RUNEBLADES

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Runeblades

"Hither came Krona, the Merciless Night and Midnight Serpent, from the drowned lands of Dom'daiel now long lost to memory. At her hip swung Shadowclaw, the soul-drinker, a blade older than the knowledge of humanity. None could say which controlled the other, but all who faced them perished."

—From the "Book of Ungol"

Runeblades are among the most powerful weapons ever forged by mortals, though the secret of their construction is nearly lost. They are empowered by ancient true runes, sigils of ineffable power that have defined the nature of reality since long before any language or society existed to try to understand them. A character may find a runeblade linked to their destiny early in their career, even have said weapon be the cause of the circumstance that makes them

The existence of runeblades is well understood by scholars and sages, but their true nature is not. They are generally considered little more than unusually powerful magic items, perhaps on the scale with lost relics and ancient artifacts. In truth runeblades are more than that in one crucial aspect. Unlike other powerful rune-empowered weapons (such as the Sword of Kings, or Soul Swords), runeblades don't just use runes, they attempt to alter them.

Each runeblade has a themed name that represents the runes that it primarily draws power from, but also has a purpose. Each purpose is a function the runeblade tries to carry out or create. The weapons are not intelligent (as most people understand that term), but instead their very nature causes them to try to alter the universe around them. This is a result of each runeblade being a warp in the fabric of runes, a lens that twists and bends the reality around it to match its own runic existence. While runeblades are not normally sentient or sapient, they do have a drive of PURPOSE, which their innate nature attempts to enforce on both their wielder's actions, and the universe around them.

To create a runeblade you create the name first, then add a purpose. Each runeblade has an effective level, though how that is determined varies based on how the GM decided to add runeblades to a campaign (see Runeblade Character Options, near the end of this product).

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Gythus tore a chunk of bread off the loaf with his teeth, but kept his eyes locked on the pulsating darkness at his companion's hip. Even in the reflection of his eyes, lit by the campfire, that sword was a spindle of total darkness.

"If it's so ancient, why is called Shadowclaw*? Did its makers think to foresee what language we would use today?"*

One corner of Krona's mouth quirked upward slightly, but it would be too generous to call the expression a smile.

"If Shadowclaw *was made by creatures capable of what we would recognize as thought, they certainly did not spare any for us or our language. But you are asking the wrong question. It is not, why does this ancient weapon carry a name we recognize in our tongue. It's why did* Shadowclaw *and its fellow runeblades mold our language to match its name?*

"And even if we knew the answer to that question, I doubt we would like it."

—From the "Book of Ungol"

Each runeblade has a name, which is the best-possible translation of its runic existence into a common tongue. In any language the name is at best an approximation of the true moniker of a runeblade, but anyone touching it (including those struck by it) know the closest their native language can get to its true name.

Runeblade names (and thus themes and secondary powers) are drawn from either iconic names representing emblems (runic symbols to be admired and emulated, often seen as positive or intimidating traits) or foes (things to be fears and killed, with names designed to suggest the foes are doomed in the in the presence of the runeblade). Whether a runeblade is built around an emblem name or a foe name, the steps for building one are the same. You can roll randomly (roll 1d20, 1-10 emblem name, 11-20 for foe name), or just decide if you want a given runeblade to be representation and inspirational, or dreadful and threatening.

Once you know if the weapon has an emblem name or foe name, you determine a prefix and suffix, which define the runeblade's final name,

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and 2/3 of the runeblade's minor, moderate, and major powers. As a GM you can just select these, or determine each element randomly by rolling 1d6 and consulting the appropriate table. If you are a player who had the GM's permission to begin play with a runeblade as one of the Runeblade Character Options (see that section, toward the end of this product) you should propose what runeblade name and themes you would like to have as part of your character (but ultimately, the GM has final say over what runeblades are allowed into a campaign).

Once you have the runeblade's name, 2/3 of its powers are set. While the powers of each name element are set and based on the meaning of that part of the name, you can alter the actual name to match your vision of the runeblade. Each prefix and suffix has a number of suggested alternatives listed in parenthesis after the main name element (and if you wish to be truly random, you can roll 1d4 to determine which of the 4 listed name elements you use). You can also replace name elements with elements that make more sense for your campaign – if dragons don't exist but kaiju are common, having *Kaijusong* as a runeblade makes more sense than *Dragonsong*.

With any suffix, you may wish to make the name two words, or even place a possessive 's on the prefix. Thus you can have the foe runeblade name *Dragondoom*, *Dragon Doom*, or *Dragon's Doom*. The same is true of the alternate prefixes and suffixes. That same weapon could be *Drakebane*, *Sphinx's End*, *Wyrm Fall*, or any combination of those elements.

Any name element powers that allow a saving throw have a DC based on the runeblade's effective level, but using the wielder's class DC proficiency and ability scores (unless it says otherwise). Any that needs a caster level or effect level uses the runeblade's effective level unless it says otherwise. Any spell granted by the runeblade is an innate spell unless it says otherwise.

Emblem Name Prefixes

EMBLEM NAME PREFIXES		
1	Dragon	drake, sphinx, wyrm
2	God	angel, demon, devil
3	Pyre	ash, fire, flame
4	Shadow	nightmare, secret, shade
5	Tide	lake, sea, water
6	Twilight	black, dark, night

1. Dragon (drake, sphinx, wyrm)

POWERS

Minor: Select one energy damage type (acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic). When you attack with the runeblade, you can choose for half of its damage to become this energy type.

Moderate: You gain a breath weapon of the same energy type as for the runeblade's minor power. Choose for it to be a 30-foot-cone, or a 60-foot-line. It does 1d6 damage per 3 effective levels of the runeblade, and allows a Reflex save for half damage. Once you have used this ability, you cannot do so again for one hour.

Major: You gain wings that grant you a 60-foot flight speed.

2. God (angel, demon, devil)

POWERS

Minor – Select 3 0-level spells from the divine spell list. You may cast these as innate divine spells at will.

Moderate – Select two spells from the divine spell list that have a spell level no greater than ¼ the runeblade's effective level and that list a range and targets. You can cast these spells as innate divine spells a total of twice per day (each spell once, or one spell twice). You can change the selected spells whenever you gain a level, or the runeblade gains an effective level.

Major – Select a spell from the divine spell list, that has a spell level no greater than 1/2 the runeblade's effective level and that lists a range and targets. You can cast this spell as an innate divine spell once each day.

3. Pyre (ash, fire, flame)

POWERS

Minor: You can choose for anything you damage with the runeblade to take 1d4 fire damage the following round. Nothing takes this damage more than once per round. This lights easily ignitable materials.

Moderate: The runeblade gains a *flaming* weapon property rune.

Major: The runeblade's *flaming* weapon property rune becomes *greater flaming*. You may choose to have anything you reduce to 0 or fewer hit points with the runeblade (including things that have already been killed or broken but still have a

physical form, such as a corpse) that is flammable to turn to ash and blow away, as if destroyed by a *disintegrate* spell.

4. Shadow (nightmare, secret, shade)

POWERS

Minor: You gain a +1 item bonus to Stealth checks while wielding the runeblade.

Moderate: You gain a constant *nondetection* spell.

Major: You can cast *shadow walk* at will as single action. It has a maximum duration of 1 round.

5. Tide (lake, sea, water)

POWERS

Minor: You gain a swim speed of 20 feet, and attacks with the runeblade suffer no penalties to attack or damage rolls underwater.

Moderate: You gain the amphibious creature trait. Your swim speed increases to 60 feet.

Major: At the beginning of your turn you can choose to fill your square and all those adjacent to you with a swirling mass of water for 1 round. This does not require an action, but you must make this choice before taking any actions. This becomes difficult terrain for all creatures except you.

6. Twilight (black, dark, night)

POWERS

Minor: You gain darkvision. If you already had darkvision, you gain greater darkvision.

Moderate: You can cast *darkness* as an innate primal spell five times per day. It acts a spell with a level equal to half the runeblade's effective level.

Major: You can cast *moon frenzy* on yourself as an innate primal spell once per day.

Foe Name Prefixes

FOE NAME PREFIXES		
1	Dragon	foe, horror, monster
2	God	angel, archon, demon, devil
3	Giant	king, hero, titan
4	Mage	curse, hexer, sorcery
5	Shadow	night, secret, thief
6	Sword	axe, claw, weapon

1. Dragon (foe, horror, monster)

POWERS

Minor: The first time each day you take acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic damage, you gain resistance to that energy type equal to half the effective level of the runeblade (minimum resist 1) for the rest of the day. This applies to the damage that triggers this ability.

Moderate: The runeblade gains the greater *bloodbane* weapon property rune, which functions against creatures with the dragon trait.

If the GM uses this name element to represent some other type of creature, this benefit can apply to creatures with a different appropriate trait.

Major: The runeblade does an additional 1d10 damage against creatures with the trait selected for its moderate ability.

2. God (angel, archon, demon, devil)

POWERS

Minor: You gain the benefits of *protection*, but rather than alignment it applies to all outsiders and creatures able to cast divine spells.

Moderate: As a single action you can choose to extend your minor benefit to all allies within 20 feet of you.

Major: You can cast *banishment* as an innate arcane spell once per day. The runeblade can act as a material component for the spell (and is not consumed when it does so). The spell has a spell level equal to half the runeblade's effective level.

3. Giant (king, hero, titan)

POWERS

Minor: You can cast *enlarge* on yourself as an innate primal spell three times per day.

Moderate: You gain the reduce action.
Reduce ◆◆
Arcane Runeblade
Range 30 feet; **Targets** 1 creature larger than you
Critical Success The target is unaffected and temporarily immune to your reduce for 1 day.
Success The target is unaffected.
Failure The target shrinks down to be your size for 1 minute. It takes a -2 penalty to all attack and damage rolls. It is temporarily immune to your reduce for 1 day.

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Critical Failure The target shrinks down to be your size for 1 minute. It takes a -2 penalty to all attack and damage rolls.

Major: Every time you damage a target with a Strike using your runeblade, you can also affect it with a *ray of enfeeblement* as part of the same action. The runeblade attack roll acts as the ray's attack roll.

4. Mage (curse, hexer, sorcery)

POWERS

Minor: You gain a +1 status bonus to saving throws against magic effects.

Moderate: Your critical failures on saving throws against spells become failures.

Major: Your successes on saving throws against spells become critical successes.

5. Shadow (night, secret, thief)

POWERS

Minor: You gain a +1 status bonus on Perception checks.

Moderate: You can cast *glitterdust* as an innate primal spell at will. Creatures treat their saving throws as one category more successful, to a maximum of critical success.

Major: You can cast *true seeing* as an innate primal spell once per day.

6. Sword (axe, claw, weapon)

POWERS

Minor: You gain resistance to bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing damage with a value equal to ¼ the runeblade's effective level.

Moderate: You gain a +2 status bonus to Disarm skill checks.

Major: When damaging a weapon, the runeblade deals +2d10 damage.

Emblem Name Suffixes

EMBLEM NAME SUFFIXES		
1	-Bringer	beacon, caller, kin/kith
2	-Claw	fang, roar, talon
3	-Edge	blade, fist, might
4	-Dawn	light, morning, sun
5	-Elder	ancient, progenitor, source
6	-Song	storm, thunder, voice

1. -Bringer (beacon, caller, kin/kith)

POWERS

Minor: Once per day you can cast a *summon* spell (a spell with a title the first word of which is "summon") with a spell level no greater than half the runeblade's effective level as an innate occult spell. Regardless of what you summon, it takes an appearance similar to and gains any appropriate trait associated with the runeblade's name (*Dragon Bringer* summons creatures that look like dragons and are have the dragon trait, and so on).

You can change what spell this ability uses once per day with 10 minutes of meditation.

Moderate: You can now use your summoning ability twice per day. You can expend two uses of this ability to cast the spell using one fewer actions (minimum 1 action). All the creatures you summon share one language of your choice.

Major: You can now use your summoning ability four times per day. You can expend four uses of this ability to cast the spell using two fewer actions (minimum 1 action).

2. -Claw (fang, roar, talon)

POWERS

Minor: The DC of any Disarm or similar skill attack action that targets your weapon is increased by +2.

Moderate: When you attack the same target more than once with the runeblade in the same round, the runeblade does an additional +1d6 damage on the second and subsequent successful hit in the same round.

Major: The runeblade gains the *speed* weapon property rune.

3. -Edge (blade, fist, might)

POWERS

Minor: Your runeblade functions as doing any physical damage type (bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing) for purposes of bypassing DR, ending regeneration, or triggering vulnerabilities.

Moderate: Your runeblade functions as being made of any metal for purposes of bypassing DR, ending regeneration, or triggering vulnerabilities.

Major: Whenever you deal damage with your runeblade, you may choose for it to be force damage. Attacks that do force damage gain the force trait.

4. Dawn (light, morning, sun)

POWERS

Minor: You can cast the *light* at will as an innate occult spell.

Moderate: The runeblade's *light* spell is sufficient to trigger light blindness and weaknesses in creatures that are normally only triggered by bright light or sunlight (such as and vampire sunlight powerlessness).

Major: You can cast chromatic wall three times per day as an innate occult spell with a spell level equal to half the runeblade's effective level.

5. Elder (ancient, progenitor, source)

POWERS

Minor: You are Trained in all Lore checks.

Moderate: You are immune to fear effects. If you are already immune to fear effects, as a single action you can grant this immunity to a single creature within 30 feet of you that you can see and hear. The immunity lasts until you grant it to an additional creature.

Major: You can cast *true seeing* as an innate occult spell twice per day. You do not age.

6. -Song (storm, thunder, voice)

POWERS

Minor: You gain +1 status bonus to Diplomacy checks.

Moderate: The runeblade gains the *thundering* weapon property rune.

Major: You are immune to effects with the linguistic trait.

Foe Name Suffixes

FOE NAME SUFFIXES		
1	-Death	gallows, grave, tomb
2	-Doom	bane, end, fall
3	-Master	king/queen, lady/lord, tyrant
4	-Slayer	hunter, killer, knight
5	-Smasher	crusher, hammer, smiter
6	-Wraith	echo, ghost, memory

1. -Death (gallows, grave, tomb)

POWERS

Minor: Your runeblade gain a +5 status bonus to attack rolls against targets that are dying, paralyzed, or restrained.

Moderate: When the runeblade damages a target, it must succeed at a Fortitude save or its regeneration and fast healing stop for 1d4 rounds, and it cannot benefit from magic healing for 1 round.

Major: Whenever your attack roll with your runeblade is a 15 or greater (the d20 shows a 15-20), and the attack hits and damages your target, the attack deals an additional amount of damage equal to 1/4 the runeblade's effective level.

2. -Doom (bane, end, fall)

POWERS

A Doom weapon has a specific creature type (or similar category)as its antithesis, as determined by its name prefix and defined below:

1. Dragon (dragons), **2. God** (celestials, fiends), **3. Giant** (humanoids, giants), **4. Mage** (creatures with the Cast a Spell activity), **5. Shadow** (undead), **6. Sword** (constructs, siege weapons, structures, traps)

Minor: Against attacks and effects from your runeblade's antithesis, you gain a +1 status bonus to your AC and saving throws.

Moderate: When you score a critical hit with the runeblade against its antithesis, you can force the target it to make a Fortitude save. On a failed save, you can either cause it to be unable to use any spells for 1d4 rounds, or reduce its resistances (if any) by half until it is fully healed.

Major: When you have been attacked by your runeblade's antithesis within the past minute, you can cast heal or *restoration* on yourself as innate divine spells. If your runeblade's antithesis kills you, there is a 50% chance your runeblade casts *revival* on you on your next turn. This power can be used twice per day, but not more than once a minute. These spells all have a spell level equal to half the runeblade's effective level.

3. -Master (king/queen, lady/lord, tyrant)

POWERS

Minor: You can cast *command* twice per day as an innate occult spell. Any creature with an Intelligence of 3 or greater and that knows any language is considered to understand the language you use for your *command*.

Moderate: You have a permanent *zone of truth* that only affects creatures damaged by your runeblade in the past day.

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Major: Once per day, you can cast *telepathic demand* as an innate occult spell on a creature you damaged with your runeblade in the past 24 hours, even if you have not previously contacted it telepathically.

4. -Slayer (hunter, killer, knight)

POWERS

Minor: A creature with any unhealed damage from your runeblade on it gains Doomed 1.

Moderate: The runeblade gains the *grievous* weapon property rune, which functions even if the critical hit triggering it does not gain the critical specialization effect.

Major: The runeblade gains the *keen* weapon property rune.

5. -Smasher (crusher, hammer, smiter)

POWERS

Minor: Your runeblade can do its normal damage type, or bludgeoning damage. If it already does bludgeoning damage, it deals extra damage equal to 1/4 the runeblade's effective level (minimum +1).

Moderate: When you do bludgeoning damage with your runeblade, if your attack roll exceeds the target's AC by 5 or more, you may knock it prone.

Major: Your runeblade gains the Smash power.

Smash

Activate ❖

Interact; **Effect** You brandish the weapon and focus its power, causing it to gain in apparent size and weight (though it is no more difficult to wield). On your next hit with the weapon this turn that deals bludgeoning damage, the runeblade adds an additional 1d12 damage, and then the weapon returns to its usual size and weight.

6. -Wraith (echo, ghost, memory)

POWERS

Minor: You can cast invisibility in one action as an innate arcane spell. It has a maximum duration of 1 round.

Moderate: You can cast *blur* as an innate arcane spell three times per day.

Major: You can cast *blink* as an innate arcane spell three times per day.

Special Purpose

Gythus swore as Hrulden Hel's head went flying, severed from the fat sorcerer's body by one blow of Krona's accursed weapon.

"You fool! We needed to question him."

"Oh yes, we did." Krona held Shadowclaw *at full arm's length, and for the first time Gythus saw some reflection in the blade. The light flickered faintly, but the face of Hrulden Hel could be made out in the light, expression shocked, mouth agape in a silent scream.*

"And I suspect he'll be much more cooperative this way."

*–From the "*Book of Ungol*"*

Each runeblade has a special purpose which grants powers in addition to its thematic powers drawn from its name elements, but also imposes an onus on the wielder. A runeblade wielder can fight this onus, but in time it nearly always wins out, at least in part, unless the wielder finds the strength to put down the blade and walk away.

When an onus calls for a saving throw to resist its compulsion, the DC of the save is 10 + 150% of the runeblade's effective level. Some actions that allow a character to avoid of fulfil such an onus note they have specific alignment descriptors, such as being described as an evil act. Undertaking such an act has the same consequences as any act of that type—a single evil act will not change your alignment, but a GM and player may need to have a conversation about a character's alignment if such actions occur regularly.

You can select an appropriate purpose that matches the runeblade's overall description, or you can roll 1d6 to determine its purpose randomly.

Purpose Descriptions

TABLE: RUNEBLADE PURPOSES	
1	Gate-Crasher
2	Luck-Bender
3	Siege-Breaker
4	Soul-Drinker
5	Spell-Breaker
6	Vampiric

Each purpose, along with is powers and onus, are described below.

1. GATE-CRASHER

A gate-crasher runeblade wishes to tear down and destroy defenses. It gains a +1 status bonus to attack rolls against foes that have shield or cover bonuses to AC. You lose this bonus, and take a -1 penalty to all your attack rolls, if you benefit from a cover bonus or shield bonus against an attack that misses you. The lasts until the end of your next round.

GATE-CRASHER RUNEBLADE POWERS

Minor: You gain a +6 status bonus to Athletics checks to Force Open, and are considered at least Trained for such checks. You treat critical failures and Failures, and Critical Successes as Successes.

Moderate: When a shield takes damage from your runeblade, it takes an additional 2d10 points of damage. This is not shared with any other target, even if normally the damage would be split between the shield and its wielder.

Major: Your runeblade ignores the hardness of structures, and of vehicles at least two sizes larger than you. Your runeblade can score critical hits against objects and constructs, even if they are normally immune to critical hits.

Onus: If a foe has a shield, vehicle, or defensive position, the wielder must attack that foe in preference over a foe that does not have such things (if one is present). Ignoring this onus requires a successful Will save, with the DC increasing by 1 each time the wielder ignores it. Anytime you fulfill the onus, the DC of Will saves to resist it resets. If you successfully resist the onus, you take a -1 penalty to AC until you successfully attack a creature with a shield, vehicle, or defensive position.

Damaging a creature with a shield, vehicle, or defensive position for the sole purpose of removing this AC penalty is an evil act.

2. LUCK-BENDER

A luck-bender runeblade exists to see unlikely things happen. This both causes it to reward dangerous, irresponsible behavior, and (sometimes) give assistance when the wielder would normally fail at a task. The wielder may choose to invoke the runeblade as a free action at the beginning of their round as a free action. Roll 1d12. On a 1-6, the wielder gains a +1 luck bonus to all attack rolls, skill and ability score checks, and saving throws.

On a 7-9, the wielder gains no bonus. On a 10-12 the wielder takes a -1 penalty to the same rolls and checks and cannot spend a luck point from the runeblade that round.

LUCK-BENDER RUNEBLADE POWERS

Minor: You gain the lucky chance ability.

Lucky Chance
Fortune Runeblade
Frequency once per hour
Trigger You critically fail a skill check.

Your runeblade rewards you for taking foolish risks... at least sometimes. You can reroll the triggering check, but you must use the new result, even if it's worse than your first roll.

Moderate: You can cast *bit of luck* at will as an innate occult spell.

Major: **Activate** ↻ use one of the runeblade; **Frequency** once per hour; **Trigger** You miss on a Strike with the runeblade; **Effect** Reroll the triggering attack roll and use the new result. This is a fortune effect.

Onus: The owner of a luck-bender runeblade is consistently pressured to take risks. Each day if the wielder does not use at least one of the runeblade's reroll powers, the wielder suffers a -1 penalty to all Perception and skill checks until they do use one of the weapon's reroll powers.

A character can take needless risks to add penalties to checks in the hopes of triggering a potential reroll—making a fancy behind-the-back weapon attack, adding an unnecessary flip to a jump, mumbling an insult every few sentences during a negotiating, and so on. Doing so is a chaotic act.

3. SIEGE-BREAKER

A siege-breaker runeblade exists to change the odds of an outnumbered, defensive force. It encourages bold assaults against large numbers of foes, and leaving allies and defenders behind to directly assault the heart of an opposing force. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to AC against attack from the second and subsequent creatures each round to attack you.

SIEGE-BREAKER RUNEBLADE POWERS

Minor: You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against attack from the third and subsequent creatures each round to attack you.

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Moderate: When you are outnumbered by foes within 30 feet of you, and have no allies within 30 feet of you, you gain a +2 status bonus to attack rolls and AC.

Major: When you are outnumbered by foes within 30 feet of you, and have no allies within 30 feet of you, you gain fast healing 2, and under these circumstances immediately heal a number of hp equal to a target's HD or level when you kill a foe or knock them unconscious.

Onus: If the wielder cannot attack and be attacked by multiple foes, and there is a position from which the wielder can attack and be attacked by multiple foes, the wielder must take at least one action each round to move toward that position. This onus can be resisted with a successful Will saving throw. If you resist this, you suffer a -1 penalty to Reflex and Fortitude saves until you do take a position where you can attack and be attacked by multiple foes.

Starting a fight with group of creatures specifically to lift the onus penalty is an evil and chaotic act.

4. Soul-Drinker

A soul-drinker runeblade takes some vital spark of animation from the soul of creatures it is used to kill. It does not drink their entire soul—their spirits can still be found as normal in the afterlife, but a crucial element of their soul that attaches them to the knowledge and concerns of the mortal realm is removed.

A creature slain by a soul-drinker runeblade has its soul stored in the runeblade, as if bind soul had been cast with the runeblade as the black sapphire. There is no limit to how many souls a soul-drinker can contain.

SOUL-DRINKER RUNEBLADE POWERS

Minor Power: Once per day you can ask a question of the last creature slain by the runeblade. This functions as *talking corpse*, except it acts as if the creature's entire corpse was available and undamaged, and you automatically share a language with the creature.

Once you have asked a specific slain creature one question, you cannot ask it more questions at a later date using this minor power.

Moderate: As the minor power, but you receive 3 questions, and critical successes on the target's saving throw are treated as successes.

Once you have asked a specific slain creature questions, you cannot ask it more questions at a later date using this moderate power.

Major: Once each week you can ask questions of any creature slain by the runeblade. This functions as *talking corpse*, except it acts as if the creature's entire corpse was available and undamaged, you automatically share a language with the creature, and all the target's saving throw results are treated as one worse.

Once you have asked a specific slain creature questions, you cannot ask it more questions at a later date using this major power.

Onus: If you go 7 days without killing a sentient, sapient creature with the runeblade, you suffer a -2 penalty to all Perception and skill checks until you do so.

Killing a sapient, sentient creature purely to satisfy the runeblade's onus is an evil act.

5. Spell-Breaker

A spell-breaker runeblade specifically wants to end magic effects and harm spellcasters. It gains a +1 status bonus to attack rolls against any creature with the Cast a Spell activity.

SPELL-BREAKER RUNEBLADE POWERS

Minor: You gain a +1 status bonus to counteract bonuses.

Moderate: You gain the Counter reaction.

Counter

Primal Runeblade

Activate ↻ command; **Frequency** once per hour; **Trigger** A spell targets you or includes you in its area; **Effect** The runeblade attempts to counteract the triggering spell with the effect of a dispel magic with a spell level equal to half the runeblade's effective level and a counteract modifier equal to 150% of the runeblade's effective level.

Major: You can cast *disjunction* as an innate primal spell once per day.

Onus: If there is a spellcasting foe present, the wielder must attack that target in preference to any non-spellcasting foe. A successful Will saving throw allows the wielder to overcome this onus, but all saving throws against things other than magic thereafter suffer a -1 penalty until the weapon is used in an attack against a spellcaster.

Attacking a spellcaster purely to remove the saving throw penalty is an evil act.

6. VAMPIRIC

A vampiric runeblade specifically wants to taste bloody wounds. It gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls against living creatures able to bleed, and a -1 penalty to attack rolls against anything else (including inanimate objects, things immune to critical hits, things without blood (or a near facsimile such as ichor) and anything specifically immune to bleeding.

VAMPIRIC RUNEBLADE POWERS

Minor: The runeblade gains the *wounding* weapon property rune.

Moderate: As long as at least one creature is takin damage from your runeblade's wounding rune, you gain fast healing 2.

Major: You treat failures and critical failures of recovery checks as successes.

Onus: Once the blade is drawn, it cannot be sheathed again until it has tasted deep blood. Any successful attack made against a creature that is not an ally that does lethal damage and made to the best of the wielder's ability qualifies as deep blood. Otherwise, the wielder must cut themselves before sheathing the blade, taking maximum damage from the weapon (not counting any benefit of the wielder's own strength or abilities).

A successful Will save allows the wielder to overcome this onus, but all attack rolls made with the runeblade thereafter suffer a -2 penalty until it next tastes deep blood.

Attacking a creature just to satisfy this need, or keeping a creature as hostage or prisoner in case there is a need to satisfy it later, is an evil act.

RUNEBLADE POWERS BY LEVEL

Krona leaped back from the giant's mighty hammerblow, disappearing into a deep shadow cast by the evening sun across the old keep's ruins. Gythus clenched his teeth, and raised his shield. Despite years of partnership, even time she left his sight in a battle, he feared this was the time she would truly abandon him.

But as the misshapen King of Basalt Tor advanced on him, iron hammer the size of a tree raised about its head, Gythus saw Krona dash out from a different shadow, dozens of feet from where she disappeared, and bury Shadowclaw *into the giant's ankle. Blood sprayed, and the monstrosity's skin toon on a shadowy paleness he has seen many times before. It fell to its knees, its eyes an expression of shock, and then collapsed onto its side, motionless.*

Gythus marched up to the victor, and the woman who wielded it. He did not entirely lower his shield's guard.

"Since when can it do that? Carry you from shadow to shadow?"

Krona shrugged. "Just now? This month? A week? The important thing is, the Keep of Basalt Tor is ours!"

Gythus was convinced she did not include him in that declaration of plural ownership.

–From the "Book of Ungol"

A runeblade has powers defined by its name elements and purpose, and granted over time at different levels. How to determine the runeblade's level depends on which runeblade character option you select (see below), but the following table shows which powers are gained when.

A runeblade can be any weapon type, but normally finds its way into the hands of a creature able to wield it with great skill (a GM generally should make a runeblade a weapon the character receiving it is most proficient with, and allow a player taking a runeblade as part of their background to select what kind of weapon it is).

Powers By Level

These are a runeblade's powers, based in its effective level. No other runes can be added to a runeblade, nor can any of its runes be transferred to another weapon.

Level 1: The first Strike you make with the runeblade in each combat gains a +1 item bonus to the attack roll.

Level 2: Minor Power from Name Prefix.

Level 3: The runeblade develops a +1 weapon *potency* rune, granting attack rolls made with the runeblade gain a +1 item bonus.

Level 4: Minor power from Name Suffix

Level 5: The runeblade develops a *striking* rune, causing it to deal two damage dice instead of one.

Level 6: Minor Power from Purpose

Level 7: Moderate Power from Name Prefix

Level 8: Moderate Power from Name Suffix

Level 9: The first Strike you make with the runeblade in each combat gains a +3 item bonus to the attack roll.

Level 10: The runeblade's *potency* rune becomes a *+2 weapon potency* rune, granting attack rolls made with the runeblade to gain a +2 item bonus.

Level 11: Moderate Power from Purpose

Level 12: The runeblade's *striking* rune becomes a *greater striking* rune, causing it to deal three damage dice instead of two.

Level 13: Major Power from Name Prefix

Level 14: The first Strike you make with the runeblade in each combat does one additional damage die if successful.

Level 15: Major Power from Name Suffix

Level 16: The runeblade's *potency* rune becomes a *+3 weapon potency* rune, granting attack rolls made with the runeblade gain a +3 item bonus.

Level 17: The runeblade's item bonus is increased by +1 for the first Strike you make with it in each combat.

Level 18: Major Power from Purpose

Level 19: The first Strike you make with the runeblade in each combat now does two additional damage die if successful.

Level 20: The runeblade's *greater striking* rune becomes a *major striking* rune, causing it to deal four damage dice instead of three.

Runeblade Character Options

Krona slumped in her throne, her drunken eyes wandering aimlessly through the great hall. Dancers danced, revelers drank and sang, but none of it touched her heart. Her remaining withered, liver-spotted hand rested lightly on Shadowclaw*'s pommel, one long, gnarled finger gently tapping on it.*

With speed none expected, she leaped to her feet and swung the deadly weapon in an arc that ended a hair's breadth from the neck of a young jester, who crouched motionless in wide-eyed shock where he had been when he dared touch the weapon.

Krona's voice was a growl. "For a thousand years, this curse has found the blood of my family to serve it. And you think you can just take it? Make the horrid thing yours? Then you may have it, fool!"

There was no sounds in the hall as Krona shoved the unshining, black blade at the hapless servant, who raised his hands up and away from it, falling away from her onto his backside, scrambling to escape as quickly as he could by kicking his legs and scooting awkwardly across the floor.

"No? Don't want it after all?! Does anyone?"

The hall was silent. Krona sat once more, but slowly, in obvious pain.

"But yet, perhaps it is time. Perhaps my sentence is served. Gythus!"

The elderly man approached, alone of all those in the hall to not show open fear. His long white beard was braided, his head bald and pale as an egg.

"Yes, my queen?"

"You have found them?"

He nodded. "Five girls, with vastly distant but true ties to your bloodline, all between the ages of 17 and 27. The first, Elrykka, is training to be an alchemis..."

Krona silenced him with the wave of her hand.

"I shall decide what they are to be. Bring them all to me. Now."

Gythus bowed once, then turned and walked from the throne.

"Sing, damn your hides." Krona grunted. "Dance! Bring me mead!"

Nervously, but not without energy, the hall burst into movement again.

Krona returned to the same posture on her throne, the same finger tapping the ebony pommel.

"Or, I suppose You shall decide what they are to be, Old Devil. One of them, anywise."

–From the "Book of Ungol"

Runeblades are similar enough to the *Sword of Kings* and *Soul Swords* (see the eponymous books describing those weapons) to use the same methods of determining its effective level as those runic weapons do. However, runeblades are also classically an integral part of a character concept from the character's origin. Whether the runeblade is an inheritance from a bygone age, a gift to the family from the gods, or is considered the true "player character," with the actual PC presented as a meat puppet, some character concepts work better if a runeblade is part of the character's ancestry features from the jump.

And that can be done with the Runeblade Wielder heritage, designed for any Pathfinder ancestry.

Runeblade Wielder Heritage

If you want to allow a character to begin play with a runeblade as an integral part of their origin, you can use the Runeblade Wielder heritage. This heritage can be added to any Pathfinder ancestry. It follows all the same rules for heritages detailed in *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*, but is taken in place of an ancestry's normal heritage options.

If you wish to allow a character to have access to a specific heritage that defines their bloodline (such as a half-elf or half-orc), you can allow them to take that heritage as well in place of their 1st level ancestry feat.

Runeblade Heritage

You gain a runeblade at 1st level. Its form is that of a weapon of your choice. It's effective level is equal to your level, to a maximum of 4th level. You are always considered attuned to your runeblade, and can only attune to 5 other items. If the runeblade is lost or destroyed, it somehow returns to your or is rebuilt when you next gain a level, or 91 days later, whichever comes first.

Runeblade Ancestry Feats

Runeblade Ancestry I   Feat 5
Runeblade
Prerequisites Runeblade heritage
Your runeblade's effective level increases to match your character level, to a maximum effective level of 8th.

Runeblade Ancestry II   Feat 9
Runeblade
Prerequisites Runeblade heritage, Runeblade Ancestry I.
Your runeblade's effective level increases to match your character level, to a maximum effective level of 12th.

Runeblade Ancestry III   Feat 13
Runeblade
Prerequisites Runeblade heritage, Runeblade Ancestry I & II.
Your runeblade's effective level increases to match your character level, to a maximum effective level of 16th.

Runeblade Ancestry IV   Feat 17
Runeblade
Prerequisites Runeblade heritage, Runeblade Ancestry I, II, & III.
Your runeblade's effective level increases to match your character level.

Runeblades

True Artifacts

Faferdra adjusted the heavy wait of the dratted sword once more, trying to find a comfortable position for the strap that held it over her shoulder.

"Are you sure you want that thing?"

The big northern woman smiled at the tiny woman Grayheldkin, whom she had traveled with so many miles already.

"It bought my aunt a kingdom didn't it?"

"A kingdom now in awash in blood and flames."

Faferdra shrugged. "She wasn't a very good queen. Left no heir, barely left her throne room the past few years. I'd have you to help me be better."

Grayheldkin shot her a dubious look.

"Besides," Faferdra continued as if she hadn't noticed. "It whispers to me in my sleep."

"Is that supposed to make me feel better?"

"It should! Because its whispers tell me my aunt never found it's true potential. It's great now, yes. But it could be... more."

–From the "Book of Ungol"

The runic weapons in the January 52-in-52 releases – the *Sword of Kings*, *Soul Swords*, and runeblades are among the most powerful weapons likely to fall into PC hands, but in generally they fall short of being as powerful as true artifacts. They can be boosted to minor artifact status by just giving them their 15th-20th level powers without requiring a character to pay any price for that benefit. But if you want to take them to the next step of true artifacts, you may wish to combine two such weapons, and then add the general guidelines for artifacts (which may be indestructible, or only have one way they can be destroyed, be beyond the effect of any mortal spell, weapon, or ability and so on).

You can also create a rock-paper-scissors situation if you wish. The *Sword of Kings* might be beyond the power of any other item... except the rune-warping purpose of runeblades. Runeblades, in turn, can ignore the effects of nearly every device and item, but are themselves subject to the soul-fueled power of *Soul Swords*. *Soul Swords* can survive and recover from nearly any damage or effect, except the might of the *Sword of Kings*.

This is a purely narrative choice on the GM's part, but it's a fun way to add some depth and potential plot concerns to a campaign that use these powerful weapons, and can lead to its own narrative possibilities if the players decide they must seek one such weapon to deal with another.

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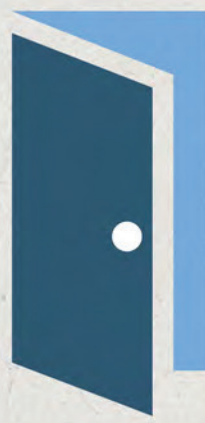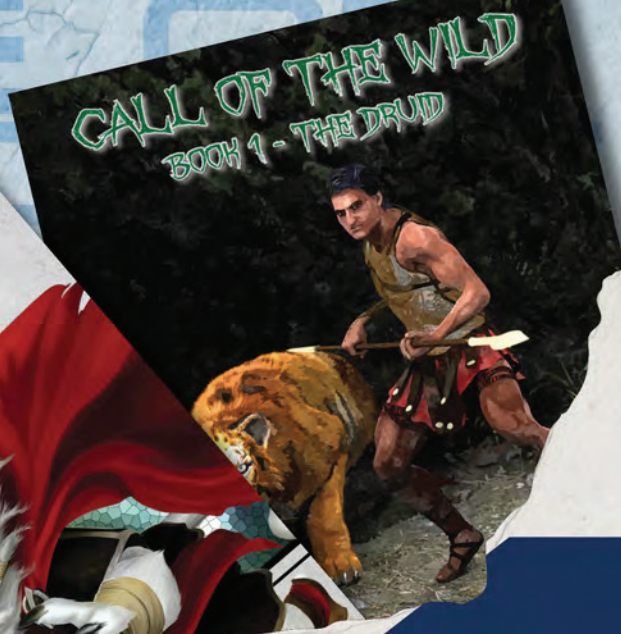
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