GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

DRAGON AGE

THE ART OF GAMEMASTERING

If you are reading this book that means you have chosen to take on the role of Game Master for your group. This is an important and challenging job, and also a rewarding one. The Game Master or "GM" is equal parts storyteller, referee, social director, and supporting actor. The *Game Master's Guide* has been designed to teach you how to run a game and support an ongoing series of adventures. In its pages you'll find advice, additional rules, adversaries, rewards, and an introductory adventure, *The Dalish Curse*, which you can use to kick off your campaign. If you are not a GM, you should stop reading now and pick up the *Player's Guide* instead; that's the book for you.

THE GM'S JOB

Becoming the Game Master may look intimidating, and it can be, but taking on the role is also a lot of fun. The advice given in this first chapter is general and meant to prepare you to be a sucessful GM. For specific advice on the *Dragon Age* rules, see **CHAPTER 2: USING THE RULES.**

While the players are responsible for keeping track of their characters and deciding on their actions, the Game Master is responsible for everything else in the game. A good GM tries to make sure the game runs as smoothly as possible and is enjoyable for all of the players. Many

components go into creating a good *Dragon Age* game. The following sections give you all the basics, but experience is the best tool to help you become a better Game Master and get a feel for the job. The essential parts of Game Mastering are:

ADJUDICATING THE RULES

Like all games, *Dragon Age* has rules, and those rules sometimes require some interpretation to determine an exact outcome during play. It is the Game Master's job to decide rules questions and make decisions regarding the implementation of the rules in the game. The rules provide a framework for you, but they cannot cover every contingency. You must be ready to make the call when the players do the unexpected. And they will!

PREPARING ADVENTURES

Dragon Age focuses on the heroic adventures of the main characters controlled by the players (the "Player Characters" or PCs). It is the Game Master's job to create the opportunities for adventure and to "hook" the characters, giving them a chance to meet new challenges. You can do this with pre-written adventures, adventures of your own design, or a mix of both. Even when using

a pre-written adventure, a good GM often customizes it to better suit the player characters.

Running the Game Session

The Game Master is much like the director of a play, coordinating all the various elements of the game to make it happen. So it is the GM's job to set up the adventure, introduce the events to the players, and narrate the story according to their decisions about their characters. It is also the GM's job to take on the roles of the various supporting and adversarial characters, describing their actions and interactions with the players' characters. All the while the GM must maintain the pace of the game, trying to keep things going at a good clip and moving the story forward.

Planning the Campaign

The Game Master plans out the overall "arc" of a series of adventures, creating what is known as a *campaign* (named for military campaigns, since early roleplaying games were derived from war games). Some GMs plan out a whole campaign in advance, working out a series of adventures taking the PCs from one place and challenge to another, while other GMs have a more open-ended approach, perhaps only planning one or two adventures ahead and seeing how the story unfolds through the players' choices and the characters' actions.

Adjudicating the Rules

The Game Master serves as referee when it comes to applying the rules of *Dragon Age* fairly and equally to help ensure everyone has fun. Part of this job involves knowing the rules: prospective Game Masters should read through both the *Player's Guide* and this book carefully and have a good working knowledge of the game. The rest of the job is applying the rules to events that come up during the game. This may be as simple as knowing which rule applies to a given situation and following it, or as complex as coming up with a new application of the rules on the spot or modifying an existing rule that isn't working for your

group and is inhibiting everybody's fun. While the *Player's Guide* contains the core of the game system, there is more that the GM needs to know. **Chapter 2** of this book, **Using the Rules,** gives you those rules and advice on how to use them.

Secret Tests

Sometimes it's a good idea to make certain tests secretly, so the players don't necessarily know the result. This is usually the case for any sort of test where the characters don't immediately know whether they've succeeded or failed. For example, you may want to make Perception tests secretly. If the test succeeds, the character notices something. If it fails, then the player doesn't know whether it's because the character failed to notice something or there just wasn't anything there to notice in the first place.

One easy way of making secret tests is to make a list of random rolls in advance. When there's a need for a secret test during the game, mark off one of the rolls from your list and use that for the test result. This way, the players don't even know you are making a secret test for them.

Game Master Fiat

On occasion a particular die roll may result in an anticlimactic or just plain dumb outcome. In such a case, feel free to change things a little to make the outcome more interesting or more in line with how the game should go. This is called "Game Master Fiat," since the judgment of the GM overrides the strict letter of the rules.

Isn't this cheating? Well, yes, in a manner of speaking it is, but it's "cheating" in order to make the game more interesting and fun for everyone involved. So long as you don't alter the outcome of die rolls unfairly or maliciously and you do it to help ensure the game is fun, interesting, and challenging, you shouldn't have a problem. Besides, the players don't have to *know* you change the occasional die roll behind the scenes. That's one of the reasons it's a good idea for Game Masters to roll their dice out of sight of the players and then announce the results.

Dragon Age in a Nutshell

Although *Dragon Age* has a fair number of rules, particularly when it comes to the various class powers and talents, the core of the game is quite simple: most everything in *Dragon Age* can be handled with an ability test.

So, when all else fails, if you need to come up with an immediate way of handling a situation and the game rules are not clear, choose the ability and focus that best apply, and call for a test using them. You can base the outcome on the result of the test or compare it against a target number, using the **Basic Test Difficulty** table (see page 18), to give you an idea. Then just continue on with the game.

So long as you remember this basic rule of thumb, you can handle almost any situation likely to come up during play.

CREATING ADVENTURES

An adventure is a single story in an ongoing campaign. Think of an adventure as a single chapter in a novel, or even a single novel in a grand series (for particularly long adventures). Sometimes adventures stand alone, with a clear beginning, middle, and end all in the same game session. Other times the adventure spans several game sessions before the entire story is wrapped up.

Creating a *Dragon Age* adventure is a fairly simple process. First, define the threat or challenge around which the adventure revolves. Then outline the overall plot, and describe the encounters the heroes are likely to have during the adventure. You'll also want to make sure you have game statistics and character sheets for important supporting characters and foes in the adventure.

DEFINING THE CHALLENGE

Dragon Age adventures typically focus on a particular challenge. It might be anything from an incursion of darkspawn into a border region, to a sensitive diplomatic mission to a nearby kingdom, or a quest for a mysterious artifact with the power to save (or destroy) the world. When the challenge presents itself, the heroes must figure out how to overcome it.

The threat in a *Dragon Age* adventure is often a villain with a scheme the heroes must thwart. It can also be a non-player character with an agenda the characters can aid, such as protecting a border region, clearing a notorious group of bandits from the forest, or arranging an alliance through marriage. The land of Thedas has plenty of inspiration for adventures, and you'll find many suitable villains in **CHAPTER 3: ADVERSARIES.**

OUTLINING THE PLOT

Once you have an idea for a challenge in mind, give some thought to how it manifests itself. Outline a series of events surrounding that challenge. This gives you the overall plot of your adventure, a sort of roadmap you can follow while you're running the game to know what is likely to happen next.

For example, you decide the challenge in your adventure focuses on a group of bandits attacking travelers along a main road in one of the border regions. Not only are they a threat to local commerce, but they have also inflamed political tensions, as the neighboring nobility have accused each other of backing the bandits. If left unchecked, their depredations will eventually lead to a bloody skirmish, perhaps even a small war, in the region, costing many lives.

Now, that's what would happen if the heroes *weren't* around. Odds are the players aren't going to just allow the bandits to get away with their crimes. They might have a friend who was the victim of a raid, or a nearby settlement could hire them to deal with the problem. Their liege-lord might order them to investigate, perhaps even all of the above! The heroes can begin investigating, trying to learn about the bandits, who they are, and what they'll do next. They might set a trap to lure them out into the open, or try and follow them back to their hideout, or capture one for interrogation. Exactly how things go depends heavily on what the players choose to do.

Try to focus your plot on the actions of the opponents, letting the player characters react to things as they happen. It's hard to base the plot on what the heroes will do because you don't always know what that is. By focusing on the challenge, you give the heroes the freedom to do whatever they want in response, and you can then modify the villains' plans accordingly.

SUBPLOTS

As you gain experience as a GM, you may want to weave in subplots to your campaign. They can be related or unrelated to the adventure and they serve to mix things up and keep the players guessing. Subplots are also a great way to use the goals and ties of the PCs and you should keep your eye out for opportunities to do

so. Let's say a goal of one of the PCs is to find his missing sister. When investigating the bandit menace, he discovers that his sister is one of these outlaws. Worse yet, she has embraced the bandit life and does not want to give it up. Now the group as a whole must deal with the bandits, but that player must try to figure out what to do about his sister. This makes the story more complicated and has the potential for great drama.

ENCOUNTERS

Your plot outline gives you a number of potential *encounters* the heroes may have during the adventure. An encounter is a single challenge, interaction, or activity, such as a fight, the investigation of an area, a chase through the city, and so forth. Using your outline, you can get a good idea of the possible encounters during your adventure. In the previous example, the heroes may have encounters with the bandits on the road, at a settlement, or at their hideout. They may investigate the sites of previous bandit raids, or interact with survivors who might have useful information.

Outline the possible encounters and take note of the important details in each one. For example, when and where will the bandits' next raid take place, and can the heroes figure it out in time to be there and stop it, or will they only learn of it after the fact? Who is the target of the raid and how do they react to the characters? Where can the survivors be found and what do they think of outsiders investigating? Might word of the heroes' investigations find its way back to the bandits somehow?

And so forth.

Then decide if the encounter is primarily about combat, exploration, or roleplaying, and note this accordingly. Try and set up a good mix of the three types of encounters, since they provide a variety of challenges and styles of play to keep all of the players involved in the game.

THE GRAND FINALE

Then there's the big finish to the adventure, the grand finale. This is when the heroes finally confront the main challenge of the adventure and have a real chance to deal with it. It may be a final showdown with the villain, averting disaster, accusing a murderer in the throne room, or confronting an army in a climatic battle. Whatever the case, this is when events in the adventure come to a head and it's time for the heroes to step up and save the day.

The finale is the big payoff, what the players have been working towards, so you need to make it as exciting and fun as possible. That means the finale should be challenging. On the other hand, the finale shouldn't be so tough the heroes can't possibly win, or the adventure just ends in frustration. Give the characters a solid challenge, but you can tip the odds slightly in their favor by setting them up with a special resource or "ace in the hole" during an earlier encounter.

For example, perhaps the party is dealing with a darkspawn about to be unleashed from a nearby ruin. They have dealt with most of the creature's cult of minions and are ready to finish off the evil wizard who is trying to free the monster. Along the way, they have learned the darkspawn has a weakness: a particular spot where its

otherwise near-impenetrable armor does not protect it. In other words, the creature is vulnerable to the Pierce Armor stunt, which ignores *all* of its armor, rather than halving it! If the heroes exploit this information, it makes the fight against the creature that much easier. Note, however, they should still have a chance even without this knowledge, since you cannot count on them learning it; the players might miss a vital clue along the way, and you don't want your adventure spoiled because of it.

The Wrap-Up

The wrap-up or epilogue is where you finish up anything after the climax of the adventure. It's where the heroes find out any remaining information, resolve the adventure's mysteries, claim their rewards, and so forth. There may still be some dangling plot threads left over—which you can spin out into later adventures—but generally things should be tied up and resolved by the end, just like the ending of any satisfying story.

You can play out the wrap-up, allowing the players to describe what their heroes do, or just sum things up for them in narration. For example, "After you slay the bandit chieftain, you're able to loot their lair, claiming what property cannot be restored to its owner. The village welcomes you back with a feast in your honor and your liege-lord is well pleased with your work in keeping the peace."

Running a Game Session

In addition to preparing the adventure before a game session, you have to prepare a real-world location in which to run the game and manage things during the game. Some of these tasks can be delegated to players, but you must be aware of what's available and make sure everything gets done. These elements can be broken into three broad categories: the play environment, information management, and play styles.

The Play Environment

The success or failure of a game session can hinge on factors completely outside the scope of the game itself. When a good mood is established and players are enjoying themselves, things go more smoothly. Bad rules calls get ignored, poor rolls are laughed off, and conflicts between characters are viewed as heroic drama. When a bad mood is in place, the slightest setback can lead to complaints and annoyance. Similarly, a group of players may begin a game happy and excited, but become bored and disinterested before the game is over.

These are problems of environment, mood, and pacing, and are the most difficult elements to manage during a game session. A few tools can be used to encourage players to be relaxed and happy or to jog a group out of a bad mood, but for the most part the best you can do is create a good play environment and hope the players take advantage of it.

Choosing a Play Space

Where a game occurs strongly affects its mood and often its longevity. Roleplaying games are a leisure activity, and players are more likely to stick with a game if doing so isn't a hassle. A good gaming space should be large enough to accommodate all players comfortably (hopefully with no one having to sit on the floor unless they want to), enough table space for books and dice rolling, a place for miniatures if the group uses them, and space for you to hide things you don't want players to see too soon, such as maps, props, or special miniatures. It should also be conveniently located for everyone to get to (easier if everyone is driving) and preferably have room for food and drink to be kept separate from game books and character sheets.

While many groups don't have access to a perfect play space, some things can be done to enhance what is available. First, don't assume you must play in someone's home or a game shop. Libraries, community centers, apartment clubhouses, and sometimes even utility co-ops often have rooms available either for free or a very small fee. The main limitation with such spaces is hours of operation, but a game played on a Saturday afternoon may be perfect for a public room. The things to look out for are privacy and noise restrictions. Games don't go as well if a group is constantly interrupted by passers-by, and an area with bad sound baffling can result in a rowdy group of players being asked to leave.

If you do play at someone's home, consider periodically moving which home hosts the game. A group of players can make quite a mess, and it's a bit much to ask one homeowner to deal with that all the time. Even if the group does its best to clean up before it leaves (always a good idea), chairs get moved, stacks of paperwork stowed away, trash bins filled, and dishes used. A group that can share this burden is less likely to have stress or conflict over it.

Taking a Break

If a game session is going badly no matter what you try, it may be time to step back from the game for a bit. In the short term, a game session can break for everyone to stretch, get a drink, or even go get something to eat. Much like changing the focus within the game, getting everyone's attention off the game entirely can shake things up and allow a fresh start later on. The length of the break should be carefully considered—doing something that takes too long may result in the group not wanting to go back to playing the game with just a little time left.

Sometimes giving up on the game for a session is the best solution. If all other efforts to set a positive tone have failed and no one is having any fun, suggest putting the game on hold until the next scheduled session. This should not be done lightly—especially in groups that can't meet very often, many players are upset by not getting to play. Just asking if people would rather not play can sometimes change a group's dynamic enough to start having fun. Taking this step requires consideration, but if you seriously believe no one is having a good time, testing to see if they'd rather not play is worthwhile.

If a campaign consistently has problems with player disinterest and poor moods, it's time to discuss the matter with your players. They may be satisfied, but simply have an odd way of showing it. Other events in their lives may prevent them from enjoying the game to its fullest, and they need to postpone gaming for a few weeks. Some specific themes of the campaign may bother one or more players, in which case discuss making changes.

Information Management

One of the biggest hassles GMs face is keeping track of everything. While players must manage a single character and possibly a companion, you must literally keep track of a world. It's not hard to fall behind in the duties of a GM and discover you've lost track of treasure the party has won, information known by a friendly sage, the name of a leader of a small country, or even just whose turn it is in combat. Keeping track of things is a chore, but it's an important one. The players depend on you to know what's going on, both on a small scale during a fight and on a larger scale with the world around them.

The most important advice for GMs who are overwhelmed is to do as much as possible outside of normal game time. In between games, you don't need to worry about keeping players entertained or hoping you'll remember to write something down at the end of a combat round. Keeping one or more notebooks is a good idea, with tabs for different sections of information. You can make quick notes on a pad of paper during a game and then transcribe your scribbled notes more completely into the notebook after the game is over.

Spread out the bookkeeping work as much as possible, rather than trying to do it all at once. If you're writing an adventure and deciding what treasure will be found, mark that information as you come up with it. Then you can note what treasure the heroes actually got after the adventure runs.

Vigilance saves you a lot of headaches later on. If possible, keep a notebook open at each game session. Whenever anything significant happens, make a quick note about it. Don't describe the whole event—just jot down who, where, and what in the simplest terms. Try to

note both the real world date and the game world date. Doing so acts as a reminder when you update your bookkeeping after the game. It also reminds you what has occurred in the past, which is especially helpful if your campaign lasts a while. Being able to look back and see what date a group met a pregnant princess is great when you're trying to decide if she has a child yet when the characters return for another visit.

Quick Reference Sheet

As Game Master, you have to reference a lot of information about different characters during play: Defense values, Health values, ability modifiers, and so forth. Rather than shuffling through papers or flipping pages in a book, it's a good idea to compile a quick reference sheet with all the essential information you need. The sheet lists characters and creatures, their combat values, and other essential scores, allowing you to see any of them with a glance. Below you'll find an example Quick Refernce sheet, filled out with the statistics of a skeleton. A photocopyable Quick Reference sheet can be found on page 64, and downloadable ones can be found at **www.greenronin.com/dragon_age**.

NAME	Skeleton	HEALTH
CLASS/LEVEL	Rage demon	17

COMMUNICATION	-2	
CONSTITUTION	2	stamina
CUNNING	-2	
DEXTERITY	2	
MAGIC	1	
PERCEPTION	0	
STRENGTH	3	claws
WILLPOWER	2	

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	SPEED
2-hand spear	+3	2d6+3	10
claws	+5	1d6+5	

DEFENSE: 12

POWERS: Howling Madness
FS: Mighty Blow, Pierce Armor
WG: Bludgeons, Bows, and Spears

ARMOR: 0

EQUIPMENT: 2-hand spear

Make sure to update your reference sheet at the start of each new game and on any occasion when the characters' abilities or scores may have changed.

Combat Cards

An important piece of information to keep track of during play is initiative order. Prepare a 3" x 5" in-

dex card for each character, including NPCs. When a combat begins, write the current initiative for each character on the upper right hand corner of the card (ideally in pencil) and place the cards in initiative order. Then simply start with the character on top of the stack. When that turn is done, flip to the next card, cycling through the cards until you reach the end of the round. This can be more effective than just listing the initiative order on a sheet of paper, since you can change the order, if need be.

Combat cards are also a good place to put basic character information, since you usually use this information when that character's turn comes up. Defensive information, such as Defense and Health, should be kept on the separate quick reference sheet, since it's normally used when other characters or monsters act, and not shuffling through the index cards looking for a character's Defense is best. Below you'll find an example Combat Card, filled out with the statistics of a level 1 rogue named Locke. Photocopyable Combat Cards can be found on page 64, and downloadable ones can be found at **WWW.GREENRONIN.COM/DRAGON_AGE**.

NAME	Locke		SPEED	INITIATIVE
CLASS/LEVEL	Rogue 1		16	11

COMMUNICATION	CONSTITUTION	CUNNING	DEXTERITY
2	-1	0	4

MAGIC	PERCEPTION	STRENGTH	WILLPOWER
1	4	1	0

SPELL CARDS

Another variant kind of card can be used to keep track of spell durations. If a character casts a spell that lasts 5 rounds, you can give the spell its own index card. The card lists the name of the spell and its duration, and every time it comes up, mark off one round. Not only does this keep spells from being forgotten, it allows the spell's duration to end on the initiative it was cast even if the caster has changed initiative.

CAMPAIGN JOURNAL

It's a good idea to keep a "campaign journal" (or campaign log) as a record of the games you have run in the campaign. A good campaign journal should have the following information, organized so you can find it fairly easily and quickly:

A summary of each adventure: the date(s) on which you ran it, and when and where it took place in the setting. It should include a brief description of the events, characters involved, and any victories or setbacks for the heroes, in-cluding experience point awards, treasures won, and so forth. It is easiest to write this summary in-between game sessions while the events are still fresh in your mind.

A list of important characters in the setting and campaign to date, primarily just names and brief notes, so if the players want to know the name of that bandit chief who got away a couple of adventures ago, you can find it at a glance. Also consider highlighting (or otherwise calling out) the names of important characters and details in your adventure summaries, so you can find them quickly.

Information on any ongoing plots, sub-plots, and developments in the game. With several main characters, there may be a lot going on in terms of individual stories. Keeping notes on their progress can help you keep track of them and ensure you don't lose a particular plot thread somewhere along the way.

GAME NOTES

In addition to your campaign journal, have a separate page or notepad where you can jot down notes to yourself during play. You can use these notes later when you put together a more detailed summary for your campaign journal. So you might note, for example, that the heroes met with a guard sergeant named Pfister and left him with a poor impression—an unplanned event that might come up later, should they happen to pass through Sergeant Pfister's jurisdiction again.

WHITE BOARDS

A chalkboard or dry-erase board can be an excellent way to keep track of information for everyone at the table. The bigger the board, the better, and white dry-erase boards tend to be cheaper, easier to read, and less messy. Place the board at the side or behind the GM, where the most people can easily see it and the GM can easily reach it. When there's no fight, list all the PCs and major NPCs, along with the players running them and noteworthy features. Especially early in a campaign, doing so helps players and GM alike keep track of who's who.

A white board can also be used to keep track of things in action scene. Laid flat, it can have a map drawn out and miniatures or counters placed on it. If upright, you can draw out a map and mark character positions on it.

MINIATURES, MAPS, AND PROPS

Roleplaying games are games of the imagination, so a "game board" is never required to play. However, having a map of a particular scene laid out, and counters or miniature figures to move around on the map, can help players to visualize what is going on and track information like the relative positions of different characters, the placement of obstacles, and so forth. You'll find more info about using miniatures and other accessories in the *Player's Guide,* in the **Using Battle Maps** sidebar on page 58 of **CHAPTER 6.**

Styles of Play

Two *Dragon Age* games can have the same rules, adventures, and even main characters, yet still have entirely different play styles. How you interact with the players and how the players view each other and the game world are matters of play style. Different styles produce different kinds of games. Understanding your own play style and that of your players provides a better chance of avoiding potential problems. Some narrative tools allow you to change the feel of a game by changing how scenarios are presented to your players.

These tools and descriptions can be helpful for figuring out why a game doesn't seem to work or why certain players are causing trouble or complaining about the game. None of these styles are "right" or "wrong" in an absolute sense, but some groups and even individual players don't mesh well with some styles. Anything a group enjoys is a good style, and anything that causes problems needs to be examined.

Game Mastering Styles

Different GMs approach their jobs differently. The following are a few common GM styles. Examine how and when you use these styles and how players react to them. Sometimes a game's main problem is players don't like the way you run things, which is something only you can change.

Adversarial

The adversarial opponent GM is one who tries to get the heroes into trouble—a lot. Foes act with ruthless efficiency and are often designed specifically to overcome the characters. Adversarial GMs tend to play very much by the book. If this kind of GM has house rules, they're run how the GM interprets them, as are all core rules. Players are allowed to decide what actions their characters attempt but have little to no other input into the world. As well, the GM specifically arranges encounters and NPCs in such a way to put PCs at risk and doesn't back down from killing an entire party.

The number of players who enjoy a GM who's actually out to get them is extremely small. Logically, there's nothing a player can do to "beat" a GM. No matter how tough the heroes are, a GM can always have them attacked by a massive horde of darkspawn, an arch-demon, or some other overwhelming threat. The idea that a GM would actually want to "defeat" players through any possible means is silly—the GM would always win, and the players would likely walk away and not want to play again.

Some players, however, enjoy games in which the GM *appears* to be out to get them. The sense of danger and risk is increased, and therefore the feeling of accomplishment is increased if the players succeed.

Adventures designed by this kind of GM must be within a reasonable power level of the player characters. Having the PCs all poisoned by a master-assassin when they're incapable of detecting or thwarting the danger is unfair. Making more dangerous adventures available is fine, but they should clearly be dangerous at the outset. The GM should stick to encounters that are within the group's ability to handle, or at least give the players the option to back down from the ones they cannot. A party that decides to attack an arch-demon right from the start chooses its own fate, but if the monster simply appears out of nowhere and attacks, that's unfair.

Even the best and most even-handed adversarial GM can rub players the wrong way. It's too easy for this style to seem like having fun at the players' expense, and no one likes a bully. The only legit use of this style is to heighten the players' excitement, and that only works if they enjoy it. Many players are more interested in telling a good story or enjoying the fruits of their labors than constantly risking the loss of their characters to a never-ending gauntlet of dangers.

In most cases, the adversarial style should be reserved for only the most epic of climaxes, and then it must come with a warning. Fudging results and saving heroes through *deus ex machina* most of the time and then throwing them to the wolves is unfair. If changing tone for a dramatic moment, make sure the players receive warning that this time there won't be any divine intervention, sudden changes of heart, or second chances. Then let the dice fall where they may.

Benevolent

The benevolent GM is an arbiter of the rules who's trying to make sure everything is both fun and fair. Like the adversarial GM, the benevolent GM tends to play tight to the game rules, but not to find ways to create greater challenges for the players or to take advantage when they do something stupid. Game rules can be modified or even ignored if they conflict with logic, but exceptions aren't made just to help along a good story.

Done well, this style of Game Mastering produces fun and flexible games in which everyone knows both how the world works (as there are consistent rules) and that the rules won't be used to enforce an unreasonable outcome. Benevolent GMs often fall prey to assumption clashes (see page 12) if they bend a rule once but refuse to do so under different circumstances. These GMs also often give their players too much free reign, allowing a game to devolve into dead-end quests and aimless wandering.

Director

A director tries to get players to act as she feels is appropriate to given situations and storylines. Most adventures have a "right" course of action, and players are rewarded if they find it, but punished if they do not. This style of

play often puts the needs of the story told ahead of the rules of the game.

A director who successfully guides players without limiting their freedom of choice and opportunity to have fun can produce the memorable story arcs and dramatic moments many roleplayers love. This type of game often has a very strong sense of style, setting it apart from less focused campaigns and allowing it to recreate dramatic moments form movies and other fiction. Heroic last-stands to guard bridges, redemption of foul villains, martyred heroes inspiring their comrades to success, and apparently unbeatable foes being brought low by underdogs are all easier in games in which the GM gives subtle hints and gentle nudges to direct the story.

On the negative side, a director can easily steamroll players who are just trying to have some fun. A GM's biases become much more obvious in a director and can impact reactions to player character actions. Bad directors penalize players who take reasonable actions that simply don't fit into the GM's plans, or otherwise attempt to "railroad" the group into following a particular path, whether they want to or not.

Knowing Your Group

To create a world players enjoy exploring, you need to know your players. Understanding how they're likely to react to situations, what sorts of games they enjoy, and how they interact with one another allows you to tailor the game world and its challenges to match their preferences, giving them foes they want to destroy and causes for which they want to fight. If that sounds a lot like being a therapist, there's a reason. Knowing a group of gamers well enough to predict their reactions and build adventures they'll enjoy is both the hardest and most important part of being a GM. With understanding of the players, everything else gets easier.

There are no real short cuts for getting to know a group of players. Although a few types of player personality crop up a lot, every player is an individual with his or her own quirks and hot-button topics. You have to spend time with players before you really get to know them, leaving you with little to go on early in a group's history. The best route is to have initial games hit on common tropes—evil wizards, towns in need, apparent allies actually having the characters' best interests at heart—and save more complex plots for when you know your players better. Engaging in non-roleplaying game social activities together, such as seeing movies or getting together for a meal, can also be useful.

Problem Player Types

The focus in the following list is on problem player types, because non-problem players are, by definition, easy to deal with. Problem players tend to fall into a few broad categories, and these categories can help you understand how to handle these kinds of players—but they're just a starting point. Most players have a smattering of several different play styles. A player may be a rules-lawyer when paired with a junior thespian, but become a motivator when in a larger group of hack-n-slashers. You may need to try different solutions before finding one that works with a particular player.

If one or more players are being disruptive, you must discuss the matter with them. You should not penalize PCs in-character for player transgressions made out-of-character. Instead, disruptive players should be talked to, possibly privately, depending on your feelings and your perception of the players' group dynamic. A player shouldn't feel ganged up on, but sometimes a group needs to discuss matters together.

Avoid bullying or intimidating a player. Outside the game world, you have no real authority. It's your job to talk to disruptive players because you're essentially the host of the game. If problems continue, involve the whole group. No one should be lied to, ostracized, or mistreated, but if a player is causing problems, the group should address him directly and maturely. Moving game nights and not telling the offending player may seem easier, but ultimately this just causes bad feelings and more problems. Some people aren't meant to play together, and a mature group is willing to say so and move on.

It's also worthwhile for you to see if *you* fall into any of these categories. Knowing your own biases and preferences can often allow you to see potential conflicts with players of other types before they even occur. A GM who is a hack-n-slash player can guess early on that a junior thespian may be dissatisfied with his campaign unless he adds numerous opportunities to roleplay and act out scenes. A good GM finds ways to accommodate player's desires without sacrificing his own gaming style.

GRIEFER

A griefer just enjoys upsetting other players and the GM. Thankfully, such players are rare. If you realize you have a griefer, a polite but firm talk is needed. If the griefer can moderate his ways to no longer aggravate other players, allow him to stay. Otherwise, the gaming group as a whole should disinvite him from playing.

HACK-N-SLASHER

The hack-n-slash player is most interested in killing things. Every challenge is likely seen in terms of what needs to be killed and how best to kill it. This player often gets bored with roleplaying and exploration encounters. The upside is the hack-n-slasher enjoys something the game naturally focuses on, fighting, and he's easy to please. The downside is he may grow disinterested with anything else, talking to and distracting other players or even complaining about any action that delays the next fight.

Sometimes the hack-n-slasher can be drawn into non-combat sequences by discovering what's important to both player and character. An up-front and honest conversation between GM and player about what sorts of non-combat events interest the player can be fruitful, as can appealing to his character's history or having NPCs talk in terms of how great a warrior the character is. If information must be given in such a way the player pays attention, try having a foe slip into witty banter during a fight.

Ultimately, if nothing but fighting interests the player, simply be sure to provide plenty of fights. Most players understand the game is for the enjoyment of all, so interspersing combat encounters with other types can generally keep the hack-n-slasher from being disruptive and keep his interest level high enough to stay in touch with the campaign. Don't expect the hack-n-slasher to negotiate with NPCs, solve riddles, or get involved in great romances unless the player has indicated an interest in doing so. Encourage roleplaying gently, but don't try to force it.

HANGER-ON

A hanger-on isn't really interested in the game; he's just there to spend time with one or more other people. Hangers-on are usually the friend or significant other of another player. As long as a hanger-on isn't disruptive, simply leaving him alone is normally best.

You may occasionally try to get a hanger-on more deeply involved with the game, but if such efforts regularly fail, there's no point in trying harder. Check-in with

a hanger-on to be sure he's not actually a wallflower who'd *like* to be more involved; otherwise, hangers-on are beyond your ability to get involved. Roleplaying games aren't for everyone, and some people are willing to play for convenience but just won't get deeply involved. There's no need to spend the time and energy trying to change your campaign to draw in these players if they just aren't interested.

JUNIOR THESPIAN

The junior thespian is most interested in playing the role of his character to the hilt. He may insist on acting out his PC's actions, talking through every conversation of every day, and staying in character even when other players don't. If the junior thespian isn't being disruptive, leave him alone—he's getting into the role and can add flair and detail to a game world. Sometimes, however, junior thespians take things too far. A player who insists on responding, in all seriousness, to someone asking if the group wants pizza, with an in-character query about what is this "pizza," has gone too far. So has one who's unwilling to skip through an uneventful ten-day trek through the woods because something important might be discussed.

You can sometimes reach a junior thespian by putting things in movie or television terms. Rather than stating a journey will not be played out, say the scene cuts to ten days later. Explain minor events must be skipped not to get to the fight, but to allow for the scenes of important drama. A player who acts out everything may need boundaries about how much time is appropriate to describe a single action. Demonstrating how a fencer draws his sword with a flourish is fine, but taking two minutes to detail an attack that is not a stunt and may not even succeed is not.

MOTIVATOR

The motivator just wants to get things done. *Now*. As long as the PCs are on track to accomplishing some goal, the motivator is happy, but side-treks, down time, and goofing off all annoy him. Some motivators restrict themselves to keeping the PCs on track, while others want the players and GM to stay focused on the game as well. A motivator can be useful when a group strays too far from a game's plot (or gets distracted from gaming in general). If too demanding, however, motivators are often perceived as bossy, clashing with other players.

A bothersome motivator may be handled by scheduling some down time, both in character and as a group of players. If the GM states he intends for a band of PCs to winter in a given city, the motivator knows there's no need to encourage everyone to get moving. If a group of players decides to begin actually playing within an hour of getting together, and the GM announces periodic breaks, the motivator may be satisfied. Failing that, make sure the motivator isn't annoying other players and encourage him to remain polite and cordial when dealing with them.

RULES LAWYER

The dreaded rules lawyer is one of the most common problem player types. The rules lawyer uses the rules of the game as a bludgeon to beat other players and even the GM. He abuses loopholes, designs characters to take advantage of them, and corrects others when they make mistakes. The rules lawyer often quotes rules and "official" interpretations of them as justification for his behavior, and argues rules decisions he disagrees with.

A player familiar with the rules of *Dragon Age* can be useful, helping you find relevant rules quickly and possibly even answering basic rules questions from other players to save you time. The problem comes when a rules lawyer takes up game time arguing, abuses rules to get away with something unreasonable, or ruins the fun of playing by bickering about the quality of other players' rules knowledge.

Often, a rules lawyer's motivation is one of fairness. If a player has been in games run by a GM who favored one or two players, the rules lawyer may see the equal application of rules as the only way to keep a game fair. In this case, an evenhanded treatment of all players, even when deviating from the rules, is a good first step to dealing with the rules lawyer.

Other rules lawyers see knowledge of the rules as a way to compete with the GM. By pointing out your mistakes, these players try to score points and control the flow of a campaign. A roleplaying game is a cooperative effort, and you must work with players, but as the referee, you have final say on how the rules work. If a rules lawyer attempts to control how rules are interpreted, take firm actions to establish your authority without being rude or tyrannical.

The best way to do this is to establish rules about handling rules disagreements before they come up. Inform players you will run your game based on the rules, but not enslaved to them. A rules call should be made quickly to keep the action of a game going. Allow anyone who disagrees with a rules call a moment to explain the objection. If you agree, there's nothing wrong with changing a ruling; if not, state that discussion is ended, and re-examine the matter after the game. If you later decide to run the rule differently, inform the players of it at the beginning of the next session.

If a rules lawyer continues to be a problem, you are well within your rights to insist *all* questions about rules wait until the end of the session, when they can be handled without making everyone wait. The rules lawyer can write down any questions, and the two of you can hash them out on your own time.

SPOTLIGHT HOG

A spotlight hog wants to be the one doing whatever is being done. Spotlight hogs often want to play more than one character or play characters with something that sets them apart. These players crave attention, both for themselves and for their characters. Spotlight hogs can be useful because they get excited and involved in a campaign, and that excitement can positively affect other players. A spotlight hog that actually manages to garner significantly more "on-screen" may be a problem, however, preventing others from enjoying the game fully.

There's not much that can be done with a spotlight hog who's a problem other than talk to him. If necessary, you can carefully craft plots to focus on other players' characters, but doing so is fair only if the spotlight hog gets his time in the sun too. It's also worthwhile to check with other players to see if they mind the spotlight hog's actions—a group of hack-n-slashers and wallflowers may be fine with a spotlight hog doing all the talking, for example.

WALLFLOWER

A wallflower is the opposite of a spotlight hog. This player doesn't seem at all involved, barely speaks, and allows others to plan everything. Wallflowers are only disruptive if they stall a game's pacing by refusing to answer questions, make initiative checks, or take their turn. The most frustrating thing about such players is they often claim they greatly enjoy a campaign even though they hardly seem present when it's run.

If you can discover the cause of a wallflower's silence, most wallflowers become active participants. Some wallflowers simply don't know the game rules well (especially in a game with many alternate rules), in which case assigning another player to help the wallflower plan actions and respond to your input can be helpful (this may be a great way to use a rules lawyer's talents). Other players of this type simply need time to become comfortable with a campaign or a particular group of players, while some never get more involved. Check periodically to see if wallflowers feel something is missing from a campaign, but failing that just leave them alone and make sure they don't slow down a game.

ASSUMPTION CLASHES

One of the greatest risks any Game Master faces is an assumption clash. This happens when a player assumes one thing and you another. For example, if a GM notes that five tough-looking men threaten a PC, the character's player may assume the men are unarmed thugs—that the description "tough-looking" means they look like "tough" unarmed thugs. The GM actually means the men look tough, like they will be hard to defeat, and is envisioning them in heavy armor and carrying weapons. Because neither GM nor player realizes a miscommunication has occurred, the player may make a decision about how to react that seems baffling to the GM and may lead to a bad game event.

The reason assumption clashes are so dangerous is they often aren't recognized until after the fact. Sometimes assumption clashes *never* get ironed out, leaving hard feelings on both sides. In the case above, if a fight doesn't break out, the player may leave the encounter without ever realizing he had mis-evaluated his opponents. He discovers the men are part of a large group of thugs holding the town hostage, but continues to see them as unarmed toughs. The player convinces his adventuring group to attack the thug stronghold, since he's sure the fight is winnable. The group plans and maneuvers for three game sessions before attacking the stronghold, only to find it manned by warriors in heavy armor. The player cries foul, only to be told the men have always been well armed and equipped. The player feels the GM changed the reality of the game, and the GM feels the player just hasn't been paying attention.

Assumption clashes can happen on a larger scale as well. If a GM describes a campaign as "sword-and-sorcery" in style, players may envision a game in which powerful spellcasters are common, and most towns have a capable wizard to cast spells for them. If the GM is actually thinking in terms of classic pulp fantasy stories, he may decide spellcasters are actually quite rare, and most are evil. Players who have designed their characters around the idea that wizards are common may not realize this until many games have passed, and be surprised and irritated when they can't hire a spellcaster in any town they visit.

There's no perfect way to avoid assumption clashes. Giving examples whenever possible and checking to see if your players understand the example helps. Also helpful is to know that assumption clashes occur and to keep high degree of patience when a player seems to assume something other than what you meant. An occasional assumption clash can be fixed by allowing players to change past actions when a reasonable assumption is proved false. For minor issues, you can even change the game reality to match the false assumption (especially if you realize an assumption clash has occurred before the players do). If such clashes become common, find a way to communicate more clearly, possibly by using illustrations, distributing handouts, describing things in different ways, or having a recap of events at the beginning of each game session.

Planning a Campaign

A campaign is a series of adventures, much like an adventure is a collection of encounters. In this way, a *Dragon Age* campaign is much like an adventure writ large, and much of the advice on creating adventures, applies to the campaign as a whole.

The default assumption of the *Dragon Age RPG* is that your campaign will be set during the latest Blight to threaten Thedas. At the stage represented in Set 1, the Blight is just beginning. Many in Thedas don't even believe it's happening, but the signs are there. The PCs will likely be amongst the first to discover that the Blight is all too real. In subsequent sets and published adventures, the threat will become much more overt and then the challenge for the PCs will be surviving a threat not seen in generations.

The unfolding story of the Blight is the thread that connects the published *Dragon Age* adventures. That said, you are the GM and you can choose to set your campaign in a different time or pick a different focus. You might decide to run a campaign in which the PCs are freedom fighters struggling to liberate Ferelden from Orlesian dominance before Maric became king. Or maybe the PCs are all elves trying to found a new homeland for their people. The campaign is yours to create and the following section includes advice on how to make it happen.

Dark Fantasy

Before we get to specific planning advice, let's pause for a moment and talk about dark fantasy. You've probably seen *Dragon Age* described as "dark fantasy roleplaying," but may have wondered what that means exactly. What follows is a brief overview of the term and how its conceits underpin the game. As the GM you can modify the tone, emphasizing some aspects while downplaying others, but this is what we mean when we say that *Dragon Age* is a dark fantasy RPG.

No Unicorns and Rainbows

There are some fantasy settings in which elves ride unicorns, knights take the air on pegasi, and wise kings with good hearts do what's best for their people all the time. Thedas is not one of them. This is a setting in which elves are oppressed and exploited, mages are feared and mistrusted, and even the vaunted grey wardens have dark secrets. The Blights, the great evil that may destroy Thedas, are the direct result of human hubris, not the master plan of some cartoonish mad overlord. And evil, since it comes from the hearts of men (and elves and dwarves), can be checked but never defeated forever.

Life Isn't Fair

Thedas is rife with injustice, and your friend today may betray you for a gold coin tomorrow. The Player Characters must make their own way in the world and watch their backs. They start as nobodies; aspiring adventures with little to their names. They may find trustworthy patrons, but they cannot rely on others to make things right. That is their task, should they choose to take it up. You and your players should be aware though that characters can and will die in *Dragon Age*. The PCs may be thrust into situations that are not tailored for their abilities. They may sometimes be outmatched and have

to choose discretion over valor. They should not assume that the universe is going to take care of them. They must do it themselves.

Actions Have Consequences

A *Dragon Age* campaign is full of choices, some big and some small. Choices, particularly moral choices, matter. And when there doesn't seem to be a good option that's when choices matter the most. PCs in *Dragon Age* have free will, but they must be ready to deal with the consequences of their actions. Happy endings are rare. Today's victory may sow the seeds of tomorrow's crisis.

Sometimes Evil Wears a Smile

The darkspawn are an obvious threat but they are not the only evil at work in Thedas. Scheming nobles, corrupt merchants, and cunning bandits can be threats every bit as dangerous as an ogre. And sometimes the well-dressed people who speak the fairest words are the worst villains of all. Lust, greed, and covetousness drive many to dark deeds, and violence is an all too common tool in even the most civilized of lands.

Raising the Banner of Hope

The world seems beset with darkness and decay, but despite it all there is hope in Thedas. There are some good folk, people who care about something other than their own needs and wants. The Player Characters can be heroes and their rise to such stature is what a *Dragon Age* campaign is all about. At key points in history such champions have raised the banner of hope and driven off the darkness, at least for a time. That is the role of the Player Characters in a dark fantasy campaign.

Consulting the Players

The first thing to do when planning an ongoing *Dragon Age* campaign is to talk with your players about the sort of campaign that interests them. It may be a good idea to try out the game — perhaps playing through the adventure in this set — and then talk about long-term plans if everybody agrees they had fun and would like to see the game continue.

What sorts of things are your players interested in? What parts of the land of Thedas intrigue them? Where do they see their characters going? The answers to these sorts of questions give you invaluable information to help ensure your campaign is tailored to fit the players and their characters in a way that a purely pre-packaged game could never be. This is one of the great advantages of roleplaying games like *Dragon Age,* so do not pass up a chance to use it.

Casting the Heroes

Just like a director casts a film, you want to "cast" the roles of the main characters in your *Dragon Age* campaign. Essentially, this means getting an idea of at least the types of characters your players are interested in

running in the game, allowing you to plan elements of the campaign around them.

So, for example, if one player is especially interested in Dalish elf culture and wants to play a member of that race, you know you can include elements about the Dalish in your game, do stories about their struggles, create foils for the character in the form of Dalish with different views, or non-elven allies or adversaries, and so forth. If a player wants to run a wizard character interested in delving into the mysteries of the Fade, you have another hook, and so on.

This can also be a cooperative process. When you define the arc of the campaign (see **Defining the Arc**) you may come up with particular character roles, such as a story revolving around a young heir to a domain. While you can make the heir a non-player character, you can also ask if any of the players would be interested in taking on that role and creating a character to fill it, giving the campaign additional focus, since the player has a built-in reason to care about what happens.

As noted in the *Player's Guide*, a character creation session is a good way to start the game. This gives everyone a chance to talk to you and each other about their characters as they make them. It also makes it easier for the players to come up with goals and ties for their characters. That in turn helps you by giving you more information about the story's protagonists, the Player Characters. You can use that when planning adventures and story arcs.

DEFINING THE ARC

Once you have an idea of what interests you and your players, consider the broad "arc" of the campaign, that is, the over-arcing story defining it. Is the campaign about a struggle against the rising darkness in Thedas? Is it a story of heroes seeking an ancient artifact able to bind an arch-demon? Is it a story of political ambition and king making, the battle for power and dominion?

Try and summarize the overall story in a paragraph or two, like: "The heroes are drawn into the political ambitions of a rising war-chieftain, become his trusted lieutenants, then must choose whether to support his plans to unite the nearby lands under his banner to resist the rising darkness or oppose his ambitions and support another candidate, perhaps even one of their own."

CAMPAIGN OUTLINING

Once you have defined the arc of the campaign, start breaking it down into individual adventures, roughly game-session long chunks you can plan out. For starters, you're going to want a series that goes on for a good eight to ten sessions or so, taking the characters through the levels presented in this set, but a campaign can go on longer, as subsequent *Dragon Age* sets detail.

In the beginning of a campaign, your adventures should have more detail and offer more hooks to get characters involved. Early on, the player characters are still developing their initial personalities and histories. They're not great heroes, and the players may need opportunities to "get their feet wet" and try out different things, getting a feel for the game and how it is played. It's a good idea to provide variety and try out different encounters to see what works best and provides the most fun. You may even decide to modify later parts of the campaign based on it.

Once you have outlined at least the first part of the campaign, you can start looking at planning out the first adventure in detail (see **Creating Adventures** for more). Many GMs like to use published adventures and these can save you a lot of time and prep work. Even when using published adventures, though, it's worth taking some time to customize them for your campaign and your group. By changing or adding even a few details, you can make these adventure better fit your planned campaign and the specific PCs in your group.

SKETCHING THE ENDING

While a *Dragon Age* campaign can go on for quite some time, lasting many game sessions, all good stories eventually come to an end. It is a good idea to have at least a *general* ending in mind for the arc of the campaign's story, so you can begin moving events towards it as it becomes clear the characters are reaching the end of their game careers, or the players are getting restive and want to wrap things up, and do not just want the game to go "on hiatus" for a while.

Do not become too attached to a particular ending for your campaign, as you might find things change quite a bit over the course of the game. One of the great things about roleplaying games is they are a co-creative process; rather than just playing out a pre-determined story, you and your players are *creating* a story about their characters you'll be able to tell when it is all over and done. Sometimes that story goes off in unexpected directions, so you have to remain flexible and open to the possibility of different outcomes and endings.

Note also that the ending of a campaign does not necessarily mean the end for a group of characters. It is always possible to start a new *Dragon Age* campaign with existing characters, a further story of their adventures, with a fresh new focus and an all-new arc. This sort of thing is detailed further in later *Dragon Age* sets dealing with more advanced and experienced heroes.

GM DOS AND DON'TS

Here's some good general advice to keep in mind when it comes to being a *Dragon Age* Game Master:

DO...

PLAN AHEAD

Take the time to prepare adventure notes and game materials like those in the **Information Management** section. Keep a campaign journal and take notes during the game, copying them over into your journal after. Keep track of character awards and advancement. The better you are at preparing and organizing your information, the easier it is to run a smooth, well-paced game without the need to shuffle papers or fumble for facts that should be at your fingertips.

DESCRIBE THINGS

It's your job to paint a picture of the world and the story for your players, and encourage them to do the same for each other. Your imaginations can be the best "graphics" in the world, but only if you exercise them! Use vivid language and make your descriptions clear and evocative without getting too heavily bogged down in pointless detail.

CHALLENGE YOUR PLAYERS

Give the characters challenging, but manageable, encounters in terms of their game abilities, but also challenge your *players* with opportunities for roleplaying, intrigue, interaction with non-player characters, riddles, investigations, and so forth. Keep them engaged and trying to get one step ahead to figure out what's coming next or how they are going to overcome the latest problem you have posed for them.

BE FLEXIBLE

There is no telling what will happen when the players encounter your plot and choose their own direction. You have to be ready and willing to improvise and to change your plans on a moment's notice to deal with an unexpected decision or idea. Try not to force the players down a path of your choosing, but instead shift to accommodate them and the direction of their characters, while still offering challenges along the way.

FOCUS ON THE CHARACTERS

The player characters are the main characters of your story, just like the main cast of a novel, film, or television series. Focus on them: their goals, their challenges, their story, rather than making it all about the non-player characters you control. The antagonists and supporting cast are there to highlight the actions of the main characters, not to overwhelm them. The story should be *about* the player characters, rather than them simply happening to be in it.

DON'T...

MAKE IT ALL ABOUT FIGHTING

While combat encounters and action are a big part of an adventure game like *Dragon Age*, don't make *every* encounter a combat encounter or have every interaction end in a fight, and don't let the players make it that way, either. Allow room for investigation, exploration, interaction, and some transitions between encounters to break up the action and provide players interested in other aspects of the game to enjoy them. Allow for the possibility of avoiding some fights, or solving some problems by means other than fighting.

ARGUE

You are expected to referee the game, so avoid getting into extended arguments with players over things. If there is a dispute over a rule or some other elements of the game, briefly hear all sides and make a decision, telling anyone who objects that you can discuss it *after* the game, then move along. Don't bring the game to a screeching halt just so you can have out an argument then and there. It's not fair to everyone else in the group.

BE MEAN

While you should certainly challenge the players and their characters, and play the roles of the most evil villains and monsters to the hilt, don't ever be mean about it. That is, don't be unfair when it comes to providing challenges, and certainly don't gloat or take personal delight in a character's failures. Don't step on the players' personal issues or bring them into the game as a way of manipulating or, worse yet, punishing them. In short, you're in charge of the game, so don't be a jerk about it.

BE BORING

The only exciting visuals and special effects you have for your *Dragon Age* game are what you can inspire in your players' imaginations. So try to keep your descriptions rich and your tone exciting, maintaining a brisk and enjoyable pace. Don't drone, or go on about details nobody cares about. Don't let the game get bogged down in minutia or side-tracked into dull encounters nobody enjoys. One of the key advantages of roleplaying is your ability to edit and direct the story, so use that to keep things interesting.

WORRY ABOUT IT

Lastly, and most importantly, remind yourself "this is only a game, and it's supposed to be fun." Don't worry too much about whether or not you're doing things "right," so long as everybody is having fun. If you make a mistake, fix it and resolve to do better next time. If you forgot some vital piece of information, make something up that fits and keep on going.

The key thing is that the game, like the show, must go on, so it's generally better to keep things moving than to worry about some detail that will be forgotten during the next exciting encounter. Best of all, if you're not tense or worried about it, your players generally won't be either. Remember, it is *your* game, so have fun with it!

THE ART OF GAMEMASTERING

USING THE RULES

Now that you've had a general overview of the GM's role in the game, it's time to give you some practical advice and using the rules. For starters, you should read the *Player's Guide*. Most of the core rules of the game can be found there; you should pay particular attention to **CHAPTER 6: PLAYING THE GAME.**

MASTERING ABILITY TESTS

As the *Player's Guide* makes clear, ability tests are the heart of the *Dragon Age* system. Most dice rolls during play are ability tests, so one of your main tasks as GM is to adjudicate them fairly while keeping the adventure moving along. Rather than provide you with huge lists of approved actions and modifiers for every occasion, *Dragon Age* gives you a simple but robust system that you can use as a tool when running the game. This means you'll be making judgments frequently, but the system is flexible enough to handle most situations easily.

You'll find a general overview of ability tests in **CHAPTER 6** of the *Player's Guide,* but let's review the basics here. An ability test uses three six-sided dice (3d6). Two of the dice should be one color and the third a different color. The off-color die is known as the Dragon Die.

The three dice are rolled and added together, and then a further 2 is added if the character has an appropriate focus. The final number is the test result.

TEST RESULT = 3D6 + ABILITY + FOCUS

The test result is compared to a static target number (TN) in the case of a Basic Test or the test result of another character in an Opposed Test. A character wins a Basic Test by meeting or beating the target number and an Opposed Test by beating the opponent's test result. The results of the Dragon Die can be used to determine the degree of success and to break ties in the case of an Opposed Test.

When adjudicating any ability test in the *Dragon Age RPG,* there are four key decisions that you have to make as GM:

- Which abilities and focuses apply?

- How much time does the test take?

- What are the stakes?

- What are the consequences of failure?

Let's take a look at these questions one by one.

WHICH ABILITIES AND FOCUSES APPLY?

When a player tries to do something that has some chance of failure, you should call for an ability test. Everyday or extremely easy tasks (reading a broadsheet if literate, walking to the tavern) do not require dice rolling. For tasks that do, the player should describe the attempted action. You then have to decide what ability is relevant and what focus applies. If a character is trying to force a door open, for example, you'd call for a **STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test. There are only eight abilities, so picking the right one should be intuitive. Remember that abilities are quite broadly defined.

Picking a focus may require more thought. Sometimes it's obvious. If a character is trying to sneak through an alley, that's a **DEXTERITY (STEALTH)** test. Other times, the right focus is not as clear and indeed it may be that no focus applies. In that case, it's just a straight ability test. You should try to be open to player suggestion, though. If a player can give a credible explanation for why a particular focus should apply to the test, you should allow its use.

The other important thing to remember is that sometimes characters will use different abilities and focuses when making Opposed Tests. For example, a merchant may try to convince an adventurer to spend more money than he should on a new shield. The merchant would make a **COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING)** test while the adventurer would make a **WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)** test.

Usually any character can attempt to take an ability test. However, some tests require specialized knowledge or skill. When that's the case, you can make a specific focus a requirement to even attempt the test. You might call for a **CUNNING (ARCANE LORE REQUIRED)** test, for example. A character trying the test without the required focus automatically fails.

HOW MUCH TIME DOES THE TEST TAKE?

An ability test can represent mere seconds, or hours, or even days, depending on what the character is trying to achieve. During narrative time, the increments will tend to be larger. If the PCs try asking around town after a villain they are hunting, for example, you might decide that a test represents an hour of walking around and talking to different people. In action time, however, tracking exact time is more important. Remember, each round of action time is 15 seconds and within that time a character can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. When deciding on how long a test takes during action time, you should express it using these action types. A long action might take a major action and a minor action, or two of each for something that'd stretch across two rounds.

Lastly, there are ability tests that are reactions. Many spells, for examples, require their targets to make a test to resist certain effects. Such tests are considered to take no time, as they usually take place when it's not the testing character's turn.

WHAT ARE THE STAKES?

If the character succeeds, what happens exactly? These are the stakes. Usually, the result is obvious. A character trying to jump over a chasm will get across, for example. You'll find it easiest to make many tests binary: either a character succeeds or fails. Sometimes, however, more nuance is required—that's where the Dragon Die comes in. You can use the result of the Dragon Die to determine a character's degree of success. A 1 means the action was barely pulled off while a 6 means the results were spectacular. Going back to the chasm example, you could use the Dragon Die to determine how the character landed. A 1 could mean hanging from the opposite edge with the possibility of falling, a 2-3 could mean a crash landing that leaves the character prone, a 4-5 could mean the character landed on his feet, and a 6 could mean the character landed so skillfully that he flies over the chasm and lands on his feet two yards beyond the edge.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE?

Bad rolls happen—often at the most inopportune time. So when a character fails an ability test, what happens? Sometimes there are no consequences but the obvious. A character trying to find information on an ancient king makes a **CUNNING (HISTORICAL LORE)** test and fails. There are no consequences to this other than not finding the information. A character that fails to jump across a chasm, however, will be plummeting down and taking damage. You must decide how much and whether the character can do anything to mitigate the situation. You might allow, for example, a **DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test to land on nearby ledge instead of falling into the river far below.

You may also have to decide if characters can try failed actions again. You can say yes, yes with conditions, or no to this depending on the circumstances. If a character has time to spend and the action seems reasonable, another attempt can be made. You may say yes, but require a new approach or assistance. Or you can rule that the task is too daunting and the character cannot try again. As always, you should try to be fair, but you don't want the game to bog down into an endless series of re-rolls.

BASIC TESTS

Basic tests are the easiest to resolve because a character is testing against a fixed target number. Unless a character is actively opposed by another character or monster, you should use basic tests. What's nice about them from the GM's point of view is that they require only one judg-

BASIC TEST DIFFICULTY	
Test Difficulty	**Target Number**
Routine	7
Easy	9
Average	11
Challenging	13
Hard	15
Formidable	17
Imposing	19
Nigh Impossible	21

ADVANCED TESTS	
Task Difficulty	**Success Threshold**
Easy	5
Average	10
Challenging	15
Hard	20
Formidable	25

ment and that's an overall assessment of the action's difficulty. The **Basic Test Difficulty** table provides baseline benchmarks for test difficulty. You'll probably consult more than any other table in the game.

When setting the target number, you should try to take all the various circumstances into consideration. In a **Cunning (Research)** test, is the library well-stocked? In a **Dexterity (Stealth)** test, are the floorboards squeaky? In a **Strength (Climbing)** test, does the wall have abundant handholds? In short, how hard is the task at hand?

You don't need to agonize about this. Make a quick assessment and then let the dice fall where they may. You can tell players what TN they are shooting for or keep that information to yourself. A plus of keeping it secret is that it reduces arguments with the players. They tell you their test result and you tell them if they succeed or fail.

Opposed Tests

Opposed tests work a little differently than basic tests. A character is not trying to meet or beat a fixed number but beat the test result of an opposing character. This makes things a bit more complicated. First, it means there is more than one dice roll involved. Second, it means that you can't distill everything in the test down to a target number. If there are circumstances that affect one or more characters involved in the test, you'll have to determine those and assign the bonuses and/or penalties that affect the final test result. Generally speaking, you should grant bonuses or impose penalties of 1-3 to reflect the circumstances of the test. You might, for example, give a character trying to jump in muddy ground a –2 penalty to the **Strength (Jumping)** test.

- Only one focus can apply to a test.
- Leave the dice on the table after a roll because the result of the Dragon Die may be important.
- The Dragon Die only counts for successful tests.
- In Opposed Tests, ties are broken by the higher Dragon Die, or by the higher ability if the Dragon Dice are tied.
- For basic tests, assess the situation and assign a difficulty.
- For opposed tests, circumstances can be represented with bonuses and penalties of 1-3.
- Advanced tests use a success threshold to measure completion over time. Don't overuse them!

Factors you may consider for bonuses and/or penalties to ability tests include equipment available, weather conditions, time constraints, distractions, assistance from others, lighting conditions, and good roleplaying where appropriate. You should let players know any bonuses or penalties before they roll, so the test result can be determined accurately.

Advanced Tests

Most tests are determined by one roll of the dice. There are times, however, when a task is complicated and resolving it with one roll wouldn't feel right. Known as advanced tests, these types of tasks generally take a lot of time and/or planning, such as running a long race or doing research. Advanced tests are basic or opposed tests that use what's known as a success threshold to track completion over time. The task is complete when the total of the Dragon Dice from all successful tests is equal to or greater than the success threshold.

EXAMPLE

The mage Lorrahn is trying to puzzle out an obscure magical theory. The GM decides this will be a series of **Cunning (Arcane Lore)** tests with a success threshold of 15. The target number for the tests is 13 and each one represents an hour of time. It takes Lorrahn six tests altogether before he can understand what the theory is all about. The first and fifth tests are unsuccessful, so the Dragon Die results for those don't count. The four successful tests have Dragon Die results of 2, 5, 4, and 6. Their total of 17 is greater than the success threshold, so after the six hours of work, the light dawns on Lorrahn and the insight of the theory becomes clear.

As the example illustrates, the length of time and difficulty of each test are important. Since the Dragon Die is only counted for successful tests, the harder you make it the more dice rolls will be required. If more than one character pitches in, this is best reflected by modifying the test difficulty or giving the testing character a bonus. This will result in more successful tests, and so the task will be completed faster.

You sometimes want to use an advanced test to determine how much time something takes, but you can also use to it to find out who finishes first. The first character to meet or beat the success threshold is the winner. This can be used to simulate all sorts of conflicts, from debates to horse races.

The **Advanced Tests** table provides some basic benchmarks for success thresholds, though there is no theoretical limit on how high they can get. Practically speaking, however, you don't want players rolling dice forever, so consider carefully before setting thresholds above 25.

Roleplaying and the Rules

In a session of *Dragon Age*, both you and the players will spend a lot of time talking in character. This interaction is one of the key differences between roleplaying games and other sorts of games. Groups can spend hours just roleplaying and never once touch a die. There are, however, points where the roleplaying part and the gaming part of RPGs must meet. People have been arguing about where they intersect since the beginning of RPGs.

A central issue is the social skills of the player vs. the social skills of the character. When is it appropriate to roleplay an interaction out and when is it appropriate to roll dice? And what if you do some roleplaying but also roll dice? What if a character has a lousy Communication ability but the player is glib? Or what if the player who's tongue-tied in real life wants to play a character who's a great orator?

These issues don't come up during combat or exploration encounters for the most part. No one expects a player to actually be able to fight or decipher an ancient script. People are content to let dice rolling handle such things. When it comes to roleplaying, however, players can talk and interact. They are doing so in character but it is the players using their social skills to roleplay.

So let's imagine a scene in which the PCs have to convince a local bann (a Fereldan nobleman) that a man was wrongly imprisoned. There are four ways you can run this scene. First, everyone can just roleplay. You play the bann and the players their characters. If their verbal arguments are convincing, you decide the bann

relents and frees the man. Second, you could resolve the whole thing with ability tests, with the players making **Communication (Persuasion)** tests vs. the bann's **Communication (Leadership)** tests. Third, you could mix the two approaches, letting the players roleplay and then having them take tests with bonuses or penalties based on their arguments and delivery. Lastly, you could run the scene as an advanced test. You tell the players they have five minutes of game time to convince the bann and each **Communication (Persuasion)** test takes one minute. You then set a success threshold based on the bann's attitude towards the PCs and the prisoner. Before each test, the players can make an argument. If you find it convincing, you can reduce the difficulty of that test. The players can take turns making arguments and rolling or have a spokesman with the best **Communication (Persuasion)** do it. The dice are the final arbiter in this approach but good roleplaying makes successful tests more likely.

None of those techniques are wrong, though the second one (just rolling dice) does reduce the roleplaying to a minimum. You need to decide how you want to handle scenes like this in your game; it's fine to mix and match approaches. You can do a quick and dirty ability test to cover haggling with a merchant and later roleplay out a feast with no dice rolling at all. The important thing is to discover which approach works for your group and is fun for everyone.

Combat Considerations

When the game switches from narrative time to action time, it's time for combat. This is when *Dragon Age* becomes the most rules intensive and you'll have many decisions to make in a short time. It's up to you to control all the NPCs. You have to roll initiative for them and decide on their actions when their turns come up. You'll need to keep track of the resources of the various NPCs as well, such as Health and mana points. The basic rules for combat are in **Chapter 6** of the *Player's Guide,* but as the GM there are a few more things you need to know about adjudicating combat. The following section provides additional advice and rules that will help you run combat encounters in *Dragon Age*.

Major and Minor NPCs

Non-player characters in *Dragon Age* are divided into two types: major NPCs and minor NPCs. Major NPCs are prominent characters in the story and often have a reoccurring role. Minor NPCs have a support role, be it as local color or spear carriers. Many minor NPCs won't even have names.

The rules treat major and minor NPCs the same way with two exceptions:

- In combat encounters, you should roll initiative for each major NPC separately. Minor NPCs you can break up into groups by type and then make an initiative roll for each group. If you had three genlocks and four fanged skeletons in a combat, for example, you'd roll initiative once for the genlocks and once of the fanged skeletons. When initiative for the genlocks came up, all three of them would take a turn. Each one could take different actions, but they'd all happen on the same initiative. Then when the skeletons' initiative came up, the four of them could take their turns.

- You may, at your option, apply the rules for dying PCs to major NPCs. If you do, a major NPC dropped to 0 Health will die after a number of rounds equal to **2 + CONSTITUTION** unless healing is received. A dying character can talk but cannot take any other actions. The NPC dies at the start of his turn on the final round, so his allies have until then to save him.

SURPRISE

In combat attacking first is often the key to victory, which is why ambush is an age old tactic. At the start of a combat encounter, you must determine if one side gets the drop on the other. Characters that are surprised will not get a chance to act the first round of combat. Determining surprise is a three part process:

- **CONSIDER THE SITUATION:** First, determine the basic situation. Is one side concealed or hidden in some way? Is the other side wary or oblivious? Did both sides just blunder into one another by accident?

- **TEST OR NO TEST:** Next, you must decide if one or both sides get a chance to detect the other before contact is made. In some situations, you may decide there is no test. In that case, one side automatically gets the drop on the other. If you decide there is a chance of detection, you can have characters make Perception tests with focuses as appropriate (though Seeing is most common). This can be a basic test, in which case you assign a TN based on circumstances, or you can make it an opposed test of Perception vs. Dexterity (Stealth). It is possible that some characters will be surprised while others on the same side will not.

- **COMBAT BEGINS:** Everyone rolls for initiative as action time begins and the combat starts. Any characters that were surprised do not get a turn during the first round of the fight. On the second round, everyone gets to act as normal.

The easiest way to deal with surprise is with basic tests. If an enemy is trying to ambush the PCs, for example, choose a TN based on the site they picked and their level of concealment and let each player make a **Perception (Seeing)** test. Those that fail the test are surprised; those that make it are not. If the PCs are trying to ambush an enemy, roll a **Perception (Seeing)** test for each major NPC and group of minor NPCs.

EXAMPLE

The rogue Gerhard, the warrior Jannelle, and the mage Lorrahn are trying to ambush an ogre and three genlocks in a mountain pass. They have hidden themselves amongst the rocks at either side of the pass. The darkspawn are not expecting trouble here, so they have no one scouting ahead. The GM decides it'll take a TN 13 **Perception (Seeing)** test to notice the ambush. He rolls once for the ogre and once for the genlocks (since the three of them are a group). The ogre gets a 14 and the genlocks a 10. Now everyone rolls initiative. During the first round of combat, Gerhard, Jannelle, Lorrahn, and the surprisingly aware ogre can take turns as normal, but the genlocks are confounded by the ambush and they do not get to act at all.

ATTACK ROLLS AND CIRCUMSTANCE

An attack roll is the most common ability test in combat. It is a basic test, but the target number is equal to the opponent's Defense. The attack roll is modified by a focus if applicable and any other relevant bonuses (such as aiming, charging, magic items, talents, etc.). You can also assign bonuses and penalties to the attack roll to reflect the circumstances of the encounter, just as you do in opposed tests. In general these bonuses and penalties should range from 1 to 3. They can take into account anything that would affect the attacker's ability to hit the target, such as lighting, terrain, tactics, and concealment. Here are some example modifiers based on common circumstances. Use them as a guideline when assigning bonuses and penalties to attack rolls.

MORALE

In many games combat is an all or nothing affair. Opponents fight until one side or the other is wiped out. War is indeed bloody but it'd be infinitely more so if it was prosecuted in this way. In truth most combats end when the morale of one side breaks and its combatants flee. Now in fantasy you will, of course, find monsters who will fight on regardless of circumstances, but most NPCs have some sense of self-preservation. You can

ATTACK ROLL MODIFIERS

Modifier	Circumstance
–3	Defender in heavy cover, such as a building or stone wall. Melee attacker in heavy snow.
–2	Defender in light cover, such as a hedge or the woods. Melee attacker in the mud. Ranged attack vs. defender engaged in melee combat. Combat at night.
–1	Rain, mist, or smoke obscures the defender. Combat in low light conditions.
0	Normal circumstances.
+1	Attacker is on higher ground. Defender is prone. Melee attacker and allies outnumber defender 2 to 1.
+2	Melee attacker and allies outnumber defender 3 to 1. Defender is drunk.
+3	Defender is unaware of the attack.

simulate this with **Willpower (Morale)** tests when it seems appropriate. Characters will fight on with a successful test or attempt to break off from combat or even surrender on a failed test.

When is it appropriate to test? That is for you to determine based on the circumstances of the combat and the perception of the combatants. You should consider, however, calling for a test under the following conditions:

• When more than half of the side's combatants are out of the fight (dead or incapacitated).

• When the side's leader or champion is defeated.

• When fighting on will mean being trapped or surrounded.

You can handle this one of two ways. Your first option is to make one **Willpower (Morale)** test for the side using the Willpower of its leader (or best available if there is no clear cut leader). This has the advantage of being simple and can end a combat with one die roll. Your other option is to roll once for each major NPC and group of minor NPCs. This can mean that some combatants flee while others stay and fight.

In general you want to use morale tests with NPCs only. Players should have the choice to fight or flee.

EXAMPLE

The rogue Gerhard, the warrior Jannelle, and the mage Lorrahn are fighting off an ambush by Avvarian hillsmen. After four rounds of combat they have killed four of the attackers, leaving a leader (a major NPC) and two Avvar warriors (a group of minor NPCs). The GM decides it's a good time to test morale, since over half of the

attackers are down. He rolls once for the leader and once for the Avvar warriors, getting a 14 and an 8 respectively. The GM set the TN at 11, so the leader makes a successful test but the warriors fail. The next time the warriors take a turn, they will attempt to flee. The Avvar leader now has a tough decision to make: Should he fight on alone, or follow his men?

Flying Combatants

Some combatants have the ability to fly. This is indicated parenthetically after the character's Speed. Speed 6 (Flying 12), for example. This character moves at 6 on the ground, but 12 when flying. As you might guess, flying requires a few additional rules. The game handles fliers with the use of special actions available only to them. When flying a character must use one of the following actions: circle, dive, fly, or fly high. A character that fails to do so for any reason suffers falling damage (see **Handling Hazards** later in this chapter). Only one of these four actions can be used on a turn. A character could not, for example, dive and then circle. Flying characters cannot take the charge, move, or run actions until back on the ground.

For the most part stunts affect fliers the same as other characters. The exception is the Knock Prone stunt. If used, this reduces the character's Flying Speed by 3 until the end of his next turn instead.

Minor Actions

Circle: The flying character circles above the battlefield at a low altitude, moving a number of yards equal to his Flying Speed. Ranged attacks from the ground add 20 yards to the horizontal distance from the shooter to the target to represent the height of the flier. A circling character can attack other circling characters at no penalty. A character must start his turn flying to circle.

Fly: The character moves a distance equal to his Flying Speed. The character is roughly 3 yards off the ground and can be attacked in melee by opponents on the ground. The character's own melee attack rolls receive a +1 bonus vs. opponents on the ground due to the height advantage. A character can choose to land after flying, in which case the normal rules once again apply. A prone character cannot fly until he takes a move action to stand up first.

Major Actions

Dive: A character that was circling or flying high the previous round can dive this round. A character that

was circling can move a number of yards equal to Flying Speed and make a melee attack against an opponent on the ground. A character that was flying high can move a number of yards equal to double his Flying Speed and make a melee attack against an opponent circling or on the ground. In either case the attack can take place at any point in the character's movement and receives +1 bonus on the melee attack roll and damage roll. At the end of the dive the character is roughly 3 yards off the ground, just as if he had taken the fly action.

Fly High: The character can move a number of yards equal to his Flying Speed while climbing far above the battlefield. While flying high, the character can neither attack nor be attacked (even by other characters flying high). A character must start his turn circling to fly high.

EXAMPLE

An Avvarian hillsman dispatches a falcon to deliver a vital message. The falcon takes to the air on its turn with the fly action. A Fereldan scout sees the falcon and fires off a quick shot. No penalties apply, but the shot still misses. Next the falcon takes the circle action and continues to move away. The scout takes another shot, determined to bring the bird down. The horizontal distance to the falcon is 20 yards, but since it's circling another 20 yards is added to that to determine range. This makes it 40 yards, which is long range for a long bow. The scout thus takes a –2 penalty and misses again. On its third turn, the falcon flies high. The scout curses as the falcon streaks skyward and out of range.

HANDLING HAZARDS

You should have a good handle on how to deal with combat encounters now. The combat rules are the most detailed part of *Dragon Age,* since the nature of action time requires a certain amount of precision. Swords and arrows are not the only threats PCs face in the land of Thedas, however. They must also contend with traps, falling, fire, and other perils. All of these things fall under the general header of "hazards"—this section explains how to deal with them. They are most commonly found in exploration encounters, but sometimes appear in combat encounters or (more rarely) roleplaying encounters.

Rather than come up with a raft of special rules for each individual type, *Dragon Age* handles hazards with a simple system that can be used to simulate everything from pit traps to drowning. Published adventures will define hazards for you, but when you need

to adjudicate them on your own, you must answer the following questions:

- What is the nature of the hazard?
- Can it be avoided?
- How dangerous is the hazard?
- Does it have any special effects?
- How long does it last?

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE HAZARD?

The first step is to describe the nature of the hazard in a general way. It could be a treacherous pathway leading up the side of a mountain, a raging forest fire, or a tripwire that triggers a dart attack. You may tweak your idea as you define the hazard, but for now just broadly define the parameters.

CAN IT BE AVOIDED?

Some hazards, particularly traps, are a hidden danger. You must decide if the PCs have a chance to detect it beforehand. This is usually a Perception test, with a focus appropriate for the hazard. You might using Seeing to give the PCs a chance to notice a patch of disturbed earth over a pit trap or Hearing to see if the PCs noticed a telltale clicking noise. If there is a chance of detection, simply set the TN for the ability test as usual. PCs that make a successful test can avoid the hazard, or at least get a clue that may help them do so. Those that fail walk right into it.

HOW DANGEROUS IS THE HAZARD?

Just as you assess challenges for ability tests, so too must you assess the danger of hazards. Consult the **Hazard Category** table and pick the one that best suits the nature of the hazard. This determines the base damage the hazard inflicts. You might decide, for example, that falling from the top of a guard tower is a major hazard, so that would inflict 3d6 damage. There can be hazards that inflict more damage than 6d6 but they should be rare.

You can also allow an ability test to mitigate the damage. A good standard is that a successful test means the character only suffered half damage (rounded down). The man falling from the tower, for example, could be given a chance to make a TN 15 **DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test to halve the damage.

You also need to decide if armor protects vs. the hazard. If it does not, make it penetrating damage (and realize this makes it nastier). Common sense should dictate whether armor is a help in a given situation. You can see, for example, how armor could protect a character from a fire but not from falling.

HAZARD CATEGORY	
CATEGORY	**DAMAGE**
Minor Hazard	1d6
Moderate Hazard	2d6
Major Hazard	3d6
Arduous Hazard	4d6
Harrowing Hazard	5d6
Murderous Hazard	6d6

DOES IT HAVE ANY SPECIAL EFFECTS?

Some hazards do more than just damage. They might impose a temporary penalty to an ability or to Speed. They could reduce the number of actions a character can take in a turn. They could leave a character prone or even unconscious. Try to remember that Health is fairly abstract in the first place, so many hazards require no special effects. When you do use a special effect, try to make it simple and sensible. It would be fair to say, for example, that the character that fell off the tower could take no actions on his next turn (presuming he survived). It makes sense that the survivor of such a fall would not leap back up and get back into the action immediately.

HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?

Many hazards happen once and then end. A dart trap, for example, will fire once when triggered. Other hazards can be ongoing. If a character is running through a blazing forest, for example, he'll take damage each round until he escapes. Again, use common sense as your guide to determine whether the hazard is a single incident or reoccurring.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here are three sample hazards. You'll find more in published *Dragon Age* adventures.

THE BURNING INN

During the night, unknown villains pour oil all over the lower floor of the inn the PCs are sleeping in and set the place alight. The characters wake up to the smell of smoke as fire quickly engulfs the inn. They can try to escape down the stairs and through the common room. However, each round they take 3d6 damage (a major hazard), and their Speed is halved because the smoke makes it hard to see where to go. They could also leap from the window of their room but the distance and the fire on the lower floors makes this an arduous hazard that inflicts 4d6 penetrating damage. A successful TN 11 **DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test halves the damage. Do the PCs dash through the inn, potentially taking damage over several rounds but enjoying the protection of armor, or do they make the jump to freedom and hope the penetrating damage isn't too bad?

PIT TRAP

A section of corridor falls away when enough pressure is put upon it, dropping the unlucky victim into a pit 15 feet deep. If the triggering character makes a successful TN 12 **PERCEPTION (TOUCHING)** test, he feels the floor starting to give away and can step back before falling in. Otherwise, he falls and takes 2d6 penetrating damage (a moderate hazard). A successful TN 11 **DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test halves the damage.

THE RUSHING RIVER

A PC must swim across a rushing river to deliver a vital message. The river is swift and there are rocks beneath the surface that make the crossing more perilous. She must make an advanced test with a success threshold of 7 (see **Advanced Tests,** earlier in this chapter). Each round the character must take a TN 13 **CONSTITUTION (SWIMMING)** test. If she succeeds, the result of her Dragon Die counts towards the success threshold. If she fails, she takes 2d6 damage from the rocks and/or inhaled water. She keeps making tests until she makes it across or is reduced to 0 Health.

Adversaries

Conflict is the heart of drama, so every *Dragon Age* campaign needs adversaries. Many of these will be darkspawn and other monsters, but a Fereldan knight with the ear of the local bann can be just as much of a threat. This chapter contains a starting selection of adversaries for your campaign, and you'll find more in subsequent sets and adventures.

Adversaries are presented in a common format. First, there is a description and then the game stats, sometimes referred to as a "stat block" because it's a block of text. If you've read the *Player's Guide*, the stats should be fairly self-explanatory. You will note that each adversary has an entry for favored stunts. These are the most commonly used stunts for that adversary, but don't feel compelled to use them. Favored stunts are provided as a suggestion but as always use your judgment. Also note that many adversaries have unique stunts to give them flavor and make fighting one enemy different than fighting another.

The stats presented are average for an adversary of that type but you can change them for an encounter. It's a simple matter to modify the weapons and armor of many adversaries to create different tactical challenges. If you want a tougher adversary (one you want to be a major NPC, for example), you can also modify the stats. You can change the stats as you like, but here are some basic guidelines for making more challenging adversaries.

- **Elite:** To make an adversary who is a little tougher than average, add 1 to any three abilities, add two focuses, and increase Health by 5. You can also make the NPC a novice in a new talent or add a degree to an existing one.

- **Heroic:** To make an adversary who is very tough indeed, add 2 to any two abilities, add 1 to any three other abilities, add four focuses, and increase Health by 15. You can also make the NPC a novice in two new talents or add two degrees to existing ones.

At this point you may be wondering, do NPCs have character classes? The answer is that they can, but they don't have to. Classes provide a framework for advancement that is necessary for the Player Characters, but not for NPCs. If you want to use the rules in the *Player's Guide* to build NPCs, you certainly can do that, but you are equally welcome to give NPCs whatever abilities, focuses, talents, and so on that seem appropriate. This chapter is full of examples that you can use and modify as needed.

Adversary Focuses

For the most part, adversaries use the same ability focuses listed in the *Player's Guide*. There are a few more required, however, to deal with creatures and animals, mostly relating to their natural attacks. These additional focuses are:

- **Dexterity Focuses:** Bite.
- **Perception Focuses:** Tasting, Touching.
- **Strength Focuses:** Claws, Gore, Kick.

PCs can take Tasting and Touching if they really want to, but since NPCs are more likely to use them they are included here. PCs cannot take any of the other listed focuses listed in this section.

Other NPCs

Not all NPCs are adversaries. The PCs will meet many people in their travels, and you needn't provide full stat blocks for all of them. Oftentimes NPCs will only appear in the game for a single roleplaying encounter. Many of them don't need stats at all, but it is often useful to know some basics about the character. In these cases you can use an abbreviated stat block, which simply lists the abilities and focuses. This innkeeper is an example of the format.

INNKEEPER

	ABILITIES (FOCUSES)
3	COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING, PERSUASION)
2	CONSTITUTION (DRINKING)
1	CUNNING (EVALUATION)
0	DEXTERITY
0	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (TASTING)
1	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

Non-Combatants

Some NPCs are labeled as non-combatants. They have no skill whatsoever in combat and they almost certainly seek to avoid such situations. Non-combatants can be children, the elderly, the idle, draft animals, or other passive NPCs. A non-combatant's attack roll is always +0, regardless of Strength or Dexterity. Other bonuses and penalties apply as normal.

Avvarian Hunter

Inevitably encountered only in the midst of winter, unless one happens to be traveling through the heights of the Frostbacks, Avvars are skilled hunters and fierce combatants who exult in battle. They raid into the Ferel-dan lowlands under the cover of heavy storms, using the great cold to their advantage, as their mountain homes have all but inured them to its bite. Their treacherous homeland has taught them to avoid heavy armor. They prefer strong chain links, dwarf wrought if they can get it, wrapped in warm furs. Avvars favor axes and spears over swords. Their bows are heavy, with long shafts capable of piercing a man's torso at great distance.

It is nearly impossible to catch a hunting party of Avvars unawares, due to their great skill at falconry. A hunting party will nearly always have a mountain eagle or two, highly clever and well-trained birds that scout for them. Indeed, Avvars are far more likely to ambush others than be caught themselves. The hot blooded Avvars are proud, honorable, and relish any opportunity to prove themselves superior to those they consider to be heretical lowlanders. A clever combatant with knowledge of the Avvars' ways can try to use either their arrogance or their many superstitions against them.

AVVARIAN HUNTER

	ABILITIES (FOCUSES)
1	COMMUNICATION (ANIMAL HANDLING)
2	CONSTITUTION (DRINKING, STAMINA)
0	CUNNING
1	DEXTERITY
0	MAGIC
1	PERCEPTION (SEEING, TRACKING)
2	STRENGTH (AXES, CLIMBING)
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
9	20	11 (13 with shield)	3

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BATTLE AXE	+4	2d6+2
LONG BOW	+1	1d6+4

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Mighty Blow and Skirmish.*

TALENTS: *Animal Training (Journeyman), Armor Training (Novice), and Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).*

WEAPON GROUPS: *Axes, Bows, Brawling, and Spears.*

EQUIPMENT

BATTLE AXE, LIGHT CHAIN, LONG BOW, AND MEDIUM SHIELD.

Note that a player character Avvar is a wild card in any encounter with his or her kin. The character's presence may defuse a tense situation—or escalate it, if the hunters are from a rival clan!

BLACK BEAR

Large, dangerous, and frequently hungry, bears are a force to be reckoned with. The bears of Ferelden's lowlands have shaggy black fur, the better to survive the harsh winters. They have little to no fear of men and frequently make their homes along the borders of the forests near human settlements, where they can more easily poach stores from outlying cabins. Bears are omnivorous and seldom picky eaters, willingly consuming carrion when fresher fare is not available. It is neither their great strength, nor their sharply curving claws that most concern the hunters of Ferelden (though only a fool reckons either lightly)—it is their attitude. Bears are unpredictable, belligerent, and regard the bulk of creatures that they meet as potential food sources. They are canny foes and quick to double back on their own tracks, taking those who would dare to hunt them unaware. They are at the top of the natural food chain, and they act like it.

BLACK BEAR

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
0	COMMUNICATION
6	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
–1	CUNNING
2	DEXTERITY (BITE)
–1	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (SMELLING, TASTING)
6	STRENGTH (CLAWS, INTIMIDATION, MIGHT)
2	WILLPOWER

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	60	12	0

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BITE	+4	1D6+6
CLAWS	+8	2D6+6

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Knock Prone (1 SP) and Quick Bite.*

QUICK BITE STUNT: *A black bear can follow up a successful attack with its claws with a Quick Bite as a special stunt costing 2 SP. This bite attack must be taken against the same target as the original attack. Doubles on the bite attack roll does not generate more stunt points.*

BRONTO

Bronto are beasts of burden that were painstaking "engineered" over many centuries by the dwarven scholars known as the Shapers of Memory, by selectively exposing now lost breeding stock to raw lyrium. The bronto were originally intended only to haul ore and serve as food sources when necessary; however, other lines have since been bred to serve as sure-footed dwarven mounts. They are strong and hardy creatures requiring little sustenance. Indeed, dwarves from Orzammar often refer to bronto as "rock-lickers" due to their ability to derive scant amounts of edible organic material from stone.

BRONTO

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
–1	COMMUNICATION
5	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
–1	CUNNING
3	DEXTERITY
0	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (SEEING)
5	STRENGTH (GORE, MIGHT)
2	WILLPOWER

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	40	13	3

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
GORE	+7	2D6+5

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Mighty Blow and Pierce Armor.*

TOUGH HIDE: *The bony skin of a bronto gives the creature an AR of 3.*

Bronto are four legged beasts with thick folds of tough skin, speckled with bony extrusions. They are fairly placid animals, except when provoked. Unfortunately, while domesticated bronto tend to have an affable temperament, it is often difficult to determine what might set off a wild bronto—and a charging angry bronto is a foe to be reckoned with.

Chasind Stalker

The Korcari Wilds do not suffer fools lightly and the Chasind peoples who make their home there are a hard folk, ill disposed towards outsiders. The harsh conditions of the Wilds and the primitive nature of the Wilders incline them to take by force or stealth anything they cannot grow or build for themselves—which is to say, almost everything worth having. Chasind raiders, known within Ferelden as "stalkers," often slip out of the wilds traveling in small scavenging parties to search for easy targets amidst the freeholds of the south. The Wilders are famed (and cursed about) for their stealth and hunting skills, both of which they employ to track down suitable targets. They favor vicious ambushes using short bows with wickedly hooked arrows. Stalker

groups are invariably small, to deflect attention, and likely to be lightly armored in patchwork leather, so as to move with speed.

Dalish Raider

It is true that the wandering elven folk known as the Dalish elves will antagonize humans occasionally; however, real bloodshed is a rarity far more often talked about by humans than actually encountered. This is due in part to the Dalish deeming it beneath them, but mainly because they are vastly outnumbered and know it. In Ferelden, where the city elves have more freedom than in many other countries and the people give the Dalish at least some modicum of respect, it is rarer still.

With that said, the typical arrogance of the Dalish will at times rub a bann the wrong way or an aravel will be passing by when an ill happenstance strikes a group of freeholders, who will lay it at the wanderers' door. If cooler heads are kept, the Dalish will simply be asked to move on—but the Fereldan are a hot-blooded people. Any violence to their folk will provoke swift retribution from the Dalish, whose arrows are deadly swift and exceedingly

CHASIND STALKER

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
0	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
1	CUNNING
3	DEXTERITY (BOWS, LIGHT BLADES, STEALTH)
1	MAGIC
3	PERCEPTION (SEARCHING, SEEING, TRACKING)
2	STRENGTH (CLIMBING)
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	20	13 (14 WITH SHIELD)	3

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
SHORT BOW	+5	1D6+4
SHORT SWORD	+5	1D6+4

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Pierce Armor and Skirmish.*

TALENTS: *Archery Style (Journeyman), Armor Training (Novice), and Scouting (Journeyman).*

WEAPON GROUPS: *Bows, Brawling, and Light Blades.*

EQUIPMENT

LIGHT LEATHER, LIGHT SHIELD, SHORT BOW, AND SHORT SWORD.

DALISH RAIDER

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
2	COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
0	CONSTITUTION
1	CUNNING (NATURAL LORE)
3	DEXTERITY (BOWS, INITIATIVE, LIGHT BLADES, STEALTH)
1	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (HEARING, TRACKING)
1	STRENGTH (CLIMBING)
3	WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	16	13	5

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
LONG BOW	+5	1D6+5
SHORT SWORD	+5	1D6+3

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Lightning Attack and Rapid Reload.*

TALENTS: *Archery Style (Journeyman), Armor Training (Novice), and Single Weapon Style (Novice).*

WEAPON GROUPS: *Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, and Staves.*

EQUIPMENT

LIGHT MAIL, LONG BOW, AND SHORT SWORD.

accurate. The Dalish carry bows shaped of wood, bone, and leather, that humans cannot duplicate. They disdain to injure the weak and helpless, but all others are fair game when the Dalish are moved to seek vengeance.

A raiding force of Dalish Elves is easily identifiable as such, as opposed to city elves turned to banditry, by the *vallasin* or "blood writing" that they mark themselves with. Valla-sin are tattoos representing the ancient gods that the Dalish still worship and they make a point of inking them on their foreheads so their can be no mistaking of their allegiance to the old ways. After the Dalish feel that they have made their "point" they will move on swiftly.
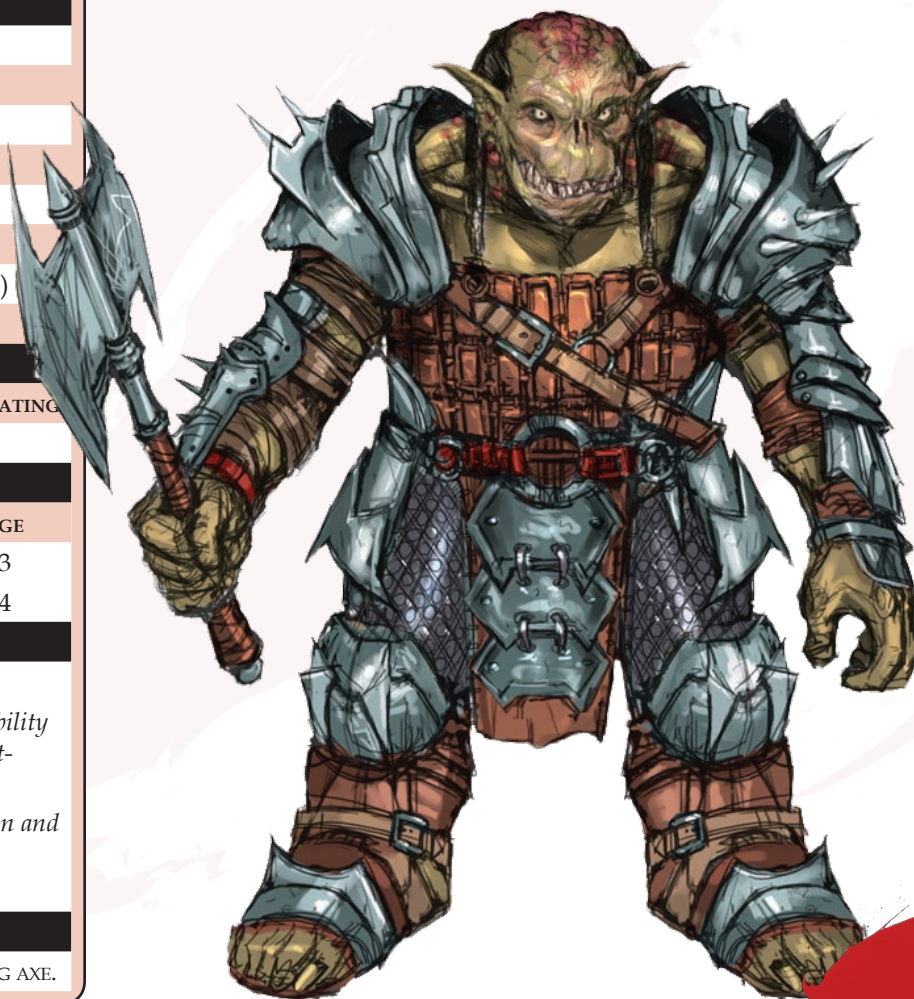
DARKSPAWN

With the First Blight came the darkspawn and they have been a plague on the world ever since. The Chantry teaches that the darkspawn cannot be utterly vanquished until sin has been banished from the world, for they are man's hubris made flesh. Regardless of where they first came from, the legions of the darkspawn now make war upon all other races, emerging from the dwarven Deep Roads in vast numbers with each Blight. Darkspawn are malicious creatures, regarding all species not their own as slave labor, sport, or provisions. They tend to even look upon their fellow darkspawn with disfavor and even when they travel together in force, they will group together with their own kind (genlocks with genlocks, hurlocks with hurlocks, and so forth). Fortunately for the other sentients of Thedas, darkspawn despise the sun and their vision is impaired in daylight.

GENLOCK

Most numerous of the darkspawn by far, genlocks are tough and stocky fighters with a penchant for wickedly hooked axes. Unlike the majority of their brethren, they are swift to take up the more complicated weapons of their enemies, employing siege engines in battle and using clever traps to defend any terrain they control. Ferelden's Circle of Magi believes that their propensity to mine the Deep Roads for lyrium has given genlocks a resistance to magic, for they've been known to shrug off spells in battle with little effect. Genlocks tend to be slightly shorter than dwarves with pale white or yellowish skin. They are invariably bald, with deep-set eyes and sunken cheeks. Their voices are low and harsh, punctuated by occasional grunts.

GENLOCK	DARKSPAWN
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
0	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)
1	CUNNING (MILITARY LORE)
1	DEXTERITY (BRAWLING)
2	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (SMELLING)
3	STRENGTH (AXES, INTIMIDATION)
2	WILLPOWER

COMBAT RATINGS

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
6	22	11 (13 WITH SHIELD)	7

ATTACKS

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BATTLE AXE	+5	2D6+3
THROWING AXE	+5	1D6+4

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Knock Prone and Mighty Blow.*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *A genlock gets a +2 bonus on ability tests to resist the effects of spells and other magical attacks.*

TALENTS: *Armor Training (Journeyman) and Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).*

WEAPON GROUPS: *Axes, Brawling, and Bludgeons.*

EQUIPMENT

BATTLE AXE, HEAVY MAIL, MEDIUM SHIELD, AND THROWING AXE.

HURLOCK | DARKSPAWN

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
0	COMMUNICATION
3	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
1	CUNNING
2	DEXTERITY (BRAWLING)
1	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (SMELLING)
4	STRENGTH (HEAVY BLADES, INTIMIDATION)
3	WILLPOWER (COURAGE, MORALE)

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
8	30	12	8

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
Short Bow	+2	1D6+5
Two-handed Sword	+6	3D6+4

POWERS

BERSERK STRIKE: *A hurlock can perform the Dual Strike stunt for 3 SP instead of the usual 4 when wielding a melee weapon.*

FAVORED STUNTS: *Dual Strike and Mighty Blow.*

TALENTS: *Armor Training (Journeyman), Two Hander Style (Novice), and Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).*

WEAPON GROUPS: *Bows, Brawling, and Heavy Blades.*

EQUIPMENT

Light plate, short bow, and two-handed sword.

DRAGONLING

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
–1	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)
–1	CUNNING
5	DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)
0	MAGIC
3	PERCEPTION (SEEING)
2	STRENGTH (CLAWS, JUMPING)
1	WILLPOWER

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
16	15	15	3

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
Bite	+5	1D6+2
Claws	+4	2D6+2
Fire Gout	+5	2D6

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Mighty Blow and Pierce Armor.*

FIRE GOUT: *A dragonling can spit flame as a ranged attack. The fire gout has a short range of 6 yards and a long range of 12 yards.*

QUICK BITE STUNT: *A dragonling can follow up a successful attack with its claws with a Quick Bite as a special stunt costing 2 SP. This bite attack must be taken against the same target as the original attack. Rolling doubles on the bite attack roll does not generate more stunt points.*

TOUGH HIDE: *The scaly skin of a dragonling gives the creature an AR of 3.*

HURLOCK

The shock vanguard of the darkspawn, hurlocks are burly soldiers far stronger than the average human. The hurlock are so arrogant they even look down on other darkspawn, convinced that they are truly the chosen race. They are deadly fighters who wield massive two-handed blades in battle, and scar or tattoo themselves regularly to denote their kills. They typically have to wear patchwork armor, as few full sets that can fit one of them exist. Their skin tone ranges from pale white to dark brown. If they are not bald, which is common, then their hair is always black.

DRAGONLING

Dragonlings are four legged reptilian beasts that live in the cave networks and occasionally the forests of Ferelden. They are quick and vicious predators about the size of a young deer. Dragonlings frequently hunt in small packs of three to five members, but even a solitary one is not to be underestimated as they have hooked claws and sharp teeth. They are fairly clever creatures, but not especially tough, just very fast. Like the near-legendary dragons from which they take their name, they can spit small gouts of fire.

FERELDAN BRIGAND

There are always those who will prey on the weak and less fortunate. In Ferelden thugs like these tend to pick on those hard pressed to defend themselves, such as city elves and poor freemen. A significant show of force will cause most groups of brigands to search elsewhere for weaker prey. However, Orlesian nobles who wish to keep Ferelden unruly as possible still secretly supply some of the worst of these traitors with money and arms. It takes a strong chief to control a gang of brigands, so challenges to leadership are common amongst ruffians without honor or loyalty.

FERELDAN BRIGAND

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
2	COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION, GAMBLING)
1	CONSTITUTION (DRINKING)
0	CUNNING (EVALUATION)
2	DEXTERITY (LEGERDEMAIN, LIGHT BLADES, STEALTH)
0	MAGIC
1	PERCEPTION (SEARCHING)
2	STRENGTH (CLIMBING)
0	WILLPOWER

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	18	12	3

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
DAGGER	+4	1D6+3
SHORT BOW	+2	1D6+2
SHORT SWORD	+4	1D6+4

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Lightning Attack and Skirmish.*

TALENTS: *Armor Training (Novice), Dual Weapon Style (Journeyman), and Scouting (Novice)*

WEAPON GROUPS: *Bows, Brawling, and Light Blades.*

EQUIPMENT

DAGGER, LIGHT LEATHER, SHORT BOW.

MABARI WAR DOG

Of all the dog breeds that the Fereldan have produced, none are so highly regarded or so widely famed as the Mabari. Justly renowned, the Mabari are intelligent war hounds fully capable of understanding speech and interpreting complex commands. The bulk of Mabari will bond with a single warrior, whom they will fight beside and follow until death takes them, for there are many stories of Mabari avenging a fallen master before lying down beside his corpse to join him.

Mabari are huge mastiffs with a touch of wolf blood that stand as tall as a dwarf and just as wide. Their masters (or "partners" as many of those paired with Mabari prefer) will often choose a distinct style of war paint to mark them with so that they can better pick them out from other Mabari at a distance in the midst of a combat. Correspondingly, many Fereldan that frequently fight alongside Mabari will scent themselves with distinctively pungent body paint called "kaddis" which allows the dogs to easily mark them as allies. Due to their great value "feral" Mabari are all but unheard of.

MABARI WAR DOG

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
0	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)
–1	CUNNING
3	DEXTERITY (BITE)
–1	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (SMELLING, TRACKING)
2	STRENGTH (JUMPING)
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
16	25	13	0

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BITE	+5	1D6+4

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Knock Prone and Mighty Blow.*

POSSESSED CORPSES

The demons of the Fade have a terrible hunger for the pleasures of the world that they sense across the gulf of the Veil. Their jealously causes them to claw at the walls of their perceived prison, forever testing the boundaries of the Fade. When a demon finally manages to break through, it must immediately seek out a form to possess lest it be pulled back across the Veil to the Fade. Unfortunately for the demons, the Veil is weakest in places where there have been a great many deaths, such as battlefields and pestilence-ridden villages, and

SKELETON — RAGE DEMON

Abilities (Focuses)

–2	Communication
2	Constitution (Stamina)
–2	Cunning
2	Dexterity
1	Magic
0	Perception
3	Strength (Claws)
2	Willpower

Combat Ratings

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	17	12	0

Attacks

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bow	+2	1d6+6
Two-handed Spear	+3	2d6+3
Claws	+5	1d6+5

Powers

Favored Stunts: *Mighty Blow and Pierce Armor.*

Howling Madness: *The demon that inhabits the skeleton is insane. A skeleton automatically passes any Willpower (Morale) test it is required to take.*

Weapon Groups: *Bludgeons, Bows, and Spears.*

Equipment

Two-handed spear or bow.

---

many demons end up possessing the forms of the dead. The rage and frustration of such beings is near unimaginable. To have finally broken through to the world of the living with all the delicious pleasures it holds only to be trapped within a corpse that can barely sustain it is infuriating. Almost uniformly these demons go insane, abandoning even the strange reasoning of their kind for howling madness.

The type of demon and the condition of the corpse it inhabits determines the creature this horrifying union creates. The Chantry teaches that demons are aligned to the Five Great Sins, in order of ascending power: Rage, Hunger, Sloth, Desire, and Pride. Destroying a possessed body sends the demon inhabiting it back to the Fade. The following are some of the more common restless dead encountered in Ferelden.

FANGED SKELETON — HUNGER DEMON

Abilities (Focuses)

–2	Communication
3	Constitution (Stamina)
–1	Cunning
2	Dexterity (Bite)
2	Magic
0	Perception
3	Strength (Claws, Heavy Blades)
2	Willpower

Combat Ratings

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
9	22	12	4

Attacks

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+4	1d6+3
Claws	+5	1d6+5
Long Sword	+5	2d6+3

Powers

Blood Healing: *A fanged skeleton that bites an unconscious or slain enemy can regain 2d6 Health by drinking blood. If used on an unconscious foe, the bite counts as a coup de grace.*

Favored Stunts: *Knock Prone and Mighty Blow.*

Howling Madness: *The demon that inhabits the skeleton is insane. A fanged skeleton automatically passes any Willpower (Morale) tests it is required to take.*

Talents: *Armor Training (Novice) and Single Weapon Style (Novice).*

Weapon Groups: *Axes, Light Blades, and Heavy Blades.*

Equipment

Heavy leather and long sword.

SKELETON

Skeletons are exactly what they sound like: animated piles of bone driven by a rage demon. They are mindless creatures that wander aimlessly, or lie dormant near the site of their "first death" till living beings walk near. Their unreasoning fury can be terrible to behold. Skeletons simply attack all living targets and continue to do so, never wavering until they are smashed to pieces. If they originally came from a battlefield and have a weapon, they will attempt to use it. Otherwise, they'll simply claw at their foes with broken finger bones, gouging away any flesh they can reach.

FANGED SKELETON

Fanged skeletons are superficially similar to skeletons, but the hunger demon that drives them is a deadlier and more powerful being, whose terrible will can slowly warp the bones of its new body, causing the corpses' teeth to grow wickedly sharp. They retain more sentience than their lesser brethren and will arm themselves with a weapon if at all possible. If not, they have no aversion to using their teeth and claws, which they fashion by sharpening their finger bones to deadly points. Fanged skeletons will drink the blood of their victims, apparently somehow deriving sustenance from it by an arcane process the scholars of Ferelden do not understand.

ENRAGED CORPSE

A rage demon that has newly crossed from the Fade has a bit more power and may succeed in animating a fresh corpse. They are clumsy but shrewd antagonists who are adept at appearing far less deadly than they actually are. The decomposition of an enraged corpse varies greatly in degree and appearance entirely depending on how their body died. Their rage is such that they prefer strangling their victims.

DEVOURING CORPSE

Hideous ravenous creatures, devouring corpses tend to congregate together and attack en masse, seeking to con-

ENRAGED CORPSE		RAGE DEMON
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)		
–2	COMMUNICATION	
4	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)	
1	CUNNING	
0	DEXTERITY	
2	MAGIC	
0	PERCEPTION	
4	STRENGTH (CLAWS, INTIMIDATION)	
2	WILLPOWER	

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	**HEALTH**	**DEFENSE**	**ARMOR RATING**
8	40	10	0

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	**ATTACK ROLL**	**DAMAGE**
CLAWS	+6	1D6+6

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Disarm and Strangle.*

HOWLING MADNESS: *The demon that inhabits the enraged corpse is insane. An enraged corpse automatically passes any WILLPOWER (MORALE) test it is required to take.*

STRANGLE: *An enraged corpse can Strangle a melee opponent as a special stunt for 3 SP. The victim immediately takes 1d6 penetrating damage. On his turn the victim can break free by winning an opposed STRENGTH (MIGHT) test. If the test is lost, the victim takes another 1d6 penetrating damage. On the enraged corpse's turn, it can continue strangling the victim as a major action. If it wins an opposed STRENGTH (MIGHT) test, it inflicts another 1d6 penetrating damage; otherwise the victim breaks free. An enraged corpse can continue strangling an opponent as long as it keeps winning the opposed STRENGTH (MIGHT) tests.*

DEVOURING CORPSE		HUNGER DEMON
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)		
–2	COMMUNICATION	
4	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)	
0	CUNNING	
2	DEXTERITY	
2	MAGIC	
0	PERCEPTION	
3	STRENGTH (CLAWS, INTIMIDATION)	
2	WILLPOWER	

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	**HEALTH**	**DEFENSE**	**ARMOR RATING**
8	30	12	0

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	**ATTACK ROLL**	**DAMAGE**
CLAWS	+5	1D6+5

POWERS

DRAIN LIFE: *A devouring corpse can suck the life force from nearby enemies as a special stunt for 5 SP. All enemies within 6 yards of the devouring corpse take 1d6 penetrating damage and it regains Health equal to the total damage inflicted.*

FAVORED STUNTS: *Drain Life and Pierce Armor.*

HOWLING MADNESS: *The demon that inhabits the devouring corpse is insane. A devouring corpse automatically passes any WILLPOWER (MORALE) test it is required to take.*

sume any living beings they can reach. Their voracious appetite for flesh is endless and their hunger for life is so powerful that some devouring corpses have even shown the ability to drain their opponents' life forces merely by being in close proximity. Devouring corpses typically eschew weapons, preferring to tear their victims apart and chew on the bloody chunks as swiftly as possible.

Rat, Giant

Giant rats are most commonly found in the Deep Roads, but they breed quickly enough that they inevitably spill into the surface world. They are scavengers par excellence, seeking food wherever it may be found. An individual giant rat is not much of a threat, but they hunt in packs and can be fearsome in numbers.

Shade

Unquiet spirits of the dead, shades are the remnants of lost souls that have slipped across from the Fade into the mortal world. They have no true memories of ever being alive, only a yawning emptiness and a sense of what they've lost that leads them to seek out living beings. At first they merely gaze upon them from the shadows, but soon enough they begin to envy the living and covet their lives. As their malice grows, they start draining the life energy of others, sapping away their spirits merely by drawing near them.

Shades resemble inky shadows, each one vaguely conforming to a humanoid shape. Despite their hunger for life, large concentrations of it, such as forests and cities, drive them away. They haunt desolate places, seeking unwary travelers. They have no thoughts as such, only hungers they barely understand.

Spider, Giant

Once found only in the depths of the dwarven Deep Roads, these huge arthropods were originally raised by the dwarves to prey on the numerous species of large bats that plagued their caverns. The dwarves called them "deep crawlers" and for many centuries their numbers were carefully controlled. When the dwarves were forced to retreat by the steady advances of the darkspawn, though, the deep crawlers' numbers soon ran out of control as they acquired a new food source: genlocks. They are now found throughout the Deep Roads and their numbers are so vast that they've spilled into many forests on the surface.

These giant spiders use webs, which they are clever enough to attempt to camouflage, in order to trap prey unaware. They are adept at spitting their webs, a racial skill acquired from many generations of hunting bats.

RAT, GIANT

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
–3	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION
–2	CUNNING
2	DEXTERITY (BITE, STEALTH)
0	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (SMELLING)
1	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
14	12	12	0

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
Bite	+4	1d6+1

POWERS

Favored Stunts: *Knock Prone and Mighty Blow.*

Swarm Tactics: *A giant rat can perform Swarm Tactics as a special stunt costing 3 SP. This stunt allows any other giant rat adjacent to the target to make an immediate attack. Rolling doubles on these bonus attacks does not generate stunt points. Giant rats that haven't taken their turns yet this round can still take their actions as normal even after benefiting from Swarm Tactics.*

Tainted Darkspawn Ghouls

The majority of darkspawn carry within them a manifestation of the Blight, a sickness that is frequently fatal to all other beings. Those unfortunate enough to succumb to this "taint" soon collapse into agony and madness. In Ferelden, the term "ghoul" refers to a creature that was infected by the darkspawn, but somehow managed to survive. Animals invariably turn into voracious predators, unnaturally slaughtering all in their path. More intelligent victims eventually seek out darkspawn to join their ranks, usually as slaves, though warriors of exceptional prowess may become foot soldiers instead. They are wretched beings whose eyes swim with madness over what they

SHADE

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

–2	COMMUNICATION
0	CONSTITUTION
0	CUNNING
5	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
4	MAGIC
1	PERCEPTION
–3	STRENGTH
4	WILLPOWER

COMBAT RATINGS

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
15	30	15	0

ATTACKS

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
DRAINING TOUCH	+5	1D6+4 Penetrating

POWERS

DRAINING AURA: *A shade can perform the special Draining Aura stunt for 4 SP. All enemies within 4 yards take 1d6 penetrating damage as the shade sucks their life essence.*

DRAINING TOUCH: *The touch of a shade drains the target of life energy. It inflicts 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage.*

FAVORED STUNTS: *Draining Aura and Lightning Attack.*

INCORPOREAL: *Shades are incorporeal, having a tenuous existence in the mortal world. They ignore the effects of terrain. Normally only magical attacks (spells or hits from magical weapons) can harm them, other attacks passing through their forms without effect. A character attacking a shade can perform a special stunt called Spirit Bane for 3 SP. The character then inflicts normal weapon damage but substitutes Magic for Strength. A character with Magic 2 and a long sword using the Spirit Bane stunt, for example, would inflict 2d6+2 damage.*

GIANT SPIDER

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

–1	COMMUNICATION
3	CONSTITUTION
–2	CUNNING
4	DEXTERITY (BITE, STEALTH)
0	MAGIC
3	PERCEPTION (TOUCHING)
3	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION, JUMPING)
1	WILLPOWER

COMBAT RATINGS

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
14	35	14	5

ATTACKS

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BITE	+6	2D6+3

POWERS

EXOSKELETON: *The tough exoskeleton of a giant spider gives the creature an AR of 5.*

FAVORED STUNTS: *Knock Prone and Poison Bite.*

Poison Bite Stunt: A giant spider can inject poison as a special stunt costing 2 SP. The poison debilitates the victim, who suffers a –2 penalty to Dexterity until the end of the encounter or until he receives a heal spell.

WALL CRAWLER: *A giant spider can walk up walls and even on ceilings.*

WEB: *As a major action a giant spider can shoot a web at a visible enemy within 12 yards. The target must make a successful TN 11 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) test or become immobilized. The target or an ally can free the victim by taking a major action and making a successful TN 13 STRENGTH (MIGHT) test. This is the only action the immobilized character can take until freed.*

BLIGHT WOLF

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
0	COMMUNICATION
3	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)
–2	CUNNING
2	DEXTERITY (BITE, STEALTH)
0	MAGIC
3	PERCEPTION (HEARING, SMELLING)
2	STRENGTH (JUMPING)
1	WILLPOWER

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	**HEALTH**	**DEFENSE**	**ARMOR RATING**
14	25	12	3

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	**ATTACK ROLL**	**DAMAGE**
BITE	+4	1D6+4

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Knock Prone and Lightning Attack.*

TOUGH HIDE: *The bony spines of a blight wolf give the creature an AR of 3.*

have become. Many are physically changed by the taint, slowly growing bony spines or other signs of their twisted state.

BLIGHT WOLF

Scholars believe that animals cannot truly hate themselves, but if there was any beast that could, surely it would be blight wolves. These tainted animals will have almost invariably slaughtered their original pack, the focus of a wolf's life, before being forced to join with other equally miserable blight wolves at the behest of their darkspawn masters. The darkspawn use them for hunting, a task at which they excel. A lone blight wolf is a slavering horror that will attack anything of living flesh that it can smell and their senses are keen.

GHOUL

All ghouls were invariably tough once in either mind or body, or they would not have survived the Taint; however, their former selves are usually all but spent on the struggle to live through the blight's ravages. Ghouls are drawn to their darkspawn makers and serve them until death, which usually comes within a few months of their transformation. Many ghouls are simply insane, and they claw at their enemies with broken fingernails, like animals. Others retain some of their intelligence and they use weapons and sometimes even craft them for their darkspawn masters.

GHOUL   TAINTED DARKSPAWN

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
0	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
–1	CUNNING
2	DEXTERITY
1	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION
2	STRENGTH (BLUDGEONS, INTIMIDATION)
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	**HEALTH**	**DEFENSE**	**ARMOR RATING**
10	20	12	3

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	**ATTACK ROLL**	**DAMAGE**
FIST	+2	1D6+2
MAUL	+4	1D6+5

POWERS

CRAZED: *Ghouls have little sense of self-preservation. If a ghoul or group of ghouls fails a **WILLPOWER (MORALE)** test, the dice can be re-rolled. The result of the second roll is final.*

FAVORED STUNTS: *Disarm and Knock Prone.*

TALENTS: *Unarmed Style (Journeyman).*

WEAPON GROUPS: *Bludgeons and Brawling.*

EQUIPMENT

LIGHT LEATHER, MAUL.

Rewards

The Player Characters risk life and limb on a regular basis and they deserve some reward for their efforts. This is one area that really requires use of your judgment as GM. The type and frequency of rewards you give out sets a tone for the campaign. This chapter discusses the various types of rewards and gives some advice on their use.

Experience Points

The most important and most common reward for players is experience points (XP). They represent the way characters hone their abilities and talents over time, learning from their successes and their failures. As characters gain XP, they go up in level. This is how they gain new class powers and raise their abilities.

When a character gains a level, four things happen immediately:

- The character's Health increases by **1d6 + Constitution**.

- The character may increase a single ability by 1. This must be a primary ability if an even numbered level was gained, and a secondary ability if an odd numbered level was gained.

- The character can pick one new ability focus. This must be a focus from a primary ability if an even numbered level was gained, and a focus from a secondary ability if an odd numbered level was gained.

- The character gains the class powers for the new level.

Players are responsible for leveling up their characters, but you should help them if they have questions, and review their choices so you know what the characters are now capable of.

The **Level Advancement** table on the next page summarizes the experience points (XP) characters need to attain higher levels. Sets 2, 3, and 4 expand this table up to level 20.

Calculating XP Rewards

As you can see, you can control the pace of the campaign with experience point rewards. If you are generous with XP, characters will go up levels quickly and gain new class powers regularly. If your rewards are more measured, the characters will have to really work to level up. Every group is different, so there is no "right" pace, but

Level Advancement

XP Total	Level
0-1,999	1
2,000-4,499	2
4,500-6,499	3
7,000-10,999	4
11,000-14,999	5

Experience Point Rewards

Encounter	Reward
Routine	0 XP
Easy	100 XP
Average	200 XP
Hard	300 XP

you don't want to frustrate your players by being too stingy or bore them by being overly generous.

As you know, an adventure is broken down into a series of encounters, and they are the key to handing out experience points. At the end of each play session, even if it's as short as one encounter, review each encounter and rate it based on how it played out. How challenging was this encounter to the party? Did they have to expend resources like money, favors, Health, or mana points to resolve it? After giving the encounter due consideration, assign one of the following ratings and then reward each participating character with the XP indicated on Experience Point Rewards table.

- **Routine:** Nothing special or challenging happened in this encounter. Most everyday scenes fall into this category. Characters don't get XP for things like buying supplies, uneventful travel, or casual conversions.

- **Easy:** The characters overcame any difficulties quickly and efficiently. They were in little danger of failing and expended few resources to be successful.

- **Average:** The characters were not taxed to their utmost, but the encounter was a real challenge. It took some skill to resolve and may have required the expenditure of significant resources.

- **Hard:** The characters had a tough time of it. It may have taken significant time and the expenditure of many resources. The characters may have been in mortal peril, and there may even have been character death.

Example

Steve has just run a short session of *Dragon Age* and needs to calculate XP for the party. There were three encounters: a roleplaying encounter in a tavern, a combat encounter in the streets, and then a roleplaying encounter with a militia captain. The tavern encounter was an attempt to gather some information. The characters talked to some locals and found out a few things, but overall Steve rates it as routine. After leaving the tavern the characters were ambushed by thugs. Steve hadn't expected this encounter to be too challenging, but bad luck plagued the party and the thugs made good use of stunts. One of the characters went to 0 Health and nearly died and the party mage spent half his mana points. Steve decides to rate this as hard. In the final encounter the local militia captain confronts the party about fighting in the streets. He wants to throw them in jail for murder and isn't well disposed towards adventurers. It takes some doing to convince him that they were defending themselves. In the end he only agrees to let them go if they investigate a small matter for him in a nearby village. Steve decides this is an average encounter. Each character thus earns 500 XP for the session (0 for the tavern encounter, 300 for the ambush, and 200 for the negotiation with the militia captain).

Bonus XP Rewards

You may also want to hand out bonus experience points in certain situations. The most appropriate time for bonus XP is the end of a successfully completed adventure or long-term story arc. It's a little extra something to tell the players they've done a good job or accomplished something of note. The size of the award is up to you, but generally you should not give out more than 300 XP for an adventure and 500 XP for a longer story arc.

Some GMs like to give out bonus XP to individual players for good roleplaying, such as staying true to their character's personality through adversity and helping sustain the whole group's enthusiasm. Others do not because it can create squabbling amongst the players. If you do give out roleplaying awards, up to 100 XP per player per session is a reasonable amount.

Reputation

As the Player Characters complete adventures, word of their deeds is likely to spread. As they go up in level and face down larger threats, tales of their heroism will only increase. PCs will find that having a good reputation is a boon to them most of the time. An inn might not have a room available for an unknown adventurer, for example, but would certainly find a way to accommodate the warrior that slew the local bandit chief.

Through their deeds PCs might also earn flattering nicknames, such as "the Sly," "Shield-hewer," or "Fire-

hand." Consider awarding honorifics like this when heroic actions and impressive stunts are accomplished in front of many witnesses.

In play, remember that the nature of a reputation will flavor its effects. A reputation for valor will generally be a positive factor in a character's career, but might still make it difficult for a character to ferret out secrets in the criminal underworld, even when a given adventure's greater good calls for it.

In the same vein, keep in mind that reputations can cut both ways. Characters who run from danger, fail at critical junctures, or lie, cheat, and steal may find that they have acquired bad reputations. Distrusted adventurers may find it difficult to track down sources of information, be gouged when they try to purchase equipment, and have difficulty hiring help when they need it. These kinds of bad reputations can be as effective motivators of player behavior as positive rewards are. As the GM you can't directly control what the players do, but few players enjoy learning of unflattering whispers about their heroes.

Goal Fulfillment

During character creation each player should have made a list of goals for his or her character. Weaving opportunities for the adventurers to achieve their goals into the campaign is a reward in itself, because it demonstrates that you see the world in a way that casts the Player Characters as its protagonists. When a character achieves one of his or her goals, particularly after a long, hard struggle, such an accomplishment ought to mean a lot more than banking another 100 silver pieces.

Whatever the specifics of the main adventure going on at any given time, you should look for ways to incorporate and re-incorporate the PCs' goals as the campaign moves forward, even going so far as to create full adventures that revolve around the goals of a given player or players.

Because achieving long-term goals can be so rewarding, encourage players who achieve the goals they wrote down at character creation to record new goals in their place, and continue to weave these threads into your campaign.

Treasure

Money can be power in Thedas, so treasure is another common reward. You'll want to be careful not to overdo it, though. If the PCs bring home a hoard of coins, it can reduce their motivation to go on further adventures. Of course, wealth attracts unwelcome attention, so treasure can also be the source of adventures as well.

When you want to give treasure as a reward, you can consult the **Treasure Category** table. This provides a rough guideline that you can use or modify as you see

TREASURE CATEGORY	
CATEGORY	VALUE
Trifling Treasure	1d6 silver pieces
Paltry Treasure	3d6 silver pieces
Middling Treasure	2d6 x 10 silver pieces
Substantial Treasure	2d6 x 100 silver pieces
Abundant Treasure	4d6 x 100 silver pieces
Lavish Treasure	6d6 x 100 silver pieces

fit. The value is given in silver pieces, but the actual treasure can be in other denominations of coins, or in the form of gems, jewels, and the like.

Magic Items

Perhaps the greatest rewards characters can receive are magic items. They are rare and prized by those lucky enough to have them. The key to the creation of magic items is lyrium, a unique mineral found deep in the earth that emits a strange sound. It is dangerous in its raw form—mores so to those with magical power. Few can mine it safely except for the dwarves. The raw mineral is then refined into a powder or a liquid, and it is then safe to use.

Items can be magically enchanted but it takes lyrium to make it permanent. The dwarves, though they cannot become mages, are expert craftsmen, and have been using lyrium to make magic items for countless centuries. In the Circle of Magi, the Formari perform a similar role. They come from the ranks of the Tranquil, apprentices who chose to undergo the Rite of Tranquility instead of becoming mages. This rite completely severs the apprentice's connection to the Fade, making possession impossible. It does this, however, by removing all capacity for emotion and the ability to dream. The Tranquil cannot cast spells and most are relegated to mercantile and administrative tasks, at which they excel due to their ability to concentrate for long periods of time. Some of the Tranquil use their capacity for great focus to assist in the creation of magic items. They prepare items with lyrium and then mages instill the magic effects.

In general there are two broad categories of magic items: temporary and permanent. Temporary items have enchantments that fade over time or are good for a single use. Potions are a good example of temporary items. Since they last for a short time and are often created using tried-and-true recipes, they tend to be generic. Permanent items are different. Any item worth such a use of lyrium is special. As such, permanent items tend to have unique names and histories. If you create new magic items for your campaign, try to make each permanent item one-of-a-kind. It may have the same effect as another item in the campaign, but its name, origin, and story should be different.

Sample magic items appropriate for low-level characters follow. You'll find more in subsequent sets and adventures.

Temporary Magic Items

Glowstone

The Tranquil prepare these stones, which provide more reliable illumination than torches. Wealthy cities such as Val Royeaux in Orlais have them lining some streets, and the Tranquil are paid to go around and renew their power from time to time. A glowstone shines with the light of a lantern for 2d6 months. Portable glowstones usually come in carrying cases that block the light when closed.

Lesser Healing Potion

This potion is made from healing herbs enchanted with Creation Magic. A character that imbibes it (an activate action) regains 2d6 + Con Health. This doesn't provide extra Health; it only allows the character to regain Health already lost.

Lesser Lyrium Potion

This potion contains a small amount of refined lyrium. A mage that consumes a lesser lyrium potion (an activate action) regains 1d6 + Magic mana points. This doesn't provide extra mana points; it only allows the mage to regain points already spent.

Swift Missile

Arrows and crossbow bolts can be enchanted for greater accuracy. A character that fires a swift missile gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll. The enchantment on each missile is good for one shot.

Wounding Missile

Arrows and crossbow bolts can be enchanted to inflict more damage. A character that fires a swift missile gains a +2 bonus when inflicting damage. The enchantment on each missile is good for one shot.

Permanent Magic Items

Boots of the Outlaw

The Circle made these boots during the Orlesian occupation of Ferelden. The freedom fighters spent many years on the run, engaging in a guerilla war, and the boots proved quite valuable to the Fereldan scouts. Their wearer does not leave footprints behind, which confounds trackers on the hunt. Those attempting to track the character take a –3 penalty to **Perception (Tracking)** tests.

Handmaiden's Necklace

This beautiful necklace of amethyst stones was given to the handmaiden of an Orlesian noble by a lovesick mage. She showed up her mistress at a gala ball and was found poisoned the following morning. The wearer of the handmaiden's necklace receives a +1 bonus on **Communication (Persuasion)** and **(Seduction)** tests.

Helm of the Eagle

This ancient helm dates back to the Glory Age. It is a fine piece of Alamarri craftsmanship crowned with a bronze eagle. The wearer gains a +1 bonus on **Communication (Leadership)** and **Willpower (Courage)** tests.

Hunter's Bane

This long bow is adorned with the symbols of Andruil, the elven goddess of the hunt. The Dalish elf who bore it was a famed hunter who was in turn hunted down and killed by the forces of the Chantry. When using Hunter's Bane, a character gains a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage.

Ring of Shielding

An apostate mage created this iron ring set with a chip from a dragon's scale. The wearer can perform the Mana Shield spell stunt for 2 stunt points instead of the normal 3. Only mages can make use of the Ring of Shielding.

Smith's Targe

Droplets of molten metal that fall from the forges of the dwarven smiths are often collected and worn for good luck. This amulet is in the shape of a small shield, with a chaotic pattern burned into it from the molten drops. Once per day the wearer can re-roll a single ability test. The results of the second test are final.

Spawn Cleaver

The dwarf smith Sighard made this battle axe to fight the darkspawn in the Deep Roads. It inflicts +3 damage against darkspawn and tainted.

Spidersilk Cloak

Said to have been created by the witches of the Korcari Wilds, this cloak is made of the finely woven webbing of a giant spider enchanted with Primal Magic. The wearer gains a +2 bonus on **Dexterity (Stealth)** tests and is immune to the web power of giant spiders.

Stalwart Mail

The maker's mark has been lost from this suit of dwarven light mail, but it has kept many warriors safe in battle. There are several small plates set into the mail, each inscribed with a boar's head. The Stalwart Mail has an Armor Rating of 6 and an Armor Penalty of –1.

Viper's Blade

An assassin from the Tevinter Imperium brought this short sword to Ferelden to murder an unknown target, but was discovered and killed before he could use it. The wielder of the Viper's Blade counts as having the **Dexterity (Initiative)** focus and can perform the Seize the Initiative stunt for 3 stunt points instead of the normal 4.

The Dalish Curse

By this point you have read quite a bit about how to be a Game Master and run a game. What you have not seen, however, is an example of what a *Dragon Age* adventure looks like. This chapter presents an introductory adventure called *The Dalish Curse,* designed for a group of characters just starting to make their way in the land of Thedas.

You can play *The Dalish Curse* as a stand-alone adventure or as the start of a full-fledged *Dragon Age* campaign. Either way, you should start by reading over the entire adventure and familiarizing yourself with its plot, characters, and encounters. You can reference the adventure during play, so you don't need to memorize it, but you'll find it easier to run the adventure if you know it well before play begins.

> Text in boxes like this is meant for you to read aloud to the players, giving them an overview of what their characters sense and notice in a situation. Feel free to paraphrase or adjust the descriptions to suit the events in your version of the adventure and the particular Player Characters in your group.

Warning! The rest of this adventure is meant for *the Game Master's eyes only!* Players are advised to read no further in order to avoid spoiling any surprises or plot twists that may lie ahead.

Adventure Summary

In *The Dalish Curse,* the Player Characters (PCs) visit a village called Vintiver, on the borderlands of Ferelden and the Brecilian Forest. There they find the people of a nearby farm butchered by unknown attackers, and they find a wounded and exhausted Dalish elf named Eshara (Eh-SHA-ra). When they take Eshara to the village, however, they get a hostile reception.

The reason for this soon becomes clear. It seems a band of Dalish visited Vintiver recently and got involved in a conflict with some villagers. The matter was settled peaceably, and the Dalish moved on, but Vintiver has since fallen prey to a series of mysterious attacks, first on livestock and now on people. They blame the elves, saying the "knife-ears" (as they call them) have placed a curse upon the village.

Eshara, the Dalish elf the PCs (hopefully) rescue, tells a different tale. She says her band fell victim to something in the Brecilian Forest. Something terrible and evil it was, from which she barely escaped. She says it is this mysterious evil that is now attacking Vintiver, but the humans are not inclined to believe her.

CHARACTER DEATH

The land of Thedas is dangerous, and PCs must stare down death on a regular basis. Sometimes they fail and fall, never to rise again. If a PC perishes in the course of *The Dalish Curse,* there are a number of things you can do to keep that player involved in the game.

First, you can assign the player the role of one of the NPCs in the story for a time. Eshara, the Dalish elf the PCs rescue in Vintiver, is a good choice, as she may accompany the group into the forest to look for her people. Lirresh, the Dalish hunter who guides the party in **Part 4** of the adventure is also a good option. Another character from the village is also a possibility, especially while the party is still there or close by.

Next, you can ask the player to manage some of the foes the characters are expected to fight, directing the actions of various monsters during combat encounters, or taking on the role of an antagonist in a roleplaying encounter, taking some of the burden off of you to handle these things. Keep in mind some players may not be comfortable with taking an antagonistic role, and nobody should be required to do so.

As soon as possible, allow the player to introduce a new character into the story. Where and how this character appears depends on where the group is in the adventure. In Vintiver, a new character might be a villager who volunteers to help out the party, or even follows them without their knowledge, looking for an opportunity. Outside the village, the character could be a traveler lost in the forest, or waylaid by the abomination's forces, perhaps in need of the PCs' aid. In Mythallen's stronghold, the new character could be one of the Dalish elves or someone else captured and held prisoner there. If a player takes on the role of an NPC like Eshara and comes to like the character, you can also make the part permanent, and convert that character over into a regular part of the group.

If they are willing to help the people of Vintiver, the PCs must travel into the darkness of the haunted Brecilian Forest, search for the missing Dalish elves, and discover the source of the attacks on both peoples: a Dalish hunter transformed into an abomination by a rage demon. He now calls himself Mythallen (myth-al-LEN)—"child of vengeance" in elvish—and seeks revenge on the folk of the village, and the "weaklings" amongst his own people. The PCs must confront the abomination, and their choices leading up to the climactic moment may have grave repercussions for the people of Vintiver.

GETTING THE CHARACTERS INVOLVED

The Dalish Curse is intended for a group of four to six starting *Dragon Age* characters with a decent mix of abilities to handle the various scenes—combat, exploration, and roleplaying—in this adventure. It can work for larger or smaller groups, or different balances of abilities, with some modification.

The basic plot of *The Dalish Curse* assumes the characters are traveling as a group to or through the village of Vintiver when they encounter the troubles there, and that they are inclined to help the villagers (and the Dalish) with their problem. But why have the characters traveled to the hinterlands of Ferelden in the first place? The default assumption is the characters' recently formed adventuring band has come to the area following word of a local bann (lord) looking for adventurers to explore the Brecilian Forest. If this does not fit the backgrounds and motivations of the Player Characters, you can come up with something more suitable. They could simply be passing through the area for any number of reasons: as couriers, caravan guards, explorers, religious pilgrims, or in some other capacity, when they encounter trouble at the Fuldor farm and in Vintiver.

Another band of Dalish elves, or friends traveling with them, would certainly receive a chilly welcome in Vintiver, but some of the villagers might appeal to elven visitors, thinking they could lift the curse on the community, or at least tell them what must be done. This can lead the characters to investigate further.

If you want to strongly tie the characters to the village and use the events in Vintiver to propel them into a life of adventure, you can decide the PCs all live in the village and were witness to the recent events described in the **Background** section following and by Eshara in **Part 1**. In this case, the villagers choose the characters to investigate Eshara's claims and learn more about the nature of the threat to Vintiver. Along the way, the fledgling heroes test their skills and learn more about the world beyond the bounds of their home.

BACKGROUND

The story of *The Dalish Curse* begins just over two weeks before the start of the adventure, during Vintiver's Harvest Festival. This is an annual event at which villagers celebrate the completion of the year's harvests and their bounty with a local fair, drawing in farmers and merchants for several days of celebration, trade, and merriment.

This year, as is sometimes the case, the fair also brought a caravan of Dalish elves. They were looking to join in the festivities and sell their wares, and many of the villagers were excited to have such exotic strangers around. Young ladies gathered, giggling, to have their

fortunes told, and children delighted to Dalish jugglers and magicians. The elves were left to perform their own religious rites surrounded by their wagons, although some wondered and talked, as people do, about what went on there.

As is also common at village fairs, the drink flowed freely, loosening tongues and numbing the wits of those who should otherwise know better, and bolstering the courage of those who did not. So it was that Coalan, the local blacksmith, and a couple of young hotheads decided to take offense at the way an elven hunter looked at one of the local girls and how they played their games (or so they said).

Knife-ears were notorious cheaters and not to be trusted, they said. Quicklings were hot-tempered and foolish, the elf and his friends shot back. More insults were exchanged and Harralan, the proud young hunter, launched himself at the blacksmith Coalan. Blood might have been spilled, had not Tarl, the village warden, intervened. As it was, he and others on both sides pulled the two apart and Tarl told them both to leave the fair and go home.

"Home?" Harralan sneered. "My people have no home, thanks to you *shems*. May you know just a fraction of what the Dalish have lost!" Then he spat angrily on the churned earth and stalked away.

The remainder of the fair passed without further incident, although spirits were somewhat dampened and the Dalish caravan left Vintiver under a dark cloud, carefully watched by suspicious villagers. Still, the elves caused no further trouble, and the incident was soon forgotten along with the hangovers from too much wine and mead. The people of Vintiver then got back to the business of preparing their homes and farms for the coming winter season.

The one who did not forget was Harralan. The elven hunter's pride was deeply wounded by a lifetime of shame about the fate of his people, of scorn from worthless, drunken flat-ears. Worse still, he had been shamed in front of his people; that burned deep inside him. He carried it in his heart like a red ember, waiting to kindle a raging fire.

The caravan's elders assigned Harralan scouting duties to keep him occupied and to give him time to meditate in the peace and solitude of nature as he considered his actions. So it was in the Brecilian Forest, where human villagers feared to tread, that the hunter came across a very old track. He followed it and found stone markers, overgrown with mosses and leafy vines, cracked paving stones beneath the dead leaves and fallen needles. Something seemed to call him onward, a presence, almost a whisper, so that by the time he climbed down into the steep cleft in the earth, the sun was already setting, the horizon ablaze with the last dying light of day.

In that narrow valley, like the ground torn asunder, Harralan found the grey stones of the ruins, and the dark entrance beckoning to him. The whispering in his thoughts stoked the rage burning in his heart, and it seemed like a thread, tugging at him, pulling him in. Although the fading light did not penetrate far into the ruined passages, Harralan did not hesitate, moving as though he had a map to this place where he had never been.

In the chamber deep under the earth, the heavy links of the chain glowed, each as large as a man's hand. Most of them were forged of dark iron untouched by rust or decay, but one was made of purest silver. The ends of the chain were linked, forming an endless circle within the runes etched into the stone floor around it.

"The link," the voice within his heart and mind whispered urgently, eagerly. "*Take up the Link of Rage and vengeance will be yours!*"

Harralan did as he was instructed, seizing upon the silver link before him and pulling with all his might. All the shame and anger and fury in his heart seemed to pour into his efforts as he screamed with primal rage. The chain shattered, iron links exploding. In his hand Harralan held the broken silver link, which had been a prison to a rage demon for hundreds of years. The newly freed demon transformed him, body and soul, through the power of his own hate.

Harralan the hunter became Mythallen, the "child of vengeance," an abomination focused on avenging crimes against the elven people committed by humans long since dead. But Mythallen did not plan to act alone. He intended to share his newfound revelations with his people, the Dalish, and so the "curse" upon Vintiver began…

PART 1

TROUBLE IN VINTIVER

The PCs learn of the trouble in Vintiver and meet a Dalish elf who may be able to provide them with clues about what is happening, provided they can keep the angry villagers from punishing her for the "curse" visited upon them.

The party encounters a farm family slain at the outskirts of the village, and blight hounds picking over the remains. Hidden in the barn is Eshara, a member of the Dalish band who passed through Vintiver during the harvest festival, who returned to the village injured and feverish, having narrowly escaped from the abomination Mythallen and his transformed minions. She knows something of what happened to her people and what is causing trouble for the outlying village farms and such.

Unfortunately, some of the frightened people of Vintiver take the appearance of a Dalish elf as confirmation of the rumors about an "elven curse" and want Eshara questioned more vigorously; interrogated, tortured, or even tried and executed as a means of putting an end to the curse. The PCs have to safeguard the elven woman and earn her trust so they can learn what is happening, and what they might be able to do about it.

The primary goals of these encounters are to introduce the PCs to the situation in Vintiver (and to each other, if necessary) and provide them with enough information to send them into the Brecilian Forest looking for Mythallen's stronghold and the missing Dalish elves. It should also make it clear to the players the Dalish are *not* responsible for what is happening at Vintiver and are at least as much victims as the humans, if not more so.

The following is a breakdown of the events of this part of the adventure. Modify them as needed to suit the characters present and their actions. For example, if the party is primarily Dalish elves themselves, then their arrival in Vintiver and their interactions with the villagers may be different from what is described.

PROLOGUE

The adventure begins when the characters arrive near the Fuldor Farm on the outskirts of Vintiver. The default assumption is the characters are already acquaint-ed and working together for one reason or another. If this is not the case, you may want to have a short roleplaying encounter wherein the characters meet and decide to cooperate to solve the problem facing the village, and for their own survival.

Similarly, if the characters are all *from* Vintiver, you may want to start with a short description of the village and what is happening. They will be well acquainted with the events in the initial part of the **Background** section, up until when the Dalish leave the village, and with subsequent events, as the villagers know of them. They might be on routine business or go out to the Fuldor farm to investigate signs of trouble there.

1. THE FULDOR FARM

COMBAT ENCOUNTER

The farm of the Fuldor family is east of the main area of Vintiver, situated on the rolling hills towards the Brecilian Forest. It consists of the main farmhouse, a nearby barn, and a few small outbuildings and sheds, all surrounded by fields, which currently lie empty save for the stubble of the recent harvest. The granary and hayloft are filled and the Fuldors are a prosperous family—until now.

There are signs of carnage across the farm, in particular the body of Keltin, one of the farm hands, lying bloody in the field. Circling and squawking over the fields is a large flock of black-winged carrion crows.

The characters find that all eight Fuldor family members have been slaughtered, plus two farm hands. Worse yet, scavengers drawn to the carnage have begun sniffing about, and they are not inclined to give up a potential meal. On the contrary, they are quite interested in the possibility of some fresh meat, in the form of the party.

A small pack of blight wolves lopes through the farm. They are presently circling the farmhouse, about to investigate the bodies within, when the Player Characters arrive. The blight wolves move to try and surround and attack the intruders threatening their meal: roll a **DEXTERITY (STEALTH) TEST** for the creatures and a **PERCEPTION (HEARING OR SEEING) TEST** for the characters to see if they notice or the blight wolves get the drop on them. If the wolves win the opposed test, they surprise the PCs (see **Surprise** on page 20). Surprised characters take no actions in the first round of combat.

The blight wolves rush to the attack and fight savagely. This is not meant to be a difficult fight. It is a chance for the players to get a taste of combat and see how the system works. Remind your players that rolling doubles on successful attack rolls lets them perform stunts. The first few times they deal with stunts, this may slow down play a bit as they decide what to do with any Stunt Points generated. That's to be expected, but as they get used to the available stunts this will become faster in regular play.

Fuldor Farm

□ = 5 feet

Once the PCs manage to kill more than half of them, the remaining wolves attempt to flee and look for easier prey.

ADVERSARIES

There should be one more wolf than there are Player Characters (so if your group has three PCs, they should face four blight wolves). Stats for blight wolves can be found on page 36 of **Chapter 3: Adversaries.**

2. DALISH IN DISTRESS

EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

The Fuldor family consisted of Edred Fuldor and his wife Miren, their four children Hann, Brella, Borren, and Quint, ages 13 through 20, Hann's wife Faleen, and their newborn son (named Edred for his grandfather). Two hired hands, Keltin and Drul, also worked on the farm. All ten are dead: the men in the fields and yard outside the house, the three women and child inside.

Some examination shows the blight wolves did *not* kill the farmers: there are claw and bite marks inconsistent with the wolves, as well as doors broken in by forceful blows. The floors and earth are sticky with blood. Moreover, on the wall inside main room of the farmhouse, there is writing in the blood of the slain. It is just one word in elvish script: "Mythal." A **TN 11 Intelligence (Cultural Lore) test** reveals Mythal is the name of the elven god of vengeance. (If none of the characters can read elvish, Eshara can read and explain the writing to them later, if they ask her.)

After the fight, the PCs can search the barn and outbuildings. They discover most of the farm's livestock is still alive, including the Fuldor's aging workhorse and a couple of cows. While they are looking around, they hear a low moan from the barn.

Hidden under the hay in the loft is a young elf woman; this is Eshara. She is in a bad way: with a nasty, inflamed wound in her side, her clothes torn and covered in blood, dirt, and stray bits of hay and straw. She has been hiding, but is exhausted and feverish from her wound and not thinking clearly. When the group approaches her hiding place, she tries to escape, but can only manage a feeble crawl before she passes out.

What Eshara carries is the Link of Rage. It is a magical artifact dating back to the Second Blight that was used to imprison the essence of a powerful rage demon. It was connected to links of iron, forming a never-ending circle that contained and neutralized the demons' power, turning it in on itself. The chain was placed inside a hidden keep to guard it, but the keep was overrun before the Blight ended. The darkspawn could not breach the warded chamber to free the demons and the link's creators took their secrets to their graves.

The link was broken when Harralan freed the demon bound within with his desire for revenge. Still, it retains some of its residual enchantment, and the rage abomination is potentially vulnerable to it. The bearer of the Link of Rage can perform stunts against rage abominations like Mythallen at a cost of 1 fewer Stunt Point than usual. Often, when this ability is used, the wielder's weapon or even a part of the body (like a hand) emits silvery arcane sparks of energy, showing the stunt is more than mere luck or skill.

An examination of the Link of Rage shows magical etchings all over its surface. A mage that makes a successful **TN 13 MAGIC (SPIRIT) TEST** can feel a residue of the power the link once contained, but cannot divine its nature. You should keep track of who has the Link of Rage throughout the adventure, as it can be an important factor in the climax.

A character may attend to her wound, making a **TN 11 INTELLIGENCE (HEALING) TEST,** with success stabilizing her condition and ensuring it does not worsen, although she will still need rest and time to recover her strength. If a Heal spell is cast on her, she visibly relaxes but remains unconscious. If none of the PCs can treat her (or they are unable to do so successfully) then they can seek help from the village. Regardless, it is best if they take her out of this slaughterhouse to a place of safety.

Examination of the young woman reveals fairly little: her wound is a set of four closely-spaced gashes along her side, apparently made by some sort of claws, and her clothing shows that she is a Dalish elf. Her wound is consistent with those suffered by many of the Fuldor family; it seems the same creatures attacked her. She carries no means of identification or anything of value save for a small leather pouch at her waist that holds a heavy link, forged out of silver, about the size of a man's hand. It has been broken and twisted by some great force.

3. MOB JUSTICE

ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTER

The Ferelden village of Vintiver is a small and fairly typical borderlands community, primarily known for its grape arbors and local winemaking, and the harvest festival that accompanies them. See **The Village of Vintiver** section at the end of the adventure for details about the village and its people.

Most likely, the group goes to Vintiver after their discovery at the Fuldor farm, probably with the unconscious elven woman in tow. If they choose to remain at the farm, then a search party from the village comes to investigate sooner or later and finds them there, which may not look very good for the characters, unless they have an explanation for their previous whereabouts. If the group left the farm before discovering Eshara's hiding place, then a later search party finds her and brings her back to the village, where the PCs hear about her along with everyone else.

Unless the PCs are *extremely* circumspect, the story of the elf woman found alive at the site of the slaughter of the Fuldor family spreads quickly throughout the village. If nothing else, villagers may stumble upon the characters tending to Eshara at the farm, or on the way back to the village, if they do not simply see them at the village inn or temple, or in the street. The story grows in the telling, as frightened and suspicious people speculate: What was a Dalish woman doing at the Fuldor farm? Why did she survive the attack when none of the humans did?

The rumors and speculation quickly turn to accusations. The elf woman is a witch or sorceress, a part of a Dalish plot. She came to the farm to lure the Fuldor men out into the open. Or she led the attack and her wound came from one of the farm's defenders (regardless of the inconsistency). At the least, the people of Vintiver think the mysterious woman should be questioned to find out who she is and what she was doing there. The more extreme and hysterical elements of the populace think she should be cast out, or even executed to protect Vintiver from further attack and to purge any "unclean" element she might have brought into the village.

This means, within hours of bringing Eshara into the village, the PCs are confronted by an angry mob, led by Vintiver blacksmith Coalan. The mob demands the elf woman be turned over to them "to answer for the crimes of the treacherous elves and to face justice." It should be clear to the players that the mob is unreasonable, whipped up into a near-frenzy by fear and anger, and that the only "justice" Eshara can expect from them is torture and execution.

Tarl Dale, the village Warden, is patrolling the outlying farms all day, so it is initially up to the characters to deal with the angry mob and its demands. While they could try and fight, they are considerably outnumbered; the mob numbers at least thirty, mostly men armed with farm implements and tools. Individually, they are not much of a match for well-armed adventurers, but there are many of them, and the PCs can hardly help the village by fighting and disabling most of its able-bodied men!

Their best bet is a faceoff against Coalan, who serves as the spokesman for the group, and issues their demands. An impassioned speech or a determined stance against Coalan's angry threats may sway the crowd. In game terms, dealing with the mob without violence is an advanced test (see **Advanced Tests** in Chapter 2: Using the Rules). As this is the first advanced test the players will attempt, make sure you pause to explain how they work.

It takes an ADVANCED **TN 13 COMMUNICATION TEST** with a **success threshold of 10** to get through to the villagers, using whatever focus suits each character's approach. Persuasion, for example, is suitable for a reasoned argument, Leadership for an authoritative approach, Performance for a passionate speech, and so forth. Each test takes a minute and you should have Coalan or another angry villager respond to each one with more angry invective. As the PCs approach the threshold, these outbursts should be delivered with less confidence, as the mood of the crowd begins to shift.

If the PCs reach the threshold, the mob disperses reluctantly. They will leave Eshara alone, but further actions could still inflame the villagers again. Coalan is noticeably deflated after this encounter but clearly still angry. He stomps off, muttering under his breath.

In the evening, Tarl Dale returns and tries to get to the bottom of the day's events. He is well aware of Coalan's hot-headedness and if dealt with forthrightly, he can become an ally for the party. If insulted or blatantly lied to, Tarl turns cold and will be much more difficult to deal with for the remainder of the adventure.

ADVERSARIES

Coalan and a mob of 30+ angry villagers. Stats can be found on pages 58-59 of **Appendix 1: NPCs**.

4. ESHARA'S TALE

ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTER

After dealing with the mob and attending to Eshara's wound, the characters have the opportunity to speak with her. Eshara regains consciousness, although she is weak and exhausted from her recent trials. She is grateful to the PCs for their aid, and does her best to explain what is happening. Read or paraphrase the following to the players as Eshara relates her tale:

"As you may know, our band visited this village just two weeks ago, during their harvest festival. We were welcomed, then, but there was a bit of trouble: some of the locals had too much to drink, and there was a confrontation with some of our young men. Harsh words were exchanged, and Harralan, one of our hunters, attacked the big blacksmith. The village warden separated them before it could get out of hand, but still the damage was done. We were no longer welcome here and we moved on as soon as the festival ended.

"Harralan was angry at our treatment, but our elders assigned him the duty of scouting as we made our way through the Brecilian Forest, to give him time to cool off. He was the first to disappear—he simply didn't return from his scouting one night.

"Then other scouts and hunters began to go missing, as did the ones sent to look for them. The elders decided we should go back, but by then it was too late.

"Three days after Harralan disappeared, before we could reach the edge of the forest, they attacked our camp: darkspawn emerging from the trees in the dead of night. My people were taken. Those who fought were beaten or killed. I was captured along

with the rest, taken to an ancient ruin in a rift valley deep in the forest, off the trails. The master of the darkspawn is a creature, an abomination. He calls himself Mythallen, which in our tongue means "child of vengeance". I was brought before him, and then to his chambers. I managed to escape, taking the broken link of silver I found laid out as if on a shrine.

"The darkspawn pursued me, accompanied by a pack of baying beasts. I was wounded, but managed to avoid them, hiding among the trees and gullies in the forest for more than a day, always moving, never resting for long. I stumbled upon the farm where you found me and managed to conceal myself in the hayloft. I heard some of the farmers coming… The darkspawn must have attacked. I remember the terrible screams… Then nothing until you found me.

"Please… You must help my people! Mythallen and his creatures must be stopped!"

Eshara does her best to answer any questions the PCs might have about her story. If anyone tries to determine if she is being truthful, roll the dice out of sight of the players and tell them their impression is that she is telling the truth, regardless of the result (this is actually the case and may help the players to believe Eshara's story, without knowing for certain that it is true, since they do not know the result of the roll).

She can give them rough directions to the rift valley where Mythallen's lair is hidden, sketching out a map. She emphasizes that time may be running out for her people, as well as the villagers. She can guide the characters if necessary, but she may be too wounded to go right back out into the forest without additional time to heal.

RESOLUTION OF PART 1

By the conclusion of **Part 1,** the PCs should have a good idea from Eshara that the threat to Vintiver lies in the Brecilian Forest, in the mysterious ruin she spoke of, and that the only way to deal with it, and to help the missing Dalish elves, is for someone to go into the haunted wood and investigate further.

Depending on how they resolved things with the villagers, the characters may be more or less inclined to aid Vintiver in its time of trouble. Still, even if the villagers attacked or threatened them, the PCs may be motivated by duty to investigate, plus Eshara's pleas to aid her people should carry some weight with them. If nothing else, the possibility of the threat spreading beyond Vintiver should be enough, but you can also remind the more mercenary characters of the potential treasures to be found in the ruins, items such as a heavy solid silver chain, perhaps?

INTO THE FOREST

Armed with Eshara's information, the PCs go into the Brecilian Forest to find out more about the disappearance of the Dalish elves and about the creature Mythallen and his forces threatening the village of Vintiver. They face the hazards of the forest, as well as an attack by Mythallen's revengers, and uncover their first hints that the disappearance of the elves is even more closely connected to Mythallen than it first appears.

The main goals of **Part 2** are to get the PCs working together towards dealing with the threat to Vintiver, provide them their first encounter with the revengers (and their first sample of Mythallen's power), and initial clues about the transformation of the Dalish and the real danger the rage abomination poses.

The following is a breakdown of the encounters in this chapter, in their approximate order of occurrence. Modify the details as needed to suit the characters' own actions and plans.

1. ON THE TRACK

COMBAT ENCOUNTER

The PCs set out to follow Eshara's directions and find the mysterious ruin that is the lair of Mythallen and, presumably, where the Dalish elves are being held prisoner. If they did not alienate Tarl Dale, the PCs depart with his blessings. He offers them what material assistance he can, at least in terms of supplies. He is sorry that he cannot offer anyone to accompany the party, but he feels it is his duty to remain and see to the safety and security of his people, and sentiment against the Dalish elves still runs high in Vintiver, so they are not likely to find any volunteers willing to help them. Indeed, many skeptical villagers still believe it is some sort of trap, with Eshara as the bait. Tarl promises to look after the elven woman (if she stays behind) and keep her safe while she is recovering. If she is able, and the party is willing, Eshara accompanies them.

When and how the PCs set out is up to the players. According to Eshara's information, the place they are looking for is only two days' travel on foot from the village, assuming they keep a reasonable pace. If they set out during the day, they reach the Dalish encampment (**Encounter 2**) by nightfall; if they depart later, then they may need to stop for the night before reaching the camp, in which case, the attack by the revengers may occur earlier (see **Encounter 3**).

Before they can face the Mythallen and his revengers, the PCs must face a more familiar enemy: Coalan. The blacksmith is not content with letting the dangers of the

forest deal with them. Instead, convinced the characters are part of the "Dalish plot" and not wanting them to escape to warn their confederates or plot more trouble for Vintiver, he gathers together a few other stout fellows and lays an ambush for the party before they enter the forest.

The ambushers conceal themselves alongside the road out of sight of the village. The PCs must make a **Perception (Sight) test,** which is opposed by the villagers' **Dexterity (Stealth) test** (just make one test for the group of NPCs). If the PCs win the test, they notice the ambush moments before it is sprung, allowing them to act on the first turn. If they lose, they are surprised and the PCs do not act during the first turn of the fight.

Coalan and his cronies mainly intend to beat up the characters and convince them to stay out of the village's affairs. Of course, once the fight starts, things may get out of hand, and the blacksmith, in particular, seems gripped by rage. Still, the men are not completely out of their heads, and they choose to pull any killing blows, leaving the characters unconscious. Once it becomes clear they are outmatched (when more than half their number are defeated, or Coalan is), they turn tail and run, possibly shouting threats and curses back at the adventurers as they do so.

The PCs have an important choice in this encounter. They may not realize it now, but it becomes important later in the adventure. When their attacks would take one of the villagers to 0 Health, the PCs can kill the ambusher or choose to pull the killing blow. This rule is in **Chapter 6** of the *Player's Guide* and you should remind the players of it the first time they have an opportunity to kill a villager. Don't pressure the players one way or the other; just let them know the choice whether or not to use lethal force is theirs. If they decide to pull their killing blows, the villagers will be reduced to 1 Health and knocked unconscious instead of being slain. This means they'll be around to help defend the village later when Mythallen's forces attack. The dead, of course, will not.

ADVERSARIES

Coalan, plus a goon squad of two angry villagers per Player Character. Stats can be found on pages 58-59 of **Appendix 1: NPCs.**

2. THE DALISH CAMP

EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

After traveling for most of the day, the group comes across the remains of the Dalish encampment, not far off the track in the forest. The elves' colorful wagons are circled around the remains of a campfire in a shallow pit, long since turned to cold ashes. The carcass of at least one carthorse lies outside the circle of wag-

DALISH CAMP INVESTIGATION

DRAGON DIE	INFORMATION
1	Some of the wagons show signs of being broken into, such as smashed or kicked in doors. Hoof prints show that most of the carthorses ran off at some point, probably panicked by the attack.
2–3	There are traces of dried blood in spots, indicating there were at least some wounded. From the size of some of the spots, there were probably at least a few deaths, but not a wholesale slaughter. In spite of that, there are no elven bodies or remains at the campsite.
4–5	Footprints and drag marks on the ground show a large number (over twenty) were marched or carried away from the site, including some that were dragged over the ground. It is likely any dead bodies were dragged or carried away as well.
6	The tracks lead off towards the south-southeast, in the direction shown on Eshara's crude map. Interestingly, all the footprints appear to belong to the elves. There is no sign of which, if any, were made by their attackers. It is a fairly easy matter to follow the tracks.

If the revengers overcome the PCs in this scene, they take the survivors prisoner and bring them back to their master, the abomination Mythallen. The rage abomination is interested to know how much the outside world and the people of Vintiver have learned of him and his plans, and he wants to recover the Link of Rage and find out what (if anything) the PCs know of it.

You can pass over **Part 3,** as the revengers carry or escort the captured characters to their master, and assume Mythallen imprisons the Player Characters with the remaining Dalish elves. The party must come up with a means of escape and dealing with the fanged skeletons Mythallen has left behind as guards. Then they can pursue the darkspawn and attempt to aid Vintiver, as detailed in **Part 4.** Naturally, in this case the PCs do not earn Experience for the encounters in **Part 3,** just for escaping and overcoming the skeleton (an average encounter overall).

ons, picked over by forest scavengers, and the wagons themselves as well as the debris scattered around the camp show signs of a struggle.

Closer examination shows overturned campstools, broken mugs and crockery, and an overturned iron cauldron that once hung from a tripod over the fire. A small amount of spoiled stew still sits in the bottom, but most of it has spilled and been consumed by scavengers.

Further examination of the camp can turn up the following information. Any character searching through the site can make a **TN 9 Perception (Tracking) test.** Successful characters notice further detail depending on the result of the Dragon Die. Consult the **Dalish Camp Investigation** table on the previous page. Provide the player with all of the information listed for that result and the lesser ones. So, for example, a Dragon Die result of 4 provides the information for the 3–4 entry and that of 1 and 2–3.

Searching the wagons does also turn up the elves' remaining valuables, mainly coin earned during the Vintiver harvest festival and personal items like jewelry. It amounts to 34 sp, assuming the characters are mercenary enough to loot the belongings of the people they are supposed to be saving, that is.

3. Revenger Attack

Combat Encounter

When night falls on the forest—most likely while the group is investigating the abandoned Dalish camp—they get their first real encounter with the threat to Vintiver, the revengers.

Unlike the other foes that have laid in ambush for the PCs, the revengers are tired of sneak attacks on their human prey. Finding intruders closer to their lair, and amidst the ruins of their encampment, the revengers want to strike fear into their victims' hearts before they strike.

The first hint of trouble comes as the shadows darken towards night and faint, wheezing and mocking laughter seems to drift out of the trees. Have the players make **TN 13 Willpower (Courage) tests** for their characters to resist the unnatural fear the revengers' laughter provokes. Those that fail suffer a –1 penalty on attack rolls made against revengers for the duration of the encounter.

The laughter gets louder as the revengers surround the party before emerging from the forest to attack. The PCs get their first look at the creatures' jackal-like appearance and their glowing reddish eyes just as they rush to the attack.

Adversaries

There is one revenger for each PC. Stats can be found on page 63 of **Appendix 2: Monsters**.

If the PCs kill or disable more than half their number, the remaining revengers flee into the darkness of the forest. Characters can pursue, but it is not advisable, given the revengers' ability to see in the dark, their superior speed, and their knowledge of the terrain, to say nothing of following them headlong into an ambush or reinforcements from their lair.

When the fight is over and they bend to examining the fallen bodies of their foes, the PCs are in for a surprise. In death, the revengers revert to their original forms: the missing Dalish! The bodies are those of normal elves, bearing the same wounds as the slain darkspawn.

Resolution of Part 2

By the end of this chapter, the PCs should have a fairly good idea what has happened to the missing elves, and a desire to free them from their unnatural transformation. They should also have a fair trail to follow off the main track into the dark forest, with the combination of Eshara's map and the tracks left by the Dalish and any retreating revengers. Of course, if any of the creatures escaped, the party should also know their master Mythallen will be expecting them, so caution in approaching his lair is clearly indicated.

The Lost Keep

In **Part 3,** the PCs make their way through the dangers of the forest to reach the ancient ruins that are Mythallen's stronghold. They must brave a perilous crossing over a deep gorge and finally the ruins themselves. They deal with a few guards and find the remaining Dalish elves, only to discover that Mythallen has already left his lair with the majority of his followers to lead an assault on Vintiver!

The main goals of **Part 3** are to challenge the characters en route and set things up for the events in **Part 4.** It allows them to garner some aid from the captured Dalish elves they rescue, and possibly return to Vintiver in time to save the village, especially if they figure out how to overcome the rage abomination leading the attack.

1. Bloodcrow Bridge

COMBAT ENCOUNTER

Following Eshara's map (and possibly the trails of the darkspawn), the party comes to a massive tree that has fallen across a deep chasm in the forest, forming a natural bridge to the far side. The chasm is nearly a hundred feet deep, with a river rushing across tumbled rocks below. Finding their way around means looking for another place to cross the chasm and the river and there is no such place for miles.

Getting across the bridge in normal circumstances is challenging enough, but it also has guardians. A flock of bloodcrows, forest creatures corrupted by the abomination Mythallen, swoop down to attack anyone trying to cross the bridge.

To give this encounter tension and unpredictability, crossing the bridge is handled as an advanced test (see **Chapter 2: Using the Rules** for more on advanced tests). The bridge itself is 16 yards long and 2 yards wide (it was a huge tree) and it's covered with moss and jutting branches that make it difficult to traverse.

Moving on the bridge takes a major action and requires a **TN 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) test.** The success threshold to get across is 8. A character that made two successful tests with Dragon Die results of 5 and 3, for example, would make it across in only two rounds. A failed test means the character slips and is now in danger of falling. Before he can resume his movement across the bridge, he must make a successful **TN 9 Strength (Climbing) test** to stand back up (a minor action). If this test is also failed, the character falls unless the PCs took precautions (like trying ropes to each other), suffering 7d6 damage.

The PCs can increase their chances with good planning. If one of them gets across with a guide rope, for example, you can drop the TN of the **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test

Perilous Bridge

to 9. They'll have to decide if they all want to cross at once, or leave some to lay down covering fire while others cross. The bloodcrows continue to attack throughout. They try to focus their attacks on wounded characters, using their Blood Drain stunt whenever possible.

ADVERSARIES

There are eight bloodcrows to start, but you can have more swoop in to keep the encounter interesting if the PCs deal with them too quickly. Stats can be found on page 63 of **Appendix 2: Monsters.**

2. Dead Guardians

COMBAT ENCOUNTER

The party makes its way down into a narrow valley, at the far end of which is the ruins of an ancient stone keep. Only the first floor is intact, and it is lacking a roof and largely filled with rubble, some of which has been cleared away to reveal a stone staircase leading down into darkness. Read or paraphrase the following to the players when the PCs move down the stairs:

> You move down the stairs into the basement of the ancient keep. Smashed furniture and broken, decaying weapons litter the floor. There was a battle here long ago, that much is clear. In the darkness you can

just make out the bones of the dead, but they do not rest quietly. You can see three skeletons staring at you, their sockets empty but their hate palpable. The keep has guardians still, and they will defend it.

In the large chamber at the foot of the stairs are creatures Mythallen has left behind to guard the prisoners (see **Encounter 3**), a trio of skeletons. They attack intruders without hesitation and fight until they are destroyed. As the skeletons stand guard out in the open, and there is no way for the party to approach them without being seen, neither side stands to surprise the other; roll for initiative normally at the start of the encounter.

ADVERSARIES

There are three skeletons, two with spears and one with a bow. Appropriate stats can be found on page 32 of **Chapter 3: Adversaries**.

3. The Dalish Dungeon

EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

Once the skeletons are dealt with, the party hears voices coming from down one corridor off the main chamber, calling out for help, in both human and elven languages. The Dalish elves held in Mythallen's dungeon have heard the sounds of the fight and dare to hope of rescue.

Before the characters can free the elves, however, they must face one more challenge: a trap laid by the abomi-

nation, should any intruders get this far, or should any of the prisoners escape.

THE BLADE TRAP

A thin cord is stretched across the doorway leading into the dungeon, at about ankle height, covered with soot and lampblack, and nearly invisible in the gloom. It is tied to a jury-rigged deadfall trap over the door, piled with some of the rusted but still dangerous blades and other debris gathered up from the ruins. The first character through the doorway triggers the trap, bringing all of it raining down. The falling blades and debris inflict 3d6 damage to the unfortunate victim.

Roll a **Perception (Seeing) test** for each of the characters in secret as they approach or declare their intention to enter the dungeon. The TN is 13 for the lead character, 15 for everyone else. If a player specifically notes that his or her character is on the lookout for a trap, the TN drops to 11. Any character succeeding on the Perception test notices the cord stretched across the entrance before anyone enters.

The nature of the trap can be determined with a successful **TN 9 Dexterity (Traps) test**. Success determines that simply stepping over the cord and not touching it is safe. Failure leaves the character not knowing for certain without actually trying it. A character can neutralize the deadfall with a **TN 11 Dexterity (Traps) test** if desired. Failure triggers the trap, so stepping over the cord is the more sensible course of action.

4. Aiding the Elves

ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTER

The corridor beyond the deadfall trap leads to the rest of the keep's basement. At the far end is a smaller circular chamber with an arcane circle inscribed on its floor. This is where Eshara took the Link the Rage, and if one of the PC carries the link back into the room it briefly sparks with power. This is the first indication that the link is not totally inert.

The rooms on one side of the corridor are empty and ruined, their original functions indiscernible in the wreckage. On the other side is the keep's dungeon and that is in use once again. Here are the remaining members of Mythallen's clan, primarily women and children, and those able to resist transformation into his revengers. Lorekeeper Orellis, the clan's elder, is also here and he has the most experience with the forces Harralan has unleashed.

The imprisoned elves are tired, dirty, hungry, and frightened. Mythallen kept them alive to continue proving to himself that everything he is doing is "for his people" and that they will eventually come to understand and respect him and his power. Perhaps there is even a small shred of decency and compassion left in him that makes him unable to bring himself to slaugh-

The Lost Keep

□ = 5 feet

ter his own, although he gladly dispatched his revengers to hunt down Eshara when she escaped.

The Dalish prisoners are initially somewhat leery of the adventurers, not knowing what to make of them, and not overly trusting of outsiders in general, but they are in dire need and Orellis, at least, quickly tries to befriend them. If the Dalish learn the characters assisted Eshara and that she is alive, or if she accompanies them, they warm to the PCs immediately and treat them as friends and allies.

Orellis and the others can fill the characters in on what has happened, having learned most of the details from Mythallen's deranged rants. Orellis knows the real identity of the so-called "child of vengeance" and what likely brought about his transformation, but not the history of the keep or who created the Link of Rage.

Most important, the elves can tell the characters that Mythallen and his remaining darkspawn left the ruins vowing to bring "terrible vengeance" upon the humans of Vintiver! They left just hours before the PCs arrived, but one of the Dalish hunters, named Lirresh, says he knows a more direct route back to the village than the one the abomination's larger force must take, if the party is willing to risk the hazards of the forest to get there in time.

Give the players a bit of time in this encounter to ask questions and tell the elves of all they have seen and heard. This is a prime opportunity for the players to portray their characters and potentially win over some new friends. They also need to decide what to do about the Dalish; many of the elves are too weak to accompany the PCs back to Vintiver at the pace they must maintain, and would not be of much help once they arrived anyway. The few able-bodied elves other than Lirresh prefer to stay behind to aid the rest of their people in getting clear of the ruins and to safeguard them against other dangers. A convincing or rousing speech by one of the players can convince another two elven hunters to accompany them back to Vintiver to help the humans. Eshara also remains with the adventurers, if she accompanied them to the keep.

Resolution of Part 3

At the end of **Part 3,** the player characters have information, but also a sense of urgency. They should know, from the rescued Dalish, exactly who and what they are up against. They also know the rage abomination and his forces are on their way to attack a relatively helpless village, unless the party can get back and aid the people of Vintiver before it is too late.

PART 4

CHILD OF VENGEANCE

In **Part 4,** the player characters rush to get back to Vintiver in time to intervene against Mythallen and his forces. They encounter dangers along the way, including another creature spawned by the corrupt forces released by the breaking of the Link of Rage. Finally, they reach Vintiver during a battle between the darkspawn and the human villagers, just in time to (hopefully) tip the balance towards victory.

1. WEB OF CORRUPTION

COMBAT ENCOUNTER

Lirresh, the Dalish hunter, leads the party from the Lost Keep, past the chasm (where the bloodcrows are either too thinned in number or wary enough not to attack again). He strikes out into the deep forest, off the main trails, as night begins to fall (if it hasn't already based on how long it took the characters to reach this point). The deepening twilight lends a sense of menace to the looming trees and the trail is only barely visible from some ancient, cracked cobblestones hidden beneath the undergrowth and moss.

THE WEB

After the group has gone a short distance, roll a secret **TN 11 PERCEPTION (SEEING) TEST** for each character. Any character failing the test stumbles into a giant web stretched between the trees, nearly invisible in the dark. The web's strands are sticky, and those who stumble into it find themselves unable to move unless they succeed at a **TN 13 STRENGTH (MIGHT) TEST** to break free. Even if all the characters manage to avoid becoming caught in the web, their approach alerts the web's owner of their presence.

THE WEB—WEAVER

A giant spider, corrupted by the unleashed power of the Link of Rage, attacks the prey near its web. The spider has been subsisting off forest animals, so it is eager to feast on humanoids. It scuttles down the strands of the web, initially attacking those who are not trapped (it assumes it can feed on the others in its web at its leisure). The spider's fangs are venomous, capable of paralyzing its prey.

The spider fights fiercely, but if its Health drops below 15, the abomination attempts to scuttle away into the darkness of the forest and escape.

ADVERSARY

One giant spider. Stats can be found on page 35 of **CHAPTER 3: ADVERSARIES.** Due to the corrupting influence of Mythallen, however, the giant spider is susceptible to the magic of the Link of Rage. Any character carrying or holding Link of Rage can perform stunts against the spider at a cost of 1 less Stunt Point: The character's weapon flashes with sparks of silvery-blue arcane energy as it strikes during any combat stunts, and the spider recoils from such attacks. This gives the players a valuable clue that the link is a weapon of sorts they can use against Mythallen as well.

2. THE DANGEROUS PATH

EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

The corrupt spider is not the only danger the party must face on their journey back to Vintiver. The trail they take through the depths of the forest is dangerous, not only because of the growing influence of the rage demon in the area and the corruption freed from the Link of Rage, but also just the natural hazards of the terrain. These include gullies and uneven ground, potential pitfalls in the darkness.

You can handle the hazards of the journey back to Vintiver as a singular hazardous encounter. Ask each player to make a **TN 11 PERCEPTION TEST. SEARCHING, SEEING,** and **TRACKING** are all applicable focuses, given the nature of the hazards. A failed test results in 1d6 penetrating damage from minor injuries and inconveniences.

If you want to extend this encounter, you can give the player characters a greater challenge to overcome, like an unexpected flooding of a river ford. See **Handling Hazards** for additional detail and ideas.

3. The Battle of Vintiver

COMBAT ENCOUNTER

The PCs return to Vintiver to find Mythallen's assault underway. Read or paraphrase the following:

> You arrive back in Vintiver to find it in chaos. Villagers run through the streets trying to escape diving blood crows. Revengers stalk between burning houses looking for prey. Many villagers have already fallen, but all is not lost. You can see Tarl, the Warden, defending himself with a knot of stout villagers. The inn is another center of resistance. In the village square you see a figure that can only be Mythallen. What was once an elf has been twisted beyond recognition. The abomination is now a thing of corruption, its long claws already slick with blood.

Mythallen has mustered a dozen revengers and a flock of twenty blood crows for his assault, and by his reckoning his force should more than suffice to rout these weak humans. With this many monsters and dozens of villagers running around, you do not want to track every combatant in this fight. It'd take a whole evening and grind the game to a halt.

Focus this scene instead on the actions of the PCs and Mythallen, with the rest of the fighting going on as a backdrop. After all, the villagers are not trained soldiers, and their hopes rest largely with the PCs, who must defeat Mythallen if they are to free the Dalish from his power and defeat his forces. It is the villagers' job to hold off the other forces as long as they can to allow the PCs to do their job. You can describe the ongoing struggle of the villagers as the PCs take their actions.

The primary battle should be between Mythallen and the characters. The trick here is to pace this climax so the fight is memorable and neither too easy nor impossible. Here are some options to keep in mind:

If Coalan survived his earlier encounter with the PCs (that is, they left him unconscious rather than killing him), then the smith is engaged in fierce combat with Mythallen himself. Just as the PCs arrive, Mythallen strikes him down, leaving Coalan lying bloody on the battlefield. Reduce Mythallen's Health by 10, however, to represent the damage Coalan inflicted before he went down. As the fight begins, Coalan is dying. If a PC reaches him before 4 rounds have elapsed and administers healing, he can be saved.

If the PCs are having a hard time of it, Tarl Dale can fight free of the revengers and provide some assistance.

On the other hand, if the PCs are going to make short work of Mythallen, you can make the fight more interesting by having a revenger or two come to the abomination's aid, or have a flight of blood crows tear through the village square.

You can set up vignettes as part of the larger battle that provide other opportunities for heroism. A family may be stuck in a burning house, for example. A child may run screaming as a blood crow chases him down the street. A villager may try to use this moment to even an old score with the neighbor, hoping no one will notice in the confusion. Each of these vignettes is a decision point for the PCs. Do they intervene or concentrate on defeating Mythallen? If they do not, make sure you note the consequences in the aftermath.

Sister Arda tends to the wounded throughout the battle, running from villager to villager to try to save lives. She can help out wounded PCs in a pinch as well. Her Cunning is 2 and she has the Chirurgy (Journeyman) talent. This means her heal tests are minor actions that restore Health equal to double the Dragon Die + Cunning.

The Power of the Link

The bearer of the broken Link of Rage subtracts 1 from the usual stunt point cost of all combat stunts performed against Mythallen, because of the lingering power of the rage demon's former prison. Inform the link-bearer of this as soon as the player rolls doubles and generate stunt points. This gives the characters a slight edge in their fight against the abomination. They may be familiar with this benefit from their prior encounter with the corrupted spider; otherwise they may learn of it here.

If an NPC, like Eshara, carries the link, have that character realize its potential and hand it over to a PC, perhaps requiring a **TN 9 DEXTERITY (LEGERDEMAIN) TEST** to catch the thrown item. If Mythallen knows one of the heroes carries the Link of Rage, he will attack that character as soon as he is able.

Mythallen Falls

When the final blow is struck against the rage abomination, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> As the abomination falls, a simultaneous cry of both pain and defeat seems to go up from his darkspawn followers. As if following the sound of the terrible cry, ghostly, screaming shapes emerge from their mouths, swirling like glowing mist into the night air.
>
> The spirits gather in a greenish cloud overhead, stirring like a gathering storm, and then the most

powerful unholy light erupts from Mythallen, lancing skyward with an echoing cry. It scatters the other shapes with a thunderclap and then goes out, leaving a sudden darkness and silence all across the grape arbor that has become a battlefield.

Where the revengers once stood are now the elves of the Dalish clan; some dead or wounded, but others simply dazed, trying to make sense of their surroundings. In the dirt at your feet lies, not the form of the rage abomination, but that of an elven hunter, dead of the same blow that slew Mythallen. The rage demon is gone, and the threat of the darkspawn with it.

Resolution of Part 4

The end of Part 4 is the end of *The Dalish Curse,* wherein the PCs hopefully triumph over the forces of evil and save the people and village of Vintiver from almost certain destruction, as well as helping to heal a rift between the humans and the elves, at least in this corner of the world. Once the final battle is concluded and Mythallen is defeated, you can move on to the **Epilogue.**

Epilogue

After the final battle against Mythallen's forces and the confrontation with the rage abomination, the dust settles and you can wrap up any remaining threads of the story.

The villagers aid the surviving Dalish (perhaps with some encouragement from stalwarts like the PCs, Warden Tarl, and Vintiver's priestess Sister Arda). Any darkspawn left behind at the Keep are destroyed at the same time as the abomination that created them, and any elves the PCs were forced to leave behind find their way to the village (or are met by search parties in the forest), allowing them to reunite with their freed loved ones.

The state of the village depends on the PCs' actions. If they killed Coalan and his followers early in the adventure then Mythallen's attack will have caused much more damage. More villagers are dead and many buildings are burned down. If the blacksmith and his men were not killed, they were able to blunt Mythallen's attack until the PCs showed up, and the village is thus in better shape. There are still losses, but it could have been much worse.

The people of Vintiver are naturally grateful to the PCs for the protection of their village, even more so if the PCs managed to save Vintiver with minimal loss of life and property. They can expect to be treated well any time they visit. The villagers provide whatever assistance the characters need in the form of rest and recovery, free food and lodging, and the equivalent of 50 silvers each in equipment and supplies—as much as the villagers can spare. This is reduced to 25 silvers if the party killed Coalan early in the adventure.

If Coalan survives, he is quite contrite with the characters and offers them his skills in repairing any of their damaged equipment such as weapons or armor, perhaps even offering to make them new items, if they plan to spend some additional time in Vintiver. If Coalan does not survive (perhaps dying a hero's death in defense of Vintiver), then Dorn Mullin, his apprentice, takes on the duties of village smith and makes them the same offer.

The Dalish are also quite grateful for their rescue from the rage abomination, especially if the PCs managed to free most or all of the revengers from Mythallen's thrall without having to kill them. At the very least, the Dalish make the characters adopted members of their clan, offering them tokens showing them to be *vhenallin,* or "friends of the People." If the party wishes, they may travel with the Dalish as part of their caravan, giving them companions along the route to their next adventure, and a kind of mobile "home base." If not, they are still welcome around the Dalish's campfire at any time.

Exploring the Ruins

If the players express interest, you can extend this **Epilogue** by allowing their characters to further explore the ruins of the ancient Keep of the Chain now that the abomination and its thralls no longer control it. There may be further treasures and clues about the nature of the Link of Rage and the threat released by its sundering to be found there. Of course, there may also be additional traps and defenses left by the builders of the Keep, or by the release of the demons, without the residual magic of the builders to help protect the PCs.

If the characters take some time in getting back to the ruins, other darkspawn or creatures from the forest might move in and take up residence, forcing the characters to root them out, and leading to a whole additional adventure. You can also create additional levels or layers to the ruins, either hidden parts of the Keep's lower levels or other nearby structures, previously buried. Some additional encounters can help out Player Characters who didn't make it to 2nd level at the conclusion of **Part 4,** giving them a small additional XP boost to wrap things up on a high note.

Left to their own devices, the people of Vintiver and the Dalish agree to destroy the "bridge" leading to the lost valley, pushing the fallen tree down into the chasm, cutting off easier access to the ruins to avoid any further temptation. Still, there is always the possibility a new threat might arise from there later on, giving the characters another reason to return to Vintiver.

Vintiver

The Ferelden village of Vintiver is where much of *The Dalish Curse* takes place, and provides both a "home base" for the PCs and an endangered populace for them to defend against the darkspawn threat. You may choose to have the fledgling PCs actually originate in Vintiver, in which case their ties to the village—and their motives for wanting to protect it from harm—will be even stronger.

Location and Layout

Vintiver is in the southeastern part of Ferelden, in the Southron Hills, where the rolling hillocks and elevation of the land are well suited to the village's primary crop: grapes. The village itself is nestled in a shallow vale between the hills, affording some protection from the weather and an ample water supply.

Vintiver itself is made up of about two dozen homesteads, each with its own garden plot, where the locals grow their own food. The vineyards extend further up the hillsides, outside of the village proper, and there are a number of outlying farms considered part of Vintiver, but located a mile or more away from the center of the village itself. The Fuldor farm the PCs visit at the start of the adventure is one such.

In addition to the homesteads, the other main buildings in Vintiver are:

1. The Temple

A small Chantry temple is set up in Vintiver to tend to the people's spiritual needs. It is a long building with tall, thin windows equipped with shutters, which are usually open in fair weather to allow light and air to fill the inside. Rows of benches are set for services before the altar at the far end of the main room of the temple, with the priest's quarters in the rooms at the back. Vintiver's temple is not especially rich, although it does have fine altar cloths, and the parishioners are humble and devout, much like the Priestess, Sister Arda.

2. The Winery

Vintiver's prime export is wine made from the grapes of its vineyards. The whole village works together to crush the grapes in large wooden vats, straining and storing the juice to ferment into wine, which is then casked and bottled and aged before being sold to wine merchants who take it all across Ferelden and beyond.

The village winery is most active during harvest season, of course, when the villagers gather for the year's wine preparations. For the rest of the year, it is tended by the most skilled winemakers, who oversee the aging of the casks, and by their young apprentices, who handle most of the cleaning and maintenance. The main area of the winery can be used for village functions when the Temple or common room at the inn will not suffice, and gatherings are sometimes held there.

3. The Arbor Inn

Vintiver has a small inn, primarily to attend to the needs of visiting merchants and traders, and to provide the locals with a common taproom. The two-story wood beam and plaster structure has heavy, dark wood shutters and window boxes kept full of brightly colored flowers in the spring and summertime. A carved and painted wooden sign bearing a dark purple bunch of grapes surrounded by curling leaves and vines and the name "The Arbor Inn" hangs above the front door, while a small bell hangs just inside, ringing when the door is opened, so the innkeeper knows when guests arrive and depart.

Haran and Kesla Mullin own and run the Arbor Inn. Kesla's father Ulten started it, and she inherited, being the oldest child. Kesla's mother Torra still cooks in the

inn's kitchen, vital and vivacious in her 60s, and still fully involved in her daughter's business (in all ways). Haran and Kesla's four younger children Finella (16), Dagmar (14), Amina (12), and Elfrida (10) all work at the inn in various capacities, while their oldest son, Dorn, age 18, is apprenticed to Coalan, the smith.

4. THE SMITHY

Master Coalan's smithy is located near the village stables, where he does most of his work shoeing horses and fixing various farm implements for the villagers. The smithy itself contains Coalan's forge, anvil, and various tools of his trade, along with small supplies of scrap metal, crucibles and molds, and so forth. The forge fire is kept burning whenever the smith is working, tended by his apprentice, Dorn Mullin.

5. THE STABLES

The village stables provide shelter for draft and farm horses apart from the villagers' own properties, and particularly for the mounts and pack animals of visiting merchants and other travelers staying at the inn. The stables also store bales of hay in their large barn along with various items of tack and harness.

CUSTOMS AND HISTORY

Vintiver was founded decades ago on the frontier of Ferelden to take advantage of the fertile soil of the hills, which provided an excellent environment for the cultivation of grapes. The village's history has been largely peaceful, far from the crime of the most densely populated cities, and from wars and border conflicts. Of sole concern has been the occasional creature from the depths of the Brecilian Forest but, even then, the people of Vintiver tend to steer clear of the forest and its inhabitants rarely venture so far as the village itself.

Like so many rural villages, life in Vintiver revolves around the seasons and the harvest. In particular, the villagers all contribute to work on the vineyards, as well as caring for their own small plots of land and food crops. The heaviest work is done during spring planting season and the autumn harvest, which is followed by crushing the grapes and the preparation of wine to be fermented throughout the remainder of the fall and winter.

Therefore, Vintiver's largest festival celebrates the Autumn Harvest, intended to give thanks for a bountiful and successful year and to bless the fields that will lie fallow until Spring to bring forth new life. It is a time of feasting and the enjoyment of the village's work in winemaking, as well as trade, as wine merchants visit to purchase vintages from the previous years, and tinkers and traders from the surrounding areas come looking to sell their wares. The visit by the traveling band of Dalish elves at the most recent harvest festival is the spark that triggered the events in this adventure and the trouble Vintiver faces in *The Dalish Curse.*

NPCs

This appendix includes game stats and descriptions for the NPCs encountered in *The Dalish Curse.* NPCs unlikely to see combat use the abbreviated stat block format.

ANGRY VILLAGERS

ENRAGED MOB

While most of the people of Vintiver are peaceful enough, there are enough rowdies to give Coalan his mob. Their bellicosity comes in handy when Mythallen attacks the village, however.

COALAN

BLACKSMITH

Coalan has lived in Vintiver all his life. He learned the blacksmith's trade here, took over the smithy and forge, and has been a good and upstanding member of the community. Coalan has always been a somewhat solitary fellow; as a lad his large size made him somewhat awkward and shy. As a man, he has focused on his work and finds little time for "foolishness," as he refers to most sorts of

ANGRY VILLAGERS			
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)			
0	COMMUNICATION (ANIMAL HANDLING, BARGAINING)		
1	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)		
2	DEXTERITY		
0	INTELLIGENCE		
0	MAGIC		
1	PERCEPTION (SEEING)		
1	STRENGTH		
0	WILLPOWER		
COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	**HEALTH**	**DEFENSE**	**ARMOR RATING**
12	11	12	0
ATTACKS			
WEAPON	**ATTACK ROLL**		**DAMAGE**
CLUB	+2		1D6+1
FIST	+2		1D3+1
POWERS			
FAVORED STUNTS: *Knock Prone and Skirmish.*			
WEAPON GROUPS: *Brawling and Staves.*			
EQUIPMENT			
CLUB.			

recreation. He is a serious man, with serious responsibilities.

Unfortunately, Master Coalan also has something of a temper. He manages to keep it in check most of the time, but it is one of the reasons why he doesn't make friends easily, or socialize all that much. Dorn Mullin, Coalan's eighteen year-old apprentice, receives the brunt of his master's ill-temper, but even he thinks of Coalan as more prickly than violent. Recent events have worsened the blacksmith's temper. After all, everything in the village was just fine until the festival, until those damned sneaky knife-ears came along and started trouble. It was getting back to normal until they came back, now *they* want help? It is some elven trick! It *has* to be.

Master Coalan likes to think he knows what is going on and what is best, but he's not the sort people listen to. No, they prefer the placid calm of Sister Arda or the quiet authority of Warden Tarl, or even some mothering from Kesla Mullin rather than deal with the hard, cold facts and the reality of what needs doing. Well, Coalan isn't one to shy away from something because it's

too hot, and he knows full well some things need to be hammered into shape if you want to fix them.

ESHARA

DALISH ELF SURVIVOR

A bright and clever young elf woman, Eshara also proves to be quite brave and determined when given the responsibility of aiding her people. She manages to escape from the clutches of the rage abomination and his minions, absconding with the broken Link of Rage, and making her way back to Vintiver in spite of the danger and the injuries she suffers in the process. She's willing to trust outsiders and to accompany them back into certain danger to bring help to her fellow Dalish and to put an end to the threat looming over them and the human village as well.

Eshara is training to become a lorekeeper herself and is a devout believer in the elven gods, as shown by

COALAN

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
1	COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP)
2	CONSTITUTION (DRINKING)
0	CUNNING
1	DEXTERITY (BRAWLING)
0	MAGIC
0	PERCEPTION
3	STRENGTH (BLUDGEONS, INTIMIDATION, MIGHT)
1	WILLPOWER (COURAGE, MORALE)

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	25	11	3

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
MAUL	+5	1D6+6
FIST	+3	1D6+3

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Dual Strike and Mighty Blow.*

SPECIALIZATIONS: *Armor Training (Novice), Unarmed Style (Novice).*

WEAPON GROUPS: *Bludgeons and Brawling.*

EQUIPMENT

LIGHT LEATHER, MAUL.

ESHARA	LEVEL 2 ROGUE

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
1	COMMUNICATION
1	CONSTITUTION
2	CUNNING (CULTURAL LORE)
2	DEXTERITY (LIGHT BLADES)
0	MAGIC
3	PERCEPTION
1	STRENGTH
2	WILLPOWER (COURAGE)

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
14	34	12	3

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
DAGGER	+4	1D6+2

POWERS

BACKSTAB: *As per the level 1 rogue power.*

FAVORED STUNTS: *Pierce Armor and Skirmish.*

ROGUE'S ARMOR: *Eshara ignores the Armor Penalty of leather armor altogether.*

SPECIALIZATIONS: *Scouting (Novice).*

STUNT BONUS: *Eshara can perform the Pierce Armor stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2.*

WEAPON GROUPS: *Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, and Staves.*

EQUIPMENT

LIGHT LEATHER, DAGGER.

her facial tattoos. She is proud of her heritage and her people, but does not let her pride blind her to reality. If outsiders—like the Player Characters—are willing to offer aid, then she is willing to accept and aid them in return.

If you want to introduce an element of romance into the adventure, Eshara might find herself inexplicably drawn to one of her rescuers. She likely tries to deny any romantic feelings for a non-elf, at least initially, but may admit or even act on those feelings, given the dangers everyone must face in this adventure. If not a Player Character, then Eshara may find herself drawn to the brave and humble Warden Tarl, providing a reason for her to remain behind in Vintiver, should you need one, either during or after the story ends.

Haran and Kesla Mullin

The Mullins are the owners and keepers of the Arbor Inn, Vintiver's sole inn and taproom, and therefore the center of social life in the village. Kesla's father started the inn and she inherited it, her husband Haran willingly gave up a career as a carpenter to help his wife run the family business, although he still puts his skills to work maintaining and fixing up the inn.

The Mullins are good folk with a live-and-let-live attitude and a belief in hard work, hospitality, and caring for family and neighbors. They are deeply concerned about recent happenings and aggrieved about the loss of people they have known. Kesla in particular keeps her children closer to home, until the matter is resolved.

The Mullins' game stats are not likely to be important in this adventure. Should any tests be necessary on their part, you can assume they have an average level of ability and focuses only concerning matters of inn-keeping, hospitality, and (in Haran's case) carpentry.

Orellis

Orellis is an older elf, his hair silvery white and his face beginning to show the hints of wrinkles and lines that would, in a human, be the early signs of middle age. In truth, Orellis is the eldest member of his band and has been their Lorekeeper for many years. He knows

HARAN MULLIN

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	COMMUNICATION (ANIMAL HANDLING, BARGAINING)
2	CONSTITUTION (DRINKING)
1	DEXTERITY
0	INTELLIGENCE
0	MAGIC
1	PERCEPTION (HEARING)
2	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER

KESLA MULLIN

Abilities (Focuses)	
2	COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING, PERSUASION)
1	CONSTITUTION
2	DEXTERITY
1	INTELLIGENCE (CULTURAL LORE, EVALUATION)
0	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (SEEING)
0	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER

SISTER ARDA

Abilities (Focuses)	
3	COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
0	CONSTITUTION
2	CUNNING (CULTURAL LORE, HEALING, HISTORICAL LORE, RELIGIOUS LORE)
1	DEXTERITY
0	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)
1	STRENGTH
3	WILLPOWER (FAITH, SELF-DISCIPLINE)

ORELLIS

Abilities (Focuses)	
3	COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP)
0	CONSTITUTION
5	CUNNING (CULTURAL LORE, HISTORICAL LORE, NATURAL LORE, NAVIGATION, RELIGIOUS LORE)
2	DEXTERITY (BOWS)
2	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (SEEING)
0	STRENGTH
3	WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

a great deal about elven history, legends, and religion in particular, and looks after the spiritual needs of his people. Orellis can tell the Player Characters about the rage demon and the nature of the abomination that calls itself Mythallen. The Lorekeeper is not overly fond of humans, nor does he trust them any more than he must, but he befriends the Player Characters if they show themselves to be friends of the Dalish, and encourages his people to do the same.

SISTER ARDA

CHANTRY PRIESTESS

Sister Arda is a devout servant of the Chantry and follower of its beliefs. Raised and trained in Denerim, she chose to immigrate to the frontier lands some eighteen years ago to minister to people in need of spiritual guidance, feeling she could do more there than in the great temples of the capital city. She has helped build up the Chantry in Vintiver, both figuratively and with her own hands. In spite of being a "newcomer" by the standards of some, Sister Arda is a known and welcomed part of the community.

At least part of her success is owed to her cosmopolitan education and willingness to acknowledge that the Song might need slightly different words or tempo here than in the heart of the Chantry's power, so long as the tune is still the same. She does not believe in blind adherence to dogma, and tends to politely overlook various local superstitions and customs dating back to tribal times. After all, the people of Vintiver are good, hard working, and devout. They need spiritual guidance to make their lives better, not more difficult, as she sees it.

Sister Arda is gravely concerned with recent events. In all her years in Vintiver, she has never had to face true evil. Now she fears corrupt forces are closing in around the souls entrusted into her care, and she does not know if she has the courage necessary to sing out loudly in the face of mortal peril, to be the guiding light her people need. She is sincerely grateful for the assistance of the PCs, although she has a touch of Chantry mistrust for magic-wielders, particularly given the circumstances. Still, she does whatever she can to aid the PCs, and to focus the attention of the villagers on the true threat to them all.

TARL DALE

FERELDAN FREEMAN, VILLAGE WARDEN

Tarl Dale, the village Warden of Vintiver, is the legal authority of the village as well as enforcer of the will of the Bann (the local lord). Master Tarl, as he is known, was a soldier in the Bann's army, and a good one by all accounts. He retired years ago, and found that life in a rural village on the frontier suited him well enough. He likes the quiet and the people of Vintiver, and never expected to have to deal with trouble such as he is now.
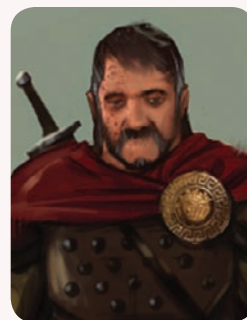
The warden is a fairly tall man, still fit in his 50s, with longish dark brown hair going to grey, and a mixture of the same in his short beard. His pale eyes are still sharp, however, and he has laugh-lines around them from an easy smile, although he has found little reason to grin of late. He's virtually the only man in Vintiver who regularly wears (or even owns) a sword and these days he has taken to wearing some of his old armor as well, just in case.

Tarl's primary duty is to protect Vintiver. He doesn't know much about magic and curses and the like, but he has fought things that would make your blood run cold,

TARL DALE		LEVEL 4 WARRIOR
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)		
2	COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP)	
4	CONSTITUTION (SWIMMING)	
1	CUNNING (MILITARY LORE)	
1	DEXTERITY (RIDING)	
0	MAGIC	
1	PERCEPTION	
3	STRENGTH	
1	WILLPOWER (COURAGE)	

COMBAT RATINGS			
SPEED	**HEALTH**	**DEFENSE**	**ARMOR RATING**
9	52	11	5

ATTACKS		
WEAPON	**ATTACK ROLL**	**DAMAGE**
LONG SWORD	+3	2D6+3
DAGGER	+1	1D6+4

POWERS

FAVORED STUNTS: *Dual Strike and Mighty Blow.*

SPECIALIZATIONS: *Armor Training (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Journeyman), Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).*

STUNT BONUS: *Tarl can perform the Dual Strike stunt for 3 stunt points instead of the usual 4.*

WEAPON GROUPS: *Brawling, Heavy Blades, Light Blades, Spears, Staves.*

EQUIPMENT

LIGHT MAIL, LONG SWORD, DAGGER.

and he knows there is evil at work in the world. He does not have anything particular against the Dalish, knowing full well they didn't start the incident he broke up during the festival. He finds it difficult to believe in any sort of a curse, but he has seen stranger things in his time.

Mythallen

Rage Abomination

Harralan was a skilled hunter and tracker for his clan, but known for having a temper and a certain amount of arrogance about his abilities. He dreamed of the days when his people were the masters of the land, with great cities and nations of their own, not dispirited wanderers living out of wagons and performing shows and tricks for very people who oppressed and enslaved them. They were better than that; they *should* be better.

The indignity at the human village of Vintiver was the final straw of Harralan's pride; that those quickling fools *dared* to speak to him in such a way! Worse yet, that his own elders admonished him for it! The hunter stewed and fumed as the clan left the insignificant village behind and continued on their journey, as Harralan was exiled to scouting alone in the woods to cool his anger, but merely stoked the flames of it the more he thought about it.

So his mind and spirit were primed to hear the call of the demon bound in the mystic Link of Rage. Drawn by that siren call, with hooks planted deep in Harralan's own anger, the hunter found the hidden vale where the ruins of the keep lay, bypassed its defenses, and took hold of the Link of Rage. All of his anger and hatred poured into it, magnified and returned a thousand times over. The Chain exploded and Harralan the elven hunter was no more.

Transformed by the power of the rage demon, the Dalish elf became Mythallen (pronounced myth-al-LEN), "child of vengeance." He felt the power thundering within every fiber of his being, the power to take revenge on those who mocked him, on the people who degraded his own. Moreover, he knew that he had the power to lead his clan, his people, along a different path.

Mythallen is a creature of primal rage, hate, and a never-ending thirst for vengeance. He may espouse concern for the future of the People, and for the injustices they have suffered, but he understands nothing of sympathy, compassion, forgiveness, or true leadership. Instead, he enslaves, yoking others to his revenge, transforming them into little more than weapons, extensions of his will. Mythallen is too far gone; whatever remains of Harralan has been burned away in the fires of his hate and the influence of the demon.

MYTHALLEN	RAGE ABOMINATION
Abilities (Focuses)	
2	Communication
3	Constitution (Stamina)
2	Cunning
3	Dexterity (Stealth, Traps)
2	Magic
1	Perception (Seeing)
3	Strength (Claws, Intimidation)
4	Willpower (Morale)

Combat Ratings			
Speed	**Health**	**Defense**	**Armor Rating**
15	60	13	5

Attacks		
Weapon	**Attack Roll**	**Damage**
Claws	+5	2d6+3

Powers

Abomination Form: *Mythallen's transformed body gives him an AR of 5.*

Favored Stunts: *Lighting Attack and Mighty Blow.*

The Fires of Hate: *Mythallen can create a burst of flame as a special stunt for 2 SP. Anyone within 2 yards of Mythallen takes 1d6 penetrating damage.*

Monsters

This appendix includes stats for creatures unique to this adventure. The remaining stats needed to run *The Dalish Curse* can be found in **Chapter 3: Adversaries.**

Bloodcrow

Infected by darkspawn, these black carrion birds gain a thirst for the blood of the living along with a savage nature and cunning. Bloodcrows are larger than their mundane kin, with a dark reddish sheen to their black feathers and blood-red eyes. They have sharp beaks and snake-like tails with small spikes or spines along them.

Bloodcrows usually attack in flocks, striking at the eyes and face as well as any other unprotected or vulnerable areas on their prey. As a group they can bring down much larger creatures, allowing them to feast.

Revenger

The rage of Mythallen is like a fire, capable of igniting and burning other creatures, transforming them into

BLOOD CROW — HUNGER DARKSPAWN

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
0	COMMUNICATION
–2	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
3	DEXTERITY (BITE, STEALTH)
–2	INTELLIGENCE
–2	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (SMELLING)
–1	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)
0	WILLPOWER

COMBAT RATINGS

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
5 (FLY 20)	10	13	0

ATTACKS

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BITE	+5	1D6–1

POWERS

BLOOD DRAIN STUNT: *For 3 stunt points, a bloodcrow can strike and latch onto its target to drain blood from the victim. The damage from the bloodcrow's attack ignores armor.*

EYE-STRIKE STUNT: *For 2 stunt points, a bloodcrow can rake or peck at its target's eyes or other vulnerable spots. The target suffers a –1 penalty on all tests until the end of its next turn.*

FAVORED STUNTS: *Blood Drain, Eye Strike, Mighty Blow.*

extensions of his unholy will like sparks spreading a bonfire. A revenger is a normal humanoid possessed and changed by Mythallen into an instrument of death and destruction.

Revengers are a sickly grey color, their flesh tough and leathery, drawn tight on their bones. Their lips are drawn back in a rictus parody of a grin, and their teeth and nails grow sharp and predatory. Their eyes become dark pools of nothingness swirling with reddish shadows, and able to pierce the darkest gloom, but sensitive to the light of day. They are usually clad in the ragged remains of whatever clothing they wore before their transformation, or else are garbed as their creator and master sees fit.

Revengers have a measure of intelligence left to them, more an animal cunning, and they are still capable of speech, although they are more likely to issue only growls and animal cries. They are otherwise nothing more than extensions of their master's will, incapable of disobedience or betrayal.

A revenger given the opportunity to attack does so savagely, striking with claws and biting targets that get too close. They fight with no regard for their own safety. A slain revenger reverts back to its original, untainted, form, often to the shock and surprise of its slayers.

REVENGERS — RAGE DARKSPAWN

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
0	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
0	CUNNING
2	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
1	MAGIC
2	PERCEPTION (SMELLING)
3	STRENGTH (CLAWS, INTIMIDATION)
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

COMBAT RATINGS

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
14	20	12	3

ATTACKS

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
CLAWS	+5	1D6+6
BITE	+2	1D6+3

POWERS

DARK VISION: *Revengers can see in the dark as if it were daylight. This does, however, make their eyes light sensitive. In actual daylight or other bright light, revengers suffer a –1 penalty to their Perception ability and all attack rolls.*

FAVORED STUNTS: *Lighting Attack and Mighty Blow.*

QUICK BITE STUNT: *A revenger can follow up a successful attack with its claws with a Quick Bite as a special stunt costing 2 SP. This bite attack must be taken against the same target as the original attack. Rolling doubles on the bite attack roll does not generate more stunt points.*

INDEX

Below you'll find blank **Combat Cards** and a blank **Quick Reference Sheet**. Permission is granted to photocopy or reproduce this page, for personal use only.

GAME MASTER AIDS

NAME

SPEED **INITIATIVE**

CLASS/LEVEL

COMMUNICATION	CONSTITUTION	CUNNING	DEXTERITY

MAGIC	PERCEPTION	STRENGTH	WILLPOWER

NAME

SPEED **INITIATIVE**

CLASS/LEVEL

COMMUNICATION	CONSTITUTION	CUNNING	DEXTERITY

MAGIC	PERCEPTION	STRENGTH	WILLPOWER

NAME

HEALTH

CLASS/LEVEL

COMMUNICATION	
CONSTITUTION	
CUNNING	
DEXTERITY	
MAGIC	
PERCEPTION	
STRENGTH	
WILLPOWER	

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	SPEED
			DEFENSE

POWERS

ARMOR

EQUIPMENT

Quick Reference Sheet: Actions and Stunts

Actions

You can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions on your turn.

MAJOR ACTIONS

Charge: You may move up to half your Speed (rounded down) in yards and then make a melee attack against an adjacent enemy. You gain a +1 bonus on your attack roll.

Defend: You concentrate on defending yourself this round. Until the beginning of your next turn, you gain a +2 bonus to your Defense.

Heal: You provide some quick first aid to an injured ally. You must be adjacent to your ally and you must have bandages ready. This is a TN 11 **Cunning (Healing)** test. If you are successful, your ally gets back an amount of Health equal to the dragon die + your Cunning. A character cannot benefit from another heal action until he takes additional damage.

Melee Attack: You attack one adjacent enemy in hand-to-hand combat. An enemy within 2 yards of you is considered adjacent.

Ranged Attack: You fire or throw a missile weapon at one visible enemy within range.

Run: You can move up to double your Speed in yards. You cannot take this action if you are prone (you'd need to use the Move action to stand up first).

MINOR ACTIONS

Activate: This action allows you to start using certain powers or items, such as fighting styles and potions.

Aim: You take the measure of your opponent and plan your next strike. If your next action is a melee attack or ranged attack, you gain a +1 bonus on your attack roll.

Move: You can move up to your Speed in yards. You can also go prone, stand up, or mount a horse or vehicle, but if you do so you can only move at half Speed (rounded down).

Prepare: You pick one major action that you prepare to execute and then end your turn. Any time until your next turn, you can interrupt another character and take your prepared action immediately. If you don't use it by your next turn, the action is lost. You cannot take the prepared action if you've already taken a major action on your turn.

Ready: You can unsheathe a weapon, pull out a potion, or otherwise ready an item that is stowed. As part of this action, you can put away something already in hand. You could thus put away your bow and a draw a sword, for example.

Standard Stunts

When you roll doubles on a successful attack roll, you generate stunt points (SP) equal to the dragon die and can spend them to perform stunts.

SP Cost	Stunt
1+	**Skirmish:** You can move yourself or the target of your attack 2 yards in any direction for each 1 SP you spend.
1	**Rapid Reload:** You can immediately reload a missile weapon.
2	**Knock Prone:** You knock your enemy prone. Any character making a melee attack against a prone foe gains +1 bonus on the attack roll.
2	**Defensive Stance:** Your attack sets you up for defense. You gain a +2 bonus to Defense until the beginning of your next turn.
2	**Disarm:** You knock your enemy's weapon 1d6 + Strength yards away in a direction you nominate.
2	**Mighty Blow:** You inflict an extra 1d6 damage on your attack.
2	**Pierce Armor:** You find a chink in your enemy's armor. His armor rating is halved (rounded down) vs. this attack.
3	**Lightning Attack:** You can make a second attack against the same enemy or a different one within range and sight. You must have a loaded missile weapon to make a ranged attack. If you roll doubles on this attack roll, you do not get any more stunt points.
4	**Dual Strike:** Your attack is so strong it affects two targets. First, pick a secondary target. He must be adjacent to you if you are using a melee weapon or within 6 yards of your primary target if you are using a missile weapon. Apply the test result of your original attack roll to the secondary target (in other words, you only make one attack roll and apply it to both opponents). If you hit the secondary target, inflict your normal damage on him.
4	**Seize the Initiative:** Your attack changes the tempo of the battle. You move to the top of the initiative order. This means you may get to take another turn before some of the combatants get to act again. You remain at the top of the order until someone else seizes the initiative.

Standard Spell Stunts

When you roll doubles on a successful casting roll, you generate stunt points (SP) equal to the dragon die and can spend them to perform spell stunts.

SP Cost	Spell Stunt
1-3	**Puissant Casting:** Increase the Spellpower of your spell by 1 per stunt point spent, to a maximum of 3.
2	**Skillful Casting:** Reduce the mana cost of the spell by 1. This can reduce the mana cost to 0.
2	**Mighty Spell:** If the spell does damage, one target of the spell of your choice takes an extra 1d6 damage.
3	**Mana Shield:** You use the residual mana of the spell casting to set up a temporary protective shield. You gain a +2 bonus to Defense until the beginning of your next turn.
4	**Fast Casting:** After you resolve this spell, you can immediately cast another spell. The second spell must have a casting time of a major action or a minor action. If you roll doubles on this casting roll, you do not get any more stunt points.
4	**Imposing Spell:** The effect of the spell is much more dramatic than usual. Until the beginning of your next turn, anyone attempting to make a melee attack against you must make a successful **Willpower (Courage)** test. The target number (TN) is 10 + your Magic ability. Those who fail must take a move or defend action instead.