d6+18)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks ferocity, improved grab, swallow whole, trample (3d6+18, DC 32)

TACTICS

Before Combat A giganotosaurus has a voracious appetite. It charges into combat at the first sign of a potential meal.

During Combat If faced with more than one target, a giganotosaurus is well equipped to control multiple threats while acquiring a meal, using its varied special attacks. Its only goal in combat is the acquisition of a good meal, so it grapples and swallows a target as quickly as possible before moving on to the next course.

Morale This terrifying carnivore isn't accustomed to losing, so it stubbornly sticks with a fight even when things badly for it.

Domesticated Euoplocephalus: Living Siege Engine

A euoplocephalus' ability to easily destroy objects with its club-like tail quickly caught the eye of a war-minded tribesman. At great risk, he acquired several euoplocephalus eggs and raised the offspring, domesticating the world's first living siege engine. Special handlers ride the euoplocephalus, directing it to inflict destruction. Its targets range from carts and wagons up to large buildings.

Euoplocephalus is easier to train than the feisty compognathus. A skilled animal trainer can domesticate a wild euoplocephalus in two weeks with 100 gp, spent evenly over the two-week period. At the end of each week, the trainer must make a DC 20 Handle Animal check; failure indicates the time and money spent that week were wasted.

Turning the animal into a living siege engine requires that a skilled trainer teach a domesticated euoplocephalus a trick to do so. In order to learn this trick, the animal must already know the Combat Riding general purpose and the Attack trick. Teaching it to become a siege engine requires an additional trick: Siege Engine (DC 20).

STATISTICS

Str 35, **Dex** 7, **Con** 27, **Int** 1, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +39

Feats Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Overrun, Power Attack, Track, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Listen +9, Spot +9, Survival +12

ECOLOGY

Environment tropical plains

Organization solitary, pair, or pack (3–6)

Treasure none

Advancement 21–35 HD (Gargantuan); 36–70 HD (Colossal)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ferocity (Ex) A giganotosaurus is a ferocious fighter and acts normally in combat even while disabled or dying.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, the giganotosaurus must hit a creature at least one size category smaller than itself with its bite attack. It can then start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Skills (Ex) A giganotosaurus gains a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks.

Swallow Whole (Ex) A giganotosaurus

can try to swallow a grabbed opponent at least one size smaller than itself by making a successful grapple check. Once inside, the opponent takes 2d8+8 points of crushing damage plus 10 points of acid damage per round from the giganotosaurus' digestive juices.

A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 20 hp damage to the giganotosaurus' digestive tract (AC 14). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. A giganotosaurus' gullet can hold 1 Huge, 4 Large, 16 Medium, 64 Small, or 256 Tiny or smaller creatures.

Trample (Ex) A giganotosaurus' long, lumbering strides make it a dangerous foe to smaller creatures. A trample attack deals 3d6+18 points of damage; those in giganotosaurus' path of destruction may attempt a Reflex saving throw (DC 32) for half-damage. The save DC is Strength-based.

Ecology

Larger than even the tyrannosaurus, giganotosaurus is roughly 43 ft. in length. Its head alone measures slightly over 6 ft. in length. It weighs an astounding 6 tons and can reach speeds of 31 mph.

A giganotosaurus is a carnivore and preys on anything it can catch.

Domesticated Giganotosaurus: Weapon of Mass Destruction

A giganotosaurus is too vicious to truly be domesticated. Many have tried, and all have met a grisly end. One tribe, however, didn't let that little detail stop it from making use of giganotosaurus during war. They captured a giganotosaurus and mistreated the beast, starving it. After weeks of mistreatment, the tribe dragged the giganotosaurus' cage to their enemy's encampment. Once there, they destroyed the cage, releasing the angered beast among their enemies. While extremely dangerous, this is also quite effective.

Capturing a giganotosaurus requires a successful DC 45 Handle Animal or Survival check. Smart hunters ensure the trap or enclosure is strong enough to withstand a furious onslaught.

In the Real World

Giganotosaurus lived in South America, in what is now Argentina, and was first discovered in 1993. Some fossil records indicate these terrible killers may have lived and hunted in packs.



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Brief Glimpses

A new column on design

by Monte Cook

The goal of playing a role-playing game should never be anything more than the enjoyment of an evening (or series of evenings). Despite the pundits you'll encounter arguing for a strict adherence to "old school" gaming, or to a "story-based" approach, or any of a number of other methods, there is no absolute right or wrong way to play, other than that which you think is most fun. That said, it's valuable sometimes to really examine what's at stake here so that you can make intentional, informed decisions about your own approach to game play.

Take, for example, the idea of realism in a game. This is a topic often debated in various forums, the first and foremost of these being around the game table itself. "Is this realistic?" people ask. "Does it make sense?" Often this issue comes up when someone at the table knows a little about ancient or Medieval history. They're questioning some aspect of the game because it does not mesh with what they know about the real world.

I think that what they're really asking is, "Can I believe in this, even just for an evening? Does it strain my credulity too much?" It all comes down to a suspension of disbelief. The pursuit of realism (as opposed to believability) leads to madness. It's like chasing the horizon—it's something you cannot reach. A perfect simulation of reality would be, of course, reality.

But believability is an achievable goal. And likely a worthwhile one.

If we look to the roots of the hobby, we see that *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*, even in its early days, didn't strive for perfect realism. The "dungeon" of the name was filled with strange, unexplained (and in fact, unexplainable) challenges, puzzles, and tricks as well as terrible monsters and fabulous trea-

tures. It was not merely a subterranean structure, but in a fashion the mythic underworld itself. It wasn't a simulation of reality, but a fun game environment.

That said, D&D didn't throw realism entirely out the window for the sake of gameplay. There was a veneer of realism. In other words, believability. It achieves this goal not by fully defining or explaining everything, and yet not by simple handwaving either. It achieves believability by offering us brief glimpses into the truth of this alternate reality where dungeons and bugbears and reverse gravity traps exist.

It's these brief glimpses that address the believability issue without allowing the game to get bogged down in meaningless (and probably unfun) detail. For example, we're told that dungeons become more dangerous the deeper you go. We're told that carnivorous apes are found in the company of hobgoblins. Bulettes love the taste of halflings. These feel like miscellaneous facts from some real place about which we know little else. But they're facts we can use as both players and Dungeon Masters upon which to base our decisions. And therefore they make the whole thing more believable.

Imagine that you peer through a dirty window into the world outside. You catch a brief glimpse here and there of people, objects, places, and activities, but not at all the complete picture. Your mind fills in all the gaps. You get only a fraction of the whole scene, but you know that the rest is there (actually, you assume it, but for our purposes it's all the same thing).

These brief glimpses don't explain everything. They don't actually allow for a game that makes sense to anyone with a scrutinizing eye. The more you define, the more someone with a bit of knowledge, a little logic, or just an argumentative streak can take issue



with. But a brief glimpse creates a context for which a group can pretend that it makes sense, and can make decisions based on what seems like fact and logic. It's the illusion of reality, or at least, of a believable alternate reality. "If only we had all the facts, of this reality, it would make perfect sense. But we don't, so we'll just take the facts we have and assume that the stuff we don't know about makes sense too.

So it's not necessary to provide a complete picture and explain or justify everything. In fact, doing so may be detrimental. Not only can you address every concern of the skeptic, but with complete explanation, you risk losing that sense of mystery and wonder. An enigmatic fantasy world may be a more enjoyable one for the players and the DM. Sometimes it's a lack of explanation that makes things fun, but only if the context suggests that there are explanations for some things.

And yet if there's nothing offered to the players to hold on to, there's no basis upon which to make decisions. If one moment orcs are terrible marauders and the next they are peaceful savages, a player can never learn anything about orcs. It's like forcing the players (not the characters) to start at 1st level with every encounter, because everything might be different.

Likewise, if the encounters aren't set in some meaningful context, you not only lose believability, but you lose this same kind of player ability to make real decisions. Some people, for example, don't believe that a D&D dungeon should have any empty rooms because an empty room is boring. They claim that every moment at the game table needs to be filled with action or it's a waste. The first problem with that approach is, how can we believe in such a place? As much a strain on credulity as a D&D dungeon is, providing it this

way will break many people's suspension of disbelief. Not to mention that it loses much of the flavor of the deep, dark, maze-like dungeon occasionally punctuated with dangerous encounters. Imagine a horror movie with non-stop violence. Such a movie would soon lose all atmosphere and mood. You can't be jolted out of your seat without moments of downtime in between the jolts.

But the even worse problem is, it provides the players with no context. In a dungeon where the dragonne lives right next to the wight-filled crypt, which is right next to the drow lair, the players can't use their wits to understand or prepare for the next encounter, let alone believe in it.

At the very least, if the group doesn't want to play through the empty rooms of a dungeon, a DM should provide some believability with areas devoid of encounters and non-action experiences and then "fast forwarding" through those portions of the game with a little description, giving the players a "brief glimpse" into the larger picture. If you want a dungeon with six encounters in it, fill in the blanks in between those encounters with a few interesting sentences about what happens in between. Don't just cram the encounters together, but explain how after the PCs fight off the dragonne, they explore a series of cobweb-strewn chambers and broken statuary and dusty furnishings before they find the undead-filled crypt.

Why? Because in that description, you've not only explained that no, the dragonne doesn't live right next to a pack of wights, you've also given the players a clue that the dragonne doesn't come down this way. Nothing does—so if they hear movement ahead, it's something that doesn't leave its lair... ever... or else they would have seen signs of its passing in the undisturbed empty rooms. They might know to prepare to face undead.

It's important to note that when you do things like this, you're not *justifying* the fantastic or the strange (or even the whimsical). Justifying the unjustifiable is a mugg's game. It's reactive and de-

fensive, and leads to non-answers like, "Uh, I don't know. It's magic!"

Instead, the DM should set the fantastic in a reasonable context. If the players ask questions like "How do these giants live down here?" the DM should ask, "How does your character go about discovering that?" The implication is that there is an answer, it just isn't immediately obvious—like lots of things in the real world.

And verisimilitude doesn't have to mean realistic. The giants in the dungeon can be sustained by a magical spell rather than needing to eat. That provides verisimilitude without being at all realistic. (But it only provides believability if the players learn that fact. It's a waste of time providing explanations, realistic or not, if the DM is the only one who ever knows about them.)

The players are on your side in this endeavor (or at least they should be). You doesn't have to defend or justify everything that's going on in the fantasy world, you just have to give the players a reason to leap into the escapism and fun with both feet. The players look to the DM to open the door—they already want to go through. If they didn't, they wouldn't be sitting around the table with dice in hand.

And on the other side of the table, players should maybe try not to look too closely at every fantastical situation. They should be generous with their willing suspension of disbelief. At the same time, however, simply accepting everything that comes with a "well, I guess it's magic" excuse robs you of any context the DM does try to provide. To truly get into the spirit of the game, there's a gooey, ephemeral middle ground of believability that I think both DM and player have to cohabit peacefully. Where that middle ground actually lies is different for every group. But choosing where to place it should be a conscious decision to maintain consistency and ensure that everyone around the table is playing the game they most want to play.

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Kitsune

A foxy new PC race

by Scott Gable

Art by Darren Calvert, Utagawa Kuniyoshi

A fox is a fox is a fox, right? Well, you might be surprised to learn that foxes are as varied and complex as any humanoid race. Foxes begin their long lives as the animals with which you are no doubt already familiar—intelligent, resourceful, charming. These qualities only increase as the fox matures. By the time a fox reaches its 100th year, it is at least as intelligent as a typical humanoid.

The surprises don't end there, though, for right around a fox's century mark, it undergoes a subtle and important transformation—it becomes fey and begins to develop incredible abilities.

From the fox's point of view, it is still a fox and has simply entered a new stage in its life. However, others typically distinguish this new form with a different name: *kitsune*. This is the name of choice among scholars and sages, though the more colloquial *gloom fox* is common in folk tales. The latter is a corruption of an earlier name, *gloom fox*, and illustrates that these creatures are often viewed only as tricksters, thieves, and ill omens.

Typical Physical Characteristics

A kitsune's physical appearance can vary widely, but the average specimen is 3 feet long (nose to tail) and weighs 10-15 pounds. Their coloration varies from red and brown to white, silver, and gray. An individual's length and weight remain the same during the transformation into kitsune; however, its coloration often becomes more intense. It is not uncommon, even, to find specimens with drastically altered coloration such as magenta or dark blue or black.

The hallmark of the kitsune, though,



are their multiple tails. They start their transformation with the single tail. As they grow older, they grow additional tails. The oldest of kitsune may have up to 9 tails, and this is the outer limit.

Contrary to popular belief, the tails are not the source of or vessel for the fox's magic; they are merely features of age. It is rumored, however, that some foxes have learned to better utilize their tails, granting them new abilities and strengthening their spellcasting. All foxes can use their tails in place of hands for the purpose of somatic components for spells.

Psychology, Society, and Transformation

As your standard fox, kitsune are relatively solitary creatures who live as hunter-gatherers. Achieving their 100th year instills in them a sense of community, however, and small tribes start banding together for friendship and protection.

A tribe of kitsune is a simple affair and is really just a bunch of localized dens with no real central leadership. Though they won't always actively seek a mate, kitsune do mate for life and prefer to raise families within the protective environment of the tribe. In general, kitsune don't need much and, while within the tribe, they share

necessities. However, each kitsune has a weakness for baubles—shiny stones, colorful balls, exotic sachets—and will tend to obsess over a given item. Though they tend not to hoard many items, they are extremely protective of the one or two that they have identified as theirs (even if others can claim ownership). After obsessing over an item for years, some kitsune may simply start obsessing over a new item, replacing the old.

Kitsune are social creatures at heart and often live in close proximity to other cultures. Whether that culture knows it or not, its members likely interact with these shapeshifting fey on a daily basis. In fact, kitsune sometimes fall in love with members of other cultures and raise families, all the while keeping their identity as a kitsune secret. Children do come of these unions but always appear as the non-kitsune parent; as the child grows, its fey heritage blossoms and grants a special affinity for fox magic.

The Inevitability of Trouble

Kitsune do as they please, though the knowledge that their actions reflect on the whole tribe is usually enough to keep a kitsune's in line. Self-imposed exile, however, is a common reaction when a kitsune incurs the wrath of



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other races. Whether caught stealing or eloping with a youngest daughter, most races have a low tolerance for kitsune escapades.

Mischief is in their blood; Kitsune simply can't suppress their mischievous ways for long. Stealing, playing tricks and just generally confounding other creatures seems to be the "reason for being" for most, if not all, kitsune. It never starts with malicious intent; it's all fun and games—*can't they see that?* Unfortunately, "they" rarely do and confrontations inevitably ensue. While unwarranted attacks on kitsune by other creatures find swift retaliation by the entire tribe, individual kitsune are expected to take responsibility for any ill will they themselves cause.

The strongest kitsune own up to their actions when those actions begin to affect the tribe and may exile themselves to spare loved ones excess trouble. Others, a not insignificant minority, become bitter and vengeful and seek to punish those that have taken offense. These destructive kitsune are often pushed from the tribe (in forced exile) and continue as loners. An ill omen indeed, small tribes of these destructive outsiders are springing up.

Following Your Tail

Gradually, all kitsune leave the tribe. Those that haven't already left prematurely in exile will eventually leave anyway,



usually about the time they gain their fifth tail; there are an exceedingly small number of 5-tail kitsune in a given tribe and almost never any older. This stage in their lives demands travel, reflection, and solitude; although mated couples frequently begin this journey together, the final stage must always be taken alone.

The end of the journey—or the Longest Step—is the transition into the nine tail (or *kyubi*). Though this stage promises great power and wisdom, it is dangerous and not all kitsune undertake it: perhaps to remain with their mate or perhaps from fear. Of those who dare, not all make the transition unscathed. Those successful become transcendent beings: a nine tail. These creatures are not entirely good, and the successful transformation simply reflects the kitsune's heart. Those who fail transformation, however, are surely evil, for the kitsune becomes a violent, raging beast which seeks to consume and destroy. These nine tailed horrors are known as the demon foxes.

Delving into Mysteries

The world of foxes is filled with mysteries undreamed of by non-foxes. Beyond even the winding lifepath of the typical kitsune that culminates in the Longest Step, there lie deeper mysteries still, myth even among the kitsune. A couple of the principals among these are the kanko and the ghost fox.

The kanko (also *kuda-gitsune* or pipe fox) are very small and long fox-headed creatures that house themselves within bamboo tubes or pipes. They can fly and possess others, and they crave knowledge above all else. Their relationship to other kitsune remains unknown, but they are said to live in the spirit world. They are seekers and finders and are often petitioned for their assistance.

Even less is known about ghost foxes, those eternal kitsune who have tricked death herself.

Racial Traits

Physical Features

Average Length 3 ft.

Average Weight 13 lb.

Ability Scores +2 Charisma, +2 Dexterity

Size Small

Speed 7 squares

Vision Low-Light

Natural Weapon Your bite is considered a natural weapon.

This attack qualifies as a weapon for powers, and it is treated as a short sword.

Quadruped Your paws are unable to hold items, including weapons and shields. However, you can still wear and utilize other magic items.

Tails You grow a new tail every 3 levels.

Languages Common, Elven

Skill Bonuses +2 Acrobatics, +2 Bluff

Alter Form You can use *alter form* as an at-will power.

Fey Origin You are fey in origin.

Fox Magic You are capable of learning fox magic and using star balls.

Fang of the Fox You can use *fang of the fox* as an at-will power.

Slip Away While running, you increase your speed by 3 squares (instead of by 2 squares) and do not grant combat advantage.

Fox Magic

Foxes have a magic all their own. From changing shape to casting fire to possessing others, their varied and ingrained magical abilities are an integral part of the secret life of foxes.

Star Ball (Hoshi no Tama)

Star gems and soul gems, as many humanoids call them, are implements for channeling and manipulating arcane and psionic energies, respectively. The more playfully named star balls, however, are used by kitsune, who have elevated them to an art form. Indeed, these items probably originated with the clever foxes.

Kitsune cherish their star ball above all things. Created ritually from a polished piece of jade, opal, jasper, ruby, or hematite, each star ball is attuned to an individual kitsune. These implements are embedded within the forehead, serving as foci for fox magic (although kitsune can also release them for a time to admire and play with them). A star ball is a physical, emotional, and spiritual manifestation of the kitsune and the theft or desecration of a star ball invites fierce retaliation.

Unable to use tools while in fox form for lack of hands, kitsune rely on star balls as the foci for other magic (see *soul ball convergence* below). Kitsune need not be in fox form to benefit from the power of star balls although powers with the fox magic keyword still require it. A star ball's enhancement bonus applies to the attack and damage rolls of any powers with the fox magic keyword (including *fang of the fox*) and other powers it is attuned to (see *soul ball convergence*).

Kitsune Star Ball

| | | |
|--------|----|-----------|
| Lvl 1 | +1 | 360 gp |
| Lvl 6 | +2 | 1,800 gp |
| Lvl 11 | +3 | 9,000 gp |
| Lvl 16 | +4 | 45,000 gp |

| | | |
|--------|----|--------------|
| Lvl 21 | +5 | 225,000 gp |
| Lvl 26 | +6 | 1,125,000 gp |

Implement (Star Ball)

Enhancement Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical +1d6 damage per plus

Powers

Fox magic powers are unique to kitsune. At any given level, a kitsune may take a power with the fox magic keyword in place of one of their class powers. Unless specified otherwise, any power with the fox magic descriptor can be performed only by kitsune while in fox form.

Level 1 At-Will Powers

Alter Form

With a mere thought, you take on the appearance of another creature.

At-Will # Fox Magic, Polymorph
Minor Action Personal

Effect You alter your form to resemble any Small or Medium humanoid. Only appearance is altered; you do not gain any special traits or abilities of the new form other than the ability to hold and use items in your hands. Copying a unique individual is treated as a disguise attempt and requires Bluff checks.

Special Kitsune need not be in fox form to initiate this power. All items usable by the kitsune remain usable and conform to any new form.

All kitsune gain this power for free at 1st level.

Fang of the Fox

With an innate deftness, you slip away from your target.

At-will # Fox Magic, Weapon
Standard Action Melee weapon
Target one creature

Attack Charisma vs. Reflex
Hit 1d6 + Charisma modifier damage
Increase damage to 2d6 + Charisma modifier as 21st level.

Effect shift yourself 2 squares after attack

Special This power is considered a basic attack.

A star ball can be used as an implement with this power if you forgo any weapon proficiency bonus.

All kitsune gain this power at 1st level.

Level 5 Daily Power

Foxfire

A ball of fire and lightning floats gently around your head and unleashes fury upon your foes.

Daily # Fire, Fox Magic, Implement, Lightning

Standard Action Ranged 10

Target one creature

Attack Charisma vs. Reflex

Hit 2d8 + Charisma modifier fire and lightning damage

Miss half damage

Sustain Minor Make a Charisma vs.

Reflex attack against any one target within range. On a hit, the target takes 2d8 + Charisma modifier fire and lightning damage. On a miss, the effect ends.

Level 22 Utility Power

Circle of Foxes

Suddenly, foxes appear out of nowhere and surround your foe.

Daily # Fox Magic, Illusion, Teleportation

Move Action Personal

Effect You create a number of illusory duplicates of yourself equal to your Charisma modifier. The duplicates appear anywhere along the border of a close blast 10 originating from you. You surreptitiously switch places with one of the duplicates by immediate



teleportation.

Each turn, the duplicates mimic your actions against a specific target (a creature, an object, or a location in space). For instance, if you make a ranged attack against the target, the duplicates make simultaneous illusory ranged attacks against the target. If you enter melee with the target, they close to enter illusory melee with the target, moving the same number of squares. If you move directly away from the target, they move directly away from the target, moving the same number of squares.

All actions taken by the duplicates are illusory, but they do provide combat advantage. The duplicates use your defenses and dissipate in a puff of smoke if damaged.

Sustain Move By teleportation, you surreptitiously switch places with one of the duplicates.

Fox Rituals

Kitsune have a long tradition of ritual magic.

Fox Possession (or Kitsune-Tsuki)

Level 15

Category Binding

Time 10 minutes

Duration special

Component Cost 1,000 gp

Market Price 7,000 gp

Key Skill Arcana

Upon completion of the ritual, the

kitsune takes on an invisible spirit form and has one hour to find and possess a humanoid target before reverting to normal form. The kitsune can automatically enter a host and may remain there indefinitely without the target's knowledge. The kitsune can leave at any time, but when leaving the body, the kitsune's spirit form lasts only a few minutes before the kitsune reverts to normal form. Kitsune typically leave when the target is sleeping to avoid detection.

If the kitsune remains in the target for 3 hours, it can impose its will over the target by making a Charisma vs. Will attack for one hour of control, during non-combat; if the target enters combat, a new Charisma vs. Will attack must be made every round to insinuate its control. When 3 such attacks have failed, the target becomes aware of the kitsune. Once the target is aware, the kitsune can only take control of the target by force of will. When the target makes a successful save, the kitsune is forced from the body; the target makes a save once per hour outside of combat and once per round within combat. A kitsune can forcefully take control of a target at any time after it has been within the target for 3 hours.

Outside combat, the kitsune can control the target as long as the action is not obviously suicidal; within combat, the target is dominated. These guidelines apply whether the control is by

insinuation or by force.

If the target dies while the kitsune is possessing it, the kitsune's spirit form leaves the body and appears next to it at zero hit points and dying.

You must be a kitsune to perform this ritual.

Star Ball Convergence

Level 4

Category Creation

Time 1 hour

Duration permanent

Component Cost special

Market Price 175 gp

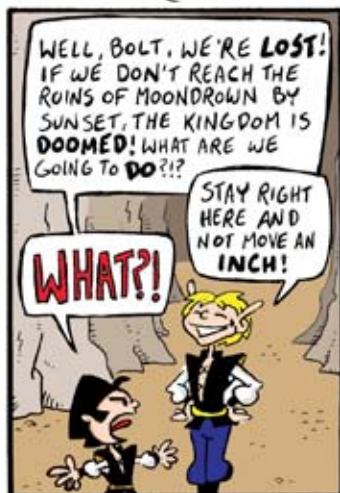
Key Skill Arcana (no check)

Upon completion of this ritual, you can subsume the power of another implement into your star ball. The new star ball has all the abilities of the old star ball and the subsumed implement. The subsumed implement must be an implement that you have access to by your class (such as a staff by a kitsune wizard).

The new star ball has a level equal to the combined levels of the subsumed implement and the previous star ball. There is no limit to the number of implements that can be combined in this fashion provided you can wield the new star ball. Enhancement and critical bonuses do not stack, and the new item takes on the highest of these bonuses from the combined items; however, all properties and powers of the items are available.



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Leastlings

by Richard Pett

Art by Michael Jaecks

My eyes struggled to adjust to the gloom. Below, the rhythmic rocking of the brothel beds continued, whilst above I could hear rats scurrying in the attic. The light I thought I saw must have been the shimmer of a passing linkboy or the flash of a lanthorn. I closed my eyes again and settled back to happy slumber.

Tomorrow, I would put the gems into the hands of the moneylender—how impressed he'd be that I'd outwitted the Free City Assassins.

I felt the merest sting on my hand and instinctively leapt up, thinking of fleas or lice, but it was no vermin that had pricked me. It was a tiny figure made of needles; a bristling doll of spines that, even as it stepped back, looked up at me—knowingly.

The smell that accompanied the creature reminded me of jasmine from the gardens of the Stall Priests, the incense of the luck market. The scent of the deadly reffis plant of the Poison Saltmarshes...

I was dead before my head hit the pillow.

Description

Leastlings resemble tiny, vicious looking men covered with needles, standing about 1 ft. tall and weighing 4 lb. No part of the leastling exposes anything but needles, and in some tales, they have been likened to curled hedgehogs or porcupines; indeed, in some places they are referred to as the devils' porcupines.

In Your Game

Leastlings make good tools to take the challenge to the PCs. Perhaps the PCs have angered a local assassin guild, and as they huddle under their blankets to get to sleep, a tiny leastling slips into one of their rooms with murder in mind.

Leastlings also make good monsters to defend dungeon bosses. Imagine a final confrontation in a chamber filled with bric-a-brac and a dozen leastlings scurrying around using cover and attacking the PCs from beneath tables, books, and rubbish.



Leastling CR 2*

N Tiny construct

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 18, flat-footed 17
(+6 Dex, +5 natural, +2 size)

hp 16 (3d10)

Fort +1, **Ref** +7, **Will** +1

DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee sting +10 (1d3-3 plus poison)

Ranged needles +10 (1 plus poison); **Increment** 5 ft.

Space 2 ½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks poison

TACTICS

Before Combat Leastlings use their size and swiftness to their advantage, preferring always to attack by ambush. These tactics may, of course, be altered by their master prior to a mission.

During Combat No great fighters, leastlings will flee once they have attempted to deliver their poison attack unless instructed differently by their masters.

Morale A master will usually specify under which circumstances a leastling should retreat. If such circumstances have not been specified, the construct will flee as soon as it is injured.

STATISTICS

Str 4, **Dex** 22, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +2; **Grp** -11

Feats Stealthy, Weapon Finesse

Skills Hide +22, Listen +6, Move Silently +14, Spot +6

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, vengeance (2-6) or retribution (7 plus)

Treasure none

Advancement —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) A leastling that makes a successful hit with its needle attack delivers poison; the type of poison depends on what its master supplied during its creation.

Spiny Retaliation (Ex) Anyone who makes an unarmed attack or tries to grapple a leastling automatically faces an attack from the leastling's sting. This is a free action, which does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

* The CR of a leastling depends on the poison used at its inception. The base CR is 2 plus the CR of the poison as per the standard rules on traps.

Construction

A leastling is shaped from a thousand needles, the finger-bones of a trio of hanged men, horsehair, a yard of fresh catgut, beeswax, a cat's or rat's stomach, an infusion of poison (see below), and a pint of the creator's blood. The device is completed by the creation of a clockwork heart made of silver, gemstones, and the stirrup bone from a murderer.

The creature's master may as-

semble the body parts themselves or pay someone to create the creature. Creating the creature requires a DC 15 Craft (trapmaking) or a DC 15 Craft (blacksmithing).

After the body is made, it is animated by means of a ghastly ritual in which the creator crafts the creature in an alchemist's forge, swallows the beeswax-shrouded needle-creature whole, and births it 24 hours later. When "birthing," the needle-bodied leastling drags itself out of the creator's backside in an agonizing process that takes 1d4 hours and inflicts 5d6 damage to the creator.

Creating a leastling costs 1,500 gp plus five times the cost of the poison to be infused into the creature. The poison cost applies once only, and thereafter, the creature is considered infused with that poison. The creator must be able to cast arcane spells and expends 60 XP plus 1/25th of the cost of the poison in XP.

Construction CL 7th; Craft Construct, *true strike*, *poison*; **Cost** 1,500 gp plus 5 x cost of poison used



Leastling Lore

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

DC Result

- 10** Made entirely of thousands of animated needles, these tiny manlike forms are constructed for assassinations, delivering poison on their fingers and with a shake of their head.
- 15** The creation of a leastling involves a horrific ceremony during which the creature is first swallowed and then birthed by its master in an agonizing process that has killed many would-be creators.
- 20** Each leastling has a specified type of poison that is infused into the creature when it is created.
- 25** As hard as steel, the creatures are deadly assassins, able to use their tiny size to great effect. They are less effective at range, having virtually no reach and a limited range for their needle attack.

Coming Next Issue

MASSIVE GenCon Issue... KOBOLD QUARTERLY brings you a heaping double handful of trans-fat saturated, reverse cowgirl, totally delicious RPG action.

Better Lycanthropes by John E. Ling

Shouldn't wercreatures suffer from their curse a little? Ling shows us how to make shifters more angst-ridden and more entertaining.

New 4E Ranger Build by Stefen Styrsky

Everyone loves a striker, and we're ready to share our new take on what makes a ranger great. 30 levels of new ranger toys!

Ecology of the Retriever by Clinton Boomer

A wild ride into the Abyss and back, by the man who brought us crazed PSAs on YouTube. Yeah, him. This is a little demonic wonderland you don't want to miss!

And much more: a set of new maps of fantasy, a double-take on "killing off the party", Monte Cook continues his Game Theories column, plus all the rich, meaty, and shockingly inspiring gaming goodness we can find.



Never to Be Broken: Sworn Oaths of Magic

by Michael Kortez

Oaths and other acts of promise binding often hold deep spiritual or ethical significance to those who would enter into such a pact. In fantasy worlds, oaths may be further elevated into powerful magics. These oaths bestow magical benefits on those who swear them. Those taking such pledges, however, should treat their magical vows with utmost seriousness: great woe awaits the oath-breaker.

Format

(Alignment)—Some oaths are only available to those with specific alignments. If the sample oath has an alignment restriction, the text lists the required alignment next to the title.

The Pledge—Each oath binds its maker to a specified code of conduct. Each example below contains three ironclad rules that the oath-taker must strictly observe.

Benefits—As long as the oath-taker upholds the oath's pledge, each oath permanently bestows the magical benefits listed in this section.

Penalties—Should an oath-taker ever break their pledge, the above benefits are lost. In addition, the oath-taker incurs a dire penalty. How long the penalty lasts will vary and this is set out in the individual descriptions for each oath.

How Taken—This section contains a brief description of the ritual that typically accompanies the taking of the oath. Oath-takers cannot bind themselves into magical oaths by accident or as victims of trickery.

Cost—Magical oaths grant statistical benefits and, in that sense, are analogous to magic items. GMs may wish to track the equivalent treasure value of oaths for the purpose of game balance.

Oaths, however, are never available for purchase, and they never take up an item slot. Because magical oaths carry the added burden of a code of conduct accompanied by the ever-present threat of penalties, their costs are generally lower than their power alone would normally suggest, similar to the pricing of a cursed item.

The Swordsman's Creed (any)

The House of the Incisive Blade has elevated the study of swordsmanship into the status of a religion. A few senior masters still teach worthy students a near-forgotten oath that, once sworn aloud, advances the pupil's skills to a level beyond what might otherwise be attainable.

The Pledge

By reciting the creed, the oath-taker devotes herself entirely to the sword. She may never again use a missile weapon, including ranged attacks with spells. Further, she may never wield a blunt weapon (other than an unarmed attack). Finally, she must train with at least one kind of sword for at least one hour every day, without fail.

Benefits

Veteran Strike (Ex) Three times per encounter, the oath-taker may choose to take 10 on her attack die roll for one of her attacks with a sword. However, she may only apply her veteran strike ability to a single attack in any given round.

Calculated Retaliation (Ex) When the oath-taker takes the total defense action, during the following round, her first attack with a sword receives a +2 circumstance bonus to hit and damage. The bonus only applies if the oath-taker makes the attack against an

opponent who made a melee attack against her the previous round.

One with Blades (Ex) The oath-taker receives a +2 bonus to her skill checks with the Craft (weaponsmithing) skill.

Consequence of a Breach

Should an oath-taker ever violate the Swordsman's Creed, in addition to losing the above benefits, she soon begins to curse the very weapons in her grip: any slashing or piercing melee weapon she wields will automatically strike her instead of her opponent on an attack roll of 1-4.

The curse lasts until the oath-taker seeks out another warrior of an equal or higher level who has also taken the Swordsman's Creed. She must then defeat her opponent in a duel while wielding her (now cursed) sword.

How Taken

A Master of the House of the Incisive Blade typically passes the Swordsman's Creed on to a favored pupil as the pair work together to forge a new masterwork or magical sword. The student then carves the runes that compose the oath into the pommel of the finished blade as she intones the words aloud. It is a promise made not only to the legacy of the House of the Incisive Blade but also to the weapon itself.

Cost 7,250 gp

The Shining Oath (LG)

The Incandescent Shuriken is a secretive league of celestial monks dedicated to training mortals on their path towards redemption. Merciful to a fault, the patient monks specialize in converting would-be tyrants into agents of the Seven Heavens. New members are inducted into the Shuriken by undertaking the Shining Oath.

The Pledge

One cannot turn evil to good if he stoops to its level. The oath-taker may never ambush a foe. Nor may he ever refuse to honor an enemy's offer of surrender. Finally, as a promise to ensure his body will remain pure, the oath-taker must never drink any liquids other than pure or holy water. This final prohibition excludes the oath-taker from consuming magical potions.

Benefits

Spin like Shuriken (Ex) Whenever an oath-taker moves his full speed during his move action, he receives a +2 circumstance bonus to his armor class until the start of his next turn.

Woundporter (Su) When injured, the oath-taker may instantly, as an immediate action, teleport (as *dimension door*) up to 5 feet for every 5 points of damage taken.

Barrier of Hands (Ex) If the oath-taker has the Deflect Arrows feat, he may further deflect a second missile each round.

Penalty

Should an oath-taker break his vow, in addition to losing the benefits listed above, he becomes heavy with lethargy. His speed is reduced by 10 ft., and he can no longer benefit from the Deflect Arrows feat, if he has it. In addition, he suffers a penalty to his armor class as though he were wearing *armor of arrow attraction*. The penalties last until the transgressor completes a cross-planar pilgrimage to the temple of light at the base of the Heavenly Mountains and atones by completing an undertaking chosen by the Incandescent Shuriken.

How Taken

The oath-taker clasps hands with an angel from the Incandescent Shuriken as he repeats the oath. A sense of peace follows and the oath-taker's memory of that day will never recede.

Cost 13,500 gp

Pledge to Baal (CE)

The arch-demon Baal lies entombed in the center of a massive adamantine asteroid that endlessly bounds through the plane of Archeron. His human cultists, the Order of Slaughter, have prophesied that if they can render an entire sentient humanoid race extinct, the final death will be the sacrifice necessary to secure their demon-god's release.

The genocidal Council of Baal continually monitors disease patterns as it engineers racism and wars, ever watchful for the chance that a race will fall vulnerable to extinction, awaiting its final push. The Order's fighting-arm are the Kovash-Nigh, armored hunters that individually specialize in slaying specific races. Deeply fanatical, before entering the secret ranks of the Kovash-Nigh, each hunter swears an oath to Baal, their imprisoned demon lord, who in turn provides them with the lethal edge to perform their missions.

The Pledge

The oath-taker must seek out and eliminate at least one sentient creature of her assigned species each month. She must also unquestioningly accept and complete all missions assigned to her by her handler. Finally, she must never spare the life of one of her assigned species.

Benefits

Methodical Purge (Ex) The oath-taker gains the favored enemy ability, as per the ranger's class ability, but the choice is limited to a single humanoid subtype assigned by the Genocidean Council.

Life Drinker (Sp) The oath-taker may cast *death knell* at will as a spell-like ability. The spell will only function, though, if cast against the oath-taker's favored enemy.

Gift of Baal (Ex) The oath-taker receives a +2 profane bonus to Intimidate and Knowledge (the planes) skill checks.

Consequence of a Breach

Those that fail Baal become prey for their successors. In addition to losing the above benefits, with each breach she is immediately subject to the effect of a *finger of death*; each instance requires a separate save (DC 16 +1 per consecutive breach). Should an oath-taker ever fail her save, she is immediately reincarnated as a member of the race that was her favored enemy.

How Taken

Only the Council may choose who will enter the ranks of the Kovash-Nigh and receive the ancient incantations required to invoke the pledge. The newly anointed hunter per-



forms the required ritual over a freshly slain corpse of their assigned species.

Cost 8,500 gp

Covenant of the Lich Hunter (any non-evil)

The Locastra are a society of lich hunters dedicated to tracking down and destroying hidden phylacteries. The Locastra recite their order's closely guarded covenant to fortify themselves against their unliving enemy as they continue their dangerous search.

The covenant also ensures that should a lich ever use its magic to force one of the Locastra to turn against his brothers, a built-in magical safeguard will fall into place. On rare occasions, the Locastra will share their pledge with a trusted outsider who may further their cause.

The Pledge

The endless pursuit of the hidden life force of a lich leaves no time for frivolity. The Locastra are grim and dour; once an oath-taker partakes in the covenant, the oath-taker may never again add skill ranks to Craft or Perform skills without breaching his oath.

In addition, the oath-taker may never cast spells from the school of necromancy or use magic items created with spells from the necromancy school. Finally, and most importantly, the oath-taker may never do the bidding of a lich, even if involuntary.

Benefit

Empty Vessel (Su) The oath-taker's body acts as a *ring of counterspelling*; it may be loaded with a single spell of up to sixth level to protect the oath-taker.

Pursue Caster (Ex) If a spell-caster who is threatened by the oath-taker takes a 5-ft. step out of the oath-taker's reach, the oath-taker may, as an immediate action, choose to take a 5-ft. step to fill the gap.

Lich Lore (Ex) The oath-taker gains a +1 sacred bonus to all Gather Information, Spellcraft, and Knowledge (arcana) checks.

Consequence of a Breach

If the oath-taker breaks the Covenant,

in addition to losing the above benefits, clerics may turn or destroy the oath-taker with positive energy as though the oath-taker were an undead of equivalent hit dice. Good and neutral-aligned clerics will intuitively sense the oath-taker's newfound weakness upon sight. The effect remains until the oath-taker atones by reducing a lich to negative hit points.

How Taken

Handed down orally amongst the Locastra, the oath-taker recites the Covenant over the body of a fallen comrade or family member slain by a lich; a brief and morose induction ceremony typically follows.

Cost 6,750 gp

Adjudicating Oaths in Play

Good roleplaying sessions frequently generate gray areas that require thoughtful rulings. It falls to the GM to determine whether a PC's specific actions on a given day have caused the PC to break her oath.

As a general guideline, GMs should interpret oaths made to lawful sources strictly and literally while giving greater consideration to the rule's spirit in the case of oaths made to chaotic entities. Note that oaths can be, and frequently are, violated unintentionally or even under duress. It is not necessary for the PC to have willfully disobeyed their oath to trigger the adverse consequences.

Dispel magic, remove curse and break enchantment cannot dispel an existing oath. Nor can they remove the associated penalties should an oath be broken. A limited wish can end an existing oath but the penalties remain. A *wish*, on the other hand, can end both an existing oath as well as the penalties associated with a broken one. This later use, however, may attract the attention of the various powers behind the oath and invite recrimination.

Only a single magical oath may bind a creature at any given time.



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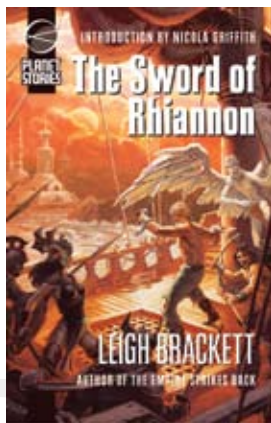
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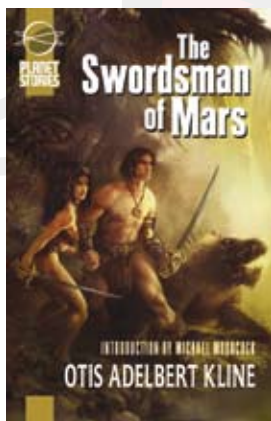
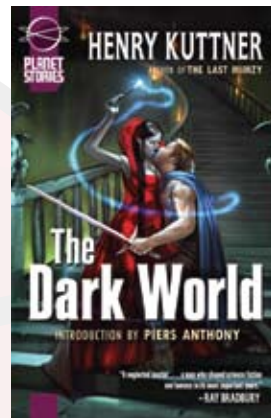
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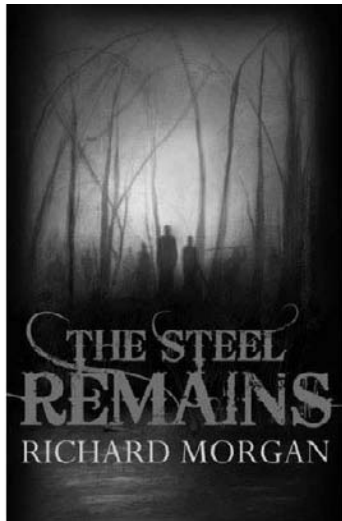
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BOOK REVIEWS

ALL TOMES READ BY CANDLELIGHT

by Cynthia Ward, Neal Hebert, and Pierce Watters



The Steel Remains

Richard K. Morgan

Ballantine/Del Rey, January 2009

Hardcover, \$26.00

432 pages

Review by Cynthia Ward

The aristocrat Ringil Eskiath is a legendary warrior: a champion in the war against the Scaled Folk and the hero of Gallows Gap. He bears the indestructible sword Ravensfriend, forged by a vanished race, the Kiriath. He's getting older and softer. He's queer, which can win you an agonizing death in his world. And he's on a quest to find his lost cousin.

The barbarian Egar is a legendary warrior. When he was younger, he traveled to the southern lands, earned the title of Dragonbane, and fought beside Ringil in the epic war with the Scaled Folk. Now, he's a wealthy clan chief among the wild Majak tribes of the North. But his position only reminds him of what he has lost. And his brothers are conspiring with the clan's shaman and god to assassinate him.

The half-Kiriath Archeth is also a legendary warrior. A great knife fighter, she helped Ringil and Egar save humankind from the Scaled Folk. Now

she serves as advisor to the dangerously whimsical Emperor of Yhelteth. She mourns the loss of her Kiriath kin, who have abandoned the human world and Archeth both. She shares Ringil's forbidden orientation. And she numbs the pain of her isolation with the drug *krinzanz*, until the Emperor sends her to investigate the mysterious destruction of a seaport.

None of the ex-comrades-in-arms expect to see one another again. But the demonic *dwenda* are invading the human world, which now lacks its Kiriath allies, and a dark lord is rising among the dangerously divided humans. These developments will reunite Ringil, Egar, and Archeth just as all hell breaks loose.

As the drug use, homosexuality, and other atypical elements suggest, award-winning SF *wunderkind* Richard K. Morgan's first fantasy novel, trilogy opener *The Steel Remains*, ain't just another sword-and-sorcery epic. Yes, the book's got blades and magic and a dark lord—but it bursts expectations in every direction (a few quite disturbing). Powerful, vividly violent, blackly hardboiled, and grittily graceful, *The Steel Remains* shatters and remakes a genre. It's the must-read heroic fantasy of 2009.

Richard Morgan on Noir in Fantasy

"I've been talking a good fight about fantasy noir for a while – now I'm putting my money where my mouth is. *The Steel Remains* is a grubby, blood-spattered trawl through exactly how unpleasant it might be to actually have to live in the average fantasy universe.

Can you do noir in a fantasy landscape? You can certainly try..."

—richardmorgan.com

The Reavers of Skaith

Leigh Brackett

Introduction by George Lucas

Planet Stories/Paizo, January 2009

Trade Paperback, \$12.99

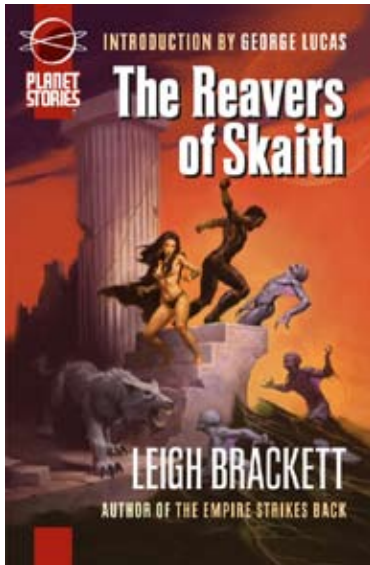
160 pages

Review by Cynthia Ward

Leigh Brackett (1915-1978) is best known today for her film scripts: her first draft of the Star Wars movie *The Empire Strikes Back*, and her scripts for classics like *The Big Sleep*, starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, *Rio Bravo*, starring John Wayne, and *The Long Goodbye*. Brackett originally came to Hollywood's attention through her mystery fiction. But, always, she was a science fiction writer, and one of our best.

Her greatest SF creation is Eric John Stark, an interplanetary mercenary who melds elements of John Carter of Mars, Tarzan of the Apes, Conan the Barbarian, and the violent antiheroes of film noir. A dark, complex character, Stark is a pivotal transition figure in SF and fantasy's evolution from pulp's two-dimensional characterizations, to the more sophisticated characters of modern writers as different as Michael Moorcock, Richard K. Morgan, and (as his Introduction makes clear) George Lucas.

In Brackett's terrific Book of Skaith trilogy, a high point of sword-and-planet fantasy, Stark travels to the violent, doomed world of Skaith in search of a missing friend. The rescue and recovery are accomplished in *The Ginger Star* and *The Hounds of Skaith*. As *The Reavers of Skaith* opens, a treacherous starship captain betrays Stark, his lover, his friend, and Skaith's new galactic-government delegates, stranding them on Skaith. Stark must cross half the world in search of the interstel-



lar transceiver that is their only hope of escaping the dying planet, now that its Lords Protector have closed the lone starport, forbidden commerce between Skaith and other worlds, and informed the galactic government the earthlings are dead. But Skaith is convulsing with its death-throes, and many hostile and desperate tribes and cities separate Stark from the transceiver — which may already have been destroyed by his enemies....

Duke Elric

Chronicles of the Last Emperor of Melniboné, Volume 4

Michael Moorcock
 Illustrated by Justin Sweet
 March, 2009
 368 pages
 Review by Pierce Watters

“*Arioch! Arioch! Blood and souls for my lord Arioch!*” So shouts Elric, Duke of Middlemarch, as Stormbringer, the dread black runesword consumes another soul, in *Duke Elric*, the script from the graphic novel of the same name.

The new Del Rey title, *Duke Elric Chronicles of the Last Emperor of Melniboné*, is the fourth book in this must-have collection. It begins with a brief foreword by Pulitzer Prize winner Michael Chabon, and then a nice introduction by the author, Michael Moorcock, in which Moorcock talks about, among other things, his band

George Lucas on Leigh Brackett

“It was into that climate – Leigh’s climate – that *Star Wars* and I showed up on the scene. I had tried to capture my own nostalgia for the movies I grew up with, including the movies that Leigh had written. I loved that organic flow of film-speak that balanced between heightened reality and easy, comfortable, conversational dialogue. And her groundwork had helped to inspire me to move away from the squeaky-clean image of cinematic science-fiction. I liked the idea of a lived-in universe, with a seamy, worn underbelly as fully-cooked as the futuristic aspects. I loved exploring fringes and outskirts. It was there that Leigh had set Stark’s adventures, and it was far from the center of the universe that I set *Star Wars*.” –from the Introduction



The Deep Fix. Next we jump into a classic Elric novel, *The Sailor on the Seas of Fate*, which Chabon calls “The minor masterpiece at the heart of this volume....” “Sailor” deftly brings Elric, the albino Emperor of lost Melniboné, into the Michael Moorcock multiverse.

The multiverse consists of myriad, perhaps infinite worlds and universes. In each of these the Eternal Champion struggles for victory and right. Elric sets foot on a ship bound for the Eternal City of Tanelorn, and joins

with three other aspects of the Eternal Champion, Erekosë, Hawkmoon, and Corum—all heroes of other Moorcock novels.

“*We were Three,*” said Corum. *Do you not recall it Elric? The Three Who Are One?*” Elric shook his head. Corum shrugged, saying softly to himself, “*Well, now we are four.*”

And so The Four set off to battle Agak and Gagak, brother and sister sorcerers from another universe. Also included in this volume is Duke Elric, the script for the illustrated novel, “Aspects of Fantasy,” part two of an essay from 1963 by Moorcock on surrealism and Gothic fiction.

Finally, there is a selection from *The Metatemporal Detective*; a short essay on the psychology of Elric by Adrian Snook; and assorted black and white reproductions of covers and art and one graphic novel page, all related to the contents of this volume.

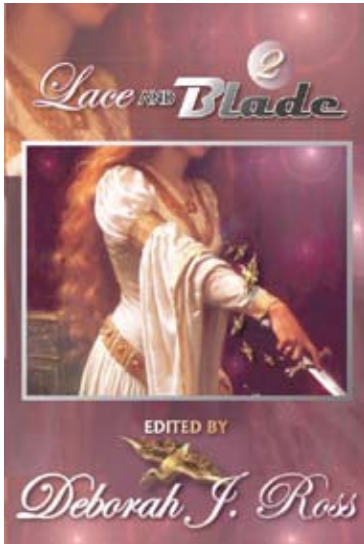
This is an outstanding collection, both for Elric fans and those who want to be Elric fans. And as a bonus, it is fully illustrated by Justin Sweet.

Highly recommended!

Michael Moorcock on Elric’s Origins

The book could be said to plot the development from the early 1970s, when Elric was at the height of his success to the present. In this volume I’m both examining his origins as Monsieur Zenith and looking at his final manifestation — as Monsieur Zenith...

The *Metatemporal Detective* makes direct reference to the original Zenith the Albino stories which appeared in British pulps from 1919 to 1941. Like Michael Chabon, I’ve always been interested in restoring the links between popular and literary fiction, between escapist and confrontational art, between the modernist and the traditional... It was a great moment, for instance, when *The Yiddish Policeman’s Union* won the 2008 Nebula Award!



Lace and Blade 2

edited by Deborah J. Ross

Leda/Norilana Books, February 2009

Trade Paperback, \$12.95

288 pages

Review by Cynthia Ward

As its title suggests, *Lace and Blade 2*, like the preceding volume in the series, is devoted to elegant, action-oriented fantasy. And, as you might expect in a Leda book, there is also romance—both kinds. There are romantic entanglements between man and woman or, sometimes, man and man or woman and woman. And there is romance in the swashbuckling sense of *Le Morte D'Arthur* and *The Prisoner of Hentzau*.

This does not mean that all 12 stories in *Lace and Blade 2* involve swords—although several do, delightfully. In British novelist Rosemary Hawley Jarman's "More in Sorrow," a dashing captain loses his heart to a superior swordswoman who may be his only hope against a sinister foe. Swords cross again as Brazilian and European magic clash in Diana L. Paxson's "The Crow." A Spanish highwayman faces a terrible sorceress in fantasist Robin Wayne Bailey's "Trial By Moonlight."

Do not be deceived by my descriptions. *Lace and Blade 2* does not feature stories in which problems are solved solely by violence. The resolutions depend on a higher power: the mind.

Consider Hugo Award finalist Mary

Rosenblum's fascinating "Dragon Wind," in which Zeng He must outwit a pair of part-dragon siblings to save the emperor's life. Or Daniel Fox's subtle "The Pillow Boy of General Shu" (set in the world of his novel *Dragon in Chains*), in which a concealed knowledge unleashes a dreadful revenge. In Sherwood Smith's witty "Miss Austen's Castle Tour," the protagonist's only weapon against an immensely powerful vampire is her genius.

In fantasy master Tanith Lee's erotic "Comfort and Despair," the power of dream brings unusual rewards. In Madeleine E. Robins's sharp "Writ of Exception," two young ladies facing an unwanted marriage to one another must outfox their parents to find happiness.

If you want smart, entertaining fantasies, you want *Lace and Blade 2*.

The Company

K. J. Parker

Orbit Books, October 2008

Hardcover, \$24.99

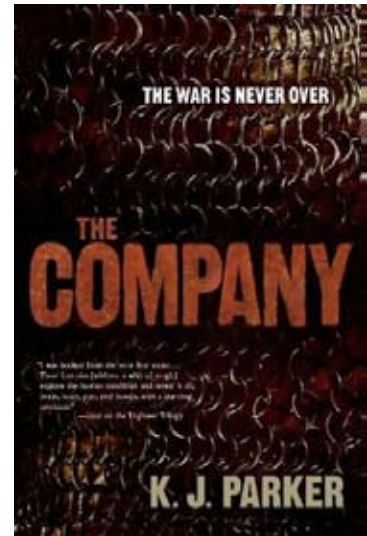
432 pages

Review by Neal Hebert

Six young men from the town of Faralia went off to war. Only five came back, and they are about to learn leaving the army is easier than escaping the war.

Kudei Gaeon, Thouridos "Fly" Alces, Muri Achaio, Aidi Proiapsen, Teuche Kunessin and Nuctos Di'Ambrosies needed to get away. So they left town as teenagers to attend the War College, graduated, joined the army, became the "A Company" line-breakers—who charge enemy pikemen to break their formation—got paid and went home. Nuctos died, and Teuche stayed on after everyone else left and became General Kunessin.

Fast forward 10 years. Alces runs a fencing school, barely scraping by. Muri's broke. Kudei's watching his family farm fall to ruin year after year. Aidi became a successful businessman. Nuctos is still dead, and Teuche has come back to Faralia with his pension and a plan.



Before retiring, Teuche found an island abandoned during the war, took it for himself and decided it would be the ideal place for "A Company" to retire. With servants, wives, and supplies the island could be a perfect colony—and Teuche retired rich enough to get everything the company needs to create their own private paradise.

Fans of dark fantasy and military fantasy will be more than satisfied with Parker's (im)morality tale. *The Company's* plot is fast-paced, with memorable dialogue and vivid, flawed characters.

The story is well told: Flashbacks of the veterans' past heroics frame their present struggles against the island and help characterize the men. Though Kudei, Teuche, Alces, Muri and Aidi are center stage, glimpses of long-dead deeds show the company as they were when they were young and alive – and suggests their past survival was the cosmic oversight that is the source of the present's unrelenting darkness.

K. J. Parker's *The Company* isn't for everyone. It's a fantasy novel set in a world without magic. Gold is god, while war and betrayal are more prevalent than love and hope. Readers looking for epic fantasy will be sorely disappointed. *The Company* is less like *Lord of the Rings* and more like *Lord of the Flies*.

But – for better or worse – it's a story you won't forget.



CHASING THE GRAVE

by Joshua Stevens

My wife lives inside the requiem lamp, her smile and soft skin held prisoner by these purple granules and freed only through the reedy pipe pursed between my cracked lips. Exhaling the violet vapor, I see her face, a dream within a vision. Floating on a perfect cloud, she caresses my head just as she did before consumption took her.

My body trembles when I take my leave of the pipe, and all the world has ceased to shine. I shall hold her again tonight, and every night, until I smoke the last of my fortune and this pipe becomes my coffin.

—from Lord Morias Seth's journals, published posthumously

From Eastern Corpses to Western Shores

Centuries ago, the peasants of fabled Xian'Dao in the Shrouded East discovered that bodies left to rot in the grain fields sprouted large, purple-capped mushrooms that thrive on dead flesh. Named the Death's Head, the mushrooms soon took on important religious connotations due to their psychoactive properties; they saw the Death's Head as a gateway to the realm of the dead. In a culture already beholden to ancestor worship and the will of inscrutable spirits, this mushroom quickly became central to many religious traditions.

The people of Xian'Dao eventually learned to cultivate the Death's Head seasonally by turning their fields into paupers' graves. With such widespread availability, new methods quickly arose to better harness the mushroom's hallucinogenic qualities: by scoring the ripe caps with a special blade, the caps' juices can be collected, congealed, and reduced to powder to produce a highly concentrated dose of the mushroom's hallucinogens. Near the end of their life cycle, the mushrooms' capless stalks can also be boiled to produce a less potent but still powerful narcotic.

With unrestrained use came addiction, and with addiction came death.

Dubbed "requiem" because it allowed its users to commune with the dead, the people of Xian'Dao slowly poisoned themselves with their miracle drug until imperial edict finally banned its use. Entire fields of the Death's Head were plowed under, and the owners of the largest farmsteads were hanged in public squares. Within a few short years, requiem use was violently stamped out among the people of Xian'Dao.

However, Siwali traders were eventually exposed to "the devil in smoke" and offered vast sums of gold in trade. Seeing the profit potential in cultivating Death's Head for export abroad, the Emperor saw nothing wrong with selling requiem to the pale-skinned foreigners who begged for it. The first waves of Xian'Dao and Siwali merchants bearing their strange purple powder and queer pipes came to the western lands just over a decade ago, with increasing frequency ever since.

The Requiem Dens

Depending on the city, requiem dens either operate in the open or lie hidden away in secretive back rooms. Accordingly, they vary from opulent manses laden with finery to dirt-floored canvas tents. Regardless, the dens can always be identified by the blue votives that burn in their entryways. Long identi-



fied with spiritual manifestation, den proprietors quickly latched onto this folklore and created candles with alchemically treated copper wicks that produced blue flames.

In cities where requiem is contraband, dealers will often carry a blue flame about their person—in a lamp, torch, or even the lit end of one of their cigars—to furtively advertise their wares. In cities where requiem use is unregulated, "blue-flame districts" can spring up overnight.

The quality of the requiem available depends on the wealth of a den's clientele. The drug comes in two grades: the premium variety is known as bliss while the cheap stuff is known as clay. Clay is usually scoffed at by those who indulge in the more potent bliss, and those that burn clay often cannot afford even a single dose of bliss, effectively segregating clientele by wealth. This dichotomy becomes even more pronounced in the dens, as those that cater to the poor are often filled with scores of the lovelorn, the broken, and the lost draped about on the ground, with eyes rolled back in their skulls as they reach for illusory figures that only they can see.

In sharp contrast, the more discreet dens tend to have private rooms, where gentlemen lounge atop velvet divans with their every need provided for.

Beautiful courtesans carefully wipe the drool from their lips and dab the sweat from their brows. The one rule constant across all dens is a sense of privacy; it is considered impolite to stare as one communes with the spirits.

Smoking requiem is often referred to as “chasing the grave” because its users chase after those they have lost while the drug slowly kills them. On entering a requiem den, the client receives an ornate lamp with a woven tube that connects to a long, fluted pipe carved from river reed or cedar.

The pipe’s length requires that anyone of average height or smaller must recline to use it. If clay is smoked, the host will ball-up a wad of the drug and give it to the client in a smudge bowl, allowing the client to put as much as desired into the lamp.

If bliss is the form of choice, the host carefully mounds a small spoonful of the purple powder inside the lamp. Long sulfur-headed matchsticks then reach inside to ignite and vaporize the requiem within the tightly sealed lamp. Experienced users often inhale deeply before slowly exhaling and then suck the plumes back into their mouths several times to prolong their high as the faces of the dead gently fade into view.

In Your Game

Requiem can be used as a flavorful means of granting the PCs opportunities to speak with lost loved ones and other deceased notables, conferring the ability to have lengthier and more meaningful conversations than usual at the cost of their health. Requiem dens are the nucleus of a city’s seedy underbelly, and circumstances can force PCs to make hard decisions regarding requiem use.

Potentially, PCs might seek someone who has fallen into the dens or they can be pitted against a powerful den proprietor. Further, if requiem is discovered in a treasure trove, PCs will have to decide whether to sell the drug, use it themselves or destroy it altogether.

Clay Effects

Requiem can be delivered only by

| Tremors | | Level 11 Disease | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Contracted through addiction to Requiem, this disease is marked by sweating, vomiting, and uncontrollable muscle spasms. | | Attack: +15 vs. Fortitude Endurance improve DC 27 maintain DC 24 worsen DC 23 or lower | |
| The target is cured. | Initial Effect The target cannot use action points until cured. The target is dazed until cured. | The target is weakened. | Final State The target goes into a coma and cannot take actions. |

smoking it. It instills a cloying euphoria and makes its first attack 2d6 minutes after inhaled. After failing the second save 1d4 times, the target becomes addicted and is treated as having Tremors (see sidebar). The tremors last until magically cured, recovered from, or until the target smokes more requiem (which stops the tremors for 24 hours).

By smoking clay, the target can summon to their side the spirit of any single deceased person personally known to them. The spirit’s image can be seen and its voice can be heard in whispers, but it cannot touch the target. The target is granted the benefits of speaking with the dead (using a Diplomacy check instead of a Religion check), and the target is granted twice the number of questions normally allowed (minimum one question).

Bliss Effects

Requiem bliss is a much more potent version of requiem, and is identical to clay except that the euphoria is

stronger and it makes its first attack 1d6 minutes after inhaled. All saving throws made against the tremors resulting from smoking bliss are made at a penalty of -2.

After smoking bliss, the target can summon to their side the spirit of any single deceased person whose name they know. The spirit takes on the physical characteristics it had in life and may actually touch the target. The target may speak with the dead (using a Diplomacy check instead of a Religion check), and the target may ask triple the usual number of questions for such magic (minimum two questions).

Finally, the target is may effectively consult mystic spirits and sages, as the summoned spirit consults with others of its kind. This allows it to relay information about a single question that would otherwise be unknown to it.



| Requiem, High Quality “Bliss” | Level 10 Poison | 2,000 gp |
|---|--|----------|
| <i>Made from the scored and drained caps of Death’s Head mushrooms, this fine purple powder is potent in quantities no larger than a spoonful.</i> | Attack: +15 vs. Will; ongoing 5 poison damage and weakened (save ends both) | |
| First Failed Save: The target is restrained instead of weakened (save ends) and takes a -5 penalty to Perception checks until completing an extended rest. | Second Failed Save: The target is unconscious for 1d8 hours and is stunned after awakening until it completes an extended rest. | |

| Requiem, Low Quality “Clay” | Level 5 Poison | 400 gp |
|--|--|--------|
| <i>Made from the stems of Death’s Head mushrooms, this muddy substance is often rolled into balls and has a damp, putty-like quality to it.</i> | Attack: +10 vs. Will; ongoing 5 poison damage and slowed (save ends both) | |
| First Failed Save: The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends) and takes a -5 penalty to Perception checks until it completes an extended rest. | Second Failed Save: The target is unconscious for 1d4 hours and is dazed after awakening until it completes an extended rest. | |

Ask the Kobold

The Story Behind Grappling, Web Spells, and More
by Skip Williams



Skip Williams is a co-author of 3rd Edition and the author of the world's longest-running rules advice column.

If you have questions for the kobold, send them to tsrsage@aol.com.

Q: The grappling rules say that a grappler who wins an opposed check can move his opponent. How does that work, exactly? Is it a move action? Also, how does this apply to earth-gliding creatures?

For example, a creature without earth glide (let's say a human fighter) is grappling with a creature with earth glide (let's say a Large earth elemental); can the earth elemental move the human underground if it wins the grapple check?

First off, yes, you can move at half speed if you begin your turn in a grapple and if you win an opposed grapple check. Doing this requires a standard action, so you can do it only once a round, even if you normally could make multiple attacks. If you don't win the opposed grapple check, your action is over, and you don't move.

If you win the opposed grapple check, you move up to half your speed as part of the standard action you used to make your opposed check.

Since moving your foe is only a standard action, you still have a move action left after moving your foe (or trying to move your foe), provided that you did not use a move action before the attempt. If you want to use that move action to travel over the battlefield, you must first release

your foe (a free action). If you don't want to release your foe, you're done moving, but you might be able to do something else that's a move action. Since you're limited in what you can do while grappling, you don't have too many options. You could, for example, draw a light weapon as a move action; doing so requires another opposed grapple check that you make as part of the move action you used to draw the weapon. If you lose the opposed check, your move action is over and you don't draw the weapon.

The rules don't say so, but it stands to reason that you cannot move while grappling unless you're strong enough to at least drag your foe's weight. If there are more than two of you in a grapple, you must be able to drag everyone else's combined weights, though. You and your allies could use the delay or ready action so that all of you could move as a group.

If you have some special mode of movement, you probably can use it while moving a foe that you've grappled. If you can fly, for example, you can carry your foe aloft provided you can get airborne while carrying your foe's weight. However, you cannot move your foe into a place that your foe could not somehow enter on his own.

For example, you cannot move a corporeal foe into a solid object, even if you can enter that object yourself. If you have the power to share your special mode of movement, however, you can carry a grappled foe along with you, provided that you don't need your

foe's cooperation to share the mode of movement.

Q: Exactly what is supposed to happen when a *web* spell hits? Are creatures in the area supposed to be stuck automatically? What can you do while stuck? The spell's saving throw entry says a successful save negates the spell.

How does that play out? If you make your save, do you avoid the spell altogether? How do you move and attack inside a *web*? If you've trapped enemies inside a *web* spell, is there anything you can do to attack them short of burning off the webbing or waiting for the spell to end? What's with burning a *web* anyway? How much webbing is there in 5 sq. ft. in game terms?

The *web* spell description lays out the effects and your options pretty clearly, but the description also is pretty long, so it's easy to miss important details. In short, when you're caught in a *web* spell, you're covered and entangled in the sticky strands the spell creates. Note that a *web* effect must have proper support (as noted at the beginning of the spell description) or the effect collapses and evaporates away without any effect at all.

You are automatically entangled when you're caught by a properly aimed *web* spell (that is, in a *web* that has the necessary support), but you're not stuck unless you fail your Reflex saving throw.

When you're within a *web* effect, but not stuck to the webbing, it takes a

whole round of effort to move at all. To actually make progress, you must attempt a Strength or Escape Artist check. You can move 5 ft. through the webbing for every 5 full points your check result exceeds 10.

For example, if your Strength or Escape Artist check result is a 15, 16, 17, 18, or 19, you can move 5 ft. If you manage a check result of 20 to 24, you can move 10 ft. If your check result is 14 or less, you don't get stuck again, but you can't move through the webs. No matter how high your check result, you can't exceed your speed when moving through webbing. Moving or not, you're still entangled when you're inside a *web* effect.

If you fail your reflex save against a *web* spell, you're both entangled and stuck in place. You cannot move at all unless you first spend a round making a DC 20 Strength or DC 25 Escape Artist check to make yourself unstuck. The spell description doesn't say so, but I recommend that a creature stuck in a *web* spell be able to take no actions other than getting unstuck or purely verbal or mental actions (such as casting a spell that has no somatic component). A stuck creature isn't helpless, just entangled and immobilized.

The final paragraphs in the spell description cover a *web* spell's effect on combat and what happens when you set it alight. When a creature is inside a web and adjacent to you, there's no effect on combat (beyond its entangling

effects). If there are 5, 10, or 15 ft. of webbing between you and an opponent, the webbing provides cover (+4 to AC). If there's 20 ft. of webbing or more between you and an opponent, the webbing provides total cover (no attacks).

When you're in a web, you can attack so long as you're not stuck. The spell description doesn't say so, but I've always assumed 20 ft. of webbing or more blocks line of sight and line of effect.

The spell description says webbing set alight burns away at the rate of one 5-ft. square per round.

Q: Is there any reason *wall of thorns* doesn't allow an escape artist check to slip through?

Web and entangle—similar spells at lower level—both do, but not *wall of thorns*. Is it an oversight or just the benefit of a 5th level spell?

I can't think of a good reason why you could not worm your way through a wall of thorns using Escape Artist checks. Use the same rules the spell description gives for Strength checks (you move 5 ft. for every 5 full points your check result exceeds 20).

You still take damage when worming through a wall of thorns using Escape Artist checks.



Wrestling with Grappling

The game's grappling rules represent a balance between playability and simulation. We were looking to represent what really happens when two combatants enter a clinch. We also wanted to make sure we gave some sort of edge or boost to big or skilled combatants. A tribe of kobolds swarming over you could prove dangerous, but if you're Conan, your martial skills should count for something. Likewise, if you're a warhorse, those kobolds should have a hard time dragging you down. (In competitive wrestling, even a slight weight advantage can prove insurmountable.) That's why the main component in your grapple bonus is your base attack bonus and why you get a big grapple bonus for being big yourself.

Lots of folks find the grappling rules complex if not downright bewildering. They can be easier to handle by following the procedure laid out in the rules and keeping track of all the conditions and consequences of grappling. Namely, you don't threaten the area around you when you grapple and you lose your Dexterity bonus against anyone except other creatures involved in the grapple with you; in effect, when you're grappling you're locked into a little bit of infighting and there's not much else you can do beyond dealing with the foes clinging to you.

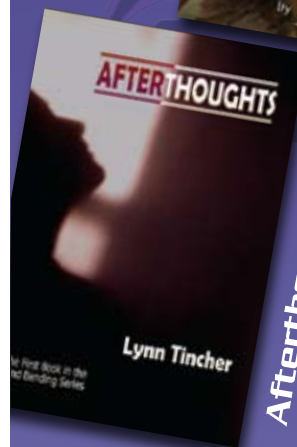
-Skip Williams

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The Bandit Lair of Severina

by Wolfgang Baur

Art by Hans Holbein

Map by Jonathan Roberts

Bandit gangs are a staple of fantasy adventure, and the better ones always strike from ambush and then slink away to some remote, hidden fortress or woodsy glen. These bandits are a bit different; they prefer their victims to come to them, and have built their false tavern not far off a main trade route.

This issue's installment of Maps of Fantasy offers a perfect lair with two entryways and multiple points of defense to challenge any party. With a little luck or a bit of healthy suspicion, the rangers and paladins in a party can bring this bandit gang to justice.

1. The Stairs and Door

At the top of a switchback set of stairs is a heavy door with a single barred window; the stairs seem heavily worn, and a small set of runes read "Waterspout Tavern" next to a bit of blue paint daubed on the stone beside the door.

Anyone approaching is easily visible from quite a distance, and only a fool would open the door to foes. The bandits do let in one or two visitors to rob them the first time the party visits. They don't kill their victims, generally, though especially charismatic elven or half-elven women are likely kept around as servants and slatterns.

If the bandit recognizes the heroes as warriors, the frontal assault is probably a failure. The creature guarding the door might be a human bandit, a hobgoblin, or an ogre, but it is a certainty that the bandit chieftain has chosen his most suspicious, least trusting, and generally irascible guard to keep watch here. Attempts to bluff will be met with a shout of "Loose bolts!" from the guard—which is a signal to the lookouts.

The Waterspout Tavern

The bandits are crafty ones, and sometimes, especially with a small group, they will put out a sign at the top of the stairs showing a boar's head spitting water, underneath which is written "Cold Ale and Hot Stew". In this way they bring some tinkers, gypsies, traders, and even prospectors into their den—and then rob them and throw them down the pit into the stream.

If the party decides to visit the "Waterspout Tavern", the guard within the door opens the door wide for the first party member or two to come in, then slams the door and throws the bar, effectively locking it shut.

The door has hardness 5 and 25 hit points, and cannot be unlocked from the outside with Disable Device or Thievery; a DC 25 Strength check is required. From the inside, it requires a moderate Disable Device or Thievery roll—except that about six bandits pressure anyone, and turning one's back to work on the door certainly grants flanking or combat advantage to one's foes.

2. The Lookouts.

While most visitors notice the door and stairs, few see the neatly hidden arrow slits high up and behind the stairs on both sides, providing a full field of fire across the stairs and the grassy sward below the cliff. In particular, the arrow slits are aimed at the backs of those at the stairs, so they often catch foes flat-footed.

Noticing these slits requires sharp eyes and a careful look around; a DC 18+ average party level Spot check. The inhabitants of both lookout posts have heavy crossbows and full quivers of bolts; they might be human, evil elves, or even gnolls with ranger levels.

3. The Waterfall Hall

A damp hall is divided by many pillars, with the sound of falling water echoing among the stone walls.

The pillars here are actually fused stalactites and stalactites. The large table and bench are the bandit mess hall, and washing up is as simply as sticking a wooden plate or a greasy knife into the trickling waterfall here.

The bandits keep a set of manacles connected to an iron ring near the waterfall, where they keep captives. At the moment, these are empty, but any captured PC will be found here, cold and shivering and unarmed. Opening the manacles requires the key from the bandit leader, a DC 15+Average party level Escape Artist check, or a DC 25 Open Lock check.

4. Leader's Chamber

Behind a tapestry is a small, dry room with a well-made bed, a small table, and a heavy iron chest.

The bandit leader is a woman named Severina, and she is the only bandit to have her own room with a proper bed, a tapestry to keep the waterfall damp away, a small table and chest. The carpet in the room is likely the most valuable treasure in it, as it is a woven with crimson and gold threads. However the dirt and mud on it obscure its value (DC 20 plus party level Spot or Perception to notice a glint of gold).

The chest contains her personal treasures, perhaps fine clothes and a set of jewels for when she retires from the robber's life. The exact value is up to the DM, but several sets of the jewels in the chest are those of nobles and merchants whom Severina has robbed (but who are too embarrassed to admit it). However, most fences or rogue's

guild buyers might be afraid to buy such obviously noble jewels, or they might feel inclined to report the theft to a vengeful former owner.

The iron chest is locked and trapped, though it also has a small slot in the top where one might deposit coins or gemstones. The trap seems to be a simple *alarm* spell, but a second trap is there as well. Once the lock is opened without first disarming the chest (and only Severina has a key), a poison gas capsule releases sleeping gas. This requires a DC 25 Fortitude save from anyone within 5 feet, and a DC 15 Fortitude save from anyone in the room. Those who fail the saving throw sleep for 1d4 hours.

5. The Treasure Vault

A pile of iron-banded chests, a fine carpet, an urn of coins, an amphora, and more stand here. The air smells of apples, and a roasted ham hangs from a hook.

The chests are all locked with expert mechanisms (DC 20 Open Locks). Hidden within the largest chest is a small ebony case might contain a set of Requiem pipes and 10 doses (see page 56). The other chests and coins constitute double normal treasure for monsters of this challenge level.

6. Bandit Hearth

There's a roaring fireplace with a roasting spit here, as well as various other gear: cookpot, some bedrolls, a whetstone, and boots.

The members of the bandit gang always gather here to cook a stolen chicken, drink some stolen ale, and cheat at cards or dice. The cook has a wide range of knives suitable for throwing, and a pot full of boiling oil (treat as 2d8 damage with 1d4 splash).

7. The Winch and Pulley

A heavy rope or chain hangs down the shaft of here; at the bottom are the gurgling sounds of water, at the top is a grate or portcullis of some kind that seals the passage.

Anyone climbing up this way will be attacked by one or more guards using spears to poke through the portcullis and pry intruders loose from the walls. In addition to the damage from a long spear, anyone hit while climbing up must make a Fortitude save with a DC of 10 plus the number of points of damage suffered that round. Failure means falling 20 feet into water and taking no damage, though Swim/Athletics checks are called for.

If PCs try to bluff their way in, the guards lower a lantern on a chain to to see visitors whether visitors are who they claim. If not, they have crossbows and can simply keep the grate in place. Lifting the oak and iron grate requires a DC 20 Strength check.



8. The Water Cave

The cave floor is slippery and the sound of falling water makes it hard to hear much else. A wooden plank and a skull are dimly visible toward the back, where a shadowy black creature moves.

The growling creature could be a war dog (CR 1/3), a leasling (CR 2+, see page 47), a hell hound (CR 3), a gargoyle (CR 4), basilisk (CR 5), behir (CR 8), Nessian hellhound (CR 9), or even a Abyssal greater basilisk (CR 12). This creature is the bandit's "pet" and attacks only if creatures approach the passage up without offering it food and saying the password, "skullbones for my beast". Any character listening outside the cave might hear the bandits speak that password, but it is very difficult to hear (Listen or Perception of DC 20 plus average party level).

Attempts to fight on the slick stone require either not moving more than 5 feet per round, or making a successful DC 15 Balance or Acrobatics check if moving more than that distance. On a critical hit, a PC is knocked prone unless a similar check is made.

Rustling Bandits

Severina's band does not depend on travelers for survival; they often take the initiative and go out to raid for cattle, sheep, or goats. When they succeed, the livestock are brought into the caves in poor weather—and a reward is offered for anyone who can steal them back.



Bandits' Lair



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Courtiers of Zobeck

By Jeff Grubb

Art by Dariusz T. Wielec



KOBOLD QUARTERLY #7 discussed the Courtesans of Zobeck and how the husbands and sons of the upper merchant class wiled away their idle days in the company of (ahem) professional young women skilled in the arts of conversation, beauty, and romance.

But lest one think that the upper class women of Zobeck were left behind, be reassured. They have their own private society, from which the men of their economic class are (mostly) excused, which is just as lustful and intrigue-filled as that of the menfolk.

Welcome to the salons of Zobeck.

Matrons and Husbands

The salons themselves are a state of mind, a gathering of artistic individuals and their patronesses. While upper class Zobeckian men spend their time with gambling, drink, and loose women, the salons are instead host to poets, artists, and musicians who strive to match in their art the beauty of the matrons and elder daughters of the ruling houses.

At least, that's what the matrons and daughters tell their husbands and fathers.

On the surface, the salons exist to promote culture and the arts. The stars are artists, musicians, and storytellers who present new works or recreate popular works of previous seasons. A wide variety of arts are presented in the salon settings, including odes, sagas, epic poetry, paintings, sculpture, portraiture, weapon demonstrations, mock fights, magical crafts, illusions, clockwork, tableaux, speeches, and short plays. But to many of the attendants the fine art is secondary to social connections and potential liaisons. Many a young bard or craftsman has been mentored by an older woman, powerful in her guild, business, or family. There is a de facto assumption that such sponsorship comes with a price,

though both artist and patroness usually choose to deny it. So while no coin changes hands, the artistic courtiers are as involved as the courtesans in a trade of favors for sustenance.

Talent is not a requisite for admission into the cadre of courtiers, though it does help. Many a matron appears at these events with one or more young bravos at her side, with a bright young magical tutor, or with a fiery young theologian who wishes to confront a traditional cleric with radical views. The fact that these young men (and the occasional young woman) inspire jealousy from the other matrons is purely coincidental.

The Artists and Country Salons

As for the artists involved, they are an ever-changing roster of the talented and handsome. Some appear for a brief season, gaining sufficient support to either establish themselves in their own craft or to disappear in a flurry of scandal. Some have switched patronesses several times and have become fixtures in salon society, cattily analyzing and dissecting this season's crop of talented young things. And a few have married into the families that have served as patrons.

The salons exist in three forms in Zobeck. The most basic is the afternoon salon, which runs from early afternoon into early evening. Matrons and artists gather in the front visiting rooms of a house or mansion, either by invitation or as a general invite. Artists and amateurs alike provide several readings, songs, and unveilings of recent work. Herbal infusions will be served on chill days, sorbets on warm ones. On larger estates, the salons spill over into garden parties, and in the more civilized rural manors south of the city, they can run late into the night, requiring the participants stay

over. An occasional afternoon salon at a distant manor morphs quite easily into a weekend long house party.

Permanent Salons

In addition to the moveable feasts of the individual salons (society life is always anticipating the next one), a few permanent salons are hosted by a guild or individual. Former mansions or townhouses whose owners have passed on without issue are the typical venue (though the Grand Salon of Zobeck was left to this purpose in its previous owner's will, along with a small endowment to maintain it). Courteous servants become familiar faces at these salons, and private quarters are available for discreet meetings and consultations.

The third type of artistic salon is the legendary Salon of the Night, whose time and location are supposedly set by precise astrological research, though always after the midnight hour. The attendees always arrive masked, and both patronesses and their spouses are welcome. The fare is considered more daring and outré than that found in more traditional salons, of a flavor that the more conservative clerics would disapprove of. The wine flows freely, secrets fly unabated, and indiscretions become unavoidable. The most recent Salon of the Night was particularly scandalous, when one patroness wooed an aged war hero, similarly masked, only to discover that it was her husband.

The salons are the place of gossip and daring and are tolerated by the lords and husbands only so that they may enjoy their own activities; attempts to crack down on one or the other have usually failed. However, the art and culture generated by these salons has helped establish Zobeck as an advanced and enlightened city, an example to communities leagues away.



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