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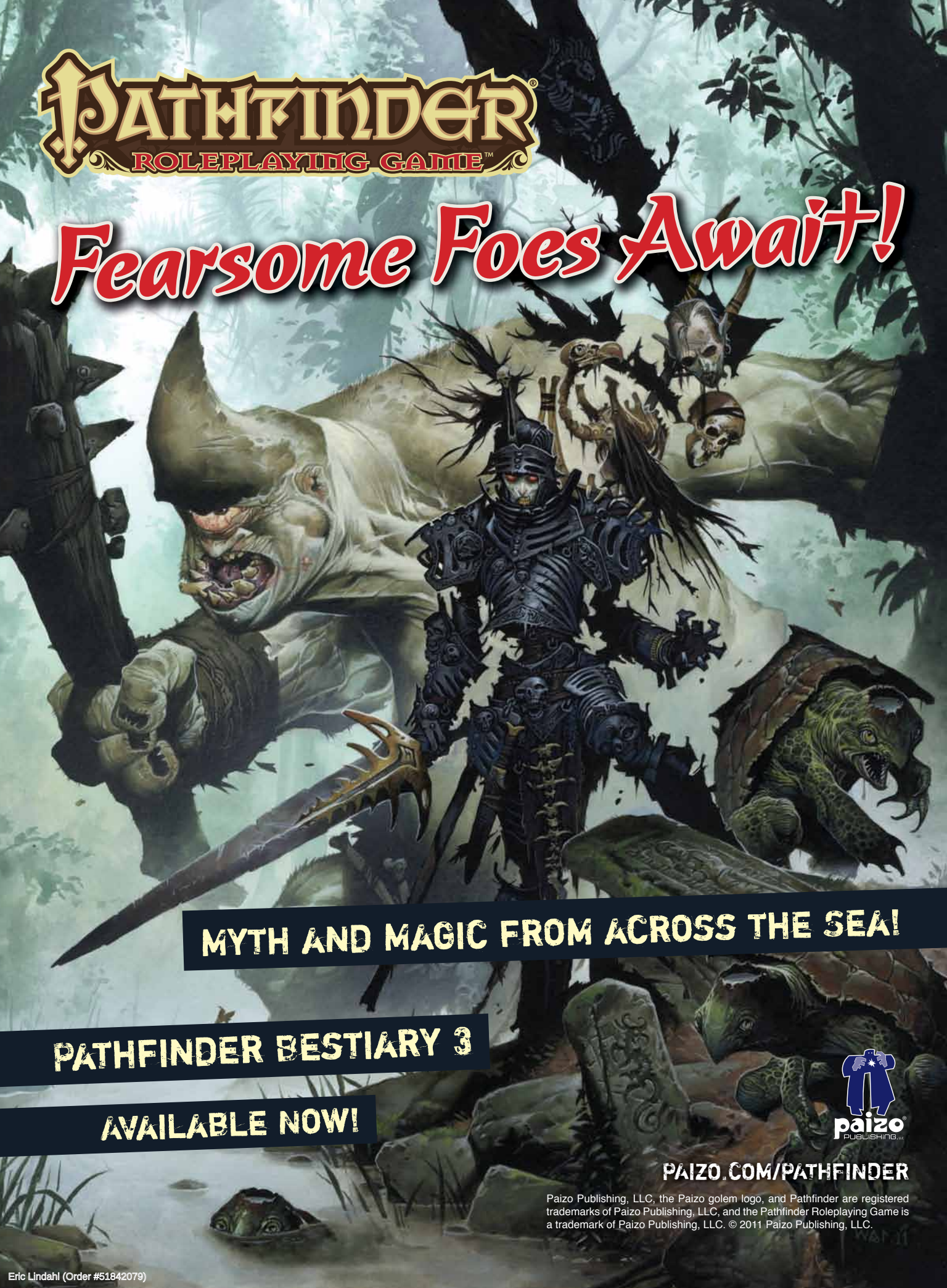
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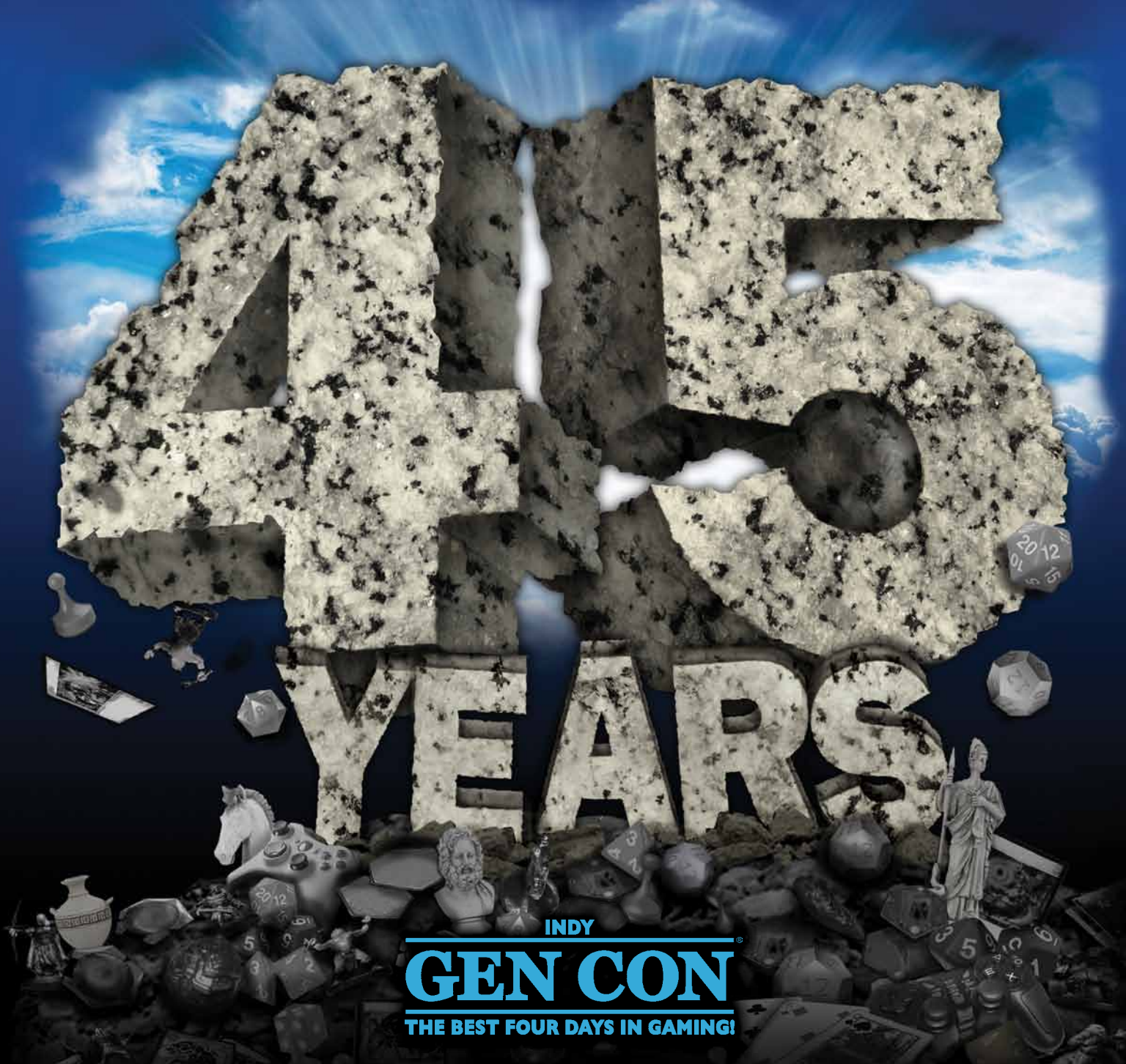
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Contents

Editorial

Hitting the Target 4

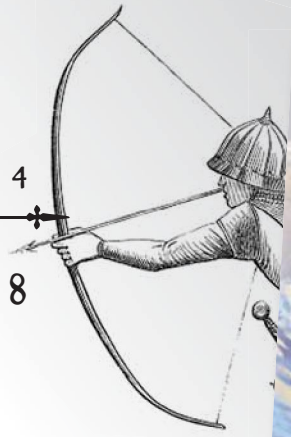
Features

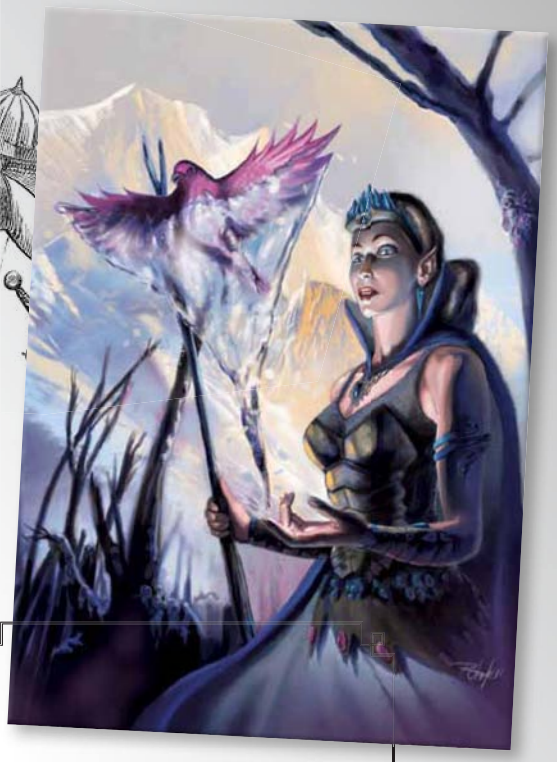
The Elven Archer 8
by John E. Ling, Jr.
The *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* scores a bulls-eye with this all-new, race-exclusive base class.

Arrows of the Arbonesse 14
by Jarrod Camiré
From tangling webs to choking fog, the Arbonesse elves fashion arrows to make any archer superhero green with envy.

Derro Ooze Magic 16
by Nicholas L. Milasich
Learn ogygian spells of filth and decay gleaned from slimes and oozes by the derro, and recruit the mindless, spineless scavengers as loyal familiars.

Servants from Beyond 26
by Mario Podeschi
Strike bargains of power, glory, and fame with these four cosmic creatures from the furthest realms of creation.





On the Cover

The winter season brings us the "Snow Queen" by Richard Clark, whose work was previously featured on the cover of issue #11

Characters

Putting the Band Back Together 46
by Stefen Styrsky

AGE of Specialization 52
by Randall K. Hurlburt

The Bardic Arts. 60
by Aaron Infante-Levy

Unearthed Ancestry 68
by Jerry LeNeave

Fish of Legend 73
by Crystal Frasier

Design and DMing

Night Terrors 34
by Jack Graham

Captured in the Cartways 40
by Christina Stiles

Fey Hunters & Shadow Hounds 48
by Christopher Bodan

Small Spirits 64
by Matthew J. Hanson

Make Haste! 70
by Ron Lundeen

Columns

The Power of the Game Master 38
by Monte Cook

Ask the Kobold 62
by Skip Williams

Kobold Diplomacy:
Bardic Charisma Meets Crunch and Chickens . . . 54
by Jeremy L. C. Jones

Coming Next Issue 79
by Kobold Staff

Book Reviews 76
by William Banks, Ben McFarland, Wade Rockett, and Pierce Watters

Free City of Zobeck:
The Ruins of Arbonesse 80
by Jeff Grubb

Comics

Bolt & Quiver 20

d20 Monkey 44

10'x 10' Toon 78

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

Editorial:
Hitting the Target

I've loved archery since before I was old enough to pull a bow. I remember the Walt Disney Robin Hood movie, and Robin Hood books in general, introducing me to a wonderland of heroes fighting for justice in a cruel world. Their arrows flew unerringly through the air to pin evildoers to trees, separate money-sacks from belts, and sever the hangman's cruel rope. This was very different from the swords and lances and heavy armor of King Arthur's knights. They always struck me as jocks, and maybe a little bit too blue-blooded for me to aspire to.

But the archers were always the sorts of heroes I could understand. Anyone, even a peasant, can draw a bow and go hunting. And the archer isn't caught in the chaos of melee, where size and speed are important. For an archer, aim and skill are the thing. Archery also appealed to me because it was rather more an individual sport than, say, running a tourney full of riders and lancers.

The main consideration, of course: my local parks department did not offer classes in horsemanship, jousting, or grand melee. Rather a pity. Maybe kids today have a wider range of feudal sports available.

In any case, I spent a summer or two shooting at targets 30 feet away, then 40 feet, drawing a rather scrawny bow (20 lb pull). The arrival of Olympic archery opened my eyes to the magnificence of a recurved bow with sights and pulleys. The bow hunters were another eye-opener (imagine having to get about 40 feet away from a deer instead of 140 feet). And of course, the sheer badassery of Bard of Lake Town shooting down Smaug with his black arrow was the highlight of *The Hobbit* for me. Archers kill dragons, and the dwarves just stick around to claim the loot. Archers earned it.

So to me, archers have always been cool. This issue, we celebrate the women and men who nock the arrows and let fly. With a new elvish archer base class, hunting in the forests, and new arrows, there's lots of tools for both player and DM who seek to hit the target.

What's your favorite archery story?

Wolfgang Baur

Kobold in Chief



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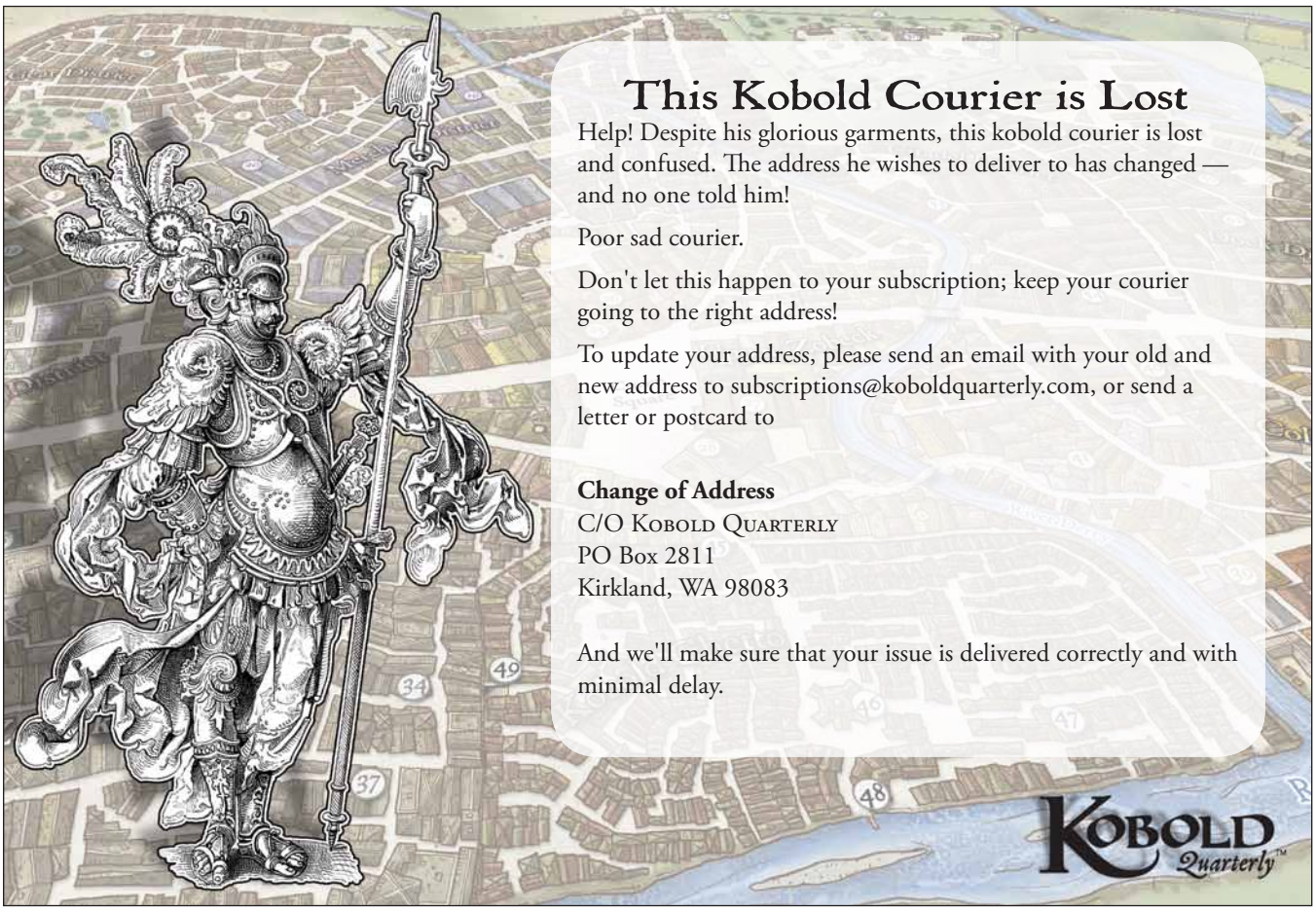
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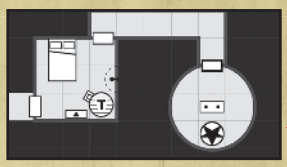


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The Elven Archer

For Some Heroes, the Arrow Strikes Swift and True

By John E. Ling, Jr.
Art by Rick Hershey

Many folks have traveled through the forest under the watchful eye of an elven archer and never realized it. Masters of stealth in natural environments, elven archers use deadly marksmanship to eliminate threats. They maintain a protective eye on travelers who respect nature and the forest, but quickly deal abusers a painful lesson.

While the elven archer respects and safeguards nature, he does not venerate it like druids or rangers. Instead, he honors the spirits of his ancestors and elven archer forebears, spending time each morning communing with their spirits, who grant him access to divine spells. The archer, in turn, uses this provided power to protect his homeland. Elven archers typically take a broad definition of protection, however, and they can often be found far from home, hunting a specific foe or skirmishing with evil races to prevent them from becoming too strong—thereby becoming a future threat to his people.

Role: Elven archers are adept at quickly dealing with a single foe. They have some of the ranger's skills, such as the ranger's superior tracking ability, and so can fill that role in a group, if necessary. Elven archers excel at hit-and-run tactics: they skirmish with a large group, disappear into the forest, and then return later to strike at a more advantageous time. In groups of less stealthy characters, elven archers defend weaker members such as arcane casters. Additionally, their precise archery provides excellent ranged support for melee fighters.

Race: Elven archers must be elves or half-elves.

Adaptation: The easiest adaptation, of course, is to simply remove the racial requirement—or replace it with another. A quick name change allows the elven archer to become the human king's elite bowyers. Changing the class' focus to thrown weapons rather than bows and adding Quick Draw to the allowable bonus feats, creates another interesting adaptation of this class, such as knife thrower—which would be fantastic for halflings! Finally, the elven archer's abilities could be modified to function with crossbows rather than a standard bow. In that scenario, add

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Rapid Reload to the list of bonus feats.

Alignment: Any, but usually matches the predominant alignment of his home community.

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills

The elven archer's class skills are Acrobatics (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Perception (Wis), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Spellcraft (Int), Stealth (Dex), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str).

Skill Ranks per Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the elven archer.

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: An elven archer is proficient with all simple and martial weapons and with light armor and bucklers.

Track (Ex): Elven archers regularly stalk their prey through the forests. An elven archer adds half his level (minimum 1) to Survival skill checks made to follow or identify tracks.

Wild Empathy (Ex): An elven archer can improve the initial attitude of an animal. This ability functions just like a Diplomacy check to improve the attitude of a person. The elven archer rolls 1d20 and adds his elven archer level and his Charisma bonus to determine the wild empathy check result. The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly.

To use wild empathy, the elven archer and the animal must be within 30 ft. of one another under normal visibility conditions. Influencing an animal in this way takes 1 minute, but it might take more or less time under especially stressful or favorable conditions.

The elven archer can also use this ability to influence a magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, with a -4 penalty on the check.

Bonus Feat: Elven archers are bow experts. At 2nd level, and every three levels thereafter, the elven archer receives a bonus feat in addition to those gained from normal advancement. The elven archer must meet all the prerequisites of the feat prior to selecting it.

An elven archer may select these bonus feats from the below-listed combat feats with this class ability. For prerequisites, treat his elven archer level -3 as his fighter level. For example, a 7th-level elven archer qualifies for Weapon Specialization because he treats his fighter level as 4th.

Elven archers may select these bonus feats from the following list: Deadly Aim, Far Shot, Greater Weapon Focus, Greater Weapon Specialization, Improved Critical, Improved Precise Shot, Manyshot, Pinpoint Targeting, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run, Weapon Focus, and Weapon Specialization. Elven archers must select a bow when selecting a feat that allows them to choose a weapon, such as Improved Critical or Weapon Focus.

Preferred Target (Ex): Much like a ranger, an elven archer becomes an expert at hunting a specific foe. At 3rd level, the elven archer selects a creature type (and subtype) where appropriate) from the list of ranger's favored enemies. Against those creatures, he gains a +2 bonus on Bluff, Knowledge, Perception, Sense Motive, and Survival check. Likewise, he gets a +2 bonus on weapon attack and damage rolls against them.

The elven archer may make Knowledge skill checks untrained when attempting to identify these creatures. At 10th level, the bonus increases to +4, and at 17th level it increases to +6. (Unlike a ranger, an elven archer does not select an additional favored creature type at these levels.)

Precision (Ex): Beginning at 4th level, an elven archer adds the indicated damage bonus to any shot he makes against a foe who is denied Dexterity to AC (whether the target already has a Dexterity bonus or not). This extra damage is 1d6 at 5th level, and it only applies when the elven archer uses a bow while within 30 feet of the target. The extra damage increases by 1d6 every five elven archer levels thereafter. At 16th level, when the elven archer gains the ability to flank with the bow, this damage also applies to shots against flanked targets.

Arbonesse Exiles and Daughters of Perun

In the Midgard campaign setting, the Arbonesse Forest is home to rather few elves after the Great Retreat. As is typical in an elven community, many classes are represented among these people. A predominant number, however, are elven archers. They use their power to keep the old roads safe, occasionally fighting with humans from Allain or creatures from the Wastes.

The most powerful elven archers among the Arbonesse Exiles faithfully serve a single lord, fervently doing his bidding to protect the community. Elven archers encountered on roads outside the Arbonesse Forest are typically on secret missions for their lord, like recovering lost elven artifacts. A handful of elven archers were forced out of the River Court for egregious slights.

You can read more about the Arbonesse Exiles and the Arbonesse Forest in the Midgard *Bestiary: Volume 1*, the *Midgard Campaign Setting*, and *Sunken Empires*.

Among non-elven archers, the Daughters of Perun are famed as amazons, skilled with bow and arrow. Their divine ruler grants gifts of land and titles to her best archers, and the Perunian archers are justly famous for their skill. They could easily adopt this class as well. They practice diligently, have learned secrets of archery from Perun himself as well as from the Rothenian centaurs and windrunner elves. Their diligence with the bow keeps their small kingdom strong, and is the despair of their enemies.

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The elven archer must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. A rogue cannot sneak attack while striking a creature with concealment.

Spells: Beginning at 4th level, an elven archer can call upon his ancestors and forebears, granting him the ability to cast a small number of divine spells, which are drawn from the ranger's spell list.

To prepare or cast a spell, an elven archer must have a Wisdom score of 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an elven archer's spell is 10 + the spell level + the elven archer's Wisdom modifier.

Like other spellcasters, an elven archer can cast only a certain number of spells of each spell level per day. His base daily spell allotment is given on Table 1: Elven Archer. In addition, he receives bonus spells per day if he has a high Wisdom score. When Table 1: Elven Archer indicates that the elven archer gets 0 spells per day of a given spell level, he gains only the bonus spells he would be entitled to based on his Wisdom score for that spell level.

An elven archer must spend 1 hour per day in quiet meditation with the spirits to regain his daily allotment of spells. An elven archer may prepare and cast any spell on the ranger spell list, provided that he can cast spells of that level, but he must choose which spells to prepare during his daily meditation.

Through 3rd level, an elven archer has no caster level. At 4th level and higher, his caster level is equal to his elven archer level - 3.

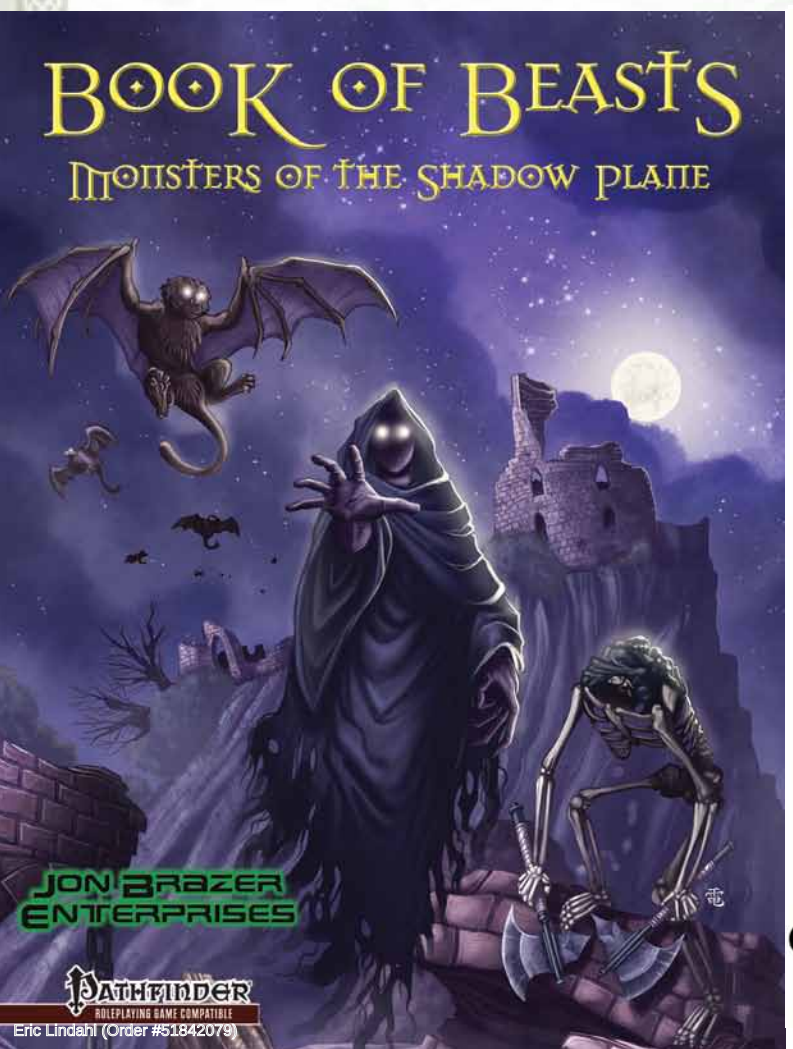
Camouflage (Ex): The elven archer may use the Stealth skill to hide in any natural environment, even if he does not have cover or concealment.

Lightfoot (Ex): An elven archer spends his life in the woods, often far from home. Starting at 7th level, an elven archer may move through any sort of undergrowth (such as natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain) at his normal speed and without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. Thorns, briars, and overgrown areas that have been magically manipulated to impede motion, however, still affect him. In addition, the elven archer leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked. He may choose to leave a trail if so desired.

Swift Tracker (Ex): Beginning at 8th level, the elven archer can move at his normal speed while using Survival to follow tracks without taking the normal -5 penalty. He takes only a -10 penalty (instead of the normal -20) when moving at up to twice normal speed while tracking.

Enchant Arrows (Su): Beginning at 9th level, the elven archer gains the ability to imbue arrows (only arrows) with ambient arcane energy once per day. He must spend 15 minutes communing with his ancestral spirits to gain this ability; at the end of the ritual, he imbues up to 50 arrows with an enhancement of his choice.

At 9th level, he may imbue any ability up to a +1 enhancement bonus.



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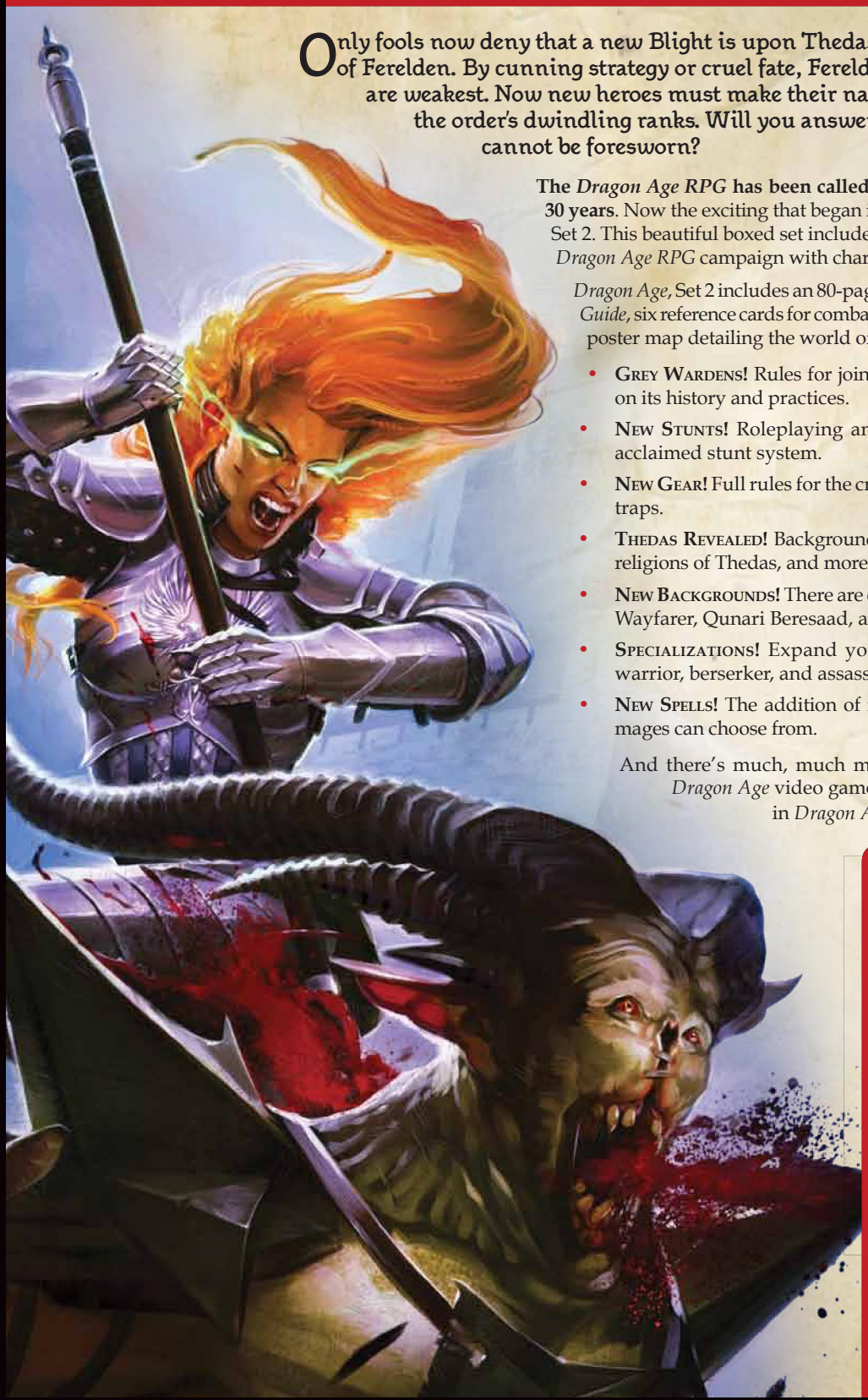
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Table 1: Elven Archer

Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Track, wild empathy	—	—	—	—
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Bonus feat	—	—	—	—
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Preferred target	—	—	—	—
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Precision +1d6	0	—	—	—
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Bonus feat	0	—	—	—
6th	+6	+5	+5	+2	Camouflage	1	—	—	—
7th	+7	+5	+5	+2	Lightfoot	1	0	—	—
8th	+8	+6	+6	+2	Bonus feat, swift tracker	1	0	—	—
9th	+9	+6	+6	+3	Enchant arrows +1, precision +2d6	2	1	—	—
10th	+10	+7	+7	+3	Close combat shot	2	1	0	—
11th	+11	+7	+7	+3	Bonus feat	2	1	0	—
12th	+12	+8	+8	+4	Enchant arrows +2	2	1	1	—
13th	+13	+8	+8	+4	Take aim	3	2	1	0
14th	+14	+9	+9	+4	Bonus feat, precision +3d6	3	2	1	0
15th	+15	+9	+9	+5	Enchant arrows +3	3	2	2	1
16th	+16	+10	+10	+5	Threatening shot	3	2	2	1
17th	+17	+10	+10	+5	Bonus feat	3	3	2	1
18th	+18	+11	+11	+6	Enchant arrows +4	4	3	2	1
19th	+19	+11	+11	+6	Precision +4d6	4	3	3	2
20th	+20	+12	+12	+6	Bonus feat	4	3	3	2



Every three levels thereafter, the bonus increases by +1. The elven archer may spend these bonuses as he sees fit. For example, a 12th-level elven archer could enhance his arrows with a +2 bonus, or he could enhance them with a +1 bonus and the *keen* ability. Once the abilities are set, they cannot be changed until the next day's ritual. Unlike when crafting magical weapons, the elven archer need not invest an initial +1 enhancement bonus before imbuing the arrows with special properties. For example, a 12th-level elven archer could imbue his arrows with *keen* and *flaming*.

The enchantment lasts for one hour per level.

Close Combat Shot (Ex): Beginning at 10th level, the elven archer no longer provokes attacks of opportunity when making a ranged attack with his bow. When making other ranged attacks, such as throwing a dagger, the elven archer provokes as normal.

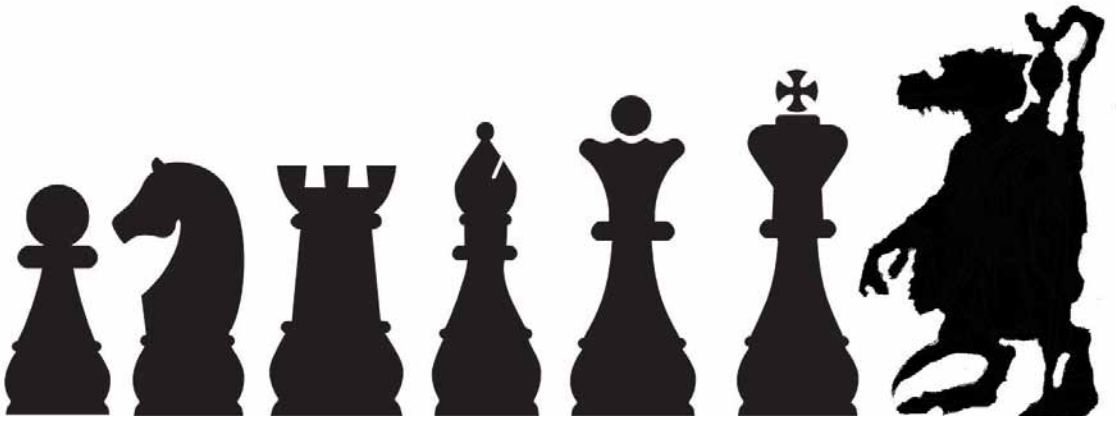
Take Aim (Ex): At 13th level, an elven archer may spend a full round to aim at a target. If the target remains stationary (moves no more than 5 ft), he may add half his class level to all ranged attacks he makes against that target within the next round.

Threatening Shot (Ex): Beginning at 16th level, the elven archer is so deadly with his bow, he may flank targets. He threatens an area at 10 ft. away, but not adjacent.

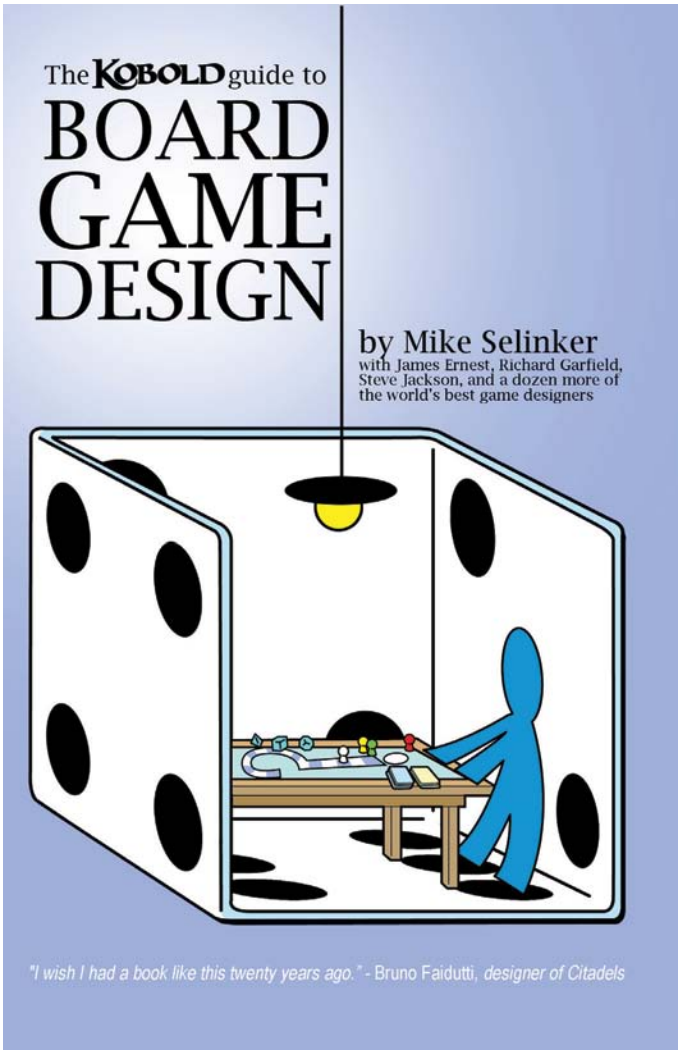
Designer's Note: Special thanks to Jeannette Cartwright for playtesting this class over the past three years, and to Susan Ling, Tim DeCapio, Sandy DeCapio, and Kieth Coleman for putting up with the occasional glitch in the class's design. Ω

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Arrows of the Arbonesse

By Jarrod Camiré
Art by Blake Henriksen

The archer knows that the right arrow at the right time can turn a good shot into a great one. The height of the arrow-making arts was lost in the Great Retreat of the elves, but much is remembered by humans and windrunner elves.

The elves of Midgard make a number of specialty arrows common to the Arbonesse and the Rothenian Plains that artfully combine the craftsmanship of a master fletcher, expert bladesmith, and sometimes a skilled glassblower. The archers of Perun's Daughter, as skilled as any elven archer, have also learned to craft these arrows for their armies, making them very dangerous foes.

ACID SPLASH ARROW

Aura faint conjuration; **CL** 4th
Slot none; **Price** 100 gp; **Weight** 1/10 lb.

DESCRIPTION

This *+1 arrow*'s glass tip breaks on impact, releasing a magical splash of acid dealing 1d3+1 points of acid damage.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *acid splash*; **Cost** 59 gp

ACID SPLASH ARROW

Aura none (non-magical); **CL** none
Slot none; **Price** 20 gp; **Weight** 1/10 lb.

DESCRIPTION

This masterwork arrow breaks on impact, releasing a dose of acid dealing 1d3 points damage.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft (bow) DC 21; **Cost** 10 gp

ACID SPLASH ARROW, ADVANCED

Aura faint conjuration; **CL** 6th
Slot none; **Price** 380 gp; **Weight** 1/10 lb.

DESCRIPTION

The head of this *+1 arrow* seems partly corroded. When the missile strikes it target, it deals 2d4 points of acid damage in addition to its normal arrow damage. Such arrows deal even more damage when created by high-level casters.

Arbonesse Arrows

Arrow Type	Value per Arrow
Acid splash arrow	100 gp
Acid splash arrow, non-magical	20 gp
Acid splash arrow, advanced	380 gp
Fisher's filament arrow	175 gp
Fog arrow	350 gp
Obscuring mist arrow	125 gp
Razor's filament arrow	45 gp
Silent night arrow	70 gp
Web arrow	475 gp

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *acid arrow*; **Cost** 196 gp

FISHER'S FILAMENT ARROW

Aura none (non-magical); **CL** none
Slot none; **Price** 175 gp; **Weight** 1/10 lb.

DESCRIPTION

When this masterwork arrow is released, a thin filament of sticky silk trails behind the projectile; before the arrow is fired, the thread must

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be anchored with a thin metallic wire and hook, which are part of the device. The filament generally has a maximum length of 100 ft. Arrows with longer filaments exist, but they are more expensive and more difficult to fashion (50 gp more per 50 ft. of filament added; +2 DC check modifier for each 50 ft. added).

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft (bow) DC 25, cave fisher's gland, liquid with high alcohol content or a dose of *universal solvent*; **Cost** 156 gp

NOTE: A cave fisher's gland is worth 100 gp according to the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, and a dose of universal solvent is worth 50 gp. A masterwork arrow is worth 6 gp.

FOG ARROW

Aura faint conjuration; **CL** 6th
Slot none; **Price** 350 gp; **Weight** 1/10 lb.

DESCRIPTION

When this *+1 arrow* hits, it releases a bank of magical billowing fog from the point of impact in the direction designated by the archer prior to launch, duplicating the effects of a *fog cloud* spell.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *fog cloud*; **Cost** 196 gp

OBSCURING MIST ARROW

Aura faint abjuration; **CL** 5th
Slot none; **Price** 125 gp; **Weight** 1/10 lb.

DESCRIPTION

This *+1 arrow* breaks on impact, releasing a magical cloud of misty vapor that spreads in a 20-ft. radius around the point of impact, with a height of 20 ft. The arrow duplicates the effects of an *obscuring mist* spell.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *obscuring mist*; **Cost** 71 gp

RAZOR'S FILAMENT ARROW

Aura none (non-magical); **CL** none
Slot none; **Price** 45 gp; **Weight** 1/10 lb.

DESCRIPTION

When this masterwork arrow is released, a thin metallic wire trails behind the projectile. The thread must be anchored before the arrow is fired (a section of the thin metallic wire equipped with a hook emerges from the arrow for this very purpose). Anyone walking through the cutting wire suffers 1d6+1 hp damage; those running through the wire suffer 2d6+2 hp damage, but the metallic thread generally snaps after the first victim (90% chance). A razor's filament is AC 15 (touch 13) has 1 hit point, and has DR 10/slashing. Such threads can be detected with a DC 20 Perception check.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft (bow) DC 23; **Cost** 25 gp

SILENT NIGHT ARROW

Aura none (non-magical); **CL** none
Slot none; **Price** 70 gp; **Weight** 1/10 lb.

DESCRIPTION

Thanks to its unique design, this black masterwork arrow doesn't emit the slightest sound while in flight, thus making the archer quite hard to pinpoint (+2 circumstance bonus to Stealth checks).

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft (bow) DC 25; **Cost** 35 gp

WEB ARROWS

Aura faint conjuration; **CL** 6th
Slot none; **Price** 475 gp; **Weight** 1/10 lb.

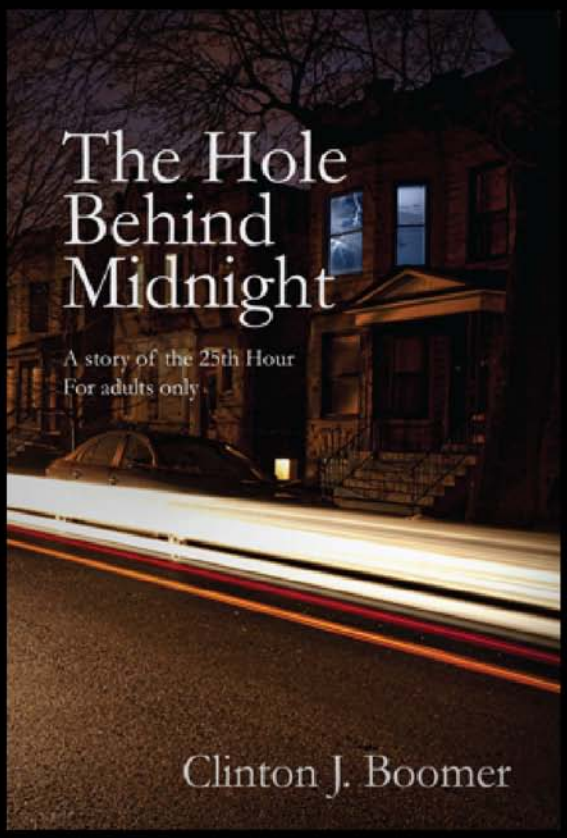
DESCRIPTION

These *+1 arrows* always come in pairs and must be fired simultaneously to deploy the *web* spell linking them together, with each arrow representing an anchor point as required by the spell.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *web*; **Cost** 242 gp (pair) Ω

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Derro Ooze Magic

New Discoveries and Archetypes for Alchemists

By Nicholas L. Milasich
Art by Michael Jaecks

Deep within the earth, the twisted false-dwarves called derro worship dark, forbidden deities and traffic with abhorred and forgotten evils. These ancient powers offer dark lore to the derro savants, including spells and rituals of ooze-friendship. Supposedly, only the truly insane can master these magics and bind their essence with the alien, mindless slimes of the deep earth. Indeed, only unstable creatures—such as skum, worshippers of ancient slime gods, and derro—commonly use ooze magic. However, rumors whisper of ooze-worshiping cults spreading among deranged goblinoids and degenerate humans, for such magic can impart considerable power.

Ooze magic allows for enhanced spell components. Using the eye of an innocent human, elf, dwarf, or gnome grants a +1 to each damage die or +1 to the saving throw DC of an ooze magic spell. Using the bile of an innocent of the above races adds 25% to the duration of to an ooze magic spell with a duration greater than instant. Using or trading in such components is an evil act.

Ooze School

Associated School: Transmutation

Replacement Powers: The following powers replace the physical enhancement, telekinetic fist, and change shape abilities of the transmutation school.

Ooze Mind (Su) You gain a +2 bonus to saving throws against mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects). This bonus increases by +1 for every five wizard levels you possess to a maximum of +5 at 20th level. This bonus stacks with other such bonuses.

Ooze Touch (Sp) Your arm transforms into a slimy pseudopod (as a swift action), allowing you an immediate melee touch attack on any target within your standard reach +5ft. The attack does 1d4 hp acid damage +1 for every two wizard levels you possess. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 plus your Intelligence modifier.

Ooze Form (Sp) At 8th level, you can change your shape for a number of rounds equal to your wizard level. These rounds need not be consecutive. This ability otherwise functions like *ooze shape I*. You can also move through and among all creatures with the ooze subtype without suffering any harm. At 12th level, ooze form functions like *ooze shape II*.

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Ooze Bloodline

As a result of horrible experimentation or the unholy union of slithering tracker and humanoid, your bloodline contains the foul ichor of the ooze. This foulness gives you horrific powers.

Class Skill: Knowledge (dungeoneering)

Bonus Spells: *oozy transparency* (3rd), *slime form* (5th), *lesser ooze touch* (7th), *ooze form I* (9th), *greater ooze touch* (11th), *ooze form 2* (13th), *greater polymorph* (15th), *ooze form III* (17th), *shapechange* (19th).

Bonus feats: Combat Casting, Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Knowledge [forbidden]).

Bloodline Arcana: When you cast a spell of the Ooze subschool, increase the damage by 1 per damage die or the duration by 25% (minimum 1 round). This duration bonus does not stack.

Bloodline Powers: As you grow in power, the hideous effects of the pollution in your blood manifest as a series of eerie powers.

Mucus Spray (Sp): Starting at 1st level, you can unleash a cone-shaped burst of acidic mucus within a 15-ft. range. This spray deals 1d6 hp acid damage for every two sorcerer levels you possess. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 plus your Charisma modifier.

Gray Ooze Nature (Ex): At 3rd level, you gain resist cold or resist fire 5 and a +2 bonus on saving throws made against mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects). At 9th level, your chosen resistance increases to 10 and your bonus on mind-affecting saving throws increases to +4. In addition, oozes do not attack you unless you move into contact with them.

Ooze Form (Sp): At 9th level, you can change your shape for a number of rounds equal to your wizard level. These rounds need not be consecutive. This ability otherwise functions like *ooze shape I*. You can also move through and among all creatures with the ooze subtype without suffering any harm. At 12th level, ooze form functions like *ooze shape II*.

Ooze Mind (Ex): At 15th level, you are considered *mindless* with regard to all spells and abilities. You cannot be targeted by scrying spells or your thoughts cannot be read.

Split (Su): At 20th level, you gain the split ability of an ochre jelly. Only the original has your identity, the rest are mindless. You gain resistance 10 to all energy types.

Ooze Subschool Spells

The spells of the ooze school are few in number but absolutely distinctive. Derro, humans, and a few goblins most often know them.

1st-Level Spells

Mucus Spray

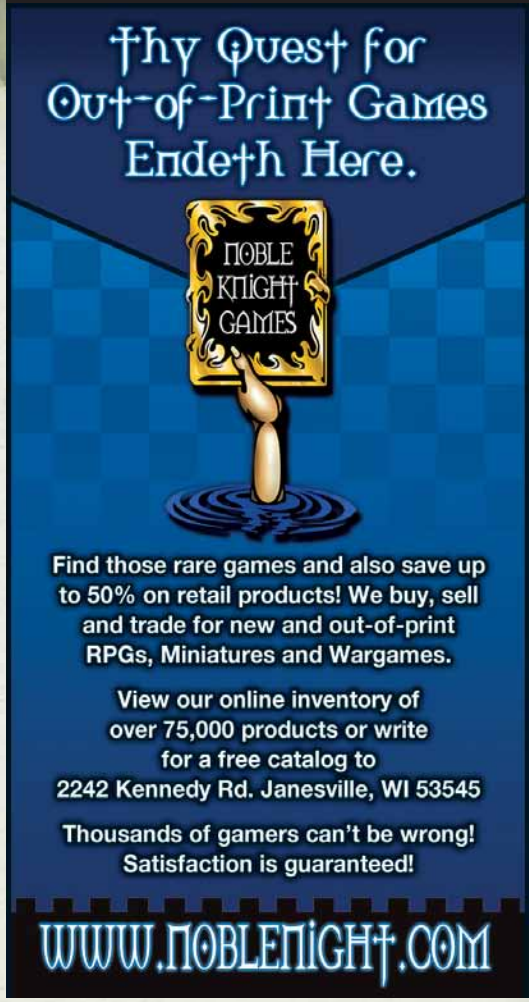
School evocation (ooze); **Level** Sor/wiz 1, witch 2
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (a bit of phlegm)
Range 15 ft.
Area cone-shaped burst
Duration instant (daze 1 round)
Saving Throw Reflex half; **Spell Resistance** yes

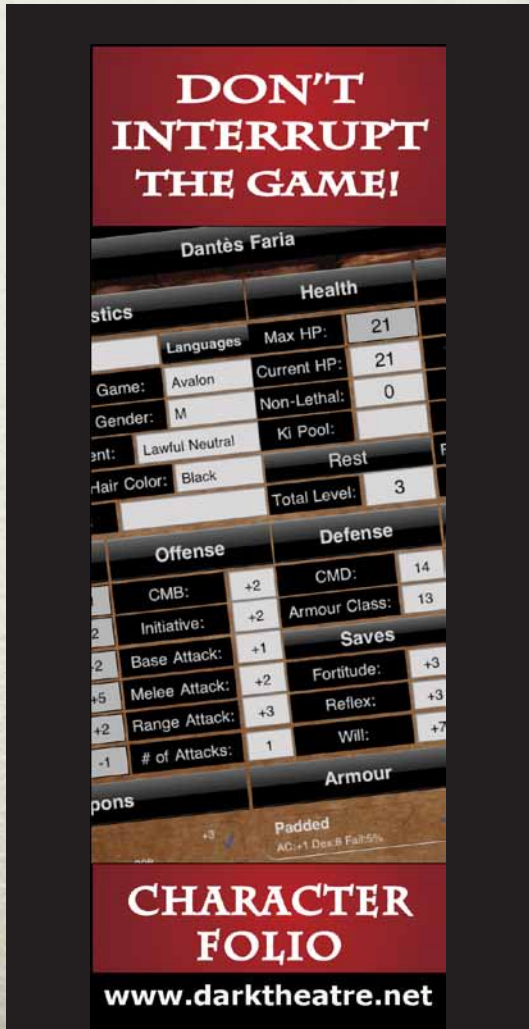
The caster sprays a fine mist of poisonous mucus. The mucus is acidic and has psychedelic properties. The mucus does 1d4 hp acid damage per caster level. In addition, a failed save leaves the targets dazed for one round.

Oozy Transparency

School transmutation (ooze); **Level** bard 2, sor/wiz 1, witch 1
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components S, M (a cube of clear jelly)
Range touch
Target one non-ooze creature
Duration 1 min./level
Saving Throw none (Will); **Spell Resistance** no

This spell renders the flesh, clothing, and gear of a creature transparent, inflicting a -8 to Perception checks to locate this creature. The penalty increases to -10 if the creature remains perfectly still.





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Lesser Ooze Touch Options

Pseudopod	Description	Additional Effect
Gelatinous Cube	Square cross section, clear	Paralysis (DC caster level)
Grey ooze	Grey, slimy	1d6 acid damage to clothes/armor (Ref save)
Slime mold	Green, releases spores	Fungus rot: save Fort; onset 1 day; freq. 1/day; effect 1d2 Str damage and 1 Con damage and fatigue cure 1 save. Effect lasts until cured
Ochre jelly	Yellowish brown, slimy	Damage is nonlethal, paralysis (DC caster level)

Ooze Touch Options

Pseudopod	Description	Additional Effect
Shoggoth	studded with mouths and eyes	grapples with CMD of 30 for 3 rounds
Id Ooze	grey, slimy	confusion – Will DC for 3 rounds
Black Pudding	black and slimy	21 acid damage to armor/clothing (Ref save)

2nd-Level Spells

Slime Form

School transmutation (ooze); **Level** druid2, sor/wiz 2, witch 2
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components S, M (a pinch of slime mold spores)
Range touch
Target willing non-ooze corporeal creature touched
Duration 2 min./level
Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

The subject and all of its gear collapse into a pool of greenish liquid. The creature gains +5 AC and material armor becomes worthless, though size, Dexterity, deflection, and armor bonuses from forces still apply.

While in slime form, the creature becomes immune to sneak attacks and critical hits, but it cannot attack or cast spells with verbal, somatic, material, or focus components, and it also loses any supernatural abilities. The creature can squeeze through any opening larger than 1 inch and gains a +20 to Climb rolls for the spell's duration. The subject's movement drops to 10 ft. per round until the spell ends.

3rd-Level Spells

Ooze Touch, Lesser

School transmutation (ooze); **Level** druid 3, sor/wiz 3, witch 3
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (a piece of dried skin in the shape of a lash)
Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no
Range touch
Target one non-ooze creature
Duration instantaneous
Saving Throw see text; **Spell Resistance** no

This spell transforms one of the caster's or target's limbs into a slimy pseudopod. If the limb is the caster's, this spell allows an immediate touch attack.

The caster chooses the color and effect of the pseudopod at the time of casting, but the range of the attack always remains 5 ft. more than the target's normal attack range. The pseudopod does 1d4+1 acid damage per caster level and has another effect that lasts for one round, unless otherwise noted. All saves use the caster's DC. Derro slavers often make use of potions of *ooze touch, lesser* to capture dangerous underdark creatures.

Jellied Resilience

School transmutation (ooze); **Level** bard 2, druid 2, witch2, sor/wiz 2
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (a cube of clear jelly)
Range touch
Target one non-ooze creature
Duration 1 min./level
Saving Throw none (Will); **Spell Resistance** no

The spell's subject becomes a sentient jelly, though it retains its original shape (humanoid or otherwise). This transmutation does not hinder the target in any way. The target becomes immune to critical hits and sneak attacks and gains DR 5 vs. slashing and piercing weapons. If the caster has a caster level of 10 or greater, the DR increases to 10 vs. slashing and piercing weapons.

4th-Level Spells

Ooze Shape I

School transmutation (ooze, polymorph); **Level** alchemist 4, druid 4, sor/wiz 4, witch 4
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (a bit of slime from the ooze you wish to become)
Range personal
Target you
Duration 1 min./level
Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

When you cast this spell, you assume the form of any Small or Medium creature of the ooze type. If the form you assume has any of the following abilities, you gain them: split (caster gains DR 10 vs. slashing or piercing weapons), transparent, and acid. If the creature has climb or swim, you gain that movement type at 10 ft. per round. You don't gain full immunity to mind-affecting effects, but you do gain a +2 resistance bonus on all saving throws against such effects. You gain blindsight and are immune to flanking and sneak attack.

5th-Level Spells

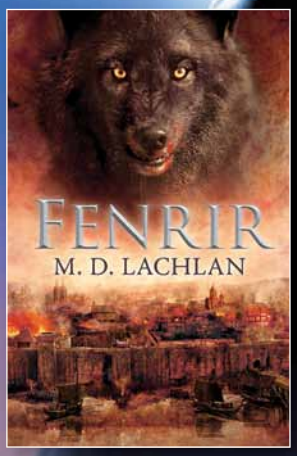
Ooze Touch

School transmutation (ooze); **Level** druid 5, sor/wiz 5, witch 6
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components S, M, V (a piece of dried skin in the shape of a lash)
Range Creature Touched
Target one non-ooze creature
Duration instant
Saving Throw see text; **Spell Resistance** no

This spell transforms the caster's limb into a slimy pseudopod and grants an immediate touch attack. The caster chooses the color and effect of the pseudopod at the time of casting. The pseudopod does 1d6+1 hp acid damage

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From Vikings to Billy the Kid—Fall Reading from Pyr

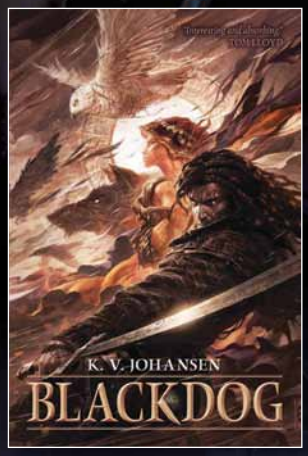


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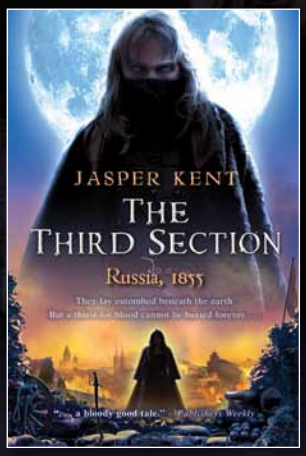


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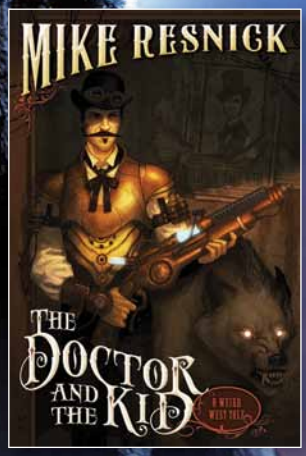


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per caster level and has another effect dependent on the caster's choice of pseudopod. See Ooze Touch Options table on page 18. All saves use the caster's DC.

6th-Level Spells

Flesh to Ooze

School transmutation (ooze, polymorph); **Level** sorcerer/wizard 6
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (alchemical reagents worth 100 gp)
Range close (25 f. + 5 f./2 levels)
Target one creature or see text
Duration permanent
Saving Throw Fortitude negates, Will partial, see text; **Spell Resistance** yes

This spell functions like *baleful polymorph*, except the target becomes an ooze of its size. A creature of 3 HD or less becomes a gray ooze, 4–9 HD becomes a gelatinous cube or ochre jelly, and 10+ HD becomes a black pudding. Alternatively, instead of a creature you may target a quantity of inert flesh (such as that created by the *stone to flesh* spell) of sufficient mass, which becomes an ooze of your choice.

If the spell succeeds, the subject must also make a Will save. If this second save fails, the creature loses its extraordinary, supernatural, and spell-like abilities, loses its ability to cast spells (if it had the ability), and gains the alignment, special abilities, and Intelligence, Wisdom, an Charisma scores of its new form in place of its own. It still retains its class and level (or HD), as well as all benefits deriving therefrom (such as base attack bonus, base save bonuses, and hit points). It retains any class features (other than spellcasting) that aren't extraordinary, supernatural, and spell-like abilities.

Because a target's gear does not transform with it, any items fall under or within the ooze's body, which may mean the items are destroyed. If the ooze has the split ability, splitting the ooze creates one ooze that retains the creature's original identity (for the purpose of memories or restoring the creature) and one normal mindless ooze of that type.

Ooze Shape II

School transmutation (ooze, polymorph) **Level** alchemist 6, druid 6 sor/wiz 6, witch 6
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (a piece of the ooze you wish to replicate)
Range personal
Target you
Duration 1 min./level

This spell functions as *ooze shape I* and also allows you to assume the form of a Tiny or Large creature with the ooze type. If the form you assume has any of the following abilities, you gain the ability: acid, paralysis, transparent, engulf, corrosion, split, and suction. If the creature has climb or swim, you gain that movement at the creature's movement rate (max 30 ft.). You don't gain full immunity to mind-affecting effects, but you do gain a +4 resistance bonus on all saving throws against such effects. You also gain blindsight and are not vulnerable to flanking or sneak attack.

Split divides the caster into two similar jellies or oozes, each with half of the character's hit points. One contains the caster's intelligence. The other is mindless, though it does not attack other creatures with the ooze type. When the spell ends, any other oozes created in this way disappear, and the remaining hit points return to the caster. A caster who takes the form of a Tiny ooze gains a +4 size bonus to Dexterity and a -2 penalty to Strength. A caster who takes the form of a Large ooze gains a +4 size bonus to Strength and a -2 penalty to Dexterity.

New Feat: Ooze Familiar

Prerequisites: 5th level, ooze magic specialization

Wizards specializing in the ooze school can take an ooze familiar. These Tiny oozes have many of the special features associated with larger oozes of their type. Their combat abilities can be a sharp surprise to those who assault the ooze wizard in close combat.

This Tiny ooze has hit points and other statistics as noted below. It has most of the powers of a larger ooze, and its saves equal to 10 + the caster level of its master. Due to the unnatural connection between wizard and ooze, the ooze grows more intelligent over time, eventually able to speak with its master. It loses the mindless trait, but its alien nature gives it a +4 bonus to resist any mind-affecting spell or effect. As a Tiny creature, it must be in an opponent's square to strike. An ooze familiar suffers no penalties to attack anyone grappling its mage.



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Most ooze mages are not above using a familiar offensively. As a held action, an ooze mage may hurl his familiar into the face of a charging foe or one attempting to grapple. In this case, the wizard makes a touch attack. If successful, the ooze hits with one attack and may attempt to grapple. If the touch attack succeeds by more than 5, the ooze has latched onto the face of the victim, who is blinded for one round.

Ooze familiars grant their masters a +2 Will save as their special ability.

Black Pudding Familiar CR 1/3

XP 135
N Tiny ooze
Init +0; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., perception -5

DEFENSE
AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 size)
hp: 7 (1d8+3)
Fort +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** -5
Defensive Abilities ooze traits

OFFENSE
Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.
Melee slam +0 (1d3-2 + 1d4 acid plus grab)



Space 2–½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Special Attacks constrict (1d3-2 plus 1d4 acid), corrosion

STATISTICS
Str 6, **Dex** 11, **Con** 16, **Int** –, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1
Base Atk +0; **CMB** -2 (+2 to grapple); **CMD** 6 (16 vs. bull rush, can't be tripped)
Skills Climb +6
SQ suction

ECOLOGY
Environment any underground
Organization solitary
Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES
Acid (Ex) A Tiny black pudding secretes a digestive acid that dissolves organic material and metal quickly but does not affect stone. Each time a creature suffers damage from a Tiny black pudding's acid, its clothing and armor take the same amount of damage from the acid. A DC 13 Reflex save prevents damage to clothing and armor. A metal or wooden weapon that strikes a Tiny black pudding takes 1d4 acid damage unless the weapon's wielder succeeds on a DC 13 Reflex save. If a Tiny black pudding remains in contact with a wooden or metal object for 1 full round, it inflicts 13 hp acid damage (no save) to the object. The save DCs are Constitution-based.
Corrosion (Ex) An opponent constricted by a Tiny black pudding suffers a -4 penalty on Reflex saves made to resist acid damage applying to clothing and armor.
Suction (Ex) The Tiny black pudding can create powerful suction against any surface as it climbs, allowing it to cling to inverted surfaces with ease. A Tiny black pudding can establish or release suction as a swift action, and, as long as it is using suction, it moves at half speed. This Tiny black pudding's CMD score gets a +10 circumstance bonus to resist bull rush, awesome blows, and other attacks and effects that attempt to physically move it from its location.

Gelatinous Cube Familiar CR 1/3

XP 135
N Tiny ooze
Init +0; **Senses**: blindsight 60 ft., perception -5

DEFENSE
AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 size)
hp 7 (1d8+3)
Fort +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** -5
Defensive Abilities ooze traits; **Immune** electricity

OFFENSE
Speed 15 ft.
Melee slam +0 (1d3-2 + 1d4 acid)
Space 2-½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Special Attacks engulf (Tiny or smaller only), paralysis

Statistics
Str 6, **Dex** 11, **Con** 16, **Int**: –, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1
Base Atk +0; **CMB** -2; **CMD** 6 (can't be tripped)
SQ transparent

ECOLOGY
Environment any underground
Organization solitary
Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES
Acid (Ex) A gelatinous cube's acid does not harm metal or stone.
Engulf (Ex) Although it moves slowly, a gelatinous cube can simply engulf Tiny or smaller creatures in its path as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. The gelatinous cube must move over the opponents, and it affects as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the cube, but if they do they do not gain a saving throw. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity can attempt a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid being engulfed—on a success, they are pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the cube moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the cube's paralysis and acid, gain the pinned condition, are in danger of suffocating, and are trapped within its body until they are no longer pinned. The save DC is Strength-based.
Paralysis (Ex) A gelatinous cube secretes an anesthetizing slime. A target hit by the cube's melee or engulf attack must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds. The cube can automatically engulf a paralyzed opponent of size Tiny or smaller. The save DC is Constitution-based.
Transparent (Ex) Due to its lack of coloration, a gelatinous cube is difficult to discern. A DC 15 Perception check is required to notice a motionless Tiny gelatinous cube. Any creature that fails to notice a Tiny gelatinous cube and walks into it suffers damage as if stuck by the cube's slam attack and is immediately subject to paralysis.

Gray Ooze Familiar CR 1/3

XP 135
N Tiny ooze
Init -1; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., perception -5

DEFENSE
AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 11 (-1 Dex, +2 size)
hp 8 (1d8+4)

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Fort +4, **Ref** -1, **Will** -5
Defensive Abilities ooze traits; **Immune** cold, fire

OFFENSE

Melee slam +1 (1d3-1 plus1d4 acid and grab)
Space 2-½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Special Attacks acid, constrict (Tiny or smaller only; 1d3-1 plus 1d4 acid)

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 9, **Con** 18, **Int** –, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1
Base Atk +0; **CMB** -3 (+1 grapple); **CMD** 7 (can't be tripped)
SQ transparent

ECOLOGY

Environment cold marshes and underground
Organization solitary
Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Acid (Ex) The digestive acid that covers a Tiny gray ooze dissolves metals and organic material but not stone. Each slam or constrict attack deals 1d4 additional hp acid damage. Armor or clothing worn by a creature grappled by a Tiny gray ooze take the same amount of acid damage unless the wearer succeeds on a DC 13 Reflex saving throw. A metal or wooden weapon that strikes a Tiny gray ooze takes 1d4 acid damage unless the weapon's wielder succeeds on a DC 13 Reflex save. The Tiny gray ooze inflicts 8 hp acid damage per round to wooden or metal objects, but the ooze must remain in contact with the material for 1 full round to deal this damage. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

Transparent (Ex) Due to its lack of vivid coloration, a gray ooze is difficult to discern from its surroundings in most environments. A DC 15 Perception check is required to notice the Tiny gray ooze. Any creature that fails to notice the Tiny gray ooze and walks into it suffers damage as if stuck by the ooze's slam attack and is immediately subject to a grab attempt (applicable by size) by the ooze.

Ochre Jelly Familiar — CR 1/3

XP 135
N Tiny ooze
Init 0; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., perception -5

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (0 Dex, +2 size)
hp 5 (1d8+1)
Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** -5
Defensive Abilities ooze traits; Immune electricity, mind-affecting effects, slashing and piercing damage

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.
Melee slam +0 (1d3-2 +1d4 acid and grab)
Space 2-½ ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Special Attacks acid, constrict (1d2 plus 1d4 acid)

STATISTICS

Str 6, **Dex** 11, **Con** 12, **Int** –, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1
Base Atk +0; **CMB** -2 (+2 grapple); **CMD** 6 (can't be tripped)
Skills Climb +6

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate underground or marshes
Organization solitary
Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

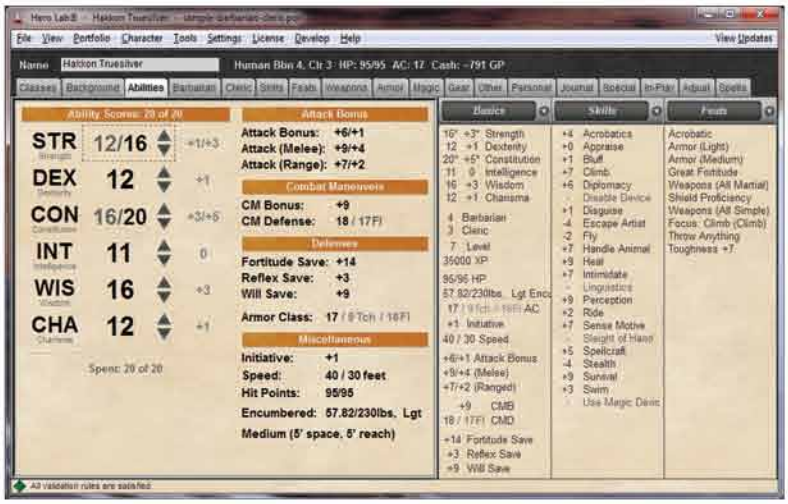
Acid (Ex) A Tiny ochre jelly secretes a digestive acid that dissolves only flesh (not bone) when it strikes a foe. Creatures not made of flesh (including most constructs and oozes, skeletal undead, plants, and incorporeal creatures) are immune to the ochre jelly's acid damage. Ω

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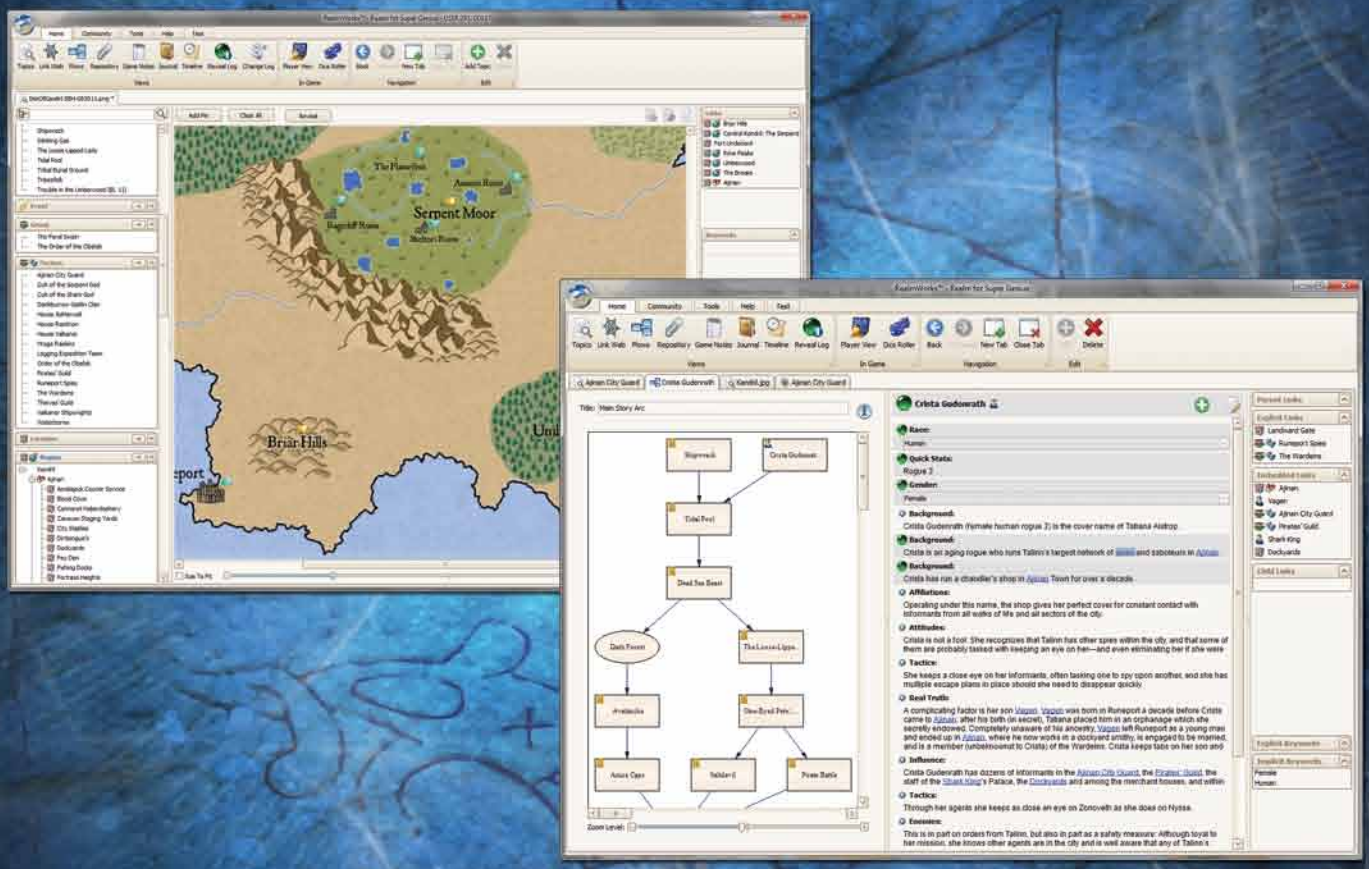
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Servants from Beyond

Lesser Planar Allies that are Ready to Summon

By Mario Podeschi
Art by Jason Rainville & Storn Cook

"My terms are generous. Just as you will serve my ambition, so will I serve yours. When I perish—as surely I will, for I have no interest in the empty promise of immortality—all my wealth shall pass to you. Behold." He lifted a handful of rubies. "This is just the beginning of your inheritance."

The small fire mephit eyed the rubies greedily. So greedily, in fact, that he did not notice Kaliskaria's clawed hands until they settled firmly on his shoulders. With one powerful shove, the female creature shoved her counterpart back into the portal.

"I accept," she said, settling her wings upon her shoulders.

The *lesser planar ally* and *lesser planar binding* spells are powerful tools that most parties can access from level 7 onward. They are sexy, tremendously versatile spells, and unlike most other conjurations, they can bring forth an ally for days rather than rounds. In practice, however, these spells are rarely cast. Their component cost limit their use, and when the party finally sees a big fight coming, there just aren't many outsiders with 6 or fewer HD to summon, especially good-aligned ones.

This article presents four ready-to-play, low-HD outsiders with unique goals, personalities, prices, and powers. Before each stat block, the "Negotiation Mechanics" section explains what skills and payments characters need to coax one of these lesser planar allies into service. The term "summoner" here does not refer to the Pathfinder RPG class, but to any spellcaster performing a summoning.

Talunian Honor Mount

Though the knights who once rode these beasts are long buried, these heavenly mounts still gallop through the planes and await the call to noble service once more.

These majestic pegasi, clad in ancient mithral armor, are eager to carry righteous warriors into battle against the forces of evil. They refuse any bridle or chain, and they take great offense at being summoned into magic circles. These celestial mounts desire only to serve a group of heroes as worthy as the knights who once rode them—a fact good-aligned clerics often share among themselves.

Negotiating with the honor mounts to accept proposed service requires

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fluency in Celestial, but successfully conversing with them entails either telepathy or a *speak with animals spell*, as the mounts can only communicate in terms of snorts and hoof stomps.

Negotiation Mechanics

- **Communication Difficulties:** A summoner who cannot speak Celestial suffers a -10 penalty to Diplomacy checks. Speaking the native language of a good-aligned outer plane negates the penalty but does not bridge the language gap. A *tongues* spell allows the mount to understand the caster, but the mount still cannot speak, and the spell does not translate the mount's snorts. Communicating telepathically or reading an honor mount's mind grants a +4 to Diplomacy checks. A *speak with animals* spell allows the mount to communicate with the caster, however.
- **Unbridled and Unchained:** Summoners receive a cumulative -2 to Diplomacy for every device they use to restrict the honor mount's freedom or mobility—bridles, chains, *magic circles,* etc.
- **Payment by Charity:** The honor mount expects to see its summoner's charitable donations firsthand. Generous spellcasting (such as casting *remove disease* for free) also satisfies them, granting a 10 gp discount per spell level.
- **Minor Task** (DC 18 Diplomacy check, 300 gp donation)
- **Major Task** (DC 23 Diplomacy check, 3,000 gp donation)
- **Grand Task** (DC 28 Diplomacy check, 30,000 gp donation)

Talunian Honor Mount (Celestial Pegasus) CR 3

XP 800

CG Large Magical Beast

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect evil*, *detect good*, low-light vision; scent; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+4 mithral chain shirt barding, +2 Dex, +3 natural, -1 size)

hp 34 (4d10+12)

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Resist acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5; **SR** 8

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 120 ft. (average)

Melee bite +7 (1d3+4), 2 hooves +2 (1d6+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks smite evil 1/day (+1 to hit/+4 to damage)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)

Constant—*detect evil* (60-ft. radius), *detect good* (60-ft. radius)

TACTICS

Talunian honor mounts serve their riders faithfully and intelligently, pulling them back to their allies if they fall in battle. If their rider is slain or the mount is otherwise turned loose, it flies 60 feet above the battle, uses flyby attacks on evil-aligned creatures, and maintains a constant distance from its opponents.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 15, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 21 (25 vs. trip)

Feats Flyby Attack, Iron Will

Skills Fly +5, Perception +11, Sense Motive +7; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception

Languages Celestial (cannot speak)

Equipment Mithral chain shirt barding, riding saddle, saddlebags

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Elysium)

Organization solitary, pair, or herd (6-10)

Treasure none

Kaliskaria

Just remember that I'm the favorite *slave.*

Kaliskaria has one goal in life: to become the slave wife of an efreeti sultan named Mumbar. She is already betrothed to him, but he will not accept her into his harem until she assembles a dowry of 100,000 golden coins. Unsettlingly enthusiastic in the pursuit of her own slavery, she cannot wait to join the other 91 slave wives and engage in a few thousand years of scheming, plotting, and fiery seduction.

Kaliskaria would make an ideal servant if she were not incorrigibly jealous and arrogant. She considers her summoner a being of absolute power, herself the summoner's "favorite slave," and any PC allies lazy and expendable





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slaves who need to learn their places.

Negotiation Mechanics

- **Strictly Business:** PCs succeeding on a DC 15 Appraise check while preparing to cast the spell demonstrate their knowledge of the value of a gold piece and quickly earn Kaliskaria's respect, granting a +2 to Diplomacy checks.
- **Warm Welcome:** PCs can make a DC 10 Knowledge (arcana) check to know that a hot fire is a sign of goodwill, thereby gaining a +1 to Diplomacy checks in the presence of a campfire or larger flame.
- **Money Talks (50 gp):** Money catches Kaliskaria's attention, granting a +2 to Diplomacy checks.
- **Minor Task** (DC 19 Diplomacy check, 100 gp)
- **Major Task** (DC 24 Diplomacy check, 500 gp/month)
- **Grand Task** (DC 29 Diplomacy check, special): For some vast but negotiable sum—an adventurer's share of treasure, a noble's inheritance, a *wish* spell—Kaliskaria will serve for a longer period, up to an entire human lifetime.

Kaliskaria (advanced fire mephit) CR 4

XP 1,200

N Small outsider (fire)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, +1 size)

hp 25 (3d10+9); fast healing 2 (while touching fire)

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

DR 5/magic; **Immune** fire

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee small *+1 scythe* +8 (1d6+4) or 2 claws +6 (1d3+3)

Special Attacks breath weapon (15-ft. cone, 1d8 fire, DC 15 half, every 4 rounds)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)

1/hour—*scorching ray*

1/day—*heat metal* (DC 16), *summon* (level 2, 1 fire mephit 25%)

TACTICS

Kaliskaria encourages her summoner to prepare spells like *sleep* and *hold person*, allowing her to administer a swift coup de grace with her scythe. Otherwise, she moves slowly into battle, switching from *scorching ray* to her breath weapon to melee. When injured, she retreats to a fire source to trigger her fast healing; if no fire sources are at hand, she uses *heat metal* on her iron necklace.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 19, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 19

Feats Dodge, Weapon Focus (scythe)

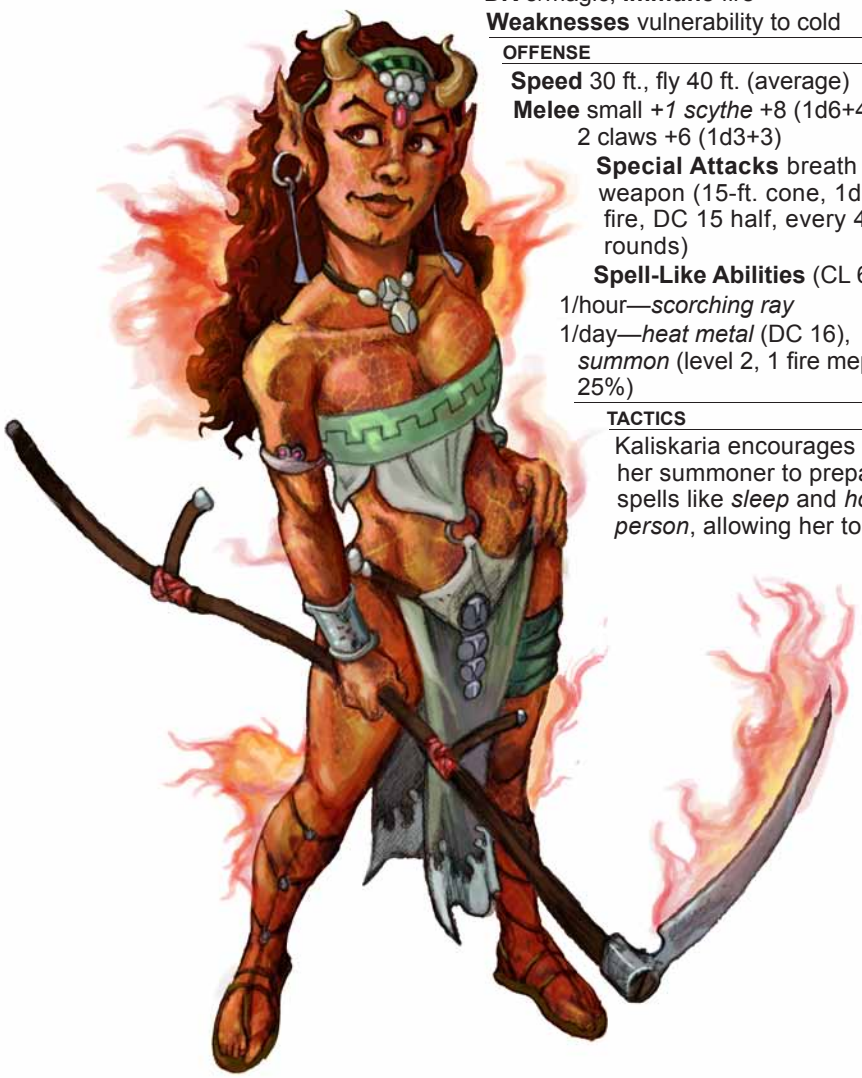
Skills Appraise +6, Bluff +10, Fly +12, Perception +8, Stealth +14

Languages Common, Ignan

Equipment *+1 scythe,* iron necklace

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Su) The fire mephit can release a fiery breath weapon every four rounds as a standard action. The DC is Constitution-based and includes a +1 racial bonus.



Endrian's Shade

Perhaps at your side I will at last find peace.

Fifty years ago, the paladin Endrian died so far from his home plane that his gods could not find him. His soul has since wandered the planes unable to find his way to a more palatable eternity. As part of his ongoing quest to discover a means to return to his god's side, he has begun answering the summonses of spellcasters, offering his unusual abilities in exchange for advice and magical research. Typical payments involve casting spells like *divination, scrying,* and *commune* or high-DC Knowledge (arcane) and Knowledge (history) checks.

Endrian only takes a willing, fully informed volunteer as his vessel. He refuses more tasks than he accepts because he believes his receptacle unwilling rather than because the request violates his ethos. He refuses charmed monsters, unintelligent beasts, and prisoners condemned to death. Only strict adherence to these criteria lets him use his possession abilities without violating his paladin's code.

If a deal is struck, Endrian's shade uses his vessel and his paladin abilities to aid his summoner faithfully until completion of his contract. He

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willingly steps aside if his vessel wishes to act independently.

Negotiation Mechanics

- **Kindred Spirits:** Like many paladins, Endrian's shade opens negotiations with *detect evil.* If he finds no evil auras, the summoner receives a +2 bonus to all Diplomacy checks.
- **False Confidence:** Summoners who convince Endrian's shade—by making a Bluff check opposed by Endarian's Sense Motive—that they will guide him to his god gain a +4 bonus to all Diplomacy checks.
- **Just Cause:** Causes in line with Endrian's paladin ethos grant a +2 bonus to Diplomacy checks.
- **Knowledge At Hand:** A DC 30 Knowledge (religion, arcana, or planes) check allows a caller or his allies to provide knowledge valuable enough to waive the cost of a single divination spell.
- **Minor Task** (DC 21 Diplomacy check and 21 *auguries*)
- **Major Task** (DC 26 Diplomacy check and 21 *divinations*)
- **Grand Task** (DC 31 Diplomacy check and 21 *communes*)

Endrian's Shade **CR 6**

XP 2,400

Human ghost paladin 5
LG Medium undead (augmented humanoid, extraplanar, incorporeal, outsider)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect evil*; Perception +9

Aura good (5 ft.), courage (10 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 deflection)

hp 62 (5d10+35)

Fort +16, **Ref** +7, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation, divine grace +6; **Immune** disease, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee corrupting touch +5 (6d6, Fort. DC 18 half (violates paladin's code))

Special Attacks malevolence (as *magic jar* CL 10, DC 18), smite evil 2/day (+6 to hit/+5 to damage, +6 deflection bonus to AC)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

At-will—*detect evil*

Spells Prepared (CL 2nd concentration +8)

1st—*lesser restoration*, *protection from evil*

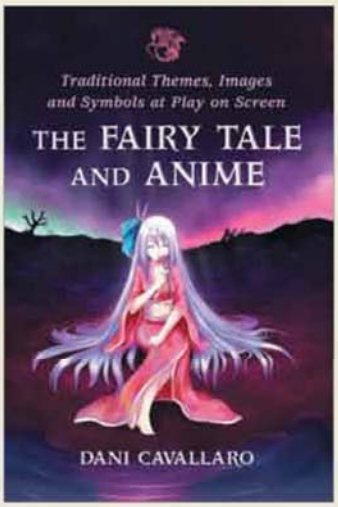
TACTICS

Endrian wades into battle with all the ferocity of a typical paladin and looks after his vessel's body as if it were his own. He heals himself and his allies when injured, smites evil foes, and relies on his high defenses to see him through. If Endrian's host is slain, his shade rises from the body and continues to heal his allies. He never willingly uses his corrupting touch ability, as doing so is a direct violation of his oaths.

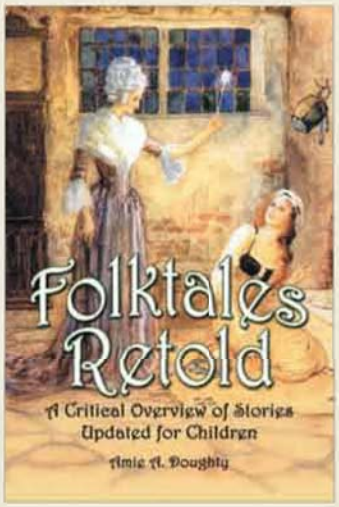


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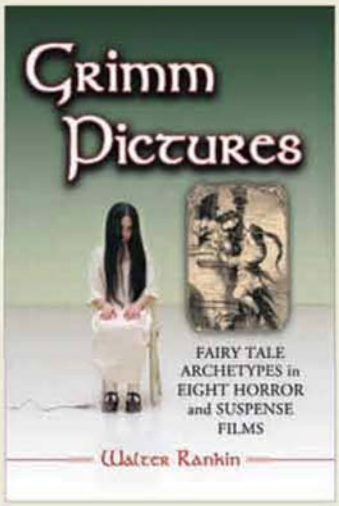
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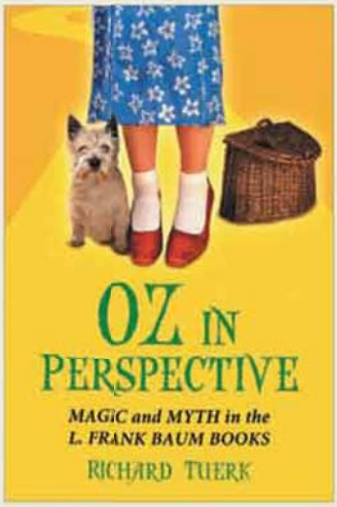
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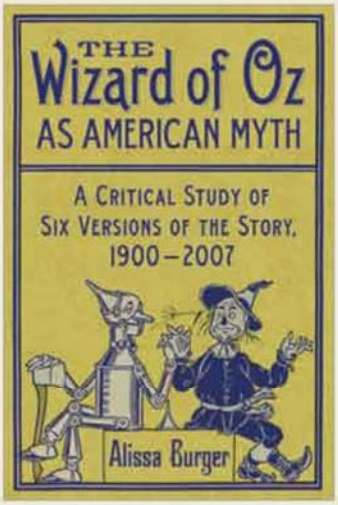
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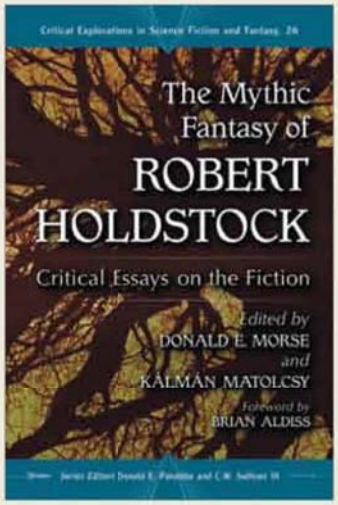
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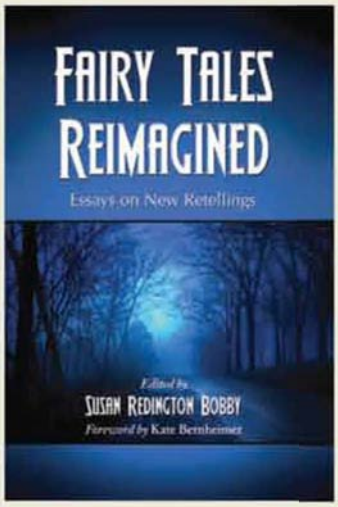
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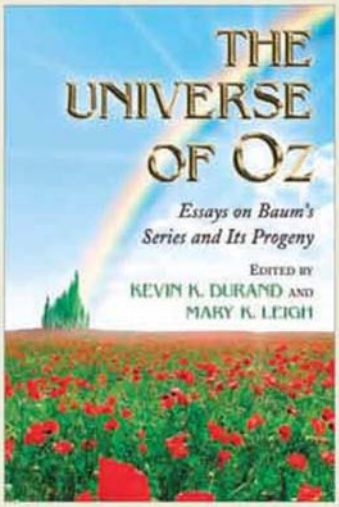
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STATISTICS

Str –, **Dex** 13, **Con** -, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 16

Feats Dodge, Mobility, Iron Will, Spring Attack

Skills Diplomacy +14, Fly +9, Heal +5, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Perception +9, Sense Motive +9, Stealth +9; **Racial Modifier** +8 Perception, +8 Stealth

Languages Common, Elven

SQ channel positive energy, divine bond (weapon), divine grace, divine health, lay on hands (2d6, DC 18, removes fatigue, 9/day)

Equipment none

Deucalion, the Celestial Guide

I have seen. Now, you are taking my hand so that you will have seen into the future's yesterday.

Deucalion is an angel of prophecy, an ancient fountain of knowledge whose strange dialect suggests that he may be walking backwards through time, reporting on that which has already come to pass. Listening to him is maddening, as his seemingly random verb tenses make it impossible to tell if he is talking about that which was, that which is, or something even more complicated.

He appears as an owl-headed old man clad in brown robes and carrying a simple wooden quarterstaff. It takes either a mad genius or a master linguist to successfully converse with Deucalion; though the being technically works for free, many would-be summoners invest thousands of gold on divinations and sages before actually being able to make their request. When the task is sealed, Deucalion continues to ramble while pointing a crooked finger in the direction he has divined.

Negotiation Mechanics

- **Backward Diplomacy:** Deucalion agrees to guide a person to any one location, and protect them en route, free of charge if they can ask him in a manner resonating with his bizarre perspective. Doing so requires a DC 30 Linguistics check.
- **Divination Spells:** Summoners gain a +1 to their Linguistics checks for every level of divination spell of relevance cast toward deciphering Deucalion's riddles. Relevant divinations only include spells with material components such as *augury, divination, commune,* or *contact other plane*.

Deucalion (unique angel) CR 5

XP 1,600

NG Medium outsider (angel, extraplanar, good)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect evil, detect magic*, low-light vision; Perception +13

Aura protective (20 ft.; as +4 saves, as *magic circle vs. evil* and *lesser globe of invulnerability*, CL 6)

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 natural) (+4 deflection vs. evil)

hp 45 (6d10+12)

Fort +7 (+11 vs. poison), **Ref** +4, **Will** +9

DR 5/cold iron or evil; **Immune** acid, cold, petrification; **Resist** electricity 10, fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.; fly 40 ft. (clumsy)

Melee staff +8/+3 1d6+3

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4; +6 concentration)

Constant—*detect evil*, *detect magic*

At-Will—*stabilize*

3/day—*augury*, *locate object*

1/day—*divination*, *plane shift*

1/week—*find the path*

TACTICS

Deucalion stays close to his allies, maximizing the effect of his protective aura and using *stabilize* on any who fall. If losing a battle, Deucalion will *plane shift* away and quickly return to his summoner with the help of his divinations.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 18, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +6, **CMB** +8; **CMD** 20

Feats Alertness, Eschew Materials, Improved Initiative

Skills (-2 armor check): Bluff +9, Fly -2, Knowledge (arcana, geography, nature, religion, planes) +13, Linguistics +13, Perception +13, Sense Motive +13

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal, Sylvan, Terran, truespeech

Equipment chain shirt, quarterstaff, augury focus, satchel with 150 gp in divination incense Ω

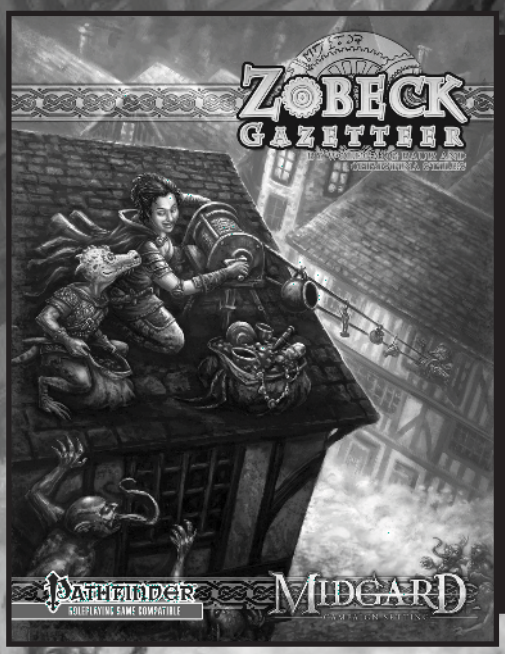
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Night Terrors

Four Creatures to Truly Terrify

By Jack Graham
Art by Katy Hargrove and Rick Hershey

Civilization has long striven to drive fell beasts and old secrets beyond its borders and into the wild places of the world, but it has not wholly succeeded. Some evils lurk on the borderlands and slip in by night or shadow to prey upon the unsuspecting. Presented below are four such creatures to challenge low- to mid-level adventurers, each with an usual ability or lifecycle to befuddle or horrify players.

Changeling Moth Chrysalis CR 4

Filling the baby's cradle is a huge, bloated moth chrysalis that wriggles its lower half and probes the air with its proboscis.

XP 1,200
N Small vermin
Init -4, **Senses** blindsense 60 ft.; Perception +13

DEFENSE
AC 15, touch 7, flat-footed 15 (+8 natural, -4 Dex, +1 size)
hp 42 (5d8+20)
Fort +8, **Ref** -3, **Will** +4
Immune mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE
Speed 0 ft.
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Spell-like Abilities (CL 5th):
3/day—*mass charm monster* (DC 16)

STATISTICS
Str 2, **Dex** 2, **Con** 18, **Int** —, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 10
Base Atk +0; **CMD** -9 (can't be tripped)
Feats Combat Casting, Spell Penetration
Skills Perception +12; **Racial Modifier** +4 Perception when using blindsense

ECOLOGY
Environment temperate forest
Organization solitary, clutch (3-6), infestation (10-100)
Treasure incidental

Changeling moths are largely harmless in their adult and larval stages (aside from the caterpillars being voracious crop pests). In their pupal stage, however, they are extremely dangerous parasites, which, like cuckoos, use other species to raise their young. A changeling moth chrysalis is 2 ft. to 4 ft. long (depending on its stage of metamorphosis) and weighs 30 to 80 pounds.

Although non-intelligent, a changeling moth chrysalis can use its *mass charm monster* spell-like ability to make affected creatures treat the chrysalis as a baby of the creatures' own kind. Humanoids and other creatures that care for their young will adopt the chrysalis and give it shelter, sometimes neglecting any real children in the process. PCs are entitled to a DC 16 Will saving throw to avoid this effect.

Worse, the chrysalis feeds voraciously as it grows, grasping with its proboscis at any food put near it. Individual chrysalises can't do much damage, but a plague of these vermin can reduce an entire village to

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gathering food for their "babies."

Changeling moth chrysalises are immobile and fairly easily dispatched despite their hard chitin. Their *charmed* caretakers defend them to the death, even turning on allies to protect the chrysalises. Encountering two enemy creatures cooperating to gather food may be a sign that changeling moths have spawned in an area. Conversely, otherwise-friendly creatures may demand travelers hand over food for their "baby" and attack those who refuse.

The changeling moth's chrysalis phase is mercifully short, lasting only 3d6 days. On the final day, the adult moth emerges from its chrysalis, and the *mass charm* effect fades in 1d3 hours. Slaves of the chrysalis who don't exhaust their food supply feeding the chrysalis may well survive. The adult moth soon produces more caterpillars, and the whole cycle begins anew.

Adult Changeling Moth (CR 0) Adult moths are size Medium, have AC 12, 6 hp, Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft. (average), and have no attacks.

Changeling Moth Caterpillar (CR 0) Caterpillars are size Tiny, have AC 12, 2 hp, Speed 5 ft., Climb 5 ft. (cannot be tripped), and have no attacks.

Adventure Hook: A young boy begs the approaching party for food on the outskirts of what looks like a prosperous farming village. If asked about the village's conditions, he replies they haven't had enough food to go around since the "new baby" arrived.

Naked Mole Rat, Dire CR 1/3

This earless, eyeless rodent has pallid, deeply wrinkled flesh and a wicked set of incisors.

XP 135

N Small animal

Init +1, **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., scent, tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size)

hp 4 (1d8)

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

Defensive Abilities ferocity

Weakness vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 5 ft.

Melee bite +1 (1d4 plus grab if opponent is flanked)

Special Attacks hive tactics

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +0; **CMB** -1 (+3 grapple), **CMD** 10 (+14 vs. trip)

Feats Weapon Finesse

Skills Perception +9, Stealth +5; Racial Modifier +4 to Perception when using blindsight

SQ hive organization

ECOLOGY

Environment warm plains

Organization foragers (2-8) or warren (15-40)

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hive Tactics (Ex) If two or more mole rats flank an enemy, on a successful bite attack, any of them may initiate a grapple as if they had the grab ability, ignoring the usual size restrictions. If successful, all mole rats flanking the target are considered part of the grapple and may make CMB checks to deal damage as a standard action. If the target breaks the grapple against one flanking mole rat, it breaks the grapple against all of them.

Hive Organization (Ex) Mole rats identify one another by scent and rapidly swarm when intruders invade their warrens. However, if the queen of a mole rat warren is slain, all the remaining mole rats become passive in 1d6 rounds. They defend themselves if attacked, but they otherwise flee for 1d12 days, by which point one of the females will have established dominance, becoming the new queen.

Common naked mole rats burrow beneath tropical savannahs and, while strange to look upon, are harmless vegetarians. Their larger kin, however, are voracious omnivores that occasionally swarm from their warrens to attack livestock and even people to satisfy their hunger. They're particularly dangerous during droughts or other situations when food is scarce.

Mole rats are physiologically mammals, but they behave like hive insects. Most warren mole rats are neuter workers that feed and protect their queen and her immature pups. Their warrens sprawl over wide areas with multiple levels and many chambers devoted to food storage, raising young, and defecating—much like an insect colony. Warrens rarely run deeper than 100 ft. below ground, as most of their food comes from the surface or just beneath it. When not foraging or tending young, workers expand their tunnel system,



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which sometimes leads to clashes with other subterranean species.

Mole rats show a single-minded viciousness when guarding their queen. They surround enemies and bear them to the ground before biting them repeatedly. Mole rats' wrinkled hides are curiously insensitive to pain, allowing them to fight on despite terrible wounds. Unlike other mammals, they lack the ability to regulate their body temperature efficiently, so they are vulnerable to cold attacks.

Breeding Males (+1 CR) A warren also contains 1d4 breeding males with the advanced template.

Queen (+1 CR) A warren contains one queen with the giant template.

Adventure Hook: An outlying hamlet complains of wrinkled beasts attacking at night, dragging livestock into their underground burrows. Are they simply hungry animals, or has some force stirred them to attack?

Cephalic Parasite CR 3

This unfortunate person's eyes and mouth have been sewn shut, but sprouting from the neck is a stubby, gray-complexioned second head, its rudimentary features twisted in an evil leer.

XP 800

CE Medium aberration

Init +1, **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +10

Aura frightful presence (DC 13, 60 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +4 armor)

hp 30 (4d8+12)

Fort +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 1 slam +4 (1d8+1), 1 ovipositor +4 (1d4+2 plus inject spawn)

Special Attacks inject spawn

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 13, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4 (+6 grapple), **CMD** 15 (+17 vs. grapple)

Feats Improved Grapple, Weapon Focus (ovipositor)

Skills Escape Artist +7, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Perception +10, Stealth +8

Languages Aklo, Common, Undercommon

ECOLOGY

Environment Any

Organization solitary or cyst (3-12)

Treasure NPC gear (chain shirt)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Inject Spawn (Ex) The cephalic parasite's host develops a sharp, snaky, abdominal ovipositor that can strike at creatures in the same square. Humanoid or monstrous humanoid targets struck by the ovipositor must make a DC 14 Fort save. Failure indicates the parasite has injected one of its young into the victim, afflicting it with a cephalic parasite infestation.

Cephalic Parasite Infestation (Ex) Disease—ovipositor; save Fort DC 14, onset 1 day, frequency 1/day for 1d12 days, effect 1d3 Cha damage and second head growth, cure two consecutive saves. If the victim reaches 0 Cha or 1d12 days elapse without the victim succeeding on two Fort saves, the second head assumes control of the body from the victim's neck down.

Thought to be mutated cousins of doppelgangers, cephalic parasites reproduce by depositing their young within humanoids and monstrous humanoids. As they mature, these new parasites sprout from their hosts as malicious, rough-featured second heads. Once in control, cephalic parasites are cruel and hedonistic, dividing their time between enjoying whatever depraved pleasures their bodies afford them and attempting to infest more hosts. Cephalic parasites occasionally target a community's elite and then demand obeisance from the rest, keeping their new chattel in line with the threat of being made into hosts.

An afflicted person develops a small lump on the neck or shoulder, which rapidly grows into a second head. The new head is sentient and takes control of the body, leaving the original head a helpless organ of the parasite. Usually the parasitic head will sew shut the original's eyes and mouth to prevent unwanted visual feedback, wailing, biting, and the like. It never kills its host, however, as it can neither hear nor control the body's autonomous processes on its own.

Before a cephalic parasite infestation runs its course, a *remove disease* spell or a series of successful cure saves kills the growing head, causing it to rapidly shrivel and fall off. Once the head assumes control, though, the only way to save the person is to deal enough nonlethal damage to take down the body and then sever the parasitic head. Severing the head takes 3 rounds and deals 1d8 hp damage to the host each round. Spellcasters attempting to keep the host alive with healing magic must make a DC 10 Heal check to avoid accidentally healing the parasite (and then having to start the whole gruesome process over again).

Adventure Hook: An outlying market town has recently been by slavers from a normally peaceful tribe dwelling in the nearby wilderness. The raiders seem to fight halfheartedly, though, and a dying raider's ravings about "the chieftain's goiter" only add to the mystery.

Pishtaco CR 6

This haggard man has a skin tone and overall look very different from the people of these mountains, and his tattered alchemist's coat is of an antique cut.

XP 2,400

CE Medium undead

Init +3, **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+2 deflection, +4 natural, +1 shield, +3 Dex)

hp 76 (9d8+36)

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2; DR 5/slashing and magic; evasion (Ex), **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee two *+1 short swords* +8/+8 (1d6+1/19-20)

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

Special Attacks sneak attack (+5d6)

Spell-like Abilities (CL 9th)

3/day—*disguise self*, *sleep* (DC 15)

1/day—*deep slumber* (DC 17), *obscuring mist*, *suggestion* (DC 16)

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +6; **CMB** + 6, **CMD** 19

Feats Deceitful, Nimble Moves, Two-

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Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse
Skills Bluff +13, Craft (Alchemy, Cooking, or Gunsmithing) +7, Disguise +12, Knowledge (arcane) +14, Knowledge (religions) +14, Perception +10, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +11, Stealth +12
SQ false wholesomeness, mountebank potions

ECOLOGY

Environment cold mountains
Organization solitary
Treasure NPC gear (*ring of protection +2*, two *+1 short swords*)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

False Wholesomeness (Su) A pishtaco that has fed on human fat within the last week does not register when in the area of effect of *detect evil* or *detect undead* spells.
Mountebank Potions (Su) Pishtacos seek to blend in, portraying themselves as food sellers or physicians. In the former guise, they sell greasy, delicious street food. In the latter, they peddle false healing potions made from rendered human fat. These oily brews appear to all inspection as *potions of cure light wounds* or *cure moderate wounds*, but the hit points they grant are temporary, lasting only 1d12 hours.

The unquiet souls of conquerors who commit atrocities against native people sometimes give rise to pishtacos, undead who spirit away locals and butcher them for their organs and fat.

Pishtacos appear in mountainous regions where the indigenous people value body fat as a sign of health and vitality. Perhaps the beliefs of the locals give shape to their fears, or perhaps the perverse cruelty of the pishtacos themselves gives impetus to their acts of butchery. Whatever the case, fear of them makes locals in regions where they hunt very suspicious of outlanders.

Pishtacos appear in many guises, but they're always gaunt and always appear as foreigners to the region in which they're found. They may lair in the wilderness near indigenous settlements, but whenever possible, they attempt to blend in at caravansaries, trading posts, market towns, and other places where foreigners brush elbows with locals. If lairing in a settled area, though, pishtacos prey exclusively on the locals unless they become truly desperate.

Pishtacos have no interest in fighting and avoid open combat, preferring to skulk in the shadows or hide behind hired human minions. If cornered, they fight viciously, expecting no quarter.

Pishtaco Alchemist: Some powerful and well-studied pishtacos actually have alchemist class levels in addition to their usual pishtaco powers. The ingredients for their infusions, however, are of questionable provenance.

Pishtaco Gunslinger: Other pishtacos may have gunslinger class levels. Where such pishtacos appear, natives will be highly suspicious of gunslingers or any character skilled with mechanical devices, for they believe (correctly) that gunslinger pishtacos maintain their weapons with oil rendered from human fat.

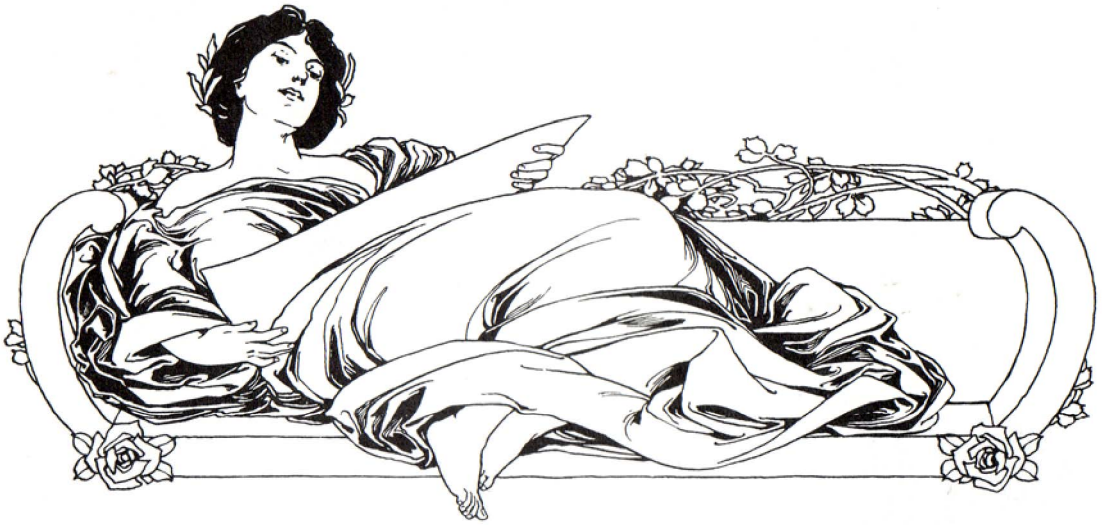


Adventure Hook: PCs are called upon to investigate a series of grisly murders in a small mountain village. The indigenous people, however, are curiously unwilling to cooperate with the investigation, and sometimes are openly hostile, especially if the party includes alchemists or gunslingers. Ω

Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151707)

The Power of the Game Master

by Monte Cook
Art by Fred H. Ball



Whether you call the person at the head of your game table the Game Master, the Dungeon Master, the Storyteller, the Keeper, or anything else, it's important to realize that it's that person's role in the game that represents the most striking difference between role playing games and other games. Sure, there are other differences too. But almost no other type of game has a role whose job it is to facilitate the game yet be a part of it. To referee the game, and still be a player. To know all the secrets, and yet still be surprised.

The GM is God

Although there are many issues involved with this unique role, I think the most important issue with having a GM in a game is how much power that person should have. When roleplaying games were born, those writing and playing the games almost immediately developed a "GM is god" mentality. What the GM says, goes. His word is law, and dictates the reality of the game world.

The idea wasn't some kind of power trip—at least, that wasn't the intention. Instead, it was to institute a sort of order. In a game played entirely within the imaginations of the players, all stretching the bounds of the game reality, someone has to say yes or no. And that person needs to be the one without an agenda, or at least, whose agenda was simply what was good for the game.

It's the benevolent dictator idea, at the scale of the kitchen table. Absolute power is fine if it's in the hands of someone who is absolutely invested in the good of those beneath him or her. Or in the case of an RPG, those playing the game. The idea, then, is that the GM provides the game in the form of setting and story, and the players take part in the game. The GM is a host of the game world as well as the authoritarian arbiter of the events that transpire there. A good GM in this role uses that power to ensure everyone has a great time, is empowered to do what they want within the context provided, and is thoroughly entertained.

One interesting thing to note is that the adherents of the GM-isgod philosophy can be old-school hack and slashers or they can be storytellers interested only in creating a fantasy epic with their friends. They can be so-called "sandbox" GMs, giving PCs full reign to go wherever they wish in a pre-set world or they can be plotline-driven, creating only the places and events that concern the action of some grand storyline the PCs are expected to follow.

GM is a Player

But some reject the idea of GM supremacy. The GM, they argue, is just another player at the table. The GM has a role to play, but then, so do all the other players, and none is more important than the other. In this view, the GM isn't the storyteller—the group is the collective storyteller.

I think this comes as a natural reaction to the "GM is god" mentality, particularly among those who have had the misfortune to play in a game where that philosophy led to abuse. Players can grow weary rather quickly of someone else pronouncing dictums regarding what they can and cannot do, and sometimes even how they should or should not play.

Ways to diminish the GM's power almost always mean putting more power into the hands of the other players. This power usually takes a narrative form. That is to say, the players are able to contribute in larger and larger ways to the events of the

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

story, beyond just the actions of their character (over which they have complete control). Some games or houserules include points, poker chips, or special cards that the players can use to manipulate the game world or the events as they transpire in the game. Others dispense with such mechanical formality and simply allow players to contribute to world building and plot control with the same "power" as the GM. Such games might be thought of as "everyone is the GM."

Group Dynamics

Like with so many things, there lies a spectrum in between these two extremes. While designing 3rd edition Dungeons & Dragons, for example, Skip Williams, Jonathan Tweet, and I wanted to keep the traditional paradigm of the GM being the in-charge figurehead, but we wanted the rules to be comprehensive enough to take some of the pressure off. Being "god" can be difficult if you don't have a lot of experience at it, and if there are rules for situations so that you don't have to make a lot of judgment calls, that can help.

In this case, one might argue that the GM has less power because the rules take some away. A player could, for example, tell the GM that he or she is wrong based on a rule in a rulebook. In such a case, who's right, the GM or the rules? (In 3rd edition, we had the infamous Rule Zero, which simply said "check with your Dungeon Master" to insure DM supremacy over the rules. This was removed for the 3.5 edition, and that one little thing changed the dynamic of the game.) It's something the rules rarely address.

In most cases this issue depends less on game system and more on group dynamics. Players must decide for themselves how they want to come down on this issue. The decision needs to be made as a group, really. Sometimes it happens organically—it just sort of works itself out and everyone's happy. Sometimes it requires an actual discussion that involves everyone.

Most groups probably come down somewhere in the middle of all of these issues. That middle being defined as:

- The rules are the framework everyone—GM and players—uses as a baseline.
- Players can contribute to the flow of events in the game and sometimes even the setting, as it pertains to their individual characters.
- The GM has the authority to override either of these things in the name of fun, gameplay, or the story.

The interesting thing is that the authority in #3 is held by the GM, but it is granted by the other players and can be taken away if the need ever arises. This then, becomes an inherent system of checks and balances to keep the GM from using the power for anything other than the greater good, as seen by the entire group. The game group polices itself. Ω

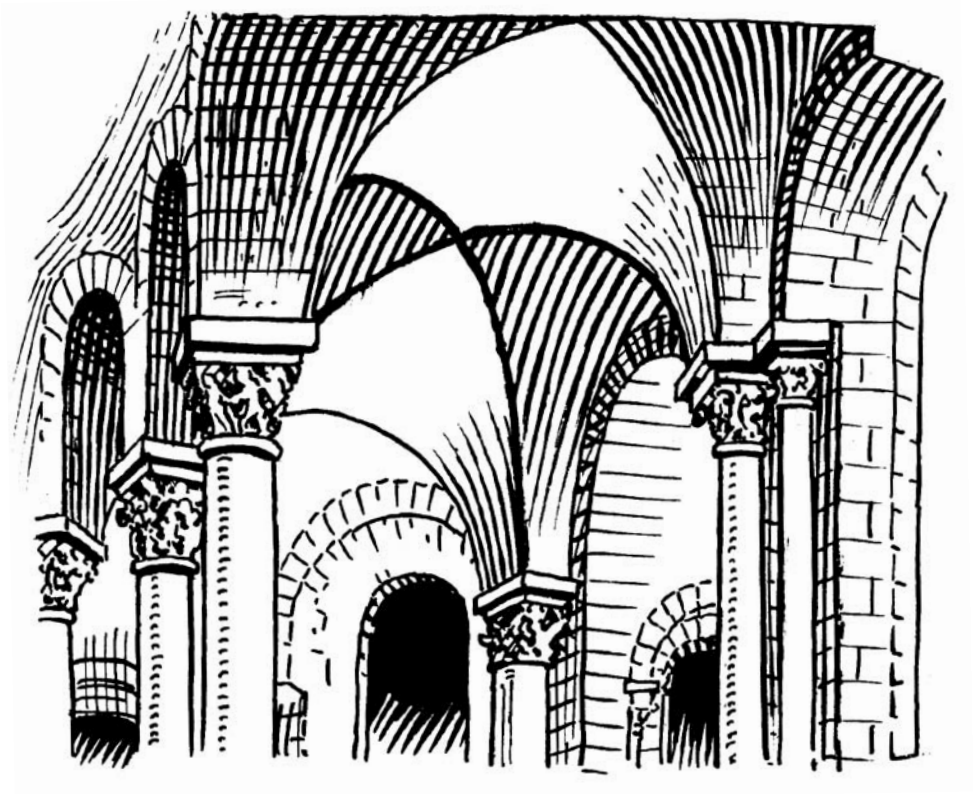


Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151707-9)

Captured in the Cartways

An Adventure for 5th-level Pathfinder RPG Characters

By Christina Stiles
Cartography by Sean Macdonald



While exploring Zobeck's dangerous Cartways, the PCs find themselves surrounded by elements of Vralgor Szarn's gang (see the *Zobeck Gazetteer* or *Kobold Quarterly* issue #4), led by the barghests Zelaf and Holst. If the PCs fight, more and more of Szarn's forces arrive, making surrender the best option. Smart characters will attempt to bargain for their freedom, and Zelaf and Holst can be swayed for a price. They want the Cartways cleared of an unusual interloper—a chain-wielding being known as LazMorta. Vralgor Szarn had ordered them to remove LazMorta, but they'd prefer expendables like the PCs handle it instead.

Presenting the creature's head to the barghests proves the PCs succeeded, and success secures their freedom.

Adventure Hooks

The PCs might be in the Cartways for any of the following reasons:

- Seeking an entrance to the kobold city of Lillefor
- Assassinating or spying on rival gang members
- Infiltrating a nobleman's vault (as per the *Streets of Zobeck's* "The Fish and the Rose" heist adventure)

If used with "The Fish and the Rose" adventure, the gang surrounds the PCs after they clear Greymark's chasm with the prized painting in hand. The barghests recognize the painting but don't want it (they think it's cursed). They will hold onto it while the PCs complete the mission, however. Otherwise, they take something valuable from each PC for insurance.

Into the Gang's Lair

The barghests lead the PCs to an area of the Cartways where a passage descends to the former lair of their barghest ally, Gozran (see map). Having never visited the abode, they have no basic map or idea of what the PCs might encounter within. They have heard the kobolds collected a lot of trash for their cavern, and that others continue to dump it there, but they have no idea why.

Also, no one has seen Gozran since LazMorta's attack over a week ago. Zelaf and Holst feign concern for him but secretly hope he's dead.

Note: The lair's rooms are unlit, so the PCs will need a light source. PCs coming within 30 ft. of area 1 smell the trash heap's horrid stench and must make DC 15 Fortitude saves every round they remain within 30 ft. of its entrance or exit. A character who fails the saving throw is sickened for 1d6 rounds.

The kobolds and their barghest leader are immune to the smell. They

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

found it a great deterrent, along with the area's otyugh residents, to trespassers—at least until LazMorta came along.

1. Kalman's Glorious Heap of Trash (CR 6; XP 2,400)

A kobold engineer named Kalman decided the gang's lair needed that extra oomph to differentiate it from the other, unimaginative hideouts he'd encountered. With Gozran's blessing, he convinced his kobold crew to gather the largest pile of refuse the Cartways had ever seen. The industrious kobolds took great pride in their work, canvassing the Cartways and the streets above for discarded treasures of waste, including mountains of dead rats and other vermin.

The result is a thing of beauty, in kobold eyes. Its splendor covers the entire width of the vast chamber at kobold-height, and only a small trail meanders through it to the cavern beyond. Rats (some of which are the Mouse King's spies) and bugs scurry within the trash pile.

Kalman enticed an otyugh pair to relocate to this fine cesspool by promising food and furnishings (meaning more trash than the creatures could eat) if they helped protect the lair. LazMorta bypassed the otyughs with her *wings of flying* when she took the gang's lair, but she brings the otyughs a steady supply of food, so they willingly work for her now. The Cartways' other residents throw their trash in the cavern entrance, maintaining the heap's glory, so all is good in the otyughs' world.

Otyughs (2), hp 39 (*Bestiary 1*)

Tactics: Like many couples, the otyughs find residing on separate ends of their home keeps their relationship happy and intact.

The female stays buried near the cavern's left center, while her mate resides near the entrance to area 2, ensuring no one gets past him. The female is less alert, sleeping often since she's with child (make her Perception +7 to his +9).

The male watches the path with an eye stalk hidden beneath the refuse (spotting it requires a DC 25 Perception check). The otyughs will let trespassers past the female and into the center of the room to gain surprise before attacking.

Treasure: If the PCs want to dig through the refuse, it takes 1d4 hours and a DC 30 Perception check to locate 36 gp, 73 sp, 38 cp, and a *wand of magic missile* (6 charges).

Dramatis Personae

Vralgor Szarn and His Gang

Vralgor Szarn (see *Zobeck Gazetteer* or *Kobold Quarterly* issue #2) is an advanced greater barghest rogue who has grown fat and powerful in the tunnels below Zobeck. He magically controls Ersebet Cemilla, guildmaster of a thieves' guild above, whose rogues he uses as a spy network. He has a gang of barghests, kobolds, and goblins in the Cartways who ruthlessly hunt those threatening his power or trespassing into his realm. Vralgor occasionally devours lesser barghests with designs on usurping his leadership. Zelaf and Holst may become his next meal.

Zelaf and Holst

Zelaf and Holst consider themselves wily and are indeed slightly smarter than their kin. They lead a group of 20 kobolds. Each barghest wants to seize Vralgor's position, but they currently lack the power to eliminate him; therefore, they seek their master's favor while awaiting their opportunity.

Gaining Vralgor's favor includes capturing useful individuals—like the PCs—who could be pressed into the gang or serve in some other way. When their master ordered them to eliminate LazMorta after she massacred his minions and seized their lair as her own, they immediately began searching for a way to avoid the mission. The two are reluctant to tussle with the strange, scarred, chain-covered woman, as they do not completely understand her true nature or abilities—other than that she has proven extremely dangerous. Therefore, finding subcontractors to take on the job seems like an excellent idea, and the PCs nicely fill the bill.

If pressed for more information, the barghests admit they know little about LazMorta. According to two kobolds who fled the massacre and have since gone aboveground, she is one of the strangest things they've encountered, even in the Cartways.

Barghests, hp 45 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 1*)

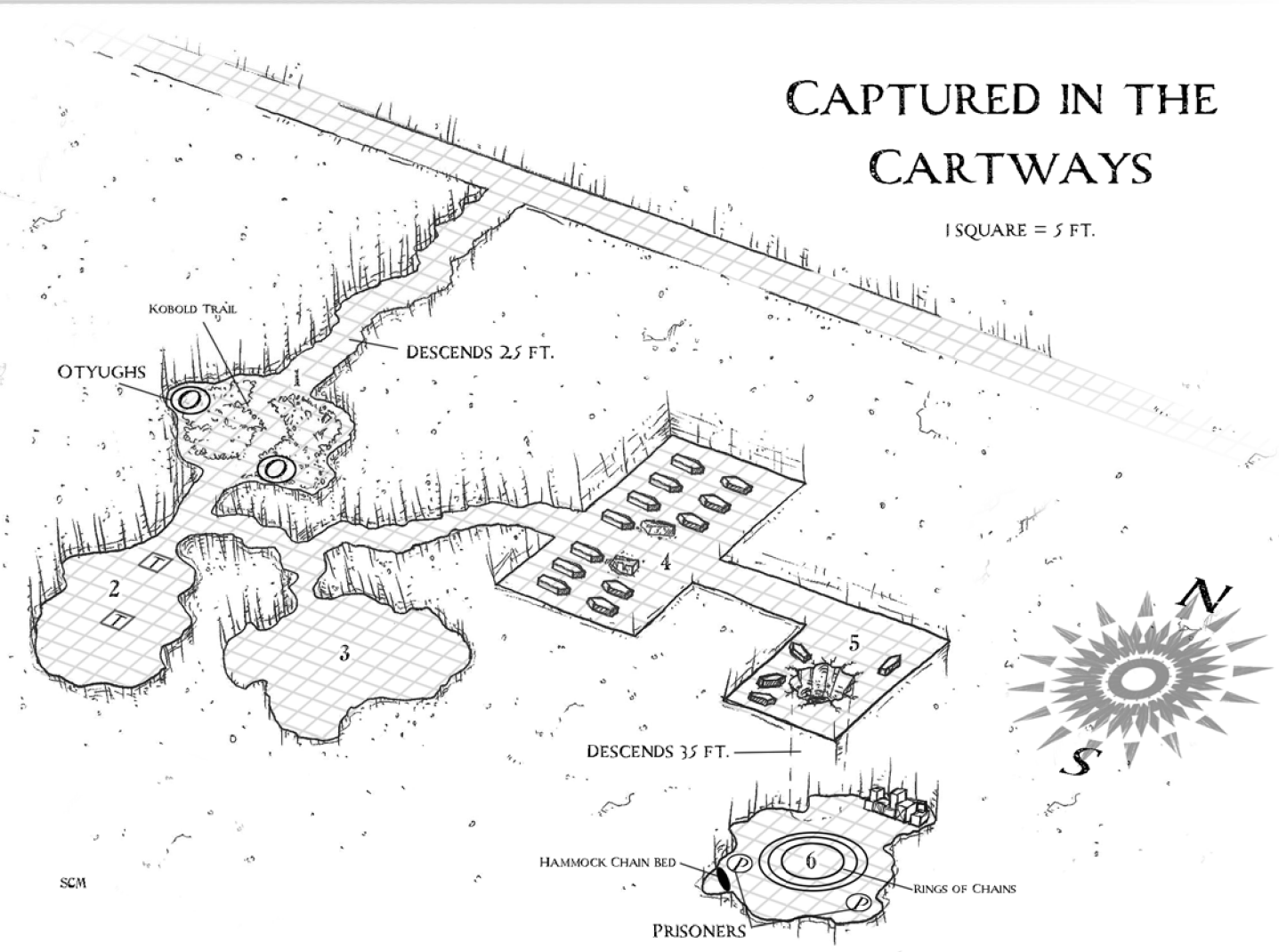
LazMorta

The newest denizen in Szarn's territory, the kyton LazMorta now resides in the seized gang lair, part of which is a forgotten crypt. She has already redecorated her chosen cavern with veils of chains and a few hanging kobolds and their barghest leader, and they all receive her sadistic attentions daily. To her, they are like joyful bric-a-brac that gives her new abode that homey feel.

2. Kobold Cavern (CR 3)

The bodies of over 13 kobolds lie throughout this debris- and pallet-filled cavern. LazMorta caught many of them asleep and strangled them with her silent chains before they could startle the others. The smell here is hideous, but it does not compare to the trash heap's stench, so the PCs barely notice. Vermin scamper about the cavern (including LazMorta's rat familiar Xorx, who informs her of any intruders) and feed on the kobolds' remains. LazMorta allows the kobolds to rot here, occasionally gathering one to throw to the otyughs.

Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151703)



On a DC 20 Heal check, PCs find a body intact enough to note that strangulation caused its death. The PCs can also find various digging tools strewn throughout the cavern and 16 small sleeping pallets.

Traps: Lest the PCs forget how much kobolds love their traps, they encounter one just a few feet into the cavern, and another lies between the sleeping pallets in the room's center. Five kobolds have trapped their treasure hidey-holes with poisoned dart traps, so searching for loot can be dangerous. LazMorta flies into the room for body pick-ups for the otyughs, as she knows the kobolds' reputation for traps.

Treasure: Searching reveals small holes under the bedding, each of which contains 4d6 gp. Five random holes are trapped with dart traps.

Camouflaged Pit Trap **CR3**

Type: mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 20
Trigger: location; **Reset** manual
Effect: 30-ft. deep pit (3d6 falling damage); DC 20 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all target in a 10-ft.-square area)

Poisoned Dart Trap **CR1**

Type: mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20
Trigger: Touch; **Reset** none
Effect: Atk +10 ranged (1d3 plus greenblood oil)

3. Gozran's Cavern (CR 3; XP 800)

Dried blood stains this cavern's floor, the seven sleeping pallets, and the occasional rock lying in the chamber. Apparently, a more heated battle took place in this cavern, though only one kobold body is present. Rats have not yet gotten to it, but the maggots have. On a Heal DC 25 Check, the PCs discern something barbed cut into the creature, ripping flesh out with its withdrawal.

Gozran shared this area with his six favored kobolds, including Kalman. LazMorta imprisoned Gozran and three of the kobolds below, hanging them from chains and torturing them. She fed the fifth kobold—who was not quite dead yet—to the otyughs. The sixth kobold and one from area 2 have risen as wraiths and now reside in area 4.

Treasure: The PCs find five pouches beneath the kobolds' bedding, each containing 7d6 gp in gems

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

and assorted coins. The kobolds also have various broken ceramic treasures (statuettes and pieces of pottery adored for their beautiful colors) wrapped in cloth near their beds. Hidden beneath a rock in the cavern (DC 30 Perception to locate) is Gozran's treasure: a large sack containing 657 gp in coin and gems.

4. Crypt (CR 5; XP 1,600)

Human-sized sarcophagi fill this room. Their lids have been unlocked or smashed open. The kobolds found a few baubles hidden within them many years ago, but not much else. Two sarcophagi lie crushed against others, a testament to Gozran's temper at his initial inability to unlock them.

Creatures: Two Small-sized wights now haunt the crypt (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 1*).

Development: The wights currently fear LazMorta and hide whenever she appears. She knows about them but has been too busy with her prisoners to subjugate them to her will.

Treasure: One kobold still has a pouch containing 7d6 in coin and gems and wears a *cloak of the rat* (new magical item, described below).

5. Crypt Extension and Pit (CR 0)

This room contains many human-sized sarcophagi, but its most unusual feature is the odd-shaped pit in the middle of the floor. Shining a light into the hole reveals that the wide opening tapers down to a 10-ft.-wide shaft, extending some 35 ft. before ending in a hole whose bottom lies another 20 ft. below.

With a DC 35 Perception check, a PC can hear a tinkling metallic noise (chains) or a low moan (one of the prisoners), but nothing in the chamber below can be seen. Spikes with circular eyelets have been driven into the crypt room's floor; the kobolds tied ropes through the holes to descend below to store their stolen goods. LazMorta removed the ropes. LazMorta cast *alarm* at the shaft's entrance to mentally alert her to intruders.

There is nothing of value in the room.

6. LazMorta's Chamber of Chains (CR 9; XP 6,400)

Descending the shaft, the PCs find themselves in the midst of a circular veil of chains, which obscures their view into the chamber (-10 to visual Perception checks). Pulling a section aside reveals another ring of chains hangs further inwards.

With a hearing-based DC 15 Perception check, the party can hear low moaning from the western side of the room (from Gozran). LazMorta is on the eastern side observing her chained kobolds to gauge how much more torture they can withstand today.

LazMorta **CR 9**

XP 6,400
Female kyton illusionist 6
LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful)
Init +9; **Senses** darkvision (60 feet); Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +4 natural)
hp 121 (8d10+6d6+56); Regeneration 2 (good weapons and spells, silver weapons)
Fort +14, **Ref** +13, **Will** +8
DR 5/good or silver; **Immune** cold; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee *+1 chains of silence* x4 (kyton) +18 x4 (2d4+4/20/x2)
Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; Concentration +11)
3/day—*blinding ray*
Illusionist Spells Prepared (CL 6th, 16 melee touch, 16 ranged touch; Concentration +11):
3rd—*dispel magic*, *haste*, *major image*
2nd—*alarm*, *mirror image* (DC 15), *invisibility* x2
1st—*color spray* (DC 14), *hypnotism* (DC 14), *magic missile*, *silent image* (DC 14), *ventriloquism* (DC 14)
0—(at will) *daze* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *disrupt undead*
Opposition Schools Divination, Necromancy

TACTICS

Before Combat Alerted to intruders via her *alarm* spell or rat familiar, LazMorta casts a *major image* of herself (with her back to the entering PCs) torturing a chained barghest inside the second chain veil. LazMorta then casts *invisibility* and *mirror image* before flying to the top of the chamber to await the PCs.
During Combat LazMorta casts *haste* when the party attacks her image and initially attacks any PCs within 20 feet using chains from the veils. She may also attack with her silent chains.
Morale If reduced to 20 hp or fewer, LazMorta flies up the pit shaft to area 5 and casts *invisibility*, escaping the lair; she recruits 3-5 other kytons (a link) and later tracks down the PCs to take as prisoners for her enjoyment.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 21, **Con** 18, **Int** 13, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10
Base Atk +11; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 29
Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Critical Focus, Empower Spell, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (chains)
Skills Acrobatics +14, Climb +14, Craft (blacksmith) +11, Escape Artist +14, Heal +2, Intimidate +12, Perception +14, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +11, Survival +2
Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Infernal
SQ arcane bond (familiar rat, "Xorx"), blinding ray (3/day) (Sp), chain armor (Ex), dancing chains (DC 15) (Su), Extended Illusions (+2r) (Su), Unnerving Gaze (DC 15) (Su)
Combat Gear *+1 chains of silence* (x4); **Other Gear** *wings of flying*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blinding Ray (Sp) This is a 30-ft. ranged touch attack usable up to 3 times per day that blinds/dazzles for 1 round.
Chain Armor (Ex) The chains that adorn a kyton grant it a +4 armor bonus but are not treated as armor for the purpose of arcane spell failure, armor check penalties, maximum Dexterity, weight, or proficiency.
Dancing Chains (Su) A kyton can control up to four chains within 20 ft. as a standard action, making the chains dance or move as it wishes. In addition, a kyton can increase these chains' length by up to 15 ft. and cause them to sprout razor-edged barbs. These chains attack as effectively as the kyton itself. If a chain is in another creature's possession, the creature can attempt a DC 15 Will save to

Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151703)

Cloak of the Rat

Aura moderate transmutation; **CL** 5th
Slot shoulders; **Price** 12,400; **Wt** 1lb.

DESCRIPTION

This gray garment bestows a +5 competence bonus on Perception checks. Once per day, the wearer can contort his body to shimmy through small spaces (if not wearing metal armor) normally accessible only by creatures one category smaller than himself (as per *alter self*) or to escape bonds. Also, once per day, the wearer may transform himself and his carried or worn possessions into a dire rat (as per *beast shape I*).

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Wondrous Item, 5 ranks in Perception, *alter self*, *beast shape I*; Cost 6,200 gp

break the kyton's power over that chain. If the save succeeds, the kyton cannot attempt to control that particular chain again for 24 hours or until the chain leaves the creature's possession. A kyton can climb chains it controls at its normal speed without making Climb checks. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Extended Illusions (Su) LazMorta can increase the duration of all her illusion spells by 3 rounds.

Unnerving Gaze (Su) Range 30 ft., DC 15 Will negates. A kyton can make its face resemble one of an opponent's departed loved ones or bitter enemies. Those who fail their saves become shaken for 1d3 rounds. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based

Development: If LazMorta escapes, she returns later to gather a kyton link and seeks out the PCs for revenge.

Treasure: An unlocked chest containing 550 gp rests beneath her hammock. Twenty stolen crates of various foodstuffs sit along the northeastern wall (value 350 gp total).

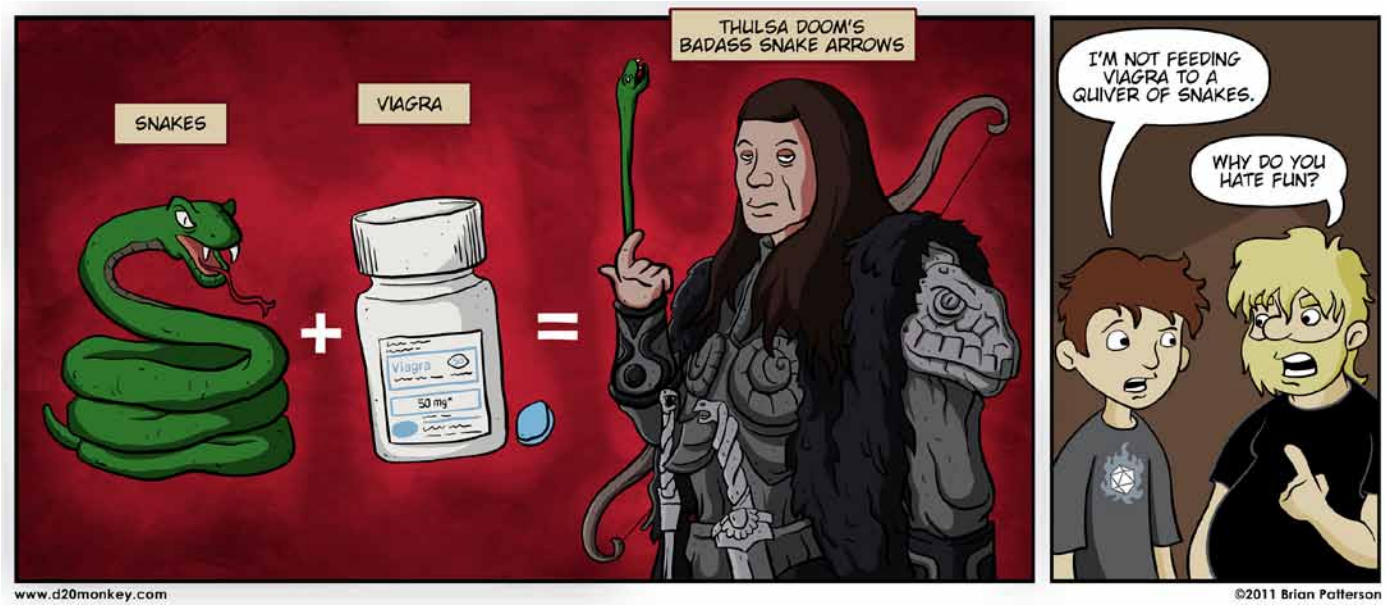
Prisoners: Gozran (5 hp), in goblin form, hangs on the western side of the room. Two barbs pierce through his outstretched arms, and his shoulders are dislocated. The kobolds—Kalman (1 hp), Croxrok (3 hp), and Tellick (4 hp)—form a triangular, rotating mobile above LazMorta's chain-hammock bed in the eastern side of the room. Kalman rests at the top of the triangle; chains wrap around his torso and throat, and barbs have ripped his body.

If the PCs free the prisoners, they all need healing. Saving them allows the PCs to call in a future favor from the group. Gozran has a decade of Cartways knowledge in his head, making him a potentially valuable contact for the PCs.

Concluding the Adventure

As stated above, the PCs must return LazMorta's head to the barghests, who will have minions watching for their return in the Cartways, to prove they succeeded in this task. Success garners their freedom, though the barghests do seem reluctant to let them go. The pair does relieve them of any treasure they gained during the adventure, but they return the "Fish and the Rose" painting if they've been holding it hostage (per the suggested connection to the Streets of Zobeck adventure). Having fought hard for these rewards should make the PCs want to return to get their revenge. Note that the Zelaf and Holst do not promise the PCs any future protection should the group decide to return to the Cartways. However, the barghests may decide the PCs could be useful in eventually helping them rid the tunnels of their boss, thereby improving their lot. Ω

d20 Monkey



Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)



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Putting the Band Back Together

By Stefen Styrsky
Art by Jeff Preston

Jake: We're putting the band back together.

Elwood: We're on a mission from God.
—The Blues Brothers

Hale and hearty throughout their careers—that is how we imagine PCs. No matter how long a character adventures or how many levels she attains, she never seems to age beyond young adult. Because players and many GMs neglect the age charts even more than the encumbrance tables, some games miss out on tremendous potential entertainment. What follows are a few ideas to encourage interest in playing an "over the hill" party.

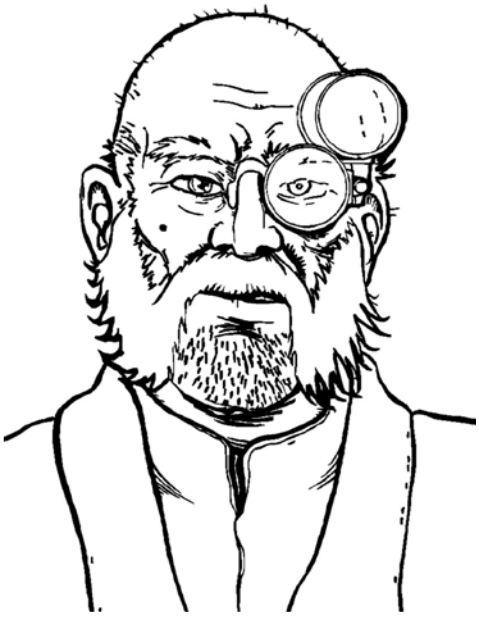
This article uses a framing device called "putting the band back together." Literature and popular entertainment have covered this story many times. Examples run from the aforementioned *Blues Brothers* to Dumas' sequel to the *Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years After*; from Stephen King's *IT* to Warren Ellis's and Cully Hamner's comic book *R.E.D*; and the gritty, intense fantasy novel, *The Steel Remains*, by Richard K. Morgan.

This scenario starts with the party members retired from a career of adventure. They have defeated the Dark Lord or helped install the Good King and gone their separate ways. Now married with families, occupied with a business, or just bored and whiling away the years, the PCs must reunite for another mission. Maybe the enemy they believed dead actually lives, or his henchmen are taking revenge after decades of lying low.

A game like this requires a bit of discussion to ensure everyone understands the set-up. It's assumed the PCs share a history but are now dispersed or alienated from each other. Players should determine what happened to their characters in the intervening years and their current attitudes about the good old days. They might fondly remember the past, dwell on age-old mistakes, or seek to atone for misdeeds. They might have grudges, old flames, or old feuds.

You can get things rolling a number of ways. One PC might stumble upon a new menace—maybe an assassin hired to kill him bears the mark of the party's former nemesis—and he has to warn his old friends about the resurgent threat. A young relative might present a PC with a problem related to his former exploits. The children of a beloved NPC might contact the characters for help or for revenge. To give the game more emotional resonance, ideally the players can use stats for characters who previously adventured together.

The first few adventures are not the usual get-to-know-you sorts—in this case, four strangers do not meet in a bar for the first time. Instead, the beginning adventure consists of the PCs trying to reconnect. Along the way, they must evade or defeat minions of their old (or new) foe, and face dangers that have arisen since they retired. GMs have the opportunity here to reuse old adventures and locations. Discovering what has and what hasn't changed becomes part of the fun for the players.



For example, the fighter and cleric must reach their old monk friend—now living as a mountain hermit—before a dragon sent by their old foe gets to him. The fastest route snakes through a dungeon underneath the peaks, which the PCs cleared out years ago. It hasn't stayed empty, of course, and while much of the place remains familiar, new denizens have arrived and dug new tunnels and set different traps.

If the PCs are older, it's logical that any former enemies are also a bit longer in the tooth. Perhaps their nemesis has aged poorly and lingers in a truly decrepit state. Alternatively, thoughts of revenge may have motivated their former opponent to stay fit, whereas the PCs have let themselves go. Their enemy's henchmen may also be older. For example, Dox, the scary ogre-barbarian who once regularly trounced the party's fighter, might struggle to maintain his dignity by acting as tough as he used to be but betray his frailer state through a persistent cough or bad back.

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

By definition, this sort of game demands the PCs be middle aged or older. This means they incur penalties to some characteristics and bonuses to others. Fighters, rogues, and those relying on physical abilities tend to wear out with age, while clerics and wizards improve with time. Monks and druids might end up as the party's most powerful members.

The GM must account for this when creating encounters. He should also keep the players' minds off ability penalties by emphasizing roleplaying and giving the PCs more chances to use hard-earned life experience: clues and Knowledge rolls should be more important than usual. He should also emphasize the nostalgia factor, allowing everyone can relive their glory days.

New Feats

"Though much is taken, much abides."
—Tennyson

The following feats require a character to be middle age or older. To compensate for penalties to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution, the GM might award these bonus feats.

A Lifetime of Memories

You never forget.
Prerequisite: Middle age or older
Benefit: You gain a +4 competence bonus to all Knowledge skills, and you can make such checks untrained.

Battle Scars

After a lifetime of wounds, your skin has become rigid and tough.
Prerequisite: Middle age or older
Benefit: You gain DR 1/–. This stacks with other DR/– you possess.

Constancy of Age

You are dependable.
Prerequisite: Middle age or older
Benefit: Whenever you roll a 1 or a 20 on a d20, treat the result as an 11.

Fit as a Fiddle

Through luck or perseverance, you haven't aged as much as your years should indicate.
Prerequisite: Middle age or older
Benefit: Choose one physical ability score: Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity. You suffer no further age-related penalties to this characteristic. If you choose this feat when you enter middle age, you never take age-related penalties to this ability score. You cannot alter this choice once it is made. Spells or effects imposing penalties due to aging still apply.
Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new physical characteristic.

Honed Skill

A lifetime of practice has made you better than anyone.
Prerequisite: Middle age or older
Benefit: Choose one class skill. Your ranks in that skill can exceed your character level +3.

Love of Life

You persevere through sheer force of personality.
Prerequisite: Middle age or older
Benefit: You may use your Charisma modifier instead of your Constitution modifier when calculating bonus hit points gained at each new level. This applies only to Hit Dice gained when you are middle age or older.

Of Equal Temper (Combat, Teamwork)

You and your comrades work well together.
Prerequisite: Middle age or older
Benefit: Whenever you use a teamwork feat to grant an ally a bonus on a check or d20 roll, increase the bonus by +2.
Special: This is a combat feat and can be selected as a fighter bonus feat.

Ornery

Old age has made you bitter and spiteful. Others better watch out.
Prerequisite: Middle age or older
Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on checks to resist attempts to Intimidate you. When an opponent fails to Intimidate you, he becomes shaken for 1d4+1 rounds.

Still Got It

Prerequisite: Middle age or older
Benefit: Choose one physical ability score: Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity. For a number of rounds per day equal to your character level, you lose all age-related penalties to this characteristic. These rounds need not be consecutive.
Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new physical characteristic.

Venerable

Your age garners you respect.
Prerequisite: Middle age or older
Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks against intelligent creatures at least one age category younger than you. For each age category younger than you, the bonus increases by an additional +2.

Withered

You are so old you appear to be a walking corpse.
Prerequisite: Old age or older
Benefit: You are *invisible,* as the spell, to unintelligent undead. Intelligent undead gain a Will save (DC 10+ 1/2 your character level + Charisma modifier) to negate this effect.

The Young Guy

What if one player doesn't want to run an older PC? Then let him play the child or younger relative of an original teammate. Sometimes a companion succumbs to the ravages of intervening years, or the bad guy gets to him before his friends. You can use death or murder to explain a PC's absence—possibly even using revenge for the latter as the campaign's motivation—and as a straightforward way to integrate a younger character into the storyline. Having the young PC be the reincarnated soul of a dead character can also work well.

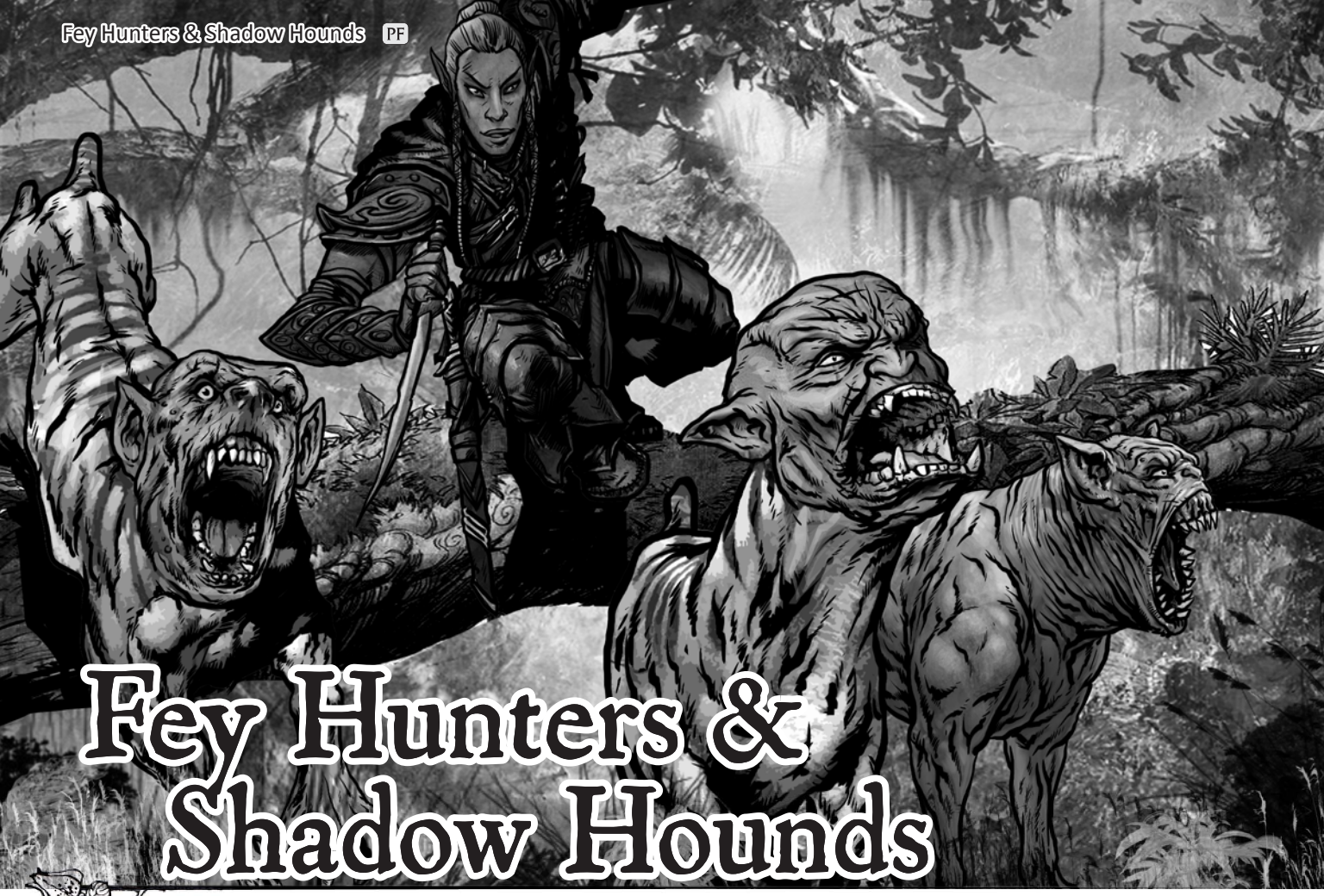
New Simple Template: Wizened Creature (CR -1)

Creatures with this template are older specimens of the base creature.

Quick Rules: +2 to all Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based rolls, -2 to all other rolls, -2 hp/HD.

Rebuild Rules: Ability Scores -4 Strength, -4 Constitution, +4 bonus to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. Ω

Eric Lindahl [Order - 5151707]



Fey Hunters & Shadow Hounds

Hunting PCs in the Margreve and the Shadow Plane

By Christopher Bodan
Art by Rick Hershey

Each summer, a few scions of Zobeck's wealthy families hire guides and ride into the outer edges of the shadowed Margreve woods. With the warm sun riding high, a band of laughing companions hunts the stag or hart, the boar, or more rarified game.

Sometimes, they stay too long or stray too far, and the forest's paths grow more twisted, its shadows even deeper, and its sounds increasingly ominous. The beasts they hunt flee, but not from them. The lucky few discover before it's too late that, for all their skill and prowess, they have become the prey.

Sometimes, a few of them survive.

Sometimes.

In the Margreve...

The shadow fey use the Margreve as their private hunting preserve. The thrill of the chase and kill quickens them as few other pastimes can, and they chase down forest beasts with an enthusiasm no other hunter could match. But no beast, however powerful, provides the joy of hunting intelligent prey.

Most mortals in the Margreve escape the shadow fey's notice. The forest is vast, the hunters and potential prey relatively few, and other dangers abound. Those exploring the deeper, wilder sections, however, may encounter fey seeking a little sport.

For the fey, the enjoyment lies in terrifying their prey; the kill is a satisfying postscript.

Fey on the hunt often offer bargains to beleaguered prey: sacrifice this one friend and the rest may live; these starmetal weapons can be yours, if you abandon your wounded companion. They conjure illusions to mislead their quarry, to convince them to turn on each other, and to drive them to save themselves at the cost of their friends.

Run, Little Rabbit, Run

A shadow fey hunt begins when the fey capture or discover mortals in the forest. With captives, the fey assess the individuals' desires, physical and mental toughness, and any exploitable

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

weaknesses. They usually offer the most basic bargain: any who escape the hunt may live. Other offers may follow—give us this one, and the rest may go; open your minds to us for a night and be free in the morning; survive the night and name your reward—but the later offers are always less-palatable so that the mortals decide to run.

Shadow Fey Tactics: Confuse, Divide, and Weaken

During the hunt, the fey start from a distance. They use illusions to divert their prey into dense or dangerous areas, lure them to the lairs of dangerous creatures, and unnerve them with ominous sights, sounds, and sensations. They set traps to kill mounts and servants, or they shower their prey with highly acidic missiles, destroying their equipment and armor. The shadow fey only reveal themselves to goad their quarry into fleeing, thereby enhancing the joy of the hunt.

The shadow fey's initial tactic is to confuse their prey, using illusions and traps to misdirect or thwart them. They create illusionary creatures to stalk the group from distant trees, herding its members in circles, down twisted paths, or toward the shadow fey's sacrificial sites within the Margreve. The fey's illusions also serve to unnerve the group and waste its spells and ranged-weapon resources—which prove ineffectual against the incorporeal beings. Of course, the fey vary their illusions with real attacks, pelting the group with special, poison-coated arrows (see *Tools and Talons of the Trade* below) or sending forth shadow hounds to run the individuals aground—all done to keep their prey guessing.

The shadow fey utilize plant poisons to temporarily dazzle, fascinate, or otherwise unbalance their prey, and the Margreve has numerous such flora that produce these effects. In addition to their arrows, the fey huntsmen coat their darts, plant traps, and caltrops with these Margreve toxins. Some poisoned individuals mistake their comrades for monsters and flee, convinced an escape route lies just down the path, or their minds become so muddled they do not see the pit that everyone else avoids with ease. The fey know injured friends slow down a party, especially if their wounds do not heal, so they often attack a group with the goal of forcing them to leave behind their hampered companions. After their misdirection attacks, the fey divide their prey with magical fog or illusory terrain. They target and secret away the group's most disruptive members: healers, spellcasters, or those with good survival skills. Removing them allows the fey to prolong their play with the weaker group members, whose fear is often heightened by the loss of their companions.

Unless enraged, the fey rarely kill isolated individuals immediately, preferring to keep them around for entertainment. The fey trap them in pits or pens, keeping them in drug-induced stupors so they do not escape. If a hunt lasts long enough, the fey dangle these captured (and tortured) companions as prizes for bedraggled groups to win back—such companions must be saved from some precarious situation quickly (like hanging from a rope on an upper branch, while their body's weight breaks a smaller branch beneath their feet), or their death is imminent. This is all part of the sport of the hunt: using one's companions against him. Then again, sometimes they keep the more interesting ones as trophies to take back to their queen in the Shadow Realm; or they use them to test a party's morality with unusual deals, upping the stakes if the group seems disinterested: "You can have him back, or you can have these rare enchanted starmetal weapons. What do you choose?"

Ideally, the PCs should have a few NPCs along for the fey to snatch. If missing individuals are much-loved or particularly important (the "escort my son safely through the Margreve" setup), then abandoning them to save their own lives becomes more difficult.

Lastly, when the fey attack in full strength, they focus on the strongest, most armored individuals, blasting them with acid-based arrows to deprive them of armor and useful gear and to inflict lingering wounds. Then they send out the hounds and any other allies to weaken the group. Through it all, the fey harass the group with long-range magic and weapons, never letting them rest long enough to recover spells.

The fey ultimately kill troublesome prey, knowing they won't be suitable trophies or servants to take home. Those who gave good sport or caught the fey in the right mood might go to the Shadow Realm for unreal years of wonders and horrors. Some with useful talents or positions lose their wills and become servants of the shadow fey in this realm. Others who ran with skill and cunning may be broken and warped, transformed into fey hunting hounds to run their former friends to ground.

Character Effects

Margreve Distortion: Those escaping shadow fey attacks in the Margreve often discover their flight, which seemed to take hours or days even, took place in a matter of minutes; and while they believe they've travelled the length of the dangerous wood in that time, they've run, hid, and fought all within a square mile. This is an unusual effect of the Margreve, which the immune shadow fey wholeheartedly exploit during their hunts. Crafty or skilled survivors may quickly realize the truth, but only after given enough resting time—1 hour or more—to think (DC 18 Survival or DC 22 Perception check, +1 for every two hours the hunt).

Drug Effects: Individuals repeatedly poisoned by shadow fey toxins, whether from coated weapons or snares, often develop phobias or manias. Whenever three or more poisonings affect a PC, he must succeed at a DC 20 Will save, or he gains a touch of insanity (see the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game's GameMastery Guide* or "A Broken Mind" in *KQ#11* for insanity options).

Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151709)

Umbral Gossamer

Spun from frost and the shadows of the towering forests in the Shadow Realm, these silky, silvery strands are woven and braided into various grades of rope and other fabrics. Umbral gossamer is strong, lightweight, and always just slightly cool to the touch. The shadow fey highly prize all goods and poisons made from it and rarely trade these goods to mortals.

The raw strands are never traded, for they take enchantment very well. Some speculate that, because materials made from umbral gossamer smoke and steam in this world, the components might not survive in Midgard. This does not stop enterprising or foolish mortals from trying to bring the strands back for weaving. None have yet succeeded.

Tools and Talons of the Trade

The fey hunter's arsenal is varied, from the cruel to the sublime, and designed to heighten the pleasure of the hunt as much as to ensure an eventual kill (or capture). These items are never bought or sold by the shadow fey who make them (and thus have no gp values). However, lucky adventuring groups might acquire them as treasure. GMs should consider the items valued at half the price of a similar magical item.

Items

Acid Arrow: This arrow is constructed of pale, unearthly wood with a heavy arrowhead of polished black laced with green veins. The arrowhead is a highly corrosive acid bound in solid form by sifting shadows. On the mortal plane, these shadows gently wisp off of it like thin smoke.

On a successful ranged attack, the head shatters (arrows are unrecoverable) and spreads over the target, doing 1d6 damage to the creature and reducing the AC bonus of any armor and shields by 1d4+1 (shields suffer this reduction first). Mundane armor or shields reduced to 0 AC bonus are destroyed. Magical armor or shields reduced to 0 armor bonus continue to provide their magical enhancement bonus to AC and can be repaired normally.

Mist Arrow: This arrow's grey-wooden shaft is shot through with black swirls, and its silver-trimmed arrowhead has broad blades. The arrow inflicts damage normally but is most often shot near a target. When the arrow hits, it fills the target square and six squares in every direction with fog for 12 rounds. All creatures with one square or more of fog between them and an attacker have concealment, even from creatures with darkvision.

Tracking Arrow: A black-shafted arrow with a greenish sheen, this missile's arrowhead has tiny barbs that break off in the victim. The arrow inflicts normal damage and 1 bleed damage. The shadowy coating on its razor-sharp blades prevents magical healing less than *cure serious wounds* from stopping the bleed damage. Blood lost from these wounds is very obvious to the shadow fey, and the fey and their hounds gain a +6 circumstance bonus to track anyone suffering this bleed damage.

Gut of the Gutted: This enchanted bowstring is made from the guts of previous prey and braided with umbral gossamer. When using this item against a creature of the same race as the string (human, kobold, goblin, etc.), the attacker suffers no penalties from lighting or concealment and the target gains no benefit from any cover except total cover. Attacks using this item still require line of effect, and the attacker must still roll a normal attack.

Twilight Hunting Spear: Use boar spear stats from the *Advanced Player's Guide*. Whenever this weapon strikes a target in an area of dim light or less illumination, it does so as a ranged touch attack instead of a standard ranged melee attack.

Tickle Net: Attacker must make a ranged touch attack unless the net is part of a trap. If the attack hits, or when the trap is triggered, the net's target must make a DC 24 Reflex save or gain the entangled condition and suffer 2d4 damage from the very fine tendrils the net sends into the target's flesh, binding the net to its victim. These also inflict 1 hp damage per round and cause 2d4 damage when removed. Removing a net requires a DC 23 Escape Artist check or external help.. The net sends tendrils into only one creature at a time and cannot entangle (but may still damage) creatures larger than Medium size.

Blessed Binding: This rope is braided from umbral gossamer and used to restrain prisoners. The rope reverses a victim's emotional and pain responses, turning terror to joy and pain to pleasure. A bound character must pass a DC 24 Will save when first bound and conscious or be affected as by a *charm person* spell toward his captors. The victim receives a new save every 24 hours, suffering a cumulative -1 penalty for every 10 damage he suffered during that time. If the character fails three consecutive Will saves, he becomes a willing servant of the fey. *Remove curse* removes this condition.

Poison

The shadow fey delight in the use of weakening and hallucinogenic compounds derived from plants in the Margreve or their own strange realm. These are just a few of the formulas more popular for hunting.

Waking Dream: A pale yellow paste derived from night-blooming flowers. **Type** injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 22; **Onset** 1 minute; **Frequency** 1/minute for 2d4+2 minutes; **Effect** gains the confused condition; **Cure** 3 consecutive saves.

Private Joys: A sparkling purple poison distilled from moon drake tears and compounded with passionberry. **Type** contact; **Save** Fortitude DC 16; **Onset** 1d6 rounds; **Frequency** 1/round for 1d6+2 rounds; **Effect** gains the fascinated condition.

Midsummer Madness: A combination of tansyweed, Margreve hellebore, and mandrake, bound together with finest umbral gossamer. **Type** injury; **Save** Will DC 20; **Onset**

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

1d10 minutes; **Effect** target feels disoriented when hit but seems to recover; after onset, target raves for a moment and then runs in a random direction for 1d6+1 minutes.

Never Alone: Pollen from the flowering vine called feybell. **Type** injury; **Save** Will DC 24; **Onset** 1 minute; **Frequency** 1/hour for 24 hours; **Effect** target hallucinates sounds and views moving shapes and objects as obscured or indistinct; DC 18 Perception check allows the PC to distinguish reality from fantasy for 10 minutes; **Cure** 3 consecutive saves.

Fey Hunting Hounds (CR +2)

Mortals caught by hunting shadow fey who display particular skill or spirit may be broken to the fey's will and changed into hunting hounds. These pitiable creatures take on the characteristics of the more traditional hounds of the fey, regardless of their species of origin, and live only to run their master's prey to ground. Rarely, favored hounds are rewarded with their lives and sanity, found abandoned decades later in the wild places with their bodies physically intact and their minds restored but their memories—thankfully—empty.

Creating a fey hunting hound

"Fey hunting hound" is an acquired template that can be added to any Small, Medium, or Large creature with a minimum Wisdom of 12.

Challenge Rating: Same as base creature or base animal (whichever is higher) +2.

Size and Type: The creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature) gains the fey subtype. Fey hunting hound look much like their former selves—men, women, kobolds, or other humanoids and animals—but generally gain a snout, claws, and fangs and take to walking on four legs. They retain their size.

AC: The fey hunting hound has a natural armor bonus of +3 over the base creature, but it cannot ever benefit from armor, even if it is wearing armor, and never uses a shield.

hp: Fey hunting hounds gain +15 hp but otherwise retain the racial Hit Dice and hit point totals of the base creature.

Speed: Fey hunting hounds gain additional movement equal to 15 ft. + 5 times their Dexterity modifier. They always ignore non-magical difficult terrain.

Melee: Fey hunting hounds gain two claw (slam) attacks and one bite as natural attacks if the base creature did not already have them. The claw attacks do 2d4 damage and the bite attack does 1d8 damage.

Special Attacks: Fey hunting hounds lose any of their base creature's special attacks but gain hunting shadows, once bitten, and shadow bleed special attacks, as well as low-light vision and scent.

Hunting Shadows (Su) Once every hour, as a standard action, a fey hunting hound may howl, a blood-chilling sound of pure joy in the chase. All non-fey creatures within 50 ft. must pass a Will save or become frightened (see Fear in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*). A creature cannot become frightened from a hunting shadows attack more than once in the same 60-minute period, but multiple hounds can attempt multiple howls to affect an entire group. Those who fail are frightened for 10 minutes after failing the save and shaken for 20 minutes after that. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Once Bitten (Su) The fey enjoy tormenting their prey as well as running it to ground, and their hunting hounds serve both purposes. A fey hunting hound may use a full-round attack action to make a special attack on a single target with its bite. If the attack inflicts any damage, the target is scarred; the wound feels cold enough to burn, and the limb or area around it goes numb. For the next 48 hours, a hound's hunting shadows special attack can be made against the target from a distance of 1 + the damage dealt miles away. Applying cold iron to the wound prevents this special attack, as does the use of a *heal* spell.

Shadow Bleed (Su) If a single fey hunting hound inflicts damage to a character equal or greater than the target's Constitution score in a single combat, the victim must make a (DC 10 + ½ level + Charisma modifier) Will save at -2. Failure means the PC immediately suffers 1 Wisdom or Dexterity drain (GM's choice). The PC must make another save with the same penalty one hour later or suffer 1 additional point of Wisdom or Dexterity drain (GM's choice). A *remove curse* prevents the need for the second save. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Ability Scores: +2 Charisma, +2 Strength, -3 Wisdom.

Fey Hunting Hound Condition

Fey hunting hounds originated as great canines captured by the shadow fey, broken to their will, and exposed to the magic of the Shadow Realm. The fey discovered they could apply a similar process to intelligent humanoids and gain "hounds" that terrified their prey while being just as effective. A prospective hound is held captive in the Shadow Realm for however long it takes for his will to break under relentless physical and mental assaults (often using blessed bindings). Once done, the enchantments to create a new hunting hound are simple and embraced by the victim.

For the most part, fey hunting hounds look much like the people or creatures they were; humans, kobolds, even centaurs drawn from all walks of life and locations to serve the fey's caprices. In low light or darker conditions, the fey hunting hound takes on an unsettlingly canine appearance; a muzzle full of sharp fangs replaces the face, back-canted and thickly-muscled legs push the creature taller, and claws like daggers overlay the hands. Only this shadow impression reveals the nature of the magic shackling these creatures.

A captured fey hunting hound may be cured through great effort. They are creatures of purely animal instinct, interested only in eating, sleeping, and hunting for their masters. They will attempt to escape any imprisonment and attack any captors coming close enough. The cure requires powdered iron and mandrake from the Margreve slathered over the hound's face, hands, and feet, and the hound must be restrained outside from sundown to dawn for three consecutive nights (including the night of the new moon); the hound must also receive a *remove curse* spell each night to fully remove the fey's magic. The victim loses the fey hunting hound template but retains all memories of the time spent before becoming a hound and all the physical effects of it (damage, scars, etc.). Time spent as a hound is blissfully forgotten. Ω

Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151707)

AGE of Specialization

Five New Character Options

By Randall K. Hurlburt
Art by Jeremy Mohler

The AGE system presents three specializations for each class, which may not provide all the variety desired by more experienced groups and players. This article introduces new specializations for each class, for use in any fantasy setting.

You may wish to rename these specializations to better fit your game. The battle captain could represent an order of knighthood unique to your setting and take their name, or if you had a location called Blackwoods, the skirmisher could become the Blackwoods Raider. Renaming adds flavor to the specializations and enriches your campaign setting.

BATTLE CAPTAIN

Warrior Specialization

Not everyone leads by inspiring example. Some lead through intelligence, cunning, and a sharp tongue. Battle captains are knowledgeable in sound tactics and strategy. Experienced fighters follow battle captains because they get results, not because of their charismatic personalities or lack thereof.

Battle Captain Talent

Class: Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Strength and Cunning 3 or higher.

You know how to best direct your allies in a fight.

Novice: You can command your allies to move into better positions during combat. You must use a minor action to use this ability. For each point of your Cunning score, one ally can move 2 yards. No ally can move more than 2 yards each time you use this ability. Allies must be within 10 yards of you to take advantage of this ability but can move beyond this range using this ability.

Journeyman: You can direct your allies in attacking or defending. You can use an activate action to give all allies within 8 yards of you either a +1 to attack or a +1 to Defense until the beginning of your next turn.

Master: When you use the lightning attack stunt, you can command one of your allies to make the second attack instead of yourself. Choose one ally within 10 yards to make an immediate melee or ranged attack against a target within range. The ally must have a loaded ranged weapon to make a ranged attack. Using the lightning attack stunt in this way costs only 2 SP instead of the usual 3.

ELEMENTALIST

Mage Talent

More than just focusing on Primal magic, an elementalist becomes one with it. They no longer simply manipulate the elements through magic, but their body becomes a conduit for elemental power.

Elementalist Talent

Class: Mage
Requirement: You must have Constitution and Magic 3 or higher and Primal Magic (novice).

Primal magic has infused your body.

Novice: You gain AR equal to your Magic score against environmental damage such as extreme cold or heat. You also get a bonus equal to your Magic score to any Constitution (Stamina) tests made due to environmental effects.

Journeyman: Add +2 to the spellpower of any Primal spell you cast.

Master: When you take damage from Primal spells, you can absorb some of the energy in the form of mana points. You gain MP equal to your Constitution for each D6 of damage caused by the spell. For example, if you have Constitution is 3 and are struck by a Shock spell that does 1D6+4 damage, you would gain 3 MP. You may gain MP above your normal pool of mana points to a maximum of your normal mana plus twice your Magic score. Using this power does not reduce the amount of damage taken.

MASTER THIEF

Rogue Specialization

Those rogues who dedicate their lives to taking what belongs to others can become master thieves. These rogues specialize in getting past locked doors, avoiding traps, and dipping light fingers into passing pockets.

Master Thief Talent

Class: Rogue
Requirement: You must have Cunning and Dexterity 3 or higher.

You have mastered the thieving arts.

Novice: You have become very wary of traps. You get a +2 to all Perception tests to sense or find traps.

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

Journeyman: When using any of the following Dexterity focuses, you can spend 1 SP to have the test take half the time it would normally take: Legerdemain, Lock Picking, Stealth, and Traps.

Master: You can use your Bluff rogue power to distract a target while you steal from his pockets or purse. Use the power as written, except instead of backstabbing the target, you get a +2 on any Dexterity (Legerdemain) test made against that target in the same round.

MARKSMAN

Rogue Specialization

Expertise at ranged weapons can take years and years of practice for some. Others find themselves with natural, raw talent. A marksman is someone who can who can split an arrow with another or throw a dagger into a bull's-eye while blindfolded.

Marksman Talent

Class: Rogue
Requirement: You must have Dexterity and Perception 3 or better and either Archery Style (novice) or Thrown Weapon Style (novice).

Your skills with ranged weapons are unsurpassed.

Novice: You have learned how to hit the smallest of targets. When making a ranged attack, you can ignore up to -2 of cover penalties. This means you will suffer no penalties for attacking targets in light cover and only a -1 penalty for attacking targets in heavy cover.

Journeyman: You know how to get the best out of your weapons. You can increase the short range of any missile weapon by 20% and the long range by 30%. Round the new ranges up to the nearest even number.

Master: You can do additional damage when taking careful aim at your target. When you hit with an attack immediately after taking the Aim action, you get an additional +2 to your damage roll.

SKIRMISHER

Rogue Specialization

Some fighters prefer to avoid stand-up fights. The skirmisher would rather use movement to gain an advantage or compromise his opponent.

Skirmisher Talent

Class: Rogue
Requirement: You must have Dexterity and Perception 3 or higher.

You have developed a stick-and-move fighting style.

Novice: If you use a move action to move at least half of your Speed in a round, you gain a +1 to your Defense until the beginning of your next turn.

Journeyman: When using the skirmish stunt, the first 2 yards you choose to move yourself costs 0 SP. Moving your opponent and any further movement of yourself costs normal SP. You must generate stunt points to use this ability.

Master: You have developed a hit-and-run combat style. If you choose to move as a minor action and attack as your major action in a single round, you can move up to half your Speed before making your attack, then move up to half your Speed after the attack. This ability cannot be used as part of a charge. Ω



Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151709)

Bardic Charisma Meets Crunch and Chickens

Interview of Christina Stiles

By Jeremy L. C. Jones

For Christina Stiles it all started with a pink box, her older brother, and some seriously deadly adventures. Now—years later—she is a part-time freelance game writer and editor with a long list of credits.

Stiles has written, edited, developed, or contributed to many game books, including *Unhallowed Halls*, *Assault on Stormbringer Castle*, *SpirosBlaak*, *Black Sails Over Freeport*, *Streets of Zobeck*, *Scion: Ragnarok*, *Faery's Tale*, the new *Zobeck Gazetteer*, and the upcoming *Rogue Mage RPG*. She's freelanced for Atlas Games, Eden Studios, Goodman Games, Green Ronin Publishing, Misfit Studios, Open Design, Troll Lord Games, and White Wolf Studios.

"I enjoy adventure writing the most because adventuring is really what the game is all about," said Stiles. "I love the co-creation that takes place at the gaming table when you run your scenario. You share your ideas and plot vision with the players, giving them the seeds of a story, and they hand you back a complete experience that is truly indicative of them only. No two groups playing the same adventure ever give you back the same story."

Proving her first love lies in adventure writing, Stiles recently penned several for Open Design: "Flesh Fails" and the "Fish and the Rose" for *Streets of Zobeck*, "Beer Run!" and "Captured in the Cartways" for Kobold Quarterly, "Truth Sunders" for *Dark Deeds in Freeport* (a spring release), and "Beyond the Ghostlight Reef" for the **Midgard Campaign Setting**.

Below, Stiles and I talk about playing, GMing, game writing, and editing. One thread seems to run throughout her work: gaming is fun.

"Play. Enjoy. Don't take yourselves too seriously," said Stiles, "and be kind to your fellow gamers."

Not a bad way to go about life.

How'd you get into playing RPGs?

Christina Stiles: My brother, who is five years older than I, brought home a copy of the D&D boxed set (the pink one) back when I was just heading into 8th grade. Needing someone to run the game for, and playing on my little-sister worship of him, he convinced me to be the guinea pig.

I remember rolling up one character after another, as most died quickly in his adventures. I had a penchant for playing thieves early on. They had names like Jumping Jack Flash and Mojo Rising. When he succeeded in convincing a neighbor guy to join us, we began an ongoing campaign and graduated to AD&D. It was then that my long-running wizard Bizzaro (yes, spelled with two "z"s) was born. I later named my first foray into publishing after him, Bizzaro Games—which, coincidentally, died as quick a death as my beginning characters right after co-publishing *Spiros Blaak* with Green Ronin Publishing.

After I started gaming, I found it hard to concentrate on anything in school, even though I was an honor student. My mind always floated to my characters and my aspirations for them.

As a player, do you prefer combat or role-playing?

Christina Stiles: Honestly, I enjoy both. A good game provides a mix of those. When I play D&D, I enjoy bards, as I like the charismatic, diplomatic play they personify. (Yes, I'm the one they wrote that class for.) When I play games like *Savage Worlds* or RIFTS, I generally play warrior types. But the role-playing aspect of the game always remains very important to me.

How would you describe your GMing style?

Christina Stiles: Neurotic. Disorganized. I'm not a very structured person by nature. By the Myers-Briggs personality definition, I'm a perceiver, someone always adapting to the flow of things. Sometimes I amaze myself that I've been able to write or edit anything at all, let alone the numerous projects I've completed over the years.

I've run a solo 3.5 campaign with my cousin for over a decade, and I'm always losing my notes. So these days, I get him to write up email recaps after we play. That works for me, especially as our time between games is often several months due to scheduling problems.

Also, when I'm not playtesting something, I have a tendency to

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

wing an idea and just see where it goes. Sometimes great things come of that, especially in regard to future adventure ideas.

When I GM at cons, though, I have my adventures and notes already in place. I usually run *Castles & Crusades* at such events, as the rules-light game makes it easier for me to concentrate on the story and to get the players involved. Of course, I've been playtesting *Rogue Mage* at several of the cons as well, and it is more rules heavy than C&C.

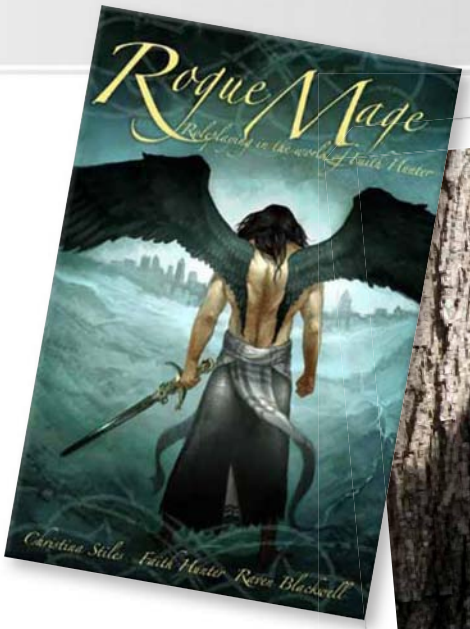
Are there landmark moments in your life as a player that were points of no return on the road to being a game writer?

Christina Stiles: I can't really pinpoint an instance where I said I wanted to be a game writer. I was an odd, fanciful kid who spent way too much time alone because my two siblings were much older and generally did not want a kid tagging along with them. I filled my days by telling myself stories, and I devoured books. When my brother introduced me to gaming, I got the bug incredibly bad, much worse than he ever did, in fact. I just couldn't stop thinking about gaming.

I do remember, however, that my brother once—unsuccessfully—sent an article to *Dragon* magazine. I guess it made an impression on me, for I eventually decided to try my hand at writing gaming material.

What prompted you to switch from player to professional game writer?

Christina Stiles: It hasn't been so much a shift, really, because I'm still a player and always will be. I'm taking my dice with me to the retirement home, thank you very much! But basically, my love of tabletop roleplaying games—I have no interest in other types of games for some odd reason—and my desire to do something creative have kept me consistently typing away for over a decade now.





What was your first gaming publication?

Christina Stiles: Although I collected many rejections from *Dungeon* magazine—at least one from Wolfgang [Baur], I might add—I eventually did get the co-written "Jigsaw" (for *Masque of the Red Death*) past the editorial staff. I had read *"Is There an Elf in the House?"* by Daniel DeFazio and Rafael Fay in an issue of *Dungeon*, and wrote the authors a letter to say how much I enjoyed the adventure, which I had run for my cousin.

Dan DeFazio and I struck up a conversation via snail mail, and we later pitched and wrote the "Jigsaw" adventure together. It took a considerable time, as we passed word-processed (Brother word-processors, not computers) manuscripts back and forth through the mail; this was before email became commonplace. Then we went through several editors at the magazine and dealt with a time delay while TSR had some ongoing in-house issues. It eventually came out in *Dungeon* #61, my first and only appearance in that magazine. To this day, I regret having given up on querying them.

"Jigsaw" was also my first stab at full project collaboration, and I enjoyed the back-and-forth experience of it, so I also learned I like collaborating from the experience. To this day, I often seek





Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151709)

out collaborators, and it's one of the reasons I thoroughly enjoy Open Design's projects. (By the way, Dan, if you are out there anywhere, I'd love to say hello. Drop me a line.)

On a side note: Someone sent a letter to *Dungeon* claiming that Sigmund Freud, whom PCs encounter discussing dreams at a party in the "Jigsaw" adventure, was never concerned with the study of dreams. I had just finished reading Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* in a college class when I added it to the adventure, so I truly know that he did! I never did write to the magazine to rebut that letter, so I'm taking the opportunity to do so now!

> Don't be afraid to try, and be persistent. If you dream of getting something published, and you are willing to hone your craft, you will eventually see your words in print.

When did you get serious about writing gaming material?

Christina Stiles: Not until the advent of the Open Gaming License and third edition. I had been active on Ryan Dancy's d20 listserv, and I was able to get my foot in the door with John Nephew at Atlas Games. I wrote *Unhallowed Halls* for them and edited *Uncommon Character*. I got in with Eden Studios, too—sometime around then—by responding to their need for playtesters. I later wrote entries for the *Liber Bestarius*.

As a designer, do you prefer writing crunch or flavor text?

Christina Stiles: Hmm. That's a tough question for me. I can and have written both. Now, whether I've succeeded at both, you'd have to judge for yourself. But I've written setting material, NPCs, new feats, skills, magic items, classes, rules, monsters, etc. That being said, I'd have to say I'm most passionate about writing adventures. A lot of my recent work with Open Design, in fact, has been along those lines.

What does an adventure need to do? What are the main ingredients? How do you go about building one?

Christina Stiles: An adventure needs to be fun for both the GM and the players. I try to create experiences or events that will keep the gamers talking about them long after they've left the table. Sometimes I do this with an unusual monster (like gingerbread golems and taunters in the "Tymon's Taunting Tower," a free PDF given to Kobold Quarterly subscribers in 2011), a villain who refuses to die (the storm giantess in my adventures *Assault on Stormbringer Castle* and the *Stormbringer Juggernaut*), or a garish magical item (like the painting in "The Fish and the Rose" in *Streets of Zobeck*).

In "Captured in the Cartways" in this issue, the PCs must deal with a kyton in her chain-covered lair, and it should be a memorable a fight, even though it's a short adventure. My hope is the players go away saying, "Man, that was hell! Those barghests are going to pay for putting us through that!" Meanwhile, the GM smiles and chuckles, knowing her players are now deeply engaged in the Zobeck setting, and they've just given her a revenge adventure to plan.

My adventures are basically born from a villain idea or a title. The only map-driven adventure I've done was "Beer Run!" in *KQ* #16, as Wolfgang had a map and no adventure, and I volunteered to write him a short one in a week. My Open Design adventures "Flesh Fails" and "Truth Sunders" came from titles alone—although I had to put some bones on them for the pitches to win their contracts. For the most part, I'm a "pantser" (as in, "fly by the seat of my pants") when it comes to adventure writing. That's one of the reasons pitching doesn't come naturally to me; I don't have all the details in mind before I sprint to the finish line. I don't think that fact spoils the enjoyment, however. It's just my approach. I'm more outline-driven and linear when I'm writing sourcebook material.

What role did you play in the creation of Faery's Tale?

Christina Stiles: I'm so thankful to have been a part of a game targeted to creating our next generation of gamers. I contributed to the Game Mastering information, rules tweaking, and the monsters, specifically.

I had also written an adventure, but for some reason, Patrick Sweeney, the project's publisher and lead writer, decided he wanted to use an adventure from some relatively unknown designer named Robin D. Laws (said very much tongue-in-cheek). Go figure. My adventure was never published, nor was the *Faery's Tale Bestiary* I had completed for the game.

Anyway, the game generated a lot of good feedback. People seemed to like it, and gamers nominated it for an Origins Award twice: once with Firefly Games, and then with Green Ronin (the Deluxe version). We designed the game with the thought that kids of a certain age would eventually be able to run their own games without their parents. We succeeded at that. I know so, because I've witnessed it firsthand. Just a few years ago, in fact, the then nine-year-old daughter of Clint Black (Pinnacle Entertainment Group's Brand Manager) and Jodi Black (freelance editor) ran it for several adults at a local convention. I was so proud! Their daughter still runs the

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

game at cons. That's exactly what we had in mind: kids running their own games.



Have things changed much since you started out?

Christina Stiles: What has changed for me? Not much. The publishing venues to sell to have certainly changed, but they still exist. I still play games when the opportunities arise, and I playtest my adventures with my crew, as I don't ever intend to design in a vacuum.

If you mean what fame have I gained, well there hasn't been much of that for me. For the most part, I feel I've been a stealth freelancer this whole time. Whenever someone does recognize my name from something, it always floors me. I still remember sitting in a White Wolf seminar at Origins one year and Will Hindmarch (now with Green Ronin) was handing out papers and read my name off my badge. He turned to his panelists and said something like: "Hey, Christina Stiles is here! Wow. Do you guys know Christina Stiles?" Nobody else did, of course. Bless you, Will! I guess he had remembered my *Unhallowed Halls* adventure from his days at Atlas.

Other than that, I do occasionally get asked to be a gaming guest at cons in North Carolina, South Carolina (my home state), and Virginia. When I can afford to attend, I accept the invites and run games.

All in all, what're the best parts about being a freelance game writer?

Christina Stiles: The best part is holding a book in your hands with your name on it. I still get giddy when I receive my contributor's copies. The second best thing is making fast friendships with the people with whom you work. For instance, I made fast friends with Spike Y Jones (editor extraordinaire) and Steven Trustrum (now president of Misfit Studios) after working with them on *Uncommon Character*. I similarly clicked with Ben McFarland after working under his lead on *Streets of Zobeck*. Ben is a definite up-and-coming designer. Seriously, keep an eye of this guy, folks.

Also, I'd like to think I've wormed my way into Wolfgang's good graces. He responds to my numerous emails, at least. That's a good sign, right?

What is it that you admire about Ben McFarland and his work?

Christina Stiles: One of the best things about being a pitching-level patron on *Streets of Zobeck* was working with Ben McFarland. He sees both the details and the big-picture structure of a project very well, and his pacing was just right, allowing us good maneuvering room for participation. He worked very hard to help the new writers on his project succeed, and I admire that.

And, of course, he's a very good writer and developer in his own right. I hope my *Journeys to the West* project goes at least half as well as *Streets* did. Ben also has an excellent grasp of the art of pitching, and I'm learning more about it from him every day. It's an important tool to know in today's freelancing market, as the open call options that fed the d20 movement in my starting days just aren't there now; so, freelancers have to *convince* a publisher to print something.

What are the worst parts of being a freelance designer?

Christina Stiles: The worst part? The products you invest a lot of time into that never see the light of day. I've had a few of those over the years, possibly a handful.

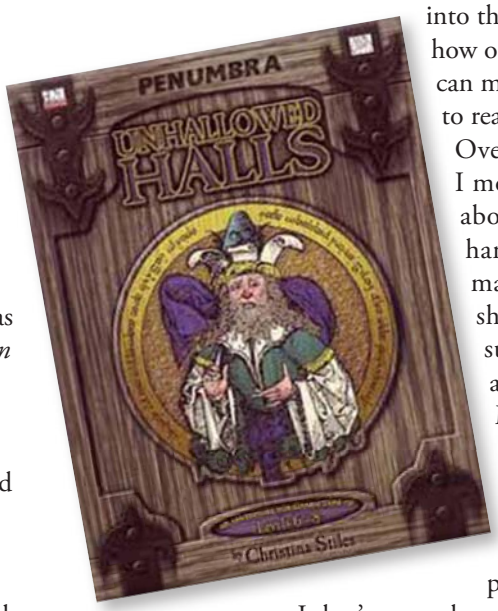
There's also the fact that it is time-consuming work that often takes you away from family and friends. My parents are both deceased now, and sometimes I wish I had spent a few more weekends with them, just did a lot more with them. And then there's the dealing with the inevitable life hiccups that keep you from finishing projects in a timely manner or at all.

But when family members die, or you have to take care of an aging

Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151707)

parent, or you have to deal with your own health problems, writing just does not take priority. That's the unfortunate reality of it. You just have to communicate with your developer and make other arrangements when life hands you such piles of crap.

How'd you get into editing?



Christina Stiles: My editing career started practically in tandem with my d20 writing career. I think Atlas Games' *Uncommon Character* NPC book was my first editing gig, but Eden Studios asked me to edit for the WitchCraft line, starting with *The Book of Hod*, and then *Waysides*, which was never published, and one or two other things along the way.

What sort of editor are you? Not just what do you edit but how do you go about it?

Christina Stiles: First, please note that at no point did I set out to become an editor. I'm not the English major who came out of college with a burning desire to wrangle words and correct everyone's grammar. Nope, my undergraduate college background is in philosophy and religious studies—though I later added a master's degree in liberal arts with a concentration in writing and briefly taught college freshman composition.

That said, when companies started offering me editing jobs, I accepted them. When my editing credits started piling up, I added editor to my freelancing abilities. My editing style? I'm analytical by nature (Virgo here), doing data crunching for a living, so I tend to question things. I can grasp the big picture, but I can also see the small details. I have a good grounding in English, and I endeavor to ensure that provided rules make sense. Some writers I've edited may call me anal after working with me, but I like to delve into the why and how of things until I can make them clear to readers.

Overall, what I most enjoy about editing is hammering a manuscript into shape, making sure it's clear and linear. My proofing is okay. I firmly believe everyone needs good proofreaders.

I don't care who you are, errors and typos will get by you. The internet complaints I read about typos and errors slipping through in manuscripts from companies both big and small bother me. With the nature of release schedules, it's just going to happen. Even the companies with a stable of editors will have this problem, and I know they are certainly doing everything within their power to catch everything.

Do you have any firm and fast rules of editing?

Christina Stiles: I don't have any hard-and-fast editing rules. I always say I'm going to read a manuscript through to its entirety before I start editing, but I invariably can't wait. I prefer working with the raw text rather than being given a layout product in print to fix and return, which makes it hard to ensure requested changes get made, but I've done those.

Anyway, I take notes along the way of changes I need to make to earlier things, and then I go back through the manuscript again to make those changes and catch other mistakes. I also send questions back to the author and input the responses, or have the writer input the responses into the edited text. That's my process in a nutshell.

What is it you admire about Spike Y Jones as an editor?

Christina Stiles: Spike is one of the most thorough, analytical editors I've ever had the pleasure of working with, and he's an ever-full font of knowledge. I think he has at least 10 ranks in every skill known to mankind, and his Knowledge (religion) is off the charts. He was the perfect guy for editing the Faith Hunter *Rogue Mage* game (Misfit Studios) for that reason alone. Spike and I have known each other for over a decade now, and we've worked together for much of that time. We just have a great rapport. The fact I'm able to drag him so easily into most of my personal projects just shows he has a low Wisdom attribute.

Spike is my all-time favorite editor. (Do most people even have a favorite editor?) He's a superhero: the Red-Ink Avenger!

If Spike Y Jones is your all-time favorite editor superhero, then who is your all-time favorite designer superhero?

Christina Stiles: That's easy. My all-time favorite designer superhero actually writes superhero games: Steve Kenson. I honestly think he's a genius—and he didn't even pay me to say that. I loved his d20 work, his *Blue Rose* and True20 game design, and his magnum opus (to date), *Mutants & Masterminds*. I even used the OGL from the second edition of the latter as the basis of my upcoming *Rogue Mage* game, with a few tweaks to suit my subject matter, of course. (*Editor's Note: Kenson was interviewed on the Kobold Quarterly blog.*)

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

I will buy anything with Steve's name attached. I love how he's able to see the possibilities in a system and improve them, turning them into something much cooler. I have nothing but pure love for Steve's work.

Tell me about the Rogue Mage RPG.

Christina Stiles: Rogue Mage is based on Faith Hunter's post-apocalyptic *Rogue Mage* novels (*Bloodring, Seraphs,* and *Host*). Faith is best known for her *New York Times* best-selling Skinwalker novels, which she wrote after the Rogue Mage ones.

The game uses open gaming material from Mutants & Masterminds second edition. In the near-future earth setting, seraphs have visited several plagues upon the earth, fulfilling some biblical prophecy, but the plagues have twisted some of the humans into neomages, individuals who can control creation energy. The world is in the throes of a mini ice age, and while the civilizations struggle to rebuild, the battle between light and darkness rages all around them.

Oddly enough, the game's main authors are all women: Faith Hunter, Raven Blackwell, and me. Spike Y Jones, the editor, did write some additional material for the game. This has been a project that has taken us over four years to pull together, and I'm hoping it brings readers into gaming and gamers to Faith's novels. The game includes new fiction from Faith. We already have the majority of text written for the *Rogue Mage Game Master's Guide* and will likely do it as a Kickstarter project.

Care to share any funny anecdotes from the gaming table?

Christina Stiles: Recently, while running Rogue Mage at MACE: West in early 2011, Heath Medlin, one of my most easygoing, patient gamer friends who is Savage only in his game of preference—Savage Worlds—was playing an earth neomage character (basically, a wizard). One of the other players was just being totally annoying with her character, to the point of attacking other party members. Heath calmly passed me a note, "I cast a sleep conjure on her."

As the day progressed, the offending player grew even more loud and problematic. Heath's neomage tried to bury her with a shape earth conjure, but another character foiled the assassination attempt. Adamant that this particular player character would die, Heath's triumph came in the game's final scene. Using the same earth spell as before, he collapsed the road out from under the character's deuce and a half and plunged the character over a cliff and into the icy earth far below. This was hilarious because it was Heath, a guy who never plays aggressive characters, and he was hell-bent on killing this character. None of us had ever seen him so fixated on a villain's death, let alone a party member's.

Then there was the playtest of "Beyond the Ghostlight Reef," an upcoming Open Design adventure (*Editor: Due for a Spring release*). I had recently moved, and I had misplaced all my miniatures. Heath happened to have a few that he was using to run a module called "Chickens in the Mist." He some odd-shaped beings we used for the characters and many, many large chickens, which became the other monsters.

I had just introduced a character named Dark Willy, and now we had chickens. Needless to say, many off-color jokes followed. Actually, the jokes started with Dark Willy, which was actually my intention, but the chickens just added to the game's colorful flavor. I understand the adventure debuted at PaizoCon 2011 (thanks, Jim Groves, for running it!), and some hilarity also ensued.

Any parting words of wisdom, warning, or mischief miscellany for aspiring game designers out there?

Christina Stiles: Don't be afraid to try, and be persistent. If you dream of getting something published, and you are willing to hone your craft, you will eventually see your words in print. I can't tout Open Design enough as being a great avenue for beginning writers, whether via the open projects or *Kobold Quarterly*. Although you pay to participate in the projects, you can easily gain a return on your investment (at the senior patron level) by earning writing contracts.

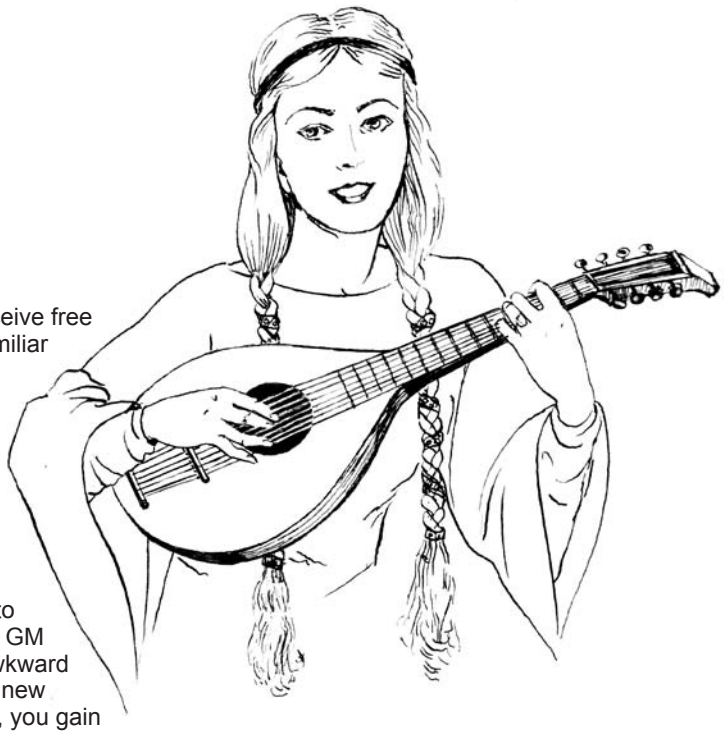
Heck, even getting something of yours accepted just for the writing credit is a win. The more it happens, the more your name becomes recognizable to those in publishing positions. Wolfgang is quick to remind patrons that Brandon Hodge and Adam Daigle, both Paizo writers now, got their start with Open Design. One day, he'll tell everyone he rediscovered Christina Stiles.

Lastly, once you get a contract, take direction from your developer and/or editor. Be willing to learn from others, and always keep an open line of communication. Dropping off the face of the world when you realize you've taken on something you can't complete is the worst thing to do, *ever*! It's better to let someone know you can't meet the deadline or finish the project. Publishers still have products to get out, whether you can meet your obligations or not. Keep that in mind. Ω

Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151709)

The Bardic Arts

By Aaron Infante-Levy
Art by Hablot Knight Browne



Rogues may be masters of skill and wizards masters of the arcane, but few characters can match the bard's social cunning and savoir faire. Whether seducing a foreign dignitary at court or rabble-rousing at the tavern, the bard excels at these interactions like no other class. To help your bardic characters achieve this social artistry, this article presents the Bardic Arts, an additional feature for the 4th Edition bard class.

New Class Feature: The Bardic Arts

Whether trained at a bardic college, apprenticed with a traveling master, or self-educated, you practice the time-honored artistic traditions of the bard.

At 1st level, you gain 2 of the following bardic arts of your choice. You gain an additional bardic art at 4th level and another at 8th level.

Cantrip Study

You've delved more into the wizardly arts than other bards, relying on simple magic tricks to illustrate your storytelling.

Benefit: Choose two cantrips from those available to wizards.

Carousing

You can drink dwarves under the table and make eladrin smile. Tavern-keepers know you by name, and you're hard pressed to find a watering hole that doesn't welcome your song and wit.

Benefit: You always receive free room and board at familiar taverns, and the local patrons often come to your aid in bar fights. When spending time at a tavern, you may attempt to carouse, making a saving throw with a +2 bonus. Failure means you succumb to drunkenness, and the GM provides a suitable awkward plot complication or a new enemy. On a success, you gain something helpful to your current adventure (using the roll results detailed below):

10-14 *Songs & Lore:* You've learned new drinking songs and ribald limericks from a culture, race, or social strata featuring prominently in your current adventure. Whenever you confront antagonistic members of that group, you may use what you've learned to defuse hostility and parlay. You may use this song only once in this way.

15-19 *Hireling:* Whether acquired at the gambling table or after a night of heavy drinking, you gain a free hireling for the rest of your current adventure. *Kobold Quarterly #17* describes sample henchmen and hirelings.

20+ *Gift:* You gain a critically helpful gift useable during your current adventure. The gift may be a one-time use magical item (like a potion or a one-charge wand—subject to the GM's approval), or it may be information, such as the sigil combination for a teleportation circle, a discovered map, or the means to bypass a trap. You may leave the gift undefined until you come to a point in the adventure when you really need a particular item. Then, you just happen to have the perfect thing, and a funny story to go with it!

You may receive only one benefit from the Carousing art during an adventure.

Chronicling

After every adventure your party faces, you take pen to paper, recording those deeds of valor and glory (with a fine editing hand). Perhaps someday you'll publish your masterpiece, but for now, writing down your exploits helps your storytelling abilities.

Benefit: While in any settlement directly helped by your party's successful deeds, your allies gain +2 to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks.

Etiquette

Accustomed to the critical eye of court, you are versed in the social customs of various nations, including proper forms of address, the polite technique

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

of agreeably disagreeing, the etiquette of introducing new people to court, and so forth. In your presence, even the most tactless half-orc may be treated with respect and gain the ear of kings.

Benefit: When you succeed a Diplomacy check, you reduce the DC of all subsequent Diplomacy checks with the same NPC by 2 for your allies until the end of the encounter. In addition, the first time you succeed at a Diplomacy check in a skill challenge, you gain an extra success.

Friends in Low Places

You have associations you'd prefer your party didn't know about – marginal "friends" connected to the pulse of the city and the underworld.

Benefit: Streetwise checks never take you longer than 5 minutes. In addition, when in a familiar settlement, you can call in a favor with a Streetwise check once per day; the GM sets the check's DC according to the nature of the favor. If successful, you gain aid in the form of maps and guard routes, secret doors, a hidden flophouse, legal aid, forged permits, and so forth.

Insult Dueling

Few traditions are as venerable among bards as the duel of wits. Whether it be trading barbs with a haughty noble over drawn swords, or viciously taunting an evil mastermind, you've wield your mockery like a finely edged blade.

Benefit: After defeating an intelligent enemy with whom you've been insult dueling, you may make a demand of the NPC as a condition of peaceful surrender, and the enemy agrees to follow your terms as long as it abides with his nature. Possible demands may include acting as your temporary guide, giving you the password or other information, surrendering his treasure, providing a false alibi, or anything else the GM deems appropriate.

Master of Disguise

Jilted lovers, angry lords, vicious debtors, and tenacious guardsmen– all good reasons to learn the art of disguise! You have several alternate identities complete with clothes, contacts, and documentation.

Benefit: You have a number of alternate identities equal to your Charisma modifier, and you gain a +5 bonus to Bluff checks to pose as an alternate identity. Depending on the nature of your alternate identity, you might have diplomatic immunity, access to military intelligence, privileges of nobility, or some other benefit while "in disguise."

Polyglot

You have an intuitive understanding of the cadence and meaning of the spoken word, and you have a seemingly supernatural ability to bridge language barriers.

Benefit: You always understand the gist of a foreign speaker's conversation ("the keep is under attack"), though not the fine details ("fire giants are smashing in its gates"). In addition, you may learn two extra languages of your choice.

Seduction

There are charming bards, and then there is you, a master of seduction with all the right moves. You bed nobles, commoners, villains, and heroes, with ease. Sometimes you do so just for the pleasure, but other times, you have alternative motives.

Benefit: You can make a Bluff check versus a DC equal to their Insight check (modified by the circumstances) to seduce members of a favorable sex. If you succeed, choose one of these advantages:

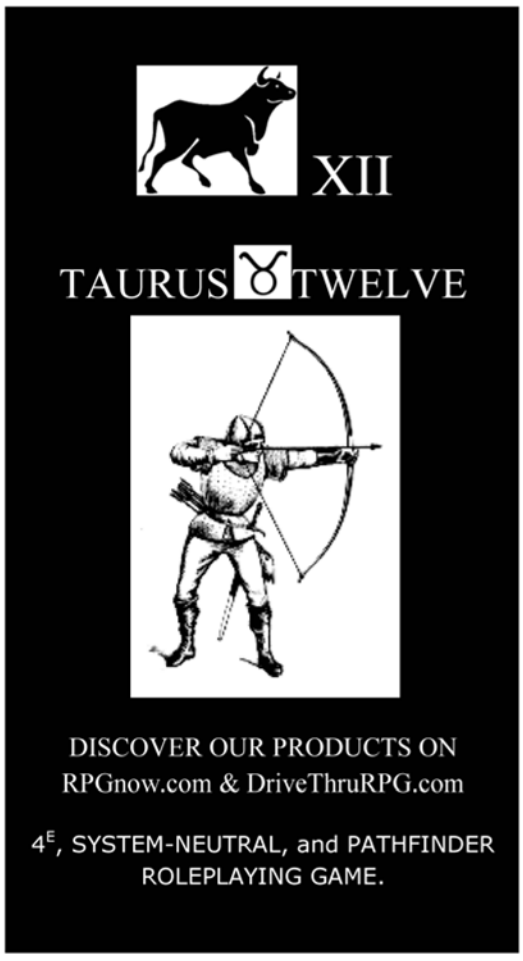
- *Learn the target:* Treat your Bluff check result as a monster knowledge check against the NPC. With the GM's permission, you gather blackmail material.
- *Intimacy:* You gain intimate contact with the NPC, keeping him or her occupied for several hours. Attacking your partner after your rendezvous may provide you the upper hand, as the target is likely surprised, unarmed, prone, or even helpless, at the GM's discretion. This betrayal is likely an evil act.
- *Sway:* Convince the NPC to take an action to gain your favor, though this action must be something morally acceptable to the character.

Student of Human Nature

By observing the subtleties of body language and conversation, you can ascertain even deeply hidden conspiracies in a matter of minutes. The slightest glance or change in attitude provides enough fodder for you to read gathered company like an open book.

Benefit: Gain +2 on Insight checks. You can make an Insight check without the bonus (GM determines the DC) to study the palette of interactions between all NPCs present. If your check succeeds, you learn the rough nature of relationships between those present, notice any innuendo or conversational undercurrents, and get a read on recent developments or changes in goals or allegiance. Ω

> The GM might include Bardic Arts as a straight addition to the bard class, or might allow it to replace Bardic Ritual Casting. In this case, Bardic Ritual Casting could then become an option as one of the arts.



Eric Lindahl [Order - 5151707-9]

Ask the Kobold

Poison and Disease

By Skip Williams

Just what goes on when a character is poisoned? What's the deal with the initial and secondary damage ratings for a poison? When are these supposed to occur? If you make a successful saving throw against a poison attack, do all the poison's effects cease? If you fail a saving throw against a poison attack and you later have the poison neutralized (with a *neutralize poison* spell for example), are all the poison's effects removed?

A player character exposed to a poison must immediately attempt a Fortitude save. If the save fails, the PC suffers the poison's initial damage or effects (usually ability damage).

If the poison has a secondary damage rating—and most do—the exposed PC must attempt a second Fortitude save one minute later, even if the initial Fortitude save succeeded. The second save represents the toxin's dispersion through the character's body and its destruction of internal tissues or its disruption of certain bodily functions. A PC may well shrug off a toxin's initial effects only to succumb to the toxin's secondary effects later.

If a poison has ongoing effects, such as sleep or paralysis, a *neutralize poison* spell ends those effects when it eliminates the toxin from your system. Instantaneous effects from a poison (such as damage, ability damage, or ability drain) remain even after a toxin has been neutralized.

You're exposed to a poison when certain kinds of game events occur. Different poisons have different modes of exposure:

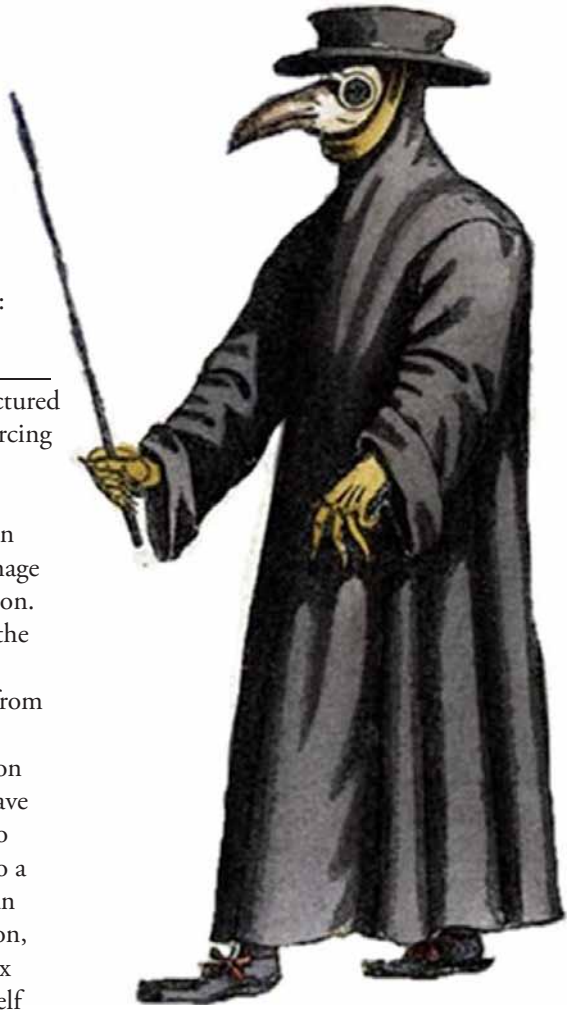
Injury

The toxin is applied to a manufactured weapon (usually a slashing or piercing weapon) or carried in a natural weapon, such as a bite or stinger. You're exposed to an injury poison when a foe successfully deals damage to you with a toxin-applied weapon. A special quality that negates all the damage from the attack, such as damage reduction, protects you from the toxin.

Using a weapon to deliver poison to a foe carries some peril. You have a 5% chance to expose yourself to a poison whenever you apply it to a weapon. Also, if you roll a 1 on an attack roll with a poisoned weapon, you must attempt a DC 15 Reflex save or accidentally poison yourself with the weapon. This special Reflex save replaces the Fortitude save you'd normally make against the toxin's initial effects. One minute later you must attempt a second save—Fortitude this time—against the toxin's secondary effects.

Contact

The toxin is applied to an object, usually either something small and portable (such as a coin or piece of jewelry) or to a closure (such as a doorknob or a container's lid). You're exposed to the toxin if you touch the treated object. Wearing gloves or armor generally does not protect you against contact poison. People tend to touch their own bodies—especially the face—amazingly often.



Ingested

The toxin is added to something edible or drinkable. If you eat or drink the tainted food or drink, you're exposed to the toxin. In most cases, one taste is all that's required for exposure. The DM, however, might require a larger volume of food or drink before you accumulate a big enough dose to become exposed.

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

Inhaled

The toxin is suspended in the air. It could be a gas that permeates the air in a chamber or it might reside in dust that creatures kick up as they move around. You're exposed when you breathe the tainted air. One breath usually is enough for exposure, but the DM might require a longer period of time, as noted for ingested poisons.

PCs often try to avoid inhaled toxins by breathing through a cloth or merely placing a hand over the face. These tricks aren't too effective, though the DM has the final say. Usually, the best you can hope for is a bonus on your Fortitude save.

How is a disease supposed to work?

Disease in the game works much like poison—with a few notable exceptions.

Diseases have the same modes of exposure as poisons. When you're exposed to a disease, you attempt a Fortitude save to overcome the infection. Unlike a poison, a successful save at the time of exposure negates the entire disease.

If the initial save fails, a disease has no immediate effects. Instead, a disease has an incubation period (usually a few days). Once the incubation period expires, the diseased character suffers the effects of the disease (usually ability damage). On each subsequent day of the incubation period, the diseased character risks the effects of the disease again. The character can attempt a new Fortitude save each day to avoid the additional effects. For most diseases, successful saving throws on two consecutive days allow the character to defeat the disease. Some supernatural diseases don't allow you to get better—you need magical help to get over them. Ω

Poison, Disease, and Ability Damage

Poisons and diseases inspire serious dread in the real world, and we designers wanted the game to reflect that fear. Poison and disease also traditionally served as great equalizers in the game, striking down PCs of any level. The designers also decided to preserve that.

Advancing characters have an ever-expanding pool of hit points, and although the game allows characters to improve their ability scores as they level up, these ability advancements do not progress nearly so quickly as their increase in hit points. This fact gave us the perfect opportunity to model a character's swift decline via the onset of a disease or toxin. It also allowed us to deal a severe blow to a character without taking the character out of immediate play.



Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

Small Spirits

5 Nature Spirits for Any Campaign



By Matthew J. Hanson
Art by Rick Hershey

Primal nature spirits all too often go unseen. While the most powerful of these spirits embody tremendous forces of nature—and their powers may rival the gods—most spirits operate on a much smaller scale. The spirit of the local forest might have great power within the woods, but it can do little beyond its borders. This article presents five small spirits that drop easily into any campaign.

Communicating with Spirits

How player characters (PCs) communicate with spirits can vary tremendously between campaigns and even within campaign worlds. Contacting and negotiating with a field spirits might be as simple as walking into a row of wheat and saying its name or as complex as awaiting a certain date or astronomical event and performing a ritual such as *commune with nature*.

As a simple rule, if spirits are easy to locate and contact, they can perform useful but not terribly powerful services for the PCs. If the spirits are harder to reach, they should be commensurately more powerful or crucial to the story.

Primal Boons

Each spirit in this article includes a primal boon. These boons function like magic items, except they have no physical form and do not take up an item slot. Boons cannot be sold, transferred, or created by mortal magic. The boons include a gold piece value for comparisons and judging PC wealth.

Ancient Turtle

The Ancient Turtle dwells in the heart of the swamp. She has grown to an enormous size and resembles a steep hill to those who do not know what to look for. The Turtle always speaks slowly and thoughtfully. To mortals she sometimes seems to trail off mid-sentence, but she is only pausing, either for effect or to catch her breath. She is also prone to rambling tangents that most would consider unrelated to the question at hand, though in her mind the connections are obvious.

For the patient, the Ancient Turtle provides a wealth of information about the swamp and its creatures. Her memory is long, and she shares knowledge freely, provided that her audience stays long enough to listen.

The Ancient Turtle cares about her swamp realm. She works to protect it from major disturbances, but she also believes nature always prevails in the end. People might drain the swamp or build over it, but their lives are fleeting. When they are gone, the swamp will return.

Adventure Hooks

A circle of once-sacred stones has been corrupted and spawns undead from those who die nearby and corrupts benign plants into evil, aggressive flora. The Ancient Turtle asks the PCs to visit the stones and perform a purifying ritual.

A black dragon has taken up residence in the swamp and is organizing the local lizardfolk to raid nearby human settlements. The PCs must consult the Ancient Turtle to find the dragon's lair and end its threat.

Boon

The Ancient Turtle grants its boon to those who demonstrate the utmost patience and an ability to think long term.

Ancient Turtle's Shell (4e) — **Level 8 Uncommon**

The turtle lends you a portion of its impenetrable shell to protect you from harm.

Price: 3,400 gp

Primal Boon

Property: If an enemy pushes, pulls, or slides you, you may reduce the forced movement by 1.

Power (Daily): Immediate Interrupt. *Trigger*: An enemy hits you. *Effect:* You gain a +4 bonus to all defenses against the triggering attack. *Special:* If you have an animal or spirit companion, you may also use this power to protect your companion.

Ancient Turtle's Shell (Pathfinder RPG)

Aura faint abjuration; **CL** 5th
Slot —; **Price** 9,000; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

The boon grants a +1 enhancement bonus to natural armor. Once per day, when the recipient of the boon is hit by an attack, she can activate the Ancient Turtle's Shell to give herself a +4 AC bonus against that attack. If the recipient has an animal companion, she can instead grant the bonus to her companion.

Laughing Maidens

The Laughing Maidens are a trio of spirits who inhabit an important

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river. The easiest way to attract their attention is to offer them praise and small gifts like bouquets of wild flowers or jars of honey.

The Maidens resemble three young human or elven women made of rippling water, and they flow in and out of the river as they speak. Though they act capricious and flighty, they have keen intellects and long memories. Their sharp senses of humor leads them to frequently play tricks on those who displease them, but mortals who endure the pranks with good humor can earn the Maidens' respect and aid.

As the Laughing Maidens travel the length of their river, they pick up many stories and rumors from travelers. This supplements their innate knowledge of their river.

The Laughing Maidens are free spirits who live spontaneously and have few long-term goals. They simply want to ensure that their river remains free and healthy.

Adventure Hooks

A young sea serpent moved into the Laughing Maidens' river and started attacking boaters. The Maidens are just as upset as the river travelers, and they will guide the PCs along the river to slay the beast.

An important priest suffered a blow to his ego when the Laughing Maidens played a trick and embarrassed him in front of his followers. Now he asks the PCs for "justice" from the Laughing Maidens, though he has no idea how to achieve this.

Boon

The Laughing Maidens are fickle about granting their boon. It might be as simple as bringing them a particularly beautiful flower, or as demanding as spending years in the Maidens' service.

Maidens' Laughter (4e) **Level 3+ Uncommon**

You giggle, and it soon infects another, causing him to double over in laughter.

Level 3 680 gp Level 8 3,400 gp

Primal Boon

Property: You gain a +2 item bonus to Athletics checks to swim, and on a successful check, you swim your speed (rather than half your speed). *Level 8:* +4 bonus to Athletics checks.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. *Attack:* Intelligence +3, Wisdom +3, or Charisma +3 vs. Will. *Hit:* The target is dazed (save ends).

Maidens' Laughter (Pathfinder RPG)

Aura weak enchantment; **CL** 1st
Slot —; **Price** 1,200; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

The recipient of the boon gains a +2 competence bonus to Swim checks, and on a successful check, she can move her full speed (as a full-round action) or half her speed (as a move action). Once per day the character can use *hideous laughter* (Will save negates, DC is 11 + Charisma modifier).

Lurker in the Caves

The Lurker in the Caves inhabits an interconnected web of limestone caverns. It speaks to visitors only in the pitch black of the caves and refuses to treat with them in the presence of even a single candle flame.

Even darkvision cannot detect the Lurker's form. It speaks with dozens of voices, from young child to old crone, from beautiful maiden to terrible beast. During the conversation, visitors may feel a gentle caress on their cheek, something crawling up their leg, or a cold noose around their neck.

The Lurker knows all that goes on within its cavern including the fungus and animals that dwell within, the schemes of the kobolds and goblins who use it as their home, and which paths lead where. The Lurker sees little reason to share its knowledge, however, and visitors seldom have anything it wants.

It is difficult to divine the desires and intentions of the Lurker in the Caves. It seems to wish to keep its caves in darkness. It is generally unsympathetic to those who become lost within its mazelike tunnels, though none can say whether this is malice or simply cold indifference.

Adventure Hooks

On a dare, three youngsters ventured into the Lurker's caves. Somehow they separated, and only one came out. The other two are trapped, and the quickest way to find them is to commune with the Lurker. It could tell the PCs exactly where the children are, but instead it toys with them, offering them vague hints and cryptic rhymes.

Boon

The Lurker in the Caves seems to bestow is blessing on those who have suffered in the dark but lived to tell the tale.

Lurker's Eyes (4e) **Level 8 Uncommon**

Even though you cannot see through the pitch darkness, you know your blows strike true.

Level 8 3,400 gp

Primal Boon

Property: You do not suffer a penalty to attack rolls as a result of dim light or darkness (other effects of dim light and darkness still apply).

Power (Daily): Minor Action. *Effect:* Area burst 2 within 10. You conjure a zone of darkness that fills the area of the burst and lasts until the end of your next turn. *Sustain Minor:* The zone persists, and you can move it five squares.

Lurker's Eyes (Pathfinder RPG)

Aura faint evocation; **CL** 5th
Slot —; **Price** 8,000; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

When attacking, the recipient treats creatures in low light as though they do not have concealment, and he treats creatures in darkness as though they have only concealment (instead of total concealment). Once per day, he can cast *deeper darkness*.

String of Grandfathers

A tribe of hunters and gatherers honored their shaman in life and death. Whenever a shaman died, his successor plucked out the largest of the old shaman's teeth and added it to a necklace that the new shaman would wear. In this way, generations of shaman advised the clan. Over the years the string grew to dozens of teeth, but the clan could not endure forever, and monstrous invaders wiped it out.

The necklace and the shamans' spirits

Eric Lindahl (Order #5851709)

endure, however, now known as the String of Grandfathers.

The String of Grandfathers speaks with the voices of two-dozen old men. Sometimes they offer advice in chorus, while other times they bicker among themselves. Sometimes one grandpa's voice comes into prominence, but in time he inevitably fades back into the group. The closer a creature is to the necklace, the more readily the Grandfather can speak to it, though they can whisper though the wind or talk into dreams at great distances.

The String of Grandfathers can recall the rich history of their people and know much about the land around their home, the uses for medicinal plants, and spiritual rites. They prefer to share their knowledge with kindred spirits, and scorn "civilized" folk, who they see as decadent and weak.

The Grandfathers seek a way to somehow restore their clan or, failing that, to exact revenge on those who destroyed them.

Adventure Hooks

One of the PCs has a series of strange dreams in which he lives the lives of various tribesmen going on great hunts, defending their clan in battle, or performing wondrous acts of healing. The constant of these dreams is that the PC always wears a necklace made of human teeth. He feels compelled to seek out the teeth, and when he at last discovers them, the String of Grandfathers explain that the PC is descended from those who escaped the clan's destruction.

The Grandfathers' clan once hid a powerful magic weapon that they feared could easily be turned to evil. Now omens predict that the weapon is the best way to stop the evil from rising again. The PCs must seek out the String of Grandfathers and convince them to trust the heroes sufficiently to reveal the weapon's hiding place.

Boon

Unlike most other primal boons, the String of Grandfathers is itself also a blessing, as a character can wear it as a magic necklace. The PCs must win the Grandfathers' approval to gain any benefit from the necklace, however. To do so they must demonstrate that they honor the Grandpas' ways and connect with them in spirit.

Grandfathers' Wisdom **Level 3+ Uncommon**

As you don the necklace of teeth, you hear the whispers of the ancients offering advice.

Level 3 680 gp Level 8 3,400 gp

Primal Boon

Property: Treat the Grandpas' necklace of teeth as a *+1 Amulet of Protection*.

Level 8: +2 Amulet of Protection.

Power (Daily): Use during an extended rest. *Effect:* Chose one skill. You gain a +1 item bonus to the skill of your choice until your next extended rest.

Level 8: +2 bonus.

Power (Daily): Free action. *Trigger:* You fail a skill check. *Effect:* You may reroll that skill check.

Grandfathers' Wisdom (Pathfinder RPG)

Aura faint divination; **CL** 3rd
Slot —; **Price** 6,000; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

If the recipient of the boon wears the necklace of teeth (occupying the neck slot), he gains a +2 resistance bonus to all saving throws. Once per day when the wielder fails a skill check, he may immediately reroll it.

Green Stag

One of the wildest nature spirits, the Green Stag dwells in the untouched forest. He often flees from the first sign of humanoids, so only those who prove themselves at one with the forest can gain an audience with the Stag.

The Stag watches what goes on in his forest, but he lacks knowledge of humanoids and their ways, so he may not always understand what humanoid creatures do. Further, the Stag does not speak any tongue known by mortals. He "speaks" primarily through gestures, body language, and animal grunts. Despite this, he is surprisingly efficient and precise at communicating (though a GM might require a Nature, Knowledge (nature), or Handle Animal check to grasp the meaning).

The Green Stag is primarily concerned with preserving the forest's splendor, and he sees humanoid encroachment as the greatest threat. Already he feels such creatures eroding the edges of his realm.

Adventure Hooks

Human herders or farmers are clearing the forest to make grazing land, and the Green Stag is furious. Woodland creatures strike against the people and their herds. The heroes must find a way to deal with the situation, preferably in a way that suits both the herders and the Stag.

Hobgoblins are felling trees to fuel their war machine, and the Green Stag asks the PCs to fend them off. In doing so they discover that the loss of the forest is only part of the danger, as the hobgoblins are on the brink of invading civilized lands.

Boon

The Green Stag gives its boon only to those who show great respect for the forest and strive to keep it wild.

Stag's Bound Level 3+ Uncommon

Your legs suddenly fill with life, and you bound across the battlefield.

Level 3 680 gp Level 8 3,400 gp

Primal Boon

Property: You gain a +1 item bonus to Nature checks

Level 8: +2 item bonus.

Power (Daily): Minor. *Effect:* You shift a number of squares equal to your speed +1.

Level 8: Your speed +2.

Stag's Bound (Pathfinder RPG)

Aura faint transmutation; **CL** 1st
Slot —; **Price** 1,400; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

The boon grants a +1 competence bonus Handle Animal and Knowledge (nature) checks. Once per day, as a swift action, the boon recipient can activate the stag's speed. For 1 minute, the recipient of the boon gains a +10 enhancement bonus to his land speed and a +5 bonus to Acrobatics checks made to jump. Ω

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OPEN DESIGN PRESENTS

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Unearthed Ancestry

Racial Utility Powers for Gnomes, Tieflings, and Minotaurs



By Jerry LeNeave
Art by Frank Walls

The tieflings noble houses have fallen and despair wreaths their ruins. The untapped magic of the Fey realm permeates the gnomish soul and creeps like fog around their homes. The conflict between Man and Beast roils just beneath the surface of every minotaur. The special talents and innate abilities, long forgotten or unidentified, of these peoples present unique opportunities for those individuals capable of using them best.

MINOTAUR POWERS

Labyrinthine Instinct — **Minotaur Utility 2**

Entering a deep trance, you reach out to the spirits of your ancestors for guidance and premonition.

At-Will * Primal
Standard Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be inside a location that contains walls.
Effect: Gain a +5 power bonus to your next Perception check. In addition, a successful Perception check will determine the origin (type) and speed of up to 5 creatures within 10 squares of you. Walls do not block this effect, and line of sight is not required.
Aftereffect: You receive a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

By the Horns **Minotaur Utility 6**

A burst of bestial strength frees you from your adversaries' grasp and sends them flying.

Encounter * Martial
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy grabs you
Effect: The triggering enemy takes damage equal to your Strength, Constitution, or Wisdom modifier and is pushed 3 squares. You are no longer grabbed.

Spiked Riposte **Minotaur Utility 10**

You parry an opponent's attack with your horns, goring and knocking them to the floor simultaneously.

Encounter * Martial
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy attacks you with a weapon attack
Effect: The attack misses you. Make the following attack as a free action.
Target: The triggering creature
Attack: Level + highest ability modifier vs. Reflex
Hit: 5 + highest ability modifier damage, and the target is knocked prone.
Miss: Target is knocked prone.

Becoming the Bull **Minotaur Utility 16**

With a poised bestial roar, steam billows from your nostrils, and your hooves dig deep into the ground.

Daily * Martial
Standard Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you may use goring charge as an At-Will power. In addition if goring charge is used against a bloodied creature, it takes an additional 1d6 damage.

Ancestral Guidance **Minotaur Utility 22**

Calling forth magic of your bestial heritage, you are emboldened by a wellspring of strength and wisdom.

Daily * Primal
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You gain a +15 power bonus to your next Constitution-, Strength-, or Wisdom-based check. In addition, you cannot be surprised until the end of your next extended rest. You score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20, and you gain a +2 power bonus to attack and damage rolls until the end of your next extended rest.

GNOME POWERS

Illusory Object **Gnome Utility 2**

A flick of the wrist allows you to conjure a steadfast illusion of a single object.

At-Will * Illusion
Minor Action **Ranged** 1 square within 5
Effect: Make an DC 15 Arcana, Thievery or Nature check. If successful, you conjure one small or tiny object in the target square. It can be moved and manipulated as if it were a real object. It may not contain moving parts and has weight, sound, and scent identical to the real thing. You may end this effect as a free action. Anyone viewing, touching, or interacting with the object may make an Insight check to detect the illusion. The DC for this check is equal to your skill check result when conjuring this item. If the Illusion is detected, it vanishes immediately

Veil of the Feywild **Gnome Utility 6**

A thin layer of fey magic serves as a guise for friend, or a foe.

Encounter * Illusion

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Standard Action **Close** burst 5
Target: One creature in burst
Effect: Make an Arcana, Bluff, Thievery, or Nature check. The target assumes the physical and vocal likeness of another person or creature of equal size as the target of your choosing until the end of your next turn. Insight checks to detect this illusion are made versus the result of your check.
Special: If the target is not an ally, you may make the following attack.
Attack: Arcana, Bluff, Thievery, or Nature vs. Perception +10
Hit: Target does not notice the illusion.
Miss: Target notices the illusion and identifies its caster.
Sustain Minor: The illusion persists until the end of your next turn.

Feybound Companion — Gnome Utility 10

A natural affinity for beasts and woodland creatures allows you to gain a fast riding companion and ally.
At-Will * Charm
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One medium or small natural living animal or beast
Effect: You may communicate with target creature in order to bond with it. After bonding, the creature will serve you as a mount for 24 hours or until you summon another feybound companion, and you may communicate with it telepathically up to one mile away. Sending thoughts to your feybound companion requires a minor action. Your companion is not dominated, may still act on its own will, and cannot be given combat orders. Willingly sending your companion into combat immediately breaks your bond.
Special: You may have only one feybound companion at a time. If you choose and bond with a new animal, you lose the bond with your previous companion.

Gnome's Gambit — Gnome Utility 16

For gnomes, toying with strands of fate is as simple as playing a hand of cards.
Encounter
Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You miss on an attack roll or fail a skill check.
Effect: You may re-roll the attack or skill check, but you must take the second result. If the roll succeeds, it counts as a critical if applicable, and you gain an action point that you may spend immediately. If the roll fails again, you lose an action point if available, and you may not spend action points until the end of your next turn.

Tall Tales Come True — Gnome Utility 22

Through a combination of luck, trickery, and perhaps a little gnomish magic, you manage to make the improbable seem feasible.
Daily * Illusion, Psychic
Standard Action **Ranged** 1 square within 20
Trigger: A creature moves into a square of your choosing
Effect: Choose one of the following.
1: Through means no gnome would ever dare reveal, you've managed to prepare a trap ahead of time.
* Effect: You may place a single trap or hazard of a level no greater than your own with its origin square anywhere within range.
2: Through means of fast talk, feints, flourishes of fey magic, deft footwork, and impish laughter, you completely puzzle and distract your target.
* Effect: Target grants combat advantage until the end of the encounter. In addition, the target suffers a -4 penalty to Will saves and Perception checks until the end of its next turn. (Sustain minor)

TIEFLING POWERS

Infernal Ignition — Tiefling Utility 2

You will the fire that stirs inside your soul to creep out into the world around you.
At-Will * Fire, Psychic
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature or object
Effect: The target bursts into flame, taking an ongoing 5/10/15 + Intelligence, Charisma, or Constitution modifier fire damage (save ends). This effect is not cumulative.

Boon of the Nine Gates — Tiefling Utility 6

Rage and flame from regions beyond writhe through a weapon of your choosing.
Encounter * Fire
Minor Action **Burst** 5
Target: One weapon or implement within range
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, the weapon inflicts an additional 1d6 + Charisma, Constitution, or Intelligence modifier fire damage.
Special: The weapon also gains the property Critical: 5 ongoing fire damage/tier. This effect stacks with other critical properties of that weapon or implement.

Devilish Perks — Tiefling Utility 10

With a little strain, you briefly manifest an infernal trait from deep within your bloodline.
Daily
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Lose a healing surge. Choose one of the following perks which lasts until the end of your next turn.
- Sprout leathery wings. You gain a fly speed of 8.
- Your body ripples with spines and horns. Gain +2 to AC, an additional 5 fire resist, and deal 5 damage to any creature hitting you with a melee attack.
- Create a Burst 1 cloud of unnatural darkness within 10 squares. These squares are opaque and prevent line of sight to all but tieflings, devils, and demons.

The effects may not be sustained after the end of an encounter.
Special: Spend an action point. You may select two of these benefits.
Sustain Minor: The effect(s) persist until the end of your next turn.

Demonic Transference — Tiefling Utility 16

A mere touch allows an ally to be infused with your dark gifts.
Daily
Standard Action **Melee** Touch
Effect: Lose a healing surge. Target regains hit points as if it had spent a healing surge and gains a single use of one of your tiefling powers, which must be used before the end of their next turn. Special properties of that power do not apply to them.

Essence of Asmodeus — Tiefling Utility 22

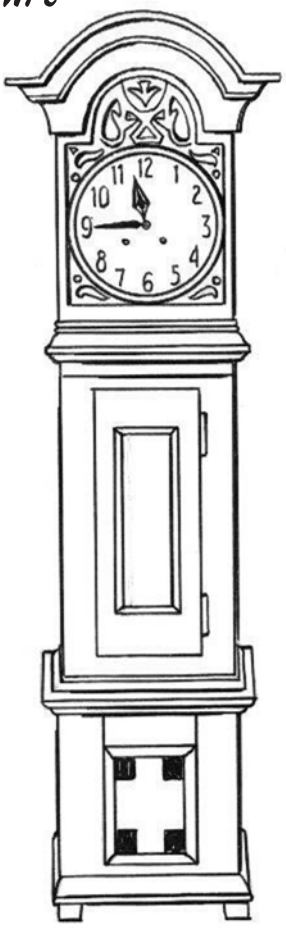
Asmodeus, the King of Devils, manifests and bestows a blessing from his ruby rod.
Daily * Healing, Fire
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Gain an additional 15 fire resist, Regeneration 15, a +10 bonus to all Intelligence and Charisma based checks, and deal 15 fire damage to any creature striking you with a melee attack until the end of the encounter. After the encounter, you are weakened until your next extended rest. Ω

Eric Lindahl [Order - 5151707]

Make Haste!

How to Design an Adventure with Time Pressure

By Ron Lundeen
Art by Jeff Preston



Racing against time is a classic element of fantasy adventure. The heroes must rush through orc-infested lands to secure vital help from a friendly nation, or race to save an imperiled damsel, or gather clues fast enough to uncover assassins before they strike. Unfortunately, the question "Do the heroes arrive in time?" isn't much of a question. They must, or the adventure has very little climax.

The haste point mechanic presented here gives you the tension of a ticking clock without sacrificing the payoff of the climax or overwhelming the PCs. Do the PCs arrive in time? Of course, but the villain might be better prepared, the events the PCs wish to prevent might be further along, or a much larger encounter might confront the PCs. Conversely, if the PCs make good time, they might catch the villain unprepared, short-handed, or just getting his plans underway.

Haste Point Basics

Haste points track how quickly the PCs navigate the various elements of a time-sensitive adventure. The PCs earn haste points based on how quickly or well they handle each encounter. More haste points give the PCs opportunities and advantages (or fewer disadvantages) during the adventure's climactic scene. Haste points encourage PC to make difficult decisions and reward hard choices and clever skill so long as the PCs keep focused on their main goal—and keep moving.

Each encounter in an adventure using haste points falls into one of two types. Either the encounter lets the PCs earn a haste point (early encounters), or the encounter's difficulty varies based on how many haste points the PCs have already earned (one or two climactic encounters). The number of encounters of the first type sets how many haste points are available. The difficulties and obstacles of climactic encounters scale based on how many haste points the PCs have earned.

Haste Point Example: Against the Venom Cult

For example, an adventure called "Against the Venom Cult" might have eight encounters and allow the PCs to earn a haste point from each of the first six encounters while they investigate cultist activity and race to locate the cult's lair. The difficulty of the final two encounters, where the PCs confront the cultists in their hideout, would thus vary depending on how many out of the six possible haste points the PCs had earned. The encounters are slightly easier if the PCs have earned four or more haste points, somewhat harder if they have earned three or less. Ways to scale the last encounter include:

- If the PCs have earned all six haste points, the cultists are entirely unprepared for an attack. The PCs must face fewer lookouts, opponents, and traps.
- If the PCs have four or five haste points, the cultists are prepared but unsupported by allies.
- If the PCs have two or three haste points, the cultists are joined by a set of four poisonous spiders, making the fight slightly more challenging for the PCs.
- If the PCs have fewer than two haste points, the cultists are joined by four spiders and all enemies inflict bonus poison damage due to the near-completion of their ritual.

Haste points can also provide opportunities to succeed beyond simply changing an encounter's composition. If the PCs must free the baron's son before a dark cult sacrifices him, for example, the speed with which they reach the final encounter (meaning the haste points they earn along the way) might not change how many cultists are gathered at the ritual. Rather, it might provide several

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Perception checks (equal to the haste point total) to see the critical flaws in the villains' security that allows a single PC to free the boy while the others fight, or it might reveals the one rope a daring archer can cut with an arrow to drop the chandelier on the cult leader.

Haste points can provide additional tension beyond simply altering an encounter's level, especially in encounters with minimal combat. Perhaps the PCs have discovered the identity of an assassin and the exact poison she plans to use, and they must race to the duke's palace to stop him from drinking it in the middle of the ball celebrating his daughter's wedding. The PCs might gain haste points for outwitting and sneaking away from the thugs set to waylay them, and from leaving one or two party members to hold up the assassin's apprentices and wizard accomplice while one of the PCs dashes for the duke. These haste points might allow the PCs a lower DC to skill checks used to convince the guards to let them into the hall (or to sneak in), to locate the one poisoned wine bottle in a table of similar bottles, and to convince the duke not to drink an otherwise exquisite vintage in a very public toast.

Early Encounters: Earning Haste Points

Each encounter that can award a haste point should, in addition any other elements, include a clear opportunity for the PCs to either make quick headway or else lose some time toward their ultimate goal. Rapidly overcoming obstacles or ignoring distractions earns the party a haste point. Getting stuck on a task or sidetracked costs them the potential haste point. Each encounter that allows the PCs to earn a haste point is either a "rush" or "linger" encounter.

Rush Encounters: In "rush" encounters, the PCs must work to earn the haste point, by accomplishing a task with a challenging but not impossible difficulty. Look for ways the PCs might put in some extra effort, over and above the encounter's usual events, to earn the haste point. Examples of "rush" encounters include:

- While crossing a wasteland and foraging for food, the PCs might make a difficult Survival or Nature check to discover a shortcut.
- If the PCs spare an enemy during a combat encounter, it might reveal a timesaving clue if they interrogate an enemy and succeed at a difficult Intimidate check.
- An encounter such as a spreading fire or rising flood might include a timesaving clue if the PCs can avert the disaster quickly. Otherwise, the clue is lost.
- While investigating a crime scene, the PCs may make a difficult Perception check to quickly discover the clue they need. A failed check means the PCs expend substantial time discovering the necessary clue.

Linger Encounters: In "linger" encounters, the PCs automatically gain a haste point unless they take action to lose it. Give the players opportunities to exchange time for other advantages (such as interesting but non-vital information, material wealth, or heroic-but-unrelated deeds). Confront the PCs with decisions that test their commitment to their goal. Examples of "linger" encounters include:

- After a combat encounter, the PCs discover captives that cannot reach safety on their own. Helping the captives forfeits the encounter's haste point.
- While seeking their goal, the PCs find someone in need of time-consuming help (lost and threatened pilgrims, villagers with missing children, etc.). Whatever reward the PCs earn, they forfeit the haste point.
- A friendly NPC offers the PCs a reward for performing a task the NPC considers urgent (such as searching for a lost item or defusing an impending fight) but that distracts from the ultimate goal. Performing the task forfeits the encounter's haste point.
- The PCs lose a haste point by spending too much game time relaxing, negotiating, healing up, exploring, or shopping. Some resting and exploration is expected, but excessive delay can cost the PCs.
- The PCs research, scry, or otherwise discover valuable information about their opponents. If the PCs spend a few hours reading or making contacts, they automatically learn useful information but forfeit the encounter's haste point. (This information should be useful but not crucial to success.)

One haste point per non-climactic encounter is a guideline, but an encounter need not provide a haste point. Conversely, a single major encounter might provide several haste points. A long night of river travel with three difficult Perception checks to avoid time-consuming river hazards might grant a haste point for each successful check—and serious danger in dark waters if the nocturnal hazards are not seen.

Record the total number of potential haste points for constructing climactic encounters. DMs should make abundantly clear throughout the adventure that delay carries a cost. It isn't fair to penalize players when they had no idea that haste was essential. Haste points should be neither easy nor assumed. As a guideline, design encounters assuming that your PCs will gain half of the available haste points.

Climactic Encounters: Applying Haste Points

Haste points might apply only to the last encounter of an adventure, but look for ways to apply haste points to other climactic moments if the adventure contains more than four encounters. This can make adventures gradually more challenging, and emphasize the need for PCs to stay focused and pick up the pace.

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In an encounter applying haste points, break down the total possible points on a scale. This breakdown can be as simple as a binary toggle (such as, whether the PCs have at least four haste points) or as detailed as different outcome for every possible haste point total.

You should set the baseline difficulty for the encounter at the halfway point, meaning plan for the PCs to arrive with about half of the total available haste points.

If the PCs have *earned fewer than half* of the available haste points, increase the difficulty of the encounter but not by more than one or two levels. These changes reflect the enemies' greater preparation. Don't overwhelm the PCs completely; no matter how long they took to reach the end, they should still have a chance of success. Examples include:

- Add minions or lackeys to the fight. Individually, these opponents don't really challenge the PCs, but the encounter is harder with more of them and they might escape to warn others.
- Increase the enemies' attentiveness and number of guards, reducing the likelihood that the PCs can catch them by surprise.
- Establish some preparatory spells or useful magic items that the villains prepare before the fight.
- Erect some minor fortifications, magical terrain, or other environmental hazard to hinder the PCs.
- Add a minor trap, or increase the danger of a trap (by adding poison, for example).

If the PCs have *earned more than half* of the available haste points, decrease the encounter difficulty by no more than a single level, so that it remains a satisfying challenge. These changes reflect the PCs giving their enemies little time to prepare. Examples include:

- One or two low-powered combatants have not yet arrived. You can add them midway through the battle if the PCs are doing well.
- Some enemies have sustained injuries that have not quite healed. These injuries are represented by lowered hp totals, a small penalty to attack rolls, or a similar effect.
- Some enemies are asleep or unarmored, and require time before joining the fight.
- If the encounter involves a trap, decrease the danger by reducing its damage or effect.
- Eliminate a trap or lookout entirely because they had no time to set it.
- Add an environmental effect to aid the PCs but not the enemies (having the sun still up while they attack the vampire, for example, or having a fog bank roll in to cover their approach in early morning, before the sun burns it away).

When the PCs have earned many haste points, your descriptions should show that the PCs have caught their enemies off-guard or unprepared. You should emphasize the link between the PCs' rush through earlier encounters and the challenge of the climactic encounter.

An adventure can include several encounters modified by haste points, and these need not be contiguous. For example, if the PCs spent the last three encounters tracking down river bandits before they steal a shipment of coins from the royal mint, haste points might influence the climactic fourth encounter in the bandits' lair. More haste points might provide clues that reveal not simply that a traitor works among the men guarding the shipment, but who it is, and that he serves the king's exiled brother. Moreover, fewer haste points at this stage might reduce the time the PCs have to reach the shipment riverboat as well as increasing the difficulty in finding the inside man, who is still determined to wrest away the gold for his master's cause.

When Not to Use Haste Points

Haste points are not a perfect tool for every time-sensitive situation, such as:

- *Short Periods*. When the action occurs over a short period of time—less than an hour, rather than over many hours or many days—haste points cannot cover all actions that might create a measurable delay. Over short periods, just using a ritual or casting a spell with a long cast time might throw off the clock. In these cases, simply tracking the PCs' activities round-by-round or minute-by-minute generally works best (just like tracking a spell or effect that lasts 20 minutes).
- *Footraces*. Don't penalize PCs just because they have a lumbering dwarf in the party. When just making a flat-out run after an objective, the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game's* chase rules or a *Dungeons & Dragons* skill challenge provide a more useful mechanism.

Haste Points and Rewards

Haste points should not modify the XP or treasure of an encounter. The encounter difficulty depends on how well the PCs met the adventure's earlier time pressures. Earning fewer haste points makes an encounter challenging, but should not reward the PCs with increased XP. Conversely, earning more haste points should not penalize the PCs with less XP because the climactic encounter was easier. They earned the easier encounter by succeeding at the faster, harder road with less time for rest.

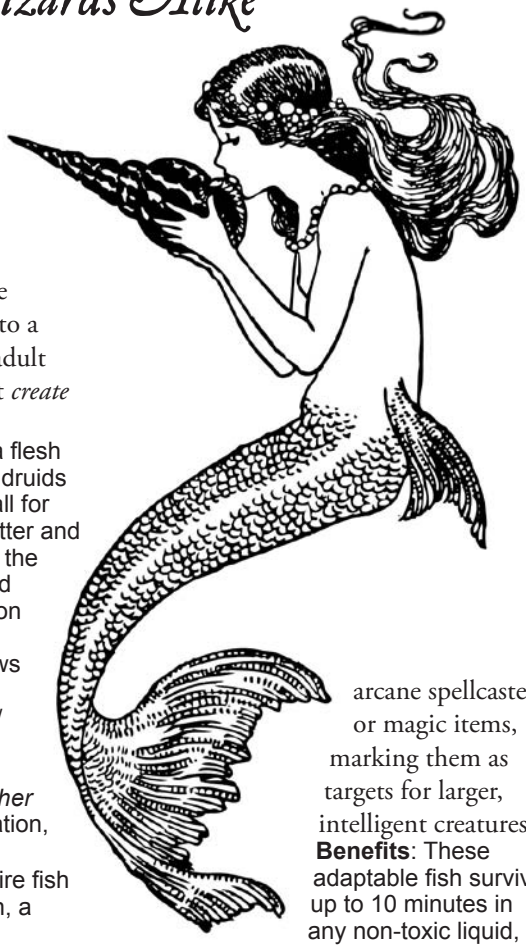
When planning adventures and encounters to include haste points, make sure that PCs still receive the enough information or items to ultimately succeed, no matter how fast or slow they go, and determine before hand what clues and useful things they could gain by moving quickly. This requires a little extra work, but the tension haste points can add to a game is well worth it. Ω

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

Fish of Legend

Magical Seafood for Fighters & Wizards Alike

By Crystal Frasier



The underwater world holds a strange fascination. Surrounding civilization on all sides, the aquatic realm is a strange and alien world—untamed, unexplored, and forever unknowable. It provides support, transportation, and nourishment vital to entire empires, yet conceals mysteries a scant dozen feet from the largest cities and best-traveled roads. Whether the rolling waves of the ocean or gentle ripples on an icy mountain lake, the aquatic world hides alien monsters and strange treasures.

For these reasons, fish serve as strong mythological symbols for everything from fertility to knowledge. Always a healthy and renewable food source, fish also provide countless mundane goods: dyes, food, medicine, cosmetics, even leather. In a world where magic runs rampant, far stranger breeds swim the furthest currents. Many makes unexpectedly fine magical treasures.

Abaia (CR 3)

Native to sweltering jungles, where seasonal rains turn forests into swamps and fields into lakes, the abaia evolved remarkable control over their environment. As relatives of the freshwater electric eel, the abaia tap elemental magic to create small rainstorms to maintain their small pools during the dry season. Competition over these magical currents makes the abaia highly territorial, and they protect their pools and fish stocks fiercely from one another and other predators.

Apply the Advanced Creature template and Aquatic subtype to a shocker lizard to represent an adult abaia, adding the ability to cast *create water* once per day.

Benefits: Freshly-caught abaia flesh is fatty and rich, and tropical druids often use it in sacrifices to call for rain. The eel's brain, while bitter and grainy, confers a measure of the abaia's elemental affinity; and eating it both renders a person impervious to dehydration effects for 24 hours and allows them to drip water from their skin at will (up to 10 gallons / day). Using the entire fish as the material component for a *control water* or *control weather* spell doubles the spell's duration, as per the Extend Spell feat.

Market Price: Whether the entire fish or simply the preserved brain, a single abaia costs 250 gp.

Alchemist Guppy

The origins of the alchemist guppy are lost to history, but selective breeding undoubtedly coaxed them along. The surprisingly durable creatures survive short-term immersion in most chemicals, but they die quickly if exposed to genuine poisons or toxins. Many alchemists, especially as apprentices, use them to ensure safety. Less commonly, nobles use them to test for poison in wines or soups.

As a strange side-effect of frequent exposure to arcane magic, alchemist guppies naturally flock to sources of this magic. In urban waterways, where escaped hardy fish sometimes breed into large numbers, schools of the colorful, inch-long fish swarm around arcane spellcasters or magic items, marking them as targets for larger, intelligent creatures.

Benefits: These adaptable fish survive up to 10 minutes in any non-toxic liquid, from salt water to wine to various potions and alchemical fluids. If the substance is poisonous, the fish dies immediately. PCs may attempt a DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check to identify the impurity. A surviving fish may be returned to freshwater and reused, though each fish needs 24 hours to recover between "expeditions." Escaped, feral guppies are woefully inaccurate, but many city dwellers keep them as pets.

Market Price: 15 gp for a carefully bred domesticated sample. A feral pet costs 5-10 cp.

Badarlayn (CR 1/6)

Catfish and other bottom-feeders benefit from a hardy constitution, but few can compare to the badarlayn. Evolved long ago from blind catfish favored by dwarven traders, they enjoy the festering cornucopia provided by

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Magic Items that Aren't

From a mechanical perspective, most of the wondrous fish mentioned in this article are simply magic items with a new paint job. Adding an unusual description to otherwise familiar magical items helps them stand out and feel special. Inventing your own magical fish is as easy as picking a potion or wondrous item of an appropriate value and dreaming up a new description. Be careful not to overuse this technique; if every potion is an exotic fish, otherworldly fruit, or mountaintop lily, then suddenly finding an actual potion in a glass vial becomes the rare treat.

If your players decide to go right to the source and angle for these spectacular fish themselves, the technical details can easily be cribbed from the Magic Item Creation rules. Simply replace the appropriate Craft skill with Profession (angler) and assume the raw materials cost is the price for specialized line, lures, and exotic bait required to fish for such legendary creatures. GMs may wish to waive any feat requirement for catching enchanted fish, as doing so requires the additional hassle of locating the creature's habitat—often far-removed from civilization and surrounded by hostile creatures. Ultimately, the GM is final arbiter of how many enchanted fish can be acquired through angling before the local supply is fished out.

urban sewers and cesspools. Many disease cults revere the reddish-black catfish, considering them blessed with immunity to all plague. Outside of such vile churches, badarlayn are not especially popular. Their plague-ridden environment and rancid-tasting flesh repulse all but the poorest city-dwellers, and the barb on its tail inflicts a deadly parasite on those who get too close.

Use the statistics for a lizard and apply the aquatic subtype. Replace the land and climb speeds with Swim 20 t. and replace its bite with a sting attack that inflicts parasites (treat as bubonic plague, but only transmissible by injury).

Benefits: Badarlayn rely on powerful natural magics to survive in filth. Properly harvesting and cleaning the fish's delicate liver without puncturing it is no simple task, but doing so preserves that magic. Eating an entire badarlayn liver cures any ailment, as per the *remove disease* spell (CL 10).

Market Price: Fried badarlayn fillets are available in the poorest neighborhoods for a few copper; while safe, they are an acquired taste. The livers are nigh-impossible to harvest intact and cost 1,500 gp apiece.

Cornucopia Skate

To many cultures, fish represent plenty, and a good haul may save entire cities from siege or blight. Sometimes called the "angel's bounty", the cornucopia skate is a celestial breed of cartilaginous fish that embodies that concept. Native to the golden seas of the higher planes, the flat fish rarely find their way into terrestrial oceans. In times of need, the gods of light send great schools of the creatures to their faithful, filling bellies in times of need and granting peace to troubled souls.

The lightly-colored cornucopia skate rarely grows larger than 12" from nose to tail. Their speckled hides often resemble holy symbols, and their flaky flesh is bland but filling. Many good-aligned churches offer pickled skates as rations for young clerics sent on holy quests or pilgrims setting out on long journeys.

Benefits: If carefully skinned and prepared with reverence by a divine caster, a cornucopia skate's flesh swells and multiplies as it is cleaned. A single fish can feed three adults for a full day. If the skate is pickled whole, its regenerative power can feed people at any point in the next year. Once skinned, the tender flesh preserves poorly and putrefies after 24 hours.

Market Price: 37.5 gp

Feytail (CR 1/4)

Also called faerie fish and the dowager's blush, feytails swim in the wildest streams of untouched forests. These delicate cousins to the carp feature wispy, delicate fins in every color of the rainbow, from which they derive their names. These silky streamers—longer than the fish's own body—mimic the somatic gestures of illusion spells. This unusual casting ability lets feytail create colorful illusory lures to attract prey.

Because of their powers, many aristocrats whisper that eating a feytail's flesh makes a woman more alluring. Ironically, the milky, soft meat does provide a flush of color, but due to a mild allergic reaction rather than any magical properties.

Feytails use the statistics for cats. Apply the Aquatic subtype, exchange its land speed for a swim speed, remove its claw attacks, and add the ability to cast *dancing lights* at will.

Benefits: The flesh of a feytail is delicate but simple to prepare. Eating its flesh causes a minor flush and sense of euphoria, providing a +2 alchemical bonus all Bluff, Diplomacy, and Perform checks for 24 hours, but the reaction also imposes a -2 penalty to all Fortitude saves.

If the creature is kept as a pet, it may be prodded up to cast *dancing lights* 3/day, though carrying the fish, an aquarium, and ample fresh water and food to keep it healthy is impractical for any traveler.

In addition, the feytail's delicate constitution requires a keeper to make a successful DC 20 Handle Animal check each day to prevent the fish from suffering 1d4 Con damage.

Market Price: A well-cooked feytail dinner is a noble extravagance, and rarely seen outside palace walls. A single fillet costs 160 gp. A live, healthy feytail is worth 600 gp.

Fur-bearing Trout (CR ½)

Despite the absurdity, rumors persist of a legendary fish high in the coldest mountains streams and iciest glacial lakes. Also called the yeti trout, these elusive freshwater fish evolved a beaver-like pelt to resist the frigid bite of their home waters. The legendary pelt does exist, because the fur-bearing trout—alone among all fish—is warm-blooded!

Whether by magic or bizarre natural selection, the fur-bearing trout generates unheard-of levels of potent hormones. While this makes

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their flavor musky in the extreme, their bodily oil makes key ingredients in tonics to treat male disorders of virility and strength. Their primordial brew also makes the fish exceptionally aggressive and tenacious.

Use the stats for badgers, giving them the aquatic subtype and swapping their land speed for swim speed. A fur-bearing trout's burrow speed only applies to ice and snow.

Benefits: The oil from a fur-bearing trout may be crafted into an alchemical tonic that provides one of the following benefits: restore lost hair for one month, fill in a mustache or beard, grow hair on an otherwise clean area (such as an arm or child's face) for one week, relieve impotence for 24 hours. A single fur-bearing trout contains enough oil to brew 10 such tonics.

Market Price: A single fur-bearing trout, alive or dead, is worth 130 gp to interested parties. Once brewed, a single dose of alchemical tonic costs 26 gp.

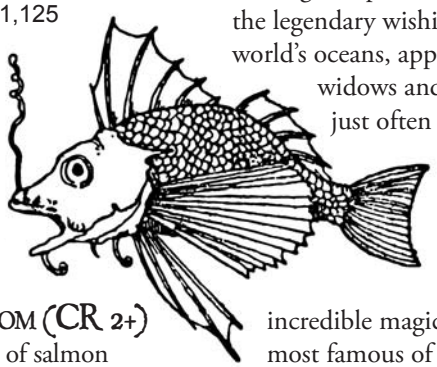
Mehyt

When the gods first forged the world, the task of painting the stars into the sky fell to a lonely young goddess. Though eager, she balked at painting infinity, so instead she crafted an energetic fish whose leaping and games would splash stars across the sky. The fish's antics so delighted the goddess that she freed her creation into the nascent rivers far below, giving birth to the mehyt.

Though difficult to find in the wild, many temples dedicated to creativity, vitality, and the stars breed mehyt as sacred animals, for their white-speckled backs mirror the night sky above them and their roe incites vivid hallucinations said to be painted in divine pigments. Mehyt rarely mate in captivity, so those few priests who can cajol eggs from captive specimens command positions of great respect.

Benefits: If consumed by a divine caster (as a spell-completion item), a spoonful of mehyt roe casts the faithful's mind into the outer planes, as per the *contact other plane* spell. The user always contacts the plane of a lesser deity and receives answers in the form of luridly bright images which may take hours or weeks to fully understand (GM discretion). A live fish may be substituted for a divine focus for deities associated with stars, creativity, or prophecy. Eating the mehyt itself provides no special insight, but doing so is considered an affront to the gods in certain areas.

Market Price: A single spoonful of mehyt roe is worth 1,125 gp, and is difficult to store for more than a week or two. A live mehyt fetches 50 gp from interested buyers, and lays eggs once a year, in the spring.



Salmon of Wisdom (CR 2+)

The annual migration of salmon is one of nature's great wonders. Thousands upon thousands of fish navigating across oceans and waterways, returning to their exact place of birth. The superstitious claim that each generation, the fish pool their cleverness into a single paragon of their kind, a Lord or Lady of Salmon who holds the memory of home and guides his brethren back to their spawning grounds, and in rare cases even reshape human kingdoms.

Whether due to rarity or salmonic cleverness, anglers rarely land more than a single salmon of wisdom a century. These paragons offer a healthful meal and divine flavor. But what changes the shape of politics is its secondary fillet—a small, moist track of flesh near the heart that grants a full measure of the fish's cunning and insight to whoever eats it.

Use the statistics for an advanced, celestial gar. For a Lord or Lady of Salmon, use an Animal Lord from *Bestiary 3*.

Benefits: While a meal of salmon of wisdom puts all other salmon to shame, it is the tiny secondary filet that men fight and die over. The delicate meat requires a full week and a successful DC 27 Craft (cook) or Profession (cook) check to smoke and prepare; failure on this check destroys the meat. If prepared successfully, eating the entire filet grants a permanent +2 inherent bonus to a creature's Wisdom.

Market Price: A single salmon of wisdom provides ample meat for ten sublime meals, with each serving worth up to 50 gp. The magical, secondary fillet is worth a king's ransom: 52,500 gp unprepared or 55,000 gp ready to eat.

Wishing Koi

Part legend, part force of nature, the legendary wishing koi swims the world's oceans, appearing to lovelorn widows and poor fishermen just often enough to keep the rumors circulating. The unusual fish can speak and commands incredible magical powers, the most famous of which is the ability to warp reality and grant a heart's desire. The crafty creature uses this ability to tempt sailors and young maidens for its own entertainment—or buy its freedom when captured.

Little is known about the wishing koi. Some cultures claim the fish, swathed in brilliant patterns of orange, black, and white, is the avatar of a trickster god. Others believe it to be a powerful fey. None even agree if the creature is unique, or if an entire race of these elusive beings dwells in some lost corner of the world.

Use the stats for a young nereid, applying the aquatic subtype and eliminating their land speed. A wishing koi's beguiling aura works against greedy creatures, rather than anyone attracted to women. In place of a shawl, they treasure a glass fishing lure with similar properties.

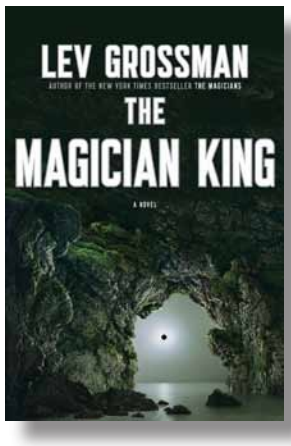
Benefits: Similar to genies, wishing koi can grant wishes for other beings, but never themselves. Once per week, they may cast *limited wish* as a spell-like ability (CL 15) on behalf of another creature. The fish must roam the open seas to replenish its natural supply of magic, and a captive wishing carp retains its intelligence and special abilities but cannot refresh any of its spell-like abilities.

Market Price: Because of their arcane abilities, a captive wishing koi is worth 4,100 gp for the single *limited wish* they can grant before exhausting their ability. They are rebellious and deceptive by nature, making terrible servants. Ω

Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151709)

Book Reviews

By William Banks, Ben McFarland, Wade Rockett, and Pierce Watters



The Magician King
By Lev Grossman
Viking Adult
ISBN: 978-0670022311
Hardcover, $26.95
416 pages

The *Magician King* is the sequel to the bestselling Lev Grossman novel, *The Magicians*. Roughly speaking, these novels might be described as "Harry Potter goes to Narnia, and does semi-adult things." In the *Magician King*, retired magician, Quentin, returns to the fantasy land of Fillory, along with his magic school alumni chums, Eliot and Janet, and Quentin's childhood friend, Julia.

There, the four assume the roles of kings and queens of Fillory (Fillory always has two of each, and they must be from Earth), and do kingly and queenly things until all begins to change.

The rulers of Fillory go on a lark and capture a future-predicting bunny, a somewhat frightening and unsavory hare. A huntsman drops dead, and a quest begins, leading to the seeming edge of the world, then back to Earth for Quentin and Julia. There is a trip to Venice, a reunion with an old friend, and an encounter with a very ancient dragon.

The quest is intermingled with chapters recalling Julia's grueling odyssey in which she learns magic the hard way and suffers terribly. In many ways, hers is the more interesting story of the two.

Grossman's tales are always engrossing, and the story moves rapidly. Like *The Magicians*, *The Magician King* is a somewhat flawed book, leaving several loose ends untied, and making a few illogical turns along the way; nonetheless, it remains and enjoyable read; the reader truly wants to follow the story to the end to learn what happens.

Some of the action is definitely adult, both sexually and violence-wise, so this is most certainly not a fairy-tale for children. It is probably the second book in a trilogy, and the reader would most likely profit from reading *The Magicians*, first. Recommended.

Review by Pierce Watters



The Night Circus
By Erin Morgenstern
Doubleday
ISBN: 978-0385534635
Hardcover, $26.95
400 pages

The Night Circus begins with two old magicians making a bet in which they pit their young apprentices against each other. One apprentice, Celia, is the daughter of the man performing under the name of Prospero, and the other is Marco, a young foundling boy plucked directly from an orphanage by the older sorcerer, who is sometimes referred to as "…the man in the grey suit."

The children grow up and are trained in magic by their respective teachers, who range from indifferent to cruel in the treatment of their charges. Nevertheless, Celia and Marco become splendid adults.

Eventually, both, who remain unaware of the other's identity or the bet, become attached to Le Cirque des Reves. This nighttime circus is a marvelous invention in tents of black and white, and it displays many wonders and marvels for the enlightenment and delectation of discerning revelers. Fans of the circus form a clique and follow along as it appears in new places and disappears again, traveling on a magical train.

Ultimately, *The Night Circus* is a love story. Absolutely and positively, it is a love story. But the romance is quiet and different and magical, both literally and emotionally. It is also a fantasy with an occasional bit of horror that leaps up and grabs the reader by the throat.

Although a completely different book, this Victorian romance is reminiscent of Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*. Both are period pieces, both are romances of an unusual nature, both have a dream-like quality to the story, and both contain moments of real horror.

Erin Morgenstern's *The Night Circus* is light on the emotional and cerebral palate. Yet it is memorable. It is a confection, perhaps an amuse bouche which delights and intrigues and then is gone. Read and enjoy. Highly recommended.

Review by Pierce Watters

Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)



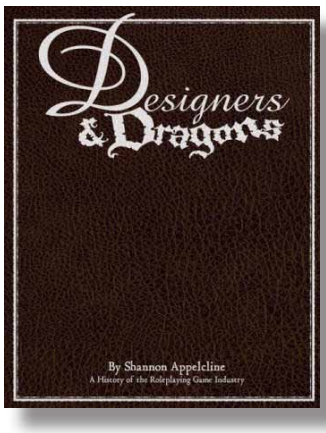
Wings of Twilight
By Hans Cummings
CreateSpace
ISBN 101466411007
Paperback, $12.99; kindle eBook $2.99
254 pages

Hans Cummings' debut offering, *Wings of Twilight*, is a well-written novel and a quick read. It presents a familiar tale refreshingly split between two diverse groups bound to collide in what seems like unavoidable violence.

Reminiscent of Jacqueline Carey's *Godslayer* books, its unusual point of view offers an uncommon and light-hearted take from within the enemies' gates, while building investment in characters traditionally relegated to fodder for the heroes' blades. The secondary plotlines of self-discovery, moral conflict, and romantic development mesh unobtrusively as one group seeks out the Twilight Dungeon and the other seeks to defend it from an internal threat—with both struggling against incompetent leadership.

While the setting is Cummings' invention, it will seem comfortably familiar to regular fantasy readers, as draconic trapsmiths, violent oroqs, and sullen minotaurs populate the underground catacombs—all commanded by the reluctant and somewhat self-deprecating character of winged, immolating Sarvesh. There is a definite high-fantasy tone to this unpretentious, fun romp. It knows what it is, and it knowingly winks at the reader as the entertaining story unfolds.

Review by Ben McFarland



Designers & Dragons
By Shannon Appelcline
Mongoose Publishing
ISBN 978-1-907702-58-7
Hardcover, $49.99
441 pages

Shannon Appelcline's *Designers & Dragons* is not just a history of the roleplaying game industry: it is *the* history of the roleplaying game industry. You sense this was the publisher's intent as soon as you lay eyes on the thick, heavy hardcover, bound in black faux leather with silver lettering. When Wolfgang handed it to me, I felt as intimidated as if he'd asked me to do a short review of the *Bible*. For all I knew, this beautiful tome was written in Latin.

I needn't have worried. *Designers & Dragons* is a page-turner, with engaging writing detailing the history of the hobby from the earliest days of TSR through the rise, fall, and surprising comeback of Catalyst Game Labs. The book's informal tone makes this massive topic as easy and enjoyable to read as a Choose Your Own Adventure book.

Which brings me to the book's innovative format. Rather than presenting a straight timeline, the book delves into the histories of individual companies in the order of the earliest RPG publishers. It begins with TSR, moves on to Flying Buffalo, then Games Workshop, and so on. Sidebars offering brief accounts of related publishers accompany each main company's entry. Though small—

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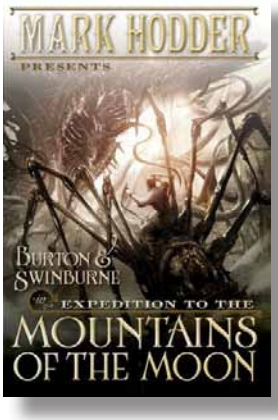
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and in many cases, short-lived—the related companies' stories are important to the RPG hobby's overall history, and Appelcline's approach is quite clever. The reader can go through the book from start to finish, or may, instead, follow the interwoven threads of several companies' histories aided by the "What to Read Next" sections.

Designers & Dragons successfully covers the warts-and-all history of the RPG industry from a hobbyist's perspective without grinding axes or taking sides. I highly recommend it to anyone who's passionate about RPGs.

Review by Wade Rockett



MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON
By Mark Hodder
Pyr Publishing
ISBN 978-1-61614-535-4
Paperback, $16, eBook $11.99
404 pages

If you like your steampunk very British indeed, and if you know who Lord Palmerston was, you should already be reading the Burton & Swinburne series by Mark Hodder. If you just want a rip-roaring yarn about adventures in the heyday of colonial exploration in Africa, *Mountains of the Moon* has you covered there too.

The book is straightforward, and it doesn't require any knowledge of previous entries in the series, though it is related to the Spring-Heeled Jack story arc. No knowledge of Victorian British bigwigs is required either, though most readers will quickly figure out that the Germans are the bad guys when the Count von Zeppelin shows up in London and makes mischief.

Sir Richard Francis Burton—the explorer and the translator of the Arabian Nights—is the main character in a big cast, and fiction may for once be stranger than truth. Burton is a king's agent and a time traveler on the trail of assassins who have mastered various bits of biotech (here called Eugenics, a perhaps unfortunate word choice) and the action sequences are excellent: troops fight major engagements with bizarre weaponry in a style worthy of H. Rider Haggard's Quatermain series. Hell, half the fun is spotting the historical characters (there's tons of them, including Oscar Wilde as a cabin boy). The plot moves from London to a flying rotorship, to Africa and back, with saboteurs and action and mysteries thrumming all along the way.

Mountains of the Moon has exotic scenery and wild technology any fantasy or steampunk gamer will appreciate (and good DMs will borrow for their own cinematic finales!). It's not going to win any literary prizes, but it's a fun read for any steampunk fan.

Review by William Banks Ω



Eric Lindahl (Order #51842079)

Coming Next Issue!

This Spring, Kobold Quarterly magazine gets holier-than-thou, addressing aspects of the Divine from saints and angels to heavenly messengers; from the ecstatic trances of the mystical shaman, to the somewhat more mundane process of just getting a proper temple built.



Clerical Conflicts

Tim Connors will introduce us to religious hierarchies and the priests who might or might not work with them. Canon law, priestly goals, and how to build a temple will expand the options for your cleric, druid, or oracle!

Messengers of the Divine

David "Zeb" Cook returns to KQ's pages with an overview of messengers, visions, and the many faces that the divine might take when it appears in your game world.

The Shaman

A class with a different view on what's holy, and how to access divine power in a new way!

What else? Well, you'll certainly find Monte Cook's Game Theories. Beyond that, there's a lot of interesting options for our editors to consider: a surprising herald of Tiamat, magical rings, a look at the Island of Morphoi, maybe some saints, and maybe some monstrous devils.

Plus hey, it's issue #21, so it can drink legally, right? You might see an article on mead, ale, and Those Darn Adventurer's Taverns. Come see what the wood nymph brings us for the Spring Festival!

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Eric Lindahl (Order - 5151203)

The Ruins of Arbonesse

By Jeff Grubb
Art by Jeff Preston



Long before the human nations, the elves ruled here. They came from elsewhere and built an empire that dominated Midgard. They wove their magic deep into the forests, and they built their fey roads beneath the skin of this reality. Valera and the Domains of the Princes are their successor states, small children aping at the grandeur of this elder kingdom. They were the Elves of Arbonesse.

Their own origin is lost in their own myths and legends. Some say they were made by their gods, and others say that they created their deities. They controlled a wild and vibrant land beyond the borders of the world. They taught their dwarven slaves how to craft and their kobold servants how to delve and their human subjects how to sing. They supped with the first dragons and drove the giants to the edge of the world.

And after ruling the heart of Midgard for many human lifetimes, they were gone. The reasons for their sudden departure, their great exodus, are still unclear, even to the elves that survived. Some say it was a curse uncovered in this land, or a disease spread from palace to palace by one of their many slave races. Some say something went horribly wrong in their own domain, requiring all colonies be abandoned. Some say they found a greater foe. And some say they found out who the true owners of this world were and fled back to their homelands.

So the world's greatest domain was left to lesser hands, and these races sought to unlock the secrets of the Arbonesse. The magics wizards found there could not be controlled, and led to the devastation of the Great Mage Wars, a and the sinking of half the heart of Arbonesse beneath the choppy sea.

The Arbonesse is now two kingdoms. One is wrapped in the ocean's bosom as the home of the sea elves . This part of the realm resisted that original calling, and its people were transformed into sea creatures. Or that they had transformed first, and engineered the sinking of their western kingdom in revenge for their warped existence.

The eastern region of the kingdom is now what people think of as Arbonesse. In its prime it was a great forest tamed by the power of the elves. Arbonesse's woodlands were domesticated by arcane means and went feral only when abandoned by its masters.

As a result, the forest has an arcane, fantastic nature. Ground cover is limited, forming an open arcade of thick, ancient trees and a solid canopy. A traveler may find herself in the midst of an thickly-overgrown hedge maze. Topiaries have grown into twisted parodies of themselves, and great palaces built among the living branches or hidden beneath the roots of huge trees now left silent, some falling into ruins, while others, kept active through ancient spells, seem as if their owners had just left them.

The animals are similarly magical – hippogriffs, owlbears, and other creatures breed in the ruins of ancient glass palaces, while malignant vegetation has spread through once-domesticated woods. This is the land of lost pets, creatures once dear to the ancient elves but now left to fend for themselves.

The elves are not gone entirely. The Arbonesse Exiles remain, elves who have fled the River Kingdoms along the Fey Roads and seek to settle and raid their forefathers' lands. They can tell many stories of the past, but they know that most are at best comforting tales, and at worst outright lies to protect the foolish. Some exiles wander the greater world, but others protect their grandsires' domains with sword and bow. Some declare they want to reclaim this land for themselves, while others protect travelers from the dangers still lurking within this land.

Hidden portals lead to the winding fey roads, to the River Kingdoms themselves, where some elven kingdoms thrive. From these safe homelands, the elves still pour forth into this world. They have no patience for the races they once ruled, and most are intemperate, haughty, and most of all powerful. While an exile may have some pity for the other races, the Elves of the River Kingdoms have nothing but scorn for the lesser races, considering them little more than servants or foes.

And so the elven majesty lies in ruins, part submerged, part wild, protected by the lost children of its original rulers. Those who trespass here find a world of opportunity and potential treasure, though those treasures are mere scraps abandoned by a greater civilization. And the descendents and protectors of those lands are more than willing to deal with those who steal what belongs to an elder, more powerful, race.

Eric Lindahl (Order #5162079)

Rogue Mage

Roleplaying in the world of Faith Hunter



It's a century after the Seraphs returned to Earth, fulfilling with fire and sword apocalyptic predictions from ancient scripture. Most of Earth's population died in the plagues and resulting wars -- and then came the ice age.

Mankind has survived, but not without change.

New races were born following the Time of Plagues: kylen, half-seraph winged warriors; mules, half-human fighting machines; and neomages like Thorn St. Croix, who could work magic with energies left over from the Creation.

But beneath cities and in abandoned wastelands, the forces of evil continue the age-old war with the Light. These dragons and their minions won't stop fighting until the world is theirs.

Will your heroes join with Thorn and the forces of Light to stop the fallen seraphs and their devil-spawn?

The **Rogue Mage RPG** is based on Faith Hunter's apocalyptic fantasy trilogy (**Bloodring**, **Seraphs**, and **Host**), and uses the world's most popular role-playing game rules set, modified for ease of play.



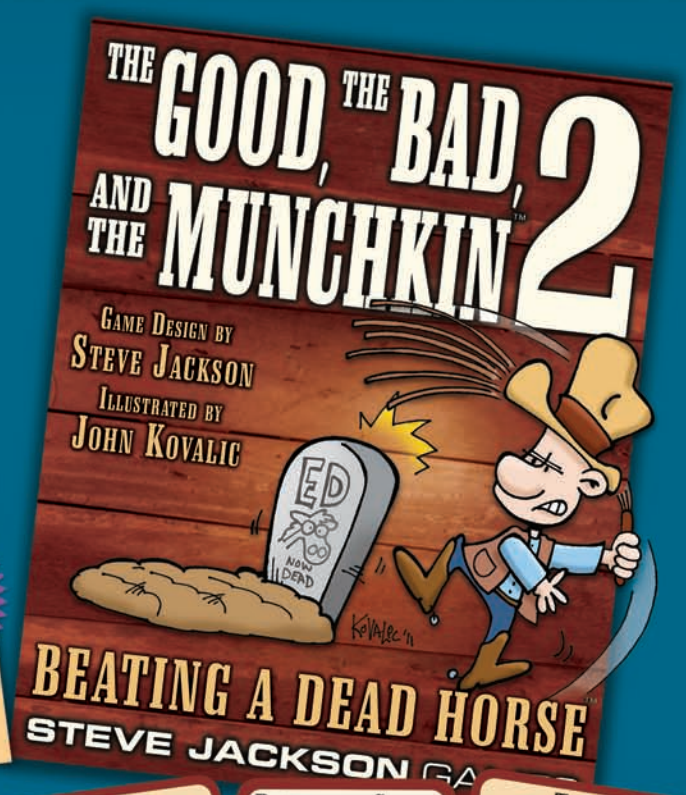
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