

Three Swordsmen



Old school fighter character classes by Venger As'Nas Satanis

Kort'thalis Publishing

Three Swordsmen augments the fighter / warrior character class associated with old school fantasy roleplaying games. The rights to reproduce this work are reserved for the copyright holder.

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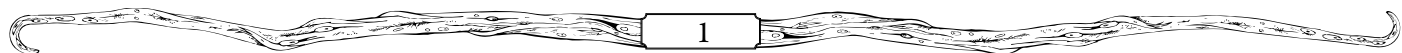
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KORT'THALIS PUBLISHING



Introduction

The secret of steel has always carried with it a mystery.

Before getting to the good stuff, I just wanted to thank you for downloading this PDF. It's a gift to those who supported my dream of producing old school RPG material. Hopefully, it resonates with you.

Besides this book, there's *The Baleful Sorcerer of Tsathag'kha* character class, also free. *Liberation of the Demon Slayer* is the first module by Kort'thalis Publishing and *The Islands of Purple-Haunted Putrescence* will be the second, available summer of 2014. Third will be *Sanctuary in Alpha Blue Complex* scheduled for 2015.

Playing at the World is an excellent historical examination of Dungeons & Dragons, its origins and evolution. The book taught me the importance of our fantasy gaming roots. That's where all this imagery comes from: Appendix N, the source material that transformed miniature wargaming into something else entirely.

I examined the hero as a subconscious archetype. Who is he? His identity can seldom be divorced from that which he wields. For those of us without supernatural powers or secrets of the guild he is a man with a sword. Heroes take up arms against oppression and slog through the death-dealing attainment of gold and glory. They put everything on the line in order to taste victorious steel slicing through beasts and bastards alike. A warrior's very reason-to-be emanates from his shining sword, decorated with strange runes or esoteric glyphs. His destiny held in his own hands!

Like a wizard's wand, a warrior's blade is part of him. The sword is his path; it symbolizes power – the ability to manifest one's will. Perhaps, a fighter is merely the personification of his sword? But enough semantics and philosophy; what you now read are three old school fighting-man variations.

Tales of sword & sorcery focus upon rare individuals, those who are unlike the rest... outsiders. There are two things that set warriors apart from simple townsfolk and farmers: the audacity to forge one's fate and the means to try. A fighter is born with the former; however, the latter must be sought, usurped, and used to hack and slash one's way to greatness!

Many fighter sub-classes exist... ranger, barbarian, paladin, etc. They all have something special going for them, those classes don't need any more gravitas. Or maybe you're in a system/campaign that only has magic-user, cleric, fighter, and sometimes thief? Regardless, the life of a swordsman can, unfortunately, be a dreary thing. The following alternatives give fighters their well-deserved panache.

Besides a little back-story flavor, each warrior preference is marked by three special abilities, two unique and one shared by all.

Each distinct fighter profession may be taken up at any time, regardless of level; though never combined nor mixed and matched. So, if a 5th level fighter puts forth the effort and meets the requirement to become a knight of the temple, then he's treated as a 5th level fighter along with his 5th level templar knight advantages.

By His loathsome tentacles,

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Templar Knight

There was a time, boy, when I searched for steel... when steel meant more to me than gold or jewels.

The first type of fighter is a templar knight. Knights of the temple devote themselves to battle as a paladin might dedicate himself to the good of the realm. Rather than holy, such warriors consider themselves dutiful. They have a purpose and that purpose, whatever it may be, is best served by wading into bloody battle time and time again. Many templars fight in religious wars, but plenty of them adventure above and below ground as their devotion dictates.

Alignment: Law

FLASHING STEEL DEFLECTION

If a knight is wielding a magic sword, he's able to deflect an amount of damage equal to the sword's enhancement (count the sword's highest plus possible), in addition to, his level to reduce damage.

This special maneuver is usable once per day and in response to any weapon, attack, or act of god - an arrow shot from a bow to a red dragon's fiery breath... even falling rocks during a cave-in. The only thing for which there would be no possible defense is direct contact with a sphere of annihilation. The templar knight has to be aware of the threat or danger in

order to make use of his flashing steel deflection. However, utilization must be announced before damage is rolled (or after the GM rolls but before the player knows the extent of his character's wound).

This is not an automatic ability. A religious battle-ritual must be performed by the fighter while his magic sword is wrapped in a crimson sheet or blanket... frequently a blood-soaked shroud. If the fighter does not currently worship a deity of war (combat, battle, crusades, etc.), then a quest must also be completed before the feat is bestowed upon him. Henceforth, the character may be recognized as a templar knight.

If the fighter forges (or re-forges) his own sword, with specific runes of war worked into the blade, then he may also include his strength modifier in the deflection, as long as, that particular sword is enchanted, infused with magic, or made sacred (blessed) by a cleric who worships a war god.

Note, when a templar knight falls out of favor with his principal deity or a magical sword is brandished which has not been through the blood-shroud ceremony, the maneuver cannot be performed as intended.

For example, if a 6th level fighter, Carr, with a +1 bastard sword, +3 vs. dragons is about to be slashed in twain by a giant mutated claw, the templar knight can elect to (partially) deflect said blow by 9 points of damage [11 assuming the character forged his own rune-sword and his strength bonus was +2].

"I use Espada Bastardo to impede the creature's claw attack."

"Very well," says the GM as he rolls a few dice. "The mutant crab is thwarted to a degree. Carr would have taken 25 points of damage, but instead takes only 16."

LEAD BY THE SWORD

Once per day, with enchanted blade in hand, a knight of the temple may convince the ambivalent to heed his words or the hostile to flee before his intimidating swordsmanship. The number of individuals influenced may not be greater than the knight's level.

ADDITIONAL ATTACK

At 3rd level, templar knights may attack two times in a round using a magic sword, but this secondary swing is granted only once per day. At 6th level, knights may use this ability twice per day, and thrice at 9th level. Upon reaching 12th level, they receive two attacks every round.



Slayer

Wealth can be wonderful, but you know, success can test one's mettle as surely as the strongest adversary.

The second type of fighter is a Slayer. Slayers are hired swords, mercenaries, and bounty hunters. They fight for the coin which buys wine, women, and song. To a lesser extent, a slayer seeks glory. After all, why not be known for one's extraordinary deeds? However, this desire for recognition is usually funneled into bigger and better jobs, more dangerous dungeons full of vast wealth, etc.

Alignment: Neutral

ICONIC BLADE

Once per day, a slayer may strike his adversary as if the hit were a critical. He must be wielding a magic sword, one that has survived the destructive force of Dragon's breath, slain a wizard aligned with Chaos, or defended a maiden pure from a fate worse than death.

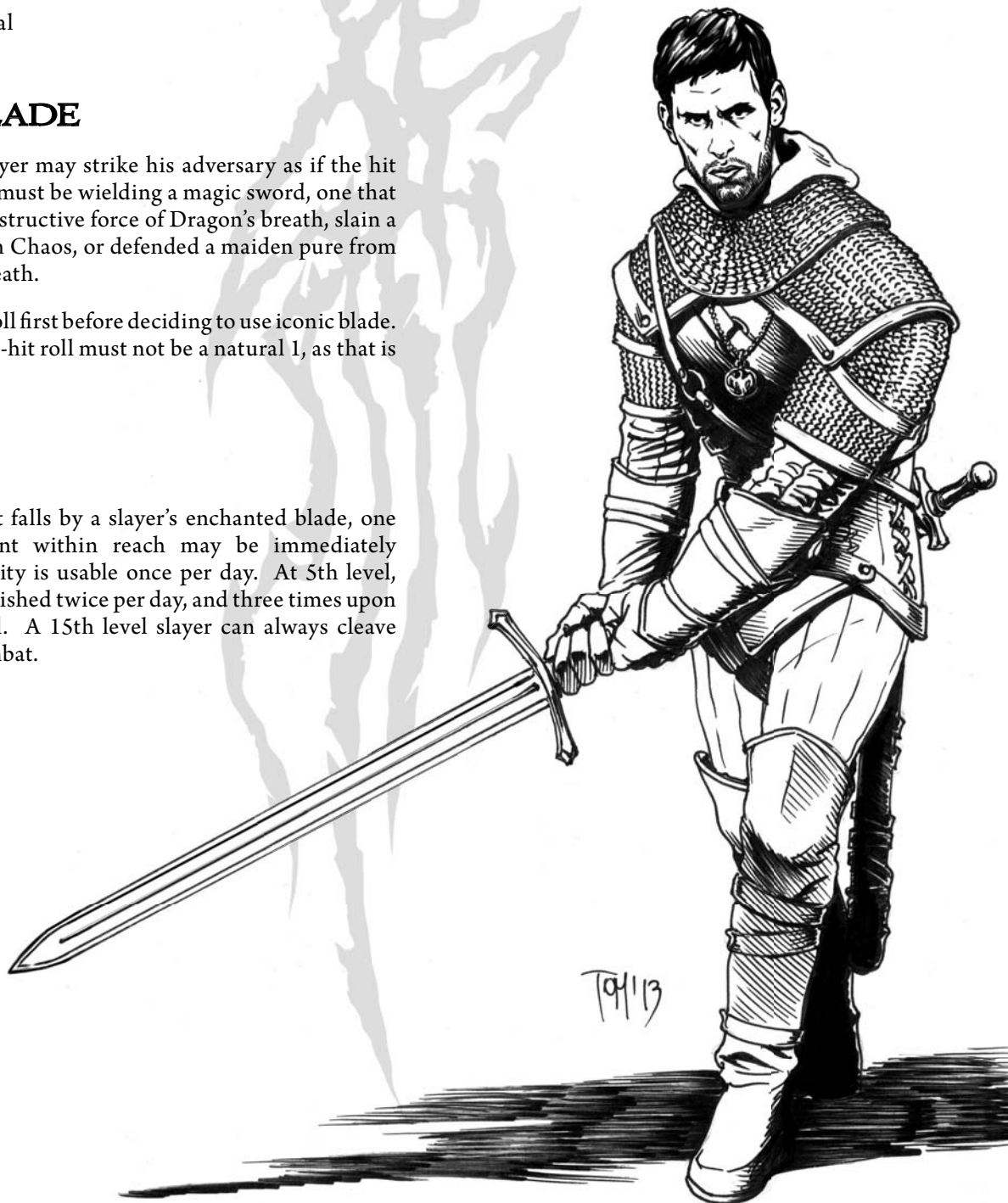
The player should roll first before deciding to use iconic blade. Additionally, the to-hit roll must not be a natural 1, as that is always a failure.

CLEAVE

When an opponent falls by a slayer's enchanted blade, one additional opponent within reach may be immediately attacked. This ability is usable once per day. At 5th level, this can be accomplished twice per day, and three times upon reaching 10th level. A 15th level slayer can always cleave suitable foes in combat.

ADDITIONAL ATTACK

At 3rd level, slayers may attack two times in a round using a magic sword, but this secondary swing is granted only once per day. At 6th level, slayers may use this ability twice per day, and thrice at 9th level. Upon reaching 12th level, they receive two attacks every round.



Reaver

Infidel defilers! They shall all drown in lakes of blood.

The third type of fighter is a Reaver. Some are soldiers of fortune turned to darkness... others developed a taste for bloodshed early on. Those who revel in slaughter and would see their kills grow by leaps and bounds are reavers. It is rumored that reavers evolved from a special order of assassins.

Long ago, the realm's assassins swore fealty to Voorthal'nyggura, an Ancient One who ruled aeons ago but now slumbers deep within a subterranean vault. Those assassins wielded swords, wore black from head to toe, and frequently imbibed an exotic spice allowing them to carry out their duties without remorse or regret.

Today, reavers are sometimes clad in black and always carry swords. They are initiated by ritual murder, smearing the victim's blood all over their naked body. Most are unaware of any ties to Voorthal'nyggura, yet his invidious rising may draw assassins and reavers near...

Alignment: Chaos



DROPPING LIKE FLIES

Every time a reaver kills or mortally wounds an adversary upon the field of battle, it strengthens his resolve. Subtract the number of felled opponents, struck down by the reaver himself, from the to-hit rolls of those still standing. This number cannot exceed the sword's enhancement bonus.

COUP DE GRACE

A reaver may add his level to both attack and damage dealt against a dazed, stunned, blinded, prone, fallen, subdued, unconscious, or blissfully unaware opponent. This ability can only be used once per day and via magical sword.

For example, an Orc chieftain kicks the fighter over, muddying his cloak, blood flows beneath his armor as his magic-using companion dazzles the Orc by supernatural means. The reaver wheels around, skewering the distracted chieftain in the throat – deep red spatters everywhere as he falls.

In this example, the reaver was 7th level, so he would get a +7 to hit and then a +7 to damage if he used the coup de grace maneuver. This must be declared before making his attack roll.

ADDITIONAL ATTACK

At 3rd level, reavers may attack two times in a round using a magic sword, but this secondary swing is granted only once per day. At 6th level, reavers may use this ability twice per day, and thrice at 9th level. Upon reaching 12th level, they receive two attacks every round.

HE WHO LIVES BY THE SWORD...

Such advantages may not be much... odds are these illustrious warriors will die horrible deaths, but at least their extraordinary blades give them a chance of survival in this dark and inhospitable world. When the end does come, women shall weep, bards shall perform ballads in their honor, and their names shall become legend!

The enchanted sword of a fallen hero invariably grows more potent, more legendary. Consult the following table to see by what measure the blade has intensified.

1 - 11%	An extra +1 to whatever type of "monster" killed the hero (i.e. Undead, Dragons, Elves, etc.)	54 - 62%	Flaming or Frost; sword does an additional 1d6 to everyone struck by it.
12 - 16%	Lesser Bane; an additional 1d4 damage to whatever type of "monster" killed the hero.	63 - 66%	Magic Resistance; the wielder gets 20% magic resistance.
17 - 18%	Leadership; the sword allows its wielder to attract thrice the usual number of followers.	67 - 69%	Summoning; sword is able to summon a type of creature once per day.
19 - 27%	An extra +2 to whatever type of "monster" killed the hero.	70 - 78%	Aligned; whatever the wielder's alignment, so is the sword. Additional 1d6 damage to those of opposing alignment.
28 - 33%	Bane; an additional 1d6 damage to whatever type of "monster" killed the hero.	79 - 82%	Keen edged; sword deals a critical hit on a natural 19 and 20.
34 - 36%	Protection; decreases the to-hit roll by 1 for whatever type of "monster" killed the hero.	83 - 89%	Vorpal; a critical hit means decapitation.
37 - 39%	Sensitivity; sword is able to sense if a type of "monster" is nearby.	88 - 90%	Soul-stealing; instead of dealing a killing blow, the wielder can choose to steal his opponent's soul instead.
40 - 45%	Spell storing; able to receive, retain, and release any spell (one at a time) placed within it.	91 - 94%	Silent; 10' radius of magical silence.
46 - 48%	Invisibility for wielder until sword is used; once per day.	95 - 97%	Light (or Darkness); 10' radius of bright illumination (pitch black) with an additional 20' of faint illumination (semi-darkness).
49 - 50%	Greater Bane; an additional 1d8 damage to whatever type of "monster" killed the hero.	98 - 100%	Ego; the sword becomes intelligent with its own personality; roll again.
51 - 53%	Jealous; sword will only be magical for its proper master or deserving recipient.		

